



Opinion Poll

South Carolina small businesses support paid family and medical leave

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Small Business Majority
1015 15th Street, NW, Suite 450
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 828-8357
www.smallbusinessmajority.org

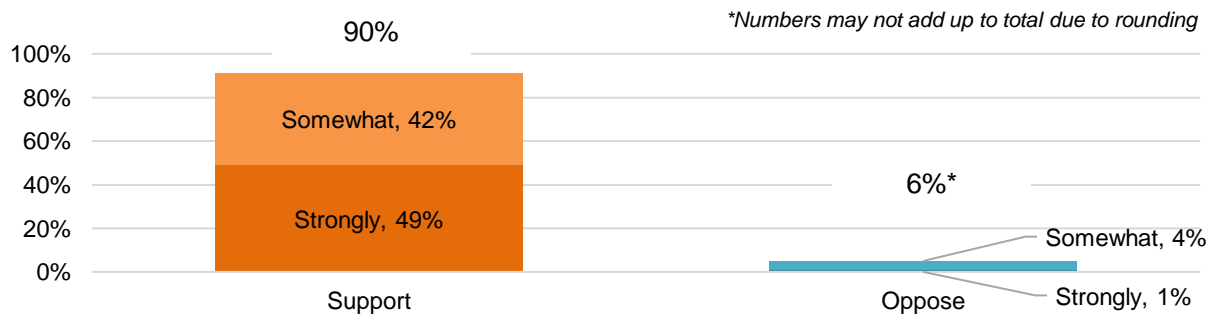
National Partnership for Women & Families
1725 Eye St. NW, Suite 950
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 986-2600
www.nationalpartnership.org

Executive summary

Small business owners across the Palmetto State know it makes good business sense to take care of the people who work for them. However, it can be challenging to provide key benefits, including paid family and medical leave, which they believe would help them recruit and retain their workers. With small businesses struggling to compete with large companies that can offer attractive benefits packages, it should come as no surprise that small business owners support establishing a comprehensive paid family and medical leave program that would make it easier for them to facilitate their employees' access to the paid time off they need to support their families while keeping their jobs.

A new scientific opinion poll conducted for Small Business Majority and the National Partnership for Women & Families by Lake Research Partners found that 90% of South Carolina small business owners support the creation of a national paid family and medical leave program that would guarantee employees wage replacement for up to 12 weeks, funded by 0.5% employer and employee contributions each. The leave could be for welcoming a new child (born or adopted), or a serious health condition or injury for an employee or a family member. In the absence of a federal program, 10 states (including the District of Columbia) have programs fully in effect, with four more in the process of implementation.¹ The South Carolina legislature has also considered a measure to expand access to paid family and medical leave.

Figure 1: South Carolina small businesses support the creation of a national paid family and medical leave program



South Carolina small business owners support paid family and medical leave for several reasons:

- 96% agree that businesses are better able to retain highly skilled and experienced employees.
- 93% agree that employee morale is better when they know they can take care of themselves and their families if needed without losing their job.
- 94% agree that businesses have more reason to invest in employees, resulting in a more skilled workforce.
- 92% agree that employees are more invested in the business when they know they can stay despite changes in life circumstances
- 89% agree that businesses have more cohesive teams when turnover is lower.

Most small business owners (94%) say they support access to paid family and medical leave as an employer and also as someone who cares about the people who work for them, and many are taking steps to offer at least some paid leave to their employees. However, it's important to note that there is a clear gap between the amount of paid leave that small businesses do offer and the amount they would like to provide. More than 8 in 10 (87%) small business owners agree that they would like to offer more paid family and medical leave than their business can currently afford, and only some are able to offer it:

- Among the 62% of small businesses that offer paid medical leave for an employee's own serious health needs, 59% offer one month or less.
- Among the 22% of small businesses that offer paid family leave to care for relatives, 72% offer one month or less.
- Among the 62% of small businesses that offer paid leave for pregnancy and/or childbirth, 52% offer one month or less.
- Among the 55% of small businesses that offer paid parental leave for a newborn child, 53% offer one month or less.
- Among the 24% of small businesses that offer paid parental leave for adoptive and/or foster parents, 90% offer one month or less.

South Carolina small businesses overwhelmingly support establishing a paid family and medical leave program, and they think it would improve employee morale and help with recruitment and retention. This support is underscored by how many small businesses have been impacted by extended leave, with both small business owners and their employees having taken extended leave to care for themselves or family members. As South Carolina legislators consider proposals that would establish a state-wide paid family and medical leave insurance program, it's important that they keep the views of small businesses in mind.

Additional poll findings

- **More than 9 in 10 (92%) South Carolina small business owners agree that having access to paid family and medical leave is important to their employees' economic security.**
- The need for paid family and medical leave is an issue that is already familiar to them: **more than three-quarters (78%) have had at least one employee take more than a week to care for a new child, for their own serious health needs or to care for a family member's serious health needs.**
- Entrepreneurs have also taken extended time away from their business. **Fifty-six percent have taken more than a week to care for an immediate family member**, while 15% have taken more than a week to care for extended family or a friend.
- When asked to choose between two approaches, **small business owners are more than twice as likely to support a universal paid family and medical leave program** (69%) than a voluntary insurance program that businesses could choose to buy into (29%).

Methodology

Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey, which was conducted online on August 13-21, 2024. The survey reached a total of 500 small business owners nationwide, plus oversamples of 100 small business owners each in Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and South Carolina, and 100 small business owners of color nationwide. The sample size in South Carolina was 105 respondents and the margin of error for the South Carolina results is +/- 9.6% at a 95% confidence level.

Download report topline from our website: <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/workforce/south-carolina-small-businesses-support-paid-family-and-medical-leave>

National report: <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/workforce/small-businesses-support-national-paid-family-medical-leave-program>

¹ "State Paid Family & Medical Leave Insurance Laws." National Partnership for Women & Families. July 2024. <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/state-paid-family-leave-laws>