



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

State of the Nation

**An overview of growing
older in Wales**



October 2019

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales protects and promotes the rights of older people throughout Wales, scrutinising and influencing a wide range of policy and practice to improve their lives. She provides help and support directly to older people through her casework team and works to empower older people and ensure that their voices are heard and acted upon. The Commissioner's role is underpinned by a set of unique legal powers to support her in reviewing the work of public bodies and holding them to account when necessary.

The Commissioner is taking action to end ageism and age discrimination, stop the abuse of older people and enable everyone to age well.

The Commissioner wants Wales to be the best place in the world to grow older.

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Contents

Foreword	04
Introduction	06
Wales: a changing society	07
Our ageing society	10
Ending ageism and age discrimination	20
Stopping the abuse of older people	28
Enabling everyone to age well	36
Conclusion	46
Appendix 1: Data and Methods	47
Appendix 2: References	48

Foreword

Can we make Wales the best place in the world to grow older?

As the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, I am advocating that we should work together across society to make Wales the best place in the world to grow older. This report sets out where we are on this journey.

It comes at a critical yet opportune time. Critical in the political and economic instability that we face and the dangers – to us all – posed by those who seek to pit generations against each other. But it also comes at an opportune time. The Welsh Government will shortly launch a consultation on a new strategy for an ageing society. This provides the opportunity to set a course for an inclusive, age-friendly nation; where we take action to understand and meet the challenges posed by our ageing population but at the same time recognise and seize the opportunities that it offers us, both individually and collectively.

As Commissioner, I am focusing on three priorities to take us towards becoming the best place in the world to grow older. I am taking action to end ageism and age discrimination; to stop the abuse of older people; and to enable everyone to age well.

In order to make progress we need to understand our starting point. What are the circumstances of older people today? What are the trends? Where are we succeeding as an ageing society and where are the problems that need to be tackled? Are we gathering the data and evidence we need to put in place the right policies and action? What do we know about the extent and experiences of ageism, abuse and being able to age well?

What this report shows is that we have some good foundations on which to build. Most older people feel in control of their lives and feel that they can do the things that matter to them. Older people are contributing significantly to society in many different ways, through volunteering, caring and working, and most can get to local services and facilities. Older age is a positive experience for many – and it is important that this is recognised and celebrated.

The report also shows, however, the stark inequalities that exist within the older population in Wales, and the areas where things are getting worse for older people. Poverty, having fallen, is now on the rise; healthy life expectancy between the least and most deprived areas in Wales varies by as much as 18 years. Significant numbers of older people are not able to access the local services they need; do not know their rights; and are not able to age well. We may have thought that the improvements in older people's lives secured in the recent past would endure, but this cannot be taken for granted.

In other areas, we face the problem of a lack of information about older people's experiences. This is particularly noticeable on the issue of abuse where much of the available data is not broken down by age, and where under-reporting of abuse compounds the problem. Under these circumstances, older people and their experiences can be invisible.

This State of the Nation report puts a spotlight on those areas where we need to make improvements, and where we need to build the evidence. Overall, it shows us that Wales can be the best place in the world to grow older and that we have some of the foundations in place. We all have a role to play in turning this into a reality, and we will all benefit.

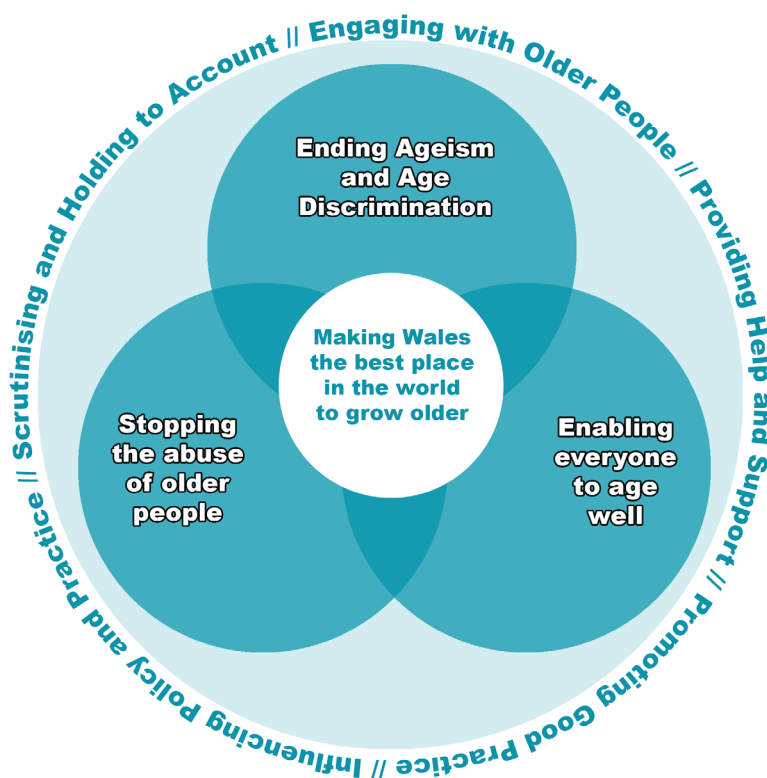


Heléna Herklots CBE
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Introduction

This report sets out a range of data and evidence about the older population in Wales. We have used existing research and evidence about Wales and about other countries, and we have also conducted our own research about some of the issues. Appendix 1 gives further detail on the data sources and methods. Unless otherwise indicated the data relates to people over the age of 60 living in Wales. We start with a brief look at how society has changed in the last 75 years – for the Wales that we live in today is very different from the one that many older people will have grown up in. In the first chapter we set out the demographic trends and what is known about the circumstances of ageing in Wales.

Then we take an in-depth look at each of the Commissioner’s three priorities, and the outcomes we want to achieve. This establishes the baseline from which progress will be measured in future years. Areas for change and action are highlighted and will be reviewed each year.



There are gaps in the data and evidence, and this report does not set out to be the last word on the state of ageing in Wales. What it does is bring together the available data and provides an interpretation and analysis to further our understanding of what we need to do to make Wales the best place in the world to grow older. We hope it will prompt questions, discussion and debate, and we welcome feedback and suggestions for future reports.

Wales: A changing society

The Wales that we live in today is very different to the one that many older people will have been born into or grew up in. The last 75 years have seen an extraordinary level of social and cultural change in Wales and the rest of the UK, with significant progress in the social acceptance and legal protections for different groups in society.

Older people in Wales have lived longer, healthier lives than their ancestors, in large part to the establishment in 1948 of the National Health Service. Built upon ideas pioneered in Tredegar, the NHS provided comprehensive healthcare for all, free at the point of use.

Many older people in Wales today did not have the opportunity to benefit from the reforms to establish compulsory education up to age 14 (later 16) and 34% left school without any formal qualifications.¹ Access to higher education was particularly limited for today's generations of older people, with only 12% of over 60s obtaining an undergraduate degree compared with 22% of people currently aged 25-39.²

This lack of opportunity to access further and higher education has had an economic impact on the lives of many older people in Wales. Wales's historic dependences on the manufacturing and the coal and steel industries have left a lasting legacy for many older people, in terms of their available pensions but also their health in older age.

Our communities have also changed significantly throughout older people's lives. Following the Second World War, there was a drive to encourage people living in other Commonwealth countries to move to the UK to work and rebuild following the war. More recent immigration from the European Union has also diversified our population and brought new cultures and identities to Wales. Many of these older people will have experienced racism as part of their daily lives and the scandal that affected the 'Windrush generation', as well as the recent increase in hate crimes,³ shows that racism still exists in society today.

Older people have seen a significant development of individual rights and the tackling of many forms of discrimination throughout their lives. We now have laws to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, age, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity. Reforms on abortion and divorce have also helped to strengthen women's rights. Over the last 60 years, gay rights have transformed following decriminalisation in 1967 to the establishment of Civil Partnerships in 2004 and Same Sex Marriage in 2013.

Key pieces of international rights protections have been introduced including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN Principles for Older Persons. These 18 Principles provide a framework for protecting and promoting older people's rights and are at the heart of the legislation that established the Commissioner's office.

When looking at the state of the nation today, we must consider the life experiences of older people throughout Wales, as well as the increasing diversity of our older population. The Wales that they were born into and grew up in is a stark contrast to the one we live in today. Older people were the pioneers of many of these changes, paving the way for generations that follow to enjoy and extend their rights.

Timeline: Legislative changes in older people's lives

Education Act 1944

Established a right to secondary education until the age of 14 (gradually increased to 16)

National Health Service Act 1946

Established the NHS - healthcare for all, free at the point of use

British Nationality Act 1948

Extended British Nationality to residents of British colonies to encourage immigration to the UK

European Convention on Human Rights (1950)

Builds on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to secure legally enforceable basic human rights for all

Commonwealth Immigrants Acts 1962 & 1968

Tightened immigration controls for Commonwealth citizens without a connection to the UK - eventually restricting entry to those with a father or grandfather born in the UK

Race Relations Act 1965

Outlawed racial discrimination in specified public places. Later extended in 1968 and 1975 to cover employment, provision of goods and services, education and public functions

Sexual Offences Act 1967

Decriminalised homosexuality in adults aged over 21. This was later reduced to 18 in 1994 and to 16 in 2000

Abortion Act 1967

Legalised abortion on certain grounds up to 28 weeks' gestation. This was later amended to 24 weeks in 1990

Divorce Reform Act 1969

Allowed either partner in a marriage to pursue a divorce without having to prove fault lay with their partner

Equal Pay Act 1970

Prohibited discrimination against women in terms of pay and conditions of employment

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Prohibited discrimination on the grounds of someone's sex in employment, education and the provision of goods and services

United Nations Principles for Older Persons (1991)

A set of principles adopted by the UN General Assembly on the rights of older people across the world

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Prohibited discrimination against disabled persons in employment, education, goods and services, premises and transport

Government of Wales Act 1998

Provided for the creation of devolved government and the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales

Human Rights Act 1998

Embedded the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law - allowing cases to be heard in UK Courts

Civil Partnerships Act 2004

Provided for same sex couples to enter a “civil partnership” with similar legal rights to married couples

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Prohibited discrimination in the workplace on the basis of someone’s age

Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006

Established the world’s first Older People’s Commissioner

Equality Act 2010

Brought together legal protections against discrimination into a single piece of legislation, including on the basis of age

Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

Gave official status to the Welsh language in Wales and treatment no less favourably than the English language

Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013

Legalised marriage between a same sex couple

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

Improved the arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence and established a National Adviser in Wales

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Enshrined well-being at the centre of public service delivery, with a focus on the long-term impact of decisions

Our ageing society

In 2017/18, the population of Wales was estimated to be **3,125,000**, of which **830,000** (27%) are aged 60 or over.⁴ By 2030, it is projected that there will be over **1,008,000** older people in Wales – 33% of the total population.⁵

In recent decades, the population profile of Wales has shifted, away from a pyramid structure – where the bulk of the population was in the younger age groups – to a more rectangular structure showing our ageing population and times where there have been population ‘booms’.

This is not a temporary shift, but rather represents a significant change in population demographics that affects each and every one of us.

Fig. 1: Estimated population pyramid for the UK in 1966 based on ONS estimates

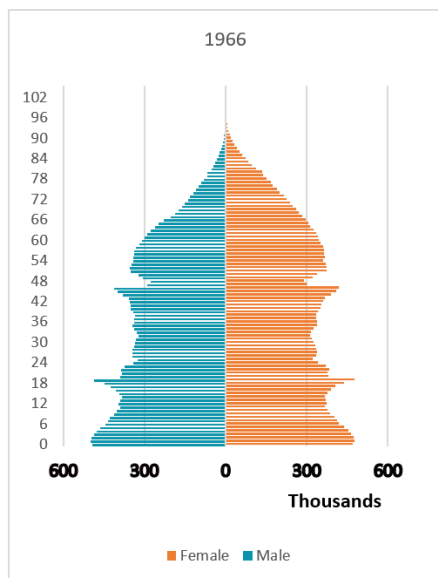


Fig. 2: Estimated population pyramid for the UK in the year 2016 based on ONS estimates

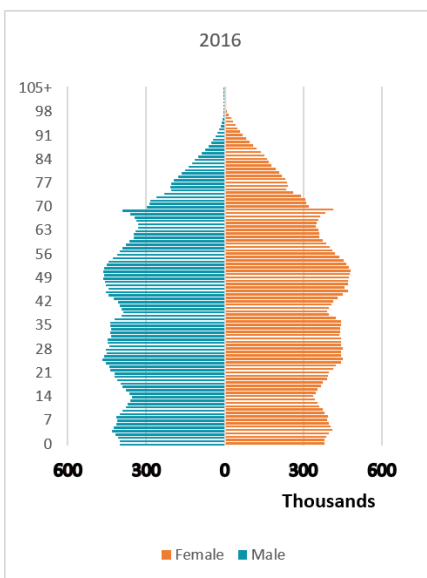
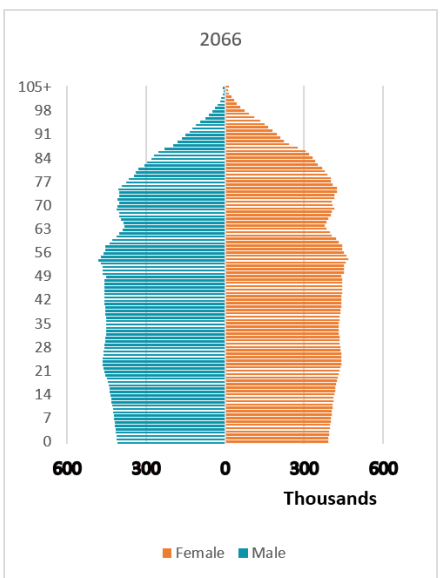


Fig. 3: Estimated population pyramid for the UK in the year 2066 based on ONS estimates

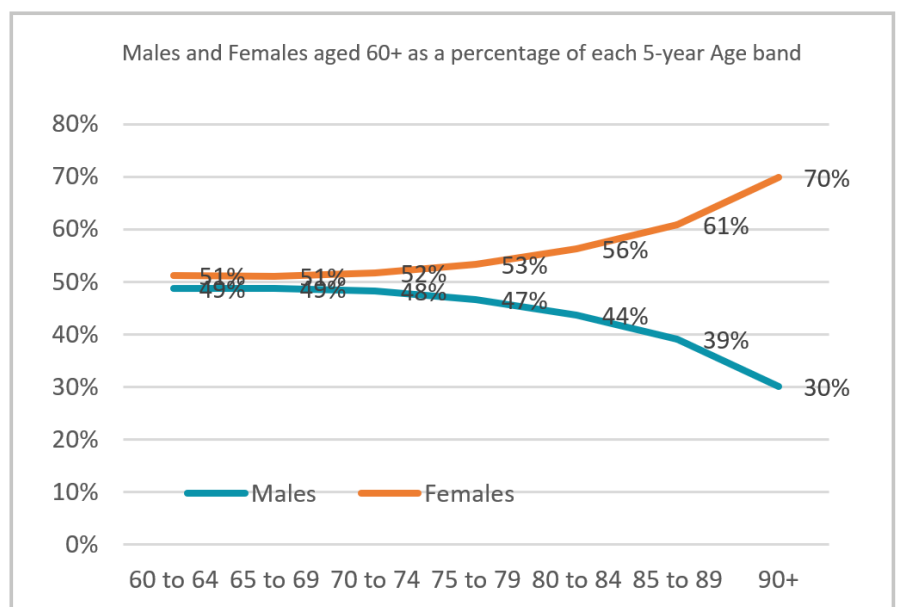


Across the older population, **53%** are women and **47%** are men.

Between the ages of 60-69, the split is almost equal, but this changes for older groups.

The 85-89 and 90+ age groups are comprised of **61%** and **70%** women respectively.⁶

Fig. 4: Percentage of older men and women in Wales in five year age bands from 60-64 to 90+. based on ONS 2017/18 population estimates



There is little ethnic diversity in the older population, with **97.8%** of older people in Wales identifying as White British. Projections indicate this will change over time – 98.8% of over 75s identify as White British, compared with 97.2% of 60-74-year olds.⁷

The full ethnic breakdown of older people in Wales is difficult to estimate because older people who identify as non-white have been under-represented in population surveys. More engagement and research with BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) older people is therefore needed for a better understanding of the diversity within these communities.

White British	812,400
Other White Ethnicity (Irish, Gypsy Traveller, Polish, Other White)	9,600
Non-White (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other Asian, Black Caribbean, Black African, Other Black, Arabic, All Other Ethnic Groups)	9,000

Table 1: Estimated number of older people in Wales of different ethnicities

Welsh language

An estimated **219,000** older people in Wales (26%) speak some Welsh. **88,000** older people are fluent in Welsh, and another **34,000** speak ‘a fair amount’ of Welsh. This means that around **15%** of older people in Wales speak ‘more than a little’ Welsh.⁸

Around a third (30%) of fluent Welsh speakers aged over 65 – an estimated **21,000** older people – feel more comfortable speaking Welsh than English.⁹ This should be considered when planning services, particularly health and social care services, to ensure that people can use the language of their choice. This can be particularly important for older people living with dementia, who may lose their second language (English) skills as their dementia progresses and can only communicate through the medium of Welsh.¹⁰

Sexual orientation and gender identity

The limited data available in Wales shows that slightly fewer people aged 65 or over identify as gay/lesbian/bisexual/other when compared to the overall adult population.¹¹

It is interesting that the number of older people identifying as heterosexual is almost the same as the overall adult population at around 95%, but a higher percentage of over 65s answer ‘don’t know’ or refuse to answer when asked about their sexual orientation. Older people may hide their sexual orientation for a number of reasons, not least because they were born at a time when being gay was illegal in the UK.¹²

Across the UK, but particularly in Wales, there is very poor data about the numbers of transgender people and individuals who identify outside of the traditional gender binary (non-binary individuals) of all ages – this is something that has been highlighted by a wide range of public bodies, researchers and other organisations.¹³

A recent report from the International Longevity Centre demonstrates the inequalities experienced by LGBT+ men and women aged 50 and over, across physical and mental health, isolation, loneliness and experiences of violence. The report highlights the need to not only improve the inclusivity of health and care services, but also to enhance the data collected about older LGBT+ people.¹⁴

Life expectancy

Average life expectancy at birth in Wales is **78.3 years** for men and **82.2 years** for women, which is lower than the UK average by 0.9 years and 0.7 years respectively.¹⁵

The impact of deprivation on life expectancy is significant. Men living in the most deprived areas in Wales are expected to live for **73.6 years**, but those living in the least deprived areas have a life expectancy of **82.4 years**. Life expectancy for men living in the most deprived areas is **4.7 years lower** than the average male life expectancy.¹⁶

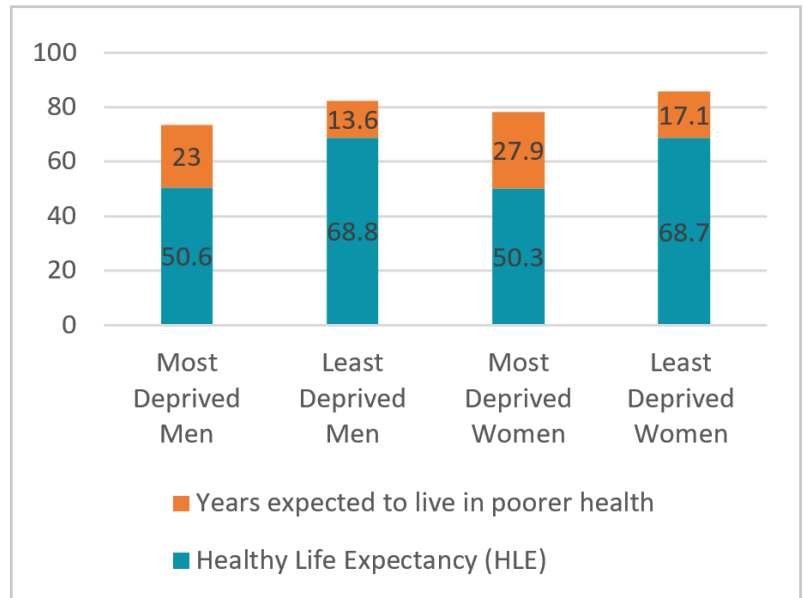
For women living in the most deprived areas, life expectancy is **78.2 years**, compared with **85.8 years** for those living in the least deprived areas. Life expectancy for women living in the most deprived areas is **4 years lower** than the average female life expectancy.¹⁷

Life expectancy has been increasing for many years, but this is no longer the case. Between 2001 and 2010, life expectancy for males increased by an average of 2 years. Between 2010 and 2017 the increase in life expectancy for men in Wales slowed considerably, with an average increase of only 0.5 years being recorded in this time. A similar pattern is identifiable for women. Between 2001 and 2010 life expectancy increased by 1.5 years. Between 2010 and 2017 however, average life expectancy for women in Wales increased by only 0.2 years.¹⁸ Recent reports suggest that life expectancy has stalled for the first time since the 1980s.¹⁹

It is also important to consider differences between overall life expectancy and healthy life expectancy (the number of years an individual is expected to live in good health), and the impact this will have on an individual's quality of life. For men, healthy life expectancy is only **61.4 years**, while for women it is **62 years**. This means that men and women in Wales are living, on average, **16.9 years** and **20.2 years** – or around a fifth of their life – in poor health.²⁰

As would be expected, deprivation also has a significant impact upon healthy life expectancy, with men from the most deprived areas expected to live only **50.6 years in good health** (10.8 years less than the average and 18.2 years less than men living in the least deprived areas), meaning they can expect to live 23 years in poor health.²¹

Fig. 5: Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy (in years) of the most and least deprived men and women in Wales



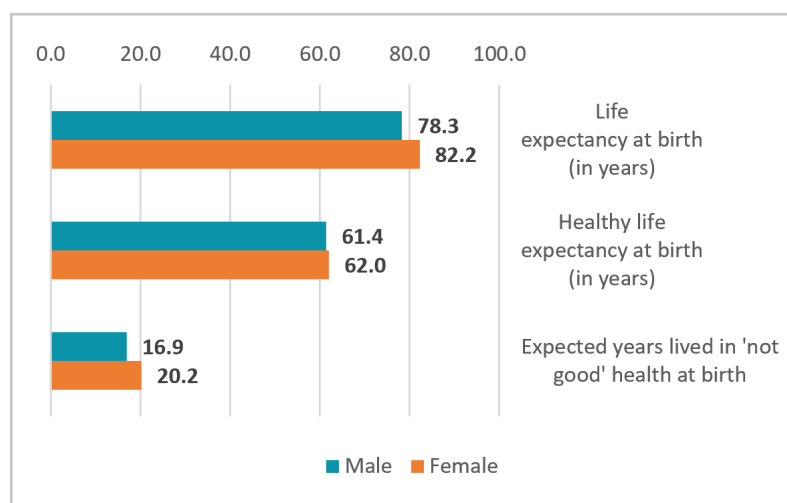
The difference in life expectancy between the least and most deprived areas can be up to 8.8 years

Women living in the most deprived areas are expected to live in **good health for 50.3 years** (11.7 years less than the average and 18.4 years less than women living in the least deprived areas). This means that women from the most deprived areas can expect to live in poor health for 27.9 years.²²

As the data in this section shows, the headline life expectancy figures – of 78.3 for men and 82.2 for women – do not paint a true picture of the experiences of many older people in Wales. The reality of life expectancy figures, particularly when deprivation is factored in, is far more nuanced and highlights significant inequalities across Wales.

The Welsh Government has set out its intention to support people to stay well in ‘A Healthier Wales’.²³ The data on healthy life expectancy indicates the scale of the challenge and the need for action across the life course.

Fig. 6: Average life expectancy and healthy life expectancy for men and women in Wales



People living in the most deprived areas can only expect to live in good health until the age of 50

Where older people live

Like most of the population of Wales, most of the older population lives in urban areas. Just over 60% of older people live in areas with a population of over 10,000.²⁴ As well as cities like Cardiff and Swansea, this also includes towns the size of Mold or Abertillery. But it is also important to note that older people are more likely than any other age group to live in a village or hamlet, or in an isolated dwelling.²⁵ Conwy has the highest percentage of older people aged 65+, at 27.2%, while Cardiff has the lowest, at 14%.²⁶

Older people are more likely to be owner-occupiers than other age groups, with **83%** of people over 60 living in a home that they own, or which is owned by someone else living in the property.²⁷ Whilst older people are less likely to live in private rented accommodation, those over the age of 65 who are at risk of living in relative income poverty are more likely to live in the private rented sector (37%) than in owner-occupied (15%) or social housing (30%).²⁸

Though the majority of people in Wales aged over 60 live in an owner-occupied property at present, trends in housing provision mean that there will be an increase in the number of older people living in the private rented sector in the years ahead.²⁹

The impacts of this will be wide ranging and will affect older people’s household and financial security. Older people will have to continue to meet demands of rent when they may have less income after retirement and will not have the financial buffer of household equity to fall back on in financial emergency, something that will potentially increase the relative poverty of older people.

Privately rented homes are also less likely to meet the Decent Homes Standard, which could lead to more older people living in low-quality housing, which would have a negative impact upon their health and well-being.³⁰

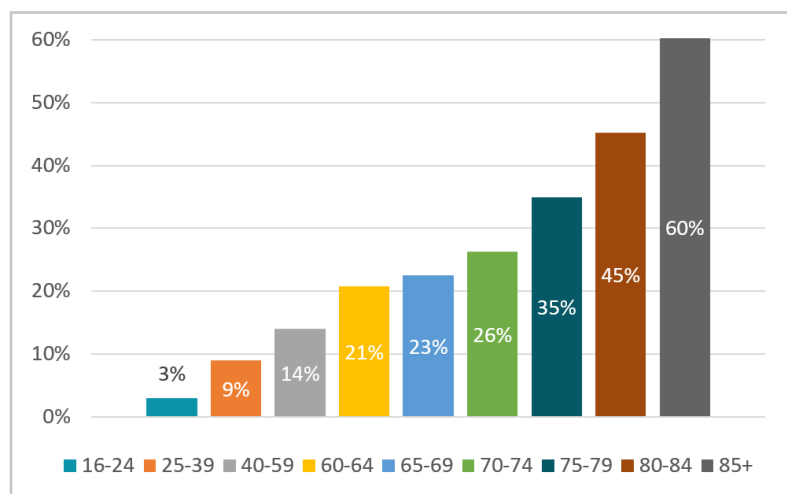
However, it is also important to remember that owner-occupation does not mean that older people are living in good quality housing – older people are more likely to be ‘house rich and cash poor’.

Wales also has the oldest housing stock in the UK, some of the least energy efficient housing and, proportionately, has the highest treatment costs for healthcare associated with poor housing in Europe. Findings from the latest Welsh Housing Conditions Survey also estimate that nearly a fifth of our housing stock has problems that pose a health and safety risk to the people living there.³¹

It is also important to consider the impact that living alone can have on health and well-being, given that older people are more likely to live alone than other age groups, and that the likelihood of living alone increases the older you get. Data shows that **21%** of people aged 60-64 live alone, rising to **60%** of people over the age of 85. In contrast, 9% of people aged 25-39 live alone, while the figure for those aged 40-59 is 14%.³²

It would not be right to automatically equate living alone with being socially isolated, or to assume that isolation means that someone will be lonely. However, the increasing numbers of older people living alone is an important factor to consider when examining how to prevent loneliness and ensuring that approaches to alleviate it are appropriate and effective for all ages.

Fig. 7: Percentage of adults who live alone.



21% of people aged 60-64 live alone. This figure rises to 60% for people over the age of 85

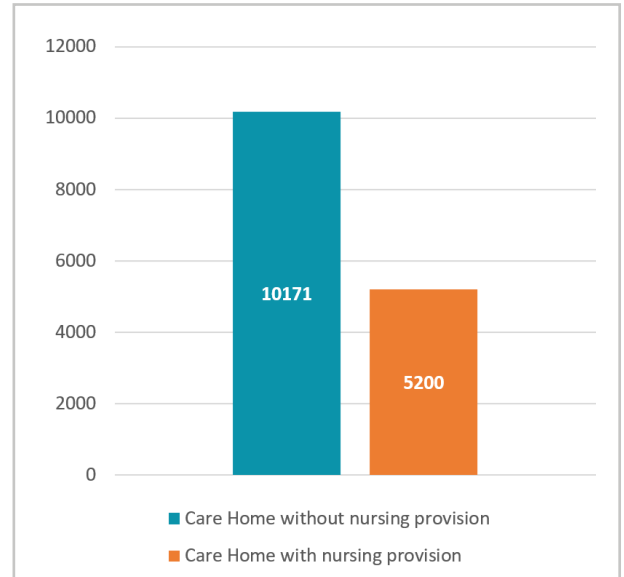
Care homes

Whilst many older people now receive care and support in their own homes, care homes are still a vital part of the health and social care system and are essential to meet the support needs of thousands of older people throughout Wales.

In 2017-18, **15,371** people aged 65 or over lived in a care home (10,171 in a home without nursing provision; 5,200 in a home with nursing care). This represents **2.4%** of people over the age of 65.³³

In Wales, the average age at which an older person moves to a care home is nearly 83 years, and people stay in care homes for an average of 869 days, just over 2 years and 4 months.³⁴ With 80% of older people in care homes living with some form of dementia or cognitive impairment, care and support services need to be able to support people with complex needs, including where there is comorbidity (the presence and/or impact of multiple conditions).³⁵

Fig. 8: Total number of care home residents aged 65+ in Wales



Only 2.4% of people over the age of 65 in Wales live in a care home

Sheltered housing

Sheltered Housing – independent living within a community of older people with varying levels of communal areas and/or support – is one of the housing options available to older people.

According to Age UK, there are around 550,000 units of sheltered (social rented) and retirement housing (private sector) in the UK, in approximately 18,000 schemes across the UK, with 450,000 of these located units in England.³⁶ In Wales, there are a total of 25,027 units of sheltered housing, according to data provided directly to the Commissioner’s office by the Welsh Government Department for Housing and Regeneration.

In recent years, there has also been increasing interest in ‘extra care’ housing or housing with care and support. It is estimated that there are currently **2,655** individuals living in extra care housing in Wales, with **95%** in the social housing sector.

Finances

Data shows that older people tend to have lower incomes than those under the age of 60, and that women are likely to be poorer than men.³⁷

Although a narrative has emerged in recent years that presents older people as being more well off than other age groups, around **1 in 3** of people aged 60-74 in Wales have incomes of less than £200 a week, or £10,400 a year. Women are often poorer, with almost half of older women having a personal income of less than £10,400 a year, compared to less than a quarter of men.³⁸

This means that an estimated **209,000** older women in Wales have a personal income of less than £10,400 a year. In contrast, almost **4 in 10** (37%) older men have a personal income of £20,800 per year or more, compared with less than 15% of older women.³⁹

Fig. 9: Reported annual personal income of men and women aged 60+ in Wales



1 in 3 people aged 60-74 have incomes of less than £200 a week

Relative Income Poverty

Relative Income Poverty is when a household's income is less than 60% of the UK median household income; it can be calculated either before (BHC) or after (AHC) housing costs.

In 1994, 27% of people over the state pension age lived in relative income poverty before housing costs (BHC) were taken into account, and 26% lived in relative income poverty after housing costs (AHC) were taken into account.⁴⁰

In subsequent years, relative income poverty fell steadily, reaching lows of 17% (BHC) between 2009 and 2013, and 14% (AHC) between 2009 and 2012.⁴¹

However, between 2013 and 2017, relative income poverty rose to 22% (BHC) and 20% (AHC).⁴²

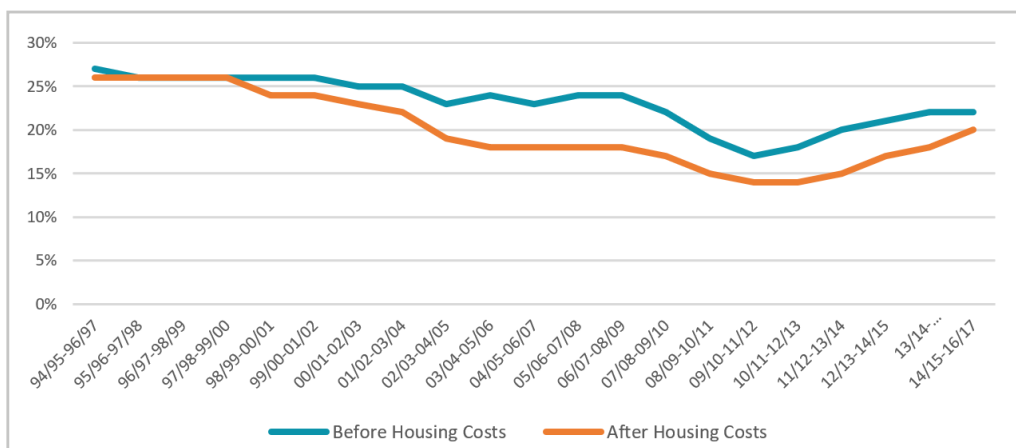


Fig. 10: Percentage of older people living in relative income poverty in Wales between 1994 and 2017

Health and well-being

Good health and well-being plays a vital role in an individual's quality of life so it is positive that a majority of people aged 60-74 (**55%**) in Wales say they are not limited by a long-term condition, illness or disability, and over a third of this age group (34%) do not have any illness condition or disability at all.⁴³

For those over the age of 75, **41%** say they are not limited by a long-term condition, illness or disability, with nearly **a quarter** (23%) saying they are unaffected by these issues.⁴⁴

However, around **a quarter** (24%) of people aged 60-74 are limited a lot by health issues, which rises to around **a third** (35%) of those over the age of 75.⁴⁵

In terms of mental health, the Royal College of Psychiatrists states that “older people are no less prone to mental health problems than younger adults, although such difficulties often manifest differently in older age”. They identify significant issues with age discrimination with respect to mental health in older age, which is touched on later in this report.⁴⁶

A key component of well-being is feeling in control and that we can do the things that matter to us. It is therefore very positive that, according to the National Survey for Wales, **90%** of older people in Wales feel in control of their lives and **80%** feel they can do what matters to them.⁴⁷

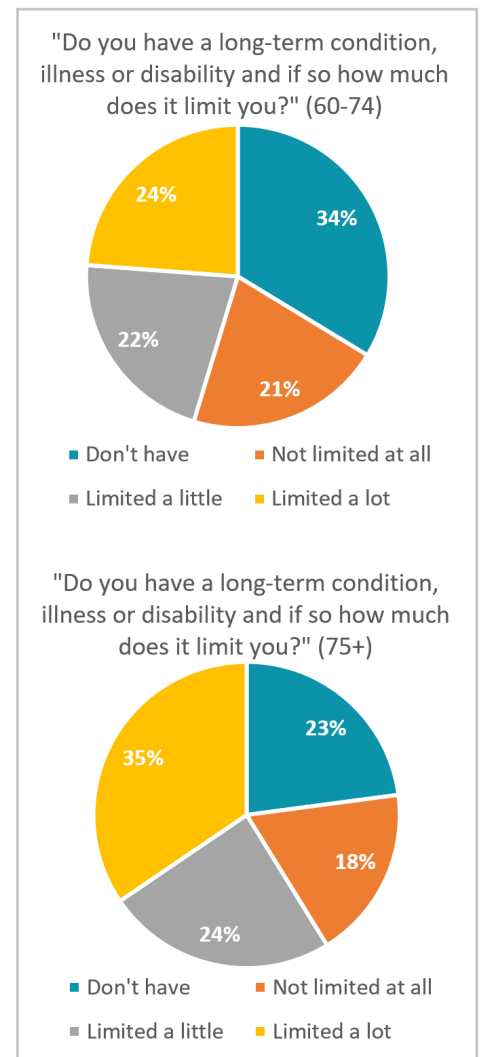
Loneliness

Over half of people aged 60-74 (54%), and **just under half** of people over the age of 75 (49%) report feeling lonely sometimes, while 11% of all older people – an estimated **91,000** people – feel consistently lonely.⁴⁸

This is concerning given the growing body of research that has identified the impact that loneliness can have on people's health and well-being.⁴⁹

Wales was in danger of falling behind other parts of the UK in terms of its work at a national level to tackle loneliness – the UK Government introduced a ‘Minister for Loneliness’ post in January 2018, while Scotland launched its loneliness strategy in December 2018. However, the Welsh Government has now undertaken a consultation on tackling loneliness and isolation to inform the development of its ‘Connected Communities – Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation’ strategy, which is due to be published in Autumn 2019.

Fig. 11: Percentage of 60-74 year olds and over 75s who are experiencing a limiting long-term condition, illness or disability and the extent to which it limits them



90% of older people in Wales feel in control of their lives, while 80% feel they can do what matters to them

Dementia

Dementia is a devastating illness that is more than just memory loss: it is a degenerative and life limiting brain disease that impacts upon every level of an individual’s physical, cognitive, emotional and social functioning. Dementia not only has a significant impact upon individuals, but also upon those who care for, and care about, them.

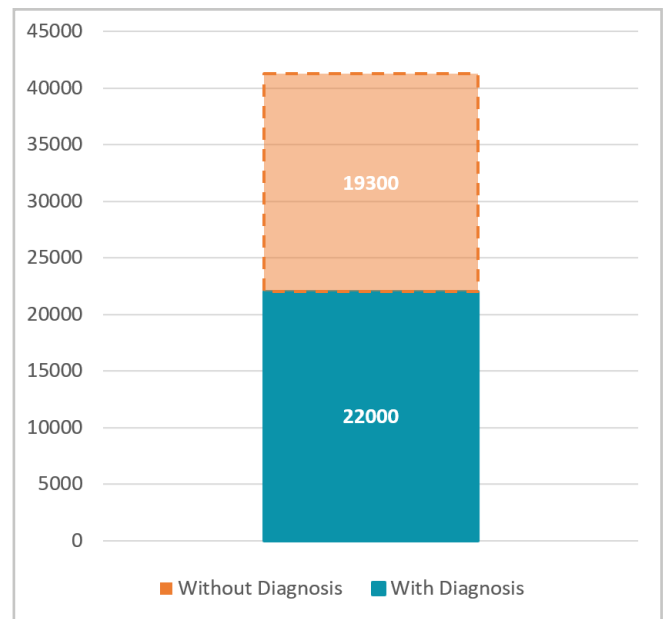
Despite assumptions that are often made, dementia is not an inevitable part of growing older – it affects only **1 in 20** older people aged 65 or over, although this rises to **1 in 5** people over the age of 80.⁵⁰

In Wales, nearly **22,000** people currently have a diagnosis for dementia, but it is estimated that nearly the same number have dementia but no diagnosis. This means that an estimated **41,300** people in Wales could be living with dementia.⁵¹

The low rate of formal diagnosis means that we do not know the true scale of the support and services required to support people living with dementia and those who care for them, and many older people who are living with dementia may not be able to access the support and services that are only available with a diagnosis.

The Welsh Government has published its Dementia Action Plan 2018-2022, which aims to improve the support available for people affected by dementia. The plan sets out a range of actions, including increasing the level of diagnosis, increasing the number of dementia support workers, strengthening working between social care and housing, and improving training for those working with older people. From 2018-19, funding of £10 million a year has been allocated by the Welsh Government to support the delivery of the action plan.⁵²

Fig. 12: Estimated number of people living with dementia in Wales



Care and support

Most care is provided to older people, unpaid, by family and friends. This care is estimated to be worth up to **£8.1bn** a year to the Welsh economy.⁵³ The age at which you are most likely to be caring is 50-64, and there are over 2 million carers in the UK within this age group.⁵⁴ Older people aged 65 and over are the fastest growing group of carers. Between 2001 and 2011 the total number of carers rose by **11%** whilst the number of older carers (aged 65+) rose by **35%**.⁵⁵

The value of care provided by unpaid carers in Wales is estimated to be worth £8.1bn a year

The 2011 Census shows that there were **370,000** carers in Wales⁵⁶ but UK-wide research from 2019 suggests that the number of unpaid carers in Wales could be higher. It found there could be as many as 8.8 million carers across the UK and if we assume that the population of carers reflects the total population, there could be as many as **422,000** people providing unpaid care in Wales.⁵⁷

Given our ageing population, the proportion of older carers is only likely to increase further, as is the number of older people receiving unpaid care and support from a loved one. However, many older people do not see or refer to themselves as carers. For example, **55%** of carers took over a year to recognise their caring role, and **24%** took over five years to identify as a carer.⁵⁸

Of the potential **422,000** unpaid carers in Wales, only **6,178** received a Carer's Assessment in 2017-18. Of those assessments, only **2,027** led to a Support Plan.⁵⁹ The low level of carers assessments is a cause for concern and, as the data cannot be broken down by age, we do not know the impact of this on older carers.

It is also important to note that there has been a downward trend in social care spending for people over the age of 65. Since 2007-08, the percentage of the social care budget spent on older people has fallen from **36%** to **32%** of the total spend.⁶⁰ The Welsh Government has established the Inter-Ministerial Group on Paying for Social Care to consider future options for the funding of social care in Wales. It will need to address the relative all in spending on older people, the implication of this, and ensure that social care funding in the future meets the needs of older people.

Over the past decade, the percentage of the social care budget spent on older people has fallen from 36% to 32% of the total spend

Ending ageism and age discrimination

Ageism – a term coined by Robert Neil Butler in 1969 – is the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age.⁶¹

Ageism may be casual or systemic, and results in negative stereotypes, older people being treated unfairly and their rights not being respected and upheld. It can also negatively influence the decisions made by society, meaning that the services, support, facilities and opportunities that people need to help them to age well can be inadequate.

Until fairly recently, the only protection from age discrimination was confined to employment practice and workplace situations. This changed in 2010, with the introduction of the Equality Act 2010, which provides a much broader legal framework designed to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. Under the Act, it is illegal to discriminate against a person because of their age. Despite this important step forward, however, ageism remains prevalent across society.

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is illegal to discriminate against a person because of their age

The Commissioner has identified that in order to end ageism and age discrimination, the following outcomes will need to be achieved:

- **The impact of ageism upon older people and society is understood**
- **People are empowered to challenge ageism and age discrimination**
- **Older people’s voices are listened to and acted upon and their legal rights are upheld**
- **Older people have access to training and employment**
- **Older people are not discriminated against in the workplace**

The evidence below highlights the ways in which older people may be affected by ageism and age discrimination across a range of areas, and the impact that this has upon individuals and society.

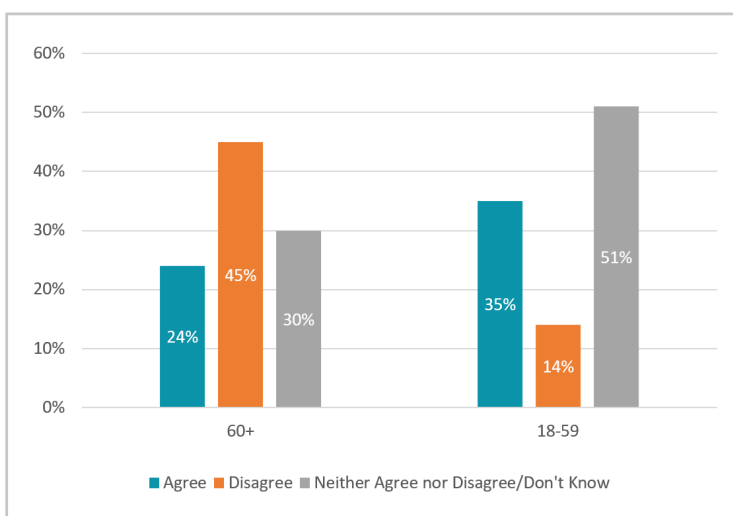
Impact on older people and society

Almost **1 in 8** older people (12% of people aged 60+ in Wales) feel they have been discriminated against because of their age, while **1 in 5** older people (21%) say they would not be confident in identifying instances of ageism.⁶²

A person's own perceptions of older people, coupled with negative cultural and societal norms relating to ageing that may have been internalised by an individual over a number of decades, ultimately become self-relevant and applied to them when they age. 'Self-stereotyping' causes people to restrict their view of what an older person is or should be and they may not easily recognise ageist attitudes when they are encountered.

This is supported by data relating to the prevalence of ageism, which shows that whilst **24%** older people think ageism against older people is prevalent in Wales, **45%** of older people think this is not the case.⁶³ It is interesting to note, however, that nearly a third of older people neither agreed nor disagreed, or answered 'don't know', to the question of whether ageism is prevalent in Wales. This again suggests that older people's internalisation of ageism across their day-to-day lives may influence their views on the prevalence of ageism and its impact.

Fig. 13: Percentages of those who agree/disagree that ageism and age discrimination against older people is prevalent in Wales



Whilst some older people may struggle to recognise or identify ageism, a growing body of research shows the impact that this form of prejudice can have on individuals.^{64, 65} Ageist stereotypes, whether through a person's own attitudes to ageing or through discrimination from others, can negatively impact upon the ageing process, affecting health and well-being, performance on cognitive tests or physical tasks, and influencing decisions made by older people about their lives.

The impact of ageism is not confined to older people alone: ageism has a negative impact on wider society, affecting the decisions that are made and the action that is taken, whether at a national or a local level. Deep-rooted ageism across society can perpetuate negative stereotypes of older people and act to legitimise and sustain inequalities in society. Ageism limits the questions we ask ourselves as a society, and acts as a major barrier to developing social policy that meets the needs of all citizens.

Ageism has a negative impact upon individuals, and on wider society

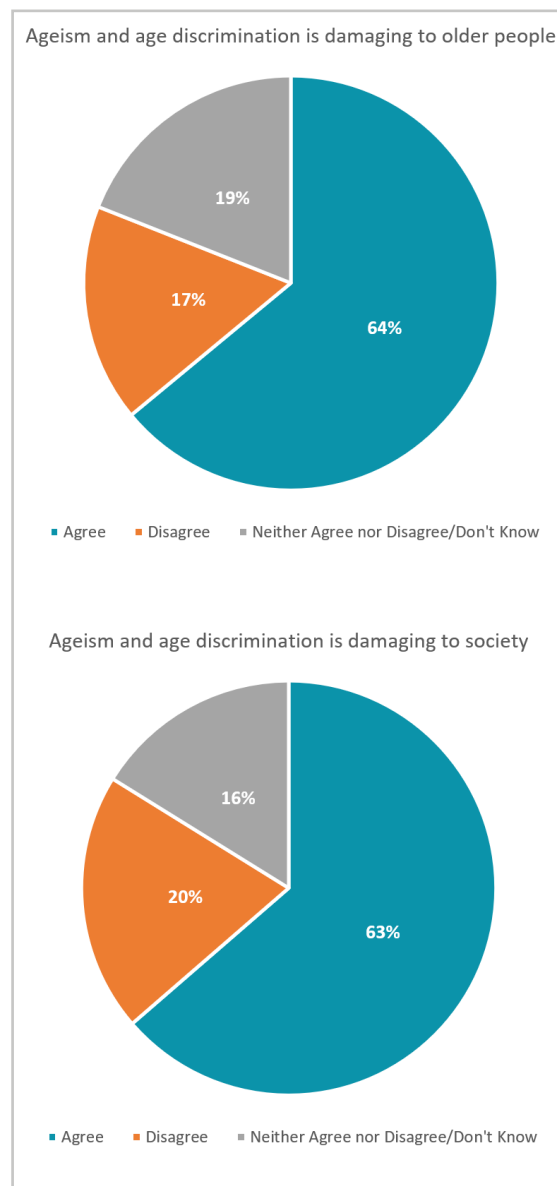
Despite the damaging effects of ageism seen in many research studies, fewer than **2 in 3** older people agreed that ageism is damaging to older people or to society as a whole.⁶⁶

Given that older people’s perceptions of ageism are lower than the rest of society, we need to consider how we can better empower older people to recognise ageism and ageist stereotypes, in order to improve their perceptions of ageing and ensure that their ability to live healthier, more independent lives is not undermined.⁶⁷

When considering why this might be important, it is helpful to look at why perceptions of ageism and age discrimination might be higher amongst younger people (people aged 18-59). As highlighted in the ‘Wales: A changing society’ section above there have been significant cultural shifts in recent decades that have resulted in a far greater awareness and more frequent discussion about the impacts of prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. This can help to explain why adults under the age of 60 seem better equipped to recognise ageism and its impact than their older counterparts.

However, the differences between age groups might also be explained by the fact that ageism experienced by younger people may be more acute, time-limited and specific – relating to matters such as employment, social protection (e.g. minimum wage qualification ages) and participation (e.g. voting age requirements) – and therefore has a more definite short-term impact than the ageism experienced by older people, which has a longer-term impact on things like an individual’s health, and well-being, or their vulnerability to abuse, which may be more difficult to identify.

Fig. 14: Extent to which older people agree / disagree that ageism and age discrimination is damaging to individuals / society



Challenging ageism and age discrimination

An essential element of delivering cultural change is challenging societal failures and injustices. This means highlighting examples of ageism and its impact, and challenging them wherever possible. Older people themselves have a key role to play in this and it is vital that they feel empowered to do so.

It is positive that **79%** of older people in Wales say they would feel confident in challenging specific instances of ageism they witness, and that **74%** of older people would feel confident in reporting ageism.⁶⁸ However, with a relatively low recognition of ageism amongst older people,

work to empower them to recognise ageism, its prevalence and its impact would help to ensure they are better equipped to identify and challenge it should they encounter it.

Furthermore, empowering older people by changing their perceptions about growing older, by highlighting the positive aspects of ageing and challenging their potentially low expectations, would be an important step towards tackling internalised ageism and helping to ensure that they are able to recognise forms of age discrimination when they occur.

Older people could be further empowered by growing their knowledge and understanding of their rights, which would help them to identify when they are being discriminated against. Data shows that over **184,000** older people in Wales (23%) report that they do not know about the rights they have, which means they are likely to find it difficult to recognise when their rights are not being upheld and would therefore be less likely to challenge age discrimination.⁶⁹

Around a quarter of older people do not know about the rights they have

It is also important to consider the ways in which older people, particularly those who are at increased vulnerability because of their circumstances (such as older people living in care homes, or those awaiting discharge from hospital) can be supported to ensure their rights are upheld and their voices are heard. Independent advocacy has a key role to play here, whether through the provision of support for those who are able to speak for themselves, or through more formal representation for those who may be unable to express their views and needs.

However, there is limited data on older people's access to advocacy in Wales. It is therefore difficult to get a true understanding of the level of advocacy support available for older people, which they have a legal right to in some situations. Whilst the data shows that a total of **656** adults received an advocacy service as part of a Care and Support plan during 2017-18, and that **312** of these referrals were for people aged over 65, there is no national data about advocacy at other important points in the social care process, such as during an assessment of care and support needs.⁷⁰

There is no national data about older people's access to advocacy at key points of the social care process

Equitable access to high quality health and care services

Around **66,000** older people in Wales (8%) report that they have been made to feel too old to receive health services.⁷¹ This is a cause for concern and further investigation is needed to understand the reasons they feel like this and the issues they may have encountered.

For older people, access to health services can play a key role in determining their quality of life and supporting them to age well, but a lack of data means it is difficult to ascertain whether older people have the same level of access to vital healthcare services as people of other ages.

There is a lack of data, for example, on the number of older people waiting longer than the target time for hip replacements, knee replacements and cataracts surgery, vital treatments that ensure older people can remain independent.

Similarly, data on Delayed Transfers of Care, which impact upon older people’s recovery, rehabilitation and independence, can only be broken down to two groups – people aged 75 and under and people aged 75 and over.⁷² It is therefore not possible to fully understand how older people are being treated differently or are being disproportionately affected by any particular issues relating to Delayed Transfers of Care.

In terms of social care, it is interesting to note that **75%**⁷³ of the people who received social care from local authorities in Wales in 2017/18 were aged 65 or over, yet they received only **a third** (32%) of the spend.⁷⁴

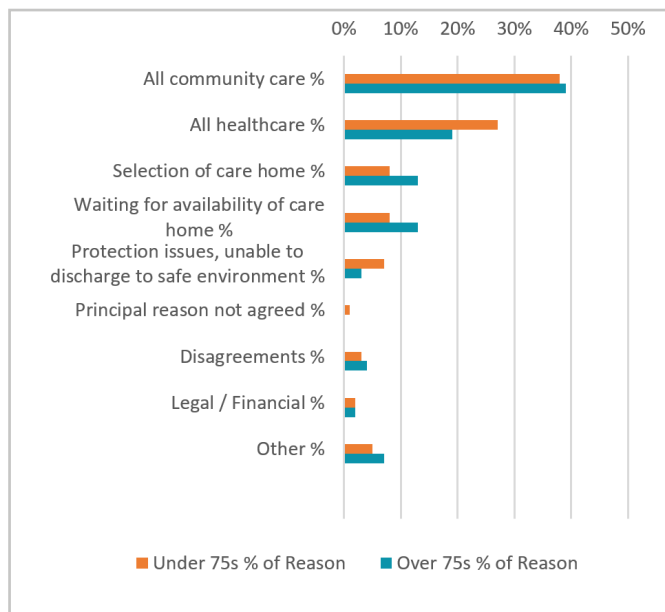
Similarly, whilst older people are the biggest users of domiciliary care services – **24,710 out of 29,838 adults**⁷⁵ – the average spend per person per year for people aged 65+ is **£7,400**, compared with a higher spend of **£13,100** per person aged 18-64.⁷⁶

These figures show that the debate around the future of social care funding should not solely focus on the provision of care for older people, but must take into consideration how levels of social care funding can meet the needs of all adults that need care and support.

In addition, we do not know how many older people receive care and support assessments or carer’s assessments in Wales as national data on social services is not currently broken down by age. This means we do not know whether older people have equitable access to key social care services or whether their rights under the law, such as a right to a carer’s assessment, are being upheld.

Responses to the Commissioner’s consultation on her priorities – from organisations including the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and the British Psychological Society – also highlighted older people’s inequitable access to mental health support as a particular issue.⁷⁷ It was noted that mental health issues are often under reported by older people and that there could be many older people living with depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions that are not being recognised and are not being provided with the support they need.

Fig. 15: Reason given for Delayed Transfer of Care



The average spend on domiciliary care for people aged 65+ is £7,400, compared with £13,100 for people aged 18-64

The principles of age equality should be evident across health and social care practice – in the way that priorities are determined, decisions are made, services are structured and delivered, and resources are allocated. Data relating to health and social care therefore needs to be collected and reported on in a way that allows us to identify (and subsequently address) obstacles to achieving age equality and reducing age discrimination.

Workplace discrimination and access to employment and training

It is estimated that **136,000** older people (just over 16% of the older population) – are currently employed in Wales, making up around **10%** of the workforce.⁷⁸ It is also estimated that **16,600** older people (2% of the older population) are seeking employment.⁷⁹



1 in 10 of the Welsh workforce is aged 60+

Of the older people who are working, almost **1 in 3**, or an estimated **42,000**, would like to work fewer hours than they do now,⁸⁰ which may suggest a financial need for employment, or that they are struggling to balance work with caring or other responsibilities.

For those who want to work but are not employed, **38%** say a long-term illness or condition, or a disability is the reason why they are unable to work.⁸¹

At a time when the economy will be increasingly dependent on having more older workers, it will be essential to encourage more older people to remain in, or return to, employment. But in order to do this, it will be important to identify and address the barriers that prevent older people from working.

A lack of training and learning opportunities is also likely to be a barrier to employment for older people, particularly for those who want to re-train or develop new skills that would allow them to re-enter the labour market. Whilst extending the eligibility criteria of Apprenticeships and Workplace Learning Schemes to people of all ages was an important step forward, only **485** older people participated in such schemes during 2017-18 – **less than 1%** of the total number of participants⁸² – so further work is required to promote these kinds of opportunities to older people.

**Less than 1%
of those who
participated in
apprenticeships and
workplace learning
schemes in Wales
are older people**

Further issues such as caring responsibilities or a lack of opportunities for flexible working are often cited as barriers to employment for older people.⁸³

However, data that could provide an insight into these potential barriers and the ways they could be tackled is lacking. There is currently no national data available, for example, about the extent to which employers in Wales offer flexible working arrangements, which can help to ensure that people with disabilities and caring responsibilities are able to remain in, or return to, the workplace. Based on our analysis of the Labour Force Survey 2017-18, caring responsibilities are cited by an estimated 25,000 older people as stopping them from working or seeking work.⁸⁴

Ending ageism and age discrimination: What needs to change?

There is much to do to improve the awareness and understanding of ageism; to identify and challenge it where it exists; and to ensure it is treated with as much seriousness and attention as other forms of discrimination. We have the opportunity to lead the way in Wales.

Delivering the actions set out below will be essential to help to end ageism and age discrimination:

Increase awareness of ageism and age discrimination, its impact and how to challenge it

Improve data collection so there is a clearer picture of access to public services

Improve older people's understanding of their rights and support for them to uphold their rights

Challenge and reduce the negative stereotyping of older people

Improve access to training and support, and flexible working to help older workers

Stopping the abuse of older people

Thousands of older people in Wales experience abuse – a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, which causes harm or distress. The types of abuse against older people may include physical abuse; domestic violence; sexual abuse; psychological or emotional abuse; financial or material abuse; organisational or institutional abuse; neglect or acts of omission; and coercive control.

The Commissioner has identified that in order to stop the abuse of older people, the following outcomes will need to be achieved:

- **Professionals and wider society are aware about abuse of older people**
- **Older people at risk of or experiencing abuse can access support services**
- **Older people who experience abuse have access to legal justice with accountability for those who abuse**
- **Incidences of abuse of older people are prevented**

Data and evidence relating to the abuse of older people is lacking for two key reasons: some information is collected but is not broken down by age, so it is not possible to identify what older people's experiences are; abuse is also under-reported – older people (and sometimes their family and friends) may be concerned about doing so due to the possibility of negative repercussions.

In order to tackle abuse effectively, it is essential that practitioners and policy-makers understand the scale, nature and impact of abuse. Progress has been made in recent years, with greater awareness as a result of new duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, and the Commissioner's own work to raise awareness of abuse through the delivery of training seminars to public services professionals throughout Wales.

The published data that is available is presented below, along with the results of polling undertaken on behalf of the Commissioner, undertaken to start to build a picture of how abuse is understood by the public.

The prevalence of abuse

UK-wide research undertaken in 2007 by the Department of Health in England asked people over the age of 65 who lived in their own homes about their experiences of abuse. The study showed that **2.6%** of older people living in the community (an estimated **16,900** older people) had experienced abuse from family, friends or care workers.⁸⁵

When including survey responses from 'neighbours and acquaintances', the rate increased from **2.6%** to **4%**. This higher rate suggests that **26,000** people over the age of 65 in Wales experience abuse in their homes. However, this survey did not cover older people living in care homes, or those who lacked mental capacity.

A more recent research study, undertaken in 2017, looked at international research on levels of abuse and found that abuse seems to affect around **1 in 6** (16%) of older adults worldwide.⁸⁶ There are some gaps in the research, particularly from low- and middle-income countries, but extrapolating this data for Wales indicates that **138,000** older people could be the victims of abuse.

It is important to consider why these two studies produced such different figures for Wales. The lower figure, based on the findings from the Department of Health, has the benefit of being based on research specific to the UK context. However, the survey was carried out over a decade ago and what we would think of as abuse has broadened substantially since then. The higher figure is based on more recent data, but the global scope of the research may not accurately reflect the experiences of older people living in Wales.

There is currently no single data set that provides a complete picture of the scale and type of abuse experienced by older people. The sources that have been identified are:

- Local authority safeguarding data
- Police and criminal justice data on crimes against older people
- Police data on domestic violence

Some national data is also available on the number of cases and prosecutions against people accused of crimes against older people.

Research that is specific to the Welsh context and is underpinned by an up-to-date understanding of abuse is required to provide a clearer picture of the full extent of the abuse of older people in Wales.

It is estimated that between 16,900 and 138,000 older people in Wales could be experiencing abuse

A lack of data makes it difficult to get a clear picture of the full extent of the abuse of older people in Wales

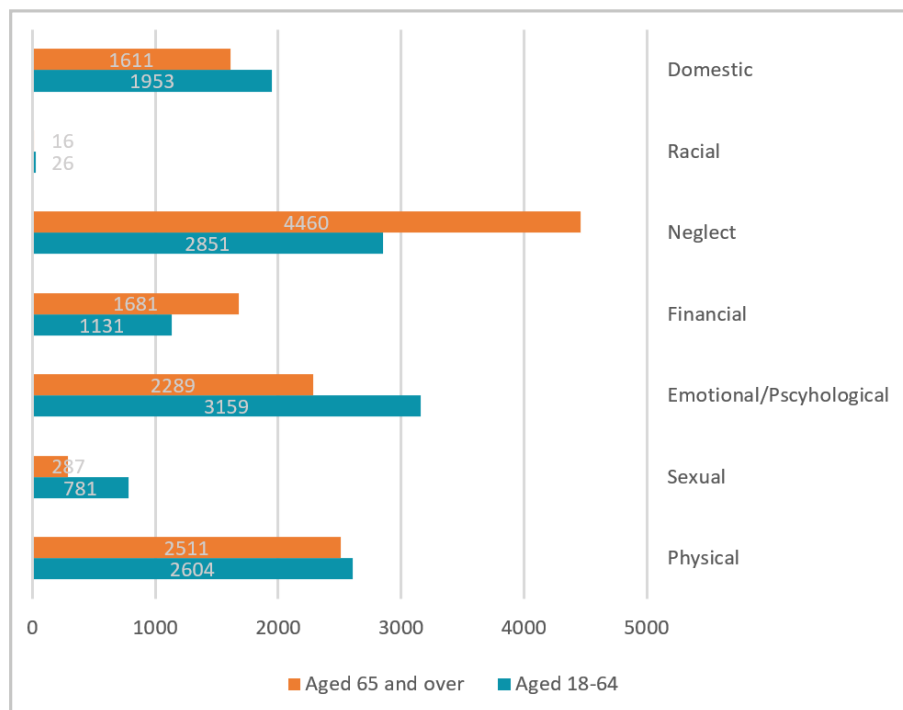
Local authority reports

Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, local authorities must keep a record of safeguarding reports made about suspected abuse or neglect of an adult. These reports may be made by practitioners working within local authorities; by other relevant partners, such as the police or care providers; or by the general public.

In 2017-18, a total of **25,360** incidents of suspected abuse or neglect were reported to local authorities, of which **12,855** (51%) related to people over the age of 65.⁸⁷

This data suggests that older women experience higher levels of abuse than other groups – **33%** of safeguarding reports related to women over the age of 65, compared with **28%** relating to women aged 18-64. Whilst **18%** related to men aged 65 or over and **22%** to men aged 18-64. However, due to limitations with the information that is captured, it is not possible to identify other potential risk factors for abuse using local authority data.

Fig. 16: Total number of incidences of abuse reported to Local Authorities in 2017/18



There are also big differences in the data across the 22 local authorities in Wales, suggesting a lack of consistency in reporting and the process that leads to an enquiry following a report being made. When a comparison is made between two local authorities of a similar size, for example, we see that ‘authority A’ received over **5,000** reports of abuse, which led to **469** follow-up enquiries, whilst ‘authority B’ received over **1,300** reports, leading to **540** follow-up enquiries.⁸⁸ This is echoed by agencies working with vulnerable people who report inconsistent responses across different local authorities when they make safeguarding referrals.

Whilst the data being captured by local authorities provides some insight into the scale and nature of abuse in Wales, it is still very limited. There is therefore a pressing need to capture further information about victims, in particular their age and factors that might increase their risk of abuse. In addition to this, there needs to be greater consistency of reporting throughout Wales, as well as work to identify how safeguarding data is being used to improve learning, policy and practice, and deliver better outcomes for older people.

A third of safeguarding reports made to local authorities in Wales in 2017-18 related to women over the age of 65

Other data sources

Given the limitations of national and local authority data relating to abuse, it is useful to consider wider data sources that may provide further insight into the scale and nature of abuse.

Polling undertaken on behalf of the Commissioner, for example, found that **21%** of older people in Wales knew an older person who has experienced some kind of abuse,⁸⁹ suggesting that the figure of **2.6%** reported by the Department of Health may be a low estimate.

Similarly, whilst local authority data indicates that there were **1681** incidents of financial abuse against older people, this figure does not include older people who are the victims of scams or rogue traders. Data from Age UK indicates that **53%** of people aged over 65 believe they have been targeted by scammers.⁹⁰ This suggests that the number of older people being financially abused is potentially far higher than the local authority data would suggest.

21% of older people in Wales say they know an older person who has experienced abuse

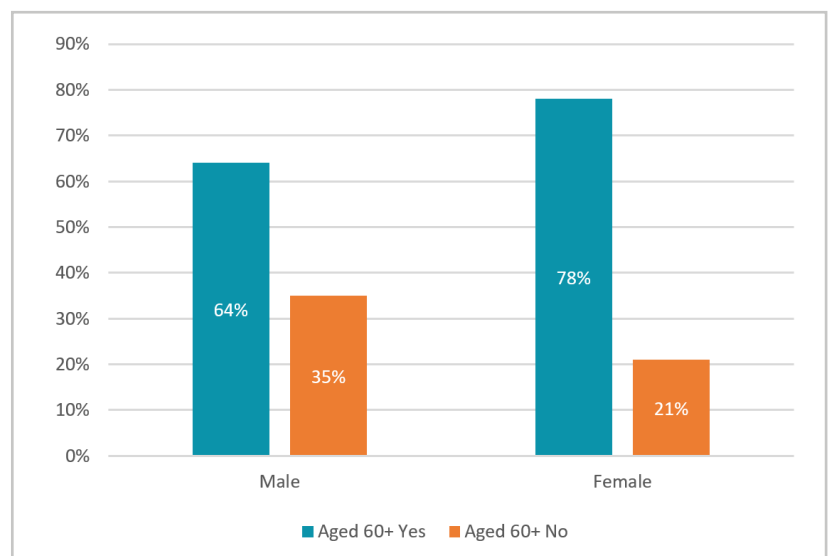
Research into potential risk factors for abuse has also identified that people living with dementia may be at greater risk. In a report published in 2013, the National Centre for the Protection of Older People identified abuse prevalence rates of between **27.9%** and **55%** for people living with dementia.⁹¹ This means that between **11,500** and **22,700** people living with dementia in Wales could be victims of abuse.

As the examples above demonstrate, improving the quality of data relating to abuse and safeguarding should be prioritised in order to ensure that there is a greater understanding of the numbers of older people who are experiencing abuse and in particular which older people may bear the greatest risk of being abused.

Support for older people at risk of or experiencing abuse

It is essential that older people at risk of, or experiencing, abuse can access the support they need to ensure they are safe and protected. However, polling undertaken on behalf of the Commissioner found that around **1 in 5** older women (21%) and around **1 in 3** older men (35%) would not know where to go to get support if they were being abused.⁹²

Fig. 17: Percentage of older men and women (aged 60+) who report knowing where to go if they were at risk of, or experiencing, abuse



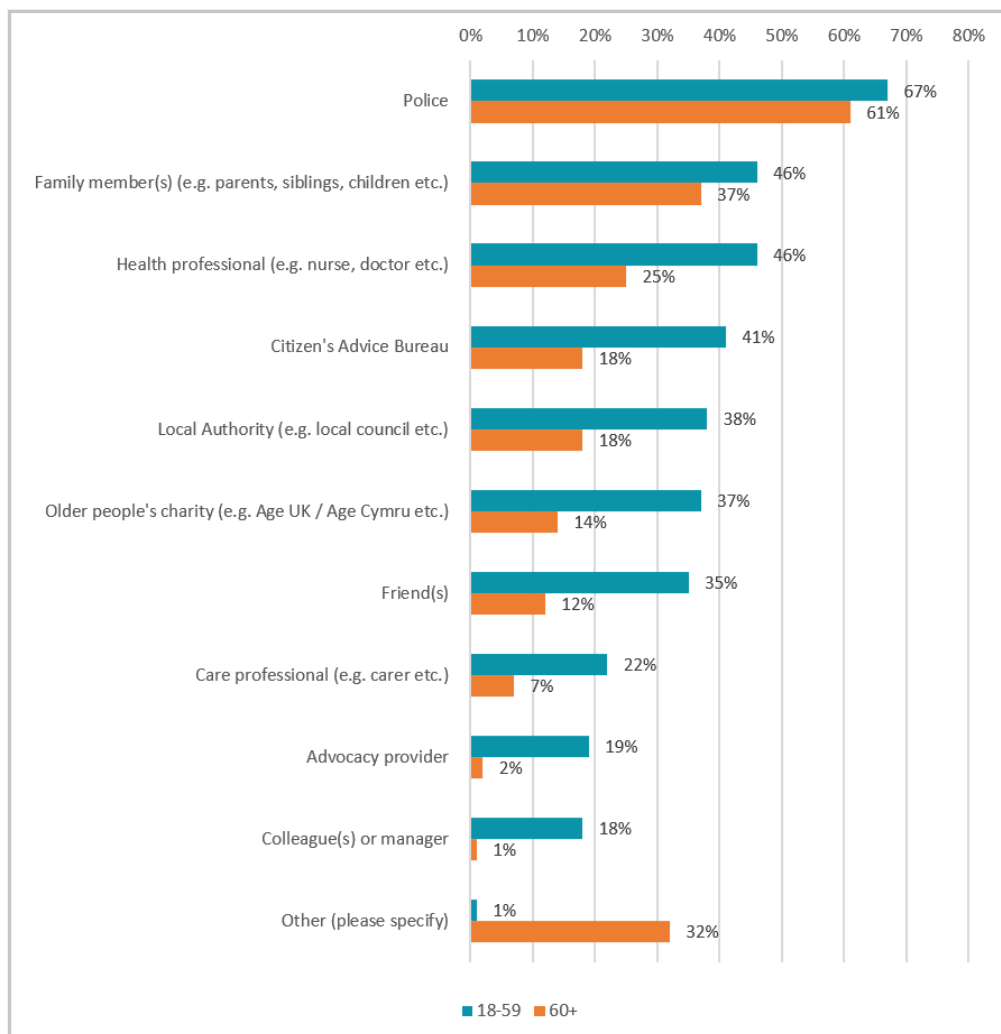
A significant number of older people (**61%**) stated that they would contact the police for help if they were at risk of or experiencing abuse,⁹³ which means it is essential that officers and staff are equipped to provide the support that people need. Police forces in Wales have already shown a commitment towards this through delivering training for staff, as well as having safeguarding policies in place.

The Commissioner is working with police forces throughout Wales to further develop training resources that will help to ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills they need to provide effective support to older people.

37% of older people also stated that they would turn to family members for support.⁹⁴ This demonstrates the importance of ensuring that information and advice about what to do if someone is experiencing abuse and how to help is easily accessible to all, including carers, particularly as this information might be needed at short notice during a time of crisis.

It is interesting to note that, despite their central role in safeguarding, local authorities come relatively low down the list of where older people would go for support if they were at risk of or experiencing abuse. This indicates a potential need to raise public awareness of the role that local authorities have in safeguarding older people and providing help and support.

Fig. 18: Percentage of 18-59 year olds and people aged 60+ who would visit different people or public bodies if they were at risk of, or experiencing, abuse



A relatively low percentage of older people would contact their local authority if they were at risk of or experiencing abuse, despite the central role local authorities play in safeguarding

Access to justice

It is essential that older people are fully supported by the criminal justice system when they are victims of crime. The table below shows the conviction rates for crimes against older people across the four police forces in Wales:⁹⁵

Table 2: Conviction rates for crimes against older people across the four police forces in Wales

Area	Total Prosecutions Brought	Convictions		Non-convictions	
			%		%
Dyfed Powys	23	17	73.9	6	26.1
Gwent	41	37	90.2	4	9.8
North Wales	63	53	84.1	10	15.9
South Wales	123		87.0	16	13.0
Wales Total	250	214	85.6	36	14.4

Whilst these prosecution rates seem relatively high, particularly when you consider that the UK average of successful prosecutions is **83.6%**, the overall volume of cases being prosecuted is very low. Data provided by three of the four Welsh police forces (South Wales, Dyfed Powys and Gwent) showed that in 2018-19 there were **15,084** recorded crimes against older people across these force areas. However, only **377** prosecutions for crimes against older people were brought across Wales during this period.

The Commissioner has previously highlighted the fact that the rate of convictions for crimes against older people is disproportionately low compared to the population as a whole. Data for 2013-14, shows that **18,931** crimes against older people were recorded in Wales but only **194** cases resulted in a successful conviction, around **1%**.⁹⁶ Looking at UK crime figures for people of all ages during 2013-14, we see that a total of **3,506,699** crimes were recorded and that the total number of convictions was **675,316** – around **19%**.⁹⁷

A recent report published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate indicated why the level of prosecutions/convictions relating to crimes against older people might be so low, stating that the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) lacked any joint cohesive strategy to deal with older victims of crime. The report called for investigations into crimes against older people to be improved, something that would improve prosecution and conviction rates.⁹⁸

The number of convictions relating to crimes against older people is only around 1% of the total number of recorded crimes of this type. For the population as a whole, this figure is around 19%

There may also be issues around police and CPS decision-making that impact upon investigations and subsequent access to justice for older people, particularly in cases related to safeguarding. The Commissioner is therefore working in partnership with police forces and the CPS to review data, decision-making processes and outcomes relating to 400 cases where abuse, neglect or ill-treatment is alleged to have taken place in hospital or care home settings, to identify ways that safeguarding investigations and training could be enhanced and access to justice for older people could be improved.⁹⁹

Extending the definition of hate crimes

The Commissioner has called for crimes against older people to be recognised in law as hate crimes, in cases where the age of the victim has been a factor.

Under the Criminal Justice Act 2003, the courts already have the power to enhance the sentence of any offence that is racially or religiously aggravated, or aggravated by reason of disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. However, despite age being a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, crimes against older people where the age of the victim has been a factor are not currently recognised as hate crimes.

Crown Prosecution Service guidance on crimes against older people does recommend that courts increase the sentence for offences against older people on the basis that their perceived vulnerability is an aggravating factor increasing the seriousness of the crime.¹⁰⁰

Recognising crimes against older people as hate crimes in law would help to ensure that there is greater recognition of these kinds of crimes by the criminal justice system and that the punishments and sentences for criminals who commit them fully reflect the nature of the crime committed.

Stopping the abuse of older people: What needs to change?

It is time to transform the awareness, understanding and action on the abuse of older people. This report shows the gaps in the data and evidence, and the inconsistency in how some of it is recorded. It is not acceptable that older people's experiences are missing because of the way that information is collected and presented. This can lead to assumptions being made that older people are not affected, which in turn means that the policy, resources, and actions needed to stop the abuse of older people are not put in place.

Delivering the actions set out below will be essential to help to stop the abuse of older people:

Improve the information about abuse of older people in Wales by collecting data broken down by age group; by identifying new areas of evidence and data that is needed; and by improving the consistency of how data is collected and used.

Improve the public's awareness and understanding of the abuse of older people, how to report it and where to get support

Assess the adequacy of the support services available to help older people who are at risk of or experiencing abuse, identifying where improvements are needed and how they can be made

Ensure the provision of appropriate training on the abuse of older people

Change the law to make crimes against older people, where the age of the victim is a factor, a hate crime

Improve access to justice for victims of abuse

Enabling everyone to age well

Ageing well – ‘adding life to years, not just years to life’ – is important for all of us, and for our country as a whole. It is something everyone in Wales should be able to do. Older people should be seen as a vital part of society and should be able to have more opportunities to participate in and contribute to our economy and our communities.

But many people find themselves unable to do the things that matter to them as they get older. Problems with public transport, for example, mean that some older people are prevented from getting about and about – to volunteer, spend time with friends and family, care for loved ones or get to medical appointments.

It is therefore important that we work towards a Wales where communities ensure that older people feel valued, included and respected.

The Commissioner has identified that in order to enable everyone to age well the following outcomes will need to be achieved:

- **Age-friendly communities are established throughout Wales**
- **People are able to get to where they want to go and do the things that matter to them**
- **Access to advice and support to age well is improved**
- **Access to health services that are needed to age well is improved**
- **Access to financial support needed to age well is improved**
- **More older people are empowered to affect change**

This section considers the support available, and where action is needed, to help older people throughout Wales to age well.

Developing age-friendly communities

An age-friendly community is a community in which older people are able to live active, healthy and independent lives, can continue to do things that matter to them, and feel valued, included and respected.

The concept of age-friendly communities was established as part of a World Health Organisation (WHO) initiative initiated in 2006 to explore what changes were needed to effectively support rapidly ageing populations across the world.¹⁰¹

As part of this work, the WHO identified eight 'domains', or community features, that communities can address to better adapt their structures and services to the needs of older people:

- age-friendly outdoor spaces and public buildings;
- social participation;
- respect and social inclusion;
- community support and health services;
- housing;
- transport;
- communication and information; and
- civic participation and employment.

Interest in age-friendly approaches has grown rapidly. In 2010, the WHO launched the Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities, recognising communities committed to becoming age-friendly and over 900 communities from across the world have joined the network to date.¹⁰²

While the Global Network does not currently include any members from Wales, several local authorities have already expressed an interest in making a commitment to being age-friendly authorities and becoming recognised by the WHO.

Many older people in Wales already live in places which support them to age well, where they can participate in and contribute to community life. However, many older people also find themselves unable to do the things that matter to them, and experience barriers to accessing services and amenities where they live.

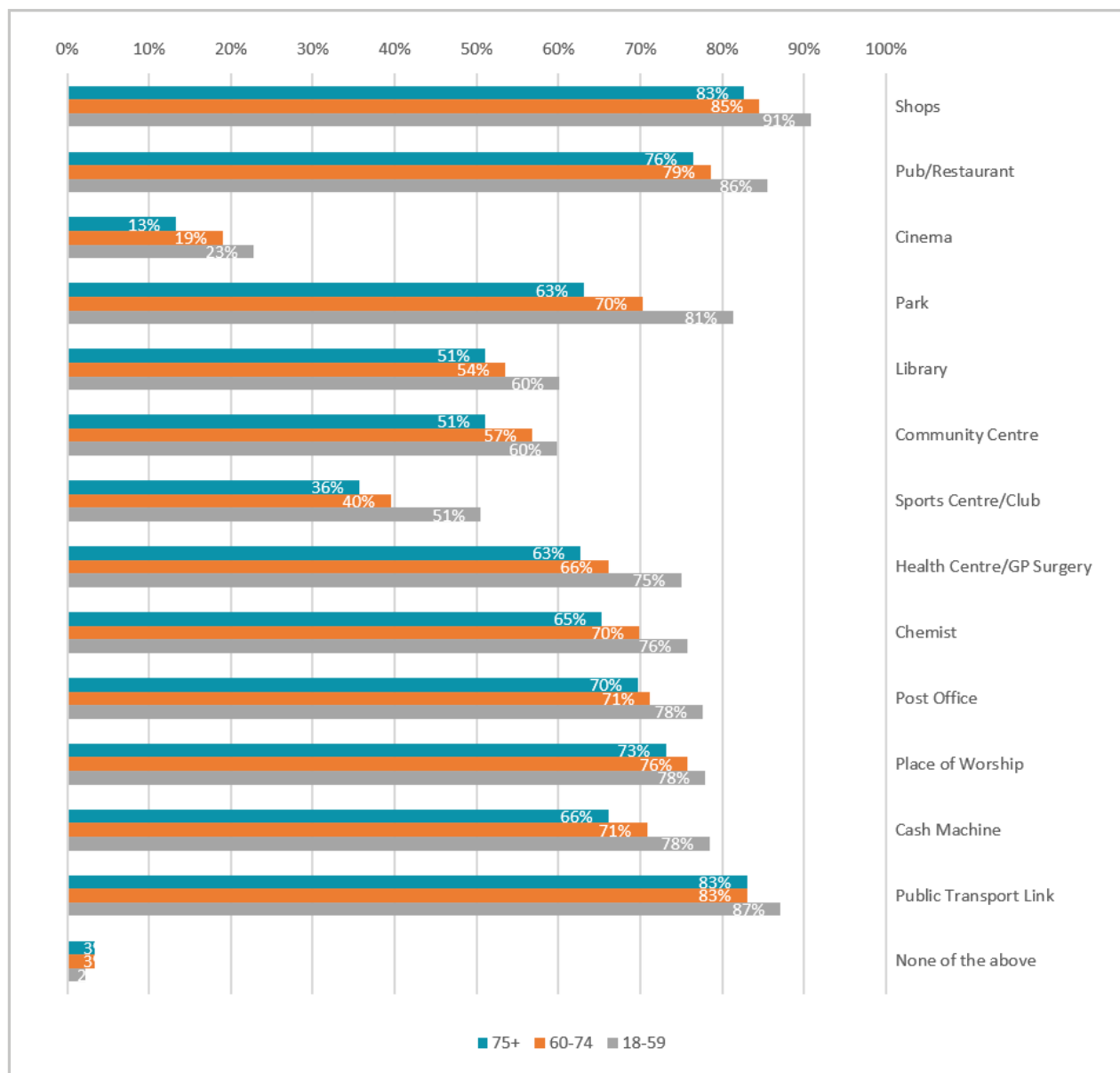
Making Wales a nation of age-friendly communities is essential if we want to enable everyone to age well.

There are currently no Welsh members of the Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities, but several local authorities in Wales are interested in becoming recognised by the World Health Organisation

Accessing community-based services and activities

Data from the National Survey for Wales shows that people over the age of 75 generally report fewer services being available in their area than those under the age of 60.¹⁰³ This is the case across all services, from shops to health centres, to public transport.

Fig. 19: Percentage of 18-59 year olds, 60-74 year olds and over 75s who have access to different services in their 'local area'



This may be explained, in part, by the fact that a higher percentage of older people live in non-urban areas compared with other age groups. However, it is far more likely that these services are simply not accessible to older people.

The question within the survey defines 'local area' as 'the area within 15 to 20 minutes walking distance from your home'. Given that older people are more likely to experience mobility issues as they get older – **59%** of people over the age of 75 have a condition or health issue that affects their mobility compared with **24%** of people under the age of 60– 'local area', is likely to

be much more restricted for an older person than for a younger person, meaning that access to certain services will be affected.¹⁰⁴

Despite these potential mobility issues, many older people still make journeys in their local area on foot, which underlines the need for well-lit and well-maintained pavements with adequate crossings so older people can cross the road safely.

Public Transport

However, as people get older and services become more centralised, getting to them can become more of a challenge and access to convenient, reliable, safe and affordable transport is therefore vital to ensure that older people can access services, as well as continue to participate in community life and stay connected to friends and family.

In Wales, the concessionary bus pass for people aged 60 and over has helped unlock access to a wide range of services, activities and places for older people and is particularly important for older people who do not drive or have access to a car.

Two-thirds of the 750,000 bus passes that have been issued to older people are used on a regular basis¹⁰⁵ and research undertaken by the Commissioner's office in 2011 demonstrated just how valued the bus pass is by older people, with **92%** of participants agreeing that having a bus pass allows them to be independent and **81%** agreeing that their quality of life would suffer without the bus pass.¹⁰⁶

However, recent years have seen cuts to many bus services, and concerns about access to transport are frequently shared with the Commissioner by older people throughout Wales.

An inability to access local services can mean that older people have to rely on others to take them to services, creating dependency, or means that older people do not access services at all. This disables rather than enables older people and is an issue that the development of age-friendly communities can do much to solve.

Public Toilets

Public toilets are also a vital part of an age-friendly community, an invaluable community asset relied upon by people of all ages, but particularly important to maintain the health, independence and well-being of older people. Research shows, however, that more than 100 – **1 in 5** – public toilets have been closed by councils across Wales since March 2013.¹⁰⁷

According to data for the UK, **80%** of people aged 65 or over say there are not enough public toilets, with **1 in 5** people (of all ages) saying they are not able to go out as often as they would like because of concerns around a lack of public toilets. This figure rises to more than **2 in 5** (43%) for people with an illness or condition that requires more frequent toilet use.¹⁰⁸



80% of people aged 65 or over say there are not enough public toilets

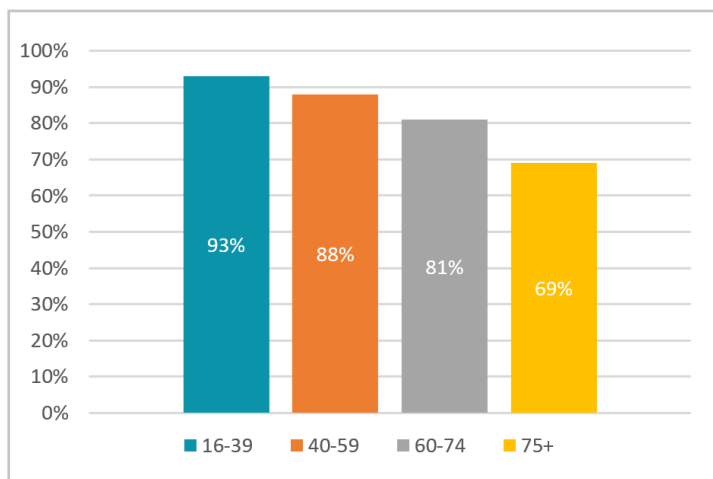
Whilst the data does not provide a breakdown by age, given what we know about older people and the greater likelihood of them experiencing a limiting condition, we can assume that a sizeable proportion of this percentage is comprised of older people.

The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 placed a duty on each local authority in Wales to prepare and publish a local toilets strategy for its area, including an assessment of the community's need for public toilets, by May 2019. At this stage, however, it is too early to assess what impact this is having on the provision of toilets for public use.

Arts, Cultural and Heritage Activities

In addition to being able to access services within the community, access to arts, cultural and heritage activities is also a vital part of ageing well. However, older people are less likely to access these kinds of activities compared to those under the age of 60 – **81%** of 60-74 year olds have accessed arts, cultural or heritage events, dropping to **69%** of people over the age of 75. By contrast, **88%** of people aged 40-59, and **93%** of people aged 16-39, accessed these activities.¹⁰⁹

Fig. 20: Percentage of people in 4 age bands (16-39, 40-59, 60-74 and 75+) who have accessed arts, cultural or heritage activities in the year 2017/18



Older people are less likely to access arts, cultural and heritage activities than other age groups

The decreasing involvement of older people in arts, cultural or heritage activities raises questions about the accessibility and affordability of these activities and highlights the need for action to ensure that older people are not excluded from activities that have been shown to improve people's health and well-being.

Accessing health services

Access to high quality health services is vital for older people to stay healthy and lead active and independent lives.

However, **42%** of older people say they now find it difficult to get to a GP appointment, up from **33%** in 2012-13.¹¹⁰ Whilst this is broadly in line with other age groups, access to GP appointments can be particularly important for older people, who may have long-term or chronic health conditions.

The difficulties reported by older people include long waits for appointments, not being able to get through to the surgery by phone and needing to contact the surgery early in the morning. Survey findings used as the basis for the 'GP Services in Wales: The Perspective of Older People', published by the Commissioner's office in 2017, also showed that around a quarter of older people found travelling to their GP surgery a barrier.¹¹¹

On a positive note, once older people access GPs, the levels of satisfaction with the services are relatively high; **91%** of people aged 75 or over, and **88%** of people aged 60-74, are satisfied with the GP service they receive, higher levels of satisfaction compared with other age groups.¹¹²

However, older people's access to other essential health services, such as dental and optometry services, is more limited. **Over a quarter** of people aged 60-74, and over **40%** of people aged over 75, have not visited the dentist during the last 12 months.¹¹³ Given the relationship between good oral health and good overall health, this is a cause for concern.

Similarly, **around two-thirds** of older people (62% of people aged 60-74 and 68% of people over the age of 75) have not used an optician in the last year.¹¹⁴

This is a particular concern as sight loss not only has a significant impact on older people's independence but can also lead to serious injury as a result of experiencing a fall.

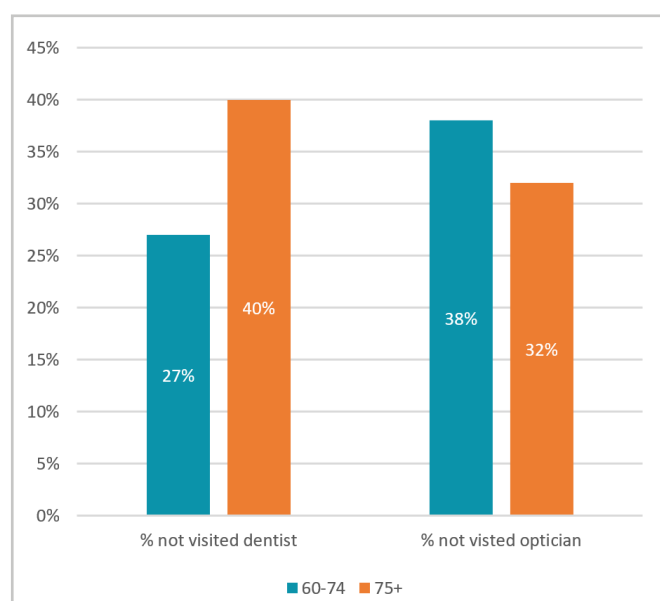
During 2017-18, there were **12,336** falls involving older people recorded in Wales, 35 falls per day, which resulted in hospitalisation, as recorded by the Patient Episode Database for Wales.¹¹⁵ This does not capture all falls involving older people but is a useful measure as it can be tracked year-on-year. Public Health Wales has identified that **30%** of people over the age of 65 fall each year, which increases to **50%** of people over the age of 80.¹¹⁶

Falls result in older people losing their confidence and independence, which means they can become withdrawn from their community and are at greater risk of becoming lonely and isolated. Following a fall, many older people will also require formal care and support, or may have to move out of their home altogether.

Falling is not an inevitable part of ageing, and preventing falls is a vital way in which people can be supported to age well. However, more action and progress are needed to reduce the number of older people falling and prevent the often devastating consequences that can follow.

Whilst accessing GP services can be difficult, older people report high satisfaction with the service they receive

Fig. 21: Percentage of older people who haven't visited a dentist or an opticians in the last 12 months



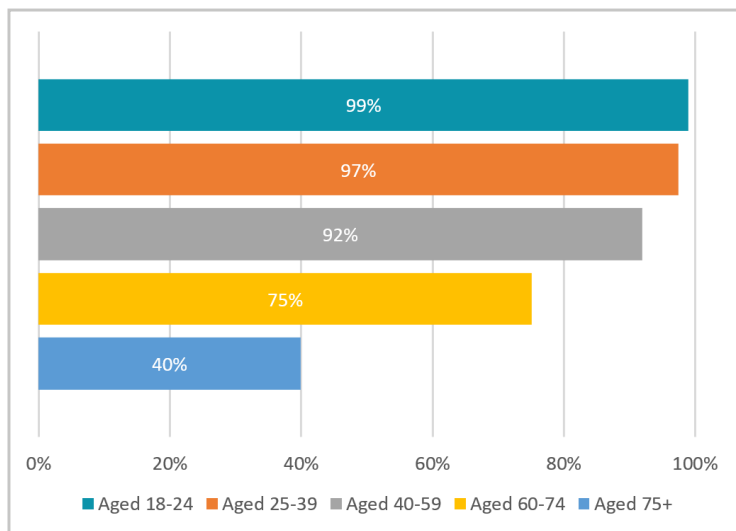
Accessing services, information and support in a digital world

The increasing use of digital technology means that the way we access services and information, and the way we communicate, has changed significantly in recent years.

While it is often taken for granted the opportunities this provides— such as banking or shopping online, or talking to a friend or relative on the other side of the world – there is a danger that many older people could be left behind and excluded from information and services that could support them to age well.

Whilst internet use among older people has grown rapidly, it is important to remember that **over a third** of older people (37%) – around **a quarter of a million** people – do not make personal use of the internet.¹¹⁷ For people aged over 75, this figure is 60%.

Fig. 22: Percentage of people in 5 age-bands who use the internet at home, at work, or somewhere else



Older people who do not use digital technology are missing out on benefits and financial savings, with research suggesting that offline households miss out on savings of up to **£560 a year** from shopping and paying bills online.¹¹⁸

Furthermore, with a growing number of services and sources of information only being available online, older people who do not use the internet are in danger of missing out on advice and support that could make a positive difference to their lives.

It is therefore crucial that older people are supported to become comfortable using digital technology as part of their daily lives. This has been identified as a priority by the Welsh Government, whose 2016 'Delivering Digital Inclusion' strategic framework included the ambitious target of ensuring that all people (who want to be) are online by 2020.¹¹⁹

However, a significant number of older people will not be online in the immediate future, or may choose, for whatever reason, not to engage with the digital world. This means it is imperative that 'traditional' ways of accessing information, advice, support and services remain in place.

Around a quarter of a million older people in Wales do not use the internet and could be missing out on savings of up to £560 a year from shopping and paying bills online

Empowering older people to effect change

Across all age groups, a majority of people feel they do not have an opportunity to participate in decisions about the ways that local services are run. However, the largest majority is amongst older people, with **70%** - an estimated 581,000 people – reporting that they do not have an opportunity to participate in this way.¹²⁰

Having opportunities to share their views and ideas is essential to help older people to influence policies and decisions and make their communities better places to live. Yet many older people struggle, or are unable, to make their voices heard, often feeling powerless when proposals are made that will affect their lives.

Communities that support and encourage high levels of participation can benefit from positive social, health and well-being outcomes, such as improved social cohesion and inclusion, better community resilience, a reduction in the potential causes of loneliness and isolation, and improved social relations and opportunities.

Older people's forums, established throughout Wales under the Welsh Government's Strategy for Older People, played a vital role in ensuring that older people's voices were heard by policy and decision-makers. However, the support available for these forums – which included ringfenced funding and a local Older People's Strategy Coordinator employed by each local authority – has diminished significantly in recent years. This has limited the opportunities for older people to participate in civic engagement and demonstrates why action is needed to empower older people so they can make their voices heard and influence decisions that affect their lives and communities.

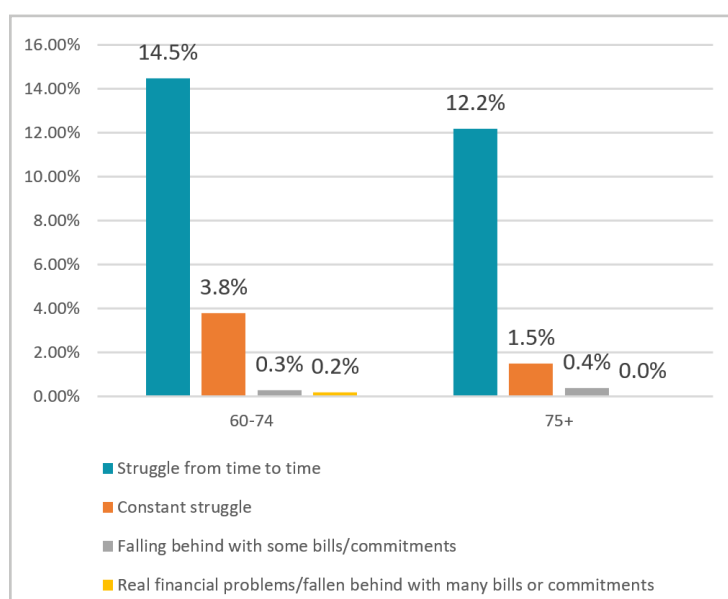
70% of older people say they do not have an opportunity to participate in decisions about the way local services are run

Financial support

Whilst **80%** of people aged 60-74, and **83%** of people aged over 75, state they are able to keep up with their bills, **nearly 1 in 5** – over 150,000 – older people in Wales experience some kind of financial difficulty.¹²¹

An estimated **27,500** older people in Wales experience persistent financial difficulties (4% of people aged 60-74 and 2% of people aged over 75), while a further **126,000** older people (15% of people aged 60-74 and 12% of people aged over 75) struggle to pay their bills 'from time to time'.¹²²

Fig. 23: Percentage of older people experiencing different levels of financial hardship



Financial support is available to the poorest older people in Wales in the form of Pension Credit, which tops up weekly household income to £167.25 for a single person and £255.25 for couples. However, according to the Department for Work and Pensions, **37%** of eligible single older people and **50%** of eligible couples do not receive Pension Credit.¹²³ This means that an estimated **£214 million** of Pension Credit and Housing Benefit (which is unlocked via a Pension Credit claim) goes unclaimed every year.¹²⁴

Fuel poverty – where a household spends 10% or more of its income on energy costs – also has a significant impact on older people’s finances, and it is estimated that there were **56,000** households in Wales inhabited by an older person that experienced fuel poverty during 2017-18.¹²⁵

In Wales, fuel poverty is exacerbated by old and poor quality housing stock that is difficult to make more energy efficient,¹²⁶ and the fact that Wales has fewer homes connected to mains gas compared to the Great Britain average,¹²⁷ meaning many older people must rely on alternative forms of fuel that are more expensive.

Some initiatives have been introduced that aim to alleviate fuel poverty, such as the Welsh Government’s Nest Scheme, but more work is still needed to ensure that the right support is available for those who may need it.

37% of eligible single older people, and 50% of eligible couples do not receive the Pension Credit they are entitled to

Enabling everyone to age well: What needs to change?

There is a mixed picture of people's experiences of ageing well in Wales, with many enjoying and having a positive experience of older age, but some older people being particularly disadvantaged. The problems of poverty, ill-health and exclusion are compounded when the communities that people live in disable rather than enable. It's why making every community age-friendly is so important.

Delivering the actions set out below will be essential to help to enable everyone to age well:

Develop age-friendly communities across Wales

Increase the take-up of financial entitlements by older people

Provide support and opportunities for older people to get online, and alternatives for those who aren't

Improve transport and access to health services

Ensure the provision of publicly accessible toilets for all

Conclusion

Since 2008 the Older People's Commissioner for Wales has been engaging with older people and building expertise, knowledge and an evidence base about older people's lives, views and experiences. This State of the Nation report adds a further dimension to this evidence, as well as highlighting the many areas where there are gaps in what is known, and where there need to be improvements in data collection.

With evidence and knowledge comes the ability and responsibility to act. For each of the Commissioner's three priorities – ending ageism, stopping the abuse of older people, and enabling everyone to age well – there are changes that are needed and actions that can be taken now to make a difference, as set out above.

Tackling many of these issues is within our collective power and Wales has the opportunity to lead the way.

Some issues, such as financial entitlements in older age, and the way the criminal justice system works for older people, will require action from the government in Westminster. On these issues we need to work together in Wales to ensure we have a strong, united voice to make a compelling case for change. For other issues which transcend nation boundaries, such as challenging and changing ageist attitudes and behaviours, we need to work together with the wider international community to make progress.

We all have a role to play in making change happen, and the Commissioner is committed to working with others to take joint action to deliver the change required.

Wales is at a critical juncture – if we don't act now, the risk is that many older people, today and in the future, will face a deteriorating quality of life. But with the right action, we can continue to make progress and improve older people's lives across the country, with the aim of making Wales the best place in the world to grow older.

Appendix 1: Data and Methods

This report draws on a range of data sources to produce an overview of the experience of growing older in Wales.

Data Sources include:

- Primary data collected on behalf of the Commissioner via polling by ICM Direct and organisational data provided directly to the Commissioner's office by Local Police Forces in Wales and Welsh Government Departments.
- Publicly available datasets (e.g. National Survey for Wales, Labour Force Survey) and data published on the Welsh Government website or available via StatsWales.com
- Official Statistics collated and published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- Reports and literature published by a range of public, private, academic and third sector bodies.

Due to the wide variety of sources, there was some variation in the age of data. The most recent data used in the report was collected in mid-2019, the oldest data used in the report was collected, in one case, in 2007 with the majority of the data being collected between 2017-2018. In all cases, best efforts were made to use the most up-to-date data available during data analysis. For this reason, we generally avoided using 2011 UK Census data, as being almost a decade old and, though detailed, lying outside of our preferred 'data window'. Within the main body of the report a reference (and where available direct weblink) to the source of all data is provided. A full source list is provided at the end of the report.

Where possible, data was broken down to explore the experiences of older people aged 60+, the age definition used in the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006. All statistical analysis carried out by the Commissioner's office of publicly available datasets and primary data collected by ICM Direct and provided by Welsh Police Forces was broken down in this way. During analysis of secondary data, weighting was applied to ensure data was representative of the Welsh adult population. Primary data collected by ICM was sampled and weighted to ensure representativeness of the Welsh adult population. Secondary data published by the Welsh Government and in previously published reports did not always provide 60+ as an age category, and more often provided data on adults aged 65+. It is indicated within the report where data was provided in this way.

Where appropriate, within the report we have indicated where a lack of data, or data gap, has been identified, either in official national statistics or publicly available datasets. An aim of this report is to highlight these gaps to ensure relevant bodies can take steps to fill these gaps so a more complete picture of growing old in Wales can be provided in future iterations of this report.

More details on the data and methods used in the production of this report are available in a Data Appendix, available here:

<http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/reviews/SOTN/data.aspx>

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