

# Emergency Medicine Residents Want Information on Parental Leave Policies During Residency Interviews

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## Introduction

A residency program's ability to adapt to situations involving family planning can be a major concern for applicants. A previous study where residency program directors were surveyed on presenting parental leave policies during residency interviews indicated that 70% did not present anything.<sup>1</sup> This provides a disservice to prospective applicants that in prior studies have indicated interest in having children during residency, approximately 40%.<sup>2</sup> This does not include the number of candidates that will start residency with children already. This stigmatizes the conversation surrounding parental leave policies, as candidates are hesitant to ask questions that may hinder their ranking.<sup>2,3,4</sup> Despite published policies on parental leave for Emergency Medicine (EM) residents, like the one from the American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM), the information is still quite sparse for prospective candidates.<sup>5</sup>

We sought to expand on a previous study and further evaluate whether prospective EM residents and current EM residents in the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic region received information about parental leave policies, if this information was wanted, and if this information would have affected their rank list.

## Methods

- Determined to be IRB exempt by Stony Brook IRB
- Internet based survey using Qualtrics sent out to program coordinators from 86 EM residency programs and 48 medical schools in the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic region with request to distribute survey to current EM residents and EM bound medical students
- Participation was voluntary and remained confidential
- No incentives were provided for participation
- Chi square analysis utilized to see if responses differed based on sex or parental status

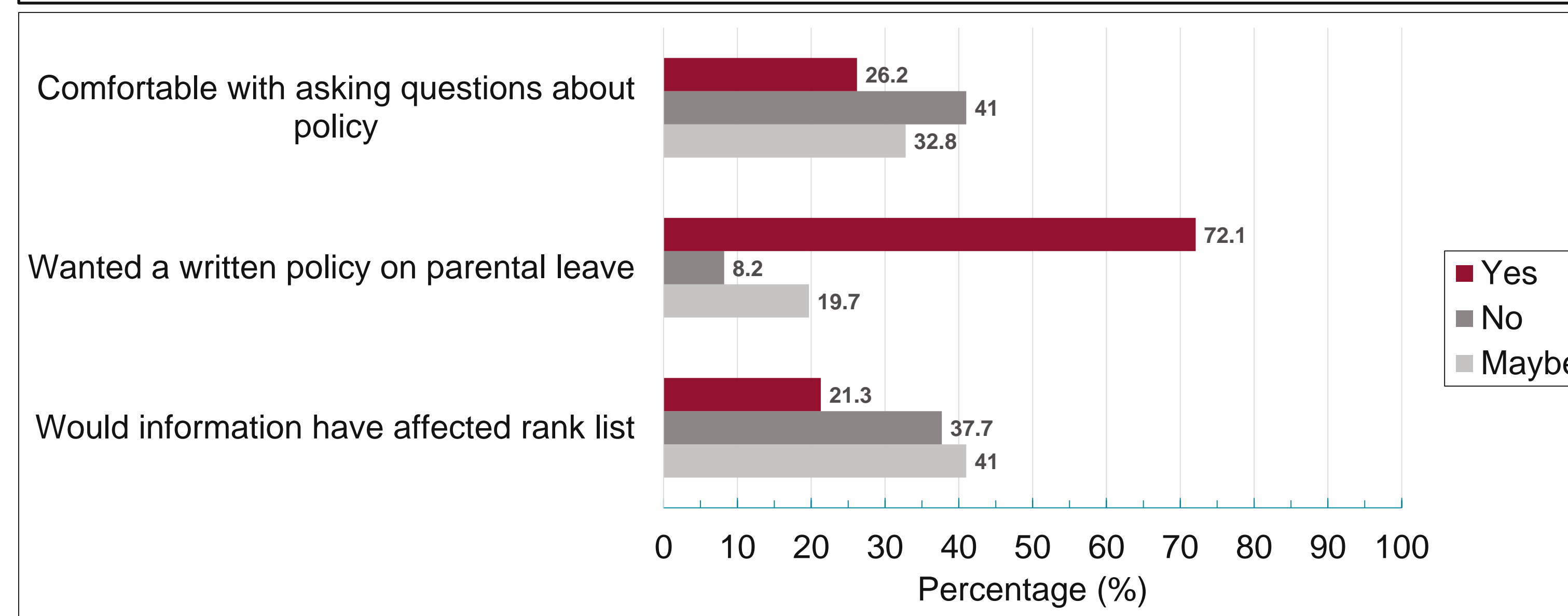
## Results

We received 61 responses, which consisted of 6.6% (4/61) 4<sup>th</sup> year medical students, 26.2% (16/61) PGY1 residents, 26.2% (16/61) PGY2 residents, 36.1% (22/61) PGY3 residents and 4.9% (3/61) PGY4 residents. Of these responses, 41.0% (25/61) were male and 59.0% (36/61) were female. 16.4% (10/61) of individuals surveyed have children. Of those without children, 13.7% (7/51) planned to have children during residency and 25.5% (13/51) were undecided.

## Results Continued

- Overall, 96.7% (59/61) of prospective and current EM residents received parental leave information during interviews from 50% or less of programs, with 78.7% (48/61) having received information from 25% or less of programs during interviews
- 72.1% (44/61) would prefer to receive a written policy regarding a program's parental leave policy with 26.2% (16/61) feeling comfortable asking questions regarding parental leave during interviews with 41.0% (25/61) of individuals having felt uncomfortable asking these questions and an additional 32.8% (20/61) unsure if they would be comfortable in that scenario
- 21.3% (13/61) stating parental leave policy information would have affected their rank list and 41.0% (25/61) unsure if it would have affected their rank list

**Figure 1:** EM bound medical students and EM residents reported opinion and impact of parental leave policies



**Figure 2:** Chi square analysis of responses based on gender and parental status

	Females "Yes" (n=36) No. (%)	Males "Yes" (n=25) No. (%)	P Value	Has/Wants Children during Residency or Undecided "Yes" (n=30) No. (%)	No children during residency "Yes" (n=31) No. (%)	P Value
Wanted to receive information on parental leave policy	23 (63.9)	22 (88.0)	<b>0.0353</b>	28 (93.3)	17 (54.8)	<b>0.0006</b>
Would information have affected rank list?	6 (16.7)	7 (28.0)	0.7286	10 (33.3)	3 (9.7)	<b>0.0004</b>
Comfortable asking questions about parental leave	10 (27.8)	6 (24.0)	0.7171	7 (23.3)	9 (29.0)	0.4440
Would have liked to receive a written policy	25 (69.4)	19 (76.0)	0.3176	24 (80.0)	20 (64.5)	<b>0.0208</b>

## Discussion

This study demonstrates that most of the Emergency Medicine (EM) bound medical students and EM residents surveyed want to receive information regarding parental leave (73.8%) with 72.1% wanting a written policy. Of the individuals surveyed, 16.4% had children. For individuals without children, a significant portion were planning to have children (13.7%) or undecided about having children (25.5%). Despite the majority wanting information on a program's parental leave policy (73.8%), 96.7% of individuals received this information from 50% or less of programs during interviews. Most of the findings did not differ significantly based on gender. Whereas having children/wanting children in residency was statistically significant regarding wanting to receive information, its effect on rank list, and preference for obtaining a written policy.

This data demonstrates a gap in the current EM residency interview process when pertaining to parental leave awareness. This is concerning given that 21.3% reported parental leave policy would have affected their rank list. However, a large portion are/were not comfortable asking questions about these policies (41.0%). This is negatively compounded by most respondents (59.0%) receiving information from 1-25% of programs during residency interviews. Programs need to be proactive in providing this information as this will likely lead to achieving more balanced matches and better resident-program fit in the future.

Limitations: Our response number (n=61) was nearly double a previous study's number. However, there was an overall decrease in response rate as a much larger number of individuals were asked to participate. Caution should be taken when drawing conclusions from this data. This study was voluntary and thus subject to non-response bias.

## References

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