



Presentation to the Cross-Party Group on Older People and Ageing 24/6/2025

Preliminary findings of Age Cymru's 2025 annual survey relating to older people's mental health and wellbeing

This year our efforts to reach more older people with our survey have seen the number of responses increase. At the time of preparing this information we had almost 1500 responses, which is about 200 than last year.

NB. Important to note that this is partial analysis before we've got every survey translated and uploaded – so some percentages may change slightly.

This is our 6th annual survey and as previously, the 2025 report is a broad overview of the position of older people across Wales.

The survey questions ask about a range of things that matter to older people. We hear many areas of concern from older people and so we try to help where we can by providing information within the survey on where they can get help with matters affecting them.

Private health care, climate change and bereavement questions are additional questions for this year as these are growing areas of concern for older people.

Demography

Over 70% were from women and 27% were from men. 1% prefer to self-describe (17).

Almost a third (31%) told us that they are living with a disability according to the Act.

Age breakdown: We received responses from people aged 50 and the oldest respondent was over 100. Over a third (37%) a third were working aged people (50-64)

Employment status: 63% retired; 13% working full time; 12% working part time; 10% doing unpaid voluntary work; 8% unable to work due to disability or illness; 3% homemakers; 2% unable to work due to caring responsibilities.

Changes in mental and emotional wellbeing since 2024

In our 2024 survey, 30% of older people told us their mental or emotional health had been a challenge over the previous year. For this year, the early incomplete figure is 27%.

One question asks whether they feel that their mental and emotional health has improved, is the same or worse than a year ago.

Percentage breakdowns:

- 7.5% (103) older people told us it had improved over the previous year.
- 74% (1012) older people told us it was the same.
- 18% (245) told us it had got worse.

Improved MH

For many who told us their mental/emotional health had improved, this often related to having had access to the care they needed for their physical and/or emotional health, or a good support network to help them.

Family issues, bereavement, relationship issues, isolation and loss of independence due to poor health greatly affected my mental health. Counselling with Ystradgynlais MIND saved me. Moving to a bungalow near town 4 months ago has also helped my depression.

I took part in the WNO Wellness for Chronic Pain sufferers. It changed my life.

New hip has revitalised me.

We heard from carers whose caring roles had reduced, allowing them more time for their own wellbeing.

I was the full time unpaid carer for my Mother who had Alzheimer's, it came at a cost. My mental well-being was compromised mainly due to the isolation.

Others told us how they were adjusting better to life following a bereavement:

I have suffered bereavement in this last 12 months which led to anxiety, but it has improved with time.

We heard from some whose mental health had improved through retiring or reducing working hours

I have gone from full time desk job to 2 days a week desk job and doing more activities in the past year. It has given me time to focus on my health and spend more time with family. The desk job was crippling my leg joints

Worsening mental health

We had a high level of comments from older people on their worsening mental/emotional health. We heard from many who felt let down by services:

I'm having to take on things I am too disabled to do, completely let down by social care (Poor MH)

The support from local services is appalling.

I am registered disabled with my mental health but no support in my area

Though not very common, we heard some real concerns from those who struggled to see a brighter future and it's really important that their voices are heard, however hard it is.

I have struggled all my life with depression and have hit a wall now where I have given up fighting. My goal now is to spend/run down the money in my pension over the next 5 years and seek out a happy life while my 2 dogs and I am still fit and able to do so. I realise I am lucky to be able to do this. I cannot think beyond those 5 years.

Same Mental Health

Looking at those who told us they felt about the same mentally or emotionally, we heard about how despite challenges in life, their resilience helped them maintain good levels of mental health:

I always try to have a positive attitude but it slips sometimes. My large garden helps my mental health. I keep busy & at the end of the day I think over what has been good that day.

I keep myself busy volunteering as secretary to a local group for older people, Instructor at a Tai Chi class for older people and socialising with friends and family as well as remaining as independent as possible.

Areas of life affecting older people's mental and emotional health

Grief and bereavement:

My Mum died suddenly 4 weeks ago. I'm now looking after my Dad, my Mother in law died last July, I looked after her (93) and had just begun to find time for me.

I used to be quite robust emotionally. I was strong when my husband needed care during his battle with cancer. I feel I've fallen apart and lost my sense of purpose and resilience. I never expected to be this devastated.

Unpaid carers:

Some told us about the negative effects of caring, usually linked with other life circumstances:

Menopause and years of caring have taken its toll. Also several bereavements in short space of time

Stress caused by all free time spent supporting 89 yr old mother, 99 yr old aunt 300 miles from me, and chores. No time for my own interests or to look after my own mental health.

Increased stress around caring for myself and also caring for others and continuing to work fulltime

Sometimes I feel I neglect my own health and mental wellbeing to care for my Mother, [I have] Carer PTSD and depression/anxiety due to personal issues and health

I'm finding life as a carer for someone with dementia as my own physical and mental capacity wanes, same with my patience.

My son has been suicidal due to his mental health. This has affected me very badly.

Physical health and ageing

Some told us of how reduced physical strength and increased health conditions are affecting them

I do get depressed sometimes because of the physical limits my osteoarthritis causes. However I try to keep busy by going to a lot of daytime activities eg Welsh classes, book clubs, Science club, cinema and lunch with friends or family. (good mental health respondent)

everything is far more difficult to do now, the mind is willing but the body not...things like just fixing bit of trellis in garden which would take able bodied person minutes, but don't have anyone to help me, my housing association says it will be the end of August before they can help!

Financial

The cost of living, changes in welfare benefits and concerns for financial security in retirement came up often.

Worrying about money, after son moved out. Having to apply for benefits when I am agoraphobic and going out makes the stress and anxiety a thousand times worse. Worried about the future regarding having enough money to live on

The pip cuts has affected me terribly.

Not being able to pay the rent has made me very tired and my psychological state is very bad.

Work concerns:

As mentioned earlier, 63% respondents were retired. We heard from working aged people about insecurity of their employment and how this was affecting them.

I had a job but it was becoming difficult because of my mobility issues. Then I was laid off losing £2k a month. I was the main earner.

My job is insecure, I'm the one responsible for keeping a charity afloat and keeping staff in employment but funding is non-existent. Also having issues with one of my children and trying to resolve a long running divorce settlement - mental health is at an all-time low and anxiety/lack of confidence in myself, is high. Struggling right now tbh

Housing and home security

Insecurity of rented accommodation and difficulties maintaining larger homes were issues for older people.

Having found myself homeless after private renting for 18 years due to landlord selling the house, I work 12-hour shifts trying to sleep after a night shift is very difficult because I'm in shared accommodation [...] I would be better off not working and that's not right, I enjoy my job and might have to give it up because of lack of housing available.

I live in a house that is too big for me and is currently on the market. However, unless I move during this calendar year I will just have to find some way of making living here more manageable. My gradual decline means I cannot manage without help and I find that depressing.

Isolation

Isolation was mentioned by older people with poor or very poor mental and emotional health:

Being disabled - isolated etc. I used to run an over 50s group for years. Now I attend two and they help.

I feel more and more forgotten about by friends and family as I cannot now go out for meals and events as I used to do. I was a very sociable person.

Next steps

We will be analysing all responses over the coming weeks and then writing up the report that covers all areas older people have told us about.

We also do a 'deeper dive' into specific areas that are of concern that our campaigns work will focus on.

A link can be sent to Cross-Party Group members when we publish the report.

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