

## HSC Statistical Brief No. 31 Caregiving in West Virginia, 2015

Caregiving is an important public health topic in West Virginia as our population ages and chronic disease and disability become more prevalent. A caregiver is defined as someone who provides assistance to others on a regular basis. The National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) and the AARP Public Policy Institute (2015a) have published extensively on the role of caregivers in the United States and the unique social, financial, and personal challenges encountered by those who provide unpaid care for friends and family members. This report will present caregiver statistics collected from adult West Virginia residents.

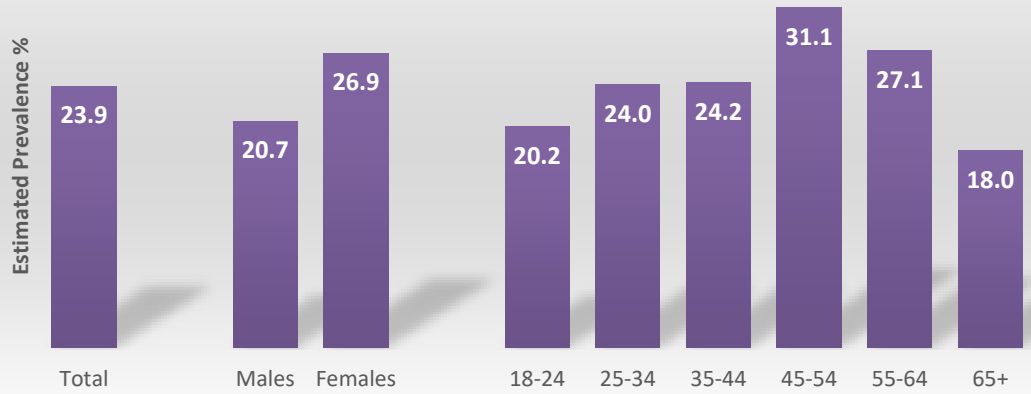
The Health Statistics Center's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) collected data related to caregivers in 2015 as part of a state selected optional module on the annual questionnaire. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2016) developed caregiver module included nine questions designed to assess

- percentage of people who self-report as being a caregiver,
- relationship between the caregiver and care recipient,
- length of time as a caregiver and average hours of caregiving provided per week,
- types of assistance needed by the care recipient,
- major health problem, long-term illness, or disability of the care recipient,
- type of assistance most needed by the caregiver, and
- percentage of adults who are not currently caregivers but expect to be caregivers in the future.

In this report, caregiver is defined as a West Virginia adult who provided regular care or assistance without compensation, in the past month, to a friend or family member who has a health problem or disability.

Figure 1 displays the prevalence of caregiver status by demographic characteristics that were statistically significant. The prevalence of being a caregiver among West Virginia adults was 23.9% in 2015. This means that approximately 327,555 adults in the State have provided regular care to a friend or a loved one in the past month. The prevalence of being a caregiver was significantly higher among females than among males. Over one-fourth of females (26.9%) and one-fifth of males (20.7%) are caregivers. This equates to 189,055 women and 138,501 men in West Virginia who provide care. The prevalence of being a caregiver was significantly higher among those aged 45-54 (31.1%) than among those aged 18-24 (20.2%) or 65 and older (18.0%).

Figure 1. Prevalence of Caregiver Status Among WV Adults by Demographic Characteristics, 2015



Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

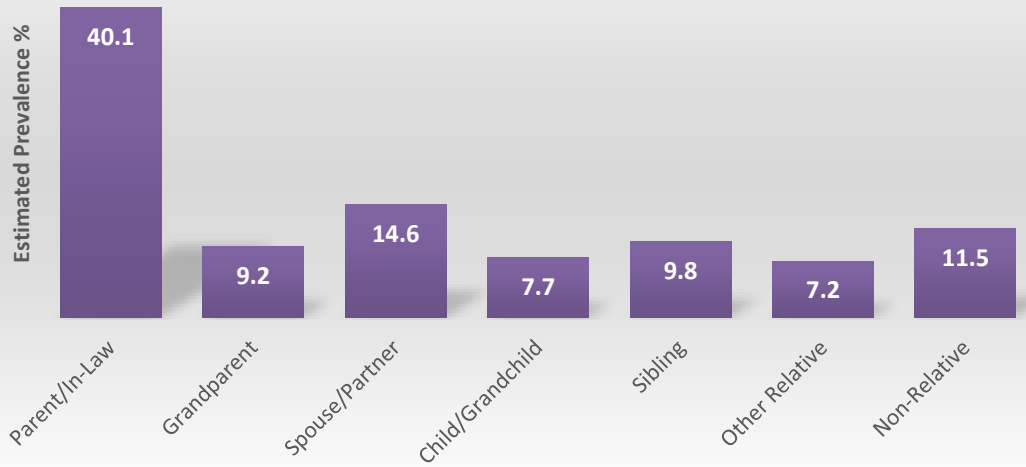
Table 1 displays the prevalence of caregiver status by all demographic characteristics. As mentioned previously, only gender and age differences were observed for caregiver status.

**Table 1. Prevalence of Caregiver Status Among West Virginia Adults by Demographic Characteristics, 2015**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Weighted Frequency</b>	<b>Prevalence Estimate (%)</b>	<b>95% Confidence Interval</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	327,555	23.9	22.6-25.2
<b>Gender</b>			
<b>Male</b>	138,501	20.7	18.8-22.6
<b>Female</b>	189,055	26.9	25.0-28.7
<b>Age</b>			
<b>18-24</b>	31,984	20.2	15.4-25.1
<b>25-34</b>	46,186	24.0	19.9-28.1
<b>35-44</b>	50,849	24.2	20.7-27.8
<b>45-54</b>	70,331	31.1	27.7-34.5
<b>55-64</b>	68,315	27.1	24.4-29.9
<b>65+</b>	58,366	18.0	15.9-20.1
<b>Educational Attainment</b>			
<b>Less than H.S.</b>	42,948	20.1	16.4-23.9
<b>H.S. or G.E.D.</b>	127,759	23.5	21.3-25.6
<b>Some Post-H.S.</b>	97,167	26.0	23.3-28.7
<b>College Graduate</b>	59,297	24.9	22.4-27.4
<b>Annual Household Income</b>			
<b>Less than \$15,000</b>	37,119	24.2	20.2-28.2
<b>\$15,000 - \$24,999</b>	49,203	24.0	20.6-27.4
<b>\$25,000 - \$34,999</b>	35,078	26.4	21.8-31.0
<b>\$35,000 - \$49,999</b>	42,946	23.8	20.2-27.4
<b>\$50,000 - \$74,999</b>	39,602	24.9	21.0-28.7
<b>\$75,000+</b>	53,840	22.9	19.9-25.8
<b>Employment Status</b>			
<b>Employed</b>	158,882	24.8	22.8-26.8
<b>Unemployed</b>	69,563	29.3	25.5-33.0
<b>Retired</b>	58,817	19.1	16.9-21.3
<b>Unable to Work</b>	39,104	21.7	18.1-25.2
<b>Marital Status</b>			
<b>Married/Couple</b>	198,076	25.4	23.6-27.1
<b>Previously Married</b>	68,230	21.0	18.6-23.3
<b>Never Married</b>	60,860	23.2	19.6-26.8
<b>Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System</b>			

Figure 2 displays the relationship between the caregiver and the care recipient. The most often cited relationship between a caregiver and care recipient was a parent or parent in-law with 40.1% of caregivers in the State taking care of a parent or in-law. The care of mothers was the most prevalent in that group at 23.3%, followed by fathers (10.2%).

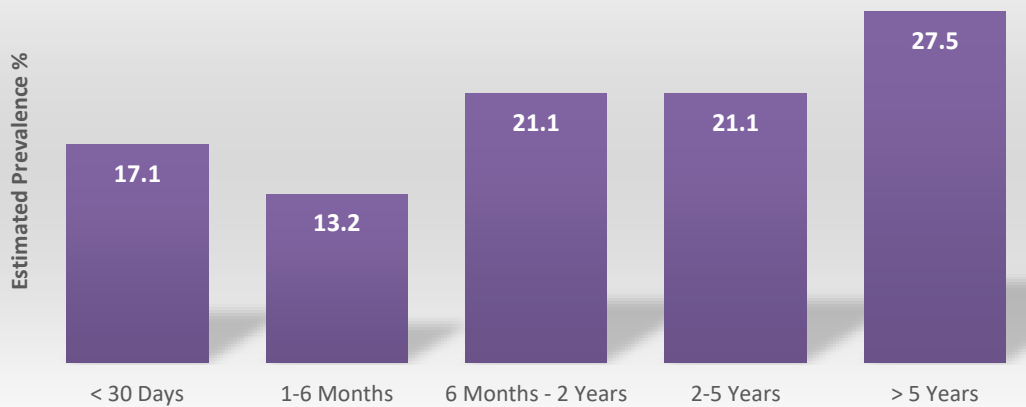
Figure 2. Relationship of Care Recipient to Caregiver, 2015



Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Figure 3 displays the length of time West Virginia adults have spent in the caregiver role. The most often reported length of time as a caregiver was more than 5 years, reported by 27.5% of caregivers. A majority of caregivers in the State (69.6%) have provided care on a long-term basis (6 months or more).

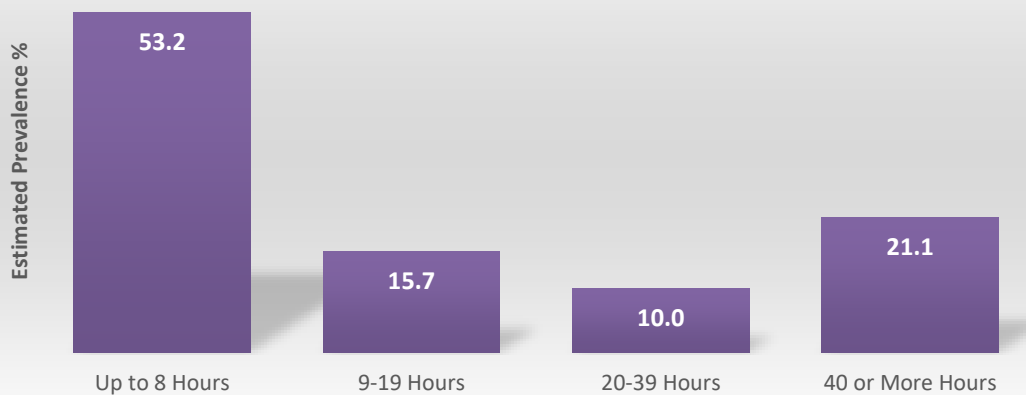
Figure 3. Length of Time WV Adults Have Spent as a Caregiver, 2015



Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Figure 4 displays the average hours of care provided per week by the caregiver. Most West Virginia caregivers provide up to 8 hours of care per week (53.2%). However, approximately one-in-five caregivers (21.1%) provide care 40 or more hours per week.

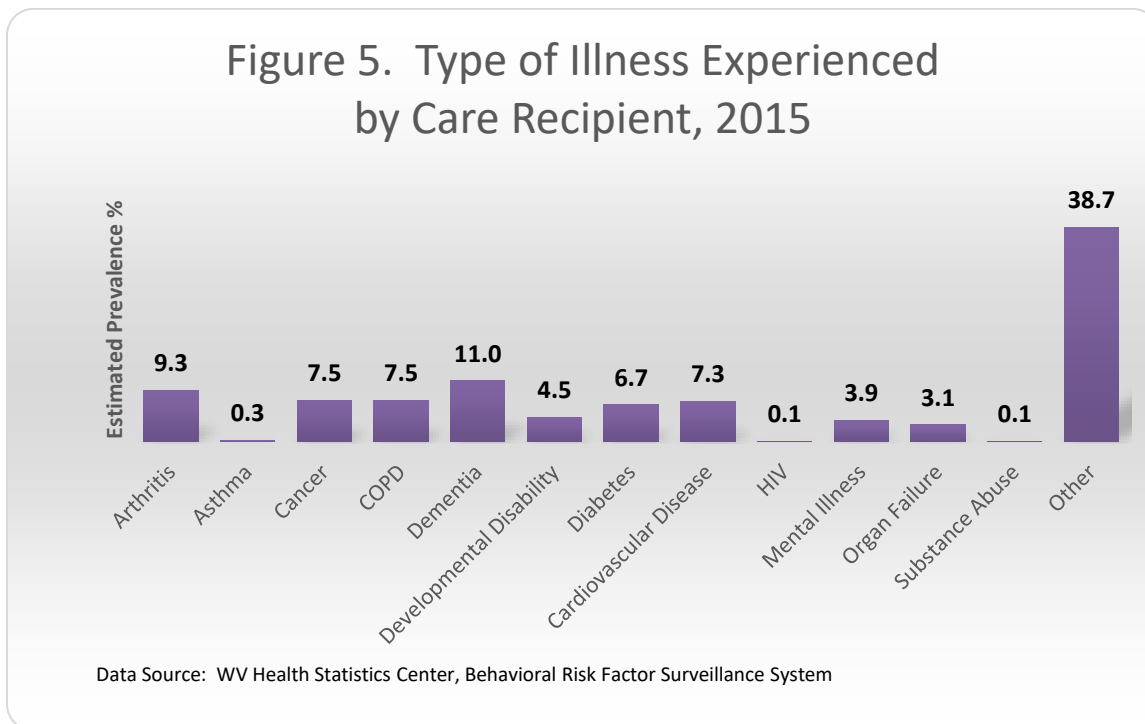
Figure 4. Average Hours of Caregiving Per Week Among WV Caregivers, 2015



Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

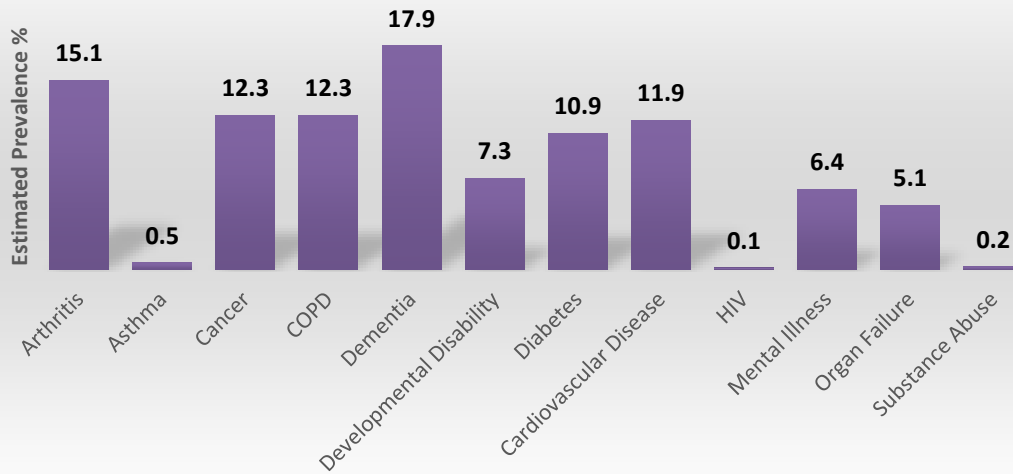
Caregivers in West Virginia provided a variety of assistance to care recipients. Caregivers managed personal care for the care recipient such as giving medications, feeding, dressing, or bathing (49.9%) and managed household tasks for the care recipient such as cleaning, managing money, or preparing meals (74.3%).

Figure 5 displays the type of illness (major health problem, long-term illness, or disability) experienced by the care recipient. The results indicate that 38.7% of care recipients had a health issue other than the ones listed here.



Because Figure 5 may give an erroneous view of type of illness experienced by care recipients in West Virginia, Figure 6 displays the health problem among those reporting a specific health issue and excludes the other category. Among those reporting a specific health problem, 17.9% of care recipients experienced dementia, 15.1% had arthritis, 12.3% had cancer, 12.3% had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), 11.9% had cardiovascular disease, and 10.9% had diabetes. This indicates that top six health problems affecting care recipients in the State are chronic disease. Other health problems affecting care recipients include developmental disability (7.3%), mental illness (6.4%), organ failure (5.1%), asthma (0.5%), substance abuse (0.2%), and HIV (0.1%).

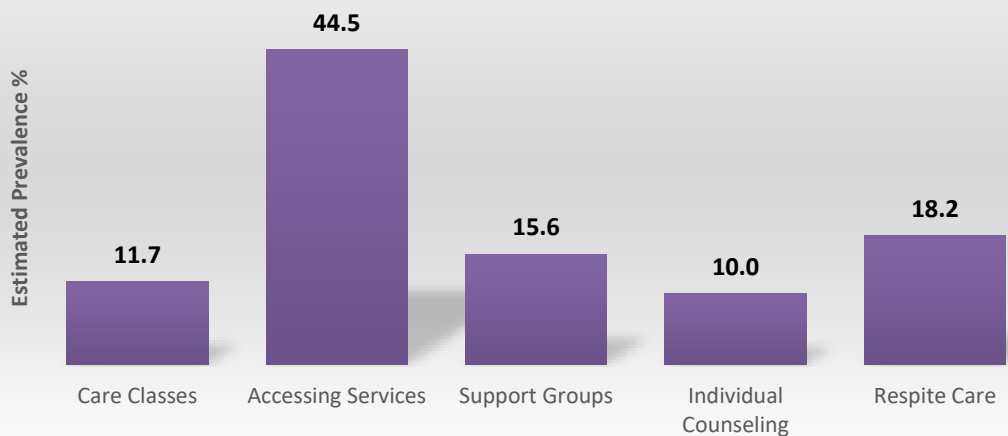
Figure 6. Type of Illness Experienced by Care Recipient, Excluding "Other" Category, 2015



Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

A majority of caregivers in West Virginia (85.5%) indicated that they needed no assistance or support while caregiving. Figure 7 displays the types of assistance or support services most needed by the caregiver, among those responding that they needed assistance or support. Overall, the results indicate that nearly half of caregivers (44.5%) would like guidance on how to access services. Other types of assistance or support needed include respite care (18.2%), support groups (15.6%), care classes such as how to give medications (11.7%), and individual counseling to help cope with caregiving (10.0%).

Figure 7. Type of Assistance Needed Most by the Caregiver, 2015



Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Among those who are not currently caregivers, 17.5% of West Virginia adults expect to provide care or assistance to a friend or family member who has a health problem or disability in the next 2 years.

As discussed earlier, caregivers may experience stress and other challenges while caring for others. Because of this, an analysis was conducted to determine to what extent West Virginia caregivers are affected by health risk behaviors and chronic diseases. Table 2 displays the prevalence of health behavior or chronic disease experienced by caregivers in the State as compared to adults who are not caregivers.

The results of this analysis indicate that the prevalence of physical inactivity was significantly higher among non-caregivers (32.7%) than among caregivers (25.5%). The results also indicate that the prevalence of poor mental health was significantly higher among caregivers (20.4%) than among non-caregivers (14.1%) and the prevalence of no money to pay medical bills was significantly higher among caregivers (17.2%) than among non-caregivers (12.7%).

Overall, these results indicate no difference between caregivers and those who are not caregivers for most health risk behaviors and chronic diseases. Areas where caregivers experience a higher burden than non-caregivers include mental health and financial problems.



**Table 2. Prevalence of Health Behavior or Chronic Disease Among West Virginia Adults Who Are Caregivers Compared to Non-Caregivers, 2015**

Health Behavior/ Chronic Disease	Caregivers		Non-Caregivers	
	Prevalence Estimate (%)	95% Confidence Interval	Prevalence Estimate (%)	95% Confidence Interval
Fair/Poor Health	24.8	22.1-27.5	26.3	24.8-27.8
Poor Physical Health	18.4	15.9-20.9	18.7	17.4-20.1
Poor Mental Health	20.4	17.8-23.0	14.1	12.9-15.3
Limited Due to Poor Health	20.0	16.6-23.4	25.3	23.2-27.4
No Health Care Coverage	9.1	7.0-11.2	6.8	5.8-7.7
No Money to Pay Medical Bills	17.2	14.7-19.6	12.7	11.5-14.0
No Doctor	17.9	15.3-20.6	21.3	19.8-22.9
No Check-up in Past Year	20.0	17.4-22.7	19.7	18.2-21.2
Hypertension	43.5	40.4-46.6	42.9	41.2-44.6
High Cholesterol	40.1	36.9-43.3	39.4	37.6-41.2
No Physical Activity	25.5	22.7-28.3	32.7	31.0-34.4
Obesity	39.5	36.3-42.7	34.9	33.1-36.6
Overweight or Obese	73.4	70.5-76.4	70.9	69.2-72.6
Current Smoking	27.4	24.5-30.4	25.1	23.5-26.7
Heavy Drinking	2.6	1.6-3.6	3.8	3.0-4.6
Binge Drinking	8.8	6.8-10.8	11.0	9.8-12.3
Cardiovascular Disease	11.9	9.9-13.8	14.8	13.6-15.9
Diabetes	14.5	12.4-16.7	14.7	13.5-15.8
COPD	13.3	11.2-15.4	13.5	12.4-14.7
Current Asthma	11.2	9.2-13.1	10.7	9.6-11.8
Disabled	29.3	26.4-32.1	28.3	26.7-29.8
Cancer	14.4	12.4-16.4	14.0	12.9-15.1
Arthritis	40.8	37.7-43.8	37.4	35.7-39.1
Depression	25.4	22.6-28.2	22.4	20.9-23.9

**Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System**

## Conclusions

The West Virginia results presented in this report are similar to national survey findings. Based on previous research by the NAC and AARP Public Policy Institute (2015b), it was determined that the average caregiver in the U.S. is

- female,
- age 49,
- works full time,
- married,
- in good health,
- has a high school diploma or some college education,
- an annual household income of \$55,000,
- cares for a female relative,
- has been a caregiver for 4 years, and
- provides care 24 hours a week.

In West Virginia, the typical caregiver is

- female,
- aged 45-54,
- is unemployed,
- married,
- has some post high school education,
- an annual household income of \$25,000-\$34,999,
- cares for her mother,
- has been a caregiver for over 5 years, and
- provides less than 9 hours of care per week.

Additionally, West Virginia caregivers help with managing both personal care and household tasks of care recipients, would like help with accessing services, and may personally experience problems with mental health and ability to pay their own medical bills.

## References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Caregiver Module. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/healthybrain/brfss-faq-caregiver.htm>.

National Alliance for Caregiving & AARP Public Policy Institute (2015a). Caregiving in the U.S., 2015 Report. Retrieved from [http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015\\_CaregivingintheUS\\_Final-Report-June-4\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015_CaregivingintheUS_Final-Report-June-4_WEB.pdf).

National Alliance for Caregiving & AARP Public Policy Institute (2015b). The typical caregiver. Retrieved from [http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Caregiving-in-the-US-2015\\_Typical\\_CGProfile.pdf](http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Caregiving-in-the-US-2015_Typical_CGProfile.pdf).

For questions about this brief, please contact:

Birgit A. Shanholtzer, M.A.  
Director, Epidemiology & Statistical Services  
WV Department of Health and Human Resources  
Bureau for Public Health  
Health Statistics Center  
350 Capitol Street, Room 165  
Charleston, WV 25301  
(304) 356-4172  
[birgit.a.shanholtzer@wv.gov](mailto:birgit.a.shanholtzer@wv.gov)  
[www.wvdhhr.org/bph/hsc](http://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/hsc)