

# Patterns of caregiving and work: evidence from two surveys

*Using data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), this article examines the patterns of caregiving during midlife of those born in the years 1957 to 1964. The two datasets examine different measures of caregiving: eldercare examined in the ATUS and care for a household member who is living with a chronic illness or a disability examined in the NLSY79. The ATUS shows that approximately 24 percent of men and women provide eldercare. The NLSY79 shows that about 7 percent of men and women care for a household member who is living with a chronic illness or a disability. For both types of care, women are more likely to provide care than men. In the ATUS, the provision of eldercare increases with education and employment. In the NLSY79, the provision of care to household members who are living with a chronic illness or a disability is negatively related to education and employment.*

For older Americans and for Americans who are living with a chronic illness or a disability, informal caregiving can make an important difference between living independently at home and living in a nursing home. Often, informal care is provided by adults in midlife with many demands on their time.<sup>[6]</sup> We use two datasets to examine the characteristics of informal caregivers who are in midlife. The American

Time Use Survey (ATUS) contains information from individuals on their provision of eldercare.<sup>[7]</sup> In contrast, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) collects information on care that individuals regularly provide to disabled and chronically ill household members regardless of the household members' ages.<sup>[8]</sup> The two data sources examine caregiving for different populations. As such, the patterns of caregiving by employment status and educational attainment vary across the two surveys. The ATUS shows that eldercare providers are more likely to be employed than nonproviders and the likelihood of providing eldercare increases with educational



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attainment. The NLSY79 shows that caregivers for household members who are disabled or chronically ill are less educated and less likely to be employed than noncaregivers. Women are more likely to provide each type of care.

## Data

The paragraphs that follow describe the two datasets used in this article, the ATUS and the NLSY79, with emphasis on the differences between the data collected in each survey. Because the two datasets collect information about different types of caregiving, together they more clearly show the details of informal caregiving than either would separately.

### American Time Use Survey

The ATUS is a continuous survey about how individuals spend their time, providing nationally representative estimates of how, where, and with whom Americans spend their time on an average day. The ATUS surveys individuals age 15 and older and provides statistics on various activities, such as paid work, childcare, volunteering, and socializing. Starting in 2011, the ATUS began collecting data on unpaid eldercare, for the full adult population. To enhance comparability with the NLSY79, we limit the ATUS data used in this article to respondents who were born from 1957 to 1964 and who completed the ATUS from 2011 to 2016. The respondents range in age from 47 to 60 during this timeframe. This sample includes 9,895 respondents who completed the survey once during the 6-year period.

The ATUS captures unpaid care that is provided to people age 65 and older who need help because of a condition related to aging.<sup>[9]</sup> Eldercare can include many different caring activities, such as assisting with grooming and feeding, arranging for medical care, and providing transportation for individuals with a chronic illness or disability that worsens with age. Eldercare can also include activities such as helping a neighbor shovel snow, grocery shopping for an acquaintance, or providing companionship to an individual as he or she grows older, even if he or she does not have a chronic illness or disability. Eldercare can be associated with almost any activity, whether the recipient has a chronic illness or not.

The ATUS interview includes a time-diary section, during which survey respondents sequentially report activities they did between 4 a.m. on the day before the interview and 4 a.m. on the day of the interview. After the respondents complete the time diary, interviewers ask questions to identify eldercare providers, the characteristics of eldercare recipients, and any activities in the time diary that may have been done as eldercare.

### National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979

The NLSY79 is a nationally representative sample of men and women who were born from 1957 to 1964 and living in the United States in 1978.<sup>[10]</sup> The sample members were surveyed annually from 1979 to 1994 and biennially since. Questions about caregiving are asked of all respondents beginning in 2008. In each wave, NLSY79 respondents are asked about care that is regularly provided to those in the household who are ill or disabled. The NLSY79 does not restrict the care reported on the basis of the recipient's age as does the ATUS, but it imposes the restrictions that the care be provided regularly and that the recipient be disabled or chronically ill. NLSY79 respondents who report providing care based on this definition are asked how many hours per week they spend giving care. The NLSY79 sample used for this study is composed of the 6,368 sample members who were interviewed in all three of the 2012, 2014, and 2016 interview waves.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Patterns of caregiving

The following tables and chart use ATUS or NLSY79 data to provide information about the frequency and intensity of caregiving during midlife of individuals in the United States, as well as the relationship between caregiving and employment.

### American Time Use Survey

Table 1 shows how the percentage of the population born from 1957 to 1964 who provided eldercare varies by sex and by selected characteristics, averaged across the years 2011 to 2016. About 24 percent of those born from 1957 to 1964 provided eldercare, with men providing eldercare at a lower rate compared with women (22 percent versus 27 percent). Among both men and women, Whites were more likely to provide eldercare than Blacks and Hispanics. The likelihood of providing eldercare increased with education, with 11 percent of those with less than a high school diploma and almost 30 percent of those with a bachelor's degree providing eldercare. This pattern holds for both men and women. Furthermore, the percentage at each level of education tracks closely for men and women, except for "some college or associate's degree," in which 21 percent of men as opposed to 29 percent of women care for elderly people.

**Table 1. Number and percentage of the population born from 1957 to 1964 who were eldercare providers, by sex and selected characteristics, averages for the combined years 2011–16**

Characteristic	Total			Men			Women		
	Civilian noninstitutional population	Eldercare providers [1]		Civilian noninstitutional population	Eldercare providers		Civilian noninstitutional population	Eldercare providers	
		Number (in thousands)	Percent of population		Number (in thousands)	Percent of population		Number (in thousands)	Percent of population
Total	35,104	8,567	24.4	17,034	3,777	22.2	18,070	4,790	26.5
Race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity [2]									
White	28,586	7,249	25.4	13,943	3,191	22.9	14,643	4,058	27.7
Black or African American	4,628	959	20.7	2,194	390	17.8	2,434	569	23.4
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	4,058	656	16.2	1,979	284	14.4	2,079	371	17.9
Employment status									
Employed	26,731	6,844	25.6	13,808	3,243	23.5	12,922	3,601	27.9
Full-time workers	22,850	5,836	25.5	12,776	3,042	23.8	10,075	2,795	27.7
Part-time workers	3,880	1,007	26.0	1,033	201	19.5	2,848	806	28.3
Not employed	8,373	1,723	20.6	3,225	534	16.5	5,148	1,189	23.1
Educational attainment									
Less than a high school diploma	3,641	382	10.5	1,976	194	9.8	1,665	188	11.3

See footnotes at end of table.

**Table 1. Number and percentage of the population born from 1957 to 1964 who were eldercare providers, by sex and selected characteristics, averages for the combined years 2011–16**

Characteristic	Total			Men			Women		
	Civilian noninstitutional population	Eldercare providers [1]		Civilian noninstitutional population	Eldercare providers		Civilian noninstitutional population	Eldercare providers	
		Number (in thousands)	Percent of population		Number (in thousands)	Percent of population		Number (in thousands)	Percent of population
High school graduates, no college	11,513	2,634	22.9	5,820	1,278	22.0	5,693	1,357	23.8
Some college or associate's degree	9,220	2,351	25.5	4,085	858	21.0	5,135	1,493	29.1
Bachelor's degree and higher	10,730	3,199	29.8	5,153	1,447	28.1	5,577	1,752	31.4
Parent of household children under 18 years									
Parent of one or more household children	7,695	1,726	22.4	4,286	806	18.8	3,409	920	27.0
Not a parent of a household child	27,408	6,841	25.0	12,747	2,971	23.3	14,661	3,870	26.4
Marital status									
No spouse or unmarried partner present in household	11,245	2,521	22.4	4,915	1,015	20.7	6,330	1,506	23.8
Spouse or unmarried partner present in household	23,858	6,046	25.3	12,119	2,761	22.8	11,740	3,285	28.0

Notes:

[1] Eldercare providers are those who, in the previous 3 to 4 months, cared for someone with a condition related to aging. Estimates were calculated for people who cared for at least one person age 65 or older. Data refer to people born from 1957 to 1964.

[2] Not all race categories are shown. Persons of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey.

Those who were not employed were less likely to have provided eldercare than those who were employed—21 percent versus 26 percent. Among employed men, the likelihood of providing eldercare was not statistically

different for full- and part-time workers (24 percent and 20 percent, respectively). Among women who were employed, the likelihood of providing eldercare did not vary by part-time and full-time status (28 percent).

Table 2 describes the characteristics of eldercare providers and of the care provided. About 80 percent of eldercare providers were not parents of a child in the household. In addition, 70 percent of eldercare providers cared for one person, 23 percent for two people, and 7 percent for three or more people. Eldercare providers were mostly caring for their parents (68 percent), with the percentage of those caring for a parent higher among women (71 percent versus 65 percent). More than half of the eldercare providers cared for someone who was age 80 or older, that is, 20 to 30 years older than they were. Most eldercare providers—87 percent—cared only for someone who lived outside of their household. About 13 percent of caregivers (or 3 percent of the population) cared for someone within the provider's household.

**Table 2. Eldercare providers born from 1957 to 1964, by sex and selected characteristics related to care provided, averages for the combined years 2011–16**

Characteristic	Total		Men		Women	
	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Number (in thousands)	Percent
Total, all eldercare providers <sup>[1]</sup>	8,567	100.0	3,777	100.0	4,790	100.0
Parent of household children under 18 years						
Parent of one or more household children	1,726	20.1	806	21.3	920	19.2
Not a parent of a household child	6,841	79.9	2,971	78.7	3,870	80.8
Number of care recipients <sup>[2]</sup>						
Caring for one person	6,003	70.1	2,538	67.2	3,464	72.3
Caring for two people	1,999	23.3	965	25.6	1,033	21.6
Caring for three or more people	565	6.6	273	7.2	291	6.1
Relationship to care recipient <sup>[1] [3]</sup>						
Caring for a spouse or unmarried partner	112	1.3	25	0.7	88	1.8
Caring for a parent	5,862	68.4	2,463	65.2	3,398	70.9
Caring for a grandparent <sup>[4]</sup>	143	1.7	63	1.7	80	1.7
Caring for another related person	2,216	25.9	1,140	30.2	1,076	22.5
Caring for a friend or neighbor	1,056	12.3	521	13.8	535	11.2
Caring for someone else	372	4.3	157	4.2	214	4.5
Age of care recipient						
Caring for someone age 65 to 69	490	5.7	255	6.7	235	4.9
Caring for someone age 70 to 74	1,353	15.8	628	16.6	726	15.1
Caring for someone age 75 to 79	2,397	28.0	1,104	29.2	1,293	27.0
Caring for someone age 80 to 84	2,976	34.7	1,356	35.9	1,620	33.8
Caring for someone age 85 or older	3,007	35.1	1,244	32.9	1,763	36.8
Care to household or nonhousehold members						
Provided eldercare to household member(s) only	999	11.7	463	12.3	536	11.2
Provided eldercare to nonhousehold person(s) only	7,423	86.6	3,247	86.0	4,176	87.2

See footnotes at end of table.

**Table 2. Eldercare providers born from 1957 to 1964, by sex and selected characteristics related to care provided, averages for the combined years 2011–16**

Characteristic	Total		Men		Women	
	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Number (in thousands)	Percent
Provided eldercare to both household and nonhousehold person(s)	145	1.7	67	1.8	78.0	1.6
Frequency of care <sup>[5]</sup>						
Provided care daily	1,759	20.5	680	18.0	1,078	22.5
Provided care several times a week	2,221	25.9	905	24.0	1,317	27.5
Provided care once a week	1,469	17.2	680	18.0	790	16.5
Provided care several times a month	1,669	19.5	775	20.5	894	18.7
Provided care once a month	996	11.6	512	13.5	485	10.1
Other	452	5.3	225	6.0	227	4.7
Duration of care <sup>[6]</sup>						
Provided care for less than 1 year	1,656	19.3	628	16.6	1,028	21.5
Provided care for 1 to 2 years	2,290	26.7	947	25.1	1,343	28.0
Provided care for 3 to 4 years	1,366	15.9	559	14.8	807	16.8
Provided care for 5 to 9 years	1,778	20.8	883	23.4	895	18.7
Provided care for 10 years or more	1,476	17.2	759	20.1	718	15.0

Notes:

<sup>[1]</sup> Eldercare providers are those who, in the previous 3 to 4 months, cared for someone with a condition related to aging. Estimates were calculated for people who cared for at least one person age 65 or older. Data refer to people born from 1957 to 1964.

<sup>[2]</sup> Data do not sum to total because some people did not respond to the question identifying the number of care recipients.

<sup>[3]</sup> Categories sum to more than 100 percent because some eldercare providers cared for more than one person.

<sup>[4]</sup> Data refer only to individuals caring for a grandparent who did not live with them. Individuals caring for a grandparent with whom they lived are included in the category "Caring for another related person."

<sup>[5]</sup> Survey participants were asked how often they provided care in the past 3 to 4 months; this information was used to categorize them by frequency of care.

<sup>[6]</sup> For people who provided eldercare to more than one person, the duration of care is calculated on the basis of the person for whom they had cared the longest.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey.

Among eldercare providers, the usual frequency with which they provided care varied substantially. Respondents were asked how often they provided care in the past 3 to 4 months; this information was used to categorize them by frequency of care. About 20 percent of eldercare providers indicated daily care, another 25 percent gave care several times a week, and 17 percent estimated once a week. Nearly 21 percent provided eldercare several times a month, and 17 percent provided care once a month or at some other frequency. In addition, many provided care over a long time, with half of the caregivers providing care for 3 years or longer.

Table 3 provides more detail on the amount of eldercare provided by this cohort (those born from 1957 to 1964) on an average day and an average week. On an average day, eldercare providers spent about 43 minutes providing care. Over an average week, this comes to about 5 hours of eldercare. On an average day, female eldercare



providers were about 25 percent more likely to provide eldercare and spent more time in this care than male eldercare providers (52 minutes versus 31 minutes). Black eldercare providers were more likely to provide care on an average day (32 percent) and provided more care (an average of 74 minutes) compared with their White counterparts. Among White eldercare providers, 24 percent engaged in this care on an average day and provided care for about 40 minutes.

**Table 3. Percentage of eldercare providers born from 1957 to 1964 who provided care on an average day and time spent providing this care, by day of week and selected characteristics, averages for the combined years 2011–16**

Characteristic	Number of eldercare providers <sup>[1]</sup> (in thousands)	Percent of eldercare providers who provided care on an average day			Average hours per day eldercare providers spent providing care			Average hours per week eldercare providers spent providing care
		Total, all days	Weekdays	Weekends and holidays	Total, all days	Weekdays	Weekends and holidays	
Total	8,567	24.8	24.0	26.7	0.72	0.66	0.85	5.01
Sex								
Men	3,777	21.7	21.8	21.5	0.52	0.51	0.56	3.66
Women	4,790	27.3	25.9	30.4	0.87	0.78	1.06	6.08
Race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity <sup>[2]</sup>								
White	7,249	23.6	22.7	25.9	0.65	0.59	0.78	4.54
Black or African American	959	32.1	32.0	32.4	1.23	1.22	1.26	8.61
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	656	29.4	28.3	31.8	0.75	0.60	1.08	5.25
Employment status								
Employed	6,844	22.1	21.3	24.2	0.55	0.53	0.61	3.86
Full-time workers	5,836	21.5	20.4	24.1	0.56	0.52	0.65	3.91
Part-time workers	1,007	25.9	26.4	24.9	0.51	0.56	0.39	3.54
Not employed	1,723	35.5	35.5	35.5	1.37	1.20	1.73	9.59
Educational attainment								
Less than a high school diploma	382	19.2	18.9	20.4	0.91	1.03	0.54	6.34
High school graduates, no college	2,634	28.9	28.2	30.5	0.74	0.58	1.08	5.15
Some college or associate's degree	2,351	25.3	24.1	27.8	0.79	0.80	0.76	5.53
Bachelor's degree and higher	3,199	21.8	21.3	23.0	0.62	0.57	0.75	4.36
Parent of household children under 18 years								
Parent of one or more household children	1,726	23.5	22.1	26.4	0.70	0.61	0.89	4.92

See footnotes at end of table.

**Table 3. Percentage of eldercare providers born from 1957 to 1964 who provided care on an average day and time spent providing this care, by day of week and selected characteristics, averages for the combined years 2011–16**

Characteristic	Number of eldercare providers <sup>[1]</sup> (in thousands)	Percent of eldercare providers who provided care on an average day			Average hours per day eldercare providers spent providing care			Average hours per week eldercare providers spent providing care
		Total, all days	Weekdays	Weekends and holidays	Total, all days	Weekdays	Weekends and holidays	
Not a parent of a household child	6,841	25.2	24.5	26.8	0.72	0.67	0.84	5.03
Marital status								
No spouse or unmarried partner present in household	2,521	35.5	36.8	32.4	0.92	0.96	0.85	6.47
Spouse or unmarried partner present in household	6,046	20.4	18.6	24.4	0.63	0.53	0.85	4.40
Number of care recipients								
Caring for one person	6,003	25.1	23.9	28.0	0.77	0.67	0.99	5.38
Caring for two people	1,999	23.6	23.6	23.5	0.59	0.62	0.51	4.10
Caring for three or more people	565	26.5	27.5	24.4	0.62	0.64	0.57	4.33
Care to household or nonhousehold members <sup>[3]</sup>								
Provided eldercare to household member(s) only	999	64.0	63.3	65.6	1.97	1.61	2.70	13.78
Provided eldercare to nonhousehold member(s) only	7,423	19.0	18.5	20.2	0.53	0.52	0.56	3.72
Frequency of care <sup>[4]</sup>								
Provided care daily	1,759	66.1	67.3	63.3	2.21	2.06	2.51	15.45
Provided care several times a week	2,221	25.5	24.5	28.0	0.57	0.57	0.59	4.01
Provided care once a week	1,469	10.3	7.8	15.8	0.23	0.18	0.34	1.61
Provided care several times a month	1,669	9.9	9.3	11.4	0.27	0.22	0.42	1.92
Provided care once a month	996	4.2	4.0	4.6	0.13	0.13	0.10	0.88

See footnotes at end of table.



**Table 3. Percentage of eldercare providers born from 1957 to 1964 who provided care on an average day and time spent providing this care, by day of week and selected characteristics, averages for the combined years 2011–16**

Characteristic	Number of eldercare providers <sup>[1]</sup> (in thousands)	Percent of eldercare providers who provided care on an average day			Average hours per day eldercare providers spent providing care			Average hours per week eldercare providers spent providing care
		Total, all days	Weekdays	Weekends and holidays	Total, all days	Weekdays	Weekends and holidays	
Duration of care <sup>[5]</sup>								
Provided care for less than 1 year	1,656	18.9	19.4	17.7	0.70	0.67	0.78	4.89
Provided care for 1 to 2 years	2,290	23.8	21.6	29.1	0.58	0.52	0.73	4.08
Provided care for 3 to 4 years	1,366	28.7	28.8	28.5	0.87	0.83	0.97	6.12
Provided care for 5 to 9 years	1,778	27.4	26.5	29.2	0.80	0.66	1.07	5.58
Provided care for 10 years or more	1,476	26.4	25.8	27.9	0.70	0.70	0.70	4.88

Notes:

<sup>[1]</sup> Eldercare providers are those who, in the previous 3 to 4 months, cared for someone with a condition related to aging. Estimates were calculated for people who cared for at least one person age 65 or older. Data refer to people born from 1957 to 1964.

<sup>[2]</sup> People of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity may be of any race.

<sup>[3]</sup> Not all categories are shown.

<sup>[4]</sup> Survey participants were asked how often they provided care in the past 3 to 4 months; this information was used to categorize them by frequency of care. Corresponding time and percent estimates were measured with the use of information about care provided on the diary day. Not all categories are shown.

<sup>[5]</sup> For people who provided eldercare to more than one person, the duration of care is calculated on the basis of the person for whom they had cared the longest.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey.

The likelihood and amount of care provided on an average day varied with employment status. Eldercare providers who were not employed were 13 percentage points more likely to provide care on an average day and spent nearly 2.5 times as much time providing care compared with eldercare providers who were employed. Care providers who were employed part time were about equally likely to provide care on an average weekend day, compared with providers who were employed full time (25 percent and 24 percent). The amount of time provided in eldercare in an average week did not differ by part- versus full-time employment status, but both fell below the amount of care provided by eldercare providers who were not employed.

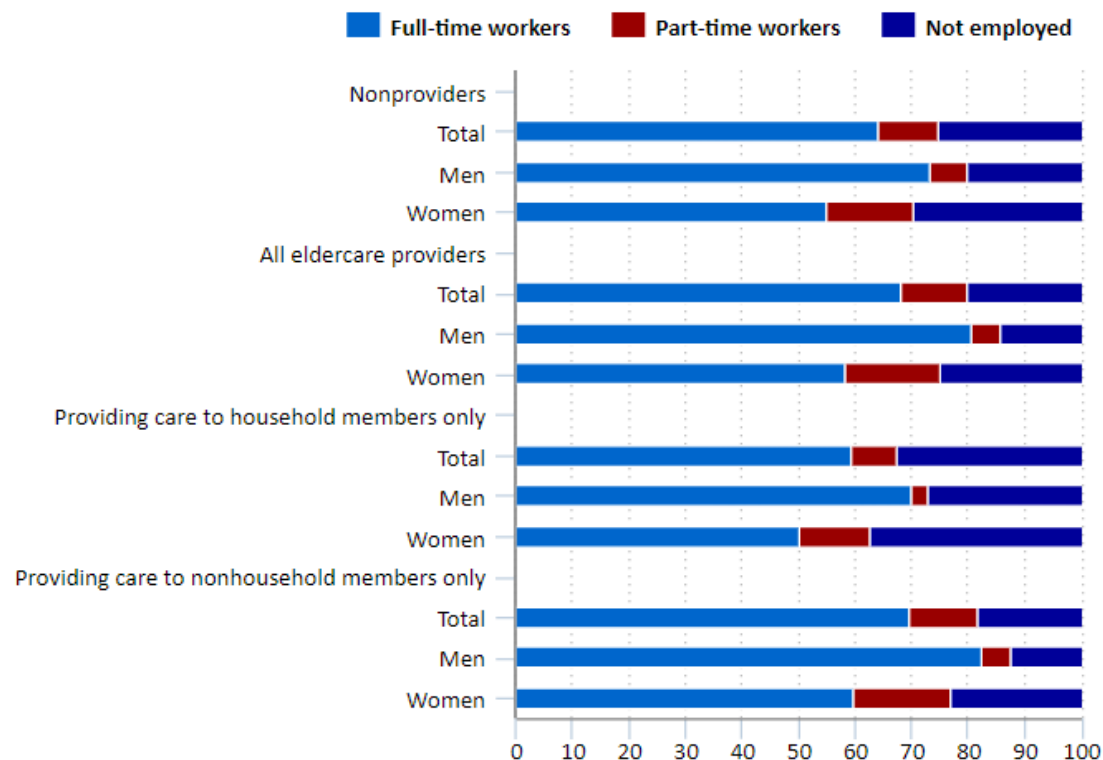
Some aspects of household composition were related to the likelihood of providing eldercare and to the amount of care provided on an average day. Eldercare providers who were married or living with a partner were 15 percentage points less likely to provide care on an average day and provided about 2 fewer hours of care per week than eldercare providers living without a spouse or partner in their household. Among eldercare providers,

parents with children under 18 were about as likely to provide eldercare and spent a similar amount of time providing care on an average day, compared with those who were not parents.

Not surprisingly, the probability of care and the average amount of eldercare provided on a given day increased with the usual frequency of care reported. About two-thirds of those who reported providing care "daily" provided care on an average day. This group provided about 15 hours of care in an average week. By contrast, 4 percent of those who reported providing care once a month provided care on an average day and spent less than 1 hour of care in an average week.

The chart shows that eldercare provision is related to employment. Caregivers were more likely to be employed and to be employed full time compared with noncaregivers. However, employment patterns were different, depending on whether the provider lived in the same household as the recipient. Of eldercare providers who did not live with the recipient, 82 percent were employed and 70 percent employed full time. By contrast, among eldercare providers who resided with the recipient, 67 percent were employed and 59 percent were employed full time. The differences in the employment rates between those who do and do not live with the recipient are sizeable, so much so that eldercare providers who lived with the care recipient were less likely to work than nonproviders were.

**Chart. Percentage of the population born from 1957 to 1964 who were eldercare providers, by employment status and whether recipient lived with provider, averages for the combined years 2011–16**



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979

Based on data from the 2012, 2014, and 2016 NLSY79 interviews, in about 7 percent of the person-years, members of the NLSY79 cohort are serving as caregivers to members of their households who are disabled or chronically ill.<sup>[12]</sup> (See table 4.) The rates of caregiving vary substantially by the characteristics of the individuals. Among Blacks and Hispanics, the rate of caregiving is higher, at 9 percent. The nonemployed are caregivers in 13 percent of the years, while the employed are less likely to provide care and are doing so in 6 percent of years. Among the individuals who are employed, rates of caregiving further differ with the hours of work; part-time workers and full-time workers provide care in about 9 percent and 5 percent of the years.

**Table 4. Number of observations and percentage of men and women who provided care to household member, by sex and selected characteristics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979; 2012, 2014, and 2016 interviews**

Characteristic	Total <sup>[1]</sup>		Men		Women	
	Number of person-years <sup>[2]</sup>	Percent	Number of person-years	Percent	Number of person-years	Percent
Total	19,071	7.4	9,033	6.2	10,038	8.6
Race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity						
Non-Black, Non-Hispanic	9,465	6.9	4,554	5.5	4,911	8.3
Black or African American	6,057	9.4	2,823	9.4	3,234	9.5
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	3,549	9.2	1,656	8.7	1,893	9.7
Employment status						
Employed	13,388	5.5	6,655	4.7	6,733	6.4
Full-time workers	12,026	5.1	6,266	4.5	5,760	6.0
Part-time workers	1,261	8.9	340	8.8	921	9.0
Not employed	5,598	12.9	2,342	11.9	3,256	13.6
Educational attainment						
Less than a high school diploma	3,072	13.2	1,590	12.8	1,482	13.7
High school graduates, no college	6,600	8.0	3,405	6.7	3,195	9.5
Some college or associate's degree	4,659	8.0	1,926	5.4	2,733	10.3
Bachelor's degree and higher	4,350	3.7	1,959	3.3	2,391	4.2
Missing	390	5.6	153	3.3	237	7.3
Marital status						
No spouse or unmarried partner present in household	7,744	5.4	3,296	4.1	4,448	6.6
Spouse present in household	10,112	7.9	5,057	6.6	5,055	9.2
Unmarried partner present in household	1,215	14.3	680	13.1	535	15.8

Notes:

See footnotes at end of table.

[1] The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 is composed of individuals born from 1957 to 1964 and living in the United States on December 31, 1978.

[2] A person-year is a unit of measurement that accounts for the number of people that make up the sample and the number of years for which they are observed.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979.

In addition, the prevalence of caregiving for household members who are disabled or chronically ill declines by education. Those without a high school diploma provided care 13 percent of the years, compared with those with a bachelor's degree who provided care only 4 percent of the years. The incidence of caregiving also differs depending on whether the individual is married. Those who are not married but have a partner present in the household are more likely to provide care, compared with those who are married and have a spouse in the household (14 percent versus 8 percent). Individuals who are unmarried and have no partner in the household are the least likely to provide care (5 percent).

In general, the variation in the rates of caregiving by the individual characteristics just discussed hold for both men and women, with rates higher among women. For example, married women, women with partners in their household, and women without a partner living in their household care for household members in 9 percent, 16 percent, and 7 percent of the years, respectively. Conversely, men with these marital statuses care for household members in 7 percent, 13 percent, and 4 percent of the years.

Table 5 shows how household composition differs between caregivers and noncaregivers. Some of these differences stem directly from the definition of caregiving used for the NLSY79. Because the definition of caregiving examined here stipulates regular care for household members who are disabled or chronically ill, none of the caregivers lives alone. In contrast, about 20 percent of noncaregivers live alone. Moreover, caregivers live in larger households than the noncaregivers. About 31 percent of caregivers live in households made up of four or more people versus 22 percent of noncaregivers. Caregivers are 5 times as likely to live with their mothers compared with noncaregivers (16 percent versus 3 percent). Caregivers are also more likely to have a partner to whom they are not married as part of their household (11 percent versus 5 percent).

**Table 5. Characteristics and household composition of men and women, by caregiving status and sex, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979; 2012, 2014, and 2016 interviews**

Characteristic	Full sample			Noncaregivers			Caregivers		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
Percent providing care to a household member	7.42	6.26	8.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (in percent)									
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	6.47	6.60	6.34	6.34	6.43	6.26	8.07	9.24	7.20
Black or African American	14.04	13.98	14.02	13.69	13.51	13.88	17.86	21.01	15.52
Non-Black, Non-Hispanic	79.53	79.92	79.64	79.96	80.07	79.86	74.07	69.73	77.28
Age (in years)	53.59	53.60	53.59	53.58	53.60	53.56	53.73	53.56	53.85
Educational attainment (in percent)									
Less than high school	12.30	13.65	10.93	11.53	12.69	10.32	21.90	27.99	17.49
High school	33.98	35.59	32.34	33.76	35.42	32.02	36.94	38.16	35.79
Some college	23.48	21.74	25.27	23.33	21.94	24.79	25.34	18.69	30.33
Bachelor's degree or higher	28.05	27.25	28.87	29.15	28.11	30.24	14.13	14.23	14.18

See footnotes at end of table.

**Table 5. Characteristics and household composition of men and women, by caregiving status and sex, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979; 2012, 2014, and 2016 interviews**

Characteristic	Full sample			Noncaregivers			Caregivers		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
Missing	2.18	1.78	2.59	2.22	1.83	2.63	1.68	0.93	2.21
Household size (in percent)									
1	18.11	19.62	16.58	19.56	20.92	18.13	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	38.55	36.09	41.06	38.13	35.50	40.90	43.72	45.00	42.78
3	21.09	20.06	22.04	20.68	19.82	21.59	25.55	23.76	26.87
4	14.63	16.44	12.78	14.44	16.36	12.43	16.92	17.53	16.47
5 or more	7.67	7.80	7.54	7.18	7.44	6.95	13.81	13.71	13.88
Household composition of respondents (in percent)									
Spouse present	60.62	62.73	58.46	60.32	62.48	58.06	64.37	66.52	62.77
Partner present	5.62	6.20	5.03	5.20	5.75	4.63	10.87	13.01	9.28
Mother present	4.05	1.41	3.75	3.11	6.61	6.65	15.84	15.08	16.40
Father present	1.20	4.34	0.98	0.94	1.21	2.57	4.47	4.43	4.50
Children (of any age) present	40.91	40.70	45.17	42.64	40.77	44.60	46.30	39.57	51.28
Under age 18	14.75	17.47	11.97	14.85	17.55	12.04	13.41	16.38	11.20
Ages 6 to 17	14.23	16.58	11.83	14.32	16.62	11.9	13.12	15.92	11.05
Under age 6	0.91	1.51	0.30	0.93	1.52	0.31	0.65	1.30	0.17
Number of household members who are disabled or chronically ill (in percent)									
0	89.29	90.77	87.77	96.37	96.75	95.98	0.00	0.00	0.00
1	10.01	8.60	11.45	3.45	2.99	3.93	92.63	93.70	91.83
2 or more	0.71	0.63	0.78	0.17	0.26	0.09	7.37	6.30	8.17
Percent living with a household member who is disabled or chronically ill	11.53	9.97	13.11	3.95	3.55	4.38	100.00	100.00	100.00
Household member who is disabled or chronically ill, among households with a member who is disabled or chronically ill (in percent)									
Spouse	49.89	48.15	51.24	60.87	55.26	65.56	44.83	44.61	44.98
Partner	8.99	12.57	6.22	9.65	14.71	5.38	8.68	11.50	6.59
Mother	9.71	2.85	2.34	3.92	1.33	2.23	12.38	12.07	12.61
Father	2.56	10.03	9.46	0.72	5.90	0.20	3.41	3.61	3.27
Children of any age	20.52	15.73	24.24	12.1	7.62	15.89	24.42	19.76	27.87
Other	12.94	15.61	10.88	14.7	20.06	10.16	12.13	13.4	11.18
Age of household member who is disabled or chronically ill, by household member who is disabled or chronically ill (in years)									
Spouse	56.43	53.84	58.31	56.04	53.50	57.96	56.63	54.04	58.52
Partner	53.71	51.74	56.77	52.91	52.40	54.1	54.11	51.32	57.72
Mother	83.32	83.02	78.99	78.38	81.04	79.93	79.79	81.03	78.92
Father	79.61	80.38	83.60	80.60	77.69	78.18	83.58	83.38	83.75
Children of any age	23.62	22.33	24.26	23.92	23.58	24.05	23.55	22.09	24.31
Other	51.77	58.05	53.28	55.75	57.24	53.27	55.78	58.63	53.28
Percent living in poverty	12.05	10.06	14.13	11.21	9.50	13.07	23.01	19.07	26.00

Note: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 is composed of individuals born from 1957 to 1964 and living in the United States on December 31, 1978.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979.

Again, by definition, all caregivers observed in the NLSY79 have at least one person in the household who is disabled or chronically ill, whereas 4 percent of the noncaregivers have a household member who meets these criteria. Among the noncaregivers who have a disabled or chronically ill household member, spouses make up the bulk of those who are disabled or chronically ill. In the households of caregivers, children and mothers make up sizeable proportions of those who are disabled or chronically ill (24 and 12 percent)—though spouses are still the largest group of disabled or chronically ill household members, at 45 percent.

In table 6, we see that the average amount of care reported is approximately 35 hours per week, with the amount of care varying substantially across caregivers. Caregivers in the bottom quartile provide 8 or fewer hours per week. Those at the 50th and the 75th percentiles of the distributions provide 20 and 40 hours of care per week. Notably, the highest 10 percent of the distribution are providing considerable amounts of care at 100 hours or more per week.

**Table 6. Hours per week of care by caregivers to household member who is living with a disability or chronic illness, person-years 2012 to 2016, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979; 2012, 2014, and 2016 interviews**

Characteristic	All (in percentiles)						Men (in percentiles)						Women (in percentiles)					
	Avg.	10th	25th	50th	75th	90th	Avg.	10th	25th	50th	75th	90th	Avg.	10th	25th	50th	75th	90th
Total	35.4	3	8	20	40	100	30.5	3	7	15	40	80	39.0	3	8	20	42	128
Race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity																		
Non-Black, Non-Hispanic	35.6	3	8	16	40	100	30.2	2	7	14	40	84	39.3	3.5	10	20	42	129
Black or African American	34.8	3	8	20	40	90	30.4	3	8	20	40	74	39.1	3	7	20	45	126
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	34.2	3	8	20	40	80	30.8	4	10	20	40	80	37.0	3	7	20	50	80
Employment status																		
Employed	27.6	2	6	14	35	76	25.0	2	6	14	30	60	29.9	3	7	15	40	80
Full-time workers	26.0	2	6	14	30	70	24.7	2	5	14	30	70	27.4	2	6	14	35	80
Part-time workers	36.2	4	10	20	40	100	27.8	3	7	18	35	56	39.0	4	10	20	48	140
Not employed	51.9	4	10	20	60	168	38.7	4	10	20	50	100	49.0	4	10	21	68	168
Educational attainment																		
Less than a high school diploma	40.9	4	10	20	50	112	37.5	4	8	20	40	100	45.1	5	10	25	58	140
High school graduates, no college	37.7	2	7	20	42	118	30.9	2	7	20	40	84	43.2	2	7	20	56	168
Some college or associate's degree	32.6	4	10	16	40	84	27.3	2	5	14	40	72	35.4	5	10	20	40	100
Bachelor's degree and higher	24.1	3	5	13	30	63	20.9	3	5	10	20	50	26.5	3	5	14	35	70
Missing	48.9	10	10	25	100	105	25.7	5	7	18	40	72	56.2	10	10	25	100	150
Marital status																		
No spouse or partner present in household	42.5	4	10	21	56	128	36.4	3	7	21	50	90	45.8	4	10	21	60	150
Married, spouse present in household	32.1	3	7	15	40	82	28.1	2	7	14	35	70	35.3	3	7	18	40	100
Unmarried, partner present in household	38.5	3	8	20	40	40	34.0	2	7	15	30	100	43.7	4	10	20	40	140

See footnotes at end of table.

Notes: A person-year is a unit of measurement that accounts for the number of people that make up the sample and the number of years for which they are observed. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 is composed of individuals born from 1957 to 1964 and living in the United States on December 31, 1978. Avg. = average.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979.

While, on average, female caregivers provide more care than their male counterparts, below the 75th percentiles, the distributions of caregiving for men and for women overlap substantially and diverge above that. Women in the top 10th percentile of hours of care, however, report caring almost constantly.

Variation in the intensity of caregiving by employment status and educational attainment mirrors the variation in the incidence of caregiving by these factors. Caregivers who are not employed spend more time caring for household members in need of care. On average, they provide 24 more hours of care per week than do caregivers who are employed. Furthermore, caregivers who work part time provide about 10 more hours than those who work full time. Hours of care decline as educational attainment rises. Caregivers with a bachelor's degree or higher provided less care than caregivers with lower levels of education. This pattern is most evident among female caregivers. On average, those with less than a high school diploma provide about 50 percent more hours of care per week compared with those who had earned at least a bachelor's degree (41 versus 24 hours per week). The amount of care provided increasingly diverges by education at higher percentiles in the caregiving distributions.

The long employment history available in the NLSY79 permits us to examine the relationship between employment over the life cycle of the NLSY79 birth cohort and their caregiving while they are in their 50s. Table 7 shows that caregivers worked approximately the same number of years during their 20s, 30s, and 40s as noncaregivers. However, caregivers worked at least 500 hours in a smaller number of years in each decade of their lives. Caregivers also worked fewer weeks during their 20s, 30s, and 40s relative to noncaregivers, but average hours worked during the weeks in which they did work are similar for caregivers and noncaregivers. Together these statistics indicate that caregivers are attached to the labor market through their prime years, but they work a lower proportion of the time than noncaregivers.

**Table 7. Average labor supply by age of caregivers, by caregiving status and sex, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979; 2012, 2014, and 2016 interviews**

Characteristic	Full sample			Men			Women		
	All	Noncaregivers	Caregivers	All	Noncaregivers	Caregivers	All	Noncaregivers	Caregivers
Employment, ages 21 to 30									
Number of years worked at all	9.74	9.74	9.79	9.69	9.68	9.70	9.80	9.79	9.85
Number of years worked at least 500 hours	7.68	7.74	6.96	8.19	8.21	7.85	7.17	7.26	6.30
Percentage of weeks worked	72.74	73.47	63.56	77.66	78.00	72.53	67.72	68.74	56.94
Average hours worked during weeks worked	40.15	40.19	39.65	43.11	43.10	43.27	37.14	37.15	37.03
Employment, ages 31 to 40									

See footnotes at end of table.



**Table 7. Average labor supply by age of caregivers, by caregiving status and sex, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979; 2012, 2014, and 2016 interviews**

Characteristic	Full sample			Men			Women		
	All	Noncaregivers	Caregivers	All	Noncaregivers	Caregivers	All	Noncaregivers	Caregivers
Number of years worked at all	9.78	9.78	9.76	9.75	9.76	9.68	9.81	9.81	9.81
Number of years worked at least 500 hours	8.41	8.47	7.54	8.97	9.02	8.22	7.83	7.90	7.04
Percentage of weeks worked	79.59	80.46	68.70	85.66	86.23	77.04	73.4	74.42	62.52
Average hours worked during weeks worked	42.41	42.44	42.10	46.5	46.57	45.27	38.16	38.00	39.85
Employment, ages 41 to 50									
Number of years worked at all	9.82	9.82	9.82	9.79	9.80	9.76	9.85	9.85	9.86
Number of years worked at least 500 hours	8.52	8.61	7.46	8.97	9.04	7.86	8.07	8.16	7.17
Percentage of weeks worked	79.55	80.63	66.03	84.55	85.43	71.37	74.44	75.60	62.07
Average hours worked during weeks worked	42.58	42.62	42.15	46.43	46.50	45.35	38.57	38.46	39.75
Note: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 is composed of individuals born from 1957 to 1964 and living in the United States on December 31, 1978.									
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979.									

## Conclusions

Taken together, the NLSY79 and ATUS show that among younger baby boomers, a sizable portion of men and women in their 50s provided care to a friend or family member. In the ATUS, almost 1 in 4 provided eldercare. In general, such caregiving seemed to constitute a low level of time, with caregivers spending 5 hours in an average week providing care. Eldercare providers who cared for someone living in their household or those who reported caring for someone daily provided high levels of care, amounting to 14 to 15 hours in an average week. In the NLSY79, more than 1 in 15 cared for a member of their household who is disabled or chronically ill. On average, these care providers reported spending 35 hours per week in care.

Because the ATUS and NLSY79 define care differently, it is not surprising that the patterns of caregiving from the two datasets vary. Except for women providing more eldercare and more care for a household member who is disabled or chronically ill, the relationships between labor market outcomes and the likelihood and intensity of each type of care contrast. The ATUS shows that the incidence of eldercare rises with education and that eldercare is most frequently provided to parents. Fifty-four percent of eldercare givers provided care weekly or less frequently, and about fifty percent had been providing care for 3 years or longer. Eldercare providers are more likely to be employed and to be employed full time than nonproviders. In the NLSY79, the provision of care to disabled or chronically ill household members is negatively related to employment and education. Although the patterns

between care and employment differ for the ATUS eldercare measures versus the NLSY79 caregiving measures, for one group they are similar. Just as for caregivers in the NLSY79, ATUS eldercare providers who reside with the recipient of their care were less likely to be employed than nonproviders.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Alison Aughinbaugh and Rose A. Woods, "Patterns of caregiving and work: evidence from two surveys," *Monthly Labor Review*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2021, <https://doi.org/10.21916/mlr.2021.6>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *2018 Profile of Older Americans*, Administration for Community Living, Administration on Aging (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, April 2018), <https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/Aging%20and%20Disability%20in%20America/2018OlderAmericansProfile.pdf>.
- <sup>2</sup> “U.S. burden of Alzheimer’s disease, related dementias to double by 2060,” press release (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, September 20, 2018), <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2018/p0920-alzheimers-burden-double-2060.html>.
- <sup>3</sup> “Table 15. Functional limitation among adults aged 18 and over, by selected characteristics: United States, selected years 2010–2017,” National Center for Health Statistics (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018), <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/2018/015.pdf>.
- <sup>4</sup> “Disability impacts all of us,” Disability & Health Infographics (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, reviewed September 16, 2020), <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html>.
- <sup>5</sup> “Percent of U.S. adults 55 and over with chronic conditions,” National Center for Health Statistics (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, September 2009), [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/health\\_policy/adult\\_chronic\\_conditions.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/health_policy/adult_chronic_conditions.pdf).
- <sup>6</sup> Lisa Weber-Raley and Erin Smith, “Caregiving in the U.S.: 2015 report” (National Alliance for Caregiving and the AARP Public Policy Institute, June 2015), <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2015/caregiving-in-the-united-states-2015-report-revised.pdf>.
- <sup>7</sup> For more details regarding the ATUS, see “American Time Use Survey: overview,” *BLS Handbook of Methods* (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, modified October 17, 2019), <https://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/atus/home.htm>.
- <sup>8</sup> For more background on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), see <https://www.bls.gov/nls/nlsy79.htm> or <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED503183.pdf>.
- <sup>9</sup> For more information about the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) measures of eldercare, see Stephanie L. Denton, “Adding eldercare questions to the American Time Use Survey,” *Monthly Labor Review*, November 2012, <https://doi.org/10.21916/mlr.2015.34>.
- <sup>10</sup> Because the NLSY79 sample is composed of individuals ages 14 to 21 years old and living in the United States in 1978, immigration of individuals that occurred after those ages is excluded. Consequently, the percentage of Hispanics or Latinos is lower in the NLSY79 than in the ATUS, which is drawn from the population currently living in the United States.
- <sup>11</sup> The NLSY79 sample for this article is weighted such that it represents the NLSY79 sampling frame. To create sample weights that represent the NLSY79 universe, we use the NLSY79 custom weighting program. For more information, see <https://www.nlsinfo.org/weights/custom-weighting-program-documentation>.
- <sup>12</sup> A person-year is a unit of measurement that accounts for both the number of people in the sample and the amount of time each person spends in the study. For example, a survey that follows 500 people for 3 years would consist of 1,500 person-years. Though not shown in this article, the rates of caregiving are stable over the short timeframe (2012 to 2017) considered in this article. Women are slightly more likely to be caregivers compared with men at each point in time.

## RELATED CONTENT

### Related Articles

- [Unpaid Eldercare in the United States—2017–2018](#), *BLS News Release*, November 2019.
- [The National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth: research highlights](#), *Monthly Labor Review*, September 2015.
- [Adding eldercare questions to the American Time Use Survey](#), *Monthly Labor Review*, November 2012.
- [The ‘sandwich generation’: women caring for parents and children](#), *Monthly Labor Review*, September 2006.

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