Unpaid carers make a vital contribution to our society. It is important that this is recognised and carers are supported as partners in care provision. The aim of this research was to provide an indication of which types of carers may be in particular need of support, and examine the demographic characteristics of carers. The report analysed responses to the Scottish Household Survey between 1999 and 2004.

Main Findings

- Around one in eight adults in Scotland provide some kind of unpaid care to another person(s).

- Overall, carers are more likely to be:
  - female
  - over 35
  - married
  - living in non-working, non-single households.

- Being an unpaid carer has an impact on employment participation, with carers of working age being less likely than non-carers of working age to be in paid employment.

- There are key differences between those who care for someone within their own household (most commonly a spouse or partner) and those who care for someone in another household (most commonly a parent). Those who care within the household are generally older individuals who are more likely to have an illness or disability than those caring outwith the household. Taken together, the results also reveal those caring within the household are more financially disadvantaged (i.e. they cope less well financially and more commonly live in the most deprived areas in Scotland than those who care outside the household).

- In particular, sole carers who care for another household member appear to be more financially disadvantaged than other carers.

- Younger carers (aged 16-24 years old) more commonly live in lower income households and are more likely to report poor health than other adults their age.

- Older carers appear to be able to cope better financially than other adults their age.
Introduction

The report examines the characteristics and experiences of unpaid carers and those in receipt of unpaid care in Scotland, by analysing the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) from 1999 to 2004. The aim of the research was to provide a clear picture of unpaid carers and identify those groups of carers who are in particular need of support in order to inform the development of Scottish Executive policy on carers.

Patterns of unpaid care

Around one in eight households in Scotland contain an adult who provides unpaid care. Around 9% of households contain an adult who provides care to someone outwith their household while around 4% of households contain an adult who provides care to someone within their household.

Analysis reveals that carers are more likely than non-carers to be: female; aged over 35 years old; married; and live in non-working households.

Those who provide care in the household most commonly care for their spouse or partner, whereas those who care outside the household most commonly care for parents. Around 16% of those who care in the household are sole carers, with the majority of these adults caring for their spouse or partner. Caring intensity for sole carers providing care in the household has increased since 1999, with a higher proportion of these carers now providing continuous care. In contrast, the proportion of adults caring outwith the household who provide very low levels of care has increased since 1999, suggesting that caring intensity is decreasing slightly among this group.

Demographic characteristics of unpaid carers

A higher proportion of carers are female and older than non-carers. There is a concentration of carers in older smaller, and large adult households. These results reflect the fact that carers tend to be older individuals who do not live on their own (often as they are caring for a household member).

Those who care inside the household are generally older individuals than those who care outside the household, with both types of carers more likely to be female. A higher proportion of those who care in rather than outwith the household are married. This may be because carers in the household are often older adults caring for their spouse or partner.

Sole carers (i.e. the only person providing care to someone) are a potentially vulnerable group. It should be noted that due to the way the data is collected in the SHS, sole carers only refer to those adults who are providing sole care for someone within their household. Sole carers are more commonly female than male, and tend to be older individuals than other adults who provide care in the household.

Economic and Financial Status by Caring Role

Previous research has suggested that being an unpaid carer can impact on working patterns and labour market participation. Half of all carers are in paid employment, although just under a third of carers of working age are not in employment. A higher proportion of non-carers than carers of working age were in paid employment (70% compared with 65%). Additionally, 5% of carers are actually themselves long-term sick or disabled.

There are clear differences in economic status between those caring within and outwith the household. A third of those caring for someone within the household are retired compared with a fifth of those caring for someone in another household. Of adults of working age, a higher proportion of those who care outside rather than inside the household are in employment, whereas a higher proportion of those who care in rather than outwith the household live in non-working households.

Generally, adults caring outside rather than inside the household live in households on higher incomes. This was true of carers of working and non-working age.

Those who care in the household cope less well financially, are less likely to have savings or investments, and more commonly live in the most deprived areas in Scotland than those who care outside the household.

Of those carers within the household, sole carers were less likely to be in paid employment. In fact, 40% of sole carers are permanently retired from work. The majority of both sole carers and other carers live in non-working couple households. However, sole carers were more likely than other carers to live in non-working households and this appears to be linked to their caring situation rather than their age.

Given that the majority of sole carers do not work, it is perhaps unsurprising that a higher proportion of sole carers than other types of carers and non-carers live in lower income households. Even among working individuals, a lower proportion of sole carers than other carers live in households with high incomes.
Younger carers (i.e. aged 16-24) more commonly live in lower income households than other adults their age, whereas older carers more commonly live in higher income households than other adults their age. (As the SHS does not collect information on carers aged under 16 years old, it is not possible to provide details on this group.) Younger carers were less likely than younger non-carers to live in a household that copes well financially, were less likely to have savings or investments, and were less likely to have a bank or building society account.

Older carers (i.e. those aged over 75 years old) were more likely than other adults their age to have savings or investments.

Health and Social Inclusion

There are no significant differences in the self reported health of carers and non-carers. However, there were age related differences. That is, older carers were less likely than older non-carers to report poor health and to have an illness or disability.

In contrast, younger carers (aged 16-24 years old) were more likely than younger non-carers to report poor health.

Those who care within the household more commonly had either a disability or illness than carers outside the household. In fact, those who care outside the household less commonly had an illness or disability than non-carers. Those who care in the household were also more likely than those caring outwith the household to report poor health.

A higher proportion of other carers in the household than sole carers and non-carers had an illness or disability. Both sole carers and other carers in the household were more likely than non-carers to rate their health as not good.

Characteristics of care recipients

The need for care has remained constant from 1999 to 2004, with around one in ten (11%) households containing at least one person who is in need of some kind of care. Overall, 7% of adults are in receipt of care.

A higher proportion of adults in receipt of care were female. As expected, the highest proportion of adults in receipt of care are aged 65 and over. Only 7% of adults in receipt of care are aged 16 – 34.

A significantly higher proportion of adults in receipt of care were from older smaller and single pensioner households. Only 3% of adults in receipt of care are in employment. The majority of adults receiving care are retired with just under three in ten unable to work due to short term ill-health.

Households reporting unmet need for care

Situations where adults reported the need for care but did not report being in receipt of care were recorded. These figures reflect the views of the household but not those authorities responsible for assessing need. Less than 0.5% of households contain someone reporting unmet need.

Households reporting an unmet need for care were more likely to be older and non-working.

Methods

The SHS is a continuous survey based on a sample of the general population in private residences in Scotland. It includes a section on caring, which gathers information on which household members require and provide care (and whether this is within or outside the household – See HF1 – HF8 and RG15 – RG18). As well as examining data from the caring section of the SHS, analysis was conducted on demographic variables. The main analysis consisted of cross tabulations. Logistic regression was also used to determine predictors of adults being carers.
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The report, “Scottish Household Survey Analytical Topic Report: Characteristics and Experiences of Unpaid Carers in Scotland”, which is summarised in this research findings is a web only document and is available on the publications pages of the Scottish Executive website at www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/Recent