

Caregivers, particularly unpaid family and friends, provide assistance with the health and daily needs of another person. The act of **caregiving can have a profound impact on the quality of life for those who dedicate themselves to the well-being of their loved ones**. This commitment may influence their own mental and physical health, social interactions, and even their ability to engage in work activities.<sup>1</sup> In fact, more caregivers have been found to have arthritis (35.5%) compared to non-caregivers (24.5%), as well as greater mental distress and worse self-rated health.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the **population of adults aged 65+ will double to 95 million by 2060**, making up nearly 25% of the total population at that time.<sup>4</sup> This is expected to happen at the same time as rates of chronic disease increase, leading to an increase in the need for caregiving.<sup>4,5</sup>

Overall, Tennessee residents report a higher prevalence of poor physical and mental health, ranking 44<sup>th</sup> in the country for overall health in 2022.<sup>6</sup> Despite this information, the burden and overall health of caregivers in Tennessee has not been readily explored.<sup>6,7,8</sup> The information presented in this fact sheet combines data from the 2019 and 2021 Tennessee Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).

**Over 1 in 4 Tennessee adults reported providing regular care to a friend or family member in the past 30 days.**

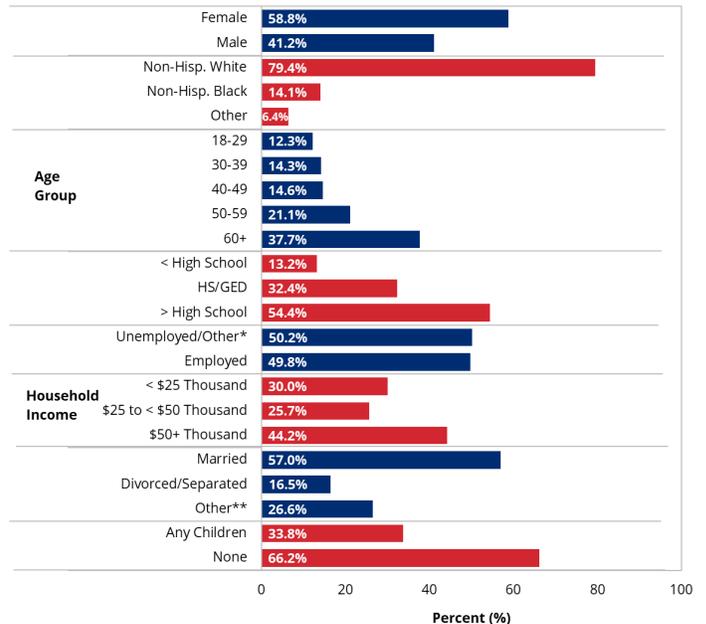


### Who were Tennessee's caregivers?

Caregivers among Tennessee's adults during 2019 and 2021 (Figure 1) were primarily:

- Female (58.8%);
- Non-Hispanic White (79.4%);
- 60+ years old (37.7%);
- Educated beyond high school (54.4%);
- Below the \$50k + income level (55.7%);
- Married (57.0%); and
- Those without children in their household (66.2%).

**Figure 1: Distribution of Sociodemographics among Caregiving Adults in Tennessee, 2019 & 2021**



Source: TN BRFSS, 2019 & 2021

\* "Other" employment status included: out of work, retired, student, homemaker, and unable to work.  
 \*\* "Other" marital status included: widower, never married, and member of an unmarried couple.

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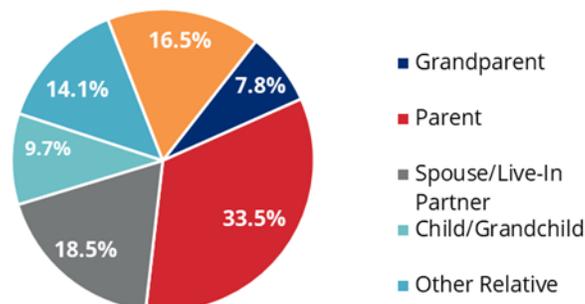
## What did our caregivers do?

In 2019 and 2021, over 1 in 3 caregivers provided care to a parent (figure 2), while over 18% reported caring for a spouse/live-in partner.

Grandparents (7.8%) were the least-commonly reported people receiving care among Tennessee's adult caregivers.

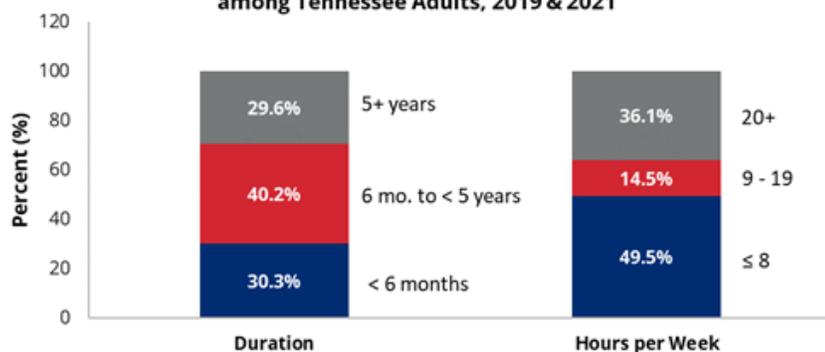
The main reason for caregiving was due to chronic illness (33.5%), including **13.5% of caregivers** were caring for a friend or family member with **Alzheimer's disease or cognitive impairment** (no figure).

**Figure 2: Main Person Receiving Care among Caregiving Adults in Tennessee, 2019 & 2021**



Source: TN BRFSS, 2019 & 2021

**Figure 3: Duration of and Hours Per Week Spent Caregiving among Tennessee Adults, 2019 & 2021**



Most caregivers (**40.2%**) in Tennessee reported having been giving care for **6 months up to less than 5 years** (figure 3).

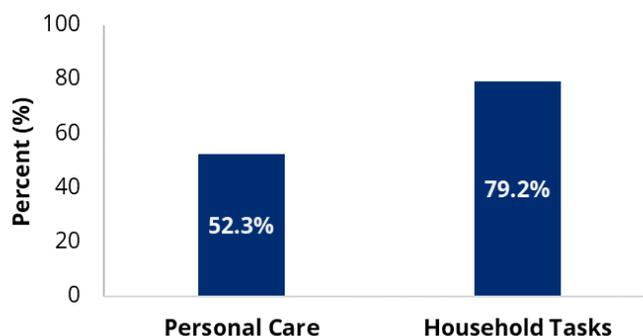
Nearly **50%** of caregivers reported spending **8 hours per week giving care** (figure 3), while over **1 in 3** caregivers reported spending **20+ hours per week** providing care.

Source: TN BRFSS, 2019 & 2021

Most caregivers (**79.2%**) in Tennessee during 2019 reported helping with managing household tasks, while 52.3% reported helping manage personal care (figure 4).

*Note: These questions were not asked in the 2021 Tennessee BRFSS survey.*

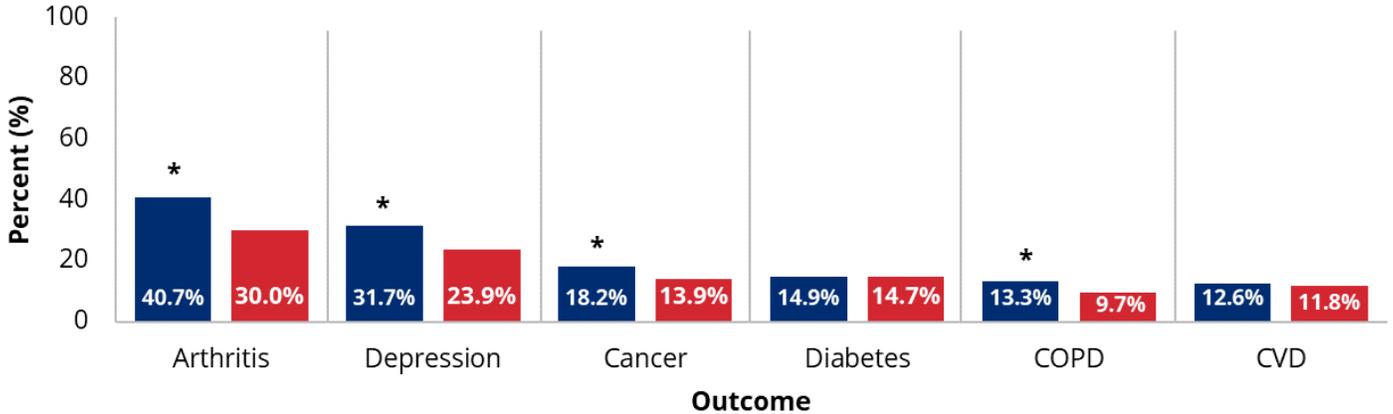
**Figure 4: Type of Assistance Provided among Caregiver Adults in Tennessee, 2019**



Source: TN BRFSS, 2019

# What was the impact on our caregivers' health?

**Figure 6: Health Outcomes by Caregiver Status among Tennessee Adults, 2019 & 2021**



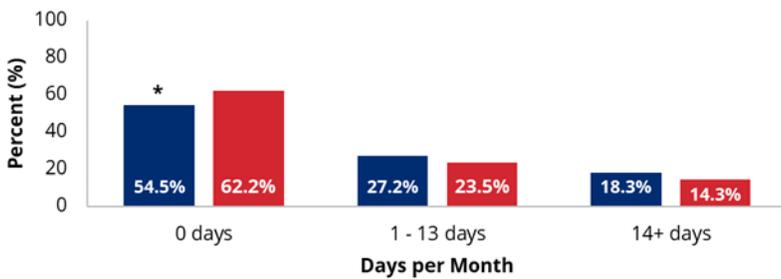
Source: TN BRFSS, 2019 & 2021

\* Denotes statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) estimate

■ Caregiver ■ Non-Caregiver

Compared to non-caregivers (figure 6) significantly more adults who were caregivers in 2019 and 2021 reported ever having arthritis (40.7%), ever experiencing depression (31.7%), ever being diagnosed with any type of cancer (18.2%), and ever having chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD, 13.3%).

**Figure 7: Days of Poor Physical Health by Caregiver Status among Tennessee Adults, 2019 & 2021**



Source: TN BRFSS, 2019 & 2021

\* Denotes statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) estimate

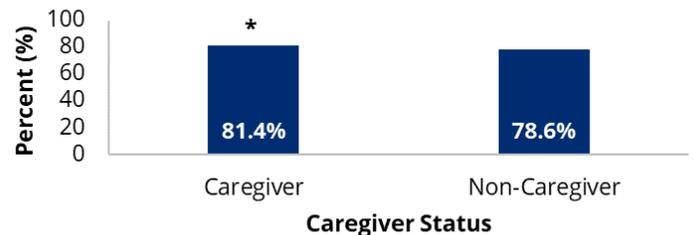
■ Caregiver ■ Non-caregiver

Caregivers more frequently reported having worse physical health than non-caregivers.

Significantly fewer caregivers (54.5%) reported having “no days per month” where their physical health was poor compared to non-caregivers in 2019 and 2021 (figure 7).

More caregivers (81.4%) reported having had a routine medical checkup in the past year compared to non-caregivers (78.6%, figure 8).

**Figure 8: Medical Checkup in the Past Year by Caregiver Status among Tennessee Adults, 2019 & 2021**



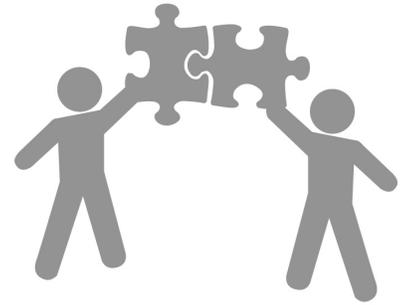
Source: TN BRFSS, 2019 & 2021

\* Denotes statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) estimate

## What can we do to support caregivers?

An encouraging finding from the data is that caregivers **more commonly reported receiving routine medical checkups** than non-caregivers. Seeking help and self-care are critical for care partners' wellbeing and health. More frequent medical checkups give healthcare providers an opportunity to recognize and address the greater mental, social, and physical burdens faced by caregivers; these needs can be addressed by combining caregiver screening tools and assessments into clinical practice.

Caregivers may have a wide range of needs and that it is also important to assess them **continuously and across settings** (healthcare, social, community, etc.). These needs may include education about Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD); locating and connecting to local services specific to supporting aging and ADRD; as well as connecting to financial and economic planning, long-term care planning, workplace assistance, and spiritual or other self-care resources.



### Tennessee

- The Tennessee Department of Health's **Office of Patient Care Advocacy** serves as a hub for *Healthy Aging Initiatives*, working at a variety of levels—from individuals to policies and programs—to promote awareness of, support treatment and care for, and increase access to data related to aging and dementia. For more information, visit: <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/health/health-program-areas/office-of-patient-care-advocacy.html>
- Contact your local **Area Agency on Aging** (AAA) to find trustworthy agencies that provide direct support to caregivers and aging adults. To be connected to your local AAA within Tennessee, call: (866) 836-6678 or visit <https://www.tn.gov/aging/resource-directory/aaad.html>
- To find respite services near you, visit the **TN Aging and Disability Resource Center** at <https://www.tnaaad.org/find-organizations> or contact the **TN Respite Coalition** at <https://tnrespite.org>.
- For a variety of other services (legal, financial, health insurance, LTSS, public benefits, etc.) in Tennessee, visit **Caregiver.org** at <https://www.caregiver.org/connecting-caregivers/services-by-state/tennessee/#i-am-new-to-caregiving-where-do-i-start>

### National

- **Family Caregivers Alliance**—select your state to view all supportive services and programs for caregivers; find organizations that provide services for caregivers in your state, events and classes, support groups, and a personalized dashboard with information and services that fit your individual needs. Visit: <https://www.caregiver.org/connecting-caregivers/>
- Use the **ARCH National Respite Locator** to find a respite center near you, visit: <https://archrespite.org/caregiver-resources/respitelocator>
- Refer caregivers of people with Dementia to their local **Alzheimer's Association chapter**. Local chapters can help with education about ADRD, connecting with local resources and support groups, community events, 24/7 phone help line, and more. Visit: <https://www.alz.org/tn?set=1>

## What is the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System?

The Behavioral Risk Factor System (**BRFSS**) is an annual household telephone survey that collects information on various chronic health conditions, health behaviors, and use of preventative health services among civilian, non-institutionalized adults aged 18-years and older. The *Caregiver Module* has been asked by Tennessee every other year and updated data can be expected for the 2023 survey year.

For questions related to Tennessee BRFSS or the data presented in this fact sheet, contact the **TN BRFSS Coordinator** at [tnbrfss.health@tn.gov](mailto:tnbrfss.health@tn.gov)



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