



# The ROI of Investing in Breastfeeding Support

## The Business Case for HR Managers



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# INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive business landscape, companies are continually seeking ways to attract and retain top talent. One impactful yet often overlooked strategy is investing in breastfeeding support for employees. For Human Resources professionals and benefits managers, understanding the payoff of these initiatives is crucial to foster a family-friendly workplace and ensure compliance with labor laws. This white paper explores the business case to support your breastfeeding employees and how such programs lead to cost savings, improved employee morale, and a stronger organizational culture.

## Work and Motherhood: Competing Priorities

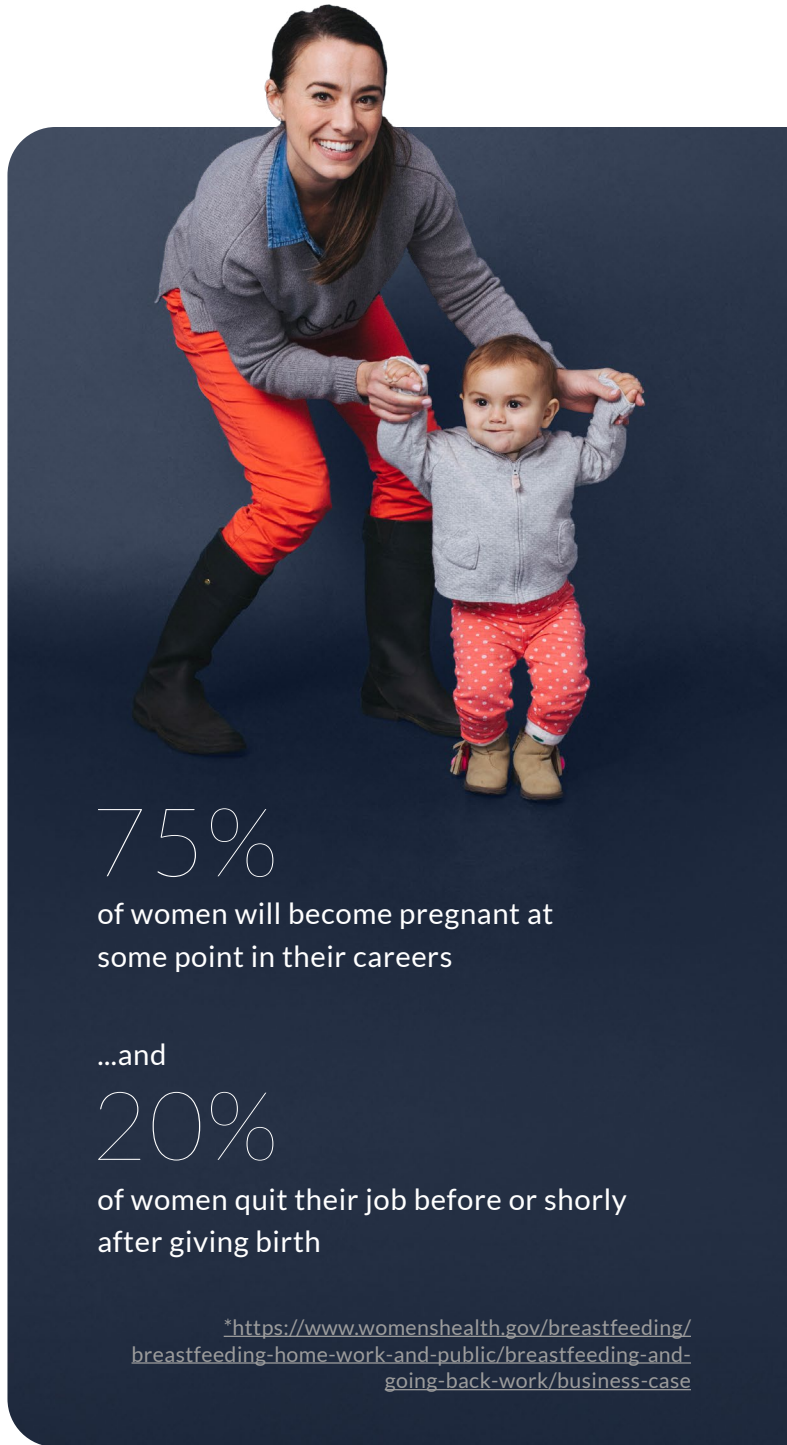
- More than **1 in 4** do not feel supported at work as a lactating parent
- **53%** aren't sure of their workplace lactation rights
- **83%** of U.S. moms breastfeed, but only **16.5%** continue breastfeeding 7-12 months after returning to work

[\\*https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/newborn-and-infant-nutrition/newborn-and-infant-breastfeeding/](https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/newborn-and-infant-nutrition/newborn-and-infant-breastfeeding/)

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# THE BUSINESS CASE TO SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING

Supporting working parents is more than just the right thing to do—it's a strategic business decision. Compliance with the Pump Act is the bottom floor of supporting working parents in your organization. The law protects lactating employees and the



75%

of women will become pregnant at some point in their careers

...and

20%

of women quit their job before or shortly after giving birth

[\\*https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-home-work-and-public/breastfeeding-and-going-back-work/business-case](https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-home-work-and-public/breastfeeding-and-going-back-work/business-case)

business from legal issues. Why is this important? Changing workforce dynamics: There are more women working during pregnancy and after than ever before, and workplace policies must evolve accordingly. In the early 1960s, only about 35% of women continued working into their final month of pregnancy. But in the late 2000s, 82% of women continued working until within one month of their first birth, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

**The PUMP Act took effect in April 2023. It requires employers to provide:**

- A place to pump at work, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public
- Reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for their nursing child for one year
- Access to a cold storage to keep breast milk cool

There is a real cost to businesses for non-compliance. Replacing employees who quit due to lack of support **can cost 6-9 months of their salary**. Discrimination claims also result in significant legal fees. Supporting breastfeeding employees can also substantially reduce your company's health insurance costs: **For every 1,000 babies not breastfed, there are an extra 2,033 physician visits, 212 days in the hospital and 609 prescriptions**. Some of those physician visits inevitably translate into time away from work.<sup>1</sup> Research shows that one-day absences to care for sick children occur more than twice as often for mothers of formula-feeding infants.

CIGNA, a global health insurance company, conducted a two-year study of 343 employees and found that organizations that offered lactation support programs benefited from an annual savings of \$240,000 in health care expenses, 62% fewer prescriptions, and \$60,000 savings in reduced absenteeism rates.<sup>2</sup>

The National Business Group on Health also found that employee retention rates are improved when companies provide lactation support; Businesses with lactation support programs boast a post-maternity retention rate of 94.2% compared to the national retention rate of 59.5%.

1,2. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-home-work-and-public/breastfeeding-and-going-back-work/business-case>



67%

of working parents have considered changing their jobs in the last year but

42%

of those said they stayed specifically because their employer **supported** their caregiving

\*[https://go.vivvi.com/hubfs/The-R.O.I.-of-Caregiving-Benefits\\_WhitePaper\\_Vivvi\\_The-Fifth-Trimester\\_2024.pdf](https://go.vivvi.com/hubfs/The-R.O.I.-of-Caregiving-Benefits_WhitePaper_Vivvi_The-Fifth-Trimester_2024.pdf)



# THE BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING

Understanding how lactation support programs benefit the companies that adopt them starts with recognizing what mothers and babies gain by breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding can positively impact a mother's physical and emotional health.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) cites four key health benefits for mothers who are able to maintain breastfeeding:

- A quicker recovery from childbirth
- Reduced rates of breast and ovarian cancer
- Reduced risk of developing type 2 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and cardiovascular disease
- Increased feel-good hormones prolactin and oxytocin, which can contribute to ongoing mental health benefits

## Why Milk Stork Moms Breastfeed

“ I believe BM [breast milk] is the best way to ensure my daughter gets all the nutrition she needs and the antibodies I can provide.”

“ It's the best way to support the nutritional needs and immunological needs of my child.”

“ I chose to breastfeed to give my daughter the best nutrition I could find for her! I loved our bonding time during nursing sessions as well.”



Initial breastfeeding rates in the U.S. are strong (83.2%), showcasing that most mothers intend to breastfeed; however, that number dramatically drops to 55.8% of infants receiving any breast milk at six months of age.<sup>3</sup> This steady drop could indicate that mothers are not getting the support they need. A 2017 study found that **60% of mothers do not breastfeed for as long as they intend to**,<sup>4</sup> which is influenced by a variety of factors including unsupportive work policies. This isn't a challenge for families to solve on their own, but an opportunity for employers to recognize, support and retain their lactating workforce.

3. <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm>

4. Odom EC, Li R, Scanlon KS, Perrine CG, Grummer-Strawn L. Reasons for earlier than desired cessation of breastfeeding. Pediatrics. 2013;131(3):e726-732.

61%

say the logistics of pumping—packing, transporting and cleaning pump parts—are a top challenge to breastfeeding

\*Mamava and Medela's 2023 State of Breastfeeding Survey



Milk Stork, the first and most trusted breast milk shipping company, is committed to helping HR professionals and their organizations support breastfeeding women. This white paper cites survey findings from more than 700 working parents around the U.S., highlighting the challenges breastfeeding employees face in their transition back from parental leave while also offering a simple solution for how HR can support breastfeeding employees. Ultimately, a family-friendly workforce will improve a working parent's performance and morale—both at the office and at home.

These Milk Stork parents returned to work after their maternity leave committed to nurturing their babies with the best nutrition available—their breast milk—while remaining dedicated to their careers. Milk Stork's service helps new parents accomplish their personal and professional goals without having to sacrifice one for the other.

## THE CHALLENGES OF RETURNING TO WORK AND BREASTFEEDING

For breastfeeding employees returning to the workforce after parental leave, the stress of the transition is often compounded by mixed emotions and physical adjustments. Breastfeeding is one of the many challenges faced by new parents returning to work.

### Paid Maternity Leave Around the World

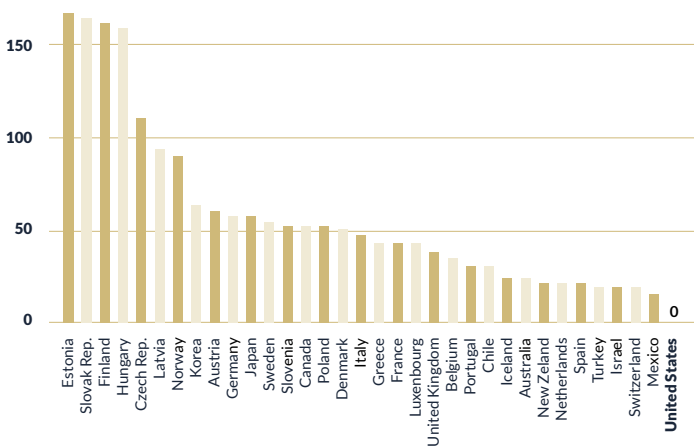
Only 61.9% of working moms aged 35-44 years old qualify for 12 weeks of protected unpaid leave under for FMLA (Family & Medical Leave Act)®. For those who do qualify for unpaid leave, many cannot afford to forgo 12 weeks of income®. As a result, according to data from the U.S. Department of Labor, 1 in 4 working mothers in the U.S. return to work within two weeks of giving birth.

Returning to work so quickly after childbirth creates numerous physical, emotional, professional and financial challenges for working parents and their families. Not only are mother and baby separated 8 to 10 hours a day very early in their relationship, but short maternity leaves separate infants from their sole source of nutrition when mothers return to work. The World Health Organization and the AAP recommends “exclusive breastfeeding for six months, followed by continued breastfeeding as complementary foods are introduced, with continuation of breastfeeding for two years or longer as mutually desired by mother and infant.”

## The Challenge of Pumping

To cover this separation and maintain their ability to lactate, working parents must express milk for every nursing session they miss.

Total weeks of paid parental leave available to mothers in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.



\*[https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/data/datasets/family-database/pf2\\_1\\_parental\\_leave\\_systems.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/data/datasets/family-database/pf2_1_parental_leave_systems.pdf)

For most breast/chestfeeding parents, this requires pumping every 2-3 hours. Pumping at work can be a significant struggle. Even with the PUMP Act that requires employers to provide reasonable break time and a private place other than a bathroom for an employee to pump breast milk for their nursing child for one year after the child’s birth, many lactating employees still do not have access

to adequate facilities or time to ensure successful pumping sessions. Additionally, pumping can be uncomfortable and less productive than nursing, which can lead to decreased milk production over time. In Milk Stork’s survey, we asked moms about the most challenging part of their breastfeeding journey. Ninety-five percent of respondents cited pumping as their biggest challenge.

“When my daughter went to daycare and I went back to work, my supply dipped and I had to pump up to 6x a day to get enough milk. I eventually had to supplement.”

“Pumping, pumping, pumping - even if you have the time it is such a pain to constantly have to use your only breaks and lunches for pumping. Having to tote equipment around everywhere and then worry about where to store the milk.”

“The pumps are not as effective as the baby and as a working, traveling professional, I have had to pump in more than my fair share of indelicate locations- such as in a cab on the way to a meeting.”

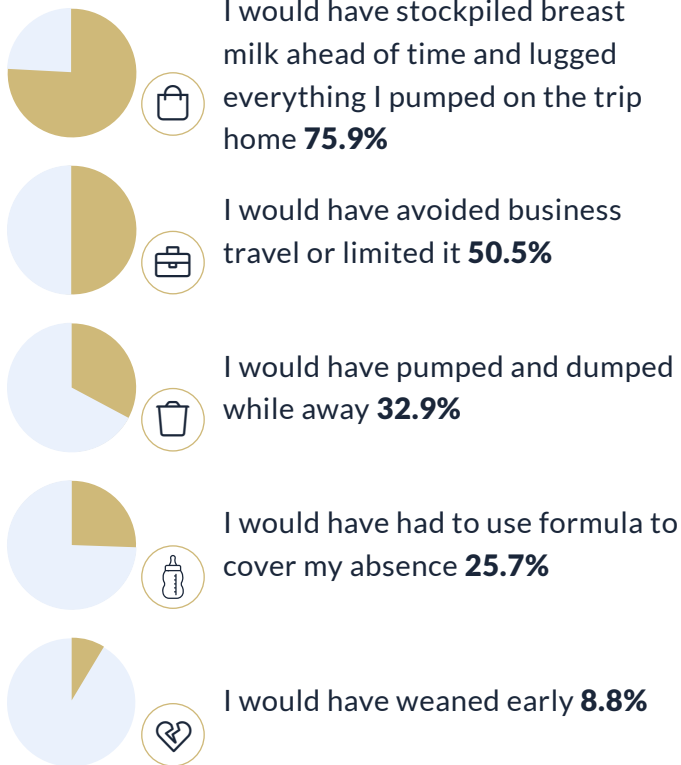
## EMPLOYEE BENEFITS WITH A REAL IMPACT

In Milk Stork’s survey, we asked breastfeeding mothers about how employers could better support a working mom’s commitment to breastfeed. Lactation programs offered by employers ranged in quality. While some felt their companies were doing an outstanding job, others felt their employers were falling short.



## The Milk Stork Difference

Milk Stork asked moms how they would approach breastfeeding and business travel without our service. The responses show that breast/chestfeeding employees, families, and businesses would have been negatively impacted if Milk Stork wasn't available.



Working mothers are savvy and motivated to identify and advocate for benefits that will support their careers while they grow their families. Of Milk Stork's hundreds of corporate partners, the majority have on-boarded Milk Stork as a benefit because an employee requested it.

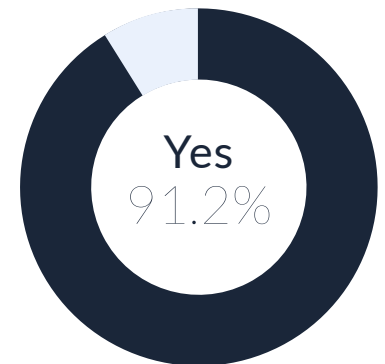
## CONCLUSION

By fostering an environment that prioritizes the needs of breastfeeding employees, companies can experience significant benefits, including enhanced employee satisfaction, increased retention rates, and improved overall productivity. These programs not only demonstrate a commitment to employee



well-being but also contribute to a healthier, more inclusive workplace culture.

**When Milk Stork moms were asked if they were more likely to accept travel assignments and/or engage in business travel**



Investing in breastfeeding support is not merely an act of corporate responsibility; it is a strategic decision that yields measurable returns. Companies that implement effective policies, such as providing dedicated lactation spaces, flexible scheduling, and resources like breast milk shipping services, can expect to see a positive impact on their bottom line. The benefits extend beyond financial gains, fostering loyalty and trust among employees and positioning the organization as an employer of choice.

As more companies recognize the value of supporting breastfeeding employees, the shift towards more inclusive and supportive workplaces will continue to grow. This evolution will not only benefit individual employees and their families but also drive organizational success and sustainability. By nurturing the needs of breastfeeding employees, companies can truly nurture their own success, creating a win-win scenario for all stakeholders involved.

In essence, supporting breastfeeding in the workplace is a powerful investment in human capital that pays dividends in the form of a more engaged, productive, and loyal workforce. As the business landscape evolves, those who champion these initiatives will lead the way in fostering healthier, happier, and more prosperous workplaces.

## ABOUT MILK STORK

Milk Stork is the #1 breast milk shipping company. As the industry pioneer since 2015, Milk Stork's mission is empower breastfeeding parents and provide them with an equitable environment to achieve the heights of their personal and professional ambitions.

Since launching in 2015, Milk Stork has partnered with over 850 companies, including industry leaders like Salesforce, Pinterest, and Bausch Health, and has delivered more than 10 million ounces of breast milk globally.

“We need a cultural shift where breastfeeding is not just accepted but fully supported. This means creating policies and workplaces that recognize the realities of motherhood and the importance of breastfeeding.”

Kate Torgersen  
Founder and CEO of Milk Stork

