

CARROT

How to create a **supportive workplace** for aspiring parents



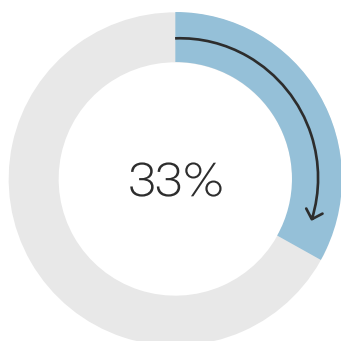
Gabriella
Carrot member

Introduction

If someone is a working parent, there are usually signs: cute photos, childcare stress, amusing stories about early-life antics, guest stars on Zoom meetings. Less visible are those who are looking to start a family but have hit a roadblock. **Thirty-three percent** of U.S. adults have either gone through fertility treatments themselves or know someone who has, but talking about anything related to fertility and family-forming tends to be taboo in the workplace.

Carrot **surveyed** more than 1,000 people to learn more about how fertility and family forming are — and are not — discussed in the workplace, and how employers can offer more support. Our findings showed that more than half of employees don't talk openly about their fertility and family-forming journeys at work. Just 12% of respondents have specific fertility-related benefits through their employer. Survey respondents planned to pursue their family-forming goals regardless of the support they received — but will often go into debt and experience significant stress to do so.

Whether employees are pursuing fertility treatments, donor-assisted reproduction, or adoption, employers have the opportunity to create a welcoming workplace for employees pursuing parenthood.



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In this guide, we'll cover



The value of providing financial support for fertility and family forming — and why it's a smart investment in your workforce



Using flexible scheduling and multipurpose wellness rooms to reduce stress



How creating an inclusive, welcoming workplace for those pursuing family forming benefits all employees

Providing financial support

A financial benefit is one of the most powerful ways employers can support employees looking to grow their families. In our survey, 84% of respondents said that financial contributions toward family forming was the benefit they wanted most from their employers. That’s because fertility and family-forming journeys are often costly — overall, **70% of women** who pursue IVF go into debt. In our survey, 32% of respondents said they would go into debt to pursue their family-forming goals.

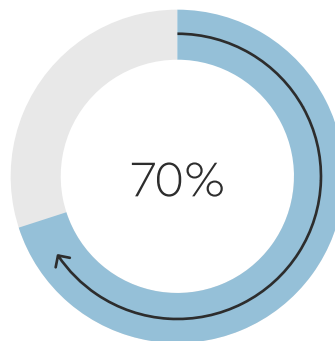
While financial support is important, including care navigation as well can lead to better health outcomes and help employers avoid long-term costs. For example, IVF isn’t necessarily the medically appropriate or preferred option for everyone having trouble getting pregnant. Experts can guide those pursuing parenthood toward less invasive options when appropriate, ultimately leading to lower costs and a lower-stress experience.

“I feel really privileged to be able to work somewhere where they care about my future and my fertility.”



Liz Watts

A Carrot member who decided to pursue egg freezing after learning she had a financial benefit through Carrot



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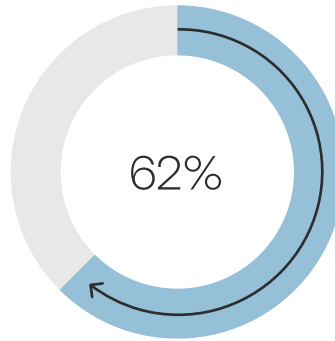
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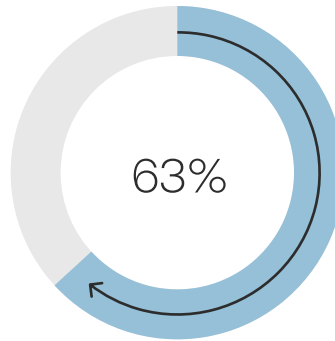
of respondents said they would go into debt to pursue their family-forming goals.

For cost-conscious HR leaders, it's also worth noting that improvements in employee recruitment and retention have financial implications, too. **88% of employees** would change jobs for fertility benefits — and 77% would stay at a company longer if they had access to fertility benefits. This is confirmed by other research — one study found that **62% of employees** who had their IVF covered by their employer reported being more likely to remain in their job for a longer period. Even employees who don't use fertility and family-forming benefits **feel more goodwill** toward their employers when they offer them. This makes a strong case for fertility and family-forming benefits as a tool for improving recruitment and retention efforts.

Supporting all paths to parenthood also demonstrates your company's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. Insurance coverage typically excludes most members of the LGBTQ+ community pursuing parenthood, and **63%** are looking to foster care, adoption, and assisted reproductive technology to grow their families. Offering inclusive fertility benefits can make these journeys more accessible for all employees.



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A fertility benefit inclusive of all paths to parenthood should include



Support for gestational surrogacy journeys



Donor-assisted reproduction, including sperm and egg donation



IVF, regardless of infertility diagnosis



Adoption support



Fertility testing



Egg and sperm freezing



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Flexible time off and scheduling

Many family-forming journeys require time away from work for appointments and consultations. A typical IVF cycle takes six to eight weeks from initial consultation to embryo transfer, and most people go through multiple IVF cycles before getting pregnant. Proactive treatments like egg freezing involve several daily doctors' appointments and some recovery time afterward. And non-medical family-forming journeys like adoption typically include visits with an adoption agency and legal experts, as well as visits with the expectant parent, that may require time away from the office.

Providing flexible hours and making sure employees feel comfortable requesting time off can help ease anxiety during an already stressful time. **22% of respondents** said they worry about job security because of time away, and 30% said that talking to their boss about fertility treatments would put their job at risk.

The majority of people use sick days and PTO for fertility care

42%

Used PTO to go to their appointments

24%

Said their company has a flexible policy

8%

Used unpaid leave

27%

Used sick days

Flexible work hours and time off also create a healthier, more productive work environment for all of your employees.

Studies show that people with flexible schedules and time off are as productive — or more so — than those with stricter time-off policies.

Some people pursuing parenthood may also prefer additional resources for projects, such as those that require meetings at specific times. However, **for others**, work is a welcome distraction from the stress of fertility treatments or the uncertainty of an adoption journey. Employers shouldn't assume that employees in the process of family forming are looking for less responsibility.

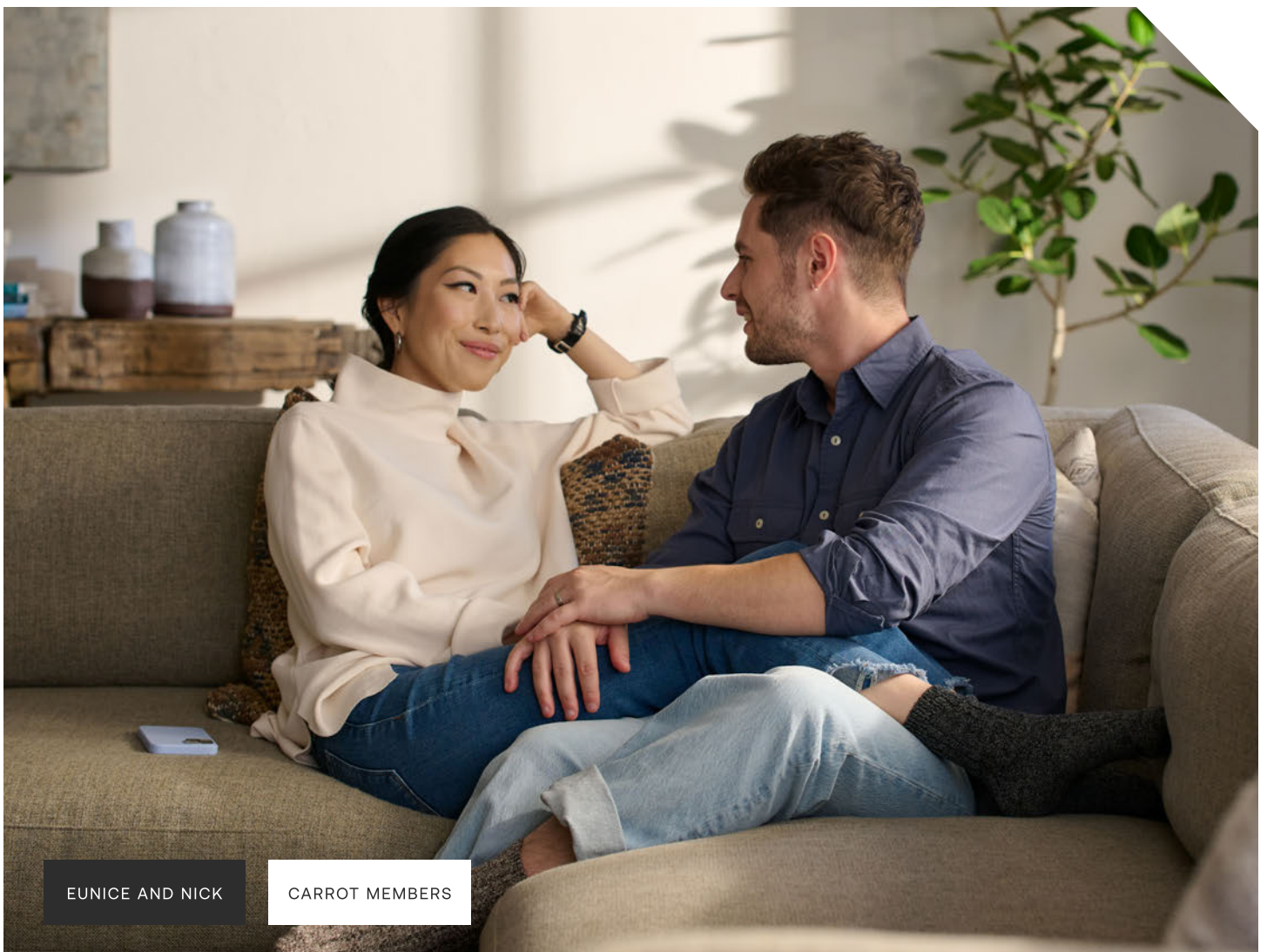


Nick
Carrot member

Multi-purpose privacy rooms for hormone injections

Spending time away from work at appointments is one stressor — taking care of medical needs during the workday is another. Some fertility journeys such as IVF and egg freezing involve hormone self-injections. When Carrot asked where survey respondents went when they had to administer hormone injections during the day responses included the bathroom, a supply closet, their car in the parking lot, or even a nearby gas station. One person responded, “There is NO good place to do this.”

Another way to create a comfortable environment for employees pursuing these journeys is to provide a space that can be used for these injections. **A multipurpose wellness room** that can be reserved in advance can help. Some workplaces provide both a room designated for nursing parents as well as a room that can be used for medication needs, meditating, or relaxing. Whatever option you choose, make sure to include amenities such as a sink or hand sanitizer, power outlet, relaxing lighting, and signage to indicate when the room is in use.



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Starting the conversation

If employees are looking for specific fertility benefits, they’ll ask for them. Right? Not necessarily. **Nearly a third of respondents** said they wouldn’t feel comfortable asking their employer for fertility benefits. One potential reason is that employees rarely hear about fertility and family-forming topics from their leadership team. 76% of respondents have never heard any fertility-related terms from executives at their company.

If you do decide to offer fertility benefits, hearing about it from the top can help employees feel more comfortable using them and sharing feedback.

“Any time we roll out any kind of benefit including fertility benefits, we always make a playbook for our leaders. When it’s coming from their mouths, it’s easier for people to talk about these things, ask more questions, or be interested in that particular benefit.”

- Angie Marin, Manager, Global Benefits & Wellness at Alteryx.

Top-down communication can both help employees feel more comfortable discussing their concerns and experiences with their managers and encourage employees to use the fertility benefits provided to them. Erica Bernal, Sr. Benefits Analyst at Alteryx compared the stigma around discussing fertility at work to discomfort talking about mental health.

“You think that your body should be working a certain way or that a family should look a certain way. As we offer mental health benefits and fertility benefits, we’re pushing to refute that type of stigma.”

- Erica Bernal, Sr. Benefits Analyst at Alteryx.

The overlap between mental health and fertility challenges is important to note: 89% of respondents said that fertility and family forming has negatively impacted their mental health. **Research suggests** that stress can worsen fertility, creating a vicious cycle. Offering fertility and family-forming benefits can help relieve stress by providing financial, logistical, and emotional support.

How to support employees on their family-forming journeys



Provide leadership and manager training on talking about fertility and family-forming benefits and resources for employees.



Provide fertility benefits that are inclusive of all paths to parenthood.



Create dedicated wellness rooms.



Allow flexible scheduling.

Benefits that reflect your values

Increasingly, prospective and current employees are looking to join companies that reflect their values. Offering inclusive fertility benefits shows that your company cares about people’s lives and goals outside of the workplace. Even for employees who may not use them, knowing they’re available can help boost morale as well as recruitment and retention.

While it’s important to support working parents, getting to that point isn’t straightforward for many people pursuing parenthood.

Challenges along the way are difficult to talk about, and have traditionally been taboo to discuss in the workplace. When employers can start the conversation and make meaningful changes, they can clear the way for less stressful parenthood journeys — and create a more welcoming workplace for everyone.

Carrot provides all the essential fertility benefits that should be a top priority for any modern company and the customizable solution makes it a fit for any employer. For more information, visit carrotfertility.com.

About Carrot

Carrot is the leading global fertility benefits provider for today’s modern employers, providing flexible financial coverage and expert care navigation across every region of the U.S. and over 50 countries around the world. Carrot’s innovative product:



Provides a turnkey solution for health plans to establish an inclusive fertility and family-forming benefits program for all members regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or geography.



Improves access to high-quality fertility care and dramatically reduces the emotional and financial strain for members who need it.



Offers flexible solutions recognized for inclusivity, price transparency, and focus on healthier outcomes.

Founded in 2016, Carrot is the only fertility benefit with a global network of high-quality clinical providers of reproductive technologies available in 120+ countries and at over 3,600+ clinics. Carrot also works with numerous partners to ensure members have access to donor gametes, gestational carriers, and adoption services. Carrot’s global team includes world-class healthcare operators, engineers, designers, benefits experts, fertility doctors, nurses, and clinicians.

Learn more at carrotfertility.com.