
Employees' Use of Leave

This chapter discusses leave taken from work for family or medical reasons during the 18-month period between January 1, 1999 and the time of the interview.⁵ Study findings are presented with regard to how much leave was taken, the demographic characteristics of persons taking leave, the reasons for their leave, as well as the use of intermittent leave. In addition, this chapter presents results about those who needed leave, but did not take it.

Where appropriate, this chapter also discusses how employees' use of leave has changed since 1995 using data from the 1995 Survey of Employees.

Differences between groups (including the 1995 and 2000 surveys) were analyzed for statistical significance by means of either chi-square tests or z-tests. These tests were computed taking into account the specific sample design and weighting of the data. An observed difference has been deemed "significant" if there is less than a 10 percent chance that the difference occurred by chance, given that the null hypothesis of "no difference" is true (i.e., $p < .10$). Furthermore, for all significant differences it is noted whether the significance is at the 10 percent level ($p < .10$) or the 5 percent level ($p < .05$).

In this chapter, the term "leave-takers" is used to refer to all employees who took leave for a reason that is covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act, regardless of their eligibility for the law or whether their employer is covered by the provisions of the Act.⁶ Thus, the findings presented in this chapter are not restricted to those

⁵ The reference periods for reporting leave, in both the 1995 and 2000 surveys, do not have precise end dates since survey interviews were conducted over a period of approximately 10 weeks. Since interviews began in July of 2000, the reference period covers an 18-20 month period.

⁶ This definition of leave-taker differs slightly from the definition used in the report of the 1995 projects (*A Workable Balance*, published by the Department of Labor). In the previous report, leave-takers included those who reported taking leave for non-covered reasons (e.g., to care for a sibling). For the current report, estimates from the 1995 Survey of Employees were regenerated to be consistent with this definition. Thus, the 1995 data presented in this report will differ slightly from the data presented in the previous report.

formally taking leave under the Act, nor are they restricted to those employed at covered establishments. Findings with respect to these groups are discussed in Chapter 3.

2.1 Describing Employees Taking Leave for Family or Medical Reasons

This section discusses the characteristics of employees that take leave for family or medical reasons.

2.1.1 The Amount of Family and Medical Leave Taken

Table 2.1 shows the number and percentage of employees who have taken leave since January 1, 1999, along with findings from the 1995 survey for a comparable period. It is estimated that approximately 23.8 million workers took leave for family or medical reasons (i.e., reasons covered by the FMLA) since January 1, 1999, representing 16.5 percent of persons employed during that period. The number of workers taking leave has increased to a statistically significant degree over the last five years.⁷ But it is important to note that the size of the workforce has also increased significantly in that time, from about 127 million employees to approximately 144 million. The estimate of the percentage of employees who are leave-takers (16.5%) does not reflect a significant change since 1995, when 16.0 percent of employees took this type of leave.

Table 2.1. Employees Taking Leave: 1995 and 2000 Surveys

	1995 Survey	2000 Survey
Number of employees taking leave (for a covered reason) in the previous 18 months**	20,359,000	23,830,000
Percent of employee population	16.0%	16.5%

** Difference between 1995 and 2000 is significant at $p < .05$.

Source: 1995 and 2000 Survey of Employees.

⁷ This may be an overestimate of the amount of change since 1995 in the number of employees taking leave. See Appendix C (section 1.6.3) for more details.

Data shown in Figure 2.1 indicate that most employees (75.2%) who used leave since January 1, 1999 did so only once during the reference period. Most of the remaining leave-takers used leave twice, although about 10 percent of leave-takers report taking leave 3 or more times. Analysis comparing these figures to findings from the 1995 survey did not reveal much change over time (Appendix Table A2-2.1).

**Figure 2.1. Number of Leaves Taken: 2000 Survey
(Percent of Leave-Takers)**

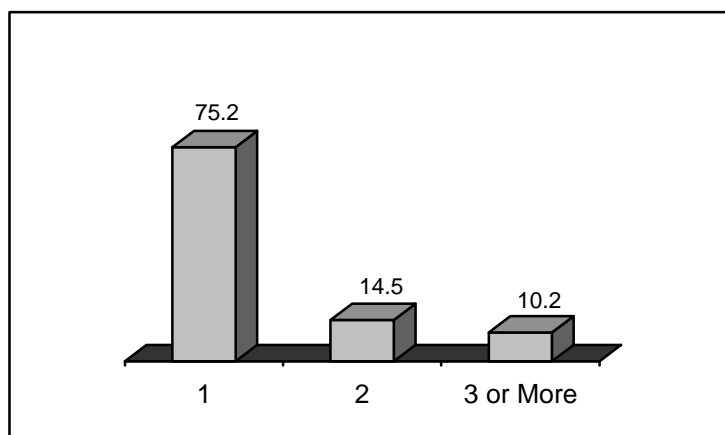
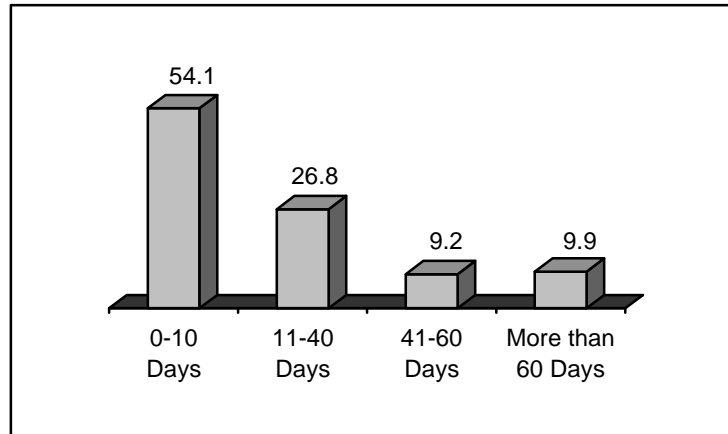


Figure 2.2 shows the length (in workdays) of longest leaves taken. Many leaves are of fairly brief duration—just over half (54.1%) of the longest leaves taken since January 1, 1999 have been for 10 or fewer workdays. About a tenth of leave-takers (9.2%), however, take between 41 and 60 days. Furthermore, another tenth (9.9%) report taking a leave that extends beyond the 12 weeks (i.e., 60 workdays) covered by FMLA. This is very consistent with data gathered in the 1995 survey (see Appendix Table A2-2.2). Furthermore, the median length of leave (10 days, not shown) has not changed in the last five years.

**Figure 2.2. Length of Longest Leave: 2000 Survey
(Percent of Leave-Takers)**



Approximately 1 in 4 leave-takers took leave more than once during the 18-month survey period. Table 2.2 shows that the length of their second longest leave tended to be quite brief. An estimated 42.9 percent of these leaves were 1 to 3 workdays long, and approximately one-quarter (26.3%) were 4 to 5 workdays.

Table 2.2. Length of Second Longest Leave: 2000 Survey

Length of Second Longest Leave	Percent of Those Taking More Than One Leave
1 – 3 days	42.9%
4 – 5 days	26.3%
6 – 10 days	14.1%
11 – 20 days	7.4%
More than 20 days	9.4%
Number of Leave-Takers Taking More Than One Leave	5,676,524

Note: Column percents may not total to 100% due to rounding.
Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

2.1.2 Reasons for Taking Leave

In the 2000 survey, leave-takers were asked to give the reason for their leave. If respondents reported taking more than one leave, they were asked the reason for the longest leave, second longest leave, and finally all other leaves. Table 2.3 shows, for each of the reasons covered by FMLA, the percent of *leave-takers* who

took at least one leave for that reason during the reference period. Similarly, Table 2.4 shows leave-takers by reason as a percent of all *employees*. By far, the most common reason for taking leave is one's own health, a reason cited by 52.4 percent of leave-takers, or 8.7 percent of all employees. The next most common reason for leave is to care for a newborn child, or a newly adopted or foster child (18.5% of leave-takers; 3.1% of employees). Caring for an ill child (11.5% of leave-takers; 1.9% of employees) or parent (13.0% of leave-takers; 2.2% of employees) are also fairly common reasons for taking leave.

Table 2.3. Reasons for Taking Leave Across All Leaves Taken in Previous 18 Months: 2000 Survey

Reason for Leave	Percent of Leave-Takers
Own health	52.4%
Maternity-disability	7.9%
Care for a newborn, newly adopted, or newly placed foster child	18.5%
Care for ill child	11.5%
Care for ill spouse	6.4%
Care for ill parent	13.0%

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% due to some persons taking more than one leave.

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

Table 2.4. Reasons for Taking Leave Across All Leaves Taken, Based on Total Employee Population: 2000 Survey

Reason for Leave	Percent of All Employees
Own health	8.7%
Maternity-disability	1.3%
Care for a newborn, newly adopted, or newly placed foster child	3.1%
Care for ill child	1.9%
Care for ill spouse	1.1%
Care for ill parent	2.2%

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

Table 2.5 shows the reasons for the longest leave taken, obtained in both the 2000 and 1995 surveys. Leave-taking, as reported in the 2000 survey, appears to be more dispersed among the various reasons covered under FMLA (at least with regard to longest leaves), compared to leaves taken five years ago. While one's own health remains the most frequently cited reason for leave (47.2%), it was mentioned less often than it was in 1995 (61.4%). Leave for reasons of maternity-disability (7.8%), care for an ill spouse (5.9%), and care for an ill parent (11.4%) have all increased significantly as a percentage of leave taken since 1995. It is not known why this change in the distribution of reasons has occurred.⁸

Table 2.5. Employees' Reasons for Taking Longest Leave: 1995 and 2000 Surveys

Reason for Longest Leave	Percent of Leave-Takers	
	1995 Survey	2000 Survey
Own health**	61.4%	47.2%
Maternity-disability**	4.6%	7.8%
Care for a newborn, newly adopted, or newly placed foster child	14.3%	17.9%
Care for ill child	8.5%	9.8%
Care for ill spouse**	3.6%	5.9%
Care for ill parent**	7.6%	11.4%

** Difference between 1995 and 2000 surveys is significant at $p < .05$.

Note: Column percents may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Source: 1995 and 2000 Survey of Employees.

The reasons for employees' second longest leave are shown in Table 2.6. Taking time off due to one's own health was mentioned by just over half (55.8%) of these leave-takers, while one-fifth (20.1%) reported that their second longest leave was to care for an ill child.

⁸ The shift away from "own health" reasons may be due, in part, to differences between the 1995 and 2000 surveys. See Appendix C (section 1.6.3) for more details.

Table 2.6. Employees' Reasons for Second Longest Leave: 2000 Survey

Reason for Second Longest Leave	Percent of Persons Taking More Than One Leave
Own health	55.8%
Maternity-disability	--
Care for a newborn, newly adopted, or newly placed foster child	5.1%
Care for ill child	20.1%
Care for ill spouse	4.2%
Care for ill parent	13.0%

-- Indicates less than 10 unweighted cases.

Note: Column percents may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

There is a strong relationship between employees' reasons for leave and the length of their leaves. Table 2.7 presents the percentage of leave-takers, for each reason, that took leave for various durations (the table is restricted to longest leaves). Persons who take leave for maternity-disability reasons tend to be away from work for the longest periods of time. About one-fourth of these leave-takers (28.7%) are on leave for longer than the 12 workweeks (i.e., 60 workdays) covered by FMLA, and many of the rest are on leave for 31-60 workdays (39.7%). By contrast, persons taking leave to care for an ill family member (either a child, spouse, or parent) tend to be away from work for relatively short periods. These leave-takers are rarely on leave for more than 30 workdays. The vast majority are on leave for 10 or fewer workdays.

Table 2.7. Length of Longest Leave by Reason for Leave: 2000 Survey

Length of Longest Leave** (in work days)	Percent of Leave-Takers for Each Reason					
	Own Health	Maternity-Disability	Care for Newborn, Newly Adopted or Foster Child	Care for Ill Child	Care for Ill Spouse	Care for Ill Parent
1 – 3 days	8.2%	--	10.0%	26.0%	24.0%	17.4%
4 – 5 days	17.1%	--	27.5%	23.7%	38.3%	32.2%
6 – 10 days	18.7%	--	17.6%	31.9%	19.9%	30.9%
11 – 30 days	25.1%	18.1%	13.5%	14.0%	--	13.1%
31 – 60 days	19.4%	39.7%	21.7%	--	--	--
More than 60 days	11.4%	28.7%	9.8%	--	--	--

** Difference among reasons for leave is significant at $p < .05$.

-- Indicates less than 10 unweighted cases.

Note: Column percents may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

2.1.3 Describing Leave-Takers

Appendix Table A2-2.4 shows the demographic characteristics of leave-takers, in comparison to all other employees. The table indicates that those taking leave for family or medical reasons differ significantly from other employees in a number of ways:

- Leave-takers are more likely to be female (58.1%), relative to other employees (46.8%);
- Employees aged 18 to 24 are under-represented among leave-takers (10.0% versus 15.8% for other employees) while employees aged 25 to 34 are over-represented (27.8%, as compared to 21.8% for other employees);
- Leave-takers are more likely to be married/living with a partner (75.0%) and less likely to have never been married (12.3%) relative to other employees (65.7% and 24.2%, respectively); and
- Leave-takers are much more likely to have children living with them (59.6%) than are other employees (36.7%).

Comparisons between the 1995 and 2000 surveys (see Appendix Table A2-2.5) reveal no significant change in the percent of leave-takers by gender, race or the type of compensation (salaried, hourly or other). There are significant shifts, however, in several demographic characteristics:

- Leave-takers were more likely to be ages 50-64 in the 2000 survey than in the 1995 survey (20.4% vs. 15.1%);
- Leave-takers were more likely to be married in the 2000 survey than in the 1995 survey (75.0% vs. 70.9%);
- Leave-takers were more likely to have children in the 2000 survey than in the 1995 survey (59.6% vs. 54.5%); and
- Leave-takers were more likely to be in higher income groups in the 2000 survey than in the 1995 survey. Inflation accounts for an increase of 10% in incomes over this time period.

While the above differences may seem small in percentage terms, they can be viewed as rather large given the small number of years that have passed. The reasons for these shifts in the demographic characteristics of leave-takers should be explored in future research.

There is a relationship between the demographic characteristics of leave-takers and the reason for taking leave. This is shown in Appendix Table A2-2.6, which presents the percent of employees within demographic categories who took leave

for the FMLA reasons. The major patterns in these data show that leave-takers most likely to take leave for reasons other than their own health include females, those aged 25-34, married persons, those with a graduate school education, higher incomes and salaried workers.

2.1.4 Changes in Leave-Taking Within Groups

As noted above, the rate of leave-taking did not significantly increase between 1995 to 2000. However, as indicated in Appendix Table A2-2.7, leave-taking did increase significantly within some demographic groups over this time period. Reported rates of leave-taking were significantly higher in the 2000 survey than in the 1995 survey among older employees (age 50-64), married employees, employees with children, and those in households earning between \$50,000 and \$75,000 dollars.

Comparing survey results from the 1995 survey and the 2000 survey, changes occurred in the reasons for leave-taking within demographic groups. Appendix Tables A2-2.8 and A2-2.9 provide the distribution of the reasons for leave within demographic groups. The major pattern to note is a significant shift, among many demographic categories, from taking leave because of the employee's own health to taking leave for other family-related reasons. For example, this shift from one's own health to other reasons occurred for both men (8.5% in 1995 vs. 6.9% in 2000) and women (11.4% in 1995 vs. 8.6 % in 2000). Similarly, it occurred for those age 25-34 (9.0% in 1995 vs. 5.5% in 2000) and those age 35-49 (12.4% in 1995 vs. 5.9% in 2000).

As noted above in the discussion of Table 2.5, it is not clear why this shift occurred in the reasons for taking leave. The data in Appendix Tables A2-2.8 and A2-2.9 indicate that this shift was *not* due to the changing demographics of the employee population between 1995 and 2000. For example, as noted earlier, the proportion of leave-takers with children went up between 1995 and 2000. Since this group is most likely to take leave for reasons other than their own health (e.g., to take care of a sick child), one would expect this to explain the overall shift away from taking leave for "own-health". However, taking leave for the "own-health" reason was also significantly down for those without any children (10.7% in 1995 vs. 7.6% in 2000).

One speculation on why this trend is occurring is that the demand for taking leave for reasons other than the employee's health has gone up over this time period. As the baby-boom generation ages, there are more employees with children and parents who may also need care. Employees may be allocating their time off differently as the demands placed on them by children and parents grow. If this speculation were true, one might have expected employees to be taking more leave overall. Getting sick and needing leave should stay relatively constant over time. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, however, the reported rate of leave-taking did not significantly increase between the 1995 and 2000 surveys (16.0% vs. 16.5%). For the above speculation to be true, therefore, there would have to have been some type of substitution of leave for "own-health" with "other family" reasons while keeping constant the amount of leave taken.⁹

2.1.5 Taking Intermittent Leave

The 2000 survey collected information on the use of intermittent leave—that is, alternating between use of leave and being at work.¹⁰ This is an important issue for both employees and employers. Leave-takers no doubt find that periodic health treatments (e.g., chemotherapy) can be more easily balanced with work responsibilities if leave is taken on an intermittent basis. But from an employer's perspective, intermittent leave may be viewed as especially disruptive to the organization. Table 2.8 shows that about a fourth of leave-takers (27.8%) had at least one intermittent leave in the 18 months before the survey. Comparable data on intermittent leave from the 1995 survey are not available.¹¹ Persons reporting having taken intermittent leave were also asked if this type of leave was "less than half," "about half," or "more than half" of all their leave time. Table 2.9 shows that 53.9 percent of these leave-takers indicate that intermittent leave made up "less than half" of their leave time. About a fourth of these leave-takers say that intermittent leave was "more than half" of the leave.

⁹ For a possible methodological reason for this shift, see Appendix C.

¹⁰ The definition of intermittent leave presented to respondents was: "repeatedly tak[ing] leave for a few hours or days at a time because of ongoing family or medical reasons." This differs from FMLA regulations, which define intermittent leave as "leave taken in separate blocks of time due to a single qualifying reason."

¹¹ The 2000 Survey of Employers asked establishments about the extent to which persons using leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act did so intermittently, and what effect this leave had on profitability and productivity (see Chapter 6).

Table 2.8. Use of Intermittent Leave: 2000 Survey

Leave-Takers Who:	Percent of Leave-Takers
Took intermittent leave at least once in previous 18 months	27.8%
Did not take intermittent leave	72.2%

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

Table 2.9. Amount of Leave that was Intermittent: 2000 Survey

Amount of Leave that was Intermittent	Percent of Leave-Takers Taking Intermittent Leave
Less than half	53.9%
About half	19.6%
More than half	26.4%

Note: Column percents based on the 27.8% of leave-takers who reported taking intermittent leave. Percents may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

With respect to employees' longest leave, Table 2.10 shows that 20.8 percent of these leaves were intermittent. Leave-takers whose longest leave was intermittent were further asked whether this leave was taken on a regular routine, or as needed. As Table 2.11 indicates, the vast majority of intermittent leaves (86.6%) are taken on an "as needed" basis.

Table 2.10. Intermittent Use of Longest Leave: 2000 Survey

Leave-Takers' Longest Leave Was:	Percent of Leave-Takers
Intermittent	20.8%
Not intermittent	79.2%

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

Table 2.11. Use of Longest Intermittent Leave on a Routine or As-Needed Basis: 2000 Survey

Intermittent Leave was Taken as:	Percent of Those Whose (Longest) Leave was Intermittent
Regular routine	13.4%
As-needed	86.6%

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

Table 2.12 shows the reason for the longest leave when it was intermittent. Only about a third (35.1%) of intermittent leaves are for one’s own health, compared to half (50.3%) of the leaves that were not intermittent. When employees take intermittent leave, it is more likely to be for the care of a family member, such as an ill child (19.1%) or an ill parent (18.7%), relative to leaves taken which are not intermittent (7.4% and 9.6% for ill child and ill parent, respectively).

Table 2.12. Intermittent Use of Longest Leave by Reason for Leave: 2000 Survey

Reason for Longest Leave**	Percent of Leave-Takers Whose Leave was Intermittent	Percent of Leave-Takers Whose Leave was Not Intermittent
Own health	35.1%	50.3%
Maternity-disability	4.9%	8.6%
Care for a newborn, newly adopted, or newly placed foster child	13.2%	19.1%
Care for ill child	19.1%	7.4%
Care for ill spouse	8.9%	5.1%
Care for ill parent	18.7%	9.6%

** Difference between “intermittent” and “not intermittent” categories is significant at $p < .05$.

Note: Column percents may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

The strong relationship between one’s reason for leave and the use of intermittent leave is more clearly demonstrated by the data in Table 2.13. Employees’ whose (longest) leave was to care for an ill family member (either a child, spouse, or parent) were about twice as likely to take intermittent leave as those using leave for other reasons. Within the most frequently cited reason for leave (own health), intermittent leave was relatively uncommon (15%). But intermittent leave was quite common among those whose longest leave was to care for an ill child (39.5%), ill spouse (30.9%), or ill parent (33.1%). It is not known why intermittent leave is

especially common among these reasons—one reason may be that responsibility for caring for ill family members is frequently shared with other individuals.

Table 2.13. Intermittent Use of Longest Leave Within Reasons for Leave: 2000 Survey

Reason for Longest Leave**	Percent of Leave-Takers Within Each Reason Whose Longest Leave Was:	
	Intermittent	Not Intermittent
Own health	15.0%	85.0%
Maternity-disability	12.7%	87.3%
Care for a newborn, newly adopted, or newly placed foster child	14.9%	85.1%
Care for ill child	39.5%	60.5%
Care for ill spouse	30.9%	69.1%
Care for ill parent	33.1%	66.9%

** Difference between reasons categories is significant at $p < .05$.
Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

2.2 Employees Who Needed Leave, but Could Not Take It

The findings discussed thus far pertain to employees who were able to take leave for a family or medical reason. But sometimes employees are unable to take the leave they feel is needed. This section presents findings about “leave-needers”—those who reported they needed leave for a reason covered under FMLA, yet were unable to take this leave. This section discusses the demographic characteristics of leave-needers, their reason for needing leave, their reasons for not being able to take leave, and how they dealt with their problem or situation given their inability to take leave.

2.2.1 Amount of Leave Needed

In the 18-month period prior to the 2000 survey, about 3.5 million people (2.4% of employees) needed leave without being able to take it (Table 2.14). As Table 2.14 indicates, this is a decrease from 3.1 percent of employees needing leave estimated from the 1995 survey. Reasons for this decline in need for leave not taken will hopefully be examined in further research. Most of those who said they needed

leave also reported that they needed it more than once (Table 2.15). Only 44.4 percent of leave-needers said they needed leave just once. A substantial number of leave-needers reported needing leave 3 to 4 times (18.9%) or 5 or more times (11.8%).

**Table 2.14. Employees Needing But Not Taking Leave:
1995 and 2000 Surveys**

	Persons Not Taking Leave	
	1995 Survey	2000 Survey
Number of employees needing but not taking leave (for a covered reason) in the previous 18 months	3,925,000	3,520,000
Percent of employee population**	3.1%	2.4%

** Difference between 1995 and 2000 significant at $p < .05$.

Source: 1995 and 2000 Survey of Employees.

**Table 2.15. Number of Leaves Needed But Not Taken:
2000 Survey**

	Percent of Leave-Needers
1 leave	44.4%
2 leaves	25.0%
3 – 4 leaves	18.9%
5 or more leaves	11.8%

Note: Column percents may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

2.2.2 Reasons for Needing Leave

Leave-needers were asked detailed questions about their most recent need for leave, including why they had wanted to take leave. Responses from both the 2000 and 1995 surveys are shown in Table 2.16. As was found with leave-takers, one's own health was the most common reason for needing to take leave (48.1%). Needing time off to care for an ill parent (22.6%) or child (19.6%) were the next most frequently mentioned reasons. However, unlike the reasons for taking leave, the reasons for needing leave in 2000 have not changed significantly since 1995.

Table 2.16. Reasons for Needing Leave: 1995 and 2000 Surveys

Reason for Needing Leave	Percent of Leave-Needers	
	1995 Survey	2000 Survey
Own health	47.7%	48.1%
Maternity-disability	--	--
Care for a newborn, newly adopted, or newly placed foster child	9.3%	9.3%
Care for ill child	18.6%	19.6%
Care for ill spouse	10.2%	9.0%
Care for ill parent	20.2%	22.6%

-- Indicates less than 10 unweighted cases.

Note: Column percentages sum to more than 100% due to some persons needing leave for more than one reason.

Source: 1995 and 2000 Survey of Employees.

2.2.3 Leave-Needer Demographics

Appendix Table A2-2.10 presents the demographic characteristics of leave-needers, in comparison to other employees. The patterns in this table show that:

- Leave-needers are more likely to be separated, divorced, or widowed (18.6%), and less likely to have never been married (13.0%), relative to other employees (10.3% and 22.5%, respectively);
- Like those who take leave, those needing leave are more likely to have children living at home (55.0%) than are other employees (40.1%);
- Salaried workers are under-represented among leave-needers (23.8% vs. 37.6% for other employees) whereas hourly workers are over-represented (62.3% vs. 51.1% for other employees).

The above demographic patterns are largely consistent with those found in the 1995 survey results (see Appendix Table A2-2.11).

2.2.4 Reasons for Not Taking Leave

The survey included a series of questions about the reason why leave-needers did not take leave. Table 2.17 presents these results for both the 2000 and 1995 surveys.

In the 2000 survey, the most commonly noted reason for not taking leave was being unable to afford it, reported by 77.6 percent of leave-needers. Many leave-needers also feared that their work or careers would suffer if they took leave: About half (52.6%) indicated that their work was too important; 42.6 percent said their job advancement would have been hurt; and 27.8 percent reported that they did not want to lose seniority. About a third of leave-needers (31.9%) said that their job might have been lost had they taken leave, and 20.8 percent reported that their employer denied their request. Table 2.17 also shows that several of these factors were cited by more leave-needers in the 2000 survey than in the 1995 survey.¹² Future research will hopefully clarify the reasons for these important trends.

Table 2.17. Reasons for Not Taking Leave: 1995 and 2000 Surveys

Reason for Not Taking Leave	Percent of Leave-Needers	
	1995 Survey	2000 Survey
Thought job might be lost	29.7%	31.9%
Thought job advancement might be hurt**	22.8%	42.6%
Did not want to lose seniority**	15.1%	27.8%
Not eligible—worked part-time	14.3%	12.3%
Not eligible—had not worked long enough for employer	N/A	18.4%
Employer denied request**	9.9%	20.8%
Could not afford to take leave**	65.9%	77.6%
Wanted to save leave time	28.5%	34.3%
Work is too important**	40.8%	52.6%
Some other reason	N/A	13.2%

** Difference between 1995 and 2000 is significant at $p < .05$.

NA Indicates reason not asked about in 1995 survey.

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% due to some persons reporting multiple reasons for not taking leave.

Source: 1995 and 2000 Survey of Employees.

Taking leave apparently posed a financial burden for many leave-needers, as evidenced by the many who said they could not afford it. To further clarify the impact of financial obstacles to leave-taking, respondents who said they could not afford to take leave were further asked: “If you had received some or additional pay,

¹² Table A2-2.10 in Appendix A-2 presents these same data with the percentages based on all employees, rather than leave-needers.

would you have taken leave?” Table 2.18 indicates that the vast majority (87.8%) of these leave-needers would have taken leave had they been able to receive some/additional pay while away from work.

Table 2.18. Perceived Impact of Pay on Leave-Needers: 2000 Survey

Perceived Impact of Pay	Percent of Leave-Needers Who Could Not Afford to Take Leave
Would have taken leave if some/additional pay had been received	87.8%
Would <u>not</u> have taken leave if some/additional pay had been received	12.2%

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

Finally, the sample of leave-needers were asked what they did to take care of their situation, since they did not take the leave that was desired. This question was asked in an open-ended manner and responses are summarized by the categories shown in Table 2.19. Many leave-needers (44.1%) stated that they “just lived with it” or “suffered through it.” Others (25.0%) noted that they received help from others (e.g., in caring for an ill family member). Some leave-needers (12.2%) altered their work patterns or job duties. Additionally, some persons (13.1%) indicated that they in fact did take some time off.¹³

Table 2.19. How Leave-Needers Took Care of Their Situation: 2000 Survey

	Percent of Leave-Needers
Just lived with it/Suffered through it	44.1%
Got help from others (family, friends)	25.0%
Altered work (schedule, duties, etc.)	12.2%
Took some time off	13.1%
Did something else	5.7%

Note: Column percents may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2000 Survey of Employees.

¹³ It is not clear what was meant by these responses, since these were individuals identified as needing, but not taking, leave. It may be that these leave-needers were able to take some limited time off, but less time than the amount they felt they needed.

2.3 Summary

This chapter has described persons who have either taken leave or have needed to take leave for family or medical reasons. About 23.8 million persons (an estimated 16.5 percent of employees) took leave for family or medical reasons during the period covered by the 2000 survey. The *number* of employees taking leave has increased significantly compared to a similar period measured in the 1995 survey. However, the *percentage* of employees taking leave does not represent a significant change over time. Most of the leave was taken for a fairly short period of time (i.e., less than 10 workdays) and most employees took leave only once.

Employees taking leave are more likely than other employees to be female, aged 25-34, married/living with a partner, and have children living at home. Since 1995, leave-taking has increased for some groups: older employees (age 50-64); married employees; employees with children; and those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$75,000.

In the 2000 survey, the most common reason given for taking leave was for the employee's own health. This is similar to the 1995 survey results. However, there was a significant movement away from this reason between the 1995 and 2000 surveys. In 2000, a greater portion of leave-takers reported using leave for reasons other than their "own health," such as maternity-disability, to care for a spouse, and to care for a parent.¹⁴ This shift in the reasons for taking leave occurred across many demographic groups.

About a fourth of leave-takers (27.8%) had at least one intermittent leave during the survey reference period. Only about a third (35.1%) of intermittent leaves were for one's own health, compared to half (50.3%) of the leaves that were not intermittent. Employees' whose (longest) leave was to care for an ill family member (either a child, spouse, or parent) were about twice as likely to take intermittent leave as those using leave for other reasons.

¹⁴ As noted in the more detailed discussion above, this change may have also been affected by differences between the 1995 and 2000 surveys.

Since January 1, 1999, an estimated 2.4 percent of employees needed but did not take leave. This is a significant decrease from the estimated 3.1 percent found for a comparable period five years ago. Employees who needed leave but were unable to take it were more likely to be hourly workers, separate/divorced/widowed, and have children living at home. About three-fourths of these employees said they did not take leave because they could not afford to take time off from work. Many leave-needers were also concerned about possible negative impacts on their jobs or careers if they took leave. About one-fifth of leave-needers reported being denied leave by their employers.