

# AARP Family Caregiver Survey: Holiday Stressors and Emotions

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The views expressed herein are for information, debate, and discussion, and do not necessarily represent official policies of AARP.

## **Acknowledgments**

Alan Newman Research (ANR) collected this data for AARP. This report was prepared by Laura Skufca in AARP Research. For additional information about the survey, contact Laura Skufca at [Lskufca@aarp.org](mailto:Lskufca@aarp.org). Media inquiries should be directed to Greg Phillips at [gphillips@aarp.org](mailto:gphillips@aarp.org).

# Methodology

- This study was conducted via telephone (RDD) with a nationally representative sample of 1,002 family caregivers age 18+ from October 27, 2017 – November 15, 2017. Both cell phone and land line dialing was included.
- The data was collected by Alan Newman Research (ANR).
- The total sample of 1,002 caregivers respondents yields a margin of error of  $\pm 3.1\%$  at the 95% level of confidence. (This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would be within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points of the results obtained had everyone in the population been interviewed.)
- Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding, multiple response questions, as well as “don’t know” and “refused” responses are not included.

# Key Findings

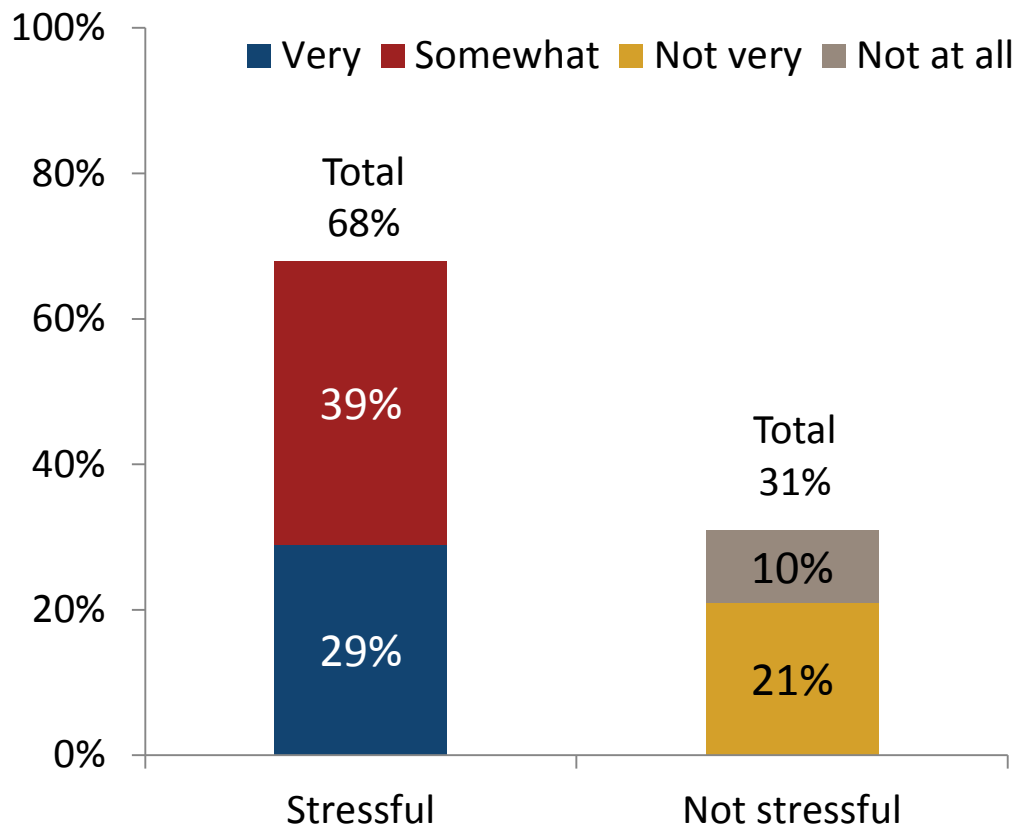
- Nearly seven in ten caregivers say it is emotionally stressful to care for their loved one during the holiday season (29% say “very stressful;” 39% “somewhat stressful”). Not surprisingly, working caregivers and those caring for parents tend to feel the most stressed.
- Despite the stress the holiday season brings, many caregivers say they feel more positive about the holidays since becoming a caregiver. Interestingly, men and younger caregivers are more likely to say their feelings have become more positive. The most common reasons caregivers feel more positive are that they enjoy helping and that their loved ones are near.
- Caregivers plan to make a variety of holiday-related changes or sacrifices this year to accommodate for their caregiving duties. Over eight in ten (85%) plan to make at least one adjustment this year to their typical holiday routine (e.g., meal changes, scaling back activities, etc.). Looking specifically at meal changes (e.g., purchasing meals, going out to eat, reducing the amount, etc.), seven in ten (70%) plan to make changes of this nature.
- In addition to adjusting holiday meals, more than four in ten (47%) say they will need to cut back on holiday spending this year due to their caregiving duties.
- On average, caregivers are making at least 3-4 changes this holiday season. Younger caregivers and those who are employed intend to make the most changes likely due to busier schedules than non-working caregivers.

# Key Findings

- Caregivers would find a variety of assistance helpful this holiday season. The most common are having someone to talk to (79%) and help with holiday tasks (73%). Senior caregivers are the least likely to say assistance would be helpful whereas those under the age of 50+ are most likely to say these things would be helpful.
- Caregivers are confident they can recognize the signs or symptoms that their loved one may need additional support. Eight in ten caregivers say they feel prepared to recognize the signs their loved ones may need more assistance or support.

# Holiday Stressors

Nearly seven in ten caregivers say it is emotionally stressful to care for their loved one during the holiday season. In fact, about three in ten say it is “very stressful.” Caregivers under age 65, working caregivers, and those caring for parents report more stress.



Demographic Group	% stressful
Age 18-34	71%
Age 35-49	71%
Age 50-64	70%
Age 65+	51%
Caring for parent	74%
Caring for spouse	65%
Employed caregiver	74%
Not employed	60%
Men	64%
Women	70%

Q9. How emotionally stressful is it for you to care for your loved one during the holiday season?

## Reasons caregivers feel more stress during the holiday season.

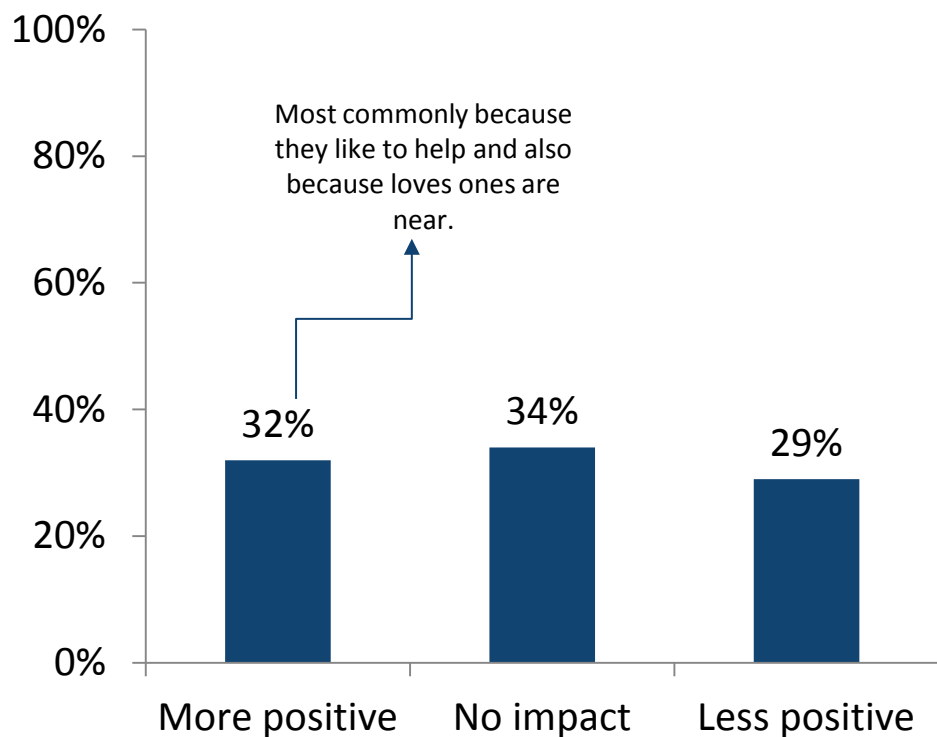
*“Because I have to make sure my kids have a great holiday on top of making sure my father does too.”  
(Female, Gen X caregiver)*

*“Because I’m afraid I’m not doing good enough.”  
(Male, Gen X caregiver)*

*“My husband cannot do the activities he used to do around the holiday season and feels he limits the family.” (Female, millennial caregiver)*



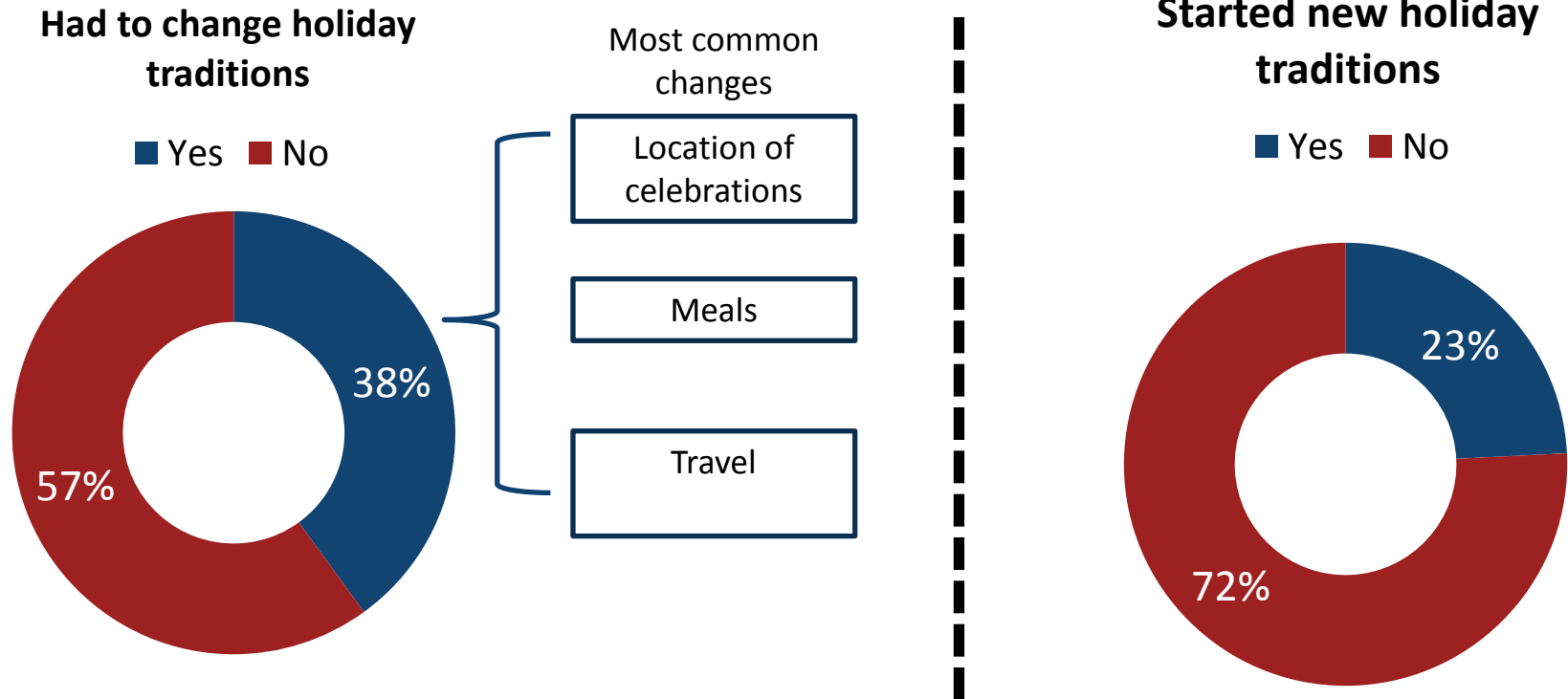
Despite the stress the holiday season brings, many caregivers say they feel more positive about the holidays since becoming a caregiver. Interestingly, men and younger caregivers are more likely to say their feelings have become more positive. Senior caregivers (age 65+) are least likely to hold this sentiment.



Demographic Group	% Feel more positive
<b>Age 18-34</b>	<b>41%</b>
Age 35-49	38%
Age 50-64	27%
Age 65+	15%
<b>Men</b>	<b>42%</b>
Women	28%

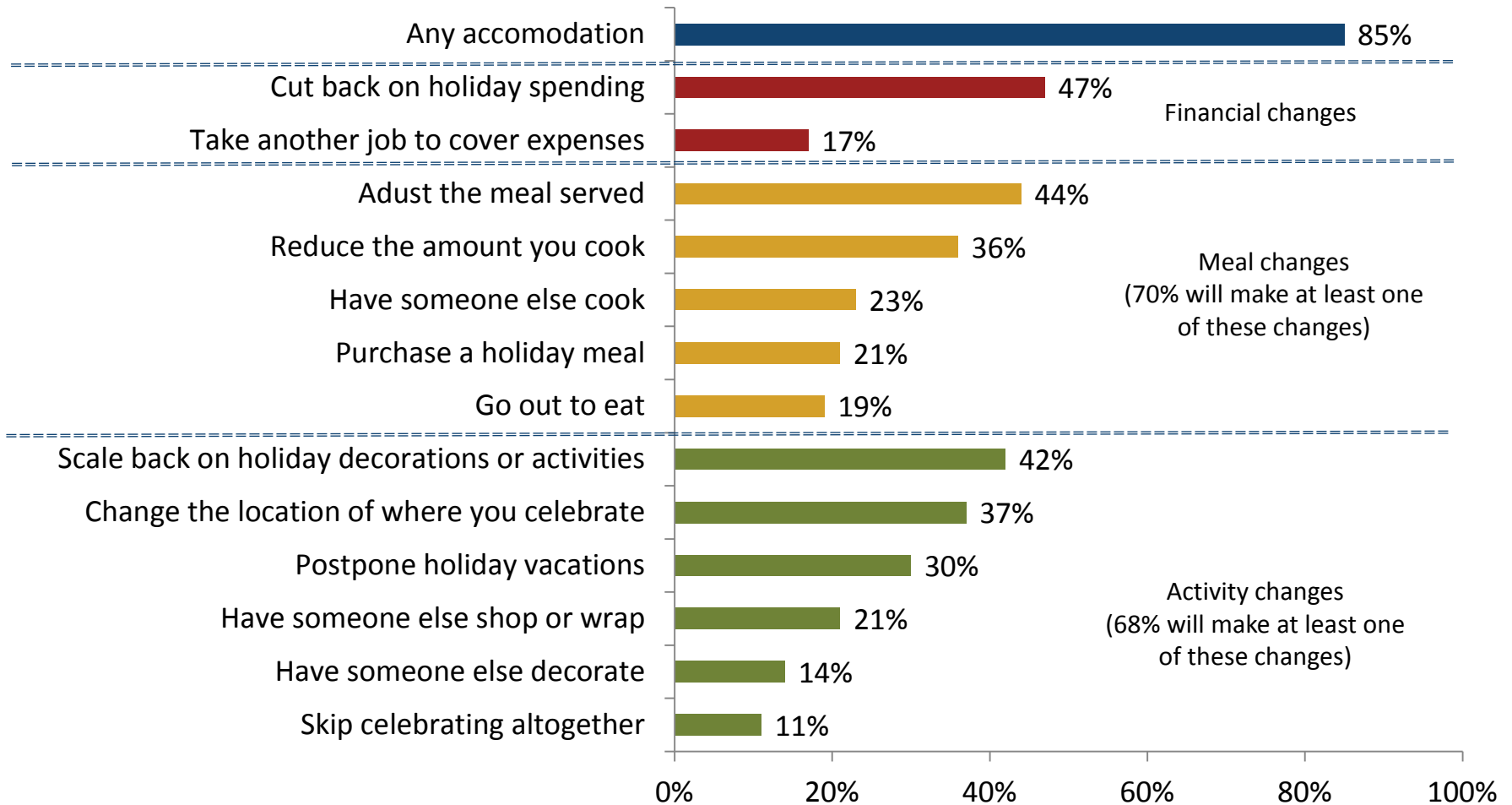
Q10. Since becoming a family caregiver, would you say it makes you feel more positive about the holiday season, less positive or has it had no impact on your feelings ?

Roughly four in ten caregivers say they have had to change a holiday tradition as a result of their caregiving. However, almost one-quarter say they have started new traditions.



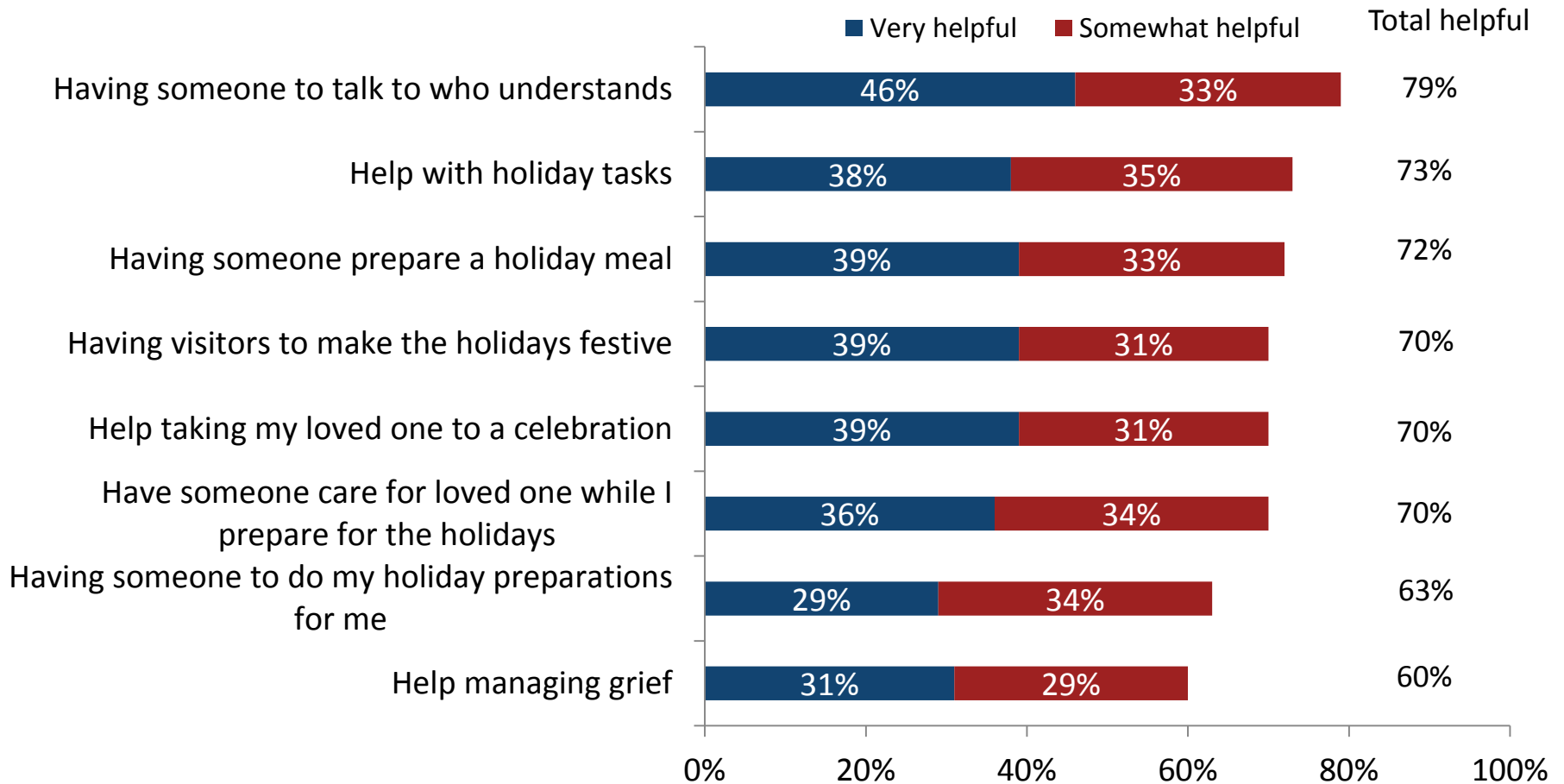
Q11. Have you had to change any of your holiday traditions as a result of your caregiving?  
Q12. Have you started any new holiday traditions as a result of your caregiving?

Caregivers plan to make a variety of holiday-related accommodations this year due to their caregiving duties. More than eight in ten plan to make at least one change with 3-4 being the average number changes.



Q13. Thinking about this upcoming holiday season, do you plan to do any of the following as a result of your caregiving?

Considering their stressors, caregivers would find many types of holiday assistance helpful. The most common revolve around emotional needs such as having someone to talk to. Help with holiday tasks or meals is also desired. Caregivers under age 65+ are most likely to say assistance would be helpful.



Q14. Thinking about your role as a caregiver, how helpful would each of the following be for you during the holidays?

If caregivers could get one gift this holiday season, it would be...

*"I would like to get this year is a gift card to amazon so I could buy her whatever she wanted, and i could see another smile come to her face!" (Male, baby boomer caregiver)*

*"A good nights sleep" (Male, millennial caregiver)*

*"Time for my children and husband without worry if my mother is safe, healthy, and happy" (Female, baby boomer caregiver)*

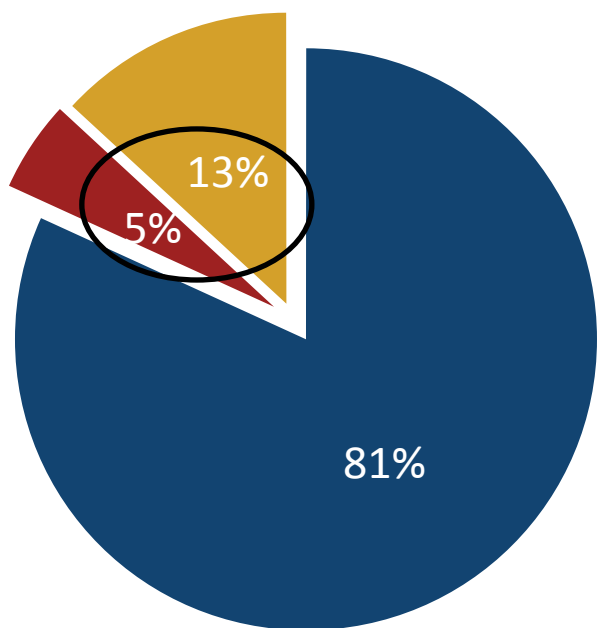
*"I'd like a day for myself-like a hot bath, nails, and hair done, respite care. A day where I could focus on my hobbies and myself." (Female, millennial caregiver)*

# Assessing Loved Ones Conditions

Eight in ten caregivers say they feel prepared to recognize the signs their loved ones may need more support; however, almost two in ten say they feel unprepared or “do not know.” Most also say they share concerns with other family members.

### Do you feel prepared....?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



# 82

Percent of caregivers who say they share concerns about their loved one with other family members.

Q7. Do you feel prepared to recognize the signs that your loved one may need additional support?

Q8. Have you ever shared your concerns about your loved one with other family members?