

Appendix 2: Summary of Carers UK State of Caring Survey

State of Caring survey 2023 Summary

The impact of caring on: employment

Our [report on carers and employment](#) found that caring responsibilities are having a significant impact on people's capacity to work and earn a full-time wage.

40% of carers surveyed – many of them caring for more than 50 hours a week - said that they had given up work to provide unpaid care, and 22% had reduced their working hours because of their caring role.

- Over half (57%) of people who had stopped working or reduced their hours at work to care said they had done this because of the stress of juggling work and care.
- Nearly half (49%) of carers who had given up work or reduced their working hours had seen their income reduce by over £1,000 per month.

The Carer's Leave Act, coming into force in April 2024 at the earliest, will give carers the right to take up to five days of unpaid carer's leave. However, over two thirds of carers (67%) were unsure if their employer had started to prepare for new rights under the Carer's Leave Act, and over a quarter (28%) said they didn't know anything about unpaid carer's leave. Carers UK is sharing recommendations for employers to:

- Recognise the range of skills that carers gain through their caring role, to retain existing employees and support carers returning to work.
- Consider becoming early adopters of unpaid carer's leave before providing five days becomes law – or go one step further and provide paid carer's leave, making it even more accessible to their employees with caring responsibilities.
- Adopt Carers UK's Carer Confident benchmark, run by [Employers for Carers](#), to move towards becoming a carer friendly employer.

The impact of caring on: health

[Our report on caring and health](#) finds that a widespread lack of support and recognition from health and care services is severely damaging unpaid carers' mental health. It highlights how people caring round the clock for older, disabled or seriously ill relatives do not have adequate support from statutory services that are in place to help them – leaving many steeped in thoughts of hopelessness, fear, and dread, and urgently in need of support.

- More than a quarter (27%) of unpaid carers have bad or very bad mental health, rising to 31% of those caring for more than 50 hours a week, or for over 10 years.
- 84% of carers whose mental health is bad or very bad have continuous low mood, 82% have feelings of hopelessness and 71% regularly feel tearful.
- 68% of carers with bad or very bad mental health are living with a sense of fear or dread.
- More than three quarters of all carers (79%) feel stressed or anxious, half (49%) feel depressed, and half (50%) feel lonely.
- 65% of carers agreed that the increase in the cost of living was having a negative impact on their physical and/or mental health.
- Despite feeling they are at breaking point, nearly three quarters (73%) of carers with bad or very bad mental health are continuing to provide care.

Not being able to access the support they need is taking its toll on unpaid carers, many of whom are worn out and exhausted. Far too many carers are having to wait long periods for health treatment - or putting it off because of the demands of their caring role; are unable to rely on fragmented social care services to support with caring, and are struggling financially because they cannot earn a higher income.

It's clear that unpaid carers desperately need to be recognised and supported with their caring roles. Working with local authorities, the Government and NHS England must urgently drive a programme of quicker and more targeted interventions to prevent poor mental health amongst carers. That's why Carers UK is urging the Government to provide the necessary investment in the NHS and social care so that unpaid carers can take care of their physical and mental health. We are also calling on the Equality and Human Rights Commission to undertake an inquiry into unpaid carers' ability to access health services in England.

The impact of caring on: finances

Our [first report](#) was about the impact of caring on finances.

This year's survey found that carers are struggling even more with their finances. A higher proportion of carers said they are struggling to make ends meet, and carers who are already struggling with the high cost of living, are being further impoverished by having their ability to earn restricted by Carer's Allowance.

Concerningly, 75% of unpaid carers receiving Carer's allowance are struggling with cost-of-living pressures, while almost half (46%) are cutting back on essentials,

including food and heating. As worryingly, 45% were even more likely to say they were struggling to make ends meet, compared with 39% last year.

This year's survey found that, of carers receiving Carer's Allowance:

- 34% were even more likely to be struggling to afford the cost of food compared with 21% of all carers. This was an increase from 29% in 2022
- 71% were even more likely to say they were worried about living costs and whether they can manage in the future, compared with 61% of all carers
- 72% are worried about the impact of caring responsibilities (e.g. petrol for hospital visits, heating, specific dietary requirements) on their finances
- 54% had cut back on seeing family and friends, compared with 43% in 2022 and 38% in 2021

Unsurprising, given the rise in the cost of living, a significant proportion of all carers who responded to the survey are worried about their ability to manage in the future:

- There has been an increase in the proportion of carers who are struggling to make ends meet compared to last year (30% compared with 27%)
- A fifth (21%) of carers are struggling to afford the cost of food. Over a third (34%) of carers said they had cut back on essentials such as food or heating compared to 25% in 2022 and 13% in 2021
- 60% of carers agreed they were worried about the impact of caring responsibilities on their finances and 62% agreed that they've been finding it more difficult to manage financially due to the increase in the cost of living

Government and policy makers need to have a clear understanding of the risks of financial hardship for unpaid carers. There must be a robust poverty prevention strategy across government which targets and prevents poverty. In the report, we make several recommendations, from reforming the benefits system to providing targeted financial support and supporting carers to remain in paid employment.