

**AARP North Carolina  
Caregiving Employee  
Internet Survey: Balancing  
Work and Family**

August 2004



# **AARP North Carolina Caregiving Employee Internet Survey: Balancing Work and Family**

**Report Prepared by Erica Dinger**

**Copyright AARP, 2004  
AARP  
Knowledge Management  
601 E Street NW  
Washington DC  
[www.research.aarp.org](http://www.research.aarp.org)  
Reprinting with Permission**

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to making life better for people 50 and over. We provide information and resources; engage in legislative, regulatory and legal advocacy; assist members in serving their communities; and offer a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for our members. These include *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *AARP Segunda Juventud*, our quarterly newspaper in Spanish; *NRTA Live and Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for 50+ educators; and our Web site, [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org). We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks go to Bob Jackson and Suzanne LaFollette-Cameron of AARP North Carolina. A special thanks to Karen Gottovi, Director, Dennis Streets, Chief of Planning, Budget, and System Supports, and Chris Urso, Family Caregiver Specialist for the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services, and the NC Family Caregiver Specialists and Area Agencies on Aging. Also a special thanks to the AARP Life Answers Team, especially Lauren Jones, Elinor Ginzler, and Scott Melton, for their guidance, resources, and consultation on subject matter. Gretchen Straw, Katherine Bridges, Rachelle Cummins, Cheryl Barnes, and Darlene Matthews, all of State Member Research, provided valuable research guidance and technical support throughout the study. Erica Dinger, also of State Member Research, managed the project and wrote this report. For more information, contact Erica Dinger at (202) 434-6176.

## Background

Current estimates put the number of caregivers in the U.S. at 44.4 million, or 21 percent of the adult population.<sup>1</sup> These caregivers do everything from calling to check up on an elderly neighbor or relative to providing full-time care to a disabled adult child. Most caregivers care for one person, who is a relative, and live near that person.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, most caregivers fulfill multiple roles: they are spouses, parents, and employees.<sup>3</sup>

AARP North Carolina commissioned this study of employees in North Carolina to provide an employee's view of caregiving issues in the state. Companies that participated in Caregiving in the Workplace forums throughout North Carolina in 2003-4 were invited to participate in this survey. A handful of companies accepted the offer and sent the survey link to their employees. Because there is no data on how many employees these companies have or if they sent the survey link to all of their employees, it is impossible to determine a response rate or to properly categorize the sample. For this reason, caution should be used in interpreting this data.

## Highlights

- Almost seven in ten (68%) employees who responded to this survey say that they have provided care or assistance to a relative or friend who is ill, elderly, or disabled.
- Of those providing care, most are caring for their mother, and the care recipient is 60 years old or older.
- Most caregivers live 20 minutes away from the care recipient or less and care for the person five or more hours a week.
- Almost nine in ten (88%) caregivers say caregiving is emotionally stressful.

---

<sup>1</sup> Caregiving in the U.S., National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, funded by Metlife (2004).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

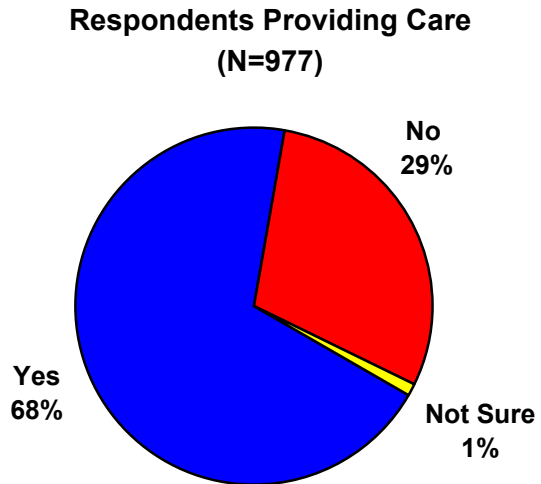
<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

# Findings

## Respondents say they have acted as caregivers in the last two years.

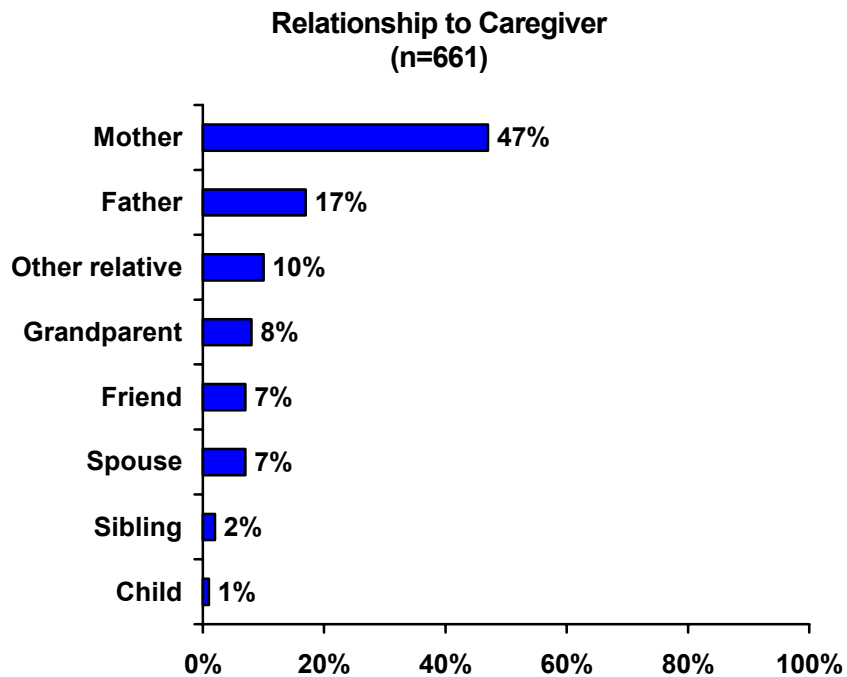
Of those who responded to the survey, 68 percent say they have acted as a caregiver in the last two years.

The survey defined a caregiver as: anyone who provides unpaid care, which may include bathing, dressing, preparing meals, or visiting, to a relative or friend who is ill, elderly, or disabled. The relative or friend may live with you or somewhere else.



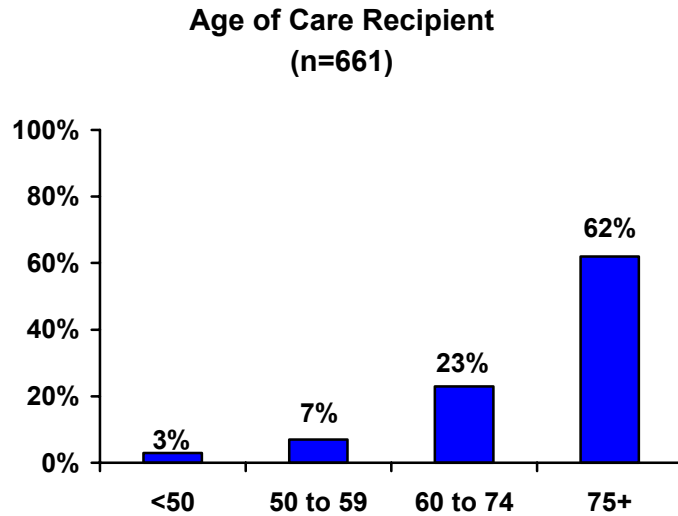
## Respondents most often report providing care for their mothers.

Of those respondents who report being caregivers, nearly half say they provide care for their mother. Fewer provide care for their father or another relative.



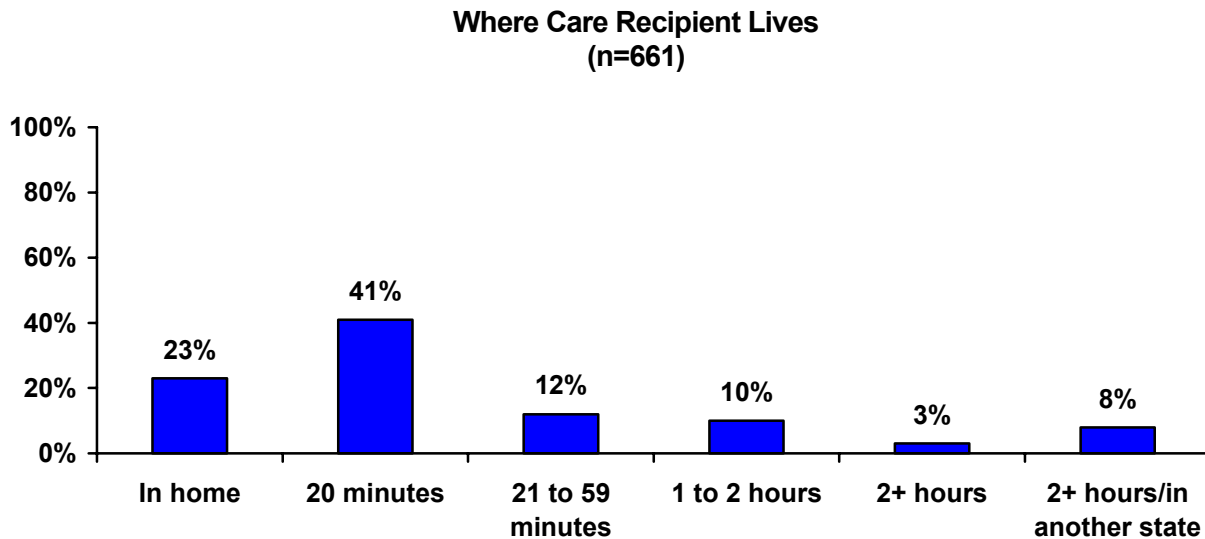
## Respondent caregivers report most often caring for those age 75+

Six in ten respondents say they provide care for someone age 75 or older. Almost a quarter provide care for someone age 60 to 74. Significantly fewer report caring for someone under age 60.



## Most respondent caregivers report living either twenty minutes away from their care recipient or with their care recipient.

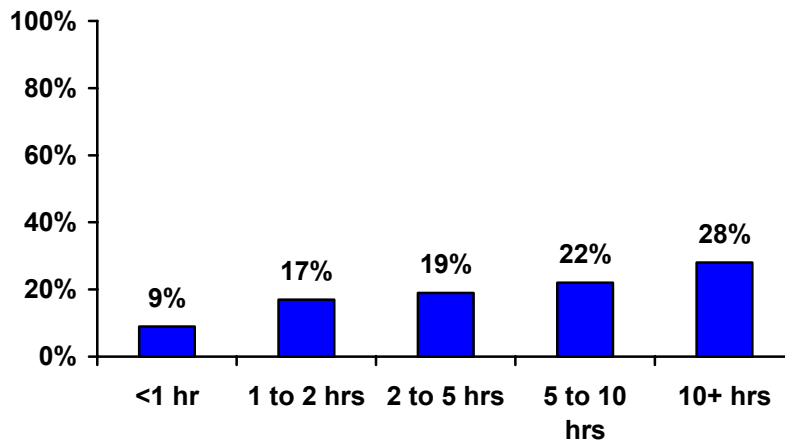
Four in ten respondents say they live about twenty minutes away from their care recipient, while almost a quarter live with their care recipient. Significantly fewer report living two or more hours away or in another state from their care recipient.



**Half of respondent caregivers say they spend five or more hours a week on caregiving duties.**

Half (50%) of those who say they are caregivers say they spend five or more hours a week providing care, while almost three in ten spend ten or more hours a week caregiving. Another two in five spend between two and five hours providing care.

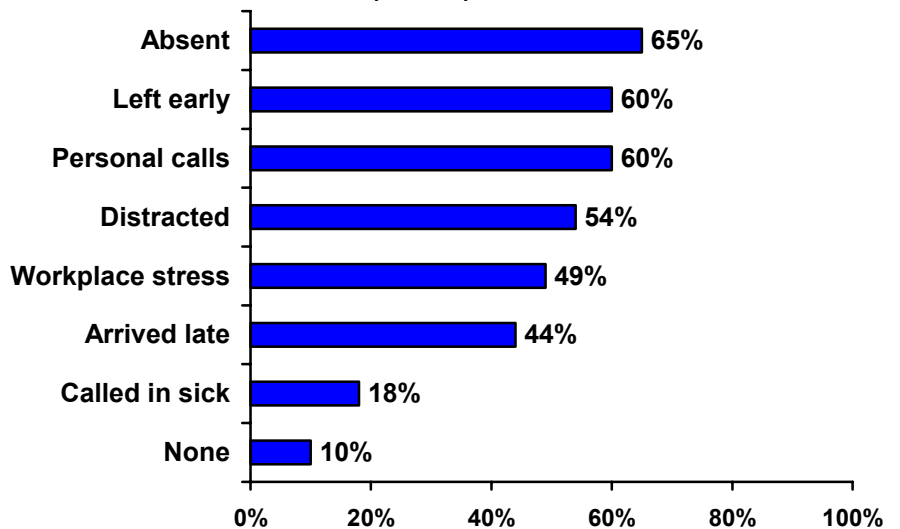
**Time Spent Providing Care  
(n=661)**



**Respondent caregivers report that caregiving effects their workplace performance.**

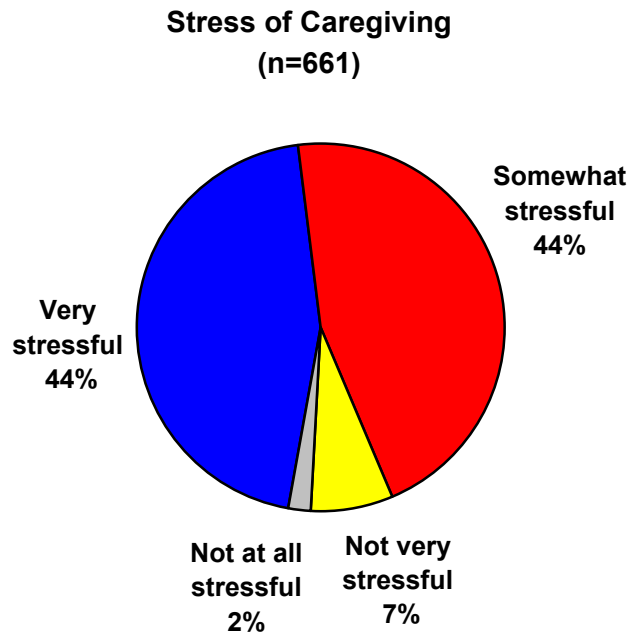
Caregivers were asked to check all of the workplace effects that they had experienced due to caregiving duties. Nearly all (90%) caregivers said that they had experienced at least one workplace effect due to caregiving, including: being absent, leaving early, making personal calls, being distracted, or experiencing workplace stress.

**Effect of Caregiving on the Workplace  
(n=661)**



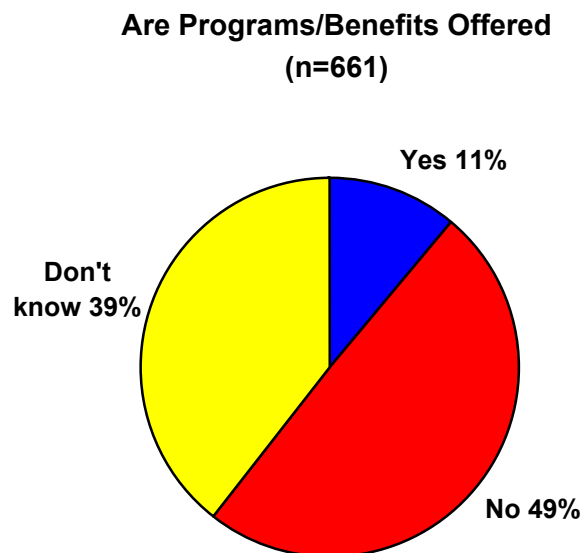
**Almost nine in ten respondents who are caregivers say caregiving is emotionally stressful.**

Almost nine in ten (88%) caregiver respondents say that caregiving is either somewhat or very emotionally stressful. Only ten percent say that it is not at all or not very stressful.



**Half of respondent caregivers say their company does not have any programs for caregivers.**

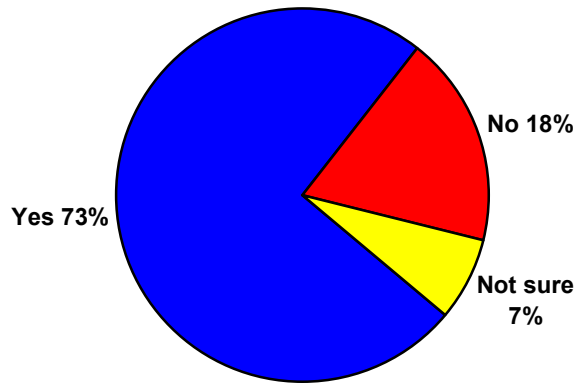
Half of respondent caregivers say their company offers no programs for employee caregivers. Four in ten say they do not know if their company offers any programs, while eleven percent say that their company does offer programs.



**Seven in ten of those who are caregivers say they would be comfortable asking for time off to give care.**

More than seven in ten caregiver respondents say they would be comfortable asking their employer for time off to provide needed care for a relative or friend.

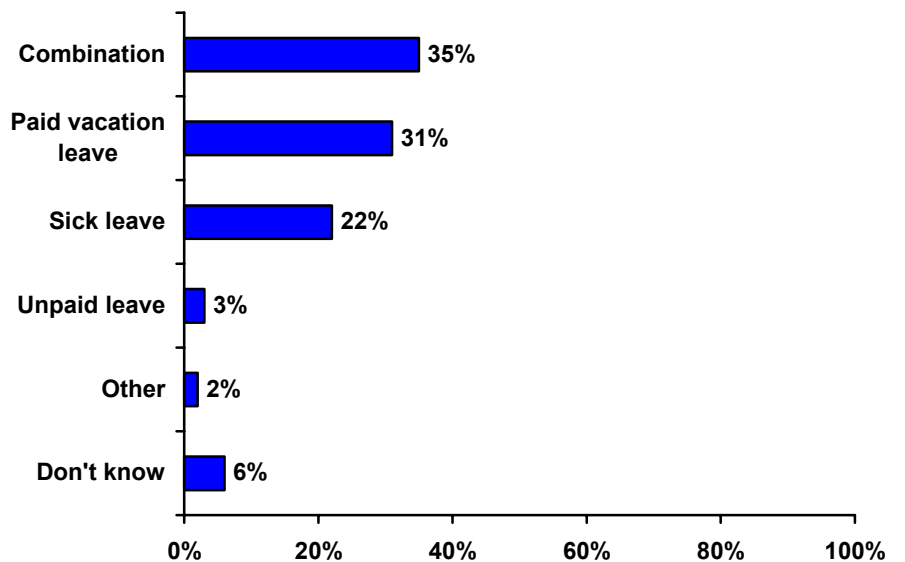
**Comfortable Asking for Time Off for Caregiving  
(n=661)**



**Respondent caregivers say they would use a combination of leave if they needed time off for caregiving.**

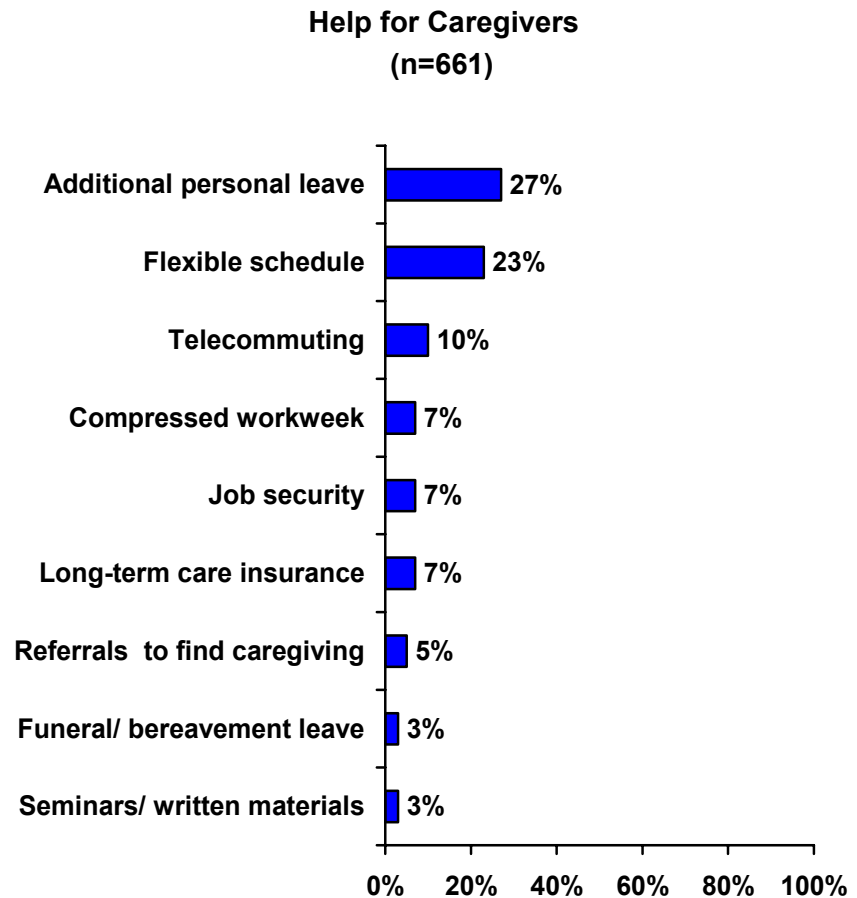
More than a third of caregiving respondents say that they would use a combination of paid sick leave, paid vacation leave, and unpaid leave if they needed to take time off to provide caregiving. Three in ten say they would use paid vacation leave.

**Type of Leave Used  
(n=661)**



## Respondent caregivers want their employers to provide additional personal leave and flexible work schedules to help with caregiving.

Respondent caregivers were asked what one thing their workplace could do to help them in their role as caregivers. Respondents were most interested in additional personal leave and flexible work schedules, while fewer were interested in such options as job sharing or referrals to counseling. (See Appendix A for a complete list).



## Conclusions

Employees in North Carolina who participated in this survey through their place of employment are dealing with the dual roles of employee and caregiver. They are most often caring for their mother or another close family member, and they live with or near their care recipient. Many spend five or more hours a week caring for this individual.

Respondents report that this amount of caregiving does affect their workplace. They are absent from work, arrive late or leave early, and have to spend work time dealing with personal phone calls. They find caregiving emotionally stressful. Many report that their companies either do not offer programs to help caregivers or they are unaware of such programs. However, they report that they are comfortable asking for time off for caregiving duties.

In many ways, these findings support the *AARP North Carolina Caregiving in the Workplace Survey* of employers in the state.<sup>4</sup> That survey found that employers were aware that their employees were also caregivers and that these dual roles often cause stress for the employee. Employers also recognized that more services could be offered for caregivers, and expressed interest in receiving information on no- or low-cost resources for caregiving employees.

AARP North Carolina with the North Carolina Family Caregiver Support Program has the opportunity to take the lead in educating employees and employers on the issues of caregiving in the workplace. Both AARP North Carolina and the North Carolina Family Caregiver Support Program through North Carolina's network of aging service agencies are poised to help employers across North Carolina develop programs for employees who are facing the difficult task of balancing their duties as employees with their duties as caregivers and help employees navigate these dual roles.

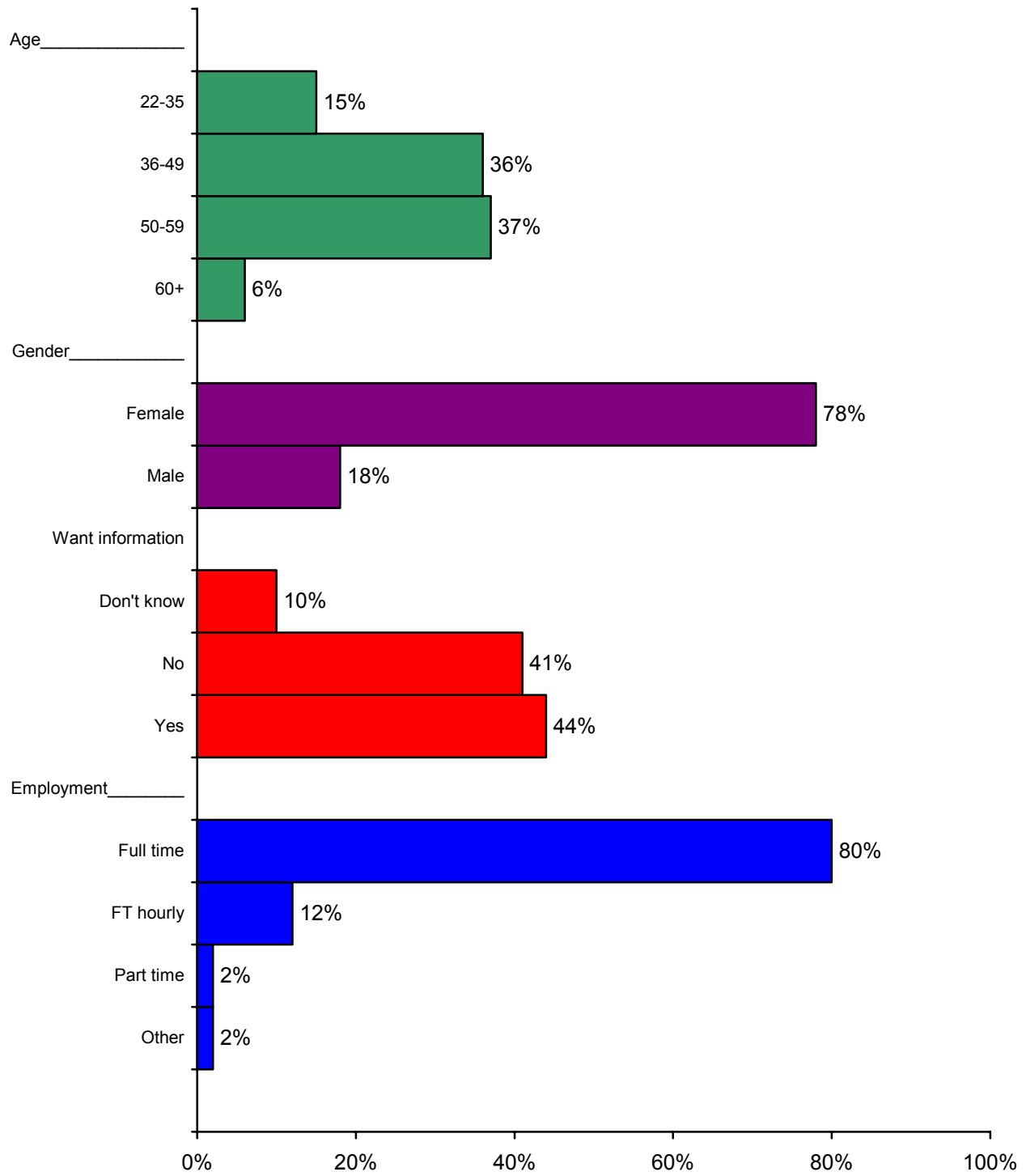
## Methodology

North Carolina employers who participated in Caregiving in the Workplace forums throughout 2003-4 were invited to participate in this internet survey. In addition, North Carolina government employees were invited to participate. A handful of companies accepted the offer and sent the survey link to their employees. Because there is no data on how many employees these companies have or if they sent the survey link to all of their employees, it is impossible to determine a response rate or to properly categorize the sample. For this reason, caution should be used in interpreting this data. These data are an indication of how a subset of employees at certain North Carolina companies feel regarding these issues.

---

<sup>4</sup> Caregiving in the U.S., National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, funded by Metlife (2004).

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS (N=977)



## **ANNOTATED QUESTIONNAIRE**

# 2004 Family Responsibilities and Work Survey

## North Carolina Internet Study

A caregiver can be anyone who provides unpaid help to a relative or friend who is ill, disabled, or elderly. This kind of help includes assistance with bathing, dressing, preparing meals, taking medications, doing household chores, taking care of finances, arranging for outside services, or regularly visiting the person needing care. The relative or friend you are helping may be someone who lives with you or somewhere else.

1. In the past two years, have you provided care or assistance to an older person (including a spouse, parent, other relative, or friend)?

<u>%</u>	
68	Yes
29	No [SKIP TO Q12]
1	Don't know [SKIP TO Q12]

2. If you have provided care for more than one person, please answer the following questions with regard to the person for whom you have provided the most care. What is this person's relationship to you? (n=661)

<u>%</u>	
7	Spouse
47	Mother
16	Father
1	Son
1	Daughter
2	Sibling
8	Grandparent
10	Other relative: _____
7	Friend

3. How old is the person you are caring/have cared for? \_\_\_\_\_(in years) (n=661)

<u>%</u>	
3	Less than 50
7	50-59
23	60-74
62	75+

**4. Where does the person you are giving/were giving care to live? (n=661)**

<u>%</u>	
23	In your home
41	20 minutes away
12	21 minutes to 59 minutes away
10	One hour to 2 hours away
3	More than two hours away
8	More than two hours away and/or in another state
*	Don't know

**5. On an average week, how much time would you say you do spend or have spent caring for this person? (n=661)**

<u>%</u>	
9	Less than 1 hour
17	1 to 2 hours
19	More than 2 hours to less than 5 hours
22	Five hours to less than 10 hours
28	More than 10 hours
4	Don't know

**6. Because of your caregiving responsibilities, have you ever (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY): (n=661)**

<u>%</u>	
49	Experienced workplace stress
65	Been absent from work
44	Arrived late to work
60	Left early from work
54	Been mentally or emotionally distracted while at work
60	Made personal calls at work
18	Called in sick to work
10	None of the above

**7. How emotionally stressful would you say caregiving is? (n=661)**

<u>%</u>	
44	Very stressful
44	Somewhat stressful
7	Not very stressful
2	Not at all stressful
1	Don't know

**8. Does your company offer any programs or services for employees who are caregivers? (n=661)**

<u>%</u>	
11	Yes
49	No
39	Don't know

**9. Would you be comfortable asking for time off to provide care? (n=661)**

<u>%</u>	
73	Yes
18	No
7	Don't know

**10. If you needed to take time off to provide care, what kind of leave would you use? [Check all that apply] (n=661)**

<u>%</u>	
31	Paid vacation leave
22	Paid sick leave
35	All of the above
3	Unpaid leave
2	Other: _____
6	Don't know

**11. What could your workplace do that would help you personally in your role as caregiver? [Check all that apply] (n=661)**

<u>%</u>	
2	Financial help through a special fund that employees contribute to voluntarily
24	Additional personal leave to be used for caregiving
2	Donated sick time or vacation time from other employees
23	Flexible work schedule to accommodate time needed to provide caregiving
2	Support groups
5	Information and referral assistance to help find caregiving providers and resources
7	Job security for employees who need to take time off to provide caregiving
10	Telecommuting/working from home
1	Job sharing
3	Information about caregiving through seminars or written materials
1	Referrals to individual counseling
7	Compressed workweek that allows employees to work longer hours but fewer days
3	Funeral/bereavement leave
1	Subsidized care or care vouchers
2	Legal counseling services (i.e., estate planning)
5	Long-term care insurance
2	Other (Please specify): _____

**These questions are for classification purposes only**

**12. Are you**

<u>%</u>	
18	Male
78	Female

**13. Your age \_\_\_\_\_ (in years)**

<u>%</u>	
*	Less than 21
15	22-35
36	36-49
37	50-59
6	60+

**14. Do you work**

<u>%</u>	
80	Full time salaried
12	Full time hourly
1	Part time salaried
1	Part time hourly
1	Outside contractor
1	Other: _____

**15. Would you be interested in materials on caregiving?**

<u>%</u>	
44	Yes
41	No
10	Don't know

**For more information on caregiving, contact:**

**Suzanne LaFollette Cameron at AARP North Carolina  
919-508-0269  
slcameron@aarp.org  
or write to:  
AARP North Carolina State Office  
225 Hillsborough Street, #440  
Raleigh, NC 27603**