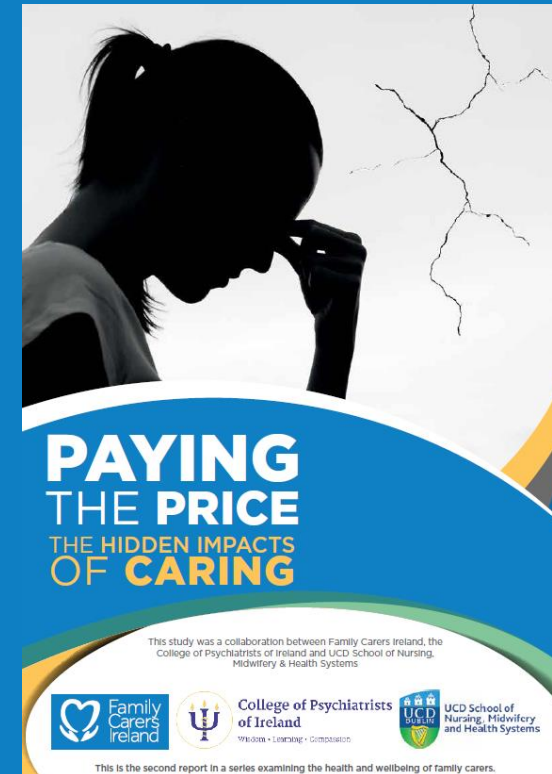
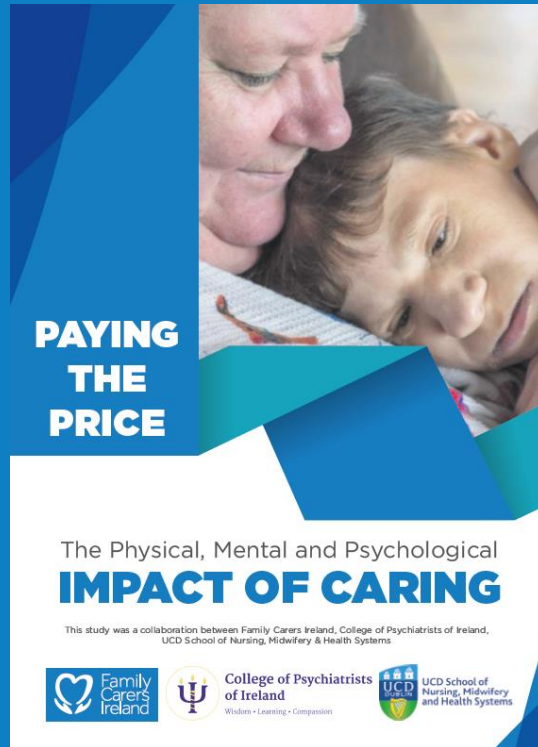


# A Decade Lost: The Physical, Mental and Psychological Impact of Caring 2009-2019



Dr Nikki Dunne, Research Officer, Family Carers Ireland

# Overview



- ▶ Methodology
- ▶ Findings: 2019 Family Carer Health & Wellbeing Study
- ▶ A Decade Lost: 2009 and 2019 study
- ▶ Recommendations for a refreshed National Carers Strategy

# About the Research

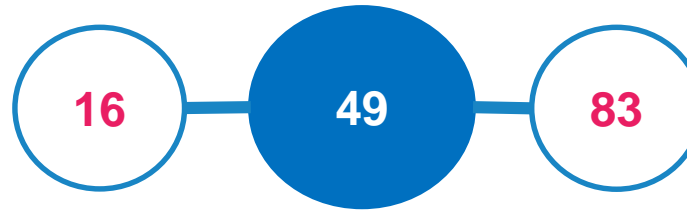
- ▶ Survey of the membership and network reach of Family Carers Ireland
- ▶ Repeat wave of a similar study conducted in 2009
- ▶ Combination of online and postal distribution
- ▶ Achieved sample of 1,102 family carers
  - ▶ All counties in Ireland represented
  - ▶ 95% CI of +/- 3%




# Overview of Respondents (N=1102)



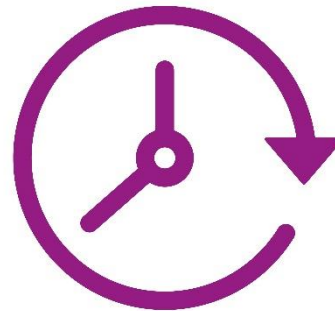
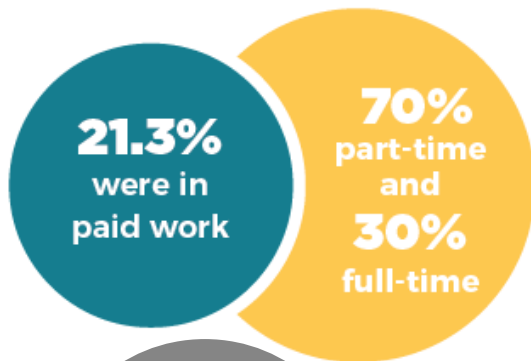
Average Age = 49 years



47% of carers were providing care to a child (under 18)



31% of carers were providing care to an older adult (over 65)



**42%** of respondents have been caring for 10 years or more

**61%** of carers provide 100 hours or more care per week

**22%** of carers provide 50-99 hours care per week

# Family Carers' Health



67% of carers reported that they were diagnosed or treated for a physical health condition

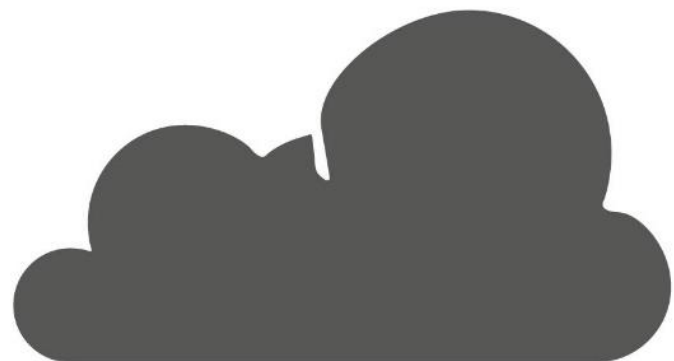
40% diagnosed with **back injury**  
26% diagnosed with **high blood pressure**



48% of carers reported that they were diagnosed or treated for a mental health condition

35% diagnosed with **depression**  
39% diagnosed with **anxiety**

68% of carers reported that they quite frequently or nearly always felt that their health had suffered because of their caring role



**88%**  
**felt**  
**stressed**

**Almost 9 in 10 (88%)** carers  
**felt stressed** trying to balance  
caring with other family and  
work responsibilities.



# Unavailable & Inadequate Services



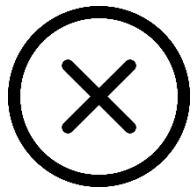
83% of care recipients had no access to suitable respite



76% of care recipients did not receive any home care hours



16% of children received home support hours where their carer couldn't leave the home



49% said services were unavailable

“There’s no appropriate respite for my Mum with Alzheimer’s who is a fall risk. An appropriate service is available but it’s not in our catchment area. So we don’t get respite. We can’t afford to pay privately.”  
(female, full-time carer for elderly parents)

“Living with a child with a severe disability both intellectually and physically has profound effects on the parents and the siblings, there are NO support services for them. Family life is not ‘normal’ and can never be, it leaves a mental scar on us all. Nobody understands what it’s like until you live in it.”

(female, full-time carer for child)

# Inaccessible & Unsuitable

22% reported that supports and services, when available, were too far away

43% said supports and services were not disability, condition and/or age appropriate

37% said quality was poor

“My Dad needs more local day care with quality stimulation activities and better quality meals. He needs more than bingo!”  
(female, full-time carer for elderly parent)

“Many supports and groups are well intentioned but they end up calling us to manage issues and behaviours, even the day services.”  
(female, full-time carer for an adult and young child)

“I travel non-stop to numerous appointments, clocking up 500km per week. Yet there’s no travel allowance or car maintenance subsidy for family carers.”  
(female, full-time carer for two children)

“I’ve had huge problems getting to appointments in SVUH due to a lack of disabled spaces, set down areas and assistance in getting him out of the car and into the clinic.”  
(female, full-time carer for spouse)



# Unaffordable

“Payments to carers are too low to sustain a family, especially with the rising rental prices. DCA is getting used for living expenses in order to survive which means the child isn't able to get private therapy, which the payment is meant for.”

(female, full-time carer for child)

73% of carers were worried about money

Mental and physical ill health statistically significantly associated with worries about not having enough money now or in the future

“Housing is a major worry. How will we cope if we lose our home of 20 years? This is a real possibility as the mortgage is now being prepared for sale to a vulture fund.”

(male, full-time carer for two children)

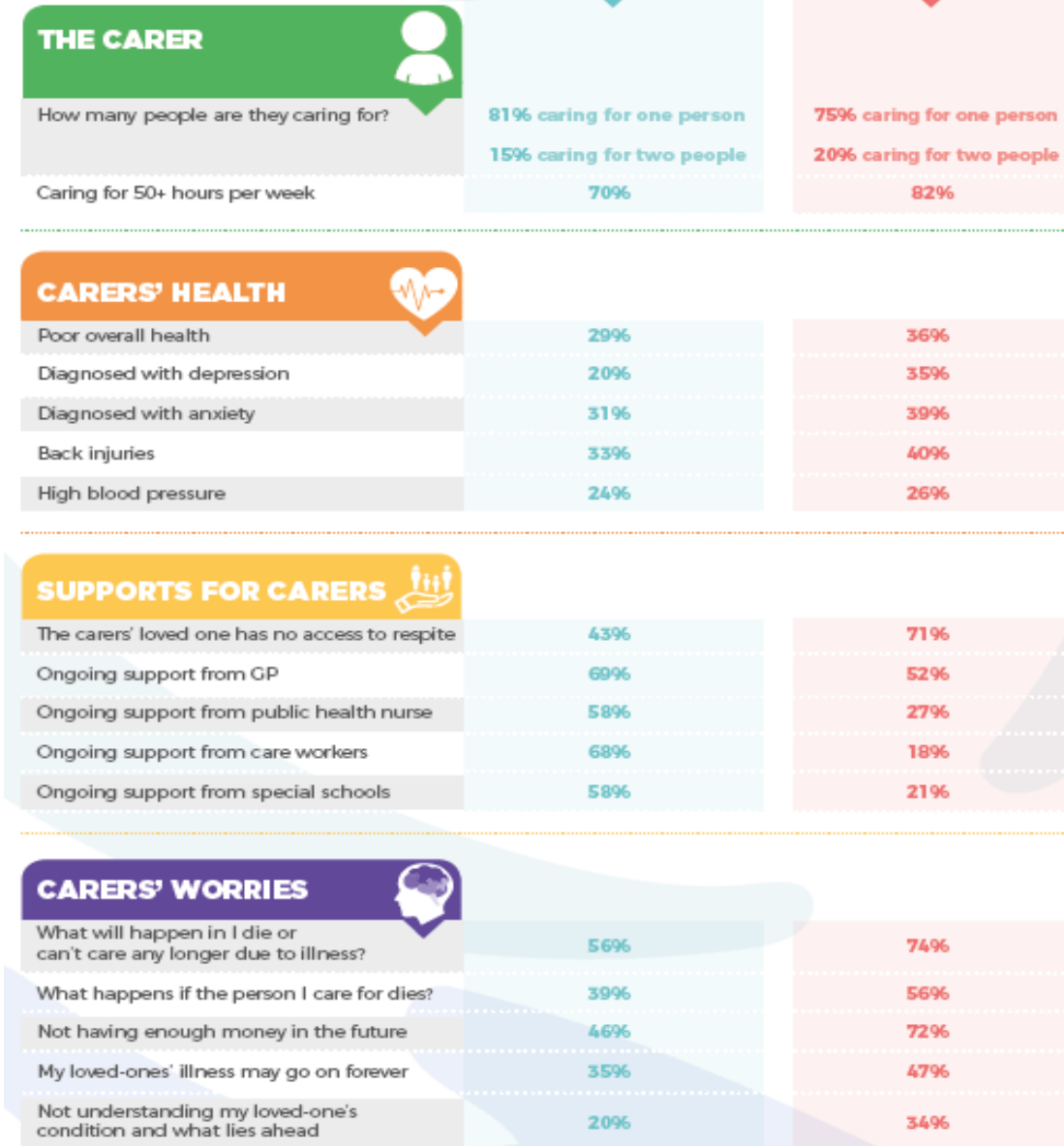
“We're left with little to no money after covering daily things. It's very hard”  
(female, full-time carer for spouse)

# A Decade Lost: Family Carer Health and Wellbeing

## 2009 to 2019

- 70% increase in carers diagnosed with depression
- 30% increase in carers diagnosed with anxiety
- 24% increase in carers reporting poor health

Comparisons between the findings from the 2009 and 2019 surveys show that:



# Supporting Carers to be Healthy: Recommendations



Enshrine in the Statutory Homecare Scheme the right to 20 days respite each year.



Ensure adequate incomes for caring households.



Carers as partners in health have a right to a Carer Needs Assessment.



Extend the GP visit card to all full-time carers in receipt of the Carer's Support Grant.

# References

- Pinquart, M. and Sörensen, S. (2003). Differences between caregivers and noncaregivers in psychological health and physical health: a meta-analysis. *Psychology and Aging, 18*(2), p.250.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2017) *Preventing Ageing Unequally*, OECD Publishing: Paris