

News

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Department
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EMPLOYEE BENEFITS IN PRIVATE INDUSTRY, 2004

Sixty-nine percent of workers in private industry had access to employer-sponsored medical care plans, and 53 percent participated in medical care plans in March 2004, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. Fifty-nine percent of workers had access to retirement benefits, with 50 percent participating in at least one type of retirement plan. These findings are from the Summary, "National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2004," published today.

These data are from the National Compensation Survey (NCS), which provides comprehensive measures of occupational earnings, compensation cost trends, and details of benefit provisions. In addition to health and retirement plans, the survey also covered paid leave, disability insurance, and other selected benefits. The following are some of the major findings:

- Three-fifths of private establishments offered health insurance in March 2004, and about half of establishments offered retirement plans.
- Paid leave was the most commonly provided employee benefit in the private sector: Paid vacations and holidays were available to 77 percent of employees. Paid jury duty leave was also common, available to 70 percent of workers. Half of the workers had paid military leave benefits.
- The large majority of employees covered by medical care plans were in plans requiring employee contributions for both single coverage and family coverage. Employee contributions to medical care premiums averaged \$264.59 per month for family coverage; for single coverage, employee contributions averaged \$67.57 per month.
- Twenty-one percent of employees were in defined benefit retirement plans, and 42 percent were covered by defined contribution plans. (Some employees participated in both types.) The overall coverage of retirement plans has held relatively steady for the last few years.
- Fifty-one percent of workers had access to life insurance, and nearly as many, 48 percent, participated. Short- and long-term disability benefits were available to 39 and 30 percent of workers, respectively, and nearly all participated.

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Note on Health Care Benefits

The estimates for March 2004 of the percent of workers with access to and participating in health insurance benefits (medical care, dental care, and vision care) are not comparable to the estimates published for March 2003. As part of the process for developing the March 2004 estimates, BLS implemented a data imputation technique to account for missing information on type of health plan. The 2003 data for access and participation in health insurance benefits have been recalculated using this technique. Tables showing the recalculated data, with additional information about the change in method, can be found on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/notice112004.htm>. The recalculated 2003 data and the 2004 data are comparable with health benefits data published by BLS for earlier years.

The release and Summary Report are available by e-mail request at ocltinfo@bls.gov, by telephone (202) 691-6199, or on the BLS Internet site, <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/home.htm>. Regional Information offices, listed on the Internet site, <http://www.bls.gov/bls/regncon.htm>, also are available to answer any of your questions.