

# CARE AND CAREERS: NAVIGATING CAREGIVING AND WORK RESPONSIBILITIES



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
The Working Caregiver Profile	5
The Impact of Caregiving	11
Caregiving and Organizational Culture	20
Recommendations	22
Conclusion	24
Sample Demographics and Methodology	24

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. *The profile of workers with caregiving responsibilities is becoming increasingly diverse, reflecting shifts in demographics, caregiving roles, and the relationships between caregivers and those they support.* With caregiving roles extending beyond traditional family structures, forward-thinking organizations must recognize these evolving dynamics and adopt proactive strategies to address the needs of today's and tomorrow's caregivers. Nearly **1 in 4** working caregivers (**23%**) in our sample manage dual or multiple roles, such as caring for both children and elders (the “sandwich generation”). An aging population has also increased the focus on elder care, which is the most anticipated care responsibility among workers who are not currently primary caregivers but anticipate becoming one in five years (**13%**).
2. *Caregiving responsibilities and access to adequate caregiving support significantly influence working caregivers' career decisions.* Over **2 in 5** working caregivers (**42%**) say their caregiving responsibilities hinder their career advancement. Some challenges they face include unpredictable care needs interrupting their work (**32%**) and trouble balancing caregiving responsibilities with job responsibilities (**26%**). These demands can influence key decisions about careers. For example, working caregivers say they are willing to change jobs for better caregiving support — even if it requires a career shift (**47%**), less meaningful work (**38%**), or moving to an area they wouldn't otherwise move to (**28%**).
3. *Over half of working caregivers with employment gaps cite caregiving as the reason (54%), a reality often misunderstood by HR professionals, who most commonly attribute applicants' employment gaps to trouble finding a job (47%).* This disconnect exacerbates the long-term impacts caregiving responsibilities can have on caregivers' career growth, financial stability, and mental health. More than half of working caregivers with employment gaps due to caregiving say these gaps have had a negative impact on their transition back to employment (**52%**) and their ability to get the job they want (**57%**). Among unemployed caregivers who have tried to enter or re-enter the workforce, **3 in 4** report their employment gap due to caregiving responsibilities has had a negative impact on their entry or re-entry into the workforce (**74%**).
4. *Managers with caregiving responsibilities are rated by direct reports as performing as well as or better than managers without caregiving responsibilities in key areas such as coaching and mentorship (59% perform the same; 28% perform better), and conflict resolution (61% perform the same; 28% perform better).* Despite these strengths, working caregivers in management, compared to those in individual contributor roles, are more likely to say their caregiving responsibilities hinder their career advancement (**45%** versus **40%**) and to report higher rates of poor treatment in the workplace due to their caregiving responsibilities (**23%** versus **17%**).
5. *Some caregivers are reluctant to disclose their caregiver status, fearing stigma or negative repercussions in the workplace.* This hesitation is reflected in the percentage of caregivers who choose not to disclose their status to employers (**32%**), managers (**22%**), or co-workers (**27%**). This hesitation may not be unfounded, as **1 in 5** caregivers say they have been treated poorly at work because of their caregiving responsibilities (**20%**). Even when caregivers do disclose their status, reactions are inconsistent. Some experienced empathy and support (**48%**), while others faced scrutiny (**22%**) or a reduction in opportunities (**16%**).

# INTRODUCTION

Caregiving responsibilities have become a defining aspect of life for a sizable portion of today's workforce. According to the most recent data available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' American Time Use Survey, [30.6% of the employed population ages 18 and older provided care to a household and/or non-household member on an average day in 2023](#).<sup>1</sup> Working caregivers must balance their professional obligations with caring for aging parents, children, and/or other family members, and for most, caregiving<sup>2</sup> is not a short-term commitment — at least **80%** of caregivers expect their responsibilities to last long-term. This dual role forces many caregivers to make challenging decisions that impact both their careers and well-being, often on a daily and long-term basis.

What's more, a lack of sufficient support exacerbates these challenges, with **28%** of working caregivers saying they have had to reduce their hours, **21%** scale back their workloads, and **14%** change jobs in search of greater flexibility in the past year due to insufficient support for their caregiving responsibilities. Some have turned to self-employment or paused their retirement contributions, underscoring the financial and professional sacrifices they make. These actions can have far-reaching consequences for organizations striving to attract and retain top talent.

With caregivers representing a growing segment of the workforce, organizations that recognize and address their unique needs are better equipped to strengthen recruitment, foster engagement, and retain talent.<sup>3</sup> By creating a work environment that acknowledges the challenges caregivers face and offers practical solutions, organizations can prepare to meet both current and future workforce needs.

Given the importance of this topic, SHRM gathered data from 1,470 HR professionals,<sup>4</sup> 3,042 working caregivers, 1,249 unemployed caregivers, and 1,543 workers without caregiving responsibilities and used it for the following objectives:

1. Understand the current and future needs of workers with caregiving responsibilities.
2. Examine the impact that being a working caregiver has on personal outcomes, such as career decisions and well-being.
3. Examine the impact that being a working caregiver has on organizational outcomes.

## SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES WITH CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES ...

... is no longer a choice but a necessity for organizations aiming to build a resilient and competitive workforce. This research sheds light on the unique challenges and needs of current and future caregivers, providing organizations with critical insights to enhance and adapt their support systems. By leveraging this knowledge, employers can create comprehensive solutions that empower caregivers while fostering a stronger, more engaged workforce.

<sup>1</sup> SHRM calculation based on American Time Use Survey (ATUS) microdata downloaded from IPUMS ATUS, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

<sup>2</sup> In this research, a primary caregiver was defined as an individual who assists another person in their daily functioning needs on a regular basis. The primary caregiver may perform a wide variety of tasks, which include assisting with activities of daily living, household management, grocery shopping, preparing meals, providing financial support, and/or providing transportation. This caregiving is on a personal level and is unpaid, not in a professional capacity. Categories of caregivers are child, adult, and elder caregivers. Categories of caregivers were not mutually exclusive.

<sup>3</sup> In conjunction with this caregiver-focused report is an additional companion report, [The Caregiving Imperative: Organizational Solutions for Supporting Caregivers and Elevating Business Performance](#). This report focuses on guiding employers on how to support their employees with caregiving responsibilities.

<sup>4</sup> The HR professionals survey was fielded electronically in September 2024 using SHRM's Voice of Work Panel. A total of 1,470 HR professionals were surveyed and answered on behalf of their employers. Access detailed information about the sample [here](#).

# THE WORKING CAREGIVER PROFILE



## Child Caregiver:

A primary caregiver to one or more individuals ages 0-17, including but not limited to biological, step, or foster children; legal wards; nieces/nephews; siblings under the age of 18; or children for whom one stands in loco parentis for.



## Adult Caregiver:

A primary caregiver to one or more individuals ages 18-64 with a disability or health impediment, including but not limited to a spouse, sibling, cousin, or adult child.



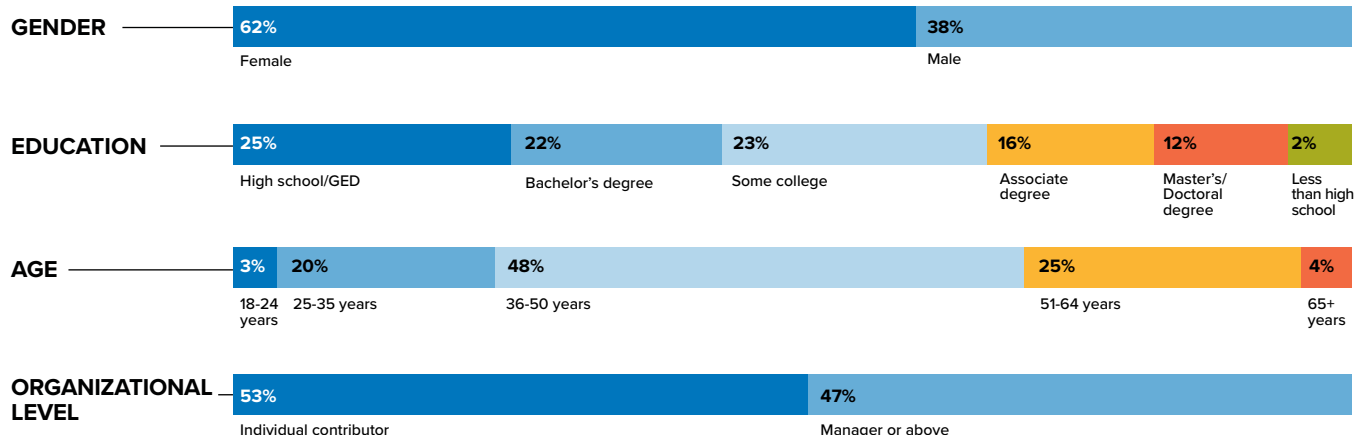
## Elder Caregiver:

A primary caregiver to one or more individuals ages 65 and older, including but not limited to parents, in-laws, grandparents, or aunts/uncles.



Caregiving dynamics have evolved significantly in recent years. While caregivers are still disproportionately women, the profile of caregivers has expanded, reflecting a broader spectrum of ages, genders, and backgrounds united by a shared commitment to care for others.

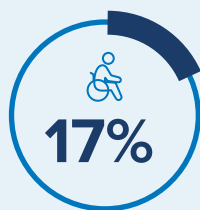
## Who Are Working Caregivers?



## WHO ARE WORKING CAREGIVERS PROVIDING CARE FOR?



Children only



Adults only



Elders only

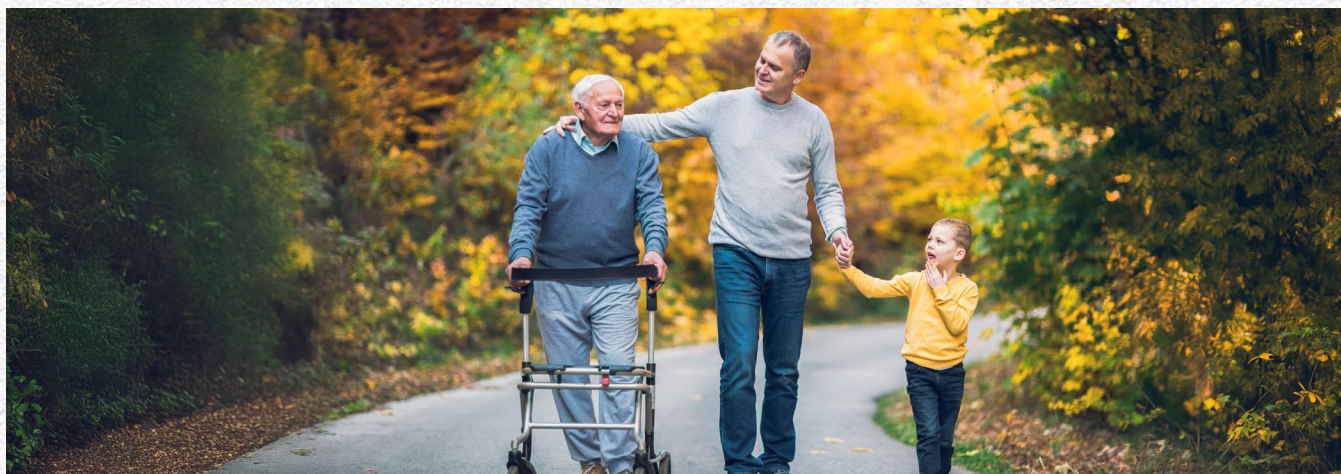


Multiple care responsibilities

While the most common relationship working caregivers have with those they're caring for is that of a parent, child, or spouse, some provide care for grandparents, grandchildren, siblings, and/or in-laws, highlighting how different types of relationships exist between caregivers and those being cared for.

The changes in who caregivers are and the variety of relationships they have with the ones they're providing care for highlight the need for HR policies and practices to proactively address modern and future caregiver needs. For example, the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is often the first avenue employers take to address caregiver needs by providing eligible employees 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year to address certain qualifying events. However, **75%** of employers say FMLA requirements are outdated and should be updated,<sup>5</sup> as the law's narrow definition of eligible relationships (spouses, parents, and children under 18) fails to account for the evolving caregiving role that now often extends beyond those family members. This underscores the urgent need for policy updates to reflect these modern dynamics. Some states recognize the limitations of FMLA to address the needs of current and future caregivers and have set more expansive FMLA standards or expanded other family leave programs.

Additionally, the support caregivers need extends beyond temporary leave, as almost all caregivers in our sample (**90%** of child caregivers, **80%** of adult caregivers, and **85%** of elder caregivers) anticipate the care they provide to be long-term, lasting more than a year. Despite the long-term commitment that caregivers have, nearly half of all working caregivers lack consistent support, such as a second primary caregiver, in their care responsibilities for children (**47%**), adults (**56%**), or elders (**50%**). These persistent gaps in care and support reveal a critical need for organizations to address the challenges faced by employees balancing caregiving responsibilities with their professional roles.



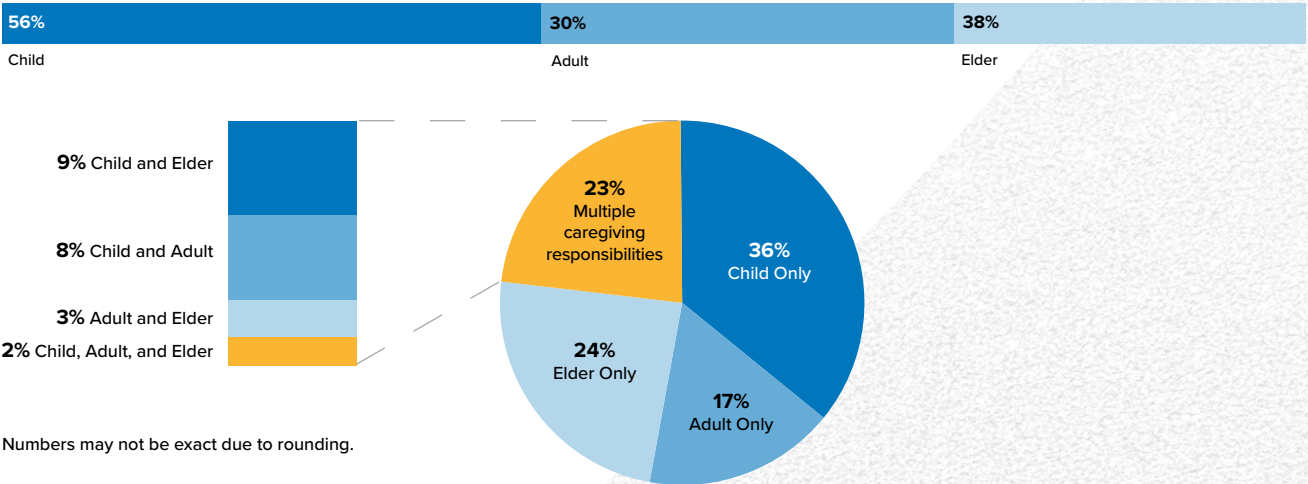
<sup>5</sup>[The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 Reimagined, SHRM, 2025.](#)

# THE CURRENT CARE LANDSCAPE



Nearly **1 in 4** working caregivers provide more than one type of care.

Are you currently a primary caregiver for any of the following? Please select all that apply.



## JUGGLING MULTIPLE CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES

Nearly **1 in 4** working caregivers (**23%**) in our sample manage dual or multiple caregiving roles, such as caring for both children and elders (the “sandwich generation”), adults and elders, or even all three groups. These caregivers face unique challenges at work, including balancing competing demands, navigating unpredictable schedules, and managing heightened stress. Caregivers with more than one caregiving responsibility are significantly more likely to say their caregiving responsibilities hold them back from advancing their careers compared to caregivers with a single type of caregiving responsibility (**52% versus 40%**). They are also more likely to say they have been treated poorly at work because of their caregiving responsibilities (**26% versus 19%**). Not only does this unique role impact their experiences at work, but also the decisions they make about their work. Caregivers with multiple care responsibilities are significantly more likely to say they are willing to leave their current job for a different job that provides the caregiving support they need even if it pays less (**33% versus 21%**).



At least **1 in 5** elder and adult caregivers are caring for multiple elders or adults.

How many children/adults/elders are you the primary caregiver for? Please select all that apply.					
Children (ages 0-17)		Adults (ages 18-64)		Elders (ages 65+)	
<b>51%</b>	1 child	<b>77%</b>	1 adult	<b>76%</b>	1 elder
<b>30%</b>	2 children	<b>14%</b>	2 adults	<b>19%</b>	2 elders
<b>19%</b>	3+ children	<b>9%</b>	3+ adults	<b>5%</b>	3+ elders



Some of the common relationships working caregivers hold with the person they're caring for are not covered under the federal FMLA (e.g., grandparent, sibling, grandchild, niece, in-law).

Most common relationships working caregivers hold with the child/adult/elder to whom they are providing care <sup>6</sup> :					
Children (ages 0-17)		Adults (ages 18-64)		Elders (ages 65+)	
<b>89%</b>	Child <sup>7</sup>	<b>36%</b>	Spouse or partner	<b>66%</b>	Parent
<b>5%</b>	Grandchild	<b>21%</b>	Child	<b>13%</b>	Grandparent
<b>4%</b>	Niece/nephew	<b>19%</b>	Parent	<b>9%</b>	Friend/neighbor
<b>3%</b>	Legal ward	<b>11%</b>	Sibling	<b>8%</b>	In-law



<sup>6</sup>Survey respondents were able to select more than one response. Other relationships were listed, but only the most common ones are presented here.

<sup>7</sup>Child can be a biological, adopted, step, or foster child.



Thirty-seven percent of child caregivers and 90% of elder caregivers say the person they care for has a short-term disability, a long-term disability, or both.<sup>8</sup>

Does the person you're caring for have a short-term or long-term disability or medical need? Please select all that apply.					
Children (ages 0-17)		Adults (ages 18-64)		Elders (ages 65+)	
13%	Yes, short-term	N/A (the adults being cared for had to have a disability or medical need to be in this category)		21%	Yes, short-term
26%	Yes, long-term			74%	Yes, long-term
63%	No			10%	No



Roughly 1 in 2 working caregivers do not share their caregiving responsibilities with anyone else on a consistent basis.

Do you share your caregiving responsibilities with anyone else on a consistent basis (i.e., they are also a primary caregiver, such as a spouse, sibling, or in-home care provider)? Please select all that apply.					
Children (ages 0-17)		Adults (ages 18-64)		Elders (ages 65+)	
13%	Yes, they are paid	21%	Yes, they are paid	20%	Yes, they are paid
42%	Yes, they are unpaid	25%	Yes, they are unpaid	32%	Yes, they are unpaid
47%	No	56%	No	50%	No



<sup>8</sup>Since respondents were allowed to select all that apply, percentages may exceed 100% due to overlap (e.g., a caregiver selecting both short-term and long-term disabilities for the same individual). To avoid double counting, we calculated the percentage of caregivers who did not select “No.”

# THE FUTURE CARE LANDSCAPE

Forward-thinking organizations must prioritize strategies that support both their current and future workforce in the coming years. With the U.S. population aging and more older individuals in the workforce, the need for both formal and informal elder caregiving supports is intensifying. This demographic shift will directly impact the type of care employees provide and highlights the critical role of employer support in meeting these evolving challenges to remain competitive. Over the next five years, many working caregivers anticipate taking on new caregiving roles beyond their current responsibilities, with **14%** expecting to care for an adult, **18%** for an elder, and **21%** for a child.

It is equally important to consider employees who are not currently caregivers but foresee stepping into caregiving roles. Among this group, elder care is the most anticipated responsibility (**13%**). Additionally, many unemployed caregivers are looking to enter or re-enter the workforce, with **57%** actively trying or considering doing so. Of these individuals, **18%** also anticipate taking on new child caregiving duties within the next five years. Supporting both current and potential caregivers will be critical to building a resilient workforce.

Percentage who anticipate taking on new or additional caregiving responsibilities for a child, adult, or elder beyond their current existing responsibilities within the next 5 years:		
Working Caregivers	Unemployed Caregivers <sup>9</sup>	Working Non-Caregivers
21%: Child	18%: Child	5%: Child
14%: Adult	9%: Adult	3%: Adult
18%: Elder	11%: Elder	13%: Elder

## AN AGING POPULATION AND THE IMPACT ON ELDER CARE AND MULTIPLE CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES

The rapidly aging population will impact employers and caregivers. In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2023 National Population Projections, just over 1 in 5 Americans will be age 65 or older in 2030. The aging population and subsequent increase of older workers contribute to an increase in elder caregivers and those juggling multiple caregiving responsibilities (**23%** of our sample of caregivers had multiple caregiving responsibilities). This shift highlights how caregiving continues to adapt to meet the diverse and complex needs of today’s families and communities.

<sup>9</sup>Note: Out of unemployed caregivers who have thought about entering or re-entering the workforce in the past 12 months.

# THE IMPACT OF CAREGIVING

The challenges working caregivers face are not solely tied to their caregiving roles, but are compounded by inadequate sources of additional supports to meet their needs. The key issue for employers to address is not caregiving itself, but the lack of sufficient resources and structures in place to assist caregivers. These individuals constitute a significant and growing segment of the workforce, making them essential to both the present and future success of organizations. While employers may differ on what exactly their roles and responsibilities are in the larger caregiving landscape, those who proactively address the critical needs of caregivers in their workforce are better equipped to retain their talent and enhance productivity and performance.

## CAREGIVING OUT OF NECESSITY

Among workers who currently do not have caregiving responsibilities but anticipate taking them on in the next five years, more than in **1 in 4 (28%)** anticipate taking on the responsibility out of necessity, such as no one else being able to care for the individual or formal paid care being too expensive. This underscores the pressing reality that many workers are compelled to step into the caregiver role because of insufficient support systems and lack of accessible or viable alternatives.

## THE IMPACT OF CAREGIVING ON THE CAREGIVER

### CAREER DECISIONS

Being a primary caregiver profoundly shapes every aspect of life, from daily routines to long-term aspirations. For example, **78%** of workers who are not caregivers, but previously had caregiving responsibilities, say it is harder to be a primary caregiver while working now than ever before. Over **2 in 5** working caregivers (**42%**) say their caregiving responsibilities hold them back from advancing their career.

The demands of caregiving often influence key decisions about career paths, job opportunities, and professional growth. For example, working caregivers are willing to leave their current job for a job that provides the caregiver support they need, even if it requires them to make sacrifices. Even among workers who are not currently caregivers, those who anticipate becoming caregivers worry about the impact it can have on their jobs and careers, and some have even started looking for new jobs in anticipation.

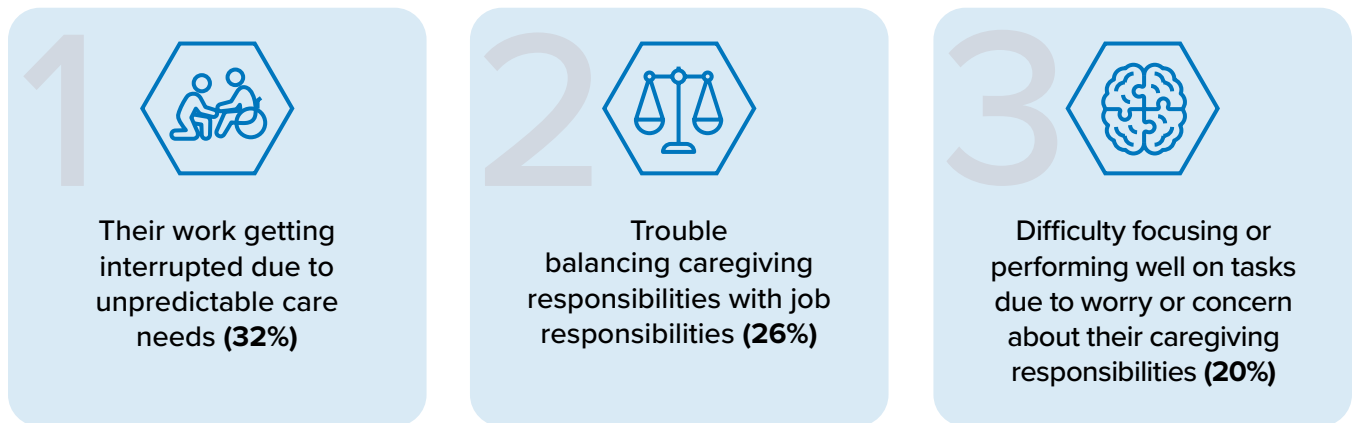
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Percentage of Working Caregivers Willing to Leave Their Current Job for a Job That Provides the Caregiving Support They Need, Even if It ...





## Top 3 Challenges Working Caregivers Face as Primary Caregivers



## Among Working Non-Caregivers Who Anticipate Becoming a Caregiver in the Next 5 Years ...



### SELF-EMPLOYMENT AS A SOLUTION

Many caregivers have turned to self-employment to balance their financial needs with their caregiving responsibilities. For 54% of self-employed caregivers, caregiving was the primary reason behind their decision to work for themselves, while an additional 25% cited it as a contributing factor.

# EMPLOYMENT GAPS

Balancing caregiving responsibilities with workplace demands often requires difficult choices and significant sacrifices. Caregivers find themselves delaying promotions, turning down leadership opportunities, or adjusting their career paths to meet the needs of their loved ones. For some, these adjustments go even further, leading to job changes, role shifts, or in some cases, a complete departure from the workforce, resulting in an employment gap.<sup>10</sup>

For caregivers with an employment gap on their resume, the most common reason was their caregiving responsibilities (**54%** of working caregivers and **55%** of unemployed caregivers). Interestingly, even **21%** of individuals who are not currently primary caregivers listed caregiving as one of the top three reasons for their employment gaps. Despite this clear trend, there is a notable mismatch in how caregiving-related gaps are perceived by employers. When HR professionals encounter an employment gap on a resume, the most common assumption they make is that the individual faced challenges finding a job, with a mere **11%** attributing gaps to caregiving responsibilities.<sup>11,12</sup>



## EMPLOYMENT GAPS GO BEYOND JOB HUNTING:

Caregiving is one of the most common reasons for employment gaps. However, HR professionals most commonly assume employment gaps are due to challenges finding a job.

## Reasons for Employment Gaps

WORKING CAREGIVERS	UNEMPLOYED CAREGIVERS	WORKING NON-CAREGIVERS	HR PROFESSIONALS' TOP ASSUMPTIONS
Caregiving for a child, adult, or elder ( <b>54%</b> )	Caregiving for a child, adult, or elder ( <b>55%</b> )	Laid off, terminated, trouble finding a job ( <b>39%</b> )	Laid off, terminated, trouble finding a job ( <b>47%</b> )
Personal health ( <b>33%</b> )	Personal health ( <b>44%</b> )	Personal health ( <b>27%</b> )	Career/job transition ( <b>20%</b> )
Laid off, terminated, trouble finding a job ( <b>25%</b> )	Laid off, terminated, trouble finding a job ( <b>18%</b> )	Caregiving for a child, adult, or elder ( <b>21%</b> )	Caregiving for a child, adult, or elder ( <b>11%</b> )

<sup>10</sup>For this research, an employment gap was defined as a period during their professional career where they did not have formal employment for more than six months.

<sup>11</sup>Working caregivers, unemployed caregivers, and working non-caregivers with employment gaps were asked if they had a gap in their employment of at least six months, followed up by a question asking, "What was the reason for your employment gap(s)? Select all that apply." HR professionals were asked "If an applicant has an employment gap of at least six months on their resume, what is the first assumption you make on the reason for the gap?"

<sup>12</sup>Twelve percent of HR professionals wrote in that they do not make assumptions when they see resume gaps, noting that they ask the applicant about the gap if needed.



More than **half** of **working caregivers** with career gaps due to caregiving say their career gap has had a **negative impact** on their ...



transition back  
into employment



ability to get the  
job they want



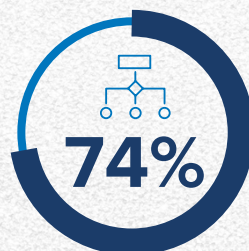
mental health



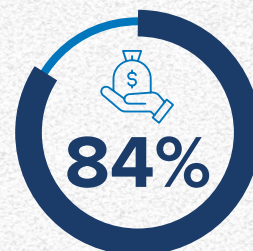
At least **3 in 4 unemployed caregivers** with career gaps due to caregiving who have tried to enter or re-enter the workforce say their career gap has had a **negative impact** on their ...



re-entry into the  
workforce



career growth



financial health

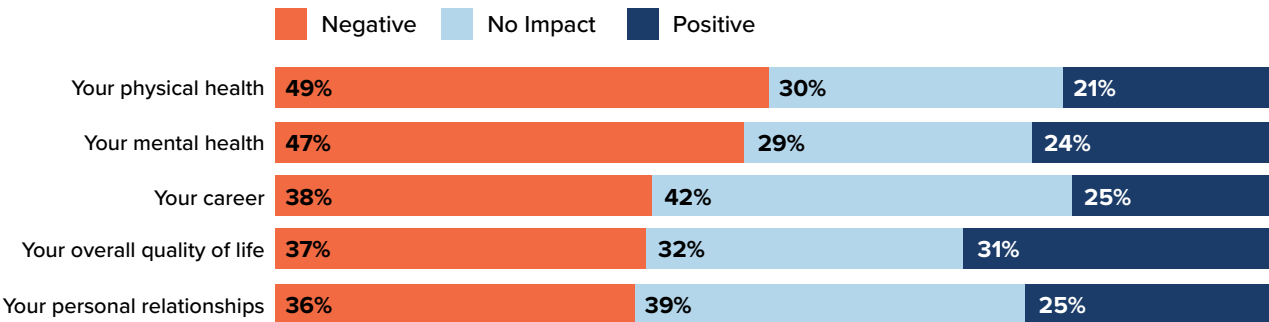
Caregiving responsibilities are a significant yet often overlooked factor in employment gaps, with more than half of caregivers citing it as the primary reason for their time away from work. Despite this reality, many HR professionals continue to misattribute employment gaps to difficulties finding a job, perpetuating a disconnect between caregivers' experiences and employer perceptions. This discrepancy not only overlooks the sacrifices caregivers make — such as adjusted career paths, delayed advancement, or leaving their jobs entirely — but also exacerbates the long-term effects on their career growth, financial stability, and mental health.

# CAREGIVER WELL-BEING

Caregiving has complex and varied implications for workers, with some finding profound meaning, purpose, and personal growth in supporting others. However, for many, the challenges of caregiving can take a toll on their well-being, causing disruptions in their physical, emotional, and/or financial health. For example, working caregivers were approximately twice as likely to say being a caregiver had a negative, instead of positive, impact on their physical health, mental health, and careers.

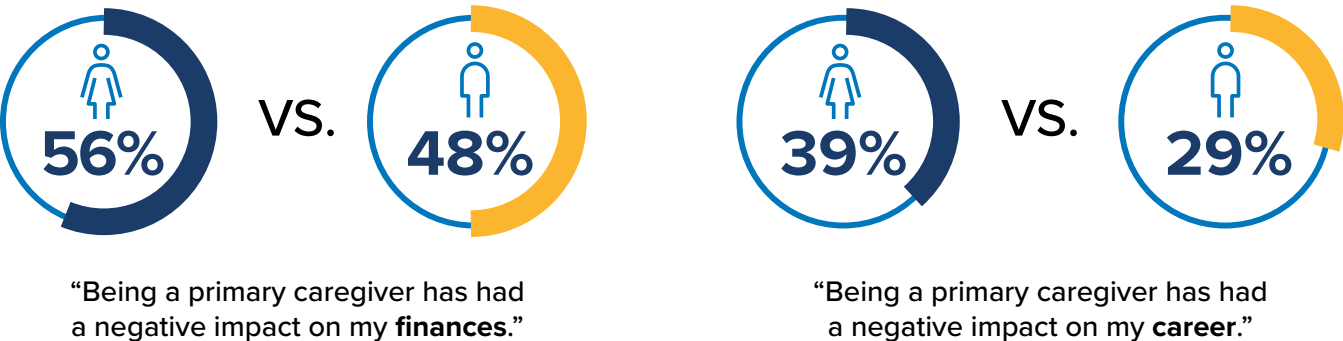
## The Impact of Caregiving on Worker Well-Being

Working caregivers were asked, “How has being a primary caregiver impacted the following?”

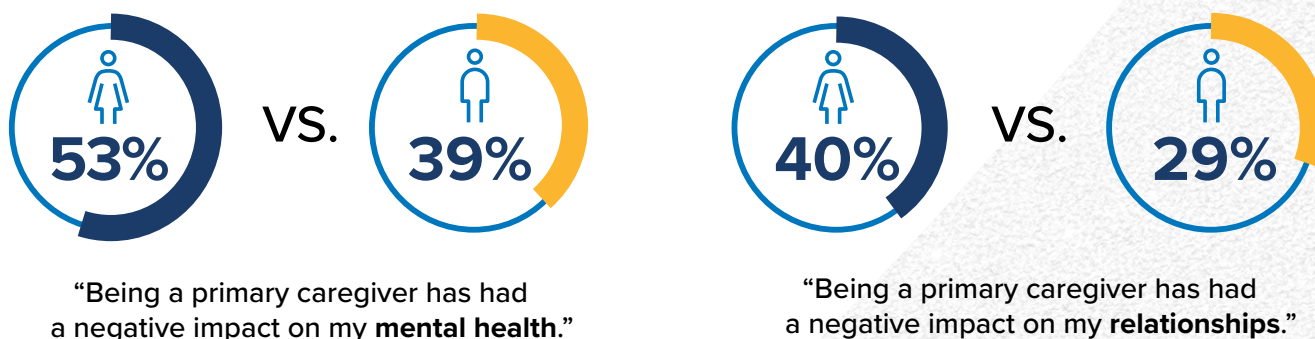


Despite shifts in the caregiver landscape, women have been, and continue to be, disproportionately responsible for the primary caregiver role. This dynamic has significant and far-reaching consequences for their well-being. For example, female working caregivers frequently face heightened financial strain, as caregiving responsibilities often lead to reduced income or halted career advancement. The research found that women were significantly more likely than men to say being a primary caregiver has had a negative impact on their finances and careers.

## Female Working Caregivers Are More Likely to Experience the Negative Impacts of Caregiving on Well-Being



These pressures are compounded with emotional stress as women manage the dual demands of work and caregiving, often with limited support and while neglecting their own health needs to prioritize those they care for. Female working caregivers are significantly more likely than their male counterparts to say being a primary caregiver has had a negative impact on their mental health and personal relationships.



Recognizing these challenges is critical in addressing the inequities female caregivers face, and providing tangible support systems is essential to reducing the undue burden placed on them.

## FINANCIAL WELL-BEING: NAVIGATING SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM FINANCIAL STRESS

Financial stress is a common challenge that impacts employees’ overall well-being, and for caregivers, this stress can be even greater. Caregiving often entails additional expenses, such as medical visits, housing adjustments, extra assistance, and increased cost of living. These financial pressures compound the stress caregivers already face, making it even more difficult to balance their responsibilities and maintain financial stability. In fact, more than half of working caregivers say that being a caregiver has had a negative impact on their finances (**53%**). What’s more, **15%** report taking on additional work or a second job in the past year because of insufficient support for their caregiving responsibilities.

**53%**

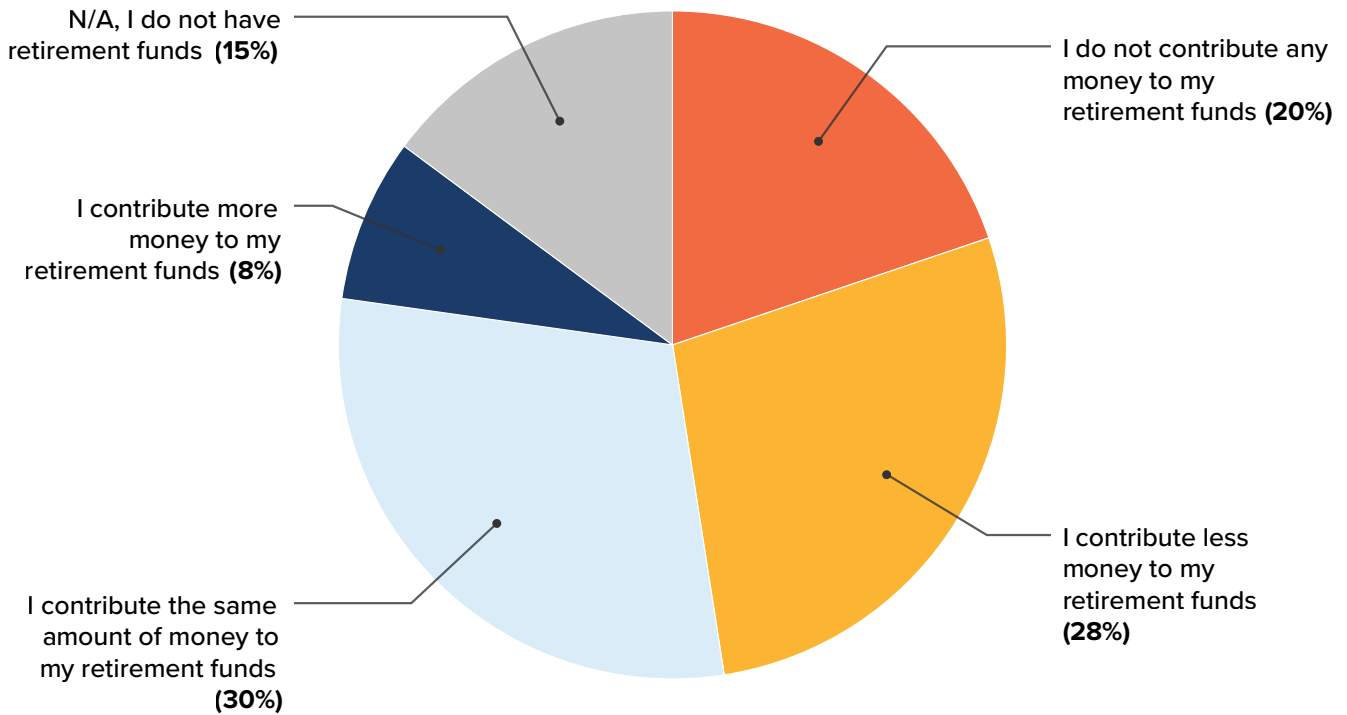
“Being a primary caregiver has had a negative impact on my finances.”

Caregiving often has a profound impact on financial choices, extending beyond immediate needs with cascading effects on long-term planning and financial security. For nearly half of working caregivers, the demands of their caregiving responsibilities have led them to reduce or halt contributions to their retirement funds, highlighting the significant and far-reaching financial trade-offs many caregivers face.



## Almost Half of Working Caregivers Reduced or Halted Contributions to Retirement Funds as a Result of Their Caregiving Responsibilities

Primary caregivers were asked: “As a result of my primary caregiving responsibilities ...”



# THE IMPACT OF CAREGIVING ON THE ORGANIZATION

Caregiving responsibilities profoundly impact not only employment and career choices but also the daily lives of caregivers. Many of the challenges they face stem not just from the inherent demands of caregiving, but also from a lack of adequate support systems to assist them. This absence of sufficient support forces caregivers into constant, often difficult decision-making that can ripple into larger career and life choices. These daily decisions frequently center on managing time, coping with stress, and juggling the competing demands of work and personal responsibilities, creating a continuous struggle to find balance. For employers, these challenges have significant implications for business operations, as the challenges caregivers face can undermine productivity, increase absenteeism, and contribute to higher turnover rates. For example:

- » Due to **insufficient** support for their caregiving responsibilities, in the past year,
  - » **48%** of working caregivers used vacation or personal days for caregiving.
  - » **28%** have had to reduce the number of hours they worked.
  - » **21%** have had to reduce their workload.
  - » **17%** turned down business travel opportunities.
  - » **15%** missed out on work-related trainings or workshops.
  - » **14%** have changed jobs for more flexibility.
- » Due to **insufficient** support for their caregiving responsibilities, caregivers report:
  - » Unexpectedly missing an average of **1.2 days** of work a month.
  - » Unexpectedly showing up to work late or leaving early **1.6 days** a month.
  - » Not performing to the best of their abilities **2.3 days** a month.

## THE COST OF INSUFFICIENT SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES

Caregivers report unexpectedly missing an average of 1.2 days of work a month due to insufficient support for their caregiving responsibilities. This translates to an average of **\$17.5 billion**<sup>13</sup> lost every month in wages due to insufficient support.

## CAREGIVER PERFORMANCE

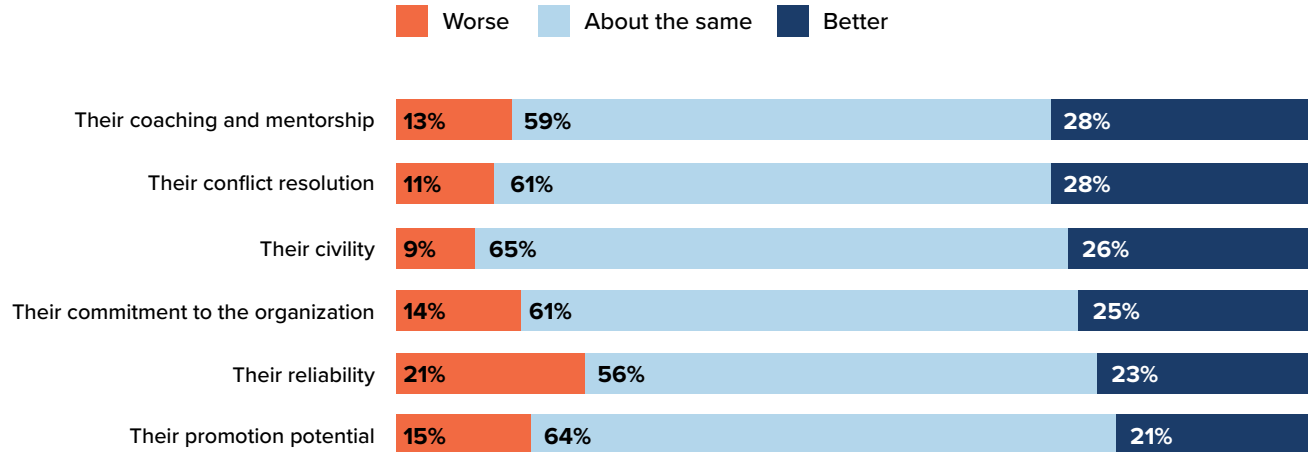
Caregiving experiences equip employees with valuable skills that enhance their professional roles, with colleagues often recognizing their contributions. Non-caregivers say that managers who are caregivers perform as well as or better than their peers without caregiving responsibilities in key areas such as coaching, mentorship, conflict resolution, and organizational commitment.

<sup>13</sup>This number was calculated by making the following assumptions: 1) [average hourly pay of \\$35.46](#) in October 2024, 2) [an average daily total of 8.09 working hours](#), 3) [a civilian, 18+ working population size of 166.19 billion](#), and 4) [30.6% of the civilian, 18+ working population providing care on a given day](#). The lost wages assume that the unexpected missed day of work is unpaid.



## Direct Reports Rate the Performance of Their Managers with Caregiving Responsibilities as Better Than or the Same as Managers Without Caregiving Responsibilities

In your experience, how would you rate managers with caregiving responsibilities on the following attributes compared to managers without caregiving responsibilities?

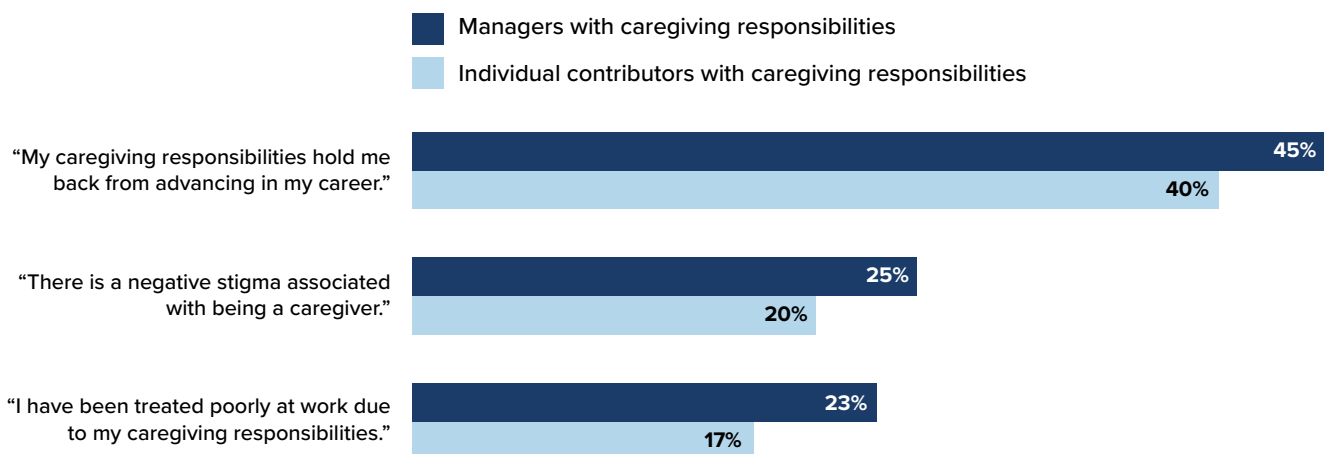


Question was asked of a sample of employees without caregiving responsibilities (n = 1,543).

However, despite these strengths, working caregivers in management roles face unique challenges. They are more likely than individual contributors who are caregivers to report a negative impact from their caregiving responsibilities, including being held back in their career and being treated poorly at work.



## Managers with Caregiving Responsibilities Are More Likely to Report Negative Consequences Associated with Caregiving Compared to Individual Contributors



# CAREGIVING AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture is crucial in shaping how caregiving supports are perceived and used. Employees struggling with caregiving responsibilities are often hesitant to seek the resources they need, fearing the stigma they might face by revealing their caregiving status. For organizations, this presents a classic chicken-and-egg scenario: They can't offer the right resources without accurate information about their employees' caregiving needs, yet employees are reluctant to disclose their status without assurances of support and understanding. These fears are not unfounded.

**1 in 5** working caregivers (**20%**) have been treated poorly at work because of their caregiving responsibilities, and **22%** say there is a negative stigma around being a caregiver at their organization.

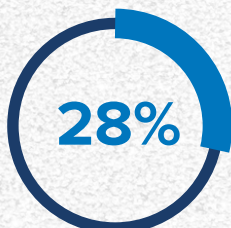


The hesitation to disclose caregiving responsibilities can be pervasive. For example, among working caregivers, more than **1 in 5** have chosen not to disclose that they're a primary caregiver to their employer (**32%**), to their co-workers (**27%**), or to their managers (**22%**).

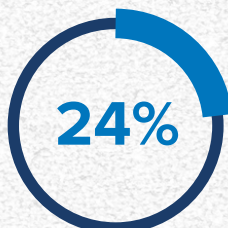
More than half of caregivers who have chosen not to disclose their caregiver status have done so because they prefer not to share their personal life at work (**55%**). However, many have chosen not to disclose their caregiver status for reasons related to perceived stigma.



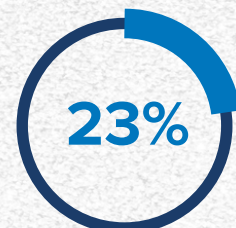
More than **1 in 5** working caregivers have chosen not to disclose their caregiver status for reasons related to perceived stigma.



"I don't want to be treated differently."



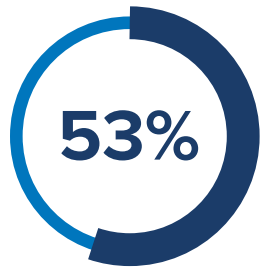
"I don't want to risk my job."



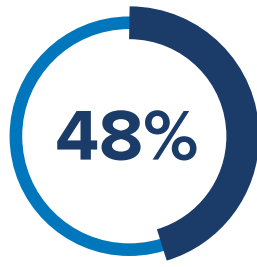
"I don't want to be seen as uncommitted to my work."



**Mixed Signals:** Even when working caregivers do disclose their caregiver status, the outcomes can be mixed. According to working caregivers who disclosed their caregiver status ...



Were treated the same



Were shown empathy



Had their ability to  
balance work with  
caregiving responsibilities  
questioned



Were given fewer  
opportunities

These numbers reveal the double-edged sword working caregivers often experience in the workplace. The varying degrees of understanding and reactions caregivers have met underscore the need for organizations to re-examine how they address caregiving to ensure fairness, inclusivity, and support across their teams.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## RECOMMENDATION NO. 1

### Foster a Culture of Openness and Empathy

Many caregivers are reluctant to disclose their status due to fear of stigma or negative workplace repercussions. Promoting an inclusive culture reduces this hesitancy and ensures that employees feel supported in addressing their caregiving challenges.

- » Train managers to recognize and support employees with caregiving responsibilities through sensitivity training or caregiving awareness workshops.
- » Publicize and normalize caregiving disclosure through active communication of policies and benefits.
- » Establish caregiver support groups to provide a safe space for peer discussions and to share best practices.
- » Launch regular educational campaigns (e.g., webinars, emails, and lunch-and-learns) on the caregiving benefits available to increase awareness and usage rates.<sup>14</sup>

[SHRM People Manager Qualification \(PMQ\)](#)

## RECOMMENDATION NO. 2

### Update and Expand Caregiving Policies

Organizations should consider modernizing their caregiving policies to reflect the evolving needs of employees. Some traditional leave policies may be too narrow, excluding many caregivers based on outdated definitions of eligible relationships and insufficient leave durations. To better understand the needs of their current and future workforce, organizations should consider regularly evaluating and modifying caregiving policies to ensure they remain relevant and effective for their workforce's evolving needs.<sup>15</sup>

- » Collect feedback from employees, particularly caregivers, to identify the variety of responsibilities caregivers have, gaps in current offerings, and opportunities for improvement.
- » Consider expanding caregiving leave policies beyond what the law requires to include extended relatives and nontraditional family structures.
- » Determine if your organization can offer flexible work arrangements, such as remote work, compressed schedules, or job sharing, to accommodate the unpredictable disruptions that caregivers face.
- » Assess your organization's capacity to create paid caregiving leave programs to reduce financial strain for employees.

[SHRM How-To Guide: How to Develop and Administer Paid-Leave Programs](#)

[SHRM Template: Paid Family and Medical Leave Policy](#)

[SHRM Toolkit: Managing Family and Medical Leave \(FMLA\)](#)

[SHRM Toolkit: Supporting Employees with Dependent and Elder Care Responsibilities](#)

[SHRM Toolkit: Managing Employee Surveys](#)

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<sup>14</sup>See the companion report, [The Caregiving Imperative: Organizational Solutions for Supporting Caregivers and Elevating Business Performance](#), for a more detailed discussion on awareness and accessibility of caregiving benefits.

<sup>15</sup>See the companion report, [The Caregiving Imperative: Organizational Solutions for Supporting Caregivers and Elevating Business Performance](#), for a more detailed discussion on the value of regularly evaluating policies that impact caregivers.

## RECOMMENDATION NO. 3

### Provide Comprehensive Caregiving Resources

Caregiving responsibilities are often long-term, yet many organizations tend to focus on addressing short-term needs. Considering ways to align benefits with the realities of long-term care can help better support the needs of current and future talent.<sup>16</sup> Exploring access to affordable, robust, quality caregiving resources is an important consideration for alleviating the challenges working caregivers face.

- » Develop an employee assistance program (EAP) that includes caregiving resources, such as concierge services that assist with finding care providers.
- » Partner with local or national caregiving organizations to provide subsidies or discounted services for elder care or child care.
- » Introduce onsite or virtual caregiving seminars focusing on financial planning, stress management, and balancing caregiving roles.
- » Partner with online caregiving platforms or apps that connect employees with vetted caregivers, offer caregiving advice, or provide tools for managing caregiving responsibilities.
- » Host local caregiving fairs where local caregiving organizations can showcase their services to employees.

[SHRM 2024 Employee Benefits Survey](#)

[AARP's Caregiving ERG Toolkit](#)

[SHRM Human Resource Vendor Directory](#)

[SHRM Toolkit: Managing Organizational Communication](#)

[SHRM Toolkit: Managing Employee Assistance Programs](#)

## RECOMMENDATION NO. 4

### Address Career Development for Caregivers

Caregivers frequently face career challenges, including slower advancement opportunities and employment gaps. Organizations should take steps to minimize these barriers while supporting caregivers' professional growth by providing various career paths for employees and by training managers on how to support caregivers.<sup>17</sup>

- » Build policies that ensure caregiving employees are not penalized in performance evaluations or advancement considerations due to caregiving-related absences.
- » Create return-to-work programs, such as reskilling or transition aids, for caregivers re-entering the workforce after employment gaps.
- » Develop resource guides for managers, including case studies and FAQs on caregiving accommodations.
- » Proactively offer mentorship and sponsorship for caregivers to help them advance in their careers.

[SHRM Toolkit: Developing Employee Career Paths and Ladders](#)

[SHRM Article: How to Recognize — and Avoid — Caregiver Discrimination](#)

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<sup>16</sup>See the companion report, [The Caregiving Imperative: Organizational Solutions for Supporting Caregivers and Elevating Business Performance](#), for a more detailed discussion on awareness and accessibility of caregiving benefits.

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# CONCLUSION

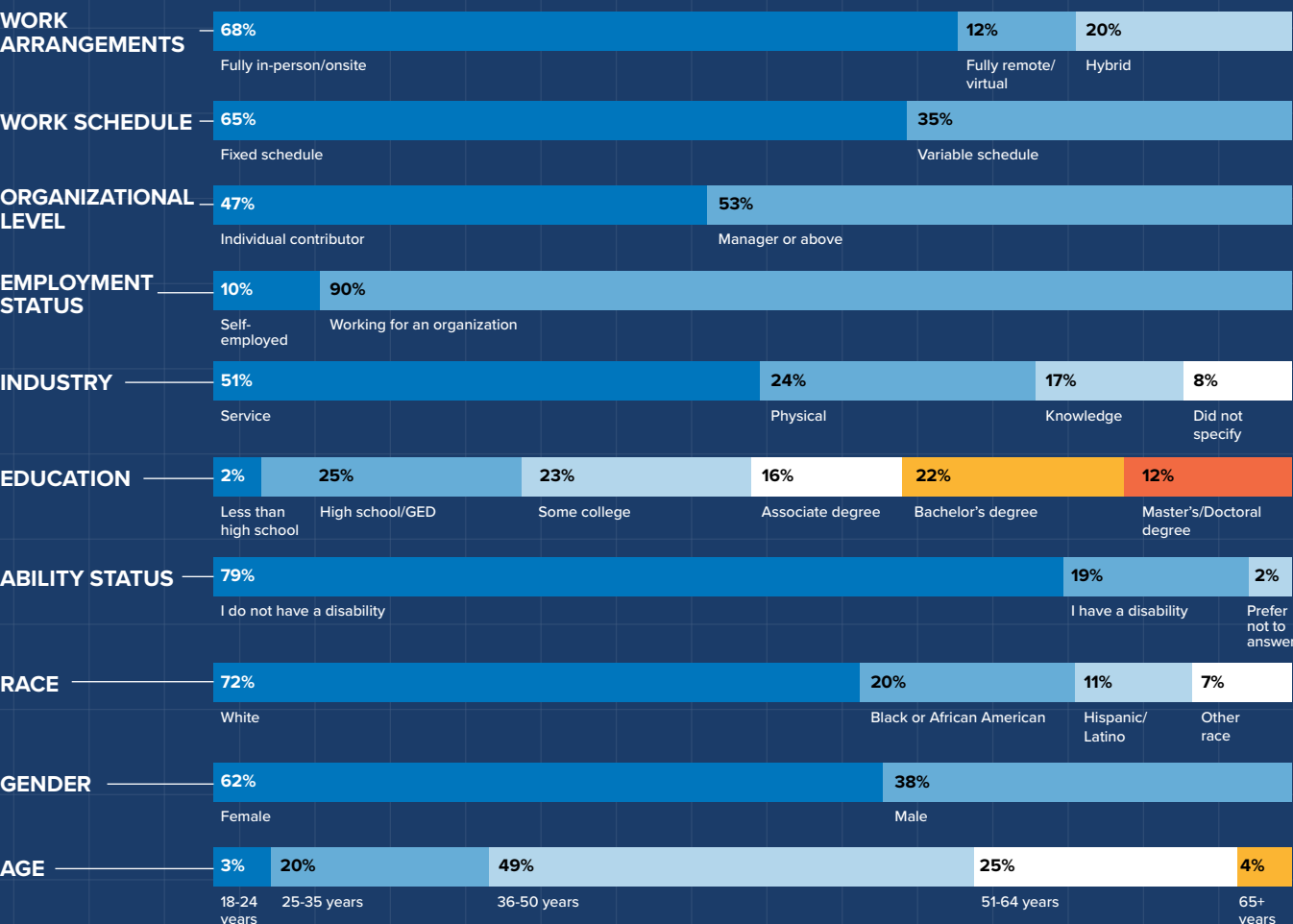
The findings of this report highlight the significant challenges faced by working caregivers, who balance their professional responsibilities with the complex and often long-term demands of caregiving. Caregiving responsibilities, which increasingly extend beyond traditional family structures, significantly impact career advancement and well-being, with many caregivers forced to make sacrifices that affect their financial stability and professional growth. Critical gaps in support systems, insufficient policies, and workplace stigma further exacerbate these challenges.

Organizations have a unique opportunity to create meaningful change. By proactively supporting caregivers, businesses can strengthen employee morale, enhance talent retention, and build a workforce resilient to the increasing complexities of caregiving. The success of the workforce — and ultimately, the business — depends on it.

# SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS AND METHODOLOGY

## WORKING CAREGIVERS

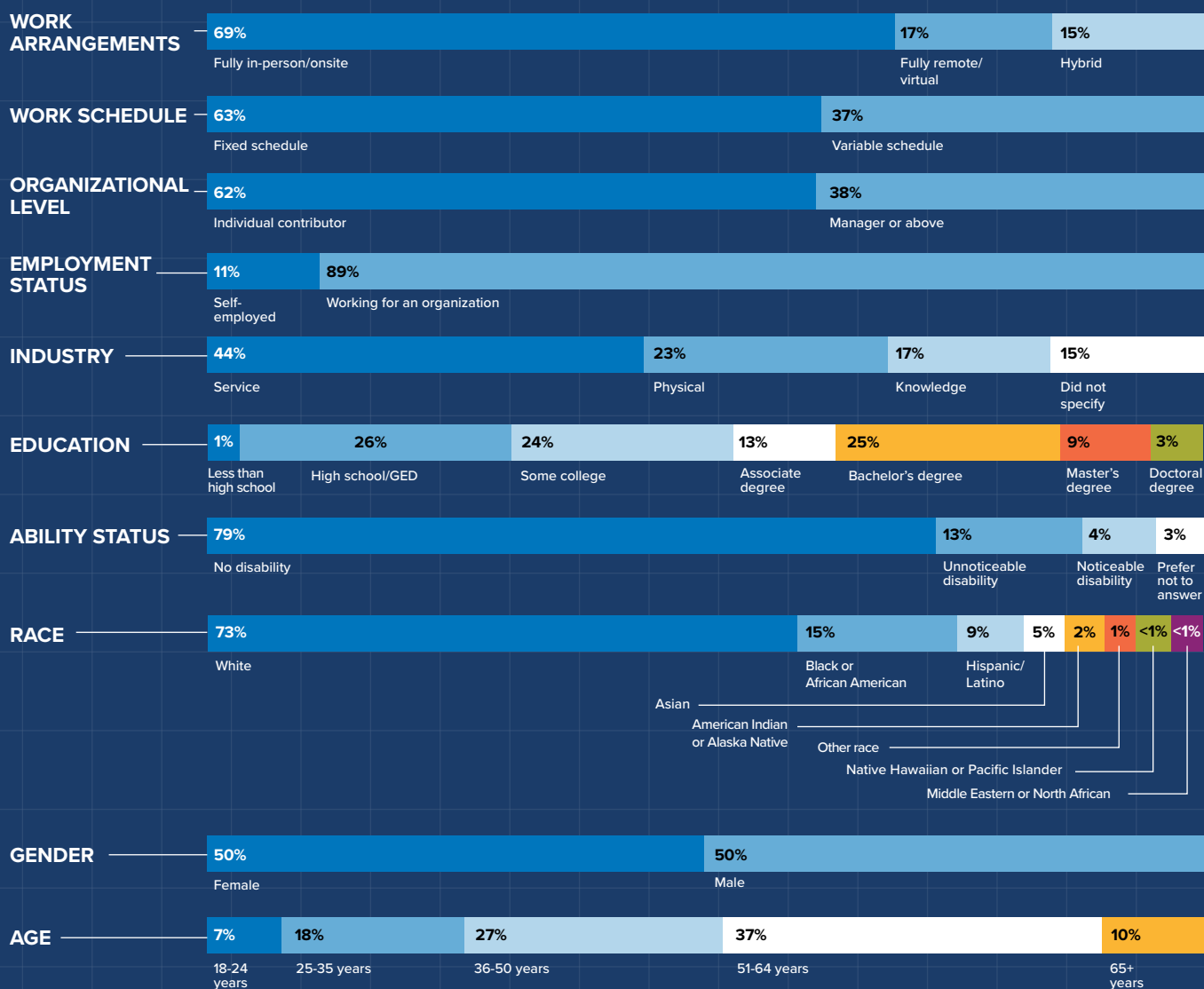
Sample size = 3,042



**Methodology:** The working caregivers survey was fielded electronically from September to October 2024 to U.S. workers who provided primary care to children, adults, and/or elders in a personal capacity. A total of 3,042 working primary caregivers were surveyed using a third-party survey panel.

# WORKING NON-CAREGIVERS

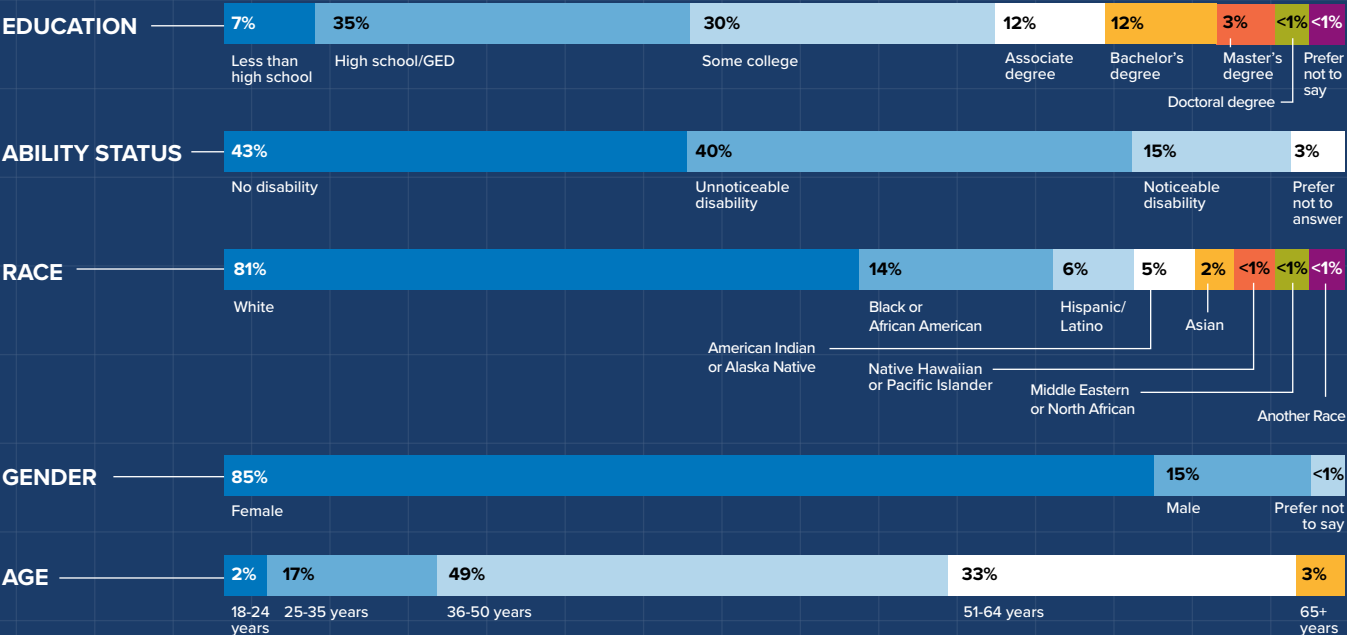
Sample size = 1,543



**Methodology:** The working non-caregivers survey was fielded electronically in September 2024 to U.S. workers who did not provide primary care to children, adults, or elders in a personal capacity. Sampling quotas were imposed so that male and female caregivers would be equally represented. A total of 1,543 working non-caregivers were surveyed using a third-party survey panel.

# UNEMPLOYED CAREGIVERS

Sample size = 1,249



**Methodology:** The unemployed caregivers survey was fielded electronically from September to October 2024 to primary caregivers to children, adults, and/or elders in a personal capacity and who were not employed at the time of the survey. A total of 1,249 unemployed primary caregivers were surveyed using a third-party survey panel.



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