

Age UK

Age UK has repeatedly raised the issue of ageism within the BBC and wider broadcast media over the last twenty years, during which period improvement in how older people are represented has been slow. This manifests itself both in terms of quantity - we question whether the number of older people on our television screens, in particular older women, reflects their presence in the population - but also in terms of 'quality', considering older people as a homogenous group, rather than reflecting the many different experiences of ageing. For example, representations may treat everybody over a certain age as similar, even though the 60+ population could easily include two generations. And, too often, ageing is represented purely in terms of cost - there are far more reports in the media, for example, of politicians worrying about how to pay for the cost of an ageing population than looking positively at the great opportunities this brings

Negative attitudes and ageism are at the root of many of the challenges older people face, from undignified treatment in care homes and hospitals to age discrimination in employment, to age limits on travel and motor insurance policies. In each of these instances, policies and practices within a specific sector are reflecting the poor attitudes to ageing and older people that exist in wider society.

Ageist attitudes are all too often reflected and amplified by media stories which often portray older people as frail, out of touch, and grumpy. In his *Inquiry into the Culture, Ethics and Practice of the Press*, Lord Justice Leveson raised concerns that, at least in certain sections of the industry, representation of particular groups is discriminatory and ill-judged. We would argue that this includes representation of older people. This was reflected in Ofcom's 2017 report *Diversity and equal opportunities in television Monitoring report on the UK broadcasting industry*.

Given the media and in particular, the BBC's unique position as a shaper and mediator of public attitudes, Age UK welcomes this review and argues that it is imperative that the issue of how older people are portrayed by the BBC and in particular, how older women, older LGBT people, and older people from ethnic minority backgrounds are portrayed, be considered in this review. Broadcasters must act to rid their output of prejudicial or pejorative references to older people and to present a more positive image of later life in their programme making and broadcasting.