

# Investing in Tomorrow:

## The Employer Case for Fertility Support in the Workplace



---

Employees are navigating fertility care while trying to meet the demands of their jobs, often without clear policies or adequate support.

While thousands of Albertans quietly struggle with the physical, mental, and financial toll of infertility, a significant gap in employer support remains the missing link in modern workplace wellness.

By addressing these needs directly, **Alberta employers can create a workplace where both the business and its people can thrive.**

## The Reality

# An estimated 1 in 6 people of reproductive age worldwide will face infertility.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to those with medically diagnosed infertility, many others also require assisted reproductive technologies to build their families such as becoming a single parent by choice or being a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Without government-funded fertility care in Alberta, patients are left to navigate the high costs of fertility treatment on their own.

Despite increased awareness on declining fertility rates, support for those going through fertility treatment remains limited. For many people, the path to parenthood involves significant financial strain, time away from work, and the stress of balancing treatment with professional responsibilities.

To better understand how employers can help, Fertility Alberta Advocacy & Outreach Association partnered with Mount Royal University to conduct the study *Employees Accessing Fertility Care: Perceptions of Effective and Supportive Government and Employer Policies*, supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. We surveyed a total of 206 patients who underwent treatment in Alberta in the past five years and hosted four focus groups that included individuals willing to share their experiences.

“Fertility issues cause financial, emotional, physical and mental burden on both partners. It has negative impacts (on employment) before, during and after the treatments.”

—Survey Respondent

The study findings demonstrate that fertility support is a win-win:

**Establishing clear, empathetic fertility care policies fosters a more loyal workforce and improves overall organizational health.**

### KEY THEMES

Financial and logistical burden of fertility care

Work disruption, scheduling strain, and leave constraints

Inequity and discrimination

Workplace culture, manager response, and support variability

Emotional and mental health burden (anxiety, stress, cognitive load)

## 39%

of survey respondents described their workplace culture as supportive of their fertility journey

## 65%

said their fertility journey negatively impacted their employment

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. (2025, November). *Infertility*.

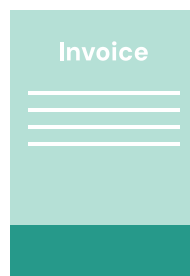
## The Struggle

# Fertility care is extremely expensive.

Participants reported spending a cumulative average of approximately

# \$35,000

out-of-pocket on fertility care



# 21.2%

of respondents said their employer offered *any benefits* to help with the cost of fertility care



# 6.3%

said their employer covered *treatment*

Respondents spent an average of approximately

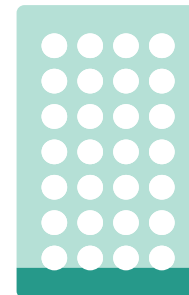
# \$7,000

on other related costs such as travel, acupuncture, counselling, supplements, massage, chiropractor and legal fees



# 17.5%

said their employer covered *medication*



If medications or treatments were partially covered by an employer, the average percentage that was covered was

# 11.8%

# 61%

of respondents required outside financial assistance, such as loans or gifts from family and friends, to pay for their treatments

## Fertility Fact

Most Albertan employers do not provide fertility or family building benefits.

“Being denied any sort of coverage is heartbreaking and makes you feel less valued.”

—Survey Respondent

“We still had to pay over \$100,000 out of pocket, (and) remortgage our house for the treatments.”

—Focus Group Participant

## Why it Matters

Employers can play an important role in helping their employees build a family, and doing so is also a strategic business decision.

Providing fertility and family-building benefits signal that an organization understands the realities many employees face today and is willing to stand beside them, not just as workers but as whole people. This kind of support helps bolster employee morale, engagement and retention.

### Benefits of being a fertility friendly employer <sup>2</sup>

- Improves employee loyalty and engagement
- Demonstrates deep, positive cultural change
- Enhances company credentials for internal and external stakeholders
- Decreases unplanned absenteeism, resulting in increased productivity

When employers offer supportive environments, they build a strong reputation for being a family-friendly employer, which results in their ability to attract and retain key talent. This reduces recruitment and training costs.

“Trying to manage work expectations while going through treatment was really stressful and felt like a constant juggling act.”

—Survey Respondent

“I changed employers halfway through the experience because the first employer wouldn’t allow time off for appointments... My second employer was much more supportive.”

—Survey Respondent

**The intricate and unpredictable nature of fertility treatments require employees to take time off work.**

**82%**  
of respondents said they took time off work for treatment

**18.7**  
was the average number of days they took off

Employees reported using sick days, vacation time, paid leave, unpaid leave, or banked hours.

Respondents to our survey and participants in the focus group indicated that a supportive work environment that included flexibility in scheduling was a key factor in them staying with their employer.

<sup>2</sup> Fertility Matters at Work. (2025, November). *The Impact of Fertility Challenges at Work: International Insights*.

## The Solution

Employers have a powerful opportunity to improve their employees' experience by proactively designing benefits, practices, and cultures that remove barriers.

The following examples are concrete, practical steps organizations can take to transform a source of stress and silence into an area of meaningful support. In doing so, they not only improve employees' wellbeing, but also strengthen retention, performance, and their reputation as an employer of choice.

### Evaluate and Modernize Benefits

#### **SURVEY YOUR WORKFORCE**

Go directly to the source to understand which family-building supports your employees value most.

#### **CONSULT YOUR INSURANCE PROVIDER**

Discuss the fertility and family building benefits they offer and ensure the benefits are inclusive and flexible.

#### **EXPLORE SPECIALIZED PLATFORMS**

Consider specialized employer-sponsored fertility benefit platforms such as Sprout Family, Progyny Canada, and Carrot Fertility.

### Implement Flexible Workplace Practices

#### **ACCOMMODATE TIME OFF**

Allow dedicated time for appointments through flexible scheduling or specialized leave.

#### **CREATE CLEAR GUIDELINES**

Develop accessible workplace fertility policies so employees know exactly what support is available.

“The workplace leaders could do better to create an environment that is safe so that more people would share. Teach people how to respond if someone does share.”

—Survey Respondent

### Foster a Supportive Culture

#### **EQUIP LEADERSHIP**

Provide training to ensure leaders can offer both empathy and practical support in alignment with policy.

#### **CREATE AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING**

Foster open dialogue to reduce the stigma and provide a safe space.

## Key Takeaways

Alberta employers have a unique opportunity to lead on fertility support, turning a widespread challenge into a competitive advantage.

By implementing inclusive family building benefits, flexible leave policies, and a supportive culture, organizations can lessen the financial, emotional, and logistical burdens faced by the 1 in 6 Albertans, who require assisted reproductive technologies to build their families.

### ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS

#### Prevalent Need

An estimated  
**250,000**  
Albertans face infertility

Approximate cumulative average  
out-of-pocket costs of

**\$35,000**  
on fertility care

**21.2%**  
have employer coverage

#### Work Impacts

**82%**  
took time off

**18.7**  
days taken off  
on average

**39%**  
rated workplaces  
as supportive

**65%**  
experienced negative work  
impacts from their journeys

#### Benefits of Fertility Policies

- Boost employee loyalty and engagement
- Enhance a company's credentials
- Decrease unplanned absenteeism

#### Pragmatic Steps for Employers

- Survey staff
- Partner with insurers
- Offer flexible/inclusive benefits
- Create a culture of openness

**As a result of this survey and focus groups, Fertility Alberta Advocacy & Outreach Association and Mount Royal University urge employers:**

**Act now to better support employees on their path to parenthood and build a thriving workplace.**



## About This Report

This report was created in partnership between Fertility Alberta and Mount Royal University. We would like to acknowledge the funding received by SSHRC through a Partnership Engage Grant. The research was led by Dr. Rachael Pettigrew of Bissett School of Business, in collaboration with Dr. Sarah Orton and Dr. Carol Armstrong (Biology).

**Report design by Tori English**

hello@torienglish.com • torienglish.com

## Contact Us

Contact us to learn more about the research or for support in advocating for better family building benefits in your organization.

**Fertility Alberta Advocacy & Outreach Association**

info@fertilityab.com • fertilityab.com • @fertilityab