

Evaluating Paid Sick Leave:

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS FOR SEATTLE



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Introduction: Public risks and responsible solutions

“Stay home when you’re sick” was the key public health message during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, raising public awareness of the responsibility we all share in preventing the spread of contagious disease. The outbreak also highlighted how difficult it is for individuals without paid sick leave to meet competing obligations to their families, employers, their own well-being, and public health.

Paid time off from work to recover from illness, tend to a sick child, or see a doctor is a prerequisite for healthy workers and businesses, public health, family economic security, and even children’s success in school.

Yet four in ten workers get no paid sick leave – including many restaurant, grocery, and health care workers who are on the front lines of food safety and public health.

Seattle is home to about half a million jobs. An estimated 190,000 of those jobs do not offer

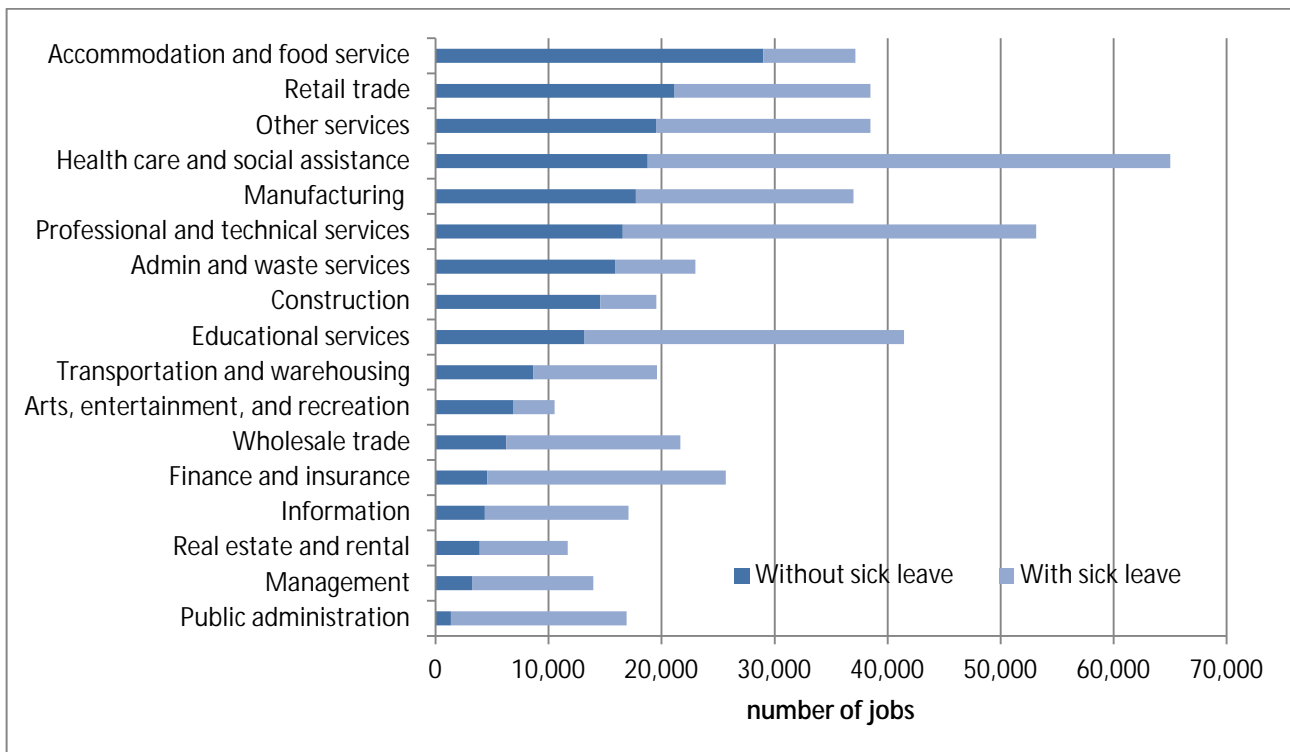
paid sick leave, including nearly 30,000 in accommodation and food service, 20,000 in retail, and close to 20,000 in health services.¹

Minimum standards of paid sick days have been passed in three U.S. cities and are under consideration across the country.² San Francisco’s paid sick leave ordinance has been in place the longest, since February 2007. The research there shows the new standards are supported by two-thirds of employers and have produced real benefits for half of all workers.³

Since it was enacted, San Francisco’s job market has been stronger than in the state of California as a whole, and compares favorably with the surrounding counties.⁴

Adopting such a standard in the city of Seattle would protect public and community health, both in the city and throughout the region where Seattle’s workforce lives.

JOBS IN SEATTLE BY SECTOR, WITH AND WITHOUT PAID SICK LEAVE, 2009



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators, and Institute for Women’s Policy Research Paid Sick Days Calculator

Public Health Risks

Food Workers and Foodborne Illness

Foodborne illness has a major impact on health and the economy in the United States. According to the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), every year one out of six Americans gets sick from food, resulting in 125,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths.⁵ About 20% of cases can be traced to an ill food worker.⁶ Elderly people are particularly vulnerable to foodborne illnesses such as norovirus, especially in group living settings such as nursing homes.⁷

The CDC estimates there are more than 21 million annual cases of norovirus, and half of all cases of foodborne illness in the U.S. can be attributed to norovirus infection. Norovirus symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, cramping and fever. Infected people usually feel better after one or two days, but they may be contagious for as long as two weeks.⁸

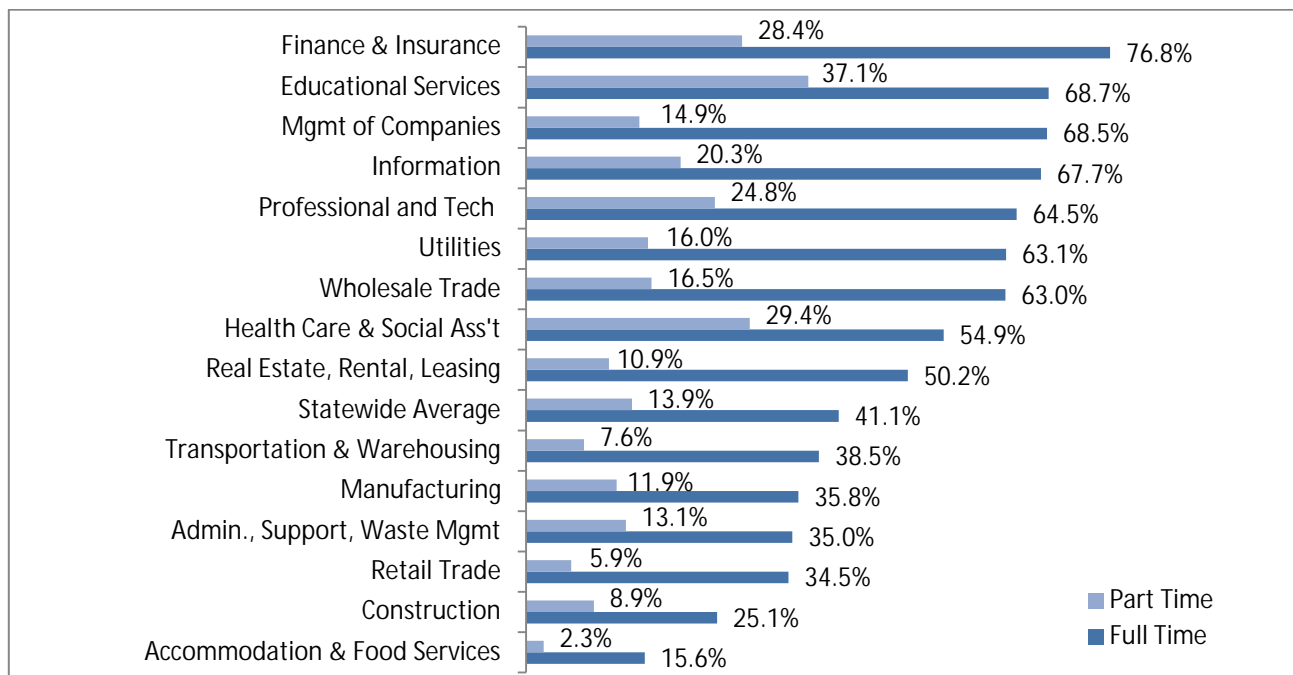
Norovirus is especially difficult to kill and easy to transmit. Of the cases analyzed by the CDC

from July 1997 to June 2000, 57% were caused by food, which most often became contaminated by an infected food handler immediately prior to consumption. Thirty-six percent of cases were traced to restaurants and catered meals, 23% to nursing homes, 13% to schools, and 10% to cruise ships.⁹

The CDC advises that the measures most likely to significantly reduce the incidence of norovirus are correct handling of cold foods, frequent hand washing and provision of paid sick leave.¹⁰

In Washington state, all food service workers are required to take food safety training and are prohibited from working around unpackaged food or beverages if they have symptoms of gastrointestinal disease or have been diagnosed with a disease that can be transmitted through food.¹¹ However, since most restaurants do not offer paid sick time, ill employees are forced to choose between taking unpaid leave or going to work sick.¹²

PERCENTAGE OF FIRMS OFFERING PAID SICK LEAVE TO FULL- AND PART-TIME WORKERS, WASHINGTON, 2009



Source: Washington Employment Security Department, Employee Benefit Survey

A recent survey of food service workers reported in the *Journal of Food Protection* found that 19.8% had worked while experiencing vomiting or diarrhea in the past year.¹³ Another survey of over 4,300 restaurant workers in 8 metropolitan regions of the U.S. found that 88% did not receive paid sick time and 63% had worked serving or preparing food while sick.¹⁴

Some workers who do earn paid sick leave face obstacles in using it. Some employer policies, including in some area grocery stores and hospitals, do not allow use of paid leave until workers have been off two or three days without pay.¹⁵ In addition, employees may face disciplinary measures if they call in sick, with too many absences resulting in job loss, even when an illness is well documented.

Spread of H1N1 and Other Common Diseases

Lack of paid sick leave contributed to the spread of H1N1 in 2009 and 2010, both in the workplace and in schools. Of the approximately 26 million employed Americans infected at the height of the pandemic from

September through November 2009, only 18 million took time off from work. Sick workers are estimated to have infected 7 million of their co-workers.¹⁶

A study by the Boston Public Health Commission found that African Americans and Latinos in that city had much higher rates of H1N1 infection than whites, and that children were often the first in their families to be infected.¹⁷ Not only are the Boston Public Schools disproportionately black and Latino, but many of those parents are low income and lack paid sick leave. Therefore, they were less able to pick up their sick children from school or keep them home for the duration of their illness, increasing the spread of disease.¹⁸

The flu and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus, which causes bronchitis) are both commonly transmitted through tiny droplets in the air when someone coughs, sneezes, or talks. The flu can be contagious one day prior to the onset of symptoms and for 5 to 7 days after becoming sick.¹⁹ RSV is typically contagious for 3 to 8 days, but germs can be spread for up to 4 weeks after infection.²⁰

Social and Community Impacts

Unequal Access

Nationally, over 80% of people who earn above the median hourly wage get paid sick leave, while only 19% do among the bottom 10% of earners.²¹ In addition to the short term financial losses from taking unpaid leave, people without sick leave lose opportunities for career advancement, and are limited in their ability to build assets, retirement savings, and longer term economic security.

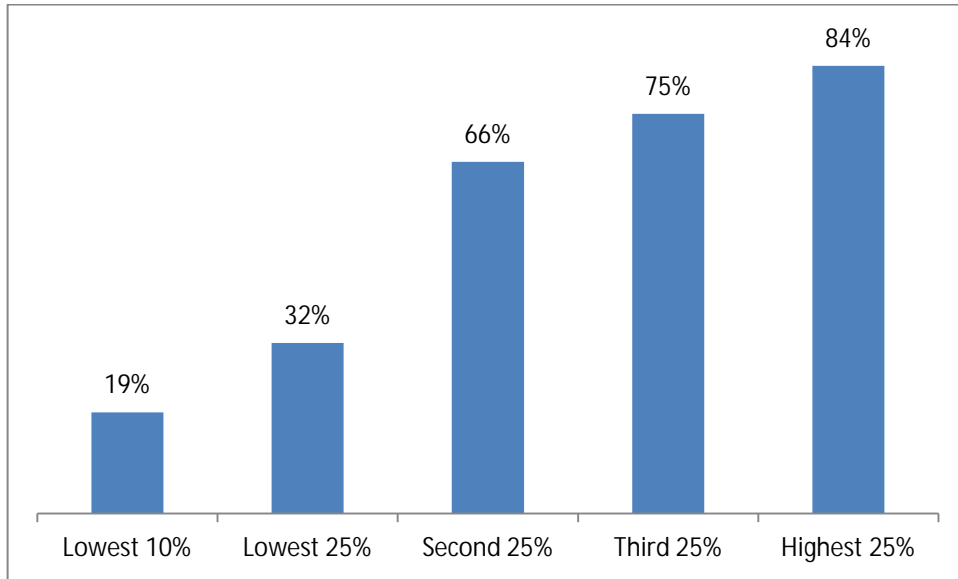
People who work part time frequently do not qualify for paid leave and other benefits that are provided to full-time employees. Women

are far more likely than men to work part time, often for family reasons.²²

According to national data, Latino and African-American workers are less likely than whites and Asians to have paid sick leave.²³

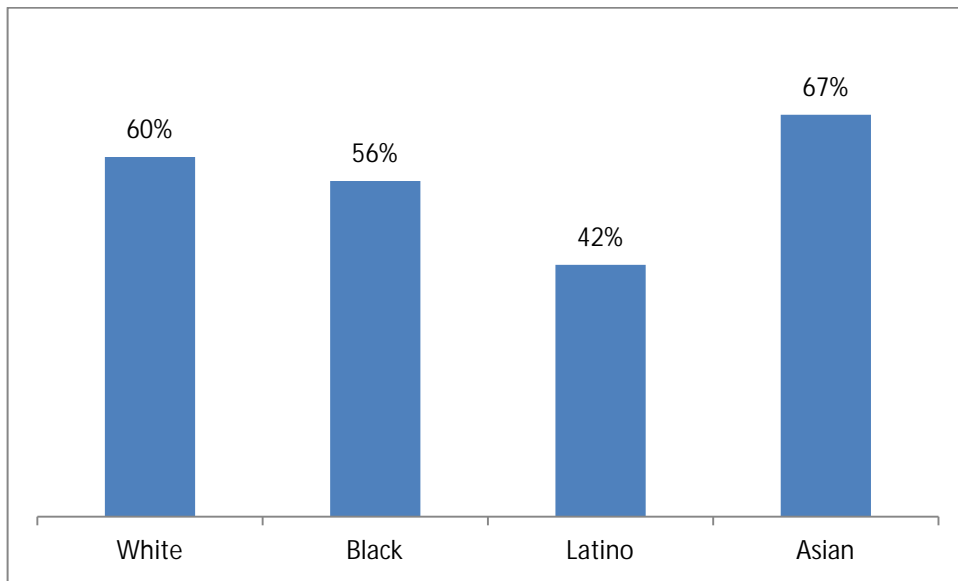
A 2010 survey of workers in San Francisco found that Latino and African American workers were more likely than white workers to report benefitting from that city's paid sick days ordinance – by having more paid sick time available, their employers being more supportive of them taking time off, and/or being better able to care for health needs of themselves or family members.²⁴

PAID SICK LEAVE BY WAGE LEVEL IN PRIVATE INDUSTRY, U.S. AVERAGE 2010



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

PRIVATE SECTOR U.S. WORKERS WITH ACCESS TO PAID SICK DAYS BY ETHNICITY, 2009



Source: IWPR analysis of 2009 National Health Interview Survey data

Children's Health and Education

A parent's lack of paid sick leave can have a negative impact on the child's health and school performance. For 74.4% of school-age children and 64.2% of preschoolers in Seattle, all parents in the family are in the work force.²⁵

Caring for a sick child or taking a child to see a health care provider during regular business hours is a significant problem without sick leave.

Many childcare centers and schools have policies requiring sick children to stay home. The CDC recommends keeping children at home for 24 hours after a fever subsides.²⁶

The Seattle Public Schools and Seattle King County Public Health recommend keeping children suspected of having H1N1 home for at least 7 days and until all symptoms are gone for 24 hours.²⁷

Studies show children recover more quickly from illness with a parent present.²⁸ Older children are sometimes kept home from school to care for younger siblings when parents are not able to take time off from work, affecting the older child's educational outcomes.²⁹

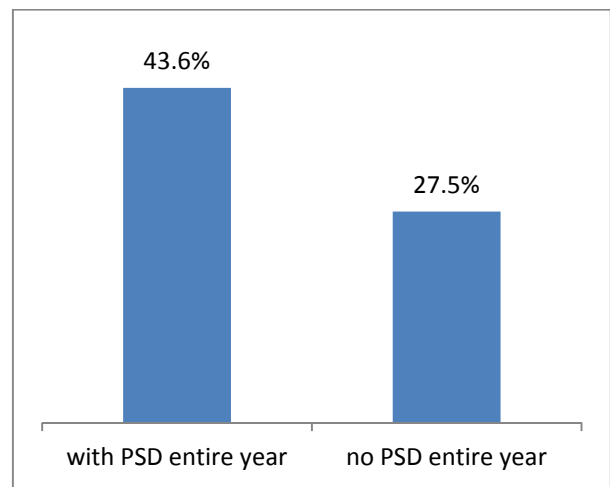
Children in families with lower incomes are much less likely to have a parent with access to sick leave than higher income children. A study of employed parents based on 2003 and 2004 data found that just 36.3% of children in families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level had a parent with access to paid sick leave, compared to 80.9% of higher income children.³⁰

Children in low income families are also more likely to be in poor health. In Washington, 30% of children in families below the poverty level were rated by their parents as being in less than very good health, compared to about 9% of middle and upper income children.³¹

Parents with low incomes are far more likely to take time off work to care for a child or other

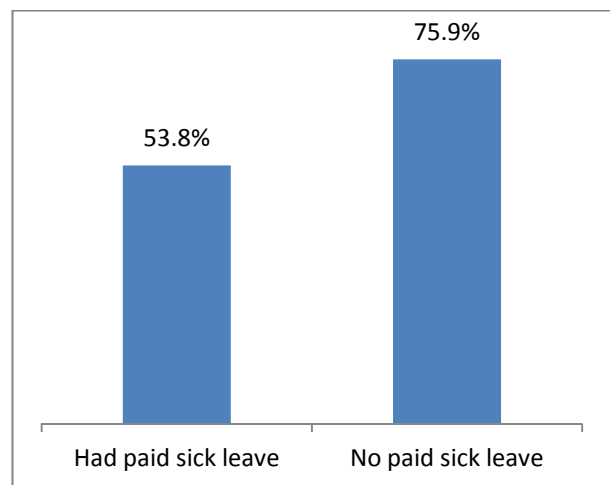
family member if they had paid sick leave.³² The 2010 San Francisco survey found that parents without access to sick leave were more likely to send a sick child to school: 75.9% of parents without access to paid sick days said their child had gone to school while sick, compared to 53.8% of parents with paid sick days.³³

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS BELOW 200% OF FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL WHO TOOK TIME OFF DURING YEAR TO CARE FOR SOMEONE ELSE, BY ACCESS TO PAID SICK LEAVE



Source: Clemons-Cope, et al., *Pediatrics* 2008; 122:480-486

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYED SAN FRANCISCO PARENTS WHOSE CHILD HAD GONE TO SCHOOL SICK IN PREVIOUS YEAR



Source: Clemons-Cope, et al., *Pediatrics* 2008; 122:480-486

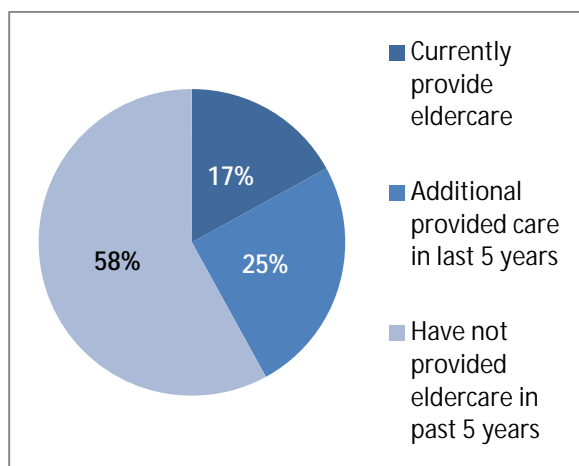
Caring for Aging Relatives – and Aging Workers

A comprehensive study based on 2008 data found that 17% of the American workforce at that time was providing uncompensated care for an elderly person, and 42% had during the previous 5 years. Men and women were equally likely to be providing such care. Nearly half of workers believe they will be responsible for eldercare in the next 5 years.³⁴

Employed family caregivers still spent on average 45 hours per week at their paid job – as much time as those without such responsibilities. Compounding the time crunch, 46% of the women and 40% of the men also had children under 18 living at home. Based on those figures, approximately 85,000 members of the Seattle-based workforce currently care for an elderly person, and 245,000 will during the next five years.

Caring for aging parents is not the only issue. With the workforce rapidly aging, more spouses and domestic partners – and workers themselves – are at risk of developing serious health problems. Between 1991 and 2009 the percentage of workers in King County over the age of 45 increased from 25% to 41%.³⁵

PERCENTAGE OF U.S. WORKFORCE PROVIDING UNCOMPENSATED ELDER CARE



Source: Families and Work Institute, Elder Care Study (based on 2008 data).

Paid Safe Days: Domestic violence and sexual assault

A few days off work can be critical to the health and safety of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking – and their co-workers. In 2008, the Seattle Police Department recorded 1,914 domestic violence offenses, or just over 5 per day.³⁶ Women are three times more likely than men to experience domestic violence.³⁷ An estimated 60,000 to 120,000 adult women in Seattle have experienced domestic violence during their lifetimes.³⁸

Economic independence is one of the best predictors of whether a victim will separate from her abuser.³⁹ However, keeping a job can be difficult for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking, who often need time off for court appearances, medical attention, or establishing a safe space away from former abusers or stalkers. A 2009 Department of Justice study found that among stalking victims who had a job, one in eight lost time from work. Nearly half of sexual assault survivors surveyed lost their jobs or were forced to quit in the aftermath of the assaults.⁴⁰

A Washington state law passed in 2008 guarantees that all victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking can take either employer-provided paid or unpaid leave from work to take care of legal needs, obtain health care, or seek counseling. Family members of a victim may also take leave to help the victim.⁴¹

Domestic violence can affect anyone, regardless of socio-economic status, race or ethnicity, religion, age, gender, or sexual orientation. As is the case with leave for illness and health care, higher-wage individuals are more likely than lower income workers to have access to paid leave they can draw on for safety needs.⁴²

Employers and Paid Sick Leave

Many employers have long recognized that providing good benefits is essential to attracting and retaining good employees.

Multiple studies have found that providing paid sick leave results in higher morale and productivity, less absenteeism, and lower rates of turnover.⁴³ Providing paid sick leave that is available for the care of sick family members has been shown to increase firm profits.⁴⁴

Turnover is particularly costly for businesses. Estimates of the direct cost of losing and replacing an employee range from 25% to 50% of annual pay for hourly workers, and much more for highly skilled employees.⁴⁵

That means that replacing a half-time employee earning \$9.00 per hour directly costs an employer \$2,340 to \$4,680. Replacing a full-time \$12.00 per hour worker runs \$6,000 to \$12,500. Indirect costs of lost productivity add more.

Policies that support work/life balance in general and flexible sick leave in particular result in better retention and measurable declines in employee turnover in all types of businesses.⁴⁶

Absenteeism v. Presenteeism

Controlling unscheduled absences remains a concern for employers, whether or not they provide paid sick leave. A survey of employers by CCH Incorporated in 2007 found that 34% of unscheduled employee absences were due to employee illness, 22% to family issues, 18% to personal needs, 13% to stress and 13% to a "sense of entitlement."⁴⁷ Employers most frequently report using disciplinary action, annual reviews and illness verification to reduce absenteeism.⁴⁸

With employees anxious about job security during the recession, rates of absenteeism reported in the Bureau of National Affairs' quarterly survey of employers fell in 2008 and 2009 to below 1% of scheduled days, compared to 1.5% in 2005. Employers with fewer than 1,000 employees had half the rate of absenteeism (0.7%) of larger employers (1.4%).⁴⁹

In workplaces where the majority of employees are committed and satisfied, rates of absenteeism are low.⁵⁰ According to the CCH survey, companies with good morale had less than half the rate of absenteeism of firms with morale rated only fair or low. The high-morale firms also reported fewer employees coming to work sick.⁵¹

Workers showing up to work sick instead of getting well at home, known as "presenteeism", has been estimated to cost employers more than absenteeism. Not only does the ill or distracted employee operate below par, but they put their coworkers at risk as well.⁵²

A 2009 survey by Kronos Incorporated found that with the economy down and job security low, 30% of employees reported being even more likely to show up to work sick.⁵³

How Workers Use Paid Sick Leave

Those full-time workers who do receive paid sick leave accrued on average nine days after one year on the job in 2010.⁵⁴ Most workers do not use all the sick leave they have available. According to national data, workers with paid sick leave take on average 2 to 3 days per year.⁵⁵

**AVERAGE NUMBER OF PAID SICK DAYS EARNED AFTER 1 YEAR EMPLOYMENT,
FOR THOSE WITH PAID SICK DAYS BENEFITS, 2010**

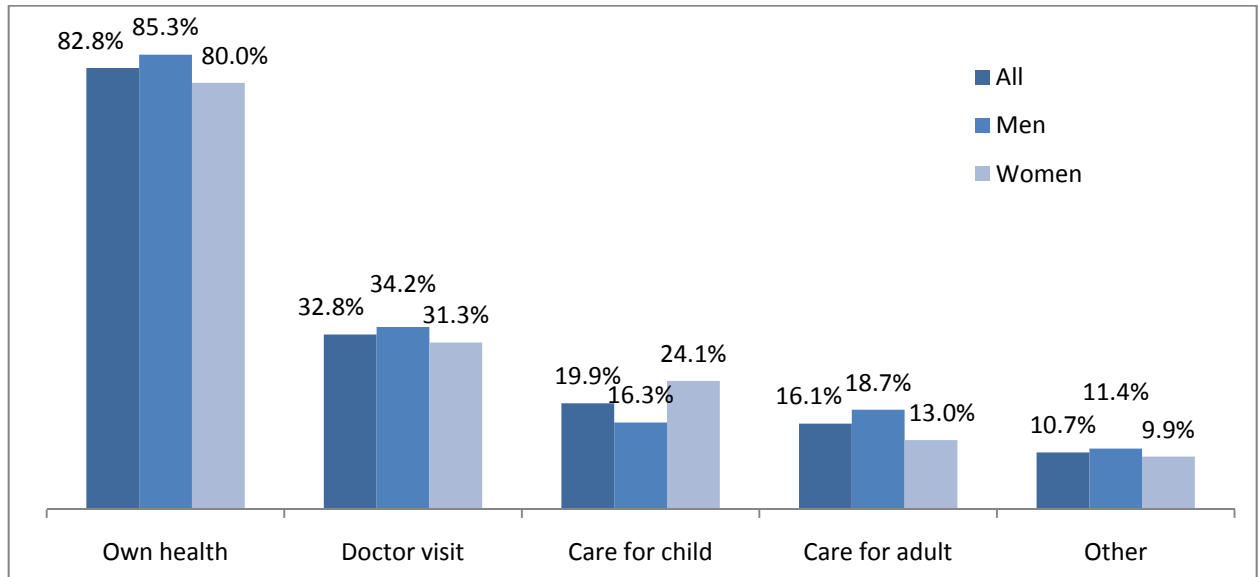
	# of sick days
All civilian workers in U.S.	8
Full time workers	9
At firms with 1-49 workers	7
At firms with 100+ workers	10
Puget Sound area nonprofits	11

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey, March 2010; and United Way of King County, Wage and Benefit Survey of King, Pierce and Snohomish County Nonprofit Organizations 2009-2010.

A 2010 survey of workers in San Francisco, where all employers are required to provide paid sick leave, found that the median number of sick days taken during the year by all workers was 3. Average use across all industries was 3.3 days, with an average of 1.9 days in the leisure and hospitality sector – in which restaurants and bars provide the majority of employment.⁵⁶

The most common reason for using paid sick leave in San Francisco was for the worker’s own health, followed by visiting the doctor, caring for a sick child and caring for an adult. One in ten workers who used a paid sick day reported doing so for some other reason, including a mental health day, a death in the family, or vacation. One-fourth reported taking no sick time in the previous year.⁵⁷

REASONS FOR USING PAID SICK TIME IN PREVIOUS YEAR, SAN FRANCISCO WORKERS, 2010



Source: Drago & Lovell, San Francisco’s Paid Sick Days Ordinance

Paid Sick Leave Policies around the Country

In February 2007, San Francisco implemented the nation's first paid sick days law. It establishes a minimum standard of paid sick leave for all workers within the city.

Workers earn one hour of paid leave for every 30 hours worked. Accrual is capped at 40 hours for workers in companies with fewer than 10 employees and at 72 hours in larger companies.⁵⁸

The cities of Milwaukee and Washington, DC also approved minimum standards for paid sick leave in 2008, although implementation in Milwaukee was delayed by a court injunction that was lifted in March 2011, and has been pre-empted by the Wisconsin legislature and governor.⁵⁹

Other cities and states have introduced similar bills that are under consideration, including in New York City, Philadelphia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Denver and California.⁶⁰

Experience in San Francisco: Jobs

Despite misgivings by some that the ordinance would add costs to employers and therefore reduce the number of jobs, the data show that San Francisco's job market has compared favorably to the surrounding counties and the state of California as a whole since the sick days law went into effect in 2007.⁶¹

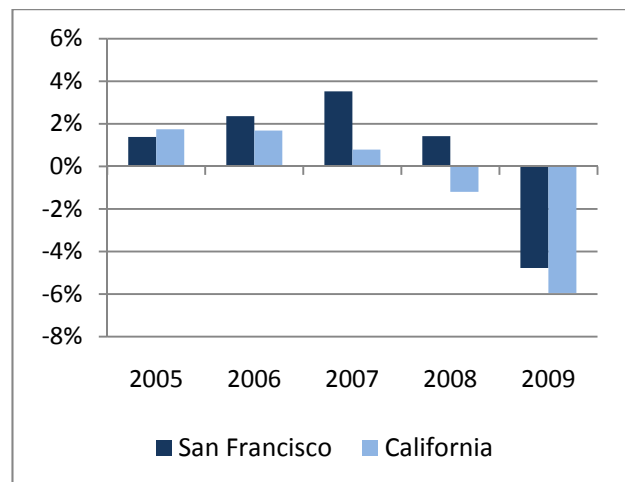
Restaurants are among the employers least likely to provide sick leave benefits, absent such a requirement.⁶² Therefore, if minimum paid leave standards affect the number of jobs available, we would expect to see that impact most clearly in the food service industry.

In 2005 and 2006, prior to the adoption of paid leave standards, accommodation and food service jobs (which are about 80% food service) grew more slowly in San Francisco than in three of the four adjacent counties.

San Francisco's relative position improved following implementation of the sick days ordinance. The city's accommodation and food service jobs outgrew three of the four counties in 2007 and all of them in 2008. All four counties lost jobs in 2009.

In the 3-county Metropolitan District, which includes San Francisco, and the smaller neighboring counties of Marin and San Mateo, restaurant jobs grew by 1.3% in 2010, while they continued to fall statewide.⁶³

PERCENTAGE ANNUAL CHANGE IN JOBS IN SAN FRANCISCO AND CALIFORNIA, 2005-2009



Source: California Employment and Development Department, *Employment by Industry Data, annual averages, for San Francisco County and California, 2000-2009*

Experience in San Francisco: Employers

The most comprehensive survey of San Francisco employers conducted since implementation of the paid sick days ordinance, found that after three and one half years of experience over two thirds supported the ordinance, with 34% very supportive.

Altogether 64% reported making no changes to paid leave policies as a result of the paid leave ordinance. Thirty-one percent reported making some changes, with 17% each enacting a new policy and expanding a

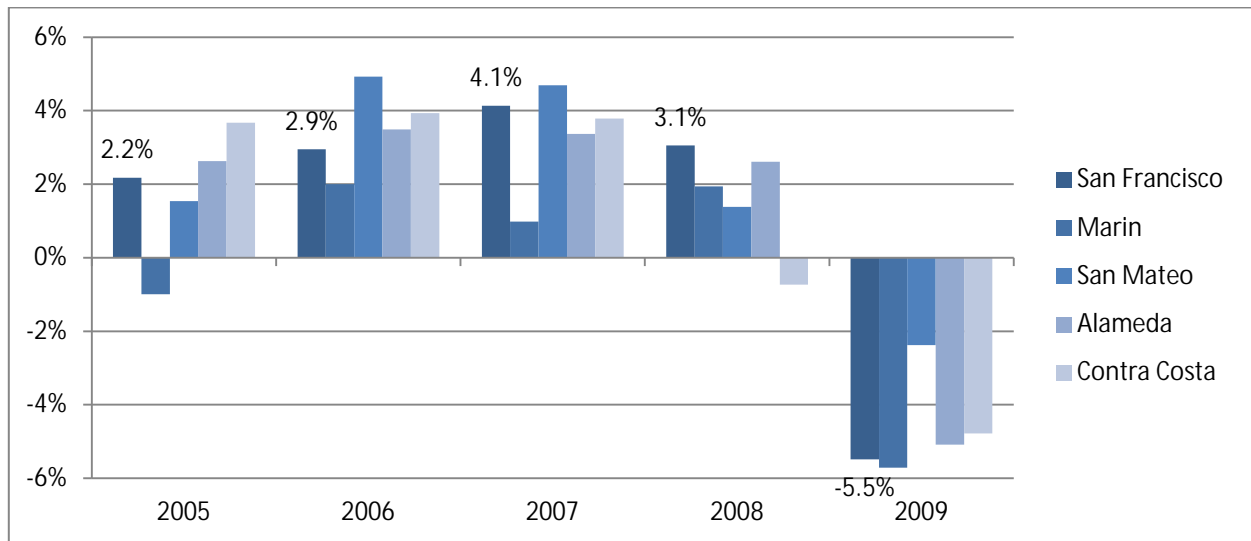
policy to more workers, and 16% increasing the accrual rate.

Among the smallest employers with fewer than 10 employees, 21.6% continued to report not providing paid sick leave. The vast majority of larger employers were in compliance with the law.⁶⁴ In looking at the bottom line, 71% of employers said the ordinance made no difference, while 14% reported decreased profits and 15% said they did not know if profits were affected.

The majority of employers reported having little difficulty understanding and administering the ordinance. Those in accommodation and food service were more likely than all employers to report difficulties in these areas, with 50% reporting some difficulty understanding and 58% some difficulty administering.

Nevertheless, 66% of accommodation and food service employers reported supporting the ordinance, just under the overall rate of 68%.

PERCENTAGE ANNUAL CHANGE IN JOBS IN ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICE JOBS, SAN FRANCISCO AND ADJACENT COUNTIES, 2005-2009



Source: California Employment and Development Department, *Employment by Industry Data, annual averages, 2000-2009*

Conclusion

Lack of access to paid sick leave is a serious issue that affects the health and well-being of everyone who lives, works, and visits in Seattle. Without access to paid leave, workers in restaurants, grocery stores, daycares, health facilities and offices throughout the city make the decision whether to go to work or send their child to school sick – or lose a day’s pay.

Absent a law requiring the provision of paid sick leave, the majority of employers in restaurants and a portion of firms spread across all industries will continue not offering

employees sick days, or significantly limiting access. Workers earning lower wages and their children are most directly affected by current practices, but the health and economic vitality of the whole community is negatively affected.

Fortunately, replicable models of successful paid sick day ordinances are available from other cities. Utilizing these successful models from around the country, Seattle can join the growing national movement to adopt a minimum standard of paid sick days.

APPENDIX 1. DISTRIBUTION OF FIRMS BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN KING COUNTY, 1ST QUARTER 2010

Firm Size	# of Firms	# of Employees	% of Firms	% of Employees
0	7,952	0	10.1%	
1 to 9	55,475	147,686	70.2%	13.4%
10 to 49	12,219	251,180	15.5%	22.8%
50 to 99	1,820	126,161	2.3%	11.5%
100 to 499	1,386	262,874	1.8%	23.9%
500 to 999	95	65,128	0.1%	5.9%
1,000 +	75	246,610	0.1%	22.4%

Source: Washington Employment Security Department, Labor Market and Economic Analysis

Notes

- ¹ Share of workers in each sector with and without sick leave is based on national percentages, applied to Seattle's specific industrial mix. U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators, and Institute for Women's Policy Research Paid Sick Days Calculator.
- ² San Francisco, Milwaukee, and Washington, D.C. have adopted ordinances and laws have been introduced in Philadelphia, New York City, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, among other places. See National Partnership for Women and Families, Paid Sick Days Campaigns in the States, viewed April 11, 2011, http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=psd_campaigns; Family Values @ Work MultiState Consortium, Activity in the States, <http://familyvaluesatwork.org/about.html>.
- ³ Robert Drago and Vicky Lovell, "San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance: Outcome for Employers and Employees," Institute for Women's Policy Research, February 2011, www.iwpr.org.
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- ⁵ Center for Disease Control, Press Release: CDC Reports 1 in 6 Get Sick from Foodborne Illnesses Each Year, December 15, 2010, <http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2010/r101215.html>.
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- ¹⁰ CDC, "Norovirus: Technical Fact Sheet."
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- ¹⁴ Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, *Serving While Sick: High Risks and Low Benefits for Nation's Restaurant Workforce, and Their Impact on the Consumer*, September 30, 2010, http://www.rocunited.org/files/roc_servingwhilesick_v06%20%281%29.pdf.
- ¹⁵ Nicole Brodeur, "Grocery Workers' Sick Deal," *Seattle Times*, July 29, 2010, http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nicolebrodeur/2012485675_nicole30m.html.
- ¹⁶ Robert Drago and Kevin Miller, "Sick at Work: Infected Employees in the Workplace During the H1N1 Pandemic," February 2010, Institute for Women's Policy Research, <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/sick-at-work-infected-employees-in-the-workplace-during-the-h1n1-pandemic>.
- ¹⁷ Boston Public Health Commission, "The State of the H1N1 Pandemic: Boston," PowerPoint presentation, January 11, 2010, <http://www.bphc.org/Newsroom/Pages/TopStoriesView.aspx?ID=139>.
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- ²⁴ Drago & Lovell, "San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance."
- ²⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Economic Characteristics, Seattle city, Washington, www.census.gov.
- ²⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The Flu, http://cdc.gov/flu/professionals/flugallery/2007-08/text/parents_guide_508.rtf.
- ²⁷ Public Health Seattle & King County, "When to Keep Your Child at Home," viewed on Seattle Public Schools website April 15, 2011, <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/healthservices/forms/swinekeepchildhome1.pdf>.
- ²⁸ Jody Heymann, *The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families are in Jeopardy – and What Can Be Done About It*, Basic Books, 2000, pp. 54-55.
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