

Caregiving in Canada

Caregiving is far more common, and far more essential than many people realize. According to Statistics Canada, **42% of people** in Canada aged 15 years or older, and more than half of women (over 8.4 million) are caregivers. Women are significantly more likely than men to take on these roles, highlighting a persistent and important gender gap in caregiving responsibilities.

This difference becomes even more pronounced when looking at unpaid care. Nearly one-third of women provide care for children, and almost one-quarter support adults with long-term conditions or disabilities (both higher rates than those seen among men). A notable proportion of caregivers (13%) are also managing both roles at once.

The type of care provided also differs. Men are more likely to take on occasional or task-based responsibilities, such as home maintenance or outdoor work. Women, however, are more often responsible for ongoing, time-sensitive care such as providing personal care, coordinating medical appointments, supporting treatments, and offering emotional support. These are the kinds of responsibilities that require consistency, flexibility, and significant emotional energy.

In terms of time commitment, caregivers for care-dependent adults reported providing **21 hours of care on average per week** with women reporting 4 more hours in care time per week than men.

While caregiving can be meaningful, it also comes with real costs. More than half of caregivers report feeling tired, and nearly half experience worry or anxiety. Women, once again, are more likely to feel these impacts.

42% of Canadians aged 15 or older are unpaid caregivers

20% care for care-dependent adults

56% report feeling tired

37% feel overwhelmed

20% feel depressed

83% provide emotional support on top of care support

25% experience financial hardship due to caregiving responsibilities



A recent study estimates the economic contribution of caregivers for those with long-term conditions, disabilities, or problems related to aging is **\$97.1 billion dollars**.

As Canada's population ages, the demand for care continues to grow, placing increasing pressure on families, workplaces, and the healthcare system. The COVID-19 pandemic made one thing clear: caregiving is not a side issue; it is foundational to our health system, our communities, and our economy.

Yet much of this work remains invisible. Recognizing, valuing, and supporting caregivers is not just important, it is essential to the well-being and economic stability of Canada as a whole.

Sandwich Caregivers

13% of the 42% of unpaid caregivers in Canada are “sandwich caregivers,” meaning they were supporting both children and care-dependent adults at the same time. Women were more likely than men to take on this dual role, most commonly in middle adulthood.

Sandwich caregivers most often support a combination of family members, such as caring for their parents or parents-in-law while also raising their own children, though many also care for grandchildren or partners alongside children. Nearly half reported that the COVID-19 pandemic increased the amount of time they spent providing care.

The impact of these responsibilities is significant; 86% of sandwich caregivers said their caregiving affected their health and well-being, compared to lower rates among those caring only for adults or only for children. Common challenges include fatigue, anxiety, and feeling overwhelmed.

These pressures also extend into the workplace.

**13% care for both
children and
caredependent
adults at
the same time**

**86% say their care
responsibilities
affected at least
one aspect of their
health and wellbeing**



Two-thirds of non-retired sandwich caregivers reported that their caregiving responsibilities affected their employment over the past year, often requiring them to adjust schedules, reduce hours, or scale back responsibilities.

Women, in particular, were more likely to experience negative effects on their well-being, especially when managing multiple caregiving roles at once.

Carer-Employees

Carer-employees, also known as worker-carers, are an essential part of Canada's workforce, balancing paid employment with unpaid caregiving responsibilities. Increasingly, many belong to the "sandwich generation," providing care for both children and aging parents simultaneously. Without meaningful workplace supports, these employees are at significant risk of being overwhelmed and experiencing burnout.

When individuals are required to manage competing responsibilities without adequate flexibility or support, the consequences are immediate and measurable. Productivity declines, absenteeism and presenteeism increase, and many are forced to reduce their hours, turn down promotions, retire early, or leave the workforce altogether.

The implications extend beyond individual employees and their needs. Organizations face disruptions, increased turnover, and the loss of valuable experience, while Canada's broader economic stability is affected.

93% of women and 73% of men report their caregiving responsibilities cause negative consequences to their health and well being

66% say it affects their employment or job-seeking activities

35% of the Canadian workforce are also caregivers providing up to 30 hours a week of unpaid care for an average of 3 years

15% reduce their work hours



Each year, caregiving-related workforce losses account for more than \$1.3 billion in lost productivity; a figure expected to rise as the population continues to age.

Canadian employers must act with urgency. Implementing caregiver-friendly policies and programs is no longer optional; it is a necessary investment in workforce sustainability, employee well-being, and long-term organizational resilience.

61% are in their peak earning years (ages 45–64), with valuable skills and experience

19% experience physical and emotional health challenges

Resources

Visit CHPCA's [Caregiving and Palliative Care Resource Repository](#) for a list of online, national, provincial and territorial resources.

Sources

1. [Sandwiched between unpaid care for children and care-dependent adults: A gender-based study](#)
2. [More than half of women in Canada are caregivers - Statistics Canada](#)
3. [Supporting-Caregivers-at-Work-Infographic](#)
4. [Family caregiving: What are the consequences?](#)
5. [Understanding mental health, mental illness, and their impacts in the workplace](#)
6. [Making the Business Case for Investments in Workplace Health and Wellness](#)
7. [Mobilizing a Caregiver-Friendly Workplace Standard: A Partnership Approach - Gender, Health and Carer-Friendly Workspaces](#)
8. [QUICK START IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE CARER-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE STANDARD](#)
9. [Family caregiving: What are the consequences?](#)

