



# You CAN have paid leave AND a productive workforce

## The Workers Left Behind Study

**Bryon Bass, DeShawna Manley, Jenny Merrithew and Kristin Tugman**  
**August 6, 2024**

The Prudential Insurance Company of America (Prudential)  
1081175-00001-00





## During this session, we will:

1. Introduce the keynote speakers
2. Explain why and what prompted the study
3. Summarize the results
  - From the worker/employee perspective
  - From the employer perspective
4. Describe the insights from our employer panel
5. Identify best practices for employers
6. Provide you with a gift for joining us—a checklist!





# Our keynote speakers

## Moderator



Bryon Bass  
DMEC



DeShawna Manley  
PwC



Jenny Merrithew  
Aflac



Kristin Tugman  
Prudential





## Why are we studying this?

- The P\* (Pandemic)
- Statutory paid leave across the US
- Multigenerational workforce
- Employer budgetary constraints
- Continued demands for benefits other than traditional Medical, Dental, Disability and so on
- Productivity

# What we found—the employee perspective



# What we found—the employer perspective

Employers recognize more employees are out of work on leave

Employers believe offering employees leave is the priority

There is a disconnect in priority and communication between employer and employee

# THE WORKER PROFILE

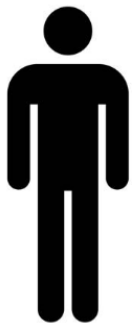
# Employee respondent profile

## Identified as:

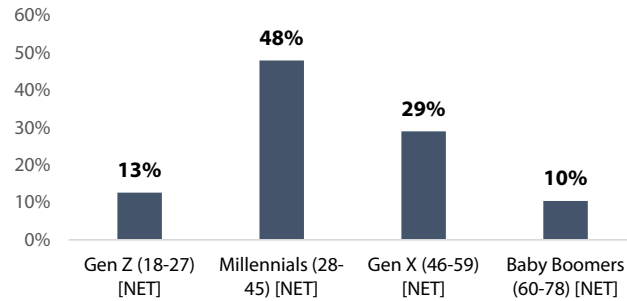
51%



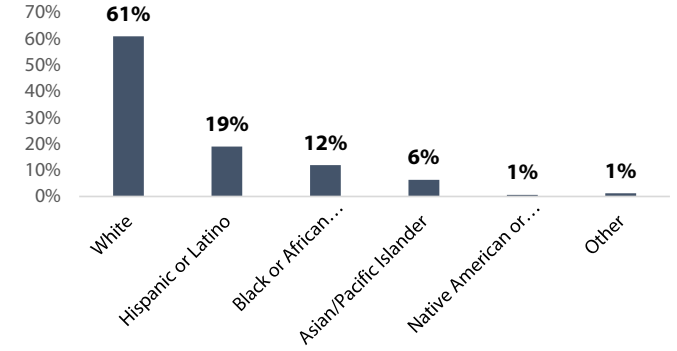
48%



## Generation



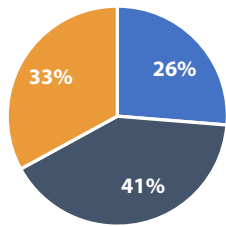
## Race/Ethnicity





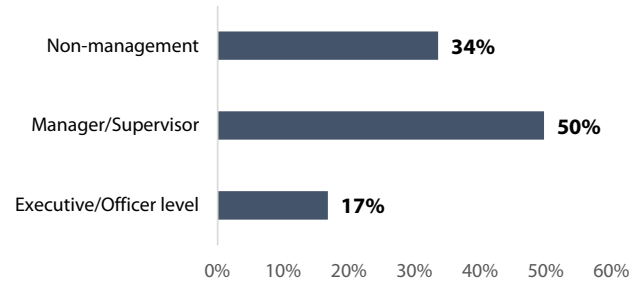
# Employee respondent profile

Company size

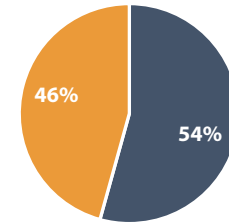


■ Small: 2-99 [NET] ■ Medium: 100-999 [NET] ■ Large: 1000+ [NET]

Job level

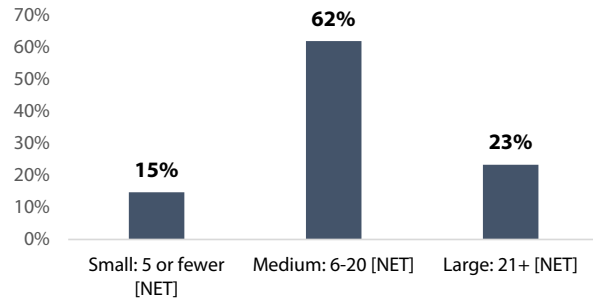


Pay designation

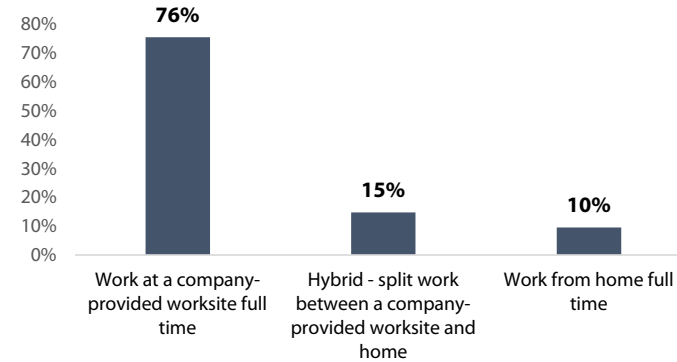


■ Salaried ■ Hourly

Team size

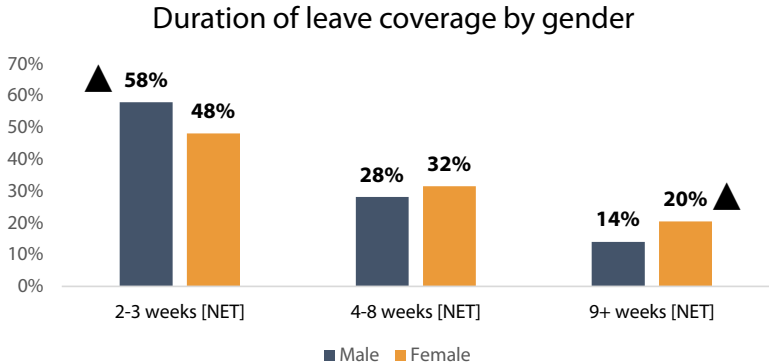
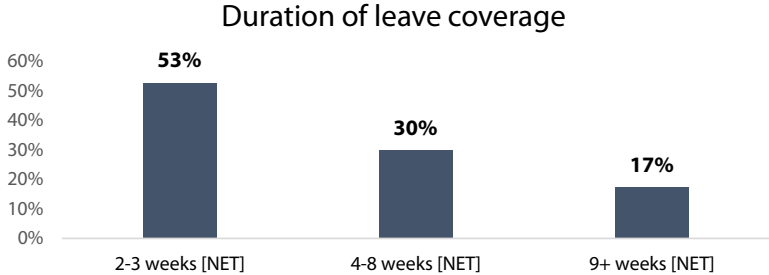
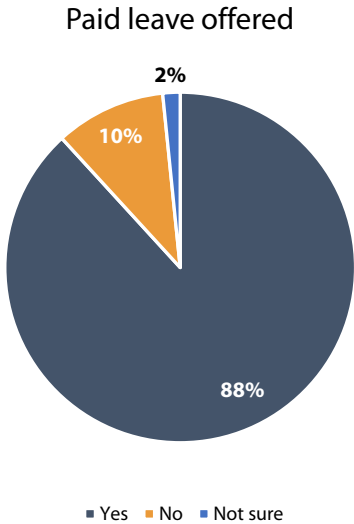


Worksite location



# Employee respondent profile

Female workers took the lead in covering for workers with the longest duration of leave (9+ weeks)

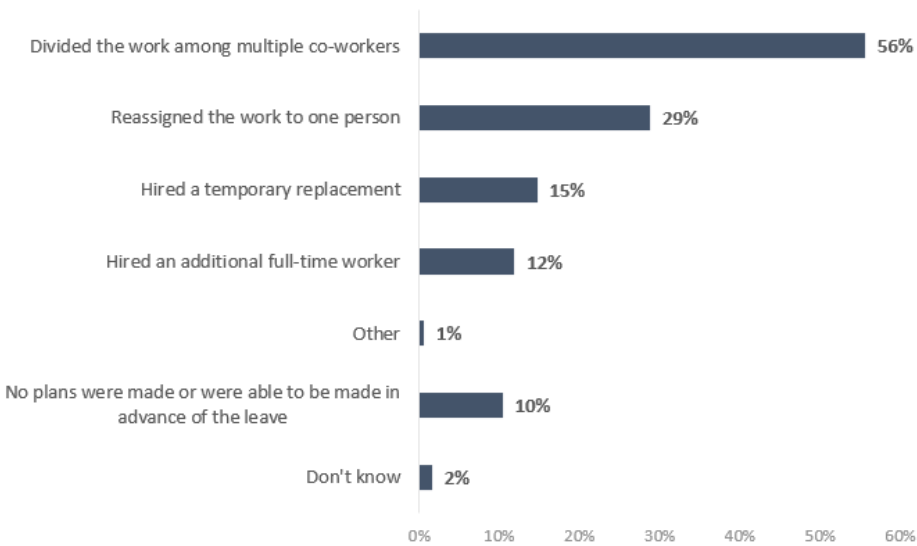


# KEY FINDINGS FOR EMPLOYEES

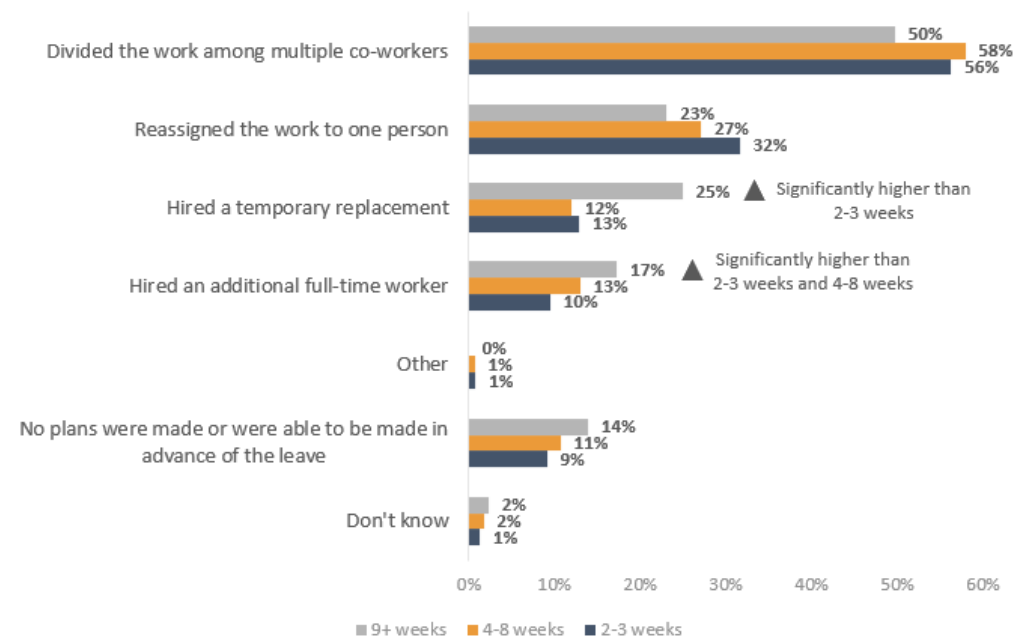
# 56% of leaders divided work among multiple co-workers

The longer the duration of leave, the greater the likelihood that additional help was hired with these differences being statistically significant.

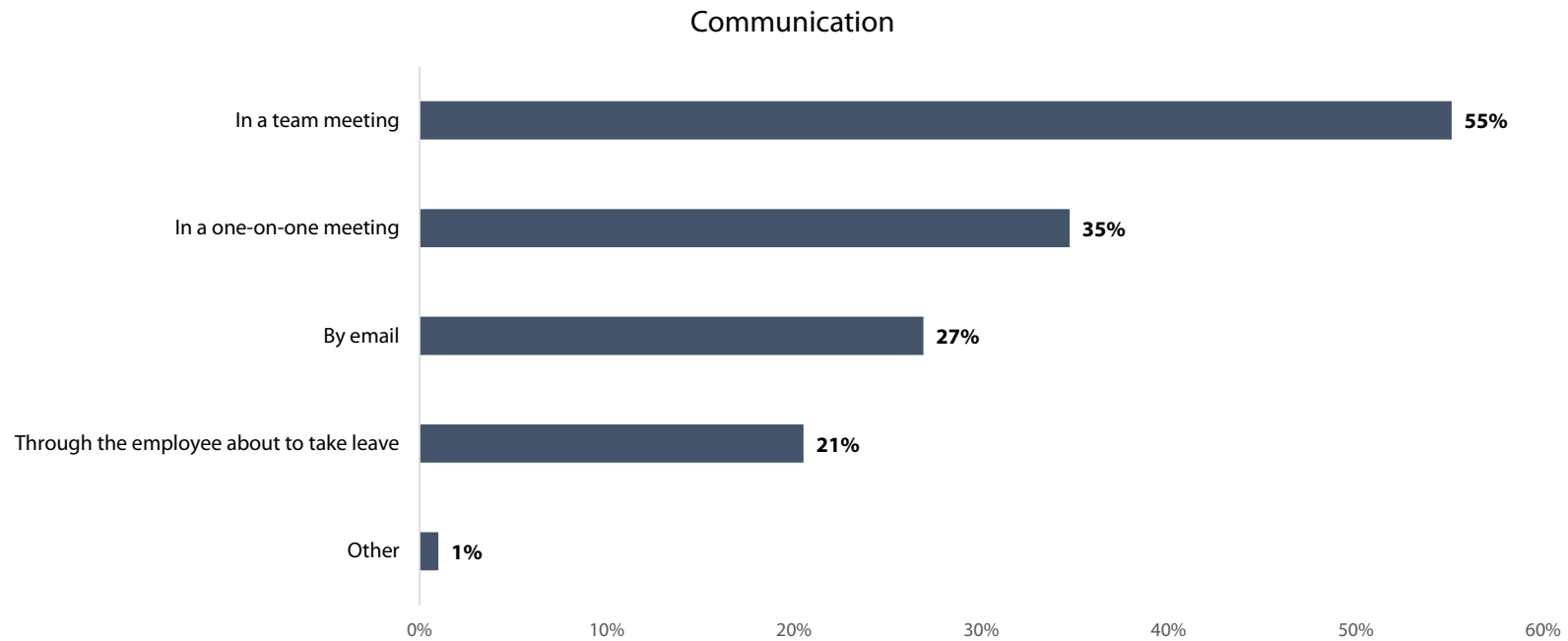
Preparation for imminent leave



Preparation for imminent leave by leave duration

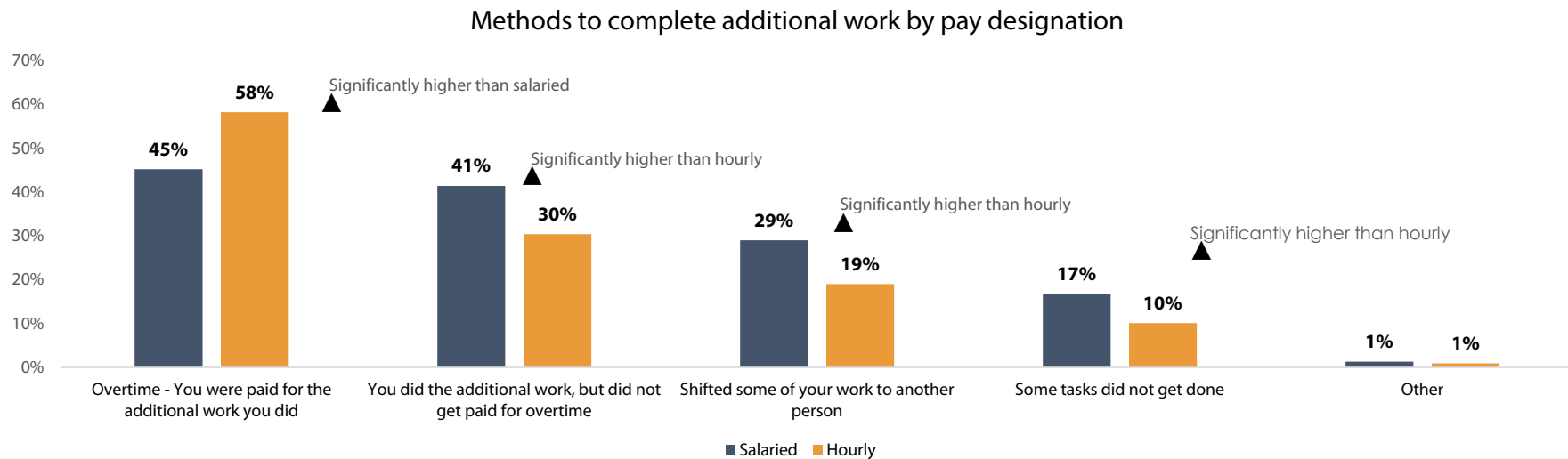


# Most were informed of work reassignments in person



# 51% were paid overtime for the additional work completed

Almost one-third (30%) of hourly workers were not paid overtime for additional work. Salaried workers had a greater ability to leave tasks undone (17%) than hourly workers (10%).



# 65% were satisfied with support from their leader

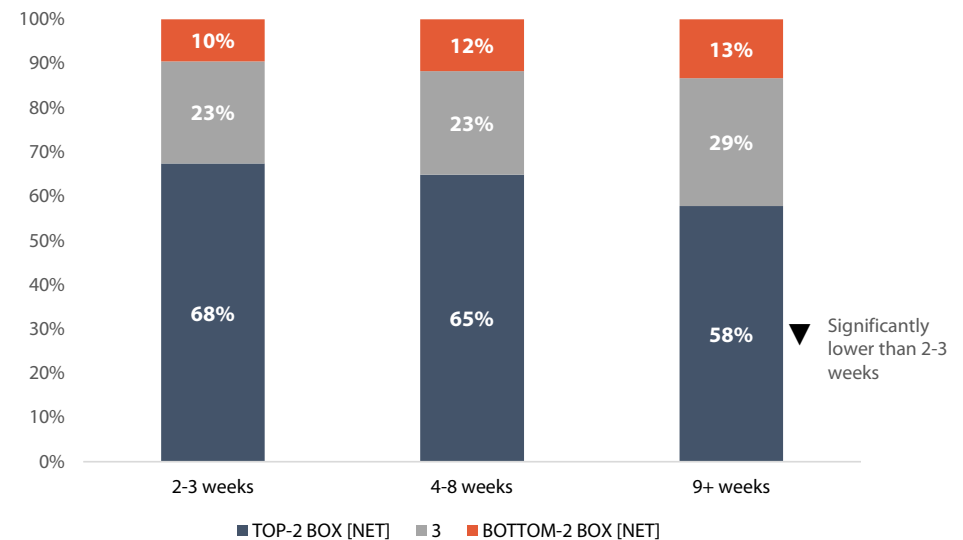
However, satisfaction levels drop when the leave extended beyond 9 weeks.

Overall satisfaction with support from leader



■ TOP-2 BOX [NET] ■ 3 ■ BOTTOM-2 BOX [NET]

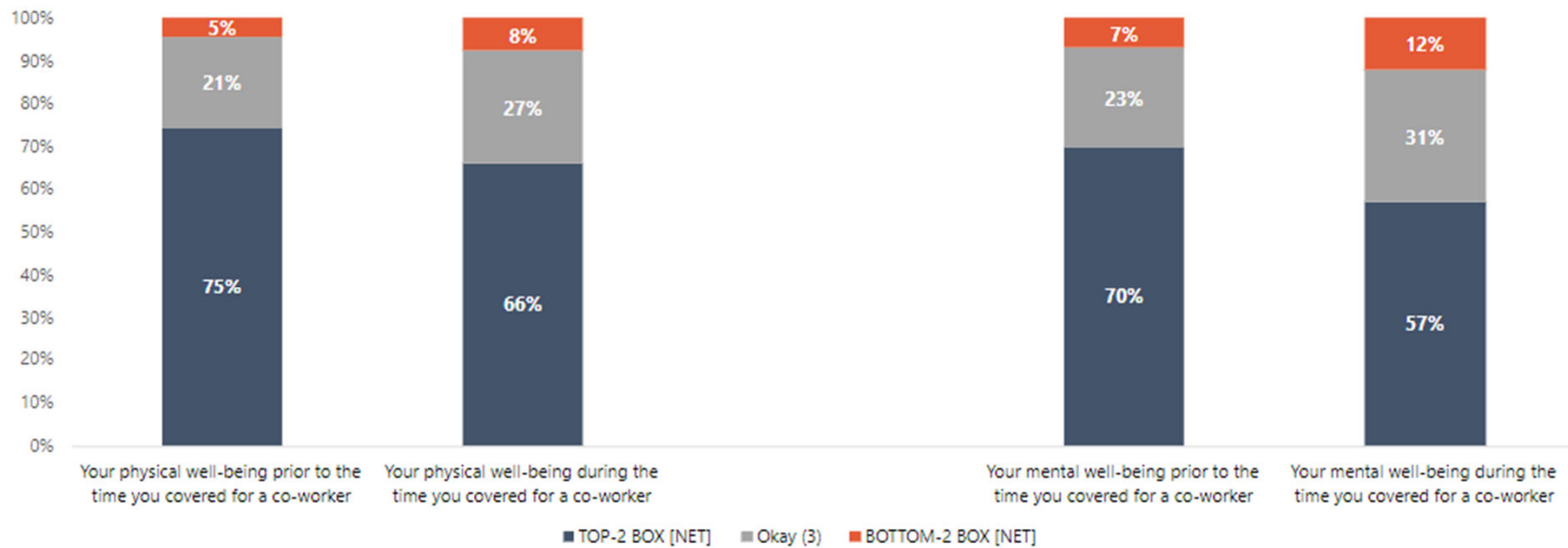
Satisfaction with leader by leave duration



# Mental well-being dropped 13 PPTs while covering for peer

The changes in physical and mental well-being while covering for an employee on leave are statistically significant.

Physical and mental well-being

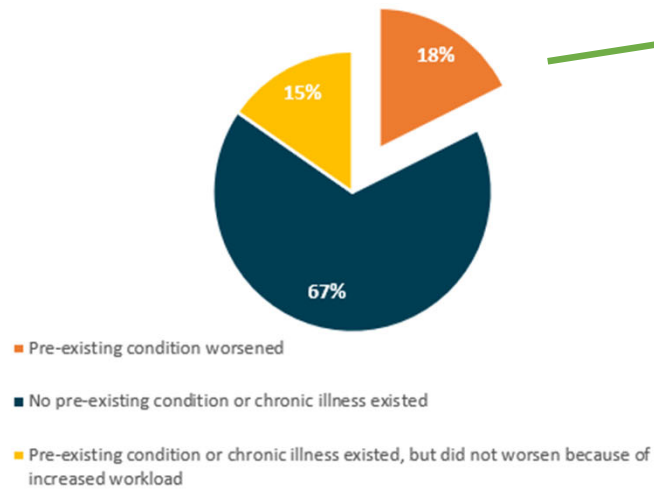




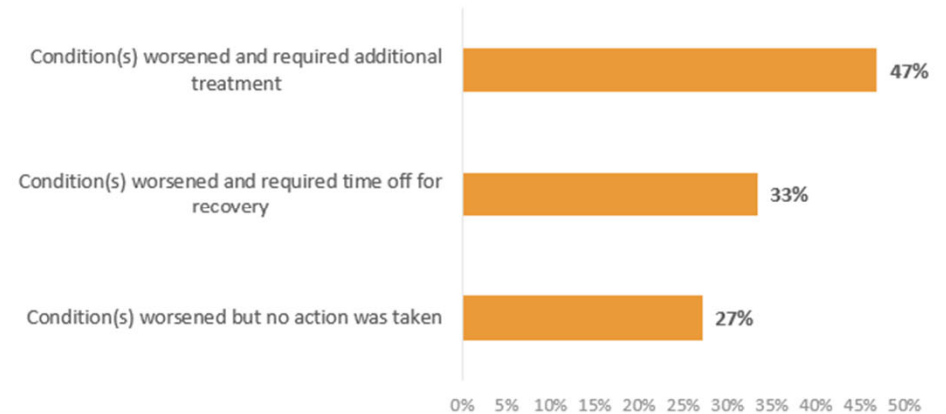
# 18% say a pre-existing condition worsened while covering for peer

Of those with a worsening pre-existing condition, 47% required additional treatment and 33% required time off for recovery.

State of physical well-being

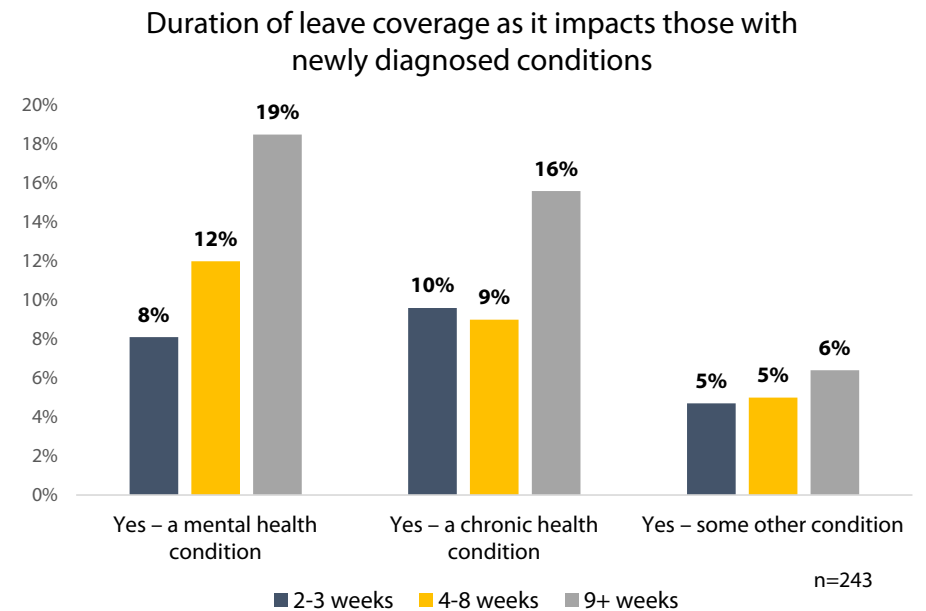
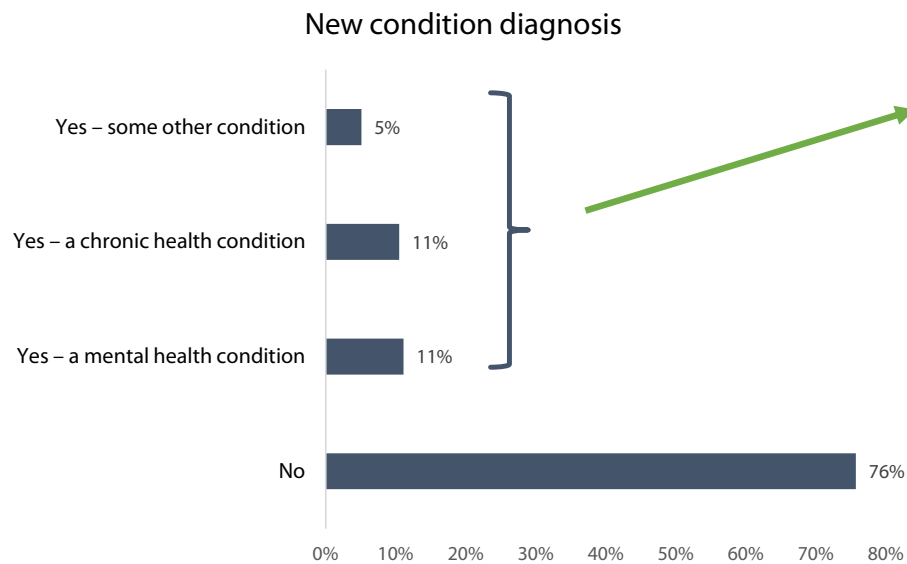


Action taken when pre-existing conditions worsened

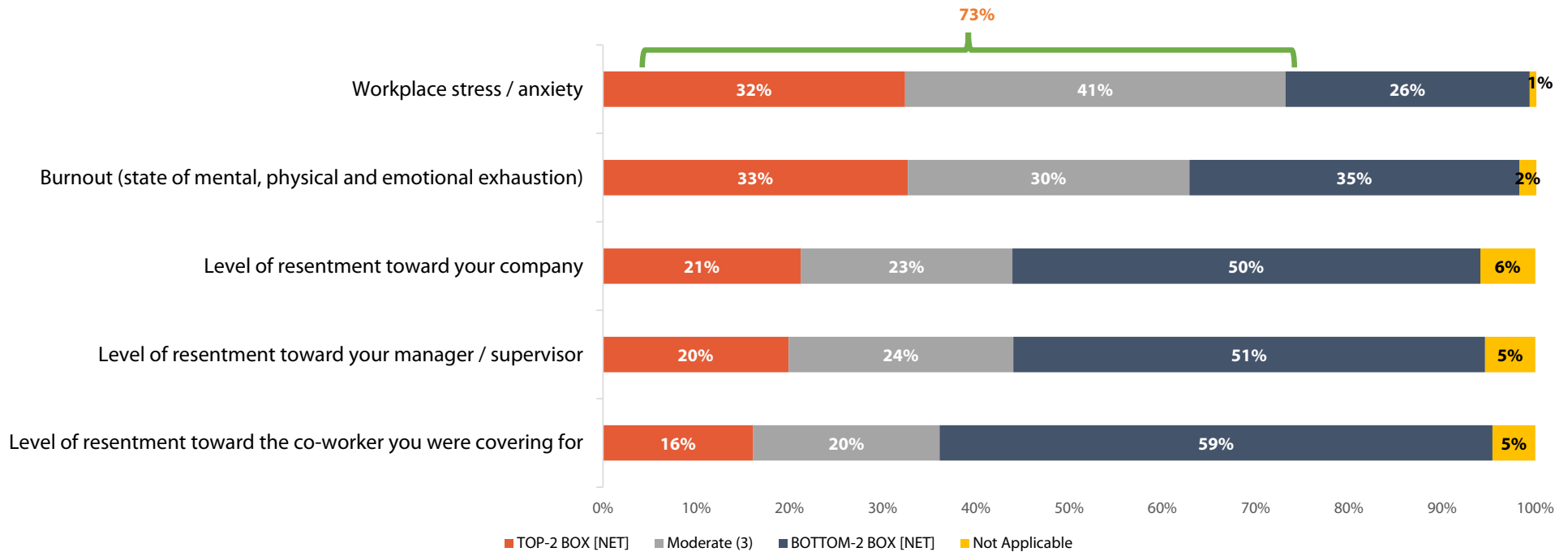


# 24% were diagnosed with a new condition while covering for peer

Longer duration of leave covered increased the likelihood of a new health condition arising.



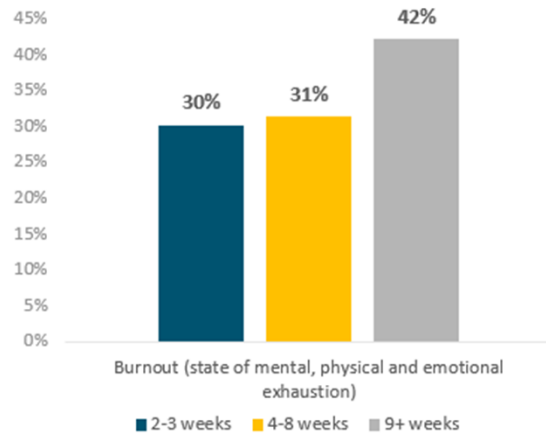
# 73% experienced workplace stress/anxiety while covering for peer



# 42% experienced burnout when the leave period extended beyond 9 weeks

In general, salaried workers harbored more resentment toward their colleague, supervisor and/or company than hourly workers.

Burnout by leave duration - Top-2 box (very high-high)

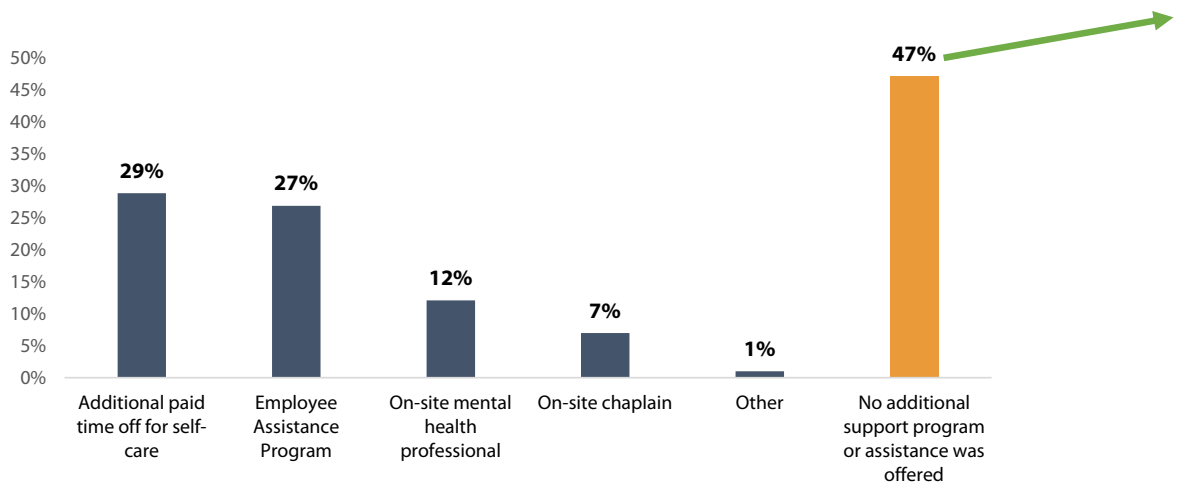


Resentment by pay designation -Top-2 box (very high-high)

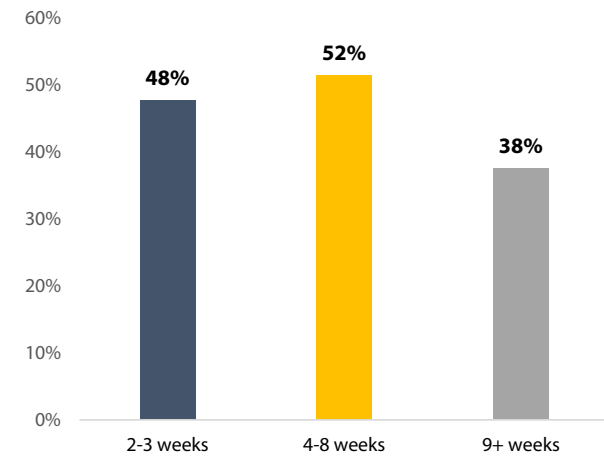


# 47% received no additional support program or assistance while covering for a peer

Support programs

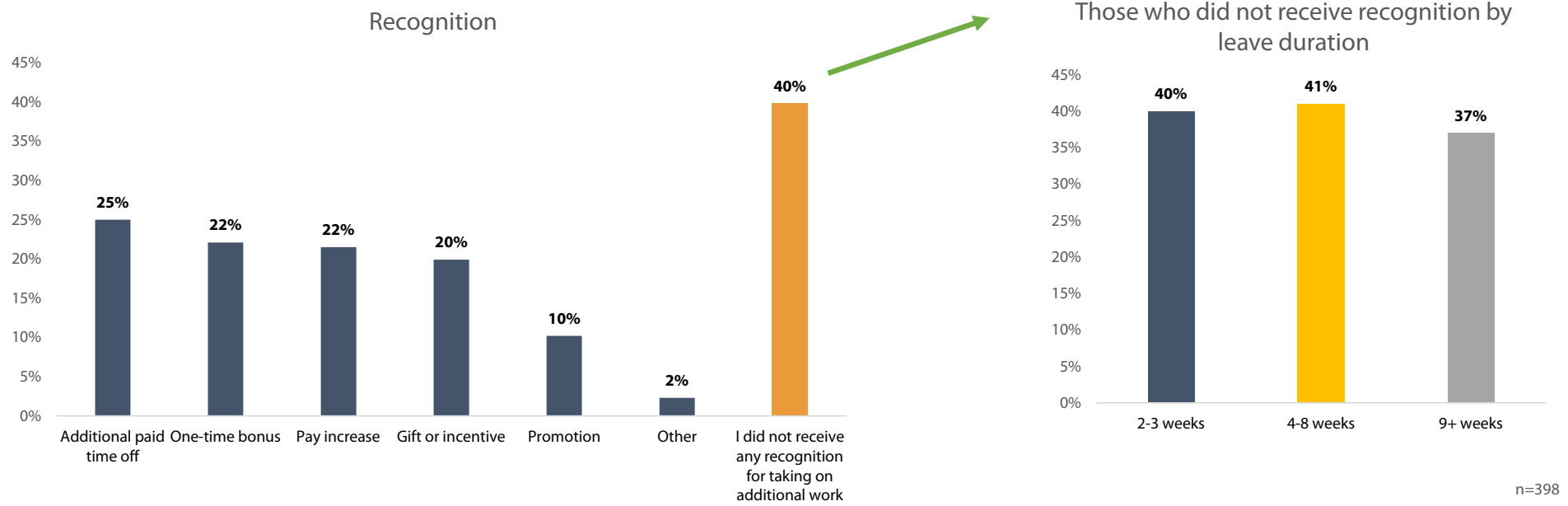


No additional support program or assistance was offered



n=472

# 40% did not receive any recognition for taking on additional work

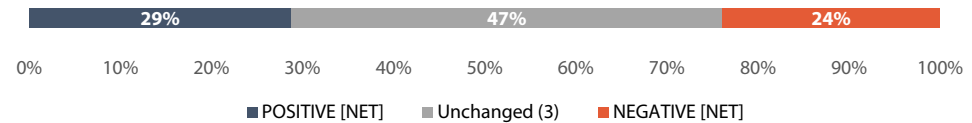


# 47% say their feelings toward employer remained unchanged

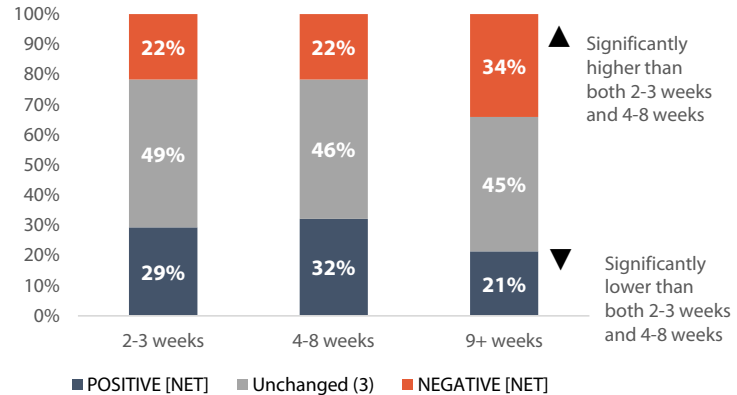
**33% of salaried workers say their feelings toward their employer improved vs. 24% of hourly workers.**

The duration of leave adversely impacted feelings toward employer. Those covering for a peer for more than 9 weeks feel more negatively about their employer (34%) than shorter leave durations.

Feelings toward employer after covering for co-worker on leave - Overall



Feelings toward employer by leave duration



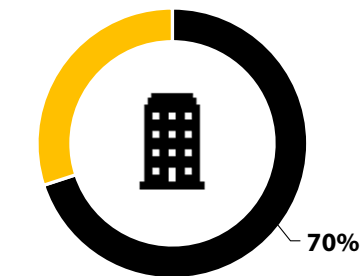
# KEY FINDINGS FOR EMPLOYERS



# Leaves of absence are becoming more common among employees

Employers say offering paid leave is what they are most focused on to achieve employee satisfaction.

Companies Offering Paid Leave



**48%** of employers have seen an increase in employee leaves.

**About half** of employers feel leaves have a positive impact on the employees taking leave, comfort of co-workers to take a leave, and the HR team.

**40%** of employers report a negative impact if a leave of absence is not available for the employee who needed one.

33% of employers believe there is a negative impact on co-worker comfort when employees take a leave.

# Employers report action to mitigate employee leaves, but employees may not be aware of these efforts

**94%** of employers report **taking action to address employee leaves.**



**74%** of employees **report employer has taken an action.**



This indicates a disconnect between actions employers say they take to mitigate the impact of leave and what employees believe are available. Given their potential for improving the leave experience, (1) better communication, (2) access and (3) awareness of these services within the organization are important.

Specific disconnects include:

	Employers	Employees	Gap
Offer <b>additional training</b>	31%	15%	2.1x
Increase <b>remote work</b>	31%	23%	1.3x
Offer <b>additional compensation</b>	27%	10%	2.7x

# What we found—the employer perspective

## Increase in Leaves

- 48% of employers indicate that leave volume has increase
- 70% of employers of employers offer a paid leave

## Employers Prioritize Paid Leave

- About 50% of employers believe that leave is positive for employees, co-workers and human resources
- Employers report a negative impact if leave is not available

## Communication & Priority Disconnect

- About a third of employers believe there is a negative impact to co-workers left behind when employees are on leave
- There is a disconnect between what employers believe they are doing to support employees left behind and what employees believe they are receiving in support
- Employers can benefit from either providing support for those left behind and communicating that support more widely

# PANEL CONVERSATION

# What should you do—best practices

## 1. Plan for the unexpected

- Increase the amount of undue hardship where ADAAA is concerned because of the length and time for some leaves.
- Anticipate covering for longer periods of time; call centers operate with a known amount of intermittent LOA, etc. Workforce planning is often used to cover for this, but when leaves last longer than expected, there are further impacts.

## 2. Use consultative analytics

- Assess staffing, location, and budget. With paid leave and time away continuing to expand, reset or set expectations that you will always have XX% of people out at any one time.

## 3. Build a standard approach/toolkit

- Delegate and hand off work from leaders when absence is expected or unexpected.
- Adjust the cadence of checking in on the worker(s) covering for the person out on leave.
- Effectively communicate with the team as needed.
- Utilize rewards, resources, etc. that are available to support the worker(s) covering for the employee (overtime, additional paid time off, ERG's, EAP, resiliency tools, apps, flex time).
- Reassess timelines; take into consideration the additional work and how it will be measured.



**These are educational materials only. Employers should consult their own counsel.**

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# APPENDIX

# Open-ended feedback

I just want companies to think about those workers and acknowledge that we are taking time away from our babies our families to work and **not be recognized**.

My company was **mindful of my needs** and was there to assist me in anything I did not understand.

I **don't blame my coworker**, for their time off. Because things happen. It would have been better if the **management would have helped, and they didn't care**. All they said was do your job or quit.

My superior **treated me with respect and was understanding with regards to my workload**.

While I was more than happy to step up and be a team player, **it is frustrating that I was not compensated for it** while others do the bare minimum and still make the same amount of money.

It was an amazing experience and I thank my coworker for taking that time off **it really boosted my career** and changed my life for the better.

Because coworker's leave was due to maternity, **advance preparation was done, workload was handled very smoothly**. Will not be that easy if the person leaves suddenly without notice.

My feelings would have been more positive if I had received some overtime pay. **I worked extra hours for free because our company does not pay overtime** due to being a non-profit.



# Aflac methodology for employee survey

## Background

The purpose of this study is to understand the impacts of extended leave programs on the workers who are left behind to ensure business continuity during those leave periods.

*Note:* Findings are summarized throughout using Top-2 Box scores, the combination of the highest two ratings on a 5-point scale.

## Sample and Methodology

- Data collected 1/23/2024 – 2/2/2024.
- National consumer survey conducted by Kantar Profiles Division.
- Survey starts 2,619. Survey completes 1,001. 40% incidence rate.

# Prudential objectives and methodology

## Objectives

Identify key issues for the industry and explore insights on emerging developments in the group benefits space.

- Explore specific trends in group benefits space.
- Understand key issues from the perspective of all its strategic audiences – employees, benefits decision-makers, and brokers.
- Introduce content that spurs conversation and generates ideas that create positive advancements for group benefits.

## Methodology

Customized 15-minute online surveys with key populations leveraging leading online panel partners

### Employees

- 1,000 full or part-time employees:
  - 22-77 years old.
  - Work in companies with 100+ employees.
  - Balanced based on statistical data of US workers by key demographics (gender, age, region, etc.).

### Benefit Decision-Makers

- 750 individuals involved in decisions about employee benefits for their organization:
  - At least 2 years' experience.
  - Work in companies with 100+ employees.
  - National sample across industry types.
  - Quotas for company size, weighted to BLS data.

### Brokers

- 500 brokers who sell or advise on non-medical group benefits to clients with 100+ employees:
  - At least 2 years' experience.
  - Clients this size represent at least 25% of book.
  - Non-medical group benefits represent at least 25% of their business.



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