

# Washington **Paid Family & Medical Leave**



**Employment Security Department**  
WASHINGTON STATE

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Rebecca Grady  
Research Manager  
Leave and Care Division  
Employment Security Department



# What is WA Paid Family and Medical Leave?

Paid leave from work to care for yourself or a family member.

Applies to workers and their employers in Washington. Self-employed workers can also elect coverage.

Workers apply for and receive benefits from the state, not through their employer.

Passed with bipartisan support in 2017, premiums began in 2019, benefits in 2020.

Includes small business assistance grants.

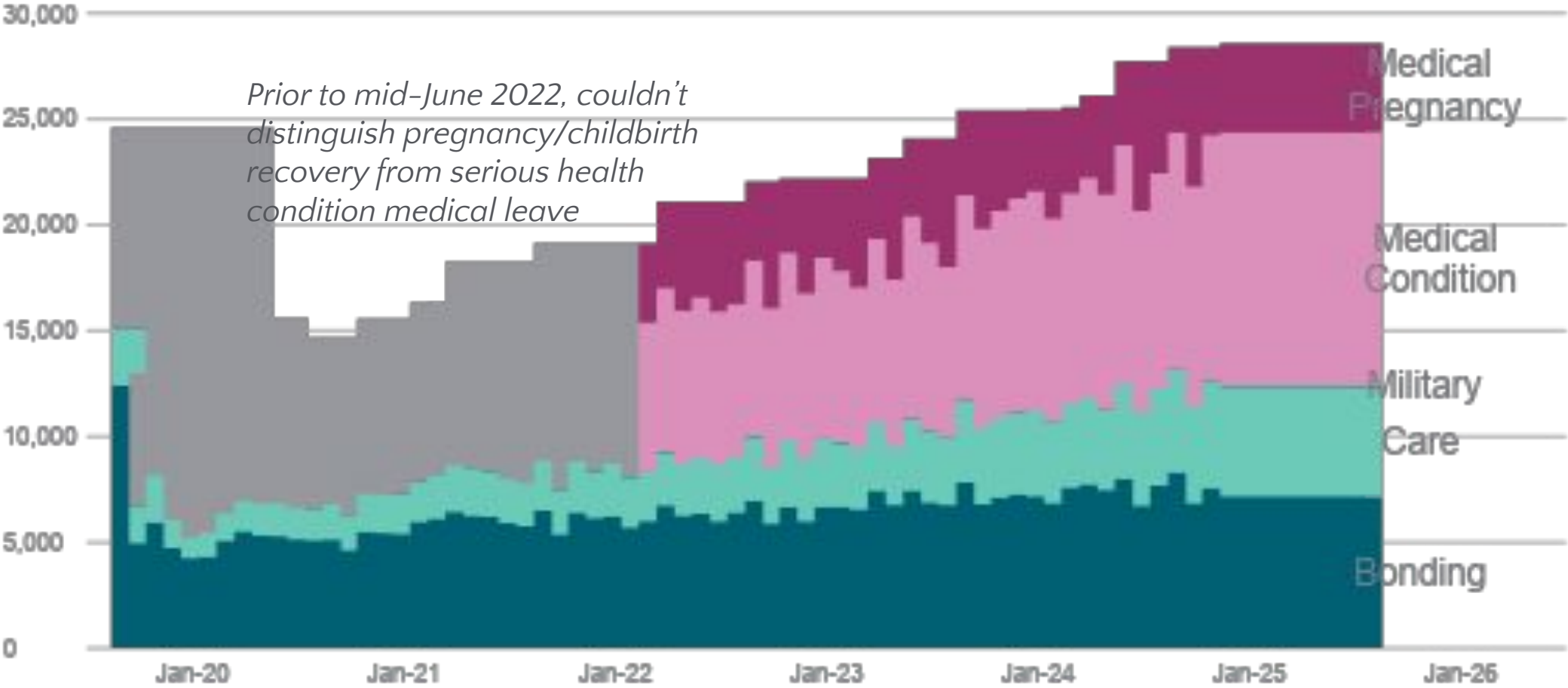


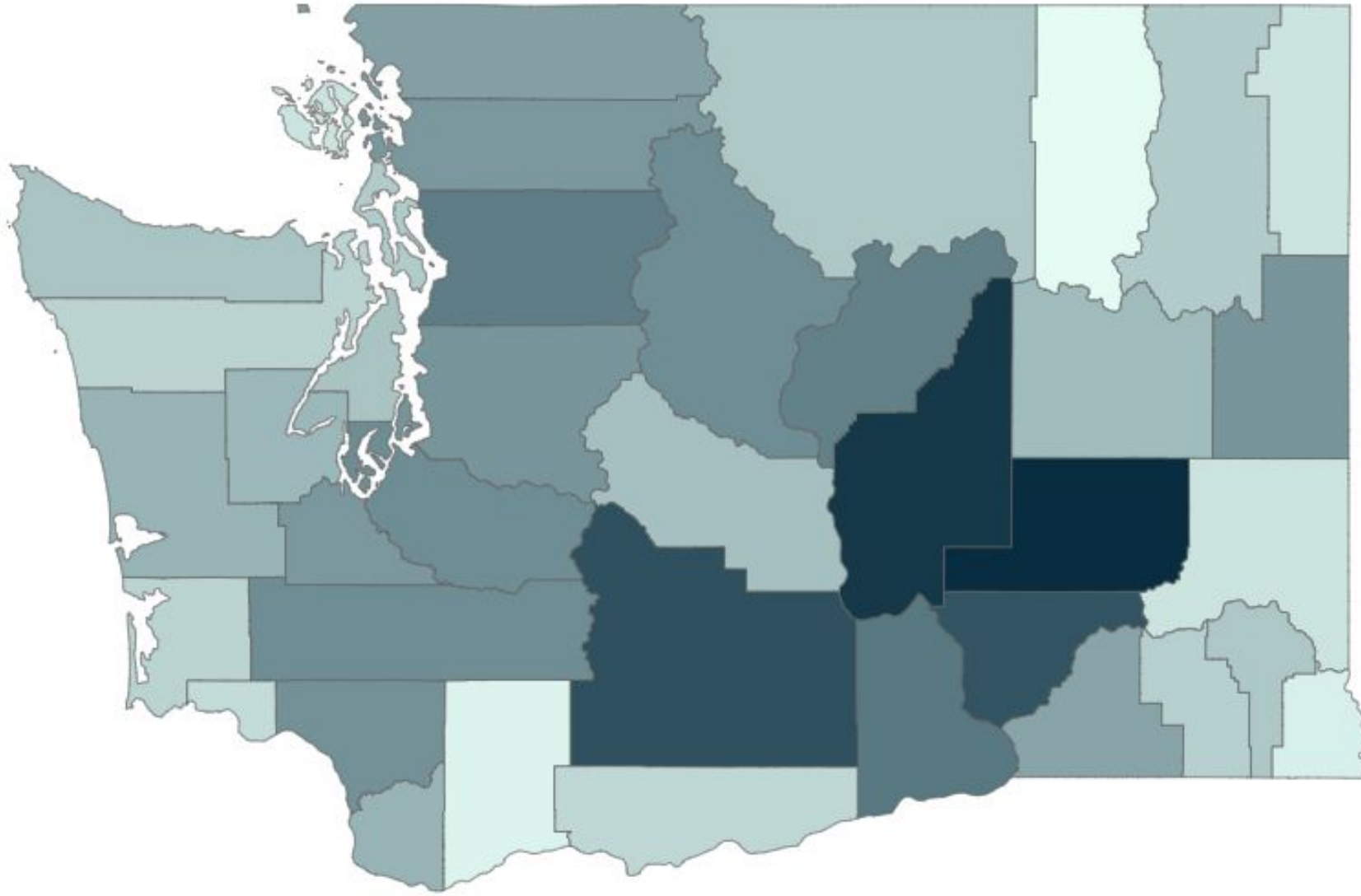
# In first five years of benefits...





# Applications for leave (aka claims submitted)





2024 applications  
per 1k residents by  
county

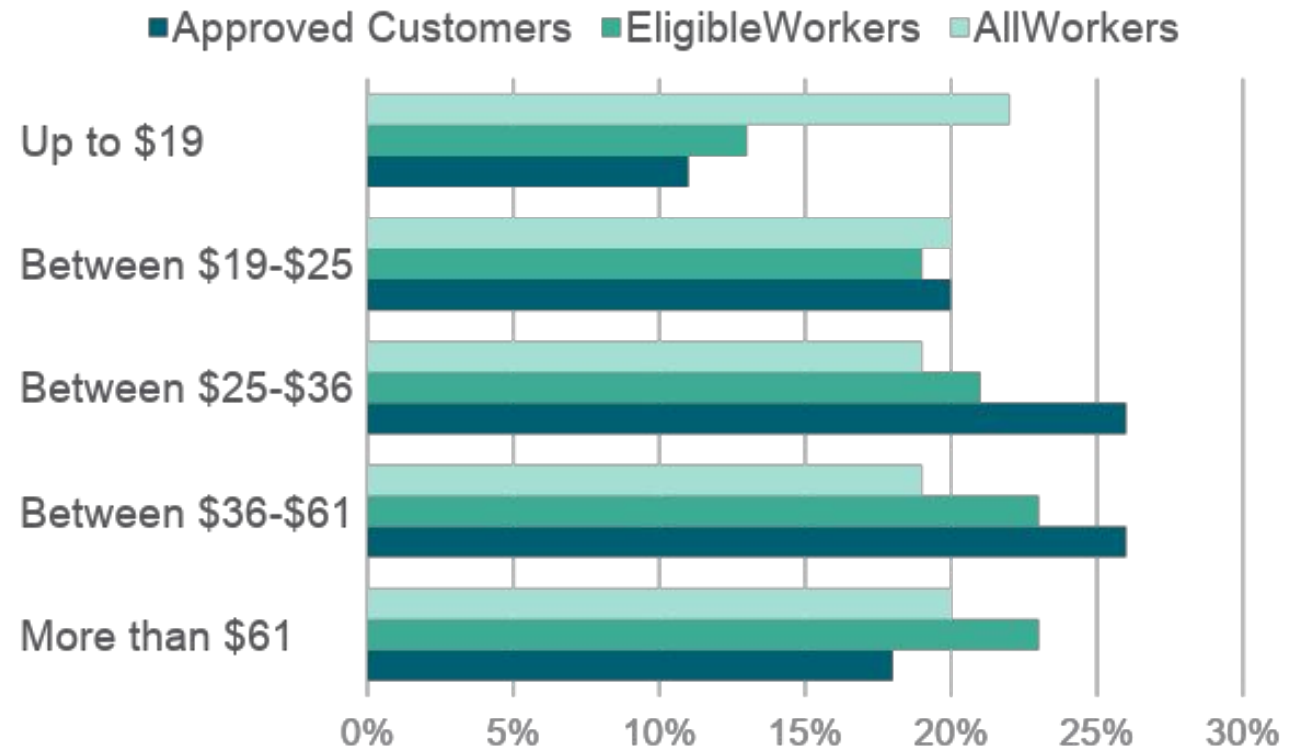
Darker shading -> more  
applications per population

# Insights on customer characteristics

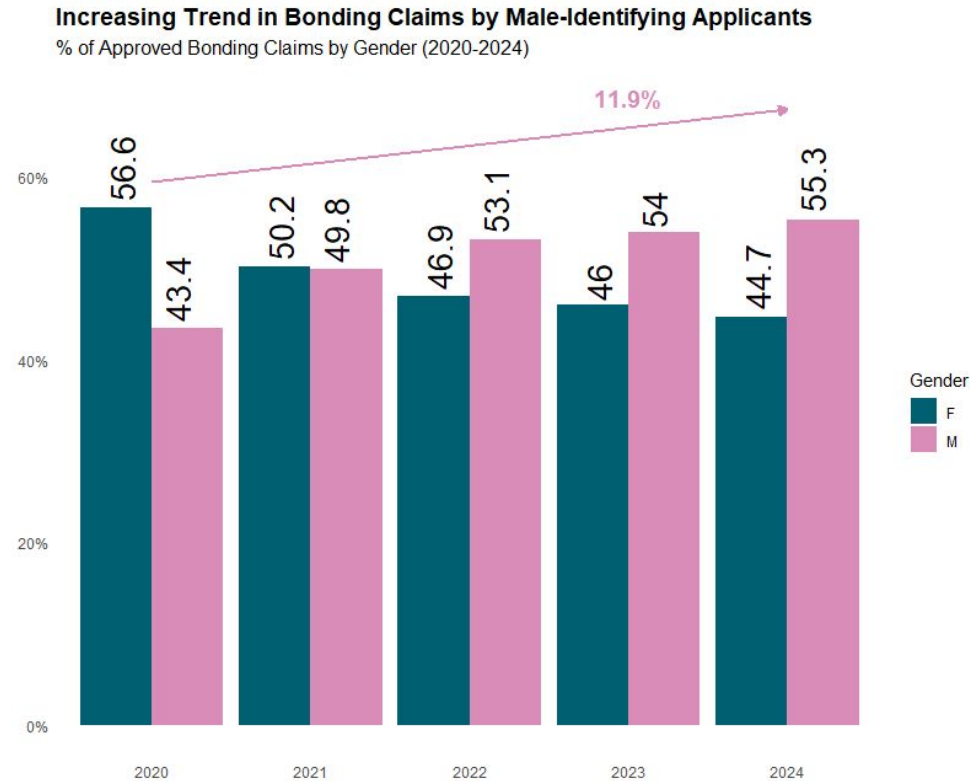
- Demographics and employment characteristics from administrative data & census data

- Women age 30–39 highest usage overall
- Generally seeing substantial racial-ethnic diversity overall, though intersectional look shows more nuanced picture
- Higher use among middle-to-upper income workers and those at larger organizations

*Program usage by hourly wages*



# Gender & leave use



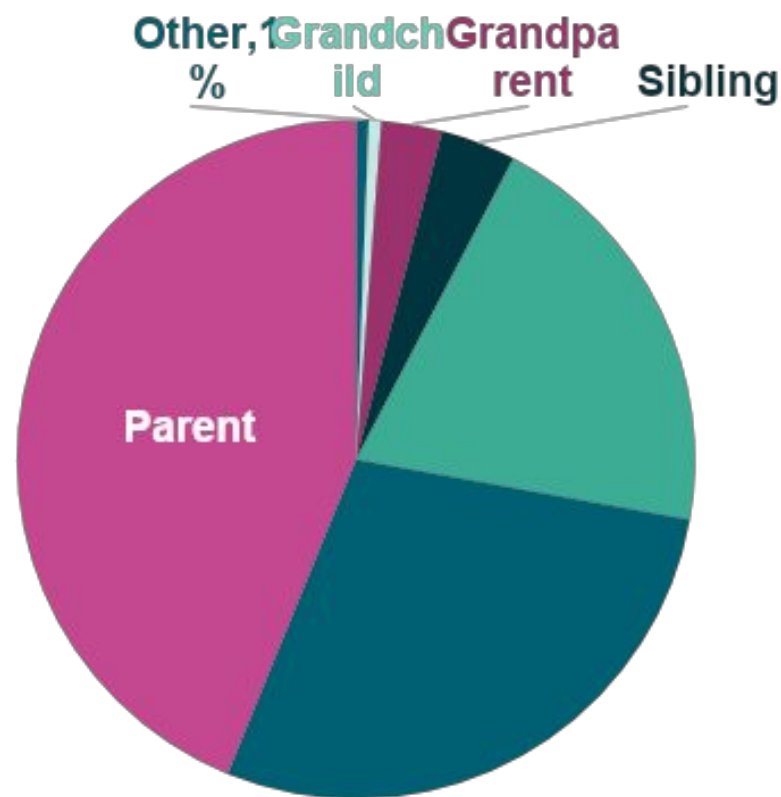
## Are men using bonding leave?

- Grew from 43% of bonding applicants in 2020 to 55% in 2024
- New child leave overall about 52% women / 48% men
  - Some birthing parents take only medical leave for pregnancy and childbirth recovery

## Other gender insights

- More women also use (non-pregnancy) **medical** leave and **family care** leave
- Most customers identifying as nonbinary & “prefer not to say” are applying for **medical** leave

# Who is being cared for during family care leaves?



*“Family member” expanded in mid-2021*

## 2024 “Other” family member descriptions

Significant Other / Partner	58%
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Relative / Kin	30%
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Friend	8%
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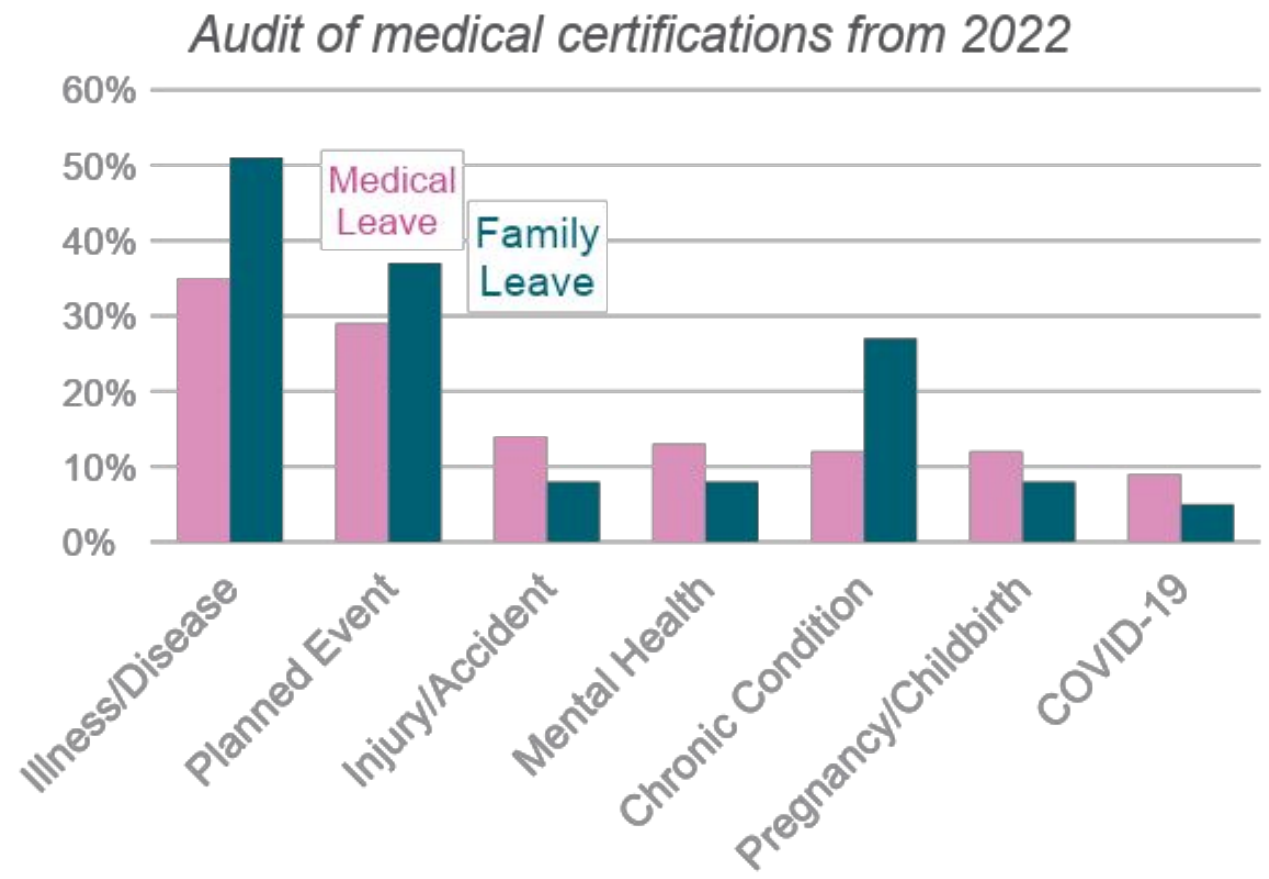
'Expectation of Care'	2%
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Other	1%
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Co-parent	1%
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# What kinds of medical conditions are folks taking leave for?



*Survey and interview project  
collaboration with Dept of Health and  
UW in 2023*

Survey (n=4,710) of caregivers who used  
either own medical or family care leave

	Medical	Family Care
Acute or short-lasting condition	68%	51%
Physical health condition	81%	78%
Mental or behavioral health condition	19%	17%



## Thoughts / Questions?

Get in touch to continue the conversation  
[Rebecca.Grady@esd.wa.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Grady@esd.wa.gov)

# Extra slides

# Who is job protected? UW study

**WE ESTIMATE THAT 53% OF WORKERS WITH AN ELIGIBLE EMPLOYMENT HISTORY FOR WA PAID LEAVE HAVE JOB PROTECTION**

**Job protection rates vary by worker earnings**

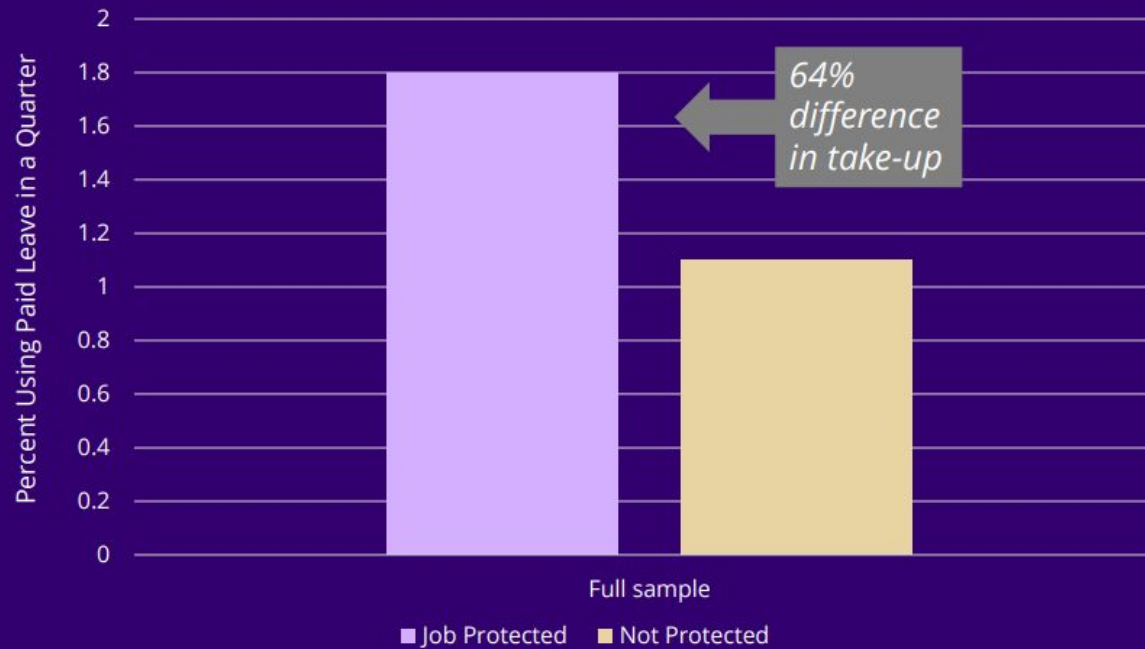
16% for lowest earnings workers  
vs.  
70% for highest earning workers

**Some industries have job protection rates of 30% or less**

Accommodation & food service  
Other services  
Mining, oil & gas extraction  
Construction  
Arts, entertainment, & recreation

# Who is job protected? UW study

**JOB PROTECTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH A 0.7 PERCENTAGE POINT DIFFERENCE IN THE LIKELIHOOD OF USING LEAVE**





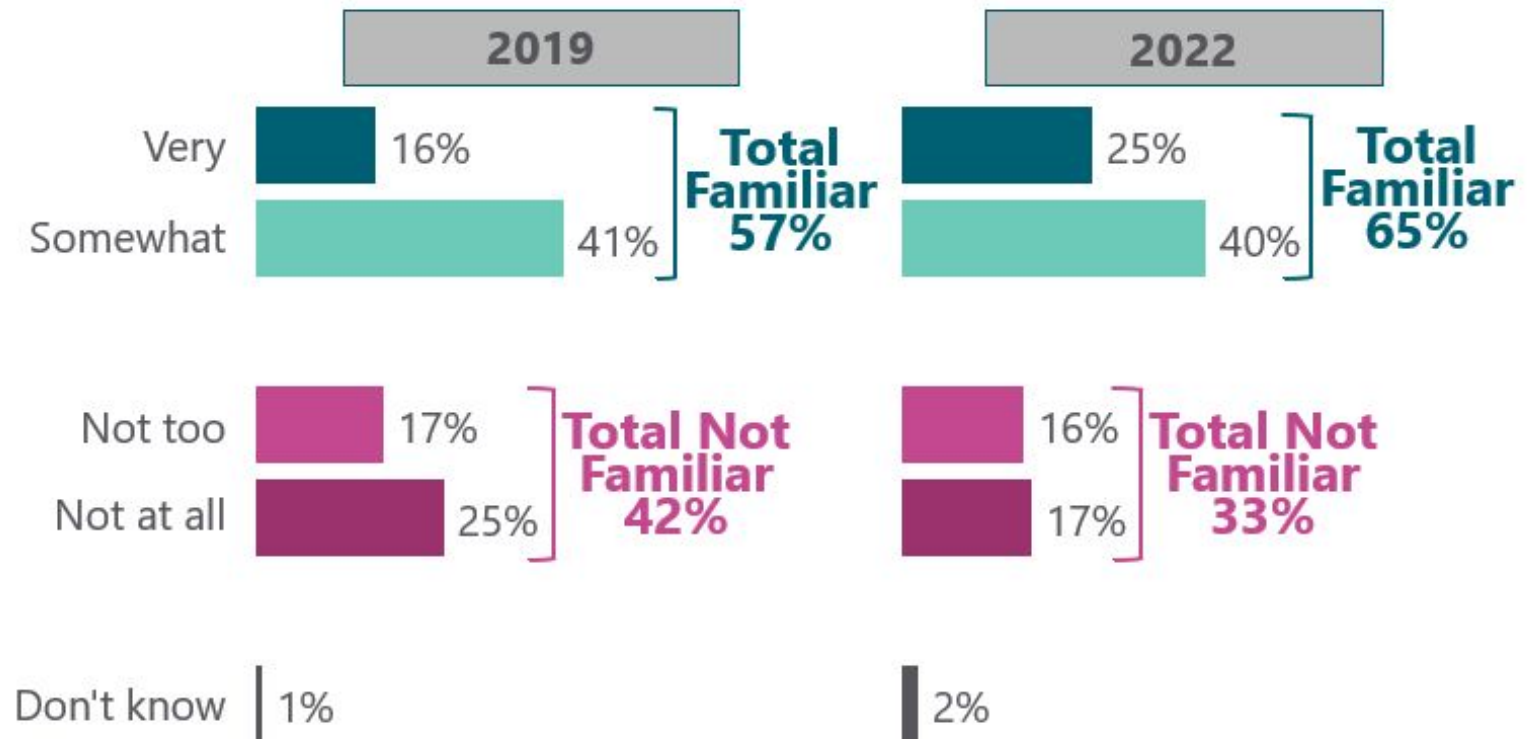
# What is small business assistance utilization looking like?

- Low usage of small business assistance grants
  - 600 total grants through end of 2024
  - Most to hire a temporary worker
  - Higher usage among healthcare & social assistance, construction, admin/support/waste management/remediation, other services, manufacturing, and professional services

# Program awareness

- Statewide survey of WA workers
- Phone & online
- English & Spanish
- 1,315 participants
  - Oversamples of Black, Spanish-speaking, and low-income workers
- Most learned about the program from their employer

*Are you familiar with Washington's new Paid Family and Medical Leave program?*



# Awareness gaps to address



Awareness higher among

- ages 30s and 40s
- parents
- full-time workers
- professional and office/administrative support occupations



Awareness lower among

- Younger and older workers
- Black workers
- lower household incomes
- non-parents
- part-time workers
- service and sales-related occupations

# How are program financials doing?



# Want to know more?

- Email [ESDgpLeaveAndCareResearch@esd.wa.gov](mailto:ESDgpLeaveAndCareResearch@esd.wa.gov) or [Rebecca.Grady@esd.wa.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Grady@esd.wa.gov)

Available on [esd.wa.gov](https://esd.wa.gov)

- [Customer dashboard](#) – demographics and worker characteristics, comparisons to census estimates
- [Claims dashboard](#) – claims volumes, average benefit \$, lengths of leave, time to first payment
- 2024 [annual report](#), [operational staffing needs](#), and [actuarial report](#)
- [Prior year legislative reports](#) – includes all ESD, select year
  - [2023 family member expansion report](#)
  - [2023 voluntary plan costs and fees report](#)
  - [2022 Help Me Grow WA and Paid Family and Medical Leave report](#)
  - [2021 state and voluntary plan usage report](#)