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joy
conflicted
stretched
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compromise
fulfilled
intense
torn
time limited
balance
unpredictable
committed
unsupported
proud



The Dual Demands of Academic Travel and Caregiving

Findings from a STEMM sector survey into travel demands and caring

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Data used to generate the illustration on the front cover were obtained by asking respondents to provide three words to describe how they felt about their current caregiving responsibilities.

Carers in STEMM would like to thank the **Future Leaders Fellows Development Network** for funding this project through a **PlusFun Award** and for their ongoing support to realise our vision. We would also like to thank: **Dr Sheila Kanani MBE** for her critical appraisal of the survey design, implementation and findings; **Dr Kamran Bogue** for his support during survey dissemination and analysis and members of the **FLF community** who provided critical support and feedback.

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1. Introducing *Carers in STEMM*



Professor Laura Carter
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Laura is a Professor of Environmental Chemistry working to understand how emerging contaminants such as pharmaceuticals and microplastics interact with ecosystems and impact soil and water quality.



Dr Laura Pallett
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Laura is an Associate Professor working to uncover how immune cells integrate mechanical, biochemical and cellular cues in the human liver, with a view to developing novel therapeutics for individuals living with chronic liver disease.



Dr Laura Wolz
University of Manchester

Laura is a Reader in Astrophysics working on constraining the evolution of the Universe via mapping the cosmic web with neutral hydrogen during the era of the SKA Observatory.

We are three scientists, three UKRI Future Leaders Fellows, three Lauras, leading three independent research programmes at three different universities across three different disciplines in the Higher Education sector.

Between us we have 5 children under the age of 10.

Our vision is to advocate for equitable and accessible support for those balancing caring and career.

At 'Carers in STEMM' we aim to identify and disseminate information about the current support provision and existing policy for carers, understand the impact caregiving responsibilities have on research/academic careers and transform funder and institutional policy to achieve sector wide positive change.

In autumn 2024 we undertook a sector-wide survey to capture the lived experiences of UK researchers in STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine) subjects with current caregiving responsibilities. Our primary goals were to understand the caring demographic, the scale of current provisions, transparency in policy and 'the need to improve'. Throughout this project we have defined carers as **"someone providing support to another individual* who could not manage without the care given"**.

This project was funded and supported by a PlusFund Award from *The Future Leaders Fellows Development Network*.

"We hope the data presented in this report acts as a catalyst for change, laying the groundwork for better, more inclusive support systems for carers."

LAURA – CARERS IN STEMM

Whether travel is considered to be a positive aspect of STEMM or not, it is an absolute necessity for many reasons. Here in this report, we uncover the hidden barriers experienced by carers in STEMM.

*In this survey a carer is defined as someone caring for a child, spouse or partner, a family member or friend of any age, an elderly relative, neighbour or an individual with additional needs and/or disability.

2. The 2024 Carers in STEMM Survey

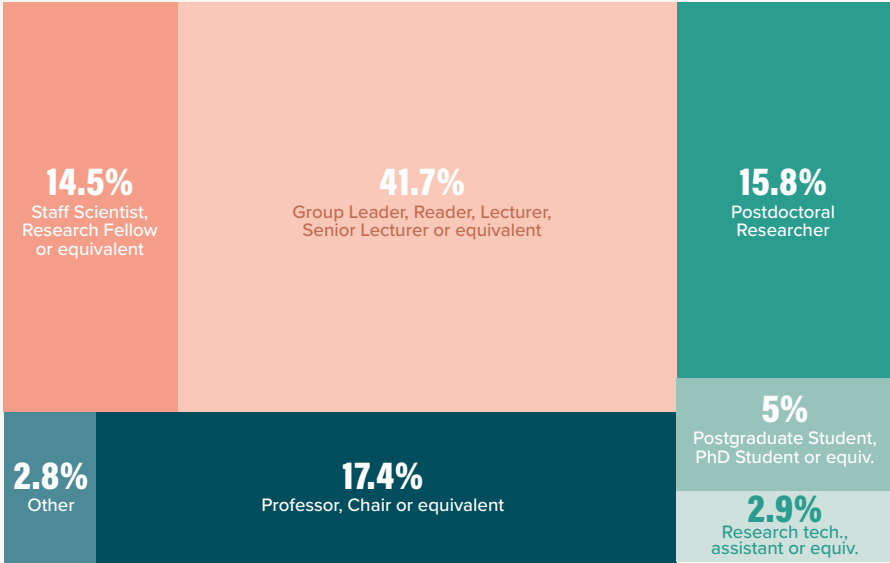
Our survey had 581 UK-based respondents working in STEMM research; 64% identified as women and 34% as men. We captured a wide range of views, with representation from across the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Research Councils encompassing all career stages, and a range of caregiving roles.

Caregiving plays a critical role in maintaining the wellbeing and stability of families and communities, often directly impacting carers’ ability to engage fully in their professional lives. The majority of respondents identifying as parents - caring for those under the age of 18 included 7% for children with additional needs. Additionally, 25% of lived experiences captured were those of carers caring for an ageing relative, partner or another adult with additional needs.

More than half of survey respondents stated that they co-care with an equal share of the responsibility, while approximately 10% of respondents confirmed they do less than half of caring, and a quarter stating they do more than half. The remaining 11% (65 individuals) identified themselves as sole carers.

Finally, the majority of our respondents (80%) reported working full-time. Among those working part-time, only a small fraction (10%) held chair positions, while the vast majority were in mid-to-early career stages, suggesting that part-time roles are more common among those still advancing in their professional journeys.

Q1 What career stage best reflects your current role? (n=581)



For the purposes of many analyses we categorised career stages as follows:

Early career (38.2%)
Including research technicians/assistants, PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, research fellows and staff scientists typically employed on fixed-term contracts.

Mid-career (41.7%)
Including group leaders, readers, lecturers, and senior lecturers.

Chair (17.6%)
Including individuals holding permanent, tenured positions such as professorships, as well as retired academics.

This grouping reflects common distinctions in job security, leadership responsibilities, and academic independence across stages of a research career.

14.5%

are caring for a parent or elderly dependant

10.7%

stated they do less than half of caring

24.3%

stated they do more than half of caring

80.1%

of respondents work full-time

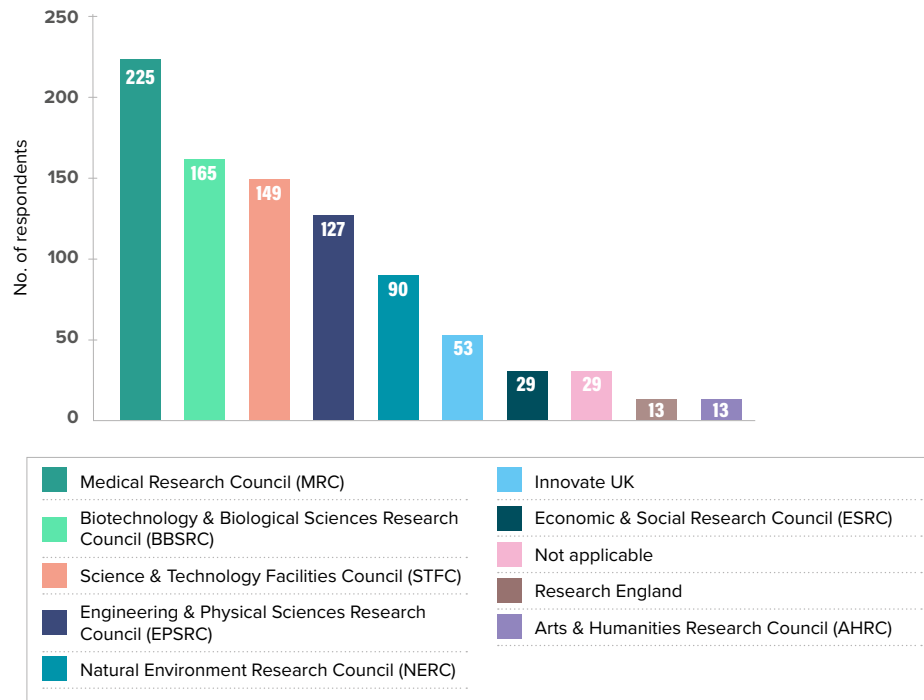
Survey analysis



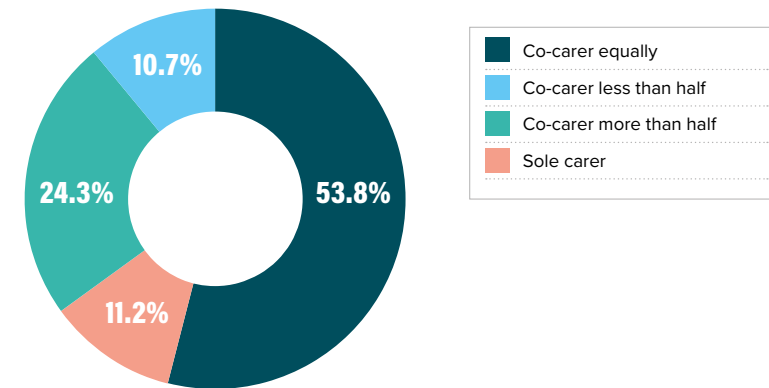
Only respondents with caring responsibilities within the two years prior to the survey window (Oct. '24 – Feb. '25) who were employed or studying in the UK were included.

The survey consisted of 54 questions which were predominantly optional with the exception of the demographics questions. We excluded respondents who responded to less than 50% of the questions. The respondent rate was 581. The respondent rate per question varies and is presented with every figure. Most multiple-choice questions allowed multiple 'tick all that apply' answers, so total numbers can on occasion be seen to exceed the respondent rate.

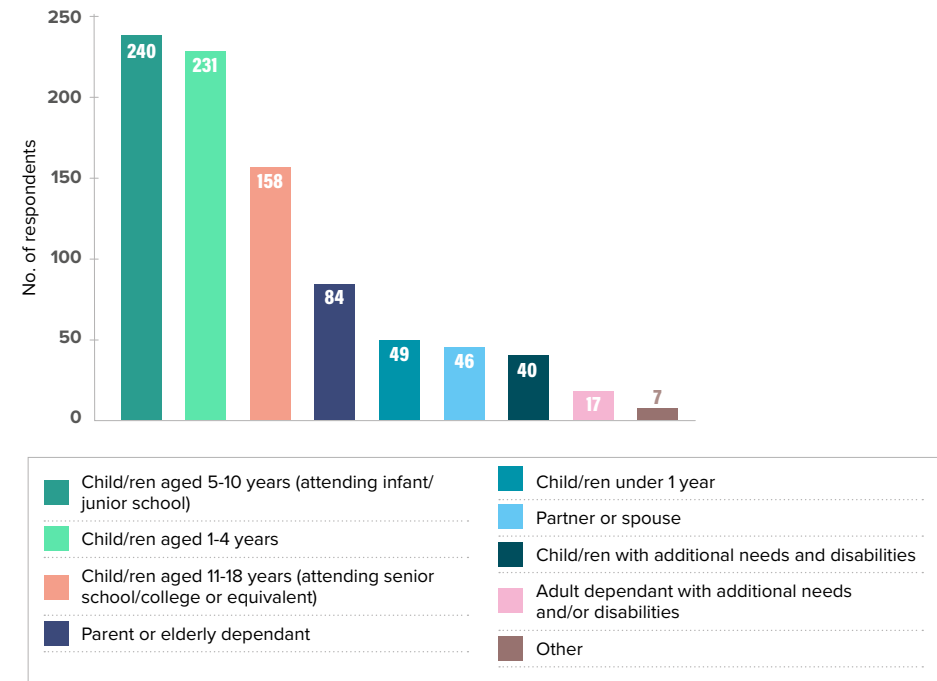
Q3 If you work in the academic sector, which of these UKRI Research Councils do you align with? (n=581)



Q2 What does your caring situation look like? (n=580)



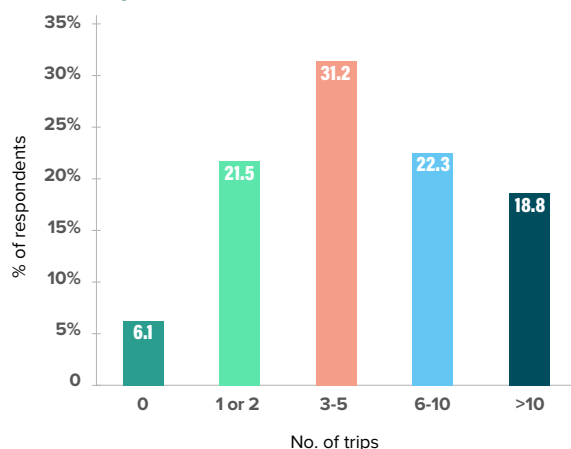
Q4 What caring responsibilities do you currently have? (n=581)



3. Balancing Travel with Caregiving

Travel is a fundamental part of career development, offering opportunities to present findings, collaborate, and build networks. However, caring responsibilities significantly shape travel patterns, often forcing difficult choices between professional growth and personal commitments.

Q5 When travelling for work/study, how many trips have you made in the last 2 years? (n=557)



Our survey revealed that 94% of respondents had travelled at least once in the past two years, demonstrating the necessity to travel in STEMM research. However, the frequency and length of travel varied widely. The majority (59%) of respondents stated they had taken fewer than six trips. However one-third of respondents confirmed they had taken three to five trips, and almost a fifth (19%) said they had travelled more than 10 times – equivalent to nearly one trip every month.

59%

of equal co-carers travelled more than 10 times



Our survey revealed striking relationships between caregiving and travel frequency:

- Carers with less than half of care responsibility travel more frequently than those who do a greater caring share.
- Researchers responsible for more than half of caregiving typically travelled less often, stating they had travelled less than six times.
- Approximately 59% of those who travelled more than 10 times in the past two years confirmed they shared equal co-caring responsibilities.
- 76% of sole carers took less than six trips; whereas 65% of respondents who travelled six or more times identified as doing less than half of care.
- Mid-career researchers appear to juggle competing demands the most – 48% travelled more than five times, balancing caregiving with the professional expectations of an advancing career.

These results highlight discrepancies in mobility of those with differential caring share.

“I have drastically restricted my conference attendance (to 1 a year max)...This has strongly negatively impacted my standing in my field, with major impacts on collaborations, seminar invites, grant success and other markers of esteem that define career progression in academia.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT

Travel with a dependant

Although the majority of respondents (67%) opted not to travel with their dependants, a small portion (7%) did so as sole caregivers. This highlights the unique challenges faced by those balancing travel with caregiving responsibilities alone. Furthermore, travelling with a dependant appears to be more common among mid-career researchers, reflecting a crucial stage where personal and professional responsibilities often intersect. Among those who travelled with an additional carer, 56% were in the mid-career group, reinforcing the trend that they are more likely to navigate travel with caregiving responsibilities.

“...it’s about being visible.”

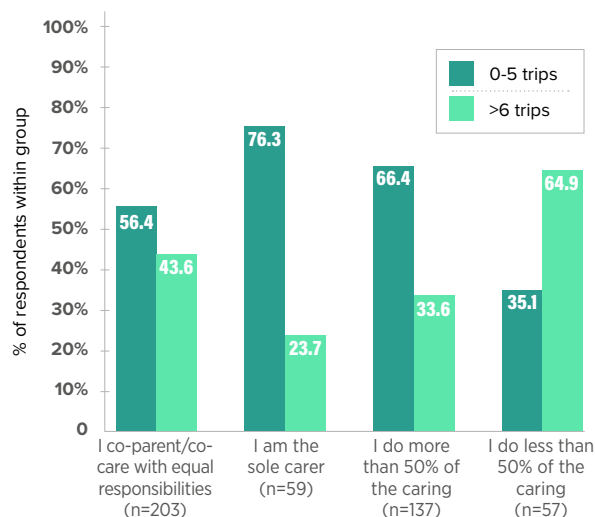
SURVEY RESPONDENT

These findings offer valuable insights into how career stage influences travel behaviour in the context of caregiving responsibilities and highlights where policies and support are needed most to better support work-related mobility for STEMM researchers with dependants.

“I think the big issue is that in academia, whatever we do, it is never enough. So there is a big pressure to do more and more and more: supervise more, approve more projects, publish more, teach more etc. And that seems incompatible with a healthy work-life balance overall, and life with children in particular.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT

Q6 How many trips have you made in the last 2 years categorised by caring share? (n=556)



Sandwich generation

Among the 581 survey respondents, 40 individuals (7%) identified as part of the “sandwich generation” – juggling the care of both ageing relatives and a child or children under the age of 18, including those with additional needs. This dual responsibility places enormous emotional, physical, and financial strain on individuals, as they navigate the competing demands of their careers, young children, and ageing relatives. While the broader academic community clearly face challenges in balancing work and caregiving, those in the sandwich generation experience a compounded effect and require different solutions.

The issue is not unique to academia.

“My experience of caring for elderly parents is that it’s a very different situation to caring for children, e.g. there aren’t nurseries for the elderly! I find it to be a much more limiting experience, there is simply far less flexibility in terms of arranging care than there is for children.”

“The current support for carers seems to be focused on carers of children and does not consider other caring responsibilities.”

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

45%

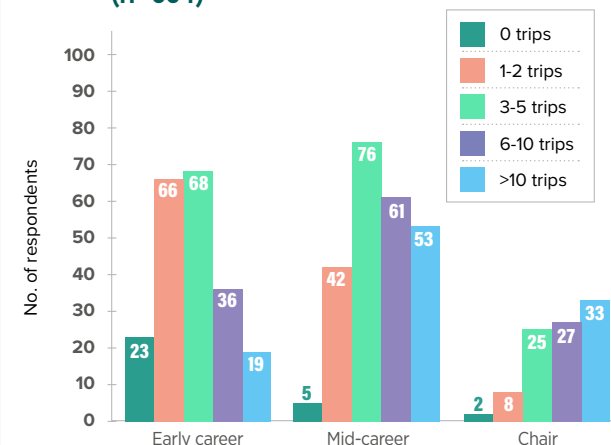
of dual academics travelled with their dependants, compared to 33% among the broader respondent group



Dual academics

A total of 23% of respondents (169 individuals) identified as “dual academics,” meaning they share caregiving responsibilities with a partner who also works in the academic sector. In these dual-career households, caregiving duties tended to be more evenly distributed between partners compared to the broader respondent group, suggesting a more balanced approach to managing professional and personal responsibilities. Interestingly, individuals in dual academic partnerships were also more likely to travel with their dependants – 45% had done so in the past two years, compared to just 33% among the broader respondent group. This trend points to a potential link between shared caregiving and increased flexibility or willingness to incorporate family travel into academic commitments.

Q7 When travelling for work/study, how many trips have you made in the last 2 years categorised by career stage? (n=554)



4. Missed Opportunities

For those with caring responsibilities, the ability to participate in career-defining moments is often compromised as many report having to cancel or reduce the number of trips taken as a result of caregiving responsibilities.

Our survey revealed the extent of this challenge: 94% of respondents reported having to turn down or miss at least one travel opportunity as a direct result of caregiving. For the majority, the decision was not about a lack of interest in taking part but rather a conflict between professional aspirations and caregiving duties. 70% cited reluctance to leave their dependants for an extended period of time as a key reason for avoiding travel, 57% confirmed they struggled to arrange alternative care, and 29% responded with concerns that the needs of their dependant would not be met away from home. Thus, it is impossible for many STEM researches to travel and be away from home.

“The biggest issue I am facing as a working carer in research is the feeling of having missed opportunities to advance my career”

SURVEY RESPONDENT

The unpredictability of caring responsibilities also emerged as a significant barrier – 48% of respondents revealed they had cancelled travel plans at the last minute at least once over the last two years, disrupting their professional commitments, as caring responsibilities had to be prioritised. Collective comments from survey respondents called for a culture shift in accommodating caregiving requirements in speaker invites and conference registration processes. It is important that we

recognise that carers may not be able to immediately accept invitations without prior discussion with a co-carer, or by significantly rearranging caregiving.

When further considering the impact of caring on travel opportunities our results highlighted that those working part-time were disproportionately affected as part-time workers reported taking fewer trips compared to their full-time counterparts. This trend may reflect differences in financial resources, the ability to work flexibly, or professional travel requirements between the two groups.

These findings highlight a critical issue: academic structures often fail to accommodate the day-to-day realities of those with caring responsibilities with varying contracted hours, making travel extremely challenging.

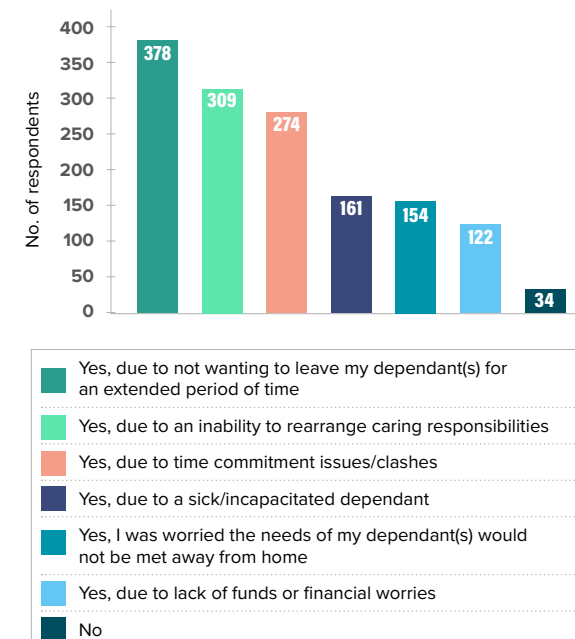
“So much of the research and collaboration is done at international events (workshops/conferences) that I have been losing touch with the field as my travel has been restricted due to caring.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT

Part-time workers are disproportionately affected comparative to full-time workers



Q8 Have you ever had to turn down or miss out on a trip? (n=540)



94%

had to miss at least one travel opportunity due to caregiving

70%

are reluctant to leave dependants, avoiding travel

57%

struggled to arrange alternative care

48%

had cancelled travel at the last minute at least once in 2 years

5. Conference Culture

The largest demand for travel fell on conference attendance, with 93% of respondents attending at least one conference in the surveyed period.

For those who travelled with a dependant, respondents faced many challenges which prevented full participation and engagement. For example, of the 178 respondents who travelled with a dependant, 76% believed they could not fully participate in the event, citing difficulties in managing both professional obligations and caregiving duties.

For sole carers, travel is particularly complex. Of the 65 question respondents who identified as sole carers, 32% had to bring a dependant with them which is a logistical challenge that many institutions/conference organisers fail to consider. Unsurprisingly, those who took dependants were mostly sole carers, meaning they had to manage both conference participation, networking and childcare simultaneously.

“...but still that means missing the poster session, networking events and conference dinner, which are probably the most useful times of the conference...”

“An acknowledgement that it is harder to go to events when you are a carer and not be penalised for not attending events...”

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

A crucial takeaway was that scheduling networking events in the evening inadvertently created additional barriers to participation, particularly for individuals with caregiving responsibilities. This practice effectively excluded a significant portion of carers from engaging in valuable relationship-building opportunities, limiting their access to key professional interactions and potential career advancement.

Provisions

Increasingly onsite crèches are being offered as a suitable provision for carers at conferences and workshops. This approach overlooks the reality that only a small proportion of survey respondents (6%) have actually used onsite childcare at conferences, with many expressing discomfort in placing their child in an unfamiliar setting.

“They cannot get around the fact that kids cannot be brought on trips during the school term, or that toddlers are terrified if left in the care of complete strangers during a conference.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT

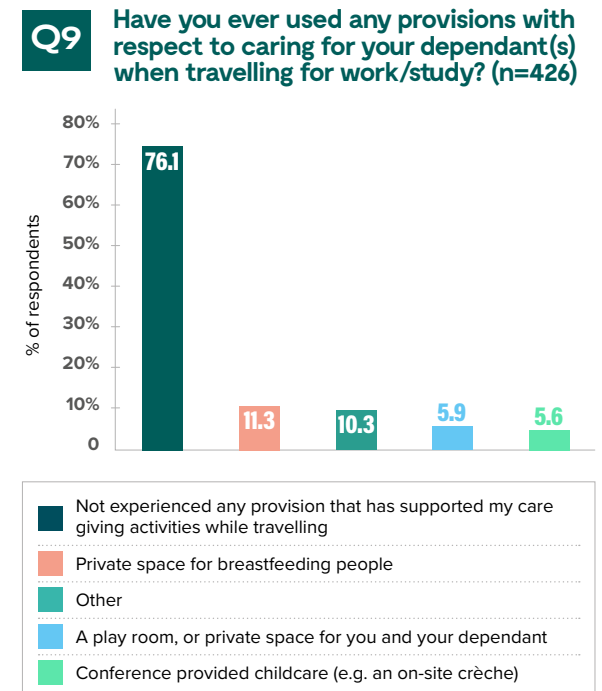
Moreover, this narrow definition of eligible childcare options ignores the broader spectrum of caregiving responsibilities. Many academic carers do not just require onsite childcare but instead support for other dependants, such as school age children, ageing relatives or individuals with additional needs. The expenses to set up crèche provisions are disproportionate compared to the uptake. Allocating equivalent funds to flexible ad hoc care at home at the discretion of the carer would be a better, more inclusive financial investment.

It is important to highlight that attending a conference or event with a dependant does still require some practical accommodations. 11% of respondents stated they had previously used a dedicated space for breastfeeding people. This highlights the necessity for the provision of facilities such as a private space to enable this, and access to refrigerated storage.

“A private space to pump breast milk and a fridge to store it in when at a conference.”

“Breastfeeding strongly limited my ability to travel away for work even for just a day.”

SURVEY RESPONDENTS



76%

of respondents who brought a dependant believed they could not fully participate in the event

32%

of sole carers had to bring a dependant with them which is a logistical challenge

75%

have used virtual formats to accommodate caring commitments

Hybrid attendance

Faced with the various challenges associated with work-related travel, particularly for those with caregiving responsibilities, many individuals have increasingly turned to hybrid or fully online events as a more accessible alternative. Over the past two years, 75% of respondents reported using virtual formats to better accommodate their caring commitments. This shift has meant that academics can remain professionally engaged without the added financial burden or logistical complexities that often accompany travel. By participating in conferences, meetings, and collaborations remotely, many were able to maintain visibility in their fields, access valuable networking opportunities, and continue their professional development in a more flexible and inclusive manner.

“Although participating online is certainly not as good as being there in-person, it’s better than not participating at all. If all workshops etc. offered online as a serious option, that would be an improvement.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT

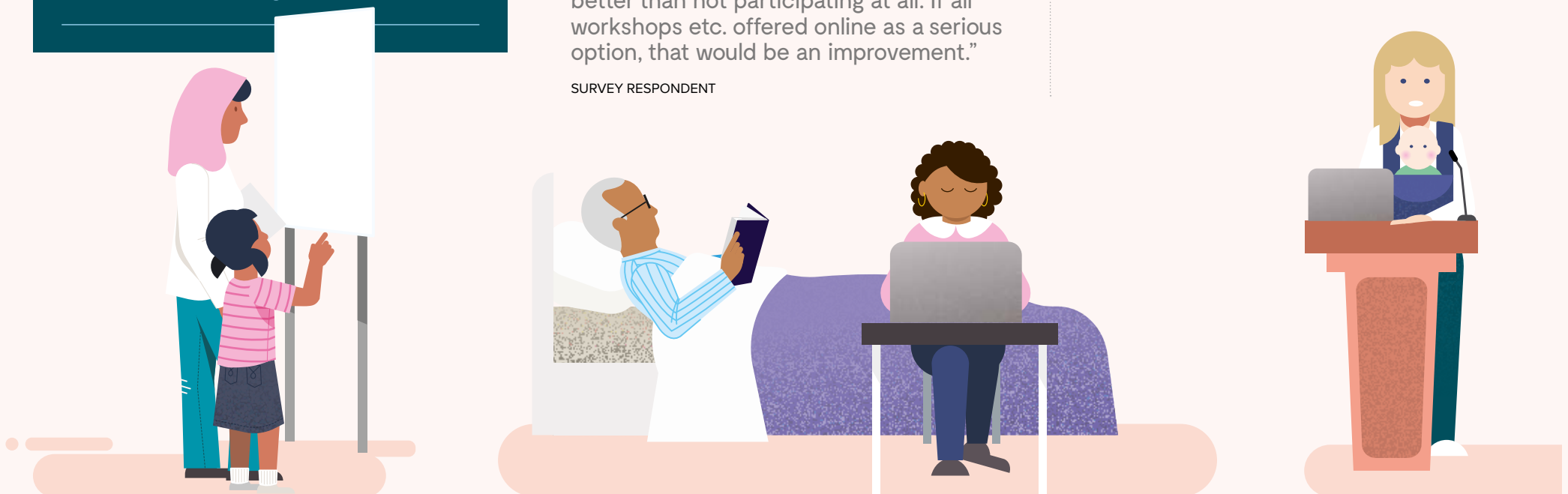
However, our survey has revealed that hybrid participation does not fully bridge the gap.

78% of respondents agreed that they were still unable to fully participate in hybrid events due to caregiving responsibilities, highlighting ongoing issues such as time zone mismatches, scheduling conflicts, and the inability to engage in informal networking opportunities in person.

“A lot of [research] activities are often online now which is helpful, however I feel I miss out on networking and informal communications which is limiting.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT

Existing support mechanisms are in place to enable carers to travel however it is clear that even when accommodations were made, structural barriers remain.



6. The Financial Burden

Caring responsibilities pose significant challenges, not only in terms of time and logistics but also financially.

Financial support for extra caregiving requirements for travel (outside of normal working arrangements) is severely lacking. 76% of respondents had never received any financial support or reimbursement for caring-related travel expenses. Only a small proportion reported that they had been able to secure limited funding through flexible travel grants from research organisations, employers, or learned societies – but this was far from the norm. For example, 8% of respondents had received financial assistance from a learned society, but in many cases, this requires membership fees to enable access to the funding opportunity. In addition to learned societies providing flexible travel grants, a growing source of financial support for carers are the conference organisers themselves. With only 5% of respondents receiving this support, there is a clear need for accelerated growth in this area.

For many, the financial burden of attending conferences, workshops, and research-related travel in STEMM fell on their personal finances. Of the 142 respondents who openly provided estimates of their out-of-pocket caregiving expenses over the past two years, 49% had spent over £500 and 29% had spent over £1,000 to cover care costs while travelling for work or study. This came to a combined minimum total of over £62,000.

>£62k

By our calculations, the combined minimum financial outlay for out-of-pocket expenses was in excess of £62k.*

This is the equivalent to the average 'first-time buyer' house deposit in the UK [Source: UK average; 20% deposit; Halifax]



Even when funds are secured to cover the cost of care responsibilities, reimbursement for out of pocket expenses are not typically settled until after the event. This highlights the need for financial support in advance.

“I don’t feel I can go to multi-day meetings because of a combination of having to be away from family for too long but also because finances are so tight that I can’t really prepay lots of stuff and only claim back afterwards.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT

Along a similar line, another survey respondent said

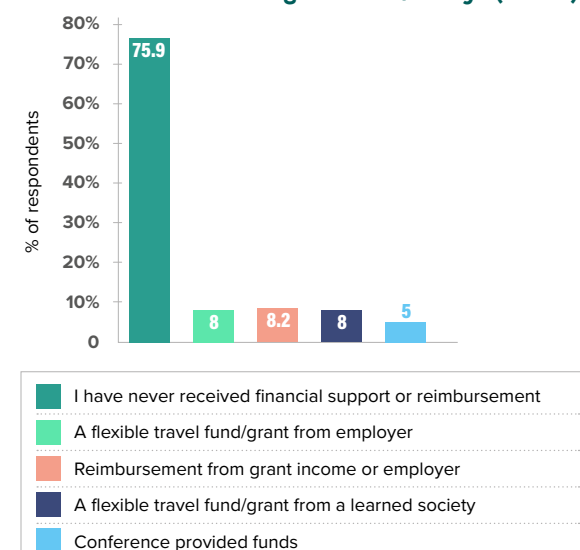
“Insufficient funding to support adding expenses associated with childcare results in me missing professional opportunities.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT

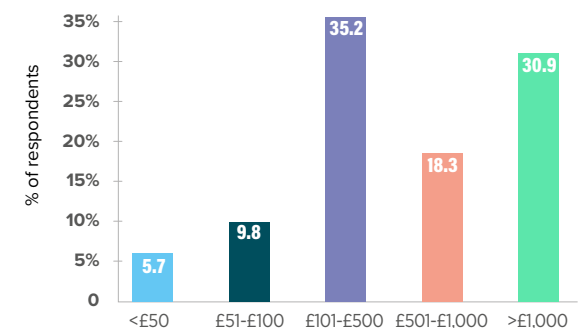
Another key gap in current funding policies is the exclusion of informal care arrangements. Many respondents reported that caregiving duties were taken on by family members, such as grandparents. Yet, these informal care solutions often fall outside the terms and conditions for reimbursement or funding, despite being a primary means of support for many academic carers.

Finances should not be the reason researchers are missing out on opportunities to share science, exchange ideas and knowledge and to widen their network.

Q10 Have you received financial support to help with your caring responsibility while travelling for work/study? (n=497)



Q11 If you sought external paid-for caring support, can you estimate how much this has cost you personally? (n=142)



7. Policy Awareness

A clear knowledge gap exists among our respondents when it comes to institutional and funder policies regarding their travel and caring responsibilities.

Funders such as UKRI offer reimbursement for additional travel costs related to caregiving, but awareness of such support is limited among researchers. Before taking our survey, 73% of respondents reported they were unaware of their employer or institutional policies with respect to caregiving. A similar proportion (¾ of respondents) were unfamiliar with their specific funder policies.

Importantly, helping to raise awareness, the survey has already had significant impact – in response to taking our survey, 78% of respondents confirmed that they will seek out and read relevant policy documents, suggesting that simply providing accessible, and transparent information can drive greater engagement with available support provisions.

Additionally, half of the respondents were unaware that they could contact their funder, employer, or institution to update research costings if their personal circumstances changed due to caring responsibilities. This gap disproportionately affected early and mid-career professionals, with 85% of those unaware falling into these career stages. Given that early and mid-career professionals often navigate career instability and evolving personal responsibilities, the lack of knowledge may place them at a disadvantage when balancing work related travel and caregiving.

73%

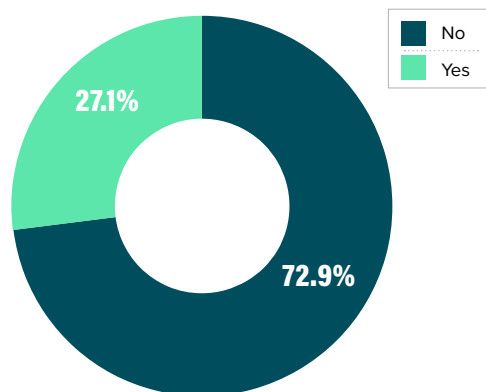
were unaware of employer or institutional policies with respect to caregiving

85%

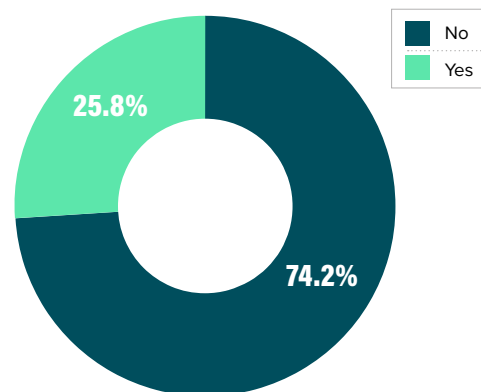
of those unaware of the possibility to change research costings, were in early and mid career stages

Q12

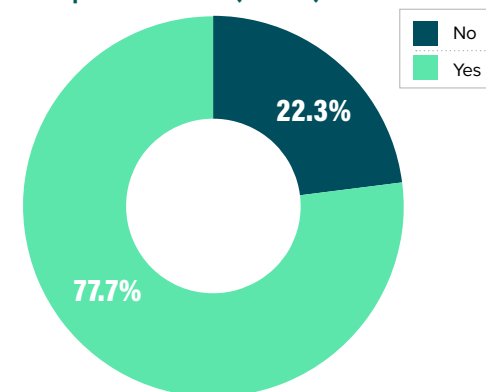
Were you aware of your employer/institutional policy regarding travel and caring for dependants? (n=527)

**Q13**

Were you aware of your funders policy regarding travel and caring for dependants? (n=496)

**Q14**

Will you now read your T&C and/or funder/institutional policy with regards to travel and caring responsibilities? (n=323)



Restricting the analysis to key funders of STEMM research to include the BBSRC, MRC, EPSRC, NERC, and STFC revealed a consistent lack of awareness of the terms and conditions for support and provisions related to care giving to facilitate travel for work or study. Among councils the percentage of respondents citing they were aware of relevant policy ranged from 23% to 31%. Additionally, a small proportion of respondents (ranging from 6% to 14%) had taken steps to contact their funder, employer, or institution to revise grant costings in light of changing personal circumstances related to caring responsibilities.

“Funders should insist all institutes receiving their funding should make seminar series available online, extra time enabled in career paths when assessing trajectories for promotion and funding and make this clear in the selection criteria.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT

Further analysis underscored the importance of tailoring awareness-raising efforts to the specific career stages of researchers. A considerable proportion of researchers at the mid-career (69%) and chair (64%) stages reported being unaware of their institution’s policies. Even more striking, 80% of early career researchers were unaware of these policies. This widespread lack of awareness is particularly concerning among the early career stage, who are at a pivotal and often precarious point in their professional development. Institutional support is especially critical during this period, making awareness of relevant policies essential for their career progression and overall well-being.

On a positive note, where respondents were familiar with current policies they appear to be inclusive to encompass caring more broadly with 85% of the 109 individuals that responded quoting ‘carer’ and not specifying a specific role as a care giver (e.g. mother, father, parent).

ACROSS UKRI COUNCILS...

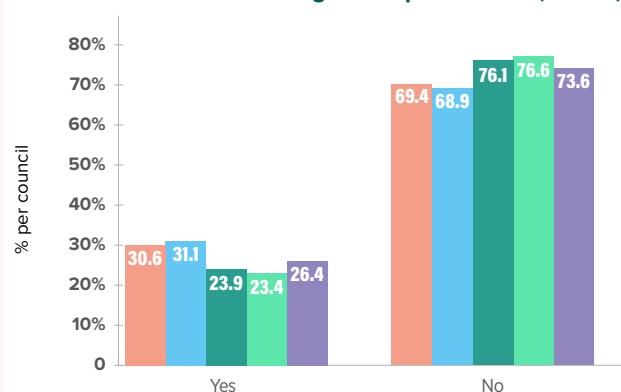
23–31%

were aware of relevant policies

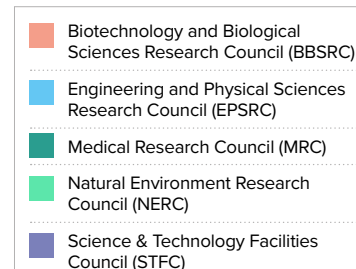
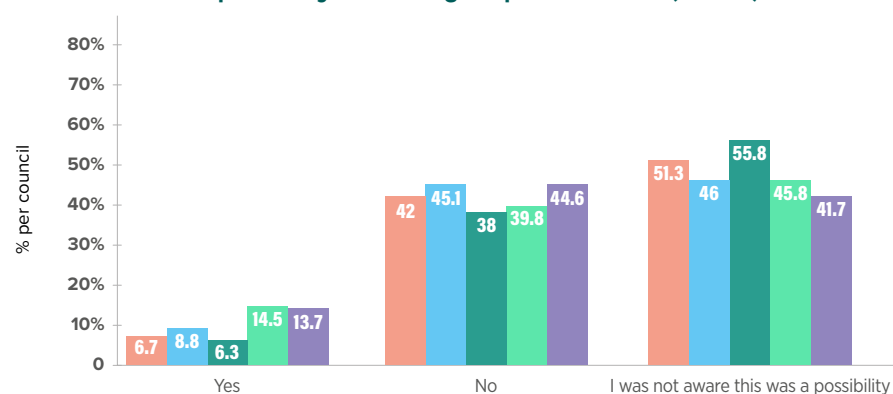
6–14%

had contacted their funder to revise costings due to changing circumstances

Q15 Prior to taking this survey were you aware of your funders policy regarding travel and caring for dependants? (n=496)



Q16 Have you ever contacted your funder, employer or institution to update costings if your personal circumstances changed with respect to your caring responsibilities? (n=528)



8. Summary

Balancing an academic career with caregiving responsibilities is undeniably challenging, yet for many, it is also deeply rewarding. Here, we summarise our key findings and conclusion to inform policy makers, research funders, higher education institutions, and fellow scientists about the barriers faced when managing travel alongside caregiving duties.

Key findings

Demographics and survey insights



The survey included 581 UK-based respondents, with 64% identifying as women and 34% as men. Respondents represented various career stages and caregiving roles, with a 25% caring for parents or ageing relative and/or partners.

Impact of caregiving on travel



93% of respondents had travelled at least once in the past two years, but caregiving responsibilities significantly influenced travel frequency and patterns. Sole carers and those with more than half care-giving duties travelled less frequently, impacting their professional growth.

Missed opportunities



94% of respondents reported missing at least one travel opportunity due to caregiving responsibilities, affecting their career progression and professional visibility.

Financial burden



76% of respondents had never received any financial reimbursement or support for caring related travel expenses.

Conference culture



The largest demand for travel fell on conference attendance and even when attendance was hybrid 78% cited they were still unable to fully participate.

Policy awareness



There is a significant knowledge gap regarding institutional and funder policies on caregiving and travel. Increased awareness and better communication of these policies are needed.

Conclusions

The current lack of comprehensive support disproportionately excludes carers from key professional development opportunities. Conferences and workshops for example often serve as critical spaces for career progression, collaboration and visibility, yet these events are typically designed with the assumption of an unencumbered attendee. This narrow framing results in many carers being unable to attend or to do so at significant personal and financial cost.

Institutions and event organisers need to reassess how accessibility is defined and delivered. Inclusive policies such as flexible travel arrangements, funding for dependants or co-carers, and considerate scheduling has the potential to improve participation among carers. To achieve true equity, however, institutional funding frameworks must also evolve. Reimbursement systems rarely accommodate the complex and varied care arrangements put in place to manage their responsibilities. In practice many

institutional expense policies prevent reimbursement of any costs associated with caregiving.

Enabling the full participation of carers requires more than just logistical adjustments, it requires a cultural shift. Greater awareness, deliberate advocacy, and proactive policy are essential to ensure that caregiving responsibilities are not career-limiting. An inclusive academic environment means opportunity is not contingent on personal circumstance, but open to all.

9. Recommendations

Addressing the challenges faced by academic carers who travel requires systemic changes to funding, policy, and culture. By implementing these recommendations, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for researchers with caregiving responsibilities, ultimately enhancing the diversity and sustainability of the community.

1 Understand the needs of your carers

Actions

Speak to carers (run focus groups, surveys), include caring in policy and documentation, acknowledge caring types, provide networks and role models.



Source

Diversity of survey respondents who reported a range of caregiving responsibilities, with a differential share of responsibility and working across different sectors.



4 Raise awareness of policy

Actions

Create, advertise and implement suitable policy. Monitor uptake and adapt to ongoing needs. Funding briefings to include information relating to caring and allow updates to costings for changing circumstances.



Source

73% were unaware of relevant travel and caregiving policy. 10% have contacted a funder to update costings.



2 Shift conference culture towards carers' needs

Actions

Allocate funding to support onsite childcare and provide facilities that meet carers' needs (e.g., breastfeeding rooms). Design event schedules and formats, both onsite and online, to enable meaningful participation, and gather carer-dependant requirements during registration.



Source

Crèches do not meet the needs of majority of carers. 76% said they still couldn't fully participate when travelling with a dependant due to lack of appropriate provisions.



5 Redesign measurements of research impact and esteem

Actions

Decouple research impact and esteem metrics from travel opportunities. Explicitly recognise alternative forms of contribution and engagement.



Source

Caregivers report missing key career opportunities due to travel, impacting grants, collaborations, and promotion success.



3 Create flexible, inclusive travel funding schemes

Actions

Offer flexible funding based on caring need, non-prescriptive grants that cover all forms of caregiving at the discretion of the carer. Ensure funding for caregiving is accessible to all.



Source

76% of carers have never received financial reimbursement for travel-related care costs. 70% of respondents did not want to leave their dependants for an extended period of time and 29% stated they were worried the needs of dependants would not be met.



6 Remove barriers to financial reimbursement

Actions

Align expense policies to allow swift reimbursement of caregiving costs. Minimise administrative burden.



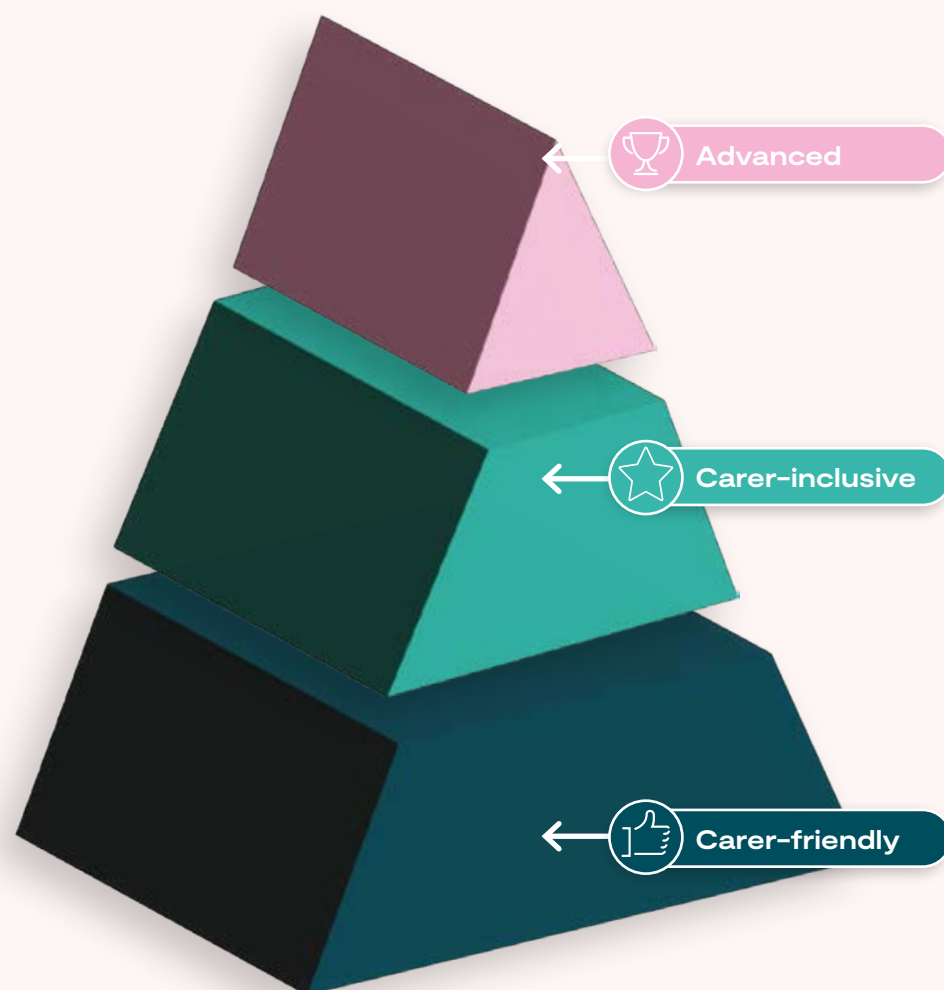
Source

76% of carers have never received financial reimbursement for travel-related care costs, despite many paying £500-£1000+ out of their own pocket.



10. A Carers Guide For Conference Organisers

Addressing the challenges faced by academic carers who travel requires systemic changes to funding, policy, and culture. By implementing these recommendations, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for researchers with caregiving responsibilities, ultimately enhancing the diversity and sustainability of the community.



Advanced – “Carer-embedded”

- Allocate budget to provide flexible carer grants with minimal administration and immediate reimbursement.
- If partnering with local childcare providers to offer on-site care ensure it fully meets the needs of carers.
- Create family-friendly spaces with activities and integrate dependants into networking opportunities.
- Incorporate previous feedback in event planning.
- Obtain personalised feedback from carers for future action.

Intermediate – “Carer-inclusive”

- Provide information on external travel and conference grants.
- Release full schedule and accommodate flexibility in invited presentation times.
- Provide information on nearby childcare facilities and eldercare services.
- Negotiate discounted rates for family-friendly accommodation.
- Provide welcoming and varied caring spaces e.g. separate childcare room and a private breastfeeding/pumping room with fridge.
- Nominate a dedicated point of contact sensitive to carers’ needs.

Foundation – “Carer-friendly”

- Acknowledge varied caregiving needs
- Provide early notification of meetings to allow ample planning time.
- Seek information regarding dependant needs at registration
- Offer flexible registration options, including refundable and/or part attendance registration.
- Ensure meaningful online participation including networking if event is hybrid.
- Provide a private space for caregivers e.g. for breastfeeding/medical calls
- Adhere to advertised schedules (with adequate breaks) to allow carers to attend to dependant needs (check-ins, to pump, dispense medication etc.).
- Organise family-friendly networking, considering time/availability in evenings.
- Collect feedback relating to caring to identify areas for improvement.

11. A Carers Guide for Institutions



- 1** Ensure institutional expense policy allows for the reimbursement of care-related costs including dependant and co-carer travel expenses.
- 2** Update and align institutional financial reimbursement policy with funder T&C's relating to care-giving costs.
- 3** Establish institutional policy and disseminate to line managers and expense approvers to avoid inconsistent implementation and support.
- 4** Provide flexible carers grants for all staff and students with minimal administrative burden to flexibly support ad-hoc care and do not mandate online attendance.
- 5** Consider the competing demands of meeting sustainability goals and the requirement to support carers (e.g. trains, flight times on weekends).
- 6** Decouple measures of research impact and esteem from travel opportunities with updated academic guidance.
- 7** Allow for family-friendly travel accommodation options including booking outside of approved institutional travel providers.
- 8** Provide a per-diem (a daily allowance) option for complex trips to reduce administrative burden on carers.
- 9** When hosting an event, ensure risk assessments and insurance policy align to allow access to those under the age of 18.



Balancing caring and careers

Advocating for parents and carers in STEMM