

Details of the number of young carers in the UK

The figures cited in this download have been calculated by the author from Office for National Statistics Census 2001 data. Table 1 was published in Becker, 2007; Table 2 will be published in Becker, 2008 – see references below for details.

The 2001 Census shows that 175,000 children provide some level of unpaid care to other family members. This is approximately 6% of children who live in families with illness and disability. Table 1 below shows the number and proportion of children who provide unpaid care in the four countries that constitute the UK (Becker, 2007). So, for example, there are 29,142 children in the UK who provide more than 20 hours of care per week, and 13,029 of these provide more than 50 hours of unpaid care work per week. There are small variations between the four UK nations, with the highest concentration of children who are carers to be found in Northern Ireland, with 2.5% of *all* children aged 5-17 being involved in caring. Overall, across the UK, 2.1% of *all* children are young carers (Table 1). These figures and proportions are *minimums* rather than maximums because of limitations inherent within the Census questions and methodology. The Census figures rely on parents' self reporting their children's caring roles, and thus the data are not likely to adequately identify or count children in some caring situations, for example those who may be caring for parents who misuse alcohol or drugs or where there is enduring parental mental ill health or HIV/AIDS.

Table 1: Number and proportion of all children who are carers in the UK, by country and hours caring per week

	Number caring for 1-19 hours	Number caring for 20-49 hours	Number caring for 50+ hours	Total number caring	Proportion who provide informal care
England	116,823	12,284	10,092	139,199	1.7%
Wales	8,854	1,029	861	10,744	2.2%
Scotland	13,511	1,826	1,364	16,701	2.1%
N Ireland	6,666	974	712	8,352	2.5%
Total number of young carers in UK	145,854	16,113	13,029	174,996	2.1% (UK average)
Total number as % of all young carers in UK	83%	9%	8%	100%	

Source: Calculated by the author from Office for National Statistics Census 2001 data, in Becker, 2007.

Table 2 below shows the number of young carers in the UK by age and hours per week caring (Becker, 2008). Here you can see that 6,563 young carers in the UK are aged between 5 and 7, and that 940 of these provide at least 50 hours of care per

week. Another 9,524 young carers are aged 8 or 9, and 1,055 of these are providing 50 hours of care or more each week. In total, around 35,000 young carers are of *primary school age* and nearly 4,000 of these are caring for more than 50 hours per week. These are alarming figures because they show that many children are drawn into a caring role from a very young age and that many of these children will have to care for very long hours each week, with one in six young carers having to care for more than 20 hours per week and almost one in ten caring for more than 50 hours each week. Remember again that these are minimums rather than maximums – the true *extent* of young caregiving is likely to be higher.

Table 2: Number and proportion of all children who are carers in the UK, by age and hours caring per week

	1-19 hours	20-49 hours	50+ hours	Total number	Total %
0-4	0	0	0	0	0
5-7	5,015	608	940	6,563	4%
8-9	7,717	752	1,055	9,524	5%
10-11	16,120	1,433	1,615	19,168	11%
12-14	46,267	4,103	3,519	53,889	31%
15	21,024	2,282	1,494	24,800	14%
16-17	49,711	6,935	4,406	61,052	35%
All	145,854	16,113	13,029	174,996	100%
All as %	83%	9%	8%	100%	

Source: Calculated by the author from Office for National Statistics Census 2001 data, in Becker, 2008.

References

Becker, S. (2007) 'Global perspectives on children's unpaid caregiving in the family: Research and policy on 'young carers' in the UK, Australia, the USA and Sub-Saharan Africa', *Global Social Policy*, Vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 23-50.

Becker, S. (2008 – in press) 'Informal family carers', in Wilson, K. et al (eds) *Introduction to Social Work*, London: Pearson (chapter 14).