**Unpaid carers in employment research report**

**Summary**

* Nearly 2.5 million people in employment are providing unpaid care in England and Wales.
* 433,000 people in employment are providing over 50 hours of unpaid care per week.
* One third of NHS staff in England (32%) are providing unpaid care. Carers UK estimate this to be over half a million people. 43% of NHS staff aged 51-65 were providing unpaid care.
* People providing unpaid care are more likely than those without caring responsibilities to be working part time. 38% of carers in employment are working part time compared with 29% of non-carers in employment.
* Carers in employment who are caring for over 50 hours a week are even more likely to be working part-time (43%).
* Although the most common industry for people to work in, regardless of caring status, is public administration, education and health, a higher proportion of carers in employment are working in this industry compared with non-carers in employment (39% vs 30%). 976,000 carers are working in public administration, education and health.
* Carers in employment caring for 50 or more hours a week are more likely to work in distribution, hotels and restaurants than carers in employment caring for less than 19 hours a week (20% compared with 16%). They are less likely to work in financial, real estate, professional and administration (14% compared with 17%).
* Carers in employment caring for over 50 hours a week are more likely to be working in elementary occupations than carers in employment caring for 19 hours or less (12% compared with 7%). They are less likely to be working in professional occupations (15% compared with 22%), and less likely to be working as managers, directors and senior officials (11% compared with 14%).

**Number of carers in employment**

According to the Census 2021 in England and Wales, nearly **2.5 million people in employment are providing unpaid care[[1]](#footnote-2)**, of which:

* **2 million** are employees
* **445,000** are self-employed

The majority of carers in employment are caring for 19 hours or less per week. However, hundreds of thousands of people are combining work with high levels of care. Over 433,000 people in employment are caring for over 50 hours a week.

Table 1: Number of carers in employment by hours of care

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hours of care | Number of carers in employment |
| Provides 19 or less hours unpaid care a week | 1.5 million |
| Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week | 513,000 |
| Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week | 433,000 |

**Carers’ hours of work**

According to the Census 2021 in England and Wales, most carers in employment are working full-time (1.6m people). 948,000 are working part-time.

Table 2: Carers in employment by hours of work[[2]](#footnote-3)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hours of work | Number of carers in employment |
| Full-time | 1.6 million |
| Part-time | 948,000 |

A bigger proportion of carers in employment are working part time than those without caring responsibilities. 38% of carers in employment are working part-time compared with 29% of non-carers in employment. Research suggests that carers often reduce their working hours to provide care[[3]](#footnote-4).

Table 3: Hours of work by caring status

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Caring status | Percentage of people in employment | |
| Part time | Full-time |
| Carers | 38% | 62% |
| Non carers | 29% | 71% |

Carers in employment who are caring for over 50 hours a week are even more likely to be working part-time. As Table 4 shows, 43% of carers in employment who are caring for over 50 hours a week are working part-time, compared to 36% of carers in employment who are caring for 19 hours or less a week.

Table 4: Carers’ hours of work by hours of care

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hours of care | Percentage in employment working full-time | Percentage in employment working part-time |
| Provides 19 or less hours unpaid care a week | 64% | 36% |
| Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week | 63% | 37% |
| Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week | 57% | 43% |

**Where carers work**

**NHS**

Carers UK analysis of the NHS staff survey 2023 in England found that **one third of NHS staff (32%) are providing unpaid care[[4]](#footnote-5).** Those working in NHS community services are even more likely to be providing unpaid care (37%).

Table 5: Carers in employment in the NHS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| NHS organisation type | Percentage of NHS staff providing unpaid care |
| Acute and Acute and Community | 31% |
| Acute specialist | 29% |
| Mental health and learning disability, and mental health, learning disability and community | 36% |
| Community | 37% |
| Ambulance | 31% |

Female NHS staff were more likely to be providing unpaid care than male employees (33% compared with 27%). Staff who were aged 51-65 were most likely to be providing unpaid care (43%) compared to other age groups. Staff with long lasting health conditions or illnesses were more likely to provide care than those without health conditions (40% compared with 29%).

Research by the Nuffield Foundation suggests that there are 1.7 million people working in the NHS in England[[5]](#footnote-6). The NHS staff survey suggests that over half a million of these might be providing unpaid care.

**Census data about where carers work**

**Industry**

According to the Census 2021 in England and Wales, the most common industry in which carers work is public administration, education and health. 39% of carers in employment work in this industry. This was followed by distribution, hotels and restaurants (18%) and financial, real estate, professional and administration (16%).

Figure 1: Carers in employment by industry

This is similar to the general population. For example, the majority of people in employment work in public administration, education and health (30%). However, carers in employment are slightly more likely to work in public administration, education and health compared to non-carers (39% compared to 30%).

Table 6: Number of carers in employment by industry

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Industry | Number of carers working in this industry |
| Agriculture, energy and water | 54,000 |
| Manufacturing | 158,000 |
| Construction | 166,000 |
| Distribution, hotels and restaurants | 443,000 |
| Transport and communications | 206,000 |
| Financial, real estate, professional and administration | 396,000 |
| Public administration, education and health | 976,000 |
| Other | 118,000 |

All carers in employment are most likely to work in public administration, education and health, regardless of how many hours they are caring for. As Table 6 shows, carers in employment caring for 50 or more hours a week are more likely to work in distribution, hotels and restaurants than those caring for less than 19 hours a week (20% compared with 16%).

Table 7: Carers in employment by industry and hours of care

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Industry | Percentage of carers in employment working in this industry | | |
| Caring for less than 19 hours | Caring for 20-49 hours | Caring for 50 or more hours |
| Agriculture, energy and water | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| Manufacturing | 6% | 6% | 6% |
| Construction | 7% | 7% | 6% |
| Distribution, hotels and restaurants | 16% | 19% | 20% |
| Transport and communications | 8% | 8% | 8% |
| Financial, real estate, professional and administration | 17% | 14% | 14% |
| Public administration, education and health | 38% | 40% | 39% |
| Other | 5% | 4% | 5% |

**Occupation**

According to the Census 2021 in England and Wales, the most common occupation type amongst carers is professional occupations, with 19% of carers working in this type of role.

Figure 2: Carers in employment by occupation

This is similar to the general population. For example, the most common occupation for all people in employment is professional occupations (20%).

Table 8: Number of carers in employment by occupation

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Occupation | Number of carers working in this occupation |
| Managers, directors and senior officials | 317,000 |
| Professional occupations | 482,000 |
| Associate professional and technical occupations | 320,000 |
| Administrative and secretarial occupations | 289,000 |
| Skilled trades occupations | 204,000 |
| Caring, leisure and other service occupations | 348,000 |
| Sales and customer service occupations | 185,000 |
| Process, plant and machine operatives | 148,000 |
| Elementary occupations | 226,000 |

Carers in employment caring for over 50 hours a week are less likely to be working in professional occupations compared with carers in employment caring for 19 hours or less (15% vs 22%). They are also less likely to be working as managers, directors and senior officials (11% vs 14%), and associate professional and technical occupations (11% vs 14%).

Carers in employment caring for over 50 hours a week are more likely to be working in elementary occupations than carers in employment caring for 19 hours or less (12% compared with 7%.

Table 9: Carers in employment by occupation and hours of care

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Occupation | Percentage of carers in employment working in this occupation | | |
| Caring for less than 19 hours | Caring for 20-49 hours | Caring for 50 or more hours |
| Managers, directors and senior officials | 14% | 10% | 11% |
| Professional occupations | 22% | 14% | 15% |
| Associate professional and technical occupations | 14% | 10% | 11% |
| Administrative and secretarial occupations | 12% | 9% | 11% |
| Skilled trades occupations | 8% | 9% | 8% |
| Caring, leisure and other service occupations | 10% | 21% | 17% |
| Sales and customer service occupations | 7% | 8% | 8% |
| Process, plant and machine operatives | 5% | 7% | 7% |
| Elementary occupations | 7% | 12% | 12% |

**Further resources**

Carers UK published a [report](https://www.carersuk.org/reports/carers-employment-rights-today-tomorrow-and-in-the-future/) in November 2023 which shared data from the Census 2021 about the number of carers in employment in each local authority and Integrated Care Board. The report also highlighted new rights for carers in relation to Carer’s Leave and flexible working, and shared carers’ responses to the State of Caring Survey 2023 questions about juggling work and care.

**Contact**

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1. 2,475,000 people excluding full-time students [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Totals include full-time students who are caring and in employment. Due to the ONS’ need to protect the confidentiality of individuals’ data, it is not possible to separate these totals into carers who are employees and carers who self-employed. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Carers UK *Juggling Work and Care* (2019) https://www.carersuk.org/media/no2lwyxl/juggling-work-and-unpaid-care-report-final-web.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. NHS *Staff Survey* staff survey (2023) <https://www.nhsstaffsurveys.com/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [The NHS workforce in numbers | Nuffield Trust](https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/resource/the-nhs-workforce-in-numbers#toc-header-0) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)