

This report was produced by Age Cymru in partnership with Swansea University’s Graduate Support Programme, utilising Welsh Government funding via the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)

## Older people in Wales: facts and statistics

September 2021

### Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Population in Wales</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Older people aged 90+ (including centenarians)</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Population in local authorities in Wales</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Population projections in Wales</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Life expectancy</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>At birth in Wales</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Life expectancy at age 65 in Wales</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Within the older population</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Welsh language</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Diversity</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Loneliness</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Fraud / Scams</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Money matters, poverty and benefits</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>9.1</b>	<b>Fuel poverty</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Economic contribution and employment</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Health</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>11.1</b>	<b>General health issues</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>11.2</b>	<b>Ageing well</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>11.3</b>	<b>Health in later life</b> .....	<b>13</b>

<b>11.4</b>	<b>Eyesight</b> .....	14
<b>11.5</b>	<b>Hearing</b> .....	14
<b>11.6</b>	<b>Musculoskeletal conditions (MSK)</b> .....	14
<b>11.7</b>	<b>Falls</b> .....	15
<b>12</b>	<b>Dementia</b> .....	15
<b>13</b>	<b>End of life care</b> .....	16
<b>14</b>	<b>Winter mortality</b> .....	16
<b>15</b>	<b>Age discrimination</b> .....	16
<b>16</b>	<b>Older carers</b> .....	17
<b>17</b>	<b>Abuse of older people</b> .....	18
<b>18</b>	<b>Access to services</b> .....	18
<b>18.1</b>	<b>Access to community services</b> .....	18
<b>18.2</b>	<b>Advocacy services</b> .....	20
<b>18.3</b>	<b>Experience of GP and hospital services</b> .....	20
<b>18.4</b>	<b>Residential care</b> .....	21
<b>18.5</b>	<b>Transport</b> .....	21
<b>18.6</b>	<b>Digital inclusion</b> .....	21
<b>18.7</b>	<b>Housing</b> .....	22
<b>19</b>	<b>COVID-19</b> .....	22
<b>19.1</b>	<b>Access to information about COVID-19</b> .....	22
<b>19.2</b>	<b>Mental and physical health</b> .....	22
<b>19.3</b>	<b>Health and social care</b> .....	23
<b>19.4</b>	<b>Abuse of older people</b> .....	23
<b>19.5</b>	<b>Unpaid older carers</b> .....	24
<b>19.6</b>	<b>Working from home</b> .....	24
<b>19.7</b>	<b>Older people affected by dementia</b> .....	25
	<b>References</b> .....	26

## 1 Population in Wales

- In 2020, an estimated 3,169,586 people were living in Wales, an increase of 0.5% (16,700) by mid-2019.<sup>1</sup>
- The latest statistics published by the ONS in 2020, report older people aged 65 and over account for 21% of the population of Wales (668,590 people), the highest proportion of all UK countries.<sup>2</sup>
- All four UK countries have seen their population growth rate slow due to a combination of higher deaths and fewer births.<sup>3</sup>
- In the year to mid-2020, Wales's population increased at the fastest rate of UK countries, reflecting greater net migration from other countries and other parts of the UK.<sup>4</sup>
- Between 1998 and 2018, in Wales, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over increased from 17.4 per cent to 20.8 per cent (669,000), while the proportion of the population aged 0-15 and under fell from 20.6 per cent to 17.9 per cent (563,000).<sup>5</sup>

## 2 Older people aged 90+ (including centenarians)

Data from the Office for National Statistics<sup>6</sup> show that:

- In the UK, there were more than 600,000 people aged 90 years and over in 2019, an increase of 3.6% compared to 2018, from 584,024 to 605,181
- In 2019, Wales had the greatest proportion of both male and female centenarians in the UK with eight men aged 100 years and over per 100,000 men and 36 women aged 100 years and over per 100,000 women
- For every 100,000 people, there are 26 who have reached that milestone in Wales
- The number of people alive in the UK, at almost every age from 90 years and above, was higher in 2019 than in 2018, with the largest increase at age 99 years (62.2%), as a direct result of seasonal birth patterns after World War One
- In the UK, the number of male semi-supercentenarians (people aged 105 years and over) has more than doubled in the last decade, while the number of female semi-supercentenarians increased by around half.

### 3 Population in local authorities in Wales

Table 1: Mid-year population estimates (2020) by local authority in Wales, for all ages and persons aged 65 and over.<sup>7</sup> (\*Column of percentage data added by Age Cymru).

Area	All ages	Over 65s	Percentage aged 65+*
Blaenau Gwent	70,020	14,177	20.25%
Bridgend	147,539	30,168	20.45%
Cardiff	369,202	52,807	14.30%
Caerphilly	181,731	35,672	19.63%
Carmarthenshire	190,073	45,693	24.04%
Ceredigion	72,895	18,668	25.61%
Conwy	118,184	32,938	27.87%
Denbighshire	96,664	23,517	24.33%
Flintshire	156,847	33,294	21.23%
Gwynedd	125,171	28,562	22.82%
Isle of Anglesey	70,440	18,639	26.46%
Merthyr Tydfil	60,424	11,394	18.86%
Monmouthshire	95,164	24,340	25.58%
Neath Port Talbot	144,386	30,254	20.95%
Newport	156,447	26,654	17.04%
Pembrokeshire	126,751	33,169	26.17%
Powys	133,030	36,801	27.66%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	241,873	46,755	19.33%
Swansea	246,563	48,958	19.86%
Torfaen	94,832	19,543	20.61%
Vale of Glamorgan	135,295	28,838	21.31%
Wrexham	136,055	27,749	20.40%
<b>Wales</b>	<b>3,169,586</b>	<b>668,590</b>	<b>21.09%</b>

## 4 Population projections in Wales

2018-based National Population Projections for Wales<sup>8</sup> indicate that:

- The population of Wales is projected to increase by 2.7% to 3.22 million by 2028, and by 3.7% to 3.26 million by 2043
- The number of children aged under 16 is projected to decrease by 4.7% to 536,300 between 2018 and 2028
- The number of people aged 16-64 is projected to increase by 0.2% to 1,927,700 between 2018 and 2028
- The number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 292,000 (44 per cent) between 2014 and 2039
- The number of people aged 75 and over is projected to increase by 29.3% to 378,100 between 2018 and 2028
- By 2030, it is projected that there will be over 1,008,000 older people in Wales – 33% of the total population.<sup>9</sup>

## 5 Life expectancy

### 5.1 At birth in Wales

- In Wales, life expectancy at birth 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.<sup>10</sup>
- 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 with an average life expectancy increased by only 0.2 years.<sup>11</sup>
- 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.<sup>12</sup>
- For the females living in the most deprived areas were expected to live up to 11 years more in a poorer state of health than their least deprived areas counterparts.<sup>13</sup>

Table 2: Life expectancy at birth (years) by local authority in Wales, 2017-2019.<sup>14</sup>

Local Authority	Life expectancy of males	Life expectancy of females
Blaenau Gwent	76.5	80.4
Bridgend	77.5	81.1
Cardiff	78.4	83
Caerphilly	77.8	81.4
Carmarthenshire	78.3	82.4
Ceredigion	79.3	84.1
Conwy	78.8	82.4
Denbighshire	78.8	81.1
Flintshire	79.5	82.7
Gwynedd	79.5	83
Isle of Anglesey	79.6	83.3
Merthyr Tydfil	76.8	80.7
Monmouthshire	81.5	84.5
Neath Port Talbot	77.1	81.3
Newport	77.9	82.3
Pembrokeshire	79.2	83
Powys	80	83.7
Rhondda Cynon Taf	77.5	81
Swansea	77.7	82.5
Torfaen	78.2	81.9
Vale of Glamorgan	79.6	83.4
Wrexham	78.3	81.4
<b>Wales</b>	<b>78.5</b>	<b>82.3</b>

## 5.2 Life expectancy at age 65 in Wales

In Wales, life expectancy for men and women aged 65 years in 2017 to 2019 was 18.3 and 20.7 years respectively. This means that men and women at this age could expect to live to reach their 83rd and 85th birthday respectively.<sup>15</sup>

Table 3: Male and female life expectancy at age 65 (years) for local authorities in Wales, 2017-2019.<sup>16</sup>

Local Authority	Age 65-year males	Age 65-year females
Blaenau Gwent	16.9	19.2
Bridgend	17.6	19.8
Cardiff	17.8	20.9
Caerphilly	17.7	20.1
Carmarthenshire	18.5	20.4
Ceredigion	19.5	22.4
Conwy	19.2	21.5
Denbighshire	18.1	19.8
Flintshire	18.9	20.9
Gwynedd	18.9	21.2
Isle of Anglesey	19.2	21.5
Merthyr Tydfil	17.4	19.2
Monmouthshire	20	21.9
Neath Port Talbot	17.5	20.1
Newport	17.7	20.2
Pembrokeshire	19.3	21.3
Powys	19.1	21.8
Rhondda Cynon Taf	17.7	19.7
Swansea	17.9	20.9
Torfaen	18.1	20.2
Vale of Glamorgan	18.7	21.6
Wrexham	18.7	20.1
<b>Wales</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>20.7</b>

## 6 Within the older population

### 6.1 Welsh language

#### Welsh language profile

Table 4: Welsh language profile, unitary authorities in Wales. Percentage of people in Wales that can speak Welsh: i) aged 65-74, ii) aged 75 and over (2011 Census).<sup>17</sup>

Area	i) Can speak Welsh: age 65-74 (percentage)	ii) Can speak Welsh: age 75 and over (percentage)
Blaenau Gwent	1.5	1.1
Bridgend	4.3	6.2
Cardiff	5.4	4.7
Caerphilly	2.5	2.5
Carmarthenshire	45.3	52.8
Ceredigion	43.2	50.1
Conwy	21	23.3
Denbighshire	19.4	23.7
Flintshire	7	9.2
Gwynedd	55.6	60.7
Isle of Anglesey	47.6	51.8
Merthyr Tydfil	3.9	4.6
Monmouthshire	2.8	2.6
Neath Port Talbot	14	17.6
Newport	1.5	1.9
Pembrokeshire	15	16.1
Powys	13.3	16.5
Rhondda Cynon Taf	4.1	5.7
Swansea	11.8	14.1
Torfaen	2	1.9
Vale of Glamorgan	5.1	4.7
Wrexham	10	13.8
<b>Wales</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>17.5</b>



## Welsh language use

The most recent National Survey for Wales (2020)<sup>18</sup> shows that:

- In the year ending 31 December 2020, 29.1% of people aged three and over were able to speak Welsh. This number is equivalent to 883,600 people. This percentage decreases with age, from 21 per cent of 16- to 24-year-olds to 13 per cent of 65- to 74-year-olds.
- The percentage of people who are more comfortable with Welsh increases with age. 52 per cent of Welsh speakers aged 65 and over felt more confident speaking the Welsh language, compared with 39 per cent of Welsh speakers aged 16 to 24 years.

## 6.2 Diversity

- Data from the 2017-2019 Annual Population Survey show a higher percentage of over 60s answering 'don't know' or refuse to answer when asked about their sexuality (2.3%).<sup>19</sup>
- 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.<sup>20</sup>
- The population of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in Wales aged 65 and over, is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Population of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic People in Wales, age 65 and over (2011 Census).<sup>21</sup> (\*Percentage data added by Age Cymru).

All groups	White	Mixed/multiple ethnic group	Asian/Asian British	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	Other ethnic group
562,544	556,459 (*98.91%)	1,526 (*0.275%)	2,998 (*0.53%)	975 (*0.17%)	586 (*0.1%)

NB. There is newer ethnicity by age information available but it's not robust enough to publish for age 65+.

## 7 Loneliness

- Data from the 2019-20 National Survey for Wales found that around 15% people report being lonely in Wales. Data also show that people of working age 16 to 64 are more likely to be lonely, than those aged 65 or over.<sup>22</sup>
- Research by Age Cymru in 2017, suggests that 75,000 older people in Wales feel lonely, with almost half of those surveyed saying their television or a pet was their main companion.<sup>23</sup>
- More than 75% of women and a third of men over 65 live alone. People aged 80 and over are most likely to report high levels of loneliness.<sup>24</sup>
- Evidence to the inquiry into loneliness and isolation in Wales has highlighted disabled people, including those with unsupported hearing loss which is common in older people, experience higher levels of loneliness and isolation.<sup>25</sup>

Research by Age UK<sup>26</sup> in 2019 indicated that:

- More than 20,000 older people in Wales claim to have felt lonely during later life.
- 100,000 people aged 65 and over in Wales speak to three or fewer people they know each week.
- 330,000 older people in Wales claim a few minutes of conversation would make a huge difference to their week.

## 8 Fraud / Scams

- An older person in England and Wales becomes a victim of fraud every 40 seconds.<sup>27</sup>
- 85% of victims of doorstep scams are aged 65 and over.<sup>28</sup>
- In the UK, older people suffer twice the detriment that younger people do, and it's estimated that older victims lose on average £1,200 each.<sup>29</sup>
- Some older people lose their life savings, decimating their retirement income, while those defrauded in their own homes are more likely either to die or go into residential care within a year.<sup>30</sup>

The Crime Survey for England and Wales 2017-18<sup>31</sup>, found that:

- Almost one in 12 (eight per cent) of respondents aged 65 and older reported being the victim of fraud in the last year – equivalent to more than 800,000 older people in England and Wales.
- People are now nearly three times more likely to be a victim of fraud than to be burgled and nearly 19 times more likely to be a victim of fraud than to be mugged.

## 9 Money matters, poverty and benefits

- 18% of pensioners in Wales were living in relative income poverty between 2017 and 2020.<sup>32</sup>
- Data from the National Survey for Wales (2017- 2018) show that older people tend to have lower incomes than those under the age of 60.<sup>33</sup>
- 1 in 3 of people aged 60-74 in Wales have incomes of less than £200 a week, or £10,400 a year.<sup>34</sup>
- Women are often poorer, with estimated 209,000 older women in Wales have a personal income of less than £10,400 a year.<sup>35</sup>
- Department for Work and Pensions estimates that between 32 and 38 percent of pensioners eligible to claim Pension Credit don't receive it.<sup>36</sup>
- Every year, it's estimated that up to £3.5 billion of state benefits in the UK goes unclaimed by older people.<sup>37</sup>
- Three quarters of older people report having no savings, just one in five have savings of up to £20,000, and only 2% have savings of £20,000 or more.<sup>38</sup>

### 9.1. Fuel poverty

In Wales, a household is defined as being in fuel poverty if they would have to spend more than 10% of their income on maintaining a satisfactory heating regime. Any household having to spend more than 20% is defined as being in severe fuel poverty.<sup>39</sup>

The most recent fuel poverty estimates for Wales by Welsh Government, report:<sup>40</sup>

- 155,000 households in Wales were living in fuel poverty. This is equivalent to 12% of all households in Wales
- Of these households, 32,000 were living in severe fuel poverty, equivalent to 2% of households
- Households in fuel poverty in 2018 were dominated by pensioner households and single person households. The single pensioner (without children) group was the most common household type among all fuel poor households (29%)
- Households in fuel poverty are generally older. Of all fuel poor households, 26% contained a Household Reference Person (HRP) aged over 75 and 43% contained an HRP aged 65 or over
- Households living in the private rented sector were more likely to be fuel poor with 20% of these households living in fuel poverty
- Households living in older properties are more likely to be fuel poor. 20% of households living in pre-1919 dwellings were fuel poor

- 21% of households living in properties with uninsulated solid walls were fuel poor and 39% of people living in properties that do not have central heating were fuel poor
- 43% of households living in properties with poorer energy efficiency (EPC Bands F and G) were fuel poor compared to 5% of households living in properties in bands B to C.

## 10 Economic contribution and employment

- The employment rate for people aged 16 to 64 in Wales was 72.8%, down 0.3 percentage points on the previous year. The UK rate was 75.3%, down 0.4 percentage points over the year.<sup>41</sup>
- In the UK, the proportion of people over the age of 50 in employment has risen over the last 20 years. The employment rate among people aged 50-64 has risen from 60% to around 73% since the year 2000. One in three workers are now aged 50 or older.<sup>42</sup>
- Older people make a significant contribution in Wales as volunteers, worth £483 million per year to the Welsh economy.<sup>43</sup>

## 11 Health

### 11.1 General health issues

According to the National survey for Wales,<sup>44</sup> in 2019-20:

- 13% of people aged 65 and over in Wales say their health is bad or very bad.<sup>45</sup>
- 71% of older people aged 65 and over had a long-term illness.
- 31% of people aged 65 and over have heart and circulatory complaints.

### 11.2 Ageing well

- Although advancing age is associated with physical and cognitive decline, in the UK wellbeing is consistently found to be higher in later life than among young or middle-aged adults.<sup>46</sup>
- English Longitudinal Survey of Ageing suggests women aged 80 and over are the most vulnerable group for wellbeing, showing lower levels of life satisfaction and greater levels of depressive symptoms.<sup>47</sup>
- Among older people (65 and over), the pattern of wellbeing can be further divided and suggests high levels of wellbeing in the early post-retirement years, followed by lower levels of wellbeing in later old age (75 and over).<sup>48</sup>
- There is a small but significant effect of exercise on mental wellbeing, suggesting exercise can improve wellbeing in adults aged 65 and over.<sup>49</sup>

- After age 40, people start losing muscle at a rate of 1% a year, thus increasing the risk of heart attacks, falls, stroke and osteoporosis. A recent research study found that older adults who did strength training twice a week lived longer and had fewer illness than those who did none.<sup>50</sup>
- Research suggests that people who take part in activities that stimulate the brain are less likely to develop dementia, compared with those who do not engage in these activities.<sup>51</sup>
- According to the Index of Wellbeing in Later Life by Age UK, engagement in creative and cultural activities makes the highest contribution of 5.75 per cent to one's overall wellbeing.<sup>52</sup>

### 11.3 Health in later life

- An estimated 4 million older adults in the UK (36% of people aged 65-74, and 47% of those aged 75+) have a limiting long-standing illness; equating to 40% of all people aged 65+.<sup>53</sup>
- In the UK, men aged 50 and over in the poorest quintile of the population are twice as likely as those in the wealthiest quintile to have Type 2 diabetes; the poorest women are three times as likely as the wealthiest women.<sup>54</sup>
- In the UK, 1 in 3 adults aged over 65 with an alcohol problem developed this problem in later life. Frequently reported reasons among older adults for starting to drink more include retirement, bereavement, loss of purpose, lack of socialising opportunities and changes in financial circumstances.<sup>55</sup>
- The proportion of people in the UK with multi-morbidities among those aged 65-74 is 46%. This proportion increases to 69% among those aged 85+.<sup>56</sup>
- Older people are disproportionately represented in malnourished groups; 43% of UK malnutrition cases are people aged 65+, equating to around 1.3 million people. Consequently, malnourished older adults are twice as likely to visit their GP, have more hospital admissions, longer stays in hospitals and have more ill health.<sup>57</sup>

According to the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing<sup>58</sup>, in the UK:

- Almost 1 in 10 (8%) of men between the ages of 55-59 struggle with activities of daily living, rising to over a third of men (37%) aged 80 and over. The corresponding figures for women are 11% and 36%, respectively.
- Those aged 50 and over in the poorest quintile of the population are almost four times more likely than those in the wealthiest quintile to experience difficulties performing at least one activity of daily living. For men it's 34% compared to 9%, and for women it's 41% compared to 13%.

## 11.4 Eyesight

In Wales 1,455 people were newly certified as sight impaired in 2017-18; more than 52% of these were aged 80 years or over.<sup>59</sup>

## 11.5 Hearing

According to the latest statistics for Sensory health<sup>60</sup> in Wales:

- 19% of adults reported having difficulty with their hearing in 2018-19.
- The likelihood of hearing difficulties increases with age (known as gradual hearing loss) with 20 per cent of 75+ year old having hearing difficulties.
- More than 60 per cent of people who had some form of hearing difficulty had never tried a hearing aid.

## 11.6 Musculoskeletal conditions (MSK)

MSK conditions are a group of conditions that affect the bones, joints, muscles, and spine, and are a common cause of severe long-term pain and physical disability.<sup>61</sup>

- Musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions such as arthritis and back pain affected an estimated 18.8 million people across the UK in 2017. They accounted for more than 22% of the total burden of ill health (morbidity) in the UK, and low back and neck were the biggest cause of ill health overall across all ages.<sup>62</sup>
- The prevalence of MSK conditions in the Wales, all ages, 2017: 29.3% (887,000).<sup>63</sup>
- A recent study found that 33.9% of older adults (over 50) with MSK pain also have persistent anxiety issues and 22% have a persistent depression problem. Mental health also has an impact on a person's ability to deal with an MSK problem.<sup>64</sup>
- Many people living with MSK conditions have other health conditions (co-morbidities) that occur alongside their MSK conditions.
- In 2018 to 2019, MSK conditions were the most commonly reported (15%) among adults in Wales.<sup>65</sup>
- The risk of MSK conditions increases with age. A global study showed that 59.8% of people aged 65-74 year olds are living with an MSK condition, which rises to 62.6% for 75-84 year olds and falls to 60% for those aged 85+.<sup>66</sup>
- In Wales 50% of adults (16+) reporting a long-term MSK condition are inactive. Inactive people are at increased risk of developing a painful MSK condition. Exercise generally reduces overall pain for people with a MSK condition.<sup>67</sup>

## 11.7 Falls

- Every year in Wales between 230,000 and 460,000 older people fall.<sup>68</sup>
- According to Public Health Wales forecasting, in 2021 more than 700 older people in Wales will die from a fall, with a further 7,750 requiring hospital-based treatment. It also predicts that more than 132,000 older people in Wales will fall more than once in their home.<sup>69</sup>
- In the UK, people aged 65 and older have the highest risk of falling; around a third of people aged 65 and over, and around half of people aged 80 and over, fall at least once a year.<sup>70</sup>
- A survey commissioned by Age UK has found that millions of older people are worried about falling, with 4.3 million (36%) saying it topped their list of concerns.<sup>71</sup>
- Falls are the most common cause of injury related deaths in people over the age of 75.<sup>72</sup>
- Falling is a cause of distress, pain, injury, loss of confidence, loss of independence and mortality.<sup>73</sup>

## 12 Dementia

- In 2019-2020, there were 22,686 people with a diagnosis for dementia in Wales.<sup>74</sup>
- In 2019, there were more than 850,000 people with dementia in the UK. This represents 1 in every 14 of the population aged 65 years and over.<sup>75</sup>
- In 2040, it's estimated that there will be more than 1.5 million people with dementia in the UK.<sup>76</sup>
- Deaths due to dementia and Alzheimer's disease are the leading cause of death in England and Wales, accounting for more than 67,000 deaths and 12.8 per cent of all deaths registered.<sup>77</sup>
- More women are affected by dementia than men.<sup>78</sup>
- Although risk of dementia increases with age, dementia is caused by diseases of the brain, not age alone.<sup>79</sup>
- Regarding health conditions, 92 per cent of people living with dementia have at least one other health condition and 45 per cent have four or more other health conditions.<sup>80</sup>

## 13 End of life care

End of life care is support for people who are in the last months or years of their life. End of life care includes palliative care. Is about improving the quality of life of anyone facing a life-threatening condition.<sup>81</sup>

- It's estimated that 0.75% (23,000) of the general population in Wales is in need of palliative care at any time and the number of people who die each year continues to rise.<sup>82</sup>
- By 2040, the demand for palliative care is estimated to increase by 42% in England and Wales.<sup>83</sup>
- People access palliative care services late or not at all, either because they anticipate stigma or discrimination, or they think the service is not for them.<sup>84</sup>
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that palliative and end of life care services may not always ensure LGBTQ+ patients and their families have the same spiritual needs addressed at end of life as any other patient.<sup>85</sup>
- In the UK, three in five older gay people are not confident that social care and support services will be able to understand and meet their needs.<sup>86</sup>
- At the UK level, only 8 per cent of those caring for someone at the end of life have received a formal Carer's assessment.<sup>87</sup>
- Over half of deaths from cancer in Wales take place in hospital, yet most people say this is the place they would least like to be.<sup>88</sup>

## 14 Winter mortality

- COVID-19 was the leading cause of excess winter mortality in 2020 to 2021, accounting for 82.9% (Wales) of all excess winter deaths.<sup>89</sup> [Updated November 2021].

## 15 Age discrimination

- Polling by Age UK in 2017 found that, in the UK, 36% of over 50s felt they had been disadvantaged at work because of their age.<sup>90</sup>
- A survey focused on Wales, carried out on behalf of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales in 2019, found that around 66,000 older people in Wales (8%) reported that they have been made to feel too old to receive health services.<sup>91</sup>
- A report by the Women and Equalities Committee into older people and employment, found that groups of older job seekers living in the UK felt that age discrimination was a regular occurrence.<sup>92</sup>
- In the UK, the number of age discrimination complaints to employment tribunals increased by 74% in 2020.<sup>93</sup>



## 16 Older carers

- In 2019, it was estimated that there were 400,000 adult carers in Wales.<sup>94</sup>
- Nearly three in five carers in England and Wales are aged 50 years and over, and one in five people aged 50 to 69 years are informal carers.<sup>95</sup>
- The peak age for caring in the UK is estimated to be between 45 and 64; the number of those aged 65 or over providing care is increasing more rapidly than the increase among the general population.<sup>96</sup>
- It's estimated that by 2037 there will be more than half a million carers in Wales, a 40% rise on current levels.<sup>97</sup>
- Every year in Wales more than 123,140 adults become carers and almost the same number will cease to become carers.<sup>98</sup>
- 103,594 people in Wales provide more than 50 hours of unpaid care per week.<sup>99</sup>
- Carers Wales state that there are more than 370,000 unpaid carers of all ages providing care worth around £8.1 billion to the Welsh economy each year.<sup>100</sup>
- More than 16% of older carers care for more than one person. This is most common for people aged between 60 and 75, where a significant number are caring for a parent, as well as an adult child, grandchild or other person with a disability or long-term illness.<sup>101</sup>

A polling published in 2019 by Carers UK has suggested that:<sup>102</sup>

- Two-thirds of carers (66%) have focused on the care needs of the person they care for, not their own needs.
- Almost half (45%) of carers say that they are struggling to make ends meet.
- More than half (56%) of carers who are receiving Carer's Allowance say they are struggling to make ends meet.
- 51% of carers said that they are not able to save for their retirement.

Age Cymru and Carers Trust Wales recently published the 'For the Moment'<sup>103</sup> report of survey responses from more than 300 older unpaid carers, which showed that:

- 89% of carers that responded to the survey said that they had not been offered a carers assessment and 48% said that they needed support.
- For the 48% who said they needed support, access to advice and information, help at home, respite and emotional support were among their top requests.
- 51% of respondents said they have not tried to access support either because they don't know what's available, are reluctant to seek external help for either themselves or the person they care for, or don't have the time. Others said that they feel that the care they provide is a natural part of family life.

## 17 Abuse of older people

- In 2019 more than 280,000 people aged 60 to 74 were reported as experiencing domestic abuse in England and Wales.<sup>104</sup>
- It's estimated that the total number of older people in Wales experiencing domestic abuse is a staggering 40,000.<sup>105</sup>
- Until 2017, the Crime Survey for England & Wales did not include domestic abuse statistics for those over the age of 59 years. Although the age limit for those who participate in the survey was increased to 74 years of age it's expected that the estimate is much higher, and many older people remain suffering in silence.<sup>106</sup>
- Older people living with dementia are at a higher risk of abuse due to their impaired ability to seek help, advocate for themselves or remove themselves from potentially abusive situations.<sup>107</sup>
- Disability is also known to increase the likelihood of a person experiencing abuse.<sup>108</sup>

## 18 Access to services

### 18.1 Access to community services

The Community Calculator is a survey launched by Age Cymru that presents an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of communities across Wales when viewed through the eyes of older people.

Collated results from the 2020 Community calculator survey revealed that:<sup>109</sup>

- Public toilets were found to be the worst scoring element in local communities, with more than half of the respondents scoring their community three or less out of 10. The lack of public toilet facilities was the key factor. Issues were also raised over the cleanliness and accessibility of facilities and limited opening hours
- Older people expressed that their voices were not heard locally, with more than a third of respondents scoring their community three or less out of 10. Some older people felt excluded from online consultations which they were unable to access. Some respondents felt that forums helped to enable people's voices to be heard
- More than a third of respondents rated the pavements in their community a score of three or less. Uneven pavements and brick pavements that are slippery when wet were seen as hazardous. Pavements obstructed with parked cars, bins and street furniture restricted access for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Problems with dog fouling and litter were also highlighted
- 22.9% of respondents rated public seating and places to rest a score of three or less, with a general lack of public seating in communities being a key issue

- 63.4% of respondents rated local services in their community a score of seven or above. Some respondents felt they lived in well serviced areas and vibrant communities, with good access to essential services. For others, however, access to money was a pressing concern (loss of banks and post offices), along with the closure of GP surgeries, libraries and shops
- A key issue raised in terms of health and social services was the difficulty in accessing GP appointments and healthcare services. Issues were raised over the quality of some social services, and that more support was needed for carers.
- Several older people told us that they do not feel safe in their communities. Concerns were raised over a lack of police presence and fears of anti-social behaviour and crime. Speeding traffic and a lack of safe facilities for crossing roads were also highlighted, along with poor street lighting.

Table 6) The average score for each local authority across all ten elements included in the survey.<sup>110</sup>

<b>Element of an age friendly community</b>	<b>Average score in Wales (out of 10)</b>
Public toilets	3.30
Your voice	4.54
Pavements	4.60
Public seating and places to rest	5.52
Neighbourhood safety	5.84
Information and advice	6.20
Health and social services	6.53
Places to meet	6.55
Public transport	6.62
Local services	6.88

## 18.2 Advocacy services

Advocacy is an important service for older people suffering abuse, or who have been abused. Age Cymru's research into advocacy provision for older people in Wales in 2020<sup>111</sup> found:

- There has continued to be a decrease in the number of advocacy services (from 13 to 12) specifically for older people
- There has been an 85% rise in services providing advocacy to a wider client group. The increase is from 41 to 76 services
- There are fewer advocates delivering advocacy specifically to older people (from 37 to 31)
- 523 fewer older people were supported by advocacy services funded specifically for older people than in 2016. This is a drop of 31%
- The total number of people supported across all advocacy services in Wales over 12 months rose by 62% to 16,909
- Services specifically funded for older people remain in only 15 of the 22 local authority areas in Wales. Services for a wider client group continue to cover all local authorities.

## 18.3 Experience of GP and hospital services

- In the National Survey of Wales 2018/19, difficulty getting through on the phone was reported by 53 per cent of respondents, with 55 per cent reporting that they needed to make an early morning call to do so.<sup>112</sup>
- A survey conducted in Wales, with people with hearing loss, found that 29 per cent had to ask someone else to make an appointment by phone on their behalf and 36 per cent had to travel to the GP practice to do so.<sup>113</sup>
- Another survey conducted in Wales by Bevan Foundation, found that a substantial minority of older people in the survey – 36 per cent - said that they were not usually happy to answer questions when they attempted to book an appointment. People were most comfortable if they perceived the questioner to be appropriately experienced or qualified. Others said they were happy to explain their reasons if they were offered privacy to do so.<sup>114</sup>

The National Survey for Wales (2019/2020) reported that:<sup>115</sup>

- People who had a GP appointment in the last 12 months when asked how easy or difficult it was to get a convenient appointment, 25% found it very difficult and 18% fairly difficult to make a convenient appointment.
- People aged 75 and over were found to be more satisfied with the care they received from their GP (75%) than people aged between 16 to 24 (61%).

- People aged 75 and over tended to be more satisfied with the hospital care they received (79%) compared with people aged 16-24 who tended to be the least satisfied with the hospital care they received (63%).

## 18.4 Residential care

- In 2019 there were 16,144 people over 65 living in care homes in Wales. 10,610 were in homes without nursing; 5,534 in a home with nursing care.<sup>116</sup>
- 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.<sup>117</sup>

An analysis for the future of care in Wales by Cardiff University (2020)<sup>118</sup> cites:

- The number of people supported through formal care services has not kept pace with the growth in the over-65s population; residential care numbers have barely changed in a decade.
- Although future demand for formal care cannot simply be linked to the growth in the over- 75 and over-85 cohorts, projected growth in the numbers of older people with complex care needs (including severe dementia) is highly likely to result in increased pressure on formal care services – the number of older adults living with severe dementia is expected to double to 53,700 by 2040.

## 18.5 Transport

- The number of bus drivers and vehicles in Wales in operation increased in 2017-18, after a long-term downward trend.<sup>119</sup>
- Evidence from the report 'Is Wales Fairer?' (2018) shows that public transport in Wales often does not meet the needs of older and disabled people. Half of rail stations in Wales, for example, are not fully accessible to disabled people, with 34% having no access for wheelchair users.<sup>120</sup>
- The number of older people eligible for free bus travel in Wales by 2034 is expected to increase by more than a million people.<sup>121</sup>
- In a survey conducted by Age Cymru, older adults raised concerns about the frequency and reliability of bus services and the lack of bus and community transport in the evenings.<sup>122</sup>

## 18.6 Digital inclusion

Data from the National Survey for Wales (2018-2019) show that:<sup>123</sup>

- 98% of those aged 16-49 used the internet compared with 49% of those aged 75 or older.
- 49% of people aged 75 or over were internet users in 2018-19, up from 22% in 2012-13. Some of this increase is likely explained by previously younger internet

users now falling within the older cohorts, together with new users accessing the internet for the first time.

- 90% of men used the internet, compared with 87% of women. This difference mainly occurs in the 65 and over age group. 69% of men aged 65+ use the internet, compared with 62% of women.

## 18.7 Housing

- The majority of people over 65 in Wales are homeowners. 2011 Census data show that 77.6% of people over the age of 65 in Wales owned or had shared ownership of their property (this includes ownership with a mortgage and part owned, part rented). The Census data also revealed that 8.8% of people over the age of 65 in Wales had a social rented tenure and 6.5% were living in the private rented sector or living rent free.<sup>124</sup>
- The current housing supply in Wales does not reflect the lifestyle choices that people want or need as they age.<sup>125</sup>

## 19 COVID-19

### 19.1 Access to information about COVID-19

Recent polling by Age Cymru on older people's experiences during the lockdown in Wales found that:<sup>126</sup>

- TV news was the most popular source of information with 82% of people getting their information that way followed by 64% of people sourcing information through various online methods.
- 2% of people told us they didn't receive regular information about the pandemic.
- 43% of respondents said that they were happy with communications, but some felt that the frequent changes and different ways in which information was circulated could be unhelpful at times.
- 20% of those who expressed an opinion felt that information provided should be simpler and clearer.

### 19.2 Mental and physical health

- For people with terminal illness, lockdown and social distancing policies have caused high levels of isolation and loneliness.<sup>127</sup>
- In the UK, those aged 75 years and over were almost twice as likely as those aged 16 to 24 years to report high anxiety during lockdown; analysis of data prior to lockdown suggests anxiety tends to be lowest among those aged from their mid to late 60s, remaining relatively stable in later years.<sup>128</sup>

- The survey undertaken by Age Cymru found that for 87% of the respondents, not seeing family and friends was their biggest challenge followed by the impact on emotional health (51%), loneliness (37%) and physical health (35%).<sup>129</sup>

A recent survey conducted by Public Health Wales reported that:<sup>130</sup>

- 43 per cent felt that their fitness levels had worsened since the start of the pandemic.
- 65 per cent of adults now report feeling happy, an increase from only 48 per cent in January 2021.

### **19.3 Health and social care**

- Enforced isolation had exacerbated many of the existing challenges older people face in accessing essential goods, healthcare and other services.<sup>131</sup>
- In Wales, the total numbers able to access routine services are only at about 35% of 2019-20 levels, because of the need to put in place measures to prevent infection spread between patients.<sup>132</sup>
- Recent modelling for Wales suggests that due to COVID-19, in 2021 there is a potential increase in demand for primary care mental health services of up to 40%, which could translate into some 31,000 referrals. Additional demand in hospital services could see an increase of up to 25%, translating into some 10,000 referrals.<sup>133</sup>
- In Wales, 70% of older people had difficulty accessing health services during pandemic.<sup>134</sup>

### **19.4 Abuse of older people**

- In the UK, the lockdown increased the risk of older people experiencing domestic abuse, especially in relation to financial or care dependencies and barriers to reporting abuse.<sup>135</sup>
- Hourglass commissioned surveys in January and June 2020 found that 1 in 5 UK residents surveyed (22%) had personal experience of abuse as an older person aged 65+ or knew an older person who had been abused. Hourglass suggested this indicated almost 2.7 million older people may have been affected by domestic abuse across the UK in 2020. It also found 53% of those surveyed believed that the abuse and neglect of older people had increased as a result of lockdown.<sup>136</sup>
- At the start of the first lockdown, Hourglass revealed that more than 1 in 3 people do not believe that 'acts of domestic violence directed towards an older person' count as abuse.<sup>137</sup>

## 19.5 Unpaid older carers

- It's estimated that the value of care provided by unpaid carers in Wales between March and November 2020 alone amounted to £8.4 billion, which is indicative of a substantial amount of care provided, yet unpaid carers face burnout due to exhaustion and mental health difficulties brought about by the situation and a lack of support.<sup>138</sup>
- Carers UK has identified that unpaid carers have been particularly vulnerable to the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19, suffering a sustained period of increased levels of stress and anxiety, and exposure to the virus.<sup>139</sup>
- In the UK, 81% of carers report that they are providing more care since the beginning of the pandemic, and 78% report that the needs of the person for whom they care have increased.<sup>140</sup>
- 64% of carers in the UK, said that they have not been able to have breaks from caring, and that their mental health has declined during the pandemic.<sup>141</sup>

A recent survey conducted by Age UK<sup>142</sup>, found that:

- 49% of older carers (around 1.1 million) have less energy since the start of the pandemic
- 35% of older carers (nearly 800,000) cannot walk as far since the start of the pandemic
- 38% of older carers (nearly 860,000) are in more physical pain since the start of the pandemic
- Carers have felt physically cut off from important sources of support, such as friends and family members
- Levels of stress, anxiety and depression have increased for many during the pandemic. Fear of the cared-for person becoming infected with COVID-19 has been an added pressure.

## 19.6 Working from home

Recent research by the Office for National Statistics<sup>143</sup> revealed that in the UK:

- The proportion of older workers who are planning to work from home following the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is higher than the proportion who worked from home prior to the pandemic, suggesting any benefit may persist
- In June and July 2020, those who were working entirely from home were more likely to say they were planning to retire later (11%) compared with those not working from home (5%)



- Those with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity who work from home were also more likely to say they are now planning to retire later (10.9%) compared with those not working from home (4.9%)
- Characteristics of those who exit the labour market early and older workers who did not switch to working from home during the pandemic were similar; they tend to have poorer health, lower well-being, live in deprived areas and have lower or no qualifications
- In April to May 2021, older workers aged 50 to 69 years who were working from home reported that it improved their work life balance and well-being.

## **19.7 Older people affected by dementia**

- There is emerging evidence to suggest that dementia itself may increase risk of severe symptoms of COVID-19 and death when age and other conditions are taken into account.<sup>144,145</sup>
- Data from the Office for National Statistics shows that 27.5% of people whose death certificate mentioned COVID-19 from March to June in England and Wales had dementia.<sup>146</sup>
- 13,840 deaths of people with dementia involving COVID-19 in England and Wales were recorded from March to June 2020, making dementia the most common pre-existing condition in deaths involving COVID-19. This is a hugely disproportionate impact on people with dementia who should have been protected.<sup>147</sup>
- 75% of care homes surveyed by the Alzheimer's Society said that GPs were reluctant to visit residents.<sup>148</sup>
- The national dementia diagnosis rate has declined steadily since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, dropping from 67.6% in February 2020 to 62.1% in July 2021.<sup>149 150</sup>
- Emerging findings from the Alzheimer's Society based in the UK suggest that during the period of lockdown, people affected by dementia living in the community were experiencing an increased sense of loneliness and/or of being socially isolated.<sup>151</sup>

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