Over their lives, many workers will need to take family and medical leave (FML) to care for their own or a close family member’s serious medical condition. Other workers will benefit from taking FML in the form of maternity/paternity leave after the birth or adoption of a child.

The US lacks a national paid leave policy, offering only unpaid FML. Five states and DC currently have paid leave laws. Research has found that a primary barrier workers face in taking unpaid FML is financial cost. Due to the absence of a national paid FML policy, many workers in the US—particularly low-income and racial/ethnic minority workers—do not have access to affordable FML.

Visit diversitydatakids.org to explore data on paid and unpaid family and medical leave across states.

Source: Authors’ analysis of data from the pooled 2014-2017 Current Population Survey March ASEC.

Notes: The sample for this analysis is working adults, ages 21-64, who worked 50 or more weeks in the previous year and lived in states that have not passed a statewide paid leave law (N=172,078). Working adults living in CA, NJ, NY, RI, WA and DC were excluded because these jurisdictions have implemented or passed statewide paid leave laws. This analysis assumes that only one working adult in a family takes leave. A worker’s family does not lose 100% of income during unpaid leave due to the presence of other sources of income or wage earners. Due to data limitations, these estimates do not account for any paid leave benefits provided through employers that could potentially mitigate wage loss. The paid leave scenario is based on the proposed FAMILY Act which provides workers with wage replacement at a rate of 66% of monthly wages up to a maximum amount of $1,000 per week. Wage loss is presented in 2016 dollars. See diversitydatakids.org for additional notes.