



Age-friendly Barnet

Baseline Assessment Report



November 2023



Age-friendly Barnet

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Introduction

Age-friendly Barnet

By 2041, Barnet’s population of over 65s is expected to reach 93,807; a 57% increase from the 2021 Census report. As our population ages, we want to make sure that older people can have an active and valuable role within our community.

With this in mind, it makes sense for there to be a proactive plan towards ageing in place. An age-friendly community is one in which age does not act as a barrier to enjoying all aspects of life. Committing to the journey of becoming an age-friendly community is an acknowledgement of the need to listen to the voices of older residents; to respond to their needs and advice and reduce some of the physical and social barriers to ageing well in a community.

Age-friendly Barnet Survey



Figure 1: The Eight Domains of an Age-friendly Setting

The Age-friendly Barnet baseline survey was live throughout July 2023. The survey consisted of 40 questions based around the World Health Organisation’s eight domains of an Age-friendly community (see Figure 1).

The survey received 1024 responses. Effort was made to ensure that the survey reached community groups across the borough, especially those who may be digitally excluded from the community. Part of this effort was

through the delivery of seven focus groups as well as a further five casual visits to various community groups across the borough promoting the survey.

Table 1: Breakdown of the ages of respondents.

| Under 55 | 56-65 | 66-75 | 76-85 | Over 85 |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| 266 | 394 | 225 | 105 | 38 |

Table 2: Breakdown of the ethnicities of respondents.

| White (White, White British, White Irish) | Asian (Asian, Asian British) | Black (Black, Black British, Caribbean or African) | Mixed (Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups) | Other |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|--------------|
| 553 | 109 | 51 | 31 | 14 |

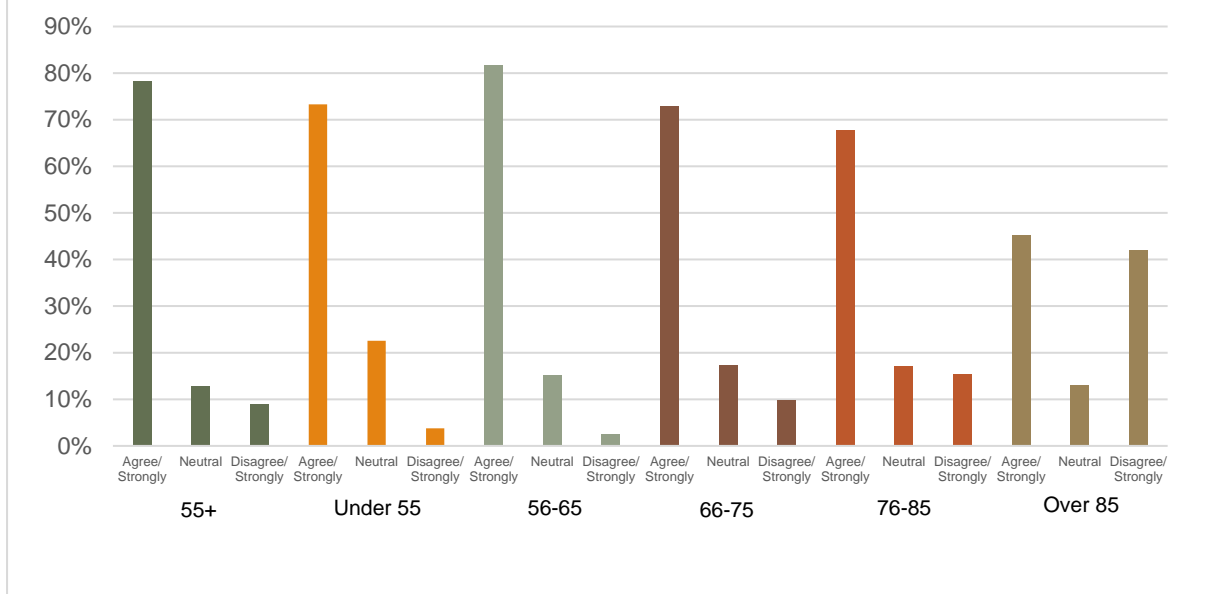
Table 3: Breakdown of the genders of respondents.

| Male | Female | Transgender / Non-binary/ Other |
|-------------|---------------|--|
| 431 | 309 | 18 |

Public Spaces (Outdoor spaces and buildings)

Public spaces have a major impact on our mobility, independence, and quality of life. Safe, accessible, and comfortable public spaces (indoor and outdoor) encourage us to be social, to exercise and leave our houses.

Figure 2: I am able to access an open greenspace/ park at least once a day.



As Figure 2 shows, 78% of all over 55s who responded to the survey agreed that they are able to access a greenspace or park at least once a day. Barnet is known as a green and leafy borough of London, and this high figure seems to reflect that. However, there is a sharp decline of those able to access greenspace between age-groups, namely 85% of 55–65-year-olds agree that they can access greenspace at least once a day, compared to 45% of over 85-year-olds.

“It would be good to have buddy benches. Benches marked with something like “I’m free to talk” so people feel they can sit down and talk without feeling scared or vulnerable”.

62% of all over 55s agreed that they felt safe when out and about alone. By looking deeper into this question, disparities in both genders and ethnicities are unearthed. Here, 69% of men agreed that they felt safe when out and about alone compared to 55% of women and 33% of trans/ non-binary residents.

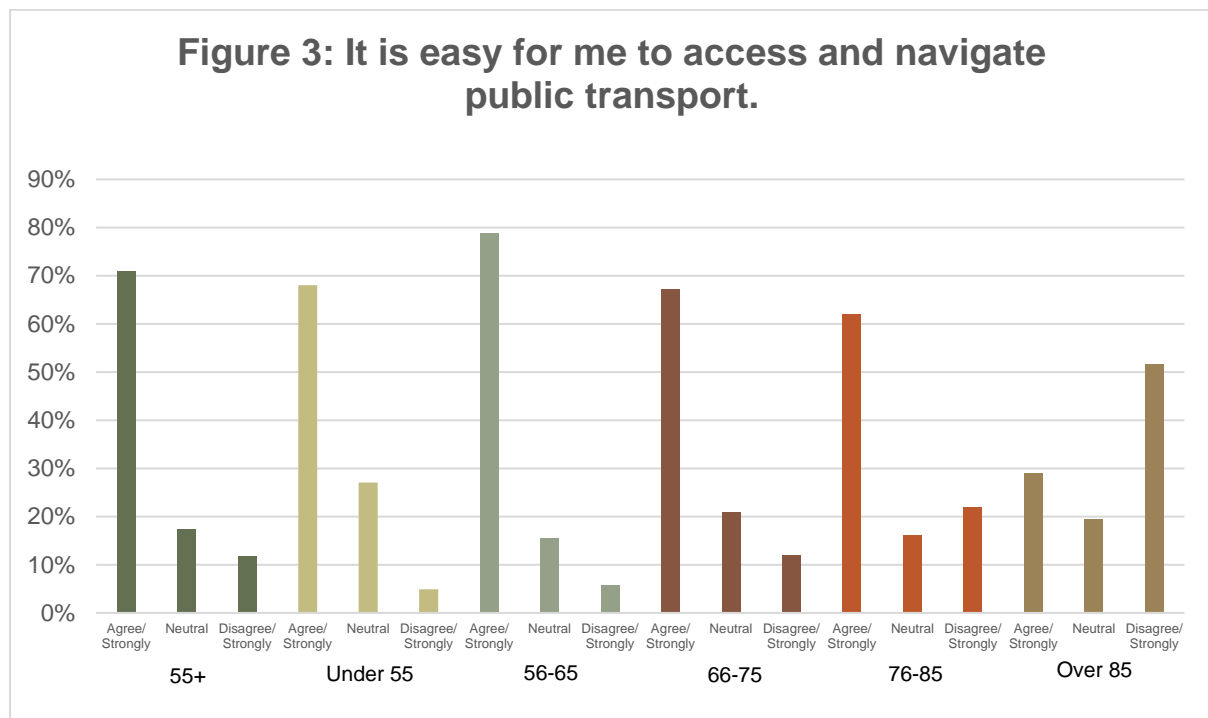
55% of all over 55s agreed that there are enough places (warm venues and benches) to rest while out and about. There is a large difference between age groups with this question, with 66% of 56–65-year-olds agreeing, but only 10% of over 85s agreeing.

48% of all over 55s agreed that there are enough public toilets in Barnet. Here, there is a notable disparity between genders in this question, with 61% of men agreeing that there are enough public toilets in Barnet compared to only 29% of women.

“Street furniture is really important. There is just not enough places to sit down, a real lack of seating not just outside but in shopping centres too [...] It’s very rare to find a public toilet as they have [all been taken] away, so if you want to go to the toilet you have to go to some café to buy something just to use the toilet”.

Transport

Transport that is affordable, reliable and convenient allows us to continue to do things that matter to us. Public transport should be easily accessible and affordable, and there should be safe and accessible foot and cycle paths to encourage residents to remain active in their day-to-day lives.



As Figure 3 illustrates, 71% of all over 55s agree that it is easy for them to access and navigate public transport. There is a sharp decline from the 76-85 age group (62%) to the over 85 age group (29%). To some extent, this is likely to reflect the smaller sample size in this age group, but it is something that could be looked into further; especially with a lens of comparing access to public transport and disability/ reduced mobility.

66% of respondents over 55 agreed that they would be confident to independently plan a journey to a new place. Of those who agreed that they would be confident to independently plan a journey to a new place, 74% also agreed that they were confident with using digital technology such as phones, tablets, laptops and the internet (compared with 62% of all over 55s who agreed with this statement on its own), suggesting digital literacy supports independent journey-planning.

62% of respondents over 55s agreed that they are reliant on public transport for their day-to-day lives. During This focus groups, where residents frequently expressed dissatisfaction with experiences of public transport; particularly in regard to bus drivers who frequently neglect needs of older residents with mobility needs and hidden disabilities. Common issues raised included drivers parking too far away from the kerb and not giving passengers enough time to sit down before driving away from the bus stop.

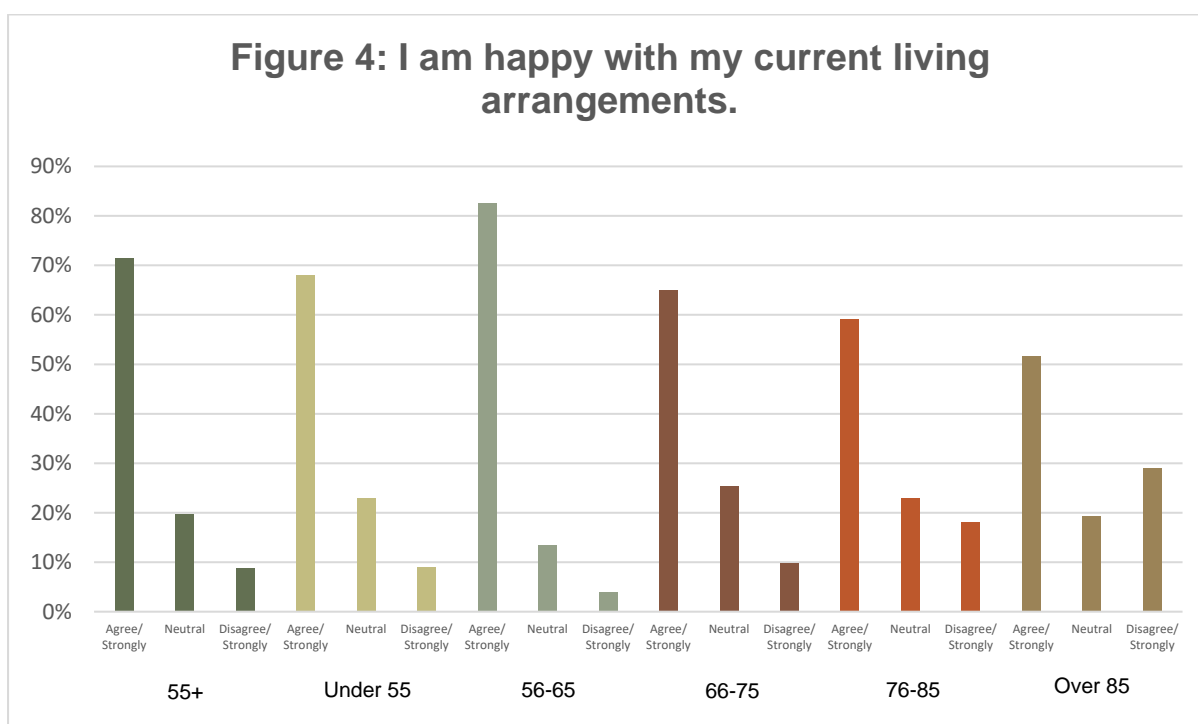
Of the respondents who agreed that they are reliant on public transport, 34% did not agree that they were confident with using digital technology such as phones, tablets, laptops and the internet. This should be flagged when considering the digitalisation of transport systems such as the movement to contactless payments and digital timetables.

“The driver didn’t stop the bus close enough to the pavement. Because I am short, I struggled to get on the bus and tripped on the step as a result. I felt a pain on my leg but only realised that I had a large cut when I felt a trickle of blood when I sat down. Other passengers helped me by giving me tissues for the bleeding, but the driver made no effort to help or apologise – he was completely oblivious.”

“Bus drivers are allergic to kerbs [...] They ‘shoot off’ and there is no time to position yourself comfortably.”

Housing

Our housing has a large impact on both our mental and physical health. Good housing makes us feel safe and help us to maintain and improve social connections.



As Figure 4 shows, 71% of all over 55s agree that they are happy with their current living arrangements. Similar to previous questions, we see a decline in those who agree with this statement as we move up age-groups. Here, 83% of 55-65 agree with this statement compared to 52% of over 85s.

53% of respondents over 55 agreed that it is easy for them to access support to improve their housing. The disparity between age-groups is again echoed here, with only 35% of 76–85-year-olds agreeing, and 16% of over 85s agreeing. Furthermore, the survey found a correlation between accessing support to improve your housing and being happy with your current living arrangements. Here, of those who agreed

that it is easy for them to access support to improve their housing, 82% also agreed that they were happy with their current living arrangements (compared with 71% in general).

Finally, 63% of respondents over 55 agreed that it is easy for them to access services (such as their GP, dentist, supermarkets and hairdressers) from their home.

“A woman from the group had lived in a Council house for a long time and needed a walk-in shower after a bad fall in her bath. It took a long time for Barnet Homes to respond, and when they did, they said they needed the permission of Barnet Council to install it. Barnet Council did not respond – it felt as if they wanted to wait for her to die so they didn’t have to make the change. We were at her funeral this morning, the last two years of her life were very stressful.”

Social Participation

Participating in leisure, cultural and spiritual activities in the community is important for both our physical and mental wellbeing. It connects us with our community and gives us opportunities to learn new skills and interact socially with a range of people.

“Loneliness is a huge issue [...] even in the family [a lot of people] often feel invisible as they are not given the type of importance and value as they were given when they were younger. This feeling really gives you a kind of depression and lack of self-esteem and that is where you start losing interest in life. [...] If you come to these kinds of meetings in centres like [Stonegrove], you talk about things as equals. It’s not like home when you are seen as ‘old’, here everyone is equal, and we value each other’s opinions. That, in my opinion is why these groups are so important”.

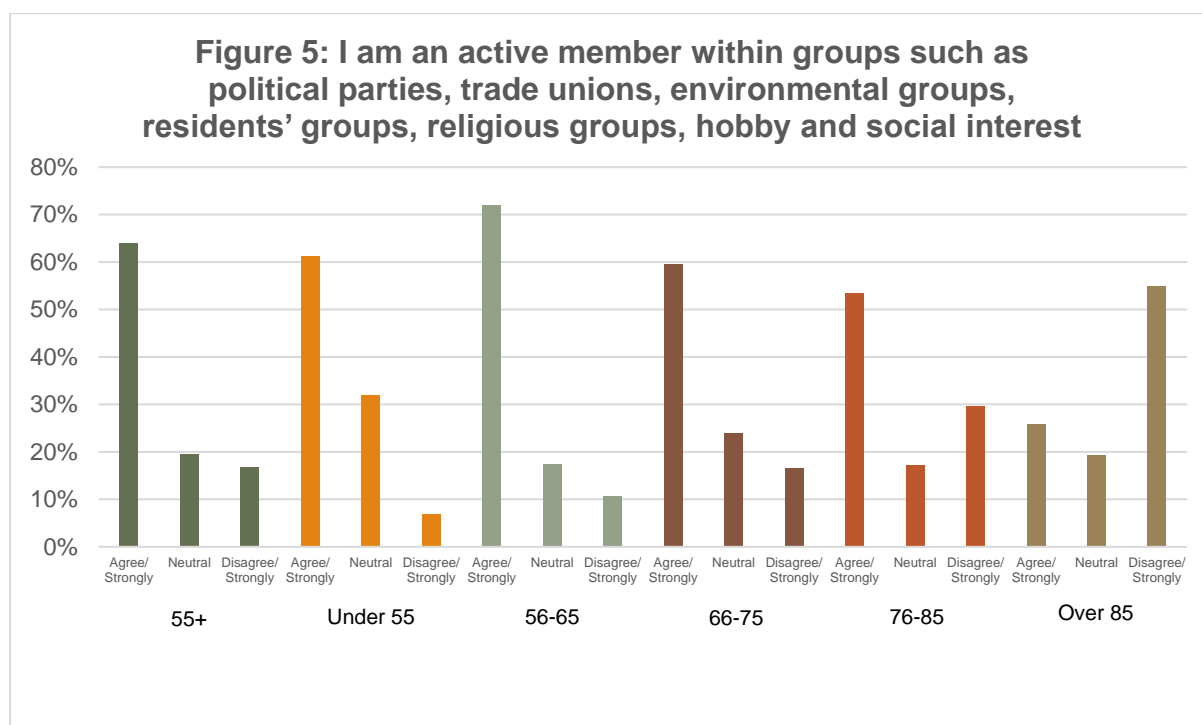
As Figure 5 illustrates, 64% of all over 55s agreed with the statement that they are an active member within groups such as political parties, trade unions, environmental groups, residents' groups, religious groups, hobby and social interest groups. However, again, we see inequalities between age-groups, with 72% of 56–65-year-olds agreeing, compared to 26% of over 85-year-olds.

“Someone said to me, why don’t you go to the cookery class. I thought ‘you’re crazy’, in my generation like me, we would never think that men should cook, or ‘the man’ shouldn’t cook. But when I went there, it was wonderful. Suddenly, you’re there for a purpose. You’re not just sitting round waiting to talk about some sort of conversation. You are there for a purpose and then you meet very interesting people that you would have never otherwise met. People that aren’t in ‘your crowd’, and it’s great! That’s what should be pushed more – we need more classes with purpose.”

The survey also looked at the affordability of activities in the borough. Here, 60% of all over 55s agreed with the statement that ‘there are enough activities in the borough that are affordable and enjoyable’. Again, it is important to compare the experiences between age-groups, particularly in the older age-groups. Here, 43% of 76–85-year-olds agree with this statement and only 16% of over 85-year-olds agree. As well as disparities between age groups, our focus groups also flagged disparities between the East and West of the borough, with more activities being available in the East of the borough, particularly Finchley/ East Finchley area, and not enough in the Mill Hill/ Golders Green area.

“Those of us that have discovered [this group] love it, but not enough people know about it. This group is run by volunteers, and we struggle to get the word out. We feel like we need help to make this group more accessible and also help to promote our group as we are not good at social media.”

The survey also asked respondents whether they felt confident to get in touch with others when they need to. Over two thirds (68%) of all over 55s agreed with this statement. Again, people’s confidence to get in touch with others declines with age, with a difference of 32% between those aged 56-65 who agree and those aged over 85 who agree.



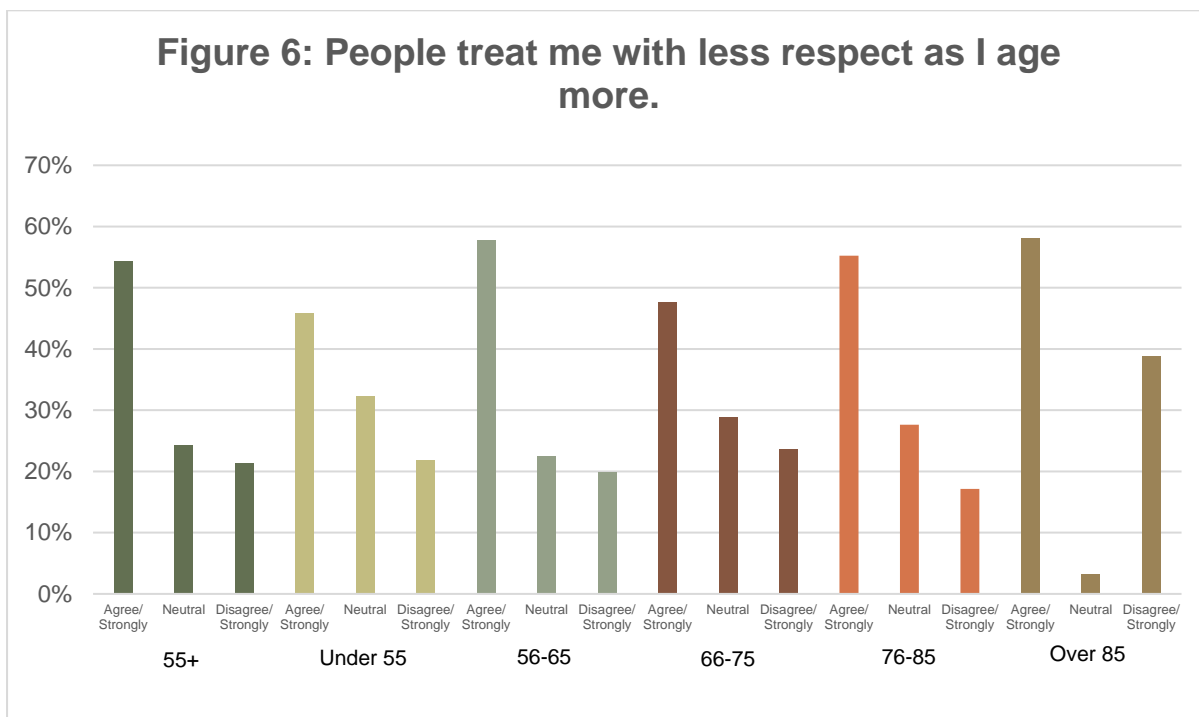
Respect and Social Inclusion

An Age-friendly Community treats everyone with respect, regardless of age. It recognises that ageism is a pervasive force in society and makes steps to confront damaging stereotypes of older residents. An age-friendly community also recognises the importance of intergenerational friendships and connections and ensures that age is not a barrier to being connected to your community.

“The Barnet First magazine provided press to our group which was sent to all the houses in Barnet. We had our picture in the magazine and an article [about our civic award]. We felt so good and so proud to see our group represented, acknowledged and celebrated by our community.”

As showed in Figure 6, over half (54%) of respondents over the age of 55 agreed with the statement “people treat me with less respect as I age more. Unlike other areas, agreement with this statement remains prevalent throughout age-groups, with 58% of both 56–65-year-olds and over 85-year-olds agreeing with the statement.

“I’m sensitive about being called ‘old’ right now, I’m not old, or at least I don’t feel old. My body has changed, but my mind has not – and I wish more people could understand that.”



The results found that just over half (51%) of over 55s agree that they regularly see positive imagery of older people in Barnet, and 50% agree that their cultural heritage is celebrated in Barnet. Disparities between ethnicities arose again here, with 56% of

white respondents agreeing that their cultural heritage is celebrated in Barnet compared to 37% of respondents from BAME communities.

Intergenerational connections were a common topic in the focus groups, with a number expressing feelings of disconnect from younger generations, particularly around subjects of technology and climate change.

“I have come across, and even sometimes from my own son people saying to me/ general messages online saying; ‘your generation screwed it up’. They attribute a lot of blame onto us, and this is a pervasive attitude amongst other generations. It separates us and doesn’t encourage us to work together and find hope through each other.”

“Technology seems to be the entire world for the younger generation [...] they don’t pay attention anymore and they don’t look at you when they are walking past”.

Civic Participation and Employment

Age-friendly Communities should ensure age is no barrier for contributing to our communities. Residents should be supported to continue contributing throughout older adulthood through paid employment, voluntary work and democratic engagement,

52% of all over 55s who completed the survey said they were currently in paid employment. Of those not in paid employment, 34% agreed that they felt confident that they could get a job if they wanted. This fell dramatically across age-groups, with 66% of 56–65-year-olds agreeing with this statement, compared to 24% of 66-75-year-olds, 11% of 76–85-year-olds, and 7% of over 85-year-olds. Furthermore, of the 34% of over 55-year-old respondents who felt confident that they could get a job if they wanted, 73% were men (27% were women), and 88% were from a white ethnic

background (12% from a BAME community). Hence, this survey has highlighted significant barriers that exist within the job market surrounding age, gender and ethnicity.

58% of all over 55s who completed the survey said they were currently in unpaid work (including voluntary work and childcare support). Of those not engaged in unpaid work, 54% agreed that they felt confident that they could find voluntary work if they wanted. Although the number of adults agreeing with this statement did fall as age-groups rose, it was not as dramatic as the figures surrounding paid employment. Here, 68% of 56–65-year-olds agreed with this statement (note that this figure is very similar to the paid employment figure for this age-group), and 30% of over 85-year-olds agreed with this statement (note that this is significantly higher to the paid employment figure for this age-group). Hence, there seems to be significant barriers to the paid job market in Barnet as residents age more.

“[Older people feel] that as soon as they retire, that they are made redundant from life as well as work. If we can be included as volunteers in schools or hospitals or local charities, then we would be improving our health span as well as our life span.”

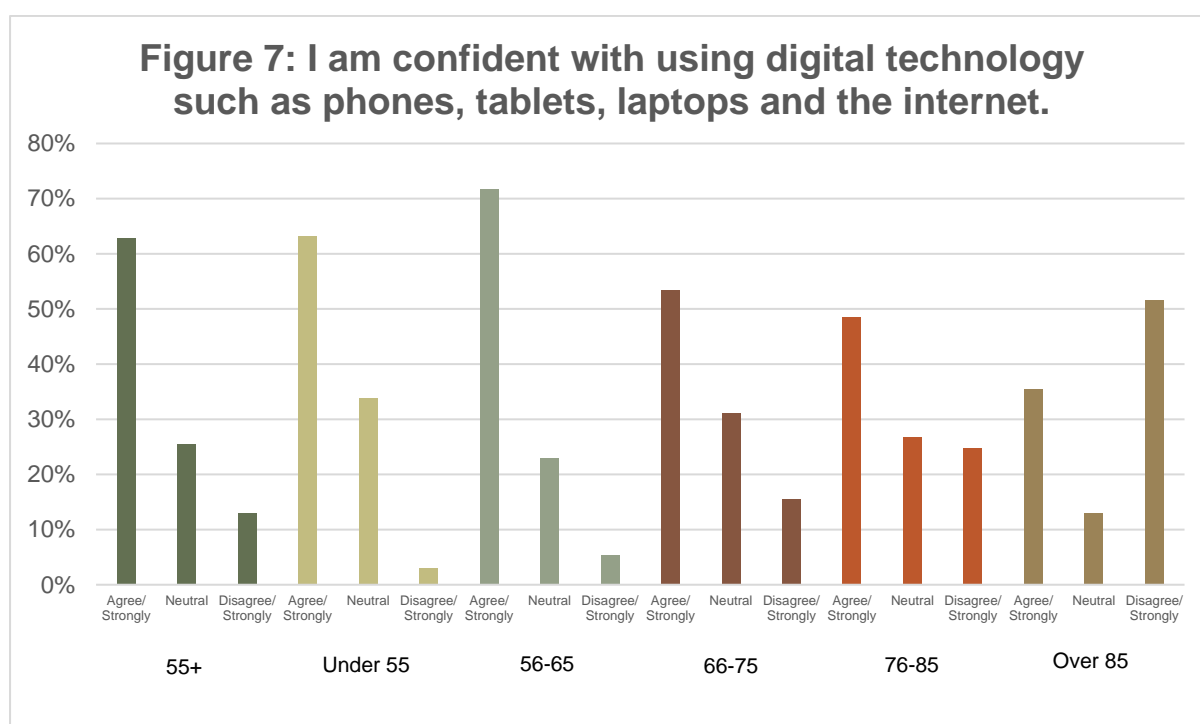
“It’s nice to do things, if I didn’t volunteer or come to classes then I would just be at home on my own all day. When I first stopped work I thought ‘oh my god, this is awful, I haven’t seen anybody’ so I started volunteering and it made such a difference”

Communication and Information

Staying connected with events and people, and getting timely, practical information is important for all of us. As the world becomes increasingly digitalised, it is vital that an Age-friendly community can ensure that those digitally excluded from their communities can still remain connected with what is happening in their community.

67% of respondents over the age of 55 agreed that they have a good idea of the bank accounts, pensions, benefits, and investments available to them and 57% felt confident that they could spot an episode of financial/ data fraud (scam) if exposed to one.

As Figure 7 shows, 62% of respondents over the age of 55 agreed that they feel confident with using digital technology such as phones, tablets, laptops and the internet. Rates of confidence fall as age-groups rise, with the over 85 age-group being the only group to have a higher percentage that disagree with this statement (52%) than agree with this statement (35%). It is important to consider this with both the lens of our current environment (with those needing digital support/ other means of information) alongside a consideration of how our ageing population is going to look in the future as digital literacy becomes the norm.



The results of the survey highlighted the power of digital inclusion in the older population. Agreeing with the statement “I am confident with using digital technology such as phones, tablets, laptops and the internet” meant that respondents were also more likely to agree that they felt safe while out and about alone, that they were an active member within groups such as political parties, trade unions, environmental groups, residents’ groups, religious groups, hobby and social interest groups, and that

they would be confident to spot financial/ data fraud (scams) if exposed to it. Therefore, despite digital inclusion often being seen as a separate issue to most aspects of community life, the findings clearly show that the impacts of digital exclusion penetrate all aspects of community living.

“It’s hard, isn’t it? You think you know everything about IT but, oh dear, the new systems that are coming in are very difficult to use – it’s impossible to keep up with it all”.

Focus groups revealed the importance of community groups in distributing information to those who are less digitally confident. In particular, members of the Barnet Asian Women’s Association (BAWA) shared that the regular meetings with the group was the main way they remained connected with events and activities in their community. Focus group members also expressed the importance of paper-based information such as Age UK Barnet’s Pigeon Post and ‘What’s On’ guide as well as local newspapers and notice boards.

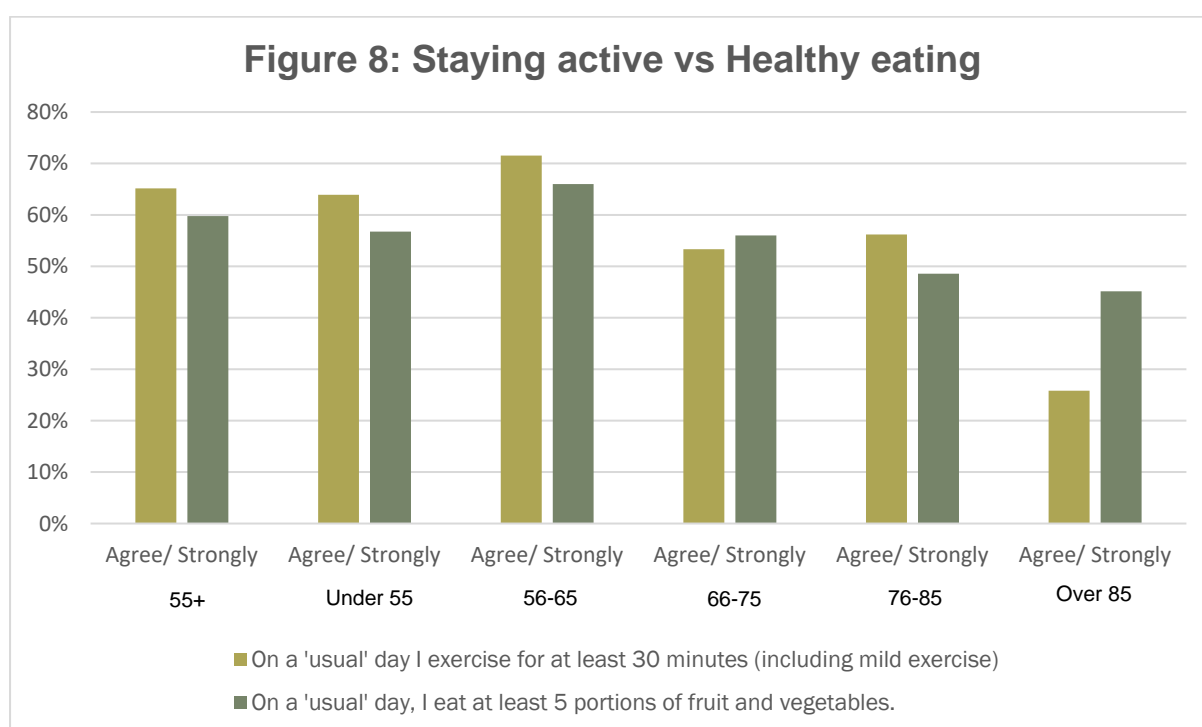
“Without [BAWA] I would not know what is going on in my community. They taught me to use the internet and let me know about events that I would be interested in going to.”

Community Support & Health Services

Alongside accessible and affordable health care services, community support and physical activity opportunities are strongly connected to good health and wellbeing throughout life.

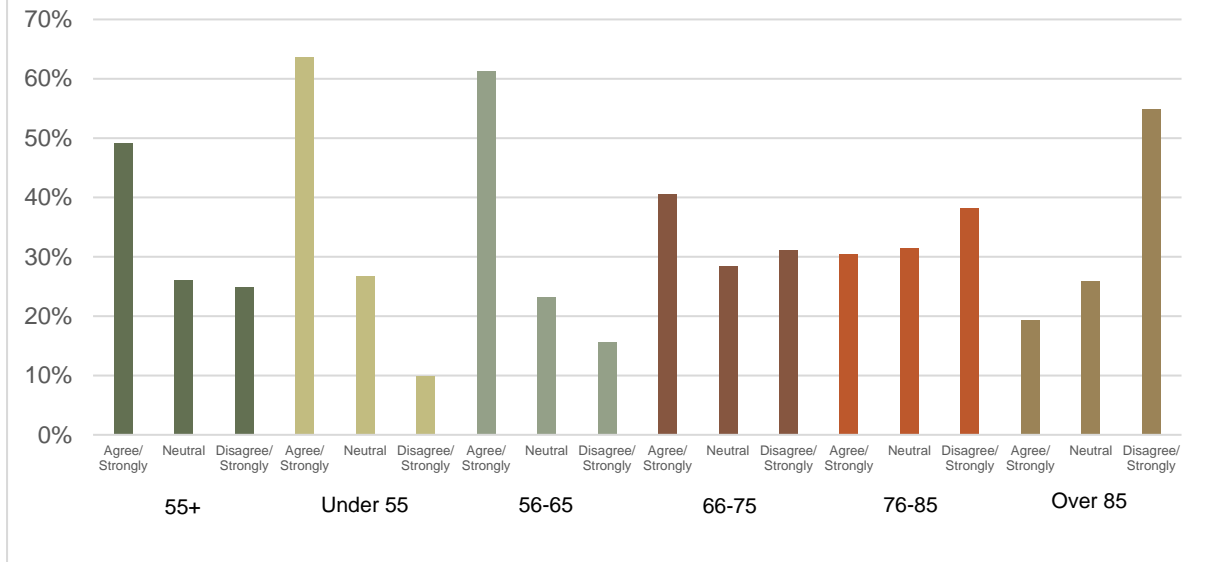
“Dancing brings me joy; it is as much for my mental health as it is to lose weight and exercise.”

65% of respondents aged over 55 agreed with the statement “on a 'usual' day I exercise for at least 30 minutes (including mild exercise)”, a slightly smaller percentage (60%) agreed that on a 'usual' day, they eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables. When comparing the responses of these two questions between age-groups (see Figure 8), we see that the level of agreement remains relatively similar between age groups, with the exception of the over 85 age group, in which there is a larger proportion of respondents finding it easier to manage 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day as opposed to managing 30 minutes of exercise a day.



As Figure 9 shows, less than half of adults over 55 agree that the health services (including dental services, physiotherapy and gyms) in Barnet are easily accessible and affordable. This dramatically falls as age-groups rise which should be further looked into. Here, there are not just disparities between age-groups, but also between ethnicities, with 55% of White respondents agreeing with this statement in comparison to 42% of Asian respondents and 25% of Black respondents. Hence, it seems that existing inequalities that exist in the healthcare system are exacerbated by age.

Figure 9: The health services (including dental services, physiotherapy and gyms) in my area are easily accessible and affordable.



Focus group participants frequently raised issues surrounding GP appointments in their local practices. Most commonly mentioned were the difficulties a lot of older residents faced booking appointments by the NHS App as well as a concern with the short prescribed time for GP appointments.

Conclusions

We are happy to see and hear that for the majority of older residents in Barnet, age is no barrier to living well and being included in all aspects of community life. However, it is clear that there are actions that need to be taken forward from this data to ensure that our community is one that suits all ages.

All eight domains are closely intertwined and are not always easy to separate. Using the eight domains as a framework for this report allows us to see issues that pop up in multiple domains.

The findings from this baseline assessment will shape the Age-friendly Barnet Action Plan which will be written in 2024.

We are grateful to everyone who have shared their views and experiences with us, whether through our survey or focus groups.