



## **Age Without Limits** 2024 Impact Report



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### From our CEO

I have a confession to make. I am ageist. And I would challenge anyone who has spent most of their life in the UK who says they are not at all ageist. Ageism is the most widespread and unchallenged form of discrimination. No-one is immune to experiencing internalised, interpersonal or institutional ageism and no-one is immune to colluding with the stereotypes that we are exposed to from childhood.

In my time leading the <u>Centre for</u>
<u>Ageing Better</u>, I have had my eyes opened to the reality of ageism and the harm that it does to individuals and society as a whole. Our own research and that of others shows how ageism impacts on physical and mental health, on the services people receive, on the work they are able to do, and on their financial security. However, it is not inevitable.

That's why I'm so thrilled that Ageing Better is running this three-year public facing campaign, Age Without Limits, to raise awareness of, and challenge, ageism for the benefit of us all as we grow older.



Culture and attitude change does take time, but we're pleased that we're already seeing positive indications of that change. Salience around ageism is increasing, resulting in more people thinking about ageism who hadn't previously done so. People who have seen our activities throughout 2024 have reflected and asked themselves if they have ageist attitudes. Many have also taken some kind of action, most notably speaking about the topic with friends and family, becoming an Age Without Limits supporter or getting involved in our Age Without Limits Day. Those green shoots build towards our overarching three-year objectives.

We all have a role in making this happen.

DR Carole Easton OBE
Chief Executive,
Centre for Ageing Better



# Why we need to challenge ageism

## Ageism is the stereotyping, prejudice and/or discrimination of people based on their age.

It affects people of all ages and can have a profoundly damaging impact on us as we get older.

From the interactions we have with our friends and family, to the headlines we read in our newspapers and our experiences at work, ageism is widespread across our lives. We can also internalise negative ideas about ageing. They affect our self-confidence, and what we think we are capable or worthy of as we get older - limiting our opportunities and activities.

Below are some examples of ageist phrases we hear and see all the time that people have shared with us.

"It's just what happens when you're old." "You look good, for your age!" "Older people are so sweet!"

"She's past her prime." "You're too experienced for this role."

"I can't do that at my age."

"Do you still work?" "You're having a senior moment." "Can't teach an old dog new tricks!"

"He's set in his ways."

#### **Impact Report** 2024

Most people aren't deliberately ageist. We also might not recognise or describe some of our everyday experiences as ageism.

Yet, we know that:

2/5

**Two fifths** of adults in England say it is sometimes, very often, or always acceptable to poke fun at 'old' people.(i)

1/4

Over a quarter of adults in England think it's acceptable to assume older people can't understand complex information. (iii)

1/3

One in three adults in England don't consider age discrimination to be a serious problem for people in their 50s. (iiii)

From our mental health to workplace opportunities, these ingrained attitudes and behaviours have a very real impact on people's experiences, the things they do, and the things they think they are capable of as they age.

## Ageism is a barrier to us all ageing well, whether now or in our futures.

It means as a society we do not prioritise, nor invest in, ways to help more people experience good health, financial security and be treated fairly and with respect as we grow older.

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"I've never had a problem getting a job before, but in my mid-fifties I suddenly seemed unemployable."

Campaign supporter



# What we're doing to challenge ageism

The evidence is clear - ageism has significant and damaging effects on our lives as we get older.

The Centre for Ageing Better, and many other organisations, deliver work that improves life for people over 50. However, little was being done to change the **attitudes and behaviour** of the population more widely - to tackle ageism, to give this issue the profile and understanding that would mean millions of older people's lives could be improved.

We needed to move the debate from the echo-chamber of the age-related sector and those who experience ageism to individuals, communities and organisations for whom ageism simply wasn't on their radar. We identified behaviour change communications as key to achieving this.

#### In 2023:

- Only 11% of people had heard lots about ageism (salience). (iv)
- 1 in 10 people believed ageism didn't exist. (v)
- Over 40% of people had never really thought about ageism before. (vi)

# BACKGROUND Behaviour change communications

Behaviour change communications has been used successfully around the world to address both public health and social justice issues. We decided to use this approach to address ageism in England for these reasons:

- We can reach a significant proportion of the population, gain recognition of our campaign and then change attitudes and behaviour in connection to ageism.
- We can use a range of interventions including education, modelling and persuasion.
- A campaign creates a **platform for change** and strengthens campaigning efforts across the wider age-related agenda. This includes service provision, better homes, better financial security, better health services and more inclusive communities.

We can move beyond the
people and organisations that
currently consider this issue
relevant and build wider
understanding of why
challenging ageism is relevant to
everyone. We can engage
business, policymakers, media,
education - stakeholders who can
help us reach more people and
embed the change we want to
see.

We know that tackling ageism takes a **long-term approach**. Making use of complementary methods such as legislation, service provision and improvement, training and support as well as behaviour change communications will allow us to increase the pace, scale and reach of change.



## OUR CAMPAIGN Vision

Age Without Limits is the Centre for Ageing Better's campaign to challenge ageism for the benefit of us all as we grow older. Our vision is of a society where everyone enjoys later life free from the impact of ageism.

We run activities across the year to change how we all think and act about age and challenge ageism. We all have a role in making this happen.

Together, we can create a society where age is celebrated, and where everyone, regardless of their age, can lead a life of dignity, respect, and opportunity.



Around half of people aged over 50 report experiencing ageism in the last year (viii)



At least a third of people hold ageist beliefs (viii)



7 in 10 people support the idea of a campaign to challenge ageism (ix)



## OUR CAMPAIGN Principles of working

The origins of the campaign are built on the foundation of the Centre for Ageing Better's wide-ranging work to tackle inequalities in ageing.

The wealth of research on ageism from the Centre for Ageing Better, a What Works Centre, particularly Ageism, What's the harm?, has boosted our ability to shape the campaign to achieve the change we want to see.

- The campaign has a robust evaluation strategy to support learning and campaign development.
- We take an insights-led approach to design our campaign for specific audiences.

- People over 50, and people over 50 who are affected by ageism, are at the heart of what we do.
- Engaging and supporting storytelling from people over 50 who have experienced ageism will remain a powerful way in which we will challenge negative attitudes and behaviours towards older people.
- We support individuals, organisations and communities to take ownership of this campaign by providing a platform, resources and ideas to challenge ageism in their everyday lives.

## Our campaign Objectives

The three-year campaign aims to challenge ageism for the benefit of us all as we grow older. We are doing this by using a mass-reach advertising campaign, a collective day of action, and our ongoing communications and resources.

To set objectives we measured attitudes and behaviours in a nationally representative sample of adults over 18 in England.



### Public awareness and understanding of ageism

3 percentage point increase in awareness of ageism and its harms



## Improve public attitudes and behaviours towards older people

3 percentage point increase in people saying they feel more respected

We identified attitudes and behaviours that, if we change them, will reduce ageism. The baseline research also showed the level of change we can achieve in three years - knowing that the evidence shows attitude and behaviour change relating to discrimination issues takes change across the system, across generations.

We set objectives to achieve 3 percentage point changes in the following measures by August 2026:



## Public attitudes and behaviours towards ageing

3 percentage point drop in people agreeing with negative sentiments and stereotypes



## Decrease number of older people who engage in self-limiting behaviours

3 percentage point drop in people engaging in self-limiting behaviours due to internalised ageism

## OUR CAMPAIGN Who we want to reach

Our **primary audience** for the campaign is men and women who think positively about their own ageing, but are less positive about older people. They are on the cusp of older age themselves (around 45 – 55 years old) so ageism may hold particular relevance to them. This group is socially influential given their intergenerational relationships with children and/or older family members as well as their job level within the workplace.

Although we know we'll reach a much broader group, this targeted approach allows us to craft tailored and reflection-generating messages, for those who are unaware of ageism and its impacts.

Our **secondary audience** is already aware of ageism, they may have experienced it themselves, seen others impacted by its negative effects and want to support us to realise a society where everyone enjoys later life free from ageism. This group of people is ready to act and be our advocates.

At the heart of our work are people over 50, including those who've experienced ageism, who are willing to tell their stories / share their experiences of ageism and inspire others by sharing what they're doing to change it.



When I was attending a music festival, I got a few stares and nasty remarks from people for just dancing and enjoying myself. This has also happened within my own social circle – some of my peers would question me or try and put me down for not allegedly 'acting my age'. It's a real shame to see that so many people see age as such a defining factor in a person's life. - Campaign storyteller

## OUR CAMPAIGN Evaluation

We have a robust and proportionate evaluation strategy in place that includes:

- A baseline survey: Conducted in 2023, a follow up survey will be taken in 2026 by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) and University of Kent. This will help us understand at a nationally representative level, how people's attitudes and behaviours have changed over time, and the impact our campaign has had on the results.
- A regular tracker: This helps us to assess the salience of the topic of ageism amongst a nationally representative sample of the population of England. We use two of these trackers to find out how the mass-reach advertising campaign performed. This includes whether people saw and remembered our messaging and whether it motivated them to take action. This also helps us to refine the advertising campaign element of our activity year on year.



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# YEAR ONE Launching a platform for change

Thinking negatively about ageing and older people has been accepted and ignored for too long, but it doesn't have to be that way. We believe that together we can all change the way we think about ageing.

Year one of the three-year Age Without Limits campaign focussed on **raising awareness and understanding** of ageism.

The three-year campaign launched with a mass-reach advertising campaign asking a hard hitting question: 'Are You Ageist?'.

Our first **Age Without Limits Day** represented a chance for individuals, communities, workplaces, friends and families to learn, take action and challenge the negative stereotypes and biases that limit us all.

Our **year-round communications** strategy throughout 2024 kept ageism on the national agenda. People's **personal experience** was the bedrock of year one, from storytellers sharing their experiences to our survey of people over 50 who had experienced ageism in some aspect of their lives.

## YEAR ONE Are You Ageist?

We delivered a bold and provocative mass-reach advertising campaign (January to March 2024) asking: 'Are You Ageist?'.

We intended to grab people's attention and ask them to question their attitudes to ageing, before educating them on the impact that ageism can have. We wanted to land ageism as an issue, spark debate and

conversation and encourage people to take an action.

Our 'Are You Ageist?' advertising ran in hundreds of locations across the country, from bus stops and train stations to shopping centre billboards, newspapers, TVs and cinemas. The adverts encouraged people to:



**Change the way they think** by reflecting and asking themselves if they had ageist attitudes



Take part in our online

'Are You Ageist?' quiz to
find out if they had ageist
ideas or beliefs



Learn more about ageism and start challenging it in their own lives and communities by using our campaign's practical online resources and tips



Take action by signing up to the **Age Without Limits newsletter** and taking part in **Age Without Limits Day** 



ARE YOU AGEIST?

#AreYouAgeist

HALF OF PEOPLE AGED 50 AND OVER IN ENGLAND EXPERIENCED AGE DISCRIMINATION IN THE LAST YEAR

We need to change the way we think about ageing.

Find out how at
AgeWithoutLimits.org



Age without

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#AreYouAgeist

TOO OLD FOR THAT

AT LEAST A THIRD OF PEOPLE HOLD AGEIST BELIEFS

We need to change the way we think about ageing.

Find out how at











# YEAR ONE Age Without Limits Day

The theme of our first Age Without Limits Day in March 2024 was 'See and Be Seen' - all about challenging the often narrow, negative and stereotypical way that older people are portrayed in our society.

We wanted to create a platform for everyone to come together and take action to end ageism - as individuals, with friends and family, in our communities and in our workplaces. To mark the day, we co-hosted a digital **exhibition of photography** in central London with Age UK to celebrate the huge diversity across ages and show there is no one way to grow old.

Hundreds of people came from across the country and joined us to celebrate ageing.

### Over 60 groups and communities hosted events

across the country to mark our first ever Age Without Limits Day.
Linking with the Centre for Ageing Better's work on age-friendly communities, we funded 46 of these events with microgrants, supporting organisations and community groups to creatively mark the day.

The brilliant range of events, from fashion shows and photography exhibitions, to podcast launches, dance competitions and intergenerational discussions, demonstrated the resonance people felt with the theme. We were delighted that so many people joined us to challenge stereotypes and celebrate ageing.

## Case study: engaging members of the public

#### **Leeds Older People's Forum**

showed how impactful challenging ageism in everyday conversations can be when their volunteers spoke to members of the public in local shopping centres to mark Age Without Limits Day.

Hundreds of shoppers shared their own experiences of ageism and their surprise at how widespread it is. One shopper said: "I am unintentionally ageist! I am mortified as I didn't think I had that attitude. I am definitely going to try and think differently about my own ageing."



# Understanding the effects of ageism

To expand our insights, we commissioned research to ascertain the effects of ageism on people over 50. We <u>surveyed over 1000</u> individuals\* who had experienced negative treatment since turning 50 to understand the impacts this had on their lives. The results were sobering.

For 60% of people, the negative treatment came from interactions with other people. Almost half of those told us they experienced it at least monthly, with a quarter experiencing it weekly.

It happens to people in employment (37%), as a consumer (34%), in health and social care settings (27%) and in social or leisure settings (24%). But friends (10%) and family (15%) are also sources of negative treatment.

The real-life impacts are felt in many ways. People we asked said they had **not taken part in social activities** (34%), or sadly, **ceased to set goals** (19%) or **think positively** about their future (27%).

Ultimately, this makes people feel unimportant (45%), not valued (53%) or patronised (47%) leaving them with low self-confidence (41%).

60%
of people we spoke
to experienced
negative treatment
from others since
turning 50

<sup>\*</sup>Conducted by Norstadt via Solutions Research. This mixed methods research project comprised focus groups and a nationally representative survey of adults in England age 50+.

#### **YEAR ONE**

#### Year-round communications

Throughout 2024, we kept ageism and the importance of age-inclusivity on the national agenda through

media work across news and radio as well as via our newsletter and ongoing social media.

#### **Media snapshots**

Don't call your gran 'sweet'! Charity campaigners urge Brits to challenge use of 'patronising' terms about older people as they fuel a 'damaging stereotype' about ageing

Mail Online, January 2024

43.51m unique monthly visits

'Heart wrenching' handkerchief display confronts ageism in Lewes ahead of Age Without Limits action day

**Sussex World, March 2024** 892.29k unique monthly visits

Ageism in the workplace is damaging skills and profits

The Times, February 2024

11.04m unique monthly visits



**463** mentions

of Age Without Limits in the media between January and December

Millions of us have experienced ageism. Have you?

**SAGA, November 2024** 865.16k unique monthly visits

Women over 50 are more likely to feel patronised or ignored because of their age, survey reveals

Mail Online, November 2024

43.51m unique monthly visits



# YEAR-ROUND COMMUNICATIONS Spotlight on: gendered experiences of ageism

Both men and women can experience ageism. Our <u>survey</u>, commissioned in 2024, found that women are more likely to be patronised (36%), dismissed (18%) or ignored (27%) because of their age while men are treated rudely or aggressively.

We explored this topic by filming a panel of women from across the media, including Dame Joan Bakewell, Sam Baker, Dr Radha Modgil, Anita Bhagwandas, and Professor Dame Carol Black. They explored the negative experiences that are felt all too often by older women, in an industry where women are also vastly underrepresented.

In just three months after its launch and up to the end of December, the recording was **viewed** on YouTube **6,970 times**.



"We should call it out whenever we see it and we should help people recognise when they say things that are ageist, that they don't have to behave like this."

#### **Professor Dame Carol Black**,

Chair of Centre for Ageing Better

# YEAR-ROUND COMMUNICATIONS Spotlight on: ageing and representation

#### In the media

The Editors' Code of Practice sets out the rules that newspapers and magazines regulated by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) have agreed to follow.

The exclusion of age from the Editors' Code means there are **no** standards that the press must adhere to when reporting on age, and this contributes to the ageist headlines we see all the time in the news.

Starting on the **International Day of Older People** on 1 October, we called on people to send an email to the CEO of IPSO, to complain about ageist media reporting and ask IPSO to consider including age in the Editors' Code rules around avoiding discrimination.



In just two months, more than **200 emails were sent to IPSO** using our easy pre-filled website email template.

#### In policy

In January 2024 our Chief Executive, Dr Carole Easton OBE, gave evidence to the **Women and Equalities Committee (WEC)** about the prevalence of ageism. This fed into a May 2024 report from the WEC which found an overwhelming case for a **Commissioner for Older People and Ageing (COPA)** in England to be established.

In December 2024, our Chief Executive again gave evidence to the WEC. We were pleased to see the WEC subsequently publish a report in February 2025, acknowledging that ageism is widespread and culturally embedded in the UK. The report also echoed many of our calls on the government, including for a COPA, and around ageing and representation.

#### In advertising

Our initial campaign research found that **just 1 in 4 TV ads feature characters aged 50 or older** and **1 in 20 feature characters aged 70 or older.** Continued unchecked ageism in advertising and stereotypical assumptions of older age has a damaging impact on the way society sees older people, and the ways older people think about themselves.

Having previously discussed ageism in advertising with the **Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)**, we were asked to contribute to their plans for conducting research into depictions of ageing and older people in advertising in October 2024. We provided research that was conducted as part of our development of Age Without Limits, including data on representations of older people in adverts, harmful

stereotypes that may be overlooked, and the wider harmful effects of ageism in general, as well as examples of the 'best' and 'worst' adverts for their depictions.

We were <u>pleased to see</u> the ASA subsequently publish a **comprehensive piece of research**, including quantitative and qualitative methods in June 2025, outlining the harms of ageist stereotypes in advertising, and including recommendations for the industry to improve its depictions of ageing and older people.



As part of our ongoing work on ageing and representation, we regularly update our **age-positive image library**, which contains over 3,000 positive, positive and realistic images of over 50s - all available to download for free.



(x) Centre for Ageing Better (2023) State of Ageing. Available online: https://ageingbetter.org.uk/health-andwellbeing-state-ageing-2023-4#conditions-that-cause

## YEAR-ROUND COMMUNICATIONS Spotlight on: our storytellers

Beyond the surveys, polls and focus groups that our campaign is built on, we worked to ensure we were being led by people who experience, or who are at risk of experiencing, ageism. Throughout 2024, as we featured a **growing number of our supporters' stories** on our website, social media and in the media, we found more and more people

welcomed the opportunity to get involved - commenting and sharing their own experiences.

We're proud to share **Brenda**, **Colleen** and **Genny's** words here, as they explain why this is an important topic to them and why they felt moved to speak out against ageism.

"This campaign really spoke to me - I was sitting in a cinema in Brighton where I saw the Age Without Limits advert for the first time. I instantly got my phone out and took down the details. I had a look on the website and arranged a quiz as part of Age Without Limits Day. Everyone really enjoyed it. One of my colleagues was able to point out a time he had been ageist. I was also really motivated to share my story of finding myself, hoping it would help other people.

My attitudes towards ageing have definitely changed over time. To me, ageing is about finding out who you are and what you want to do next...

I'm now able to embrace ageing."



"I really want to be part of this campaign against ageism. There's still a perception of older people being slow, unable to get about and invisible in drab colours. It's complete nonsense and I love challenging these stereotypes.

I want to let everyone know that **we're not past it.** I'm over 60 and I go to the gym, I love dancing, I love clothes, I love make-up. But we have this stereotype that older people, over 60 or 50 even, have no position in society. Better representation for us over 60s is needed. I want to feel that I'm a person and not stereotyped as an old person who is capable of not much."





"People see older people and [assume] just because you're old you can't do anything, you should stop your dreams etc. At this time of life, it's like you've had so many experiences, it's now time for you to stand up, shoulders high, and leave a legacy to others ... to say, these are my experiences and this is what I want you to know and just being proud of what you've gone through and just being there to help other people as well.

Being involved in the campaign is helping me to understand, change even my own language that I use as well so I can help make a difference in workplaces, and even in my own home and community."

# YEAR 1 Our year in numbers

#### **Are You Ageist? ad campaign**



24% of adults saw at least one element of the campaign. That's around 10 million people!



Almost half of adults who had seen the campaign said the adverts made them question if they are ageist



Around two thirds
of those who had seen the
campaign said it helped
them understand the
negative impacts of
ageism



Almost three quarters of those who recognised the advertising campaign had taken action; most commonly to speak to friends and family about ageism

#### **Age Without Limits Day**



Over 60 groups, individuals and communities across the country took part in Age Without Limits Day



**2,850 people**directly participated in the **events** held by communities



**400 posts**used the #SeeAndBeSeen
hashtag on X and
Instagram alone\*



**750,000 social media users reached\***, powerfully demonstrating a growing age-inclusive community

#### By the end of the year:



More people were hearing lots about ageism (+7 percentage points shift year on year\*)



**Awareness** of our Are You Ageist? advertising remained **consistent** throughout the year



More people were rating their understanding of ageism as 'very good' (+3 percentage points shift year on year\*)



More people were
thinking about ageism
who hadn't previously
done so (+3 percentage
points shift year on year\*)



More people agreed that **holding negative views can be harmful** (+3 percentage point shift year on year\*)



**15,668 downloads** of our free, age-positive **image library** pictures of people aged 50+



11,000 people in our growing online audience



**15 stories**of campaign supporters
published on our **website** 



**463 mentions** of Age Without Limits in the **media** 



**87,890 page views** on our newly launched **website** 



### Learning for year two

We've successfully built awareness of ageism in year one, giving us the opportunity in the coming year to show people why this matters - to build a stronger emotional connection with them through storytelling - showcasing the effects of ageism on people's lives.

We have a strong platform in Age Without Limits and we intend to take this to more people, more organisations and to anyone who wants to tackle ageism. In the course of year one we recognised the potential of engaging industries that impact on how we think and act about ageing, such as advertising and workplaces - where employers have the ability to directly impact both how we think and act about ageing and our experiences of ageing in work. We're looking forward to working alongside various industry leaders in year two.

We want people to find out more and get engaged with the issue through Age Without Limits as a platform, and feel empowered to create this change themselves, in their own lives, by Age Without Limits providing the tools and resources that help make it clear what people can do every day to continue the momentum. Our target audience respond best to opportunities to make positive change - we want them to feel inspired to do so and to understand that individual actions ladder up to societal change.

The campaign, through **Age Without Limits Day** and our **continuous communications strategy**, will
continue to mobilise our supporters
and advocates to help us achieve our
vision of a society where everyone
enjoys later life free from the impact
of ageism. We can't wait to work
alongside you during 2025.

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### **Acknowledgements**

Age Without Limits is a campaign from the Centre for Ageing Better, a charity funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

The inaugural Age Without Limits
Day (2024) was made more
successful thanks to a partnership
between Age UK and the Centre for
Ageing Better. In 2024 we were able
to co-host a digital photo exhibition
at The Outernet, Tottenham Court
Road thanks to a kind donation from
Age UK.

We would like to thank the following organisations for their collaboration and support in setting up, delivering and evaluating the Age Without

Limits Campaign: Basis Social; The National Centre for Social Research; Centre for the Study of Group Processes at the University of Kent; Solutions Strategy Research Facilitation Ltd; Four Agency Worldwide Limited; Hewitt & Walker; Close Up.

Our campaign has authenticity because people are willing to share their stories with us, and more widely, as part of the campaign. We thank our storytellers and supporters for their huge contribution to the success of creating a society where we can all age without limits.

### Together, we can create a future where everyone can age without limits.



To find out how you can challenge ageism in your own everyday life, community or workplace, please visit our website, sign up to our newsletter, or follow us on social media. If you would like learn more about the development of the campaign or get involved further, please email us at information@agewithoutlimits.org.



#### Follow us







#### **Contact us**





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