



Carers Week 2020 Research Report

The rise in the number of unpaid carers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak



Headline supporter



About this research

This research is based on polling carried out by YouGov in May 2020 of 4557 people over the age of 18 living in the UK.

The polling used the following question:

‘For the following questions, by ‘unpaid support’, we mean helping someone who could be finding it hard to manage because of mental or physical illness, needing extra help as they grow older or because they have a physical or learning disability.

This could be for anyone that you know (eg family, a friend, neighbour, colleague etc.)

Your support might include shopping, helping to find or arrange care or support, helping with managing money, giving regular emotional support, helping with transport, picking up prescriptions or providing hands on care (eg help with bathing, dressing etc.).

Do you currently give unpaid support to someone who is older, seriously ill, or has a disability?

Please select the option that best applies:

I currently give unpaid support to someone and did this before the coronavirus outbreak

I currently give unpaid support to someone but have only started doing this since the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

I don't currently give unpaid support to anyone and have not done in the past

I don't currently give unpaid support to anyone but have done in the past

Don't know'

Population estimates for the number of carers were extrapolated using the percentage selecting each of the above options and the Office for National Statistics 2019 mid-year population estimates (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2019>).

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Summary | 4 |
| Higher number of unpaid carers | 7 |
| Unpaid carers who were already caring before the crisis | 8 |
| Unpaid carers who started caring since the coronavirus outbreak | 10 |
| Challenges faced by unpaid carers | 12 |
| Worries about taking on an unpaid caring role | 14 |
| Working carers | 16 |
| Gender inequality | 17 |
| Age | 18 |
| Public recognition of unpaid caring | 19 |
| Government support for unpaid carers | 20 |
| Conclusion and recommendations | 22 |
| Unpaid caring in Wales | 25 |
| Unpaid caring in Northern Ireland | 27 |
| Unpaid caring in Scotland | 29 |
| About this research | 31 |



Summary

Carers Week carried out polling with YouGov to revisit how many people are caring in the UK today, the challenges they face and what the public's worries would be if they became an unpaid carer. We also looked at public awareness of unpaid caring, whether the public thought unpaid carers were valued and whether the Government had provided sufficient support.

The results show a large increase and difference in unpaid care, and it has never been more important that we all Make Caring Visible. Awareness of unpaid carers has increased amongst those who have never had a caring role, yet the public feel unpaid caring is undervalued.

There are **an estimated 13.6 million unpaid carers in the UK today**. Most of these unpaid carers, 9.1 million, were already caring before the coronavirus outbreak. A staggering 4.5 million people have started providing unpaid care since the outbreak. This represents nearly a 50% increase in the number of unpaid carers since the crisis began.

An estimated **26% of the UK adult population is providing unpaid care** to an older, disabled or ill relative or friend – that is equivalent to **one in four adults**.

This is more than double the number of unpaid carers since the 2011 Census which found that there were 6.5 million carers in the UK. We consider this to be due, in part, to a more encompassing definition being used in the polling. However, other surveys prior to the coronavirus outbreak have also seen an increase in the number of carers,¹ and there has been a rise in the amount of care provided by unpaid carers during the outbreak.²

This research also shows that:

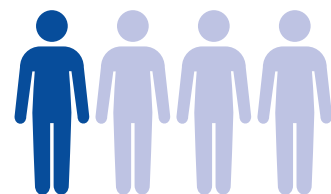
- People providing unpaid care since the start of the outbreak were more likely to be in paid work (62% were working) compared with those who were already providing care pre-outbreak are less likely to be in paid work (48% were working).
- There are **2.8 million extra workers juggling work and unpaid care** since the start of outbreak. One in ten workers has started providing unpaid care since the outbreak. This brings the estimated number of unpaid carers who are also in paid work to over 7 million across the UK as previous research found that there were already 4.9 million people juggling work and unpaid care.³
- In total 26% of all workers are juggling work and unpaid care – one in four workers.
- Unpaid carers who started caring since the outbreak are more likely to be younger. 5% were aged over 65, compared with 23% of unpaid carers who were already providing care pre-outbreak.

Up to

13.6 million

people could be providing unpaid care in the UK today

1 in 4 up from 1 in 6



There are an additional

4.5 million

unpaid carers in the UK since the coronavirus outbreak



2.8 million

more workers are juggling work and unpaid care since the coronavirus outbreak



1 Getting Carers Connected, Carers Week 2019

2 Caring Behind Closed Doors, Carers UK 2020

3 Juggling work and unpaid care, 2019

- Women are slightly more likely to be providing unpaid care since the outbreak began (59% compared to 57%)
- People providing unpaid care since the outbreak are more likely to have children under the age of 18.

The top three most frequently chosen challenges by all unpaid carers were:

- managing the stress and responsibility (71%)
- the negative impacts on their physical and mental health (70%)
- not being able to take time away from caring (66%).

These results closely matched what the public, who had never been unpaid carers, thought the challenges that unpaid carers face were:

- not being able to take time away from caring (72%)
- managing the stress and responsibility (70%)
- the negative impacts on their physical and mental health (69%).

There were other important challenges that were frequently chosen by unpaid carers:

- the impact it has on other personal relationships (eg with family, friends, partners etc.) (63%)
- the negative impact it has on their ability to do paid work (55%)
- the financial impact of the additional care costs (eg specialist care equipment, home adaptations (53%)
- not having anyone to talk to about the challenges of caring (50%).

The general public, who don't have a caring role, were asked what worries they would have if they took on an unpaid caring role. Their top three worries were:

- The negative impact on their own physical and mental health (56%)
- Not being able to cope financially, not being able to afford care services or equipment required (50%)
- Not knowing or understanding what help is available to carers (49%).

Awareness of unpaid carers is higher since the outbreak of coronavirus according to the general public. Half (48%) of those who had never been a carer said they were either more aware or much more aware of unpaid carers. 21% of the general public were much more aware.

Yet two thirds (65%) of the public thought unpaid carers were not valued. Women were more likely to think this (69%), compared with men (61%).

The general public also felt that the Government had not done enough to support unpaid carers. Nearly 7 out of 10 people (69%) felt that unpaid carers had not been supported by the Government during the coronavirus outbreak and almost three quarters (75%) thought the Government should increase support.

New carers are more likely to be younger and working

62%

of new carers are also working



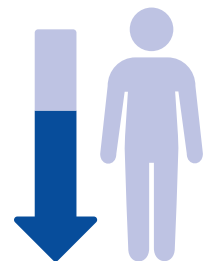
48%

of people without caring responsibilities are more aware of the role of unpaid carers



65%

of the public think unpaid carers are undervalued



69%

of the public do not think that the government has provided enough support since the coronavirus outbreak



Implications of an increase in unpaid carers

Providing low levels of unpaid care will be manageable for many. However, even five hours of unpaid care has been shown to have a negative impact on paid work.⁴ For some, a small extra caring responsibility may be too much.

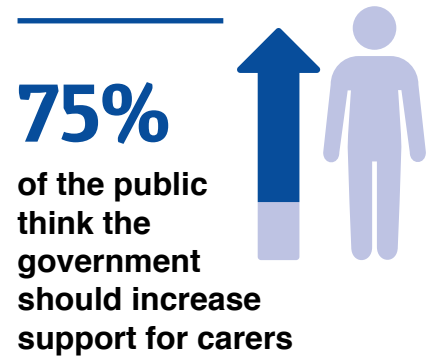
The level of increase in the number of unpaid carers is a cause for concern in many ways and needs a new approach from Government, employers, local authorities, the NHS, local communities and society. This rise must not be applauded without considering and tackling the negative consequences of providing unpaid care for families, business productivity and the economy.

For example, with so many people providing unpaid care, employers need a whole new approach to supporting workers who are juggling work and care, patterns and ways of working, awareness of unpaid carers and leave arrangements.

The rise in caring is not without its costs which is why it is a cause for concern. Earlier research has found that 2.6 million people have given up work to provide unpaid care,⁵ unpaid carers are more likely to be in poor health⁶ and 1.2 million unpaid carers are in poverty.⁷

Without the right care services in place, financial and practical support, it makes it even more likely that unpaid carers will give up work to care and have poorer health and wellbeing outcomes. It is more likely they will experience financial challenges, face increased isolation and loneliness and have a lower quality of life.

In order to have a healthy and strong economy, strong families and communities, with greater independence for older and disabled people, we need action from everyone.



Summary of recommendations:

- Increase awareness of the role of caring and unpaid carers.
- Fund and rebuild social care and health services.
- End carers' financial hardship.
- Identify and provide carers with support.
- Support working carers more through employers and by Government.
- Identify and support carers in education.
- Add Your Voice and Make Caring Visible.

4 Walking the tightrope: the challenges of combining work and care in later life, Age UK and Carers UK 2016

5 Juggling work and unpaid care, Carers UK 2019

6 Census 2011

7 Informal carers & poverty in the UK, New Policy Institute 2016

Higher number of unpaid carers

Across the UK, millions of people provide unpaid support for an ill, older or disabled family member, or friend. They are unpaid carers but for many they are just a wife, husband, child, parent, friend or good neighbour.

The amount and type of support that unpaid carers provide varies considerably. It can range from a few hours a week, such as picking up prescriptions and preparing meals, to providing emotional or personal care, day and night, 365 days a year.

For some, taking on a caring role can happen suddenly and unexpectedly; a family member has an accident or a child is born with a disability. For others, caring responsibilities grow gradually over time – parents become less able to manage on their own or a partner or child’s mental or physical health worsens.

The coronavirus outbreak has brought into stark focus the need to support older, ill or disabled people – and the people that care for them. With the health and social care system under significant pressure, local services having been reduced and closed, and significant numbers of people having to take extra precautions to protect their own health – many more people are now needing support.

This research included a question using a comprehensive definition of unpaid caring to capture different types of caring activity which may go uncounted and unrecognised, such as providing emotional support or arranging care.⁸ The polling found that a far higher proportion (26%) of the adult population are currently providing care, due to large numbers of individuals who have recently taken on caring roles during the coronavirus crisis.

These figures are higher than the 2011 Census which found 12% of adults were caring and research by Age UK and the Social Market Foundation which found 15%.⁹ However, the percentage of people caring before coronavirus from our polling is consistent with previous Carers Week polling in 2019 which also suggested that 17% were providing unpaid care.¹⁰

8 See About This Research section for more information

9 Caring for Carers, SMF and Age UK 2018

10 Getting Carers Connected, Carers Week 2019

The polling found that:

- 17% of adults are providing unpaid care, and were already doing so before the coronavirus outbreak. This is 1 in every 6 adults and could be as many as 9.1 million people.
- An additional 9% of adults are providing unpaid care, but only started caring since the coronavirus outbreak began. This is a further 1 in 10 people and a staggering 4.5 million more unpaid carers.
- Overall, by adding these two groups together, 26% of all adults are providing unpaid care at the moment. This is one in four adults and means that there could be as many as 13.6 million unpaid carers currently in the UK.

Projections of the number of carers across the nations

In Wales 19% of the adult population said they were already providing care before the coronavirus outbreak (487,000 people) and a further 8% said they have started caring since the coronavirus outbreak (196,000 people). This suggests there are currently as many as 683,000 unpaid carers in Wales.

In Northern Ireland 15% of the adult population said they were already providing care before the coronavirus outbreak (212,000 people) and a further 7% said they have started caring since the coronavirus outbreak (98,000 people). This suggests there are currently as many as 310,000 unpaid carers in Northern Ireland.

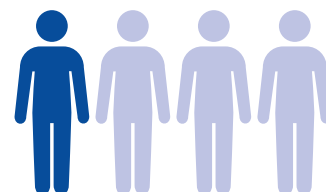
In Scotland 16% of the adult population said they were already providing care before the coronavirus outbreak (729,000 people) and a further 9% said they have started caring since the coronavirus outbreak (392,000 people). This suggests there are currently as many as 1.1 million unpaid carers in Scotland.

Up to

13.6 million

people could be providing unpaid care in the UK today

1 in 4 up from 1 in 6



Unpaid carers who were already caring before the crisis

17% of the general public were already providing unpaid care before the crisis. This equates to an estimated 9.1 million or one in every six adults. Carers can find themselves in poverty or financial hardship, struggling to make ends meet for themselves and the people they care for. Caring can also seriously affect health, wellbeing and relationships.

Profile of the people who were already caring before the coronavirus outbreak:

- 57% are women and 43% are men.
- Nearly half (48%) are juggling paid work with their unpaid care. 34% are in full-time work and 15% are in part-time work.
- 4% are full time students.
- A quarter (25%) are a parent or guardian for someone under 18. Many of them are sandwich carers; caring for an older, ill or disabled person while also being a parent or guardian of someone 18 or under.
- 23% are over 65, 23% are 55-64, 22% are 45-54, 16% are 35-44, 9% are 25-34, and 7% are 18-24.

Unpaid carers who have started caring since the coronavirus outbreak

There has been a significant rise in the number of people providing unpaid care since the coronavirus outbreak. 9% of the general public said they are providing unpaid care but that they had only started doing so since the coronavirus outbreak. This is nearly 1 in 10 adults and equates to an estimated 4.5 million unpaid carers.

Profile of the people who have started caring since the start of the coronavirus outbreak:

- 59% are women and 41% are men. This means the newer carers are slightly more likely to be women than the people who were already caring.
- Almost two thirds (62%) are in paid work – 41% are working full time, and 21% working part time. These new unpaid carers are 30% more likely to be in paid work and these figures suggest that 2.8 million extra workers are now juggling work and unpaid care
- 6% are full time students. This is slightly higher than those who were already caring.
- 35% are a parent or guardian for someone under 18, which is significantly higher than those who were caring already before the crisis.
- 14% are over 65, 17% are 55-64, 22% are 45-54, 21% are 35-44, 16% are 25-34, and 10% are 18-24. This indicates that the newer carers are younger, on average, than those who were already caring.

The polling did not ask about the levels of care being provided, or what types of care were being provided. Typically, the majority will be providing low levels of care, but some will be providing significantly more. According to the 2011 Census, 64% of carers in England and Wales care for 1-19 hours each week whilst 13% provide 20-49 hours and 24% provide 50 hours or more unpaid care.¹¹

There are an additional

4.5 million

unpaid carers in the UK since the coronavirus outbreak



6%

of new carers are also students – 270,000 in total



¹¹ Of the 5.8 million carers in England and Wales according to the 2011 Census, 3.7 million care for 1-19 hours each week whilst 775,000 provide 20-49 hours and 1.4 million provide 50 hours or more unpaid care – 2011 Census Analysis: Unpaid care in England and Wales, 2011 and comparison with 2001, Office for National Statistics 2013

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthcaresystem/articles/2011censusanalysisunpaidcareinenglandandwales2011andcomparisonwith2001/2013-02-15> articles/2011censusanalysisunpaidcareinenglandandwales2011andcomparisonwith2001/2013-02-15

Demographics of unpaid carers:
Source Carers Week/YouGov polling

| | All unpaid carers | Unpaid carers already providing unpaid care before the coronavirus outbreak | Unpaid carers who have started caring since the start of the coronavirus outbreak |
|--|-------------------|---|---|
| Female | 58% | 57% | 59% |
| Male | 42% | 43% | 41% |
| Working | 53% | 48% | 62% |
| Parent or guardian for someone under 18 | 28% | 25% | 35% |
| Aged over 65 | 20% | 23% | 14% |
| Aged 55-64 | 21% | 23% | 17% |
| Aged 45-54 | 22% | 22% | 22% |
| Aged 35-44 | 17% | 16% | 21% |
| Aged 25-34 | 11% | 9% | 16% |
| Aged 18-24 | 8% | 7% | 10% |

Challenges faced by unpaid carers

The general public who have never been an unpaid carer were asked what challenges they thought unpaid carers faced. The emotional, mental and physical health impacts of caring were highlighted as the top challenges they thought were faced by unpaid carers.

The most frequently chosen responses were:

- not being able to take time away from caring (72%)
- managing the stress and responsibility (70%)
- the negative impacts on their physical and mental health (69%).

Unpaid carers were also asked about what they thought were the biggest challenges faced by unpaid carers. Their choices closely matched those of the general public, without unpaid caring responsibilities. Unpaid carers responded:

- managing the stress and responsibility (71%)
- the negative impacts on their physical and mental health (70%)
- not being able to take time away from caring (66%).

The challenges identified by both unpaid carers themselves and the general public are areas that many carers find are significantly impacted. Previous research has highlighted that carers are nearly twice as anxious as the general population. Carers placed their levels of anxiety at an average of 5.4 out of 10 compared with a population average of 2. In this research carers also reported levels of happiness over a third (37%) lower than the general population.¹²

Caring can also be physically demanding – for example, many carers have disturbed sleep as a result of caring, others have to help move or lift the person they are caring for. The 2019 GP Patient Survey highlights the impact of caring on carers health in England – whilst 51% of non-carers had a long-standing health condition, this rose to 63% of all carers, and 71% of carers caring for 50 or more hours a week.¹³

Previous research from Carers UK showed that many carers were unable to access breaks. Before the coronavirus outbreak, only 8% of carers felt that they had been able to take sufficient breaks and 39% said that although they had been able to take a break, they would have liked to have been able to take more.¹⁴ With the reduction or closure of local care and support services, reduction in home visits by paid carers and the impact of social distancing measures this is likely to be far higher.

Unpaid carers said the top challenges affecting unpaid carers were:

71%
experiencing stress / added responsibility



70%
had negative impact on physical and mental health



66%
no time away from caring



¹² Getting Carers Connected, Carers Week 2019

¹³ Carers UK analysis of the GP Patient Survey 2019 – <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/expert-comment/6173-what-does-the-gp-patient-survey-tell-us-about-carers>

¹⁴ Carers at breaking point, Carers UK 2019

When asked about the what they thought were the biggest challenges faced by unpaid carers, people who had never been carers also frequently chose the following key areas:

- the impact it has on other personal relationships (eg with family, friends, partners etc.) (63%)
- the negative impact it has on their ability to do paid work (62%)
- the financial impact of the additional care costs (eg specialist care equipment, home adaptations (62%)
- not having anyone to talk to about the challenges of caring (51%).

Unpaid carers were asked what they thought were the biggest challenges faced by unpaid carers and they frequently chose the following:

- the impact it has on other personal relationships (eg with family, friends, partners etc.) (63%)
- the negative impact it has on their ability to do paid work (55%)
- the financial impact of the additional care costs (eg specialist care equipment, home adaptations) (53%)
- not having anyone to talk to about the challenges of caring (50%).

Worries about taking on an unpaid caring role

The general public without unpaid caring responsibilities were asked to imagine a scenario in which they have taken on an unpaid caring role and what their biggest worries would be.

The most frequently chosen responses were:

- the negative impact on their own physical and mental health (56%)
- not being able to cope financially, not being able to afford care services or equipment required (50%)
- not knowing or understanding what help is available to carers (49%).

Taking on a caring role can result in a sharp reduction in income due to the extra costs of caring, and this can be compounded if they have had to reduce or give up their paid work. Those providing substantial amounts of care are most likely to be struggling financially, with previous research having found that 43% of those caring for more than 35 hours a week struggle to make ends meet.¹⁵

Caring without support and advice can be particularly challenging. It can also be extremely complicated now more so than ever before, whether this involves grappling with changes to the benefits system or considering how to pay for care. Missing out on support as a result of not recognising that you have a caring role can have a significant impact on your physical health, mental health, wellbeing and finances.¹⁶

The other worries the general public without caring responsibilities reported about taking on an unpaid caring responsibility were:

- not having the skills or experience to provide care (48%)
- having to reduce paid working hours, leave work or stop studying (46%)
- the negative impact it might have on personal relationships (eg with family, friends, partners etc.) (45%)
- not being able to manage the stress and/ or responsibility of being a carer (41%)
- not having anyone to talk to about the challenges of caring (33%).

¹⁵ State of Caring 2019, Carers UK, 2019

¹⁶ Missing Out: research briefing on state of Caring 2019, Carers UK 2019

Unpaid carers' worries

Unpaid carers were asked about what they worried about. The top three worries were:

- managing the stress and/ or responsibility of being a carer (37%)
- the negative impact on their own physical and mental health (36%)
- the negative impact it has on personal relationships (eg with family, friends, partners etc.) (24%).

The other worries, unpaid carers responded were:

- not having the skills or experience to provide care (22%)
- not knowing or understanding what help is available to carers (20%)
- not having anyone to talk to about the challenges of caring (18%)
- not being able to cope financially, not being able to afford care services or equipment required (16%)
- having to reduce paid working hours, leave work or stop studying (15%).

Unpaid carers, who were already caring before the coronavirus outbreak, were more likely to report that they have worries associated with their caring role. This will reflect the fact that many will have been caring for several years.

- managing the stress and/ or responsibility of being a carer (44%)
- the negative impact on their own physical and mental health (43%)
- the negative impact it has on personal relationships (eg with family, friends, partners etc.) (29%).

Working carers

The polling shows that of all unpaid carers, 53% are in paid work – 36% are in full time work and 17% are in part time work. As highlighted previously in the report, unpaid carers who have started caring since the start of the coronavirus outbreak are 29% more likely to be in work compared with unpaid carers who were already caring before the coronavirus outbreak.

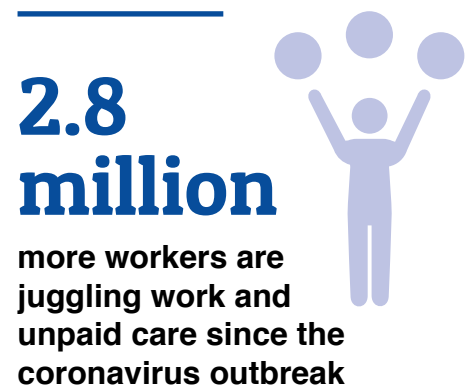
There are 2.8 million extra workers juggling work and unpaid care since the start of outbreak. One in ten workers has started providing unpaid care since the outbreak. This brings the estimated number of unpaid carers who are also in paid work to over 7 million across the UK, as previous research found that there were already 4.9 million people juggling work and unpaid care.¹⁷

In total 26% of all workers are juggling work and unpaid care – one in four workers.

Of unpaid carers who are in paid work, 16% said they worry about having to reduce their paid working hours, leave work or stop studying as a result of their caring role.

Working carers were asked about the challenges they think unpaid carers face. 61% thought that the negative impact that caring has on carers' ability to do paid work was a challenge they faced.

Juggling work and unpaid care can be a significant issue for carers, leading to many having to stop working. Previous research suggests that nearly 2.6 million people have given up work to care, equivalent to 600 people a day giving up work to care.¹⁸



¹⁷ Juggling work and unpaid care, 2019

¹⁸ Juggling work and unpaid care, Carers UK 2019

Gender inequality

Caring often features especially strongly in women's lives. Our polling shows that of all unpaid carers, 58% are women and 42% are men, which mirrors the findings of the 2011 Census.

The general public, who do not have unpaid caring responsibilities, were asked what they would worry about if they became an unpaid carer. Women were significantly more likely to say they were worried about the negative impact it could have on their physical and mental health: 62% of women compared to 50% of men. Women were also significantly more likely to say they would worry about not being able to cope financially – 56% of women compared to 45% of men.

Previous research has shown women are more likely to care earlier in their lives and more intensively than men.¹⁹ Women's caring roles often affect their participation in paid work and reduce their lifetime earnings, with wider gender equality implications.

¹⁹ Will I Care: the likelihood of being an adult carer, Carers UK and Sustainable Care 2019

Age

Our polling shows that unpaid carers are most likely to be between 45-64 years old with 43% within this age category, but caring can happen at any point in our lives. 22% are aged over 65 and 20% are younger aged between 18-24 years old.

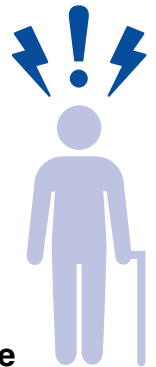
The polling found that older carers (those aged over 65) were particularly worried about the health implications of caring with 32% worried about managing the stress and responsibility associated with being a carer and 29% worried about the negative impact on their own physical and mental health.

This echoes findings from other research. For example, Carers Week research from 2019 found that carers aged 65 or older were 9 times more likely to say they often or always feel lonely.²⁰

#1

Unpaid carers said the top worry for older unpaid carers was:

Stress and negative impact on physical and mental health



²⁰ Getting carers connected, Carers Week 2019

Public recognition of carers

Unpaid caring is an essential part of society. Previous research, conducted before the coronavirus outbreak, has shown that the value of unpaid care is £132 billion a year which is equivalent to a second NHS.²¹

Caring often comes with significant personal costs, alongside the wider economic costs of carers leaving work or reducing their hours, and the cost of increased physical and mental poor health.

The coronavirus outbreak has placed more pressure on unpaid carers, as well as the health and social care systems. Research recently showed that the majority (70%) of unpaid carers are taking on more care as a result of the crisis.²² This may be because they have chosen to or have to reduce the number of care workers coming into their home, or because local services have reduced or closed.

Despite all this, many unpaid carers do not feel valued and supported.

Public awareness of unpaid caring

The coronavirus outbreak has had a significant impact on all of our lives. Millions more people have taken on a caring role and it has also led to a focus for many people on the need to provide help and support to others. For some, it has brought into sharper focus the realities and importance of providing care and support to vulnerable people.

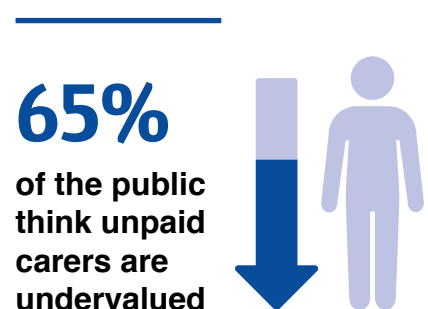
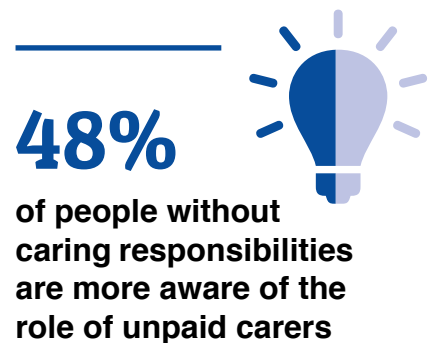
The polling suggests there has been a significant increase in people's awareness of the role unpaid carers play since the start of the crisis. Nearly half (48%) of the public who have never been an unpaid carer said they are now more aware or much more aware of the role of unpaid carers than before. 15% said they are much more aware of the role of unpaid carers.

Public attitudes to valuing unpaid carers

Alongside awareness of carers, we asked to what extent, if at all, they thought the role of unpaid carers is valued by the general public. Two thirds (65%) of the public thought unpaid carers are not well valued or not valued at all.

69% of women said that unpaid carers are not well valued or not valued at all, compared to 61% of men. This could reflect that women are more likely to be providing unpaid care, or to have provided unpaid care than men.

In Wales 66%, in Northern Ireland 74% and in Scotland 72% of the public think that unpaid carers are not well valued or not valued at all.



21 Valuing Carers 2015: The rising value of carers' support, Sue Yeandle and Lisa Buckner Carers UK 2015

22 Caring Behind Closed Doors, Carers UK 2020

Government support for unpaid carers

This research shows that there has been growing awareness of unpaid caring during the coronavirus outbreak, and that there is strong public support for providing additional support for unpaid carers. In this section we explore attitudes toward Government support for unpaid carers.

Please note that the provision, funding and delivery of carer support is delivered by different institutions in the devolved nations. For example, UK Government has powers over carers' benefits in England and Wales but devolved administrations in Scotland and Northern Ireland are responsible for decisions over Carer's Allowance in their respective nations.

It was widely acknowledged before the coronavirus outbreak began that the social care system has, for many years, been under significant financial pressure.²³ As a result, unpaid carers have often seen a reduction in the services available to them and the people they support. The coronavirus outbreak has now added significant additional pressure to local government finances. The impact of social distancing measures, and health and social care staff pressures and worries about the virus, have also resulted in many carers having to provide more hours of care.

Legislation remains important. For example, the 2014 Care Act in England and 2014 Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act included for the first time a principle that local authorities have a duty to promote the well-being of carers from a physical, emotional and mental perspective. Even before the coronavirus crisis, increasingly squeezed local budgetary funding pressures on social care meant that many carers had been, left without support. Last year, 1 in 8 carers reported that they, or those they support, received less care or support services during the previous year due to a reduction in the amount of support from social services.²⁴

Because of the additional pressures they are facing during the crisis, many unpaid carers are concerned they will burnout and anxious that services will not be restored. Recent research has found that over a third of carers are taking on more care as a result of local services reducing or closing during the coronavirus outbreak.²⁵

23 For example, in England the Local Government Association (LGA) estimated the funding gap for adult social services before the crisis at £3.9 billion – The Lives We Want to Lead: towards change, toward hope, LGA 2020

24 State of Caring, Carers UK 2019

25 Caring Behind Closed Doors: the forgotten families of the coronavirus crisis. Carers UK 2020

Government support for unpaid carers during the coronavirus outbreak

Over two thirds (69%) of the public said they do not think that unpaid carers have been supported by the Government during the coronavirus outbreak. Within this, nearly a third (31%) do not think unpaid carers have been supported at all by the Government during the coronavirus outbreak.

In Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland 72% of the public think that carers have not been supported by the Government during the coronavirus outbreak.

Levels of government support for unpaid carers

We asked the public if, when thinking about the impact of the coronavirus outbreak, they felt the Government should provide additional support for unpaid carers. Three quarters of the public (75%) thought the Government should increase support, for example through increased financial support, investment in care and support services so unpaid carers can take a break, and further investment in social services. Within this, nearly two in five (39%) strongly agreed with increasing support for unpaid carers.

69%



of the public do not think that the government has provided enough support since the coronavirus outbreak

Conclusion and recommendations

This research shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of people who are providing care during this time of crisis.

Most of these new unpaid carers are drawn from the working population which shines a light on where future carers might come from if we do not invest in sufficient care and support – the losses and costs will clearly be felt by employers and the economy alike – as well as the obvious cost to carers and their families. It also begs the question what will happen next to these unpaid carers as the situation unfolds, how long they will have to care, whether their care can be replaced, and what happens if we cannot replace that care? There is a serious concern about the sustainability of the current situation which must be addressed.

The challenges and worries faced by the general public when thinking about caring are potentially linked to the unpredictability of caring – will I have to give up my job? Will I be able to still maintain relationships? Will my health suffer? This is part and parcel of the unpredictability of caring, and how difficult it can be for people to predict the future. There is a significant role for information and advice, forward planning, but also better support so that people can rely on what they need.

The general public is more attuned to caring than ever before, but we need to take this positive change and turn it into something more positively tangible for carers. This increased public awareness and public sympathy has to translate into real change for those people who are caring, and those who will care in the future to ensure that they and their families do not face poverty, loss of good paid work, isolation and loneliness, and loss of health and wellbeing.

There is also a clear feeling that unpaid carers are very well valued by the public, but they do not think that Government has sufficiently supported carers during the crisis. Whilst Governments in every nation across the UK have implemented measures to support carers, there is no doubt that there are gaps that need to be plugged to improve carers' lives in the short term. In the longer term, Government needs to build a better future for carers that tackles the underlying issues that they face.

Summary of recommendations

- Increase awareness of the role of caring and unpaid carers.
- Fund and rebuild social care and health services.
- End carers' financial hardship.
- Identify and provide carers with support.
- Support working carers more through employers and by Government.
- Identify and support carers in education.
- Add Your Voice and Make Caring Visible.

Increase awareness of the role of caring and unpaid carers

Carers have been and continue to provide vital and essential care in supporting older, disabled and chronically ill people, and protecting some of the most vulnerable people in our society during the coronavirus outbreak. Despite this, carers and the general public do not feel their role is valued. The UK and Nation Governments should promote awareness of the important role of unpaid carers and caring, and introduce more concrete support so that value is recognised practically.

Fund and rebuild social care and health services

Carers have been essential in supporting the health and social care system during the coronavirus outbreak. The impact of reduced services as a result of the coronavirus outbreak should be closely monitored and reported on, in terms of carers' health and wellbeing and ability to care. The UK and Nation Governments need to recognise the amount of pressure the system has been under during the coronavirus outbreak, and the funding shortages that were widely recognised for many years before the crisis. There needs to be a significant increase in funding levels to allow the social services and the NHS to rebuild after the crisis, alongside bringing forward plans for long-term reform of social care. Greater investment in care will lead to a healthier and happier population that is better able to balance important aspects of their lives, including personal relationships, work and family.

End carers' financial hardship²⁶

Despite their enormous contribution, too many carers continue to struggle financially – with serious repercussions for their mental and physical wellbeing, in the short and long term. Financial support for carers must be urgently improved, which would particularly benefit women who are more likely to be caring and providing higher levels of care. The UK Government should immediately increase the basic level of Carer's Allowance, and a one-off coronavirus Supplement to those entitled to Carer's Allowance of £20 a week to match the rise in Universal Credit.

²⁶ In Scotland, carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance are paid an additional payment twice per year a Carer's Allowance Supplement. In addition, they have introduced a one off Coronavirus Carer's Allowance Supplement to those eligible for Carer's Allowance Supplement.

Identify and provide carers with support

Unpaid carers are still not routinely identified or supported by health and social care professionals. Greater consistency is needed in connecting carers to support available to look after their own mental and physical health and wellbeing. Support for carers to take part in physical activity, for example, can be hugely beneficial in preventing them developing health problems in later life as well as reducing isolation.

Support working carers more through employers and by Government

The coronavirus outbreak has the potential to have long running ramifications for workers, including working carers, many of whom are already having to balance returning to work and caring for a vulnerable person. Employers, and UK and Nation Governments, should ensure that there are carer-friendly policies in place that enable working carers to balance their caring responsibilities with work. We fully support the Government's plans to introduce an entitlement to take care leave for working carers; our preference would be for this to be paid.

Identify and support carers in education

Schools, colleges and universities should be encouraged to introduce policies and programmes that support carers and improve their experience of education. This is particularly important when considering the needs of young carers.

Add Your Voice and Make Caring Visible – an action for everyone

Carers Week aims to raise awareness and understanding of caring so carers feel valued and supported. We all have a part to play ensuring carers feel recognised and their role is visible and valued. This year everyone should Add Your Voice in support of unpaid carers.

Unpaid caring in Wales

Across Wales, hundreds of thousands of people care unpaid for an ill, older or disabled family member, or friend. The amount and type of support that carers provide varies considerably. It can range from a few hours a week, such as picking up prescriptions and preparing meals, to providing emotional or personal care, day and night, 365 days a year.

The Welsh Government acknowledged their commitment to unpaid carers rights in the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 Act, which came into force in 2016. This gave carers an equal right to have their needs assessed as those they care for. If carers have eligible needs, their local authority must meet those needs through a carers support plan. This commitment to carers was re-affirmed in 2017 with the announcement of three Ministerial priorities for carers. However, Carers Wales' Track the Act annual research has consistently found that the aims of the Act are not being implemented in practice and that many carers continue to miss out on much needed support.

Number of carers

In our polling 19% of respondents in Wales said they were already providing care before the coronavirus outbreak (487,000 people) and a further 8% said they have started caring since the coronavirus outbreak (196,000 people). Using population projections, this suggests there are currently as many as 683,000 unpaid carers in Wales.

Profile of carers

- 57% are women and 43% are men.
- Half (50%) of unpaid carers are in paid work. 31% are in full-time work, and 19% are in part-time work.
- 17% are aged over 65, 28% are 55-64, 19% are 44-54, 25% are 35-44, 5% are 25-34, 6% are 18-24.

Challenges faced by unpaid carers

Adults in Wales who had never been a carer were asked about what challenges they thought unpaid carers faced. The emotional, mental and physical health impacts of caring were highlighted as the top challenges faced by unpaid carers:

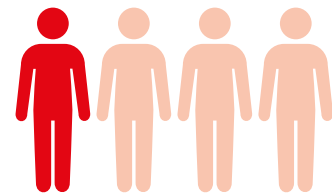
- not being able to take time away from caring (78%)
- managing the stress and responsibility (77%)
- the financial impact of the additional care costs (72%)
- the impact it has on other personal relationships (eg with family, friends, partners etc.) (70%).

Up to

683,000

people in Wales could be providing unpaid care

1 in 4 up from 1 in 6



There are an additional

196,000

unpaid carers in Wales since the coronavirus outbreak



98,000

more workers are juggling work and unpaid care in Wales since the coronavirus outbreak



- the negative impacts on their physical and mental health (69%)
- the negative impact it has on their ability to do paid work (63%)
- not having anyone to talk to about the challenges of caring (52%).

When unpaid carers in Wales were asked about what they thought were the biggest challenges faced by unpaid carers, they responded:

- not being able to take time away from caring (74%)
- managing the stress and responsibility (73%)
- the negative impacts on their physical and mental health (73%)
- the impact it has on other personal relationships (eg with family, friends, partners etc.) (65%)
- the financial impact of the additional care costs (53%)
- the negative impact it has on their ability to do paid work (50%)
- not having anyone to talk to about the challenges of caring (46%).

Public recognition of unpaid caring

The coronavirus outbreak has had a significant impact on all of our lives. The polling suggests there has been a significant increase in people's awareness of the role unpaid carers play since the start of the crisis. 42% of the public in Wales, who have never been a carer, said they are now more aware of the role of unpaid carers than before. Alongside awareness of carers rising, we asked to what extent, if at all, they thought the role of unpaid carers is valued by the general public in Wales. Two thirds (66%) of the public said they thought carers were not well valued or not valued at all.

Government support for unpaid carers

This research shows that there has been growing awareness of unpaid caring during the coronavirus outbreak, and that there is strong public support in Wales for providing additional support for unpaid carers. 72% think that carers have not been supported by the Government during the coronavirus outbreak.

The majority of the Welsh public (80%) thought the Government should increase support, for example through increased financial support, investment in care and support services so unpaid carers can take a break, and further investment in social services.

Welsh Government Response

On 4 May 2020, the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services released a Written Statement on Unpaid Carers, acknowledging their vital role in supporting vulnerable people during the coronavirus pandemic. In this statement she announced that she would be establishing a Task and Finish Group of carers representatives to consider current and future actions to support carers. Despite this, there are ongoing concerns about a lack of commitment to ensure unpaid carers can access the help and support they need at this time (eg no commitment to PPE or testing for unpaid carers).

42%



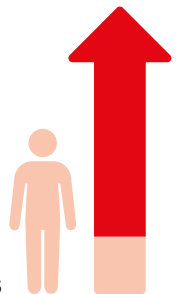
of the Welsh public are more aware of the role of unpaid carers

72%



of the Welsh public do not think that the government has provided enough support since the coronavirus outbreak

80%



of the public in Wales think the government should increase support for carers

#1

The Welsh public said the top challenge affecting unpaid carers in Wales was:

not being able to take time away from caring



Unpaid caring in Northern Ireland

Across Northern Ireland, hundreds of thousands of people care unpaid for an ill, older or disabled family member, or friend. The amount and type of support that carers provide varies considerably. It can range from a few hours a week, such as picking up prescriptions and preparing meals, to providing emotional or personal care, day and night, 365 days a year.

Number of carers

In our polling, 15% of respondents in Northern Ireland said they were already providing care before the coronavirus outbreak (212,000 people) and a further 7% said they have started caring since the coronavirus outbreak (98,000 people). Using population projections, this suggests there are currently as many as 310,000 unpaid carers in Northern Ireland.

Profile of carers²⁷

- 58% of unpaid carers are women and 42% are men.
- Over half (53%) of unpaid carers are in paid work. 36% are in full-time work, and 17% are in part-time work.
- 20% are aged over 65, 21% are 55-64, 22% are 44-54, 17% are 35-44, 11% are 25-34, 8% are 18-24.

Challenges faced by unpaid carers

Adults in Northern Ireland were asked about the challenges facing unpaid carers. The emotional, mental and physical health impacts of caring were highlighted as the top challenges. The responses were:

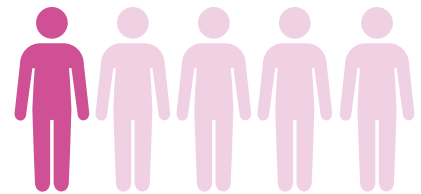
- managing the stress and responsibility (73%)
- the negative impacts on their physical and mental health (70%)
- not being able to take time away from caring (70%)
- the impact it has on other personal relationships (eg with family, friends, partners etc.) (59%)
- the negative impact it has on their ability to do paid work (59%)
- the financial impact of the additional care costs (54%)
- not having anyone to talk to about the challenges of caring (49%).

Up to

310,000

people in Northern Ireland may be providing unpaid care

That's 22% of all adults



There are an additional

98,000

unpaid carers in Northern Ireland since the coronavirus outbreak



²⁷ The limited sample size in this research means it is not possible to report the demographics of unpaid carers from Northern Ireland. These percentages relate to the figures for the whole of the UK.

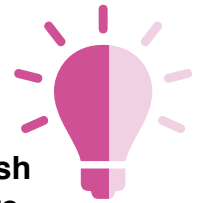
Public recognition of unpaid caring

- The coronavirus outbreak has had a significant impact on all of our lives. The polling suggests there has been a significant increase in people's awareness of the role unpaid carers play since the start of the crisis. Over half (54%) of the public in Northern Ireland said they are now more aware of the role of unpaid carers than before. Alongside awareness of carers rising, we asked to what extent, if at all, they thought the role of unpaid carers is valued by the general public. Nearly three quarters (74%) of the public said they thought carers were not well valued or not valued at all.

Government support for unpaid carers

- This research shows that there has been growing awareness of unpaid caring during the coronavirus outbreak, and that there is strong public support in Northern Ireland for providing additional support for unpaid carers. 72% think that carers have not been supported by the Government during the coronavirus outbreak.
- The majority of the public (74%) thought the Government should increase support, for example through increased financial support, investment in care and support services so unpaid carers can take a break, and further investment in social services.

54%



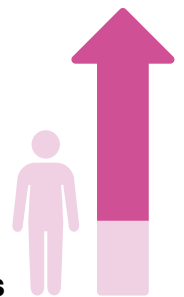
of Northern Irish public are more aware of the role of unpaid carers

72%



of the Northern Irish public do not think that the government has provided enough support since the coronavirus outbreak

74%

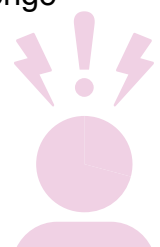


of the public in Northern Ireland think the government should increase support for carers

#1

The Northern Irish public said the top challenge affecting unpaid carers in Northern Ireland was:

stress and responsibility



Unpaid caring in Scotland

Across Scotland, hundreds of thousands of people care unpaid for an ill, older or disabled family member, or friend. The amount and type of support that carers provide varies considerably. It can range from a few hours a week, such as picking up prescriptions and preparing meals, to providing emotional or personal care, day and night, 365 days a year.

Number of carers

In our polling, 16% of respondents in Scotland said they were already providing care before the coronavirus outbreak (729,000 people) and a further 9% said they have started caring since the coronavirus outbreak (392,000 people). Using population projections, this suggests there are currently as many as 1.1 million unpaid carers in Scotland.

Profile of carers

- 61% are women and 39% are men.
- Over half (58%) of unpaid carers are in paid work. 42% are in full-time work, and 16% are in part-time work.
- 12% are aged over 65, 17% are 55-64, 26% are 44-54, 20% are 35-44, 12% are 25-34, 12% are 18-24.

Challenges faced by unpaid carers

Adults in Scotland who had never been a carer were asked about what challenges they thought unpaid carers faced. The emotional, mental and physical health impacts of caring were highlighted as the top challenges faced by unpaid carers. The responses were:

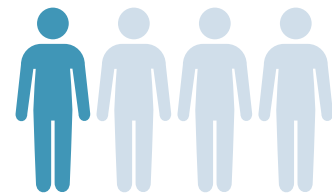
- not being able to take time away from caring (76%)
- the negative impacts on their physical and mental health (75%)
- managing the stress and responsibility (73%)
- the financial impact of the additional care costs (66%)
- the negative impact it has on their ability to do paid work (65%)
- the impact it has on other personal relationships (eg with family, friends, partners etc.) (64%)
- not having anyone to talk to about the challenges of caring (54%).

Up to

1.1 million

people in Scotland could be providing unpaid care

1 in 4 up from 1 in 6



There are an additional

392,000

unpaid carers in Scotland since the coronavirus outbreak



227,000

more workers are juggling work and unpaid care in Scotland since the coronavirus outbreak



When unpaid carers in Scotland were asked about what they thought the biggest challenges faced by unpaid carers, they responded

- managing the stress and responsibility (74%)
- the negative impacts on their physical and mental health (70%)
- not being able to take time away from caring (66%)
- the financial impact of the additional care costs (63%)
- The impact it has on other personal relationships (eg with family, friends, partners etc.) (62%)
- the negative impact it has on their ability to do paid work (55%)
- not having anyone to talk to about the challenges of caring (53%).

Public recognition of unpaid caring

The coronavirus outbreak has had a significant impact on all of our lives. The polling suggests there has been a significant increase in people's awareness of the role unpaid carers play since the start of the crisis. 43% of the public in Scotland who have never been a carer said they are now more aware of the role of unpaid carers than before. Alongside awareness of carers rising, we asked to what extent, if at all, they thought the role of unpaid carers is valued by the general public. 72% of the public in Scotland said they thought carers were not well valued or not valued at all.

Government support for unpaid carers

This research shows that there has been growing awareness of unpaid caring during the coronavirus outbreak, and that there is strong public support in Scotland for providing additional support for unpaid carers. Whilst the Scottish Government have provided a range of support for unpaid carers and carers services. 72% think that carers have not been supported by the Government during the coronavirus outbreak.

The majority of the public (79%) thought the Government should increase support, for example through increased financial support, investment in care and support services so unpaid carers can take a break, and further investment in social services.

The Scottish Government has provided a range of support for unpaid carers during this time including:

- A one off coronavirus payment for those eligible for Carers Allowance Supplement, payable with the June payment of the supplement.
- Support for those experiencing hardship, including unpaid carers, through the Scottish Welfare Fund crisis or community care grants by increasing this fund by £45 million.
- £500,000 of funding to carers centres and young carers services to support their costs in moving to providing remote and digital services.
- Provision of PPE for unpaid carers.

43%



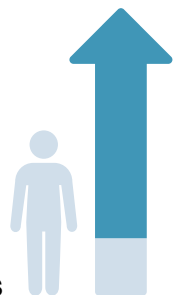
of the Scottish public are more aware of the role of unpaid carers

72%



of the Scottish public do not think that the government has provided enough support since the coronavirus outbreak

79%

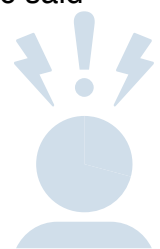


of the public in Scotland think the government should increase support for carers

#1

The Scottish public said the top challenge affecting unpaid carers in Scotland was:

stress and responsibility



- Extension of testing to unpaid carers.
- The establishment of an online wellbeing hub for health and social care workforce, which includes unpaid carers.
- Support for creative “time out” for carers at home through the Time to Live Fund and Take a Break Scotland.
- Support for providing different offers to young carers and young adult carers through the Young Scot, Young Carers Package.



About Carers Week

Carers Week is an annual awareness campaign to recognise the vital contribution made by unpaid carers across the UK.

In 2020, Carers Week is made possible through Carers UK working together with five other major charities: Age UK, Carers Trust, Motor Neurone Disease Association, Oxfam GB and Rethink Mental Illness with British Gas the headline supporter, and with Nutricia continuing their support this year.

Find out more and get involved at carersweek.org

© Copyright Carers UK June 2020
UK4087_0620



info@carersweek.org



[/carersweek](https://www.facebook.com/carersweek)



[@carersweek](https://twitter.com/carersweek)

carersweek.org