

Elderly people having to 'fend for themselves' as 40,000 fewer pensioners receive care despite rising demand

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Age UK have warned that a record number of over 65s are at "far greater risk of not eating enough and of falling and hurting themselves" amid an ever-deepening social care crisis CREDIT: J.

Elderly people are being left to "fend for themselves", a charity has warned, as 40,000 fewer pensioners are receiving council care despite rising demand.

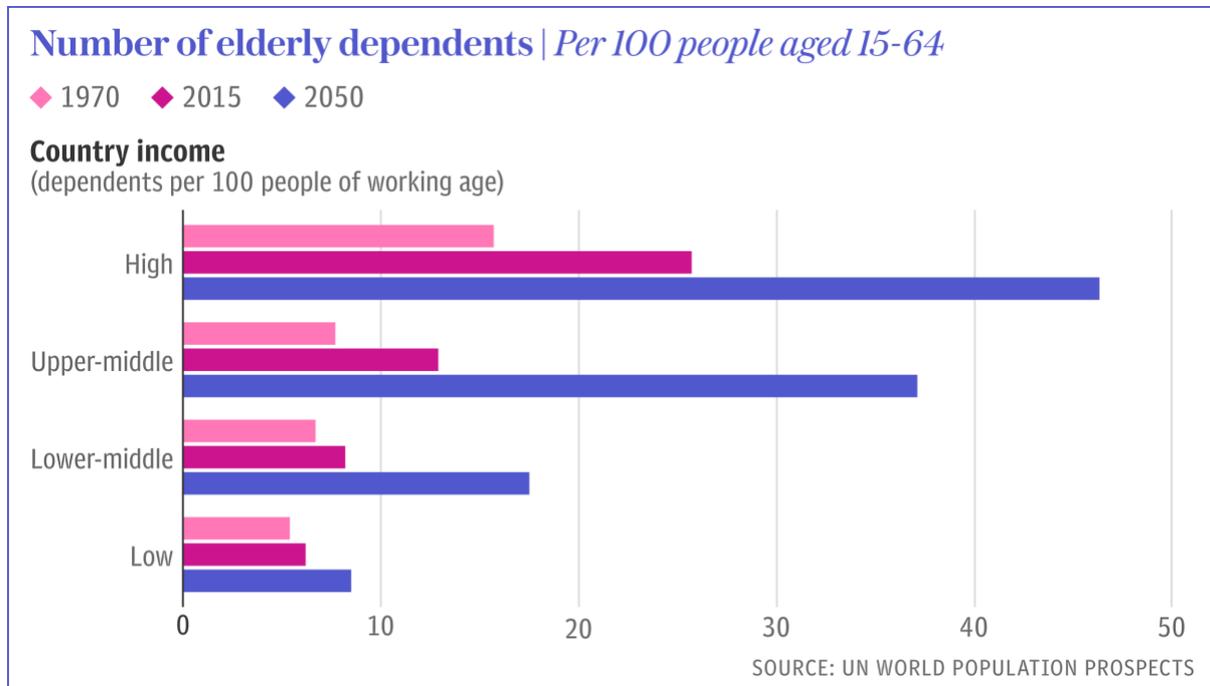
Figures released by NHS Digital yesterday [TUES] reveal that the number of people receiving long-term care has fallen each year - from from 872,520 in 2015-16 to 841,850 in 2018-19.

Statisticians say that this has mainly been driven by a fall in care for those aged 65 and over, down 39,060 to 548,435.

This comes amid an ever-deepening social care crisis. This summer, Age UK warned that a record number of over 65s are not getting the care they need as increasing numbers are "at far greater risk of not eating enough and of falling and hurting themselves". The charity warned that the care system was on the brink of "collapse".

However in response to the latest NHS Digital figures, elderly care charities said that this problem would only get worse.

Caroline Abrahams, Age UK’s charity director, said: “The fact that the numbers of older people are increasing but 40,000 fewer are receiving long term care means that the system is becoming even meaner and leaving more in need to fend for themselves.



“This is cause for very serious concern: how do they cope, especially if they lack family and friends nearby to help, which is by no means uncommon?”

“We know that for some people, obtaining care in the first place in some areas is near impossible. Indeed there are genuine worries that as we look toward next year we are seeing the prospect of total system collapse in the worst affected areas.

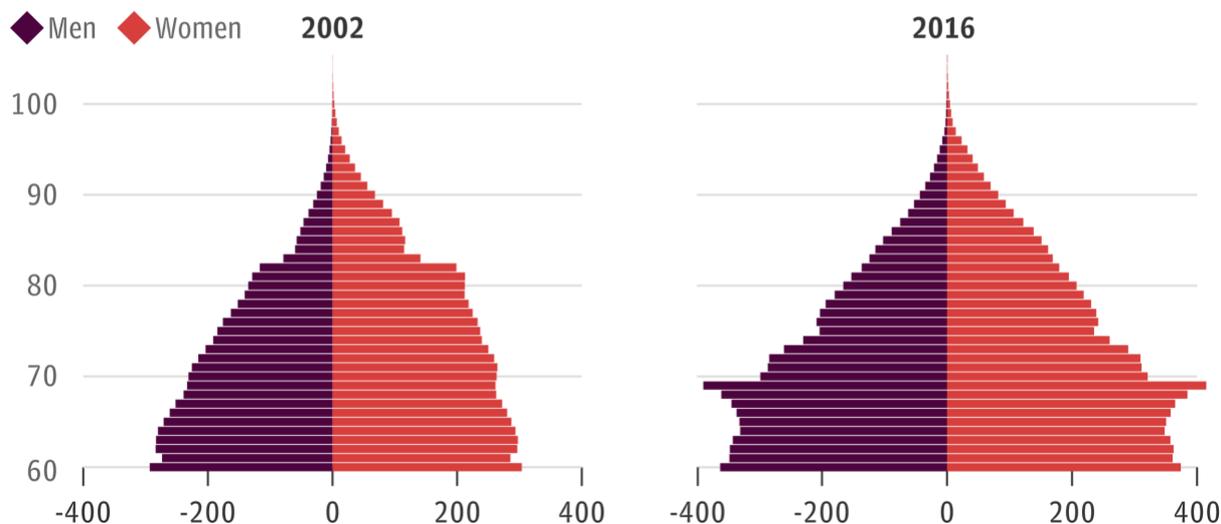
“Meanwhile too many older people are living with unmet care needs, a figure that continues to grow.”

Researchers found that local authorities received 1.9 million requests for adult social care support during 2018-19 - the equivalent of 5,245 requests for support received per day. This marks an increase of 3.8% since 2017-18 (when it was 1.8 million).

Deborah Alsina MBE, Chief Executive of Independent Age, said: “It is hugely concerning that despite growing demand, fewer older people are getting access care.

Women are still more likely to live to the oldest ages

Population pyramids from age 60, thousands



“We know councils are under pressure to balance their books and limit what they provide, and the impact is that many vulnerable older people are left struggling with basic tasks like washing, dressing and preparing meals.

“In such a tight financial environment for local authorities, it is essential that there are clear, consistent processes in place for people to challenge decisions about accessing care.”

Dr Alison Giles, associate director, Centre for Ageing Better, said: “Too many people in later life don’t get the care they need. It is unacceptable that so many people are being left behind.

“Demand is growing and local government resources are stretched, so right now only people with the highest levels of need get help. The risk is that those with less serious conditions miss out on care because of lack of investment, leading them to need much greater and potentially more costly support in the long run.

“We need national government to find a sustainable funding solution for social care. But we also need to reduce demand by investing in prevention. Disability, frailty and some forms of dementia can be prevented or delayed, so we must put more resources and effort into helping people to stay healthy and independent for as long as possible.”

A poll of 68,745 people receiving social care as part of the package found that almost two-thirds (64.3%) were very or extremely satisfied with the care and support they received, while 2% were very or extremely dissatisfied.

Of those in residential care homes, 58.5% said they had as much social contact as they wanted with people they liked.

But those in the community were less likely to say this (41.9%), and they also had the highest levels of feeling socially isolated (7.3%).

For those with little social contact who felt isolated, 36.7% said they were extremely anxious or depressed.

In response to the new NHS figures, Ian Hudspeth, chairman of the Local Government Association's community wellbeing board, said: "The Government's proposals on the future of adult social care brought forward in the Queen's Speech need to be substantive and must be brought forward as soon as possible."