

4 Ways to Support Expecting and New Parents in the Workplace



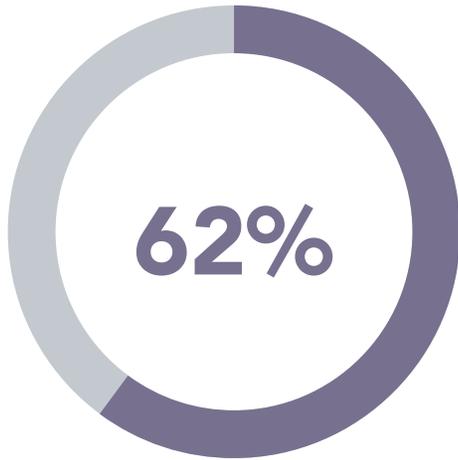
Supporting employees before and after they have children helps you create a culture of work-life balance, which is key for recruiting and retaining top talent. It also supports employee wellness and can help keep healthcare costs down.

Research shows that a lack of support for working parents could hurt your business in these areas.

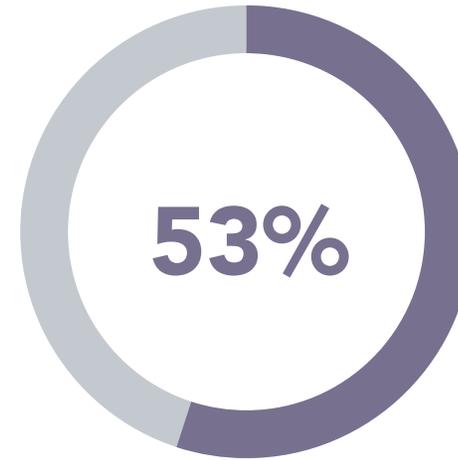


Recruitment

Workplace culture is becoming increasingly important to working parents, especially millennials, while job searching.



62% say it's extremely important for company values to support the needs of working parents.

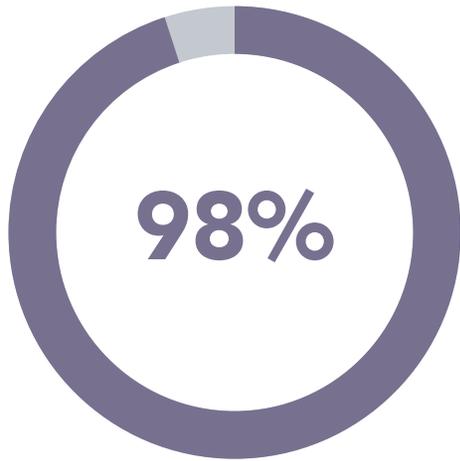


53% call it critical for company culture to address family responsibilities.

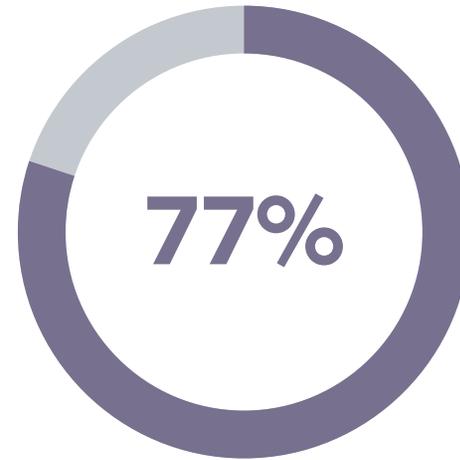
Burnout

Stress among working parents is a main cause of burnout and rising health costs.

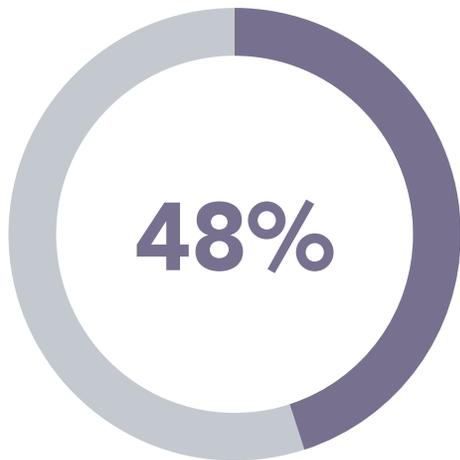




98% of working parents
have been burnt out.



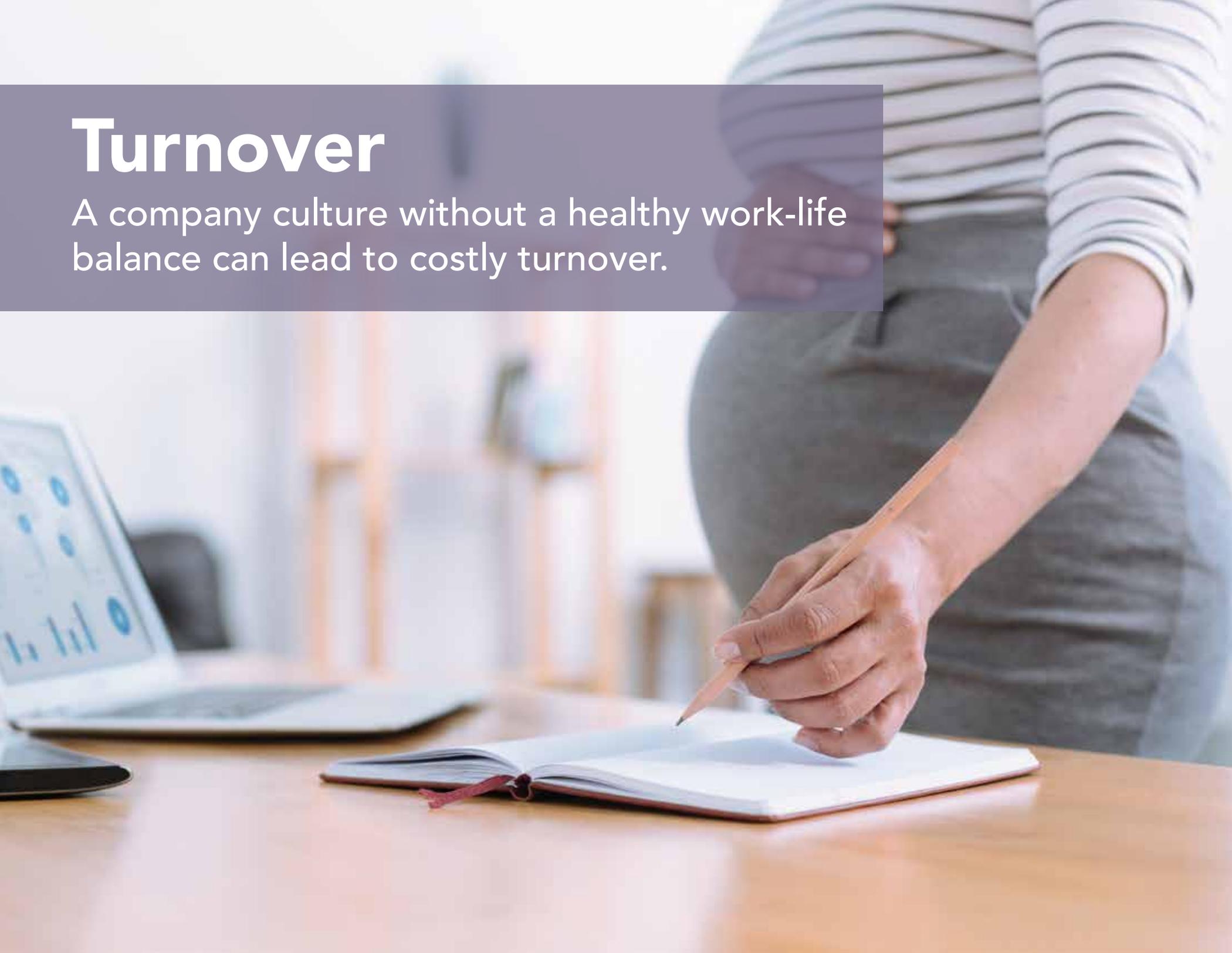
77% say they have
become depressed,
anxious or sick as a result
of burnout.

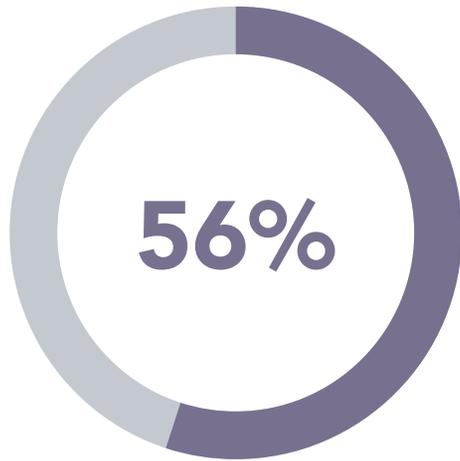


48% worry about
their health.

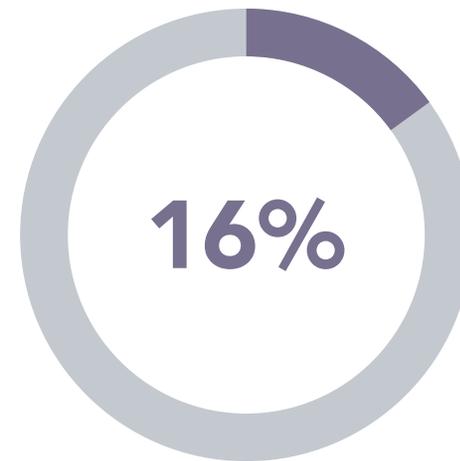
Turnover

A company culture without a healthy work-life balance can lead to costly turnover.

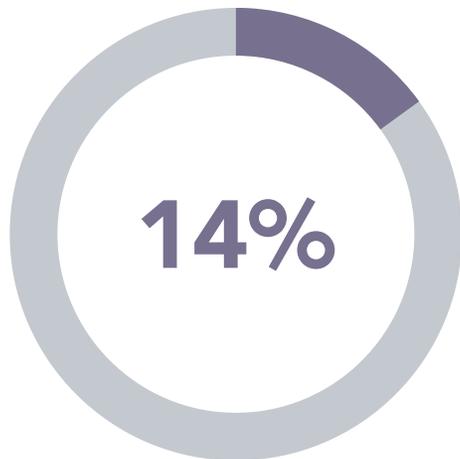




56% of working parents say they are unhappy in their current job.



16% of working dads would quit their job over lack of work-life balance.



14% of those who are unhappy would quit even without another job lined up.

Follow our four tips to create a workplace culture that supports expecting and new parents.



A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a white pregnancy test stick. The person is wearing a light-colored, possibly pink, long-sleeved shirt. The background is a soft-focus blue and white. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent purple rectangular area on the left side of the image.

1.

Talk about plans and expectations early.

“Supporting pregnant workers is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and the quality of support received during pregnancy could make the difference in retaining top female talent long-term.”

—[Harvard Business Review](#)

More than 80 percent of first-time mothers continue to work until within one month of giving birth, but you shouldn't wait that long to start planning for an employee's maternity leave. You can show support for an expecting employee and help alleviate stress for her and her co-workers by discussing her leave early.

Talk about how close to her due date she plans to work (keeping in mind that could change unexpectedly) and how long she plans to be out after the baby is born.

Get a comprehensive list of the employee's daily duties and talk about who could take over each while she's out. Have her train others to handle tasks if necessary.

Discuss expectations (both yours and hers) for during and after the pregnancy. Talk about any flexibility your company offers for expecting or new parents. This could include work-from-home days or allowing employees to leave during the workday for doctor visits or other child-related appointments, like touring a daycare center.

However, don't make assumptions about a pregnant employee's needs. Each woman will have her own plans for working while pregnant. It's important to listen to her needs and let her set the tone for any changes to her schedule or workload.

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), employees are entitled to 12 weeks of job-protected leave for the birth of a child.

Learn more about [FMLA regulations](#) and find resources for employers and workers.



2.

Accommodate nursing mothers.

“Breastfeeding support helps employers keep their best employees so that less money is spent hiring and training new employees.”

—U.S. Breastfeeding Committee

According to [WomensHealth.gov](https://www.womenshealth.gov), providing workplace support for nursing mothers results in a 3:1 return on investment through:

- Lower healthcare costs
- Lower employee absenteeism rates
- Lower turnover rates
- Higher employee productivity and loyalty

The federal [Break Time for Nursing Mothers](#) law requires employers to provide reasonable breaks and a place other than a bathroom for nursing mothers to pump at work until their babies are a year old. Many states also have breastfeeding laws that may put other provisions in place for workplace pumping.

If your office has limited space reserved for pumping, consider having your HR department or office manager create a sign-up sheet for the room.

Keep in mind when scheduling long meetings or planning off-site outings that a new mother may need to pump several times during the workday.

Discuss your company's accommodations, expectations and any offered flexibility for nursing mothers before an employee goes on maternity leave. That way, she'll know what to expect when returning to work and can plan accordingly.

If you have fewer than 50 employees, you might be exempt from some of the requirements under the federal law.

[Learn more about the law](#) and your responsibilities as an employer.

A man with short brown hair and glasses is holding a baby. He is wearing a dark grey t-shirt and is looking down at the baby. The baby is wearing a white onesie with small black polka dots and is looking towards the camera. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window with light blue curtains. A dark purple semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the number '3.' and a quote.

3.

Don't forget the dads.

“When a company’s culture supports fathers balancing their responsibilities at work and at home, it can boost loyalty and productivity among workers with families.”

—[Care.com](https://www.care.com)

According to a [Bright Horizons study](#), the new generation of working fathers prioritizes family equally with their careers, and they often see increased conflict while trying to balance the two.

- More than a third of new dads feel negatively judged by their co-workers and supervisors after announcing fatherhood.
- 1 in 3 feels it limited their opportunities for advancement.
- 1 in 4 believes that the announcement of fatherhood caused employers to think less of them.

It benefits your company to show support for new dads. If you know a male employee is expecting a child, ask whether he plans to take any time off so you can start planning for his absence.

Both male and female employees have the legal right to FMLA leave after having a child. Fathers are equally entitled to take up to 12 work weeks of FMLA leave in the first year after the baby is born.

Also, talk to him about any schedule flexibility your company offers, just as you would with a female employee who's expecting. Offering all new parents equal flexibility can go a long way toward helping new dads remain engaged at work and feeling supportive of their partners.

New dads say a family-friendly environment is as important to them as it is to their female counterparts.



4.

**Help them understand
their healthcare coverage.**

“70% of parents with a child under 18 are confused
about their health benefits.”

—Collective Health Benefits Survey

Healthcare coverage can be confusing. And when you add the excitement and sleep deprivation of having a newborn to the mix, it's no wonder some employees don't understand how to add their newborn to their plan or forget to do so.

Your group's healthcare policy will include the time frame and instructions for adding a newborn dependent. It also lists covered maternity care.

If you know an employee is expecting, consider having their manager or your benefits administrator send a quick reminder about newborn and maternity coverage.

Helpful info to share with an expecting employee:

- Time frame for adding the baby to their plan
- What the process is (calling customer service, submitting an online form, etc.)
- How to check whether their premiums will change after adding the baby
- Reminder to check plan materials for covered maternity services
- How to learn more about applicable benefits, like flexible spending accounts or short-term disability coverage

Helping your employees understand how to add a baby to their plan is a small gesture that leaves a positive impression. It shows you care about your employees and want to help them prepare for their new arrival. It can also help alleviate some of the stress many expecting and new parents experience.

**Look at the
bigger picture.**



Supporting expecting parents is part of creating a wellness-focused workplace culture that helps keep employee satisfaction and retention high. Another step you can take is implementing a workplace wellness program, which can help your employees be healthier, happier and more productive while helping you keep healthcare costs under control.

Also, consider choosing a group health plan with built-in wellness extras. This means you can offer wellness benefits without the hassle of having to create or oversee the programs yourself.

For example, all fully insured Health Alliance plans include these perks and more.

- Rally[®], an online tool that helps members improve their health in small ways every day
- Medical management services, like health coaching and help dealing with chronic conditions
- A 24-hour Anytime Nurse Line
- A Treatment Cost Calculator to compare prices for various medical procedures
- A smoking cessation program
- Fitness and weight-loss center discounts

These are included at no extra cost to you or your employees. Self-funded plans have the option to include these perks as well.

To learn more about our group plans, visit HealthAlliance.org or call 1-800-851-3379.



Helpful Resources

For employees:

- [U.S. Department of Labor, FMLA Resources for Workers](#)
- [U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Protections for Pregnant or Nursing Workers](#)
- [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Legal Rights for Pregnant Workers](#)
- [Health Alliance's Pregnancy Resources at Blog.HealthAlliance.org](#)

For employers:

- [Department of Labor, FMLA Employer Guide](#)
- [Office on Women's Health, Supporting Nursing Moms at Work](#)
- [U.S. Breastfeeding Committee, Benefits to Employers](#)
- [U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission, Pregnancy Discrimination](#)

Other tips:

- Keep work schedules as predictable as possible. Try to avoid making last-minute changes or travel arrangements on short notice.
- Consider not scheduling meetings before 9:30 a.m. or after 4:30 p.m. This can reduce anxiety about dropping off and picking up kids from child care or school, which helps employees stay focused and engaged at work.
- Help your employees find reliable, affordable child care.
- Consider offering transitional career plans, like reduced schedules, part-time positions or job-sharing programs.

