

RESEARCH BRIEF

Supporting Work & Caregiving: Diagnosing Readiness to Change

Why it Matters

Large-scale population aging alongside the lack of community supports for eldercare mean that caregiving is often expected to be performed by family members. For these family carers, this unspoken expectation has ramifications on all aspects of their life, including their career trajectory and work performance. However, there is an observed disconnect between the needs of the aging labour force and the policies and supports offered by employers. While carer-supportive initiatives can be mutually beneficial for both carer-employees as well as employers, there are relatively few employers who implement eldercare friendly policies and supports within the workplace. This study examines the employer perspective pertaining to the care crises, and identifies barriers and motivations to the implementation of carer initiatives in the workplace.

Research Objectives

1. Identify drivers and barriers to organizational change conducive to employed carers.
2. Streamlining of drivers and barriers into a concise list.
3. Prioritization of streamlined drivers and barriers from most to least important.
4. How can organizations overcome these barriers?

Methods

The Delphi method, a structured communication technique which relies on a panel of experts, was used to construct a force field diagram which describes the forces encouraging and dissuading employers from implementing policies and programs supporting employed caregivers. A panel of 67 human resource experts were recruited with the assistance of the Conference Board of Canada. Four iterative rounds of interviews were conducted with the panel, addressing each of the three above research objectives.

Key Findings

<i>Importance Ranking</i>	<i>Drivers of Change</i>
1	Support for eldercare is consistent with our companies focus on employee well-being.
2	To maintain our competitive edge, we need to attract top talent. In today's tight labour market, this means that we need to offer employees flexibility and programs with respect to balancing work and eldercare.
3	To maintain our competitive edge, we need to retain top talent. In today's tight labour market, this means that we need to offer employees flexibility and programs with respect to balancing work and eldercare.
<i>Importance Ranking</i>	<i>Barriers to Change</i>
1	The business case for change in this area has not yet been made.
2	The pace of work makes it difficult for us to provide the type of flexibility that will make a difference.
3	Our employees have not asked us to introduce policies and programs to support balancing work and eldercare demands.

Implications

Communication from employers, government and other policy makers that emphasize the legitimacy of eldercare as an issue that needs to be recognized is viewed as highly important, and would go far to educate the general public as well as key stakeholders on the changing needs of the changing labour market. Practical and evidence-based advice on how to build the business case for change is urgently needed by organizations. This advice needs to include information on both the costs and benefits of dealing with balancing work and caregiving as well as the costs of ignoring work and eldercare as an issue that needs to be addressed.

Publications

Key Findings

Employer-identified solutions to organizational barriers

	Total (n=32)	
	#	%
Develop a strategy to address work and eldercare issues through continual assessment and measurement	19	59
Facilitate and encourage open communication to inform and interact with employees on issues associated with caregiving	15	47
Educate new and existing managers/leaders /HR regarding the importance of this issue and how to handle it	10	31
Use external resources to make the case for change and inform senior leadership on the types of changes that are needed	10	31
Assess costs and benefits of policies and programs to support eldercare	6	19
Review and revamp existing benefits	6	19

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