



**Using individual and neighbourhood profiles and trends to understand frailty with nationally representative population data**

**Part 1: Frailty among older adults and its distribution in England**

**Executive Summary**

**February 2020**

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## The problem

Frailty is common in later life, and linked to poor quality of life, high service use and adverse health outcomes, including falls and death. We know that frailty is not an inevitable part of ageing, and action to prevent or slow the progression of frailty makes an important contribution to public health. To develop appropriate policies and intervention, we need to understand where services are needed. National estimates for the prevalence of frailty are useful, but they provide no information on how frailty varies across the country. This study addresses an important gap in our knowledge - of how common frailty is, at a local level. The aim of

this work was to estimate the proportion of older adults with pre-frailty and frailty across local authority districts (LADs) in England.

## What did we do?

To estimate the prevalence of frailty, we analysed data from two nationally representative studies - the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) Wave 4 and the Cognitive Function and Ageing Study II (CFAS II). We also included deprivation data (2011 UK Townsend Deprivation Scores), and 2020 population projections for local authorities.

## Key Findings

### Frailty in England

- **Frailty prevalence at 65+:** The prevalence of frailty in adults aged 65+ (2020) was estimated at 1.2%. Estimates were higher for women (1.5%) than for men (0.8%).
- **Frailty prevalence at older ages:** Over one in nine men aged 85 or older (11.6%) and one in eight women aged 80 or older (14.3%) in England were estimated to be frail. Estimates were highest for women aged 90+ years (21.3%).
- **Frailty geographical variation:** Frailty varied significantly across local authority districts, with estimates for adults aged 65+ ranging from 0.5% to 2.2%.

### Pre-frailty in England

- **Pre-frailty prevalence at 65+:** Approximately 2.7% of adults aged 65+ were estimated to be pre-frail, with higher estimates for women (3.4%) than men (2.0%).
- **Pre-frailty variation with age:** A strong age gradient exists in the estimated prevalence of pre-frailty, with highest estimates for those aged 90+ years.
- **Pre-frailty geographical variation:** Pre-frailty is estimated to range between 1.1% and 4.7% in different local authority districts.

**Caveat:** It is important to note that the figures in this report are synthetic estimates. They reflect expected values, taking into account relevant individual characteristics. This is an established and accepted approach to take, when no direct measures are available.

## Conclusion

This is the first area-level description of pre-frailty and frailty amongst older adults in England. Frailty and pre-frailty are more common with age. Geographical variation was greater for pre-frailty

than frailty. This analysis should be of value to inform service planning in health and social care, in particular, efforts to prevent or delay the onset of frailty.

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