

# Paid sick leave among U.S. healthcare personnel, April 2021

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## Introduction

- Healthcare personnel (HCP) are at risk for acquiring COVID-19, influenza, and other respiratory infections in the workplace.
- Paid sick leave benefits allow workers to stay home and visit a healthcare provider when ill, which can prevent workplace transmission.
- Our objectives were to quantify the percentage of HCP reporting paid sick leave, identify differences across occupations and settings, and determine factors associated with having paid sick leave.

## Methods

- In a national nonprobability Internet panel survey of HCP in April 2021, respondents were asked: **Does your employer offer paid sick leave?**
- Sample population from preexisting national opt in sources
  - Medscape, managed by WebMD Health Professional Network
  - General population Internet panels operated by Dynata
- We weighted responses to the U.S. HCP population by age, sex, race/ethnicity, work setting, and census region.
- We calculated the weighted percentage of HCP who reported paid sick leave by occupation, work setting, and type of employment.
- Using multivariable logistic regression, we identified factors associated with having paid sick leave with adjusted prevalence ratios (aPR).

**Table 1. Paid sick leave among healthcare personnel, (n=2,391)**

	No. (weighted %)	Weighted % with paid sick leave (95% CI)
<b>Total/Overall</b>	1,652 (71.4)	71.4 (67.3, 75.3)
<b>Age</b>		
18-29 years (ref)	263 (17.5)	58.3 (44.5, 71.2)
30-44 years	1,007 (38.9)	<b>74.8 (68.6, 80.2)</b>
45-59 years	774 (29.0)	<b>75.8 (69.0, 81.7)</b>
60+ years	346 (14.6)	69.7 (59.6, 78.6)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male (ref)	794 (23.3)	83.9 (78.4, 88.4)
Female	1,597 (76.7)	<b>67.7 (62.6, 72.5)</b>
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>		
White, non-Hispanic (ref)	1,419 (61.4)	71.5 (66.7, 76.0)
Black, non-Hispanic	316 (17.0)	69.1 (54.4, 81.4)
Hispanic	399 (14.1)	74.9 (61.9, 85.3)
Other, non-Hispanic	253 (7.5)	69.0 (56.5, 79.7)
<b>Occupation</b>		
Physician	283 (3.4)	<b>54.3 (46.1, 62.4)</b>
Nurse practitioner/Physician assistant	147 (1.4)	88.8 (65.2, 98.6) <sup>†</sup>
Nurse (ref)	179 (18.4)	76.5 (66.3, 84.9)
Pharmacist	309 (1.3)	73.4 (67.4, 78.8)
Other clinical personnel*	561 (18.8)	<b>62.4 (51.6, 72.4)</b>
Assistant/aide	577 (24.2)	<b>60.3 (56.0, 64.5)</b>
Non-clinical personnel	306 (32.5)	83.2 (72.8, 90.9)
<b>Work setting</b>		
Hospital (ref)	887 (38.6)	82.4 (77.3, 86.7)
Ambulatory care	708 (22.6)	69.0 (59.6, 77.4)
Long-term care/ home health care	575 (41.7)	67.8 (60.0, 74.9)
Other clinical setting <sup>†</sup>	618 (10.8)	59.7 (48.5, 70.2)
<b>Type of work arrangement</b>		
Direct hire (ref)	1,787 (82.6)	77.0 (72.9, 80.7)
Licensed independent practitioner	263 (5.5)	<b>50.1 (37.1, 63.1)</b>
Contract employee	279 (12.0)	<b>46.3 (32.4, 60.6)</b>
<b>Location of primary workplace</b>		
Rural (ref)	308 (12.2)	58.7 (47.2, 69.5)
Non-rural	2,080 (87.8)	<b>73.2 (68.8, 77.3)</b>
<b>Region</b>		
Northeast (ref)	456 (19.8)	77.8 (68.6, 85.3)
Midwest	399 (23.3)	<b>61.3 (51.1, 70.8)</b>
South	1,024 (36.1)	68.0 (60.4, 74.9)
West	507 (20.8)	82.8 (75.9, 88.4)
<b>Employer flu vaccine requirement</b>		
Required (ref)	758 (32.4)	79.9 (73.9, 85.1)
Recommended	1,071 (44.7)	74.8 (68.9, 80.1)
Neither required or recommended	453 (22.8)	<b>56.7 (43.3, 69.5)</b>

\*Dentists, allied health professionals, technicians and technologists, emergency medical technicians, and paramedics.

<sup>†</sup> Dentist office, pharmacy, emergency medical services, and other clinical care settings

## Results

- In April 2021, **71.4% of 2,391 responding HCP reported having paid sick leave**, a slight increase from 68.1% in April 2020.
- The % of HCP reporting paid sick leave varied by occupation, work setting, type of work arrangement, work location, and region
- Factors **positively associated** with paid sick leave
  - Age 30–44 years [aPR:1.20, (1.02, 1.42)]
  - Age 45–59 years [aPR:1.22, (1.05, 1.42)]
  - Male sex [aPR:1.19, (1.10, 1.30)]
- Factors **negatively associated** with paid sick leave
  - Physicians [aPR:0.74, (0.58, 0.94)]
  - Contract employees [aPR:0.71, (0.58, 0.86)]
  - Working in Midwest region [aPR:0.78, (0.67, 0.91)]
  - Working in South region [aPR:0.87, (0.78, 0.97)]
  - Working in rural settings [aPR:0.86, (0.75, 0.99)]
- No associations identified between paid sick leave and
  - Being ill with influenza like illness\*
  - Working while ill\*
  - Missing work while ill\*

\*timeframe for question was since October 1, 2021

## Limitations

- Nonprobability sample, limiting generalizability
- Self-reported data (recall or social desirability bias)
- Details on sick leave plans not obtained
- Small sample sizes for some variables

## Public Health Context

- The United States is 1 of 11 countries in the world without a national policy mandating paid sick leave for workers.<sup>1</sup>
- Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that 78% of civilian workers had access to paid sick leave benefits in 2020.
- Paid sick leave can reduce spread of respiratory infectious diseases to coworkers and patients.
- Paid sick leave is associated with higher use of primary and preventive healthcare services.

## Conclusions

- The majority of HCP from all occupational groups and healthcare settings in this survey reported having paid sick leave.
- However, differences by age, sex, occupation, type of work arrangement, and region exist and highlight disparities.
- Increasing HCP access to paid sick leave may decrease presenteeism and subsequent transmission of infectious diseases in healthcare settings.

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## Reference

<sup>1</sup>Heyman J et al. Health Affairs  
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