Not a benefit ... a necessity: What Paid Family Leave means for NYC’s low-income families

Nancy Rankin, Vice President for Policy Research and Advocacy
Apurva Mehrotra, Policy Analyst

April 2, 2015
One out of four of NYC’s working women live in low-income households (> 200% of the federal poverty level).

Of these, two thirds are black or Latina.

Source: 2013 American Community Survey
Nearly half of low-income working moms have $500 or less to fall back on in an emergency. For a minimum wage worker: 7 days lost pay would wipe out their entire life savings.

Source: 2014 Unheard Third Survey
Why PFL matters: Job loss for a household member leads to a dramatic rise in hardships

Percent of low-income (< 200% FPL) New Yorkers reporting hardships

- Threatened with foreclosure or eviction: 8% (No job loss), 22% (Someone in household lost job)
- Moved in with others: 9% (No job loss), 30% (Someone in household lost job)
- Often skipped meals: 14% (No job loss), 34% (Someone in household lost job)
- Couldn't fill prescription: 18% (No job loss), 38% (Someone in household lost job)
- Fell behind in rent or mortgage: 23% (No job loss), 46% (Someone in household lost job)
And job loss for a household member also leads to increased reliance on Medicaid and food stamps.
Paid family leave is an idea whose time has come. Since we last asked this question in 2005, overall support has grown, and the intensity of support has skyrocketed. Now 2 out of 3 New Yorkers strongly favor it.

Q: Employees in New York State are currently covered by a state disability insurance program that replaces some lost wages when someone is temporarily out of work because of a disability. Would you favor or oppose modernizing this insurance to provide up to 12 weeks in a year of paid family leave to a worker who needs time to care for a new baby or seriously ill family member, like an aging parent?
Support for Paid Family Leave cuts across party lines. Nearly 9 out of 10 Democrats, more than 8 out of 10 Independents and nearly 2/3 of Republicans favor the proposal.

Q: Employees in New York State are currently covered by a state disability insurance program that replaces some lost wages when someone is temporarily out of work because of a disability. Would you favor or oppose modernizing this insurance to provide up to 12 weeks in a year of paid family leave to a worker who needs time to care for a new baby or seriously ill family member, like an aging parent?
Q: Employees in New York State are currently covered by a state disability insurance program that replaces some lost wages when someone is temporarily out of work because of a disability. Would you favor or oppose modernizing this insurance to provide up to 12 weeks in a year of paid family leave to a worker who needs time to care for a new baby or seriously ill family member, like an aging parent, if it meant up to a dollar a week would be deducted from your paycheck?

Pointing out that employees would pay for family leave insurance, causes only a slight drop-off in support. Even if it meant a deduction of up to $1 a week from their paycheck, nearly 8 out of 10 New Yorkers favor the proposal and strong support shows the same leap from 2005.
Support for a paid family leave proposal holds up across party lines when including a paycheck deduction of up to $1 a week.

Q: Employees in New York State are currently covered by a state disability insurance program that replaces some lost wages when someone is temporarily out of work because of a disability. Would you favor or oppose modernizing this insurance to provide up to 12 weeks in a year of paid family leave to a worker who needs time to care for a new baby or seriously ill family member, like an aging parent, if it meant up to a dollar a week would be deducted from your paycheck?
How the survey was conducted

The Community Service Society designed this survey in collaboration with Lake Research Partners, who administered the survey by phone using professional interviewers. The survey was conducted from July 25th to August 21st, 2014.

The survey reached a total of 1,615 New York City residents, age 18 or older, divided into two samples:

• **1006 low-income** residents (up to 200% of federal poverty standards, or FPL) comprise the first sample:
  – 537 poor respondents, from households earning **at or below 100% FPL**
  – 459 near-poor respondents, from households earning **101% - 200% FPL**

• **609 moderate- and higher-income** residents (above 200% FPL) comprise the second sample:
  – 410 moderate-income respondents, from households earning **201% - 400% FPL**
  – 199 higher-income respondents, from households earning **above 400% FPL**.

• This year’s survey also included an oversample of **400 cell phone** interviews among adult residents at up to 400% FPL.

Telephone numbers for the low income sample were drawn using random digit dial (RDD) among exchanges in census tracts with an average annual income of no more than $40,000. Telephone numbers for the higher income sample were drawn using RDD in exchanges in the remaining census tracts. The data were weighted slightly by gender, age, region, immigration status, education and race in order to ensure that it accurately reflects the demographic configuration of these populations. In the combined totals respondents in the low income sample were weighted down to reflect their actual proportion among all residents. Also, in the combined totals, the sample is weighted by telephone status. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish and Chinese.

In interpreting survey results, all sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error; that is, the results of a survey may differ from those which would be obtained if the entire population were interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of responses to a particular question. The margin of error for the low income component is +/- 3.1%. The margin of error for the higher income component is +/-4.0%.