

PROGRESS WITH THE DELIVERY PLAN FOR AGE FRIENDLY WALES: OUR STRATEGY FOR AN AGEING SOCIETY

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

INTRODUCTION

For the previous report we created a UK Ageing Index to provide a baseline measure of the situation of older adults in Wales. This was developed prior to the development of the strategy and therefore was intended to capture quite broad dimensions of ageing as, at the time, the specific goals of the strategy were unknown. The UK Ageing Index was based on the domains identified in the Global Ageing Index. As discussed in the previous report it was also our ambition to use the UK Ageing Index to compare how well Wales was doing for its older population with countries around the world as the Global Ageing Index focused just on the UK as a whole, not the constituent countries.

However, it was decided not to replicate the UK Ageing Index for this report for two main reasons:

- i) it appears that the Global Ageing Index will not be produced again, hence we will not be able to look at international comparisons with Wales and
- ii) since the publication of the Strategy we now know what the goals are which allowed us to identify more specific and relevant indicators for the Welsh context.

Our plan going forward is review the data collected by various agencies in Wales with the ultimate aim of co-producing a Welsh Index of Ageing based on a wider range of measures that will allow for a much more detailed assessment of the extent to which the goals set out in the Strategy are being met.

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The data in this report is gathered from Public Health Wales Observatory¹ and the National Survey for Wales 2018-19 and 2021-22²

¹ https://publichealthwales.shinyapps.io/PHWO_HealthExpectanciesWales_2022/

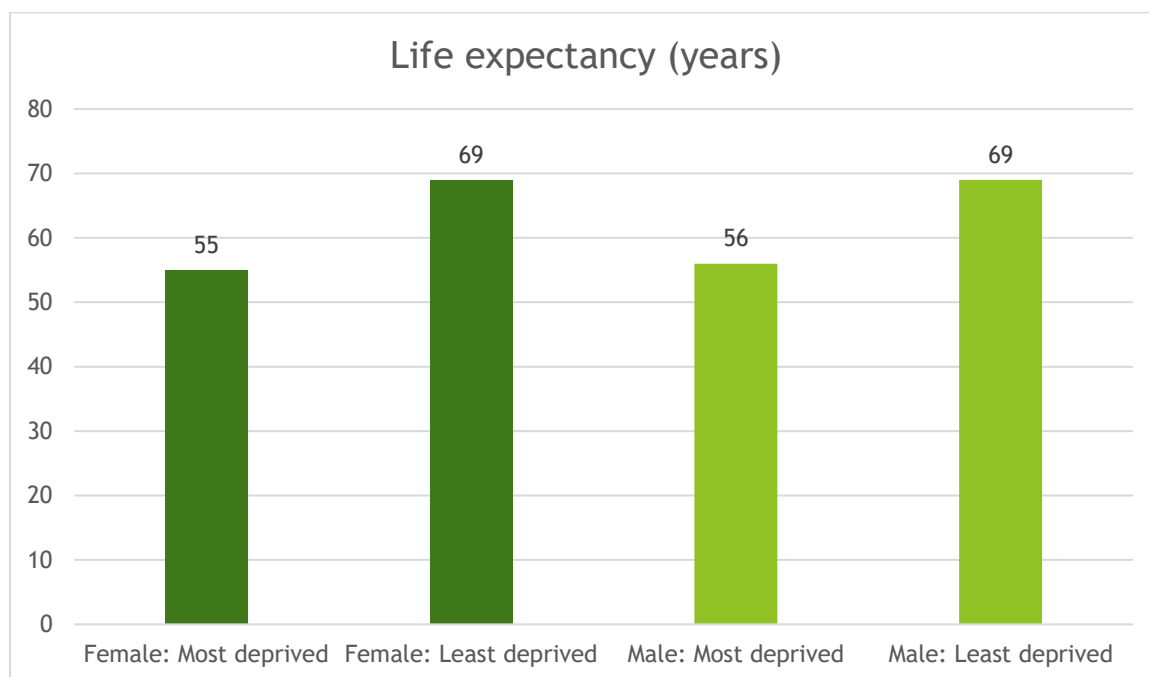
² Office for National Statistics, Welsh Government. (2022). National Survey for Wales, 2021-2022. [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 9011, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-9011-1>

ANALYSIS

The most recent data from the Public Health Wales Observatory show that in 2018-2020 life expectancy in Wales was 82 years for females and 78 years for males and healthy life expectancy was 62 years for females and 61 years for males. However, life expectancy for females was at its lowest point since 2011-2013. Moreover, the data show that there are continuing economic inequalities in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in Wales.

Women in the most deprived areas are expected to live to 78 years, whilst those in the least deprived areas can expect to live to 85 years on average. For men the figures are 74 years and 82 years respectively. As figure 1 shows the gap in healthy life expectancy (the number of years, on average, that someone can expect to live in good health) is 14 years for females and 13 years for men. Of some concern is that the Public Health Wales Observatory reports that while the gap in healthy life expectancy among males has decreased since 2015-2017, the gap has increased for females.

Figure 1. Inequalities in healthy life expectancy in Wales 2018-2020



As table 1 shows there are also quite wide regional differences in healthy life expectancy across Wales. For males this ranges from 55 years in Torfaen to 69 years in Monmouthshire. For females this ranges from 56 years in Blaenau Gwent to 69 years in Monmouthshire.

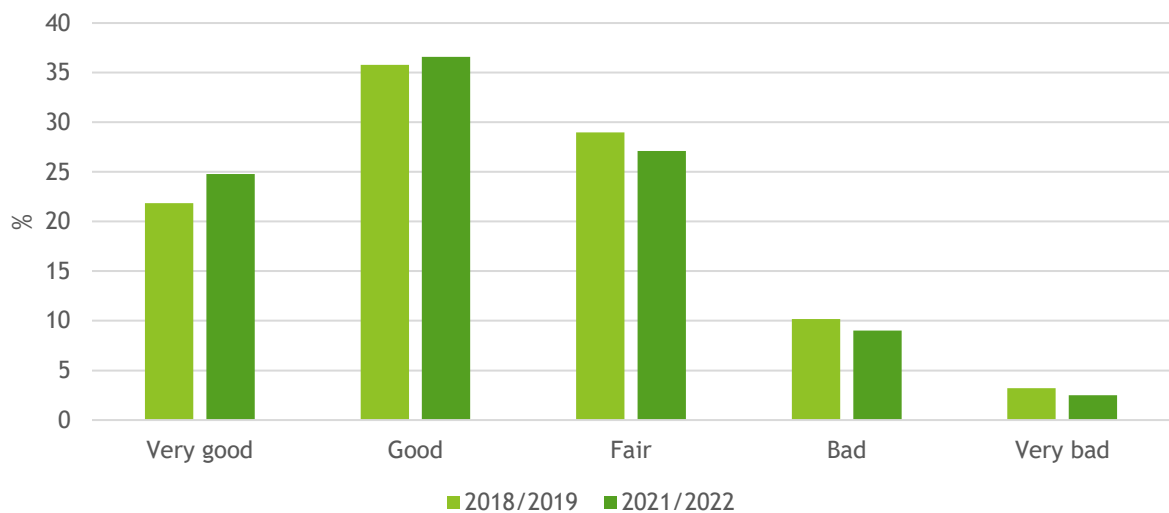
Table 1. Regional differences in healthy life expectancy in Wales

	Females	Males
Isle of Anglesey	63.59	64.19
Gwynedd	68.10	65.05
Conwy	66.01	63.41
Denbighshire	65.83	63.25
Flintshire	63.95	64.22
Wrexham	63.26	63.77
Powys	65.62	62.02
Ceredigion	64.17	62.62
Pembrokeshire	65.75	61.76
Carmarthenshire	61.83	59.75
Swansea	60.51	61.92
Neath Port Talbot	57.92	59.67
Bridgend	58.24	60.16
Vale of Glamorgan	64.74	61.94
Cardiff	65.86	62.87
Rhondda Cynon Taf	60.68	57.14
Merthyr Tydfil	57.00	57.67
Caerphilly	57.03	56.70
Blaenau Gwent	56.46	55.65
Torfaen	55.26	60.75
Monmouthshire	69.30	68.74
Newport	58.11	60.66

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

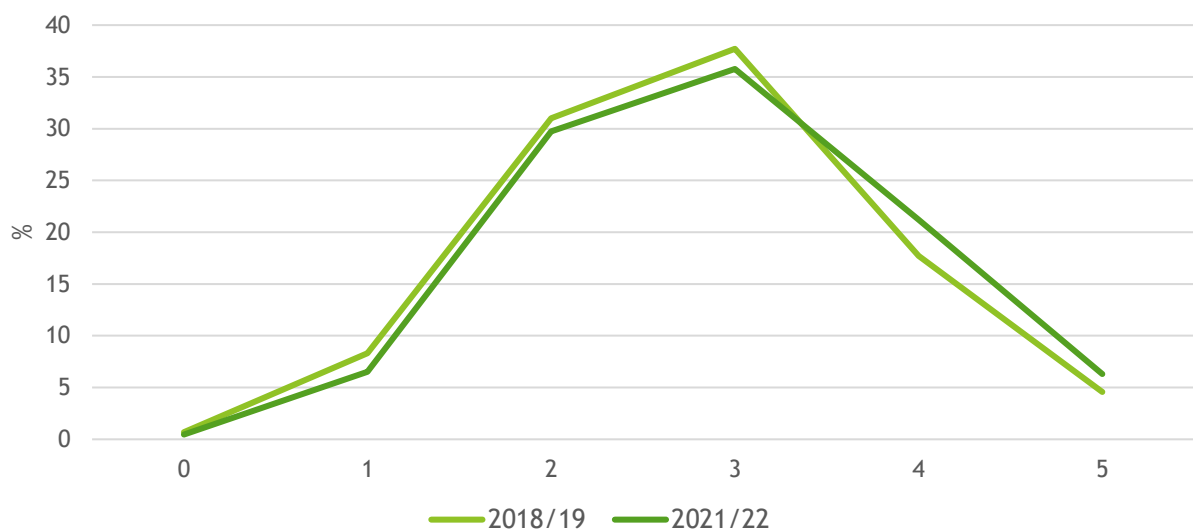
Data from the National Survey for Wales show that overall, there were slight improvements in the general health of the older population in Wales between 2018/19 and 2021/22. As figure 2 shows, in 2018/19 22 per cent of those aged 60 and over reported that their health was very good. By 2021/22 this had risen to 25 per cent. At the other end of the scale the proportion who reported having very bad health fell from 3 per cent to 2 per cent.

Figure 2. General health among older adults in Wales in 2018/19 and 2021/22.



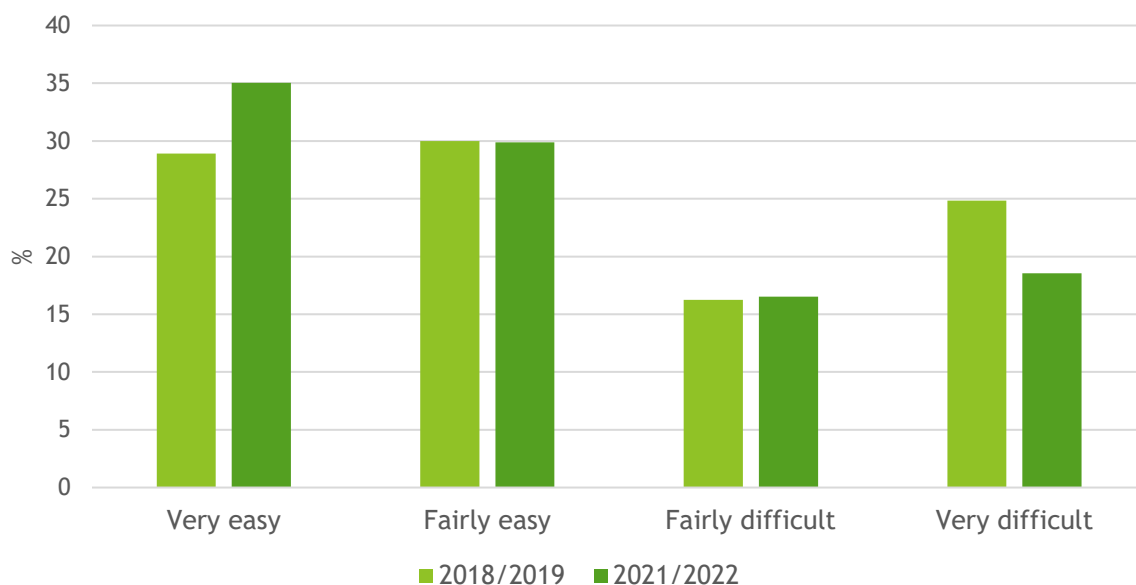
There was also very little change in the health behaviours of older adults between 2018/19 and 2021/22. As figure 3 shows at both time points around one-third of older adults reported having 3 healthy lifestyle behaviours, around 20 per cent have 4 healthy behaviours and around 5 per cent report 5 healthy lifestyle behaviours.

Figure 3. Number of healthy lifestyle behaviours (not smoking, healthy weight, eat 5 fruit or veg, not drinking above guidelines, active) among older adults.



The proportion of older adults who had seen a GP/family doctor about own health in last 12 months had fallen from 80 per cent in 2018/19 to 60 per cent in 2021/22 (figure 4). Over the same period the proportion of older people who said that they had wanted to see a GP or family doctor, but could not, rose from 9 per cent to 14 per cent. However, there has been a slight positive change in the ease with which older adults report that they can get a doctor’s appointment at a convenient time. In 2018/19, 29 per cent of older adults said that they found it very easy to get an appointment. By 2021/22 this had risen to 35 per cent. At the other end of the scale the proportion who said that it was very difficult fell from 25 per cent to 19 per cent.

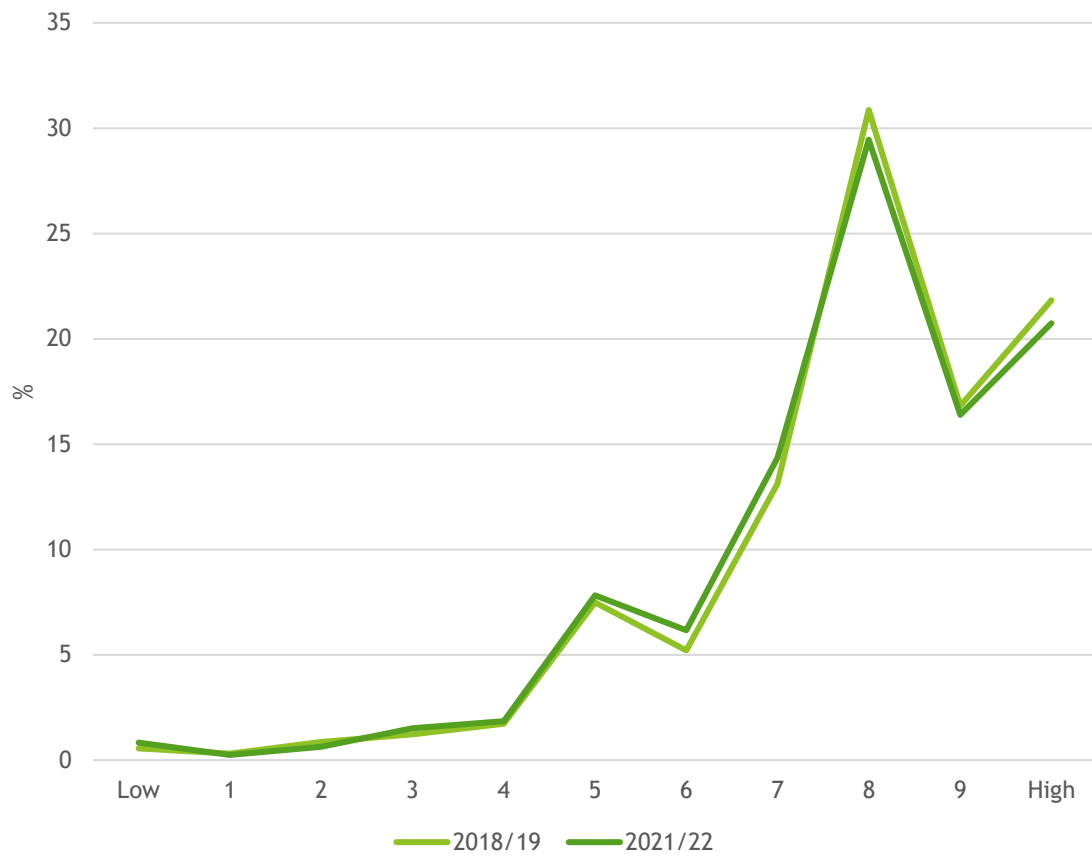
Figure 4. Ease of getting an appointment at a convenient time



However, there was a decline in the levels of satisfaction with the care that older adults felt they received from their GP. The proportion of those who said that they were very satisfied declined from 70 per cent in 2018/19 to 60 per cent in 2021/22. On a more positive note, the proportion of older adults who said that they were very satisfied with the care that they received in hospital rose from 77 per cent in 2018/19 to 84 per cent in 2021/22.

There have been no notable changes in the well-being of older adults between 2018/19 and 2021/22. Well-being was measured using the Office for National Statistics well-being scale. This is comprised of 4 items: i) Overall satisfaction with life; ii) Extent of feeling that things done in life are worthwhile; iii) Overall happiness yesterday; and, iv) Overall anxiety yesterday. In the 2018/19 data most older adults reported high levels of well-being across these four items. As figure 5 considers overall levels of life satisfaction, shows the data in 2021/22 show a similar pattern.

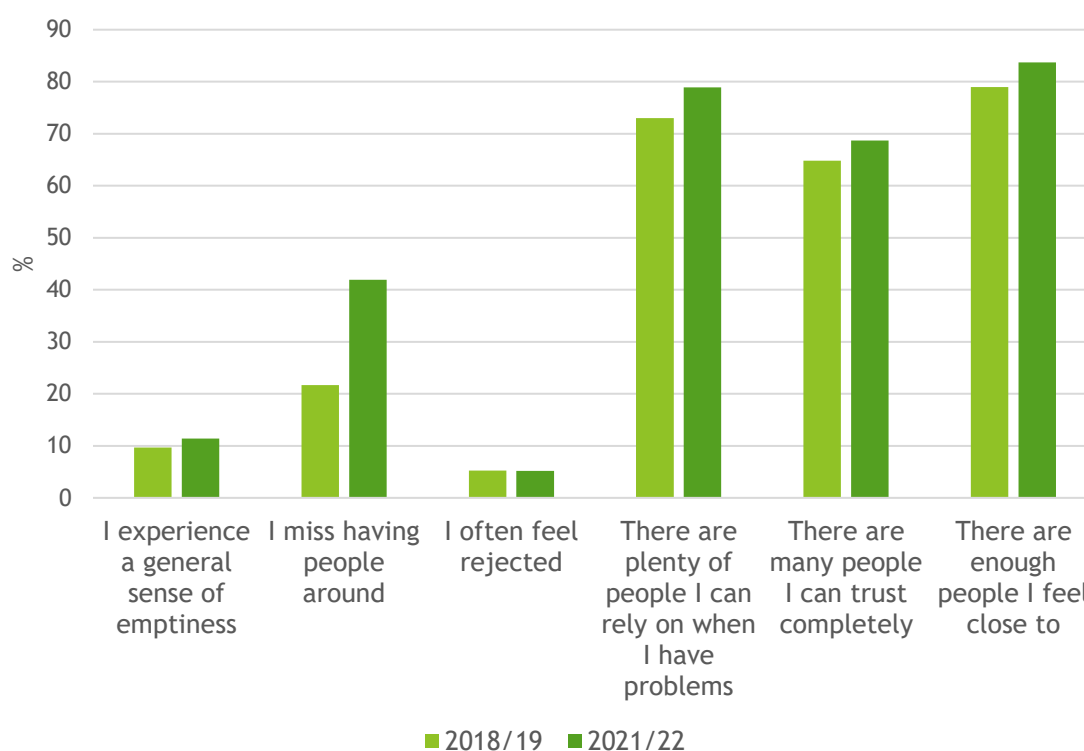
Figure 5. Differences in overall life satisfaction between 2018/9 and 2021/22.



SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY

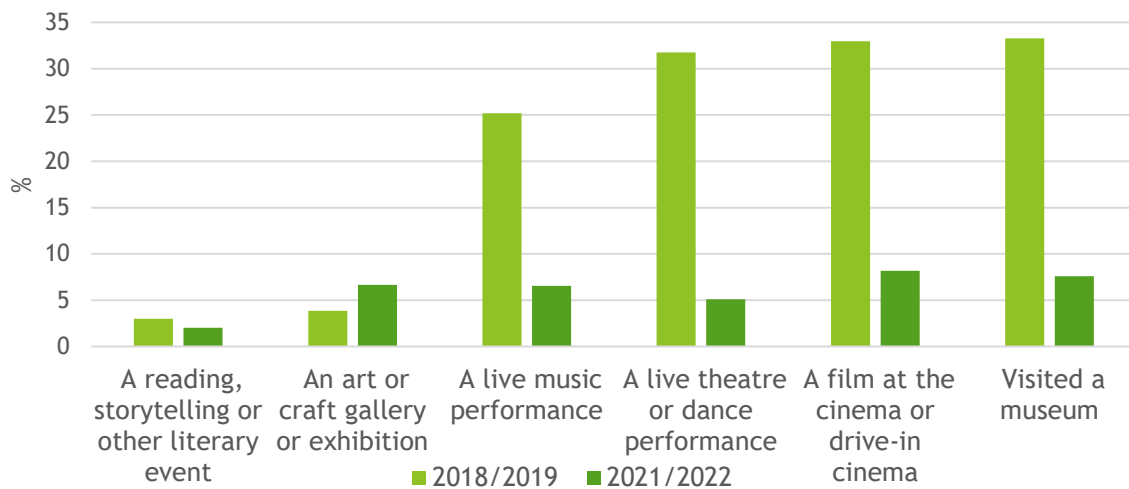
The data on levels of social connectivity show a similar picture of relative stability between 2018/19 and 2021/22. At each time point the majority of older adults felt that there were plenty of people they could rely on when they have problems, there were many people they could trust completely and that there are enough people they felt close to. Where there was a notable change between the two periods was the increase in the proportion of older people who said that they miss having people around. As figure 6 shows in 2018/19 around 22 per cent of older adults said that they miss having people around. By 2021/22 this had almost doubled to 42 per cent.

Figure 6. Social isolation and connectivity



Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that the data were partly collected during the Covid-19 lockdowns, there has been a significant drop in the proportion of older adults who have attended various arts events or visited heritage sites. However, on a more positive note there has not been such a dramatic drop in the proportion of older adults participating in artistic and creative activities during 2021/22. Although the numbers are still relatively low 7 per cent of older adults reported participating in visual arts and crafts (down from 8 per cent in 2018/19). In both the 2018/19 and the 2021/22 surveys 2 per cent of older adults said that they did creative writing and a 2 per cent said that they did photography or film making. Also of note is that the proportion of older adults who said that they had access to the internet rose from 78 per cent in 2018/2019 to 84 per cent in 2021/2022.

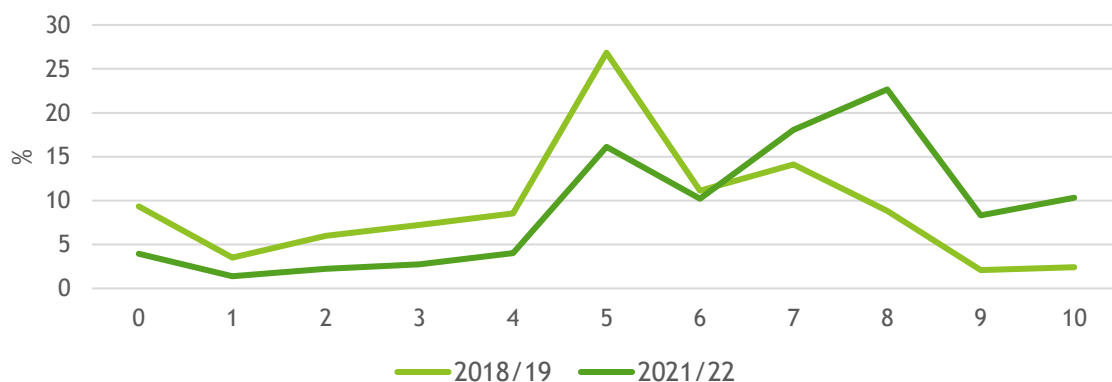
Figure 7: Percentage who have attended the following arts event or historical places in past 12 months.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

There has been a notable change in the extent to which older adults feel that they are able to participate in decision about the running of their local authority. In the 2018/19 data older people were most likely to say that they did not feel that they had a voice in the local authority, 40 per cent said that they strongly disagreed and 30 per cent said that they tended to disagree. By 2021/22 this had changed and 28 per cent said that they tended to agree that they had an opportunity to participate in making decisions about the running of my local authority services, which is up from 12 per cent in 2018/19. Conversely, the proportion who strongly disagreed with this statement had fallen to 20 per cent. Similarly, there has been a positive shift in the overall satisfaction that older adults in Wales feel about Welsh Government between the two periods. As figure 8 shows in 2018/9 most people had rather neutral opinion of Welsh Government. By 2021/22 we see a notable shift towards the high satisfaction end of the scale, with older adults most commonly rating their satisfaction with Welsh Government 8 out of 10.

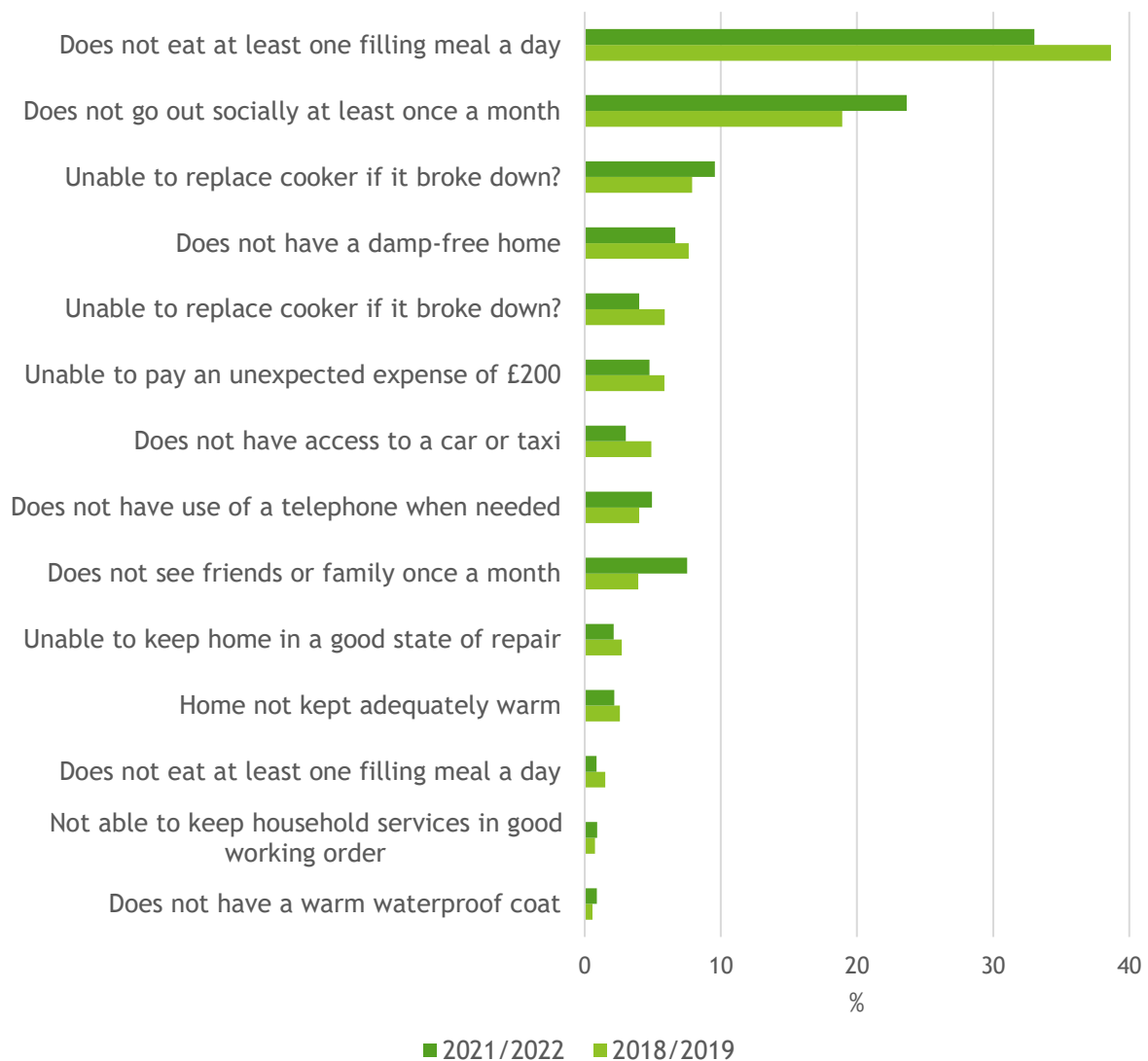
Figure 8. Overall satisfaction with way Welsh Government is doing its job.



DEPRIVATION

Overall, as figure 9 shows, levels of individual deprivation in later life have remained relatively stable between 2018/19 and 2021/22. However, there has been a slight drop in the proportion of those who said that they did not eat at least one filling meal a day. In 2018/19 38 per cent of those aged 60 and over said that they did not have a filling meal. In 2021/22 this was 33 per cent. However, despite this move in the right direction this still means that about 1-in-3 older adults go without a filling meal. Aside from this the only other measures of deprivation where there was notable change were those items that related to social participation and meeting friends or family. As noted above, given the impact of the Covid-19 lockdowns these results are to be expected.

Figure 9. Changes in levels of deprivation among older adults 2018/19 to 2021/22



WELSH LANGUAGE

Interestingly there has been an increase Welsh language competence among older adults. In 2018/19 21 per cent of older adults said that they understood spoken Welsh (figure 10). By 2021/22 this had increased to 27 per cent. There were also increases, albeit smaller, in the proportions who could speak, read and write Welsh. These figures reflect the growing popularity of learning Welsh during the pandemic. According to [Duolingo](#), Welsh became the fastest growing language in 2020.

Figure 10. Rise in Welsh language skills among older adults 2018/19 and 2021/22

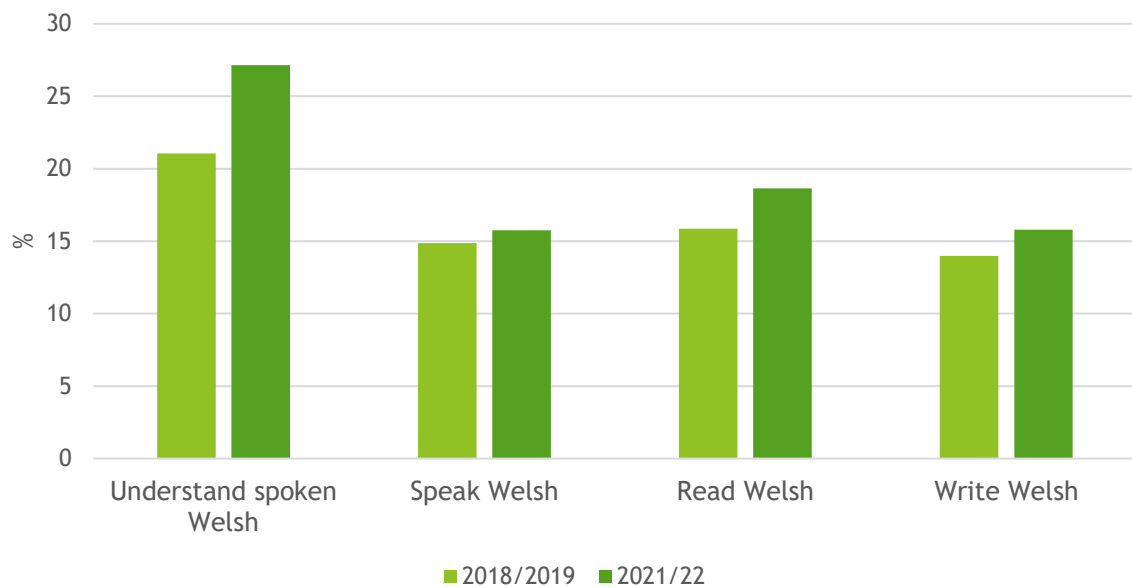


Figure 11. Frequency of speaking Welsh

