

Overwhelming majority of New Jerseyans support paid sick days, study finds

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Many low-wage earners lack paid sick days. Credit: Alan Light

As New Jersey's policymakers consider establishing a minimum standard for paid sick days, the Center for Women and Work (CWW) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey has released an issue brief on the subject that finds an overwhelming majority (83 percent) of state residents of all political affiliations support paid sick day policies.

While there is a great deal of public support, results reported in, *It's Catching: Public Opinion toward Paid Sick Days in New Jersey*, document a persistent need: 37 percent of state residents currently lack access to paid [sick days](#), particularly Hispanic and Latino workers, younger workers and those who work part time or earn less than \$50,000

per year.

"Over 37 percent of New Jersey residents work in jobs with no paid sick days," said Linda Houser, CWW affiliate fellow, assistant professor at Widener University and co-author of the report. "This proportion is significantly higher for some of New Jersey's most vulnerable citizens – low-income earners, part-time workers and young adults. Additionally, over 50 percent of these workers cited concerns about financial affordability, job loss or bad performance reviews as having an impact on their decision about taking time off from work to recover from illness."

The research also underscores the need for paid and secure time off. It found that 38 percent of respondents reported they could not afford the time off financially, about 28 percent feared receiving a bad performance review if they took time off from work and nearly a quarter (24 percent) feared losing their jobs. Some groups, including [young adults](#), Asian and Hispanic/Latino workers, low-income earners and those with low levels of educational attainment, were far more vulnerable to these concerns than were other worker groups.

The CWW report follows a September 2013 [public opinion](#) telephone poll conducted by the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers that surveyed 925 New Jersey residents. The margin of error for reported results is +/-3.2 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval.

"Not only do most New Jerseyans – over 83 percent – support paid sick days policies, but one of our most striking findings is that this support spans all economic and racial groups, both genders and even political affiliations," said Danielle Lindemann, research director and assistant research professor at CWW and co-author of the brief.

Paid sick days legislation recently has been passed in cities and states

including San Francisco; Portland; Seattle; Washington, D.C.; New York City; Connecticut; and Jersey City. Additionally, Newark is considering adoption of a similar ordinance, and legislation has been introduced in both houses of the New Jersey Legislature.

"Our findings show that New Jersey's low-wage workers, the majority of whom are women, are those least likely to have access to paid sick days," said Karen White, director of the Working Families Program at the Rutgers center and co-author of the brief. "Yet they are the ones who most need this workplace standard so that they don't have to choose between losing a day's wages and caring for a sick child of themselves."

More information: [smlr.rutgers.edu/cww-report-it ... ching-paid-sick-days](https://smlr.rutgers.edu/cww-report-it...ching-paid-sick-days)

Provided by Rutgers University

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