



# THE LONG-TERM CARE WORKFORCE IN OECD COUNTRIES

An overview of characteristics, trends and policy challenges

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# Long-term care is a labour-intensive service that relies on its workforce

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This presentation will look at three questions...

1 What does the LTC workforce look like now?

2 How will the workforce need to change in the future?

3 What policies can help countries to meet their future workforce needs?



WHAT DOES THE CURRENT  
LONG-TERM CARE  
WORKFORCE LOOK LIKE?

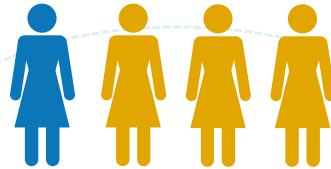


# Some generalisations about the LTC workforce...



Care workers are mostly women

One in four is a nurse...



three in four are lower-skilled personal care workers.

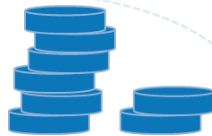


High rate of part-time work



Migrant workers are important in many countries

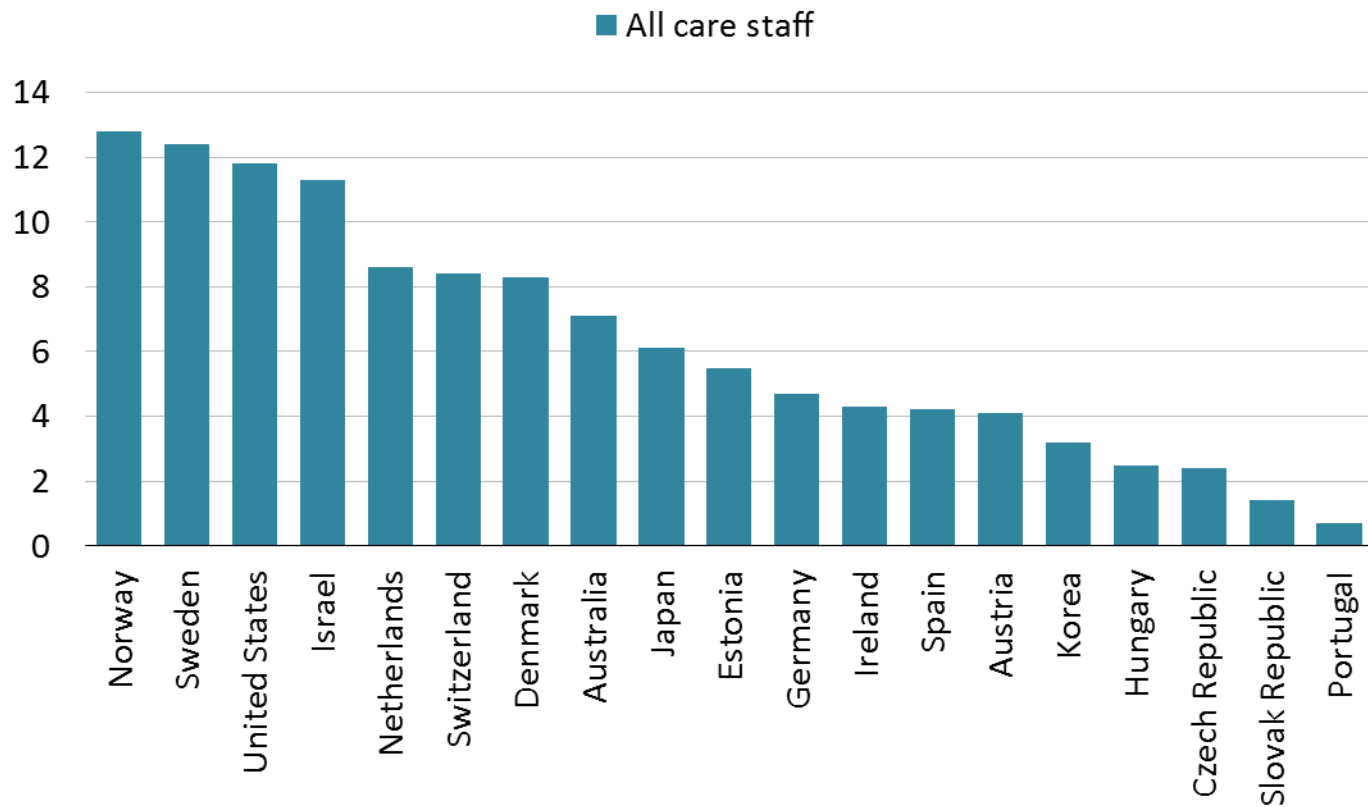
LTC work is often characterised by low pay and tough working conditions





# The size of the LTC workforce varies a lot between countries

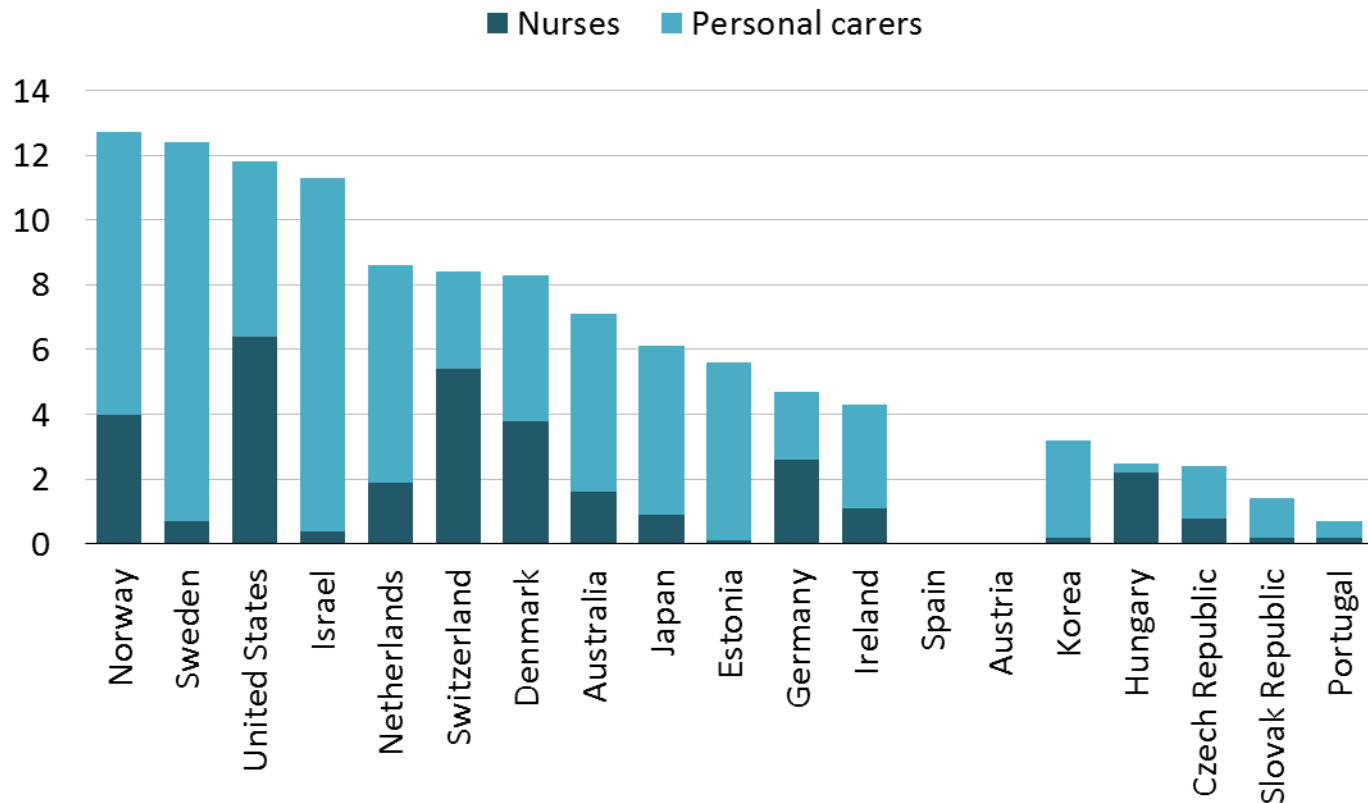
LTC workers per 100 people aged over 65





# Some countries use more nurses while others use more lower-skilled staff

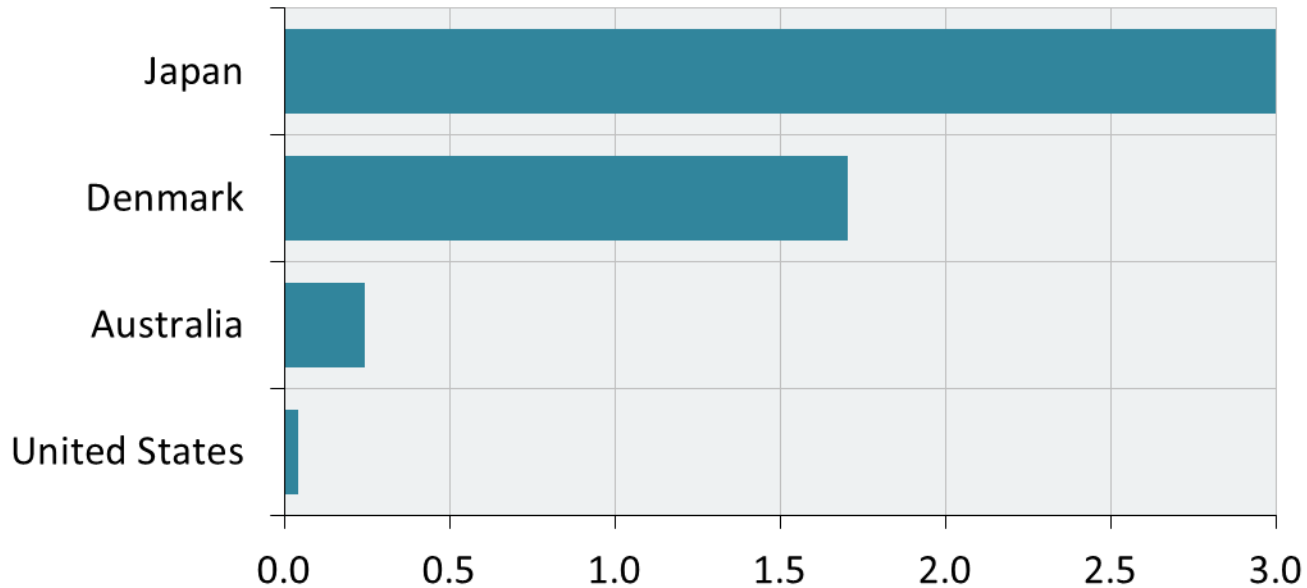
LTC workers per 100 people aged over 65





# Although the skill level of “lower-skilled” staff varies a lot

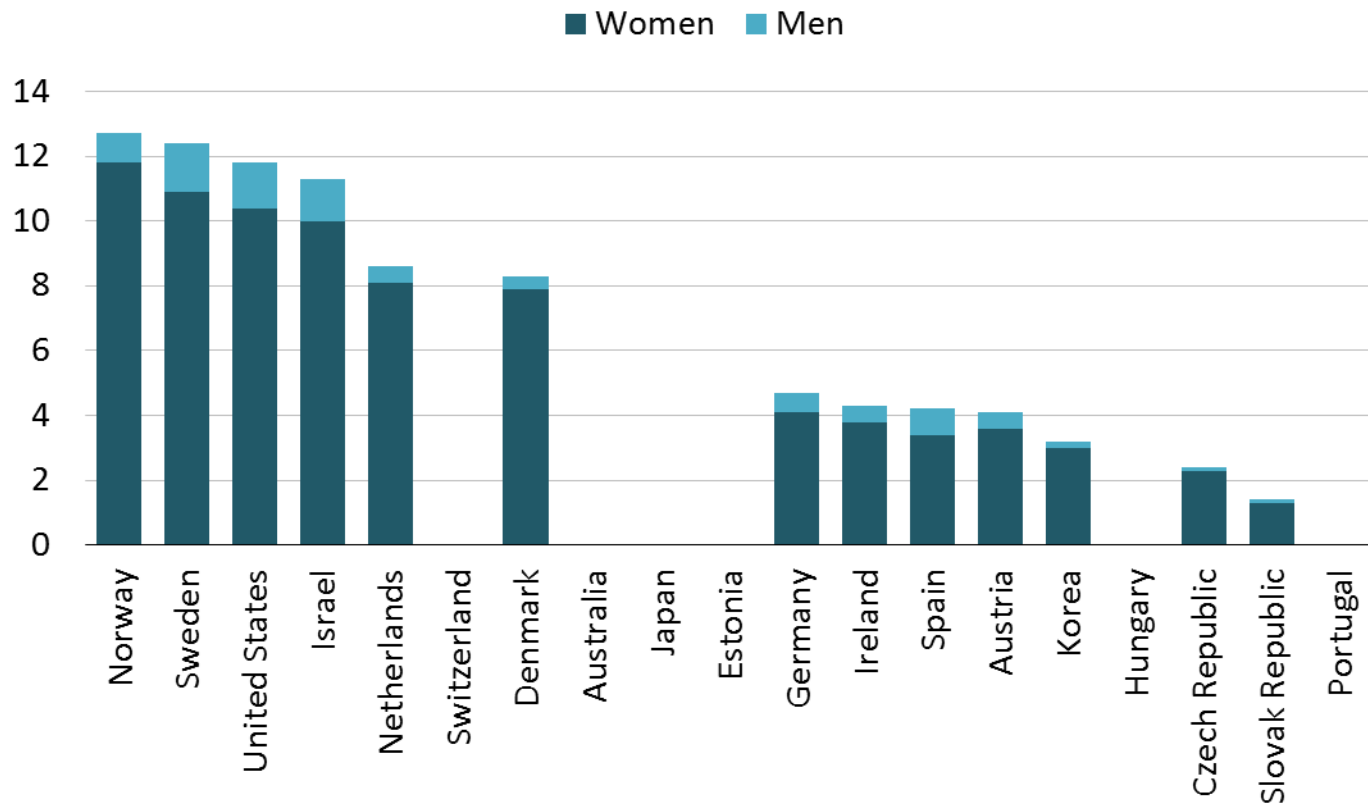
Years of training required for “personal carers” in selected countries





# In all countries women make up the vast majority of the workforce

LTC workers per 100 people aged over 65







HOW WILL THE  
WORKFORCE NEED TO  
CHANGE IN THE FUTURE?



# We might need more LTC workers in the future

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## Demand for long-term care will *probably* increase



Increasing life expectancies mean more older people



But any reductions in disability rates will offset this



People are richer and expect higher standards of living

Most projections expect increasing demand

## Informal carers may not be able to absorb much of the increase



Increasing female labour force participation?



Multiple people with care needs in one family?



# LTC employment has grown quickly in a number of countries

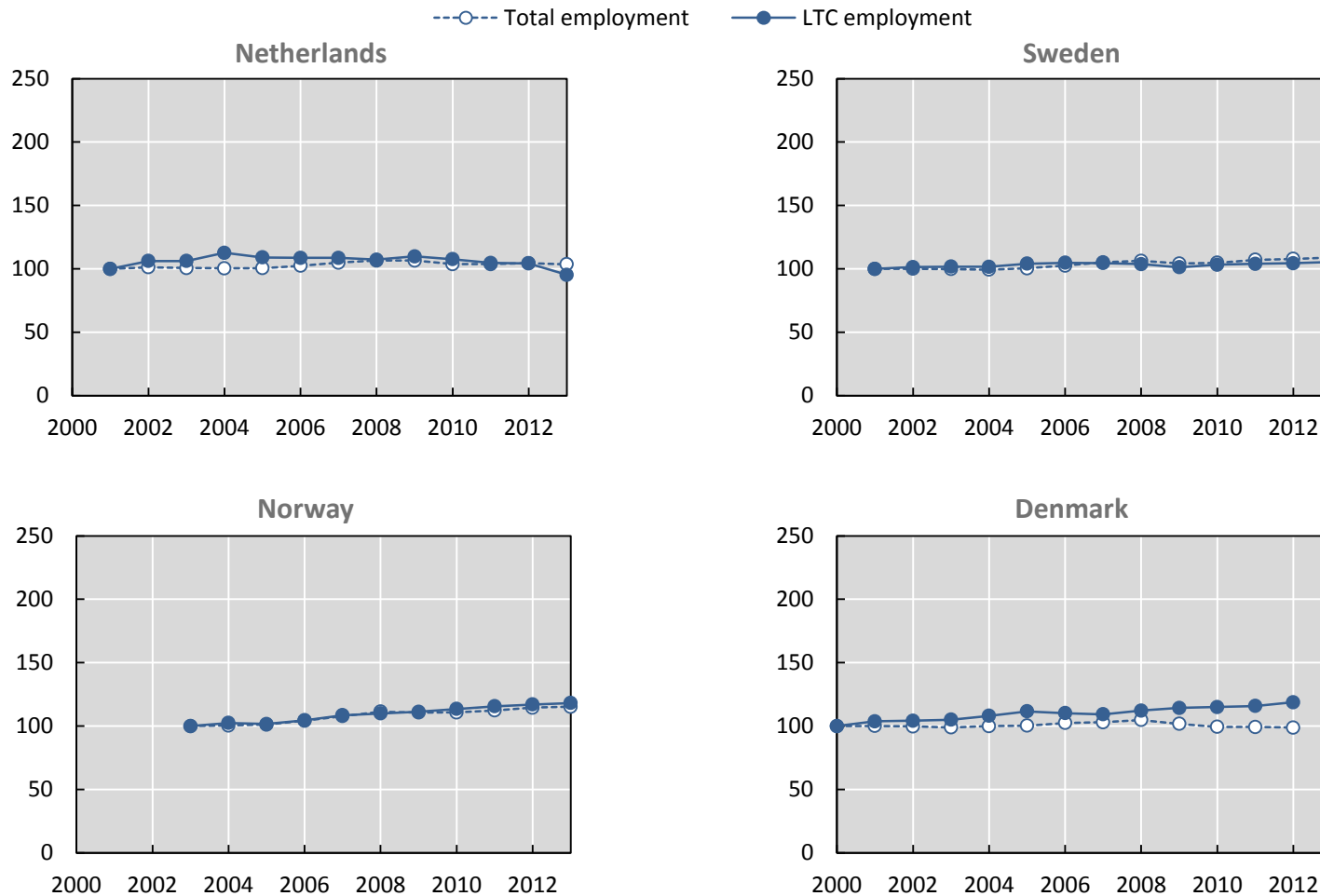
Trends in LTC employment and total employment in selected OECD countries





# But in some others it has followed a similar trend to other sectors

Trends in LTC employment and total employment in selected OECD countries





WHAT TYPES OF POLICY  
CAN HELP COUNTRIES TO  
MEET FUTURE  
WORKFORCE NEEDS?



# Countries have struggled to get enough people into the LTC sector

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High vacancy rates

Twice as high as other sectors in the UK

Short duration of employment

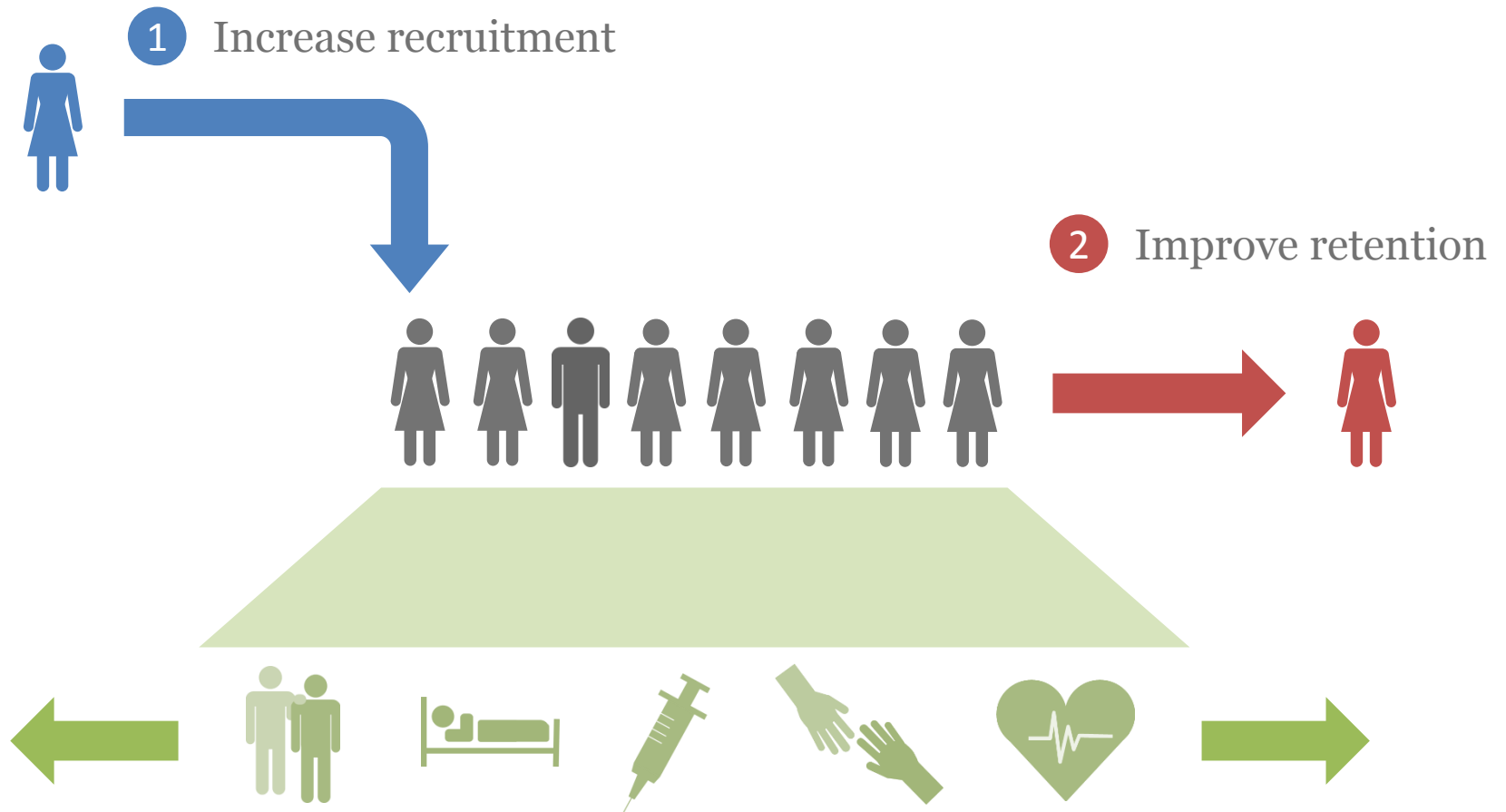
Median duration of employment for a direct carer in the US is five months

High turnover

25% in Australia  
27% for institutional care workers in Japan



# There are a limited number of options to meet increased demand



**3** Improve productivity to do more with the same amount of staff



# Some countries target specific groups to increase recruitment

## **Migrants**

Canadian Live-in Caregiver Programme grants care workers permanent residence after two years

## **Unemployed people**

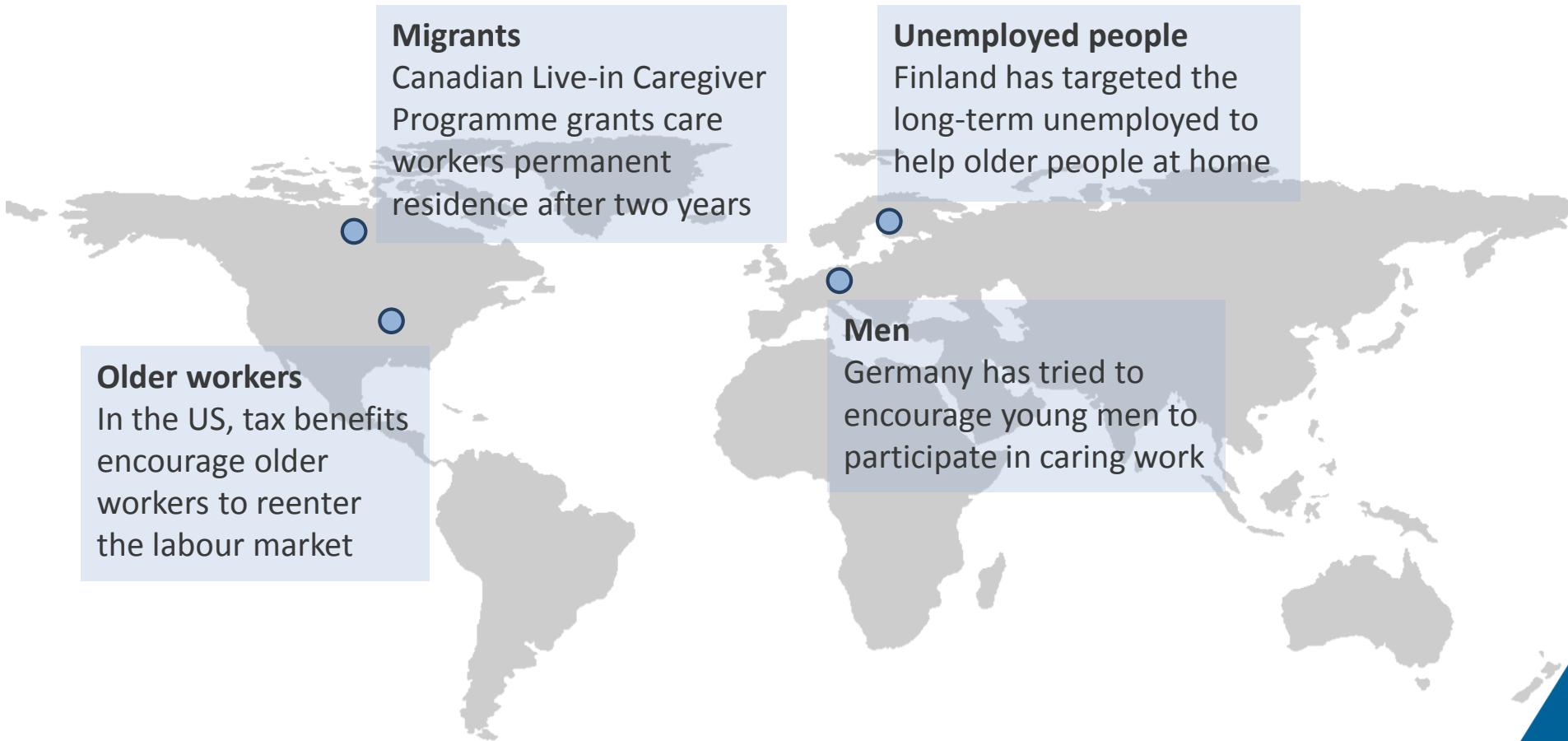
Finland has targeted the long-term unemployed to help older people at home

## **Older workers**

In the US, tax benefits encourage older workers to reenter the labour market

## **Men**

Germany has tried to encourage young men to participate in caring work







# Is it just a case of paying people more?

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## A number of countries have increased pay for LTC workers

- e.g. Belgium, Luxembourg, France, New Zealand, Japan



## There is some evidence that this helps

- e.g. a US study found that a \$1 increase in hourly wages could increase job tenure by 2.1 months (Wiener et al., 2009)



## But are big pay increases realistic?

- It's not clear that governments or private payers are willing to foot the bill for higher wages.
- So we need to think about other things that can help...



# There is evidence that better job quality can improve retention

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**More development and career opportunities** could encourage people to stay in the LTC profession

But...

...many people work part time and miss out on training and development

**Professional autonomy** and involvement in management decisions can make people happier in their jobs

But...

But low-skilled staff may require supervision to ensure safe and high quality care

**Quality of care** can be an important factor in whether LTC workers want to stay in their jobs



# Raising productivity in LTC is difficult, but could be important in the future

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Pay people less...?



Delegate tasks to **cheaper staff**



Take **less time** to care for each person



**New technology** might reduce the amount of face-to-face time required



## So in summary...

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- Demand for LTC is going up
- Productivity increases probably aren't going to save the day
- So we're going to need more LTC staff in the future
- Without better pay and/or job quality it may not be possible to attract enough people
- This is probably going to cost some money



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