Covid Takes its Toll on Caregivers: Nearly 60% Have Shouldered New Caregiving Responsibilities Since the Pandemic

Almost a third of caregivers' monthly budget goes toward providing care

MILWAUKEE, Nov. 4, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been felt especially hard among the nation's caregivers, according to the latest findings from Northwestern Mutual's 2021 Planning & Progress Study. One in five (21%) of Americans report they are currently providing care for someone, and among them six in ten (59%) say that they have had to take on new or expanded caregiving responsibilities during the pandemic.

The majority of caregivers (73%) report receiving help of some kind with their caregiving responsibilities, most often from family and friends:

Family – 53%
Friends – 25%
Community groups – 14%
Health care professionals – 11%

However, more than a quarter (27%) of caregivers say they do not receive any additional help.

"Caregiving, even in the best of circumstances, poses significant emotional, lifestyle and financial challenges," saidKamilah Williams-Kemp, vice president of risk products for Northwestern Mutual. "Layer on top of that a global pandemic, which has disrupted and altered many people's lives in so many ways, and the toll it is taking on caregivers has spiked."

Financial impact on caregivers
On average, nearly a third (31%) of current caregivers' monthly budget goes toward providing care. Those costs include professional support as well as expenses for services caregivers provide themselves.

What's less apparent in the numbers is the financial uncertainty that providing care can lead to –for example, 35% of current caregivers are not sure how much of their monthly budget goes toward providing care.

"This is a difficult topic for many families to address, especially ahead of when a caregiving scenario is actually required," said Williams-Kemp. "But it's critical that long-term care be part of financial planning conversations."

Planning for long-term care
Increased caregiving responsibilities over the last 20 months have prompted many Americans to pay more attention to long-term care. The study shows that a third (34%) of adults have planned for their own long-term care needs. Among them, more than half (53%) say the pandemic has changed their views on long-term care. As a result, they have taken specific steps toward preparing for their needs, including:

Increasing their savings – 46%
Incorporating long-term care into their financial plan – 39%
Talking to their financial advisor – 37%
Purchasing long-term care insurance – 36%

"Planning for long-term care has been thrust onto the financial radar for many Americans during the pandemic," said Williams-Kemp. "Long-term care coverage provides flexible options for in-home care in addition to facilities like nursing homes and assisted living centers, giving people access to the type of care that makes most sense for their unique situation. It's good to see that a growing number of people are taking action, and hopefully this is the start of what will be a longer-range trend."

About The 2021 Northwestern Mutual Planning & Progress Study
The 2021 Planning & Progress Study was conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Northwestern Mutual and included 2,320 American adults aged 18 or older who participated in an online survey between March 16 – 26, 2021. Results were weighted to Census targets for education, age/gender, race/ethnicity, region and household income. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated; a full methodology is available.

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For further information: LUKE PUNZENBERGER, 1-800-323-7033, mediarelations@northwesternmutual.com

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