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Family-Friendly Policies

Redesigning the Workplace of the Future

A Policy Brief

For societies and economies to thrive, countries and businesses need to support workers as families and parents, through family-friendly policies, as they carry and raise children from pregnancy to school age. Family-friendly policies are defined as those policies that help to balance and benefit both work and family life that typically provide three types of essential resources needed by parents and caregivers of young children: time, resources and services. Mutual investment by families, businesses and the State in this critical phase of the early years of life lays the foundation for children's success in school, adults' success at work, the ability of children and families to exit poverty, and the attainment of lifelong health.

In 2018, 75 per cent of men and 48 per cent of women were employed or looking for work. Many more women work in the uncounted informal sector, trading, waste picking, hawking or doing unpaid care work at home. This work keeps them busy at, or away from, home. For the majority of parents all over

the world – both fathers and mothers – employment policies, covering both the formal and informal sector and conditions at work, greatly impact the well-being of their families. This is especially the case for workers in vulnerable situations and low-income families, where children may be at particular risk of being deprived of basic rights and access to essential services. Better care for young children, enabled by supportive conditions at work, is not only in the interest of young children and families, but also yields benefits for businesses across a number of indicators of workers' productivity, earnings, gender equality, business growth, brand equity, talent recruitment and retention, and improved employee health, engagement and morale. These policies are also significant for improved equitable social and economic growth in countries.

However, family-friendly policies, such as paid parental leave, breastfeeding breaks, quality childcare and child benefits, are not yet a reality for most

FOUR TRANSFORMATIVE SHIFTS IN THE WORKPLACE

From Maternal to Parental Leave

From Infrastructure to People

From Individual to Co-responsibility

From Reducing Parental Stress to Enhancing Family Wellbeing

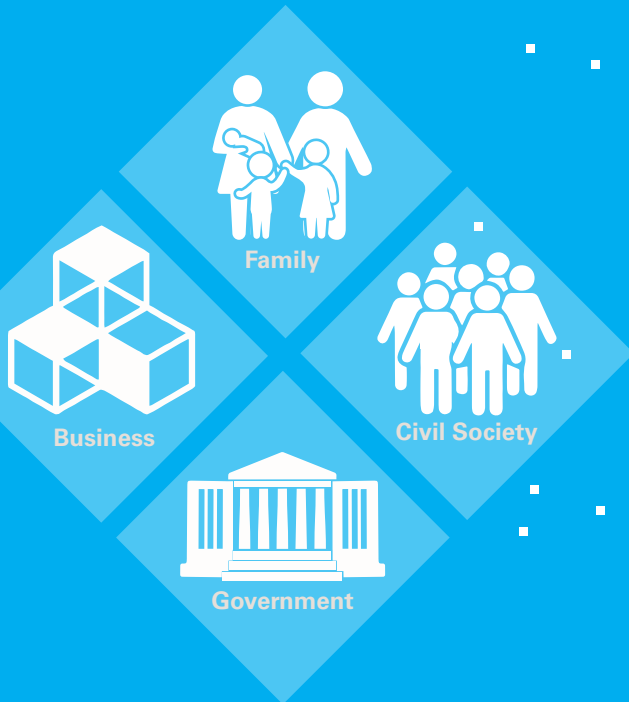
FOUR SETS OF POLICIES

1. Paid Parental Leave to Care for Young Children

2. Support for Breastfeeding

3. Affordable, Accessible and Quality Childcare

4. Child Benefits

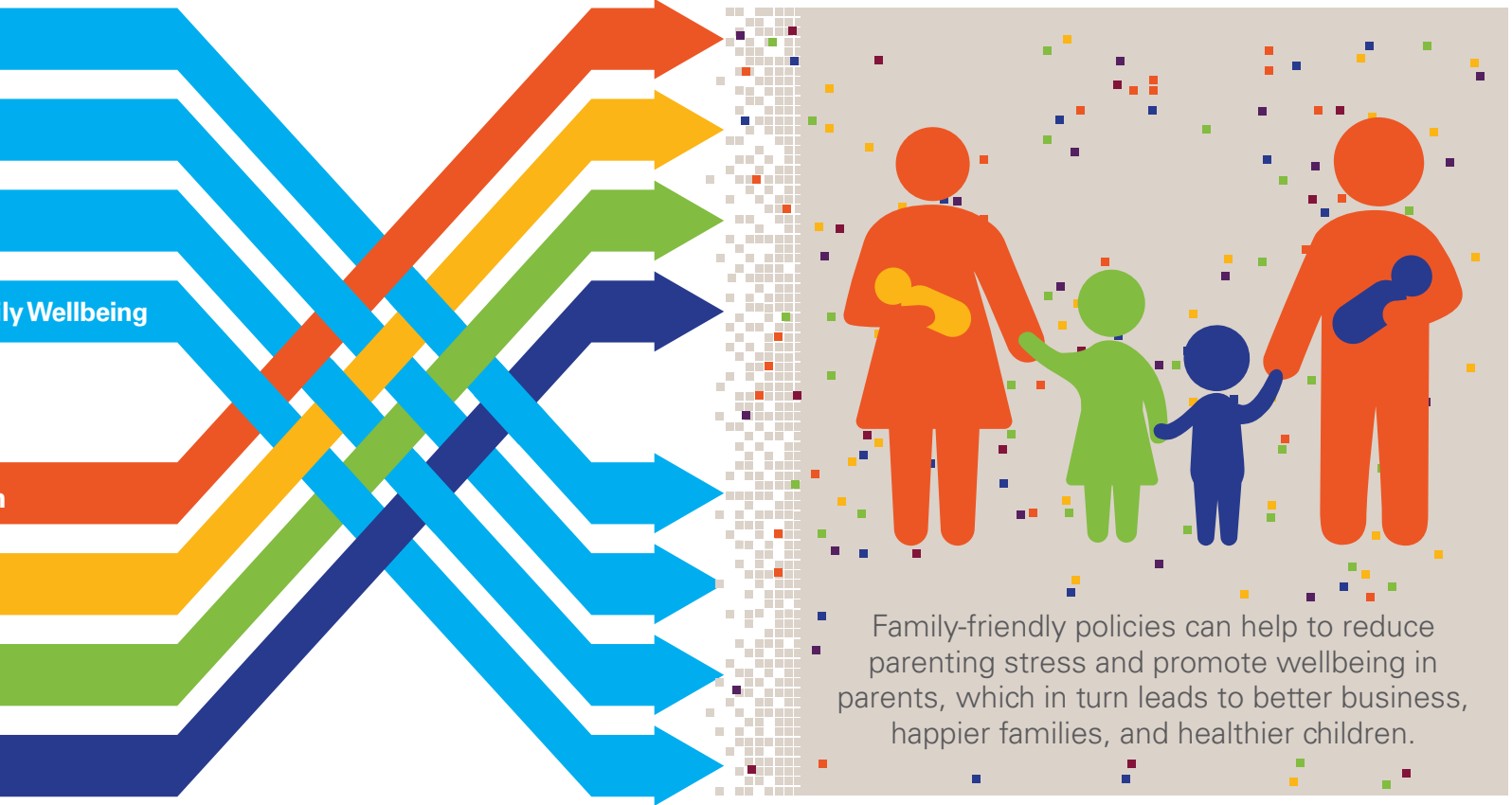


parents around the world. Many children in low- and middle-income countries lack adequate childcare and nutrition. To address this situation, for the first time, United Nations agencies, governments, the private sector, and civil society are coming together to commit to the realization of family-friendly policies at work. Each has an important role to play, and through collaboration, more can be achieved than by any one player alone. Governments set policies, guided by evidence of what is in the interests of their citizens and economies. The private sector implements government policies in the workplace, but also innovates and leads when there are benefits to its enterprise. Many governments and companies have already adopted family-friendly policies and procedures, with maternity leave and increasingly paternity leave, being good examples. However, the changes are neither fast enough nor substantial enough to address the balance that workers strive to achieve between work and family. The global crisis in childcare and the evidence for the benefits of family-friendly policies call for collective voice, urgent action, greater investment, universal adoption and compliance in implementation.

This policy brief draws on the substantial evidence on the health, educational, and economic benefits

of family-friendly policies to recommend four transformative shifts in workplaces:

- From 'maternal' to 'parental' leave: Time and support for all key caregivers is important for young children's development.
- From 'infrastructure' to 'people': These policies should go beyond infrastructure changes such as safer work conditions and breastfeeding rooms, to a strengthened approach of investing in families so they can provide both time and support to their young children.
- From 'individual' to 'co-responsibility': It is also crucial to move from viewing work-family balance as an individual matter to a shared responsibility of governments, private sector employers and families.
- From 'reducing parental stress' to 'enhancing family wellbeing': Social structures and the work environment have been shown to affect stresses associated with parenting. Family-friendly policies can help to reduce parenting stress and promote wellbeing among parents. This, in turn, leads to better businesses, happier families, and healthier children.



Family-friendly policies can help to reduce parenting stress and promote wellbeing in parents, which in turn leads to better business, happier families, and healthier children.

The recommendations presented in this policy brief are supported by state of the art information from six evidence briefs. The recommendations cover four sets of effective policies that span pregnancy to when children start formal schooling. These policies help to address the needs of parents and families for adequate time, resources, and services to care for their young children, while fulfilling their work obligations, staying in their jobs and improving/unlocking their skills and productivity. This brief also highlights the powerful roles that governments, employers and civil society together can play in advocating for and implementing family-friendly policies, in order to reap the returns that these investments have on human and economic development.

The four sets of policies are:

1. Sufficient paid leave to all parents and guardians, in both the formal and informal economies, to meet the needs of their young children. This includes paid maternity, paternity, and parental leave, and leave to care for sick young children.
2. Supporting the ability of mothers to breastfeed exclusively for six months, as recommended by global endorsed standards, and to continue

- breastfeeding for as long as they choose.
3. Ensuring that all children have access to affordable, quality childcare and early education.
4. Providing child benefits and adequate wages to help families provide for young children.

In conclusion, to be effective, family-friendly policies need to be designed as a holistic and balanced package of time-related, resource-related and service-related policies to provide adequate provisions. The policies need to accommodate a variety of family forms and non-standard work situations and consider the range of roles that women perform as workers and caregivers. Four key actors are needed to advance family-friendly policies as four corners of a diamond: the State, businesses, families and civil society (including international organizations, trade unions, community-based organizations, the non-profit sector and informal networks). This “diamond of care” can come together in an integrated approach for family-friendly policies. Family-friendly policies are not just the right thing to do, but also the smart and equitable thing to do.

1. Paid Parental Leave to Care for Young Children

Family-Friendly Policy 1: Paid Parental Leave to Care for Young Children

What is it?

Job protected paid leave of absence for working women and men, typically starting just before the time of childbirth (or adoption in some countries). Typically referred to as paid maternity leave, paid paternity leave and parental leave.

What is the current situation?

- Estimates from the International Labour Organization in 2014, indicated that 830 million women workers globally were not adequately covered by maternity protection, including maternity leave. Almost two thirds of the world's children under 1 year old – nearly 90 million – live in countries where their fathers are not entitled by law to a single day of paid paternity leave, according to a new UNICEF analysis.

Importance for the health and development of children and parents

Paid parental leave ensures parents have the necessary time to bond with their young children, whether born to them or adopted, and to meet children's critical health, nutritional, and developmental needs.

- Infant mortality rates drop- by approximately 3 per cent in high-income countries, even though infant mortality rates may already be low in several of these countries. In low-and-middle income countries, a one-month increase in paid maternity leave has been found to reduce infant mortality rates by 13 per cent.
- Women are significantly more likely to immediately initiate breastfeeding, to exclusively breastfeed for the first six months, and to breastfeed for longer periods of time. A one-month increase in paid parental leave for mothers leads to more than a two-month increase in breastfeeding duration.
- Infants are significantly less likely to have bloody diarrhea and significantly more likely to have scheduled immunizations. A one month increase in paid maternity leave leads to a 35 per cent reduction in bloody diarrhoea.
- Giving parents the opportunity to bond with their infants at this critical phase in a child's life ensures essential preventive care, and healthy development in childhood and across the lifespan. Nurturing parent-child interactions early in life influences healthy development throughout childhood and into adulthood.
- Fathers who take paternity leave are more involved in early childcare, share household work more equally, and can support mothers' breastfeeding – all of which help to reduce post-partum depression.

All of these factors benefit healthy child development, parental wellbeing, enhanced gender equality in decision-making in the

household, enhanced gender equality in the workforce, and greater long-term economic opportunities for women and families.

The economic benefits to paid parental leave are substantial and accrue to families, businesses, and countries

- Families benefit by not losing income at a critical time when their infants are born or adopted and families' needs increase. Paid parental leave has short- and long-term positive effects on family income. In high-income countries, each additional week of paid parental leave is associated with a 4.2 per cent lower chance of single mothers living in poverty.
- Women's advancement in the labour force is strengthened, bringing positive benefits for women, their employers and women's and family income. Paid maternity leave can increase women's wages from 1 to 5 years after birth of the child.
- Increased labour force participation contributes to lower turnover rates among new parents that benefit business through lower turnover, lower recruitment and training costs, and retention of the higher productivity of experienced employees
- Women's equal participation in the workforce would add \$12 trillion to the global economy by 2025. For countries that have had these policies in place for the past several decades, increases in female employment have boosted gross domestic product per capita growth by between 10 per cent and 20 per cent.
- In general, access to leave is associated with increased employment and earnings for mothers. For example, recent data from the United States indicate that with provision of leave, mothers' wages rose 10 per cent to 17 per cent and the number of hours and weeks worked also increased. As a result of increased job retention and labour force attachment, paid leave can reduce families' need for public assistance. Data indicate that women who do not have paid leave are less likely to return to work leading to higher recruitment and training costs for employers.

Importance of paid leave to care for sick children

Parental care is crucial when young children become sick. Childcare environments are not designed to care for sick children. They have neither the staffing nor the ability to prevent the spread of common infectious diseases. As a result, it is crucial that parents can take paid leave to care for sick children. Around the world, 119 countries have devised ways to guarantee leave from work when children are sick. This plays a critically important role in the care of sick children, relieving parental anxiety about both the child and work, and ensuring that parents don't lose jobs as a result of caring for a sick child.



2. Support for Breastfeeding

Recommendations for governments and businesses

1. Governments should establish, implement and monitor a national paid parental leave policy that guarantees paid leave for both parents. Both governments and businesses should ensure that paid parental leave is implemented, and they should champion paternity leave as being equally important as paid maternity leave. They should provide guarantees of paid paternity leave in addition to maternity leave, and both should jointly ensure job protection and promote the uptake of parental leave by men.
2. Both governments and businesses should ensure at least 18 weeks of paid maternity leave, and at least¹ 6 months of paid maternity, paternity and parental leave, after the birth of the child. Paid parental leave should be of sufficient duration to provide for parental care until affordable and quality infant care is available. Both governments and businesses should strive to provide combined leave for parents of at least nine months, after the birth of the child.
3. Both governments and businesses should work together to create mechanisms to ensure that paid parental leave is made available to women in both formal and informal economies. This leave should be provided through social insurance or another system available to all women, regardless of whether they have a formal sector employer. Both governments and businesses should ensure that the leave is paid at a rate sufficient to make it feasible for all parents to take in order to meet their family needs.
4. Both governments and businesses should prohibit discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, marital or family status and of leave associated with family responsibility. They must effectively enforce these protections and collaborate to provide training to managers and staff regarding the value of employee retention and productivity resulting from parental leave and leave for care of sick children.
5. Both governments and businesses should provide parents with paid leave to care for sick children and implement leave specifically for the care of a child's health needs. Businesses should bolster these efforts on parental leave, generate evidence on its benefits and raise awareness among business partners, employees, consumers and the wider public.

Family-Friendly Policy 2: Support for Breastfeeding

What is it?

Remunerated breastfeeding, lactation breaks during working hours to accommodate breastfeeding or expressing of breastmilk at work and a supportive breastfeeding environment (including

adequate facilities) enable mothers to continue exclusive or complimentary breastfeeding after returning to work.

What is the current situation?

Only 40 per cent of children younger than six months of age are exclusively breastfed as recommended, far lower than the 2030 target of 70 per cent. The workplace setting represents a substantial barrier to continue breastfeeding among families that wish to breastfeed. Most countries recommend that employers provide space and paid breaks within the working day for breastfeeding, but 16 per cent still do not have any statutory requirements for this.

Importance for the health and development of children and parents

- Breastfeeding confers remarkable benefits to infant, child, and maternal health. There is strong evidence that breastfeeding contributes to lower rates of acute infant and chronic child illness as well as improved cognitive and educational outcomes. With adequate scaling up of breastfeeding to recommended levels, more than 820,000 lives of children under 5 years of age could be saved.
- The maternal health benefits are also substantial, including lower rates of postnatal depression, improved physical health and a reduction in the lifetime risk of breast cancer. With adequate scaling up of breastfeeding to recommended levels, more than 20,000 cases of breast cancer could be prevented.
- While the benefits of breastfeeding are greatest in low-income settings, the benefits are powerful in all settings and occur as a result of immune protection, healthy metabolism, and early psychological security.

As a result of these life-saving and life-changing benefits, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and others recommend that mothers initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth and that infants be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life, with continued breastfeeding, combined with other food sources, from six months.

Importance for women's empowerment, businesses and the economy

- Provision of paid maternity leave increases the likelihood that women initiate breastfeeding early and continuation of exclusive breastfeeding rises substantially. Women with six months or more maternity leave are at least 30 per cent more likely to maintain any breastfeeding for at least the first six months of their baby's life.
- Comfortable space for pumping when children are not nearby and space for breastfeeding when children are nearby, storage space for expressed milk and breaks from work to express



3. Affordable, Accessible and Quality Childcare

breastmilk, yield a return to investment of 3 to 1 because of savings on reduced turnover, increased employee retention, and reduced absences related to child illness.

- Optimal breastfeeding practices produce societal benefits through reduction of health care costs of US \$300 billion and an estimated \$35 to \$1 return on investment

Recommendations for governments and businesses

1. Both governments and business should provide at least 18 weeks paid maternity leave; and at least 6 months of paid maternity, paternity and parental leave², after birth of a child. In line with national policy and beyond, businesses should guarantee paid maternity leave and remunerated breastfeeding breaks at work to facilitate the ability of mothers to breastfeed for the duration of their choice.
2. Governments should pass and implement laws that guarantee breastfeeding breaks.
3. Workplaces should provide safe, clean, hygienic, and culturally appropriate space for women to breastfeed and/or express milk, and refrigeration for the storage of expressed milk.
4. Businesses and governments should prohibit discrimination in the workplace on the basis of pregnancy, breastfeeding, or family status. Businesses should ensure monitoring of workplace discrimination.
5. Business leaders and their networks should lead coalitions with governments and civil society actors to raise awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding and family-friendly policies for children's health and development.
6. Employers should provide training to managers about the benefits of breastfeeding in terms of higher employee retention, lower turnover costs, health benefits to the child and mother, and lower absenteeism due to child illness. Businesses should advocate for stronger government policy on breastfeeding support in the workplace.

Family-Friendly Policy 3: Affordable, Accessible and Quality Childcare

What is it?

Universal access to quality affordable childcare from the end of parental leave to children's entry into the first grade of school, including before- and after-care for young children and pre-primary programmes.

What is the current situation?

While many European countries have near universal childcare, this is not the situation in lower- and middle-income countries (and in

some high-income countries as well). Forty per cent of countries in the Global South that were surveyed did not have any statutory entitlement for childcare services to be offered by the State or by employers.

Importance for the health and development of children and parents

- Children who receive quality and nurturing early childcare are healthier, learn better and stay in school longer, and have higher earnings as adults.
- Quality affordable childcare enables working parents to meet their work obligations and aspirations as well as be productive at work and be the good parents they want to be at home.

Importance for women's empowerment, businesses and the economy

- Childcare and flexible hours for parents with young children, are associated with reduced parental stress, absenteeism and staff turnover as well as increased staff satisfaction and commitment.
- Quality affordable childcare leads to increases in women's labour participation.
- Quality affordable childcare benefits the economy. It has been estimated that increasing the number of women in the workforce would raise gross domestic product in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, for example, by 12 per cent by 2030.
- The benefits of improved early childhood development, including through quality affordable childcare, are estimated to result in a 7 per cent return to society on investment, often considerably higher.

Recommendations for governments and businesses

1. Governments should initiate and develop cross-sector national early childhood development policies and plans in collaboration with businesses and civil society, to meet the needs of working families in both the formal and informal sectors.
2. Governments should assure universal access to quality affordable childcare from the end of parental leave to children's entry into the first grade of school, including before- and after-care for young children in pre-primary programmes. Governments should allocate public funds with the support of the private sector and donors, and subsidize childcare provision, at home and in centres and in community-based facilities. Such efforts should ensure full inclusion and capacity development of the childcare workforce to address the needs of children with disabilities.
3. Building upon government policies, businesses should assess any remaining employee childcare needs, in collaboration with worker representatives and labour unions, invest in solutions to



4. Child Benefits

meet these needs and, where appropriate, support meeting any remaining needs of the surrounding community.

- Employers and labour unions should work together to ensure safe working conditions for pregnant women and their children, minimize shift work and long, unpredictable working hours of parents with young children, and introduce flexible working arrangements to enable parents to take care of their children.
- Governments should allocate public funds and seek the support of the private sector and donors to develop the capacity and sustainability of the childcare workforce.

Family-Friendly Policy 4: Child Benefits

What is it?

Child benefits are regular cash transfers provided to an identified caregiver of children who live in a defined jurisdiction. These child benefits should be part of a system of social protection for young children including access to quality social services.

What is the current situation?

A recent analysis indicates that about 35 per cent of households globally receive child/family cash benefits, varying from 88 per cent in Europe and Central Asia, to 28 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 16 per cent in Africa. This means that the majority of children in the poorest countries, living in the poorest households, do not yet benefit from cash grants to support their development.

An adequate living/minimum wage should be considered as a complementary policy initiative to support working parents and their families. This has proven to be beneficial to lift families out of poverty and should be considered as part of the package of family-friendly policies.

Importance for the health and development of children and parents

- Child grants in many parts of the world have been shown to improve, amongst others, pregnancy care and child immunizations, and improved food security.
- Child benefits also improve educational attendance; for example, girls' enrolment into school and transition from primary to secondary schooling.
- Families receiving child grants, as part of a larger social protection system, have been found to make investments and gain access to labour markets that help them escape destitution. These initiatives increase food security for families with young children, with onward benefits for health, wellbeing and education.

Importance for female empowerment, business and the economy

- 250 million children under five in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of not reaching their development potential because of extreme poverty and stunting.
- World Bank research in some countries indicates that adults who suffered early childhood malnutrition lose 12% of potential earnings due to lower labour productivity.
- Social protection programmes, of which child grants are often a large part, can also improve macroeconomic resilience, especially when households face natural disasters and other unforeseen shocks.
- The majority of working women, especially in the Global South (61 per cent overall and 87 percent in Africa and 88 per cent in India) – fall outside maternity protection interventions which impacts significantly on their ability to intervene in support of ECD outcomes.

Recommendations for governments

- Governments should adopt policies to rapidly expand coverage of cash benefit for all children, starting with the youngest children and working towards universal coverage.
- Governments should undertake analysis to determine the optimal parameters for effective implementation, including the amount per child and modalities and operations for payment.
- Businesses should collaborate with governments to ensure that barriers to access are removed so that all children, especially the most vulnerable, receive the benefit. The most vulnerable often include children who live in rural areas, are sick or marginalized, and caregivers who may be less informed of their rights and procedures for access or less able to access them.
- Governments should set minimum wages at levels that are adequate to support families. Businesses should bolster these efforts by going beyond legal compliance and paying particular attention to working conditions and strong wages for families in their own workplaces and in their supply chains.
- Governments should monitor roll-out and access to child benefits, regularly assess impacts and make any necessary adjustments to maximize individual and social benefits.

1, 2. The six months of paid leave is needed to promote and support exclusive breastfeeding.



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