

Impacts of caregiving on the health and quality of life of European carers

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The impact that providing informal care to close relatives has on people's health and quality of life depends on where they live and their cultural and social background, according to research published today by the Centre for Health Economics, University of York.

Using a [representative sample](#) drawn from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (which provides data from 11 countries but not including the UK), researchers assessed whether matched individuals differed on self-assessed health and on a validated measure of quality of life. They also explored whether any regional differences exist across Europe.

Overall results showed a North-South divide for both self-assessed health and quality of life. Caregivers in Northern (Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands) and [Central Europe](#) (Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium) rate their own health higher than non-carers while in the South (Spain, Greece and Italy) there is no significant difference. Formal care provision explains some of the differences as carers with more formal support structures rate their health as better than non-carers.

Researchers also observed North-South differences in quality of life, with caregivers in Central Europe and the South experiencing feelings of more self-realisation and pleasure, but those in Central Europe feeling less autonomous and in control.

One of the research team, Rowena Jacobs said: "Our findings suggest that formulating effective policies across Europe could be particularly challenging and shows the importance of ensuring that policy should be tailored to match the needs of individual carers in their own geographical areas and cultural contexts."

More information: Di Novi, C. et al. The quality of life of female informal caregivers: from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean Sea. CHE Research Paper 84, York: University of York.

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Provided by University of York

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