

# SHRM Research Report:

**Families First Coronavirus  
Response Act (FFCRA) Paid  
Leave During the Pandemic**



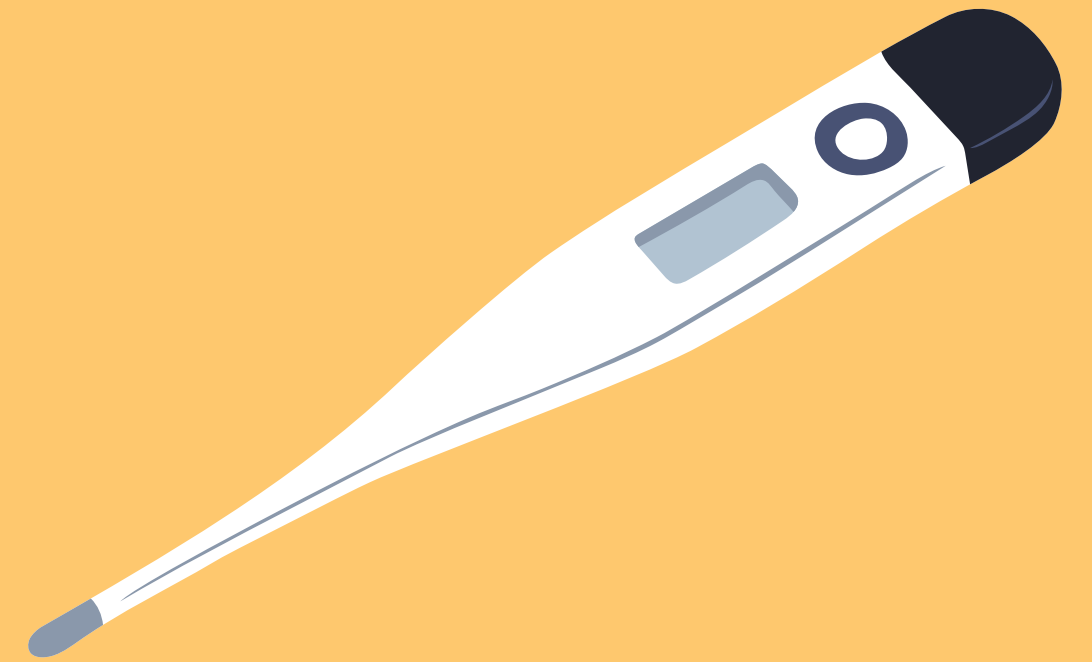
# Key Terms

The FFCRA had two major provisions, the **Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) Act** and the **Emergency Family and Medical Leave (EFML) Expansion Act**.

Under the EPSL Act, private employers with fewer than 500 employees and some public employers were required to pay sick leave of up to 80 hours, or roughly 10 days, to employees who needed to take leave for certain coronavirus-related reasons.

Under the EFML Expansion Act, employees were eligible for an additional 10 weeks of family leave paid at two-thirds of their regular wages to care for a child whose school or place of care is closed or whose child care provider is unavailable because of COVID-19.

The FFCRA did not have requirements for private-sector employers with 500 or more employees.



# Of organizations that were required to provide FFCRA paid leave in 2020:

92%

had at least one employee take leave under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) Act

67%

had at least one employee take leave under the Emergency Family and Medical Leave (EFML) Expansion Act.

**Of these two policies, organizations saw a higher proportion of their workforces take the paid leave provided by the EPSL Act than take the leave provided by the EFML Expansion Act.**

\*See Appendix - Chart 1 for more information.



**Many organizations are voluntarily providing Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) and/or Emergency Family and Medical Leave (EFML) to employees this year:**



**73%**

of organizations that were required to provide paid leave under the FFCRA in 2020 are voluntarily providing Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) to their employees in 2021.

**60%**

of organizations that were required to provide paid leave under the FFCRA in 2020 are voluntarily providing Emergency Family & Medical Leave (EFML) to their employees in 2021.

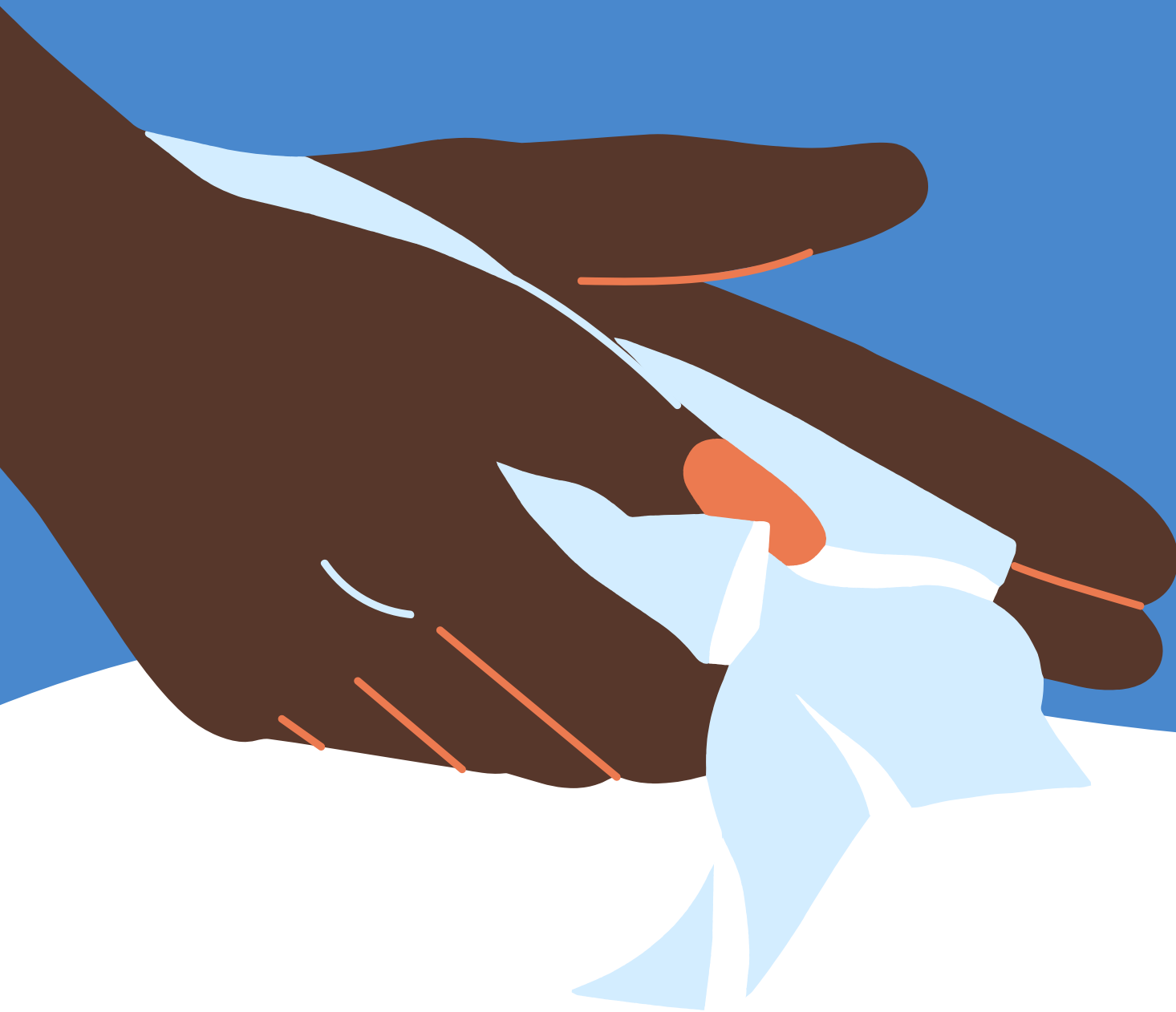
**Organizations are allowing employees to take this leave continuously, intermittently, or both.**

**79%**

of organizations voluntarily offering Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) in 2021 are allowing employees to take this leave both continuously and intermittently, 17% continuously, and 4% intermittently.

**85%**

of organizations voluntarily offering Emergency Family & Medical Leave (EFML) in 2021 are allowing employees to take this leave both continuously and intermittently, 9% continuously, and 6% intermittently.



# Reasons why organizations have decided to voluntarily provide FFCRA leave to employees this year:



To boost employee retention (75%)



To access tax credits (60%)



For another reason (40%)

“We felt it was the right thing to do. Our employees remained on the front line providing municipal services to our residents. They deserve to have this coverage.”

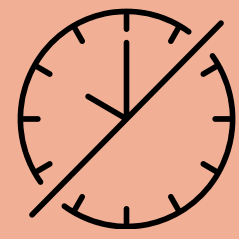
“We had zero employee-to-employee transmission throughout 2020 and to date. [We] credit having the EPSL benefit for employees to ensure they did not come to work sick.”

“[We're offering it] to promote getting vaccinated and to encourage employees to stay home if they have symptoms related to COVID.”

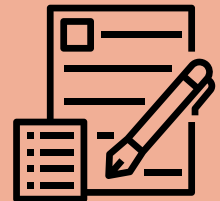
# Reasons why organizations have decided to not voluntarily provide FFCRA leave to employees this year:



They couldn't afford to continue providing leave (29%)



They have another paid leave program (28%)



The paperwork is too burdensome (6%)



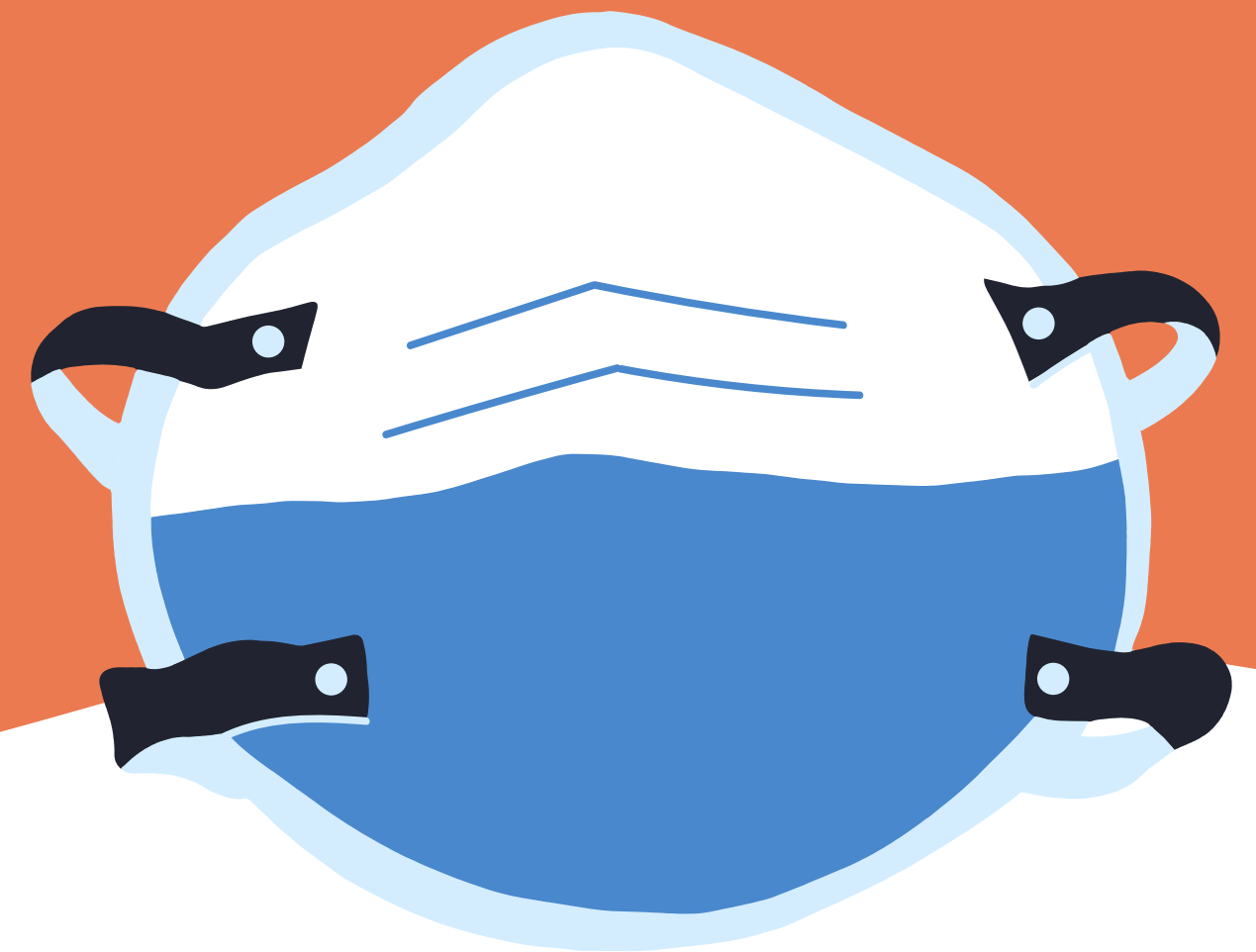
Another reason (36%)

“No one needed or took advantage of this program in 2020, so we decided not to provide it in 2021.”

“We had so little need for it last year and were concerned about potential abuse and our ability to continue delivering for our clients.”

“We don't anticipate the need to provide leave since most staff are still working remotely and those of us who are in person have been vaccinated.”

**70% of organizations that were required to offer paid leave under the FFCRA had one or more employees exhaust this leave in 2020.**



Of organizations voluntarily providing the leave this year, **25%** have had one or more employees exhaust this extended leave in 2021.



# What did organizations do when employees exhausted their FFCRA leave?

86%

**offered these employees additional time off through a different mechanism**

13%

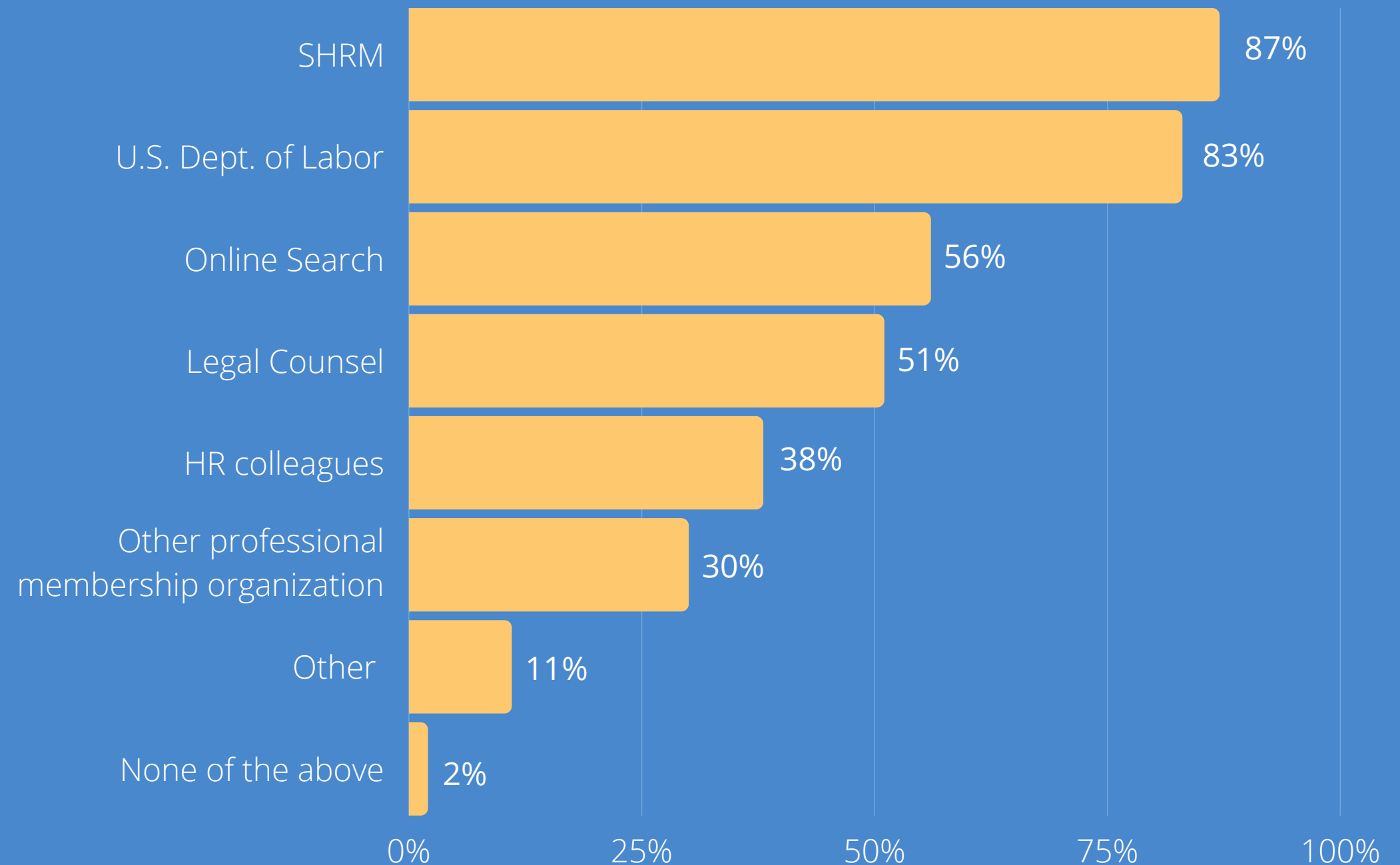
**indicated that something else happened (e.g., employees returned to work)**

1%

**terminated employees after exhausting their FFCRA leave**

**98% of those who said their organization was required to provide paid leave under the FFCRA in 2020 report that they've utilized one or more resources to learn about and/or understand how to implement paid leave under the FFCRA.**

Sources respondents say they used to learn about paid leave under the FFCRA



Of survey respondents who have utilized resources from various sources to learn about and/or understand how to implement paid leave under the FFCRA, **97%** said these resources adequately answered their questions.

# Other types of leave provided to employees during the COVID-19 pandemic\*:

73% provided paid leave

27% provided unpaid leave

35% provided paid family leave for parents who had to care for a child whose school or place of care was closed or unavailable due to COVID-19

21% provided unpaid family leave for parents who had to care for a child whose school or place of care was closed or unavailable due to COVID-19

10% didn't provide any of these options

23% provided additional context to their response or said they provided something else



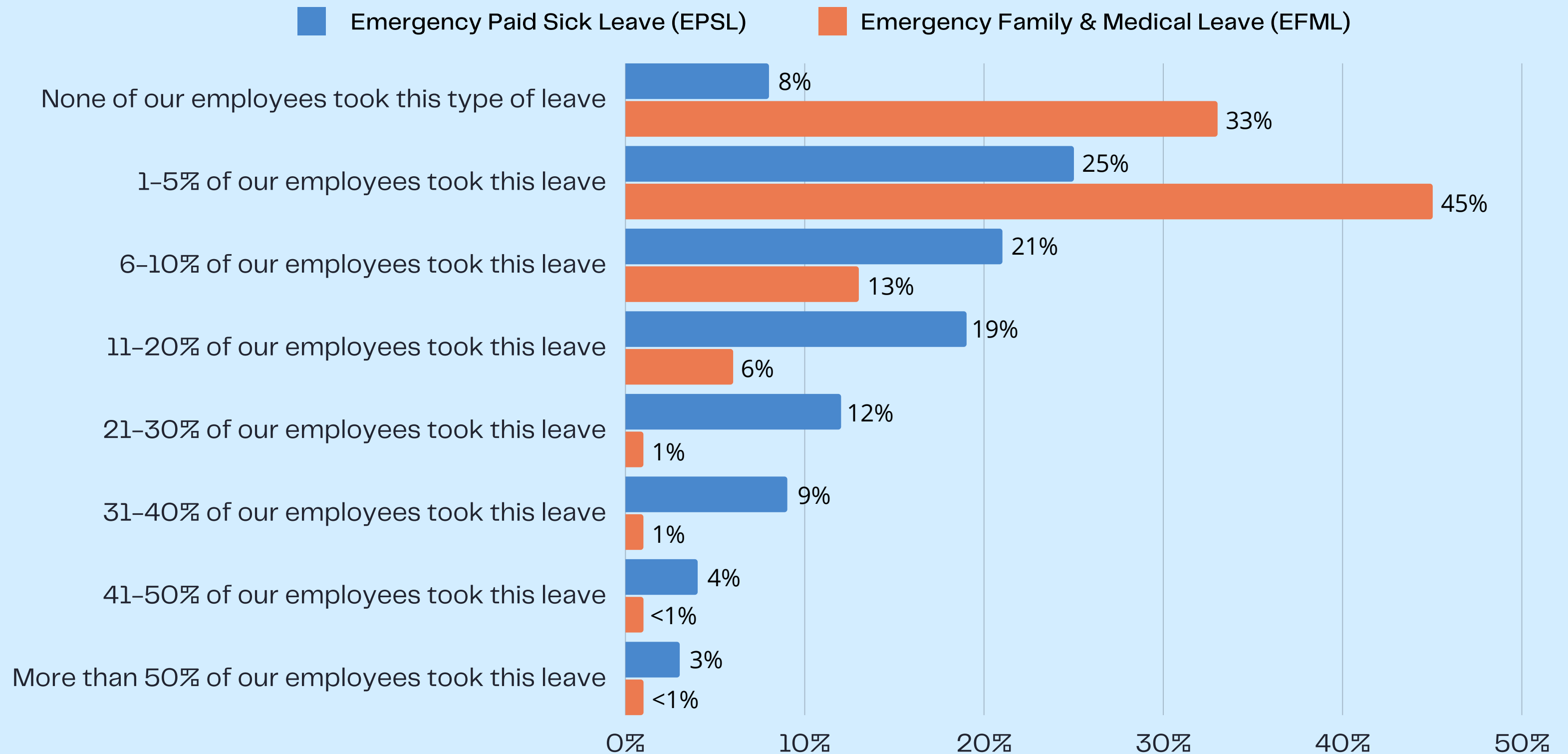
\*Asked only to those who said their organization WASN'T required to offer FFCRA leave (i.e., those over size 500) or those who were unsure if their organization was required to offer it.

# Appendix



# Chart 1:

**Approximately what percentage of your organization's employees took leave under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) Act and the Emergency Family and Medical Leave (EFML) Expansion Act in 2020?\***



**\*Of organizations that were required to provide FFCRA leave**

# Methodology

The survey was fielded electronically to a sample of active SHRM members from April 7 through April 18, 2021. In total, 1278 members responded to the survey. Potential respondents were identified based on their organization's size (i.e., fewer than 500 employees) and with particular attention paid to job functions that may have expertise in leave practices and policies. A small subgroup of respondents who did not meet these criteria were asked a separate question about their leave offerings in general. Academics, students, consultants and retired HR professionals were excluded from the sample.

