

WHITEPAPER

Caregiver Mental Health Support: A Win-Win for All

Employers that offer caregiving support tools for stress and anxiety can improve employees' lives while benefiting the business.



For many people, caregiving is a job unto itself. For employed caregivers, supporting children, parents, partners or neighbors means facing a set of challenging responsibilities in addition to the existing demands of their career.

The energy it takes to attend to these myriad responsibilities can make life difficult both inside and outside the workplace. Recent research from Arizent/Employee Benefit News — sponsored by Calm — found that some employees spend more than 50 hours a week directly caring for loved ones. That's the equivalent of a second full-time job, and it's taking a toll on their mental well-being. The survey, conducted online among 500 employees across industries and company sizes, offers insights on how caregiving is impacting the mental health of these respondents and points to actions employers can take to help.

Caregivers deal with a lot — and their numbers are growing

To understand the scope of the issue, consider that nearly eight-in-10 survey respondents see themselves as caregivers. They provide care for a wide variety of loved ones — children, parents, spouses, other family and friends — who have a wide variety of health challenges, including mental health issues, neurodiversity diagnoses, fine motor skill conditions, physical mobility complications, memory issues and other neurological or developmental disorders.

The types of activities caregivers undertake reflect the breadth of issues they have to address. For example, the 42% who care for children most often find themselves planning meals or arranging transportation or educational support. The 37% who care for parents and the 29% looking after partners most frequently run errands or simply spend time with them. Other common areas of support include navigating the healthcare system, housekeeping, monitoring medication and managing finances.

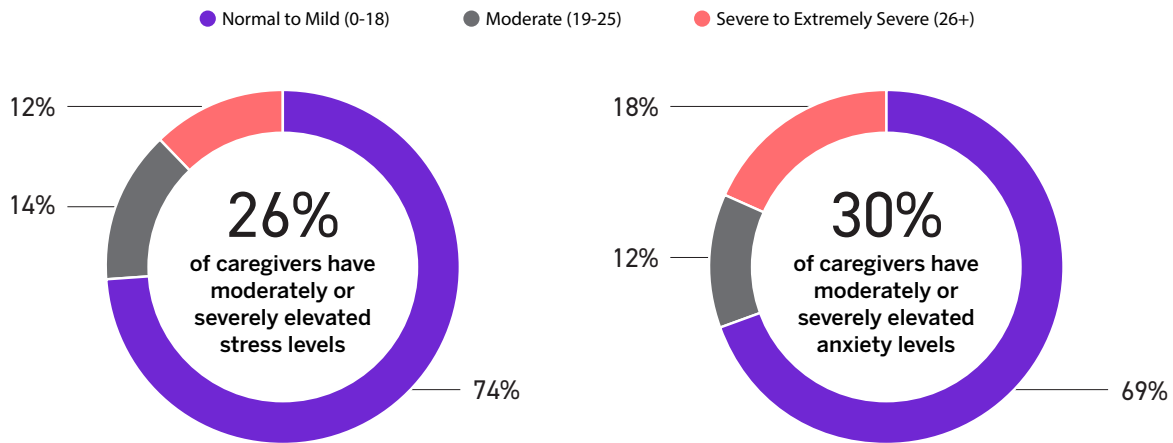
In other words, caregiver support can take any number of forms — and 53% of survey respondents believe their caregiving duties will only get more intensive in the next few years.

Caregiving takes a toll on mental health

Depending on who they care for, between 19% and 38% of caregivers say concerns about how they care for their loved ones are always on their minds. More than half (51%) of respondents who care for parents say doing so is one of the most stressful aspects of their lives. At least 25% of those who care for others say the same.

Additional evidence supports the accuracy of these self-reported results. Respondents were asked to respond to 14 statements used by medical professionals to quantify the severity of stress and anxiety, and their answers are revealing. More than one in four (26%) answer in ways that suggest moderately or severely elevated stress levels, and 30% appear to have moderately or severely elevated anxiety levels (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Many Caregivers Experience Stress and Anxiety



Source: Arizent/Employee Benefit News, 2023

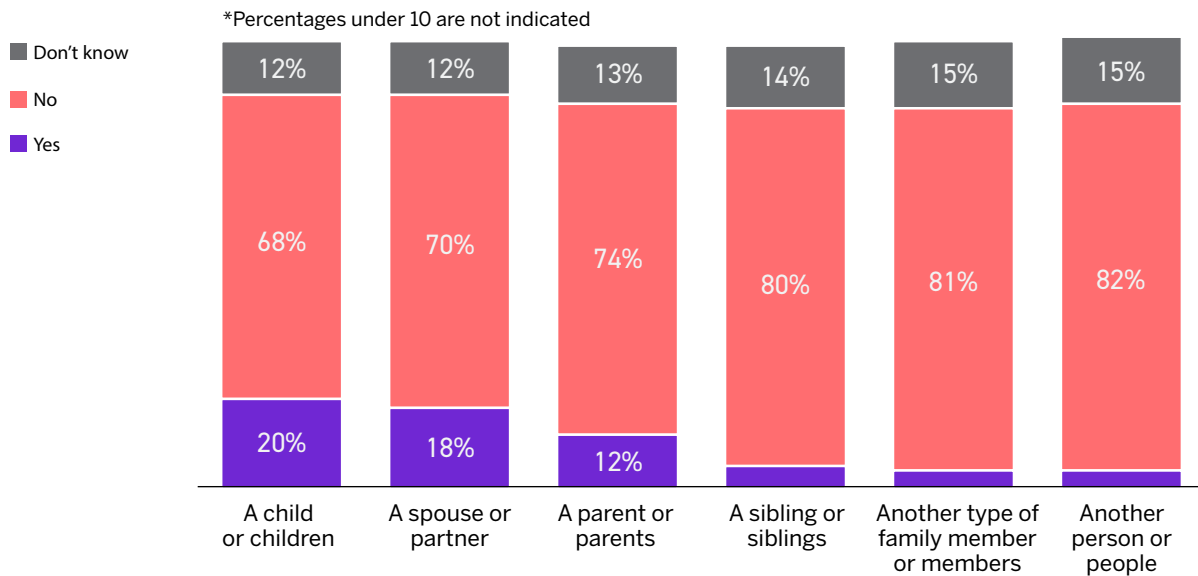
Employees want more mental health support from their employers

For people struggling to manage the care of loved ones, it can feel like being alone on an island. In response to an open-ended question about the kind of support that could make caregiving easier, most respondents say they could use a support network to help in areas such as mental and emotional health, as well as empathy and flexibility from employers. “If I could have any kind of support to make the caregiving I provide to others easier, I would like to have support for my mental health and well-being,” says a millennial working full time in accounting and tax preparation.

Employers could be playing a much more substantial role in enabling this support network. More than one-in-five employees (21%) explicitly say that more support from their employers would be useful to them as they care for others. In fact, when asked to grade their company’s efforts to support caregiving, 62% of respondents award it a C or worse. Employees caring for parents or partners generally hand out the worst grades for employer support. Not surprisingly, employees who are experiencing a high level of stress are also more likely to give their employer low marks for the support they provide.

Whether they expect it or not, caregivers indicate that overall they are not receiving much targeted support from their employers. Fewer than one-in-five caregivers say their company offers dedicated resources to support them — regardless of who they are caring for (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Employer Support for Caregiving by Person Receiving Care



Source: Arizent/Employee Benefit News, 2023

When it comes to the specific type of support that would help, 29% say they would like mental health services and their employer doesn't provide them. Of those who actually receive mental health support from employers, 67% say those services fail to fully meet their needs. There is clearly a gap between the mental health support that employees want and need, and what is currently available through their work benefits.

Employers have a stake in providing better caregiver support

So, why should all this data be troubling to employers? Beyond the fact that many employers really do care about the well-being of their employees, the stress and anxiety caregivers experience affects the workplace. More than six-in-10 (62%) respondents agree that their caregiving duties make it harder to accomplish their work. When employers support caregivers, they support workplace productivity as well. In addition, caregivers who rate their company highly for supportiveness are also much less likely to report being interested in finding a new job. By contrast, employees who give their company a D or F for supportiveness are much more likely to be looking for a new job with better benefits. Supporting employees could help bolster talent retention, reducing turnover and saving the money that comes with it.

While many organizations do offer employee assistance programs or clinical therapy for clinically depressed or anxious employees, these tools target a relatively small population. As a result, they don't address the vast majority of employees who suffer from subclinical levels of stress, anxiety or sleep issues that can affect their daily lives and may evolve into more serious conditions over time. Mental health self-care tools like Calm Business that offer more continuous preventive care can help employees identify and address ongoing challenges before they become bigger issues. Employees can use these tools to defuse panic attacks in the moment, take a break to destress at work or unwind and fall asleep better after a long, difficult day. These resources can also be extended to eligible family members and children, expanding the reach of the mental health benefits beyond caregivers to those being cared for.

Because people and caregiving situations are unique, the most effective tools should be flexible enough to support people with different needs and expectations. Providing culturally relevant information delivered in an employee's native language, for example, can help better align support to an individual's identity. In addition to offering culturally relevant resources, Calm Business resources tailored to common caregiving situations, such as anxious new or expectant parents or children experiencing stress at various ages, can also help match employer support to employee needs.

No matter how well conceived a benefit is, it won't help anybody if employees don't know about it and use it. Benefits managers should look for mental health and wellness providers who help distribute relevant, timely information and drive engagement with detailed analytics reporting to track use and align efforts with employee needs. They should also look to partners that offer educational opportunities for users and a dedicated staff person to answer any questions that the HR professional implementing the program might have. Calm Business' enterprise solution offers HR benefit leaders an analytics dashboard and monthly engagement strategies around key themes to drive enrollment and engagement as well as a dedicated Customer Success manager to do all the heavylifting.

Employers can make a real difference by offering resources that help all employees — particularly the many caregivers in their ranks — manage stress and anxiety on a continuous basis. These tools can improve the quality of their employees' lives while improving productivity and driving employee satisfaction and retention.

Methodology

This study from Arizent/Employee Benefit News was conducted online in Feb. and March of 2023 among 500 employees across multiple industries and company sizes. The purpose of the survey is to understand how employees who are caregivers are balancing the demands of work, caregiving and the other parts of their life, including what additional support would be helpful. The survey was designed to get balanced regional representation of respondents, based on the U.S. Census.



Business

About Calm

Calm Business is an enterprise-level solution that brings mental health and wellness front and center for global organizations everywhere. Calm Business is a preventive self-care tool that offers resources to help employee caregivers and their families destress during the day, defuse anxiety and panic attacks in the moment, and get better sleep. In addition, the preventive nature of Calm gets more people the mental health support they need when they need it, leading to lower overall healthcare costs. As the #1 Mental health preventive brand, our self-care resources such as guided meditations, breathing exercises, sleep stories, and masterclasses help employees and their families reduce their stress and anxiousness levels and be more productive and happy at work and in life. In addition, Calm Business offers organization-level analytics, insights and reporting, dedicated customer service, support for dependents, engagement strategies, and tailored workshops.

Over 3,000+ organizations around the world trust and choose Calm Business as their mental health and wellness partner, including Time USA, Ketchum Inc, XM Radio, Zendesk, Investcorp, McDonald's, University of Cincinnati, Rush University Medical Center, WorkRamp, and Museum of London. Partner with us and drive the mental health conversation forward.

Learn more at business.calm.com.



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