

Social inclusion and communities

The facts

- 1.1 million older people experience severe 'multiple exclusion'.¹
- 10% of people aged over 50 and 14% of people aged 80-plus are 'financially excluded'.
- 43% of people aged over 65 feel unsafe walking alone after dark.²
- There were 12,750 recorded distraction burglary crimes in 2006/07.³ The average age of a victim is 81 years.
- Older men and women have the lowest rate of victimisation overall for any age group.⁴
- In 2006/07, 12% of men and 10% of women aged 65-74 perceived high levels of anti-social behaviour in their local areas.⁵
- 32% of people aged 65-74 and 26% of people aged over 75 regularly participate in formal volunteering.⁶
- Research shows that older people are significantly higher than average users of post office services.⁷
- 149 rural Post Offices were closed during 2005/06 and a further 2,500 Post Offices in rural and urban areas will be closed by the end of 2008.
- 72% of single people and 25% of couples over the age of 65 do not have a car.⁸ Among the over-75s, 66% of women and 43% of men do not have access to a car.⁹ 27% of people over 65 in rural areas live in households without a car.¹⁰
- In 2006, 45% of people aged 50 or over had used a computer in the previous three months.¹¹ 8.4 million people over the age of 50 are unable to benefit directly from computer and internet access.¹²
- By 2025, the number of people over 60 excluded from technology is expected to rise to 9.7 million with the consequences being more acutely felt as technology becomes pervasive.¹³

On the agenda

Older people continue to face exclusion on a range of dimensions and can face barriers to participation in their local communities. The Government continues to have a twin-track approach to tackling social exclusion – targeting both disadvantaged individuals and neighbourhoods. Government policy for the former is now focusing on the most excluded, but there are no initiatives relating to the most deprived older people.

The importance of locality and place in achieving inclusion and cohesion has been coming to the fore. The 2006 Local Government White Paper and the final report of the Lyons Review of Local Government both emphasised that the main role of local government should be as ‘place-shapers’ for their communities. Local authorities are increasingly being expected to lead and work with a range of local partners, reflected in the language of ‘local areas’ and not ‘local authorities’.

2008 will mark the implementation of a framework that promises more autonomy for local areas to set priorities of local importance, with more of an expectation of community involvement. The challenge will be how to balance this autonomy for local areas with safeguards for disadvantaged older people who are more likely to face exclusion and less likely to be heard.

Priorities for action

- Local services should be re-designed to meet the needs of older people who are at risk of social exclusion, with a focus on joined-up, targeted support.
- The police and other agencies need to recognise and monitor crime that targets older people because of perceived vulnerability or prejudice.
- The free bus travel scheme should be extended to fund alternatives for people unable to access conventional public transport.
- Local Area Agreements should be monitored locally and nationally to assess how well they are meeting the needs of older people.
- The Government needs to develop safeguards to ensure resources are channelled into cost-effective preventative services, even where there are competing spending pressures.

Local leadership and partnership

October 2007 saw the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act receive Royal Assent and publication of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Together these set out a broad framework for the future role of local authorities as community leaders. Since then, there has been a raft of follow-up publications relating to Local Area Agreements and a new performance framework for local services.

Local authorities have been given more autonomy and flexibility to set their own priorities. But in exchange for this devolution of responsibility, they are in turn expected to devolve power to their local communities and to work more closely with local partners. This expectation is reflected by the Act's new duty for 'responsible bodies' – all the key public agencies – to co-operate together. There is also a duty for local authorities to inform, consult and involve local people in improving local services and quality of life. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is the key vehicle for co-operation as it brings together public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The LSP agrees the area's Sustainable Community Strategy, a document that sets out a vision for the area and a set of key priorities.

To support this, there will be a new performance assessment regime, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), which will measure not just local authority services, but also general improvements in the local area and the contributions of all responsible bodies. The assessments, which start in April 2009, will also examine the quality of local partnership arrangements and community involvement.

The CAA is part of a much less onerous framework of targets, monitoring and regulation. In place of 1,200 existing performance measures, in October 2007 the Government unveiled a new suite of just 198 national performance indicators. These are largely local versions of new national indicators set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review's Public Service Agreements (PSAs). Three of the five indicators in the PSA on well-being in later life are included. These cover healthy life expectancy at 65, older people's assessment of whether they receive support to remain independent, and older people's satisfaction with their home and neighbourhood. Progress against these three indicators will be measured via questions in the new Place Survey to be undertaken regularly by all local authorities from later this year. Consultation on the content and methodology of the survey ended in February.¹⁴ However two other key PSA measures are excluded from the 198 indicators – local levels of pensioner poverty and the 50+ employment rate.

Local Area Agreements lie at the heart of the new arrangements for partnership working and performance assessment. LAAs have existed since April 2005, but from April 2008 they become a statutory requirement. Sitting under the Sustainable Community Strategy, they are intended to define local priorities and set targets for improvements. The new LAAs must include up to 35 local targets agreed with the regional Government Office drawn from the national performance indicator set (in addition there are 16 statutory education and early years targets). LAAs can also include further local targets and indicators which will not be monitored centrally.

The national indicator set and the accompanying LAA guidance both include themes specifically on older people. However local partners are not obliged to include these in the LAAs they agree. There is also no duty for local authorities to monitor the impact of key indicators for different age groups, as there is with respect to race, gender and disability. The Government is, however, considering whether to require local authorities to disaggregate and report data for some national indicators by age and other dimensions of equality.

Age Concern comment

Local flexibility to focus on local priorities is welcome. But there is a danger that in some areas, with a maximum of 35 indicators to choose, key issues for the older population will not emerge as priorities. Close scrutiny is needed to ensure that LAA indicators really do reflect local priorities – they must not just be ‘soft’ targets that can be easily achieved. For the process to deliver for older people, it is especially important that they and their representatives have an opportunity to be heard locally.

Joined-up preventive services

Local government has a long tradition of funding services in the community which benefit a wider group of older people than those with formally assessed health or care needs. Examples include many of the services delivered by local Age Concerns, such as daycare, social activities, opportunities for exercise and education, and information and advice. In recent years these services have come under financial pressure in many areas.

The Government’s policy pronouncements have been increasingly positive about preventive services for older people. The Government sees these services as ways to tackle social exclusion, enhance older people’s health and well-being, and reduce expenditure on acute services (the ‘invest to save’ principle). In social care, the Government has made it clear that there needs to be a shift from resources focused on those with the most acute needs to those with low level needs. The recently published Concordat, *Putting People First*, pledged to build on best practice and replace ‘paternalistic, reactive care of variable quality’ with ‘a mainstream system focused on prevention, early intervention, enablement, and high quality, personally tailored services’.¹⁵ A ring-fenced Social Care Reform Grant commits £517 million over three years to support this broad agenda (some diverted from NHS spending). However, increasing demand for intensive services, growing funding pressures and institutional barriers mean that these aspirations may never become reality.

The Government is funding two pilot programmes to test the value for money case for preventative services. The Department of Health’s 29 Partnerships for Older People Project (POPP) pilots are intended to test whether preventative services reduce costs for the NHS. The Department for Work and Pensions’ 8 LinkAge Plus pilots aim to improve outcomes for older people through better joining-up of services. At local level, however, it is often difficult to distinguish between POPPs and LinkAge Plus programmes. In Autumn 2007 the Department of Health published interim results of the evaluation of POPPs which showed clear reductions in demand for acute NHS services as a result of the pilots.

Recent evaluation has confirmed that Supporting People – the programme for housing related support – is a preventative service which delivers savings for other public services. This has helped to inform the Government’s decision to continue the programme, albeit with reduced funding. This is one example of a general trend for the Government to reduce the role of ‘ring-fenced’ programmes, in the belief that innovative and preventative programmes should be able to win resources from mainstream budgets, when the business case is strong enough. Another example is that additional pots of money attached to Local Area Agreements are no longer tied to specific strands of activity and local partners are allowed to pool their resources to achieve joint priorities.

The advocates of joined-up, preventative programmes are hoping that the LAA process will deliver support and resources to ensure their long-term sustainability. But faced with statutory responsibilities within their education, early years, social care, and environmental functions, it is not clear that local authorities will have the capacity to make these local priorities.

Social exclusion

Social exclusion means being unable to access the things in life that most of society takes for granted. It's not just about not having enough money, but is a build-up of problems across many aspects of people's lives. It covers lack of access to services, good social networks, decent housing, adequate information and support, and the ability to exercise basic rights. Older people at risk include those experiencing poor physical health, depression, cognitive impairments, or recent bereavement. People who are over 80, from minority ethnic backgrounds, or who have experienced inequality over their whole lives are at the highest risk.

In 2006 the former Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) published *A Sure Start to Later Life*, a widely welcomed report on older people's social exclusion. It looked at the dimensions and causes of exclusion in later life and called for the development of local, joined-up preventative services that would be available to all, but targeted at the most excluded. This message chimed with ministers' existing interest in preventative services, but had a particular focus on supporting the most disadvantaged.

The legacy of the 2006 SEU project are the LinkAge Plus pilots, managed by the Department for Work and Pensions' Opportunity Age programme. These were intended to test the 'sure start' approach to services for older people. Age Concern's initial assessment is that most of these pilots have fallen short of the SEU's vision of a holistic, joined-up support for the most excluded. While many of the individual services appear to be effective they are piecemeal initiatives and not always effectively targeted.

Aside from these pilots, momentum has been lost since the report's launch. Awareness of the SEU's work within local government is low and there have been few systematic attempts to re-model older people's services along the lines recommended by the report. In summer 2006, the Social Exclusion Task Force replaced the SEU and decided to focus on people facing the most severe social exclusion. However its work has mainly targeted people who cause concern to others, such as drug users, people with severe mental health problems, ex-offenders and homeless people. As a result the Task Force has not looked at the forms of severe exclusion typically experienced in later life, for example sub-standard private housing and extreme isolation.

Older people also appear to be losing out from a new direction in policy on neighbourhood renewal. In recent years the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and New Deal for Communities programme have provided significant funding for the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods. These projects have often focused on the built environment or employment, and have sometimes been criticised for ignoring the interests of older people. Following the Comprehensive Spending Review there will be little support specifically targeted at neighbourhood renewal. Instead the Government has introduced a new Working Neighbourhoods Fund which, by focusing on employment, skills and enterprise, will bring few benefits to people who have already retired.

Exclusion from services and transport

Access to transport is crucial if older people are to keep in touch with friends and family and be able to access the goods and services they need to continue to live independently. Over the past 30 years the UK has become increasingly car dependent and key services such as hospitals and supermarkets are often located in places which are inaccessible without a car. The problems are particularly acute for people in rural areas who do not have a car. Although the number of older people holding driving licences is projected to increase in future years – due to the increase in women drivers – there will always be a significant number of older households without a car, both because car ownership has a strong link with income and because some people have to give up driving due to health reasons.

The majority of trips made by older people are by car, either as a driver or as a passenger (58%). The next most popular modes of transport are walking (25%) and using a bus or coach (12%). The Government has taken steps to improve the accessibility, availability and affordability of bus travel. Since 1998/2000 the proportion of rural households located within 13 minutes walk of an hourly or better bus service has increased from 45% to 54%. There have also been staged improvements to the statutory bus concession for people over the age of 60. The latest of these, free nationwide bus travel, is due to come into force in April 2008. Each improvement has seen an increase in the take-up of the concession which now stands at 63%¹⁶. Although use of the concession is higher in urban areas, growth in take-up is now fastest in rural areas. However, there are no travel concessions for older people who either have no local bus services or who are too immobile to be able to use them, even though they may have to rely on other more costly forms of transport.

It is also important that public transport goes to the places older people need to reach. Research done by the Social Exclusion Unit found that people with no car had greater difficulty accessing basic services such as hospitals, GP surgeries and food shops, as well as seeing friends and family.¹⁷ For example they found that 31% of people without a car have difficulties travelling to their local hospital compared to 17% of car owners. This also results in losses to the health service since each year over 1.4 million people miss, turn down or do not seek a clinical appointment because of transport problems. The report also showed that 16% of people without cars found accessing supermarkets difficult and 18% had difficulty visiting family and friends. The main barriers to using public transport are availability, physical accessibility, cost, security fears and services such as hospitals and shops being poorly served by public transport. This is a particularly acute problem in rural areas which have seen the loss of local provision of many key services such as shops, post offices and banks. In recognition of these problems local authorities have been required to incorporate accessibility plans into their 2006-2011 Local Transport Plans.

The Social Exclusion Unit's 2006 report *A Sure Start to Later Life* included two transport related announcements. First it said that eligibility for the Blue Badge scheme would be extended to people with cognitive and behavioural disabilities. However, when the Government changed the criteria it did not include these groups, although a further review is now underway. The report also recommended that the Individual Budget pilots should include a transport component and this was piloted in one area.

Age Concern comment

The statutory bus concession should be extended to allow a choice to be made between having either a bus pass or tokens that can be spent on other modes of transport.

Exclusion from technology

The ability to use technology often has a very positive impact on quality of life for older people. Technology can help people stay in touch with friends and family; manage health conditions and remain independent; play an active part in the community; and learn new skills for work or leisure. But many older people are excluded from the benefits of new technologies. Some are in the paradoxical position of saying they are not interested in new technology but also recognising the benefits it could bring (the main reason for not using the internet is 'lack of interest' – despite high awareness of opportunities such as cheap online shopping and the chance to stay in touch with friends).¹⁸

In 2006, Ofcom's Consumer Panel published research exploring the dramatic and seemingly voluntary decline in technology use with age. Significantly, it found that attitudes are the key determinants of whether older people use technology – rather than health, age or income.¹⁹ The findings indicated that while there is a small proportion of older people who will never choose to engage with technology, this is not the case for the vast majority. Many older people that are seemingly 'voluntarily' excluded would be willing to engage with the appropriate support and assistance.

A number of commercial providers have begun offering home-based training and support for mobile phones and computers and this trend may be contributing to an increase in take-up of technology. In November 2007 Ofcom published research showing that since 2006 take-up of mobile telephones, broadband internet and digital television had increased significantly among people over 65 and low-income groups.

Older people are more likely to watch television than any other age group (television is watched by 99% of people over 60).²⁰ The switchover from analogue to digital television has now begun, with Whitehaven in Cumbria the first community to make the move in November 2007. Switchover will be phased, with the country divided into ITV regions:

- 2008 – Border
- 2009 – West Country, HTV Wales, Granada
- 2010 – HTV West, Grampian, Scottish Television
- 2011 – Yorkshire, Anglia Central
- 2012 – Meridian, Carlton/ LWT (London), Tyne Tees, Ulster

The Digital Switchover (Disclosure of Information) Act received Royal Assent in June 2007.²¹ The Act allows for social security information to be disclosed to the BBC to help target those who will benefit from the Digital Switchover Help Scheme. The scheme provides information and technical support to everyone over the age of 75; people with a significant disability (receiving either Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance or an equivalent under war pension or industrial injuries legislation); and people registered blind or partially sighted.

Age Concern successfully lobbied the Government and Digital UK, the body responsible for delivering the switchover, to ensure that additional support is made available for people who do not meet the requirements of the Help Scheme but who are nevertheless struggling with the switchover process (eg people under 75 with a disability who are not receiving one of the relevant benefits). As a result a Community Outreach Programme will be delivered in the first four switchover regions.

In 2008, the Government is committed to reviewing its Digital Strategy with an emphasis on social inclusion. Technology features widely in the Government's drive against social exclusion.²² For example the Government's Digital Challenge scheme has made over £20 million of awards, including to a scheme that helps carers take time off by linking them to the person they are caring for, via a 24 hour contact centre.

This is one example of 'telecare'. Telecare is an umbrella term for a range of networked systems used to monitor safety and health at home. Examples include environmental and movement sensors, and specific clinical measurements such as heart rate or blood pressure. Technologies of this sort are extremely welcome, as long as they supplement rather than replace human contact. The 2006 White Paper *Our health, our care, our say*, promoted the role of telecare and other assistive technologies in helping people retain their independence and improve quality of life.²³ Between 2006 and 2008 the Government allocated £80 million to a Preventative Technology Grant to test new approaches. It now remains to be seen whether there is widespread adoption of telecare following the end of this pilot scheme.

More controversially, a debate has begun on the merits of electronically tagging dementia sufferers, 40% of whom are prone to wander and get lost. With Government ministers and the Alzheimer's Society giving serious consideration to the idea, it is likely to remain a talking point.

Independence and interdependence in the community

The Government's commitment to supporting older people to remain independent for as long as possible was reaffirmed in 2007, not least by the Public Service Agreement on later life. However, most focus is still on services provided within and to the home, as opposed to how external environments can contribute to independence. And since the publication of the *Opportunity Age* strategy in 2005 there has been little focus on interdependence within the community, and the contributions older people can make to neighbours, friends and family.

There are some signs that both agendas are now at least being considered by the Government. National spatial planning policy now indicates that regional and local authorities should have regard to the needs of older people.²⁴ Some local authorities have already sought

to engage older people in design and planning. The Newcastle Elders Council, for example, has tested how sensitive the city centre is to the needs of older people. And the Government, as part of its work on the National Housing Strategy for an Ageing Population, worked with the International Longevity Centre (ILC) on developing the concept of 'lifetime neighbourhoods'.²⁵ This concept implies that just as homes should be designed inclusively to meet needs through the lifecourse, so too should local neighbourhoods. The ILC paper considered what services and physical environment are needed to realise this vision.

The Cabinet Office has shown some interest too in interdependence and co-production models such as 'timebanking'. Timebank participants 'deposit' their time in the bank by giving practical help and support to others and are able to 'withdraw' their time when they need something done themselves. The Department of Health is also funding two pilot 'homeshare' schemes, in West Sussex and Oxfordshire. Homeshare is an arrangement whereby accommodation is offered to someone in exchange for an agreed amount of low-level support. The *Putting People First* Concordat also suggested that intergenerational programmes, involving older people as active citizens, would be 'early priorities' of a personalised adult social care system.

Age Concern comment

Older people comprise a large, and growing, proportion of local neighbourhoods but their potential is not being sufficiently recognised or utilised. Older people still face barriers to participation and can be viewed as passive recipients of services.

Innovative design and means of consultation can allow less able older people to enjoy their neighbourhoods and to have a voice. And reciprocal models such as Homeshare and Timebanks can help older people to feel valued as well as being a means of receiving low-intensity services that are vital to their independence and well-being.

Crime

The Government has presided over an era of falling crime rates, although this trend has not been universal – serious violent crime has increased, for example. In addition, low level crime and anti-social behaviour remains a problem. And despite falling crime figures, fear of crime and perceptions of crime continue to be high. The Government's new three-year crime strategy therefore pledged a stronger focus on serious violence and 'continued pressure on anti-social behaviour'.²⁶ It also pledged to reduce re-offending, renew the focus on young people and introduce a 'new national approach to designing out crime'.

Local authorities have had community safety responsibilities since 1998. Local authority-led Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) continue to set priorities locally but are expected to work very closely with Local Strategic Partnerships, with reduced requirements imposed by Central Government. Every local authority ward now has a core team of police, although Government plans to roll out a national non-emergency number, '101', have stalled. The Government has also announced that from 2008 everyone will be able to access

straightforward, street-by-street information via the internet about crime in their area. Time will tell what impact this has – MORI research indicates that even where people believe that crime is low locally, they still believe that crime elsewhere is high. Disproportionate media reporting has been blamed for this.

Fear of crime is still highest among the oldest and youngest. It can have a severe impact on the behaviour and well-being of older people – for example, in their reluctance to venture out alone after dark.²⁷ Fear of crime among older people is often deemed to be unnecessarily high because older people are unlikely to be the victims of crime. But the vulnerability of older people, and the prevalence of crime in deprived areas, can justify this fear.

Some communities have recognised the role of positive contact in helping to promote understanding between younger and older generations. The benefits of intergenerational schemes have been promoted by the Local Government Association and in Government-commissioned research.^{28, 29} Such schemes are far from commonplace however.

Age Concern comment

It is generally recognised that fear of crime is high among older people, even though they are rarely victims of crime. But the focus on reducing public misunderstandings about levels of crime, could lead policy makers to disregard the debilitating effects of fear of crime for some older people.

Intergenerational schemes in particular, can have a marked effect on older people's perceptions and feelings of safety and should be promoted more widely.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has published a draft policy on its position towards crimes against older people, including a commitment to greater support for victims in giving evidence. There is no statutory definition of a crime against an older person. The CPS policy includes distraction burglary, scams, rogue traders, doorstep selling and elder abuse or neglect. Statistics on all these crimes are patchy. Official crime statistics, recorded by the police, do not include details about the victim and although 'hate crime' is recorded separately, age is not a recognised category. The British Crime Survey, which includes unreported crime, records a victim's age but only relates to theft, vandalism, violent crime, burglary and vehicle-related crime. So figures for other crimes are partial estimates:

- distraction burglary appears to be falling, although it is widely acknowledged that this is an under-reported crime
- the Office of Fair Trading estimated that 80% of telephone scams affected older people aged 65 or more³⁰
- a national study in 2007 found that 2.6% of older people aged 66 and over living in private households reported mistreatment involving a family member, close friend or care worker (around 227,000 people aged 66 and over).³¹

The Government has no plans to introduce tougher sentencing or new legislation for crimes against older people, although there is some Ministerial interest in new legislation to protect vulnerable adults from abuse. On the other hand, the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive will come into force in Spring 2008 and this will involve revising some existing consumer legislation. It is hoped that the implementation of the Directive will give a greater opportunity to protect consumers who are vulnerable, for example, to excessive overcharging for routine home improvements.

Age Concern comment

Age Concern believes there should be better monitoring of whether older people are being targeted as victims of crime because of their age or vulnerability. With improved evidence, it should become clear whether additional legislation is needed to protect older people, on the lines of laws protecting other victims of prejudice.

We welcome the Crown Prosecution Service's attempt to highlight the plight of victims of the sorts of crimes that affect older people. We believe its work should be a stepping stone to a wider cross-Government strategy for tackling crime that targets older people due to ageism or perceived vulnerability.

Coming up in 2008

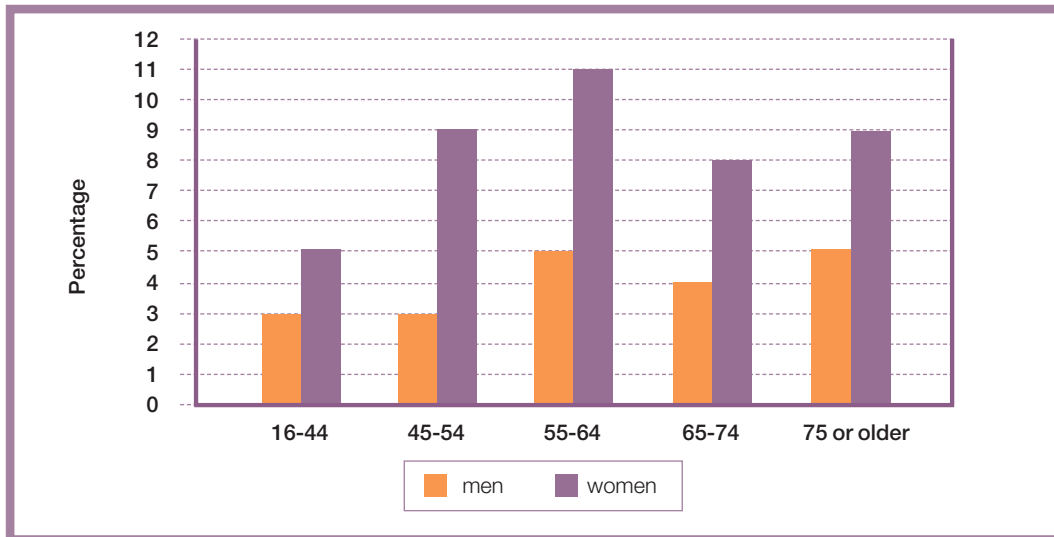
- Proposals from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency on revised procedures regarding the notification of medical conditions.
- Implementation of the nationwide bus pass.
- Review of the Blue Badge scheme.
- New POCA tender to be allocated.
- Finalisation on which 2,500 post offices are to close.
- Final Crown Prosecution Service to be published (April).
- Unfair Commercial Practices Directive coming into force (April 2008).
- New Local Area Agreements to be signed off (June 2008).
- New local crime profiles to be available (July 2008).
- First Place Survey results expected (November 2008).

and beyond.....

- Comprehensive Area Assessment begins in 2009.
- Post office subsidy ends in 2011.

Indicators

1. Quality of life affected by crime



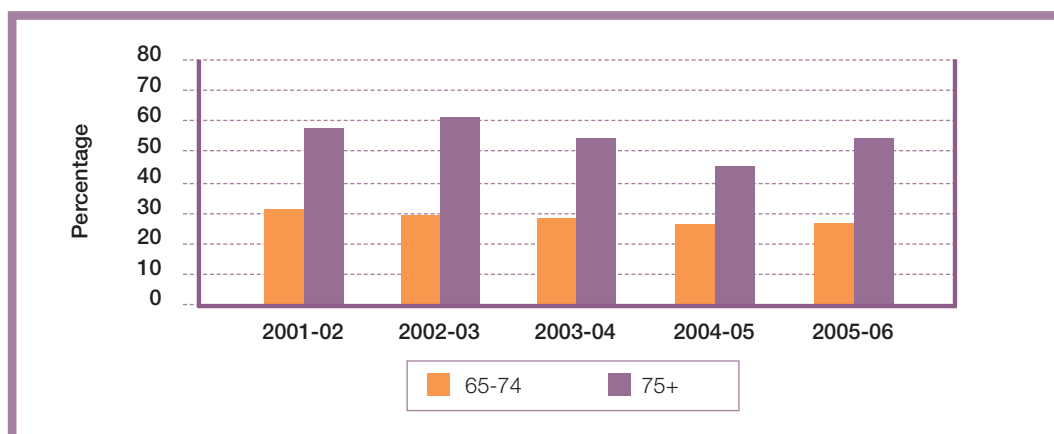
Source: Home Office, British Crime Survey 2005/06

Notes: Percentage of people whose life is greatly affected by the fear of crime

Direction of travel: no time series

Generally, older people are less likely to fear that they will be victims of crime than younger age groups, who are the most fearful of crime. But older people are more likely to say their quality of life is greatly affected by fear of crime than younger people. This is despite the fact that older people are less likely to be a victim of crime. This is a negative indicator for older people as fear of crime among this age group can lead to social isolation and reduced independence.

2. Households without a car



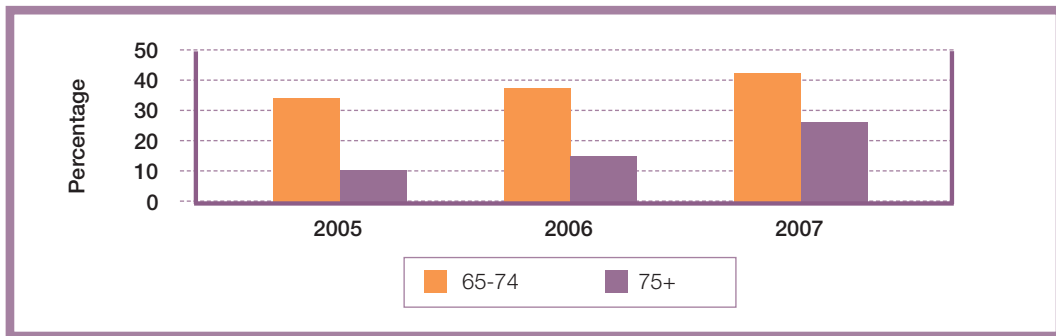
Source: Department for Communities and Local Government, Survey of English Housing 2006

Notes: Percentage of households with someone over 65, and 75, who do not have use of a car or van

Direction of travel: positive

There has been a gradual upward trend in older people's car ownership over the past few of years, although over half of 75+ households don't have the use of a car. Single people are far more likely than couples to be affected.

3. Use of internet

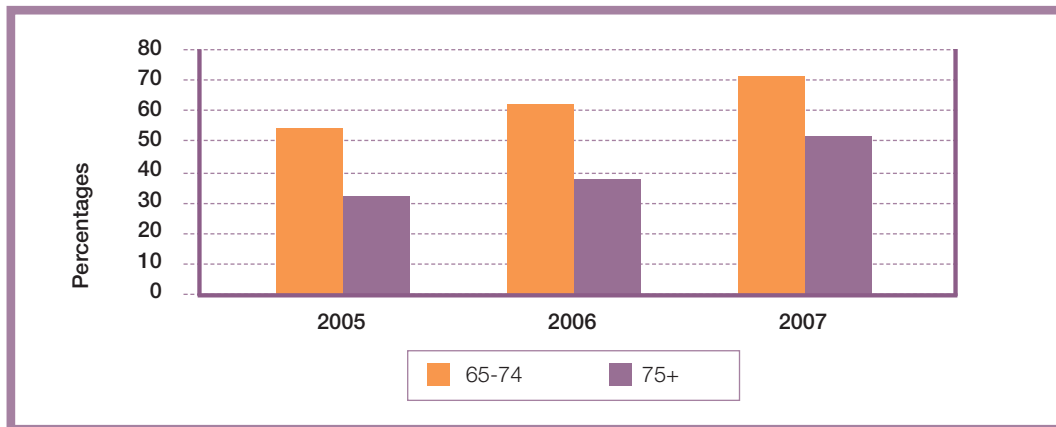


Base: All adults (Q2 2005, 2206) (Q2 2006, 2439) (Q2 2007, 2265)
Source: Ofcom communications tracking survey
Notes: Percentage of people with internet access, by age group.

Direction of travel: positive

Internet take-up has continued to increase rapidly among older people, particularly over 75s. A one year jump from 14% to 27% is extremely positive, although under this is still some way off the population-wide figure of 65%.

4. Digital television



Base: All adults 15+ (Q2 2005, 2206) (Q2 2006, 2439) (Q2 2007, 2265)
Source: Ofcom communications tracking survey
Notes: Percentage of people with digital TV access, by age group

Direction of travel: positive

Take-up of digital TV has continued to increase in the last 12 months. For the first time more than half of households with someone over 75 now have digital television.

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