



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Understanding Wales' Ageing Population: Key Statistics

Updated: September 2023

Next update: December 2023

**An independent voice and champion
for older people**

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is an independent voice and champion for older people throughout Wales.

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

The Commissioner is working for a Wales where older people are valued, rights are upheld, and no-one is left behind.

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg // This document is available in Welsh

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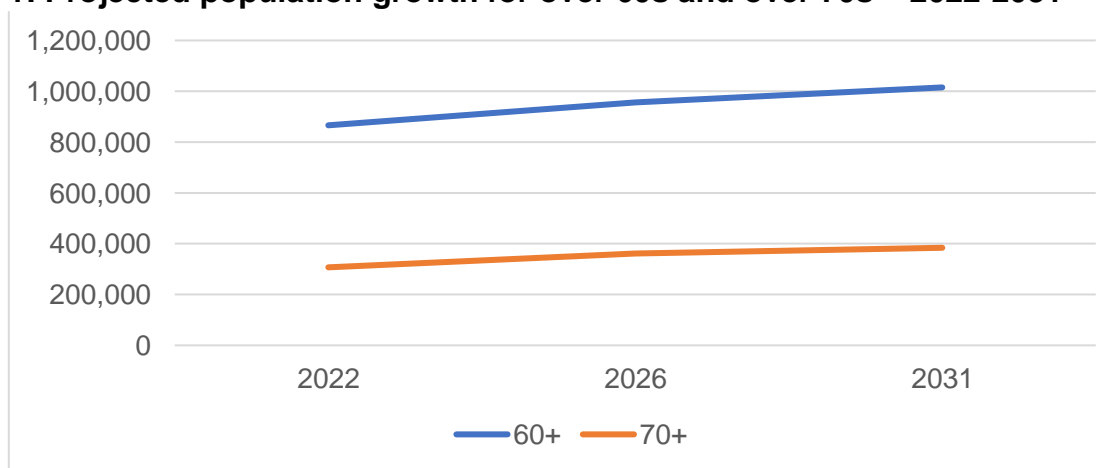
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Demographics

The latest estimates show that there are **861,600** people over the age of 60 living in Wales. This number is estimated to rise to 956,000 (30% of the population) by 2026, and to 1,015,000 (31% of the population) by 2031.¹ The current estimate is that there are 303,100 people over the age of 75, 171,600 over 80 and 82,500 over 85. The number of over 75s in Wales is projected to rise to 361,000 (11.2% of the population) in 2026 and to 384,000 (11.8% of the population) by 2031.

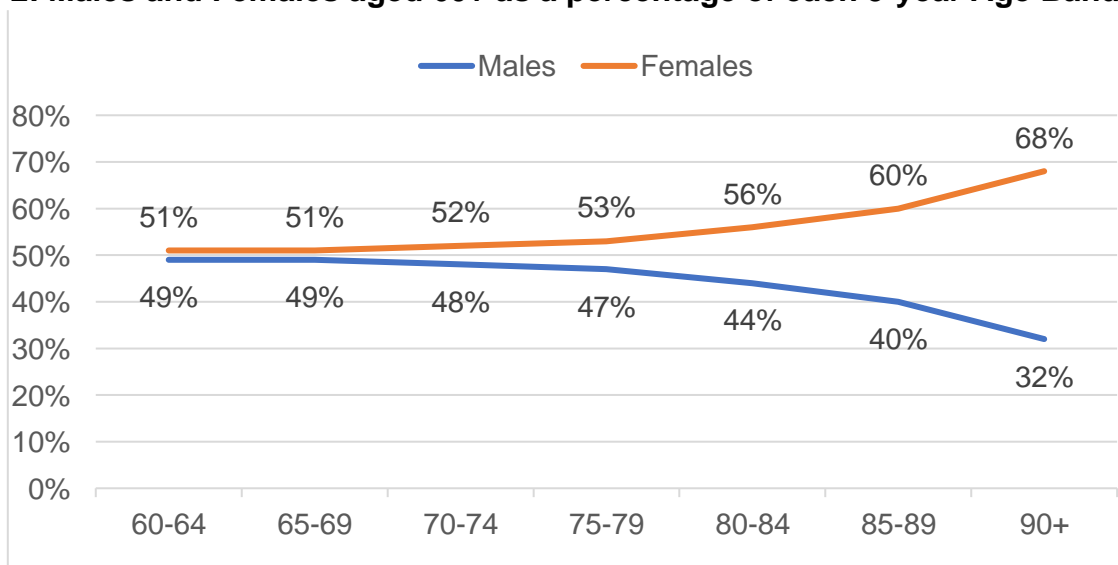
Conwy and Powys have the highest percentage of older people aged 60, at 35% while Cardiff has the lowest, at 19%, followed by Newport with 23%.²

Table 1: Projected population growth for over 60s and over 70s – 2022-2031



Across the older population, 53% are women and 47% are men. Between the ages of 60-69, the split is almost equal, (51% and 49%) but this changes for older groups. The 85-89 and 90+ age groups are comprised of 60% and 68% women respectively.³

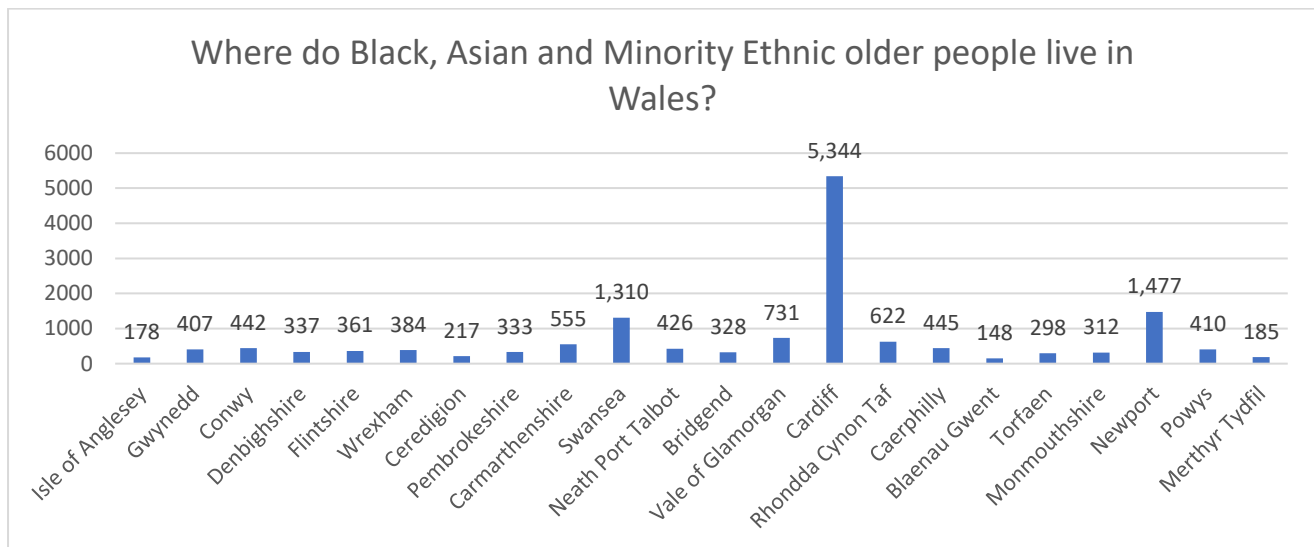
Table 2: Males and Females aged 60+ as a percentage of each 5-year Age Band



There is currently little ethnic diversity in the older population, with 97.8% of older people in Wales identifying as White British.⁴ However, 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 and 94.6% of 16-64s. There is likely to be greater ethnic diversity in urban areas, with cities such as Cardiff (14.9%), Newport (14.1%) and Swansea (7.5%) all having a higher percentage of people who are Black, Asian and minority ethnic at an all-age level when compared to more rural areas such as Anglesey (1.1%), Pembrokeshire (1.4%) and Powys (1.7%).⁵

According to recent census data, the number of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people aged over 60 living in Wales ranged from 148 in Blaenau Gwent and 178 in Anglesey, to 5,344 in Cardiff and 1,477 in Newport.⁶



87.8% of over 65s identified as heterosexual in the 2021 census. 0.5% of over 65s identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other, and 11.7% chose not to answer. There is a slight difference between 65-74 year olds, and people 75+. People aged 75+ were less likely to identify as LGBT+ than 65-74s (0.2% v 0.7%), and were less likely to answer the question (14.9%v 8.9%).⁷

In the 2021 Census, 1,276 people aged over 65 in Wales identified as a gender different from sex registered at birth. When asked about their gender identity, 60,541 over 65s did not answer the question.⁸

According to the recent census, 116,788 people over the age of 60 can speak Welsh. This is equal to 13.6%.⁹ 28% of fluent Welsh speakers aged over 65 – an estimated 21,000 older people – feel more comfortable speaking Welsh than English.⁸

The percentage of older people who speak Welsh in different local authorities range from 1.4% of 65-74s and 1% of over 75s in Blaenau Gwent, to 53% and 56.5% in Gwynedd.¹⁰

According to the charity Ageing Well Without Children, 10% of people over the age of 60 in the UK have no children, 20% of people over the age of 50 have no children, we are 25% more likely to go into a care home if we are ageing without children, and there will be an 80% increase in number of single, childless older people needing care by 2032.¹¹

Housing

87% of over 65s own their own home, with 10% living in social housing and 4% private renting. The proportion of owner occupiers over 65 is higher than any other age group (57% 16-24s, 63% 25-44s and 81% 49-64s)¹² These numbers have remained similar over the past few years.

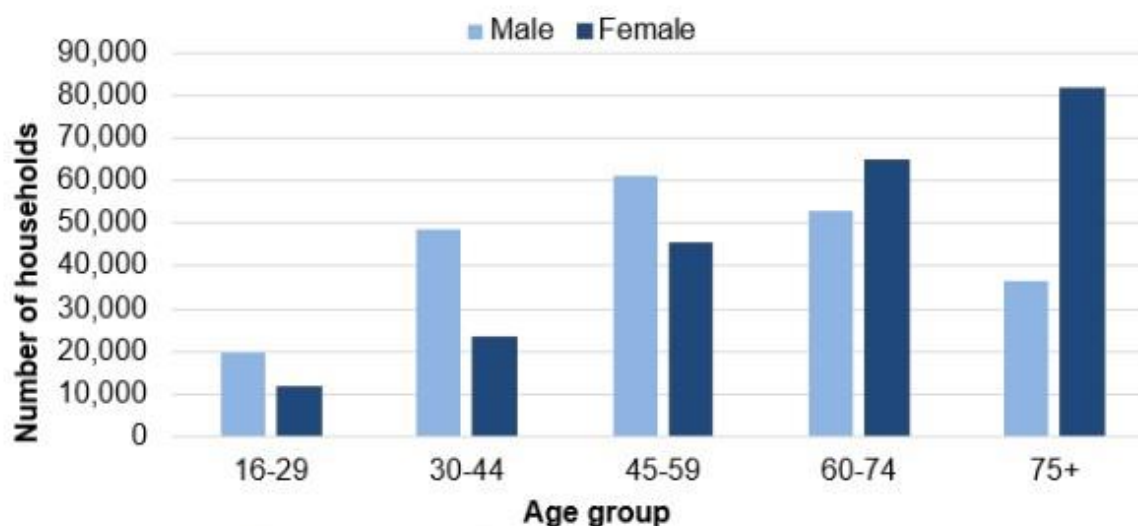
Of those who are owner-occupiers, 93% of 65-74 year olds and 97% of those over-75 own their homes outright without a mortgage. This compares to 51% of 45-64 year olds and 15% of 25-44 year olds.¹³

People in their mid-30s to mid-40s are three times more likely to rent than 20 years ago. A third of this age group were renting from a private landlord in 2017, compared with fewer than 1 in 10 in 1997. If this trend persists into their older ages, in the future, older people will be more likely to be living in the private rental sector than today. Changes in housing tenure patterns could have implications for what life will be like for older people in the future.¹⁴

30% of older people living in social rented housing are living in relative income poverty, compared to 16% of those living in owner-occupied housing.¹⁵

There are estimated to be 236,000 older people living alone in Wales, making up 53% of single person households.¹⁶ This is 27% of the older population. There are estimated to be a similar number aged 60-74 (118,000) split relatively evenly between men and women, and those aged over 75 (118,000) who are predominantly women.

Table 3: Estimated number of one-person households by age group and sex



Source: Household estimates for Wales, Welsh Government

In 2020-21, 20,651 people aged 65 or over lived in a care home. This represents 3.1% of people over the age of 65, up from 2.4% in 2017-18.¹⁷

Age Discrimination

8% of people aged 60+ in Wales have experienced discrimination which they felt was in some way related to their age.¹⁸

The World Health Organisation's Global Report on Ageism notes that 1 in 2 people worldwide are ageist and that in Europe, 1 in 3 older people report having been a target of ageism.¹⁹

Research conducted for the Commissioner's State of the Nation report found that 1 in 5 older people (21%) say they would not be confident in identifying instances of ageism.²⁰

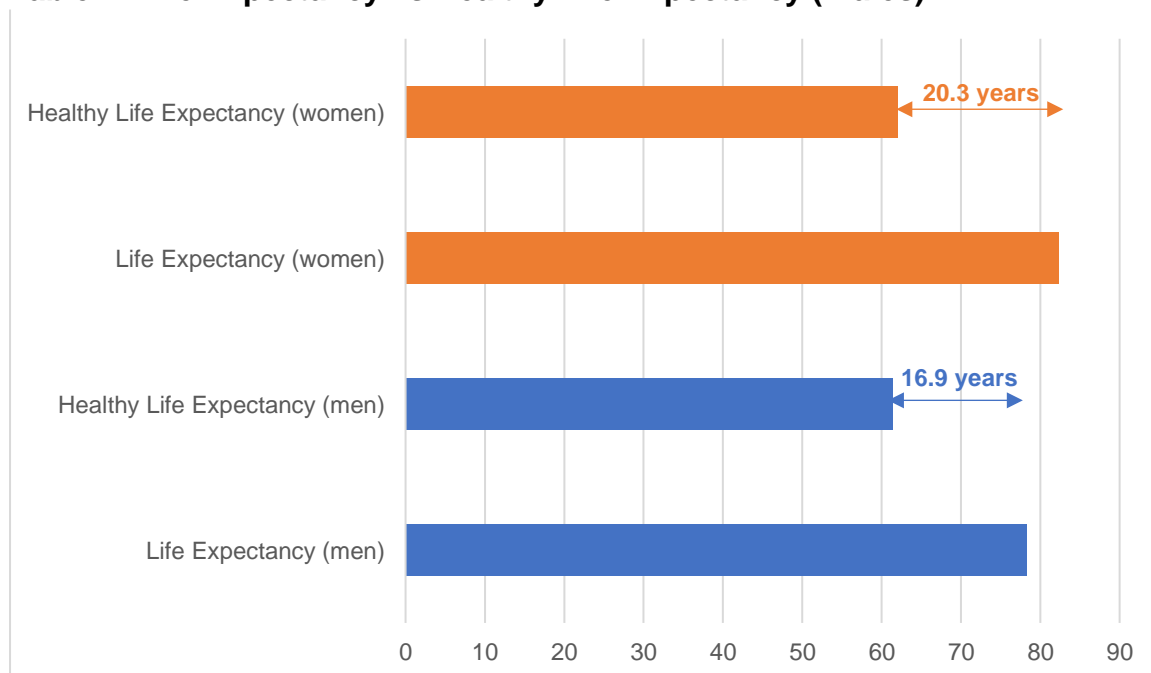
8% of older people in Wales report that they have been made to feel too old to receive health services.²¹

There is also evidence of age discrimination in employment, as older workers are more likely to be made redundant and less likely to be offered training in a new industry.

Health and Wellbeing

At birth, life expectancy on average for men in Wales is 78.3, but healthy life expectancy (the number of years on average lived in good general health) is only 61.4, a difference of almost 17 years. Life expectancy for women in Wales is 82.3, whereas healthy life expectancy is 62, a difference of over 20 years. Healthy life expectancy ranges from 59.5 for men and 59.3 for women in Blaenau Gwent to 69.8 and 70.1 in Monmouthshire.²²

Table 4: Life Expectancy vs Healthy Life Expectancy (Wales)



67% of over 65s reported living with one longstanding illness, down from 71% in 2020, and 32% with two or more longstanding illnesses, mainly musculoskeletal, heart, or circulatory complaints, down from 39%. This figure rises from 62% of 65-74s to 72% of over 75s.²³

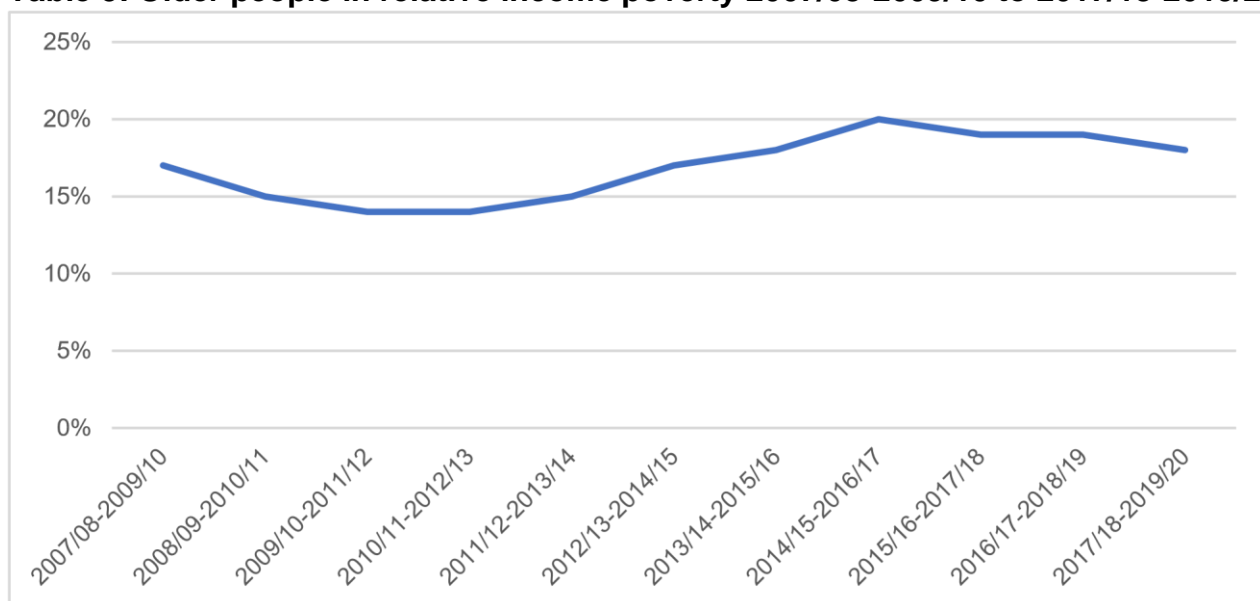
The National Survey for Wales reports that 60% of people aged over 65 report feeling lonely sometimes, compared to 58% of those aged 45-64, while 9% of older people in Wales – an estimated 91,000 people – feel consistently lonely.²³ These figures are lower than during the pandemic (75% and 11%).

Income

Relative income poverty is where a person is living in a household where the total household income from all sources is less than 60 per cent of the average UK household income. Nearly 1 in 5 older people in Wales live in relative income poverty (18%). This rises from 15% of older owner occupiers, to 33% of social renters.²⁴

The rates of relative income poverty increase with age, with 16% of 65-69 year olds and 19% of 70-79 year olds living in relative income poverty.²⁵ The figures available for those over 80 are based on very limited sample sizes so are low quality statistics – 16% for 80-84 year olds and 21% for 85+.

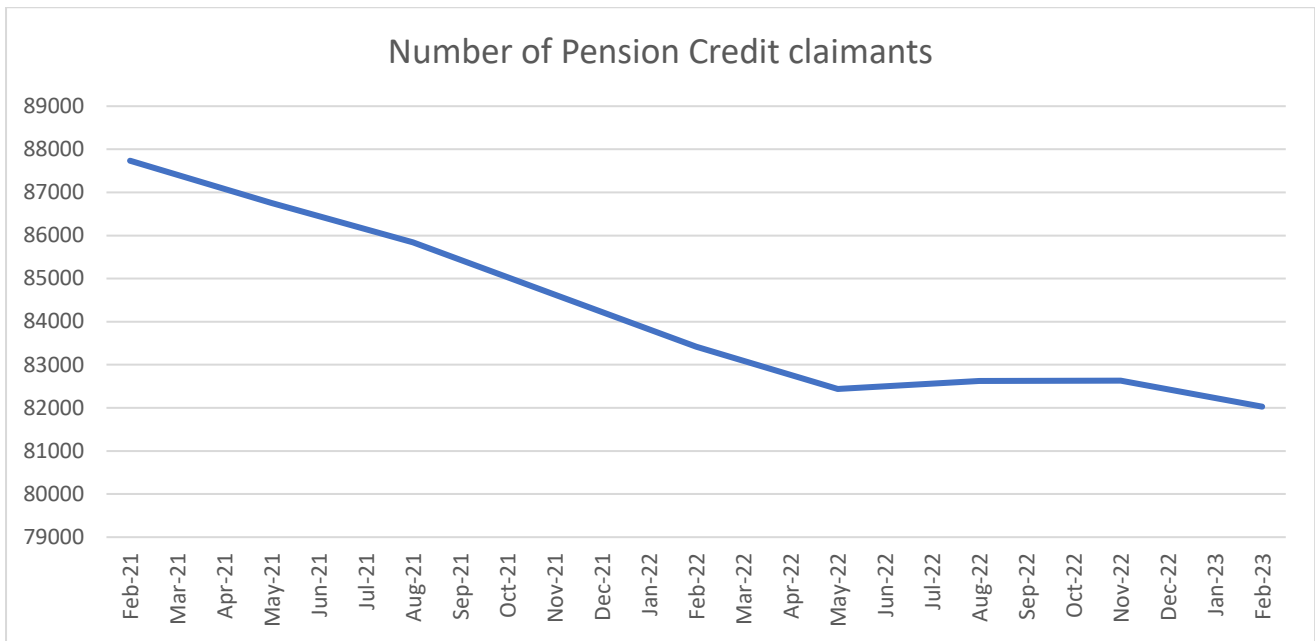
Table 5: Older people in relative income poverty 2007/08-2009/10 to 2017/18-2019/20



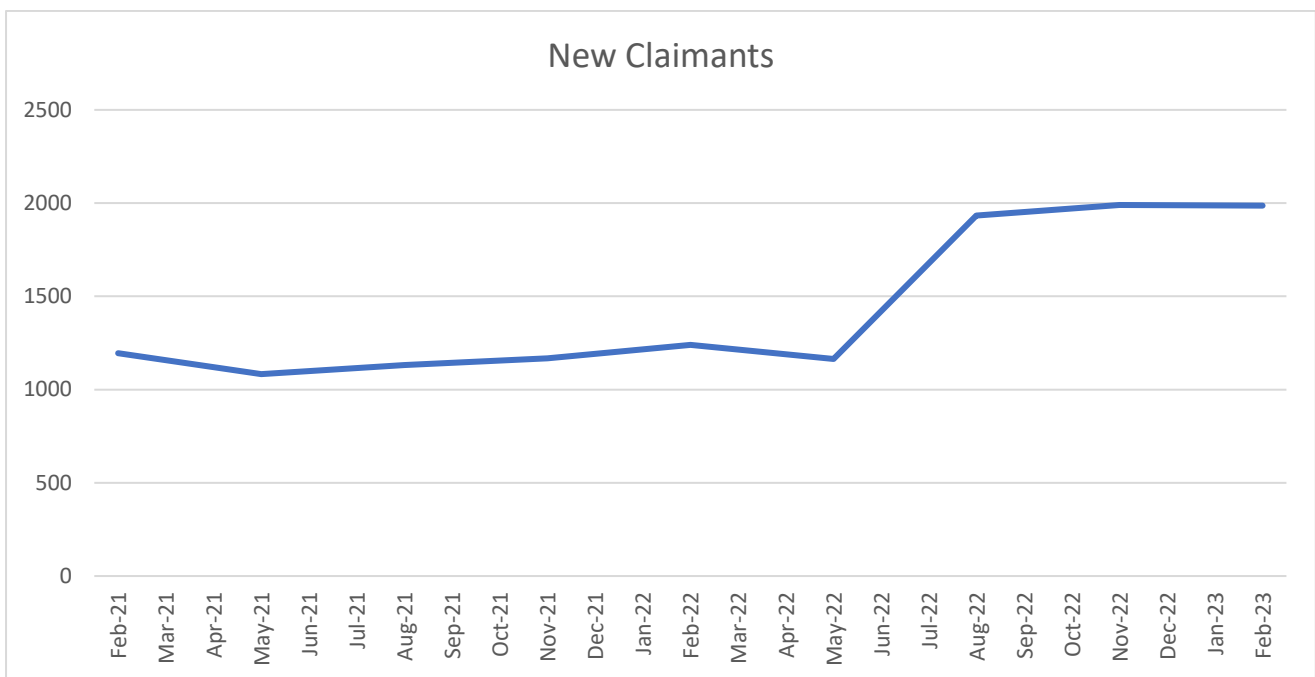
29% of single older women are living in relative income poverty, compared to 11% of older couples. The figures available for single older men are based on very limited sample sizes so are low quality statistics – 31% also.²⁶

The basic state pension is £156.20 weekly (£8,122,.40 annually) and the new full state pension (those that retired since April 2016) is £203.85 weekly (£10,600.20 annually).

Pension Credit is a financial entitlement for people over State Pension age which tops up weekly income up to £201.05 a week for a single person and £306.85 for a couple. The number of Pension Credit claimants in Wales has steadily declined over the last two years.

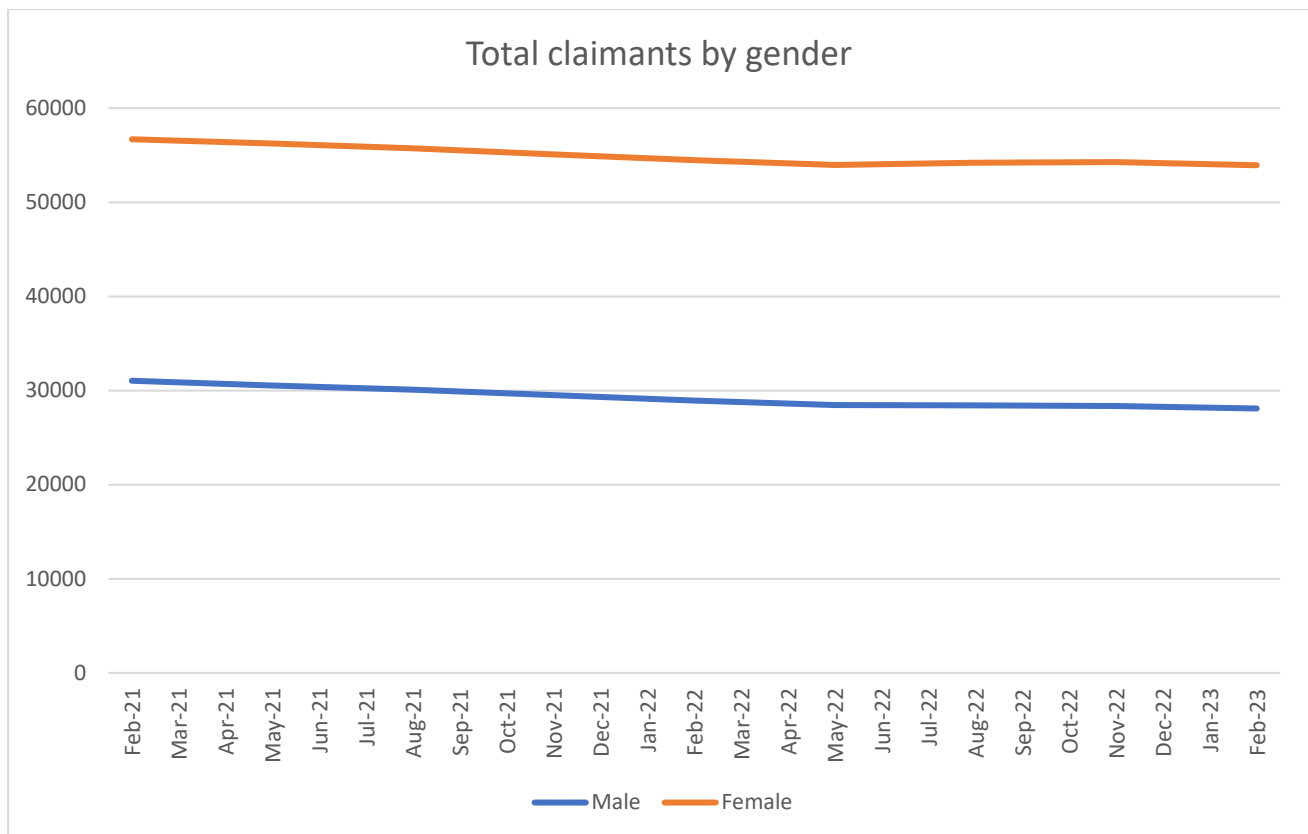


However, the number of new claimants has increased.



For the latest month available, February 2023, there were 82,028 people who were recipients of Pension Credit in Wales.²⁷

Women are almost twice as likely to claim Pension Credit in Wales. In February 2023, there were 53,938 female claimants, compared to 28,092 male claimants.

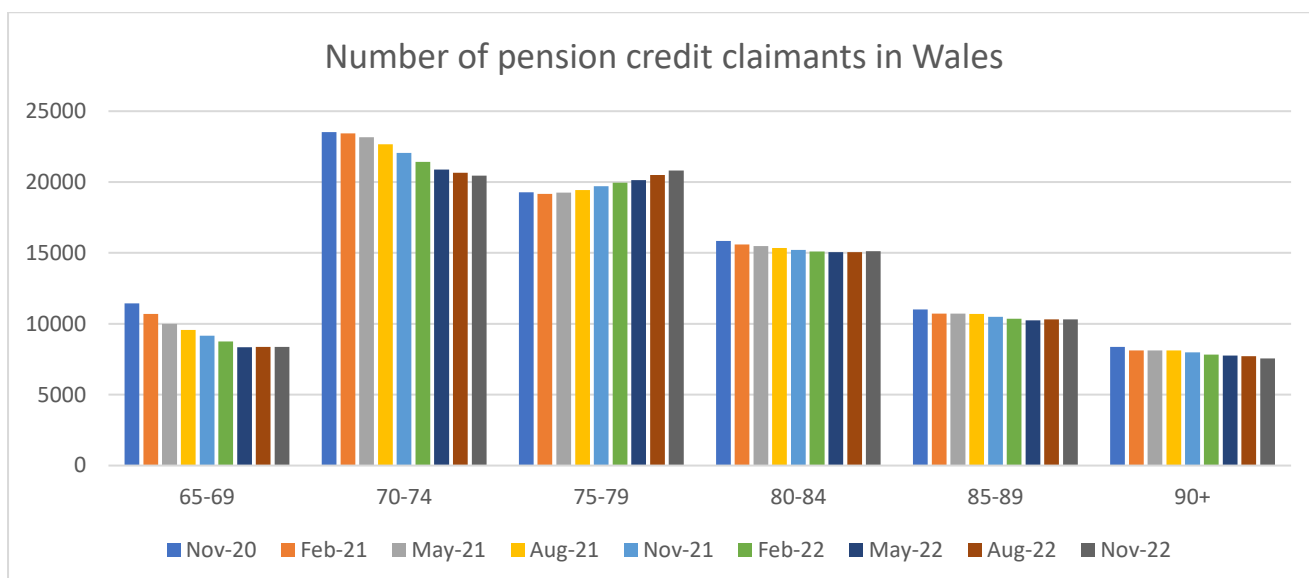


However, according to the Department for Work and Pensions, 33% of eligible single male older people, 33% of eligible single female older people and 31% of eligible couples still do not receive Pension Credit.²⁷ Across Great Britain this equates to 130,000 couples, 160,000 single men and 480,000 single women. In November 2022, the Commissioner published a briefing paper, which highlighted that up to 80,000 older people in Wales do not receive the Pension Credit they are entitled to. This means that over £200 million is left unclaimed in the UK Treasury, rather than reaching those who need it most.

Wales is consistent with the rest of the UK with regards to Pension Credit trends. The number of older people claiming Pension Credit decreased every quarter from Nov-20 to May-22 and has remained lower than pre- Nov-20 figures since then. The same is true for the UK. However, overall claims have slightly increased in the most recent month (Nov-22) compared to the previous three months.

The numbers of people claiming Pension Credit has decreased in every age group between Nov-20 and May-22 apart from 75-79 where there has been a slight increase in claims, in Wales and the UK.

The highest numbers of people claiming Pension Credit are in the 70-74 age bracket.



Universal credit is a monthly payment to help with living costs for those under the state pension age (currently 66) who are out of work or on a low income. In June 2023, there were 23,653 people in Wales over the age of 60 who were recipients of Universal Credit.²⁸

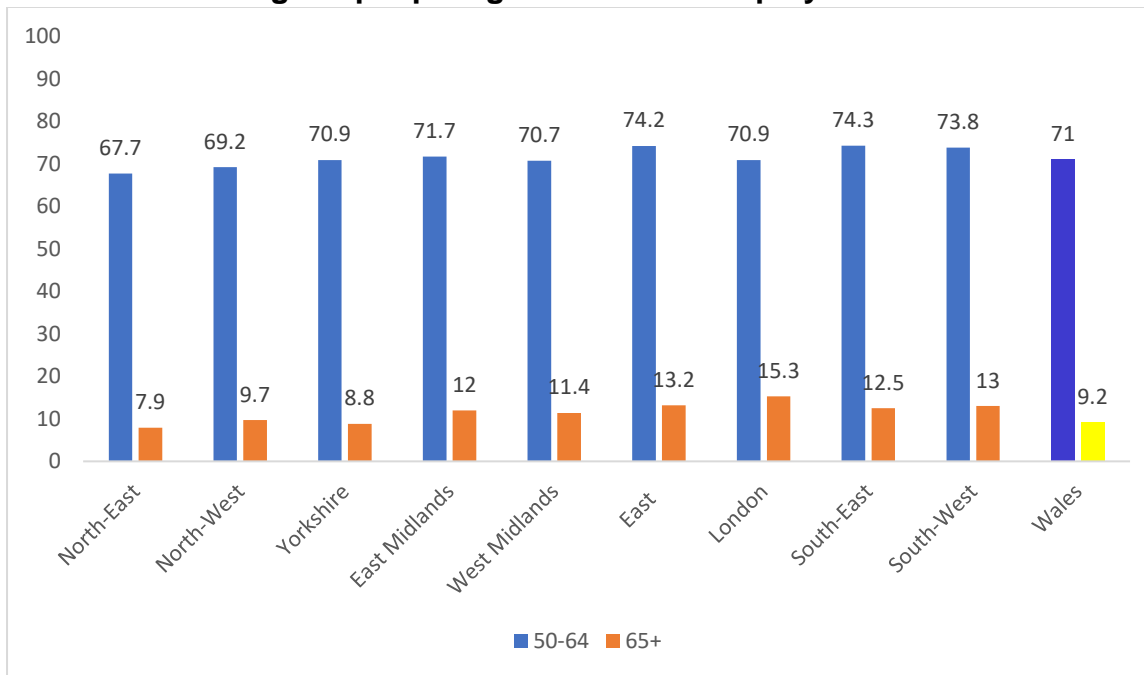
As at 1 October 2021, 22% of single pensioner households, and 13% of pensioner couple households are in fuel poverty.²⁹ Fuel poverty is when a household spends more than 10% of its income heating their home. The latest estimates suggest that up to 45% of all households in Wales could be in fuel poverty from April 2022 as a result of the increasing costs of fuel and increases to the price cap.³⁰ Older people are likely to be disproportionately affected by these changes.

The National Survey for Wales has recently reported that 25% of 65-74 year olds and 17% of those aged over 75 said they sometimes or always struggle to pay bills.³¹

Employment

The latest figures (Apr-Jun 23) show that the level of employment amongst 50–64-year olds is 71%, which is the fifth lowest of all the nations and regions of England and Wales.³² 9.2% of over 65s in Wales are in employment, the third lowest of the regions of the UK. 75.8% of men aged 50-64 are in employment, compared to 66.5% of women. 11.9% of men aged over 65 are in employment, compared to 6.8% of women.

Table 6: Percentage of people aged over 50 in employment



For older people who want to work but are not employed, 33% of 65-74 year olds and 54% of 75+ say their age and 39% of 65-74 year olds say a long-term illness or condition, or a disability is the reason why they are unable to work.³³

Older workers are also more likely to be made redundant, and often find it more difficult to find work following a job loss or redundancy, particularly as the support available to help them find work is often not suitable to meet their specific needs.³⁴

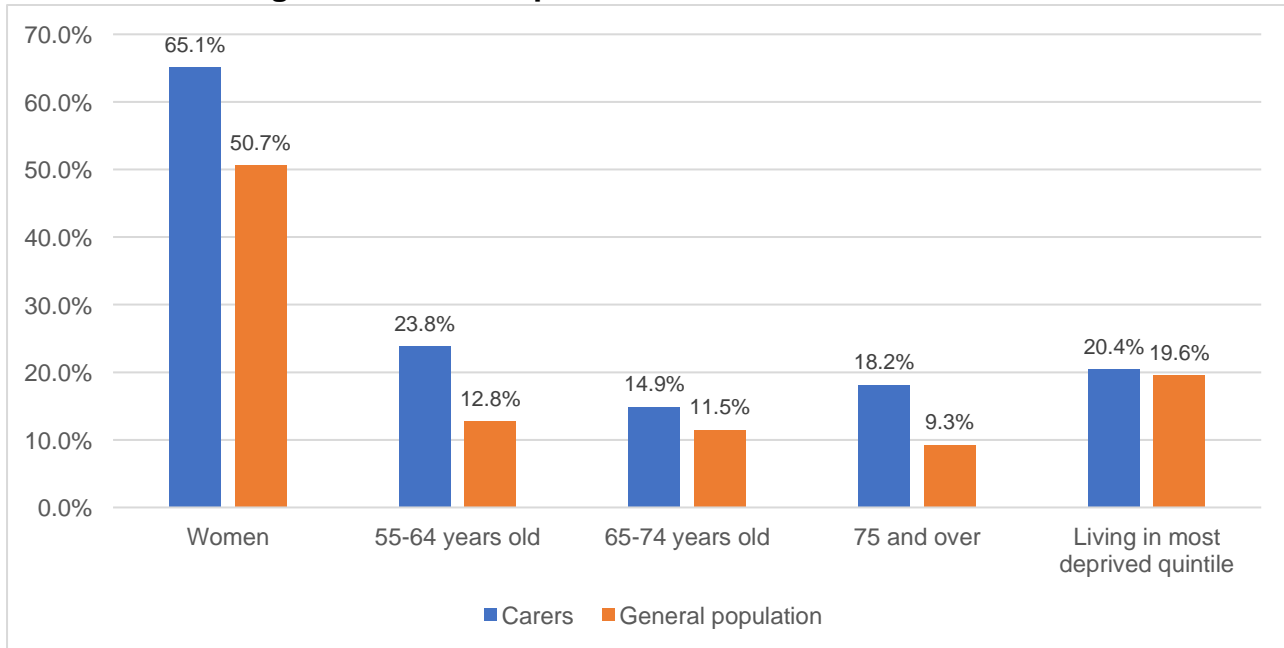
90% of older people believe that they have transferable skills to move roles or industry if they were offered training, but only 35% of employers surveyed would be prepared to hire and offer training to someone over 55 in a new industry.³⁵

The Welsh Government extended the eligibility criteria of Apprenticeships and Workplace Learning Schemes to people of all ages in 2016. However, only 355 older people participated in such schemes during 2021-22– just 1% of the total number of participants.³⁶

Unpaid Work

Approximately 55% of carers in Wales are over the age of 55, this means that there are now roughly 275,000 older carers in Wales.³⁷ Unpaid carers are more like to be female, older and living in more deprived communities.³⁸

Table 7: Percentage of carers with particular characteristics



Social Care Wales estimate that 12 per cent of the population of Wales are unpaid carers and this figure could increase to 16 per cent by 2037. Wales has the highest proportion in the UK of older carers and of carers providing more than 50 hours' care a week.³⁹

84,189 older people in Wales (who answered the 2021 census) provide some unpaid care (12.7%). Almost 42,000 of these provide over 50 hours of unpaid care per week. The percentage of older people who provide some unpaid care varies from 10.2% in Gwynedd, to 13.8% in Neath Port Talbot.⁴⁰

Due to the cost of living crisis, 26% of carers have reported cutting back on essentials such as food and heating, and 87% said that the rising cost of living is one of the main challenges they will face over the coming year.⁴¹

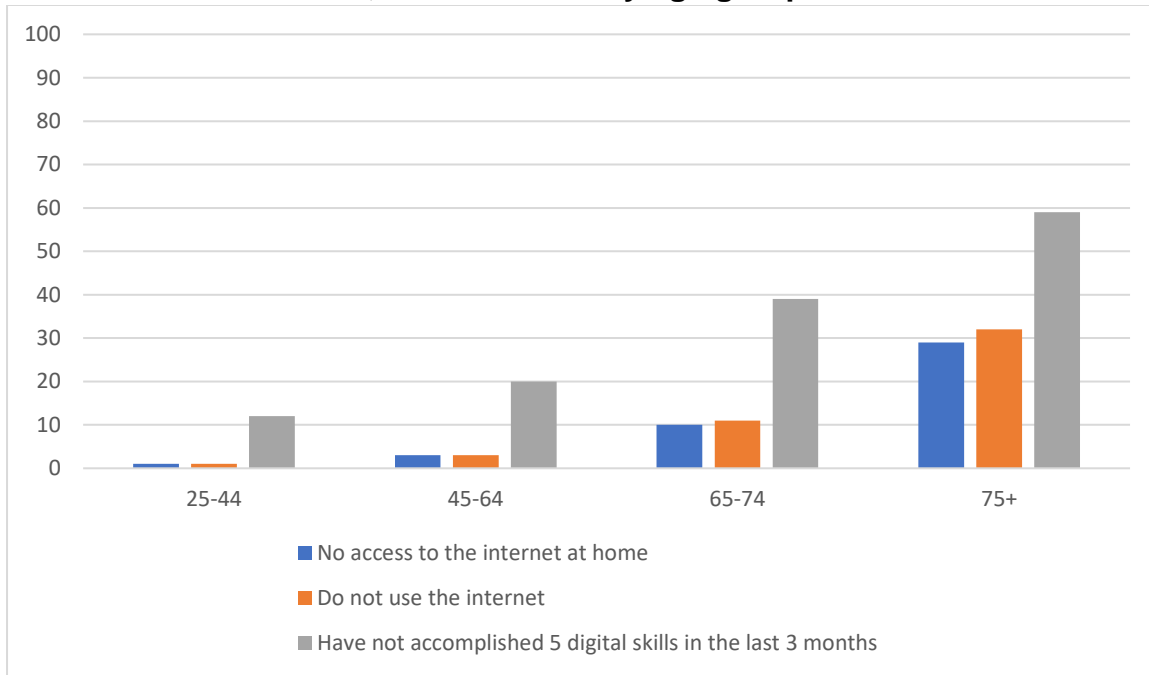
In 2017-2018, 35% of 65–74-year-olds and 27% of over 75s volunteered. This decreased to 30% and 26% respectively during 2019-2020.⁴² This increased to 32% of over 65s in 2022-23.

Around 65% of grandparents provide some form of childcare, with the median number of hours of care per week at 11.3. The value of childcare contributions that grandparents (50+) make has been estimated to be £6.94 billion in the UK, equating to around £325 million in Wales per annum.⁴³

Digital

29% of over 75s do not have access to the internet at home and 32% of over 75s do not use the internet (including Smart TV and handheld devices), compared to 11% of 65-74s and 1% of 25-44s.⁴⁴

Table 8: Internet access, use and skills by age group



Older people are far less likely to have accomplished 5 [digital skills](#) in the past 3 months compared to other age groups – 41% of over-75s and 51% of 65-74 year olds, compared to 80% of 45-64 year olds, 88% of 25-44 year olds and 90% of 16-24 year olds.⁴⁵

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