THE ONTARIO
caregiver
ORGANIZATION

SPOTLIGHT ON ONTARIO CAREGIVERS

DECEMBER 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

Today, 4.2 million Ontarians provide care to a family member, partner, friend, or neighbour, and that number is expected to climb to 6.5 million by 2030. An aging population, rising life expectancy, and a shift toward community-based care has lengthened the duration and intensity of caregiving, placing unprecedented pressure on caregivers.

Caregivers continue to report high levels of burnout with 68% saying they have reached their breaking point. Last year, 28% stopped or reduced their caregiving role because of the stress associated with it and another 18% say they needed to stop but couldn't because there was no one else to step in. When caregivers stop providing care, the impacts are felt by them, the person they care for, our healthcare system, and beyond.

More than two thirds of caregivers expect their role to become harder in the next few years. For 30%, it's because they will lose help from other family members who are unavailable or who are aging and can no longer help, or because they can no longer afford paid assistance. Caregivers are often advised to build their 'circle of care' so they don't have to do it alone, but these support structures are weakening. As this support erodes, caregivers will carry even more of the workload alone, a responsibility they simply can't sustain.

The strain and burnout associated with caregiving is impacting our society and economy in increasingly significant ways.

- Almost 1 in 5 caregivers report taking the care recipient to a hospital emergency room because they needed a break from caregiving, resulting in 1.9 million ER visits last year for caregiver respite. At an average cost of $323 per visit, caregiver exhaustion and lack of respite supports cost Ontario hospitals an estimated $643 million in 2024-25.
- Working caregivers are increasingly leaving or thinking about leaving the workforce to be better able to provide care. Last year, 1 in 4 stepped away from their job or stopped working because of their caregiving responsibilities. Another 41% or 1.7 million Ontarians say they are considering leaving the workforce to provide care.
- Caregivers report experiencing greater financial hardship because of their caregiving responsibilities. The average out-of-pocket cost per month is now $758, up from $641 in 2024. This extra pressure, along with increasing economic uncertainty, has made the financial impact one of the most stressful aspects of being a caregiver.
- Caregivers are struggling to sustain their own health and wellness. 72% of caregivers say they can't maintain their own healthy behaviours because of their caregiving role, making caregivers a vulnerable population for illness and disease. This presents a compounding risk that should not be ignored.
- Since OCO was established, there are 900,000 new family caregivers in Ontario and a sharp increase is expected in the next few years. There will be more caregivers who need more support and without it, the impact to their own health, the people they care for, the healthcare system, and Ontario's workforce will be substantial.

OCO will continue to play a key role in providing the support caregivers need. Year-over-year, OCO is reaching more caregivers with its programs and services that are designed to support caregiver health and well-being. Whether it's through education, peer support, the 24/7 Caregiver Helpline, or one of the many other programs offered, we consistently hear OCO is making a difference. This growing demand is enabling OCO to expand its offerings, while also positioning the organization to continue its work with health system leaders and employers to help ensure caregivers are recognized, included, and supported in their role.

The data outlined in this report not only helps to guide OCO's work, but it is also shared broadly with government, health system partners, organizations that interact with caregivers, and the public so there is a common understanding of the caregiving experience and what caregivers need to continue to provide care in a sustainable way.

Sincerely,

Yves Savoie
Board Chair,
Ontario Caregiver Organization

Amy Coupal
CEO,
Ontario Caregiver Organization

THE CAREGIVING EXPERIENCE AT A GLANCE

In Ontario, there are an estimated 4.2 million caregivers. Almost three in four say they are not sure how they will continue in their caregiving role.

38% provide more than 10 hours of care per week

69% feel so burnt out they are not sure how they will continue

72% feel they can't maintain their own healthy behaviours

76% feel concerned they won't be able to handle all their caregiving duties going forward

1.9M visits to the ER so caregivers could take a break

Caregivers are spending an average of $758 per month on caregiving

25% have taken out a loan or are using a line of credit

41% have considered quitting their job to provide care

62% wish there was more support given by their employer

CAREGIVER ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CAREGIVER ROLE

Most caregivers care for their aging parents, spouses, or grandparents. They are most commonly supporting someone who has aging-related ailments, including physical and mobility issues, and cognitive issues like dementia or Alzheimer’s. 15% care for someone with mental illness and addiction. Last year the number of caregivers providing more than 10 hours a week increased from 34% to 38%.

Number of individuals cared for	(%)
1	**81**
2	**16**
More than 3	**3**

Who are caregivers caring for?	(%)
Parents or in-laws	**45**
Extended family	**27**
Spouse or partner	**21**
Child	**11**
Friend, neighbour, colleague	**7**
Other	**5**

Main health condition of care recipient	(%)
Aging/frailty	**40**
Physical condition	**31**
Cognitive condition	**25**
Cardiovascular-respiratory issues	**21**
Accident/surgery	**18**
Mental illness & addiction	**15**
Chronic long-term pain	**8**
Cancer	**7**
Other health problems	**6**
COVID-19 health issues	**1**

CAREGIVER RESPONSIBILITIES

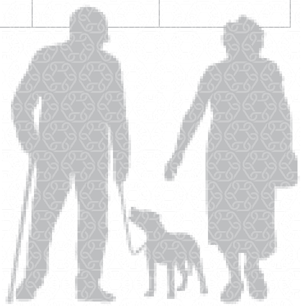
Providing emotional support is a caregiver's primary responsibility, followed by tasks that include scheduling appointments (61%), attending appointments (69%), helping with indoor/outdoor tasks (63%), and transportation needs (68%).

Caregiving responsibilities	2025 (%)	2024 (%)
Emotional support	**74**	77
Attending appointments	**69**	N/A
Transportation needs	**68**	72
Indoor and outdoor tasks	**63**	66
Scheduling appointments	**61**	64
Researching and finding supports/services	**59**	N/A
Paying for expenses	**58**	58
Translating information	**57**	55
Mental health support	**55**	57
Cognitive support	**53**	56
Managing finances or expenses	**53**	57
Managing legal affairs	**47**	41
Physical support	**46**	52
Basic medical tasks	**46**	48
Personal care	**38**	40
Medical procedures or treatments	**32**	30

CAREGIVER HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Similar to previous years, caregivers continue to say it's difficult to provide care, both mentally and physically. Almost half (46%) feel lonely, isolated, and depressed. 60% feel burnt out, 52% say it's taking a toll on their health, and 72% say they feel unable to maintain their own healthy behaviours. Caregivers are most worried about dealing with the care recipients' declining health, making sure their needs are met, and balancing caregiving with other family responsibilities. 54% find the changes and challenges to their own health stressful.

Aspects of caregiving that are stressful	2025 (%)	2024 (%)
Dealing with care recipients declining health	**65**	65
Making sure care recipients needs are met	**60**	60
Managing own emotions	**56**	55
Balancing caregiving and family responsibilities	**55**	58
Finding services for care recipient	**54**	51
Changes and challenges with caregiver's health	**54**	N/A
Balancing caregiving and work	**51**	56
Financing, paying bills, paying for care recipient's needs, medicine, supplies, etc.	**47**	41



Caregiver experience	2025 (%)	2024 (%)
Feeling so tired you have difficulty doing the things you need to get done	**77**	79
Feeling concerned that you will not be able to handle all your caregiving duties moving forward	**76**	75
Feeling that you cannot take on any more responsibility than you already have	**75**	78
Unable to enjoy activities that you used to like	**75**	76
Feeling unable to maintain own healthy behaviours	**72**	N/A
Feeling so burnt out that you are not sure how you can continue, even if you know that you will continue	**69**	72
Feeling that you have hit your breaking point, even if you know you will keep going	**68**	72

THE COST OF BURNOUT

Last year, 28% stopped or reduced their caregiving role because of the stress associated with it and another 18% say they needed to stop but couldn't because there was no one else to step in.

Almost 1 in 5 caregivers report taking the care recipient to a hospital emergency room because they needed a break from caregiving, resulting in an estimated 1.9 million ER visits last year for caregiver respite. At an average cost of $323 per visit[1], caregiver exhaustion and lack of respite supports cost Ontario hospitals an estimated $643 million in 2024-25.

Number of times taking care recipient to emergency room for a break	(%)
1	22
2	28
3	9
4	18
5	13
6 or more	9

CAREGIVER OUTLOOK

67% of caregivers expect caregiving to become even harder over the next few years and 3 in 4 are concerned about their ability to continue providing the level of care that will be necessary. Those who are concerned they won't be able to provide care will look to other family members, government-funded care, private home care, or long-term care.

Caregiving will become harder because...	(%)
Care recipient will need more care	66
It will be harder to handle the responsibilities as caregivers age	49
Other family obligations will take up time	18
Work will be more demanding	17
Government-funded supports will not provide the care needed	15
Will probably be looking after more people	13
Other caregivers are getting older and won't be able to help	13
Other caregivers who share the responsibility will no longer be able to help	12
Will not be able to continue to pay for help	12

Actions taken if unable to provide care	(%)
Have another family caregiver take over responsibilities	34
Access government funded in-home care	33
Pay for someone to take over responsibilities	24
Move the care recipient to a group or long-term care home	18
Move care recipient to a retirement home	16
Get government subsidies to pay for in-home caregivers	14
The care recipient will just receive less care	8
Don't know what I will do	13

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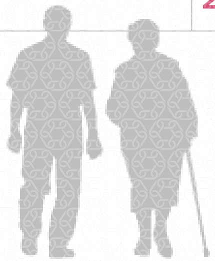
[1] Alliance for Healthier Communities. (2023). Emergency department costs averted attributed to community health centres in Ontario (Dale McMurchy Consulting). https://www.allianceon.org/sites/default/files/CHC_ED_Costs_Averted_Feb_9.pdf

FINANCIAL IMPACT OF CAREGIVING

A third of caregivers are feeling the financial impact of providing care, paying, out-of-pocket and on average, $758, up from $641 per month in 2024. While in most cases, caregivers are using their personal finances or savings to cover the cost, 1 in 4 have taken a loan or are using their line of credit. Financial support continues to be the most needed area of support (24%).

Monthly out-of-pocket costs for caregiving needs	(%)
Up to $499	**20%**
$500 – $999	**8%**
$1000 – $2000	**10%**
$2,000+	**5%**
Do not pay anything myself	**36%**
Don't know	**22%**



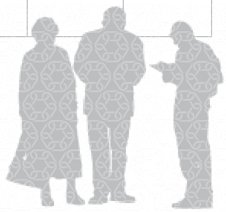
How costs are covered	2025 (%)	2024 (%)
Using personal finances	**53**	57
Savings	**44**	46
Cut back on spending	**43**	44
Health benefits cover most of the expenses	**36**	35
Financial support from family/ extended family	**36**	35
Income from investments	**35**	36
Financial support from government agencies, volunteer groups, special agencies, community help centres	**33**	31
Loan or line of credit	**25**	25
Sold assets	**24**	23

BALANCING WORK AND CARE

70% of caregivers work. Balancing work and caregiving continues to be a challenge, with the number of caregivers who are considering cutting back hours or quitting their job continuing to rise. Most are making sacrifices at their jobs to manage their caregiving responsibilities, particularly taking time off. Caregivers continue to wish for more support from their employers.

Impact of caregiving on work	2025 (%)	2024 (%)
I feel my work colleagues are understanding towards my role as a caregiver	**65**	68
I am not worried about losing my job because of my caregiving responsibilities	**64**	61
I wish there was more support given to me from my employer	**62**	64
My work is flexible/hours I work/ ability to work from home, to allow me to manage my caregiving duties	**62**	60
My employer understands my role as caregiver/what I'm doing to manage caregiving & job responsibilities	**61**	62
I am often in a situation where I have to prioritize my caregiving responsibilities over my work responsibilities	**60**	57
I have considered reducing my working hours/taking up a part-time job to be able to provide better care	**52**	54
I am unable to openly speak about my role as caregiver in my workspace	**47**	46
I have considered quitting my job to be able to provide better care	**41**	43

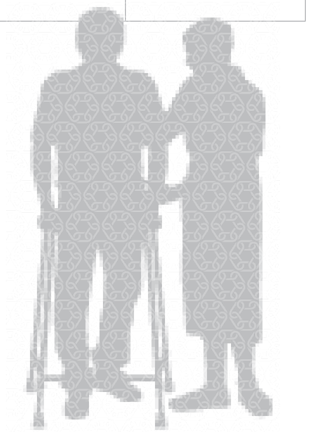
Actions taken due to caregiving responsibilities	2025 (%)	2024 (%)
Took one or more days off	**31**	36
Took time off during the day	**31**	31
Been late for work or had to leave early	**24**	26
Had difficulty fulfilling work responsibilities	**20**	16
Took a break from job to manage caregiving responsibilities	**18**	15
Reduced hours of work	**16**	16
Did not apply for jobs because of caregiving responsibilities	**12**	12
Lost some or all employment benefits	**9**	7
Turned down an opportunity for promotion	**8**	6
Was fired or laid off due to caregiving responsibilities	**3**	6
Quit job to manage caregiving responsibilities	**5**	6



EXPERIENCE WITH THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Caregivers provide up to 90% of the care in the healthcare system and feel their involvement is providing a critical support by improving the care recipient's health and mitigating the risk of injury, yet 43% say they do not feel recognized or valued in the system. 50% say healthcare providers don't know how to help them in their caregiving duties and 46% of providers often or occasionally ask how they're doing.

Incidence of being involved and sharing information with the healthcare team	Has happened (%)
Improved care recipient's health by advocating for best possible care	81
Helped care recipient to understand and agree to the care plan or treatment	80
Shared information with healthcare professionals that led to faster diagnosis and/or treatment	75
Shared information with healthcare professionals that helped avoid a medication error	65
Shared information with healthcare professionals that helped prevent a life-threatening or dangerous situation for the recipient	59
Shared information with healthcare professionals that prevented them from doing something that went against the cultural or spiritual values of care recipient	48



WHAT CAREGIVERS SAY THEY NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR ROLE

To be successful, caregivers say they need financial support, faster access to healthcare services, and supports for their own physical and mental health that include respite care and mental health counselling services.

Top initiatives needed for caregiver success*	(%)
Financial support – tax credits, deductions, or benefits	24
Faster access to healthcare services	18
Making retirement homes more affordable	17
Providing high-quality long-term care that is affordable	17
Increasing the number of PSWs, nurses, and staff	16

**For the full list see Appendix*

Support needed for caregiver burnout and stress	(%)
Support for my physical health	30
Respite care for the recipient so I can have a break	28
Mental health counselling services	28
Caregiver support groups	21
Caregiver coaching services	19
Education on topics related to caregiving	19
Being matched with another caregiver	16

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Knowing that the number of caregivers will increase significantly in the coming years, OCO is working to expand its services to reach more caregivers. Preparing future caregivers for the role is a preventative way to mitigate burnout, depression, and a decline in the overall health and wellness of caregivers in the province.

In addition to providing direct-to-caregiver supports, OCO continues to expand its work within the healthcare system, working with hospitals, long-term care, home and community care, and primary care to help ensure caregivers are recognized, included, and supported as part of the care team.

OCO will continue to drive its strategic plan forward, focusing our efforts on connecting caregivers to the support they need, embedding caregiving into the culture of healthcare to recognize and support caregivers as partners in care, generating solutions with caregivers and system partners to address issues that impact caregivers, and amplifying caregiver voices and evidence to influence change.

A special thank you to our funders who recognize the critical need for this work and our system partners who are embedding OCO programs within their organizations. Also, thank you to Ontario's 4.2 million caregivers who are so giving with their time and energy to support someone in their life who needs it.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Helping caregivers self-identify as a caregiver, rather than seeing themselves as “just” a daughter, son, partner, wife, husband, or friend is an important step. When caregivers don’t see themselves as a “caregiver”, it’s unlikely they’ll reach out for support. The best way to mitigate that burnout is to reach caregivers early in their journey. That’s where we all play a role. Whether you are a physician or another healthcare provider, an employer, educator, relative or friend, you know a caregiver. Ask them how they’re doing and let them know OCO is here to help.

If you are working in a care setting, connect with the Essential Care Partner Support Hub. The team can support your organization in the adoption of evidence-based caregiver friendly policies and practices that are known to improve the experience of caregivers, patients, and front-line care providers. Point caregivers to ontariocaregiver.ca. Whether they have been a caregiver for 10 years, or they are new to the role, OCO has resources that can help.

THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO TODAY TO SUPPORT A CAREGIVER:

Ask a caregiver how they’re managing in their role

Point them to ontariocaregiver.ca to learn about free caregiver programs and services

If you are a healthcare provider or employer that interacts with caregivers, [reach out to the Support Hub]() to learn how you can implement caregiver friendly policies and practices in your organization.

METHODOLOGY

An online survey was conducted among N=903 self-reported caregivers in Ontario, 16 years of age and older. All participants answered "yes" to the following question:

During the past 12 months, have you cared for someone who needed support due to physical or developmental disability, mental health condition, long-term illness, degenerative disease, an aging related condition or through long-term recovery from accident or surgery, or palliative care? By this we mean providing help or care, usually without pay, to a family member, friend, neighbour or anyone else. This help may be personal and can include certain tasks such as helping with housework, assisting with meals and washroom needs, help with outdoor tasks, or anything else. It may also include providing physical support, assisting in certain healthcare related tasks such as monitoring medication, coordinating for or attending doctor's appointments or conducting basic medical procedures. This care can also be social or emotional support such that you are providing support or company to the person to enable them to be more socially included, driving them, shopping with or for them, or anything else.

APPENDIX

Top Initiatives Needed for Caregiver Success	(%)
Providing financial support to caregivers – tax rebates, deductions, or benefits	24
Getting faster access to healthcare services, such as diagnostic tests or procedures for care recipient	18
Making retirement homes more affordable	17
Providing high-quality long-term care that is affordable	17
Increasing the number of PSWs, nurses, and staff	16
Better sources of information – knowing who to contact or where to go to get information	15
More services for the care recipient	15
Getting access to doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals	13
Improving the quality of care offered at long-term care homes, retirement homes, senior care, etc.	12
Providing mental health support to caregivers	12
Having one location/platform to get all the information you need as a caregiver	12
That healthcare professionals help with providing the right kind of information and support	11
Getting faster access to healthcare services, such as diagnostic tests or procedures for myself	10
Increased mental health support provided to patients	10
The healthcare professionals recognize the role of caregivers	8
More support from my employer	6
Providing and improving access to telemedicine services	6
Some other priority	1
Don’t know/prefer not to answer	9

About the Ontario Caregiver Organization
The Ontario Caregiver Organization exists to improve the lives of Ontario's estimated 4.2 million caregivers; ordinary people who provide physical and/or emotional support to a family member, partner, friend, or neighbour. OCO provides caregivers with one point of access to information, services, and supports that empower and help enable caregivers to be successful in their role. Where gaps exist in caregiver programs and services, OCO partners with caregivers, health care providers, and other organizations to find new and innovative ways to bridge those gaps so all caregivers, regardless of age, condition, or geographic location have access to the help they need. OCO is funded, in part, by The Ministry of Health.

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