

South East England Later Life Factsheet (March 2009)

Background

This factsheet provides a short overview of a range of key statistics which provide an insight into the lives of older people in South East England. There are many areas for which robust regional-level data is available. But for many important aspects of older people's lives, our understanding is more limited. For example, information on age discrimination is difficult to obtain, and the available statistics on lifestyle risk factors are based on sample surveys.

This factsheet focuses on five themes: demography, active ageing and citizenship, employment and skills, housing, and health and well-being.

Demography

- **Numbers of older people:** An estimated 34.1% of the population of the South East (or 2,834,500 persons) are aged 50 and over which is greater than the number of under 25 year olds

This figure includes 1,376,300 people aged 65 and over (or 16.6% of the total population) and 202,400 people aged 85 and over (2.4% of the total), the latter being the second higher percentage of the nine English regions

The district of Rother has the highest percentage of people aged 65 and over (48.2% of the total population), while Oxford City has the lowest (22.3% of the total)

- **Black and Minority Ethnic groups:** It is estimated that there are just under 100,000 people of retirement age from Black and Minority Ethnic groups in the South East, including 27,900 'White Irish', 33,700 'Other White', 10,800 'Asian or British Asian' and 5,900 'Black Caribbean' older people (ONS, 2006)
- **Sex ratio:** There are currently 1.3 women to every one man aged 65 and over in the region; at age 85 and over the sex ratio increases to 2.2:1 (ONS. 2007 Mid-Year Estimates)
- **Projected change:** By 2030, it is projected that 22.8% of the population of the South East (or 2,228,300 persons) will be aged 65 and over and 4.3% (423,60 persons) will be aged 85 and over (ONS. 2006-Based Subnational Projections)

Active Ageing and Citizenship

- **Networks and volunteering:** 51% of people aged 65 and over in the South East are regular participants in at least one organised association (such as a social club or charitable institution) and 36.5% have positive views about the neighbourhood they live in (Health Survey for England, 2005)
- **Car ownership:** 31% of people aged 65 and over in the South East live in a household with no car, the second lowest figure in England (ONS, 2001)
- **Carers:** In 2001, there were over 145,500 people aged 65 and over providing unpaid care to others, including over 44,100 people providing 50 or more hours (ONS. 2001 Census)

- **Social support:** Older men are more likely than women to be socially isolated: an estimated 21% of men and 13% of women aged 65 and over in the South East report a 'severe lack' of social support, while 40% of men and 33% of women have low levels of contact with friends, and 15% of men and 11% of women have 'low' levels of trust in people in general (Health Survey for England, 2005)
- **Social care:** There are approximately 214,200 people aged 65 and over in the South East in receipt of local authority social care services of whom:
 - 178,300 (83.2%) have a physical disability, are frail or have a sensory impairment
 - 184,500 (86.1%) are receiving community-based services
 - 20,200 (9.4%) are receiving independent sector residential care
 - 15,800 (7.4%) are receiving nursing care
 - 15,000 (7%) are receiving a meals service (NHS Information Centre, 2007/8)
- **Mobility:** 34% of men and 43% of women aged 65 and over in the South East report having some form of mobility problem (the lowest and second lowest rates respectively in England) (Health Survey for England, 2005)

Employment and Skills

- **Economic contribution:** Workers aged over 40 contributed almost half the total output of the South East economy in 2007 (£86b), while employees aged over 50 accounted for one quarter of regional output (£44b) (SEEDA estimates, 2007)
National evidence suggests that older workers are a source of innovation (80% of the most workable and worthwhile new production ideas come from employees aged over 40 according to NIACE, 2008), are off sick less often, have lower absentee rates and stay in jobs longer (Age Concern, 2008)
- **Falling numbers of younger workers:** The number of young people leaving the education system is projected to decline over the next decade, and the number of 35 to 45 year olds is projected to fall by 130,000 between 2008 and 2015. At the same time, employment in the South East is forecast to grow considerably following the current economic downturn: by almost 80,000 by 2015. In order to meet this increased demand for labour, recruiting and retaining more 45 to 65 year olds increasingly will be a priority (ONS. 2006-Based Subnational Projections; Experian Business Strategies Regional Planning Service, 2008)
- **Workers over pension age:** 13% of people over state pension age (208,000 persons) were still in work in the South East in 2007/8 and the majority of future population growth will be accounted for by people aged over 65. In 2008, the ratio of 'economically inactive' people to those of working age was 6:10; by 2020 it is forecast to rise to 7:10. Encouraging more people to stay in work beyond the age of 65 would help to counteract the effects of this rising 'dependency ratio' (ONS. 2006-Based Subnational Projections)
- **Economic inactivity:** More than 140,000 people in the South East aged 40 to 70 are currently economically inactive, but would like a job if one were available (ONS. Annual Population Survey 2007/8).
There are half a million 50 to 60 year olds in the South East who regard themselves as retired or not in need of a job. This group represent a large potential source of volunteers, particularly in the current downturn, where voluntary organisations are reporting greater demand for their services but fewer willing volunteers (ONS. Annual Population Survey 2007/8)

Well over half of all employment and support allowance (formerly incapacity benefit) claimants – more than 133,000 people – are in the 45 to 64 age group in the South East (DWP, 2008)

- **Skills:** The employment rate of people aged 50 and over with no or low qualifications is higher than that of younger workers with the same level of qualification, suggesting that employers often value the experience and 'softer skills' of older workers above their formal qualifications (ONS. Annual Population Survey 2007/8)

In sectors with larger proportions of older workers, employers are generally less likely to report skills gaps and skills shortage vacancies (LSC, 2005 and 2007)

Housing

- **Fuel poverty:** Older people form the largest proportion of those affected by fuel poverty: an estimated 49% of fuel poor households (in other words, households that spend more than 10% of their income on heating to maintain an adequate level of warmth) in England contain a person aged 60 and over, and an estimated 5.7% of households in the South East are fuel poor (Centre for Sustainable Energy, 2003)

7% of people aged 65 and over in the South East live in homes with no central heating, the third lowest percentage in England (ONS, 2001)

- **Home ownership:** 64% of people aged 65 and over in the South East own their own home, the second highest figure in England (ONS, 2001)

20% of those aged 85 and over in the region live in a medical or care establishment (ONS, 2001)

- **Living alone:** 43% of women and 20% of men aged 65 and over in the South East live alone (ONS, 2001)

Health and Well-Being

- **Life expectancy:** Male life expectancy at age 65 in the South East is the highest in England (18.2 years) and female life expectancy the second highest (20.7 years) (ONS, 2005-7); disability-free life expectancy in the South East is the highest in England for both males (9.3 years) and females (10.3 years) (ONS, 2001)

- **The 'big killers':** The main causes of death differ by age group: for those aged 65 to 74, cancer is the 'big killer' accounting for 43.6% of deaths (with circulatory disease second at 29.1%), but for those aged 75 and over, circulatory disease is responsible for 38.3% of deaths and cancer a further 20.8% (ONS, 2007)

The mortality rate for all causes of death among persons aged 65 to 74 in the South East is 11.2% lower than the England average (and the second best in England); the regional rates for cancer and circulatory disease are 6.7% and 15% respectively lower than the national averages (ONS, 2005-7)

- **Disease prevalence:** An estimated 40% of men and 29% of women aged 65 and over in the South East have some form of cardiovascular disease, while 12% and 8% respectively have diabetes, 31% and 44% respectively have arthritis (including osteoarthritis and rheumatism), and 10% of both sexes have some form of cancer (Health Survey for England, 2005)

- **Falls:** The hospital admission rate for fractured neck of femur for older people in the South East (4.0 admissions per 1,000 persons aged 65 and over) is significantly better than the national average (4.2 admissions per 1,000) (ONS, 2006/7)

An estimated 20% of men and 28% of women aged 65 and over in the South East have one or more fall each year, the second and third lowest figures respectively in England (Health Survey for England, 2005)

Within the region, however, there are significant differences in fracture admission rates: the figure for the fifth of local authority areas with the worst admission rates (5.8 admissions per 1,000 persons aged 65 and over) is over twice as high as that for the fifth with the lowest rates (2.8 per 1,000 persons) (ONS, 2006/7)

- **Dementia:** According to GP records, over 36,700 people in the South East have been diagnosed with dementia (IC, 2006/7), although this is likely to be a considerable underestimate of the true prevalence: based on estimates contained in the national Dementia Strategy, there are 92,700 people in the region with dementia
- **Health status:** It is estimated that nearly two-thirds (64%) of those aged 65 and over in the South East feel that their health is 'good' or 'very good', the highest figure in England (Health Survey for England, 2005)
- **Obesity:** An estimated 72% of men and 62% of women aged 65 and over in the South East are overweight or obese; while the figure for men is similar to other regions, the figure for women is the lowest in England (Health Survey for England, 2005)
- **Smoking:** It is estimated that 9% of people aged 65 and over in the region are current smokers, the lowest percentage in England (General Household Survey, 2003-4)
- **Alcohol consumption:** An estimated 27% of people aged 65 and over in the South East drink on five or more days a week, the highest percentage in England; an estimated 4% of older people in the region are binge drinkers (General Household Survey, 2003-4)
- **Healthy eating:** It is estimated that only 35% of people aged 65 and over in the South East consume the recommended five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day, although this is the second highest percentage in England (Health Survey for England, 2005)
- **Access to primary care:** Men and women aged 65 and over in the South East are in contact with their GP an average 7.5 times a year, while an estimated 52% of men and 46% of women have attended hospital as an outpatient in the last year (Health Survey for England, 2005)

Produced by

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