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**Ageing societies — General  
requirements and guidelines for  
carer-inclusive organizations**

*Viellissement de la population — Exigences générales et lignes  
directrices pour les organisations favorisant et appuyant les aidants  
naturels*

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 314, *Ageing societies*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

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# Introduction

## 0.1 General

Worldwide, 349 million people are estimated to be care-dependent and of these, 101 million people are over the age of 60 years<sup>[1]</sup>. The form that long-term care takes varies significantly among and within countries, from home care services to institutional hospital-based care. In most countries, individuals assume caregiving responsibilities for a spouse, family member, or friend who needs care because of limitations in their physical, mental or cognitive functioning and the majority of these carers are women. Although caregiving is a valued societal resource and often viewed positively by carers themselves, family/friend carers are largely a hidden and unacknowledged workforce.

Caregiving has become one of the most important social and economic issues worldwide and as population ages, carers will play an increasing critical role in every society, providing substantial economic value globally. For example, a study in Finland showed that the availability of unpaid care considerably reduces public care expenditure (estimated cost savings of 338 million euros)<sup>[2]</sup>. As unpaid care reduces costs of health system expenditure, it needs to be recognized that both unpaid and paid care is more often done by women. This can result in women leaving paid work to meet the demands of their unpaid care work and/or experiencing workplace inequalities. Caregiving is impacting workforces, health care systems, families and societies in general.

One of the greatest challenges for working carers is trying to balance employment with caregiving responsibilities. For example, labour force participation (the percentage of working age people in an economy who are either employed or unemployed but actively looking for work) is significantly affected by the family care needs of the growing ageing population. At the same time, family sizes are decreasing, more women are employed in the labour force, mobility is increasing, life expectancy is increasing, and the number of older adults in need of care is projected to continue to grow. These trends are impacting the growing number of working carers. Studies<sup>[3][4][5][6]</sup> show that their paid work is negatively impacted by becoming a carer and in most situations, employers do not have policies or programs in place to support these working carers<sup>[7]</sup>.

## 0.2 Supports for working carers

Employers can play a key role in supporting their employees who are also carers. Organizations can opt to sponsor benefits to working carers, such as education, skills training or supportive services, or to implement carer-supportive personnel policies and programs. These policies and programs help working carers to manage their paid work alongside their caring role, providing equal opportunities for them to remain in/or return to work, and help to reduce work-family conflict and/or support work-life balance. However, there is a lack of clear guidance for employers on how to support working carers.

The workplace is but one arena where working carers can be supported. Although the majority of waking hours are often spent at work, making it a key environment for carer supports, there are other arenas where carer supports are available. These include those available through the government or state, via the provision of public health care services and supports, such as family leaves. There are also a range of non-governmental, charitable and/or disease-specific organizations (i.e. cancer, dementia) that also provide supports, whether transportation services or personal care, for example. Finally, each working carer also has their own informal support system made up of extended family, friends and/or neighbours.

In some jurisdictions, working carers can be entitled to statutory care leaves, income support or credits, insurance schemes, financial support for care expenses, etc. For example, in June 2019, the European Union updated its Work-Life Balance Directive to introduce carer leaves and extended the right to request flexible working arrangements to working carers (previously available to working parents)<sup>[8]</sup>.

The intent of this document is to complement relevant existing programs and supports, whether state provided or otherwise.