

Changing Demography of Family Caregiving Network Updates

The first quarter of 2026 was an exciting one for the Changing Demography of Family Caregiving Network members, with our annual webinar, new research papers, and real impact. Here are a few highlights.

CDFC Network 2026 Webinar Recap

Changing Demography of Family Caregiving Network Webinar: *Caregiving and Relationship Dynamics*

June 5th, 2026
12-2 PM EST

Featuring presentations from: **Courtney Polenick, Chanee Fabius, Adriana Reyes, Sheria Robinson-Lane, and Karen Fingerman**



June 4th, 2026 marked our network's annual meeting and webinar. The theme for this year's webinar was *Caregiving and Relationship Dynamics*, and it featured the following presentations:

In her presentation [“Extradynamic Social Interactions and Physiological Synchrony in Couples Living with Dementia,”](#) Courtney Polenick shared research showing that social interactions outside the couple relationship can influence stress patterns between people living with dementia and their spouses. Positive interactions may help couples feel more physiologically “in sync,” while negative interactions may create stress patterns that reflect coping and support between partners.

Chanee Fabius’ presentation [“Family and Paid Care Coordination in Home Care for Older Adults With and Without Dementia”](#) examined how family caregivers coordinate with paid caregivers, and how that changes based on the care recipient’s dementia status. Her findings showed that unpaid caregivers of people with dementia reported stronger relational coordination with paid caregivers than unpaid caregivers of those without dementia. This suggests that more frequent interaction may help build trust and understanding between family and paid caregivers.

In [“Caregiver Preference Alignment Across Generations,”](#) Adriana Reyes compared what adult children want for their aging parents against what older adults want for themselves. Over half of adult children would want to help care for a parent, while older adults overwhelmingly do not want to live with their adult children. There were notable demographic differences, with white, college educated adult children more likely to favor professional care, possibly due to physical distance from their parents.

Sheria Robinson-Lane shared research on [“Role Adjustment and Caregiving Self-efficacy,”](#) discussing dementia family caregiving with a focus on Black caregivers and the social factors that shape caregiving experiences. Her presentation emphasized how interventions combining support groups, care management goal-setting, and caregiver-defined sources of humor and gratitude led to improved mental health outcomes.

Karen Fingerman, with graduate student Sibon Gao, presented [“Challenges of Research on Lewy Body Dementia Caregiving Dyads.”](#) Drawing on data from caregivers who wore Fitbits, took surveys, and recorded audio over four days, she showed that emotional and cognitive symptoms of Lewy Body Dementia had the strongest links to caregiver mood. Caregiving tasks that involved emotional or cognitive support created more distress than physical caregiving tasks, which did not substantially affect caregivers’ mood. As the research moves forward, a key focus will be on the dyadic relationship and how it changes over time.

To view the presentations, click on the links above or visit the MiCDA YouTube channel’s CDFC Webinar 2026 playlist here: [▶ Michigan Center on the Demography of Aging](#)

New Dashboards and Chart Books for NHATS and NSOC

NHATS Trends Dashboards: 2011 - 2023

DISABILITY

HOUSING

ONLINE ACTIVITY

END OF LIFE

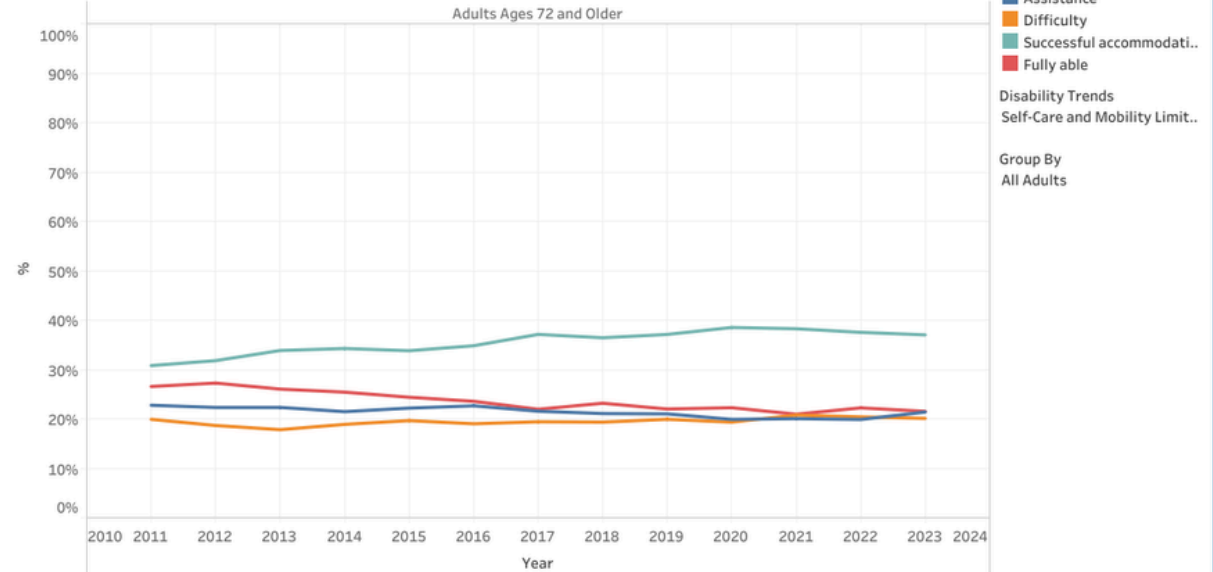
DEMOGRAPHIC

Trends in Self-Care and Mobility Limitations, Adults Ages 72 and Older: All Adults

KEY FINDINGS

The percentage of older adults fully able to carry out and receiving assistance with self-care and mobility activities declined (from 26.6% to 21.5% and from 22.8% to 21.4%, respectively). The percentage successfully accommodating with device and reporting difficulty increased (from 30.8% to 37.0% and from 19.9% to 20.1%, respectively).

Excludes nursing home residents



NOTES: Self-care and mobility limitations summarizes the ability to perform in the last month the following seven activities – going outside, getting around inside, getting in/out of bed, eating, bathing, toileting, and dressing. 1) fully able to do all activities (no assistance, difficulty, or device use for any activity); 2) successfully accommodates one or more activities with assistive devices (but no assistance or difficulty); 3) has difficulty when carrying out activities.

Recommended citation: Freedman VA, Cornman JC. 2026. National Health and Aging Trends Study Trends Dashboards. Available at nhatsannex.org/findings/nhats-trends-dashboards. The NHATS dashboards were prepared with funding from the National Institute on Aging (U01AG032947).

Updated dashboards and chart books are now available for both the National Health and Aging Trends Study and the National Study of Caregiving. Visit nhats.org/findings to view the latest data through 2023 and discover new insights on health, aging, and caregiving trends over a 12-year span.

New Articles

The Future Availability of Family Caregivers: Implications for Late-Life Care Gaps



[Vicki Freedman](#), [Rachel Margolis](#), [Ashton Verdery](#), [Emily Agree](#), and [Esther Friedman](#)

This study projected U.S. care gaps among older adults through 2040 using NHATS data and forecasts of kinship structures. Care gaps were defined as older adults with no family caregivers and those with unmet care needs. By 2040, estimates suggest 7.7 million older adults will have care needs but no family caregivers, and 14 million will have unmet needs, with increases driven mainly by population growth and aging. Changes in family structure and size had little additional effect. Overall, the findings indicate substantial growth in care gaps, primarily due to demographic change rather than family composition shifts.

Read the paper [here](#).

Evolution of shared care networks by race and ethnicity: findings from the National Health and Aging Trends Study



Alexa Bragg, Theodore Iwashyna, and [Chanee Fabius](#)

This study used data from the National Health and Aging Trends Study (2015 and 2022) to examine racial and ethnic differences in “role-sharing,” where multiple caregivers assist the same older adult with daily tasks. Role-sharing was most common in household activities (about 30% across groups) and remained stable over time. Hispanic older adults had lower odds of experiencing role-sharing in household care compared to White adults, while no differences were found in other care domains. Overall, results suggest generally stable caregiving networks with some ethnic variation in household assistance.

Read the paper [here](#).

Caregivers serving as confidants: relationship correlates and well-being by care-recipients’ dementia status



Meng Huo, Fei Wang, Yongxin Shang, and [Sarah Patterson](#)

This study used data from the 2017 National Health and Aging Trends Study and National Study of Caregiving to examine when family and unpaid caregivers also serve as confidants for older adults and how this relates to caregiver well-being. Caregivers who were spouses or children and those with higher-quality relationships were more likely to be nominated as confidants, although the role of relationship quality varied depending on whether the care recipient had dementia. Being a confidant was linked to better psychological well-being for caregivers of older adults without dementia, but not for those caring for individuals with dementia. Overall, the findings suggest that the emotional benefits of caregiving roles depend on both relationship closeness and dementia status.

Read the paper [here](#).

Incongruent caregiver–care recipient reports by care task and relationship type



Janecca Chin and [I-Fen Lin](#)

This study used linked data from the 2011, 2015, and 2017 National Health and Aging Trends Study and National Study of Caregiving to examine agreement between caregivers and care

recipients about whether help with specific tasks was provided. Agreement varied by task, with the highest consistency for banking and the lowest for mobility, and caregivers were more likely than recipients to report that help was provided when disagreements occurred. Spousal dyads showed the highest level of agreement, while other relationship types had more similar and generally lower concordance. Overall, the findings highlight substantial differences in caregiving reports depending on task and relationship type, underscoring challenges in accurately measuring unpaid care.

Read the paper [here](#) (sign in required).

Network Members in the News



Rachel Margolis was quoted in the National Post article “Older, 70% white, plunging fertility and lost faith: Who Canada is now,” where she commented on immigration, fertility, and their effects on changing family demographics. You can read the article [here](#).



HwaJung Choi was quoted and had research featured in “Americans Are in Denial About Elder Care” from the Atlantic, in which she discussed proximity and its relation to family caregiving. The article also highlighted work from others in the network. You can read the article [here](#).



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