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“This is What Art is Supposed to Do”

**How a Caregiving Storyline on
This Is Us Helped Audiences Feel Seen**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

For many Americans, caregiving is a fundamental reality. One in five U.S. adults are caregivers to older adults or disabled individuals. Twenty-nine percent have a child under 18 at home, and 12% of those parents are also providing unpaid care for another adult. Because care can take many forms, including financial, physical, and emotional, these numbers likely underestimate the number of people who regularly provide care for someone else. At the same time, caregiving remains largely invisible and undervalued.

Scripted entertainment has been shown to impact audiences' attitudes, beliefs, and behavior — including support for existing or new policies — around a wide range of social issues. Thus, it is critical to understand the ways in which care shows up on-screen, and how these portrayals affect public attitudes related to caregiving.

Study Overview

The final season of NBC's ***This Is Us*** featured a nuanced, multi-episode story arc in which the Pearson family cares for matriarch Rebecca as her health declines due to Alzheimer's Disease. Caring Across Generations — an organization focused on transforming care policies, organizing caregivers and care recipients, shifting cultural norms around care, and elevating the stories of caregivers — engaged the USC Norman Lear Center's Media Impact Project (MIP) to study:

- Twitter and Reddit discourse about care-related topics before and after four key care-centric episodes;
- The storyline's impact on audience attitudes and beliefs about care; and
- Instagram responses to a social impact campaign led by Caring Across Generations and Hilarity for Charity, ***This Is Us: This Is Care. A Conversation.***

What We Found

How did *This Is Us* influence social media conversations?

- Overall, the caregiving storyline on *This Is Us* inspired viewers to share their own care experiences on social media, driving a surge in care-related Twitter dialogue and prompting diverse, thoughtful reactions on Reddit.
- On Twitter, the volume of care-related Tweets increased by up to six times in the two-weeks following key episodes. The largest increase followed the episode "Miguel," which focused on Rebecca's second husband's caregiving journey.
- On Reddit, about half of the comments (49%) praised the storyline, 35% were mixed, and 16% critiqued the storyline. Sixty-one percent of positive comments indicated the storyline accurately represented their life experiences.

How did Instagram users respond to a social impact campaign that amplified the final season's caregiving storyline?

- One-in-four comments discussed caregiving topics such as Alzheimer's, dementia, caregiving, and aging or elder care. Instagram comments that implied having seen the storyline were three times more likely to include caregiving themes.
- Among comments that implied having seen the storyline, 82% were positive. Of those, three in four suggested the commenter gained a new perspective on their caregiving experiences.

How did *This Is Us* influence audience attitudes and actions?

Compared to *This is Us* viewers who did not see the final season, those who watched it were more likely to agree that:

- Caregiving is a universal issue that affects everyone at one point or another in life;
- It is important to have conversations with family and/or loved ones about planning for care; and
- Nobody should have to choose between their livelihood and caring for someone important to them.

Viewers were also more likely to support:

- Increased government funding for home and community-based care services;
- Guaranteed paid family leave and medical leave for workers who need to take time off to care for a family member; and
- Improved wages, benefits, and training for those who assist older adults and disabled people.

When viewers of the final season were asked to indicate their opinions of the storyline:

- 52% said the storyline made them want to seek more information on the issue of caregiving; and
- 45% said the storyline made them want to seek support in their own caregiving journey.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this report, we propose the following recommendations for content creators:

- Tell more stories that include care.
- Expand the diversity of on-screen caregiving experiences.
- Reframe care as a universal human issue.
- Highlight systemic barriers to caregiving challenges.
- Illustrate exemplary caregiving conversations.
- Devise social impact campaigns to amplify caregiving representation and dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

The Centers for Disease Control defines caregiving as the act of providing assistance with another person's social or health needs.¹ Though caregiving is often associated with child care, the reality is that care is essential at different points across the lifespan and is especially critical for disabled people, those with chronic illness, and older adults. Care can be long-term or temporary, and includes a variety of tasks, such as providing transportation to medical appointments, helping with medication regimens, advocating for care recipients, helping someone bathe or dress, doing housework, preparing meals, offering financial support, and so much more.² Care can be paid or unpaid, and it can be provided by professional caregivers or by family members, friends, or neighbors.

For many Americans, caregiving is a fundamental reality of life. Twenty-nine percent of U.S. adults have a child under 18 at home, and 12% of those caring for children are also providing unpaid care for an adult.³ The American Association of Retired Persons estimates that one in five U.S. adults — 53 million in total — are caregivers to older adults or disabled individuals.⁴ Still, the broad nature of care work means that these numbers likely underestimate the total number of people who regularly provide care for someone else. Despite the centrality of care in the human experience, care work remains largely invisible, and few people identify themselves as caregivers.⁵ Instead, many view caregiving as an extension of their familial role.⁶ And while many caregivers hope for a future in which care is valued and supported, the present lack of support leaves many wrestling with feelings of guilt at the thought of asking for help.

The AARP estimates that one in five U.S. adults – 53 million in total – are caregivers to older adults or disabled individuals.

The undervaluing and invisibility of care at the societal level reinforces the notion that care is the responsibility of individuals and families rather than something to be supported on a collective level. In addition to advocacy efforts around specific policies and legislation, many point towards narrative change as a tool for challenging the deep-set ways of thinking required for building policy support. Narrative change refers to strategies that harness the power of narratives, including those in entertainment media, to shift public attitudes towards equity and justice.⁷ Narrative change is informed by decades of research that have found that popular media can have a significant impact on audiences' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and policy support.⁸ Thus, it is critical to understand the ways in which care shows up on-screen and the impact these portrayals have on the attitudes and beliefs of viewers.

- 1 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Caregiving for family and friends – A public health issue*. <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/caregiving/caregiver-brief.html>
- 2 Johns Hopkins Medicine. (n.d.). *What is a caregiver?* https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/about/community_health/johns-hopkins-bayview/services/called_to_care/what_is_a_caregiver.html
- 3 Livingston, G. (2018, November 29). *More than one-in-ten U.S. parents are also caring for an adult*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/11/29/more-than-one-in-ten-u-s-parents-are-also-caring-for-an-adult/>
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- 7 Rosenthal, E.L., Korobkova, K., Weinstein, D., Jung, E.J., Jauriqui, V., and Rogers, A. (2023). *A strategic framework to guide investments in narrative change: Best practices for media and beyond*. USC Norman Lear Center Media Impact Project <https://learcenter.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/Norman+Lear+Center+Narrative+Change+Investment+Framework.pdf>
- 8 Korobkova, K., Weinstein, D., Felt, L., Rosenthal, E. L., & Blakley, J. (2023). *Lights, camera, impact: 20 years of research on the power of entertainment to support narrative change*. USC Norman Lear Center Media Impact Project. <https://learcenter.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/NormanLearCenter-Narrative-Change-Research-Review.pdf>

Caregiving in Scripted Entertainment

A recent study from the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media and Caring Across Generations found that care-related experiences are underrepresented in scripted television. Among broadcast, cable, and streaming shows airing in 2021, less than 11% featured a prominent care storyline.⁹ According to this research, when such storylines do appear, they fail to represent the full spectrum of care. For example, 75% of storylines focused on parenting children, and less than one-third depicted long-term care related to disability or aging. When care of older adults is depicted, it almost always takes place in institutional settings. Furthermore, depictions of care rarely incorporate common challenges faced by everyday people, such as balancing work and care, financial strain, or navigating policies and programs that exist to support caregivers in the U.S.

While current research underscores the invisibility of care, less is known about how nuanced representations, when they do appear, affect audience attitudes, behaviors, or conversations around care.

Caregiving in NBC's *This Is Us*

This Is Us is a family drama that premiered on NBC in 2016 and ran for six seasons, concluding in May of 2022. The show follows the Pearson family as they navigate life, love, and loss. Throughout its run, *This Is Us* received critical acclaim, earning 39 Emmy nominations.¹⁰ The series also showed strong viewership throughout all six seasons, peaking in its later seasons. The series finale brought in 6.4 million viewers,¹¹ which was its second highest ever showing.¹²

Season four introduced a caregiving storyline when one of the characters, Rebecca, starts to experience cognitive decline due to Alzheimer's disease. Throughout the season, Rebecca and her adult children are forced to have tough conversations and weigh various care options. A study of this season found evidence of the storyline's impact on viewers' intentions towards planning for aging, which was motivated by a reduction in stigma.¹³ Though care was a theme in this season, the overall focus was primarily on Alzheimer's disease.

The sixth and final season of *This Is Us* placed greater emphasis on the Pearson family's caregiving journey as Rebecca shows continued signs of cognitive decline. Throughout the season, viewers see Rebecca's husband, Miguel, and her adult children — known as the "Big Three" — further embrace into their roles as caregivers. While care is woven throughout the season, four key episodes stand out for their nuanced representation of the decision making that surrounds caregiving, and the personal sacrifices that often accompany it:

- **Taboo** (air date: March 8, 2022; viewers: 4.2 million¹⁴): In this episode, Rebecca initiates a conversation with her adult children about planning for her care. She wants her second husband, Miguel, to make decisions about her care moving forward, and if something happens to Miguel, she would like for her daughter Kate to

9 Conroy, M., Terán, L., & Storie, L. (2023). *Make care pop: What we see and don't see about caregiving on TV*. Caring Across Generations and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender and Media. https://issuu.com/caringacross/docs/hollywood_report

10 Snierston, D. (2022, July 12). *This Is Us* receives only 1 Emmy nomination for final season. Entertainment Weekly. <https://ew.com/awards/emmys/this-is-us-only-one-emmy-nomination-final-season/#:~:text=Over%20its%20six%2Dseason%20run,four%20victories%2C%20with%20Sterling%20K>

11 Mass, J. (2022, May 25). *'This Is Us' series finale scores highest rating of final season*. Variety. <https://variety.com/2022/tv/ratings/this-is-us-series-finale-ratings-1235277318/>

12 Maglio, T., (2022, May 25). *'This Is Us' finale had the series' best ratings since November 2020*. IndieWire. <https://www.indiewire.com/features/general/this-is-us-series-finale-ratings-viewers-jack-rebecca-1234728498/>

13 Hoffman, B. L., Sidani, J. E., Wang, Y., Chang, J., & Burke, J. G. (2022). "It encourages family discussion": A mixed-methods examination of the *this is us* alzheimer's disease & caregiving storyline. *Journal of Health Communication*, 27(6), 382-393. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2022.2111620>

14 TV Series Finale. (2022, May 25). *This Is Us: Season six ratings*. <https://tvseriesfinale.com/tv-show/this-ias-us-season-six-ratings/>

step in. Rebecca brings up the idea of possibly needing an in-home caregiver in the future, and encourages her children not to let her condition hold them back in their own lives.

- ✿ **Day of the Wedding** (air date: April 19, 2022; viewers: 5.1 million): The Pearson family struggles with the bittersweet emotions of a family wedding knowing that it may be one of Rebecca's last major life events with her memory mostly intact. The change in routine during the day of the wedding proves to be difficult for Rebecca, who keeps confusing her son Kevin with her late husband, Jack. Meanwhile, Miguel shows signs of being overwhelmed, and wrestles with a need for emotional release and a psychological break from his role as Rebecca's primary caregiver.
- ✿ **Miguel** (air date: May 3, 2022; viewers: 4.7 million): This episode explores Miguel's backstory as a Puerto Rican immigrant and shows us how his family provided home care for Miguel's aunt in the past. In present time, Miguel provides care for Rebecca, helping with tasks such as medication management and physical therapy, and advocating for his wife. Though Miguel is experiencing some health concerns of his own, he sacrifices his well-being to care for Rebecca. When Rebecca's children insist on hiring a full-time home care worker, Miguel resists, feeling a sense of obligation to provide the care himself. Eventually, he agrees to hire the worker, who assumes care for both Rebecca and Miguel until Miguel passes away.
- ✿ **Family Meeting** (air date: May 10, 2022, viewers: 4.8 million): The Pearson children hold a family meeting to discuss how to move forward with Rebecca's care after the death of Miguel. The siblings argue about where Rebecca should live and who should take charge. We see them provide care for Rebecca in the form of everyday tasks, such as brushing her hair and helping her apply lotion.

Instagram Social Impact Campaign

NBC collaborated with Caring Across Generations and Hilarity for Charity (HFC) to produce an Instagram social impact campaign titled ***This Is Us. This Is Care. A Conversation.*** which ran between March and June 2022. Caring Across Generations is an organization focused on transforming care policies, shifting cultural norms around care, and elevating the stories of caregivers, while HFC supports Alzheimer's disease caregivers.

Study Overview

The prominent and nuanced caregiving storyline in the final season of *This Is Us* provided a unique opportunity to explore how such depictions affect audience attitudes, policy support, and conversations related to care. To this end, Caring Across Generations engaged the USC Norman Lear Center's Media Impact Project (MIP) to conduct a research study including the following:

- ✿ An analysis of Twitter¹⁵ and Reddit conversations about care-related topics before and after the airing of four key care-centric episodes.
- ✿ An analysis of responses to the Instagram social impact campaign ***This Is Us: This Is Care. A Conversation.***
- ✿ A survey measuring the impact of the final season of *This Is Us* (NBC) on audience attitudes and policy beliefs around caregiving.

15 In late July 2022, Twitter re-branded as X. Because it was known as Twitter during the analysis time frame, we refer to the platform as Twitter and associated posts as tweets throughout this report.

HOW DID *THIS IS US* INFLUENCE TWITTER AND REDDIT CONVERSATIONS?

To gain insights into how audiences responded to the representation of caregiving on *This Is Us*, we examined social media dialogue on Twitter and Reddit¹⁶ surrounding four key episodes of the sixth and final season: “Taboo,” “Day of the Wedding,” “Miguel,” and “Family Meeting.”

What We Did

For both Twitter and Reddit analyses, we conducted keyword searches beginning two weeks before each target episode aired through two weeks after the air date, combining several search terms, shown in Table 1.¹⁷ Our sample included tweets that mentioned at least one care-related search term to limit our analysis to care-related conversations around the show (rather than conversations about actors or other storylines).

Table 1.

Sample Used for Analysis

Episode title	Taboo	Day of the Wedding	Miguel	Family Meeting
Air Date	3/8/2022	4/19/2022	5/3/2022	5/10/2022
Search Timeframe	2/22 - 3/22	4/5 - 5/3	4/19 - 5/17	4/26 - 5/24
Care-related Search Terms*	Care, Caregiving, Caregiver, Caretaker, #CareCantWait, #CareGiverLife, #FamilyCareGiver, @CaringAcrossGen, Mental health, Alzheimer’s disease, Dementia, Aging, Elder care, Parental leave, Maternity leave, Paternity leave, Child care, Disability, Illness, Caregiving infrastructure, Policy, Social support, Financial support			

* Reddit search terms excluded hashtags and Twitter handles.

Twitter Trends in Volume

The resulting dataset of 12,834 tweets was used to compare the volume of caregiving mentions in the two-week periods before versus after each of the four episodes. Additionally, for the “Miguel” episode — which had the largest increase in care-related tweets — we analyzed volume changes for each care-related search term.

Reddit Thematic Analysis

Reddit hosts user-generated forums called “subreddits,” where users discuss specific topics of interest. Using the Reddit API, we collected the top 250 posts in the *This Is Us* subreddit (/r/thisisus).¹⁸ We then filtered this dataset to include

16 Throughout this report, “Reddit comments” refer to both original submissions (posts) and associated comments on these Reddit posts.
17 See [Appendix A](#) for detailed social media data collection methodology.
18 The top posts are those that received the “highest score” in this subreddit, calculated by the difference between the number of upvotes and downvotes cast by Reddit users.

After the episode “Miguel” aired, there was a 40-fold increase in mentions of the word caregiving on Twitter.

comments mentioning any of 19 care-related search terms and keywords¹⁹ within the two week periods following the “Miguel” and “Family Meeting” episodes, which had the largest increases in care-related conversations.

Two human coders analyzed the resulting 298 unique Reddit comments for reactions to caregiving portrayals, identification with key characters, and the frequency of caregiving-related topics.²⁰

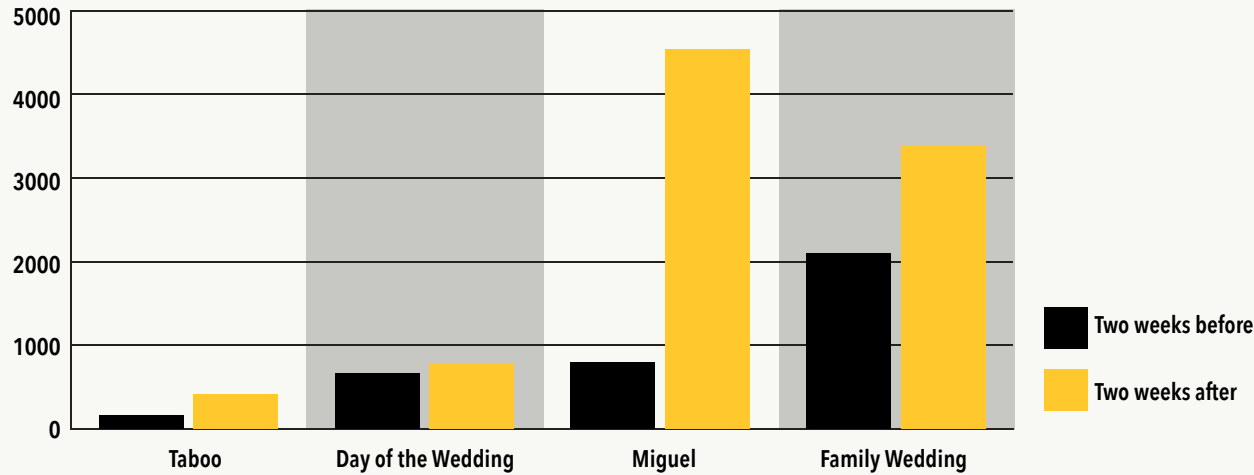
What We Found

Twitter Trends in Volume

Overall, the two-week periods following the four caregiving episodes had more than double the number of care-related keyword mentions (9,111 tweets) than the two-week periods before (3,723 tweets). As shown in Figure 1, each of the four key episodes was associated with a relative increase, ranging from 1.2 times (“Day of the Wedding”) to 5.7 times (“Miguel”).

Figure 1.

Change in Number of Care-related Tweets 2-weeks Before and After Each Episode



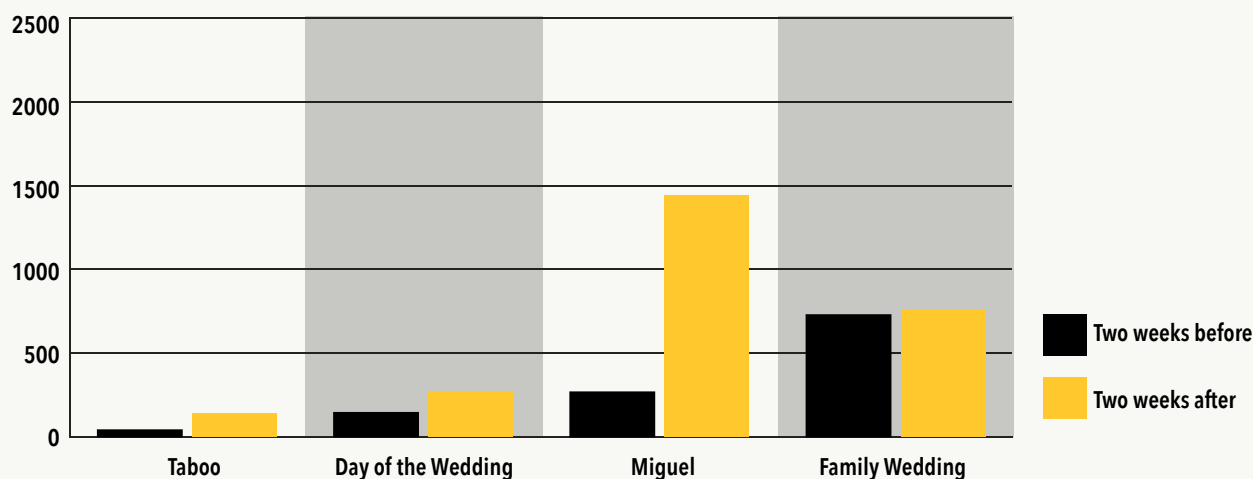
Unsurprisingly, care was the most frequently mentioned term, accounting for approximately two-thirds of all tweets that mentioned care-related terms. Even after excluding the word care from the analysis (N = 3,839 remaining tweets), the volume of care-related conversations increased by 5.3 times following the “Miguel” episode (Figure 2).

19 The 19 search terms for the Reddit thematic analysis were those listed in Table 3, excluding three hashtags and one Twitter handle.

20 See [Appendix A](#) for the comment analysis coding procedure, items, and reliability.

Figure 2.

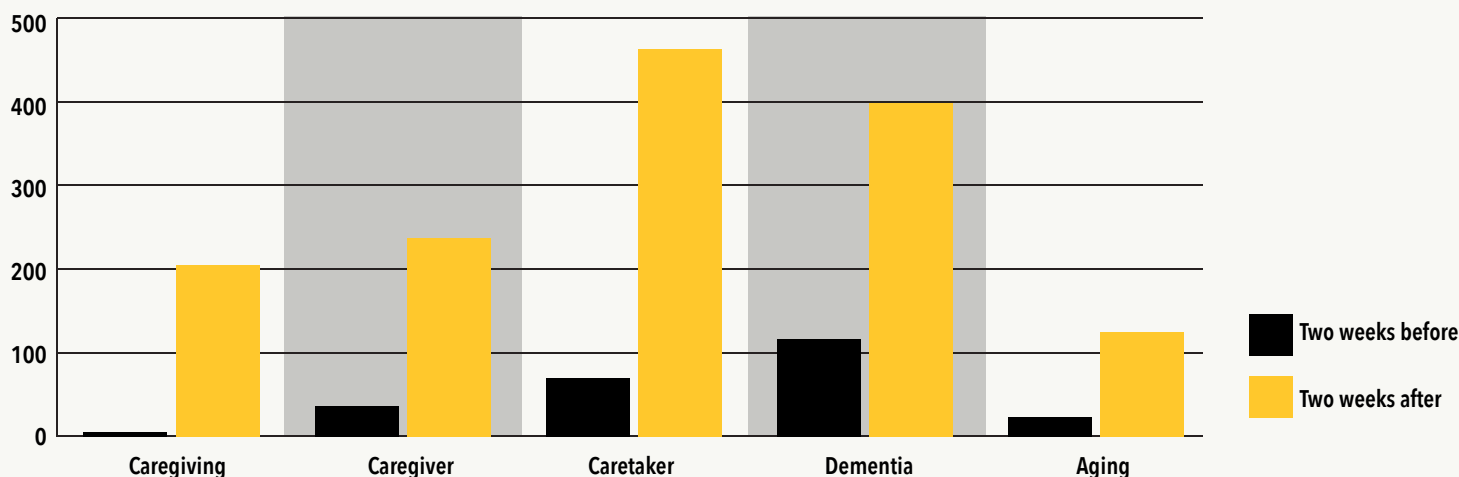
Shifts in Volume of Tweets Mentioning Care-Related Terms (excluding Care)



The “Miguel” episode saw an increase in tweets mentioning twelve different care-related terms.²¹ In particular, there was a 40-fold increase in mentions of the word *caregiving*. Mentions of *care*, *caregiver*, and *caretaker* surged by six to seven times, followed by *aging*, which saw a five-fold increase, and *mental health* and *dementia* which garnered three to four-fold increases in mentions (Figure 3).

Figure 3.

Shifts in Volume of Tweets Mentioning Care-Related Terms: “Miguel” Episode

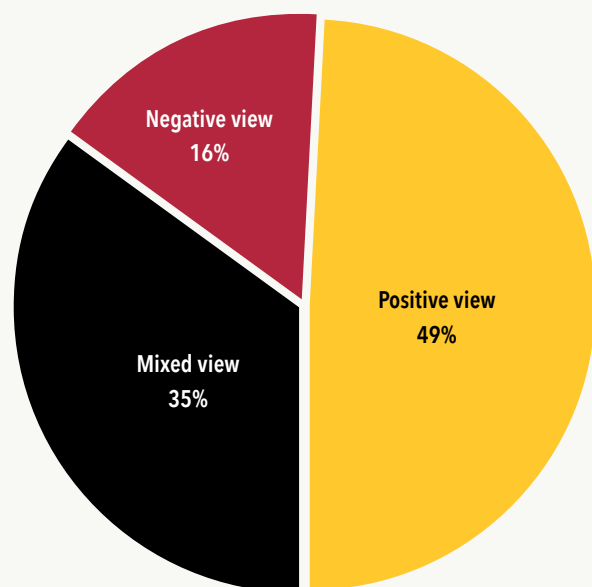


“Miguel” appears to have sparked fresh discussions on Twitter about various caregiving topics that had not been actively discussed before its airing. Specifically, *elder care* and *disability* along with terms like *#CareCantWait* and *@CaringAcrossGen* all saw an increase from zero in tweets following the episode’s airing.

21 There were no tweets mentioning “#CareGiverLife,” “#FamilyCaregiver,” “Alzheimer’s disease,” “Parental leave,” “Paternity leave,” “Child care,” “Caregiving infrastructure,” “Policy,” “Social support,” and “Financial support” after the episode aired. The number of tweets mentioning “Illness” remained the same (22) before and after the episode aired.

Figure 4.

Reddit Users' Reactions to Caregiving Portrayal on *This Is Us*



Reddit Thematic Analysis

Our analysis of comments from the /r/thisisus subreddit revealed a rich tapestry of reactions and in-depth conversations about the portrayal of caregiving in the show. Among the 298 comments we analyzed, 114 directly addressed the caregiving portrayal.²² Of these, about half (49%) expressed a positive view toward the show's caregiving storyline, 16% expressed a negative view, and 35% expressed mixed views (Figure 4).

Praise For Caregiving Portrayal

Of the 56 Reddit comments that praised the episodes' depiction of caregiving, the majority (61%) indicated that the show represented their real-life experiences and about half (48%) mentioned that the portrayal was realistic. About a quarter of comments (27%) deemed the depiction of caregiving believable. Reddit commenters shared how the show's portrayal of caregiving resonated with their personal experiences:

*"This is EXACTLY the way we cared for our mom. She moved in with my family and we **cared** for her til the end. Watching this ending has been very hard on me. [...] It also makes me see that I wouldn't have changed our decisions. I believe our mom died knowing she was loved."*

*"I went through the exact same thing recently with my aging mother **caretaking** my father with **Parkinson's**. It almost mirrored theirs exactly with her guilt that she needs to be there to **care** and can't abandon him, that he isn't comfortable with anyone but her.. ugh broke my dang heart again. So well done and very realistic."*

Comments also praised the way the show depicted caregiving in nuanced ways by acknowledging the emotional and physical challenges and emphasizing the importance of seeking support when caring for loved ones. For example, the episodes showcased Rebecca's children (Kate, Kevin, Randall) supporting a primary caregiver, Miguel, who learned to accept assistance from others, as one comment stated:

*"I was born and raised in Colombia and you're right. The parallel is beautiful: his parents modeled a behavior that he [Miguel] later did for his wife. [...] he was her husband and protector, and [felt] like HE was in charge of her care. **He thought he had to do it all**, but I once heard a wise person say that **seeking help w/care is a way to better care for another person (as it helps reduce the stress of being the caretaker)**."*

²² The majority of comments (184 out of 298) primarily discussed characters' behaviors, past storylines, or general thoughts about the show.

Some comments praised the show for its portrayal of early diagnosis and end of life issues. These depictions were viewed as helpful in raising awareness and accurately representing the complexities of caregiving and dementia on television.

*"I think the fact Rebecca got such an early diagnosis really helps her situation. She [...] came to terms with it while being mostly lucid and made plans while she still had capacity to. Often there is so little awareness around **dementia** that first signs are ignored by family and friends until the person has deteriorated so much that they cannot understand the diagnosis."*

Critiques of Caregiving Portrayal

A small number of Reddit comments (18) were critical of the storyline. Of these, nine cited a lack of alignment with their real-life experiences and 12 criticized its unrealistic or limited nature. Specifically, these comments criticized the episodes for presenting an idealized portrayal of caregiving that fails to accurately reflect the financial hardships, sacrifices and emotional toll typically associated with caregiving in real life. The comments highlighted a stark contrast between the characters' access to resources like full-time, private home care and the real-life experiences of caregivers who often face significant financial challenges:

*"This is one case where 'This is Us' is really about 'This is the Top 0.1% of Us.' Very few people can afford private **home care** with full time nursing and yes, it's a lucky few people with **dementia** that are as placid and 'easy' to **care** for as Rebecca."*

*"I know Kevin has \$\$\$ from TV series work, but that no one mentioned the **costs** of full-time care vs a memory-**care facility**, etc just belies the reality of families touched by **Alzheimer's** disease. [...] For my mother, who also had Alzheimer's and for whom the cost of a facility was beyond our means, it meant my sister and I gave up our single lives, and moved back to our parent's home to become Mom's **caregivers**."*

Mixed Responses

More than a third of the Reddit comments (40) conveyed mixed reactions to the depiction of caregiving. Most of these comments (78%) criticized the show's unrealistic portrayal of caregiving, with over half (55%) highlighting the gap between the on-screen and real-life experiences. Many (42%) pointed out that the show only touched on less severe aspects of dementia. At the same time, the vast majority (93%) valued the representation of caregiving on-screen. They often acknowledged the need for dramatized TV storylines and understood that the caregiving narrative was framed within the context of the show's established premise and characters developed over six seasons.

*"Rich people are real and that's what we are seeing play out on screen. They've never tried to pretend that the versions of the adult children taking **care** of Rebecca are living paycheck to paycheck. [...] This portrayal is uncommon, not unrealistic."*

*"When you have money the **healthcare** problem in the US doesn't exist so I don't think it's odd that it wasn't mentioned. [...] I do agree with [critical comments] on them making **Alzheimer's** look too easy, this is a disease that can destroy families and oftentimes it can be worse for the loved one than it can be for the person with the **illness**, but on the show it's portrayed more like a person that has movement issues."*

Cultural Resonance with Miguel

A total of 130 Reddit comments were posted in the two-week period following the "Miguel" episode, of which 35 explicitly mentioned the character Miguel. Of these, 16 comments mentioned how likable he was.

Reddit commenters praised the episode "Miguel" for highlighting cultural influences on caregiving and family dynamics, illustrating how upbringing and heritage shape caring for loved ones, fostering values transmitted through generations.

Commenters connected with Miguel's immigrant background and cultural values, particularly resonating with the depiction of multigenerational care — family members caring for elders at home rather than external care services — as an expression of love, respect, and familial duty. Reddit commenters praised the episode "Miguel" for highlighting cultural influences on caregiving and family dynamics, illustrating how upbringing and heritage shape caring for loved ones, fostering values transmitted through generations.

*"As a Latina with immigrant parents, Family is everything. [...] Miguel witnessed his mother **care** for her sister until the end. This taught Miguel that regardless of what happens, you care for those you love until the end. **That is what family does.**[...] I thought it was beautiful. Immigrant children carry so much guilt as they slowly move away from the life they came from."*

*"I come from an immigrant Bolivian family and this episode resonated with me so much. My husband is white and doesn't watch the show so I was explaining how beautiful this episode was and how it portrayed what is very common in our cultures. [...] **For us, it's what we do, it's how we love our family.**[...] It was just wonderful to see this all played out for those of us who really get its importance."*

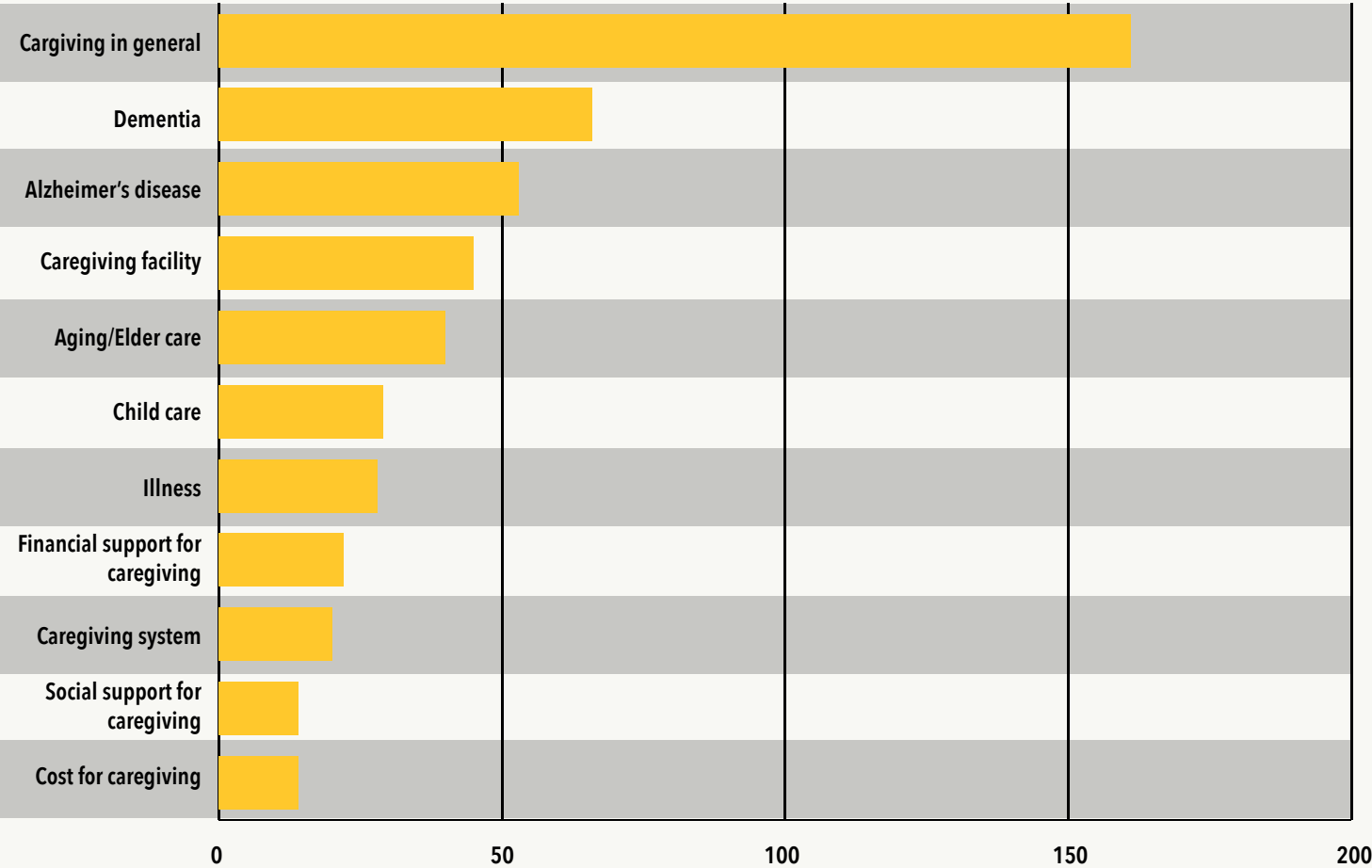
Caregiving-Related Conversations

Our analysis of caregiving-related topics across all Reddit comments (N = 298) revealed that the "Miguel" and "Family Meeting" episodes sparked in-depth discussions on a broad spectrum of caregiving subjects (Figure 5).

Caregiving, in general, emerged as the most frequent topic, mentioned in 161 comments. Dementia followed in 66 comments, while caregiving facilities was mentioned in 45, and aging/elder care appeared in 40. These comments discussed caregiving within the context of larger societal systems, highlighting the challenges faced by individuals when there is a lack of supportive structures and social resources.

Figure 5.

Number of Comments Mentioning Caregiving-related Topics



"I mean, it's our society in the sense that we don't create **systems** that would make it easier for people to care for parents (or children for that matter). We don't prioritize public transit, so **elderly** people have to rely on others if they can't drive. Need to take a relative to a doctor's appointment? That can be a missed paycheck depending on your job. [...] **Caregiving** for someone is hard. But I know for me, it felt like there were things at the society/community level that made it more difficult."



HOW DID INSTAGRAM USERS RESPOND TO A SOCIAL IMPACT CAMPAIGN?

Instagram Social Impact Campaign

In collaboration with Caring Across Generations and Hilarity for Charity (HFC), NBC produced an Instagram social impact campaign titled ***This Is Us. This Is Care. A Conversation.*** The campaign sought to engage the show's fan base, emphasizing care as a vital societal issue and stimulating a nationwide conversation on innovative caregiving representation to challenge cultural stigmas.



Employing video, social, and PR strategies, the campaign spotlighted the show's portrayal of dementia and caregiving through a conversation with panelists including *This Is Us* stars Mandy Moore (Rebecca), Jon Huertas (Miguel), and Chirssy Metz (Kate), series executive producer KJ Steinberg, Caring Across Generations' executive director Ai-jen Poo, and HFC co-founders Seth Rogen and Lauren Miller Rogen (pictured at left).

According to data from Caring Across Generations, the campaign reached 3.4 million individuals in the U.S., garnering

praise from fans, the series creator, and the cast, as well as recognition from *The Hollywood Reporter*²³ and an Anthem Award. We conducted a qualitative analysis of Instagram comments related to the campaign.

What We Did²⁴

In consultation with Caring Across Generations, we identified 20 social impact campaign posts published by nine public Instagram accounts between March and June of 2022.²⁵ We analyzed all unique English-language comments — including replies to comments — associated with these campaign posts (N = 387).

Two human coders examined the comments for various themes, including caregiving-related topics, viewer sentiment and reactions, and behavioral responses to the storyline.

23 Strause, J. (2022, June 3). '*This Is Us*' team on destigmatizing aging and illness: "We were telling the story of millions of families." *The Hollywood Reporter*. <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-features/this-is-us-alzheimers-aging-illness-tv-1235158599/>

24 See Appendix A for the comment analysis coding procedure, items, and reliability.

25 @aijenp, @caringacrossgen, @chirssymetz, @endwellproject, @jonhuertas, @laurenmillerrogen, @mandymooremm, @nbcthisus, @wearehfc

What We Found

Caregiving-Related Conversations

The social impact campaign inspired caregiving-related conversations on Instagram. Approximately one-in-four campaign comments mentioned caregiving-related topics. Of these comments, *Alzheimer's disease* was the most frequently mentioned, followed by *dementia*, discussions of *caregiving in general*, and *aging/elder care*.

Approximately half of the 104 comments mentioning caregiving-related topics emphasized the importance of having conversations around these topics and the significance of TV representation. Some comments mentioned these caregiving-related terms while sharing personal caregiving experiences or expressing a desire to see more stories addressing these topics.

*"I sooooo wish that 'This Is Us' and their magical writers were around when my family and I were dealing with my mom's **Alzheimer's**....so many things I wish we had done differently, and **sooo many pointers I got from watching the show**...Thank you for writing these so very important episodes...I sobbed through them...but it was oh so worth it!"*

*"Such an important conversation- my mom has been gone nearly 4 years [...] **I had no idea we were part of the sandwich generation** [...] The raising of children and caring for a parent is exhausting. God bless all **caregivers**, and the family members they care for. Thank you @nbcthisissus @chrissymetz @wearehfc @mandymooremm @jonhuertas ❤️**Conversation will make a difference.**"*

Individuals who watched the show or were familiar with its storyline were more likely to discuss themes related to caregiving in response to campaign posts. We identified 122 comments that implied the commenter had seen the storyline.²⁶ Of these, more than half (53%) mentioned caregiving-related topics, compared to 14% in the comments that did not imply having seen the storyline (many of these comments consisted of brief reactions with positive emojis, such as: "Thank you for sharing this beautiful conversation ❤️🙏🏻").

Inspiring Conversations and Raising Awareness about Caregiving

Around two-thirds (67%) of the Instagram campaign comments that implied having seen the storyline expressed "gratitude and appreciation for the show's representation of caregiving."

"We need more storylines that normalize the complexities, joys and overall realities of these critical conversations faced by families everyday."

*"It IS a big conversation starter! For me and my husband too. We talk a lot about us **parenting** when we watch this 🍷 great show"*

²⁶ We distinguished comments simply expressing awareness of the show or its storyline without substantial understanding or viewership from those indicating the commenter's viewership or engagement with the show or its storyline.

"We need more storylines that normalize the complexities, joys and overall realities of these critical conversations faced by families everyday."

Most of these comments highlighted that the show raised awareness on the topic of caregiving (65%). For instance, some comments praised the show's accurate portrayal of dementia and caregivers' experiences in full breadth, which help raise awareness about dementia and those impacted by the disease:

*"[My mom] had **dementia** for years and we became her **caregivers**, much like Rebecca's children did at the end. I want to thank the writers for showing viewers a snippet of what a **caregiver** does through Miguel's story. [...] Thank you for bringing awareness about the devastating effects of **Alzheimer's** and dementia."*

Often, comments mentioned that Rebecca's journey humanizes those impacted by the disease "in a way that opens up conversations for everyone," as one person put it. Another comment emphasized the importance of a scene where Rebecca and her children have conversations about Rebecca's end-of-life care:

*"I was impressed with the episode where Rebecca told the Big Three to live their lives and follow their dreams and not to stop for her. Family members are not all on the same page and the conversation is taboo for many [...] 'This is Us' writers did an exceptional job at portraying a wonderful **caregiving** situation for Rebecca and the Big Three! 🙌❤️❤️"*

Emotional Tone

The overall emotional tone expressed in the Instagram campaign comments was overwhelmingly positive. Among 122 comments that implied having seen the storyline, the vast majority (82%) expressed positive tone, while none expressed negative tone (8% were neutral; 11% unclear).

"As a disabled person, this show has meant so much to me. It has been my family and my therapy. Thank you 🙏"

*"Having lived through **caring** for and making big decisions for my parents before they passed (while having young children), I can attest to the mental and emotional toll it takes. I thought the show portrayed this situation in a very truthful and beautiful way. Great job!"*

Among 265 comments that *did not* imply having seen the storyline, the majority (61%) were positive, with only a minimal portion (1%) conveying negativity (9% were neutral; 22% unclear).

*"I'm going through this now... and have been for several years. It means so much that you're having this conversation. To be honest- I've never seen your show, but I rarely see any shows. It's not really a part of **caregiving** 24/7, but now I'm going to try. Thank you. @mandymooremm @nbcthisus @alzheimerscaregiving"*

Overall, sentiment toward the characters in *This Is Us* and the panelists in the campaign reel was predominantly positive, with some variations in feelings toward specific characters or actors panelists.

Identification with Caregivers on TV

Instagram comments on the social impact campaign revealed that viewers appreciated the show's representation of caregiving. Among the 122 comments that mentioned or implied the commenter watched the caregiving storyline, nearly half (48%) expressed the theme of "feeling seen," as one comment highlights:

*"Thank you for thoughtfully addressing **dementia** and its impacts on families. Millions are suffering, often in silence and without the needed resources. **I was my mother's full time caregiver and often felt we were invisible.**"*

Of the 58 comments that expressed feeling seen, the majority (78%) stated that the show inspired the commenter to share their personal caregiving experiences. Most of these comments (75%) also stated that the show offered new perspectives for understanding their caregiving experiences. For example, several comments expressed that the show illuminated the emotions and experiences of individuals with dementia, allowing viewers to gain a deeper understanding of the intricate challenges faced by both those living with the illness and their caregivers.

*"**This is the story of millions.** There were so many times that I was overcome with emotion, **finally getting a perspective of what my grandmother must have been going** through as Alzheimer and dementia claimed stake to her mental wellness [...] this was so important and insightful. Just one of the many reasons this show was so necessary!!! 🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌"*

Furthermore, among the comments that implied having seen the storyline, about half of comments (44%) expressed gratitude toward the show for offering emotional support and providing a sense of release to those who had cared for family members with dementia. For instance, some mentioned how the show helped them process their caregiving experiences and aided in their grieving process.

*"**Thank you for helping me finish grieving.** I lost my Dad and Mom in the last 6 months. My Dad had **dementia** and congestive heart failure. [...] I am grateful to have your show be a part of my life and the last episodes allowed me to grieve fully. Thank you 🙌❤️❤️"*



Critiques of Caregiving Portrayal

Of the 122 comments that mentioned or implied the commenter watched the caregiving storyline, only a few comments (8) criticized the portrayal or noted room for improvement. As with the Reddit comments, most of these comments (6)

pointed out that the caregiving situation portrayed by the Pearson family in the show is not representative or universal. For example:

"They had far more monetary resources than the average person. Kevin was able to build a house with a side house for a live-in nurse. Not something most can do. Heck, just having a nurse that comes to the home is not feasible for most."

One comment even highlighted the need for national-level structural policies to enable many families to secure financial means to prioritize their family's caregiving:

*"Just saw the episode last night. ❤️❤️ As a nurse scientist who does **caregiving** research the thing that struck me above all else is that **the Pearson's have what many families don't have: economic means and jobs that give them autonomy to put family first. This can only be overcome with structural policies at the national level.**"*

Furthermore, some comments noted that caregiving for a loved one with dementia is not always as smooth and easy as depicted in the show. Family dynamics may not be cohesive, and the person's behavior can fluctuate dramatically from sweet to aggressive or violent. Additionally, managing multiple medical conditions alongside dementia adds further complexity to the caregiving journey.

Actions Indicated

Of the 387 unique comments analyzed, 13 indicated that the commenter took any action related to caregiving. Six of these mentioned having or planning to have conversations about caregiving-related topics — such as elder care, parenting, and end-of-life care plan — with family or friends, as illustrated by the comments below:

*"**This show really did help me with dialogue** when talking to my family about **elder care** and **parenting**. This is what art is supposed to do, reflect life and help us to see ourselves in new ways."*

*"We lost my Grammy and Mom and my Uncle are currently fighting this [**Alzheimer's** disease] battle as well. More than anything **I've told all those I know to make plans for the future**. It makes it so much easier on the family if they know what you want."*

Two people expressed the intention to rewatch *This Is Us* while another mentioned further posting about the caregiving story on social media. Other comments also included calls-to-action, such as recommending the show to others, urging participation in a charity campaign to raise Alzheimer's disease awareness, or adopting strategies to manage caregiving responsibilities while maintaining well-being.

"Take a step back, breathe, and find three things to do for yourself per day."

HOW DID THIS IS US INFLUENCE AUDIENCE ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS?

We conducted an online survey to measure the impact of the caregiving storyline on audience attitudes and actions related to care. We expected viewers of the final season of *This is Us* would have more positive attitudes towards home-based care and the importance of care conversations. Because the storyline centered Rebecca’s decisions around her own care, we also anticipated viewers would be more likely to support care recipients being involved in decision-making. However, because the Pearson family did not face any of the common barriers to care — such as financial strain, navigating government aid, or taking family leave — we were not sure what impact viewing might have on audiences’ support for relevant policies.

What We Did

We recruited 1,000 U.S. adults through Lucid, a market research recruitment platform, to participate in an online survey in April and May 2023. Participants were required to be regular viewers of television dramas (defined as watching at least once a week) and regular viewers of family dramas, such as *A Million Little Things* or *Parenthood* (defined as watching at least once a month). Our sample consisted of:

- 500 family drama viewers who watched some or all of the final season of *This Is Us*.
- A comparison group of 500 family drama viewers (hereafter “non-viewers”) who did not watch the final season of *This Is Us*.

All survey respondents, regardless of whether they had seen the final season of *This Is Us*, answered questions about their attitudes and beliefs around caregiving topics, such as the importance of making care plans, the role of those receiving care in decision-making, and government support for a more robust care infrastructure. Viewers of *This Is Us* answered additional questions about their level of transportation (or immersion) into the storyline, their opinions on the storyline, emotional responses, and feelings of perceived friendship with four key characters (Miguel and the “Big Three”: Kevin, Randall, and Kate), all of whom engaged in caregiving decisions and behaviors in the show.²⁷

What We Found

Attitudes Related to Caregiving

Viewers of the final season of This Is Us were more likely to agree that caregiving is a universal issue that affects everyone at one point or another in life; and that it is important to have conversations with family and/or loved ones about planning for care.

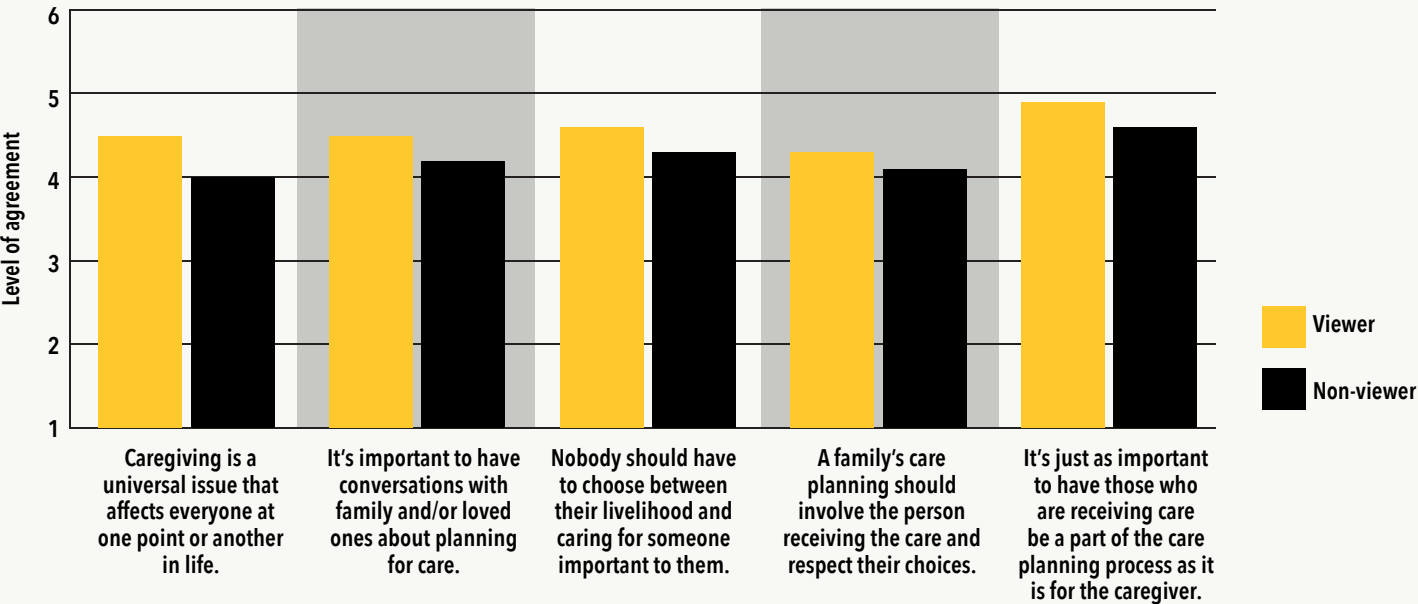
27 For all outcomes, we compared viewers of the final season with non-viewers. Non-viewers could have seen previous seasons of *This Is Us*, but had not seen the final season. We controlled for household income, level of religiosity, political ideology, and personal experiences with caregiving.

Compared to non-viewers, those who watched the final season of *This Is Us* were more likely to agree that:

- Caregiving is a universal issue that affects everyone at one point or another in life;
- It's important to have conversations with family and/or loved ones about planning for care;
- Nobody should have to choose between their livelihood and caring for someone important to them;
- A family's care planning should involve the person receiving care; and that
- It is just as important to have those receiving care be a part of the care planning process as it is for the caregiver.

Viewers also had greater confidence in their ability to make difference within their own family.

Figure 6.
Shifts in Volume of Tweets Mentioning Care-Related Terms: "Miguel" Episode

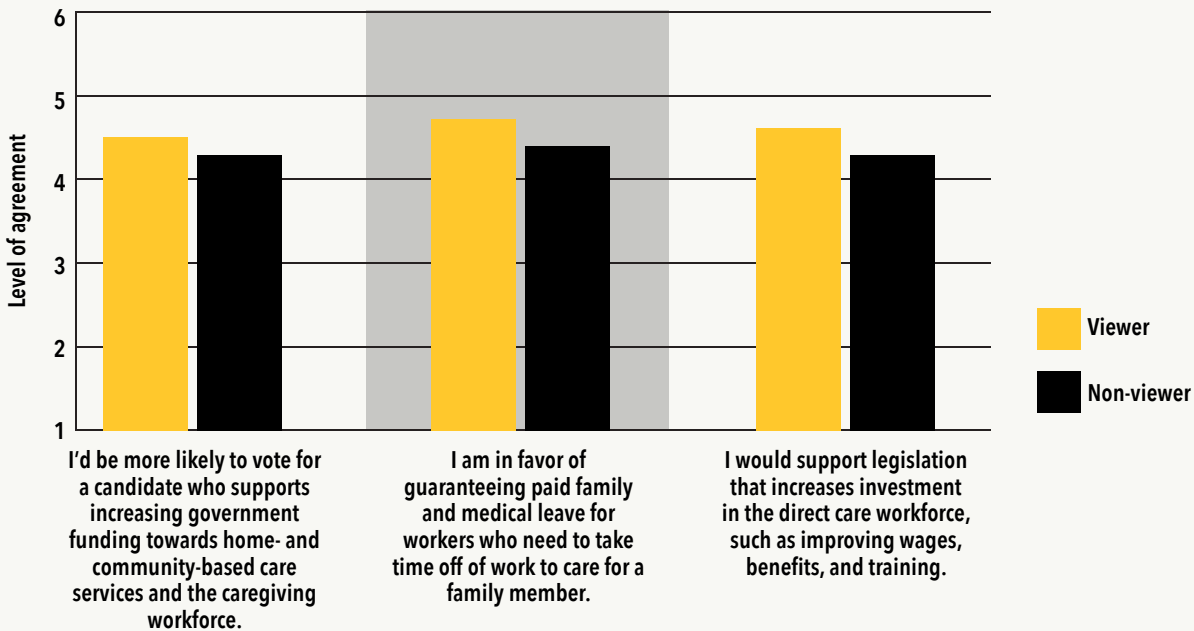


For all of these statements, transportation into the narrative and feelings of friendship with four characters — Miguel, Kevin, Randall, and Kate — were associated with greater agreement. Feelings of friendship with Kate were a particularly strong predictor of these care-supportive beliefs.



Figure 7.

Impact on Policy



Policy Support

With regard to care policies, viewers were more likely to say that **it is important for the government to invest in programs that improve access to home and community based care programs.**

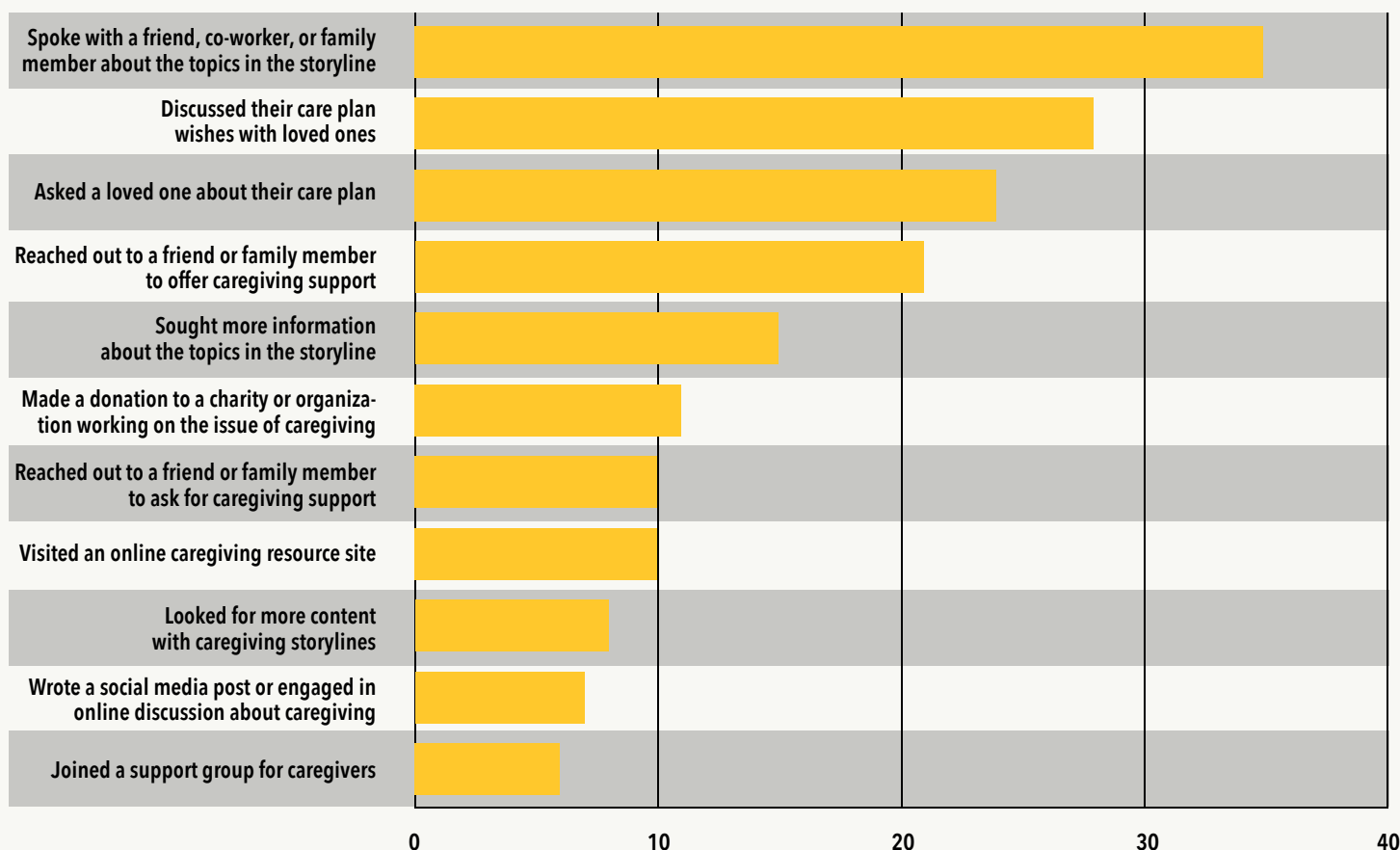
Viewers also showed stronger support for:

- Candidates who want to increase government funding towards home- and community-based care services;
- Guaranteed paid family leave and medical leave for workers who need to take time off of work to care for a family member; and
- Legislation that increases investment in the direct care workforce such as improving wages, benefits, and training for those who assist older adults and disabled people.

Support for all of these policy beliefs was associated with transportation into the storyline and feelings of friendship with our four key characters. Feelings of friendship with Randall were a particularly strong predictor of policy support.

Figure 8.

Actions Related to Caregiving After Watching *This is Us*



Viewer Responses

Viewers of the final season of *This is Us* reported taking a variety of actions related to caregiving after watching. The most common was speaking with a friend or family member about the topics discussed (35%). Twenty-eight percent reported discussing their care plan wishes with others and 21% asked a loved one about their care plan. Twenty-one percent offered caregiving support to a family member or friend and 15% sought more information.

Viewers had overwhelmingly positive opinions of the storyline, with 93% saying it made them feel compassion or empathy for those with caregiving responsibilities or needs (Figure 9). Eighty-nine percent said it covers a topic they think should be talked about more often and 85% agreed it should be shown on TV more often. Nearly half (45%) said the storyline made them feel less alone in a struggle they've been having. The most common emotional responses reported by viewers were empathy (33%) and sadness (31%). However, nearly one-in-five viewers (18%) felt a sense of hope (Figure 10).

- Feelings of hope and relief were each associated with a greater number of actions taken.
- Feelings of empathy, sadness, and fear were associated with a greater level of transportation into the storyline, which in turn predicted a number of positive outcomes.
- Feelings of hope were associated with greater feelings of friendship with Miguel, Kevin, Randall, and Kate, which in turn predicted positive outcomes.

Figure 9.

Emotional Responses Reported by Viewers After Watching *This is Us*

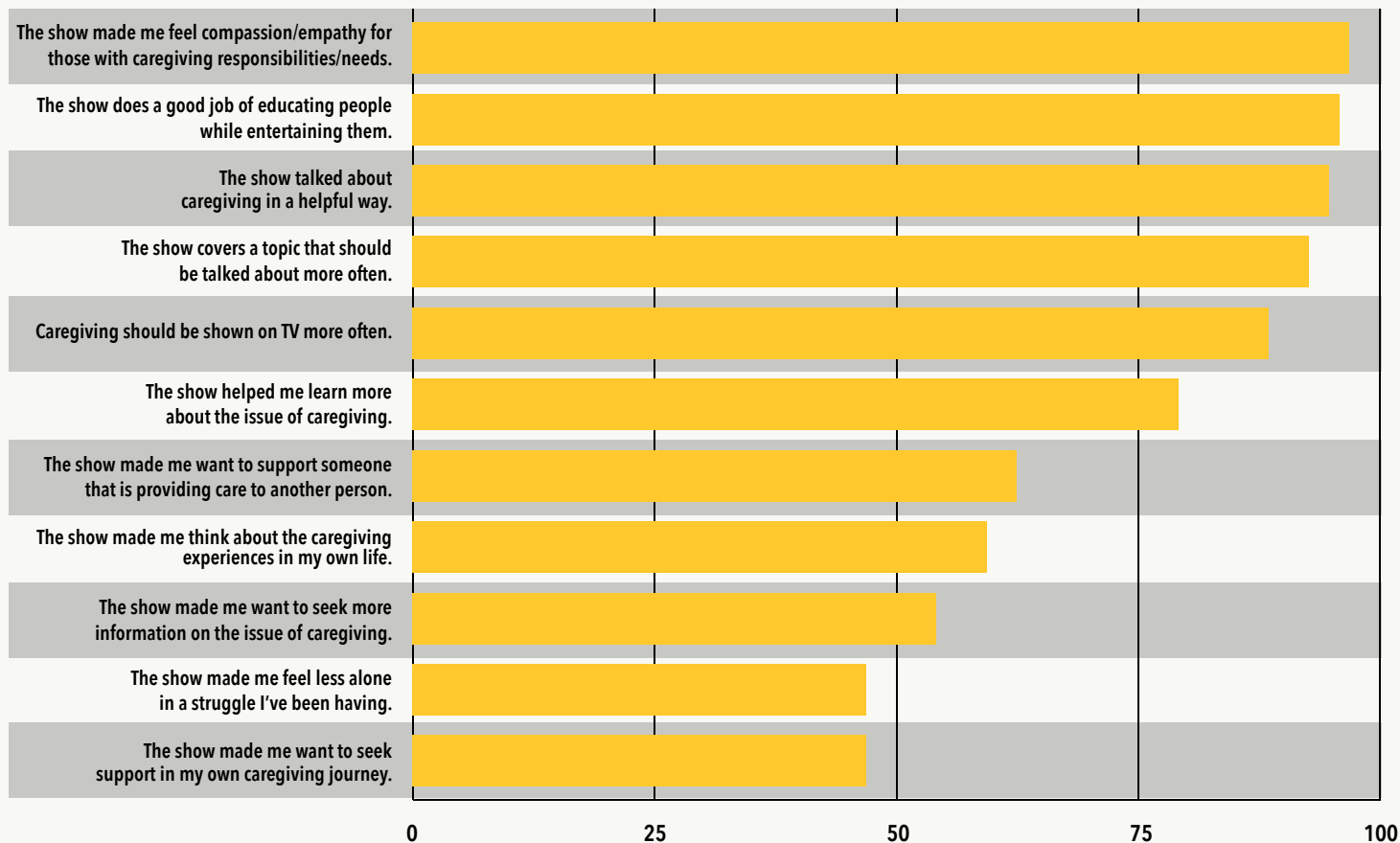
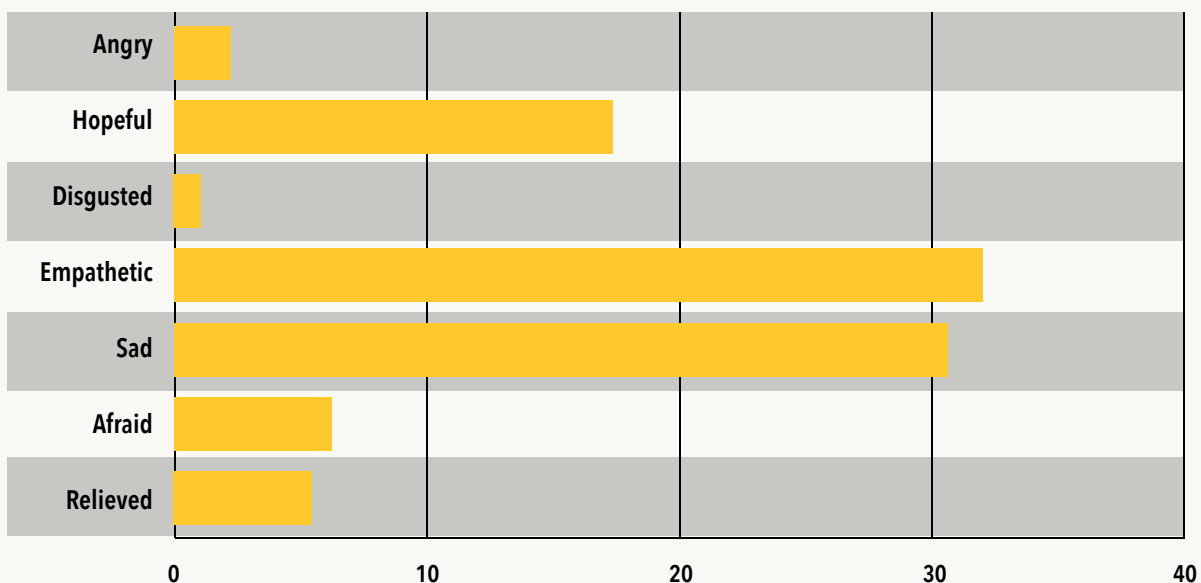


Figure 10.

Emotional Responses Reported by Viewers After Watching *This is Us*



CONCLUSION

Recent research has sought to examine the frequency of care depictions on-screen, as well as the ways in which care is portrayed. This study was an attempt to measure the impact of a particular caregiving storyline on the final season of *This Is Us*.

Impact on Audiences

Overall, our findings show that compelling TV storylines about caregiving can inspire conversations about care, both on social media and within families. Social media conversations show that feeling seen on screen can validate the lived experiences of so many while encouraging empathy for those providing and receiving care. However, they also highlight how a failure to depict care as a systemic or structural issue can challenge a storyline's authenticity. This suggests that viewers seek authentic portrayals that mirror the challenges and complexities of their own care needs and responsibilities. Rather than shying away from conversations about policies, programs, and barriers to care, content creators should embrace those discussions as a central part of the care experience.

Findings across Twitter and Reddit also underscored the value of the episode "Miguel" in advancing these conversations. On Twitter, we found that the largest increase in volume of care-related conversations occurred after the episode "Miguel." Mentions of *care*, *caregiver*, and *caretaker* increased by six to seven times, while the term *caregiving* itself saw a 40-fold increase. The episode was also responsible for one of the largest increases in volume of conversation on Reddit. In particular, Miguel's guilt over needing help and the pressure he felt to handle everything on his own resonated deeply with audiences, particularly those with immigrant backgrounds. This is not surprising, given that real-world caregivers frequently report feelings of stress or overwhelm.²⁸

Exposure to the final season of This Is Us had a significant impact on audience attitudes and support for care-related public policy and increased federal funding for care.

We also found that exposure to the final season of *This Is Us* had a significant impact on audience attitudes and support for care-related public policy. Notably, viewers of the show had greater confidence in their ability to make a difference within their own family, suggesting that depictions of care that include decision-making may make audiences feel more confident in their ability to do the same. Overall, viewers were more likely to support increased government funding for home and community-based care, paid family and medical leave, and improved wages and benefits for those who provide care to older adults and people with disabilities.

Impact of Corresponding Social Media Campaign

In addition to the storyline itself, we examined audiences' response to an Instagram campaign produced by NBC in collaboration with Caring Across Generations and HFC. When coupled with an engaging social media campaign, a care-centric TV storyline can inspire individuals to share their personal caregiving experiences openly and foster meaningful

28 Chang, E. (2023, March 22). The sandwich generation is changing. The stress remains. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/parenting/2023/03/22/caregivers-sandwich-generation/>

conversations about caregiving. We found that among comments that mentioned caregiving-related topics, half emphasized the significance of seeing care represented on television. Commenters overwhelmingly expressed positive sentiments towards the storyline, such as emphasizing how the series made them feel personally seen, how it helped them cope with and process their own care experiences, and generally praising the show for increasing awareness about these topics. Among the comments that criticized the storyline, the majority focused on the lack of attention to financial or structural barriers to care that most families face.

Recommendations

- **Tell more stories that include care.** Though often overlooked as a mundane and everyday part of life, care plays a fundamental role in the lives of many people in the U.S. and these stories resonate strongly with audiences.
- **Expand the diversity of on-screen caregiving experiences.** Depict an array of caregiving experiences that speak to audiences of different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- **Reframe care as a universal human issue.** Avoid framing caregiving as a women's issue or one that is limited to childcare.
- **Highlight systemic barriers to caregiving challenges.** To increase authenticity, include discussions or depictions around barriers to providing or receiving care. Such barriers can include lack of paid medical or family leave, the financial cost of care, and/or the lack of available professional help.
- **Illustrate exemplary caregiving conversations.** Showcase conversations about care planning and decision-making that can be modeled by people in similar situations.
- **Devise social impact campaigns to amplify caregiving representation and dialogue.** Leverage the visibility of the show's cast and the viewers' emotional connection to the characters to amplify caregiving representation and dialogues.



APPENDIX A: DETAILED METHODOLOGY FOR SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS

Data Collection

In consultation with Caring Across Generations, we identified four *This Is Us* episodes and a set of search terms including care-related terms, show-related terms, and names of key actors and characters (Table 2). For both Twitter and Reddit, we conducted keyword searches beginning two weeks before through two weeks after each episode’s air date, combining the terms using the Boolean operator “OR.”

Table 2.

Search Parameters

Episode title	Taboo	Day of the Wedding	Miguel	Family Meeting
Air Date	3/8/2022	4/19/2022	5/3/2022	5/10/2022
Search Timeframe	2/22 - 3/22	4/5 - 5/3	4/19 - 5/17	4/26 - 5/24
Search terms include:				
<i>This Is Us</i> Show-Related Terms	#Thisisusfinalchapter, #ThisIsUs, @NBCThisIsUs			
Character and Actor Names	Rebecca Pearson, #RebeccaPearson, Mandy Moore, @TheMandyMoore, Miguel Rivas, #MiguelRivas, Jon Huertas, @jonhuertas, Kate Pearson, Chrissy Metz, @ChrissyMetz, Kevin Pearson, Justin Hartley, @justinhartley, Randall Pearson, Sterling Brown, @SterlingKBrown			
Caregiving -Related Terms*	Care, Caregiving, Caregiver, Caretaker, #CareCantWait, #CareGiverLife, #FamilyCareGiver, @CaringAcrossGen			

* Reddit search terms excluded hashtags and Twitter handles.

We contracted with VISIMO, a data mining and analytics services firm, to scrape Twitter and Reddit data using Python, specifically utilizing the Pandas library for data manipulation and organization. VISIMO accessed the data fields and engagement metrics from Reddit and Twitter using their respective data Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), which allowed them to extract relevant information in a structured format.

Twitter

For Twitter, VISIMO used MIP’s Twitter Academic Research account (API v2) to access real time and historical Twitter data. For each tweet that mentioned any of the relevant search terms, we retrieved the predetermined data fields (Table 3).

Table 3.

Twitter Data Fields and Descriptions

Twitter Data Fields	Description
author_id	Full ID of author
created_at	Datetime of when the tweet was created
text	Text content of tweet
impression_count	Number of times a tweet was seen (noting the API always returned 0.)
like_count	Number of times a tweet was liked.
reply_count	Number of times a tweet was replied to
retweet_count	Number of times a tweet was retweeted
retweet_text	If the tweet is a retweet, the contents of the retweet
is_post	A flag denoting if a tweet was created after a given episode

We retrieved two types of tweets to capture various ways in which Twitter users engage in conversations:

- Original: Originally tweeted by a user
- Quoted: Another or the same user retweeted and added extra words

After removing duplicates, our sample included tweets that mention at least one care-related search term to limit our analysis to care-related conversations around the show, rather than conversations about actors or other storylines (Table 4).

Table 4.

Sample Used for Analysis

Episode title	<i>Taboo</i>	<i>Day of the Wedding</i>	<i>Miguel</i>	<i>Family Meeting</i>
Air Date	3/8/2022	4/19/2022	5/3/2022	5/10/2022
Search Timeframe	2/22 - 3/22	4/5 - 5/3	4/19 - 5/17	4/26 - 5/24
Care-related Search Terms*	Care, Caregiving, Caregiver, Caretaker, #CareCantWait, #CareGiverLife, #FamilyCareGiver, @CaringAcrossGen, Mental health, Alzheimer's disease, Dementia, Aging, Elder care, Parental leave, Maternity leave, Paternity leave, Child care, Disability, Illness, Caregiving infrastructure, Policy, Social support, Financial support			

* Reddit search terms excluded hashtags and Twitter handles.

The resulting dataset, consisting of 12,834 tweets (pre-episode: 3,723, post-episode: 9,111), was used to analyze the overall volume trends of Twitter conversations about caregiving (Table 5).

Table 5.

Number of Unique Tweets (original and quoted) Mentioning 23 Care-related Terms

Twitter Search Results		
Episode Title	2 Weeks Before	2 Weeks After
<i>Taboo</i>	162	417
<i>Day of Wedding</i>	664	783
<i>Miguel</i>	795	4,537
<i>Family Meeting</i>	2,102	3,374
Total	3,723	9,111

Reddit

Sample Identification

For Reddit, we focused on the *This Is Us* subreddit (/r/thisisus), a forum within Reddit about the show. As of the data collection conducted in March 2023, this subreddit consisted of 8,925 unique posts and 92,579 unique comments. Using Reddit API, VISIMO retrieved predetermined datafields by accessing the top 250²⁹ subreddit posts which included a total of 4,597 comments (74 unique posts and 4,523 unique comments) that mentioned any of the search keywords (excluding hashtags and Twitter handles) within the specified time frame. For each subreddit post and comment that mentioned any of the relevant search terms, we retrieved the predetermined data fields (Table 7).

To analyze themes in Reddit conversations about caregiving representation on *This Is Us*, we filtered the dataset to include comments mentioning any of the 19 care-related terms³⁰ within the two week period following each episode’s airing (Table 6). We analyzed 298 unique Reddit comments mentioning any of the care-terms posted within two weeks following the “Miguel” and “Family Meeting” episodes, which had the largest increases in care-related conversations. Due to the overlapping search timeframe between “Miguel” and “Family Meeting” episodes, we extracted 130 comments from the post-data of the “Miguel” episode, 78 comments from the post-data of the “Family Meeting” episode, and 90 comments that intersected both episodes. Reddit comments for each episode³¹ were:

Table 6.

Number of Unique Reddit Comments Mentioning 19 Care-related Terms

Reddit Search Results	
Episode Title	2 Weeks After
<i>Taboo</i>	57
<i>Day of Wedding</i>	68
<i>Miguel</i>	220
<i>Family Meeting</i>	168
Total	513

29 These refer to the posts that received the “highest score” in this subreddit, calculated by the difference between the number of upvotes and downvotes cast by Reddit users.

30 Three hashtags and one Twitter handle were excluded from the care-related filtering keywords presented in Table 4.

31 Due to the overlapping search timeframe between episodes, some Reddit comments may be counted twice.

Table 7.

Reddit Data Fields and Description

Reddit Data Fields (Submissions)	Description
subreddit	Subreddit post was submitted under (always /r/thisisus in this case)
selftext	The description of the post the user wrote
author_fullname	Full ID of author
gilded	Number of times the post was given Reddit Gold
title	Title of the post
name	ID of the post along with its "kind" according to the Reddit API
upvote_ratio	Upvotes divided by downvotes
total_awards_received	Number of gildings and other awards given
score	User rating of score (upvotes - downvotes)
edited	If the post was edited, the UTC timestamp of when it was edited. Otherwise FALSE.
gildings	Specific Reddit awards given
created	UTC timestamps of when the post was created
id	ID without the "kind" according to the Reddit API
author	Author's username
send_replies	If replies were locked or not on a given post
url	URL of the post
Reddit Data Fields (Comments)	Description
body	Text of comment
created	UTC timestamp of when comment was posted
score	User rating of score (upvotes - downvotes)
parent_id	ID of item comment is nested under. (IDs starting with t3 are posts, IDs starting with t1 are other)

Comment Coding and Reliability

In addition to two MIP researchers, two graduate USC students were trained over a two-week period on the coding process and were familiarized with codebook items (Table 8). The training period included multiple rounds of testing and codebook refinement. In March and April 2023, a total of 298 unique Reddit comments were coded.

A total of 60 comments (20% of the sample) were double-coded to ensure inter-rater reliability, and the two coders analyzed separate sets of 119 comments each. A preliminary sample of 30 comments was coded by both student coders

to measure the initial reliability. Reliability for these comments was calculated using Krippendorff's Alpha. Items with borderline or inadequate reliability were discussed among the student coders and the MIP researchers. After primary coding of all 298 comments, 30 additional comments were randomly selected from the sample to be double-coded. Reliability values for all items are shown in Table 8.

- ✿ 1.00: perfect reliability
- ✿ 0.60-0.99: acceptable reliability
- ✿ 0.40-0.59: borderline reliability
- ✿ Less than 0.40: inadequate
- ✿ N/A: items with no positive cases in the reliability sample, unable to calculate reliability

Table 8.

Reddit Codebook Items and Reliability

Variable	Krippendorff's Alpha
Overall, the comment indicates that the episode depicted caregiving well. (Yes, No, Mixed, Not Applicable ³²)	0.94
The episode depicted caregiving well because... [select all that apply.]	
✿ The commenter felt their real life experience was validated	1.00
✿ The portrayal of caregiving was realistic	1.00
✿ The portrayal of caregiving was believable (e.g., given the show's premise, nature of the tv show, etc.)	1.00
✿ The commenter identified with the character(s) (What are the names of characters mentioned?)	N/A
✿ The commenter learned something new about caregiving	N/A
✿ It sparked important conversations around caregiving	N/A
✿ Other (Please specify.)	1.00
The episode did not depict caregiving well because... [select all that apply.]	
✿ The portrayal of caregiving did not align with the commenter's real life experience	1.00
✿ The portrayal of caregiving was unrealistic/limited (explain why.)	1.00
✿ Other (Please specify.)	N/A
The comment mentions the character Miguel (Yes, No)	1.00
The comment mentions the character "Miguel" because... [select all that apply.]	
✿ They identify with (or relate to) him as an immigrant	N/A
✿ They relate to his caregiving experiences	N/A

32 The comment does not address the depiction of caregiving and instead primarily debates the actions and behavior of characters unrelated to caregiving; talks about the past storylines or scenes; and shares thoughts about the show in general.

Variable	Krippendorff's Alpha
✿ They find Miguel likable	1.00
✿ Other (Please specify.)	1.00
The comment mentions the following kind(s) of caregiving-related topics [Select all that apply.]	
✿ Alzheimer's disease	1.00
✿ Dementia	1.00
✿ Aging/ Elder care	0.79
✿ Illness	0.87
✿ Caregiving facility	0.84

Instagram Campaign Comment Analysis

Sample Identification

In consultation with Caring Across Generations, we identified 20 social impact campaign posts published by nine public Instagram accounts³³ between March and June 2022. Using Instagram API, a USC student programmer scraped a total of 387 unique English comments (including replies to comments) associated with these campaign posts. In addition to one MIP researcher, two graduate USC students were trained over a two-week period to examine the comments for various themes, including caregiving-related topics, viewer sentiment and reactions, and behavioral responses to the caregiving storyline in the final season of *This Is Us*. The training period included multiple rounds of discussion and refinement before analysis in January and February 2023.

33 @aijenp, @caringacrossgen, @chirssymetz, @endwellproject, @jonhuertas, @laurenmillerrogen, @mandymooremm, @nbcthisisus, @wearehfc

APPENDIX B: DETAILED SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Sample

Survey recruitment and data collection was administered online by Lucid, a market research recruitment platform. Survey responses were collected online via the Qualtrics survey platform. Our total sample consisted of 1,000 American adults.

- A majority of respondents (62%) were women.
- The majority were white (81.5%), followed by 6.3% Black, 6% Latine, and 3.4% Asian. Less than 1% were Middle Eastern/ North African, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or Native American/ Alaska Native.
- 20% identified as Republican and 36% as Democratic.
- 48% lived in a large city, 33% in a small city, and 29% in a rural area.

Procedure

Before entering the full survey, participants were asked a series of screening questions. Audiences were required to be over the age of 18 and living in the U.S. In order to recruit a comparable group of viewers who hadn't seen the final season of *This Is Us*, we asked participants how often they watch content from a number of different genres. Those who do not watch dramas at least once a week were screened out of the survey. Then, we asked participants to indicate how often they watch different types of dramas and screened out those who do not watch family dramas at least once a month.

We then asked how often they watched a series of shows, including *This Is Us*. To qualify as a "viewer" in this study, participants had to have watched some or all of the final season. Viewers and nonviewers could have watched earlier seasons of *This Is Us*. To check participant's recall of the season, we asked four recall questions and required that they answer at least three correctly in order to proceed.

Analytic Strategy

Data were downloaded from Qualtrics into Microsoft Excel for data cleaning. Data analysis was performed using Python. We analyzed differences in outcomes between viewers of the final season of *This Is Us* and non-viewers while controlling for household income, level of religiosity, political ideology, and personal experiences with caregiving. We used correlational analyses to examine how transportation into the narrative or feelings of friendship with key characters were associated with the impact of the storyline.

Survey Instrument

SCREENING ITEMS
<p>Please confirm your age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ I am 18 or older ☛ I am under 18 years old
<p>What U.S. state or territory do you live in? [drop down menu with 50 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico]</p>
<p>How often do you watch content from the following genres (either on broadcast, cable, or streaming)? 1= <i>Never</i>, 2= <i>Less than once a month</i>, 3= <i>At least once a month</i>, 4= <i>At least once a week</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Action/Adventure ☛ Comedy/ Satire ☛ Sci-Fi/ Fantasy/ Supernatural ☛ Drama ☛ Reality (including competition/ game shows) ☛ Sports ☛ Mystery/ Suspense ☛ Talk Show
<p>You've indicated that you watch dramas. How often do you watch content from the following types of dramas? 1= <i>Never</i>, 2= <i>Less than once a month</i>, 3= <i>At least once a month</i>, 4= <i>At least once a week</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Family Drama (e.g., <i>This Is Us</i>, <i>A Million Little Things</i>) ☛ Crime/ Police/ Legal Drama (e.g., <i>Law & Order</i>, <i>Chicago PD</i>) ☛ Medical Drama (e.g., <i>Grey's Anatomy</i>, <i>New Amsterdam</i>) ☛ Period/ Historical Drama (e.g., <i>The Crown</i>, <i>Lovecraft Country</i>)
<p>How much have you viewed each of the following shows? 1= <i>Never</i>, 2= <i>Less than one full season</i>, 3= <i>At least one full season, but not the most recent</i>, 4= <i>Most seasons, but not the most recent</i>, 5= <i>Some of the most recent season</i>, 6= <i>All of the most recent season</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ <i>This Is Us</i> (NBC) ☛ <i>A Million Little Things</i> (NBC) ☛ <i>Abbott Elementary</i> (ABC) ☛ <i>9-1-1</i> (FOX) ☛ <i>Virgin River</i> (Netflix) ☛ <i>Young Sheldon</i> (CBS)
SHOW RECALL ITEMS
<p>In the final season of <i>This Is Us</i>, Kate and Toby struggle to agree on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Food choices for their child, Jack ☛ Moving away from the Pearson family ☛ Kate's decision to return to work
<p>In the final season of <i>This Is Us</i>, Kevin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Moves in with Randall ☛ Builds Rebecca her dream home ☛ Decides not marry Sophie
<p>In the final season of <i>This Is Us</i>, Kate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Gives birth to twins ☛ Marries Phillip ☛ Undergoes surgery for a heart condition
<p>In the final season of <i>This Is Us</i>, Randall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Divorces his wife, Beth ☛ Survives a critical car accident ☛ Becomes a senator

OUTCOME VARIABLES

Please rate how certain you are that your actions can make a difference in each of the settings described below.
Sliding scale from 0-100

- ✿ In your home/family

[Attitudes] Please rate your agreement with the following statements

1= *Strongly disagree*, 3= *Neither agree nor disagree*, 5= *Strongly agree*

- ✿ Caregiving is a universal issue that affects everyone at one point or another in life.
- ✿ It's important to have conversations with family and/or loved ones about planning for care.
- ✿ Nobody should have to choose between their livelihood and caring for someone important to them.
- ✿ A family's care planning should involve the person receiving the care.
- ✿ It is just as important to have those who are receiving care be a part of the care planning process as it is for the caregiver.

[Policy] Please rate your agreement with the following statements

1= *Strongly disagree*, 3= *Neither agree nor disagree*, 5= *Strongly agree*

- ✿ I would support legislation that increases investment in the direct care workforce by improving wages, benefits, and training for those who assist older adults and people with disabilities.
- ✿ I'd be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports increasing government funding towards home and community-based care services and the caregiving workforce.

RESPONSES TO STORYLINE

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the storyline:

1= *Strongly disagree*, 2= *Somewhat disagree*, 3= *Neither agree nor disagree*, 4= *Somewhat agree*, 5= *Strongly agree*

- ✿ The storyline covers a topic I think should be talked about more often.
- ✿ The storyline makes me feel compassion/ empathy for those with caregiving struggles.
- ✿ The storyline talks about caregiving in a helpful way.
- ✿ I think the topics shown in the storyline should be shown on TV more often.
- ✿ The storyline made me want to support someone I know who has their own caregiving struggles.
- ✿ The storyline helped me learn more about caregiving issues.
- ✿ The storyline made me think about the caregiving issues I'm having in my own life.
- ✿ The storyline made me feel less alone in a struggle I've been having.
- ✿ The storyline made me want to seek more information on caregiving issues.
- ✿ The storyline made me want to seek help for a caregiving struggle.
- ✿ The storyline does a good job of educating people while entertaining them.

Which of the following actions specifically in regard to caregiving issues have you taken since watching *This Is Us*?
Select all that apply.

- ✿ I sought more information about the topics in the storyline
- ✿ I spoke with a friend, co-worker, or family member about the topics in the storyline
- ✿ I reached out to a friend or family member to offer support
- ✿ I reached out to a friend or family member to get support
- ✿ I made a donation to a charity or organization working on the issue/s
- ✿ I joined a support group for caregivers
- ✿ I visited an online caregiving resource site
- ✿ I wrote a social media post or engaged in online discussion about the topic
- ✿ I looked for more content with caregiving storylines
- ✿ Other (please specify) [text box]
- ✿ I have not taken any actions

MECHANISM VARIABLES

[Transportation into the storyline] Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1= *Strongly disagree*, 3= *Neither agree nor disagree*, 5= *Strongly agree*

- While I was watching the storyline, I could easily picture the events in it taking place.
- While I was watching the storyline, activity going on in the room around me was on my mind.
- I could picture myself in the scene of the events shown in the storyline.
- I was mentally involved in the storyline while watching it.
- After finishing the storyline, I found it easy to put it out of my mind.
- I wanted to learn how the storyline ended.
- The storyline affected me emotionally.
- I found myself thinking of ways the storyline could have turned out differently.
- I found my mind wandering while watching the storyline.
- The events in the storyline are relevant to my everyday life.
- The events in the storyline have changed my life.

[Parasocial Interaction] Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1= *Strongly disagree*, 3= *Neither agree nor disagree*, 5= *Strongly agree*

- [Character] made me feel comfortable, as if I was with a friend.
- I see [Character] as a natural, down-to-earth person.
- I look forward to watching [Character] in another episode.
- If [Character] would appear in another show, I would watch that show.
- If there were a news story about [Character], I would read it.
- I would miss [Character] if he did not appear in an episode.
- I would like to meet [Character] in person.
- I find [Character] to be attractive.

Note: Parasocial interaction was examined for four characters: Miguel, Randall, Kate, and Kevin.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH CAREGIVING

Are you a parent/guardian to a child under 18?

- Yes
- No

Do you provide regular care or assistance to an adult friend or family member in any of the following ways:

Select all that apply

- Financial support
- Transportation
- Help around the house
- Physical assistance
- Medical or therapeutic service management
- Employing caregivers
- Companionship

Note: A sum score was created to represent respondents' level of experience with caregiving.

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Please select your gender identity:

- ☐ Trans Woman
- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Trans Man
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Genderqueer, Non-binary
- ☐ Other (please specify) [text box]
- ☐ Decline to answer

What is your current relationship status?

- ☐ Single
- ☐ In committed relationship
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Separated or divorced
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Decline to answer

Which of the following best represents your race/ethnicity ? (select all that apply)

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Middle Eastern or North African
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Decline to answer

Which is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ☐ Less than high school degree
- ☐ High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)
- ☐ Some college but no degree
- ☐ Associate's degree in college (2-year)
- ☐ Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree/Professional degree (JD, MD, PhD)
- ☐ Other (please specify) [text box]
- ☐ Decline to answer

What is your household income? Please indicate the answer that includes your entire household income in 2021 before taxes.

- ☐ \$0 to 9,999
- ☐ \$10,000 to 14,999
- ☐ \$15,000 to 19,999
- ☐ \$20,000 to 34,999
- ☐ \$35,000 to 49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 to 74,999
- ☐ \$75,000 to 99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 to 199,999
- ☐ \$200,000 or more
- ☐ Decline to answer

Which of the following best represents your religious affiliation?

- ✱ Atheist/Agnostic
- ✱ Buddhist
- ✱ Catholic
- ✱ Christian (please specify) [text box]
- ✱ Hindu
- ✱ Jewish
- ✱ Muslim
- ✱ Other (please specify) [text box]
- ✱ Spiritual, but not religious
- ✱ Decline to answer

How religious do you consider yourself? 0= *Not at all religious*; 10= *Very religious*

Which party, if any, do you most identify with?

- ✱ Republican
- ✱ Democratic
- ✱ No party preference
- ✱ Decline to answer
- ✱ Other (please specify) [text box]

Overall, which description best represents your political ideology?

- ✱ Very liberal
- ✱ Liberal
- ✱ Moderate
- ✱ Conservative
- ✱ Very conservative
- ✱ Decline to answer

Which of the following best represents where you live?

- ✱ Large city (100,00 or more)
- ✱ Small city (less than 100,000)
- ✱ Suburbs
- ✱ Rural area
- ✱ Decline to answer

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