



# Here is Who Is Searching For Senior Living?

By Michelle Seitzer

Imagine the Pope, Justin Bieber, Oprah, and the President were coming to visit your community. Would you change the tour format? Would you make sure every hallway and every common area sparkled? Would you ask your staff to wear their Sunday best, and have your culinary director serve his best meal in the dining room?

Of course, it's unlikely that all of those individuals would ever visit your community at once (or at all) — and they'd never just drop by unannounced. When you know a certain someone is coming, you prepare accordingly.

But do you actually think about the specific people who are visiting your community virtually? Do you picture a female adult child sitting behind her computer, a spousal caregiver scrolling on a tablet, a friend browsing on a mobile phone? Do you think about their values, and what they're looking for when they get online and punch in "search for senior living near me?"

## Getting to Know All About You

By getting to know your audience better, you can do a better job of reaching them — which we all hope translates to getting them through your doors. [Caring.com](#), a Senior Housing Forum partner, produces a survey about senior care searchers called [The Caregiver Journey](#) that does just that. And in the latest version, over 4,500 respondents participated — almost doubling the number from the previous one!

Here's the "who's who" breakdown:

- 67% identified as family caregivers
- 22% identified as older adults "caring for self"
- 11% identified as professional caregivers

Who are these family caregivers? Females dominate at 75%, and the majority (54%) are ages 50 to 70, comprised of adult children (39%), spouses (29%), friends/relatives (12%), and self (20%).

Who are they caring for? The large majority of care receivers — 60% — have celebrated their 80th birthday and beyond. Many are also dealing with some level of memory loss:

- 46% have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or dementia
- 13% are suspected to have Alzheimer's or dementia but have not been officially diagnosed
- 27% are dealing with age-related memory decline but don't have dementia
- 13% show no signs of memory loss

Now that we know "who's" looking, let's take a look at "what" these online searchers do on a daily basis, and how that influences what they need to hear from you.

## **Working 9-5, and Then Some**

Across the board, caregivers are giving a lot...of themselves, of their financial resources, of their time. For 39% of caregivers, the commitment is [equivalent to a full-time job](#), logging 30 hours or more each week. And if they're going to an office too, caregiving is still very much a part of their day:

- 63% cited on-the-job distractions related to caregiving
- 41% missed work due to caregiving
- 55% missed more than 7 days of work
- 31% frequently arrived late or left early

These are busy people, juggling many responsibilities and finding themselves stretched to their limits. These are people who [care about their loved ones](#) and their careers, and who may even have children at home who rely on them too. They're also [giving from their wallets](#): while 46% of respondents spent \$5,000 a year or less (which is still no small amount), 8% spent more than \$50,000 annually on caregiving expenses.

## **The Where & Why of Caregiving**

The Caregiver Journey survey analyzed the living arrangements of caregivers and care receivers in four segments: living together, living at home independently, residing in a senior living community, or caring for self across settings. This part of the survey also looked at the motivations behind a move — wherever they would land.

Check out some of the top reasons for a change of address:

- Medical condition (61%)
- Safety concerns (59%)
- Transportation or mobility issues (33%)
- Home maintenance or home upkeep challenges (31%)
- Financial considerations (29%)

## **Decision Time**

When it's time to make a decision about a move, 29% of respondents did so in less than 30 days, and 39% took 1-6 months before making the transition. How many of these decision-makers actually visited your website? Only 18%, as opposed to those who found communities based their own knowledge of what's in the area (44%) or recommendations from friends and family (37%).

Interesting, as it seems to indicate that most searchers are considering your community after someone else has already told them about it, or they discovered it themselves (remember, these are busy people who don't have the luxury of extensive research time). And since location was one of the top reasons a person ultimately chose a particular community, your marketing efforts should probably stay pretty close to home.

## **Let's Hear It for the Men!**

Male caregivers made the survey too, comprising 25% of family caregiver respondents and largely falling in the 60-89 age range (81%).

One of the most significant differences between male and female caregivers? Whether they're multitasking or not: according to survey results, 66% of male caregivers were retired, as compared to 47% of their female counterparts. And 70% of male caregivers lived with their care receivers, as opposed to only 54% of female caregivers, who are probably traveling between their own home and their parents to provide care and support. Male caregivers were also spending more of their own money on a care receiver and were more likely to be providing care full-time.

As you work on your next big digital marketing campaign, update your website and listings, or design new print materials, keep these facts and stats in mind. Picture the people behind these stats: their stories, how they're spending their time and money, what they value, and how you can partner with them in caring for the people they love.

Want to review Caring.com's webinar presentation of the survey data in more depth? Watch the [webinar recording](#) or [scroll through the slides](#).



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