COVID-19’S IMPACT ON FAMILY CAREGIVERS’ HOLIDAY PLANS

November 2020
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Key Findings

• The pandemic has had a negative impact on nearly half of caregivers’ mental health (44%) and that of the person they care for (46%). Many are experiencing emotions such as anxiety, sadness, and anger as a result of the enduring pandemic.

• Most will be making changes to their typical holiday traditions this year (64%) with more than three quarters (77%) saying the pandemic will impact their plans at least to some extent.

• Three quarters (76%) believe there is at least some risk of COVID-19 exposure if they are to visit with others. Concern is high with about eight in ten worried about exposure for themselves or their loved one.

• That said, six in ten (62%) plan to gather with family in some form and eight in ten caregivers who do not live with the person they care for (80%) will visit them this holiday season. Precautions will be taken such as limiting hugs, limiting the size of gatherings, and wearing masks.
COVID-19 Has Had a Negative Impact on Mental Health

While most caregivers continue to rate their mental health highly, almost one in six report a *fair* or *poor* mental state. In addition, more than four in ten say the pandemic has had a negative impact on not only their mental health but that of the person they care for as well.

**Current Mental Health Rating**

Among caregivers, women (51%) and those over age 50 (54%) were more likely to say it has had a negative impact on their own mental health than men (32%) and those age 18-49 (33%).

**Impact on Mental Health**

- **Own mental health**
  - Positive: 27%
  - Neutral: 30%
  - Negative: 44%

- **Care recipient mental health**
  - Positive: 26%
  - Neutral: 29%
  - Negative: 46%

**Q4 – How would you rate your mental health at the current time?**

**Q5/7 – What type of impact, if any, has COVID-19 had on your/the person you care for mental health?**
Nearly half of caregivers have seen a modest increase in their levels of worrying, anxiety, and sadness, among other negative emotions as a result of the pandemic. More than a quarter report a great increase in stress and anxiety and express concern about the future.
And Led Many to Feel Sad About the Upcoming Holiday Season

Three quarters of caregivers are at least *somewhat* concerned about exposure to the coronavirus this holiday season. More are *very concerned* about exposure for the person they are caring for compared to themselves. Therefore, more than half say they are feeling sad about the upcoming holiday season.

Q18 – How, if at all, has the pandemic impacted your thoughts about this year’s holiday season?

Q19/20 – How concerned are you (your loved one’s) about your exposure to COVID-19 this holiday season?
Most Caregivers Will Stay Close to Home This Holiday Season

Only one-third of caregivers plan to travel this holiday season. Among those who plan to travel, most will do so via automobile. To be safe, more than one-third will self-quarantine after traveling.

83% plan to travel via car. Only 25% intend on flying.

Q12 – Do you plan to travel at any point this Thanksgiving or winter holiday season?
Q13 – What method do you plan to travel by?
Q14 – What, if anything, do you plan to do differently when it comes to your travel?

Base: Caregivers who plan to travel
Virus Concerns Will Impact Holiday Traditions

Three-quarters of caregivers feel holiday gatherings lend themselves to virus exposure. In fact, one-third feel it is a *great* risk. Therefore, many plan to make many modification when it comes to social gatherings. About four in ten will avoid hugging others, limit guests, and wear a mask. About one five may self-quarantine or request a COVID-19 test for peace of mind.

Q17 – How much of a COVID-19 exposure risk, if any, do you think getting together with others is this holiday season?

Social Precautions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precaution</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoid hugs/physical contact</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit size of gatherings</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximize distance between guests</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit duration of gathering</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move gatherings outside (when possible)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid overnight visits</td>
<td>23%</td>
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</table>

Health/Safety Precautions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precaution</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wear a mask and ask others to do so</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-quarantine before travel</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-quarantine after travel</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a COVID-19 test after visiting others</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a COVID-19 test prior to visiting others</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Q14 – What changes if any, might you make when visiting with others this year?
Yet Most Do Plan to Celebrate With Family In Some Way

Among caregivers who do not live with the person they care for, eight in ten plan to visit them at some point this holiday season. But most will be making changes to their typical plans as pandemic concerns are high.

Extent Pandemic Will Impact Plans

- 80% plan to visit the person they are caring for.
- 62% will get together with family members at some point.
- 64% say they will make adjustments to their typical plans.

Q9 – Do you plan to visit the person you are caring for (among those who do not live with the person they care for)?
Q15 – Do you plan to get together with family at any point this Thanksgiving or winter holiday season?
Methodology

- **Objectives**: To explore how the coronavirus pandemic has impacted caregivers’ mental health and their plans for the holiday season.
- **Methodology**: Online survey using the Dynata panel.
- **Qualifications**: US residents 18 years or older who are currently providing unpaid care to an adult relative or friend (screened according to AARP’s standard caregiver definition).
- **Sample**: 1,000 caregivers
- **Interviewing Dates**: October 9-14, 2020.
- **Weighting**: The data is weighted by age and gender to reflect national population estimates for caregivers age 18+ (based on benchmark data from Caregiving in the U.S. 2020).
About AARP

AARP is the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation’s largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.
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This research was designed and executed by AARP Research