



Who cares? Exploring attitudes toward social care in the UK 2025 survey

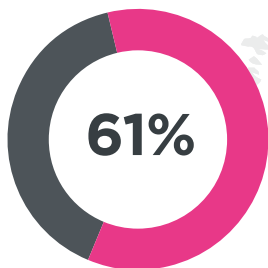
Introduction

This 2025 survey, conducted by YouGov on behalf of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (IFoA) Social Care Working Party, examines UK public attitudes toward saving for retirement and long-term care.

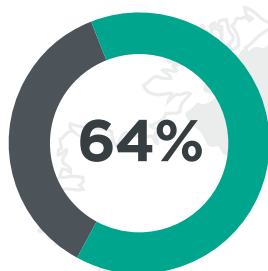
It complements some of the medium term objectives of the Casey commission, namely:

1. to seek to understand the current adult social care landscape and identify a commonly agreed picture of the problems faced.
2. to start a national conversation about what adult social care should deliver for citizens and to build consensus with the public on how best to meet the current and future needs of the population.
3. to produce tangible, pragmatic recommendations that can be implemented in a phased way over a decade.

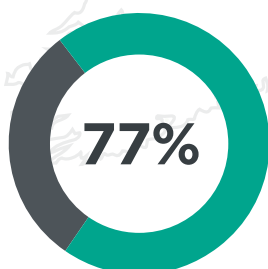
Headline results and key messages



61% of UK adults are not confident that they will be able to cover the cost of long-term care.



Two thirds (64%) think that social care is mostly funded by the individual.



Yet, 77% of people have not taken steps to prepare for long-term care needs.

Main findings

- **Retirement pessimism:** 59% of non-retirees are pessimistic about achieving their desired retirement lifestyle and covering long-term care costs in retirement.
- **Knowledge gaps:** 71% of non-retirees have limited understanding or no knowledge of retirement investment options.

57% of UK adults have either limited understanding or no knowledge of the social care system.
- **Risk aversion:** Of those yet to retire, 60% use the workplace pension to save for retirement. Over half (56%) prioritise having a guaranteed monthly income in retirement, even if it means potentially less overall.
- **Limited planning engagement:** Whereas 31% of non-retirees have not started planning for retirement, over three quarters (77%) – including retirees – have not taken steps to prepare for possible long-term care needs.
- **Downsizing and home equity:** Around a quarter (28%) of all UK adults have not started planning their retirement yet; of those who have, three quarters (76%) would be open to downsizing or already have.
- **Caregiving burdens:** Nearly two in five people (38%) provide or expect to provide unpaid care, with a quarter of current carers (25%) dedicating over 40 hours weekly. 30% of all respondents worry about their family's ability to afford care.
- **Care funding perceptions:** 64% of UK adults believe that social care is mostly funded by individuals, unless low on income or savings, with the costs of residential (59%) and home social care (38%) per person predicted to be at least £50,000 per annum, by those who could provide estimates.

People are less aware of home than residential social care costs, with 9% fewer people knowing home care costs.

When asked what they expected most to rely on to fund care costs, 39% said personal savings/investments, 31% said local authorities and 25% said the NHS. 22% of respondents did not know.*
- **Demand for support:** Only half of UK adults (50%) trust the government for reliable information about retirement planning and long-term care planning. However, they are still more trusted than their employers (34%) and insurance companies (17%). 38% said that government initiatives or support to cover long-term care expenses would help them feel most prepared, while a quarter (26%) selected more information about care options and costs and a further 24% said more affordable insurance or savings programmes.*
- **Diversity and inclusion:** Women and those from lower social grades are more likely to be pessimistic about retirement, and to have limited understanding of retirement investment options. A greater proportion of men than women have limited or no understanding of the social care system.

* People could select up to two options.



57% of UK adults have either limited understanding or no knowledge of the social care system.

71% of non-retirees have limited understanding or no knowledge of retirement investment options.



Around a quarter (28%) of all UK adults have not started planning their retirement yet; of those who have, three quarters (76%) would be open to downsizing or already have.



Only 50% of UK adults trust the government for reliable information about retirement and long-term care planning.

What do the results show?

Proactive planning is low

This survey reveals critical challenges in public preparedness for retirement and social care. 31% of respondents who are yet to retire have not considered planning for retirement and 77% of all respondents have yet to take any steps to prepare for possible long-term care needs. Split by gender, age and socio-economic group, the data reveals that:

- women are six percentage points more likely than men not to be saving for retirement and two percentage points less likely to have thought about planning for long-term care.
- whereas engagement with retirement planning increases with age, with 53% of those aged 18-24 yet to consider it compared to 22% of those aged 50-64, figures show a significant lack of planning for social care across the ages; 83% of those aged 18-49 have not taken any steps and 79% of those aged 50-64.
- people in lower socio-economic groups are 7 percentage points less likely than those in higher groups to have made plans for retirement and 3 percentage points less likely to have thought about social care planning.

Knowledge gaps

These findings are possibly accentuated by knowledge gaps in retirement investment options (non-retirees: 71%) and the social care system (57%). Differences by gender are interesting in that women are 17 percentage points more likely than men to have limited or no understanding of retirement investment options, but men are 10 percentage points more likely than women to have limited or no understanding of the social care system. Examining age and socio-economic group respectively:

- the proportion of the population who have limited or no understanding of retirement products or social care decreases with age but remains higher for retirement investment options than the social care system for all age groups.
- there is an 11 percentage point gap between lower and higher socio-economic groups in the number who have limited or no understanding of retirement investment options. This narrows to 2 percentage points on knowledge of the social care system.

Retirement pessimism

Such observations could partially explain why almost three in five (59%) of those yet to retire are pessimistic about achieving their desired retirement lifestyle and at least three in five (61%) of all respondents are not confident that they will be able to cover any necessary long-term care. Pessimism about the desired retirement lifestyle is more pronounced for women (63%) than men (56%) and for lower socio-economic groups (63%) than higher groups (57%). Older adults (65+) are least pessimistic (49%) and slightly more optimistic (20%) than, on average, younger age groups (60% of whom are pessimistic and only 19% optimistic).

On confidence in ability to cover social care costs in retirement, the proportion of respondents who do not know reduces as age increases (18-24, 41%; 25-49, 21%; 50-64, 18%; 65+, 11%).

At the same time, the percentage who lack confidence increases with age (18-24, 40%; 25-49, 62%; 50-64, 64%; 65+, 67%), as does the percentage that has confidence (18-24, 19%; 25-49, 17%; 50-64, 18%; 65+, 22%) but without as material a jump from 18-24 to 25-49.

Limited understanding of investment options

This may inform the strong reliance on workplace pension which, of seven options, was chosen 60% of the time as the primary avenue for saving for retirement, followed by personal savings or high-yield savings accounts at 23%, investments at 17% and private pension at 15%. But 26% of those not retired are not saving for retirement and therefore did not select any options, the bulk of whom are young adults (18-24: 59%) and the unemployed (73%).

Risk appetite declines with age as 45% of non-retirees aged 65+ prioritise income security and none prioritise growth, compared to 24% and 10% respectively of those aged 25-49. Retirement preference is for a guaranteed monthly income (56%) over riskier options (7%), which reflects concerns about the effect of market fluctuations on retirement savings (42%), notably among older adults (65+: 56%) and women (45% versus 39% for men).

Limited understanding of investment options may inform the strong reliance on workplace pensions.

Social care funding

64% of respondents think that social care for the elderly is mostly covered by the individual unless they are very low on income or savings, with recognition of individual responsibility increasing with age (18-24, 48%; 25-49, 60%; 50-64, 70%; 65+: 73%). Younger adults (18-24) are most likely (29%) not to know who funds social care. Overall, 14% of respondents were unsure.

Of the 19% who believe that funding is either mostly or entirely by the state, 49% think that it is funded by local authorities, 30% by the central government and 11% by the NHS. Northern Ireland has the highest votes for the NHS (21%).

Social care costs

Of those who answered, 58% thought that residential care costs at least £50,000 per annum while 37% believe that home social care costs at least £50,000 per annum.

When asked to choose up to two options that reflect who/what they expected to rely most on to fund care costs, most (39%) selected personal savings/investments, 31% chose local authorities and 25% NHS – with older adults (65+: 48%) and those in the higher socio-economic group (46%) more likely to select personal savings or investments. Local authority assistance is anticipated more by those in the lower socio-economic group (36% versus 27% in the higher group) while NHS reliance is highest in Northern Ireland (46%).

At 29% for residential care and 38% for home social care, unawareness of annual social care costs per person is high, with women 2-4 percentage points more likely than men to admit to not knowing, along with up to 49% of young adults (18-24). Only 6% have saved up personal funds or invested specifically for future care expenses, and 1% have purchased private long-term care insurance.

Downsizing

Moving to a smaller property as a strategy for funding retirement is seen as an option among 76% of those who have started planning their retirement. People in Northern Ireland are most likely to reject the idea of downsizing (28%), while older adults (65+) have the highest proportion that (i) would not consider it (14%), (ii) would consider it if needed, but would prefer to stay where they are (30%), and (iii) have already downsized as part of their retirement plan (18%).

Overall, 28% have not started planning their retirement and therefore have yet to consider downsizing. This is particularly true for younger adults aged 18-24 (61%) and for those in the lower socio-economic group, who are 6 percentage points more likely than those in the higher group to have not started planning for retirement.

Carers

Caregiving burdens are significant, with 38% providing or expecting to provide unpaid carer support, and 25% of carers dedicating over 40 hours weekly. Notably, more women than men (43% versus 34%) and 44% of those aged 50-64 provide or expect to provide unpaid carer support. Family financial strain concerns 30% of respondents, with higher worry among women (4 percentage points more than men), among those aged 65+ (35%) and in Northern Ireland (38%). For 29% of respondents, however, it was too early to worry about family members covering their long-term care costs. This was especially pronounced for those aged 18-24 (49%) and 25-49 (39%).

Lack of information, and what could help

50% of respondents trust the government to provide reliable information about retirement and long-term care planning. However, fewer see the government or NHS resources as the most likely place to learn about retirement (29%) or planning for long-term care (36%).* Online research ranked first at 48% and 40%, respectively. Overall, only 19% of respondents were satisfied with the tools available to them to plan retirement and/or long-term care needs (16%).

Asked what would help them most to feel better prepared to deal with future long-term care needs, 38% said government initiatives or support to help cover long-term care expenses,* with 44% of respondents trusting the government to provide effective retirement or long-term care products. More information about care options and likely costs of care ranked second at 26% and more affordable insurance or savings programmes for long-term care third at 24%.

25% of respondents believe that simple, jargon-free educational resources would be most helpful when planning for retirement and long-term care. However, a significant percentage, 28%, were unsure what might help. This lack of knowledge is marked for women (at 3 percentage points more than men), young adults (18-24: 41%), and those from lower socio-economic groups (35%) and Wales (35%).

* People could pick more than one option.

Policy implications

Based on the insights from the IFoA social care survey, targeted actions that policymakers, educators, employers, and financial institutions can take to improve retirement and social care preparedness across age groups are summarised below.

Cross-cutting policy recommendations

Challenges: Moderate savings, growing concern about retirement, mixed understanding of care options.

Actions:

- **National awareness campaigns:** Focus on the cost of care and the importance of early planning
- **Accessible planning tools:** Develop government-backed calculators and AI tools for retirement and care forecasting
- **Regulatory clarity:** Simplify and publicise rules around state versus individual funding for social care.

For older adults (50-64 and 65+)

Challenges: Higher concern about care costs, preference for income stability, better understanding but still gaps.

Actions:

- **Promote long-term care insurance:** Tailor products to older adults with clear, jargon-free explanations
- **Support downsizing and equity release:**¹ Provide guidance and incentives for using home equity to fund care
- **Expand community-based care education:** Help older adults understand local care options and funding mechanisms.

1. 51% households aged 60+ in 2040 could benefit from accessing their-housing wealth in retirement through later life lending." (Fairer Finance, 2025)

For working-age adults (25-49)

Challenges: Moderate savings, growing concern about retirement, mixed understanding of care options.

Actions:

- **Employer-led initiatives:** Encourage companies to provide retirement planning workshops and access to financial advisors
- **Flexible pension options:** Promote hybrid models combining workplace pensions with personal investments
- **Targeted campaigns:** Use relatable life milestones (for example, buying a home, having children) to prompt planning.

For younger adults (18-24)

Challenges: Low engagement, limited savings, poor understanding of social care.

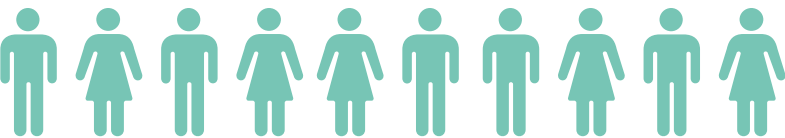
Actions:

- **Integrate financial literacy into education:** Include retirement planning and social care awareness in school/university curricula
- **Create youth-focused savings incentives:** Develop more adaptable pension schemes and saving opportunities²
- **Use digital platforms:** Deliver engaging content via social media, gamified apps, and influencers to raise awareness.

2. IFoA commissioned PPI report 'The concerns of Gen Z'.

About the survey

This polling was conducted online by YouGov for the IFoA between 9-10 July 2025, with a total sample size of 2,307 adults. The figures have been weighted to be representative of all UK adults (aged 18+), and the sample was categorised into the following subgroups.



Gender:	male, female
Age bracket:	18-24, 25-49, 50-64, 65+
Social grade:	ABC1, C2DE
Country:	England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland
Geographical region in England:	North, Midlands, London, Rest of South
Employment status:	full-time, part-time, retired, unemployed, not working, student
Political affiliation: (vote in 2024 general election)	Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Reform UK, Green Party

This paper was produced by the IFoA Social Care Working Party.

The full results of this survey may be found on the **IFoA Virtual Learning Environment**.



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