

Providing Care Changes Men

So What Keeps So Many from Having this Transformative Caregiving Experience?

In this report, we found that men overwhelmingly value care and believe caregiving should be equally shared with women. Yet the gap between the ideal and real is large: while 91 percent of survey respondents said caregiving should be equally shared between men and women, nearly half, 45 percent, said that caring responsibilities fall primarily on women. (Just 4 percent said they fall primarily on men.)

Yet the experience of providing care can be transformative for men. Men with care responsibilities struggle with work-life conflict and burnout and some have reduced work hours or left the workforce at similar rates to women with care responsibilities. They also have a much more nuanced, personal and intimate view of what caregiving is, compared to men in a general population group, and are also more likely to believe that men, in addition to women, have a natural instinct for nurture, or that care is a skill that can be learned. They also are much more attuned to not only the difficulty and demands of care work, and the need for workplace, policy and cultural support, but also to its joys and the profound sense of meaning, pride and connection to others that can come with caring for a loved one.

In our nationally representative survey, we compared the experiences of men who are **High-Intensity Caregivers and/or Parents** who have ever provided care to an adult or parents who have cared for a child under 18 with a medical, behavioral or other condition or disability; **Other Fathers** of children without such special needs; and **Non-caregivers**, men with no caregiving experience.

Men sharing care is key to creating not only more gender equity, but better health and wellbeing for individuals, children, and families. This report makes clear that, contrary to cultural stereotypes, men provide more care than they're often given credit for. And while traditional gender norms are still powerful, structural, financial and cultural barriers push men into breadwinning roles and prevent them from becoming the caregivers they say they want to be.



Key Findings

- Nearly 70 percent of the men in our survey have had parenting or caregiving responsibilities. And more than four in 10 men have cared for adults or children with special needs, compared to 56 percent of women.
- Caregiving men perform many of the intimate, hands-on tasks more associated with women, like bathing, toileting, dressing, and changing bandages.
- About half of all men, even Non-Caregivers, anticipate needing to take time off work to give care, the same as the rate for women.
- Six in 10 men with care responsibilities reported feeling burned out by care work.
- One in five men who provide care—twice as many men as women—said that people do not trust them to give care or to parent in a safe and caring manner simply because they are men, an indicator of the cultural barriers to equal caregiving.