



# Unum Insights Report

Leave and absence management

# Contents

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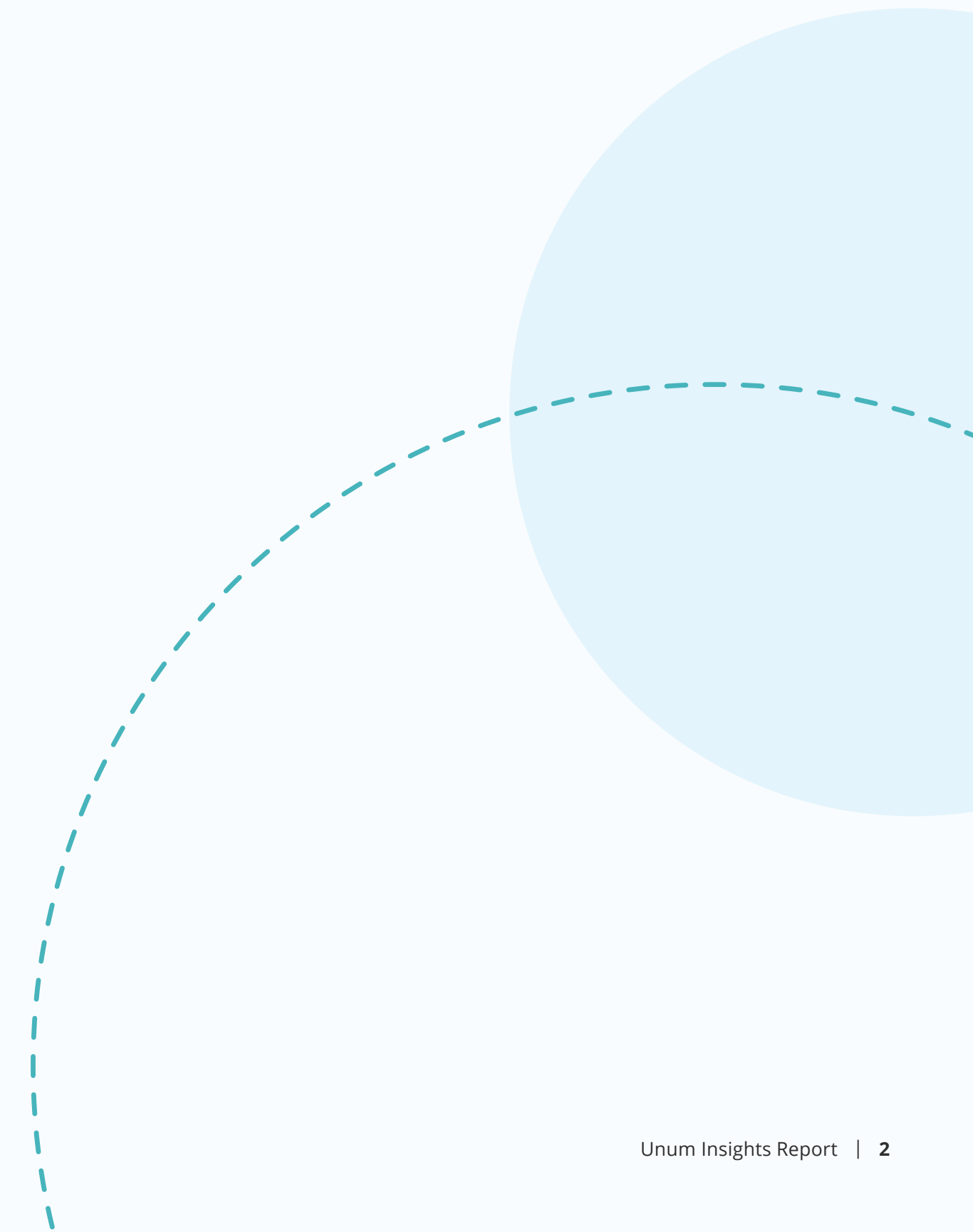
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# Introduction

## The key to a leading leave program? Better experiences, powered by integrated technology

In the face of a changing workplace, leave and absence management has evolved into a complex challenge and a critical aspect of employee retention and workforce productivity. As the size and importance of leave continues to grow, forward-thinking organizations are realizing the value of

investing in leave technology solutions and integration of leave data into key HR systems.

Our latest Unum Insights Report dives into the modern landscape of leave to better understand what today's employers are seeking when choosing a leave solution and the successes and challenges faced by workplaces embracing integrated technology.

## Four core survey insights

1

Leave programs continue to scale in size.

2

Challenges remain broad; employers need help with multiple aspects of administration.

3

Employers are increasingly turning to technology to manage leave.

4

The desire for a stronger leave program is driven by both employer- and employee-centric goals.



72%

of employers report leave management overall is somewhat, very, or extremely challenging.

## INTRODUCTION

# Methodology

Unum conducts a quarterly survey of employers exploring different topics of interest around employee benefits. A subset of tracking questions are used to monitor trends on benefit offerings and investments, leave management and general HR concerns.

### Respondent qualifying criteria

All survey respondents are involved in employee benefits decision-making or administration at U.S.-based organizations and represent companies in various industries and of various sizes.

Survey quotas are set to ensure adequate representation within four size categories to allow for analysis and comparison between these sub-groups.

### 2024 Q1 employer pulse survey



The Q1 survey was conducted online from 12/20/2023 – 1/10/2024.



407 employers were surveyed.



Analysis was segmented across company size and various firmographics.

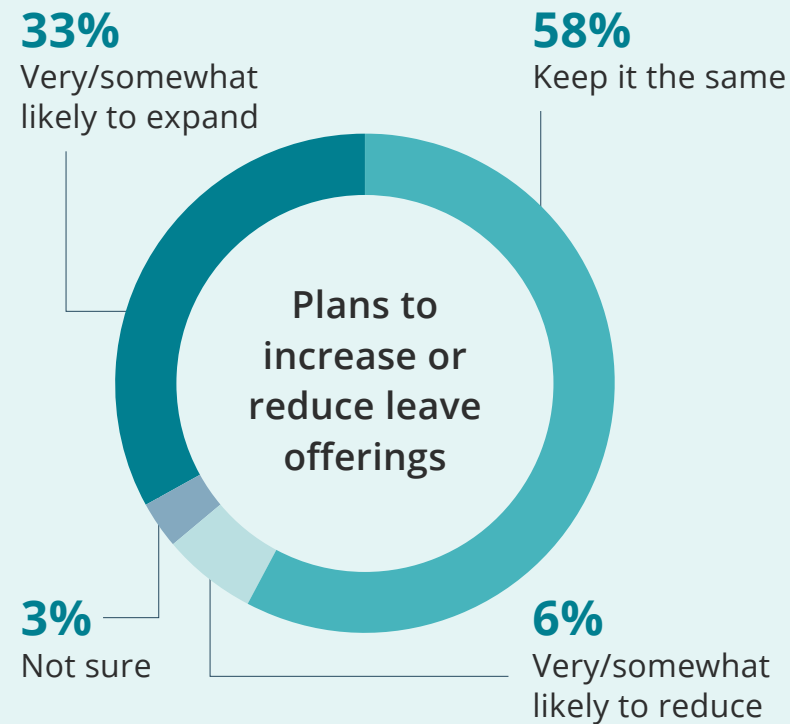
INSIGHT 1

# Leave programs continue to scale in size

This holds true both in types of leave offered  
and amount of leave taken.

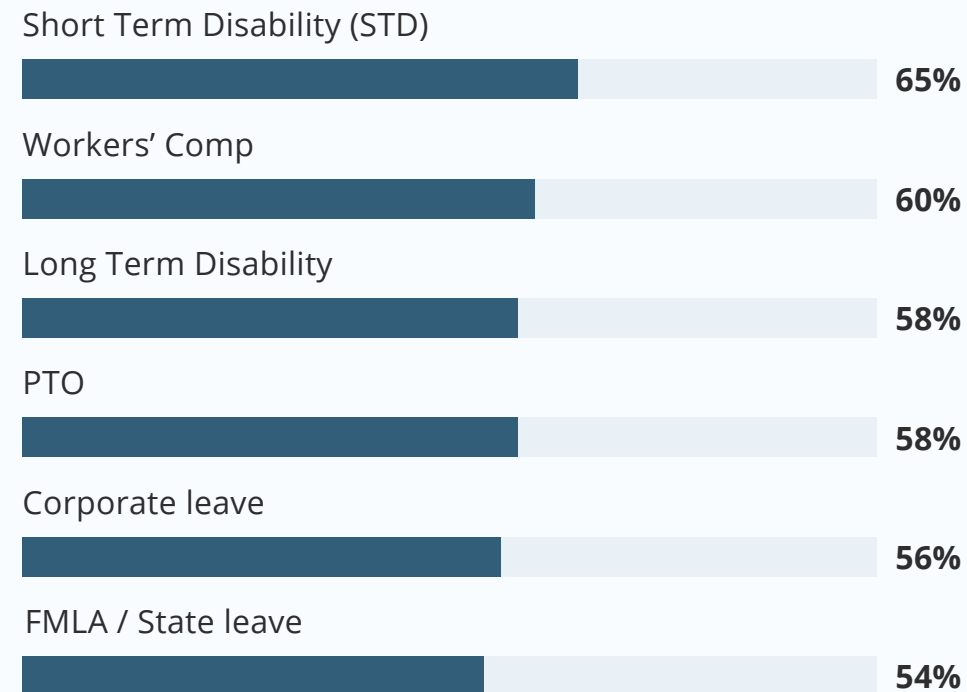
## The market is growing

One third of employers are planning to expand leave offerings, while only 6% say they are planning to decrease.



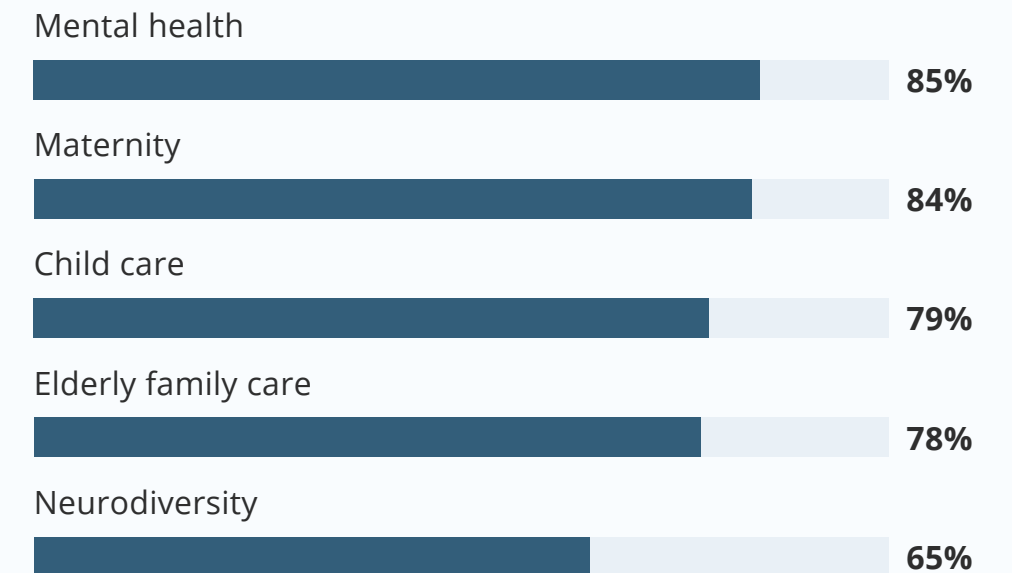
## Tracking today's leave offerings

Employers most often cite STD, Workers' Comp, LTD and PTO as part of their current leave offerings.



## Employers increasingly see themselves supporting employees inside and outside of work

Here's where they see opportunities to help:



### Employers consider their leave offerings to be:



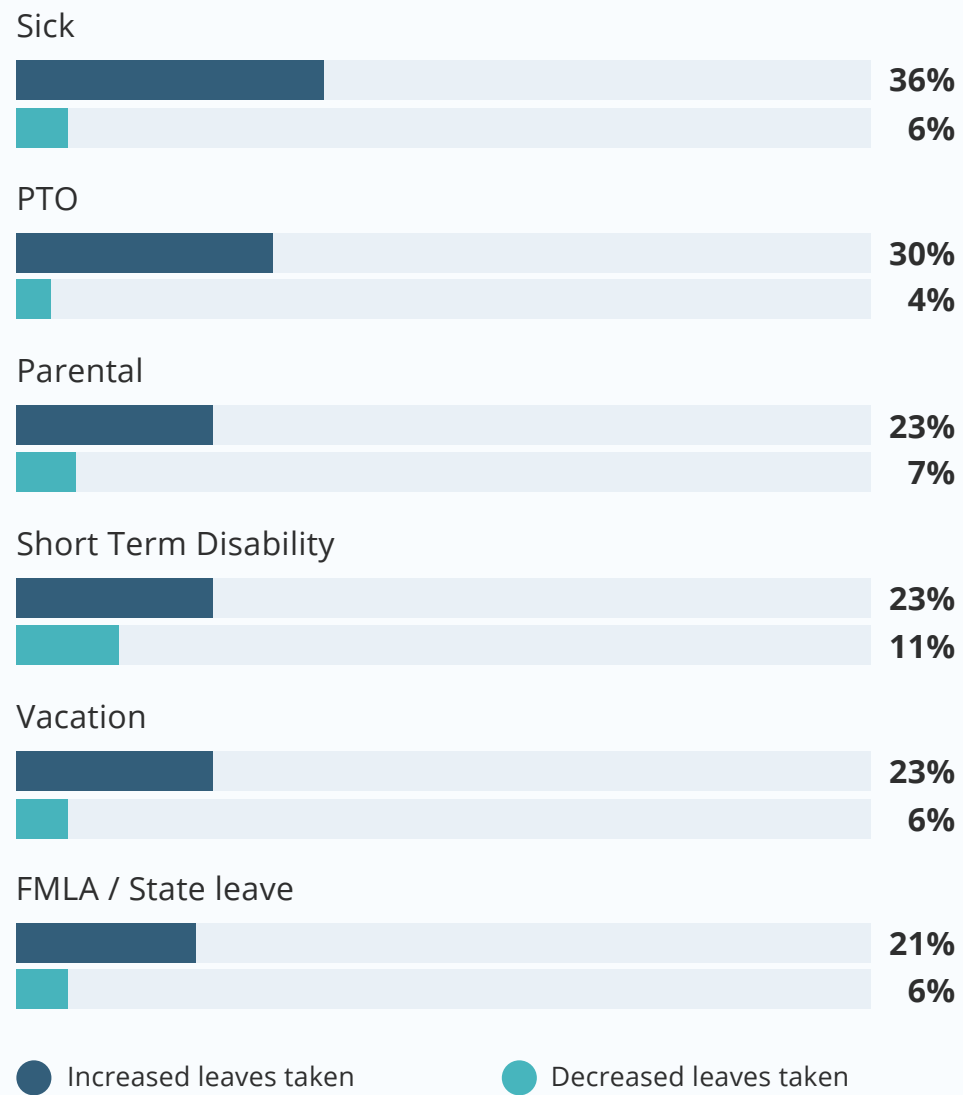
Interestingly, those who see their leave offerings as comprehensive are more likely to expand their offerings (40%), while those with limited offerings are more likely to reduce (18%).

*"We're trying to be as flexible as we can, especially after COVID where you can give employees more flexibility in how they perform their work and take time off when needed."*

— Survey respondent

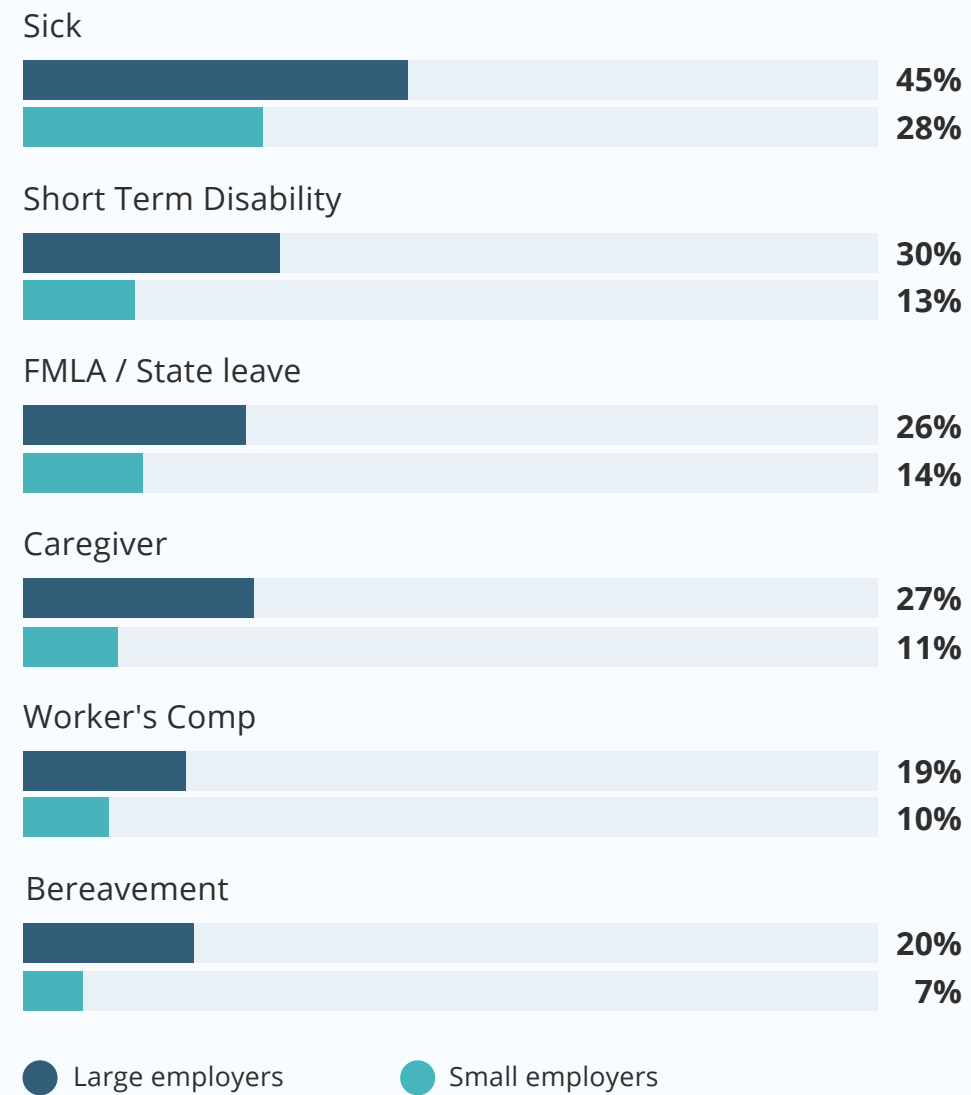
## Employers have seen increases across leave types

**36%** of employers report an increase in leaves taken in 2023, as compared to only **7%** who noted a decrease.



Larger employers have seen more increases than smaller companies:

**42%** of large employers have seen an increase in leaves taken.



**NEARLY HALF**

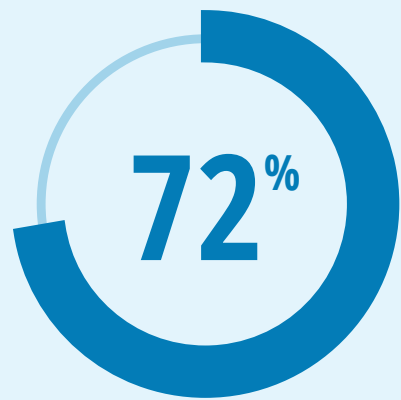
of employers managing leave exclusively in-house are somewhat or very likely to consider outsourcing leave in the next 1-2 years.

INSIGHT 2

# Leave challenges remain broad

Employers need help with multiple aspects of administration.

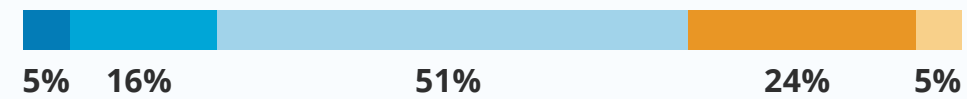
## Leave management presents a wide range of challenges for employers



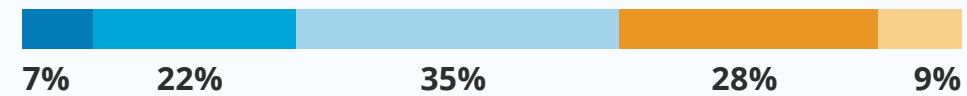
of employers report **leave management overall** is somewhat, very or extremely **challenging**.

### How challenging are aspects of leave management?

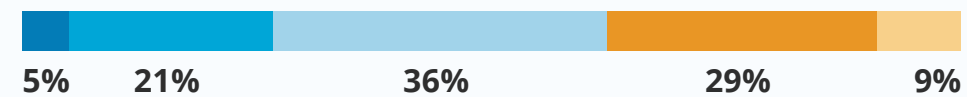
Leave management overall



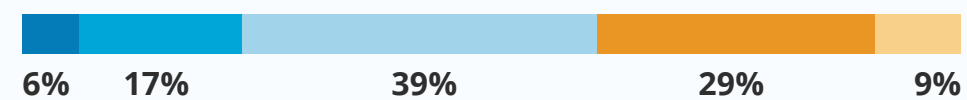
Controlling abuse



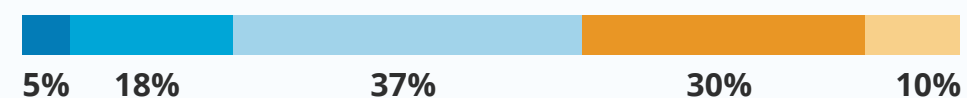
Helping managers manage leaves



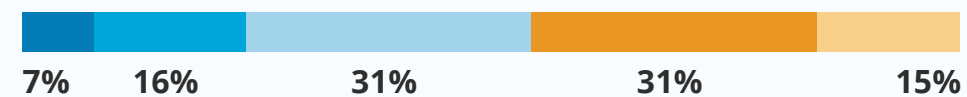
Tracking intermittent leave



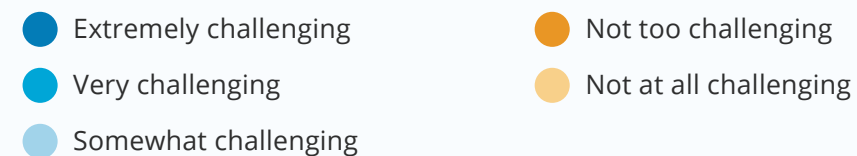
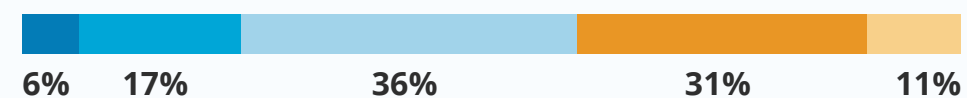
Integrating systems



Staying compliant with regulations



Reporting & tracking leave usage



## What employers are saying

### What is your biggest challenge?

- 10% Workload balance/productivity
- 8% Abuse of leave
- 8% Tracking leave / recordkeeping
- 8% Timeliness of leave requests
- 7% Too many people gone at once
- 6% Filling STD replacement staff
- 5% Filling staffing vacancies / onboarding
- 5% Administration of leave / paperwork
- 4% Communication across departments and employees

*"Lots of time spent managing data and paperwork."*

*"Production has to keep up with reduced head counts."*

— Survey respondents

INSIGHT 3

# Employers are increasingly turning to technology to manage leave

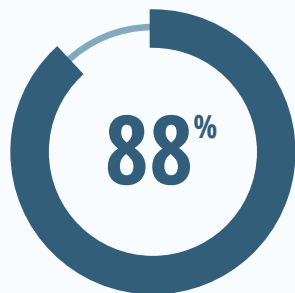
and early adopters are seeing positive results.

## Technology adoption is still in the early stages



ONLY  
**1 in 5**

employers use technology solutions (e.g. digital intake or user portals).



of employers without leave technology solutions say they're likely to seek them out.



ONLY  
**1 in 3**

employers have wholly integrated leave and HRIS data.

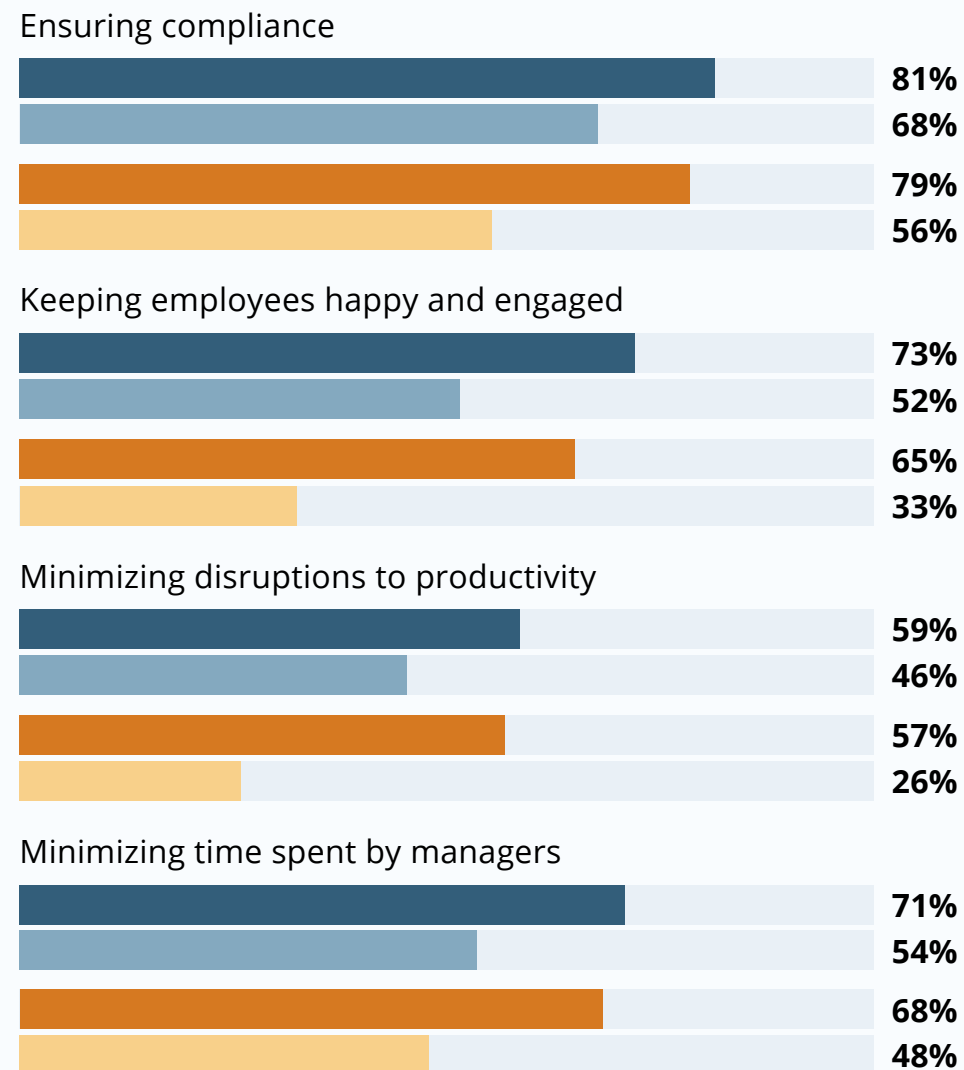


of employers deploy only partial integration of leave and HRIS data.

## Leave tech solutions and data integration have a strong impact on outcomes

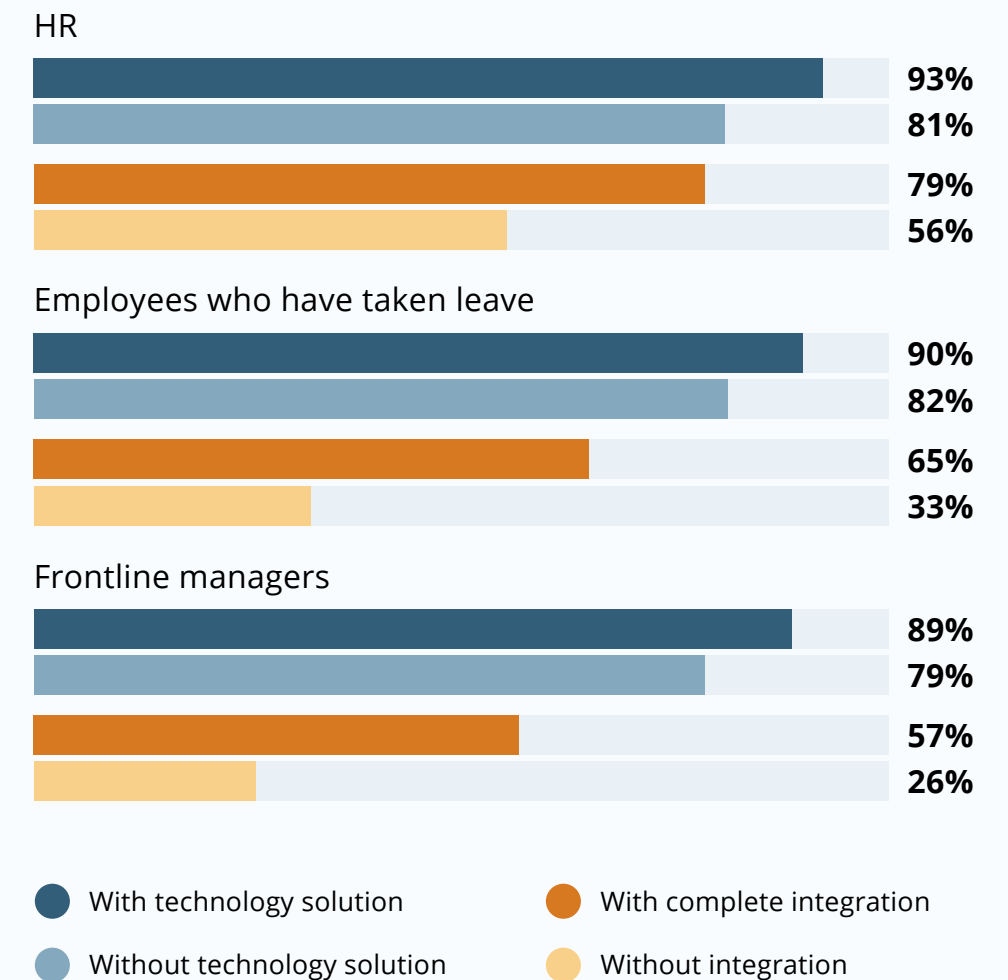
Employers with complete integration and leave tech are more likely to rate their leave program highly.

**Performance rating of leave program features**  
(% excellent/very good):



These integrations are more likely to result in high satisfaction from all parties.

**Leave management process satisfaction**  
(% extremely/very satisfied):



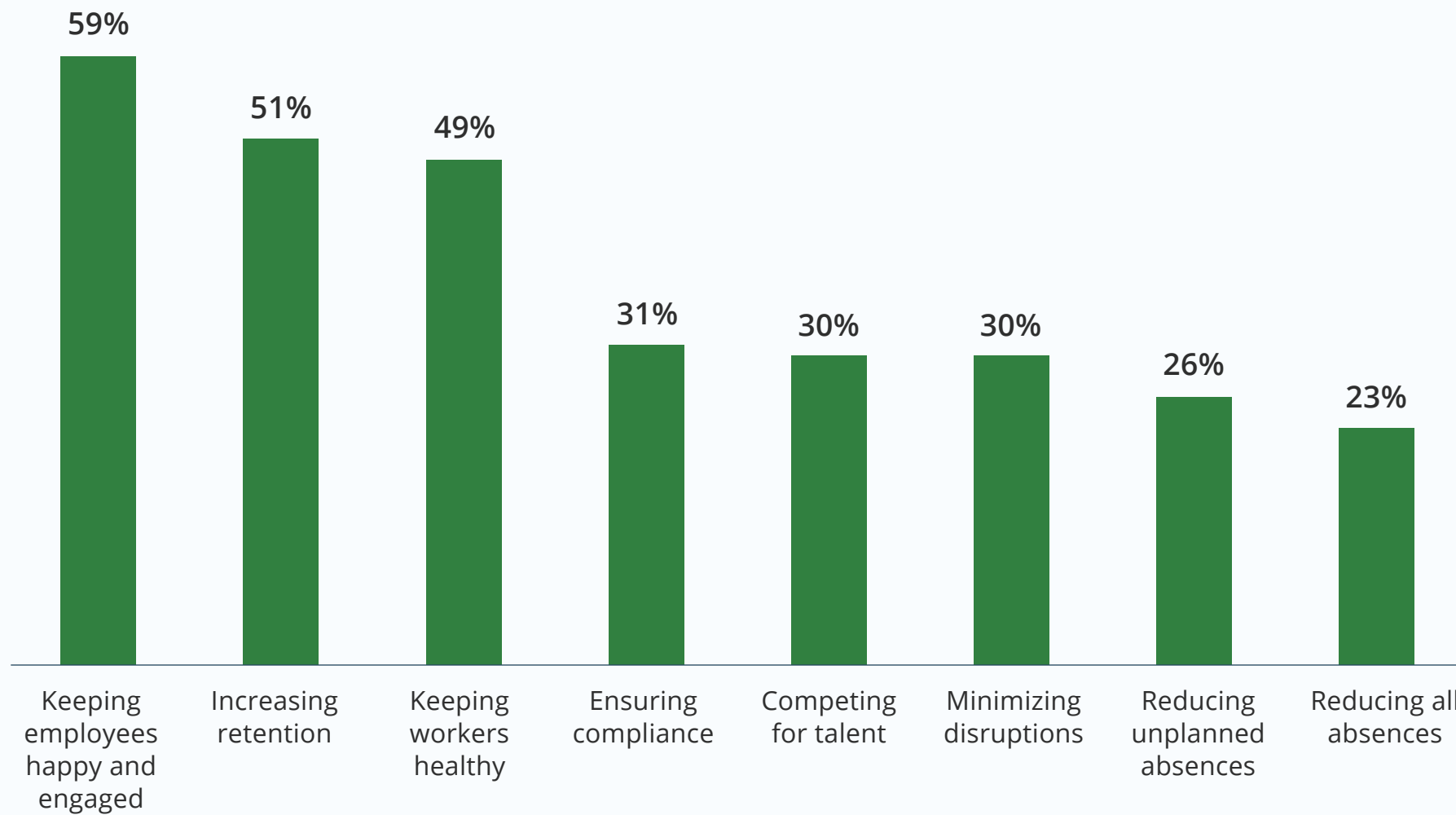
● With technology solution      ● With complete integration  
● Without technology solution      ● Without integration

#### INSIGHT 4

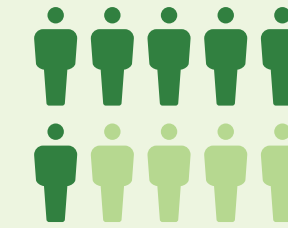
The desire for a stronger leave program is driven by both employer- and employee-centric goals

# Top leave program goals are balanced between meeting employee and employer needs

% of employers who identify the following as top goals of their leave program:



Leave is an important tool in recruiting efforts



**6 in 10**

employers make an effort to highlight their leave program in recruiting conversations.



**1 in 10**

discuss their program only if brought up by the recruit.

HR's biggest challenges remain:

**33%**

Recruitment

**21%**

Retention

# When evaluating success, employers report using a mix of employee- and employer-centric criteria

## Methods used for evaluating the success of leave programs

### Employers using as a method of evaluating success:



### Employers using as the top method of evaluating success:



**55%**

cite an employer-centric method as what they use most often.

**45%**

cite an employee-centric method as what they use most often.

# What's next?

## Embracing the future of leave

Leave continues to grow, and the complexity of leave is only increasing with additional leave types offered, evolving compliance requirements and new digital technologies. In response, employers plan to expand their offerings to employees, especially those who have already built solid leave programs. Those who have already invested early in leave technology solutions and comprehensive data integration report positive gains.

The time of forward-looking leave solutions and more extensive leave offerings seems to have fully emerged. As leave-leading

employers link leave directly to their biggest HR challenges around recruitment and retention and cite its direct use in attracting talent, it's hard to see the trend reversing.

Integrated leave management technology is a valuable tool for employers. It streamlines processes while supporting a better employee experience. By combining new technologies with a full offering of leave benefits, employers can navigate the challenges of leave and create a more supportive and productive work environment.

## Unum Leave Solutions

### Leading the way in leave management

Unum makes it easy for employees to plan time away, access support and return to work smoothly while automating and streamlining administration tasks for HR.

**Unum Total Leave** Advanced leave management with an elevated employee experience

**Unum HR Connect** Seamless connections to key HR platforms for integrated leave management

**Unum Leave Logic** Self-service leave-planning for employees

**Unum ADA Solutions** Manage compliance and accommodation request processes

**Unum Care Hub** Support employees and address the drivers of leave and disability

Talk to your broker or Unum representative about our leading leave solutions today.



Better benefits  
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