

RESEARCH BRIEF

Baby Boomers Who Provide Informal Care for People Living with Dementia in the Community

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One in four Baby Boomers fills the informal caregiver role in the United States

Why is this research important?

- This study aimed to understand how many Baby Boomers are informal caregivers for people living with dementia (PWD) and to compare their physical and mental wellbeing compared to caregivers looking after persons with other conditions (PWOC).
- Approximately 6.2 million people aged 65 and older are reported to live with Alzheimer's dementia.
- Informal caregivers are defined as a family members and friends who attend to another person's health needs and provide unpaid assistance in the community.

Who was part of this study and how was the research conducted?

- Data was collected from 46 jurisdictions included in the 2015–2018 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) (N=10,602), and 44 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico administered the Caregiver Module.
- The BRFSS is a telephone survey of non-institutionalized adults aged 18 years and older conducted annually by U.S. jurisdictions in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The BRFSS includes a core set of questions about health and demographic characteristics.
- The study identified caregiving status (assisting a family member/friend with a long-term illness or disability in the past month, managing personal care, and not caring for a child/grandchild) and whether the care recipient's major health condition was dementia.

What did we find?

- Among Baby Boomer caregivers, 15.4% were caring for someone with dementia.
- Dementia caregivers were more likely to be female, caring for a parent/parent-in-law, and providing care longer than caregivers for persons without dementia.
- No differences in caregiver's physical and mental health by care recipient's dementia status were found, we should underscore the importance of maintaining Baby Boomer caregivers' health and well-being.
- The majority (72%) of caregivers of PWD in this study were caring for their parents or parents-in-law, which is consistent with many previous studies.

Action steps

- Additional research is needed to more fully understand the effects of providing care including long-term health impacts, especially in older caregivers or those with multiple chronic health conditions.
- As Baby Boomers continue to grow older, efforts are necessary to support their continued caregiving role, protect their health status and promote self-care as many Baby Boomers are older adults themselves. They, like caregivers of all ages, need to take care of their own health and psychological well-being, too.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

Dr. Miyawaki's research has centered on the health and well-being of older adults of color and their family caregivers. Trained as a bilingual geriatric social worker, Dr. Miyawaki has first-hand working experience with family caregivers and their care recipients from a variety of racial/ethnic groups. As a gerontologist, she developed a strong foundation in health disparities research, especially focusing on Asian American populations.

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