

# Professional Caregiving Men find Meaning and Pride in their Work, But Face Stigma

Men who work as paid professional caregivers are a small minority in health, education and many caring professions. As automation and artificial intelligence rapidly reshape the nature of work, caring professions, which require warmth, empathy and human interaction, are among the fastest growing and most future-proof jobs. Yet women predominantly occupy these professions, driven by the [gendered stereotype beliefs](#) that care work is “women’s work,” and that women are naturally “warm” and better suited for caring occupations, and that men are more “competent,” and thus more inclined to competition.

Caring jobs are, as a result, undervalued, seen as less challenging or requiring less skill as jobs in sectors dominated by men, and underpaid. Understanding better what caring jobs truly entail and what could attract and retain men to these fast-growing caring professions could be critical for the future economy, worker and family health, wellbeing and stability, as well as for helping to drive the transformation of these undervalued jobs into decent, dignified and respected work for people of all genders.

---

## How Professional Caregiving Men See Themselves

Professional caregiving men are proud of their work, and find it meaningful and challenging. They believe the jobs require empathy and compassion as well as high-level cognitive skills. Whether they choose the industry or stumble into it, most see it as a lifetime career. Men in caring professions often provide care at home as well, and as a result face work-family conflict and need time off work to provide care at home.

Said Nathan, 35, a nurse working in oncology in Salt Lake City, “Many people outside of the medical world have little understanding of what it is to be a nurse unless they have seen a loved one seriously ill. I am proud to tell people what I do, because the work I do has a positive influence on our society.”

Said Luther, “I feel caring for others can be overwhelming.” He spoke of how important it is for professional caregivers to take time off work to rest and to make time for family. “Turn off your Nursing demeanor and just be a family member,” he said, “not a care provider.”

---

## How Professional Caregiving Men Think Others See Them, and How Others See Them

Professional caregiving men have mixed views on whether or not society respects them, and often face a lot of negativity, stigma, and isolation. Despite this, they encourage other men to do care work. In focus groups, the general public expressed more acceptance of male nurses than men in early care and education.

Said Joshua, “Society values nursing as a whole. However, males in nursing are usually derided or the butt of many jokes.”

“What we do as a whole is very valuable because we could be role models for younger males, and influence them to follow their dreams no matter what society standards are,” Montell said.

To attract and retain more men in caring professions, workplaces, public policies and cultural attitudes must shift to:

**TRANSFORM CULTURE TO SUPPORT MEN IN CARING PROFESSIONS**

Change the narrative to highlight the challenges and competencies required for care work by sharing stories and normalizing men as equal and fully capable caregivers to address stigma.

**IMPROVE EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK PATHWAYS TO CREATE A GENDER-EQUAL CARE WORKFORCE**

Create role model opportunities and job pathways for men entering professional caring professions. Actively recruit men into caring professions early through schools, and focus on providing training, expanding security protocols and providing clear policies and procedures to parents. To reduce gender bias, provide unconscious bias training and open up management and leadership positions to women.

**INVEST IN THE CARE ECONOMY**

Create and pass public policies that require and support decent wages, benefits, stable schedules, and flexibility to improve the quality of work in the care sector, and provide a public, universal paid family and medical leave program to people of all genders.

