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No progress in life expectancy in a decade shows worrying signs for state of nation's health

Commissioner for Older People and Ageing

New data released today shows there has been no progress made on life expectancy in the UK in a decade – in stark contrast to sizeable increases over previous decades.

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We are calling for a [Commissioner for Older People and Ageing](#) to ensure older people's needs are considered within measures to build a healthier nation.

Stagnating levels of long-term progress in life expectancy as revealed in new data released today are the latest indicator of our nation's poor state of health and widespread inequality, we are warning today.

New life expectancy data released today shows that while there has been some small incremental increases in the short-term, the overall, long-term trend is still extremely worrying.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) data shows that life expectancy has marginally increased in England as a whole for the 2022-24 period compared with 2021-23 – now standing at 83.3 years for women and 79.5 years for men.

But warning signs from today's data release include:

- Life expectancy in the UK is no better than it was 10 years ago. This compares to sustained increases in the preceding decades including an increase of 1.7 years for male life expectancy and 2.4 years for female life expectancy at birth between 2000/02 and 2008/10.
- A ten-year life expectancy gap between the richest and poorest in this country. In England, the lowest life expectancy at birth across local areas was in Blackpool (73.7 years for males and 79.1 years for females); the highest life expectancy was in Hart for males (83.7 years) and in Kensington and Chelsea (87.1 years) for females. This gap has increased quite steadily from 4.5 years in 2003-05 to 7.1 years now for women and from 6.9 years to 10 years for men.
- The life expectancy of men is still lower than pre-pandemic levels in all regions of the country except for the South East and London. Life expectancy of men in the capital has reached a new high of 80.4 years.
- For women, life expectancy is still lower or the same as pre-pandemic levels in every region except the East of England, London and the South East.
- By 2022 to 2024, male life expectancy was at or above pre-pandemic levels in just 36% of all local areas; for female life expectancy, this was 50%.

Dr Aideen Young, Senior Evidence Manager (Research, Impact and Voice) at the Centre for Ageing Better, said:

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The latest life expectancy data for the country continues to paint a concerning picture. Life expectancy in this country is stagnating and remains well below pre-pandemic levels.

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“The picture is even more damning at a local level where the difference in the life expectancy of some of the most prosperous places in the South and the poorest parts of the North are as much as ten years.

Unfortunately, where you are born has a very strong bearing on how long you can expect to live. The poorest health is seen in the poorest places in the country.

“This needs to change. Not only for the benefit of the people who are dying early and living through the vast majority of their curtailed later life in poor health. But also for the benefit of our country and economy. Our growing ageing population is often seen as a looming and unaffordable crisis. This doesn’t have to be the case. But unless we adopt a more preventative approach, and give people a better chance of ageing well and having good health in later life, then it will become a reality.

“To reduce the huge income-related gap in life expectancy, the government should establish a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing who could ensure that older people’s needs are considered within measures to build a healthier nation. This should include work to tackle

the wider determinants of poor health such as a lack of access to good work, poverty poor-quality housing and social isolation.”

Commissioner for Older People and Ageing

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