

Caring Unseen

Understanding Family Carers in 2026

Polling Report and Quantitative Analysis: Wellbeing, Carer's Allowance, Political Outlook, Awareness of Support Options and Future Projections among family carers, with local Census, benefits and health data

You are not alone

GoodOaks
Quality Care at Home

2026

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You Are Not Alone Campaign

There are some 5.8 million unpaid carers across the UK, according to the 2021 Census. Every individual carer provides incredible and life-changing support for those they care for.

At GoodOaks, we know that providing unpaid care can be overwhelming and isolating, and we believe that there is an absence of sufficient information, support, and resources available for those people – and their loved ones – who need extra help.

That's why we launched our campaign; You Are Not Alone.

We want to celebrate and support the quiet, unseen, unheralded commitment that millions of people make to those they love who are struggling to cope day-to-day at home. We are on a mission to help; through providing information guides and sessions, campaigning for more family carer support, sharing interviews with experts, joining up families with local services, and much more.

You Are Not Alone aims to address the lack of information, resources and assistance for individuals needing some extra help to remain independent, and for those caring for them. GoodOaks, with its partnership approach, seeks to empower families and improve lives by providing essential support and celebrating the joy of staying at home.

The campaign focuses on recognising the invaluable role of family carers and aims to make caring for loved ones more manageable. It strives to create awareness about the challenges faced by carers and advocates for increased support, information, and celebration for their efforts.

Our goals:

- To raise awareness about the challenges faced by caring family members
- To provide genuinely useful information and resources for families of individuals needing extra help due to their age or condition
- To advocate for policy changes to better support family carers
- To encourage quality time spent with loved ones
- To connect families with local support services and build connections within local communities
- To engage with people who are starting to find remaining independent at home a struggle.
- To demonstrate the benefits of GoodOaks' unique partnership-led approach to care provision

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Since launch the campaign has offered a free online resource hub, a helpline run from GoodOaks' head office, and local information sessions run by its franchise partners.

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About GoodOaks

GoodOaks is an award-winning homecare company focused on providing quality care to individuals in their own homes.

Set up by two care professionals, GoodOaks is built on the understanding of the privilege of stepping through someone's front door into their home, and the responsibility that comes with that; to protect the client and to provide what they need with respect, empathy and warmth.

The founders' experiences working as care professionals informs their approach to care; the GoodOaks Way;

People: GoodOaks solely employs individuals who embody their caring values. The company is committed to valuing, developing, and appropriately rewarding its teams. This commitment ensures the attraction and retention of top-tier care professionals for clients.

Partnership: The company's distinctive partnership approach positions them as proactive collaborators within the entire support network. They recognise clients and their families as the experts on their lives and conditions.

Planet: GoodOaks calculates and offset the carbon emissions generated by care professionals during travel between clients and is actively exploring innovative methods to reduce its environmental impact.

Today, GoodOaks has 31 branches across England. It employs over 400 care professionals and cares for some 500 individuals.



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At a Glance

Two years after the first Caring Unseen report, unpaid carers in England are less hopeful about the future, no less critical of the government and clear about what would help.

51%

of unpaid carers cannot meet their own health and wellbeing needs

45%

felt stressed in the past week, the feeling named most often

61%

say the government supports unpaid carers ineffectively

39%

say the Prime Minister Andy Burnham's proposed social care reforms make them more likely to vote Labour

59%

of the 666 Carer's Allowance claimers say it does not reflect the value of their care

50%

of claimers who have worked have held back to stay under the £204 earnings limit

18%

expect their ability to care to improve over the next two years, down from 24% in 2024 like for like

11%

understand the Carer's Leave Act, two years after it came into force

37%

would consider a paid career in care, rising to 70% of 18 to 24-year-olds

The 2021 Census counted 4.68 million unpaid carers in England. 1.40 million care for 50 hours or more a week, and they are concentrated in the country's most deprived neighbourhoods.

The Current Climate

Unpaid carers remain the largest source of care in England, and the system of support built around them is under review.

The 2021 Census counted **4.68 million** people in England aged five and over who provide unpaid care, 8.8% of residents. **1.40 million** of them care for 50 hours or more a week. Across the UK, Carers UK puts the number of unpaid carers at 5.8 million, and in November 2024 Carers UK and the Centre for Care valued their work at **£184.3 billion** a year, close to the £189 billion combined NHS budget of the four nations in 2021/22.

Caring is not spread evenly. The North East has the highest share of residents providing unpaid care (10.1%) and the highest share caring for 50 hours or more a week (3.4% of its residents). London has the lowest share on both counts (7.2% and 2.0%), partly because its population is younger.

The main financial support is Carer's Allowance, worth **£86.45** a week from April 2026 for people who care for at least 35 hours a week. That is £2.47 for each of those hours, about a fifth (19%) of what the same hours would earn at the £12.71 National Living Wage. Carers lose the allowance entirely if their earnings pass **£204** a week, about 16 hours of work at the National Living Wage.

In July 2026 the Department for Work and Pensions opened a call for evidence on the earnings limit, asking whether to replace the cliff edge with a taper and whether to relax the rules on the hours a carer can work. It closed on 18 August 2026. Separately, since April 2026 the department has been reassessing around 200,000 historic overpayment cases, of which around 25,000 are expected to see debts reduced, cancelled or refunded.

The Carer's Leave Act, which came into force in April 2024, gives employees a week of unpaid leave a year to arrange or provide care. The government has also changed since the first edition of this report: the 2024 survey asked about a Conservative government, and this one asks about the Labour government elected in July 2024. Andy Burnham became Prime Minister in July 2026, three months before fieldwork. Respondents were asked about his proposed social care reforms without being told what they were. On 29 September 2026, the day of his Labour Party conference speech, he set out plans for a National Care Service in the next Parliament, giving older people free personal care, funded by changing the State Pension triple lock from April 2030 (GOV.UK, 29 September 2026).

> Carer's Allowance works out at £2.47 for each of the 35 hours of care a week it requires.

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Unpaid Carers Across England

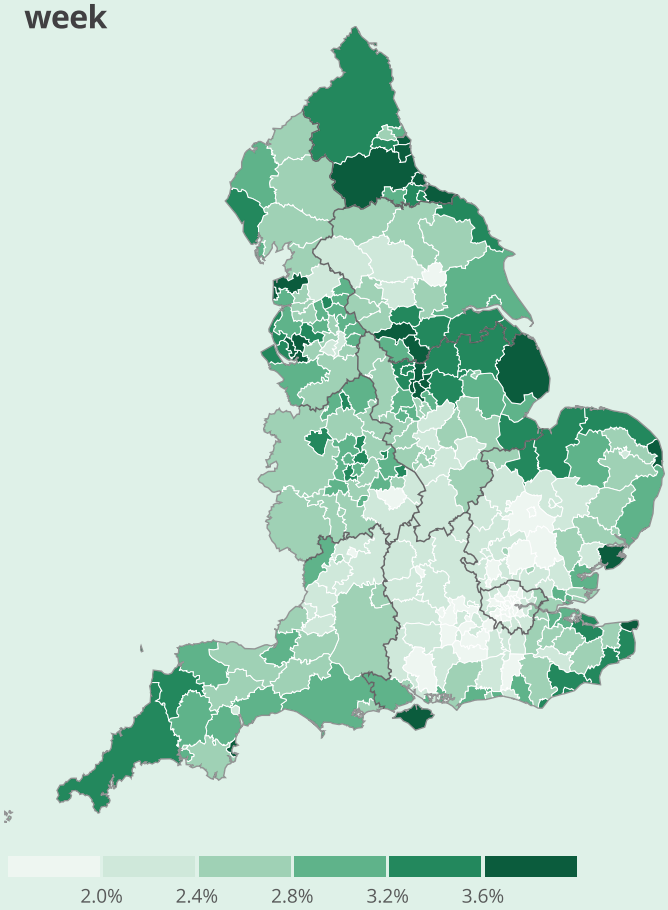
Where carers live tracks where people live. Where the most people care for 50 hours or more a week does not: it is concentrated in coastal towns and former industrial areas, from County Durham to the Lincolnshire and Essex coasts.

Number of unpaid carers, by district



Circle area is proportional to the number of carers aged 5 and over.
Largest: Birmingham, 91,445.

Share of residents caring 50+ hours a week



The largest numbers of carers are in the biggest authorities: Birmingham (91,445), Leeds (61,490), Cornwall (54,552) and County Durham (52,678). The share caring for 50 hours or more a week varies more than three-fold between districts. In **East Lindsey**, **4.7%** of residents provide 50 hours or more of unpaid care a week, followed by Knowsley and Tendring (4.1%), Sunderland (4.0%) and St. Helens (4.0%). In Wandsworth the figure is 1.4%.

60 of England's 309 districts have at least 3.2% of residents caring for 50 hours or more, against an England average of 2.6%. They are spread across the former industrial areas of the North East, the North West, South Yorkshire, the East Midlands and the West Midlands, and along the coasts of Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Kent, Essex, East Sussex and Devon, the Isle of Wight and Cornwall. Most have older populations, more long-term illness and more deprivation (page 9). GoodOaks has 21 of its 31 branches in the South East and London (map, page 46). Fewer residents there care for 50 hours or more, as a share, but the number of carers is large.

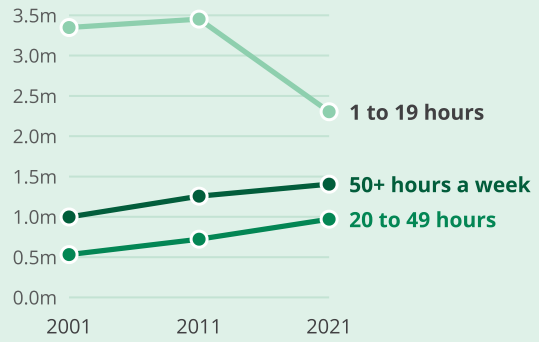
Census 2021 (ONS TS039), usual residents aged 5 and over, 309 local authority districts (2021 boundaries). Shares are not age-standardised at district level. Boundaries: ONS Open Geography Portal, December 2021, ultra-generalised. Hover over a district in the online version for its figures.

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Unpaid Carers Over Time

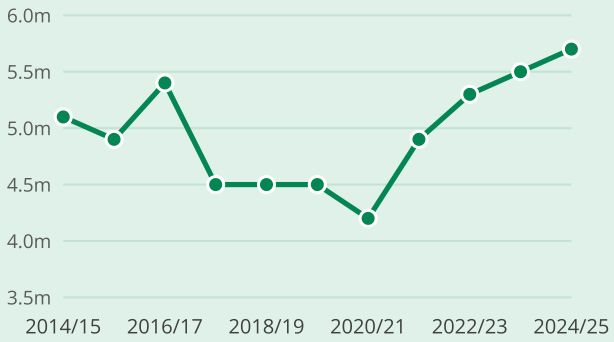
The total has gone up and down. The number caring for 50 hours or more a week has risen at every census since 2001.

Unpaid carers in England by weekly hours of care, Census 2001, 2011 and 2021



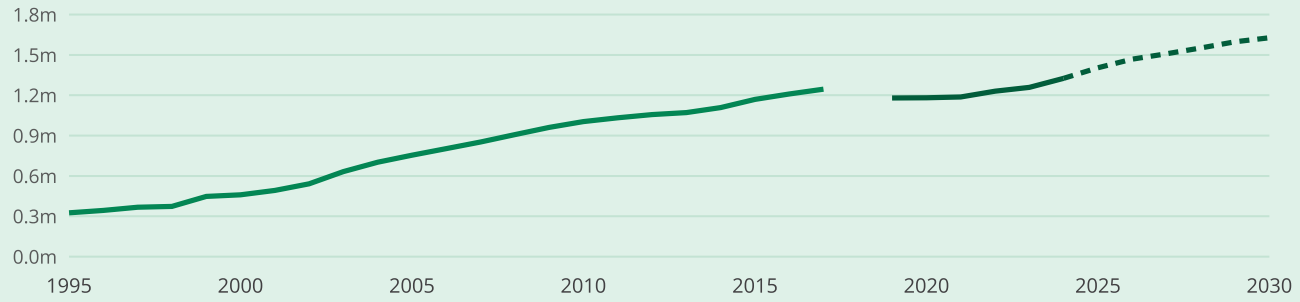
ONS Census, Nomis UV021, QS301EW and TS039. 2021 counts residents aged 5 and over.

Informal carers in the UK, Family Resources Survey, 2014/15 to 2024/25 (millions)



DWP, Family Resources Survey 2024/25, Table 5.1. 2020/21 sample affected by the pandemic.

People entitled to Carer's Allowance, 1995/96 to 2030/31 (millions)



DWP, Benefit expenditure and caseload tables, Spring Forecast 2026. Great Britain to 2017/18; England and Wales from 2019/20, after Scotland took over the benefit. From 1999/00 includes people entitled but not paid because of another benefit. Pale line: Great Britain; dark: England and Wales; dashed: DWP forecast.

England had **1.40 million** people caring for 50 hours or more a week in 2021, up from 1.26 million in 2011 and 1.00 million in 2001, a rise of **41%** in twenty years. The headline count fell over the same decade, from 5.43 million to 4.68 million, entirely among people caring for less than 20 hours. ONS cautions that a change in the wording of the 2021 question, and the pandemic, may account for part of that fall.

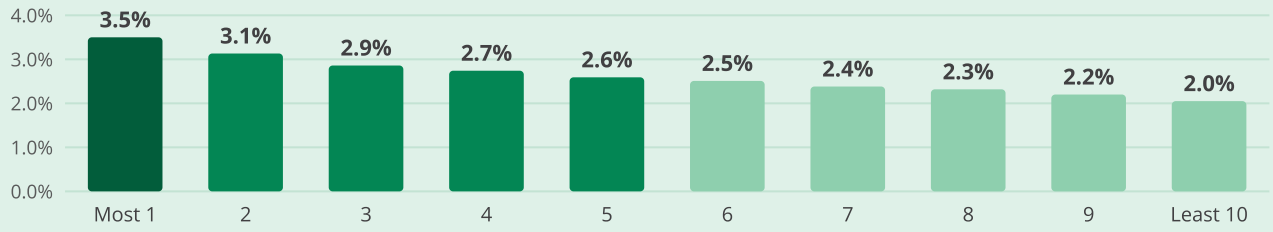
The UK-wide Family Resources Survey, which asks a different question, shows no lasting fall: it counted 5.7 million informal carers in 2024/25, against 4.5 million in 2019/20 and 4.2 million in the pandemic year of 2020/21. People entitled to Carer's Allowance have roughly trebled since 1999/00, the first year DWP counted those entitled but not paid, to 1.33 million in England and Wales in 2024/25, and DWP expects 1.63 million by 2030/31. Demand will keep rising: ONS projects England's population aged 85 and over to grow from 1.48 million in 2024 to 2.22 million by 2035.

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Why the Pattern Matters

People are most likely to care for 50 hours or more a week where incomes are lowest. Registered home care is also somewhat thinner in the councils where long hours of caring are most common, though that link is weaker.

Share of residents providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week, by neighbourhood deprivation (1 = most deprived tenth of England)



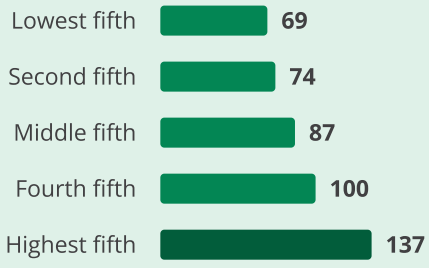
Census 2021 (ONS TS039) for 33,755 neighbourhoods (lower layer super output areas), grouped by the English Indices of Deprivation 2025 (MHCLG, October 2025). Bridgehead analysis.

In the most deprived tenth of neighbourhoods, **3.5%** of residents provide 50 hours or more of unpaid care a week. In the least deprived tenth the figure is 2.0%. The rate rises at every step from least to most deprived. Carers in deprived areas also care for longer: **38%** of carers in the most deprived tenth give 50 hours or more, against 24% in the least deprived.

Age does not explain the gap. Older people are more likely to need and to give care, yet the most deprived neighbourhoods are the youngest: 12.4% of their residents are 65 or over, against 22.9% in the least deprived. Across England's districts, the share caring 50 hours a week rises with the deprivation score (correlation 0.56; 0.69 outside London).

Registered home care is thinner, on average, where more residents give long hours of unpaid care, but the link is weak. Split 150 councils into fifths by the age-adjusted share caring 50 hours or more a week: the highest fifth has 12.8 home care agencies per 10,000 people aged 65 and over, the lowest 17.0. The middle fifths do not follow a steady pattern, and London accounts for part of the gap; outside it the figures are 11.9 and 14.1.

People giving 50+ hours of unpaid care a week for every registered home care agency



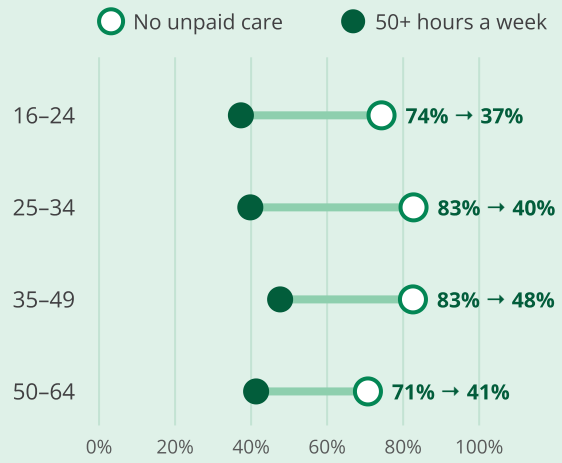
Councils are grouped into fifths by the share of residents giving that much care. CQC register, 7 October 2026 (15,670 home care agencies); Census 2021 TS039, TS039ASP and TS007A. 150 upper-tier council areas on 2021 boundaries, excluding the Isles of Scilly and the City of London and counting Cumbria as one. Agency counts do not measure hours of care delivered.

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Carers' Own Health and Work

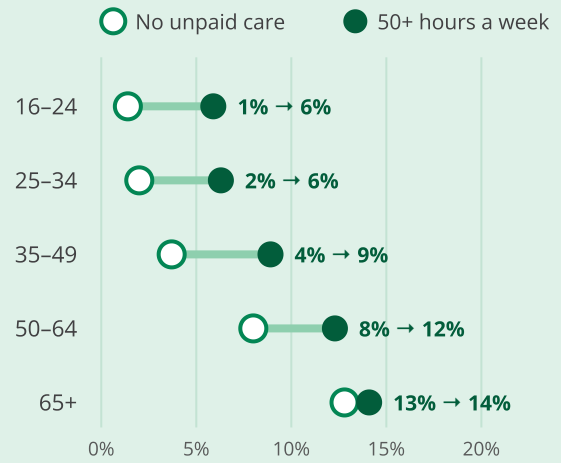
People who care for 50 hours or more a week are far less likely to be in paid work, and more likely to be in poor health, than people of the same age who do not provide care.

In employment, by age (excluding full-time students)



Census 2021, England. Census day fell in a lockdown, so 'in employment' includes people on furlough.

Health 'bad' or 'very bad', by age



Census 2021, England, self-reported general health.

Among people aged 16 to 64, **43%** of those caring 50 hours or more a week were in work at the 2021 Census, against 78% of those who provide no care. The gap is not about age: carers giving that much time are older, but within every age band their employment rate is 29 to 43 points lower, and adjusting for age leaves the gap at 33 to 35 points.

That is the backdrop to the earnings limit. Carer's Allowance is paid only to carers earning under £204 a week, and half of the claimers in this poll who have worked have held back to stay under it (page 28).

Carers' own health shows the same strain. **12%** of adults caring 50 hours or more a week described their health as bad or very bad, against 8% of non-carers of the same ages. The gap is widest in midlife: 9% against 4% among 35 to 49-year-olds. People who give fewer than 20 hours are, if anything, healthier than non-carers, so the toll rises with the hours of care.

The Census cannot say which comes first: poor health may keep some people out of work and at home. But it matches what carers told the poll, where 51% said they cannot meet their own health and wellbeing needs.

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Unpaid Carers Polling

On behalf of GoodOaks Homecare, OnePoll, a member of the British Polling Council, surveyed 1,000 unpaid carers across England between 9 and 15 October 2026.

This is the second edition of the survey. The first, published in April 2024, also polled 1,000 unpaid carers in England. Where a question was asked in the same way in both years, this report compares the results.

The questionnaire covers four themes from 2024: wellbeing, political outlook, awareness of care and support options, and the future. New this year are questions on Carer's Allowance and its earnings limit, on the Prime Minister Andy Burnham's proposed social care reforms and on whether carers would consider a paid career in care.

The sample is 1,000 adults who provide unpaid care and live in England. 61% are women, and half (50%) are aged 35 to 54. Results are unweighted; re-weighting them to the Census profile of carers by region and age moves most headline figures by three points or less (page 48). Questions about the earnings limit went only to the 666 respondents who receive Carer's Allowance.

Regional quotas were uneven: London supplied 280 respondents, the South East 250 and the South West 170, and each of the other six English regions 50. A regional result based on 50 people carries a margin of error of up to 14 percentage points, so this report shows all nine regions but draws firm conclusions only from the larger samples. It also compares London, the South East, the South West and the other six regions combined after adjusting each for the age of its respondents (page 41).

To place the poll in context, the report draws on the 2021 Census of population (Office for National Statistics) for the number and distribution of unpaid carers, and on the 2023-24 Survey of Adult Carers in England (NHS England), which questioned 42,258 carers known to their councils. Sources are listed on page 48.

Key Findings

Wellbeing

45% of unpaid carers said they had felt 'stressed' in the past week, the most common feeling by a distance. Frustration (29%) and loneliness (19%) came next.

51% of unpaid carers could not meet their own health and wellbeing needs, including 43% who could meet their loved ones' needs but not their own.

Carers aged 25 to 44 are under the most pressure: **53%** met their loved ones' needs but not their own, against 28% of over-65s.



Political Outlook

61% said the government supports unpaid carers ineffectively, the same as in 2024 about the previous government once the two samples' ages are matched (62%).

Dissatisfaction rises with age, from **42%** of 18 to 24-year-olds to **73%** of carers aged 65 and over.

39% said the Prime Minister Andy Burnham's proposed social care reforms make them more likely to vote Labour and 10% less likely. Among undecided voters the split was 30% to 5%.

Reform UK voters were the most critical of the government (**72%** ineffective). Even among Labour voters, more said ineffective (43%) than effective (29%).



Carer's Allowance and Work

Changes to Carer's Allowance took **52%** of first-choice requests, led by a higher weekly rate (25%).

59% of the 666 claimers said the allowance does not reflect the value of the care they provide.

42% of claimers had limited their hours, turned down work or turned down a promotion to stay under the £204 earnings limit. Those who had were more likely to be unable to meet their own needs (59% against 44%).

Awareness of Care and Support Options

Carer's Allowance was the best understood support option, yet only **43%** said they understood it well, down from 51% in 2024 like for like.

Only **11%** understood the Carer's Leave Act, falling to 3% of carers aged 65 and over.

40% were aware of the provisions, costs and benefits of live-in care before the survey; 36% were unaware.

Looking to the Future

34% said their current level of care is not sustainable, close to the 2024 figure once ages are matched (32%).

28% expect their ability to care to worsen over the next 18 to 24 months. 18% expect it to improve, down from 24% in 2024 like for like.

37% would consider a paid career in caregiving, rising to 70% of 18 to 24-year-olds.

The Regional Picture

South West carers were the most stretched of the larger regional samples: **58%** could not meet their own needs and 70% called government support ineffective.

London carers were the least critical of the government (**53%** ineffective) and the most open to a care career (50%), partly because London's sample is younger.

Census data show the North East has the highest share of residents caring for 50 hours or more a week (**3.4%**), against 2.0% in London.

Who Cares, and Where

England had 4.68 million unpaid carers at the 2021 Census, and 1.40 million cared for 50 hours or more a week. That figure has grown 41% since 2001, even though the total number of carers fell between 2011 and 2021.

Caring for 50 hours or more a week is concentrated on the coast and in former industrial areas: 4.7% of East Lindsey residents do so, against 1.4% in Wandsworth.

It follows deprivation. 3.5% of residents in the most deprived tenth of neighbourhoods care for 50 hours or more, against 2.0% in the least deprived.

Carers in deprived areas also care for longer: 38% of carers in the most deprived tenth of neighbourhoods give 50 hours or more a week, against 24% in the least deprived.

Two Years On and in Context

The 2024 sample was much younger, so its results are matched to this year's age profile. Like for like, two things have changed: fewer carers expect their ability to care to improve (24% to 18%), and fewer understand Carer's Allowance (51% to 43%). Views of the government and of whether care is sustainable have barely moved.

Women reported more stress, more unmet need and a harsher verdict on the government than men. The two groups look alike on the future and on a care career.

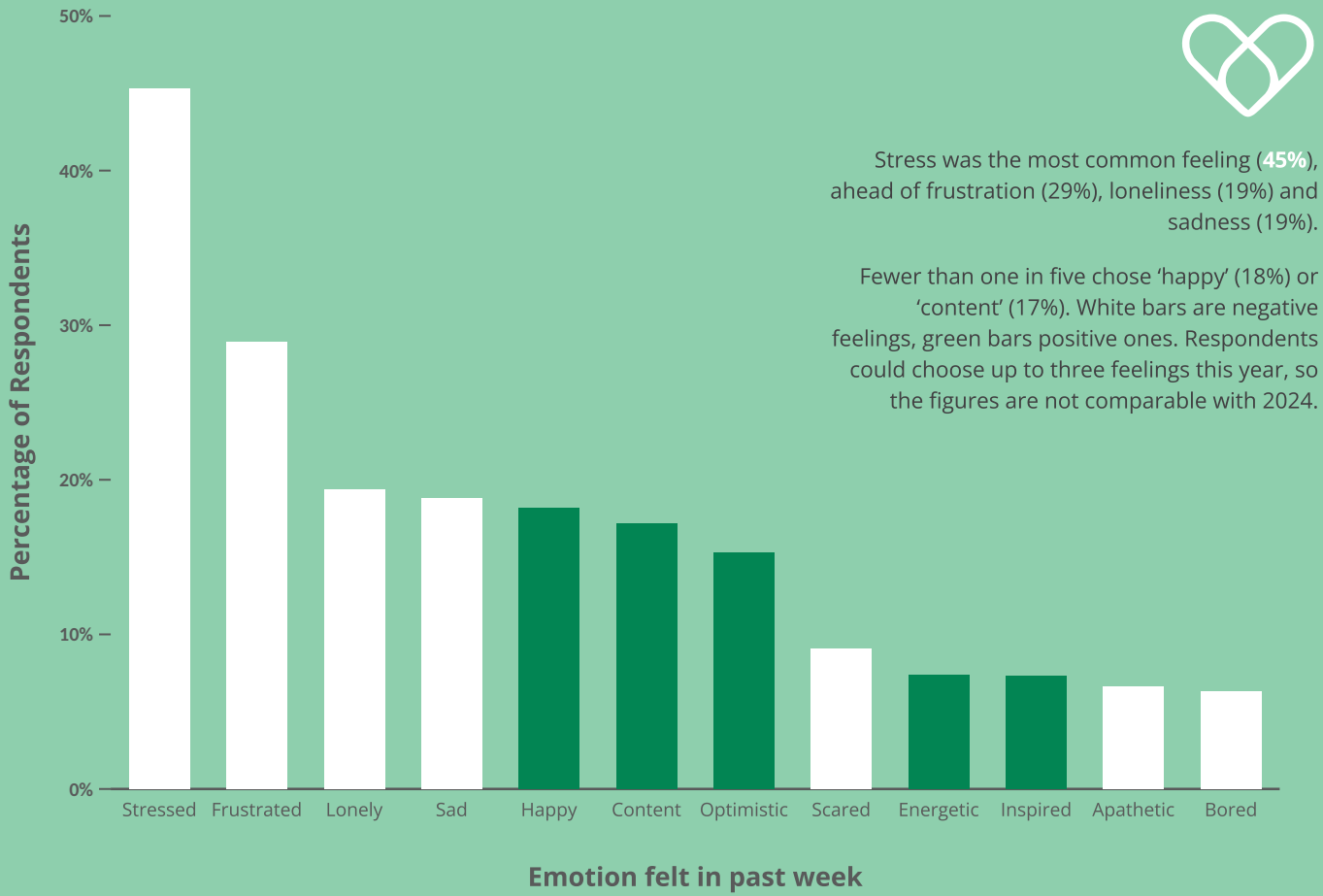
London's sample is younger than the others. Adjusting for age cuts London's response to the Burnham reforms from 45% to 39%, while unmet need in the South West stays the highest (60% adjusted).

GoodOaks' 31 branches sit in 23 council areas with 1.14 million unpaid carers, 24.5% of England's total. People are paid Carer's Allowance for 43 in every 100 carers there, against 50 in England as a whole.

Wellbeing

To gauge how unpaid carers in England are feeling, respondents were asked to choose up to three emotions they had felt in the past week, from the same list used in 2024.

Broadly speaking, which of the following, if any, best describes how you have felt emotionally in the past week? [Select up to three]



Stress was the most common feeling (**45%**), ahead of frustration (29%), loneliness (19%) and sadness (19%).

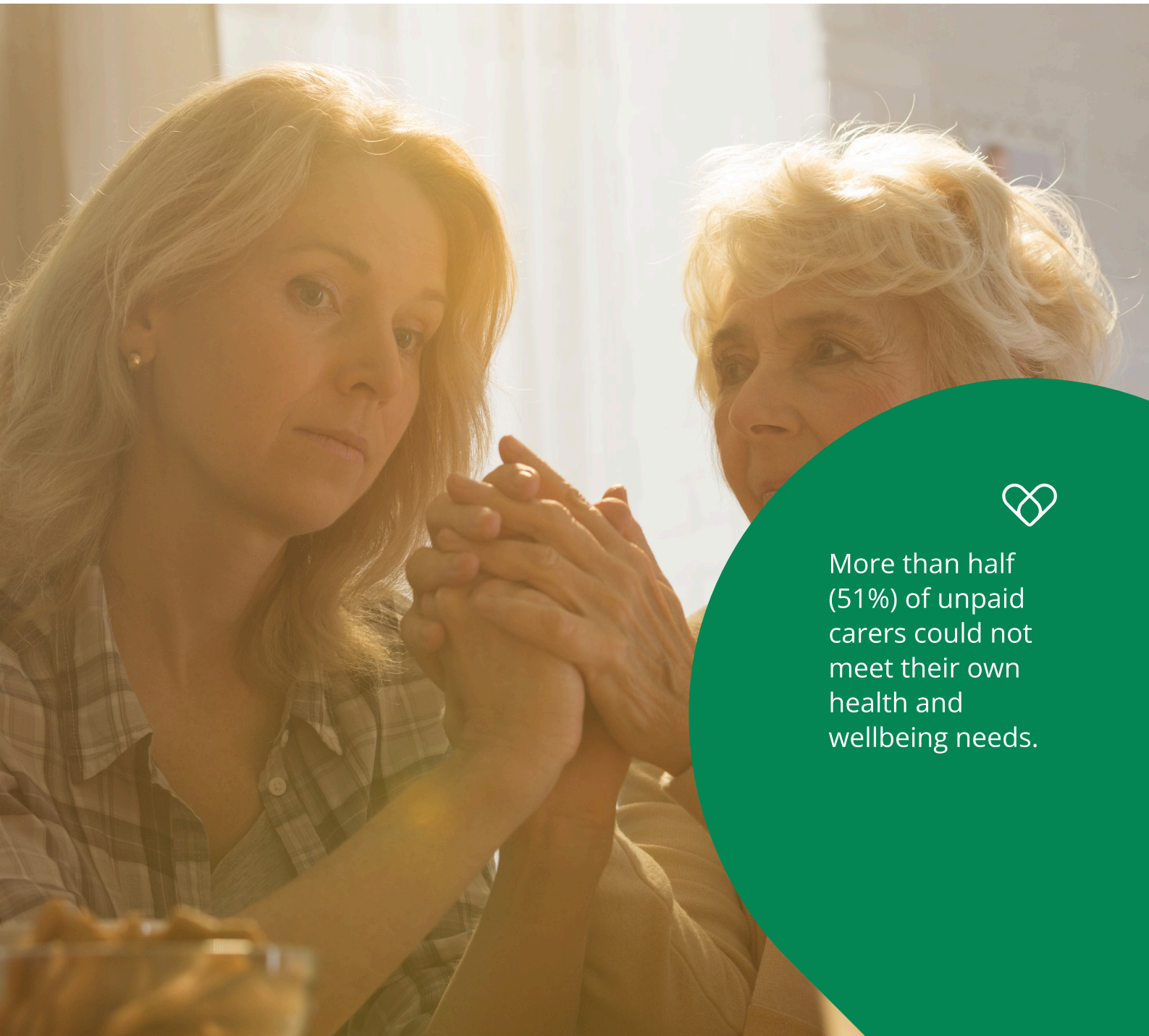
Fewer than one in five chose 'happy' (18%) or 'content' (17%). White bars are negative feelings, green bars positive ones. Respondents could choose up to three feelings this year, so the figures are not comparable with 2024.

Respondents were also asked to assess whether they could meet the health and wellbeing needs of their loved ones and of themselves. The options matched those used in 2024: both, their loved ones but not themselves, themselves but not their loved ones, or neither.

43% said they could meet their loved ones' needs but not their own, and a further 8% could meet neither. In all, **51%** of unpaid carers could not meet their own health and wellbeing needs.

39% could meet both. Just 6% could meet their own needs but not their loved ones', and 14% in total felt unable to meet the needs of the person they care for.

The pattern is the one the 2024 report found, when 48% of carers said they could meet their loved ones' needs but not their own.



More than half (51%) of unpaid carers could not meet their own health and wellbeing needs.

Wellbeing by Region

Unmet need was highest in the South West and lowest in London among the larger regional samples, though most regional differences fall within the margin of error.

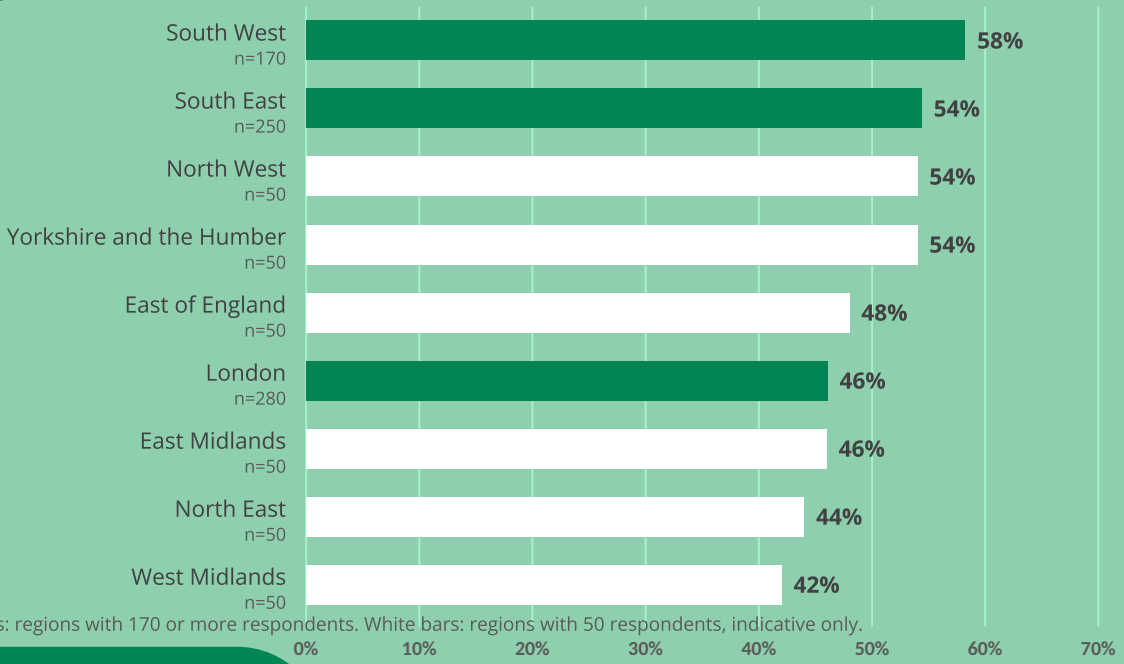
58% of South West carers could not meet their own health and wellbeing needs and 51% reported feeling stressed in the past week, the highest of the three largest regional samples on both measures. Adjusted for the age of respondents, the South West figure for unmet need rises to 60%. Its lead over the South East (54%) is within the margin of error.

London sits at the other end: 46% of carers there could not meet their own needs and 14% reported feeling lonely, against 25% in the South East.

Six regions were sampled at 50 respondents each. At that size a difference of up to 14 points can arise by chance, so the low figures for the West Midlands (42%) and the North East (44%) should be read as indicative.

Council data point the same way for the North East. In the 2023-24 Survey of Adult Carers in England, carers known to North East councils reported the highest quality of life of any region (7.6 out of 12, against 7.3 for England) and the least loneliness.

Share of carers unable to meet their own health and wellbeing needs, by region



Green bars: regions with 170 or more respondents. White bars: regions with 50 respondents, indicative only.

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Wellbeing by Age

The pressure to put a loved one first falls hardest on carers aged 25 to 44.

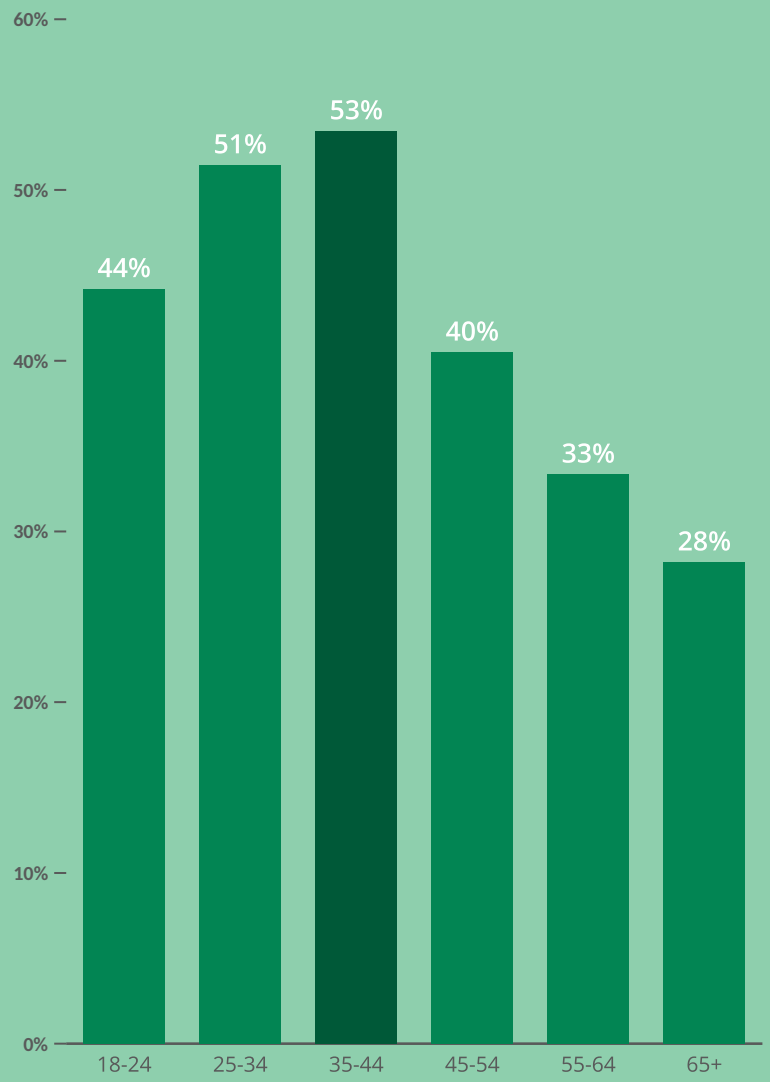
53% of 35 to 44-year-olds and 51% of 25 to 34-year-olds said they could meet their loved ones' needs but not their own. The share falls with age, to 33% of 55 to 64-year-olds and 28% of carers aged 65 and over.

Older carers were the most likely to say they could meet both their own and their loved ones' needs: 54% of over-65s, against 29% of 35 to 44-year-olds.

In 2024 the pressure was greatest among carers under 35. In 2026 the differences between carers under 45 are small, and the pressure eases from 45 onwards.

The 18 to 24 age group had 43 respondents, so its result (44%) is indicative.

Share who said 'I am able to meet the health and wellbeing needs of my loved ones, but not my own', by age



Carers aged 35 to 44 were the most likely to meet their loved ones' needs but not their own (53%).

Political Outlook

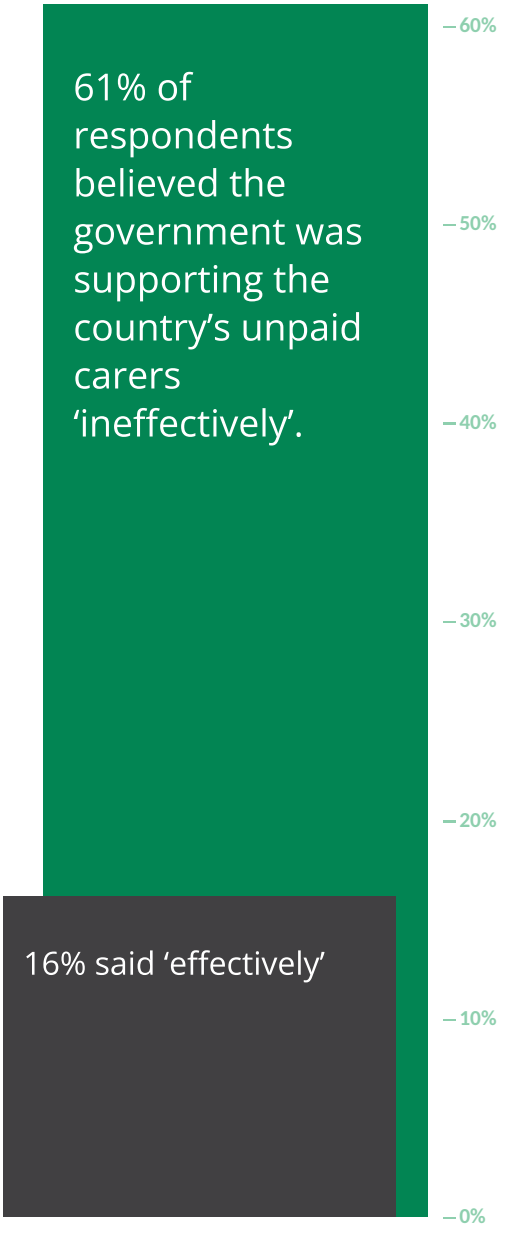
Two years after the general election, respondents were asked how well the government supports unpaid carers, how they would vote, and whether the Prime Minister Andy Burnham's proposed social care reforms would change that.

61% of carers said the government is supporting unpaid carers ineffectively, including 36% who said very ineffectively. 16% said effectively. In the 2024 survey, asked about the previous Conservative government, 56% said ineffectively and 23% effectively; matched to this year's older age profile, 62% and 18%, almost the same as today.

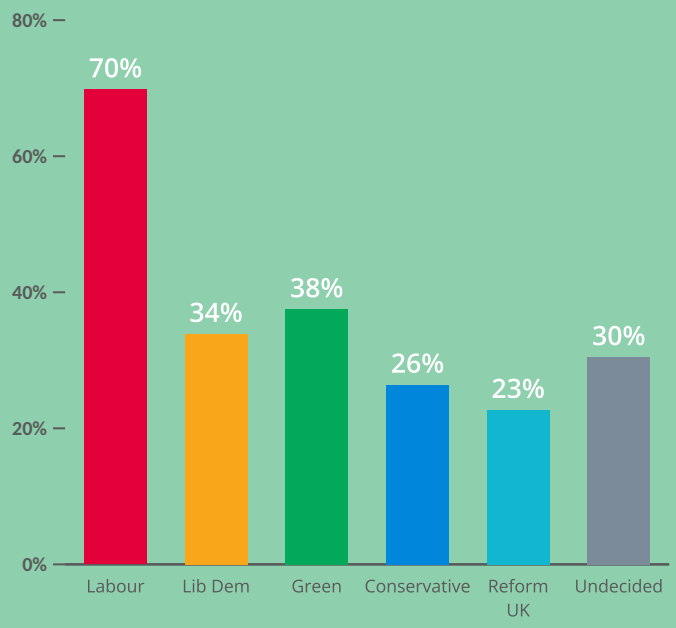
Voting intention in the sample put Labour first (30%), ahead of Reform UK (21%) and the Conservatives (16%), with 11% undecided. Carers are an engaged group: 59% rated their likelihood of voting at 10 out of 10.

Criticism of the government crossed party lines. Reform UK voters were the most critical (72% ineffective), followed by Liberal Democrat (69%) and Conservative (68%) voters. Even among Labour voters, more said ineffective (43%) than effective (29%). Only 5% of undecided voters said effective.

The Liberal Democrat (62 respondents) and Green (72) results are indicative.



Andy Burnham has proposed reforms to social care. Does this make you more or less likely to vote Labour at the next general election? (share 'more likely', by vote intention)



The effect is strongest among those already voting Labour (70% more likely, almost none less likely), which says more about loyalty to the Prime Minister's party than persuasion. Among carers who do not intend to vote Labour, 26% said more likely and 14% less likely.

Undecided voters are the group to watch: **30%** said more likely and 5% less likely. Reform UK voters were split, with 23% more likely and 20% less likely, the one group where the downside nearly matches the upside.

Conservative voters were more likely to be drawn than put off (26% against 16%).

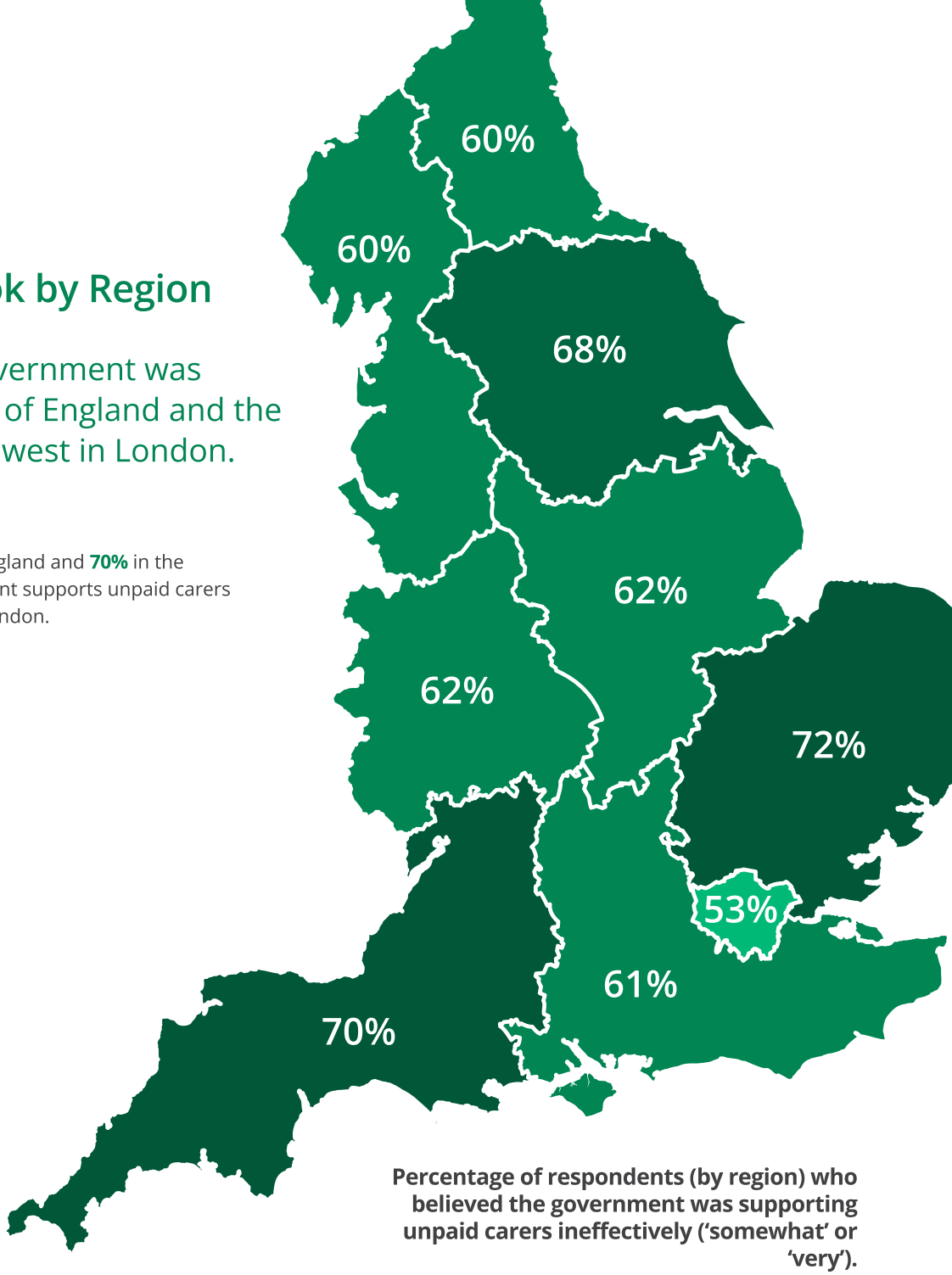


of carers said the reforms make them more likely to vote Labour, including 12% who said much more likely. 10% said less likely and 46% said it makes no difference.

Political Outlook by Region

Criticism of the government was highest in the East of England and the South West, and lowest in London.

72% of carers in the East of England and **70%** in the South West said the government supports unpaid carers ineffectively, against 53% in London.



Percentage of respondents (by region) who believed the government was supporting unpaid carers ineffectively ('somewhat' or 'very').

London remains the least critical region after adjusting for age (57%, against 68% in the South West and 63% across the six smaller regions).

The Burnham reforms drew their strongest response in London, where 45% said they were more likely to vote Labour. Most of that gap reflects the age of London's respondents: adjusted to the national age mix, the London figure is 39%, close to the South East (38%), the South West (36%) and the other six regions (37%).

Six of the nine regions were sampled at 50 respondents, so their figures on the map are indicative.

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Political Outlook by Age

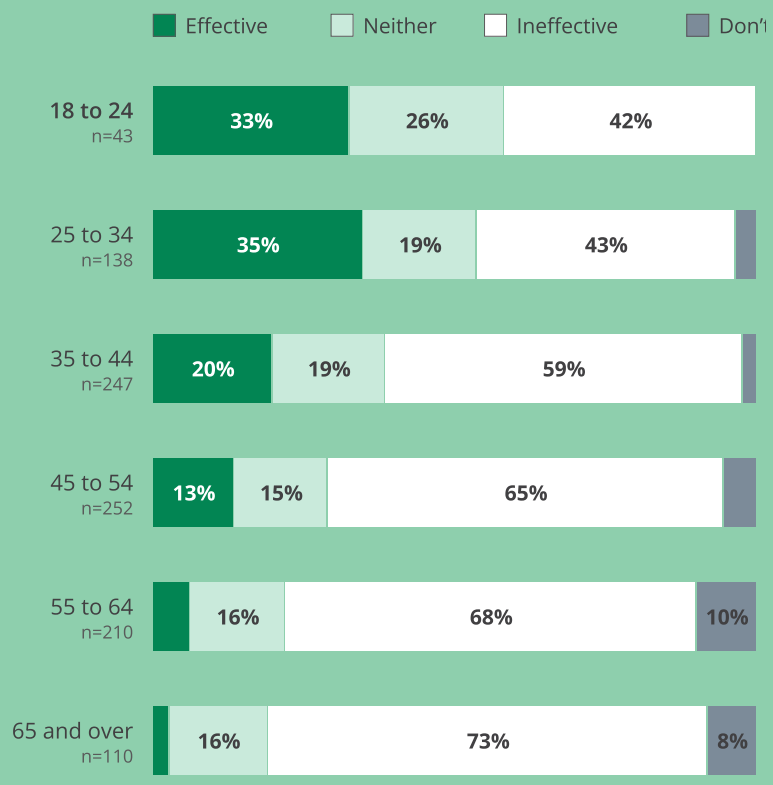
Older carers were markedly more critical of the government, and younger carers more drawn to the Burnham reforms.

42% of 18 to 24-year-olds and 43% of 25 to 34-year-olds said the government supports unpaid carers ineffectively. The share rises to 65% of 45 to 54-year-olds, 68% of 55 to 64-year-olds and **73%** of carers aged 65 and over. Only 3% of over-65s said the government is effective, against 33% of 18 to 24-year-olds.

The Burnham reforms appealed most to the young: 60% of 18 to 24-year-olds and 54% of 25 to 34-year-olds said they were more likely to vote Labour, falling to 29% of over-65s. Older carers were also the most likely to be put off: 12% of 55 to 64-year-olds and 11% of over-65s said much less likely.

In 2024, carers over 55 were also the most critical of the government of the day, then a Conservative one. The age gradient has outlasted the change of government.

In your opinion, how effectively or ineffectively is the current government supporting unpaid carers? By age



73% of carers aged 65 and over believed the government's current support was ineffective.

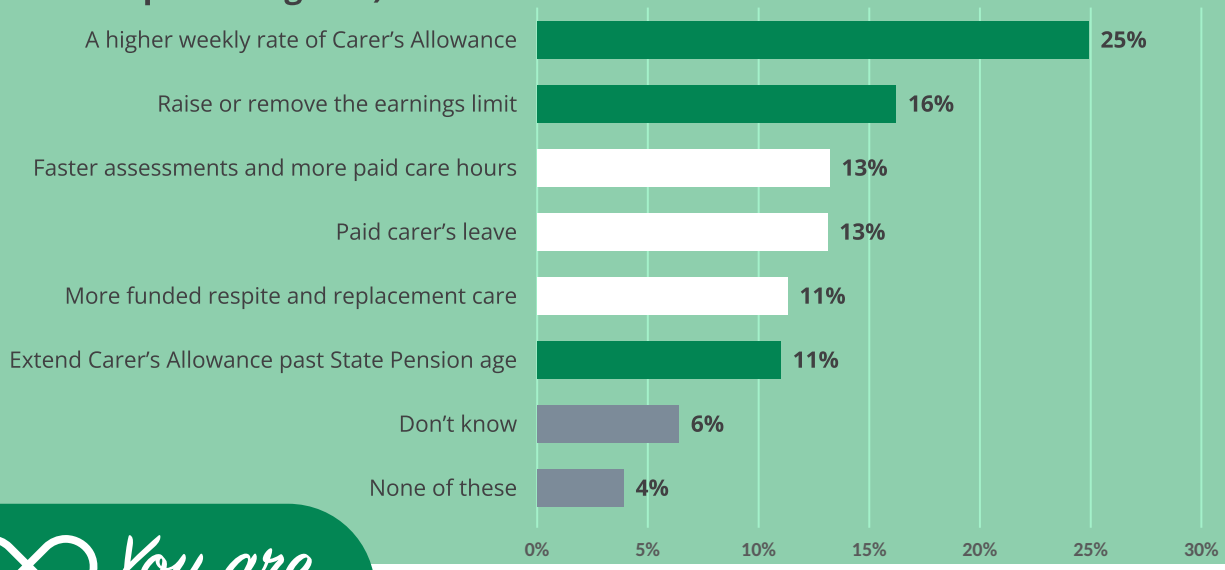
Carer's Allowance and Work

New questions this year asked carers what would help them most, whether Carer's Allowance reflects the care they give, and how its earnings limit affects their work.

Asked which one change would help them most, carers put a higher weekly rate of Carer's Allowance first (**25%**), followed by raising or removing the earnings limit (16%). Faster social care assessments (13%), paid carer's leave (13%) and more funded respite care (11%) came next.

Together, the three changes to Carer's Allowance (a higher rate, a higher earnings limit and extending the allowance past State Pension age) took **52%** of first choices. Among carers aged 65 and over, extending the allowance was the top request by a distance, chosen by 41%. Under the current overlapping benefits rule, a carer whose State Pension is £86.45 a week or more gets no Carer's Allowance, and one on a lower State Pension gets only the difference (GOV.UK). Extending the allowance past State Pension age would mean paying it in full on top of the pension.

Which ONE of the following would most help you as an unpaid carer? (Carer's Allowance options in green)



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Does Carer's Allowance Reflect the Care Given?

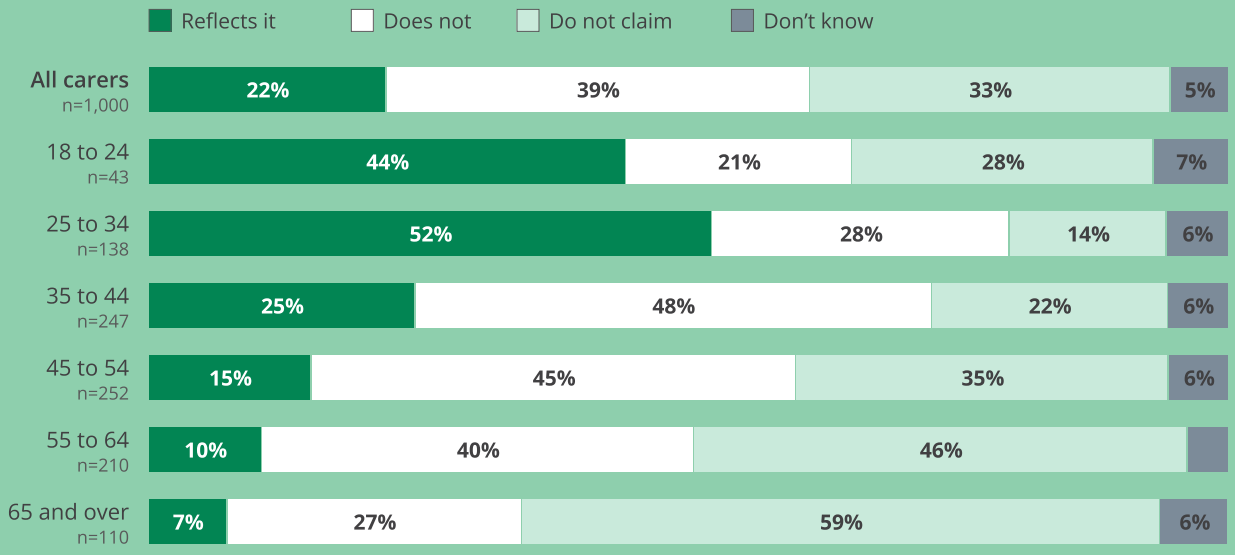
Of the 666 respondents who claim Carer's Allowance, **59%** said it does not reflect the value of the care they provide and 33% said it fully or partly does. Across all carers, 39% said it falls short, 22% said it reflects their care and 33% do not claim it.

Satisfaction is highest among carers under 35: 52% of 25 to 34-year-olds said the allowance reflects the value of their care, against 10% of 55 to 64-year-olds. Carers aged 65 and over are the least likely to claim it at all (59% do not).

Reform UK voters were the most critical: 65% of Reform-voting claimers said it falls short, against 52% of Labour-voting claimers.

The earnings limit. 42% of claimers said they had limited their working hours, turned down work or turned down a promotion to stay under the earnings limit; 39% had not and 16% had never worked while claiming. Among claimers who have been in paid work, **50%** have held back. The pattern holds across regions, from 39% in London to 44% in the South West.

Do you feel the current level of Carer's Allowance adequately reflects the value of the care you provide? By age



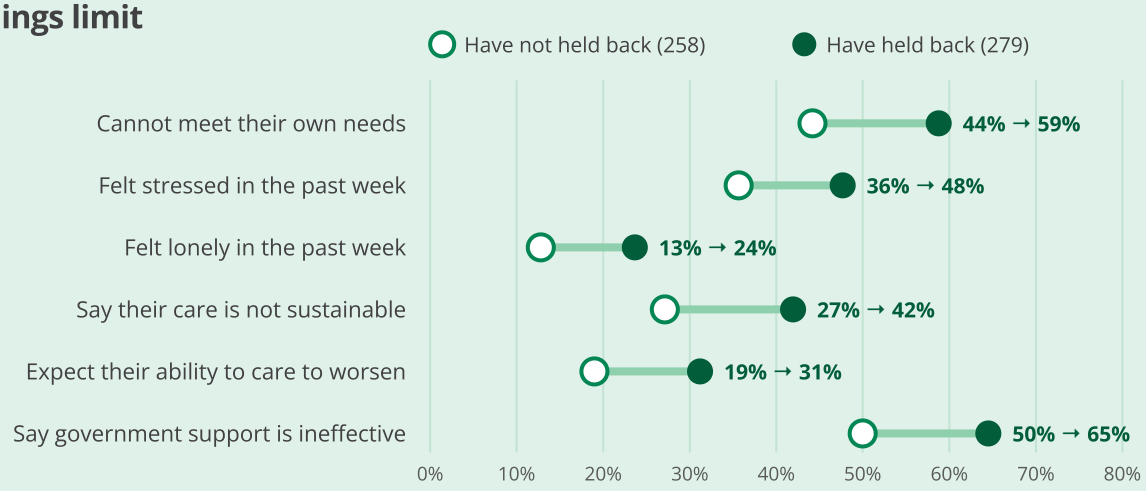
£204, the weekly earnings limit, is about 16 hours' pay at the £12.71 National Living Wage.

£86.45 a week for at least 35 hours of care is 19% of what 35 hours earn at the National Living Wage.

The Earnings Limit and Wellbeing

Claimers who have held back at work to stay under the £204 limit report more unmet need, more stress and more loneliness than claimers who have not, at every age.

Claimers who have worked while claiming Carer's Allowance, by whether they have limited their hours, turned down work or turned down a promotion to stay under the earnings limit



OnePoll dashboard, filtered by question 12. Claimers who answered yes (279) or no (258); those who answered 'don't know' (24) are left out of this comparison. Every difference shown is larger than the 95% margin of error.

Half (**50%**) of the claimers who have worked while claiming have limited their hours, turned down work or turned down a promotion to stay under the earnings limit. Their answers to the rest of the survey differ sharply from those of claimers who have not: **59%** cannot meet their own health and wellbeing needs, against 44%, and 42% say their care is not sustainable, against 27%.

Age does not explain the gap. The difference appears within each age band: among 35 to 54-year-olds, 51% of those who held back say their care is not sustainable, against 29% of those who did not. Adjusted for age, the gap in unmet need is 58% against 45%.

The poll cannot show that the limit causes the difference, since carers under the most pressure may be the ones who cut their hours. It does show that the limit holds back carers who are already under strain, which bears directly on the government's review of it.

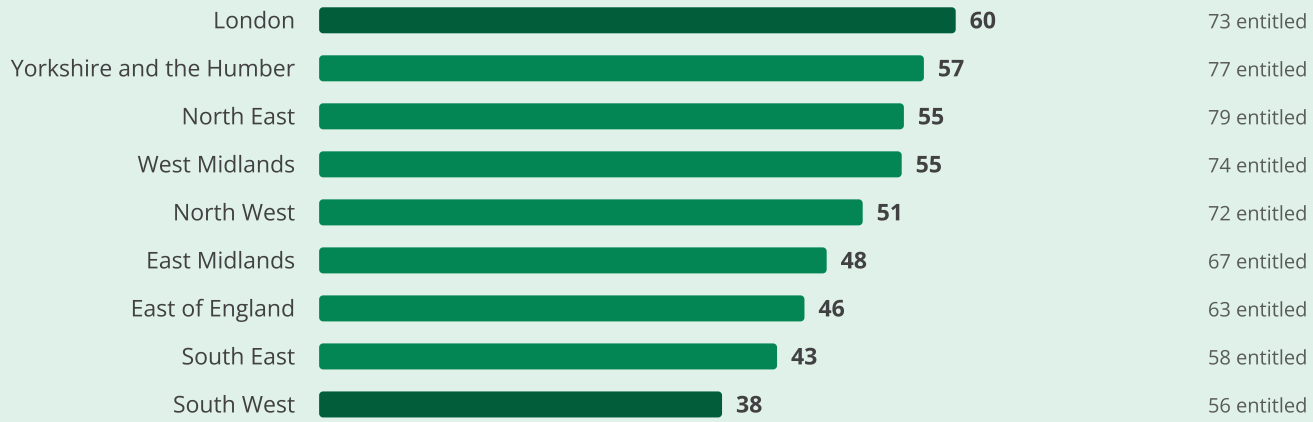
Share of claimers who...	Held back	Did not	Held back, adjusted for age	Did not, adjusted for age
cannot meet their own needs	59%	44%	58%	45%
felt stressed in the past week	48%	36%	47%	36%
felt lonely in the past week	24%	13%	24%	13%
say their care is not sustainable	42%	27%	41%	27%
expect their ability to care to worsen	31%	19%	31%	18%
say government support is ineffective	65%	50%	65%	49%

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Carer's Allowance Across England

For every 100 people in England caring 35 hours or more a week, about 50 receive Carer's Allowance. In the South West the figure is 38.

People receiving Carer's Allowance per 100 carers giving 35 or more hours a week, by region, March 2026 (with people entitled per 100)



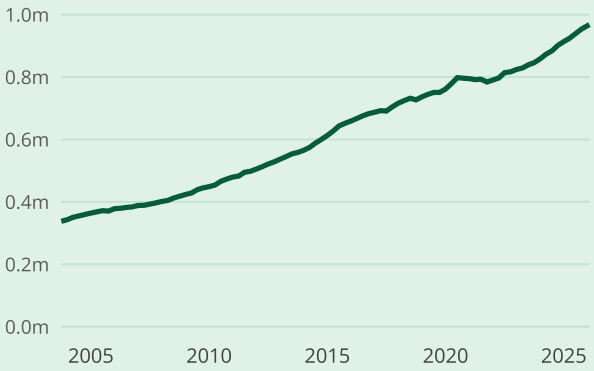
DWP Stat-Xplore, Carer's Allowance cases in payment and with entitlement, March 2026; Census 2021 TS039, carers giving 35+ hours. Ratios mix 2021 and 2026 and are a guide to relative reach, not a take-up rate.

In March 2026, **1.31 million** people in England were entitled to Carer's Allowance and **968,268** were being paid it. The rest are entitled but receive nothing because another benefit, such as the State Pension, pays more. The number being paid is 2.9 times its November 2003 level (337,810).

Reach varies by region. Against the number of carers giving 35 hours a week at the 2021 Census, payments are most widespread in London (60 per 100) and Yorkshire and the Humber, and least in the South West (**38**) and the South East (43). The South West also has the highest share of entitled carers who are paid nothing (31%), consistent with an older caring population, and the slowest growth in entitlement since 2018 (12%, against 35% in London).

The poll points the same way. South West carers were the most likely of the larger regional samples to be unable to meet their own needs (60% after adjusting for age), and 33% of all carers surveyed do not claim the allowance. Not every 35-hour carer is eligible: claimants must be 16 or over, earn under £204 a week and not be in full-time study.

People receiving Carer's Allowance in England, 2003 to 2026 (millions)



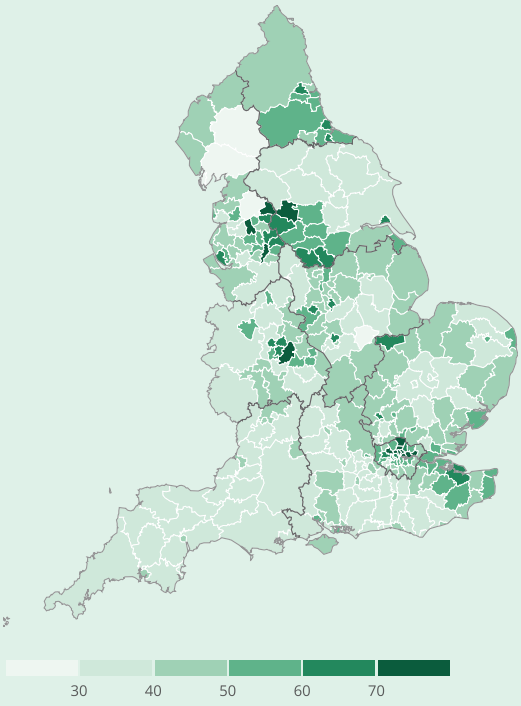
Nomis NM_116_1 to 2018, Stat-Xplore from May 2018; the sources agree in November 2018.

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Carer's Allowance and Deprivation

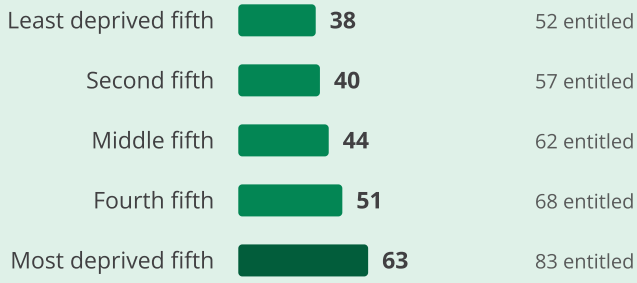
Carer's Allowance reaches far more carers in deprived areas than in affluent ones: 63 are paid it for every 100 carers giving 35 hours a week in the most deprived fifth of areas, against 38 in the least deprived.

People paid Carer's Allowance per 100 carers giving 35+ hours a week, by local authority, March 2026



Local authority boundaries as at 2024; Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness, North Yorkshire and Somerset are shown at district level with the unitary value.

By deprivation fifth of England's 296 local authorities (with people entitled per 100)



Areas ranked on the average score in the English Indices of Deprivation 2025; fifths cover 59 or 60 areas each.

Correlation with deprivation: 0.77 across England, 0.80 outside London.

Across England's 296 local authorities, the number of people paid Carer's Allowance for every 100 carers giving 35 hours or more a week rises with deprivation. Reach is highest in **Tower Hamlets** (104), Bradford (89) and Hackney (83) and lowest in Rutland (26), Westmorland and Furness and Ribble Valley (both 30). The Isles of Scilly are left out of that ranking because their numbers are tiny. Tower Hamlets is above 100, which shows these are relative measures: the Census counts carers in 2021 and the claims are from 2026.

The gap sits mainly in entitlement. 83 people per 100 carers are entitled to the allowance in the most deprived fifth, against 52 in the least deprived, while the share of entitled people who are paid nothing because another benefit pays more is similar (24% in the most deprived fifth and 28% in the least). One likely reason is that carers in affluent areas more often earn above the £204 weekly limit, which these data cannot test. The poll adds the carer's side of it: 50% of claimers who have worked have held back to stay under that limit.

Awareness of Care and Support Options

Carers were asked how well they understand the support available to them, and how aware they are of live-in care, an arrangement in which a professional carer lives with the person who needs support.

No support option was well understood by a majority of carers. Carer's Allowance came highest at **43%**, down from 51% in 2024 once the two samples' ages are matched. Personal Independence Payment (33%) and Attendance Allowance (27%) followed.

The rules that most affect working carers were among the least understood. 21% said they understood the Carer's Allowance earnings limit, 13% Carer's Credit and **11%** the Carer's Leave Act. In 2024, matched for age, the figures for Carer's Credit and the Leave Act were 13% and 9%.

28% of carers said they understood none of the options listed, rising to 43% of those aged 65 and over.

Awareness of live-in care was mixed: 40% said they were aware of its provisions, costs and benefits before the survey, 19% were neither aware nor unaware and 36% were unaware.

> Just 11% of carers have a 'good understanding' of the Carer's Leave Act, two years after it came into force.

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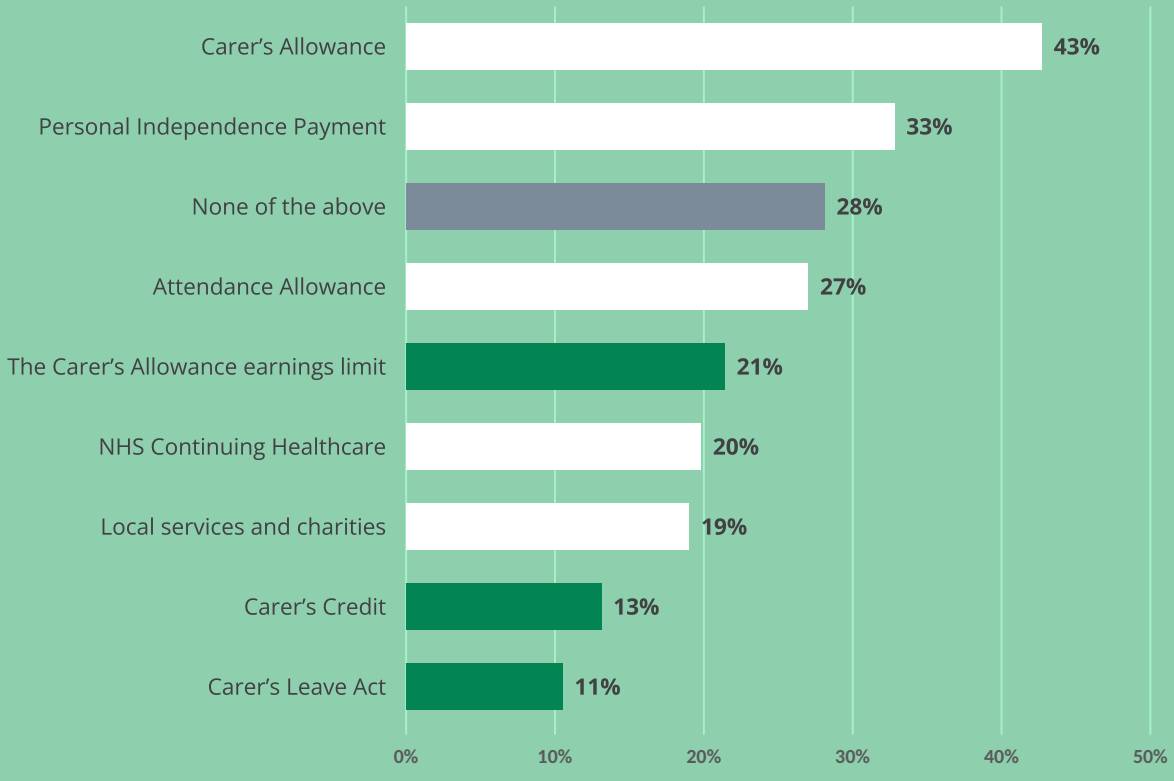
Understanding of Support Options

Carers know the benefits paid to the person they look after better than the rights that protect their own income and work.

The three options most directly about carers' own finances and jobs (the earnings limit, Carer's Credit and the Carer's Leave Act, shown in green) were understood by between 11% and 21% of carers. Benefits that follow the person being cared for, Personal Independence Payment and Attendance Allowance, were better known.

The earnings limit matters most to the 666 respondents who claim Carer's Allowance, 42% of whom have held back at work to stay under it, yet only 21% of all carers said they understood it well.

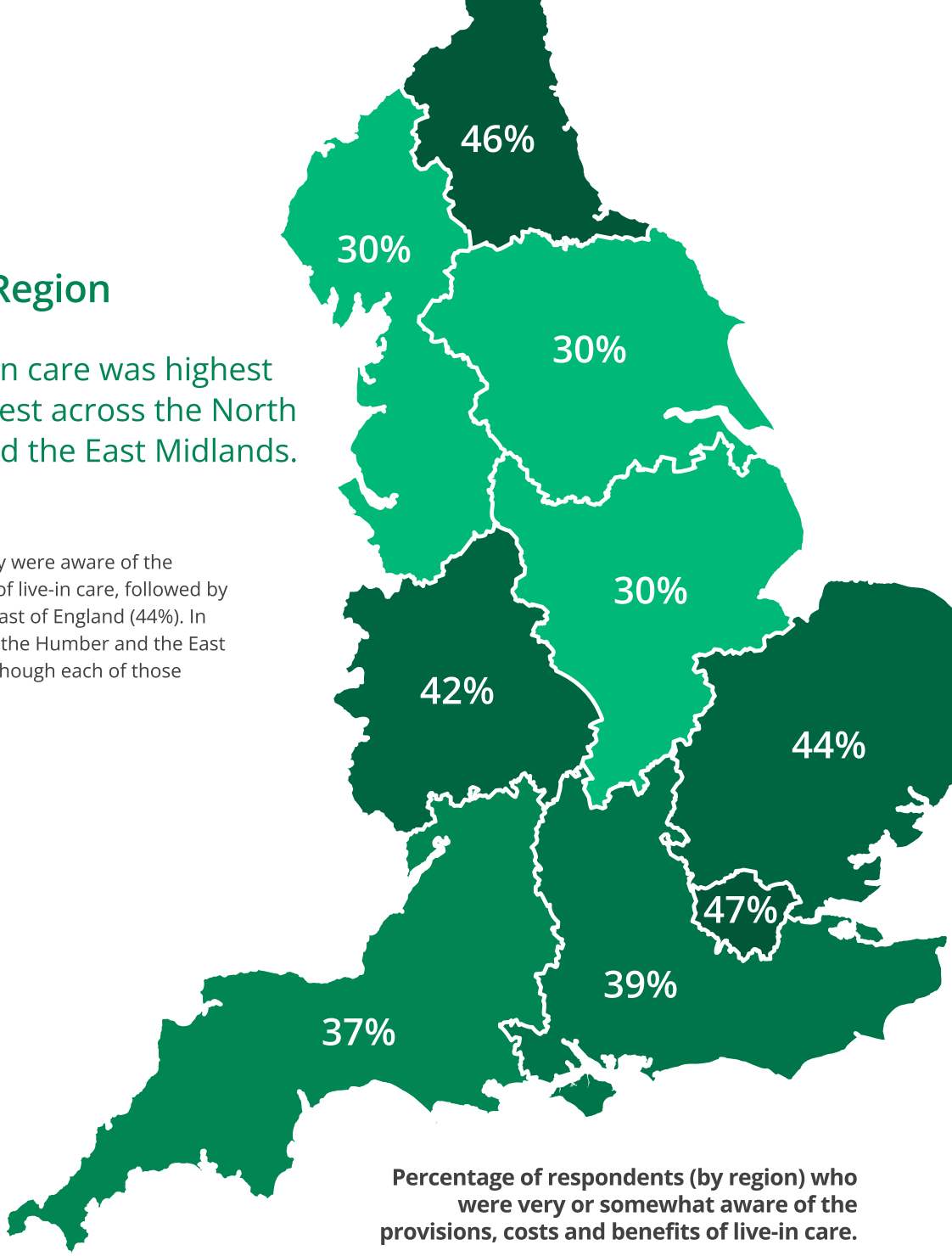
Which, if any, of the following care support options do you have a good understanding of? [Select all that apply]



Awareness by Region

Awareness of live-in care was highest in London and lowest across the North West, Yorkshire and the East Midlands.

47% of London carers said they were aware of the provisions, costs and benefits of live-in care, followed by the North East (46%) and the East of England (44%). In the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber and the East Midlands the figure was 30%, though each of those regions was sampled at 50.



Percentage of respondents (by region) who were very or somewhat aware of the provisions, costs and benefits of live-in care.

Adjusted for age, London (44%) remains ahead of the South East and South West (both 39%) and the six smaller regions combined (38%).

Understanding of the Carer's Leave Act was low everywhere, from 6% to 14% across the nine regions, with London highest.

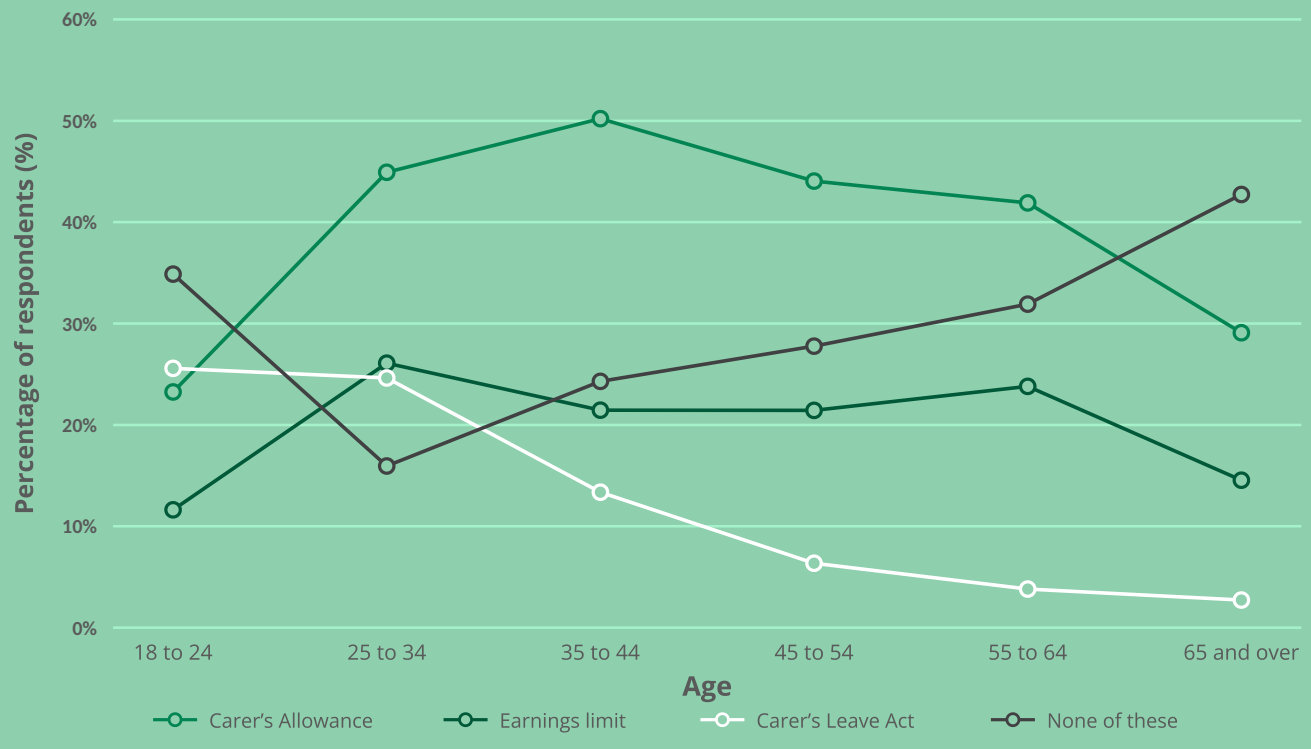
Awareness by Age

Understanding of Carer's Allowance peaks in midlife, while understanding of the Carer's Leave Act falls with every age band.

Understanding of Carer's Allowance rises from 23% of 18 to 24-year-olds to **50%** of 35 to 44-year-olds, then falls to 29% of carers aged 65 and over. Understanding of the earnings limit follows a similar arc, peaking at 26% among 25 to 34-year-olds.

Understanding of the Carer's Leave Act falls from **26%** of 18 to 24-year-olds to 3% of over-65s, the same pattern the 2024 survey found for awareness of the Act (44% among the youngest to 12% among the oldest). Over-65s were the most likely to understand none of the options listed (43%).

Share of carers with a 'good understanding' of each option, by age

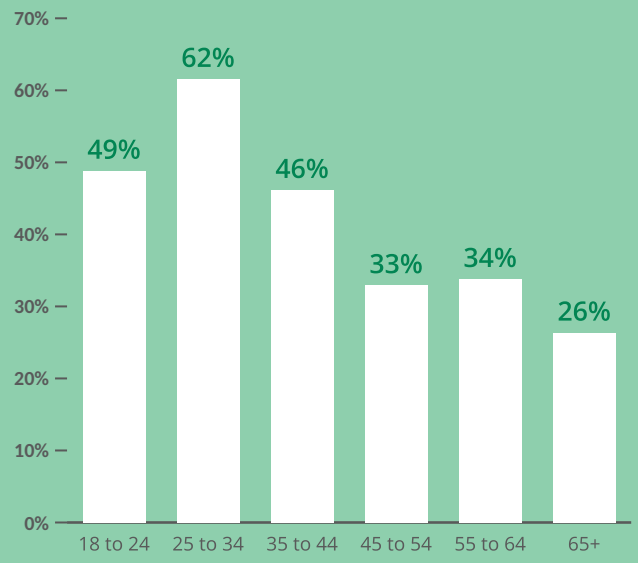


Understanding of the Carer's Leave Act falls from 26% of 18 to 24-year-olds to 3% of over-65s.

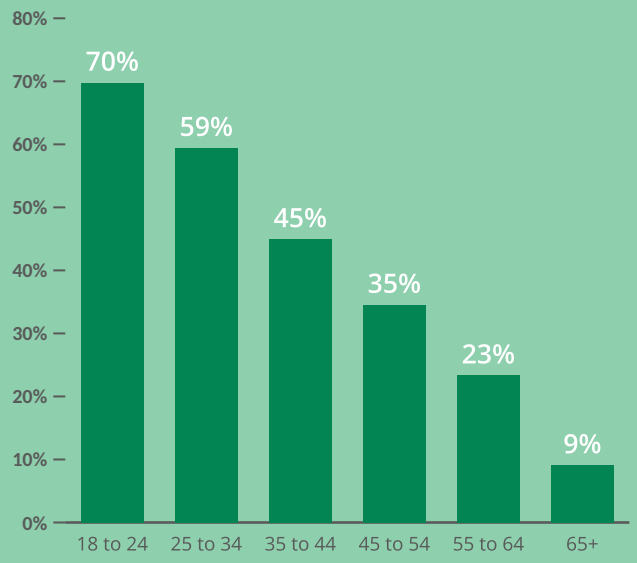
Live-in Care and Careers in Care

Younger carers know more about live-in care, and are far more open to caring as a paid job.

Aware of the provisions, costs and benefits of live-in care, by age



Would consider a paid career in professional caregiving, by age



Awareness of live-in care peaks among 25 to 34-year-olds (**62%**) and falls to 26% of carers aged 65 and over, more than half of whom (52%) said they were unaware of it. In 2024 awareness also declined with age, from 75% of 18 to 34-year-olds to 55% of over-65s.

New this year, carers were asked whether they would consider a paid career in professional caregiving. **37%** said they would, including 11% who definitely would; 53% would not and 2% already work in care.

Interest is concentrated among younger carers: **70%** of 18 to 24-year-olds and 59% of 25 to 34-year-olds would consider it, against 9% of over-65s. London carers were the most open (50%, or 44% after adjusting for age) and South West carers the least (21%; 23% adjusted).

For care providers recruiting staff, younger carers who would consider the work bring direct experience of caring. The 18 to 24 group had 43 respondents, so its results are indicative.

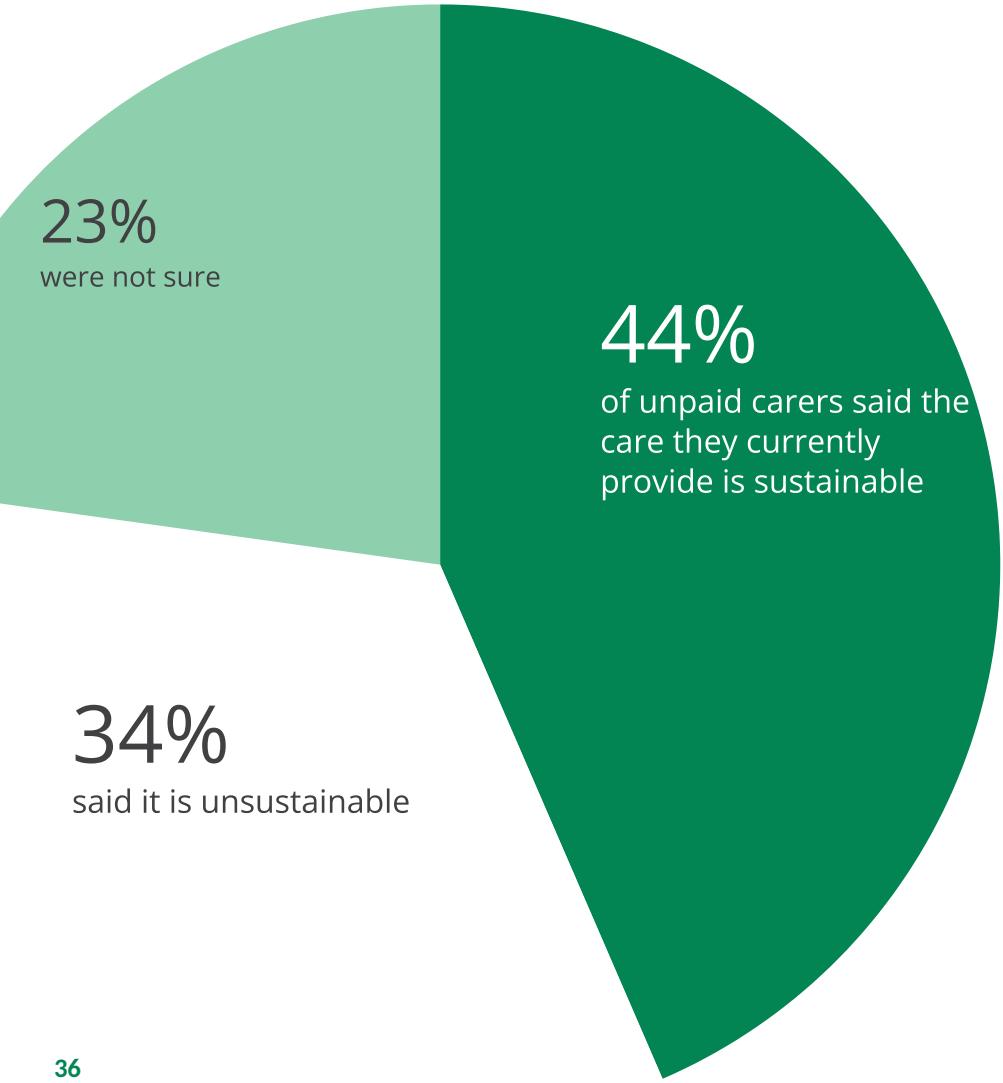
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Looking to the future

GoodOaks also asked carers whether their current level of care is sustainable, and how they expect their ability to care to change over the next 18 to 24 months.

44% of carers said their current level of care is sustainable, **34%** said it is not and 23% were unsure. In 2024, 48% said their care was sustainable and 29% said it was not; matched to this year's age profile, 43% and 32%, close to today's.

Looking ahead, 46% expect their ability to care to stay the same, **28%** expect it to worsen (6% significantly) and 18% expect it to improve. Two years ago 31% expected an improvement, or 24% matched for age: a real fall, but smaller than the published figures suggest.

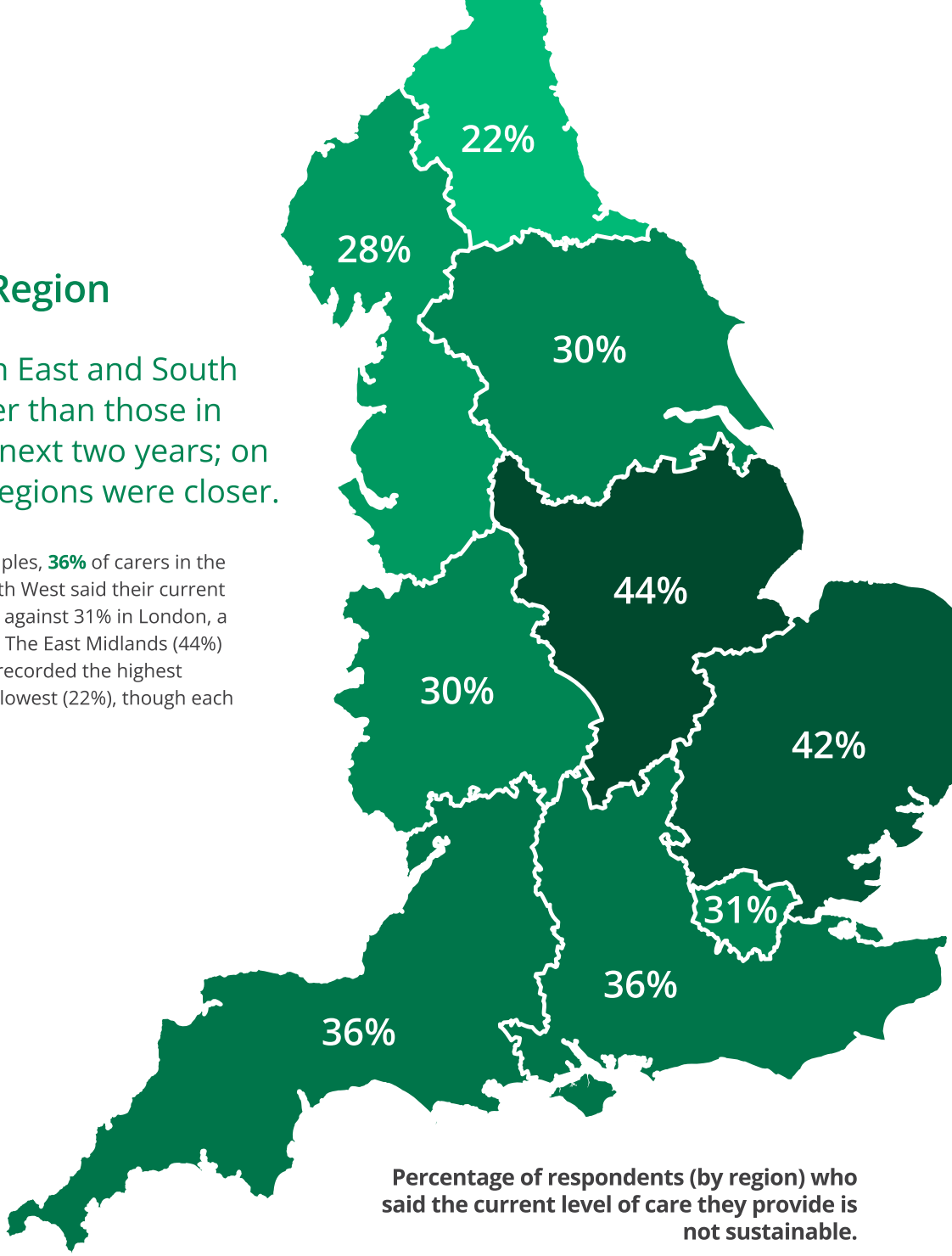


28%
expect their ability to deliver care to their loved ones to worsen over the next 18 to 24 months

The Future by Region

Carers in the South East and South West were gloomier than those in London about the next two years; on sustainability the regions were closer.

Among the larger regional samples, **36%** of carers in the South East and 36% in the South West said their current level of care is not sustainable, against 31% in London, a gap within the margin of error. The East Midlands (44%) and the East of England (42%) recorded the highest figures and the North East the lowest (22%), though each was sampled at 50.



Percentage of respondents (by region) who said the current level of care they provide is not sustainable.

Expectations for the next two years show a clearer divide: 34% in both the South East and the South West expect their ability to care to worsen, against 20% in London. The gap holds after adjusting for age (33% in both the South East and South West, against 23% in London).

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The Future by Age

The youngest carers were by far the most optimistic, and the oldest the least.

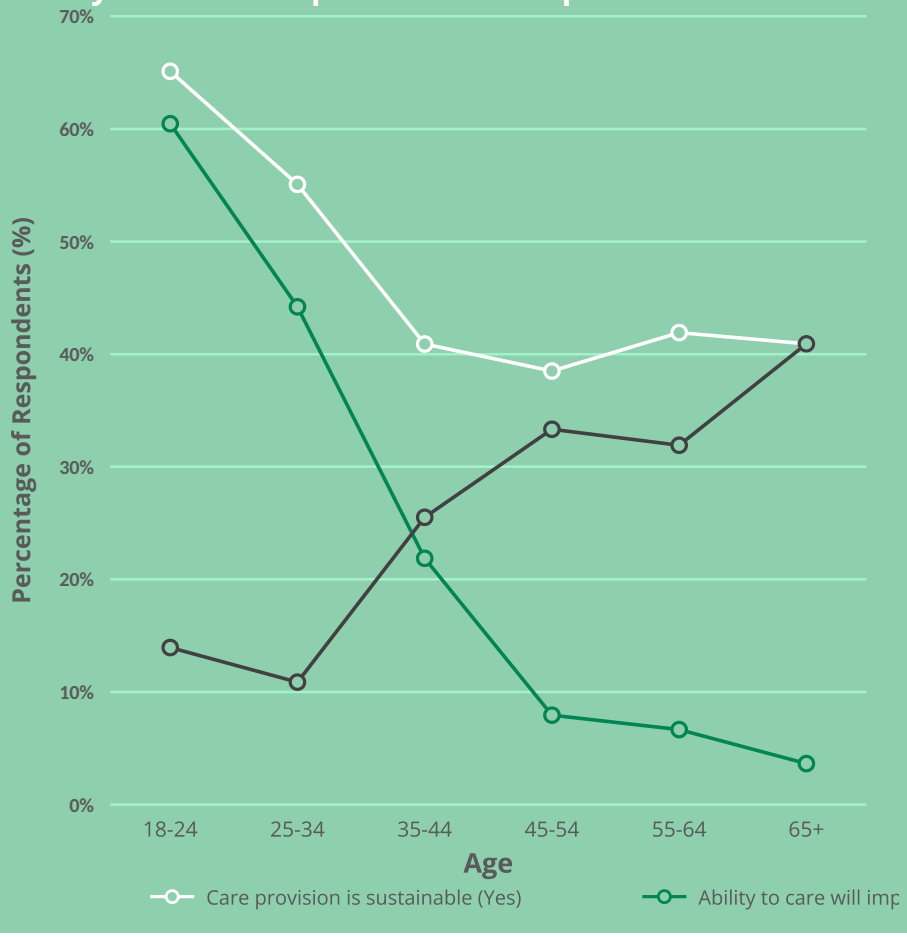
65% of 18 to 24-year-olds said their care is sustainable and **60%** expect their ability to care to improve. Optimism falls sharply after 35.

Among 45 to 54-year-olds, 8% expect an improvement. Among carers aged 65 and over the figure is 4%, while **41%** expect their ability to worsen.

In 2024 carers over 65 (a sample of only 49) were an exception to the trend, more positive than those aged 55 to 64 about both the sustainability of their care and the prospect of improvement. In 2026 they are the most pessimistic group on the outlook for the next two years.

Uncertainty also rises with age: a third of over-65s were not sure whether their care is sustainable.

Do you believe that the current level of care you provide to your loved one is sustainable? Thinking about the next 18 to 24 months, do you think your ability to deliver unpaid care will improve or worsen?



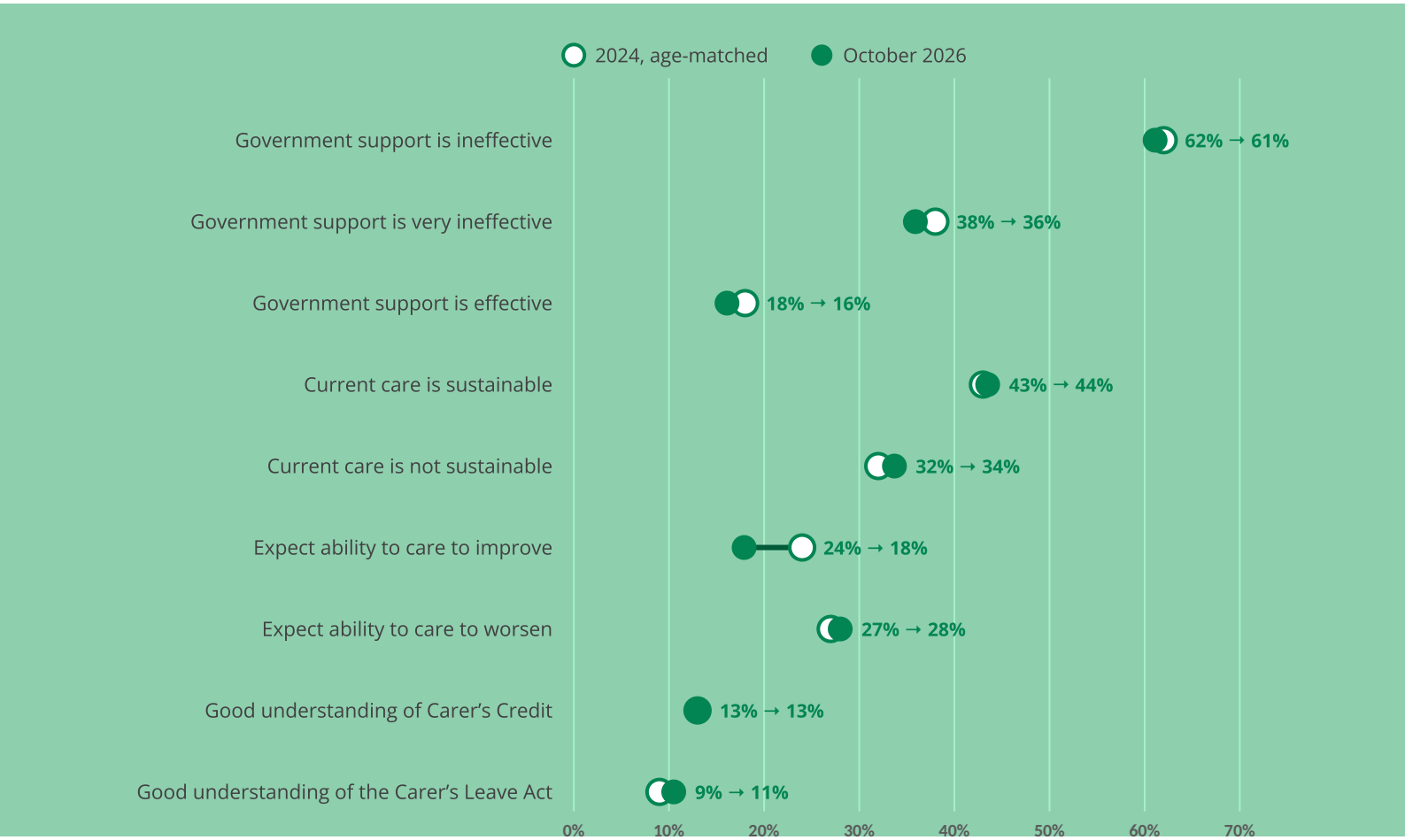
The youngest carers were the most optimistic: 60% of 18 to 24-year-olds expect their ability to care to improve.

By 65 and over, 4% expect an improvement and 41% expect their ability to care to worsen.

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Two Years On

Several questions were asked in the same way in 2024 and October 2026. Compared like for like, fewer carers expect their ability to care to improve; on the other measures little has changed.



The 2024 sample was much younger (42% under 35, against 18% this year), and hope for the future falls with age, so the chart shows 2024 results matched to this year's age profile. On that basis, expecting improvement fell from 24% to 18%, a change larger than the margin of error. As published, the 2024 figure was 31%.

Nothing else moved by more than two points: calling support ineffective (62% then, 61% now) and saying care is sustainable (43% and 44%). The verdict held although the government changed, from Conservative in 2024 to Labour in 2026.

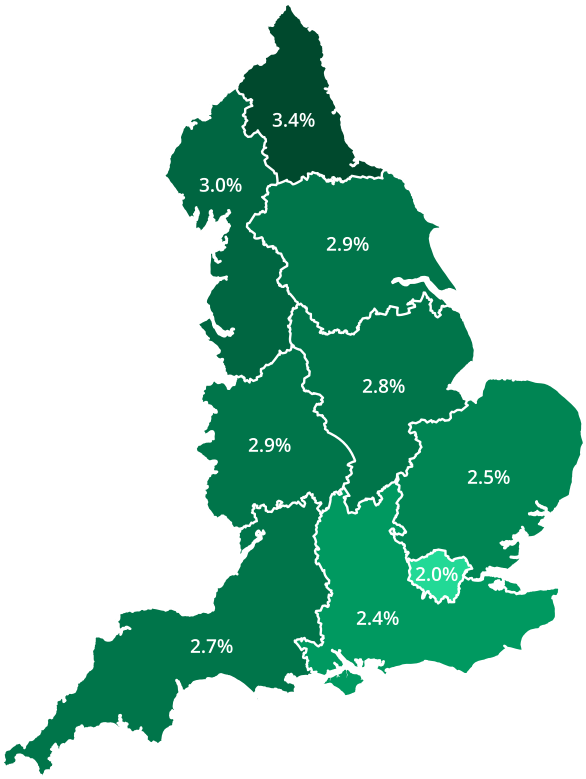
Understanding of the rights that support working carers has not improved since the Carer's Leave Act came into force. Some 2024 measures are left out because the question changed: the mood question now caps answers at three, so its figures are not comparable, and the 2024 question on which party would best support carers was not repeated.

The Regional Picture in Context

Two public datasets show where people care for 50 hours or more a week, by region, and how carers known to councils are faring.

The 2021 Census shows that caring for 50 hours or more a week is concentrated in the North. **3.4%** of North East residents provide 50 hours or more of unpaid care a week, against 2.0% in London and 2.4% in the South East. Age explains only part of the gap: after age-standardisation the North East (3.4%) remains well above London (2.3%). In England as a whole, 1.40 million people (30.0% of unpaid carers) care for 50 hours or more a week.

The 2023-24 Survey of Adult Carers in England tells a different story from the poll in one respect. Carers known to London councils reported among the lowest quality of life (7.2 out of 12), the most financial difficulty (55%) and the highest share out of work because of caring (27%). This poll, which reaches carers whether or not their council knows them, found London carers the least critical of the government and the least lonely. The samples differ: carers known to councils are in contact with social services because of the long hours they care for, and 55% of them are aged 65 or over.



Percentage of residents aged five and over (by region) providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week, Census 2021.

Both sources agree on the North East. Carers known to North East councils reported the highest quality of life (7.6), the least loneliness (10% often or always lonely) and the least financial difficulty (38%). In this poll North East carers were the least likely to say their care is not sustainable (22%), from a sample of 50.

How carers known to their councils are faring, by region (Survey of Adult Carers in England, 2023-24)

Region	Quality of life (0-12)	Often or always lonely	As much social contact as wanted	Caring caused financial difficulty	Not working because of caring
North East	7.6	10%	35%	38%	21%
East of England	7.4	12%	30%	45%	18%
Yorkshire and the Humber	7.3	12%	31%	42%	19%
East Midlands	7.2	13%	29%	48%	19%
West Midlands	7.2	14%	30%	48%	23%
South West	7.2	14%	28%	47%	18%
South East	7.2	14%	27%	48%	18%
North West	7.2	14%	29%	48%	22%
London	7.2	14%	30%	55%	27%
England	**7.3**	**13%**	**30%**	**47%**	**21%**

Survey of Adult Carers in England 2023-24 (NHS England), 42,258 responding carers known to their councils; Bridgehead analysis of the published record-level file, unweighted. Quality of life is the six-question carer-reported score used in the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework.

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Reading the Regional Results

London's sample is younger than the others, which matters for questions that divide carers by age. Adjusting for it changes some regional findings and confirms others.

London supplied 280 respondents, the South East 250 and the South West 170; the other six regions supplied 50 each and are combined here as the rest of England (300). 27% of London respondents were aged 18 to 34, against 14% in the South East, 12% in the South West and 17% in the rest of England.

Each region's results were re-weighted to the age profile of the whole sample (direct standardisation across five age bands: 18 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64 and 65 and over). The table shows the unadjusted figure in bold, the age-adjusted figure beside it, and the 95% margin of error of the unadjusted figure below.

Two findings change. London's stronger response to the Burnham reforms (45%) falls to 39% once age is accounted for, in line with the other regions. London's greater openness to a care career also narrows, from 50% to 44%, though it stays the highest.

Others hold. South West carers remain the most likely to be unable to meet their own needs (60% adjusted) and the least open to a care career (23%). London carers remain the least critical of the government (57%) and the least likely to expect their ability to care to worsen (23%, against 33% in the South East).

Share of carers who...	London n=280	South East n=250	South West n=170	Rest of England n=300
say government support is ineffective	**53%** **57%** ±6	**61%** **60%** ±6	**70%** **68%** ±7	**64%** **63%** ±5
are more likely to vote Labour because of the Burnham reforms	**45%** **39%** ±6	**38%** **38%** ±6	**34%** **36%** ±7	**36%** **37%** ±5
cannot meet their own needs	**46%** **44%** ±6	**54%** **55%** ±6	**58%** **60%** ±7	**48%** **49%** ±6
say their care is not sustainable	**31%** **32%** ±5	**36%** **35%** ±6	**36%** **37%** ±7	**33%** **34%** ±5
expect their ability to care to worsen	**20%** **23%** ±5	**34%** **33%** ±6	**34%** **33%** ±7	**27%** **27%** ±5
felt lonely in the past week	**14%** **14%** ±4	**25%** **25%** ±5	**20%** **21%** ±6	**20%** **21%** ±5
are aware of live-in care	**47%** **44%** ±6	**39%** **39%** ±6	**37%** **39%** ±7	**37%** **38%** ±6
would consider a paid care career	**50%** **44%** ±6	**38%** **38%** ±6	**21%** **23%** ±6	**33%** **35%** ±5

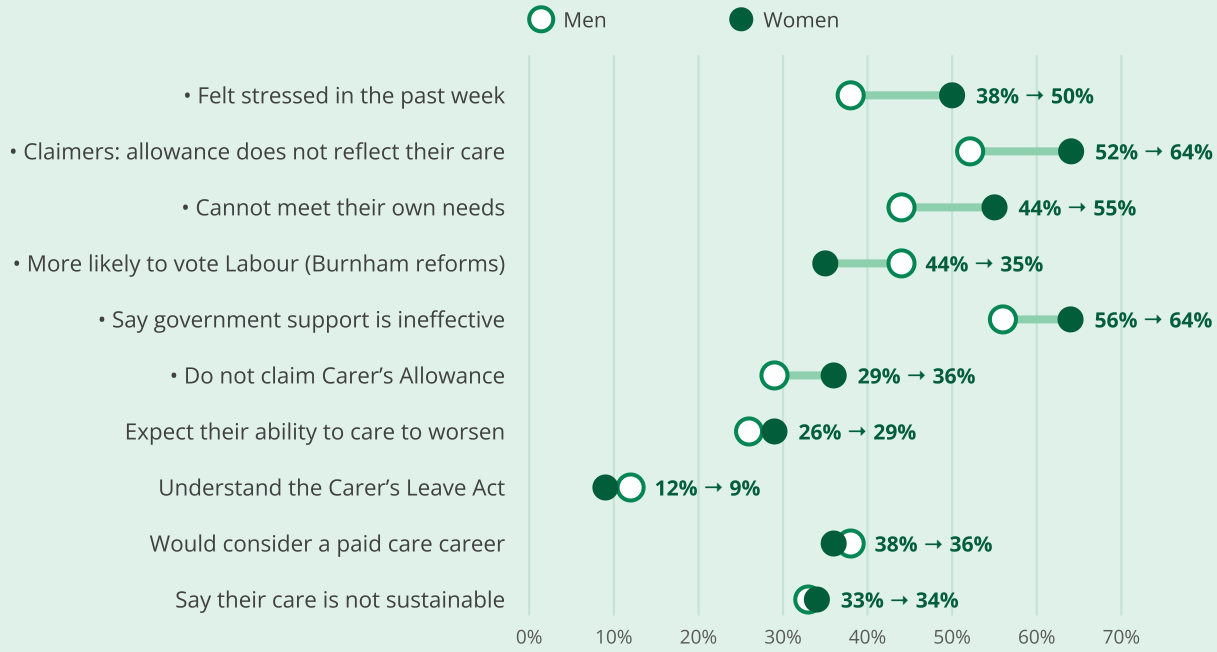
Bold: unadjusted. Green: adjusted to the national age mix of the sample. ±: 95% margin of error of the unadjusted figure.

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Women and Men

Women make up 61% of the sample. They report more stress, more unmet need and a harsher verdict on the government than men; the two groups look alike on the future and on a care career.

Share of women and men who… (• difference larger than the 95% margin of error)



OnePoll results workbook, October 2026. Women n=610, men n=387; three respondents who gave a non-binary or other identity are not shown. Claimer rows use the 390 women and 275 men who claim Carer's Allowance (approximate bases).

Women were more likely than men to have felt stressed (**50%** against 38%), sad (21% against 15%) and scared (11% against 6%). Most of the gap in unmet need comes from carers who could look after their loved one but not themselves (46% of women, 36% of men). Taken with those who could meet neither, **55%** of women and 44% of men could not meet their own health and wellbeing needs. Because women are 61% of the sample, the report's headline figures lean towards their answers.

Men were more certain to vote and more receptive to the Burnham reforms. 44% of men said the reforms make them more likely to vote Labour, against 35% of women. 28% of men would vote Reform UK, against 16% of women; Labour support was level (31% and 29%). Men rated their likelihood of voting at 9.1 out of 10 on average and women at 8.2.

On Carer's Allowance, **36%** of women do not claim it, against 29% of men. Among those who do, **64%** of women and 52% of men said it does not reflect the value of their care.

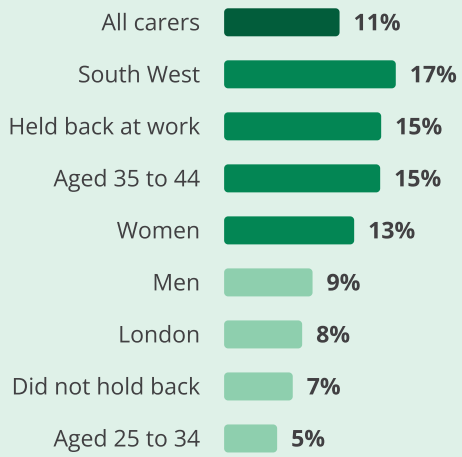
Generation repeats the age results (page 34). The youngest generation is the most optimistic and the most open to a career in care: 64% of Generation Z would consider it and 49% expect their ability to care to improve, against 15% and 5% of boomers. Generation Z had 104 respondents and boomers 170; the silent generation (6) is not shown.

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Who Is Under Most Strain

About one carer in nine (11%) cannot meet their own needs, says their care is not sustainable and expects things to get worse, all at once.

Share of carers under all three pressures (cannot meet own needs, care not sustainable, expect things to worsen)



Respondent-level OnePoll file, unweighted. Regional groups other than London, the South East and the South West are too small to show.

11% of carers face all three pressures, and 34% face at least two. The share is highest in the South West (17%) and among claimers who have held back at work (15%), and lowest among carers under 35 and those who have not held back. 86% of carers under all three pressures say government support is ineffective, against 58% of other carers.

The model separates factors that travel together. Against claimers who have not held back, those who have held back at work are 12 points more likely to be unable to meet their own needs and 13 points more likely to expect things to worsen, whatever their age, sex or region. Women are 9 points more likely than men to have unmet needs, carers aged 35 to 44 carry the most, and the South West's higher figure survives the adjustment.

What raises the risk of strain: differences from a statistical model of each measure

Percentage-point difference, other factors held equal	Cannot meet own needs	Care not sustainable	Expect things to worsen	Felt stressed
Aged 35 to 44 (against 45 to 54)	**+13***	+5	-7	+4
Aged 18 to 34	+9	**-11***	**-20***	-4
Aged 65 and over	-11	**-12***	+8	**-12***
Woman (against man)	**+9***	-1	+2	**+9***
South West (against six smaller regions)	**+10***	+3	+5	+2
London	-4	-2	-4	-6
Held back at work (against claimers who did not)	**+12***	**+13***	**+13***	**+10***

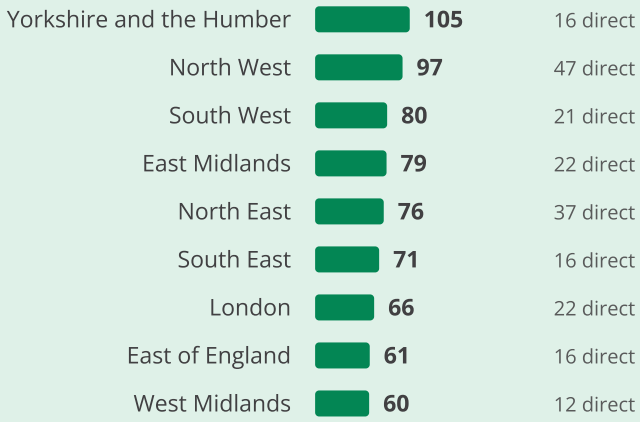
Logistic regression on 1,000 respondents with age, sex, region and Carer's Allowance status entered together; figures are average differences in percentage points. * and bold: larger than the 95% margin of error.

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Support and Health Beyond the Poll

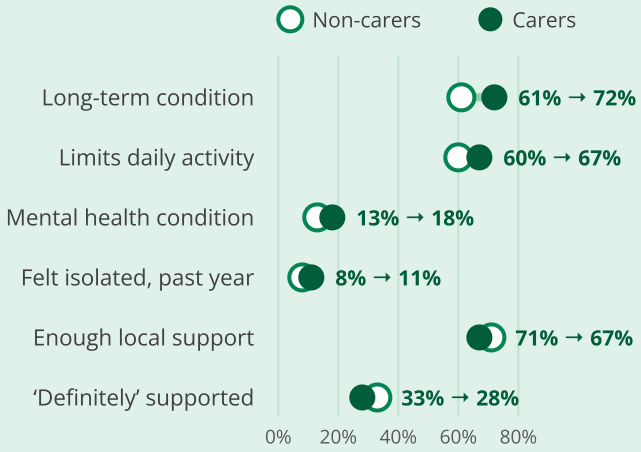
Official data on council support, carers' health and young carers point the same way as the poll: most carers get little direct help, and caring takes a toll on their own health.

Carers supported by councils per 1,000 unpaid carers, 2023-24 (direct support per 1,000 beside each bar)



NHS England, Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report 2023-24, table 47; Census 2021 carers. Includes carers given information and advice only. Later years do not count carers.

Carers and non-carers in the GP Patient Survey, England, 2026



NHS England and Ipsos, GP Patient Survey 2026 (648,754 responses), weighted. Not adjusted for age; carers are older than non-carers.

Councils supported or assessed **360,815** carers in 2023-24, 77 for every 1,000 unpaid carers counted by the Census. Most of that was information and advice: only 107,935 carers, 23 per 1,000, received direct support such as a direct payment or a commissioned service. Rates vary widely, partly because councils record information and advice differently, from 105 per 1,000 in Yorkshire and the Humber to 60 in the West Midlands.

In the GP Patient Survey, 16% of adult patients say they are carers, and 24% of those care for 50 hours or more a week. 72% of carers have a long-term condition, against 61% of non-carers, and carers are less likely to say they get enough support from local services (67% against 71%). Carers trail non-carers on support in every integrated care system.

The Census also counted **118,944** young carers aged 5 to 17 in England, 1.4% of that age group; 13,783 of them care for 50 hours or more a week. The share is highest in the South West (1.6%) and lowest in London (1.1%), and highest of all in Folkestone and Hythe and Halton. The figure is likely an undercount, since a parent usually completed the form.

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Unpaid Carers by Constituency

Every MP in England represents thousands of people who care for 50 hours or more a week: 2,541 in the median constituency, from 636 in Bristol Central to 4,408 in Boston and Skegness.

The 15 constituencies with the highest share of residents caring 50+ hours a week

Constituency	Caring 50+ hours	Share of residents
1. Clacton	4,327	4.6%
2. Louth and Horncastle	4,020	4.3%
3. Easington	3,825	4.3%
4. Knowsley	3,748	4.3%
5. Houghton and Sunderland South	3,951	4.2%
6. Liverpool Walton	3,911	4.1%
7. Washington and Gateshead South	3,666	4.1%
8. Blackpool North and Fleetwood	3,673	4.0%
9. St Helens North	3,806	4.0%
10. Ashfield	3,590	4.0%
11. Boston and Skegness	4,408	4.0%
12. Plymouth Moor View	3,777	4.0%
13. St Helens South and Whiston	3,531	3.9%
14. Wallasey	3,576	3.9%
15. Bootle	3,733	3.9%

Louth and Horncastle and Easington are tied (4.33%); ONS adds small random changes to these tables.

The 31 constituencies with a GoodOaks branch, highest share first (top 10)

Constituency	Caring 50+ hours	Share of residents
Isle of Wight East	2,481	3.7%
Christchurch	2,704	3.2%
Mid Cheshire	2,688	3.0%
Worthing West	2,703	2.8%
Ashford	2,845	2.8%
New Forest West	2,326	2.8%
West Dorset	2,531	2.8%
Harborough, Oadby and Wigston	2,416	2.5%
Harlow	2,574	2.5%
Bournemouth West	2,517	2.5%

Together the 31 constituencies are home to 251,187 unpaid carers, 68,635 of whom care for 50 hours or more a week.

Branches matched to constituencies by postcode (postcodes.io).

The share of residents caring 50 hours or more a week runs from 4.6% in Clacton to 0.7% in Bristol Central, against 2.6% across England. The top of the list is the coast and the former coalfields and docks: Clacton, Louth and Horncastle, Easington, Knowsley and the Sunderland, Liverpool and St Helens seats. The bottom is city centres with young populations, such as Bristol Central, Battersea and Sheffield Central.

Some coastal seats rank high partly because their residents are older. Adjusted for age with ONS's own method, Knowsley, Liverpool Walton and Easington lead, while Louth and Horncastle falls from second to twentieth. The age-adjusted figures are Bridgehead's calculation, not published ONS statistics.

GoodOaks' branches sit mostly in constituencies with lower shares, but the numbers are still large. Isle of Wight East has the highest share of any branch constituency (3.7%, 38th in England). A table for all 543 constituencies accompanies this report.

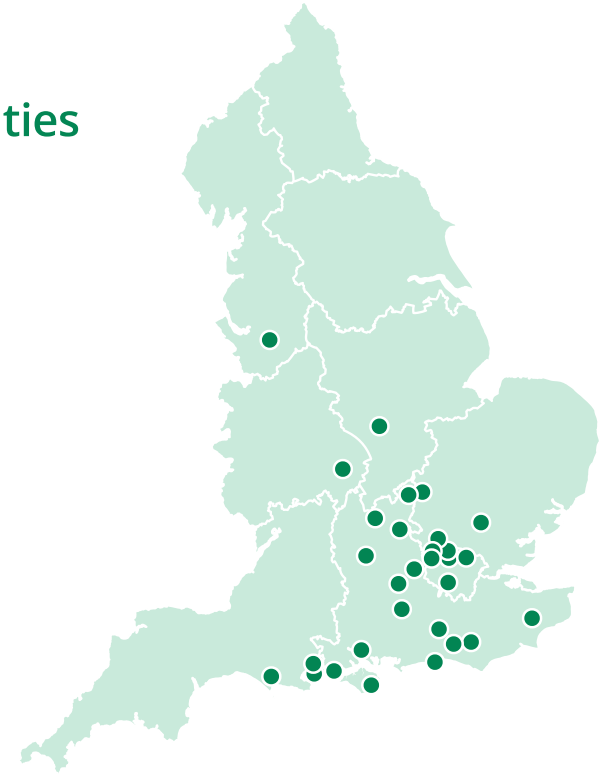
Unpaid Carers in GoodOaks Communities

GoodOaks' 31 CQC-registered branches sit in council areas that are home to more than a million unpaid carers.

In October 2026, 31 locations were registered with CQC under the GoodOaks name, in 23 council areas. Those areas are home to **1.14 million** unpaid carers, 24.5% of England's total; 325,392 care for 50 hours or more a week.

The Isle of Wight has the highest share of residents caring for 50 hours or more a week (**3.6%**, 3.3% after age-standardisation), well above the England average of 2.6%. East Sussex (3.0%) comes next.

Carer's Allowance reaches fewer carers in GoodOaks areas than in England as a whole: **43** people are paid it for every 100 caring 35 hours a week, against 50 nationally. The range runs from Dorset (35) to Redbridge (58).



GoodOaks locations registered with CQC, October 2026.

Unpaid carers in the council areas where GoodOaks has a registered branch (Census 2021)

Council area	Branches	Unpaid carers	50+ hrs	%	CA per 100
Kent	1	135,895	43,312	2.9%	51
Essex	1	124,442	37,418	2.6%	47
Hampshire	2	111,739	31,284	2.4%	40
Hertfordshire	2	92,781	24,038	2.1%	44
Surrey	2	90,497	23,469	2.1%	38
West Sussex	3	72,816	20,327	2.4%	38
Leicestershire	1	61,306	17,116	2.5%	42
Oxfordshire	2	52,674	13,636	2.0%	37
East Sussex	1	51,405	15,637	3.0%	38
Warwickshire	1	49,625	14,216	2.5%	44
Buckinghamshire	1	41,773	10,671	2.0%	42
Dorset	2	35,512	10,572	2.9%	35
BCP	1	33,352	9,624	2.5%	37
Cheshire West and Chester	1	32,638	9,905	2.9%	43
Barnet	2	28,808	7,328	2.0%	52
Hillingdon	1	22,463	6,449	2.2%	54
Redbridge	1	21,395	5,853	2.0%	58
Milton Keynes	1	20,604	6,001	2.2%	44
Bedford	1	14,332	3,882	2.2%	47
Isle of Wight	1	14,205	4,886	3.6%	40
Merton	1	13,893	3,750	1.9%	44
Wokingham	1	12,195	3,024	1.8%	36
Slough	1	10,144	2,994	2.0%	58
All 23 areas	**31**	**1,144,494**	**325,392**	**2.4%**	**43**
England		**4,678,264**	**1,404,769**	**2.6%**	**50**

Council-area figures cover each whole council area, not a branch's own service area. A branch-level file accompanies this report. CA per 100: people receiving Carer's Allowance in March 2026 (DWP Stat-Xplore) per 100 residents caring 35+ hours a week in 2021.

Conclusion

Two years after the first Caring Unseen report, unpaid carers in England are less hopeful about their future, no more confident in the support around them, and clear about what would help.

The core finding of 2024 still stands. Carers put the needs of the people they look after ahead of their own, and pay for it in their own health: 51% cannot meet their own health and wellbeing needs, and stress remains the feeling they name most often. The pressure falls hardest on carers of working age: 53% of those aged 25 to 44 can meet their loved one's needs but not their own.

What has changed is carers' view of the years ahead. Only 18% expect their ability to care to improve over the next 18 to 24 months, down from 24% in 2024 once the two samples' ages are matched, and 34% already say their current level of care is not sustainable. Carers aged 65 and over are now the most pessimistic group.

Carers are clear about what would help. Changes to Carer's Allowance account for 52% of first-choice requests. Among those who claim it, 59% say it does not reflect the value of their care, and 50% of those who have worked have held back to stay under an earnings limit worth about 16 hours a week at the National Living Wage, and those who have held back are more likely to be unable to meet their own needs (59% against 44%). The government's call for evidence on the earnings limit is an opportunity to respond.

Politically, the verdict on the government cuts across party lines. 61% of carers say its support is ineffective, including 72% of Reform UK voters and 43% of Labour voters. The Prime Minister's proposed reforms moved 39% of carers towards Labour and 10% away, with undecided voters leaning towards the proposals.

Awareness remains the weak point. 28% of carers understand none of the support options listed, and only 11% understand the Carer's Leave Act. Information that reaches carers through the services they already use, from GP surgeries to home care providers, would close part of that gap.

The national data add a warning. Caring for 50 hours or more a week is concentrated in England's most deprived neighbourhoods, where 3.5% of residents care for 50 hours a week against 2.0% in the least deprived. Support that depends on carers buying in help, or earning above the allowance limit, reaches least far there. 37% of carers, and 70% of the youngest, would consider a paid career in care: a source of recruits for a sector that will need them.



Methodology and Sources

The poll. OnePoll surveyed 1,000 adults in England who are unpaid carers, online, between 9 and 15 October 2026, on behalf of GoodOaks Homecare. OnePoll is a member of the British Polling Council and an MRS Company Partner. Results are unweighted. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding. Groups with fewer than 100 respondents (18 to 24-year-olds, Liberal Democrat and Green voters, and six of the nine regions) are indicative. Bridgehead Communications analysed the aggregate results exported from OnePoll's reporting dashboard and, for the gender and generation results, OnePoll's results workbook (RB GO 0610 U, October 2026). The sample is England only: OnePoll's workbook labels it "UK: Unpaid carers", but every respondent lives in one of the nine English regions.

Comparisons with 2024. 2024 figures come from Caring Unseen (GoodOaks Homecare, April 2024) and OnePoll's results tables for that survey of 1,000 unpaid carers in England (fieldwork 7 to 13 February 2024). Only questions asked in the same way in both years are compared. The 2024 sample had the same regional quotas but was much younger (42% under 35, against 18% in 2026), so 2024 results are re-weighted to the 2026 sample's age profile across six age bands; figures labelled 'as published' are unadjusted.

Weighting check. The sample over-represents London (28% of respondents, 13% of England's carers) and under-represents carers aged 65 and over (11%, about 24%). Raking the respondent-level file to the Census 2021 profile of adult carers by region (TS039) and age (RM115, three bands) moves most headline figures by three points or less. The largest changes are openness to a care career (37% to 31%) and not claiming Carer's Allowance (33% to 40%); expecting improvement falls to 14% and calling government support ineffective rises to 63%. The weights have a design effect of 1.7.

Earnings limit comparison (page 28). OnePoll's dashboard filtered by question 12, overall and within three age bands; the age-adjusted figures weight each band by its combined size.

Age adjustment. Regional results for London, the South East, the South West and the other six regions combined were standardised to the age profile of the full sample across five age bands. Margins of error are 95% intervals for a simple random sample of the stated size and are a guide only for an online panel.

Methodology and Sources (continued)

Census 2021. Office for National Statistics, TS039 Provision of unpaid care, TS039ASP (age-standardised proportions) and TS007A (age), usual residents aged five and over, for regions, local authorities and lower layer super output areas, from Nomis, October 2026. District maps use ONS Open Geography Portal boundaries (December 2021, ultra-generalised).

Deprivation. English Indices of Deprivation 2025 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 30 October 2025), Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles for 33,755 neighbourhoods (2021 lower layer super output areas), joined to Census 2021 TS039 by Bridgehead. Shares are not age-standardised.

Home care supply. CQC register of 7 October 2026: registered domiciliary care locations by council, against Census 2021 population aged 65 and over. Agency counts do not measure the hours of care each agency delivers.

Survey of Adult Carers in England 2023-24. NHS England, published 27 June 2024 (data tables corrected 16 April 2025). Regional figures are Bridgehead's unweighted aggregation of the record-level file (42,258 carers); the national quality-of-life score from this method (7.3) matches the published figure.

GoodOaks branches. Locations registered with CQC under the GoodOaks name, 7 October 2026, matched to council areas and districts by postcode (postcodes.io).

Rates and policy. Carer's Allowance (£86.45 a week) and the earnings limit (£204 a week): GOV.UK. National Living Wage (£12.71 an hour from 1 April 2026): GOV.UK. Carer's Allowance call for evidence: GOV.UK, 7 July 2026. Unpaid carers in the UK (5.8 million): Carers UK. Value of unpaid care (£184.3 billion): Valuing Carers 2021/22, Centre for Care and Carers UK, November 2024.

Carer's Allowance claimants. DWP Stat-Xplore, Carer's Allowance cases with entitlement and in payment (data from May 2018), English regions and the 296 local authorities (2024 boundaries), March 2026, retrieved 16 October 2026, divided by Census 2021 carers giving 35 or more hours a week; local authority deprivation uses the average score in the English Indices of Deprivation 2025; earlier England series from Nomis NM_116_1 (DWP benefit claimants, to November 2018).

Respondent-level analysis. OnePoll's respondent-level file (1,000 rows) supports the strain page, the significance tests and the weighting check. The models are logistic regressions with age (four bands), sex, region (London, South East, South West, others) and Carer's Allowance status entered together; results are average differences in percentage points.

Employment, health, constituencies and young carers. ONS Census 2021 custom tables (economic activity, general health and unpaid care by age; unpaid care on 2024 Westminster constituency boundaries, 543 in England; unpaid care by age for 2021 districts). Employment rates exclude full-time students. Age adjustment is by direct standardisation; the constituency age-adjusted ranks are Bridgehead's, using the ONS TS039ASP method. ONS adds small random changes to custom tables.

Council support and GP Patient Survey. NHS England, Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report 2023-24, table 47 (the 2024-25 edition does not count carers). GP Patient Survey 2026, NHS England and Ipsos, 9 July 2026, national and integrated care system results.

Trends. Census 2001 (Nomis UV021, KS008), 2011 (QS301EW) and 2021 (TS039) for England. ONS, Unpaid care, England and Wales: Census 2021, 19 January 2023. DWP, Family Resources Survey 2024/25, 26 March 2026, Table 5.1. DWP, Benefit expenditure and caseload tables, Spring Forecast 2026, 14 April 2026. ONS, 2024-based national population projections, 28 April 2026.



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