



IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19, AMERICA’S FAMILY CAREGIVERS FEEL THE STRAIN PROVIDING MORE SUPPORT TO AGING FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The AP-NORC Center poll also finds increased support for health insurance companies, Medicare, and Medicaid paying a larger share of long-term care costs.

CHICAGO, October 13, 2020 — The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 has affected the lives of many Americans, with those who provide ongoing living assistance to an aging family member or friend being acutely impacted, according to [a new study](#) from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Yet, the pandemic has not led to heightened awareness when it comes to preparations for growing older or providing care to an aging loved one. Compared to 2018, more say they have done little or no planning for their own care needs (46% vs. 37%) and believe it is unlikely that a loved one will need care (43% vs. 34%).

Nearly 1 in 5 Americans currently provide ongoing living assistance to a family member or friend, and for 36% of caregivers, their caregiving responsibilities have increased because of the pandemic. This ongoing living assistance can take many forms — from helping an aging family member or friend with household upkeep and meals, to bathing and dressing, to medical care or help paying bills.

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, those ages 18-39 are taking on greater share of these responsibilities because of the pandemic. Twenty-one percent of these younger caregivers started providing care during the outbreak and the share who provide more than 10 hours of care per week has increased since 2018.

The data also show a shift in Americans’ views about who should pay for long-term care. Compared to 2018, fewer now think individuals and families should be responsible for paying for their aging loved ones’ care, and more feel that health insurance companies, Medicare, and Medicaid should take responsibility for the costs.

“Americans of all ages are providing even more care to older loved ones, yet in the face of extremely troubling times, they *still* are not thinking about their future aging and long-term care needs in an action-oriented, productive way,” said Bruce Chernof, MD, president and CEO of The SCAN Foundation. “It’s staggering, and these findings are a clarion call for both presidential campaigns to bring the needs of older adults and family caregivers to the forefront.”

Other key findings from the study include:

- The pandemic has not increased the number of conversations about aging and care among young people – just 17% have had more conversations, 14% have had fewer, and 68% haven't changed.
- Since 2018, concerns about telehealth have declined when it comes to worrying about low-quality care (51% in 2018 to 37% now), technical issues (42% to 35%), security of health information (42% vs. 27%), and lack of privacy (33% vs. 24%).
- 28% of current caregivers who employed an in-home caregiver have canceled that care as a result of the outbreak.
- Caregivers ages 18-39 are providing more care – 35% are providing 10 or more hours of care a week vs. 26% who did so in 2018.
- Only 5% of those with caregiving experience have provided care to someone with COVID-19 or related complications, but non-white caregivers have been especially likely to do so compared to white caregivers (11% vs. 2%).
- Those who have suffered financial hardship as a result of COVID-19 are particularly likely to have had their caregiver responsibilities increase compared to those who haven't (42% vs. 25%).
- More than a quarter (29%) of caregivers have struggled to afford providing care, including 41% of those who have been impacted economically by COVID-19 through job loss or lost income.
- 12% of Americans report a family member or close friend has died of COVID-19.
- Despite concerns about infecting the person they provide care to, 31% of caregivers are not sure whether they would get a COVID-19 vaccine. Thirty-four percent are not sure whether the person they care for would get one.
- Non-white caregivers and caregivers ages 18-39 have been particularly likely to take advantage of meal delivery services and video chat to provide care.

Most new caregivers – those who started providing care since the COVID-19 outbreak began – did so for reasons related to the virus, including: restrictions making their loved one less able to care for themselves; a previous care situation seeming unsafe; or a previous caregiver contracting COVID-19.

The pandemic has forced many to adapt to new realities in order to stay safe. America's caregivers are now relying on a range of services to aid in caregiving responsibilities like meal and grocery delivery, video chat technology, "senior-only" hours at stores, and transportation services to help care for their loved ones. Telehealth has also become prevalent, with three-quarters of caregivers using it to get professional health care for their loved one.

"While the pandemic has created many obstacles for caregivers, they have adopted a

number of creative solutions – many involving technology – to overcome the challenges and continue to provide assistance in a time of great need,” said Michelle Kitchman Strollo, senior vice president of NORC’s Health Care Programs. “We can expect many of these innovations to continue even after the pandemic subsides.”

About the Study

This survey, funded by The SCAN Foundation, was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Staff from NORC at the University of Chicago, The Associated Press, and The SCAN Foundation collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Survey Methodology

The nationwide poll was conducted August 27-September 14, 2020, using the AmeriSpeak Panel®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,893 adults. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.0 percentage points.

The study includes an oversample of current caregivers who were weighted back to their proper proportion of the population for analysis. The overall margin of sampling error for the 565 completed interviews with current caregivers is +/- 5.9 percentage points.

For more information, please visit www.longtermcarepoll.org.

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The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

About The SCAN Foundation

Supported by a grant from The SCAN Foundation - advancing a coordinated and easily navigated system of high-quality services for older adults that preserve dignity and independence.

www.thescanfoundation.org

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