



# Survey of Carers in Households 2009/10

The NHS Information Centre  
is England's central, authoritative source  
of health and social care information.

Acting as a 'hub' for high quality, national,  
comparative data, we deliver information for local  
decision makers, to improve the quality and  
efficiency of care.

[www.ic.nhs.uk](http://www.ic.nhs.uk)

**Author:** The NHS Information Centre, Social Care Team

**Responsible Statistician:** Paul Niblett, Section Head Social Care Dissemination Team

**Version:** 1.1

**Status of Publication:** This publication is an official statistic not designated as National Statistics. The UK Statistics Authority is currently assessing this output against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics with a view to the statistics being designated as National Statistics.

**Date of Publication:** 14th December 2010

## Executive Summary

This report contains the results of a detailed survey of carers in households in 2009/10, commissioned by the Department of Health as part of the Government's Carers' Strategy programme<sup>1</sup>. The NHS Information Centre for health and social care (NHS IC) undertook responsibility for this survey which was funded by the Department of Health and the Department for Work and Pensions. GfK NOP was commissioned to carry out face-to-face interviews over 11 months of fieldwork in a representative sample of homes in England.

The report contains details on the prevalence of caring in England, the demographic profile of carers, the impact of caring duties upon the carer, details of the services carers receive and a profile of the cared for people. Carers who were under 16 years of age were excluded from the Survey of Carers in Households 2009/10, as were people in communal establishments.

This will be of interest to all who share the vision and responsibility for implementing the Carers' Strategy, including Central and Local Government, the public sector, third sector organisations, families and communities. These groups will be able to align the results of this survey with the Strategy.

Carers were identified via a short screening questionnaire at addresses which were randomly selected from the Postcode Address File (PAF). Carers were defined as those people who identified themselves as having extra responsibilities of looking after someone who has a long-term physical or mental ill health or disability, or problem related to old age. People providing care in a professional capacity were excluded. The main questionnaire, covered in Chapters 3 to 7 of this report, asked a series of detailed questions about the caring role and was concerned only with Carers who also fitted the General Household Survey (GHS)<sup>2</sup> definition of Carers (which excludes those caring as volunteers for a charity or organisation, those caring for someone in an

---

<sup>1</sup> Carers' Strategy

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_085345](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_085345)

<sup>2</sup> GHS [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/ssd/surveys/general\\_household\\_survey.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/ssd/surveys/general_household_survey.asp)

Carers 2000 module Report:

[http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_health/carers2000.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_health/carers2000.pdf)

Note that the GHS survey is now known as the General LiFestyle Survey (GLF).

institution, those providing financial support only and those caring for someone with a temporary illness or disability).

## Prevalence of caring (see chapter 2)

- Overall, 12 per cent of people aged 16 or over in England in 2009/10 were looking after or giving special help to a sick, disabled or elderly person. This represents around 5 million adults in England. Six per cent of adults in England were caring for someone who was living with them, and 6 per cent were caring for someone living elsewhere only.
- 15 per cent of households in England contained a carer. This represents around 3 million households in England.

## Profile of carers (see chapter 3)

- Carers were more likely to be women than men; 60 per cent of carers in England were women.
- Carers were most likely to be aged 45-64 (42%); a quarter (25%) were aged 65 or over.
- Around half (46%) of carers were in paid employment, 27 per cent were retired from paid work and 13 per cent were looking after their home or family
- 92 per cent of carers were white, while 8 per cent were from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds.
- Around two in five carers (37%) were the only support for their main cared for person, while the remainder reported shared caring responsibilities. This means that around 1.7 million adults in England were the sole carer for their main cared for person.
- 48 per cent provided care for 20 or more hours per week. Carers with such heavy commitments had a different profile to those who were caring for fewer hours per week; they were more likely to be aged 65 or over (30% compared with 20%) and less likely to be in full-time employment (17% compared with 35%).
- Overall, 62 per cent of carers felt their own general health was good, while fewer than one in ten (8%) felt their health was bad. In comparison with the Health Survey for England (2008)<sup>3</sup> carers were considerably less likely to describe their general health as good (62% compared to 76%), though this reflects, in part, the older age profile of carers.
- 83 per cent of carers were looking after one person only, 14 per cent were looking after two people and 3 per cent looked after three or more people.

---

<sup>3</sup> Source: Health Survey for England Adult Trend tables 2008.  
[http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/HSE/HSE08trends/ADULT\\_TREND\\_TABLES\\_2008\\_to\\_IC5.xls](http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/HSE/HSE08trends/ADULT_TREND_TABLES_2008_to_IC5.xls)

- 27 per cent of carers had been looking after their (main) cared for person for at least ten years, including 8 per cent who had been providing support for 20 years or more.
- Carers performed a wide variety of tasks for the person they mainly cared for - they were most likely to provide practical help (such as preparing meals, shopping and doing the laundry) (82%), keep an eye on the person they cared for (76%), keep them company (68%) or take them out (62%).
- 11 per cent of all carers reported receiving Carer's Allowance and 27% received Disability Living Allowance/Attendance Allowance. This rose to 23% of carers who cared for 35 hours or more per week receiving Carer's Allowance and 50% receiving Disability Living Allowance/Attendance Allowance.

### The impact of caring upon carers (see chapter 4)

- Overall, 80 per cent of carers defined their quality of life as 'good'. Those who were providing more than 20 hours of support per week or were looking after someone in the same household were less likely to say this was the case (72% and 75% respectively).
- Around half (52%) of carers said their health had been affected because of the care they provide. A wide range of effects were mentioned; a third of carers reported feeling tired (34%), 29 per cent felt stressed, 25 per cent had disturbed sleep and 22 per cent reported being short tempered or irritable.
- Around two in five carers (42%) said their personal relationships, social life or leisure time had been affected because of the assistance they provided. Those who had been affected in this way were asked an unprompted question to establish the effects of caring. The most common effects were having less time for leisure activities (69%), being too tired to go out (32%), being unable to go on holiday (23%) and the effect upon their own health (20%).
- When asked about spending time doing social or leisure activities specifically, 25 per cent of carers said they had less time with friends and 20 per cent had less time for pastimes or hobbies because of their caring responsibilities.
- Six in ten carers (61%) anticipated that the amount of time they spend caring will increase in the next five years, while just 8 per cent felt it would decrease.
- Amongst carers who were of working age, 26 per cent felt their caring responsibilities had affected their ability to take up or stay in employment, although nearly three quarters (74%) did not feel this was the case. Carers

aged 35-54 were most likely to say that caring had affected them in this way (32%).

- Amongst carers who were of working age but not in employment, 27 per cent indicated that they were interested in taking up paid employment; 16 per cent were interested in doing so in the near future and 10 per cent would think about doing so when their caring responsibilities were reduced.
- Flexibility in working hours was the most important thing that would help carers who wanted to work to take up paid employment (68%); in addition 34 per cent said the ability to work from home would help them.
- Awareness of the right to request flexible working from an employer was very low amongst all carers (19%), but higher amongst carers who were in work (27% of carers in full-time employment and 24% of those in part-time employment).

## Support and Services for Carers (see chapter 5)

- Only a small number (6%) of carers said they had been offered a carer's assessment and 4 per cent had actually been assessed. Two per cent said they had been offered a review of their own needs and 1 per cent said they had actually had such a review.
- 67 per cent of carers who had been assessed said they had received a service of some kind as a result of the assessment. The most common services were equipment such as mobility aids (26%), services for the person they care for (22%), an assessment of the person they care for (21%) and information about benefits (20%).
- Almost two thirds (66%) of carers reported that they would need someone else to care for their main cared for person if they wanted to take a break for a couple of days. For shorter breaks from caring of a couple of hours, 27 per cent of carers said that someone else would be needed if they wanted to take a break.
- 84% of carers who said that someone else would be needed if they wanted to take a break for a couple of days did have someone they could rely on to look after the person they cared for. However, 16 per cent (or, 11% of all carers) said there was no one they could rely on if they wanted to take a break.
- Those carers who had someone else they could rely upon were most likely to say that another relative would be on hand to look after their main cared for person if they wanted to have a break for a couple of days (91%).
- 58 per cent of carers who would need someone else to look after the person they cared for said they had had a break of 2 days or more,

meaning that a large minority (42%) had not taken such a break since they started looking after their main cared for person.

- Two per cent of all carers reported that their main cared for person had made use of a sitting service in the last year. The same percentage said they had used a befriending service in the same period. Overall, 3 per cent reported using one or both of these services.

## Profile of the people being cared for (see chapter 6)

- Overall, 61 per cent of carers were looking after women, while 39 per cent were looking after men. Half (50%) were looking after someone aged 75 or older, while 8 per cent were caring for someone under 16.
- Carers were most likely to be looking after a close family member, such as a parent (33%), a spouse or partner (26%) or a child (13%). Just 9 per cent said their main cared for person was a friend or neighbour.
- The most common reasons why care was required included a physical disability (58%), a long-standing illness (37%) or a sight or hearing loss (20%). In addition, 17 per cent mentioned that their main cared for person had problems connected to ageing.
- The majority (62%) of carers were looking after someone whose condition affected them only physically, 11 per cent said he/she was affected only mentally and 22 per cent said their main cared for person was affected both physically and mentally.
- Overall, around two thirds (66%) of carers said their main cared for person had some kind of regular contact with a health or social care professional; 43 per cent saw a doctor at least once a month, 13 per cent saw a community/district nurse or community matron at least once a month and 13 per cent saw a home help or care worker at least once a month.
- Sixty three per cent of carers said their main cared for person did not go to any of a number of outside places or activities they were prompted with. Around one in five carers (19%) said the person they looked after went to a social club, support group or other club, 10 per cent said they went to school or college, 8 per cent mentioned a day centre and 5 per cent said their main cared for person went to work.
- Only 13 per cent of carers said that their main cared for person regularly made use of a community or voluntary transport scheme.