

tilt

2025
Leave Benchmark Report





Overview

Tilt's new benchmark survey data provides key insights that help organizations understand how competitive their leave benefits are in comparison to companies in similar industries, employee size, and growth classification.

It also provides key analysis that demonstrates the impact leave of absence has on key business outcomes, assisting Heads of HR in becoming strategic business partners at the executive level.

Our research has concluded that companies that grant their HR teams the time, headcount, and resourcing to develop and manage diverse and equitable leave of absence program experience financial stability and significant growth.



Companies seeing significant growth also had high retention rates for employees who took leave.

Having a well thought out **employee experience** and **re-onboarding plan** for employees taking leave leads to higher retention.

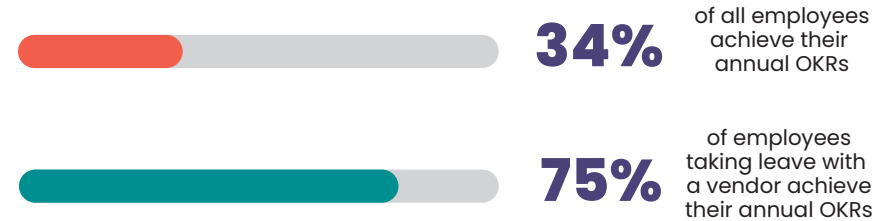
There appears to be a strong correlation between the growth of an organization and its ability to retain employees after a leave, with an 86% retention rate for organizations experiencing significant growth and only a 71% retention rate for organizations on the decline.

The same holds true for achieving OKRs after returning from a leave, with 41% of employees only sometimes or rarely hitting them in the year following a leave of absence if the company is on the decline. Compare that with 74% of employees either always or often hitting them in a stable organization.

Organizations seeing significant growth see an average of 3X the number of employees taking leave than companies in decline.

Industries resistant to vendor leave managements and opt to manage leave with a spreadsheet are in the bottom 3rd in the amount of paid parental leave they offer. Additionally, they are in the bottom half of performance when it comes to employee retention within the first 12 months of an employee returning from leave.

Similarly, these industries had 33% or more of employees who were unlikely to reach their OKRs after returning from leave, and are in the bottom 3rd of industries that show concern over staying compliant with leave-related laws.



Employers using a vendor to manage leave were able to offer 33% more paid parental leave and demonstrate a higher retention rate for employees returning to work than those relying on a spreadsheet. Similarly, employees of those companies are more likely to achieve their OKRs after returning from a leave if that leave is managed with a vendor. All of this while spending 20% fewer hours a week on leave management.

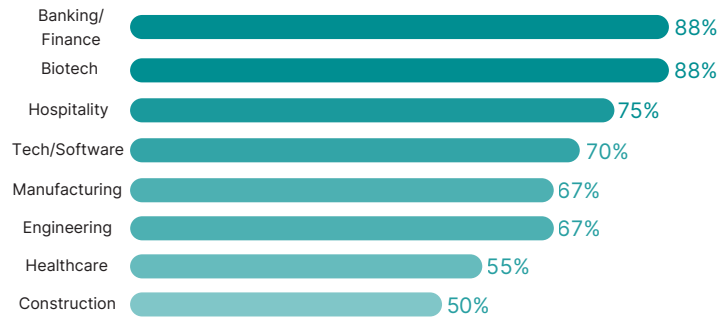
Conclusion

There is a strong correlation between companies that are growing and the amount of importance placed on leave management in their operations. Organizations that emphasize leave and use a vendor to manage them demonstrate a greater commitment to compliance, spend less time managing leave, have higher retention rates, and have better employee performance.

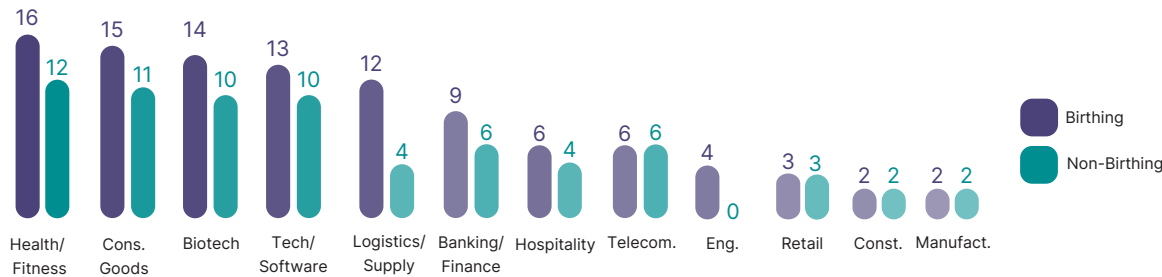
It's clear organizations are positively impacted by employees taking leave and the direct benefits from relying on vendors to manage them. As leave requests rise, compliance is complex, and leave of absence's influence on operational success strengthens.

Industry Benchmarks

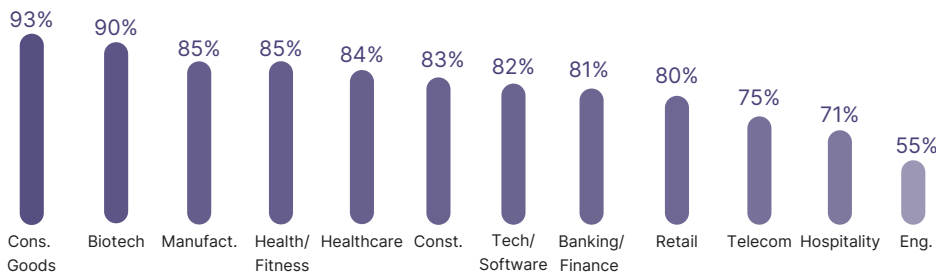
% Employees Likely to Hit OKRs Returning From Leave



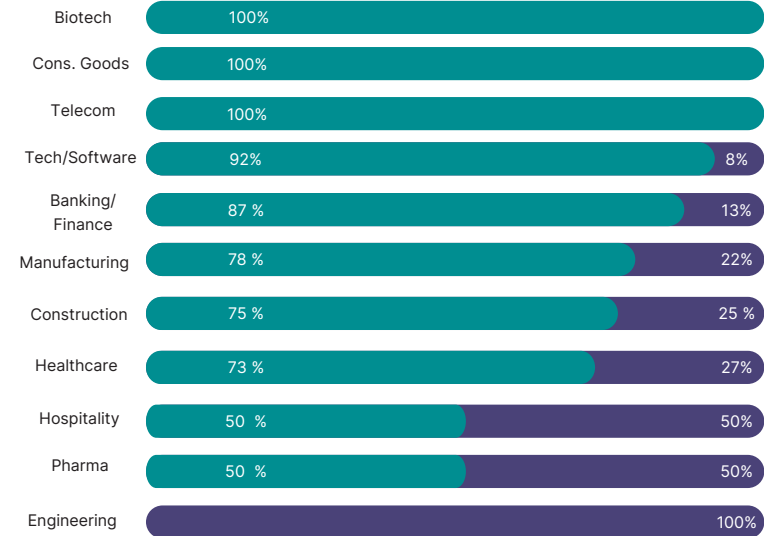
Avg. Weeks of Paid Parental Leave



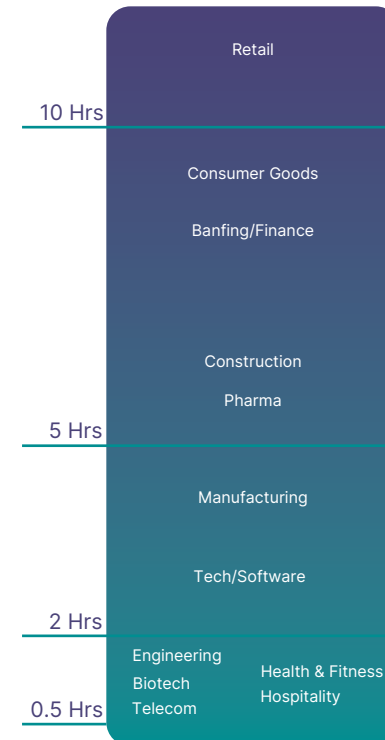
% Employed 1 Year After Returning From Leave



Vendor or Spreadsheet to Manage Leave



Hours Spent Managing Leave (per week)



Industry Analysis

Jennifer Henderson, Tilt Founder & CEO

Seeing the variation of industries taking leave seriously, or not (by way of amount offered, spreadsheet management, retention post-return, etc.), it's easy to let the results speak for themselves. When you treat life events that employees navigate like an afterthought, or worse, an inconvenience to your business, you see that direct-line negative impact to your business.

Leave is here to stay, it is more complex than ever before in history, and accurate and empathetic management of LOAs are being demanded by our workforce. Companies can either stick their head in the sand and be a laggard (paying significant costs in turnover, legal exposure, inefficiencies, rework, and reputational damage along the way) OR they can reframe their biases, lean into areas they don't understand, and get proactive with one of the most impactful events in an employee lifecycle.

Industries that are resistant to adopting modern leave management solutions, instead opting for outdated methods like spreadsheet tracking, are feeling the consequences. These industries consistently find themselves in the bottom third for the amount of paid parental leave they offer, signaling a lack of investment in employee well-being. This reluctance isn't just about benefits; it extends into employee experience and retention. The data shows that industries clinging to manual leave processes are in the bottom half for employee retention within the first 12 months of an employee returning from leave. These organizations are also struggling with performance metrics, experiencing more employees failing to meet their OKRs post-leave, which suggests that inadequate support during this critical time impacts overall productivity.

The impact of leave mismanagement goes beyond just individual employees. Companies that do not prioritize leave compliance are setting themselves up for substantial legal risks, falling into the bottom third of industries that are concerned with adhering to leave-related laws. This can lead to costly litigation and penalties, not to mention the damage to employer brand and employee trust. By contrast, industries that have embraced proactive leave management, offering comprehensive and well-managed leave policies, see clear benefits: stronger employee loyalty, higher retention rates, and a more engaged workforce.

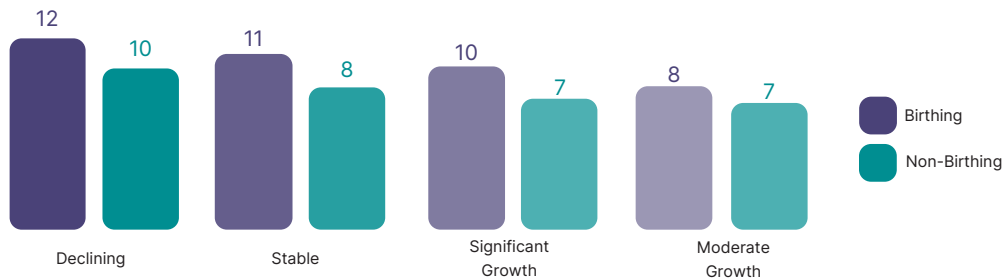
The message is clear and the data backs it up; the way industries manage leave of absence directly correlates with their ability to attract, retain, and engage top talent. Organizations that acknowledge the critical role of leave in the employee lifecycle are positioning themselves not only as employers of choice but also as resilient, future-ready businesses. Those who continue to dismiss the importance of modern, empathetic leave management are leaving themselves vulnerable to turnover, reduced employee morale, and diminished organizational performance. The data validates what we've known all along: adapt and thrive or resist and risk falling behind.

Growth Stage Benchmarks

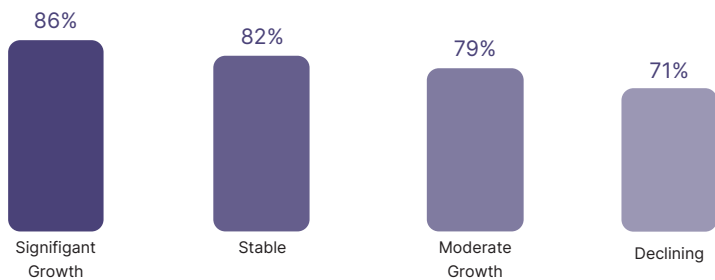
% Employees Likely to Hit OKRs Returning From Leave



Avg. Weeks of Paid Parental Leave



% Employed 1 Year After Returning From Leave



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Hours Spent Managing Leave (per week)



Growth Stage Analysis

Taylor McLemore, Tilt COO

From the influence of private investors to the expectations of public markets, companies live and die by their ability to project and then achieve growth. These external expectations translate to management and human resources adopting a posture of constantly preparing for a future that is scaled beyond current operations.

This generates specific challenges when considering employee experience and employee retention, and leave management is one of the hardest elements to manage through scale. The response to this reality is visible in the adoption of vendor solutions by Significant Growth companies over Stable or Moderate Growth companies. Leveraging a vendor for quality and scale of leave management is a logical and accretive choice for companies seeking employee experiences that retain talent and unlock economies of scale.

While Significant Growth companies are embracing leave out of necessity, the strategic takeaway is that unlocking quality and scale of leave via leave vendor partnership is available to companies across the growth spectrum.

"Our people are our most important asset" is a common refrain. Leave is the moment when life intersects with work for an employee and their employer, and the results of how a company manages leave impacts company performance and competitiveness. The results from our research reinforce two concepts. Approach to and employee experience of leave management impacts:

- **Employee Retention**
- **Employee Performance**

Any company that believes its people are the driver of their success can leverage leave to drive business outcomes.

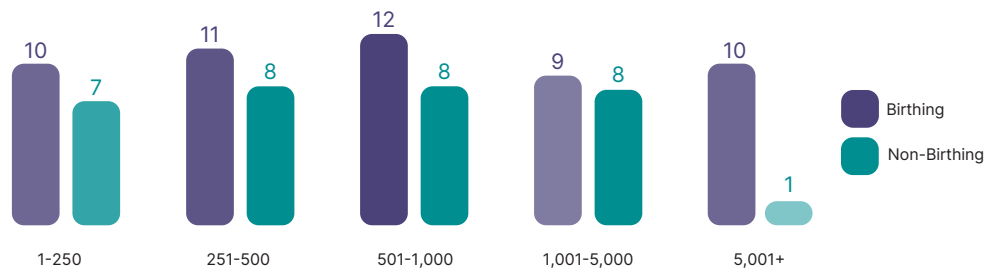
Specifically, when approaching leave management as a lever for employee retention, it is necessary to think of leave for an employee in the same manner as any critical business or human resources moment: plan proactively and then execute to outcomes. Our research shows that a well-thought-out employee experience and re-onboarding plan for employees taking leave leads to higher retention. Whether a business has calculated a specific cost of employee turnover, the CEO, CFO, and HR leader all know that turnover costs are commonly hidden and massively detrimental to business progress.

Company Size Benchmarks

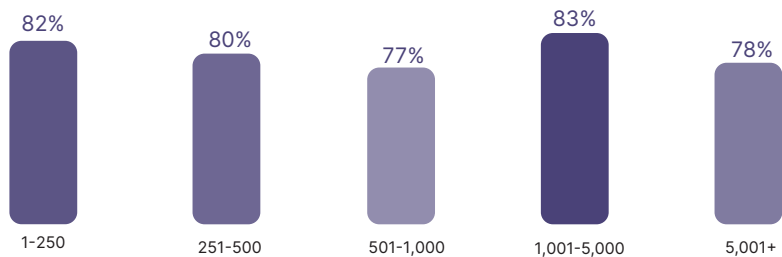
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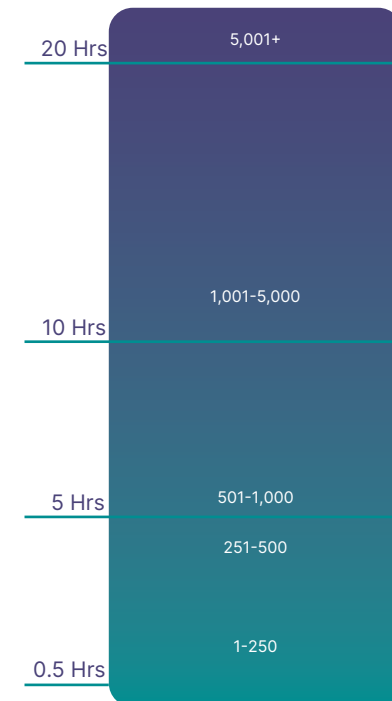
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Vendor or Spreadsheet to Manage Leave



Hours Spent Managing Leave (per week)



Company Size Analysis

Jessi Johanson , Tilt VP of Sales

When examining leave management practices across different company sizes, data shows that the amount of leave offered and the percentage of employees hitting their OKRs post-leave remains relatively consistent regardless of company size. However, a critical disparity emerges in the 500-1000 employee range.

These mid-sized companies are facing more significant challenges with retention, particularly within the first 12 months after an employee returns from leave. Companies in this bracket are also the least likely to use a specialized vendor for managing leave, relying instead on manual processes like spreadsheets, which can lead to inefficiencies and errors.

The hypothesis here is that companies with 500-1000 employees are often caught in a tricky middle ground. They are large enough to experience a high volume of leave requests, which requires more robust management solutions, but they may lack the support or resources from leadership to invest in advanced tools that streamline this process. These organizations might believe they can continue managing leave the way they always have (similar to smaller businesses) but the retention data tells a different story. Without scalable systems in place, these companies struggle to provide the level of support employees expect, which directly impacts their ability to retain talent.

Larger companies, unsurprisingly, spend significantly more time managing leave due to the sheer volume of requests. However, despite their size, many still lack the dedicated staff needed to handle leaves at scale. This often results in overburdened HR teams, increased risk of compliance errors, and inconsistent employee experiences. Without adequate support systems, even the largest organizations face challenges in providing timely, accurate, and empathetic leave management.

On the other hand, companies that have embraced leave management solutions, regardless of their size, are reaping the benefits of improved employee satisfaction, stronger loyalty, and a more engaged workforce.

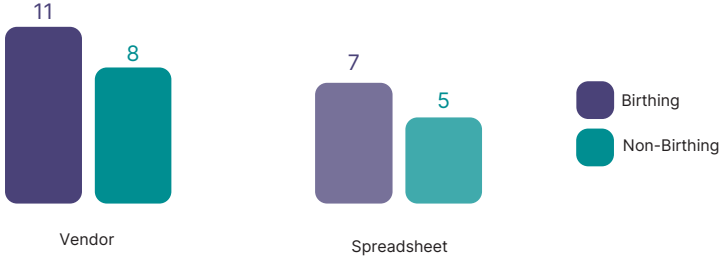
These findings highlight how essential it is for companies of all sizes to invest in structured leave management. Our data shows a strong connection between robust leave policies and key business metrics like retention and productivity. Organizations that prioritize efficient leave management—especially those working with a vendor—see noticeable benefits in employee satisfaction, retention rates, and operational efficiency. Adopting modern leave solutions isn't just an operational improvement; it's a strategic investment in long-term growth and employee loyalty.

Leave Vendor Benchmarks

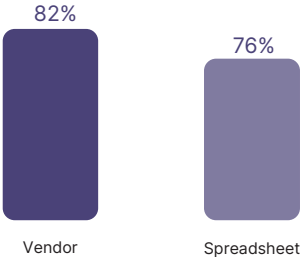
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Hours Spent Managing Leave (per week)



Leave Vendor Analysis

Lyndsey Haag , Tilt Head of Partnerships

Managing leave with spreadsheets often leaves HR teams feeling overwhelmed and stretched thin. They care deeply about their people, but the administrative burden of navigating complex leave policies can keep them from fully supporting employees during life's critical moments. Employees in turn may feel confused or unsupported, which can add stress to an already challenging time.

So it's not surprising to see the data show that when an employer relies on spreadsheets to manage leave, the employees returning from leave are less likely to hit their OKRs and are less likely to stay employed with that organization a year after returning. Further, it explains why employers can offer better benefits and spend less time managing leave when they use a leave vendor who are experts in leave.

The contrast between organizations that use a leave management vendor and those that stick to spreadsheets is apparent. Employers who leverage software solutions for leave management are able to automate complex tasks, streamline workflows, and reduce the risk of errors. This frees up HR teams to focus on providing personalized support when necessary, which significantly improves the employee experience, contributing to better overall business performance.

On the other hand, organizations relying on spreadsheets often find themselves struggling to keep up with the administrative demands of leave management. The manual process can become a time sink for HR, leading to delays, inconsistencies, and even compliance risks. This not only affects the HR team's efficiency but also leaves employees feeling unsupported during critical life events like parental leave, medical leave, or caregiving responsibilities.

The trend towards automating HR processes, including leave management, is gaining momentum for good reason: it's not just about cutting costs, but about driving better business outcomes. Beyond freeing up HR professionals to focus on strategic initiatives that add value to the business, these companies can also offer more competitive benefits packages because they are not bogged down by the inefficiencies of manual leave tracking. This positions them as employers of choice in a competitive job market, helping them attract and retain top talent.

Furthermore, automating leave management with a specialized vendor enhances compliance with ever-changing leave laws, reducing legal risks and protecting the company's reputation. With experts handling the complexities of leave regulations, organizations can avoid costly mistakes and focus on creating a supportive culture that prioritizes employee well-being.

Additional Insights

What type of leave do you believe your company would benefit most from offering, which is not currently available?

Responses suggest a clear emphasis on caregiver support, mental health, and sabbaticals, which reflects a broader recognition of work-life balance and holistic employee well-being.

- Caregiver leave
- Paid parental leave
- Mental health leave
- Bereavement leave
- Pet-related leave
- Sabbatical leave
- Military leave

In the next 12 months, what do you believe is your biggest opportunity?

A significant focus is being put on optimizing internal processes, managing compliance with evolving leave laws, supporting and retaining employees, and exploring ways to grow and expand within existing resources.

- Streamline and Process Improvement
- Retention and Talent Development
- Growth and Expansion
- Compliance and Standardization
- Automation and Integration
- Employee Support and Benefits Expansion

In the next 12 months, where do you see yourself (or your company) struggling the most?

Companies foresee challenges in adapting to new leave laws, managing employee retention and turnover, balancing growth, and dealing with economic constraints. Compliance, employee well-being, and recruitment are also major themes, underscoring the need for both resource management and supportive leave policies.

- Managing leave volume and complexity
- Retention and turnover
- Technology and system integration
- Scaling and growth management
- Economic and budget constraints
- Employee well-being and burnout
- Compliance
- Recruitment of quality hires

What type(s) of leave have you added in the last 12 months?

Overall, companies are focusing on expanding policies that address family care, medical needs, and compassionate leave, as well as adding support for unique personal situations like domestic violence and voting rights. The expansions in parental, medical, and caregiver leave signal a trend toward offering more comprehensive support for employees' diverse life needs.

- Bereavement leave
- Parental leave
- Medical leave
- Domestic violence leave
- Caregiver leave
- Sabbatical leave
- Compliance
- Voting leave

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