

U.S. caregivers face worsening of their own health challenges

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The health of U.S. caregivers is worse than that seen in adults without the responsibility of caring for someone with a health problem or disability, according to research [published](#) in the Aug. 29 issue of the

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Greta Kilmer, from the CDC in Atlanta, and colleagues used data from the 2015 to 2016 and 2021 to 2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System to compare changes in the prevalence of 19 health indicators among caregivers and noncaregivers.

The researchers found that caregivers experienced improvements in prevalence of four health indicators (current smoking, physical inactivity, no health coverage, and inability to see a doctor due to cost), whereas six worsened ([mental distress](#), depression, asthma, obesity, and having any or multiple chronic physical conditions). For both caregivers and noncaregivers, some health indicators, such as cigarette smoking, improved, although smoking prevalence remained higher for caregivers (16.6 versus 11.7 percent). Similarly, both groups experienced increases in the prevalence of lifetime depression, and prevalence remained higher among caregivers (25.6 versus 18.6 percent). Compared with noncaregivers, during 2021 to 2022, age-adjusted estimates for caregivers were unfavorable for 13 of the 19 health indicators.

"Strategies for supporting caregivers are available, and integrating these with existing programs to address [mental health](#) and [chronic diseases](#) among this population might improve caregiver well-being," the authors write.

More information: Greta Kilmer et al, Changes in Health Indicators Among Caregivers — United States, 2015–2016 to 2021–2022, *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (2024). [DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.mm7334a2](#)

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