

Fact Sheet: Sandwich Generation

July 15, 2011 — Since 2009, 20 states and 11 cities have designated July as Sandwich Generation Month, to recognize Americans who are caring for their children and their own aging parents at the same time. Currently about 7% of employed men and women, or about 9.8 million people out of the 139.3 million employed persons in June 2011, are official members of the sandwich generation, but a much higher proportion of Americans have already experienced or will eventually experience this stressful combination of care-giving responsibilities. With the number of Americans aged 65 and older projected to increase from 40 million in 2010 to 88.5 million by 2050, the ranks of sandwich generation caregivers are poised to expand significantly.

Among people who currently only have child-care responsibilities, more than a quarter have provided elder care in the last five years and almost half (44%) expect to provide elder care in the next five years

Among people with current elder and child-care responsibilities, 86% expect to still be providing elder care over the next five years.

Some facts about the sandwich generation from researchers at the Council on Contemporary Families and the [Families and Work Institute](#):

1. The sandwich generation is not really a single generation.

The majority (55%) of people with elder and child care responsibilities are between 28 and 42 years old. But many are older (38% are between 43 and 61 years old) or younger (7% are younger than 28).

Children in sandwich generation families also range in ages: 30% are under 6 years old, 32% between 6 and 12 years old, and 39% between 13 and 17 years old.

2. Sandwich generation caregivers live in diverse family situations.

Of employed persons simultaneously caring for elders and children, slightly more than half are women (54%), compared with 47% of employed men. Interestingly, these sandwiched women are less likely to have a spouse/partner than their male counterparts. Only 66% of women with child-care and elder responsibilities, compared to almost 90% of sandwich generation men, are married or living with a partner.

More than three quarters of sandwiched people who live with a spouse/partner are in a dual-earner couple. Of the 23% of sandwiched single earners, 81% are men and 19% are women.

3. Sandwiched employees spend as much time on their work responsibilities (an average of 44 hours a week) as people without any caregiving responsibilities (42 hours a week), even though they spend more time on total family care.

4. Sandwiched families cover more than a third of the overall cost of long-term elder care through their unpaid or donated time. They also contribute significant out-of-pocket funds, even though they earn less than those without care-giving responsibilities.

In 2004, the total cost of long-term care services for the elderly, including unpaid or 'donated' time, was \$211.4 billion. The unpaid time that families and other uncompensated caregivers donated to elder care covered 36% of total costs. By comparison, Medicare and Medicaid combined paid for 38% of total costs. Sandwiched families (median income \$67,671) have lower incomes than families who do not have any care-giving responsibilities (\$84,000).