

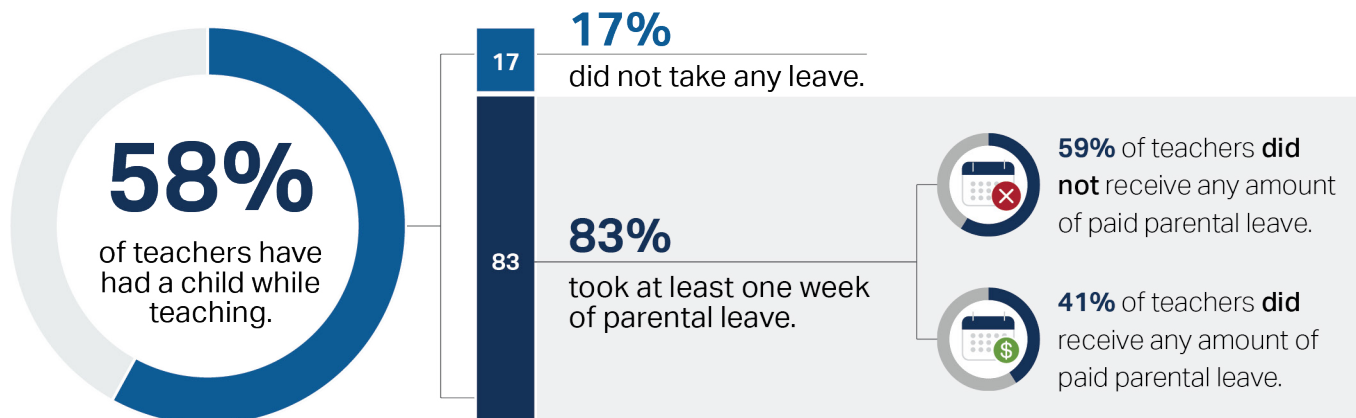
Walton Family Foundation *Teaching for Tomorrow* Study

Teacher Parental Leave Findings

A nationally representative survey of nearly 2,000 U.S. K-12 teachers — conducted by Gallup and the Walton Family Foundation as part of the *Teaching for Tomorrow* study — finds that six in 10 U.S. teachers have given birth to or adopted a child during their time as a teacher; however, nearly 60% of those teachers say their school did not grant them any paid parental leave, and about one in five took no leave at all. Recent changes to paid family leave policies in many U.S. states appear to be driving more teachers to take longer periods of time off after having children, with more of that time covered by paid leave policies.

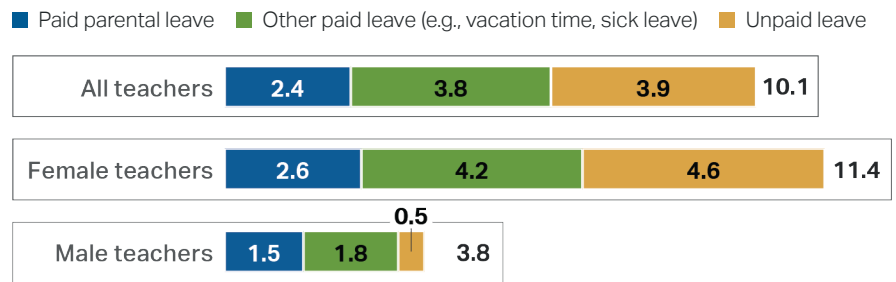
Fifty-eight percent of teachers say that they have given birth to or adopted a child since starting their career as a teacher. Among those teachers who say the arrival of their child overlapped with the school year, **83% say they took at least one week of parental leave, while 17% did not take any leave.** This percentage diverges sharply along gender lines: 92% of female teachers say they took parental leave after giving birth to or adopting a child during the school year, compared with 55% of male teachers. Additionally, while 6% of teachers say the birth of their child did not overlap with the school year, over one in three teachers (38%) say they tried to plan the birth or adoption of their child for a time that would not conflict with the school year.

While most teachers do take time away from work after welcoming their child, the circumstances of that leave vary. The 83% of teachers who did take parental leave report an average of just over 10 weeks away from the classroom, with women taking roughly 11 weeks, compared with just under four weeks among men. Moreover, even when teachers do have the ability to take time away from work to welcome their child, many of them are only able to do so by utilizing accrued sick leave and vacation time, or by forgoing a paycheck entirely.



On average, **2.4 weeks of teachers' leave is covered by paid parental leave, while the majority of their leave is covered through other paid time off**, such as vacation or sick leave (3.8 weeks) or by taking unpaid leave (3.9 weeks).

Average Weeks of Parental Leave Taken



Among teachers who took at least one week of parental leave

However, it is important to note that 59% of teachers who took parental leave (and 66% of all teachers who had a child during their teaching career) received no paid parental leave at all. This is supported by **new analysis** from the National Center for Teacher Quality (NCTQ), which highlights that one in three teachers report having access to paid parental leave.

The same analysis from NCTQ also notes that 16 U.S. states require districts to offer some form of paid parental leave, beyond sick days, to teachers. An additional seven states allow districts or individuals to opt into the state-provided leave program. Additionally, the nature of these policies varies significantly from state to state: 11 states pay teachers who give birth their full salaries while on leave, while the amount of leave that teachers are allowed ranges from as few as two weeks to as many as 18 weeks.

As more states implement these mandatory or optional paid parental leave policies for teachers, those who have had children more recently are reporting longer leave periods and are also more likely to report that some of their leave was covered by a paid parental leave policy. Twenty years ago, the median teacher's parental leave lasted seven weeks, and **40% of teachers who took time off received some paid parental leave.**

Among teachers who last took parental leave in 2022 or later, **the median leave period was 12 weeks, with half of those teachers receiving at least one week of paid parental leave.**

Median Weeks of Parental Leave Taken

Based on year of most recent parental leave



Among teachers who took at least one week of parental leave; totals include paid parental leave, other paid leave (e.g., vacation time or sick leave) and unpaid leave.

METHODOLOGY AND COPYRIGHT

Results are based on a web survey conducted Oct. 29–Nov. 25, 2024, with a sample of 1,989 U.S. teachers working in public K-12 schools. For full methodology details of the Teaching for Tomorrow study, please see [the published report](#).

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