

## **Take It Or Leave It Podcast: Episode 40 - Benefits Breakdown: What SHRM's 2024 Survey Says About Leave, Paid Time Off, and Flexible Work**

*(This transcript was generated through AI technology.)*

### **Joshua Seidman**

Hi everyone and welcome back for the 40th episode of Take It or Leave It where we discuss the hottest topics in the world of workplace leaves, absence, management and accommodations. I'm your host, Josh Seidman.

Spring is in the air again and not a moment too soon, even with all the April showers - and here in the New York region we have seen some heavy, heavy downpours this month - major seasonal events have me feeling all cheery and rosy inside. Things like spring break, Easter, Passover, Eid Mubarak and all the family togetherness they bring. Yes, for you parents out there, it means the kids are home during business hours. But it's a nice change of pace every now and then.

The March Madness basketball tournaments came and went - congratulations to the Florida Gators men's basketball team and the Connecticut Huskies women's basketball team on cutting down the nets this year. The masters was here, it's over. And what a weekend and a win for Rory it was. And the start of the NBA and NHL playoffs are here as well, where so many fan bases, including myself and my fellow New York Knicks fans, are dreaming of a title.

Spring 2025 also saw a major milestone for the Seidman family. But more on that in our upcoming episodes. Needless to say, I hope our listeners are packing away their scarves and gloves and earmuffs and getting ready for some May flowers as we march our way through the spring.

Now, as for today's episode, from time to time on Take It or Leave It, we have an episode where we get really into the weeds, get our hands dirty with hard data from surveys and reports on leave and time off. For instance, you might remember episode 25 where we covered the Bipartisan Policy Center's report exploring the impact more robust paid leave and flexible work policies would have on Americans who are currently out of work. As someone who studied physics and spent time pulling through data sets on topics like cosmic rays and lightning, I am so very much looking forward to today's episode and examination of the Society for Human Resource Management, or SHRM as their better known, 2024 Employee Benefits Survey.

To help guide us through this important resource, which, according to SHRM's website, "captures the prevalence across the spectrum of various employee benefits and parts provided by organizations", I am overjoyed to welcome Daniel Stunes to the podcast. Daniel is the manager of data monetization for SHRM. During his tenure at SHRM, he has led various research projects, including those on paid leave, immigration, inclusion and diversity, workplace impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, empathy, alternative credentials and benchmarking studies for human capital, talent access and employee benefits. In his role, his team is also responsible for the voice of work research panel, a

diverse group of HR professionals who participate in research surveys to help SHRM and others understand important topics and trends, in the world of all things work, workers, and the workplace. Daniel joined SHRM from Walmart, where he worked as part of multiple HR centers of expertise, including surveys, selection and assessments and performance management. Daniel holds a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from Drake University, a Master of Science degree in clinical psychology from Fort Hays State University, and a Master of Arts degree in industrial organizational psychology from the University of Tulsa. Daniel, welcome to Take It or Leave It.

**Daniel Stunes**

Glad to be here, Josh. Thanks for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to share some of our benefits research.

**Joshua Seidman**

Oh, absolutely, Daniel. I'm so, so thrilled for today's episode, like I said a minute ago, and we have so much ground to cover today. So I'm ready to jump in to start our discussion. Can you just tell our listeners a bit about yourself and your work with SHRM?

**Daniel Stunes**

Sure thing. In my role I'm part of the data and the analytics team at SHRM, we're kind of colloquially known as the research team. So if you ever see anything put out by SHRM research, that's probably the data and analytics team. In my role, I work on some of our reoccurring studies like our benefits survey that you mentioned and that we'll talk about today, as well as our HR benchmarking study where we survey HR professionals to develop benchmarks for various HR metrics - revenue per FTE, HR expense to FTE ratio, cost per hire, time to fill - and other benchmarks important for operating an overall HR function, for operating, recruiting, talent management, the voice of work research panel that you mentioned, which is often used internally for the work of the broader data and analytics team for all the great research they put out throughout the year. My background is in industrial organizational psychology, which of course lends itself to gathering, analyzing and reporting all the research data we gather, and have worked in several HR specialist roles previously, so that definitely helps in knowing how to present data in a meaningful and useful way for businesses. At least hopefully, that is, of course the goal.

**Joshua Seidman**

I've seen the report from 2024 and a couple of years prior, and it certainly resonated with me. So I think that goal is being checked off. No, no problem there.

**Daniel Stunes**

Good to hear.

## **Joshua Seidman**

So this is this is great. Thank you for the background. I'd like to ask - let's talk a little bit about the survey, the 2024 Employee Benefits survey, which as folks might have gleaned from my intro and you certainly, Dan, I think you can glean, I cannot wait to discuss. So before we crack open the survey, let's talk a little bit of background but on the survey itself. How did the survey come to be? Has SHRM published a similar survey in the past and prior years? What were some of the high level methods that went into the data collection and the corresponding results? And broadly speaking, how many organizations were interviewed as part of this year's survey?

## **Daniel Stunes**

Yeah, happy to cover that background info and for our benefits research, there is a lot of that. So the SHRM Benefits survey is actually one of the longest running studies of employee benefits in the United States. We've been conducting the benefits survey annually since 1996, so the version we're working on currently, the 2025 version, is the 30th iteration of this survey. It's been an honor to be able to continue the deep history of the project as well as to evolve it as more new and different types of benefits become available.

It all started with the desire to provide benchmarks to our members of how many employers were offering certain benefits so that they could use that information to determine how they compare, basically. I say certain benefits, but really it is a broad swath of benefits including healthcare, leave, retirement, etcetera. You know, do they offer something that others typically don't? Do they not offer something that is really common elsewhere, do they need to consider changing some of their benefits to better attract or retain employees? The goal was to help our members have that information, so they could make more informed decisions about their benefits offerings.

And then as the years progressed, it also became interesting to see how the prevalence of certain benefits changed over time. Some benefits became much more common, while others maybe dropped off as they became less popular. Each year, we published the current year's data along with the prior four years, so our members can see the trends that are occurring. So going back to that original purpose of the study, they also have that trend information at their fingertips to make those benefits offerings decisions.

Now for the methodology - we survey US based professional members of SHRM about what benefits their organizations offer during that particular plan year. We administer the survey during the first part of the year, so it's after organizations have completed their open enrollment process at the end of the prior year. That way, they have everything determined and know all of their offerings for the new year. We use a stratified sampling approach to ensure coverage of US locations, including individual states, since that is a filter that our members can use in the online benchmarking tool on our reporting site. Respondents represent organizations of all sizes in a wide variety of industries and sectors all across the US and the data is unweighted. For the 2024 plan year survey that resulted in 4,529 unique organizations contributing to the results.

## **Joshua Seidman**

Wow. First things first, congratulations on this being the 30th iteration of the survey. That is incredibly impressive, a milestone certainly since the mid 90s, I just love that fact. It's something that's certainly connected with me, and something that I hear about from the clients that that my leave colleagues and I here at Seyfarth deal with regularly, is wanting to have some benchmark, some ability to compare and see how the company and its offerings stack up against others in their industry or others, companies in the country more broadly. And the fact that this tool that SHRM's been putting out for decades gives companies that ability to compare and contrast across states or industries. As you were saying, incredibly valuable. So thank you for that overview.

Now you touched upon this a little bit in that last response, but just to confirm, Daniel, so SHRM's 2024 Employee Benefits Survey, certainly covers leaves of absence and time off - we're here o Take it or Leave it - but it is also broader than those topics, right? And if you could, just maybe explain a little bit about what are the different broad benefit topics examined in the survey?

## **Daniel Stunes**

Yeah, that that broad swath of benefits the survey covers that I mentioned earlier includes over 200 different and unique benefits that employers might offer. Of course, we cover categories that are thought about during open enrollment like healthcare, as well as some of the other usual suspects like leave and retirement. But we also cover categories like family care, flexible work, and development and education benefits. Things that folks might not consider as a traditional "benefits item". Maybe they think of it more as like a policy item or something, but regardless of how those items are thought about, ultimately they are a type of benefit or additional offering to the employee that some organizations offer and some do not. So we choose to cover those as well. We even cover really specific things like various transportation benefits, technology benefits, housing and relocation benefits, even food and refreshments benefits. So it really is a wide range of things that are covered by the survey.

## **Joshua Seidman**

Oh, absolutely. Food and refreshment benefits - I love it. And not to be too much of a spoiler, but I do have a question at the tail end of today on the flexible work portion of the more than 200 unique benefit topics that you all were tracking for the report, but astounding number. So more on that in just a little bit for folks.

Now that we know how SHRM has prepared the survey and what topics it covers. How can organizations use this survey to educate their teams, benefit their organizations, and Daniel, from your perspective, what are some of the survey's key takeaways and findings? Are there any results that were maybe unexpected or at least somewhat surprising from this year's collection?

## **Daniel Stunes**

Yeah, there are so many things that organizations can do with this data. So many things. For one, you know the basic - they can see what other organizations generally offer and consider if they should do that as well. Are they not offering something that their employees could easily get somewhere else. Even just seeing the list of benefits themselves, they might realize that there are other ideas for benefits out there that they maybe haven't considered, but would be willing to offer their employees, maybe things that are rare but would really benefit their workforce. They could even use it as a type of internal data for their employees to show their workforce how prevalent certain benefits are. If the organization offers a particular benefit that is maybe rare, they can show their employees that it's something they might struggle to get elsewhere. In other words, kind of a way to help with retention.

SHRM members can also use our online tool to look at the data by industry groupings, organization sizes and locations, both region and state, so they can compare their organizations to organizations most like them. As for some of the key takeaways from the data, with over 200 unique benefits studied, there's a lot to choose from. So for now, I'll steer away from any of the leave related takeaways for the moment as I know we'll discuss those in detail later. But here's a I would say a small smattering, but it's probably a large smattering of some of the takeaways here.

One of the health related ones, telehealth continues to be an offering by most organizations with 91% making it available, very popular. Obviously it picked up during the pandemic, but it's clearly going to be sticking around. Wellness benefits generally decreased in 2024 overall. Things like general wellness programs, health insurance premium discounts for participating in wellness programs, annual health risk assessments, onsite flu vaccinations. They all went down between 2 and 4% from 2023 rates. Same thing with the majority of various lifestyle benefits, things like smoking cessation programs, weight loss programs, personal or life coaching, onsite stress management programs, most of those decreased from 2023 to 2024 as well. Although the individual decreases weren't that huge, the fact that it was almost across the board for both the wellness and the lifestyle benefits was really interesting. So those are definitely some categories we're going to pay attention to going forward to see if that trend continues.

For retirement, the traditional 401K remains popular at 94%. However, the Roth 401K is very much increasing in popularity. It's now at 73% increasing every year from when it was 63% back in 2020. So that one just keeps on going up and up and up. The biggest increase in 2024 was the on-site lactation or a mother's room, up by 19 percentage points from '23 now at 73%. Of course, there's a reason for that - the Federal Pump Act was passed into law, so that certainly played into the large increase, so not really too much of a surprise on that one. In the education and development arena, although the cost and impacts of student loans has been a large topic in the media over the last couple of years, company provided student loan repayments are still pretty low, with only 9% of surveyed organizations providing that benefit.

And then pet health insurance has actually been a rising star, this one kind of surprised me at first, but given the number of households with pets and the increasing costs of

care for pets, maybe it shouldn't have. In 2024, 22% of responding organizations offered this benefit, up from 14% in 2022 when we first asked about it, so that one's becoming more and more popular. I can go on and on, but I know we have a lot of other things to get to, so I'll leave it at that for now.

### **Joshua Seidman**

Oh man, there is so much data and good takeaway. Telehealth, the on-site lactation, the pet health insurance, I mean wonderful offerings and diverse offerings that are available depending on how an employer sees the needs of his employees and his workforce and what would make the most sense. From a cultural standpoint, from a retention standpoint, from attracting new employees into the organization. Thank you for that, Daniel, really fascinating stuff.

I'd like to now zoom in on the surveys leave section, and thank you for giving us a reprieve from that in the last response so we can dive into it here. So let's start in terms of importance. Where do employers and employees rank "leave" against other benefit categories assessed by SHRM? And how, if at all, has this ranking change as compared to the importance placed on leave in, say the 2022 and 2023 versions of this survey.

### **Daniel Stunes**

Yeah, absolutely. Leave is consistently one of the top rated benefit types that employers feel is important to provide and that employees feel is important to have. It's probably no surprise that healthcare has come out on top every year for both employer ratings. Since 2022, 88 to 89% of employers rated as very or extremely important to provide. As well as for employee ratings where it's about 81 to 83% since 2022 rated as very or extremely important to have. But then both leave and retirement tend to jockey for second place. When it comes to employers rating, how important leave is to provide, it not only was tied with retirement in 2024, but also in 2023 and in 2022. All those years between 81 and 82% of employers saying it's very or extremely important.

### **Joshua Seidman**

You've already got me hooked for the 2025 results with that last one Daniel, see if the tie can be broken.

### **Daniel Stunes**

Yeah. I don't know. It's been pretty consistent, so we'll have to wait and see. It's one thing that's definitely clear from this is that employers recognize the importance of providing time off just as much as they do the monetary aspects of helping their employees prepare for retirement. As for employee ratings on how important they consider leave, it was rated above retirement in 2024, about 75% rating leave is very or extremely important compared to 73% for retirement. So, close but leave did win out in 2023, they were both tied at 77%, but in 2022 leave was once again ahead of retirement - 81% compared to 77% stating it's very or extremely important. So for employees I'd give a slight edge to leave benefits as far as which benefit type is second most

important to them behind healthcare. After these big three, there is a drop off from both employers and employees in regards to the other benefits categories. So it's clear that leave is among the top echelon of benefits that employers can provide.

**Joshua Seidman**

So interesting and thank you for those details those statistics. I'd like to turn now to one of my personal favorite topics, the topic of vacation and sick leave and personal time and PTO, and I can practically feel our listeners sliding to the edge of their seats as we get ready for this next question. The leave world has so many moving pieces, as you mentioned, the benefits survey here has 200 topics that are being examined, but within the umbrella of leave, there are so many moving parts.

So I'd like to start here with vacation, sick, personal, PTO. Across all industries and employer sizes included in the survey, I believe I saw that 68% of respondents offer PTO and that includes you know, both vacation and sick leave. This was down 2% I believe from 2023 and I'm curious if - making sure I got those numbers right firstly, but if I did - any thoughts on the reason behind that slight dip?

**Daniel Stunes**

Yeah, absolutely. First of all, yes, you, you did get the numbers right, so. Nice on that.

**Joshua Seidman**

Cool.

**Daniel Stunes**

So yeah, you've got the numbers right, so great on that.

**Joshua Seidman**

Great. Great.

**Daniel Stunes**

And to your point, PTO did dip slightly in 2024 compared to 2023, but in this case I think it's also important to look at the last several years worth of data to see where PTO has kind of been over the years. It was either steady or slightly increasing for the last several years, reaching its highest rate of 70% in 2023. Although it then went down to 68% in 2024 to what you said.

That is still actually higher than all the rates prior to 2023, which were all between 63% to 67%. So that means that other than 2023, 2024 was still its highest prevalence rate year. That could mean that there was just a spike in 2023 for some reason, perhaps more organizations looking at simplifying their leave processes as they saw other organizations doing the same. Maybe a post pandemic reaction or something to do with

returning to the office plans. It could be a number of things. And 2024, maybe is just a reset to the gradual increases it was seeing prior to that point. I think the real story here will be to see what happens in our 2025 data. If it continues to go down, then there could definitely be something happening around this, but if it stays steady or increases again then it seems PTO is still holding strong.

### **Joshua Seidman**

Yeah, great, great insights. I agree with all of that. I've had over the lifetime of my counseling career and certainly over the last decade, I've seen clients that are interested in offering or moving to offer PTO, sort of single bucket PTO, ebb and flow. So it is not surprising to see those numbers generally increase, but then also to potentially you know, have a slide back or recalibration for a year or two. So excited again for 2025. Let's see what that one will hold.

Related to the last question and still sticking with all industries and employer sizes in the US - how many businesses reported offering unlimited paid time off in this year's survey, in terms of industries. Also then, did the survey include information in which specific industries unlimited paid time off is most common? And then finally, did SHRM's reporting by any chance ask which specific employees - full time versus part time or exempt versus non exempt - are receiving unlimited paid time off benefit to the extent their employer is offering?

### **Daniel Stunes**

Yeah, this is always an interesting one people want to talk about and ask about because it's one of those things that a lot of people don't have. So the paid open or unlimited leave as we call it, it is one of those interesting times because there's always a lot of press about it, but actually it's really quite rare. At the very least, very uncommon. In 2024, paid open/unlimited leave was only offered by 7% of organization surveyed. It has been a very steady item over the years, ranging consistently between 6 to 8% each year, so it's not something a lot of organizations are really providing at this point.

In regards to industries, we do actually run the data by industry groupings and make those results available to our members on our reporting site at [shrm.org/benefits](https://shrm.org/benefits). The industries most commonly providing paid open/unlimited leave are - and probably no surprise here - professional, scientific and technical services. That's at about 13% rate and information/finance and insurance/real estate grouping at about 9%. This is likely because they're more office or desk based type of roles.

Interesting, there was a large increase in retail/wholesale trade/transportation and warehousing, which is kind of 1 industry grouping. It went from 5% in 2023 to 10% in 2024 so that was a bit surprising. But it makes me wonder if this has more to do with employees in their corporate headquarters getting that benefit versus those in the stores or in the distribution centers possibly. It will be interesting to see if that increase sticks around this year.



Those industries least likely to offer paid open or unlimited leave are government and education at about 3% rate and healthcare and social assistance at about a 4% rate. The employees that usually have the paid open or unlimited leave available to them are most often the full time exempt employees which were actually at 7%, the exact same rate as the overall rate. The full time no- exempt are less than half of that at 3% and the part time folks are less than half of that at only 1%. And of course the vast majority of the organizations that offer this to those last two groups are those that already offer it to their full time exempt employees, so they're offering it to all their employees, regardless of type, is what it gets down to, which explains why the full time exempt rate is actually the same as the overall rate.

**Joshua Seidman**

That is so interesting. So if I'm hearing you right it was about 3% that offer to non exempt and then about 1 1/2% that offer to part time and the organizations that do are offering you know, limited open PTO to all of their employees. Did I that I hear that right, Daniel?

**Daniel Stunes**

Yeah, it's about 1% for the part timers, but the vast majority of those are, they're offering it to everyone basically, is what it gets down to. It's not like they're offering it to part timers and then they're not offering it to their exempt folks typically. That would be very odd, an odd situation for them to offer.

**Joshua Seidman**

Yeah, it's very interesting. I mean, I'm just trying to do the math, which I used to be good at back when I was studying physics regularly, but today my math skills are shell of their former self. But nonetheless, so I feel like you mentioned a bit ago there were over 4,500 organizations that responded. Does that that sound right?

**Daniel Stunes**

Correct.

**Joshua Seidman**

Right. So if we're doing the math, so if 1% of that is offering these benefits to part timers, that's around 45 organizations give or take. That is more than I would have thought, frankly. I would have expected that to be, you know, a .1% you know, 4 organizations maybe even less. So that, that is really interesting data. Thank you for sharing that.

**Daniel Stunes**

Yeah, absolutely.

## **Joshua Seidman**

Let's shift gears to leave for new parents for a minute. Topics like paid parental leave, paid family leave, paid maternity leave, paid adoption leave, and so forth. Can you explain to our listeners how SHRM survey defines each of these benefit types as well as are there any trends or takeaways from the 2024 survey involving leave for new parents? And I'm asking about sort of big picture, right? All industries or industry specific, kind of whatever you have, wherever you want to take this one.

## **Daniel Stunes**

Sure. So I really apologize ahead of time for going through all the specific definitions of these, but I'll get through that and we'll get to more.

## **Joshua Seidman**

I asked for it, so I'm the one who should be apologizing. Sorry folks.

## **Daniel Stunes**

No, it's fine. So SHRM defines each of those different types in the following ways: so paid maternity leave, it's basically paid leave for new mothers that's above and beyond what is covered by short term disability, as well as the law. And it's separate from broader paid parental or family leave plans, which we'll get to in a second.

Paid paternity leave - paid leave for new fathers that's above and beyond what is covered by law, if there's a law in that state or whatnot, and separate from broader and paid parental or family leave plans. So basically the same concept. Obviously the short term disability doesn't come into effect for the paternity leave.

Paid parental leave generally the same idea as the previous types mentioned, just covering new parent leave for both parents in a single policy versus having, you know, 2 separate policies. And then there's the paid family leave. Again, generally the same concept as mentioned previously, it's just covering the new parent leave as a broader policy that goes beyond just being for new parents.

Then we also have paid adoption leave, so paid leave for anyone who offers any of the prior leaves, maternity, paternity, parental or family but their policy also happens to cover adoption versus just birth. And then we also asked about paid foster parenting leave. So it's kind of similar to the adoption leave, paid leave for anyone who offers any of the prior types but their policy also covers fostering a child versus just the birth of a child. So as you can see it gets kind of complicated kind of fast because each organization might choose to offer their leaves in a different way or with a different policy or with different situations that are, you know, may or may not be covered by other organizations. So we always kind of have to measure it a little bit broadly and then kind of pull everything together

Interestingly paid leave for new parents expanded greatly in 2023 with an average increase of 4.5 percentage points across the six different types. So we were really looking to see what would happen in 2024. As it turns out, and this is really good news, showing that 2023 wasn't an anomaly, 2024 seemed to be a year of stabilization, so everything stayed within  $\pm 1$  percentage points of the 2023 rates. These benefits remaining at their previously elevated levels, suggests that organizations which began allowing more comprehensive parental leave packages the prior year in 2023, have decided to keep them in their policies, seemingly understanding that the importance and value that offering leave for new parents brings to their workforce, so we were we were really happy to see that.

### **Joshua Seidman**

Wow, that is a great data point and set of data and I'll say it is consistent with my anecdotal hearings from our client base here at Seyfarth, because we certainly have seen an uptick in the rollout of these leave for new parent topics - parental leave, paid maternity, paid paternity and the like. So really I'm glad to hear that the numbers from the survey both in 2023 and then in 2024 are back up, but we've certainly been hearing for a number of years from our clients anecdotally.

What about the related topic of paid leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition, which, anecdotally, is something we at Seyfarth are seeing offered, or at least being considered, also by a greater number of employers in recent years. What did the 2024 SHRM survey see on that topic?

### **Daniel Stunes**

This is a great item to bring up and candidly, this is one that is very important to me as a caregiver myself. This is something that's becoming more and more important to workers overall as they care for aging parents or other family members that need assistance, you know, that that "sandwich generation", so to speak. Unfortunately, since this is about leave specifically, the family member requiring care doesn't need to be covered under the employees health plan, but sometimes they do need to be a certain type of relative which is actually why we ask about this type of paid leave to care for family members in two different ways: to care for both immediate family like spouses, children or parents, as well as extended family like siblings, in-laws, grandparents, grandchildren, etc.

It's probably no surprise that paid leave to care for immediate family is more prevalent, with 33% of surveyed organizations providing it. Paid leave to care for extended families, a bit less at 19% offering this. Of course, it is important to remember that these numbers are for paid leave specifically, there are laws such as FMLA, which I know you know about, that require leave to be provided to care for certain family members, but that doesn't require it to be paid leave, so that distinction is important as these offerings certainly go above and beyond, but it's usually required by law.

### **Joshua Seidman**

Wonderful again, very interesting. It's funny, I certainly felt that the winds of change were blowing in the direction of the paid parental leave and that swath of policies five years ago, six years ago and really seeing big upticks in the offerings from our clients over the last 5, 6, 7 years in that space. And now it feels like the paid caregiver leave is a benefit that is sort of rising through the ranks. So thank you, thank you for sharing that information. Daniel.

Another question for you, So SHRM's Survey contains and I love a good catchall category, I use it all the time when counseling on different topics. A catch all category or other leave: this includes benefits like paid holidays, paid bereavement leave, paid voting leave, which I understand SHRM has covered in prior years reports, as well as some newcomer topics like floating holidays, grandparent leave and bereavement leave. That includes loss of pregnancy, failed surrogacy, and failed adoption processes. What are some of the notable findings and takeaways from this particular aspect of the 2024 survey?

**Daniel Stunes**

Yeah. You know what's interesting? Because there are so many different types of leave that organizations can offer above just the normal sick and vacation leave now, and there's just more and more coming, every day, so you have to keep up with it.

**Joshua Seidman**

Absolutely.

**Daniel Stunes**

Things like floating holiday leave or time off for special events like a birthday or whatever, that is separate from the regular personal leave was actually provided by 46% of surveyed organizations so just under half. Paid bereavement leave, that's pretty ubiquitous at 91% of organizations providing it. In 2024, though we asked the follow up question about bereavement leave for the loss of pregnancy, failed surrogacy or failed adoption process that you mentioned. So it was actually the first time we asked that. Among those that offer bereavement leave, 39% also offer it for these particular situations.

We have asked about both paid and unpaid time off to vote for several years now and paid voting leave was at 50% for 2024, while unpaid voting leave was at 42%. Interestingly, in 2024, mind you - an election year, both went down 3 to 4 percentage points from 2023, so that was really interesting/surprising on our side. Maybe it has to do with so many states now requiring one or the other by law that the rates of organizations providing them voluntarily have just decreased because of that. So these will be interesting ones to keep track of going forward.

**Joshua Seidman**

And that was where my head went to with that last nugget there, Daniel. So yeah, of course. Very interested to see.

### **Daniel Stunes**

Yeah, it was such a surprise being an election year, but we'll see if it continues and what happens in 2026 and beyond. Another leave type we asked about was paid mental health days separate from regular sick leave. The first time we asked about this was in 2022 and it was at 20%, which surprised us that it was actually that high at that point. It decreased to 19% in 2023 and then dropped a little bit more to 16% in 2024. Perhaps this was something organizations started to offer due to the pandemic, and they're now backing off of it a bit. Not sure, so we'll have to keep an eye on it to see if it goes down again in 2025 or if it perhaps levels off.

And you mentioned grandparent leave, which is a cool one we added in 2024 that is similar to new parent leave just for the grandparents instead. This one is still pretty rare. Only 4% of organizations providing it, but thinking about it with the aging workforce, people working longer, et cetera, this might be something that more and more employees want. So we'll have to wait and see if that results in more organizations offering it in the future.

### **Joshua Seidman**

Thank you for those data points. The paid mental health days - it's a topic that we've seen as well. It's popped up in a few different legal senses, statutes and ordinances and whatnot. We've seen organizations offered out of the goodness of their corporate hearts as well. And sort of it being kind of akin to personal days or a floating holiday, you know, so they're all sort of unique ways of getting to a comparable landing spot for a benefit. So interesting to see that the numbers had dipped a bit since you all first started looking at it in 2022. The number of, I mean, each of the numbers were interesting and insightful that you just rattled through, but the one that jumped out to me when I was getting ready for today's session with you, Daniel, was the scope of the paid bereavement for loss of pregnancy, failed surrogacy, failed adoption and so forth. I was surprised that that number was as high as it was. I think it was at 39%. That one, that one caught me a bit off guard as being as widespread as, you know, two out of every five companies that you surveyed were offering that type of benefit.

### **Daniel Stunes**

Yeah, that was one... I don't know if we knew what we were going to get when we started asking that one, but we knew it was something we wanted to ask about. So it'll be interesting to see going forward if it stays the same, goes up, goes down. But I was glad to see that it was as high as it was, because those are obviously important and frankly stressful situations that, you know, if companies can take care of their employees when they go through something like that, that's going to build that loyalty to the company. So it's important on both sides.

### **Joshua Seidman**

Absolutely hit the nail on the head there. My last question for you. This has been so much fun, Daniel, so I'm kind of hesitant to let you go, but I do have one final question for you, which I previewed earlier. So moving away from the topic of leave - as you mentioned, SHRMs report also covers a unique and diverse set of additional types of benefits, including data on flexible work. Flexible work setups continue to be a focal point for many employees, and a component of many employers' present day work arrangements. So for my last question, can you tell our listeners, what subtopics SHRM includes in this benefit category and what some of the trends and takeaways look like on the topic of flexible work.

### **Daniel Stunes**

Yeah, absolutely. Even though the return to office push gets a lot of attention in the media, a lot of organizations are still offering flexible working arrangements like hybrid work opportunities, which were offered by 63% of responding organizations. So still pretty high. This prevalence rate has so far remained very consistent since we started asking it in 2022. Of course, the type of work that is done may or may not lend itself to a hybrid work environment. So it's no surprise that certain industries like you know the information, finance and insurance, real estate as well as the professional, scientific and technical services industries tend to offer it at a higher rate like between 77 and 78%, more so than manufacturing or like the retail which are much lower than that, you know 49 to 54% somewhere around there.

Related to this, we also asked about whether organizations cover the cost of at home equipment for remote or hybrid work, and if they do what they cover and how much are they willing to cover. After the pandemic, around 60% would cover this, but in 2024 that dropped to 52%, which perhaps the return to office push impacted that drastic decrease, possibly. 96% that offer this do cover work technology like keyboards, headsets, etcetera, kind of the basic things you'd expect.

63% cover general office supplies like pens, paper or ink. 35% cover cell phone service and about 1/4 cover chairs and other well-being items like a standing desk as an example. Overall in 2024, organizations that provided at home equipment for their employees would cover an average cost of about \$871 for it. So they're covering quite a bit of it. There are a couple of other work arrangement items that are often in the media that we do cover as well. Compressed work weeks where employees work longer days in order to have a full day off per week or per pay period, that was provided by 23% of respondents in 2024, up four percentage points from 2023. A four day work week, and I know that one always gets a lot of media attention, where they only the employees only work about 32 hours per week for all or part of the year. That's much less common, being offered by 8% of employers unchanged from 2023. And as I mentioned, more and more research is, you know, getting done, it's always in the media, but the research is being done to see how effective those arrangements are. So we'll have to see if those rates change in the future based on the outcomes of that research.

### **Joshua Seidman**

That is again fascinating, interesting. Certainly the four day work week, the flexible hybrid work arrangements, they make headlines all the time. I get Google alerts seemingly daily on topics, certainly involving hybrid work and the four day work week. Every time it pops up in a different country or here in the states, it makes headlines. Great that you all are reporting on those pieces of benefits as well.

Daniel, thank you so very, very much for spending some time with us today and taking us through many of these highlights of SHRM's 2024 Employee Benefits Survey.

**Daniel Stunes**

It was my pleasure, Josh, thank you so much for having me. And for anyone that wants to learn more about the survey or results, please check out our reporting site at [shrm.org/benefits](https://shrm.org/benefits). And I would be remiss if I didn't put a plug in, keep an eye out for our 2025 update, which will be available the first week in July.

**Joshua Seidman**

Oh my goodness, I love it. And Daniel, I would love- it's so soon! And I would love to, you know, when once the data, the next data set comes out and we have some time to wrap our arms around it, would love to have you back to boomerang back to the podcast and do another round and see how some of these changes have taken place.

**Daniel Stunes**

Sounds great. Sounds like a plan, Josh.

**Joshua Seidman**

Wonderful. Thank you again and thank you to our listeners for tuning in for today's episode. We'll see you next time.