

## Study Finds U.S. Workers Afraid to Use Paid Sick Leave

Workers in the United States are hesitant to use their paid sick leave, even when they are truly sick, according to a new study by HR software company BambooHR. In fact, 9 in 10 people worked while sick during the past year, while nearly half said they shouldn't have.

When it comes to paid sick leave policies, the United States lags behind the rest of the world. The United States joins India, Somalia and South Korea as the only United Nations member states that do not guarantee some form of paid sick leave for workers—that's 4 out of 193 countries. The United States only guarantees unpaid sick leave.

**“The remote situation post-COVID-19 has made managing sick leave policies worse. You can be at home and still be on work calls. But working when ill doesn't serve the person, the company or the customer.”**

- Anita Grantham, head of HR, BambooHR

BambooHR's study revealed the following key findings related to Americans and their sick time:

- Over half (64%) of workers experience negative emotions (e.g., stress, anxiety, guilt and fear) when calling out of work.

- Less than half (40%) of workers felt insecure taking sick time because others may assume they're faking it.
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of workers agree that nobody needs to know why you're taking a sick day.
- A quarter (25%) of workers have been pressured or explicitly asked to work despite being sick.

Furthermore, younger workers are facing unique circumstances around sick leave and illness. For example, 93% of Millennials have worked despite being sick, whereas 68% of Generation Z workers have taken a sick day for mental health reasons. Younger workers are voicing the need for a work culture that allows unquestioned sick leave.

### Employer Takeaways

American workers are not using their paid sick leave, even when ill or for other qualifying reasons. Many employees experience guilt and stress related to their sick time, so paid leave policy transparency is critical in empowering workers to use their sick leave. While more employers recognize and support the importance of mental health in the workplace, some are even reclassifying sick time under a broader definition, such as “wellness time,” so employees feel more comfortable using those days for mental and physical health reasons.

Leave policies are important to today's workers as they try to balance working and caring for their physical and mental health needs. Employers should continue to monitor workers' desires while ensuring their leave policies reflect current regulations.

Contact us today for more information about paid leave benefits.