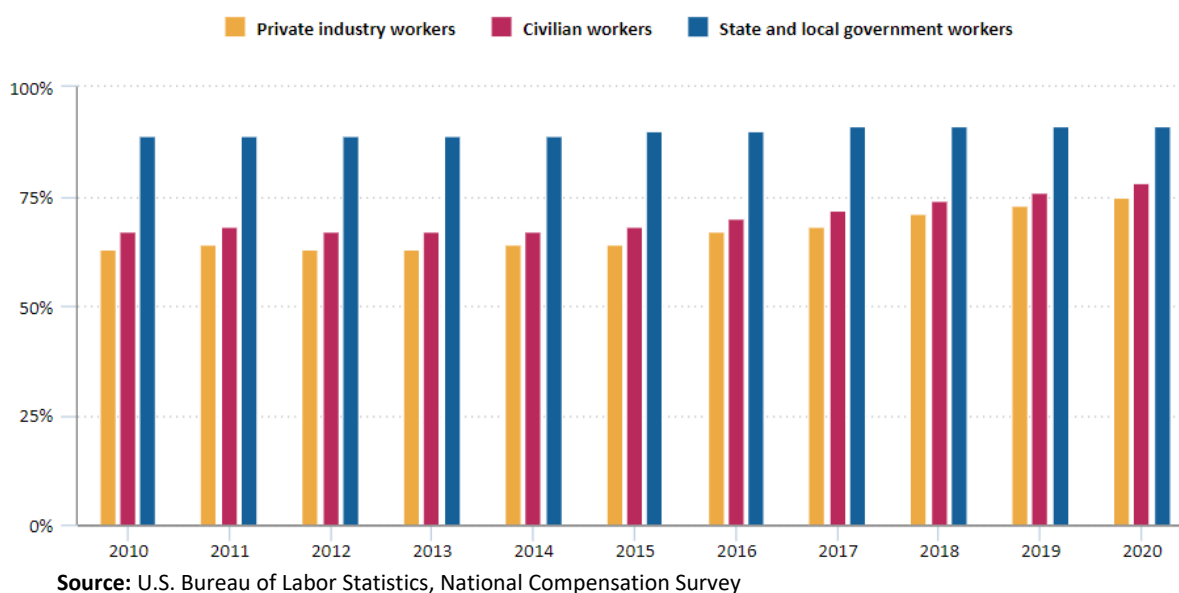


Paid sick leave: What is available to workers?

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) first published statistics on paid sick leave as part of the 1979 pilot study on [Employee Benefits in Industry](#) and annually publishes the percentage of workers with access, the type of paid leave plan, as well as the number of days provided by length of service. This factsheet provides an overview of the sick leave estimates available through the National Compensation Survey (NCS).

In March 2020, 78 percent of civilian workers¹ had access to paid sick leave benefits. Employees are considered to have access to paid sick leave plans if it is available for their use. The average cost to employers was \$0.45 per employee hour worked in March 2020².

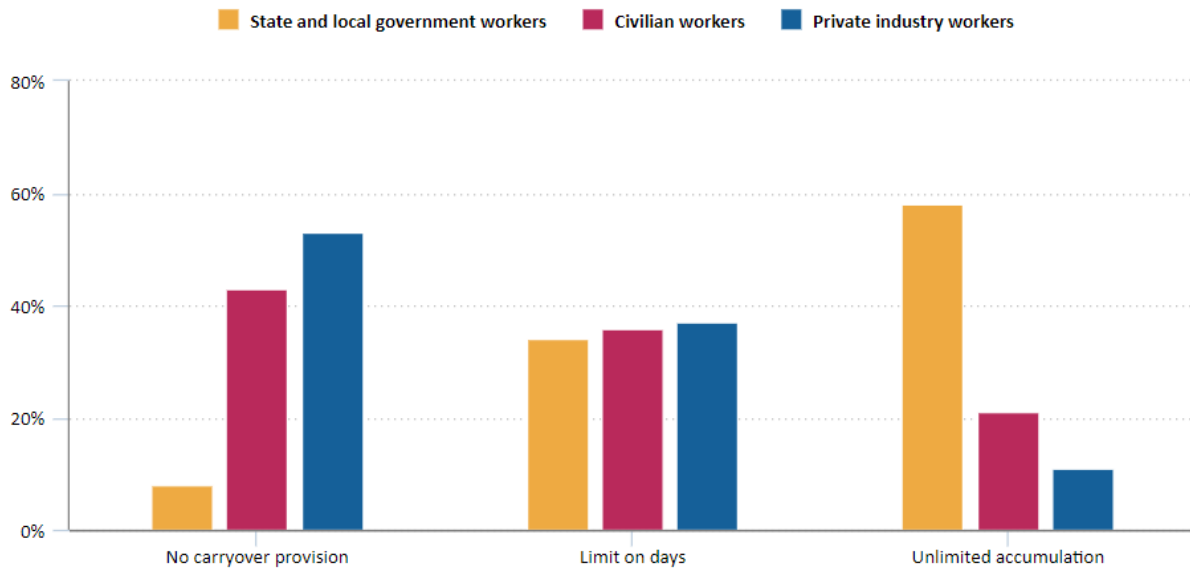
Chart 1. Percentage of workers with access to paid sick leave benefits, March 2010 - 2020



For 68 percent of workers with paid sick leave, sick leave plans provide a fixed number of days per year³ with an average of 8 days available for their use. Three percent of workers have an as-needed sick leave plan; that is, the plan does not specify the maximum number of days. For the remaining 30 percent, their sick leave plan is part of a consolidated leave plan, which provides a single amount of time off for workers to use for multiple purposes such as vacation, illness, or other personal business.

For workers with fixed number of days per year sick leave plans, 57 percent have a carryover provision, which means that they can accumulate unused sick leave from year to year. An unlimited carryover provision is available for 21 percent of workers while 36 percent have a limit on the number of days they can accumulate from one year to the next. Carryover provisions are not available for 43 percent of workers with a fixed number of days per year sick leave plan.

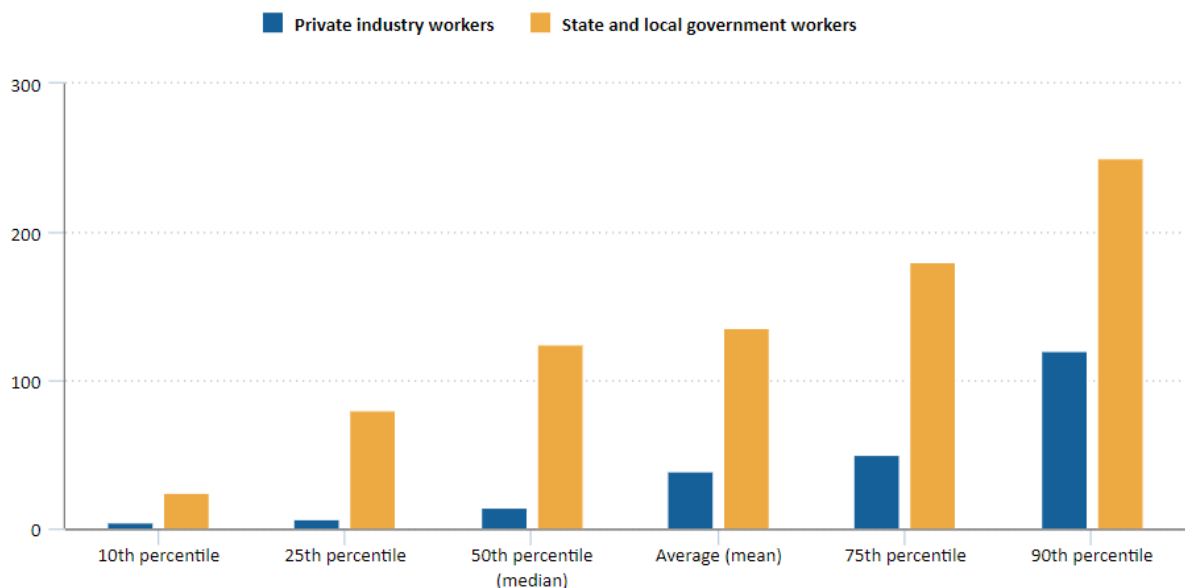
Chart 2. Percentage of workers with fixed number of days sick leave plans by carryover provisions, March 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey

Due to differences in the structure of paid sick leave, consolidated leave plans, and disability insurance the BLS does not publish estimates on limit on days accumulated for civilian workers. However, the BLS does publish the estimates for private industry as well as state and local government separately.

Chart 3. Limit on the number of carryover days, March 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey

Consolidated leave plan estimates were first published by BLS in 2010, when 21 percent of civilian workers with paid vacation plans included them as part of a consolidated leave plan. The average



number of paid days available for workers in consolidated leave plans ranged from 15 days after 1 year of service to 25 days after 20 years of service. In 2020, 41 percent of workers with paid vacation plans included them as part of a consolidated leave plan, where the average number of days available ranged from 14 days after 1 year of service to 23 days after 20 years of service.

This factsheet covered the overall availability and provisions of sick leave plans included in the [Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2020](#) publication. Additional information on leave benefits, quality of life benefits (including flexible work place and flexible work schedule), retirement and savings, and insurance benefits (including health care, short-term disability, and long-term care) are available within the publication.

Estimates by worker characteristics such as full- and part-time, bargaining status (union and nonunion), average wages within percentile groups, and occupational groups as well as establishment characteristics such as industry, size class, and geographic area (census regions and divisions) are also available.

Estimates for employer-sponsored benefits prior to 2010 are also available through the [publications page](#). Estimates for civilian workers are available beginning with March 2008. Prior to 2003, private industry estimates were provided separately for small establishments (less than 100 workers) and medium and large establishments (100 or more workers). Additionally, prior to 2003 estimates are for full-time workers by establishment size.

March 2020 estimates were published on September 24, 2020. Join the [BLS Mailing Lists](#) to receive notification of the latest data releases.

Additional resources:

- [Latest news release](#)
- [Archived benefits news releases](#)
- [Employee Benefits Survey glossary](#)
- [Household survey on absences from work](#)

Fact sheets

- [Medical care premiums in the United States](#)
- [Supplemental data measuring the effects of the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic on sick leave plans](#)
- [High deductible health plans and health savings accounts \(PDF\)](#)
- [Who receives paid vacations? \(PDF\)](#)
- [What statistics does the BLS provide on frozen defined benefit plans? \(PDF\)](#)
- [Flexible benefits in the workplace \(PDF\)](#)
- [Flexible work schedule and student loan repayment](#)
- [What data does the BLS publish on family leave?](#)
- [Holiday profiles](#)
- [Access to paid personal leave](#)
- [Unmarried domestic partner benefits](#)

Articles



- [Employer provisions for parental leave, 1989](#)
- [Family leave coverage in the 1990s](#)
- [Parental leave benefits provided by employers, 1993](#)
- [Unpaid Family Leave, 1998](#)
- [Family and medical leave: evidence from the 2000 surveys](#)
- [How paid family leave affects mothers in the labor force, 2012](#)
- [Pay protection during temporary absences from work: what we know and what we don't know, 2015](#)
- [Does paid family leave increase leave taking among fathers? 2016](#)
- [Racial and ethnic disparities in access to and use of paid family and medical leave; evidence from four nationally representative datasets, 2019](#)
- [94 percent of managers, 56 percent of construction and extraction workers had paid sick leave, 2019](#)

The [glossary of employee benefit terms](#) provides definitions for plans, provisions, coverage, and related terms. The [National Compensation Measures Handbook of Methods](#) provides information on the survey design, calculations, weighting, and imputation methods used to produce compensation estimates. The [calculation section](#) includes information on the measures of reliability available for each estimate.

Historical data

Estimates on the cost, coverage, and provisions of employer–sponsored benefit plans from 2010 to 2020 are available through the [Excel dataset](#), and [public database](#). Historical data are available on the [publications](#) page. Benefit estimates are not a time series and users are advised to consider changes in survey design, survey scope, estimation methods, weighting, and sample rotation when analyzing the data.

Comparing private and public sector estimates

Estimate differences between private industry and state and local government stem from several factors such as variation in work activities and occupational structures. Manufacturing and sales, for example, comprise a large portion of private industry work activities but are rare in state and local government. Professional and administrative support occupations (including teachers) account for two–thirds of the state and local government workforce, compared with one–half of private industry.

Endnotes:

¹ Civilian workers include those in private industry as well as workers in state and local government. Excluded are federal government workers, agricultural industry sector, private households, individuals who set their own pay, volunteers, and family members receiving token wages.

² Average cost for paid sick leave obtained from the [March 2020 Employer Cost for Employee Compensation](#). The costs are calculated across all workers, that is workers that do not have access to paid sick leave plans or did not use any sick leave are included as part of the denominator.

³ Employees earn or accrue a specified number of sick leave days per year. This number may vary by length of service.

