

# What is the forecasted prevalence and incidence of long term conditions in Wales?

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## Background

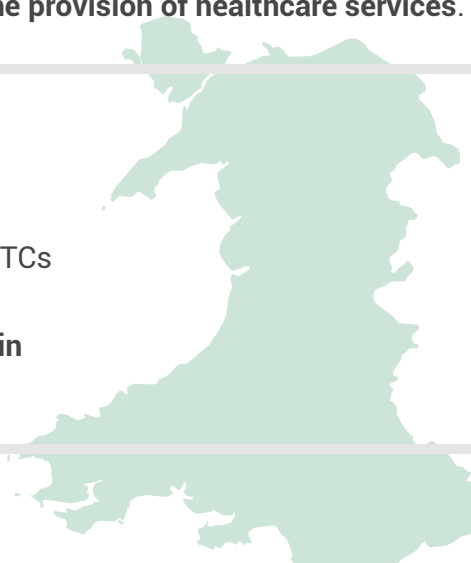
Wales' growing and aging population is expected to see **1 in 5 people age 70 or over by 2038**, thus **increasing the risk of significant rises in the prevalence of many long-term health conditions (LTCs)**.

LTCs can have a **significant impact on healthy life expectancy**, particularly for more deprived members of the population, and **have implications for the provision of healthcare services**.

## Aim

The aim of this study is to

- forecast the **expected prevalence and incidence** of LTCs in Wales over the next 10+ years
- support **planning for organising and financing care in Wales**



A **Rapid Evidence Map** of published research was produced, with a focus on Wales  
Evidence base reviewed: 2012 to 2023

## Conditions reviewed

These include:

- Cancer
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Stroke
- Dementia
- Diabetes
- Mental illness

## Risk factors reviewed



Diet/nutrition



Obesity



Smoking

## Findings

The study results show **which** LTCs are expected to increase over the next 10+ years in Wales:

- More **cancer** cases in people age 70+ are anticipated by 2040
- Rates of **obesity** are expected to rise until 2031-37
- Rates of **diabetes** are expected to rise by 22% by 2035-36
- **Dementia** prevalence is projected to increase by 2040

People living with **4+ LTCs** will **almost double** by 2035

## Evidence Gaps

There was insufficient evidence to forecast the likely trajectories of the following conditions in Wales:

- Atrial fibrillation
  - Heart failure
  - Peripheral vascular disease
  - Hypertension
  - Multi-morbidities
- Further research is therefore needed.

## Policy and Practice implications

Risk factors for many LTCs can be reduced through making healthy lifestyle choices.



**Focus on prevention through increased investment in behavioural science approaches** (i.e. lifestyle change interventions) should be considered by policy makers and healthcare leaders to mitigate the rising incidence and prevalence of several preventable conditions. In cases where this is not possible, services and organisations should support and advocate.



### Targeted prevention activity

Smoking, excessive drinking and obesity are candidates for targeted preventive work, especially in areas of deprivation to lessen health inequalities.



### Earlier diagnosis

Earlier diagnosis by genetic and genomic technologies, coupled with more cost-effective home care to support lifestyle changes could help to reduce NHS costs for some LTCs.



### Further research

Further research is needed for some LTCs to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the burden of these conditions in Wales. Also further research is required on the wider determinants of health to inform interventions that would improve health outcomes, service design and delivery.

The full report can be found at

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2023.06.23.23291814v1>

This report has informed a report by the Welsh Government's Chief Scientific Adviser for Health and Science Evidence Advice Division:

'**NHS in 10+ years: An examination of the projected impact of Long-Term Conditions and Risk Factors in Wales**', published 22 September 2023 and available here:

<https://www.gov.wales/report-projections-health-evidence-and-policy-recommendations>