

Autism spectrum disorder caregiver healthcare resource utilization and economic burden: results from the 2024 US National Health and Wellness Survey

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Background

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurological and developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave.<sup>1</sup>
- In the United States (U.S.), 1 in 36 children and 1 in 45 adults have ASD.<sup>2,3</sup>
- Millions of Americans are caregivers with many caring for individuals with neurological or developmental conditions.<sup>4</sup>

Objectives

The study aimed to describe the sociodemographic profile and economic burden experienced by caregivers to those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Methods

- Data from the 2024 US National Health and Wellness Survey, a cross-sectional, nationally representative, general population survey, were used.
- Participants are adults (aged ≥18 years), recruited using general population panels; using a quota sampling technique.

- Participants self-reported being caregivers to adults with ASD (CA) or caregivers to children with ASD (CC). Caregiver characteristics and healthcare resource utilization (HCRU) were evaluated.
- The economic burden of HCRU will be estimated using the most recent data from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey and inflated to 2024 medical care costs using data from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.<sup>5,6</sup>

Results

- Sample sizes were n=1,254 CA and n=1,908 CC.
- 63.7% of CA were male whereas 51.4% of CC were female. Many were non-Hispanic White (CA: 62.4%; CC 58.0%).
- The majority were insured (CA: 85.7%; CC: 86.6%); household income ≥\$75,000 was significantly higher among CA (CA: 61.7%; CC: 48.9%).
- Significantly more CA (81.6%) were employed (full-time or part-time) than CC (67.2%; p<0.001).
- CA were significantly more likely to be currently using technology to monitor or manage the health and safety of the care recipient compared to CC (59.2% versus 35.5%; p<0.001).
- On average, CA had more HCP visits (9.1±22.5 vs. 8.0±16.3), ER visits (2.1±4.5 vs. 1.5±4.4), and hospitalizations (2.3±5.5 vs. 1.3±2.8) in the past 6 months compared to CC.
- CA had more economic burden accrued from HCP visits (\$3,560±\$8,693 vs. \$3,083±\$6,312), ER visits (\$3,310±\$7,229 vs.\$2,427±\$6,947), and hospitalizations (\$37,798±\$91,151 vs. \$21,753±\$46,867) compared to CC.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

		Total Sample (N=75,013)		Caregivers (Adults) (n=1,254)		Caregivers (Children) (n=1,908)		P-value (Adults versus Children)
		%	N	%	N	%	N	
Age	Age (mean, standard deviation)	48.5	17.6	38.2	12.5	41.3	13.0	<0.001
Gender	Male	47.5%	35657	63.7%	799	48.6%	927	<0.001
	Female	52.5%	39356	36.3%	455	51.4%	981	
Race	African American / Black	15.7%	11748	13.2%	165	16.2%	309	<0.001
	Asian	4.4%	3312	2.2%	27	2.4%	46	
	White or Caucasian	62.0%	46484	62.4%	783	58.0%	1107	
	Other (All other responses)	4.8%	3572	2.4%	30	5.1%	97	
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino [yes]	13.2%	9897	19.9%	249	18.3%	349	0.429
	Insured (all options)	84.0%	62993	85.7%	1074	86.6%	1653	
Health Insurance	Not Insured	16.0%	12020	14.4%	180	13.4%	255	<0.001
	Employed (full time or part time)	56.0%	42040	81.6%	1023	67.2%	1283	
Employment	Not Employed/Retired	44.0%	32973	18.4%	231	32.8%	625	<0.001
	Income							
Income	Up to \$50,000	31.7%	23055	27.3%	339	36.8%	695	<0.001
	\$50,000 to \$74,999	15.7%	11381	11.0%	137	14.3%	270	
	\$75,000 or higher	52.6%	38260	61.7%	768	48.9%	923.0	

Figure 1: Caregiver Interest in Technology

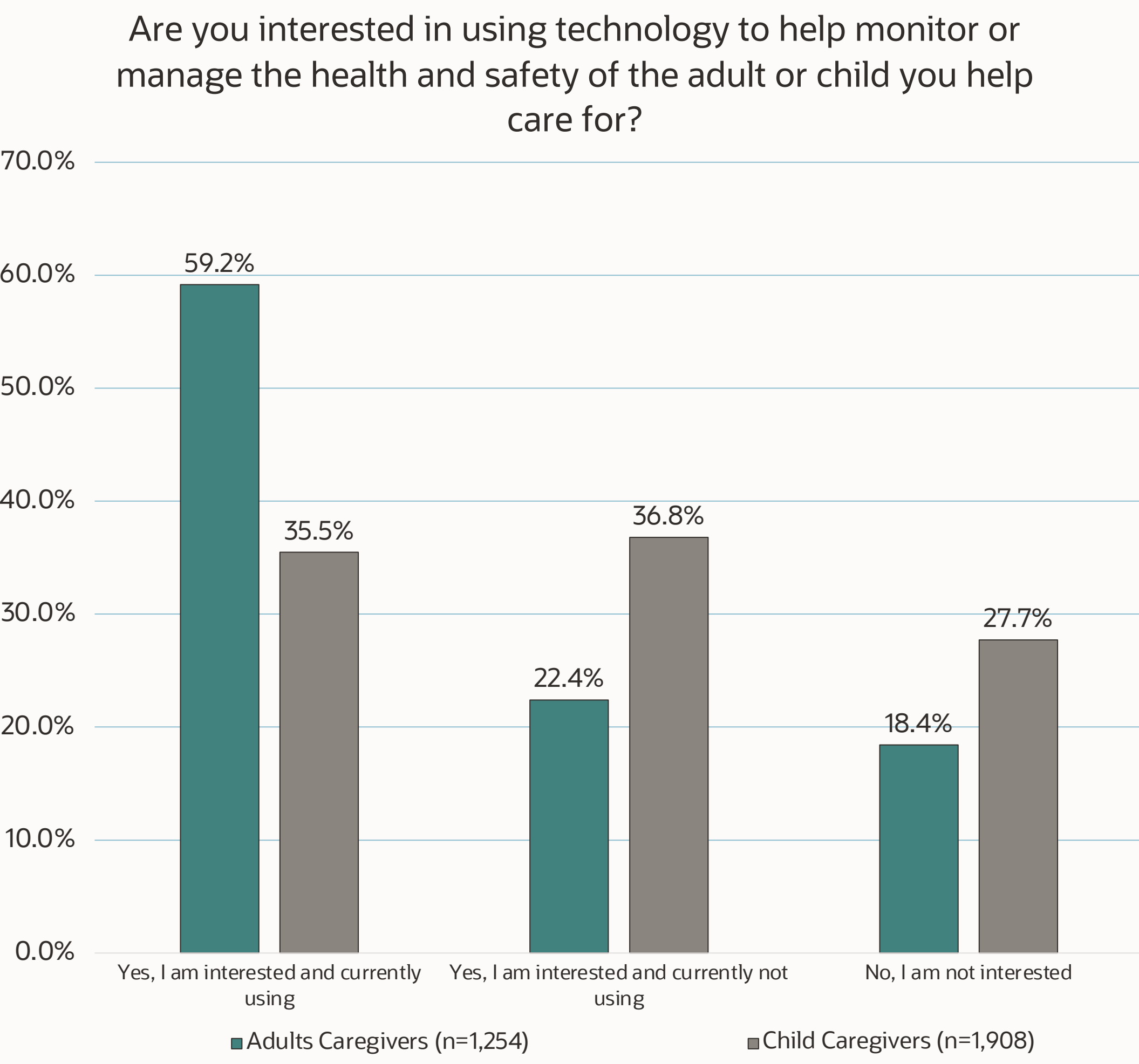
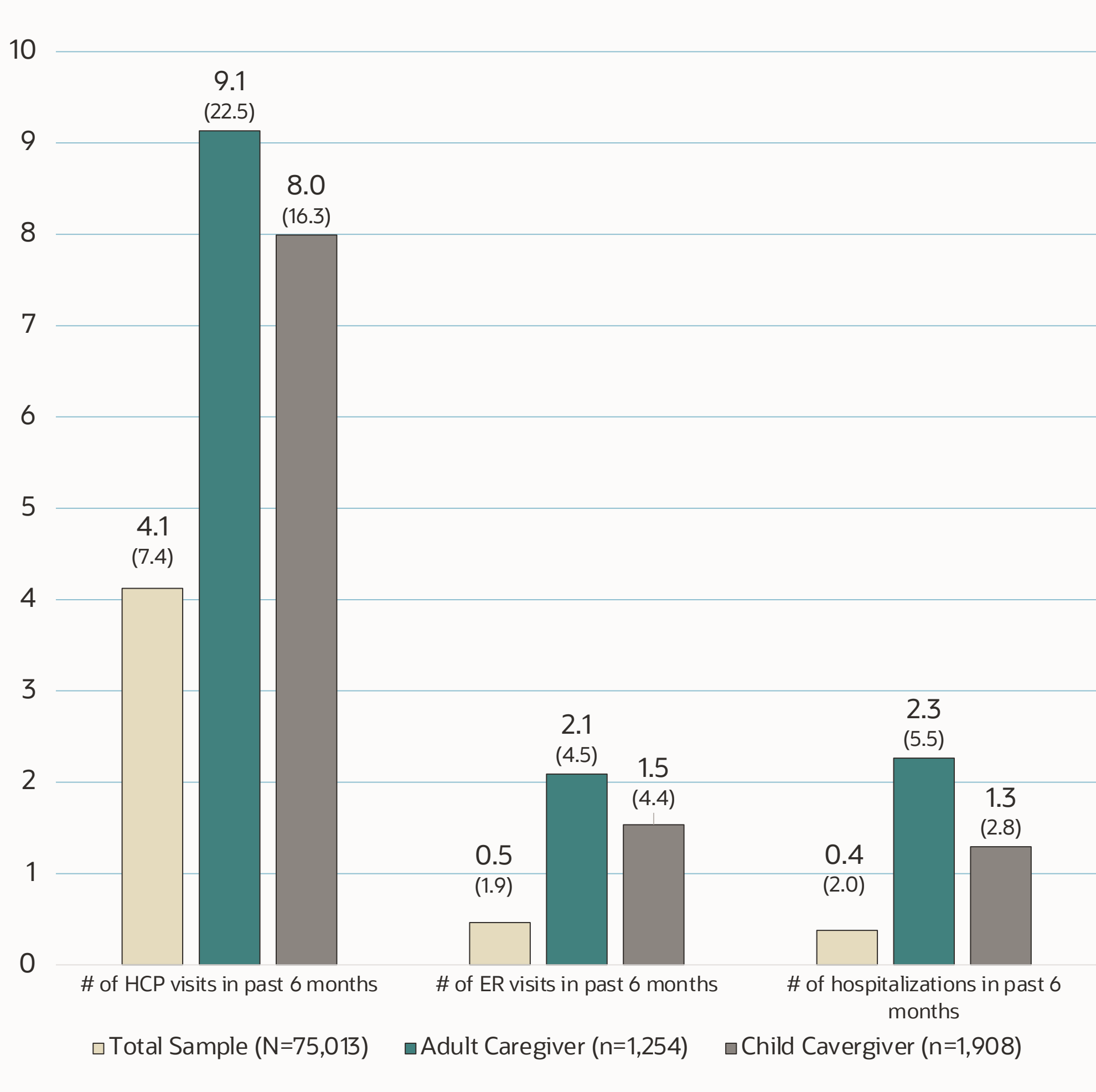
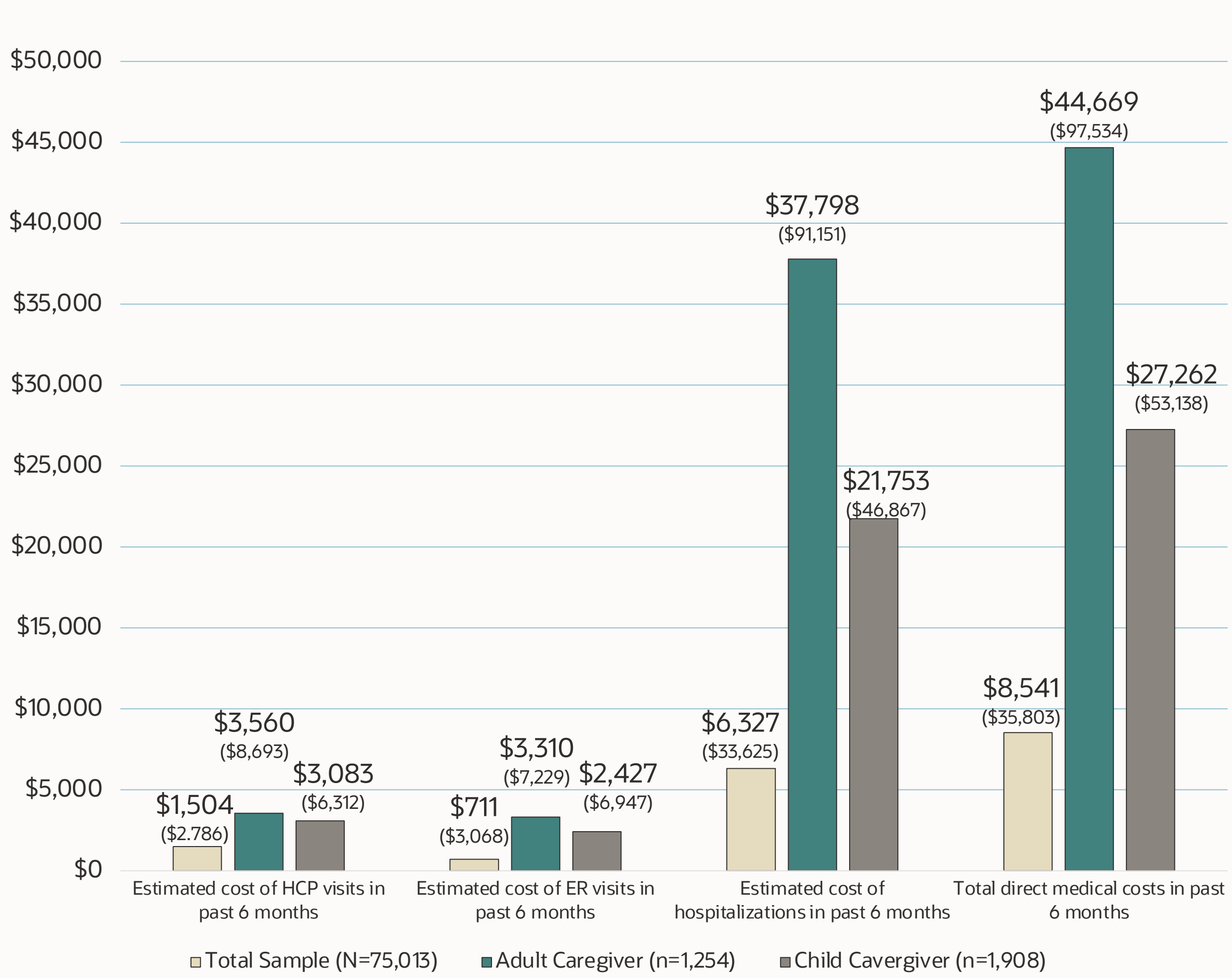


Figure 2: Average Healthcare Resource Use in the Past 6 Months



Standard deviation are in parenthesis under mean values.

Figure 3: Average Estimated Healthcare Resource Expenditure in the Past 6 Months



Standard deviation are in parenthesis under mean values.

Conclusion

CA utilized more healthcare services and faced a higher economic burden compared to CC, suggesting CA may need additional forms of support to continue to provide adequate care. However, both CA and CC may need additional support to mitigate the financial burden due to caregiver responsibilities, as both groups faced higher HCRU and economic impact.

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