

# Children & Young People's Family Relationships!

## World Children's Day – 20 November 2022

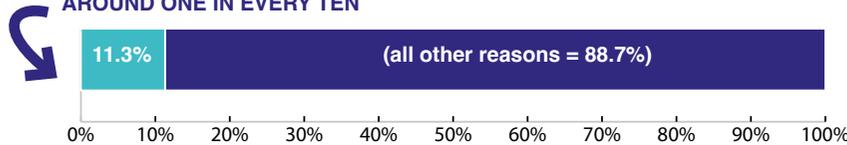
Data from our child helpline members indicates that the relationship between children and young people and their families is **an important concern raised by children and young people who reach out to child helplines**. It is important for children and young people to have healthy and comfortable relationships with their caregivers, and **child helplines can support children and young people in this respect** by providing guidance and, in some cases, acting as a mediator between them and their caregivers.

Around the world in 2021, around **one in every ten children or young people** who contacted a child helpline wanted to discuss their family relationships. Of these callers, **one in every three** specifically wanted to talk about their **relationship with their parents or other caregivers**.

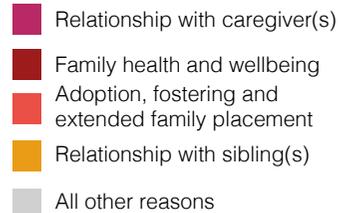
Relationships with parents or other caregivers is an important concern for children and young people wherever they are in the world...



**COUNSELLING CONTACTS IN 2021 RELATING TO FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS: AROUND ONE IN EVERY TEN**

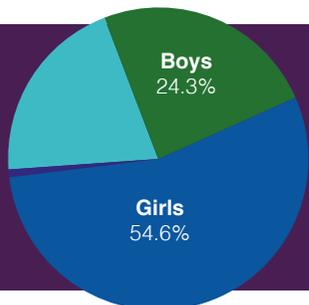


**GLOBAL CONTACTS RELATING TO FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**



**RELATIONSHIPS WITH CAREGIVER(S): AROUND ONE IN EVERY THREE**

Relationship with caregiver(s) was the main family relationship concern in the Americas & the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific and European regions, the second in the MENA region, and the third in the Africa region.



The data from our child helpline members shows that **girls made contact with child helplines about relationships with caregivers more than twice as often as boys**, with girls accounting for 54% of contacts and boys for 24%. Importantly, girls tend to contact child helplines more regardless of the reason for contact, so this finding is not unique to family relationships. The remaining 22% of contacts were from contacts where the gender of the caller was not identified or known, and from a small number of callers identifying as non-binary.

Family relationships, in particular healthy attachments to caregivers, are essential to the development and wellbeing of children<sup>1,2,3</sup>.

When the opposite is true, children may develop insecure attachments. Examples of family predictors of insecure attachments include child abuse, neglect, parental depression and situations where children perceive their caregivers as unavailable, for example after a difficult divorce. However, these attachment styles are open to change depending on life experiences<sup>4</sup>.

For this reason, child helplines can play an essential role in supporting children and young people in having more secure and positive interactions with family members.

1. UNICEF, Caregiver mental health and well-being: The key to thriving families, accessed on 15 July 2022 at <https://www.unicef.org/blog/caregiver-mental-health-well-being-key-thriving-families>
2. Bowlby J (1973). Attachment and loss: Volume II: Separation, anxiety and anger. In Attachment and loss: Volume II: Separation, anxiety and anger (pp. 1-429). London: The Hogarth press and the institute of psycho-analysis.
3. Sutton TE (2019). Review of attachment theory: Familial predictors, continuity and change, and intrapersonal and relational outcomes. Marriage & Family Review, 55(1), 1-22
4. Van Ryzin MJ, Carlson EA & Sroufe LA (2011). Attachment discontinuity in a high-risk sample. Attachment & human development, 13(4), 381-401