



Caring Unseen

Understanding Family Carers

Polling Report: Wellbeing, Awareness of Support Options, and Future Projections among family carers

 *You are
not alone*

GoodOaks
Quality Care at Home

Table of Contents

Foreword	03
You Are Not Alone Campaign	04
About GoodOaks	05
The Current Climate	06
Unpaid Carers Polling	07
Key Findings	08
Wellbeing	11
Wellbeing by Region	13
Wellbeing by Age	14
Awareness of Care and Support Options	15
Awareness by Region	17
Awareness by Age	19
Looking to the future	22
The Future by Region	23
The Future by Age	24
Conclusion	25

Foreword

Too often the debate on social care is concentrated entirely on the part of the sector in which care is paid for. This part of the sector has problems enough, but ignoring the issues affecting unpaid carers only compounds the difficulties of the sector.

Many of these unpaid carers do not think of themselves in these terms. They are simply doing their duty, and often demonstrating their love, for their closest companions, whether they are spouses, parents, or near relatives. There are more than ten million of them in this country, and they are some of the quiet heroes of our society.

It is relatively easy to estimate the economic benefit they bring to the country. Estimates are that they deliver services that would cost £162 billion if they were provided by professionals, a figure that is more than our annual spend on the NHS.

More difficult is to imagine how much poorer our society would be without them. It would leave millions of the most vulnerable in our society that much more lonely, unhappy and without hope.

The study which follows gives an insight into how these unpaid carers are feeling. Unsurprisingly it is not a cheerful and optimistic read, and there are findings which will make politicians of all parties uneasy. As the Chair of the All-Party group on the subject I try to approach social care issues in a non-partisan way.

They are not happy with the level of the Carers' Allowance, and they want the entitlement to some respite leave. They also want more support for their own health and wellbeing, which are too often sacrificed in the interests of those who need the care.

The carers themselves feel lonely, and find it difficult to meet their own needs, even if they are pleased to be able to meet the needs of their loved ones. This awareness of their own success is reflected particularly in the younger carers polled, who have a more positive outlook on their future.

Good Oaks deserve praise for bringing this information together as part of their You Are Not Alone campaign, as well as for their work in providing care for their clients. This report is a reminder to policy makers that the millions of unpaid carers deserve not just recognition but practical help to make their lives more comfortable.



Damian Green MP

Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary
Group on Adult Social Care

You Are Not Alone Campaign

It is estimated that there are over 10 million unpaid carers across the country. 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



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 over 22 branches across England. It employs over 400 care professionals and cares for some 500 individuals.



The Current Climate

In the United Kingdom, the landscape for unpaid carers is increasingly acknowledged as a critical area of concern, with the number of individuals taking on the role of providing unpaid care for family members or friends reaching an estimated 10.6 million, according to research conducted by Carers UK.

These carers are an indispensable part of the healthcare system, delivering services that, if provided by professionals, would cost the government £162 billion annually according to research from the University of Sheffield and Carers UK, more than the entire day-to-day spending of NHS England last year. These contributions, however, often come with significant personal costs to those providing care, particularly emotionally, physically, and financially.

Unpaid carers face a myriad of challenges, from the balancing act of juggling employment and care responsibilities to the emotional and physical toll of caregiving. Financially, the situation for many is precarious. While some may qualify for support schemes such as the Carer's Allowance—a government benefit aimed at providing financial support to those who care for someone at least 35 hours a week - the support is often deemed insufficient, failing to fully address the economic sacrifices made by carers.

The allowance, at just £76.75 per week, does not adequately compensate for the loss of income, career opportunities, and pension contributions, leaving many carers in a vulnerable financial position.

As part of recent approaches to tackling the issues faced by unpaid carers, the Carer's Leave Act, proposed by the Liberal Democrat MP Wendy Chamberlain, is scheduled to come into force this April.

The Act provides a statutory entitlement to one week of unpaid leave per year for eligible employees, offering them crucial time to arrange or provide care for dependents with long-term care needs. Though a move that appears welcome, some remain critical of its unpaid nature. The Liberal Democrats, for example, have promised to make the Act paid if elected.

Despite these advancements, there remains a pressing need for broader support mechanisms to be introduced for unpaid carers. Calls for improved financial support, access to respite care, and greater recognition of carers' rights in the workplace continue to grow.

The Covid-19 pandemic further underscored the vulnerabilities faced by unpaid carers, emphasising the essential nature of their role and the critical need for robust support systems that can adapt to crises.

As the number of unpaid carers continues to rise, more comprehensive strategies are needed. These strategies must aim to alleviate the financial burden on carers, provide significant support for their health and well-being, and ensure that carers are recognised as an integral part of the healthcare system.

The journey towards full support for unpaid carers is ongoing but requires continued advocacy, policy development, and societal recognition of their contributions.



Unpaid Carers Polling

On behalf of GoodOaks Homecare, OnePoll, a member of the UK Polling Council, conducted a comprehensive survey of 1,000 unpaid carers across England. The objective was to delve into the perspectives and experiences of unpaid carers, shedding light on their views on the current unpaid care landscape in the UK.

Questions were divided deliberately into thematic subsections hoping to probe different aspects of this landscape.

Firstly, it aimed to assess the current state of wellbeing among unpaid carers, focusing on their emotional health and their ability to balance their own needs with those of the individuals they care for.

Secondly, the survey sought to evaluate the level of awareness of various support measures designed for unpaid carers – both those currently in place and those scheduled for implementation in the near future.

Lastly, the survey explored carers' perceptions of the future, including anticipated changes in their caregiving capacity, employment opportunities, and ability to meet the needs of those they cared for in the future.

Key Findings

Wellbeing



62% of unpaid carers described themselves as having felt 'stressed' in the week prior to the survey, **50%** higher than those of the public in the same period.



Unpaid carers were **more than twice** as likely to have felt lonely in the week prior to completing the poll than the public.



More than half (**55%**) of unpaid carers felt unable to meet their own health and wellbeing needs.



Younger unpaid carers (18-34-year-olds), were **most likely** to respond that they were "able to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their loved ones, but not their own."



Awareness of Care and Support Options



Though the majority of carers polled described themselves as aware of the provisions, costs and benefits of live-in care, understanding declined as age increased. Awareness fell from **75%** among 18-to-34-year-olds to just **55%** among over 65s.



Carer's Allowance emerged as the most familiar additional support option, though just over **50%** of respondents indicated a "good understanding" of its provisions.



Carer's Credit and the incoming Carer's Leave Act proved the least well known of all options, with awareness levels at just **15%** and **12%** respectively.



One-fifth of unpaid carers polled did not have a good understanding of **any** of the options provided.



Just **one-third** of unpaid carers described themselves as "very" or "somewhat" aware of the provisions outlined in the Carer's Leave Act 2023. **51%** described themselves as either very or somewhat "unaware".



Awareness of the Carer's Leave Act also declined as age increased, falling from **44%** among 18-24-year-olds to just **12%** among over 65s. Self-assessed unawareness rose in a linear pattern from **33%** in the youngest cohort to **77%** in the eldest.

Looking to the Future



Nearly a third of unpaid carers (**30%**) believed that their care provision was **unsustainable**.



The youngest cohorts polled tended to have the most positive outlook for the future, with **two-thirds** of those in the 18-24 category believing their care was sustainable, and **51%** anticipating that their ability to provide care would improve over the next 18-24 months.



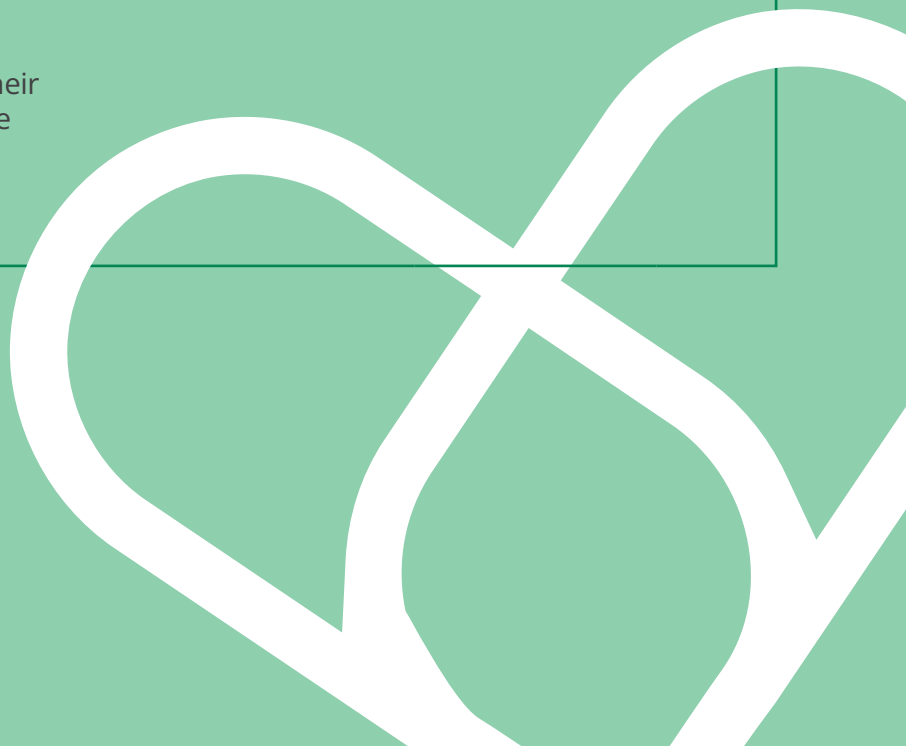
Optimism tended to **fall as age increased**, though unpaid carers over 65 proved an interesting outlier to the trend, perceiving their care provision as both more sustainable and more likely to improve over the next 18 to 24 months than those in the 55 to 64 age category.



When asked how they perceived their ability to provide unpaid care to their loved ones might change over the next 18 to 24 months, approximately **one-quarter** foresaw that their ability would worsen.



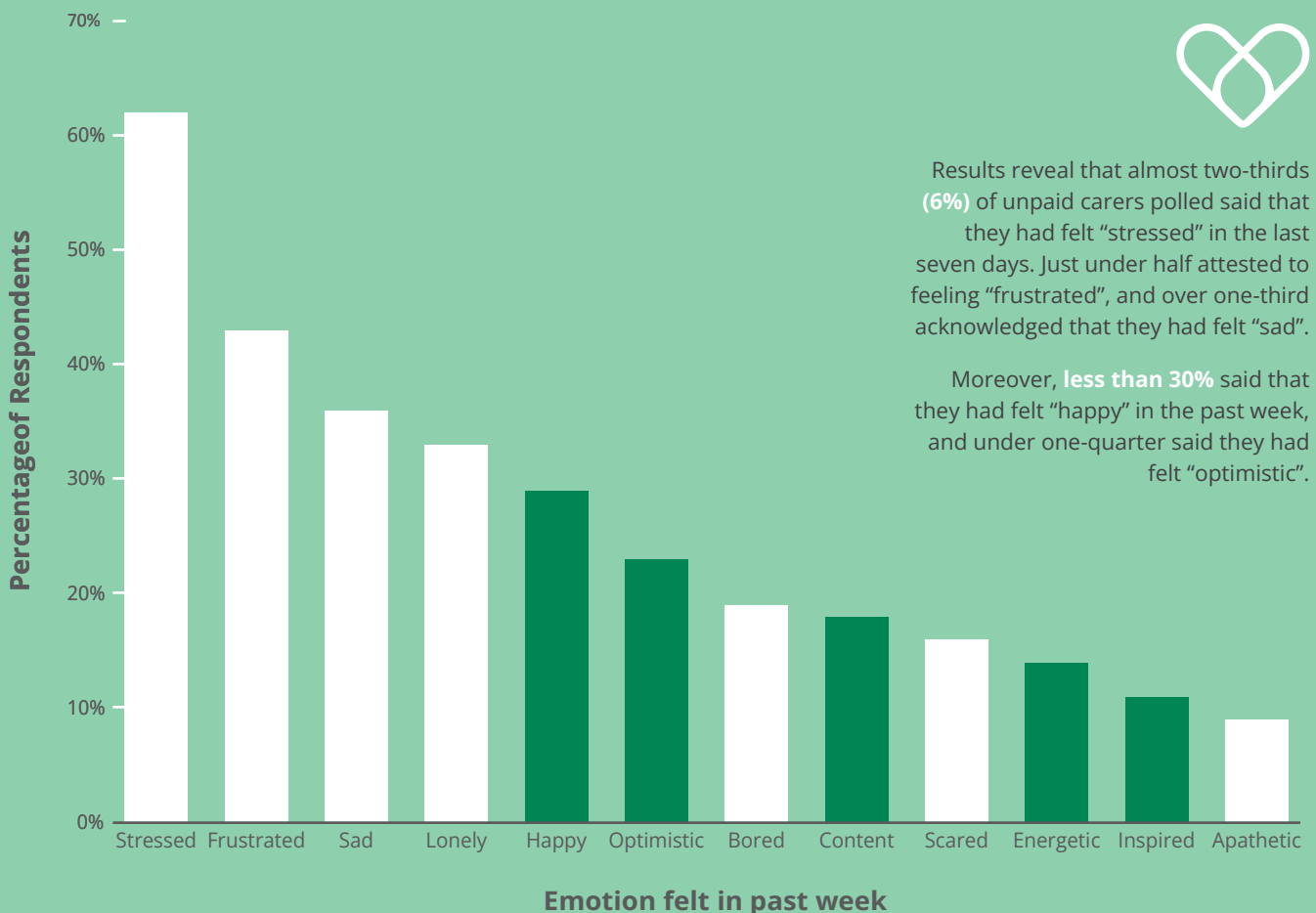
Just **31%** of those polled believed their ability to deliver care would improve over the next 18 to 24 months.



Wellbeing

To gauge the prevailing sentiments among unpaid carers in England, respondents were invited to indicate the emotions that they had felt in the past week, ticking each applicable feeling. The question style mirrors YouGov’s weekly mood tracker and aims to grasp an impression of how unpaid carers are feeling in comparison to the general public.

Broadly speaking, which of the following, if any, best describes how you have felt emotionally in the past week?



The results suggest a more significant trend in poor wellbeing among unpaid carers when this data is compared with that of the general population. Unpaid carers were, for example, more than twice as likely to feel “lonely” in the past seven days than members of the public. The public were **50%** more likely to have felt “happy” in the same period versus those providing unpaid care.

Unpaid carers were also asked to self-assess their ability to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their loved ones and themselves.

Questions were divided into sections, enabling respondents to say whether they felt able to meet the wellbeing needs of their loved ones and themselves, their loved ones but not themselves, themselves but not their loved ones, or neither.

Nearly half (**48%**) said that they believed they were able to meet the needs of their loved ones, but not themselves. **Less than 30%** said that they were able to meet the needs of both themselves and those they cared for. **17%** of unpaid carers felt that they were unable to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their loved ones.



More than half (55%) of unpaid carers felt unable to meet their own health and wellbeing needs.

Wellbeing by Region

There was relative uniformity in the geographical breakdown of how unpaid carers had felt in the week prior to taking the poll. The total percentage of respondents who felt stressed, for example, at 62%, echoed the median of all regions polled, which stood at 64%.

Those in the South East were most likely to have felt more negative emotions. **67%** said they had felt stressed, **47%** frustrated, **39%** sad, and **33%** lonely. Virtually all remaining regions polled reported a poor emotional wellbeing just three or four percentage points behind these.

Unpaid carers in London were slightly more likely to exhibit more positive sentiment, or at the least, less likely to feel as bad as those in the other regions. **28%** of Londoners, for example, reported having felt optimistic, **29%** happy, and **just under one-fifth** energetic.

The picture for unpaid carer's wellbeing in relation to their ability to provide for those they cared for whilst also meeting their own wellbeing needs, was particularly stark in the North and East of England. **60%** of respondents from the North East, for example, reported that they were able to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their loved ones, but not their own.

54% of respondents in the North East, and **56%** of respondents in the East of England echoed the same sentiment.

In the South East and South West, similar patterns emerge in the results. In both regions, **49%** said that whilst able to meet the needs of those they cared for, they could not meet their own.

Notably, both of these regions reported the highest percentages of respondents who reported being unable to meet either the health and wellbeing needs of their loved ones or their own, at **9%** and **8%** respectively.

Respondents from London at the West Midlands had the highest number of respondents who said they were able to meet the needs of themselves and their loved ones, but even then, the figures stood at just **34%** and **38%** respectively.



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Wellbeing by Age

The polling results also revealed variation in the wellbeing of unpaid carers depending on their age. It found that respondents under 35 were more likely to have their wellbeing affected.

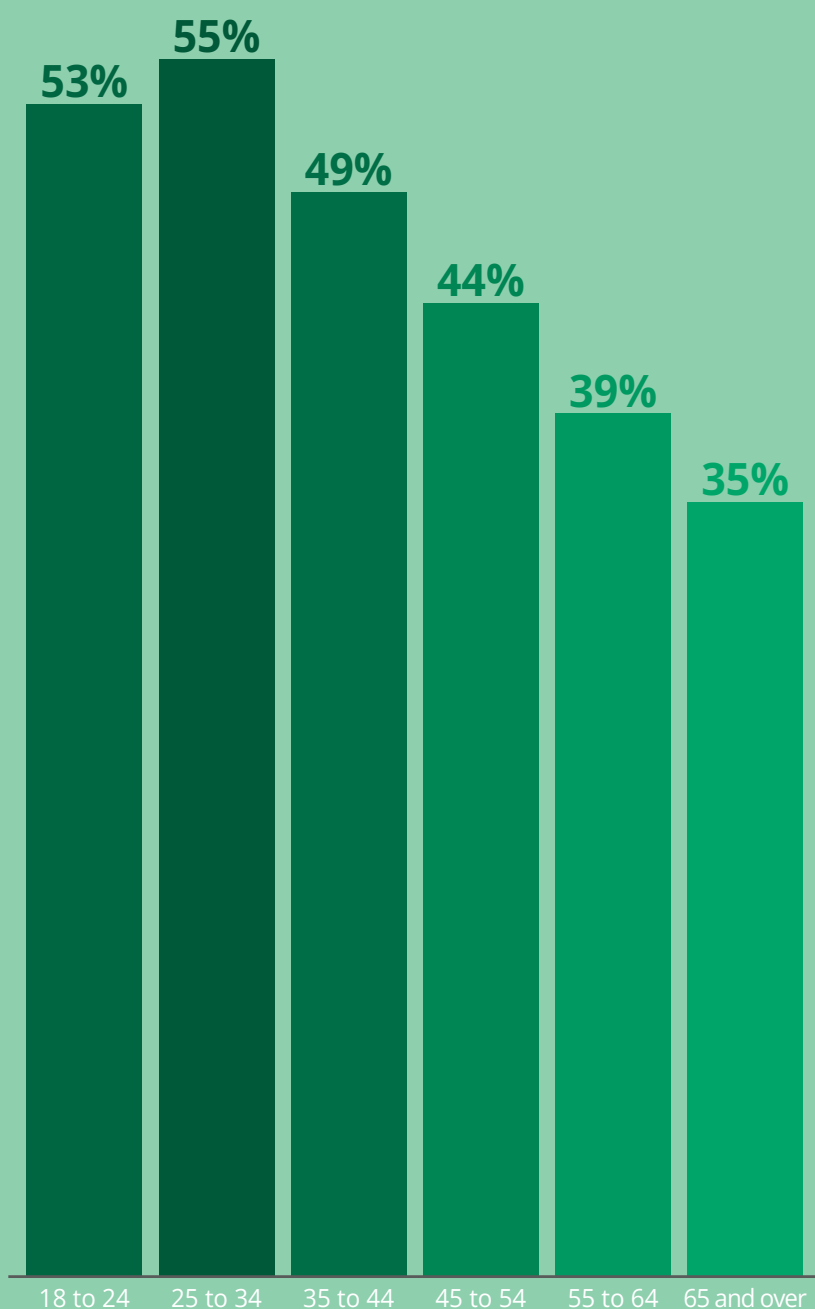
55% of unpaid carers between 25 and 34 said that they were able to meet the health and wellbeing needs of loved ones, but not their own. The figures were similar for 18-24-year-olds, where **53%** of respondents said the same.

Similar trends were also exhibited when respondents were asked how they had felt in the last week. **41%** of 18-to-24-year-olds said that they had felt lonely, as had **34%** of 25-to-24-year-olds, whereas just **20%** of over 65s said the same. 18-to-24-year-olds were also the most likely to be 'scared', 'bored', and 'apathetic' of all age groups.

Unpaid carers under the age of 35 were most likely to be unable to meet their own health and wellbeing needs, despite being able to meet those of loved ones.

When thinking of your ability to meet the health and wellbeing needs of yourself and your loved ones, which of the following, if any, do you feel comes closest to your view?

I am able to meet the health and wellbeing needs of my loved ones, but not my own



Awareness of Care and Support Options

In an effort to assess unpaid carer's awareness of different care and support options, GoodOaks initiated a study to first measure their understanding of the details associated with live in care – an arrangement in which a care professional resides with an individual in need of assistance, providing round-the-clock support in a care receiver's own home.

The survey asked respondents to judge their own awareness of the 'provisions, costs and benefits' of live-in care. The findings revealed that half of all respondents were either 'not aware' or only 'somewhat aware' of live-in care as a model of care.

As a further part of the survey, GoodOaks also sought to evaluate unpaid carer's awareness of various support options available, primarily those already accessible to carers, but also those, such as the Carer's Leave Act, that are expected to come into force in April 2024.

Survey participants were presented with a list of support options and asked to indicate those of which they had a "good understanding". The options included Personal Independence Payments, NHS Continuing Healthcare, Carer's Allowance, Attendance Allowance, local services and charities, Carer's Credit, and the Carer's Leave Act.

Among all unpaid carers polled, the Carer's Allowance emerged as the most familiar, with just over **50%** of respondents indicating a "good understanding" of its provisions.

The second most well-understood of the aforementioned support options were Personal Independence Payments, which **35%** of respondents selected.

Approximately one-quarter of respondents reported a "good understanding" of the Attendance Allowance, of local services and charity support, and of NHS Continuing Healthcare.

Carer's Credit was selected by just **15%** of respondents, and the Carer's Leave Act, planned for the statute books this April, was well-understood by just **12%**.

Given the proximity of the Act's introduction, which gives unpaid carer's the right to take a week of unpaid leave each year to care for a dependent, GoodOaks commissioned a further survey of unpaid carer's awareness of the provisions within the act.



Just 12% of carers described themselves as having a 'good understanding' of the incoming Carer's Leave Act 2023



The question was as follows:

The government has announced something called the “Carer’s Leave Act 2023”, which comes into effect this April. How aware or unaware are you of the provisions outlined in the Carer’s Leave Act?

The more targeted questions yielded more detailed responses. **10%** of those polled described themselves as “very aware” of the provisions outlined within the Act, while **23%** described themselves as “somewhat aware”. This translates to approximately **one-third** of unpaid carers polled having at least a basic understanding of the stipulations of the Carer’s Leave Act.

There remained, however, a majority of respondents who claimed to be “unaware” – at varying degrees – of the provisions outlined in the Act. **35%** of respondents claimed to be “very unaware” of the detail of the Carer’s Leave Act, and a further **16%** “somewhat unaware”. **15%** described themselves as “neither unaware nor unaware” of the provisions outlined in the Act.

Among all unpaid carers polled, the Carer’s Allowance emerged as the most familiar support option, with just over 50% of respondents indicating a “good understanding” of its provisions.

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Awareness by Region

Interestingly, it was the Yorkshire and the Humber region in which unpaid carers exhibited the highest level of awareness among unpaid carers regarding the provisions, costs and benefits of live-in care, with 74% of respondents describing themselves as aware.

Following closely was London, where 73% of respondents revealed that they were either 'somewhat' or 'very' aware, and then the North West region, where 72% of carers reported the same.

Levels of awareness in the South East and South West were nearly identical, with 25% and 24% respectively describing themselves as "very aware" of the details of live-in care, while 44% and 45% respectively considered themselves "somewhat aware".

Despite the high figure of awareness, there remained approximately one-fifth of respondents in both regions who stated that they were "unaware" of the provisions, costs and benefits of live-in care.

The region with the least awareness (though nonetheless still a majority) was the West Midlands. In the region, 62% described themselves as aware, whereas 22% claimed to be unaware.

Awareness of the various support options presented to respondents varied significantly, and do not appear to present any linear correlation of generally more awareness of care support options in one region compared to another.

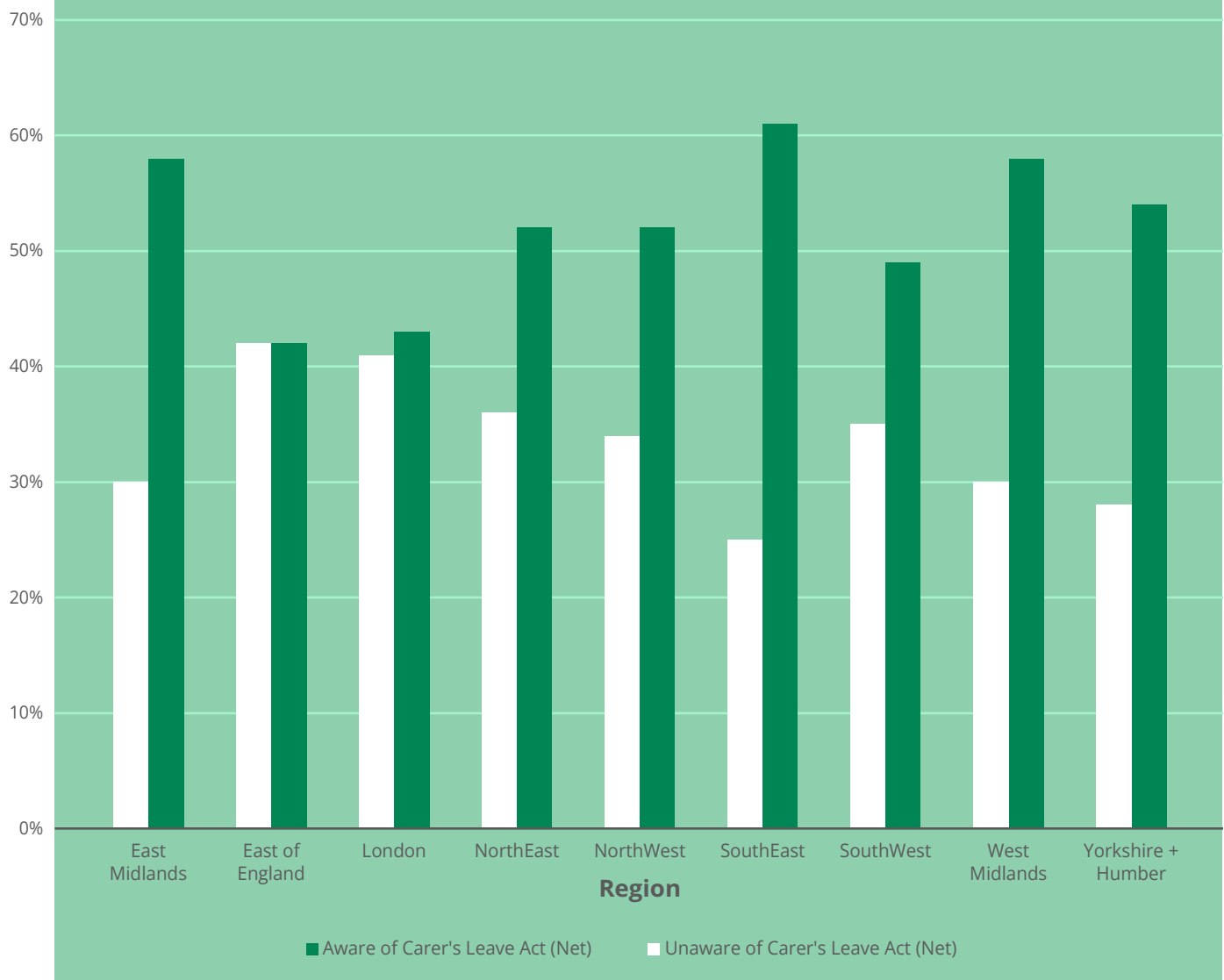
In the North West, for example, while 58% of respondents demonstrated a strong grasp of the Carer's Allowance, the highest among all regions, just one-fifth had a good understanding of the Attendance Allowance, the second lowest of all regions, and respondents had a below-average understanding of Personal Independence Payments when compared with the responses elsewhere.

Similarly, while unpaid carers in the South West had an above-average understanding of the Attendance Allowance (29% versus 26% average) they had a below average understanding of Carer's Credit (11% versus 15% average).

There were also significant regional disparities in the understanding and awareness of the provisions entailed within Carer's Leave Act 2023.



The government has announced something called the “Carer’s Leave Act 2023”, which comes into effect this April. How aware or unaware are you of the provisions outlined in the Carer’s Leave Act?



Those in the East of England and in London appear most aware of the details encompassed within the Carer’s Leave Act, with **42%** and **41%** of respondents claiming so respectively. In both regions, though, the proportion of those who were ‘unaware’ of the provisions mirrored the levels of those who were ‘aware’.

Awareness was considerably lower in other regions polled. Unpaid carers in the South East displayed the lowest awareness, with only a quarter claiming to be either ‘somewhat’ or ‘very’ aware, and over **60%** admitting to being unaware. Similarly, both the East and West Midlands lacked the levels of awareness signalled in London and the East of England, with only **30%** demonstrating awareness and **58%** lacking awareness of the Act.

Both the East and West Midlands also lacked much awareness of the Act – in both regions only **30%** had a net awareness, and **58%** had a net lack of awareness.

Awareness of the provisions entailed within the Carer’s Leave Act 2023 was lowest in the South East region of England, with just **25%** aware and **60%** unaware.

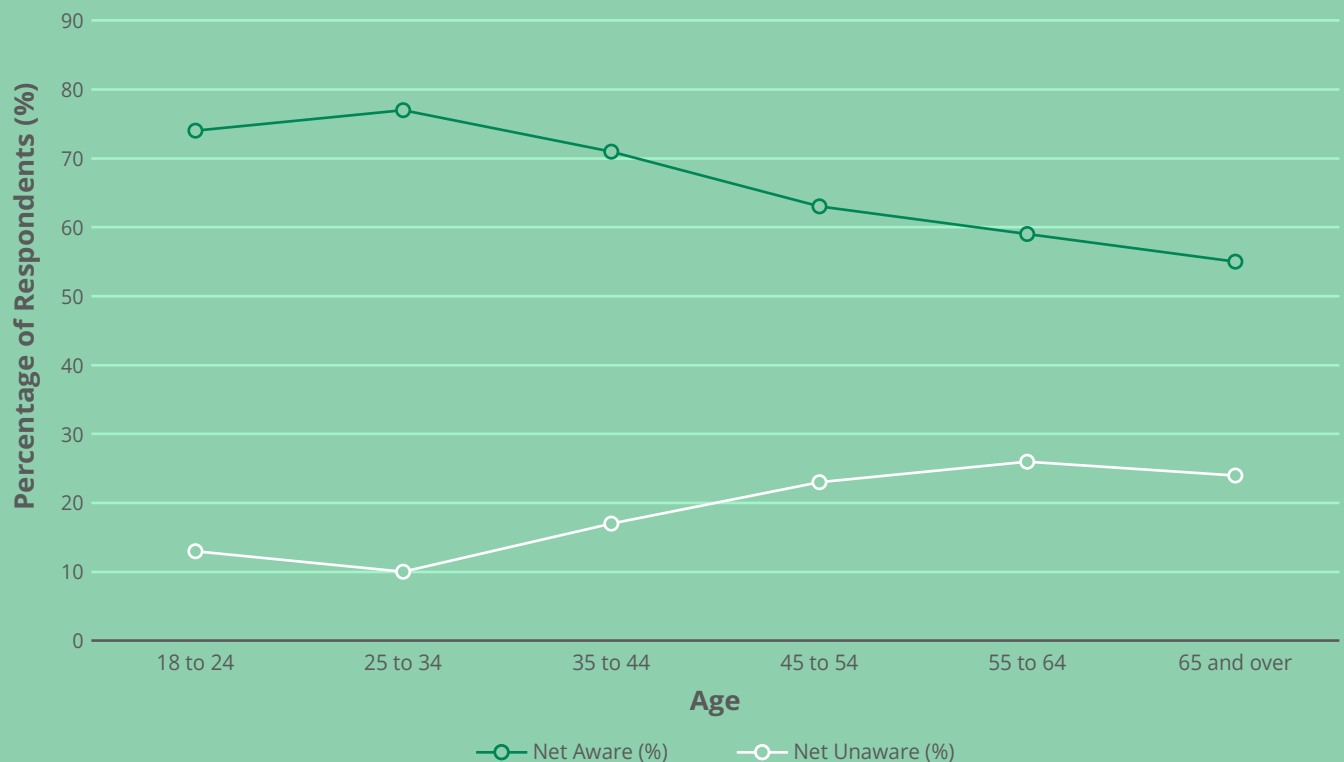
Awareness by Age

Analysis of the survey data broken down by age groups unveils interesting patterns in the recognition of various care and support options.

When respondents were queried on their understanding of live-in care, the responses followed a relatively linear pattern: the younger you are, the more detailed your awareness of its provisions, costs, and benefits.

Specifically, approximately three-quarters of individuals aged 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 reported being aware of these aspects, in contrast to just **13** and **10%** of both age brackets that described themselves as 'unaware'.

“Live-in care” is a type of long-term care arrangement where a professional care-giver resides with an individual in need of assistance, providing round-the-clock support in the care-receiver’s own home. How aware or unaware are you of the provisions, costs and benefits of live-in care?

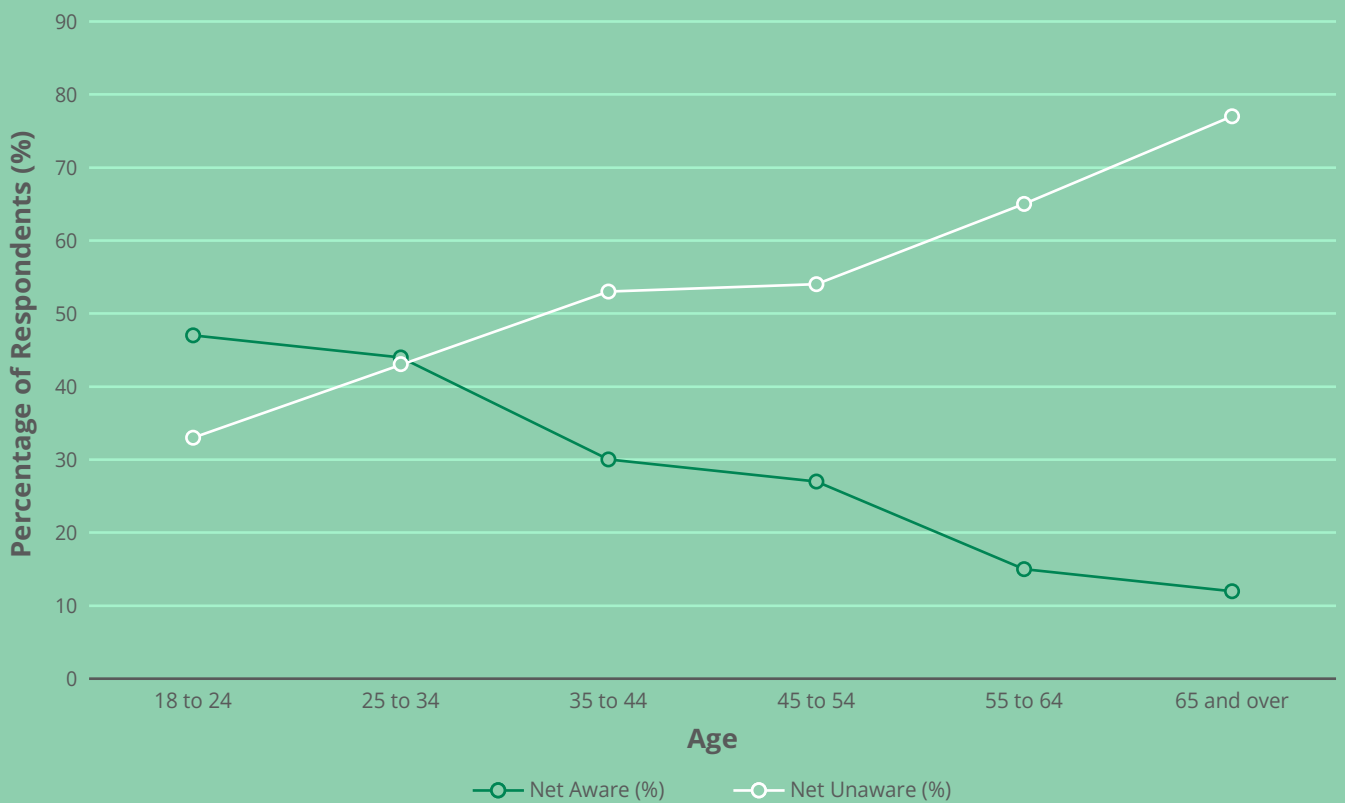


As the age of respondents ascended, their awareness declined consistently, as presented in the graph below. Awareness among over 65s stood at just **55%**, with **24%** describing themselves as 'unaware'.

A similar pattern emerges with respect to familiarity with the forthcoming Carer's Leave Act, with knowledge diminishing steadily as age increased.

It falls from **47%** among 18 to 25-year-olds to just **12%** among those aged 65 and older. This decline is mirrored by a rise in self-assessed 'unawareness' of the provisions outlined in the Carer's Leave Act, rising from **33%** in the youngest cohort to **77%** in the eldest cohort.

The government has announced something called the "Carer's Leave Act 2023", which comes into effect this April. How aware or unaware are you of the provisions outlined in the Carer's Leave Act?



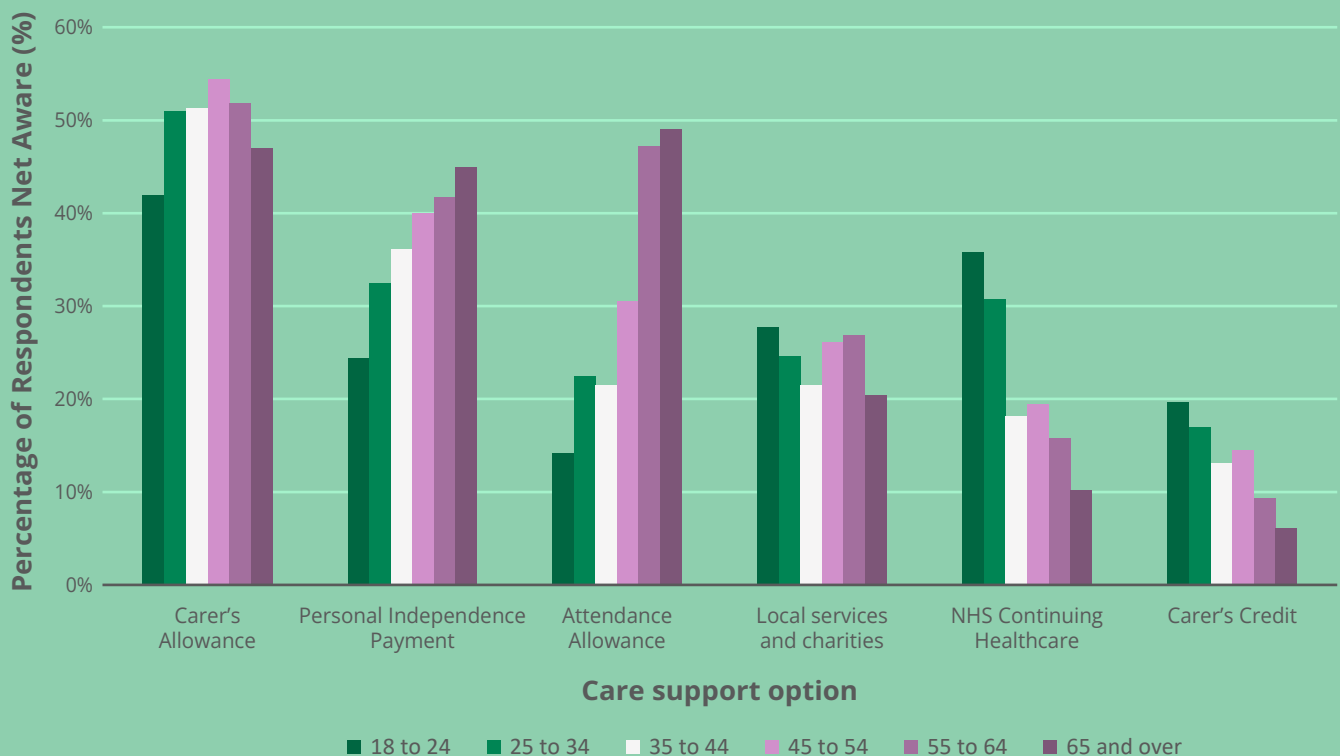
Polling revealed that as unpaid carers age increased, their awareness of the provisions of the Carer's Leave Act declined – falling from 47% awareness among 18 to 24-year-olds to just 12% in over 65s



Nonetheless, when examining other forms of support options, the level of understanding among age groups is more variable. The Carer's Allowance proved the most well-understood across all ages, with each having between **40** and **55%** of respondent declaring a 'good understanding'.

Personal Independent Payments were also well-understood, although awareness increased as age increased, with less than **one quarter** of those under 25 had a 'good' understanding versus around **45%** of those over 65. Similar was the case with Attendance Allowance – where nearly **50%** over 55s polled had a good understanding, whereas less than **15%** of those under 25 had the same.

4. Which of the following care support options, if any, do you have a good understanding of?



Local services and charities that provide support received less recognition among unpaid carers, though levels were similar across all age categories. It was NHS Continuing Healthcare and Carer's Credit in which the younger respondents held a significant advantage – more three-times as many respondents between 18 and 35 had a 'good understanding' of these than those aged 65 and over. Less than **20%** of those between 35 and 64 had a strong understanding of these.

Looking to the future

GoodOaks also sought to gain a deeper insight into how unpaid carers perceived their own ability to provide care to loved ones might change over time.

Firstly, respondents were asked to assess the sustainability of their current care provision. Just under half of respondents deemed it sustainable, while **29%** believed it was unsustainable, and **23%** were unsure.

In a slightly more specific question, unpaid carers were asked how they anticipated their ability to provide care for their loved ones would change over the next 18 to 24 months. Approximately one-quarter foresaw that their ability to care for loved ones would 'worsen', made up of **5%** who believed it would 'significantly' worsen, and **19%** who predicted it would 'somewhat' worsen.

Nevertheless, only **31%** of those surveyed believed their ability to provide care to loved ones would improve over the same period – **9%** 'significantly', and **22%** 'somewhat'. The option selected by the highest number of unpaid carers was the perception that their ability to deliver care over the next 18 to 24 months would neither improve nor worsen.

49%

of unpaid carers polled perceived the care they currently provide as sustainable

29%

believed it was unsustainable

1/4

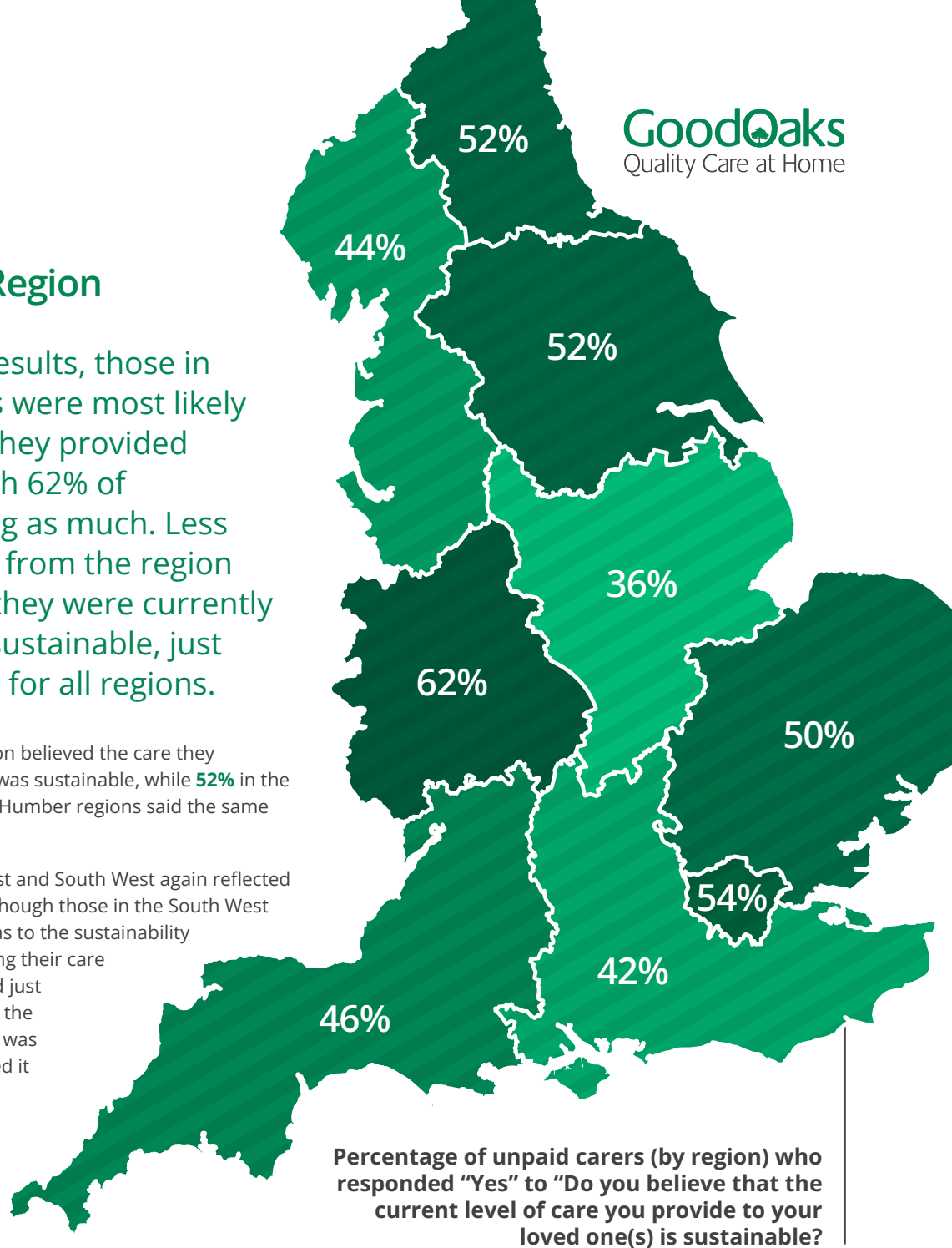
of unpaid carers believed their ability to deliver care to their loved ones would 'worsen' over the next 18-24 months.

The Future by Region

According to the results, those in the West Midlands were most likely to judge the care they provided as sustainable, with 62% of respondents saying as much. Less than 30% of those from the region believed the care they were currently delivering was unsustainable, just below the average for all regions.

54% of unpaid carers in London believed the care they provided for their loved ones was sustainable, while 52% in the North East and Yorkshire and Humber regions said the same respectively.

Unpaid carers in the South East and South West again reflected relatively similar sentiments, though those in the South West were slightly more optimistic as to the sustainability of their care, with 46% believing their care provision was sustainable, and just 28% believing the opposite. In the South East, 42% believed care was sustainable, and 31% perceived it as unsustainable.



Percentage of unpaid carers (by region) who responded "Yes" to "Do you believe that the current level of care you provide to your loved one(s) is sustainable?"

It was those in the East Midlands who were least likely to respond that their current care provision was sustainable. Just 36% said so, whereas 38% believed it was unsustainable.

It is unsurprising therefore that those in the East Midlands were also the most likely to predict that their ability to deliver unpaid care to friends and family would worsen over the next 18 to 24 months.

30% of respondents said as much, with less than a quarter predicting it would improve.

There were interesting intra-regional divides on the question of how unpaid carers anticipated their capacity to deliver care would change over the next 18 to 24 months. In the South East, for example, while 25% of respondents believed their care provision would improve, 27% said it would worsen. For those in the South West, 22% predicted their ability to deliver care would improve, whereas 27% believed it would worsen.

The Future by Age

The youngest cohorts of unpaid carers polled tended to have the most positive outlook for the future.

Optimism tended to fall as age increased, though unpaid carers over 65 proved an interesting outlier to the trend, perceiving their care provision as both more sustainable and more likely to improve over the next 18 to 24 months than those in the 55 to 64 age category.

Two-thirds of respondents in the 18 to 24 age category believed that their current care provision was sustainable, and **51%** believed that their ability to deliver care to their family and friends would 'improve', either somewhat or significantly, in the next 18 to 24 months.

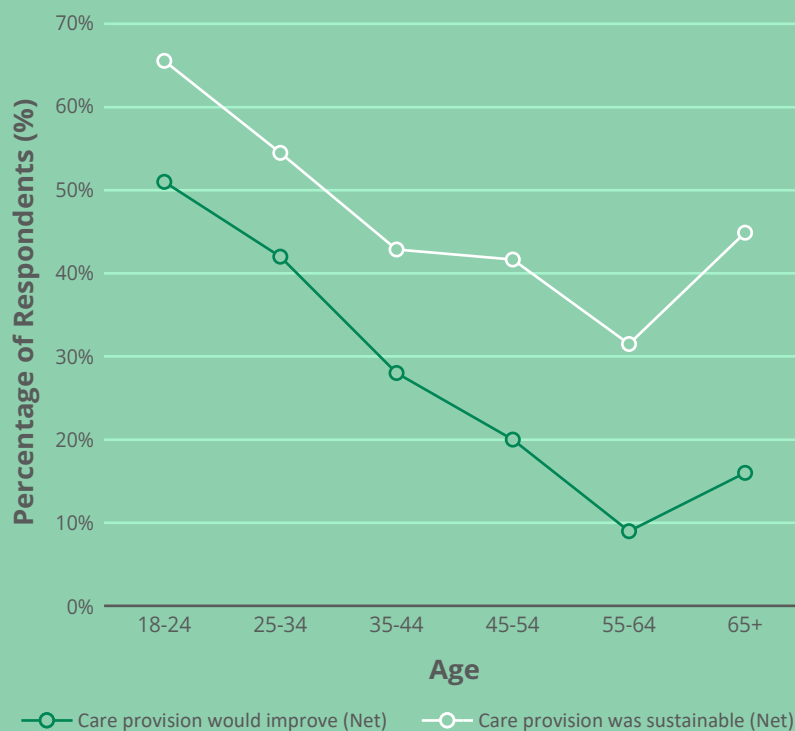
As age increased, the percentage of respondents who believed their care provision was sustainable fell consistently, as did the percentage of respondents who believed their ability to deliver care over the next year-and-a-half to two years.

By the age 55 to 64 category, the percentage of unpaid carers who believe their care situation would improve over the next 18 to 24 months had fallen to just **9%**, and the percentage of these who believed their care was "sustainable" had fallen to **31%**.

It is not entirely clear why the downwards trend is broken by the over 65s category of unpaid carers. Nevertheless, the data reveals that unpaid carers in the age subcategory were more likely to consider their current care provision as sustainable than unpaid carers between the ages of 35 and 64. They are also more likely to anticipate their ability to deliver care will improve over the next 18 to 24 months versus unpaid carers aged between 55 and 64.

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 to your family/friends will improve or worsen



The youngest cohorts of unpaid carers polled tended to have the most positive outlook for the future.

By the age 55 to 64 category, the percentage of unpaid carers who believe their care situation would improve over the next 18 to 24 months had fallen to just 9%, and the percentage of these who believed their care was "sustainable" had fallen to 31%.

Conclusion

There is clearly much valuable insight that can be derived from these polling results, across all sub-sections of analysis, and much can be learnt to effectively inform decision-making amongst policymakers when looking into the sector.

It is clear that a substantial proportion of unpaid carers are facing considerable challenges in maintaining their own health and wellbeing while providing unpaid care for their loved ones. That more than half point to an inability to meet their own needs suggests that the mechanisms of support currently must be at the very least bolstered and should be added to.

But there is equally more to be done to raise awareness among unpaid carers for virtually all current and proposed measures. Though support such as the Carer's Allowance is reasonably well-known, it should be a real driver for the government and local authorities to ensure that every unpaid carer has a detailed understanding of each and every option. The significant disparities in awareness that this polling has uncovered, which tends to decrease with the carers' age, points to a need for more effective communication and education strategies to ensure carers of all ages are informed of the support available to them.

Such is the visibility issue of many of these options that the Carer's Leave Act, perhaps one of the most significant wins for unpaid carers in recent years, is hardly known about among the country's unpaid carers. Even if it sounds like a fantastic support option on paper, without increased awareness of the act among those who delivered care, the scale of its potential benefits will likely go unrealised.

The findings from this report make a compelling case for immediate and targeted actions to address the needs of unpaid carers. It is essential that these insights lead to a collective effort from policymakers, community organisations, and the public to recognise and support the critical role that many millions across the country do for those they love most.



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