

## **Facts about carers (last updated June 2025)**

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## Who are unpaid carers?

- An unpaid carer is someone who is providing unpaid care and support to a family member, partner, friend, or neighbour who is disabled, has an illness or long-term condition, or who needs extra help as they get older. This support could be a few hours a week, or it could be round the clock care.

## How many people are carers?

- There are different estimates as to the number of unpaid carers. The largest survey, by far, is the Census which surveys every household in the UK.
  - The [2021 Census](#) found that there are 5m people aged over 5 years who are providing unpaid care in England and Wales: 4.7m in England and 311,000 in Wales.
  - The [2021 Census](#) in Northern Ireland found there are 222,000 unpaid carers in Northern Ireland.
  - The [2022 Census](#) in Scotland found that there are 627,700 unpaid carers in Scotland.
- **The total number of unpaid carers in the UK is 5.8m.**

### ***Total number of people providing unpaid care by nation***

Nation	Number of carers
England	<b>4.7 million</b>
Wales	<b>311,000</b>
Northern Ireland	<b>222,000</b>
Scotland	<b>627,700</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.8 million</b>

## Has the number of carers decreased, according to the Census?

- According to the ONS census, there has been a [decline](#) in the proportion of people providing care in England and Wales since 2011. ONS use age-standardised proportions to allow for comparisons over time, as these account for differences in population size and structure. In 2021, an age-standardised proportion of **9% were providing care in England and Wales** compared to 11.4% in 2011.
- As the table below shows, a higher proportion of people in Wales are providing unpaid care (10.5%) than in England (8.9%). However, the proportion of carers has decreased since 2011 in both nations. This decrease was driven by a substantial fall in the number of people providing 19 hours or less of unpaid care.

### ***Proportion of people providing unpaid care in England and Wales (Census 2021)***

	<b>Age standardised proportion of people providing unpaid care 2021</b>	<b>Age standardised proportion of people providing unpaid care 2011</b>
England	8.9%	11.3%
Wales	10.5%	13%
England and Wales	9%	11.4%

- The proportion of people providing unpaid care in Northern Ireland has [not changed markedly](#) since 2011, when 214,000 people (12.7%) were providing unpaid care compared to 222,200 in 2021 (12.4%).
- In Scotland, there has been a 27.5% [increase](#) in the number of people providing unpaid care. In 2022, 11.9% of people aged 3 and over were providing unpaid care.

Why has the proportion of people providing unpaid care decreased in England and Wales, but increased in Scotland, according to the Census?

- The decrease in the proportion of unpaid carers in England and Wales in the Census may have been due to the change in the wording of the question. In 2011 the census asked people whether they look after or give any help or support to ‘family members, friends, neighbours or others’. The question asked in the 2021 census did not mention family members, friends, or neighbours. We know from our research that many carers do not identify themselves as carers. Without this clarification, carers may have misunderstood the question.
- ONS have also suggested that because the census was carried out during the pandemic, this may have influenced how people perceived their provision of unpaid care. Social distancing regulations may have also reduced people’s ability to provide care. The survey was carried out during a lockdown period.
- In Scotland, the Census took place slightly later in 2022, so people may not have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to the same extent. In addition, the wording of the question is clearer – it asks people whether they were caring for a family member or friend, rather than whether they were caring for ‘anyone’ (as the Census in England and Wales did).

Which parts of the UK have the most unpaid carers?

- Census data shows that the highest rates of carers are in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the North of England. In England, the North East has the highest proportion of unpaid carers (10.1%) compared to other regions and the highest proportion of people providing 50 or more hours of care. London is the region with the smallest proportion of unpaid carers (7.8%).

## Are there other estimates of the number of carers, other than the Census?

- Other datasets suggest that the number of carers is much larger than the Census suggests. For example:
  - [Polling](#) commissioned by Carers UK, and carried out by YouGov for Carers Week 2025 with people aged 18 and over across the UK, found that 22% of people were currently caring. Based on ONS population data, we estimated this to be **11.9m people in the UK**.
  - The [GP Patient Survey](#) 2024 found that **16% of people** in England are currently caring.
- The [Family Resources Survey](#), however, found that a similar proportion of carers as the Census. It found that 8% of people in the UK were caring in 2022-23 (in comparison, Census found there are [9%](#) of people caring in England and Wales)
- It is difficult to compare all these surveys with the Census as they are much smaller and are completed by far less people. The Carers UK polling, for example, was completed by 4,000 people. The Family Resources Survey was a sample of 25,000 households. The GP survey had just under 700,000 respondents. In contrast, the Census is a survey of every household in the UK, with a [97%](#) response rate in England and Wales.
- The questions about caring also vary from one survey to another. The question used in Carers UK polling is longer than the one in the Census and goes into more depth. The sampling (ie the ways in which people are selected to take part) vary from one survey to another as well.

## How many people start or stop caring each year?

- The Centre for Care carried out some [research](#) on this in collaboration with Carers UK in 2022, using data from Understanding Society (the UK Household Longitudinal Study ). This survey is the largest longitudinal household panel study of its kind and provides vital evidence on many areas, including caring. The Centre for Care's analysis of the survey data found that **over the period 2010-2020, 4.3m people across the UK became unpaid carers every year**. This means that:
  - 1 in 15 people became unpaid carers every year.
  - 84,000 people became unpaid carers every week.
  - 12,000 people became unpaid carers every day.
- Every year, more than 4 million people left their unpaid caring roles. As stated above, 4.3m became carers every year. This shows how dynamic care is, with people moving in and out of caring roles every year.
- [Analysis](#) carried out by the UK Data Service, also using the UK Household Longitudinal Study (Understanding Society), found that two thirds of people (67%) providing care during the second wave of the pandemic (November 2020-January

2021) were not previously providing any care. This suggests that many people started providing care during the pandemic.

### How many carers will there be in the future?

- [Research](#) by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation based on Understanding Society data found that if the number of carers rise only in line with population growth, by 2035 there will be an extra 400,000 people in the UK caring for the elderly, sick and disabled for 10 or more hours per week, an 11.3% increase compared to now. If we include those caring for fewer than 10 hours per week, this figure rises to 990,000 additional carers, a 10.6% increase compared to now.

### What is the likelihood of becoming a carer?

- Most people are carers at some point in their lives. Centre for Care [research](#) in 2019, in collaboration with Carers UK and based on Understanding Society data, found that people in the UK have a 65% chance of providing care in their adult life.

### How many hours of care are people providing?

- According to Census data, **1.7 million people in the UK are providing 50 or more hours of care per week.**
- It is important to note that the impact of caring is not just dictated by the number of hours of care provided. Some people may be combining a few hours of care a week with other responsibilities, such as paid employment or childcare, meaning that it can have an impact on their health and wellbeing.

#### ***Number of carers by nation and hours of care***

Nation	Number of hours of care provided per week		
	1-19 hours	20-49 hours	50 or more hours
England	2,303,725	969,769	1,404,771
Wales	138,325	65,597	106,829
Northern Ireland	100,782	52,746	68,691
Scotland	350,671	124,724	152,324
<b>UK total</b>	<b>2.9 million</b>	<b>1.2 million</b>	<b>1.7 million</b>

### Has the number of hours of care changed since 2011, according to the Census?

- In England and Wales, the Census data shows that there has been a decrease in the proportion of people providing 19 or hours or less (4.4% in 2021 compared with 7.2% in 2011), and **an increase in the proportion of people providing 20-49 hours** (1.9% in 2021 compared with 1.5% in 2011) and a slight increase in the proportion of people providing 50 or more hours (2.8% in 2021 compared with 2.7% in 2011).

**Proportion of people providing unpaid care in England and Wales by hours of care and survey year**

	19 hours or less		20-49 hours		50 or more hours	
	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011
<b>England</b>	4.4%	7.2%	1.8%	1.5%	2.7%	2.7%
<b>Wales</b>	4.7%	7.4%	2.2%	1.9%	3.6%	3.7%
<b>England and Wales</b>	4.4%	7.2%	1.9%	1.5%	2.8%	2.7%

- We need to be cautious when comparing the actual numbers of carers between 2021 and 2011. ONS [prefer](#) to use Age Standardised proportions, as these allow for more accurate comparisons between populations that may contain proportions of different ages. However, the data suggests that in England and Wales there has been an **increase of 260,000 carers providing 20-49 hours of care a week and an increase of 152,000 carers providing over 50 hours of care a week.**
- In Northern Ireland, the number of people caring for 50 or more hours also [increased](#) from 2011 to 2021 (up from 56,300 people in 2011 to 68,700 people in 2021).
- In Scotland, although the total number of carers increased, there was [little difference](#) between 2011 and 2021 in the proportion of carers providing 50 or more hours of care per week.

## What is the value of care?

- Social services and the NHS rely on carers' willingness and ability to provide care. Without the support of unpaid carers, these systems would collapse.
- In 2022, the Centre for Care published [new research](#) on valuing carers. This found that the economic value of the support provided by unpaid carers in England and Wales is an estimated **£162 billion per year, 29% more in real terms than 2011.** Carers UK estimate that this is roughly equivalent to the budget for NHS health service spending which was £156bn in England in 2020/21 according to Kings Fund [research](#).
- Centre for Care have also produced reports on the value of care in [Northern Ireland](#) (£5.8 billion), and in [Scotland](#) (£15.9 billion). In 2024, they produced a [new figure](#) for the value of care in the whole of the UK – this is **£184 billion**. That's a 29.3% increase over the past decade (£119.4 billion in 2011). The increase in the number of hours of care provided by unpaid carers has led to this increase in the economic cost of care.

## Carer demographics

### Gender

#### Census 2021

- According to the [2021 Census](#), of the 5m people providing unpaid care in England and Wales:
  - **2 million** are men (**41%**)
  - **3 million** are women (**59%**)
- The Census found that **women are more likely to provide care than men (10.4% of women are caring in England and Wales, compared with 7.6% of men)**. In England, 10.3% of women are caring, compared with 7.6% of men. In Wales, 12% of women are caring, compared with 9% of men.
- In Northern Ireland, the Census found that 130,000 carers are women (59%), and 92,000 are men (41%).
- In Scotland, there was a [higher percentage of females](#) providing unpaid care (13.5%) than males (10.1%).
- **In the UK, there are 3.5 million female carers, and 2.4 million male carers.**

#### Total number of carers by nation and sex

Location	Number of men providing unpaid care	Number of women providing unpaid care
England	1,907,499	2,770,766
Wales	129,417	181,334
Scotland	258,554	369,131
Northern Ireland	92,191	130,028
<b>TOTAL UK</b>	<b>2.4 million (2,387,661)</b>	<b>3.5 million (3,451,259)</b>

#### Other research

- The Centre for Care [research](#) on transitions in and out of care found that in England, over the period 2010-2020, on average **7% of women and 6.2% of men became unpaid carers every year – more than 2.3m women and 2m men every year**. More women than men in all age groups became unpaid carers, except those over the age of 66.
- [Research](#) by the Centre for Care on the likelihood of providing care in the UK found that women have a higher chance of becoming a carer than men (70% vs 60%). By the time they are aged 46, half of women have been a carer. Men have the same 50:50 chance by age 57 – eleven years later.
- The [Family Resources survey](#) in the UK found that women were more likely to be carers (10%) than men (6%).
- The [GP Patient Survey 2024](#) in England found that 18% of women surveyed were caring, compared with 13% of men.

- The [NHS SACE survey](#) in England found that 69% of carers were female and 31% were male.

## Age

### Census 2021

- According to the [Census 2021](#), **the biggest proportion of people caring in England and Wales are from the 55-59 age group** (16.5% people from this age group are providing unpaid care - 666,535 people).
- The Census in England and Wales also found that the **older age groups provide the highest hours of unpaid care per week**.
  - For women, it was those aged between 75 and 79 who were most likely to provide 50 hours or more of care (5.6% of women aged 75-79 in England were caring for 50 or more hours a week, and 6.9% in Wales).
  - For men, it was those aged between 85-89 who were most likely to provide 50 hours or more of care (7.4% of men aged 85-89 in England were caring for 50 or more hours, and 8.7% in Wales).
- In Northern Ireland, the Census found that [those aged 40 to 64](#) provided the highest level of unpaid care. In total around 20%, or one person in five, of those aged 40 to 64 provided unpaid care.
- In Scotland, the Census found that the [biggest increase](#) in the number of carers between 2011 and 2022 was within the 50-64 group (up 62,700).

### Total number of carers by nation and age

Age group	Location				
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	UK total
0-24	334,307	22,556	52,342	17,528	426,700
25-34	463,736	28,905	62,176	24,020	578,800
35-44	652,953	39,615	389,731	37,414	3,503,100
45-54	996,003	63,126		53,804	
55-64	1,143,031	76,858		50,589	
65-74	640,556	47,718	123,460	23,734	1,330,200
75-84	348,467	25,524		15,132	
85 plus	99,212	6,448			

### Other research

- The [NHS Social Services Survey of Adult Carers](#) in England (SACE) found that the largest age-band of carers was 55-64 years (26% of carers were in this age group).
- The [Family Resources survey](#) in the UK found that people aged between 55 and 64 were most likely to be unpaid carers.



- The Centre for Care's [research](#) into transitions in and out of care found that the largest age group of people who became unpaid carers were those aged 46-65, with 41% of people who became unpaid carers being from this group.
- The [GP Patient Survey](#) 2024 found that nearly a quarter (24%) of people aged 55-64 were currently providing care in England.
- Age UK [research](#) using Understanding Society data found that the number of people aged over 65 in the UK providing unpaid care nearly doubled during the pandemic to more than 4 million.

## Age and Gender

- The 2021 Census found that **women aged 55-59 provided the most unpaid care** (19.9% of women aged 55-59 are caring in England, and 21.9% in Wales). This means that in both nations, around 1 in 5 women aged 55-59 are unpaid carers.
- The [Census](#) found that in England, **women were significantly more likely to provide unpaid care than men in every age group up to 75-79. However, from the age of 80 years, men were statistically significantly more likely to provide unpaid care.** In Wales, women were more likely to provide unpaid care than men in every age group up to 70-74. There was no difference for those aged 75-79, but from the age of 80 years, men were statistically significantly more likely to provide unpaid care.
- The Census in England and Wales also found that since 2011 there has been an **increase in the percentage of women aged 85 and over providing unpaid care.** In England, 6.3% of women aged 85-89 in England are caring, compared to 5.9% in 2011, and 2.9% of women aged 90 and over are caring, compared with 2.4% in 2011.

## Young carers

### *Number of young carers*

- The 2021 [Census](#) found there were about **120,000 young unpaid carers** aged 5-17 in England (1.4% of 5-17 year olds), and **8,200 in Wales** (1.8% of 5-17 year olds).
- Previous [research](#) by the BBC and the University of Nottingham in 2018 found that 22% of children (1 in 5) were young carers.
- In 2023/24 the School Census in England included a question on caring for the first time. The [data](#) showed that there were just under 39,000 young carers - 0.5% of pupils. In the school census in 2023/24 there was an increase to 54,000 young carers – 0.6% of the pupil population. This is likely to be a significant underreporting as 72% of schools recorded having no young carers in their school at all.

### *Impact of caring on young carers*

- The School [Census](#) found that young carers had an overall absence rate of 12.3% compared to 7.3% for those who were not young carers. Children's Society [research](#) found that 27% of young carers aged 11-15 miss school or experience educational difficulties.
- Recent [research](#) by Carers Trust found that in 2022/23, almost half (48%) of young carers reported being bullied in the past year. More than two in five (44%) of young carers frequently struggle to study for tests or exams because of the demands of their caring situation. Almost one in four young carers (23%) say there is 'no support at all' for young carers in their school, college or university.
- Research by Action for Children and Carers Trust found that [eight out of ten young carers feel lonely during summer holidays](#), and over a third do not look forward to the summer break. A Carers Trust [survey](#) in 2022 found that 42% of young carers 'always' or 'usually' felt stressed, 36% 'always' or 'usually' felt worried, and 33% 'always' or 'usually' felt lonely.
- [UCAS data](#) shows that in 2023, 18,915 young adult carers applied to university or college, accounting for 3.9% of all UCAS applicants. 72% said they never or rarely spoke to teaching staff about their caring responsibilities. Young adult carers are less mobile due to their caring responsibilities – they are 29% more likely than their peers to go to a university or college within a 30 minutes' drive from home.
- [Research](#) by the UCL found that young adult carers were 38% less likely than their peers to get a degree.
- The GP Patient Survey found that young carers aged 16-24 in England were more likely to have mental and physical health conditions than young people not caring. (58% vs 44%). The [Sutton Trust COSMO study](#) found that young carers are significantly more likely to experience psychological distress (56%), compared to 43% of non-carers.
- A [report](#) commissioned by the Department for Education found that caring had adverse effects such as anxiety, stress, tiredness, and strain in family relationships. [Several studies](#) have found that children and adolescents who care for a parent with illness may be at a high risk of a range of emotional and mental health needs.
- An academic [study](#) with young carers found that young carers were often carrying out duties that were considered to be inappropriate for children to undertake, according to The Care Act 2014. These included physical/strenuous activities, dealing with medication and overseeing family finances.

### [Disability](#)

#### *Census 2021*

- The [Census 2021](#) found that **1.4 million carers are disabled** in England and Wales. Carers were more likely than non-carers to be disabled. **28% of carers were**

**disabled, compared with 18% of non-carers.** Over a quarter (27.5%) of carers in England were disabled compared with 17.8% of non-carers, and 29.8% of carers in Wales were disabled compared with 21.4% of non-carers. The difference was most marked in the younger age groups. In England, 23.6% of young carers aged 5-17 were disabled, compared with 8% of people aged 5-17 who do not provide care.

- The wording of the question on disability was different in 2021, meaning any comparison with 2011 should be done with caution. However, the data shows that **the percentage of unpaid carers with a disability has increased** since 2011. This increase has been mainly driven by an increase in the percentage of disabled unpaid carers aged 54 and under, particularly the 5-17 age group.
- In Northern Ireland, 65,000 carers had a long-term health problem or disability – 29% of all carers, in comparison with 25% of non-carers.
- In Scotland, 205,400 carers are disabled – 33% of all carers, in comparison with 24% of non-carers.

#### *Other research*

- The GP Patient Survey 2024 found that 19% of people with one or more long-term conditions or illnesses were caring in England, compared with 12% of people who did not have one or more long-term conditions or illnesses

#### *Ethnicity and faith*

- Carers UK analysis of Census data found that there are over 620,000 carers from an Asian, Black or Mixed ethnic background in the UK. This includes:
  - 596,700 carers in England
  - 10,000 carers in Wales
  - 25,600 carers in Scotland
  - 3,200 carers in Northern Ireland
- [Analysis](#) by UCL of Understanding Society data found that Pakistani and Bangladeshi carers were more likely to be living with the person they provided care for (70.1% and 74.8% respectively) in comparison with White carers (39.7%).
- In England and Wales, ONS [analysis](#) found that the ethnicity of unpaid carers largely follows the ethnic-group distributions in the whole population. In people who identified as unpaid carers and non-carers, the most common ethnic group identified with was "White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British" in both England (78.3% and 73.8% in unpaid carers and non-carers, respectively) and Wales (92.9% and 90.2% in unpaid carers and non-carers, respectively).
- In England and Wales, ONS [analysis](#) found that the most common religion carers identified with is Christian (48.7% of carers in England are Christian, and 45.5% of carers in Wales). In both countries, there has been an increase in the proportion of carers identifying with 'no religion' (35% in England, and 45.4% in Wales) compared with 2011. This pattern has also been seen in the wider population.

## Sexual orientation

- Carers UK analysis of Census data found that at least 150,000 carers in the UK are **LGB+**. This includes:
  - 138,400 carers in England
  - 9,000 carers in Wales
  - 4,200 carers in Northern Ireland
  - Data in Scotland is not yet available
- **ONS [analysis](#) of Census data in England and Wales found that a higher proportion of unpaid carers aged 16 and over are lesbian, gay, bisexual or other compared with non-carers.** In England, 3.9% of unpaid carers are LGB+ compared with 3% of non-carers, and 4% of carers in Wales are LGB+ compared with 3% of non-carers.
- The Census found that there are over 25,000 trans carers in England and Wales.

## What kind of care do carers provide?

- In State of Caring 2024, we found that the most reported task that carers did was **household help** such as preparing meals, doing shopping or laundry, housework or household repairs (93% of carers did this). This was followed by emotional support (91%), and then helping with paperwork or financial matters such as dealing with bills or banking (88%).

## Who do carers care for?

- The [Family Resource Survey](#) found that the main recipients of unpaid care were parents - 35% cared for parents living outside their household and 7% cared for parents living inside their household.
- In State of Caring 2024 we found that the most common person being cared for was a spouse (39%), followed by a child/child-law (35%) and a parent/parent-in-law (33%).
- The State of Caring survey also found that the majority of carers care for 1 person (72%). 20% care for 2 people, 5% care for 3 people, and 2% care for 4 or more people.

## Caring at a distance

- The [Family Resources Survey](#) found that 50% of carers provided care to someone living inside their household and 54% provided care to someone living outside their household.
- Health Foundation [analysis](#) of Understanding Society data found that 46% of carers provided care to someone living inside their household, and 63% cared for someone living elsewhere.

## Carers with childcare responsibilities

- The [Family Resources Survey](#) found that 18% of carers in the UK were 'sandwich carers' (ie were caring for a child and an adult relative). [ONS analysis](#) of Understanding Society data found that there were 1.4m sandwich carers aged 16-64 in the UK between 2021 and 2023 – and of those, 61% are female. 64% are providing care outside the home (eg to a parent living elsewhere).
- The [Census](#) found that there are just under 4 million households which include at least 1 unpaid carer. Of those, 1.1m households (29%) also include at least 1 dependant child.
- [Research](#) by the ONS found that people who care for someone and also have dependent children are more likely than the average person to find it difficult to manage financially (16% vs 9%), and feel anxious or depressed (31% vs 24%). Over half (53%) are unable to work at all or as much as they'd like because of caring.

## Impact of caring

### Financial impact

#### How many carers are in poverty?

- [Research](#) commissioned by Carers UK and conducted by WPI Economics in 2024 found that **1.2 million unpaid carers live in poverty, and 400,000 live in deep poverty in the UK**. In 2021/22 in the UK, the poverty rate for unpaid carers was 50% higher than for those who did not provide care (27% vs 18%).
- More recent [research](#) by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2025 found that informal carers are much more likely than those with no caring responsibilities to be living in poverty (28% compared with 20%).
- The WPI Economics research found that some carers are even more likely to be in poverty, including those caring for more than 35 hours a week, those caring for more than one person, carers aged 25-44, unpaid carers who are women, unpaid carers who are from ethnic minorities, and unpaid carers who live in the North of England or West Midlands.
- [Research](#) in 2023 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation calculated the 'caring penalty', or the amount lost in earnings by those who take up caring for a loved one. This found that unpaid carers experience an average pay penalty of £414 per month, or nearly £5,000 per year, rising to £628 per month or nearly £8,000 per year after six years of providing unpaid care.
- The Department of Work and Pension's [Family Resources Survey](#) 2023/24 found that 31% households in receipt of Carer's Allowance reported living in food insecurity – three times the rate of the general population (10%).
- New Poverty Institute [analysis](#) of the Family Resources Survey in 2016 found that the poverty rate among working-age carers increases with the number of hours they care

for, particularly after 20 hours per week. **37% of working age adults providing at least 20 hours of care are in poverty.**

- [State of Caring 2024](#) found that 61% of unpaid carers are worried about living costs and managing in the future, and over a third (35%) don't feel confident they will be able to manage financially over the next 12 months. A quarter of carers (27%) are struggling to make ends meet and 28% of carers are cutting back on essentials like food and heating.

#### Why are carers in poverty?

- Unpaid carers can often struggle because of inadequate support from the social security system. Carer's Allowance is the lowest benefit of its kind at only **£81.90 per week (2024/25)** for providing a minimum of 35 hours of care. [DWP data](#) suggests there were **over 991,000 people receiving Carer's Allowance** in November 2023, of which 73% are women.
- Carers who exceed the Carer's Allowance earnings limit must notify the Carer's Allowance Unit of any relevant changes to their circumstances that would affect their entitlement. If they do not do so, and they go over this earnings limit, they must pay back the full amount of the benefit for each month when it was claimed in error. As of [14 May 2024](#), there are **134,800 people with an outstanding Carer's Allowance debt – a total value of £251m.**
- Carers often bear additional costs of caring such as care services, assistive equipment, specialist food, and increased fuel expenses, including petrol costs or keeping the house warm for the person being cared for.
- The WPI Economics [research](#) found that being out of work is the single strongest quantitative predictor of poverty for unpaid carers. Carers UK [research](#) found that **2.6 million people had given up work to care.** Carers can often give up work when they are unable to find suitable replacement care services, or when they do not receive enough support from their employer to stay in work.

#### Health impact

- The [Census 2021](#) in England and Wales found that around **1 in 4 unpaid carers reported being in 'not good health' after adjusting for age, compared with fewer than 1 in 5 non-carers.** The probability of being in "not good health" was higher for people providing more hours of unpaid care: **around 1 in 3 carers caring for 50 or more hours a week reported being in 'not good health'.**
- [ONS analysis](#) of the Health Survey for England in 2015, 2017 and 2019 combined found that **nearly half (49%) of unpaid carers reported at least one adverse health effect from providing unpaid care.** This was higher among females (53%) than males (43%), and higher amongst those providing more hours of care. **83% of those caring for 50 or more hours in the previous week, and 75% of those caring for 20-49 hours in the previous week, reported at least one adverse health effect.**



- The [2024 GP Patient survey](#) in England asked people whether they had any long-term physical or mental health conditions, disabilities or illnesses. **70% of carers said they did, compared to 59% of non-carers.**
- Carers have an increased risk of mortality. A longitudinal [study](#) in the US found that after controlling for demographic factors, carers reporting mental or emotional strain had mortality risks that were 63% higher than non-carers.
- Carers Week [research](#) in 2025 found that 43% of current and former carers said they had a mental or physical health condition develop or become worse since caring. 40% of current carers said they had postponed or cancelled a medical appointment, test, scan, treatment or therapy because of caring.
- Many carers are unable to take a break, because they feel that social care services (such as respite services or paid care workers) do not meet their needs, or because they feel too anxious about the person they care for to take time to themselves. Carers UK [research](#) in 2024 found that a significant proportion of carers feel overwhelmed. 57% of carers stated that they feel overwhelmed often or always. The main reason carers feel overwhelmed is because they are not getting a break from caring. 65% of carers said that they felt overwhelmed because they haven't been able to take a break from caring.
- [Analysis](#) of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing found that poor mental and physical health and social isolation were common amongst older carers.
- Caring can have a negative impact on physical and mental health. [Research](#) by Public Health England has shown that **caring should be considered a social determinant of health.**
- The most recent [NHS SACE survey](#) found that the 20% of carers felt they are neglecting themselves.
- Caring can come with high personal costs. Many carers find that their friendships and relationships are impacted, with less time to spend with family and friends. This can lead to loneliness and isolation. [State of Caring 2023](#) found that **50% of carers felt lonely.**
- Juggling many different aspects of care, alongside other priorities such as paid employment or childcare, can be stressful, particularly if carers are not receiving the support they need. In [State of Caring 2024](#), **80% of carers said the impact of caring on their physical and/or mental health will be a challenge over the next year. Over a third (35%) of carers said they had bad or very bad mental health, compared to 27% the previous year.**
- Some carers feel that the demands of caring mean they are unable to prioritise their own health and wellbeing. According to [State of Caring 2023](#), **44% of carers said they had put off health treatment because of their caring role, and 73% said that they continued providing care even though they felt they were at breaking point.**

- A recent [study](#) found that more than 40% of parents with disabled children have thought about suicide

## Employment impact

### Census 2021

- The Census found that there are **nearly 3 million people in the UK who are working in paid employment whilst also juggling unpaid care.**
- **Around a quarter of a million unpaid carers are not in paid employment because they are long-term sick or disabled.**

### Carers' economic activity by Nation

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	UK
Employed (excluding full time students)	2,330,464	144,814	341,445	122,033	
Employed and full-time student	40,554	2,800	10,955	2,942	
<b>Total in employment</b>	<b>2.4 million</b>	<b>147,600</b>	<b>352,400</b>	<b>125,000</b>	<b>3 million</b>
Unemployed (including students looking for work)	122,578	6,985	13,311	4,354	147,228
Student	96,559	6,932	14,884	4,594	122,969
Looking after home or family	587,851	37,869	60,205	28,525	714,450
Retired	1,097,108	81,516	131,920	40,225	1,350,769
Long term sick or disabled	200,988	16,970	28,789	11,474	258,221
Other economically inactive	123,350	7,540	12,551	4,786	148,227
<b>Non-employed total</b>	<b>2.2 million</b>	<b>157,800</b>	<b>261,700</b>	<b>94,000</b>	<b>2.7 million</b>
<i>Not applicable (children aged under 16)</i>	<i>78,800</i>	<i>5,300</i>	<i>13,700</i>	<i>3,300</i>	<i>101,100</i>

- People providing unpaid care are more likely than those without caring responsibilities to be working part time. The Census 2021 in England and Wales



found that 38% of carers in employment are working part time compared with 29% of non-carers in employment.

- Carers in employment caring for 50 or more hours a week are more likely to be working in elementary occupations than carers in employment caring for 19 hours or less (12% compared with 7%). However, many carers are juggling unpaid care with senior roles: there are over 317,000 managers, directors and senior officials with unpaid caring roles, with over 47,000 providing over 50 hours of unpaid care per week.
- Carers in employment caring for 50 or more hours a week are more likely to work in distribution, hotels and restaurants than carers in employment caring for less than 19 hours a week (20% compared with 16%).

#### *Other research*

- The NHS staff survey found that one third of NHS staff (32%) are providing unpaid care. Carers UK estimate this to be about half a million people. 43% of NHS staff aged 51-65 were providing unpaid care.
- Centre for Care [research](#) found that **more than 1.9m people in paid employment became unpaid carers every year between 2010-2020 - 5,300 people every day.**
- Caring is a significant and growing reason for employees leaving the labour market. Many people cut back their working hours in order to care, while others feel they have to leave their employment or reduce their working hours if flexible working or unpaid care leave isn't available or supported. [Carers UK research](#) based on polling, found that **2.6m people have given up work to care, and 2m people have reduced their working hours to care.** It also found that 1 in 7 people are juggling work and care.
- WPI [research](#) found that difficulty combining paid work with unpaid care is one of the main predictors and drivers of poverty. There is an employment gap between working-age carers (62% in employment) and non-carers (75% in employment).
- [Analysis](#) by Age UK found that an estimated £5.3bn has been wiped from the economy in lost earnings due to people who've dropped out of the workforce to take on caring responsibilities for older or disabled loved ones.
- Some carers also find that they are unable to progress in their careers: [research](#) by the University of Sheffield found that 36% of working carers said they had turned down a job offer or promotion, or decided not to apply for a job, in the last 12 months because of their caring responsibilities.
- [State of Caring 2024](#) found that **40% of all carers had given up work to care.** 44% of carers in employment said they had reduced their working hours to care, and a quarter (25%) had to take on a lower paid or more junior role.
- Carers Trust [research](#) found that 80% of unpaid carers with a health condition have considered giving up their jobs.

- Centrica, a founder member of Employers for Carers, [estimates](#) that UK companies could save up to £4.8 billion a year in unplanned absences and a further £3.4 billion in improved employee retention by adopting flexible working policies to support those with caring responsibilities.
- Support from employers can help people stay in work – [research](#) by the University of Sheffield found that mental wellbeing is higher among working carers in organisations that provide support: among those working in organisations that provided support for working carers, 43% reported high wellbeing compared with just 31% in organisations providing no support.

## Public awareness of carers

- Many carers feel undervalued and unrecognised. Carers Week [polling](#) in 2022 found that nearly **7 out of 10 (69%) of the general public feel that the role of unpaid carers is not well valued by the general public.**
- [State of Caring 2024](#) found that **57% of carers said they needed better understanding and recognition of unpaid carers from the general public.**

## Identification

- Carers Week [research](#) in 2023 found that nearly three quarters of people who are providing, or have provided, unpaid care said they do not identify as or call themselves a carer. Nearly half of those who took longer to identify themselves as a carer (46%) said they missed out on financial support as a result of not knowing they were a carer.
- The State of Caring 2024 survey found that over half of all carers (55%) took over a year to recognise their caring role, with a quarter (24%) taking over five years to recognise themselves as a carer.
- The CQC 2023/24 [State of Care report](#) found that at all the local authorities they have assessed so far, there is work needed to identify carers – and raise awareness that carers are entitled to an assessment and services to support them in their role.

## Support with caring from social care services

- Carers Week [research](#) in 2024 found that 62% of those who are currently providing or who have previously provided unpaid care said that they had **no choice in taking on the role** because no other care options were available.
- SALT data shows that in 2023-24, 360,815 carers were either [supported or assessed/reviewed](#) by the local authorities – about 8% of all carers. 70% (252,875) of carers who approached the local authority for support were only given information, advice and other universal services/signposting, or did not get any direct support at all. Local authority [gross expenditure](#) on support to carers was £183 million in 2023-24, a drop of 6.1% from £195 million in 2022-23.

- The ADASS spring survey found that adult social care budgets in 2023/24 were [overspent](#) by £586mn, the highest levels for at least a decade. The complexity of people's adult social care needs means that more people now require more intensive care and support. This has a significant impact on unpaid carers. 88% of Directors of Adult Social Care agreed that unpaid carers are coming forward with an increased level of need in their local area over the past 12 months, as a result of shortages in health and care support.
- The ADASS spring survey [found](#) that nine in ten Directors (90%) indicated that they are either only partially confident or have no confidence that their budgets will be sufficient to fully meet their statutory duties in 2024/25, up from 86% in 2023/24.
- Carers UK State of Caring [research](#) in 2022 found that 25% of carers had had a Carer's Assessment in the last 12 months, and **75% had not had a Carer's Assessment in the last year**. 39% of carers who had not had a Carer's Assessment said that a barrier to having an assessment was not knowing what an assessment was.
- Carers UK State of Caring [research](#) in 2023 found that 37% of carers were receiving support with their caring role from social care services – lower than the proportion receiving support from family and friends (50%).
- Skills For Care [estimate](#) that 8.3% of roles within the adult social care workforce are vacant – a total of 131,000 posts. Kings Fund [analysis](#) has found that vacancy rates are much higher in social care than in other sectors of the economy such as retail, education and manufacturing.

Across the UK today 5.8 million people are carers – supporting a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill.

Carers UK is here to listen, to give carers expert information and tailored advice. We champion the rights of carers and support them in finding new ways to manage at home, at work, or in their community.

**We're here to make life better for carers.**

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