

# IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND MEASURES ON UNPAID CARERS

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# UNPAID CARERS ARE A CRUCIAL SOURCE OF SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH CARE NEEDS AROUND THE WORLD

- Many people with long-term care needs receive care and support from unpaid family members
  - In countries with existing long-term care support structures unpaid carers continue to play an important role:
    - 4.7 million unpaid carers in Germany,
    - 5.4 million unpaid carers in England,
    - 41 million unpaid carers in the United States
  - In countries with emerging long-term care systems almost all care is provided by unpaid carers (2)
- Unpaid carers save care systems money:
  - In England around £132 billion
  - in the United States about \$470 billion

# WHO ARE UNPAID CARERS

## **Gender & Age**

- Across countries: the majority of unpaid care is provided by women (8, 9, 10)
  - More older men care for their partners (8)
  - Older carers providing long hours (8,10)

## **Socio-economic status**

- Unpaid carers often experience low socio-economic status (9)
- More likely to be working part-time or to leave employment & experience difficulty re-entering the labour force (3,9)
  - Reduced income, pensions & savings (3)

## **Physical and mental health**

- The provision of unpaid care is associated with poor mental (depression, anxiety, stress, burden) and physical health and lower quality of life (3,8,9)

# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON UNPAID CARERS

## Intensity of care

- 70% provide more care (on average +10 more hours) (4)
  - 35% provide more care due to reduce or close local services (4); reports of stopped or reduced care packages (5), domiciliary care workers and unavailable migrant worker (7)
  - Respite options unavailable (5)

## Financial implications

- 81% incur higher costs (e.g. on food, household bills) (4)
  - 38% of surveyed carers are worried about their financial situation (4)

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## Personal well-being

- 55% feel overwhelmed and are worried about burnout (4)
- 87% of carers are worried about what would happen to the person they support if they become unable to care (4)
- Loss of control, routine, community (6)
- Worry about risk for the person they support if people don't adhere to distancing & hygiene rules (6)
- Feeling overwhelmed from news (6)
- 33% of carers unable 'to look after their own health and wellbeing' (4)
- 44% of carers were 'lonely and cut off from people' Poor mental health (social isolation) (4)
- Bereavement (4)

=> *Development of methods to deal with the situation: finding moments for themselves, things they enjoy, develop a new routine, virtual social connection (6)*

=> *57% of carers remained in contact with friends and family (4)*

# MEASURES TO SUPPORT UNPAID CARERS

## Interventions for people with care needs that support unpaid carers

- Formal paid care (paid home care, personal assistants, day care, respite care)
- Other unpaid carers
- Services for the person with care needs (meals-on-wheels)
- Assistive technology that enables independence

## Interventions and services for unpaid carers

- Training (skills & education)
- Psychological support (counselling, psychological interventions)
- Support groups
- Support to maintain in labour force: anti-discrimination, flexible working hours, compassionate leave, care leave
- Financial assistance (cash benefit/ carer allowance)
- Assistive technology to deliver interventions

(Brimblecombe et al., 2018)

# OVERVIEW OF MEASURES TAKEN TO SUPPORT UNPAID CARERS DURING COVID-19

	<b>Australia</b>	<b>Austria</b>	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>China</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>Hong Kong</b>	<b>Ireland</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>USA</b>
Guidance and information	X		X		X	X		X	X		X
Virtual support and interventions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Emergency support structures				X	X			X			
Financial support					X	X		X		X	
Healthcare provider responsibility									X		X
Support with navigating restrictions					X						
COVID-19 testing for unpaid carers					X						

# EXAMPLES OF MEASURES USED TO SUPPORT UNPAID CARERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1. Guidance and resources for unpaid carers: technical and educational guidance, guidance for specific groups (people with dementia, people with learning disabilities)
2. Virtual support
  - To facilitate social contact
  - Virtual interventions: virtual carer groups, games, exercises
  - Psychological support: counselling, videos
  - Virtual training for unpaid carers
  - Helplines
3. Emergency support structures: advice, information, systems

# EXAMPLES OF MEASURES USED TO SUPPORT UNPAID CARERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

## 4. Financial support:

- reimbursement for days taken off to provide emergency care/ furlough
- financial support to reimburse (other) unpaid care (carer allowance)
- scheme to enable reduced working hours
- financial support for people with low-income

## 5. Healthcare provider responsibility: monitoring, tele-health

## 6. Support with navigating restrictions: identification as unpaid carer (shopping)

## 7. Testing: access to priority testing

# WHAT IS FALLING SHORT OR MISSING?

- Accessible and clearly communicated information
- Exemptions for unpaid carers to purchase limited number of items
- Access to PPE
- Prioritise testing of unpaid family carers
- Help with contingency planning for emergency situations
- Increase of financial support
- Recognition of the main unpaid carer on medical notes
- Increase funding for remote support interventions
- Unpaid carers of people with dementia, people with learning disabilities and people with autism may require specific support.
- Considering respite options for when it will be safe to do so

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