

THE HEALTH OF OLDER CAREGIVERS



Findings from the New Zealand Health, Work, & Retirement Longitudinal Study



Andy Towers, Fiona Alpass, Christine Stephens, & Jack Noone
Massey University, New Zealand

Presentation for the 41st Australian Association of Gerontology National Conference
Thursday 20th November 2008

HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huaru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Care Giving

- Care-giving role
 - Time spent providing care increases with age
 - Physical stressors
 - Psychological symptoms
 - Experience resentment, isolation, entrapment, embarrassment, lack of control
- Caregivers health
 - Poor physical health
 - Poor mental health
 - Elderly carers have greater health burden and higher mortality than younger counterparts

HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huaru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Key Questions

- Age-related differences
 - Are there any differences in the health of carers and non-carers across age-groups?
- Gender-related differences
 - Do female carers have better or poorer health than male carers?
 - Do male and female health trends follow the same path?
- Location-related differences
 - Differences between "within-home" and "outside the home" carers?

HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huaru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Study Overview

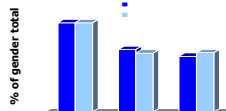
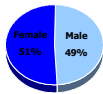
- The Health, Work, & Retirement Longitudinal Study
 - 'Investigate the key factors determining the maintenance of health, wealth, and wellbeing in the transition from work to retirement'
 - Research collaboration between:
 - Massey University
 - New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing
 - Health Research Council of New Zealand
 - Funding:
 - Over NZ\$1 million
 - 3 years (2006-2008)

HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huaru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

2006: Carers in Study

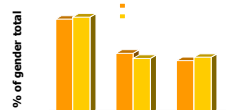
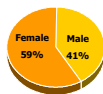
- Carers – Within home

■ N = 779



- Carers – Outside home

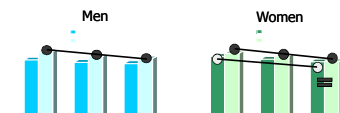
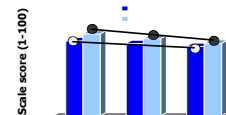
■ N = 1646



HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huaru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Carers – Within Home

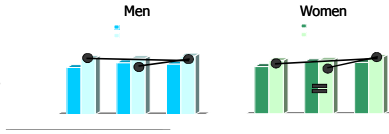
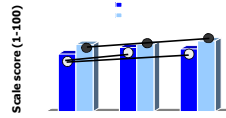
- Physical health
 - Carers worse across age-groups
 - Age-related decreases for both carers and non-carers
- Physical health by gender
 - Males worse across ages
 - Females show age-related change



HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huaru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Carers – Within Home

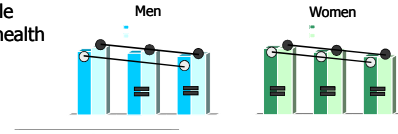
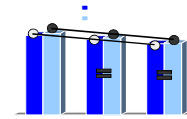
- Mental health
- Carers worse across age groups
- No increase for carers above 60 years of age.
- Mental health by gender
- Males worse across ages
- Neither show age-related increase for carers



HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Carers – Outside Home

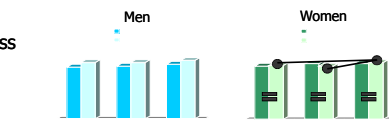
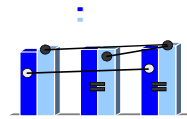
- Physical health
- Disparity for younger carers only
- Same age-related trend for carers and non-carers
- Physical health by gender
- Only younger male carers in poorer health



HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Carers – Outside Home

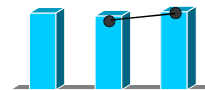
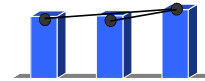
- Mental health
- Disparity for younger carers only
- Similar age-related trends
- Mental health by gender
- Male carers have poorer health across ages
- No age-related increase for carers



HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Carers: Within VS. Outside Home

- Physical health
- WITHIN home carers have poorer health than OUTSIDE carers
- Mental health
- 'WITHIN & OUTSIDE' carers have poorer mental health than carers working only OUTSIDE



HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Conclusions

- Caring leads to poor health?
 - Few disparities for OUTSIDE carers
- Poor health as a pathway to caring
 - Poor health prompts 'informal' caring roles rather than other occupations
 - Poor health linked to uptake of WITHIN home care (i.e., informal)
 - Poor health for younger carers both WITHIN & OUTSIDE home
 - Lack of health disparity for older carers OUTSIDE home
- Gender asymmetry in care-giver health
 - Poor health results across ALL carers driven by males
 - Care-giving not a traditional male role and may be 'health-enforced'

HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

"You who have reached the pinnacle, remain as a guiding light to us all"

HEALTH WORK AND RETIREMENT E tū te huru mā, haramai e noho
LONGITUDINAL STUDY