



Portrait of a Caregiver

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Who are Caregivers?

- Caregivers are as diverse as the United States as a whole: they come from every age, gender, socioeconomic, and racial/ethnic group. An estimated 43.5 million adults in the United States have provided unpaid care to an adult or a child in the prior 12 months.
- The majority of caregivers are female (60%), but 40 percent are male. Eight in 10 are taking care of one person (82%). They are 49 years of age, on average. A large majority of caregivers provide care for a relative (85%), with 49 percent caring for a parent or parent-in-law. One in 10 provides care for a spouse.
- Nearly 1 in 10 caregivers is 75 years of age or older (7%). Therefore, when income may be fixed, they are performing the difficult task of managing household finances, for both themselves and their spouse.
- A quarter of caregivers having provided care for 5 years or more (24%).

What do Caregivers do?

- On average, caregivers spend 24.4 hours a week providing care to their loved one. Nearly one-quarter provide 41 or more hours of care a week (23%). Caregiving is particularly time-intensive for those caring for a spouse/partner (44.6 hours a week).
- In addition to activities of daily living, family caregivers are increasingly performing tasks that nurses typically perform including injections, tube feedings, catheter and colostomy care, and many other complex care responsibilities. About 6 in 10 caregivers assist with medical/nursing tasks (57%).

To whom do Caregivers provide care?

- Three in five care recipients have a long-term physical condition (59%), more than a third have a short-term physical condition (35%), and a quarter have a memory problem (26%). Many care recipients have more than one ongoing problem or illness (37%).
- The top three problems reported by caregivers are "old age" (14%), Alzheimer's or dementia (8%), or surgery/wounds (8%). Some other common conditions include: cancer (7%), mobility (7%), and mental/emotional health issues (5%).

Caregiving and the Workplace

- Six in 10 caregivers report being employed while caregiving (56 % worked full time).
- Six in 10 caregivers report having to make a workplace accommodation as a result of caregiving, such as cutting back on their working hours, taking a leave of absence, receiving a warning about performance or attendance, or other such impacts.

HELP WITHIN REACH

Contact the OEA at 7-2469

Impact of Caregiving on the Caregiver

- When asked about the impact that caregiving has had on their health, 22 percent of caregivers felt their health had gotten worse as a result of caregiving.
- One in five caregivers reports a high level of physical strain resulting from caregiving (19%), while two in five consider their caregiving situation to be emotionally stressful (38%).
- Caring for a close relative, like a spouse or parent (45% and 44%, respectively), is more emotionally stressful than caring for a relative for caregivers than caring for another relative (35%) or non-relative (18%).
- Chronic or long-term conditions among care recipients seem to be particularly likely to cause emotional stress for caregivers, as about one out of every two caregivers of someone with a mental health issue (53%), Alzheimer's or dementia (50%), or a long-term physical condition (45%) report feeling emotional stress.
- About one in five caregivers' reports experiencing financial strain (18%).

YOU'RE NOT ALONE



Care for the Caregiver

A key challenge for caregivers is to stay aware of their own emotional, social, and physical needs. Below are some suggestions for caregivers in tending to their own needs:*

- ✓ Find moments for daily relaxation including prayer, meditation, exercise, stretching, etc., as well as engage in activities you enjoy.
- ✓ Share with trusted others about how you are feeling and when you feel stressed or write your thoughts and feelings in a journal.
- ✓ Try to find meaning in both your life and in your role as a caregiver.
- ✓ Watch out for signs of depression, anxiety, or burnout and get professional help if needed.
- ✓ Avoid becoming socially isolated. Stay in touch with your friends and other family members. Strengthen your support network by connecting to your spiritual community, social group or civic organization. Join **FIU's Caregiver Support Group** (meets the last Friday of every month)
- ✓ To avoid fatigue and burnout, seek respite by taking regular breaks from caregiving.
- ✓ Engage in a healthy lifestyle by exercising regularly, eating nutritious meals, and getting enough sleep.
- ✓ Avoid coping with stress by using alcohol and drugs.
- ✓ Keep up with your own health care. Go to the doctor and dentist on schedule, and keep up with your own prescriptions or medical therapy. As a caregiver, you need to stay as strong and healthy as possible.
- ✓ Contact the Office of Employee Assistance to schedule a consultation or to join the support group and visit us at <http://oea.fiu.edu/> or call (305) 348-2469.