

A photograph of two women in a kitchen. The woman in the foreground is a Black woman with short, curly blonde hair, wearing a light-colored cardigan over a blue top. She is holding a yellow lemon. The woman in the background is a white woman with long dark hair, wearing a white baseball jersey with a red number '2'. She is looking down at a brown paper shopping bag with 'M&S' written on it. The background is slightly blurred, showing a window and some greenery.

Fertifa^f
fertilitynetworkuk

Fertility in Focus: The UK's largest survey
on the impact of fertility challenges in the
workplace.

The UK's largest survey on fertility in the workplace

Welcome to Fertility in Focus, a report where we look at the impact of fertility in the workplace. Commissioned by Fertifa and Fertility Network UK, the survey has collated over 3,600 responses to reveal the profound and extensive impact of fertility challenges on individuals in the workplace. This is the largest survey ever conducted in the UK on fertility for working professionals, and the results are too significant to ignore.

We'll be using the data from this survey to help us continue to build workplaces that support people through fertility challenges of any kind. In this report, we'll take you through some of the key trends we've seen and what they reveal about fertility in the workplace.

Thank you to every person who took part in the survey and who shared their own stories. Your voices will help shape the future of fertility in the workplace for others 💜



“This survey in partnership with Fertility Network sharpens the focus of how workplaces and employer policies affect wellbeing and outcomes for individuals. We already knew that 1 in 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage, 40% of heterosexual couples’ challenges are male factor related and all LGBTQ+ individuals will need some form of support to start a family, but now we also know quantitatively just how impactful this can be on work productivity and the role companies can play to support!”

Eileen Burbidge
Fertifa Executive Director

Fertility support in our workplaces is more crucial than ever.

Fertility challenges are having a profound impact on working lives, and this impact is especially seen in the absence of workplace support. The research reveals the serious lack of workplace support, as people struggle to manage necessary medical care with their work lives, leaving employees feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope.



“My journey has been 10 years and counting, with 23 rounds of IVF and 8 miscarriages. My experience has been different with each employer.”

— Anonymous

“Employers need to be educated about fertility issues and treatment so they can adequately support their staff going through the process. All workplaces should have a fertility policy which should be separate from maternity policy. I changed jobs after my first fertility cycle and although my first boss was completely unsupportive my new boss was amazingly supportive towards me. It was like night and day.”

— Anonymous



Nearly eight out of ten (78%)

people said that fertility support or a fertility policy was **very important** when they were considering a new job or employer.

Three out of four (75%)

people said that their productivity at work was **strongly impacted** by fertility challenges, and yet more than **one third (37%)** said that they received very little or **no support from their employer**.

People who go through fertility challenges do not feel comfortable speaking to their employers about what they are experiencing.

Employees are struggling through fertility challenges in silence.

These numbers show that barriers around fertility challenges are still very much alive in UK workplaces and around the world. Employers have a long way to go in creating workplace cultures that successfully normalise fertility challenges.



One third of people (30%)

who went through fertility treatment took time off from work, without telling their employer the real reason why.

“I used all of my annual leave for fertility treatment, so when I eventually needed a break, I couldn’t take one and that was mentally exhausting.”

— Anonymous



“I felt like I needed to carry on as usual. Often dipping out of meetings or escaping to the toilet to take calls with my consultant about the progression of our embryos... to then rejoin the meeting minutes later.”

— Anonymous



A significant number of people are quitting their jobs, due to the impact of fertility challenges

The impact of fertility challenges can be hugely detrimental to an individual's career long-term. Fertility support should be considered a necessity by employers not a 'nice to have'. Implementing fertility benefits at work can help retain employees and attract the best talent.

"The pressure of work and lack of manager understanding impacted me negatively. I took a lengthy absence (sick leave) and was subsequently threatened with disciplinary [action] and dismissal."

— Anonymous



"I had a supportive manager but very unsupportive employer. I reduced my hours of work before eventually leaving my job, because it was too difficult and stressful but that then meant I was earning less. A very difficult and isolating experience."

— Anonymous



Almost 1 in 5  people we spoke to (18%) ended up leaving their jobs because of the impact fertility treatment had.

The cost of fertility treatment extends far beyond the treatment

The hidden cost of fertility treatment is not just limited to the fertility treatment itself. The financial impact can be long-term, with people often having to take unpaid leave or go down to part-time work to manage the challenges.

With fertility challenges disproportionately impacting female employees, this reaffirms how important it is for employers to implement fertility benefits to create an inclusive workplace. People aren't prepared for the financial burden of fertility treatment. A subset of the data that looked at the gender breakdown of results found that only 5% of women felt they were well-prepared financially.

“There are lots of appointments during your 9 to 5 day. Working full time makes it feel impossible and I have to make up hours at work for appointments. Fertility is not considered a medical condition.”

— Anonymous



“Treatment impacts you physically and mentally. I have always been a career woman but found going through infertility really made the balance of work and personal life hard!”

— Anonymous



One third (32%) of people who went through fertility treatment said they were not prepared financially.



Dr Catherine Hill

Fertility Network's Head of Policy
and Public Affairs

"Fertility Network and Fertifa's survey reveals the **shocking lack of workplace support for fertility patients** as they juggle necessary medical care and work, and the **continued stigma around fertility treatment** in the workplace. Fertility patients should not feel they have to **lie to their employer about taking time off work** for reproductive health issues or use annual leave for medical appointments.

As the national charity, we know how traumatic infertility can be and we urge employers to be forward-thinking and **implement family-friendly fertility policies** detailing how many days **fertility leave employees are entitled to**, as well as developing a work environment **understanding of the impact of infertility** and its treatment. Enshrining reproductive health rights in workplace policies is **long overdue** and employers need to foster a culture of transparency, so women and their partners **feel able to speak up about their reproductive health treatment**. Our pioneering **Fertility in the Workplace initiative** provides help in supporting staff and improving understanding in the workplace."

The **huge response rate** demonstrates that people want to talk openly about **their experiences** and how profound of an impact fertility challenges had on their lives. It shows that people want to drive change for others who will go through **similar challenges**, such as **IVF, pregnancy loss**, and **unexplained infertility**.

About Fertifa:

Fertifa is the UK and Europe's leading reproductive health benefits provider. The company provides diagnosis and treatment, clinical advice, educational support, and financing for employers across the UK, Europe, Asia and the US.

Fertifa presently supports employees in sectors across retail, banking, financial services, technology and media, for clients including Monzo Bank, Foot Anstey, Osborne Clarke, Lululemon, ClearScore, SpaceNK, Aviva, Bain Capital, and Balderton.

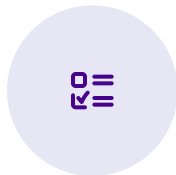
About Fertility Network UK:

Fertility Network UK is the leading patient-focused fertility charity providing free and impartial information and support for anyone affected by fertility issues. They provide support for people at every stage of a fertility journey.

Their pioneering initiative Fertility in the Workplace helps firms improve support and understanding for staff on their fertility journey, among other services that include an Info Line and a Support Line and specialty and regional support groups.



Book in a call with the Fertifa team to talk about how we can help support your employees through fertility challenges of any kind.



The survey includes responses from 3,654 individuals across the UK, aged 25 to 45. The data was collected over the period of 15th September through 27th October and analysed by the Fertifa team and Fertility Network UK.