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What do caregivers in the North Central Region use for support and what support do they still need?

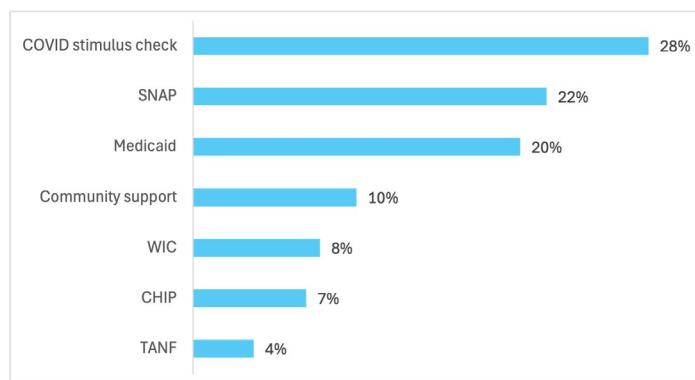
Emily Southard, Florence Becot, Shoshanah Inwood, Elena Pojman

Providing care to children and adults requires time and resources. In this snapshot, we explore the **supports used by caregivers and the supports they still need**. Since the caregiving needs of children and adults vary, we also explore variations in supports used based on the type of care provided. Overall, we find that caregivers use and desire a variety of programs and resources to support them in their caregiving duties. There were important differences in needs based on who they care for. Those who care for both children and adults (also sometimes referred to as the “sandwich generation”) consistently reported a greater need for support.

Use of the Social Safety Net

The social safety net refers to programs and resources that support individuals and families' ability to meet their social and economic needs along the life course. In the last 12 months (which includes 2022-2023), over half of caregivers (59%) used social safety net programs to support their family. The most frequently used programs were the COVID-19 stimulus check (28%), SNAP (22%), Medicaid (20%), community support (10%), WIC (8%), CHIP (7%), and TANF (4%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Social safety net programs used in last 12 months



The social safety net programs that caregivers used differed significantly based on who they care for.

- Those who care for both adults and children use social safety net programs the most (67%), followed by those who only care for adults (56%), and those who only care for children (53%).
- Looking at the most frequently used programs, those caring for adults were most likely to use the

COVID-19 stimulus check (31%, though differences were not statistically significant), while caregivers of both children and adults were most likely to use SNAP (28%; compared to 19% of caregivers of children and 18% of caregivers of adults).

Caregivers' Insurance Coverage

Caregivers received health insurance coverage from several sources. Over nine in 10 of all caregivers (94%) reported that they had health insurance for themselves and their families. The most frequently used programs were employed-provided plans (45%), followed by Medicare (26%), and Medicaid or CHIP (22%).

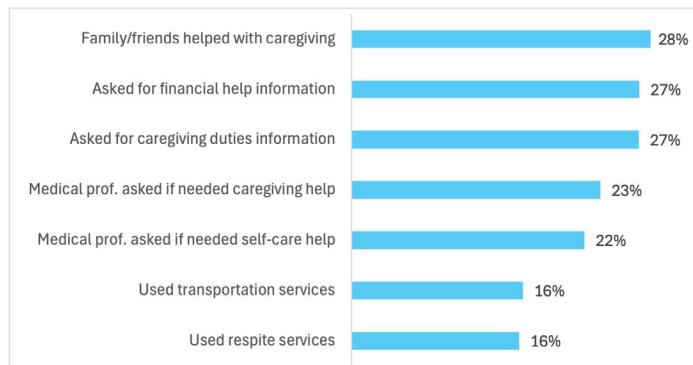
While there were no differences for rates of insurance, the sources of coverage caregivers used varied based on who the respondents cared for, potentially due to life-course differences.

- Caregivers of children only were significantly more likely to receive health insurance through their employer (52%) than were caregivers of adults only (39%) or of both children and adults (41%).
- Caregivers of adults only were significantly more likely to get their health insurance through Medicare (34%) than were caregivers of children only (21%) or caregivers of both adults and children (25%).
- Caregivers of both adults and children were more likely to receive their health insurance through Medicaid or CHIP (27%) than were caregivers of children (22%) or caregivers of adults (17%).

Caregivers' Use of Information and Resources

Caregivers have asked for information and resources in the past (Figure 2). The top three most popular requests were for help from friends, neighbors, and community members (28%), information on financial help for caregiving (27%), and information on help to carry out caregiving duties (27%).

Figure 2. Use of information and resources



Those who care for both children and adults were more likely to ask for information and resources:

- Two-fifths (38%) of caregivers who cared for both children and adults have requested information about financial help for caregiving, compared to one-fourth of those who only care for adults (25%) or for children (18%).
- Over one-third (37%) of caregivers who cared for both children and adults relied on help from their friends, neighbors, and community members, compared to those who only care for adults (30%) or for children (19%).

Caregivers' Use of Online Resources

Over half (60%) of caregivers have used online resources to assist with their caregiving responsibilities in the last 12 months. Most frequently they used online grocery ordering (30%), online prescription ordering (23%), telehealth services (21%), or searched for support services, aids, or facilities (16%).

The use of online resources varied based on the type of caregiving provided:

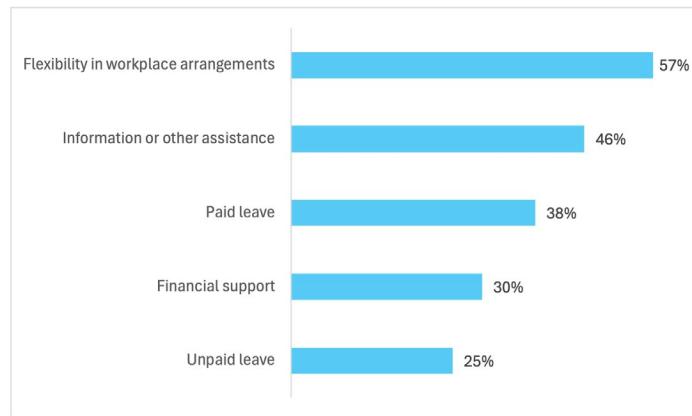
- One-third (34%) of caregivers who cared for both children and adults used online ordering for groceries or household supplies, compared to those who cared for just children (29%) or adults (27%).

- One-fourth (25%) of caregivers of children and adults made use of virtual or online visits with a healthcare provider, which was more than caregivers of children only (19%) or adults only (17%).

Desired Supports to Participate in the Workforce

For caregivers who were not working, programs and resources most helpful to be able to (re)enter the workforce included flexibility in workplace arrangements (57%), information, referrals, counseling, or an employee assistance program (46%), and paid leave, time off, or sick leave (38%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Programs and resources seen as helpful to (re)enter the workforce



The desired programs and resources varied based on for whom the respondents provided care.

- There were no statistically significant differences by type of caregiving provided in terms of desiring flexibility in workplace arrangements.
- Caregivers of adults, both with and without children, were more likely to want information, referrals, counseling, or employee assistance programs than were caregivers of children only. Specifically, over half of caregivers of both children and adults (55%) and almost half of those who only care only for adults (46%) wanted this, as opposed to about two-fifths of those who care only for children (39%).

Desired Information and Resources

Caregivers were most interested in information about activities to do with the person they care for (22%), stipends or financial compensation for caregiving (21%), keeping the person they care for safe (21%), and managing emotional or physical stress (20%).

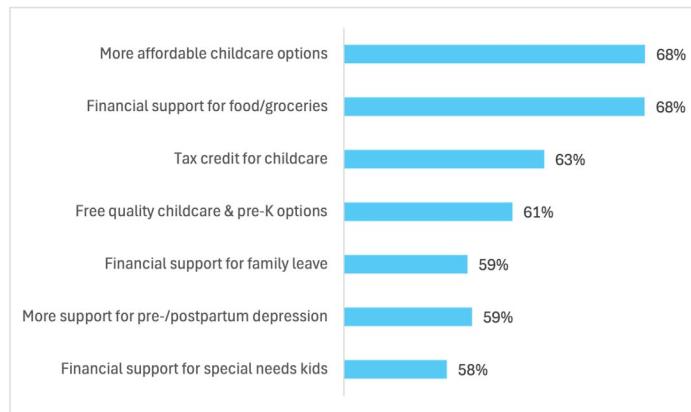
Those who care for children (either solely or along with adults) desired different information and resources than did those who care only for adults.

- Those who care for both children and adults (25%) and those who care only for children (22%) were likelier to be interested in information about activities to do with the people they care for, compared to those who care only for adults (17%).
- Those who care for both children and adults (28%) and those who care for only adults (21%) are more interested in stipends or financial compensation for caregiving, compared to those who care only for children (14%).

Desired Childcare Supports

Those caring for children were asked about their desires for support for childcare. Around two-thirds reported interest in more affordable childcare options (68%), financial support for food and groceries (68%), a tax credit for childcare (63%), and free, quality childcare and pre-K options (61%) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Supports desired by caregivers with children



Authors: Emily Southard, Pennsylvania State University, ems617@psu.edu, Florence Becot, Pennsylvania State University, florence.becot@psu.edu, Shoshanah Inwood, The Ohio State University, inwood.2@osu.edu, and Elena Pojman, Pennsylvania State University, emp5761@psu.edu.

Methods and dataset: The survey was conducted in 2023 with 4,532 responses from the 12 states of the North Central Region through a Qualtrics online panel and Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing - CATI. The technical documentation, survey codebook, and the open access dataset are available for download here: Inwood, S., Bednarik, Z., Becot, F., Caldera, S., Henning-Smith, C., Cohen, S., Finders, J., & Brown, L. (2024). *North Central Region Household Data. NCR-Stat: Caregiving Survey (2.0)* [Dataset]. Purdue University Research Repository. [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 NCRCRD 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](https://doi.org/10.4231/Q22G-WE30)