## The Dynamic Effects of Informal Caregiving on Caregivers' Health

"High-intensity caregivers experience a substantial and persistent impact on their mental health"

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Ageing populations in developed economies pose a challenge to healthcare systems. Informal care provided by relatives or friends could help meet the growing demand for longterm care (LTC) while keeping LTC costs low. However, data from the United Kingdom, where informal care is a fundamental pillar of the long-term care sector, reveal that high-intensity caregivers experience long-term and substantial negative effects on their mental health. This burden on informal care providers merits careful consideration in LTC policy.

## **Principal Findings**

- Low- and medium-intensity caregivers experience few mental health effects.
- Female high-intensity caregivers
  (>20 hours of informal care per
  week) experience substantial negative effects on their mental health.
  For male caregivers, the effects are smaller but still substantial.
- The initial mental health issues experienced diminish but persist for 4 to 5 years, indicating that individuals might slowly adapt to or recover from intensive caregiving tasks.

SF12 Mental Component Score

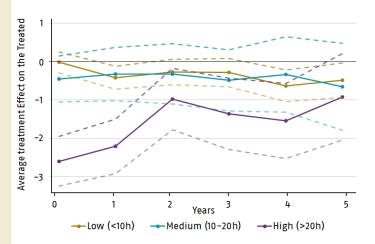


Figure: The effect of informal care provision on mental health by weekly hours of care provided. It shows the initial effects of starting care provision (Year=0) and follows individuals up to five years after (Year=5).

• These negative effects are related to the strain of caring for someone and not concerns for the health or well-being of the family member cared for.

## **Key Takeaways for the Industry**

- Policymakers should strike a careful balance between the benefits of informal care for public healthcare systems and care recipients and its impact on individual caregivers.
- High-intensity informal caregivers (>20 hours per week) are at particular risk and require targeted support.



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