



# SHRM Survey Findings: Paid Leave in the Workplace



October 6, 2016

The purpose of this survey is to explore the details of different types of paid leave benefits that organizations offer to their employees. Topics such as the number of days awarded, waiting periods and eligibility are discussed.

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- **Paid-time-off plans:** Paid-time-off (PTO) plans include sick, vacation and personal days all in one combined plan. These plans exclude paid holidays such as Labor Day, Memorial Day and Thanksgiving. Since this type of plan is merged into one leave bank, employees can use it for any reason.
- **Paid vacation plans:** Paid vacation plans are stand-alone plans that provide employees paid leave from work, which is typically taken in increments of days or weeks. These plans exclude paid holidays such as Labor Day, Memorial Day and Thanksgiving. This type of leave is typically used for vacation and general time away from the office.
- **Paid sick leave plans:** Paid sick leave plans are stand-alone plans providing employees paid leave for absences from work caused by illness or injury, appointments, and travel time to and from health care facilities. These plans sometimes provide paid leave for employees to care for immediate family members.
- **Paid personal leave plans:** Paid personal leave plans provide employees paid leave for any purpose an employee chooses or for any purpose that may not be covered by a paid vacation or paid sick leave plan. These plans exclude paid holidays such as Labor Day, Memorial Day and Thanksgiving.
- **Sabbatical leave:** Sabbatical leave is time off from work to accomplish professional development objectives.

- **Are paid leave plans provided to employees based on length of service?** The majority of organizations offered PTO plans (87%) and paid vacation plans (91%) to employees based on their length of service at the organization. However, an employee's length of service seemed to have little impact on paid sick leave (9%) and personal leave plans (14%).
- **How many paid leave days are provided to employees annually?** For organizations that did not base their paid leave plans on tenure, an average of 18 days of PTO was offered to full-time employees through this combined plan. For stand-alone plans, 16 paid vacation days, 11 paid sick days and four paid personal days were offered. Part-time employees were offered roughly two-thirds of leave given to full-time employees except for paid personal plans, which matched full-time employees at four days. Among organizations offering paid leave based on employees' length of service, paid leave days increased with employee tenure. For instance, the average days per year offered in PTO plans ranged from 13 days for employees with less than one year of service to 26 days for employees with 20 or more years of service. Paid vacation plans ranged from eight to 22 days based on employees' length of service.

## Key Findings (continued)

- **How does paid leave accrue?** Although leave accrual methods differed among paid leave plans, pay period and calendar year appeared to be the most commonly used methods practiced. For PTO and paid vacation plans, most organizations implemented a pay period accrual system, whereas paid sick leave and paid personal leave plans most often accrued by calendar year.
- **How much parental leave do organizations provide parents?** On average, organizations gave mothers 41 paid days of maternity leave, compared with 22 paid days of paternity leave for fathers. The average amount of paid adoption leave and paid surrogacy leave was 31 and 36 days, respectively. Not surprisingly, very few parents left any parental leave unused. The average amount of unused paid maternity leave was 17 hours.
- **What other paid leave plans do organizations offer?** While the majority of organizations offered bereavement leave, very few offered paid or unpaid sabbatical programs. Furthermore, less than one-half provided paid leave to vote (37%) that is beyond what is required by law.

## What do these findings mean for the HR profession?

- **While many organizations will continue to use combined PTO plans, their potential drawbacks are also likely to continue to be debated.** PTO plans may create less administrative burden for HR professionals; however, some maintain that employees are unable to adequately budget their leave. For example, employees might not save sufficient time for sick leave, which causes them to come into work while they are unwell or to take great amounts of leave without pay. Furthermore, some employees may perceive switching to a PTO plan from stand-alone plans as losing some of their leave time.
- **As demographics of the workforce and employment patterns change, the details of paid leave plans such as tenure-based accruals may also cause paid leave strategies to shift.** Some theorize that younger workers view PTO plans as more advantageous because they are less likely to get sick, allowing them to use more PTO as vacation. Others argue that plans based on tenure tend to benefit older workers. These workforce demographics may influence how organizations approach their future policies. Some organizations may also want to consider allowing newly hired employees to “bring” their tenure with them so that employees are not penalized when they move to a new organization. This could be a recruitment strategy.

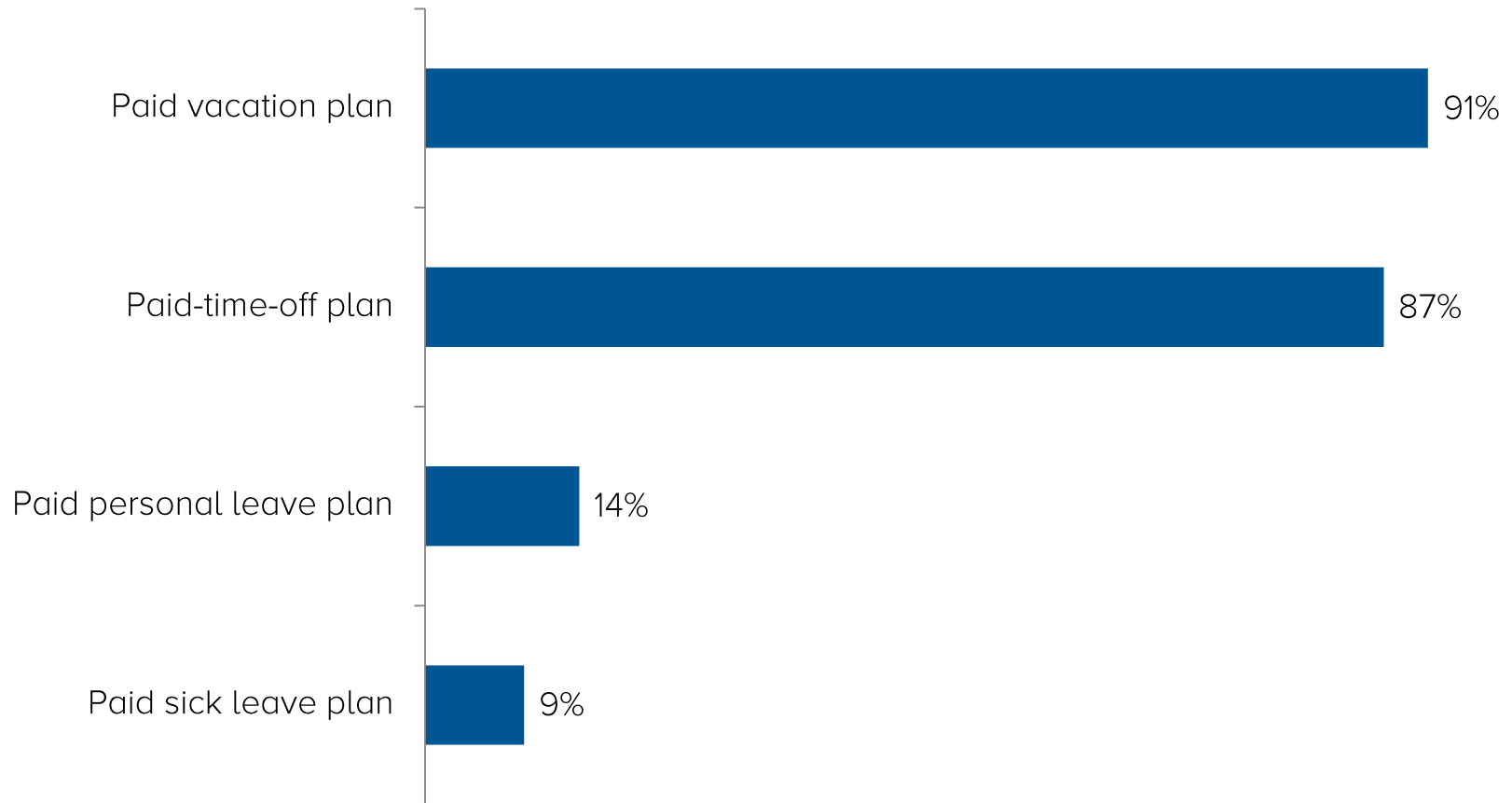
## What do these findings mean for the HR profession? (continued)

- **A comparison of the days of maternity leave awarded per year versus the days of paternity leave awarded reveals that organizations could be reinforcing gender roles in society and the workplace.** The *2016 Employee Benefits* report indicates the percentages of organizations offering maternity leave and paternity leave are similar; however, this research exhibits possible inequities in the amount of parental leave offered to men and women, given that the average days of maternity leave were almost double the amount awarded for paternity leave. This imbalance may force mothers to stay at home and discourage fathers from taking time off to care for a newborn.
- **The differences in parental leave offered to mothers compared with fathers (41 days of maternity leave, compared with 22 days of paternity leave) indicate that organizations still expect mothers to take on the majority of early infant child care.** Differences in leave benefits based on gender could, however, be increasingly questioned by employees both in relation to gender equality and equality of paid parenting leave benefits offered to same-sex and opposite-sex couples with children.
- **The decline of unpaid sabbaticals suggests that fewer organizations may be open to the concept.** According to the *2016 Employee Benefits* report, unpaid sabbatical programs have decreased compared to 20 years ago, whereas the percentage of organizations offering paid sabbatical programs has remained the same. While some organizations argue that sabbatical programs could be quite costly, others claim that these benefits can help employees stay engaged and motivated. Employees on sabbatical may avoid burnout, while employees covering the extra work are able to receive additional training and development opportunities. As the workforce grows older, the demand for sabbaticals may increase because they can be a valuable tool as part of an organization's succession planning.

# Paid Leave Plans



## Paid Leave Plans Based on an Employee's Length of Service



*Note: n = 471-1,365. Only respondents whose organizations offer a set number of days for respective paid leave plans to their full-time employees were asked this question. Only "yes" responses to this question are shown.*

## Average Paid Leave Days Awarded Per Year Not Based on Employees' Length of Service

	Full-Time Employees	Part-Time Employees
Paid-time-off plan	18	12
Paid vacation plan	16	11
Paid sick plan	11	7
Paid personal plan	4	4

- For plans that are not based on tenure, full-time employees, on average, are awarded roughly three to four weeks (18 days) of PTO leave, and part-time employees are given generally two weeks of leave. This leave can be used for any reason since vacation, sick and personal are combined into one leave bank.
- Full-time employees, on average, are given 16 vacation days, 11 sick days and four personal days per year.
- Part-time employees are generally awarded about two weeks for vacation, one week for sick leave and less than one week for personal leave per year.

*Note: n = 28-926. Number of days shown in table is the average. Only respondents whose organizations offer a set number of days for respective paid leave plan that is not based on an employee's length of service to their full-time employees or part-time employees were asked this question.*

## Comparisons by organization sector

- Nonprofit organizations are more likely than publicly and privately owned for-profit organizations to award more paid vacation days to full-time employees.

Comparisons by organization sector		
Full-Time Employees		
Nonprofit (22 days)	>	Publicly owned for-profit (14 days) Privately owned for-profit (14 days)

*Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown.*

## Comparisons by organization sector

- Government organizations are more likely than all other types of organizations to award more paid sick days to full-time employees.

Comparisons by organization sector		
Full-Time Employees		
Government (15 days)	>	Publicly owned for-profit (9 days) Privately owned for-profit (9 days) Nonprofit (11 days)

- Government and nonprofit organizations are more likely than privately owned for-profit organizations to award more paid sick days to part-time employees.

Comparisons by organization sector		
Part-Time Employees		
Nonprofit (9 days) Government (8 days)	>	Privately owned for-profit (5 days)

*Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown.*

## Average Paid Leave Days Awarded Per Year Based on Employees' Length of Service

	Less Than One Year	One Year	Two Years	Three Years	Four Years	Five to Nine Years	10 to 19 Years	20 or More Years
Paid-time-off plan	13	15	15	16	17	20	24	26
Paid vacation plan	8	10	11	12	12	15	19	22
Paid sick plan	7	10	11	13	14	17	19	19

*Note: n = 62-1,088. Number of days shown in table is the average. Only respondents whose organizations offer the respective paid leave plan to their full-time employees based on their length of service were asked this question. Paid personal plan data are not shown due to a small sample size.*

## Waiting Period for Accruing Paid Leave

	Average Days Until Eligible to Start <u>Accruing</u> Paid Leave	
	Full-Time Employees	Part-Time Employees
Paid-time-off plan	26	25
Paid vacation plan	42	33
Paid sick plan	22	16
Paid personal plan	37	30

- On average, full-time employees have the shortest waiting periods to begin accruing leave in PTO and paid sick plans at 26 and 22 days, respectively.
- However, full-time employees had to wait five to six weeks to start building up vacation (42 days) and personal leave (37 days).
- Part-time employees generally wait roughly a month to begin accruing leave in PTO, vacation and personal plans, whereas the average waiting period to accrue leave for a sick plan is 16 days.

*Note: n = 179-1,338. Number of days shown in table is the average. Only respondents whose organizations offer a set number of days for respective paid leave plans to their full-time or part-time employees were asked this question.*

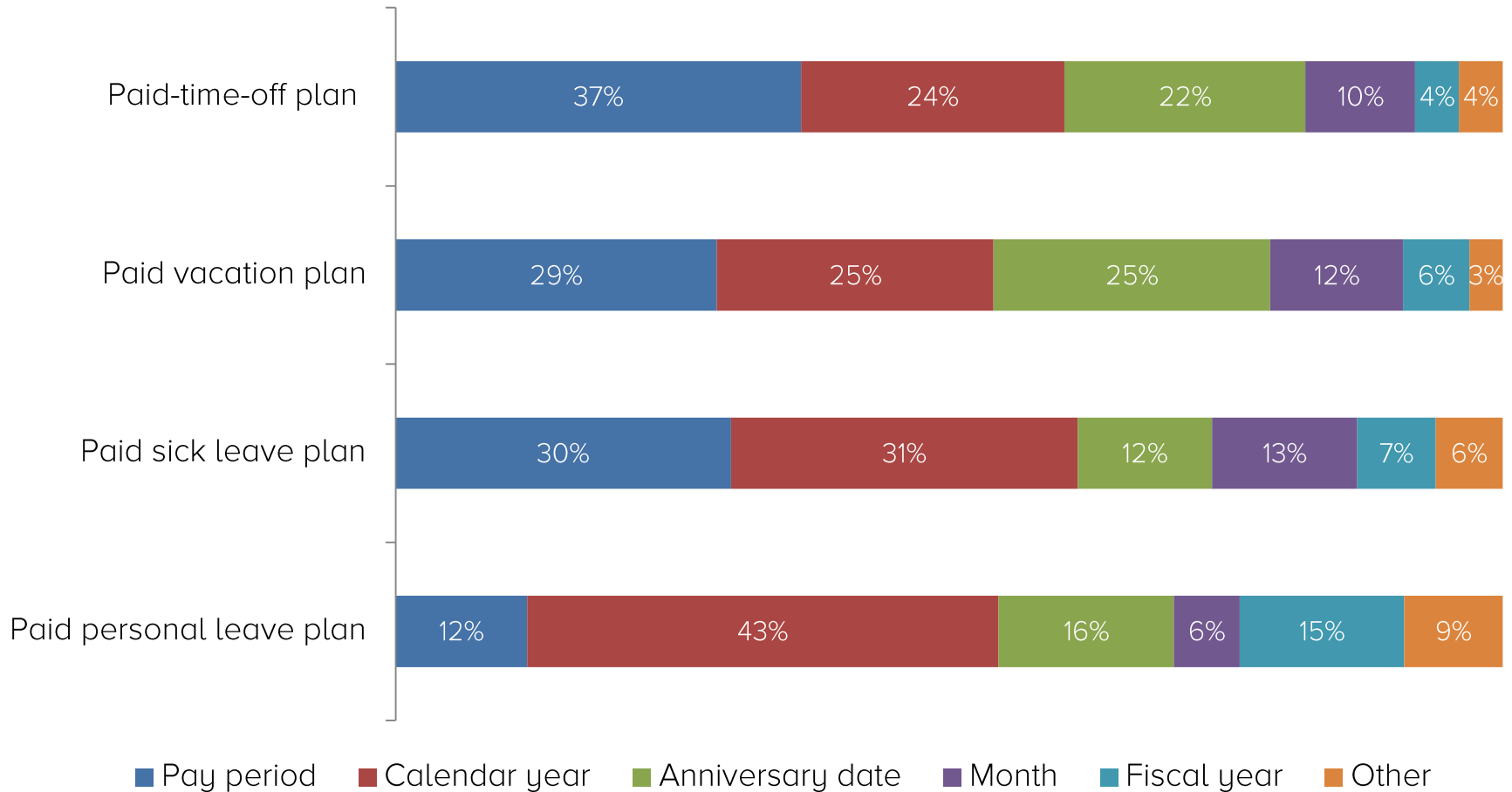
## Waiting Period for Taking Paid Leave

	Average Days Until Eligible to Take Paid Leave	
	Full-Time employees	Part-Time employees
Paid time off plan	60	63
Paid vacation plan	100	93
Paid sick plan	50	45
Paid personal plan	68	54

- Full-time employees generally wait six to nine weeks to take leave from PTO, paid sick and paid personal plans.
- Waiting periods to take leave were longest for both full- and part-time employees enrolled in paid vacation plans, in which the waiting period was slightly over three months.
- For part-time employees, the waiting period to take leave for PTO plans (63 days), paid sick plans (45 days) and paid personal plans (54 days) was six to eight weeks.

*Note: n = 188-1,399. Number of days shown in table is the average. Only respondents whose organizations offer the respective paid leave plan to their full-time employees or part-time employees were asked this question.*

## Paid Leave Plan Accrual Methods



*Note: n=484-1,391. Only respondents whose organizations offer a set number of days for respective paid leave plans to their full-time employees were asked this question. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.*



# Parental Leave

## Average Days of Paid Parental Leave Awarded Per Year

	Average Number of Days
Maternity leave	41
Paternity leave	22
Adoption leave	31
Surrogacy leave	36

- On average, female employees were awarded 41 days of paid maternity, while new fathers were given 22 days of paid paternity leave per year.
- Employees were awarded roughly one month for paid adoption leave (31 days) and paid surrogacy leave (36 days).

*Note: n = 37-312. Number of days shown in table is the average. Only respondents whose organizations offer the respective paid parental leave that is beyond what is offered by law were asked this question.*

## Average Hours of Unused Paid Parental Leave Per Year

	Average Number of Unused Hours
Maternity leave	17
Paternity leave	16
Adoption leave	4
Surrogacy leave	9

- Generally, the majority of employees exhausted all of the parental leave awarded to them. On average, organizations noted roughly two days of unused maternity leave and paternity leave (17 hours and 16 hours, respectively), whereas even fewer unused hours of adoption and surrogacy leave were reported.

*Note: n = 15-165. Number of hours shown in table is the average. Only respondents whose organizations offer the respective paid parental leave that is beyond what is offered by law were asked this question.*

# Bereavement, Sabbatical and Civic Leave

## Average Days of Paid Bereavement Leave Awarded by Relationship

- On average, four days of bereavement leave were awarded during the death of a spouse or child.
- In the event of a death of a domestic partner, foster child, grandchild, parent, sibling or grandparent, three days of bereavement leave were given.
- One or two days of bereavement leave were given for other extended family or a spouse's relative.
- However, many organizations did not issue bereavement leave for a friend or colleague's death.

Four Days of Bereavement Leave	Three Days of Bereavement Leave	Two Days of Bereavement Leave	One Day of Bereavement Leave	Zero Days of Bereavement Leave
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spouse</li> <li>• Child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same-sex domestic partner</li> <li>• Opposite-sex domestic partner</li> <li>• Foster child</li> <li>• Grandchild</li> <li>• Parent</li> <li>• Sibling</li> <li>• Grandparent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miscarriage</li> <li>• Relative of a spouse</li> <li>• Relative of a same-sex domestic partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended family member (e.g., cousin, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew)</li> <li>• Relative of an opposite-sex domestic partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friend</li> <li>• Colleague</li> </ul>

*Note: n = 1,340-1,928. Number of days shown in table is the average. Only respondents whose organizations offer paid bereavement leave were asked this question.*

	Minimum Years of Service Until Eligible	Maximum Sabbatical Days Allowance
Paid sabbatical program	6 years	132 days
Unpaid sabbatical program	2 years	116 days

- On average, employees were able to take paid sabbatical leave after six years with their employer, while eligibility to partake in the unpaid sabbatical benefit was fulfilled after two years.
- Generally, organizations awarded 132 paid days for a paid sabbatical program, whereas they typically awarded 116 days for unpaid sabbatical programs.

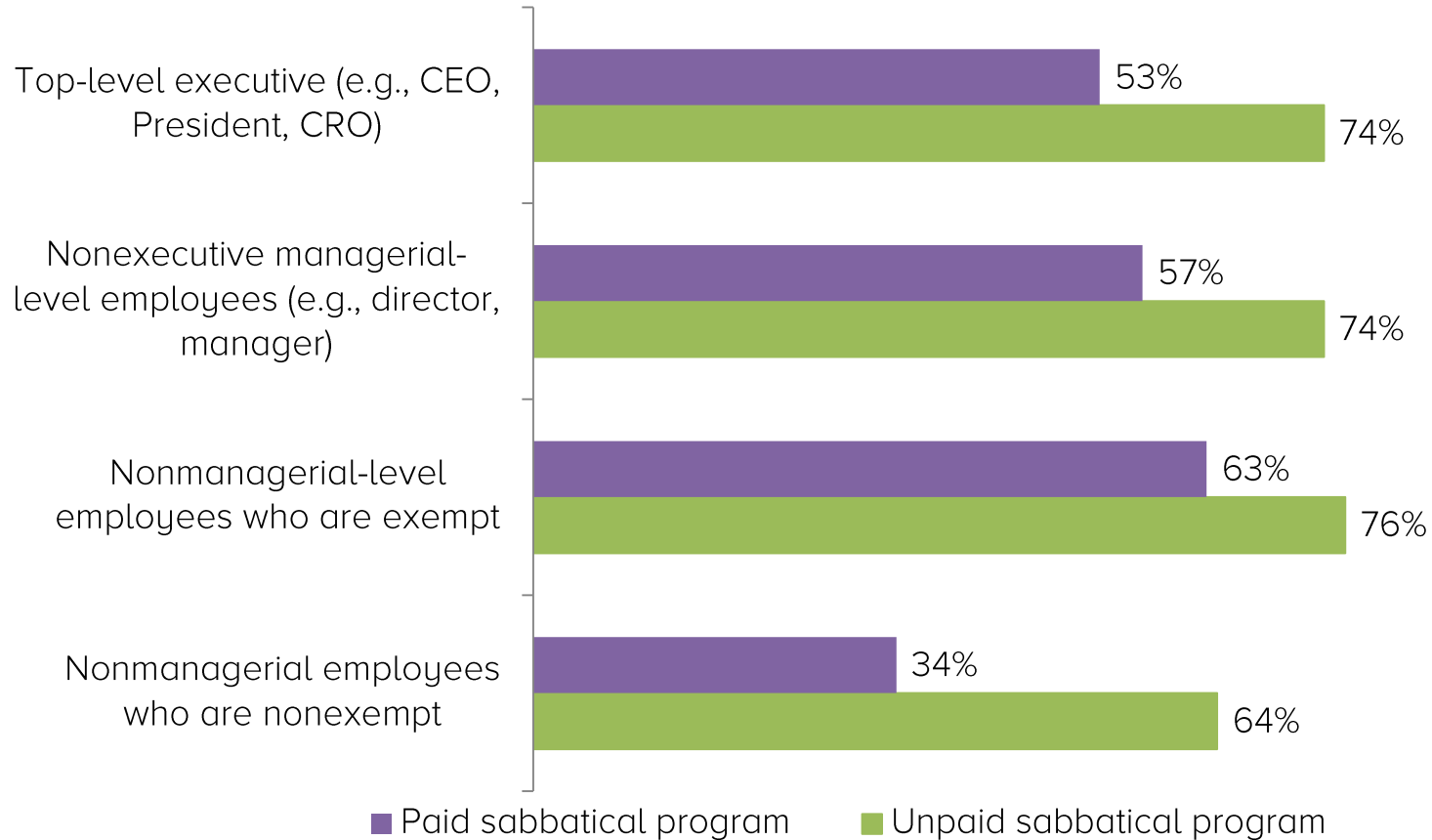
*Note: n = 71-136. Number of years and days shown in table is the average. Only respondents whose organizations offer the respective sabbatical programs to their employees were asked this question.*

### Comparisons by organization sector

- Nonprofit and government organizations are more likely than privately owned for-profit organizations to allow more days for paid sabbatical programs to full-time employees.

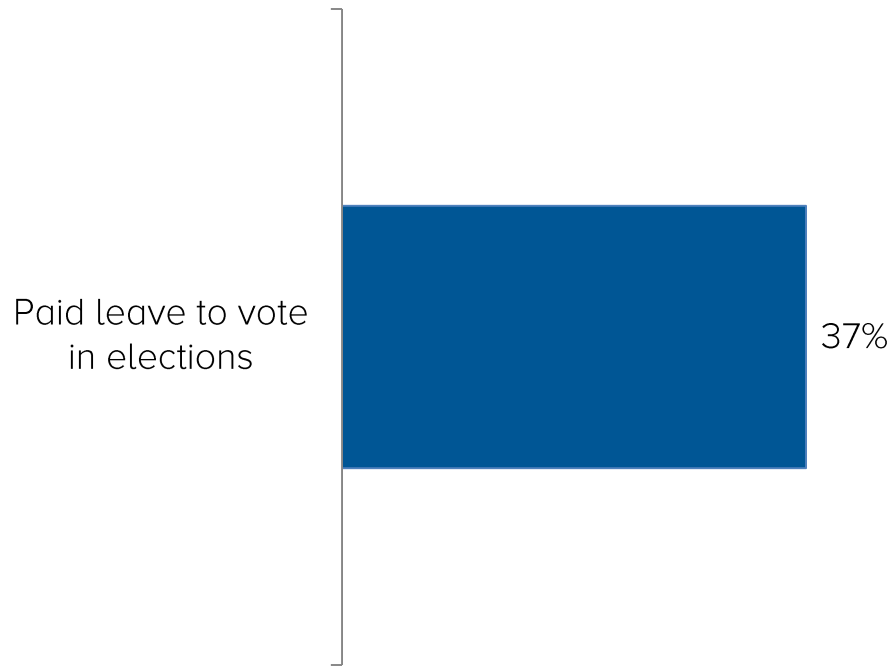
Comparisons by organization sector		
Paid Sabbatical Leave Programs		
Nonprofit (161 days) Government (178 days)	>	Privately owned for-profit (60 days)

## Sabbatical Program Eligibility by Job Level



*Note: n = 86-171. Only "yes" responses to this question are shown. Only respondents whose organizations offer the respective sabbatical programs to their employees were asked this question. Percentages do not equal 100% due to multiple response options.*





*Note: n = 2,276. Only "yes" responses to this question are shown.*

### Comparisons by organization sector

- Government organizations are more likely than privately owned for-profit and nonprofit organizations to offer leave beyond what is required by law for voting.

Comparisons by organization sector		
Leave to Vote		
Government (50%)	>	Privately owned for-profit (35%) Nonprofit (35%)

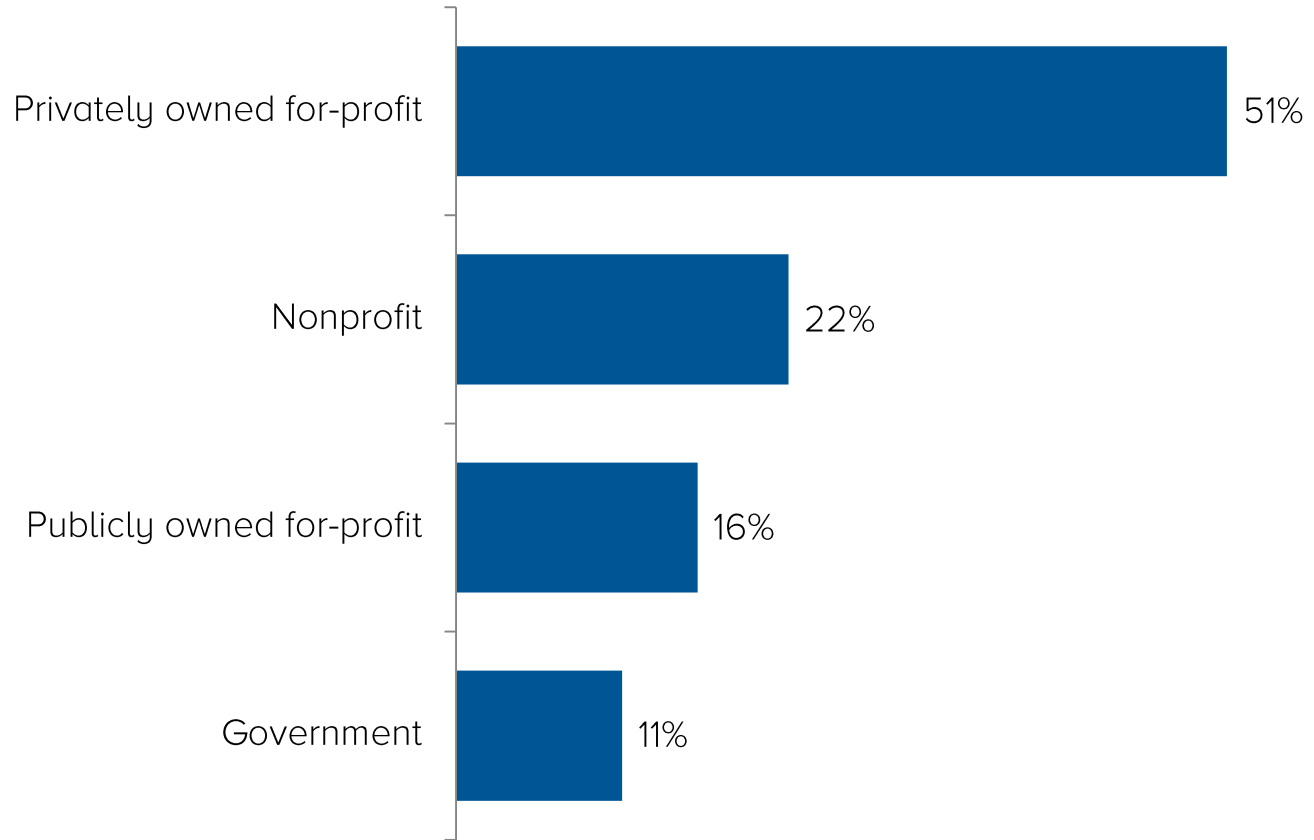
# Demographics

	Percentage
Manufacturing	19%
Professional, scientific and technical services	19%
Health care and social assistance	17%
Finance and insurance	9%
Educational services	9%
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	8%
Government agencies	8%
Wholesale trade	8%
Retail trade	6%
Religious, grant-making, civic, professional and similar organizations	6%
Information	5%

*Note: n = 2,665. Percentages do not equal 100% due to multiple response options.*

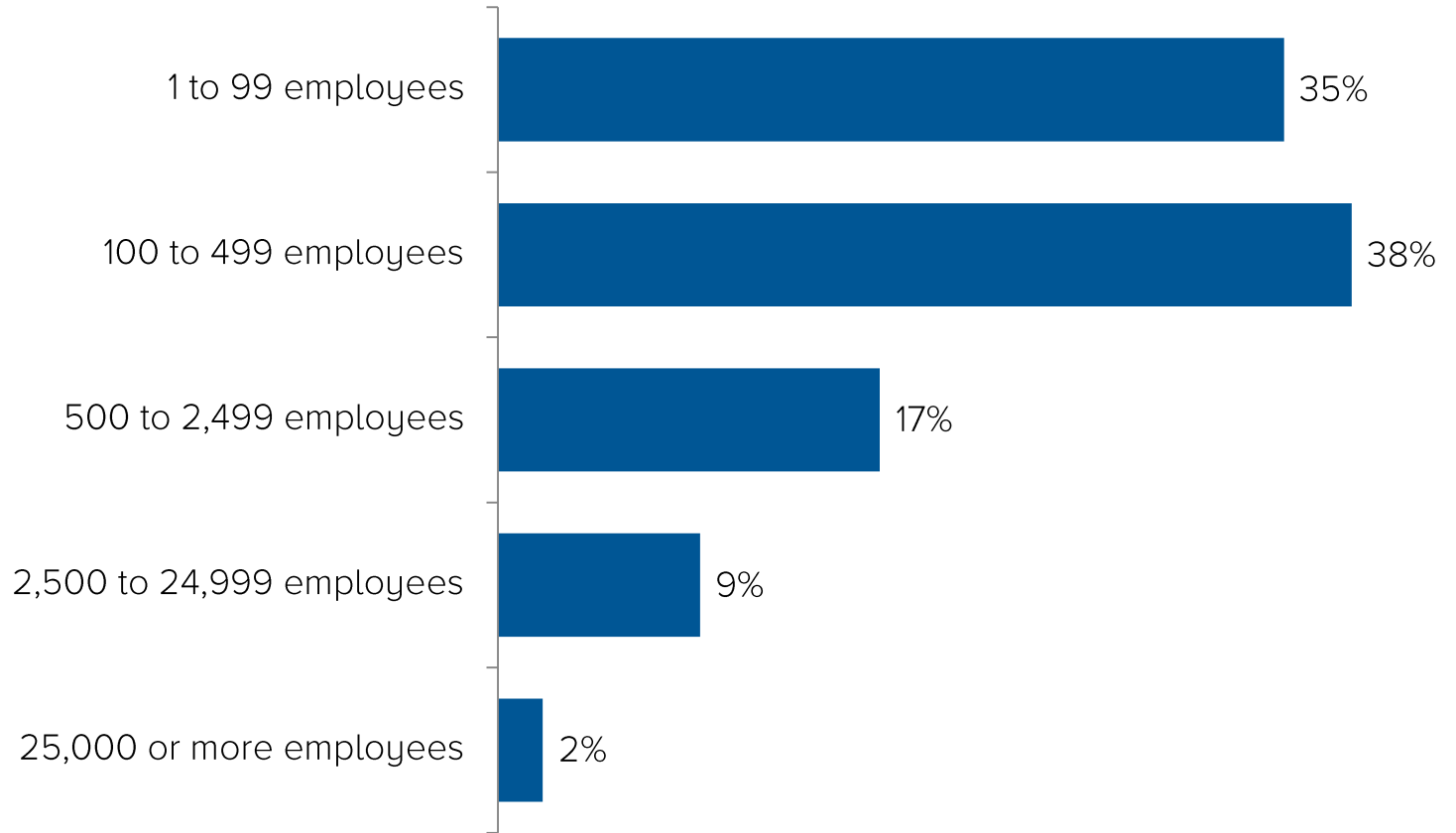
	Percentage
Transportation and warehousing	5%
Construction	5%
Accommodation and food services	3%
Utilities	3%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	3%
Real estate and rental and leasing	3%
Repair and maintenance	3%
Mining	2%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1%
Personal and laundry services	1%

*Note: n = 2,665. Percentages do not equal 100% due to multiple response options.*



*n* = 2,648

## Demographics: Organization Staff Size



Note: n = 2,540. Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

What is the HR department/function for which you responded throughout this survey?

Entire organization	79%
A specific business unit/work location(s)	21%

*n* = 2,618



## Survey Methodology

- Response rate = 11%
- 2,665 HR professionals from a randomly selected sample of SHRM's membership participated in this survey
- Margin of error: +/-2%
- Survey fielded: November 20, 2015-January 14, 2016

- [How to Create a Leave Donation Program](#)
- [Local Sick Leave Laws Raise Compliance Challenges](#)
- [Managing Family and Medical Leave](#)
- [Leave Policy: Paid Leave for Maternity/Paternity/Adoption](#)
- [Leave Policy: Paid Sabbatical](#)
- [Leave Policy: Unpaid Sabbatical Leave](#)
- [Leave Policy: Voting Leave Incorporating State Law by Reference](#)
- [Leave Policy: Voting Leave Without Reference to State Law](#)

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