Age-positive image library Impact Report

September 2025

What is the Age-positive image library? And why do we need one?

The issue with stock photos

The evidence is clear: ageism has significant and damaging effects on our lives as we get older. At the Centre for Ageing Better, we deliver work that improves life for people over 50. However, little is being done to change the attitudes and behaviour of the population more widely, to give this issue the profile and understanding that would mean millions of older people's lives could be improved. That's why we launched a campaign to change this: Age Without Limits. This three-year campaign aims to challenge ageism for the benefit of us all as we grow older.

As part of this work, we noticed that there was a significant gap in stock photos; there were scarcely any people over 50 in them. Those that did exist were often negative or stereotypical. For instance, how many articles about older people have you read where the only photo used is of someone's wrinkled hands? This dehumanising image sustains the stereotype that ageing is predominantly about frailty, decline and dependency - an association that is commonly overestimated.

Our evidence shows that how we are represented as we grow older can have a profound impact on other people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours towards us.

We believe the representation of older people could be and should be better.

The first of its kind

Our Age-positive image library, which is part of our Age Without Limits campaign, is the first stock image bank in the world to solely focus on positive and realistic photos of people over 50.

Launched in January 2021, the photos focus on a more nuanced, varied and realistic depiction of older age. The free library now contains over 3,000 images and offers journalists, advertisers, organisations and individuals a wide selection of images.
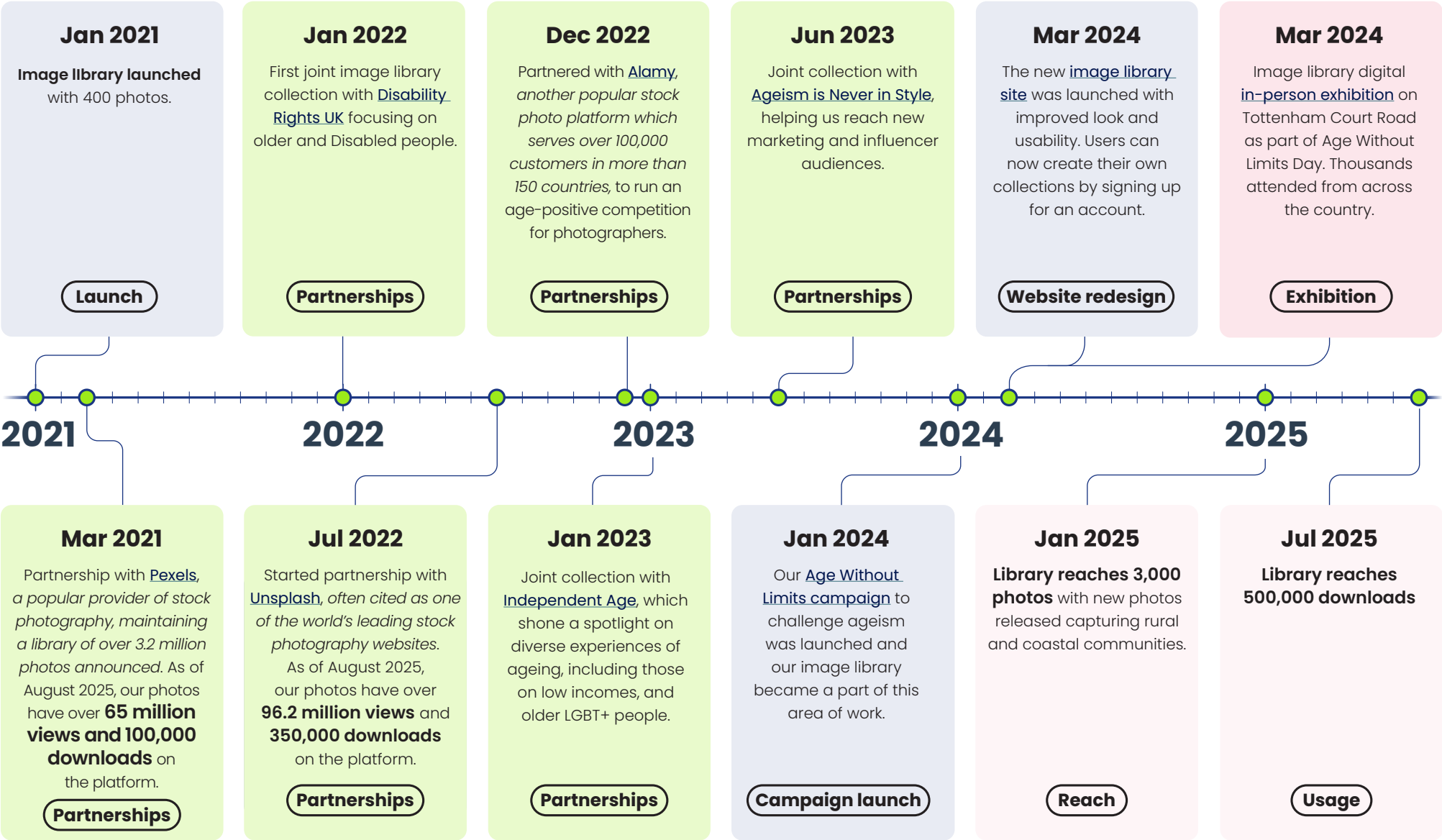
Our photos include older workers, intergenerational friendships, community groups, sports, couples in love, travelling, campaigning, people trying new hobbies, and connecting with family. We seek to capture the varied life experiences that we can all have as we get older.
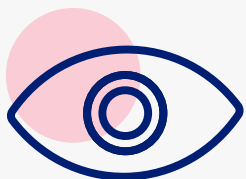
Our library is always growing and is an important way of improving how older people are depicted. Our aim is to encourage as many media outlets, charities and marketers to use the library as possible, so that eventually stereotypical photos of older people will be a thing of the past.

Timeline

Jan 2021

Image library launched with 400 photos.

(Launch)

Mar 2021

Partnership with Pexels, *a popular provider of stock photography, maintaining a library of over 3.2 million photos announced.* As of August 2025, our photos have over **65 million views and 100,000 downloads** on the platform.

(Partnerships)

Jan 2022

First joint image library collection with Disability Rights UK focusing on older and Disabled people.

(Partnerships)

Jul 2022

Started partnership with Unsplash, *often cited as one of the world's leading stock photography websites.* As of August 2025, our photos have over **96.2 million views** and **350,000 downloads** on the platform.

(Partnerships)

Dec 2022

Partnered with Alamy, *another popular stock photo platform which serves over 100,000 customers in more than 150 countries,* to run an age-positive competition for photographers.

(Partnerships)

Jan 2023

Joint collection with Independent Age, which shone a spotlight on diverse experiences of ageing, including those on low incomes, and older LGBT+ people.

(Partnerships)

Jun 2023

Joint collection with Ageism is Never in Style, helping us reach new marketing and influencer audiences.

(Partnerships)

Jan 2024

Our Age Without Limits campaign to challenge ageism was launched and our image library became a part of this area of work.

(Campaign launch)

Mar 2024

The new image library site was launched with improved look and usability. Users can now create their own collections by signing up for an account.

(Website redesign)

Jan 2025

Library reaches 3,000 photos with new photos released capturing rural and coastal communities.

(Reach)

Mar 2024

Image library digital in-person exhibition on Tottenham Court Road as part of Age Without Limits Day. Thousands attended from across the country.

(Exhibition)

Jul 2025

Library reaches 500,000 downloads

(Usage)

2021   2022   2023   2024   2025

In numbers

Over 115 million views[1]

93% agree with the statement[2]

Over 2,500 personal libraries created

Since launching our 'image library account' feature, over 2,500 individuals have signed up so that they can create their own personalised collections using our photos.

"The Age-positive image library is a valuable resource that challenges negative stereotypes of getting older"

an average of **14,200** photo downloads a month

Over 500,000 downloads overall

4

1   This is including external sites like Unsplash and Pexels

2   Sample from 117 participants in a 2024 survey

In media and advertising

Our images have reached millions of people, and made a real difference to how older people are depicted in the media and advertising

THE BIG ISSUE

This photo featured in The Big Issue.

Print circulation 45,700, unique monthly website visits 378,270.

Featured on charity websites and reports including:

age UK   DRUK

World Health Organization

RNID | Supporting people who are deaf, have hearing loss or tinnitus

Stonewall
Acceptance without exception

Unsplash and Pexels uses include:

BuzzFeed Inc.

Medium

mailchimp

N Notion

DAILY EXPRESS
THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER

This photo featured in the Daily Express, 20 December 2024. *Print circulation 119,020 unique monthly visits 17.57m.*

THE i PAPER

This photo featured in the i Paper. *Print circulation 119,395 unique monthly visits 3.14m.*

INDEPENDENT

5

A diverse portrait of later life

Older people are not a homogenous age group and are just as diverse as any other group. That's why we make every effort for our image library to be as diverse as possible, in terms of ethnicity, sexuality, disability, income and location. We approach every photoshoot with this mindset.

We also actively seek feedback from people over 50 and image library users to guide future photoshoots.

6

CASE STUDY

Ann Campbell

We photograph older people all around England, with their family and friends, at work, in their community. 90% of the individuals featured in the image library are people sharing their own life experience, rather than professional models. One of these people is Ann Campbell, 59, who is a carer for her father.

Ann got involved when she heard a request for carers to take part in a photo shoot to create an Age-positive image library.

> **"** It seemed a good idea to have a library of positive but realistic images of older people. I don't necessarily mean older people doing extraordinary things, like running marathons. More images of ageing that illustrate the pleasures of living, even at a slower pace, and how rich life is at any age.

I thought, why not include me and dad? Being part of the library seemed to chime with things that I feel strongly about.

My dad and I don't go out dancing but I knew that we could portray love and connection, and that we had something to say about the changing relationships between parents and children in later age, as well as the satisfaction I have from being a carer and making a good life for my father.

7

Testimonials from image library users

> **I want to say a massive THANK YOU for the image library you've built. It is such an amazing resource and it is brilliant to see it growing in both size and popularity."**
>
> – Manager at a research organisation

> Such a brilliant resource and great to have a stock library that can be used to show positive images of ageing rather than the depressing, wrinkly hands style of images normally used in the press."*

> **We wanted to express our gratitude and share how much of a difference your website and its collection of photos has made. We've been using your photos for our social media to help promote our cause."**
>
> – New Zealand charity worker

> Subscribing to the Age-positive image library has been a game-changer. An impressively wide range of high quality images depicting people of all ages, genders and ethnicities in a variety of situations be it at work, at home, exercising, etc. Older people are often depicted as frail, but this library challenges this notion."
>
> – Graphic designer

> We are currently planning a photo shoot as we have realised our library of images has some big gaps in it from a diversity point of view – these are great both practically and as inspiration"
>
> – Vice President of a corporate manufacturer

89%
of people we surveyed agreed that

Using the Age-positive image library in my work has helped me depict older people in a more positive and realistic way*

> **Thank you for sharing this resource, and for free, it is so useful! I'm also so pleased that you've been including more LGBT+ people and the new pictures including disabled people - more diversity in the photos is great!"***

*from 117 participants in a 2024 survey.

What we have learned

Here are the top 5 things we've learned when it comes to using and taking your own Age-positive photos:

1

Avoid negative stereotypes associated with ageing

Don't rely on images that perpetuate negative associations with ageing.

2

Don't ignore diversity

People aged 50 and over are not a homogenous group.

3

Don't be bound by outdated social norms

Whatever topic you are using images to illustrate, make sure you include a range of age groups wherever possible (including over 50s). For example, in an article about the workplace, try and find a photo of an intergenerational team, rather than choosing one where everyone is under 30.

4

The answer isn't to solely focus on older people being 'extraordinary'

It might be tempting to counter negative and stereotypical images of older people by showcasing those who run marathons or skydive, in reality this isn't necessarily representative either - aim for balanced, realistic and nuanced portrayals instead.

5

Accept that you won't always get things 100% right

Improving the representation of older people isn't a perfect science – we are all learning how to do it better.

9

What we will do next

Older people seeing themselves properly represented in photos matters. How we are portrayed as we age can strongly influence others' beliefs and actions toward us.

The Age-Positive Image Library is a resource that gives people access to free, realistic, and authentic images of people aged 50+. We're proud of our track record of influencing others to change the way they depict older people, and that we've established ourselves as experts in producing photos that address the lack of older people in stock photos. This impact report is testament to the fact that we're already making a difference. But our work isn't done yet.

Demand for our library is growing

The Age-positive image library is a shining success. We will continue to build a bigger, more diverse illustration of what ageing means for people. We will foster relationships with brands, organisations and agencies in order to continue to realistically represent us all as we grow older.

Work with us

This project is an important part of Ageing Better, and our Age Without Limits campaign, as well as our ambitions to ensure that the reality of ageing is accurately depicted in all of the photos we see. We look forward to future partnerships with other organisations and brands to make this possible.