



Aruba Family-Friendly Workplaces Situational Analysis

Acknowledgements

Aruba Family-Friendly Workplaces: Situation Analysis

Developed under the leadership of the Directorate of Social Affairs, Government of Aruba, in partnership with UNICEF the Netherlands, with technical support from Parenting for Lifelong Health.



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The report draws on inputs and insights from working parents and caregivers, as well as from a wide range of stakeholders — including representatives from government ministries and departments, trade unions, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector — who shared their perspectives on the realities and needs of working families and on strategies to create more supportive and family-friendly workplaces. Members of the National Parenting Committee provided valuable guidance and support throughout the process.

Together, these contributions reflect a shared commitment to creating a society where every child can grow up in a safe, nurturing, and family-friendly environment.

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List of Abbreviations

Afl	Aruban florin
AHATA	Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association
ATA	Aruba Tourism Authority
AZV	Algemene Ziekteverzekering
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics Aruba
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
FADA	Fundacion Anti Droga Aruba
AFFW	Aruba Family-Friendly Workplace
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HR	Human Resources
ILO	International Labour Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PLH	Parenting for Lifelong Health
PFL	Parent-Friendly Label
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ZV	Landsverordening Ziekteverzekering

Section 1 - Aruba's Path Toward a Family-Friendly Workplace Certification

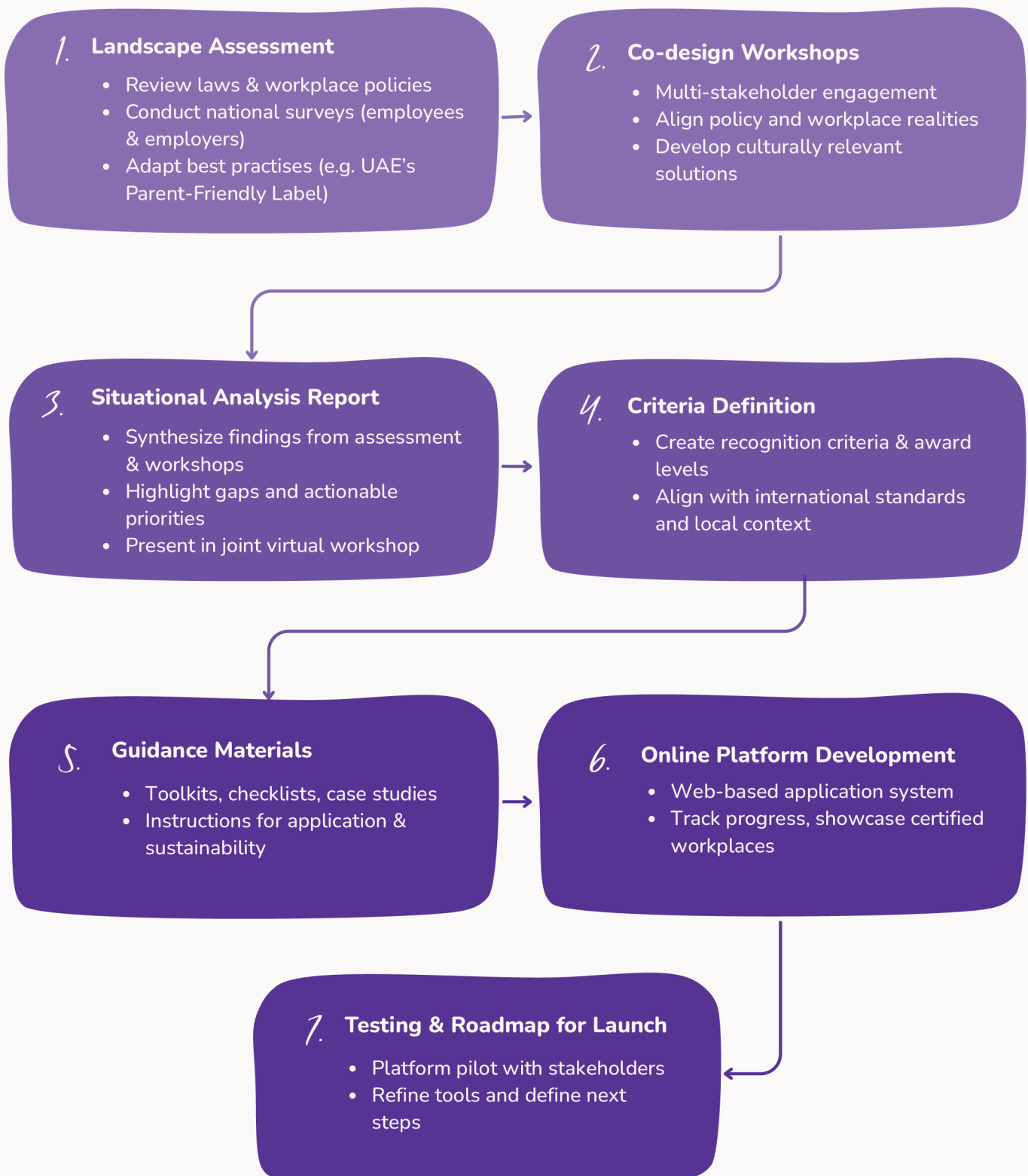
Executive Summary

Aruba's long-standing commitment to parenting support , rooted in the National Parenting Vision (2017) and deepened through the Parenting Support Vision (2024) , provides a solid foundation for the development of a Aruba Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Certification.

This situational analysis aims to:

- Map past and ongoing efforts by government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to implement a coordinated parenting strategy.
- Identify existing legal and institutional frameworks that support working parents.
- Highlight gaps between formal policy and daily practice, drawing from the perspectives of employees, employers, and service providers.
- Benchmark Aruba's efforts against international best practices.
- Recommend a realistic and impactful certification framework that promotes equity, inclusion, productivity, and family wellbeing, particularly within Aruba's service-oriented and small-business-based economy.

Proposed Workstreams Toward Family-Friendly Workplace Certification in Aruba (2025)



Aruba's Path Toward a Family-Friendly Workplace Certification

Aruba's efforts to foster a supportive culture for parenting (across government, civil society, and the private sector) are rooted in nearly a decade of sustained national commitment. These coordinated initiatives have laid a strong foundation for advancing parenting support and promoting child wellbeing.

At the core of this movement is a shared recognition that parenting support is essential to empowering caregivers in raising children in ways that foster optimal development and long-term societal wellbeing. The key milestones that have shaped Aruba's family support landscape include:

2016 – **Establishment of the Parenting Vision Committee.** This committee promotes collaboration among government institutions and civil society organizations to explore how parenting support could positively influence child development and family wellbeing in Aruba. The committee brings together key stakeholders, including:

- Directorate of Social Affairs / Centro Hoben y Famia
- Fundacion Respeta Mi
- Fundacion Pa Nos Muchanan
- Stichting Wit Gele Kruis Aruba
- Stichting Tienda di Educacion

And leading to specific actions like:

- The organization of Parenting Week in November, held annually in recognition of the International Day of the Rights of the Child, to raise awareness and foster dialogue on parenting support.
- Launch of the National Parenting Vision (2017) introducing a comprehensive policy framework built around six foundational building blocks aimed at strengthening caregiver support and embedding positive parenting practices across the country:
 - Positive support through loving encouragement
 - A safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment
 - Developmentally appropriate and realistic expectations of the child
 - Consistent and effective discipline strategies
 - Prioritizing self-care and wellbeing as a parent
 - Access to personalized advice, support, and tailored assistance
- Implementation the Turning to Empathy Strategic Plan (2022–2026) to place a national focus on the seven points of interest for emotionally healthy families and parenting with:
 - Community involvement and outreach
 - Inclusiveness
 - Emotional capability
 - Early childhood care and youth development
 - Norms and values
 - Quality of Service and professional development
 - Financial stability

- The development of the **Parenting Support Vision (2024)** not only consolidates previous efforts but also deepens the understanding of parenting support as a strategic entry point for broader family support interventions. These interventions aim to strengthen family functioning by embedding parenting and caregiving within a wider network of supportive relationships and resources. This framework has led to the identification of key principles that form the foundation for a future Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Certification:

- Child at the centre
- Accessibility
- Ongoing support
- Evidence-based approach
- Equality
- Gender equality
- Inclusivity
- Cultural sensitivity
- Collaboration

This decade-long journey represents a series of coordinated efforts signalling a broader cultural shift, now identifying family-friendly employment as a key driver of positive change and building momentum to establish a National Family-Friendly Workplace Certification in Aruba, with the potential to create lasting and meaningful societal impact.

Methodology and Data Sources

The situational analysis draws on a mixed-methods approach combining legal review, stakeholder engagement, and survey data to inform the design of the Aruba Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Certification in Aruba. The three main data sources include:

- **Landscape & legal review of Aruba's Civil Code** (Government of Aruba, 2024), social-insurance ordinances (Government of Aruba, 2025) and existing workplace policies and local and international benchmarks.¹
- **Family-Friendly Workplace Surveys** (May–June 2025): Two national pulse surveys. 167 working parents/caregivers and 49 employers.²
- **Three co-design workshops** (April 2025) with 90+ stakeholders, including unions, NGOs, ministries and private sector.³ The workshops generated a joint SWOT analysis.

¹ See Annex 1 for the list of documents reviewed

² See Annex 2.1 for survey methodology

³ See Annex 3.1 for stakeholder co-design workshop methodology

Existing Legal and Institutional Supports

Aruba's Statutory Framework for Supporting Working Parents

Aruba's current statutory framework offers a foundation of rights and benefits for working parents, as outlined in the Civil Code (Government of Aruba, 2024) and reinforced by the Labor Relations Ordinance and ILO international conventions.⁴ Key provisions include:

- **12 weeks of fully paid maternity leave**, with legal protection against dismissal and guaranteed salary coverage throughout the leave period.
- **Two paid working days of paternity leave.**
- **Protected lactation breaks**, allowing up to 25% of a work shift for breastfeeding or expressing milk and specifies that nursing mothers are entitled not only to paid breaks for breastfeeding or expressing milk during the first nine months after birth, but also to a private and suitable space provided by the employer.
- **Legal guarantees of equal treatment and protection against workplace discrimination**, particularly in relation to pregnancy and motherhood.
- **Income security** is further reinforced through Aruba's universal health insurance and the Sickness Benefit Ordinance (Government of Aruba, 2025):
 - 100% wage coverage during maternity leave.
 - 80% wage coverage for general illness (100% for government employees).

These legal protections apply to all employees, including part-time and fixed-term workers, establishing a baseline of family-friendly employment practices across both public and private sectors.

Policy and Practice Gaps

The National Vision on Parenting Support report identified a range of parenting challenges in Aruba, including difficulties in balancing work and family responsibilities, financial stress, single parenthood, culturally and socially embedded gender norms, and limited availability of support services, especially for families with children with special needs.

⁴ Labor Relations Ordinance; International Labour Organization (ILO). (n.d.). Aruba: Country profile and standards. Retrieved August 27, 2025, from <https://www.ilo.org/regions-and-countries/latin-america-and-caribbean/caribbean/aruba#standards>

Complementary data from the AFFW Survey responses and insights from co-design workshops (April–June 2025) reveal ongoing gaps between statutory intent and day-to-day reality experiences of working parents and employers:

Gap	Illustrative Data
Scheduling rigidity	39.5% of working-caregiver respondents list “limited remote or hybrid options” among their top three challenges; tourism staff report 12-hour, six-day rosters issued at short notice.
Child-care affordability and access	Only 1.8% of surveyed workers receive on-site or subsidised care; average private day-care fees (Afl 475/month) consume ~30% of an entry-level hospitality wage.
Partner leave	Statutory entitlement is two days and HR managers report <10% uptake, citing stigma and scheduling constraints.
Mental-health support	50% of caregivers select “mental or emotional stress” as a primary challenge; NGO referrals for stress-related issues rose 22% in the past two years.
SME capacity	82% of registered firms employ fewer than ten staff and often lack HR capacity; 27% of workers report no family-friendly benefit beyond the legal minimum.
Inclusive reach	Single parents (20% of respondents) and caregivers of children with disabilities (9%) report the highest financial strain and the lowest access to flexible hours.

Recommended Certification Framework

AFFW Certification Approaches

To ensure inclusivity and reflect the real business landscape in Aruba, where approximately 80% of enterprises are small and medium-sized (CBS, 2021), the AFFW Certification has been structured to be accessible, fair, and relevant to organizations of any size or structure.

Year	Key Actions	Resource Focus	Cost Inputs
Build			
2025	Build the foundation of the Certification mission and criteria with the correspondent guideline documents for applicants and evaluators to test the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFFW Website • Eligibility test • Applicant handbook • Self-Assessment Tool • Journey Checklist • Evaluator Handbook (scoring rubric) • Public Awareness Materials (Communication Kit) • Public Registry of Certified Workplaces (by sector and tier) 	
Pilot			
2026	Pilot the Family-Friendly Workplace Certification with a diverse sample of organizations across sectors and sizes in Aruba. This will assess its relevance and acceptance, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and determine the support needed for effective implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refinement to existing materials and criteria based on pilot • Manager Toolkit • Training and support materials for scaling • Story telling templates to share the pilot journey • Feedback forms and surveys • Website enhancements • Award event • Impact Research 	<p>Human Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>AFFW Full-Time Position:</i> Salary and Operational Support <p>Events & Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Event Venue:</i> rental, logistics, equipment. • <i>Refreshments:</i> catering for participants and stakeholders. <p>Communications & Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Media Support:</i> outreach, press coverage, and campaign support.

Year	Key Actions	Resource Focus	Cost Inputs
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Scale

<p>2027 - 2028</p>	<p>The certification is ready for a broader national rollout to amplify its impact across Aruba’s workforce and economy. Scaling will promote the widespread adoption of AFFW Certification practices, encourage continuous training and support, and foster community exchanges that position Aruba as a caring, progressive, and people-centered economy. This phase can also include a structured feedback loop with iteration mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement of the certification process. In addition, an evaluation of the system’s impact on intended outcomes (e.g., realist evaluation) will provide evidence to refine and strengthen its effectiveness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaling Communication Strategy. • M&E training for selected organizations. • Dashboard for monitoring and progress tracking. • Website enhancements to share community experiences. • Directory of NGOs and consultants for ongoing training • Impact Research 	<p>Human Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>AFFW Full-Time Position:</i> Salary and Operational Support • <i>IT Support:</i> to updates in the website <p>Events & Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Event Venue:</i> rental, logistics, equipment. • <i>Refreshments:</i> catering for participants and stakeholders. <p>Communications & Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Media Support:</i> outreach, press coverage, and campaign support. <p>Evaluation</p>
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Sustain

<p>2029 - 2030</p>	<p>The Sustain phase marks the point where the Family-Friendly Workplace Certification becomes fully embedded in organizational culture and national workforce development. It is a time to celebrate achievements, share annual learnings, ensure policy alignment and institutional support, and reach national scale, with a target of 60% of Aruba’s companies enrolled.</p> <p>Government Support</p> <p>It is important that the government reflects its commitment by reinforcing the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual AFFW Awards • Additional M&E audit capacity 	<p>Human Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>AFFW Full-Time Position:</i> Salary and Operational Support <p>Events & Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Event Venue:</i> rental, logistics, equipment. • <i>Refreshments:</i> catering for participants and stakeholders. <p>Communications & Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Media Support:</i> outreach, press coverage, and campaign support.
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Year	Key Actions	Resource Focus	Cost Inputs
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Sustain (continued)

2027 - 2028	rights of working parents, through strengthening existing labor protections in the Civil Code or other public policies. Additionally, the government can explore tax incentives for certified companies and micro-grants(≤Afl5 000 each) for organizations building their family-friendly foundations, ensuring inclusivity and long-term sustainability.		
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Evaluate

2027 - 2030	Conduct an independent impact study to measure the certification’s effectiveness and inform evidence-based improvements. It also includes refreshing the certification criteria to ensure alignment with evolving workplace realities and best practices, maintaining the program’s relevance, credibility, and continuous improvement. It should also be aimed at understanding the impact on children and families with the intention of improving the certification process overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External evaluation contract • Criteria updating process • Communication materials to share evaluation findings with stakeholders 	
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Expected Outcomes

Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) practices, such as flexible schedules, parental leave, and childcare support, enable parents to fulfill their professional responsibilities while remaining available to their families. This flexibility and support not only enhance employees' effectiveness both at work and at home but also reduce stress and burnout, improving employee satisfaction and retention. Additionally, family-friendly labor policies promote gender equality by supporting both male and female employees, helping to break down traditional gender roles.

By grounding the certification criteria in locally observed gaps and international evidence, Aruba can expect multiple benefits:

- **Stronger employee retention and productivity**, with global data linking family-friendly workplaces to profit margins up to 23% higher than peers.
- **Greater gender equality and workforce resilience** through extended partner leave and predictable scheduling, which improve female labor force participation and normalize shared caregiving;
- **Improved family well-being**, as paid leave, flexible work, and childcare support reduce parental stress and enhance early childhood development outcomes.

Section 2 - Situational Analysis

Introduction

Aruba already has strong parenting interventions that range from short public-awareness campaigns to intensive programmes for vulnerable families. Together, these achievements make the workplace the next logical frontier.

To move from principle to practice, the Government of Aruba, in working with unions, business, and civil-society partners, has planned to launch a Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Certification. The AFFW Certification aims to recognise organisations helping employees balance work and caregiving.

Evidence from international research (The Heckman Equation, 2012) shows that investing in integrated, preventive approaches, such as combining parenting support with family-friendly employment policies and enabling environments, greatly enhances the impact of high-quality early childhood programs. These investments generate substantial long-term returns, estimated at 7% to 13% annually, through improved educational, economic, health, and social outcomes, as well as reduced public spending on remedial education, healthcare, and criminal justice.

These examples suggest that incremental, tiered improvements – rather than single sweeping mandates – are both practical and effective, especially when paired with coaching tools and modest financial incentives for employers:

- **Leave extensions.** Paid maternity leave improves the quality of mother-infant interactions and strengthens attachment security in the critical first months of life, while longer paternity leave increases father involvement, a factor linked to better cognitive and behavioural outcomes for children (UNICEF, 2019).
- **Flexible-working rights.** Since April 2024 the UK entitles all employees to request changes in hours, times or location from day one, with a required employer response within two months (UNICEF, 2025).
- **Certification models.** The UAE Parent-Friendly Label (launched 2021; ADECA, 2024) shows that a two-tier scheme can scale quickly: in the inaugural cycle, 75 organisations submitted applications, 90% of staff who felt well-supported as parents said they would recommend their workplace, and 41% of organisations upgraded or were actively upgrading policies during the cycle.
- **Small-island comparators.** Barbados now provides three weeks' statutory paternity leave; the Seychelles offers ten days at full pay (ILO, 2022). Both economies rely heavily on services, demonstrating that more generous partner leave is feasible in a tourism context.

Building on national parenting leadership, local data, and tested international design, Aruba is well-positioned to introduce a Family-Friendly Workplace Certification that recognizes supportive employers, encourages continuous improvement, and advances the island's wider goals for inclusive growth and child wellbeing.

Background

Aruba is home to a population of approximately 108 000 (as of fourth quarter 2024) that is both aging and diverse with around a quarter of inhabitants aged over 60 and 40% foreign-born, first-generation migrants (CBS, 2025). As of 2020, children were most often raised in extended or multi-family households (52%), followed by two-parent households (33%) and single-parent households (14%; 13% single-mother, 1% father-father; CBS, 2025). In 2022, almost 5% of recent births were to adolescent mothers (age 12–19 years; CBS, 2023). These intersecting demographics mean that a sizeable share of the workforce must juggle childcare, elder-care, and often cross-cultural caregiving arrangements alongside paid work. Single-mother households illustrate the strain most clearly: in 2019, 29% of single-mother households earned below 60% of the national equivalized household income, compared with 20% of single-father households and 17% of all households (Government of Aruba, 2022).

The labour force indicators appear strong at first glance. The 2024 Labour Force Survey sets employment at 61% of people aged fifteen and over, unemployment at 4% (CBS, 2025b). This is the lowest unemployment rate Aruba has recorded in two decades, suggesting a brisk rebound since the COVID-19 pandemic. This may mask key disparities, where women engage seven percentage points less than men (52% versus 59%), youth joblessness has crept above 11%, and nearly half of working-age women remain outside paid work (Government of Aruba, 2022).

The number of companies registered with the Social Security Bank (and thus employ one or more employees) as per the end of the year decreased from 3,638 in 2018 to 3,634 in 2019. The number of registered employees amounted to 50,853 as per the end of 2019, of which 41% were employed in the 'Accommodation and Food service activities' and 'Wholesale & Retail Trade' industries. The 'Real Estate', the 'Professional, scientific and technical activities', and the 'Administrative and support service activities' industries employed 15% of the total number of registered employees. The latter industry includes temporary manpower companies, of which the employees are active in several of the other industries (CBS, 2021).

Employment is dominated by the services sector. Hotels and restaurants alone absorb roughly one in five jobs – with women holding the majority of the posts across all age groups (CBS, 2025c). Workers in the tourism industry often experience long and inflexible working hours, including shifts that extend into evenings and weekends, a scheduling reality that clashes with caregiving duties. Wholesale and retail trade is the second largest employment sector, with men gravitating next to construction and women to health and social work (CBS, 2025c). At the occupational level, men cluster in craft and trades, while women fill service-and-sales, clerical and professional roles (CBS, 2025c). Despite this breadth of participation, women's earnings still average about eighty cents to the male florin (Government of Aruba, 2022).

Top 4 Employment Sectors in Aruba (2024)

Rank	Sector	% of Employees	% of Companies
1	Accommodations	18.4%	1.6%
2	Wholesale & retail trade; repair	16.7%	23.4%
3	Administrative and support service activities	13.0%	11.6%
4	Food & beverage serving activities	12.2%	12.1%

Top 3 Branches of Industry by Sex (2023)

Rank	Male	%	Female	%
1	Hotels and restaurants	20.1%	Hotels and restaurants	24.7%
2	Wholesale & retail trade; repair	14.9%	Wholesale & retail trade; repair	15.6%
3	Construction	13.2%	Health and social work	9.9%

Central Bureau of Statistics data for 2021 show that Aruba’s business landscape is overwhelmingly composed of very small firms, including micro-enterprises (fewer than ten employees) who make up 82% of all registered companies and include family businesses, small enterprises (10–49 employees) another 14%, and medium-sized firms (50–249) 4%. Large enterprises (250+) make up just 1%.

Company Sizes in Aruba (2021)

Company Size (Definition)	% of Total Companies
Microenterprises (fewer than 10 employees)	82%
Small enterprises (10 to 49 employees)	14%
Medium-sized enterprises (50 to 249 employees)	4%
Large enterprises (250 or more employees)	1%
Total	100%

The broader economy mirrors this tilt. Services generate roughly two-thirds of output, industry (mainly refining and offshore finance) most of the remainder, and agriculture is negligible. Nominal GDP surged 13.7% in 2023 and was projected to rise another 6.7% in 2024, 3.9% in 2025, and 0.4% in 2026 as tourism exports rebound following the COVID-19 pandemic (DEACI, 2024), but the same service dependence and limited public childcare investment leave working families with fragile support systems.

Behind these figures lies a stubborn care gap. National gender-policy analysis notes that women carry more than 2.5 times the unpaid house- and care-work shouldered by men, a load that increased during pandemic lockdowns (Government of Aruba, 2022). Paid maternity leave now runs twelve weeks and lactation breaks are protected, yet fathers still have only two days of statutory leave, and informal care solutions are scarce in a services-based economy (Government of Aruba, 2022).

Taken together, Aruba's service-oriented economy and evolving demographic profile create a timely opportunity: by extending flexible scheduling, leave options, and childcare provisions, the island can unlock the full potential of a diverse workforce and stay ahead of emerging labour-market needs.

Policy & Legal Context: Alignment with National Priorities to Support Parents

The Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Certification supports Aruba's vision for a socially inclusive, economically resilient, and child-focused society, as articulated in the National Action Plan 2023–2025 (Government of Aruba, 2023) and in Aruba's 2023 Agenda Roadmap (UNDP, 2024) for the Sustainable Development Goals – particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth) and SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-being). By encouraging employers to adopt policies that support working parents and caregivers, such as equitable parental leave, flexible scheduling, and childcare access, the AFFW Certification helps translate high-level development priorities into tangible improvements in everyday life and work. It also echoes the National Action Plan's call for a sustainable, inclusive and future-proof economic model powered by social cohesion, gender equality, and multi-stakeholder collaboration (Government of Aruba, 2023).

In practice, the AFFW Certification advances Aruba's national goals in four key areas:

- **Workforce development.** It fosters higher staff engagement, better retention, and broader gender equity in labor force participation by reducing barriers faced by women, youth, and caregiving workers.
- **Early childhood development.** It gives parents time, resources, and protections they need to provide nurturing care during children's most critical years – an objective embedded in the National Parenting Vision (2018) and Parenting Support Vision (2024).
- **Social protection.** By codifying inclusive, rights-based employment standards, it advances the National Gender Policy (Government of Aruba, 2022) and child protection frameworks aimed at closing systematic caregiving and employment gaps.
- **Private-sector innovation and competitiveness.** Modern, responsive employment practices enhance Aruba's tourism-led economy and helps firms attract and retain talent.

The AFFW Certification also responds directly to the Parenting Vision Committee's mandate to improve family-friendly employment. By embedding certification into broader public policy efforts, the AFFW Certification provides a platform to implement the Committee's updated vision in practice.

This coherence extends to related strategies, including gender equity, child protection, early education, and access to childcare. For example, the AFFW Certification supports childcare expansion goals by encouraging governments to recognize and incentivize employers who offer subsidies, partnerships, or on-site childcare services. This not only advances education policy by enabling parents to engage more fully in their children's learning and development but also reinforces child protection efforts by promoting work environments that reduce stress and increase time for caregiving.

Structurally, the AFFW Certification is designed to build a national ecosystem for promoting, evaluating, and continuously improving family-friendly practices. Its objectives include:

- **Establish clear, tiered criteria** that can guide employers of all sizes and sectors in adopting family-friendly practices.
- **Recognize excellence** through a transparent and credible certification mechanism that rewards progress and leadership.
- **Facilitate cross-sector collaboration** by fostering active engagement between government, businesses, and unions to create shared responsibility for family wellbeing.
- **Generate data and insights** that inform evidence-based policies on family wellbeing, child development, and inclusive labour practices, ensuring continuous improvement and accountability.
- **Provide continuous education** and training to employers and managers on Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) best practices, including practical tools, workshops, and peer-learning opportunities, to build long-term capacity and embed a culture of family support across workplaces.

Statutory Baseline and Emerging Employer Practice

Aruba's legal and social-insurance framework sets a single statutory floor that applies to every employer – public ministries, SOEs, multinationals and micro-enterprises alike. The Civil Code (Government of Aruba, 2024) guarantees:

- **Twelve weeks of paid maternity leave** – typically four to six weeks before birth and six to eight weeks after – provided the employee gives two months' notice.
- Fathers, by contrast, are entitled to **two paid working days of paternity leave**, to be taken within four weeks of the child's arrival at home.
- **Breastfeeding** mothers may take paid lactation breaks for up to a quarter of their shift, and employers must provide a lockable, hygienic room for that purpose.

Alongside these leave provisions, the Code bans pregnancy-based discrimination, upholds parity for part-time and fixed-term staff, and obliges employers to safeguard workplace health and safety, laying the statutory floor for family-friendly practice.

- **Income protection** is reinforced by Aruba's social-insurance laws (Government of Aruba, 2025). Every resident worker and dependent is automatically covered by the general health-insurance scheme (AZV), and employers – not employees – must pay the premium; passing the cost back to workers is expressly forbidden. The Landsverordening Ziekteverzekering (ZV) ordinance tops up that safety net: female employees on maternity leave receive 100% of their average daily wage for the full twelve-week period, while ordinary sickness is covered at 80% (Government 100%).

- Parents who need to interrupt a shift for necessary medical appointments retain the right to wages during that time, and a six-week block of full-pay sick leave offers short-term income security during family health emergencies.

Findings from national surveys and stakeholders meetings suggest that compliance is generally stronger in the public sector and large multinationals; **micro- and small enterprises report patchier uptake, especially on lactation rooms and paternity leave.**

While these benefits are universally protected by law, smaller private organizations participating in the stakeholder co-design workshops reported challenges, particularly in the case of income protection and shift flexibility, due to limited HR capacity to navigate the necessary procedures. As a result, awareness and utilization of these benefits may lag behind the public sector and larger private companies.

Despite this statutory baseline, data from stakeholder co-design workshops and national AFFW surveys reveal five persistent gaps:

1. **Limited paternity leave** – Two days of paternity leave are insufficient to normalize fathers' early involvement in caregiving, challenge traditional gender roles, and meaningfully support child wellbeing and development.
2. **Inconsistent access to flexible work** – Access to flexible schedules and phased returns often depends on the discretion of individual managers and the degree of trust employees have in their leadership. In many cases, competitive work environments have contributed to unhealthy organizational cultures where employees fear that using such benefits could jeopardize their job security or result in lost income (e.g., tips or performance-based bonuses). This leads to inconsistent application and, in many cases, near-total underutilization.
3. **Childcare access and cultural barriers** – On-site or subsidized childcare remains rare, and where it is available, cultural barriers and a lack of communication or education around these benefits often prevent employees from making full use of them. Many workers continue to prioritize salary increases over childcare support, often due to limited awareness of the long-term value such services offer to family wellbeing and work-life balance.
4. **Breastfeeding support** – Breastfeeding provisions often fall short in practice due to inadequate facilities and limited supervisory support. Many workplaces also lack the training and information necessary to implement and normalize breastfeeding accommodations effectively.
5. **Uneven implementation across sectors** – Although all entitlements are legally mandated, consistent implementation is more commonly observed in the public sector and larger organizations. In contrast, smaller private enterprises often face limited capacity to adopt family-friendly workplace practices due to budget constraints, staffing shortages, and inadequate infrastructure.

Nonetheless, several public agencies and flagship private employers have begun to provide family-supportive measures that move beyond the statutory floor. For example:

Organisation	Family-support Measure
MetaCorp	Supplements wages with a monthly childcare allowance and runs in-house parenting and well-being workshops for staff
Marriott's island properties	Offer similar workshops to MetaCorp
Divi Resorts and Wind Creek Aruba	Piloting predictable rosters, split shifts and an app for shift-swaps
Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort and Casino	Plans to convert unused office space into a fully equipped lactation suite.
Directie Voogdijraad (Guardianship Council)	Allows staff to bring children to the office when emergency care falls through.
Fundacion Anti Droga Aruba (FADA)	Enables remote work for caregivers.

Benefits of a Family-Friendly Workplace

The AFFW Certification aims to elevate Aruba’s statutory baseline into a broader culture of flexible, inclusive, and supportive work environments. International evidence (Annex 3.1) demonstrates that fostering such workplace cultures yields tangible benefits for businesses, families, and the wider economy:

Economic and Business Value

<p>Flexible work + Talent Retention + Profit</p>	<p>4 out of 10 employees have already left or considered leaving a job because flexibility was missing (Global research consolidated by UNICEF, 2025). 71% would stay longer if genuine flexible work were available (ADECA, 2024). Highly engaged workforces post profit margins up to 23% higher than their peers (ADECA, 2024).</p>
<p>Paid leave and on-site childcare - Turnover - Productivity loss - Hiring cost</p>	<p>Reduced turnover and prevented significant productivity losses and high hiring costs (UNICEF, 2019).</p>
<p>Well-being initiatives + Loyalty + Reputation + Fast embrace</p>	<p>89% of staff with AFFW initiatives would recommend their workplace (UAE-PFL). 41% of the first firms adopting AFFW initiatives in the UAE upgraded their leave or flexibility policies within a year of engaging with the scheme (ADECA, 2024).</p>

Taken together, the evidence makes a business case that directly addresses one of Aruba’s loudest private sector concerns – employee retention. Flexible hours, paid leave and childcare not only advance environmental, social and governance and diversity and inclusion commitments (UNICEF, 2025); **they are proven levers for attracting and retaining Millennial and Gen Z talent in roles that many Aruban employers currently struggle to staff and sustain.**

Parenting and Child Development Wellbeing

<p>Paid maternity leave + Early development + Gender equality + Talent retention</p>	<p>Enhances mother–infant interactions by providing time and security for bonding, breastfeeding, and responsive care, fostering healthy early development (UNICEF, 2019). Promotes gender equality by increasing women’s likelihood of staying in the workforce after childbirth, helping employers retain talent (UNICEF, 2025).</p>
<p>Longer paid paternity leave + Balance Gender roles + Children development - Mortality risk</p>	<p>Colombia is gradually expanding paternity leave from 2 to 12 weeks by 2026. In 2021, leave increased from 8 days to 2 weeks; in 2024, increased from 2 to 8 weeks; in 2025, from 8 to 10 weeks; and finally, in 2026, it will reach 12 weeks (UNICEF, 2025). The UK allows parents to share up to 50 weeks; Australia is expanding to 26 weeks of paid, shareable leave by 2026 (UNICEF, 2025). Increases fathers’ active involvement in caregiving (UNICEF, 2019). Leads to improved cognitive and behavioural outcomes in children (UNICEF, 2019). Fosters a cultural shift toward more balanced gender roles in society. (UNICEF, 2019). Reduces men long-term mortality risk, highlighting lasting psychosocial and health benefits of early caregiving (UNICEF, 2019).</p>

Extending partner leave and normalising father involvement would bring a triple benefit for Aruba: healthier early-childhood outcomes, an economy that promotes gender equality through talent retention in skilled and leadership positions, and a cultural shift toward more balanced gender roles in society.

Communities and Health

<p>Implementation of Family–Friendly policies + Mental health + Social Cohesion + Human Workforce</p>	<p>Reduced parental stress (UNICEF, 2019). Benefit stable family relationships (UNICEF, 2019). Support social cohesion and quality-of-life goals (UNICEF, 2019). Long-term impact on strengthening a nation’s human capital, as children from nurturing, economically stable households achieve higher education and high-quality workforce participation (UNICEF, 2019).</p>
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Communities and Health (continued)

<p>Breastfeeding support + Health - Health Costs</p>	<p>Healthier infants with lower infection rates and fewer chronic illnesses. Maternal health by reducing lifelong risks of Type 2 diabetes and breast cancer, which in turn curbs public and private healthcare costs (UNICEF, 2019)</p>
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For Aruba, a service-oriented economy already facing labour-supply pressures, these broader returns reinforce the strategic value of embedding family-friendly standards across sectors.

Cross-ministerial Policy Coordination

<p>Cross-ministerial policy tool: AFFW certifications or labels</p> <p>+ Institutional Change + Cultural Change + International Alignment + AFFW Budget + AFFW Communication</p>	<p>Government advocacy for tagged and prioritized AFFW budgets within public procurement processes (ADECA, 2023). The government leverages its purchasing power to promote family-friendly practices (ADECA, 2023). Employers participating in the UAE label have shown stronger adoption, moving from ad-hoc perks to durable policy-level support, directly contributing to SDG targets on health, gender equality, and decent work (ADECA, 2023). Government awards and recognition programs encourage the integration of AFFW standards into national development goals and inter-ministerial accountability frameworks (ADECA, 2023).</p>
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This incentivizes organizations to pursue certification not only for reputational benefits but also to strengthen their eligibility for government contracts. For more details on international experiences and evidence, please consult Annex 3.1.

By positioning the certification as a tool for aligning workplace practices with national policy objectives, certification can function beyond the workplace. This approach offers valuable lessons for Aruba, where a similar scheme could be anchored in cross-ministerial collaboration in order to bolster policy coherence across ministries.

Case Study - Lessons learned from the UAE Parent-Friendly Label

Implementation of the UAE Parent-Friendly Label (PFL) offers a case study for the Aruba's Family-Friendly Workplace Certification. Launched in 2021 by Abu Dhabi's Early Childhood Authority, the PFL has progressed through three certification cycles and now covers 75 private-, semi-government and third-sector employers representing roughly 165 000 workers. Its structure, data, and growing pains offer guidance for Aruba:

A) Two-tier structure. The structure of the PFL balances entry and ambition for businesses:

Level 1	Level 2
<p>Parent-Friendly Label (PFL) Recognises full compliance with UAE labour law plus a minimum set of “core” family-friendly measures:</p>	<p>Parent-Friendly+ (PFL+) Rewards organisations that meet or exceed international standards:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline maternity/ Paternity leave • Lactation breaks • Emergency time-off • Policy communication plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer parental leave • Formal flexible-work policy • Dedicated lactation suites • Childcare support • Ongoing well-being initiatives.

Of the 75 organisations certified, 44 earned Level 1 and 31 achieved Level 2. The two-step ladder encourages first-timers to enter while showing a clear trajectory to progress. Assessors report that the tiered model helps manage expectations: firms with limited budgets focus first on policy compliance, then plan upgrades for the next cycle (PFL Handbook).

B) Employee voice. The PFL ensures that employee voice is central and visible. Each applicant must deploy an anonymous, 20-question **Parent-Friendly Experience Survey**.

At least 30% of employees must respond and results are weighted at 30% of the final score. Key metrics – e.g., “Would you recommend your organisation as parent-friendly?” – are published in the public scorecard.

C) Continuous improvement. Certification lasts two years, but firms receive a written feedback report within four weeks of the audit and a mid-cycle “check-in” at 12 months. Organisations get free access to PFL Connect webinars and templates.

Within 12 months of Cycle 1 audits 31 organisations (41%) upgraded at least one policy – most frequently extending paternity leave from 5 to 15 days, adding tele-work guidelines or converting temporary breastfeeding corners into permanent suites (PFL impact report).

D) Managerial support. Employee surveys show that written policy alone is not enough; manager consistency is the top predictor of satisfaction. The programme therefore offers a “Manager Toolkit” covering conversation guides, scheduling tips and common bias traps. Pilot data indicate a 12-point rise in satisfaction scores in teams whose managers completed the toolkit modules (PFL impact report).

E) Flexibility as a key driver. In Cycle 2, focus groups revealed that staff valued flexibility over token perks. Specially, **predictable rosters, remote-work options, and phased returns** were favoured over perks like Mother’s Day gifts. PFL therefore awards the most points in the “Flexibility” and “Family Care” domains. Twelve firms have added formal job-sharing or compressed-week pilots to secure Level 2 status (handbook).

F) Small business support. The reach of the PFL is widened through no application fee, coaching support is offered before and after audit, ensuring that small businesses (with less than 100 staff) can submit a streamlined dossier. As a result, certified organisations include start-ups with 25 employees and multinationals with 12 000, demonstrating scalability.

G) Mitigating threats. The PFL has not been without its challenges, and several mitigation strategies have subsequently been introduced:

- The diverse starting lines meant that some applicants had no written policies, whereas others had global standards. PFL now uses a **calibration rubric and peer-shadow audits to maintain score consistency.**
- Of surveyed staff, 13% still felt unsupported, suggesting a gap in management capacity. The programme has since doubled the number of management training webinars in Cycle 3.
- Government entities are not yet eligible, limiting universal update. The UAE is exploring a separate pathway for ministries and public schools.
- Momentum may be difficult to sustain, with small firms struggling to act on feedback. A micro-grant pilot (Afl 5 000 equivalent) was launched in 2024 to fund quick wins like lactation-room upgrades.

Comparative insights relevant for Aruba

International experience (particularly the UAE's PFL three-cycle implementation) highlights five design features that align with Aruba's labor realities and the priority gaps identified:

- 1. A multi-tier model that starts with legal compliance and scales upward**
The UAE's two-level structure proves that a low-bar "on-ramp" attracts first-time applicants while an aspirational upper tier drives continuous improvement. Because 82% of Aruban firms are micro-enterprises, a Tier 1-Tier 2- Tier 3 (plus future "Tier 4") ladder is even more critical: Tier 1 locks in Civil-Code compliance; Tier 2 adds the core supports employees and employers most want (predictable scheduling, modest paternity leave, basic childcare/EAP access); Tier 3 rewards the global (two-week partner leave, formal right-to-request flexibility, lactation suites, published gender-pay data).
- 2. Mandatory employee voice to verify 'policy in practice'**
UAE evidence shows that an anonymous survey data surfaces implementation managers gaps and also give Government and the Parenting Vision Committee live indicators on inclusivity (single parents, fathers, caregivers of children with disabilities, adolescent parents) that raw policy audits cannot capture.
- 3. A feedback-and-coaching loop instead of one-off audits**
Two-year certificates with a mid-cycle check-in, free webinars and template libraries moved 41% of UAE certificate-holders from basic to advanced status within 12 months. For Aruba's SMEs – many without HR staff – this continuous-learning spine matters as much as the badge itself, especially on thorny issues such as flexible-roster design or phased leave budgeting.
- 4. Manager toolkits and culture levers**
Across the UAE data, manager consistency – not written rules – was the top predictor of employee satisfaction. That finding mirrors Aruban workshop stories in which "it depends on your supervisor" determined whether staff could take lactation breaks or swap shifts. A short, modular toolkit (conversation guides, bias checks, micro-learning clips) bundled with the certification will therefore convert policy into day-to-day practice far faster than legislation alone.
- 5. Cost-sensitive incentives for very small businesses**
UAE micro-grants (≈ Afl5000) financed quick wins like converting storage rooms into lactation spaces and upgrading EAP access for <100-staff companies. Aruba could mirror this with small innovation funds, targeted tax credits or pooled-procurement discounts for child-care allowances, ensuring that cafés, roadside retail and NGOs are not priced out of participation. Coupling these incentives with a "lighthouse cohort" of flagship resorts (Marriott, Hilton, Divi, WindCreek) – whose supply chains include dozens of micro vendors – creates demonstration effects and market pull without heavy public expenditure.

Taken together, these five insights translate global best practice into a roadmap that is proportionate to Aruba's service-heavy, micro-enterprise landscape, responsive to the gaps stakeholders identified (flexible work, childcare, mental-health, inclusivity) and fully compatible with existing quality-assurance infrastructure.

Key Insights from Family-Friendly Workplace Assessment in Aruba

This section summarizes findings from the AFFW national surveys and the co-design workshops, including SWOT analysis, highlighting insights into the current environment for working parents and caregivers in Aruba. It also identifies the drivers, appetite for certification, and alignment with workplace goals for employment.

Working Caregivers' Perspectives: Challenges and Support Needs

A 2025 National **AFFW Caregiver Survey** was circulated through government, union, and private-sector networks during the design phase of the Family-Friendly Workplace Certification Initiative.⁵ It gathered information on respondents' 1) demographic and work profiles; 2) caregiving responsibilities and home dynamics; 3) access to employer supports such as paid leave, flexible hours, and remote work; 4) perceptions of workplace culture, including fairness, stigma, and inclusion; and 5) key challenges faced by working caregivers and their interest in expanded benefits – such as childcare subsidies, on-site care, parenting workshops, and family-friendly resources.

The findings are not statistically representative of the full workforce, with a notable overrepresentation of public sector employees and self-selected participation that may bias results toward more engaged respondents, they provide valuable insights into workplace experiences and caregiver needs in Aruba. Data are disaggregated where meaningful by sector, gender, single-parent status, and parents of children with disabilities.

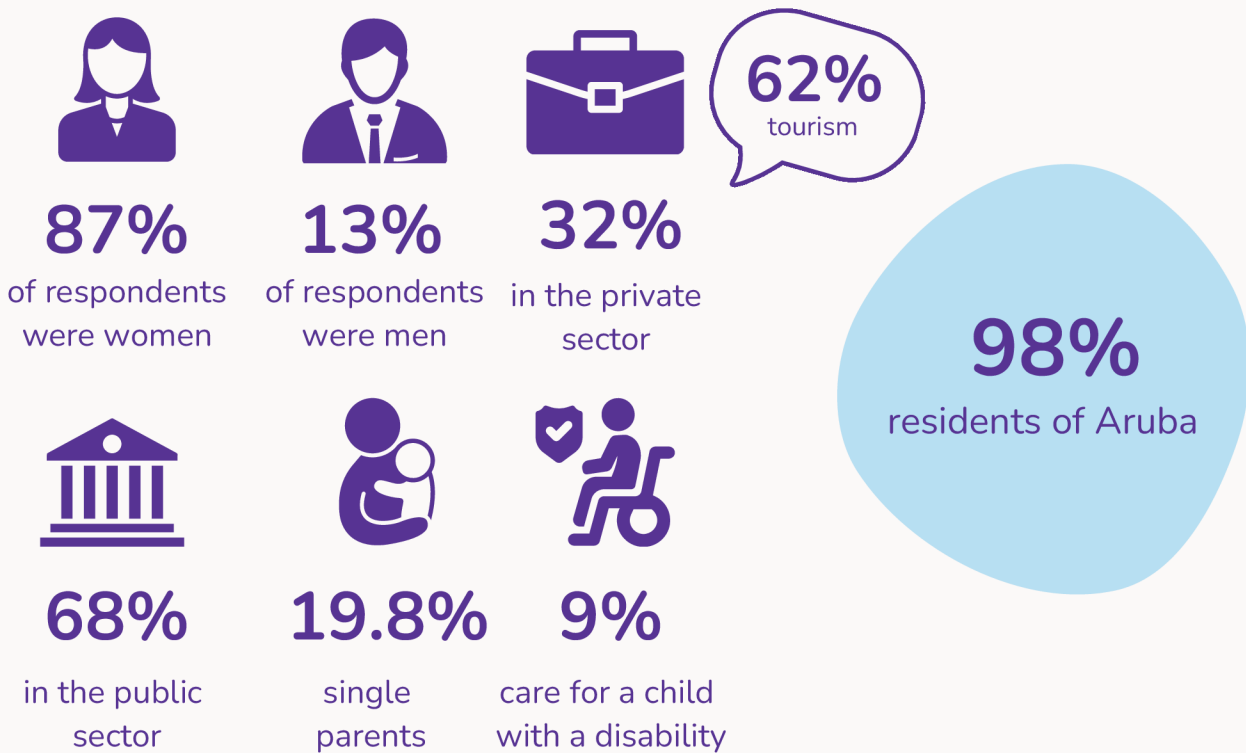
1. Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents in Aruba

A total of 167 working parents and caregivers completed the survey from different sectors and company sizes.

Most of the respondents were women (87%), with men making up 13%. Public-sector workers account for 68%, while 32% are in the private sector – most of those in tourism (62%). Two-thirds of respondents are in their mid-career years (35-54), one in five is a single parent (19.8%) and almost one in ten cares for a child with a disability (9%). The large majority reported being residents of Aruba (98%) and only 1.8% were non-residents.

⁵ See Annex 2.1 for survey methodology and Annex 2.2 for detailed survey results.

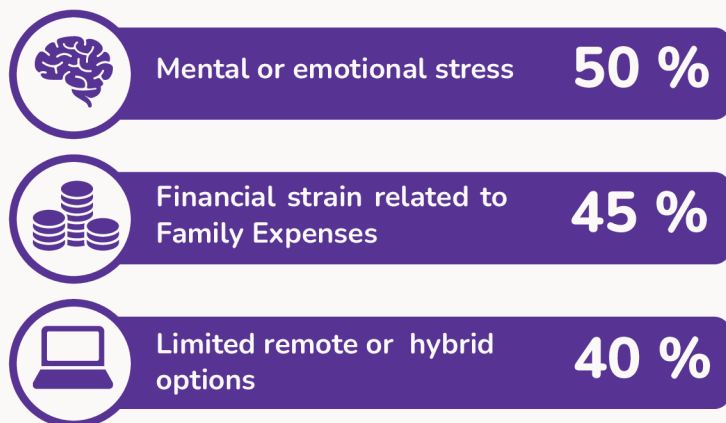
Figure 1. Visual Representation of Demographic Profile



2. Challenges as working caregivers

When asked to pick up to three main challenges from a 11-item list of common work-family obstacles, half of all respondents chose “mental or emotional stress” and almost as many chose “financial strain related to childcare and family expenses” (45%). “Limited remote or hybrid options” (40%) ranked third, and push many parents to juggle shifts with ad-hoc childcare. The complete breakdown is presented in Graph 1 on the next page.

Two follow up items captured the day-to-day impact: 43% said work often prevented them from meeting caregiving duties, and 38% said that caregiving sometimes impairs their job performance.



Graph 1. Top Challenges for Working Parents and Caregivers by Group

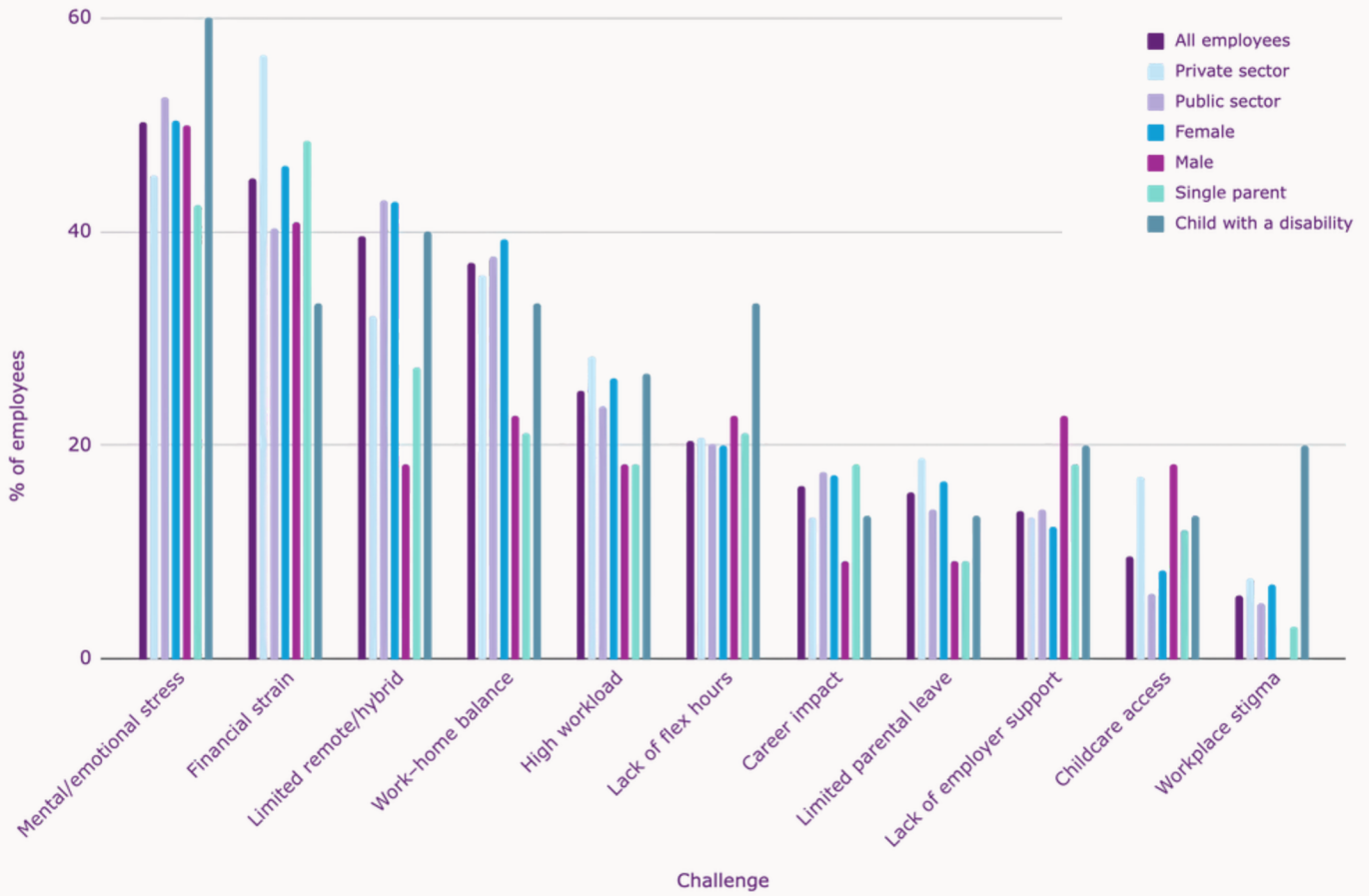


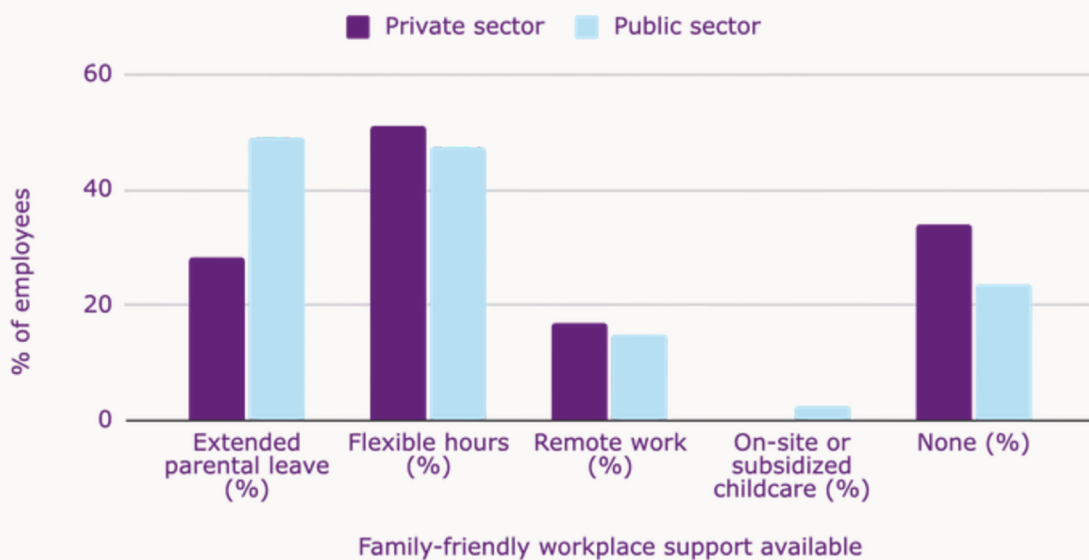
Figure 2. Top Challenges for Working Parents and Caregivers by Group



3. Availability of workplace support

Respondents were asked what benefits their employer currently offered (parental leave beyond the statutory minimum, flexible hours, remote work, on-site or subsidised childcare, none). More than a quarter of respondents (27%) reported “none” – meaning no formal flexibility, no extra paid leave, and no childcare help. The gap in the private-sector was widest: one-third of those employees (34%) reported no benefit at all, and only 28.3% could count on paid family leave beyond the basic two-day paternity or 12-week maternity entitlement. On-site or subsidised childcare reached just under 2% of employees, and formal hybrid or part-time options only 29%. See Graph 2 below.

Graph 2. Availability of Family-Friendly Workplace Support, by Sector



4. Gender gaps

Cross-tabbing the same benefit and challenge items by gender shows clear disparities. Women are more likely than men to work part-time or irregular hours; and report lower access to remote work (43% vs 18% for men). They are also twice as likely to feel they have been passed over for promotion because of caregiving (1% vs 9%). Men, meanwhile, are more likely to say they feel supported by their employer (59% vs 43%) and to recommend their workplace as family-friendly (46% vs 33%).

Regarding **breastfeeding support** at work, 116 parents surveyed for whom breastfeeding support at work was relevant. Of this sample, 59.5% reported breastfeeding or pumping on the job, while 40.5% did not. The main reasons for not doing so were personal preference (55.3%), lack of a dedicated lactation space (29.8%), and inconvenient break times (19.2%).

Figure 2. Visual Representation of Gender Gaps in Aruba

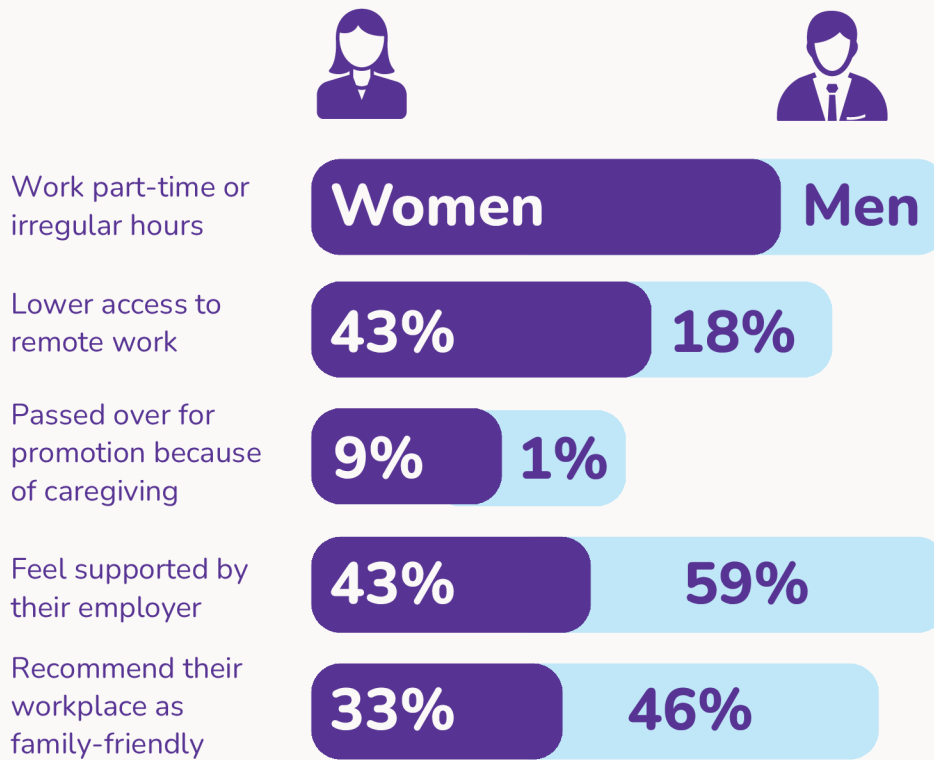
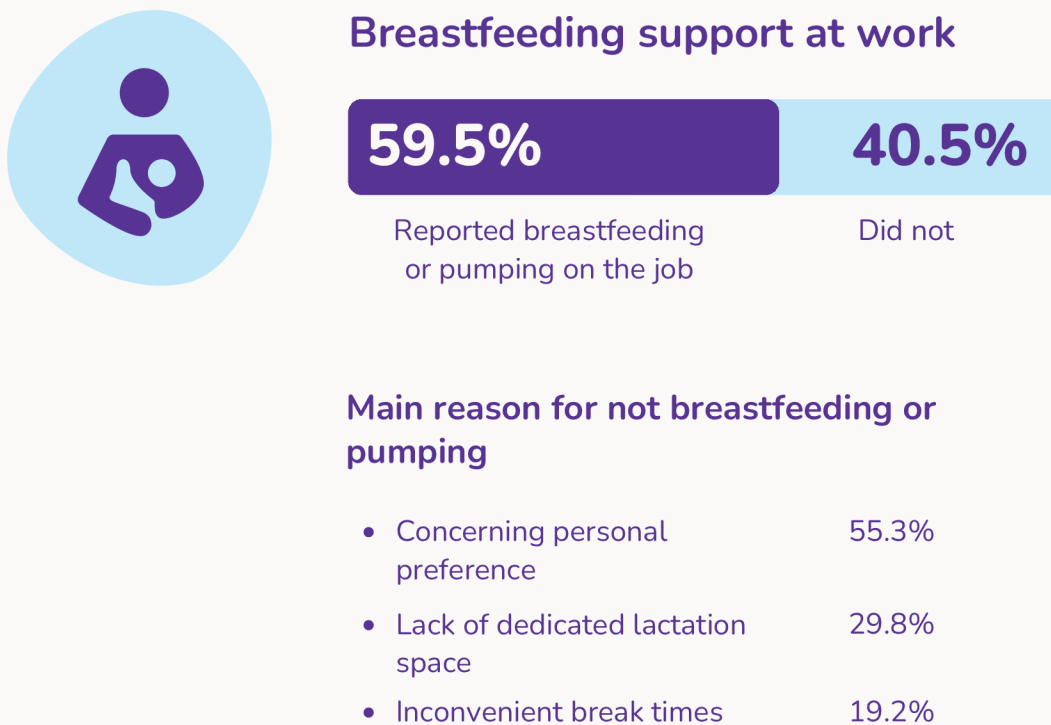


Figure 3. Breastfeeding Results



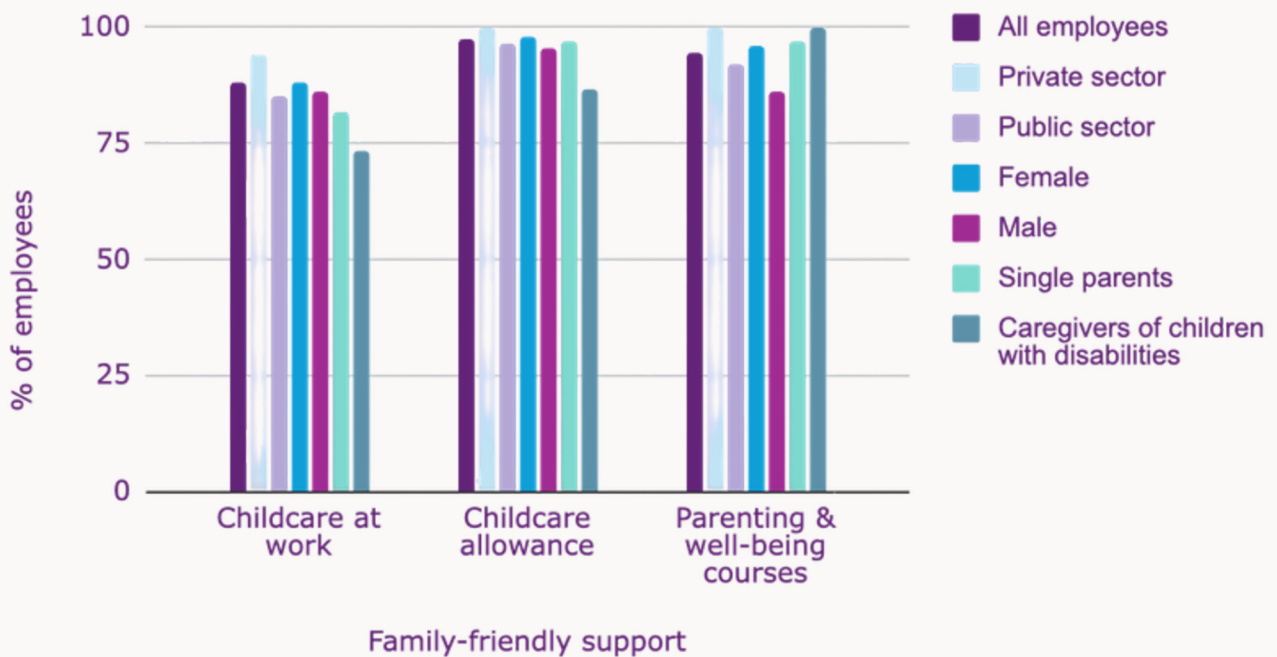
5. Need of Family-Friendly Benefits

Appetite for new policy support is almost universal:

- 97.6% would use a monthly childcare allowance;
- 88.0% would place a child in on-site care; and
- 94.6% would join parenting or well-being workshops.

As potential workplace benefits, employees were asked about on-site childcare, childcare allowances, and parenting & wellbeing courses. As shown in Graph 3, private-sector employees, who currently have the least coverage, express the strongest interest, with 100% supporting both the allowance and the training courses.

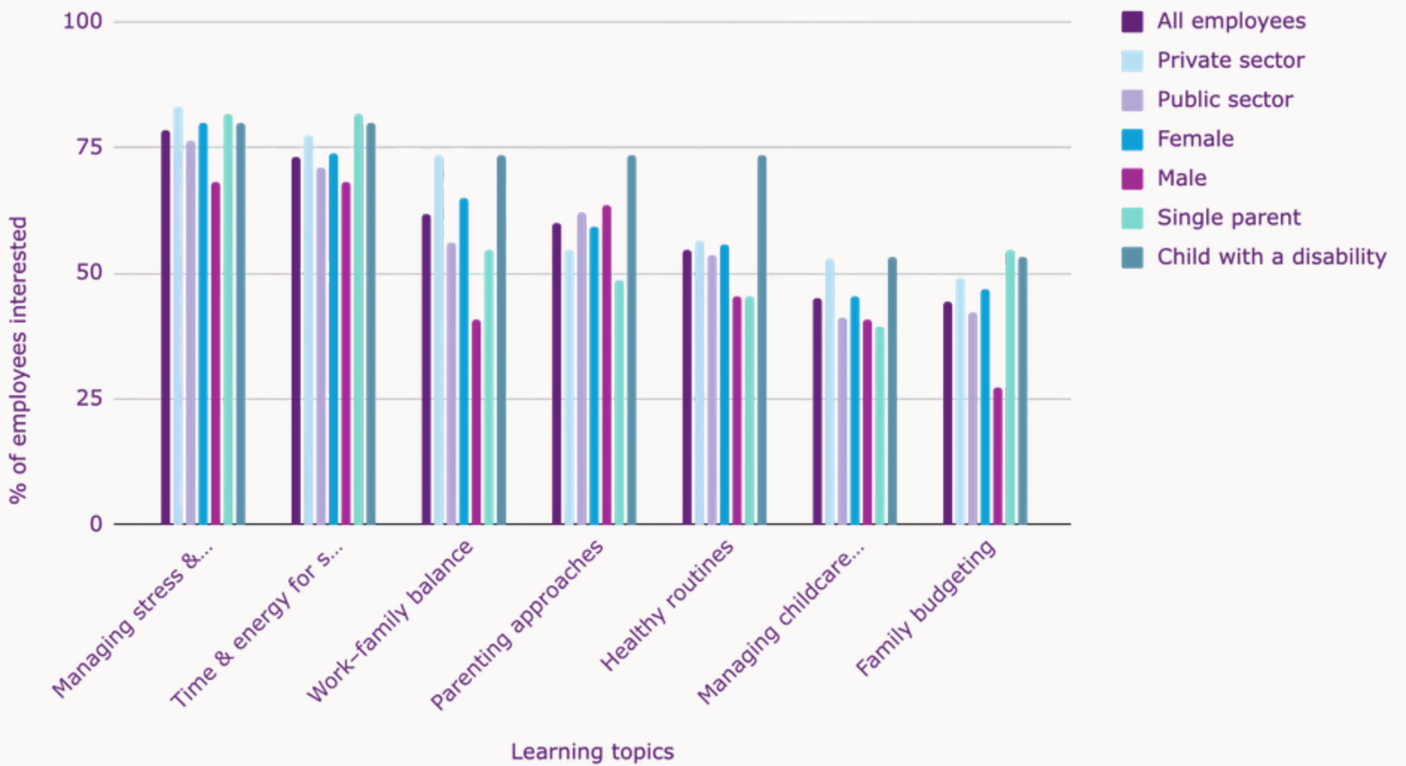
Graph 3. Caregiver Interest in Family-Friendly Supports by Group



6. Topics of interest for learning

Respondents were asked which learning topics their employer could offer to better support working caregivers (select all that apply). Across the board, interest was exceptionally high: 78.4 % of caregivers wanted courses on managing stress and mental wellbeing for themselves and their children, while 73.1 % sought guidance on finding time and energy for self-care. A majority also prioritised support for balancing work and family life (61.7 %), with strong demand for parenting approaches to children’s behaviour and development (59.9 %) and for advice on healthy eating and daily routines (54.5 %). Less b–ut still substantial – interest was shown in strategies for juggling childcare and job responsibilities (44.9 %) and in family budgeting and financial planning (44.3 %). See Graphic 4 below.

Graph 4. Interest in Learning Topics by Group

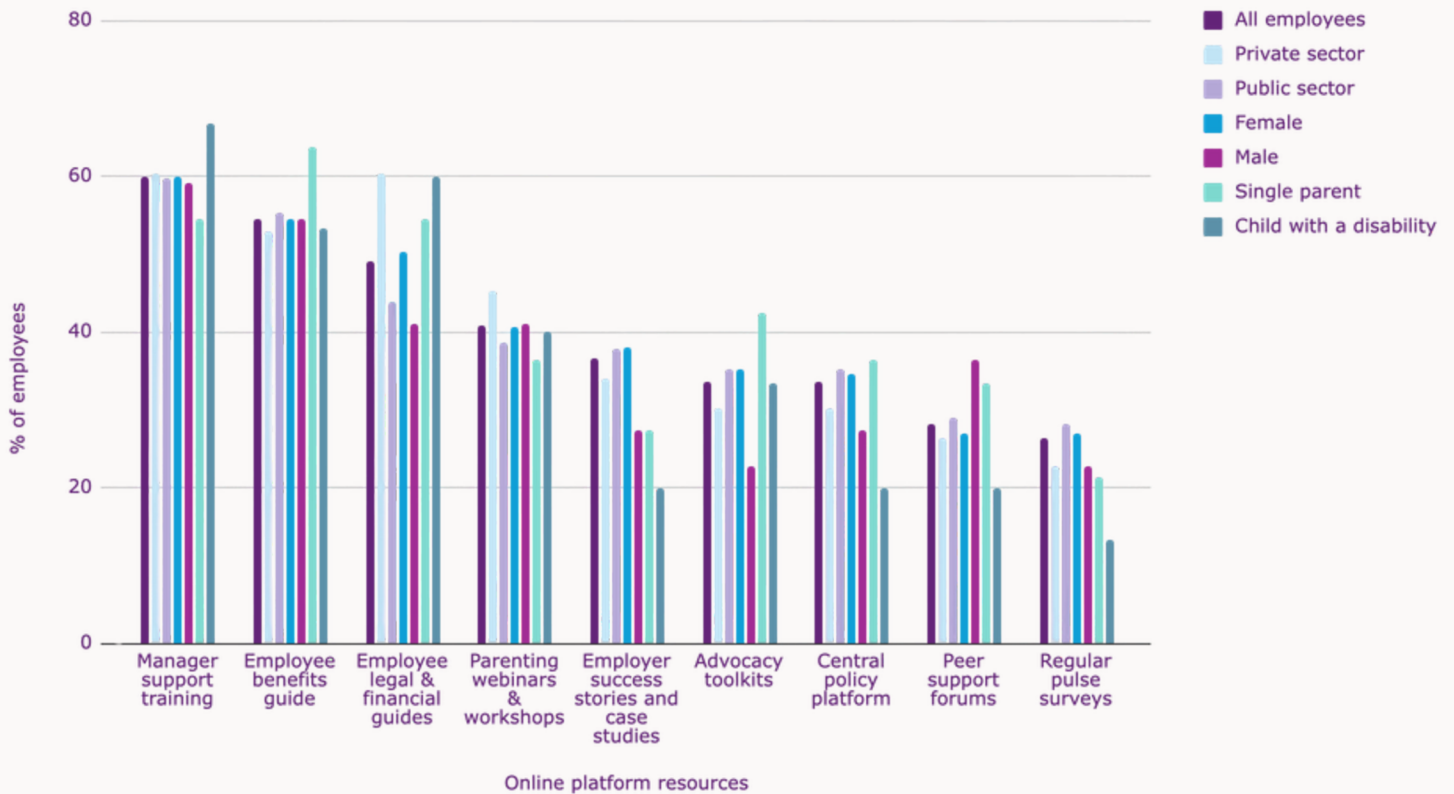


7. Desired resources on a digital platform

Caregivers were also asked which digital resources would be most useful if their organisation provided an online family-friendly hub (select up to three). The leading choices were manager training on supporting employees with care responsibilities (59.9 %), concise guidance on available workplace benefits (54.5 %), legal or financial information about parental rights (49.1 %) and parenting webinars or on-demand workshops (40.7 %). Fewer respondents selected and advocacy tools – such as communication templates or policy checklists (33.5 % each – while peer-support forums (28.1 %) and regular pulse surveys (26.4 %) ranked lowest. See Graph 5 on the next page.



Graph 5. Interest in Online Platform: Resources by Group



8. Groups needing special focus

The data point to three cohorts that warrant extra attention in the certification design:

- **Private-sector employees.** They register the biggest resource gap and the heaviest financial pressure: 33.5% receive no family-friendly support and 45% rank financial strain as among their top three challenges;
- **Single parents (20% of the sample).** Four in ten report no family-friendly supports and high monetary stress, making them especially sensitive to childcare costs and schedule predictability; and
- **Parents of children with disabilities (9%).** They cite the highest mental or emotional stress and social stigma, yet – perhaps because supportive line managers make a noticeable difference – are the most likely to endorse their employer as family-friendly (73% “yes”).

9. Implications for certification design

The AFFW Survey results point to clear priorities for shaping a credible and impactful family-friendly workplace certification. The following three actions emerge as essential:

- **Set the foundation.** Ensure flexibility and adequate leave as the baseline of a family-friendly workplace, and provide childcare solutions (allowances, partnerships, or on-site provision) to meet a universal unmet need.
- **Close knowledge gaps.** Deploy simple manager toolkits alongside clear legal guidance to rapidly strengthen awareness and implementation.
- **Develop a communications strategy** that promotes the normalization of paternity leave and highlights the positive impact of fathers' active caregiving on child development.
- **Reduce stigma** around seeking mental health support, designing targeted messaging tailored for both men and women, and encourage open conversations about well-being in the workplace.
- **Reward progress and inclusion.** Introduce a tiered certification model that recognizes demonstrable progress, and spotlights benefits for single parents and families of children with disabilities, directly responding to the strongest survey signals.

Voices from the workforce

The AFFW Survey open-text responses to the final question : “What could your employer do to create a more family-friendly environment?” , centered on six recurring themes. Below we highlight selected employee quotes:

““

Workplace childcare – 15 quotes

“Bring a daycare centre to the workplace for employees’ children.” – *Public sector, M, 25–34, extended-family*

“A safe kids’ room under trained supervision, separate from client areas.” – *Public sector, F, 45–54, blended-family*

“On-site childcare at work.” – *Private sector, F, 35–44, extended-family*

““

Empathy and family-friendly culture – 24 quotes

“HR should treat every colleague with children the same and with empathy – remember they’re parents.” – *Public sector, Female, 35–44, two-parent household*

“Be more understanding, reduce hours, and respect my day off.” – *Private sector, Female, 18–24, primary-caregiver with partner household*

“Listen to every employee and show more empathy when the topic is children and family.” – *Private sector, Female, 25–34, single-parent household*

““

Help with childcare costs – 9 quotes, including:

“Compensation to help cover monthly after-school care costs (I pay \$475 myself—help would be welcome).” – *Public sector, F, 35–44, single-parent household*

“Childcare or reimbursement for childcare.” – *Private sector, F, 35–44, two-parent*



Family-friendly and learning events – 20 quotes

“Workshops related to parenting.” – *Private sector, Female, 45–54, two-parent household*

“Organise social & educational activities for the whole family (Family day).” – *Public sector, Female, 45–54, blended-family household*

“Bring your kid to work’ day, an after-school space.” – *Private sector, Female, 25–34, two-parent household*



Leave and time off policies (emergency caregiving, mental health, and expanded parental leave) – 13 quotes

“More than 2 days of paternity leave; option to work part-time... without harming career prospects.” – *Private sector, Female, 35–44, two-parent household*

“Give teachers more freedom to take personal days instead of obliging them around school holidays.” – *Public sector, M, 55–64, blended-family*

“...mental-health hours (e.g., twice a month work 4 hours on Friday for self-care).” – *Public sector, F, 35–44, single-parent*

“Understand when your child gets sick and you can’t go to work.” – *Public sector, F, 35–44, single-parent*



Flexible work arrangements – 49 quotes

“Flexible work hours... punch out, pick up your kids, then punch back in and continue to work.” – *Public sector, Female, 35–44, two-parent household*

“Flexibility and trust that the work will get done” – *Public sector, Female, 35–44, two-parent household*

“Flexibility to leave and return when emergencies with my child arise.” – *Private sector, Female, 18–24, single-parent household*

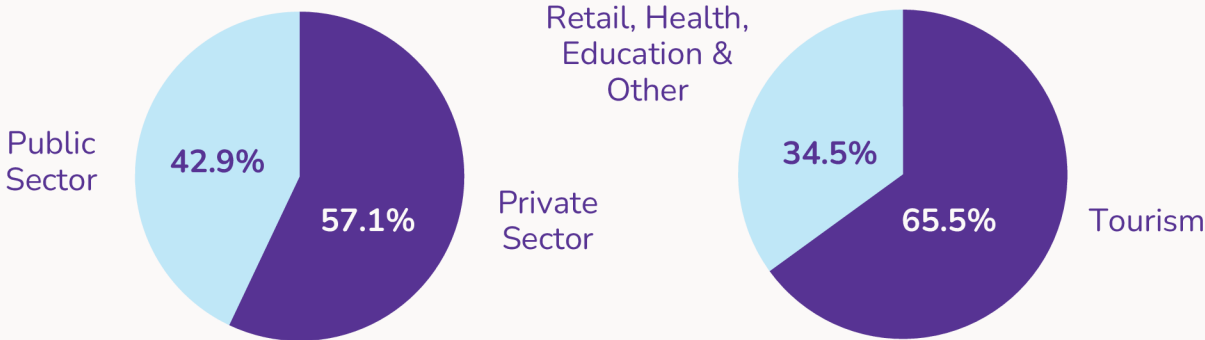
“Opportunity to work specific days or two half-days from home.” – *Public sector, Female, 45–54, single-parent household*

Employer Perspectives: Current Practice, Motivation and Support Needs

A 2025 National AFFW Employer Survey was circulated through government, unions and industry networks in parallel with the AFFW Caregiver Survey⁶. The questionnaire covered four blocks of information: 1) organisation profile – sector, size, ownership and principal industry; 2) existing family-friendly measures – leave, flexibility, childcare, well-being supports and manager training; 3) motivation and perceived value – reasons for seeking or declining a Family-Friendly Certification; and 4) implementation needs – the practical tools, incentives and learning resources employers would need to introduce or strengthen such policies.

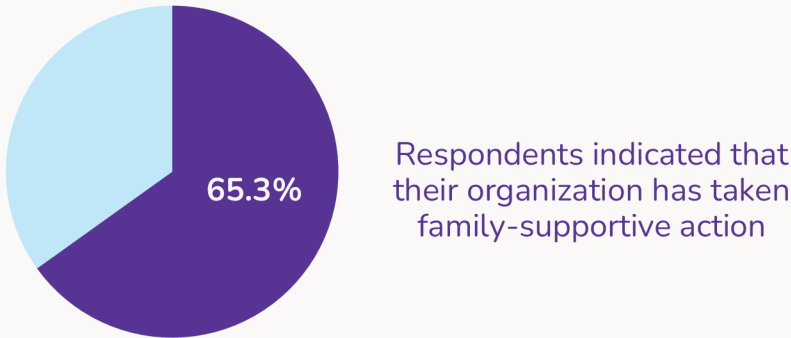
1. Employer Survey Respondents

Of the 49 employer representatives who completed the survey, 57.1% operate in the private sector and 42.9% in the public sector. Tourism dominates the private-sector subgroup (65.5%), with the remainder drawn from retail, health, education and other services.



2. Existing efforts

65.3% of respondents indicated that their organization has taken family-supportive action, led by the public sector (76.2% versus 57.1% in the private sector). Existing efforts to support caregivers in the workplace fell into five broad categories:



⁶ See Annex 2.1 for survey methodology and Annex 2.3 for detailed survey results.

Survey Quotes



No action yet – 15 quotes

“I haven’t taken any steps; I really don’t have the space to do this.” – *Education representative*

“Currently none... I don’t yet have enough children to offer someone a job.” – *Other private sector representative*

“The director does nothing, has old-fashioned thinking.” – *Retail representative*



Flexible schedules and hybrid work – 14 quotes

“Give employees the chance to handle situations that pop up... work from home if a child or parent is sick.” – *Other private representative*

“Flexible schedules to maintain a positive work–life balance... half a paid day per month so they can bond with their children.” – *Tourism representative*

“Pick up a child, work from home if a child or parent is sick... we don’t mind if a child has to stay close to us.” – *Private sector representative*



Caring culture and well-being support – 13 quotes

“Foster personal relationship, listen to your team. Show care and empathy.” – *Education representative*

“Ensure that they are happy, pay well... understand their character and emotions.” – *Retail representative*

“Small space to post compliments... extra 15-minute break for personal communication.” – *Public Service representative*

“Mental health assistance... wellbeing workshops.” – *Tourism representative*

“

Including families in workplace life – 10 quotes

“Family day and seasonal festivities including family members... a quiet private room for nursing mothers.” – *Tourism representative*

“Employees may come to work with their child (if they don’t have childcare).” – *Public Service representative*

“Family ‘open days’. Taking family members on company trips.” – *Retail representative*

“

Family-focused leave and financial help – 7 quotes

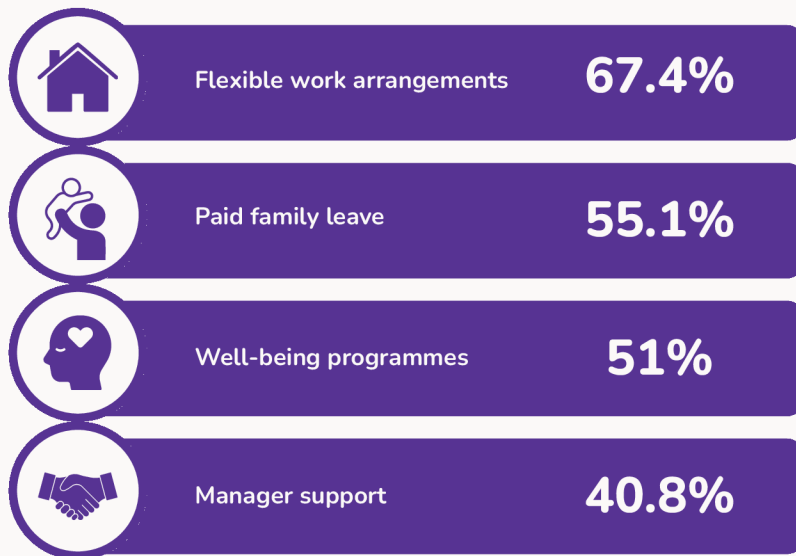
“Extended days for paternity, bereavement, and marriage.” – *Tourism representative*

“Arrange extra insurance in their package.” – *Retail representative*

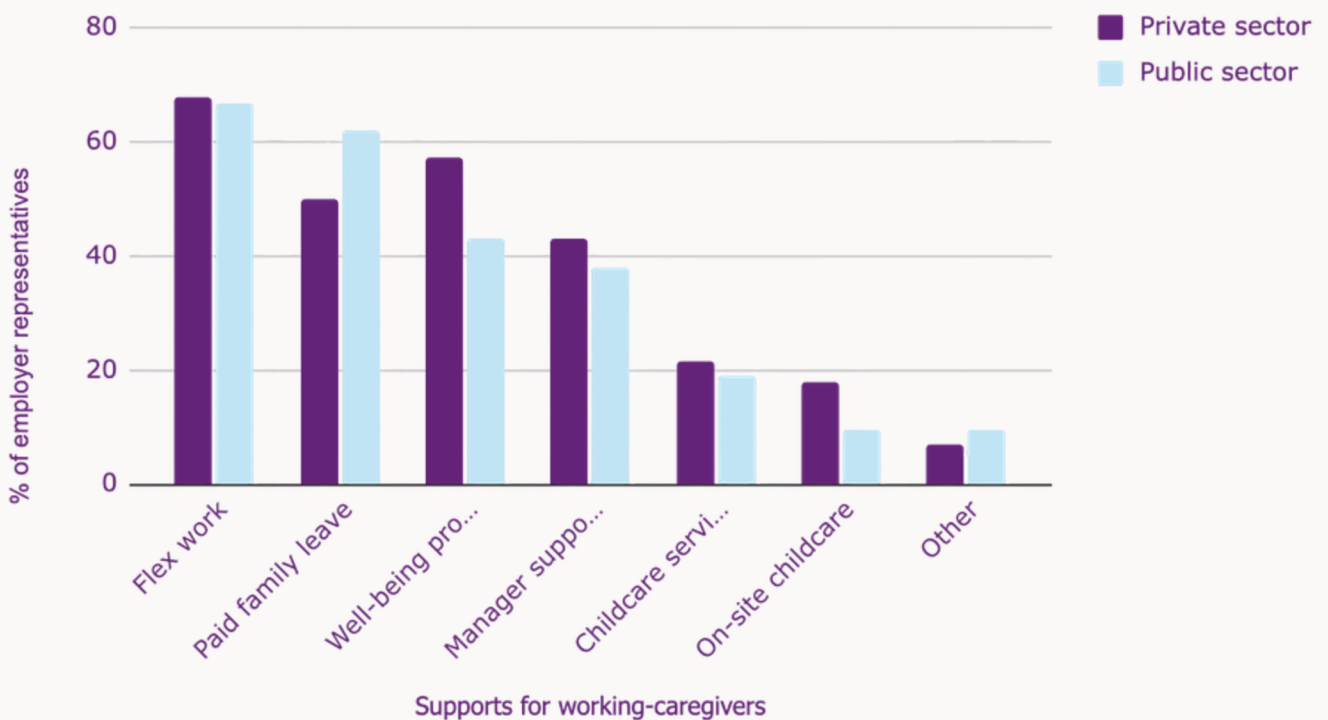
“Implementing a daycare allowance because this relieves colleagues who cannot afford full daycare.” – *Tourism representative*

3. Employer priorities

When asked to select two top elements for helping employees balance work and care, the clear leader was flexible work arrangements (67.4%). Paid family leave followed at 55.1%, with stronger support in the public sector (61.9%). Well-being programmes (51.0%) and manager support (40.8%) ranked mid-tier, the former particularly popular in tourism and education. Direct childcare services registered lower overall (20.4%), though they matter more in education and the public service. On-site childcare was rarely picked (14.3%), yet slightly more common among private employers. See Graph 6 below.



Graph 6. Priorities for supporting Working-Caregivers by Sector

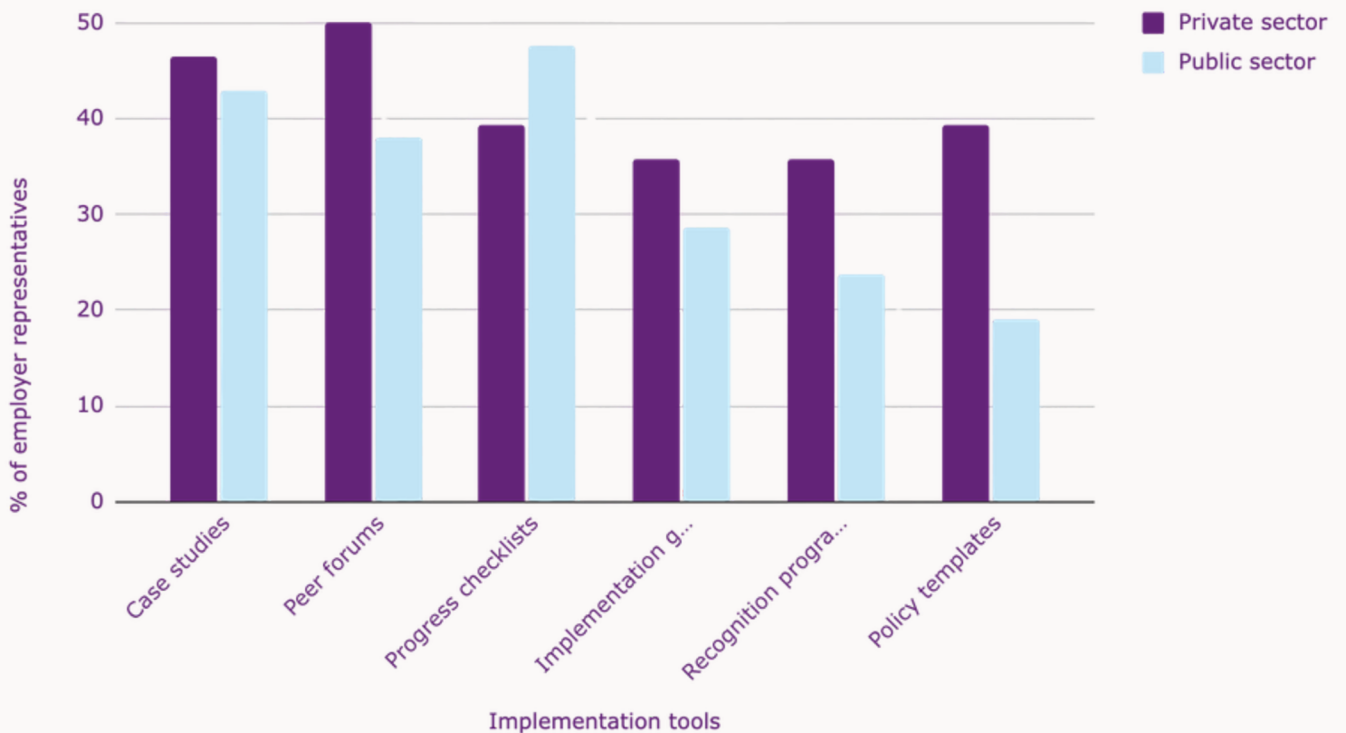


4. Tools they need next

Implementation support is high on the wish-list:

- Peer learning and real-world examples – case studies and forums – appeal to 44.9% of respondents, rising to half of tourism employers.
- Progress checklists resonate with 42.9%, especially in the public sector (47.6%).
- Step-by-step guides (32.7%) and policy templates (30.6%) are in demand, with the sharpest pull from private firms looking for turnkey resources.

Graph 7. Implementation Tool Request by Sector



5. Recognition matters

Nearly every respondent (93.9%) would like formal recognition as a family-friendly workplace; interest is almost universal in the private sector (96.4%) and very high in the public sector (90.5%). Their reasons cluster around four themes (see next page).



Work-life balance and flexibility – 15 quotes

“...we value the importance of work and personal life balance” – *Tourism representative*

“When a child has no school, he or she can accompany the parent to the workplace.” – *Education representative*

“To accommodate employees with children so they can achieve a better work-life balance.” – *Health representative*

More voices from employers



Supporting families and communities - 13 quotes

“Home, school, and society must be able to work together for students’ well-being.” – *Education representative*

“To improve inclusion, gender equality, and wellbeing outcomes for families” – *Tourism representative*

“We encourage families to stay by offering amenities such as a kids’ pool and kids’ cave.” – *Tourism representative*



Values-driven leadership – 13 quotes

“If we want to create a family-friendly community, we have to start with awareness and lead by example” – *Other-private sector representative*

“We believe in leadership that is rooted in humanity.” – *Education representative*

“Recognition is not a problem, but it is not what really matters; the substance counts...” – *Public Service representative*



Reputation and competitive edge. Tourism representatives view the label as a branding signal that will “put our company in a positive light for current and future staff” (5 quotes).

“As a family-friendly hotel it is important to make the public aware that the hotel is a place that is family friendly for the guests and also value their employees and their family” – *Tourism representative*

“This will put our company in a positive light for current and future staff.” – *Tourism representative*

6. Implications for certification design

The AFFW Survey responses highlight that employers expect a certification to go beyond compliance and audit checks. To be credible and impactful, certification should function as a learning and support ecosystem that helps organizations put family-friendly practices into action. Employers point the following priorities:

- **Provide practical resources.** It should supply a ready-made learning ecosystem: peer exchanges, checklists, model policies, and simple measurement tools that can be adapted quickly by different sectors through the leverage of the AFFW platform for audits and public recognition.
- **Define entry-level standards.** Recognize flexibility and adequate leave as baseline requirements for certification, setting the foundation for further progress.
- **Enable culture and capacity change.** Offer guidance on manager training and culture transformation, ensuring that policies are supported by daily behaviors and leadership.
- **Support scalable childcare solutions.** Promote options such as childcare allowances, partnerships, and on-site services, which are especially critical in tourism, retail, and other service industries with shift work and customer-facing roles.
- **Ease compliance for smaller employers.** Collaborate with ministries to design targeted tax credits or fee incentives that offset implementation costs and encourage broader adoption.

Perspectives from co–design workshops with private sector, unions, NGOs, and government

Three co-design workshops were held in Aruba in April 2025 to ground the Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Initiative in day-to-day realities. They were convened by the Department of Social Affairs, UNICEF Netherlands, and Parenting for Lifelong Health. The workshops were designed around three key audiences:

- Senior government and Parenting Committee members
- Private-sector employers from hospitality, retail, and finance
- Unions, NGOs, and labour specialists

In total, more than 90 stakeholders took part, including government officers, private-sector HR leads, union representatives, and NGO practitioners. Each workshop combined international benchmarks (such as the UAE Parent-Friendly Label and the UNICEF toolkit) with structured group work on local challenges, lived experiences, and feasible solutions. Sessions followed a consistent sequence: plenary briefing, thematic break-outs (flexible work, leave, care services, mental health), rapid SWOT analysis, and a closing dialogue on next steps. The objectives across all three audiences were to:

- Map existing workplace practices and legal constraints.
- Elicit employee and employer perspectives on unmet needs, momentum, and opportunities.
- Compare Aruba’s context with successful international models.
- Co-create draft criteria and incentive ideas for a national certification.

Challenge**Impact****Solutions****General**

<p>Inefficient public transport adds up to 90-minute island crossings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces family time and rest hours. 	
<p>Uneven application of statutory rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees hesitate to request paternity leave, fearing it will be viewed as an inconvenience. • HR managers conceded that policy manuals exist but are rarely updated or actively communicated, leaving both workers and line-managers unclear about the rules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants therefore called for clearer guidelines, sustained awareness campaigns and a more visible inspection regime to ensure that legal protections translate into everyday practice. • Participants agreed that formal stress leave and destigmatising campaigns should be embedded in any certification.
<p>Persistent equity and inclusion gaps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR representatives admitted fewer than 1 in 10 eligible men used paternity leave in 2023. • Gender dynamics in the workforce also remain a key consideration: while unemployment among women declined significantly from 5.2% to 3.9%, the rate for men rose slightly, from 3.2% to 4.0% (Government of Aruba, 2024). • Single parents (20%) and caregivers of children with disabilities (9%) remain overlooked signalling the need for certification criteria that explicitly track and support these groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop groups repeatedly called for a phased entitlement of up to two weeks, ideally taken in blocks to cover newborn care. • Adolescents who are parents scarcely appear in workplace policy; youth advocates urged messaging that frames fathers and teen parents as equal carers, both at home and on the job

Challenge

Impact

Solutions

General (continued)

<p>Demand for practical tools and incentives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small and medium enterprises said the main barrier is not goodwill but bandwidth. • Employers lack the capacity to design or compare policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMEs requested ready-made policy templates, cost calculators and peer-learning forums. • Larger organisations asked for benchmarking dashboards to compare progress across properties. • Across sectors, employers said modest tax offsets or levies credited against training funds would accelerate adoption . • Public recognition under a national label would strengthen recruitment and brand value – especially in tourism, where employers compete globally for staff.
<p>Specialist workforce shortages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aruba’s economy is growing faster than its pool of specialized and highly trained workers, leading many employees to hold two or three jobs to meet the demands of different industries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in workforce development expanding vocational training and certification programs in hospitality, health, and technical trades. • Upskill existing workers: Partner with employers to provide continuous training and career-progression and mixed pathways. • Leverage migration strategically to design fair policies that balance opportunities for locals while welcoming skilled migrant labor.

Challenge**Impact****Solutions****General (continued)**

<p>Migration barriers and resistance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local workers avoid flexible shifts, fearing it may put their jobs at risk, which in turn reduces support for migrant workers. • A perception that flexible shifts threaten job security discourages locals from taking them and limits solidarity with migrants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and trust-building campaigns to communicate rights clearly so locals feel confident about flexible work arrangements. • Promote inclusive scheduling to encourage mixed teams of local and migrant workers to reduce perceptions of competition. • Employer accountability to introduce monitoring and feedback mechanisms to prevent discrimination in shift allocation.
<p>Child Care Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The country's child care centers operate largely without a robust regulatory framework, and most are privately managed with limited government subsidies or oversight. • Variability in quality and access of child care, particularly for families in lower income brackets. Stakeholders said the average monthly cost of private day-care now stands at Afl 475 – nearly 30 per cent of a front-line hospitality salary – placing formal care out of reach for many dual-earner households. • Corporate investment in child care remains the exception rather than the norm. 	

Challenge	Impact	Solutions
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General (continued)

<p>Labor market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth unemployment rose to 11.1% in 2023, up from 9.9% the previous year, with many young people facing barriers related to lack of experience or qualifications (Aruba Online News, 2024). 	
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Servies & Hospitality

<p>Front-line tourism staff face 12-hour days, six-day weeks, short- notice rosters with split or late-night shifts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elevated stress levels and, at the extreme, serious health risks. Inability to organize family time due to work demands Union’s Story Union representatives cited a recent incident in which an over-worked hotel employee attempted suicide, prompting the Department of Social Affairs to pilot mental-health seminars at selected properties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predictable scheduling and remote-work options to reduce reliance Develop a cross-trained workforce, enabling employees to rotate roles and share responsibilities across teams. This approach allows for shorter shifts, reduces burnout, and strengthens mutual support between teams
<p>Phone use restricted even during breaks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents can’t reach schools or caregivers to check on their children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The hospitality sector prompted social-services officials to pilot targeted well-being seminars for hotel staff.
<p>Nursing rooms in small hotels and schools are described as inadequate or absent</p>	<p>Worker’s Story <i>A hotel receptionist recalled pumping in a storage closet, returning late and flustered to the desk.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lactation breaks hinge on individual supervisors; some mothers forgo them altogether to avoid stigma. 	

Challenge

Impact

Solutions

Servies & Hospitality

<p>School Term Rosters Drive Caregiving Absences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism HR managers noted that absences spike at the start of each school term, a signal that rigid rosters are forcing parents to choose between attendance and caregiving. Mental health risk NGO counsellors reported a 22% rise in stress-related referrals over the past two years, with half linked to work-schedule conflict. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In every break-out exercise, participants ranked predictable or adjustable scheduling as the first or second priority for enabling effective care.
<p>Limited uptake of family-friendly practices among smaller hotels and supply-chain partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widening gap between flagship resorts adopting good practices and smaller hotels lagging behind. Unequal access to family-friendly policies for most workers in the sector, especially those in smaller businesses. Slower diffusion of innovations, leaving many employees without support for caregiving, health, or work-life balance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flagship resorts (Marriott, Hilton, Divi, Wind Creek) are already testing family-friendly practices such as parenting workshops, breastfeeding suites, predictable rosters, split shifts, and shift-swap apps. Position these resorts as “lighthouse” adopters of the AFFW certification. Their uptake, backed by the Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association, can set a strong market signal and accelerate adoption by smaller hotels and supply-chain partners.

Education

<p>Rigid school timetables leave no space for medical appointments or personal care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers often use sick days for caregiving. Education-sector unions story: Teachers who cannot shift their timetables resort to using statutory sick days – one school reported that 18 per cent of its annual sick leave is taken for caregiving rather than illness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility as an overriding need.
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Key Elements and Concerns Raised by Sector (from Co-Design Workshop)

Sector	Concern/Challenges	Proposed Solutions
Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No financial support or tax benefits available. • Workplace culture issues: employees perceived as taking advantage without fulfilling duties or real commitment. • Limited team support and collaboration. • Lack of qualified employees. • A competitive, money-driven culture leads workers to request excessive extra hours, making it difficult for employers to protect their well-being. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government support through tax benefits. • Clear guidelines to ensure compliance and facilitate implementation of family-friendly policies. • Develop a cross-trained workforce to allow role rotation and shared responsibilities. • Campaigns to support migrants' legal employment and reduce barriers from local communities.
Unions & NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited education and awareness of priorities for social change, focus tends to remain on income and aspirational lifestyles rather than family wellbeing, quality time, or mental health. • When advocating for family policies, employees often prefer wage increases instead. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in continuous education and awareness-raising (not only campaigns but sustained processes). • Highlight the long-term benefits of family time, positive parenting, and mental health practices for employees and their families.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Commitment from government and private sector.

Existing policies.

International benchmarks and inspiration.

Flagship hotel engagement.

Opportunities

Leveraging best practices.

Government support and incentives.

Collaboration across sectors.

Growing demand for work-life balance.

Tourism-sector demonstration effect.

Equity, inclusion and gender norms.

Threats

Operational and cultural barriers.

Economic pressures.

Lack of trained workforce or substitutes.

Weaknesses

Lack of formal workplace policies.

Resistance to change in the private sector.

Limited awareness and understanding.

Inefficient transportation.

Teen parenting support and systemic focus.

These workshop insights flow directly into the SWOT analysis, which distils strengths to build on, weaknesses to address, opportunities to seize and threats to mitigate.

Strengths:

- **Commitment from government and private sector.** Senior officials from Social Affairs, Labour and Tourism attended all three sessions and pledged rotating representation on the future certification panel, while major employers signalled willingness to pilot new policies.
- **International benchmarks and inspiration.** The workshops drew on the UAE Parent Friendly Label and UNICEF's global toolkit, giving stakeholders tried and tested reference points.

- **Existing policies.** Aruba's Civil Code already mandates twelve week paid maternity leave, lactation breaks and anti discrimination safeguards, which provides a statutory floor on which the initiative can be built.
- **Flagship hotel engagement.** Marriott, Hilton, Divi Resorts, and WindCreek are already trialling family-friendly practices and, as sector leaders, can serve as a lighthouse cohort for the first certification cycle.

Weaknesses:

- **Lack of formal workplace policies.** Flexible work, extended paternity leave, and childcare benefits remain informal or absent in most firms, and practice is at managerial discretion.
- **Resistance to change in the private sector.** Smaller employers fear that paid leave extensions and scheduling adjustments will strain already thin margins, especially in customer facing roles.
- **Limited awareness and understanding.** Workers often do not know their rights (e.g., lactation breaks), and many SMEs admit their employee handbooks are outdated.

External gaps were also identified:

- **Limited transportation.** Long, unreliable bus commutes (up to 90 minutes each way) can eat into family time and make staggered shifts harder to implement.
- **Teen parenting support and systemic focus.** Policies tend to target early childhood, and adolescent parents and broader ecosystem supports (schools, clinics) remain under addressed.

Opportunities:

- **Leveraging international best practices.** Models from the UAE, UK flexible working law and Colombia's phased paternity leave show feasible pathways.
- **Government support and incentives.** Ministries signalled openness to tax offsets or fee waivers for certified firms, easing cost concerns.
- **Collaboration across sectors.** The Parenting Vision Committee, unions and business associations can jointly drive policy literacy and peer learning.
- **Growing demand for work-life balance.** Younger workers prioritise flexibility, giving certified employers a recruitment edge.
- **Tourism-sector demonstration effect.** Certifying large resorts first would create quick visibility, tap AHATA and ATA communication channels, and pull SMEs into the programme through supply-chain expectations.
- **Expand AFFW to include family-friendly indicators.** Adding a UNICEF endorsed tier would enhance brand value for Aruba's service-oriented economy.
- **Equity, inclusion and shifting gender norms.** Longer paternity leave and father-friendly messaging can accelerate cultural change toward shared caregiving.

Threats:

- **Operational and cultural barriers.** Rigid service schedules and customer facing roles may limit real world flexibility and entrenched norms still assign care to mothers.
- **Economic pressures.** Rising living costs and narrow margins could deter small firms from adopting paid benefits.
- **Lack of trained workforce or substitutes.** Shortages of substitute teachers and skilled hospitality staff make back filling leave challenging.

Section 3 - Aruba Family-Friendly Certification Model

About AFFW Certification

The Aruba Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Certification is a national initiative, grounded in evidence and tailored to Aruba's realities. Open to all employers, from micro-enterprises to large corporations, aimed at creating lasting positive impact on the workforce while positioning Aruban companies as international benchmarks of excellence.

Aruba recognizes that for every child to thrive, parents and caregivers must be supported. Child well-being and family resilience are the foundation of a prosperous society, and workplaces play a decisive role in making that possible.

Through a clear and attainable pathway to recognition, the AFFW Certification encourages organizations to adopt family-friendly practices that help caregivers balance work and family life. In turn, companies benefit from higher productivity, stronger employee loyalty, better talent attraction and retention, and enhanced organizational excellence.

Why it matters

When workplaces support families, everyone wins: parents, children, businesses, and Aruba as a whole. Employers that adopt AFFW practices gain a real advantage: they attract and keep great talent, build loyalty, and see stronger productivity and well-being across their teams. In a competitive labor market, policies like flexible schedules, paid leave, and childcare support reduce turnover, bring in young talent, lower hiring costs, and make companies stand out as employers of choice.

And the benefits don't stop there. Family-friendly workplaces promote inclusion, gender equality, ease stress for parents, and help create stronger, more connected communities. Children grow up healthier and better prepared for school and work, ensuring Aruba builds the human capital it needs for the future. For a service-driven economy facing labor challenges, the AFFW Certification is both the right thing to do and a smart investment helping companies grow while building a more inclusive and resilient Aruba.

Benefits of Being an AFFW-Certified Company

Adopting family-friendly policies delivers measurable business results:

- Retention ↑ 71%
- Profit margins ↑ 23%
- Employee recommendation ↑ 89%
- Productivity ↑
- Wellbeing ↑
- Turnover ↓
- Hiring costs ↓
- Parental stress ↓
- Belonging to a community of leaders and exchange of learning
- National and international recognition.

Supporting resources for these data points can be found in Section 3: Benefits of a Family-Friendly Workplace.

To be considered:

- Continuous learning opportunities and impact tools.
- Tax incentives & micro-grants
- Access to specialized trainings and tools to strengthen workplace practices.

Who grants it

The Department of Social Affairs (DSA) or a designated national body (to be confirmed).

Who can apply

- Micro, medium, and large companies legally established in Aruba
- Private, government, and third-sector organizations
- Employers committed to driving social change and contributing to Aruba's progress

AFFW Certification Approaches

- To ensure inclusivity and reflect the real business landscape in Aruba, where approximately 80% of enterprises are small and medium-sized (CBS, 2021), the AFFW Certification has been structured to be accessible, fair, and relevant to organizations of any size or structure.

Certification Criteria Categories

These categories were built based on the most common raised issues and challenges by Aruban employees and employers through the AFWW Surveys and the co-design sessions:

Category

Leadership & Culture of Care

Prepares leaders and managers to champion family-friendly practices, communicate policies clearly and support employee rights to foster an inclusive workplace culture.

Work-Life Flexibility

Evaluates the organization's capacity to support employees in balancing work and family life through flexible, responsive, and family-centered workplace practices.

Family Learning & Wellbeing

Promotes caregivers' well-being through parenting and mental health management workshops or programs so employees can care for their families while remaining balanced, productive, and resilient at work and home.

Parental Leave

Provides protected, non-discriminatory maternity leave and strengthens paternity leave to promote shared caregiving and family well-being.

Breastfeeding Policy Framework

Ensures dedicated time, space, and support for breastfeeding in the workplace, promoting maternal health, infant nutrition, and family well-being.

Childcare Solutions

Supports caregivers by providing information about nearby childcare resources and by covering or offsetting application and administrative fees.

Workplace & Community Pulse

Builds workplace community through family events and ensures effective parent-friendly practices via regular reviews, performance tracking, and continuous policy improvement.

Certification Cycles

The AFFW Certification follows an annual cycle, with one new application round opening each year.

To ensure DSA can coordinate effectively and provide high-quality support, each cycle is limited to 35 applicants. (This limit does not apply to the pilot phase, which involves a smaller sample size.)

Once granted, the certification remains valid for two years. Certified organizations must demonstrate continuous compliance and the effective implementation of all required standards to maintain their certification's validity and remain eligible for renewal at the end of the two-year period.



Month	Activity	Description
November– February	Promotion and Preparation Period	Announcement of the upcoming AFFW Cycle and promotion across communication channels. Planning period for organizations.
March-April	Application Submission	Reception of applications and supporting materials. If documentation does not meet all requirements, applicants will receive feedback and have two weeks to resubmit and comply.
April – May	Evaluation Period	Review of all submissions. Applicants that meet the criteria will receive a notification granting the AFFW Certification, along with the official stamp and digital insignia valid for two years. Applicants receiving feedback will have six months to improve and resubmit their documentation.
May- Nov	Improvement Period (for denied applicants)	Time allocated for applicants to address feedback and strengthen their submission.
Nov-Dec	Resubmission and Re-evaluation	Second-round applicants are re-evaluated based on the feedback provided. Those who meet the requirements will receive the AFFW Certification, along with the official stamp and digital insignia valid for the corresponding two-year period. Applicants who do not qualify will receive a “Prepare for Next Cycle” notification.
October	Renewal Process	Renewal submissions and evaluations take place every 2 years of each AFFW generation. Approved applicants receive their renewed AFFW Certification, valid for a new period of two years. Applicants receiving feedback have two months to address and resubmit.
November – December	Renewal Improvement period (for denied applicants) Resubmission and Re-evaluation	Second-round renewal applicants are re-evaluated based on the feedback provided. Those who meet the requirements will receive the AFFW Certification, along with the official stamp and digital insignia valid for the corresponding two-year period. Applicants who do not qualify will receive a “Prepare for Next Cycle” notification.

Application

How to Apply

- Legal Screening Tool
- Applicant handbook
- Online application(Manager Brief)
- Support Documentation
- Baseline Survey

Company Assessment

DSA will evaluate policies and practices against the certification criteria, considering the size of the organization.

AFFW Certification Approval

Successful applicants are awarded the official Aruba Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Certification, which is valid for two years and eligible for renewal upon demonstrating continued compliance with the required standards.

Applicants who receive feedback on specific criteria will be given defined periods to address, improve, and resubmit their documentation to achieve compliance.

Celebrate and Share

Certified organizations are recognized nationally and promoted as employers of choice through the AFFW website, official communications, and award events.

Certification Continuity and Growth

Certification is not the end of the process. Organizations are encouraged to maintain and strengthen their family-friendly practices and to reapply for renewal every two years, demonstrating continued commitment to these standards. In future stages of the program, bifurcating the certification into a “Commitment to Improve” and “Tier Achieved” system may further reinforce this strengths-based approach. Recognizing organizations that not only meet requirements but also show consistent growth and expanded impact.

AFFW Criteria Proposal

The proposed AFFW criteria have been developed through a comprehensive process that combined evidence, consultation, and participatory design. Inputs were gathered from co-design sessions, AFFW surveys, international best practices, and the perspectives of employees, employers, civil society, unions, and government representatives. This inclusive approach ensured that the resulting framework reflects both global recommendations and local priorities, with the clear purpose of driving real change in families' lives.

The criteria categories are presented in priority order, emphasizing the outputs most widely supported across stakeholder groups. Each category brings together the diverse contributions received, balancing stakeholder preferences with feasibility and impact.

AFFW Criteria Summary

1. Leadership and Culture of Care

Leaders and managers are expected to foster an inclusive and family-friendly workplace culture. They must sign the Manager Brief, complete an initial test with a minimum score of 80%, and participate in a baseline survey. Every two years, they must complete a follow-up evaluation and maintain the minimum performance standards.

2. Work-Life Flexibility

Organizations should implement policies that help employees balance work and family life effectively. Those with existing flexible work policies must provide documented evidence, while those without must include a two-year implementation plan in the Foundational Submission. Every two years, an employee survey must be conducted to assess satisfaction with flexibility regarding emergencies, family events, mental health and well-being time, family medical permissions (such as vaccinations), and breastfeeding support. A minimum satisfaction score of 80% and full confidentiality for participants are required for renewal.

3. Family Learning and Well-being

Companies should organize at least one accredited workshop or training per year on parenting, well-being, or mental health, reaching at least 80% of employees. They must also maintain a mental health support channel (whether internal, external, or online) and communicate its availability twice a year. Renewal requires proof of continued implementation, communication, and usage.

4. Parental Leave

Organizations must comply with the legal minimum of 12 weeks of paid maternity leave and at least 5 days of paid paternity leave, ensuring non-discrimination and equal protection. Policies must be communicated to all employees twice a year and documented in internal manuals or contracts. Renewal requires updated evidence of compliance and communication.

5. **Breastfeeding Policy**

Employers must ensure breastfeeding breaks, proper facilities, and clear communication of these rights to employees. Renewal requires proof that these measures remain active and accessible.

6. **Childcare Solutions**

Supports caregivers by providing information about nearby childcare resources and by covering or offsetting application and administrative fees. Organizations also can offer time and guidance to assist caregivers in completing applications and securing childcare placements.

7. **Workplace and Community Pulse**

Organizations should foster a sense of community and assess progress through events and surveys. Each must hold at least one annual family-friendly event and conduct awareness activities every six months. For renewal, updated evidence of events, communications, and survey results (minimum 80% score) must be submitted.

Basic Resources for AFFW Piloting

To ensure the proper launch and piloting of the Aruba Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Certification, a comprehensive set of resources will be developed and refined. These resources will guide applicants, equip evaluators, raise public awareness, and provide mechanisms for learning and continuous improvement. Together, they will create the foundation for a credible and scalable certification process.

Applicant Resources

- AFFW Website
- Eligibility Test(Legal Baseline)
- Applicant Handbook
- Managers Brief
- Self-Assessment Tool
- Journey Checklist

Evaluator Tools

- Evaluator Handbook (Scoring Rubric)

Public Communication and Recognition

- Public Awareness Materials (Communication Kit)
- Public Registry of Certified Workplaces (by sector and tier)

Governance & Sustainability

To ensure the Family-Friendly Workplace certification remains credible and evolves beyond its pilot, the programme will need a clear institutional home and multi-sector oversight.

- **Host agency** – day-to-day secretariat in the Department of Social Affairs.
- **Cross-sector board** – Social Affairs, Labour, Tourism, Parenting Vision Committee, AHATA, unions, civil society; meets twice yearly to approve audits, review criteria and track impact.
- **Integration** – audits embedded in AFFW workflow; data shared (with consent) to inform future labour and social-protection policy.

This structure anchors the label institutionally, ensures multi-stakeholder oversight and keeps operating costs low.

Strengthen Behaviour and Culture Change

Culture change is not optional, but essential for change. Certification materials and training will emphasize that written policy has limited effect without leadership buy-in and staff trust. A lactation room, for example, is not used if staff feel discouraged or judged. Similarly, leave entitlements are not protective if taking them damages promotion prospects.

Implementation should therefore actively support cultural transformation within the workplace in order to ensure the Aruba Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Certification leads to meaningful change in employees' day-to-day experiences. Organizational norms, leadership behaviors, professional skills, and peer attitudes must evolve to fully support caregiving, flexibility, and wellbeing in order to achieve lasting impact. It is recommended that the development and deepening of this work take place in a future stage, building on pilot learnings to strengthen four structured approaches to behavior and culture change:

Support Manager Engagement and Behaviour Change

Managers play a pivotal role in shaping the workplace. To promote consistent and empathetic implementation of family-friendly policies:

- Short orientation sessions will be required at the AFFW Foundation Tier to ensure managers understand the purpose of the certification and their role in supporting policy uptake.
- Manager toolkits including FAQs and scenario-based guidance will accompany all criteria, and manager completion of an orientation module will be required before each audit cycle.

Normalize and Destigmatize Caregiver Rights

To reduce stigma around paternity leave, mental health, and flexible work, frequently cited in workshops as barriers to policy use, the program will include a suite of culture-shifting resources:

- Short videos, real-life stories, and employee testimonials will be developed for use in onboarding sessions.
- Public awareness materials will be included in a communications kit to help certified employers shift workplace cultural norms around the importance of wellbeing.
- Sample messaging and ready-to-use posters will help reinforce that taking leave, using lactation rooms, or accessing mental health supports is encouraged and not penalized.

Strengthen Public Recognition and Learning Culture

Recognition must do more than certify technical compliance. In order to celebrate progress, reinforce uptake, and create incentives for others to follow.

- A public registry of certified workplaces searchable by sector and tier.
- Spotlight stories featuring certified employers on government and media platforms.
- Employee testimonials to showcase lived benefits of policies.
- Award events to recognize and celebrate certified organizations.
- Publishing of employee survey scores (as in the UAE Parent-Friendly Label) to reinforce transparency and credibility.
- An optional communications kit (sample press release, branding assets, messaging guide) provided to certified employers.

Embed Continuous Improvement Mechanisms

To support ongoing learning and motivation, the following measures are recommended:

- Mid-cycle reviews will be conducted to assess progress and offer tailored improvement suggestions.
- Benchmarking dashboards will allow employers to anonymously compare their practices and scores against peer organizations.
- Peer learning forums will be convened quarterly, including ‘Gold mentors’ and micro-enterprise champions to share implementation tips and innovations.
- Track long-term outcomes (e.g., staff retention, absenteeism, child well-being) to build an evidence base.

Build on existing parenting interventions in Aruba

Several existing parenting and family-support interventions already exist in Aruba. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Fundacion Pa Nos Muchanan/Fundacion Respeta Mi/Tienda di Educacion/Wit Gele Kruis Aruba:** These organizations jointly implement initiatives offering parental support, childhood development and family well-being. Programming includes parenting education and caregiver empowerment that could be adapted into workplace-based parenting seminars or support networks.
- **“Happy Parents, Happy Children”** Co-Parenting Seminar (Piso 3, sponsored by Aruba Bank): This seminar (November 2024) addresses co-parenting challenges and practical parenting skills and could offer a template for employer-hosted parenting workshops as part of wellbeing programming.

- **Strengthening Families Together (SFT)**: A Caribbean-wide initiative that includes Aruban NGOs Fundacion Plan di Bida, Fundacion Pa Nos Comunidad, and Fundacion Contra Violencia Relacional. This program offers parenting support, economic empowerment, and increased parental involvement for vulnerable family groups especially. The curriculum could be included in resources offered and/or endorsed by employers.

Certification criteria recognizes the integration of approaches and curricula from existing programmes through the following conduits and channels:

- **Employer-subsidized parenting interventions:** On-site or virtual delivery of existing parenting modules: Certified employers or employers seeking certification host sessions developed by Fundacion Pa Nos Muchanan or Piso 3.
- **Employer-provided parenting interventions:** Adapted content packages: Employers offer adapted content packages based on the Strengthening Families Together program.
- **Support access for vulnerable caregivers:** Referral pathways: Employers partner with local NGOs offer referral pathways to early intervention services for employees facing financial stress, or requiring targeted support for parenting children with disabilities modelled on the Departamento di Mucha y Hoben coordinated support. Expand to include disabled and adolescent parents.

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