

The mental health of home-carers deteriorated more during lockdown than non-carers

June 14 2021



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A new study has found the mental health of home-carers deteriorated more during lockdown than non-carers.

The research—led by the University of Glasgow's MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit with colleagues at the University of Essex—found that unpaid carers who looked after another member of their household (home-carers) had poorer [mental health](#) than the [general population](#) before [lockdown](#) and that this worsened as lockdown continued.

The first COVID-19 national lockdown led to an increasing reliance on home-carers, with many existing carers providing more support and other individuals taking on new caring roles as many non-COVID health and [social care services](#) were withdrawn. This study investigated the short and longer-term impact of lockdown on the mental health of those caring for others in their household.

Data from 9,737 adults from the UK Household Longitudinal Study (Understanding Society) were used to explore changes in mental health between pre-pandemic (2019) and early lockdown (April 2020), and also between early and later lockdown (April-July 2020).

The research found that, compared to non-carers, mental health was worse among home-carers before lockdown, and this worsened as lockdown continued. When compared with other home-carers, those caring for a sick or disabled child under 18 or for someone with a learning disability had particularly poor mental health in early lockdown.

Home-carers of children under 18 improved from April to July, while those caring for [adult children](#) or someone with a [learning disability](#) saw a marked worsening of their mental health as lockdown progressed. Declines in mental health were particularly marked among home-carers with greater care burden or who had formal help prior to lockdown but then lost it .

Lead researcher Dr. Elise Whitley said: "Prior to the pandemic almost 9

million people in UK were providing unpaid care for an individual, most commonly a close family member, with a disability, long term health condition, or needs related to old age. The withdrawal and suspension of many non-COVID-19 medical and social care services in March 2020 led to an increasing reliance on informal carers who were particularly likely to be negatively affected by COVID-19 lockdown measures. We found that individuals providing care for a member of their household had poorer mental health than non-carers prior to the pandemic and that this worsened as lockdown continued.

"This research shines a spotlight on the challenges facing informal carers before and during the pandemic. As restrictions on travel and hospitality are relaxed for the general population, priority should also be given to restarting and creating services that support carers and protect their mental and physical health."

The study, published in *Psychological Medicine*, is titled "Tracking the mental [health](#) of home-carers during the first COVID-19 national lockdown: evidence from a nationally representative UK survey."

More information: Elise Whitley et al, Tracking the mental health of home-carers during the first COVID-19 national lockdown: evidence from a nationally representative UK survey, *Psychological Medicine* (2021). [DOI: 10.1017/S0033291721002555](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291721002555)

Provided by University of Glasgow

Citation: The mental health of home-carers deteriorated more during lockdown than non-carers (2021, June 14) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-06-mental-health-home-carers-deteriorated-lockdown.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.