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Summary of Studies on the Health Effects of Paid Sick & Safe Time Ordinances

Time and again, studies have shown that paid sick and safe time laws benefit workers and their communities. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has only made the benefits of paid sick leave even clearer.

Ensuring that employees are able to take paid leave when they or their loved ones are sick reduces “presenteeism”—the very common phenomenon of individuals going to work while sick, leading to decreased productivity and the spread of illness in the workplace. Paid sick time also makes it more likely that parents will keep their children at home when they are sick, both of which allow workers and their families to get better faster. Access to paid sick leave also makes workers more likely to seek preventative care, an important part of maintaining one’s overall health. Moreover, universal paid sick leave laws benefit communities at large, reducing overall healthcare spending and the spread of contagious diseases, in part by providing paid sick leave to workers who have high levels of public contact—like day-care and food service workers—who are otherwise more likely to go to work. Requiring all employers to provide access to paid sick leave is especially important for low-income workers and workers of color, who are less likely to work for employers that voluntarily provide paid sick leave benefits and who would not be able to take unpaid sick leave while maintaining their economic security. To date, 14 states, the District of Columbia, and over 30 localities have passed legislation requiring employers to provide paid sick time, not to mention the dozens of emergency paid sick leave laws pass around the country, all of which shows an increased recognition of the important public health benefits of paid sick time laws.¹

The following is a sampling of studies that demonstrate the public health benefits of paid sick leave policies. For more information on paid sick and safe time policies, including summaries of existing paid sick leave laws, visit <https://www.abetterbalance.org/our-issues/paid-sick-time/>.

For more information on paid sick leave policies, please see our comprehensive issue brief *Sick Without a Safety Net: Now Is the Time to Build on State Successes With a Federal Paid Sick Time Law* at <https://www.abetterbalance.org/sick-without-a-safety-net/>.

Access to paid sick leave saved lives during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- David Naimark, Juan David Rios, et al., *Health and Economic Consequences of Universal Paid Sick Leave Policies During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, January 2022,

¹ A Better Balance, *Interactive Overview of Paid Sick Time Laws in the United States*, <https://www.abetterbalance.org/paid-sick-time-laws/>. Two other states—Nevada and Maine—require employers to provide paid time off, which can be used for both health-related and other purposes.

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.01.13.21268270v1.full.pdf>: concluding that increased access to paid sick leave would reduce COVID-19 cases, reduce presenteeism among workers with COVID-19, and mitigate wage loss among workers.

- Alison Thompson et al., *Benefits of Paid Sick Leave During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Science Table: COVID-19 Advisory for Ontario (April 28, 2021), <https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Science-Brief-Paid-Sick-Leave-20210504-version-1.1-published2.pdf>: Real-world evidence from the COVID-19 pandemic and from influenza-like illnesses indicates that paid sick leave can support workers in following public health measures, reduce viral transmission and workplace outbreaks, promote higher vaccination rates among essential workers, increase work productivity, and reduce worker absenteeism. Paid sick leave also protects the larger public from harm by containing the spread of infectious diseases and optimizing economic stability.
- Stefan Pichler et al., *COVID-19 Emergency Sick Leave Has Helped Flatten The Curve in The United States*, Health Affairs (October 2020), <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00863>: Finding that states that gained access to paid sick leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act reported 400 fewer COVID cases per state per day.
- Martin Anderson et al., *Effect of a Federal Paid Sick Leave Mandate on Working and Staying at Home During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Evidence from Cellular Device Data*, NBER Working Paper (October 2020), https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w27138/w27138.pdf: Finding that increased access to paid sick leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act increased the average number of hours at home.

Workers with paid sick leave are more likely to seek preventative care.

- Chanup Jeung et al., *The Impact of Connecticut's Paid Sick Leave Law on the Use of Preventative Services*, American Journal of Preventative Medicine (June 2021), [https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(21\)00112-4/fulltext](https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(21)00112-4/fulltext): finding that after the implementation of paid sick leave in Connecticut, routine check-ups, influenza vaccinations, dental visits, and Pap tests increased compared to other New England states.
- Hansoo Ko and Sherry A. Glied, *Associations Between a New York City Paid Sick Leave Mandate and Health Care Utilization Among Medicaid Beneficiaries in New York City and New York State*, JAMA Health Forum (May 2021), <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama-health-forum/article-abstract/2779693>: finding that New York City's paid sick leave mandate "was significantly associated with decreases in emergency department and specialist visits, increases in primary care use, and an increased probability of receiving certain preventive health services."
- Zhai, Y., Santibanez, T. A., Kahn, K. E., Black, C. L., & de Perio, M. A., *Paid Sick Leave Benefits, Influenza Vaccination, and Taking Sick Days Due to Influenza-like Illness Among U.S. Workers*. *Vaccine*, 2018, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30361122/>: A study of data from the 2009 flu outbreak found that workers with paid sick leave were 30 percent more likely to be vaccinated against flu and were more likely to seek treatment when they were sick with flu-like symptoms, compared to those without paid sick leave.

- LeaAnne DeRigne et al., *Paid Sick Leave and Preventative Health Care Service Use Among U.S. Working Adults*, *Journal of Preventative Medicine*, Vol. 99, June 2017, pp. 58-62, available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0091743517300440>: finding that people lacking paid sick days tend not to take time for preventative health care.
- Kevin Miller, et al., *Paid Sick Days and Health: Cost Savings from Reduced Emergency Department Visits*, Institute for Women's Policy Research, November 2011, <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-and-health-cost-savings-from-reduced-emergency-department-visits>: finding that paid sick days are associated with better self-reported general health among workers, that workers with paid sick days are less likely to delay preventative medical care for themselves or for their family, that access to paid sick days is associated with lower usage of hospital emergency departments, and that providing paid sick days to workers would reduce hospital emergency department visits, reducing medical costs by \$1.1 billion annually.
- Lucy Peipins et al., *The Lack of Paid Sick Leave as a Barrier to Cancer Screening and Medical Care-Seeking: Results from the National Health Interview Survey*, *BMC Public Health*, (2012), <http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-2458-12-520.pdf>: lack of paid sick time appears to be a potential barrier to obtaining cancer screenings and preventive medical care.

Lack of paid sick leave makes workers more likely to go to work while sick.

- David Naimark, Juan David Rios, et al., *Health and Economic Consequences of Universal Paid Sick Leave Policies During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, January 2022, <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.01.13.21268270v1.full.pdf>: concluding that increased access to paid sick leave would reduce COVID-19 cases, reduce presenteeism among workers with COVID-19, and mitigate wage loss among workers.
- Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Restaurant Workers Across America*, 2 (February 2022, <https://stateofrestaurantworkers.com/covid-impact-report/>): noting that restaurant workers who lack access to paid sick time are likely to go to work while sick because of economic pressures and that 72% of surveyed restaurant workers reported having no access to paid sick leave.
- Yusheng Zhai et al, *Paid Sick Leave Benefits, Influenza Vaccination, and Taking Sick Days Due to Influenza-Like Illness Among U.S. Workers*, October 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30361122>: A study of data from the 2009 flu outbreak found that workers with paid sick leave were 30 percent more likely to be vaccinated against flu and were more likely to seek treatment when they were sick with flu-like symptoms, compared to those without paid sick leave.
- Stefan Pichier & Nicholas R. Ziebarth, *The Pros and Cons of Sick Pay Schemes: Contagious Presenteeism and Noncontagious Absenteeism Behavior*, May 12, 2018, <https://voxeu.org/article/pros-and-cons-sick-pay>: although the title is "The Pros and Cons of Sick Pay Schemes," the paper focuses on pros, finding that access to paid sick leave reduces presenteeism (when employees show up to work sick) and reduces overall contagion.
- Human Impact Partners et al., *A Health Impact Assessment of the Healthy Families Act of 2009* (June 11, 2009), available at http://go.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/WF_PSD_HFA_HealthImpactAssess

[ment HIA_090611.pdf?docID=5101](#): also links lack of paid sick leave to presenteeism, which spreads contagions to co-workers and customers.

- Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, *Serving While Sick: High Risks & Low Benefits for the Nation's Restaurant Workforce, and Their Impact on the Consumer*, (September 2010), http://rocunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/reports_serving-while-sick_full.pdf: two-thirds of restaurant waitstaff and cooks have gone to work while sick.
- Steven Sumner. et al., *Factors Associated with Food Workers Working while Experiencing Vomiting or Diarrhea*. *Journal of Food Protection*, 74(2), (2011), http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/ehsnet/Docs/JFP_ill_food_workers.pdf: A peer-reviewed epidemiological study finding that nearly one in five food service workers had come to work vomiting or with diarrhea in the past year, creating dangerous health conditions.
- Tom W. Smith & Jibum Kim, *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences*, National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago (June 2010), <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-attitudes-and-experiences.pdf>: people without access to paid sick leave are 1.5x more likely to go to work while they have a contagious illness and 1.7x more likely to send a sick child to school or daycare than those with access to it.

Paid sick leave has broader public health benefits for the entire community.

- Nat'l Partnership for Women & Families, *Paid Sick Days Improve Public Health by Reducing the Spread of Disease*, Institute for Women's Policy Research (Sep. 2021), <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-sick-days/paid-sick-days-improve-our-public-health.pdf>: Noting that, given the fact that nearly a quarter of private sector workers lack access to a single day of paid sick leave, access to that benefit would decrease the flu rate, lead to a decline in occupational injuries, and cut the share of retail and food service workers—who have high contact with customers—from coming to work while sick.
- Stefan Pichler et al., *Positive Health Externalities of Mandating Paid Sick Leave*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 13530 (July 2020), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3660277: comparing states that mandate access to paid sick leave and those that do not, finding that mandating access to paid sick leave reduced the transmission of influenza-like-illnesses by about 11%.
- Supriya Kumar et al., *Policies to Reduce Influenza in the Workplace: Impact Assessments Using an Agent-Based Model*, *American Journal of Public Health* (August 2013), <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301269>: in a simulated influenza epidemic, 72% of employees who caught the flu at work did so because of exposure to other employees attending work while sick; paid sick days would reduce flu incidences among workers by 6%.
- Supriya Kumar et al., *The Impact of Workplace Policies and Other Social Factors on Self-Reported Influenza-Like Illness Incidence During the 2009 H1N1 Pandemic*, *American Journal of Public Health* (January 2012), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3490553/>: Estimates that the lack of paid sick leave was responsible for 5 million incidences of flu-like illness during the H1N1 pandemic.

Low-income, women and minority workers are most affected by lack of paid sick leave.

- Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Restaurant Workers Across America*, 2 (February 2022), <https://stateofrestaurantworkers.com/covid-impact-report/>: noting that restaurant workers who lack access to paid sick time are likely to go to work while sick because of economic pressures and that 72% of surveyed restaurant workers reported having no access to paid sick leave.
- Lan N. Doan et al., *Immigrant Communities & Covid-ap: Strengthening the Public Health Response*, American Public Health Association (May 2021), <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306433>: noting that immigrant workers in the United States experienced “a disproportionately higher COVID-19 burden” associated with a lack of worker protections including access to paid sick leave.
- Vasquez, Juan et al., *Expanding Paid Sick Leave as a Public Health Tool in the COVID-19 Pandemic*, *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine* (Oct. 2020). https://journals.lww.com/joem/fulltext/2020/10000/expanding_paid_sick_leave_as_a_public_health_tool.26.aspx: noting that Latinx and Black workers are more likely to work in jobs that cannot be done remotely, more likely to be classified as essential workers, and thus more likely to contract and spread the COVID-19 virus, making access to paid sick leave essential for such workers.
- Nat’l Partnership for Women & Families, *Women Carried the Burden of Unpaid Caregiving in 2020*, May 2021, <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/women-carried-the-burden-of-unpaid-caregiving-in-2020.pdf>: Noting that more than 65 million women provided unpaid care to family members in 2020, a majority of whom were also in the labor force. This caregiving burden pushes working women out of the labor force.
- Rakeen Mabud et al., *Foundations For a Just and Inclusive Recovery: Economic Security, Health and Safety, and Agency and Voice in the COVID-19 Era*, Color of Change, National Employment Law Project, Time’s Up Foundation, and ILR Worker Institute (February 2021), <https://www.nelp.org/wp-content/uploads/Foundations-for-Just-Inclusive-Recovery-Report.pdf>: noting that during the COVID-19 pandemic, 31% of workers lacked access to paid sick leave and Black workers were three times more likely than white workers to have their requests for paid sick leave denied. Also notes that women, Black and Latinx women in particular, expect to lose paid work in order to provide unpaid caregiving.
- Rachel O’Connor et al., *Paid Sick Days Access Varies by Race/Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, and Job Characteristics*, Institute for Women’s Policy Research (July 2014), <https://iwpr.org/publications/paid-sick-days-access-varies-by-raceethnicity-sexual-orientation-and-job-characteristics/>: noting that workers with high levels of public contact (i.e. those working in the restaurant/service industry, child care professionals) are less likely to have access to paid sick leave. Hispanic and African American workers are also less likely to have access to paid sick leave.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *A Look at Pay at the Top, the Bottom, and the Middle* (May 2015), <https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2015/a-look-at-pay-at-the-top-the-bottom-and-in-between/pdf/a-look-at-pay-at-the-top-the-bottom-and-in-between.pdf>: Among the lowest-paid decile of private-sector workers, only 20% have access to paid sick leave, compared to 87% of workers in the top-paid decile.

- Robert Drago & Kevin Miller, *Sick at Work: Infected Employees in the Workplace During the H1N1 Pandemic*, Institute for Women's Policy Research (Feb. 2010), <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.192.5012&rep=rep1&type=pdf>: During the height of the H1N1 pandemic, workers with lower rates of access to paid sick time were more likely than those with higher rates of access to paid sick time to go to work sick, and as a result, the pandemic lasted longer in their workplaces as the virus spread from co-worker to co-worker.

Sick time prevents on-the-job accidents.

- Abay Asfaw et al., *Paid Sick Leave and Nonfatal Occupational Injuries*, 102 Am. J. Pub. Health e59 (Sept. 2012), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3482022/>: access to paid sick days reduce the incidence of on-the-job injuries by 28%.

Sick time allows parents to keep children at home when they are sick.

- Smith, T., & Kim, J. (2010, June). Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences (p. 6). National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago Publication. Retrieved 10 November 2015, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-attitudes-and-experiences.pdf>: Workers who don't have paid sick time are twice as likely as those with paid sick time to use hospital emergency rooms or send a sick child to school or daycare.

The importance of safe time:

- Patricia Tjaden & Nancy Thoennes, *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Rape Victimization: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*, National Institute of Justice, U.S. Dep't of Justice (January 2006), <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/21950>: Nearly 20% of female rape victims and 10% of male rape victims said that their victimization cause them to lose time from work.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, *Stalking* (last updated July 2017), <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=973>: according to the Supplemental Victimization Survey, more than half of stalking victims lost five or more days of work.
- Rochelle Hanson et al., *The Impact of Crime Victimization on Quality of Life*. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, Journal of Trauma Stress (April 2010), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2910433/>: Victims of partner violence report more frequent tardiness, higher rates of absenteeism, job turnover, and unemployment. They are also more likely to miss advancement opportunities, lose their jobs, and earn lower wages, at least in part because they are unable to work in the immediate aftermath of an assault or because of an abuse-related disability.
- National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2003), <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/IPVBook-a.pdf>: Each year, victims of domestic violence are forced to miss nearly eight million days of paid work (the equivalent of 32,000 full-time jobs).
- Sharon Smith et al., *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 State Report*, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (April 2017), <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReportBook.pdf>: 24.9% of

females and 14% of males who have experienced intimate partner violence have missed at least one day of work or school. 26.5% of female and 14.3% of male victims of recent intimate partner violence (within the previous 12 months) missed at least one day of work or school.

- Susan Lloyd & Nina Taluc, *The Effects of Male Violence on Female Employment, Violence Against Women* (April 1999), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/10778019922181275>: Between 25 and 50 percent of domestic violence survivors report job loss, due at least in part to the domestic violence.

Sick time is linked to overall healthcare cost savings:

- Fact Sheet, *Paid Sick Days Lead to Cost Savings for All*, Nat'l Partnership for Women & Families (Mar. 2020), <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-sick-days/paid-sick-days-lead-to-cost-savings-savings-for-all.pdf>: Nationally, providing all workers with earned paid sick time would result in \$1.1 billion in annual savings in hospital emergency department costs, including more than \$500 million in savings to publicly funded health insurance programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP.