

AGEING WELL EXERCISE CLASS SURVEY REPORT

APRIL 2023



Please see a copy of original questionnaire in Appendix 1.

Who is the Ageing Well Team?


Age UK Somerset's Ageing Well Team is dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of older people. We have a large team of quality instructors and volunteers who deliver a wide range of exercise sessions in Somerset and North Somerset, including general fitness, strength and balance, chair-based classes, swimming, fishing, Yoga and Tai Chi; There really is something to suit everyone!

Why did we carry out a Survey?

Between February and April 2023, the Ageing Well team undertook an extensive annual survey amongst our class participants. The purpose of the survey was to collect, analyse, and report on our current service users' opinions, ideas and comments to shape future improvements and changes to the operations of the service.

'SurveyMonkey' was chosen again this year to collate responses, as this was the most cost-effective way to produce the report. SurveyMonkey is an online, survey development software. It allows users to easily create and send surveys, collect and store data, and produce reports.

Most people completed the survey online, but paper copies were also made available, which were then entered into Survey Monkey by staff.



We collected a total of 524 responses from over 70 different exercise classes across Somerset and North Somerset; Online responses 339, paper responses 125 (although 47% of these 125 reported that they use the internet).

We would like to say a BIG Thank you for everyone who took the time to fill in our annual survey. Your feedback is incredibly important to our Charity as it helps us to understand how we can better support our community. Your responses will inform our work and help us to continue to provide high-quality services and support. We value your input and appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts with us.

Key Headlines

Our service:

- Provides real **VALUE** to participants
- Is **HIGHLY-RATED**, needs driven & responsive to feedback
- Is **CONTINUALLY IMPROVING** its efficiency, reputation & reach

Introduction

Why is it important to stay physically active in later life?

While it may be tempting to slow down and take it easy as we age, it is important to prioritise physical activity to maintain overall health and well-being.

Staying physically active in later life is essential for maintaining independence, improving mental and physical health, and reducing the risk of chronic diseases.

Recently our Ageing Well Team have been learning with Sir Muir Gray, who is pioneering The [‘Live Longer Better’](#) revolution. We have found that our charities missions align:

“Our mission is to enable people to live better for longer, to increase Healthy Life Expectancy and reduce the period at the end of life when people are very dependent on others. It is based on a clear understanding of the science and a strong evidence base.

The number of people over 80 is going to increase significantly in the next ten years with little increase in healthy life expectancy in prospect. This has huge implications for health and social care services. It doesn’t have to be this way. The evidence is strong that we can reduce the risk of falls, prevent and delay dementia, disability and frailty.”

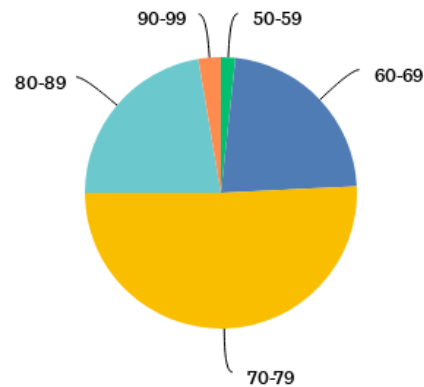


SURVEY RESULTS:

Age Distribution

The Ageing Well Team at Age UK Somerset is dedicated to improving the Health & Wellbeing of over 55s.

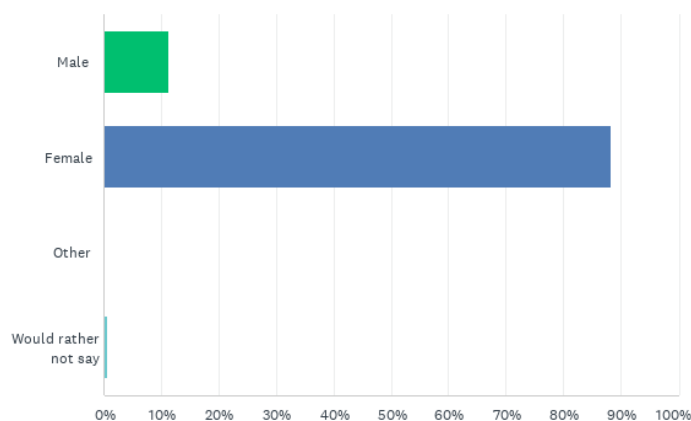
We are pleased to see that we are serving our target demographic well. We had responses from service users in the age ranges 50-59 all the way through to 90-99.



Looking at the ONS statistics (office for National Statistics), and comparing data from the 2011 and 2021 census, it is clear to see that Somerset has an ageing demographic.

Somerset also has a higher-than-average mean age for residents across all districts, as well as a higher-than-average proportion of older adults; in fact, Somerset has one of the highest proportions of over 65s in the UK¹, which is why our work here at Age UK Somerset is so crucial.

Gender



Only 11% of our respondents are male; engaging older men in group exercise classes remains a challenge.

Traditional gender roles may play a part in the reluctance of older men to participate; Historically, men have been encouraged to engage in more competitive and

individualistic sports, such as weightlifting, running, and cycling, rather than community focused group exercise classes.

Here at Age UK Somerset, we understand that our marketing needs to resonate with men, to help them feel less excluded. As such, we have developed more targeted marketing campaigns, created classes that are specifically designed for older men, and we provide a supportive and inclusive environment that encourages men to participate in group exercise activities.

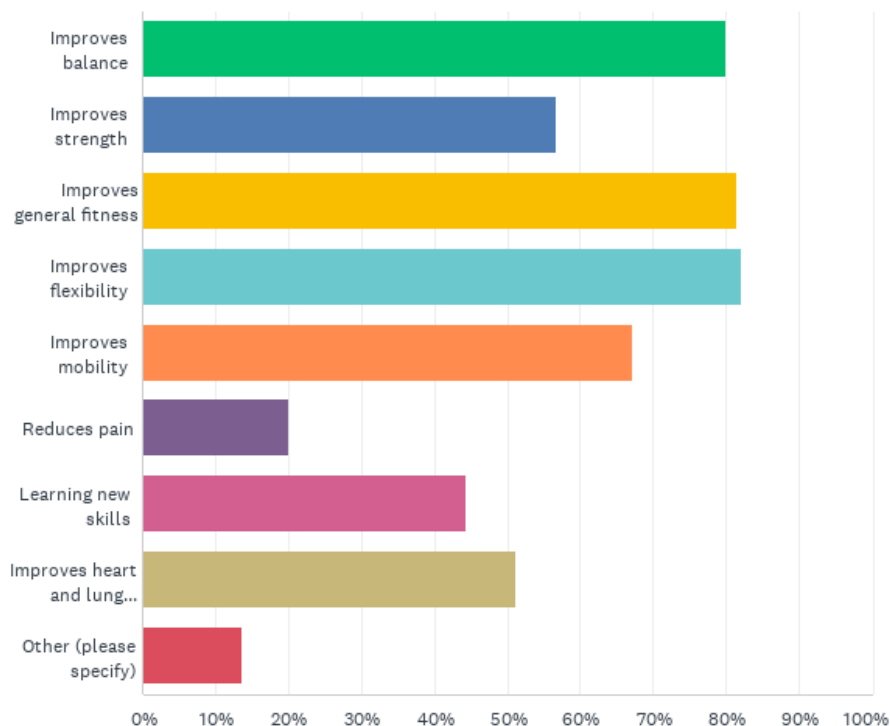
Recently we have launched 'Men on Mats' which is a men-only Pilates style class, and also a volunteer led coarse fishing group. Both groups are now attracting more men into the service, but class numbers remain low.



'Men on Mats' - Street.

Physical Health Benefits

As physical health and mental health are two interconnected aspects of overall well-being, it may not necessarily be useful to define or separate the benefits; Rather, it is important to recognise and promote the holistic benefits of group exercise classes.



The graph above shows the physical health benefits our participants gain from our exercise classes.

We are pleased that the reported physical benefits of exercise are so varied, and all the options listed appear to be of importance to participants.

It is interesting to note that 82% of people reported that their exercise class improved their flexibility. Older adults do lose a small amount of flexibility as part of the normal ageing process, so stretches and mobility exercises to improve flexibility are very beneficial for reasons such as: Improving your performance in physical activities & activities of daily living, your joints moving through their full range of motion, your muscles to work most effectively, improved blood flow, & reducing risk of injury.

“The class has helped in my rehabilitation following back surgery.”

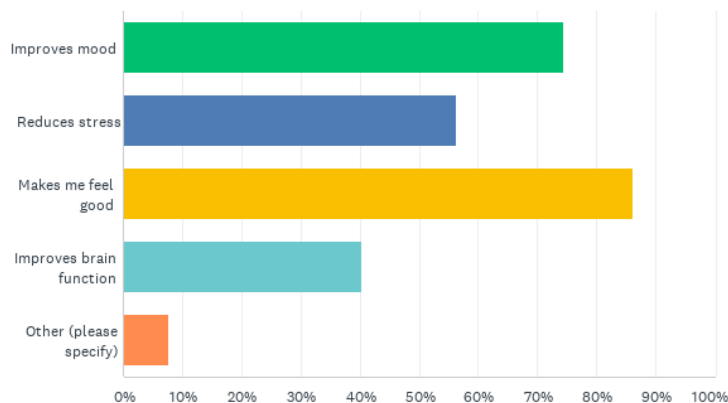


Mental Health Benefits

When you exercise, it makes you feel good, and 87% of our respondents agree with this!

Do you know the science behind why exercise can make you feel good and improve your mood? Several neurotransmitters are released when you exercise, including endorphins (which can block pain), endocannabinoids (which can increase feelings of euphoria), and dopamine (which can increase feelings of pleasure).

Exercise also promotes neuroplasticity in the brain (learning new skills) and increases oxygen supply to your brain (increasing your executive functioning e.g., self-control, & attention span).



56% of people reported that their chosen activity reduces stress levels. This is likely because exercise reduces levels of the body's stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol.

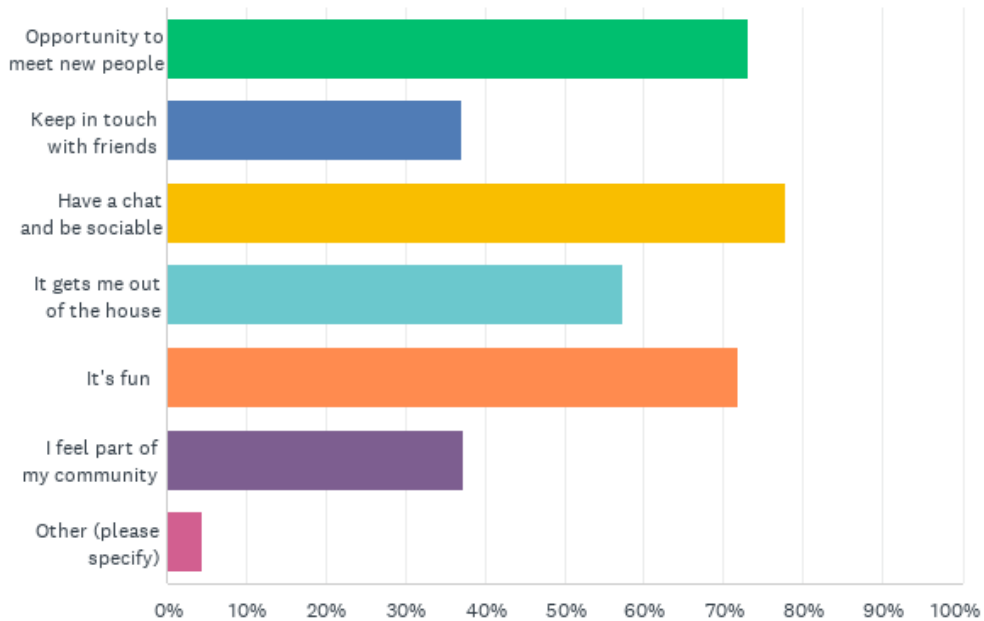


“I find this course gives a sense of achievement when we finish & I always feel better for it.”

“I look forward to the class each week - it is good for the soul!”

Social Benefits

We asked our participants what social benefits they gained from our service and here is what they told us...



Our classes prevent and mitigate isolation by creating a social support network for participants. Through informal chats and teas/coffees after class, instructors create an environment in which people can fulfil their potential to enable strengthening of purpose. We think that exercise is always better in a group, our participants stay motivated, new friendships are formed, and it's fun!

“Excellent exercising with other people”

“The class has really made a difference to me, meeting people and making friends as well as improving my fitness.”



Venue

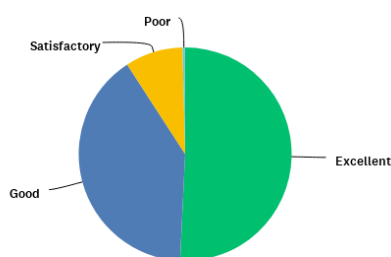
Q10 How would you rate the quality of the venue?

home Large airy room house well maintained Local large enough always parking close modern
Central Wells spacious need Cold Great pleasant Roomy plenty space suitable S
sometimes nice people easy clean tidy heating car parking large N
venue enough class Warm spacious room enough space
good large airy warm easy parking clean plenty hall
building parking Ample well hall toilets plenty room
warm environment light access excellent close toilets bright facilities
environment easy access convenient big lots lovely bright warm light airy spacious light
floor far home size Clean spacious space within walking distance atmosphere accessible

You can see from the word cloud above (where the larger the word, the more times it was mentioned by respondents), important features in a venue for our service users include being 'spacious, warm, clean, light and airy'.

Age UK Somerset take great pride in providing good quality venues to host our classes. We always conduct a detailed 'venue assessment' ahead of any venue booking in which we look at the suitability of many variables, including parking, access, welfare facilities, and safety.

Q10 How would you rate the quality of the venue?



90% of respondents reported their class venue to be 'excellent or good'

10% of respondents reported their venue was satisfactory. Many of these reasons were that the venue can felt cold in the winter. It is not a surprise with the rising cost of energy, and the cost-of-living crisis, that many of our venues are becoming more energy conscious and turning their heating down.

We are always looking to expand our reach, so if you know of any venues that may suit us, please do get in touch with the team.

Instructor

We are thrilled that 99% of our respondents said their instructor was excellent or good. Of the 9 people who selected 'satisfactory' their comments were that they struggled to hear their instructor sometimes. We are now looking into options for those instructors (e.g., providing a microphone).



Q11 How would you rate the quality of your instructor?

time make session understanding sense humour one Chris excellent lovely well organised kind
 things easy follow motivating easy suit enthusiastic Della happy warm
 gives clear instructions age Hannah takes makes class helpful keep feel
 always cheerful makes everyone feel gives explains moves Chris Tansin makes
 knowledgeable varies exercises clear instructions N great way
 well pleasant encouraging Shows makes gentle
 exercises music class experience good helps fun week
 friendly movements us aware always personality patient
 need instructor love explains feel welcome caring
 friendly knowledgeable moves gives us welcoming great sense humour
 enjoyable hard excellent Jan cheerful going good teacher person
 instructions lots calm without works efficient teacher routine brilliant provided also Les
 clearly friendly helpful really keeps us interesting good job Chris makes go wrong makes
 Michelle

Here's what some had to say about our team of excellent instructors:



“Well planned classes and music, each exercise thoughtfully explained & beneficial for our age”

“She helps us with her knowledge of anatomical problems & prevents us doing exercises not good for certain skeletal problems we have, not all instructors are as knowledgeable of anatomy of the body”

“Very warm, inclusive. Ensures everyone feels a part of the process. Brings new ideas to the class. She ensures everyone knows each other and has a good sense of humour.”

“She is friendly and positive. She gives clear guidance and is aware of the differing needs of members of the class.”

“She makes it fun as well as good all round exercise and explains the benefits of various movements Also good choice of music and excellent choreography. Encourages you to do what you can without putting you under pressure.”

“He is a great communicator, is intuitive, patient and inclusive. I felt welcomed from the very first moment.”

“She is great. She interacts well with everyone in the class. She is clear and concise and easy to follow. She also brings a great sense of humour into the class. Just a great all round teacher.”

“She makes class fun so I do more without realising, exercise no longer feels like hard work!

“She is very friendly and good at her job. She makes everyone feel welcome. There’s always a lot of laughter in her classes which is just as important as exercising!”

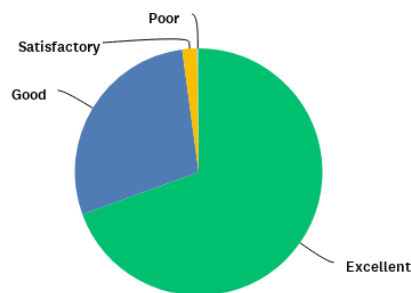
Age UK Somerset is a very reputable employer. We know (through regular communication and check-ins) that our staff enjoy being on the Age UK Somerset team, and they tend to stay with us many years. Our class participants really value the longevity and reliability of our classes, but above all else – **they love their instructors!**

Value for Money

Our recent market analysis tells us our class prices (which range from £2.50 to £5), are below the average in the county. Our aim is to provide an excellent service at an affordable rate. We believe we offer excellent value for money, and we're pleased that most of our respondents agree. We never want the cost of our classes to act as a barrier to participation. Of the 12 people who selected 'satisfactory or poor', only two of them left us an explanatory comment: one related to the cost of nearby parking, and one suggested the NHS should fund us, so the class could be free.



Q12 How would you rate the value for money of your exercise class?



“The quality of the instructor and the venue - excellent value”

“£5 is a very little price to pay for something that helps my wellbeing all week.”

“As a pensioner, it remains affordable for me”

“Worth every penny”

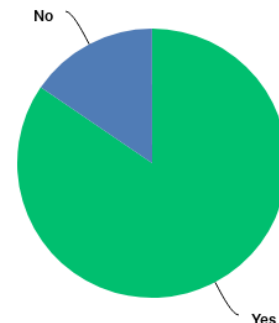
good value money full hour s people rate able happy exercise classes fee
afford much attend Compared affordable s pay price pay
good value money classes hour exercise cost pay go
good value Well worth reasonable Cheaper going worth hour lot
price venue excellent value quality pensioners reasonably priced seems

Digital Inclusion

This survey shows us that 85% of our respondents use the internet, and only 15% don't. We are pleased that this is 10% below the National average of 25% of people who are digitally excluded.

It is interesting to note that last year our survey said that 72% of our respondents used the internet, so that's an encouraging 13% increase.

Q13 Do you use the Internet?



Why digital skills matter

Older people who are without digital skills risk losing access to key services such as banking, shopping and health services, as well as communications platforms that keep people connected.

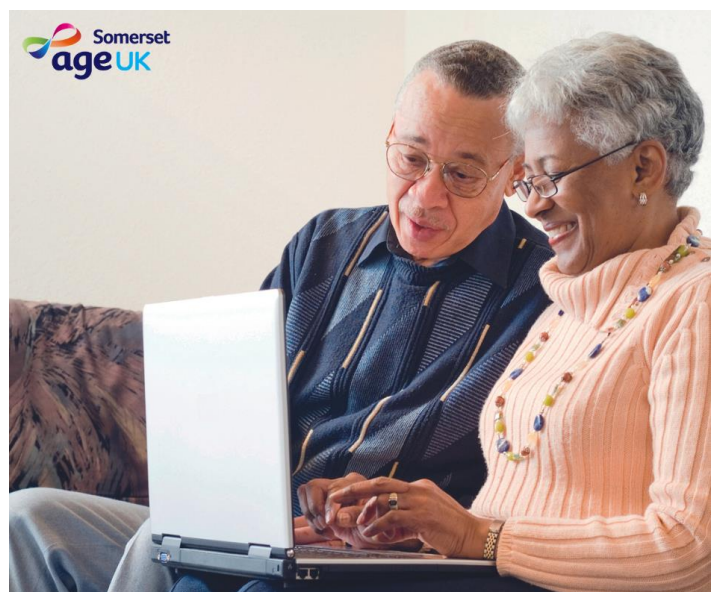
From AGE UK NATIONAL

Recent research from Age UK has found that in England, the three most common reasons for people aged 65 and over not using the internet are;

- *A lack of skills.*
- *A lack of trust in the internet.*
- *A lack of access to good enough equipment and/or broadband access*

Age UK are on a mission to help more older people make the most of the digital world through programmes that increase skills and confidence. Click on the links below to get inspired about digital inclusion:

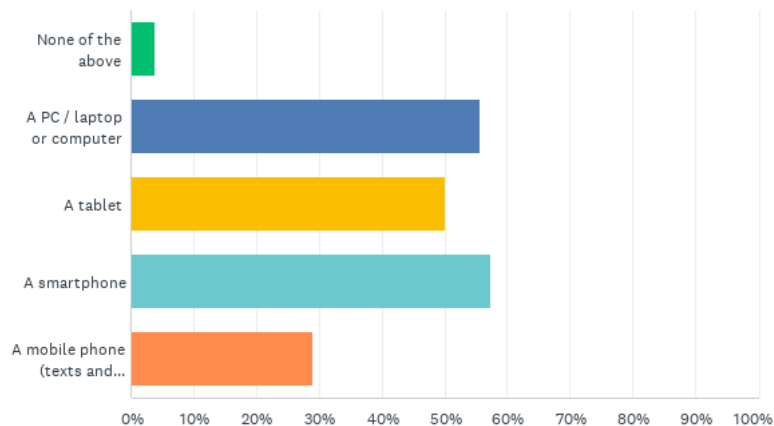
- [Why digital skills matter](#)
- [Our approach](#)
- [Current programmes](#)
- [Past programmes](#)



Use of Devices

It's encouraging to see that the majority of our service users are staying connected through using their devices.

Q14 Do you use? (Please tick all that apply)



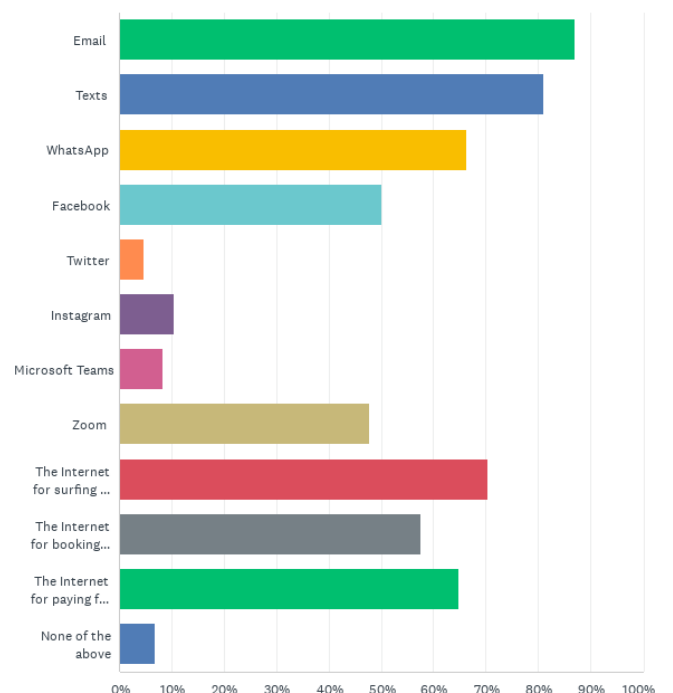
A few of our respondents asked for advice on where to get help with using their devices and we have recommended contacting SPARK Somerset on 01458 5509 973, or search their website: <https://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/spark-it>

They have 'Digital Champions' who can offer guidance/help/support with devices, and they also facilitate 'digital cafes' which are free to attend and open to anyone who would like to learn about using a phone, tablet, or laptop.

What do you use the internet for?

Our participants told us all the different ways they use the Internet. It was encouraging for us to note that 65% of respondents this year reported that they use the internet 'for paying for goods and services' and 58% used the internet for booking appointments.

Q15 Have you ever used? (Please tick all that apply)



We compared responses from last year's survey and were pleased to see the following:

	2022	2023	Increase %
E-mail	81%	87%	+6%
Face Book	28%	50%	+22%
WhatsApp	43%	66%	+23%
Texts	63%	81%	+18%
Twitter	1%	5%	+4%
Instagram	4%	11%	+7%
NOT ONLINE	11%	7%	-4%

Here at Age UK Somerset we are always looking for ways to embrace technology and use it to our advantage. The Ageing Well Team are currently looking into options of using booking software, including a phone app, to allow participants to easily and conveniently book/pay/cancel a class. This would run alongside (not replace) our current PAYG/cash option.

Here's what some of our participants had to say:

“The only bug bear is the weekly pre-booking in procedure after 1pm. Would much prefer to pay monthly or 3 monthly on line for the whole course.”

“The opportunity to have a Zoom class has been such a positive experience”

‘It would be helpful if we could pay online for classes, especially as we have to email to book them’.

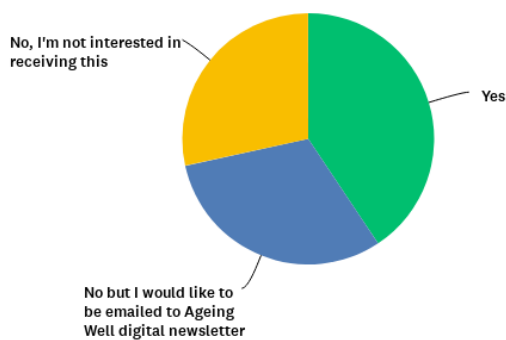
‘Booking & paying online for term/half term would be useful but aware some could not use this’.

‘Would prefer to make a long term booking rather than weekly.’

Digital Newsletter

As a result of last year's survey, we were encouraged to share our newsletter via email to our participants and any other interested parties. We have found it to be a wonderful way to share our news, but also engage with our participants and hear their stories and lived experiences.

Q16 Do you receive our monthly digital newsletter?



We are thrilled that of the 524 responses, 72% of people were keen on receiving the newsletter, either having subscribed to it already or requested to be added to our mailing list.



We upload the newsletter to our webpages each month for people to access who don't have email.

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/somerset/activities-and-events/ageing-well-news-and-other-activities/>

In order to keep the cost minimal for the charity we have recently changed to a new automated emailing system provider, this will allow us to increase our number of subscribers without incurring a fee. Unfortunately, our small team is unable to produce paper copies of the newsletter.

The statistics indicate 87% of our participants have an email address, and we regularly share details of free digital skills cafes, library initiatives etc, for those who wish to improve their IT skills further.

Anyone can subscribe to our monthly digital newsletter here: <https://zcmp.eu/QOr>

We will endeavour to continue to provide free digital communication with our participants and partners via our monthly newsletter.

Other Comments

The response from our participants has been overwhelmingly positive. The final question in our survey was an open request for any further comments or questions. Many of our responders took this opportunity to give thanks and ask us to keep doing what we're doing.

Q17 Do you have any other comments or questions?

happy Really enjoy class mobile always look forward enjoyable recommend class want prefer
hope swim friendly much possible Tansin Continue access fun group people right
keeping comes age week find older s Many pleased months book
glad found class make Please keep great enjoyable class Thank
found class class enjoy class good keep going well glad
attended easy excellent opportunity session lovely going long
help None instructor lot Age UK helpful exercise service years meet really
team look forward leaving course Long may Tai Chi Thank providing enjoying
really look forward day spoke

“

Best Activity I've done for years, I'm so lucky to have found this class nearby. Thankyou!

The most enjoyable day of my week

Just to say 'THANK YOU' to Age UK for providing these excellent classes

Thank you for keeping me moving

As well as enjoying the class, I found it easy to get in touch to find out about it and book it. Everyone I spoke to/ emailed was pleasant, friendly and helpful. Thank you!

Thank you for giving the older people the opportunity to relearn old physical skills. The classes bring energy, lightness and a touch of youth to us.

Please keep the class going!

The class has really made a difference to me, meeting people and making friends as well as improving my fitness.

Long may this class continue

Thank you for giving me to opportunity to keep fit both mentally and physically

I hope these classes will continue as they are invaluable and necessary for people of our age who want to keep fit and well.

A valuable service for an ageing population of Somerset

Always look forward to Fridays meeting up with friends. Always feel better mentally & physically afterwards.

”



SUMMARY

To summarise, we need to keep doing what we do, and do more of it!

KEY HEADLINES:

Our service provides real **VALUE to participants**

Our service is **HIGHLY-RATED, needs driven & responsive to feedback**

Our service is **CONTINUALLY IMPROVING its efficiency, reputation & reach**

A BIG THANK YOU to all instructors, participants, and team members who helped create and send out this survey, collect and input the data, and produce the report.

Compiled by Becky Bostock, Ageing Well Manager

Appendix 1



Age UK Somerset Exercise Class Questionnaire 2023

Please complete this short survey to help inform our Ageing Well Service. We may use this information to help improve our service, show demand and prove need, so we can continue to deliver exercise sessions across the county. Thank you for your responses and feedback.

Please complete one survey for each class you attend.

1. What is your first name? (Please leave blank if you would like to be anonymous)

2. What is your second name? (Please leave blank if you would like to remain anonymous)

* 3. Do you consent to your feedback or comments being used in local promotional materials for marketing purposes? Only your first name would be used. Eg. quotes for posters, press releases or social media posts

Yes

No

* 4. What is your age?

50-59

60-69

70-79

80-89

90-99

100-109

* 5. What gender do you identify as?

Male

Female

Other

Would rather not say

6. Which class with Age UK Somerset are you completing this survey for? Please state class name and location.

Please base all future answers on this class only. If you attend more than one, please fill in additional survey/s.

* 7. How do you feel this class benefits your physical health?
Tick all statements that apply.

- Improves balance
- Improves strength
- Improves general fitness
- Improves flexibility
- Improves mobility
- Reduces pain
- Learning new skills
- Improves heart and lung function
- Other (please specify)

* 8. How do you feel this class benefits your mental health?
Tick all statements that apply.

- Improves mood
- Reduces stress
- Makes me feel good
- Improves brain function
- Other (please specify)

* 9. How do you feel this class benefits you socially? Tick all statements that apply.

Opportunity to meet new people

Keep in touch with friends

Have a chat and be sociable

It gets me out of the house

It's fun

I feel part of my community

Other (please specify)

* 10. How would you rate the quality of the venue?

Excellent

Good

Satisfactory

Poor

Please comment why

* 11. How would you rate the quality of your instructor?

Excellent

Good

Satisfactory

Poor

Please comment why

* 12. How would you rate the value for money of your exercise class?

- Excellent
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Poor

Please comment why

* 13. Do you use the Internet?

- Yes
- No

* 14. Do you use? (Please tick all that apply)

- A PC / laptop or computer
- A tablet
- A smartphone
- A mobile phone (texts and calls only)
- None of the above

* 15. Have you ever used? (Please tick all that apply)

- Email
- Texts
- WhatsApp
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Microsoft Teams
- Zoom
- The Internet for surfing or browsing websites
- The Internet for booking appointments
- The Internet for paying for goods or services
- None of the above

* 16. Do you receive our monthly digital newsletter?

- Yes
- No but I would like to be emailed the Ageing Well digital newsletter
- No, I'm not interested in receiving this

Please enter your email address here if you would like to receive our digital newsletter

17. Do you have any other comments or questions?



Footnotes

1- www.ons.gov.uk