

Fact Sheet on Family Caring- June 2015

Who is a Carer?

The most recent Census of Population (2011) defines a 'carer' as someone who:

provides regular, unpaid personal help for a friend or family member with a long-term illness, health problem or disability (including problems which are due to old age). Personal help includes help with basic tasks such as feeding and dressing.

The Quarterly National Household Survey, in the third quarter of 2009, asked 21,500 people:

Some people have extra responsibilities because they look after someone who has long-term physical or mental ill health or disability, or problems related to old age. May I just check, is there anyone living with you/not living with you who is sick, disabled or elderly whom you look after or give special help to, other than in a professional or paid capacity (for example, a sick or disabled (or elderly) relative/husband/wife/child/friend/parent etc.)?

(This is a broader definition of caring than the census question and therefore is likely to elicit a greater positive response.)

Who Needs Care?

Amongst community-dwelling older people in Ireland, 11% of men and 14% of women aged 50 or over had at least one limitation in at least one 'activity of daily living' or one 'instrumental activity of daily living'. This translates into 164,000 older adults with care and support needs living in communities across Ireland.

Who Cares?

- 4.1% of the total population over 15 was providing unpaid assistance to others in April 2011.

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(Census 2002 – 148,754, Census 2006 – 160,917, Census 2011 – 182,884 (excludes 4,228 carers aged under 15)).

- The 2009 QNHS suggest higher numbers providing care generalised to the estimated population at the time. The survey suggests that in the region of 274,000 people aged 15 and over were providing unpaid informal care.
- 98.3% care for a family member. Spouses were most frequently identified as the main caregiver.
- Amongst spouse carers, 11.7% received Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit.
- A fifth of all carers reported having no formal education.
- A 2009 Irish study of Family Carers found that 71% reported their health as 'quite good' or 'very good', but that well over half had the experience of being mentally and physically 'drained' by their caring role. The types of caring tasks most often reported to cause ill health were: dealing with verbal/emotional abuse; coping with bizarre/inconsistent behaviour; and getting up in the night. Over half reported having a medical problem, the most frequent being back injury, and over half also reported having a significant mental health problem, the most frequent being anxiety disorder. Most carers stated that they had no time for themselves and worried how the person they cared for would cope if they had to stop caregiving due to illness or death.

Gender

- Females provided around two-thirds (66.1%) of all care hours, increasing to approximately seven in ten from age 50.
- The number of male carers aged 15 years and older increased by 16.8% between Census 2006 and Census 2011.
- Carers are more likely to be married – 61.6% of female carers and 60.6% of male carers were married.
- The proportion of carers who were separated or divorced was also higher than in the general population.

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- Men with no formal education or educated only to primary level were the most likely category of male carers.

Age

- The greatest proportion of carers in Census 2011 was in the 40–55 age group, for both males and females, amounting to 27,504 carers in total. The peak age for caring amongst women was 45–49, with 11.2% of women in this age group providing unpaid care, amounting to 572,680 hours of care every week.
- Carers aged 65 years and over represent 22% of those providing at least 43 hours of care per week.
- Those aged 70+ provide 795,916 hours of unpaid care per week. Around a fifth of these reported providing full-time care.
- Census 2011 identified 4,228 children aged less than 15 years who were engaged in providing care to others, accounting for 2.3% of all carers.
- 50.9% of young carers were female, providing 53.1% of total care hours.
- The total number of unpaid care hours provided by children on a weekly basis amounted to 38,496.
- Children aged nine and under provided a total of 13,738 hours of care, whilst the 10–14 age group provided 24,758 hours.

Where?

- 43.2% of carers are in rural areas.
- On a county-by-county basis, the highest proportion of carers is in Mayo, where 5% of people are involved in providing unpaid care.

How much Care?

- 6,287,510 hours of care provided each week.

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- 33.6 hours – average caregiving hours per carer per week.
- 15,175 – number of people giving '24/7' care, a total of 2,549,400 care hours every week.
- 8%, approximately 274,000 people, aged 15 and over provide unpaid informal care.
- At least 21% of carers provide 57 or more hours of care per week.
- A third of carers work full-time.
- Four in ten carers were the sole carer for the person they looked after.
- 38% of carers who look after someone in the same household report feeling completely overwhelmed by their caring responsibilities.
- 27% of carers scored seven or higher on the Caregiver Strain Index.
- 40% described their own health as very good, 40% as good, 14% as fair, 2% as bad and 0% as very bad.
- Only 3.5% of people aged over 50 were found to receive home help services from the state.

Useful references:

- Census 2011. (<http://www.cso.ie/en/census/>)
- Yumiko, K. et al. (2012) Profile of Community Dwelling Older People with Disability and their Caregivers in Ireland. Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing. Dublin: Trinity College Dublin.
(sparc.tcd.ie/newsAndEvents/Carer%20Report%20FINAL%202012.pdf)
- Central Statistics Office (2010) *Quarterly National Household Survey, Quarter 3 2009: Module on Caring*.
(www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/labourmarket/2009/carersq32009.pdf Please note: additional figures kindly provided to Care Alliance Ireland following request.)
- Carers Association of Ireland and the Irish College of Psychiatrists (2009). *The Health of the Carer in Ireland Survey*. Dublin: Carers Association.
[www.carersireland.com/userfiles/CPsychI%20Carers%20Survey%20full%20report%2026%20Nov%2009\(1\).pdf](http://www.carersireland.com/userfiles/CPsychI%20Carers%20Survey%20full%20report%2026%20Nov%2009(1).pdf)
- Barrett, A. et al. (eds) (2011) *Fifty Plus in Ireland 2011: First results from the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA)*. Dublin: Trinity College Dublin.

www.tcd.ie/tilda/events/first%20wave%20results/Tilda_Master_First_Findings_Report.pdf

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