

Myths and Realities about Family Caregiving

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- True **The most common care decision that families need to make about care for aging adults is about what type of care facility to have them live in.**
- False

Answer – False

Myth – The majority of older adults who need care will spend time in a nursing home at some point in their lives.

Reality – Most care provided to older adults is done by family caregivers in a home setting. Seventy to 80 percent of all community-based care needed by older persons is done by family caregivers. The most common care decision is who will provide family-based care when it is needed.

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- True **Adults who are still caring for children at home and also assume care of an aging parent have been referred to as being part of the “sandwich generation.”**
- False

Answer – True

Myth – Nearly every adult American will pass through the experience of being part of the “sandwich generation.”

Reality – Although it is not uncommon for adult Americans to have this experience, the majority of adults do not have dependent children when they assume care for a parent in need.

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- True **Adult daughters are the most common primary caregivers when family care is given to an aging or needy adult.**
- False

Answer – False

Myth – Daughters are usually the primary caregiver for an adult who needs family care.

Reality – It is first spouses, either husbands or wives, who are the most common primary caregivers, followed by daughters and daughters-in-law. So, adult daughters provide a great deal of care, but it is even more common for aging spouses to be in this circumstance.

True **Family-friendly business policies are paying increased attention to the need for family leave to care for dependent adults.**

False

Answer – True

Myth – Care for dependent adults is mostly ignored in the policies of companies relating to care for dependent family members.

Reality – With more and more adults caring for aging family members, companies are being required to give increased attention to the need for flexible work and leave policies that allow for care of dependent adults. These trends are more likely to increase in the near future as the aging population increases significantly.

True **Women provide most of the direct care that is given in family caregiving situations to aging parents or family members.**

False

Answer – True

Myth – The amount of direct care provided in family caregiving varies by cultural context so that men are most responsible in some cultures.

Reality – While it is true that there is an ethic of care by adult sons for parents in some cultural settings, even in those situations most direct care is still provided by women such as daughters-in-law or other women in the family. However, involvement by men in direct care is slowly increasing.

True **The feelings of obligation that an adult child feels toward a parent are the strongest predictor of how often an adult child has contact with a parent.**

False

Answer – False

Myth – A sense of filial obligation or duty toward a parent is the strongest motivation and predictor of how often an adult child has contact with a parent.

Reality – Although an adult child's feelings of obligation are important, the biggest factor in regular contact between adult children and parents is proximity—how close they live to the parent. The next most important factor is the feelings of parent-adult child closeness that exist, and then feelings of obligation.

For more information on this and other topics, see: www.ag.ndsu.edu