

# What matters to you?

## Current experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales

.....  
June 2026 headlines report  
.....



# Contents

- Introduction..... 3**
- Challenges over the last 12 months..... 4**
- Cost of living ..... 5**
- Health..... 6**
- Social care ..... 7**
- Unpaid care ..... 8**
- Transport and travel..... 9**
- Housing.....10**
- Accessing information .....11**
- Representation in society .....12**
- Climate change .....12**



## Introduction

For seven weeks across March and April 2026, Age Cymru ran its seventh annual survey of people aged 50 and over in Wales. To the backdrop of a Senedd election campaign, rising prices and heightened global tensions, we asked older people for their experiences of health and social care, the cost of living, housing, transport and much more. 1,448 people responded from across all 22 local authorities in Wales. The youngest were in their early fifties, the eldest over one hundred years old.

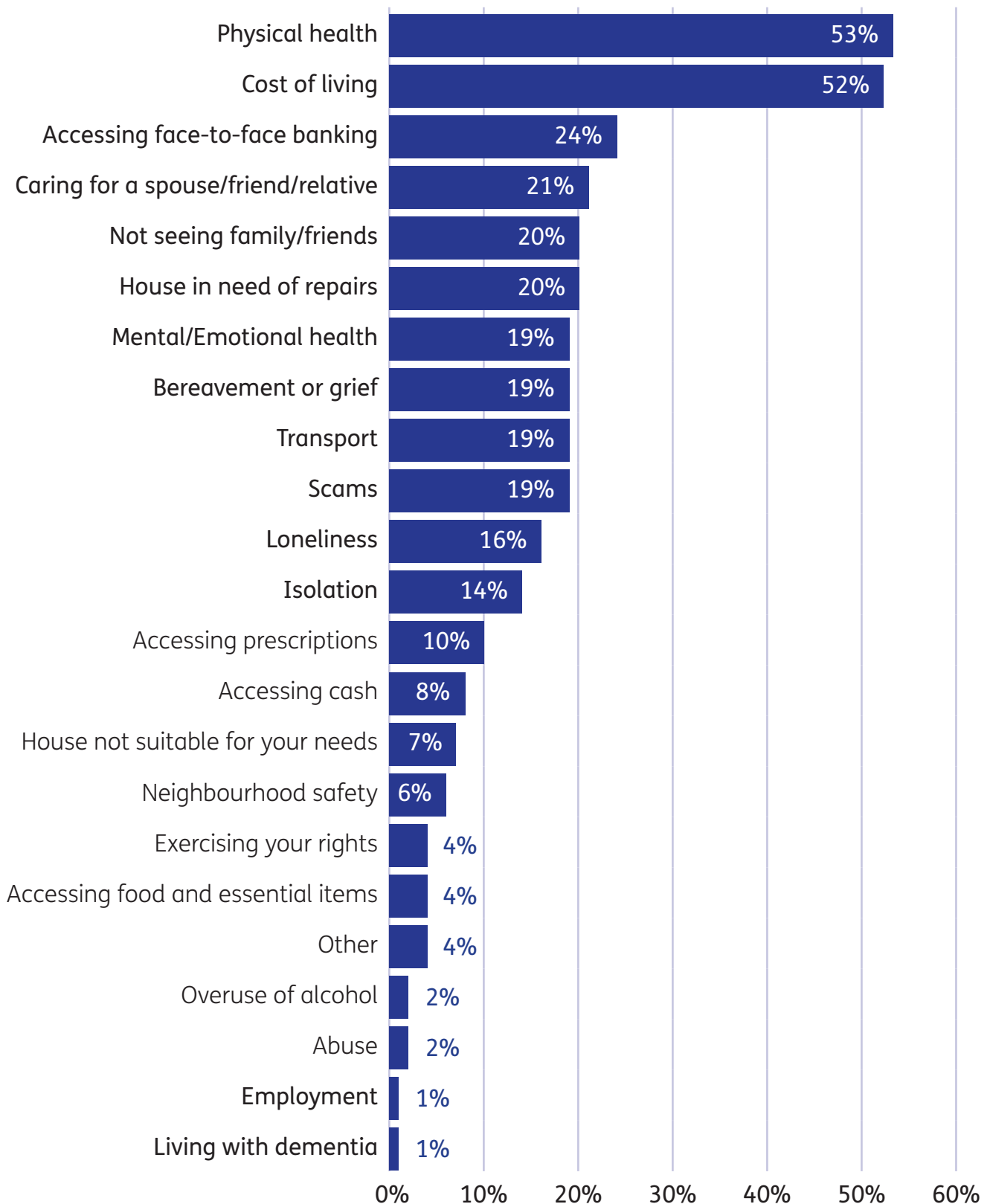
At first glance, the results suggest a worsening picture for older people. The most striking statistic was the proportion of people who stated that the cost of living had been a challenge over the last year – up to 52% from 46% in 2025. For many, it was the cost of petrol and water – both of which saw sudden rises over 2025-26 – that was to blame. Personal health had similarly crept up as a common challenge, from 50% to 53%. Other growing issues included difficulty accessing social care, difficulty accessing information and reductions in bus routes – all of which compounded to create a sense that life is getting tougher for older people.

However, closer inspection of survey data suggests that it's not all bad news. In 2026, a smaller proportion of people reported feeling lonely or isolated, and mental/emotional health was a less commonly reported challenge than in previous years (20%, down from 26% in 2025 and 30% in 2024). Fewer people reported problems with accessing prescriptions or gaining/retaining jobs. And, while plenty had negative experiences of bus services, most people who used trains had positive things to say about them.

Perhaps it's more accurate to say that the 2026 survey reflects a growing uncertainty among older people in Wales. Reading through the comments, it's noticeable that many of those concerned about the cost of living or personal health said that they worried about how things would look in future: if prices keep rising at this rate, how will I pay my energy bills? If my village loses its bus service, how will I get to hospital without a car? It's telling that, when asked if they felt optimistic about the year ahead, two fifths said 'no' – the highest result we've ever seen. As one person summarised: "International situation very fragile, inflation increasing, climate change effects increasing, supply chains under pressure – future uncertain."

# Challenges over the last 12 months

As in previous years, we asked respondents about the challenges they had faced over the last twelve months.



# Cost of living



52% of older people told us they had struggled with the cost of living over the past year.

This represents a considerable increase from 2025, when the figure stood at only 46%, and is the highest figure recorded since our first annual survey in 2020, when only 9% of people reported struggling with living costs.

Comments tended to focus on the increased costs of fuel and water, both of which have seen sudden price hikes over the last twelve months.

Just had [an oil] delivery which cost £834, compared to £305 previously.

Of those people feeling financially secure, many put this down to them or their partner having a private pension, or because they have inherited wealth. At the same time, some commented that the State Pension has not kept up with living costs.

Husband has a good pension and we have savings, so very lucky not to have money restraints.

In line with this, older people are generally less confident about meeting rising living costs. 53.2% of people felt 'confident' or 'very confident' that they would be able to meet costs over the next year, down from 56% in 2025.

Confidence was lower among people living with a disability, with only 43% feeling 'confident' or 'very confident'. For people living alone, the figure was 48%. For many, their lack of confidence stems from the unpredictability of global events.

With the situation in the Gulf, we can expect inflation to soar over the next months, which will make life harder.

35% of people said that they have made a change to their life to continue meeting the cost of living. Of these, 52% are using less energy/heating and just over one third have reduced their food bill. 30% stated that they now socialise less.

Can't afford to put heating on at all - boil kettle rather than turn hot water on.

3% of all respondents said that they are delaying retirement to save more money for later life, while 1% have left retirement to return to work.

If I can keep working, we should be OK, otherwise we will be broke after one year.

One third of respondents are claiming benefits or entitlements beyond the State Pension, up from one quarter in 2025. The proportion of those claiming Attendance Allowance has more than doubled since 2025, though take-up of other benefits remains low, with only 6% claiming Pension Credit.

# Health



Half of all older people said it was difficult or very difficult to make a GP appointment.

This year, 83% of people made appointments for themselves and 19% for someone else, in line with figures from 2025. Like last year, many reported being unable to book non-urgent appointments or appointments ahead of time. Others commented on the unreliability of a phone booking system based on an 8am rush.

GP will not allow advance appointments which means I can only make an appointment if I'm not working that day.

However, some people told us that appointment availability has improved over the past year. Others said that their surgery offers several ways to book, including both same-day and advance appointments. Digital inclusion often makes access easier.

Older people are still experiencing long waits for secondary care, with some people being on multiple waiting lists at the same time.

The proportion of people who find it difficult or very difficult to travel to secondary care appointments rose from 19% in 2025 to 23% in 2026. Those finding it easy tend to drive, live close to health services, or have access to regular public transport.

Nothing's local. Buses are poor and driving is terrifying in the bigger towns where the hospitals are. All three hospitals are over an hour away.

This year, we asked people about corridor care – defined as a patient waiting for or receiving treatment in an inappropriate part of the hospital or in an ambulance.

17% of older people reported experiencing corridor care in the last year. 5% had experienced corridor care themselves and 12% reported on behalf of someone else. The longest corridor care time we heard about was three weeks, though five people mentioned it lasting a week or more.

Despite these issues, many older people made it clear that NHS staff were working as hard as they could in often strenuous conditions.

My husband [...] was sat in a chair for four days in a corridor that was packed with people being treated. There was only one toilet for several dozen people and no washing facilities.

We often heard of older people waiting days before being treated and discharged or moved to an appropriate bed. This was devastating for end-of-life care.

20 hours for an ambulance, 18 hours outside in the ambulance, nearly a week in a bed in A&E and he was dying of prostate and lung cancer as well as end-stage heart failure. A bed was found on CDU eventually. [Clinical Decision Unit]

## 6 What matters to you?

Current experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales

# Social care



16% of older people told us that they had tried to get help from social care services in the last year, a reduction from 19% in 2025.

56% said the help was for themselves and 46% said it was for someone else. For some older people, their request was simple, such as help to stay safe at home.

My husband and myself have occasionally needed help – advice, grab rails, a stair lift and help with form-filling.

Others told of increasingly complex needs following a reduction in physical health, often after a lengthy stay in hospital or a sudden health crisis.

My neighbour lost their twin last year. It affected them more than anyone knew. They had a car accident and spent time in hospital. When they came home, I went to see them, and it was obvious they needed a lot of help. I called Social Services and Age Cymru who are now helping.

Nearly two-thirds (62%) said they got the help they needed, though nearly half (46%) said it was difficult or very difficult to get that help.

Many older people told us how they struggled to find the right person to talk to, and how difficult it was to get the help they needed in a timely manner, despite the best intentions of social care staff. Some also reported that, having secured help, they found that the care offered was insufficient for their needs.

Visits once a day to help with evening meal. Mum was not impressed as they turned up way too early, with different carers each night. She had to explain how to use things and became very frustrated.

Many told us that delays in care resulted in further damage to physical health.

My husband ended up in hospital waiting to access carers.

For those who got the right help, this often involved a simple request, such as for a minor home adaptation. A few also told us how help was available in the community, particularly when moving to residential care.

40% of older people told us they contribute towards the cost of their social care.

Some told us that they felt it was unfair and disruptive to force people to pay top-up charges for residential care above the rate the local authority will pay.

I was told that unless I contributed £150 per week to my husband's nursing home fees, he would be moved to the far side of Swansea. This is really disruptive of his care and my ability to visit.

# Unpaid care



29% of older people currently look after someone or give unpaid help to at least one person. More than half (57%) of these find caring a challenge.

63% of unpaid carers who responded to the survey were women, and 77% were aged 65 and over.

More than half (54%) of older carers said that they are now providing more care than last year, while 6% are providing less. Compared to people without caring responsibilities, carers were more likely to report challenges with their physical and mental health, difficulty getting prescriptions, food and other essentials, living with dementia, and missing friends and family.

I have been refused surgery as I'm not considered to be seriously incapacitated. I am a full-time carer for my wife [...] She was admitted to Morryston hospital because of problems from not taking some medication.

40% of unpaid carers have asked for help from social care in the last year.

82% asked for help for someone else and 18% for themselves. Unpaid carers who needed social care for themselves were less likely to get the help they needed (57% compared with 62% of non-carers). This was similarly true for those unpaid carers who had arranged social care for another person.

The social worker arranged respite. The home could not cope with [my husband's] wanderings, and he was sent home.

Many carers told us of the long delays in getting any help for themselves or the person they care for - and the massive impact this has on their lives.

I was suicidal by the time the help we needed was forthcoming.

When carers received the help they needed, it was often a short-term package to support the carer or cared-for person following medical treatment, or a home adaptation to help them live independently.

Many carers said that better financial support and knowing where to get it would make a huge difference to their lives. Only 5% of self-identifying carers said they are claiming Carer's Allowance and 14% said they were claiming Attendance Allowance.

Financial support – paid time off work without having to use annual leave.

Other told us that timely and effective access to health and/or social care services would improve their lives the most.

Hospital appointments more readily available. My wife has now been waiting for treatment for 9 months and her condition is deteriorating all the time.

# Transport and travel



Just over half of older people told us that it's easy to get out and about.

By contrast, around 18% said that this has been a challenge over the last year.

By far the most common reason for people struggling to travel is poor physical health, cited in nearly 50% of cases. Other common reasons include worries about falling (27%), lack of public transport (24%) and transport costs (23%).

I am in a wheelchair and my wife depends on the use of a mobility scooter. This prevents us from using buses as they will only take one of us at a time.

Like last year, most of those who find it easy to travel have access to a car, with three quarters of people saying that they regularly drive themselves.

We are both able to [...] drive currently, which allows us to access primary health care 12 miles away. There is effectively no public transport within easy walking distance of our house.

43% told us that they also regularly walk to destinations. However, concerns were raised about a lack of safe pedestrian routes, often due to poor maintenance or parking on pavements.

Fell in Cardiff before I even got to a shop due to uneven paving slab [...] Broke my wrist and had to have a plate fitted.

Problems with public transport were recorded across all local authorities in Wales, though the situation appears to be worse in rural and post-industrial areas. Many respondents voiced their concerns about reduced bus routes and times.

Transport is a definite problem. Bus times have been cut and finish at a very early hour.

The lack of bus routes is of particular concern to those living alone, many of whom reported feeling lonely and/or isolated due to a lack of public transport.

Buses often don't turn up. Events are difficult to get to. Loneliness and isolation at the weekends cause mental health issues.

Train travel is used regularly by 21% of people. Most comments on train travel were positive, though some noted that train services remain limited in Wales, especially in the centre and west of the country.

Would like to use buses and trains, but destinations not always convenient.

# Housing



20% of respondents said that their home is in need of repairs.

For many of those who own their own home outright (73% of respondents) or with a mortgage/loan (6%), the costs of repairs are simply unaffordable.

My house is in desperate need of repairs (roof, electrics, kitchen and bathroom need replacing) but I can't afford to do these things and am unable to do them myself.

People told us that it's hard to find reliable tradespeople to carry out repairs or maintenance. Some said that they paid for repairs that weren't completed.

It was very difficult to find a roofer to fix my roof. I had three different people out that cost me about £2,000 and it wasn't fixed. I don't have money to waste like that.

We also heard of repairs needed in social and privately rented housing, including cases of damp and mould.

I live in a council house and it is always very cold. They promised a couple of years ago to replace the double glazing with triple glazing and installing new front and back doors [...] My curtains move due to the draught from worn out seals in the windows.

There was a slight increase in older people living in the private rented sector (PRS) this year (5%, up from 4% in 2025). Some PRS tenants are concerned about high rents and the difficulty they have experienced trying to organise repairs.

My husband's health is poor and the mildew in this rented [home] is awful and causes a lot of stress. The landlord hates parting with money and will put my rent up to £1,000 if I ask for anything to be done. It took me over 10 years to get double glazed windows - the wooden ones were rotten and falling out.

7% of respondents told us that their house is unsuitable for their needs, with many citing difficulties in accessing stairs without adaptations. We heard of some people who are now unable to access their bathroom due to it being upstairs.

My husband works full-time because we still have a mortgage at 69 and 62. My mobility is very poor indeed. I need a downstairs toilet or bathroom. For 23 years I have used a commode in my lounge, which is also my bedroom and bathroom and living/dining room. I need a stairlift and a bathroom that I can access normally.

Other challenges raised included wishing to downsize but not having the finances to do so, waiting for council accommodation, and issues with anti-social behaviour.

# Accessing information



Only one third of older people are easily able to access information on the support and services they need.

This represents a drop from 2025, when the figure was 47%. This year also saw a rise in the number of people reporting difficulty in accessing information, from 10% in 2025 to nearly 14% in 2026.

The information is there if you can find it.

97% of people said that they have access to the internet at home, though not all said that they used it regularly. One in ten said that they don't feel confident using the internet to look for information or services.

There does appear to be an assumption that everyone has internet access or mobile phones ... some people are either unable or choose not to use the internet.

A significant number of people commented that they prefer to access information via face-to-face services, particularly when dealing with more complex matters. This included people who stated that they are confident in using the internet.

We need to be able to speak to real people.

Another common call was for more paper leaflets and posters advertising public services, including placing them in GP surgeries, libraries and on public transport.

Put leaflets/posters out in the community. Advertise on public transport and bus shelters.

This year, we asked what might help people build their confidence using online services. Multiple people suggested in-person information sessions for older people on accessing basic online services, while others suggested that scams awareness training might help people overcome fears around using the internet.

Just [need] someone to take me through the basics, rather than having to do it by trial and error.

Some people said that they rely on family or friends to help them navigate internet use. This was especially common among people who don't speak English or Welsh as their first language.

Not that confident in using internet but can manage the basics and have a friend I can call on for help and advice.

# Representation in society

Only **14%** of respondents felt that older people are **well represented in society**. This is lower than last year, when 18% said that they believed older people were well represented.

By contrast, **65%** of people felt that older people are **not well represented** – up from 60% in 2025, though down from 70% in 2024 and 2023.

Respondents commented that older people are often portrayed as a ‘drain on society’ or a ‘costly nuisance’, with some feeling that media narratives deliberately stoke intergenerational divisions. Others felt that older people’s needs aren’t reflected in public spaces, citing the lack of public toilets, pedestrian access and joined-up transport routes.

However, there was a general agreement that older people are well represented in politics, with multiple people noting the relative older age of politicians and suggesting that older people are more likely to attend political events and debates.

## Climate change

Rising temperatures pose a significant risk to the health and wellbeing of older people in Wales. This includes immediate dangers, such as the increased likelihood of heat exhaustion in hotter weather (this survey closed shortly before the record-breaking heatwave of late May 2026), flooding and landslips, as well as more global concerns, like the impact of more extreme weather on food prices.

Last year, we asked older people in Wales how they felt about climate change and the danger it poses to an ageing society. This year we asked the same question:

- **35%** are greatly concerned by climate change – down from 43% in 2025
- **36%** are sometimes concerned – up from 31% in 2025
- **12%** are rarely concerned - up from 11% in 2025
- **12%** are not concerned - down from 13% in 2025
- **4%** are unsure - up from 2% in 2025

Like last year, the results show widespread concern among older people about the impact of climate change. Comments focused on issues like the risk of flooding, the loss of seasonally predictable weather and fears for future generations.

However, there was a slight decrease in the immediacy with which people view climate change. For some, the outbreak of the Iran war – and its consequent impact on prices – appears to have taken priority as the most pressing global issue.

Age Cymru is a registered charity 1128436. Company limited by guarantee and registered in Wales and England 6837284. Registered office address Ground Floor, Mariners House, Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff CF24 5TD. © Age Cymru 2026.