

# Giving Women What They Need to Work

Millions of women have quit during the pandemic. Here's how employers can provide the support they need.

With women leaving the workforce in droves during the pandemic, employers and recruiters have to consider how to win them back—or at least make sure more don't quit.

Throughout the pandemic, workforce participation among women has fallen to its lowest levels in more than 30 years, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. And a 2021 [survey](#) by Indeed, the global job site and enterprise hiring platform, found that 70% of women in the U.S. who reduced hours or left jobs during the pandemic did so due to a lack of support from their employer, as they dealt with greater demands in their personal lives.

"Most organizations realize they need to do more to support women, but they're not acting quickly or deliberately enough," says Jessica Jensen, Indeed's chief marketing officer. "Expecting women to choose between their work or family gives them no true choice, and companies are seeing the impact of that now."

## The "Great Realization"

Women continue to be the "main fallback catchers" in their families. Further, many became primary caregivers when their children's schools shifted to remote learning or elderly or sick family members needed support, Jensen says. For them, the "Great Resignation"

Hourly workers often need flexibility the most but are least likely to receive it. Providing backup to these employees and cross-training them enables the workplace to function when a worker is out temporarily. Paid time off and compressed workweeks also enable these employees to tend to personal needs more easily.

For professionals in fields like law and banking, long, unpredictable hours are often the norm and requests to reduce job duties can lead to drastic cuts in pay and promotion opportunities, says Claudia Goldin, a labor economist at Harvard University. Unfortunately, it's usually men in these professions who hang on to such jobs while women forgo their careers.

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Companies can reduce this trend by letting professionals share work and act as substitutes for each other—ultimately providing greater flexibility and making these jobs more feasible for parents and other caregivers.

In addition to offering flexibility, here are four things companies can do to both attract and retain more women employees:

**Provide predictability.** Predictable and standardized schedules are critical for many women who have caregiving duties, Goldin says. Some employers have been known to give their workers their schedules just a day, or hours, before their shifts start.

Ideally, schedules should be both predictable, so workers can arrange for any needed care in advance, and flexible, in case of an emergency, like a sick child. “Flexibility and predictability go hand in hand,” she says.