

Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2011

Unmarried Domestic Partners Benefit Fact Sheet

July 26, 2011

The “Employee Benefits in the United States – March 2011” news release, which was issued on Tuesday, July 26, 2011 contains data on unmarried domestic partner benefits. This is the first time that data on unmarried domestic partners are available from the National Compensation Survey. Table 7 provides data on access to defined benefit retirement survivor benefits for unmarried domestic partners and table 8 provides data on access to health care benefits for unmarried domestic partners.

The complete news release is available at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ebs2.pdf>.

Highlights of these data include:

- Defined benefit retirement survivor benefits:
 - Fourteen percent of all civilian workers have access to a defined benefit retirement plan that has a provision for survivor benefits for unmarried domestic partners. The percentage is the same for both same sex and opposite sex partners.
 - In private industry, 7 percent have access to this provision for both same sex and opposite sex partners.
 - In State and local government, 50 percent have access to this provision for same sex partners and 49 percent for opposite sex partners.
 - There is typically little difference in access rates between same sex and opposite sex partners for the same series characteristics.
 - When analyzing these access rates, it is important to take into account the percent of workers who have access to defined benefit plans. For example, employees in private industry have less access to a defined benefit plan compared to State and local government (in 2010, it was 20 percent to 84 percent, respectively). As a result, approximately 35 percent (7/20) of private industry employees with access to a defined benefit plan have a plan that provides unmarried domestic partner benefits for same sex partners, while that figure in State and local government is 60 percent (50/84). Note that these calculations use 2010 data for access to defined benefit plans and 2011 data for the domestic partner access rate. 2011 data for the former will be available in late summer 2011.
- Health care benefits:
 - Among civilian workers, access to health care benefits for unmarried domestic partners is available to 30 percent of same sex partners and 25 percent of opposite sex partners.
 - In private industry, 29 percent have access for same sex partners and 25 percent have access for opposite sex partners.
 - In State and local government, 33 percent have access for same sex partners and 28 percent have access for opposite sex partners.
 - This benefit is typically more prevalent for same sex partners than for opposite sex partners.