



**Care
Alliance**
Ireland

"Some reflections on state supports for family carers over the past 20 years".

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Care Alliance Ireland – Some Background

- [Care Alliance Ireland](#) – Umbrella organisation of 100+ orgs. supporting not-for-profit groups who provide supports for family carers.
- Concentrate on macro advocacy: policy, research, governance, etc.
- Also deliver online supports for family carers
 - [Online Family Carer Support Group](#)
 - Employment Readiness Projects ([Kaleidoscope](#) (2021), [Return Ready](#) (2023) & [Reemerge 1](#) (2024) and [2](#) (2025))

State Supports for Family Carers 2005-2026

Income Adequacy of Carer's Allowance - In real terms, an increase of 14%, just about the same as increases in wages.

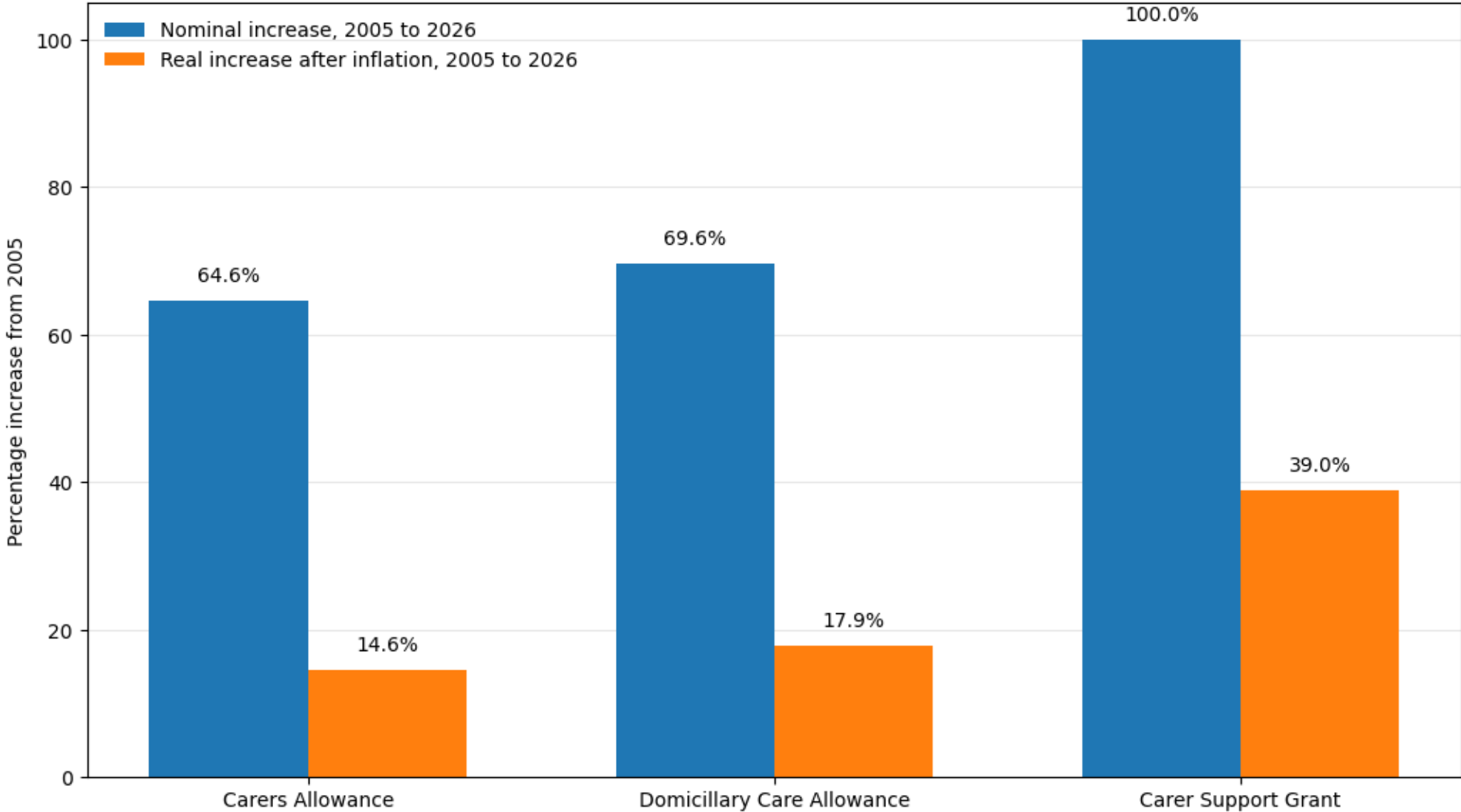
Means-test reform trajectory for Carer's Allowance
(278% increase in income disregard)

Half-Rate Carer's Allowance –50,000 recipients.

Carer's Support Grant –5 times increase in real terms

Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) 18% increase in real terms

Changes in Irish income support rates, 2005 to 2026



Source file mixes weekly rates and an annual grant.
This chart therefore compares percentage change rather than euro amounts.

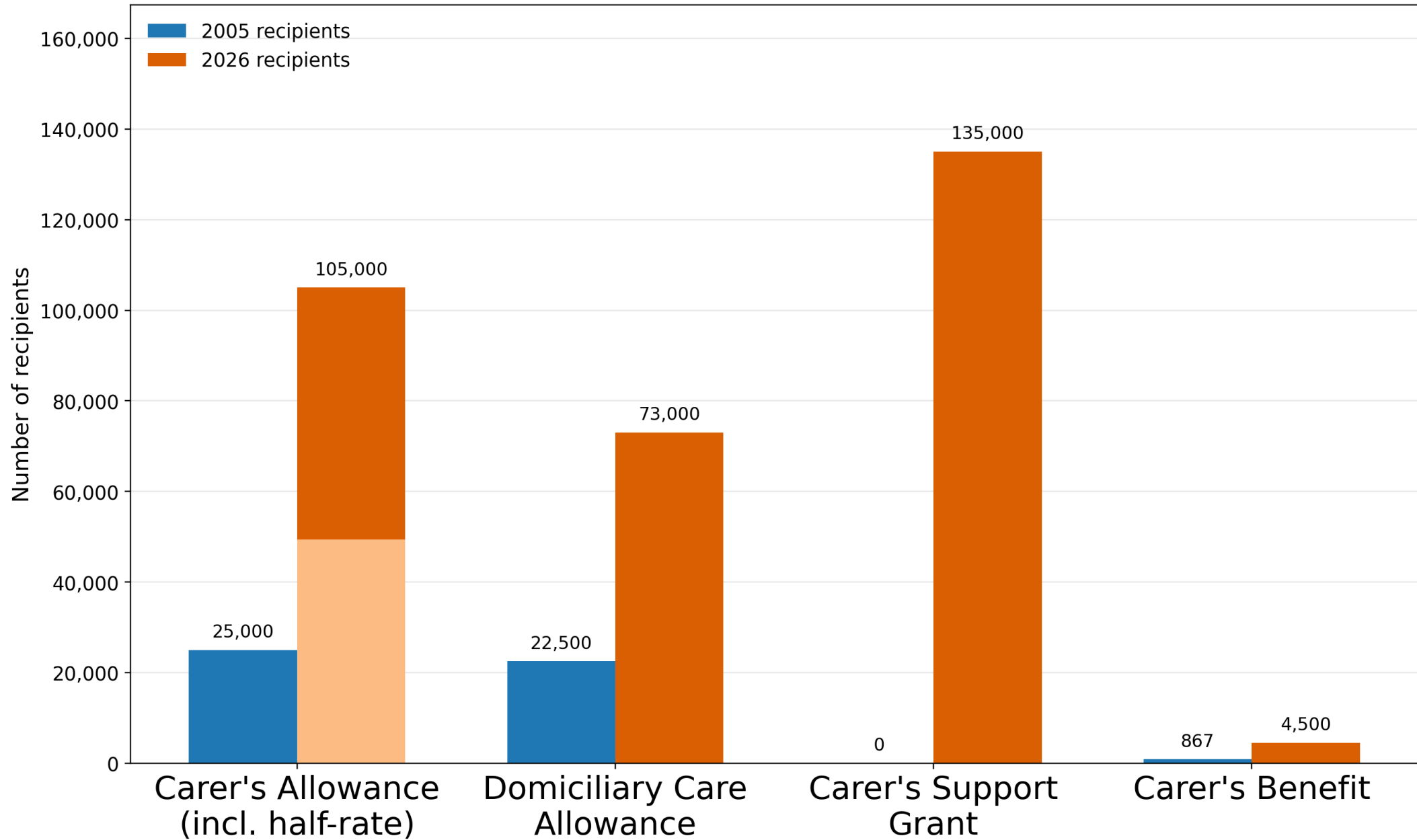
State Supports for Family Carers 2005-2026

Carers Benefit – 867 recipients in 2005, in 2026 it will be 4,600

Home Care Provision – Risen from 7m home care hours for 29,000 people to 25m home care hours for 60,000 people

Long-Term Carers' Contribution introduced for the State Pension (Contributory) from January 2024 – has benefitted thousands, mostly women

Changes in numbers receiving income supports, 2005 to 2026



Lighter orange section represents 47% of the 106,430 Carer's Allowance recipients.

Trends

- Income support for Carers - Now over €2.2 billion annually – 7.6% of total DSP expenditure – was c.3% in 2005.
- However
 - Inflation, population growth, doubling of aged >65 and over, more carers identifying
- Greater general eligibility - (fuel allowance, CB (self employed), income disregards, 18.5 hrs. rule)
- Significant increases in the intensity of home care support, on average.
- Govt. Expenditure Income Support and Home Care – 1% to 1.7%

Has the overall Landscape Changed?

- Are a greater percentage of full-time family carers in receipt of income supports? → **Yes**
- Are family carers today more treated as partners in care? → **Possibly**
- Do family carers feel more supported now? → **Not sure**
- Are family carers more visible and more talked about in the media? → **Yes**
- Are family carers better represented in advocacy groups? → **Hopefully**
- Are more family carers present at various annual carer fora? → **Yes**
- Are family carers health and wellbeing better now? → **Difficult to know**
- How do family carers feel about the support they get from their extended family? → **??**

Brass Tax

- About double the proportion of full-time carers now get a weekly carer support payment (Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit)
- The real value of this income for carers who get a weekly payment has increased only about 0.7% per year.
- There are many more full-time carers who ALSO get another weekly income support (max €135)
- Home care support hours - 4.5 hours to 8 hours per week.
- Indirect supports for carers
- Additional Costs of Disability (Care) – promised in 2027.

8 Reasons to Make Carers Allowance Tax Exempt

- Inconsistency with comparable payments
- Financial strain and income adequacy
- Recognition and reciprocity
- Gender equity
- Limited Exchequer gain versus harm caused
- System cost avoidance
- Administrative simplification
- International and domestic precedent

Making Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit Tax-Exempt in the Republic of Ireland



Guiding support for family carers

Position Paper
February 2026

Sources / References

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2026-02-26/17/>

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2026-02-26/75/>

https://www.carealliance.ie/userfiles/files/Family_Care_Irl_2025.pdf

https://www.carealliance.ie/userfiles/files/Making_Carers_Allowance_and_Carers_Benefit_Tax_Exempt_in_the_Republic_of_Ireland.pdf

HSE Annual Report 2005 <https://www.lenus.ie/entities/publication/5f6d1493-4036-425f-ae95-10aefdd86b82#>

<https://budgeting.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/MESL-2025.pdf>

2005 earnings (National Employment Survey / historical CSO tables)

2024–2025 earnings (modern CSO series)