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5 facts about family caregivers

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Photo credit: Shestock/Getty Images

As American society gets grayer, families are taking the lead role in providing care for aging adults. Most American adults say a family member is caring for their aging parent (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/05/21/4-caring-for-aging-parents/>) who needs help handling their affairs or

caring for themselves. And if they're not already helping out a parent, most expect to do so someday (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/01/30/caregiving-for-older-family-members/>) .

Here are five facts about caregivers of older Americans for National Family Caregivers Month:

1 (http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/18/5-facts-about-family-caregivers/ft_15-11-19-caregivers2-2/) **There are 40.4 million unpaid caregivers of adults ages 65 and older in the United States.** Of that group, nine-in-ten are providing care for an aging relative, and a plurality is caring for a parent, according to new data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

(<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/elcare.nro.htm>).

Caregivers may perform a range of activities, such as providing companionship, assisting with housework or providing medical and other forms of physical care.

Among caregivers of older adults, most provide help to one aging adult, but 22% provide help to two and 7% provide help to three or more. Roughly half of these caregivers have been providing help for two years or less. More than a third have been providing care for five or more years.

Most caregivers of older adults provide help to others weekly or less often. One-in-five caregivers say they provide care on a daily basis.

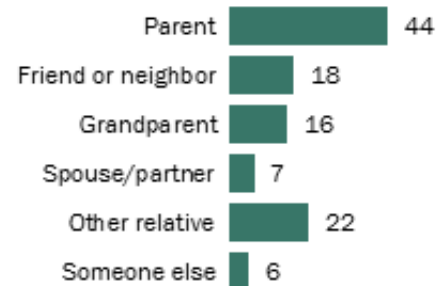
Many are also juggling their own jobs with their caregiving responsibilities. Six-in-ten (61%) caregivers are employed, including nearly half who work full-time.

2 **Adults ages 45 to 64 are the most likely to be caregivers.** In fact, about a quarter (23%) of adults ages 45 to 64 cares for an aging adult.

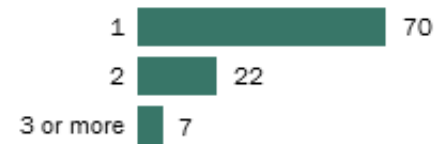
A significant share of adults ages 65 and older – 17% – serve as caregivers for another aging American. These adults, who themselves are advanced in age, are the second most likely age group to be caregivers. Many in this group are caring for a spouse or partner (29%) or a friend or neighbor (33%).

Caring for Older Adults: Who Do Caregivers Provide Help for and for How Long?

% of caregivers providing help to an aging ...



% of caregivers providing help to ___ older adults



% of caregivers that have been providing help to an older adult for ___ years



Note: The sum of who caregivers are providing help to is greater than 100% since some caregivers are providing care to more than one person. For caregivers who provide care to more than one person, the duration of care is calculated based on the person for whom they had cared the longest. Data for 2013-14.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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3 (http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/18/5-facts-about-family-caregivers/ft_15-11-19-sweat-equity/) **Most caregiving for aging parents is not in the form of financial support or personal care.** More commonly, adults have helped their parent with errands, housework or home repairs.

A recent Pew Research survey (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/05/21/4-caring-for-aging-parents/>) asked about specific types of support adults may have provided for their aging parents in the last 12 months. About six-in-ten adults with at least one parent age 65 or older say they have helped their parent with errands, housework or home repairs.

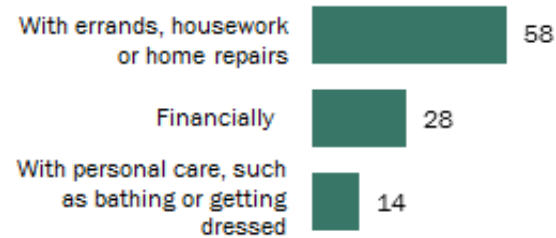
A significantly smaller share has provided financial help to a parent age 65 and older. Among this group, nearly half say providing financial support was for a special circumstance, while 43% say it was for a recurring expense.

Relatively few caregivers say they helped with personal care, such as bathing or getting dressed. Women are twice as likely as men to say they provided this type of care for an aging parent (19% vs. 8%).

4 Emotional support is a big part of caregiving. Most adults say they provide some emotional support for their aging parents, but more women say this than men. Fully 68% of adults say they do this at least sometimes (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/01/30/emotional-ties/>), including about one-third who provided emotional support to their parent frequently. Some 39% of women say they provide emotional support frequently to an aging parent compared with 30% of men.

'Sweat Equity' Is a Common Type of Help Provided to Aging Parents

% with at least one parent 65+ who say they have helped ___ in the past 12 months



Source: Pew Research Center survey Oct. 27-Dec. 18, 2014

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5 (http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/18/5-facts-about-family-caregivers/ft_15-11-19-helping-parents/) **Most adults who have helped an aging parent see it as rewarding; relatively few say it is stressful.** Among those who have helped their parents in a matter of ways – financially, with errands housework, or home repairs or with personal care – 88% say it’s rewarding. Roughly one-third (32%) of adults who have helped with any of these tasks say helping an aging parent is stressful.

Americans are generally comfortable with the level of care they are providing for their aging parents. About three-quarters of adults with at least one parent ages 65 or older say that their aging parent (or parents) expects about the right amount of support from them. Just 8% say they are expected to do too much for their parents. Women (11%) are more likely to feel this way than men (4%).

Note: The Bureau of Labor Statistics defines eldercare providers (referred to here as caregivers of older Americans) as anyone age 15 and older who has provided unpaid care to any adult age 65 and older in the last three to four months because of a condition related to aging.

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Providing Help for a Parent Is ...

% of adults providing at least one type of care for a parent ages 65 or older



Note: Based on respondents with at least one parent 65+ and who helped their parents financially, with errands, housework or home repairs or with personal care. "Don't provide help/Depends/Don't know/Refused" not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey Oct. 27-Dec. 18, 2014

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3 Comments



Don Thomas • 1 week ago (#comment-661515)

I am 59 and I have been taking care of my father for 4 and a half years, he is 87. He is in a wheel chair. I do most everything for him . And I am very proud that I have chosen this path . I have resently quit my job to take care if him full time. It is the best thing i feel like i have done in my whole life! I am a American Male! My father is a 100% disabled , 30 years in the USMC

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Edna B Bowles • 1 week ago (#comment-661542)

When I first met my now husband of eleven years,the greatest quality I observed was his constant dedication and love for his 85 disabled father.To see the kindness and total respect was to reflective of how I judged his character . He would leave very early in the morning only to have a bowl of cereal and a small container of milk on ice at the table. Coffee service complete with a demitasse cup,spoon and sweetener. From timed phone calls to laying out his clothes,his pride of doing these things was amazing.Now deceased,I miss him terribly ,he too was a respected man of the community as well as a veteran in the air force .

I have read that in the Asian part of the world ,the elderly are revered and taken in the home and by example the grandchildren learn by that a parent such as yours and my father in law ,it is an honor to care for men such as these

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Doug Morrisey • 1 week ago (#comment-661490)

As an “experienced” caregiver (since 1998) I believe I’m entitled to an observation here.

My wife suffered a series of strokes and was immobilized and classified as disabled. Our children for various reasons have been unable to offer any particular assistance so the role of “primary caregiver” devolved to me. We opted to keep my wife at home and thus 24-hour caregiving became my career.

I have no background in this area. Nonetheless we have survived, not always without a certain friction. We have both come to the realization that neither of us could survive without the other so there are moments of pure toleration purely for the greater good.

To say that it is not stressful would be begging the issue. It IS always stressful! In our generation (Silent) we have been taught that self-reliance is a “good” thing and that dependence is bad. Intellectually we realize that the circumstances were beyond our control and that neither of us is to “blame”. Emotionally, however, we are human and is our lot to err.

Granted, I’ve managed to provide caregiving to my mother and my father in-law and I found great stress in both situations, practically leading to breakdowns in my own personal life. But I believed that such friction would not occur between me a my wife. Wrong! I forgot that erring adage and that I belong to the class, “human”. So, STRESS!

Thank you for permitting the ”rant” venue.

Doug Morrisey

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