

Longitudinal trajectories of stress and positive aspects of dementia caregiving: Findings from the IDEAL programme

Do people's feelings about caring change over time?

Carers are family members, friends, or other supporters who provide help and support to people with dementia. Carers will have different experiences of caring. Caring can be stressful, but some carers also identify positive experiences in providing care. We wanted to explore whether and how these feelings change over time. We also wanted to identify any patterns in these changes.

We asked carers participating in the IDEAL study about their feelings of stress and positive experiences in providing care. We asked them about this at the start of the study and then 1 and 2 years later. We looked to see if there were any differences in their answers over time.

We found that carer stress increased over time. We found differences in how stress levels changed over time:

- One group of carers had very high stress scores that remained the same over time.
- Another group of carers had medium levels of stress that slightly increased over time.
- A small group of carers started with low stress which increased sharply over time.
- Another group of carers started with low levels of stress which slightly increased over time.

Carers' reports of positive experiences did not change much over time. We did find a small group of carers who reported more positive experiences over time. We also found a small group who reported fewer positive experiences over time.

These findings show that carers can have different experiences. Carers' needs may change over time. People working with carers should check to see whether their support needs have changed.

This is a summary of a [research article](#) which appeared in **The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences** in May 2024.