

## RESEARCH BRIEF

# Determining the Value of Carer-friendly Workplace Policies and Social Support on the Mental Health of Carer-employees

## Background

Carer-employees (CEs) are unpaid carers of adult care recipients who are simultaneously working in paid employment. Workplace stress often compounds with caregiving stress to cause negative health effects on CEs.

Previous literatures have shown:

- Work interferences (WIs), such as reducing work hours, taking days off, etc., have a negative association with the mental health of CEs
- Social support is generally positively associated with CE's poor mental health
- Caregiver friendly work policies (CFWPs), such as CFWPs, such as flexible scheduling, the option to work part-time, being able to take a leave of absence, and being able to take an extended leave, are helpful in reducing mental health symptoms in CEs

## What is the importance of this research?

As the number of CEs increase over time, the need for effective and wide-ranging CFWPs is becoming more important. The results of this analysis are useful in highlighting the importance of CFWPs for CE's mental health.

## Data

This study uses Statistics Canada's General Social Survey (GSS) 2018 and the target population for this study were CEs.

CEs are:

- 1) Participants who were employed or self-employed in the past year, and
- 2) who cared for an adult aged 18 or older.

Out of 23,025 survey respondents, 4,291 were CEs.

## Research Questions

We evaluated the following questions:

- 1) Are the CEs experiencing WIs more likely to have worse mental health due to caregiving responsibilities?
- 2) Do CFWPs and social support lower the impact of carer responsibilities, reflected in CE's mental health symptoms?
- 3) Is the association between WIs and mental health moderated by CFWPs or social support?

## Study Methods

It was found that approximately 20% of the data had missing values in at least one variable of interest. To address missing responses on study variables, multiple imputation by chained equations was performed to avoid potential bias.

Adopting Pearlin et al's stress process model (1990), a series of multivariable logistic regressions was conducted to investigate the association between various CFWPs, social support, WIs and CE's mental health symptoms. In addition to numerous variables, the interactions between WIs and CFWPs with significant correlation (as determined by chi-square tests) were also included. Moderate effects of CFWPs on the association between WIs and the mental health of CEs were then examined using F-tests.

### **References:**

Statistics Canada, general social survey-caregiving and care receiving (GSS). (2018). Retrieved from <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?function=getSurvey&SDDS=4502>

Pearlin, L. I., Mullan, J. T., Semple, S. J., & Skaff, M. M. (1990). Caregiving and the stress process: An overview of concepts and their measures. *The Gerontologist*, 30(5), 583-594. doi:10.1093/geront/30.5.583 [doi]

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## What did the researchers find?

What this paper adds:

- The option to work part-time, and a workplace culture characterized by CFWPs that can be taken without negative career impacts, were both negatively associated with CE's appetite loss, trouble sleeping as well as having any mental health symptoms
- CFWPs have a significant moderate effect on the association between WIs and the mental health of CEs
- CEs who worked in a workplace that promote CFWPs without negative impacts on their career were less likely to feel anxious when turning down a job offer or promotion

Other findings:

- Social support was associated with an increased chance of mental health symptoms apart from help from the community
  - o The odds of experiencing feelings of isolation decreased by 35% when CEs received help from the community
- The odds of feelings depressed decreased by 35% when CEs had a flexible working schedule
- 44.7% of CEs reported feelings of anxiousness and 42.4% reported feeling tired due to caregiving responsibilities

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