

## Carers

A carer is anyone who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who lives with a disability, chronic condition, terminal illness, mental illness, alcohol or drug dependency or who are frail aged.<sup>1</sup>

In SESLHD, 9% of the population over the age of 15 years are carers, with 59% of the carer population being women<sup>2</sup>.

The majority of carers are aged between 50 and 59 years.

Of the total carer population, 4% are aged 80 to 99 years and 4% are aged between 12 to 25 in SESLHD.<sup>2</sup>

The Sutherland Shire has the highest percentage of carers in its total population (10%) and the highest number of carers at 22,889.

In contrast, Woollahra has the lowest carer count in SESLHD, with 5,051 carers, although this still represents over 9% of Woollahra's total population.<sup>2</sup>

A study of carers within the Central and Eastern Sydney region, identified that around 12% of adults over 45 years are carers.

Carers in this region are more likely to be female, married, speak a language other than English, have a lower income, and not be working fulltime, compared to non-carers. These carers are more likely to be current smokers, experience anxiety and psychological distress, have heart disease, report poorer quality of life and are more likely to need help with daily activities.<sup>3</sup>

Caring often starts suddenly, requiring individuals to quickly learn and adapt to their new role. Only a proportion of carers remain in these roles for many years.<sup>3</sup>

Many carers have their own health care needs and report high levels of financial stress and social isolation.<sup>4</sup>

Caring can be more common and intense in specific communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTIQ+ communities and among young caregivers. Over half of all Aboriginal carers look after more than one person compared to 26% of all carers. Additionally, carers from LGBTIQ+ communities, and young carers, can experience additional challenges.<sup>5</sup>

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic increased the quantity and intensity of unpaid care, amplified the inaccessibility of services, and impacted the ability of carers to find information about services and support.<sup>3</sup>

1. Carers NSW 2020, 'Who are carers?'

2. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, 'Population: Census.'

3. Harris-Roxas, B. et al 2021, 'Understanding the carer role and challenges in Central and Eastern Sydney in Australia: a population-based linked cohort study of people aged 45 years and over,' International Journal of Integrated Care, vol. 22, no. S1, A1, pp. 1-8, DOI: doi.org/10.5334/ijic.ICIC21028.

4. Carers NSW 2022, 'National Carer Survey.'

5. Carers NSW 2020, 'National Carer Survey.'