

# Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the family carers of older people living with dementia in Italy and in Hungary

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on both people with dementia and families caring for them. The aim of the research was to compare the difficulties of family carers of dementia patients in Italy and in Hungary, before and during the first wave of the pandemic. Research questions: (1) How has the pandemic changed the lives of family carers? (2) How did government stringency measures change the availability of care-related help? (3) What other changes did families experience? Due to the difficulty of reaching the target group, as well as restrictions, an online questionnaire was designed and distributed in both countries via social media (self-help Facebook groups of family carers of people with dementia). Data was collected between May and July, 2020. The sample consisted of 188 Italian and 182 Hungarian respondents. Results show that about one-quarter of both subsamples experienced a deterioration in their financial status. A decline in both general and mental health was also reported. Due to “lockdown”, family carers’ burden increased substantially. Utilization of care-related help decreased, and the share of those left with no help increased in both countries. Cross-country differences emerged in terms of dementia care system, severity of the first pandemic wave, and measures put in place by governments.

## Biography

László Árpád KOSTYÁL is a Social Policy Expert, and a PhD student at Semmelweis University's Doctoral School of Mental Health Sciences (Hungary). Programme: Resources of individuals and communities from a sociological and mental health perspective. His formal work experience includes strategic planning in developing

new curriculums for employees working in social and child protection services, and professional supervision and project management of government- and EU-funded projects aimed at modernizing social services. He is currently employed as an instructor at Semmelweis University. Research interests: elderly care, sustainability of social support systems, mental health support of informal carers of dementia patients.