

# ***AGEISM IN THE MEDIA & REFRAMING AGEING***

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 @hanaswift

 @Swifty\_Agefree

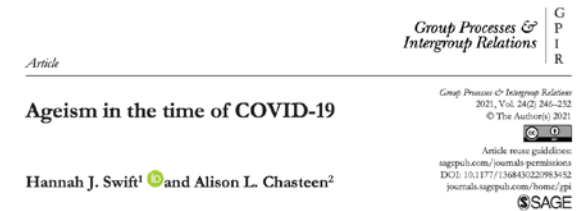
#RedressingAgeism

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# Ageism in the Media & Reframing Ageing

- Ageism in the media
  - Where were we pre-covid
  - And where are we now?
- What can we do about it?
  - Imagery
  - Reframing
  - Ageism in fashion and beauty



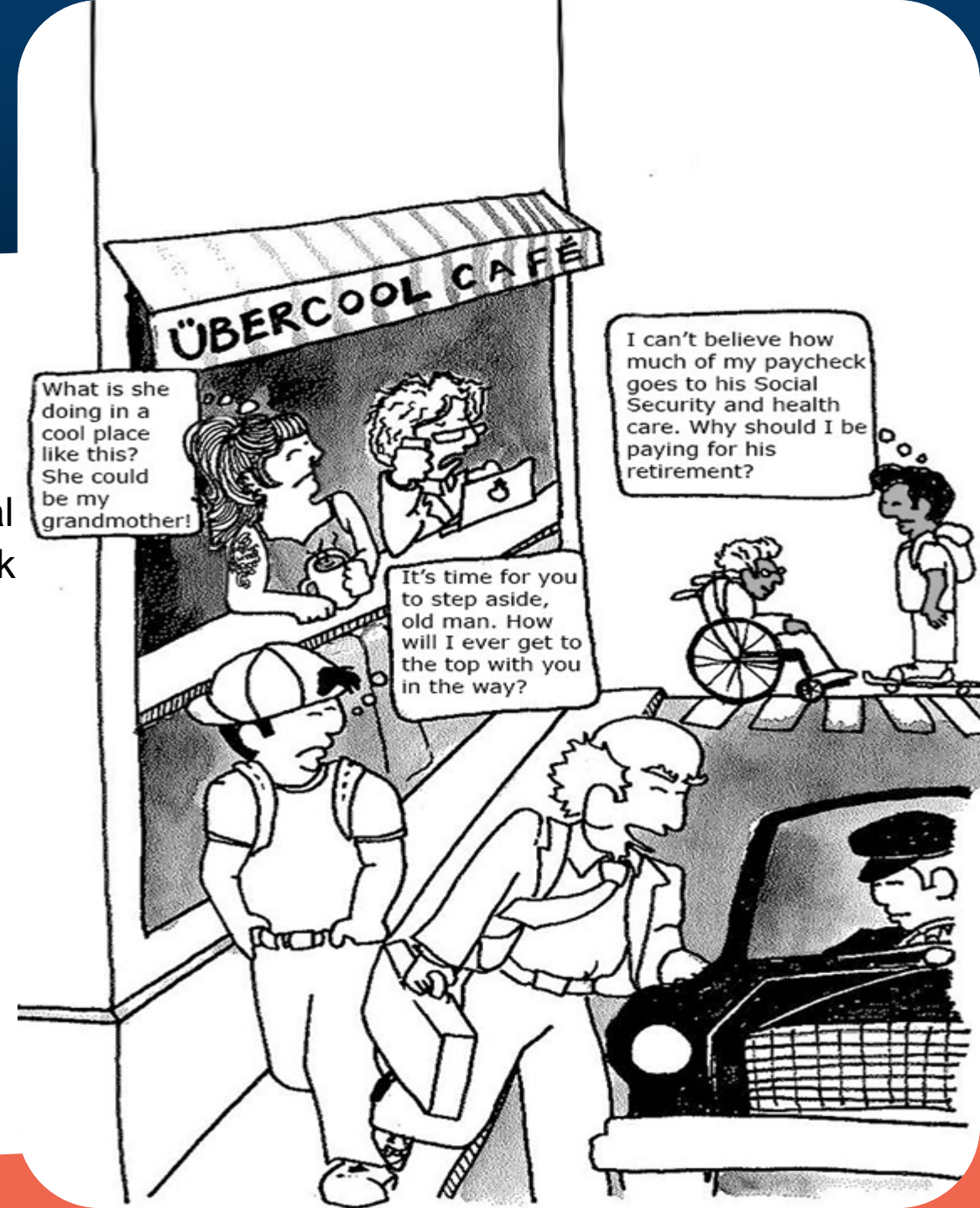
# *How was ageing represented pre-covid?*

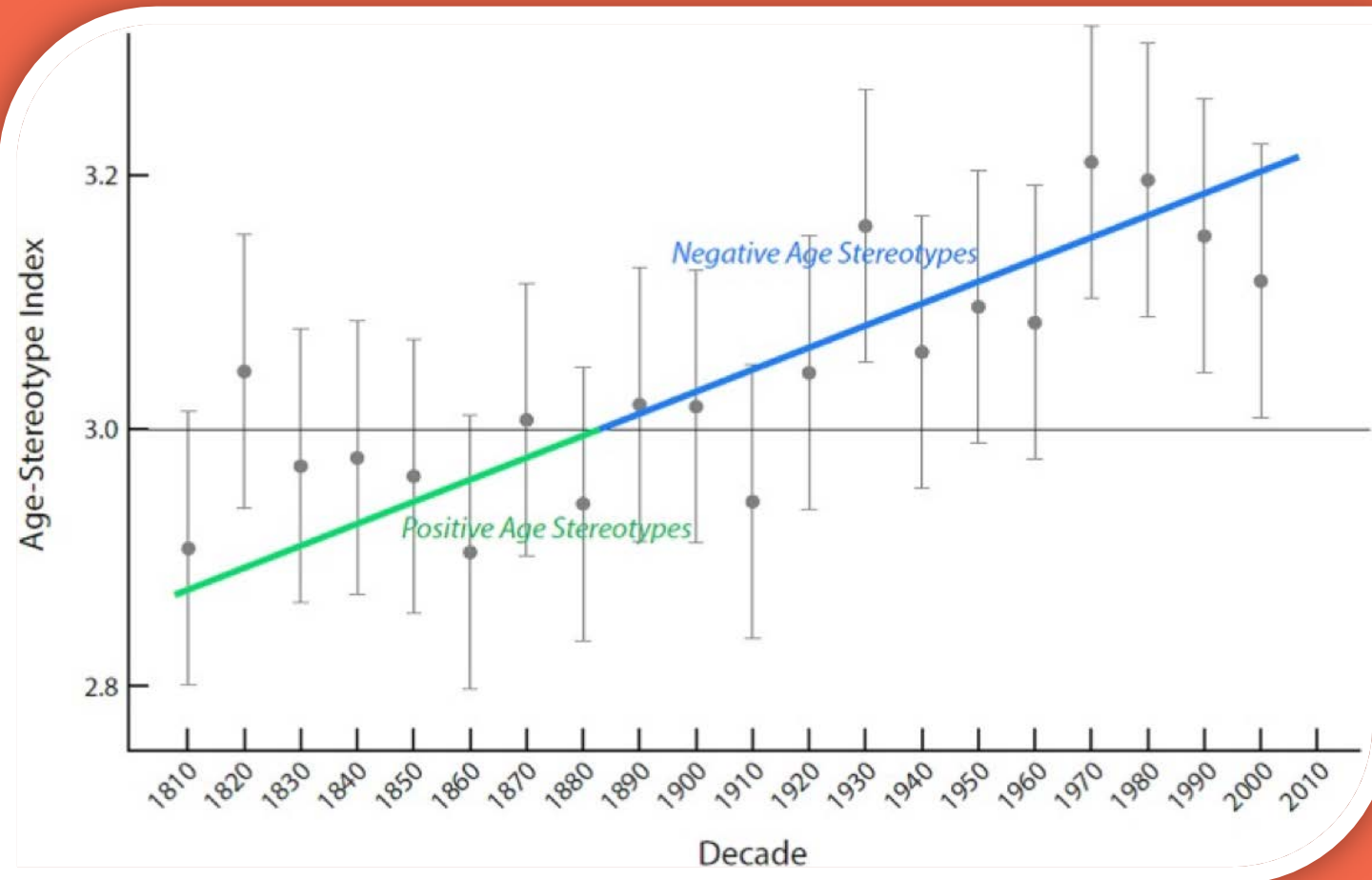
- Semi-structured review of research (academic, practitioner, or grey literature) published in the last fifteen years (2004-2019)
- Articles should be about representations of age, ageing, older people, or the language or framing of age, ageing or older people
- 140 articles were included in the review



# Age Stereotypes

- **Descriptive stereotypes** represent what we think older people are typically like and what they do
  - Positive dimensions e.g. wisdom, warm, friendly, moral
  - Negative dimensions e.g. incompetence, burden, weak
- **Prescriptive age stereotypes** define what we think older people should and should not do
  - Succession
  - Consumption
  - Identity
- **Meta-stereotypes** are what we think *other* people think about older people





***Negative stereotypes dominate***

Ng R, Allore HG, Trentalange M, Monin JK, Levy BR (2015) Increasing Negativity of Age Stereotypes across 200 Years: Evidence from a Database of 400 Million Words. PLOS ONE 10(2): e0117086. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0117086>

# *Stereotypes can vary depending on context plus extreme double standards*



- Experienced, reliable and loyal, vs unproductive, demotivated, difficult to train and unwilling to learn.
- Ageing is seen as synonymous with ill-health, period of ‘inevitable’ cognitive and physical decline.
- Healthy, active ageing and successful ageing, but also narratives of intergenerational conflict, older people as consumers of resources.
- Demographic crisis. Lack of diversity. Older people represented unattractive or unhealthy, or as successful agers, defying the effects of ageing.

# Impact of covid-19 on Ageism

During covid-19 pandemic:



Vulnerability  
Narrative



Stigmatizing  
social  
identity &  
social status



Hostile and  
Benevolent  
ageism



Visual  
Ageism

# Vulnerability narrative

## Addressing Older Persons' Vulnerability during the COVID-19 Pandemic

### Older Adults Vulnerable to 'Twindemic' of Flu and COVID-19

 By Kara-Marie Hall, RN, BSN, CCRN  Fact checked by James Lacy

#### Why COVID-19 hit our vulnerable older population hardest

**For older adults vulnerable to the coronavirus, work from home not always an option**

Nearly three-fourths of workers age 65 and older are unable to work from home.

**Coronavirus: Young people are not 'invincible', WHO warns**

© 20 March 2020

- Strengthening negative 'incompetence' stereotypes
- Strengthening the homogenised view of older adults
- Self-limiting view of ageing (Levy, 2002; Swift et al. 2017)
- Young people are not vulnerable, or worse resilient
- Framing is important because it can influence perceived risk and in turn health behaviours.



# Stigmatizing Social Identity

## Why Covid-19 is so dangerous for older adults

Older people and people with chronic illness are at greater risk, and how we respond to the threat affects everyone.

By Umair Irfan and Julia Belluz | Updated Mar 13, 2020, 1:13pm EDT

**COVID-19: One in five over-80s need hospitalisation and death rate 0.66 per cent**

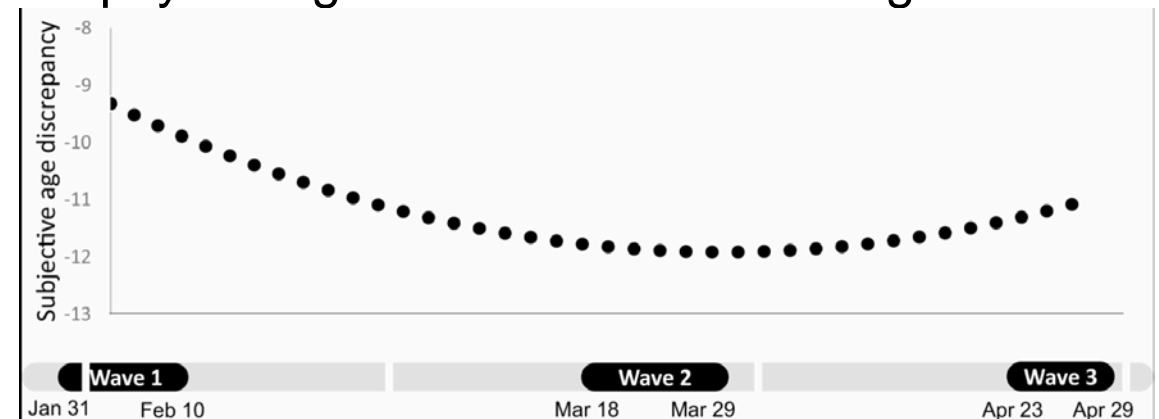
OPINION

### 'Covid-19 Kills Only Old People.' Only?

Why are we OK with old people dying?

March 22, 2020

- Covid-19 an 'older persons disease'
- Increasing fears of death and dying (Martens et al. 2005; Esses & Hamilton 2021)
- Increasing physical distance from older people
- psychological distance from old age



# Devalued Social Status

## Neglected, sacrificed: older persons during the Covid-19 pandemic

### Frail coronavirus patients may be denied critical care under NHS 'scale' system designed to free up ICU beds for those most likely to recover

- Coronavirus patients will be ranked from one to nine based on age and frailty
- Those with a score of five are said to have uncertainty around benefits of care
- It comes as hospitals scramble to free up beds before an explosion of cases
- Coronavirus outbreak is expected to peak in Britain this week or over weekend
- [Learn more about how to help people impacted by COVID](#)

By [CONNOR BOYD HEALTH REPORTER FOR MAILONLINE](#)

PUBLISHED: 10:29, 13 April 2020 | UPDATED: 22:00, 13 April 2020

- Evidence suggests people perceived those over 70 to have lower social status and value than powerful 'middle-aged', but equivalent social status to younger adults aged 30 and below (Abrams et al. 2011)
- Disregard for older people's lives
- Impact of Covid-19 in care homes
- Distribution & justification of resources (White & Lo, 2020)
- Has older adults social status decreased further?
- Has it strengthened prescriptive ageist norms of succession? (North & Fiske, 2013)

# Hostile, calculated ageism



**Attila the Comrade**  
@nurselietyv

I heard someone call the coronavirus the “boomer remover”

3:10 PM · Feb 29, 2020 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

It's Mother Nature's immune system. The earth knows who the worst generation is [#covid19](#) [#boomerremover](#) [#coronavirus](#) [#earthfightsback](#)

— jacob (@jacobflores78)  
[March 16, 2020](#)

## Millennials' shocking new term for coronavirus - 'Boomer Remover'

- Calculated ageism refers to expressions or sentiments that justify prejudicial beliefs or unfair treatment with positive claims (Barrett et al., 2020).
- Devaluing of older adults' social status
- Older lives are expendable set against reduced economic burden (Aronson, 2020)
- Economic burden narrative likely to strengthen prescriptive norms of consumption (North & Fiske, 2013)

# Benevolent, compassionate ageism



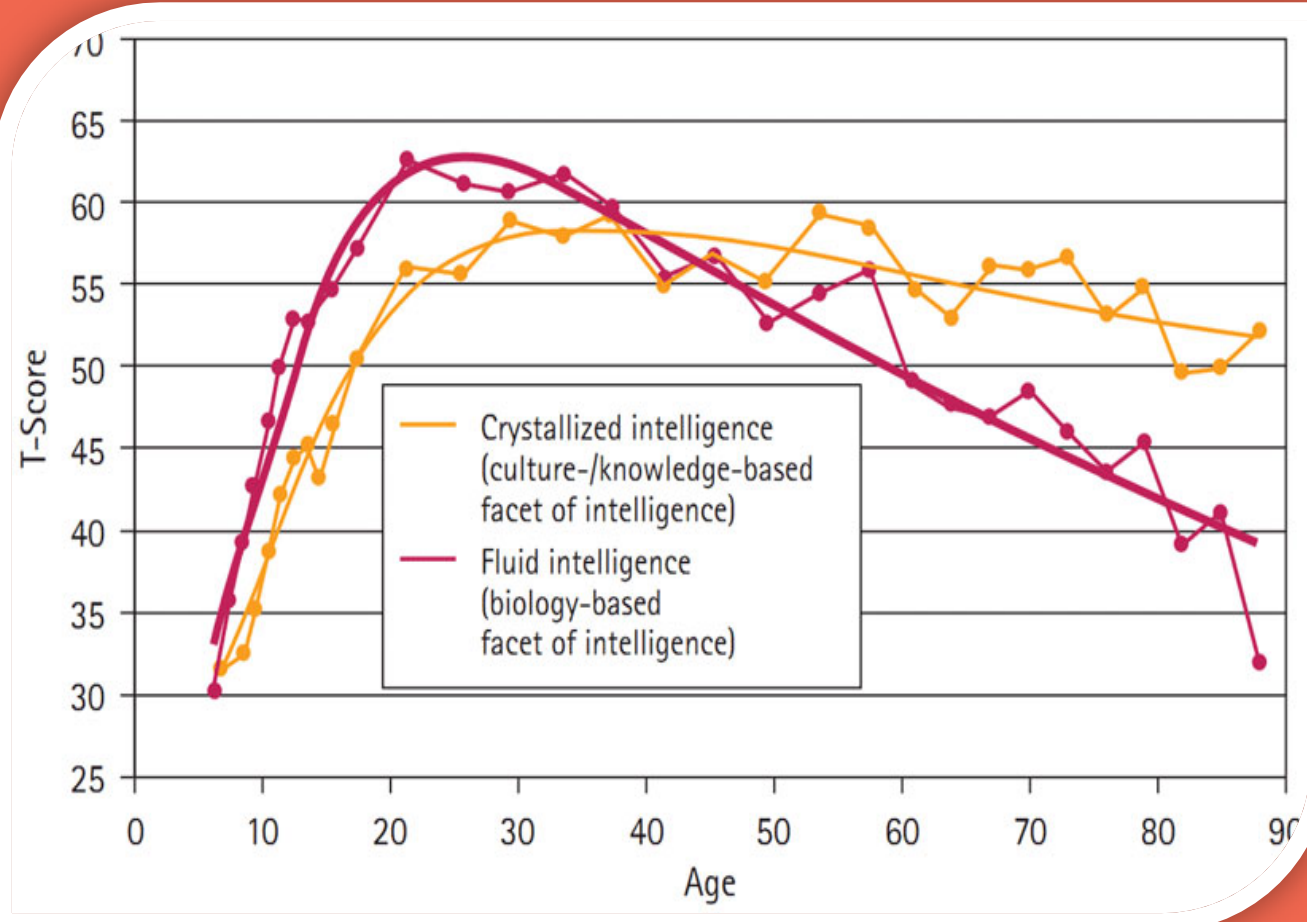
## Boris 'scraps plans' to lockdown over 50s after critics slam measures as 'ageist'

The controversial supposed plan to lockdown over-50s in order to avoid another nationwide lockdown is said to have been scrapped after fierce backlash

By **Ryan Merrifield**, Reporter

02:19, 4 Aug 2020 | **UPDATED 02:21, 4 Aug 2020**

- Stereotypes of incompetence and warmth → pity and active facilitation behaviours (helping) (Cuddy et al. 2005)
- Vulnerability narrative has inflated chronological age with impairment, incompetence and helplessness, which increases pity and feelings of paternalism
- Helping / social care movements could heighten patronising and protective treatment
- 'old' age is subjective and could be erroneously applied



## *The Curse of the Kernel of Truth*

- Stereotypes regarding biological ageing processes are more universal (Swift et al. 2019)
- Stereotypes over exaggerate age differences, and dismiss the huge variation between people of the same age



despite council tax rises - BBC ...  
bbc.com

More support offered to carers in ...  
itv.com

UK leaves the European Uni...  
itv.com



eland ...

Charity says social care cut for 210 ...  
examinerlive.co.uk

despite council tax rises - BBC ...  
bbc.com

despite council tax ...  
bbc.com



residents have die...

3.8bn NHS boost ...  
itv.com

County council cuts £1m from Dorset ...  
itv.com

care homes ...  
itv.com



# Visual Ageism

*“the social practice of visually underrepresenting older people or misrepresenting them in a prejudiced way” (Loos & Ivan 2018)*

*Image credit to Professor Tom Scharf, University of Newcastle, on Twitter*



ap is widening as ...



Big rise in single-person households ...  
thetimes.co.uk



UK's falling life expectancy is like ...  
thetimes.co.uk



gence could help ...  
rd.co.uk



daily publication of Covid-19 care ...  
sloughobserver.co.uk



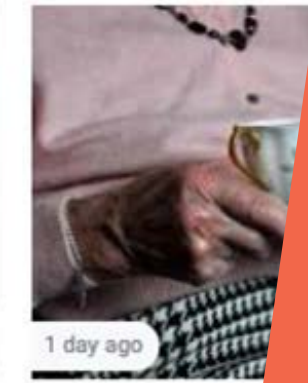
Sutton: Nearly 30 care hom ...  
yourlocalguardian.co.uk



olds in Hertfordshire ...  
stortfordindependent.co.uk



daily publication of Covid-19 care ...  
kentonline.co.uk



1 day ago

York care home pro ...  
newslocker.com

***“visual underrepresentation”***

***Strengthens negative stereotypes***

*Image credit to Professor Tom Scharf, University of Newcastle via Twitter*



أكثر من 16



Karūnuotas Moteriškumas - Publi...  
fr-fr.facebook.com



Consider #Prestonwood #Country...  
thefiftyplusnetwork.com



Globális jelentés a  
promenad.hu



ceberg for Sen...



Fiatalnak Maradni | Maximumon a...  
fittmegoldasok.com



Did you know that once you hit 40 ...  
in.pinterest.com



483 Best LI...  
pinterest.co



Images in 2020 | Cou...



archiparti ⭐️⚡️ Caring for Aging P...  
pinterest.com



VIEUX COUPLES inspirants ...  
pinterest.com



Active  
pinter

***And positive stereotypes too!***

***Image credit to Professor Tom Scharf,  
University of Newcastle via Twitter***





Scotland ...



Tears as councillor says she is ...  
gazette.liv.co.uk



Lack of staff at Flint home meant ...  
dailypost.co.uk



...ctancy calculator will ...  
liverpool.co.uk



Watchdog tells council's home care ...  
liverpoolcho.co.uk



Which? findings - Diaries of ...  
mirror.co.uk



...es to tackle dementia ...  
liverpool.co.uk



2 days ago

Horror in den Altenheimen ...  
n-tv.de



Goddess protein could ...  
gastrovexpress.com

# Visual ageism during Covid-19

Image credit to Professor Tom Scharf, University of Newcastle via Twitter

*So what can we do about it?*

# Diversify imagery



**BAND ON THE WALL**

**MY GENERATION**  
MANCHESTER'S COOLEST  
OVER 50s CLUB NIGHT

**LAUREN HOUSLEY BAND**  
LIVE SOUL!

Classic  
DJs til late!

Rediscover the buzz, excitement and anticipation of a night out in Manchester.

Meet up with old friends and make new ones at the coolest over 50s night in town.

Whatever your choice of music, Rock, Pop, R&B, Soul or Funk - Manchester had something to offer and we've recreated it. So dust off your dancing shoes, dig out your groovy gear and get yourself back to where you once belonged.

My Generation Social Scene at Band on the Wall is back with an evening of classic soul with the amazing Lauren Housley Band and the return of DJs Baz and Howard spinning great tracks from their classic vinyl collection.

**SUNDAY 21ST OCTOBER 2012**  
7.00PM - MIDNIGHT TICKETS £4

TICKETS £4 AVAILABLE FROM THE BAND ON THE WALL BOX OFFICE  
[www.bandonthewall.org](http://www.bandonthewall.org) OR CALL 0845 2 500 500

This is a 'My Generation Social Scene' event brought to you in partnership with Valuing Older People and the Cultural Strategy team.

# Age-Positive Image Library



- Centre for Ageing Better
- <https://ageing-better.org.uk/>
  
- <https://ageingbetter.resourcespace.com/pages/home.php>

# Guidance from WHO

- Choose images wisely
- Avoid overgeneralisation
- Avoid euphemisms
- Use neutral language
- Avoid othering
- Avoid the problem frame



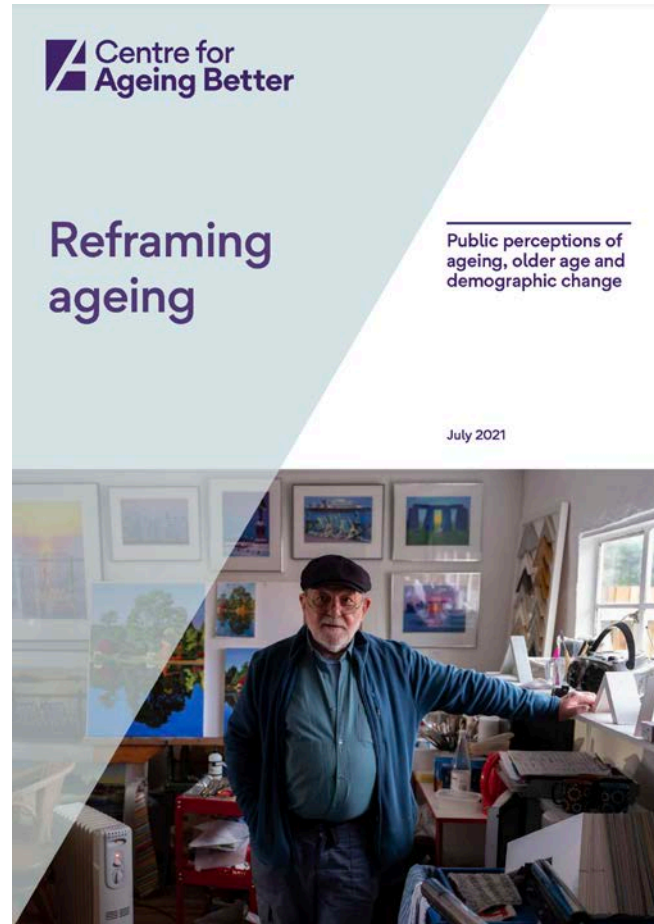
# Reframing guide from Age Platform Europe

## Language \*

<i>Instead of...</i>	<i>Prefer to...</i>
Catastrophic terms about growing population of older people (“time bomb”, “silver tsunami”)	Talk affirmatively about longer and healthier lives and ageing as an opportunity
References to youth to describe older age (“accumulated youth”) or positive aspects of one’s personality (“young at heart”)	Use direct affirmation of being old (“I’m old and that’s ok”) or alternative adjectives to describe positive aspects of one’s personality
Terms that are homogenising and stoking stereotypes (“seniors”, “elderly”)	Use “older people” or “older adults” that are more neutral
Pronouns (“they”, “them”) or framing that are “other-ing” older people as a group to set aside assuming they are different from “we”	Use “we” and “us” pronouns in reference to the universal experience of ageing and giving a voice to self-advocates
Possessive assuming older people are someone’s property (“our older people”)	Remove the possessive pronouns
Adjectives around frailty to describe a whole age group (“vulnerable”, “at-risk” population)	Specify the risk factors that are putting people in situations of vulnerability

Inspiration: (c) FrameWorks Institute. 2017. *Quick Start Guide*. Washington, DC.

# Reframing: Testing messages



Route	What we want to achieve	Overarching message for this route
<b>A - Reframe ageing</b>	Shift understanding of ageing as an inevitable process of decline and loss to a continuous process of change	Ageing is living – a process of continuous change. Throughout our lives, we have different experiences, opportunities and challenges, and contribute and need different things. But [what] we all need is freedom to decide how we live, and recognition and support from one another to thrive. And we all benefit from communities, workplaces and services that give us an equal chance to live the best lives we can.
<b>B - Reframe older age</b>	Shift associations with frailty, vulnerability, dependency and low competence towards living lives of equal value and purpose	As we get older, many of us report a stronger sense of purpose and wellbeing. And our diverse life experience and skills, perspective and resilience mean we have much to contribute. Our communities, workplaces and services can be designed in a way that fully unlocks what we all have to offer in older age. This would give us the freedom to decide how we live, the opportunity to give and receive the recognition and support we all need, and an equal chance to thrive throughout our lives.
<b>C - Reframe longer lives</b>	Shift understanding of longer lives as a societal and economic burden to a mutually beneficial opportunity	Most of us will live longer than the generations before us – an achievement we should all feel proud of as a society. By designing our communities, workplaces and services so that we can all contribute, live well together and thrive, we can fully unlock the benefits and opportunities of our extra time.

# Concluding thoughts

- The problem of ageism is bigger than ever – back to defaults & stereotypes
- From recommendations to changing practice
  - Check regulatory body codes of practice in your country
- Evidence that communities that have invested in social cohesion programs fared better during the pandemic (Lalot et al. 2021)
- How to address ageism without direct intergenerational contact?
- We don't know the impact of diverse imagery on changing attitudes to age
  - Reactions to counter-stereotypical representations of age do not necessarily change attitudes
- The fashion industry is a good place to explore and test some of these practices #RedressingAgeism



RESEARCH ARTICLE | [Open Access](#) | [CC](#) [i](#)

**The social cohesion investment: Communities that invested in integration programmes are showing greater social cohesion in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic**

Fanny Lalot ✉, Dominic Abrams, Jo Broadwood, Kaya Davies Hayon, Isobel Platts-Dunn

First published: 05 April 2021 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2522>

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***THANK YOU***  
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