

FOCUS ON Older People



Focus on Older People paints a picture of the people aged 50 and over in Britain today. It includes information on their characteristics, lifestyles and experiences, placing particular emphasis on changes with age.

Older people make up an increasing proportion of our population. The blurring of the various stages in our lifecycle mean that older people are as varied as any other group in our society. Many older people lead active and healthy lives for many years over the age of 50. Employment rates for people in their fifties have risen in the past decade, and it is this age group who are most likely to be providing unpaid care. However, for the very old, there may be barriers which prevent them from participating in a wide variety of activities. These may be financial, or related to health or lack of transport.

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Population

19.8 million aged 50 and over in UK

Age structure

There were 19.8 million people aged 50 and over in the United Kingdom in 2002. This was a 24 per cent increase over four decades, from 16.0 million in 1961. The number is projected to increase by a further 37 per cent by 2031, when there will be close to 27 million people aged 50 and over*.

Over the last 40 years there has also been a substantial change in the age composition of older people. The proportion of people in the UK population aged 85 and over increased from 0.7 per cent in 1961 to 1.9 per cent in 2002. At the same time the proportion aged 50 to 59 fell, from 13.2 per cent to 12.7 per cent.

Projections for 2031 indicate a more rapid ageing of the population over the next 30 years. People aged 85 and over will then comprise 3.8 per cent of the UK population.

Population ageing is primarily the result of sustained low fertility (low number of births). Falling fertility leads to fewer young people in the population and hence a rise in the proportion of older people. Declines in mortality are also an important factor. In particular, falls in the death rates at older ages have contributed to the increase in the number of older people.

Gender

Older women outnumber older men, as death rates are greater among men than among women. The improvement in death rates among older men has led to a narrowing of the gap. There were 28 per cent more women than men aged 50 and over in 1961, but only 18 per cent more in 2002.

Projections indicate a further narrowing of the gap by 2031, when it is expected that there will be 14 per cent more women than men aged 50 and over.

The greater number of women than men is most pronounced among the very old, as women tend to live longer than men. The death of men in the World Wars has also had an impact. In 2002 there were 2.6 women for every man aged 85 and over. This compares with 2.3 women per man in 1961, but is projected to fall to 1.5 by 2031.

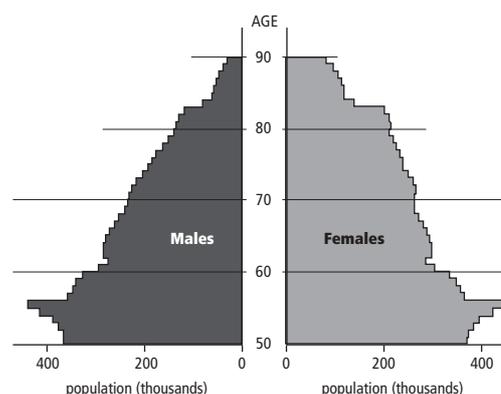
Ethnicity

A very small proportion of older people in Great Britain (4 per cent) are from non-White minority ethnic groups. In 2001, 15 per cent of people from non-White minority ethnic groups were aged 50 and over (around 672,000 people). This compares with 33 per cent of the overall population.

Black Caribbeans have the oldest age structure of all the non-White ethnic groups – 24 per cent were aged 50 and over. The Mixed group had the youngest age structure, with just under 8 per cent aged 50 and over.

Population: by gender and age, 2002

United Kingdom



Proportion of older people in each ethnic group, April 2001

Great Britain	Percentages			
	50–64	65–84	85 and over	All aged 50 and over
White				
British	18.2	14.9	2.1	35.2
Irish	26.7	22.9	1.9	51.5
Other White	13.6	9.5	0.9	24.1
All White	18.2	14.9	2.1	35.1
Mixed	4.7	2.7	0.3	7.6
Asian or Asian British				
Indian	12.8	6.2	0.3	19.4
Pakistani	7.4	3.9	0.2	11.5
Bangladeshi	6.4	3.1	0.1	9.6
Other Asian	12.5	4.9	0.3	17.6
All Asian or Asian British	10.3	5.0	0.3	15.5
Black or Black British				
Black Caribbean	13.4	10.2	0.4	24.0
Black African	6.8	2.2	0.1	9.1
Other Black	5.0	3.0	0.3	8.3
All Black or Black British	9.9	6.2	0.3	16.4
Chinese	11.1	4.8	0.3	16.2
Other ethnic groups	11.0	2.7	0.2	13.9
All non-White minority ethnic population	9.4	4.8	0.3	14.5
All population	17.5	14.0	1.9	33.5

Correction Notice

On 14 May 2004, data was corrected following a production error. On 11 August 2004, an error was found in the Ethnicity section, first sentence, paragraph 8. The error involved the calculation of a percentage and ONS apologises for any inconvenience caused.

Sources:

Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics for data up to 2002 on age structure and gender;
Population Projections, Government Actuary's Department for data for 2031 on age structure and gender;
Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics for ethnicity data;
Census, April 2001, General Register Office for Scotland for ethnicity data;
Census, April 2001, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency for ethnicity data.

Notes:

Unless otherwise stated older people refers to those aged 50 years and over.



Geographic Distribution

Highest in Wales, Cornwall and coast

The Local Authority Districts with a high proportion of people above state pension age (more than 20 per cent) are concentrated in Wales and Cornwall, and along the coastal areas of the country.

Three Local Authority Districts had over 30 per cent of people above state pension age in 2001: Christchurch, in the South West (33 per cent), Rother, in the South East (32 per cent), and East Devon (30 per cent).

The areas with low proportions of older people are in Northern Ireland and in London. Of the seven Local Authority Districts with less than 12 per cent of people above state pension age in 2001, five were in London and two in Northern Ireland.

These differences in geographic distribution are thought to be due, in part, to many older people choosing to leave congested urban areas to settle in coastal and rural destinations. On the other hand, urban and surrounding areas draw younger people due to employment opportunities and other reasons.

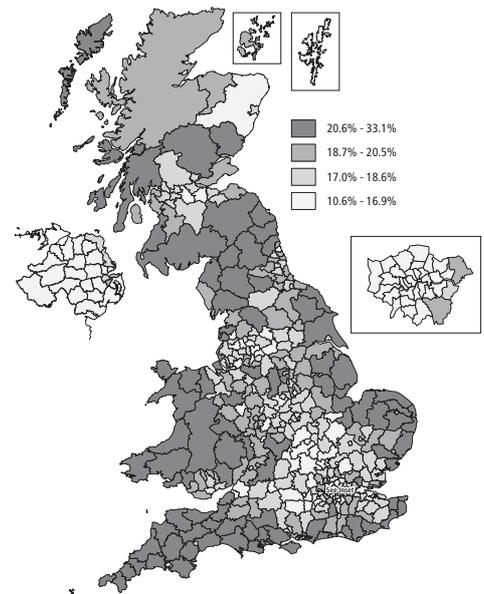
Additionally, major cities like London have a high proportion of people from non-White minority ethnic groups, who have a younger age structure than the overall population. Northern Ireland has higher fertility than Great Britain overall, so its age structure is younger.

Between 1991 and 2001 the highest percentage increases in people over state pension age occurred in Wokingham (29 per cent), South Staffordshire (28 per cent) and Surrey Heath (27 per cent).

The largest percentage falls were in urban areas, including London, Manchester, Brighton, Bristol and Glasgow. Wandsworth borough in London had the biggest fall, having 20 per cent less people over state pension age in 2001 than in 1991.

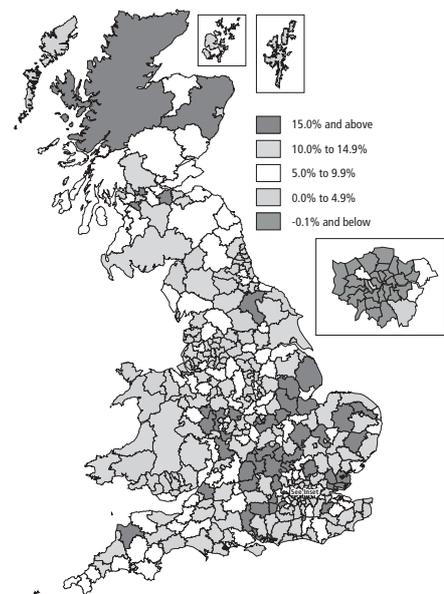
Many areas on the Southeast coast with traditionally high proportions of older people, such as Worthing, Eastbourne and Canterbury, also experienced declines in the population over state pension age between 1991 and 2001.

**People over state pension age: by area, April 2001
United Kingdom**



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**Change in population over state pension age: by area, 1991 to 2001
Great Britain**



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Sources:

- Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics;
- Census, April 1991, Office for National Statistics;
- Census, April 2001, General Register Office for Scotland;
- Census, April 2001, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

Notes:

State pension age for men is aged 65 and over and for women aged 60 and over.



Living Arrangements

7 in 10 women aged 85+ live alone

Older women are more likely than older men to live alone and the proportion increases with advancing age. Among women aged 85 and over who live in private GB households, 71 per cent lived alone in 2001, compared with 42 per cent of men of the same age.

The majority of older men live in a married couple family, though the proportion declines with age. Among men living in private households, the proportion fell from 74 per cent for men aged 50 to 64 years old, to 71 per cent for those aged 65 to 84 and 45 per cent for men aged 85 and over.

Among older women the proportion decreases more sharply with age. It fell from 70 per cent of women aged 50 to 64 to 45 per cent aged 65 to 84 and 10 per cent aged 85 and over.

Cohabitation is becoming more common among people in their fifties than in the past, and again the proportion declines with age. In 2001, 5.5 per cent of men and 4.3 per cent of women aged 50 to 64 lived with a partner without being married to them. This compares with 1.6 per cent of men and 0.6 per cent of women aged 85 and over.

Widowhood is common among women at older ages. Nearly half of women aged 65 and over are widowed and this proportion rises to four fifths of those aged 85 and over.

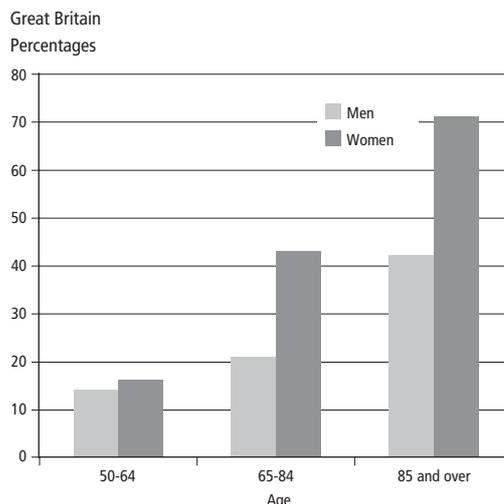
Living with other people (not including a spouse, cohabiting partner or child) is not very common, though it too increases with advancing age. In 2001, 7 per cent of men and 10 per cent of women aged 85 and over were living with others.

In 2001, 4 per cent of people aged 65 and over (373,000) were resident in communal establishments in Great Britain, a smaller proportion than the 5 per cent in 1991. This proportion was greatest among people aged 85 and over at 18 per cent in 2001. It also fell, from 23 per cent in 1991.

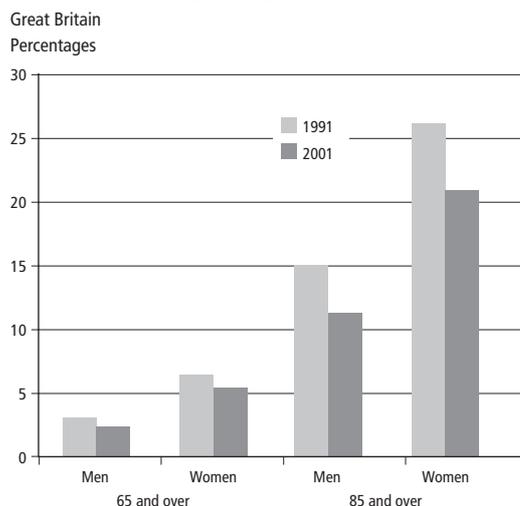
Older women are more likely than older men to live in communal establishments. Among women aged 65 and over, 5 per cent were resident in communal establishments, compared with 2 per cent of men in the same age group. The difference is even more striking among people aged 85 and over: 21 per cent of women compared with 11 per cent of men.

One of the main reasons for the higher presence of women in communal establishments is gender differences in marital status. Women are more likely than men to be widowed and so be without a spouse to care for them. In addition, at ages over 85, never married people are even more likely than widowed people to live in a communal establishment. Another important factor is the higher level of disability reported by women than men at any given older age.

People in private households who live alone: by age and gender, April 2001



Percentage of people who live in communal establishments: by age and gender, April 1991 and 2001



Sources:

Census, April 1991 and 2001, Office for National Statistics;
Census, April 1991 and 2001, General Register Office for Scotland.

Notes:

All data relate to Great Britain.
A resident in a communal establishment is any person who has been living, or intends to live, in the establishment for six months or more. It excludes visitors and staff family members. People visiting the establishment on Census day who do not have a usual address elsewhere are also classified as a resident.



Housing

6 in 10 aged 65+ own home outright

The majority of older people are owner-occupiers, although the proportion decreases with age. In 2001, among people aged 50 to 64 living in private households in Great Britain, 80 per cent were owner-occupiers. This compares with 72 per cent of people aged 65 to 84 and 61 per cent of people aged 85 and over.

People over the age of 65 are much more likely to be outright owners than to be buying with a mortgage. This is mainly because, in general, mortgages are arranged so that they are paid off by the time people retire. In 2001, 61 per cent of people aged 65 and over owned their homes outright.

The proportion of those living in rented housing increases with age. Among people aged 50 to 64, 20 per cent were renters. This compares with 28 per cent of people aged 65 to 84 and 40 per cent of people aged 85 and over.

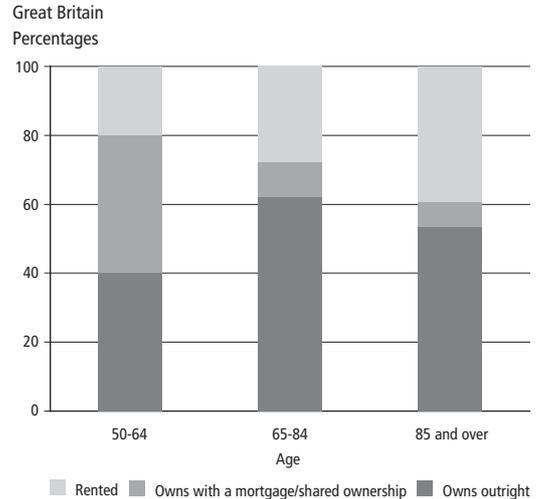
Few older people live in overcrowded conditions – just 1 per cent of people aged 50 and over.

Just over half of all people aged 50 or over in England lived in a property which was under-occupied in 2002/03, although this fell to 32 per cent for those aged 85 or more.

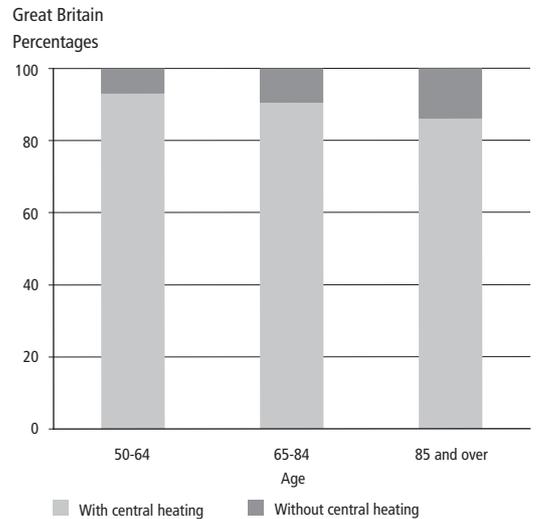
Only a minority of people aged 50 and over report problems with their house. One in ten older people complained of damp rising in floors and walls, of problems with insects, mice or rats or the house being too dark. About 12 per cent of older people said that their house was too cold in winter.

Among people aged 50 to 64 in Great Britain, almost all of them lived in households with central heating (93 per cent) in 2001. The proportion decreased with age, to 86 per cent among those aged 85 and over.

Tenure of people living in households: by age, April 2001



People living in households with or without central heating: by age, April 2001



Sources:

Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics for tenure and central heating data;
 Census, April 2001, General Register Office for Scotland for tenure and central heating data;
 Survey of English Housing for overcrowding/under-occupation data;
 2002 English Longitudinal Study of Ageing for housing problems data.

Notes:

Unless otherwise stated, older people refers to those aged 50 years and over. All data relate to those living in private households. 'Bedroom standard' from the Survey of English Housing is used to measure under-occupancy & overcrowding. A standard number of bedrooms is allocated to each household in accordance with its age/sex/marital status composition & relationship of the members to one another. It is then compared with the actual number of bedrooms (including bed-sitters) available for the sole use of the household. Overcrowded is defined as 1 or more bedrooms below the standard; under-occupying is defined as 2 or more bedrooms above the standard.



Labour Market

Employment rates rose in 1990s

The UK employment rates of men and women aged between 50 and state pension age (60 for women, 65 for men) in winter 2003/4 were 72 per cent and 67 per cent respectively.

Over the last decade there has been an increase in employment among older people. The proportion of women in their fifties in employment increased from around 59 per cent in early 1993 to a high of 67 per cent in winter 2003/4. For men aged 50 to 64 the employment rate followed a similar pattern, increasing from 65 per cent to 72 per cent over the period.

As a result of this upward trend in the employment rate of older workers, the gap between them and the working age group as a whole has narrowed. Older workers still have a lower employment rate, though the gap for women is quite small, and certainly smaller than that for men.

For some older people, part-time work may act as a bridge between full-time work and retirement. A slightly higher proportion of men in the 50 to 64 age group now work part-time than ten years ago – 5 per cent in winter 2003/4 compared with 3 per cent in 1993/4. For men in this age group, part-time work still remains relatively uncommon compared with full-time work.

The picture for women is rather different. Among women in their fifties, 32 per cent worked full-time in winter 2003/4 and only slightly fewer (28 per cent) worked part-time.

For both men and women who are in work after state pension age, part-time work is more prevalent than full-time work.

Men who were self-employed in their fifties are much more likely than those who were employees to still be working ten years later. In addition, workers who are over state pension age also are twice as likely to be employed in small companies with 1 to 10 staff and far less likely to be employed in larger organisations with over 50 staff.

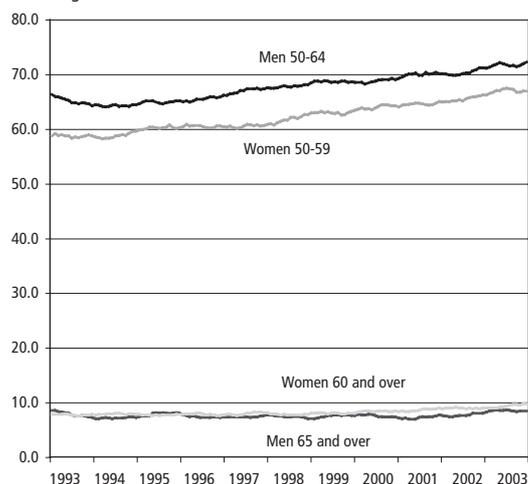
Unemployment rates are low for older people, well below the national average. In winter 2003/4, 3.3 per cent of economically active men aged 50 and over and 2.3 per cent of economically active women of the same age were unemployed. This is partly due to the choice of some to take early retirement.

The vast majority of those out of work in the 50 to state pension age group are economically inactive rather than unemployed. Despite a decline in the last few years, economic inactivity rates for men and women aged 50 to state pension age were 25 per cent and 32 per cent respectively in winter 2003/4. Inactivity rates increase dramatically beyond state pension age.

Employment rates

United Kingdom

Percentages



Economic activity status, winter 2003/4

United Kingdom

Percentages

	Men		Women	
	50-64	65 and over	50-59	60 and over
Full-time employees	49	1	32	2
Part-time employees	5	3	28	6
Self-employed	18	4	6	1
All in employment	72	8	67	10
Unemployed	3	..	2	..
Economically inactive	25	91	32	90
All (=100%)(millions)	5.2	3.9	3.8	6.6

Definition of terms:

Employees – people who regard themselves as paid employees. People with two or more jobs are counted only once.

Self-employed – people who regard themselves as self-employed, that is, who in their main employment work on their own account, whether or not they have employees.

In employment – employees, self-employed and participants in government training schemes and people doing unpaid family work.

Unemployed – the measure based on the International Labour Organisation (ILO) guidelines which counts as unemployed those who are without a job, are available to start work in the next two weeks, who want a job and have been seeking a job in the last four weeks or are waiting to start a job already obtained.

Economically active (labour force) – those in employment plus ILO unemployed.

Economically inactive – people who are neither in employment or unemployment. This includes those looking after a home or retired or permanently unable to work.

Source:

Labour Force Survey.

Notes:

State pension age for women is 60 & 65 years for men.



Pensioner Income

Net real incomes up by 25 per cent in 8 years

In the last 8 years average net incomes of pensioner units in Great Britain rose by 25 per cent after taking into account inflation. The average pensioner unit (pensioner couples and single pensioners) received £237 a week in net income in 2002/03. For pensioner couples the average was £327 per week compared with £177 for single pensioners.

The average net income of pensioners grew faster than that for non-pensioners between 1979 and 2002/03. In 1979, 47 per cent of pensioners were in the bottom fifth of the net equivalised income distribution. By 2002/03, this proportion had almost halved to 26 per cent. There are fewer pensioners in the bottom quintile once housing costs are taken into account

Based on the pensioner distribution of income (before housing costs), single female pensioners were slightly over-represented in the bottom fifth (22 per cent). Single men were more likely to be in the top fifth (24 per cent) than the bottom fifth (15 per cent).

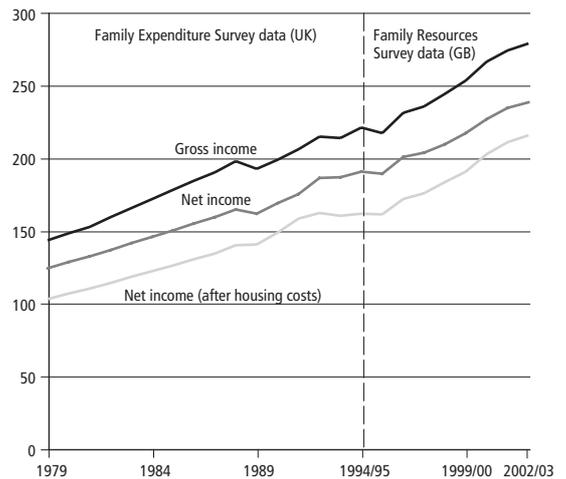
Younger pensioners tend to have higher incomes than older pensioners because they are likely to receive more occupational pension and earnings income than older pensioners.

Older pensioners were more likely to be found towards the bottom of both the single pensioner and pensioner couples' income distributions. In 2002/03, 24 per cent of couples where the head was aged 75 or over were in the bottom fifth. The proportion of single pensioners of the same age in the bottom fifth was also 24 per cent.

The largest source of income for pensioners is state benefits (which include the state retirement pension). In 2002/03 the average pensioner unit received 51 per cent of its income from state benefits. This proportion rose to 60 per cent for single pensioners over the age of 75. Occupational pensions accounted for 27 per cent and investment income for 9 per cent. Low-income pensioners typically receive little income from personal pensions, investments or earnings and the majority of their income from social security benefits.

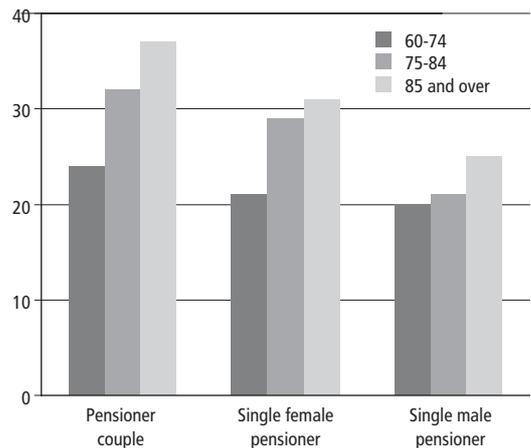
Average real weekly income of pensioner units

United Kingdom/Great Britain
£ per week at 2002/03 prices



Percentage in bottom quintile of net income: by age of head, Before Housing Costs, 2002/03

Great Britain
Percentages



Sources:

Family Resources Survey 2002/03 for data on sources of income;
Family Expenditure Survey for historical data from 1979 to 1996/97.

Notes:

A pensioner unit is defined as a single (non-cohabiting) person over state pension age or a couple (married or cohabiting) where the man, defined as the head, has reached state pension age. State pension age is 65 years for men and 60 years for women.

FRS data used for pensioners incomes is unequivalised. Statistics on pensioners' positions in the overall distribution are based on equivalised data.



Travel

Distance and trips decline with age

The number of trips people in Great Britain make declines with age. During 2002, people aged 70 and over each made an average of 700 trips. This compares with 1,100 trips made by those aged 50 to 59.

Retiring from work has a major influence on travel patterns. Those aged 50 to 59 made around 300 trips for business or commuting purposes on average, compared with hardly any by those 70 and over.

Shopping and other personal business are the most common reasons for travel by older people. During 2002, 43 per cent of trips made by those aged 50 to 59 were to go shopping, to conduct other personal business or to escort somebody else. This increased to 55 per cent for people aged 60 to 69 and to 64 per cent for people aged 70 and over.

Older people also travel considerably less distance than those in younger age groups. Men aged 50 to 59 travelled 16,900 kilometres on average during 2002. This was more than double the 7,000 kilometres travelled by those aged 70 and over. Women in these age groups travelled 11,600 and 5,200 kilometres, respectively.

Older people, specifically those over state pension age, are more reliant than younger people on public transport, in particular local buses. Older people are also considerably more likely to report difficulties accessing local amenities such as shops, banks or hospitals.

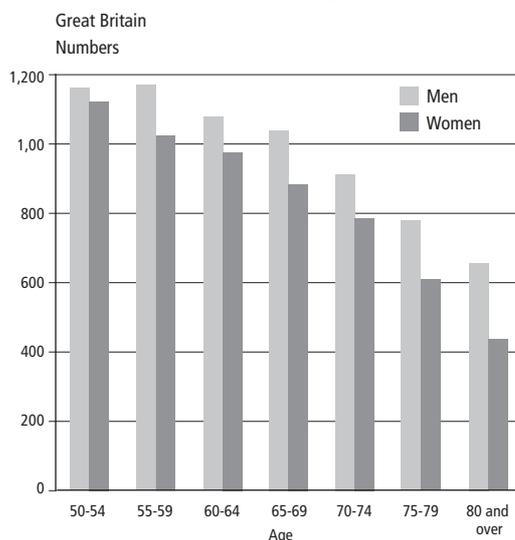
In 2002–03, women aged 75 and over in England and those who said they were in only 'fair' or 'poor' health were the most likely to report such access difficulties. Among those in only 'fair' or 'poor' health, 21 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women aged 75 and over said they had difficulties getting to local shops.

The car is the most important form of transport for people of all ages in Great Britain, although its use declines with age. In addition, fewer older women have access to cars compared with men of the same age. In 2001, 88 per cent of men and 85 per cent of women aged 50 to 59 had access to at least one car or van in their household. Among those aged 75 and over these proportions were far lower at 58 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively.

A much greater proportion of older men than women hold a full car driving licence – 68 per cent of men and 28 per cent of women aged 70 and over in 2002. This difference is expected to reduce in the future as 74 per cent of 50 to 59 year old women held a driving licence compared with 89 per cent of men of the same age.

Although they walk less than people in younger age groups, older people are considerably more likely to be killed, as pedestrians, in a road accident. People aged 70 and over walked on average nearly a third less far than the population as a whole in 2002. However, 3.7 per 100,000 population aged 70 and over were killed as pedestrians in road accidents, compared with a rate of 1.3 per 100,000 for the population as a whole.

Trips per person per year: by age and sex, 2002



Full car driving licence holders: by age and sex

Great Britain	Percentages		
	50-59	60-69	70 and over
Men			
1975/1976	75	58	32
1985/1986	81	72	51
1991/1993	87	80	59
1996/1998	88	82	64
1999/2001	88	86	69
2002	89	85	68
Women			
1975/1976	24	15	4
1985/1986	41	24	11
1991/1993	54	37	17
1996/1998	63	48	20
1999/2001	69	57	25
2002	74	56	28

Sources:

National Travel Survey, Department for Transport, for number of trips, distance travelled and driving licence data;
 2002 English Longitudinal Survey of Ageing for access to services data;
 Road Casualties GB 2002, Department for Transport, for road accident data.



Life Expectancy

More aged 70 and 80 than ever before

Life expectancy

Life expectancy for both men and women has continued to rise. In 2002, life expectancy at birth for females born in the UK was 81 years, compared with 76 years for males. This contrasts with 49 and 45 years respectively at the turn of the last century in 1901.

In recent years, the increase in life expectancy among older adults has been dramatic, particularly for men. Between 1981 and 2002, life expectancy at age 50 increased by four and a half years for men and three years for women. For those aged 65 and over the extra years of life were three years and two years respectively. By 2002, women who were aged 65 could expect to live to the age of 84, while men could expect to live to the age of 81.

Projections suggest that life expectancies at these older ages will increase by a further three years or so by 2020. The expectation of life for people at 70 and 80 has also gone up. At present there are more older people aged 70 and 80 than ever before.

Causes of death

Over the last 30 years death rates for men have fallen faster than those for women, but men still have higher rates than women at all ages. Death rates increase with age, from 8 per 1,000 men aged 50 to 64 to 188 per 1,000 men aged 85 and over in England and Wales in 2002. The equivalent rates for women were 5 and 160.

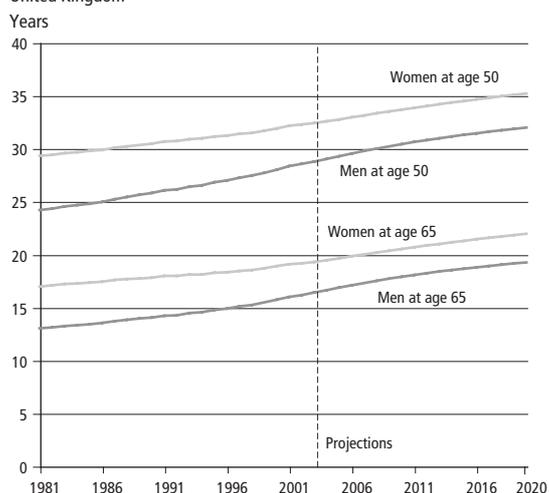
The most common cause of death for people aged 50 to 64 was cancers. Overall, 39 per cent of male, and 53 per cent of female, deaths in this age group were due to cancers. Lung cancer was the most common cause of cancer death for men in this age group. Breast cancer was the most common cause for women.

For those over the age of 65, circulatory diseases are the most common cause of death. Within this age group, heart disease as a cause of death decreases with age, and strokes increase.

Pneumonia as a cause of death also increases with age to account for one in ten deaths among those aged 85 and over.

Expected further number of years of life at ages 50 and 65

United Kingdom



Major cause of death: by sex and age, 2002

England & Wales

Percentages

	Men			Women		
	50-64	65-84	85 and over	50-64	65-84	85 and over
Cancers	39	32	18	53	29	12
Circulatory system	36	42	42	22	40	44
Digestive system	7	4	3	6	5	4
Respiratory system	7	13	19	8	13	17
Injury and poisoning	4	1	2	3	1	2
Nervous system	2	3	3	3	3	3
Mental and behavioural	1	1	3	-	2	6
Other	4	5	9	5	7	14
All deaths (=100%)						
(thousands)	35.6	144.6	53.6	23.0	129.6	116.3

Sources:

Government Actuary's Department for expectation of life data; Office for National Statistics for mortality data.

Notes:

The expectation of life at a given age is defined as the average number of years, which a person could be expected to live, if their rate of mortality at each age were those experienced in that calendar year. Projections are 2002-based.

Unless otherwise stated older people refers to those aged 50 years and over.



Health & Caring

2.8m aged 50+ provide unpaid care

Health

While women can expect to live longer than men, they are also more likely to have more years in poor health. Healthy life expectancy for women in 1999 averaged 69 years compared with 67 years for men.

The proportion of people with a long-term illness or disability which restricts their daily activities increases with age. Among women in Great Britain, the proportion of those aged 85 and over reporting such a disability in 2001 (74 per cent) was almost triple that for women aged 50 to 64 (26 per cent). The increase with age among men was not quite so strong – 27 per cent of 50 to 64 year olds compared with 67 per cent of those aged 85 and over.

In the 50 to 64 and 65 to 84 age groups, a similar percentage of women as men have such a disability. However, among those aged 85 and over, the rate for women is greater than that for men.

The types of chronic sickness suffered by older people in Great Britain can be wide ranging. The most commonly reported conditions in 2001/02 among those aged 65 and over were heart and circulatory diseases and musculoskeletal ailments. Women over 75 were more likely than men of the same age to suffer from arthritis and rheumatism. Conversely men were more likely than women to report respiratory diseases, such as bronchitis and emphysema.

Many people in the older age groups still consider themselves to be in good health, even if they have a long-term illness which restricts daily activities. In 2001, around one in 20 of both men and women in England and Wales aged between 50 and 64 who considered themselves in good health had such a disability. Among those aged 85 and over in good health, the percentages reporting such a disability rose to 33 per cent for men and 40 per cent for women.

Caring

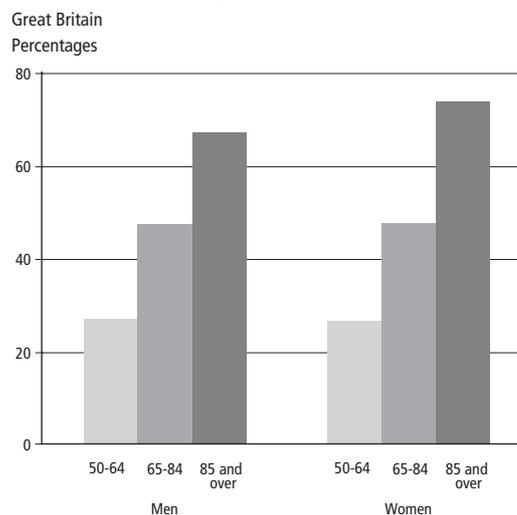
In 2001 almost 2.8 million people aged 50 and over (16 per cent) living in private households in England and Wales provided unpaid care for family members, friends or neighbours.

People in their fifties were the group most likely to be providing unpaid care. More than one in five (21 per cent) were doing so. The proportion declined with age. Even so, 5 per cent of those aged 85 and over were providing some form of unpaid care.

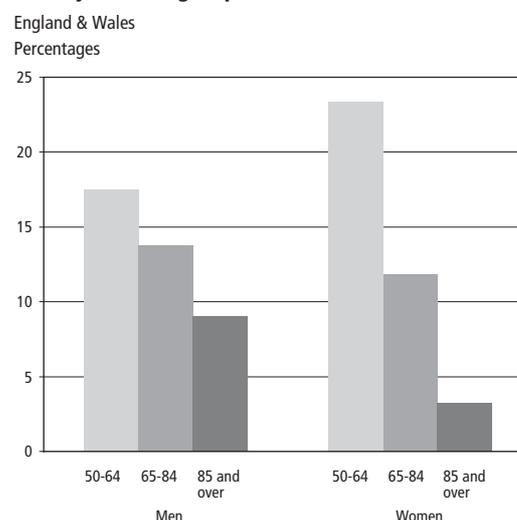
Among 50 to 64 year olds a greater proportion of women than men provide unpaid care. However, for the older age groups men are more likely than women to be providing care.

One in four carers over the age of 50 (24 per cent) spent 50 hours or more a week caring. This proportion rose to one in two carers aged 85 and over (50 per cent).

Long-term illness or disability which restricts daily activities: by sex and age, April 2001



Percentage of people in households providing unpaid care: by sex and age, April 2001



Sources:

Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics for limiting long-term illness, good health and caring data;
 Census, April 2001, General Register Office for Scotland for limiting long-term illness, good health and caring data;
 General Household Survey 2001/02 for most commonly reported conditions.

Notes:

The term disability is used to refer to limiting long-term illness or disability which restricts daily activities. It is calculated from a 'Yes' response to the question in the 2001 Census: "Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits your activities or the work you can do?" This includes problems due to old age.



Lifestyles

TV watched for 3hrs 45mins a day by 65+

Activities

People aged 65 and over in the UK spend more time than those aged 50 to 64 watching the TV, reading, listening to the radio or music and resting.

The over 65s spent an average of three and three-quarter hours a day watching TV (or DVD/video) in 2000–01, three-quarters of an hour more than 50 to 64 year olds.

As some people age and their working lives end, they may have more free time available to spend on leisure activities. However, a variety of barriers to the more active leisure pursuits may exist. These include health and mobility problems, poor transport and lack of finance.

The over 65s spend one and a quarter hours a day reading (nearly half an hour more than 50 to 64 year olds). However, the likelihood of having a visual impairment increases with age and this may hamper reading activities.

Older people also spend more time resting or 'doing nothing special' – an average of three-quarters of an hour a day for those aged 65 and over compared with half an hour for 50 to 64 year olds.

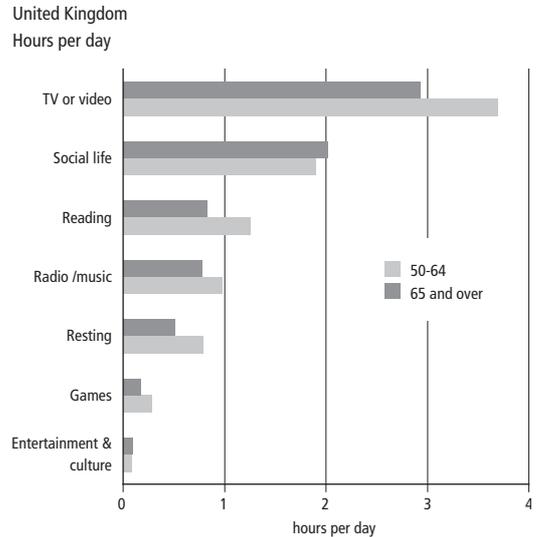
Social networks

In 2001/02, 79 per cent of people aged 65 and over living in households in Great Britain saw a relative or friend at least once a week. Only a small minority (2 per cent) did not see relatives or friends at all.

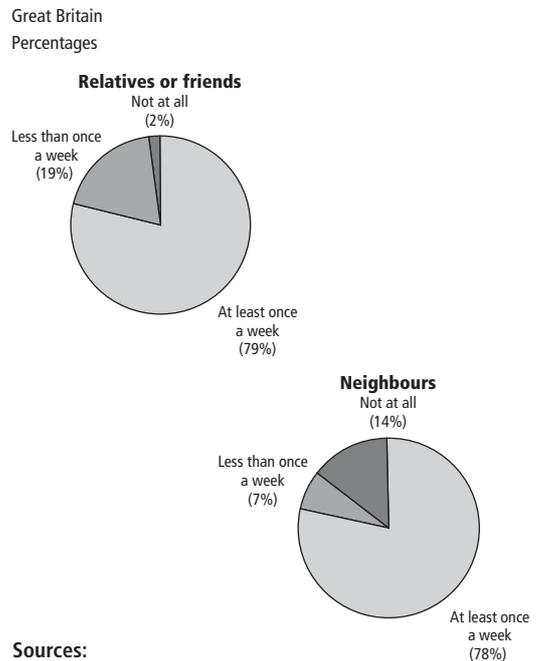
The frequency of contact is linked to whether older people live alone or in a couple, particularly among the very old. Among those aged 75 and over, 82 per cent of those who lived alone saw relatives or friends at least once a week, compared with 73 per cent of those who lived with their spouse only.

Seventy-eight per cent of people aged 65 and over said they chatted to neighbours at least once a week while 14 per cent had no contact at all. Contact with neighbours tends to decrease with age – 81 per cent of 65 to 69 year olds had weekly contact compared with 71 per cent of those aged 85 and over.

Time spent on selected activities: by age, 2000–01



Frequency of people aged 65 and over seeing relatives or friends and contact with neighbours, 2001/02



Sources:

Time Use Survey 2000 – 2001 for activities data;
General Household Survey 2001/02 for social networks data.

Notes:

Social life activities include: unspecified social life; socialising with household members; visiting and receiving visitors; feasts (including weddings and funerals); telephone conversation; other specified social life. Resting activities is defined as: resting – time out. Games activities include: unspecified games; solo games and play; games and play with others (billiards, pool, snooker, petanque, chess and bridge, other specified parlour games); computer games; gambling; other specified games. Entertainment and culture activities include: cinema; art; art exhibitions & museums; library; attending sports events; other specified entertainment & culture.

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