

FAST Facts

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How Common Is Paid Sick Leave in the United States?

WASHINGTON—How many workers in the United States have access to paid sick leave? Is paid sick leave mandatory?

According to the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), paid sick leave was available to approximately two-thirds (66 percent) of civilian workers in March 2009. This number includes workers in the private nonfarm economy (except those in private households) and workers in the public sector (except the federal government).

Here are some details from the BLS:

- Nearly 90 percent of state and local government workers had access to paid sick leave, significantly greater than the approximately 60 percent of private-industry workers.
- Among civilian workers, 77 percent of full-time workers had access to paid sick leave, compared with 28 percent of part-time workers.
- Seventy-seven percent of civilian workers at firms with 100 or more employees had access to paid sick leave, compared with 53 percent of employees at firms with 1–99 employees.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics: *Employee Benefits in the United States News Release Text*: www.bls.gov/news.release/ebs2.nr0.htm

Is sick leave mandatory?

The following is from the Department of Labor Web site: “Generally, federal labor laws do not require employers to provide sick leave or pay sick time off. However, if employers do provide sick leave, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) permits an eligible employee to substitute paid leave for the unpaid leave to the extent the employer's usual requirements for the use of sick/medical leave are met and the sick leave qualifies as FMLA leave. Employers are also permitted to designate paid leave as FMLA leave assuming all the conditions are met.”

Source: Department of Labor: *Frequently Asked Questions*: <http://webapps.dol.gov/dolfaq/go-dol-faq.asp?faqid=47>

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