

# CARERS IN HEREFORDSHIRE

Version 1.0

Herefordshire Council Intelligence Unit

March 2025

## CONTENTS

Numbers of carers.....	3
Amount of care provided .....	5
Characteristics of unpaid carers .....	7
Age distribution of carers .....	7
Sex of carers .....	9
Sexual orientation of unpaid carers.....	10
General health of unpaid carers .....	10
Loneliness and mental health of carers .....	11
Economic activity of unpaid carers .....	12
Access to a car or a van.....	13
Housing tenure.....	13
Impact of cost of living pressures on carers.....	13
Young carers.....	15
Census 2021 .....	15
2024 Herefordshire’s children and young people’s quality of life survey.....	16
Herefordshire Young and Young Adult Carers (HYYAC).....	16
Children’s Services, Herefordshire Council .....	16
School Census .....	16
Impact of caring responsibilities .....	16

If you need help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please contact us on 01432 261944 or e-mail [researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk)

# INTRODUCTION

Unpaid carers play a pivotal role in our communities, contributing dedication and compassion to support their loved ones. It is crucial to recognise that the experience of caregiving is not a one size-fits-all journey, but rather a nuanced and dynamic process shaped by the unique needs and circumstances of those involved.' ([Herefordshire All-Age Carers Strategy 2024-2029](#))

Unpaid or informal carers are people who look after or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours, or others, because of long-term physical or mental ill-health, disability, or problems related to old age. It does not include anyone who provides care as part of their paid employment or voluntary work for a group or organisation.

This report has been compiled to provide the information on numbers of carers in Herefordshire and their key characteristics.

## NUMBERS OF CARERS

The total number of unpaid carers in Herefordshire is not definitively known<sup>1</sup> as people who provide unpaid care do not always chose to identify them as carers and are often not known to be carers by support services.

The decennial Census undertaken by the Office for National Statistics is the primary source of local-level data on the number of carers and how this changes over time. However, the numbers of people identifying themselves as carers in the Census is almost certainly a significant underestimate and other local sources suggest that numbers in Herefordshire are likely much higher.

In Herefordshire,

- Census data suggested that around 16,580 people aged five and over were providing at least an hour of unpaid care a week in 2021. This represented around 9% of the population; the same percentage as England and Wales but was almost certainly an underestimate, partly attributable to the timing of 2021 Census coinciding with the Covid-19 pandemic when interaction between households was restricted.
- The proportion of residents providing unpaid care therefore appeared to decrease from the previous Census in 2011<sup>2\*</sup> (12%), and a similar decrease was seen in England and Wales too (from 11% to 9%).
- Overall, Census data showed the largest proportional decrease between 2011 and 2021 was in:
  - People who provided 19 or less hours of unpaid care a week, which decreased from 7.8% to 4.7%. This is to be expected, as carers providing smaller levels of care are less likely

---

<sup>1</sup> Social Care blog by Department of Health and Social care: [Carers Week 2023: crunching the numbers... – Social care](#)

<sup>2</sup> Census 2011 included unpaid carers of all ages, while Census 2021 included unpaid carers aged 5 years and over. Although the number of carers aged under 5 is negligible, this comparison is an indication only.

to be living with the person they are caring for and so have had their caring activities be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

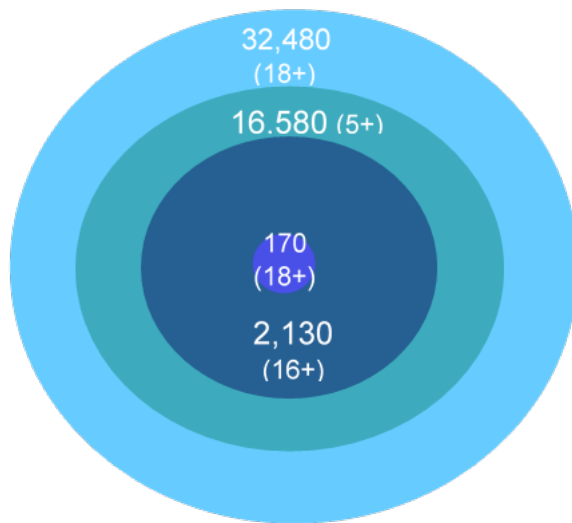
- Conversely, the proportion of people who provided 20 to 49 hours of unpaid care a week increased from 1.3% to 1.6% and people who provided 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week remained the same at 2.4%
- The 2023 Community Wellbeing Survey (CWS) of Herefordshire adults (aged 18 and over) found that, 21% (32,800) provided some level of unpaid care, which was a slight decrease from 23% in the previous 2021 CWS. On the basis of the [national evidence](#) these estimates are much more likely to be closer to the true figure.
- The decrease in the proportion of adults providing unpaid care between the 2021 and 2023 surveys may have partly reflected the lifting of pandemic restrictions, meaning that some people may have needed less care from family members.
- In August 2024, 2,155 people aged 16 years and over were claiming Carer's Allowance, a government benefit for eligible unpaid carers who provide substantial care for someone with significant needs.
- In the 12 months to November 2023, 170 adults (aged 18 and over) who had contact with the council in that period were identified as having caring responsibilities.<sup>3</sup>
- The numbers of unpaid carers claiming Carer's Allowance, or known to the council, both represent very small cohorts within the overall numbers of people providing care and tend to be those with the highest levels of need. It is also possible that some carers with qualifying levels of need are reluctant to, or lack the necessary information, to claim benefits to which they are entitled, or engage with the council for support.

---

<sup>3</sup> Carers enter the social care system either through self-referral or through a joint assessment with the person they care for.

Figure 1:

Number of residents who provides unpaid care in Herefordshire



All unpaid carers in Herefordshire = **not known**

Census 2021 provide unpaid care = 16,580 (5+ years)

Claiming Carer's Allowance (August 2024) = 2,155 (16+ years)

Known to the council for having caring responsibilities (year to November 2023) = 170 (18+ years)

Self-reported as providing unpaid care in Community Wellbeing Survey 2023 = 21% of survey population (18+ years) = 32,480

AMOUNT OF CARE PROVIDED

The only source that provides data on the amount of care unpaid carers provide at local level is the Census. The table below shows the breakdown by hours of care provided from the 2011 and 2021 Census compared to the proportions for England and Wales.

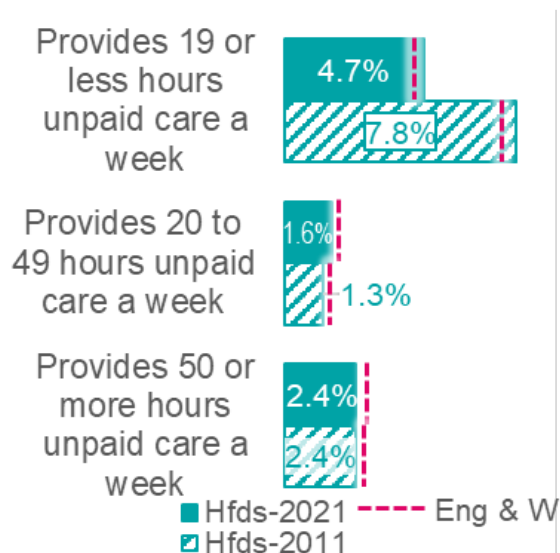
The majority of the population aged five and over who provide care did so for 19 hours or less a week.

Table 1: Percentage of people aged five and over providing unpaid care by hours of care provided, Census 2011 and 2021.

Unpaid care hours	Herefordshire 2011	Herefordshire 2021	England & Wales 2011	England & Wales 2021
19 or less hours unpaid care a week	7.8%	4.7%	7.2%	4.4%
20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	1.3%	1.6%	1.5%	1.9%
50 or more hours unpaid care a week	2.4%	2.4%	2.7%	2.8%

The pattern of unpaid care that people provide is influenced by their age and therefore it is useful to apply age-standardisation.<sup>4</sup> The chart below shows the age-standardised proportions of people providing unpaid care. It can be seen that the age-standardised proportions were very similar to the non-age standardised figures.

Figure 2: Residents provide unpaid care hours a week (age-standardised proportions), 2021



Data source: Office for National Statistics, 2021 Census

Of only those people providing unpaid care in 2021 the majority 53% (8,815) provided unpaid care for 19 hours or less a week. Nearly a third of carers 29% (4,810) provided 50 hour or more of unpaid care a week (see table 2 below).

Although the proportions were slightly different to England and Wales, one of Herefordshire’s geographical neighbours, Shropshire, had similar proportions providing each level of unpaid care per week.

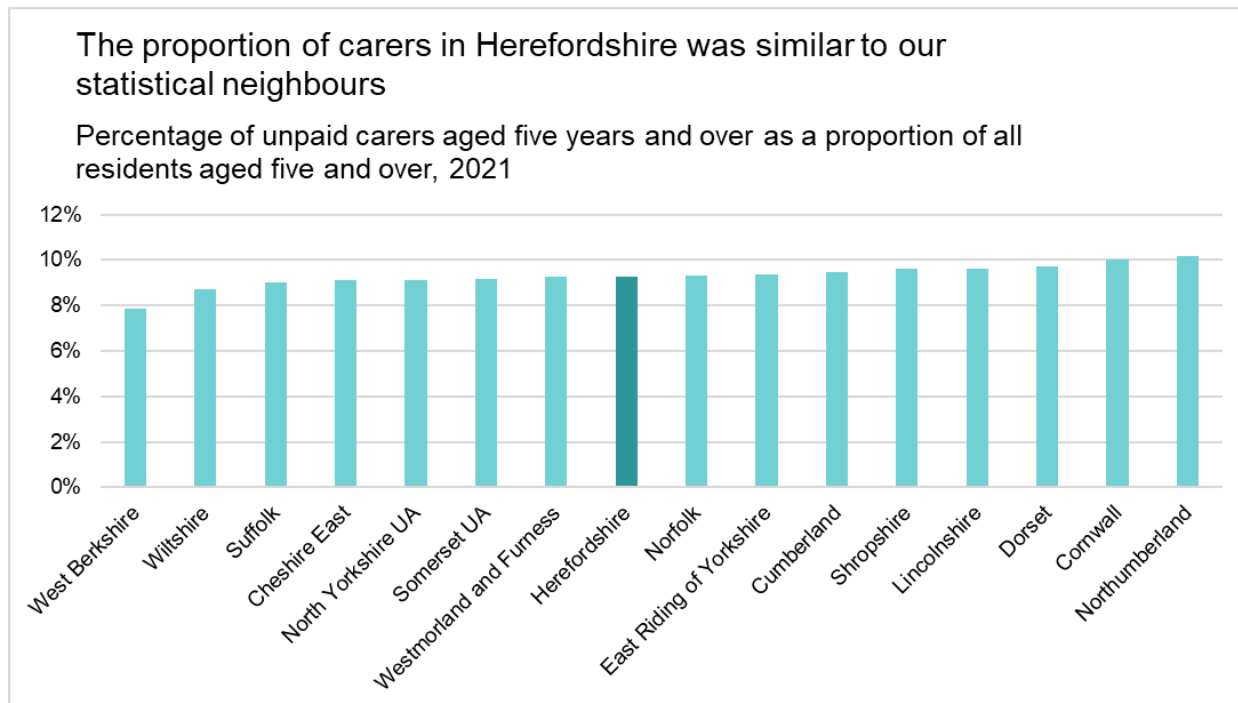
Table 2: Hours of care provided per week by unpaid carers, 2021 Census

Unpaid care hours	Herefordshire Number	Herefordshire %	Shropshire %	England & Wales %
19 or less hours unpaid care a week	8,815	53%	53%	49%
20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	2,955	18%	18%	21%
50 or more hours unpaid care a week	4,810	29%	29%	30%
All unpaid carers	16,580	100%	100%	100%

<sup>4</sup> When drawing comparisons over time and across geographical areas, in order to eliminate age distribution bias, hypothetical rates (called age-standardised proportions) are used that would have been observed if the different populations being studied had the same age distribution, while all other factors remain unchanged

It is also useful to compare Herefordshire to its most statistically similar neighbours<sup>5</sup> (see figure 3 below). In 2021, the proportion of people aged five and over providing unpaid care was quite similar across these neighbours, ranging between 9% and 11%.

Figure 3:



Data Source: 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics

## CHARACTERISTICS OF UNPAID CARERS

There are significant differences when it comes to which residents are most likely to provide unpaid care.

### AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CARERS

In 2021 the majority of unpaid carers in Herefordshire were aged 50 years or older.

As the table below shows, this proportion was significantly higher than nationally, with the proportions of carers in the younger age groups correspondingly lower. This was likely due to Herefordshire’s older age profile.

<sup>5</sup> A group of Local Authorities deemed to have similar characteristics. There are different set of comparator areas depending on the dataset is analysed. The comparator areas used in this analysis is similar to the areas included in NHS England’s Adult Social Care and Outcomes Framework indicators.

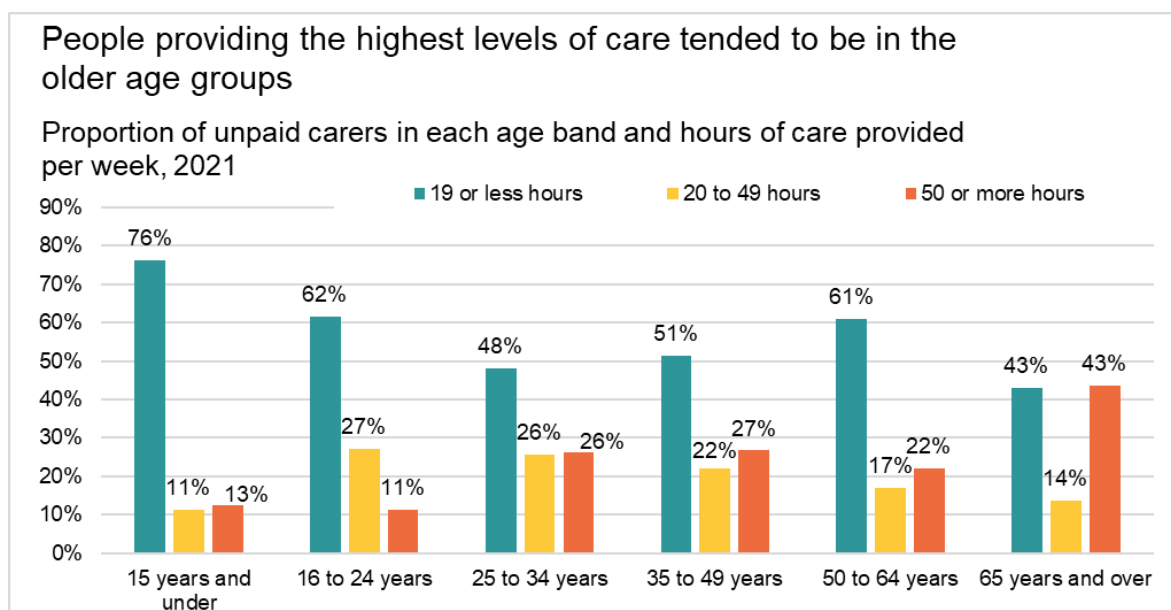
Table 3: Age breakdown of the unpaid carers, Census 2021

Age band	Herefordshire Number	Herefordshire %	England & Wales %
Aged 15 years and under	224	1%	2%
Aged 16 to 24 years	697	4%	5%
Aged 25 to 34 years	1,198	7%	10%
Aged 35 to 49 years	3,010	18%	23%
Aged 50 to 64 years	6,484	39%	36%
Aged 65 years and over	4,966	30%	23%

- The highest number of hours (50 hours and more) of unpaid care were provided by residents aged 65 years and older - 4,966 (30%) unpaid carers (see table 3 above).
- With an ageing population, it is likely that in the future more high-level care will be needed and for longer ([Carers UK](#)).

When we look at each age group in turn and the amount of care they provided, the younger age groups tended to provide lower levels of care, whereas the proportions providing higher levels of care were much higher amongst older age groups (see figure 4 below).

Figure 4:



Data source: 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics

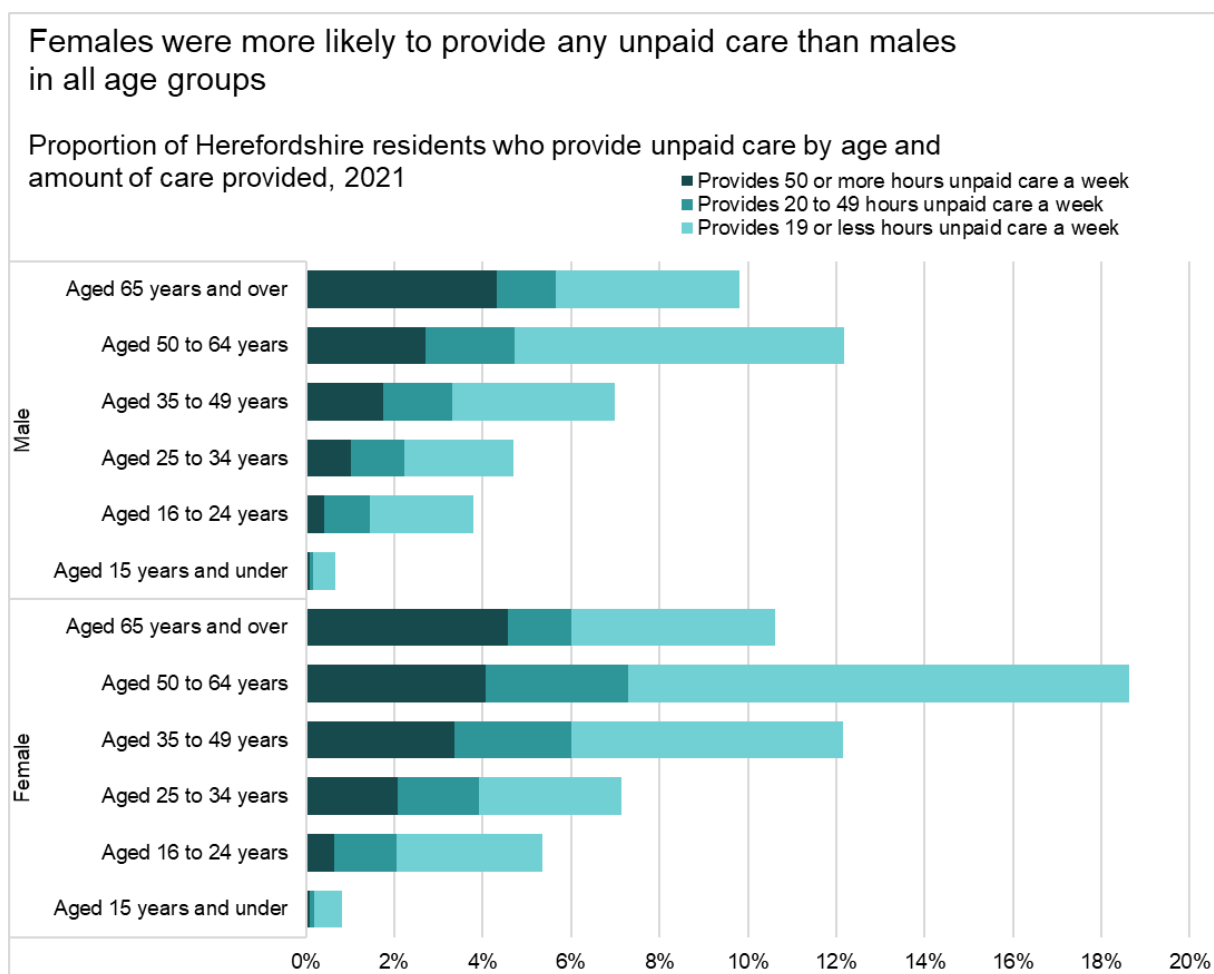
The 2021 Census identified around 360 young carers aged 5 to 17 years and 560 young adult carers aged 18 to 24 years in Herefordshire, in total 920 young and young adult carers in the county, which equated to 2% of the county's population aged 5 to 24 years. A similar proportion was reported nationally, with 357,000 young and young adult carers across England and Wales. See the section on young carers for more information.



## SEX OF CARERS

- [Carers UK](#) has found that nationally women are more likely to become carers and to provide more hours of unpaid care than men. More women than men also provide high intensity care at ages when they would expect to be in paid work. In 2021, there were more females in Herefordshire (9,940 – 60%) providing unpaid care than males (6,640 - 40%).
- When the whole population of Herefordshire is taken into account, females in all age groups were more likely than males to provide unpaid care irrespective of the amount of care they were providing. The likelihood of providing unpaid care was highest amongst females aged 50 to 64: 19%, compared to 12% of males of the same age and 12% of females aged 35 to 49, and less than 11% for other age-sex groups. People aged 65 or over were the most likely to be providing the highest levels of care irrespective of their sex (see figure 5 below).

Figure 5:



Data source: 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION OF UNPAID CARERS

Similarly to nationally, in 2021 the majority of adult carers (aged 16 and over) in Herefordshire identified as straight/heterosexual (91%). Two percent identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or other sexually orientations.

## GENERAL HEALTH OF UNPAID CARERS

The Carers UK [State of Caring report](#) for 2019 found that across the UK of those carers who care for more than 50 hours a week many reported being in poor health, with 25% reporting bad or very bad physical health and 29% reporting bad or very bad mental health. Carers who had been caring for over 15 years were also more likely to report poorer health, with 28% describing their physical health as bad or very bad and 27% describing their mental health as bad or very bad.<sup>6</sup>

Research has also found that the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions had a disproportionately adverse impact on the wellbeing of carers, whose mental health deteriorated more during lockdown than non-carers<sup>7</sup> and who because of their circumstances found themselves more socially isolated than other groups.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the longer hours of caring responsibilities, carers often do not get to do the things that they enjoy. According to the [Caring for Others survey in 2023](#), a large majority (91%) of Herefordshire's carers said that they did not do enough things, or anything, they valued with their time, or felt they had little or no control over their daily life.

In addition, increasing hours of care can result in the general health of carers deteriorating incrementally ([NHS England](#)).

- Nationally, unpaid carers who provide high levels of care for sick, or disabled relatives and friends, are more than twice as likely to suffer from poor health compared to people without caring responsibilities, with nearly 21% of carers providing over 50 hours of care in poor health compared to nearly 11% of the non-carer population.

According to Census 2021, in Herefordshire:

- Whilst the majority (72%, 11,970) of unpaid carers said they had very good or good health, 21% (3,430) said they were only fairly healthy and 7% (1,180) said they looked after someone while their general health was bad or very bad. Nearly a half of these carers (565) provided care for 50 hours or more a week. These proportions were similar to England and Wales.
- Whilst the majority (72%, 11,960) of unpaid carers were not disabled, 28% (4,620) were disabled under the Equality Act. 36% of these carers (1,705) provided 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week (see figure 6 below). Again these proportions were similar to England and Wales.

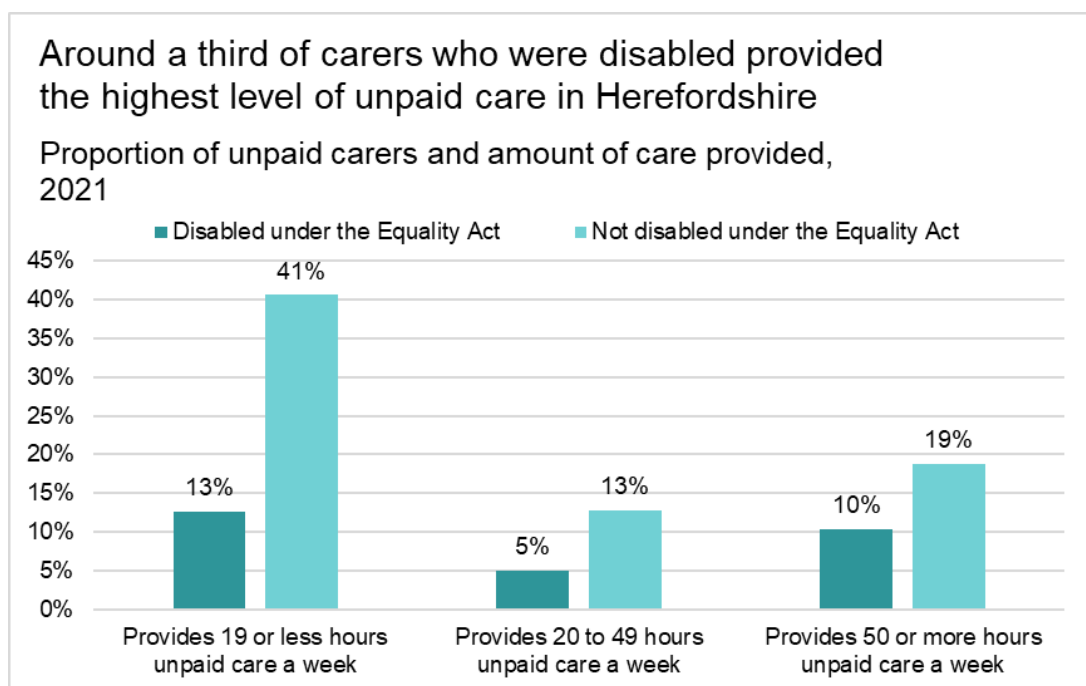
---

<sup>6</sup> [State of Caring](#). Carers UK, 2019, p.21.

<sup>7</sup> [Tracking the mental health of home-carers during the first COVID-19 national lockdown: evidence from a nationally representative UK survey](#). Whitley, E., Reeve, K., Benzavel, M., Psychol Med, June 2021.

<sup>8</sup> [Coronavirus and the social impacts on unpaid carers in Great Britain - Office for National Statistics](#)

Figure 6:



Data source: 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics

- The Caring for Others survey for Herefordshire 2021 found that 40% adult carers were affected by at least one these conditions; tiredness, disturbed sleep, depression, feeling stressed or irritable, or under physical strain.

## LONELINESS AND MENTAL HEALTH OF CARERS

The demands of providing unpaid care can be isolating and a risk factor for mental wellbeing.

According to [research](#) undertaken for Carers' week in 2019, carers in the UK were seven times more likely to say they were always or often lonely compared to the general population and those supporting someone with a mental health condition were nearly nine times more likely than the rest of the population to say they are always or often lonely.

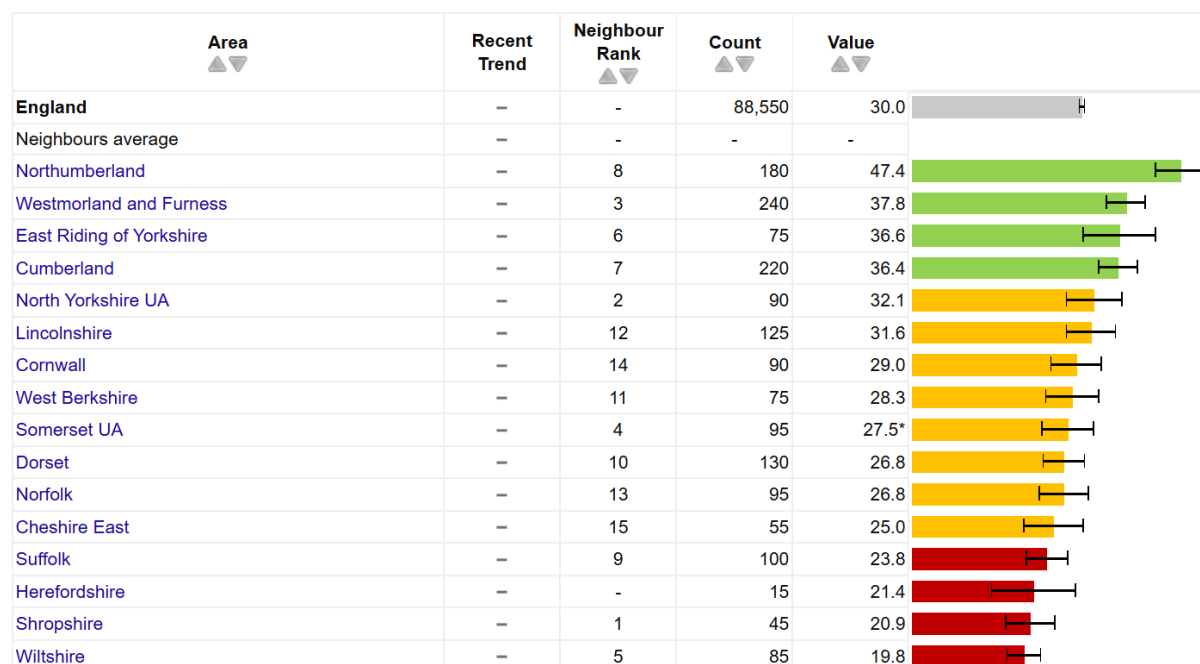
More than a third (36%) of carers who looked after a disabled child under the age of 18 reported that their mental health was bad or very bad and 26% described their physical health as bad or very bad. 38% of young carers reported having a mental health problem, yet only half of them reported receiving additional support from a member of staff at school.

In Herefordshire, the 2023 CWS of adults (18+) found that adult carers were among those groups reporting the highest anxiety levels (34% compared to 28% 'high' for the general population).

According to the Caring for Others Survey in 2023:

- 21.4% of Herefordshire carers had as much as social contact as they would like, which was lower than the level recorded for England (30%) (see figure 7 below).
- However, the Herefordshire proportion was similar to comparable local authorities.

Figure 7: Percentage of adult carers who have as much social contact as they would like (18+ years), 2021



Source: [NHS England, Adult Social Care and Outcomes Framework](#), last accessed 14 March 2025

## ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF UNPAID CARERS

- In Herefordshire, a half of carers were economically active and in employment, while 45% of were economically inactive<sup>9</sup> (including retired). 1% each were students who were either unemployed or in full time education, similar to the national picture.
- The largest proportion of unpaid carers worked in professional occupations (17%), similar to the general working age population of Herefordshire (see table 5 below).
- [Carers UK](#) reports that nationally unpaid carers who are in employment and caring for over 50 hours a week are more likely to be working in elementary occupations than those caring for 19 hours a week or less (12% compared to 7%).

<sup>9</sup>People not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last four weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next two weeks.

Table 5: Percentage of unpaid carers and of the general working-age population by occupational group in Herefordshire, Census 2021

Occupation	% of unpaid carers	% of general working age population
Professional occupations	17%	16%
Managers, directors and senior officials	14%	13%
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	14%	10%
Skilled trades occupations	12%	14%
Associate professional and technical occupations	11%	11%
Administrative and secretarial occupations	11%	9%
Elementary occupations	9%	11%
Sales and customer service occupations	7%	7%
Process, plant and machine operatives	5%	8%

## ACCESS TO A CAR OR A VAN

According to the 2021 Census, one in ten (10% - 1,180) unpaid carer households<sup>10</sup> in Herefordshire did not have access to a private vehicle (a car or a van) compared to one in five (19%) in England and Wales, however Herefordshire households generally had less access to a private vehicle (14% compared to 23%).

## HOUSING TENURE

Census 2021 data showed that just below a third of unpaid carer households lived in a rented accommodation: 13% in private and 16% in social rented accommodation, compared to 10% and 21% respectively in England and Wales. In terms of all households in Herefordshire, there were 33% in rented accommodation (private or social), slightly fewer than in England and Wales (37%).

## IMPACT OF COST OF LIVING PRESSURES ON CARERS

Recently, carers have been disproportionately impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, partly because their caring responsibilities limited their employment and earnings opportunities and partly because cost-of-living pressures exasperated existing disadvantage with respect to educational and social opportunities.

In October 2023 [Carers UK reported](#) that nationally:

A significant proportion of carers were struggling financially, unable to afford the cost of food or bills. This is often because their income has been affected by caring: many carers have had to reduce their working hours to care, while others are unable to work at all due to caring responsibilities. Carer's Allowance is the lowest benefit of its kind at only £76.75 per week (2023/24 rates) for providing a minimum of 35 hours of care. An inflexible and strict earnings limit with the benefit hinders carers' ability to work extra hours to make ends meet. Carers often bear additional costs of caring which are not met but existing benefits.

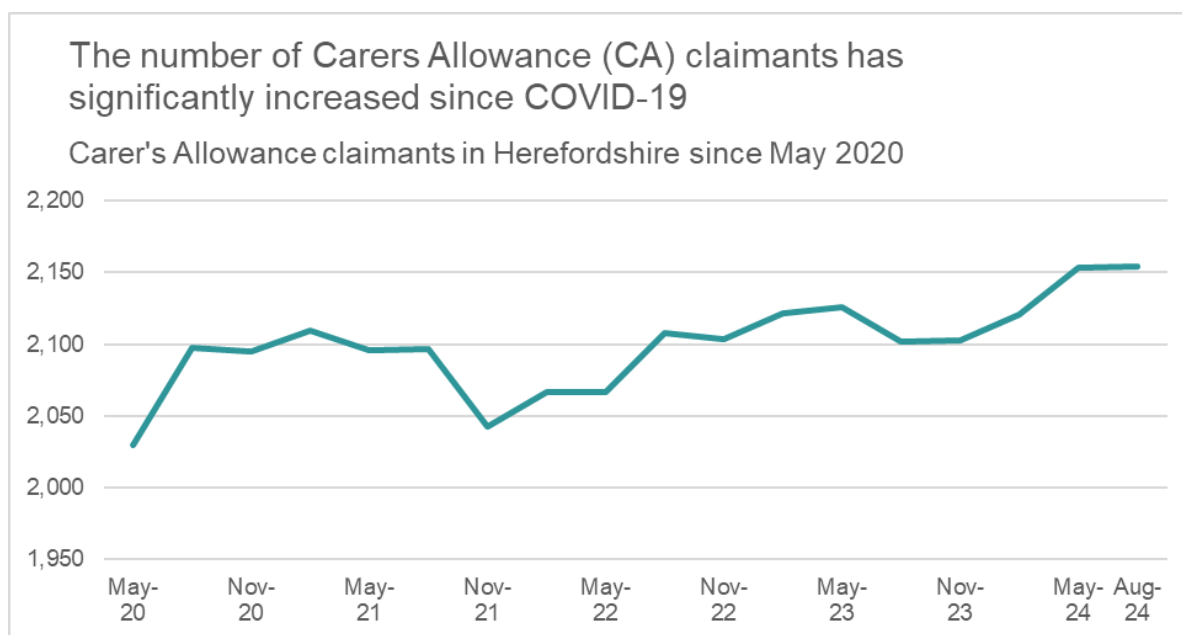
<sup>10</sup> Households comprising at least one person who provides unpaid care

Carers UK also found that 65% of their survey respondents agreed that the increase in the cost of living was having a negative impact on their physical and/or mental health.

[The Caring for Others survey 2023](#) reported that 55% of Herefordshire carers were having at least some financial difficulties.

Carers who are aged 16 or over and spend at least 35 hours a week caring for someone who is ill or has a disability are eligible to receive Carer's Allowance. The latest data show that in Herefordshire, there were 2,155 people claiming Carer's Allowance in August 2024, 125 more claimants than at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (May 2020) (see figure 8 below).

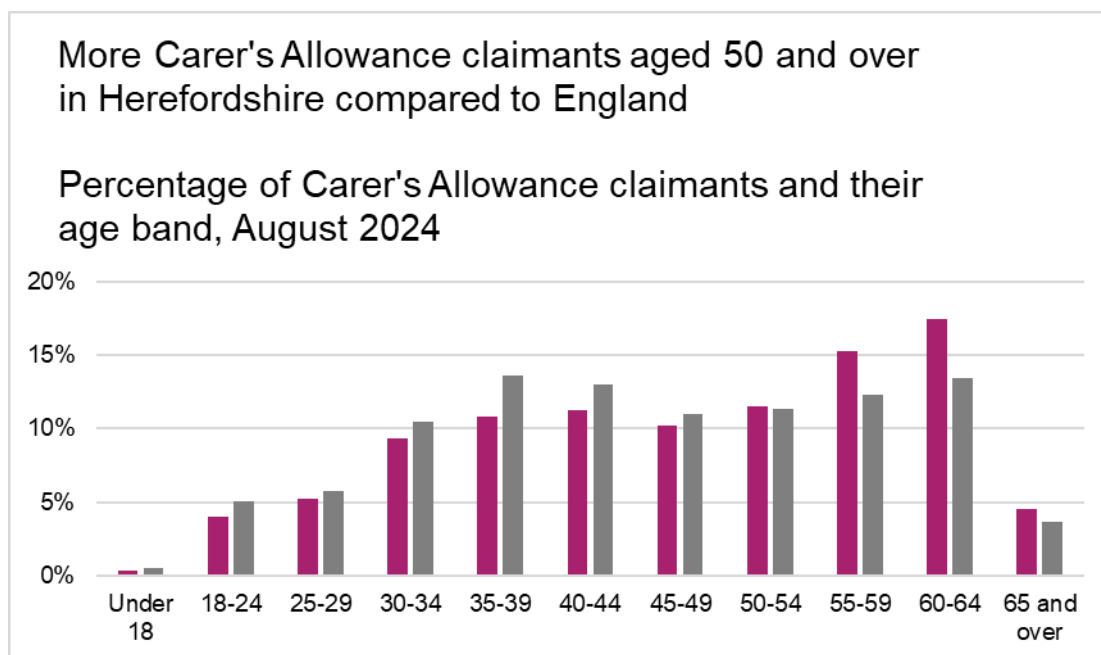
Figure 8:



Data source: Department for Work and Pensions, Carers Allowance, cases in payment, August 2024

In August 2024, the proportion of people claiming Carer's Allowance who were aged 50 years and over in Herefordshire was higher than nationally (see figure 10 below). This was to be expected because, as discussed earlier, Herefordshire has a higher proportion of older carers.

Figure 10: Age band of Carer's Allowance claimants, August 2024



Data source: Department for Work and Pensions, Carers Allowance, cases in payment, August 2024

## YOUNG CARERS

There are different definitions of who is classed as a young carer. Broadly speaking, these are young people who are aged 25 or under and who provide some level of care to a friend or family member, regardless of whether they are living with that person ([Carers Trust](#)).

Consequently, there are lots of different estimates of how many young carers there are. Furthermore, some young carers come from hidden and marginalised groups, including for example, children caring for family members with mental illness and parental substance dependency. As a result estimates for numbers are likely to be lower than the actual numbers.

As mentioned earlier in the age distribution of carers section in 2021 the Census estimated there to be around 357,000 young and young adult carers (aged 5-24 years) across England and Wales. However, a [2018 BBC survey](#) for example found that there could be as many as 820,000 young carers aged 11-15 in England. Locally numbers also vary widely depending upon the data source.

## CENSUS 2021

As detailed in the age distribution of carers section, the 2021 Census estimated there to be 225 young carers aged 15 years and under in Herefordshire. As was noted earlier, the Census figure was likely a significant underestimation due to the timing of the Census but also in this specific case due to the methodology, as the Census questionnaire was completed by heads of households who may have been reluctant to identify their children as carers.

---

## 2024 HEREFORDSHIRE'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY

This survey found that almost 630 pupils in Year 6 or above (age 10 to 18) cared for someone at home, equating around 12% of pupils who took part in the survey. Of these pupils, 2% of Year 6 pupils and around 8% of secondary and further education pupils looked after a family member at home who was ill or had a physical disability. It should be noted that the CYP survey asked whether the respondents look after any family members at home and this form of caregiving could have included simply baby-sitting younger siblings, or spending time with elderly grandparents, and therefore may not have been an accurate representation of young people who meet the definition of an unpaid carer.

---

## HEREFORDSHIRE YOUNG AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS (HYYAC)

As of December 2023, HYYAC provided support to 130 young and young adult carers.<sup>11</sup> Of these, around 30 regularly attended groups and/or trips and outings and 20 young adult carers regularly attended groups or accessed one-to-one support. It should be noted that in 2018, HYYAC supported around 250 young people. At that time HYYAC was part of a larger service, Herefordshire Carers Support. With the closing of that charity and having to downsize considerably, HYYAC has not been able to do the awareness-raising and work with schools that they used to do. It is therefore unlikely that the number of young people that the charity currently supports is reflective of the number of young people in need of support.

---

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES, HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

To the year ending February 2025, Herefordshire Council's Early Help Team has supported 52 young carers in 44 families. The youngest 'young carer' was 6 years old.

---

## SCHOOL CENSUS

In 2024, the School Census of children aged 0-18 years reported that there were 39,000 'known' young carers in England representing 0.6% of the pupil population. It should be noted that this number is far smaller than the Office for National Statistics Census figure of 357,000 aged 5-24 in 2021 discussed in the introduction to this section. In Herefordshire there were 40 'known' young carers representing 0.2% of pupil population. The first year of the School Census data to pertain to young carers were released in June 2023. Notwithstanding the different age parameters between sources, given the very large difference in these estimates, the number of young carers reported in the School Census was likely to have been significantly below the true number and it is important to note that schools could only report pupils where they were already aware of their caring responsibilities.

---

## IMPACT OF CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

[National research](#) in 2023 found that young carers missed an average of 27 school days per academic year and that young carers performed worse in their GCSEs than peers without a caring role. [The Big Ask survey](#) 2021 in England reported that 39% of young carers said that nobody in their school was aware of their caring responsibilities.

---

<sup>11</sup> There is some overlap between the age groups 16-18 years as there are 80 young carers aged 8-18 years and 50 young adult carers aged 16-24 years registered with HYYAC as of October 2023.



A [Prioritising the Mental Health of England's Young Carers report](#) by the Carers Trust in 2016 found that young carers frequently reported that their caring role can cause distress and impact on their mental health.

In Herefordshire, the 2024 CYP survey found that more than half of students (28%) at secondary school or in further education who said that they provide unpaid care also said their school or college did not know about the caring they were doing at home. The survey also revealed that 2% of young carers in secondary school said having to look after family members affected their school work and 7% said that it stopped them doing the things that they want to do.

The 2024 CYP survey found that young carers in **Year 6** were more likely to say the following when compared to peers who were not carers:

- They never feel safe after dark in their local area (42% vs. 27%)
- Worry about more issues such as school work, health, future etc. (43% vs. 25%)
- Have taken part in some volunteering outside school (67% vs. 49%)
- Have bullied someone else in the last 12 months (15% vs. 7%)

And they were less likely to say:

- They feel 'quite' or 'very' happy with their life at the moment (56% vs. 71%)
- They would be happy with their weight as it is (44% vs. 57%)

Young carers in **Year 10** were more likely to say:

- Having to look after family stops them from doing things they want (33% vs. 7%)
- They have been drunk at some point (50% vs. 36%)
- They have physically attacked at school/home/their local area in the last month (22% vs. 10%)
- Someone they did not know has asked to see pictures of them (60% vs. 38%)
- Have bullied someone else in the last 12 months (15% vs. 4%)

And they were less likely to say:

- At least 'quite' happy with life at the moment (42% vs. 58%)