

Ageing *in* Australia Community Expectations Report 2026



At a glance

Overall, the results told a story of divergent views. Responses to many questions tended to be evenly split across positive, negative and neutral answers from the general population. A feature of the research was the influence of respondents' level of knowledge and engagement with the aged care sector on sentiment and confidence in the system.

- Knowledge about the aged care system was generally low, even among older Australians, including prospective users who were often uncertain about where to seek reliable information.
- Sentiment towards the current system was polarised though it improved with knowledge. Confidence in the system supporting people to age well was low to neutral.
- Perceptions of whether people have choice within the system was polarised, largely due to availability and affordability issues. Ageing with choice and empowerment was seen as a foundational part of ageing well, but often felt outside of people's control.
- Only a small proportion (ten per cent) of our respondents received aged care services. Among people with firsthand experience of aged care, satisfaction was relatively high. Seventy-one per cent of those who had personally used aged care services, and 63 per cent of those who had cared for someone receiving aged care, reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the care provided.
- There was uncertainty about the future, with almost half respondents (46 per cent) indicating they didn't know whether the aged care system is heading in the right or wrong direction. In qualitative discussions about future trends, including pressure on the system through population shifts and workforce shortages, respondents felt even more concerned.
- Looking to the future of the sector, there was positive sentiment towards the use of new technology (including artificial intelligence (AI)) to support the workforce and free staff up, not to replace them. This was particularly true where people were given specific examples of the uses of new technology, with the exception of using technology for companionship.
- Respondents were also open to providing (and to a lesser extent receiving) informal care. However, there were some boundaries: parents didn't want their children to have to shower them, dress wounds or generally provide 'higher care'. Many saw positives in increasing the migrant workforce, though with some concerns or negative experiences around language barriers affecting care.
- When it comes to funding aged care in the future, respondents generally feel a mix of user pays and taxpayer funding is fair, with younger respondents more supportive of more funding coming from users, while older respondents were more likely to oppose using superannuation to fund aged care.
- More than one in two participants (56 per cent) wanted to stay at home until death, while one in three would like to move to a retirement village or assisted living.
- One in two respondents (50 per cent) expressed some interest in downsizing, but many barriers were identified. These included: affordability and availability of properties, emotional attachment, cost and hassle. Beyond the age of 70, stamp duty and aged pension implications also became prominent barriers.
- Overall, the results show several opportunities for governments and the aged care sector to guide and support older Australians and their families as they navigate the future. These include:
 - strengthening knowledge and understanding of the aged care system, including how it is funded, what it offers, and how it can be accessed. It is also important to clearly demonstrate why system change is needed and the benefits it is expected to deliver;
 - providing greater support and guidance for people to age well;
 - addressing the demand for more holistic support for older people in relation to the healthcare, aged care and housing sectors;
 - addressing barriers to downsizing through relevant policy reforms and expanding affordable housing stock in key markets; and
 - addressing concerns about informal caregiving or the use of technology in aged care.