

# 2024



## Leave of Absence and Workplace Accommodations Forecast



The modern workforce is evolving fast. When we look at the rapid rise of remote work, the impact of new technologies such as AI, and major generational shifts, the workforce of today is not the workforce of just five years ago. A big part of this evolution includes employee attitudes and expectations around leaves of absence and workplace accommodations.

## In two of our recent reports, we found that:

71%

of respondents felt comfortable or very comfortable requesting an accommodation at their organization<sup>1</sup>

85%

of respondents felt comfortable requesting and taking a leave of absence<sup>2</sup>

Taken together, those numbers show a workforce that is very willing to ask for what they need – both in terms of time away from work, and accommodations to make their day-to-day work experience more supportive, comfortable, and productive. In fact, we found that among job-seekers, 42% wouldn't even apply to a job that didn't offer paid leave.<sup>3</sup>

Employers are finding themselves having to adapt to this changing workforce. Our 2024 survey of HR leaders at employers with over 5,000 employees uncovers their top challenges with both leave and workplace accommodations and what changes they have made to address these challenges. We also look at how leave and accommodations requests have changed over the past year, and the top reasons employees are requesting both.

As leave and accommodations requests continue to rise, it's never been more important to support HR teams with the right technology. The right platform can centralize leave and accommodations requests into a single location, securely storing documents, decisions, dates, and much more. Teams can become much more efficient at managing large caseloads with a platform that automates the adminstrivia of leave and accommodations processes.

To learn more about how solutions like AbsenceSoft can help, [schedule a demo today.](#)



<sup>1</sup> [Accommodations in the Workplace Report, AbsenceSoft](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Leave of Absence Experience and Business Impact Report, AbsenceSoft](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Leave of Absence Experience and Business Impact Report, AbsenceSoft](#)

# Recruitment and Remote Work are Top Challenges.

In our survey, we asked HR managers if they are experiencing challenges with current top-of-mind issues with today's modern workforces. For every issue option we provided, more than half said they were struggling with them, with the top being recruitment and supporting hybrid and remote workforces. This comes as no surprise as today's labor market remains tight, and hybrid and remote work becomes more desired – and even expected – by potential employees.

**During the past 12 months, employers reported struggling with the following issues:**

**60%**  
Recruiting talent



**60%**  
Supporting hybrid  
and remote workers



**54%**  
Employee stress  
and burnout



**52%**  
Employee experience



**51%**  
Employee health  
and well-being

# The 2024 Leave of Absence Forecast

For the second year in a row, we find that most HR managers are seeing an increase in leave requests. **Nearly 75% say that they received a 20% or more increase in leave requests during the past year.** This means leave teams are under pressure to quickly and compliantly manage more leave requests each year, often without getting additional headcount. With employee experience as a top priority for many organizations, ensuring a positive leave experience can become a major challenge for HR.

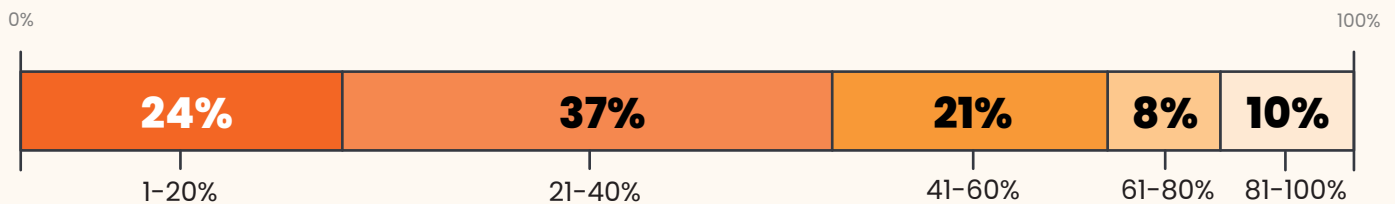


# Leave Requests Continue to Rise.

During the past year, requests for leaves of absence:



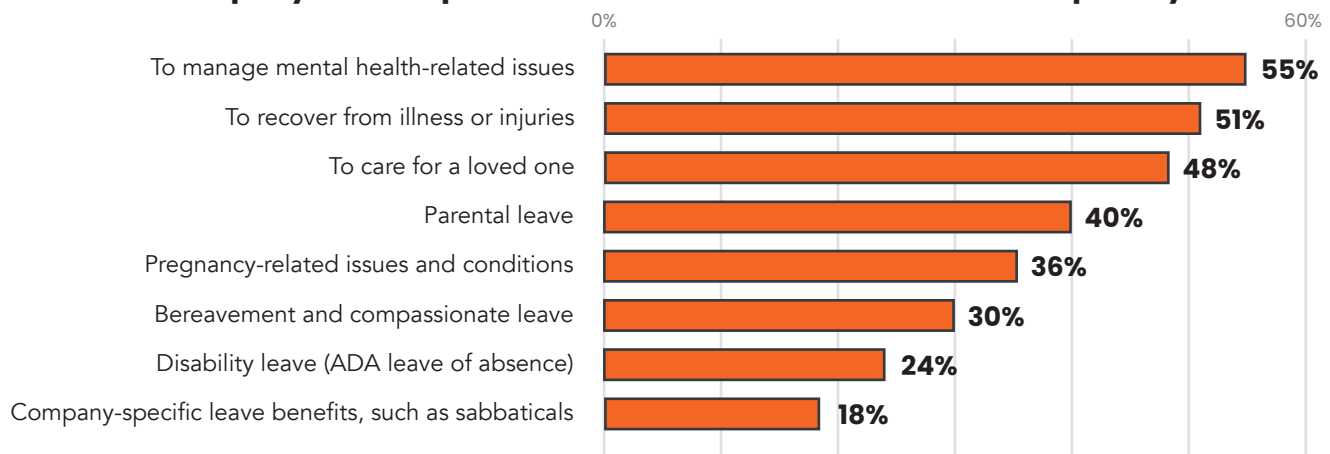
Percentage that leave requests increased over the past year:



## Mental Health is the Most Frequent Reason Cited for Leave.

When we asked employers what the main reasons employees gave for requesting leave, we saw mental health issues at the top. Given this dramatic rise in requests for mental health leave, it is important for employers to understand the details of eligibility and employer requirements around these types of requests. Additionally, mental health challenges can also be a covered disability under the ADA, and employers could be required to provide reasonable accommodations to workers struggling with mental health challenges.

Reasons employees requested a leave of absence in the past year:





# Employers Keep Adding New Leave Benefits to Attract and Retain Talent.

Employers adding new leave benefits continues to be a growing trend. For the second year in a row, we found that more than half of employers we surveyed are adding all kinds of new paid leave benefits, mostly to meet business goals around recruitment, retention, and employee experience. However, adding new paid leave benefits can be stressful for HR teams who must implement, track, and report on the usage of these new policies. Many outsourcing partners and some

leave tracking solutions won't handle custom policies like these, which can make them even more of a headache for leave managers.

Systems like AbsenceSoft that both allow for custom policies to be added and tracked can be a big help as companies start to add more leave benefits. They also offer reporting functionality to show just how a policy is being used, and the impact it is having on the business as a whole.

## Types of paid leave benefits organizations added recently or will add in 2024:

**54%**

Paid parental leave



**51%**

Paid mental health days



**37%**

Paid caregiver leave



**52%**

Flexible time off (FTO)



**49%**

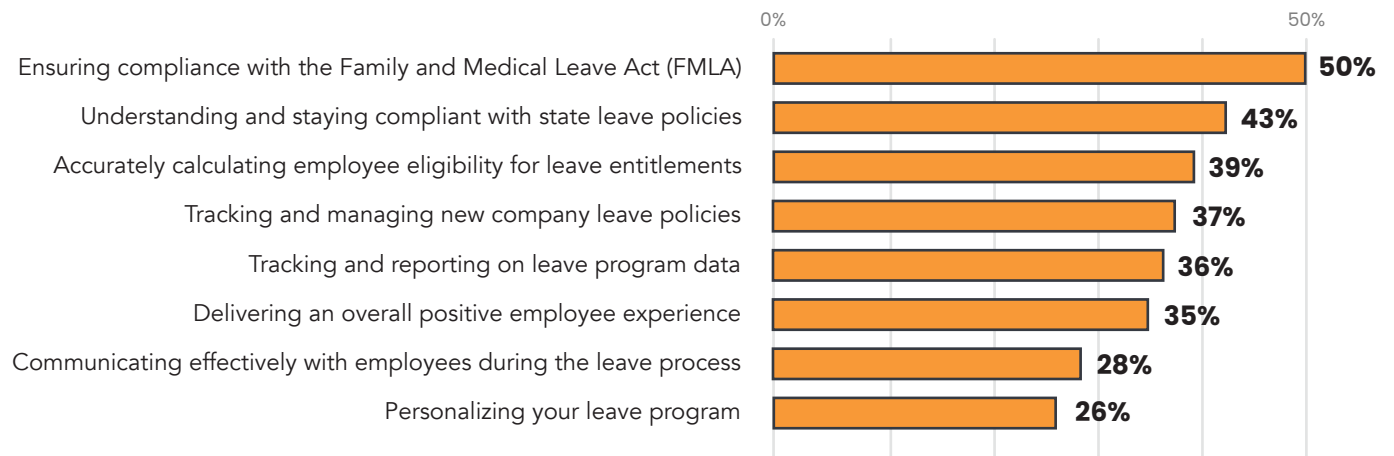
Paid compassionate or bereavement leave

# Compliance Remains a Top Challenge When Managing Leave.

There are numerous challenges to successfully managing leave, especially at a large organization. However, staying compliant with FMLA and state leave laws topped the list for the HR managers we surveyed. The state leave law landscape is changing rapidly, and every new state leave law is unique from the other. Some states

even have multiple policies that address different life events. With more companies hiring workers from all 50 states, it means more laws to understand, track, and manage eligibility for. All this points to a growing need for a robust leave management solution to help HR teams stay up-to-date and compliant from day one.

## Top challenges when managing leave:



# Conclusion

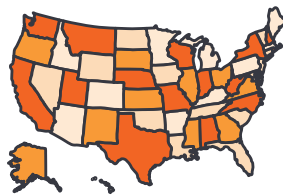
In today's modern workplace, leave programs can no longer be an afterthought. Leave requests continue to rise year over year as workforce expectations evolve rapidly. With recruitment and retention topping the list of organizational challenges, companies are adding more leave benefits to attract and retain talent. More employers are embracing remote work and hiring talent across the United States, which requires having to understand the numerous state leave programs their workers are eligible for.

All of this points to an inflection point for leave management, with more leave cases to manage, more complex leave laws to understand, and new policies to implement and track every year. Companies that don't ensure their HR teams are well-equipped to stay compliant and have the tools they need to effectively manage a growing caseload will find themselves facing numerous challenges in the years to come. Employee morale, productivity, and retention are easily impacted by poor leave experience. Worse, organizations could face investigations and costly lawsuits if their leave program isn't compliant.

AbsenceSoft partners with numerous large employers to tackle the challenges of modern workforces. We help them stay compliant, efficiently manage large caseloads of leave requests, and deliver personalized leave programs to large, complex workforces. To see AbsenceSoft in action, we invite you to schedule a demo today with a Certified Leave Management Specialist.

[Get a Demo](#)

## FMLA Compliance



## Leave Requests

▲ 9.7% from last month

## Reason for Case

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bonding                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Care for Injured Servicemember          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Care of Child during Public Health Emergency | <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption/Foster Care                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Military                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care Provider or School Emergency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employee Health Condition                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Health Condition                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy/Maternity               | <input type="checkbox"/> Voting Leave                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other  | <input type="checkbox"/> COVID 19                                |

Expected Case Dates

06/03/2024 to 08/19/2024

[Calculate Eligibility](#)



# The 2024 Workplace Accommodations Forecast

Beyond just complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), organizations can benefit from a strong accommodations program that promotes and supports a diverse workforce. With younger generations being more comfortable asking for what they need, as well as older workers needing additional support to stay fully productive, the employers we surveyed overwhelmingly reported an increase in requests during the past year.



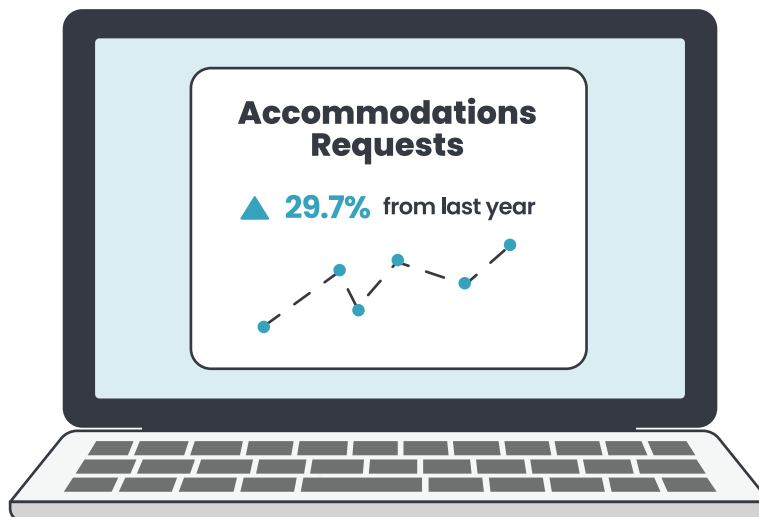
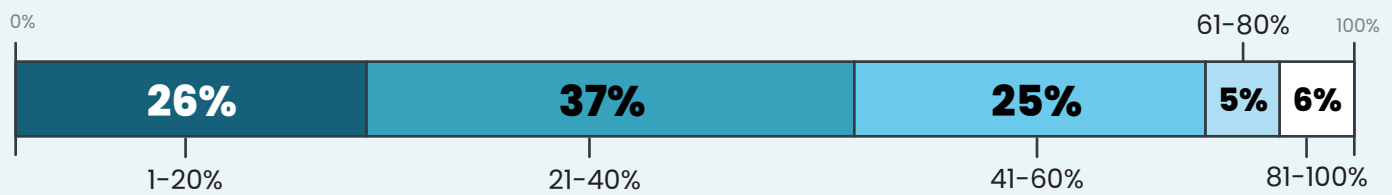
# Workplace Accommodations Request are Increasing Rapidly.

Of those employers that reported an increase in requests, 74% reported handling 20% or more requests than the prior year. With every request, the law requires employers to undergo an interactive process with the employee, which can add a lot to an HR team's workload. Modernizing your leave program with technology is becoming increasingly important to keep up rapidly growing caseloads.

**During the past year, requests for workplace accommodations have:**



**Percentage that accommodations requests increased over the past year:**

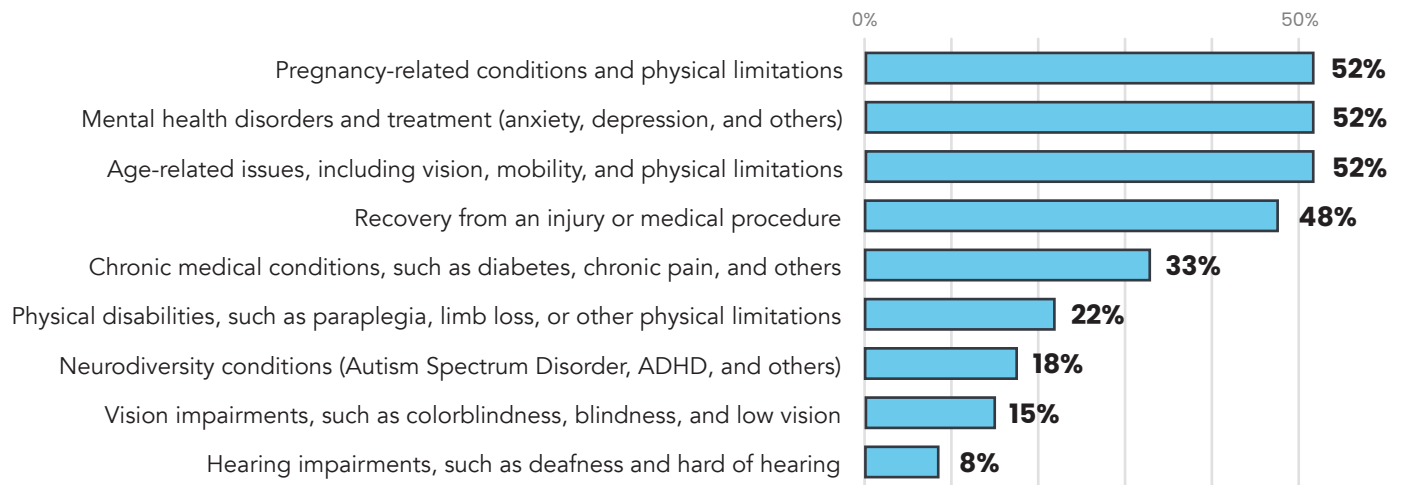


# Pregnancy, Mental Health, and Age-Related Conditions Drive an Increase in Accommodations Requests.

Managing mental health came in as a top reason for workplace accommodations requests. The other top factors were pregnancy and age-related conditions, showing that accommodating workers means much more than providing specialized equipment or chairs. The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) now protects many pregnancy-related conditions as a covered disability, placing a greater level

of responsibility on employers to support workers before, during, and after pregnancy. As the workforce evolves, and new legal requirements come into play, it's more important than ever for organizations to pay special attention to their accommodations program, to ensure it is supportive, compliant, and meeting the needs of each employee.

## Primary reasons employees are requesting workplace accommodations:



# Managing the Interactive Process is a Top Challenge for Employers.

For every accommodations request that is made, federal law requires that employers engage in an interactive process with the employee. It's critical that the process starts in a timely manner, and that every step is documented to prove your organization is complying with the law should a complaint arise.

During the interactive process, there are many steps, including collecting and tracking documentation, and even talking with medical providers. It's easy for any

part of the process to fall through the cracks, especially as these requests increase over time, and caseloads grow. In a recent survey of employees who requested workplace accommodations, 45% reported that they did not fully complete the interactive process – of those, nearly 20% didn't go through the process at all.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, this can be all it takes for an organization to face and lose a costly lawsuit. Organizations should take special care to make sure the interactive process is started and completed fully, in a timely manner, to stay compliant.

Average Cost to Defend a Lawsuit  
(regardless of outcome):

**\$78,000**

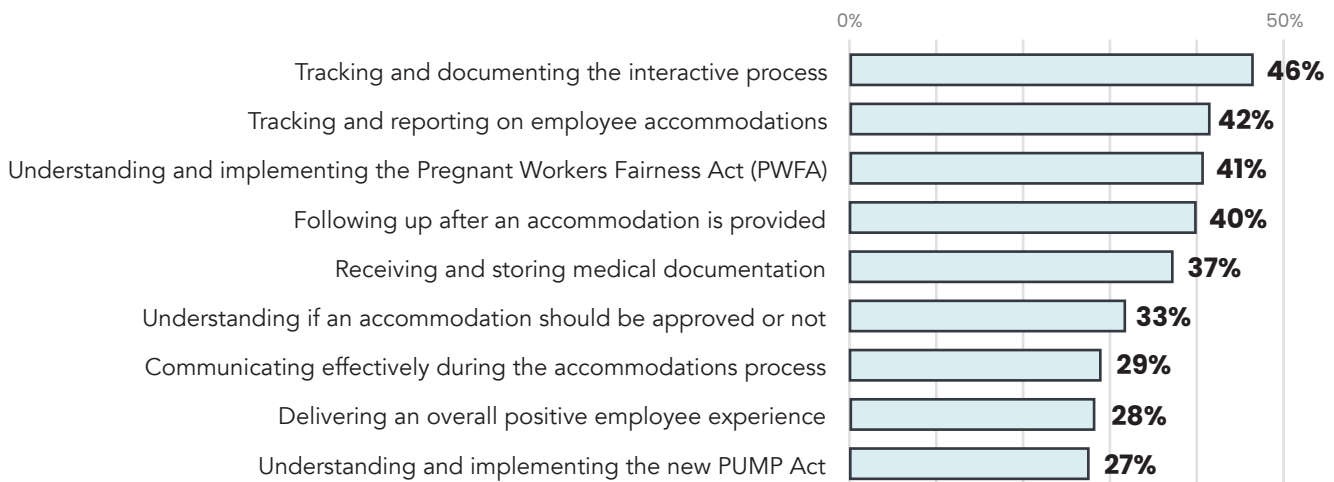
*\*Department of Wage and Hour Division, U.S.  
Department of Labor; SHRM*

Average cost for one wrongful termination:

**\$335,000**

*\*Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*

## Challenges organizations face with workplace accommodations:



# Conclusion

With accommodations requests on the rise, and new federal laws changing who is eligible for accommodations under the ADA, it's more critical than ever for organizations to look for ways to improve and streamline their accommodations processes. The great news is that most accommodations requests cost very little and providing them without hassle can help you build a diverse, inclusive, productive, and loyal workforce.

In a recent survey of employees who had requested workplace accommodations, we found that **36% waited more than a month to hear back about their request, and of those, nearly 10% never heard back at all.**<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, with many ADA lawsuits, this

is all it takes to run afoul of the law and put your organization at risk.

Technology can be a big help when facing increasing accommodations requests. Software like AbsenceSoft can help your HR team open a case quickly, automate communications, and centrally document every part of the interactive process. Medical documents can be easily attached to a case with fax barcoding, and text messages can also be sent and captured. Prompts and reminders can be sent from the system so follow-up isn't forgotten. If, for any reason, your organization faces an audit, producing the details required to prove compliance becomes much easier.

AbsenceSoft partners with many large employers to streamline and improve their accommodations programs. As a platform that also manages leave, our customers access one just system to track both types of requests. Especially for medical procedures, a leave is often followed by a request for a workplace accommodation, so having one system that tracks both can save HR teams a significant amount of time and effort. To see AbsenceSoft in action, we invite you to schedule a demo today with a Certified Leave Management Specialist.

[Get a Demo](#)