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The economic and social well-being of caregivers in the North Central Region

Florence Becot, Shoshanah Inwood

Caregiving is a common experience

- Almost four in five respondents (79%) have provided care to children and/or adults at some point in the past.
- Almost half of the sample (49%) have provided care in the last 12 months. Among these respondents: 39% cared for children (ages 0 to 17 years old), 26% cared for adults (18 years and older), and 35% cared for children and adults.
- Among respondents caring for adults, half of the adults cared for were over the age of 65.

Caregiving is often a family affair

- Individuals caring for children were most often the parent of that child (60%), followed by their grandparent (20%), and their aunt/uncle (15%).
- Those caring for adults were most often the child of that adult (38%), followed by their spouse/partner (24%), and their parent (16%).

Caregiver demographics

- Among respondents who had provided care in the last 12 months, the majority identified as: female (65%), were 44 years old on average, were White (82%) followed by Hispanic or Latino (15%) and Black or African American (9%).
- Most caregivers in this survey were employed (60%), followed by retired (15%), and unemployed/not working (10%).
- One third reported a household income of less than \$50,000 (37%) or between \$50,000 and \$99,999 (39%), while a quarter reported a household income of \$100,000 or more (25%).
- Geographically, respondents were split between living in a suburban area (37%), urban area (35%), and rural area (27%).

Health care needs of children and adults being cared for

The health care needs of children and adults being cared for are noticeably different. Only one-third (34%) of children cared for had a health condition, compared to 83% of adults.

- *Long-term health conditions*, where the individual being cared for is not expected to (re)gain independence in the future, affected 16% of children and 59% of adults in care.
 - 30% of children and 17% of adults in care had an emotional, behavioral, or mental health condition.
 - 25% of children needing long-term care had a learning disability.
 - 18% of adults requiring long-term care had memory problems.
- *Short-term health conditions*, where the individual being cared for is expected to (re)gain independence, accounted for 8% of children and 28% of adults needing care.
 - For children, short-term health needs were evenly split between physical (20%) and emotional, behavioral, or mental health (20%) conditions.
 - For adults, the most frequent short-term condition was physical (28%) compared to emotional, behavioral, or mental health (10%) conditions.

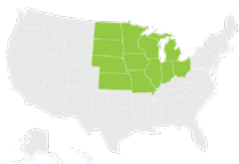
Time and financial resources needed for caregiving

Caring for children requires more time than caring for adults.

- 41% of those caring for children either provide constant care or between 20 to 40 hours per week. Only 22% of adult caregivers reported that level of care.

Over two-thirds of respondents caring for children or adults paid for some care.

- Among those who paid for care, 50% of those caring for children and 45% of those caring for adults spent more than \$201 per week.



The North Central Region consists of these 12 states:

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin

Intersection between caregiving and household finances

Caregiving is multidimensional and complex. Caregiving responsibilities often intersect with household needs and can impact the household's finances.

Respondents shared that caregiving affected their ability to perform their household responsibilities (46%) and their ability to perform paid work (43%).

- To meet their caregiving responsibilities, respondents reported they or someone in their household made changes to:
 - Their employment (34%).
 - Their living situation and/or the living situation of the person they care for (28%).
 - Their education (15%).
- As a result of providing care, more than half of the respondents (55%) experienced financial difficulties. The difficulties most frequently reported include:
 - Taking on more debts (46%).
 - Stopped saving (36%).
 - Missed or were late making a student loan payment (35%).
- Within the last 12 months, 59% of respondents had used social safety net programs. The most frequently used programs included:
 - COVID-19 stimulus check (47%).
 - Food assistance through SNAP (36%).
 - Medicaid (34%).

Varying impacts of caregiving on caregivers' health and well-being

- Caregiving is more likely to affect the caregivers' mental and/or emotional health (48%) and social life (41%) than it was to impact physical health (30%).
- One third of respondents shared that caregiving worsened their mental and/or emotional health (32%) and social life (31%). Fewer respondents reported that caregiving improved their mental and/or emotional health (16%) and social life (10%).
- The impact of caregiving on physical health was mixed, 15% reported their physical health was worse, and 13% said it is better.

Policies and programs to support caregivers

Respondents identified a variety of policies and programs that would better support their roles as caregivers.

- Almost two-thirds of respondents (62%) would like more help or information. Most frequently, they asked for:
 - Activities they can do with the people they care for (34%).
 - Financial compensation for caregiving (33%).
 - Information on how to keep the people they care for safe (33%).
 - Help manage emotional or physical stress (32%).
 - Help manage the challenging behavior of the people they care for (31%).
- To help respondents enter or return to the workforce:
 - About three-quarters favored flexible workplace arrangements (75%), financial support (74%), and paid leave/time off/sick time (72%).
 - Less than half of survey participants favored information, referrals, or counseling to help caregivers (46%) and unpaid leave/time (43%).

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Methods and dataset: The technical documentation, survey codebook, and the open access dataset are available for download at: [doi:10.4231/Q22G-WE30](https://doi.org/10.4231/Q22G-WE30).

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NCR-Stat: Caregiving Survey is the regional household survey that NCRCD conducted in collaboration with Ohio State University and the National Farm Medicine Center. All data gathered via the NCR-Stat: Caregiving Survey are available for those who want to use the data as a baseline for further research and extend the portfolio of already existing databases. [NCR-Stat: Caregiving Dataset](#)