



BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

IBI LEAVE MANAGEMENT BENCHMARKING SERIES

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Executive summary

Bereavement leave refers to time off for employees who have recently experienced the death of a loved one. As part of its Leave Management Benchmarking series,¹ the Integrated Benefits Institute (IBI) surveyed 982 organizations about their formal leave policies and received about 250 in-depth responses specific to bereavement leave. Employers were instructed that formal leave policies are those that go beyond any applicable federal, state and local laws or that the company has implemented where there are no legal requirements for leave. Formal policies are specific rules or instructions that define who can take leave, for what reasons and for how long.

- **Four in five employers reported having formal bereavement leave policies.** One in seven reported that employees could take bereavement leave using consolidated leaves such as paid time off (PTO) or leave banks, sick leave or vacation. Formal bereavement leave policies were less common among employers in transportation and warehousing and more common among employers in "other" services, manufacturing, information, and retail trade. Employers with at least 2,500 employees were more likely to have formal leave policies. Among states for which we received responses from at least 30 employers, California and Washington employers were less likely to have formal bereavement leave policies. Employers with workers in multiple states or with most of their employees in Missouri were more likely to have formal bereavement leave policies.
- **Half of employers that offered bereavement leave made it available to all employees.** Compared to finance and insurance employers, fewer health care employers offered bereavement leave. There was no clear association between company size and universal eligibility for bereavement leave. Half of employers that referenced full- or part-time status offered bereavement leave to part-time employees. Hourly employees were offered bereavement leave nearly as often as salaried employees, whereas three-quarters of employers that referenced collective bargaining offered bereavement leave to employees covered by collective-bargaining agreements. Only one in five employers that referenced the location of employees indicated that bereavement leave was offered to employees outside the United States.
- **Only one in six employers required a waiting period for new employees to become eligible for bereavement leave.** Waiting periods most were common among health care employers. Employers with a waiting period typically made leave available during the first three to six months of hire. Waiting periods were most common among employers with fewer than 500 employees.
- **Nearly all employers managed and tracked bereavement leaves using internal resources** (such as an HR or benefits department), rather than outsourcing these leaves to a third party administrator. There were with few meaningful differences in management approaches across industries or companies of different sizes.
- **More than two-thirds of employers allowed less than one week of bereavement leave.** Nearly one in four allowed between one and two weeks. Finance and insurance employers were most likely to offer at least one week. There was no clear association between company size and allowed durations of bereavement leave.
- **Across industries and company sizes, virtually all employers paid 100% of an employee's wages during bereavement leave.** Only 2% reported that bereavement leave was unpaid, while 4% reported that bereavement pay depends on the employee.

¹ <https://ibiweb.org/research-resources/detail/leave-management-benchmarking-project>

- **Other time-off policies.** Only one in five employers allowed bereavement leave for the deaths of non-family members—a practice more common among finance and insurance employers. One-quarter of employers required employees to authenticate their need for bereavement leave. Generally, larger companies were less likely to require authentication. Half of employers reported that the allowed durations of bereavement leave went beyond what is required by law. Nearly all employers made leave time available all at once (as opposed to accruing), while virtually none allowed unused time to roll over.
- **Other pay policies.** Among employers with formal parental leave policies, 100% reported that employee benefits such as health care continued for the duration of leave. Half of employers indicated that their leave pay went beyond what is required by law, though this was slightly more common among manufacturing employers. Nine in ten employers indicated that employees received their pay for the entire leave duration. Few differences in pay policies were observed across employers of different sizes.

Background

Since the end of the Great Recession and the return of several economic indicators to prerecession levels,² many employers have been reviewing and updating their employee leave policies. While providing time off from work is intended to address several strategic goals—including attracting and retaining talent, helping employees meet challenging life events and signaling corporate social values³—employers often take their cues from their peers and competitors when considering the design of their leave benefits.

As part of its Leave Management Benchmarking series, the **Integrated Benefits Institute (IBI)** surveyed **982 organizations** about their formal leave policies, including the following:

- Maternity leave
- Parental leave for non-birth mothers
- Family leave
- Elder care leave
- Sick days
- Short-term disability (STD)
- Long-term disability (LTD)
- Bereavement leave
- Career development leave

The surveys also included a block of questions about paid-time-off (PTO) programs for employers that implemented this approach to leaves.

Recognizing that most employers have complex workforces comprising many different categories of workers, fulfilling a diversity of functions and sometimes spread across multiple locations and legal jurisdictions, the intent of the benchmarks is to provide some basic guidance on what is typical for specific types of leaves. This will give senior leaders, human resource (HR) and benefits professionals and their third-party partners a starting point for considering how to craft policies that best address their specific business goals for their own workforce needs.

This report focuses only on bereavement leave. Bereavement leave refers to time off for employees who have recently experienced the death of a loved one.

SURVEY APPROACH

The survey began by asking all employers about formal policies for all leaves listed above. Employers were instructed that formal leave policies are those that go beyond any applicable federal, state and local laws or that the company has implemented where there are no legal requirements for leave. Formal policies are specific rules or instructions that define who can take leave, for what reasons and for how long.

After employers reported whether or not they had each of the listed leaves, they were given the option of requesting benchmark reports for each type of leave. For a requested leave report, employers with no formal policies were asked to provide contact information confidentially and were then given the option of requesting any of the remaining reports. Employers with formal bereavement leave policies were asked to provide additional information about eligibility for leave, before providing contact information to receive the reports.

We received in-depth responses for approximately 250 employers' formal bereavement leave policies.

Those responses are reported in this document for the entire sample, for employers in industries and states for which we had at least 30 responses, and across employers of different sizes. Results for other leave policies are

² See, for example, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis for historical series on indicators such as unemployment, personal consumption, gross domestic product (GDP) and wages as a share of GDP. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org>

³ Gifford B, Zong B, Presutti J. *And Baby Makes Three (Months Off): Paid Parental Leave at 15 High Technology Firms*. Integrated Benefits Institute, August 2016. <https://ibiweb.org/research-resources/detail/and-a-baby-makes-three-months-off-paid-parental-leave-at-15-high-tech-firms>

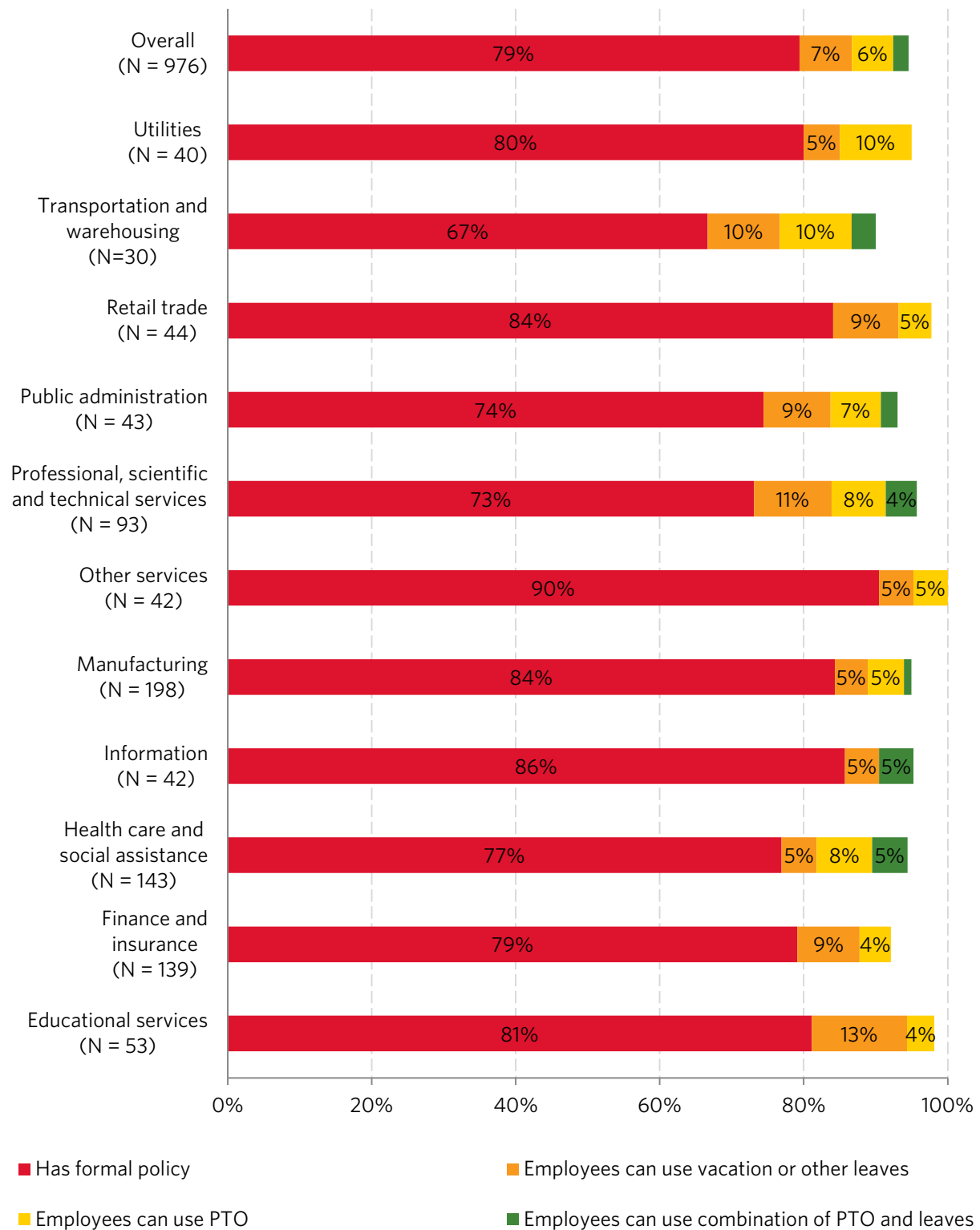
provided in separate reports. See the appendix for more information about the survey and the participating organizations.

How many employers have formal bereavement leave policies?

As illustrated in Figures 1 through 3, four in five employers reported having bereavement leave policies that go beyond any applicable federal, state and local laws or that the company had implemented policies where there are no legal requirements for leave. Another one in seven employers reported that employees could take bereavement leave using consolidated leaves such as PTO or leave banks, sick leave or vacation.

Formal bereavement leave policies were less common among employers in transportation and warehousing and more common among employers in "other" services, manufacturing, information, and retail trade. The smallest employers (fewer than 100 employees) were least likely to offer bereavement leave, particularly in contrast to employers with at least 2,500 workers. Among states for which we received responses from at least 30 employers, California and Washington employers were less likely to have formal bereavement leave policies. Employers with workers in multiple states or with most of their employees in Missouri were more likely to have formal bereavement leave policies.

Figure 1: Bereavement leave policies by selected industries (% of employers)



Note: Industries with fewer than 30 responding employers are not shown.

Figure 2: Bereavement leave policies by number of employees (% of employers)

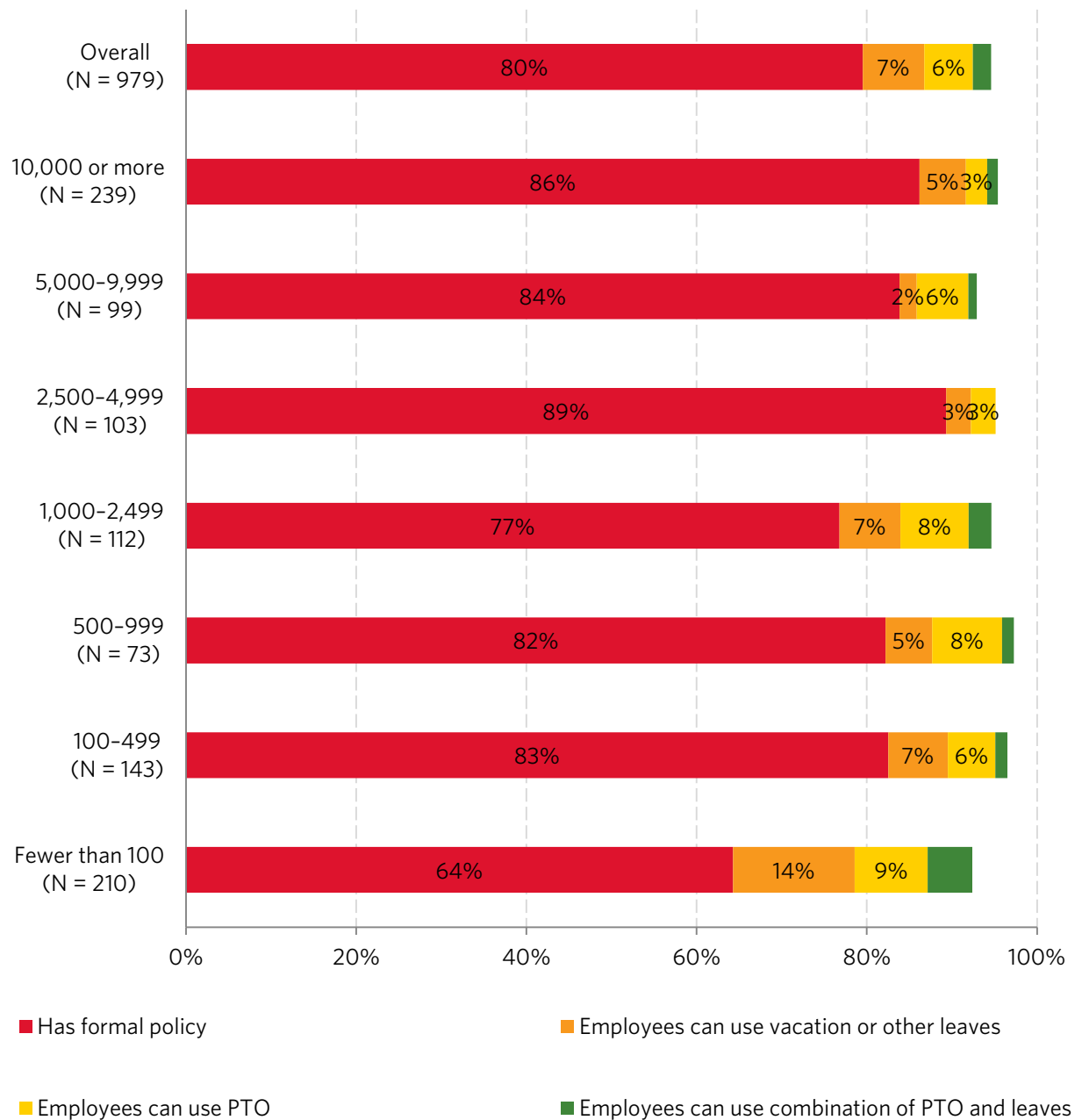
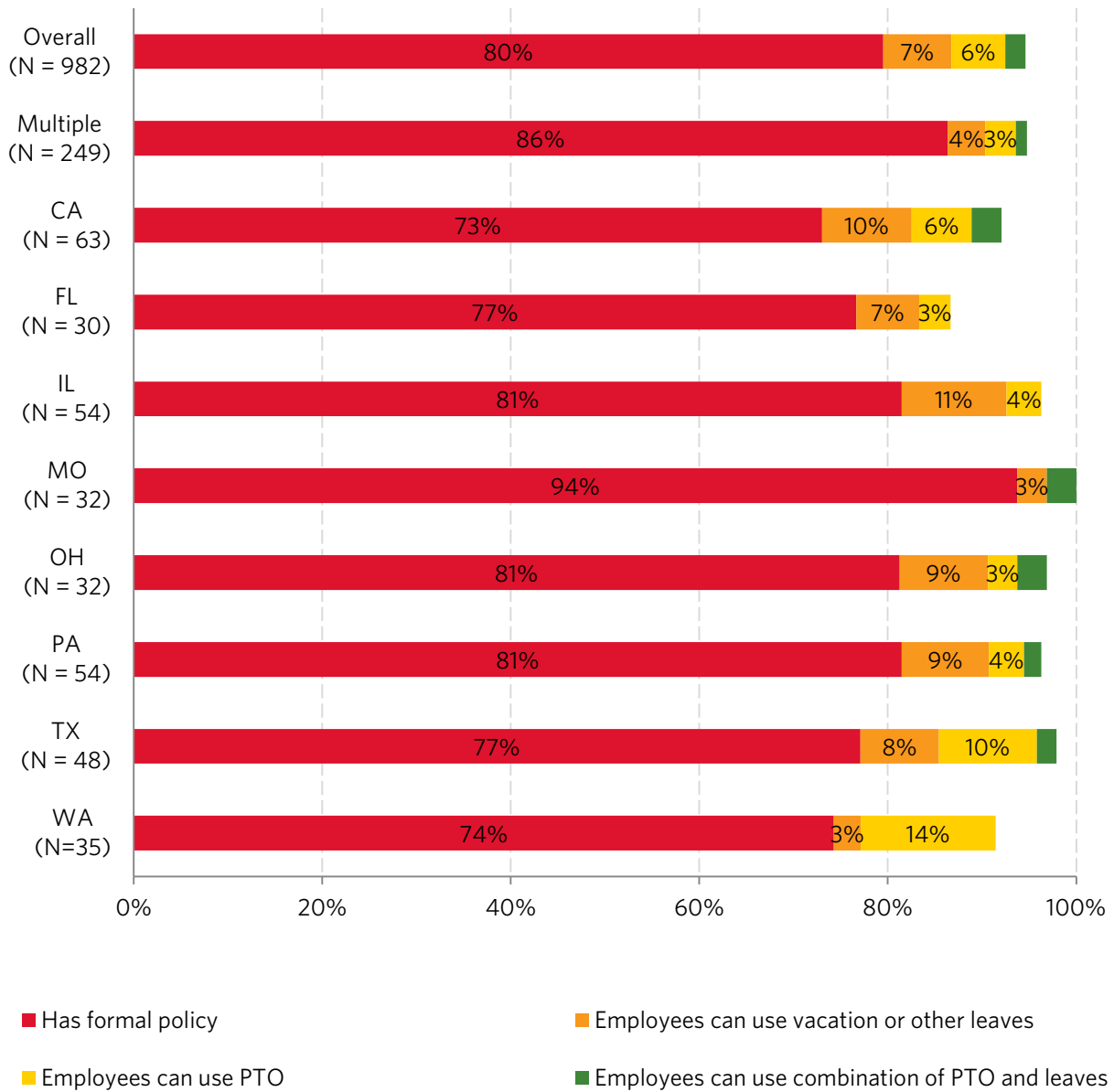


Figure 3: Bereavement leave policies by selected states (% of employers)



Note: States with fewer than 30 responding employers are not shown.

Who can take bereavement leave?

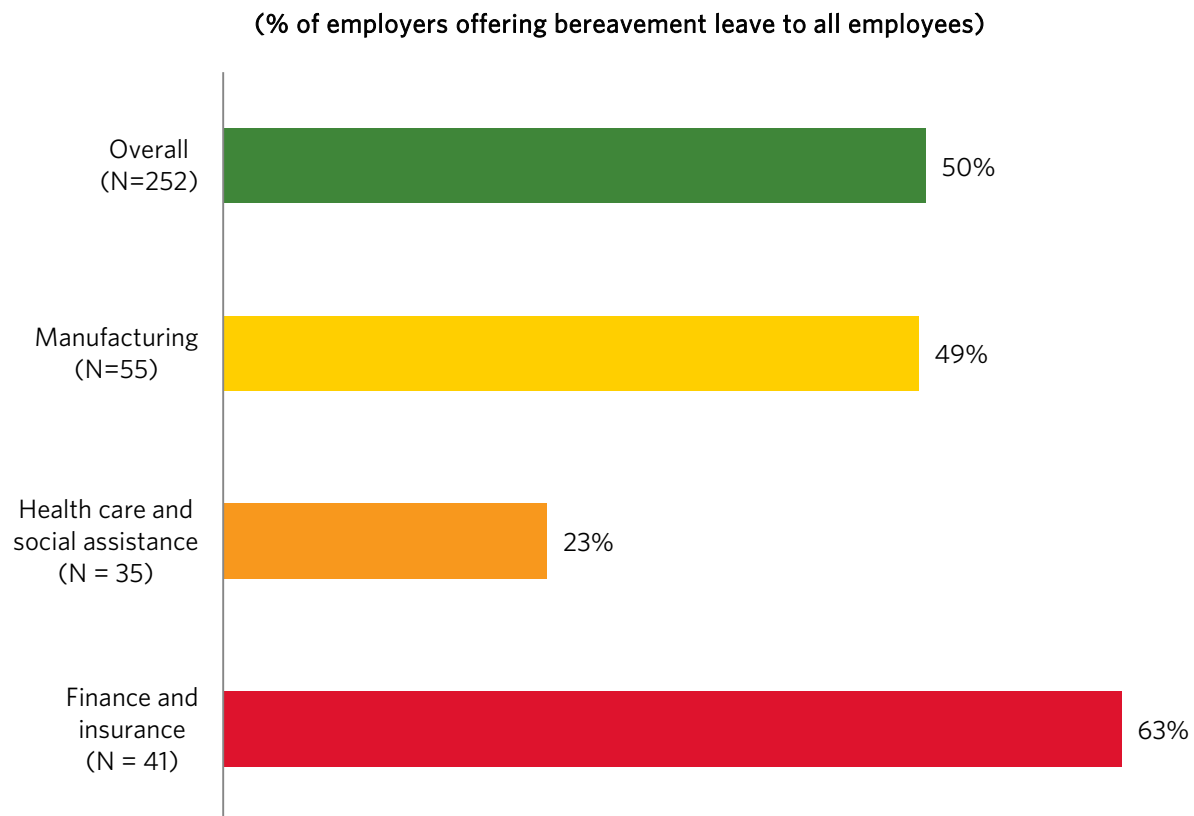
UNIVERSAL ELIGIBILITY

Employers with formal bereavement leave policies were asked to provide additional information about eligibility for leave. About 250 employers opted to provide this information (out of 781 employers with any formal policies to describe).

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate employers' responses to whether bereavement leave was offered to all employees, by industry and employer size. As of this writing, no single state had responses from at least 30 employers. For that reason, results are not reported by state.

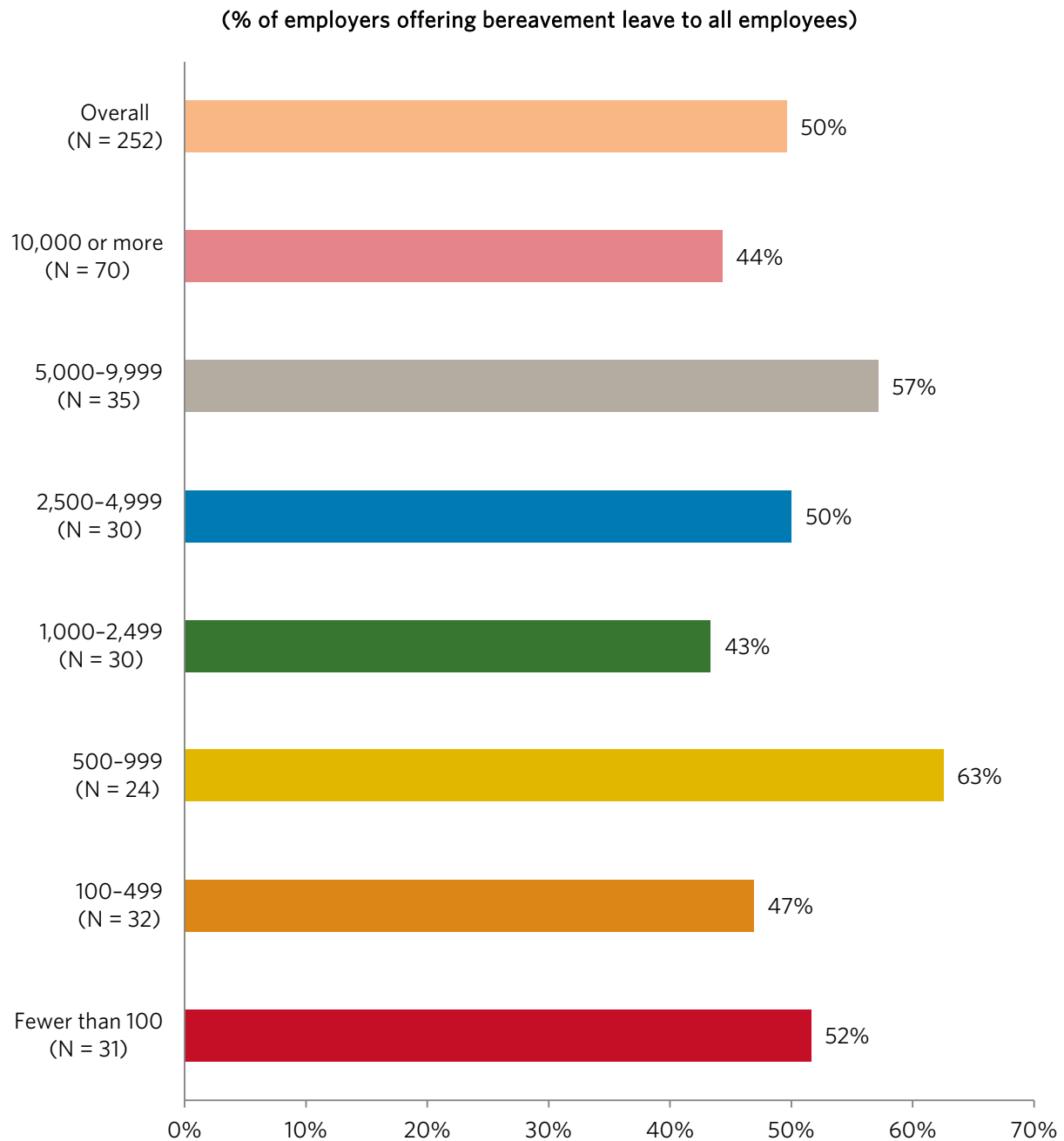
About half of employers that offered bereavement leave made it available to all employees—many fewer in health care than in finance and insurance. There was no clear association between company size and universal eligibility for bereavement leave.

Figure 4: Universal eligibility by selected industries



Note: Includes only employers that provided information about their formal bereavement leave policies. Industries with fewer than 30 responding employers are not shown.

Figure 5: Universal eligibility by number of employees



Note: Includes only employers that provided information about their formal bereavement leave policies.

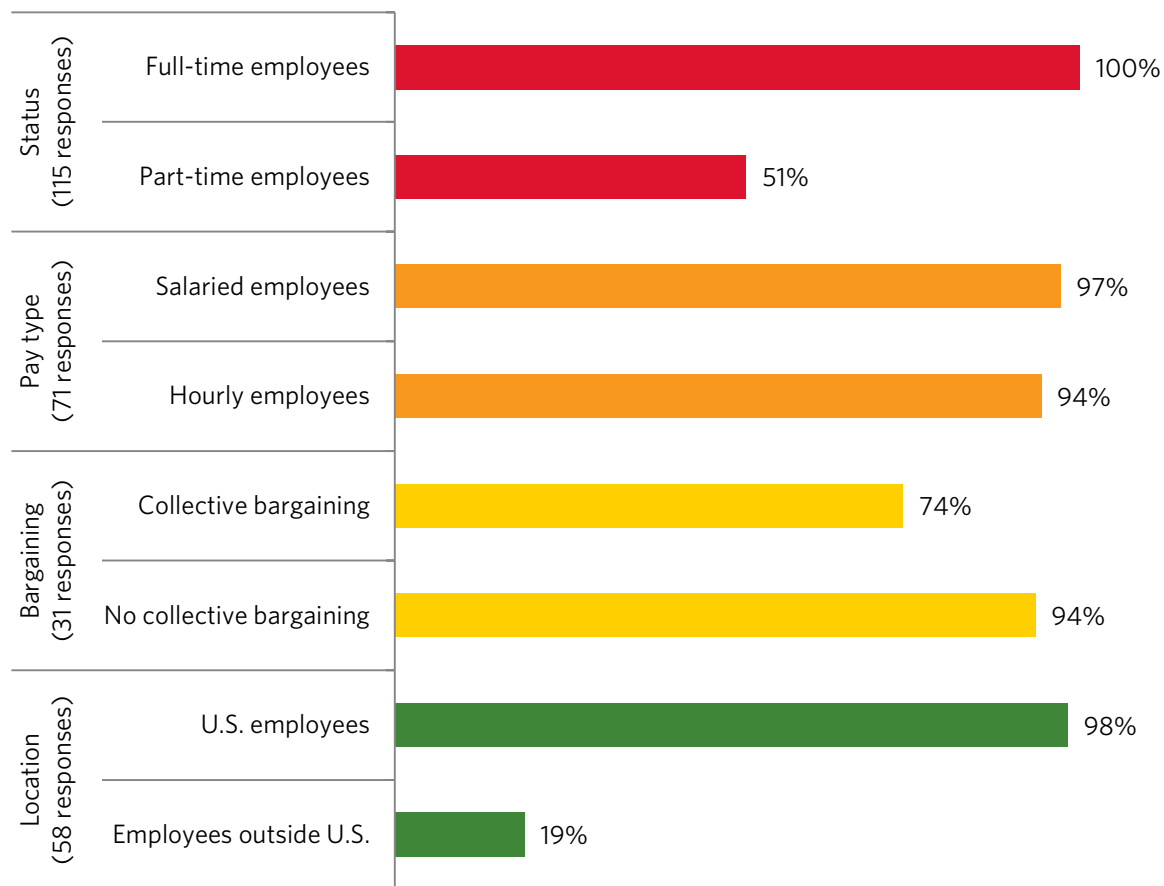
ELIGIBILITY BY EMPLOYEE CATEGORY

Employers that did not offer bereavement leave to all employees were provided the opportunity to identify categories of employees who were eligible for leave. These categories included full- or part-time status, salaried or hourly pay status, employees covered/not covered by collective-bargaining agreements and employees inside or outside the United States.

Figure 6 shows the percentage of employers that identified specific categories of employees in their formal leave policies. Because not all categories of employers are relevant to all employers, the proportions represent employers that responded about different ways to classify employees (e.g., by pay status or by full- or part-time status).

Half of employers that referenced full- or part-time status offered bereavement leave to part-time employees. Hourly employees were offered bereavement leave nearly as often as salaried employees, whereas three-quarters of employers that referenced collective bargaining offered bereavement leave to employees covered by collective-bargaining agreements. Only one in five employers that referenced the location of employees indicated that bereavement leave was offered to employees outside the United States.

Figure 6: Categories of employees identified in formal bereavement leave policies (% of employers)

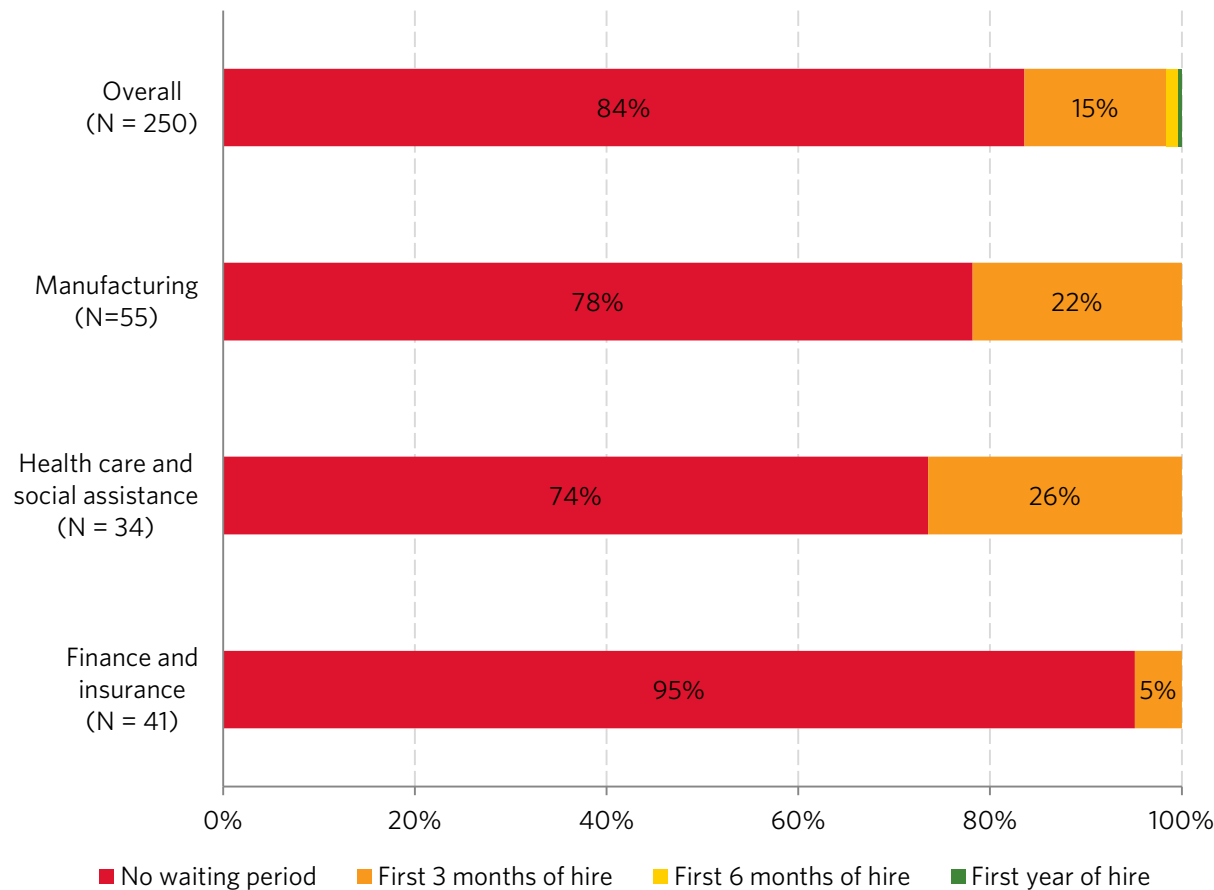


Note: Includes only employers that provided information about their formal bereavement leave policies.

How long must new hires wait until they become eligible to take bereavement leave?

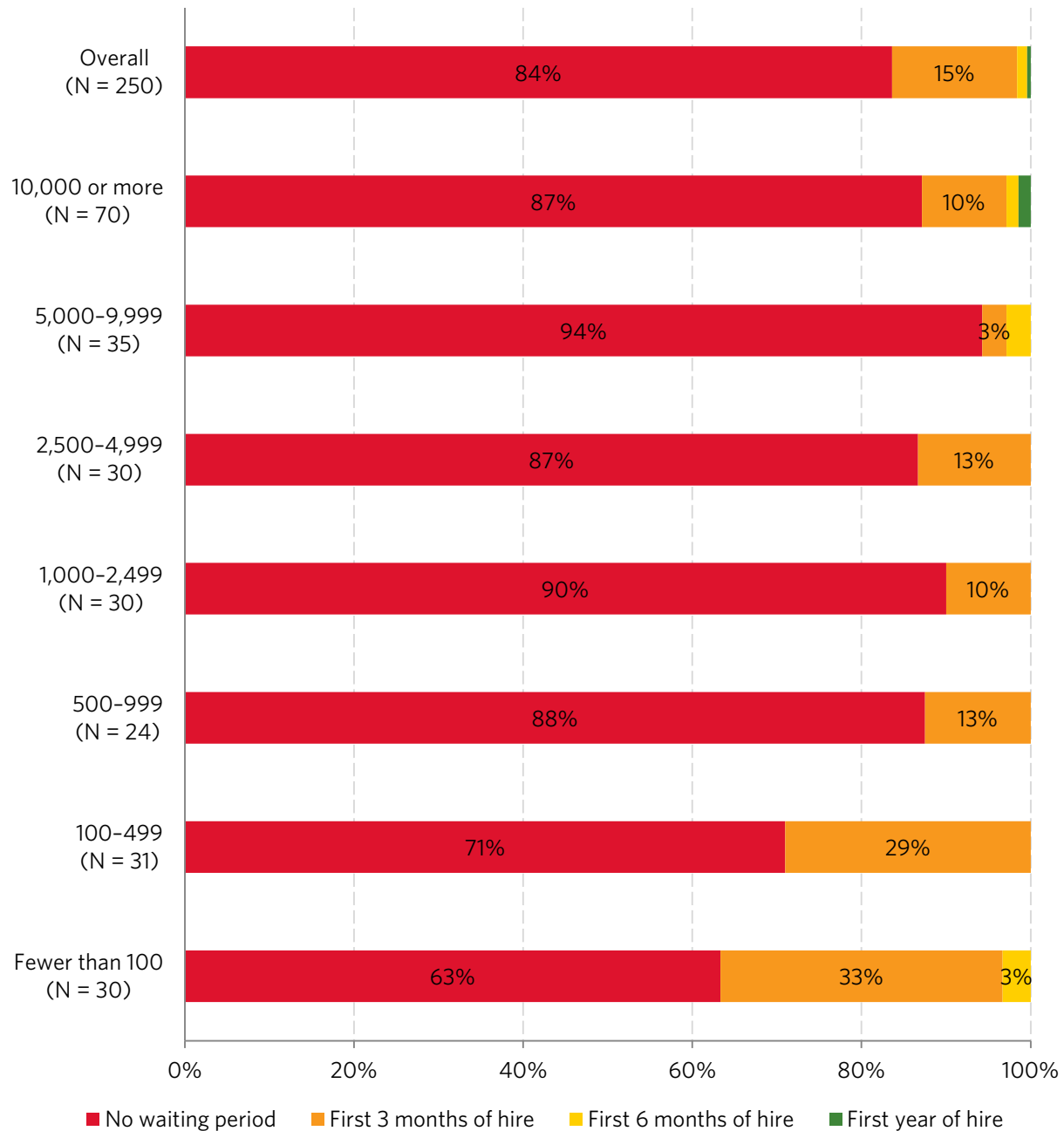
Figures 7 and 8 show the waiting periods before new employees become eligible for bereavement leave. Only one in six employers required a waiting period for new employees to become eligible for bereavement leave. Waiting periods most were common among health care employers. Employers with a waiting period typically made leave available during the first three to six months of hire. Waiting periods were most common among employers with fewer than 500 employees.

Figure 7: Waiting periods for bereavement leave eligibility by selected industries (% of employers)



Note: Includes only employers that provided information about their formal bereavement leave policies. Industries with fewer than 30 responding employers are not shown.

Figure 8: Waiting periods for bereavement leave eligibility by number of employees (% of employers)



Note: Includes only employers that provided information about their formal bereavement leave policies.

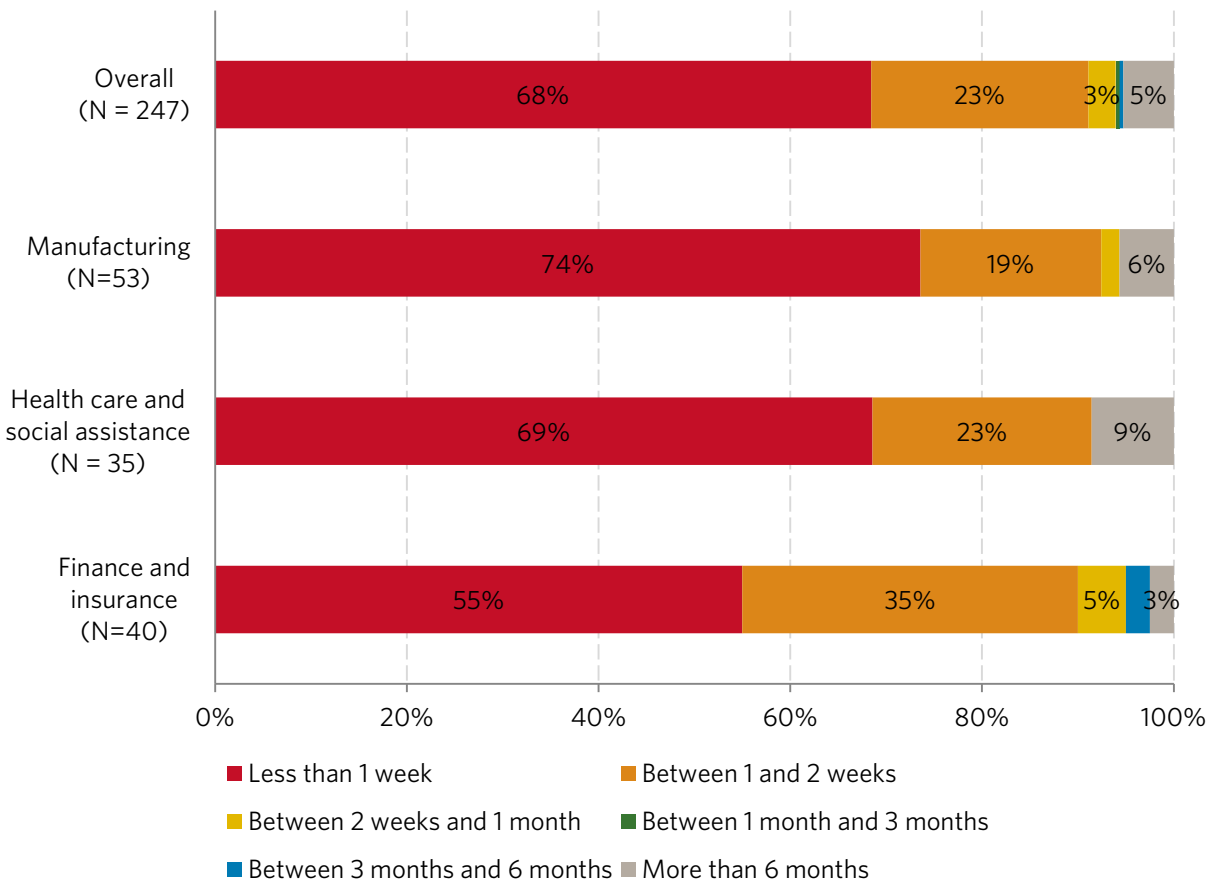
How is bereavement leave managed and tracked?

Nearly all employers (96%) managed and tracked bereavement leaves internally using internal resources (such as an HR or benefits department), rather than outsourcing these leaves to a third party administrator (results not shown). There were with few meaningful differences in management approaches across industries or companies of different sizes.

What are the allowed durations of bereavement leave?

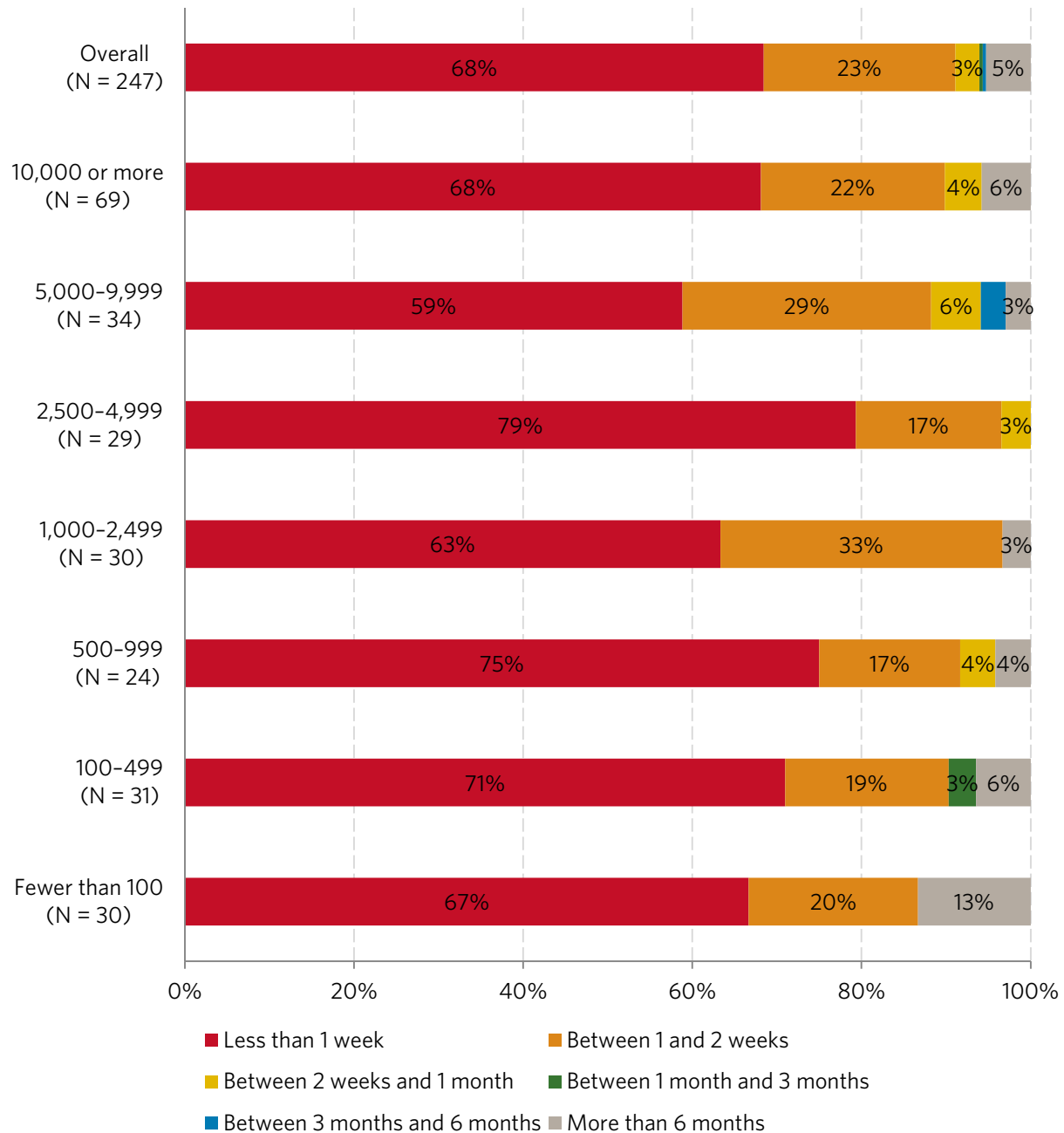
Figures 9 and 10 show the allowed durations of bereavement leave, by industry and by the number of employees. Overall, more than two-thirds of employers allowed less than one week of bereavement leave. Nearly one in four allowed between one and two weeks. Finance and insurance employers were most likely to allow at least one week. There was no clear association between company size and allowed durations of bereavement leave.

Figure 9: Allowed bereavement leave duration by selected industries (% of employers)



Note: Includes only employers that provided information about their formal bereavement leave policies. Industries with fewer than 30 responding employers are not shown.

Figure 10: Allowed bereavement leave duration by number of employees (% of employers)



Note: Includes only employers that provided information about their formal bereavement leave policies.

How much of their usual pay does an employee receive while on bereavement leave?

Across industries and company sizes, virtually all employers (93%) paid 100% of an employee's wages during bereavement leave (results not shown). Only 2% reported that bereavement leave was unpaid, while 4% reported that bereavement pay depends on the employee.

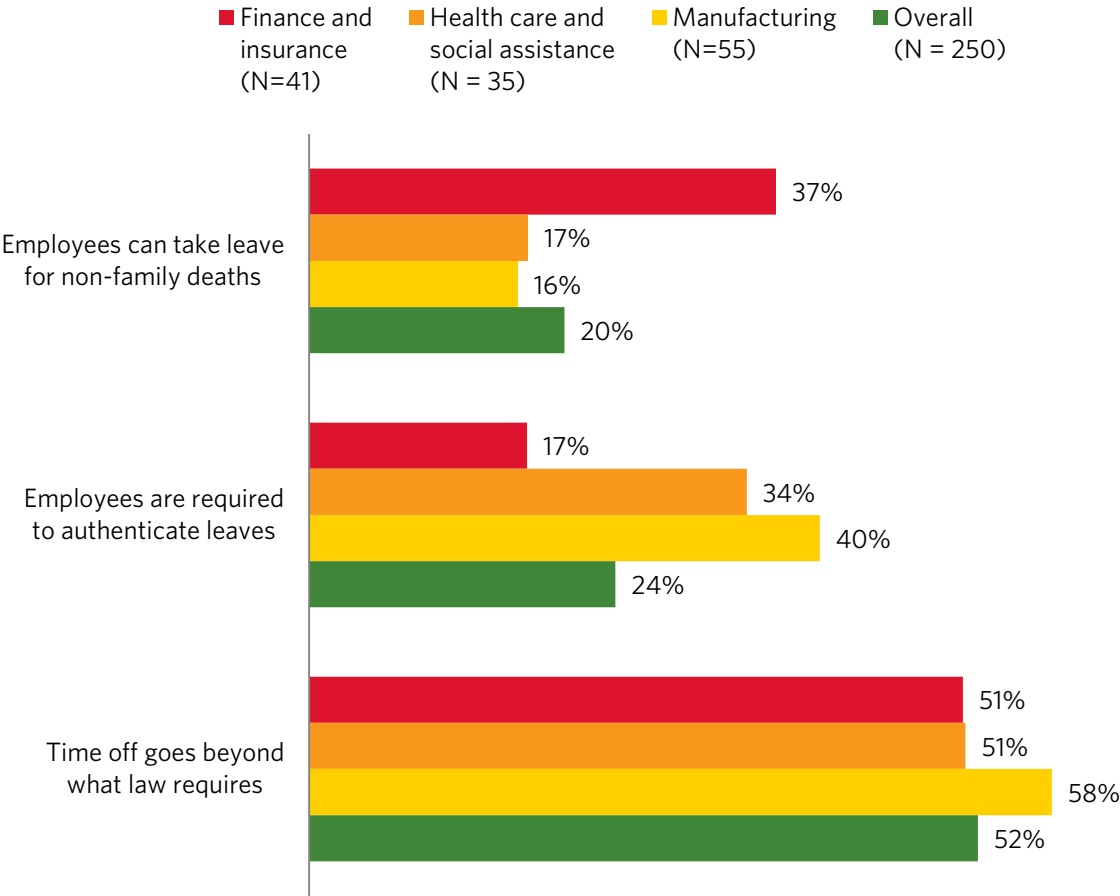
What other policies are applied to bereavement leaves?

Employers with formal bereavement leave policies were also asked about rules that applied to time off and pay during leave. Time-off policies include the requirements that employees authenticate the reason for leave, whether bereavement leave is allowed for non-family members' deaths, whether the amount of allowed time off exceeds what is required by applicable leave laws, whether allowed time off accrues over time or is available all at once and whether unused time in one year rolls over for use in the next year. Pay policies include whether employee benefits such as health care continued for the duration of leave, whether amounts of leave pay exceed what is required by applicable leave laws and whether employees receive pay during the entire duration of leave.

TIME-OFF POLICIES

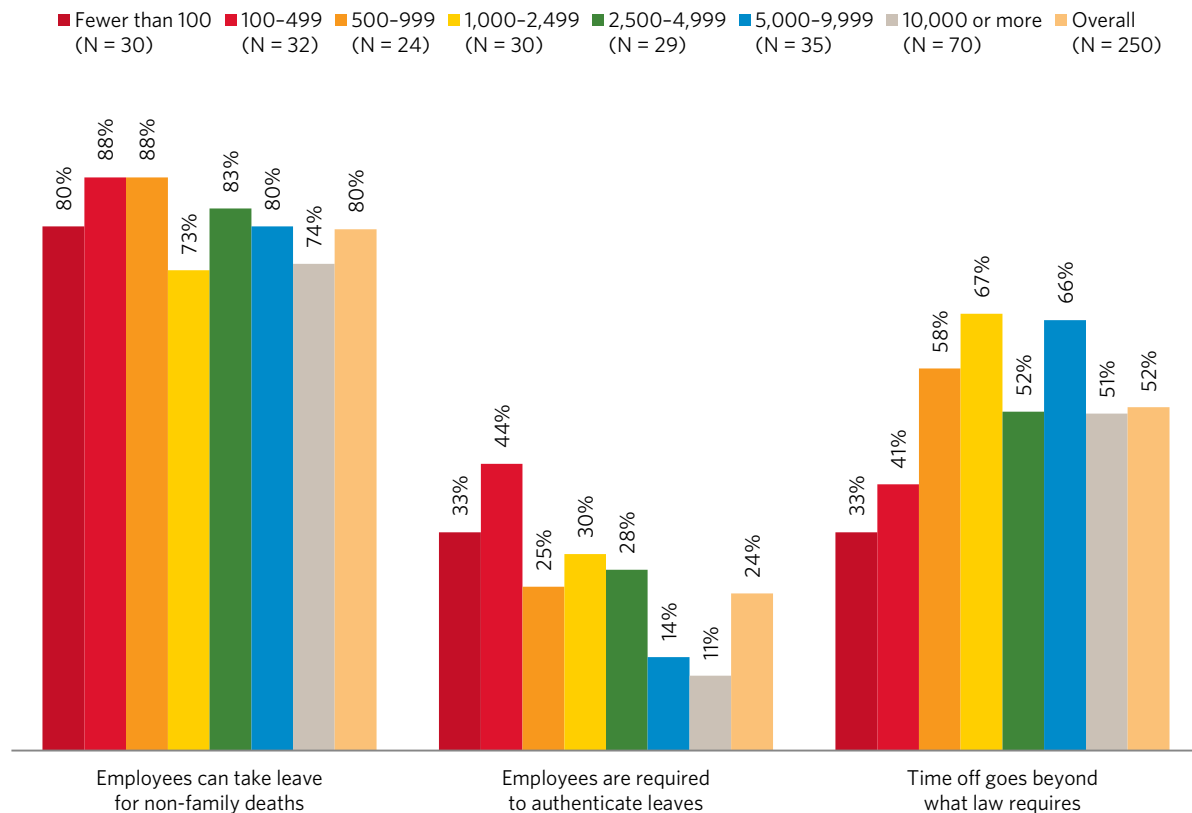
Figures 11 and 12 show the percentage of employers that apply different types of time-off policies. Only one in five employers allowed bereavement leave for the deaths of non-family members—a practice more common among finance and insurance employers. One-quarter of employers required employees to authenticate their need for bereavement leave. Generally, larger companies were less likely to require authentication. Half of employers reported that the allowed durations of bereavement leave went beyond what is required by law. Nearly all employers (97%) made leave time available all at once (as opposed to accruing), while virtually none (5%) allowed unused time to roll over (results not shown).

Figure 11: Other time-off policies by selected industries (% of employers)



Note: Includes only employers that provided information about their formal bereavement leave policies. Industries with fewer than 30 responding employers are not shown.

Figure 12: Other time-off policies by number of employees (% of employers)

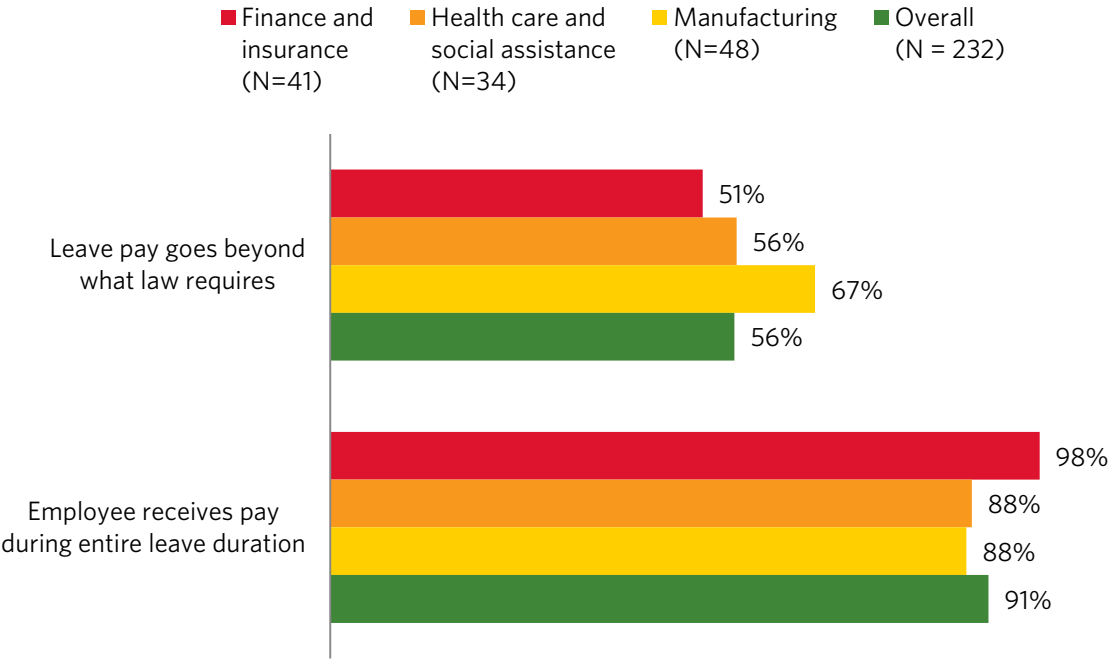


Note: Includes only employers that provided information about their formal bereavement leave policies.

PAY POLICIES

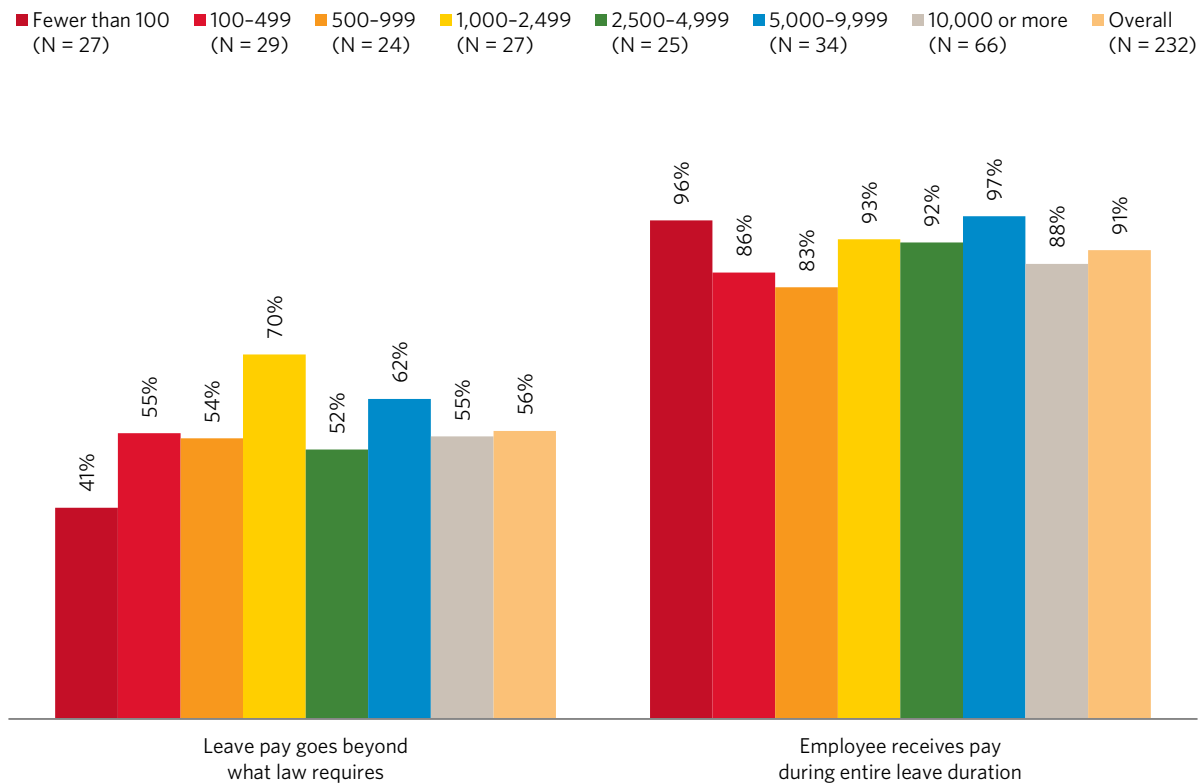
Employers that provided a specific pay rate during bereavement leave were asked further questions about pay and benefits policies. Figures 13 and 14 show the percentage of employers that applied different types of pay policies. Although not shown in the charts, 100% of employers with formal bereavement leave policies reported that employee benefits such as health care continued for the duration of leave. Half of employers indicated that their leave pay went beyond what is required by law, though this was slightly more common among manufacturing employers. Nine in ten employers indicated that employees received their pay for the entire leave duration. Few differences in pay policies were observed across employers of different sizes.

Figure 13: Other pay and benefits policies by selected industries (% of employers)



Note: Includes only employers that reported a specific pay rate as part of their formal bereavement leave policies. Industries with fewer than 30 responding employers are not shown. All employers with formal bereavement leave policies reported that employee benefits such as health care continued for the duration of leave.

Figure 14: Other pay and benefits policies by number of employees (% of employers)



Note: Includes only employers that reported a specific pay rate as part of their formal bereavement leave policies. All employers with formal bereavement leave policies reported that employee benefits such as health care continued for the duration of leave.

Appendix

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The Leave Management Benchmarking program collects data on nine separate types of leaves. Employers complete a survey for each type of leave for which they would like to receive a benchmarking report. Each leave is considered as a separate survey effort. Employers may complete surveys for as many leaves as they wish, and survey responses across leave types are not connected to one another.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Employers are recruited for the survey from IBI member organizations, as well as from the membership lists and client bases of partner organizations. As of the publication date of the current report, partner organizations that have invited members and clients to take surveys include the following:

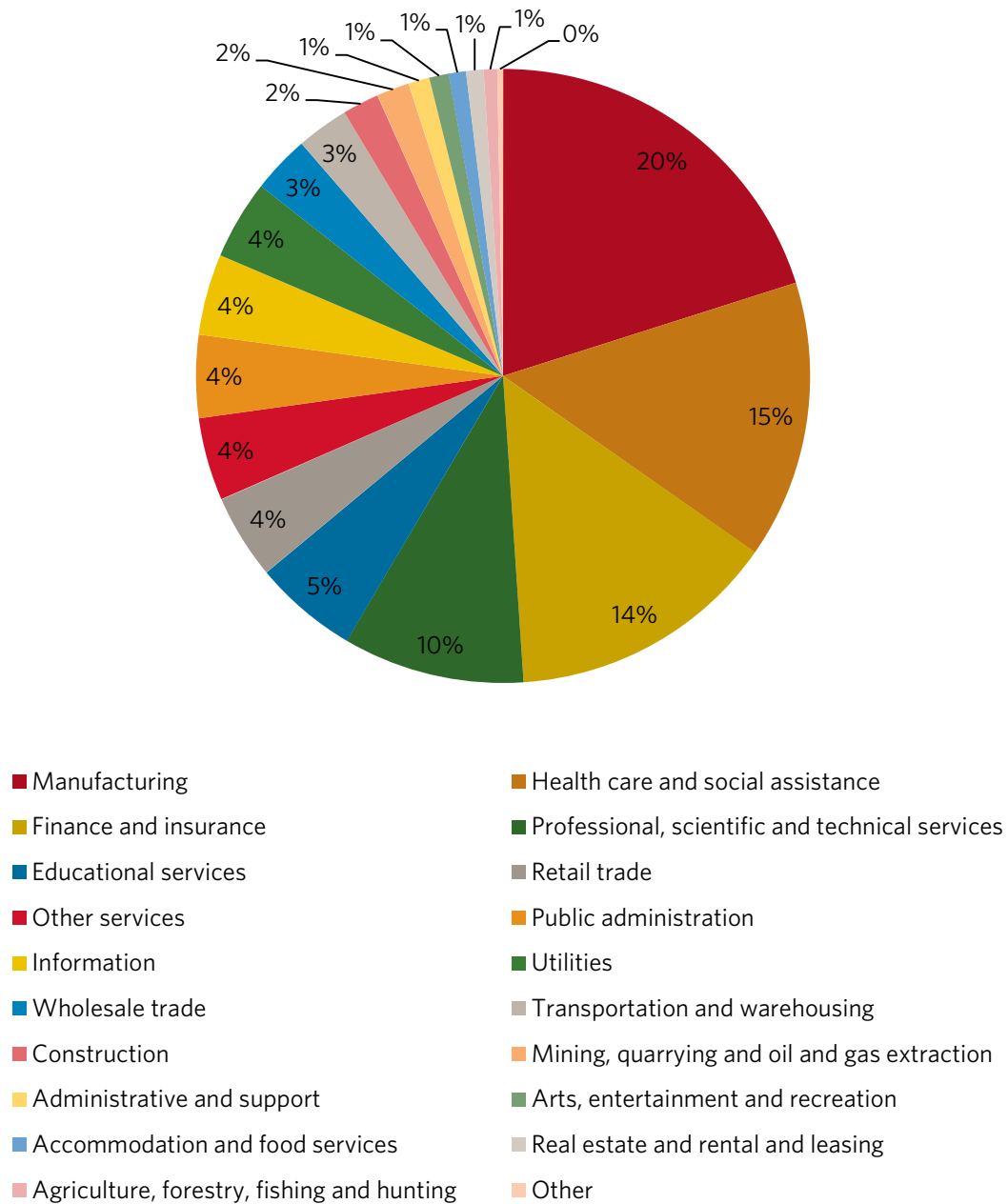
- The Alliance
- Aon Hewitt
- Broadspire
- ClaimVantage
- Employers Health
- Employers Health Coalition
- Employers Healthcare Coalition
- Florida Health Care Coalition
- Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health
- HC21
- Houston Business Coalition on Health
- Liberty Mutual Insurance
- Memphis Business Group on Health
- Midwest Business Group on Health
- Mississippi Business Group on Health
- Nevada Business Group on Health
- Northeastern Oklahoma Business Coalition on Health
- Pacific Business Group on Health
- Pittsburgh Business Group on Health
- The Reed Group
- Rhode Island Business Group on Health
- Sedgwick Claims Management Services, Inc.
- St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition
- Standard Insurance
- Sun Life Financial
- Unum Group
- Washington Health Alliance
- Willis Towers Watson
- WorkPartners
- Wyoming Business Coalition on Health

The survey was opened for responses on July 5, 2017, and remains open continuously. A report on a specific leave type is released when surveys from 30 organizations provide information about their policies; it is subsequently updated for each additional 30 recorded policy descriptions. Because the interest is primarily in benchmarking employers' policies, all due diligence is made to exclude responses from persons known to represent consultants, absence management suppliers or third-party administrators. The primary method of identifying these organizations is through cross-referencing the domain in the work email address provided by the user for delivering results. Respondents who provide an email address that indicates a personal email service (such as Gmail) are asked to provide a corporate work email to verify their employer status. Responses with unverified email addresses are excluded from analysis.

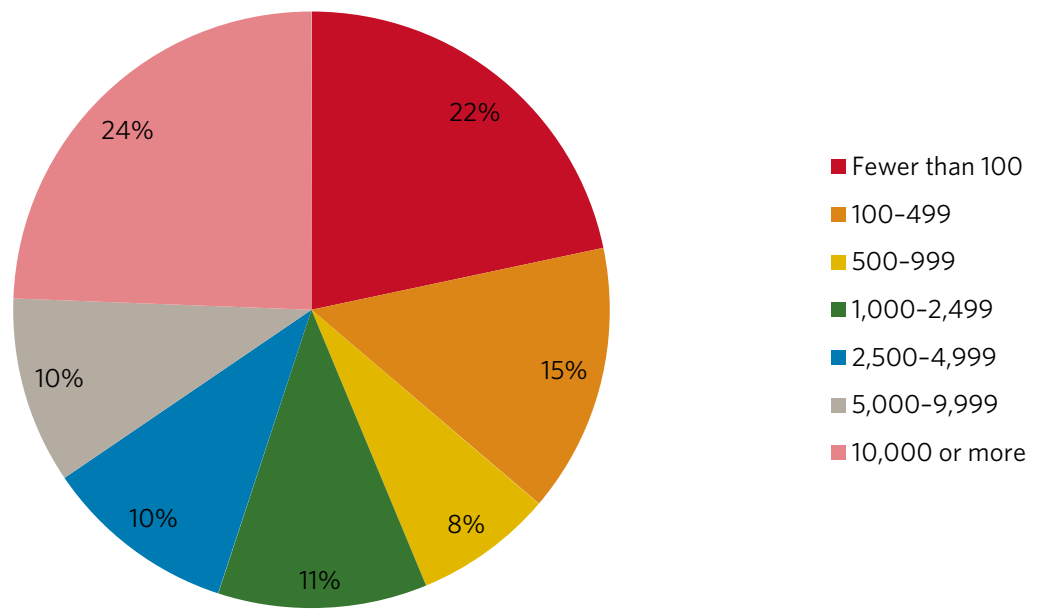
Reports are updated with industry- and state-level benchmarks when 30 additional responses are recorded.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDING EMPLOYERS

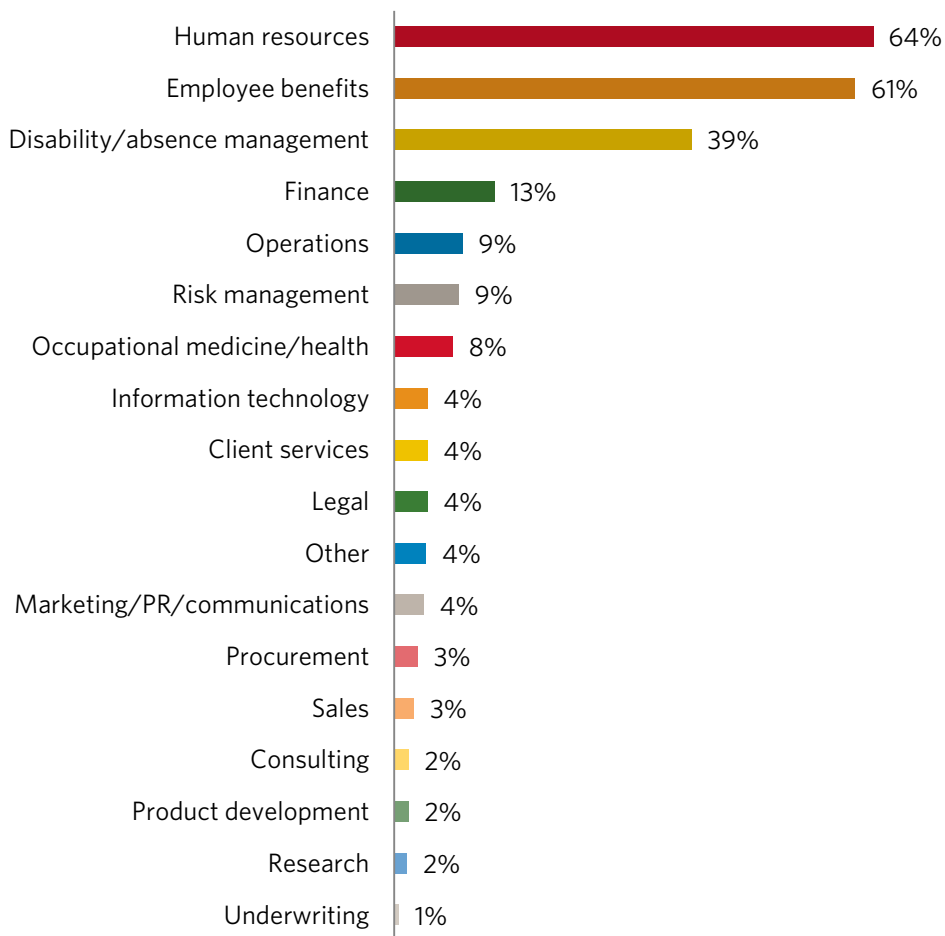
Appendix Figure 1: Industry



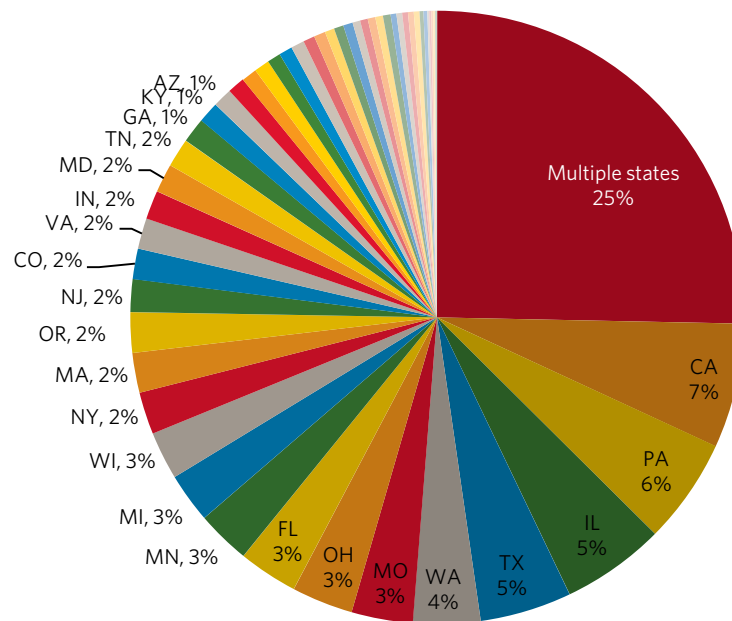
Appendix Figure 2: Company size



Appendix Figure 3: Respondents' organizational functions



Appendix Figure 4: State in which most employees work



Note: States that represented less than 1% of responses are not labeled.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks are due to the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions for helping coordinate the distribution of the survey through several employer coalitions.

IBI's Leave Management Benchmarking series originated from the Leave Management Issue Group, part of IBI's Research Committee. IBI gratefully acknowledges representatives from the following organizations for providing expert guidance during the development of the Leave Policy Benchmarking Survey.

Leave Management Issue Group members:

- Angie Brown, ClaimVantage
- Ed Crouch, MD, Liberty Mutual Insurance
- Marc Cunningham, Broadspire
- Susan Fabry, Sun Life Financial
- Michelle Jackson, Unum Group
- Annie Jantz, Lincoln Financial Group
- Gene Lanzoni, The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America
- David Setzkorn, Standard Insurance

Terri Rhodes, President of the Disability Management Employer Coalition, also provided valuable guidance on the development of the survey.

IBI RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
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| • Anthem | • Lockton Companies | • Sanofi |
| • Aon Hewitt | • Marsh & McLennan Agency | • Sedgwick Claims Management Services |
| • Broadspire | • Mercer-Trion | • Standard Insurance |
| • CareWorks Absence Management | • Merck & Co. | • Sun Life Financial |
| • Cigna | • MetLife | • Teladoc |
| • ClaimVantage | • Morneau Shepell | • UnitedHealthcare |
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