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GLOBAL BUSINESS
AND DISABILITY
NETWORK

► Care to Compete

Corporate Policies and Practices on Care and
Support for Employees with Disabilities and
Employees with Dependants with Disabilities



► **Care to Compete**

Corporate Policies and Practices on Care and Support for Employees with Disabilities and Employees with Dependents with Disabilities

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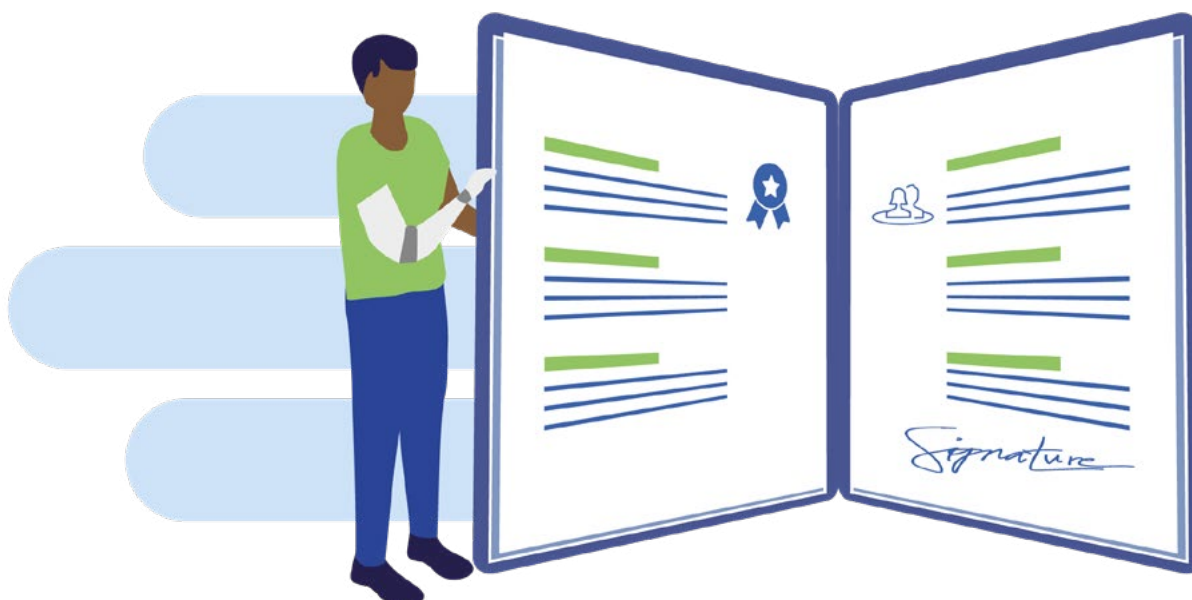
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► Executive Summary

This report by the ILO Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN) provides business-focussed insights into care and support policies and practices as they relate to employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities. It is primarily intended for corporate leaders and decision-makers, with a focus on those in multinational enterprises, as well as self-advocates to improve the relevance and effectiveness of care and support practices.

While this report is not globally representative of all employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities, it illustrates the needs, challenges, and positive practices experienced by many of these workers. It is important to recognise that not all groups reviewed in this report always require care or support. The analysis aims to ensure that appropriate policies and practices are available and accessible to those who need them - in line with principles of equity and inclusion. Further, the ILO GBDN recognises that the design and implementation of comprehensive and effective care and support systems is a shared responsibility and is not solely an obligation of employers.

Six main themes arise from the report's analysis and key recommendations to companies are linked to each theme:

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1. Aligning care policies with workforce needs for stronger retention and productivity

There is a strong correlation between care and support policies and job satisfaction,¹ which has direct implications for retention of employees and their productivity.²

Employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities who feel their employer understands and responds to their needs are far more likely to be satisfied in their jobs and to stay with the company.



- Position care policies as core to workforce strategy, for instance, through tracking basic indicators like turnover, absenteeism or employee satisfaction to gauge whether care efforts are making a positive difference.
- Where possible, align these indicators with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and Human Resources (HR) performance goals, as well as human rights due diligence, and evaluate them using disaggregated satisfaction, usage, and retention data.
- Ensure delivery mechanisms build trust and meet the diverse needs of employees with disabilities and employees providing care to dependants with disabilities.

1 Yang, J. et al. 2003. [The Role of Carer-Friendly Workplace Policies and Social Support in Relation to the Mental Health of Carer-Employees.](#)

2 S&P Global. 2024. [Guiding caregiving employees: It's complicated](#)

2. Increasing awareness to maximise the use of care policies among employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities

Even when corporate care and support policies are in place, their effectiveness depends on the workforce's awareness of them - to be able to access and utilise them. Deliberate promotion of policies can shift potential cultural stigma which may hold employees back from making use of existing policies.



- Integrate care policy communications into areas such as onboarding of new employees, supervisor talking points, team briefings, and company-internal communication channels.
- Use targeted outreach for employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities, regardless of gender, who may be less likely to disclose care-related needs or inquire about support.

3. Empowering employees through inclusive policy engagement

Enterprises that regularly review and adapt their care and support policy offerings are better equipped to respond to both sudden disruptions as well as short-term and long-term demographic shifts, including changes in caregiving responsibilities and family crises.³ Involving employees in shaping or reviewing care-related policies can improve relevance and enhance trust.

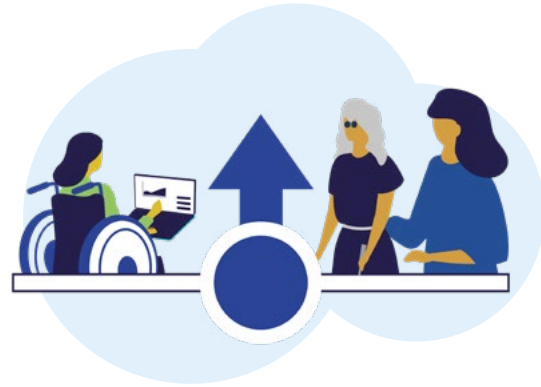


- Use short surveys, suggestion boxes or regular staff discussions to gather input on which care needs exist and how policies are working (or not).
- Where feasible, establish consultation mechanisms such as caregiver focus groups, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) on disability issues or on caregiver issues, and policy review panels.
- Use transparent feedback loops to ensure employee input influences relevant outcomes and is communicated back to participants.

3 McKinsey & Company. 2023. [The State of Organizations 2003](#).

4. Advancing equity in care for employees with disabilities and those with dependants with disabilities

Employees with disabilities and employees caring for dependants with disabilities often face additional barriers in accessing, balancing and benefiting from workplace support, especially when care responsibilities are layered with gender-based expectations. Promoting equity means not only recognizing the unique challenges faced by these employees but also designing support that is tailored and inclusive, regardless of gender or caregiving roles.



- Review policies to assess if they meet the specific needs of employees with disabilities and those with dependants with disabilities, not just general caregivers.
- Be mindful of overlapping challenges, for example women with disabilities or single fathers with caregiving responsibilities, and address gaps in access, flexibility or support.

.....

5. Supporting the well-being and engagement of employees with care responsibilities

Employees with dependants with disabilities may face additional stress and fatigue when providing care for them. While not all employers can offer formal caregiver benefits, there are practical steps enterprises can take to ease pressure and help employees stay engaged and productive.



- Increase awareness of existing national or community support services and refer relevant employees to them, when appropriate.
- Offer increased flexibility to employees with care responsibilities for dependants with disabilities, where possible and when it meets the needs of both the enterprise and its workforce.

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6. Bridging the global vision with local implementation

Multinational enterprises may have global care policies relevant for employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities, but the effectiveness of implementation often varies by country or branch. Even for smaller enterprises, the key is to adapt policies to local realities and ensure consistency in how they are applied.



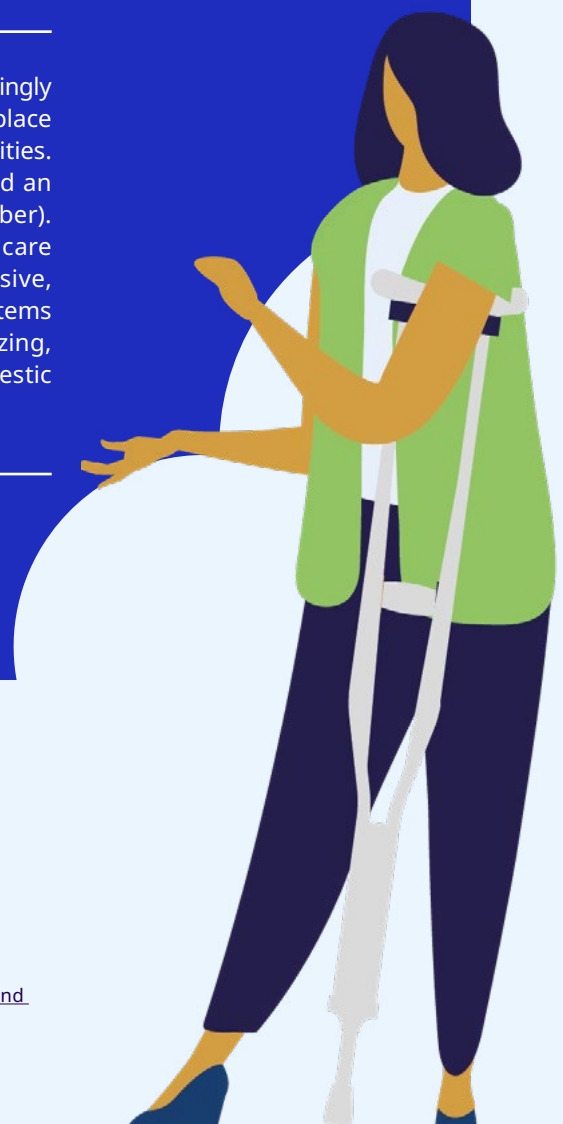
- Establish a globally coherent care and support policy framework that ensures consistent implementation and equips managers with the authority and training to apply policies equitably across all markets in which the company operates.



► 1. Introduction and methodology

Around the world, employers and public policymakers increasingly recognize the need for and the benefits of effective workplace care and support policies, including for persons with disabilities. In 2023, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed an annual International Day of Care and Support (29th October). The proclamation explicitly acknowledges the role of the care economy “to create robust, resilient and gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and age-sensitive care and support systems with full respect for human rights with a view to recognizing, reducing, valuing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work and support.”⁴

4 WHO (World Health Organization). 2024. [International Day of Care and Support: time for gender-equitable investment to better value and recognize care workers.](#)



In 2024, the International Labour Conference – the ILO’s highest-level decision-making body – adopted the *Resolution concerning decent work and the care economy*. It was negotiated and endorsed by its tripartite structure of governments, employers’, and workers’ representatives from the ILO’s 187 Member States.⁵ A specific commitment of the resolution aims to “enhance the availability of assistance and support services for persons with disabilities to promote individual autonomy and independence, including by taking a disability-inclusive approach to increase access to employment opportunities.”⁶ Please see Box 1 for further details.

Building on the momentum generated by the ILO resolution and its accompanying Plan of Action, this report offers a focused examination of workplace care and support policies from the perspective of employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities. In this context, it is important to recognise that having a disability does not automatically mean one also has care needs. Further, persons with dependants with disabilities do not automatically have care responsibilities for them.

► **Box 1: Disability-related priorities in the ILO Resolution concerning decent work and the care economy⁷**

Common understanding of the care economy: The care economy encompasses both paid and unpaid care work, direct and indirect, delivered in households and institutions, aimed at supporting the well-being, dignity, and diverse needs of individuals across all life stages, including caregivers and care recipients. Section II, point 9.

Implementation and monitoring: A key guiding principle is the collection of disaggregated data to capture the full scope and value of care work, especially unpaid care. This data should reflect diverse characteristics, such as income, gender, age, disability, and location, to inform inclusive and context-specific policy design. Section III, point 28.

Recognition of support as a precondition for work: Advancing decent work in the care economy requires expanding access to assistance and support services for persons with disabilities, with a focus on promoting autonomy, independence, and inclusive pathways to employment. Section IV, point 30, m.

5 ILO. 2024. [ILO Resolution on Decent Work and the Care Economy moves ahead.](#)

6 ILO. 2024. [Resolution concerning decent work and the care economy.](#)

7 ILO. 2024. [Resolution concerning decent work and the care economy.](#)

The study underpinning this report employed a mixed-methods research design anchored in three complementary online surveys to gather quantitative and qualitative data⁸ – targeting corporate managers in areas like DEI, and HR (Survey 1: “Workplace Care and Support Policies and Practices”), employees who provide care and support for dependants with disabilities (Survey 2: “Availability and Adequacy of Care and Support Policies for Workers with Dependants with Disabilities”), and employees with disabilities who require care and support (Survey 3: “Care and Support Policies Available at the Workplace: Understanding the Needs and Lived Experiences of Workers with Disabilities”). Survey data was collected over a 30-day period in English, French, and Spanish, with outreach being facilitated by members of the ILO GBDN, including National Business and Disability Networks, and partners such as PurpleSpace - a global hub of disability ERGs. All tools were reviewed for digital accessibility. To ensure confidentiality, all responses were anonymized, and only aggregated results are presented. This report also draws on insights from 18 interviews with representatives from multinational enterprise members of the ILO GBDN, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions, as well as desk-based research to contextualize survey and interview findings within previously found insights.

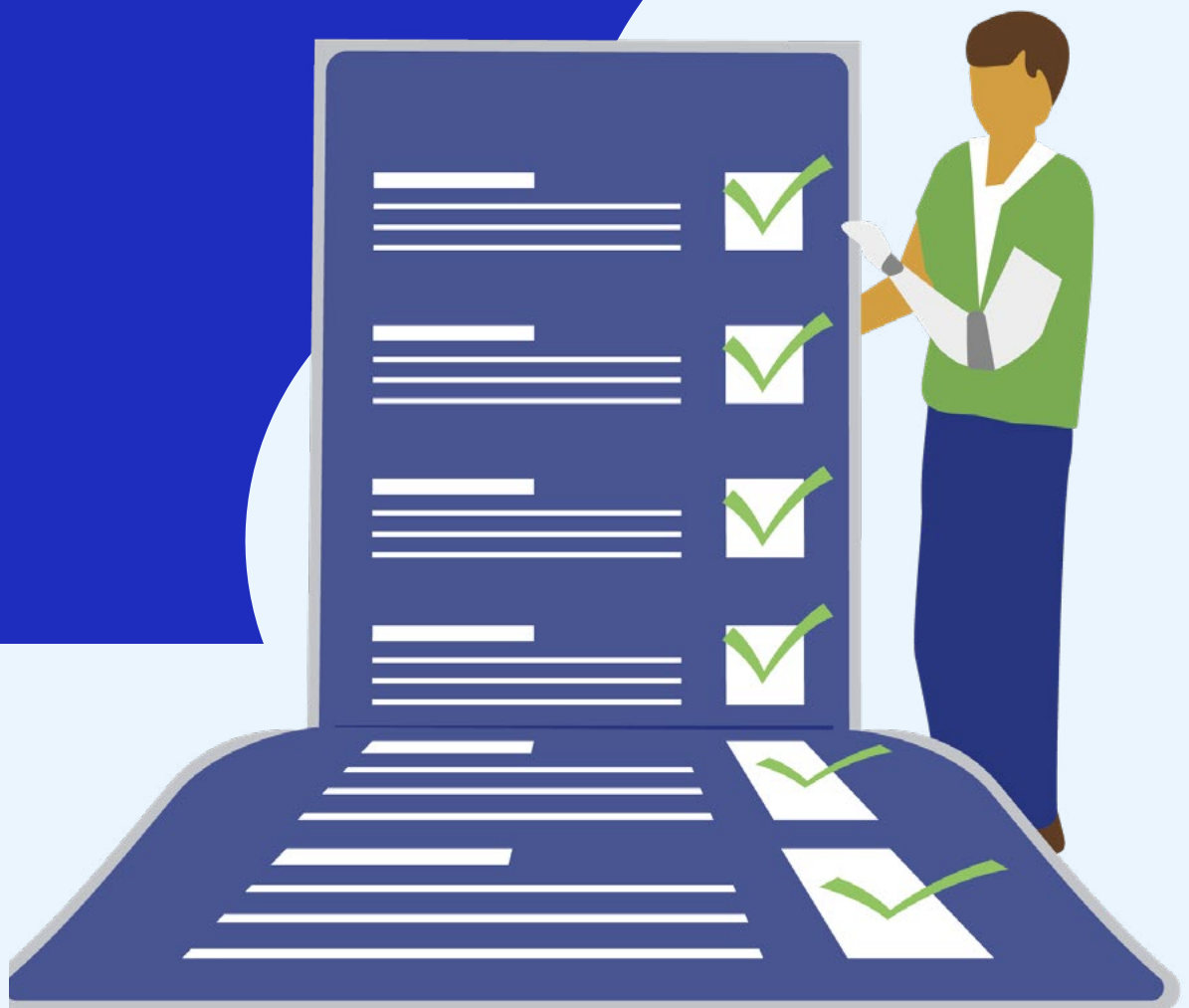
The survey samples are not representative of all employees with disabilities, employees with dependants with disabilities, or employers, as responses were voluntary and may reflect bias given many respondents are engaged with disability inclusion or caregiving issues. The data from the surveys was not weighted. Data were not disaggregated by industry or region. The survey was conducted online, which may have limited participation from anyone without access to a computer or internet services. All data are self-reported and not independently verified.

8 Survey 1: Workplace Care and Support Policies and Practices. Total viable survey responses, n=51
Survey 2: Availability and Adequacy of Care and Support Policies for Workers with Dependants with Disabilities. Total viable survey responses, n=8
Survey 3: Care and Support Policies Available at the Workplace: Understanding the Needs and Lived Experiences of Workers with Disabilities. Total viable survey responses, n=31





► 2. Opportunities and challenges for enterprises

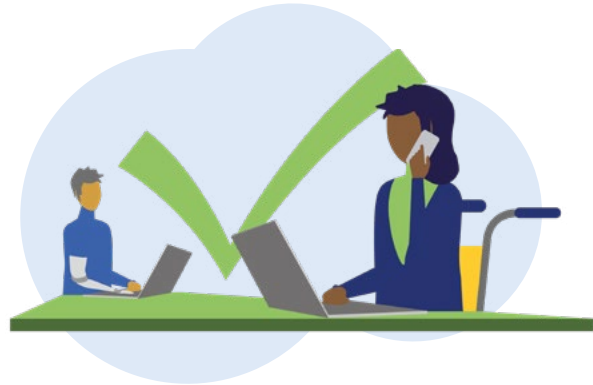


2.1. Benefits of workplace care and support policies

Companies with strong care and support policies typically see positive results in employee engagement and productivity. The World Economic Forum, for example, estimates that enhancing employee health and well-being (through measures like comprehensive leave, wellness benefits, and flexibility) could generate up to USD 11.7 trillion in additional global economic value by boosting productivity and reducing turnover and absenteeism.⁹ When employees feel a sense of being cared for, they tend to show increased motivation in performing their job.

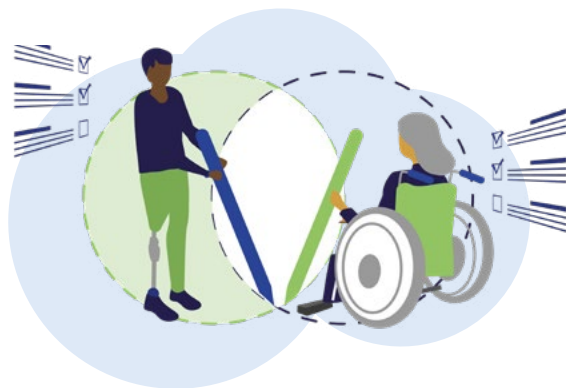
This can lead to better **employee engagement, greater willingness to collaborate, and reduced workplace cynicism.**

In turn, these outcomes can positively influence performance, both in business-to-business (B2B) contexts and in interactions with end customers in business-to-consumer (B2C) models. Consumers often feel goodwill and therefore loyalty toward companies that treat their employees well, such as the positive publicity around companies extending caregiving policy such as leave or maintaining pay for employees during crises.¹⁰ Corporate care and support policies can strengthen employee pride and referrals and can also appeal to investors¹¹ who prefer to engage with socially responsible businesses.



2.2. Intersection between public and workplace policies on care and support

Public policy and workplace practices can be tightly interwoven when it comes to assisting employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities. National laws and mandates often set the baseline for what employers must provide, and in many cases, they catalyse stronger benefits at the company level. For example, countries with robust government mandates on family leave tend to see most employers comply and sometimes exceed these standards, embedding care-friendly measures into workplace culture. Conversely, where public policy is weak or absent, there is usually a greater onus on individual employers or workers' organizations to negotiate solutions, potentially leading to a patchwork of outcomes. Please also see Box 2 for case studies of public-private sector collaboration for better care outcomes.



9 WEF (World Economic Forum). 2025. [Thriving Workplaces: How Employers can Improve Productivity and Change Lives.](#)

10 RDM Lawyers LLP. 2024. [Nurturing Your Workforce: Tips for Employers re Pregnant Employees and Parental Leaves.](#)

11 ILO GBDN. 2024. [Putting the I in ESG: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities as Strategic Advantage of Sustainability Practices for Corporates and Investors.](#)

► **Box 2: Case studies of public-private partnerships for better care outcomes**

There are encouraging cases of **collaboration between public institutions and private workplaces** that have led to improved care and support outcomes. For instance, in **China**, some local governments, disability advocacy groups, and major employers have partnered to create “Supported Employment” initiatives. The government funds vocational rehabilitation centres, and companies agree (sometimes through informal agreements with workers’ organisations) to offer positions to programme graduates.^{12,13} These initiatives show that **when public policy provides resources or frameworks, and companies step up with opportunities, tangible improvements follow.**

In **Sweden**, a noteworthy approach sees collective bargaining and public policy planned in tandem: with regards to national parental leave, trade unions negotiated additional “*daddy months*” (in colloquial language) in some workplaces - before the government eventually increased the statutory quota for fathers.¹⁴ The result was a leap in paternal participation in caregiving, credited to the **synergy of trade union initiative and state policy.**

According to the ILO GBDN survey results, a combined **57.1 per cent of enterprise-level survey respondents** indicated that public policies have influenced workplace practices either significantly (51 per cent) or very significantly (6.1 per cent).¹⁵ These findings affirm that **public sector policy and regulatory frameworks play an important role in catalysing internal enterprise policy development.**

Further, the ILO GBDN survey for enterprises and interviews with company representatives highlighted a strong perceived alignment between workplace care and support policies and national frameworks, with **83.7 per cent of enterprise respondents reporting that their policies were either mostly (42.9 per cent) or fully aligned (40.8 percent) with national policies.**¹⁶ However, survey respondents further cautioned that alignment does not always equate to effectiveness, as policies may meet formal requirements while falling short in responsiveness to the lived experiences of employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities.

12 ILO. 2006. [Employment of People with Disabilities A Human Rights Approach \(Asia\).](#)

13 EASPD (European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities). 2020. [The opportunities and barriers of different employment models for persons with disabilities.](#)

14 Oxford University Press. 2022. [Successful Public Policy in the Nordic Countries Cases, Lessons, Challenges.](#)

15 Survey title: Workplace Care and Support Policies and Practices
Survey question: To what extent do you think public policies have influenced your workplace’s care and support policies? n=49

16 Survey title: Workplace Care and Support Policies and Practices
Survey question: How well do you feel your workplace policies align with national care and support legislation? n=49

2.3. Structural challenges in multinational enterprises

The responses to the ILO GBDN survey targeting enterprise representatives and interviews with representatives from multinational enterprises reveal a wide range of systemic and structural challenges that companies face in delivering effective care and support policies for employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities. While many employers demonstrate a strong intent to be inclusive, the execution of these policies remains uneven, shaped by internal limitations, external regulatory differences, and varying levels of organizational commitment.



The top two challenges reported through the ILO GBDN survey to enterprise representatives, were **inconsistent policy implementation across regions or markets**, cited by 40 per cent of respondents, followed by **lack of benefits and allowances for care and support**,¹⁷ cited by 30 per cent of respondents.¹⁸ A survey respondent added, “*global mandates and policies can get inconsistently implemented across local countries.*” Another enterprise representative tied these identified challenges together, highlighting the nuanced effect of creating policies with sufficient financial support, which can consistently be implemented across markets: “*we have some common tools to assist employees globally, but most of the benefits/allowance are local and there is still a lack of practices consistency [in how they are offered]*”. Another enterprise representative noted, “*in some countries, local administrations are very slow to deal with individual cases of disability recognition,*” referencing bureaucratic delays that hinder access.

Another recurring concern reported by enterprise representatives, both through the survey and interviews, was the **reliance on self-disclose to access care-related policies**. Interviewees stressed the importance of building trust between employers and employees for them to come forward and self-ID as a person with a disability, when needed to access relevant policies. Many interviewees highlighted the importance of facilitating “*smoother access to care and support policies for all employees, regardless of disability status.*” Reliance on narrow medical definitions was seen as a barrier, as also expressed by an enterprise representative in the following way: “*We need to broaden our understanding of disability to include invisible and fluctuating conditions, not just those with formal diagnoses.*” Pressure to disclose personal information to access standard supports was also flagged, with one employee with a disability stating, “*back to office mandate is non-inclusive for my disability, I can get exceptions but will have to disclose.*”

Structural and procedural challenges were frequently cited in the ILO GBDN surveys and related interviews. Respondents expressed a desire for transparent, rights-based systems that provide clarity and consistency around accessing care-related benefits rather than relying on managerial discretion to secure flexible work or time off. As one employee noted in the ILO GBDN survey for employees with disabilities, “*not needing to rely on a manager for getting (...) flexible working*” would ensure fairer access for all employees with care responsibilities.

¹⁷ Benefits / allowances referenced in the survey question included: disability benefits, child benefits, childcare benefits, long-term care benefits (direct payments, allowances, tax benefits), tax incentives (credits or deductions).

¹⁸ Survey title: Workplace Care and Support Policies and Practices
Survey question: Which of the following challenges does your company face in your care and support policies? (select all that apply) n=40

When having to request access to care and support policies via a manager is a mandatory requirement, managerial capability was reported as another barrier to effective policy access and utilization. Many companies rely on line managers to act as the first point of contact for policy access. However, often without sufficient training or authority, these managers may not be able to fulfil the requests by employees with disabilities or employees with dependants with disabilities. One enterprise representative observed that policies *“can be excellent, but if the manager is not flexible or supportive, it’s not accessible.”* The absence of a clearly defined framework and training to activate relevant processes can create inequities in policy access and utilization.

Organizational inertia was also reported as an obstacle to advancing disability-inclusive care policies. In some cases, disability inclusion is not seen as business-critical unless linked to broader Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) or Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)¹⁹ strategies. This view would overlook the systemic value of inclusive care policies, and the cost of inaction, such as turnover, absenteeism, and disengagement, that arise when employees’ care responsibilities are unsupported.

Taken together, these insights highlight the need for a **coherent, inclusive, and consistently implemented global care policy framework**. Companies should focus on harmonizing practices across markets while respecting local legislation, improving internal communication between company functions to advance requests for policy use as requested, expand eligibility requirements for use of policies - without restricting use to those with medical diagnoses (a potentially lengthy process, not generating trust) - and equip managers and HR teams with the training and tools needed to deliver support equitably. Without these enabling conditions, even well-intentioned policies risk falling short of their potential to create meaningful, inclusive workplace change.

2.4. Good corporate practices

Many leading companies have moved beyond compliance to implement care and support policies that aim to enable employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities to thrive in the workplace. This shift is often driven by a top-down commitment. “Building a culture of inclusion is a critical lever to business success,” one multinational enterprise interviewee shared. These policies do not emerge in isolation; rather, they are the product of intentional management practices that institutionalize care responsibilities as a legitimate and supported dimension of decent work. This section outlines five interconnected practices identified across a sample of multinational enterprises.²⁰



19 ILO GBDN. 2024. [Putting the I in ESG: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities as Strategic Advantage of Sustainability Practices for Corporates and Investors](#).

20 All quotations included in this report are illustrative and anonymized. They have been crafted to reflect common perspectives and practices shared by member companies of the ILO GBDN. These statements do not represent direct quotes from any individual or company, and no attribution should be inferred.

2.4.1. Senior leadership commitment and public accountability

A defining feature of companies making meaningful progress on care and support for employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities is visible and sustained engagement from top leadership. When senior executives champion caregiving and disability-inclusive policies, it not only legitimizes these issues within the organizational agenda, but it also sets a tone of accountability across all levels of management. Leadership visibility helps shift care from being treated as an individual challenge to being recognized as a structural priority, embedded in workforce planning, talent retention, and organizational resilience. Without this top-down commitment, even well-designed policies risk limited uptake or uneven implementation. Several enterprises provide illustrative examples of how executive leadership can drive progress:

- At AXA, the introduction of the “We Care” global health and wellbeing programme in 2023 was championed directly by the Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), positioning care leave as a core component of employee wellbeing. The programme provides up to five days of fully paid caregiver leave per year for employees caring for family members with serious health conditions or disabilities and is being rolled out across 51 countries.²¹ The inclusion of care-related policies in AXA’s 2024-2026 corporate strategic plan underscores the role of executive accountability in scaling care as a strategic priority.²²
- L’Oréal’s Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Advisory Board, launched in 2021, brings together senior leadership and external experts to guide and strengthen the company’s DEI strategy. Co-chaired by the CEO and the Global Chief DEI Officer, the board promotes open dialogue on advancing inclusive practices. External members contribute critical insights on emerging social issues and provide feedback to support continuous improvement.²³ L’Oréal’s “Share & Care” programme, implemented globally, provides a minimum of 14 weeks of fully paid maternity/primary parent leave and at least six weeks of paid paternity/secondary parent leave.²⁴
- HSBC’s commitment to caregiving and inclusion is reinforced by strong leadership engagement and structured policy support. Executive sponsorship for employee networks, such as the Ability network focused on disability and neurodiversity, comes directly from the Group Operating Committee and board-level leaders. In 2024, HSBC launched a “Global Carers Charter”, offering tools and support for employees with caring responsibilities, which received “Ambassador” status from Carers UK - the highest level in their “Carer Confident” accreditation scheme - following its UK rollout. The company also advanced its position in the Social Mobility Index by the UK’s Social Mobility Foundation, moving up 30 places to rank 37 in 2024.²⁵



As one interviewee noted: “When leadership names care as a business priority, it creates the permission and structure for others to follow. It signals that supporting the workforce through life’s caregiving demands is not an exception, it’s expected.”

21 AXA. 2023. [AXA launches 'We Care' program for all employees worldwide.](#)

22 AXA. 2024. [Unlock the Future AXA Strategic Plan 2024-2026.](#)

23 L’Oréal. 2024. [Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion at L’Oréal Groupe.](#)

24 L’Oréal. 2023. [2023 Universal Registration Document.](#)

25 HSBC. [Our inclusion strategy.](#)

These examples illustrate how leadership-led strategies can normalize care and inclusion across the workplace, ensuring that support mechanisms are not only adopted but sustained and scaled as part of a broader vision for decent and inclusive work. At the same time, companies that are in the early stages need to be aware of the risks of “carewashing”, i.e. a misalignment between what is portrayed as cultures of care and employees' actual daily experiences.²⁶

2.4.2. Tracking and embedding care responsibilities in wider business strategies

Tracking metrics such as leave uptake, requests for flexible work arrangements, and employee engagement - disaggregated by gender, age, disability status, and other personal characteristics - helps identify usage patterns and potential equity gaps. When such data is integrated into business strategies, including ESG²⁷ and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) priorities, it offers a comprehensive understanding of inclusion and respective needs. Integrating care into these frameworks elevates it from individual accommodations to strategic priorities. This alignment not only strengthens internal accountability, but it also signals to investors, employees, and external stakeholders that care responsibilities, particularly those related to disability, are central to the company's vision of inclusive and sustainable business practices.

- As a signatory of the ILO GBDN's “Business Leaders’ Pledge on Disability- Inclusive Sustainability Practices”,²⁸ Capgemini continues to advance disability-inclusive sustainability practices and reporting.²⁹ At Capgemini, the “NeuroInclusion” programme is integrated into the company's global approach to CSR and sustainability reporting, with explicit attention to how support for neurodivergent employees and their families reflects broader goals around equity, inclusion, and health.³⁰
- HSBC demonstrates how caregiving can be formally integrated into corporate sustainability strategy through its 2024 ESG review. Under the social pillar of its ESG reporting, HSBC outlines a comprehensive global caregiving framework. This includes at least 18 weeks of fully paid parental leave for 94 per cent of primary caregivers, two weeks of paid leave for 74 per cent of secondary caregivers, and five fully paid carers' leave days available to 67 per cent of its global workforce. Compassionate and emergency leave is also provided in 79 per cent of locations, supporting employees with urgent family care responsibilities, including those related to disability.³¹



26 Harvard Business Review. 2024. [How “Carewashing” Alienates Employees.](#)

27 ILO GBDN. 2024. [Putting the I in ESG: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities as Strategic Advantage of Sustainability Practices for Corporates and Investors.](#)

28 ILO. 2024. [Business leaders pledge to include disability in sustainability efforts.](#)

29 Capgemini. 2024. [Progressing toward a more accessible workplace, shaping inclusive futures for all.](#)

30 ILO GBDN. 2023. [Neurodiversity Inclusion at Capgemini.](#)

31 HSBC. 2024. [Annual Report and Accounts.](#)

- Nestlé includes parental and caregiver support as well as retention rates for those who used leave, in its 2024 Non-Financial Statement, which includes disclosures and sustainability performance metrics.³² Nestlé provides up to 14 weeks of fully paid leave for primary caregivers globally, with an additional 12 weeks of unpaid family support leave available.³³ Such inclusive leave policies are highlighted as part of Nestlé's broader commitment to employee wellbeing and equality of opportunity, as set out in its "Creating Shared Value" framework.³⁴



"We began to treat care not just as a benefit, but as part of our social footprint. Once we integrated it into our ESG and reporting frameworks, it gained the visibility and resourcing needed to scale." – quote from an enterprise representative.

2.4.3. Cross-departmental coordination and implementation

Several companies showcase that care policies are most effective when developed through interdepartmental collaboration. Rather than being led by HR alone, these initiatives involve units like legal, operations, compliance, and wellbeing teams to ensure policies are legally sound, operationally feasible, and responsive to employees' needs. This cross-functional approach helps embed care into everyday business practices and ensures consistent support for employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities.

- HSBC's 2024 "Global Carers Charter" exemplifies interdepartmental teamwork. Its design and delivery involved HR, legal, operations, and wellbeing teams, complemented by input from senior executive sponsors and its Ability ERG. The policy offers carers' leave, compassionate steps, and flexible support tailored to employees with dependants who require care, including those with disabilities.³⁵
- In 2024, L'Oréal's Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Advisory Board met twice, with experts also engaging in collaborative sessions across key departments including HR and Research & Development.³⁶ L'Oréal's "Share & Care" programme, launched in 2013, is rooted in social innovation and driven by cross-functional collaboration.³⁷ Managed by a dedicated social innovation team, it brings together HR, Research & Development, Health & Safety, and digital teams to ensure a comprehensive approach spanning protection, health, balance, and workplace. In 2023, L'Oréal extended this model globally by founding the "Engage & Care Corporate Coalition", uniting 16 companies – many of them being ILO GBDN company members, too – to co-develop social protection innovations and share good practices, signalling that care policies are built on collective expertise across multiple domains.³⁸



³² Nestlé. 2024. [Non-Financial Statement 2024](#).

³³ Nestlé. [Benefits & Perks](#).

³⁴ Nestlé. 2023. [Creating Shared Value and Sustainability Report 2023](#).

³⁵ HSBC. 2024. [Carers bring unique skills to the workplace](#).

³⁶ L'Oréal. 2024. [Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion at L'Oréal Groupe](#).

³⁷ L'Oréal. 2025. [L'Oréal named Europe's most innovative company](#).

³⁸ L'Oréal. [We Believe in Social Innovations for Our Employees](#).

- At Orange, ERGs have played a direct role in co-creating the “Neuroteam” initiative, a cross-departmental programme on neurodiversity.³⁹ Backed by two members of Orange’s Executive Committee responsible for CSR and HR, the programme brings together a multidisciplinary group that includes members of the Les Z’Atypiques neurodivergent employee community and representatives from across all business units.⁴⁰



“The only way care policies work is if they’re designed across functions. Legal ensures compliance, HR ensures consistency, and our inclusion teams ensure relevance. No one team owns care, but everyone has a role.”
– quote from an enterprise representative.

2.4.4. Combining global policy with local flexibility

Multinational enterprises often adopt a dual approach by establishing global minimum standards while allowing adaptation to local contexts. This model ensures a consistent baseline of support, such as caregiver leave, disability-related reasonable accommodations, or flexible work arrangements, across all operations - while granting local teams the flexibility to tailor policies to national laws, cultural norms, and specific workforce needs. By doing so, companies can uphold their global commitments to inclusion, while remaining responsive and relevant at the local level. This approach also facilitates smoother implementation, as locally adapted policies are more likely to gain employee trust and reflect the realities of care infrastructure and social protection systems in each country.

- ENGIE offers an example of a global policy standard with local flexibility through its “ENGIE Care” global social protection programme, launched in 2020. The policy guarantees a core set of benefits across all operations, including at least 14 weeks of paid maternity leave and four weeks of paternity leave.⁴¹ These standards were formalized through ENGIE’s International Social Agreement, co-developed with global trade unions, three international federations and ENGIE employees, signed in 2022. At ENGIE, the agreement is implemented through cross-functional collaboration, with the Ethics & Compliance, Health & Safety, and Purchasing departments jointly responsible for its rollout and oversight.⁴² While centrally governed, the policies are implemented through local HR and business units, allowing subsidiaries to align provisions with national care systems and workforce needs.⁴³
- Accor demonstrates this principle through its “Ethics and CSR Charter” and the “Planet 21” programme, which establish group-wide principles for work-life balance, health, and inclusive employment. These standards are not uniformly prescriptive; rather, local hotel and regional teams, working in partnership with HR, CSR, and operations departments, adapt the guidance to national contexts. This decentralized implementation ensures that corporate care values are realized in ways that reflect local workforce realities, legal requirements, and available public infrastructure.⁴⁴



“Setting a global minimum gave us the clarity we needed, but it was local input that made it real. The flexibility to adapt benefits to regional needs helped us make sure we could respond to local context, while using global guidelines.” – quote from an enterprise representative.

39 Orange. 2022. [Why Orange is committed to neurodiversity](#).

40 Orange. 2022. [Neuroteam Manifesto of the program dedicated to taking into account neurodiversity in the workplace](#).

41 ENGIE. “A modern and comprehensive social agreement”.

42 ENGIE. 2022. [FACT 42 – Protecting our employees throughout the world](#).

43 ENGIE. [Compensation, social protection, employee savings plans, and employee shareholding](#).

44 Accor. 2020. [Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility Charter](#).

2.4.5. Inclusion of employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities in policy design and review

Companies that regularly review and adapt their policy offerings - such as leave provisions, wellness supports, and flexible work options - are better equipped to respond to both sudden disruptions and short-term and long-term demographic shifts, including changes in caregiving responsibilities and family crises.⁴⁵ Please see also Box 3 on strengthening care-related social dialogue between governments, employers' organizations, workers' organizations and organisations of persons with disabilities.

► **Box 3: Strengthening care-related social dialogue between governments, employers' organizations, workers' organizations and organisations of persons with disabilities**

A recurring theme in successful alignment of public and workplace policies is inclusive stakeholder involvement in designing those policies. Employers' and workers' organizations, organisations of persons with disabilities and disability NGOs each offer critical perspectives that, when combined, lead to more robust and accepted solutions. Many governments have institutionalized this through **tripartite or multistakeholder councils**.

For instance, when the European Union (EU) was formulating its directive on work-life balance, it held consultations with the European Trade Union Confederation and the employer federation BusinessEurope, among others, including persons with disabilities and unpaid carers.⁴⁶ The resulting policy, which includes carers' leave and the right to request flexible work, bore the imprint of these discussions, balancing employees' need for guaranteed time off with employers' request for flexibility in how it is taken. Because social partners were involved from the start, EU countries have seen relatively cooperative implementation at the company level, often through collective agreements that mirror the directive's provisions.

In the context of the respective ILO GBDN survey, most enterprise representatives (96.1 per cent) reported that their company conducts some form of review of their care and support policies, of which 54.9 per cent do so 'regularly', 41.2 per cent review them 'only occasionally', and only 3.9 per cent of respondents reported their company does not review or update policies, by indicating 'not at all'.⁴⁷ Overall, these findings signal responsive and adaptive policy management, which is crucial for ensuring relevance to evolving workforce needs, especially as caregiving needs may change over time or with shifts in life stage, job role, or health condition. Irregular updates may risk that policies become outdated, less effective, or misaligned with employee expectations and lived realities.

Care and support policies that not only meet legal or company guidelines but that also reflect real needs are often shaped through structured engagement with employees who have lived experience

⁴⁵ McKinsey & Company. 2023. [The State of Organizations 2023](#).

⁴⁶ European Commission. [Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Work-life balance](#).

⁴⁷ Survey title: Workplace Care and Support Policies and Practices
Survey question: To what extent were/are workers with disabilities and/or workers with dependants with disabilities, or their representatives, involved in the design and review of care and support policies? n=51

of disability or who have caregiving responsibilities for a dependant with a disability. Embedding care needs into policy design requires proactive listening and incorporation of these lived experiences. For management, this means establishing formal channels, including through surveys, focus groups, ERGs, or pilot initiatives, to build policies that earn trust, encourage use, and genuinely improve employee wellbeing.

- Capgemini emphasizes the importance of participatory design and peer support mechanisms in delivering effective, inclusive care policies. Capgemini’s global disability ERG, CapAbility, offers practical support, advocacy, and opportunities for connection among employees with disabilities. Within this ERG, the “NeuroAbility” initiative specifically supports neurodivergent colleagues. Together, these groups play a central role in advancing the cultural change necessary for building a more inclusive workplace.⁴⁸



- AXA uses short, targeted pulse surveys to gather timely employee feedback aligned with its cultural and organizational priorities. These surveys, distributed globally in 19 languages, enable rapid insights into specific experiences, such as onboarding, parental transitions, or workplace changes. By conducting both company-wide and ad hoc surveys, AXA has fostered a continuous feedback culture, allowing for quick adjustments throughout the year rather than relying solely on annual surveys.⁴⁹



“We’ve learned that our best policies come from listening to employees who’ve lived the reality of balancing work and care. Their insight is what turned policies into practices people can trust.” – quote from an enterprise representative.

48 ILO GBDN. 2023. [Neurodiversity Inclusion at Capgemini](#).

49 AXA. [Collecting feedback and Measuring Employee Engagement](#).





► 3. Opportunities and challenges for employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities



3.1. Detrimental effects of care needs and care responsibilities

Effectively meeting disability-related care and support needs at work is essential for fostering an inclusive, equitable, and productive workplace. When employers recognize and respond to these needs, they improve employee well-being, reduce turnover, and support diverse talent pools. However, if left unaddressed or not addressed sufficiently, negative effects materialise.



3.1.1. Effects of care and support needs on livelihoods

Understanding how care and support needs affect livelihoods is essential for designing inclusive employment and social protection systems. When such needs are overlooked, employees, especially women, persons with disabilities, and those with caregiving responsibilities, face reduced labour market participation, job insecurity, and income volatility.⁵⁰

The ILO GBDN survey findings show that **59.2 per cent of employees with disabilities reported that unmet care and support needs have moderate to extreme effects on their livelihoods**.⁵¹ These impacts can lead to reduced working hours, job insecurity, and barriers to full-time employment - directly affecting income stability and career progression. The data reveals **gendered differences** in how impacts are experienced: men reported more varied results across response options,⁵² whereas women's responses leaned towards more negative impacts.

Employees with dependants with disabilities responded to this survey question with **nearly 57.2 per cent indicating moderate or greater constraints** on their livelihoods.⁵³ These findings highlight that care responsibilities may disrupt workforce participation for many employees with dependants with disabilities. It may require **integrated policy responses**, including accessible services, income supports, and flexible work arrangements that account for gender, caregiving roles, and disability-related needs.

3.1.2. Psycho-emotional effects of care responsibilities

Research consistently finds elevated levels of stress, burnout, and mental strain among employees with dependants who have significant care needs. The ILO GBDN survey to **employees with dependants with disabilities** reveals that psychological strain is widespread, with 66.7 per cent of respondents reporting feelings of burnout or overwhelm linked to their caregiving responsibilities.

50 ILO. 2018. [Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work](#).

51 Survey title: Care and Support Policies Available at the Workplace: Understanding the Needs and Lived Experiences of Workers with Disabilities
Survey question: To what extent do you feel that your care and support needs have impacted your livelihood (e.g., access paid employment, income, employment stability, ability to work full-time)? n=27

52 Options include: not at all, slightly, moderately, significantly, extremely

53 Survey title: Availability and Adequacy of Care and Support Policies for Workers with Dependants with Disabilities
Survey question: To what extent do you feel that your care responsibilities for a dependant with a disability have impacted your livelihood (e.g., access paid employment, income, employment stability, ability to work full-time)? n= 7

Half of these respondents also noted experiencing symptoms such as stress, isolation or burnout, and anxiety or depression.⁵⁴ One-third of respondents reported experiencing physical strain as well. The frequency of these effects is also significant: 50 per cent of respondents reported experiencing these impacts several days a week, while 33 per cent said they occurred more than half the time.⁵⁵ Please see Box 4 for further details.

► **Box 4: Balancing paid work and care responsibilities in the workplace**

For many professionals, the most challenging part of having care duties is **finding the time and energy “to do it all”**. The clash between full-time job demands and dependants’ care needs often leads to “time poverty,” where individuals have too few hours for rest or self-care because so much time is absorbed by work and caregiving. Globally, women are most affected by this double burden. According to the ILO, **women perform about 75 per cent of all unpaid care work worldwide**, spending on average 4 hours 25 minutes per day on caregiving and housework, more than **three times the amount of time men spend**.⁵⁶ This unequal division of labour means that female professionals, in particular, face intense pressure trying to balance deadlines and meetings with childcare, elder care, and domestic tasks. As the World Economic Forum observes, the **unequal distribution of care is a significant barrier to women’s full workforce participation**, often limiting their job choices, work hours, and career progression. Fathers are taking on more caregiving than in the past and want to do more, but barriers like limited parental leave, pay inequality, and social expectations hold them back. Workplaces help shape these norms, and with supportive public policy, employers can drive a more equal sharing of care responsibilities and shift attitudes around caregiving.⁵⁷

Taken together, these results underline the benefit of designing a comprehensive and sustained support system for employees with caregiving responsibilities. Companies can take meaningful action by expanding access to mental health services, promoting regular use of employee assistance programmes, and providing care-related training for both managers and HR personnel. Developing flexible work policies that explicitly account for caregiving responsibilities, establishing clear and supportive communication channels, and fostering an open, stigma-free culture around disclosing care responsibilities are equally important.

54 Survey title: Availability and Adequacy of Care and Support Policies for Workers with Dependants with Disabilities
Survey question: Have you ever experienced any of the following due to your care responsibilities? (Select all that apply)
n=6

55 Survey title: Availability and Adequacy of Care and Support Policies for Workers with Dependants with Disabilities
Survey question: In the last 2 weeks, how often did you experience any of the above? n=6

56 ILO. 2019. [The Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market. An analysis of time use data based on the latest World Compilation of Time-use Surveys.](#)

57 WEF. 2023. [Men want to increase care work at home. Here's how business can help.](#)

3.2. Awareness of policies

Even when robust corporate care and support policies are in place, their effectiveness depends on employees being aware of them and feeling empowered to access and utilize them. Awareness of specific policies differed between employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities. Responses regarding leave policies,⁵⁸ rights and working arrangements,⁵⁹ as well as benefits and allowances are highlighted in this section.



Employees with disabilities reported low awareness levels of the three areas of care and support policies (leave policies, rights and working arrangements, as well as benefits and allowances), pointing to possible concerns regarding gaps in awareness across an enterprise. Specifically, awareness of leave policies such as paid and unpaid leave for chronic health conditions or rehabilitation services was reported at 42.0 per cent. Awareness of rights and working arrangements was ascertained through awareness of flexible working arrangements (67.7 per cent) and the right to request reasonable accommodations (54.8 per cent). Employees with disabilities further reported significantly lower awareness of benefits and allowances such as financial assistance programmes, at 12.9 per cent.⁶⁰ Please see Table 1 for details.

Employees with dependants with disabilities reported a different pattern of awareness. While the total sample size for employees with dependants with disabilities was low at n=8, their responses to the question of awareness of policies remains useful. Awareness of leave policies was reported by 37.5 per cent of respondents, rights and working arrangements was reported by 12.5 per cent of respondents, and benefits and allowances was reported by 37.5 per cent of respondents. Employees with dependants with disabilities also reported the highest score for “I don’t know” at 37.5 per cent, suggesting an overall awareness gap of care and support policies.⁶¹

While proactive outreach by employers must be balanced with respect for employees’ privacy and the sensitive nature of personal or domestic caregiving situations, lack of early engagement may lead to missed opportunities to connect employees with offers for addressing caregiving needs. Enterprises can create a culture of openness by clearly communicating available policies and support to all workers - without requiring personal disclosure - and by ensuring that any voluntary disclosures are handled with discretion and confidentiality.

58 Leave policies include emergency leave, long-term care leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, paid and unpaid leave for chronic health conditions or rehabilitation services.

59 Rights and working arrangements include the right to request/obtain flexible working arrangements, anti-discrimination rights, employment protections (right to return to work, same pay, same job), right to request/obtain reasonable accommodations, physical accessibility, assistive technology).

60 Survey title: Care and Support Policies Available at the Workplace: Understanding the Needs and Lived Experiences of Workers with Disabilities
Survey question: Which of the following care and support policies does your employer offer that go above and beyond national care policies? (Select all that apply) n=31

61 Survey title: Availability and Adequacy of Care and Support Policies for Workers with Dependants with Disabilities
Survey question: Which of the following care and support policies does your employer offer that go above and beyond national care policies? (Select all that apply) n=8

► **Table 1: Awareness of employees with disabilities about care and support policies and practices at their respective workplace, by gender**

Answer Choices	Responses from employees with disabilities, n=27 (%)	Responses from male employees with disabilities, n=6 (%)	Responses from female employees with disabilities, n=21 (%)
None of the above	16.1	14.3	17.4
Flexible working arrangements (e.g., remote work, flexible hours)	67.7	42.9	73.9
Right to request/obtain reasonable accommodations	54.8	57.1	52.2
Physical accessibility (e.g., ergonomic assessments, accessible facilities)	32.3	28.6	30.4
Assistive technology (e.g., screen readers, hearing aids)	38.7	28.6	43.5
Paid and unpaid leave for chronic health conditions or rehabilitation services	41.9	14.3	52.2
Financial assistance programs (healthcare benefits, disability insurance)	12.9	14.3	13.0
Personal assistance: personal assistance refers to individualized paid support services provided to persons with disabilities to enable them to perform daily activities, participate fully in society, and maintain their independence.	3.2	0.0	4.3
Financial support for care and support services (in-home, community or residential)	3.2	0.0	4.3
I don't know	16.1	28.6	13.0
Other (please specify)	3.2	0.0	4.3

Note: 31 employees responded to the survey, 7 identified as men, 23 as women, 1 person preferred not to say. The percentages under 'men' and 'women' columns are relative to the number of respondents for each category.

Source: ILO GBDN, Survey on Care and Support Policies Available at the Workplace: Understanding the Needs and Lived Experiences of Workers with Disabilities, 2025. Survey question: Which of the following care and support policies does your employer offer that go above and beyond national care policies? (Select all that apply) n=31

3.3. Perception of supportive environment at organizational level

The ILO GBDN survey findings suggest that perceptions of supportive environment at the organizational level may not be evenly distributed amongst employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities. Among **employees with disabilities**, organizational support in meeting care and support needs generally leans toward the positive end, as approximately two-thirds felt their organizations were either 'very supportive' (26.9 per cent), or 'somewhat supportive' (38.5 per cent). Nonetheless, 23 per cent of employees with disabilities reported feeling unsupported (11.5 per cent 'very unsupportive' and 11.5 per cent 'somewhat unsupportive'),⁶² signalling room to understand limitations and barriers that prevent employees with disabilities from experiencing the benefits of an organizational supportive environment.



Among **employees with dependants with disabilities**, perceptions of supportive environment at the organizational level appears overall lower, although marginally. A worker with a dependant with a disability noted in the respective survey, *"not all managers are in favour of helping provide support or accommodations."* While 26.9 per cent of employees with disabilities reported their organizational environment was 'very supportive', 16.7 per cent of employees with dependants chose the same response.⁶³ Please see Table 2 for details.

► **Table 2: Perception of supportive environment at work, by employees, employees by gender, employees with dependants**

Answer Choices	Responses from employees with disabilities, n=26 (%)	Responses from male employees with disabilities, n=5 (%)	Responses from female employees with disabilities, n=21 (%)	Employees with dependants with disabilities, n=6 (%)
Very unsupportive	11.5	0.0	14.3	0.0
Somewhat unsupportive	11.5	20.0	9.5	16.7
Neutral	11.5	0.0	14.3	33.3
Somewhat supportive	38.5	40.0	38.1	33.3
Very supportive	26.9	40.0	23.8	16.7

Note: The percentages under 'men' and 'women' columns are relative to the number of respondents for each category.

Sources: ILO, Survey on Care and Support Policies Available at the Workplace: Understanding the Needs and Lived Experiences of Workers with Disabilities, 2025. Survey question: How supportive is your organization in helping you meet your care and support needs? n=26

ILO, Availability and adequacy of care and support policies for workers with dependants with disabilities, 2025. Survey question: How supportive is your organization in helping you balance paid work and care responsibilities? n=6

62 Survey title: Care and Support Policies Available at the Workplace: Understanding the Needs and Lived Experiences of Workers with Disabilities
Survey question: How supportive is your organization in helping you meet your care and support needs? n=26

63 Survey title: Availability and Adequacy of Care and Support Policies for Workers with Dependants with Disabilities
Survey question: How supportive is your organization in helping you balance paid work and care responsibilities? n=6

3.4. Impact of workplace care and support policies on employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities



3.4.1. Job satisfaction

There is a strong correlation between job satisfaction and care and support policies.⁶⁴ Employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities who feel their employer understands and responds to their needs are far more likely to be satisfied in their jobs and stay in their job. The ILO GBDN survey results show that workplace care and support policies overall have a positive impact on satisfaction levels for both employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities as most responses from both groups correspond to the positive impact of workplace policies on job satisfaction.

Among **employees with disabilities**, responses varied across each category, with the greatest number of responses going to the choice of 'moderate' impact (34.6 per cent of responses), followed by the choice 'significantly' impacted (30.8 per cent of responses) and 19.2 per cent felt workplace policies had 'very significantly' impacted their job satisfaction.⁶⁵

When responses from employees are disaggregated by gender, there are notable differences that emerge. While men were more than twice as likely to report care and support policies impacted their job satisfaction 'significantly', 23.8 per cent of women reported these policies 'very significantly' affected their job satisfaction, compared to none of the male respondents.

Employees with dependants with disabilities reported fewer positive impacts, with 16.7 per cent for the reply option 'not at all', compared to 3.9 per cent of surveyed employees with disabilities having responded the same. One-third of the respondents with dependants with disabilities reported either a 'moderate' and one-third 'significant' impact, but none indicated that workplace policies had a very significant effect on their job satisfaction.⁶⁶ This suggests that while policies may be broadly supportive, they often fall short in addressing the specific challenges faced by dual-role employees balancing work and caregiving. Please see Table 3 for details.

64 Yang, J. et al. 2003. [The Role of Carer-Friendly Workplace Policies and Social Support in Relation to the Mental Health of Carer-Employees.](#)

65 Survey title: Care and Support Policies Available at the Workplace: Understanding the Needs and Lived Experiences of Workers with Disabilities
Survey question: To what extent do the care and support policies available at your workplace impact your job satisfaction? n=26

66 Survey title: Availability and Adequacy of Care and Support Policies for Workers with Dependants with Disabilities
Survey question: To what extent do the care and support policies available at your workplace impact your job satisfaction? n=6

► Table 3: Care and support policies' impact on job satisfaction, by employees, employees by gender, employees with dependants

Answer Choices	Responses from employees with disabilities, n=26 (%)	Responses from male employees with disabilities, n=5 (%)	Responses from female employees with disabilities, n=21 (%)	Employees with dependants with disabilities, n=6 (%)
Not at all	3.9	0.0	0.1	16.7
Slightly	11.5	0.0	14.3	16.7
Moderately	34.6	40.0	33.3	33.3
Significantly	30.8	60.0	23.8	33.3
Very significantly	19.2	0.0	23.8	0.0

Note: The percentages under 'men' and 'women' columns are relative to the number of respondents for each category.

Sources: ILO, Survey on Care and Support Policies Available at the Workplace: Understanding the Needs and Lived Experiences of Workers with Disabilities, 2025. Survey question: To what extent do the care and support policies available at your workplace impact your job satisfaction? n=26

ILO, Availability and adequacy of care and support policies for workers with dependants with disabilities, 2025. Survey question: To what extent do the care and support policies available at your workplace impact your job satisfaction? n=6

3.4.2. Workplace productivity and retention

Productivity tends to increase when employees' caregiving and health needs are accommodated. People who are less stressed and feel supported can focus better on their work tasks. In a survey from S&P Global, 80 per cent of HR professionals believed that supporting employees' caregiving responsibilities reduced indirect costs for a company by lowering turnover and productivity losses from understaffing.⁶⁷ These findings further help to counter a persistent misconception that care policies are costly and without return.

The ILO GBDN survey reveals **enterprise representatives'** view of care and support policies on workplace productivity. **Most reported that these policies 'somewhat increased' (48.9 per cent) workplace productivity followed by 'significantly increased' (24.5 per cent).**⁶⁸

Benefits of implementing proactive care and support policies also have a positive impact on **employee retention rates**. According to the ILO GBDN survey, enterprise representatives largely believe that inclusive care and support policies in the workplace improve retention.

Findings reveal that employees with disabilities and those with care responsibilities for dependants with disabilities can especially benefit from inclusive practices such as flexible working arrangements, paid leave, accessible environments, and financial supports. When these supports are in place, employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities are more likely to remain focused, engaged, and able to meet performance expectations, contributing positively to both productivity and retention rates.

⁶⁷ S&P Global. 2024. [Guiding caregiving employees: It's complicated](#)

⁶⁸ Survey title: Workplace Care and Support Policies and Practices
Survey question: How do you believe access to care and support policies impacted your company's productivity? In this context, productivity refers to how effectively workers are able to complete their work tasks and meet expected goals. n=49

3.4.3. Career progression

Without effective care and support policies and practices, many employees, especially women, work reduced hours, accept lower-level roles, or exit the workforce entirely. One study found that 12 per cent of female unpaid carers quit their jobs due to caregiving responsibilities (compared to 3 per cent of male unpaid carers), and 16 per cent took a demotion or less demanding role (compared to 6 per cent of male unpaid carers), reinforcing gender gaps in leadership and financial security later in life.⁶⁹ Care and support policies and services allow employees with dependants to stay in their careers and continue progressing. For employees, inclusive care and support policies create pathways to career advancements, that may be higher-paying roles and leadership positions.⁷⁰

The ILO GBDN survey findings suggest that **employees with disabilities** feel their care and support needs have ‘somewhat hindered’ their career progression (37.1 per cent), followed by the response to ‘significantly hindered’ and ‘no impact’ (both 22.2 per cent each).⁷¹ This may point to an enduring systemic issue where caregiving is perceived as incompatible with leadership or progression pathways.

The **most acute impact was reported by employees with dependants with disabilities**, of which 42.9 per cent reported their career progression was ‘significantly hindered’ by their care and support needs.⁷² This data point may highlight a profound gap in workplace support structures and a broader devaluation of caregiving in career systems. Given the small sample size, further research of this group is warranted. Please see Table 4 for details.

69 FCA. [Caregiver Statistics: Work and Caregiving](#).

70 CCRW (Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work). [Career Advancement Pathways for Workers with Disabilities](#).

71 Survey title: Care and Support Policies Available at the Workplace: Understanding the Needs and Lived Experiences of Workers with Disabilities
Survey question: To what extent do you feel your care and support needs have affected your career progression? n=27

72 Survey title: Availability and Adequacy of Care and Support Policies for Workers with Dependants with Disabilities
Survey question: To what extent do you feel your care responsibilities for a dependant with a disability have affected your career progression? n=7



► Table 4: Effect of care needs and of care responsibilities on career progression, by employees, employees by gender, employees with dependants

Answer Choices	Responses from employees with disabilities, n=27 (%)	Responses from male employees with disabilities, n=6 (%)	Responses from female employees with disabilities, n=21 (%)	Employees with dependants with disabilities, n=7 (%)
Significantly hindered	22.2	0.0	28.6	42.9
Somewhat hindered	37.0	50.0	33.3	28.6
No impact	22.2	16.7	23.8	28.6
Somewhat enhanced	14.8	16.7	14.3	0.0
Significantly enhanced	3.7	16.7	0.0	0.0

Note: The percentages under 'men' and 'women' columns are relative to the number of respondents for each category.

Sources: ILO, Survey on Care and Support Policies Available at the Workplace: Understanding the Needs and Lived Experiences of Workers with Disabilities, 2025. Survey question: To what extent do you feel your care and support needs have affected your career progression? n=27

ILO, Availability and adequacy of care and support policies for workers with dependants with disabilities, 2025. Survey question: To what extent do you feel your care responsibilities for a dependant with a disability have affected your career progression? n=7

► 4. Key conclusions and recommendations

While not globally representative of all employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities, findings from the ILO GBDN surveys and interviews point to a critical insight: the existence of care and support policies alone does not guarantee access or impact. Bridging the gap between policy and practice requires the fostering of supportive workplace cultures, improving awareness, and ensuring that employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities do not risk negative professional consequences for fulfilling care responsibilities.



The implications are significant, not only for gender equality and employee well-being, but also for organizational performance. As an employee with a disability suggested in the respective ILO GBDN survey, disability-related needs *“need to be normalized and not [seen] as special treatment.”* The findings of this report highlight the need for coordinated efforts to remove structural barriers to effective policy implementation. Below are key conclusions and recommendations.

Leverage care policies as a strategic investment in productivity and retention:

Almost 75 per cent of enterprise representatives reported care policies do increase productivity (48.9 per cent “somewhat,” 24.5 per cent “significantly”), and 91.8 per cent agreed that they improved employee retention. Companies are recommended to treat care and support policies as integral to business performance. It is recommended to embed them in workforce planning strategies, wider business strategies and framework such as DEI or ESG reporting, and monitor impact using disaggregated data on satisfaction, retention, and engagement.

Strengthen corporate communication to enhance awareness:

Despite 82.4 per cent of surveyed companies offering care and support beyond legal requirements, only 41.9 per cent of employees with disabilities were aware of leave policies, and just 12.9 per cent knew about financial support offered. Surveyed female employees with disabilities were nearly 3.7 times more likely than their male counterparts to be aware of leave policies, and 1.7 times more likely to be aware of flexible working arrangements. Companies are recommended to improve communication by embedding care policy information in onboarding, supervisor talking points, team meetings, and other communication channels, and tailoring outreach to employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities, regardless of gender, who may be less likely to disclose care and support related needs.

Make policy consultation inclusive and representative: While just over half (54.9 per cent) of surveyed enterprises regularly review their policies, employees often have limited involvement. Companies are recommended to include diverse voices in the policy design and review process. Using employee focus groups, ERGs and structured feedback loops can make policies meet real needs and address lived experiences of employees with disabilities and employees with dependants with disabilities.

Support managers to enable policy access: Frontline managers often play a key role in enabling access to flexible work arrangements and care-related benefits. Equipping managers with training on policy implementation and inclusive communication, as well as shifting decision-making towards standardized protocols promote accountability. As an employee with a disability suggested in the respective survey, *“better education for managers on how to support staff”* would go a long way in improving care and support policies.

Help address the strain of caregivers’ mental and physical health: Two-thirds of employees with dependants with disabilities reported feeling burnout or overwhelmed. One-third of them reported physical strain, and half experienced these effects multiple times per week. Employers could take more concrete action to prioritize employee wellbeing by expanding access to flexible work, mental health resources, caregiver-specific supports (e.g. counselling), and workload adjustments for those balancing job and caregiving duties.

Recognize and mitigate career progression barriers: Thirty-seven per cent of employees with disabilities said care needs had “somewhat hindered” their career, and 22.2 per cent said “significantly.” Among employees with dependants with disabilities, 42.9 per cent reported significant hindrance. Amongst employees with disabilities, women (26.8 per cent) were more likely than men (0.0 per cent) to report significant career barriers. Companies are recommended to audit career progression systems for bias and offer flexible leadership pathways. It is also important to promote and support caregivers in leadership roles to challenge assumptions and normalize caregiving within high-performance cultures.

Align global policies with consistent local implementation: Forty per cent of companies cited inconsistent application of global care policies across markets. Many noted discrepancies in local benefits, delays in disability recognition, and implementation gaps. Companies are recommended to harmonize global care standards while allowing local teams flexibility in implementation. It is key to establish clear guidance and accountability across countries to reduce disparities and ensure all employees experience consistent and equitable access.



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We are the world's only coming-together of leading multinational companies working with the ILO – the United Nations agency for the world of work – to the benefit of business, persons with disabilities and economies and communities worldwide. As ILO Global Business and Disability Network, we aim to promote decent work for persons with disabilities in the private for-profit sector – with a geographical focus on developing countries. At global level, our Network comprises more than 35 leading multinational enterprises from diverse industry sectors as well as several international non-business entities with specialised disability expertise, including the International Disability Alliance. At the level of individual countries, more than 35 National Business and Disability Networks on all continents pertain to our Network.

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