

A photograph showing a person from the side, wearing glasses and a white t-shirt, focused on writing on a document with a black pen. The background is a blurred indoor setting with vertical wooden slats. The image is partially obscured by white rectangular shapes.

Research Tour de Table Eurocarers – May 2024

HOGENT – 360° Care and Well-being

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Changes in care networks during the COVID-19 pandemic: application of the Convoys of Care model.

D. Lambotte; B. De Koker; N. De Witte

6th Transforming Care Conference

Symposium 'Possibilities for care convoys: imaginative and diverse conversations'

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Background: COVID-19 pandemic.

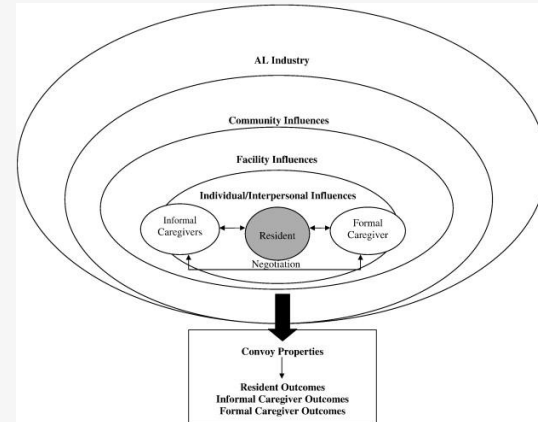
- Impact on the physical health of individuals, but also on economic, cultural, and social life
- Strict restrictions and hard lockdown
- The pandemic especially affected those in need of care and those providing the care needed



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Changes in care convoy properties.

- Care convoys (Kemp et al., 2013) > broad perspective on care networks
- Care convoy properties:
 - Structure
 - Function
 - Adequacy



Research questions.

How did the structure, function and adequacy of care convoys change during the COVID-19 pandemic?

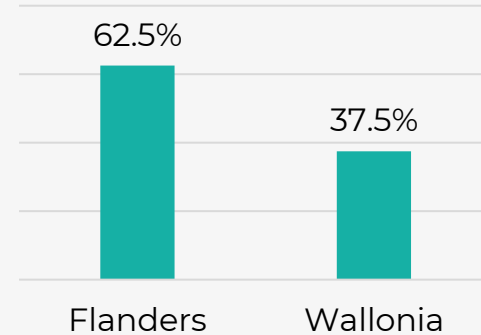
What is the relationship between care convoy changes and informal carers' mental health?

Data and methods.

- Self-developed online questionnaire
- In collaboration with informal care organisations (i.e., Steunpunt Mantelzorg; Aidants Proches asbl)
- Disseminated between May 11 and 31, 2020, in Flanders and between June 15 and August 15, 2020, in Wallonia
- Descriptive statistics and bivariate analyses (i.e., Chi-square tests)

Population.

- n = 1,041 informal carers

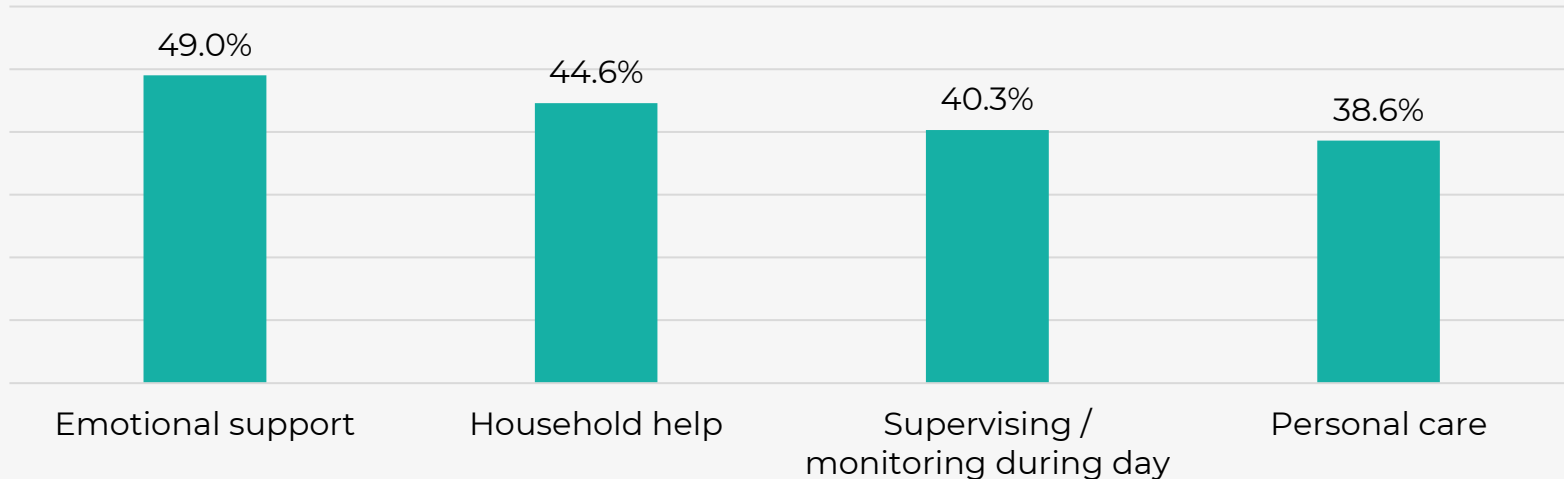


- Majority of participants was female (81.7%), married (62.5%), aged between 50-64 years (48.0%)
- 39.1% of participants cared for a parent, 27.7% for a partner and 21.7% for a child

Results: changes in care convoys' structure and function.

- A more intensive caring role for participants

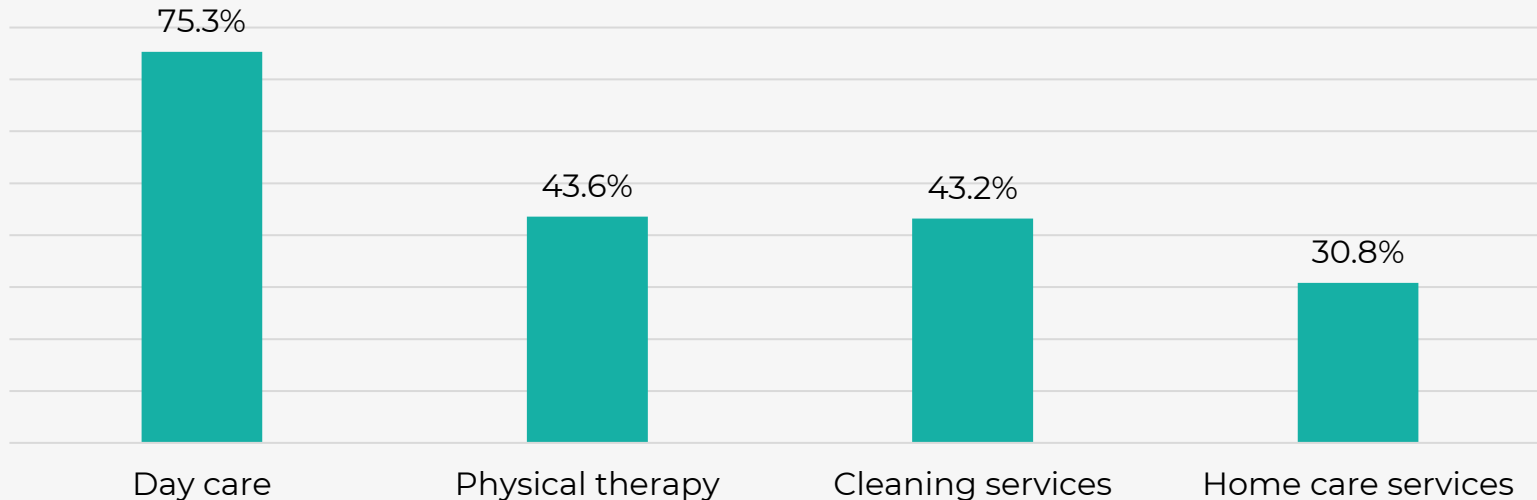
More during the COVID-19 pandemic



Results: changes in care convoys' structure and function.

- No longer help or less help from professional care workers

Not during the COVID-19 pandemic

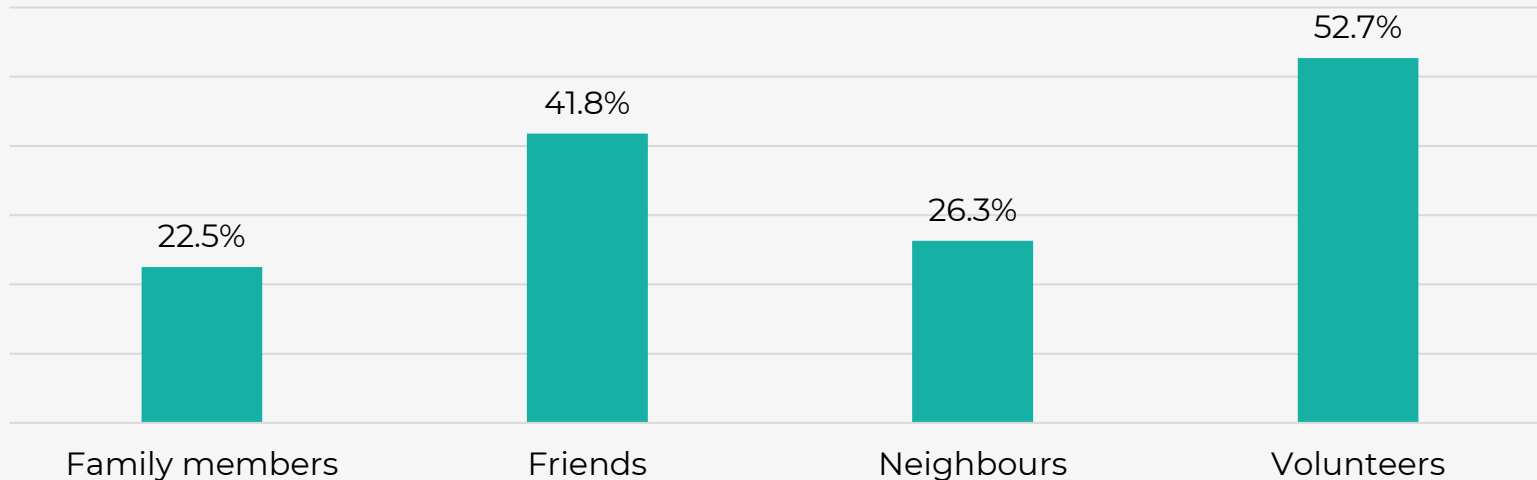


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Results: changes in care convoys' structure and function.

- No longer help or less help from other informal carers

Not during the COVID-19 pandemic



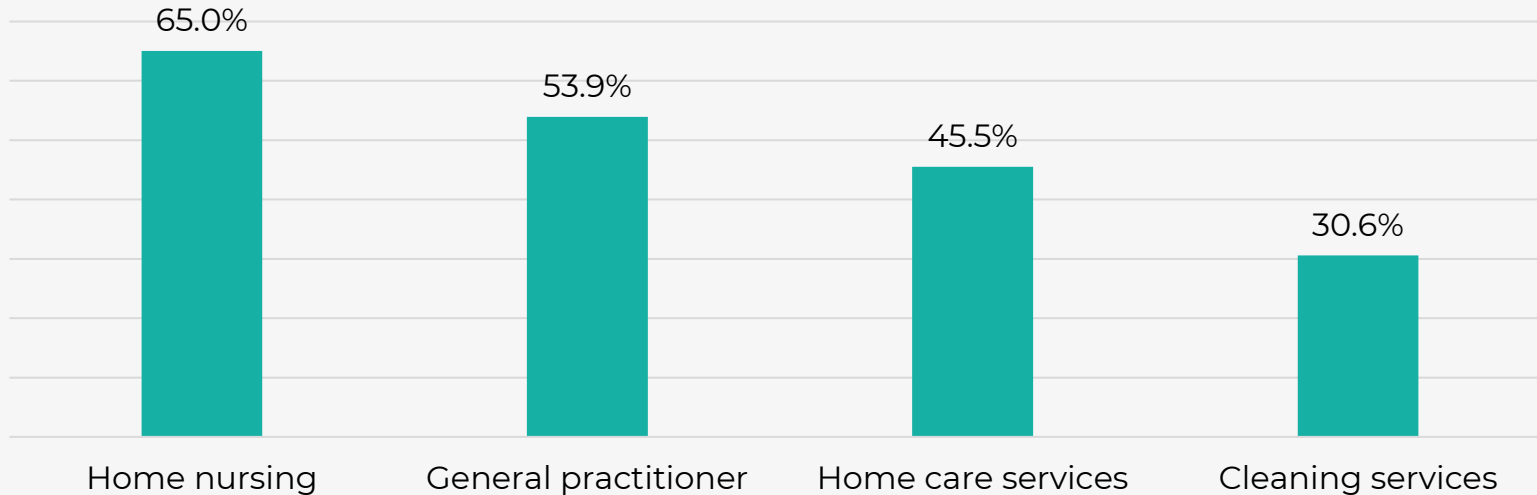
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During the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results: changes in care convoys' structure and function.

- Some professional care services were more resilient

Equal or more help during the COVID-19 pandemic






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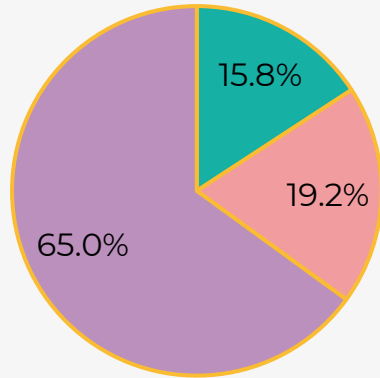
Results: changes in care convoys' structure and function.




Less help from other informal carers and professional carers	37.4%
Equal or more help from other informal carers, but less professional care	34.9%
Less help from other informal carers, but equal or more professional care	8.3%
Equal or more help from other informal carers and professional carers	19.4%

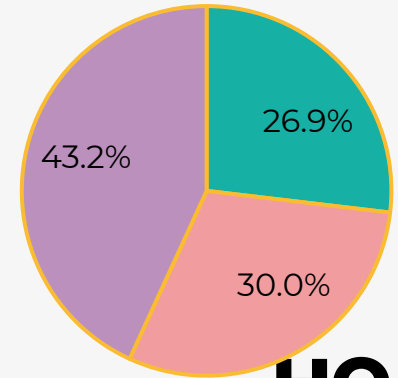
Results: changes in care convoys' adequacy.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic  During the COVID-19 pandemic

-  Dissatisfied
-  Neither dissatisfied, neither satisfied
-  Satisfied



-  Dissatisfied
-  Neither dissatisfied, neither satisfied
-  Satisfied



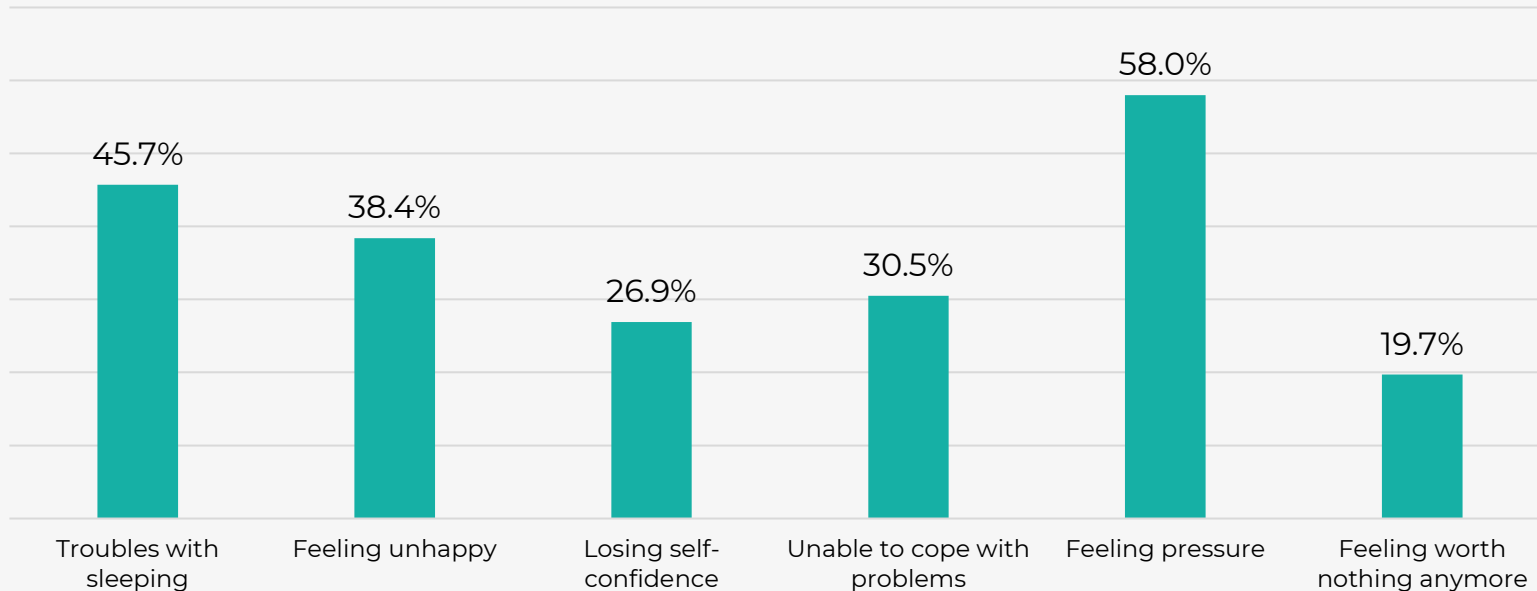
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Results: changes in care convoys' adequacy.

	Disagree
If I am temporarily unable to take care for the care recipient, I can call on someone close to me.	41.6%
I can rely sufficiently on persons in my close environment for practical support.	34.3%
I can rely sufficiently on persons in my close environment for emotional support.	27.2%

Results: informal carers' mental health outcomes.

(Remarkably) more than usual experiences with...

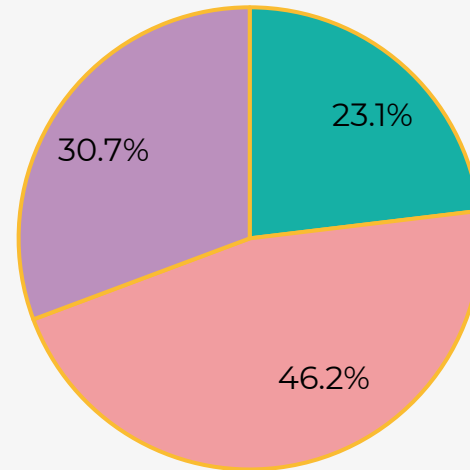


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Results: informal carers' mental health outcomes.

Perseverance time

- Very or rather easy
- Neither difficult nor easy
- Rather or very difficult



Results: informal carers' mental health outcomes.

- Significant differences between changes in care provision
- Significant differences between profiles of changes in care provision from other informal carers and professional care workers

Results: informal carers' mental health outcomes.

(Remarkably) more than usual experiences with ...



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Discussion.

- Important changes in the structure and function of care convoys during the COVID-19 pandemic: smaller care convoys during the COVID-19 pandemic, with less help from different types of informal carers and professional care workers
- Increase in informal caregiving might be caused by loss of professional support services or retreat of other informal carers

Discussion.

- **Consequences for care convoys' adequacy**
 - **The social distancing measures also limited opportunities for social support!**
- **Professional care and informal care disruption significantly increased the probability of psychological distress in informal care**

Conclusion.

- **More possibilities in choice of solutions and alternatives to make the care system more resilient and able to respond to care recipients' and informal carers' needs during a pandemic**
- **Recognising the crucial role of informal carers within care recipients' care convoy, also during a crisis**
- **Support structures for informal carers should be kept running during crises and in the future, along with measures that protect them**



Student-carers in higher education

Ponteur, F., Lambotte, D., De Koker, B.

Project-team HOGENT, Steunpunt mantelzorg & EhB

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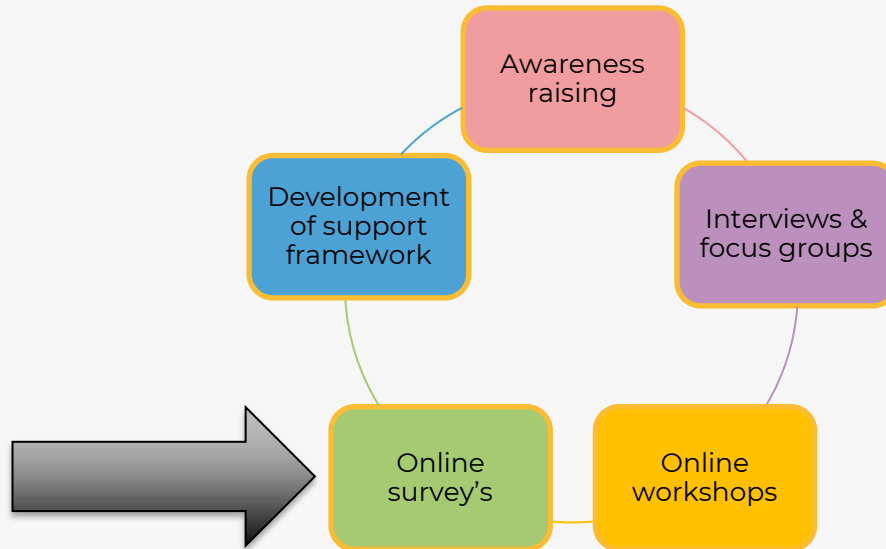
Context

- 17% of students in higher education provide informal care (HOWEST & VIVES, 2019)
- Young adults carers (YACs) have higher chances than other students to drop out of higher education, struggle with competing demands
- Education professionals are not always aware of young adults' carer roles

=> How to create a carer friendly higher education institution? What are the needs of student-carers and how to support them in higher education?

Co-design approach

- Active involvement central stakeholders: YACs, students, lecturers, Social service division (STUVO) & student coaches, Steunpunt mantelzorg, local partners.



Online survey student-carers

- 50.5% perceive the combi of study and informal care as difficult
- 29.5% can combine studying and providing informal care well to very well
- Problems in combining:

Table 3: Frequency of problems experienced in educational activities due to taking up care tasks (N=105)

	% (N)				
	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
I am late for class	37.1% (39)	26.7% (28)	30.5% (32)	5.7% (6)	0
I am late for my internship	61.5% (64)	24% (25)	13.5% (14)	1% (1)	0
I leave classes earlier	35.6% (37)	19.2% (20)	32.7% (34)	10.6% (11)	1.9% (2)
I skip classes	24% (25)	20.2% (21)	40.4% (42)	11.5% (12)	3.8% (4)
I fail to meet a deadline	32.4% (34)	16.2% (17)	35.2% (37)	13.3% (14)	2.9% (3)
I experience difficulties in group work	20.4% (21)	22.3% (23)	33% (34)	19.4% (20)	4.9% (5)
I find it difficult to concentrate	11.4% (12)	7.6% (8)	32.4% (34)	27.6% (29)	21% (22)

Online survey student-carers

- **45,2% told no one in programme about caregiving situation**
- **If shared, mostly with fellow-students and (individual) teachers**

Online survey student-carers

- Support measures:

Table 7: desired educational support measures (N=105)

	% (N)
Class recordings in case of absence	69.5% (73)
Flexibility for classes/activities/excursions with mandatory attendance	56.1% (59)
Flexibility regarding deadlines	50.4% (53)
Possibility for (part-time) remote learning	47.6% (50)
Notes from classes in case of absence	45.7% (48)
Possibility to be available via smartphone during lessons	38.0% (40)
Being permitted to leave class earlier or arrive later	38.0% (40)
Contact person for mediation towards educational staff	37.1% (39)
Support in planning lessons and tasks	32.3% (34)
Alternative to group work outside the class hours	31.4% (33)
Adjusted hours and days for internship	25.9% (27)
Peer support groups at college/university	22.8% (24)
Being able to use a silent room	21.9% (23)
Other desired educational support measures	5.7% (6)

Online survey student-carers

- Apply for an informal care statute if it existed?

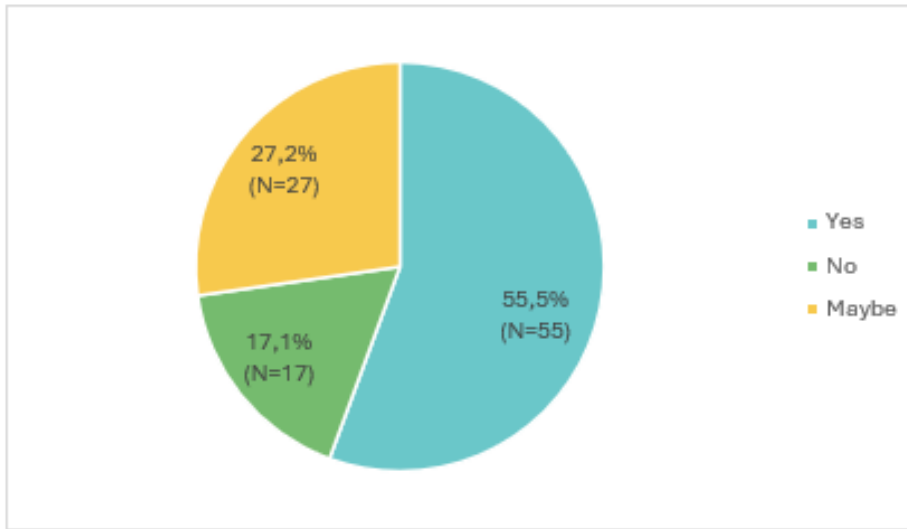


Chart 3: applications for "student informal carer" statute (N=99)

Online survey student-carers

- *I think this could make a big difference. Hopefully, I can still decide for myself at which moments I can use these separate measures and when not.....*

I do not always want to feel like I am getting a special treatment. Support from the school would be a great help, more understanding for sure as well.

But I would rather not want my fellow students to know that I am an informal carer, that I can choose to who I tell this and to who I do not. So never being addressed as an informal carer in front of the other students, being treated in a subtle way, ... I would rather not draw too much attention to it.

COMBINING CARE AND STUDY

Alliance project HOGENT - EhB



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2023

Diversity sensitive care

- Erasmus+ project: Diversity sensitive care of older persons with migrant background and their families
 - Development and testing training program for higher education
 - Developing and testing online training materials for professionals
 - Policy recommendations

<https://www.diversitysensitivitycare.eu>



Thank you!

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