

All about carers

How many carers are there in Australia?

The most useful source of data on how many carers there are in Australia comes from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), which is conducted every three years. The last survey was conducted in 2015.

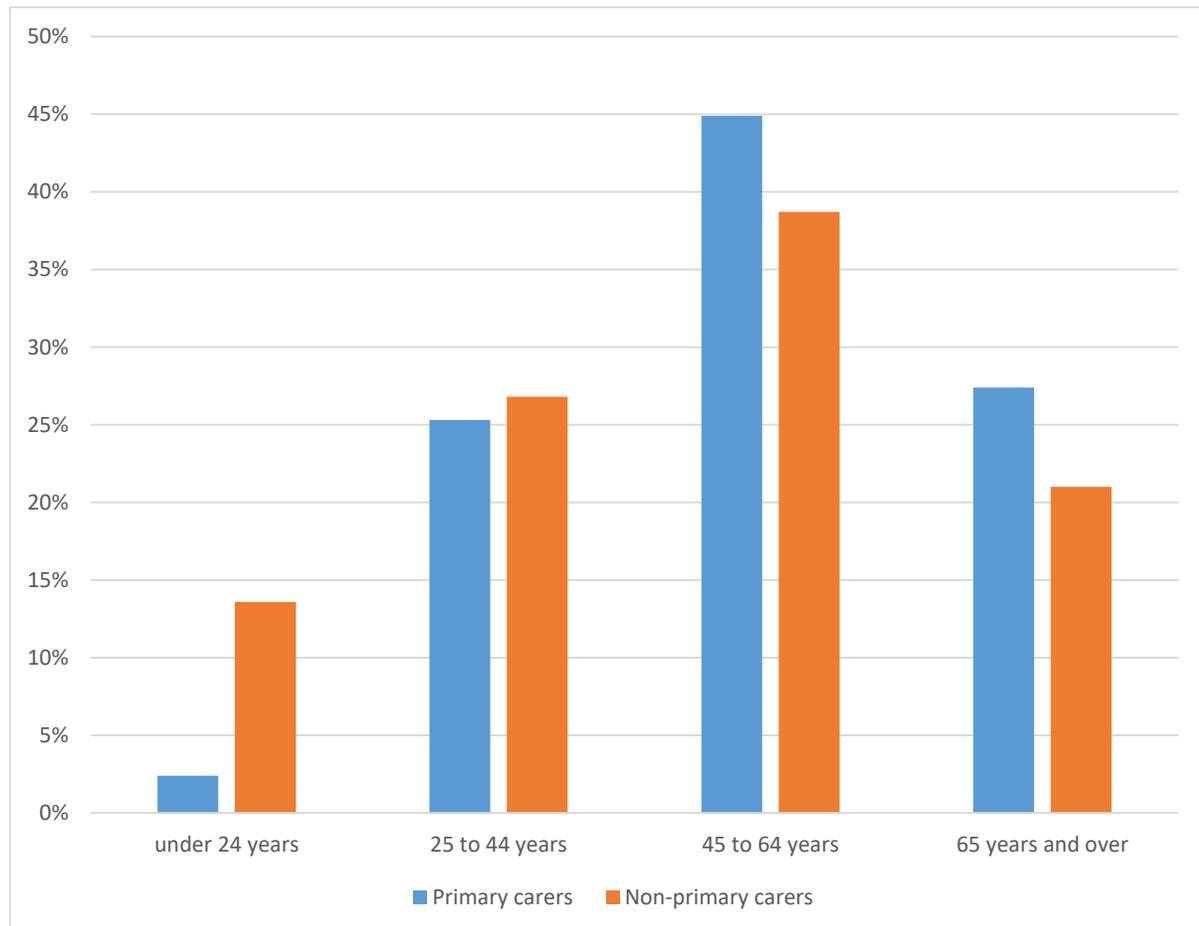
The 2015 SDAC indicates that there are nearly 2.7 million carers in Australia, approximately 12 per cent of the population, and that around 856,000 of these (32 per cent) are the primary carer of someone with disability or frail aged.

What do we know about carers?

How old are carers?

Most carers are aged 45 years or older, with a significant proportion – 27.4 per cent of primary carers – over 65 years old. At the other end of the age spectrum, young carers (under 24 years old) comprise 2.4 per cent of primary carers and 13.6 per cent of non-primary carers.

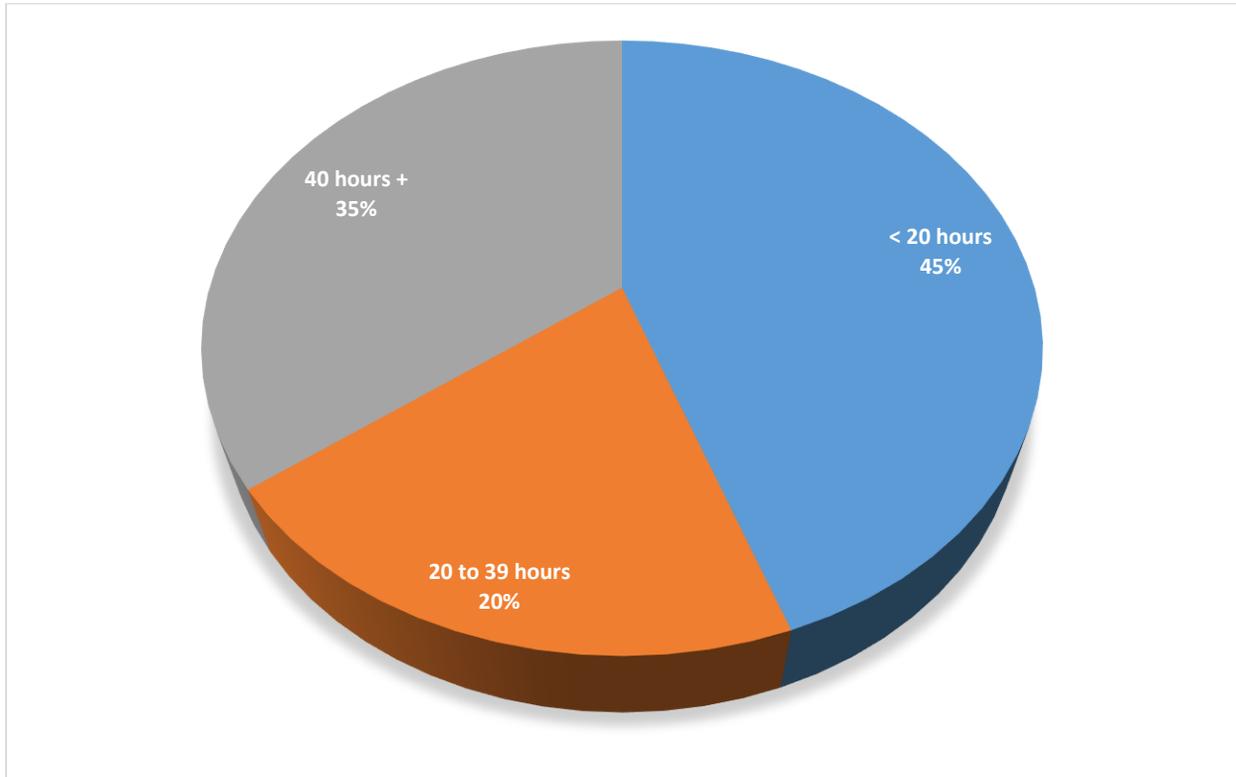
Proportion of carers by age group



How much time do carers spend caring?

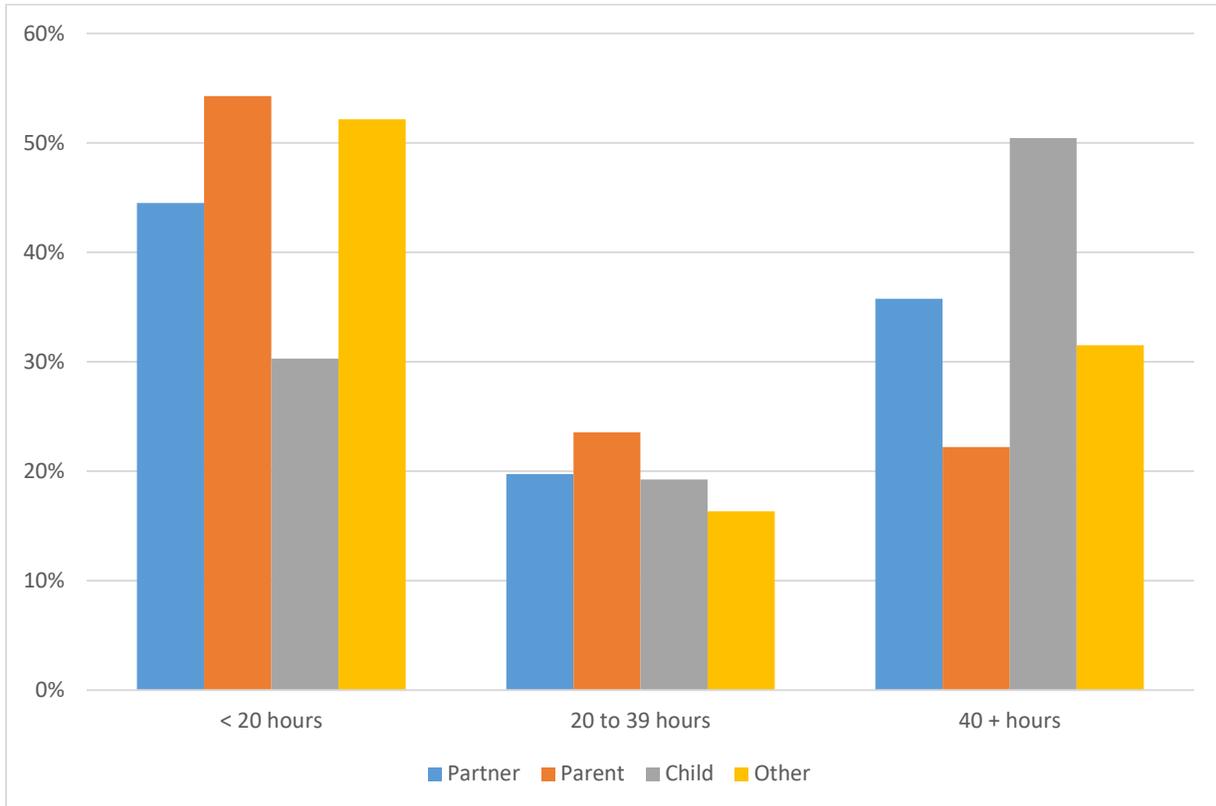
Primary carers are almost evenly divided across those who provide less than 20 hours a week of care and those who provide more than 20 hours a week care. More than a third are providing more than 40 hours a week of care.

Average weekly hours spent caring – primary carers



On average, more time is spent caring for a child with care needs than for parent or partner with care needs and carers are least likely to spend 40 hours a more a week on their parents' needs.¹

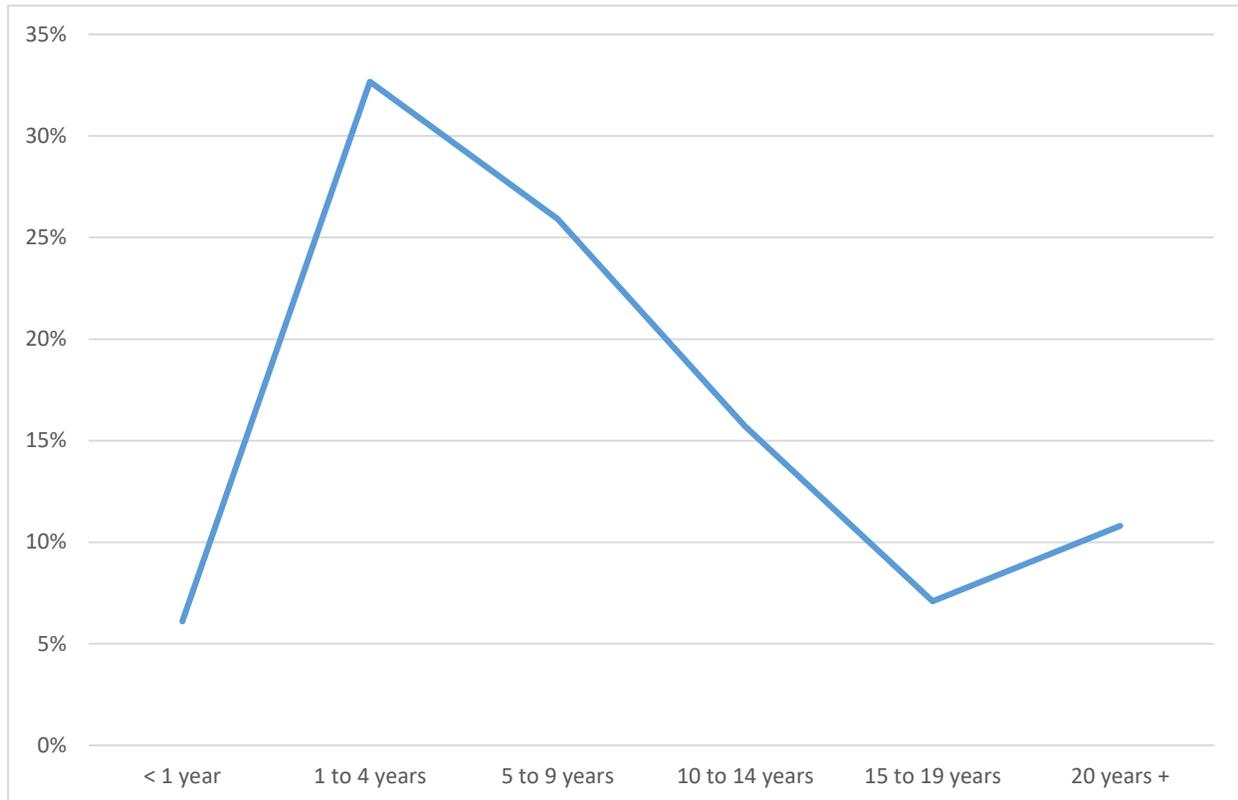
Number of hours of care by relationship to person with care needs



¹ Please note not all SDAC carers were included in this response.

When the SDAC was undertaken in 2015, more than half the primary carers had been in their role for between one and nine years. The graph below shows a peak during the 1 to 4 year period, followed by a decline as the years progressed, with a slight upward turn after 20 years of caring.

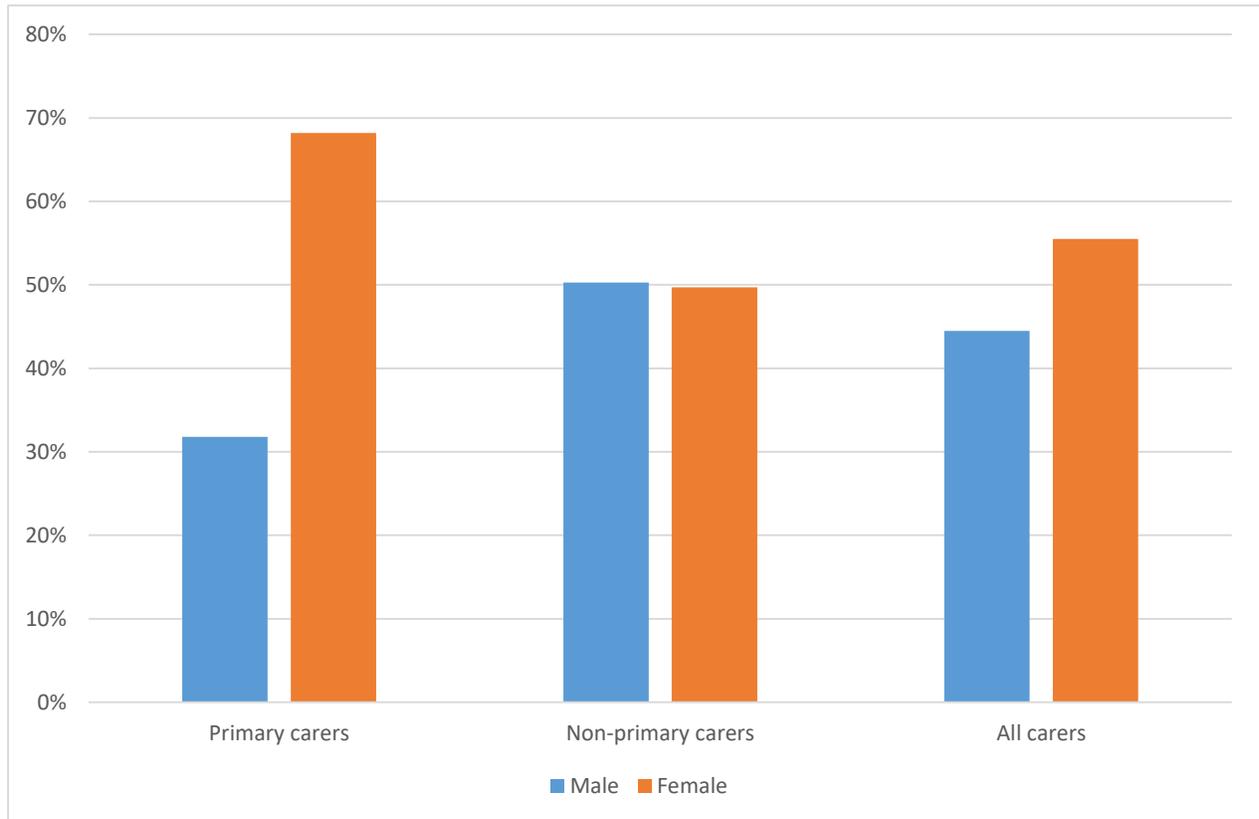
Time spent in carer role



How many men and women are carers?

The SDAC identified that a significantly higher proportion of women (68.2 per cent) provide primary care than men (31.8 per cent), while non-primary care is evenly divided between men and women.

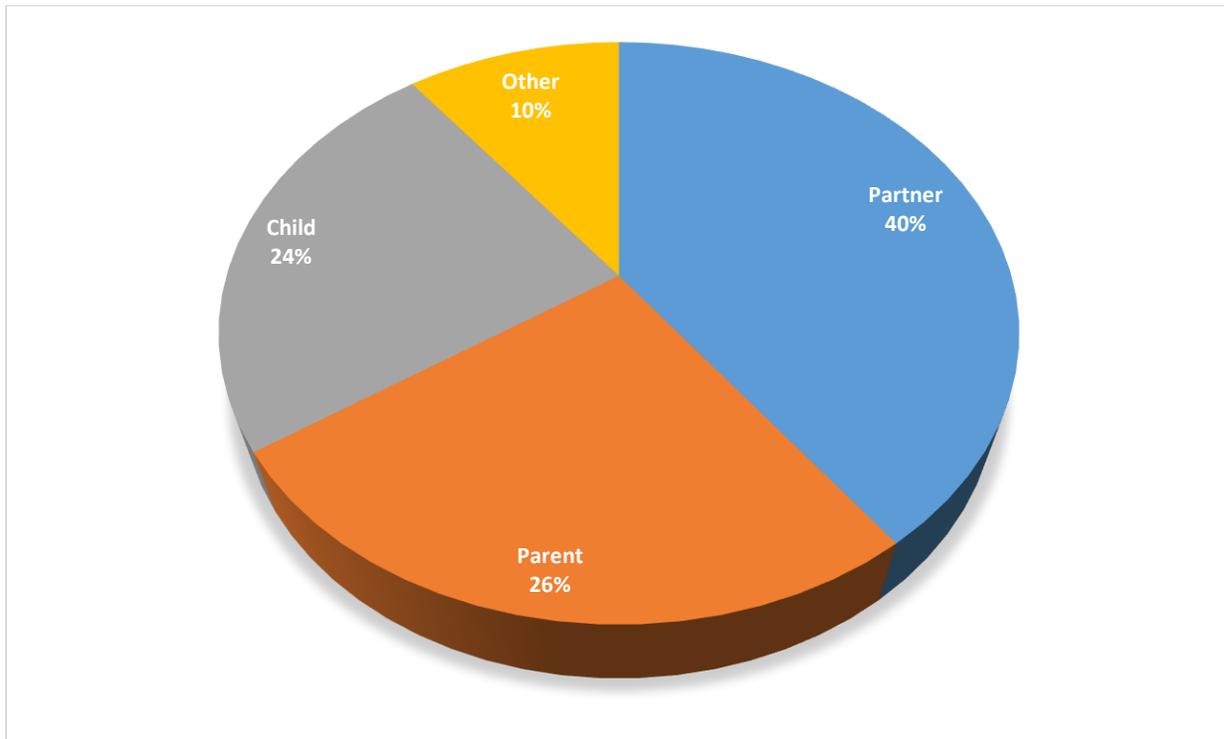
Division of caring roles by sex



Relationships between carers and people with care needs

While many people care for more than one person with care needs, the 2015 SDAC established that partners are most commonly the main person with care need, followed by a child or parent of the carer. Together, partners, parents and children make up 90 per cent of the people with care needs.

Relationship of primary carers to main person with care needs



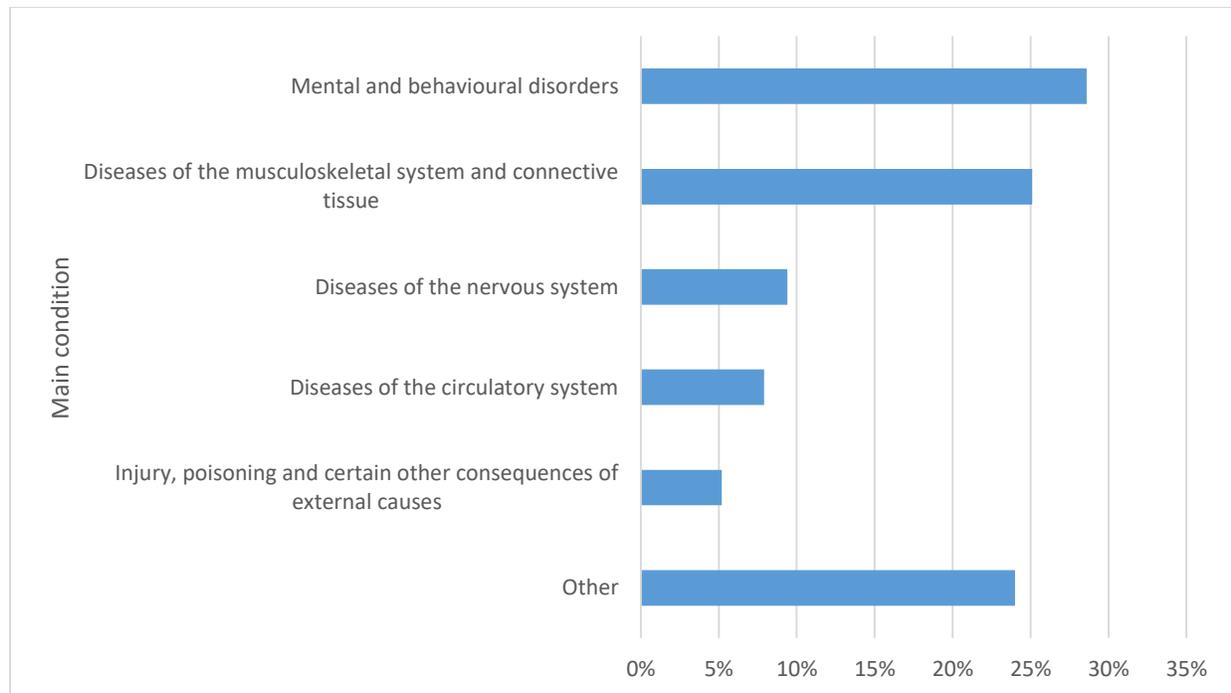
Conditions of people with care needs

More than half (53.7 per cent) of people with care needs have either mental and behavioural disorders, (mostly comprising autism and related disorders, dementia, intellectual disabilities, depression and anxiety) or diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue as their main condition. The next most prevalent main conditions of people with care needs are:

- diseases of the nervous system
- diseases of the circulatory system
- injuries, poisoning and other external causes.

Together, these five make up more than 75 per cent of the main conditions suffered by people with care needs.

Main condition of people with care needs



How do carers manage financially?

Combining paid work and care

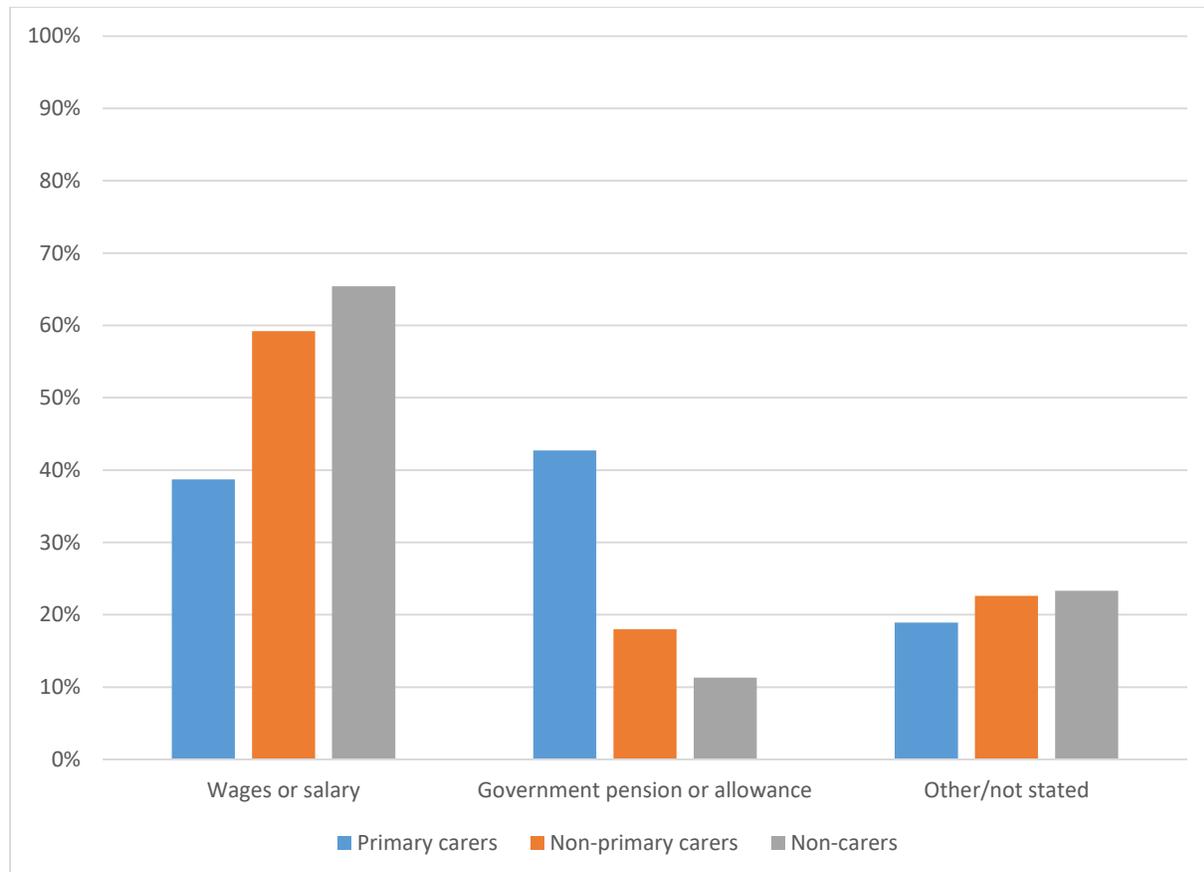
Caring has an impact on participation on paid work, with just over half of primary carers of working age (15 to 64 years old) combining caring with employment, compared to the more than two-thirds of non-carers in paid employment. Working aged primary carers are less likely to be in the labour force, with 43.7 per cent of primary carers not working and not looking for work, compared to only 19.7 per cent of non-carers.

The difference is more pronounced when comparing the main income sources of primary carers with non-primary carers and non-carers. This is indicated both by lower median gross weekly income of carers, especially pronounced for primary carers, and the higher proportion of primary carers whose main source of income is from government pensions and allowances.

The median income of primary carers is \$520 per week, compared to \$813 per week for non-primary carers and \$900 per week for non-carers.

A greater reliance on government payments also suggests employed primary carers work fewer hours and/or undertake lower paid work. That is, while 52.2 per cent of working aged primary carers undertake paid work, only 38.7 per cent rely on employment as their main source of income, with a further 42.7 per cent primarily relying on government payments. This compares to 65.4 per cent of non-carers whose main source of income is from paid employment, with only 11.3 per cent mainly relying on government income support.

Sources of income for carers and non-carers



Government payments

Carers' entitlements to government payments, delivered through the Department of Human Services (Centrelink), can vary based on their income and assets, the amount of care they provide (which must be full time) and how many people with care needs they assist.

The Department of Social Services' Budget Statements indicate that direct government payments to carers totalled approximately \$8.5 billion in 2017-18. The main payments made to carers are:

- **Carer Payment** is the main income support payment, means tested and paid at the pension rate
- **Carer Allowance** is paid in respect of each person with care needs to assist with the costs of providing care (the household income test of \$250,000 was introduced on 20 September 2018)
- **Carer Supplement** is a lump sum paid to people receiving Carer Allowance, with an additional payment for people who also receive Carer Payment.

More information about government payments is available from the [Department of Human Services](#) website.

The value of care

Carers Australia commissioned Deloitte Economics to determine the economic value of the unpaid work of carers. The report used the 2015 SDAC to estimate that 1.9 billion hours of unpaid care is provided each year, valued at \$60.3 billion per year, based on the replacement cost of the care.