

Implications of a paid sick leave ordinance for Tacoma

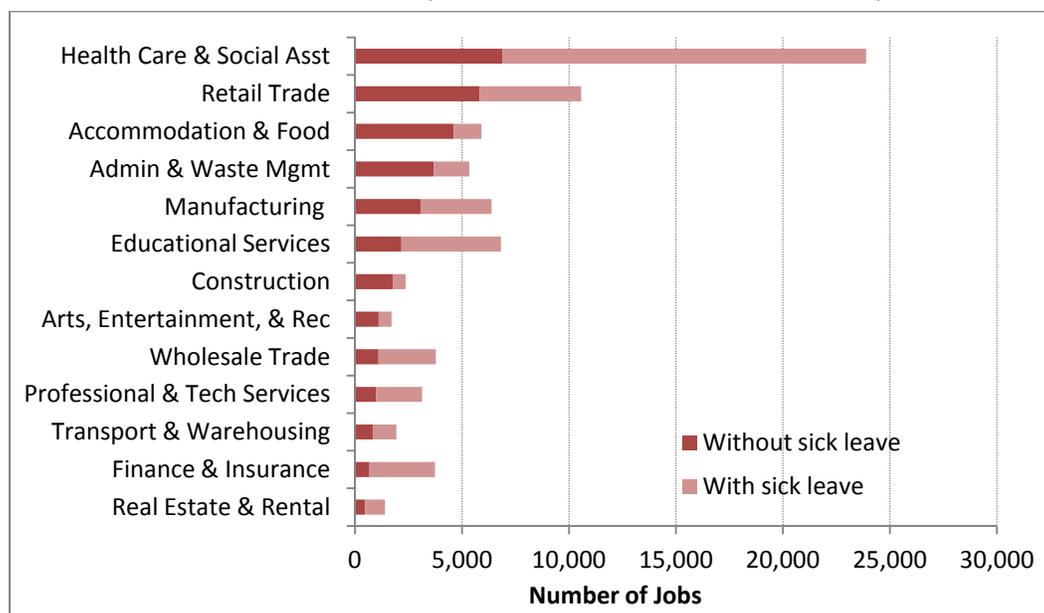
As of June 2013, five U.S. cities and one state have established laws to guarantee people the right to earn paid sick days from their employers: San Francisco, CA; Portland, OR; Seattle, WA; New York, NY; Washington, DC; and Connecticut. With the Tacoma City Council poised to consider a paid sick days ordinance, a review of recent studies finds:

1. Paid sick leave is provided unequally and inequitably in Tacoma.
2. A widespread lack of paid sick leave poses public health risks.
3. Paid safe leave helps protect victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault.
4. Paid sick leave contributes to a strong local economy by helping families maintain buying power – and employers’ experience with paid sick days laws in other cities is generally positive.
5. Tacoma voters, like other Americans, support a paid sick leave law by a wide margin.

Paid sick leave is provided unequally and inequitably in Tacoma

An estimated 37,500 of Tacoma’s 94,000 jobs do not provide any paid sick leave, including nearly 6,900 in health services, 5,800 in retail and 4,600 in accommodation and food services.¹ Lower income workers, women, and people of color – and their children – are disproportionately impacted by the lack of paid leave. Nationally, nearly 80% of people who earn above the average hourly wage get paid sick leave, compared to just 20% among the bottom 10% of earners.² People without paid sick leave suffer negative health consequences and face financial losses, ranging from smaller paychecks to fewer career advancement opportunities and a more limited ability to build retirement savings.

JOBS IN TACOMA BY SECTOR, WITH AND WITHOUT PAID SICK LEAVE, 2011



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *On the Map*; and Institute for Women’s Policy Research *Paid Sick Days Calculator*

A widespread lack of paid sick leave poses public health risks

People with paid sick leave are less likely to go to work sick or send sick children to school. New research published by the *American Journal of Public Health* concludes access to paid sick days significantly reduces the spread of influenza in the workplace.³ Of the approximately 26 million employed Americans infected at the height of the H1N1 pandemic in 2009, only 18 million took time off from work, contributing to the spread of the disease.⁴ Sick workers are estimated to have infected 7 million of their co-workers.⁵

Every year, one out of six Americans gets sick from food – resulting in 125,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths, according to the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).⁶ About 20% of cases can be traced to an ill food worker.⁷ A 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.⁸

Paid sick leave allows workers to seek preventive care and early treatment when health conditions arise. A study coauthored by the San Francisco Department of Public Health found that workers with paid sick leave were about 20% more likely to have had a routine check up in the previous two years than those without paid leave.⁹ An Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis found that workers with paid sick leave make fewer visits to the emergency room, saving taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars per year.¹⁰

Paid safe leave helps protect victims of domestic violence/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 2012, the Tacoma Police Department recorded 3,699 domestic violence offenses, or about 10 per day.¹¹ Women are three times more likely than men to experience domestic violence.¹² An estimated 22,000 adult women in Tacoma have experienced domestic violence during their lifetimes.¹³

Economic independence is one of the best predictors of whether a victim will separate from her abuser.¹⁴ 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 following the assaults.¹⁵

Paid sick leave contributes to a strong local economy

When people are forced to take unpaid leave to deal with personal or family health needs, they cut back on spending at local businesses. While companies do have direct costs from providing paid sick and safe leave, particularly in scheduling and paying replacement staff, real-life experience shows those costs are often less than expected and largely off-set by gains in productivity, retention, and customer satisfaction.¹⁶

Paid sick leave reduces employee turnover, which 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.¹⁷ In addition, employees coming to work sick, known as “presenteeism,” has been estimated to cost employers more than when workers call in sick.

Not only do ill or distracted employees operate below par, they put their coworkers at risk as well.¹⁸ New research shows access to paid sick leave significantly reduces on-the-job injuries. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found workers without paid sick days are 28% more likely to suffer non-fatal workplace injuries than workers with access to paid sick days.¹⁹ According to lead author Abay Asfaw, a senior service fellow at the CDC, “We can infer that lower injury rates mean lower levels of workers’ compensation payments. In the long term, paid sick leave might help employers to reduce cost and increase profit.”²⁰

Employers' experience with paid sick days laws is generally positive

Studies in San Francisco and Washington DC, both of which have adopted paid sick leave ordinances, yield ample evidence the laws are working well for most employers.

A report by the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA) on Washington DC's 2008 paid sick days law found it "did not have the economic impact of encouraging business owners to move a business from the District nor did the Act have the economic impact of discouraging business owners to locate a business in the District of Columbia."²¹

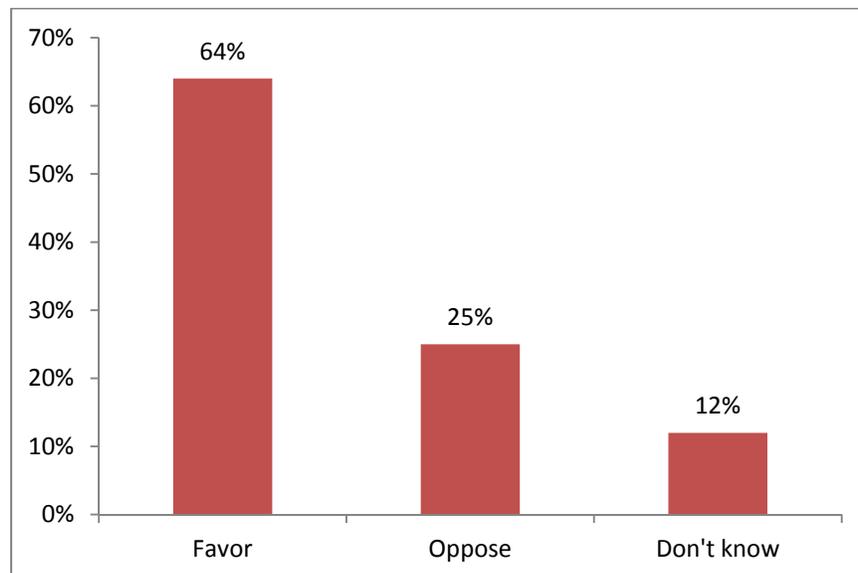
The most comprehensive survey of San Francisco employers conducted since implementation of the paid sick days ordinance found that after three and one half years of experience, over two thirds supported the ordinance, with 34% very supportive.²²

Tacoma voters, like other Americans, support a paid sick leave law by a wide margin

Surveys of voters in cities considering paid sick days legislation echo national polls, finding strong support for legislation that guarantees all workers the opportunity to earn paid sick days from their employers.²³ The support extends across geographic, political party and gender lines, as well as racial and ethnic categories. Further, voters are more likely to support public officials who back paid sick days legislation.

Nearly two-thirds of Tacoma's likely voters support a proposed paid sick leave law for the city. Only one-quarter of the electorate say they oppose such legislation. Further, City Council candidates stand to gain by their support of a Tacoma paid sick days proposal. Four in ten voters say they would be "more likely" to vote for a candidate that supported paid sick days.²⁴

PERCENT OF TACOMA VOTERS THAT FAVOR OR OPPOSE PROPOSED PAID SICK DAYS LAW



Source: Patinkin Research Strategies

Endnotes

- ¹ Number of workers in each sector without sick leave is based on national percentages, applied to Tacoma’s specific industrial mix. U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators (2011 data), and Institute for Women’s Policy Research Paid Sick Days Calculator.
- ² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employee Benefits in the United States, National Compensation Survey, March 2012, <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/>.
- ³ Kumar Supriya, et al., “Policies to Reduce Influenza in the Workplace: Impact Assessments using an Agent-Based Model,” *American Journal of Public Health*, printed online June 13, 2013.
- ⁴ 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>.
- ⁵ 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>.
- ⁶ 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>.
- ⁷ Lynch, M., J. Painter, R. Woodruff, and C. Braden, “Surveillance for foodborne-disease outbreaks—United States, 1998-2002,” *Morb. Mortal. Wkly. Rep.* (2006) 55:1–34 (as reported in Steven Sumner, Laura Green Brown, et al., “Factors Associated with Food Workers Working while Experiencing Vomiting or Diarrhea,” *Journal of Food Protection*, Vol. 74, No 2., 2011, pp. 215-220.)
- ⁸ Steven Sumner, Laura Green Brown, et al., “Factors Associated with Food Workers Working while Experiencing Vomiting or Diarrhea,” *Journal of Food Protection*, Vol. 74, No 2., 2011, pp. 215-220.
- ⁹ Bhatia R, et al., *Health Impacts of the California Healthy Families, Healthy Workplaces Act of 2008: A Report on Ongoing Research*, p. 25, Oakland, California: Human Impact Partners and San Francisco Department of Public Health, April 2009, <http://www.humanimpact.org/doc-lib/finish/5/72>.
- ¹⁰ Kevin Miller, Claudia Williams and Youngman Yi, “Paid Sick Days and Health: Cost Savings from Reduced Emergency Department Visits,” November 2011, Institute for Women’s Policy Research, <http://www.iwpr.org/initiatives/family-leave-paid-sick-days>.
- ¹¹ Kellie Lapczynski, et al., *Crime in Washington 2012 Annual Report*; pp 347. Retrieved from <http://www.waspc.org/index.php?c=Crime%20Statistics>.
- ¹² National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, *Domestic Violence Facts: Washington, 2009*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncadv.org/files/Washington%20new%202009.pdf>.
- ¹³ In 2011, an estimated 81,500 adult women lived in Tacoma; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey. About 25-30% of women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime.
- ¹⁴ Legal Momentum: The Women’s Legal Defense and Education Fund (2009). *Statistics page*. Retrieved from <http://www.legalmomentum.org/our-work/domestic-violence/statistics.html>.
- ¹⁵ Legal Momentum: The Women’s Legal Defense and Education Fund (2009). *The Impact of Interpersonal Violence on the Workplace*. Retrieved from <http://www.legalmomentum.org/assets/pdfs/statistics.pdf>.
- ¹⁶ Jane Waldfogel, “The Impact of the Family Medical Leave Act,” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Vol. 18, Spring 1999; Thomas E. Casey and Karen Warlin, “Retention and Customer Satisfaction,” *Compensation & Benefits Review*, May/June 2001, p. 27-30.
- ¹⁷ Patricia C. Borstorff and Michael B. Marker, “Turnover Drivers and Retention Factors Affecting Hourly Workers: What is Important” *Management Review: An International Journal*, Vol. 2, No.1, June 30, 2007, pp. 14-27; University of Missouri Extension, Missouri Small Business and Technology Development Centers, “Reducing Employee Turnover,” website viewed April 4, 2011, http://www.missouribusiness.net/sbtdc/docs/reducing_employee_turnover.asp.
- ¹⁸ Paul Hemp, “Presenteeism: At Work – But Out of It,” *Harvard Business Review*, October 2004, <http://www.ihpm.org/pdf/HBR%20Presenteeism.pdf>; “Economists coin term, ‘presenteeism,’ for on-the-job health slowdowns,” *Cornell Chronicle*, April 2004, <http://www.news.cornell.edu/Chronicle/04/4.22.04/presenteeism.html>.
- ¹⁹ Abay Asfaw, Regina Pana-Cryan and Roger Rosa, “Paid Sick Leave and Nonfatal Occupational Injuries,” *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 102, No. 9, September 2012: 59-64.
- ²⁰ *New York Times*, Aug 6, 2012, <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/06/paid-sick-leave-may-reduce-work-injuries/>.
- ²¹ Audit of the Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act of 2008, Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, <http://dcauditor.org/reports/audit-accrued-sick-and-safe-leave-act-2008>.
- ²² Robert Drago and Vicky Lovell, “San Francisco’s Paid Sick Leave Ordinance: Outcome for Employers and Employees,” Appendix Table 2, Institute for Women’s Policy Research, February 2011, www.iwpr.org.
- ²³ Anzalone Liszt Research, Anzalone Liszt Research, June 28 2011, http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/WHITE_HOUSE_MEMO_-_PAID_SICK_DAYS.pdf?docID=9143.
- ²⁴ Patinkin Research Strategies, June 2013 poll of 400 registered, likely November, 2013 voters in the City of Tacoma, <http://healthytacoma.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/tacoma-sick-days-polling-memo-6-10-13.pdf>