

The Motherload

THE WEIGHT OF LIMITED POSTPARTUM SUPPORT

elvie x MOTHERLY

"It's time mothers had the respect and support they deserve"

With this new research, we're demonstrating something mothers in the US already know: Postpartum care is simply not good enough.

This report will tell you more about women's experiences of support from four main areas:

- Medical professionals
- The government and employers
- Family and community
- Technology

By examining exactly how and where these systems are failing us—or holding us up—we've come up with some actionable tips and ways to lighten the motherload. While we wait for the world to catch up, we hope they'll help women navigate their postpartum journeys.

TANIA BOLER
Founder, Elvie



Healthcare Community Structural Support Technology Lighten the Load Appendix

Healthcare

The Big Picture

New moms face a trio of serious postpartum challenges: Breastfeeding, pelvic floor health and mental health.

We all know this, right? But our study found that while these issues are widely acknowledged as common hurdles, US healthcare systems are doing very little to help women over them.

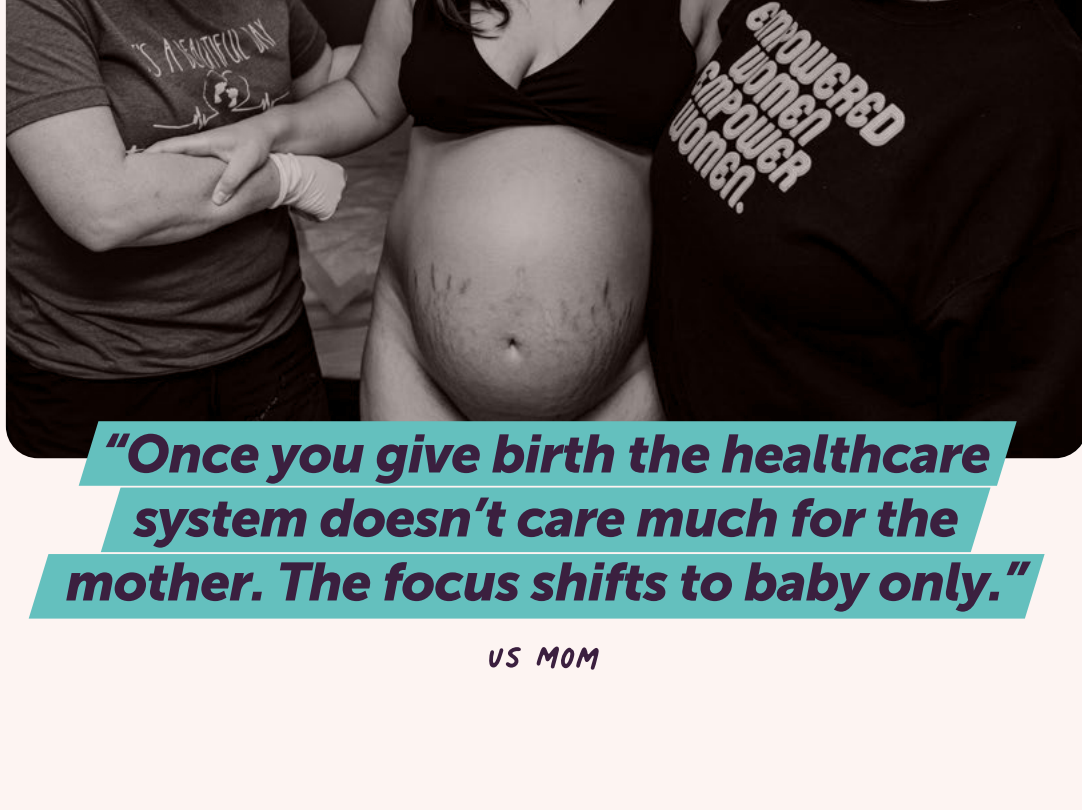
Well, we're here to empower you with info and advice on how to advocate for yourself and get the support you deserve. Buckle up moms, we're gonna get through this.

23%

FELT VERY SUPPORTED BY THEIR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IN THE POSTPARTUM PERIOD.

40%

4 IN 10 EMPLOYED MOMS' HEALTH INSURANCE DIDN'T COVER PREGNANCY OR BIRTH-RELATED CARE.



"Once you give birth the healthcare system doesn't care much for the mother. The focus shifts to baby only."

US MOM

Breastfeeding

We checked in about your postpartum expectations, and you said your single biggest misconception was thinking breastfeeding would be easier.

83%

REPORTED BREASTFEEDING FOR AT LEAST ONE MONTH.

84%

REPORTED AT LEAST MILD FEEDING COMPLICATIONS.

74%

SAID BREASTFEEDING OR PUMPING SUPPORT WAS THE MOST COMMON NEED.

27%

HAD SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS.

67%

OF THOSE WHO USED A LACTATION CONSULTANT FOUND IT THE MOST HELPFUL SUPPORT.

42%

STOPPED BECAUSE OF CHALLENGES, NOT CHOICE.

If you're struggling, it doesn't make you any less of a mom. It just means you're human. Breastfeeding is a learned skill—if there's no one to teach you, no wonder you're finding it tough.

42% of breastfeeding moms stopped because of: return to work constraints, lack of support, difficulty balancing breastfeeding with other duties, sleep concerns, mental health issues or pain.

Most of these issues could be eased with proper information and support. Mental health consultants, sleep consultants, checkups... these statistics would look very different if our medical structures took postpartum seriously.



"I have fought so hard for this and pride every drop of breastmilk I can give."

US MOM

Pelvic Floor

Let's chat about an unsung hero of pregnancy, birth, and motherhood: your pelvic floor. We're talking about a vital support system for your bladder, bowel, and uterus.

79%

EXPERIENCED MILD OR MAJOR PELVIC FLOOR ISSUES AFTER GIVING BIRTH.

81%

FELT THEIR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER DIDN'T DISCUSS PELVIC FLOOR HEALTH.

31%

WERE SATISFIED WITH THE LEVEL OF PELVIC FLOOR TREATMENT.

Shockingly (or not-so-shockingly?), we found you were given minimum support and advice about pelvic floor training and treatment during pregnancy and postpartum.

As a muscle that can be strengthened to stop leaks and give you a better post-birth experience, we know it's crucial for your healthcare providers to give it the attention it deserves.

So, ladies, we're calling out a glaring oversight. Pelvic floors can't be ignored. They need comprehensive, compassionate care that puts you first—and we're not scared to demand it.



"Literally no discussion about pelvic floor. They only want to discuss birth control methods."

US MOM

Mental Health

Our research shows that 77% of you weathered mild (or, for 20%, severe) mental health storms after giving birth.

No wisecrack here—just cold, hard facts.

31%

HAD THE PROFESSIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT THEY NEEDED.

45%

MOMS HAD A CHECK UP ABOUT THEIR OWN HEALTH WITHIN 4 WEEKS OF GIVING BIRTH.

96%

HAD A CHECK UP ABOUT THEIR BABY'S HEALTH WITHIN 7 DAYS OF GIVING BIRTH.

We hear "healthy mom, healthy baby" all the time, but there's no evidence that your healthcare providers actually believe it. In fact, only 23% of moms felt like the professionals had their back postpartum.

Mama's game plan

We know it all sounds kinda bleak. The good news? Knowing what you're up against will help you prepare for postpartum and get your recovery on track (we know—you have to do everything around here).



GET YOUR ORGANIZATION ON, MOM.

Check with your healthcare provider to find out exactly what your insurance will pay for. Then, make notes about out-of-pocket costs so you won't be surprised later.

ASK QUESTIONS.

Grill your insurance provider on what services and support are available during pregnancy and postpartum, as you could get pumps and lactation consultants covered.

PENCIL YOURSELF IN.

Schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider for after you've given birth—an appointment to focus on your recovery, not baby's.

MILK ENQUIRIES.

Think about a lactation consultant if you're planning on breastfeeding, and check if they take your insurance. Not sure where to find a pro? The boobie website is a great place to start.

NERD IT UP.

Read up on pelvic floor exercises and get squeezing in preparation for the big day.

Community

The Big Picture



“The “village” everyone talks about does not show up for everyone. I was, and still am, very lonely.”

US MOM

Having a baby is beautiful, but really f*cking hard. We’ve found, though, that you have your cheerleaders: your partner, family, and friends. Our research has shown they’re the bedrock of your postpartum support.

94%

FELT SUPPORTED BY THEIR PARTNER DURING PREGNANCY.

90%

FELT SUPPORTED BY THEIR PARTNER POSTPARTUM.

83%

CONSIDERED PARTNERS AND FAMILY SUPPORTIVE TO THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.

31%

FOUND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS SUPPORTIVE.

14%

SAID PARTNER AND FAMILY SUPPORT WAS MISSING BUT NEEDED.

83% felt backed by their nearest and dearest. But hold up! This isn’t just a family affair. Remember, it takes a village to raise a child, and it seems we’re still missing some villagers.

Sadly, when it comes to seeking support beyond mom’s immediate circle, only 31% felt the love from professional health providers. 70% told us they didn’t have access to a breastfeeding support group, and 64% lacked access to a new mom group.

These stats remind us that the circle of support for new moms needs to be wider, richer, and more accessible.

Mama’s game plan

If motherhood feels lonely, it’s time to tap into your support network and get all the hands-on help or late-night cheerleaders you deserve. Here’s a 5-step checklist to help you find your village.



START THE CHAT WITH FRIENDS WHO’VE HAD BABIES.

Their support is like a search engine in human form—they’ve been there, done that, and have a ton of wisdom to share.

FIND A NEW MAMA TRIBE.

We love apps like Peanut, and don’t snooze on your local parenting Facebook groups either. You’ll find info, support, and maybe some much-needed commiseration.

CALENDARIZE YOUR SELF-CARE.

Those hangouts with your pals? Sacred. Mark them down as the non-negotiable appointments they are.

CHECK AN ONLINE COMMUNITY THAT JUST GETS IT.

Like Mama Glow. Explore their webinars and meet-ups to help you reclaim your birth process and your postpartum self.

OPEN UP THE COMMUNICATION LINES.

Sit down with your nearest and dearest for an honest chat about what support looks like to you, and form a game plan together.

Structural Support



“It is horrifying to me that women are forced to go back to work before they have physically healed from childbirth, let alone still breastfeeding.”

US MOM

Your Employer

After the baby arrives, it seems like the country is itching for you to pack up your hospital bag and get back to your cubicle, as only 59% of working moms had access to paid leave—and for 34% of them, it was just 2 weeks.

Remember, if you’re struggling, it doesn’t make you any less of a boss. It’s workplaces that need to recognize the unbelievable load of juggling motherhood and a career.

68%

WORK FULL-TIME.

14%

WORK PART-TIME OR FOR THEMSELVES.

59%

OF WORKING MOMS HAD ACCESS TO PAID LEAVE.

34%

OF WORKING MOMS HAD LESS THAN 2 WEEKS OF PAID LEAVE.

77%

OF THOSE WITH SEVERE POSTPARTUM COMPLICATIONS WERE BACK TO WORK WITHIN 6 MONTHS.

Your Rights

We’re going to be totally honest: your legal rights aren’t even close to what you deserve. While we work to change that, it’s worth getting up to speed on what is available.

In our study, only 30% of moms knew about recent expansions to the PUMP Act. (Quick recap: employers are required to provide break time and a clean, private space for lactating women to express milk, and it can’t be a bathroom.)

And hold the phone—almost 20% of you weren’t aware that you have a legal right to feed your baby wherever and whenever you want to. It’s yours, mom, so never be afraid to use it.

20%

OF FIRST-TIME MOMS KNEW THEIR STATE’S MATERNITY POLICY.

30%

KNEW ABOUT THE NEW PUMP ACT.

20%

DIDN’T KNOW THEIR RIGHT TO BREASTFEED IN PUBLIC IS LEGALLY PROTECTED.

89%

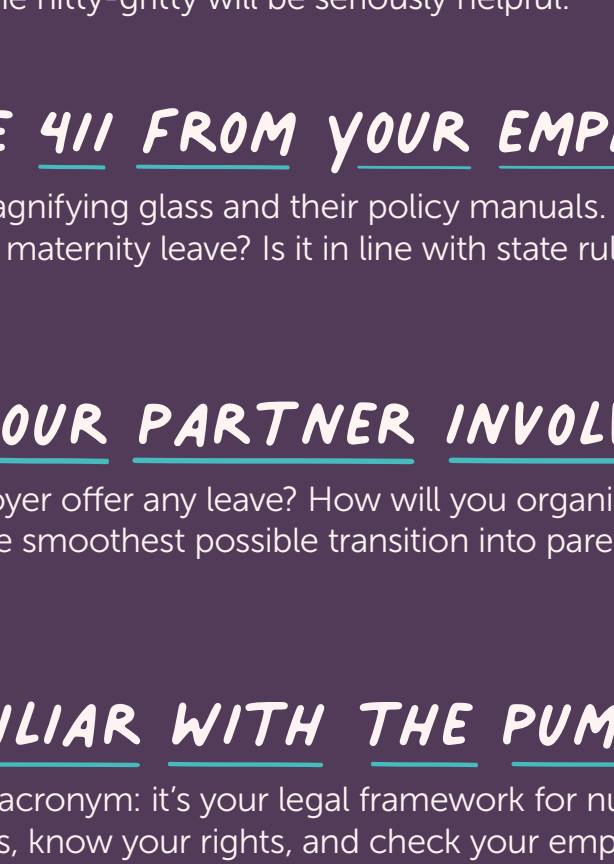
KNEW ABOUT THEIR RIGHT TO A PRIVATE SPACE TO PUMP AT WORK.

84%

KNEW ABOUT THEIR RIGHT TO PUMPING BREAKS.

Mama’s game plan

When the baby fog descends, it can be tough to research and advocate for yourself. So here’s the game plan: Let’s get to know your rights.



CHECK YOUR RIGHTS.

Get on your state’s website and make notes on exactly what you’re entitled to in terms of leave, healthcare access, and postpartum rights. Pretty painful, we know, but knowing the nitty-gritty will be seriously helpful.

GET THE 411 FROM YOUR EMPLOYER.

Bust out that magnifying glass and their policy manuals. What’s their play for maternity leave? Is it in line with state rules?

GET YOUR PARTNER INVOLVED.

Does their employer offer any leave? How will you organize those first weeks for the smoothest possible transition into parenthood?

GET FAMILIAR WITH THE PUMP ACT.

Not just a random acronym: it’s your legal framework for nursing support. Delve into details, know your rights, and check your employer’s duty.

HAVE THE TALK.

Schedule a chat with your employer to talk about your leave, pumping provisions, and anything else that’s on your mind, mama.

Tech

The Big Picture



"Pumping is such a huge part of the breastfeeding journey and it was never mentioned once prenatally to me."

US MOM

From safe sleep gadgets to super smart breast pumps, moms told us about some seriously heroic products in their postpartum journeys, with 80% celebrating tech tools as making motherhood easier.

97%

RELIED ON TECHNOLOGY FOR POSTPARTUM RECOVERY.

80%

SAID TECH PRODUCTS AND SERVICES MADE MOTHERHOOD EASIER.

28%

SAID TECH PRODUCTS WERE THE MOST VALUABLE SUPPORT THEY GOT.

Breastfeeding tech aced the test, as 82% of moms who tried it said it was effective. By contrast, 77% of moms who checked in with a lactation consultant rated it effective.

But (yep, there's always a but), there's room for more tech that's truly in tune with what moms need. A huge 97% leaned on technology for postpartum recovery, but 26% felt that technology products weren't designed well for their needs.

Mama's game plan

When it comes to spreading the motherload, we love to see technology supporting your body as it changes through the motherhood journey. Not sure where to start? Here's our advice on how to gear up, plug in, and show the postpartum period who's boss.



THINK STREAMLINING, NOT STOCKPILING.

Before you go all-in on every gadget going, think about what's actually gonna serve you. Breast pumps? Apps? Baby monitors? Pick the gear to match your mama lifestyle.

TRACK DOWN THE TECH THAT'S GOT YOUR BACK.

Think about what's important in each item, read reviews, and factor in payment plans, delivery times, and warranties.

USE WHAT YOU GOT.

Need white noise? Eleven alarms to remind you about the next doctor's appointment? (We've been there, sister.) No sweat, as your smartphone can likely handle a lot of these new tasks.

GET SMART WITH SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Think beyond hardware—there's an online subscription service for most postpartum essentials these days. Diapers, meal kits, vitamins. Automate the trivial so you can focus on the pivotal.

STRUGGLING TO KNOW WHAT YOU NEED?

Chat with your mom friends, or check out our panel from the Equality Lounge at CES 2024 for more ideas on how tech can support you.

Lighten the Load

"We need tech that finally puts women's needs first."

After all, why should we have to make do with shoddy design or pink spin-offs when there are self-driving cars in the world?"

Eleven years ago, I embarked on a mission fueled by a conviction that burns as fiercely today as it did then: Women deserve better.

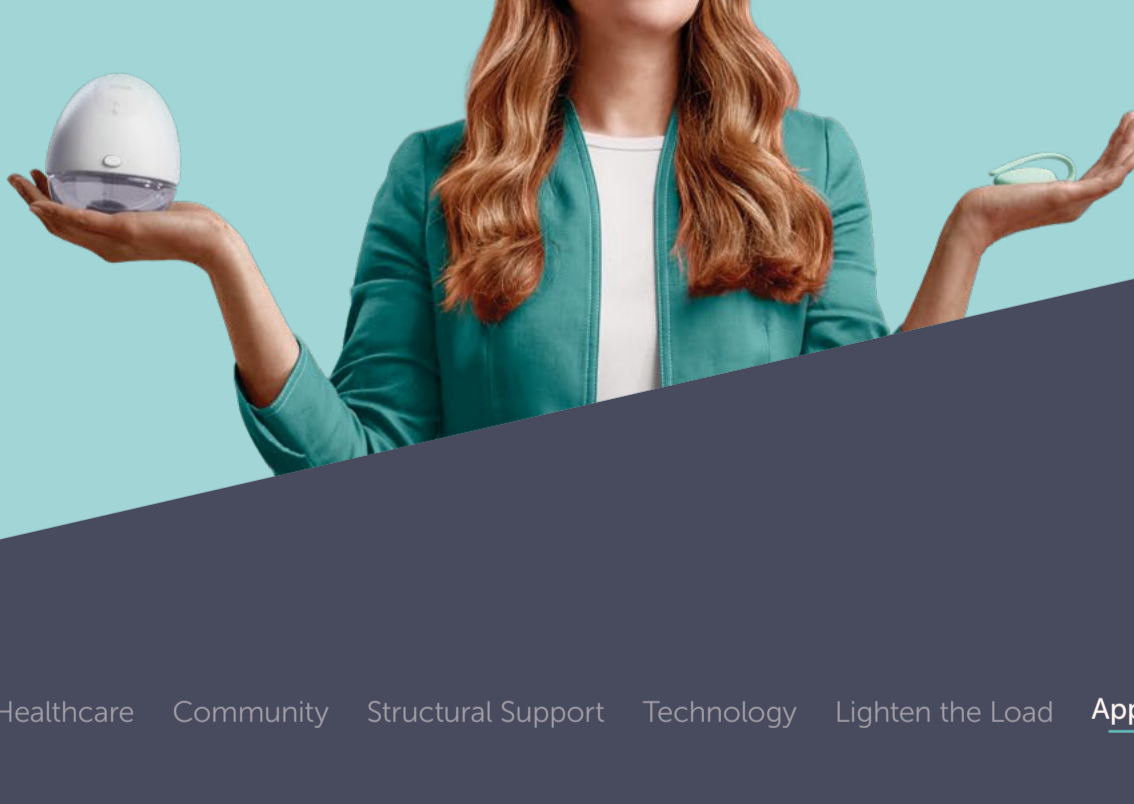
Since then, we've witnessed a cultural shift. Conversations around breastfeeding and pelvic health are no longer whispered but shared freely among friends, family, and partners. Our communities, where available, go some way to lighten the motherload.

And technology? It's providing solutions that were once just a dream, supporting our smart, incredible bodies. From innovative breast pumps to apps that support mental health, technology is a reliable postpartum tool.

Yet, as we celebrate our progress, we still need critical structural change. Our data on postpartum support from healthcare and politics screams it.

Together, we write the next chapter.

TANIA BOLER
Founder, Elvie



We're Elvie and we create radical female-first technology, revolutionizing categories that have been overlooked for decades. Founded in 2013 by women's health expert Tania Boler, we innovate smarter technology products including breast pumps and pelvic floor trainers, giving women the autonomy and support they've long been denied.

We're on a mission to make a brighter tomorrow for women worldwide. By breaking social taboos, pioneering intuitive products and spotlighting conversations about women's health, we're determined to turn the tide on the damaging, outdated structures that hold women back. Because we believe women need— and deserve— better.

elvie

Keep in touch

You and us? We just get each other— we can tell. Let's stay in touch. If you wanna hear more about what we're getting up to, you can find us on:

elvie.com @elvie

Check out our podcast:



How we collected the data

This report uses data from our survey of 1,075 mothers, living in the United States of America.

Online polling conducted in January to February 2024 in partnership with Motherly.

MOTHERLY

Images by: Fresh Pine Photography