

# Guiding caregiving employees: It's complicated

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*This research includes Equileap data, which covers the scope of corporate paid parental leave and family care policies in publicly listed companies in the US as of third quarter 2023 for this report.*

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# Highlights

- Despite both employers and employees reporting high levels of support for caregivers of adults, workplace policies aimed at helping working caregivers are often not formalized.
- Caregivers of adults typically use paid leave that is not specifically designated for caregiving.
- Although managers play a role in helping employees use their benefits, they are not the main messengers of caregiving policies.
- Employers face hurdles in enacting policies for caregivers, including a lack of detailed knowledge about what caregiver benefits entail and fears that policies will be abused or that other workers will need to pick up the slack.
- Most companies offer flexibility in both work location and hours when they can, though enacting caregiver-friendly policies may be difficult for those with high proportions of hourly workers.
- Parental benefits, in general, are also more common than benefits for caregivers of adults.
- State and local legislatures increasingly recognize the need to provide working caregivers with support, including paid family leave laws that cover leave for caregiving.

# Introduction

Workplace policies for caregivers impact a sizable population. [Nearly 48 million](#) Americans provide care to an adult family member, and 61% of those caregivers have full-time or part-time jobs, according to the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP study *Caregiving in the United States in 2020*, based on fieldwork carried out before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The current study surveyed 505 US human resources (HR) professionals to understand how employers support caregivers and what challenges they face in adopting and implementing caregiver-friendly policies. Surveying both working caregivers and employer representatives helps to assess the gaps between what employers offer and what caregivers can use. This is a companion study to “[Working while caregiving: It’s complicated](#),” in which S&P Global and AARP focused on the workplace needs of working caregivers who provide unpaid assistance to an adult needing help with daily living activities, medical or nursing tasks, coordinating services and support, transportation, or shopping. “Working while caregiving: It’s complicated” examines the needs and pressures of working caregivers as well as their use of workplace solutions that can help them balance their responsibilities at work and home.

While employers are supportive of caregivers, the survey of HR professionals reveals that most employers do not have formalized caregiving policies. A lack of formal caregiving policies allows employees to tailor benefits to their unique caregiving situation, but it also leaves caregivers with the responsibility of exploring policies they — or indeed their managers — may not know much about. Many employers offer peer support groups at work, which can help caregivers learn to navigate both their benefits at work and caregiving tasks at home. This study corroborates the perception found in “Working while caregiving: It’s complicated” that caregivers of adults think companies are more understanding about childcare issues than adult caregiving responsibilities. Findings from the earlier survey of caregivers also reflect caregivers’ need for flexibility: more than four-fifths of respondents who were offered a flexible work schedule used it. Taken together, these two studies show that most working caregivers are coping but facing stress and able to benefit from more clarity around — and access to — workplace policies.

# Methodology

S&P Global and AARP conducted an online survey of 505 HR professionals working for US companies with more than 1,000 employees. Respondents were screened to ensure they work on benefits; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI); talent management; or employee relations. Data was cleaned to eliminate multiple responses from one company. The survey was fielded during February and March 2024. The sample is not representative of all HR professionals in the US, nor was the data weighted. In addition to the survey, researchers conducted five interviews with HR professionals who work for a US company with a headcount over 1,000.

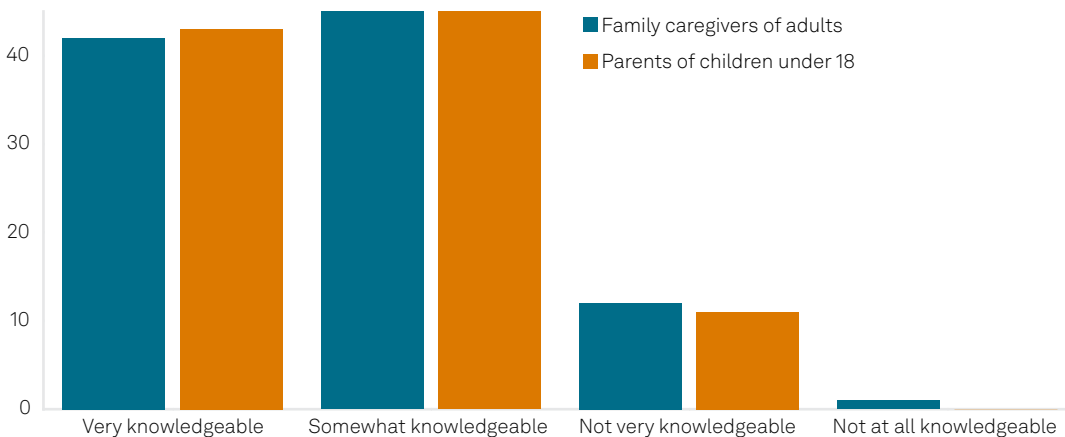
AARP and S&P Global also analyzed workplace benefit and policy data from Equileap, a leading provider of workplace Diversity, Equity & Inclusion data, enabling responsible investors to make informed decisions and have a positive impact since 2017. The data used for this report includes information on 1,503 public companies in the US, updated as of the third quarter of 2023.

## HR professionals view their employers as knowledgeable and supportive of caregivers

HR professionals reported that their organizations exhibit similar levels of knowledge and support of their caregiver employees. A large majority of HR professionals surveyed (87%) said their company is very or somewhat knowledgeable about the needs of family caregivers, and a similar proportion (85%) agree that their organization is very or somewhat supportive of adult caregivers. HR professionals reported similar levels of knowledge of the needs of parents of children under 18. While company support for both caregivers of adults and parents of children under 18 was high, the proportion of those who said their company is very supportive of parents (54%) was moderately higher than for adult caregivers (45%).

### Level of company knowledge about needs of caregivers

(% of HR professionals)



Question: In general, what level of knowledge would you say your company has about the following employees in your workplace?  
Base: 505.

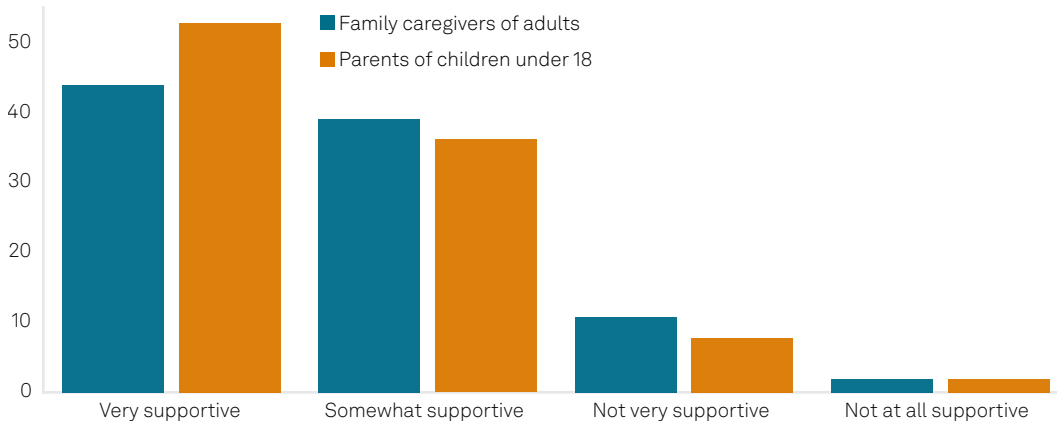
Values may not total 100% due to rounding.

Sources: S&P Global and AARP Employer Caregiver Survey 2023; S&P Global Market Intelligence.

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## Level of company support of caregivers

(% of HR professionals)



Question: How supportive, if at all, would you say your company culture is of the following employees in your workplace?

Base: 505.

Values may not total 100% due to rounding.

Sources: S&P Global and AARP Employer Caregiver Survey 2023; S&P Global Market Intelligence.

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“Everybody knows about going to school and tuition reimbursement and stuff like that. They know about how to advance their careers and go about that. But nobody really talks about caregiving. And so, if we could push that more and have better benefits toward that, I think that would be a focus for me.”

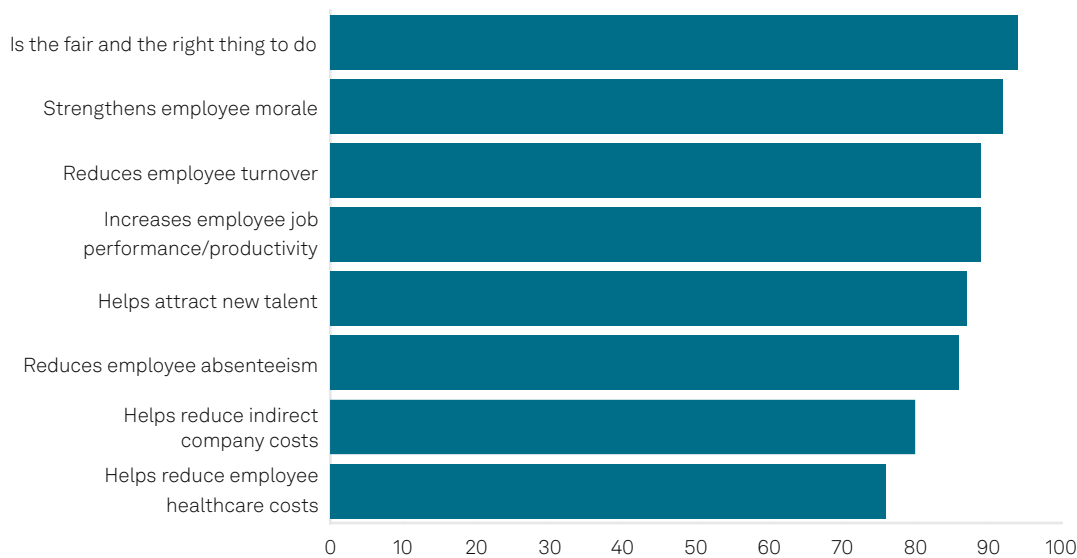
- HR professional

Most HR professionals surveyed saw value in supporting family caregivers; a sizeable majority (87%) agreed or strongly agreed that doing so helps attract talent. HR respondents also recognized a connection between supporting caregivers and helping their company’s bottom line by reducing employee turnover (89%), reducing indirect costs such as the time needed to train new employees (80%), and reducing employee healthcare costs (76%).

## Reasons for supporting adult caregivers in the workplace

(% of HR professionals that agree or strongly agree)

Supporting family caregivers of adults in the workplace...



Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Supporting family caregivers of adults in the workplace... (combined results of “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree.”)

Base: 505.

Sources: S&P Global and AARP Employer Caregiver Survey 2023; S&P Global Market Intelligence.

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While employers may be motivated to adopt caregiver policies or benefits for both employee and company health, barriers remain. Nearly three in four respondents expressed fear that employees could take advantage of these policies or that they would have a negative impact on other staff members who would need to take on more work. Employers' lack of knowledge about what caregiver benefits and policies should look like is another big hurdle. In interviews with HR professionals, several mentioned cost as the top concern when evaluating new benefits, along with staying competitive in their field.

Enacting caregiver-friendly policies may be more challenging for employers with a high proportion of

hourly workers. HR respondents at companies where 75% or more of the workforce is hourly were more likely than those at firms with lower hourly workforce percentages to indicate that barriers were standing in the way of their ability to provide benefits and policies to support caregivers. These barriers included cost, fear of workers taking advantage of the programs, negative impacts on other staff who may have to pick up slack, and insufficient capacity to support flexible schedules. Employers with a significant proportion of hourly staff may benefit from guidance on how to enact caregiver policies suitable for their work environments.

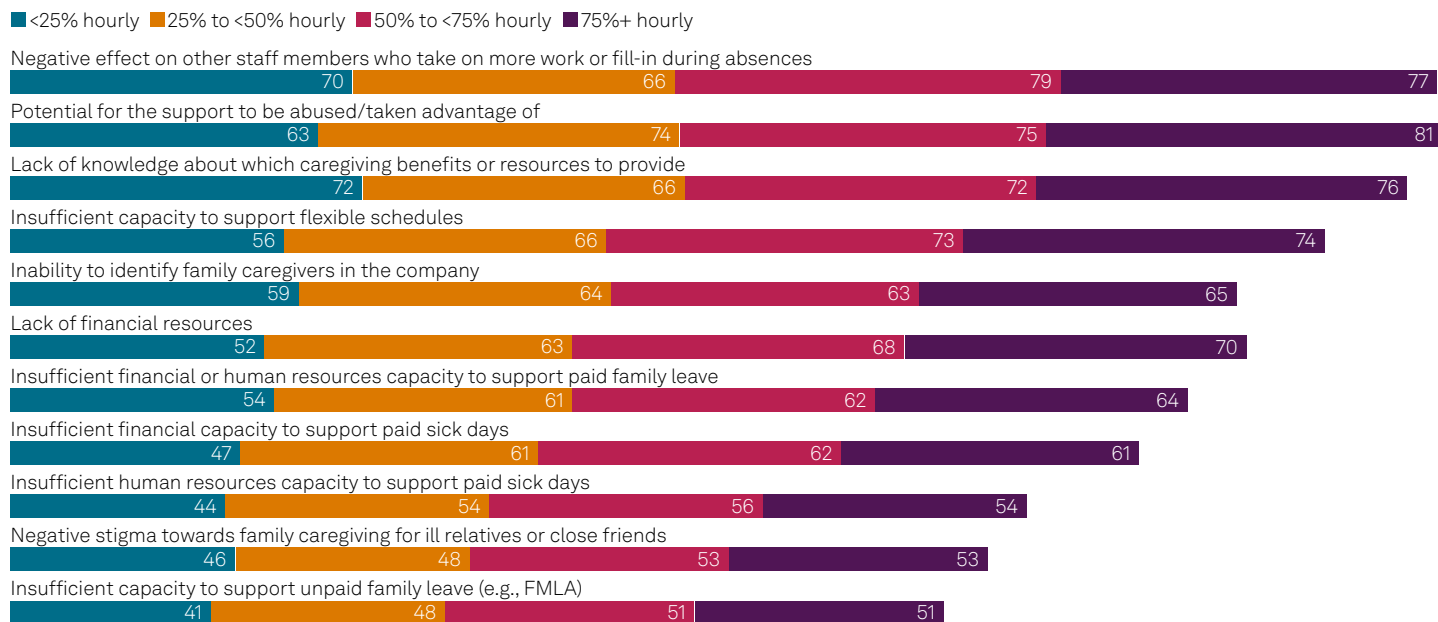
## Caregiving policies are often not formalized

Workplace policies aimed at helping caregivers are often not formalized. Without formal, written policies, caregivers may not be aware of available benefits. In these cases, managers may also bear responsibility for

finding solutions to help caregiving employees. When entering a caregiving situation, both caregivers and their managers may be left without clear information on benefits, accommodations and support available.

### Barriers to supporting adult caregivers

(% of HR professionals by size of hourly workforce)



FMLA = Benefits established by Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993.

Question: How much of a barrier, if at all, are each of the following factors to supporting family caregivers of adults in your company?

Base: 505; < 25% hourly - 104; 25% to <50% hourly - 112; 50% to <75% hourly - 158; 75%+ hourly - 105.

Sources: S&P Global and AARP Employer Caregiver Survey 2023; S&P Global Market Intelligence.

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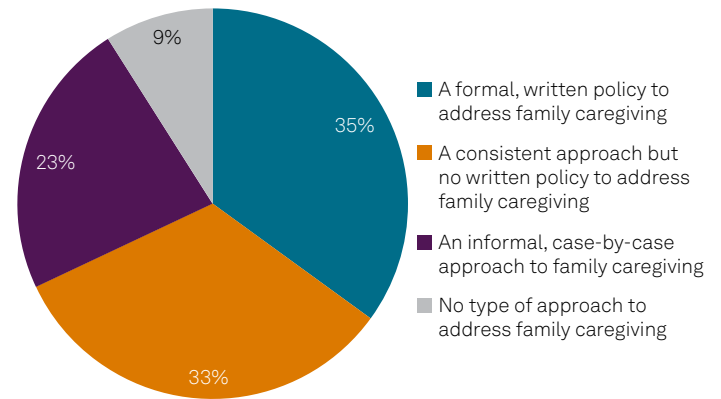
Formal caregiving policies can help caregivers navigate a challenging situation, but even official policies may fall short in meeting caregiver needs if the person who needs care is not covered. Findings from the National Alliance of Caregiving (NAC) and AARP study [Caregiving in the US](#) show 10% of family caregivers provide care for a non-relative. HR professionals from companies with a formal caregiving policy report the company's policies cover caregiving for a range of adults, but less than half (41%) include unmarried partners, and only 8% of policies cover care for other non-relatives.

"I can't say exactly that [caregivers] ask for support, but when you talk to these individuals, you can feel that they need support. Maybe they don't know how to ask. The company is not offering that up front, saying, "Hey, here is the caregiver program." ... If you don't see that, you may miss it ... miss the opportunity."

- HR professional

## Employer approach to policies regarding family caregivers of adults

(% of HR professionals)



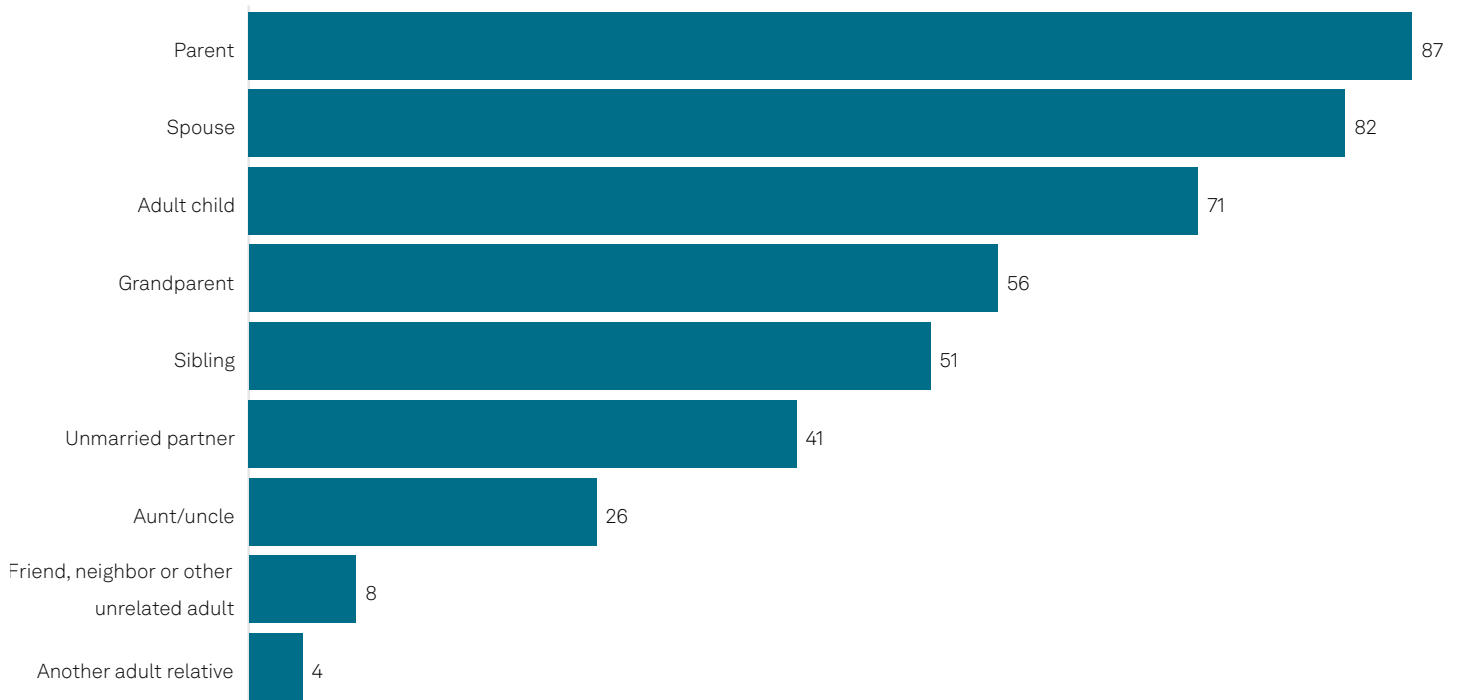
Question: Which of the following best describes your company's policies regarding family caregivers of adults?

Base: 505.

Sources: S&P Global and AARP Employer Caregiver Survey 2023; S&P Global Market Intelligence. ©2024 S&P Global.

## Individual recipient types covered by adult caregiving policy

(% of HR professionals at companies with a formal caregiving policy)



Question: Does your family caregiving policy cover caring for any of the following?

Base: 175.

Sources: S&P Global and AARP Employer Caregiver Survey 2023; S&P Global Market Intelligence. ©2024 S&P Global.

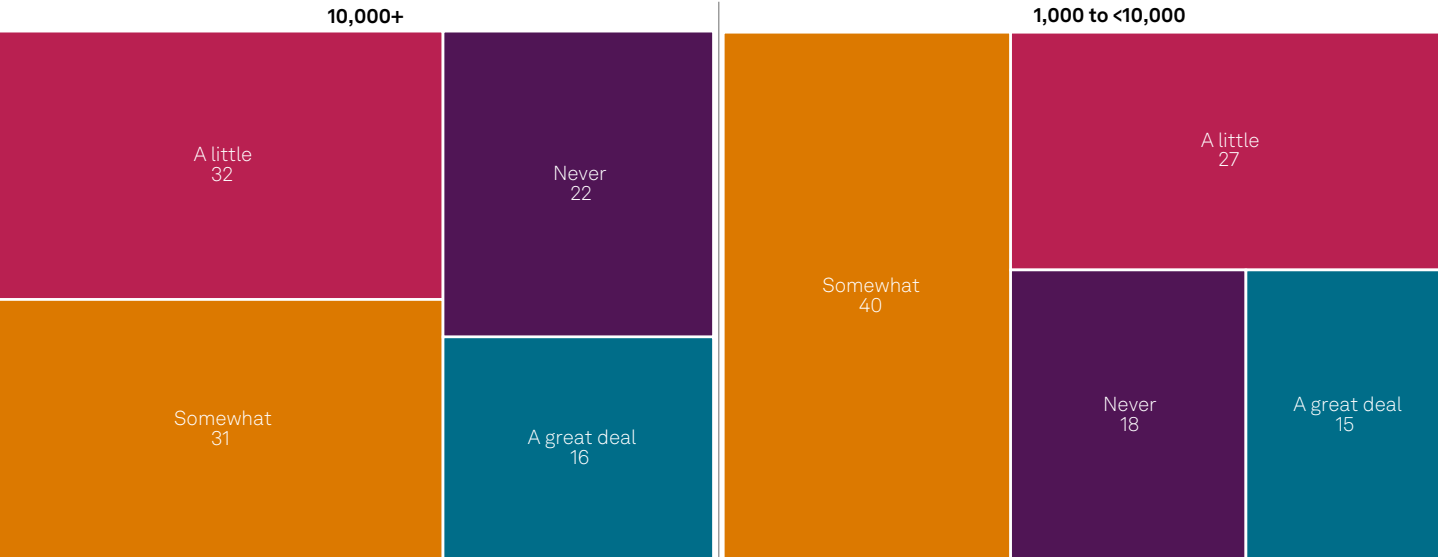
# Managers have some discretion in the provision of benefits

Managers play a role in helping employees use their benefits, but they are not the main messengers. Employers promote their benefits frequently, and most often at a companywide level. Sixty-nine percent of HR professionals reported promoting benefits during open enrollment, 65% during employee onboarding, and 64% throughout the year. Fewer than half (40%) said that managers were trained to communicate benefits to their direct reports throughout the year. Holding managers accountable for promoting benefits was not

a high priority for most companies, and most managers had some flexibility in their employees' use of company benefits and policies. Companies with at least 10,000 employees are less likely to give managers discretion over employees' use of benefits. One-fifth (22%) of respondents from employers with 10,000-plus employees reported they never allow managers to use their own discretion for employee benefits, compared with 14% of employers with fewer than 10,000 employees.

## Individual recipient types covered by adult caregiving policy

(% of HR professionals)



Base: 505. Values may not total 100% due to rounding. Sources: S&P Global and AARP Employer Caregiver Survey 2023; S&P Global Market Intelligence. ©2024 S&P Global.

# Most employers have a patchwork of benefits for caregivers

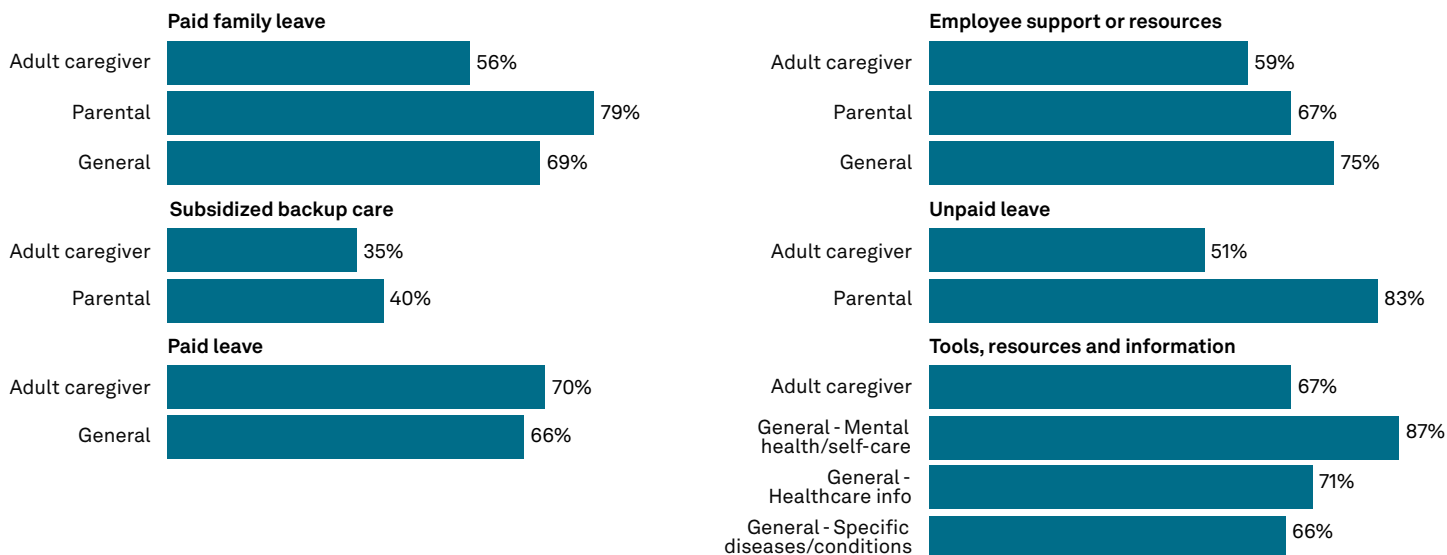
When asked which caregiver-focused benefits are available, the most common response was that caregivers can use paid leave that is not specifically designated for caregiving. This aligns with the finding that employer policies for caregivers are often informal. This approach to benefits can allow for the personalization of policies to suit a caregiver's unique situation. However,

it may also leave caregivers with the added stress of navigating a patchwork of HR policies to get the support they need. It may also require caregivers to repurpose their sick or vacation time, making it more difficult for them to care for themselves, and therefore be able to provide long-term care and to be a productive employee also.



## Comparison of caregiver and general benefits or resources offered to employees

(% of HR professionals)



FMLA = Benefits established by Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993.  
 Question: Which of the following benefits or resources does your company currently offer, if any?  
 Base: 505.  
 Sources: S&P Global and AARP Employer Caregiver Survey 2023; S&P Global Market Intelligence.  
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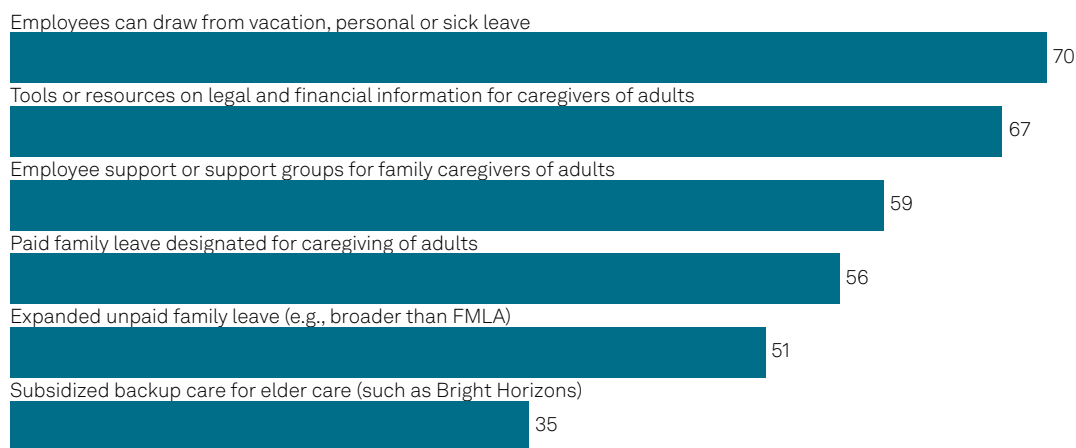
Many organizations have specific caregiving-related benefits in place. Two-thirds (67%) of HR professionals reported that their employer offers tools and resources on legal or financial matters. Support groups for caregivers, which can help caregivers learn from each other and find approaches to issues at work and at home, are also common. Slightly more than half of respondents reported their employer offers paid leave for caregivers of adults. The availability of caregiver benefits does not vary much between companies with between 1,000 and 9,999 employees and companies with 10,000-plus employees.

“Vacation is intended for vacation and relaxation. And people would run out of sick leave for their own illness, and that didn’t leave a lot for caregiving leave. We felt that the missing piece to our total compensation package was caregiving.”

- HR professional

## Adult caregiver benefits or resources offered to employees

(% of HR professionals)



FMLA = Benefits established by Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993.  
 Question: Which of the following benefits or resources does your company currently offer, if any?  
 Base: 505.  
 Sources: S&P Global and AARP Employer Caregiver Survey 2023; S&P Global Market Intelligence.  
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# HR departments recognize the value of flexibility to caregivers

Most caregivers also have access to benefits that can be used for any reason but may help in a caregiving situation. More than four-fifths of employers offered an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), tools to help with mental health, and flexible work schedules or locations.

## General benefits or resources offered to employees

(% of HR professionals)



Question: Which of the following benefits or resources does your company currently offer, if any?

Base: 505.

Sources: S&P Global and AARP Employer Caregiver Survey 2023; S&P Global Market Intelligence.

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A key finding from “Working while caregiving: It’s complicated” showed caregivers value flexibility because it allows them to balance their work and home responsibilities, which can include providing support to the person they care for during the traditional 9-to-5 workday. This study found most companies offer flexibility in both work location and hours when they can. About 70% of HR professionals reported that at least a quarter of their employees can opt for a hybrid schedule where they work from home at least some of the time.

Interviews with HR professionals show they understand the importance of flexibility to working caregivers, and most intend to keep these policies in place or expand them. Around one in four employers plans to expand access to hybrid options. Companies where at least one-quarter of workers are hourly are driving these plans to expand access to hybrid options.

“They started in a junior-level or a mid-level position. And now they’re all managers and directors. And they usually tell me the reason why they stay. It’s because of the flexibility that we give our employees, and us not giving them a hard time.”

- HR professional

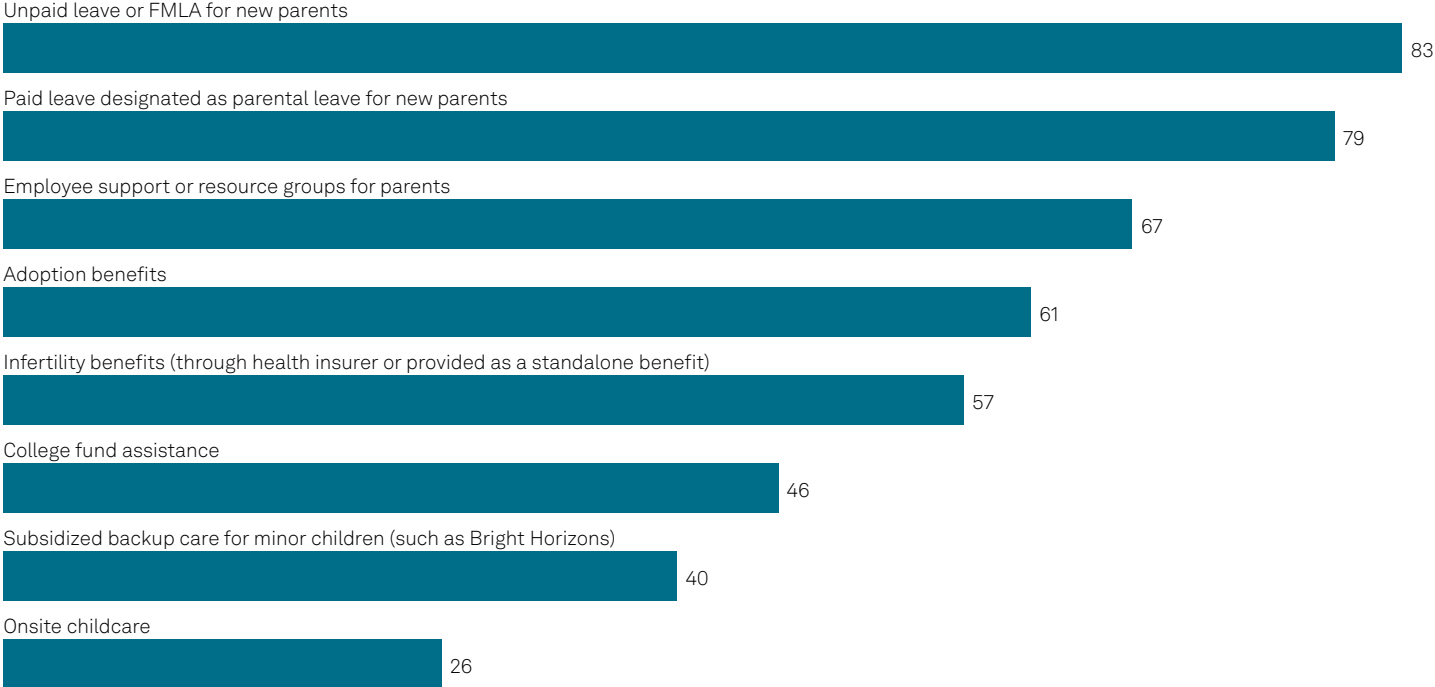
# Parental benefits are more common than benefits for caregivers of adults

One major finding of “Working while caregiving: It’s complicated” was that caregivers of adults think that their employers understand parents’ childcare issues more than their adult care responsibilities. Looking at paid leave, this study supports the accuracy of that perception. Four out of five (79%) HR professionals reported their company offers paid parental leave, compared to the 56% who reported their company offers paid leave for caregivers of adults. Public companies in the US offer an average of 11.64 weeks of primary parental leave and an average of 7.65 weeks of secondary parental leave, according to Equileap data. Although differences are not as pronounced for other identified

categories of benefits, they still remain. For example, employee support groups are more available for parents (67%) than for caregivers of adults (59%). And HR professionals also report their company is more likely to offer subsidized backup childcare (40%) than subsidized backup elder care (35%). Respondents from larger companies — those with 10,000 or more employees — are more likely than their smaller counterparts to indicate they provide some parental benefits including unpaid leave/Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 benefits, subsidized backup childcare, adoption benefits and fertility benefits.

## Parental benefits or resources offered to employees

(% of HR professionals)



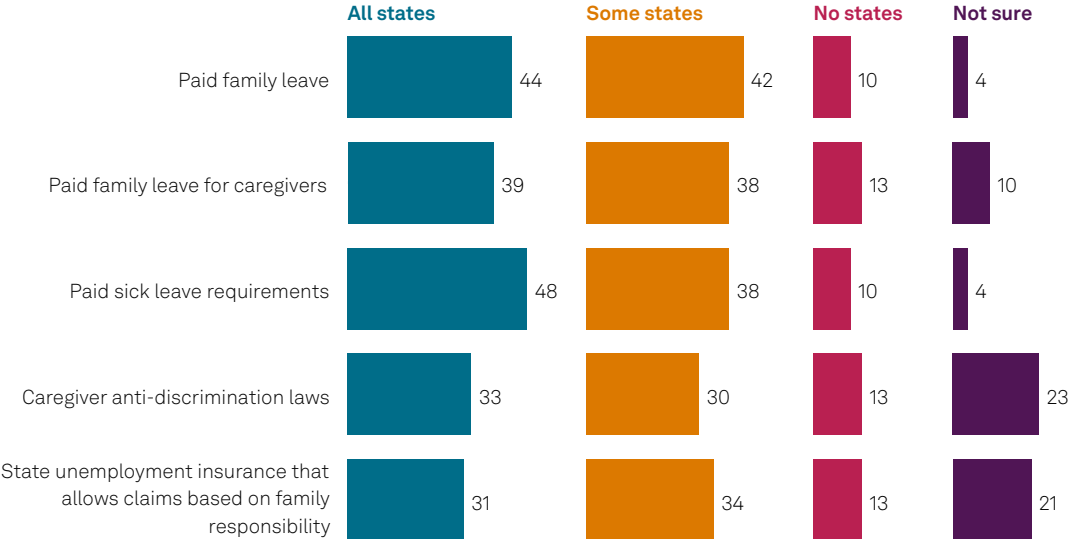
FMLA = Benefits established by Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993.  
Question: Which of the following benefits or resources does your company currently offer, if any?  
Base: 505.  
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# Employers are aware of state laws for caregivers

State and local legislatures increasingly recognize the need to support working caregivers of adults. In recent years, 13 states and the District of Columbia passed paid family leave laws that include [leave for caregiving](#). Fourteen states and the District of Columbia, as well as local jurisdictions, have [paid sick leave laws](#). Four states and 200 local jurisdictions have [caregiver anti-discrimination laws](#) that protect parents or caregivers of adults from discrimination at work. As of 2023, [11 states](#) covered caregiving for family members beyond the minimum requirement established by the Family and Medical Leave Act (e.g., grandparents, siblings). For the most part, surveyed HR professionals say they are aware whether the state laws requiring paid family leave apply to them. The outlier was whether state unemployment insurance allows claims based on family responsibility, with one in five respondents surveyed not being sure.

## Company caregiving policies that apply by state law

(% of HR professionals)



Question: Do any of the following state laws apply in the state(s) where your company operates?  
 Base: 505.  
 Values may not total 100% due to rounding.  
 Sources: S&P Global and AARP Employer Caregiver Survey 2023; S&P Global Market Intelligence.  
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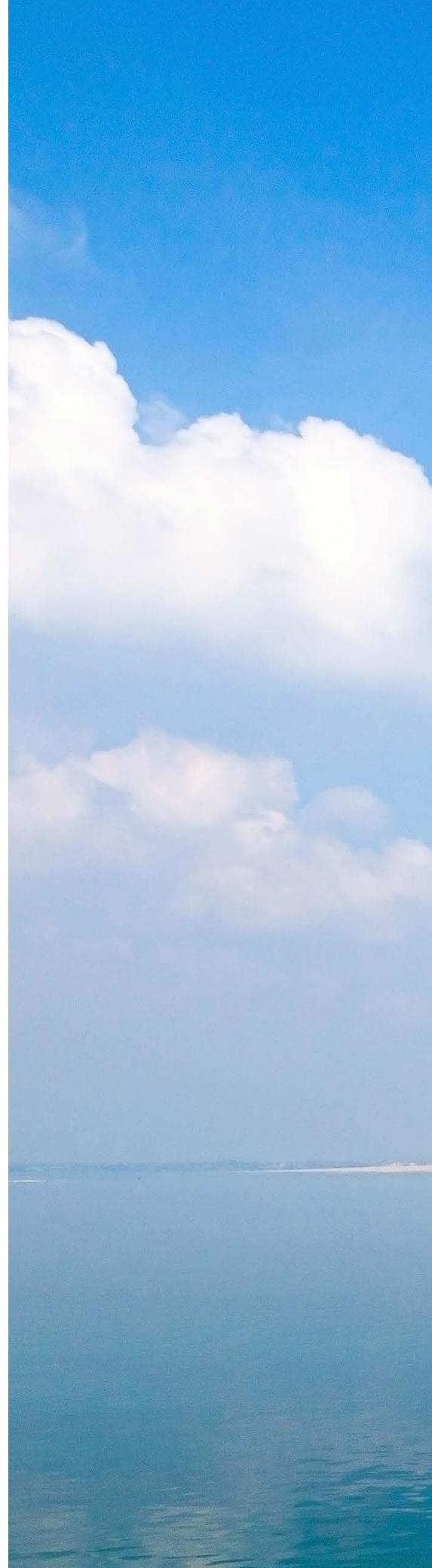
# Conclusion

Employers have working caregivers of adults on their radar and see benefits in supporting them through caregiver-friendly policies and benefits. The increase in adoption of flexibility in work hours and work location — a boon to working caregivers largely driven by the COVID-19 pandemic — remains in place at most organizations. However, workplace policies for caregivers can be informal and uneven, impeding access for some caregivers. Positive examples of workplace caregiver policies and benefits can help assuage employers’ concerns about misuse of time off and lack of knowledge about what these policies look like in practice.

## Caregiver support best practices

Companies can adopt caregiver-supportive policies and benefits, even with limited additional investment. As part of our research, we have identified the following list of caregiver-supportive best practices that companies can initiate, maintain or expand.

- Offer and support flexible schedules and flexible work locations (hybrid/remote).
- Pressure-test benefits to ensure all employees can afford to use their available benefits from a cash flow perspective. Employees often cannot afford to use benefits such as front-loading dependent and healthcare reimbursement accounts, educational stipends that require employees to front the funds and apply for reimbursement, and partially paid leave.
- Host sessions to highlight how caregiving employees can optimize employer benefits and policies, as a way to address any lack of awareness about using benefits.
- Ask senior leaders to share their stories of how they have used the caregiver-supportive benefits and policies, signaling to both people managers and their teams that they are encouraged to use them.
- Train people managers on caregiver-inclusive managerial practices. Ensure managers are aware of caregiver-supportive benefits and policies and message to their direct reports that it is safe to use them all without incurring career risk.
- Start or support an Employee Resource Group for parents and caregivers or create a caregiving initiative across all ERGs.
- Offer company-supported access to support groups, career coaching and financial advising resources to empower employees to design a clear path through the caregiving phase of their career.
- Offer paid leave specifically for caregivers and/or flexible leave that can be used to help with caregiving duties. Even if the benefit starts small, the inclusion of family caregivers in leave policies is a powerful signal that the organization supports all caregivers equally, regardless of whether they are caring for a child or an adult.
- Keep in mind best practices to drive utilization: 1. Ensure leave policies do not have gender-based or primary/secondary caregiver terms, and 2. Offer paid leave for a duration when full wage replacement can be provided, rather than a longer term with only partial wage replacement.



**S&P Global provides employee support measures that align with best practices identified in this report, including:**

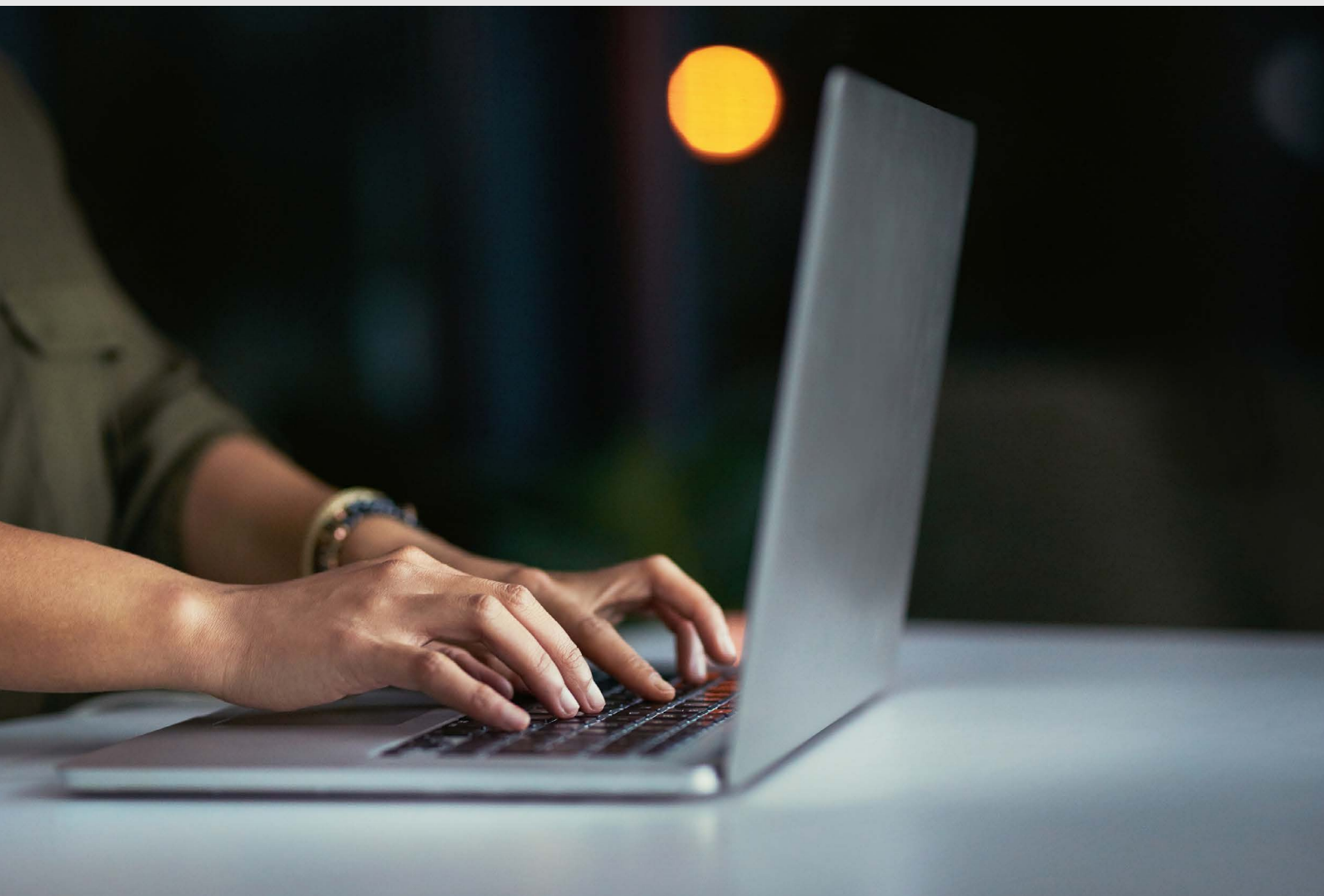
- A “Recharge” unlimited paid time off program that allows employees to take the time off they need when they need it.
- The ParentsNet employee resource group, which advocates for both working parents and caregivers.
- Counseling on finding care for older adults via external vendor partnerships.

**AARP offers the following free resources for enhancing the workplace experiences of caregivers of adults:**

- Sessions to help employees learn to use caregiving benefits.
- Guidance for manager engagement with caregivers.
- The AARP Caregiving ERG Toolkit.
- A range of practical overviews of caregiver-friendly benefits, policies, and initiatives.

**To learn more, please visit:**

<https://employerportal.aarp.org>



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