

# Dominant narratives on ageing

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Identifying the current  
discourse within  
influential sectors  
and industries

Savanta ComRes  
Equally Ours

November 2020

in partnership with:

**Savanta:**  
ComRes

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# About us

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## **Centre for Ageing Better**

The UK's population is undergoing a massive age shift. In less than 20 years, one in four people will be over 65.

The fact that many of us are living longer is a great achievement. But unless radical action is taken by government, business and others in society, millions of us risk missing out on enjoying those extra years.

At the Centre for Ageing Better we want everyone to enjoy later life. We create change in policy and practice informed by evidence and work with partners across England to improve employment, housing, health and communities.

We are a charitable foundation, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, and part of the government's What Works Network.

In collaboration with Age-Friendly Manchester this report was created with market researchers Savanta ComRes and equality and human rights charity Equally Ours.

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## Introduction

Our longer lives are a gift. Yet this increased longevity is frequently cast as a threat to society. There are few realistic and positive portrayals of ageing in the media, and in debates about health and social care, metaphors such as the ‘demographic time bomb’ and ‘silver tsunami’ create a sense of impending catastrophe. Discussion of our ageing society often focuses on spiralling cost, not on opportunity, and positions demographic change as a locus of intergenerational conflict. As with metaphors of ‘swarms’ in connection with migrants, such language has been shown to ignite primordial base defensive instincts in the brain, which lead us to defensive political impulses.

These narratives stem from - and in turn perpetuate - negative attitudes to ageing. Abrams et al. (2015) point to categorisation, stereotypes, and intergenerational conflict as the three key sources of prejudice connected to ageing. These have deep roots not only in the way ageing and older people are thought about, but in the way our society is organised. For example, some social policies that target older people reinforce social stereotypes of frailty, vulnerability or reduced productivity, or act to cultivate feelings of pity.

This attitude-narratives cycle - which, in turn, impacts on how people act - is a major obstacle to winning public support for the fundamental changes needed in the areas of health, housing, employment and community. To break this cycle, we need to create and tell a new, constructive, and compelling story of change, and generate support for the systemic changes to improve the experience of ageing and older age.

With this report, we present the first phase of a programme of research which reveals the dominant narratives which are currently being used by sectors and industries which have the influence to determine how ageing is being presented in public discourse. Prior to this report, a semi-systematic literature review was conducted by Dr Hannah Swift and Ben Steeden from the School of Psychology at the University of Kent. The published report<sup>1</sup> reviews the existing research and policy documents focusing on representations of age, ageing and older people, and on language and framing used around ageing in the UK. The findings from this review were fed into two further modules of research as part of Phase 1: stakeholder interviews and a discourse analysis – both analysed in this report.

Parliament and government departments, health and social care organisations, the media and advertising industries, and age-related charities are all contributing to a narrative ecosystem in which the general public exist, and from which they naturally adopt the language and frames when talking about ageing. This narrative ecosystem activates deeply embedded values and frames related to ageing which this report identifies

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/publications/doddery-dear-examining-age-related-stereotypes>

and proposes approaches which might be taken to reframe existing narratives. These approaches will be taken forward into the next phase of the project, to be tested and further developed with the general public of all ages in both qualitative and quantitative research. Furthermore, this report explores perceptions of stakeholders regarding the state of play around ageing in their respective sector or industry, and summarises their own perceived opportunities, barriers, and solutions for shifting the discourse on ageing in their field.

For clarity and mutual understanding, we have outlined how we use key linguistic terms in this report below:

- **Topics** – used when talking about a subject matter or issues-based policy topics relating to ageing that are emerging from the research (e.g. pensions, social care, healthcare).
- **Themes** – used when talking about the underlying message, idea or concept that is conveyed.
- **Discourse or language** – used when referring to the system of communication, consisting of the use of words, phrases, and grammar.
- **Narratives** – used when talking about the dominant overarching meta-narratives (stories) of ageing (e.g. as a process of physical and mental decline leading to the destination of old). Also used when discussing alternative meta-narratives to achieve social change.
- **Frames** - clusters of ideas, words, images, values, and associations that we use, usually subconsciously, as mental shortcuts to make sense of the world around us.
- **Frame elements** – can include specific values, context, narrative, explanation of a problem and the solution, visuals, explanatory metaphors, and messengers.
- **Framing strategy** – the optimal combination of framing elements to change attitudes and behaviours in the defined target audience(s).

## Summary:

# Narratives of ageing within influential sectors and industries

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## Stakeholders' views of narratives of ageing within their sectors and industries

As part of this programme of research, we interviewed 20 stakeholders within four sectors and industries identified as having an influence to determine how ageing is being presented in public discourse: the government sector, the media industry, the advertising industry, as well as charities with a specific remit related to ageing. Stakeholders interviewed describe how their sector, or industry, thinks and talks about ageing in a manner that is linked to their role and remit.

**Government sector stakeholders** interviewed, including MPs, Peers, civil servants and local authorities, say that ageing does not clearly sit within any individual department, therefore current work related to ageing cuts across multiple departments, involving structural work, service planning, policy making and problem solving. In policy discourse, stakeholders perceive ageing and older people to be discussed in economic terms (i.e. older people's economic value or contribution to society) as well as a challenge (i.e. age-related policy issues, such as demographic change or social care, that need to be dealt with). From our discussions with government sector stakeholders, there is limited evidence that they consider it the responsibility of their sector to 'lead the way' in creating a more constructive dialogue around ageing.

**Media and advertising stakeholders** interviewed are aware that their industry does not accurately reflect the diversity of experiences of older people and ageing. However, they also emphasise that their purpose is to sell newspapers, products, and services. Emotional stories which often use crude and limited stereotypes are used to evoke emotion. The media also use binary devices to create news stories which can be presented in contrast: lonely old lady versus family focussed gran; rich and carefree versus poor and struggling.

Several advertising stakeholders say that there has been an increase in the proportion of older people in adverts in recent years, which they describe as positive. However, they also acknowledge that stereotypes still prevail. There is some appetite for change amongst media and advertising

stakeholders in the way that ageing and older people are presented. However, there does not seem to be great belief that this will really happen in their industry, where the use of stereotypes and emotional stories are considered integral to their industry's work.

**Ageing charity sector stakeholders** and the content analysed from their websites suggests that they talk and think about ageing in a much more holistic way. Ageing is spoken and thought about by ageing charity stakeholders in line with the role and purpose of the ageing charity sector. This includes providing support, advice, and inspiration to older people. Therefore, this sector could be seen as having a more nuanced approach to ageing due to this greater specialisation and focus, however, this isn't always the case in their advertising and fundraising campaigns. Ageing is seen as more of a process rather than a destination. This sector as a result also refers to distinct groups within 'older people', as we can see from the discourse analysis, rather than just 'old' people as a homogenous group.

In light of the different perspectives and sector narratives on ageing, it will be constructive to consider where progressive change should come from and who will drive this. Our thinking around this is outlined in more detail in this report.

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## **Dominant discourse across influential sectors and industries<sup>2</sup>**

**This section analyses the top 10 words and phrases, top 20 adjectives and top 20 topics appearing across all six sectors and industries included in the research (government sector, health and social care, the media, advertising, and age-related charities), in association with age-related search terms and compared to standard English.**

### **Reference texts:**

- The dataset across all sectors and industries consists of an amalgamation of the six sectors and industries included in the research (government sector, health and social care, social media, online news, advertising and the ageing charity sector) in which we randomly selected a sample of ~5,000 words per sector to avoid biasing the results by the size of the dataset per sector. This sums to a total of 29,382 words in this dataset.
- The health and social care sources were compared to a standard English text, comprised of the British National Corpus<sup>3</sup>.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

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2 'All sectors and industries' refers to a combination of the 6 sectors and industries included in this research (government, health and social care, online news, social media, advertising, and the ageing charity sector). A sample of 5,000 words was randomly selected from each dataset to ensure each sector is equally contributing to the combined total sample (i.e. is equally weighted).

3 BNC: <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>

Top 10 words and phrases most likely to appear in discourse about ageing across all sectors and industries					
The following words are significantly more prevalent in discourse across all sectors and industries compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency - selection of words from all sectors and industries	Frequency % of total word count - selection of words from all sectors and industries (n=5,000/sector; n=29,382 in total)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
Care	31x	135	0.4595%	142	0.0147%
Support	7x	62	0.2110%	292	0.0302%
Social	8x	46	0.1566%	184	0.0190%
Family	5x	44	0.1498%	310	0.0320%
Health	14x	41	0.1395%	96	0.0099%
Services	5x	38	0.1293%	234	0.0242%
NHS	305x	37	0.1259%	4	0.0004%
Dementia	280x	17	0.0579%	2	0.0002%
Challenges	42x	14	0.0476%	11	0.0011%
Mental	33x	14	0.0476%	14	0.0014%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, a combination of the text from all sectors and industries) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

**Discourse related to ageing across all the sectors and industries analysed in the research predominantly reflects the medicalisation of ageing and the role of society in terms of providing care, support, and services for older people in need. The most prevalent language related to ageing<sup>4</sup>, compared to standard English, appears to be highly centred around healthcare, social care, and support services.**

Discourse related to ageing shows a dominant focus on tackling the challenges it creates for **health and social care** services. This theme features common use of words including ‘NHS’, ‘dementia’, ‘challenges’, ‘mental’, ‘care’, ‘health’, ‘social’, ‘support’ and ‘services.’ Looking at the sources in which these words are mentioned, specific issues discussed

<sup>4</sup> Words and phrases were excluded if: they featured in our search terms for data collection (e.g. ‘older’, ‘elderly’, ‘age’, ‘grandmother’) or were irrelevant (e.g. ‘people’, ‘get’, ‘uk’).

include care quality, bed capacity, unpaid care, comorbid conditions, independent living, mental health, and learning disabilities. Preventative interventions (both mental and physical) as well as volunteering, campaigning and community ‘support’ activities are also mentioned in association with ‘dementia’. The ‘NHS’ is largely referenced in discussions about the future of healthcare provision in a policy setting, as well as in communications from age-related charities who are signposting older people to ‘support’ ‘services’, benefits, and resources. Social care is principally discussed as being in crisis, with its declining quality of care due to chronic underfunding and an ageing population.

Furthermore, ‘family’ is also frequently mentioned, largely related to discussion in online news articles and social media posts about: the impact of health and social care concerns on friends and relatives; stories of loneliness and isolation among older people (despite family connections); as well as a variety of other life stories involving older people and relatives (both positive and negative).

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**“Many families are increasingly reliant on extra care facilities and nursing homes to manage the healthcare needs of their elderly and vulnerable relatives. Their voices must be heard when incidents take place.”**

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**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan, Labour MP, Twitter, Feb 2019**

# Political narratives on ageing

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## Summary

Government sector and policy discourse, on the surface, largely neutral and factual about ageing. However, government sector sources related to ageing are 2.5x more likely to feature negative emotions compared to the ageing charity sector. Key themes and topics from government sector stakeholders and government texts related to ageing (sourced across Hansard, MPs' Twitter, and policy documents) include:



**A focus on challenges related to ageing and finding solutions to them.**

This could inadvertently feed the detrimental narrative that older people are a burden and dependent on the state. Government sector stakeholders suggest that local government and other industries (e.g. media and advertising) would be better placed to facilitate change. However, analysis of government discourse around ageing focuses on economic issues, health and social care issues, intergenerational conflict and tend to use negative language, suggesting potential for change.



**Economic and financial language is prevalent.**

Pensions, productivity, working adults and jobs, and the living wage. Political and government sector sources talk about people living longer and having longer working lives, as well as a need for perceived fairness between those working and those who are retired. This is also related to the role of the Government in addressing policy issues, for example the under-funding of social care or the impact of the proposed triple lock pension changes. Since government sector discourse commonly associates older people the economy, this could unintentionally enhance the narrative of older people having to contribute in economic terms to society rather than other forms, such as unpaid and informal care of family and friends.



**Specific policies relating to ageing are dominant associations.**

These largely include social care, pensions, the winter fuel allowance and TV licenses. Since policy concerning ageing is fragmented across the Government and civil service, approaches associated with ageing are not always joined up, which may be a barrier and an opportunity to promote change.



**Demographic change and intergenerational fairness, or conflict, are common topics.** This is connected to an embedded perception that older people, and in particular baby boomers, are wealthier than young people, thus treating older people as a homogenous group. However, government sector stakeholders acknowledge the importance of avoiding ageist language because of the electoral capital that older people generally have.



**Clinical, health-related language** is prevalent, with frailty emerging as a key theme. While frailty is largely referred to as a medical term, and not intended to be derogatory, the word is more prevalent than in the ageing charity sector.

These summarised findings from the government sector discourse analysis echo those from the literature review, also conducted as part of this programme of research by Dr Hannah Swift from the University of Kent School of Psychology. Policy was found to be discussed in relation to a perceived intergenerational conflict, often depicting older people in hostile ageist terms as the villain, unfairly consuming too much of society's resources at the expense of a younger generation; or in benevolent ageist terms as the vulnerable victim, irredeemably weak and dependent on others. These notions perpetuate the view that older people are a challenge requiring urgent action (Kesby, 2017), which may, in turn, encourage policy responses focusing on older people contributing more to society in economically productive terms, discrediting their many other contributions.

'Positive' narratives of ageing highlighted in the literature review relating to active ageing and healthy ageing<sup>5</sup> were less prominent than perhaps expected in the analysed political discourse. Indeed, discourse from the ageing charity sector is 2.8x more likely to mention 'active', 17.5x more likely to mention 'stay active', and 14x more likely to mention 'physically active' than government and policy discourse.

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5 WHO, 2017; Zaidi & Howse, 2017; Walker, 2008.

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## Stakeholders' perceptions in government sector roles

Savanta ComRes conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with 6 government sector stakeholders, each lasting 30-45 minutes. Government sector stakeholders (such as Parliamentarians, senior government officials, MPs, Peers and policymakers) were approached from a list of stakeholders who were identified by the Centre for Ageing Better and Savanta ComRes as having not only an interest in ageing, but the potential to influence narratives on ageing in their field.

In order to measure similarities and differences between stakeholders' perceptions and language used around ageing across various sectors and industries, Savanta ComRes asked each stakeholder to describe the narratives of ageing present within their organisation and sector more broadly. They were also asked to highlight any positive and negative representations of ageing, as well as identifying any opportunities and challenges for change. In order to better understand and analyse their underlying views and emotions around ageing, stakeholders were also asked about their personal views on ageing and why they think it is important to shift narratives on ageing.

**Government sector stakeholders' understanding of ageing is predominantly focused on discussing specific policy issues associated with an ageing population. Stakeholders tend to talk about older people as a homogenous population group with distinct needs, which are often identified as a burden on existing systems.**

**While government sector stakeholders recognise this approach to ageing to be predominantly negative, they are split on whether there is space within government sector discourse for a more positive and constructive understanding of and dialogue around ageing. They suggest that the government sector's function is to identify and respond to policy-based problems. Due to the lack of cross-departmental joint up thinking on ageing, examples of a more balanced approach are perceived by government sector stakeholders to be limited to the work of specific departments or local initiatives.**

## **Narratives of ageing at an organisational and sector level**

Government sector stakeholders do not consider ageing to be a particular focus of their sector and are instead concerned about the consequences of an ageing population. Stakeholders say that existing action related to ageing in the sector is currently approached via individual policy areas or topics, such as housing, pensions, health and care systems. As a result, stakeholders highlight a lack of joined up thinking about ageing. Furthermore, due to the nature of these policies, the government sector currently focuses on older people as a specific population group, rather than considering ageing as a process that extends through all stages of life.

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**“I don't think we do talk about ageing. I think that's exactly the point. [...] So, rather than having a conversation about ageing and what that means, we tend to have a conversation driven by, you know, the echoes and reflections of ageing on our existing service structures, and I think that's why it feels always, sort of, like a negative thing.”**

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**Anonymous, Government sector stakeholder**

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**“I think that there is a tendency [within the Government] to think about ageing in the context of its impact on the need for public services.”**

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**Sarah Pickup, LGA, Government sector stakeholder**

Stakeholders predominantly say that most areas of policymaking remain focussed on problems rather than opportunities. This leads to an understanding of older people as a homogenous and growing demographic that is an increasing economic and social burden due to associated service needs and costs.

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“I think the dominant narrative still is one of seeing ageing as a cost to the public purse and to society, in terms of lost productivity and so on [...] it’s still very prevalent in, for example, debates around funding of social care. Indeed, debates about funding of social care tend to exacerbate that perception, that ageing is necessarily something that is about cost to Government and for society.”

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**Paul Burstow, Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), Government sector stakeholder**

Focusing on older people as a population group with distinct needs creates what is recognised to be a predominantly negative discourse. Stakeholders often use the word ‘crisis’ in the context of an ageing population, suggesting that government sector discussion is primarily focused on resolving this ‘crisis’ and the costs associated with it. Some stakeholders say that this is appropriate to the Government’s role, which is by nature there to identify and resolve problems.

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“The good things don’t require Government. Government is there to be helpful in case of the bad things that come along with old age. It isn’t an entirely negative point of view but it’s also a caring basis for policy making. Policies are not mostly about endorsing the happy state of old age.”

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**Lord Best, House of Lords, Government sector stakeholder**

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"The Government would prefer to talk about positive messages, than negative messages, but it doesn't control the agenda that much. Immediate problems are always the issue, actually setting out long-term strategies is always quite difficult in Government because you tend to be overwhelmed by immediate considerations.”

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**Anonymous, Government sector stakeholder**

Despite recognising the Government's role in problem resolution, some stakeholders suggest that the sector may also have a role in influencing perceptions of ageing and wider public discourse.

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**“The point of Government will be to improve people's lives, and so there will be problems to address, but it's also the role of Government to assess opportunities as well, and prepare for and encourage people to take those opportunities. Also, Government can have a role in changing public discourse, so that in the end we have a more balanced discourse so that the opportunities and problems are both addressed.”**

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**Anonymous, Government sector stakeholder**

In this context, stakeholders also highlight differences between the approaches of central government and local government or councils, with the latter two perhaps having a more progressive understanding of ageing than the former. For example, a few stakeholders say that local government and councils have a much closer relationship with the community and are therefore able to communicate ageing in a more positive, or at least balanced, light; focusing on positive action taking place in the community rather than purely focusing on the negative issues related to ageing. This suggests that, due to their access to local communities, some councils and local government may be better placed to start shifting the predominantly issue-based discussions on ageing. Stakeholders suggest this may be done by promoting case studies of active and healthy ageing and the contribution of older people to their local communities such as through volunteering activities or caring roles. This may lead to a more balanced understanding of the diversity of different experiences of ageing as opposed to focusing solely on those with increasing needs and dependence on government support.

Some stakeholders also mention differences between the two Houses of Parliament. The House of Lords is seen as having a more realistic understanding of ageing as a result of being more likely to have personal experience of older age. In comparison, members of the House of Commons are more likely to think of their parents or other relatives in the context of ageing. Therefore, their perceptions of ageing may be more distant, and potentially less accurate.

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**“The House of Lords is full of old people, which means that the House of Lords has an enormous amount of practical experience of ageing. [...] We’ve got a lot of over 80s, a lot of people who are experiencing all the things, good and bad, that you experience in later life. So, the attitudes of the two Houses are likely to be rather different. One’s based on the lived experience with parents and the ageing process that’s affecting their parents. The other’s based on the ageing process as it affects themselves.”**

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**Lord Best, House of Lords, Government sector stakeholder**

Some also highlight the careful language that MPs use when talking about older people. This is due to the recognition that older people form a relatively large – and growing – portion of their voters, and as a result they need to avoid using hostile or offensive language that may result in public backlash.

Overall, government sector stakeholders suggest that there is no coherent cross-departmental discussion on ageing within the sector. The term ‘ageing’ itself is used interchangeably with ‘older people’, and the sector primarily focuses on problems associated with having an ageing population. Stakeholders’ views are split on whether the Government should have a more balanced narrative, and whether it has a role in shifting predominantly negative public narratives about ageing.

### **Perceptions of ageing and demographic change**

All government sector stakeholders consider demographic change to be an important concern, and some question whether adequate attention has been given by the government sector to this conversation.

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**“I think it’s important to care, not just about general demographic change but also what it means for how we’ll work and how we’ll live as a society. I think we’re going to live different lives, and I think we’re only just starting to think about it.”**

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**Anonymous, Government sector stakeholder**

Stakeholders primarily focus on the importance of planning ahead in their discussion of demographic change associating it with particular policy challenges. Most stakeholders highlight that they expect demographic change to cause major economic and social problems. As a result, there is a consensus among stakeholders in recognising the challenge of creating comprehensive, complex policies that enable a systemic change that better accommodates the changing needs of the ageing society. One stakeholder approaches demographic change through a social justice lens, highlighting the intersection between age and poverty. In this context, systemic change is also seen as a way to create a more equal society.

### **Current state and likelihood of change**

Government sector stakeholders struggle to identify any positive changes in the sector's overall approach to ageing. Rather, they focus on developments that are specific to distinct policy areas, particularly the increasing focus on prevention or ways to better enable healthy ageing within the health and care agenda, and the innovation agenda. These are seen as progressive in increasingly recognising ageing as a process rather than a destination, which some refer to as the 'life-course' approach to ageing. Stakeholders refer to specific actions or reports that may signal this positive shift in understanding about ageing, most commonly mentioning The Ageing Grand Challenge, although, these improvements remain specific to certain policies and departments.

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**“What Government is seeking to do, what councils are seeking to do, is to move to a more strength based approach around, not just around ageing, but people who need support generally, so that we start drawing on kind of the plus side in order to help support people and ensure that communities are active and helpful in that.”**

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**Sarah Pickup, Local Government Association (LGA), Government sector stakeholder**

Comprehensive change in government sector's issue-focussed understanding of ageing is seen as unlikely or slow at best. The government sector is overall unlikely to think about ageing as a separate issue, instead it is just a part of certain policy-specific workstreams, which may have a more or less progressive approach.

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## Dominant political discourse

This section analyses the top 10 words and phrases, top 20 adjectives and top 20 topics appearing in government sector sources, in association with ageing related search terms and compared to standard English.

### Reference texts:

- The government sector texts consist of 2,779,018 words from three data sources:
  - > **Hansard scripts:** defined search terms (see Figure 6) were used to identify sections in Hansard over the last 2.5 years that relate to ageing and demographic change. Hansard is the official record of debates among Members of Parliament (MPs) in the House of Commons and Peers in the House of Lords.
  - > **MPs' Twitter posts:** a global media monitoring tool, Meltwater, was used to identify tweets from all active MPs' Twitter accounts (as of September 2019) that contained the defined search terms (see Figure 6) relating to ageing over the last 12 months.
  - > **Policy documents:** a comprehensive list of 41 open access policy documents and press releases were built by Savanta ComRes and Dr Hannah Swift. Documents relevant to ageing were identified by manually searching for primary search terms (see Figure 6) and were signed off by the Centre for Ageing Better. All documents were published in the last 5 years by government departments, government committees or All-Party Parliamentary Groups.
- The government sector texts were compared to a standard English text, comprised of the British National Corpus.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

Top 10 words and phrases most likely to appear in government sector discourse about ageing					
The following words are significantly more prevalent in government sector sources compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency - government sector	Frequency % of total word count - government sector (n=2,779,018)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
Care	17x	7075	0.2546%	142	0.0147%
Social	10x	5219	0.1878%	184	0.0190%
Support	5x	4270	0.1537%	292	0.0302%
Health	12x	3196	0.1150%	96	0.0099%
Services	5x	3046	0.1096%	234	0.0242%
Funding	25x	2412	0.0868%	33	0.0034%
Housing	16x	2392	0.0861%	52	0.0054%
NHS	194x	2227	0.0801%	4	0.0004%
Young people	180x	966	0.0348%	2	0.0002%
Older workers	349x	939	0.0338%	1	0.0001%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, government sector sources) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

**Government sector discourse related to ageing predominantly reflects concerns about service provision and their cost, indicating an association amongst parliamentarians between ageing and economic burden. The most prevalent language related to ageing<sup>6</sup>, compared to standard English, fall into three, interrelated themes: the pressures on health and social care, economics related to demography, and intergeneration fairness between older and younger generations.**

Government sector discourse related to ageing shows a focus on **tackling the challenges and pressures on health and social care services**. This theme features common use of words including ‘care’, ‘social’, ‘health’, ‘NHS’, ‘support’ and ‘services’. Looking at the government sector sources in which these words are mentioned, specific issues discussed include bed capacity, care quality, the annual winter crisis, prevention and early diagnosis. ‘Funding’ is also frequently mentioned, largely related to discussion about the future of the social care budget. Social care is largely discussed as a crisis due to an

<sup>6</sup> Words and phrases were excluded if: they featured in our search terms for data collection (e.g. ‘ageing’, ‘age’); are inherent to Government discourse (e.g. ‘noble lord’, ‘right hon’); or were irrelevant (e.g. ‘people’).

ageing population which requires urgent attention in order to ‘support’ the many older people dependent on this service.

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**“It will not tackle either the growing crisis in services available to support the elderly or disabled or end the need for cuts to local services, including social care, such is the funding crisis.”**

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**Gareth Thomas, Co-Operative Party, Shadow Minister (Communities and Local Government), Hansard, Feb 2017**

The topic of economics is based on frequent use of words and phrases such as ‘older workers’, ‘funding’ and ‘housing’ in government sector sources related to ageing. Prominent sub-topics relate to individuals’ finances (savings, bonds and shares); policies or programmes (future of work, pension auto-enrolment, mental health, housing assessments, LISAs, Help to Buy) and related departments or organisations (DWP, Economic Affairs Committee, FCA, Money Advice Service).

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**“We particularly want to support older workers to remain in and return to the labour market; 1 in 4 men and 1 in 3 women reaching state pension age have not worked for 5 years or more.”**

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**Damian Green, The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Hansard, Feb 2017**

Intergenerational fairness also features in discussions related to the economics of demographic change, with parliamentarians discussing how policies related to older people impact ‘young people’ who experience higher levels of deprivation. Specific policy areas mentioned in relation to intergenerational fairness include ‘housing’, financial security and pensions (e.g. triple lock pension).

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**“Does my hon. friend therefore agree that we should reform pensions tax relief to enable younger people to save more? Three quarters of pensions tax relief goes to higher earners, who are often older.”**

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**Julian Knight, Conservative MP, Hansard, Feb 2017**

## Top 20 adjectives and topics most likely to appear in government sector discourse (n=2,779,018 words) when compared to standard English

Please note, when reporting these figures, we recommend that you use the below wording to ensure the data is communicated clearly:

‘Out of the 2.8 million words analysed from government sector sources referring to ageing from January 2014 to August 2019, the most frequently occurring word was ‘older’ which was mentioned 56,310 times, when compared to standard English texts (the British National Corpus).’

Top 20 adjectives most likely to appear in government sector discourse <sup>7</sup>					
The following adjectives are significantly more prevalent in government sector discourse compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency - government	Frequency % of total word count - government (n=2,779,018 words)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
older	30x	6310	0.2271%	74	0.0076%
social	10x	5219	0.1878%	184	0.0190%
important	3x	3221	0.1159%	337	0.0348%
older people	588x	3163	0.1138%	2	0.0002%
local	3x	2657	0.0956%	306	0.0316%
financial	6x	2595	0.0934%	142	0.0147%
future	3x	2480	0.0892%	269	0.0278%
public	3x	2439	0.0878%	279	0.0288%
working	4x	2434	0.0876%	235	0.0243%
ageing	91x	1837	0.0661%	7	0.0007%
elderly	13x	1051	0.0378%	28	0.0029%
aged	9x	1022	0.0368%	40	0.0041%
young people	180x	966	0.0348%	2	0.0002%
older workers	349x	939	0.0338%	1	0.0001%
vulnerable	18x	826	0.0297%	16	0.0017%
master	15x	796	0.0286%	18	0.0019%
local authorities	259x	695	0.0250%	1	0.0001%
mental health	252x	676	0.0243%	1	0.0001%
local government	35x	654	0.0235%	7	0.0007%
later life	220x	590	0.0212%	1	0.0001%

Relative difference of each adjective is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the adjective in one source (in this case, government sources) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

<sup>7</sup> Words inherent to government sector discourse were excluded from this list e.g. ‘noble’, ‘lord’, ‘right’

Top 20 topics most likely to appear in government sector discourse (n=2,779,018 words)						
The following topics are significantly more prevalent in government sector discourse compared to standard English:	Frequency	Example word 1 (most frequently occurring word in this topic)	Example word 2	Example word 3	Example word 4	Example word 5
Government	37075	government	minister	country	lords	parliament
Helping	36163	care	support	services	help	benefits
Money and pay	31019	pension	pensions	funding	tax	fund
Work and employment	25913	work	working	workers	staff	employment
Planning for the future	25574	want	scheme	policy	strategy	schemes
Belonging to a group <sup>8</sup>	25169	member	members	public	society	community
People	24381	people	children	population	individuals	person
Time: Old; age	17590	older	ageing	aged	age	ageist
Money generally	13668	financial	money	state pension	budget	pension scheme
Important	12932	important	significant	key	value	serious
Knowledgeable	11560	know	information	experience	recognise	aware
Medicines and medical treatment	8536	hospital	healthcare	treatment	nurses	GPs
Money: Debts	7900	pay	spending	debt	paid	loss
Difficult	7307	problem	challenges	difficult	problems	crisis
Personal relationship	7017	friend	meet	met	relationship	relationships
Ethical	6032	noble	fair	fairness	equity	honour
Health and disease	3856	health	mental health	health professionals	influenza	post-traumatic
Unemployed	3441	retirement	retired	retire	unemployment	retiring
Alive	3389	life	lives	life course	live	alive
Money: Lack	1832	poverty	poor	unpaid	in need	insolvent

<sup>8</sup> Please note: 'member(s)' will be mostly used to refer to 'member(s) of parliament', and 'noble' will be mostly used to refer to 'noble lord', therefore the two topics containing these words are likely to be inflated.

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## Political discourse compared to the ageing charity sector

This section analyses the prominent topics, phrases, words and emotions appearing in government sector sources compared to discourse in the ageing charity sector, in association with ageing related search terms.

### Reference texts:

- The government sector texts consist of 2,779,018 words from three data sources:
  - > **Hansard scripts:** defined search terms (see Figure 6) were used to identify sections in Hansard over the last 2.5 years that relate to ageing and demographic change. Hansard is the official record of debates among Members of Parliament (MPs) in the House of Commons and Peers in the House of Lords.
  - > **MPs' Twitter posts:** a global media monitoring tool, Meltwater, was used to identify tweets from all active MPs' Twitter accounts (as of September 2019) that contained the defined search terms (see Figure 6) relating to ageing over the last 12 months.
  - > **Policy documents:** a comprehensive list of 41 open access policy documents and press releases were built by Savanta ComRes and Dr Hannah Swift. Documents relevant to ageing were identified by manually searching for primary search terms (see Figure 6) and were signed off by the Centre for Ageing Better. All documents were published in the last 5 years by government departments, government committees or All-Party Parliamentary Groups.
- The government sector sources were compared to texts from the ageing charity sector, which consist of 310,323 words scraped from the websites of the top 8 leading age-related charities in the UK. The list of these charities was approved by the Centre for Ageing Better and includes Age UK; Friends of the Elderly; Centre for Ageing Better; Independent Age; International Longevity Centre UK; Age Friendly Manchester; The Silver Line and the Campaign to End Loneliness. The dataset consisted of a website scrape of all online communications as of August 2019, which would include open access press releases, blogs and marketing material, however, does not include their advertisements.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

**Key differences:**

Compared to age-related charities, government sources are:

- 14x more likely to focus on policy issues relating to ageing, reflecting the focus on the challenges of an ageing population;
- 12.5x more likely to use economic language, focus on productivity and the workforce;
- 9x more likely to talk about generations and related themes;
- 14x more likely to mention the phrases ‘vulnerable people’ and ‘disabled people’; and
- 2.5x more likely to feature negative emotions around ageing.

**Government sector sources are more likely than age-related charities to discuss specific policies in relation to ageing and older people – often with an economic angle.**

Policy-focused language around ageing – government sector					
Phrases	Relative difference	Frequency - government sector	Frequency % of total wordcount – government sector (n=2,779,018)	Frequency - ageing charity	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity (n=310,323)
Living wage	∞	161	0.0058%	0	0%
Triple lock	25x	216	0.0078%	1	0.0003%
Social care	2.5x	2707	0.0974%	119	0.0372%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, government sector sources) by the other source (in this case, ageing charity sources).

Policies related to ageing are 14x more prevalent in government sector sources, with the ‘triple lock’ being particularly more likely to be mentioned (25x more likely). Debates in the House of Commons, particularly those before the 2017 election, are predominantly related to the commitment to the triple lock, how this policy fits with future generations of pensioners who are currently working, or how to pay for this pledge. These debates mostly take place along party lines with opposition parties positioning themselves against the Conservatives.

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**“Will the Prime Minister give a clear and unambiguous commitment to maintaining the triple lock on the state pension?”**

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**Angus Robertson, SNP MP, Hansard, Apr 2017**

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**“The pension rates, the triple lock everything that he has explained make perfect sense and sit well with the requirements of that part of our population that is past retirement age. However, we must have some concerns whether proper provision that, arguably, is being made for those over retirement age, is also being made for those of working age.”**

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**Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope, Liberal Democrat Peer, Hansard, Feb 2017**

‘Social care’ is mentioned 2.5x more in government sector sources compared to age-related charities. However, ‘social care’ is also mentioned by government sources at a higher frequency than the ‘triple lock’ (2,707 vs. 216 times), indicating the focus on social care by both sectors. Discourse about social care largely focuses on crisis in the system, with ways to reform and fund health and social care, the impact on local councils, vulnerable people and the pressures on the NHS and hospital as a result.

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**“The crisis in our hospitals has been made much worse by the Government’s continued failure to fund social care properly.”**

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**Barbara Keeley, Labour MP, Hansard, Jan 2017**

Discussion around social care largely focuses on the need of elderly people, with other groups who need social care only being mentioned a handful of times:

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**“Can the Minister confirm that the now-promised social care plan will address not only the needs of older people but the needs of all vulnerable people of all ages? It is a little-known fact that the cost of meeting the needs of people with learning disabilities will soon overtake the cost of care of the growing number of older people.”**

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**Baroness Hollins, Crossbench Peer, Hansard, Jun 2018**

Social care and its funding are a priority which all parties wish to be seen to be supporting publicly, with an appetite for greater funding, despite slow progress on reform.

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**“Great to see @BorisJohnson commit to improving health and social care. Underfunding of rural areas with ageing populations like #Somerset needs to be addressed as part of this. Formulas need to look at future projections of local need not past levels.”**

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**Marcus Fysh, Conservative MP, Twitter, Aug 2019**

**Economic language features 12.5x more often in government sector sources compared to age-related charities, often with a focus on the workforce and productivity.**

Economic and productivity language - government sector					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - government sector	Frequency % of total wordcount - government sector (n=2,779,018)	Frequency - ageing charity	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity (n=310,323)
<b>Words</b>					
Pensions	5x	3929	0.1414%	85	0.0274%
<b>Phrases</b>					
WASPI women	∞	392	0.0141%	0	0%
Business rates	∞	130	0.0047%	0	0%
Financial guidance	42.5x	368	0.0132%	1	0.0003%
Triple lock	25x	216	0.0078%	1	0.0003%
Older workers	12x	939	0.0338%	9	0.0028%
Working lives	9x	234	0.0084%	3	0.0009%
Pension scheme	4.5x	631	0.0227%	16	0.0050%
<b>Topics</b>					
Business	1.5x	8299	0.2986%	534	0.1721%
Money and pay	1.4x	31019	1.1162%	2653	0.8549%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, government sector sources) by the other source (in this case, ageing charity sources).

Economic language consists of words and phrases around pensions as well as productivity – ‘older workers’, ‘working lives’, ‘business rates’, and ‘financial guidance’. This is consistent with the finding of a similar pattern related to policy, which also places an emphasis on economic aspects of how policies affect older people. It could suggest that whereas age-related charities are primarily focused on the needs of older people, the government sector looks at the financial wellbeing of adults and how much support they need.

The government sector appears to welcome the idea of the current and potential value that older people can bring to the economy in light of demographic change. Parliamentarians commonly acknowledge this in the form of older workers contributing to the economy, for example needing to

ensure workplaces are conducive of retaining older workers in employment. However, other forms of economic contribution appear to be less frequently mentioned. Similar references were made by the government and policy stakeholders that we interviewed.

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**“For employers, in order to meet future demand it will be increasingly important to recruit, retain and retrain older workers. Over the next five years to 2022, there will be just under 2 million more people aged 50 years and over and 300,000 fewer people aged 16-49 (source: ONS 2014) population estimates and 2014-based population projections).”**

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**Damian Green, The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Feb 2017**

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**“Any form of negative stereotyping or discrimination is, of course, wrong. I mentioned a couple of things that the Government are already doing and a lot is going on to counter any kind of discrimination. This Government have got more older workers into employment and are tackling the discrimination in the workplace that, unfortunately, still takes place.”**

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**Lord O'Shaughnessy, Conservative Peer, Jul 2017**

Similar patterns emerge around the way government sector sources discuss Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) and the living wage: further highlighting a larger focus of the government sector upon economic factors such as working lives, pensions, and productivity.

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**“Does my hon. Friend agree that the WASPI women, who had expected to retire at age 60 and who are being compelled to work for another six years, are also furious and feel terribly let down by the Government?”**

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**Grahame Morris, Labour MP, Hansard, Dec 2017**

**Overall, topics and phrases relating to intergenerational language, young people and demographic descriptors are 9x more prevalent among government sources than age-related charities.**

Ageing and demographic change – government sector					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency – government sector	Frequency % of total wordcount – government sector (n=2,779,018)	Frequency – ageing charity	Frequency % of total wordcount – ageing charity (n=310,323)
<b>Phrases</b>					
Young people	x18.5	966	0.0348%	6	0.0019%
Intergenerational fairness	x18.5	162	0.0058%	1	0.0003%
Ageing population	x6	503	0.0181%	10	0.0031%
Life expectancy	x5.5	529	0.0190%	11	0.0034%
Older adults	x4	359	0.0129%	10	0.0031%
<b>Topic(s)</b>					
Time: Old; grown-up	x2	8,940	0.3217%	2414	0.7779%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, government sector sources) by the other source (in this case, ageing charity sources).

Intergenerational fairness is frequently mentioned in the context of recent inquiries or debates in Hansard. In particular, discussions centre around the 2017 Intergenerational fairness inquiry by the Department for Work and Pensions Select Committee, which argued that the economy is skewed towards baby boomers and against millennials and that policy should seek to shift this and strengthen intergenerational contract. This presents a narrative of conflict between old and young, in which an ageing population is described as a ‘pressure’ on resources, or as a challenge that needs addressing, particularly in relation to NHS systems and provision.

The language related to intergenerational fairness is frequently from an economic angle, with associations with the triple lock pension, housing, and job insecurity for young people. Some mentions of the topic also relate to perceived fairness and inequality more widely – for example, the differences in life expectancy in some areas of the country compared to others.

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**“The [Intergenerational Fairness Select] Committee effectively said that the UK economy is skewed. We focused on some key elements: house prices; life expectancy; the burden of looking after the old financed by the young; the triple lock on pensions; and the implicit social contract between generations that we felt had become skewed.”**

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**Richard Graham, Conservative MP, Hansard, Feb 2017**

Analysis of MPs’ Twitter posts also reflects the narrative around younger generations being worse off than their older counterparts, being linked to unequal wealth distribution and opportunities across generations, or challenges faced by young people that previous generations did not face (for example, the lack of affordable housing).

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**“The growth rate of personal wealth is vastly different depending on your generation. Young people are losing out from high rent and house prices, while property and pension wealth is concentrated overwhelmingly among those in their 60s.”**

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**Chuka Umunna, Liberal Democrat MP, Twitter, Jul 2019**

That said, more positive associations with ageing emerge from MPs’ Twitter compared to Hansard (where language associated with ageing is more likely to indicate a burden or challenge to society). Examples include allocating resources to those who need support, or about the future of work and technology. One reason for this difference from Hansard may be the common use of Twitter as a campaigning mechanism, and the focus on government policy to an audience of colleagues within Hansard rather than to the public on Twitter.

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**“Supporting our ageing population is vital & I know how important it is to help those who wish to remain in their own homes to do so. That is why I am very pleased that Warwickshire will receive an additional £2.2m to help elderly residents this winter.”**

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**Mark Pawsey, Conservative MP, Twitter, Oct 2018**

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**“...I do think that having a holistic view of lifelong learning is necessary, urgent and overdue given the changing nature of our economy, the rapid pace of technological change and our ageing population.”**

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**Wes Streeting, Labour MP, Twitter, Jun 2019**

**Mentions of ‘vulnerable people’ and ‘disabled people’ are collectively 14x more prevalent in government sector sources than in age-related charities.**

Other groups mentioned - government sector					
Phrases	Relative difference	Frequency - government sector	Frequency % of total wordcount - government sector (n=2,779,018)	Frequency - ageing charity	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity (n=310,323)
Vulnerable people	20x	172	0.0062%	1	0.0003%
Disabled people	8x	273	0.0098%	4	0.0013%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, government sector sources) by the other source (in this case, ageing charity sources).

While government sector discourse is more likely to refer to disabled people as a group, the word ‘disabled’ in fact occurs with a similar frequency across both government and the ageing charity sector sources, with the latter tending to refer to specific needs related to disability, such as ‘disabled access’, ‘disabled toilets’, ‘disabled parking’ and ‘disabled bus passes’. This could suggest that discussions around ageing are needs-focused rather than age-focused, with mentions of disability coming into discussions around social care provisions for those who need social care regardless of their age.

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**“The LGA [Local Government Association] highlights that there will be a 2.6 billion funding gap in social care by the end of the decade and notes that the Government’s settlement will fall well short of what is needed to fully protect the care services for elderly and vulnerable people today and in the future.”**

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**Jim McMahon, Labour MP, Hansard, Feb 2017**

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**“Some people do inspiring work for our community. @XMoniqueAmyX is founder of Fulham's @SmileBrigadeUK which takes surplus food from local stores to the elderly, the homeless & other vulnerable people. Am helping in their search for a venue for a regular soup kitchen #BigSociety”**

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**Greg Hands, Conservative MP, Twitter, Apr 2019**

**Negative emotions around ageing are more prevalent in government sector sources compared to age-related charities.**

Negative emotions around ageing - government sector					
Topics	Relative difference	Frequency - government sector	Frequency % of total wordcount - government sector (n=2,779,018)	Frequency - ageing charity	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity (n=310,323)
Discontent	4x	391	0.014%	11	0.004%
Violent/ angry	2x	2289	0.082%	145	0.047%
Dislike	2x	271	0.010%	15	0.005%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, government sector sources) by the other source (in this case, ageing charity sources).

Topics such as violent/angry (e.g. ‘abuse’, ‘hit’, ‘force’, ‘violence’), discontent (e.g. ‘dissatisfied’, ‘disappointed’, ‘frustrating’) and dislike (e.g. ‘hate’, ‘unpopular’, ‘objections’, ‘damning’) are 2.5x more prevalent among government sector sources than among age-related charity sources.

While this is, in part, the nature of political debates it also highlights the role of the government sector to identify and fix problems (for example with social care) and therefore the language they use is more likely to be negative. This is likely to be true across policy areas and therefore may not be unique to the way that government sector sources talk about ageing or older people.

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**“Not a single bid has been received. What a damning indictment of this Government’s market approach to healthcare.”**

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**Anna Turley, Labour (Co-op) MP, Hansard, Apr 2017**

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“Very disappointing Treasury body-swerved debate on how their changes to #PensionTaxAllowances are interacting with NHS Pension schemes & so Drs are losing more than they earn from extra sessions. It's already resulting in consultants & GPs cutting back on covering extra sessions.”

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**Dr Philippa Whitford, SNP MP, Twitter, Jun 2019**

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## **Dominant health and social care discourse**

**This section analyses the top 10 words and phrases, top 20 adjectives and top 20 topics appearing in health and social care sources, in association with ageing related search terms and compared to standard English.**

### **Reference texts:**

- The health and social care sources consist of 385,479 words sourced from open access policy documents from the most influential 6 health and social care organisations in the UK published over the last 5 years (January 2014 to August 2019). This list was approved by the Centre for Ageing Better and includes the NHS (including NHS England and NHS Confederation); Public Health England (PHE); The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE); British Geriatrics Society; The King’s Fund; and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE). Primary search terms (see Figure 6) were used to search for the documents on each of the organisations’ websites. See Figure 4 in the Methodology section for the full list of 36 policy documents included in the analysis.
- The health and social care sources were compared to a standard English text, comprised of the British National Corpus.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

Top 10 words and phrases most likely to appear in the health and social care sources about ageing					
The following words are significantly more prevalent in health and social care sources compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency - health and social care	Frequency % of total word count - health and social care (n=385,479)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
Care	115x	6473	1.6792%	142	0.0147%
Health	69x	2619	0.6794%	96	0.0099%
Social	30x	2207	0.5725%	184	0.0190%
Support	16x	1858	0.4820%	292	0.0302%
NHS	1153x	1836	0.4763%	4	0.0004%
Services	18x	1680	0.4358%	234	0.0242%
Needs	15x	1027	0.2664%	177	0.0183%
Hospital	22x	848	0.2200%	99	0.0102%
Patients	55x	725	0.1881%	33	0.0034%
Dementia	737x	587	0.1523%	2	0.0002%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, health and social care sources) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

The health and care sector’s discourse on ageing is primarily focused on the health and care needs of older people and the systemic pressures associated with these.

References to the ‘NHS’ are common, with frequently used phrases including ‘NHS services’, ‘NHS staff’, ‘NHS workforce’, ‘NHS budget’, ‘NHS funding’ or ‘NHS spending’. These are often mentioned in the context of growing demand and pressures on the healthcare system in order to better meet changing social needs.

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**“Our values haven’t changed, but our world has. So the NHS needs to adapt.”**

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**‘Five Year Forward View’, NHS, Policy document, Oct 2014**

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**“Demand for NHS services continues to grow, for at least five separate reasons...”**

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**‘The NHS Long Term Plan’, NHS, Policy document, Jan 2019**

Linked to the theme of growing demand for NHS health and care services, words such as ‘health’, ‘patients’, ‘social’ and ‘needs’ are linked to language on ageing and older people as the recipients of services. In addition, language used is also related to providers of services such as ‘hospital’, ‘support’, ‘care’, and ‘services’. Innovation and reform are also mentioned in this context, recognising new social trends and developing care systems that better fit with the changing needs and preferences of an ageing population.

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**“Acute hospital care must meet the needs of older patients with complex co-morbidities.”**

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**‘Making our health and care systems fit for an ageing population’,  
The King’s Fund, Policy document, 2014**

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**“In an ageing society where the cost of long-term care is increasingly unaffordable, we need to ensure that older people age well.”**

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**‘Helping older people maintain a healthy diet: A review of what works’,  
Public Health England, Policy document, Feb 2017**

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**“Making our health and care systems fit for an ageing population provides strong evidence of what we know works well. This includes both major and minor interventions, for example, adequate treatment for minor needs that limit independence such as foot health, chronic pain, visual and hearing impairment, incontinence, malnutrition and oral health have significant benefits on older people’s well-being and independence. Without such interventions the risks of loneliness and social isolation are higher.”**

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**‘BGS response to call for evidence on tackling loneliness’,  
British Geriatrics Society, Policy document, Jul 2018**

Finally, common diseases and medical conditions, both mental and physical, are also frequently mentioned within the health and care discourse. Older people are often referred to as ‘older patients’ or ‘frail older patients.’ This suggests that older age groups may be associated with higher level of vulnerability and mental decline. The most referenced condition in the health and social care sources is ‘dementia’. Since it is so frequently used, the term may act as a shortcut to a whole host of associations, feelings and images – contributing to the frame of mental decline and dependency with older age.

## Top 20 adjectives and topics most likely to appear in health and social care discourse (n=385,479 words) when compared to standard English

Please note, when reporting these figures, we recommend that you use the below wording to ensure the data is communicated clearly:

**‘Out of the 385,479 words analysed from health and social care sources referring to ageing from January 2014 to August 2019, the adjective ‘social’ which was mentioned 2,207 times, when compared to standard English texts (the British National Corpus).’**

Top 20 adjectives most likely to appear in health and social care discourse					
The following adjectives are significantly more prevalent in health and social care discourse compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency - health and social care	Frequency % of total word count – health and social care (n=385,479 words)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
social	30x	2207	0.5725%	184	0.0190%
older	61x	1784	0.4628%	74	0.0076%
older people	1602x	1305	0.3099%	2	0.0002%
mental health	2496x	1006	0.2489%	2	0.0002%
available	7x	988	0.2563%	336	0.0347%
long term	720x	869	0.2196%	59	0.0061%
local	7x	858	0.2226%	306	0.0316%
community	6x	596	0.1546%	257	0.0265%
national	4x	582	0.1510%	377	0.0389%
quality	12x	576	0.1494%	119	0.0123%
nice	14	425	0.1103%	75	0.0077%
integrated	43	411	0.1066%	24	0.0025%
clinical	144x	344	0.0892%	6	0.0006%
key	9x	334	0.0866%	92	0.0095%
acute	52x	289	0.0750%	14	0.0014%
intermediate	23x	286	0.0742%	31	0.0032%
ageing	92x	256	0.0664%	7	0.0007%
public health	597x	243	0.0577%	1	0.0001%
enhanced	60x	237	0.0615%	10	0.0010%
local authorities	33x	210	0.0545%	16	0.0017%

Relative difference of each adjective is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the adjective in one source (in this case, health and social care sources) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

Top 20 topics most likely to appear in health and social care discourse (n=385,479 words)						
The following topics are significantly more prevalent in health and social care discourse compared to standard English:	Frequency	Example word 1 (most frequently occurring word in this topic)	Example word 2	Example word 3	Example word 4	Example word 5
Helping	14318	care	support	services	service	help
Medicines and medical treatment	6467	hospital	clinical	medical	primary care	treatment
People	5789	people	person	population	children	individuals
Belonging to a group	4364	community	public	team	organisations	teams
Planning	4125	plan	planning	programme	policy	voluntary
Disease	3572	patients	dementia	disabilities	disease	patient
Social Actions, States and Processes	3303	social	engagement	contact	visits	behaviours
Health and disease	3136	health	mental health	health professionals	influenza	health professional
Work and employment	2941	staff	work	working	role	workforce
Inclusion	2512	including	integrated	include	involved	integration
Investigate, examine, test, search	2470	review	assessment	research	survey	analysis
Important	2444	key	important	acute	significant	emergency
Money and pay	2332	fund	funding	investment	funded	trusts
Knowledgeable	2322	information	specialist	experience	identify	know
Time: Old; grown-up	2227	older	ageing	geriatric	age	aged
Residence	1948	home	homes	residents	living	live
Evaluation: Good/bad	1000	quality	standards	evaluation	standard	evaluate
Alive	626	life	lives	live	life course	alive
Healthy	623	wellbeing	healthy	recovery	well	well-being
Weak	509	frailty	frail	vulnerable	mild	weak

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## Health & social care discourse compared to the ageing charity sector

This section analyses the prominent topics, phrases, words and emotions appearing in health and social care sources compared to discourse in the ageing charity sector, in association with ageing related search terms.

### Reference texts:

- The health and social care sources consist of 385,479 words sourced from open access policy documents from the most influential 6 health and social care organisations in the UK published over the last 5 years (January 2014 to August 2019). This list was approved by the Centre for Ageing Better and includes the NHS (including NHS England and NHS Confederation); Public Health England (PHE); The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE); British Geriatrics Society; The King’s Fund; and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE). Primary search terms (see Figure 6) were used to search for the documents on each of the organisations’ websites. See Figure 4 in the Methodology section for the full list of 36 policy documents included in the analysis.
- The health and social care sources were compared to texts from the ageing charity sector, which consist of 310,323 words scraped from the websites of the top 8 leading age-related charities in the UK. The list of these charities was approved by the Centre for Ageing Better and includes Age UK; Friends of the Elderly; Centre for Ageing Better; Independent Age; International Longevity Centre UK; Age Friendly Manchester; The Silver Line and the Campaign to End Loneliness. The dataset consisted of a website scrape of all online communications as of August 2019, which would include open access press releases, blogs and marketing material, however, does not include their advertisements.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

**Key differences:**

Compared to ageing charities, health and social care sources are:

- 20.5x more likely to use language that discusses ageing linked to vulnerability;
- 18x more likely to use clinical language and focus on evidence, medicines and disease;
- 11.5x more likely to mention specific policies or initiatives; and
- 21x more likely to discuss ageing through the use of age groups or conditions.

**Health and social care documents are 20.5x more likely to discuss ageing linked to frailty, weakness and/or help.**

Vulnerable language - health and social care					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - health and social care	Frequency % of total wordcount - health and social care (n=385,479)	Frequency - ageing charity	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity (n=310,323)
<b>Words</b>					
Frailty	65x	322	0.0835%	4	0.0013%
Frail	10.5x	91	0.0236%	7	0.0023%
<b>Topics</b>					
Weak	5x	509	0.1320%	83	0.0267%
Helping	1.5x	14318	3.7142%	7555	2.4346%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, health and social care sources) by the other source (in this case, ageing charity sources).

These topics and themes are 20.5x more prevalent among health and social care documents compared to age-related charities. While this does allow association of ageing with frailty, weakness and requiring help, this does not necessarily equate older people with being vulnerable; vulnerable older people are somewhat separated from older people as a whole:

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**“Local authorities have sought to protect the most vulnerable older people..”**

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**‘Social care for older people – Home truths’,  
The King’s Fund & Nuffield Trust, Policy document, Sept 2016**

That said, both older and younger groups are frequently highlighted as potentially more vulnerable and therefore targeted in the provision of certain health services.

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**“In addition to this a newly available vaccine that is more effective will be offered to over-65s. This could prevent hundreds of deaths and save thousands of GP and hospital hours I strongly encourage everyone in vulnerable groups to get the life-saving vaccine as we head into winter.”**

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**‘New flu vaccine available this winter for those aged 65 and over’, Public Health England, Press Release, Sept 2018**

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**“As younger children have poorer hand and respiratory hygiene than adults, they tend to spread flu more easily, so vaccinating children, protects not only them, but also other vulnerable groups around them.”**

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**‘Vaccine for older adults gives significant protection against flu’, Public Health England, Press Release, May 2019**

**The language used by health and social care is more clinical and focuses on evidence, needs, medicines, patients and disease 18x more than age-related charities.**

Clinical or research terminology - health and social care					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - health and social care	Frequency % of total wordcount - health and social care (n=385,479)	Frequency - ageing charity	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity (n=310,323)
<b>Words</b>					
Patients	39x	725	0.1881%	15	0.0048%
<b>Phrases</b>					
British geriatrics	58.5x	77	0.0183%	1	0.0003%
Complex needs	32.5x	85	0.0202%	2	0.0006%
<b>Topics</b>					
Health and disease	3.5x	3136	0.8135%	702	0.2262%
Medicines and medical treatment	3x	6467	1.6777%	1754	0.5652%
Science and technology in general	3x	283	0.0734%	81	0.0261%
Disease	2x	3572	0.9266%	1334	0.4299%
Investigate, examine, test, search	1.4x	2470	0.6408%	1446	0.4660%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, health and social care sources) by the other source (in this case, ageing charity sources).

This, sometimes complex, language reflects the very different intended audiences for the two types of text, with health and social care documents directed at policymakers and health bodies and organisations, compared to age-related charities which are primarily aimed at the general public and older people.

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**“The goal of the ADD challenge will be to support research, prevention and treatment across major chronic diseases, including cancer, dementia, heart disease and mental health conditions.”**

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**‘Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s’, Department of Health & Social Care, Policy document, July 2019**

**Similarly to government sector sources, health and social care documents are 11.5x more likely than age-related charities to mention specific policies or initiatives.**

Policy spheres - health and social care					
Phrases	Relative difference	Frequency - health and social care	Frequency % of total wordcount - health and social care (n=385,479)	Frequency - ageing charity	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity (n=310,323)
Health inequalities	14x	92	0.0218%	5	0.0016%
Social care	11.5x	1790	0.4251%	119	0.0372%
Mental health	9.5x	549	0.1304%	44	0.0137%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, health and social care sources) by the other source (in this case, ageing charity sources).

This illustrates the specific policy focus of the former, while the latter take a view of a broader range of needs related to ageing. In the context of social care, references to policy considerations are frequently related to funding models and systems, both reflecting and potentially influencing the government sector’s narrative around the cost of social care:

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**“The social care system is heavily reliant on unpaid informal carers, usually family... There have also been concerns about the impact of social care budget pressures.”**

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**‘Social care for older people – Home truths’,  
The King’s Fund & Nuffield Trust, Policy document, Sept 2016**

Notably, ‘mental health’ is 9.5x more prevalent among health and social care documents compared to age-related charities. On the other hand, ‘social isolation’ and ‘wellbeing’ are similarly likely to occur in sources from health and social care as they are in age-related charities.

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**“Although the national data captures ‘reasons’ for delay, and ascribes causation to either the NHS, social care or ‘both’, most interviewees described a complex and interdependent set of causes behind delays in discharging older people. Prominent among these factors was a lack of social care services, in particular nursing homes, beds for older people with social care and mental health needs, reablement places and, particularly, home care packages.”**

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**‘Social care for older people – Home truths’,  
The King’s Fund & Nuffield Trust, Policy document, Sept 2016**

Health inequalities also come up more frequently in health and social care documents compared to age-related charities. Mentions of health inequality do not necessarily focus on older people, although some documents focus specifically on older people and the health inequalities they might experience.

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**“The project will seek to enrol under-represented groups, such as ethnic minorities, to enable a better understanding of disease and preventative measures for every individual in society and reduce existing health inequalities.”**

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**Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s,  
Department of Health & Social Care, Consultation document, July 2019**

**Health and social care documents are 21x more likely than ageing charity sources to refer to a wider range of ages or conditions.**

‘Frailty’ is far more prevalent (65x) in health and social care sources than in sources from age-related charities. While frailty is mostly discussed with a focus on the individuals it affects, the impact on wider society is also referenced:

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**“Dementia, disability and frailty in later life affect individuals, families and society as a whole..”**

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**‘Dementia, disability and frailty in later life – mid-life approaches to delay or prevent onset’, NICE, Policy document, Oct 2015**

Health and social care documents are also more likely than age-related charities to talk about age categories other than older people, for example with ‘young people’ being 13x more prevalent, and references to ‘mid-life’ and ‘adults’. This is encouraging, given that social care is typically conflated with older people – missing that, while the need increases amongst older people, other age groups also require social care, and not all older people require it.

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**“Working with families to reduce conflict between parents and help families deal with challenges more easily, and providing support for children and young people”**

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**‘Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s – consultation document’, Department of Health & Social Care, Policy document, Jul 2019**

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**“There will be increasing future demand from both older people and working age adults.”**

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**‘Future of an Ageing Population’, Government Office for Science, Policy document, 2016**

# Media narratives on ageing

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## Summary

Key findings from media stakeholders and media texts related to ageing (sourced across social media and online news) are outlined below.



Across online news and social media, **negative stereotyping** of ageing and older people appears to be more widespread than positive representations, reflecting the findings of the literature review. This is particularly true of online tabloids - where stereotypes appear in portrayals of ageing including vulnerability, victimisation, sex, appearance and celebrity role models – as well as across social media – where offensive slurs are used to describe older people as well as generalisations of older peoples’ politics, class and ability. This is highlighted by the finding that tabloid news sources are 2x more likely than broadsheet news sources to use highly positive and highly negative emotive language in association with ageing. Examples of self-internalisation of these stereotypes can also be found across social media. On the other hand, online broadsheets tend to discuss policy areas and issues related to ageing using more neutral and balanced language. Media stakeholders recognise the problem of misrepresenting and generalising older people in the media and describe it as an intrinsic component of news media. These findings reflect those in the literature review, where research suggests that:

- negative age stereotypes predominate in the media, characterising older people as dependent, frail, incompetent and in psychosocial decline<sup>9</sup>;
- role models in the media shape our perceptions of when someone becomes ‘old’ and our expectations of old age<sup>10</sup>; and
- stereotype threat can lead to older people performing stereotypes in a self-fulfilling way, to the detriment to their participation in society, physical and mental health.

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9 Kesby, 2017; Ng, Allore, Trentalange, Monin & Levy, 2015; Rozanova, 2010; reviewed in Bugental & Hehman, 2007.

10 Swift, Abrams, & Lamont, in press; Ayalon, Doron, Bodner, & Inbar 2014.



Online tabloids tend to publish articles focused on the viewpoint of an individual rather than the collective, which gives rise to a high proportion of **life stories** in these publications. The words ‘family’, ‘life’ and ‘home’ all appear in the top 10 most prevalent words and phrases in online tabloids and in social media. Similarly, ageing is discussed in association with a range of life stories and events across social media, including birthdays, celebrations, struggles with health, loved ones passing away and memories of older relatives. These representations of older people are often binary and exaggerated – either highly negative (more common) or exceptionally positive (less common). Media stakeholders recognise the need to increase the diversity and authenticity of stories involving ageing and older people in the media. This echoes findings in the literature review, where older people are under-represented, and when they are represented, they are portrayed largely as a homogenous group lacking individual differentiation (Kessler, 2004).



**Health and social care** are dominant topics discussed in association with ageing across the media. Online broadsheets are more likely than tabloids to discuss aspects related to health and social care, reflecting their nature to focus on ageing-specific policy areas. Similar to government sector sources, online broadsheets talk about health and social care as a challenge and a crisis due to an ageing population combined with dwindling care budgets across local government. Discourse on social media also relates to health, largely in terms of a decline in physical and mental ability using patronising benevolent ageist language (e.g. ‘elderspeak’ and offensive jokes). As outlined in the literature review, benevolent ageist language reflects high-warmth, low-competence stereotypes of older people, where slow, simple and patronising language is used, perhaps most frequently viewed as acceptable in healthcare settings<sup>11</sup>.



Additionally, ageing is discussed in the media in association with demographic change, **intergenerational fairness and conflict**. Online broadsheets discuss differences in ‘relative poverty’, financial and housing security between older and younger generations, as well as the ‘burden’ which an ageing population places on families and the health and social care system overall. On social media, the public pit the old against young, for example during discussions about how older people predominantly ‘voted leave’, thus influencing the fate of the UK’s relationship with the EU despite younger people having more of a stake in the UK’s future. Media stakeholders recognise this narrative is problematic, yet also think it is important to prepare for changing social and economic needs in light of demographic change.

11 Reviewed in Chrisler et al., 2016; Bugental et al., 2007; Nussbaum et al., 2005.

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## Stakeholders' perceptions in the media industry

Savanta ComRes conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with 4 media stakeholders, each lasting 30-45 minutes. Media stakeholders (such as Journalists and/or presenters) were approached from a list of stakeholders who were identified by the Centre for Ageing Better and Savanta ComRes as having not only an interest in ageing, diversity or human rights, but the potential to influence narratives on ageing in their field.

In order to measure similarities and differences between stakeholders' perceptions and language used around ageing across various sectors and industries, Savanta ComRes asked each stakeholder to describe the narratives of ageing present within their organisation and sector more broadly. They were also asked to highlight any positive and negative representations of ageing, as well as identifying any opportunities and challenges for change. In order to better understand and analyse their underlying views and emotions around ageing, stakeholders were also asked about their personal views on ageing and why they think it is important to shift narratives on ageing.

**Similar to government sector stakeholders, media stakeholders say that ageing is understood as a later stage of life and is mainly used in the context of talking about older people. Stakeholders recognise the media's approach as overly generalised and simplistic, often featuring misrepresentative portrayals of older people. Some stakeholders suggest that stereotypical depictions of older people in media coverage are often used as a tool to evoke a greater emotional response from recipients.**

## Narratives of ageing at an organisational and sector level

Media stakeholders suggest that ageing is predominantly used interchangeably with older people, understanding it as a stage of life rather than as a process. They highlight the media's limited understanding of 'old people' as anyone over 55 or 60, which means that the sector classifies a broad age-range into one homogenous category. Stakeholders identify a lack of accurate representations in the media industry of the diversity of experiences relating to ageing. They often describe coverage and images of older people in the media as generalised and simplistic. These tend to be

biased portrayals of older people in a binary manner, either showing them as ill, lonely, vulnerable and declining or as extremely healthy, happy, independent and looking younger than their age.

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**“The problem with ageing is that you lump everyone together from the age of 60 on. [...] The conventional envelopes are vulnerability or poverty or something extraordinary like jumping out of an aeroplane at the age of 80. It’s hard to define what a genuine and interesting ageing story is or should be.”**

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**Anonymous, Media stakeholder**

While media stakeholders recognise the misrepresentation of older people in the sector, they question what an authentic, realistic whilst simultaneously interesting ageing story would look like. Similar to when government sector stakeholders suggest that focusing on problems is innate to policymaking, media stakeholders highlight that making generalisations and stereotypes is a natural characteristic of the media industry.

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**“Newspapers are looking to convey an impression very quickly, so if you are writing about old people, and it's a touchy-feely story, then the grey-haired old couple walking arm in arm up the street might well be a, sort of, image that comes to mind. Similarly, if you were writing about a cold snap coming up, then lonely old person wrapped in a blanket might well be the sort of image that comes to mind.”**

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**Matt Tee, Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), Media stakeholder**

### **Perceptions of ageing and demographic change**

All stakeholders from the media industry say that it is important to care about demographic change, primarily due to the economic and social transformations they associate with it. Whilst their language may not be as nuanced in thinking about particular policies as that employed by government sector stakeholders, their discussions of demographic changes centre around the importance of planning ahead and preparing for changing social and economic needs.

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**“I think it’s very important to care about demographic change in England, not least because of the economic consequences. I think if you have a growing proportion of the population who are no longer economically active, that has significant implications for the country.”**

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**Matt Tee, Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), Media stakeholder**

### **Current state and likeliness of change**

Talking about ageing and older people interchangeably, stakeholders suggest that images and stories of older people are becoming more widespread. They recognise a slow shift towards a less homogenous representation of older people as a single age group in the media. However, they stress that there is still significant room for improvement, as most of the coverage remains biased towards stereotypes.

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**“I think we’re probably better at representing a spread of ages on our pages without specifically talking about ageing, so, I think that’s a positive. It’s become normalized to see a face older than 50, I suppose, without it being an issue.”**

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**Anonymous, Media stakeholder**

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**“We need to bust down that stereotype lens and just have much more variety so that people can see different ways of being older.”**

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**Carl Honore, Writer and Author of *Bolder*, Media stakeholder**

Another aspect related to stereotypes that stakeholders describe as problematic, is featuring stories focused on intergenerational conflict that pits stereotypes of younger and older people against each other. This is predominantly seen in two contexts. Firstly, in media coverage of the challenges associated with an ageing population, which positions the growing number of older people in society as a burden which younger citizens will end up shouldering. Secondly, by creating generalised comparisons of the wealth of older people and the struggles of young adults.

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“It’s not as simple as ‘All retirees are rich’ and ‘All young people are struggling’ and if you pit them against each other you’re distracting attention from really what is causing the hardship. Because we’re not doing it to each other we are impacted by politics and social pressure’s outsiders, and that’s where attention needs to be focused.”

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**Anonymous, Media stakeholder**

One media stakeholder highlights the difference between traditional mediums and new platforms such as social media. He suggests that while the traditional and dominant media narrative remains stereotypical, social media has the potential to offer a platform for people to share their individual experiences of ageing. He says this may challenge mainstream stereotypes, identifying this as a potential starting point for change.

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“There’s part of social media which is hugely ageist but there’s another part which gives people a platform to say, this is what thirty-something looks like to me, this is what forty-something, fifty-something, eighty-something and people are up there completely smashing all the stereotypes every day, uploading millions of videos and photos that are completely redefining what age can be at every stage.”

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**Carl Honore, Writer and Author of Bolder, Media stakeholder**

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## **Dominant social media discourse**

**This section analyses the top 10 words and phrases, top 20 adjectives and top 20 topics appearing in social media sources, in association with ageing related search terms and compared to standard English.**

### **Reference texts:**

- The social media dataset consists of 10,783,461 words were analysed across a mosaic of multiple social media platforms: Twitter, blogs, forums, as well as public Facebook posts, Instagram posts and YouTube comments (in descending order in terms of their proportion of the dataset). A range of forums were used to create a good balance between different ages and genders including Reddit; studentroom; Mumsnet; Pistonheads; Tractorsforum; Over 50s forum; Gransnet; Moneysavingexpert forum. Savanta ComRes used defined search terms (see Figure 6) to collect social media posts that were relevant to ageing over the past 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019).
- The social media sources were compared to a standard English text, comprised of the British National Corpus.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

Top 10 words and phrases most likely to appear in social media posts about ageing					
The following words are significantly more prevalent in social media sources compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency - social media	Frequency % of total word count - social media (n= 10,783,461)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
life	3x	14608	0.1355%	434	0.0448%
family	4x	14503	0.1345%	310	0.0320%
home	3x	12055	0.1118%	424	0.0438%
care	7x	11653	0.1081%	142	0.0147%
love	4x	9206	0.0854%	201	0.0208%
skin	11x	5477	0.0508%	44	0.0045%
mum	5x	5006	0.0464%	84	0.0087%
loved	8x	4434	0.0411%	47	0.0049%
baby	6x	4355	0.0404%	62	0.0064%
dementia	119x	2642	0.0245%	2	0.0002%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, social media) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

**Social media posts related to ageing predominantly reflect the public life of older people in terms of their relationships with family and friends. The most prevalent language related to ageing<sup>12</sup>, compared to standard English, falls into two dominant themes: stories about health and social care as well as older people and relatives sharing stories about family life.**

The theme of healthcare emerges in social media with the frequent use of words such as ‘dementia’, ‘care’ and ‘life’. Discourse used on social media discusses older people in a variety of ways, with the public sharing positive and negative stories about care homes, ill-health and end of life care. Social media also features political debates about the social care crisis and the lack of available funding for good quality healthcare. Mentions of ‘skin’ are largely in relation to skincare products (designed to give you better, healthier, more radiant, ‘younger-looking’ skin, or to prevent ‘wrinkly skin’), sun cream to protect ‘ageing skin’ from ‘premature ageing’, as well as pharmaceutical research and advice on how to lead a healthy life.

<sup>12</sup> Words and phrases were excluded if: they featured in our search terms for data collection (e.g. ‘grandad’, ‘nan’) or were irrelevant (e.g. ‘my’, ‘I’m’, ‘it’s’).

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**“Played a Ukulele gig today for a bunch of lovely young at heart and swinging elderly folk at a local care home. Everyone had a good time.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

Dominant language used on social media posts related to ageing reveals a focus on family life. This theme contains commonly used words such as ‘loved’, ‘family’, ‘love’, ‘life’, ‘home’, ‘baby’<sup>13</sup> and ‘mum’. Looking at the context in which these words are mentioned on social media, topics emerge including birthdays, religious occasions, holidays as well as memories and commemorations to the lives of loved ones who have passed away. Older people tend to principally be represented on social media by their relationship with other family members and their role in offering advice, care, love and generosity.

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**“Miss my Nan so much... the way she loved me was out of this world.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

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13 However, ‘baby’ is also mentioned on social media in discussions about demographic change, intergenerational fairness and conflict, as part of the phrase ‘baby boomers’.

## Top 20 adjectives and topics most likely to appear in social media discourse (n=10,783,461 words) when compared to standard English

Please note, when reporting these figures, we recommend that you use the below wording to ensure the data is communicated clearly:

‘Out of the 10.8 million words analysed from social media sources referring to ageing from September 2018 to August 2019, the most frequently occurring adjective was ‘old’ which was mentioned 23,195 times, when compared to standard English texts (the British National Corpus).’

Top 20 adjectives most likely to appear in social media discourse					
The following adjectives are significantly more prevalent in social media discourse compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency – social media	Frequency % of total word count – social media (n=10,783,461 words)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
old	5x	28195	0.2615%	514	0.0531%
elderly	80x	25091	0.2327%	28	0.0029%
older	23x	18562	0.1721%	74	0.0076%
old man/ the old man	1159x	15771	0.1351%	22	0.0023%
older people	402x	9234	0.0778%	2	0.0002%
great	2x	8853	0.0821%	417	0.0431%
young	2x	8243	0.0764%	329	0.0340%
ageing/aging	147x	5655	0.0524%	9	0.0009%
happy	3x	4929	0.0457%	144	0.0149%
old people	341x	3909	0.0329%	1	0.0001%
mental health	256x	2897	0.0256%	2	0.0002%
lovely	5x	2780	0.0258%	55	0.0057%
aged	6x	2687	0.0249%	40	0.0041%
later life	220x	2520	0.0212%	1	0.0001%
vulnerable	13x	2308	0.0214%	16	0.0017%
amazing	19x	2281	0.0212%	11	0.0011%
old men	93x	2138	0.0180%	2	0.0002%
proud	7x	2027	0.0188%	26	0.0027%
last year	14x	1720	0.0145%	11	0.0011%
young people	69x	1580	0.0133%	2	0.0002%

Relative difference of each adjective is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the adjective in one source (in this case, social media sources) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

## Media narratives on ageing

Top 20 topics most likely to appear in social media discourse (n=10,783,461 words)						
The following topics are significantly more prevalent in social media discourse compared to standard English:	Frequency	Example word 1 (most frequently occurring word in this topic)	Example word 2	Example word 3	Example word 4	Example word 5
Kin	187244	family	grandad	nan	grandmother	grandma
Time: Period	115588	years	day	year	days	week
Time: Older age	100800	old	pensioner	elderly	adults	older
People	82032	people	children	person	child	kids
Helping	78202	help	care	support	service	services
Evaluation: Good	62216	good	love	great	well	loved
Disease	38187	dementia	patients	disabled	cancer	sick
Residence	35454	home	live	living	homes	residents
Medicines and medical treatment	35299	hospital	treatment	medical	doctor	healthcare
Dead	27915	died	death	funeral	dead	killed
People: Female	25902	women	woman	girl	lady	girls
Time: Old, new and young; age	22415	age	aging	aged	one	ageism
Alive	18992	life	lives	live	alive	life's
Crime	12992	crime	guilty	stolen	fraud	crimes
Unemployed	9681	retirement	retired	retire	retiring	unemployed
Time: New and young	9299	baby	younger	babies	toddler	baby's
Informal/friendly	8192	lovely	nice	friendly	accessible	humanity
Health and disease	6977	health	mental health	diarrhoea	infected	influenza
Mental actions and processes	5046	memory	memories	mental	mentally	dream
Light	3986	light	lights	sunshine	UV	shine

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## Social media discourse compared to online news

This section analyses the topics, phrases, words and emotions appearing in social media compared to discourse in online news articles, in association with ageing related search terms.

### Reference texts:

- The social media dataset consists of 10,783,461 words were analysed across a mosaic of multiple social media platforms: Twitter, blogs, forums, as well as public Facebook posts, Instagram posts and YouTube comments (in descending order in terms of their proportion of the dataset). A range of forums were used to create a good balance between different ages and genders including Reddit; studentroom; Mumsnet; Pistonheads; Tractorsforum; Over 50s forum; Gransnet; Moneysavingexpert forum. Savanta ComRes used defined search terms (see Figure 6) to collect social media posts that were relevant to ageing over the past 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019).
- The social media sources were compared to 6,586,317 words from online news sources. Savanta ComRes used NetBase, an artificial intelligence powered social analytics platform, to gain access to full articles of all publicly available online UK media sources, including a combination of local and national media, print and online (both broadsheets and tabloids). We searched for articles related to ageing and/or older people published over the last 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019) using defined search terms (see Figure 6) and then randomly selected a 25% sample of the online media dataset – controlling for key characteristics - and removed any duplicates.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

**Context:** Social media discourse exhibits certain characteristics resulting from specific behaviours across social media which should be kept in mind when reading this section of the report.

Generally, social media tends to use an informal writing style, with people's opinions and beliefs more openly expressed than in online news, since social media exists for online interaction between individuals, rather than from a news outlet directed to consumers of that news source. Social media is also not as heavily reviewed, edited or censored as online news tends to be. Thus, the language used on social media tends to be more like day-to-day speech, conversational, colloquial, and can therefore also be more overtly offensive. In addition, people can also use social media to market themselves, often with controversial or out-spoken individuals gaining a large number of followers. In this sense, the language used on social media can be referred to as 'multi-modal' as it exists in a unique space between written and spoken modes, without neatly falling into either one or the other.

Furthermore, as a result of algorithms that choose content based on previous online behaviour, social media can create bubbles or 'echo chambers' of certain beliefs, politics and ideologies. The same applies to online news as well. This may influence the audience that the writer has in mind when writing a 280-character tweet, or indeed a news article.

### **Key differences:**

Compared to online news articles, social media sources featuring ageing are:

- 13x more likely to discuss older people, politics and voting behaviours (e.g. 'voted leave');
- 8x more likely to discuss ageing in association with mental and physical ability (e.g. 'senile');
- 4.5x more likely to discuss ageing, retirement plans and pensions (e.g. 'retire early');
- 8x more likely to use highly descriptive adjectives for older men and women (e.g. 'old crone');
- 8.5x more likely to use somewhat patronising elderspeak (e.g. 'sweetie'); and
- 10.5x more likely to use terms referring to older people's family roles (e.g. 'grandma').

## Discussions about older people and politics are 13x more prevalent on social media sources related to ageing than in online news sources.

Politics and representations of older people - social media					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - social media	Frequency % of total wordcount - social media	Frequency - online news	Frequency % of total wordcount - online news (n=6,586,317)
<b>Words</b>					
EU	3x	2180	0.0202%	446	0.00677%
Brexit	2x	2247	0.0208%	685	0.01040%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Magic grandpa	49x	560	0.0047%	7	0.00010%
Leave voters	43x	70	0.0006%	1	0.00001%
Voted remain	14x	91	0.0008%	4	0.00006%
Right wing	11x	108	0.0009%	6	0.00008%
Tory party	6.5x	114	0.0010%	11	0.00015%
Voted leave	5.5x	169	0.0014%	19	0.00026%
Working class	4x	229	0.0019%	35	0.00048%
<b>Topics</b>					
Selfish	1.5x	2077	0.0193%	749	0.01140%
Politics	1.5x	19044	0.1766%	8208	0.12462%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, social media) by the other source (in this case, online news).

Older people are represented in a number of ways across social media. Some sources classify older people as ‘middle class’ (1.5x), ‘right wing’ (x11) and whose political allegiance sits with the ‘tory party’ (x6.5). On social media, the ‘working class’ (x4) are largely listed as a deprived group alongside older people. However, there are also instances where older people are referred to as ‘working class’. These include: ‘vot[ing] remain’ (x14); voting Conservative or UKIP (i.e. older people who are either middle class or working class are both referred to as Conservative voters); lack of job opportunities and insecurity, financial instability (e.g. paying the bills and heating their property); issues of racism, sexism and homophobia; as well as general stories of people’s working class grandparents. Whilst these varying political representations of older people could indicate their diverse

opinions and beliefs, the sources themselves predominantly generalise and stereotype the views of older people as a homogenous group.

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**“You can have right wing views and totally abhor racism, as I do. SOME older people develop right wings views after decades of disappointment under left wing governments. I give you #Labour today!”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

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**“The amount of working class people who have voted UKIP is amazing, my auntie who is wheelchair bound lives in a house converted by a Labour council on benefits and voted Tory.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

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**“My grandmother rode a motorbike in 1924 and owned and ran her own business too. She was a devout working class Baptist but had no time for the Suffragettes..”**

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**Facebook comment, Social media, Sept 2018**

Intergenerational fairness and conflict appear in several instances on social media posts relating to politics and older people. Some sources on social media refer to the conflict between older people who were more likely to be ‘leave voters’ (x4.3) in the EU Referendum, and younger people who ‘voted remain’ in higher numbers. Selfishness is discussed as a topic which is 1.5x more likely to occur in social media sources than in online news articles, and is predominantly referred to by those who argue that younger people have a greater stake in the future of the UK’s relationship with the EU than older people. Words associated with the topic ‘Selfish’ (x1.5), include ‘arrogant’, ‘bigoted’, ‘patronising’ and ‘boasts’. Some individuals challenge this stereotype of older people being ‘right-wing’ ‘leave voters’. It is worth noting that some users of social media are more likely to be outspoken, swear and use offensive language about a whole range of topics, and so it is likely that this language is not isolated to age-related extracts only.

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“Not all older people. The problem lies with the right wing, xenophobic baby boomers who overwhelmingly supported Leave. I can't stand these ‘know it all’, Daily Mail brainwashed idiots.”

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**Twitter, Social media, Dec 2018**

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“74% of hull? And? So what a load of bigoted old pensioners start harrumphing a bit. F\*\*\* them. And f\*\*\* Brexit.”

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

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“GRANDMAS of BRITAIN! Join me. MARCH to show we care for ALL our grandkids' futures. MARCH to show we are NOT selfish 'baby boomers'. MARCH to stick 2 fingers up to this Parliament! MARCH MARCH MARCH! #putittothepeople #wearesodem #oldies #PeoplesVoteMarch #StopBrexitSaveBritain”

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**Twitter, Social media, Feb 2019**

Furthermore, intergenerational conflict appears to exist in social media posts discussing the election of a Conservative government because of ‘wealthy elderly right-wing people who adore the new fascist authoritarians and their racist policies’. Intergenerational fairness also features in posts discussing differences between the current, and future, state of affairs facing younger generations (such as the quality of public services) compared to those experienced by older generations.

In addition, phrases which have the potential to stoke intergenerational conflict, such as ‘baby boomer’ (x1.5), ‘demographic changes’ (x1.5) and ‘timebomb’ (x3.5), are more frequently used on social media sources related to ageing than those in online news. Conversely, phrases such as ‘baby boomers’, ‘young people’, ‘silver tsunami’, ‘generations’ and ‘wealth’ appear to be used with similar frequency across both social media and online news. Since these similar phrases appear in low frequency across both sources, the interpretation of these phrases is indicative only.

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**“The prejudice of less than 100,000 white elderly middle class people, (0.13% of the population) has imposed a right-wing government on the country. Is this democracy in action?”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Jul 2019**

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**“So are you suggesting a cull of 25 million people to feed these unicorn ideas? I suppose you could cull the pensioners and then eliminate the pension timebomb. You really need to get realistic about issues, not emotional and delusional.”**

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**Facebook comments, Social media, Dec 2018**

Discourse on social media sources related to ageing also features discussions about older politicians. For example, Theresa May is talked about in an overwhelmingly derogatory way, using phrases such as ‘sour’, ‘old hag’, ‘evil old granny’, ‘monotonous crone’ and ‘ageing, narcissistic, bigoted woman’. Similarly, the phrase ‘magic grandpa’ (x49) also commonly features in social media (when compared to online news) predominantly when referring to Jeremy Corbyn by both fans and critics. Corbyn is sometimes described in this way on social media because of the perception of his unrealistic policies and offensive, anti-Semitic views. However, ‘magic grandpa’ signifies an alternative perception of his empathetic, caring manner as well as the wizardry in which he fought the 2017 election and engaged younger voters. Despite this dominant stereotyping of older British politicians, there are a few instances of individuals who defend them against the ageist and sexist accusations that they receive on social media.

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**“Theresa May seems to be babbling incoherently like an old woman you see shuffling around the supermarket, who randomly starts shouting at the cheese. Someone please escort the poor dear from the premises before she embarrasses herself further. #MayStatement #BrexitChaos”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Nov 2018**

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**“Magic Grandpa [Corbyn] has quite a temper on him when confronted with the truth doesn't he?!”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Aug 2019**

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**“I don't know why people think calling Corbyn a ‘Magic Grandpa’ is a bad thing. Everyone loves their Grandads, and when they can do magic tricks, it's even better. So, by that logic, Corbyn should be the most loved Grandad in the country.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

**Discourse on social media sources related to ageing is 8x more likely than online news to discuss ageing in association with mental and physical ability.**

Negative stereotypes of a decline in physical and mental ability with age are more prevalent on social media than in online news. Whilst not all instances are directly associated with descriptions of older people, words such as ‘stupid’ (x3) and ‘senile’ (x11) are commonly used to describe older people’s mental ability, whilst ‘weak’ (x1.5) and ‘frailty’ (x1.5) are used to describe the physical ability of older people. The ability of older people also tends to be mentioned with a humorous and patronising tone, or even an offensive tone; for example, with the use of ‘senile’ which is the colloquial term for dementia.

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**“Coming to visit my grandparents means teaching my nana how to use social media, and fixing her phone and computer problems, bless old people.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Dec 2018**

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**“Murderer: haha granny, your fate is sealed!  
Granny: Actually dear, it's called pâté and I'm struggling, be a dear and open it.  
Murderer: ?”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Feb 2019**

Ability - social media					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - social media	Frequency % of total wordcount - social media	Frequency - online news	Frequency % of total wordcount - online news (n=6,586,317)
<b>Words</b>					
Senile	11x	108	0.0010%	6	0.00009%
Stupid	3x	664	0.0062%	139	0.00211%
Weak	1.5x	265	0.0025%	109	0.00165%
Frailty	1.5x	220	0.0020%	88	0.00134%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Nan could	21x	104	0.0009%	3	0.00004%
Getting old man	15x	24	0.0002%	1	0.00001%
Senior moment	5.5x	174	0.0015%	19	0.00026%
Wise old	5.5x	101	0.0009%	11	0.00015%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, social media) by the other source (in this case, online news).

Associated with physical ability, is the use of language describing older people in terms of their state of health. Phrases such as ‘sick old’ (x6) appear more frequently in social media than in online news, along with more nuanced posts commenting on their older relative’s declining health and fitness.

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**“My Dutch grandmother, however, was a senile, doddering, wheelchair bound diabetes ravaged incontinent wreck by her eighties. So we’ll see. Meanwhile, I’ll continue eating local, doing CrossFit and rock climbing.”**

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**Reddit, Social media, Sept 2019**

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**“One of the saddest markers of passing time is by how much grandparents slow down. Just two-three years ago, my grandmother would take five mins to climb 40 steps, today she took close to 15 mins.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

'Nan could' is also frequently used on social media when jokingly comparing the ability of someone with the ability of their nan. This is overwhelmingly used in association with commentary about football. For example, 'my nan could do better than that / have saved that goal / scored that goal / reacted quicker / passed better'. Whilst these phrases all appear to be intended to criticise the ability of a football player, they belittle and patronise their nan's physical agility.

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**“My Nan could strike a volley better than Dylan Whyte & she's in a wheelchair.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Dec 2018**

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**“My Nan could keep a clean sheet against this Chelsea team and she's been dead 10yrs.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Aug 2019**

Furthermore, phrases such as 'senior moment' (x5.5) and 'I'm getting old man' (x14.5) are used by individuals to criticise their own physical and/or mental ability, often apologising for mistakes or things they have forgotten. Again, this is another example of a response to, or enactment of, 'stereotype embodiment theory' in which stereotypes of ageing and older age are internalised by individuals (Levy, 2009).

This language is not unique to social media, however, with some online broadsheet articles related to ageing also discussing the process of ageing as a decline. These articles describe ageing as a deteriorating condition in which we have the ability to influence and determine how we age.

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**“However, if we intervene early, we can slow the decline. It's always easier to protect a healthy brain than to try to repair damage once it is extensive... on average, non-genetic factors are more important than genetics in determining how well and long we live, suggesting that we have more control than we realise over remaining healthy as we get older. Compelling scientific evidence points to a formula for successful ageing, in particular four habits that facilitate ageing well...”**

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**The Guardian, Broadsheet, Oct 2018**

## Media narratives on ageing

The examples mentioned above, reflect a traditional deficit narrative of ageing tied with the argument that individuals can determine the way that they age.

Notably, there are some instances on social media where individuals refer to older people as ‘wise’, with phrases such as ‘wise woman’, ‘wise old’ and ‘wise old man’ occurring 4.5x, 5.5x and 6.5x more in social media than in online news, respectively. However, these instances appear to be less frequent than the more negative ones mentioned above. Notably, the extent to which ‘wise’ would be considered a positive thing is context dependent.

### Discourse about pensions and retirement feature 4.5x more frequently on social media sources related to ageing, particularly on online forums, than in online news.

Pensions and retirement - social media					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - social media	Frequency % of total wordcount - social media	Frequency - online news	Frequency % of total wordcount - online news (n=6,586,317)
<b>Words</b>					
Pension	2.5x	5788	0.0537%	1561	0.0237%
Retirement	1.5x	4091	0.0379%	1573	0.0239%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Retire early	11.5x	96	0.0008%	5	0.0001%
Lump sum	6.5x	409	0.0035%	39	0.0005%
Personal pension	9x	87	0.0007%	6	0.0001%
Private pensions	6x	97	0.0008%	10	0.0001%
Retirement age	3.5x	219	0.0018%	37	0.0005%
Pension pot	3x	230	0.0019%	50	0.0007%
Pension contributions	3x	143	0.0012%	27	0.0004%
State pension	1.3x	1185	0.0100%	598	0.0083%
<b>Topics</b>					
Money and pay	1.3x	42036	0.3898%	21055	0.3197%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, social media) by the other source (in this case, online news).

Discussions about financial planning for later life - focusing on ‘pension[s]’ (2.5x), savings and retirement - are common on social media. Conversations on social media about these issues tend to be on forums and blogs where the public share advice on how to best fund a secure later life, in preparation for unexpected life events (e.g. a decline in physical or mental health, or a large house maintenance cost). They also share their own experiences and plans when they reach ‘retirement age’ (3.5x) or when they ‘retire early’ (11.5x). ‘Retirement age’ also features in social media posts, particularly on Twitter, in relation to the debate about the recent proposal to extend the state pension age to 75 as well as protests from WASPI women who call for compensation for women who lost out because of the equalisation of men’s and women’s state pension age.

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**“Being self-employed and NOT having a conventional pension, you really have to think about how you will support yourself post retirement age.”**

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**MoneySavingExpert.com, Social media, Feb 2019**

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**“Retirees never ask each other the question: "what do you do?" (i.e. "how do you earn a crust"). There are no social judgements and pigeonholes in the post-work world.”**

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**Forum, Social media**

Social media appears is also used as a forum for calling out ageist language, with the word ‘ageist’ featuring 9.5x more frequently on social media than in online news. This finding reflects what was found in the literature review, where social media is platform for challenging stereotypes as well as redefining age and ageing.

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**“Keep your ageist sh\*tte to yourself. Statistics will tell you that older people are safer drivers than young people, they have fewer accidents. Maybe not let people drive until they are 30?”**

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**Mumsnet, Social media, Mar 2019**

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“That's rather ageist. I'm mid-fifties and have no problem chatting to people of all ages on here.”

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**Forum, Social media, Sept 2019**

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“Ah an ageist clown. I've got more news for you; people did clever stuff before software. Like inventing the hardware that gave rise to it. You're basically doing the same job as 19th c. tally clerks made redundant by calculating machines.”

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

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“Without sounding like I'm trying to score some woke points, I'm not the only one who finds the ‘magic grandpa’ moniker not just dull, but also a tad ageist?”

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**Twitter, Social media, Dec 2018**

**Language found in social media posts describing older people is 8x more likely to be colloquial and offensive than the language found in online news media.<sup>14</sup>**

Descriptive adjectives using the word 'old' - 8x more likely in social media					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - social media	Frequency % of total wordcount - social media	Frequency - online news	Frequency % of total wordcount - online news (n=6,586,317)
<b>Grammar</b>					
General adjective	1.1x	801578	7.4334%	479711	7.28345%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Wee granny	22.5x	73	0.0006%	2	0.00003%
Sad old	17x	167	0.0014%	6	0.00008%
Old fart	13x	872	0.0074%	41	0.00057%
Old hag	12x	399	0.0034%	20	0.00028%
Old codger	11.5x	169	0.0014%	9	0.00012%
Old granny	11x	128	0.0011%	7	0.00010%
Bitter old	9.5x	172	0.0014%	11	0.00015%
Old man	6x	13178	0.1111%	1356	0.01870%
Old biddy	5.5x	61	0.0005%	7	0.00010%
Dirty old man	5x	189	0.0016%	23	0.00032%
Old crone	4.5x	66	0.0006%	9	0.00012%
Old woman	3.5x	1654	0.0139%	308	0.00425%
Grumpy old man	3.5x	234	0.0020%	39	0.00054%
Grumpy old	3x	410	0.0035%	80	0.00110%
Little old lady	3x	288	0.0024%	60	0.00083%
Old enough	2.5x	198	0.0017%	53	0.00073%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, social media) by the other source (in this case, online news).

'Bitter old hag' has been excluded from the results due the small sample size of 12 instances of this word in social media sources.

<sup>14</sup> If a feature (e.g. word, phrase or topic) does not appear at all in the comparator source, but does appear in the primary source, it is said to occur infinitely ( $\infty$ ) more in the primary source than in the comparator source.

Whilst ‘old woman’ and ‘old man’ are used to refer to the age of an individual, as well as to refer to one’s father (i.e. ‘my old man’), these terms often appear alongside highly descriptive, and offensive, adjectives. These include ‘sad old’ (17x), ‘bitter old’ (9.5x), ‘lonely old’ (4.5x) and ‘grumpy old’ (3x) which all arise more frequently in social media than in online news. This language depicts various negative emotional states that are stereotypically associated with older people – depressed, grouchy and stubborn.

There are clear gender differences in the adjectives and derogatory slang used on social media to describe older women compared to older men. Phrases such as ‘old hag’ (12x) and ‘old crone’ (4.5x) represent female battle-axe archetypes who are often portrayed as ugly, unpleasant and malicious witches in fairy-tale stories. In addition, phrases such as ‘little old lady’ (3x) and ‘wee granny’ (22.5x) characterise a dainty, frail and feeble-minded older woman. The use of the phrase ‘old biddy’ (x5.5) portrays an older woman who is silly, nosy, annoying or unpleasant.

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**“What does this hatchet-faced old crone know? Stick to writing bulls\*\*t in that laughable comic the Guardian.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Aug 2019**

In comparison, different adjectives are used on social media to describe older men. The use of the phrases ‘grumpy old man’, ‘bitter old’ and ‘old fart’ on social media portray older men as uninteresting, stupid, irritable and/or unhappy. The use of the phrases ‘dirty old man’ and ‘sick old’ appear to be closely linked with associations of an older man who is sexist, racist, homophobic etc.; who holds right-wing or old-fashioned ‘backward’ views; who is a creepy ‘paedophile’; or someone who is generally a danger to society. ‘Old codger’ is also 11.5x more likely to be mentioned in social media than online news, with this phrase also being associated with clumsiness but also hostility and aggression. Whilst these adjectives are used on social media to describe older women, they are much more likely to be used in association with men than women.

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**“I belong to a family of socialists in South Wales stretching back to the 1920s, grandparents were in the ILP, we're not all daily mail reading old farts!”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Dec 2018**

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“Awh thanks pal, love it. Are you some dirty old man hiding behind your profile? Too scared to show the real you?”

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**Twitter, Social media, Aug 2019**

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“An old codger crashed in the back of my car a while back. Got out to take details, the chap could hardly walk two yards, was deaf and had glassy milky eyes. Shouldn't be on the road. Older people need to be truthful with and take responsibility for themselves and others.”

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**Twitter, Social media, Aug 2019**

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“Sour bitter old woman slags of a much younger and clearly more intelligent girl [referring to Julia Hartley-Brewer criticising Greta Thunberg]”

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**Twitter, Social media, Aug 2019**

All of these examples of adjectives describing older men and women appear to have strong associations with gender. The examples demonstrate stereotyping older people based on their characteristics, personalities and behaviours, often representing them in a dehumanising way and as ‘other’.

Phrases such as ‘old people’ (5x), ‘old men’ (5.5x), ‘old women’ (5.5x) and ‘old ladies’ (2.5x) are also more likely to occur in social media than in online news. Examples including ‘sad old men’, ‘weird old men’ and ‘fat old men’ appear in social media sources.

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“Why are all fashion designers ugly weird old men?”

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**Twitter, Social media, Feb 2019**

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“Why do weird old men think it’s ok to drive past you and stare you down when you have shorts on, seriously eyes on the road pls.”

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**Twitter, Social media, Sept 2018**

Notably, there are examples in the social media sources where individuals identify themselves using the aforementioned phrases. The examples often occur in the first person and use a joke style, self-deprecating tone in which they highlight signs of ageing, such as ill-health and tiredness. This type of humour can be considered a response to, or enactment of, 'stereotype embodiment theory' in which stereotypes of ageing and older age are internalised by individuals (Levy, 2009).

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**“I guess I don't do too bad for an old codger.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Jan 2019**

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**“Literally just got rid of a cough last week I'm always ill too and that's just because my immune system is absolutely f\*\*\*\*\*!  
Whoop for being a sick old woman.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Oct 2019**

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**“Have eaten, and sat quietly, but I still think I need to go & lie down for a bit. Digestion just seems to be easier when I'm horizontal... Either that, or I'm turning into a little old lady who needs her afternoon nap!”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Jun 2019**

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**“Happy birthday dear Amy lots of love from the old hag xx”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Aug 2019**

**Discourse on social media sources related to ageing is 8.5x more likely than online news to use patronising language (e.g. ‘elderspeak’), which comes across as well-intentioned but ultimately condescending and infantilising.**

Patronising language - social media					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - social media	Frequency % of total wordcount - social media	Frequency - online news	Frequency % of total wordcount - online news (n=6,586,317)
<b>Words</b>					
Aww	26.5x	131	0.0012%	3	0.00005%
Aw	15.5x	101	0.0009%	4	0.00006%
Cutie	13.5x	22	0.0002%	1	0.00002%
Cutest	7x	155	0.0014%	14	0.00021%
Sweetie	6.5x	42	0.0004%	4	0.00006%
Bless	6x	329	0.0031%	34	0.00052%
Cute	3.5x	631	0.0059%	109	0.00165%
Pity	3x	139	0.0013%	30	0.00046%
Sweetest	2.5x	63	0.0006%	14	0.00021%
Dearest	2x	90	0.0008%	27	0.00041%
Dear	1.5x	724	0.0067%	255	0.00387%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Wee granny	22.5x	73	0.0006%	2	0.00003%
Poor pensioners	9x	45	0.0004%	3	0.00004%
Poor old	6x	164	0.0014%	17	0.00023%
Lonely old	4.5x	67	0.0006%	9	0.00012%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, social media) by the other source (in this case, online news).

Social media posts related to ageing commonly feature words including 'aww' (x26.5), 'dear' (x1.5) and 'bless' (x6) as well as superlatives which describe the appearances and behaviours of older people, such as 'sweetest' (x2.5), 'cutest' (x7) and 'dearest' (x2). There is also a gender difference in the relative frequency of 'bless her' (x12.5) and 'bless him' (x2.5) in social media with women more likely to be referred to in this way. Phrases such as 'poor pensioners' (x9), 'poor old' (x6) and 'poor elderly' (x19) are also used on social media in association with pitying older people who are in a difficult situation. However, it is important to be mindful that some instances refer to economically poor pensioners.

Whilst these sayings and phrases signal a level of sympathy towards older people, the language is highly patronising. This language used on some social media posts also appears to be associated with a perception of older people's declining physical and mental ability, which in turn gives rise to sympathetic but patronising language. This is associated with a level of high warmth and low competence contributing to emotions of pity and behaviours of passive harm, as explained by the 'stereotype content model and BIAS map'<sup>15</sup>.

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**“Bored to death of you waiting to fix my smart metre. Absolutely rubbish customer service... I pity any elderly customers who use you. Smart metres are not so smart.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Aug 2019**

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**“The little old lady where my mum works bought me Easter eggs. My heart is breaking at her cuteness. The wee soul!”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

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<sup>15</sup> Fiske, et.al. 2002, Cuddy et.al. 2005; 2007

**Terms referring to older peoples' family roles – such as 'grandad' and 'grandma' - are 10.5x more prevalent in social media posts related to ageing than in online news sources.**

Labels of kinship - social media					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - social media	Frequency % of total wordcount - social media	Frequency - online news	Frequency % of total wordcount - online news
<b>Words</b>					
Grandpa	5x	4046	0.0375%	515	0.00782%
Grandad	4.5x	13101	0.1215%	1847	0.02800%
Granny	4.5x	7943	0.0737%	1097	0.01670%
Grandma	3.5x	9778	0.0907%	1706	0.02590%
Grandparents	1.4x	1343	0.0125%	619	0.00940%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Grandad always	24.5x	80	0.0007%	2	0.00003%
Nan could	21x	104	0.0009%	3	0.00004%
RIP grandad	18.5x	30	0.0003%	1	0.00001%
Nan used	14.5x	215	0.0018%	9	0.00012%
Grandad used	12x	196	0.0017%	10	0.00014%
Grandma's house	10x	148	0.0013%	49	0.00068%
Nan would	8x	216	0.0018%	17	0.00023%
Grandad would	7.5x	190	0.0016%	16	0.00022%
Great grandad	6.5x	400	0.0034%	37	0.00051%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, social media) by the other source (in this case, online news).

'RIP nan' has been excluded from the results due the small sample size of 15 instances of this word in social media sources.

Posts on social media containing words of kinship (e.g. nan or grandad) are often linked to admiration and appreciation. Messages, anecdotes, stories and memories are shared about grandparents largely from the point of view of grandchildren. Language used is largely positive and warm, admiring grandparents for their generosity, compassion and caring nature and using words such as ‘cutest’, ‘special’ and ‘angel’. Phrases such as ‘rip grandad’, ‘nan always’, ‘grandad would’, and ‘nan used [to]’ are 18.5x, 15.5x, 7.5x and 14.5x more likely to appear in social media than in online news, respectively. These phrases appear in the context of references to how grandparents would act or what grandparents would say in a situation - past or present. This perhaps indicates the value placed on grandparents as important family members and involved in shaping beliefs and identity.

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**“Come to nans for one night and she’s sending me home w/ a new blender, bread maker, steamer, two bottles of Prosecco and a new dinner set. Grandparents are effin brilliant ya know #AdultingViaMyNan”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

Family events such as birthdays, holidays, religious occasions and other festivities often feature in these messages, providing a point of intergenerational contact. This is not to say that such discussions do not occur in online news, with words like ‘celebrate’, ‘Christmas’, ‘travel’ and ‘culture’ occurring with similar frequency across both social media and news. Other commonly occurring heartfelt posts on social media include advice to make the most of opportunities with your grandparents and ‘cherish them while you can.’

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**“Loved visiting my grandparents every summer holidays growing up, still regularly go back to visit - my grandad used to clean the beach shelters and was very proud of it.”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

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**“#Deepavali reminds me of my grandparents. Their way of celebrating, the detail, individuality and style of showing affection. We don't have the class or closeness of their time.. And we have drifted to the lows of listening to Lutyens idiots on how to celebrate. #diwali”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Nov 2018**

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**“Put off telling my grandparents about me being gay for the longest time because my grandma is pretty religious and we were worried about her reaction. . . . my dad told her about me and Leah today and [image of a positive response from her Grandma].”**

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**Twitter, Social media, Apr 2019**

More negative topics also occur in social media posts about grandparents. This includes the struggles grandparents are facing, or have faced, with health (dementia, cancer, care), war (Holocaust), technology (using a mobile, tablet, social media) and finances (pensions, work). Furthermore, there are also jokes made to the detriment of grandparents, largely about fashion, style, haircuts and ability – for example their inability to use technology.

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## **Dominant online news discourse**

**This section analyses the top 10 words and phrases, top 20 adjectives and top 20 topics appearing in online news sources, in association with ageing related search terms and compared to standard English.**

### **Reference texts:**

- The online news dataset consists of 6,586,317 words from online news sources Savanta ComRes used NetBase, an artificial intelligence powered social analytics platform, to gain access to full articles of all publicly available online UK media sources, including a combination of local and national media, print and online (both broadsheets and tabloids). We searched for articles related to ageing and/or older people published over the last 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019) using defined search terms (see Figure 6) and then randomly selected a 25% sample of the online media dataset – controlling for key characteristics - and removed duplicates.
- The online news sources were compared to a standard English text, comprised of the British National Corpus.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

Top 10 words and phrases most likely to appear in online news articles related to ageing					
The following words are significantly more prevalent in online news sources compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency - online news	Frequency % of total word count - online news (n=6,586,317)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
Home	4x	11032	0.1675%	424	0.0438%
Family	5x	10842	0.1646%	310	0.0320%
Care	11x	10267	0.1559%	142	0.0147%
Life	3x	8286	0.1258%	434	0.0448%
Police	6x	7084	0.1076%	173	0.0179%
Health	7x	4549	0.0691%	96	0.0099%
Residents	16x	4069	0.0618%	38	0.0039%
Hospital	6x	3832	0.0582%	99	0.0102%
Dementia	194x	2637	0.0400%	2	0.0002%
Vulnerable	24x	2604	0.0395%	16	0.0017%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online news) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

Discourse used in online news articles related to ageing or older people predominantly reflect negative stories rather than positive ones. This perhaps indicates a lack of diverse representations of older people and a reliance on age-old stereotypes, particularly among tabloid newspapers. The most prevalent language related to ageing, compared to standard English, fall into three, interrelated themes: ageing and a decline in health, the portrayal of older people as vulnerable, and stories about daily life.

**Health and disease** are a dominant theme in online news articles related to ageing, featuring commonly used words such as ‘dementia’, ‘health’, ‘hospital’ and ‘life’. Looking at the context in online news sources in which these words appear, older people are referred to in stories about suffering from chronic and acute illnesses (e.g. dementia, cancer, heart attacks), near-death experiences, as well as failures in health services. Since the term ‘dementia’ is so frequently used, it may be acting as a mental shortcut for a whole host of associations, feelings and images – contributing to the frame of mental decline and dependency with older age.

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**“A pensioner was rushed to hospital this morning following an incident on Princes Street.”**

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**Edinburgh News, Online news, Sep 2018**

The theme of vulnerability arises based on frequent use of words such as ‘vulnerable’, ‘care’, ‘home’, ‘health’, ‘Police’ and ‘life’. Articles using these words feature complaints from older ‘residents’ about their local area (anti-social behaviour, housing and transport developments); violent attacks, scams and crimes against victimised older people; and stories about mistreatment of older people in care homes and the ‘social care crisis’. This sometimes appears to portray older people as grouchy (complaining about the activities of others) as well as frail, feeble-minded victims who are outwitted by criminals.

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**“Heartless liar’ stole elderly dementia sufferers’ home from them and used cash for a hair transplant.”**

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**Manchester Evening News, Online news, Sep 2018**

Finally, the words ‘residents’, ‘family’, ‘home’ and ‘life’ form the third theme of daily life and life stories. These words often feature in individuals’ stories about family and events in the community involving older people. However, these appear to be outweighed by the negative stories mentioned above which centre on the vulnerability of older people and the impact that this has on their family and friends.

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**“Worthing High School hosted a three-course dinner for older residents.”**

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**Worthing Herald, Online news, Dec 2018**

## Top 20 adjectives and topics most likely to appear in online news discourse (n= 6,586,317 words) when compared to standard English

Please note, when reporting these figures, we recommend that you use the below wording to ensure the data is communicated clearly:

‘Out of the 6.5 million words analysed from online news sources referring to ageing from September 2018 to August 2019, the adjective ‘vulnerable’ was mentioned 2,604 times, when compared to standard English texts (the British National Corpus).’

Top 20 adjectives most likely to appear in online news discourse <sup>16</sup>					
The following adjectives are significantly more prevalent in news discourse compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency – online news	Frequency % of total word count – online news (n=6,586,317 words)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
elderly	86x	16467	0.2500%	28	0.0029%
older	21x	10664	0.1619%	74	0.0076%
older people	430x	6034	0.0832%	2	0.0002%
young	2x	4772	0.0725%	329	0.0340%
local	2x	4482	0.0681%	306	0.0316%
community	2x	4085	0.0620%	257	0.0265%
social	3x	3788	0.0575%	184	0.0190%
vulnerable	24x	2604	0.0395%	16	0.0017%
senior	4x	2431	0.0369%	94	0.0097%
mental health	336x	2324	0.0335%	2	0.0002%
ageing/ aging	92x	2199	0.0334%	9	0.0009%
last year	25x	1915	0.0264%	11	0.0011%
later life	222x	1559	0.0215%	1	0.0001%
disabled	8x	1381	0.0210%	27	0.0028%
old man	193x	1356	0.0187%	1	0.0001%
aged	5x	1323	0.0201%	40	0.0041%
missing	7x	1213	0.0184%	26	0.0027%
young people	78x	1096	0.0151%	2	0.0002%
elderly man	76x	1066	0.0147%	2	0.0002%
proud	6x	1037	0.0157%	26	0.0027%

Relative difference of each adjective is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the adjective in one source (in this case, online news sources) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

<sup>16</sup> Words inherent to online news discourse were removed e.g. ‘daily’ and ‘online’.

Top 20 topics most likely to appear in online news discourse (n=6,586,317 words) <sup>17</sup>						
The following topics are significantly more prevalent in online news discourse compared to standard English:	Frequency	Example word 1 (most frequently occurring word in this topic)	Example word 2	Example word 3	Example word 4	Example word 5
Personal names	149048	Harry	senior	John	Kate	David
Kin	84367	family	grandmother	grandfather	mother	father
Time: Old	61587	elderly	older	old	pensioner	age
Helping	61120	care	help	support	service	services
People	51182	people	children	person	child	population
Health and disease	37780	dementia	patients	cancer	disabled	injuries
Law and order	36047	police	court	jailed	arrested	prison
Knowledgeable	32819	news	know	information	experience	known
Medicines and medical treatment	32518	hospital	treatment	medical	healthcare	drugs
Residence	31657	home	residents	living	homes	live
Vehicles and transport on land	30408	car	road	driver	driving	street
Dead	20567	died	death	killed	dead	murder
Violent/Angry	17707	hit	attack	abuse	attacked	force
People: Female	17113	woman	women	Ms.	girl	lady
Crime	16038	crime	guilty	stolen	fraud	burglary
Damaging and destroying	13944	victim	victims	crash	collision	damage
Alive	11428	life	lives	live	alive	life's
Time: New and young	6105	baby	younger	babies	toddler	baby's
Weak	3797	vulnerable	frail	weak	vulnerability	frailty
Mental actions and processes	2652	memory	memories	mental	mentally	IQ

<sup>17</sup> Note: topics inherent to online news discourse have been excluded, such as communication (said, told, says, story), media (tv, video, film, footage, cctv) and social media mentions (@dailymailuk, @metcc, @kensingtonroyal).

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## Online news discourse compared to social media

**This section analyses the prominent topics, phrases, words and emotions appearing in online news articles compared to discourse in social media, in association with ageing related search terms.**

### Reference texts:

- The online news dataset consists of 6,586,317 words. Savanta ComRes used NetBase, an artificial intelligence powered social analytics platform, to gain access to full articles of all publicly available online UK media sources, including a combination of local and national media, print and online (both broadsheets and tabloids). We searched for articles related to ageing and/or older people published over the last 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019) using defined search terms (see Figure 6) and then randomly selected a 25% sample of the online media dataset – controlling for key characteristics - and removed any duplicates.
- The online news sources were compared to social media, consisting of 10,783,461 words sourced from a mosaic of multiple social media platforms: Twitter, blogs, forums, as well as public Facebook posts, Instagram posts and YouTube comments (in descending order in terms of their proportion of the dataset). A range of forums were used to create a good balance between different ages and genders including Reddit; studentroom; Mumsnet; Pistonheads; Tractorsforum; Over 50s forum; Gransnet; Moneysavingexpert forum. Savanta ComRes used defined search terms (see Figure 6) to collect social media posts that were relevant to ageing over the past 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019).
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

**Context:** Specific characteristics of the discourse used in online news media, which should be considered when reading this section.

Online news is generally written using a more considered and formal style than social media and is written with the demographic make-up in mind of the news outlet’s readership, including their age, gender, social grade and political persuasion. It also features quotes from various spokespeople, outside of the publication itself, who may or may not have written and edited the quotations themselves. This can give rise to a large range of voices and points of view across different online sources, and even within the same article.

**Key differences:**

Compared to social media, online news articles featuring ageing are:

- 3x more likely to feature stories where older people are victimised (e.g. ‘elderly victim’);
- 2.5x more likely to describe older people as ‘vulnerable’; and
- 2x more likely to use more formal terms, which are more widely accepted as being more neutral, when referring to older people (e.g. ‘elderly people’, ‘older people’).

**Stories where vulnerable older people are the victim are 3x more frequent in online news articles related to ageing than in social media.**

Stories of older people involving violence and aggression, or crime are 1.3x and 2x more likely to be featured on online news than on social media, respectively. Older people are more commonly featured as passive subjects of hate, crime, and accidents in online news, using phrases such as ‘pensioner dies’ or ‘elderly victims’ that may evoke fear, shock or pity among readers.

While both online tabloids and online broadsheets commonly frame older people as victims, there are some differences between the two sources of online news. Online tabloids are 2x as likely as online broadsheets to focus on topics such as ‘law and order’, ‘violent/angry’, ‘fear/shock’ than broadsheets, whilst also more frequently using words such as ‘victim’ (2.5x) in the context of talking about older people. Tabloids also often use words such as ‘grandfather’ to describe victims, perhaps to trigger a more emotional reaction from readers by using a familial term.

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**“...the man on the bench stood up and attacked the grandfather, knocking him to the floor. He then pulled out a knife and stabbed the grandfather at least 15 times.”**

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**Daily Mail, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

Stories where vulnerable older people are the victim - online news					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - online news	Frequency % of total wordcount - online news	Frequency - social media	Frequency % of total wordcount - social media
<b>Phrases</b>					
Pensioner left	6x	29	0.0004%	8	0.0001%
Elderly victim	4x	86	0.0012%	37	0.0003%
Pensioner dies	3.5x	54	0.0007%	25	0.0002%
Seriously injured	3.5x	180	0.0025%	86	0.0007%
<b>Topics</b>					
Crime	2x	16038	0.2435%	12992	0.1205%
Violent/ angry	1.3x	17707	0.2688%	22403	0.2078%
Fear/ shock	1.2x	5842	0.0887%	8205	0.0761%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online news) by the other source (in this case, social media).

'Pensioner avoids jail' has been excluded from the results due the small sample size of 15 instances of this word in online news sources.

Despite online tabloids being more likely to frame older people as victims, it is important to note that online broadsheets can also represent older people in this way. The words 'victims' and 'abuse' are prevalent with a similar frequency in online broadsheet and tabloid articles related to ageing.

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**“HM inspectors... said they had 'grave' concerns at the failure of police to safeguard vulnerable elderly victims and provide them with the support they needed after they fell prey to crime.”**

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**The Telegraph, Online broadsheet, Jul 2019**

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**“An 88-year-old woman was left with a broken nose and shocking bruising after her handbag was snatched in a daylight robbery. The elderly victim, who has not been named by police...”**

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**The Telegraph, Online broadsheet, Jan 2019**

**Similarly, older people are 2.5x more likely to be described as ‘vulnerable’ in online news articles related to ageing than in social media.**

‘Vulnerable pensioner’ and ‘vulnerable adults’ are used in conjunction frequently in online news. This is an example of collocation, where the word ‘vulnerable’ is frequently paired with ‘elderly’ or ‘pensioner’. Similar findings were seen by comparative data from the British National Corpus (BNC) where the ten adjectives linked most frequently with ‘elderly’ through ‘and’ / ‘or’ were: disabled, frail, infirm, vulnerable, sick, ill, handicapped, housebound, confused, and dependent (Kilgarriff, Rychly, Smrz & Tugwell, 2004).

Vulnerable - online news					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - online news	Frequency % of total wordcount - online news	Frequency - social media	Frequency % of total wordcount - social media
<b>Words</b>					
Vulnerable	2x	2604	0.0395%	2308	0.0214%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Vulnerable pensioner	4x	67	0.0009%	29	0.0002%
Vulnerable people	2x	464	0.0064%	379	0.0032%
Vulnerable pensioners	2x	34	0.0005%	28	0.0002%
Vulnerable adults	1.5x	50	0.0007%	47	0.0004%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online news) by the other source (in this case, social media).

More broadly, other vulnerable groups are also more likely to be mentioned in online news, with phrases such as ‘vulnerable residents’, ‘vulnerable customers’ and ‘vulnerable victims’ appearing 3.5x, 4x and 5x more frequently in online news than in social media, respectively. Older people are most commonly labelled as vulnerable in the context of housing needs, loneliness, finances or health and care. Furthermore, as previously noted, phrases related to vulnerability are often in the context of crime, covering stories of older people being targets of violence, assault or scams.

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“Citizens Advice found 8 out of 10 people are paying way over the odds for at least 1 of 5 basic bills broadband, home insurance, mortgages, mobiles and savings... Yet again, the most vulnerable are being hit the hardest. Older people, who are the most likely to struggle with switching, can be paying much higher amounts.”

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**Daily Mail, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

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“Public Health at North Lincolnshire Council is urging residents to get their flu jab before the winter months' set in to protect them and those they come into contact with from the virus. The cold weather can be harmful to health, especially the vulnerable e. g. elderly and young children.”

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**UK Business Insider, Online news, Sept 2018**

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“A ruthless conman preyed on a vulnerable elderly couple by selling their home from under them and plundering their life savings.”

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**RCN, Online news, Oct 2018**

**Language to describe older people, by using words and phrases such as ‘pensioner’, ‘older people’ and ‘elderly’ is more likely to be used in online news articles related to ageing than social media.**

News uses more formal language to describe older people - online news					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - online news	Frequency % of total wordcount - online news	Frequency - social media	Frequency % of total wordcount - social media (n=6,586,317)
<b>Words</b>					
Pensioner	1.5x	4371	0.066%	4640	0.043%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Year-old woman	4.5x	241	0.003%	90	0.001%
Year-old man	4x	285	0.004%	122	0.001%
Elderly residents	2.5x	667	0.009%	408	0.003%
Elderly man	2x	1066	0.015%	949	0.008%
Elderly woman	2x	1408	0.019%	1100	0.009%
Elderly couple	1.5x	465	0.006%	450	0.004%
Elderly people	1.3x	1629	0.022%	2117	0.018%
Older adults	1.2x	992	0.014%	1376	0.012%
Older people	1.1x	6034	0.083%	9234	0.078%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online news) by the other source (in this case, social media).

Referring to older people as ‘pensioner’, ‘elderly woman’ or ‘elderly man’ are 1.5x, 2x and 2x more common in online news than in social media, respectively. Phrases, such as ‘older people’ (x1.1) or ‘older adults’ (x1.2) and references of individual age such as ‘year-old woman’ (x4.5) or ‘year-old man’ (x4) are also more frequently used in online news than in social media. The use of more impersonal and distant language can be explained by the generally more formal style of online news than social media content. Furthermore, online news features news stories typically written in the third person with the author as the narrator.

Within online news sources, there are notable variations between online tabloids and online broadsheets in terms of their descriptions of older people and the frequency and context in which these words and phrases are used. This will be explored in greater detail in the following sections.

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## Tabloid news discourse compared to broadsheet news

This section analyses the prominent topics, phrases, words and emotions appearing in online tabloids compared to discourse in online broadsheets, in association with ageing related search terms.

### Reference texts:

- The online tabloids dataset consists 4,072,213 words from full articles, which relate to ageing and/or older people, from the top 5 most read tabloid newspapers based on Ofcom’s News Consumption 2018 report<sup>18</sup>: Daily Mail, Metro, The Sun, Daily Mirror and The Express. Only articles published over the last 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019) that featured the defined search terms (see Figure 6) were included.
- The online tabloids were compared to online broadsheets, which consist of 768,361 words from full articles relating to ageing and/or older people from the top 5 most read tabloid newspapers based on Ofcom’s News Consumption 2018 report: The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Independent and the Financial Times. Only articles published over the last 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019) that featured the defined search terms (see Figure 6) were included.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

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18 [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/116529/news-consumption-2018.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/116529/news-consumption-2018.pdf)

### **Context:**

Tabloid articles typically have a greater emphasis on topics such as sensational crime stories, astrology, celebrity gossip and television than broadsheets do, and often use shorter sentences and paragraphs with more basic vocabulary. Tabloids tend to be more sensationalised and emotive than broadsheets, and focus on individual's experiences and stories, that offer a catchy headline, rather than taking the long view which broadsheets are more likely to do.

The data collection of online tabloids, using defined search terms over the last year, produced a language set of 4,072,213 words, compared to 768,361 words from online broadsheets. This is an interesting finding in itself, as it shows that online tabloids more frequently discuss ageing and older people than online broadsheets. This does not impact the validity of the analysis, since the Relative Insight tool normalises differences in the number of words between the two comparison language sets.

### **Key differences:**

Compared to online broadsheets, online tabloid articles featuring ageing are:

- 5.5x more likely to refer to older people using colloquial, informal terms (e.g. 'OAP');
- 1.5x more likely to discuss older people in association with 'sex and intimacy';
- 2x more likely to discuss ageing with respect to beauty and appearance (e.g. 'hair loss');
- More likely to feature older celebrities and role models:
  - > 40.5x more likely to feature stories with older characters on TV;
  - > 7.5x more likely to feature stories about older members of the Royal Family;
- 3.5x more likely to discuss ageing in association with death (e.g. 'passed away');
- 4x more likely to discuss topics associated with pensions (e.g. 'state pension'); and
- 2x more likely to use highly positive and negative emotive language.

**Online articles related to ageing in tabloids are over 5x as likely as online articles in broadsheets to use more informal, colloquial and familial words to refer to older people.**

Informal/ colloquial language referring to older people - tabloid					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - online tabloids	Frequency % of total wordcount - online tabloids (n=4,072,213)	Frequency - online broadsheets	Frequency % of total wordcount - online broadsheets (n=768,361)
<b>Words</b>					
OAPs	12.5x	134	0.0033%	2	0.0003%
OAP	10x	209	0.0051%	4	0.0005%
Gran	8.5x	399	0.0098%	9	0.0012%
Grandma	3x	1477	0.0363%	95	0.0124%
Grandad	2.5x	1316	0.0323%	93	0.0121%
Pensioner	2x	2690	0.0661%	251	0.0327%
Grandmother	1.5x	7572	0.1859%	922	0.1200%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Year-old said	10x	54	0.0012%	1	0.0001%
Pensioner said	7.5x	40	0.0009%	1	0.0001%
Elderly man	2x	576	0.0128%	57	0.0068%
<b>Topics</b>					
Kin	1.5x	79414	1.9501%	10265	1.3360%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online tabloids) by the other source (in this case, online broadsheets).

Online tabloids are ten times more likely than broadsheets to present older people to their readers as an ‘OAP’ (i.e. Old Age Pensioner) and twice as likely to use the word ‘pensioner’. OAP is used in more light-hearted stories and when the tabloid wants to exaggerate their age to express surprise at their behaviour or shock at something that has happened to them.

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**“Mark Jordon has pleaded not guilty to allegations he attacked a pensioner. OAP Andy Potts, 67, was taken to hospital.”**

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**Mirror, Online tabloid, Nov 2018**

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**“A lorry driver spots a smartly-dressed OAP weeing on his truck who then waves as he walks off.”**

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**The Sun, Online tabloid, Oct 2018**

Furthermore, the individual’s age is often referenced and focused on in the story, e.g. ‘year-old said’ is ten times more likely to occur in tabloids than in broadsheets. The focus on age may be a linguistic technique used by the writer to trigger assumptions and associations in the reader’s mind about their appearance, ability and expected behaviours. Having said this, the phrases ‘year-old man’ and ‘year-old woman’ feature with similar frequency across online tabloids and online broadsheets.

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**“The 62 year-old said his wife's 'nastiness' in a swearsy Christmas rant.”**

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**Mirror, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

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**“A pensioner who conducted a 15-year hate campaign against her neighbours that included throwing urine over her fence, knocking over their plant pots and silent phone calls has been jailed. Kathleen Neal, 79, banged on the conservatory of Susan Brookes, 68, and her husband Keith, 71, and told them to ‘get back to your council house where you belong’.”**

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**The Times, Online broadsheet, Feb 2019**

Tabloids are also more likely than broadsheets to refer to older people using labels of kinship, such as ‘grandad’ and ‘gran’. Words like ‘great-great-grandmother’ and ‘grandmother-of-four’ (neither are shown on the chart) are also used by tabloids to emphasise this point further in the reader’s mind. At times, the individual is referred to with this term of kinship rather than their own name in online tabloids, compared to online broadsheets which tend to use this label to highlight the relationship between the people involved in a factual way.

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**“Grandad battling cancer stunned to find face of 'cocker spaniel' in X-ray.”**

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**Mirror, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

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**“...his grandad was mumbling along gamely to a video.”**

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**The Guardian, Online broadsheet, Nov 2018**

**Ageing is more likely to be discussed with reference to beauty and appearance in online tabloid articles in comparison to online broadsheet articles.**

<b>Image/ appearance - tabloid</b>					
<b>Items</b>	<b>Relative difference</b>	<b>Frequency - online tabloids</b>	<b>Frequency % of total wordcount - online tabloids (n=4,072,213)</b>	<b>Frequency - online broadsheets</b>	<b>Frequency % of total wordcount - online broadsheets (n=768,361)</b>
<b>Phrases</b>					
Hottest grandma	∞	133	0.0030%	0	0%
Anti-ageing serum	∞	36	0.0008%	0	0%
Look younger	∞	21	0.0005%	0	0%
Grandma Gina Stewart	∞	45	0.0010%	0	0%
Eye cream	3.5x	57	0.0013%	3	0.0004%
<b>Topics</b>					
Anatomy and physiology	1.4x	33380	0.8197%	4670	0.6078%
Clothes and fashion	1.4x	14508	0.3563%	2028	0.2639%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online tabloids) by the other source (in this case, online broadsheets).

Phrases such as ‘look younger’, ‘eye cream’, ‘anti-ageing serum’ are all more likely to appear in online tabloids than online broadsheets – collectively, 2x more likely. They also tend to exclusively feature in tabloids and not at all in broadsheets (∞).

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**“Cream of the crop? Boots’ new anti-ageing serum claims to take TEN YEARS off your face and neck.”**

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**The Sun, Online tabloid, Jan 2019**

When looking at the context in which these phrases are used, they are almost exclusively used when referring to women and the avoidance of physical signs of ageing. Furthermore, Gina Stewart has become famous for her youthful appearance ‘despite being a Grandma’, being labelled as the ‘World’s Hottest Grandma’ in online tabloids. Among the mentions of Gina Stewart in the online tabloid articles analysed, her behaviour and image are frequently commented on and questioned.

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**“Has the World's Hottest Grandma gone too far? Gina Stewart risked an Instagram ban on Thursday after stripping down for a beach photo shoot in Surfers Paradise.”**

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**Daily Mail, Online tabloid, Jan 2019**

An exception appears to exist for the phrase ‘hair loss’. Whilst it is used in reference to older women and menopause, the phrase tends to dominate male stereotypes to a greater degree which are presented in online tabloids, particularly men in the Royal Family.

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**“While marital happiness does not bring about any hormonal changes which would affect hair loss, research shows that men in settled relationships tend to do less to disguise their baldness. ‘It reflects nature and the need to find a partner. Once that goal is achieved there is slightly less incentive to cover up hair loss.’”**

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**Mirror, Online tabloid, Nov 2018**

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**“It's not just Will who lost his hair, the Princes' dad Charles and grandfather Philip were also blighted by baldness and Harry has clearly inherited the gene too.”**

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**The Sun, Online tabloid, Nov 2018**

Perhaps unexpectedly, the words ‘skin’, ‘wrinkles’, ‘wrinkly’, ‘grey hair’, ‘anti-ageing’ and ‘ageing process’ appear with similar frequency in online tabloids and broadsheets. Whilst these words largely feature in the context of reviews about the efficacy of ‘anti-ageing’ face creams, online broadsheets also occasionally use these words to provide social commentary. For example, when challenging stereotypes or when criticising the lack of older

women in the public sphere. Once again, the focus is almost exclusively on women – with or without wrinkles and grey hair. Notably, the words ‘fashion’, ‘ugly’, ‘frumpy’ and ‘old-fashioned’ are also found with similar frequency in both online tabloid and broadsheet articles.

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**“...it will make you look younger, not to mention the fact that it's formulated with optical blurrers to deflect light away from fine lines and wrinkles. And, as for preventing the actual ageing process, this product has SPF15 protection, which we all know works a treat.”**

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**The Sun, Online news, Sept 2018**

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**“But while older women have become stars with lifestyle shows, such as the cook Mary Berry, it is older men who host news shows... Older women in the public eye in America tend to look fabulously youthful. Almost none has grey hair, one exception in Washington being Frenchwoman Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund, who sports stylish grey hair and wrinkles.”**

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**Financial Times, Online broadsheet, Mar 2019**

The examples presented above support the findings of the literature review, in which ageing is presented as a physical decline and as something to defy. Ageing also appears to be presented as a personal choice and individual responsibility for maintaining your own appearance in order to age successfully.

## **TRIGGER WARNING: This section discusses sex and rape.**

**Sex and intimacy are 1.5x more likely to appear in online tabloid articles which feature ageing or older people than online broadsheet articles.**

The word ‘sex’ appears 2x more frequently in online tabloids than in online broadsheets. Delving into the excerpts of tabloid articles that mention ‘sex’, we see that older people are represented in a range of ways. However, they tend to be confined to extreme examples, particularly when it comes to women, with the negative examples and stories overshadowing the positive ones. Overall, there also appears to be a lack of diverse, realistic representations of older people and sex.

Some online tabloid articles appear to debate the acceptability and expectations of older people – particularly older women – to be sexual or have a sex drive. Some anecdotes do exist in online tabloids that seem to challenge these taboos. However, the link between older people and sex in many cases can be seen as an attempt to shock. For example, where older women are sexualised and objectified as ‘MILFs’ and ‘GILFs’<sup>19</sup> in online tabloid articles.

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**“Women like her aren't often portrayed on TV but when they are, we recognise and embrace them; it's crazy to assume that bigger or older women are no longer attractive, that they don't have sex or use their sexuality to get what they want.”**

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**Daily Mail, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

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**“Another hotel guest, an elderly woman in naughty lingerie, inspects her collection of sex toys and edible thongs.”**

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**Metro, Online tabloid, Nov 2018**

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**“I remained unconvinced. Do older women really want to rip their clothes off at the clink of a handcuff? Is the average middle-aged woman really obsessed by sex, sex, sex? Sorry, I don't buy it...”**

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**Daily Mail, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

Among the dismissive stories involving older people and sex in online tabloids, anecdotes exist that seem to reinforce the detrimental stereotype that older people – particularly older women - lack sexuality. This appears to indicate a lack of diversity in online tabloids of real-life examples of older people’s lives. Furthermore, and much more concerning, negative examples include scandals of rape, paedophilia, victimisation and imbalances of power between an older individual and a younger individual, or vice versa. The disproportionate representation of older people – particularly older men – in these negative stories about sex, create a dangerous stereotype about older people instead of confining it to the minority of cases in which these events happen. For example, phrases such as ‘dirty old man’ and ‘sick old man’ feature five times and infinitely (∞) times

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<sup>19</sup> ‘Mother I’d Like to F\*\*k’ and ‘Grandma I’d Like to F\*\*k’

more frequently, respectively, in social media (a proxy for the discourse used by the general public) than in online news. It is important to note that older women also feature in these negative stories – whether the victim or the perpetrator.

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**“A 59-year-old woman had sex with a 14-year-old boy on a balcony during a family holiday to Ibiza, a court heard.”**

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**Metro, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

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**“Ramkishun has gone on trial at Plymouth Crown Court accused of raping the elderly woman. He denies having sex with her at the care home between June 8 and June 11 last year.”**

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**Daily Mail, Online tabloid, Oct 2018**

## END OF TRIGGER WARNING

**Characterisations of older people in TV programmes are more likely to be discussed in online tabloid articles related to ageing than in online broadsheet articles related to ageing.**

Items	Relative difference	Frequency - online tabloids	Frequency % of total wordcount - online tabloids	Frequency - online	Frequency % of total wordcount - online
<b>Words</b>					
EastEnders	9x	336	0.0083%	7	0.0009%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Grandmother Evelyn	∞	47	0.0010%	0	0%
Britain's Got Talent	∞	50	0.0011%	0	0%
Coronation Street	139x	743	0.0165%	1	0.0001%
Love Island	8.5x	325	0.0072%	7	0.0008%
Strictly Come	5.5x	113	0.0025%	4	0.0005%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online tabloids) by the other source (in this case, online broadsheets).

TV programmes such as ‘Coronation Street’ and ‘EastEnders’ are 139x and 9x more likely to be mentioned in online tabloids than in online broadsheets, respectively. Whilst it may be expected that online tabloids are more likely to discuss TV programmes than online broadsheets, it is important to understand the way in which older role models are characterised as this may influence our own stereotypes and notions of age, such as what is expected of a certain age or when someone is perceived to be ‘too old’ (Swift, Abrams, & Lamont, in press; Ayalon, Doron, Bodner, & Inbar 2014). For example, ‘Grandmother Evelyn’ frequently appears as a character from Coronation Street, being described as ‘acid-tongued’ and represented as a battle-axe archetype.

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**“When Tyrone comes face to face with his demonic grandmother Evelyn, it's not long before he is inviting her to stay in Weatherfield. Soon, Evelyn is causing chaos in the community with her confidence to speak her mind and her antics which include her trying to con Dev.”**

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**Metro, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

Older people are also present in the side-line ‘sob stories’ of contestants in TV shows such as Love Island, Britain’s Got Talent and Strictly Come Dancing. In these cases, the stories and quotes featuring older people – who tend to be the contestant’s grandparents – appear to add emotion and poignancy to the plotline as well as develop the character of the contestant.

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**“And it seems that fledgling contestant Joe Sugg has two very devoted fans of the show in his family, his grandparents... In fact, his nan's reaction is pretty much everything (and it'll warm your heart). Joe said that contrary to what many may think his grandparents ‘aren't strangers to social media or anything’ in fact his granddad has over 128, 000 followers.”**

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**Metro, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

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**“Love Island co-star Ellie Jones explained her passion for the cause and the personal struggles she and her family have experienced... 'I'm so glad I came today. My Grandmother had Alzheimer's and the years later my Grandad had a form of dementia, so I know how horrible the condition is,' she said.”**

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**Daily Mail, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

**Online tabloid articles, featuring ageing and/or older people, are 7.5x as likely as online broadsheets to make references to the Royal Family, presenting the Queen and Prince Charles as grandparents.**

The Royal Family - tabloid					
Phrases	Relative difference	Frequency - online tabloids	Frequency % of total wordcount - online tabloids (n=4,072,213)	Frequency - online broadsheets	Frequency % of total wordcount - online broadsheets (n=768,361)
Grandmother Queen Elizabeth	∞	49	0.0011%	0	0%
Grandfather Prince	11.5x	125	0.0028%	2	0.0002%
Grandmother Queen	8x	130	0.0029%	3	0.0004%
Queen Mother	2x	244	0.0054%	21	0.0025%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online tabloids) by the other source (in this case, online broadsheets).

The same trend applies for the Royal Family, who frequently feature in tabloid articles. Queen Elizabeth is characterised as a ‘grandmother’ or ‘mother’ and Prince Charles is referred to as ‘grandfather’. Collectively, these terms are seven-and-a-half times as likely to appear in tabloid news than in broadsheet news.

Some stories in online tabloids present the ‘grandmother Queen’ and ‘grandfather Prince’ Charles as loving, affectionate and caring grandparents, perhaps making them more relatable to the public. Whilst some tabloid news stories appear to be presenting the Queen and Prince Charles as passive spectators to the rest of the Royal Family’s more active lives, there are also mentions of the Queen as a decisive surveyor in which she decides the customs and traditions of the Royal Family, permitting or rejecting certain activities (examples below). The way in which online newspapers discuss and present older celebrities and role models is important in how they influence stereotypes held by the public and the resulting narrative of ageing/older age.

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**“Charles, who became a grandfather for the third time on April 23 this year when Prince Louis was born, is known to adore his grandchildren.”**

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**Express, Online tabloid, Nov 2018**

“He [William] now regularly travels on the same plane with his family despite this long tradition. It is rumoured that he had to ask his grandmother Queen Elizabeth for permission before joining his son [Prince George] onboard.”

Express, Online tabloid, Nov 2018

Online tabloids are 3.5x as likely as online broadsheets to discuss ageing and older people in association with death.

Death - tabloid					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - online tabloids	Frequency % of total wordcount - online tabloids (n=4,072,213)	Frequency - online broadsheets	Frequency % of total wordcount - online broadsheets (n=768,361)
<b>Words</b>					
Funeral	3x	616	0.0151%	39	0.0051%
Died	1.5x	3754	0.0922%	460	0.0599%
Death	1.5x	2847	0.0699%	337	0.0439%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Tragic death	∞	81	0.0018%	0	0%
Causing death	∞	69	0.0015%	0	0%
Say goodbye	∞	63	0.0014%	0	0%
Cardiac arrest	8x	86	0.0019%	2	0.0002%
Paid tribute	4.5x	201	0.0045%	8	0.0009%
Passed away	4x	511	0.0114%	23	0.0027%
Pronounced dead	3.5x	142	0.0032%	8	0.0009%
Found dead	2.5x	291	0.0065%	22	0.0026%
<b>Topics</b>					
Dead	1.5x	18491	0.4541%	2342	0.3048%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online tabloids) by the other source (in this case, online broadsheets).

Words and phrases related to passing away are 3.5x more likely to feature in tabloids in comparison to broadsheet media. Apart from words related to the state of passing away such as ‘death’ or past tense ‘died’ and ‘passed away’, other language refers to post-mortem period (‘funeral’, ‘pay tribute’) and causes of death (‘cardiac arrest’, ‘causing death’). Emotionally charged phrases such as ‘tragic death’, ‘say goodbye’ or ‘causing death’ also tend to exclusively appear in tabloids and not at all in broadsheets (∞).

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**“Conroy, who lived with her 83-year-old grandmother, bought the antifreeze with the purpose of poisoning her. Prosecutors say Conroy poured it into some juice the next day and gave it to her grandmother, but she didn’t drink it because it tasted weird. ‘Conroy’s attorney has said she wanted to injure her grandmother due to alleged mistreatment. The grandmother died in March after a heart attack.”**

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**Daily Mail, Online tabloid, Sep 2018**

Some words and phrases (‘death’, ‘dead’, ‘pronounced dead’) are more likely to appear in context with tragic stories resulting in death, most often related to accidents, poisoning, murders, suicides, mental health disorders and other. Elderly people appear in these articles as low competence (victim, witness) and high warmth (identified by their family roles rather than by their names).

Tabloid media often have simplistic depictions of death. Stories where the aforementioned terms (i.e. ‘death’, ‘dead’ etc.) appear focus on whatever extraordinary factor which lead to that particular death (suffering, tragedy) and seem distant from the victims and other protagonists. On the contrary, stories that feature ‘passed away’, ‘funeral’, ‘paid tribute’ or ‘say goodbye’ aim to strike an affectionate tone. In these instances, death is seen as a natural chapter in life that gifts family members with memories or even empowers them.

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**“My own Grandma was a very formidable lady. When my Grandad passed away, she was determined to carry on. She travelled to see me three times in the Olympic Games and World Championships. She really was an inspiration, and she would always call me if she felt a bit low.”**

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**The Sun, Online tabloid, Oct 2018**

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**“78-year-old Veronica Leaning, from Grimsby, passed away from lung and bone cancer on 17 September. At her funeral yesterday, 1 October, the grandmother-of-15's customised coffin, emblazoned in Harry Potter memorabilia and decorated in each of the four house's colours, was carried into Grimsby Crematorium to Hedwig's Theme.”**

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**Metro, Online tabloid, Oct 2018**

However, older people are not always the ‘protagonists’ of news stories related to death, however their appearance in them can serve as an emotional trigger. For this reason, older people are commonly referred to with their role within the family rather than as an individual, with older women (‘gran’, ‘grandmother’) often featuring in the role of the carer.

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**“A toddler died while his gran was reading Mr Men books to him after his crucial surgery was repeatedly delayed because no beds were available, an inquest heard.”**

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**Mirror, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

The portrayal of elderly people in online tabloid media supports the findings of the literature review, according to which older people are described as frail, and in decline. They also mostly remain anonymous or are referred to via their function in family. They also feature in stories to provide an emotional trigger or even a contrast to dramatic events concerning young people/ youngers family members.

### Online tabloid articles are 4x more likely than online broadsheets to discuss ageing and/or older people in association with pensions.

Phrases such as ‘Pension Credit’ (x5), ‘state pension’ (x2) and ‘pension age’ (x2.5) are more likely to occur in online tabloid articles relating to ageing than those of online broadsheets. Despite these differences, the word ‘pension’ occurs with similar frequency between online tabloids (0.024% of the dataset) and online broadsheets (0.023% of the dataset), indicating that whilst both broadsheets and tabloids discuss pension-related issues to a similar extent, online tabloids are more likely to discuss overarching government policies relating to pensions.

Pensions - tabloid					
Phrases	Relative difference	Frequency - online tabloids	Frequency % of total wordcount - online tabloids (n=4,072,213)	Frequency - online broadsheets	Frequency % of total wordcount - online broadsheets (n=768,361)
Pension pot	7.5x	39	0.0009%	1	0.0001%
Pension credit	5x	204	0.0045%	8	0.0009%
Pension age	2.5x	108	0.0024%	8	0.0009%
State pension	2x	706	0.0157%	59	0.0070%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online tabloids) by the other source (in this case, online broadsheets).

Whereas online broadsheets are more likely to talk about a wider range of pension issues but to a lesser extent, such as ‘pension scheme[s]’ (x3) of public services (e.g. rail, water), private companies (e.g. airlines, retail) and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Pension Credit is mostly mentioned in online tabloids in association with the proposed changes to the BBC’s TV licensing policy as well as the lack of uptake of the Pension Credit scheme from eligible pensioners. Online tabloids appear to be more likely than online broadsheets to discuss issues relating to state pensions and benefits using a style intended to evoke fear and shock at the latest government developments and pensioners who may be missing out.

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**“OAPs to lose £7,000 a year as Government sneaks out 'toy boy' tax... Under current rules a mixed-age couple can claim pension credit if they wish, because one of them is over state pension age.”**

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**Express, Online tabloid, Jan 2019**

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**“Members of one of Britain's largest final salary pension schemes [the LGPS] face a temporary ban on moving their retirement money while the Government works out how much their funds are worth.”**

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**The Telegraph, Online broadsheet, Nov 2018**

**See the Appendix (Tabloid news – emotional aspects) for more detail on the emotional aspects of the tabloid news sources.**

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## Broadsheet news discourse compared to tabloid news

This section analyses the prominent topics, phrases, words and emotions appearing in online broadsheets compared to discourse in online tabloids, in association with ageing related search terms.

### Reference texts:

- The online broadsheets dataset consists of 768,361 words from full articles, which relate to ageing and/or older people, from the top 5 most read tabloid newspapers based on Ofcom’s News Consumption 2018 report<sup>20</sup>: The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Independent and the Financial Times. Only articles published over the last 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019) that featured the defined search terms (see Figure 6) were included.
- The online broadsheets were compared to online tabloid sources, consisting of 4,072,213 words from full articles related to ageing and/or older people from the top 5 most read tabloid newspapers based on Ofcom’s News Consumption 2018 report: Daily Mail, Metro, The Sun, Daily Mirror and The Express. Only articles published over the last 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019) that featured the defined search terms (see Figure 6) were included.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

**Context:** Broadsheet articles often use longer, more complicated sentences, with more advanced vocabulary than tabloids. They are also far less sensationalised than tabloids, tend to provide more balanced arguments that are supported with more evidence. Naturally, broadsheets tend to look at the bigger picture and focus on specific policy areas. This is worth taking into account when reading this section.

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<sup>20</sup> [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/116529/news-consumption-2018.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/116529/news-consumption-2018.pdf)

**Key differences:**

Compared to online tabloids, online broadsheet articles featuring ageing are:

- 3.5x more likely to talk about health and social care issues relating to older people;
- 2.5x more likely to talk about demographic change and intergenerational fairness; and
- 1.5x more likely to use more balanced terms when referring to older people (e.g. ‘elderly people’).

**Health and social care is a dominant theme that is 3.5x as likely to appear in online broadsheet articles related to ageing than in those of online tabloids.**

Health and social care - broadsheet					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - online broadsheets	Frequency % of total wordcount - online broadsheets (n=768,361)	Frequency - online tabloids	Frequency % of total wordcount - online tabloids (n=4,072,213)
<b>Words</b>					
Hospitals	3x	77	0.0100%	140	0.0034%
Healthcare	3x	67	0.0087%	112	0.0028%
NHS	2x	224	0.0292%	632	0.0155%
Care	2x	771	0.1003%	2259	0.0555%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Disabled people	5x	45	0.0053%	47	0.0010%
Elderly care	5x	30	0.0036%	31	0.0007%
Older patients	5x	13	0.0015%	14	0.0003%
Care crisis	4x	13	0.0015%	18	0.0004%
Social care	3.5x	175	0.0208%	258	0.0057%
<b>Topics</b>					
Health and disease	1.4x	533	0.0694%	2169	0.0533%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online broadsheets) by the other source (in this case, online tabloids).

It is evident that older people are often represented in online broadsheets as in need of care. Broadsheets tend to discuss this topic with a policy lens, focusing on the challenges that a growing and ageing population present to health and care services, using phrases such as ‘stretched social care system’, ‘care crisis’ and ‘on the brink of collapse’. However, it is important to note that phrases such as ‘care home’, ‘retirement home’ and ‘dementia’ all appear with similar frequency in both online broadsheets and tabloids, indicating discussions about social care occurring across both types of news media.

The language referenced in online broadsheets may encourage stereotypical perceptions of older people as being a uniform group of ill, frail and vulnerable individuals who are dependent on benevolent care workers, the NHS and ultimately the state. For example, a story in the Telegraph talks about how older people are ‘visited for very short periods of time’ which ‘does not leave time for carers to have a conversation with their clients’. This could inadvertently create an image that all older people in care are highly inactive, incapable and vulnerable, spending their days waiting for the care worker to come and speak to them. This language may evoke feelings of pity and compassion in the reader. Furthermore, phrases using the continuous present tense such as ‘being let down’, ‘being left to starve’ and ‘being left without support’ occur repeatedly across broadsheet articles about older people and social care. In these cases, older people are referred to in the passive voice as they are objects of state inaction and inadequate support.

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**“Successive governments have failed to address the social care crisis, and the country's older people have once again been let down.”**

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**Independent, Online broadsheet, Dec 2018**

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**“Record numbers of pensioners are being admitted to hospital suffering malnutrition amid a growing social care crisis. Charities said the figures were ‘shocking,’ with vulnerable people being left to starve for want of help at home or in care homes.”**

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**The Telegraph, Online broadsheet, Aug 2019**

In addition, discussions about demographic changes which create of ‘burden’ (x2) and ‘strain’ (x2) on health and social care services and on families feature more prevalently in online broadsheets than in online tabloids and indicate associations with intergenerational conflict.

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**“Families bearing the care burden are starting to feel the strain. With pitiful care benefits, many people looking after elderly relatives are struggling.”**

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**The Times, Online broadsheet, Feb 2019**

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**“Its report also highlights the problem of older people stuck in hospital and unable to go home, putting more strain on the healthcare system.”**

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**Telegraph, Online broadsheet, Sept 2018**

‘Loneliness’ (x1.5) is also more prevalent in online broadsheet articles relating to ageing than in online tabloids. While loneliness may be caused by social isolation or people may feel lonely due to mental health issues, regardless of the causality, loneliness is an issue that is often mentioned in online broadsheets in the context of talking about older people’s mental health and the interrelatedness of the two. Initiatives to help tackle loneliness and encourage socialising among older age groups (e.g. going for walks, using social media and dating networks) are often featured in online broadsheets, along with findings from public opinion and medical research.

Words and phrases such as ‘medical’, ‘treatment’, ‘mental health’, ‘brain’, ‘memory’, ‘doctors’, ‘healthy’ and ‘disease’ all appear with similar frequency in both online broadsheets and tabloids. ‘Mental health’ is largely discussed in both online broadsheets and tabloids in association with positive action to tackle these issues, de-stigmatisation campaigns, and research. Stories also exist of the mental health benefits of increasing intergenerational contact. However, online tabloids are more likely to feature individual’s stories about their struggles with mental health and loneliness in a sensationalist way.

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**“Matt Hancock argued that the physical and mental health of old and young would benefit from spending time together [as a result of opening nurseries to NHS services for the elderly] after positive reports from early schemes. 'Intergenerational care' began in Japan in 1976 and has enjoyed success in the US and Europe.”**

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**The Times, Online broadsheet, Oct 2018**

“Ways we can help to fight the scourge of loneliness. THE Daily Express has long called for loneliness to be given a far higher priority, especially when older people are living longer and ending their days alone and isolated. But loneliness does not just affect the elderly. It has become a modern-day scourge that goes way beyond age, often leading to mental health issues...”

The Daily Express, Online tabloid, Oct 2018

Words and phrases related to demographic change and intergenerational fairness are 2.5x more likely to occur in online broadsheet articles than in online tabloids.

Demographic change and intergenerational fairness - broadsheet					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - online broadsheets	Frequency % of total wordcount - online broadsheets (n=768,361)	Frequency - online tabloids	Frequency % of total wordcount - online tabloids (n=4,072,213)
<b>Words</b>					
Population	3.5x	186	0.024%	290	0.0071%
Tackle	2.5x	53	0.007%	121	0.0030%
Increasing	2x	68	0.009%	169	0.0042%
Burden	2x	31	0.004%	79	0.0019%
Challenge	2x	66	0.009%	195	0.0048%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Baby boomers	3x	104	0.012%	191	0.004%
Young people	2.5x	142	0.017%	280	0.006%
Ageing population	2x	24	0.003%	58	0.001%
<b>Topics</b>					
Money: Lack	2x	20	0.003%	59	0.001%
Change	1.3x	3123	0.406%	13651	0.335%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online broadsheets) by the other source (in this case, online tabloids).

Demographic change is a key theme that is associated with ageing and older people in online broadsheets. The context of the language used to talk about demographic changes tends to centre on the increasing challenge this presents society, in terms of the impact on the housing market, the healthcare system and other public services. Notably, demographic change is not a topic confined to online broadsheets as it also appears as a topic in online tabloids but less frequently. In addition to those in the image above, phrases such as ‘birth rate’ (x18), ‘ageing society’ (x9) and ‘changing demographics’ (x7.5) have a higher relative frequency in online broadsheets than in online tabloids, however, the total number of mentions for these phrases are low and should be indicative only.

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**“We are a growing and ageing population and we need to think about what provision there is for older people and how can we keep them active and creative for as long as possible,’ says Andy Barry, who has run the Royal Exchange’s elders programme.”**

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**The Guardian, Online broadsheet, Sept 2018**

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**“Number of households to rocket by 4m by 2041 led by big rise in OAPs.”**

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**The Sun, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

Discourse about demographic change in online broadsheets is heavily related to intergenerational fairness. Broadsheets discuss on the decline, over the past few decades, in ‘relative poverty’ (x8.5) among the older generation compared to the increase in relative poverty among children and millennials. This is mentioned in association with reduced financial, job and house security among younger generations. This narrative appears to encourage the idea of intergenerational conflict in online news, as well as the negative stereotyping of older people as ‘greedy oldies’ (∞). This reflects the literature review, which found that the media often represent older people, non-stereotypically, as resource-rich and productive, but almost in an overly positive light, more attuned to middle-age and denying older age (Kessler, 2004).

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**“Where pensioners were once the most likely to be in poverty, now it's children.”**

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**The Times, Online broadsheet, Nov 2018**

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“Generation Rent - mainly the under-40s - has long complained that Baby Boomers have bought all the homes, leaving them unable to afford to buy their own.”

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**Financial Times, Online broadsheet, Oct 2018**

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“Lord Hall asked if it was fair for over-75s to receive a free licence, regardless of their wealth, when younger generations also struggle to pay the bills.”

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**The Telegraph, Online broadsheet, Nov 2018**

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“Baby boomers and millennials seem at constant loggerheads, one group dismissing the other as feckless, entitled snowflakes afraid of hard work, and in return the young blame the old for Brexit, an impossible housing market, and generally ruining the country.”

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**Independent, Online broadsheet, Nov 2018**

The language used above is in stark contrast with other representations of older people elsewhere in online news media where they are represented as financially vulnerable.

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“Austerity creates not just poverty, but also what the EHRC calls a 'two-speed' society, one where certain groups are trapped, excluded from prosperity. The result is an acceleration of disadvantage. Nearly 400, 000 more children and 300,000 more pensioners are living in poverty compared with five years ago.”

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**The Guardian, Online broadsheet, Nov 2018**

## Older people are more likely to be described with more balanced terms and language in online broadsheet articles featuring ageing than in those of online tabloids.

Language referring to older people - broadsheet					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - online broadsheets	Frequency % of total wordcount - online broadsheets (n=768,361)	Frequency - online tabloids	Frequency % of total wordcount - online tabloids (n=4,072,213)
<b>Words</b>					
Older	1.5x	1197	0.1558%	3958	0.0972%
Vulnerable	1.4x	209	0.0272%	839	0.0206%
Elderly	1.3x	1571	0.2045%	6595	0.1620%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Vulnerable older	3.5x	10	0.0012%	16	0.0004%
Older people	2.5x	566	0.0672%	1284	0.0285%
Elderly people	1.5x	174	0.0207%	621	0.0138%
<b>Topics</b>					
Time: Old, grown-up	1.5x	1625	0.2115%	5137	0.1261%
Belonging to a group	1.4x	22	0.0029%	83	0.0020%
Helping	1.2x	4750	0.6182%	21640	0.5314%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online broadsheets) by the other source (in this case, online tabloids).

The phrases ‘older people’ and ‘elderly people’ are 2.5x and 1.5x more likely to appear in online broadsheets than in online tabloids, respectively. This language comes across as more neutral, balanced, politically correct and less emotively referring to later life than in online tabloids. Furthermore, online broadsheets appear less likely to use such a broad lexicon of terms when referring to older people than online tabloids tends to, and the relative difference of these words and phrases is also lower (1.5x compared to 5.5x in online tabloids).

In the majority of cases where the term ‘older people’ appears in online broadsheets, the context is linked to research, medicine, healthcare, social care, mental health, loneliness and disability. The dominance of these medicalised stories appear to portray older people in need of support, care and research. Furthermore, older people are often referred to as a homogenous group of people, when in fact the experiences discussed may

only apply to a smaller sub-set of people. Whilst the aforementioned issues (i.e. research, healthcare etc.) are all incredibly important, and whilst other non-medicalised themes do exist, the dominance of them highlights the lack of a diverse representation of older people from all walks of life and all states of health in online broadsheets.

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**“Self-harm has been neglected in older people because of a belief that it is a problem only for troubled teenagers and doctors must do more to head off suicide fuelled by loneliness, researchers said.”**

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**The Times, Online broadsheet, Oct 2018**

The context in which the word ‘vulnerable’ occurs in broadsheets is often alongside stories of crimes, attacks, phone scams and burglaries. Older people are referred to in the passive voice and are victims of the actions of others. Older people are also frequently referred to as vulnerable when discussing the health and social care system and its lack of adequate support for older people in need. Whilst this discourse is likely to be rooted in empathy and care, the repeated use of the word vulnerable could be considered as highly denigrating.

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**“Elderly people can be vulnerable to scams by nuisance call companies. Nearly half of landline calls made to elderly and vulnerable people are from cold callers.”**

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**Telegraph, Online broadsheet, Dec 2018**

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**“Many small towns and rural areas have no high street banking facilities thanks to branch closures, which are especially likely to affect vulnerable customers such as the poor and elderly.”**

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**The Times, Online broadsheet, May 2019**

Notably, the phrase ‘vulnerable elderly’ is used as frequently in both online broadsheets and online tabloids, however, the context in which it is used is slightly different. Online broadsheet articles tend to use the phrase to highlight flaws in certain structures - such as health and social care, social security and data protection - and the challenges that some older people face. Online tabloid articles tend to use the phrase in a more emotive way.

Both online broadsheets and tabloids use the phrase in a way that groups older people as homogenous, weak, vulnerable, unaware, and ill-equipped, who have crimes and maltreatment committed against them. In both types of news sources, society is blamed for not effectively caring and supporting our ‘vulnerable elderly’.

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**“Since then a number of health watchdogs have warned against such practices, with concern that vulnerable elderly people are being sent back to freezing homes without any support.”**

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**Telegraph, Online broadsheet, Dec 2018**

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**“Respect and protect our vulnerable elderly. ONE of the hallmarks of a civilisation is how it cares for and protects the elderly... We still have some way to go to better protect pensioners and to bring about a culture of respect needed in this country.”**

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**Express Comment, Online tabloid, Dec 2018**

# Advertising narratives on ageing

## Summary

Key themes and topics from advertising stakeholders and analysed scripts from advertisements related to ageing are outlined below.



**Positive, clichéd language is frequently used.** The terms ‘amazing’, ‘survivor’, ‘golden age’ and ‘smile’ are among the top 10 most prevalent words and phrases, compared to standard English. The advertising stakeholders similarly highlight the storytelling nature of adverts and the need to communicate ideas quickly, in a simple, relatable and persuasive way, which sometimes lead to the reliance on clichés or stereotypes. Examples include older people enjoying later life on cruise ships or enjoying products like beer and chocolate. This reflects findings in the literature review where magazines and advertising idealise ageing and portray ‘golden’ or ‘successful’ agers (Ylänne, 2015, Williams et al., 2010b).



**Advertisements are also more likely to discuss death and decline.** Advertising sources are 2.5x more likely than the ageing charity sector to discuss ‘death’ as a topic, reflecting the inclusion of funeral adverts in the dataset. Stakeholders also recognise the abundance of advertisements of products aimed at defying ageing, such as anti-ageing skin cream. This is potentially highly detrimental to viewers who are only offered two extremes – highly positive narrative of older people enjoying later life or stressing the need to prepare financially for impending physical decline and death.



**Advertisements generally lack genuine representativity.** Stakeholders mention that adverts are not always representative of the diversity and authenticity of experiences and views shared by the general public, pointing out that this may be due to a skew towards younger age groups working in the advertising industry. Advertising stakeholders also recognise that older people are generally included in adverts only for products specifically targeted to older people (e.g. chair lifts or hearing aids) rather than adverts for products used by all ages. Whilst unrealistic positive storylines and clichés are perhaps characteristic of the advertising industry, there appears to be a prevalence of negative storylines associated with death, disability and dependence.



**Advertising stakeholders suggest connecting with older people to better represent them.** Having a forum through which advertisers can better understand older people is seen as an avenue for progress in the advertising industry, building on wider work relating to diversity (e.g. ethnicity, body shapes etc.). This is also seen as commercially beneficial because it will allow them to better promote products or services. Recruiting a wide range of age groups within advertising is also seen as a worthwhile solution.

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## Stakeholders' perceptions in the advertising industry

Savanta ComRes conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with 3 advertising stakeholders, each lasting 30-45 minutes. Advertising stakeholders (including senior representatives at advertising agencies or umbrella organisations) were approached from a list of stakeholders who were identified by the Centre for Ageing Better and Savanta ComRes as having not only an interest in ageing, but also the potential to influence narratives on ageing in their field.

In order to measure similarities and differences between stakeholders' perceptions and language used around ageing across various sectors and industries, Savanta ComRes asked each stakeholder to describe the narratives of ageing present within their organisation and sector more broadly. They were also asked to highlight any positive and negative representations of ageing, as well as identifying any opportunities and challenges for change. In order to better understand and analyse their underlying views and emotions around ageing, stakeholders were also asked about their personal views on ageing and why they think it is important to shift narratives on ageing.

**Similar to media stakeholders, advertising stakeholders say that their sector has a simplistic, biased approach to ageing. They highlight 'anti-ageing' or the 'medicalisation of ageing' as a central theme, with images of older people often showing physical decline or a loss of beauty. Stakeholders recognise the sector's preference for showing younger people in advertisements for every-day products, while older people are underrepresented in these adverts and tend to only be featured in advertisements for products specifically for older people.**

## Narratives of ageing at an organisational and sector level

Advertising stakeholders suggest that the sector's understanding of ageing is synonymous with older people. They identify 'anti-ageing' or the 'medicalisation of ageing' as the central themes within advertising discourse, particularly when talking about older women. Ageing or getting old is positioned as something to tackle or avoid, evoking associations with physical decline.

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**“Ageing is seen and talked about as something that needs to be defied. So, you get little messages like, ‘Turn back the clock’ or ‘Look X number of years younger with’ or ‘Combat the seven critical signs of ageing or whatever’. [...] I see that as a very continual and subtle pressure on all of us to believe that there’s something wrong with ageing and that we should do everything in our power to stop it or reverse it.”**

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**Tricia Cusden, Look Fabulous Forever, Advertising stakeholder**

The sector is often described by stakeholders as having a preference for younger people. Those aged 55+, who advertising stakeholders say their sector identifies as ‘old’, are rarely visible in advertisements for every-day products. This, they say is partly explained by the majority of the workforce in the sector being in their 20s or 30s and therefore having limited understanding of the lives and product preferences of older people. The biased representation of older people is also seen as integral to how advertising works and not unique to ageing only. In advertising, stereotypes are used as they are memorable and easy to understand, rather than complex stories that may be less easily absorbed.

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**“Advertisers, who, on the whole, are looking for simple ways to get to audiences quickly, tend to simplify, and so you get the clichés and the stereotypes.”**

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**James Best, Committees of Advertising Practice, Advertising stakeholder**

### **Perceptions of ageing and demographic change**

All advertising stakeholders consider it important to care about demographic change. Recognising the economic power of the ageing population is highlighted to be of crucial relevance for advertisers. They recognise ‘older people’ to be part of a growing potential market and increasing customer base for products and services. One stakeholder mentions this particularly in the context of creating advertisements that better represent the product preferences of older people, as a way for the sector to respond to this demographic change.

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**“As advertisers, if we boil down to what we’re here to do, it’s to get people interested in the products that we sell. And given that we have got an ageing population, then it just makes good business sense that we need to make people of all ages interested in the products that we sell.”**

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**Jo Arden, MullenLowe Group, Advertising stakeholder**

However, of the different sectors and industries tested, it is perhaps the advertising industry that is most likely to be pessimistic when talking about demographic change in England. Stakeholders identify several widely used and problematic phrases such as ‘demographic time bomb’ or ‘crisis’, which they recognise are potentially reinforced by the sector’s representation of older people.

Amongst advertising stakeholders, there is a narrative of the problem of intergenerational conflict in how stakeholders from the sector talk about demographic change. Interestingly, one advertising stakeholder particularly refers to the Brexit referendum, serving as a reminder of the increasing political strength of an ageing population.

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**“The oldies came out and voted to leave, and everybody’s been stunned by their activism and intent ever since. On the whole, [...] as people get significantly older and they become less mobile and less energetic, they do lose their voices in society. They do disappear, as it were, because they don’t have the roles in work or politics or anything else which can make their points. So, there’s always been a deficit there. [...] But] They’ve got the vote and they’ve got the money. So, they have power.”**

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**James Best, Committees of Advertising Practice, Advertising stakeholder**

### **Current state and likelihood of change**

Advertising stakeholders recognise that overall, older people remain underrepresented in advertisements. They suggest that older people are predominantly featured in adverts for products for ‘old people’ and are rarely shown in advertisements for every-day products. Stakeholders say this presents a simplistic and stereotypical understanding of older demographics. This leads to what stakeholders describe as the medicalisation of ageing, representing older people as ill and vulnerable, and as a result in need of products such as chair lifts, incontinence pads or

hearing aids. These medical images are seen to reinforce associations of ageing with physical decline and contribute to the underrepresentation of examples of healthy ageing.

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**“I very much dislike the medicalisation of ageing in the sense that you see a lot of ads that aim to fix what they see as the problem of ageing. So, if your body is getting older, you’re likely to have poor eyesight, poor hearing, you know, and incontinence and you’re going to die soon,’ so you need to see an advert about funeral plans.”**

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**Tricia Cusden, Look Fabulous Forever, Advertising stakeholder**

However, one respondent suggests that some sectors, industries or brands within advertisements, particularly the fashion and beauty industry - are getting better in terms of showing a greater diversity of people, including an increasing diversity of ages, body types, races and relationships in their adverts. However, they add that change seems slow and may be limited in sectors outside the fashion and beauty industries.

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**“I think the areas in which we as an industry try to be more representative of a diverse group of ages, is in fashion and beauty. [...] But it took them a long, long time to actually show women of an appropriate age in those communications.”**

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**Jo Arden, MullenLowe Group, Advertising stakeholder**

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## Dominant advertising discourse

This section analyses the top 10 words and phrases, top 20 adjectives and top 20 topics appearing in the advertising industry, in association with ageing related search terms and compared to standard English.

### Reference texts:

- The advertising sources consist of adverts associated with ageing and/or older people published over the last 5 years (January 2014 to August 2019). They were sourced from three advertisement platforms (YouTube, AdForum and Ads of the World) using primary search terms. The derived advertisements (see Figure 3) were then machine-transcribed, manually checked and the resulting 4,861 words were uploaded onto the Relative Insight platform for analysis. It is worth noting that analysing the words occurring in advertisements only provide part of the picture. The context, setting, visuals, characters, symbols, colours, background audio and tone of delivery all influence the framing and cultural setting of the advertisement, and all are absent from the words we have analysed.
- The advertisements were compared to a standard English text, comprised of the British National Corpus.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

Top 10 words and phrases most likely to be used in advertisements					
The following words are significantly more prevalent in advertisements compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency - advertisements	Frequency % of total word count - advertisements (n=4,861)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
Pension	49x	10	0.2057%	41	0.0042%
Amazing	127x	7	0.1440%	11	0.0011%
Funeral	82x	7	0.1440%	17	0.0018%
Smile	20.8x	7	0.1440%	67	0.0069%
Abuse	70x	6	0.1234%	17	0.0018%
Forget	27x	6	0.1234%	44	0.0045%
Retirement	35x	4	0.0823%	23	0.0024%
Golden age	320x	3	0.0617%	2	0.0002%
Survivor	199x	3	0.0617%	3	0.0003%
Loved ones	213x	2	0.0411%	2	0.0002%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, advertisements) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

**The most prominent words and phrases in advertising sources can be grouped into two different broad themes. These two opposing themes are of a happy and fulfilled state, or of decline and death at the end of life.**

Words evoking positive emotions such as ‘amazing’ and ‘smile’ are often used, particularly in the context of enjoying retirement. These include phrases such as ‘enjoy our retirement’ or ‘worry free retirement’.

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**“And now after all these years our house has done the most amazing thing of all: given us the money to enjoy our retirement.”**

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**‘Key Retirement Television Ad’, Key, Advertisement, Oct 2014**

Ageing is also frequently associated in the advertising with death, frequently featuring words such as ‘loved one’, ‘funeral’ or ‘forget’.

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**“A funeral is never an easy time but by arranging yours in advance with a prepaid plan you allow loved ones the chance to remember your life without worrying about the cost knowing everything.”**

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**‘Co-op Funeralcare TV commercial’, Co-op Funeralcare, Advertisement, Oct 2015**

‘Pension’ is also commonly mentioned in the context of planning ahead, suggesting that at a certain age it is time for people to think about savings for the future. These advertisements often include messages that seem to be designed to provoke fear about pensions not being high enough for people to make ends meet or to sustain their current lifestyles.

Identifying older people as a vulnerable group is also a common theme within adverts. This is primarily shown by the common use of the word ‘survivor’ in the context of talking about certain illnesses.

Finally, appearance and attractiveness are also central topics, particularly within skincare advertisements. Ageing is often portrayed as something to fight against using ‘perfect’ as an ideal to strive for.

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**“New age perfect golden age created to flatter your skin tone.”**

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**‘Age Perfect Golden Age’, Let It Glow, L’Oréal Paris, Advertisement, Dec 2016**

**Top 20 adjectives and topics most likely to appear in advertising discourse (n= 4,861 words words) when compared to standard English**

Please note, when reporting these figures, we recommend that you use the below wording to ensure the data is communicated clearly:

**‘Out of the 4,861 words analysed from advertising sources referring to ageing from January 2014 to August 2019, the adjective ‘amazing’ was mentioned 7 times, when compared to standard English texts (the British National Corpus).’**

Top 20 adjectives most likely to appear in advertising discourse					
The following adjectives are significantly more prevalent in advertising discourse compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency - advertising	Frequency % of total word count - advertising (n=4,861 words)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
boring	86x	13	0.2674%	30	0.0031%
amazing	127x	7	0.1440%	11	0.0011%
alone	7x	5	0.1029%	146	0.0151%
creamy	114x	4	0.0823%	7	0.0007%
emotional	33x	4	0.0823%	24	0.0025%
perfect	12x	4	0.0823%	64	0.0066%
nice	11x	4	0.0823%	75	0.0077%
golden age	320x	3	0.0617%	2	0.0002%
cool	16x	3	0.0617%	38	0.0039%
new type	425x	2	0.0411%	1	0.0001%
real one	425x	2	0.0411%	1	0.0001%
completely new	142x	2	0.0411%	3	0.0003%
richest	133x	2	0.0411%	3	0.0003%
Norwegian	66x	2	0.0411%	6	0.0006%
darker	66x	2	0.0411%	6	0.0006%
challenging	66x	2	0.0411%	6	0.0006%
richer	50x	2	0.0411%	8	0.0008%
alright	50x	2	0.0411%	8	0.0008%
last year	39x	2	0.0411%	11	0.0011%
shy	36x	2	0.0411%	11	0.0011%

Relative difference of each adjective is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the adjective in one source (in this case, government sources) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

Please note, all occurrences of the adjective ‘boring’ originates from one advert by Comfort about a town called Boring in the USA, featuring older people. Similarly, the words ‘richest’, ‘creamy’, ‘darker’ and ‘richer’ all originated from two adverts by Cadbury’s for their Darkmilk chocolate.

Top 20 topics most likely to appear in advertising discourse (n=4,861 words) <sup>21</sup>						
The following topics are significantly more prevalent in advertising discourse compared to standard English:	Frequency	Example word 1 (most frequently occurring word in this topic)	Example word 2	Example word 3	Example word 4	Example word 5
Evaluation: Good	60	well	amazing	love	great	okay
Food	47	chocolate	meat	biscuit	fast-food	eating
Unlikely	40	can't	hesitating	impossible		
Sensory: Sight	32	see	spot	sight	saw	seeing
People	28	people	person	kids	children	guests
Drinks and alcohol	28	milk	beer	sip	bar	drink
Money and pay	26	pension	pay	savings	save	savers
Knowledgeable	24	know	news	remember	known	specialist
Like	21	enjoy	like	loved	enjoying	dear
Time: Old, new and young; age	19	age	55	over eight	57	
People: Female	17	women	woman	girls	female	women's
Happy	17	smile	fun	smiles	celebrate	smiling
Uninterested/bored/unenergetic	15	boring	lounge	dull		
Alive	13	life	lives	alive		
Stationary	10	stay	sit	sitting	sit down	
No knowledge	9	forget	unknown	mystery		
Sensory: Taste	7	tastes	flavours	flavour	sweet	taste
No obligation or necessity	6	free				
Mental actions and processes	4	memories	memory			
Time: General	4	ever	anytime			

<sup>21</sup> Topics inherent to advertising discourse and grammar were excluded, such as pronouns (you, we, I), location (here, where, there), chatty discourse (yeah, oh, ah, you know), exclusives/particularisers (just, only, alone, especially).

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## Advertising industry discourse compared to the ageing charity sector

This section analyses the prominent topics, phrases, words and emotions occurring in the advertising industry, in comparison to discourse occurring in the ageing charity sector, in association with ageing related search terms.

### Reference texts:

- The advertising sources consist of adverts associated with ageing and/or older people published over the last 5 years (January 2014 to August 2019). They were sourced from three advertisement platforms (YouTube, AdForum and Ads of the World) using primary search terms. The derived advertisements (see Figure 3) were then machine-transcribed, manually checked and the resulting 4,861 words were uploaded onto the Relative Insight platform for analysis. It is worth noting that analysing the words occurring in advertisements only provide part of the picture. The context, setting, visuals, characters, symbols, colours, background audio and tone of delivery all influence the framing and cultural setting of the advertisement, and all are absent from the words we have analysed.
- The advertisements were compared to texts from the ageing charity sector, which consist of 310,323 words scraped from the websites of the top 8 leading age-related charities in the UK. The list of these charities was approved by the Centre for Ageing Better and includes Age UK; Friends of the Elderly; Centre for Ageing Better; Independent Age; International Longevity Centre UK; Age Friendly Manchester; The Silver Line and the Campaign to End Loneliness. The dataset consisted of a website scrape of all online communications as of August 2019, which would include open access press releases, blogs and marketing material, however, does not include their advertisements.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

### Key differences:

Compared to ageing charity sector sources, advertisements featuring ageing are:

- 2.5x more likely to discuss 'death' as a topic;
- 15x more likely to use positive language and emotions in relation to ageing; and
- 43.5x more likely to mention family.

‘Mental actions and processes’, ‘loneliness’ and ‘emotional’ are topics that are apparent in both advertising and age-related charities. Advertising focuses more on memories and memory while age-related charities tend to use the word ‘mental’ more frequently, in association with mental health, mental wellbeing, mental and emotional abuse and mental capacity, reflecting a more health-related approach. Furthermore, both sectors talk about disease with similar frequency, with words such as ‘dementia’ and ‘stroke’ being prevalent in each. This may be associated with the ‘medicalisation of ageing’ which advertising stakeholders discussed as problematic.

Both sectors talk about ‘life’ however, advertising is more likely to talk about ‘death’ (x2.5) as a topic. Death is often discussed in association with funeral advertisements, talking about older people planning their deaths so that others don’t bear the cost.

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**“Most people don't have a proper funeral plan so when the inevitable happens your loved ones can be left all alone and distressed and facing a whacking great bill. In the next 15 years even the most traditional funeral can cost over eight thousand pounds.”**

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**‘Jon Cleese TV Advert’, Avalon Funeral Plans, Advertisement, Sep 2017**

Both sectors talk about retirement, pensions and finances to a similar extent, including words such as ‘pensions’, ‘retirement’, ‘savings’, ‘equity’, ‘pounds’ and ‘tax-free’.

**Adverts are more likely than age-related charities to use positive words or emotions around ageing, featuring words such as ‘smile’, ‘amazing’ and ‘enjoying life’.<sup>22</sup>**

Use of positive emotions and words - advertising					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - advertisements	Frequency % of total wordcount - advertisements (n=4,861)	Frequency - ageing charity sector	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)
<b>Words</b>					
Smile	49.5x	7	0.1440%	9	0.0029%
Amazing	18.5x	7	0.1440%	24	0.0077%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Enjoying life	∞	2	0.0411%	0	0%
<b>Topics</b>					
Happy	4x	17	0.3497%	270	0.0870%
Evaluation: Good	2.5x	12	0.2469%	337	0.1086%
Like	2x	21	0.4320%	642	0.2069%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, advertisements) by the other source (in this case, ageing charity sector).

These words, phrases and topics are 15.5x more prevalent in the advertising data related to ageing, compared to ageing charity sources. This reflects the role of advertising to create favourable stories around products or services, to be presented as desirable or aspirational – and emphasising a narrative of an enjoyable later life based on the ability to spend money in retirement.

Some of these words are adverbs describing the products or services and bringing them to life – for example ‘smile-inducing’, ‘amazing’ - while others demonstrate the slogans and positive phrases that affirm enjoyment and fun that is often used in advertising.

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**“Now after all these years our house has done the most amazing thing of all: given us the money to enjoy our retirement.”**

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**‘Key Retirement Television Ad’, Key, Advertisement, Oct 2014**

22 If a feature (e.g. word, phrase or topic) does not appear at all in the comparator source, but does appear in the primary source, it is said to occur infinitely (∞) more in the primary source than in the comparator source.

Both advertisements and age-related charities use informal vocabulary suggesting warmth and friendliness – however, this manifests itself in different ways, with advertising being more likely to use colloquial language such as ‘nice’ and ‘lovely’ whereas age-related charities are more likely to use words around caring and inclusion such as ‘accessible’ or ‘friendly’.

### Some phrases indicate aspirational language about ageing.

Phrases around ageing indicating aspirational language - advertising					
Phrases	Relative difference	Frequency - advertisements	Frequency % of total wordcount - advertisements (n=4,861)	Frequency - ageing charity sector	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)
Golden age	∞	3	0.06%	0	0%
Age perfect	∞	3	0.06%	0	0%
Enjoying life	∞	2	0.04%	0	0%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, advertisements) by the other source (in this case, ageing charity sector).

While the frequency of each is low, and therefore should be treated with caution, advertising, and beauty brands in particular, creates stories that set age in opposition with perfection.

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**“Washed out sometimes washed up never. New age perfect golden age created to flatter your skin tone. With neo calcium and imperial peony, science it's a wonderful thing. Skin feels re-cushioned with a healthy-looking rosy glow. Gold not old. It's the beginning of a new golden age.”**

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**‘Age Perfect Golden Age’, Let It Glow, L'Oréal Paris, Advertisement, Dec 2016**

Advertisements related to ageing also appear to use a number of older celebrity role models. Examples include Ross Kemp, John Cleese, Jason Donovan, Kim Wilde and James Bolam. While this could be a positive step that older people are featured in advertisements, although the representation of celebrities who are ‘successful agers’ which may encourage unattainable and damaging expectations of how one should age,

foregrounding individual responsibility over structural factors. Furthermore, Kim Wilde, Ross Kemp, and Jason Donovan are aged 58, 55 and 51 respectively, and are considered 'old' in the context of the advertisements in which they appear.

Words and topics relating to family –such as grandparents, 'kids' and 'grandkids' – are 43.5x more prevalent in advertising compared to age-related charities.

The words 'kids' and 'grandkids' are 64x more prevalent in advertisements than in sources from the ageing charity sector. This indicates a tendency for advertisements to present older people as a relative to younger people. Descriptions of family situations feature in some of the advertisements, making it more relatable to the audience, but these scenes often rely on stereotypes to tell quick, familiar stories about family roles.

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**“Thank you, Grandpa. You're welcome princess.”**

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**‘Be there’, BT Infinity, Sept 2017**

# Ageing charity sector narratives on ageing

## Summary

Discourse in the ageing charity sector is largely positive and supportive, however, it also focuses on negative topics of ageing (e.g. loneliness, disability and health conditions) which need to be addressed. Key themes and topics from stakeholders in the ageing charity sector and from text scraped from age-related charities' websites are outlined below.



Ageing charity sector stakeholders are most likely to describe **ageing as a process**, and to use phrases such as 'later life' in comparison with other sectors. They see their sector's view of ageing as more open and **progressive**. However, language featured in the discourse suggests **a greater use of specific age categories**, e.g. over 50s, or 60-74.



'**Loneliness**' features in the top 10 most prevalent words and phrases in the ageing charity sector and is discussed largely alongside mental health and social isolation. The sector also discusses loneliness in association with campaigning and volunteering. Furthermore, these charities talk about **relationships, friendships and social networks** as being important for tackling loneliness among older people. Notably, the analysis of age-related charities websites did not include their advertisements that commonly feature lonely older people, as a device for evoking pity and contribute to fundraising efforts.



Themes of **support, care and services** are notable among the ageing charity sector sources, highlighting the role of age-related charities in providing information and support for older people - but also potentially evoking suggestions of dependency. The words 'help', 'support' and 'care' are particularly notable. Some stakeholders from age-related charities acknowledge a shift of the sector's communications away from focusing on vulnerability and ageing. Stakeholders come across as eager to avoid stereotypical or patronising language.



Demographic change is described as important to the majority of ageing charity stakeholders; they feel that **people should be valued** regardless of their age, and that this issue should be considered to prepare for changing social needs.

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## Stakeholders' perceptions from the ageing charity sector

Savanta ComRes conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with 7 stakeholders from the ageing charity sector, each lasting 30-45 minutes. Advertising stakeholders (including senior leaders of Comms/Policy/Advocacy/Public Affairs of leading age-related charities in the UK) were approached from a list of stakeholders who were identified by the Centre for Ageing Better and Savanta ComRes as having not only an interest in ageing, but also the potential to influence narratives on ageing in their field.

In order to measure similarities and differences between stakeholders' perceptions and language used around ageing across various sectors and industries, Savanta ComRes asked each stakeholder to describe the narratives of ageing present within their organisation and sector more broadly. They were also asked to highlight any positive and negative representations of ageing, as well as identifying any opportunities and challenges for change. In order to better understand and analyse their underlying views and emotions around ageing, stakeholders were also asked about their personal views on ageing and why they think it is important to shift narratives on ageing.

**Of all of the sectors and industries included in the interviews, the ageing charity sector is seen to be aiming to have the most progressive approach to ageing. Stakeholders describe the sector as having a holistic understanding of older age, recognising that ageing is a subjective experience. Stakeholders recognise that there are difference stages to older age, and, unlike other sectors and industries, they aim to avoid making generalisations about older people.**

## Narratives of ageing at an organisational and sector level

Many ageing charity sector stakeholders highlight that their overarching aim when thinking and talking about ageing is to encourage a more progressive understanding of ageing, avoiding the narrative of ageing as decline. They aim to promote a 'life-course' approach to ageing, viewing ageing as a process that impacts everyone at all stages of life, as opposed to understanding ageing simply as an end stage of life.

In this context, stakeholders most often describe their sector's approach to ageing as holistic, recognising the diversity of different age groups, rather than viewing 'old people' simply as one homogenous group. They also highlight the inclusivity of the sector compared to other sectors and industries with regards to its increasing engagement with older people. Stakeholders suggest that this inclusivity contributes to a more realistic and well-rounded understanding of ageing within the sector that is based on a range of lived experiences.

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**“[Ageing is] something that we see as just a normal part of, moving through the life course, and that with it comes a range of opportunities for people when it's done well. Obviously, from a public policy point of view we tend to also work on where it does not go well for people and what we can do to remove the barriers to enable them to age well.”**

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**Angela Kitching, Age UK, Ageing charity sector**

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**“We go to great lengths to try and get the balance right between presenting a sort of a positive role model of older people while also trying to highlight some of the particular issues and challenges that they face. [...] It is very important to us that we encapsulate the sort of diversity of older people, we recognise that older people are not one homogenous group.”**

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**Estelle McCartney, Instinctif Partners, Ageing charity sector**

Ageing sector stakeholders are likely to associate their organisation that they represent with what they see as progressive phrases such as 'healthy ageing', 'active ageing' or 'ageing well', as opposed to using language associated with policy and service provision problems. Ageing charity sector stakeholders perceive their sector's language to be centred around enabling and encouraging older people, to 'age well' and to 'live better for longer.'

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**“We talk about ageing well, ageing better, healthy ageing, these are the sort of adjectives that you would hear us talk about. [...] I think probably the dominant [narrative on ageing] is how to age well. It would be how do we have healthy ageing? Good health at all ages is something we talk about as a narrative in public health. So, how are you healthy at every age? This is a nice way of talking about the life course approach to health.”**

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**Shirley Cramer, Royal Society for Public Health, Ageing charity sector**

However, many age-related charities not only provide policy direction and thought leadership, but they also offer services to older people. This creates a disconnect in the language and approach to thinking and talking about ageing which is noted by the sector stakeholders. Different age-related charities can provide advice and support on specific health conditions or issues, such as dementia or discrimination in the workplace. Thus, some stakeholders recognise a conflict between charities’ understanding of ageing as a process and the language they use discussing specific issues of interest, which might be seen as problem focused.

### **Perceptions of ageing and demographic change**

Charities and ageing sector stakeholders tend to consider it important to care about demographic change in England in order to be able to plan ahead, prepare and adapt for the resulting change in social needs. However, they are also positive about the value that this change provides to society.

Central to their thinking about demographic change is the importance of recognising older people as contributors to society, as well as enabling and encouraging older people to contribute.

Unlike other sectors and industries, they also highlight the importance of recognising the changing needs of people across all ages.

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**“We need to be able to plan for the demographic changes that are going to happen in the UK. Unless we do so honestly, and without a set of stereotypes, relying on decent evidence, then we won’t actually manage to build a society that is able to meet the needs of people of all ages.”**

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**Angela Kitching, Age UK, Ageing charity sector**

Interestingly, one respondent from the ageing sector questioned the value of having conversations focused on demographic change, due to the risk of reinforcing negative narratives about older people. Instead, she suggests focusing on the needs of individuals, as opposed to making generalisations about the needs of older people as a homogenous group.

## **Current state and likelihood of change**

There is a tension noted by stakeholders between the language used in policy and the language used in their support services and advertising. Some ageing charity sector stakeholders suggest that due to some parts of the sector's function, supporting and advising older people, communications around these issues may focus on problems. When thinking from a policy perspective, this language and approach may be seen in contrast or in opposition to embracing a holistic and inclusive approach to ageing. Some stakeholders identify this in the language and images used in campaigns for funding, although most suggest that this is moving towards a more progressive approach.

Stakeholders say that there has been a conscious shift within the sector's language, particularly the focus on avoiding patronising language or the use of images of old age as decline. This includes an increasing focus on featuring stories about activities such as volunteering or community engagement in order to demonstrate the value of older people in society. Hence, overall, sector stakeholders do think that there has been a positive development in recognising the different stages of older age and the diversity of the experiences that exist as part of that ongoing journey.

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**“What we’re concerned about is how everybody fulfils their potential, however old they are, however able bodied they are and whatever their ethnicity, and social background.”**

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**David Isaac, The Equality and Human Rights Commission,  
Ageing charity sector**

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**“I think increasingly, valuing older people, recognising that you need to value older people and their contribution to society rather than write them off at pensionable age.”**

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**Helen Walker, Carers UK, Ageing charity sector**

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## **Dominant discourse in the ageing charity sector**

**This section analyses the top 10 words and phrases, top 20 adjectives and top 20 topics appearing in the ageing charity sector, in association with ageing related search terms and compared to standard English.**

### **Reference texts:**

- The ageing charity sector sources consist of 310,323 words scraped from the websites of the top 8 leading age-related charities in the UK. The list of these charities was approved by the Centre for Ageing Better and includes Age UK; Friends of the Elderly; Centre for Ageing Better; Independent Age; International Longevity Centre UK; Age Friendly Manchester; The Silver Line and the Campaign to End Loneliness. The dataset consisted of a website scrape of all online communications as of August 2019, which would include open access press releases, blogs and marketing material, however, does not include their advertisements.
- The ageing charity sector sources were compared to a standard English text, comprised of the British National Corpus.
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

Top 10 words and phrases most likely to be used in ageing charity sector discourse about ageing.					
The following words are significantly more prevalent in ageing charity sources compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency - age-related charities	Frequency % of total word count -age-related charities (n=310,323)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
Help	12x	1445	0.4656%	393	0.0406%
Care	30x	1383	0.4457%	142	0.0147%
Support	10x	938	0.3023%	292	0.0302%
Home	7x	916	0.2952%	424	0.0438%
Need	5x	877	0.2826%	517	0.0534%
Health	21x	632	0.2037%	96	0.0099%
Services	8x	596	0.1921%	234	0.0242%
Loneliness	310x	496	0.1598%	5	0.0005%
Benefits	12x	362	0.1167%	99	0.0102%
NHS	191x	245	0.0789%	4	0.0004%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

The ageing charity discourse<sup>23</sup> on ageing is centred around perceived practical needs of older people. This suggests that ageing is predominantly associated with a state of heightened need which also means increased service provision and dependence on services due to physical or mental decline.

Words referring to the supportive function of the ageing charity sector, including 'care', 'help' and 'support', are frequently used. These are predominantly featured in the context of responding to different service needs (using words such as 'need' or 'services') that are associated with later life - most commonly: health, finances or at-home support.

23 Words and phrases were excluded if: they are included in the name of an ageing charity (e.g. 'independent age', 'ageing better'); or were deemed irrelevant (e.g. 'information', 'people'),

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**“We aim to provide life-enhancing services and vital support to people in later life.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

Health is a central theme within the ageing charity sector, both in the context of personal physical or mental health and in the context of caring for others, such as older people caring for their partners or family members caring for older relatives.

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**“If you look after a partner, relative or friend who is disabled or ill due to physical or mental health, you are a carer, even if you don’t think of yourself as one. Find out about the emotional, practical and financial support available to you.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

References to the ‘NHS’ are common, primarily in the context of physical health and the costs associated with accessing NHS dental or eye-care services, or eligibility for certain NHS-benefits that are assessed based on physical conditions.

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**“If your health condition makes public transport or getting in and out of a car difficult, you may be able to get free NHS transport.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

Frequent references to ‘loneliness’ illustrate that references to health are not limited solely to physical health; loneliness is frequently discussed in the context of mental wellbeing.

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**“Long term loneliness could contribute to later depression and other health problems. Your GP should be able to direct you to local services that can help.”**

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**Campaign to End Loneliness website, Age-related charity, 2019**

The common use of words such as ‘benefits’, ‘services’ and ‘home’<sup>24</sup> suggests a focus on older people’s dependence on outside support such as with finances or in their homes. ‘Benefits’ and ‘services’ are covered as part of general information on what support older people may be eligible for.

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**“We provide professional and friendly help with day-to-day domestic tasks to help you stay in your home for longer.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

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**“Our aim is to help make every new home accessible and adaptable in order to provide diverse housing options for people approaching later life.”**

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**Centre for Ageing Better website, Age-related charity, 2019**

Financial security is also a central theme, including for example providing advice on how to recognise or avoid scams. This suggests concerns that older people are seen as an easy target for fraudsters.

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**“Fraudsters will try different ways to persuade you to part with your pension cash from promising opportunities that are simply too good to be true, to giving you false information.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

### **Top 20 adjectives and topics most likely to appear in ageing charity sources (n=310,323 words) when compared to standard English**

Please note, when reporting these figures, we recommend that you use the below wording to ensure the data is communicated clearly:

‘Out of the 310,323 words analysed from 8 age-related charities’ websites in August 2019, the adjective ‘independent’ was mentioned 370 times when compared to standard English texts (the British National Corpus).’

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24 ‘Home’ can appear in the context of ‘care home’, ‘home care’, ‘home help’, ‘home discount’, ‘accessible homes’, ‘home fees’, ‘home insurance’, ‘warm home’, ‘home improvement’, ‘suitable home’ or ‘home safety’.

## Ageing charity sector narratives on ageing

Top 20 adjectives most likely to appear in ageing charity discourse					
The following adjectives are significantly more prevalent in ageing charity discourse compared to standard English:	Relative difference	Frequency – age-related charities	Frequency % of total word count – age-related charities (n=310,323 words)	Frequency - standard English	Frequency % of total wordcount - standard English
older	69x	1643	0.5294%	74	0.0076%
older people	1371x	849	0.2652%	2	0.0002%
local	7x	708	0.2281%	306	0.0316%
social	7x	424	0.1366%	184	0.0190%
free	4x	396	0.1276%	322	0.0333%
ageing	176x	395	0.1273%	7	0.0007%
independent	13x	370	0.1192%	91	0.0094%
personal	8x	330	0.1063%	134	0.0138%
able	4x	318	0.1025%	235	0.0243%
better	3x	309	0.0996%	293	0.0303%
online	12x	260	0.0838%	65	0.0067%
eligible	60x	210	0.0677%	11	0.0011%
later life	633x	196	0.0612%	1	0.0001%
silver	9x	183	0.0590%	66	0.0068%
lonely	25x	153	0.0493%	19	0.0020%
healthy	14x	137	0.0441%	31	0.0032%
elderly	15x	135	0.0435%	28	0.0029%
local council	134x	129	0.0416%	3	0.0003%
caring	21x	106	0.0342%	16	0.0017%
mental	22x	99	0.0319%	14	0.0014%

Relative difference of each adjective is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the adjective in one source (in this case, age-related charities sources) by the other source (in this case, standard English).

Please note, the adjective 'better' is likely to be overinflated since the Centre for Ageing Better's website was analysed. Similarly, the adjective 'silver' is overinflated – largely sourced from Silver Line's website.

Top 20 topics most likely to appear in ageing charities discourse (n=310,323 words)						
The following topics are significantly more prevalent in age-related charities' discourse compared to standard English:	Frequency	Example word 1 (most frequently occurring word in this topic)	Example word 2	Example word 3	Example word 4	Example word 5
Helping	7555	help	care	support	services	benefits
Time: Old; age, grown-up	4451	older	ageing	age	aged	ages
Planning	3278	want	campaign	will	plan	programme
People	3033	people	person	population	and other	children
Giving	2656	provide	offer	give	provided	volunteering
Money and pay	2653	pension	credit	income	allowance	fundraising
Work and employment	2385	work	working	volunteers	staff	volunteer
Residence	2296	home	living	live	residents	homes
Knowledgeable	2017	information	know	experience	known	remember
Medicines and medical treatment	1754	GP	hospital	treatment	doctor	medical
Not part of a group	1346	loneliness	personal	lonely	independent	alone
Disease	1334	dementia	symptoms	disabled	illness	flu
Information technology and computing	1271	website	online	it	internet	websites
Money: Debts	1136	pay	loss	paying	paid	debt
Personal relationship: General	1004	friends	meet	partner	partners	friend
Alive	759	life	lives	live	life course	lives'
Telecommunications	717	email	helpline	telephone	phone	phone calls
Health and disease	702	health	mental health	health professional	health professionals	influenza
Learning	605	find out	learn	learning	learned	finding out
No obligation or necessity	437	free	exempt	shouldn't	optional	exemption

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## Ageing charity sector discourse compared to government

This section analyses the prominent topics, phrases, words and emotions occurring in the ageing charity sector, in comparison to discourse occurring in sources from other sectors including the government sector, the health and social care sector and the advertising industry, in association with ageing related search terms.

### Reference texts:

- The ageing charity sector sources consist of 310,323 words scraped from the websites of the top 8 leading age-related charities in the UK. The list of these charities was approved by the Centre for Ageing Better and includes Age UK; Friends of the Elderly; Centre for Ageing Better; Independent Age; International Longevity Centre UK; Age Friendly Manchester; The Silver Line and the Campaign to End Loneliness. The dataset consisted of a website scrape of all online communications as of August 2019, which would include open access press releases, blogs and marketing material, however, does not include their advertisements.
- The ageing charity sector sources were compared to government sector sources (Hansard scripts, MPs' Twitter accounts, and open access policy documents), health and social care sources (open access policy documents from the top 6 health and social care organisations in the UK) and the advertising industry (a selection of adverts from three advertisement platforms).
- See the Methodology section (Sectors and industries used for comparison) for more information.

**Key differences:**

Compared to government discourse, sources from the ageing charity sector are:

- 6.5x more likely to discuss ageing in association with social inclusion and community;
- 33x more likely (and 4.5x more likely than advertisements) to use caring, helpful and supportive language;
- 4x more likely to discuss ageing and everyday life (e.g. food, accommodation and clothing);
- 12x more likely to discuss health and disease; and
- 4x more likely to categorise people into age groups (e.g. over 50s).

Compared to health and social care documents, sources from the ageing charity sector are:

- 10x more likely to discuss social and emotional aspects of ageing (e.g. personal relationships);
- 6x more likely to discuss services that older people are eligible for (e.g. TV licenses);
- 16.5x more likely to discuss financial issues and offer financial advice (e.g. about benefits and pensions);
- 9x more likely to discuss death;
- 3.5x more likely to warn about scams or mistreatment against older people; and
- 6x more likely to discuss ageing using with phrases such as 'getting older' and 'later life'.

**Age-related charities are 33x more likely than both government and advertising sources to use language such as ‘help’ and ‘taking care’, suggesting a more supportive position from the charities.**

Language around caring or helping - age-related charities v. government sector sources					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - ageing charity sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)	Frequency - government sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - government sector sources (n=2,779,018)
<b>Words</b>					
Help	6x	1445	0.466%	2202	0.0792%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Taking care	113x	52	0.016%	4	0.0001%
May need	12x	71	0.022%	52	0.0019%
<b>Topics</b>					
Helping	2x	7555	2.435%	36163	1.3013%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, government sector sources).

For ‘taking care’, some of this language relates to security systems for older people (called ‘Taking Care’) which may be skewing some of the prevalence of this language in the data set, however, it is also an example of how supportive language is used in communications marketed at older people. Other examples include using this phrase to refer to older people and their loss of independence and self-sufficiency. This theme continues into some of the other language in this cluster – for example, that older people ‘may need’ to make changes to remain independent or think about pensions or other ways that they may be affected by growing older e.g. driving or health conditions.

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**“If you're reading this, then the issue you're worried about might be more complicated. Perhaps the person you know seems not to be taking care of themselves or their home in the same way as they used to. Or you might have noticed changes in their personality or behaviour.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

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**“Attendance Allowance is a benefit for older people who may need extra help to remain independent at home, because of an illness or disability.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

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**“Making some simple changes to your home could make it more comfortable for you. It’s not always easy to know where to start especially if you’ve lived in your house a long time. We’re here to help you make the choices that feel right for you.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

This theme is also evident when compared to advertising sources (see table below), suggesting it to be a prominent theme within the language used by the ageing charity sector. For example, compared to advertising, age-related charities are 4.5x more likely to use language around being supportive, services, caring, information, help or benefits.

## Ageing charity sector narratives on ageing

Supportive language - age-related charities v. advertising sources					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - ageing charity sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)	Frequency - advertisements	Frequency % of total wordcount - advertisements (n=4,861)
<b>Words</b>					
Information	∞	861	0.28%	0	0%
Services	∞	596	0.19%	0	0%
Age-friendly	∞	542	0.17%	0	0%
Benefits	∞	362	0.12%	0	0%
Community	∞	265	0.09%	0	0%
Support	7.5x	938	0.30%	2	0.04%
Care	7x	1383	0.45%	3	0.06%
Help	4x	1445	0.47%	6	0.12%
Home	3x	916	0.30%	5	0.10%
How	3x	1229	0.40%	7	0.14%
<b>Topics</b>					
Helping	4x	7555	2.43%	29	0.60%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, advertising sources).

**Linked to help and support, age-related charity websites are 6x more likely than health and social care documents to use language around services that older people are eligible for.**

Services for older people - age-related charities v. health and social care documents					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - ageing charity sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)	Frequency - health and social care sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - health and social care sources (n=385,479)
<b>Words</b>					
Entitled	12x	123	0.040%	13	0.003%
State pension	9x	133	0.043%	18	0.005%
Eligible	5.5x	210	0.068%	49	0.013%
<b>Topics</b>					
The Media: TV, radio and cinema	5x	318	0.102%	76	0.020%
No obligation or necessity	2x	437	0.141%	247	0.064%
Suitable	1.5x	607	0.196%	516	0.134%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, health and social care sources).

Words like ‘eligible’, ‘entitled’, ‘suitable’ and ‘free’ are associated with this topic. As well as state pension, this also includes TV licences and other benefits and services aimed at older people. The frequent use of the second person ‘you’ further demonstrates that age-related charities appear to be communicating to older adults rather than younger adults.

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**“Our benefits calculator can help you find out if you can claim Pension Credit, which would mean you’d be eligible for a free over 75s TV licence if the planned changes go ahead.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

Similar comparisons are clear when compared with advertising, for example the word ‘credit’ is infinitely ( $\infty$ ) more prevalent in charity sources (294 occurrences) compared to advertising (0 occurrences).

**Age-related charities talk more about social networks and are more likely to use language that suggests inclusion compared to government sector sources.**

Language around inclusion and social networks - age-related charities v. government sector sources					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - ageing charity sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)	Frequency - government sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - government sector sources (n=2,779,018)
<b>Words</b>					
Volunteer	22.8x	188	0.061%	74	0.003%
Friends	6.4x	312	0.101%	438	0.016%
Community	1.5x	265	0.085%	1550	0.056%
<b>Topics</b>					
Not part of a group	3.5x	1346	0.434%	3479	0.125%
Informal/ Friendly	2.8x	278	0.090%	880	0.032%
Inclusion	1.4x	1025	0.330%	6652	0.239%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, government sector sources).

Themes of community, friends, inclusion and volunteering as well as loneliness and independence (included in ‘not part of a group’) are 6.5x more prevalent among age-related charities than among government sector sources.

Loneliness is a common thread running through some of these topics – for example asking people to volunteer as a way to help reduce loneliness amongst older people or providing older people with an online community as a way to make friends.

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**“As you get older it’s common to find that your social circle starts to shrink. But it’s never too late to have a new friendship.”**

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**Independent Age website, Age-related charity, 2019**

“Spending time with other people can prevent you from feeling lonely or anxious. If you find that you are no longer able to do the things you used to do, try to develop new hobbies and interests or think about becoming a volunteer.”

#### Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019

Sometimes the word ‘friends’ is present in the context of grief and bereavement or planning a funeral.

“A funeral allows friends and family to say goodbye and celebrate your life. Talking about what you would like and putting some plans in place can reassure your family and friends and means your funeral is more likely to reflect your wishes.”

#### Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019

Similarly, age-related charities are 10x more likely than health and social care documents to focus on social and emotional aspects, for example friendships, personal relationships, beliefs and religion.

Social and emotional aspects - age-related charities v. health and social care documents					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - ageing charity sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)	Frequency - health and social care sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - health and social care sources (n=385,479)
<b>Words</b>					
Friends	6.5x	312	0.101%	60	0.016%
Friendship	51.6x	83	0.027%	2	0.001%
<b>Topics</b>					
Not part of a group	2.2x	1346	0.434%	758	0.197%
Thought, belief	1.6x	1411	0.455%	1067	0.277%
Personal relationship	1.8x	1004	0.324%	697	0.181%
Religion and the supernatural	5x	173	0.056%	42	0.011%
Emotional actions, states and processes	2.5x	114	0.037%	57	0.015%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, health and social care sources).

Topics about social isolation and loneliness are also apparent in other comparisons which involve age-related charities. Some of the language around ‘friendship’ picks up on specific initiatives run by age-related charities to tackle loneliness or focus on ensuring that older people are not lonely by encouraging them to reach out to their social networks.

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**“Winter can make us feel more isolated, but there are lots of ways to keep in touch. From email and text message to a good old-fashioned post, try to find ways to reach out to friends and family.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

Others focus on the emotional aspects that may come with life changes, some of which may affect older people.

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**“Adjusting to living by yourself has its ups and downs, and there may be emotional issues you need to deal with.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

Language included in the ‘religion and supernatural’ topic also focus on social inclusion and community with ‘Christmas’ and ‘church’ being among the most referenced aspects of this topic. Notably, instances of these words sometimes overlaps with loneliness or Christmas volunteering, for example.

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**“Many said that the small hours of the night, and the long hours of Sundays were very bleak, if you are alone. Christmas, they said, was particularly painful.”**

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**The Silver Line website, Age-related charity, 2019**

This again may be linked to older people being a primary audience for age-related charities, whereas health and social care documents may focus on influencing policy and parliamentarians in their work.

Notably, positive emotions around ageing are more prevalent among age-related charities compared to the government sector. Topics associated with the word like – which include ‘enjoy’ and ‘loved’ – and happy, pleased or celebration

– which include ‘thrilled’, ‘fun’ and ‘delighted’ are 4x more prevalent among age-related charities than government sector sources. The reason for this may be to present ageing in a positive way, particularly given that their audience is more likely to be older people, and to offer advice, support and inspiration to older people. This reflects findings in the government discourse where negative emotions were found to be more common than in ageing charity discourse.

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### “More ways to stay happy and healthy this winter.”

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#### Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019

**Alongside topics of friendship and social connection, age-related charities are 4x more likely to focus on aspects of everyday life compared to government sector sources, for example food, accommodation and clothing, perhaps due to age-related charities often offering resources and advice to older people.**

Aspects or themes of everyday life - age-related charities v. government sector sources					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - ageing charity sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)	Frequency - government sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - government sector sources (n=2,779,018)
<b>Words</b>					
Home	6x	916	0.295%	1403	0.050%
<b>Topics</b>					
Food	7x	990	0.319%	1288	0.046%
Cleaning and personal care	5.7x	235	0.076%	372	0.013%
Drinks and alcohol	5x	298	0.096%	541	0.019%
Games	5x	66	0.021%	115	0.004%
Clothes and personal belongings	2.8x	366	0.118%	1186	0.043%
Residence	2.7x	2296	0.740%	7585	0.273%
Relationships: Intimacy and sex	2.4x	158	0.051%	600	0.022%
Entertainment generally	1.7x	426	0.137%	2245	0.081%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, government sector sources).

Many of these topics relate to the essentials needed for living. Within some of these topics – for instance food, which includes words such as ‘meals’, ‘fruit’, ‘diet’ and ‘vegetables’ – instances of language is in relation to advice, often using a didactic tone, to give guidance relating to staying healthier for longer or to prevent illness. This is also a theme across other topics, such as clothing and personal care, and drinks and alcohol.

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**“Make sure you drink enough, even if you’re not thirsty, to replace fluids lost through sweating. Aim to drink about eight glasses of water or diluted fruit juice, spread throughout the day and evening and more if it’s very hot.”**

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**Independent Age website, Age-related charity, 2019**

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**“We’ve partnered with the British Dietetic Association (BDA) to highlight the importance of good nutrition and hydration in older age. Download our helpful guide to good nutrition and hydration. Download five easy tips to improve nutrition and hydration in older age.”**

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**Friends of the Elderly website, Age-related charity, 2019**

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**“Always wear shoes or slippers, and never walk indoors in bare feet, socks or tights.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

Other topics explore help and care that older people can access, for example with day to day care or helping accommodation to be more accessible to people’s needs.

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**“Making adaptations to your home can help you live there independently for longer. They could help you with using the bathroom, managing stairs, or using kitchen equipment safely, for instance. Small adaptations include grab rails, a bath seat or a perching stool in the kitchen. Large ones might be fitting a stairlift or installing a downstairs bathroom. You may be eligible for financial help to pay for these.”**

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**Independent Age website, Age-related charity, 2019**

That said, other topics focus on more leisurely aspects of people’s lives – for example games and entertainment and using language such as ‘party’, ‘hobbies’ and ‘football’, largely involving activities that older people can get involved in, encouraging them to be active, and increase health, and reduce social exclusion.

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**“Lots of us have spent our lives on the move running around after children, holding down busy jobs and keeping up with friends and hobbies. And while it can be nice to take the rush out of life as we get older, there's no reason our age should mean we stop altogether.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

Similar comparisons are clear when compared with advertising, for example the word ‘housing’ is infinitely ( $\infty$ ) more prevalent in charity sources (299 occurrences) compared to advertising (0 occurrences).

This discourse suggests that age-related charities not only provide practical day to day support and health advice but are also focused on providing suggestions to enable enjoyment of a good later life.

**Age-related charities are 16.5x more likely than health and social care documents to contain words linked to financial matters associated with ageing.**

Financial language around ageing - age-related charities v. health and social care documents					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - ageing charity sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)	Frequency - health and social care sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - health and social care sources (n=385,479)
<b>Words</b>					
Pension	22x	376	0.1212%	21	0.0054%
Money	4.5x	382	0.1231%	104	0.0270%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Equity release	∞	81	0.0253%	0	0%
Raise money	∞	31	0.0097%	0	0%
Pension pot	∞	31	0.0097%	0	0%
Tax support	∞	22	0.0069%	0	0%
Jobcentre Plus	∞	21	0.0066%	0	0%
Housing benefit	44.7x	34	0.0106%	1	0.0002%
Pension credit	19.6x	119	0.0372%	8	0.0019%
Council tax	14.5x	77	0.0240%	7	0.0017%
<b>Topics</b>					
Debt-free	57x	46	0.0148%	1	0.0003%
Unemployed	9x	251	0.0809%	35	0.0091%
Expensive	3.x	64	0.0206%	25	0.0065%
Money: Debts	2x	1136	0.3661%	728	0.1889%
Money and pay	1.5x	2653	0.8549%	2332	0.6050%
Money: Cost and price	1.4x	760	0.2449%	699	0.1813%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, health and social care sources).

This may reinforce the idea that age-related charities offer resource to older people looking for financial advice and support. Some of the language is related to money and debt, housing (e.g. benefits, council tax and equity release), or retirement.

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**“Think about other ways that you can pay back the interest on your mortgage. The letter you receive from DWP will outline your options, which include using other savings or investments to repay your mortgage, moving to a smaller property or seeking help from friends or family.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

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**“Don’t panic if you’re behind on these bills. Seek advice as soon as possible so that you and your debt adviser can work out a plan of action to repay the money.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

On the other hand, discourse around pensions is more prevalent in government sector sources than in sources from age-related charities. This suggests that while the government sector focuses on the broader picture of pensions, charities focus on individual personal finances directed towards those retiring, whereas this is less of a focus for health and social care documents.

Topics of ‘work and employment’ are 3.5x more prevalent in ageing charity sector sources compared to advertising, suggesting a recurring theme that the charities place an emphasis on people’s financial and employment status.

**Health-related themes, topics and language are 12x more common in age-related charities than government sector sources.**

Health-related themes and language - age-related charities v. government sector sources					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - ageing charity sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)	Frequency - government sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - government sector sources (n=2,779,018)
<b>Words</b>					
Dementia	2.5x	221	0.0712%	835	0.0300%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Blood pressure	50x	23	0.0072%	4	0.0001%
Needs assessment	29x	30	0.0094%	9	0.0003%
Mental capacity	14x	48	0.0150%	30	0.0011%
<b>Topics</b>					
Mental actions and processes	4.x	208	0.0670%	447	0.0161%
Anatomy and physiology	2x	1255	0.4044%	5598	0.2014%
Medicines and treatment	2x	1754	0.5652%	8536	0.3072%
Investigate, examine, test	1.5x	1446	0.4660%	8925	0.3212%
Health and disease	1.5x	702	0.2262%	3856	0.1388%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, government sector sources).

Staying healthy in later life is a noticeable theme throughout other areas of discourse, with activities such as hobbies or friends being presented as ways to improve health and wellbeing of older people. Therefore, topics relating to mental and physical health strongly emerge. It also encapsulates language around GPs, hospital, medication, and treatment as part of this topic. Interestingly, with an increasing focus on mental health in recent years, this also emerges as a theme in terms of good mental health as well as dementia and mental capacity for older people.

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**“You may need to make longer-term plans if, for example, you have been diagnosed with dementia and you may lose the mental capacity to make your own decisions in the future.”**

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### Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019

This supports the conclusion that age-related charities are more focused on support for older people with specific health needs, compared to the government sector who may be more focused on overall policy ideas.

The prevalence of language relating to health is understandably more prevalent within health and social care documents. For example, ‘health’ and ‘NHS’ are mentioned infinitely ( $\infty$ ) more in the ageing charity sector documents compared to no mentions in the advertising sources.

**In line with themes of health, age-related charities are also 9x more likely to include end of life themes and words.**

Language around end of life - age-related charities v. health and social care documents					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - ageing charity sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)	Frequency - health and social care sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - health and social care sources (n=385,479)
<b>Words</b>					
Funeral	$\infty$	57	0.0184%	0	0%
<b>Phrases</b>					
Loved one	16.5x	25	0.0078%	2	0.0005%
<b>Topics</b>					
Dead	1.5x	374	0.1205%	321	0.0833%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, health and social care sources).

Reference to death is 1.5x more prevalent in age-related charities compared to health and social care documents. While in health and social care documents it is likely to appear in a medical sense, within age-related charities words such as ‘bereavement’ and ‘funeral’ are commonly referenced within this topic. Much of the language around end of life from age-related charities appears to be in a practical sense with the websites of age-related charities acting as a resource and tool to provide information on aspects like funerals or bereavement benefits. However, as previously outlined, this is not devoid of social and emotional aspects.

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**“An unexpected death may need to be reported to a coroner. A coroner is a doctor or lawyer responsible for investigating unexpected deaths. They may call for a post-mortem or inquest to find out the cause of death. This may take some time, so the funeral may need to be delayed.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

Not all of the quotations around the phrase ‘loved one’ are to do with death and the end of life, but some are in relation to this:

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**“Making a donation in memory of a loved one is a wonderful way to celebrate their life.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

**Another theme that emerges is the vulnerability of older people. For example, age-related charities are 3.5x more likely than health and social care documents to warn older people of scams or mistreatment of older people.**

<b>Mistreatment of older people - age-related charities v. health and social care documents</b>					
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Relative difference</b>	<b>Frequency - ageing charity sector sources</b>	<b>Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)</b>	<b>Frequency - health and social care sources</b>	<b>Frequency % of total wordcount - health and social care sources (n=385,479)</b>
Unethical	7x	262	0.084%	45	0.012%
Crime	4.5x	146	0.047%	42	0.011%
Ethical	2.5x	178	0.057%	86	0.022%
Failure	2x	183	0.059%	112	0.029%
Damaging and destroying	2x	180	0.058%	110	0.029%
Violent/ angry	1.4x	145	0.047%	131	0.034%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, health and social care sources).

'No respect' has been excluded from the results due the small sample size of 15 instances of this word in social media sources.

These topics commonly occur in ageing charity sources in the financial sense of being defrauded – with words such as ‘scam’, ‘fraudster’, ‘criminal’, ‘damage’ and ‘victim’ being used. Some of these are warnings to older people to look out for those who may commit online or pension fraud, for example, or advice on how to avoid it. However, the frequent occurrence of this topic in not only charities websites but also online news articles (see Media narratives on ageing) may inadvertently contribute to the representation of older people as vulnerable and helpless as well as susceptible to fraud or scams due to their perceived lack of ‘know-how’ with technology.

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**“Postal scams are getting more sophisticated and it can be difficult to spot the difference between scam mail, junk mail and offers from legitimate companies.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

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**“You may be worried that someone you know has become victim to a scam. Look out for these warning signs...”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

Another dominant theme within this is the mistreatment of older people within a treatment or care setting, for example, ‘abuse’, ‘humiliating’ and ‘degrading’. Some of this language is associated with informing people of their rights and expectations with regards to care and dignity. However, this may also highlight experiences of ageism more generally and be a negative reinforcement of declining health and increasing dependency with older age.

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**“Older people should be able to live safely and with dignity in good quality, warm housing that meets their individual needs, free from exploitation and abuse.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

**Age-related charities are 6x more likely than health and social care documents to contain language that describes ageing with phrases like ‘getting older’ and ‘later life’, suggesting a broader conversation around ageing.**

Language associated with age - age-related charities v. health and social care sources					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - ageing charity sector sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - ageing charity sector (n=310,323)	Frequency - health and social care sources	Frequency % of total wordcount - health and social care sources (n=385,479)
<b>Phrases</b>					
Get older	20x	61	0.019%	4	0.001%
Later life	2x	196	0.061%	118	0.028%
<b>Topics</b>					
Time: Old; grown-up	3x	214	0.069%	764	0.198%
Time: Old, new and young	2.5x	2037	0.656%	950	0.246%
Alive	1.5x	759	0.245%	626	0.162%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, ageing charity sector sources) by the other source (in this case, health and social care sources).

Reflecting findings from the stakeholder interviews, the charities' websites analysed were more likely to associate ageing with a journey rather than thinking about ageing as simply a destination (i.e. being 'old'), using phrases such as 'get older' and 'later life' in association with changes experienced during the ageing process. This discourse largely appears to be positive, referring to ageing as an opportunity to engage with ever-changing interests and activities. However, sometimes the discourse focuses on health issues and decline, using language that indicates the provision of support or advice for people:

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**“Loneliness can be felt by people of all ages, but as we get older, risk factors that might lead to loneliness begin to increase and converge”**

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**Campaign to End Loneliness website, Age-related charity, 2019**

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**“As you get older your health may change and with it your needs. Being prepared can help you stay healthy for longer, understand and deal with changes in your health, get the right care and know your rights when you do need healthcare.”**

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**Independent Age website, Age-related charity, 2019**

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**“As we get older, our muscle strength and balance reduce, which can lead to a fall. Exercises designed to improve muscle strength can reduce your risk of a fall by improving your posture, coordination and balance.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

However, in other contexts, the discourse focuses on continuing or empowering older people to do things regardless of ageing or staying socially connected:

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**“Loneliness can have a devastating impact on our lives, but there are many ways we can make sure we stay connected with the people and communities around us as we get older.”**

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**Friends of the Elderly website, Age-related charity, 2019**

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**“Volunteering isn’t just crucial for sustaining the activities of many organisations, it’s also a really important way for people to stay in touch with the people around them and to keep doing the things they love in later life.”**

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**Centre for Ageing Better website, Age-related charity, 2019**

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**“You're never too old to enjoy a favourite hobby, try out a new activity or even set out on the open road! Here, you'll find lots of information to match your interests from getting a pet to driving in later life.”**

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**Age UK website, Age-related charity, 2019**

Like with government sector sources and health and social care documents, ageing sector charities are also significantly more likely to use the phrase ‘older people’ than advertising sources. ‘Older people’ is infinitely ( $\infty$ ) more prevalent with 849 instances of this phrase occurring in this language set compared to 0 instances in advertising sources.

# Methodology

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## Stakeholder interviews

Savanta ComRes conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with 20 expert stakeholders, each lasting 30-45 minutes. Stakeholders were approached based on a sample of senior decision-makers identified as having an interest in ageing, and the potential to influence their sector's narrative on ageing. This sample was identified by the Centre for Ageing Better and supplemented by Savanta ComRes.

The breakdown of interviews by sector was as follows.

**Government sector stakeholders** (6 interviews): Parliamentarians, senior government officials, MPs, Peers policymakers who have a stake in ageing

**Media industry stakeholders** (4 interviews): Journalists/presenters with an interest in ageing/diversity or human rights

**Advertising industry stakeholders** (3 interviews): Senior representatives at advertising organisations or advertising agencies

**Ageing charity sector stakeholders** (7 interviews): Senior leaders of Comms/Policy/Advocacy/Public Affairs of leading ageing and (1) human rights charity in the UK

In order to compare similarities and differences between the language around ageing within various organisations and sectors/industries, Savanta ComRes designed a discussion guide comprising 12 key questions, and several sub-questions guiding the discussion, that was used during all interviews in order to ensure the comparability of responses. Savanta ComRes asked each stakeholder to describe the narratives of ageing present within their organisation and sector more broadly. They were also asked to highlight any positive and negative representations of ageing, as well as identifying any opportunities and challenges for change. In order to better understand and analyse their underlying views and emotions around ageing, stakeholders were also asked about their personal views on ageing and why they think it is important to shift narratives on ageing.

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### Discourse analysis

For the discourse analysis, Savanta ComRes used a cutting-edge text analysis platform called Relative Insight. This tool was developed over the course of 10 years, originally designed to identify and track criminals and paedophiles in online chat forums for children and teenagers, requiring a high level of language sensitivity. The entire approach of the Relative Insight tool is built on a comparison between sources, or set of sources, against a comparison source, or set of comparison sources, to provide relative differences, similarities, and frequencies in terms of topics, phrases, words, grammar and sentiment appearing in the compared sources.

In this project, the sources for comparison consisted of data from selected sectors/industries identified by the Centre for Ageing Better. These sectors, six in total, are assumed to influence the way the UK public speak and think about ageing. All selected sectors and industries are built by merging a combination of carefully selected text sources which are defined in more detail further in this section and summarised in Figure 5.

Whilst all sectors and industries are not directly compared against each other, we have built combinations of sectors to analyse and interpret the language used within each of these. For example, the comparison between ageing charity campaigns and the government sector brings a better understanding of the language used when aiming to influence the general public and the sector itself.

The sectors and industries compared with the Relative Insight tool are the following:

#### **Narrative ecosystem 1 – The media:**

1. Online media v. Social media
2. Tabloid media v. Broadsheet media

#### **Narrative ecosystem 2 – The sector:**

3. Ageing charity sector v. Government sector
4. Ageing charity sector v. Advertising industry
5. Ageing charity sector v. Health and social care sector

The text sources used to build these sectors/industries fall within these three types of data input:

- Data drawn from a number of existing established search tools in the industry used to gather media & social media data, e.g. NetBase, Meltwater, Pulsar;

- Web-scraping tools to gather text data using a defined search from a specified set of website/s (e.g. as intended for Hansard, ageing sector charity websites);
- Text documents which can be uploaded onto the Relative Insight platform; e.g. policy documents, press releases.

The timeframe for this analysis is by default the last 12 months; from September 2018 until August 2019. This timeframe gives us a robust set of data, which is focused, current and pertinent, and enables us to control for seasonal variations in the data. Setting the same time frame for all datasets is good practice for analysis of different narratives alongside each other.

However, in some cases the timeframe was extended to make sure sufficient documentation was collected to reach a robust number of words for detailed comparisons and conclusions. See Figure 5 for the timeframes per sector.

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## Sectors and industries used for comparison

Savanta ComRes used the Relative Insight platform to run a comparative analysis on sectors and industries identified as playing a key role in determining the dominant narratives on ageing. We used a defined set of search terms (see Figure 6) within each sector to search for sources relating to ageing.

### Government and policy sector

The government sector texts consist of 2,779,018 words and were sourced from three sources: **Hansard** scripts, MPs' Twitter accounts, and open access policy documents.

Firstly, Relative Insight used search terms to identify sections in **Hansard** - the official record of debates among Members of Parliament (MPs) in the House of Commons and Peers in the House of Lords - which relate to ageing. Defined search terms (see Figure 6) were used to identify sections in Hansard over the last 2.5 years that relate to ageing and demographic change.

Secondly, Savanta ComRes used Meltwater, a global media monitoring tool, to access tweets from all active **MPs' Twitter** accounts over the last 12 months that featured the defined search terms relating to ageing. Since the data collection for this language set was conducted on the 10th September, the data reflects tweets of the MPs who held their roles on this date. The full list of MPs' Twitter accounts that we conducted the search among are listed below. This is not to be shared outside of Centre for Ageing Better, Equally Ours or Savanta ComRes.

author:"jeremycorbyn" OR author:"SKinnock" OR author:"GutoAberconwy"  
 OR author:"KirstySNP" OR author:"RossThomson\_MP" OR  
 author:"NeilGrayMP" OR author:"LeoDochertyUK" OR author:"morton\_  
 wendy" OR author:"MarkTamiMP" OR author:"nigelmills" OR  
 author:"Kirstene4Angus" OR author:"HywelPlaidCymru" OR  
 author:"BrendanOHaraSNP" OR author:"nickherbertmp" OR  
 author:"GloriaDePiero" OR author:"DamianGreen" OR  
 author:"AngelaRayner" OR author:"DLidington" OR author:"VictoriaPrentis"  
 OR author:"daviddaguidmp" OR author:"margarethodge" OR  
 author:"DanJarvisMp" OR author:"Steph\_Peacock" OR  
 author:"JWoodcockMP" OR author:"MariaMillerUK" OR  
 author:"JohnMannMP" OR author:"Wera\_Hobhouse" OR  
 author:"TracyBrabin" OR author:"Marshadecordova" OR  
 author:"yasminmpbedford" OR author:"GrobinsonDUP" OR  
 author:"NigelDoddsDUP" OR author:"little\_pengelly" OR  
 author:"PaulMaskeyMP" OR author:"coyleneil" OR author:"John2Win" OR  
 author:"annietrev" OR author:"rushanaraali" OR author:"grahamstuart" OR  
 author:"HuwMerriman" OR author:"DavidEvennett" OR  
 author:"frankfieldteam" OR author:"PreetKGillMP" OR author:"RogerGodsiff"  
 OR author:"LiamByrneMp" OR author:"ShabanaMahmood" OR author:"  
 RichardBurdenMp" OR author:"khalid4PB" OR author:"steve\_mccabe" OR  
 author:"jessphillips" OR author:"HelenGoodmanMP" OR author:"Kate\_  
 HollernMP" OR author:"PaulMaynardUK" OR author:"GordonMarsden" OR  
 author:"BlaenauGwentMP" OR author:"LizTwistMP" OR author:"NickBibbUK"  
 OR author:"DavidCrausby" OR author:"YasminQureshiMP" OR  
 author:"CGreenUK" OR author:"Peter\_Dowd" OR author:"mattwarman" OR  
 author:"Tobias\_Ellwood" OR author:"ConorBurnsUK" OR  
 author:"DrPhillipLeeMP" OR author:"Imran\_HussainMP" OR  
 author:"JudithCummins" OR author:"NazShahBfd" OR  
 author:"JamesCleverly" OR author:"DawnButlerBrent" OR  
 author:"BarryGardiner" OR author:"RuthCadbury" OR author:"alexburghart"  
 OR author:"MadelineMoon" OR author:"Lloyd\_rm" OR  
 author:"CarolineLucas" OR author:"KerryMP" OR author:"darrenpjones" OR  
 author:"karinsmyth" OR author:"ThangamMP" OR author:"KeithSimpsonMP"  
 OR author:"neil\_bob" OR author:"sajidjavid" OR author:"Anna\_Soubry" OR  
 author:"JulieForBurnley" OR author:"JamesFrith" OR author:"IvanLewis\_MP"  
 OR author:"Jochurchil4" OR author:"WayneDavid\_MP" OR  
 author:"Jamie4North" OR author:"CWhitakerMP" OR author:"harrietharman"  
 OR author:"DanielZeichner" OR author:"amandamilling" OR  
 author:"RosieDuffield1" OR author:"JoStevensLabour" OR  
 author:"annamcmorrin" OR author:"SDoughtyMP" OR  
 author:"KevinBrennanMP" OR author:"JohnStevensonMP" OR  
 author:"JonathanPlaid" OR author:"Simonhartmp" OR author:"thomasbrake"  
 OR author:"RebeccaHarrisMP" OR author:"Dr\_PhilippaW" OR  
 author:"MelJStride" OR author:"BenMLake" OR author:"tracey\_crouch" OR  
 author:"MaryRobinsonO1" OR author:"vickyford" OR author:"GregHands"

OR author:"AlexChalkChelt" OR author:"CherylGillan" OR author:"tobyperkinsmp" OR author:"GillianKeegan" OR author:"michelledonelan" OR author:"LindsayHoyle\_MP" OR author:"MarkFieldUK" OR author:"ChrisM4Chester" OR author:"robertabwMP" OR author:"GilesWatling" OR author:"MartinVickers" OR author:"susanelanjones" OR author:"DavidJonesMP" OR author:"HughGaffneyMP" OR author:"willquince" OR author:"Thelma\_WalkerMP" OR author:"VotePursglove" OR author:"Geoffrey4CovNW" OR author:"jimforcovsouth" OR author:"HenrySmithUK" OR author:"LauraSmithMP" OR author:"LabourSJ" OR author:"SteveReedMP" OR author:"CPhilpOfficial" OR author:"StuartMcDonald" OR author:"AnnClwyd" OR author:"JonCruddas\_1" OR author:"JennyChapman" OR author:"chhcalling" OR author:"DavidHansonMP" OR author:"GwynneMP" OR author:"DerbyChrisW" OR author:"Patrick4Dales" OR author:"claireperrypm" OR author:"paulasherriff" OR author:"CarolineFlintMP" OR author:"Ed\_Miliband" OR author:"CharlieElphicke" OR author:"IanAustinMP" OR author:"mikejwood" OR author:"helenhayes\_" OR author:"DAvidMundellDCT" OR author:"StewartHosieSNP" OR author:"ChrisLawSNP" OR author:"DougChapmanSNP" OR author:"Isrplaid" OR author:"RupaHuq" OR author:"VirendraSharma" OR author:"grahamemorris" OR author:"eastantrimmp" OR author:"HugoSwire" OR author:"joswinson" OR author:"stephencimms" OR author:"DamianHinds" OR author:"DrLisaCameronMP" OR author:"MartWhitfieldMP" OR author:"PM4EastRen" OR author:"SamGyimah" OR author:"timloughton" OR author:"GregKnight" OR author:"StephenLloydEBN" OR author:"mimsdavies" OR author:"Sandbach" OR author:"TommySheppard" OR author:"DeidreBrock" OR author:"IanMurrayMP" OR author:"joannaccherry" OR author:"cajardineMP" OR author:"KateOsamor" OR author:"justinmadders" OR author:"AlecShelbrooke" OR author:"CliveEfford" OR author:"joanryanEnfield" OR author:"BambosMP" OR author:"Eleanor4epping" OR author:"Maggie\_erewash" OR author:"tpearce003" OR author:"DominicRaab" OR author:"BenPBradshaw" OR author:"JohnMcNallyMP" OR author:"SuellaBraverman" OR author:"Helen\_Whately" OR author:"SeemaMalhotra1" OR author:"gildernewm" OR author:"JackLopresti" OR author:"DamianCollins" OR author:"Mark\_J\_Harper" OR author:"ElishaMcC\_SF" OR author:"EdwardLeighMP" OR author:"meaglemp" OR author:"IanMearnsMP" OR author:"Vernon\_Coaker" OR author:"Reham\_Chishti" OR author:"alisonhewliss" OR author:"DavidLinden" OR author:"GradySNP" OR author:"PaulJSweeney" OR author:"CMonaghanSNP" OR author:"StewartMcDonald" OR author:"ChrisStephens" OR author:"PeterGrantMP" OR author:"RichardGrahamUK" OR author:"Colin\_J\_Clark" OR author:"cj\_dineage" OR author:"ToniaAntoniazzi" OR author:"Nickboles" OR author:"OnnMel" OR author:"BrandonLewis" OR author:"mtpennycook" OR author:"AnneMilton" OR author:"HackneyAbott"

OR author:"Meg\_HillierMP" OR author:"JamesMorris" OR  
 author:"hollylynch5" OR author:"daviddavismp" OR author:"DerekTwiggMP"  
 OR author:"hammersmithandy" OR author:"TulipSiddiq" OR  
 author:"NeilDotObrien" OR author:"halfon4harlowMP" OR  
 author:"AJonesMP" OR author:"BobBlackman" OR  
 author:"GarethThomasMP" OR author:"MikeHillMP" OR  
 author:"bernardjenkin" OR author:"AmberRuddHR" OR author:"AlanMakMP"  
 OR author:"johnmcdonnellMP" OR author:"William\_Wragg" OR author:"jon\_  
 trickett" OR author:"Offord4Hendon" OR author:"JHowellUK" OR  
 author:"Jesse\_Norman" OR author:"PriskMark" OR author:"GuyOpperman"  
 OR author:"LizMcInnes\_MP" OR author:"RuthGeorge6" OR  
 author:"BimAfolami" OR author:"Keir\_Starmer" OR author:"JuliaLopezMP"  
 OR author:"CatherineWest1" OR author:"bphillipsonMP" OR  
 author:"peterkyle" OR author:"BarrySheerman" OR author:"Jdjanogly" OR  
 author:"GrahamJones\_MP" OR author:"wesstreeting" OR  
 author:"MikeGapes" OR author:"ronniecowan" OR author:"drewhendrySNP"  
 OR author:"sandyofipswich" OR author:"loWBobSeely" OR  
 author:"EmilyThornberry" OR author:"ChrisEvansMP" OR  
 author:"jarrowstevemp" OR author:"DCMS\_SecOfState" OR  
 author:"emmadentcoad" OR author:"AlanBrownSNP" OR  
 author:"EdwardJDavey" OR author:"KarlTurnerMP" OR  
 author:"DianaJohnsonMP" OR author:"EmmaHardyMP" OR  
 author:"CSkidmoreUK" OR author:"LesleyLaird" OR author:"J\_Donaldson\_  
 MP" OR author:"AngelaCrawley30" OR author:"CatSmithMP" OR  
 author:"hiliarybennmp" OR author:"RichardBurgon" OR  
 author:"FabianLeedsNE" OR author:"alexsobel" OR  
 author:"RachelReevesMP" OR author:"Keith\_Vaz\_MP" OR  
 author:"JonAshworth" OR author:"leicesterliz" OR author:"JoPlattMP" OR  
 author:"mariacaulfield" OR author:"JanetDaby" OR author:"elliereeves" OR  
 author:"vickyfoxcroft" OR author:"JohnCryerMP" OR author:"Mike\_  
 Fabricant" OR author:"KarenLeeMP" OR author:"MartynDaySNP" OR  
 author:"LouiseEllman" OR author:"DanCardenMP" OR  
 author:"lucianaberger" OR author:"StephenTwigg" OR  
 author:"HannahB4LiviMP" OR author:"NiaGriffithMP" OR  
 author:"NickyMorgan01" OR author:"Dunne4Ludlow" OR  
 author:"gavinshuker" OR author:"DavidRutley" OR author:"theresa\_may" OR  
 author:"HelenGrantMP" OR author:"Y\_FovargueMP" OR  
 author:"JWhittingdale" OR author:"LucyMPowell" OR author:"Afzal4Gorton"  
 OR author:"JeffSmithetc" OR author:"bbradleymp" OR  
 author:"GHollingbery" OR author:"spelmac" OR author:"GeraldJonesLAB"  
 OR author:"NadineDorries" OR author:"Pauline\_Latham" OR  
 author:"Michael4MDNP" OR author:"GeorgeFreemanMP" OR  
 author:"Nsoames" OR author:"FrancineMolloy" OR  
 author:"HuddlestonNigel" OR author:"AndyMcdonaldMP" OR  
 author:"SimonClarkeMP" OR author:"DaniRowley" OR  
 author:"MarkLancasterMK" OR author:"Iainastewart" OR author:"Siobhan\_

MP" OR author:"DavidCTDavies" OR author:"Douglas4Moray" OR author:"davidmorrism1" OR author:"andreajenkyns" OR author:"marionfellows" OR author:"AngusMacNeilSNP" OR author:"Rees4Neath" OR author:"DesmondSwayne" OR author:"RobertJenrick" OR author:"RichardBenyonMP" OR author:"ChiOnwurah" OR author:"CatMcKinnell" OR author:"RuthNewportWest" OR author:"MickeyBradySF" OR author:"YvetteCooperMP" OR author:"PGibsonSNP" OR author:"scottman4NC" OR author:"PeterNorthDevon" OR author:"Simon4Dorset" OR author:"KevanJonesMP" OR author:"AlistairBurtUK" OR author:"SteveBarclay" OR author:"Lee4NED" OR author:"StephenGethins" OR author:"TeamRanil" OR author:"OliverHealdUK" OR author:"Jacob\_Rees\_Mogg" OR author:"normanlamb" OR author:"OwenPaterson" OR author:"LiamFox" OR author:"JustinTomlinson" OR author:"SirRogerGaleMP" OR author:"GlindonMary" OR author:"craig4nwards" OR author:"ShaileshVara" OR author:"LauraPidcockMP" OR author:"kitmalthouse" OR author:"ABridgen" OR author:"JGray" OR author:"Michael\_Ellis1" OR author:"ALewerMBE" OR author:"NorwichChloe" OR author:"ChrisLeslieMP" OR author:"ANorrisMP" OR author:"LilianGreenwood" OR author:"Marcus4Nuneaton" OR author:"LukeGrahamMP" OR author:"CPJElmore" OR author:"JBrokenshire" OR author:"Debbie\_abrahams" OR author:"JimfromOldham" OR author:"amcarmichaelMP" OR author:"JoJohnsonUK" OR author:"AnnelieseDodds" OR author:"laylamoran" OR author:"GavNewlandsSNP" OR author:"MhairiBlack" OR author:"Andrew4Pendle" OR author:"angelasmithmp" OR author:"RoryStewartUK" OR author:"PeteWishart" OR author:"LisaForbes\_" OR author:"JohnnyMercerUK" OR author:"LukePollard" OR author:"OwenSmith\_MP" OR author:"RobertSyms" OR author:"FitzMP" OR author:"PennyMordaunt" OR author:"StephenMorganMP" OR author:"SCrabbPemb" OR author:"MpHendrick" OR author:"StuartAndrew" OR author:"JustineGreening" OR author:"MattRodda" OR author:"AlokSHarma\_RDG" OR author:"annaturley" OR author:"redditchrachel" OR author:"CrispinBlunt" OR author:"RhonddaBryant" OR author:"nigelmp" OR author:"ZacGoldsmith" OR author:"tony4rochdale" OR author:"KellyTolhurst" OR author:"JamesDuddridge" OR author:"AndrewRosindell" OR author:"carolinenokes" OR author:"IanBlackfordMP" OR author:"JakeBerry" OR author:"KevinBarronMP" OR author:"SarahChampionMP" OR author:"MarkPawsey" OR author:"NickHurdUK" OR author:"PhillipHammondUK" OR author:"Gedk" OR author:"AlanDuncanMP" OR author:"KemiBadenoch" OR author:"RLong\_Bailey" OR author:"JohnGlenUK" OR author:"NicDakinMP" OR author:"MPphilwilson" OR author:"Bill\_Esterson" OR author:"nadams" OR author:"PaulBlomfieldMP" OR author:"GillFurnissMP" OR author:"jaredomaramp" OR author:"LouHaigh" OR author:"Mark\_Spencer" OR author:"PhilipDaviesUK" OR author:"DKShrewsbury" OR

author:"JulianSmithUK" OR author:"drcarolinej" OR author:"TanDhesi" OR  
author:"julianknight15" OR author:"DJWarbuton" OR author:"PaulGirvanMP"  
OR author:"Metcalf\_S BET" OR author:"heidiallen75" OR  
author:"HeatherWheeler" OR author:"ChrisHazzardSF" OR  
author:"lucyfrazemp" OR author:"AlbertoCostaMP" OR  
author:"richardbaconmp" OR author:"andrealeadsom" OR  
author:"SeemaKennedy" OR author:"EmmaLewellBuck" OR  
author:"GavinWilliamson" OR author:"jc4southsuffolk" OR  
author:"RobertBuckland" OR author:"cmackinlay" OR  
author:"AndrewSelous" OR author:"garystreeterSWD" OR  
author:"DavidGauke" OR author:"trussliz" OR author:"Jeremy\_Hunt" OR  
author:"AWMurrison" OR author:"Royston\_Smith" OR  
author:"alanwhiteheadmp" OR author:"amessd\_southend" OR  
author:"damienmooremp" OR author:"KwasiKwarteng" OR  
author:"stevedouble" OR author:"ConorMcGinn" OR author:"MarieRimmer"  
OR author:"DerekThomasUK" OR author:"JeremyLefroy" OR  
author:"jreynoldsMP" OR author:"SMcPartland" OR author:"stephenkerrMP"  
OR author:"anncoffey\_mp" OR author:"ACunninghamMP" OR  
author:"PaulWilliamsMP" OR author:"gareth\_snell" OR author:"RuthSmeeth"  
OR author:"BillCashMP" OR author:"margot\_james\_mp" OR  
author:"JimShannonMP" OR author:"nadhimzahawi" OR  
author:"ChukaUmunna" OR author:"KateGreenSU" OR author:"DavidEDrew"  
OR author:"theresecoffey" OR author:"JulieElliotMP" OR  
author:"michaelgove" OR author:"scullyp" OR author:"carolynharris24" OR  
author:"GeraintDaviesMP" OR author:"ChrisPincher" OR  
author:"EstherMcIvey" OR author:"pow\_rebecca" OR author:"lucyallan" OR  
author:"IrobertsonTewks" OR author:"MPritchardUK" OR  
author:"kevinhollinrake" OR author:"LukeHall" OR author:"JackieDP" OR  
author:"neil\_parish" OR author:"TomTugendhat" OR author:"DrRosena" OR  
author:"kevin\_j\_foster" OR author:"NickTorfaenMP" OR author:"geoffrey\_  
cox" OR author:"sarahwollaston" OR author:"DavidLammy" OR  
author:"SNewtonUK" OR author:"GregClarkMP" OR author:"vincecable" OR  
author:"alancampbellmp" OR author:"DavidSimpsonDUP" OR  
author:"BorisJohnson" OR author:"Chris\_RuaneMP" OR author:"AlunCairns"  
OR author:"KateHoeyMP" OR author:"MaryCreaghMP" OR  
author:"angelaeagle" OR author:"EddieHughes4WN" OR author:"Valerie\_  
VazMP" OR author:"stellacreasy" OR author:"IanLaveryMP" OR  
author:"edvaizey" OR author:"spellar" OR author:"HelenJonesMP" OR  
author:"FaisalRashad6" OR author:"MattWestern\_" OR  
author:"SharonHodgsonMP" OR author:"Richard4Watford" OR  
author:"peter\_aldous" OR author:"Nus\_Ghani" OR  
author:"MikeAmesburyMP" OR author:"PeterBoneUK" OR  
author:"JSHeappey" OR author:"JohnHealey\_MP" OR  
author:"AndrewBowieMP" OR author:"tom\_watson" OR  
author:"AdrianBaileyMP" OR author:"oletwinofficial" OR  
author:"martinjdocherty" OR author:"lynbrownmp" OR

author:"rosie4westlancs" OR author:"MattHancock" OR  
author:"OrfhlaithBegley" OR author:"hbaldwin" OR author:"KarenPBuckMP"  
OR author:"timfarron" OR author:"johnpenrosenews" OR author:"lisanandy"  
OR author:"S\_Hammond" OR author:"BrineMinister" OR  
author:"AdamAfriyie" OR author:"Alison\_McGovern" OR  
author:"MGreenwoodWW" OR author:"patel4witham" OR  
author:"robertcourts" OR author:"JonathanLord" OR author:"johnredwood"  
OR author:"EmmaReynoldsMP" OR author:"patmcfaddenmp" OR  
author:"Eleanor\_SmithMP" OR author:"WalkerWorcester" OR  
author:"SueHayman1" OR author:"KeeleyMP" OR author:"IanCLucas" OR  
author:"SteveBakerHW" OR author:"BwallaceMP" OR  
author:"Mark4WyreForest" OR author:"MikeKaneMP" OR  
author:"MarcusFysh" OR author:"AlbertOwenMP" OR  
author:"RachaelMaskell"

Thirdly, a comprehensive list of **policy documents** was built. Savanta ComRes collated policy documents gathered by Dr. Hannah Swift during the literature review. Additionally, we conducted a manual search using primary search terms (see Figure 6) to further populate the list with open access policy documents from the following sources:

1. Government committees and APPGs (e.g. Women and Equalities Committee);
2. Government departments (e.g. Department of Health).

A list of 41 policy documents considered to be relevant was shared with the Centre for Ageing Better and those approved were uploaded onto the Relative Insight platform. The final list of policy documents is outlined below.

**Figure 3. Full list of government policy documents used for the discourse analysis**

Document Name	Date	Organisation/Author	Document type
Ageing: Science, Technology and Healthy Living			
Call for Evidence	2019	House of Lords - SELECT COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	Policy paper
Inquiry into decent and accessible homes for older people			
Summer 2019	2019	APPG for Ageing and Older People Focusing on current political and legislative issues before Parliament which affect older people	Policy paper
Publications from APPG on Longevity	2019	APPG on Longevity	Policy paper
Personalised health checks to be considered in new review	Aug-19	Department of Health and Social Care	Press release/news
Equity investors invited to partner in healthy ageing funding	Aug-19	Innovate UK and UK Research and Innovation	Press release/news
Thousands of pensioners to benefit from PIP assessment overhaul	Jul-19	Department for Work and Pensions, Justin Tomlinson MP, and The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP	Press release/news
Speech: How local and national government can work together to improve health and care	Jul-19	Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock	Press release/news
Experts to help UK champion ageing society opportunities	Jun-19	Department of Health and Social Care	Press release/news
'Let's Talk Loneliness' campaign launched to tackle stigma of feeling alone	Jun-19	DCMS	Press release/news
Digital technology for adult social care: apply for funding	Jun-19	Innovate UK	Press release/news
Unnecessary disability reassessments for disabled pensioners to be phased out	May-19	Department for Work and Pensions	Press release/news
Tackling intergenerational unfairness: Report of Session 2017-19 HL Paper 329	Apr-19	Select Committee on Intergenerational Fairness and Provision (House of Lords)	Policy paper
New campaign to recruit thousands more adult social care staff	Feb-19	Department of Health and Social Care	Press release/news
Changes to benefits for mixed age couples	Jan-19	DWP	Press release/news
'Smart homes' to help older and disabled people get digital skills and tackle loneliness in rural areas	Jan-19	DCMS	Press release/news
Inquiry into human rights and older people: Protecting our rights as we age	2018	APPG for Ageing and Older People	Policy paper

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£11.5 million fund to tackle loneliness across England	Dec-18	DCMS	Press release/news
ExtraCare: building better lives for older people	Nov-18	Innovate UK	Press release/news
Community networks linking older and younger people	Nov-18	Department of Health and Social Care	Press release/news
Government uses innovative tech companies to tackle rural isolation and loneliness	Nov-18	Cabinet Office	Press release/news
Older people and employment: Government and Equality and Human Rights Commission Responses to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2017-19	Oct-18	Government response (Government Equalities Office) to Women and Equalities Select Committee regarding "Older People & Employment" (July 2018)	Policy paper
PM launches Government's first loneliness strategy	Oct-18	DCMS	Press release/news
£240 million social care investment to ease NHS winter pressures	Oct-18	Department of Health and Social Care	Press release/news
Tracey Crouch speech at Public Health England Annual Conference	Sep-18	DCMS	Press release/news
Civil Society Strategy: building a future that works for everyone	Aug-18	Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, Office for Civil Society, Tracey Crouch MP, and The Rt Hon Jeremy Wright MP (link from PHE website)	Policy paper - strategy document
Older people and employment	Jul-18	Women and Equalities Committee (House of Commons)	Policy paper
Government's work on tackling loneliness			
This page brings together Government's work and announcements on loneliness.			
Published 9 June 2018 / Last updated 15 October 2018	Jun-18	Department of Culture, Media and Sport	Policy paper
Housing for older people needs national strategy	Feb-18	Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee	Policy paper
APPG on Social Integration minutes for intergenerational connection inquiry event on 19th December 2017, 11:00 AM - 12.30 PM, in Committee Room 9, House of Commons	Dec-17	APPG on Social Integration	Policy paper
Ages Apart?			
Essay collection for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration's Inquiry into intergenerational connection.	Dec-17	APPG on Social Integration	Policy paper
Collection from Nov 2013 to June 2017 - x21 documents			

Future of ageing			
Materials from the Foresight 'Future of an ageing population' project, which analysed the challenges and opportunities of an ageing society.	Jun-17	Government Office for Science	Evidence review
Healing the Generational Divide			
Interim report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration's Inquiry into intergenerational connection	May-17	APPG on Social Integration	Policy paper
Older workers and the workplace: evidence from the Workplace Employment Relations Survey			
This research examines the working experiences of older individuals and the effects of changes in age composition on workplace performance.	Feb-17	DWP	Policy paper
Future of ageing: seminar on health and care in an ageing population			
Report of an expert seminar on health and care in an ageing population.	Oct-16	Government Office for Science	Policy paper
Future of an ageing population			
Foresight report looking at the challenges and opportunities of an ageing society.			
Published 7 July 2016 / Last updated 11 July 2019	Jul-16	Government Office for Science	Policy paper
Dementia: post-diagnostic care and support - Joint declaration on post-diagnostic dementia care and support	Jan-16	Department of Health and Social Care	Policy paper
Future of ageing: relationships between the generations			
Report looking at how the ageing population will change intergenerational relationships.	2015	Government Office for Science	Policy paper
Future of ageing: attitudes to ageing - psychological factors			
Report looking at the psychological factors which affect our attitudes to ageing.	Aug-15	Government Office for Science	Policy paper
Key Issues Parliament 2015: Social Change Ageing Population (p. 50-51)	May-15	House of Commons Research Library	Policy paper
House of Lords report on ageing: response 1 year on			
What the government is doing to meet the challenges of an ageing population.	Jun-14	Department of Health and Social Care	Policy paper

### Health and social care sector

The discourse analysed from the health and social care sector consists of 385,479 words sourced from policy documents from websites of the 6 most influential health and social care organisations in the UK, as approved by Centre for Ageing Better:

1. NHS (including NHS England and NHS Confederation);
2. Public Health England (PHE);
3. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE);
4. British Geriatrics Society;
5. The King's Fund;
6. Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE).

Savanta ComRes conducted an online search for relevant policy documents published over the last 5 years (2014-2019) using primary search terms (see Figure 6). For the NHS policy document search, the NHS, NHS Confederation and NHS England websites were used. A list of 36 policy documents considered relevant was shared with Centre for Ageing Better and those approved were uploaded onto the Relative Insight platform.

**Figure 4. Full list of health & social care policy documents used for the discourse analysis**

Document Name	Date	Organisation/Author	Document type
Quick Guide: allied health professionals enhancing health for people in care homes	Jul-19	NHS England	Guidance
Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s	Jul-19	Department of Health and Social Care (link from PHE website)	Consultation document
NICE impact adult social care	Jul-19	NICE	Report
Vaccine for older adults gives significant protection against flu	May-19	Public Health England	Press release/news
Integrated care in action – older people's care	Mar-19	NHS England	Case Study
Public satisfaction with the NHS and social care in 2018			
Results from the British Social Attitudes survey	Mar-19	The King's Fund, Nuffield Trust / Ruth Robertson, John Appleby, Nina Hemmings	Report
A Menu of Interventions for Productive Healthy Ageing: For pharmacy teams working in different settings	Mar-19	Public Health England	Report/guidance
NHS Long Term Plan	Jan-19	NHS England	Guidance
Key challenges facing the adult social care sector in England	Dec-18	The King's Fund	Briefing (originally commissioned by the Labour Party as an

independent contribution to policy development)			
Collaborative approaches to treatment			
Depression among older people living in care homes	Sep-18	BGS / Royal College of Psychiatrists	Report
Heart Age Test gives early warning of heart attack and stroke	Sep-18	Public Health England	Press release/news
New flu vaccine available this winter for those aged 65 and over	Sep-18	Public Health England	Press release/news
Effective healthcare for older people			
Position statement on primary care for older people	Aug-18	BGS	Position statement
Our priorities for the NHS long term plan	Aug-18	BGS	Position statement
BGS members' position on institutional initiatives to tackle loneliness amongst older people	Jul-18	Caroline Cooke	
British Geriatrics Society	Position statement		
Care and support of people growing older with learning disabilities	Apr-18	NICE	NICE guideline
Tackling loneliness and social isolation: the role of commissioners	Jan-18	SCIE	Report / Key messages to Commissioners
Enhanced health in care homes - Learning from experiences so far	Dec-17	Alex Baylis	
Susie Perks-Baker			
The King's Fund	Report		
Intermediate care including reablement	Sep-17	NICE	NICE guideline
Living well in older years	Aug-17	Public Health England	Guidance
Involving people in their own health and care equality and health inequalities	Apr-17	NHS England	Report
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES, HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND SPORT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO LONELINESS AND ISOLATION			
SUBMISSION FROM THE BRITISH GERIATRICS SOCIETY	Mar-17	BGS	Policy document
Helping older people maintain a healthy diet: a review of what works	Feb-17	Public Health England	Impact assessment
Social care for older people: Home truths	Sep-16	Richard Humphries	
Ruth Thorlby			
Holly Holder			
Patrick Hall			
Anna Charles			
The King's Fund / Nuffield Trust	Report		

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Growing old together: Sharing new ways to support older people	Jan-16		
NHS Confederation	Report		
Transition between inpatient hospital settings and community or care home settings for adults with social care needs	Dec-15	NICE	NICE guideline
Older people with social care needs and multiple long-term conditions	Nov-15	NICE	NICE guideline
Dementia, disability and frailty in later life – mid-life approaches to delay or prevent onset	Oct-15	NICE	NICE guideline
Physiotherapy and older people	Mar-15	BGS	Policy document
Five year forward view	Oct-14	NHS England	Strategy document
The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) and care planning	Oct-14	SCIE	Report
A new settlement for health and social care: Final report	Sep-14	Kate Barker	
The King's Fund	Report		
Future of Health and Social Care in England	Jul-14	BGS	Policy document
A Better Life for older people with high support needs: the role of social care	May-14	SCIE / JRF	Report
Making our health and care systems fit for an ageing population	Mar-14	David Oliver	
Catherine Foot			
Richard Humphries			
The King's Fund	Report		
Providing integrated care for older people with complex needs: Lessons from seven international case studies	Jan-14		
Nick Goodwin			
Anna Dixon			
Geoff Anderson			
Walter Wodchis			
The King's Fund	Report		

## Social media

10,783,461 words were analysed across a mosaic of multiple social media platforms: Twitter, blogs, forums, as well as public Facebook posts, Instagram posts and YouTube comments (in descending order in terms of their proportion of the dataset). Savanta ComRes used defined search terms (see Figure 6) to collect social media posts that were relevant to ageing over the past 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019).

Savanta ComRes used NetBase to gather a list of all age-related mentions appearing in **YouTube** comments, **Facebook** and **Instagram** posts, **blog** entries. However, due to Instagram and Facebook removing access to its API last year, only public posts posted before 1st December 2018 were available for download.

**Tweets** relating to ageing were also gathered using NetBase. We collected a sample of tweets across the last 12 months, rather than the full set of tweets, due to NetBase's restriction policy on Twitter exports which allows only for a maximum of 50,000 tweets to be downloaded per day. We divided the one year search period into four trimesters (Sept 18-Nov 18, Dec 18-Feb 19, Mar 19-May 19, Jun 19-Aug 19) and downloaded the 50,000 most closely related mentions to our search query from each time period, resulting in an even spread of tweets throughout the one year period. The resulting sample yields a robust number of tweets, representing 10% of the total number of all age-related tweets from the past 12 months.

To gather posts on **forums**, Savanta ComRes used Relative Insight to search for all age-related posts. A range of forums were selected in order to create a good balance between different ages and genders, including:

1. Reddit and studentroom (students and millennials);
2. Mumsnet (female adults);
3. Pistonheads and Tractorsforum (male adults);
4. Over 50s forum and Gransnet (older age categories);
5. Moneysavingexpert forum.

Savanta ComRes had access to more social media platforms, such as Tumblr, consumer and professional reviews, however, we chose to focus exclusively on social media platforms with high incidence rate in the UK.

## Online media

Savanta ComRes used NetBase, an artificial intelligence powered social analytics platform, to gain access to all online UK media sources and search for articles related to ageing. This includes a combination of local and national media, print and online. We used the defined search terms (see Figure 6) to identify news experts related to ageing and demographic change over the last 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019). We then randomly selected a 25% sample of the online media dataset – controlling for key characteristics - and removed duplicates. The resulting 6,586,317 words were then uploaded onto Relative Insight and analysed.

Online media were further divided into two separate categories of the top 5 most read tabloids and top 5 most read broadsheets, based on Ofcom's News Consumption 2018 report<sup>25</sup>. This was used for a comparative analysis between tabloid news (consisting of 4,072,213 words) and broadsheet news (consisting of 768,361 words) articles relating to ageing over the last 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019).

The top 5 tabloids, in descending order of readership (high to low):



The top 5 broadsheets, in descending order of readership (high to low):



### Advertising

Savanta ComRes and Relative Insight used an API search with primary search terms to identify and download advertising campaigns related to ageing, published over the last 5 years (2014-2019), from three key open source advertising libraries:

1. AdForum;
2. Ads of the World; and
3. YouTube.

Savanta ComRes used the search terms below to collect the advertisements which differed from the search terms used for other sectors and industries. Only advertisements that contained primary search terms listed below either in the video or in the script were used for the analysis.

- The search terms used on AdForum and Ads of the World were: 'old people', 'old man', 'old age', 'elderly', 'elderly people', 'older people', 'old women', 'older men', 'senior people', 'later life', 'senior moment', 'grandad', 'grandma', 'grandmother', 'grandpa'.
- The search terms used on YouTube were: included the following: 'old people adverts', 'old people in adverts', 'older people adverts', 'older people', 'older people in adverts', 'ageing adverts', 'ageing people adverts', 'ageism adverts', 'ageist adverts', 'elderly adverts', 'elderly people adverts', 'old age adverts', 'old age people adverts'.

The derived advertisements (see Figure 3) were then machine-transcribed, manually checked and the resulting 4,861 words were uploaded onto Relative Insight.

25 [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/116529/news-consumption-2018.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/116529/news-consumption-2018.pdf)

**Figure 5. Full list of advertisements used for the discourse analysis**

Advertisement name	Organisation/Author
adidas Originals by Daniel Arsham Hourglass	Adidas
Age Co Car Insurance TV advert 'It happens'	Age Co
Age Partnership Pension Income TV Advert	Age Partnership
Lonely in a Crowd	Age UK
When you leave...	Age UK
Charles' story   2015	Age UK
Love Later Life TV advert   Age UK - 2014	Age UK
Roy's story by James Bolam   Age UK	Age UK
We Are Here   Age UK	Age UK
Olympic Heroes 1	ALDI
United Against Dementia	Alzheimer's Society
Amazon - Vicar and Imam	Amazon
Sharing is Caring	Amazon Echo
John Cleese TV Advert 2017- Avalon Funeral Plans	Avalon Funeral Plans
Spare Chair Sunday	Bisto
Be There	BT Infinity
Great TV Brings Us Closer	BT TV
Donate Your Words 120"	Cadbury Dairy Milk
It's a bit grown up - UK	Cadbury Darkmilk
It's a bit grown up	Cadbury Darkmilk
Mean Tweets (Long Video)	Carlsberg
100 YEARS	Channel-4
Bring Them Home	Combat Stress
Boring	Comfort
Co-op Funerals that help fund good things like Co-op Academy schools #ItsWhatWeDo   Live on	Co-op Funeralcare
TV commercial - 2015	Co-op Funeralcare
Grannies - I'm In	Diet Coke
Grandma	Dreamies Cat Treats

## Methodology

Men of Fire	Edeka
Elder TV Ad: Peace of mind	Elder
Don't let a scammer enjoy your retirement - 60 Second TV Ad	FCA & TPR
Step into Gaviscon Night Labs	Gaviscon
We Believe: The Best Men Can Be   Gillette (Short Film)	Gillette
Who the fudge	Green Flag
HSBC - First Date	HSBC
The Boy and the Piano	John Lewis Partnership
Key Retirement Television Ad   60 Second [Official] - 2014	Key Retirement
LEGOPRESS	Legoland Florida Resort
Age Perfect Face, Neck & Décolleté   Reveal a Little More 2017	L'Oréal Paris
Age Perfect Golden Age   Let It Glow 2016	L'Oréal Paris
A sister with cancer is still a sister	Macmillan Cancer Support
Ross Kemp's Smiletinerary   Marella Cruises	Marella Cruises
Women To Look Up To	McCann
Kayak	McDonald's
Mobility Solutions New TV Advert	Mobility Solutions
RedrawTheBalance - Inspiring-The-Future	MullenLowe London
Graham - Grandad	Nationwide
Be The Gift	Nokia
Norwegian Airlines official sound identity: Northern Colours	Norwegian Airlines
Parkinson's Daily Fighters - SHAIUN	Parkinson's UK
Pension Wise - The TV Advert	Pension Wise
PensionBee, pensions made simple	PensionBee
SEE THE PERSON, NOT THE SIGHT LOSS	Royal National Institute of Blind People
Carrot	Royal National Institute of Blind People
Biscuit	Royal National Institute of Blind People
Escalator	Royal National Institute of Blind People
VOX MONETÆ (The Voice of Money)	Saga
Welcome to Shetopia	Sally Hansen

Pockets	Stella Artois Beer
On the Go: A Stella Artois Experiment	Stella Artois Beer
Elderly	Sx By Azzi
Rebuilding Lives	The Stroke Association
Walk - Hive	The&Partnership
We Are Scotland	We Are Scotland
Word Search	Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)
Word Search (With Answers)	Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)

### Ageing charity sector

The discourse analysed from the ageing charity sector comprised of 310,323 words scraped from the websites of the top 10 leading age-related charities in the UK, as identified by the Centre for Ageing Better. The dataset consisted of a website scrape of all online communications as of August 2019, which would include open access press releases, blogs and marketing collateral. The list of top 10 age-related charities includes:

1. Age UK;
2. Friends of the Elderly;
3. Centre for Ageing Better;
4. Independent Age
5. International Longevity Centre UK;
6. Age Friendly Manchester;
7. The Silver Line;
8. Campaign to End Loneliness;

Alzheimer's Society and Hospice UK were considered for analysis but were excluded since they were introducing bias by skewing narratives towards specific topics such as Alzheimer disease, dementia, hospices and palliative care.

**Figure 6. Full list of sectors and industries and data sources**

Sector/industry	Sources included	Software used	Timeframe	Comparison
<b>Government and policy</b>	Hansard scripts	Relative Insight; web scrape	Past 2.5 years (Jan 2017 – Aug 2019)	Ageing charity sector v. Government
	MPs' Twitter	Meltwater; social media data	Past 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019)	
	Open access policy documents from select committees, APPGs,	Online search by Hannah Swift and Savanta ComRes; text documents	Past 5 years (2014-2019)	
	Government departments			
<b>Health and social care</b>	Policy documents from Top 6 health and social care organisations	Manual search by Savanta ComRes; text documents	Past 5 years (2014-2019)	Ageing charity sector v. Health and social care sector
<b>Online media</b>	Sample of all online media articles	NetBase; media data	Past 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019)	Online media v. Social media
	All articles from Top 5 tabloid media			Online media v. Social media
	All articles from Top 5 broadsheet media			Tabloid media v. broadsheet media
<b>Social media</b>	Sample of Twitter	NetBase; social media data	Past 12 months (Sept 2018 – Aug 2019)	Online media v. Social media
	All YouTube comments			
	All Blogs			
	Public Instagram posts			
	Public Facebook posts			
	Selected forums	Relative Insight; social media data		
<b>Advertising</b>	Selected advertising campaigns from two online ad libraries and YouTube	Savanta ComRes and Relative Insight; text	Past 5 years (2014-2019)	Ageing charity sector v. Advertising
<b>Age-related charities</b>	Websites of Top 8 age-related charities	Relative Insight web scraping tool	Current website (August 2019)	Ageing charity sector v. Government
				Ageing charity sector v. Advertising
				Ageing charity sector v. Health and social care

# Search terms

Savanta ComRes gathered data input for the Relative Insight platform using a set of primary and secondary search terms. These are based on primary search terms from the literature review module<sup>26</sup>.

Additional words were added to the list of search terms via an internal Savanta ComRes brainstorming session, and completed with word suggestions from Equally Ours, Centre for Ageing Better and our partners at Relative Insight. This iterative process produced a more refined set of search blocks incorporating synonyms and neighbouring terms. Further, a few secondary terms were added to the table based on a review of first data sources gathered via Meltwater tool.

**Figure 7. Search Terms Used in the Literature review and Discourse analysis modules**

Literature review module [Hannah Swift et al.]	Discourse analysis module [Savanta ComRes]	
Primary search terms	Primary search terms	Secondary search terms
Ageism OR Ageing OR Ageist Old age OR Old OR Older OR Elderly Intergenerational OR “Ageing population” OR “Ageing society” Senior citizen OR Senior person OR Senior People OR “Baby boomers” OR “Later life” Pension OR Pensioner Retired OR Retirement OR Retiree Grandfather OR Grandmother OR Grandparent “Demographic change” OR “Demographic challenge” OR “Demographic timebomb” OR “Demographic shift”	Ageism OR Ageing OR Ageist Old age OR Old people OR Older people OR Elderly OR Elderly people Old man OR Old men OR Older man OR Older men OR Old woman OR Old women OR Older woman OR Older women	Ageing population OR Ageing society OR Later life OR Demographic change OR Demographic timebomb OR anti-ageing Senior citizen OR Senior person OR Senior people OR baby boomer OR Baby boomer Retire OR retired OR retiring OR Retirement OR Retiree OR senior moment OR Pension OR Pensioner grandad OR grandfather OR grandpa OR gramps OR grandma OR grandmother OR grannies OR granny OR Grandparent silver tsunami OR silver economy OR silver surfers OR grey pound OR silver pound OR bed blocker OR old hag OR crone OR codger OR giffer OR doddery OR wrinkly OR biddy OR golden ager OR fogie OR old fart OR little old lady OR bitter old man OR grumpy old man OR grumpy old woman OR cougar

<sup>26</sup> These were identified based on a previous literature review conducted for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (Abrams, Swift & Mahmood, 2016), and on a previous project conducted by Swift in 2012 exploring representations of age in UK print media.

## Search terms

Search terms were used in various combinations based on the type of search and data type we were gathering:

- Media and social media data were gathered from search tools (e.g. online and social media): A Boolean search query including primary and secondary terms; further, geographic and language specifications, and exclusion terms were added to the query;
- Web-scraping tools (e.g. websites):
- Text documents (e.g. policy documents): due to less advanced search capability of websites where those documents are stored we searched on primary search terms only.

These terms were collated in a basic search query that was used as a baseline query for all subsequent searches. Search queries across platforms were adjusted to sector specifics. For example, we did not use many secondary terms, especially derogatory words, for Hansard as this language is not likely to appear in the British parliament. Similarly, some search terms were excluded from search where necessary. An example is the term ‘pension’ in social media search, as it produced a high number of irrelevant mentions that were difficult to clean through exclusion terms.

Exclusion terms specific to each platform were excluded from the list of mentions in a manual sense-checking process of search results. Exclusion terms are words that appear in search but are not relevant for the scope of this project. Some examples would be ‘old wine’, ‘old money’, ‘granny smith’ or ‘gangsta granny’ (a book). Mentions containing these words were excluded from the search and a list of new search results was checked. This process continued until there were no irrelevant mentions found in the list of first 100 mentions.

Policy documents and other manually sourced documents went through an additional filter of eligibility. Only documents which fulfilled the criteria below were included in the final document list that was sent to Centre for Ageing Better for approval.

- Documents relevant to the stated research topic (ageing);
- Documents which had been peer reviewed or derived from an otherwise trustworthy source (e.g. policy documents, internal reports delivered by prominent organisations with an interest in health);
- Documents published within the specified timeframe;
- Documents written in English language.

Relevant literature and document references were stored as progress developed, being logged on a specifically designed Excel project document using section headings according to each source.

Further logic checking and data cleansing was applied to uploaded text.

## Discourse analysis and interpretation

To introduce the key language use in each sector, a top 10 words and phrases are identified by sector. For this, we conducted sector-specific ‘standalone’ analyses using a standard English language comparison text for reference. The standard comparison text used by Relative Insight is the British National Corpus – a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide cross-section of British English, both spoken and written, from the late twentieth century.

Savanta ComRes critically assessed results from sector comparisons, exploring in detail all relatively significant units of analysis (topics, words, phrases, grammar and emotions) and combining these to create insights. The resulting insights on dominant language and frames of ageing were gathered in ‘insight cards’ which Savanta ComRes interpret in more detail in the sector by sector analysis and provide quotes to evidence and illustrate each topic.

### Calculating differences

The Relative Insight tool calculates the differences between the two language sets by first calculating the relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion). This is done by dividing the normalised frequencies of the feature in one language set by the other.

For example:

- Dataset 1 contains the word ‘photography’ 6 times, and contains 1,000 words in total - the normalised frequency for occurrences of photography is 0.006
- Dataset 2 contains the word ‘photography’ 7 times, and contains 10,000 words in total - the normalised frequency for occurrences of photography is 0.0007
- The Relative Difference calculation shows that relatively speaking (when the two datasets are normalised), ‘photography’ occurs 8.57 times more in Dataset 1 than Dataset 2.

The tool then uses the relative difference and the absolute number of occurrences to calculate the significance of the result using the log-likelihood function. A higher relative difference, and a higher number of occurrences will both contribute to a higher significance score, which defines the confidence in the result. The tool then uses the confidence to order the list in the platform and will only display results with at least 99.9% confidence.

If a feature (e.g. word, phrase or topic) does not appear at all in the comparator source, but does appear in the primary source, it is said to occur infinitely ( $\infty$ ) more in the primary source than in the comparator source.

### **Calculating similarities**

The Relative Insight tool also calculates the similarities between the two language sets. Similarities are all of the differences in topics, words, phrases, emotions or grammatical features that occur in both language sets, when compared against standard English. All features that are displayed in the tool are 99.9% statistically significant between both language sets and Standard English. The log likelihood significance score is the statistical test applied to the analysis as mentioned above for calculating differences.

# Appendix

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## Stakeholders' views on changing the narrative

This section summarises the perceived challenges and proposed solutions of changing the narrative on ageing from the stakeholders interviewed as part of this research. Please note that the solutions outlined below are not necessarily in line with Equally Ours and Savanta ComRes recommendations from a strategic communications perspective, however, provide context from stakeholders' point of view in their sector or industry.

Stakeholders across all four sectors and industries suggest that their sector/industry is at least open to the idea of some level of change, recognising the potential for more progressive conversations about ageing. Ageing charity stakeholders express the most openness to changing the narrative, saying that the sector has already put in place a number of actions to demonstrate their commitment to a more balanced approach to talking about ageing. On the other hand, stakeholders from the media industry and advertising industry are the least likely to consider significant change as realistic, primarily they say due to their younger aged workforce which results in a lack of personal understanding of the diversity of experience within ageing and old age.

While stakeholders identify a number of potential pathways for change within their sector and more widely, they also identify external challenges that prevent them from exploring some of these opportunities.

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## Perceived challenges to changing the narrative

Stakeholders were largely aligned in their views on the biggest challenges currently faced in shifting the narrative about ageing. Current challenges of culturally embedded stereotypes, behaviours and language used across sectors and in parts of society result in a tendency to externalise the responsibility for driving change beyond an individual sector in which they might have influence.

## 1. Current narratives are engrained in culture and language

Stakeholders across each sector identify culturally ingrained narratives of ageing held by society, which are reflected within their sectors, and in some cases may also be reinforced by their sectors, as a barrier to changing the narrative of ageing in each sector. These include associations of ageing with decline and as something to fear and resist. As such, shifting these established perceptions is seen by stakeholders to present a great challenge.

The difficulty in changing the narrative from the perspective of government sector stakeholders can broadly be split into two main themes. One is the need to maintain public trust and remain credible, while promoting a more progressive approach. These stakeholders say that it could be challenging for the government sector to present different ideas around ageing that contradict dominant cultural perceptions in society without losing public trust in its impartiality. Furthermore, some suggest that it is not their role to create social change. The second barrier is the perceived limited reach of government into people's personal lives. Government sector stakeholders tend not to believe that they have much influence on public perceptions of certain topics – for example, ageing. As such there is not a great appetite to change the current discussion and presentation of ageing.

Words and phrases such as 'bed-blocking', 'elderly', or the 'demographic time-bomb' that are widely used in the media, or the use of 'anti-ageing' in the advertising industry, are identified as examples of counterproductive discourse, feeding into stereotypes and narratives of older people as burdens on society and old age as a stage of life to be resisted.

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**"Our societies today have a large focus on staying young [...] all the advertisements that we see often related to beauty, related to productivity, creativity, etc., are often linked to characteristics that are more often associated with younger populations [...] that then leads people working in different sectors to associate or feel more driven to working in areas that are related to anti-ageing rather than ageing, and improving the life of older people."**

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**Dr Vania de la Fuente-Nunez, Ageing charity sector**

Advertising and media industry stakeholders see culture as a barrier to more progressive representation of ageing within advertisements and media content due to a general perception that consumers prefer to see younger faces. One media stakeholder also points towards consumers' opportunity

and responsibility to call out ageist content and how the lack of public complaints may be interpreted by content creators as approval. Similarly, advertising stakeholders suggest that any changes that are made in their presentation of specific population groups is a result of popular demand as opposed to the industry leading change.

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**“The media is not just on its own. The people who consume the media have a role to play as well, we should be demanding a better media than we’ve got.”**

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**Carl Honore, Media stakeholder**

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**“I can remember having a conversation with somebody about why face creams for ageing well were shown with models who are blatantly in their twenties, and somebody saying to me ‘well nobody wants to see an old woman in an ad’. [...] I think [advertising is] being led by culture, I think advertising is very much following in that way.”**

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**Jo Arden, Advertising stakeholder**

How age is implicitly defined in conversation is also recognised by stakeholders as a challenge in shifting engrained tendencies to stereotype ageing. For instance, ageing and old people are frequently used as synonymous terms, and those aged 55+ are commonly referred to as a homogenous group. This oversimplification of terminology is seen as unhelpful in encouraging people to think about a more varied experience of ageing across all sectors and industries.

Government sector and ageing charity stakeholders say there are some challenging elements with the language used by NHS, such as the frequent use of words and phrases such as ‘the frail elderly’, ‘dementia’, or ‘demand’. Perhaps due to the great focus on health and care needs in discussions around demographic change, the NHS is seen to be influential in its contribution to discourses around ageing with the focus on needs potentially reinforce stereotypes of ageing.

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**“I do think there's the beginning of a slightly different narrative about focusing more on wellbeing and wellness, and instead of trying to focus on patching people back together again when they've got broken, how can you help them help themselves to stay well and engaged? But that is not the instant mind-set of the NHS and those are the people that we work with quite a lot. [...] A lot of social care tends to focus more on people's disabilities, on the things that they can't do, their deficits.”**

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**Richard Murray, Ageing charity sector**

Additionally, ageing charity stakeholders indicate that they may encounter barriers to the language used in conversations about ageing with government sector stakeholders. One ageing charity stakeholder suggests that new phrases such as ‘age friendly society’ are not commonly used by government. Some ageing charity stakeholders go on to say that the Government determines the narrative, which in turn may be a barrier for these charities to introduce new language to policy making.

## **2. Structure and bureaucracy**

Government sector stakeholders often refer to internal bureaucratic and structural barriers that prevent them from creating a cross-departmental, coherent approach to language around ageing in policymaking. Ageing charity stakeholders also recognise this challenge within government. There are distinct workstreams of separate government departments, which ageing charity stakeholders see as posing complex bureaucratic and structural barriers to gaining support for large-scale and forward-thinking cross-departmental policy ideas. Some ageing charity stakeholders mention that the short-termism of the Government’s policy-thinking, prioritising immediate problems also likely to add a further challenge.

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**“The way that the government structures work and that could prevent us from being able to frame solutions for an ageing society in a broader sense because it just won’t reach the right people because the government is not open to, or able to listen to things on a cross-departmental basis very easily.”**

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**Angela Kitching, Ageing charity sector**

### 3. Lack of age diversity in key sectors and industries

Lack of age diversity within the workforce is often seen as a barrier, particularly within the advertising industry, although some media and government sector stakeholders also highlight similar challenges within their sectors and industries.

Stakeholders, primarily from advertising, but also from other sectors and industries, identify the predominantly young workforce within the advertising industry as one of the main challenges to a more nuanced approach to talking about ageing in the advertising. This results in a severe lack of personal experience and therefore understanding of ageing within the advertising industry, which stakeholders suggest may go some way to explain the misrepresentation of older age groups in advertisements. Similar concerns are also raised about the media industry by some stakeholders.

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**“The younger people who are writing the ads, and they’re nearly all male as well as younger, so their, sort of, intimate understanding of an older woman’s life is probably pretty scanty.”**

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**James Best, Advertising stakeholder**

Greater age diversity within the advertising and media industry or having ‘age representatives’ within these sectors are identified as a potential solution for shifting to a more diverse representation of ageing within these sectors and industries.

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### **STAKEHOLDERS' PROPOSED APPROACHES TO CHANGING THE NARRATIVE OF AGEING**

Stakeholders offer a number of suggestions in how to approach the task of changing the discussion around ageing and how it is perceived within their respective sectors and industries. Please note that these solutions are not necessarily in line with Equally Ours’ and Savanta ComRes’ recommendations from an empirical strategic communications perspective and may indeed be detrimental to any reframe and reduce support for effective policy change. They are included here for information and completeness.

## 1. Engaging stakeholders to act as ambassadors for reframing

Positively, there is some acknowledgement within the sectors and industries that their narratives are biased and that they are not representative of the experiences of older people and of ageing more broadly. When asked to describe what they personally associate with ageing, all stakeholders across the sectors and industries provided their own examples which were divergent from the way that they described their sector's narrative.

This could present an opportunity to reach out to key individuals in senior positions in the advertising and media industry to discuss ideas of changing the representation of ageing and older people to be more prominent and diverse. This approach could also be undertaken with representatives in government although due to the separate departmental nature of government work it will likely be important to identify specific areas of government to target that would be most responsive or worthwhile. Alternatively, and perhaps more productively central government could be targeted to change its approach to ageing and the language used, by protocol across all government departments.



## 2. Highlighting real life stories of ageing, driven by the ageing charity sector

A clear finding of this study that is noted across sector stakeholders is the importance of showing diverse representation of older people. Stakeholders considered that showing a range of stories about older people's real lives can help to break down stereotypes and unrepresentative and unhelpful depictions of older age and ageing. Social media is mentioned by some stakeholders and is described in the literature review as having the potential to increase the visibility of older people by providing a platform for their individual experiences.

Stakeholders from the ageing charity sector see their access to and direct engagement with a wide range of people from all ages as a great opportunity for creating a better ageing narrative both within their sector and among the general public. They often talk about the power of real-life case studies of different, relatable experiences of 'ageing well' in shifting public perceptions of ageing, focusing on positives such as increased happiness or evoking images of productivity. While the government sector, media and advertising industries are less likely to have direct engagement with older age groups, they tend to recognise research as a potential opportunity to fill that gap in order to achieve a more complex understanding of the diversity of different experiences of ageing within their respective sectors.

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**“I think there's some real great case studies and examples on a very human level that, when I've seen them, when I've seen other people see them, the, kind of, penny drops. They go like, 'Oh, that's what you mean.'”**

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### **Richard Murray, Ageing charity sector**

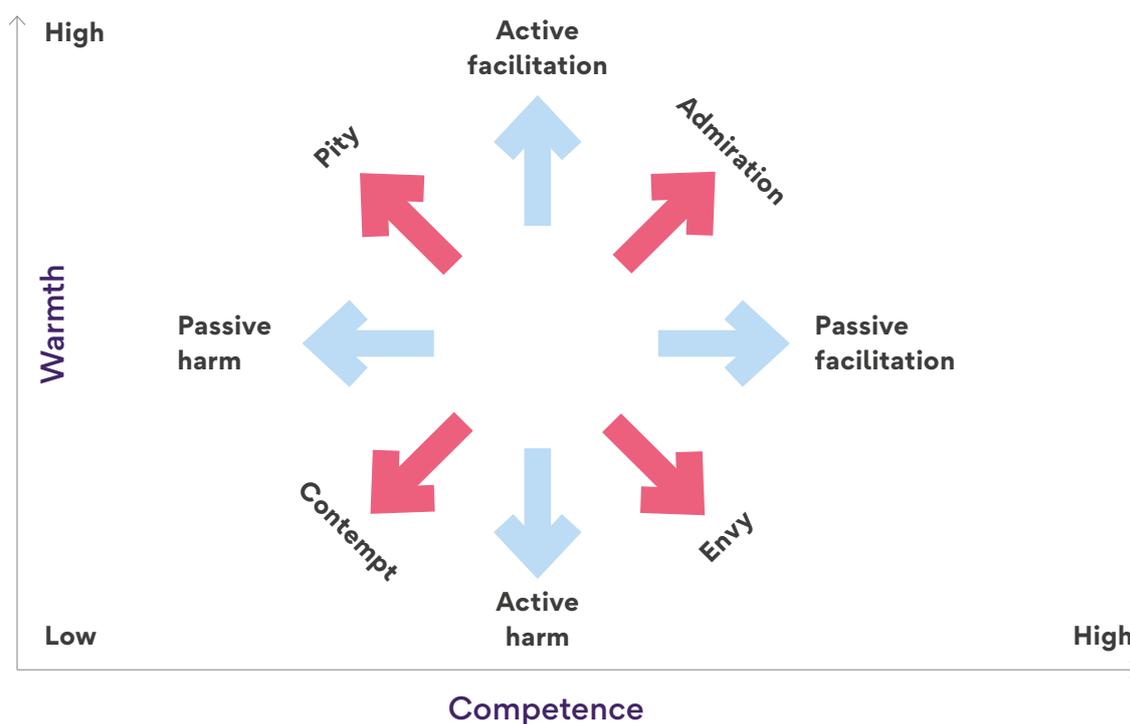
Charity sector stakeholders say that they have already increased the number of personal stories that they show in recent years to make their representation of ageing less policy or problem focused. However, when the charity sector discourse analysis in this study is compared to the advertising industry discourse, we can see that the advertising industry uses a great deal of personal stories, apparently more than the charity sector, with relatively fewer.

Use of personal stories to enhance representation would be a potentially effective approach as long as supported by structural analysis. In addition, the tone, focus and nuances of these will influence how they are received. The advertising industry using personal stories to invoke emotions and the charity sector uses these to encourage engagement and support. It should be acknowledged that messaging generated from this study should

consider the context in which it operates in addition to the specific words or phrases themselves. Where and how the message appears and who interprets it, is crucial in how the message is understood.

Message development should consider that what might appear to be an effective description, is not necessarily positive in terms of reducing stereotypes and broadening the narrative. The project literature review examined positive and negative descriptive stereotypes associated with older people and Fiske's content model<sup>27</sup> shows us that even terms that are considered positive can have a negative impact. For example, many descriptive terms used for older people stereotypes evoke high warmth but low perceived competence. Any messages developed to reframe ageing would need to be carefully tested to ensure that the message received did not fit this.

**Representation of the emotions and behaviours elicited from competence and warmth stereotypes. Emotions are represented by red arrows. Behaviours are represented by blue arrows. Cuddy et al., (2007).**



### 3. Recognising economic contribution and social value

Stakeholders suggest highlighting the impact of the contribution of older people across their life course economically, rather than just focusing on the financial 'burden' that they present to the public sector once they have retired. Government sector stakeholders suggest there could be value in highlighting

<sup>27</sup> Fiske, et.al. 2002, Cuddy et.al. 2005; 2007.

the economic contribution of older people. Stakeholders say that it could be helpful to quantify older people's payments throughout their lives in tax and that it could be useful to explore other areas where they may contribute too.

However, in highlighting the workplace economic contribution of older people, this runs the risk of engaging in myth busting which may simply highlight the issue area that it intends to counteract. One consideration is that it might be better to focus on the unpaid work that older people currently do for example unpaid childcare, or voluntary work with charities that indirectly contributes to the economy and society. Stakeholders recognise the contribution of older people through voluntary, unpaid roles within their communities or their role within their families, often caring for children or other relatives. This, they say, could increase the broader understanding of older people's value and contribution to society. This is seen as an opportunity for changing perceptions not only within their sector, but also among the wider public, breaking down some culturally ingrained perceptions of older people as a drain on society. It is important to recognise that from a strategic communications perspective, recognising older people by their 'worth' or economic value, dials up extrinsic values which reduces support for social change and so is counterproductive. Therefore, this would not be a recommended approach.

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**“How to present positive narratives of ageing, and to quantify the contribution made by older people, as opposed to always looking at the cost of supporting them.”**

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**Sarah Pickup, Government sector stakeholder**

From the perspective of advertising and media, sector stakeholders also recognise that older people have economic power. They acknowledge a under representation and misrepresentation of older people within their respective industries and suggest that by doing so these sectors and industries could be missing out on revenue. This limited representation means that a significant proportion of the market are not being targeted and could therefore be alienated by adverts or media content. Highlighting the economic opportunities for these industries by tapping into the 'ageing market' is seen by some of these stakeholders as an opportunity to encourage a change in narrative within these sectors and industries. Again, however the empirical evidence on the use of such extrinsic values shows that this would be counterproductive.

#### **4. Ageing as a process – ‘life course approach’**

Talking about ageing as a process as opposed to an ‘end state’ or a ‘destination’ is a commonly suggested and potentially fruitful approach to creating a more balanced narrative across all sectors and industries and potentially shift engrained stereotypes of ageing and old age.

This approach, often defined by stakeholders in the ageing charity sector as the ‘life course’ approach, overcomes using ageing and old people as synonymous terms. It is described as having the potential to contribute to a more progressive and holistic understanding of the subjectivity of ageing and the diversity of different real-life experiences.

In shifting towards a more effective language, some ageing charity and media stakeholders highlight the importance of integrating people from all ages in conversations around ageing as opposed to focusing only on older demographics, in order to ensure that ageing is a relatable concept for all age groups.

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**“I think something that can help to change and make people more involved is to also frame it around them. It is not about others, it is about you as well, so we'll all be older. I think this is something that you actually don't see that often necessarily [...] so you don't self-recognise in that group, and I think that's not necessarily very productive.”**

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**Dr Vania de la Fuente-Nunez, Ageing charity sector**

Additionally, some media stakeholders suggest that change should begin with recognising and eliminating some inappropriate, ageist phrases and images, while actively diversifying images and content. This is seen by stakeholders as an opportunity to move away from arbitrary generalisations of old people.

#### **5. Engagement with age diversity**

Stakeholders from all four sectors and industries recognise that some form of engagement with older people within their sector may be a way of overcoming some of the barriers related to a lack of knowledge and understanding about the range of experience within ageing and old age.

In this respect, some government sector stakeholders suggest that local government may be better placed than central government to broaden the sector’s narrative on ageing. This is due to local government institutions’ ability to directly engage with local communities and as a result their wider

exposure to a diversity of different experiences of ageing, which stakeholders say could contribute to a more balanced and holistic understanding of ageing within the sector.

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**“Some of the opportunities may be greater in local government, because of course local government is a place-based approach, see themselves as leaders of communities, love a good news story about people who are, you know, setting things up, doing things.”**

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**Sarah Pickup, Government sector stakeholder**

Engagement through online platforms, particularly creating and sharing individual content on social media is often seen as an opportunity and a solution to diversifying and promoting different experiences and understandings of ageing as a subjective process, which may challenge stereotypes and prejudices of old people.

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**“The positive thing from the Internet and technology is that it has opened up so many new avenues of exploration for all ages, so simplifying people by their age is really irrelevant.”**

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**George Lee, Ageing charity stakeholder**

## **6. Cross-sectoral cooperation**

Stakeholders from each sector are likely to externalise responsibilities on where change should start and focus on challenges outside of their sector. This suggests that in order to successfully shift the narrative, it is inevitable to take a more holistic approach that involves the cross-sectoral engagement of decision-makers from each key sector.

Some suggest that their sector-specific roles and responsibilities naturally define their relationship with and language around ageing. For example, the health sector is primarily exposed to ill, frail, old people and has limited or no engagement with active and healthy ageing. Therefore, their approach is naturally more focused on mental and physical decline. Sectors focused on active and healthy ageing in turn tend to focus on individuals’ behaviours and choices, not the wider societal systems that either enable or constrain behaviour and choice. Having constructive conversations across sectors and industries that challenge each sector’s established associations, may contribute to the creation of a more balanced and representative narrative that incorporates a diversity of different experiences and understanding of ageing.

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**“If you're working in A&E you don't see that many well older people walking through. You see the ones that have fallen over, and it can really colour the mind. In some ways, the same way that police often think a lot of people are criminals. Well, that's because that's who they deal with, but of course most people aren't.”**

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**Richard Murray, Ageing charity stakeholder**

Furthermore, ageing charity stakeholders note that there lies a valuable opportunity in collaboration between charities, in order to further broaden their understanding of ageing. Additionally, forming coalitions not only leads to the creation of a more nuanced narrative, but also enables the sector to have a louder voice when it comes to wider, cross-sectoral discussions around the issue.

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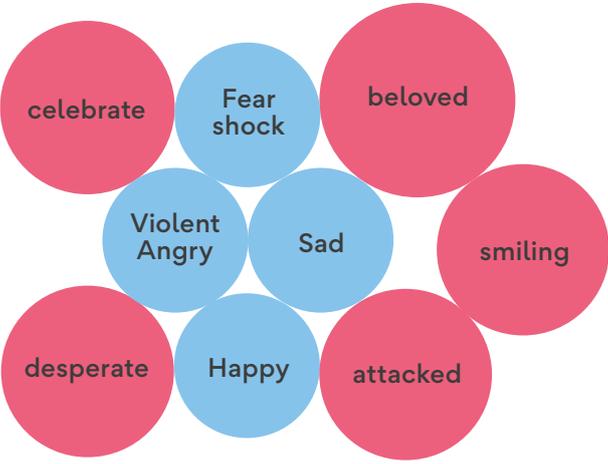
**“I think the sector has been very good at coming together and to work in collaboration [...] I think we'll see more of that partnership and collaboration amongst charities. I think that's a big opportunity.”**

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**Estelle McCartney, Ageing charity sector**

# Tabloid news – emotional aspects

Online tabloids related to ageing are more likely than online broadsheets to use emotive language, both positively and negatively.

<b>Emotions used in online tabloids</b> Relative difference: 2x more likely	<b>Tabloid</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Words</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attacked x2</li> <li>beloved x2.5</li> <li>celebrate x2</li> <li>desperate x2</li> <li>smiling x2</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Topics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Violent/Angry x1.4</li> <li>Sad x1.5</li> <li>Happy x1.5</li> <li>Fear/shock x1.4</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

## Tabloid news – emotional aspects

Emotions used in online tabloids - tabloid					
Items	Relative difference	Frequency - online tabloids	Frequency % of total wordcount - online tabloids (n=4,072,213)	Frequency - online broadsheets	Frequency % of total wordcount - online broadsheets (n=768,361)
<b>Words</b>					
Beloved	2.5x	414	0.010%	33	0.004%
Attacked	2x	530	0.013%	46	0.006%
Celebrate	2x	367	0.009%	34	0.004%
Desperate	2x	352	0.009%	34	0.004%
Smiling	2x	205	0.005%	18	0.002%
<b>Topics</b>					
Sad	1.5x	8639	0.212%	1085	0.141%
Happy	1.5x	7862	0.193%	1042	0.136%
Violent/ angry	1.4x	15152	0.372%	2084	0.271%
Fear/ shock	1.4x	5534	0.136%	765	0.100%

Relative difference of each feature (topic, word, phrase, grammar or emotion) is calculated by dividing the normalised frequency percentages of the feature in one source (in this case, online tabloids) by the other source (in this case, online broadsheets).

Words and emotions such as ‘happy’, ‘celebrate’, ‘beloved’, ‘loved’, ‘smiling’ are all used more frequently by online tabloids to denote feelings of warmth. Notably, the use of these words and emotions in this context are largely associated with relationships among family and friends.

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**“I'm so happy that the memory of him will stay alive and everyone can see him the way I did, as an amazing person and a beloved grandfather.”**

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**Daily Mail, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

However, negative emotions appear to outweigh the apparently positive ones. Words and emotions such as ‘shock’, ‘fear’, ‘horror’, ‘suffering’, ‘heart-breaking’ and ‘tragedy’ are all used more frequently by online tabloids than by broadsheets. This is perhaps expected, considering online tabloids are also more likely to discuss stories involving topics where older people are subject to violence and assault, or where older people have committed crimes which go against the image which characterises older people as being ‘vulnerable’ and ‘desperate’. Furthermore, these emotions are often expressed by members of the public whose viewpoints are asserted through quotations in the articles.

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**“A TERRIFIED pensioner was left fearing for his life.”**

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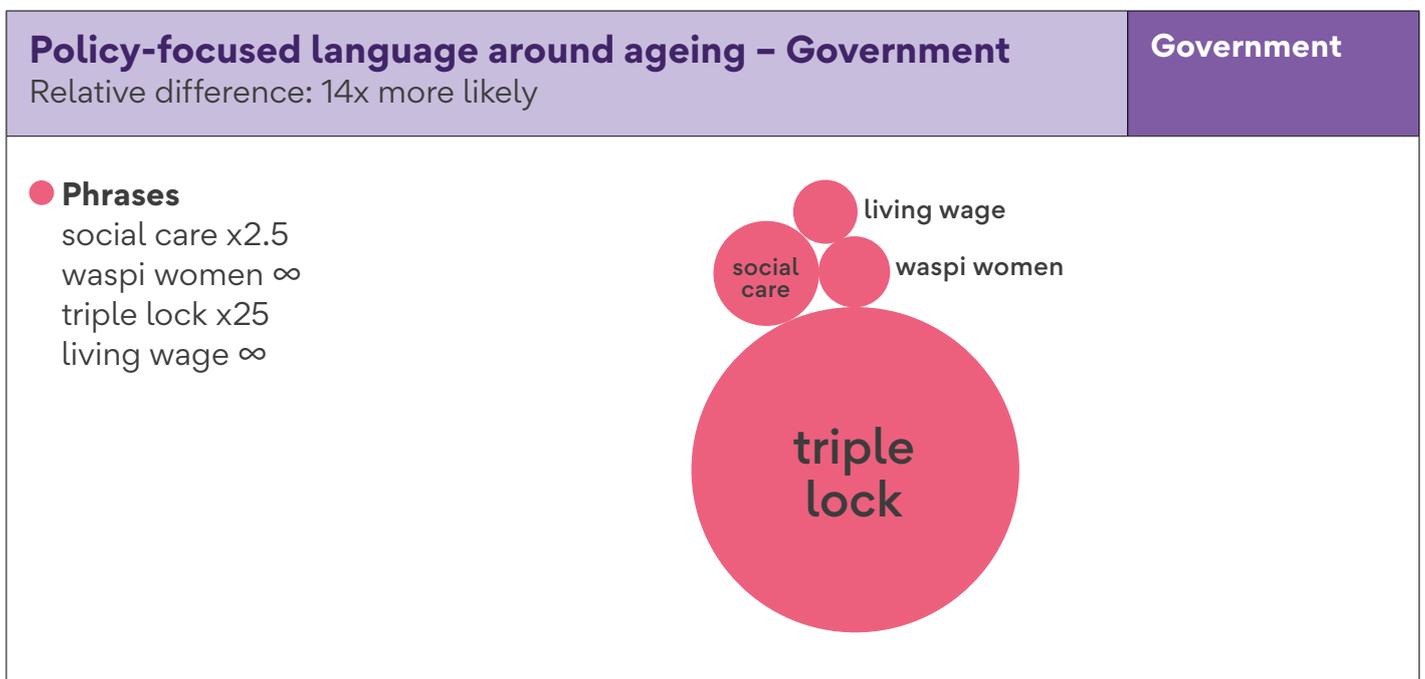
**The Sun, Online tabloid, Sept 2018**

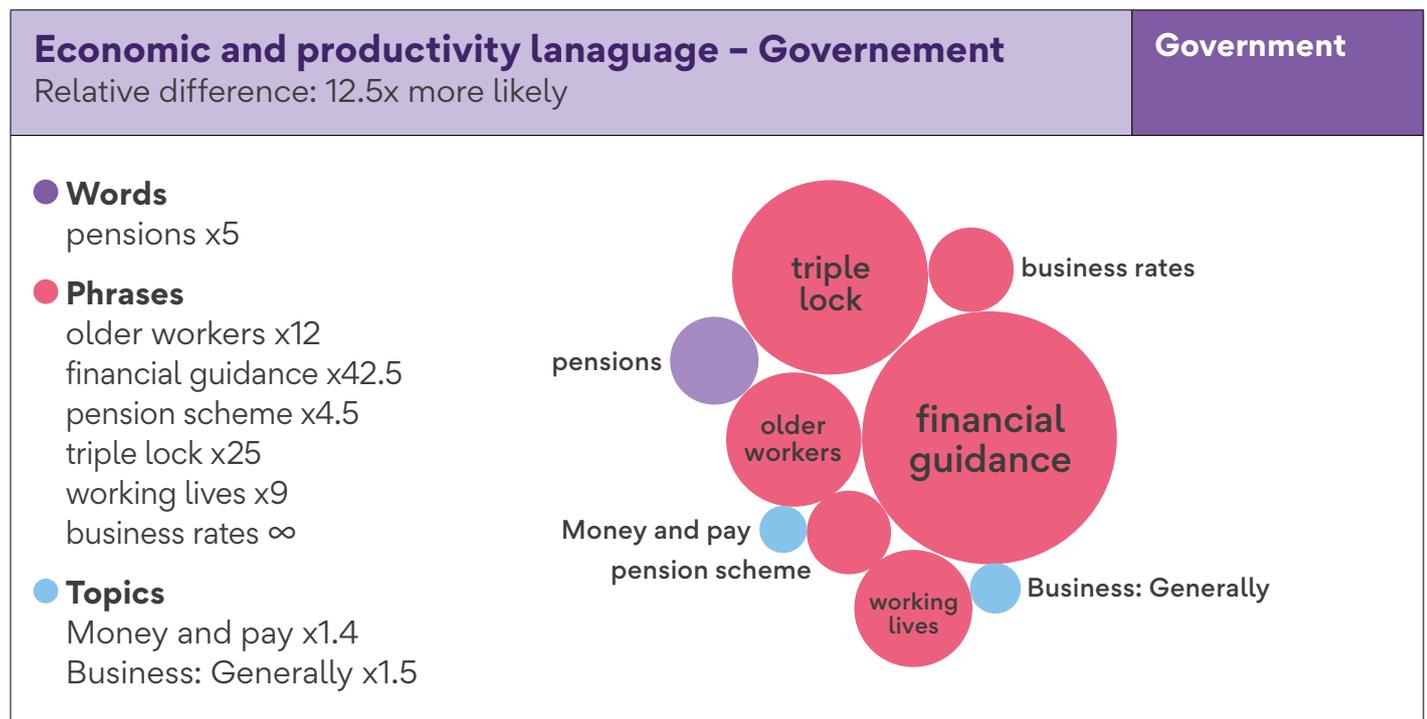
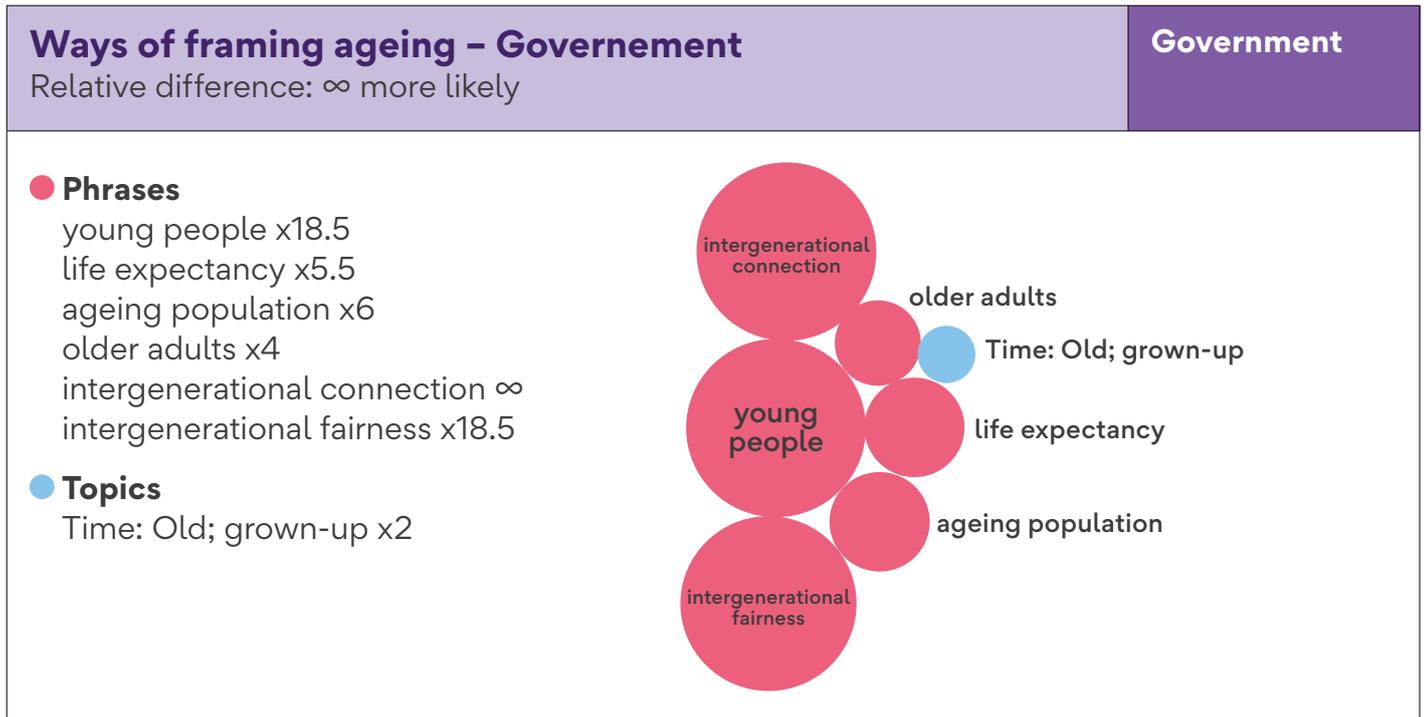
In contrast, emotive language is used much less frequently in online broadsheets when discussing ageing and older people.

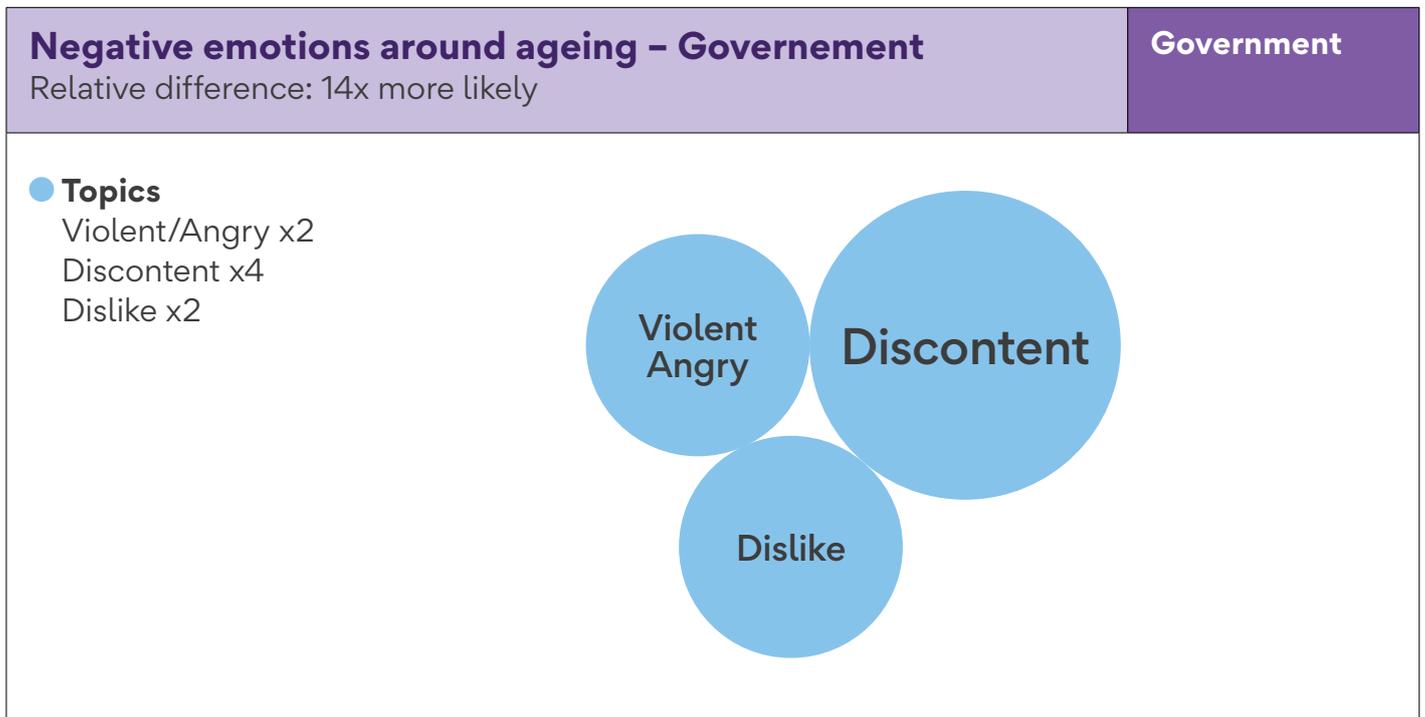
# Bubble diagrams

The bubble diagrams below provide a visual representation of the relative differences of features (words, phrases, topics, grammar, emotions). They are shown in the same order as the tables in the report.

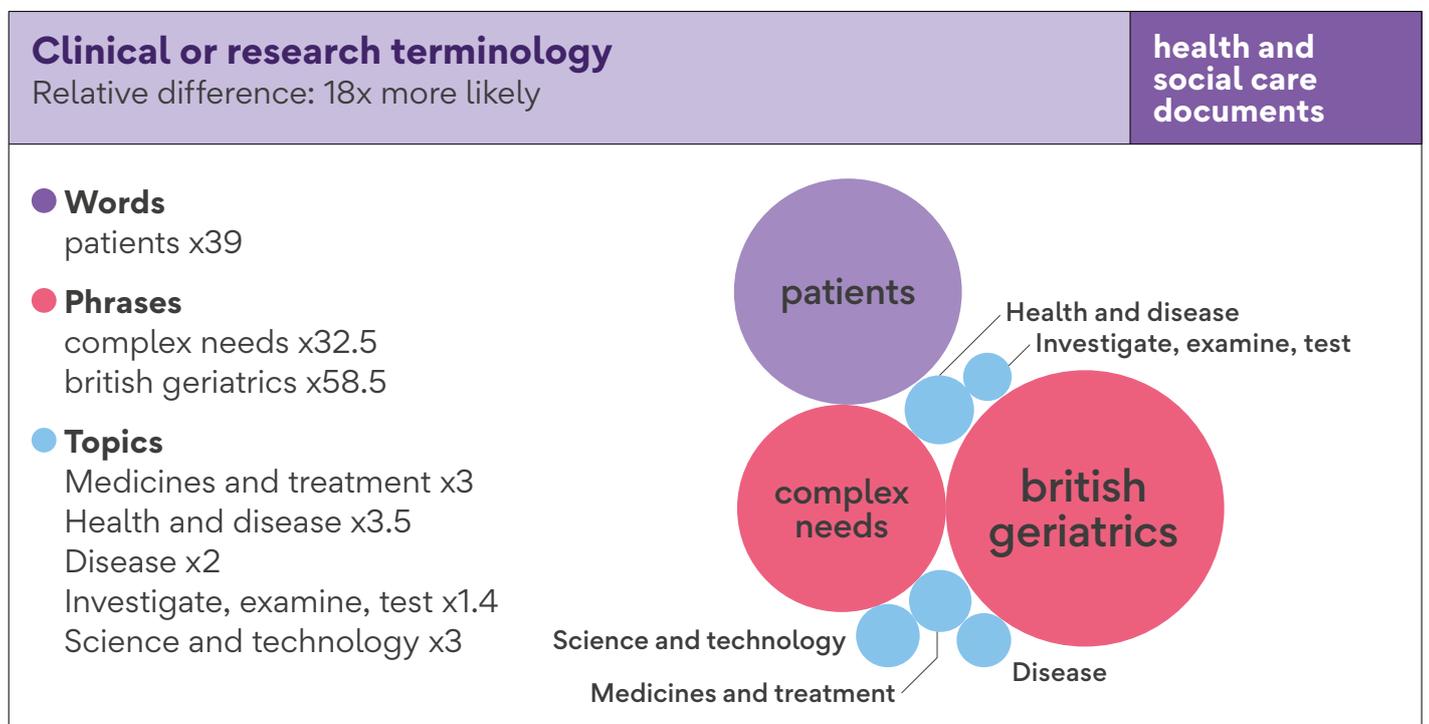
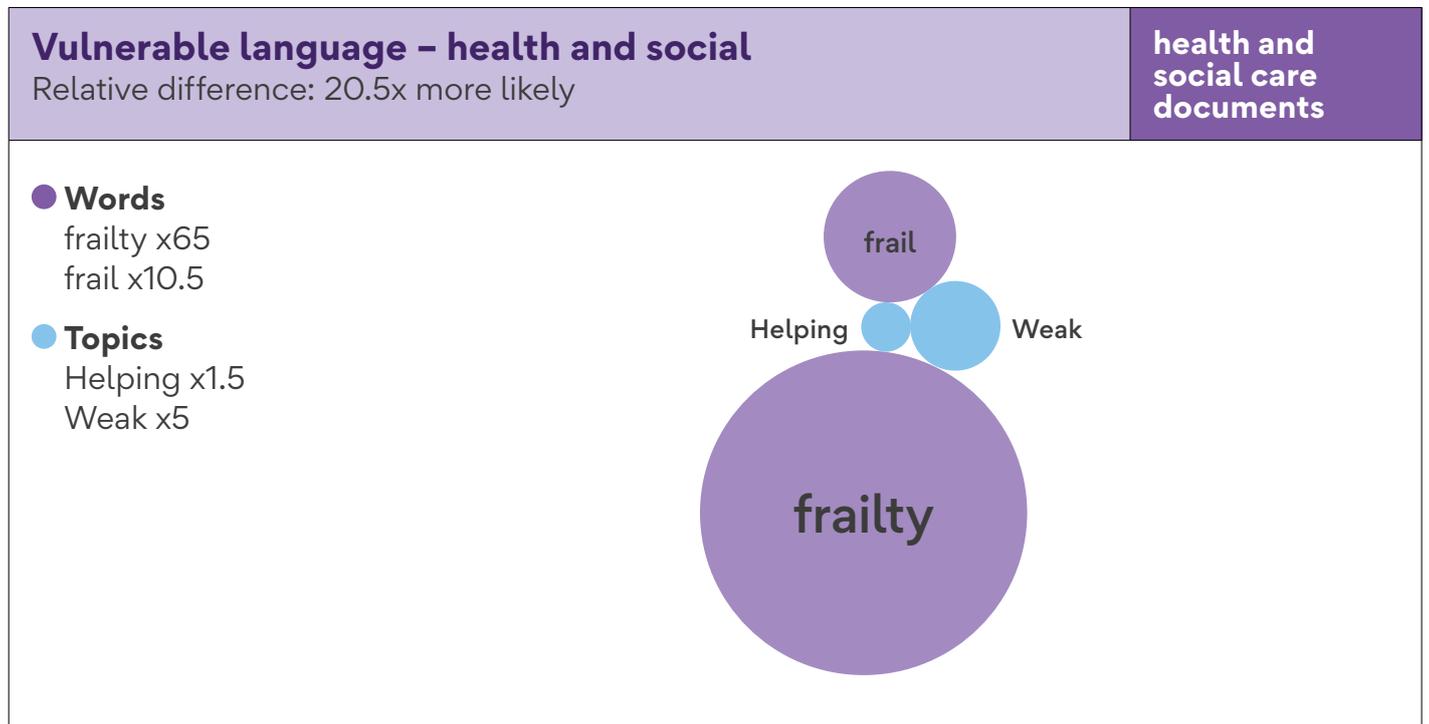
## Government sector discourse compared to age-related charity sources





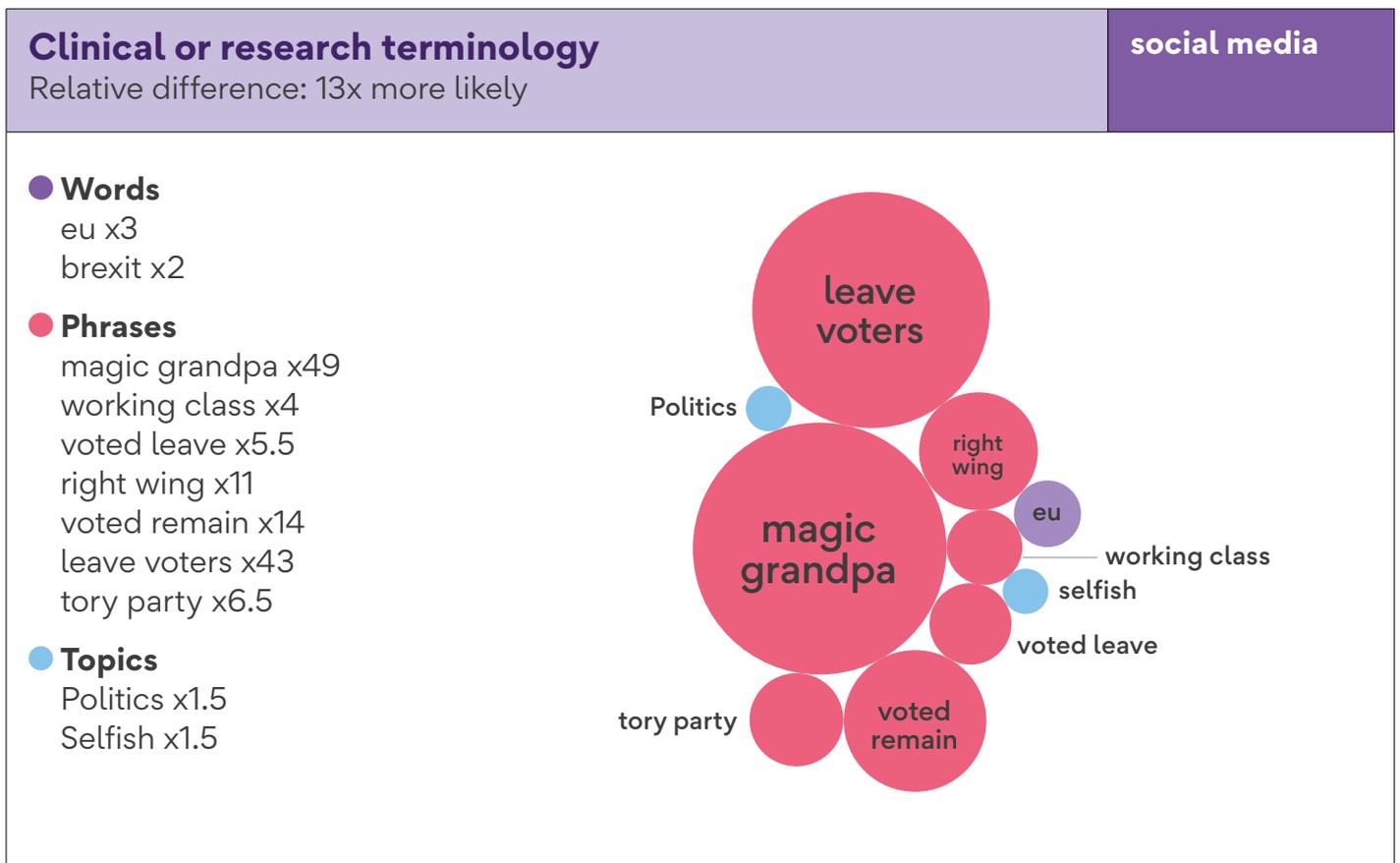


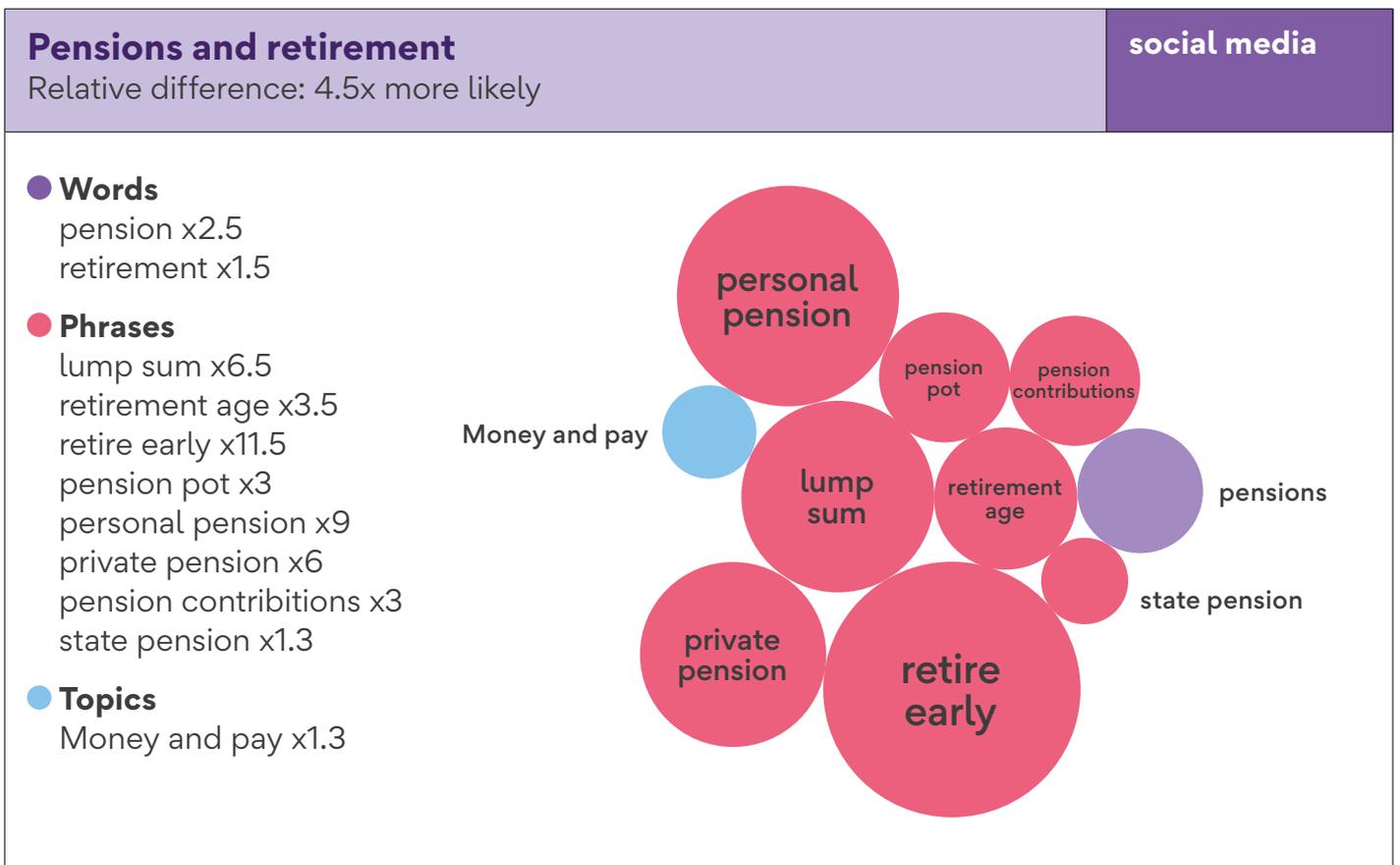
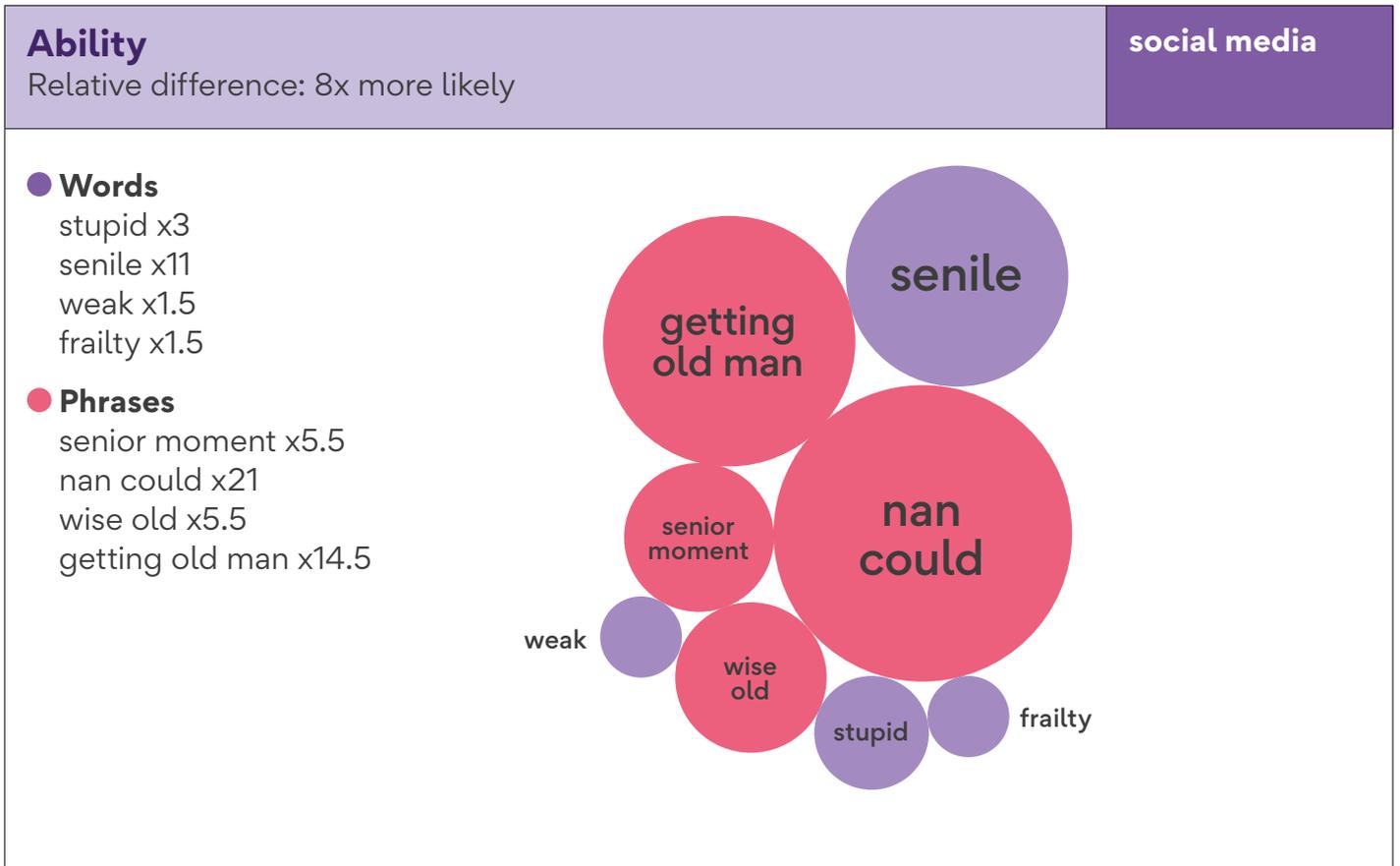
## Health and social care sector discourse compared to age-related charities

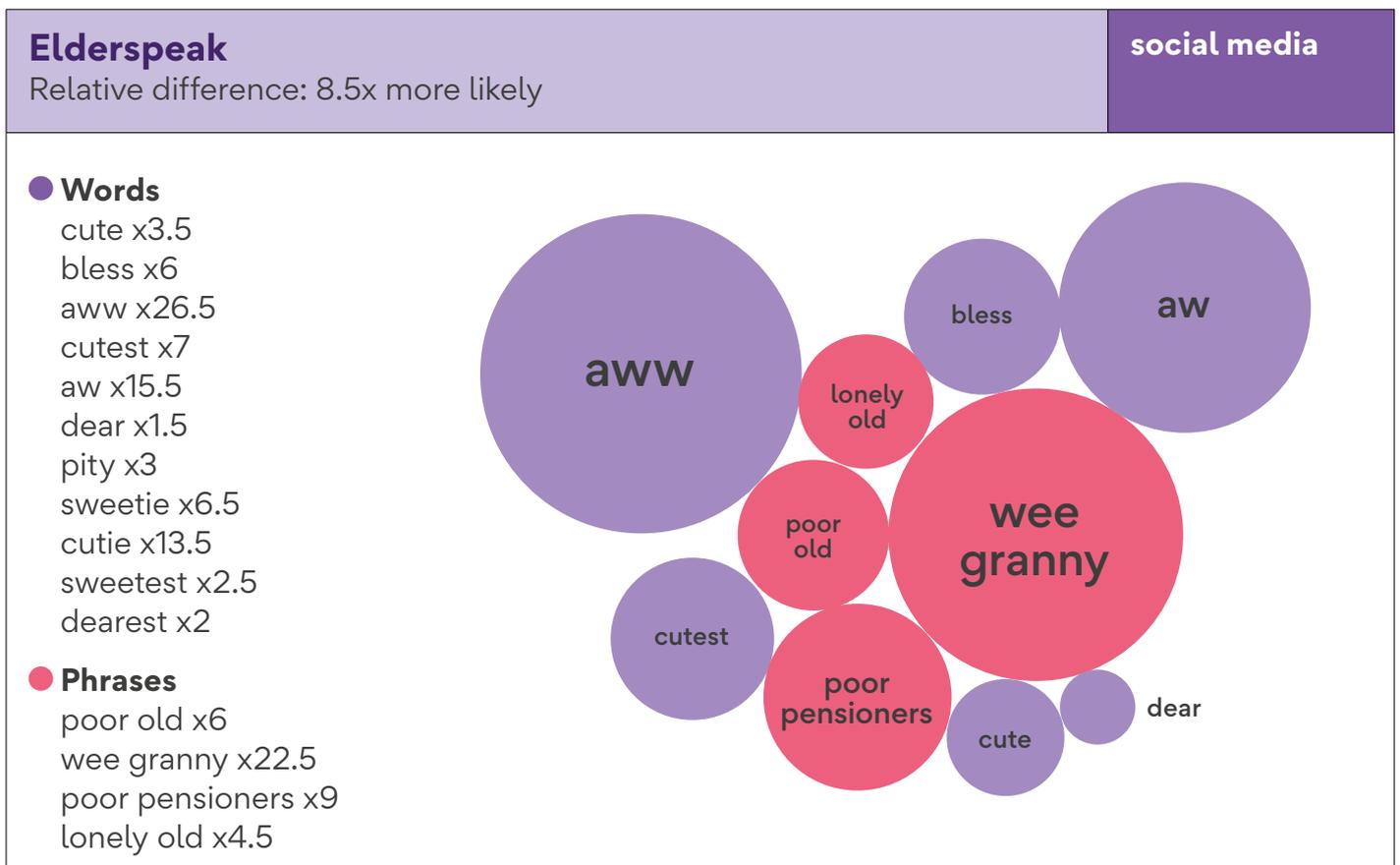
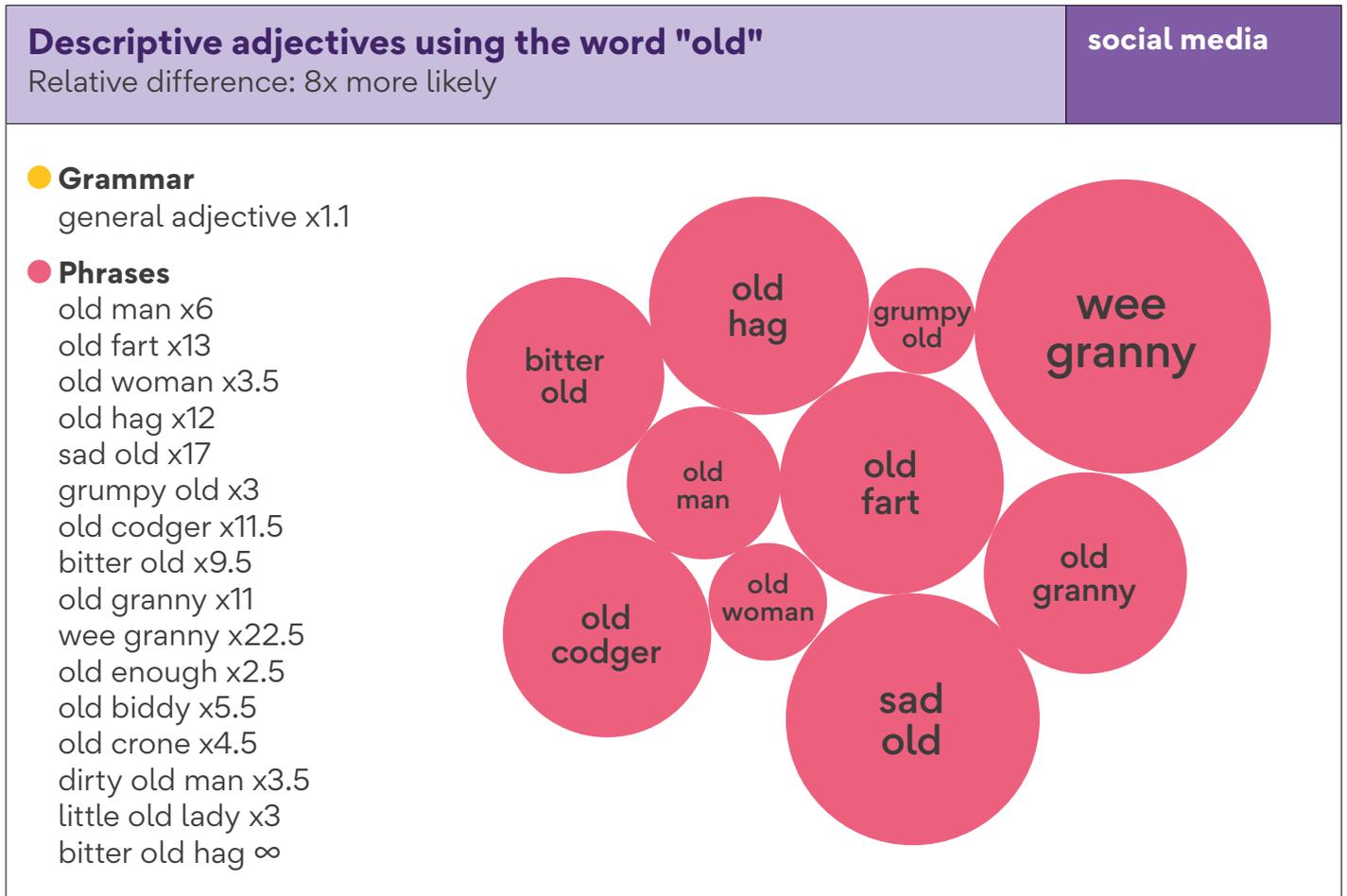


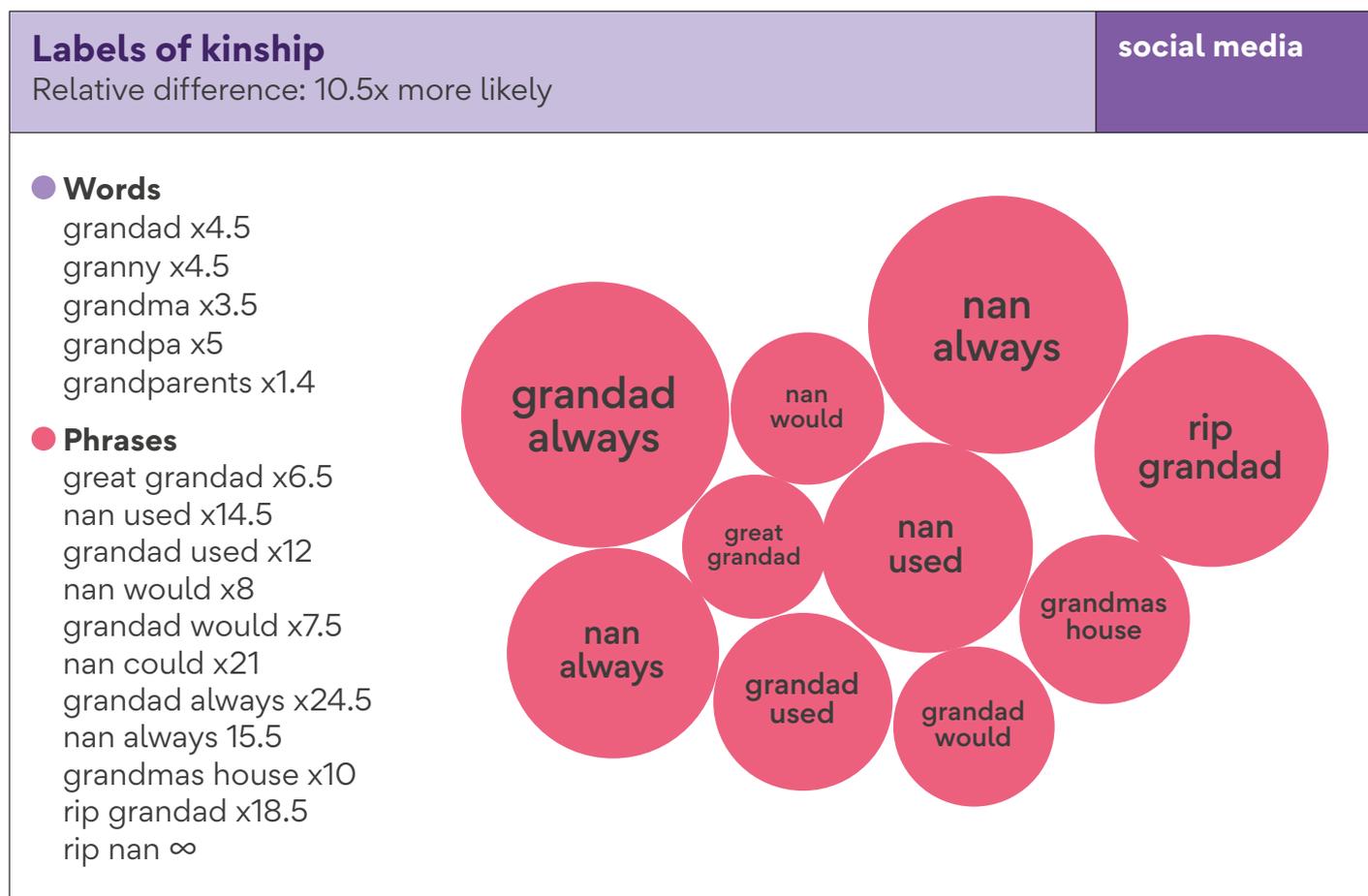


**Social media discourse compared to online news**

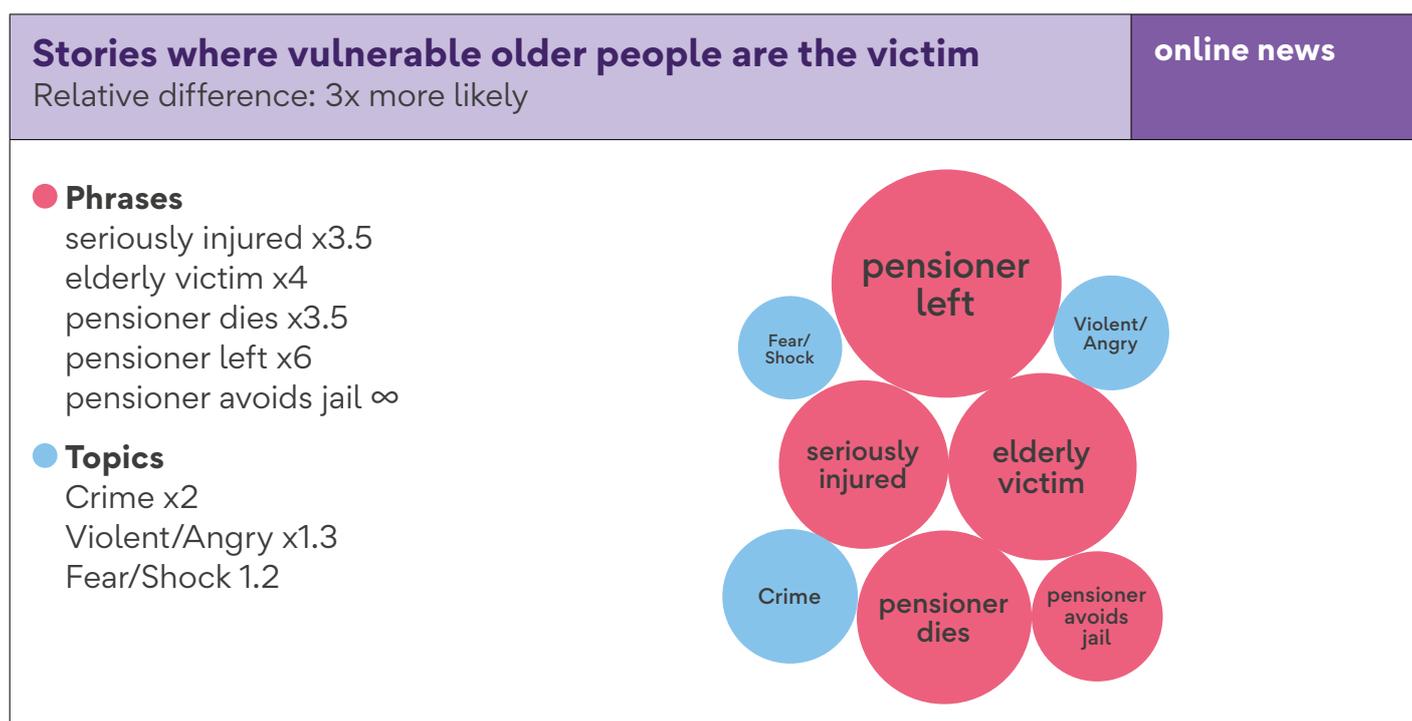


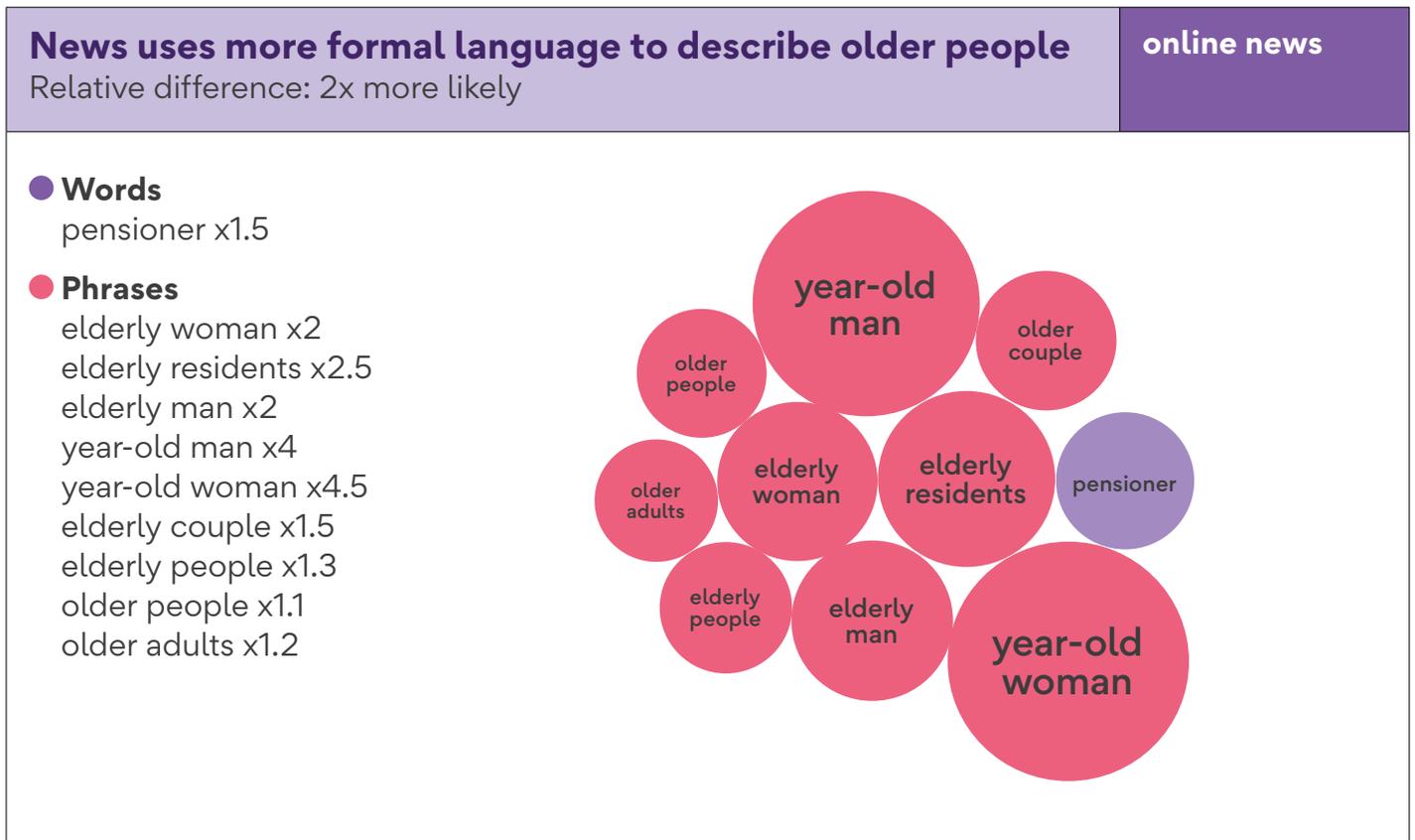
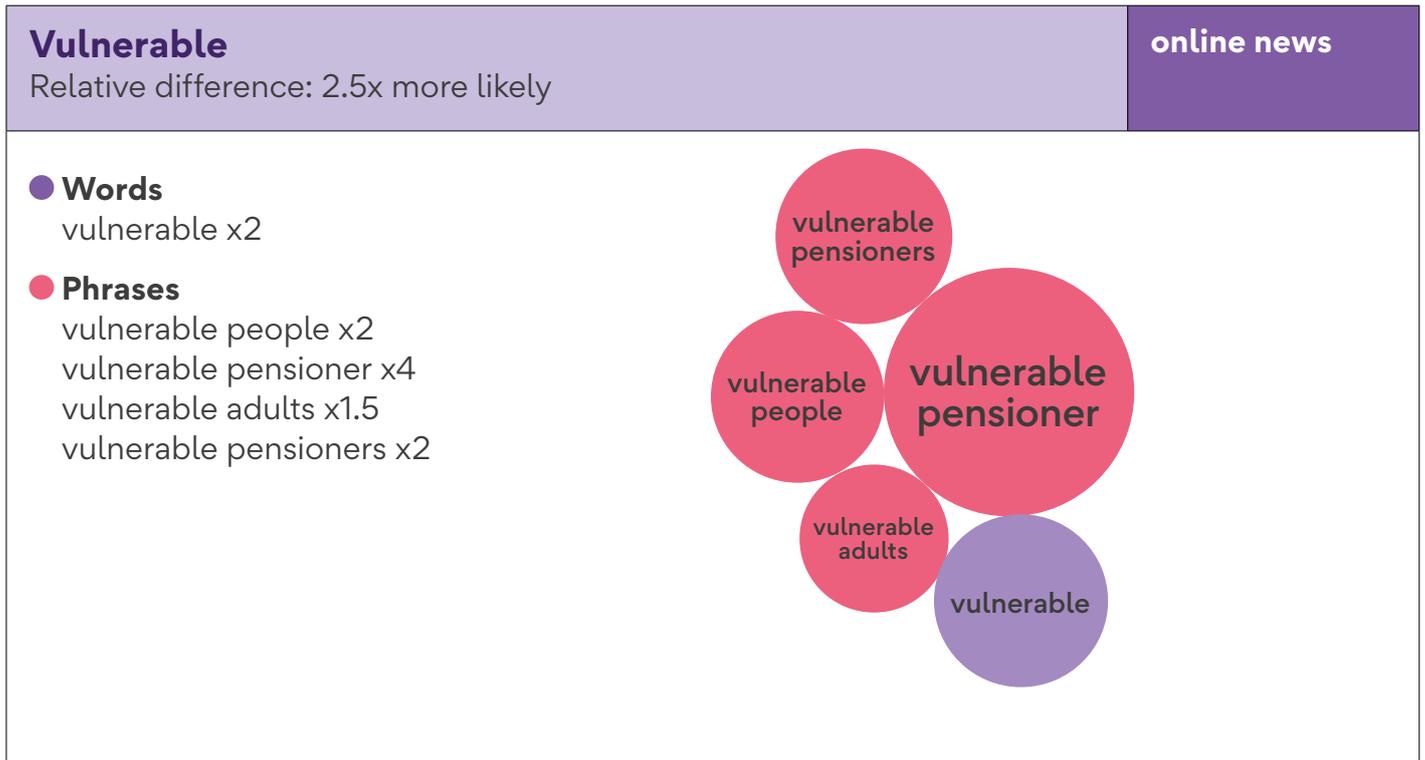




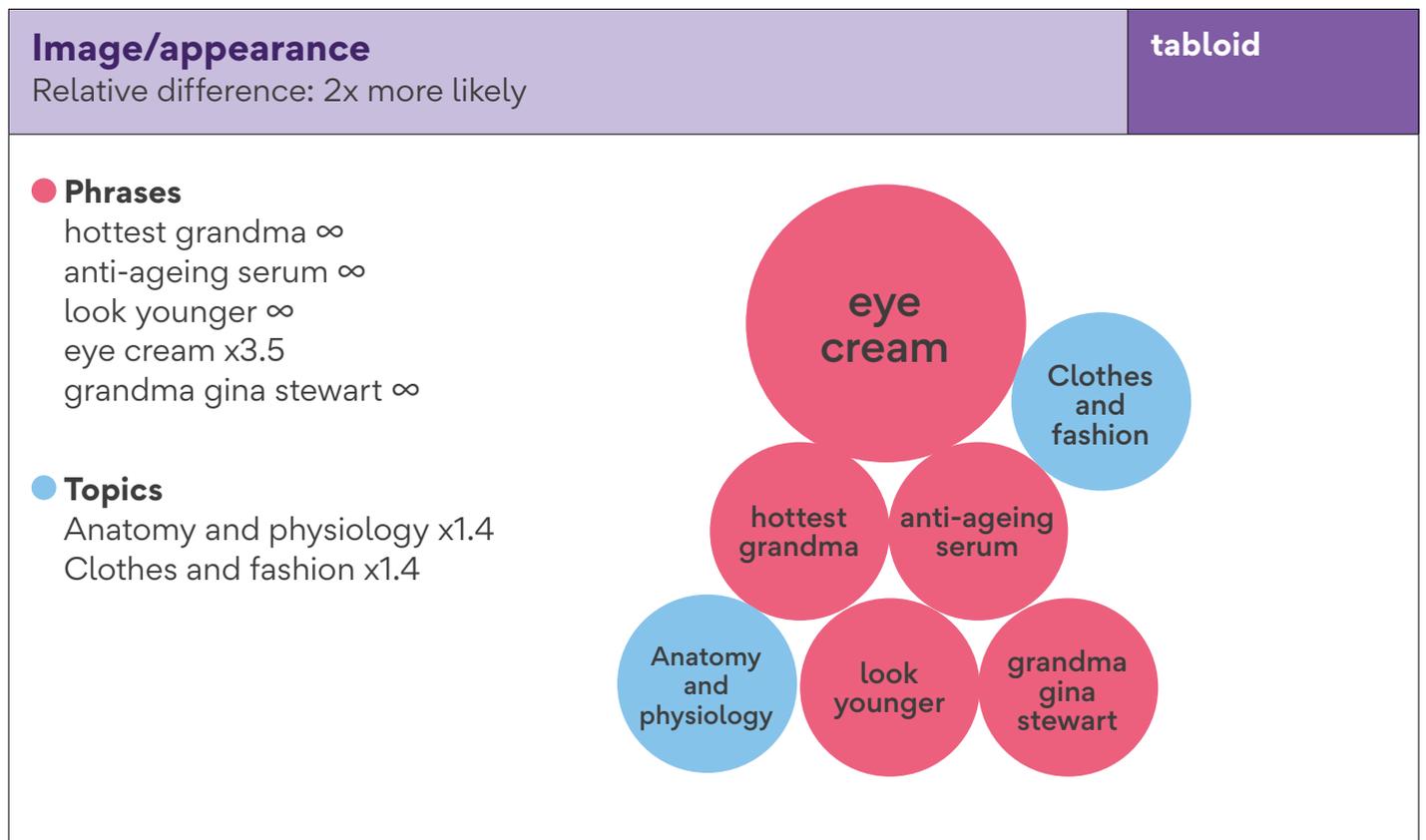
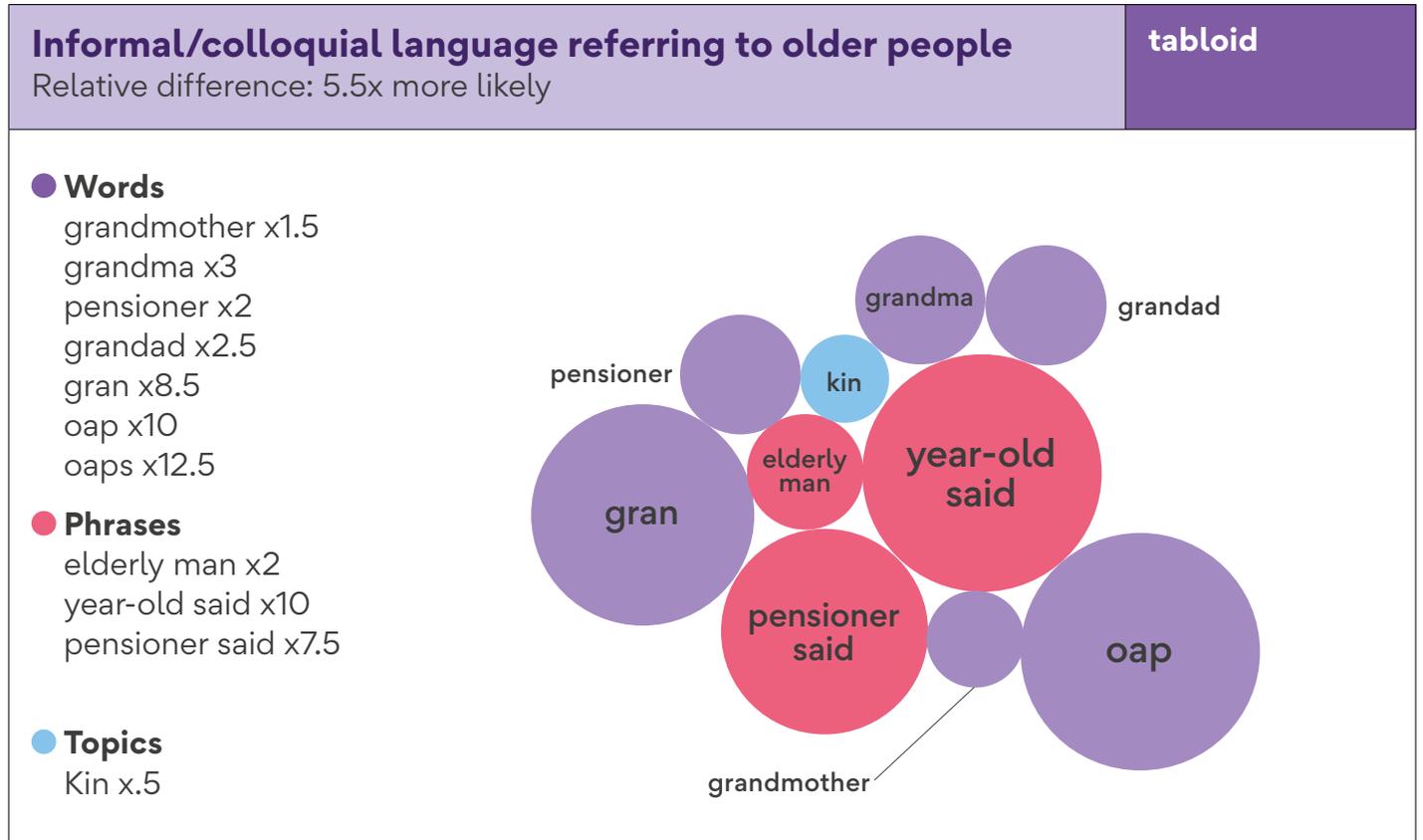


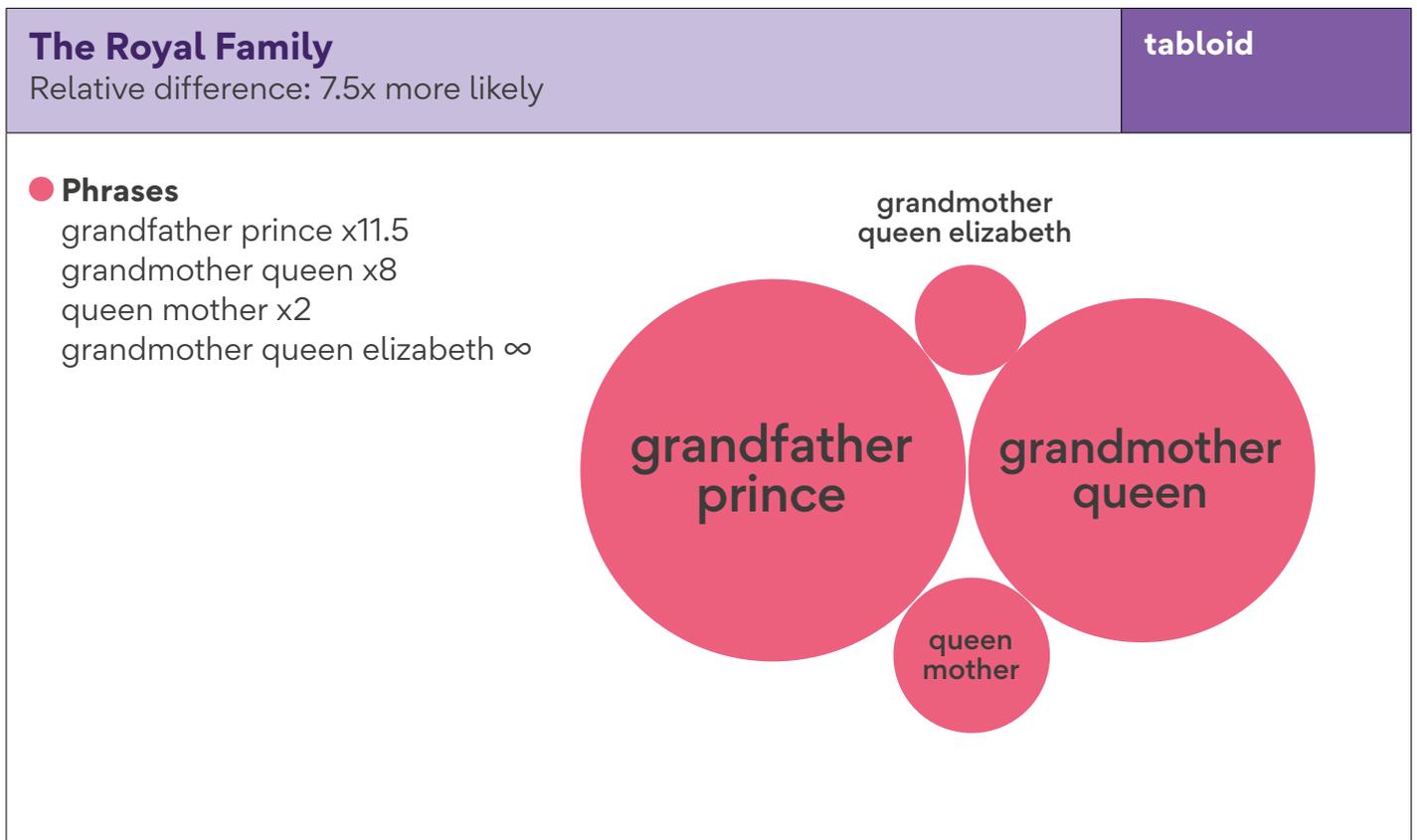
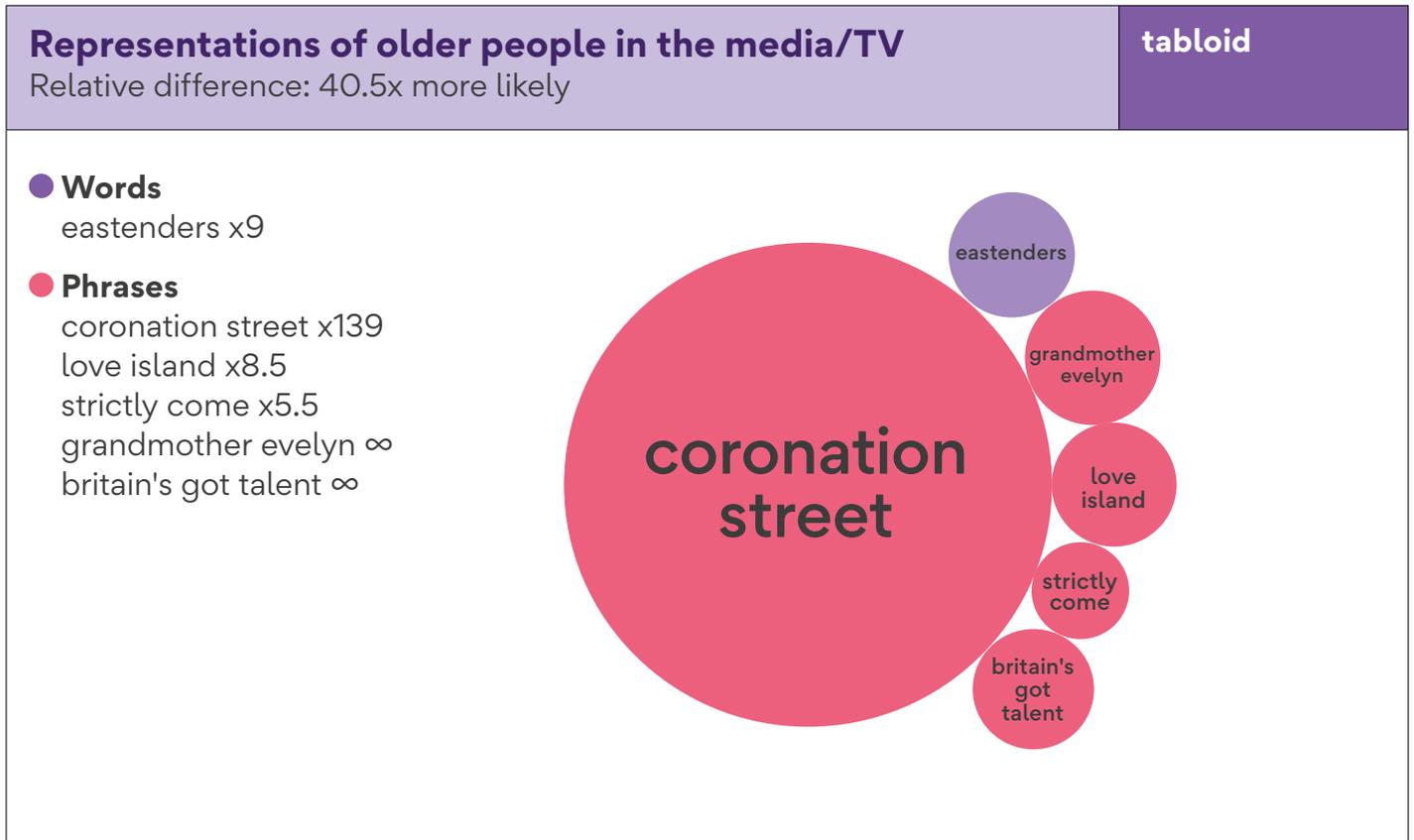
## Online news discourse compared to social media

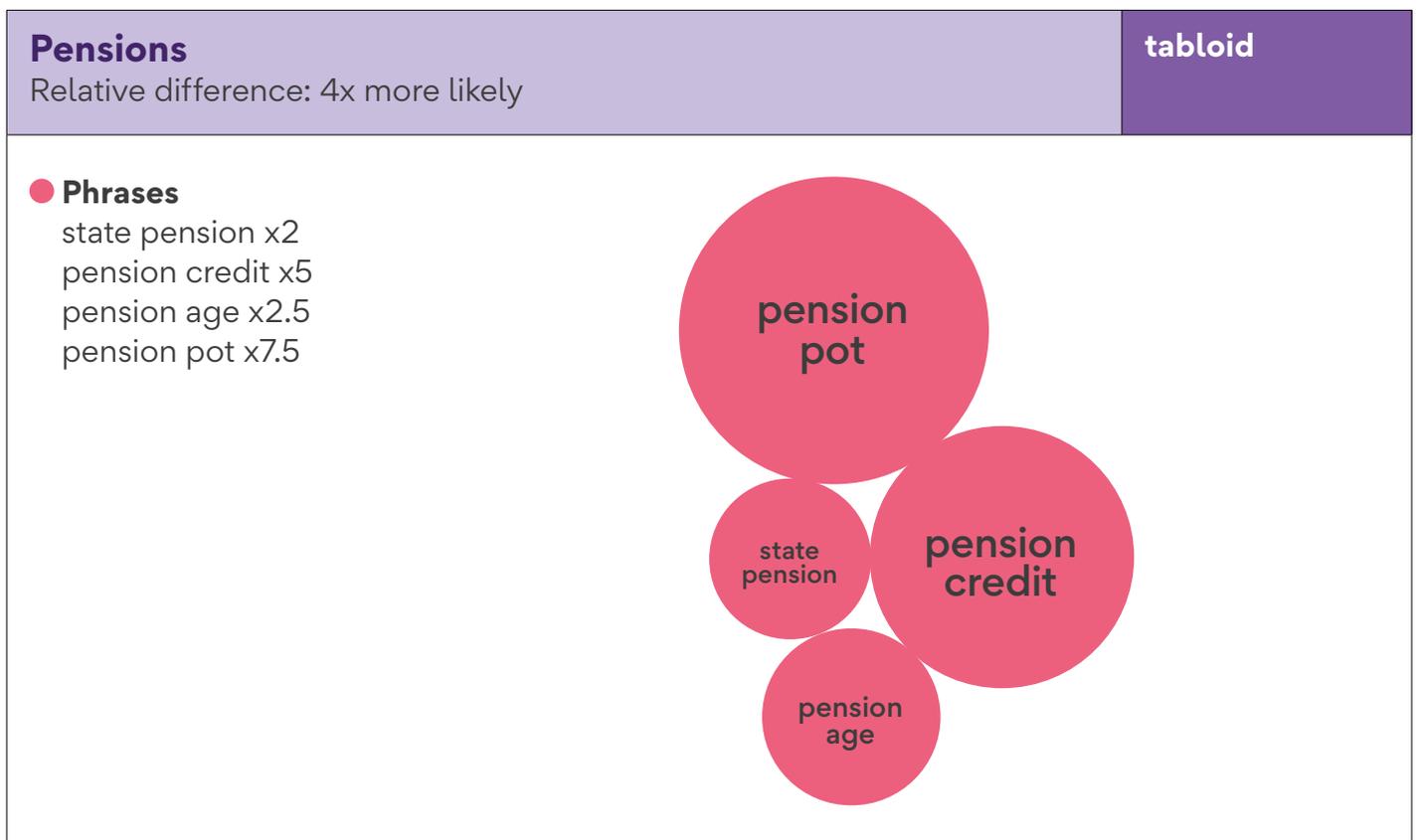
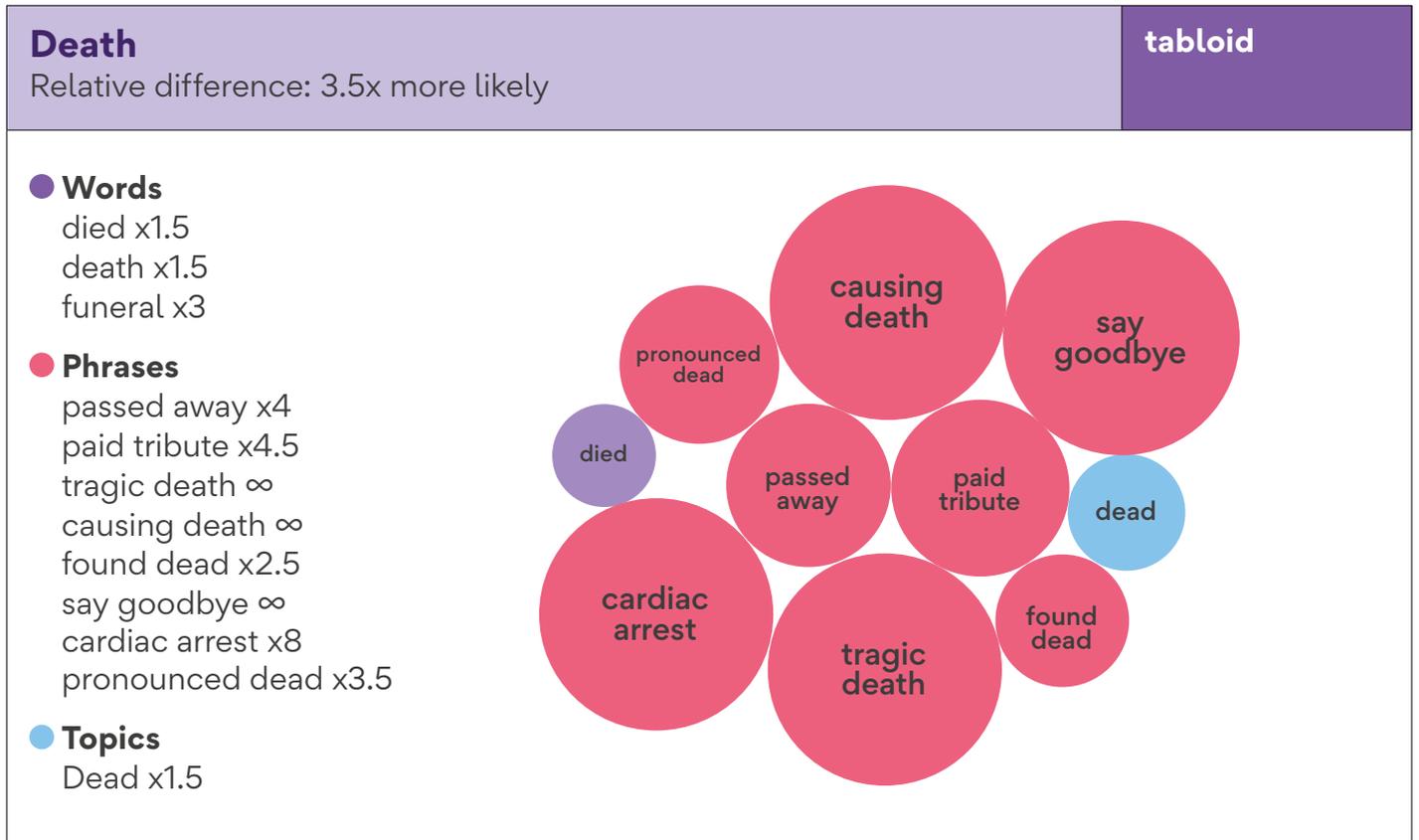




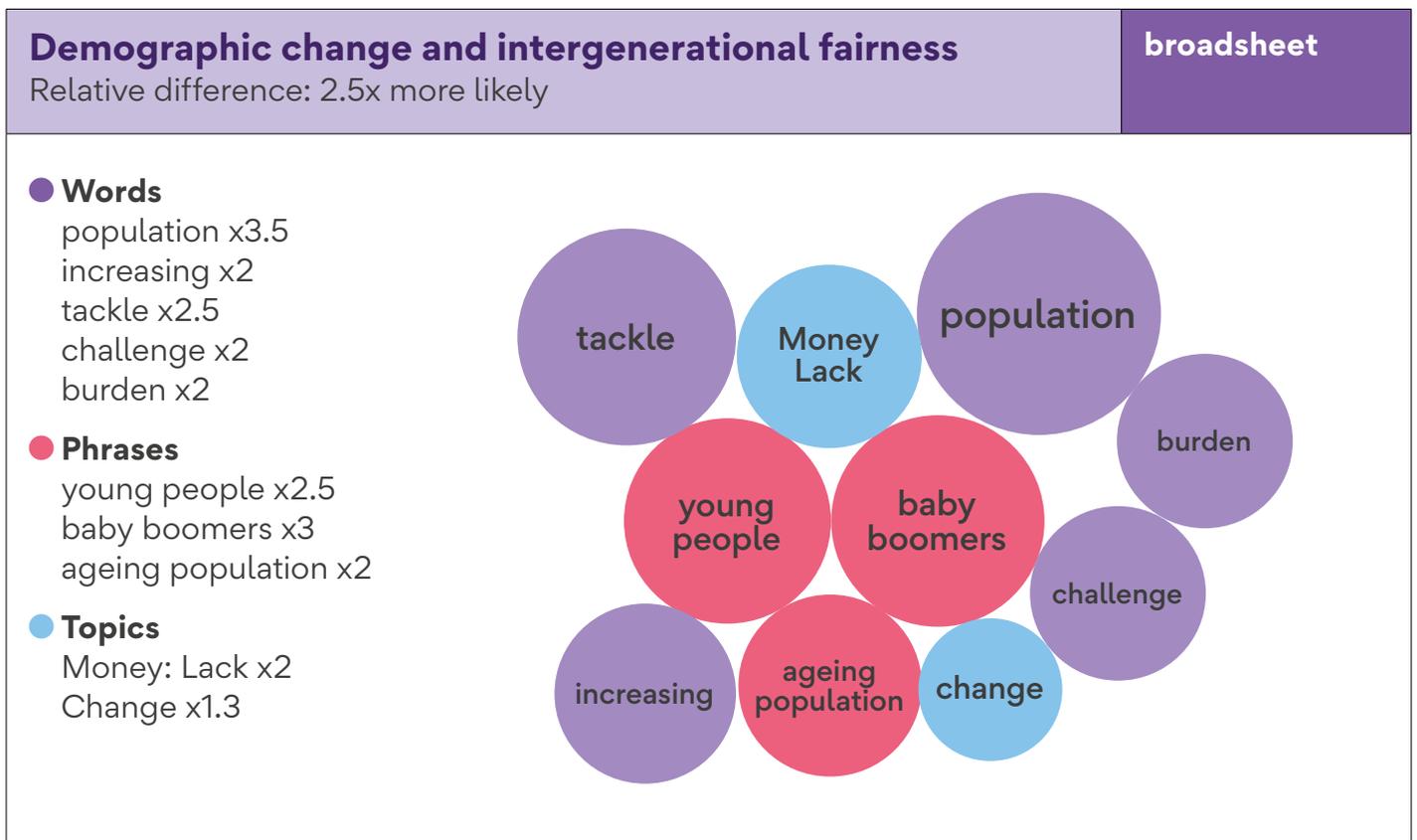
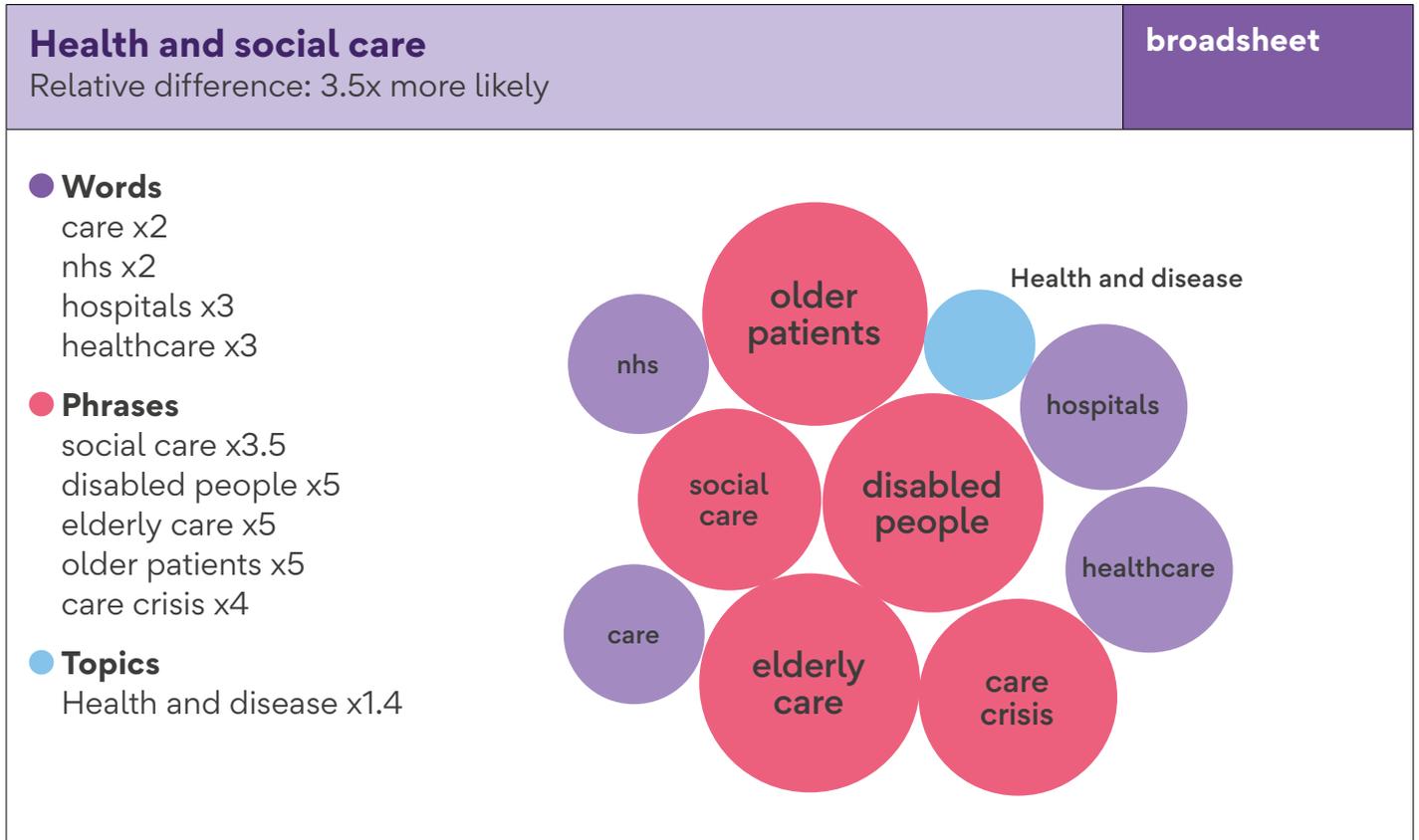
## Tabloid news discourse compared to broadsheet news

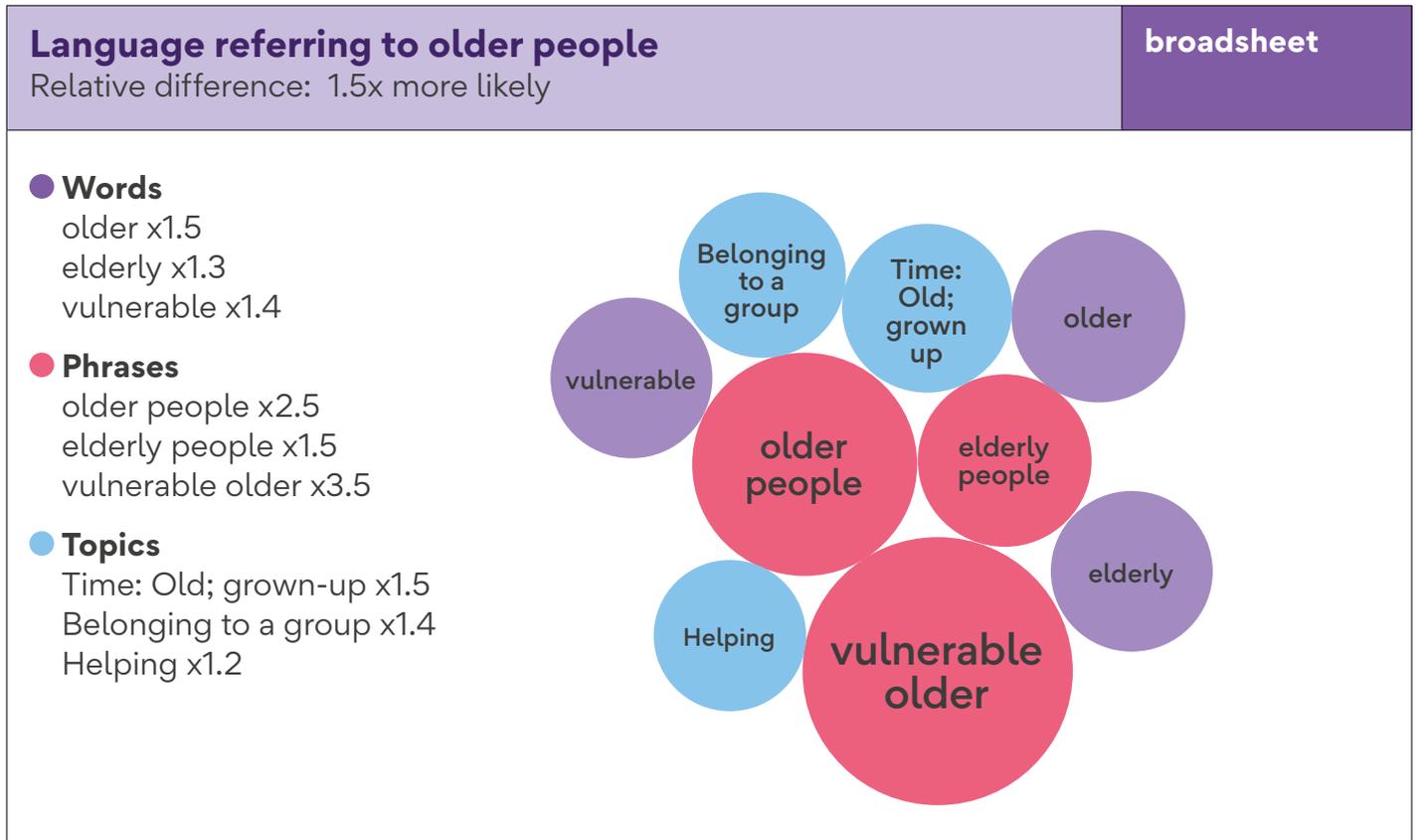




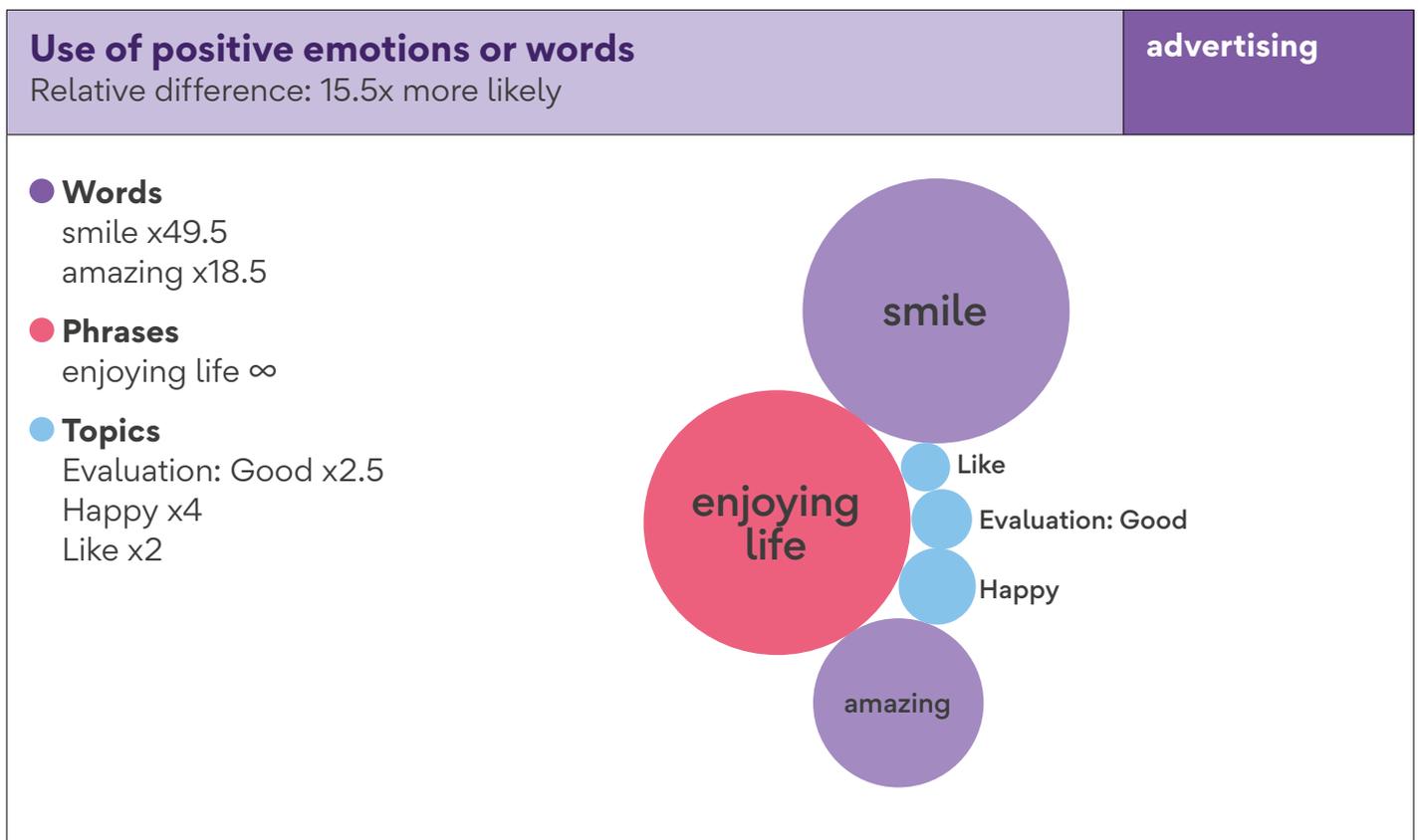


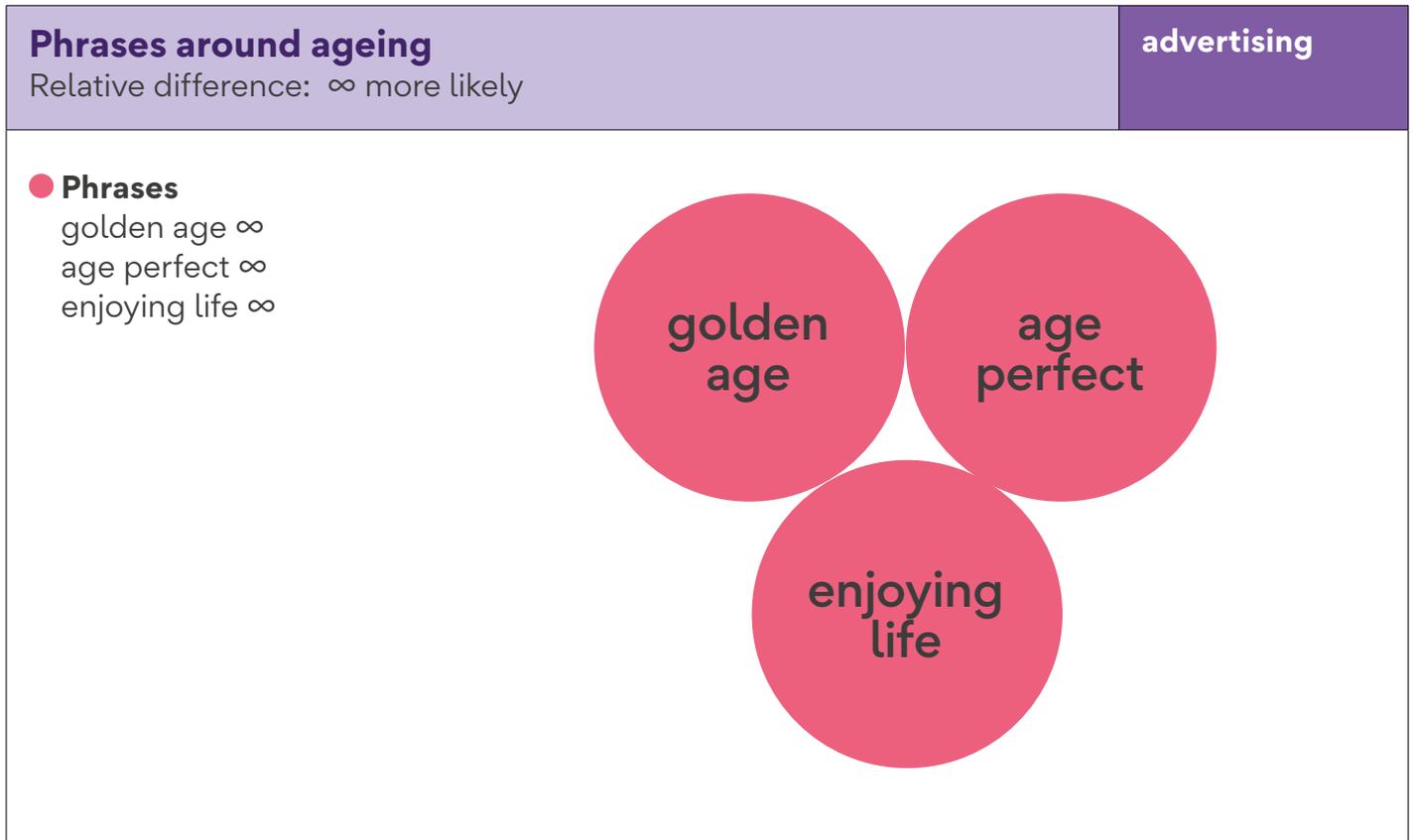
## Broadsheet news discourse compared to tabloid news





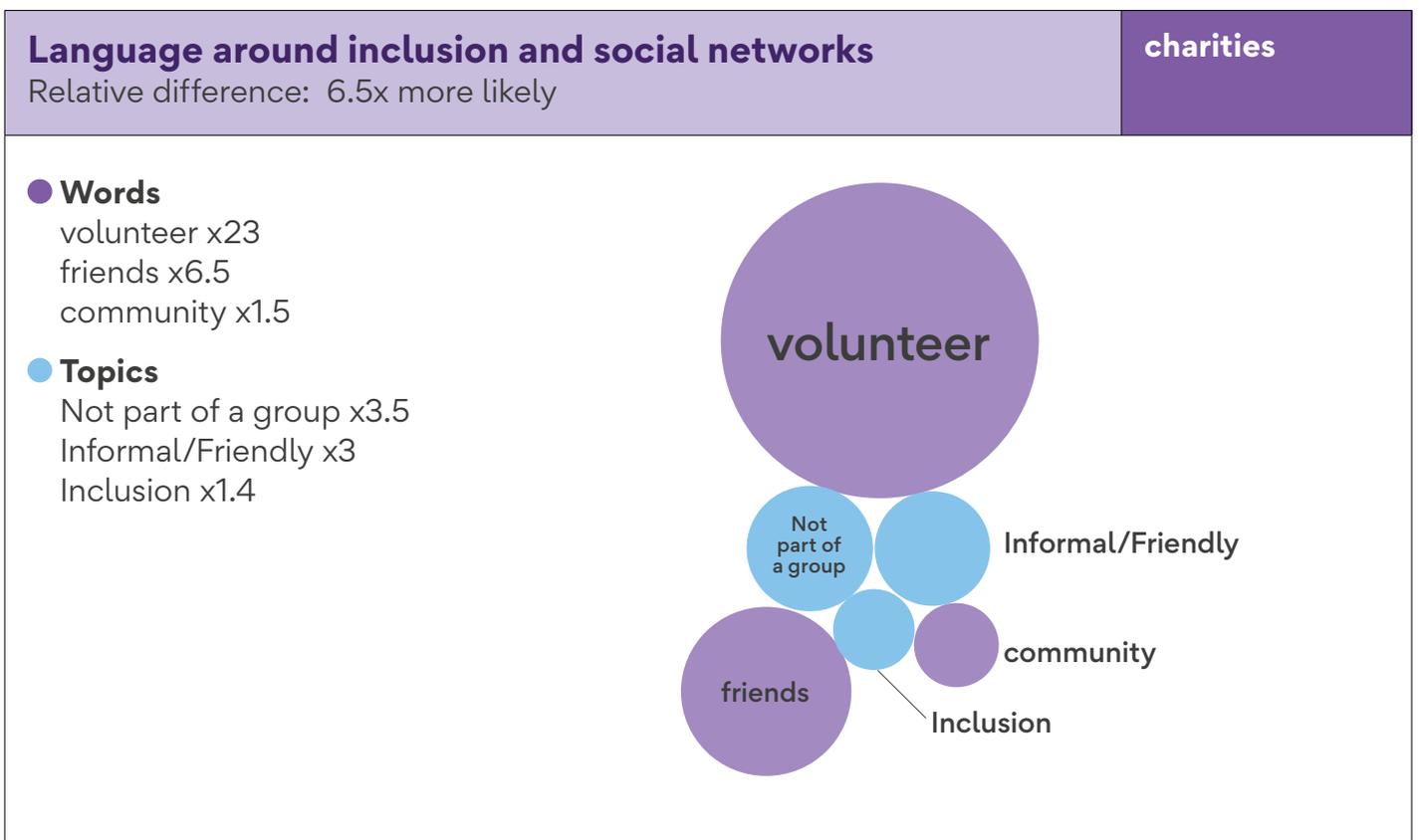
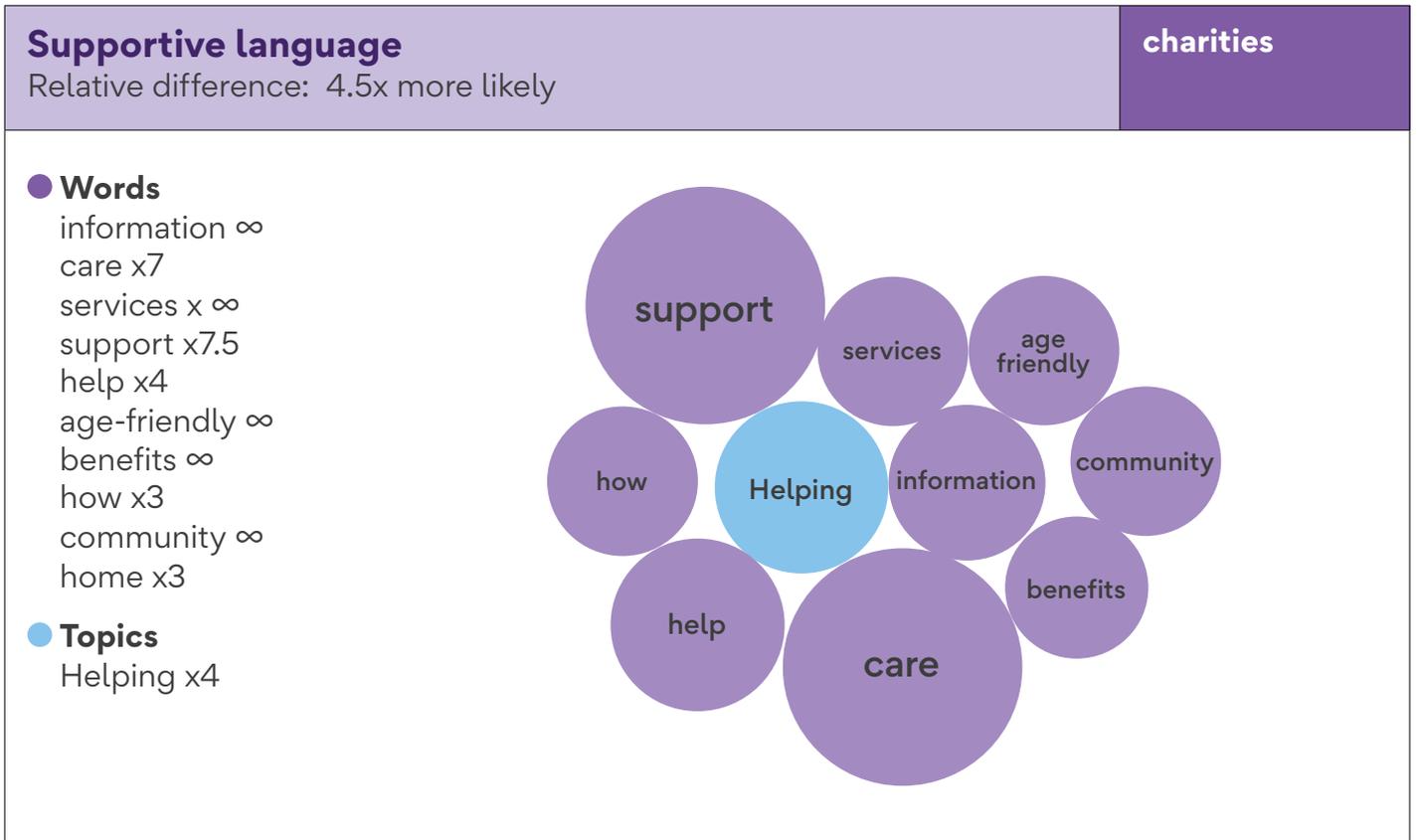
### Advertising industry discourse compared to the ageing charity sector

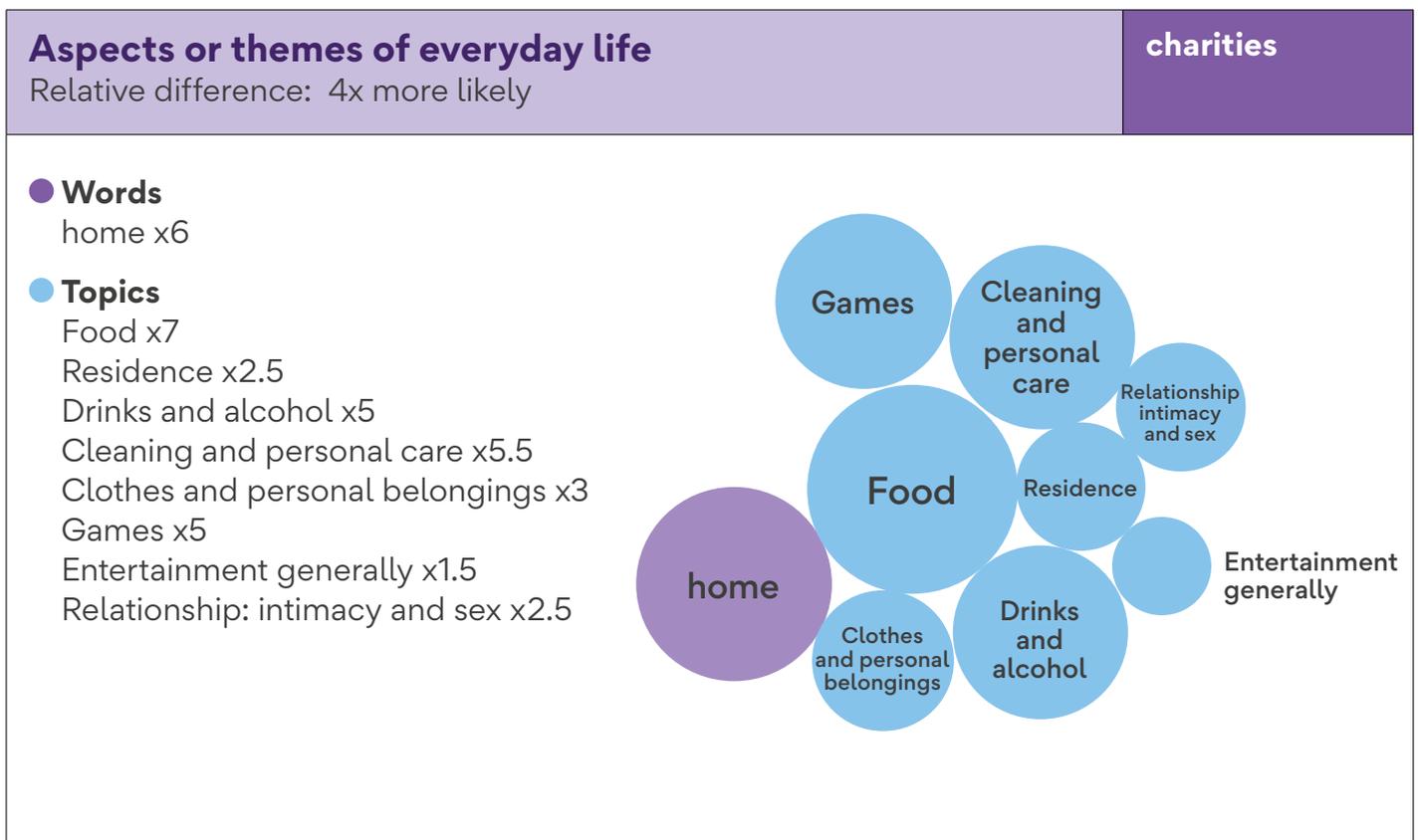
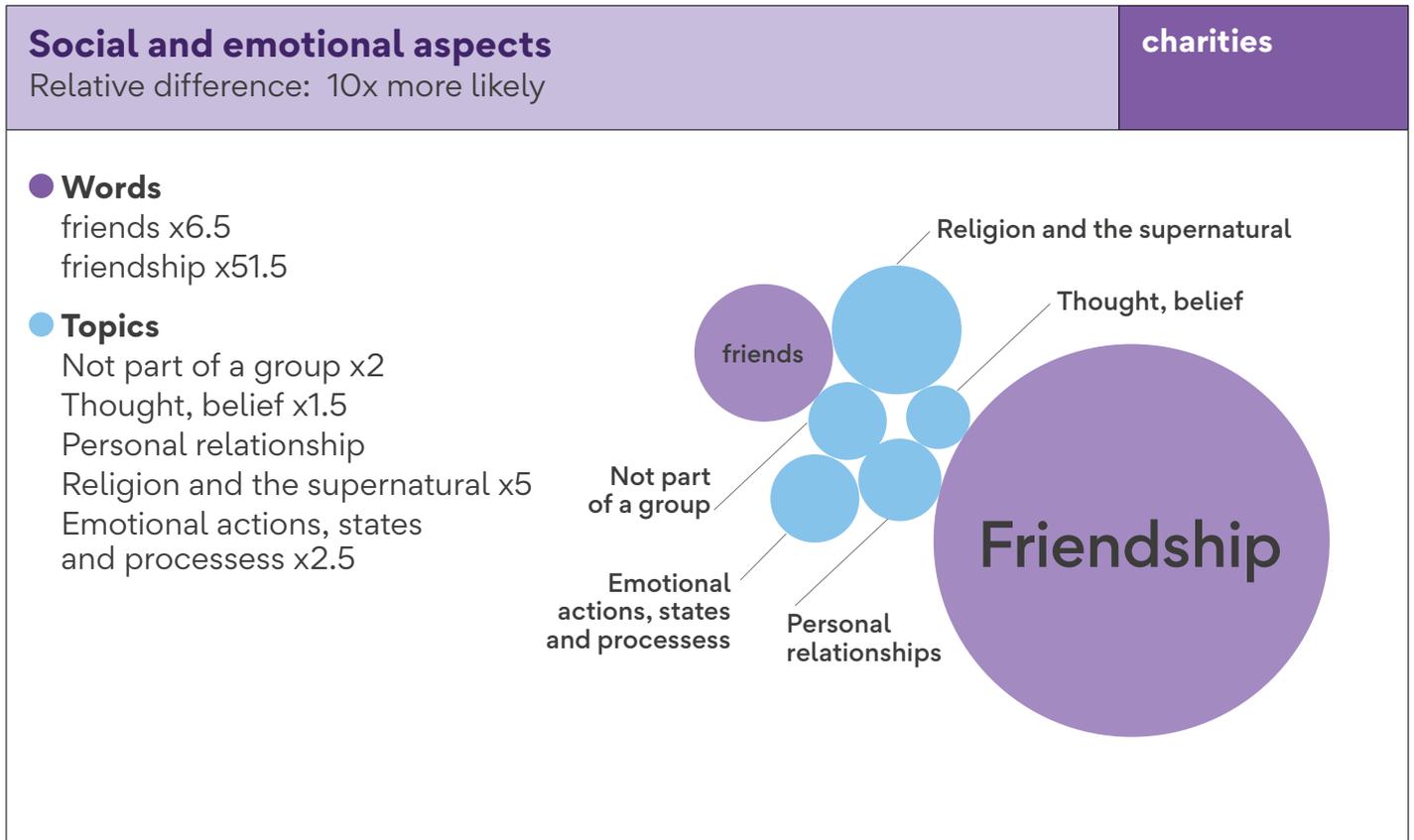


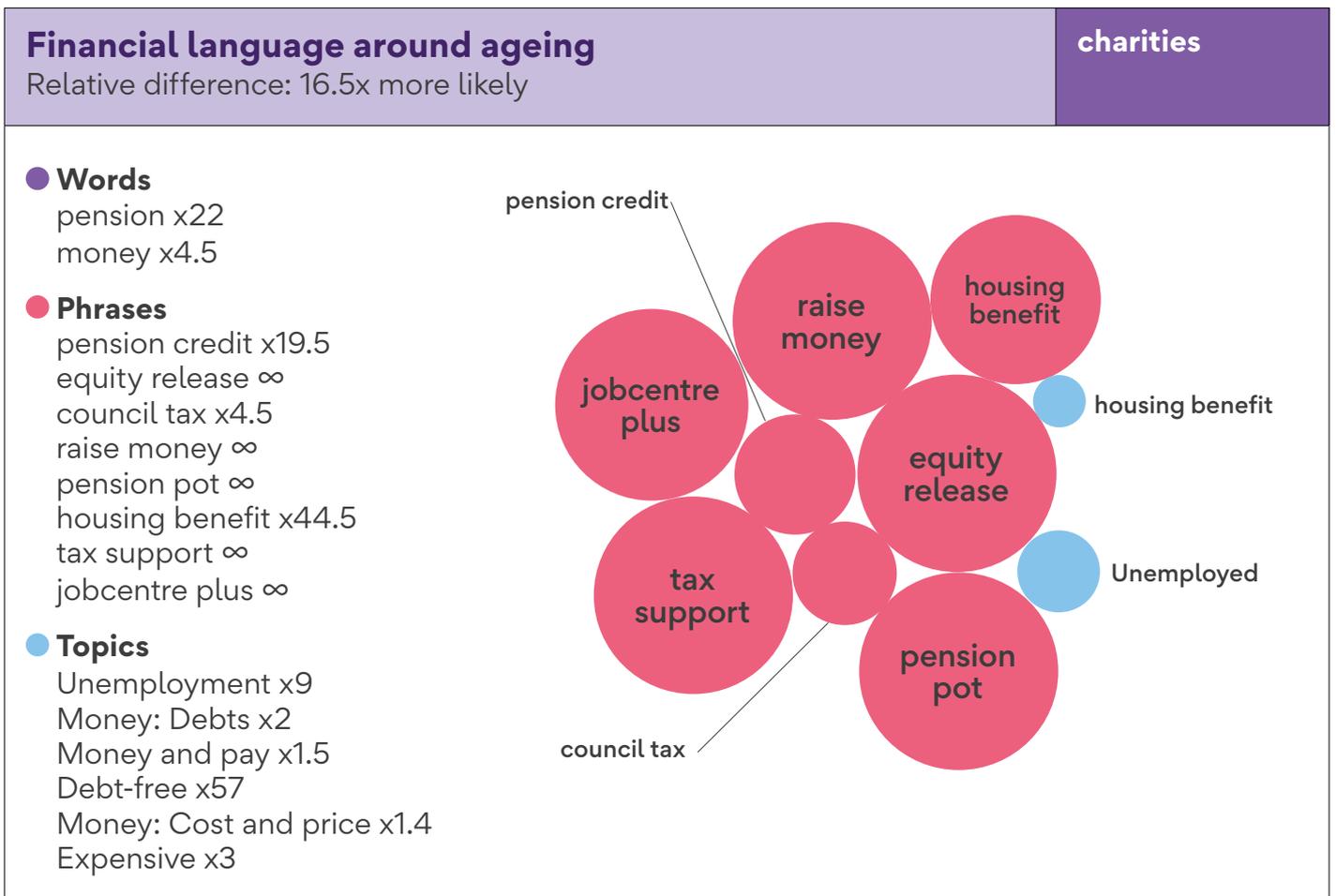
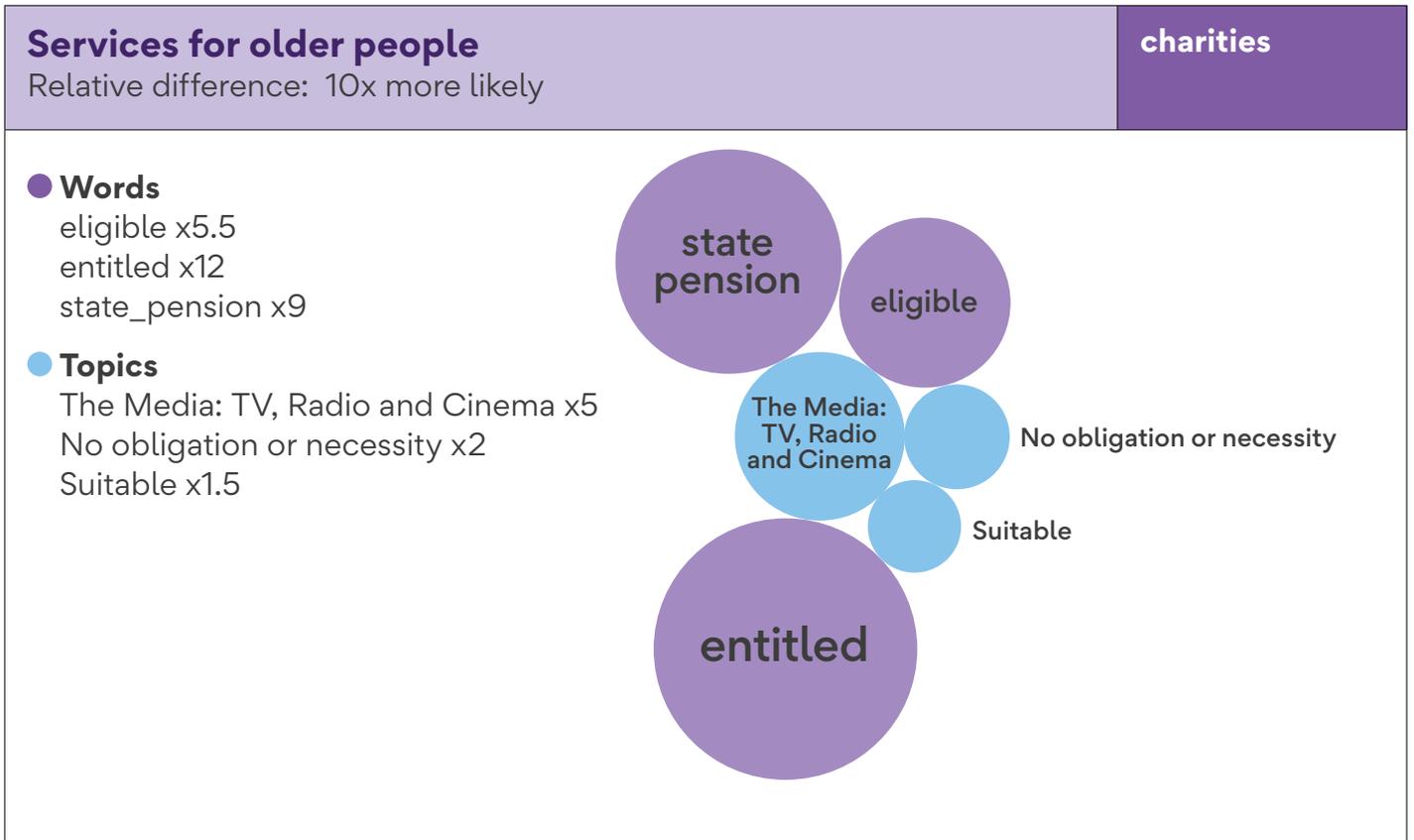


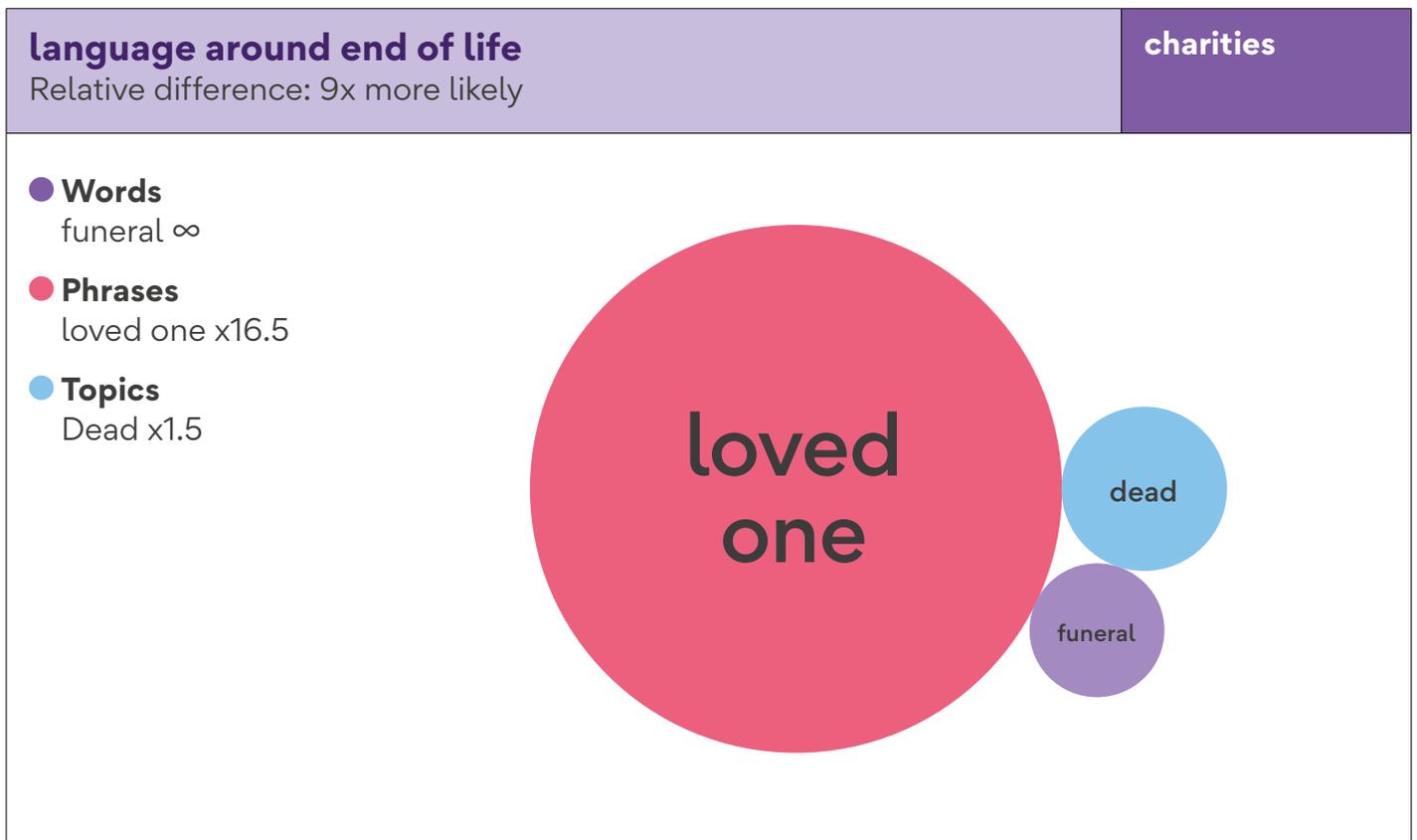
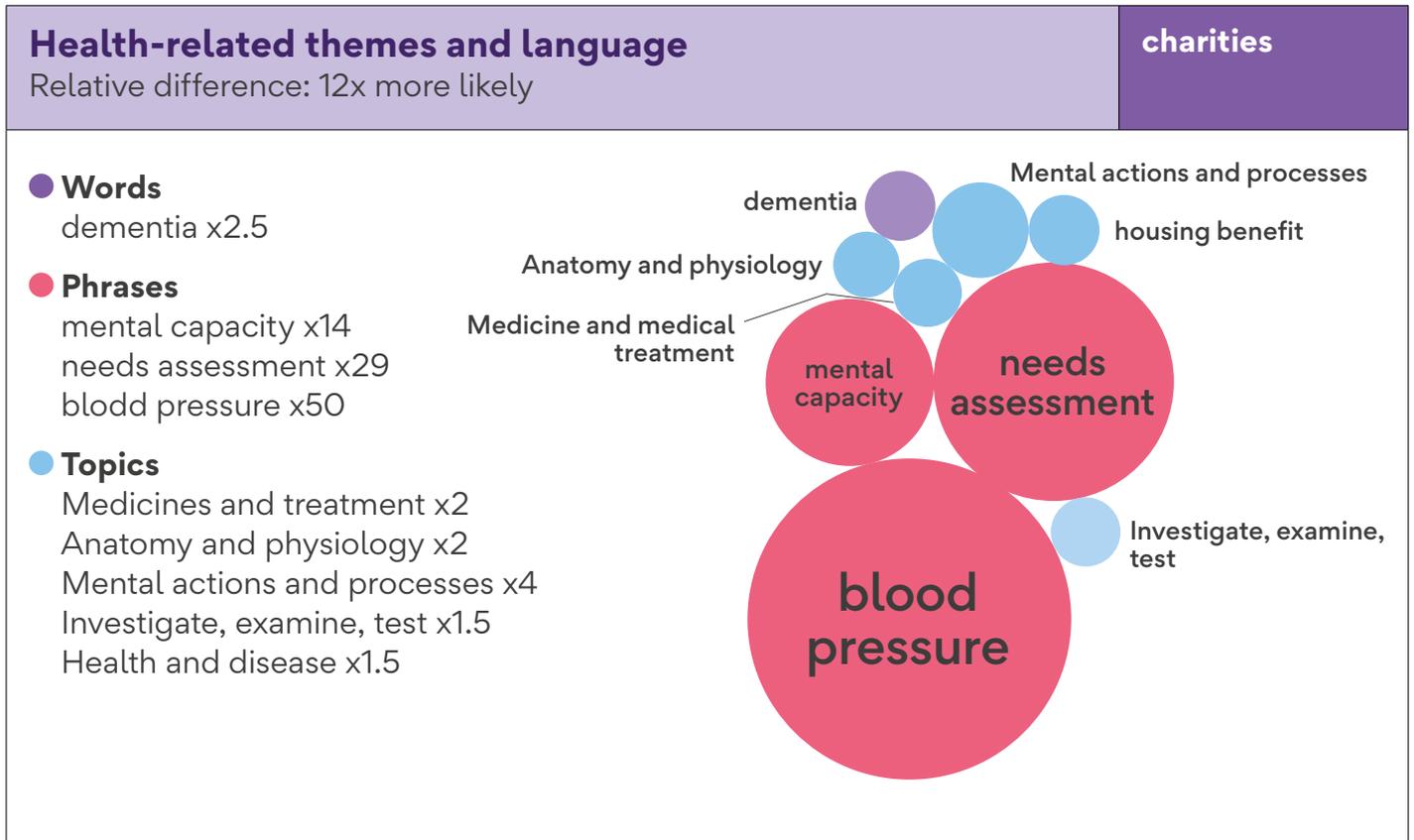
**Ageing charity sector discourse compared to government sector, advertising industry and health and social care**

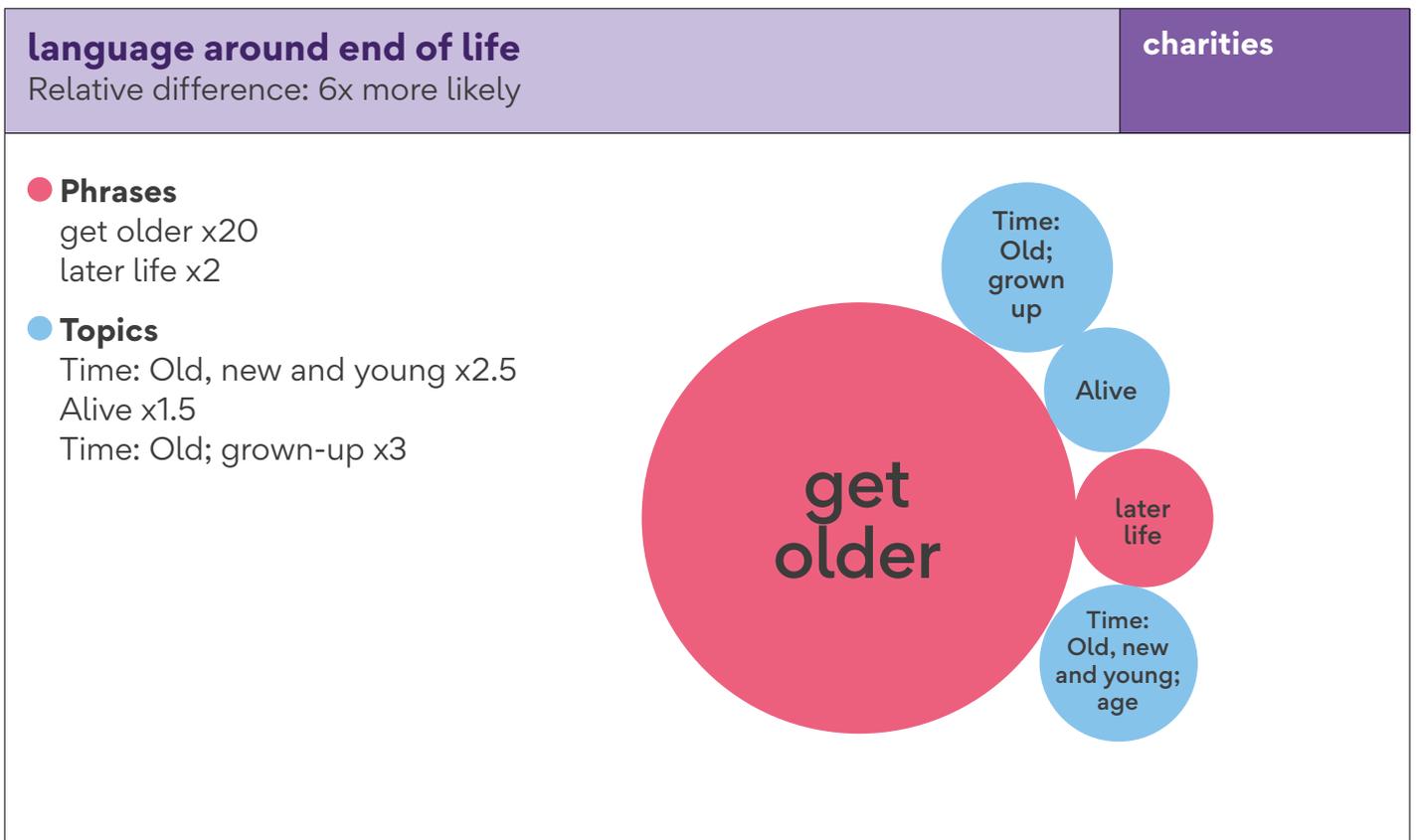












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