Unpaid caregiving and paid work: different pathways, divergent outcomes

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Abstract:

This paper uses longitudinal data to provide a dynamic analysis of employment and caregiving histories for 4339 people over 15-20 years. We analyse these histories as sequences using optimal matching and cluster analysis to group similar life-courses. Regression analysis shows that prior to embarking on different pathways, people are already differentiated by individual characteristics and attitudes towards gender roles. Differences in differences estimation shows that some initial differences in income, subjective health and wellbeing widen over time, while others narrow. In particular, those following the most caregiving-intensive pathways not only end up poorer but also experience a relative decline in subjective health and wellbeing. Within a life-cycle context, these results are consistent with pre-determination, persistence, and path dependence as well as caregiver burden.

Keywords: caregiving, unpaid work, labour force participation, social attitudes, life-course theory