

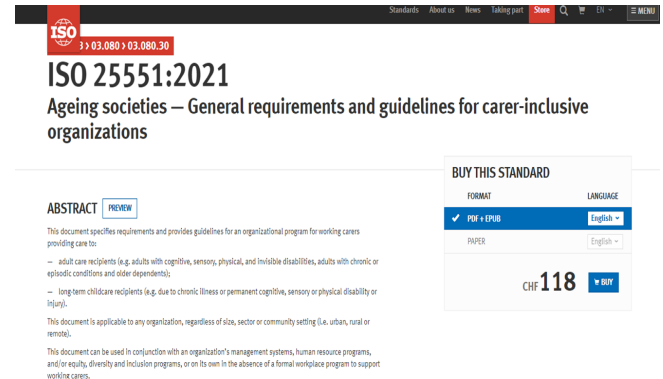
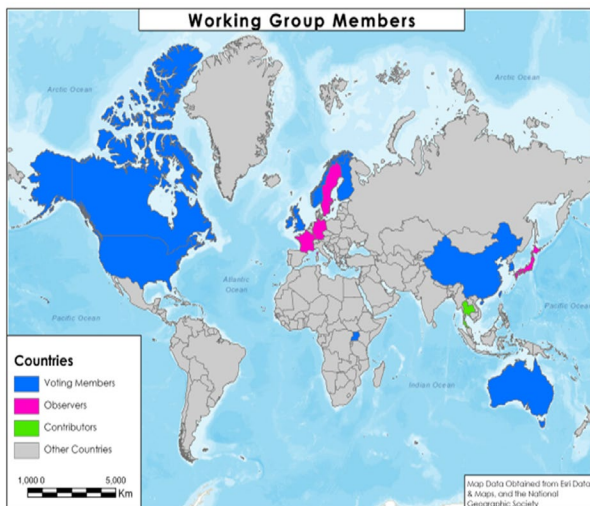


## RESEARCH BRIEF

# The development of international standardized guidelines for the workplace: Support for working carers across the globe

## Background

As the world's population ages, more unpaid care provision is required by family, friends and neighbors. Currently, 349 million people worldwide are estimated to be depending on care, with 101 million of these aged 60 years and older (WHO, 2017). Most of this growing number of unpaid carers are, at the same time, employed in the labor market or attending school, and they experience a range of space and time tensions due to the multiple demands of both paid labor and unpaid caregiving. Further, many of these working carers are also caring for young dependents. Research evidence illustrates that unpaid care work negatively impacts paid work, and that few employers have adopted carer-friendly workplace programs or policies (CFWP). Deficiency of workplace or organizational support could lead to a range of negative employee consequences, which increase costs to employers, including: mental and physical health problems; reduced productivity; increased absenteeism and presenteeism; and employees exiting the workforce altogether. For employers to best support these working carers, this project set out to create a set of standardized guidelines. Seventeen countries were represented in the Working Group, including Canada, USA, UK, Finland, Norway, Uganda, S. Korea, China, Singapore, Germany, France, Japan, Sweden, and Thailand.

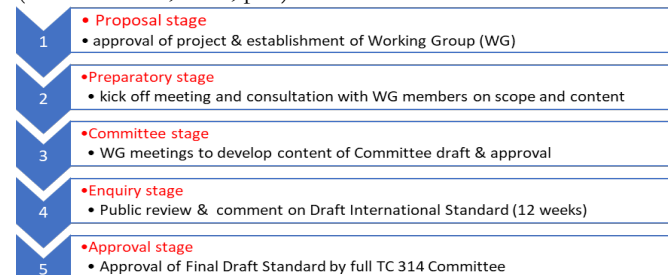


## Standards Development Process

The international standard project was launched in April 2019 and took 31 months to publication, following the ISO's International Standard Development Process outlined below.

This initiative partnered with the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and McMaster University (both in Ontario, Canada) to scale up the CSA's B701-17 standard, 'Carer-inclusive and accommodating organizations standard' ([www.csagroup.org/article/b701-17/](http://www.csagroup.org/article/b701-17/)), which was published with an implementation guide entitled 'Helping worker-carers in your organization' ([www.csagroup.org/article/b701hb-18](http://www.csagroup.org/article/b701hb-18/)) in both English and French in 2017. This provided the seed document for the international standard.

Figure 2: ISO's International Standard Development Process (Williams et al., 2022, p. 3).



## Alignment with the UN SDGs

Given the international reach of the ISO Carer Standard and the impact on the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (UN SDGs) (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>), time was taken to align the top UN SDGs of concern. With respect to the Standard, we believe that the most critical of these is SDG 5 (Gender Inequality), and SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth).

ISO/TC 314



**ISO 25551:2021 Ageing societies - General requirements and guidelines for carer-inclusive organizations & UN SDGs**

There is no question that gender equality is of critical importance in care work, given that between 57-81% of all unpaid carers are female (depending on the country context) of which most of which are most likely employed outside the home. Further, due to females providing significantly more caregiving hours than males, females experience a greater impact on their paid employment. Females working carers are comparatively more likely to make job modifications, such as changing jobs, as a result of ongoing caregiving requirements. This is reflected in European research that reflects that only half of female working carers are able to work full-time, showing the impact on their financial condition.



### Gender Inequality & Reduced Inequalities

The Carer Standard meets a number of UN SDGs, in particular Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls, which is argued as being central to the achievement of all other goals. Goal 5 is made up of 9 targets, including Target 5.4: Value unpaid care and promote shared domestic responsibilities.



### Decent Work & Economic Growth

Women make up close to 40% of the labour market internationally. If they are no longer able to be employed due to the demands of their unpaid care work, Economic Growth will suffer. Carer-friendly workplace accommodations are central to Decent Work.



### Good Health & Well-being

Employment provides not only income for subsistence, but the resources, such as vaccinations, health services, and medicine, to achieve Good health & Well-being for carer-workers and their families.



### No Poverty

The majority of unpaid carers are female, and due to females providing significantly more caregiving hours than males, females experience a greater impact on their paid employment and are therefore more prone to poverty. Employment is the primary way out of poverty, as well as the primary way to prevent poverty.



### Sustainable Cities and Communities

Carer-workers need to juggle both employment and unpaid care work, and do so more successfully when supported in resilient, inclusive Sustainable Cities & Communities.

## References:

Williams, A., & Bank, J. (2022). Support for working carers across the globe: the development of international standardized guidelines for the workplace, *International Journal of Care and Caring* (published online ahead of print 2022). Retrieved Feb 14, 2023, from [bristoluniversitypressdigital.com](https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com)

WHO (World Health Organization) (2017) Evidence profile: Caregiver support-integrated care for older people, [www.who.int](https://www.who.int)

## Project Results

At end of 2021, the International Standards Organization (ISO) published ISO 25551, Ageing societies — General requirements and guidelines for carer-inclusive organizations ([www.iso.org/standard/77288.html](https://www.iso.org/standard/77288.html)). This Standard provides practical guidance on how organizations can develop and implement policies and programs to support workers who are balancing work with caregiving roles.

We are pleased to report that an article authored by the convener of the Working Group, Professor Allison Williams and the Secretary, Jeanne Bank, was one of the most downloaded articles published in the *International Journal of Care and Caring* in 2022. The article “Support for working carers across the globe: the development of international standardized guidelines for the workplace” provides background information about the Standard and describes the process for the development of the Standard. It also shows the linkages between the Standard and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and outlines some next steps to help put the Standard into practice.

## Next Steps:

Working with a number of international organizations, such as the International Alliance of Carer Organizations (IACO), UNWomen, and the International Labour Organization (ILO), we continue to disseminate ISO Carer Standard and associated tools. Although countries representing the global north are more readily available to adopt the ISO Carer Standard, international advocacy is needed to convince countries in the global south to adopt the ISO Carer Standard.

## Research Team

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