

Men in Northern Ireland: Report 7 June 2011

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The Men in Northern Ireland (MINI) series is produced by ARK, a joint initiative between Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster. ARK makes material on the social and political life of Northern Ireland available to the widest audience.

www.ark.ac.uk

About the surveys:
Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey: www.ark.ac.uk/nilt
Young Life and Times Survey: www.ark.ac.uk/ylt

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Men as carers

Key facts

- 41% of carers are male.
- 9% of men provide care for someone living with them, and 17% provide care for someone not living with them.
- Overall, 22% of men provide care for someone, which rises to 29% among men aged 55-64 years.
- Men are mostly caring for family members, for example, one third are caring for a parent or a parent-in-law.
- The main activities are companionship and practical help (such as housework or shopping).
- While one half of men spend under 10 hours a week caring, 15% of men spend at least 60 hours a week.
- Most men (95%) are happy some or most of the time that they are able to help someone. However, 56% feels pressure most or some of the time.
- 18% of 16 year olds males have been carers at some time, including 8% who are now.

Introduction

Every year, the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey asks respondents if there is anyone living with them who is sick, disabled or elderly and who they look after or give special help to. This person can either be living with the respondent, or not. In 2006 and 2010, the survey asked a wide range of questions about these caring responsibilities, as well as carers' attitudes towards their role.

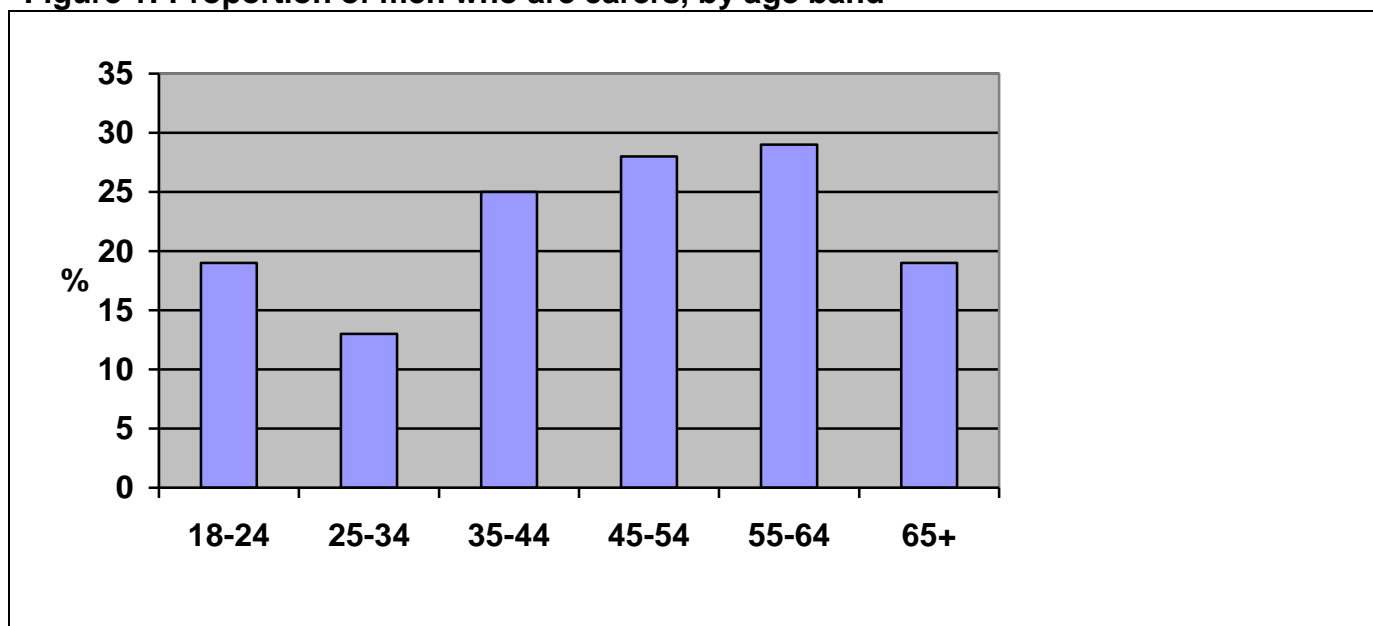
In 2010, four out of ten carers (41%) were male. One in ten men aged 18 years or over (9%) said that they provided care for someone living with them, and almost twice that proportion (17%) said that they provided care for someone not living with them. Given that 18 men are undertaking a caring role both at home and away from home, this means that overall, 22 percent of men are carers.

About the carers

There are differences according to age in the proportion of men who are carers. The lowest proportion is among men aged 25-34 years (13%), whilst the highest is among men aged 55-64 (29%) – see Figure 1.

One third (33%) of male carers have a long term illness or disability, and this is statistically higher than for non-carers (19%). 64 percent of carers say that their health is excellent or good (compared with 71% of men who are not carers). These figures show that caring responsibilities are undertaken by a wide range of men, not just by those who are young and/or fit.

Figure 1: Proportion of men who are carers, by age band



Who do they care for?

Within the NILT survey, carers were asked about the person that they spend most hours per week caring for, and these were mostly family members. For example, one quarter of carers said that the person they mainly care for is a parent, with a further 10 percent looking after a parent-in-law – see Table 1. Only 8 percent of men were providing care for a friend or neighbour. In most cases (61%), the person being looked after was female. Two thirds (66%) of the people being cared for were aged 65 years or over, whilst 9 percent were aged under 18.

Table 1: Who is being cared for?

	%
Parent	25
Another relative	15
Child or step-child	12
Wife or partner	11
Parent-in-law	10
Grandparent	10
A friend or neighbour	8
Brother or sister	5
Other	3
Don't know	1

Reasons for care

The most frequently identified reason for giving care was old age or frailty (47%), followed by physical disability (43%) and physical illness (31%) – see Table 2. However, the pattern varied depending on whether the carer lived with the person or not. Physical illness, learning disability and mental illness were identified by a higher proportion of carers who lived with the person than by those who didn't live with them, and the reverse was true in relation to dementia or old age.

Table 2: Need for care

	%
Old age or frailty	47
Physical disability	43
Physical illness	31
Dementia	12
Mental illness	11
Learning disability	8

Type of care given

Carers provide support and assistance in many ways. Carers were asked to indicate which of a list of tasks they usually carry out for the person that they spend most time caring for. Table 3 shows that the most frequently identified activity was companionship, followed by practical help (such as shopping and housework).

Table 3: Types of care given

	%
Companionship	65
Practical help eg shopping and housework	62
Take him/her out	58
Helping with paperwork/financial matters	37
Supervision	37
Help with personal care eg washing, dressing, eating, toilet	35
Physical help eg helping in/out of bed/chair	34
Other practical help eg gardening and decorating	33
Give medicine	31
Helping up/down stairs	23
Other	6

Amount of care

Around one half of men spend less than ten hours per week caring for someone (Table 4). However, approximately 15 percent of men are spending at least 60 hours per week. Almost one quarter of male carers spend at least 35 hours per week caring, which is the threshold of time for Carers Allowance. While one in eight men (12%) provide care on one day per week, with a further 18 percent doing so on two days per week, one half of men (51%) do this every day.

Table 4: Hours per week spent caring

	%
Less than 10 hours	52
10-19 hours	14
20-34 hours	11
35 -59 hours	8
60 hours or more	15

Feelings of carers

The NILT Survey also asked carers how they felt about their caring role, and Table 5 shows the mixed feelings that many carers have. Three quarters of men say that most of the time they are happy that they are able to help someone, and only 6 percent feel this not at all. In addition, more than half (54%) feel that they are giving something back most of the time.

However, one in five feels pressure most of the time, and a further 37 percent feel this sometimes.

Table 5: Feelings of carers

	%			
	Most of the time	Sometimes	Not at all	Don't know
Happy that you are able to help someone	77	18	6	0
Giving something back	54	29	14	3
Under pressure	19	37	45	0
Resentment	4	21	75	0

Young men as carers

The 2010 Young Life and Times Survey asked 16 year olds similar questions about caring. Of the 286 young men who took part in the survey, 11 percent said that they had had caring responsibilities in the past, and 8 percent currently did so. This means that nearly one in five (18%) have had caring responsibilities at some time in their life. As was the case among NILT respondents, young men mainly provide care for family members, especially their mother, brother or grandmother. These young male carers carry out a variety of tasks, including cleaning, watching over someone, and helping with medication. However, young men were less likely to undertake more personal tasks (such as washing or helping someone to get to the toilet). Around one half of young men said that they enjoyed their caring role, and did not think that this affected their school or social life. However, just under one half said that they often get stressed about their caring role.

Carers Allowance

Carers Allowance is paid to carers who spend at least 35 hours per week looking after someone who gets either Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance at the middle or higher rate of the care component. In August 2010, 19,687 men in Northern Ireland were entitled to Carers Allowance, although only 11,134 received this benefit. Of these, 97 percent were of working age (Department for Social Development, 2010).

Useful sources of information

www.ark.ac.uk/nilt The 2006 and 2010 Northern Ireland Life and Times Surveys contained a module of questions on informal carers.

www.ark.ac.uk/yilt/ The 2010 Young Life and Times Survey also contained a module of questions on informal carers.

www.dsdni.gov.uk/dla Information and statistics on Carers' Allowance can be found on the website of the Department for Social Development.

www.nisra.gov.uk The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is Northern Ireland's official statistics organisation. The NISRA website contains a comprehensive range of official Northern Ireland statistics and survey information.

www.nisra.gov.uk/census/ Questions on caring were included in the 2011 Census of Population, and the first results are due to be released in summer 2010.