



# Young carers findings from The Big Ask

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March 2022

## Additional findings from The Big Ask on young carers

### Introduction

In April 2021, the Children’s Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza, launched The Big Ask: a national consultation exercise with children in England to ask them about their lives and their priorities, aspirations and worries for the future. The survey was shared with a wide range of organisations, including children’s homes, charities and young carers’ projects.

This report provides additional detail and analysis specifically focussed on young carers.<sup>1</sup> In The Big Ask we received 6,008 responses from children who report that they are supported by a young carers’ project, our proxy for young carers (aged 6-17). Table 1, below, provides more information on the characteristics of this sample of children. The majority of them were aged 6 to 11 (69%) or British (61%); the gender split was skewed slightly towards boys.

We also received an additional 25,669 responses from children aged 6-17 who indicated that they were unhappy with their family’s health but were not supported by a young carer’s project. These children will be analysed separately and compared to the proxy group above.

*Table 1. Key characteristics of young carers who responded to The Big Ask*

Characteristic	Count	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	2987	50%
Female	2585	43%
Other	234	4%
I don't want to say	202	3%
<b>Age</b>		
6 to 8	1831	30%
9 to 11	2337	39%
12 to 15	1397	23%
16 to 17	264	4%
I don't want to say	179	3%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
African	170	3%
Any other Asian background	65	1%
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background	80	1%
Any other White background	231	4%
Arab	91	2%

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the survey, young carers are defined as children reporting receiving support from a young carers’ project.

Bangladeshi	57	1%
Caribbean	50	1%
Chinese	48	1%
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	3679	61%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	66	1%
Indian	146	2%
Irish	144	2%
Pakistani	195	3%
White and Asian	87	1%
White and Black African	113	2%
White and Black Caribbean	75	1%
Other	237	4%
I don't want to say	474	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6008</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **1. Quantitative analysis (9-17 year olds)**

The quantitative questions asked children about their current levels of happiness with various aspects of their life, what they find important to having a good life when they grow up and what they worry about not having in the future. For comparison, the analysis below compares the responses of young carers to those of 9-17 year old children without care duties at home.

### **1.1. How happy are young carers (9-17) with their lives at the moment?**

Most young carers aged 9-17 (66%) said they were happy with life overall (Figure 1), and just over half (51%) said they were happy with every single aspect of their life that the survey asked about (Table 2). However, there were a significant minority of young carers who were unhappy with certain aspects of their life. Twenty-five percent were unhappy with their mental health, 21 percent were unhappy with the choice of things to do in their local area and 19 percent were unhappy with their life at school and college (Figure 1) – the same top 3 items as other children nationally. These show that young carers are more unhappy with their mental health and with life at school and college compared to the percentages for all 9-17 year olds nationally (20%, 19% and 16% respectively).

Figure 1. How happy young carers (aged 9-17) are with each aspect of their life

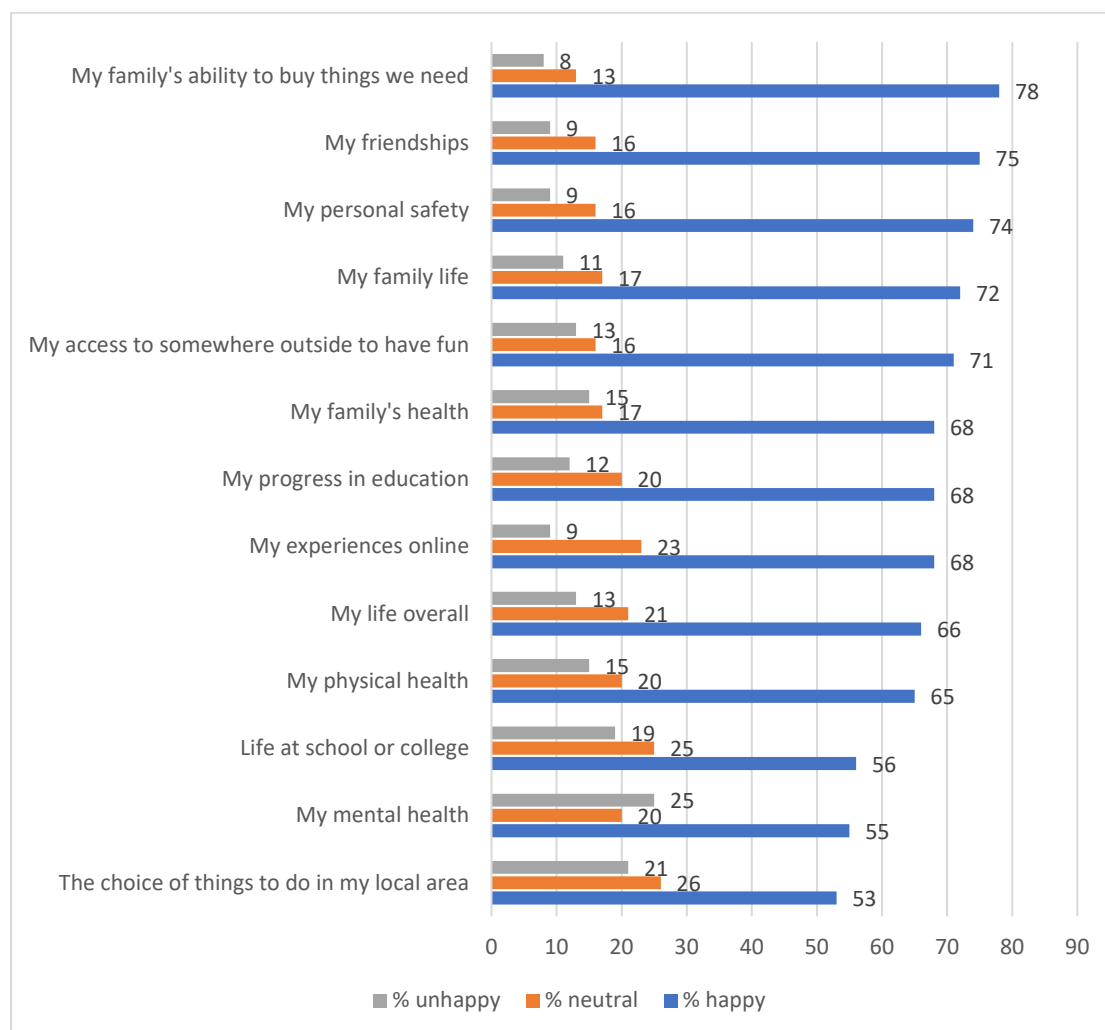


Table 2. Percentage of young carers aged 9 to 17 by the number of aspects of life that they are unhappy with

Number of aspects of their life children are unhappy with	% of young carers	% of all respondents
All	1.6	0.2
12+	1.9	0.3
11+	2.2	0.4
10+	2.5	0.7
9+	3.8	1.2
8+	4.9	1.9
7+	6.5	3.1
6+	9.5	5.0
5+	12.6	7.7
4+	17.2	11.6

3+	23.8	17.4
2+	33.7	26.9
1+	50.8	43.3
0	49.2	56.7

Young carers were generally more likely than other children to say they were unhappy with most aspects of their life. The most notable differences were that young carers were more likely to be unhappy with:

- Their family's health (15% of young carers vs 6% of other children)
- Their mental health (25% of young carers vs 20% of other children)
- Their family's ability to buy the things that they need (8% of young carers vs 3% other children)
- Their family life (11% of young carers vs 6% of other children)

#### 1.1.1. Differences by age

Older young carers (aged 16-17) were significantly more unhappy across all aspects of life when compared to those aged 9-11. They are also almost 4 times more likely to be unhappy with their family's ability to buy the things that they need and 3.7 times more likely to be unhappy with their family's health. Almost half (47%) are unhappy with their mental health – almost triple the rate of 9-11 year old carers (14%).

#### 1.1.2. Differences by ethnicity

Asian and mixed ethnic background young carers are more likely to be unhappy across most aspects of life when compared to white young carers. In particular, they are more likely to be upset with their access to places outside to have fun (18% Asian, 27% mixed ethnic compared to 12% of white children) and their progress in education (18% Asian, 22% mixed ethnic compared to 11% of white children).

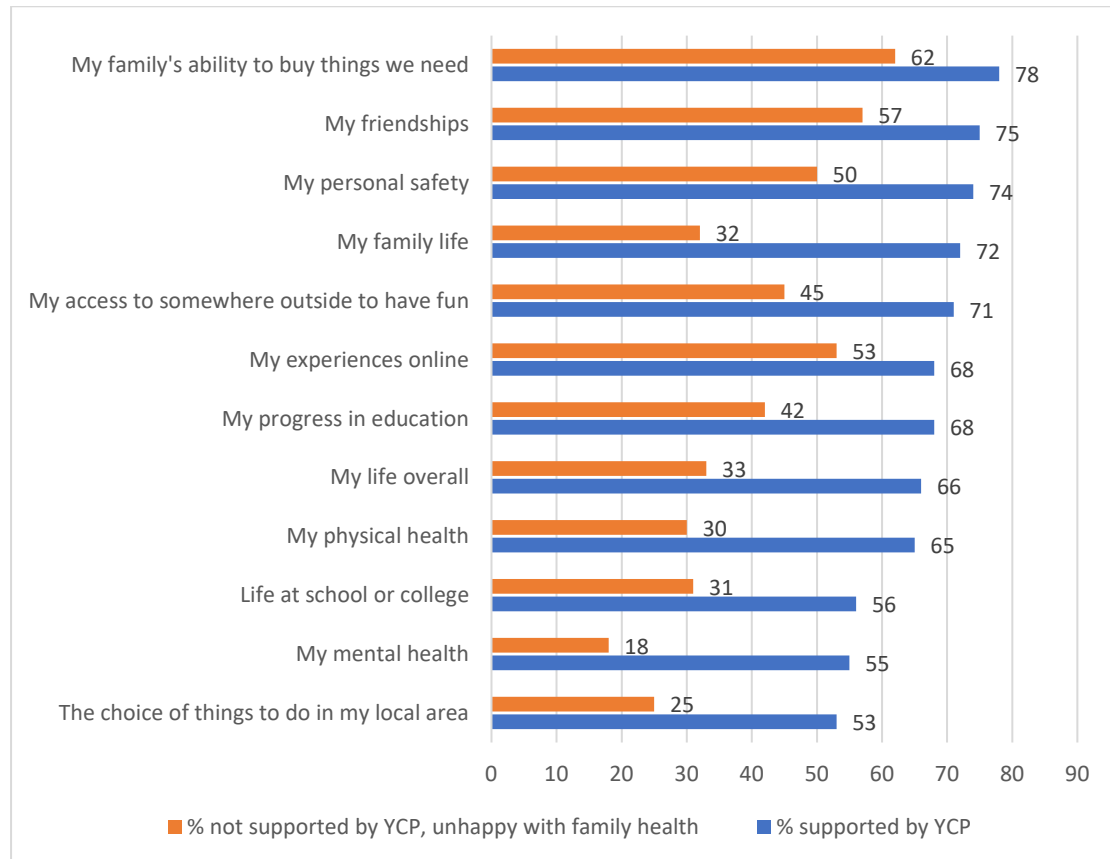
Young carers of black descent are generally happier with many of the items listed above except for personal safety, for which their responses are similar to the other ethnic groups. For example, only five percent of black young carers are unhappy with their friendships. This is compared to 15% of Asian children and 8% of white children.

*\*Note: Breakdowns by gender were also looked into but no major differences were found.*

1.1.3. Children who are unhappy with their family life but not supported by a young carer's project.

There were 22,075 children aged 9-17 who indicated that they were unhappy with their family's health but were not supported by a young carer's project (YCP). These children were less happy with all aspects of life than young carer's who were supported.

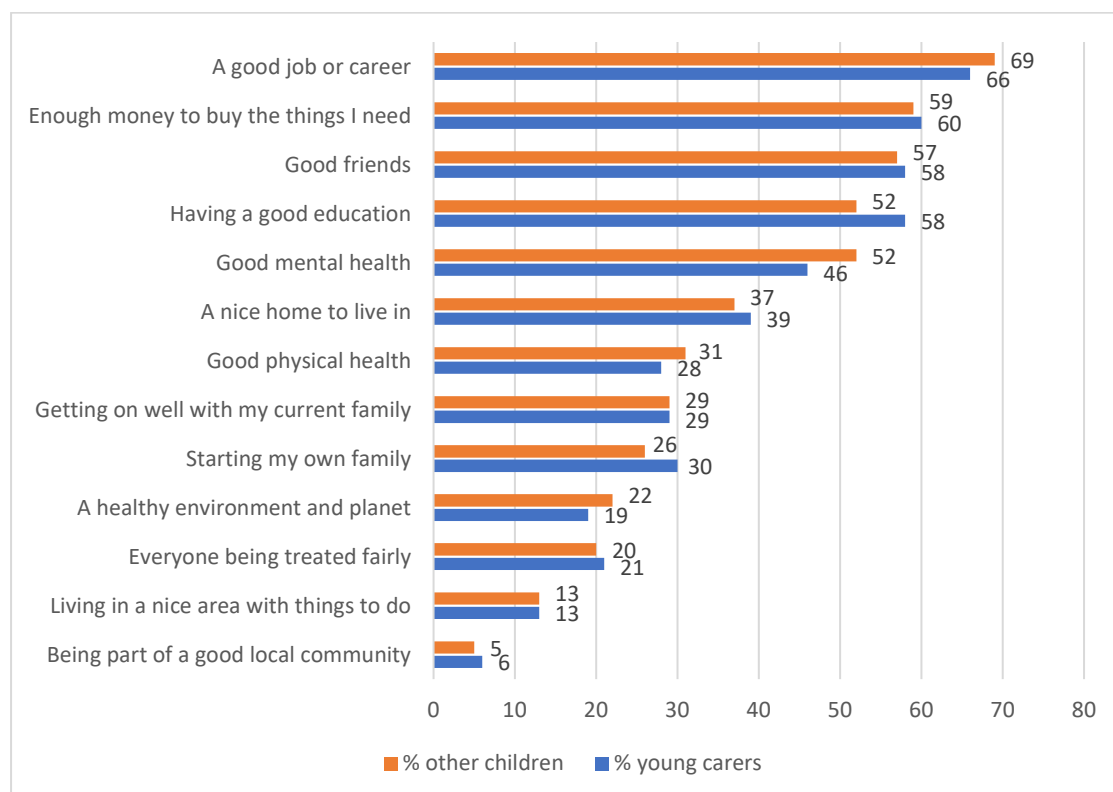
Figure 2. Percentage of children happy with various aspects of life by whether they are supported by a young carer's project (YCP)



1.2. What do young carers (9-17) say is most important for them to have a good life in future?

The most common aspects selected by young carers as important to their future lives were: having a good job or career (66%), having enough money to buy the things they need (60%), good friends (58%) and having a good education (53%). These were the same items chosen by other 9-17 year olds at very similar rates (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Main future priorities and aspirations among young carers and other children (aged 9-17)



Compared to other 9-17 year olds, young carers were more likely to say that the following were important future priorities:

- Having a good education (58% of young carers vs. 52% of other children)
- Starting their own family (29% of young carers vs. 26% of other children)

Conversely, young carers were slightly *less* likely than other 9-17 year olds to say that the following were important future priorities:

- Having good mental health (46% of young carers vs. 52% of other children)
- Having good physical health (28% of young carers vs. 31% of other children)
- Having a healthy environment and planet (19% of young carers vs. 22% of other children)
- Having a good job or career (69% of young carers vs. 66% of other children)

### 1.2.1. Differences by age

Consistent with findings above, young carers of all ages prioritised having a good job and good friendships. Young carers aged 9-11 were more likely to choose

having a good education as a future priority compared to older young carers (65% of 9-11 year olds, vs 46% of 16-17 year olds).

Older young carers (aged 16-17) placed greater emphasis on having enough money to buy the things they needed (63% vs. 59%) and good mental health (54% vs. 42%).

### *1.2.2. Differences by gender*

Overall, the things young carers find important to their future wellbeing are quite similar regardless of gender. Aspects related to money were picked most frequently and having a good job or career was the most commonly selected item for both boys and girls.

Boys placed greater value on having a good education (63 % vs 54% of girls) while girls placed greater emphasis on wider world and wellbeing factors:

- Having good mental health (55% of girls vs. 39% of boys)
- Everybody being treated fairly (27% of girls vs. 17% of boys)
- Having a healthy environment (22% of girls vs. 17% of boys)

### *1.2.3. Differences by ethnicity*

When comparing the responses of young carers from various ethnic backgrounds, there are more similarities than differences. As with the above sections, monetary concerns such as having a good job and enough money were most commonly picked by both white and black/ethnic minority (BAME) children.

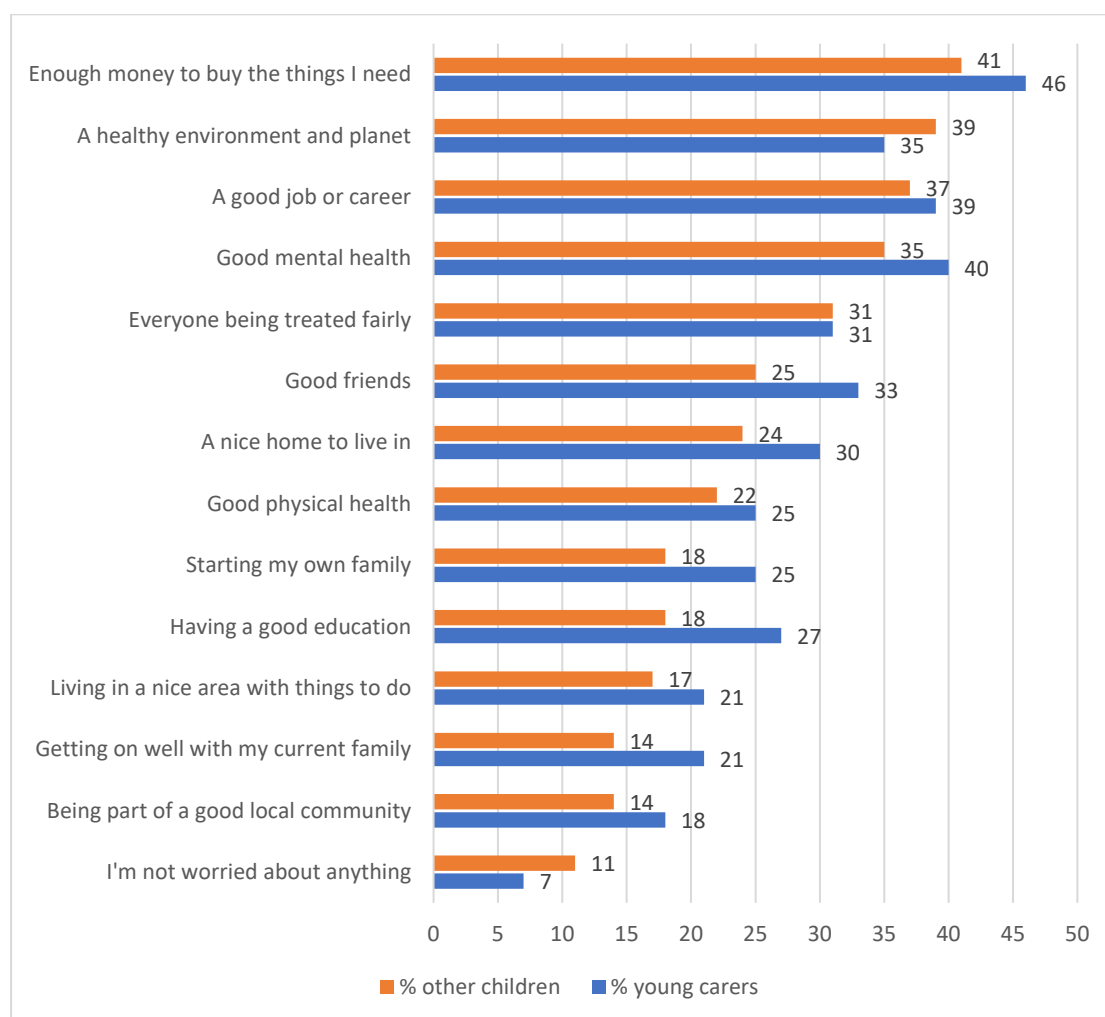
White young carers were more likely to find good mental health important (49% vs. 41% of BAME children) while BAME children placed greater value on having a good education (65% vs. 56% of white children).

## **1.3. What do young carers (9-17) say they are most worried that they will not have in future?**

Young carers are generally more likely than other children to be worried about almost all items listed. The main future worries for young carers are more likely to be about money and mental health and less likely to be about wider world factors (e.g. the environment), compared to children without care duties. Figure 4 shows that the top three future worries for young carers were: whether they will have enough money to buy the things they need (46%), whether they will have good mental health (40%) and whether they will have a good job or career (39%).



Figure 4. Main future worries among young carers and other children (aged 9-17).



Worries about having enough money or having a good job were very common both for young carers and for other children. However, children without caring responsibilities were more likely to worry about the state of the environment: this was their second most common response, chosen by 39% – compared to only 35% of young carers.

Compared to other 9-17 year olds, young carers were *more* likely to worry about:

- whether they would have a good education (27% vs. 18%)
- whether they would have good friends (33% vs. 25%)
- whether they would get on well with their current family (21% vs. 14%)
- whether they would have a nice home to live in (30% vs. 24%)

### *1.3.1. Differences by age*

Consistent with the findings above, young carers of all ages generally worry about material concerns more than children not supported by a young carer's project. Having enough money to buy the things they need and a good job or career feature in the top three worries for all age groups.

However, older young carers (aged 16-17) were 1.5 times more likely than those aged 9-11 to say that they were worried about whether they would have good mental health in the future.

Conversely, young carers aged 9-11 were more likely to say they were worried about whether they would:

- Live in a nice home (32% of 9-11s vs. 26% of 16-17s)
- Start their own family (28% of 9-11s vs. 20% of 16-17s)
- Have a good education (31% of 9-11s vs. 21% of 16-17s).

### *1.3.2. Differences by gender*

Regardless of gender, the top three items that young carers worry about not having are having enough money, a good job or career and good mental health.

Boys are more likely to worry about nothing (9% of boys vs. 5% of girls) and having a good education (31% of boys vs. 23% of girls).

As with above sections, girls were more likely to worry about wider world factors such as fairness in society (35% of girls vs. 28% of boys) and having a healthy environment (38% of girls vs. 33% of boys).

### *1.3.3. Differences by ethnicity*

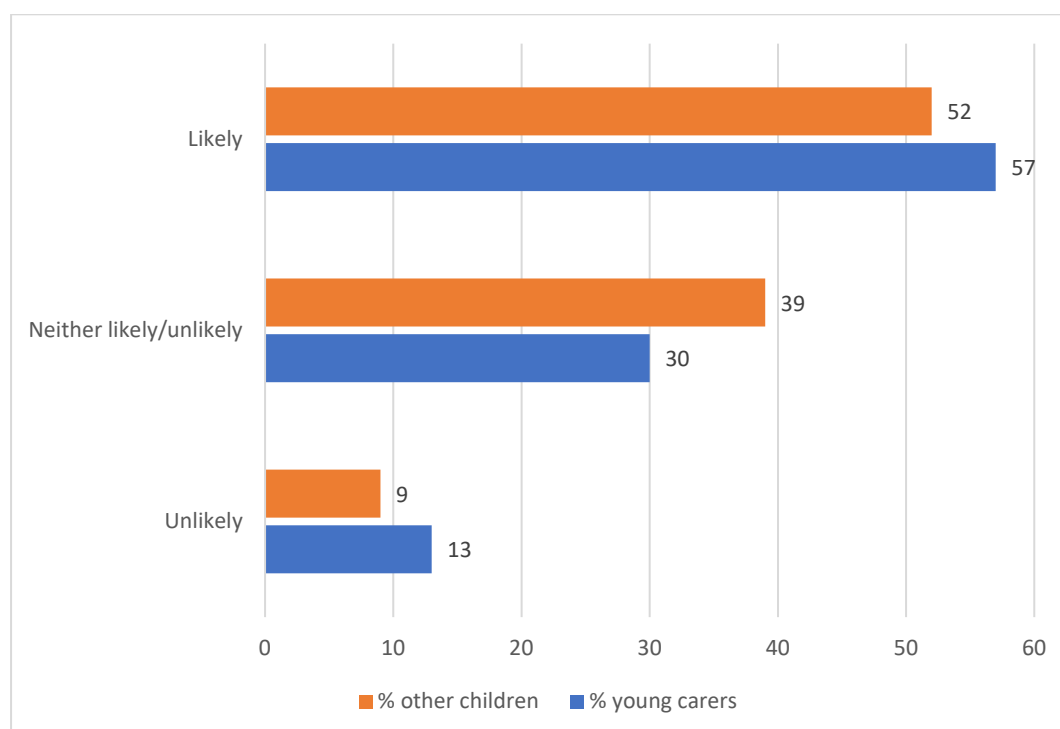
Overall, the things young carers worry about not having in the future are similar across ethnicities.

White children were more likely to worry about mental health (42% vs 34% of BAME children) and having enough money to buy the things they need (48% vs 42% BAME children),

#### 1.4. Do young carers (9-17) think that they will have a better life than their parents?

Most young carers aged 9-17 (57%) think that they will probably have a better life than their parents, compared to 52% of other 9 to 17 year olds. However, young carers were also more likely to be pessimistic about this: 13% thought it was unlikely that their quality of life would surpass that of their parents, compared to 9% of other 9-17 year olds (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Whether young carers and other children (aged 9-17) think they will have a better life than their parents



##### 1.4.1. Differences by age

As with above findings, young carers of all ages are more likely to think they will probably have a better life than their parents when compared to children without care duties. The percentage of young carers that think it is likely stays relatively consistent across age groups.

However, older young carers are less likely to express neutral views on the subject which translates to a larger proportion of 16 to 17 year old young carers who do not think they will have a better life than their parents (18% of 16-17 year olds vs. 12% of 9-11s).

### 1.4.2. Differences by gender

There were not many notable or statistically significant differences between the genders.

Compared to girls, male young carers are slightly more likely to be optimistic about having a better life than their parents (59% thinking it is likely compared to 55% of girls).

### 1.4.3. Differences by ethnicity

Consistent with findings for other groups of children, BAME young carers are more likely than those from white backgrounds to think their quality of life will surpass that of their parents (69% think it is likely vs. 54% of white young carers).

This is especially the case for black young carers – 75% of which believe they will likely have a better life than their parents.

## 2. Quantitative analysis (6-8 year olds)

The quantitative questions asked to children aged 6-8 were similar in nature to the questions above, but were simplified and contained fewer response options. Therefore, the findings for 6-8 have to be presented separately.

### 2.1. How happy are young carers (6-8) with their lives at the moment?

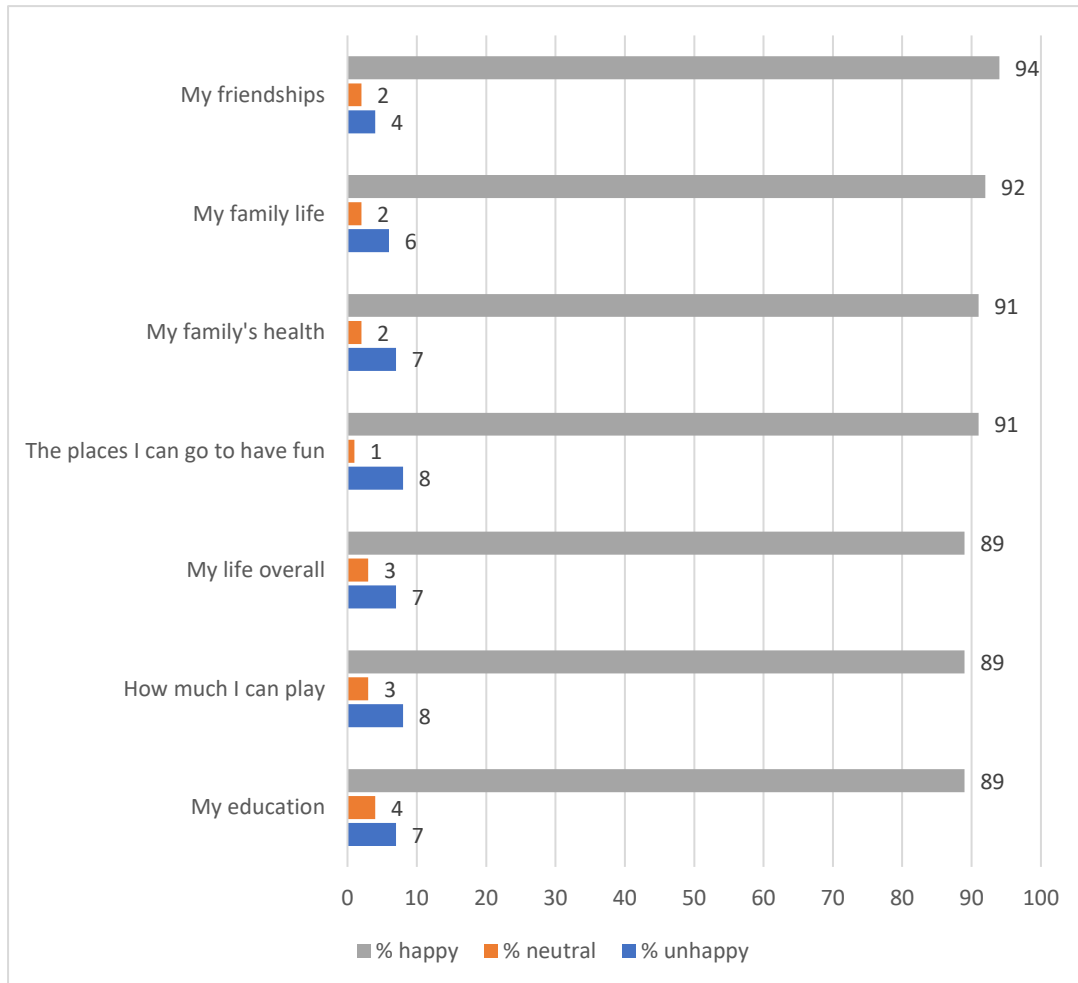
The overwhelming majority of young carers aged 6-8 (89%) were happy with life overall (Table 3) and 74% were happy with every aspect of their life that the survey asked about (Table 3). On average, young carers were more likely to be unhappier with more aspects of their life than other children.

*Table 3. Percentage of young carers aged 6 to 8 by the number of aspects of life that they are unhappy with*

Number of aspects of their life children are unhappy with	% of young carers (age 6 to 8)	% all respondents
All	0.5	0.1
6+	0.9	0.2

5+	1.4	0.4
4+	1.8	0.8
3+	4.2	2.1
2+	10.1	6.0
1+	26	18.8
0	74	81.2

Figure 6. How happy young carers (aged 6-8) are with each aspect of their life



Compared to other 6-8 year olds, young carers were more likely to say that they were unhappy than other children with every aspect of their life. The most notable differences were in whether they were unhappy with:

- Their family life (6% of young carers vs 3% of other 6-8 year olds)
- Their family's health (7% of young carers vs 4% of other 6-8 year olds).
- Their life overall (7% of young carers vs 4% of other 6-8 year olds).
- Their education (7% of young carers vs 4% of other 6-8 year olds)

## 2.2. What do young carers (aged 6-8) say is most important for them to have a good life in future?

Figure 7, below, shows that the top three future priorities for young carers aged 6-8 were having good friends (77%), being healthy and active (66%) and getting on well with their current family (59%).

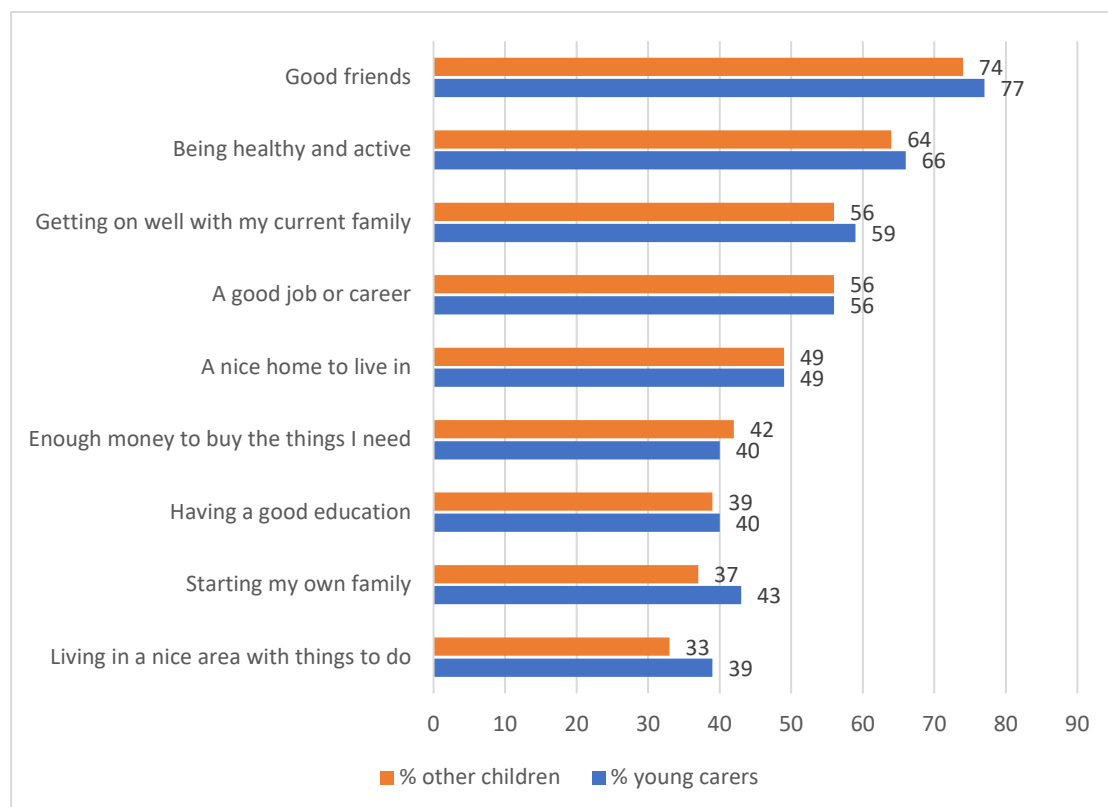
The importance of having good friends or being healthy and active was similar for young carers and for other children aged 6-8. However, young carers were slightly less likely to choose the following as their main future priorities:

- Having enough money to buy the things I need (40% vs. 42% of other 6-8 year olds)

Conversely, young carers were more likely than other children to find the following important:

- Starting their own family (43% vs. 37% of other children)
- Living in a nice area with things to do (39% vs. 33% of other children)
- Good friends (77% vs. 74% of other children)
- Getting on well with my current family (59% vs. 56% of other children)

Figure 7. Main future priorities and aspirations among young carers and other children (aged 6-8)



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