



What do we know about the consequences of caregiving?

Janet Fast



Prepared for Speed Networking: Meet your Research on Aging Match event, October 1, 2015



Family care issue in context

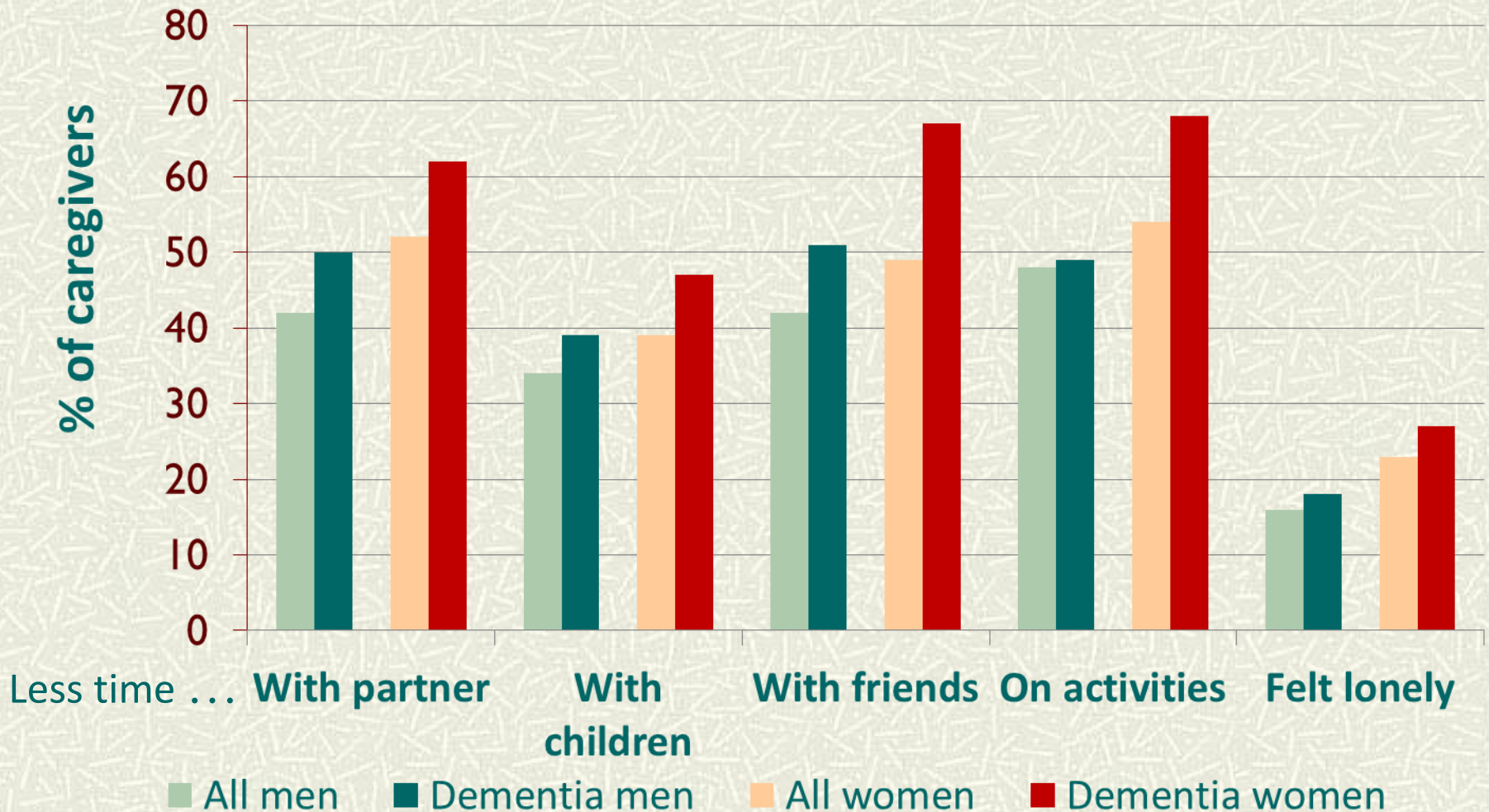
- ✦ Increasing demand for care + shrinking supply
→ growing care gap
- ✦ Sustainability of family care sector critical to sustainability of public care sector, labour force and economy
- ✦ Social, health and economic consequences of care threaten sustainability of family care sector

The Family/Friend Workforce

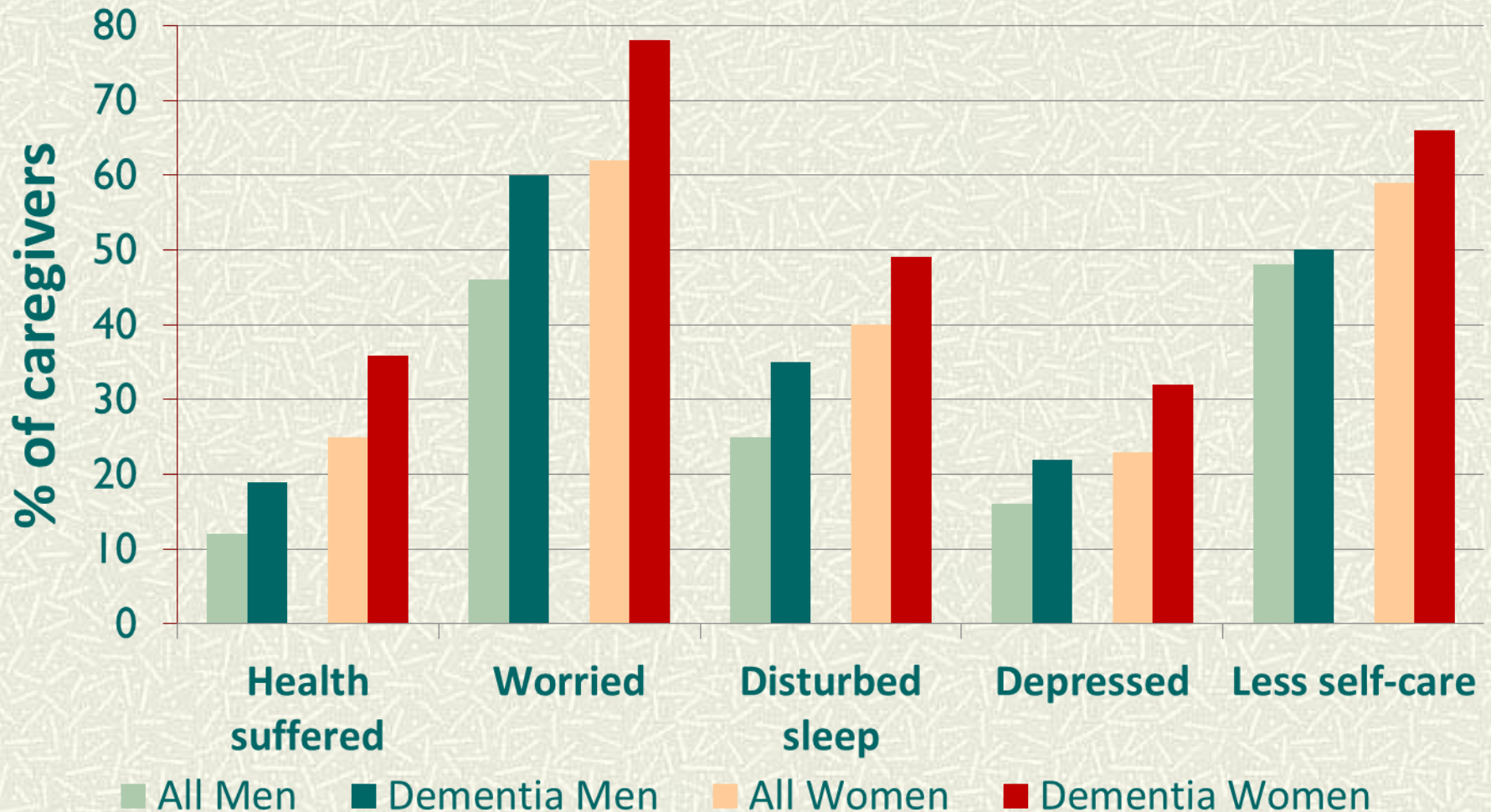
- ⊕ Vast majority of care is provided by family members and friends
 - ❖ 28% of Canadians, 8.1 M, were caregivers in 2012
 - ❖ Provided 1.5 billion hours of care
 - Equal to work of 1.2 M FT employees
 - >10 X the amount of paid care
- ⊕ 70% (5.6 million) employed
 - ❖ 30-35% of Canadian workforce



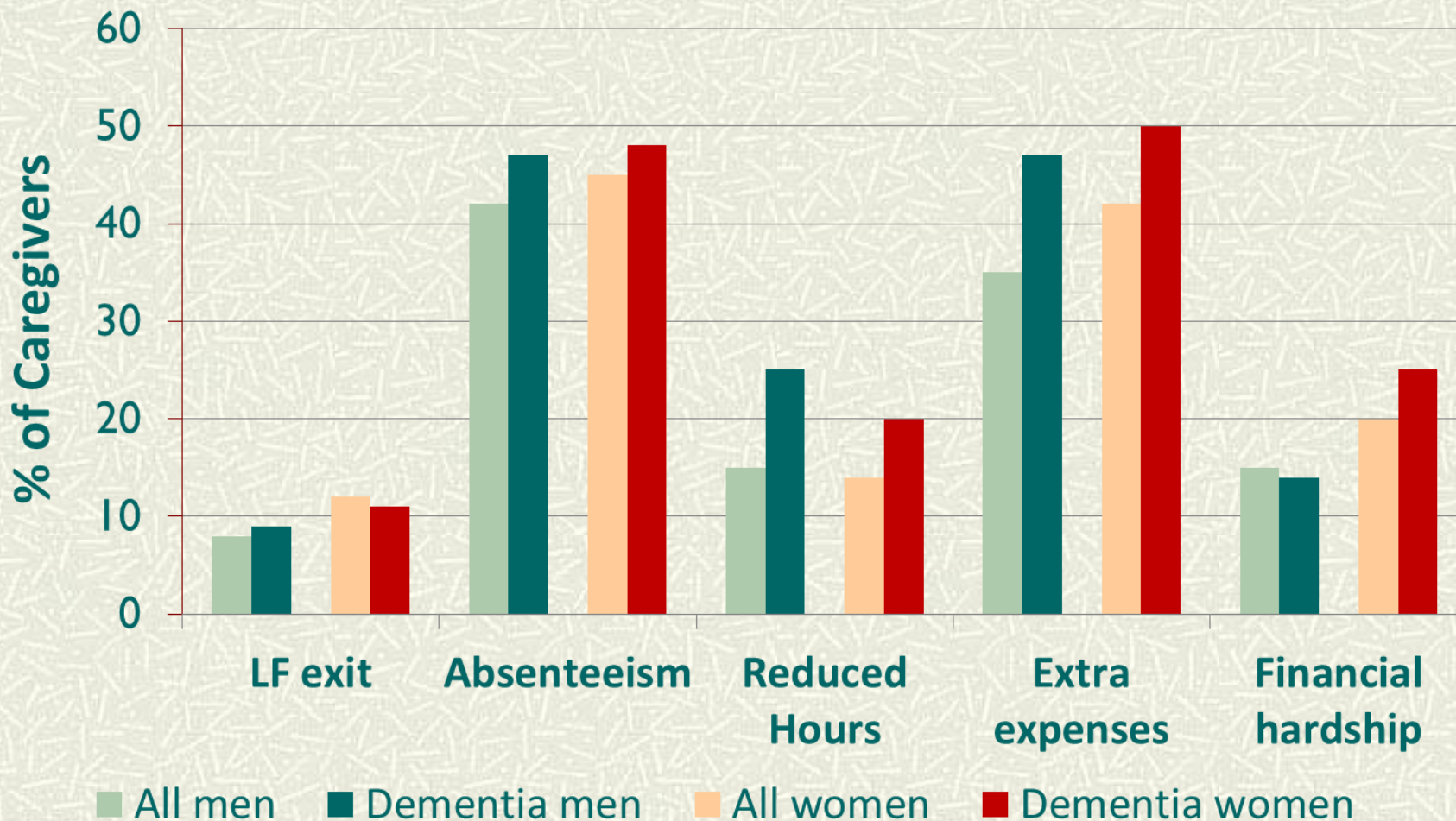
Social Consequences (last 12 months)



Health Consequences (last 12 months)



Financial Consequences (Last 12 Months)



Workplace Supports Matter

The option was laid out to me like this: “You have a choice, to place him and stay employed or to keep him and you’re terminated. Your choice.” I was terminated and there went my income of \$10,000 a month, right out the window.

(Donna, caring for spouse with brain injury)



I am fortunate to be able to work part time... I can just flex things around and there’s almost hostility [with coworkers] over that, because I am part time I can do that, but the others can’t.

(Heather, caring for parents)

Implications for Employers & Economy

⊕ Aggregate productivity losses:

- 558,874 employees lost (turnover) p.a.
- 9.7 million days of absenteeism p.a.
- 4.9 million fewer hours worked p.a.



Canadian Workplace Context

- High level of awareness:
73% knew they had employees with dependent adult care responsibilities

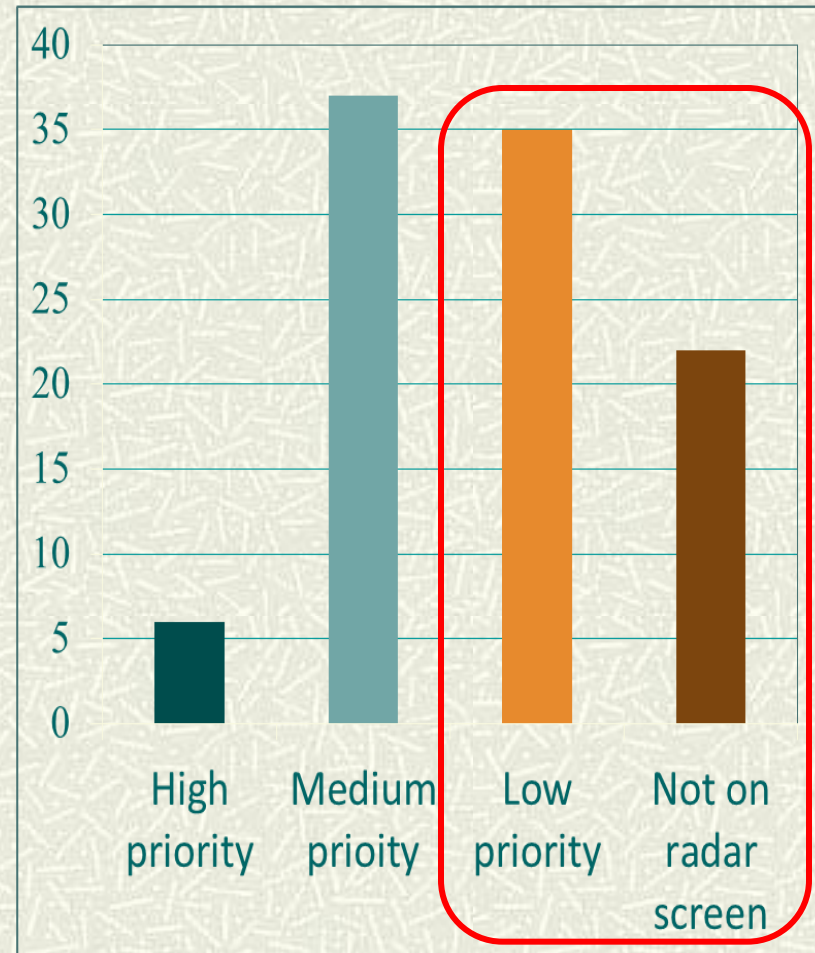
The public service is aging... There's so many people between the ages of 50 and 60 right now who are going to be retiring in the next five to ten years. It's going to leave a really big gap. I think we need to try to ensure that we have that flexibility so people aren't leaving [to provide care].

(Kimberly, manager, government sector)

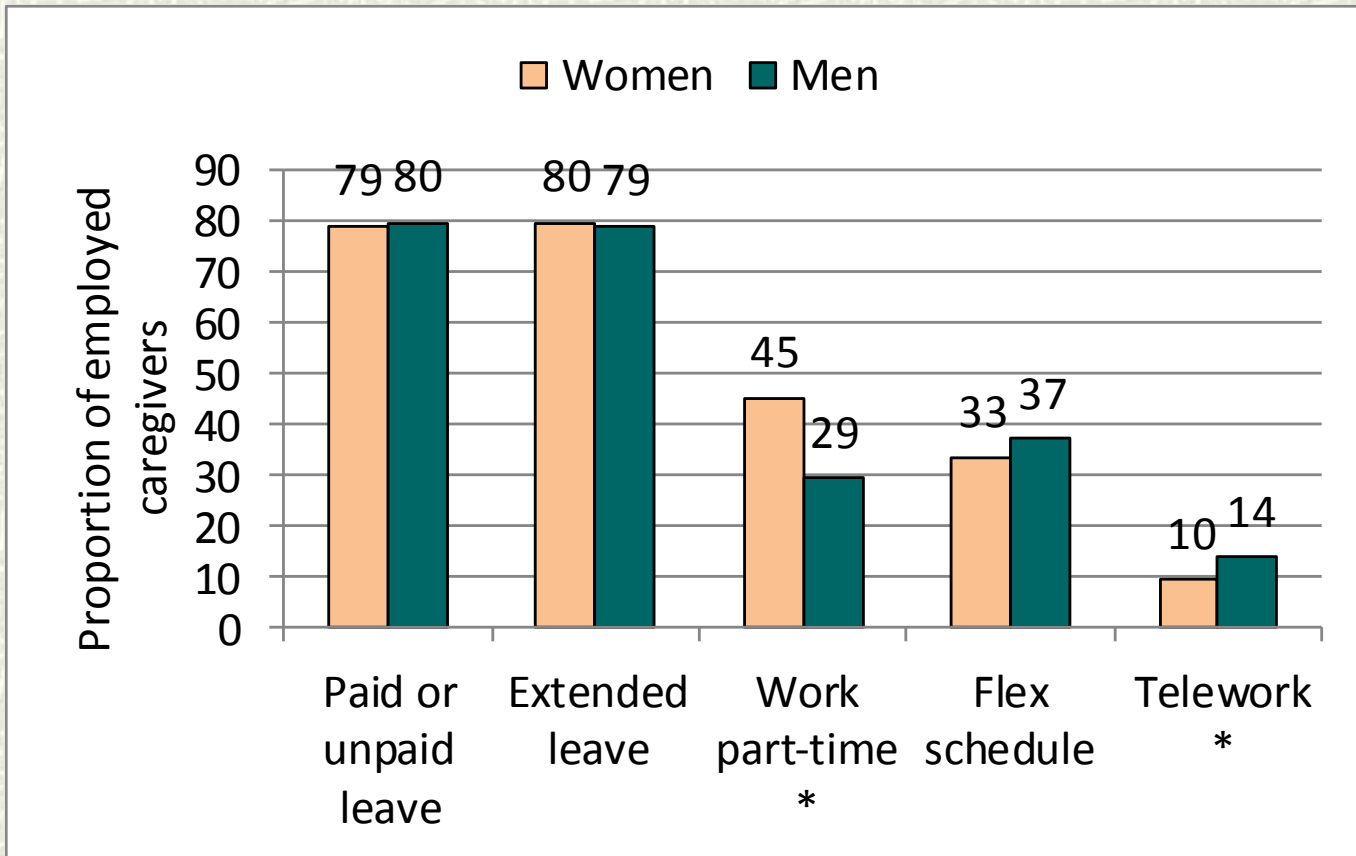
Canadian Workplace Context

- Low level of action
- Less accommodating to adult care than child care

We have an aging workforce and they're starting to leave and part of the reason is ... they're in the sandwich thing. They can afford to retire early, so they are. We're going, "No, no, please don't!" but we're not accommodating them at the same time. (Sharon, disability manager, education sector)



Availability of flex work doesn't guarantee access



BUT, almost half (W47%, M45%) feel that they *cannot use flex work arrangements without it having a negative impact on their careers*

* statistically significant difference between women and men of $p \leq 0.05$.



Canadian Policy Context

(re: working caregivers)

- ✦ Compassionate care leave & benefit (2004 federal; 2014 all provinces)
 - End-of-life care only
 - 8 weeks leave, 6 weeks partial income replacement (55% of pre-leave earnings to max) (**proposal to extend to 6 mo.*)
- ✦ Family responsibility leaves (since 2000)
 - 3-12 days p.a. unpaid leave
- ✦ Human Rights case law
 - Employer duty to accommodate family obligations
- ✦ Employers for Caregivers Plan (2014)
 - Employer council to advise on best practices



Key messages

- ✦ Many employees have adult/elder care responsibilities: 30-35% and ↑
- ✦ Care-related employment consequences are common; have significant costs for caregivers & employers
- ✦ Options for flexible work arrangements associated with reduced risk of absenteeism & reducing work hours
- ✦ Access to such arrangements mixed and nearly ½ who do have access fear fallout from using them
 - ✦ supportive employers and supervisors needed
- ✦ Broader range of public policies & services needed to complement increased workplace supports



Acknowledgement: University of Alberta Killam
Cornerstone grants program

Corresponding author:

janet.fast@ualberta.ca

Research on Aging, Policies, & Practice (RAPP)

Room 3-02 Human Ecology Bldg.

University of Alberta

Edmonton AB CANADA T6G 2N1

 <http://www.rapp.ualberta.ca/>