Introduction

The number of adults with developmental disabilities has grown steadily in Nebraska and the United States over time. Most adult children with a disability live with a family member. These family members represent an important caregiving resource. When they are no longer available, the state provides residential care. Today, however, many caregiving parents are faced with both their own health care challenges and finding suitable care for their adult child with a disability after their own death.

Communities are challenged to provide suitable living arrangements and a continuum of care based on the needs of these adult children. The waiting lists for community living for the developmentally disabled are growing because of: a) the increased incidence and prevalence of individuals with disabilities; b) the Olmstead decision that mandated that both older adults and individuals with disabilities should live in the least restrictive settings; and c) policies such as the Affordable Care Act (2010) that shifted state Medicaid funding from long-term residential services to community based care.

This report uses data from the American Community Survey (ACS) from 2000 to 2010 to highlight trends in the population characteristics of both older adult caregivers and their adult children with disabilities in Nebraska.

Disability can be measured in a number of ways. It can be a condition that affects one’s ability to work and/or one’s ability to perform an activity of daily living (ADL) such as eating, dressing, socializing, or caring for oneself. Disabilities can range from a moderate condition to severe. In addition, the surveys we use change the measures of disability over time. This report focuses on two measures of disability: one that affects the ability to work and one that affects the ability to perform ADLs. It should be noted that an individual who has a disability that significantly affects ADLs is also likely to have a work disability.

Characteristics of Adult Children with Disabilities

Work Disability

More adult children are living in their parents’ homes regardless of their disability status. As expected, an adult child with a disability is more likely to live in his or her parents’ homes than an adult child who does not have a disability. While the percentage of adult children without disabilities living with their parents has shown a slight increase since the 1970s, the percentage of adult children with disabilities living with their parents was almost twice as high. This percentage showed a slight dip in 2000. It should be noted that this question was not asked in the 2010 Census.

In order to examine the question whether the percentage of adult children with work disabilities living with their parents has increased over time in Nebraska, the ACS was used. The results from the analysis of this data show that from 2001 to 2007, the percentage of adult children (ages 25 to 44) with a work disability living with their parents rose steadily from 13% to over 17%. Adult children ages 45 to 64 with
a work disability living with their parents rose from roughly 3% to 5% and then dropped to 1%. These results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Adult Children Living with Parents by Work Disability Status by Age, Nebraska: 2001-2007

![Graph showing the percent of adult children living with parents by work disability status from 2001 to 2007.](image)


Figure 2. Adult Children Living with Parents by Status of Disabilities that Affect Activities of Daily Living by Age, Nebraska: 2001 to 2010

![Graph showing the percent of adult children living with parents by disability status from 2001 to 2010.](image)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2001-2010; prepared by the UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, December 2013.
Limitations in Activities of Daily Living

The ACS asked respondents to identify whether they had a disability that caused a limitation in an ADL defined as "getting around inside the home, bathing, dressing and eating" (U.S. Census, 2012). Figure 2 shows that between 2001 and 2010, the percentage of adult children ages 25 to 44 with disabilities affecting ADLs living with their parents showed the greatest increases. Adult children (45 to 64) with a disability affecting ADLs increased from 3% to 5% from 2001 to 2010.

Figure 3. Adult Children Living with Parents by Type of Disability, Nebraska: 2001-2010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2001-2010; prepared by the UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, December 2013.

Types of Disabilities of Adult Children

The next set of analyses used the ACS to examine the specific types of disabilities found in adult children living with their parents. Between 2001 and 2010, the most frequently reported disability for adult children living with their parents was a physical disability, ranging from just over 8% to just under 6%. Other disabilities were those related to remembering, self-care, auditory, sensory, mobility, and visual. The breakdown of disabilities for adult children ages 25 to 64 with disabilities living with their parents is shown in Figure 3.

Characteristics of Adult Caregivers

The next set of analyses examined the characteristics of the parent caregivers. Two aspects were examined: parent age and parent disability status. The results from the ACS suggest that adult children with disabilities tend to live with a parent who also has a disability. As expected, the older the child with the disability, the older the parent. As expected, as the age of the parent increases, the probability the parent will have a disability also increases.
Figure 4. Adult Children Ages 25-44 with Disabilities Living with Parents by Parents’ Age, Nebraska: 2001-2010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2001-2010; prepared by the UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, December 2013

Figure 5. Adult Children Ages 45-64 with Disabilities Living with Parents by Parents’ Age, Nebraska: 2001-2010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2001-2010; prepared by the UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, December 2013
**Age**

Over the last decade, approximately one-half of adult children ages 25 to 64 with disabilities affecting ADLs were living with a parent who was 55 to 64 years of age. Between 10% and 20% of these adult children lived with a parent who was 65 to 74 years of age. The age breakdowns for adult children ages 25 to 44 are shown in Figure 4 on the previous page.

Adult children (ages 45 to 64) with disabilities are more likely to be residing with parents over 60 years of age. This is expected because of the age of the child. Figure 5 on the previous page shows the breakdown of parents’ age for adult children ages 45 to 64 with disabilities living with their parent.

**Figure 6. Adult Children with Disabilities Living with Parents by Disability of Parents, Nebraska: 2001-2010**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2001-2010; prepared by the UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, December 2013.

**Health of Caregiver**

Most adult children with disabilities live with an older adult parent who is also challenged with a disability. The final set of analyses used the ACS to examine the specific types of disabilities found among parents of adults with disabilities ages 25 to 64 who live with their parents. Physical, care, or mobility disabilities were most commonly found among these parents. The breakdown is shown in Figure 6.

**Number of Adult Children with Disabilities**

The last analysis examined the total number of adult children with disabilities that affected activities of daily living in their parents’ homes from 2001 to 2010. Figure 7 shows that this number increased from 2,834 in 2001 to 4,276 in 2010. This represents a 50.9% increase between 2001 and 2010.
Conclusions and Implications

This report used American Community Survey (ACS) data to examine adult children with disabilities living with their adult caregivers in Nebraska from 2001 to 2010. The results of these analyses suggest that the population of adult children with disabilities is growing over time and living with caregivers who have health care needs of their own.

In order to plan effectively, more will need to be known about the needs and the capacity of caregivers as well as the capacity of the current structured continuum of care in Nebraska for adults with disabilities. This information will help with planning for the most appropriate services for both older adult caregivers and their adult children with disabilities and will decrease the amount of time spent on waiting lists for adult children with disabilities for group home services, if necessary.

Currently, funding has shifted toward Home and Community Based Waivers to support individuals in their homes through supported living. This can help adult children and their older adult parent caregivers maintain supported living in their communities as long as possible. In addition, the development of housing for adults with disabilities remains a priority for most communities. Finally, Braddock (2009) maintains that universal design that supports older adults and smart technology can benefit both older adults and adults with disabilities through home monitoring and architectural design that is much less costly than residential care.
References


