

Independent Age

In Focus: Experiences of older age in England

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About Independent Age

Independent Age wants to ensure that as we grow older, we all have the opportunity to live well with dignity, choice and purpose.



Origins of In Focus

We wanted to undertake a project that would underpin our policy work going forward

We were concerned at how 65+ is often treated as a homogenous group by decision makers

'Subgroups' of the 65+ group are often poorly represented in data. Very hard to get data on 65+ BAME people for example.

Wanted to look at 3 key themes: Health and Wellbeing, Financial Security, and Social Connections.

Scoping the project

- We asked NDTI to test our hypothesis looking at academic literature
- They conducted a scoping review and literature search
- Their findings confirmed our hypothesis: in academic literature subgroups of older people are very under-researched

Independent Age:
State of the Nation Scoping Review.

Carol Clifford and Geraldine Cooney
NDTi



March 2019

Setting up our co-production group

- We set up an co-production group of older people to advise us on aspects of the work, including:
 - selecting our qualitative research partner
 - advising on Humankind's approach to engaging with research participants eg guides for the photography task, questions to cover
- This group made a big difference to our work and members reported a positive experience

Commissioning: our initial questions

Academic vs. Market research?

Both projects to one provider, or separate?

Which Qualitative research method to use?

Quantitative method, lots of datasets or one deep dive?

Commissioning: our answers

Q1 and Q2: A market researcher for the qual and academics for the quant

Q3: Our coproduction group were instrumental in selecting method

Q4: One deep dive into one huge dataset

Choosing the research part 3

Activity	Scoping review	Qualitative interviews	Data analysis
Provider	National Development Team for Inclusion	Humankind Research	City University
Approach	Reviewing literature to establish extent to which specific groups of older people are represented in policy thinking and research	In-depth interviews with 45 older people across England, informed by a participatory photography exercise. Follow-up interviews with 21 of the participants	Reviewing extent to which sub-groups are represented in key national statistics Using data from Understanding Society survey* to identify differences for these groups and the extent of multiple disadvantage
Outputs	Report and evidence grid	Report on findings, photos of participants and the photos they took themselves, interview footage (varied levels of consent)	Report and extensive data tables

Choosing our dataset: ELSA

English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA)

Pros:

- The go-to, respected, and comprehensive dataset about older people.
- Because it is a dataset that only looks at older people, the number of questions and possible indicators it has are extensive.

Cons:

- Data on some demographics, for example LGBT+, are covered by special licenses that you have to apply for, which takes time.
- Does not cover any age younger than 50, which prevents cross-generational comparison.

Choosing our dataset: USoc

Understanding Society (USoc)

Pros:

- A giant survey, with a larger sample size of older people than ELSA, including the oldest old.
- The City team had worked on USoc extensively
- The fact that it is the same questions asked to older people and younger people allowed for cross-generational comparison.

Cons:

- The questions are not been designed with older people in mind, as ELSA is.
- Because the survey is very big, the number of questions asked in each topic is lower than ELSA.

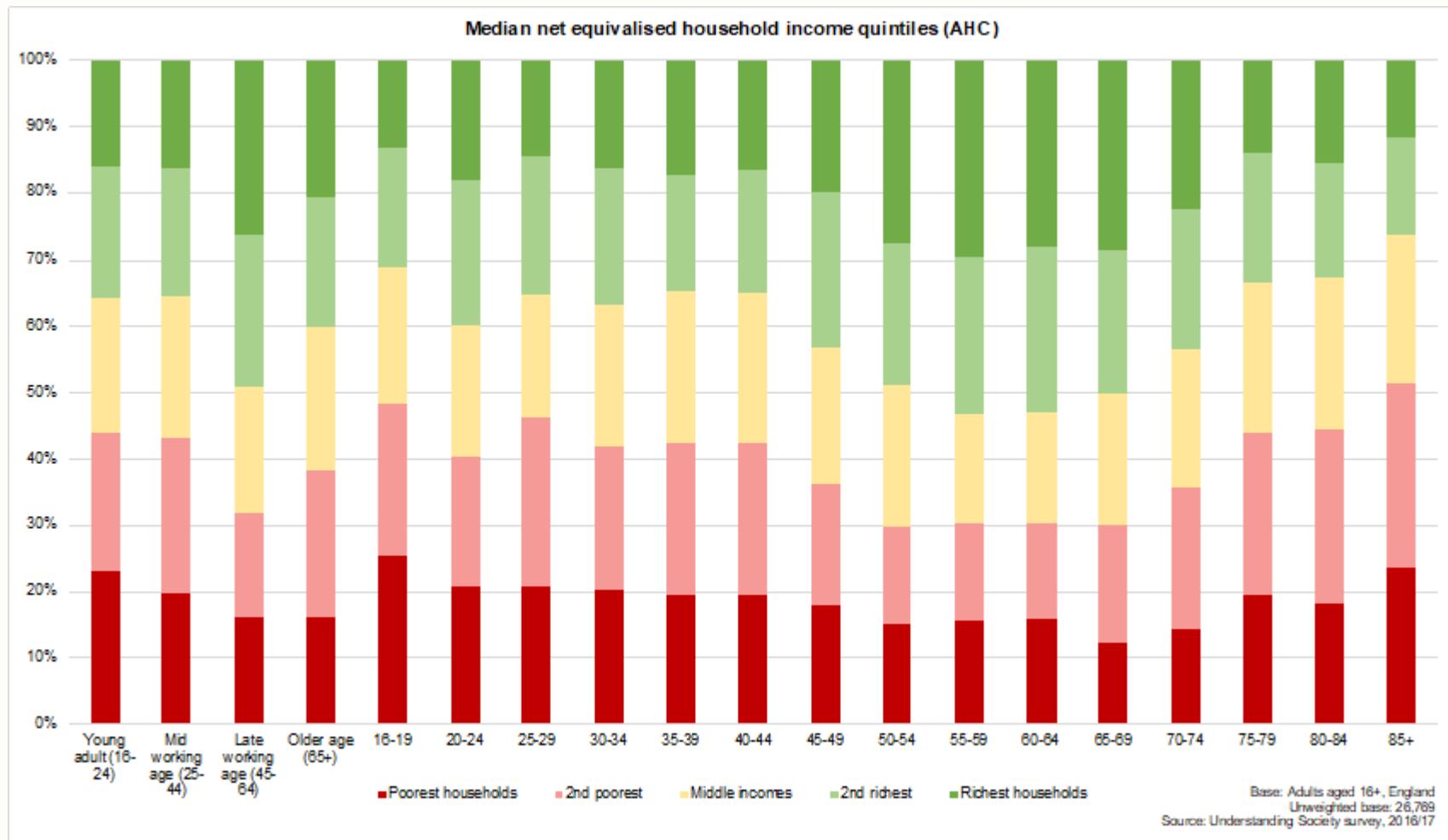
Choosing definitions and indicators

Each subgroup needed defining,
more complicated than it sounds!

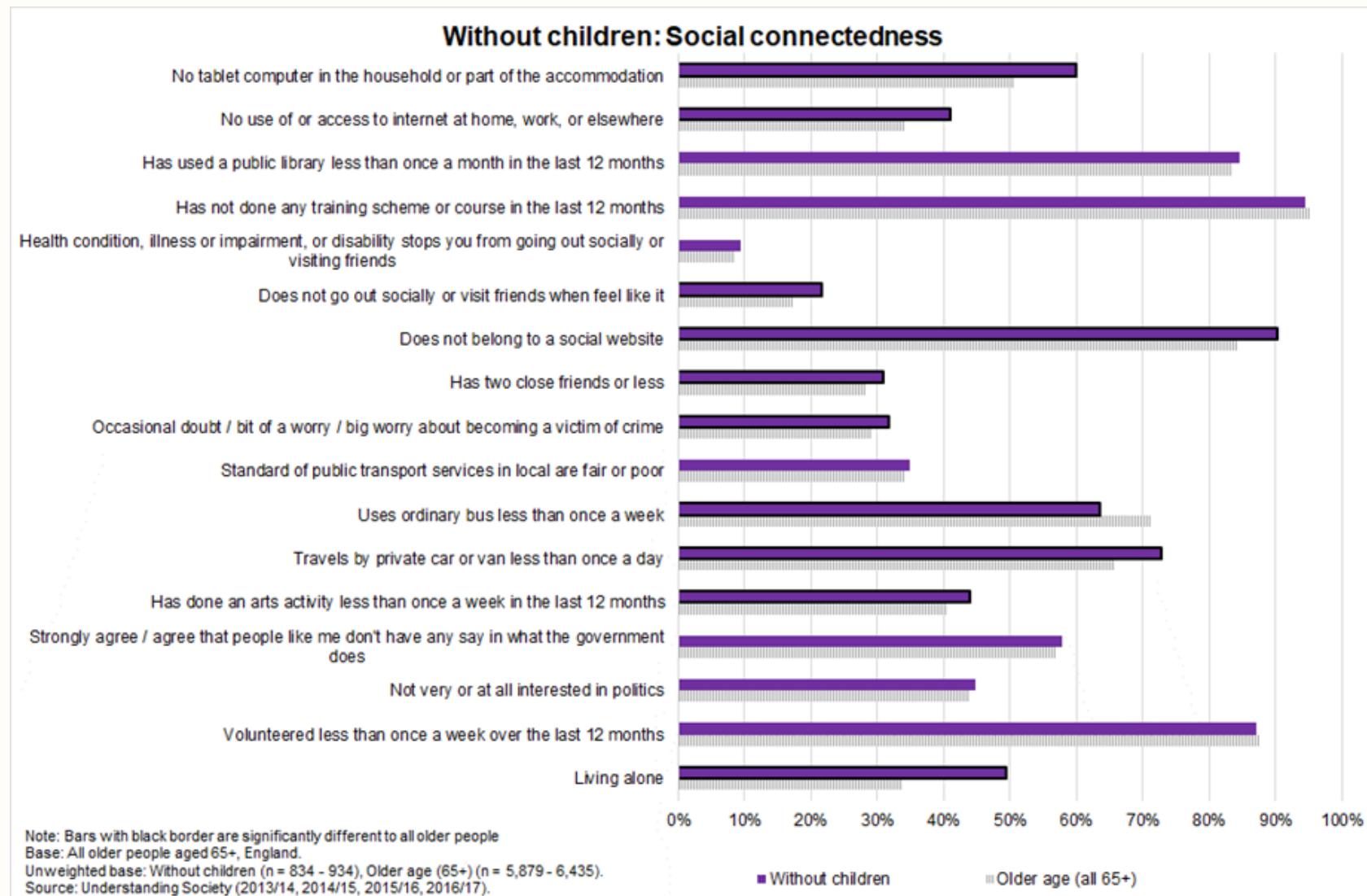
We chose around 17 indicators for
each theme

This was a key learning for us: our
lack of experience slowed us down

City's analysis: life course



City's analysis: Subgroups



'Phase 3', combining qual with quant

We held a workshop in November 2019 once the main phases of the qual and quant had ended.

This workshop allowed us to bring the results together, and establish follow up work

For Humankind, this was follow-up interviews on issues highlighted in the quant.

For City, this was some additional analysis of issues that came up in the qual.

How we presented the data

1. People with physical health conditions

2m
in total

Approximate number in England
One in five older people has a severe physical health problem (a condition that limits everyday activities, such as washing and getting dressed, or restricts mobility).

- Key issues**
- Limited options for getting out of the home, affecting mental health.
 - Additional costs, for example, equipment, needing taxis to appointments.
 - For care home residents, a sense of having 'checked out' of society.

Example
Omar, 82, has a range of conditions, including diabetes and osteoarthritis, and was living on the seventh floor of a block of flats.

“
It's easier to stay inside and not be a burden on people.
Omar, 82

Likelihood of living alone

Older people with severe physical health issues

45%

All older people
33%

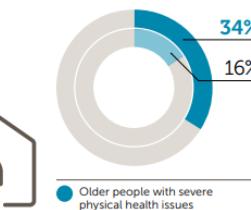


Likelihood to not go out socially or visit friends

Older people with severe physical health issues

34%

All older people
16%

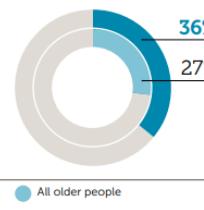


Likelihood of having two close friends or fewer

Older people with severe physical health issues

36%

All older people
27%



2. People with mental health conditions

1.2m
in total

Approximate number in England
One in 10 older people has moderate or severe anxiety or depression.

- Key issues**
- Struggle to manage administrative load and connect with authorities that may be able to help.
 - Lack of someone to confide in.
 - Struggle to communicate financial problems, as well as a lack of access to wellbeing options (financially and geographically).

Example
Frances, 95, started feeling depressed when she had a nasty fall and became housebound.

“
I fall just above the threshold for pension credit but can't really afford to live... I am in no man's land.
Betty, 86

Dissatisfied with life

Older people with severe mental health issues

30%

All older people
6%

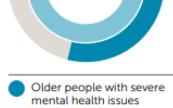


Likelihood of going out socially

Older people with severe mental health issues

54%

All older people
84%



Likelihood of paying an unexpected expense

Older people with severe mental health issues

5%

All older people
19%



3. People providing informal care

1.9m
in total

Approximate number in England
One in five older people in England is a carer.
Some 400,000 of these care for more than 35 hours a week.

- Key issues**
- Physical and mental wellbeing is compromised by the inability to prioritise their own health and emotional needs.
 - Not always receiving the financial support they are entitled to.
 - Missing out on social activities, volunteering and seeing friends.

Example
Michelle, 90, lives in social housing and her son manages her finances.

“
Your focus is totally looking after [your partner], your depression doesn't manifest itself.
George, 65

Health limits activities

Full-time carers

57%

Part-time carers

38%

Non-carers

25%



Miss going out socially

Full-time carers

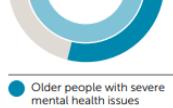
31%

Part-time carers

11%

Non-carers

18%



Likelihood of volunteering

Full-time carers

6%

Part-time carers

17%

Non-carers

12%



Reflections for the future

We had never conducted this kind of project before, so at the start of the project we weren't aware of all of the possibilities available to us.

Looking back, it may have been interesting to use the quantitative data to develop a 'vulnerability index' for older people, covering multiple factors of potential risk.

We've learned a lot about writing research tenders, and working with academics since this project. Could have got things done a lot faster!

Any questions?

If anyone would like to follow up directly after this session, please email:

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You can find our In Focus work here:

<https://www.independente.org/in-focus>