

# Women as unpaid carers

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Plight of the middle-aged women who have been turned into army of unpaid carers By James Slack Daily Mail, Last updated at 8: 52 AM on 11th October 2010 Middle-aged women have been turned into an army of unpaid carers who suffer losses in income, job prospects and health. According to a landmark study of 'fairness' in modern Britain, published today, a quarter of women in their fifties have carer responsibilities, often for an ageing parent. According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, this group of 'dutiful middle-aged' is likely to consider this work 'rewarding' - despite it coming after decades of caring for their own children. And they will lose out in relation to their 'job prospects, income and health', suffering from 'chronic disadvantage'. Caring for the elderly: Middle-aged women have been turned into an army of unpaid carers At the same time, they save the taxpayer, an extra £87billion by providing free care that would otherwise be funded by the NHS. The study also reveals how: \* There remains a huge pay gap — with women earning almost a fifth less than men. \* Millions of women are not entitled to full state pensions. \* Crimes most commonly suffered by women have the worst clear-up rates. The study says gaps in employment histories — often the result of having children or quitting work for full-time caring — leave 60 per cent of women entitled to less than the full basic state pension. This compares to only ten per cent of men. With an ageing population, more people will be forced to take on responsibility for caring for parents with debilitating conditions. This will lead to 'chronic disadvantage' for those involved, the 700-page EHRC study, which claims to be the biggest of its kind ever conducted, warns. Nearly one in five men in their fifties has carer responsibilities, and there are 175, 000 under-18s in the same position. Of 15. 2million people in full-time paid work, 1. 2million also have unpaid care <https://assignbuster.com/women-as-unpaid-carers/>

duties to perform at home. Overall, the report paints a picture of a country which remains divided by wealth, sex and race. Despite repeated Labour promises to close the gap between rich and poor, the report says the total net household wealth of the top 10 per cent, at £853, 000, is almost 100 times higher than the net wealth of the poorest 10 per cent. On care, the report calls for more to be done to ease the burden on those looking after ill or ageing relatives. The study says: ‘ Today, 25 per cent of women in their 50s and 18 per cent of men in their 50s are carers. In some cases these are people who have spent their 20s, 30s or 40s caring for children and now find themselves responsible for looking after a partner, parent, or other relative.’ A second section warns: ‘ Over the next decade there will be a steep increase in the demand for personal care for older people. ‘ At the same time, more people who might have cared for their parents will have dependent children. ‘ This often means a concentration of informal care provision falling on the dutiful middle aged.’ There have been repeated demands for the country to do more to help carers. In 2008, a committee of MPs demanded relatives of the sick and elderly should be paid a salary of up to £110 a week for looking after them. Almost three-quarters of carers lose an average £11, 000 a year, the support group Carers UK claims. The report also warns that the conviction rate for rape is ‘ stubbornly low’ and boys are performing less well than girls at school. Disabled men earned 11 per cent less than other male workers, while the gap was 22 per cent for women. Commission chairman Trevor Phillips said: ‘ We are a people who have moved light years in our attitudes to all kinds of human difference, and in our desire to be a truly fair society, but we are still a country where our achievements haven’t yet caught up with our aspirations.’ He added: ‘ In the

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21st century we face a fresh challenge — the danger of a society divided by the barriers of inequality and injustice.’ Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1319423/Plight-middle-aged-women-act-carers.html#ixzz1niUx6Osr>