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# Key Findings

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## Chapter 2: Methodology

- A response rate of 81% with 5,101 completed self-interviews was achieved in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of TILDA.
- A response rate of 57% was achieved for proxy interviews (n=124), i.e. where a close relative or friend completes the interview on behalf of a participant unable to do so due to a physical or cognitive impairment. A further 172 End-of-Life interviews were completed for participants who had died.
- A total of 4,410 self-completion questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 86%.

## Chapter 3: Living with Frailty in Ireland 2018

- Frailty is not a diagnosis and can be driven by different factors in different individuals. The two most common operationalisations of frailty are the physical frailty phenotype (FP) and the frailty index (FI) or accumulation of health deficits.
- The information presented in this chapter utilises frailty as measured by the FI and is based on cross-sectional analyses of TILDA participants from Wave 5 (2018).
- Frailty is common, affecting 18% of adults aged 58 years and over, 22% aged 65 years and over and 33.3% aged 75 years and over in Ireland.
- The prevalence of frailty among women is almost twice that of men (22% versus 13%) and increases with age in both sexes.
- Frailty is three times more prevalent at lower levels of educational attainment: 29% for primary level versus 10% for third level.
- Among those aged 58 years and over, 10% are living alone, of whom 23% live alone with frailty. Among those aged 75 years and over who live alone, 44% have frailty.
- Half of adults aged 58 years and over living with frailty also have a disability in either basic or instrumental activities of daily living.
- People living with frailty are more likely to experience lower levels of cognitive function at all age groups.

- Among adults aged 75 years and over living with frailty:
  - 47% do not receive any form of informal care or formal community support
  - 36% receive informal care from a family member or friend
  - 38% receive formal community support services
  - 16% receive both informal care and formal community support services
  - 12% pay for private home help or a personal care attendant
  - 17% receive public home help
  - 10% receive public personal care attendant
  - 4% receive public meals-on-wheels
  - 4% are in receipt of a home care package
- 55% of adults aged 75 years and older who live with frailty self-rate their health as excellent, very good or good.
- Frailty is not inevitable and can be avoided, delayed and reversed with timely and appropriate interventions, both at the individual and population levels.

#### **Chapter 4: Multimorbidity and Medication Usage**

- 64% of adults aged 75 years and older report the presence of three or more chronic conditions compared to 34% of adults aged 58-64 years. A higher proportion of adults reporting low physical activity also report three or more chronic conditions (59%) compared to adults reporting high physical activity (37%).
- Hypertension and high cholesterol are the most commonly reported cardiovascular diseases in adults. Angina and heart attack became increasingly prevalent in older ages for both men and women. Diabetes also increases in prevalence with age, but only in men.
- Experience of a stroke is over twice that in adults aged 75 years and older (4%) compared to adults aged 58-64 years (1%). The proportion of mini-stroke or a transient ischaemic incident is twice that in adults reporting low physical activity (6%) compared to adults reporting high physical activity (3%).
- The prevalence of cancer increases with age in men, increasing from 6% in adults aged 58-64 to 17% in adults aged 75 years and older.
- The proportion of adults reporting asthma or lung disease is 13% and 9% respectively. A higher proportion of women report asthma compared to men between ages 58-74 years. Twice as many current smokers (14%) report lung disease compared to never or past smokers (8%), and a lower proportion of those reporting high physical activity (10%) report asthma compared to low physical activity (15%).

- Almost half of adults (46%) report arthritis, increasing to 60% in adults aged 75 years and older.
- Just one-fifth (20%) of adults report no medication use, with 92% of adults aged 75 years and older reporting use of at least one medication. The proportion of adults aged 75 years and older (48%) using five or more medication is over twice that of those aged 58-64 years (18%).
- Almost half of adults use anti-hypertensive medication (49%), increasing from 33% to 69% in adults aged 58-64 years and 75 years and older respectively.

## Chapter 5: Patterns in Health Service Utilisation and Healthcare Entitlements

- 36% had a medical card only, 28% had a medical card and private health insurance ('dual cover'), 27% had private health insurance only, 2% had a GP visit card only, and 8% had 'no cover'.
- In the previous 12 months, 93% reported visiting their GP, 46% visited a hospital outpatient clinic, 1 in 5 visited the ED, 16% had an overnight hospital admission and 8% had a day case procedure. The most frequently utilised medical service was the GP (average 3.88 visits in the previous 12 months). Advancing age was associated with an increase in the frequency of use of all medical services, but the effect was particularly prominent in the number of nights an older adult spent in hospital in the previous 12 months (1.23 nights aged 58-64 years, to 3.57 nights aged 75 years or older). However, much of this effect is likely driven by biological age (e.g. frailty), rather than their chronological age.
- The most commonly used allied health service in the previous 12 months was the optician (15%). Approximately 1 in 10 visited the dentist and 6% utilised community-based physiotherapy. Community-based dietetics, hearing services, psychological or counselling services, and social work were used by fewer than 5% of the population aged 58 years and older.
- It was uncommon for the over-58s population in Ireland to use services which are delivered in the home, or are available to support independent living in the home. Informal carers are the most commonly used 'service' (8%), followed by community nursing (5%) and the home help or personal care service (4%).
- 8% reported having ever undertaken home modifications at an average cost of €3,878. 62% of those who made home modifications, did not receive help from the State to cover the cost of these modifications.

## Chapter 6: The Contributions of the Older Population

- Overall, 41% of adults aged 58 years and older provide some kind of regular help and/or care for their spouses, relatives (not including grandchildren), neighbours and friends.
- Overall, 5% of men and 7% of women aged 58 years and over report that they provided informal care for a family member or friend in the last month.
- 8% of the population aged 58 years and over had living parents; 12% of men and 21% of women aged 58-64 years and 12% of men and 31% of women aged 65-74 years provided help with dressing, feeding and bathing to their parents.
- 42% of men and 50% of women who have living parents report they regularly helped them with household chores and tasks.
- 16% of men and 19% of women aged 58-64 report helping their children with household tasks, this increases to 24% of men aged 65-74 but remained at 17% for women in this age group and decreased to 7% and 5% respectively for men and women aged 75 years and over.
- The older population also help their friends and neighbours with household tasks; 14% of men and 12% of women aged 58-64 and 15% of men and 12% of women aged 65-74 report helping their friends and neighbours with household tasks. A lower but still substantial number (8%) aged 75 years and over also report providing friends and neighbours with this help.
- Grandchild care is very common in the older population, and 42% of older adults report that they looked after their grandchild in the last month. This increased from 40% of men aged 58-64 to 54% of men aged 65-74 years while for women the proportion remained similar at half of all aged 58-64 year (50%) and 65-74 years (54%) and remained high in both men (30%) and women (21%) aged 75 years and older.

## Chapter 7: Internet Access and Usage among Ireland's Older Population

- 80% of adults aged 58 years and older have access to the internet in their homes.
- Internet access decreases with age. Only 58% of those aged 75 years and older have home internet access, compared to 94% aged 58-64 years, and 83% aged 65-74 years.
- 83% aged 58 years and older in urban areas have home internet access; 75% in rural.

- 66% of adults aged 58 years and older have access to a smartphone/tablet (and therefore to apps).
- Access to smartphones/tablets similarly decreases with age. Only 42% aged 75 years and older have access to a smartphone/tablet, compared to 84% aged 58-64 years, and 69% aged 65-74 years.
- Common internet uses among those aged 58 years and older include:
  - Searching for information: 81%
  - Sending and receiving emails: 73%
  - Financial transactions: 59%
  - News: 58%
  - Audio/video calls: 44%
  - Social media: 40%
  - Gaming/apps: 17%
- Internet use for any purpose declines with increased age, with social media use experiencing the largest of these age-associated declines, from 49% in those aged 58-64 years, 40% aged 65-74 years, to only 26% aged 75 years and older.
- Women use social media more than men, with 47% of women aged 58 years and older using the internet for this purpose, compared to 33% of men.
- 70% of adults aged 58 years and older use the internet daily; 87% weekly.
- 3% of adults aged 58 years and older use the internet but are solely reliant on internet access external to their homes e.g. friends'/relatives' home, library, community centre and public Wi-Fi networks.
- Of adults aged 58 years and older living alone, 36% do not have internet access in their homes.