

Mother
Board

Overcoming The Motherhood Penalty

An introduction to mother inclusion in tech

// Introduction

The tech industry is one of the fastest-growing and most innovative sectors, however, despite its many successes, gaining and retaining women in the tech industry continues to prove challenging.

So why is the industry struggling to attract and retain female talent?

One of the key areas that continues to influence the lack of women in tech is motherhood. A reported 50% of women leave tech by age 35, directly correlating with childbearing and childrearing years.

Motherhood is now one of the most pressing issues for the sector to tackle to create a more inclusive, gender-balanced industry.

This resource explores the steps businesses can take to create an inclusive workplace that supports the needs of working mothers. By doing so, we can help to build a more equitable and diverse tech industry that benefits everyone.



There is a proven link between women leaving their jobs and motherhood. This is especially prominent in male dominated industries, with tech specifically having one of the poorest attrition rates of all industries in the UK. While there's a prevailing notion that elevating women to senior roles can address this issue, the stark reality is that without addressing the root cause — the alarming 50% of women that are leaving tech by age 35 — meaningful change remains elusive. Retaining women, by going beyond the basics of maternity leave, is essential to changing the future landscape of the industry. That's why I am thrilled to be launching this guide with the Tech Talent Charter so that leaders can start to open the dialogue of how they can go beyond policy by taking tangible actions for a more equitable and inclusive future.

Sophie Creese

Founder, MotherBoard



The tech industry is at a crossroad. Our research shows the scale at which women leave tech at critical junctures in their lives, often due to the challenges of balancing motherhood and caring responsibilities with career demands. This exodus is a loss for these talented individuals and a significant setback for the industry and UK PLC. That's why the work of the Tech Talent Charter and the Motherboard Charter is so important. By tackling the motherhood penalty and creating a more inclusive workplace, we can help to ensure that the tech industry is a place where everyone can thrive. We all have a role in creating a more inclusive tech industry. Employers can start by rethinking their flexible working policies, investing in career development for women, publishing parental leave policies and creating a more empathetic workplace culture. Individuals can also take action by advocating for change in their workplaces and supporting organisations working to make the tech industry more inclusive.

Karen Blake

Co-CEO, Tech Talent Charter

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// 10 practical ways to make your workplace more inclusive for mothers

1. Assess your maternity, paternity, and wider family policies for equality barriers and pioneer change to fix them.
2. Commit to full transparency on family leave policies and family-inclusive benefits in all communications.
3. Deliver empathetic, efficient, and practical returns to work for employees enabled by manager training.
4. Build awareness of a wide range of parental narratives, and embed support for these journeys in your company policies and culture.
5. Enhance your flexible working policies to promote a variety of part-time and job-sharing patterns.
6. Ensure that all job activities are factored into core working hours, especially learning and development and social activities.
7. Strive for excellence in onboarding. Create practical access to support services, skills, and learning resources.
8. Build a network for parental support, championed by senior leadership.
9. Leverage employee peer support through mentor and buddy schemes.
10. Collaborate for change: join the [Tech Talent Charter](#) and the [Motherboard Charter](#).



The Reality for Mums in Tech

With 50% of women leaving the tech industry by age 35¹, and one in three women planning to leave their tech job², hiring managers and businesses are losing talent from their teams due to motherhood, which is preventable.

From our work with Signatories of both MotherBoard & Tech Talent Charter, we know that mothers typically face the following challenges at work:

- Part-time work in technical roles is less common than in other industries
- Male-dominated teams may lack understanding of the needs of working mothers
- Parent-unfriendly informal and social activities
- Approaches to planning that disadvantage parents
- Maternity policies are variable in quality and execution
- Limited access to childcare, wrap-around care and high childcare costs
- Inflexible work schedules
- Poor return to work processes after extended leave
- Little or no support for parents who have returned to work
- The expectation of working beyond scheduled hours
- Bias and stereotyping, particularly in recruitment and career advancement decisions
- Lack of role models in senior positions
- Feeling excluded and isolated

This leads to:

- Women leaving the industry
- Women moving away from the more technical roles
- Slower/ missed promotion opportunities
- Limited talent pools of women in tech
- A continued skill shortage in the UK, especially at the mid/senior level
- Gender imbalance within tech teams
- Rising costs of not retaining talent

It is crucial for companies to recognise and address these barriers if they want to retain women in their teams and the industry as a whole.

// 4 reasons why businesses should care about fixing 'The Motherhood Penalty'

1 It leads to better team morale and productivity

Acknowledging the challenges of motherhood and providing flexibility allows mothers to balance their responsibilities effectively, and as a result, they can focus on their tasks, leading to increased productivity and overall performance.

Not only that, a workplace that supports mothers fosters a positive work culture that extends beyond just mothers, and this improved work atmosphere enhances employee morale and strengthens team dynamics across the board.

2 It helps futureproof the business

With employee retention being a key issue for many tech businesses, when employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to stay with the company long-term, reducing turnover costs and preserving institutional knowledge.

3

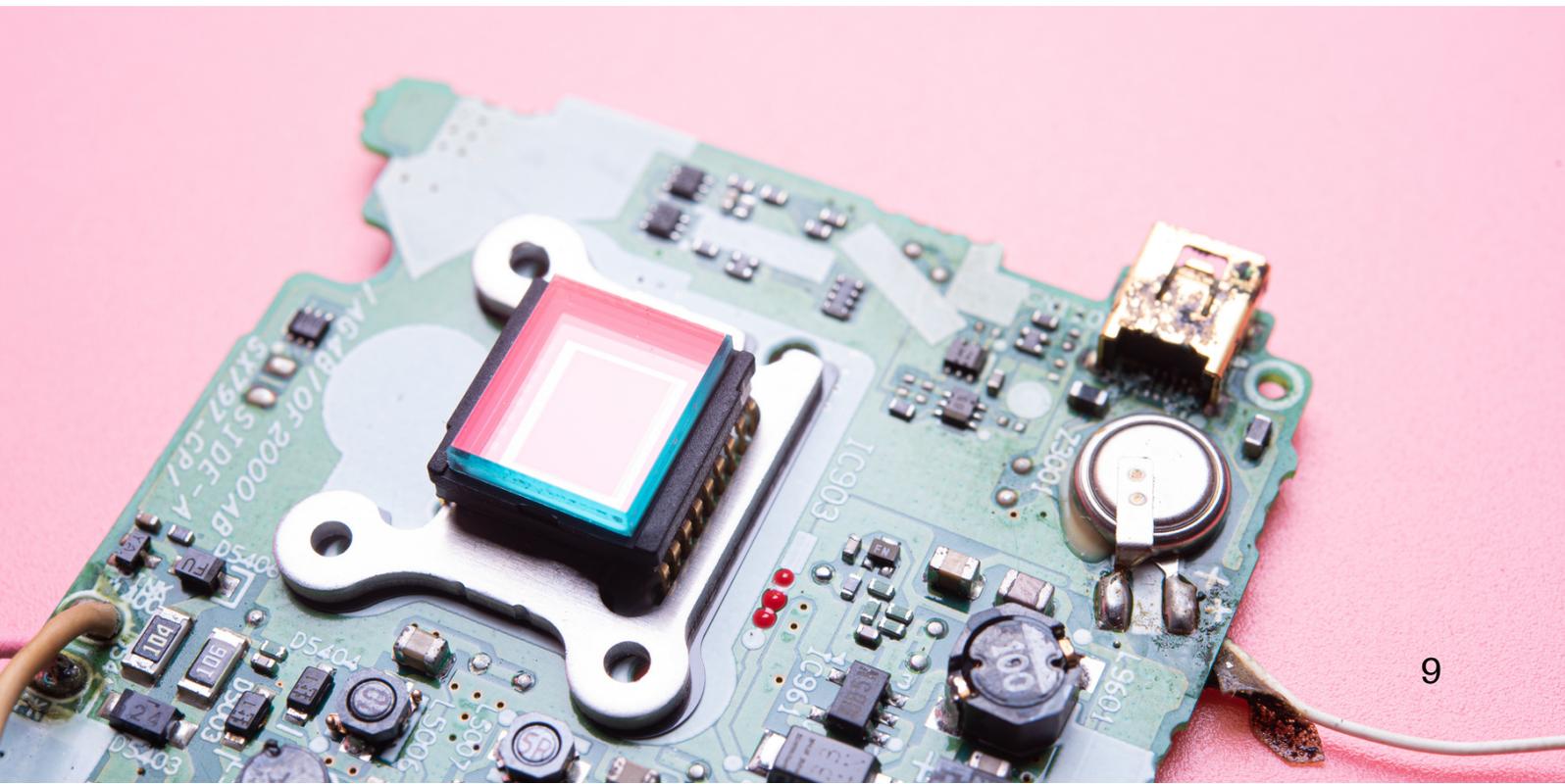
It helps close the gender pay gap

There is no coincidence that the gender pay gap significantly increases around the same time people tend to become parents. If business leaders are serious about closing the gender pay gap, they need to address the role that motherhood plays, and to create a more supportive environment is the only way to close it.

4

It's simply a good look

Potentially cynically, businesses that actively advocate, and support mother inclusion and work-life balance project a positive brand image. This makes them a more attractive option for potential future candidates, clients and partners where family-friendly policies and values are becoming a higher priority.





How to create an inclusive workplace for working mums

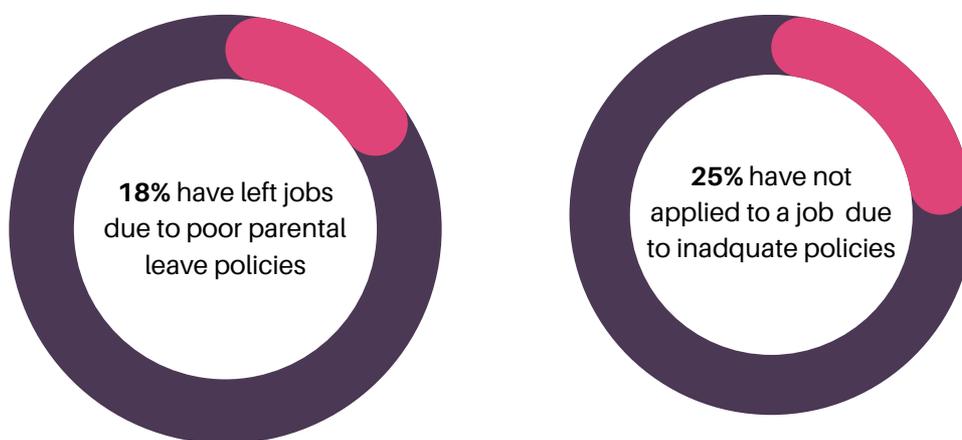
// Maternity Leave

As a progressive employer in the UK, offering a statutory maternity (and paternity) policy leaves you at a disadvantage compared to others when it comes to hiring for two reasons: candidates are becoming more discerning, and businesses are already responding.

Poor parental leave policies have led 18% of 18-34-year-olds to leave their jobs while 25%³ have not applied for a job due to inadequate policies, even with no plans to have children, so it's no real surprise that two-thirds of businesses in the UK are offering enhanced plans.⁴

By addressing your maternity policy to ensure that it's aligned with and goes beyond the statutory minimum shows a dedication to employee wellbeing which in turn leads to increased retention, reduced turnover, better engagement, positive return to the workplace, attraction to work at the business for others etc.

18-34 year olds in the UK:



What's a good maternity policy based on company size?

As much as we'd love to recommend every company should provide 40 weeks of full-pay maternity and paternity leave, realistically that's not a financial option for most businesses. To be considered competitive, across the UK, the most common option is to provide full pay for the first 6 weeks,⁴ but within the FTSE top 100, this moves up to full pay for 26 weeks.⁵

// Key Considerations

Humanise your maternity policies

Providing good financial support for parents while they are on leave is important, but from an emotional perspective try to think holistically about what would help a parent feel supported and part of the team. Even if it's simply a care package once the baby has arrived, small gestures to acknowledge their journey past their leave make a huge difference.

Considerate and helpful communication during maternity leave

Even if a returner has decided to take the bare minimum of ordinary maternity leave, a lot can change within a business in 26 weeks, and the last thing you want is for there to be any surprises as it can leave returners feeling excluded and out of the loop.

To make the return of employees smoother, ensure that Keeping In Touch (KIT) days are held and that your employee is updated on any company changes before they return to work. Make sure that your KIT days actually happen, and update your returning colleague about any company changes before they get back to work, to make their return smoother.

Give people on leave pay rises & bonuses

Not only is withholding a pay rise from someone on leave illegal, but even if it weren't, missing out on the career progression opportunity sets returners at a disadvantage and will result in feelings of dissatisfaction, which leads to attrition.

The same goes for bonuses. Even if they aren't contractual, consider the emotional impact of not receiving a bonus which you have contributed to either with your time, or your work before taking leave.

// Case Study : Modern



Modern, the award winning digital consultancy for B2B tech businesses, was founded by Nicola and Stuart Ray 12 years ago when they had two children under the age of 3. For Nicola, her career in the London digital consultancy world wasn't compatible with family life, so Modern was born.

It now boasts almost 40 employees, and 62% of the senior leadership team are women.



I vowed to ensure that as we grew Modern, we made it a family-friendly organisation and gave parents the opportunity to come back to work with flexibility and consideration for family life.

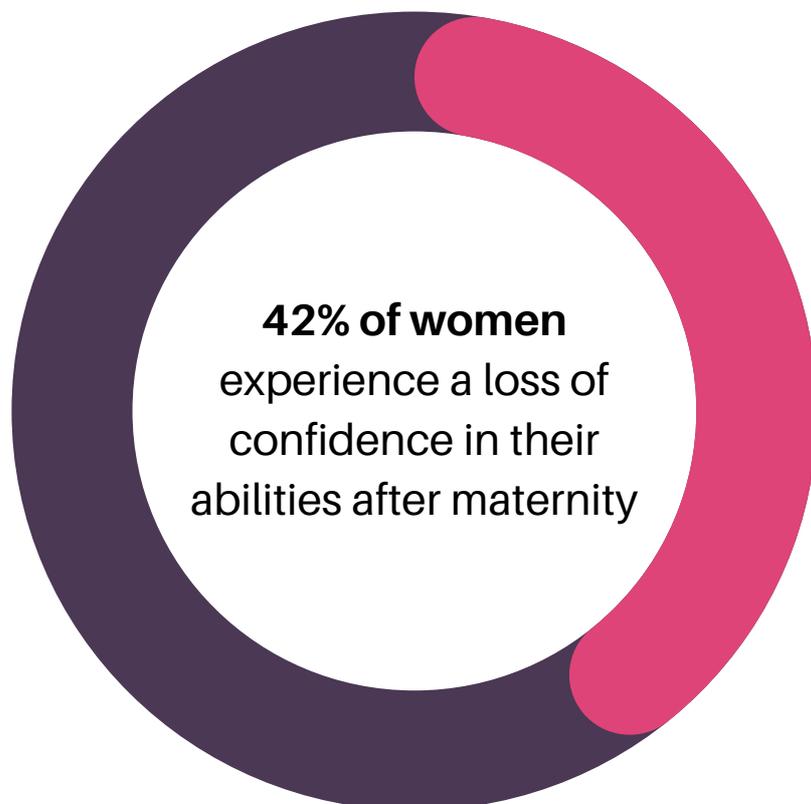
For the ambitious women in our business, maternity leave isn't a time for their career aspirations to die. As we've had recent restructures and promotion opportunities, we've made a concerted effort to give our team members on maternity leave the opportunity to step up and shape their roles when they return. Keeping an open dialogue while they've been on maternity leave, and having regular meetings and KIT days, has been key to helping them feel valued, motivated and empowered when they return.

Nicola Ray
CEO, Modern

// Return to work

Returning to work after an extended period of leave can be daunting for everybody, but with 42% of women experiencing a loss in their confidence of their abilities after maternity,³ this is especially true for the fast-moving pace of the tech industry, which can often leave returners feeling left behind if they're not supported correctly.

Ensuring you have a robust yet flexible return-to-work plan driven by empathy and understanding will significantly increase your likelihood of retaining employees and generally improve employee satisfaction.



// Key Considerations

Treat RTW as an onboarding experience

Processes, tools and ways of working may have changed subtly, so the best way of approaching a return to work is to treat the returner in the same way you would a person joining the company for the first time. The worst that you could do is remind someone of information they already know, but it means you won't miss anything and they will have everything that they need to hit the ground running.

Company-wide adjustments

Although a large part of the return-to-work experience will be between the returner, their immediate team and HR, consider how the wider context of the company can shift to be a more inclusive environment. This goes from practical solutions around aspects such as breastfeeding, to ensuring that company socials occur during family-friendly hours so that parents can attend.

Don't overlook the basics

Small things really do go a long way, and when you're focusing on larger operational considerations there are some smaller aspects that often fall through the net. Although they may seem basic, check that all logins and tool subscriptions are active, they are included in any regular meeting invites and that their passes/keys actually still work – one surefire way of making someone not feel welcome is them not being able to get into the building!

// Management & Communication

Even past the initial period of return to work, the role that managers play is vital in ensuring that mothers (and parents generally) feel supported and understood.

Often employees that parent are managed by those that aren't and vice versa, so it's about giving managers the tools that they may need to support those outside of their lived experience to create an environment that promotes productivity and empathy.



// Key Considerations

Teach managers how to apply your parental policies well

Having a good policy in place is only the first step. Without knowing how to implement a policy properly, no matter how progressive it may be, can potentially lead to greater employee dissatisfaction because there is a great gap between the experience they could have and the one they receive. So it's important that managers are aware of and feel confident applying your policies effectively.

Cover empathy in your management training

Due to societal stereotypes and pressures, mothers are often presumed (and expected) to be the primary caregivers, meaning that they have additional workloads around aspects like childcare pickups, phone calls from childcare and child sickness.

Ensuring that managers can tap into and show empathy is an important capability that will enable them to have more productive management conversations and make more informed decisions. It's important not to assume that empathy is automatic and that all empathetic responses are the same or right for the situation. So talk openly about empathy and treat it as a skill like any other required from a manager.

This type of management skill is particularly important in tech, where the age of the average tech worker is lower, and where management positions are held by a wider range of age groups than they are in other industries.

Support employees through 1:1 time as they experience the realities of parenthood

Especially during the early stages of parenthood, finding the balance between work and being a parent is hard. An employee's circumstances, energy levels and personality traits may have changed significantly from how they were before they became a parent, and even if you can't see any changes, this may still be happening beneath the surface.

Ensure you're booking in one on one time where the focus is not on work but rather on their well-being to give an open space for any concerns that may be occurring.



// Case Study : Police Digital Service



To address the continually changing needs of their employees, Police Digital Service has updated and introduced policies to support different stages of life, including enhancing their policies for parents, with 6 weeks of fully paid leave for paternity and 6 months of fully paid leave for maternity.

Parents can also return to work at 80% capacity for 100% pay in the first month to help with that adjustment back to work.

Their pregnancy and baby loss, neonatal care, and parental bereavement policies set out the support available to employees in the most difficult of times. These policies apply to all employees, regardless of how long they have been with PDS, and include paid leave and a phased return to work when the time comes.



The paternity leave offered by PDS has been such an incredible benefit. The new policy meant we could all spend time together whilst my newborn son was developing so quickly in these first few weeks. Being able to choose my approach was so valuable and respectful - I am very proud of PDS for allowing me to choose rather than enforcing a certain approach, which may not have suited our family as perfectly.

Also being able to return to work after paternity at 80% hours for full pay for the first month, allowed me to gently phase back into work whilst being able to still spend such valuable time with my newborn son and was a big help to my wife too. I will forever be grateful to PDS for helping to provide the time to create these moments and memories for my family.

Will Taylor

PMO Planning Resource Officer, Police Digital Services

// Career support & upskilling for returning mothers

The fast-changing landscape of the tech industry is often cited as a reason why hiring managers find it difficult to place recent mothers in jobs due to the period of time where 'things have changed'.

Without training and upskilling, this furthers the gulf for mother inclusion, as then they find it even more difficult to find a job due to more time 'out'.



// Key Considerations

Identify and fill skill gaps after leave

Before a returner comes back from maternity leave, make sure that you are aware of any potential gaps that may have arisen with your current tools and practices and have a training plan in place before they come back. Not only will it mean that they will be able to perform better, but it sends the message that you are caring and nurturing their development.

Revisit and reassess progression targets

It's important to revisit your progression and promotion plan just after someone has returned to work but make sure to check in regularly during parenthood as priorities may naturally shift in either direction once they're more settled.

Integrate training into work hours

On average mothers spend roughly 4.2 hours per day on unpaid childcare and housework.⁶ So if offered additional training is expected to occur outside of work hours, then it immediately puts mothers at a disadvantage as they are generally more time-poor.

This is particularly important in tech roles, where there is a culture of workers being expected to keep abreast of new updates and releases in their personal time. By building a structured L&D plan that is contained within core hours, not only would it be more inclusive but you are able to formally monitor the level of investment that goes into employee development.



// Case Study : Capgemini

Capgemini UK, a global leader in consulting, technology, and digital transformation services, is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace where all employees feel supported and valued. In line with this commitment, Capgemini UK has recently revamped its family-friendly policies, introducing a more equitable and comprehensive framework to support employees embarking on parenthood.

Under the new policies, primary caregivers, regardless of their gender, are eligible for up to 52 weeks of leave, with up to 26 weeks of paid leave at 100% of their average earnings. Partners, irrespective of their gender or sexual orientation, can also take up to 24 weeks of paid leave at 100% of their average earnings in addition to their paid partner leave entitlement.

Capgemini UK's revamped family-friendly policies serve as a model for other organisations seeking to create a more inclusive and supportive workplace for working parents. The company's commitment to equal access to generous leave entitlements, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or path to parenthood, sets a high standard for other companies to follow.

// Flexible working

The pandemic has made it clear that flexible working is more achievable and desired than ever, with flexible working options having a strong correlation with the retention of women in tech.²

But it isn't necessarily just about working from home (though that helps) as the realities of being a parent are far more complex than simply being able to put your washing on during the workday. They often require a higher level of flexibility as employees juggle multiple different responsibilities at once.

// Key Considerations

Consider individual flexibility requirements and learn from the ones you can't accommodate

Although blanket flexibility policies such as core hours and work-from-anywhere days go a long way when it comes to helping a parent fit their work around crucial aspects of childcare, it's important to check in with your employees and see how these policies are working for them and if there is something different you could be doing more effectively. You don't have to say 'yes' to requests that aren't feasible but understanding what the ideal situation may be, and working from there is a great place to start.

Don't assume that a returning mother wants a slower pace of work or lower targets; always ask and check the answer periodically

Especially in the early stages of childhood, it can often be assumed that a mother may want 'less work' so that they can focus on childcare, but assuming anything about a returning mother's preferences is risky. Whilst some may want to look into more flexible options, others will want to jump straight back in full-time and hit the promotion targets set before maternity ASAP. The key is not to assume anything about desired levels of work and professional expectations before you speak to an employee and see what they actually want.

Having said that...

Make all your roles available on a part-time basis, and if part-time doesn't work offer a job share

One of the most common barriers to hiring mothers is that a role cannot be done part-time. Yet there are many instances when this is more down to lack of internal willpower to make it work. There are valid cases where a job can't be done on a part-time basis, so if there is no flexibility, consider a job share option where two people share one job role and handover the work between each other so that continuity is not affected for the people who work with the role holders. This allows you to overcome any challenges to a part-time setup without missing out on incredible talent.

// Case Study : Vistair



Since joining the MotherBoard Charter, Aviation Technology company Vistair has assessed its hiring process to accommodate more flexibility around part-time working and working hours to encourage a wider range of candidates to apply who may need more flexibility, including parents and those with care responsibilities. This year they have hired two returning mothers into flexible positions that were originally posted as full-time roles, since then Vistair has been seeing incredible results and both mothers are thriving.



As a first-time mum I was incredibly nervous about joining a new company as my experience with a previous role had not been flexible enough for me to return to work following maternity leave. From the first interview, they put me at ease, telling me all about how the company can be flexible to accommodate life as a parent and their involvement with MotherBoard. What a sigh of relief! I knew I could add a lot of value to Vistair having many years' experience in learning and development but just needed the opportunity to be able to demonstrate this whilst working around a small child. Vistair has given me that opportunity and I can honestly say it has changed my life. By Vistair adopting this new approach, it has taken away the unnecessary stresses involved with trying to balance being a new mum alongside a career.

Becky Barker

Learning and Development Lead, Vistair



Allyship & Advocacy

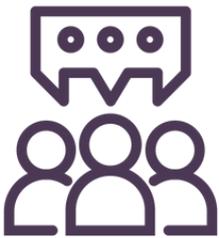
When you consider that roughly 72% of the UK Tech Industry are men, the fight for gender equity in the industry simply cannot sit with women alone - and there needs to be allyship that is a genuine commitment to active and ongoing support to bring about tangible change

// 3 starting steps to becoming a better ally



Hold yourself accountable

Change takes time, but without creating a plan and holding yourself to it, it won't get done. Keep inclusion at the top of your agenda, and while you're working on the larger initiatives that more structural change, think of ongoing support that can be implemented both internally, but also lobbying for change outside your company and supporting organisations that are fighting the same fight.



Set up a support group

Consider establishing support groups for new parents within the workplace, or a buddy system with employees that have had similar experiences. These groups can provide a supportive environment for sharing experiences, tips, and advice and should be open to all parents.



Look into mentorships

If there aren't any other employees with a shared experience, consider looking externally to mentorship or coaching programs to provide support, and guidance and help new mothers readjust to their roles and responsibilities.

If you are interested in finding out how to support Mums In Tech on a more individual basis, then head over to the [MotherBoard website](#) to join our community.

// Engaging men in the conversation



In order for cultural change to happen within an organisation, a majority of colleagues must be actively engaged and feel included in campaigns to promote DE&I. Many men would like to be better allies, but currently they don't feel safe and seen in these conversations. That's why 70% of white male leaders say they feel forgotten by these initiatives and therefore disengage.⁷

Men need direct, targeted support to feel able to join in with vital DE&I work. That starts by engaging them in their own reality, assisting them to develop empathy and helping them to increase their emotional intelligence. Only then can they be encouraged to empathise with others.

// We've seen first-hand how powerful these conversations are when they're directed at men, rather than about them. Too many male colleagues feel they are not truly welcome in these spaces – so M-Path focuses on helping them to navigate that reality.

Our programmes are designed to actively and compassionately engage men in their own experience of existence and encourage them to take charge of their emotional well-being. It's only once this has happened that we work to effectively engage them in conversations around allyship.

Chris Hemmings
Founder, M-Path



Paternity & other routes to parenthood

For gender equity in the tech industry for all people, regardless of gender or parental status, there needs to be a shift away from the idea that the 'mother' is the primary caregiver and that parental experience is just via natal and live births.

// Don't ignore working fathers

73% of fathers would like to work flexibly to spend more time with their children.⁸

But only 4.8% of fathers with children under the age of 14 have reduced their hours for childcare reasons compared to 28.5% of mothers.

Why? Well there are two potential main reasons:

Fathers want to ask but don't because of fear of backlash

If men mistakenly thought that their workplace would disapprove if they worked flexibly, then they avoid doing so - this is what is called 'pluralistic ignorance'. In fact a recent study has shown that once the realities of colleagues and managers being supportive of fathers taking more parental leave, then there is a significant shift of fathers feel comfortable and intending to do so.

Keep the conversation open, and gather insight into your company's attitude through surveys to gain an accurate reflection of their sentiment, and to help fathers take up an equal share.

When they do ask, it's rejected

The sad reality is that in 2023, 53% of new fathers have the flexibility they ask for either partially or fully rejected. Not only does that keep mothers taking on most of the work, but it also leads to employee dissatisfaction, and further attrition with 66% of men reporting they would change jobs for a better paternity leave package.

// Case Study : Funding Circle



For Funding Circle, diversity and inclusion are key pillars for success and part of their commitment to advocating for equality in parenthood is to include fathers and partners in their parenting journey as a step towards creating a more inclusive and balanced workplace.

Their Enhanced Partner Leave Policy offers six weeks of leave to partners, either as a singular period or as part of shared parental leave, depending on their family's needs. This policy not only supports the well-being of their employees but also helps them manage their personal and professional lives more effectively.



It wasn't financially viable for me to take SPL at statutory pay while my partner was also on statutory pay. Funding Circle has truly supported us through this major life event by not only offering full pay for six weeks but also enabling me to split those six weeks to suit us. This made my experience as a first-time Dad so much more stress-free and gave me the chance to spend time with my son while he's little and create some special memories with my family, which is an opportunity so many dads don't get.

Carl Woodbridge

Talent Acquisition Lead - Tech, Funding Circle

// Respect a variety of routes to family forming

When talking about parenthood there is often a primary focus on natal births, but having that as a sole focus of your parental inclusion excludes the other routes to family forming such as adoption, surrogacy and fostering.

For many LGBTQIA+ people, and those with reproductive illnesses or infertility these aren't 'non-traditional' to forming a family, as they are potentially their only option, so when you're enhancing your maternity and paternity policies, consider how your other policies are equally matched.

A majority of the advice in this document will naturally cover all types of parental journey because of the fact that they are centred around the ideas of empathetic listening and responding, but there are nuanced considerations as the laws are slightly different.

This includes offering paid rather than unpaid leave for prenatal appointments in cases of surrogacy so the parent can be included without financial loss, and in the unfortunate cases of adoption break down treating it in the same way as you would any other child loss because the emotional impact is just as great.

// Case Study : QBE



QBE helps businesses build resilience through risk management and insurance, offering a range of tailored insurance products from the standard suite of property, casualty and motor to the specialist financial lines, marine and energy. They are committed to creating an inclusive, flexible and supportive culture.

In order to better support working families, close the gender pay gap and promote equality they have equalised their paternity leave to mirror their other parental policies so that regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or how our people become parents, all employees are entitled to 52 weeks of leave with 26 weeks at full pay.



At QBE there is a strong emphasis on doing the right thing for our people. We believe our enhanced policy will help to remove barriers to career progression, challenge traditional gender roles and level the playing field for women and men at home and at work. Offering extended paternity leave and supporting fathers in the workplace has wide-reaching benefits for co-parents themselves, their children, and employers who gain a more engaged and loyal workforce. This also has a positive impact on gender equality beyond our organisation and reflects the needs of dual career families, as time away from work to care for a child can be more equally split. Our intention is to create a culture in which taking paternity leave and extended time out is normalised.

Alex Tong

General Manager, QBE



Attrition in tech: why women leave tech jobs

Tech Talent Charter (TTC) undertook research with research and data partner, Attest, to understand what causes women to leave tech jobs and the tech workforce. Research reported that 1 in 3 women said they were planning to leave their current tech job. This new research provided an updated perspective on women's experience of the UK tech landscape and the factors that influence them to leave roles and occupations¹⁰.

// Attrition in tech key report findings

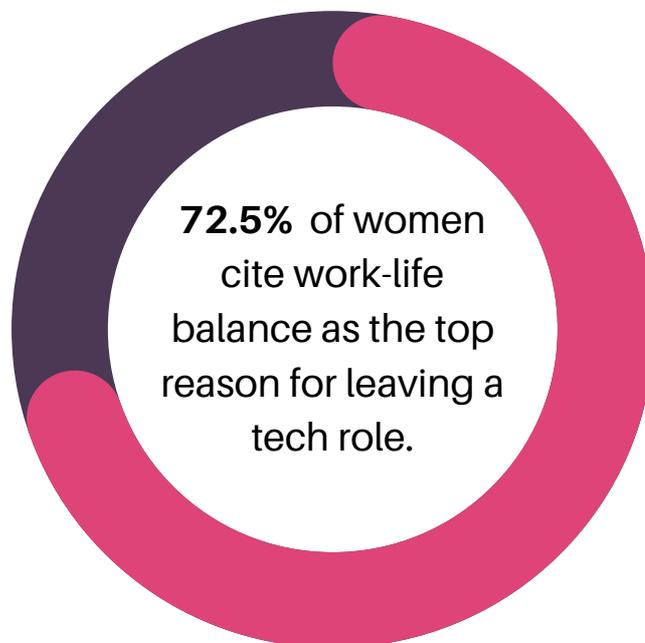
1. One in three women are planning to leave their tech job.
2. One in four women who left a tech job in the last few years left for a non-tech job.
3. Only one in six women who have been in their tech role for more than a year are planning to stay.
4. Four out of five women said that dissatisfaction with their career development impacted their decision to leave their tech role.
5. Work-life balance was ranked the most important factor in women's decisions to leave their tech role, often linked to challenges managing caring commitments.
6. Women in tech with flexible work arrangements had significantly higher retention.
7. Nearly 40% of women agreed that caring commitments influenced their decision to leave their tech job, but only 11.4% of them actually left the workforce to do this.
8. Pay dissatisfaction is one of the top factors motivating women to move jobs, and was often linked to the cost of living crisis and childcare high costs.

[If you are interested in learning more about diversity and inclusion practice and what you can do to improve, visit the TTC's D&I toolkit, a suite of free resources and examples from over 800 UK organisations.](#)

// Work-life balance

Flexibility is correlated with better retention

TTC research found that women employed in part-time tech roles were less likely to have changed tech roles in the past five years (27.5%) compared to overall (35.6%). Alarming though, despite the tech industry being regarded as one of the most flex-work friendly industries, we found that women in tech and digital jobs were significantly less likely to work part-time than in other industries, including ones commonly regarded as less gender diverse, such as finance and manufacturing. So despite greater flexibility in areas like remote working, women in tech may still be facing less visible challenges around the type of flexible work they may need.



Examples of what companies can do to improve flexibility and work-life balance:

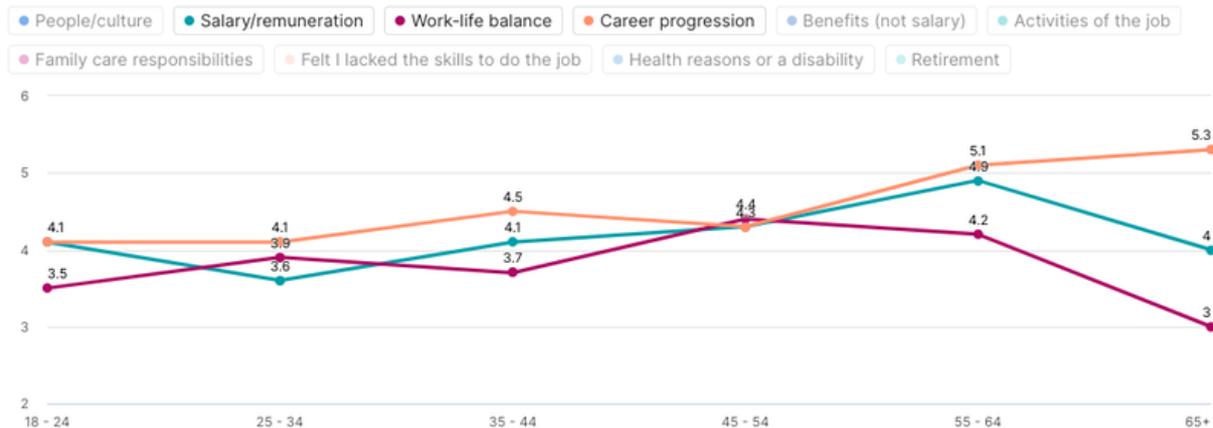
- Seasonal working weeks that are shorter during school holiday periods.
- Flexible hours to accommodate time away during the school run hours.
- Ability to work remotely, to enable parents to be located closer to their children's schools and childcare.
- Fair work allocation policies that measure and review how promotable work is being distributed amongst all team members, especially those on part-time contracts.
- Using systems to analyse and identify various types of data, including pay parity, bonuses, work allocations and benefits and ensure distribution across flexibly working employees.
- Training managers in inclusive leadership, to better understand and manage co-located and asynchronous teams.



// Pay and remuneration

Why do women leave tech jobs?

Thinking about what led to your decision to leave the tech role, rank these factors in order of importance:



Our survey of women who have left tech roles asked them to rank the factors that most influenced their decision to leave. The three most important factors were salary/remuneration, work-life balance, and career progression. There is a clear pattern in the way that women's priorities shift as they move through different life stages.

For example, the graph shows that during prime family-forming years, women are far more likely to be seeking a higher salary and better work-life balance. During likely child-rearing years, women are more likely to be influenced by the need for better work-life balance and flexibility.

Despite the tech sector's high earning potential, our survey reveals a stark reality for women – a significant portion, 67.9%, left their roles due to salary dissatisfaction. This aligns with the persistent gender pay gap, highlighting a critical roadblock for women in their career progression and earning potential.

// Cost of childcare was so high it made the amount I'd have left from my salary pitiful.

// 4 strategies businesses can use to address the gender pay gap

1 Transparent pay structures

Combat the pay gap by developing a transparent and equitable framework. Conduct extensive market research to establish competitive and fair salary ranges for every role. Create a clear salary structure outlining progression and criteria for raises, and communicate it openly in job descriptions. To avoid perpetuating existing disparities, avoid basing salaries on previous earnings or allowing for salary negotiations at the entry point.

2 Ensure fair compensation from the start

Every year, scrutinise your compensation data, dissecting salaries across roles, levels, and responsibilities - with a keen eye on gender disparities. Where discrepancies emerge, act swiftly and justly, adjusting salaries where needed. These audits shouldn't be annual events; integrate them into your regular review processes for continuous monitoring and rectification of pay inequalities.

3

Enhanced parental leave policies

By encouraging equal parental leave, companies break down traditional childcare gender roles, leading to a fairer workplace. Generous leave for all parents promotes shared caregiving and helps prevent mothers from falling behind in their careers. When both parents can work flexibly, it becomes the norm and removes the stigma often associated with flexible work schedules for men.

4

Ensure equal career progression

Level the playing field by proactively ensuring women have equal opportunities to rise through the ranks. Regularly review promotion practices to identify and eliminate biases, both explicit and those inherent in overlooking valuable "glue work" – often overlooked tasks that keep teams running smoothly but may not be formally recognised in traditional criteria. Encourage mentorship programs, leadership training, and professional development opportunities geared towards women, particularly mothers re-entering the workforce after maternity leave, and those who excel at both visible and invisible contributions. Transparency in promotion criteria is crucial. Actively seeking to diversify leadership positions is another key step. By implementing these strategies, you can close the gender pay gap and create a more productive and thriving organisation for everyone.

// 3 key learnings from attrition in tech report

Embrace flexible work culture



The tech industry's retention rate for women is low, with one in four female tech workers leaving the profession for other roles. Flexible work options are essential to help women balance careers and family responsibilities. Companies should embrace diverse work arrangements, promote flexible work culture, and ensure equal opportunities for all.

End gendered perceptions



The availability of flexible work arrangements is often associated with women's care responsibilities, discouraging men from taking advantage. Companies should promote flexible work options for all employees, regardless of gender, to normalise flexible work and create a more equitable work-life balance for all.

Career progression



Creating inclusive career developmental frameworks, rooted in merit and open opportunities, provides women with the support and guidance they need to advance in their careers. This includes mentorship programs, training opportunities, and promotions based on individual contributions, regardless of gender or caregiving commitments.

[If you are interested in learning more about diversity and inclusion practice and what you can do to improve, visit the TTC's D&I toolkit, a suite of free resources and examples from over 800 UK organisations.](#)

// About MotherBoard

MotherBoard is a Business Charter, Community, and Event Series driving tangible change for mums working in the tech industry. We are on a mission to transform the industry to be more inclusive of mothers by tackling stigmas and supporting employers who want to create real change.

motherboardmovement.co.uk // hello@motherboardcharter.co.uk

// About Tech Talent Charter

The Tech Talent Charter (TTC) is a government-supported, industry-led membership group that brings together 700+ Signatory organisations and equips them with the networks and resources to drive their diversity and inclusion efforts.

Our broad base of Signatories includes companies and industries of all sizes, non-profit organisations, charities, leading UK educators, and government departments.

techtalentcharter.co.uk // hello@techtalentcharter.co.uk

1 InnovateHER, 2022
2 Tech Talent Charter, 2023
3 Vodafone, 2022
4 Xpert HR, 2022

5 Parent Promise, 2023
6 ONS, 2022
7. Forbes, 2022
8. Behavioural Insights Team, 2021

9. TUC, 2023
10. Attrition in tech: why women leave tech jobs, Tech Talent Charter