



Unpaid Family Caregiving of Seniors Extracts a High Cost

By Pam McDonald

With over 34 million Americans providing unpaid family care to an adult over age 50, this service is a vital part of our long-term care system. No doubt the women and men providing this care experience the rewards of their self-sacrificing act . . . after all, they are making a difference in the everyday life of someone they love. However, family caregivers pay a price – physically, emotionally and financially – for their generosity.

On Thursday, September 29th from 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM PDT, Caring.com, the largest online resource for people considering a move to senior living and a Senior Housing Forum partner, will reveal findings from their annual “Caregiver Journey” survey, measuring how family caregivers of older adults living in the U.S. hold up financially as they care for elder loved ones.

Surprisingly, 22% of family caregivers who responded to the survey have a loved one living in a senior community. Among these, the most common reason for the move (in 70% of the decisions) was medical. Loneliness was a factor, but only in 12% of moving decisions. Among those who made a move to senior living, 65% left their own home for the community. The others came from the following:

17% moved from a family member’s home to a community

15% moved from a different community into the one they’re in now

3% moved from a hospital or rehab situation into the community

Financial Costs of Family Caregiving

With regard to the financial cost of caregiving, the survey found that 4 in 10 family caregivers spend \$5,000 or more per year. Spending breakdowns as follows:

18% spend from \$5,000 to \$9,999

10% spend from \$10,000 to \$19,999

5% spend \$20,000 to \$29,999

4% spend \$30,000 to \$49,999

5% spend \$50,000 or more each year

20% don’t know how much they spend

The most common out-of-pocket expenses for family caregivers are food and clothing (62%), transportation (60%), and medications and other medical costs (44%).

Expenses are slightly higher for families caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia. Eighteen percent of these caregivers are more likely to spend \$20,000 or more per year compared to 11% of caregivers for people who haven't been diagnosed with either disease.

"Caregiving can be very costly, especially if your loved one has Alzheimer's," said Dayna Steele, Caring.com's Chief Caring Expert. "But you're not alone." Her book, *Surviving Alzheimer's With Friends, Facebook and a Really Big Glass of Wine*, supplies plenty of online resources, information, tools, and support groups for dealing with the financial burdens of caregiving.

Not only does family caregiving affect finances, it also impacts caregiver's employment. Forty-two percent of family caregivers who work either full-time or part-time have missed work because of caregiving responsibilities. Of those, 24% missed about a week and 31% have missed two or more weeks of work.

Other findings included the following:

72% of employed family caregivers say caregiving has a strong or some negative impact on their job

60% of employed caregivers had to make changes to their work schedule and 31% frequently arrive late to work or leave early

59% of the surveyed family caregivers live with the person for whom they provide care; about half (56%) of these are spouses, but the other half either moved in with their loved one or had their loved one move in with them.

Methodology

The online survey was conducted for Caring.com from July 19 – August 10, 2016 by Pretell Market Research of people searching on the internet for senior care-related content. Researchers received responses from 2,512 unique individuals. No incentive was offered.



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