

Carers in Dumfries and Galloway – what we know

A Carer is “A person of any age who provides unpaid help and support to a relative, friend or neighbour who cannot manage to live independently without the Carer’s help due to frailty, illness, disability or addiction”. (Scottish Government 2016).

They may provide care and/or support that complements formal support arranged by the Partnership or other organisations, or they could be the only source of support for the cared for person.

Carers are the largest group of care providers in Scotland, providing more care than the NHS and Councils combined, avoiding costs of £15.9bn nationally, per annum ([Valuing Carers: 2022, Scotland](#)).

Carers are a vital part of the health and social care system in Dumfries and Galloway and beyond with over half of all required care (approximately 490,000 hours per week) being provided by unpaid Carers. Avoiding costs of more than £653m annually based on the average hourly cost of care at home provision for 2023/24 ([Local Government Benchmarking](#)).

Carers have specific rights, laid out in the [Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#). We capitalise the word Carer when talking about people who provide unpaid care and support to a family member, neighbour or friend. This distinguishes them from paid care workers.

1. Strategic context

The [Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) consolidates Carers rights. The aim of the Act is that Carers should be better supported on a consistent basis to continue in their caring role (if they wish) in good health and well-being and have a life alongside of caring. This Carers Act was implemented from the 1 April 2018.

The Act provides rights in a number of areas:

- A duty for local authorities to provide support to Carers, based on a Carer’s identified needs if they meet the local eligibility criteria.
- A right to an Adult Carer Support plan or young Carer statement to identify Carers’ needs and personal outcomes. (This is available to Carers of all ages, no matter how many hours of care they provide and whether or not the person they care for receives care services.)
- A requirement for local authorities to have an information and advice service for Carers providing advice on, for example: emergency and future care planning, advocacy, maximising income and rights.
- A duty on the NHS to inform and involve Carers if the person they care for is being discharged from hospital.

The [Carers’ charter](#) was published in 2018 and sets out the rights of Carers under the Act. These are:

1. Adult Carers have a right to an ‘Adult Carer Support Plan’.
2. Young Carers have a right to a ‘Young Carer Statement’.
3. Carers have a right to support to meet any ‘eligible needs’.
4. Carers have a right to be involved in services.
5. Carers have a right to be involved in the hospital discharge process of the person they are or are going to be caring for.

The [Care Reform \(Scotland\) Bill 2025](#) includes a new right to breaks for Carers, as of 15 July 2025 the Bill is progressing through Parliament with stage 2 proceedings scheduled to take place soon.

In the [National Carers Strategy 2022](#), the Scottish Government set out plans to review the Carers' Charter to reflect Carers' right to information and advice, new rights for Carers of people with terminal illness and subject to Scottish Parliament approval, the right to breaks from caring.

The National Carers Strategy states, 'Unpaid care is vital to how social care is provided in Scotland, and the value of the dedication and expertise of Carers cannot be overstated'

The Equality Act (2010) places a general equality duty on Scottish public authorities to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, as well as to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is a process used to ensure that policies, practices, and decisions are fair and do not discriminate against any protected groups and are used to ensure that the above duty is met.

In Dumfries and Galloway Health and Social Care Partnership (DGHSCP), Carers are included within our local equality impact assessment. This means that we consider the impact of any change on Carers as a protected characteristic group.

Dumfries and Galloway Integrated Joint Board (IJB) approved their [Carers Strategy 2025-2028](#), 'More of the same won't do', on 17 December 2024 and a [Carers Delivery Plan 2025-2028](#) on 4 March 2025.

2. Community context

All Carers are eligible to access a basic level of support that includes information, advice and community activities. Support can be provided by a wide range of sources including friends, family, communities (of interest and geographical), independent, statutory or third sector organisations, GPs and Education Services among others.

Each Carer's circumstances, needs and wants are unique and are likely to change over time. This could be because of changes to the cared for person's needs or their own. It is important that any support is flexible and responsive to those changes. This is not only important for the wellbeing of the Carer, but is directly linked to the sustainability of the health and social care system.

3. Employment / Poverty / SIMD

Carers do not get paid for the care they give, instead their household income comes from various sources such as wages and salaries, universal credit, pensions and other benefits. People providing more than 35 hours of unpaid care per week, tend to rely more on benefits, state pension and universal credit, than those who provide less than 35 hours. The government offers monetary support to people who meet the eligibility criteria, through the Carer Support Payment and other financial support.

Carers Scotland's annual State of Caring survey has been running for over a decade. The January 2024 report was completed by almost 2,000 Carers in Scotland. A quarter of the Carers who responded are retired and, of the remaining Carers of working age, just over half were in employment. Almost 30% were not working because of their caring role, 10% were unable to work because of sickness and disability.

Almost half of Carers stated that they were caring for a parent/parent-in-law and a quarter were caring for a spouse or partner. 37% were caring for a son/daughter/in-law and 16% were caring for another relative.

The balancing act of juggling paid work and caring responsibilities leaves many Carers unable to sustain full-time employment. Carers are less likely to work full-time and are more likely to be in part-time work than non-Carers.

The Carer's Leave Act 2023 and the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 offers Carers the right to take up to five unpaid days of Carer's leave from work alongside a new right to request flexible working from the first day of working with an employer. Such flexibility and support from employers are critical to helping balance work and care. Being in paid employment brings positive benefits for Carers, with nearly two thirds of working Carers reporting that employment improved their health and wellbeing and nearly half said that employment gave them a break from caring.

Balancing work and caring can have significant impacts on Carers' financial security. For those currently working, despite being in paid employment, many still face real financial difficulties. A quarter of working Carers reported struggling to make ends meet, with 1 in 10 saying they cannot afford utility bills. 16% of full-time working Carers and 21% of part-time workers said they were struggling to afford the cost of food and a third were cutting back on essentials like food and heating.

The long-term financial impacts of caring caused by giving up work, reducing hours and taking on less well-paid opportunities means sacrificing financial security. Over a third of the working Carers said they may need to retire later than planned because of the impact of their caring role.

The poverty rate for Carers remains higher than for those without a caring role – 29% compared with 20%. The rate is higher still for those of working age and those in receipt of certain benefits.

Technology can help support Carers to care – remote monitoring (motion sensors and fall detectors), vital signs monitoring (blood pressure, blood glucose, heart rate) and apps that help pain or mood management. Online support groups and activities for Carers may also be helpful.

4. Evidence

4.1 Number of Carers in Dumfries and Galloway

The Scottish Census 2022 captured information on the number of Carers within Dumfries and Galloway who provide any level of care. The information captured about Carers in the 2022 Census applied to all people aged 3 and over. This changed from the 2011 Census where Carer information was captured for all people. Information provided here on the proportions of the population in Dumfries and Galloway who are Carers is for people of all ages for 2011 and 2022 to understand how this has changed over time.

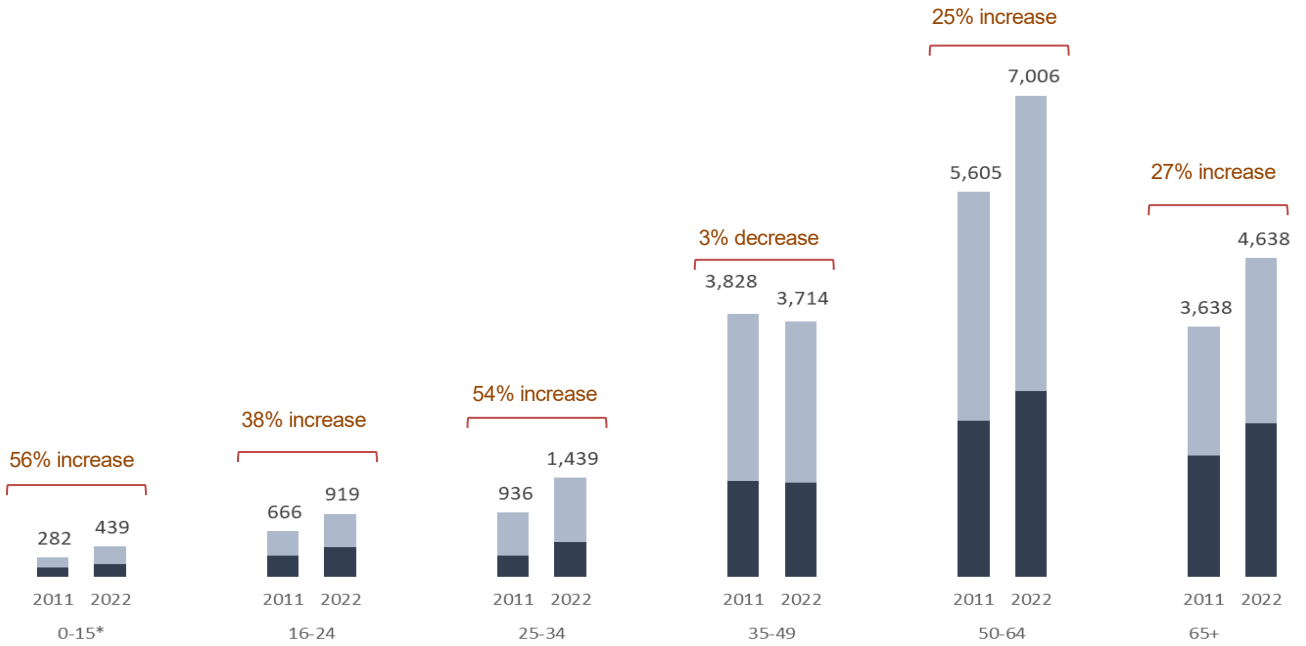
Overall Carer numbers in Dumfries and Galloway have increased by 22% since 2011. The following tiles and chart demonstrates how the number of Carers increased and decreased across different age groups and gender:

In 2011
1 in 10 people
provided some level of
unpaid care

In 2022
1 in 8 people
provided some level of
unpaid care

Dumfries and Galloway Carer numbers by age group and gender

■ Male ■ Female



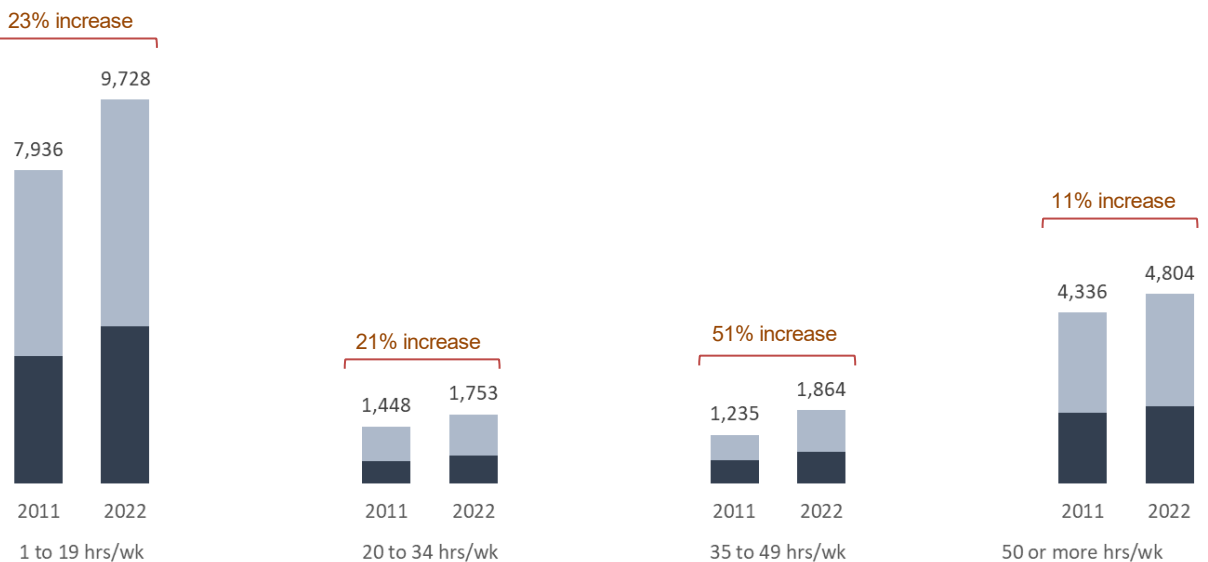
* 2022 3-15 age group

4.2 Levels of unpaid care

The level of unpaid care provided by Carers has increased overall by 21% since the 2011 Census with the largest increase in 35 to 49 hours per week (hours provided by female Carers up 66% and male Carers up 34%) as demonstrated in the chart below:

Dumfries and Galloway Carers by level of unpaid care

■ Male ■ Female



In 2022 approximately 490,000 hrs/wk of care were provided by unpaid Carers in Dumfries and Galloway

4.3 What people told us about the impact of being a Carer

“It’s the most challenging, isolating thing I’ve ever done and there’s no relief, no end in sight, just excuses as to why there’s no support (because I live in a rural situation).”

“... I have never felt so isolated and alone in my life even though I am surrounded by people.”

In the Health and Care Experience (HACE) Survey 2024, people in Dumfries and Galloway told us that caring can have a negative impact on aspects of their lives including their:

- Ability to do the things they want to do in life
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Lack of support to continue caring
- Feeling unsupported

How does this compare across Scotland?

The Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) is available to compare against similar areas across Scotland and against results nationally. Dumfries and Galloway are in a Family Group (FG) with seven similar areas which are represented in the following tiles with where we are in the FG rank (out of 8) and FG average. For this needs assessment the LGBF family group has been applied to the HACE survey questions, detailed above, to understand if there is any similarity or if the results are different.

Key: **Scotland:** average of all local authority areas **FG Rank:** 1 to 8 (1 = best) **FG average:** average of 8 local authority areas in family group

64% said they have a good balance between caring and other things in their lives.

Scotland: 62% FG Rank: 2 FG average: 61%

38% responded positively to ‘Caring has not had a negative impact on my health and wellbeing’.

Scotland: 35% FG Rank: 1 FG average: 34%

44% of people feel they have a say in services provided for the person(s) they look after.

Scotland: 42% FG Rank: 2 FG average: 41%

Around a third (33%) of people felt that local services are well coordinated for the person(s) they look after.

Scotland: 31% FG Rank: 2 FG average: 30%

Less than a third (29%) of people feel supported to continue caring.

Scotland: 31% FG Rank: 5 FG average: 29%

18% of people feel they need more support to help them in their caring role.

Scotland: 18% FG Rank: 4 FG average: 19%

88% of people have not received an assessment of their needs as a Carer or a written plan about their caring role or support.

Scotland: 89% FG Rank: 7 FG average: 89%

7% responded to say that they received support from services to help them have breaks.

Scotland: 7% FG Rank: 2 FG average: 7%

What is important to Carers

Engagement carried out within Dumfries and Galloway with Carers told us that it is important to:

- Identify Carers early, acknowledge their lived experience and involve them in the way we plan and deliver care and support.
- Ensure that people recognise and value Carers, their caring role and understand Carers Rights.
- Include proposals to make more opportunities for respite available.
- Include actions to make these resources more accessible.

What support is available to unpaid Carers

Information on services for Carers is available in various places. The 'Looking After Someone?' leaflet pulls this together in one place with links to each of the services. This can be accessed using the QR code below or using this [link](#).



5. Analysis

What does all this information tell us about Carers in Dumfries and Galloway?

5.1 Carer numbers

The number of Carers continue to increase across our region. As at the Census in 2022, 1 in 8 people were providing some level of unpaid care which is a 22% increase compared to 2011.

The gender split of Carers across the region remains the same as it was in 2011 with 41% male and 59% female Carers.

Numbers of unpaid Carers have increased across all age groups however in the 0-15 and 25-34 age groups we have seen an increase of more than 50%. This means that the number of children and younger adults are supporting a cared for person while going through our education system and early into their working lives has doubled since 2011.

Female Carers aged between 0-15 years have gone up by the biggest proportion, from 141 in 2011 to 250 in 2022, a 77% increase. In the 25-34 age group, male Carers went from 312 in 2011 to 509 in 2022, a 63% increase, with females increasing by 49% from 624 in 2011 to 930 in 2022.

5.2 Level of unpaid care

The level of unpaid care provided has increased similarly in line with Carer numbers with the number of people providing support in all hour bands going up by 21%.

We have calculated that approximately 490,000 hours per week of unpaid care was provided across our region. This is based on the mid-point in each of the hour bands to give us an indication of the

scale of unpaid care provided. This level of care delivered by unpaid Carers across Dumfries and Galloway avoids costs of more than £653m annually based on the average hourly cost of care at home provision for 2023/24.

The number of unpaid Carers providing 35+ hours per week of care has increased from 5,571 in 2011 to 6,668 in 2022.

While each of the hour bands increased, there has been a 51% increase in the 35 to 49 hour per week band going from 1,235 Carers in 2011 to 1,864 in 2022. Predominately coming from an increase of female Carers from 643 in 2011 to 1,069 in 2022 (66% increase).

More Carers are stepping up to provide support and on average they are doing more hours and the biggest contributors are women.

5.3 How Carers feel

Carers across Dumfries and Galloway have told us, through the HACE survey, that 64% have a good balance between caring and other things in their lives. However, only 38% responded positively when they were asked if 'caring had not had a negative impact on their health and wellbeing'. Suggesting that caring does have a negative impact on their health and wellbeing. Only 29% of Carers, responding to the survey, felt supported to continue their caring role with 18% stating they had received support in the last 12 months. People responding to the survey stated that there is a lack of assessing unpaid Carers needs across the region with almost 90% responding that they had not received an assessment.

33% of responders feel that services within Dumfries and Galloway are well coordinated for the person they look after with 44% stating that they have a say in those services.

These responses to the HACE survey for Dumfries and Galloway are like the position for Scotland as a whole. Within the family group of similar local authority areas Carers within our region responded more positively.

The experience of Dumfries and Galloway Carers compares well to the rest of Scotland. Although, less than 50% of responses were positive across the country which suggests that improvement is required.

6. What is important to consider when planning service change

1. **Impact** – What impact could the service change have on Carers and their caring role?
 - Do you know how to identify Carers that your service change could impact?
 - Have you carried out an equality impact assessment?
 - Did you involve Carers when carrying out an equality impact assessment?
2. **Involvement** – Have you involved Carers within the design of your service?
 - Have you considered how you are going to capture the views of Carers?
 - Have you ensured that Carers have the support they need to enable them to provide their input at all stages?
3. **Coordination** – How will the design of the service ensure that appropriate links to all other services for Carers are in place?
 - Have you identified the appropriate links to other services?

- Have you ensured that consent to share relevant information on Carers and their caring role is in place?
- Have you planned for the transfer of relevant information on Carers and their caring role to services linked to your new or redesigned service?
- Have you planned for relevant actions to take place within appropriate linked services to support Carers in their caring role?

7. What will the future look like?

The changes seen between the 2011 and 2022 Census can give us an indication of Carer numbers and what level of support could look like across Dumfries and Galloway. In this section the percentage increases and decreases from 2011 to 2022 were used to estimate what Carers could look like in 2032 if this pattern continues. The tiles and graphs here are bordered in orange and shaded blue to identify them as estimates.

7.1 Carer Numbers

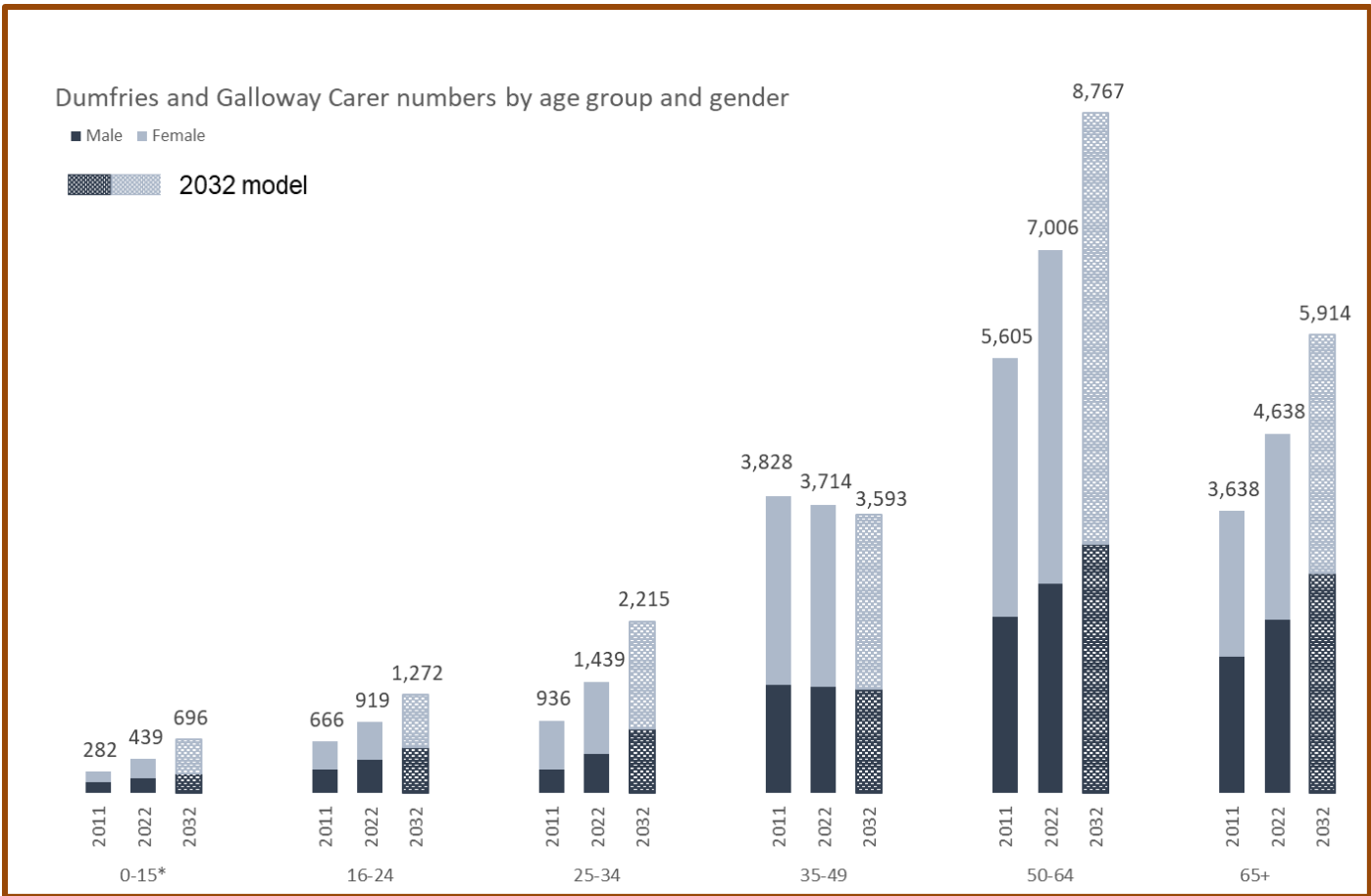
Carer numbers are estimated to increase by more than 4,000 by 2032 with numbers in the 25-34 age group seeing the largest rise.

In 2032, we estimate that
1 in 6
People overall will provide some level of unpaid care

Based on estimated decreasing population sizes and estimated changes in Carer numbers we are likely to see a significant change in Carer ratios, by age group and gender, by 2032:

Age group	Estimated change in population	Ratio of Male Carers	Ratio of Female Carers	Ratio of all Carers
0-15	Reduce	1 in 39	1 in 22	1 in 28
16-24	Reduce	1 in 8	1 in 7	1 in 7
25-34	Increase	1 in 9	1 in 6	1 in 10
35-49	Reduce	1 in 6	1 in 4	1 in 5
50-64	Increase	1 in 5	1 in 4	1 in 4
65+	Increase	1 in 8	1 in 6	1 in 8

The following chart shows how Carer numbers have changed since the 2011 Census, by age groups and gender, with 2032 estimates provided in the shaded columns.



7.2 Level of unpaid care required

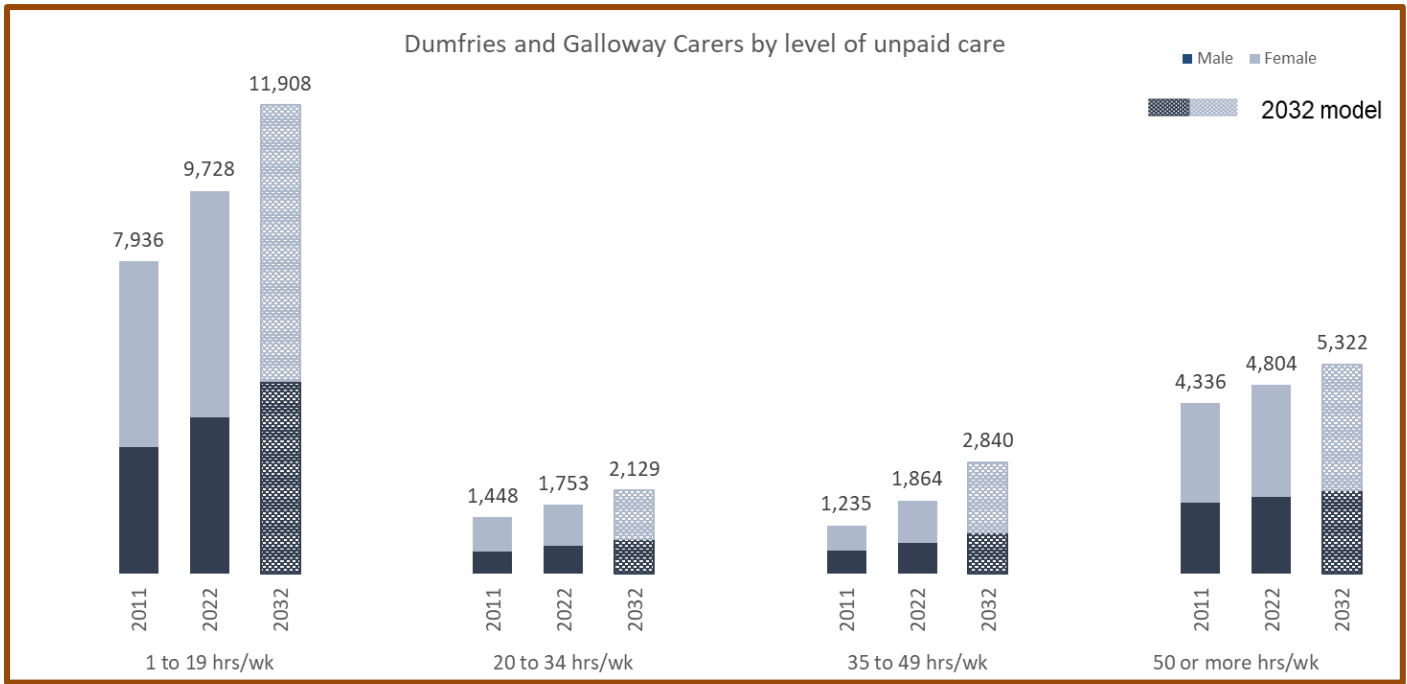
The levels of unpaid care and support required is going up and the hours per week is estimated to increase by 100,000 by 2032.

In 2032, we estimate that

Almost 590,000 hrs/wk

of care and support will be provided by Carers

The following chart shows how the level of unpaid care provided has changed since the 2011 Census, by groups of hrs/wk and gender, with 2032 estimates provided in the shaded columns.



7.3 Impact of being a Carer

This piece of work has looked at what Carers have told us about how providing care has an impact on them. The HACE survey results, detailed in section 4.3, gives an indication of how Carers feel (based on the number of people responding to the survey who identified as a Carer).

We are estimating that in 2032 there could be almost 22,500 Carers in Dumfries and Galloway. By using the percentage of positive, neutral and negative responses to the HACE survey this can give us an estimate of the number of people who may respond in the same way to the HACE survey in the future, if nothing changes:

Health and Care Experience questions – what these results could look like in 2032 if all estimated Carers respond.	Potential positive responses	Potential neutral responses	Potential negative responses
	Number of potential responses (percentage of HACE responses)	Number of potential responses (percentage of HACE responses)	Number of potential responses (percentage of HACE responses)
I have a good balance between caring and other things in my life.	14,372 (64%)	4,491 (20%)	3,593 (16%)
Caring has not had a negative impact on my health and wellbeing.	8,534 (38%)	6,063 (27%)	7,860 (35%)
I have a say in services provided for the person(s) I look after.	9,881 (44%)	8,309 (37%)	4,267 (19%)
Local services are well coordinated for the person(s) I look after.	7,411 (33%)	9,207 (41%)	5,839 (26%)
I feel supported to continue caring.	6,513 (29%)	11,229 (50%)	4,716 (21%)
Received some/no support or help in the last 12 months	4,042 (18%)	N/A	N/A
Received services/support to help have breaks in the last 12 months	1,572 (7%)	N/A	N/A
Not received assessment of your needs as a carer, or a written plan	19,762 (88%)	N/A	N/A

‘Unpaid care is vital to how social care is provided in Scotland, and the value of the dedication and expertise of Carers cannot be overstated’ (Scottish Government, 2022)

‘More of the same won’t do’

Data Sources:

Valuing Carers: 2022, Scotland

2011 Census [[Search | Scotland's Census - Search by location](#)]

2022 Census [[Search | Scotland's Census - Search by location](#)]

Health and Care Experience Survey 2023/24 [[Health and Care Experience Survey - gov.scot](#)]

Local Government Benchmarking Framework [[Local Government Benchmarking Framework Outcomes Tool | Benchmarking](#)]

Carers Scotland - State of Caring Survey 2024 [[state-of-caring-health-and-social-care-2024.pdf](#) / [State of Caring in Scotland 2024 Paid work and access to employment for unpaid Carers | Carers UK](#)]

Locality	Age group (Years)	Number of Carers	% of population	1 to 19 Hrs	% of Carers	20 to 34 Hrs	% of Carers	35 to 49 Hrs	% of Carers	50+ Hrs	% of Carers	Population
Annandale & Eskdale	3 to 15	103	2%	80	78%	9	9%	10	10%	10	10%	4,802
	16 to 24	203	7%	145	71%	18	9%	30	15%	23	11%	3,030
	25 to 34	348	10%	153	44%	33	9%	39	11%	121	35%	3,487
	35 to 49	959	17%	501	52%	94	10%	107	11%	255	27%	5,648
	50 to 64	1,701	19%	1,070	63%	154	9%	146	9%	331	19%	9,086
	65+	1,234	12%	502	41%	126	10%	114	9%	495	40%	10,383
	All Ages	4,572	12%	2,458	54%	434	9%	445	10%	1,236	27%	37,328
Nithsdale	3 to 15	197	3%	141	72%	20	10%	35	18%	10	5%	7,790
	16 to 24	393	8%	215	55%	68	17%	58	15%	53	13%	4,877
	25 to 34	653	10%	329	50%	53	8%	93	14%	181	28%	6,566
	35 to 49	1,551	16%	789	51%	150	10%	220	14%	395	25%	9,552
	50 to 64	2,761	20%	1,682	61%	242	9%	248	9%	578	21%	13,909
	65+	1,595	11%	705	44%	144	9%	125	8%	625	39%	13,950
	All Ages	7,162	12%	3,888	54%	684	10%	755	11%	1,830	26%	58,089
Stewartry	3 to 15	52	2%	42	81%	4	8%	3	6%	1	2%	2,763
	16 to 24	139	8%	79	57%	33	24%	18	13%	9	6%	1,656
	25 to 34	153	8%	66	43%	17	11%	26	17%	41	27%	1,883
	35 to 49	545	16%	317	58%	48	9%	58	11%	117	21%	3,420
	50 to 64	1,117	19%	708	63%	97	9%	86	8%	220	20%	5,741
	65+	862	12%	420	49%	68	8%	55	6%	316	37%	7,354
	All Ages	2,860	12%	1,643	57%	272	10%	245	9%	704	25%	23,256
Wigtownshire	3 to 15	77	2%	65	84%	10	13%	1	1%	8	10%	3,423
	16 to 24	167	8%	95	57%	23	14%	33	20%	30	18%	2,157
	25 to 34	273	11%	112	41%	25	9%	51	19%	89	33%	2,507
	35 to 49	665	17%	344	52%	56	8%	90	14%	166	25%	3,885
	50 to 64	1,420	21%	764	54%	154	11%	163	11%	335	24%	6,728
	65+	959	12%	368	38%	102	11%	85	9%	402	42%	7,909
	All Ages	3,556	13%	1,746	49%	373	10%	412	12%	1,026	29%	27,220
Dumfries and Galloway	3 to 15	429	2%	328	76%	43	10%	49	11%	29	7%	18,778
	16 to 24	902	8%	534	59%	142	16%	139	15%	115	13%	11,720
	25 to 34	1,427	10%	660	46%	128	9%	209	15%	432	30%	14,443
	35 to 49	3,720	17%	1,951	52%	348	9%	475	13%	933	25%	22,505
	50 to 64	6,999	20%	4,224	60%	647	9%	643	9%	1,464	21%	35,464
	65+	4,650	12%	1,995	43%	440	9%	379	8%	1,838	40%	39,596
	All Ages	18,150	12%	9,735	54%	1,763	10%	1,857	10%	4,796	26%	145,893