



## FAST FACTS

### Questions and Answers about Young Carers and Work-Family Role Strains

#### What is a young-carer?

- **Fact 1:** “Young family members may be required to take on a range and depth of care-related responsibilities well before they might otherwise be expected or prepared to on a regular basis. These young people are young carers” (Charles, et al 2012).
- **Fact 2:** “Care provided informally by young people” (Purcal 2012:46).
- **Fact 3:** “Their motivations for becoming caregivers also appears to be...out of a sense of duty, or because there was no one else to do the work” (Charles, et al 2011:12).

#### What do young-carers do?

- **Fact 1:** The types of responsibilities that young carers take vary depending on the needs of the family. Some common tasks are: “personal care, sibling care, domestic chore, emotional care, household management, and financial/practical” (Joseph, et al. 2009:35).

#### How common are young-carers?

- **Fact 1:** A survey of high school students in Vancouver, Canada found that 12% of youth are in a caregiving role. “Assuming an average classroom size of 30 students, this translates into at least three young people per class providing substantial care, assistance or support to another family member” (Charles, et al 2012).
- **Fact 2:** “Similar to Australian and United Kingdom data, young girls in Canada provide most unpaid caregiving and, in line with the Australian data, there is a growing feminization of this care as these youth age” (Chadi, et al 2017:189).

### What are the economic costs of being a young-carer?

- **Fact 1:** “Caring can lead to poverty if you have to give up work to care or are managing on benefits. The aids and equipment needed to help care can add an extra drain on tight finances” (Carers Trust, 2015).
- **Fact 2:** “Carers in poverty will not be able to afford do the things that many of us take for granted, such as buying new or warm clothes, heating the house, house repairs, going on holiday or a short break, running a car or paying a bus fare” (Carers Trust, 2015).

### What are the social experiences of young-carers?

- **Fact 1:** “82% of young-carers miss out on seeing friends - 60% miss attending events and other activities and 45% struggle to get their homework done on time” (Carers Trust 2016).
- **Fact 2:** “Many young carers report that they have a heightened sensitivity to the needs of others and a corresponding increased level of altruism and compassion” (Charles, et al 2012).
- **Fact 3:** “Young carers carry a heavy load in relation to stigma, personal disruption and loss, because of the demands placed upon them” (Sprung, et al 2017:22).

### How is physical health affected by being a young-carer?

- **Fact 1:** “Children who were carers had poorer health and well-being, reported less happiness with their lives, were more likely to be bullied at school and had poorer educational aspirations and outcomes than their peers who were not carers” (Lloyd, 2012:14).
- **Fact 2:** “Physicians should be aware that young carers may show symptoms of exhaustion, confusion, anger and depression, and that their development and health may become compromised, creating an additional burden on the health and social services” (Chadi, et al 2017:189).

### How is emotional development affected by being a young-carer?

- **Fact 1:** “The stress of incorrect care giving was identified as a key concern for young carers in evaluation of providing registered nursing-like tasks and worries about these responsibilities have been found in the context of frequent and general caring tasks” (Sprung, et al 2017:22).
- **Fact 2:** Studies show young carers develop a positive sense of self, feel appreciated for their caregiving, and have positive feelings towards their ill loved one (Aldridge, et al 1993:69, Beach 1997:37, Hunt, et al 2005, Kavanaugh, 2014:43).

## What resources are in place for young-carers?

- **Fact 1:** “In the UK, young carers have legal rights as “Carers” under the Care Act, which affords them access to more than 350 dedicated young carer programs and “direct payments” in lieu of services” (Chadi, et al 2017:189).
- **Fact 2:** “In England, the Children and Families Act (2014) recognizes that young people who care for persons with cognitive impairments, mental illness or substance abuse disorder may also be at risk for violent assault and sexually inappropriate behavior, and accounts for such concerns by mandating a formal “needs assessment” for each formally recognized young carer and their particular caregiving situation” (Chadi, et al 2017:189).
- **Fact 3:** “Despite an estimate of over 1.4 million children and adolescents providing to a family member in the U.S. (Hunt, et al 2005), few studies, and even fewer programs, services or supports for children and teens that provide care to an ill parent exist, including none specifically targeted to HD (Huntington’s Disease) young carers in the U.S of these young carers” (Kavanaugh, 2014:43).

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## **About the Author**

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