

Fact Sheet: Parents Caring for Adult Children Need Access to Paid Leave

No one should have to choose between caring for their loved ones and maintaining their economic security, but many parents of adult children are forced to make that impossible choice when their children need care. Many young adults, in particular, depend on their parents for care when they are sick or managing a disability. Parents need paid sick time and paid family and medical leave laws that use expansive and inclusive language to ensure that they can care for their children in times of need.

Adult Children Increasingly Rely on Parental Care

- Many young adults continue to rely on their parents for care. In 2024, 58.3 percent of men and 56.4 percent of women between the ages of 18-24 lived in the same household as their parents.ⁱ
- Young adults who are single are more likely to continue to live and rely on their parents into adulthood.ⁱⁱ The number of single adults has increased throughout the years, making it so that more adults are relying on their parents as their main support system.
- Since the Covid-19 pandemic, more and more young adults are living with their parents. The number of 18- to 29-year-olds living with their parents has become a majority, surpassing the previous peak during the Great Depression era.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Young adults are also increasingly facing mental health challenges.^{iv} Often, due to a lack of available professional support, these adults need parental support to aid them in these challenges. Further, young adults often rely on their parents to assist them in seeking out professional support and receiving diagnostic evaluations.^v

Adult Children with Disabilities Rely on Parental Care

- A recent 2024 study found that up to 22% of adolescents (12-17) and young adults (18-25) live with some type of disability.^{vi}
- Around 50% of children with disabilities continue to live with their parents into their adult life. Of the adult children with disabilities who live outside of the home, 44% of parents still devote significant time to assisting with daily tasks such as money management, transportation, and shopping.^{vii} Oftentimes parental caregivers will not only assist with daily tasks, but also complex medical tasks. This can include things such as medication monitoring, infusion therapy, tube feeding, vital monitoring, etc.^{viii}
- Many parents of adults with disabilities have low rates of social participation, likely due to the fact that they have limited discretionary time and their caregiving responsibilities can impact their own health. Finding appropriate care for their children and managing the demands of caregiving alongside other responsibilities is exceedingly time-consuming. This leaves these parents with little support, impacting both their mental and physical health, resulting in higher levels of anxiety and physical pain affecting daily routines.^{ix}

Parents who Care for Adult Children Have Their Own Care Needs

- Even among adult children who do not live with their parents, a significant number still rely on them for caregiving needs. Oftentimes parents must balance caring for their adult children, as well as their own elderly parents, with their work responsibilities. Balancing both roles can be challenging.^x
- Caring for adult children can also take a financial toll on parents. Approximately 50% of parents still provide financial support for at least one adult child; among these parents, the average monthly expense to provide this support was \$1,500.^{xi}
- Working parents spend 2.3 times more on their adult children than on their own retirement accounts each month, and 47% of these parents state having sacrificed their own financial security for the sake of their adult children.^{xii}
- The challenges posed by caring for adult children, especially without needed support, are not only financial. 50% of older caregivers reported feeling stressed or overwhelmed by their caregiving duties and 37% have stated that their own physical health has been negatively affected.^{xiii}
- Studies have shown that when a family member has serious health concerns, it affects the mental health and well-being of the immediate surrounding family members. Parents with older children, who have serious health conditions, reported a higher feeling of psychological distress than parents with younger children.^{xiv}

Importance on Paid Leave for Parental Caregivers

- Paid leave laws are essential for individuals to take care of themselves and their loved ones without putting their economic security at risk.
- These paid leave laws can help parents balance their jobs and provide care for their adult children. Additionally, paid leave laws allow parents to take care of themselves if any healthcare concerns arise from their caregiving responsibilities.
- Paid leave laws need to be more inclusive, allowing parents to not only care for their adult children with disabilities, but also their adult children who rely on them for care and support.

ⁱ US Census Bureau, *Historical Living Arrangements of Adults* Census.gov (2023), <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/families/adults.html>, Table AD-1.

ⁱⁱ JOAN KAHN ET AL., GROWING PARENTAL ECONOMIC POWER IN PARENT-ADULT CHILD HOUSEHOLDS: CORESIDENCE AND FINANCIAL DEPENDENCY IN THE UNITED STATES, 1960-2010, 50 *Demography* 1449-1475 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-013-0196-2>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Richard Fry, Jeffrey Passel, D'Vera Cohn, *A Majority of Young Adults in the U.S. Live with Their Parents for the First Time Since the Great Depression*, Pew Research Center, Sept. 4, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/09/04/a-majority-of-young-adults-in-the-u-s-live-with-their-parents-for-the-first-time-since-the-great-depression/#:~:text=The%20coronavirus%20outbreak%20has%20pushed,and%20for%20White%20young%20adults>.

^{iv} National Institute of Mental Health, *Mental Illness*, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>.

^v *Id.*

^{vi} JONATHAN SCHULZ ET AL., MEASURING DISABILITY AMONG U.S. ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS: A SURVEY MEASUREMENT EXPERIMENT, 43 *Prev. Med. Rep.* 102770, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2024.102770>.

^{vii} SUBHARATI GHOSH ET AL., ADAPTATION TO A SPOUSE'S DISABILITY BY PARENTS OF ADULT CHILDREN WITH MENTAL ILLNESS OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY, *Psychiatric Services*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3593059/>.

^{viii} Richard Schulz & Connie A. Tompkins, *Informal Caregivers in the United States: Prevalence, Caregiver Characteristics, and Ability to Provide Care* National Library of Medicine (2010), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK210048/>.

^{ix} SRISHTI DANG ET AL., EXPLORING THE NEEDS OF SPOUSAL, ADULT CHILD, AND ADULT SIBLING INFORMAL CAREGIVERS: A MIXED-METHOD SYSTEMATIC REVIEW, *Frontiers in Psychology* (2022), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8992373/>.

^x *Id.*

^{xi} Emma Burleigh, *Half of Parents are Paying Their Gen Z and Millennial Adult Children \$1,474 a Month—But They Plan to Pull the Plug in the Next Two Years Because it's Eating Into Retirement*, *Fortune*, Mar. 26, 2025, <https://fortune.com/2025/03/26/millennial-gen-z-adult-children-parents-monthly-payments-retirement/>.

^{xii} *Id.*

^{xiii} Bruce Horowitz, *More Than 60% Say Caregiving Increased Their Level of Stress and Worry, New AARP Report Finds*, AARP, Nov. 1, 2023, <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/health/info-2023/report-caregiver-mental-health.html>.

^{xiv} MEGAN GILLIGAN ET AL., ADULT CHILDREN'S SERIOUS HEALTH CONDITIONS AND THE FLOW OF SUPPORT BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS, 57 *The Gerontologist* 179-190 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnv075>.

