Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 599

Attitudes to age in Britain 2004-08

Dominic Abrams, Tiina Eilola and Hannah Swift

A report of research carried out by the Centre for the Study of Group Processes, Department of Psychology, University of Kent on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

© Crown Copyright 2009. Published for the Department for Work and Pensions under licence from the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Application for reproduction should be made in writing to The Copyright Unit, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ.

First Published 2009.

ISBN 978 1 84712 635 1

Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Department for Work and Pensions or any other Government Department.

Contents

Acknowledgements xv

The Authors xvi

Summary 1

1 Introduction 7

1.1 Ageism and ageing 7

1.2 Policy in the UK 9

1.2.1 Implications of ageism for UK policy 9

1.2.2 Current policy initiatives 11

1.3 Aims and outcomes for this report 14

1.3.1 Constructs 15

1.4 Surveys, sampling and methodology 19

2 Relevant evidence from previous UK and European surveys 21

2.1 Introduction 21

2.2 Eurobarometer reports 22

2.3 The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing 23

2.4 Findings 23

2.4.1 Age categorisation 23

2.4.2 Perceptions of age prejudice 24

2.4.3 Experiences of discrimination 24

2.4.4 Stereotypes 25

2.4.5 Perceived threats 26

2.4.6 Expressions of prejudice 26

2.4.7 Intergenerational closeness 27

2.5 Summary and discussion 28

3 Analysis strategy 29

3.1 Introduction 29

3.2 Statistical models 29

3.3 Independent variables 30

3.4 Selection and coding of dependent variables 33

4 Age categorisation and identification 35

4.1 Introduction 35

4.1.1 Key findings 35

4.2 Age self-categorisation 36

4.3 Categorisation of other people as young or old 38

4.3.1 Age at which people are perceived to stop being young 39

4.3.2 Age at which old age is perceived to start 42

4.3.3 Difference between the age at which youth is perceived to end and old age is perceived to start 44

4.4 Age group identification 45

4.5 Summary of age group differences 47

4.6 Summary and discussion 47

5 Perceived age prejudice 49

5.1 Introduction 49

5.1.1 Key findings 49

5.2 Over 50 as 'old' 50

5.3 Perceived extent of discrimination against people over 70 53

5.4 Perceived seriousness of age discrimination 56

5.5 Perceptions of media bias against older people 58

5.6 Summary of age group differences 60

5.7 Summary and discussion 61

6 Experiences of discrimination 63
6.1 Introduction 63
6.1.1 Key findings 63
6.2 Experiences of discrimination 63
6.3 Summary of age group differences 66
6.4 Experiences of age-related discrimination 67
6.5 Summary and discussion 68
7 Age stereotypes 71
7.1 Introduction 71
7.1.1 Key findings 71
7.2 Comparisons between warmth and competence stereotypes 72
7.3 Summary of age group differences 75
7.4 Predictors of stereotypes of people over 70 78
7.4.1 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 as friendly (warmth stereotype) 78
7.4.2 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 as capable (competence stereotype) 79
7.4.3 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 with admiration 79
7.4.4 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 with pity 80
7.4.5 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 with envy 80
7.4.6 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 as moral 81
7.4.7 Summary 81
7.5 Predictors of stereotypes of people under 30 81
7.5.1 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people under 30 as friendly (warmth stereotype) 81
7.5.2 The extent to which other people are perceived to view people under 30 as capable (competence stereotype) 82
7.5.3 Extent to which other people in this country are perceived to view people under 30 with admiration 82

7.5.4 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people under 30 with pity 83

7.5.5 The extent to which other people are perceived to view people under 30 with envy 83

7.5.6 The extent to which other people are perceived to view people under 30 as moral 84

7.5.7 Summary 84

7.6 The effect of social class and ethnicity on stereotype differences 84

7.7 Summary and discussion 86

8 Ageing as a perceived threat 89

8.1 Introduction 89

8.1.1 Key findings 89

8.2 Perception of threat to economic well-being 90

8.2.1 Perceived threat to economic well-being: 2004 and 2006 90

8.2.2 Perceived threat to economic well-being: 2005 and 2008 91

8.3 Material threat 91

8.4 Symbolic threat 92

8.5 Comparison of types of threat 94

8.6 Summary of age group differences 95

8.7 Summary and discussion 96

9 Expressions of age prejudice 97

9.1 Introduction 97

9.1.1 Key findings 97

9.2 Indirect prejudice 98

9.3 Internal and external control of age prejudice 102

9.3.1 Internal motivation to control prejudice 103

9.3.2 External motivation to control prejudice 104

9.4 Direct age prejudice 104

9.4.1 How negative or positive do you feel towards people over 70 and under 30? 104

9.4.2 Comparison between feelings towards people over 70 and under 30 106

9.5 Age and employment relationships 107

9.5.1 Differences between comfort with a potential employment relationship with people over 70 and under 30 years of age 109

9.6 Summary of age group differences 110

9.7 Summary and discussion 111

10 Intergenerational closeness 113

10.1 Introduction 113

10.1.1 Key findings 114

10.2 Perceived intergenerational similarity 114

10.2.1 How much do people over 70 and under 30 have in common? 114

10.2.2 In what way are people aged over 70 and under 30 viewed as different? 115

10.2.3 Perceptions that people aged over 70 and under 30 are all separate individuals 116

10.2.4 Perceptions that people aged over 70 and under 30 are two separate groups with little in common 117

10.2.5 Perceptions that people aged over 70 and under 30 are two separate groups but part of the same community 117

10.2.6 Perceptions that people aged over 70 and under 30 are one common group 118

10.2.7 Summary 118

10.3 Intergenerational contact 119

10.3.1 Contact with people over 70 years of age 119

10.3.2 Contact with people under 30 years of age 119

10.3.3 Age group differences in friendships with people under 30 and over 70 years of age 120

10.4 Summary of age group differences 121

10.5 Summary and discussion 122
11 Regional differences 125
11.1 Introduction 125
11.1.1 Key findings 125
11.2 Statistical note 126
11.3 Age categorisation and identification 127
11.4 Perceived age prejudice 128
11.5 Experiences of age discrimination 128
11.6 Stereotypes of people over 70 129
11.7 Stereotypes of people under 30 129
11.8 Age and perceived threats 129
11.9 Expressions of age prejudice 130
11.10 Intergenerational closeness 131
11.11 Summary and discussion 131
12 Conclusions 133
12.1 Framing the problem 133
12.2 Key findings 134
12.3 Demographic differences 135
12.4 Implications for policy 137
12.4.1 Individuals 138
12.4.2 Families 138
12.4.3 Business 138
12.4.4 Public services 139
12.4.5 Communities 139
12.5 Further steps 140
13 List of appendices 141
References 143

List of tables

Table 1.1 List of the surveys included in the present report....19
Table 3.1 Sample characteristics within each survey year....31
Table 3.2 Descriptions of social classes....32
Table 4.1 Age self-categorisation, by social class....38
Table 4.2 Mean age at which people are perceived to stop being young, by working status....41
Table 4.3 Mean age at which old age is perceived to start, by working status and social class....43
Table 4.4 Respondents' mean level of identification with their age group, by working status and social class....46
Table 4.5 Mean responses to age-categorisation items among respondents from different age groups....47
Table 5.1 Percentage of respondents who agreed that 'people over 50 are written off as old', by social class....52
Table 5.2 Percentage of respondents who believed that, people over 70 had experienced prejudice over the previous year at least sometimes, by working status....55
Table 5.3 Percentage of respondents who perceived that age discrimination is serious or very serious, by working status and social class....57
Table 5.4 Perception of the extent and seriousness of age discrimination among respondents from different age groups....60
Table 6.1 Experiences of different types of discrimination among respondents in different age groups in percentages....66
Table 6.2 Percentage of respondents experiencing age discrimination, by social class and working status....68
Table 7.1 Perception of stereotypes of people aged under 30 and over 70 among respondents in different age groups....76
Table 7.2 Percentage of respondents that believed people over 70 are viewed as very or extremely friendly (warmth), by social class and working status....78
Table 7.3 Percentage of respondents viewing people over 70 as capable (competence), by social class....79
Table 7.4 Percentage of respondents that believed people over 70 are viewed with admiration, by social class and working status....79
Table 7.5 Percentage of respondents that believed people over 70 are viewed with pity, by working status and tenure....80
Table 7.6 Percentage of respondents that believed people over 70 are viewed with envy, by social class and tenure....80
Table 7.7 Percentage of respondents that believed people over 70 are viewed as moral, by tenure....81

Table 7.8 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed as friendly (warmth), by social class 82
Table 7.9 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed as capable (competence), by social class and working status 82
Table 7.10 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed with admiration, by social class 83
Table 7.11 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed with pity, by tenure 83
Table 7.12 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed with envy, by tenure 84
Table 7.13 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed as moral, by social class 84
Table 8.1 Percentage of respondents that viewed people over 70 as a threat to the economy (2005 to 2008), by social class 91
Table 8.2 Percentage of respondents that viewed people over 70 as a material threat, by working status 92
Table 8.3 Percentage of respondents that viewed people over 70 as a symbolic threat, by tenure 94
Table 9.1 Percentage of respondents indicating that attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70 have gone too far (indirect prejudice), by social class 101
Table 9.2 Percentage of respondents indicating high and low levels of internal and external control over prejudice in general (2005) and in respect to age (2008) 103
Table 9.3 Percentage of respondents internally motivated to control prejudice, by social class 103
Table 9.4 Mean responses in measures of prejudice among respondents from different age groups 111
Table 10.1 Percentage of respondents that viewed people aged over 70 and under 30 having quite a lot or a great deal in common, by social class 115
Table 10.2 Percentage of respondents viewing people aged over 70 and under 30 as separate individuals, by working status 116
Table 10.3 Percentage of respondents that viewed people aged over 70 and under 30 as two separate groups with little in common, by working status and tenure 117
Table 10.4 Percentage of respondents that viewed people aged over 70 and under 30 as separate groups but part of the same community, by social class 118
Table 10.5 Percentage of respondents that viewed people aged over 70 and under 30 as one common group, by social class 118

Table 10.6 Percentage of respondents with friends aged over 70, by tenure....119
Table 10.7 Mean level of contact with people aged under 30, by working status and tenure....120
Table 10.8 Mean responses to intergenerational closeness items among the different age groups....122

List of figures

Figure 4.1 Mean age self-categorisation, by respondent's age group....37
Figure 4.2 Percentage of respondents who categorised themselves as young, middle-aged or old, by respondent's age group....37
Figure 4.3 Percentage of respondents who estimated, in five-year age bands, the age at which youth ends and old age starts....39
Figure 4.4 Mean age at which people are perceived to stop being young, by respondent's age group and survey year....41
Figure 4.5 Mean age at which old age is perceived to start, by respondent's age group and survey year....42
Figure 4.6 Mean age at which people perceive youth to end and old age to start, by respondent's age group....44
Figure 4.7 Mean level of identification with age group, by respondent's age group....46
Figure 5.1 Percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed with the statement that 'people over 50 are written off as old'....50
Figure 5.2 Percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed with the statement that 'people over 50 are written off as old', by age group....51
Figure 5.3 Percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed that 'people over 50 are written off as old', by social class....52
Figure 5.4 Percentage of respondents who believed that people over 70 had experienced prejudice over the previous year....53
Figure 5.5 Percentage of respondents who believed that people over 70 had experienced prejudice sometimes or more often over the previous year (2005 survey only), by age group....54
Figure 5.6 Percentage of respondents who believed that people over 70 had experienced prejudice over the previous year at least sometimes, by gender and ethnicity....55
Figure 5.7 Percentage of respondents indicating different levels of seriousness of age discrimination....56
Figure 5.8 Percentage of respondents who perceived that age discrimination is serious or very serious, by gender, ethnicity and working status....57
Figure 5.9 Percentage of respondents who perceived age discrimination to be a serious problem, by social class....58

Figure 5.10 Percentage of respondents indicating that people over 70 are represented positively or negatively in the media 59
Figure 6.1 Percentage of respondents who experienced different types of discrimination.....64
Figure 6.2 Percentage of respondents who experienced each type of discrimination, by age group.....65
Figure 6.3 Percentage of respondents who experienced each type of discrimination, by survey year 67
Figure 7.1 Mean evaluation of warmth and competence stereotypes of people aged over 70 and under 30 73
Figure 7.2 Mean evaluation of characteristics and emotional reactions perceived to apply to people aged over 70 and under 30.....73
Figure 7.3 Mean evaluation of the warmth and competence of people over 70 and under 30, by respondent's age group 74
Figure 7.4 Mean evaluation of the emotions associated with people over 70 and under 30, by respondent's age group 75
Figure 7.5 Mean difference between the perceived stereotypes of people over 70 and under 30 for each stereotype item according to survey year 77
Figure 7.6 Mean difference between the perceived stereotypes of people over 70 and under 30 for each stereotype item, by respondent's ethnicity 85
Figure 7.7 Mean difference between the perceived stereotypes of people over 70 and under 30 for each stereotype item, by respondent's social class 86
Figure 8.1 Mean evaluation of the effect of people aged over 70 on the country's customs, traditions and general way of life (symbolic threat), by respondent's age group and survey year.....94
Figure 8.2 Percentage of respondents that perceived people over 70 to pose an economic, material or symbolic threat 95
Figure 9.1 Percentage of respondents indicating that attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70 have gone (much) too far or have not gone (nearly) far enough, by survey year 99
Figure 9.2 Percentage of respondents who perceived that attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70, have not gone far enough, are about right or have gone too far, by survey year and age group 100
Figure 9.3 Percentage of respondents indicating that attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70 have gone too far or not far enough, by social class.....101
Figure 9.4 Mean rating of positive feelings towards people over 70 and people under 30 years of age 105

Figure 9.5 Mean rating of positive feelings towards people over 70 and under 30, by respondent's age group 106
Figure 9.6 Mean differences between reports of feeling positive towards people under 30 and over 70, by respondent's age group.....107
Figure 9.7 Percentage of respondents stating different levels of comfort with having a boss over 70 years of age or under 30 years of age 108
Figure 9.8 Mean level of comfort with having a boss over 70 years of age and under 30 years of age, by respondent's age group 109
Figure 9.9 Mean difference between stated levels of comfort with a boss aged under 30 and over 70, by respondent's age group and survey year 110
Figure 10.1 Percentage of respondents who regarded people aged over 70 and under 30 as 'individuals' or as members of different, or common, groups 116
Figure 10.2 Percentage of respondents who had friendships with people aged over 70 and under 30, by age group.....121
Figure 11.1 Ratio of people aged over 65 within different GORs 127

Acknowledgements

This project was completed as a result of the substantial effort and contribution from a number of colleagues at the Centre for the Study of Group Processes and others at the University of Kent. In particular we wish to thank Tirza Leader, Letitia Slabu, Brian R. Spisak and Ruth Lamont for their help with tabulation and data checking, Sonia Roccas and Hazel Wardrop for comments, Katerina Tasiopoulou for work on preliminary analyses and data preparation, Georgina Randsley de Moura, Tendayi Viki and Adam Rutland for contributions to the measurement and design aspects of the surveys. We are grateful for administrative support from Judy Lee and Lizanne Allcock.

The research could not have been conducted without sustained and enthusiastic support and funding from Age Concern England and Age Concern Research Services, particularly Su Ray, Andrew Harrop, Gordon Lishman, and Leslie Sopp. Important parts of the research design were also developed and funded in collaboration with the (then DTI) Women and Equality Unit, and we are grateful to Angela Mason and Diane Houston for their encouragement and advice.

We also benefited greatly from comments from, and discussions with, members of the European Social Survey Central Coordinating Team, particularly Roger Jowell, Rory Fitzgerald and Sally Widdop (City University). The design of the final (2008) survey was shared with Luisa Lima and Sibila Marques (Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa, Lisbon), and Geneviève Coudin (Université Paris 5).

The organisation and preparation of this report, as well as detailed commentary, benefited from the expertise and guidance of Maxine Willitts, Principal Research Officer, Older People and Ageing Society Division at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and from Sarah Vickerstaff and John Baldock at the University of Kent.

Above all, we thank the individuals who participated in the many stages of pilot work and surveys for this research.

The Authors

Dominic Abrams, Professor of Social Psychology and Director of the Centre for the Study of Group Processes at the University of Kent, specialises in research on attitudes and behaviour within and between different social groups. His research spans relationships between people of different ages, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability and other types of groups such as schools, teams, and nationalities. He has worked on the design and analysis of survey and experimental research with various government departments, including for the DTI (Women and Equality Unit), Communities and Local Government (REACH programme). He also works as a research advisor with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, as well as with various charities including Age Concern England and People United. He was formerly chair of the British Psychological Society's Research Board and is currently a member of the ESRC Research Board, and the Councils of the Academy of Social Sciences and Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. He read Psychology at the University of Manchester, and has postgraduate degrees in social psychology from the London School of Economics and University of Kent.

Tiina Eilola read Psychology at the University of Tartu, Estonia, and her postgraduate degree in Cognitive Psychology and Neuropsychology at the University of Kent. She has been a research associate on a variety of projects including British Academy research on eye movements and reading, ESRC research on orthography, and the REACH programme.

Hannah Swift read Psychology at the University of Kent and also completed her postgraduate training there. She is currently conducting research on the impact of media images on age self-stereotypes and this is supported by the Economic and Social Research Council and Age Concern England.

Summary

Introduction, relevant evidence from previous UK and European surveys, and analysis strategy (Chapters 1, 2 and 3)

In the context of Britain's ageing population an important policy challenge is how to respond to people's assumptions and expectations about age and ageing. Attitudes to age can affect people of all ages, and involve people's views both of themselves and of others. These attitudes have important implications for individual well-being, for age equality and for social cohesion. Understanding attitudes to age is essential if we are to develop appropriate strategies for an ageing population.

The limited evidence from prior surveys suggests that people view the start of old age as happening later as they get older, and that age discrimination may be perceived as prevalent but is not experienced widely. The evidence in the present report provides a different and more comprehensive picture of attitudes to age in Britain over a five year period. This evidence comes from five national surveys (with a total of over 6,000 respondents) sponsored by Age Concern England (ACE) in 2004, 2006 and 2008, and by the Women and Equality Unit in 2005. These involved using in-home (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI)) interviews with representative samples of between 1,000 and 2,000 people aged 15 years and over (except 2008, which sampled 500 people).

We examine how people's age and other demographic characteristics relate to seven issues:

- the importance of age to people's self-concept, and what determines how they judge others as 'young' or 'old';
- beliefs that age prejudice and discrimination are a problem;
- personal experience of age discrimination;
- stereotypes that exist about older and younger people, and their implications;
- beliefs that the ageing population endangers employment prospects, access to services and resources, or endangers the culture and way of life of all people;

- the expression of age prejudice;
- beliefs that younger and older people share a single community and intergenerational divide.

Age categorisation and identification (Chapter 4)

By their mid-30s most respondents stopped describing themselves as young. By their mid-70s most started describing themselves as old. The youngest and oldest respondents identified most strongly with their age groups whereas those in their 50s and early 60s identified least strongly.

On average, respondents judged that 'youth' generally ends at 45 years of age. However, 18 per cent said youth ends by the age of 30 and 11 per cent said it continues beyond the age of 50. On average, respondents judged that 'old age' starts at 63 years of age, but 11 per cent said it starts before the age of 50 while 34 per cent said that old age starts after the age of 70. Older respondents and women considered that youth continues longer and old age starts later than did younger respondents and men, respectively. This huge diversity in perceptions of age boundaries means that there is substantial scope for misunderstanding and mistaken assumptions about age in the way people are judged and treat one another.

Perceptions of age prejudice (Chapter 5)

Media images of older people were more often considered to be positive than negative. However, 94 per cent of respondents believed that people over 70 experience age prejudice and 51 one per cent of respondents agreed that people over 50 are 'written off as old'. Almost half (48 per cent) of respondents viewed age discrimination as a serious issue. Women, respondents from a white ethnic background, and those working full-time, viewed age prejudice and discrimination against people over 70 to be more prevalent and serious than did men, respondents from non-white ethnic backgrounds and respondents who had retired.

Experiences of discrimination (Chapter 6)

The present evidence reveals a more extreme picture than that emerging from earlier surveys in the Eurobarometer (EB) series. Over a quarter (26 per cent) of respondents had experienced ageism. Among respondents of all ages, ageism was experienced more commonly than any other form of prejudice. Younger respondents reported experiencing more discrimination of all types, including ageism. Age discrimination was more likely to be experienced by respondents who were retired or not working, and by respondents who were not married/ not living as married. The prevalence of gender and ethnic discrimination showed slight decline between 2004 and 2008 whereas experiences of age discrimination appeared to have increased in 2008.

Age stereotypes (Chapter 7)

Based on a well established theory of social stereotypes, the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), the surveys examined key features of stereotypes that are applied to people aged under 30 and over 70. Respondents from white ethnic backgrounds and from higher social classes perceived that these stereotypes were held more strongly. Older people were stereotyped as friendlier, more admirable and more moral than younger people; higher on the SCM's 'warmth' dimension. Younger people were viewed as more capable (high on the 'competence' dimension). Younger respondents were less likely to think people aged over 70 are viewed as capable. Younger people were viewed as more likely to be envied. By implication they are likely to be subjected to hostile and resentful prejudice. Older people were viewed as more likely to be pitied. By implication they are more likely to be subjected to patronizing prejudice. These findings show that, prejudices against younger and older people are likely to differ in degree, tone and application.

Ageing as a perceived threat (Chapter 8)

Negative attitudes toward social groups are often associated with the perception that these groups may pose various types of threat. Knowing what type of threat a group poses provides insight into why it might be subjected to particular forms of prejudice or discrimination. The surveys examined and compared three potential types of threat that might be posed by an ageing population, and specifically by the needs, demands or actions of people over the age of 70.

Economic threat was measured by asking respondents whether people over 70 years of age take out more from the economy than they put in or whether they put in more than they take out. Material threat was measured by asking how those aged 70 or over affect the safety, security, or health of other people in Britain. Symbolic threat was studied by asking respondents to indicate how people over 70 affect the customs, traditions or general way of life of other people in Britain. People over 70 were perceived as posing greater economic threat than either material or symbolic threat. Nearly a quarter of respondents believed that people over 70 take out more from the economy than they put in. Younger respondents perceived people over 70 as posing more threat economically, materially and symbolically than did older respondents.

Expressions of age prejudice (Chapter 9)

The surveys examined three aspects of people's expressions of prejudice.

Indirect prejudice was measured by asking respondents to say to what extent attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70 have gone too far or not far enough. Nearly one in ten (nine per cent) of respondents believed they had gone too far.

Self-control over prejudice was measured by asking how important respondents felt it was not to hold, and not to express, prejudice against people of other age groups. Just over one in ten respondents (11 per cent) did not feel that it was important to control their age prejudice.

Direct prejudice was assessed by asking respondents how positive or negative they feel towards people under 30 and over 70 years of age and by asking how comfortable they would feel with a boss aged over 70 or under 30. Younger respondents felt more positive toward people under 30, whereas older respondents felt more positive to those aged over 70. A majority would be comfortable with either type of boss, but more were comfortable with a boss aged over 70 (70 per cent) than a boss aged under 30 (59 per cent).

Intergenerational closeness (Chapter 10)

Important indexes of good relations between groups are the extent to which the groups share common goals and values, see themselves as part of the same community, and have friendships across group boundaries. In the case of age, these reflect the psychological cohesion that exists across generational boundaries. The surveys examined intergenerational closeness in two ways:

Firstly, the surveys investigated how far people aged under 30 and over 70 are perceived to be similar. Respondents generally regarded people aged under 30 and over 70 as having little in common. However, between 2005 and 2008 there was a trend towards perceiving greater commonality between age groups. Women and respondents from a white ethnic background were less likely to see people under 30 and over 70 as being from separate groups than were men and respondents from a non-white ethnic background.

Secondly, respondents were asked whether they have close friends aged over 70 and under 30. Fewer than a third of respondents over 70 had friends under 30 and fewer than a third of respondents aged under 30 had friends over 70, whereas almost all of these respondents had friends their own age. Regardless of their age, women, and respondents with a white ethnic background were more likely to have friends aged over 70 whereas men and respondents in full-time work were more likely to have friends aged under 30.

Regional differences (Chapter 11)

There are 12 official Government regions. To examine whether local economic or cultural factors had pervasive effects across all the attitudes and experiences the report describes all regional differences together, Londoners were more likely to categorise themselves as above 'middle age' and identified more with their age group compared to respondents from other regions. Londoners were also more likely to see people over 70 and under 30 as belonging to two separate groups. Respondents living in regions with a higher proportion of people aged over 65 reported a stronger sense of identification with their age, perceived that people over 70 posed less economic (but higher material) threat, expressed greater acceptance of a boss over 70 and were less likely to perceive people over 70 and under 30 less as being separate groups.

Conclusions (Chapter 12)

Public preconceptions about age and ageing present significant obstacles to progress toward a society that meets the expectations and needs of people of all ages. The current Government strategy to deal with the ageing population involves 'building a society for all ages'. This includes ensuring that people can prepare for later life, participate during later life, have the right support and public services, and a voice. These are to be delivered at different levels including individuals, families, business, public services and community.

There is substantial distance between generations; older and younger people find their friendships primarily within rather than across age groups. A policy to build a society for all ages must include ways of building stronger connections and bridges between older and younger people. This can be achieved, in part, through families and intergenerational programmes, but also through restructuring work and employment in a more flexible way. It is important that intergenerational programmes establish clear objectives and that their outcomes are monitored carefully to reduce rather than reinforce age group distinctions.

People psychologically delay the category 'old' as they get older. Ironically, this may mean they delay in preparing for later life. Addressing the negative connotations associated with ageing (as revealed by high levels of agreement with the idea that people are likely to be 'written off as old' after the age of 50), might help smooth the transition between mid-life and later life.

High levels of age discrimination create a barrier to people being able to participate fully in later life. For example, in the domain of employment, the consistent and pervasive stereotype of older people as being warmer but less capable than younger people seems likely to have damaging effects. Even after their age is accounted for, retired people and those who are not working are more vulnerable to age discrimination. This seems likely to be connected with inaccessibility of the world of work or to transitions out of employment. It may be that a dual standard

operates for senior professionals and employers (older age is alright) than for employees (their competence declines). If we are to sustain people's participation in later life, these perceptions need to be addressed and monitored.

The surveys reveal a consensus that many people experience ageism and that ageism is a serious problem. It is important to be aware that younger people experience ageism just as acutely as older people but the age stereotypes are potentially damaging in different ways for younger and older people. Consequently, different types of support are likely to be required to tackle the problem for different age groups. There are also important differences associated with gender, ethnicity and other demographic characteristics. Getting the right support to those who need it requires attention to the nuances of these differences.

The widely held perception that people over 50 are likely to be 'written off' as old, highlights the need to ensure that the voices of older people are heard clearly at national, regional and local levels. It is necessary to create a dialogue about age related issues that involves and recognise the perspectives of people of all ages.

The present research provides important benchmarks for assessing future trends and changes in attitudes to age in Britain. Attitudes to age have significant implications and affect large numbers of people and there are signs that these attitudes are changing. As part of the strategy for an ageing population, it will be important to reassess attitudes, stereotypes and experiences on a relatively regular basis, across people of all ages and backgrounds.

1 Introduction

The ageing population presents a pressing policy concern in the UK and internationally. Government policy and public responses to policy reflect people's experiences, perceptions and assumptions about age and age differences. Yet there is little systematic evidence about the nature of these perceptions or their implications. The present report addresses this gap by outlining current policy initiatives set to deal with the ageing population, reviewing previous evidence and then analysing findings from a recent series of surveys on experiences and expressions of ageism in Britain from 2004-08. This series also relates to evidence from European surveys including previous Eurobarometer (EB) reports and the forthcoming European Social Survey's (ESS) Round 4 module on Ageism. This report examines age differences in perceptions, how stable the patterns of attitudes are over time, and whether various demographic variables affect perceptions and attitudes about different age groups. The findings are relevant to major policy issues in the UK, in particular current and forthcoming legislative decisions about the rights and equal treatment of older people.

1.1 Ageism and ageing

In 1969, Robert N. Butler, the then Director of the National Institute on Aging in the US, introduced the term 'ageism' as involving prejudicial attitudes towards older persons, old age and the ageing process, along with discriminatory practices and institutional policies that perpetuate stereotypes about older people (Wilkinson and Ferraro, 2002). More broadly, 'ageism' encapsulates unwarranted age-based assumptions about people of any age. One of the key issues is people's unwillingness to acknowledge or to take seriously the nature of age discrimination. This is an interesting social psychological phenomenon. Social psychology offers theories and measures that explain the processes underlying important phenomena (such as interpersonal attraction, conformity, and prejudice).

Age, along with gender and ethnicity serve as primary perceptual bases on which people categorise one another. People use age as a ready way of inferring others' abilities, competence, skills, experience and even health status. Ageism permeates people's reactions to physical appearance, their use of language, imagery in advertising, employment and healthcare practice (Wilkinson and Ferraro, 2002).

Unlike other aspects of inequality and discrimination, which tend to be aimed only at minority groups or rival groups (Abrams, Christian and Gordon, 2007; Abrams, Hogg and Marques, 2005), age prejudice and discrimination has multi-directional impact (i.e. on people of all ages). And in some ways the existence of ageism is more surprising given that everyone has been young, the vast majority will be old and most people have had older and younger relatives. Age prejudice and age discrimination is, ironically, not just about people's views of others, but also about the way they see themselves. Thus, analysing age-related attitudes also requires a focus on people's understanding of relationships between different age groups within the population and also their own age identity.

Of all the common grounds for discrimination (i.e. gender, race, disability or sexuality), age is the least well-researched (Carstensen and Hartel, 2006; Nelson, 2005). One reason for this could be that age is less easy to categorise (e.g. than gender) because we all age gradually throughout life, moving from one age category to another. To understand the implications of ageism we need to know exactly the nature of age-related stereotypes and why they are applied. For example, stereotypes that older people are not as capable as younger people may lead to the over-inclusion of younger workers, and over-exclusion of older workers because employers and co-workers may disregard older workers' true capabilities. Within a workplace older people may be assigned 'easier' tasks, perpetuating an image that they are unable to tackle complex work.

In fact, as the evidence in this report will show, ageism is a form of prejudice that is experienced most pervasively in Britain (Abrams and Houston, 2006). Anyone of any age can be a victim and a perpetrator of ageism, and this has significant implications for how it should be managed. If society is to respond positively to changing age demographics, we need to understand how attitudes to ageing vary in different parts of the population, what factors are associated with different attitudes toward younger and older people, and how widely ageist stereotypes are held.

Government policy tends to fixate on physical age-related decline. What is the real nature of this decline? In fact, research has failed to establish linear links between ageing and declining health and capability (Abrams *et al.*, 2005; Bowling, 2005; Blanchard-Fields, Chen and Norris, 1997; Pasupathi and Löckenhoff, 2002; Sidell, 1995; Warr, 1999). Despite this objective evidence, older people themselves view ill health and old age as strongly linked (Blanchard-Fields *et al.*, 1997; Sidell, 1995) perhaps because they internalise negative stereotypes. Experimental research shows that exposure to negative stereotypes harms older people's physical capability and health, and even subtle reminders of old age stereotypes can slow people's walking speed (Krauss, Whitbourne and Sneed, 2002) when people are asked to complete tasks that are stereotypically challenging to someone of 'their age' (Levy and Banaji, 2002). Internalised negative stereotypes can also increase stress responses such as increased heart rate, blood pressure and skin conductance.

Older people who accept negative images of ageing are also more likely to suffer with health problems, are more likely to attribute their problems to the ageing process and therefore, fail to seek necessary medical assistance. Some older people may also minimise their health problems as a deliberate method of denying negative stereotypes (Sidell, 1995). Older people are sometimes reluctant to visit medical professionals, even to the point of rejecting lifesaving treatment, because of perceived ageism in the system (Fee, 1999; Golub, Filipowicz and Langer, 2002).

Mental capability and well-being are also negatively affected by exposure to stereotypes and experiences of ageism. Negative stereotypes cause decreases in memory performance and more negative views of ageing (Fee, 1999; Hess, Auman, Colcombe and Rahhal, 2003). One mechanism for this is 'behavioural confirmation'. Exposure to stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes cause a person to behave in a way which confirms these beliefs (Abrams, Crisp, Marques, Fagg, Bedford and Provias, 2008; Abrams, Eller and Bryant, 2006; Cuddy, Norton and Fiske, 2005). For example, the use of 'baby talk' (or infantilisation), or being treated as pitiable causes older people to accept the inference that they are no longer independent adults, and then to behave in a passive and dependent manner in social and medical contexts (Cuddy *et al.*, 2005; Montepare and Zebrowitz, 2002). Evidence from the Age Concern England (ACE) and Mental Health Foundation Inquiry into Mental Health and Wellbeing in Later Life revealed that older people themselves said that the most effective way to improve mental health and well-being would be to improve public attitudes to older people and mental health (Third Sector First, 2005). These are just a few of the available examples to illustrate the potentially profound impacts of age-based perceptions, stereotypes and attitudes. Thus, a very important part of the problem of ageing is actually the problem of ageism. In many areas, including employment, health and education, policy makers themselves are susceptible to ageist assumptions that need to be clarified and challenged.

1.2 Policy in the UK

1.2.1 Implications of ageism for UK policy

The ageing population

Britain's population is ageing as life expectancy continues to rise by one year every decade due to behavioural, nutritional, medical and technological advances. The number of 60-year-olds has increased by 25 per cent since 2004, and Office for National Statistics (ONS) projections of Britain's age demographic are undergoing constant upward revision. The fastest growing age group in the population is those aged 80 years and over. The proportion of the population over 85 has doubled in the last 30 years and projections suggest a further 25 per cent growth over the next ten years.

These changes are creating significant shifts in the economic and practical capacity of different sections of the population to sustain other sections. In particular, there is an increasing need for pension provision into very old age, for health and social care for elderly people, and to meet the demands of older people both for education and employment. In the past, when a majority of the population were of 'working' age, these burdens have been manageable. Now the impact of a 'greying' population on the distribution of public spending continuously needs to be assessed in relation to changing demands on public and private services. Furthermore, there are potentially significant longer-term conflicts of economic interest between the young and old that might be starting to have an impact upon intergenerational relations and therefore these continuously need assessing. Younger adults are under increased pressure to pay not only for their current use of services (e.g. university fees and maintenance costs) but their own direct long-term needs (e.g. through insurance and pensions), and indirectly for the added costs to those services of providing for older people's needs. Similarly, older people are increasingly likely to find that they have to sacrifice their savings and equity in their homes in order to pay for their own care, leaving less to pass on to younger relatives. The implications of these changes are that people's attitudes to age and ageing are also likely to be changing (ACE, 2008). In the current economic climate and with fewer long-term career paths than in previous generations, there is additional need to review assumptions about the 'right' age for retirement.

The balance of political power is also shifting, with older people gaining increasing electoral impact with successive general elections. For example, in the 2010 General Election the proportion of people aged over 55 who say they are 'absolutely certain' to vote is 69 per cent compared to 52 per cent of the general population (Ipsos MORI Polling, 2008). The implication of these population changes is that society needs to adjust, adapt and change to accommodate an ageing population and increasing numbers of older people.

Social attitudes

It is possible that if the population is developing more egalitarian views than in previous eras, negative stereotypes of ageing might be weakening (e.g. a decline in the view that older people are incompetent or incapable). More positive images of ageing are appearing, with recognition of the strength of the 'grey pound'. Older people have been identified as an important consumer market with spare income and time to be captured. In 2007 spending by the over-65s was estimated to be worth £91 billion (ONS, 2008). At the same time more directly conflictual and hostile attitudes between the generations may be on the increase. Younger people may view older people as 'job blockers' and conversely older people may see younger people as a threat because they are prepared to work for less money and on less favourable terms. In other words, some of the same socio-political issues that traditionally play out in terms of inter-ethnic attitudes and prejudices may for similar reasons begin to come to the fore in terms of ageism. For this reason, it may be of increasing concern for policy that age equality, particularly

as framed by a human rights agenda, may not have received the same degree of legislative impetus as other equality strands.

Policy trends

UK government policy on age equality has developed more gradually than in some other equality areas, exemplified by the absence of a duty for age equality in the Discrimination Law Review (DLR), and the introduction in the 2006 Employment (Age) regulations of a default retirement age. UK age discrimination legislation also excludes unpaid work. Despite England's age discrimination standard as part of the 2001 National Service Framework for Older People, there remain 'deep-rooted cultural attitudes to ageing' in local public services that hamper Government plans to improve health and social care for older people (Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection, 2006). Other equality framework provisions are likely to bear on age discrimination through the work of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (ACE, 2008; The Equalities Review, 2006). In addition, the less complete protection for the equal rights of older people is matched by a similar reticence to extend rights in the DLR to children and younger people. The UK economy is strongly rooted in a model in which almost all economic activity occurs between 18 and 65. Consequently, perhaps, there is hesitancy about embracing the idea that curtailing rights or opportunities at arbitrary age points may be as discriminatory as curtailing the rights or opportunities of certain ethnic, religious or other types of group.

1.2.2 Current policy initiatives

Several policy initiatives have been published recently in order to meet the challenges presented by an ageing population. In March 2005, *Opportunity Age* (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), 2005) was published highlighting the need to end the perception of older people as dependent, to ensure that ageing is healthy and a fulfilling experience and to encourage older people to participate fully in society. Three key areas were identified as the focus of the ageing strategy. First, work and income was identified in order to achieve higher employment rates and greater flexibility for people over 50. Second, there was a focus on active ageing to enable older people to play a full and active role in society. Finally, *Opportunity Age* recommended a focus on services that allow people to keep control and independence throughout life.

From the focus on work and income and the indication that retirement age has increased because people are deciding to work longer, the Age Positive initiative introduced a guide to promote good practice and standards for employers retaining older workers (DWP, 2008a). New employment equality regulations on age came into force in October 2006. These outlawed discrimination on the basis of age in employment and vocational training for older and younger people.

Presently there is no official retirement age in the UK. There is a default retirement age of 65 but this is not mandatory and employers do not need to set a retirement age at all. Compulsory retirement under 65 is unlawful unless it can be justified

objectively. Employees have the 'right to request' to work beyond 65 and employers have a 'duty to consider' such requests. However, the situation remains one in which if an employer can justify and make a case for early retirement for an employee, then the employee's right to work may not necessarily be protected by this age legislation.

In addition, the 2006 age legislation currently does not outlaw discrimination on the basis of age for provision of goods, facilities and services. The Equality Bill, which is currently progressing through Parliament, will address this by outlawing harmful age discrimination and harassment against adults over 18 years of age in the provision of goods, facilities and services and in the exercise of public functions. The protection from age discrimination and harassment will be contained in the Equality Bill.

Building upon the focus to improve services for older people presented in *Opportunity Age*, LinkAge Plus (DWP, 2006), pilots were developed in 2006. The LinkAge Plus pilots expanded upon principles of joined up working. This was an approach reinforced by the publication of 'A Sure Start to Later Life' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2006). This suggested that the Sure Start approach to reshaping services in the community could work equally well with services for older people, thus providing older people with access to a wide range of more integrated services. The LinkAge Plus schemes put older people at the centre of policy making and service delivery. Each pilot focused on local needs and strategies to integrate local services whilst also developing links between central government, local authorities and other organisations. This holistic approach to service delivery was evaluated to benefit both taxpayers and older people. Firstly, the approach removed duplication and overlap between voluntary and statutory sectors and allows for shared resources. Secondly, the schemes facilitated a range of services that were designed to improve well-being, independence, participation and quality of life of older people and thirdly they demonstrated that information and access to services can be improved through partnership working (Watt and Blair, 2009).

In 2007, after consultation with older people, the Government announced the Public Service Agreement 17 (PSA 17). This was the first PSA targeting older people to: *'tackle poverty and promote greater independence and well-being in later life'* (HM Government, 2007). PSA 17 requires cross-disciplinary action relying upon different parts of central government, local government and delivery organisations. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is leading on PSA 17, which focuses on addressing important issues that concern older people, such as their income, work, health, independence and the quality of their homes and neighbourhoods. Across Government departments, in particular the Department of Health and Department for Communities and Local Government, work is underway to increase employment flexibility, encourage the uptake of income-related benefits, improve public health by reducing smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and the prevalence of obesity, the introduction of new strategies for dementia, maintaining independent living and implementation of national housing strategy for an ageing society.

In conjunction with PSA 17 the new ageing strategy was introduced in 2009 with new policies to meet the challenges of an ageing society. A new framework, 'Empowering Engagement' (DWP, 2009), was introduced in response to the John Elbourne review (Elbourne, 2008) on the Government's engagement with older people. The Empowering Engagement document sets out a programme of action for more effective engagement of older people at all government levels, thus ensuring they have a stronger voice and improving their inclusion in society by extending their opportunity to shape the world in which they live. Such programmes include establishing national leadership for older people in a UK Advisory Forum, empowering a regional voice for older people with a designated lead for older people's engagement in each English region, providing funding to support Older People Advisory Groups and other forums.

ACE writes an annual policy document, the latest of which made a strong case that social relationships, beliefs and perceptions are extremely important for policy (ACE, 2008). Key policy issues were identified as provision of social care, intergenerational contact, social exclusion, the need for comprehensive age equality legislation and age proofing of employment and skills policy. Unevenness of provision as a result of devolution was also an important issue.

ACE is now merging with Help the Aged. The agenda of the merging charities identifies seven priorities for action, these include the recommendation to remove the default retirement age, increasing provision of health and social care, and age proofing of employment and skills in order to help older workers cope with the recession. The impact of the recession on the people over 50 was highlighted throughout, with particular reference to work and employment. It was argued that action is needed to prevent unplanned early retirement, especially since economic sustainability is dependent on average working lives lengthening (ACE and Help the Aged, 2009).

Consistent with many of these ideas, the DWP discussion paper, *Preparing for Our Ageing Society* (DWP, 2008b), identified four areas where changes need to be made in order to meet the challenges of an ageing society. Of these, creating a society for all ages was a top priority. This requires that more needs to be done to tackle stereotypes about old age, to change attitudes and reduce harmful age discrimination by extending protection in the forthcoming Equality Bill.

To respond to this, the Government published a new strategy for an ageing society, *Building a Society for All Ages* (HM Government, 2009). This document, which builds on *Opportunity Age*, included measures to help build a society for all ages, for individuals, for families, for businesses, for public services and for communities. These measures include strengthening the voice of people in later life, to ensure that they have a greater say in shaping policies that affect them. In addition, the measures aim to maximise the opportunities for people in later life to participate fully, helping to ensure that they are not marginalised.

Policy initiatives have highlighted key themes which need to be addressed in order to deal with the challenges of an ageing population. The themes that have been highlighted are those centred on increasing inclusion, tackling poverty and increasing well-being of the older population. This means targeting several areas for improvement such as the breakdown of barriers to inclusion by reducing workplace discrimination, promoting empowerment and engagement of older people, tackling negative stereotypes and changing attitudes of others in order to reduce age discrimination as well as improving the standard and delivery of services. To some extent many of the issues highlighted are grounded in the attitudes people have towards older generations and it is important to understand the nature of these.

1.3 Aims and outcomes for this report

This report examines five datasets from representative national surveys mapping experiences and expression of age-related attitudes and ageism in Britain from 2004 to 2008. The focus of the analysis is to map indicators of ageism across the surveys and to discuss, interpret and evaluate trends or stabilities in stereotypes, experiences and attitudes over this time period. It is just as important to account for the stability of experiences and attitudes measured in these surveys as it is to identify changes. Stability suggests that experiences or attitudes are deeply embedded and thus, illuminates the scale of challenges that lie ahead for legislation. Commonality across different age groups implies a shared perspective, whereas differences suggest potential conflicts or areas where those differences need to be addressed.

Key questions addressed in this report include:

- What demographic characteristics are associated with different attitudes and stereotypes about age and with experiences of age-related prejudice?
- What are people's perceptions of age categories and boundaries? What are their assumptions about the start of old age or the end of youth, and how do people apply labels such as young and old to themselves?
- How seriously do people view the problem of age prejudice?
- How widespread are personal experiences of ageism, and how are these distributed within different age ranges, genders, and for other relevant social categories?
- How widely are age-related stereotypes held and which groups perceive them most strongly? Are older people liable to be subjected to patronising 'benevolent' forms of prejudice?
- To what extent do people perceive various 'threats' from an ageing population?

- What do people think about expressing age-related prejudice, and how likely are they to express it directly or indirectly?
- How 'close' are younger and older sections of society? How similar do people perceive them to be, and how likely is it that older and younger people will share significant social relationships?

1.3.1 Constructs

This section summarises the constructs and measures included in the surveys. Development of measures and methods is described in reports from The Equalities Review and ACE (Abrams *et al.*, 2006; ACE, 2004; Ray, Sharp and Abrams *et al.*, 2006).

All the surveys measured a series of core constructs:

- age categorisation and identification;
- perceptions of age prejudice;
- experiences of age discrimination;
- age stereotypes and 'benevolent' prejudice;
- intergenerational threats;
- direct and indirect expressions of age prejudice; and
- intergenerational closeness.

These core constructs are more explained in more detail.

Age categorisation and identification

Prejudiced attitudes and behaviour can be predicted by the extent to which people categorise themselves as belonging to an ingroup and the extent to which they positively identify with that category (Abrams and Hogg, 2001; Tajfel, 1981). However, there are many different possible boundary points for the categories 'old' and 'young' unlike, for example, for gender. Knowing how people label themselves and others as younger or older gives us an insight into how, and to whom, they will apply age stereotypes. Given the demographic transitions in age it will be especially interesting to see whether there are age differences in perceptions of the boundaries of 'oldness' and youth. Such evidence is important for showing whether particular age boundaries are likely to be out of step with social changes.

Evidence also shows that people apply ageist stereotypes to themselves (Levy *et al.*, 2002). Self-stereotyping causes people to restrict their horizons because they see themselves as 'too young' or 'too old' to pursue particular activities or roles. Categorising self and others into different age bands has significant implications for people's actions. Work with ACE suggested reliable differences in the way people of different ages and genders apply the labels young and old to one

another. If people do not agree about the boundaries of the categories themselves it is highly likely that age discrimination will arise if only through misunderstanding and misconstrual, regardless of hostile attitudes.

The theoretical framework for this research is also informed by social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel and Turner, 1986), which would hold that self-defined age identity should play an important role in age-related attitudes and expectations. The majority of older people maintain a positive sense of well-being throughout their later life. This is often referred to as 'successful' or 'optimal' ageing, and may appear to contradict evidence about the likely impacts of negative stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination (Krauss *et al.*, 2002). Similarly, older people consistently rate their health as good (Warr, 1999). Given the ultimate inevitability of death, this positive outlook could be explained in various ways, including narrowing of expectations and horizons, and compartmentalisation of experiences. Alternatively, it could be viewed as the constructive management of social identity. It is, therefore, illuminating to see whether people's feelings that their age is a positive aspect of their identity depend on their age. It is also interesting whether other factors contribute to how positively people regard their current age.

Perceptions of age prejudice

SIT holds that people deal with potentially negative images of their groups using a variety of strategies (Abrams *et al.*, 2001). Applied to age, these could include aspiring to be accepted as older or younger than one is, finding new ways to celebrate one's age and attempting to outperform or challenge the dominance of other age groups. Different strategies are likely to be adopted depending on people's context, including both the wider social structure framed by age demographics, electoral influence and the more immediate context such as local employment options, one's role within a family or status within a peer group and so on. The surveys did not all explore all of these avenues but specific items in different surveys investigated some aspects, including how seriously people view the problem of age prejudice, and how people view status related to age and whether they view age boundaries as flexible and fluid.

Experiences of age discrimination

An important part of these surveys has been to establish the extent of people's personal experience of ageism against themselves (generally in 2004 and 2005, in some detail in 2006, and in a partially differentiated measure in 2008). As well as providing essential information about differences in experiences of ageism, these measures help to provide a clearer comparative context for understanding the linkage between stereotypes and self-stereotypes with prejudice and discrimination. It is possible that the policy focus on 'equality' issues generally during 2004 to 2008 might have sensitised people more strongly to ageism, but it is also possible that more progressive policies make people feel less discriminated against. Comparison both across time and (in future research such as the ESS) between countries, will illuminate which of these is happening. However, a relevant issue

for the present research is to compare people's perceptions of age prejudice with reported experiences of age prejudice.

Age stereotypes and 'benevolent' prejudice

The research systematically examined stereotypes associated both with overtly hostile and also ostensibly 'benevolent' or tolerant aspects of ageism (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick and Xu, 2002; Council of the European Union, 2000). Fiske's 'Stereotype Content Model' (Stereotype Content Model (SCM); Fiske *et al.*, 2002) contends that the basic elements of all stereotypes fall along the dimensions of warmth and competence. Generally, older people are likely to be stereotyped 'benevolently' as warm (positive) but incompetent (negative), whereas the reverse is true for younger people (Cuddy *et al.*, 2005). Thus both age groups attract a mixture of positive and negative evaluations (rather than just prejudice per se), and the important question is what variations there are in perceptions of these stereotypes?

The datasets also permit us to examine the emotions associated with the stereotypes, and aspects of intergroup relationships involved in stereotypes. Benevolent stereotypes are usually associated with 'positive' feelings such as pity and sympathy. These emotions can be particularly dangerous because, while serving to enhance the self-esteem of low-status group members, patronising stereotypes and feelings often sustain and justify policies that disadvantage those groups (Jost and Banaji, 1994). They also colour people's interpretations, for example, people who hold benevolent ageist stereotypes are likely to attribute lower performance by older people to (unalterable) lack of capability, whereas they would attribute similar performance by younger people to (correctable) lack of effort.

Moreover, prejudice against younger people – as cold – is likely to result in their being excluded from other activities and opportunities, or blamed excessively for crime. These images may also contribute to more directly hostile forms of prejudice. Understanding the content of stereotypes applied to different age groups, therefore, provides clear insight into the differences in opportunity that may be afforded to these groups.

Intergenerational threats

Segmentations of the life course (Hagestad and Uhlenburg, 2005), such as preparation and education, family building and work and retirement could frame people's age-related perceptions. In particular, perceptions of interdependencies between different age groups might vary as a function of one's own situation and life stage. Where there are perceived age-based differences (e.g. in lifestyle, employment opportunities or needs for welfare and health care) younger and older people may feel that the other age group poses a threat to their economic, material or cultural quality of life. Theories of prejudice and stereotyping suggest that these perceptions of threat are likely to contribute to intergroup antipathy (Riek, Ania and Gaertner, 2006). Consequently, the surveys measured people's

perceptions of 'threats' posed by the older generation to see whether different types of threat loom larger than others and whether people of different ages and backgrounds perceived the threats differently.

Direct and indirect expressions of age prejudice

Various population surveys of prejudice have in various forms simply asked, 'How prejudiced are you?' (e.g. British Social Attitudes Survey since 1983, Rothon and Heath, 2003). Beyond the problem that people may not be aware of their own prejudices, such questions are often too abstract to be answered easily, and people seem likely to be more cautious about admitting prejudice against some groups than others (Abrams *et al.*, 2006). The current surveys examined expressions of age prejudice both directly and indirectly. As well as indirectly asking whether equal opportunities for older people had gone 'too far'. Respondents were asked about their motivation to avoid being prejudiced, and to avoid being seen to be prejudiced. Previous research on other types of prejudice shows that both motivations are important if people are to work towards eliminating prejudice in their dealings with others. Respondents were also asked more directly how positive or negative they felt toward people aged under 30 and toward people aged over 70. Another type of measure, often used to examine prejudice, is that of 'social distance', such as how comfortable people would be having someone from a different group as a neighbour, friend, or relative. These questions do not fit relationships with younger and older people because such relationships are rather unavoidable. Instead, a social distance item in these surveys focused on employment relations by asking how comfortable respondents would feel with an older or younger colleague as a boss, assuming the person was well qualified.

Intergenerational closeness

An important index of potential inequality and prejudice is the extent to which groups share common goals and values, and the extent to which they understand one another. We examined intergenerational closeness in two ways. First, Gaertner and Dovidio's (2000) research on 'common ingroup identity' shows that prejudice is likely to be lower when people view those from their own and another group as sharing a larger common group or community (Brown and Hewstone, 2005). The surveys examine whether these perceptions are held differently by people of different ages and backgrounds.

Second, the extensive literature on intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998) demonstrates that positive experiences of contact between members of different groups can lay the ground for positive attitudes and behaviour. Intergroup contact theory holds that positive personal relationships, especially friendships, across intergroup boundaries are likely to generalize to more positive attitudes and less stereotyping of an outgroup. Therefore, an important indicator of a group's risk of discrimination or social exclusion is the extent to which its members are in regular positive contact with others (Schneider, 2004). Alternatively, socio-emotional selectivity theory suggests that older people might isolate themselves

from relationships that highlight their relative lack of capacity (Krauss *et al.*, 2002). Intergenerational friendship has been measured across all the surveys. The extent of intergenerational closeness is of fundamental interest to the large numbers of intergenerational initiatives (e.g. the Beth Johnson Foundation, the London Intergenerational Network), and was foregrounded in ACE's recent policy statement (ACE, 2008).

1.4 Surveys, sampling and methodology

The evidence analysed in this report comes from the first systematic representative surveys on ageism in Britain, which were sponsored by ACE in 2004 and 2006. These were complemented by 2005 evidence from the National Survey of Prejudice (NSP; Abrams *et al.* 2006), conducted for the Equalities Review. ACE sponsored a further survey in 2008. Building on this research, a module on Experiences and Expressions of Ageism appeared for the first time in the 2008 ESS. The design work has involved collaboration with colleagues at the Centre for the Study of Group Processes, the Women and Equality Unit, ACE, and the Universities of Lisbon and Paris (European Population Committee of the Council of Europe, 2006). All the surveys were designed using the same coherent conceptual framework and with continuity in many but not all of the core items allowing us to examine ageism, age stereotypes and age discrimination from 2004 to 2008.

All survey data are based on in-home (Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI)) interviews with representative samples (usually 1,000) adults in Great Britain, aged 15 years and over.

These surveys are summarised in Table 1.1, and further details are provided in Chapter 3.

Table 1.1 List of the surveys included in the present report

Survey	Date	Sample size
Age Concern England (ACE)	July 2004	2,113
National Survey of Prejudice (NSP)	May 2005	2,893 (age module N = 942)
NSP repeat survey on ageism	July 2005	1,100
ACE	July 2006	2,005
ACE	February 2008	982 (age module N = 487)

2 Relevant evidence from previous UK and European surveys

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides context for the report by considering evidence, dating from 1992 to 2008, from three Eurobarometer (EB) reports (EB report 296, 2008; Marsh and Sahin-Dikmen, 2002; Walker, 1993) and two more recent English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA; Banks and Tetlow, 2008; Demakakos, Hacker and Gjonça, 2006) reports that focused on attitudes to age. As well as indicating possible trends, the evidence also highlights how differences in measurement techniques and items might lead to different conclusions. We briefly introduce the surveys and then assess what evidence and conclusions they provide about age categorisation and identification, perceptions of prejudice, experiences of discrimination, age stereotypes, intergenerational threats, expressions of age prejudice and intergenerational closeness.

The evidence from these sources appears to indicate that whereas people believe age prejudice is widespread and they disapprove age prejudice and discrimination, very few express any age prejudice or report experiencing age prejudice. These surveys provide valuable initial evidence. However, we conclude that the measures used in these surveys are rather limited, for example, barely examining stereotypes at all, and often only considering perspectives from a particular age group or about a particular age group, such as people over 50. It is argued that, for many of the important components of age prejudice and age discrimination, a more comprehensive approach is necessary to both record and understand the underlying pattern of social attitudes and experiences.

2.2 Eurobarometer reports

The EB surveys gather public opinions on a range of European issues and topics. The earliest EB report of interest is the 1993 report which linked two surveys conducted in 12 member states of the European Union (EU), with the aim of producing a clear picture and better understanding of older people's lifestyles and their standing in society.

In 1993 the UK population was 57.71 million people (Jefferies, 2005), by mid-2007 the population had grown to 60.97 million (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2009). Population growth has increased from 0.3 per cent between 1991 and 2001 to 0.5 per cent since 2001 (ONS, 2008a). In addition to population growth the structure of the population has been changing. Since 1995 the population of under 16s has been declining and the average population of people over State Pension age has been increasing (ONS, 2008b). Therefore, the 1993 EB report provides a useful context against which to interpret contemporary evidence over a 15-year period during which socio-demographic changes related to age, and their implications, were becoming of increasing concern and gaining increased attention for public policy.

The second and third EB reports focus more heavily on issues related to equality and discrimination. The second EB report aimed to establish evidence on the impact of discrimination in Europe and to build a picture of discrimination in European member states. The report was set in the context of three directives presented by the European Commission in November 1999. The first prohibits racial and ethnic discrimination in employment, education, provision of goods and services and social protection. The second prohibits discrimination in employment and excludes discrimination based on religion, disability, age, gender or sexual orientation. The Community Action Programme is intended to combat discrimination at the community level by improving understanding, knowledge and impact of discrimination. For the purpose of the present report, we focus on evidence relating to the age dimension.

The third EB report in 2008 compared data from 2006 and 2008, tracking perceptions and opinions about equality and discrimination before and after the European Commission's 'European year of equal opportunities for all' in 2007. That initiative aimed to inform people of their rights, to celebrate diversity and promote equal opportunities for all within the EU. This involved 430 national actions and over 600 events across 30 participating countries.

Below, where findings from the UK are similar to those from Europe as a whole we discuss the European evidence. If survey questions or results are unique to the UK we note that we are referring only to UK evidence from within the EB surveys.

2.3 The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing

The ELSA covers a broad set of topics with the aim of understanding factors associated with people's quality of life beyond the age of 50. These include health, the determinants of economic position and the relationship between the two, retirement and post-retirement labour market activity, the nature of social networks and household structure and transfer of resources. The first survey commenced in 2002 and has continued with three biennial waves.

We have organised discussion of this evidence in terms of the constructs defined as relevant for the present report.

2.4 Findings

2.4.1 Age categorisation

In the 1993 EB, people were asked about their preferred label for older people. In most countries there was a roughly even split between the terms 'older people' and 'senior citizens'. Within the UK, however, the term 'older people' was strongly favoured. This is interesting because whereas the term 'senior citizen' suggests a particular age or status in society (e.g. retired), 'older people' is a much more flexible term. These types of 'self-categorisation' label carry symbolic meaning with them.

Data from the ELSA second wave (2004/05), published in 2006 also examined age categorisation and identification. On average, respondents considered that 'old age' started at 71 years, but this judgement was dependent on their own age. Respondents aged 50 to 54 years believed on average that old age begins at 68, whereas respondents over 80 years of age believed on average that old age begins at 75. The ELSA data also showed that women believed old age started later than did men, and that wealthier people perceived old age as beginning later than less wealthy people.

Taken together these sources of evidence suggest that age categories and labels may be applied differently by different people, leaving substantial scope for possible misperceptions and conflicting expectations.

Data from the current research will establish the trend across all age groups and will also compare people's beliefs about the start of old age with the end of youth. Arguably, it is the intersection of these two beliefs that is relevant for when and to whom people apply their stereotypes about ageing. A further issue that is unexplored in the EB and ELSA data is whether age actually matters to respondents, and more specifically whether they feel that they identify strongly with their age group. It seems reasonable to think that perceptions of age differences, and views about discrimination and prejudice, may be of greater concern and relevance to people for whom age is an important part of their identity.

2.4.2 Perceptions of age prejudice

In the 1993 EB, over two-thirds of respondents agreed that older workers are discriminated against in employment in terms of recruitment (82 per cent), promotion (78 per cent) and training (77 per cent). Respondents in the 2002 EB were asked about their perceptions of equal opportunities in employment and were asked to evaluate the chances of different people getting the same job. Seventy-one per cent of respondents thought those aged 50 and over would have less chance getting a job than someone under 50.

In the 2008 EB, 42 per cent of respondents reported age discrimination to be widespread, with older respondents (aged 40 and over) being more likely to say so. However, this is much lower than the perceived prevalence of ethnic discrimination, which was believed to be widespread by 62 per cent of respondents. Between 2006 and 2008, in general, there was a decrease by between one and two per cent in the proportion of respondents who believed discrimination to be widespread.

In the present research some of these issues are explored in greater depth. Questions are asked about equal age opportunities at work, perceptions of older and younger bosses, and public and media perceptions and images of ageing.

Regardless of how much prejudice or discrimination people perceive, an interesting question is whether they think it matters. This question is important because psychological research on prejudice against minority groups such as immigrants shows that one subtle form of prejudice is to regard the prejudice as having already been addressed by policy or as no longer being serious. The current research asked directly how serious people viewed the problem of prejudice, not just how widespread they think prejudice is and whether they approve of equality.

2.4.3 Experiences of discrimination

The 2002 EB explored people's experiences of discrimination directed at their ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, mental disability, physical disability and age (in work, education, seeking housing and accessing services). Younger people, those with a higher education and those who were to the left of the political spectrum were most likely to report experiencing discrimination.

Age discrimination was reported to be experienced by the largest proportion of respondents, though even this involved only five per cent of respondents. Using a more general measure the 2008 EB revealed a similar pattern of results, with six per cent of respondents saying they had experienced age discrimination. People aged 25 to 39 years were less likely to experience age discrimination compared to all other age groups.

In contrast, in the 2002 EB respondents most commonly reported witnessing discrimination directed at people's race or ethnicity (22 per cent), whereas ageism was one of the least witnessed forms of discrimination (six per cent).

The 2002 EB report did not describe how people of different ages perceived ageism. Since younger people were more likely to report discrimination in general (Marsh and Sahin-Dikmen, 2002), we have to interpret the account of the EB findings with caution; it cannot be taken as a measure of ageism directed only towards older people.

Taken together, the perceptions of ageism and experiences of ageism reported from these EB surveys highlight some potentially important inconsistencies. Whereas people perceive ethnic discrimination most commonly, it is ageism that is most frequently reported as a personal experience. This reflects the potentially hidden or more subtle nature of age prejudice and discrimination and highlights why it is important to try to evaluate age prejudices using a broad spectrum of measures.

2.4.4 Stereotypes

Although both the EB and ELSA research consider various aspects of positive ageing neither directly examines stereotypes of older and younger people. Moreover, the age thresholds used for questions about age groups do not correspond especially well to the thresholds that people might actually use when thinking of younger and older age categories. The UK evidence from the 1993 EB report describes two items assessing how far older people are respected. One of these asked whether 'older people are admired and respected by younger people'. Sixty-three per cent of the older respondents (aged over 60) believed that younger people did not respect or admire older people. Another item asked whether people are treated with more or with less respect as they grow older. Interestingly, 34 per cent of people over 60 answered positively, and 25 per cent answered negatively, and the proportion answering positively increased from 26 per cent among 60 to 64-year-olds to 35 per cent among respondents aged 70 and over. In apparent contrast to these findings, the ELSA surveys revealed that older respondents were less likely than younger ones to believe that older people will be respected in society.

There are at least two possible reasons for the inconsistencies and ambiguities in these findings. One reason may be that, between 1993 and 2008, the levels of respect for older people have indeed declined. Another interpretation is that respect is only one of the potentially important aspects of stereotypes about older people. As we have argued in the introductory section, and describe later on, stereotypical characteristics that appear positive (such as being liked or being worthy of respect) can also have potentially negative implications in the context of other stereotypical characteristics that may be less positive (especially competence, intelligence, capability and so on). Moreover, it is likely to be informative to assess the stereotype of any particular group in the context of other groups against which they will be frequently compared. Therefore, when assessing stereotypes about older people it is illuminating to know how they compare with stereotypes of younger people. These comparisons are addressed directly by the surveys for the current report.

2.4.5 Perceived threats

The idea that older and younger people might be perceived as threatening the well-being or economic success of one another is not something that has featured in earlier surveys. However, owing to contemporary pressure on pensions and increased demands for younger people to pay their way through education, the high costs of home ownership and less stable career prospects, the idea that people might perceive intergenerational threat seems plausible.

The 1993 EB asked a potentially relevant question about the interdependency underlying economic threat posed to younger people by an ageing population. It asked to what extent respondents agreed that *'those in employment have a duty to ensure, through their taxes, that older people have a decent standard of living'*. The majority of people agreed or strongly agreed, but this depended on people's own age. For example, 28 per cent of 15 to 24-year-olds agreed strongly, compared with just over 40 per cent of people aged 55 and over. This could be indicative of potential conflict caused by changes in the relative economic and political positions of different age groups in the population. A chapter in the present report examines perceived threat in greater detail to see whether older and younger people perceive the relative needs and demands of different age groups in a similar way.

2.4.6 Expressions of prejudice

In the 2002 EB the majority of respondents opposed discrimination directed against any of the six equality groups (age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability and sexuality) across four areas of activity (work, education, housing and access to services).

One direct form of expressed prejudice was described in the 2008 EB report. People were asked whether they would feel comfortable having someone aged under 30 or aged over 75 in the highest political office of one's country. Both provoked significantly more discomfort than some of the other scenarios where the position was occupied by someone in a minority position (e.g. someone with a different religion, or a disability). Regardless of their own age, respondents expressed greater comfort with a political leader under 30 than over 75. Respondents from the UK, however, were among those reporting the highest levels of comfort that a senior politician might be over 75 years of age.

This EB measure is interesting but may only shed light on one particular role (politician). Politicians do not typically have a fixed retirement age in Europe and, because political careers tend to be long, views about political retirement may not reflect age-related prejudices or assumptions that are more generally applied in the workplace. In the present research the surveys included a measure that focused on the employment context, asking how comfortable people would feel having a boss who is either over 70 or under 30 years of age.

The 1993 EB report showed that, compared with other countries in Europe, the UK was among those with the largest majority in favour of granting older people better access to employment. Over 76 per cent of UK respondents were in favour of flexible retirement. The 2008 EB assessed respondents' knowledge of employment law and support for equality policies in employment. Across Europe there was strong support for the implementation of specific measures to provide equal opportunities in employment. However, separate UK statistics were not provided in the EB report. The surveys in the present report include a measure of indirect prejudice that asked respondents the extent to which age equality in employment has gone too far or not far enough. Age and other differences in answers to this question will shed light on which sections of the population feel relatively more comfortable with improvement of age equality measures.

2.4.7 Intergenerational closeness

More positive intergenerational relations are likely to be reflected by higher objective and perceived similarity between people of different generations. Actual similarity was assessed in the 1993 EB report by asking respondents aged 15 to 24 years and respondents aged 60 or older to choose three qualities from a list of 11 that parents should try and encourage in their children. The data revealed a fairly high level of consensus about which were the most important qualities. However, the data does not illuminate whether people of different ages perceive similarity. Moreover, similarity of attitudes may not compensate for dissimilarity in other characteristics such as values, income, interests, abilities and motivation. Psychological research shows that it is the perception of similarity and shared group membership that is most likely to promote positive attitudes between people. The present surveys include measures that directly examine perceptions of intergenerational similarity, and whether people aged under 30 and over 70 are perceived to belong to a common group.

A second, more objective index of intergenerational closeness is the extent to which friendship bonds form across generational boundaries. In the EB 1993 report, a separate survey of people aged 60 and over asked about their frequency of any contact with people (including family members) aged 25 or younger. Results showed a high level of contact in the UK (42 per cent said 'a lot') compared with other countries (the range was from 26 to 46 per cent). However, contact also decreased as people got older, from 46 per cent among 60 to 64-year-olds to 27 per cent among people aged 75 and over. The majority of respondents agreed with the statement that 'older people prefer to mix with others their own age'.

Younger people's contact with older people was not examined in the EB surveys. Similarly, because the ELSA surveys focus only on people aged 50 and over, it is not possible to explore perceptions and friendships from both the perspective of older and younger people. For this reason most of the surveys in the present report examined people's friendships both with others who were aged under 30 and over 70.

2.5 Summary and discussion

The EB and ELSA reports provide the most comparable independent and early evidence relevant to the current research. The EB surveys contain a number of items examining experiences of discrimination but they lack important contextual information needed to provide a clear understanding of attitudes to age in the British context. The EB data indicate that we might expect some discrepancies between people's personal experiences of age discrimination and their perceptions of the prevalence of age discrimination directed at others. Levels of experiences of discrimination in the EB surveys are also very low generally compared with perceived discrimination. Therefore, it is important to consider more focused evidence from the surveys in the present report to re-evaluate these levels. The ELSA focuses on what it means to grow old and suggests that people of different ages may view age itself differently. However, the limited item set on perceptions of ageing and the restriction of the sample to people aged 50 and over leaves unanswered many important questions about age-related trends and differences in perceptions and experiences.

The evidence described in the present report substantially extends the previous EB report. It addresses some of these gaps by exploring experiences, perceptions and expressions of age-related attitudes, over the entire adult age range, as well as evidence about intergenerational friendship. Integrating evidence from a sequence of closely linked surveys also provides us with the opportunity to evaluate robustly how differences in age, gender, social class and other characteristics bear on age-related attitudes and experiences. In sum, while the EB and ELSA evidence provides a useful starting point, the surveys for the present report now allow us to provide a more detailed and more rounded picture of age prejudice and discrimination in Britain.

3 Analysis strategy

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the statistical approach used for the analyses applied throughout the report. The demographic characteristics that were measured across the surveys are then outlined. An outline of the different statistical tests used to examine differences in people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences about age is presented. The methods used for integrating the data from the four survey years, 2004 to 2008, are described. Further details are also provided in the appendices to this report.

3.2 Statistical models

A statistical model refers to the question one asks of a dataset. For this report the statistical model being tested is that certain factors, or 'independent variables' can explain differences in particular outcomes, or 'dependent variables'. The independent variables in our statistical model are people's age, gender, social class, ethnicity, working status, housing tenure and marital status. The dependent variables are the things that we are, statistically, trying to explain. These are people's experiences, attitudes and opinions. The dependent variables are described and discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 to 10 of this report.

Analyses were conducted in two forms: A multiple regression approach was used to see how well the entire set of independent variables can explain differences between people's responses on each dependent variable. Then, analysis of covariance was used to assess and compare differences between age groups and survey years.

Standard multiple regression was used to test the relationship between the set of eight independent variables and each of the dependent variables. When the dependent variables were continuous or measured in equal interval steps (for example, a question that was answered using a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree), ordinary least squares multiple regression was employed. However, for some items people's answers were given, or classified,

using dichotomous scores (e.g. yes or no, 0 or 1). In these cases, a binary logistic regression analysis was employed.

The regression analyses show to what extent the independent variables can predict or explain differences in the dependent variables. The main body of this report focuses on how well all of the independent variables combined explain the dependent variable, and then whether (and how) each one (e.g. gender) uniquely affects the dependent variable after the impact of all the other independent variables is taken into account.[1]

In order to illustrate the findings, and for statistical reasons, analysis of covariance (either multivariate or univariate) was employed to examine differences between five age categories. These were defined using dividing points that were relevant to other Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) datasets and policy issues. These were ages 16 to 24, 25 to 49, 50 to 64, 65 to 79 and 80 years and over. Where relevant and possible we also examined differences between survey years (2004, 2005, 2006 and 2008), as well as whether differences between age groups were constant across the different survey years (indicated by an 'interaction' effect between age and survey year). In these analyses we statistically accounted for the effects of all of the other demographic variables by including them as 'covariates'. These analyses supplement the regression analyses by allowing us to examine transparently potential non-linear differences (for example whether middle-aged respondents might score differently from both older and younger ones). The analyses also allow us to use a repeated measure to examine how answers to different but related questions might differ (e.g. to compare how perceptions of a stereotype is applied to people under 30 and to people over 70).

3.3 Independent variables

The 2005 sample consisted of two separate surveys, conducted in May and July that year. No differences were found between responses in the two surveys so the data from them were aggregated. Consequently all the analyses presented in this report treated the two surveys as one sample.

The following independent variables were used in the analyses that follow: age, survey year (2004, 2005, 2006 and 2008), gender, social class (A, B, C1, C2, D and E), ethnicity (white and non-white ethnic background), working status (working full-time, working part-time, not working and retired), housing tenure (owned outright, bought on mortgage, rented from the local authority and rented privately) and marital status (married/living as married compared to other (Table 3.1).

---

[1] Additional demographic and behavioural measures were included in some of the surveys but these were either theoretically irrelevant or did not account for any substantial variance in the dependent variables and hence, are not discussed further.

Table 3.1 Sample characteristics within each survey year

Year	2004		2005		2006		2008	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender								
Male	831	45.1	937	43.5	945	44.7	226	45.0
Female	1,012	54.9	1,105	56.5	1,168	55.3	261	55.0
Age								
Minimum	16		16		16		15	
Maximum	92		98		95		97	
Mean	48.8		45.8		48.3		47.4	
SD	19.1		19.2		19.5		19.7	
Age group								
16-24	221	12.0	323	15.8	289	13.7	133	13.5
25-49	765	41.5	874	42.8	828	39.2	400	40.7
50-64	402	21.8	425	20.8	458	21.7	200	20.4
65-79	348	18.9	332	16.3	440	20.8	171	17.4
80+	107	5.8	88	4.3	98	4.6	59	6.0
Social class								
A (Upper Middle Class)	64	3.5	56	2.7	71	3.4	31	3.2
B (Middle Class)	262	14.2	280	13.7	317	15.0	151	15.4
C1 (Lower Middle Class)	448	24.3	477	23.4	517	24.5	245	24.9
C2 (Skilled Working Class)	404	21.9	387	19.0	455	21.5	223	22.7
D (Working Class)	291	15.8	355	17.4	351	16.6	156	15.9
E (Those at the lowest levels of subsistence)	374	20.3	487	23.8	402	19.0	176	17.9
Ethnic background								
White	1,661	90.6	1,778	87.6	1,939	92.2	874	90.5
Non-white	173	9.4	252	12.4	165	7.8	92	9.5
Working status								
Full-time	641	34.8	728	35.7	754	35.7	308	31.4
Part-time	237	12.9	243	11.9	259	12.3	149	15.2
Not working	417	22.6	570	27.9	463	21.9	270	27.5
Retired	548	29.7	501	24.5	637	30.1	255	26.0
Tenure								
Bought on mortgage	626	35.0	658	33.2	685	32.4	329	33.6
Owned outright	566	30.7	557	28.1	678	32.1	305	31.1
Rented from local authority	369	20.0	506	25.6	426	20.2	186	19.0
Rented privately	229	12.4	259	13.1	274	13.3	148	15.1
Marital status								
Married/as married	1,069	58.0	1,107	54.2	1,160	54.9	566	57.6
Other	404	21.9	935	45.8	953	45.1	223	22.7
Total number of respondents		1,843		2,042		2,113		982

The social class classification used in the present report is based on the one developed by the National Readership Survey (NRS) for Great Britain. Social class is determined by the occupation of the Chief Income Earner (CIE) in each household. Additional criteria such as the size of the organisation, and the number of people for which the CIE is responsible, are used to further refine the process. The categories are described in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Descriptions of social classes

Social class	Social status	CIE's occupation
A	Upper Middle Class	Higher managerial, administrative or professional
B	Middle Class	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
C1	Lower Middle Class	Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2	Skilled Working Class	Skilled manual workers
D	Working Class	Semi and unskilled manual workers
E	Those at the lowest levels of subsistence	Casual or lowest grade workers, pensioners and others who depend on the state for their income

In regression analyses, age was treated as a continuous variable. All other variables were categorical and therefore, dummy variables were created where alternative categories were compared with a reference category (coded as zero). Survey years were referenced to the earliest year available. This was usually 2004, but in some analyses 2005 was used instead. Male was the reference category for gender. For social class C1 was the reference category. White was used as the reference category for ethnicity, and full-time was the reference category for working status. Owned outright was the reference category for tenure and married was the reference category for marital status.

The statistical data analysis underpinning the description of the findings and conclusions in this report used the most fine-grained level of measurement that was possible when combining data from the different survey years. The statistical rationale and explanation of the tests are provided in Appendix A (technical appendices are supplied in a separate document). However, to illustrate the meaning of these significant findings clearly, rather than listing means, the report generally provides the percentage of respondents who answered above a relevant threshold (e.g. the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with a statement).

When describing findings across the entire sample we present means or percentages based on weighted data. When reporting and illustrating differences between different categories or groups we use weighted percentages or estimated means.

Significant effects of age and year are reported for all dependent variables. To highlight the differences between age groups that are relevant for policy questions and for DWP, we have partitioned the analysis of age differences first to compare respondents who were under 50 to those who were over 50 years of age, and second to compare the three older age groups (50 to 64, 65 to 79 and 80 and over). Tables accompanying the descriptions of results present mean responses for each question, including levels of statistical significance of the differences between the age groups.

When describing effects of other independent variables, such as social class or ethnicity, we have sought to describe only the significant and meaningful differences between groups or categories after adjusting for differences associated with other independent variables, including age and survey year. Tables in this report generally present percentages of respondents from different categories who agree with relevant items, but we have also indicated with superscripts whether the mean responses differ among categories. Full details of means, standard errors and pairwise comparisons for gender, ethnicity, working status, tenure, social class and marital status are available in Appendix C (technical appendices are supplied in a separate document).

Differences between regions are reported separately to examine whether local economic or cultural factors had pervasive effects across all the attitudes and experiences. There are many possible reasons why regions might differ in their attitudes related to age. One of these is that some regions have a higher proportion of older people than others. Because regional differences could well be conflated with other differences it was decided to examine whether, after accounting for all the other independent variables, there were any regional differences in responses to the dependent variables. We then classified the regions according to their age ratios (from national statistics) and examined whether regional differences in age ratios could explain regional differences in attitudes and other dependent variables.

3.4 Selection and coding of dependent variables

The five surveys sometimes differed in the particular wording or scaling of an item to measure a particular concept. Therefore, selection of the items for this report reflected an effort to find items that were present in more than one of the surveys and that had comparable wording and scaling. The overall pool of items that was common or comparable across the surveys included 53 individual questions.

Sometimes, as a result of decisions to improve measurement, the response scales changed between survey years. For example, sometimes respondents answered a question using a five-point scale in an earlier survey but a nine-point scale in a later survey. In these cases we carefully analysed the distribution of responses across the larger scales and transformed or converted the responses into the smaller range. When we have analysed transformed scales this is indicated in the

report. The implication of transforming scales is that we need to be cautious about interpreting differences between survey years. However, the transformations have no implications for interpreting effects of all the other independent variables.

In some instances if they provide illuminating evidence items are reported that were present only in one survey year.

4 Age categorisation and identification

4.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at age categorisation and identification. Age can be described in terms of physical and psychological age. Categorisation is the psychological basis for stereotypes and prejudice. Because there are no objective boundaries for the categories of 'young' and 'old', knowing how people label themselves and others as younger or older gives us an insight into how, and to whom, they will apply age stereotypes. Given the demographic transitions in age, important questions are how do people perceive 'oldness', and how much consensus there is about these perceptions across age groups. Such evidence is important for showing whether particular age boundaries are likely to be out of step with social changes. It is also illuminating to examine whether there are age differences in how positively people feel about their age as part of their identity, or whether factors other than age affect how positively people regard their current age. These differences are summarised in Table 4.5 at the end of the chapter. This chapter, therefore, analyses the way people categorise themselves and others as young and old, as well as the level of identification with their age group.

4.1.1 Key findings

- Most respondents stopped considering themselves as young by their mid-30s and started categorising themselves as old by their mid-70s.
- In general, respondents judged that youth ends at 45 years and old age starts at 63 years of age.
- However, these boundaries for youth and old age varied substantially, depending on the respondent's own age and gender.

- Older respondents and women considered youth to continue longer and old age to start later than younger respondents and men, respectively.
- The youngest and oldest age groups identified most strongly with their age group. Respondents in their 50s and early 60s identified least strongly with their age groups.

4.2 Age self-categorisation

Respondents were asked 'How would you describe the age group you belong to?' They answered using a nine-point scale that was labelled in three segments (points 1-3 = young, points 4-6 = middle, points 7-9 = old). The question focused on the subjective perception of being young or old, and therefore, did not explicitly state whether or how age groups corresponded to each of the nine points on the scale.

Predictably, all age groups differed significantly from each other in their judgements of their self-categorised age. Younger respondents rated themselves as younger than did older respondents (see Figure 4.1 and Table 4.5). There was no systematic trend for age self-categorisation to change between survey years.

Figure 4.2 shows that the percentage of respondents who categorised themselves as young dropped rapidly from 21 to 45 years. After this, the reduction in numbers of respondents perceiving themselves as young was more gradual. A cross-over point from self-categorisation as young to self-categorisation as middle-aged occurred in respondents' early 30s. By the age of 35 a large majority of respondents categorised themselves as middle-aged and this persisted until respondents were around the age of 60.

From the age of 60 there was a rapid reduction in the proportion of respondents who categorised themselves as middle-aged and a parallel increase in respondents categorising themselves as old. This steep shift toward self-categorisation as 'old' seems likely to be associated with socially recognised ages at which various concessions (such as free bus passes), retirement, and pensions become available rather than threshold for decline in intellectual, psychological, or physical characteristics.

The cross-over point from middle-age to old age occurred at around the age of 70, with the majority of respondents describing themselves as old by 75 years of age.

These results suggest that youth and old age are perceived to be distinct categories, with meaningful socially defined thresholds for the end of youth at around the age of 30 and for the start of old age at around 70 years.

These findings echo pilot research for the 2004 survey and are reflected in the research decision to use the categories 'under 30' and 'over 70' to obtain respondents' views about younger and older people elsewhere in the surveys.

Figure 4.1 Mean age self-categorisation, by respondent's age group

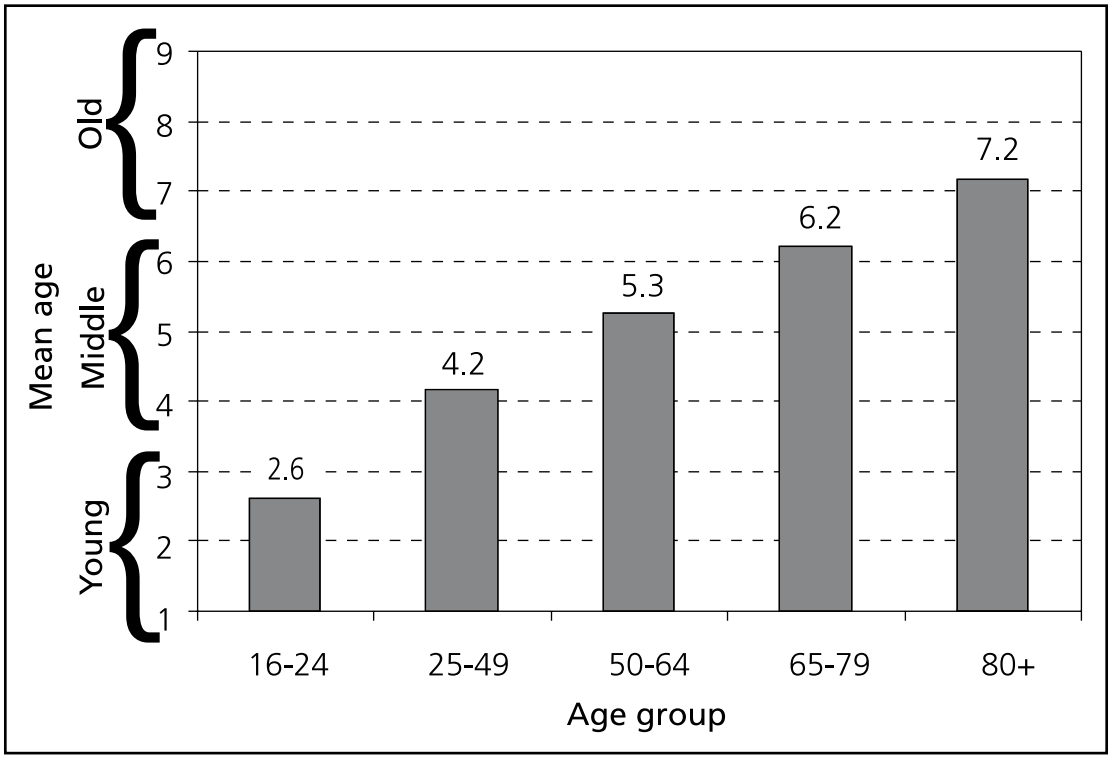
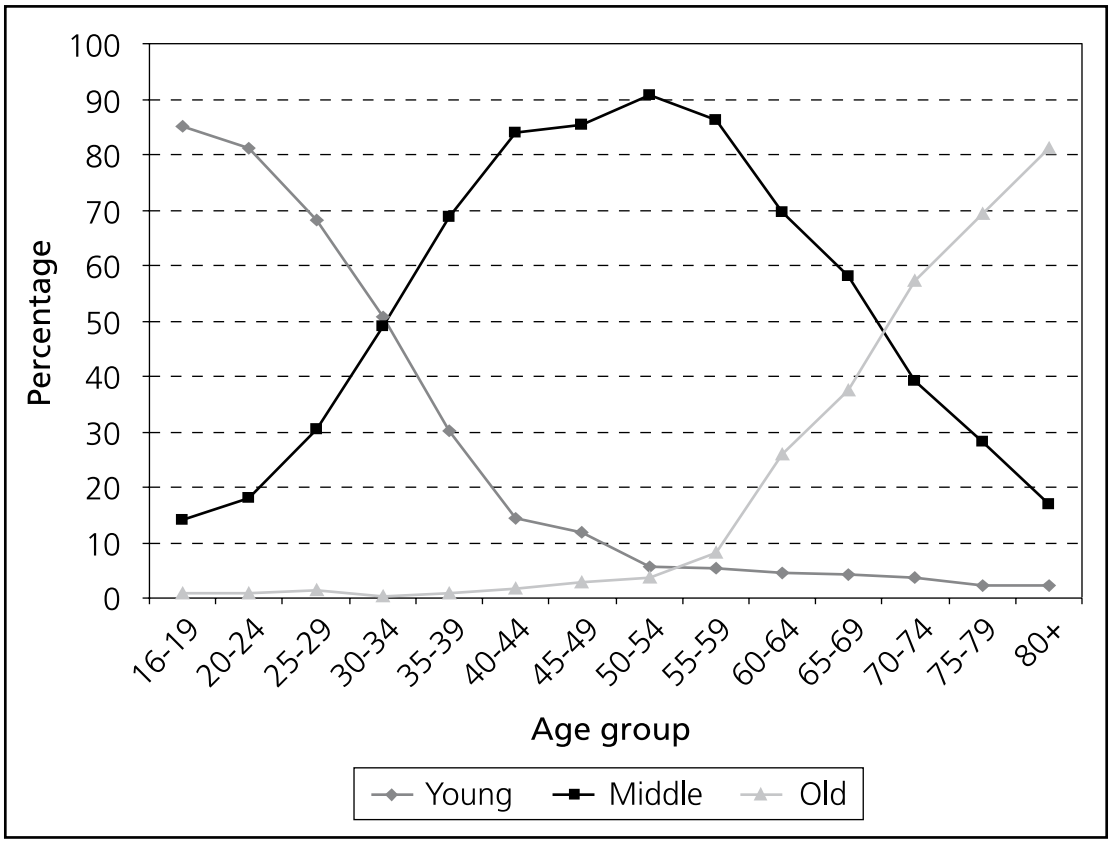


Figure 4.2 Percentage of respondents who categorised themselves as young, middle-aged or old, by respondent's age group



We examined to what extent age self-categorisation was affected by other factors when respondents' actual age was accounted for. The results showed that gender, ethnicity and social class independently explained how respondents categorised themselves, thus confirming that a person's psychological age is not tied precisely to their physical age.

Women perceived themselves as slightly younger (mean rating = 4.7) than men (mean rating = 4.8). Those from a white ethnic background viewed themselves as younger (mean rating = 4.7) than respondents from non-white backgrounds (mean rating = 4.9). Respondents from social class C1 perceived themselves to be younger than those from social class E (Table 4.1).

In summary, respondents' perceptions of themselves as young, middle-aged, or old did not shift in a smooth progression as they got older. It was also affected by other factors including respondents' gender, ethnicity and social class. Between the years 2004 and 2008 there was no overall change in how respondents categorised their own age.

Table 4.1 Age self-categorisation, by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Mean rating	4.6	4.8	4.7[a]	4.8	4.7	4.8[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

4.3 Categorisation of other people as young or old

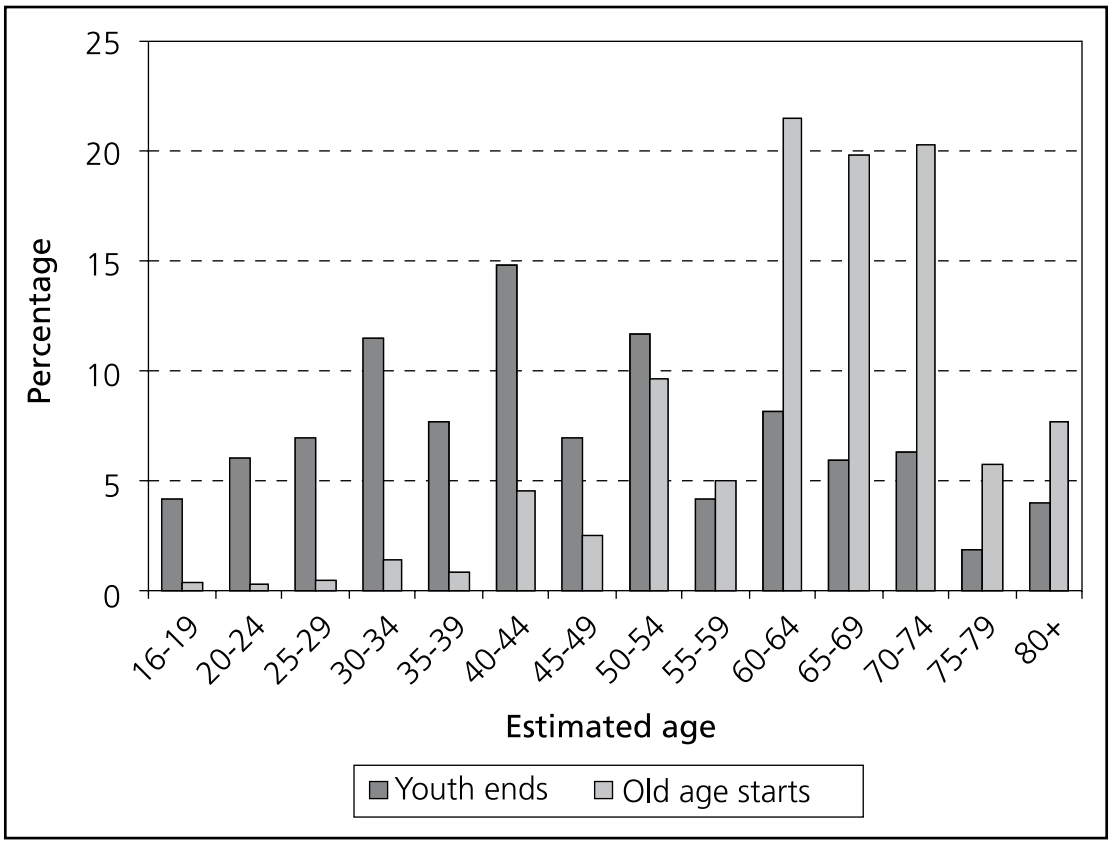
The previous section demonstrated how a person's own psychological age can differ depending on factors such as gender, ethnicity and social class. However, the fact that respondents categorised **themselves** as older as they age does not necessarily mean that they apply the labels young and old to **others** in the same way throughout their lives. It was, therefore, of interest, how respondents categorised people in general as young or old. Respondents were, therefore, asked at what age they thought people stop being young and when they considered old age to start.[2]

[2] For illustrative purposes, responses to the questions 'when do people stop being young' and 'when does old age start' were converted to dichotomous variables, i.e. the responses were coded either as 'stop being young' happens before or after the age of 30 or 'old age start' before or after the age of 70. These splits were designed to reflect the category labels used for later questions in the surveys and reflected pilot research suggesting that these are the modal boundaries. It was, therefore, of interest to what extent categorisations of people as young and old would fit with these two boundaries. Binomial logistic regression analyses were conducted on these dichotomous measures. The subsequent analyses of covariance used the original continuous variables.

Figure 4.3 shows the age continuum divided into five-year bands and the proportion of respondents who stated that youth ends and old age begins within each of these bands. The estimations covered a wide range of ages. While 18 per cent of respondents thought youth ends by the age of 30, 11 per cent of them believed that youth continues beyond the age of 50 years. This diversity of perceptions contrasts with respondents' age self-categorisation because by the age of 35 most respondents no longer described themselves as young.

Similarly to the end of youth, estimations of the beginning of old age varied substantially. For example, 11 per cent of respondents thought old age starts before the age of 50 but 34 per cent of respondents thought old age starts after the age of 70. It is striking that there is a substantial overlap between the age ranges at which many respondents consider people still to be young while others view old age as having begun.

Figure 4.3 Percentage of respondents who estimated, in five-year age bands, the age at which youth ends and old age starts



4.3.1 Age at which people are perceived to stop being young

On average, respondents believed that youth ends at the age of 45.4 years. Respondents' own age was the best predictor of their estimations of the end of youth. For example, respondents aged under 50 believed youth ends earlier (mean estimated age = 40.6) than did those respondents who were older than

50 (mean estimated age = 48.4) (Table 4.5). This trend continued into later life so that those respondents over 65 believed youth ends later than did those under 65, and respondents aged 80 and over believed youth ends even later (see Table 4.5 and Figure 4.4). For example, respondents over 80 years of age perceived that youth continues until nearly 55 years of age, whereas respondents aged under 65 perceived that youth ended by the age of 47. Thus, it appears that there is a widespread disagreement about the age at which people in general are perceived to stop being young. Consequently, anyone within a 20-year age range could be viewed as young or not. The implication of this is that people within a wide age range are potentially vulnerable to being treated (or not) in line with stereotypes that apply to youth.

Initial analysis of the data showed that respondents in 2008 judged that youth ends much earlier than in previous years (Figure 4.4). In 2004 survey respondents placed the end of youth at 51.8 years whereas in 2008 they placed it, on average, at 35.1 years. Although there was a small downward change between 2004 and 2006, the strikingly lower estimates in 2008 can perhaps best be explained by the sequence in which questions were asked. In 2004 and 2006 respondents were asked first to categorise themselves (as young, middle-aged or old) and then to estimate the end of youth (and start of old age). In 2008 the age self-categorisation item was presented after the questions on the end of youth and start of old age. Thus, those respondents who were first asked to consider their own age, relative to other people, judged that youth ends later than did those who had not first categorised their own age. This is an interesting finding as it shows how malleable perceptions of others' age can be. It highlights the way that age categorisations can change dramatically depending on the context in which these judgements are made.

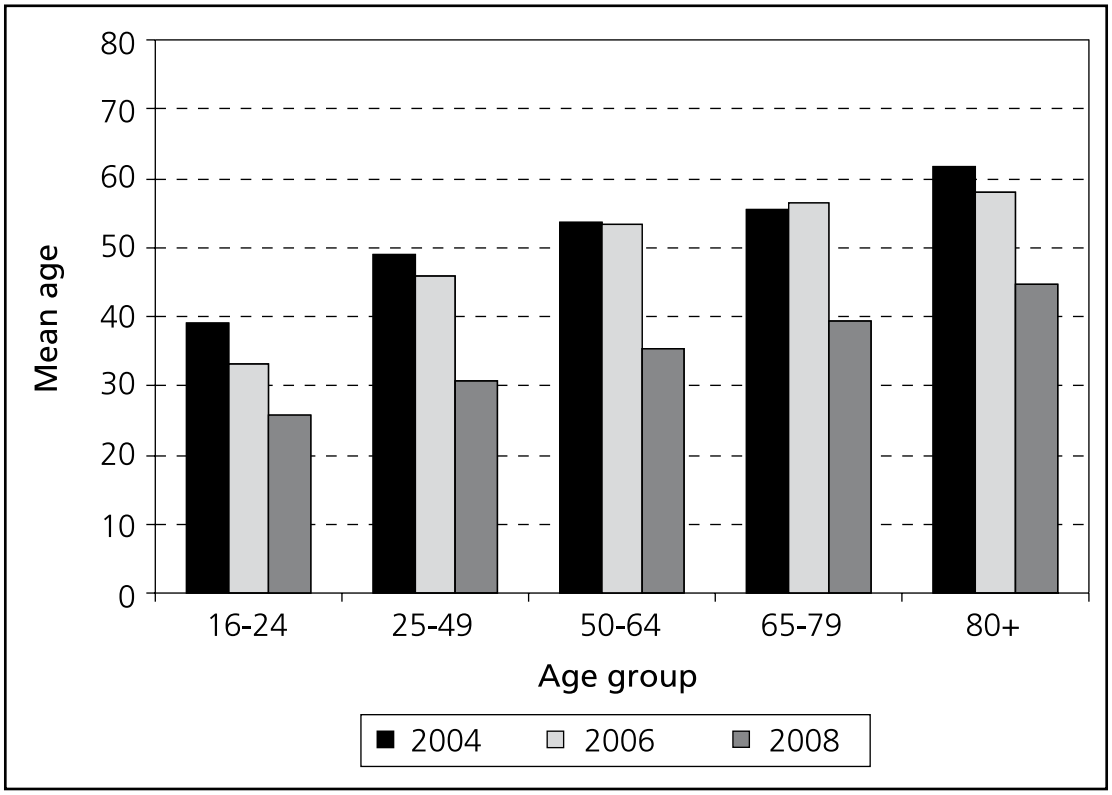
Aside from respondents' age and the survey year, gender, ethnicity, working status and marital status each independently predicted their perceptions of the age at which youth ends. Working status and gender were the strongest predictors.

Women believed youth ends five years later (mean estimated age = 49.2) than men (mean estimated age = 44.1). For example, 15 per cent of women, as compared with 21 per cent of men, believed youth ends by the age of 30.

Respondents with a white ethnic background estimated that youth ends later (mean estimated age = 47.1) than did non-white respondents (mean estimated age = 43.8). For example, 16 per cent of white respondents, as compared with 31 per cent of non-white respondents believed youth ends by the age of 30.

Respondents who worked full-time, part-time or were not working perceived that youth ends later than did those who had retired (Table 4.2).

Figure 4.4 Mean age at which people are perceived to stop being young, by respondent's age group and survey year



Finally, respondents who were married or lived as married estimated that youth ends later (mean estimated age = 48.3) than did those who were single, divorced, or widowed (mean estimated age = 44.7). For example, 13 per cent of those who were married or living as married thought that youth ends before the age of 30, while 25 per cent of those respondents not married agreed with this. It is important to note that this difference is not attributable to the possibility that single people are younger because the difference is statistically reliable even after we have taken account of respondents' own age.

In summary, spanning the different surveys and age groups, the age at which youth is perceived to end ranged between 28 and 63 years. Older respondents, women, people working full-time or part-time or not working and those respondents from white ethnic backgrounds perceived youth to end later than younger respondents, men, those who were retired and respondents from other than white ethnic backgrounds.

Table 4.2 Mean age at which people are perceived to stop being young, by working status

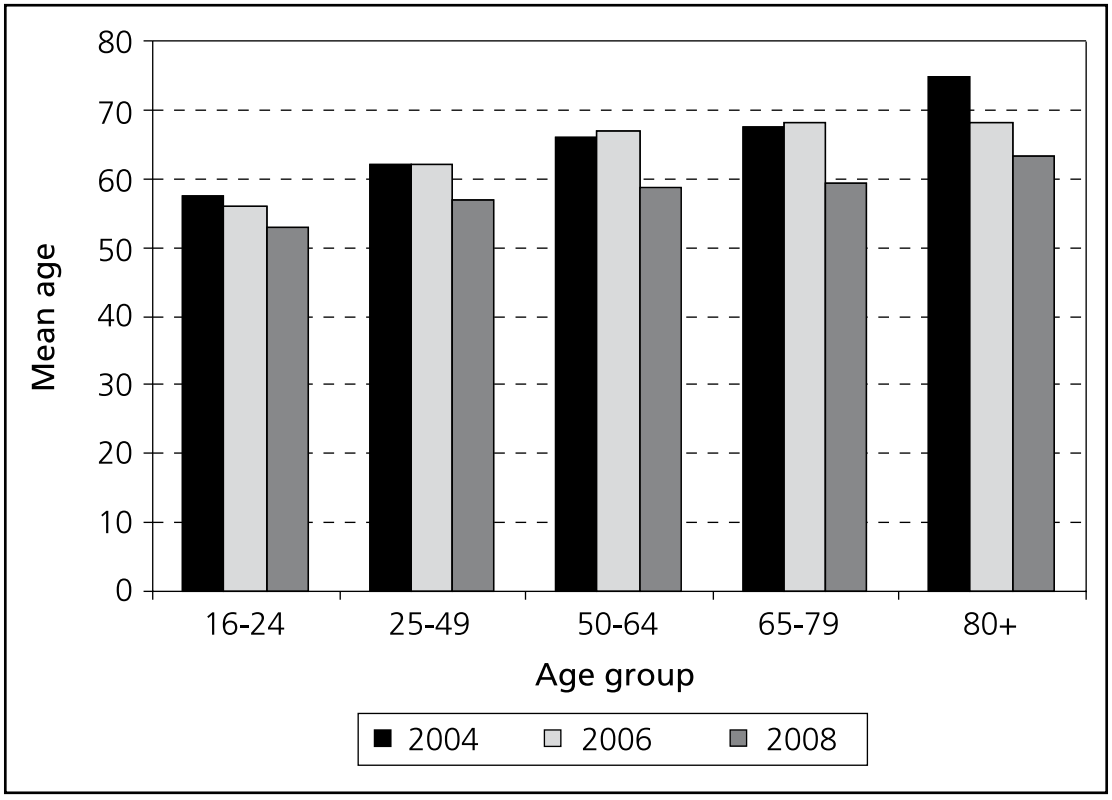
Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Mean age	47.7[b]	47.3[b]	47.0	44.8[a]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

4.3.2 Age at which old age is perceived to start

On average, respondents believed old age to start at 62.7 years. Respondents' own age significantly affected when they perceived old age to begin (Figure 4.5). Respondents under 50 years of age believed old age starts earlier (mean estimated age = 60.3) than did respondents over 50 years of age (mean estimated age = 64.9) (Table 4.5). This trend continued into later life so that those over 80 considered old age to start later than did those aged 50 to 64 and 65 to 79 years (Figure 4.5). For example, 68 per cent of respondents over 80 compared with 46 per cent of respondents aged 50 to 64 years believed old age starts after the age of 70 years.

Figure 4.5 Mean age at which old age is perceived to start, by respondent's age group and survey year



As with beliefs about the end of youth, beliefs about the threshold for old age were lower in 2006 than 2004 and substantially lower again in 2008. In 2004 the start of old age was placed at 66.4 years whereas in 2008 it was placed at 58.6 years. As discussed earlier (see Section 4.3.1), this decline could be accounted for, in part, by the question sequence. However, this finding also underscores the point that perceptions of age categories are flexible and sensitive to the context in which the judgements are made.

In addition to age and survey year, gender, ethnicity, working status, social class and marital status each independently predicted the perceived start of old age. Of these, the strongest predictors were gender and ethnicity.

Women believed old age starts later (mean estimated age = 65.5) than did men (mean estimated age = 61.3) with 42 per cent of women, as compared with 25 per cent of men considering old age to start at or after the age of 70.

Those from a white ethnic background estimated old age to start later (mean estimated age = 64.2 years) than did non-white respondents (mean estimated age = 58.2). Three times as many white respondents, as compared with non-white respondents believed old age to start at or after the age of 70 (36 and 12 per cent, respectively).

Respondents who worked full-time perceived that old age starts later than did those who were retired (Table 4.3). For example, 27 per cent of those respondents who worked full-time estimated that old age starts at or after the age of 70 when compared to 54 per cent of those who were retired.

Those respondents from social classes A and B perceived that old age starts significantly later than did respondents from the other four social classes (Table 4.3). For example, 48 per cent of respondents from social class A thought old age starts at or after the age of 70 years whereas only 32 per cent of respondents from social class E put the threshold as old as 70.

Respondents who were married or lived as married estimated that old age starts later (mean estimated age = 64.2) than did those respondents who were single, divorced, or widowed (mean estimated age = 62.7). Of those who were married, 38 per cent thought that old age starts at or after the age of 70 years, while only 28 per cent of those not married put the threshold as old as 70.

In summary, the age at which old age is perceived to start varied substantially depending on respondents' own age, gender, ethnicity, social class, working and marital status. Extending the threshold of old age to later in life was characteristic of people who were older, female, white, employed full-time, married or living as married, from higher social class backgrounds. These findings highlight that age perceptions are influenced by cultural and economic factors as well as people's personal circumstances and age.

Table 4.3 Mean age at which old age is perceived to start, by working status and social class

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Mean age	64.4[a]	64.7[ac]	63.4[d]	62.2[b]

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Mean age	66.0[a]	65.4[a]	63.6[b]	63.2[b]	63.0[b]	62.6[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] as well as [c] and [d] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

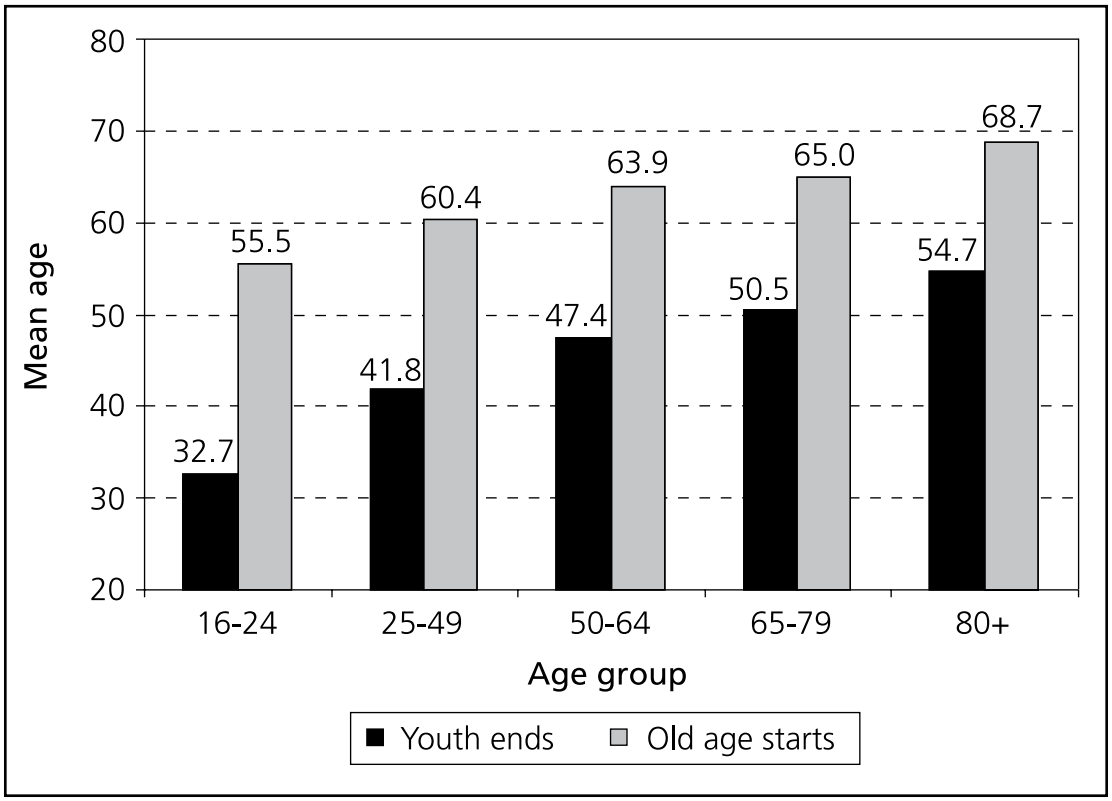
Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

4.3.3 Difference between the age at which youth is perceived to end and old age is perceived to start

When taken together, these perceived categorisations reveal, strikingly, that respondents over the age of 80 believed youth ends at around the same age (mean estimated age = 54.9) that respondents under 24 believed old age begins (mean estimated age = 55.9). This illustrates the degree of disparity in perceptions of age held by people from different age ranges, and hence, shows the potential for age stereotypes to be applied in very inconsistent ways.

As shown in Figure 4.6 and Table 4.5, the gap between respondents' estimates of the end of youth and start of old age reduced substantially as people get older. This gap is estimated at 22.3 years, for 16 to 24-year-old respondents, compared with only 12.8 years, for respondents aged over 80. The range estimated by 16 to 24-year-olds was significantly larger than the range estimated by 25 to 49-year-olds, which in turn was significantly larger than the range estimated by 50 to 64-year-olds. However the differences between those aged 50 to 64, 65 to 79 and 80 years and over were not statistically significant.

Figure 4.6 Mean age at which people perceive youth to end and old age to start, by respondent's age group



The difference in judgements about the end of youth and beginning of old age increased from 2004 to 2008. In 2004 the difference averaged 13.8 years, in 2006 it was 14.8 years but in 2008 the difference averaged 23.1 years. This appears to be attributable to the differences in question sequence as discussed earlier (see Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2).

4.4 Age group identification

Respondents' sense of identification with their age was measured with the item, 'I have a strong sense of belonging to my age group'. Responses were scored using a five-point scale where 5 represents high and 1 low identification.[3]

Overall, half of the respondents indicated strong identification with their age group, while 28 per cent showed low levels of age-group identification.

Age identification was predicted by respondents' own age. However, the trend was not linear. Respondents aged 50 to 64 years identified significantly less strongly than all other age groups, while those aged 16 to 24 years and 80 years and over identified significantly more strongly with their age group than all other age groups (but did not differ from one another). Respondents aged 24 to 49 and 65 to 79 fell in between the three age groups but did not differ from one another (see Figure 4.7 and Table 4.5). For example, 41 per cent of 50 to 64-year-old respondents indicated strong identification with their age groups when compared to 55 per cent of respondents over 80 years of age.

There was also a trend for the overall level of age-group identification to reduce over time from 2004 (mean rating = 3.5) to 2006 (mean rating = 3.4) and 2008 (mean rating = 3.2).

In addition to age and survey year, gender, ethnicity, working status, social class, and marital status independently predicted age-group identification. The strongest predictors were working status and ethnicity.

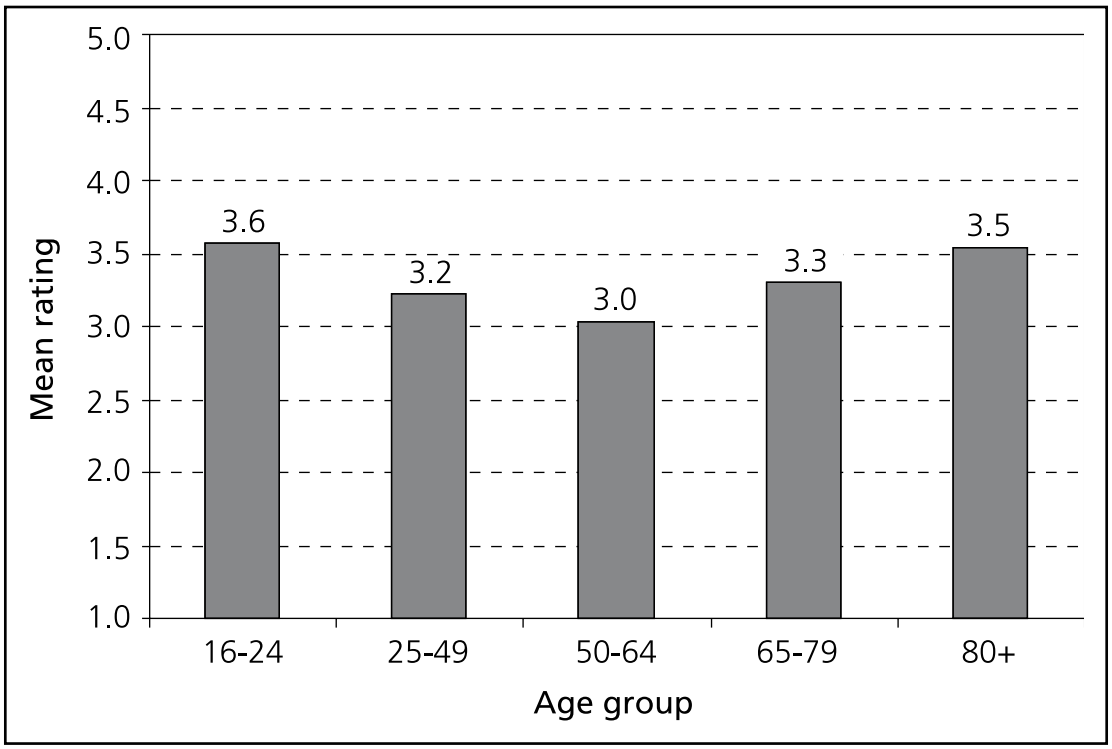
Women reported somewhat weaker age-group identification (mean = 3.2) than men (mean = 3.4). For example, 47 per cent of women agreed that they have a strong sense of belonging to their age-group, while 52 per cent of men agreed with this statement.

Respondents from white ethnic backgrounds expressed weaker age-group identification (mean = 3.3) than respondents from non-white ethnic backgrounds (mean = 3.6). For example, 48 per cent of respondents from white ethnic backgrounds agreed that they have a strong sense of belonging to their age group, while 64 per cent of respondents from non-white ethnic backgrounds agreed with this statement.

---

[3] A five-point scale was used in 2004 and 2006 (1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = strongly agree). However, in 2008 an 11-point scale was used (0 = very weak sense of belonging, 10 = very strong sense of belonging). To facilitate comparative analyses responses were converted into a five-point range. The converted five-point scaling from the original 11-point scale were highly correlated with standardised scores ($r = .98$) confirming that the relative positions of the responses were accurately captured by the recoded five-point scale.

Figure 4.7 Mean level of identification with age group, by respondent's age group



Those respondents who had retired expressed slightly stronger identification with their age-group than did respondents who were working full-time (Table 4.4); 50 per cent of respondents who had retired agreed that they feel strong belonging to their age group, while 48 per cent of those working full-time agreed with this.

The highest level of age-group identification was indicated by those respondents from social class D and the lowest by respondents from social class B (Table 4.4). For example, 57 per cent of those respondents from social class D indicated strong age-group identification compared to 41 per cent of respondents from social class B.

Table 4.4 Respondents' mean level of identification with their age group, by working status and social class

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Mean rating	3.2[a]	3.2[a]	3.2[a]	3.5[b]

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Mean rating	3.2[a]	3.1[c]	3.3[ad]	3.4[bd]	3.5[bd]	3.3[d]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b], as well as [c] and [d] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

Respondents who were single, divorced or widowed expressed slightly higher age-group identification (mean = 3.4) than those respondents who were married/lived as married indicated (mean = 3.3). For example, 53 per cent of respondents who were not married agreed that they have a strong sense of belonging to their age group, compared to 47 per cent of those respondents who were married/lived as married.

In summary, age-group identification seems to be strongest in the youngest and oldest age groups, and weakest in 50 to 64-year-olds. Furthermore, men, respondents from non-white ethnic backgrounds, respondents who were retired, those from social class D, and respondents who were not married indicated the strongest levels of identification with their age group.

4.5 Summary of age group differences

Table 4.5 summarises age group differences for age self-categorisation and identification. Mean responses are compared between respondents aged under 50 and over 50. Further comparisons are made between age groups 50 to 64, 65 to 79 and those aged 80 and over.

Table 4.5 Mean responses to age-categorisation items among respondents from different age groups

Item	Under 50	Over 50	50-64	65-79	80+
Estimated age that youth ends	40.62	48.39[a***]	47.22[b**c***]	50.77[d*]	54.91
Estimated age that old age starts	60.30	64.86[a***]	64.53[c***]	65.29[d***]	69.14
Age self-categorisation[1]	4.07	5.64[a***]	5.27 [b***c***]	6.22[d***]	7.18
Age-group identification[2]	3.36	3.15	3.04[b***c***]	3.30[d*]	3.53

Note: [a]: difference between people under and over 50 and 65-79, [b]: difference between 50-64 and 65-79, [c]: difference between 50-64 and 80+, [d]: difference between 65-79 and 80+; $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$; [1] A nine-point scale was used ranging from 1 (young) to 9 (old). [2] The scale used ranged from 1 (strongly disagree; weak age-group identification) to 5 (strongly agree; strong age-group identification).

4.6 Summary and discussion

The majority of respondents stopped considering themselves as young when they reached their mid-30s and they started categorising themselves as old in their mid-70s. However, women, respondents from a white ethnic background and those from social class C1 classified themselves as slightly younger than men, respondents from a non-white ethnic background and those from social class E.

In general, respondents perceived that other people's youth ends by the age of 45.4 years and old age starts at 62.7 years. However, these perceptions varied substantially, depending on respondents' own age and gender. Older respondents and women perceived that youth continues later and that old age also starts later than did younger respondents and men. Surprisingly, when respondents had first categorised themselves as young, middle-aged, or old, they then judged that youth ends, and old age begins, earlier than if they had not first categorised themselves. Taken together, the age categorisation evidence highlights that, socially and psychologically, youth and old age are not fixed categories linked to specific ages. People's perceptions of the boundaries for different age categories can move significantly depending on the context in which people apply their judgements.

Respondents' identification with their age group did not change steadily with age. Instead, the evidence shows clearly that the youngest and oldest respondents identified with their age group most strongly and those aged 50 to 64 felt least identification with their age group. Other factors affected respondents' identification with their age group. Respondents who had retired or were from a non-white ethnic background expressed stronger age-group identification than respondents who were working full-time or were from a white ethnic background.

Taken together, these findings show that people's perceptions and categorisations of age were substantially affected by their own age. Even though respondents categorised themselves as middle-aged over a wide age range, they perceived others as falling more clearly into the categories young or old. As respondents got older they increased the age of the boundaries they subjectively place on the end of youth and start of old age. The start of old age was also likely to be perceived later by those in higher social classes and with more independence. More generally, the wide variations in the way different people apply age categorisations suggests that a person's vulnerability to stereotypes about age may fluctuate quite radically as they move from situation to situation. Vulnerability is likely to depend on who is judging them and who they are being compared with.

Whereas as people got older their self-perceived age, perceptions of the end of youth and start of old age, all increased, respondents' identification with their age group did not. The fact that people in the most 'ambiguous' age range (50-64 years) are least likely to identify strongly with their age group may reflect their potential uncertainty about how others may perceive and categorise their age. Given these large variations in perceptions of age, age categories and age identification, it seems likely that, in many situations, there is substantial scope for misperception and miscommunication involving assumptions about peoples' age and age-based expectations. In employment, health and other settings these misperceptions could be highly consequential. In addition, the fact that age matters most to people who are either young or old highlights the fact that age discrimination and prejudice may pose stronger threats to their sense of self-worth.

5 Perceived age prejudice

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines respondents' perceptions of the occurrence and seriousness of age-related prejudice. We cannot assume that awareness of prejudice is equivalent to concern about prejudice, but it is likely to be a first step towards getting people to think about changing their behaviour. Research on prejudice that is based on ethnicity and race has shown that prejudice is often manifested in subtle forms, one of which is the denial that prejudice exists or that inequality or discrimination is a problem.

The chapter starts by examining respondents' perceptions of prejudice against people over 50 and over 70 years of age. It then turns to the question of whether respondents view age-related prejudice as serious and whether they believe media images of people over 70 are positive or negative.

5.1.1 Key findings

- 94 per cent of respondents indicated that people over 70 experienced prejudice because of their age over the previous year.
- 51 per cent of respondents also agreed that people over 50 are written off as old, whereas 40 per cent disagreed with this.
- 48 per cent of respondents viewed age discrimination as a serious issue.
- Images of older people in the media were more often considered to be positive than negative.
- Women, respondents from a white ethnic background, and those working full-time, viewed age prejudice and discrimination against people over 70 to be more frequent and more serious than did men, respondents from non-white ethnic backgrounds and respondents who had retired.
- Respondents aged 80 and over, and those who were retired, generally considered age prejudice to be less prevalent than did those respondents aged 50-79 years.

5.2 Over 50 as 'old'

The surveys in 2004 and 2006 included the item, 'Once people get to 50 they get written off as old'. This question was answered using a five-point scale (1 = agree strongly, 5 = disagree strongly).

Overall there was a general tendency for respondents to think that those aged 50 or over are viewed as old and therefore, may experience prejudice as a consequence; 51 per cent of respondents agreed that people over 50 are written off as old when compared to 40 per cent of respondents who disagreed with this statement (Figure 5.1). It also appears that respondents' views on this question were divided; very few gave intermediate answers, most either agreed or disagreed that there was age-related prejudice against people over 50. In the following we will explore the factors that may have contributed to these discrepant views.

Respondents of different ages had different perceptions of prejudice against people over 50 years of age. Respondents aged 50 to 64 and 65 to 79 were most likely to believe that people over 50 are written off as old, and differed significantly both from the views of respondents aged 16 to 24 and those over 80 years of age (see Figure 5.2 and Table 5.4). For example, 44 per cent of respondents aged 80 years and over and 47 per cent of respondents aged 16 to 24 agreed that people are written off as old once they get to 50, while 54 per cent of respondents aged 50 to 64 agreed with this. 16 to 24-year-old respondents also differed from those aged 25 to 49 years.

Figure 5.1 Percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed with the statement that 'people over 50 are written off as old'

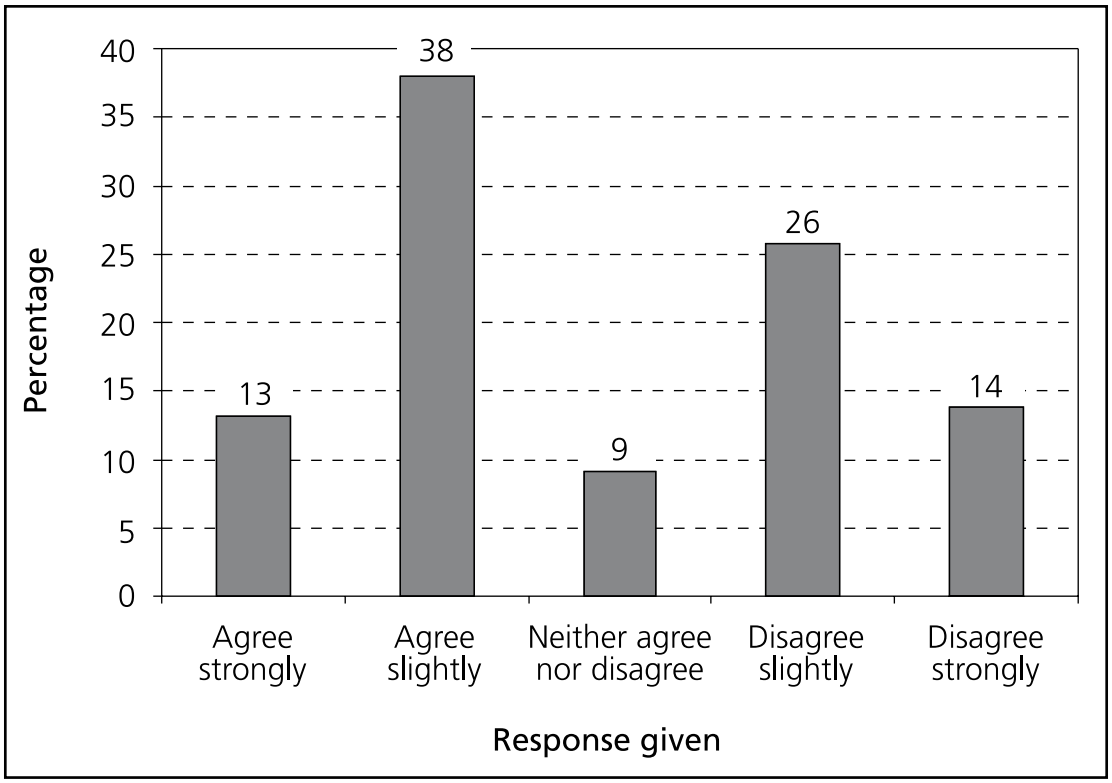
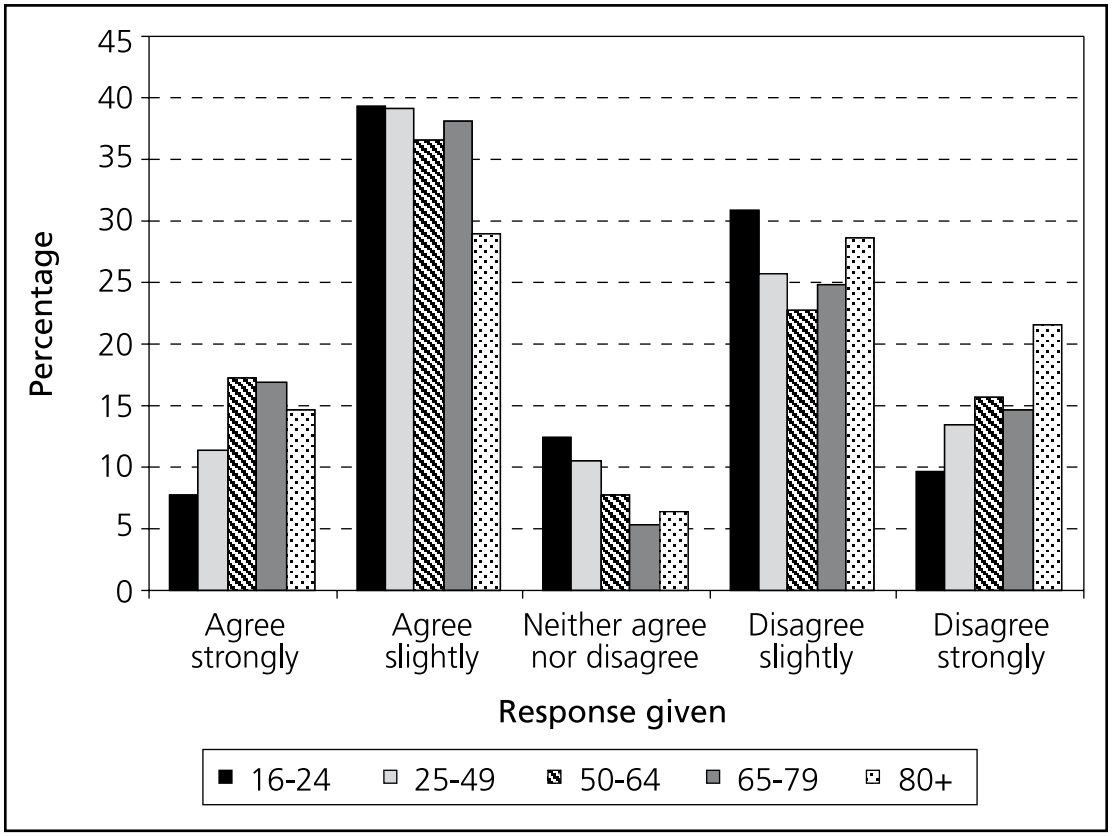


Figure 5.2 Percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed with the statement that 'people over 50 are written off as old', by age group



Gender, ethnicity and social class independently predicted perceptions of whether people over 50 are written off as old. Of these factors, respondent's gender was the strongest predictor.

Women were less likely to believe that people over 50 are written off as old than men (48 and 54 per cent agreed, respectively). Respondents from a non-white ethnic background were slightly more likely to perceive that people over 50 are written off as old than those from a white ethnic background (55 and 51 per cent agreed, respectively).

As shown in Figure 5.3, respondents from lower social classes were more likely to agree that people over 50 are written off as old. For example, 52 per cent of respondents from social class C1 agreed whereas only 42 per cent of respondents from social class A agreed (see also Table 5.1).

Figure 5.3 Percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed that 'people over 50 are written off as old', by social class

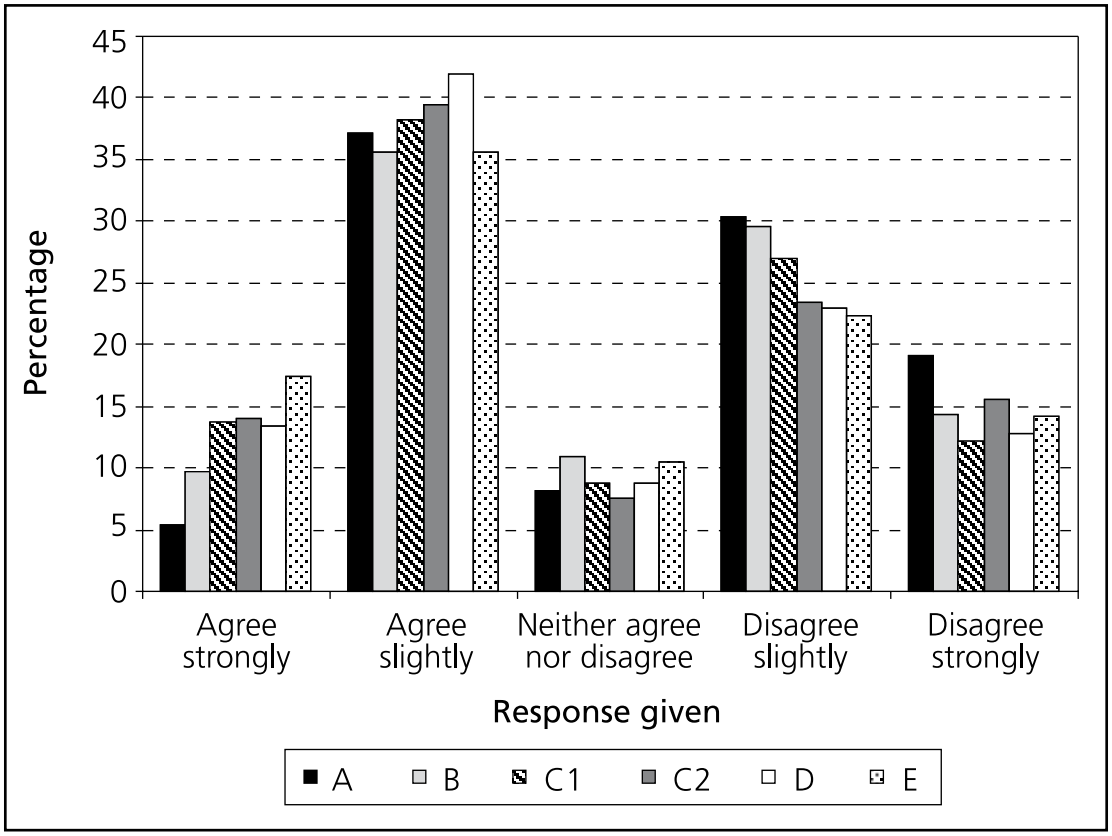


Table 5.1 Percentage of respondents who agreed that 'people over 50 are written off as old', by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage agreed	42[a]	45[c]	52[bd]	54[bd]	55[bd]	53[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b], as well as [c] and [d] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

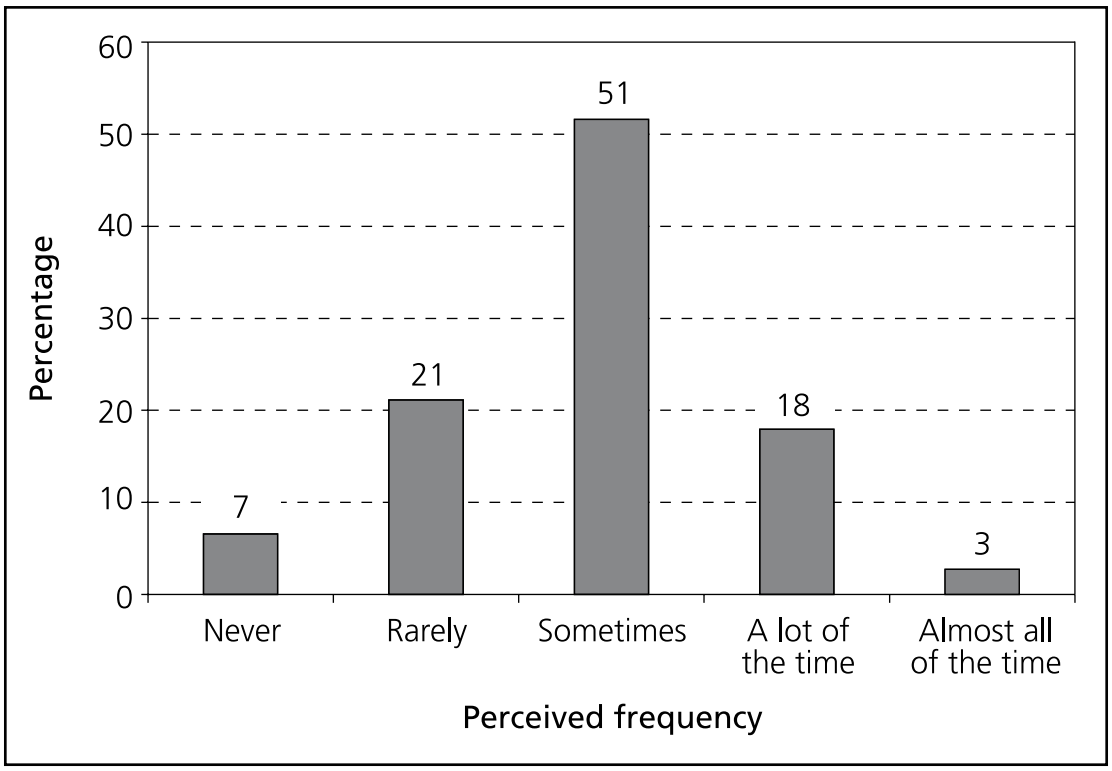
In summary, respondents' views appeared divided about whether those over 50 are written off as old, though significantly more respondents agreed rather than disagreed with this view. There was strongest agreement among those who were aged 50 to 64, men, respondents of non-white ethnic background, and respondents from lower social class background. It seems likely that these differences reflect the fact that women, respondents from white ethnic background and from higher social classes also perceived that youth lasts longer and old age starts later (see Chapter 4), as well as their generally higher probability of living into old age. This also suggests that perceptions of age prejudice are limited by respondents' field of view, namely the social milieu within which they live.

5.3 Perceived extent of discrimination against people over 70

In 2005 a more direct question was also asked about prejudice of respondents over 70. This question asked, 'In the past year to what extent do you think people over 70 years of age have suffered from prejudice or discrimination or unfair treatment in Britain?' Respondents answered using a five-point scale (0 = never, 1 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 3 = a lot of the time, and 4 = almost all the time).

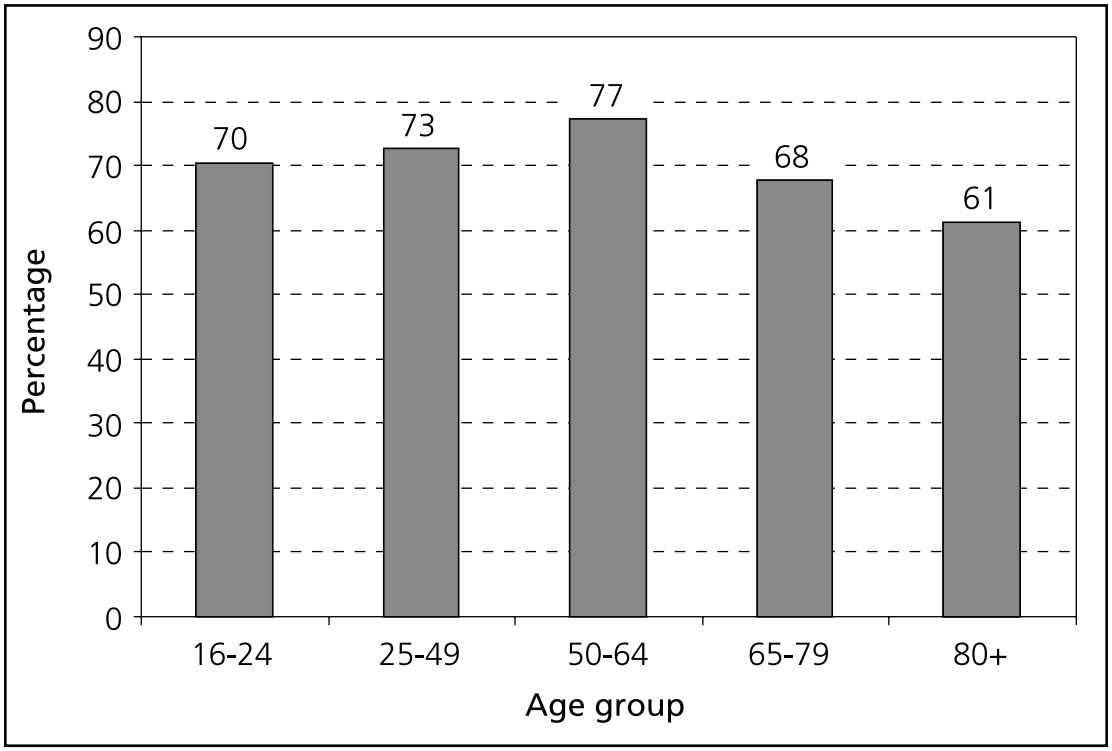
Overall, 73 per cent of respondents indicated that people over 70 had experienced prejudice sometimes or more often over the past year (mean rating = 1.8). This also highlights the pervasiveness of age-related prejudice (Figure 5.4). This figure seems comparable to, but rather higher than, responses to a similar question posed in the Eurobarometer (EB) (see Chapter 2).

Figure 5.4 Percentage of respondents who believed that people over 70 had experienced prejudice over the previous year



Interestingly, consistent with the pattern for people over 50 being written off as old, respondents aged 50 to 64 years were most likely to think people over 70 had experienced age prejudice sometimes or more often, and they perceived this significantly more than did 65 to 79-year-olds and those over 80 years of age (see Table 5.4 and Figure 5.5). For example, 77 per cent of 50 to 64-year-old respondents said 'sometimes' or more often, whereas only 61 per cent of over 80-year-olds did so.

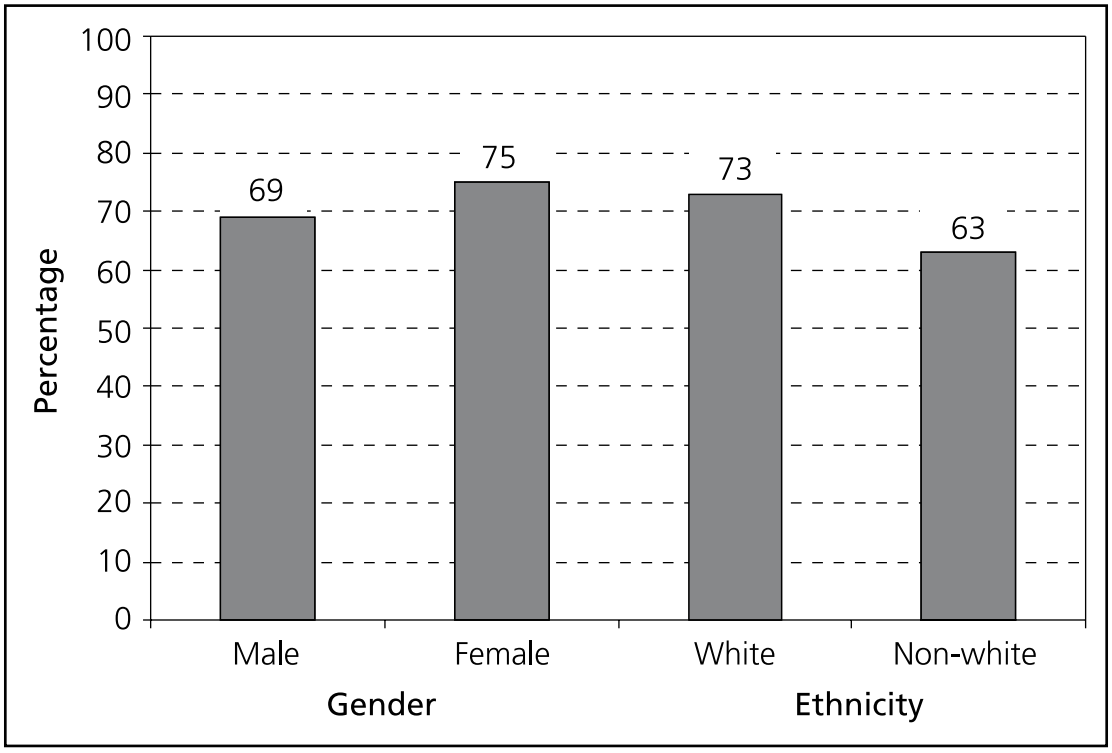
Figure 5.5 Percentage of respondents who believed that people over 70 had experienced prejudice sometimes or more often over the previous year (2005 survey only), by age group



Gender, ethnicity and working status also independently predicted the extent to which respondents felt people over 70 years of age had suffered from prejudice over the previous year. Ethnicity and working status were the strongest predictors. However, the differences between gender and ethnic groups were the opposite of those observed in the question about being written off as old after the age of 50.

As shown in Figure 5.6, women were more likely to think that people over 70 had experienced age prejudice than was the case with men; 75 per cent of women when compared to 69 per cent of men said that over 70-year-olds had experienced prejudice, discrimination or unfair treatment at least sometimes over the previous year. Those from a white ethnic background were also more likely to report prejudice against people over 70 when compared to respondents from non-white backgrounds. For example, 73 per cent of those from white backgrounds believed that people over 70 had experienced prejudice at least sometimes in the last year compared with 63 per cent from non-white backgrounds.

Figure 5.6 Percentage of respondents who believed that people over 70 had experienced prejudice over the previous year at least sometimes, by gender and ethnicity



The survey also revealed that respondents' perceptions of discrimination against people over 70 were higher among those respondents who were working full-time or part-time than among those who had retired (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Percentage of respondents who believed that, people over 70 had experienced prejudice over the previous year at least sometimes, by working status

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Percentage	74[a]	77[a]	70[a]	68[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

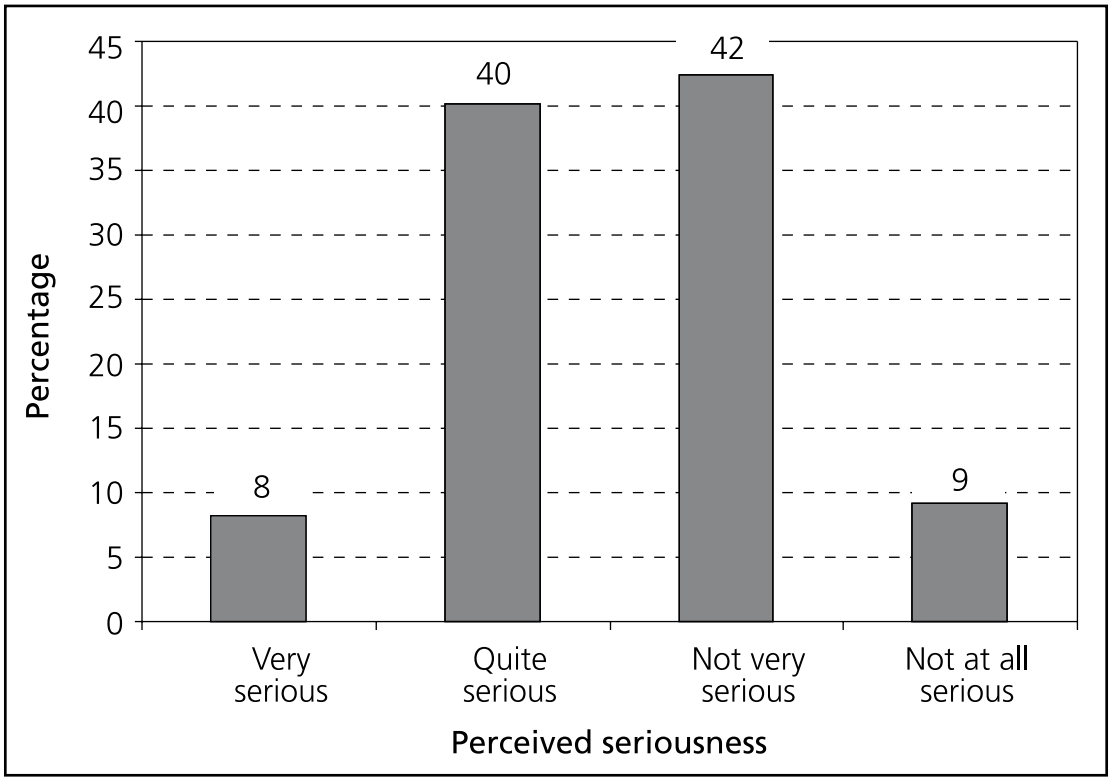
In summary, the majority of the respondents in 2005 judged that people over 70 had experienced prejudice or discrimination sometimes or more often over the previous year. Similarly to the perceptions of prejudice against people over 50, those who were aged 50 to 64, reported higher levels of perceived prejudice. However, women and respondents from white ethnic backgrounds also reported perceiving higher levels of prejudice against respondents aged over 70, as did respondents who were employed compared with those who had retired.

5.4 Perceived seriousness of age discrimination

This item, which was fielded in both 2004 and 2006, asked, 'In this country nowadays, how serious is the issue of discrimination against people because of their age?' Responses were given using a four-point scale (1 = very serious, 4 = not at all serious).

Overall, 48 per cent of respondents thought age discrimination was quite or very serious and 52 per cent thought it was not very serious or it was not serious at all (Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7 Percentage of respondents indicating different levels of seriousness of age discrimination



The perceived seriousness of age discrimination increased between 2004 and 2006. In 2004, 45 per cent of respondents indicated that they thought age discrimination is quite or very serious, while in 2006, 52 per cent held this view.

Gender, ethnicity, working status and social class also independently predicted perceived seriousness of age discrimination. Of these factors, working status and social class were the strongest predictors.

About half of women thought it was quite or very serious when compared to 46 per cent of men. More respondents from a white ethnic background thought that age discrimination was serious than those from non-white ethnic background (Figure 5.8).

Also about half of those working full-time considered age discrimination to be serious, a substantially larger proportion than was the case with respondents who had retired (see Figure 5.8 and Table 5.3). These findings closely match responses in the 2005 survey to question about respondents' perceptions of the extent of prejudice against people over 70.

Figure 5.8 Percentage of respondents who perceived that age discrimination is serious or very serious, by gender, ethnicity and working status

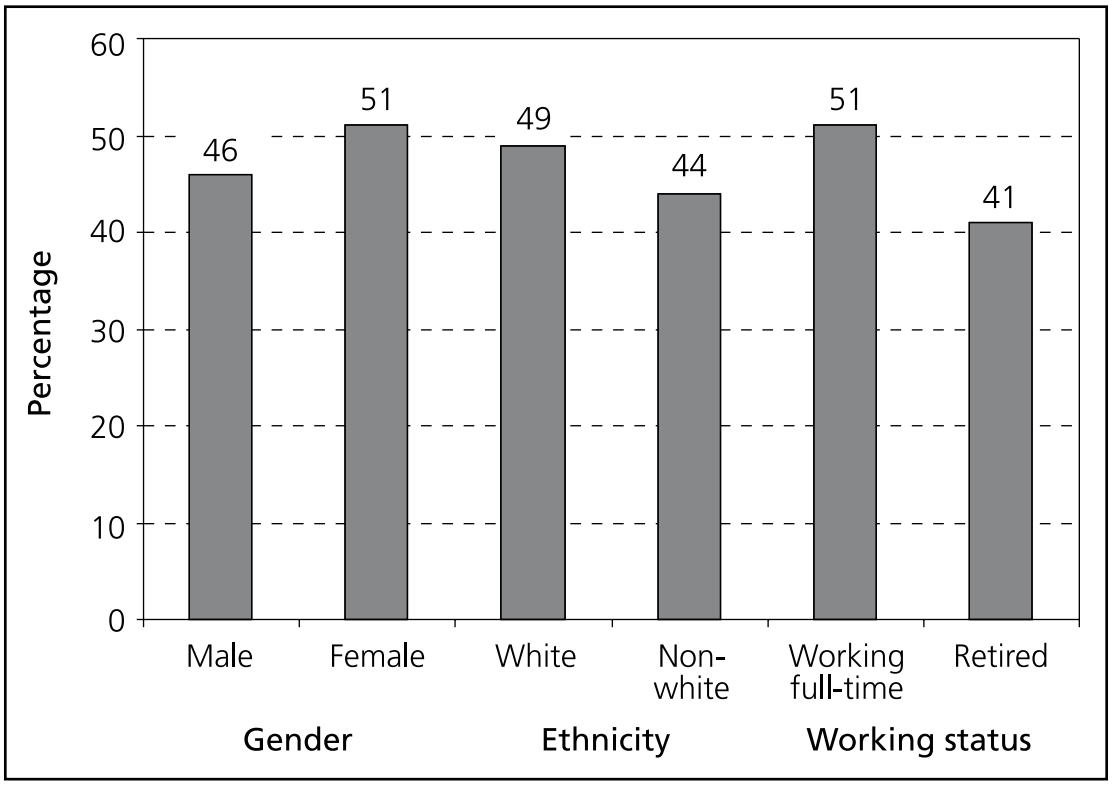


Table 5.3 Percentage of respondents who perceived that age discrimination is serious or very serious, by working status and social class

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Percentage	51[a]	48[ac]	51[a]	41[b]

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	52[a]	51[ad]	52[ad]	42[b]	44[c]	50[ad]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b], as well as [c] and [d] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

Figure 5.9 shows that respondents from higher social classes (A, B and C1), as well as those from social class E, saw age discrimination as more serious than did those respondents from social classes C2 and D. For example, 52 per cent of

respondents from social class C1 thought that discrimination because of age is quite or very serious when compared to 42 per cent of respondents from social class C2.

In summary, views were divided as to whether or not age discrimination is a serious problem, but it seems that there is a trend over time for more respondents to consider it to be a serious problem. Women, respondents from white ethnic backgrounds and from social classes A, B, C1 and E were also more likely to view age discrimination as a serious problem. It is likely that these are groups either with higher aspirations or needs as they get older and who, therefore, are more acutely aware that they are likely to confront difficulties associated with others' prejudices about age.

Figure 5.9 Percentage of respondents who perceived age discrimination to be a serious problem, by social class

Note: Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest level of subsistence.

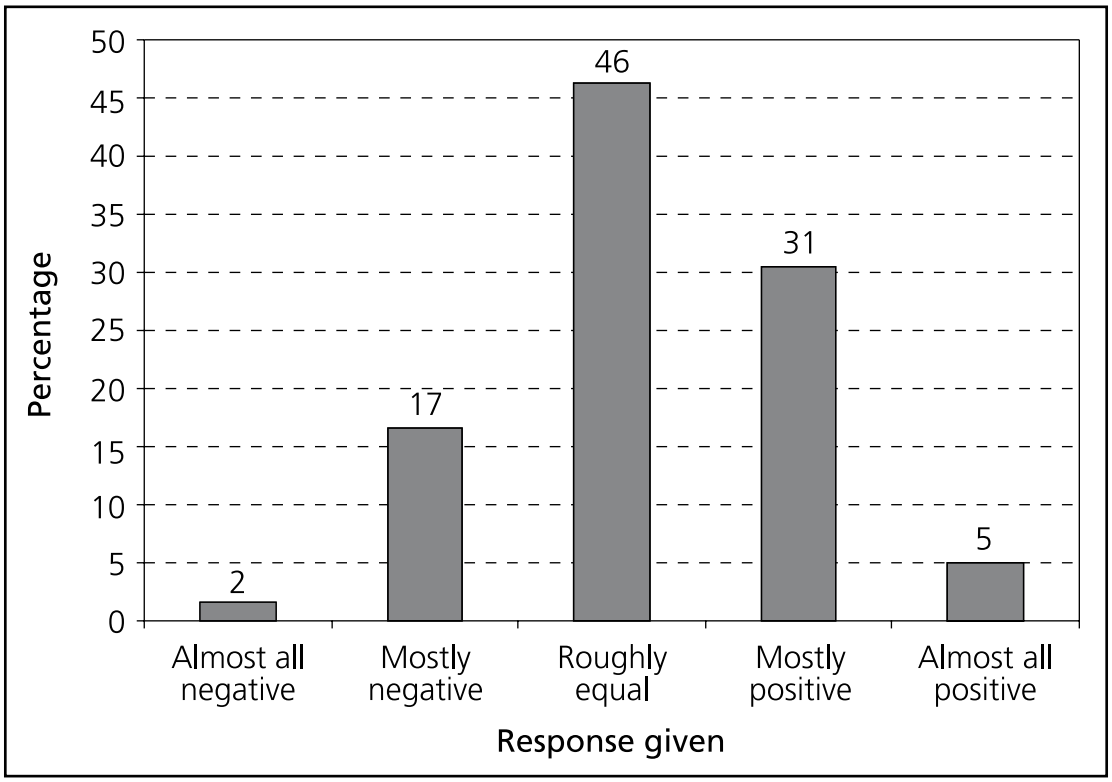
5.5 Perceptions of media bias against older people

In the 2005 survey only respondents were asked, 'Thinking back over the last year, how much do you think the images and stories about people over 70 years of age in TV and newspapers have been negative or positive?' Responses were given on a five-point scale (-2 = almost all negative, 2 = almost all positive).

When interpreting answers to this question it is important to bear in mind that in an unprejudiced society one might expect images of any particular group to be balanced in terms of the overall characteristics and behaviour of the group. Given that 'people over 70' reflect a cross-section of different gender, ethnicity, social class and so on, and given that people generally have a favourable view of others, we might expect a balanced representation to be positive.

In fact only 36 per cent of respondents perceived media coverage of people over 70 to be positive. Of greater concern is that 19 per cent perceived media imagery to be negative. Thus, the overall mean rating of 0.3 on the -2 to +2 scale does not suggest that media images of people over 70 are generally accurate or sufficiently positive to be unbiased (see also Figure 5.10).

Figure 5.10 Percentage of respondents indicating that people over 70 are represented positively or negatively in the media



Gender and ethnicity independently predicted the extent to which the stories and images in the media concerning people over 70 years of age are perceived to be positive or negative. Slightly fewer women (35 per cent) than men (37 per cent) perceived that the stories and images in the media were mostly, or almost all, positive. Fewer respondents from a white ethnic background (35 per cent) than from a non-white background (46 per cent) perceived that the media images were positive.

These gender and ethnicity trends are consistent with findings, reported earlier, that women and respondents from white ethnic backgrounds perceive higher

levels of prejudice generally against people over 70 and think that this type of prejudice is more serious than do men and respondents from non-white backgrounds, respectively.

In summary, respondents consider the images of people over 70 in the media to be somewhat positive rather than negative, but perceptions of media imagery differed somewhat depending on people's gender and ethnicity. Men and respondents from non-white ethnic backgrounds perceived less age-related prejudice in the media than women and respondents from white ethnic backgrounds.

However, it is important to be aware that this evidence does not address the particular kinds of images that portray older people and which of those is valued positively or negatively. Given that most respondents tended to say that both positive and negative images are portrayed, an important question is whether the positive images focus on different characteristics (such as warmth or kindness) than the negative images (which may focus on ability or health). As Chapter 7 of this report shows, the specific content of such images may be very important for the stereotypes that people apply to age and youth. Therefore, this evidence on perceptions of media imagery should certainly not be taken to demonstrate that media images of older people are free from distortion or bias.

5.6 Summary of age group differences

Table 5.4 summarises age group differences for the perceived age prejudice items. Mean responses are compared between respondents aged under 50 and over 50. Further comparisons are made between age groups 50 to 64, 65 to 79 and those aged 80 and over.

Table 5.4 Perception of the extent and seriousness of age discrimination among respondents from different age groups

Item	Under 50	Over 50	50-64	65-79	80+
Perceived prejudice against over 50s[1]	2.95	2.83	2.83[c*]	2.77[d**]	3.10
Perceived prejudice against over 70s[2]	1.84	1.9	1.96[b**c***]	1.74	1.62
Seriousness of age discrimination[3]	2.56	2.51	2.49	2.55	2.54
Media discrimination against over 70s[4]	0.20	0.23[a*]	0.21[c*]	0.29	0.41

Note: [a]: difference between people under and over 50 and 65-79, [b]: difference between 50-64 and 65-79, [c]: difference between 50-64 and 80+, [d]: difference between 65-79 and 80+; $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$; [1] 2004 and 2006 surveys only, a five-point scale was used ranging from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (disagree strongly), [2] 2005 survey only, a five-point scale was used ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (almost all the time), [3] 2004 and 2006 surveys only, a four-point scale was used ranging from 1 (very serious) to 4 (not at all serious), [4] 2005 survey only, a five-point scale was used ranging from -2 (almost all negative) to 2 (almost all positive).

5.7 Summary and discussion

The majority of respondents thought that sometimes or often people aged 70 or over experience prejudice because of their age. They also agreed with the statement that those aged 50 or over are written off as old. Furthermore, 48 per cent of respondents said that age discrimination is quite, or very, serious. Yet, media images of people aged 70 and over were perceived mostly as positive.

Respondents' age, gender, ethnicity and working status affect their perceptions of prejudice across several measures. Respondents aged between 50 and 64 were most likely to perceive that people over 50 will be written off as old, and to be aware of prejudice against people over 70. Interestingly, whereas women and respondents from white ethnic backgrounds and higher social classes were less likely to think people are written off as old at 50, they were more likely to be aware of discrimination against people over 70 exists and is serious and occurs through media imagery. Respondents who were retired tended to perceive less age prejudice against people over 70 and viewed age discrimination as less serious than those who were working full-time.

The gender and ethnic differences in perceptions of discrimination against people over 50 and people over 70 seem likely to be explained by the age categorisation evidence, reported in Chapter 4, showing that women and respondents from white ethnic background consider youth to carry on longer and old age to start later. So it seems that respondents may prefer not to believe that people in their 50s will be written off as old, but at the same time they are vigilant and sensitive to the fact that people aged over 70 are liable to be victims of age prejudice and discrimination.

These findings illustrate some of the challenges for policy. Whereas respondents believe age prejudice is a significant and serious issue, they seem to find it hard to pinpoint the nature of that prejudice. Moreover, sectors of society that might be doubly hit by prejudice, including women and members of minority ethnic groups, are also more aware of prejudice against older people.

6 Experiences of discrimination

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines respondents' reports of experiencing discrimination because of their age. Such experiences are set in the context of their experiences of discrimination because of their gender, race, disability, religion or sexual orientation. Previous research from the Eurobarometer (EB) surveys has shown that age-related discrimination is likely to be experienced more commonly than other forms of discrimination. The evidence from the present surveys amplifies this picture, with higher levels of reported discrimination than in the EB and substantially higher levels of age discrimination. This may, in part, reflect the focus of the survey questions, but it also seems possible that people in the UK are more sensitised to prejudice and discrimination or are more willing to report it.

6.1.1 Key findings

- 26 per cent of respondents reported experiencing ageism, showing that it is experienced more commonly than any other form of prejudice.
- Younger respondents were more likely to report experiencing discrimination of all types.
- Regardless of their age, age discrimination was more likely to be experienced by respondents who were retired or not working, and by respondents who were not married.
- Whereas the prevalence of gender and ethnic discrimination was stable or declined between 2004 and 2008 there is some evidence that experiences of age discrimination may have increased in 2008.

6.2 Experiences of discrimination

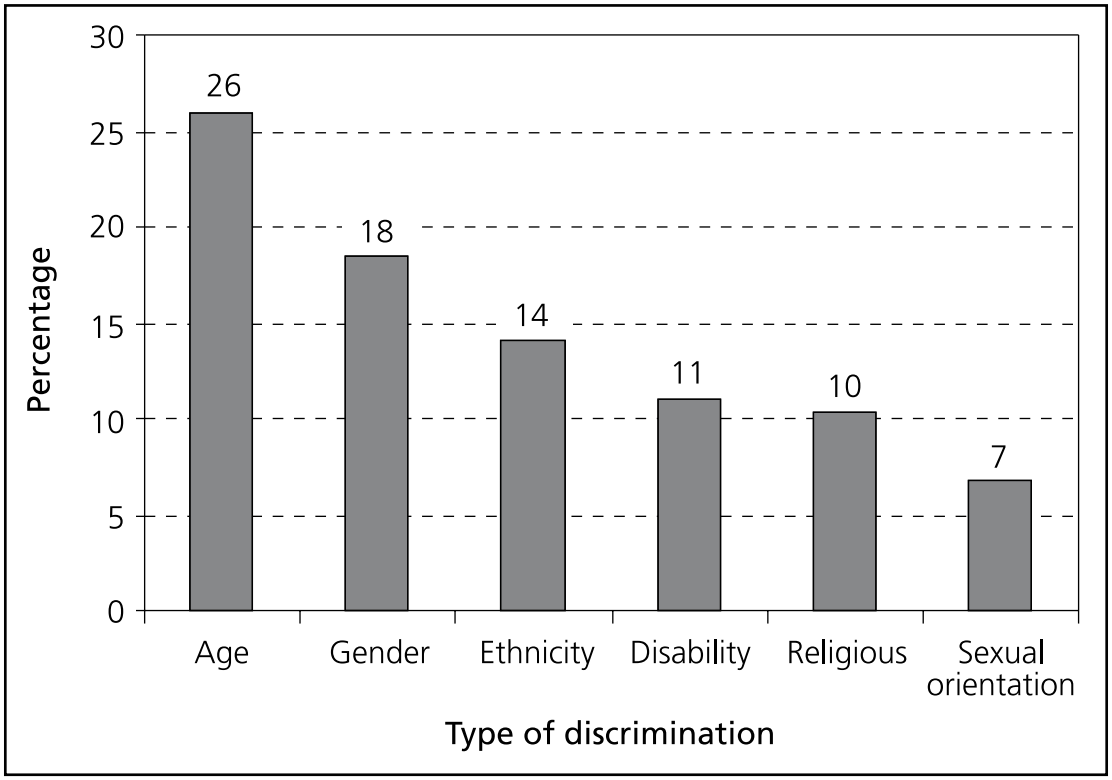
Respondents' experiences of discrimination because of their age, gender and ethnicity, religion, any disability and sexual orientation were measured in 2004,

2005 and 2006. The 2008 survey only included age, race or ethnicity, and gender[4]. In 2004, 2005 and 2008 the questions asked were: 'In the past year, how often, if at all, has anyone shown prejudice against you or treated you unfairly…because of your age/gender/race or ethnicity/(etc.)?'

In 2006, the possible forms of discrimination were examined in greater detail. Respondents were asked their experiences of having been ridiculed, insulted or treated unfairly, treated disrespectfully, and then about having been patronised or refused products or services over the previous year because of age/gender/race or ethnicity/religion/sexual orientation or a disability. These items were aggregated for questions about each strand in order to be able to compare the experiences of prejudice and discrimination with the other survey years. Relating to membership of each equality strand, responses were coded 0 if no form of discrimination had been experienced and 1 if any form had been experienced.

Overall, ageism was the most commonly experienced form of prejudice. About a quarter (26 per cent) of respondents reported experiencing age-related discrimination followed by discrimination because of gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Percentage of respondents who experienced different types of discrimination

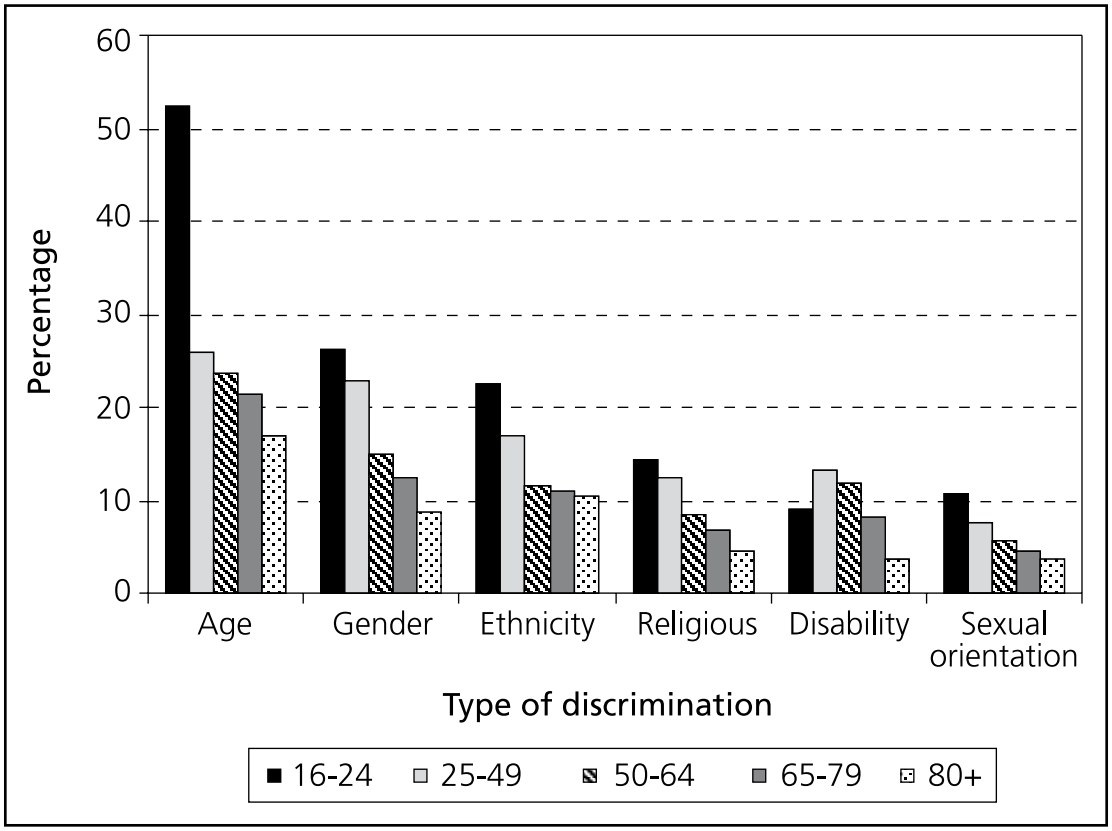


[4] Experiences of discrimination were analysed in two parts: Age, gender and ethnicity were analysed together in order to include data from survey year 2008. Experiences of religious, disability and sexual orientation discrimination were analysed separately.

The percentage of respondents who experienced discrimination related to age, gender and ethnicity differed significantly from each other, whereas the percentage of respondents who experience discrimination against their religion, disability or sexual orientation did not differ.

Experiences of all forms of discrimination varied between age groups. Generally, younger respondents aged 16 to 25 years experienced more of all forms of prejudice and discrimination than other age groups, except for that related to disability. Respondents under 25 years reported experiencing more age-related prejudice and discrimination (52 per cent) compared to any form, and they experienced more age-related prejudice and discrimination than any other age group (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 Percentage of respondents who experienced each type of discrimination[5], by age group



Respondents under 50 years reported experiencing more of all forms of discrimination than those aged over 50 (Table 6.1). Respondents aged over 80 reported experiencing less prejudice based on age, gender or disability than did those aged 64 to 79 (Table 6.1).

[5] Reported percentages for age, gender and ethnicity by age group include all surveys years. Percentages for religious, disability and sexual orientation discrimination by age group exclude survey year 2008.

6.3 Summary of age group differences

Table 6.1 summarises age group differences in respondents' experience of different types of discrimination. Mean responses are compared between respondents aged under 50 and over 50. Further comparisons are made between age groups 50 to 64, 65 to 79 and those aged 80 and over.

Table 6.1 Experiences of different types of discrimination among respondents in different age groups in percentages

			Age group		
Type of discrimination	**Up to 50**	**Over 50**	**50-64**	**65-79**	**80+**
Age	30.7	23.5[a***]	23.8[c*]	21.4	16.9
Gender	22.7	14.3[a***]	14.8[c*]	12.5	8.6
Ethnic	17.9	11.6[a***]	11.6	11.0	10.5
Religious	12.50	7.90[a***]	8.4	6.9	4.6
Disability	11.10	10.60[a*]	11.9[b* c***]	8.1[d*]	3.8
Sexual orientation	7.90	5.20[a***]	5.5	4.4	3.6

Note: [a]: difference between people up to and over 50, [b]: difference between 50-64 and 65-79, [c]: difference between 50-64 and 80+, [d]: difference between 65-79 and 80+; $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

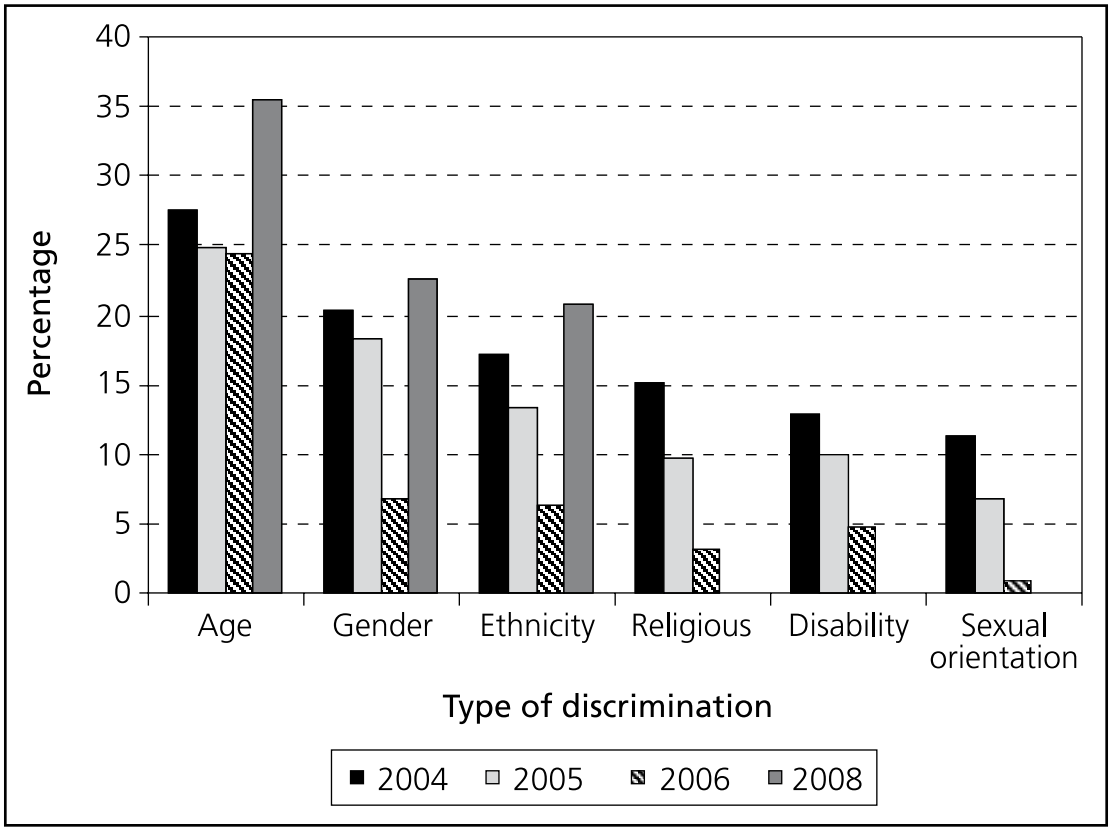
Figure 6.3 shows that experiences of discrimination also differed by survey year. Generally, experiences of discrimination decreased between 2004 and 2006, except for age-related discrimination, which remained statistically unchanged. However, reports of age discrimination increased substantially in 2008. For example, in 2004, 27 per cent of people reported experiencing age discrimination whereas in 2008 the figure was 35 per cent.

Reported gender-related discrimination decreased substantially in 2006 and then increased in 2008 back to the level reported in 2004. Experiences of race or ethnic discrimination also decreased year on year, until 2008 when experiences reverted to the levels reported in 2004. Experiences of discrimination against gender and ethnicity reported in 2008 do not differ significantly from those reported in 2004. Experiences of discrimination because of religion, disability and sexual orientation decreased year on year.

Age discrimination reported in 2006 appears to be in line with experiences reported in previous survey years, whereas discrimination because of gender and ethnicity reported in 2006 appears to contrast with previous surveys and the subsequent survey in 2008. This could be due to the measurement method used in 2006, where several items were used to capture the extent to which different expressions of discrimination were being experienced. Perhaps the items used in 2006 capture the breadth of forms of age discrimination more effectively than forms of other types of discrimination. More importantly, the different changes across survey

years for different types of discrimination shows that the changes are not a general effect of survey year (for example, people becoming generally more or less prejudiced) or the specific type of measurement (for example, the differences between 2006 and other survey years is not the same for all six equality strands). Thus, the changes over time seem likely to reflect meaningful shifts in the extent to which people are experiencing age-related prejudice. Whether this is because actual levels of prejudice and discrimination are changing, or because of changes in people's awareness of what actions constitute prejudice and discrimination, is an interesting question for future research.

Figure 6.3 Percentage of respondents who experienced each type of discrimination, by survey year



In summary, the reported experiences of age discrimination remained fairly stable across years but there is apparently an increase in 2008. Experiences of gender and ethnic discrimination were fairly stable except for a pronounced decrease in 2006. Reported experiences of other forms of discrimination decreased year on year.

6.4 Experiences of age-related discrimination

As well as age and survey year, social class, working status and marital status were independently related to respondents' experiences of age-related discrimination. The strongest predictor was working status.

Respondents in social class E were less likely to report experiencing age-related prejudice compared to respondents in C1, for example, 26 per cent of respondents in social class C1 reported experiencing age discrimination compared to 21 per cent of respondents in social class E (Table 6.2).[6]

A larger proportion of respondents who were not working or retired reported age-related discrimination compared to respondents in full-time employment (Table 6.2).

Respondents who were not married experienced more age discrimination (29 per cent) than those who were married or living as married (23 per cent).

Table 6.2 Percentage of respondents experiencing age discrimination, by social class and working status

Working status	Full-time		Part-time		Not working		Retired
Age discrimination	22[a]		22[a]		25[a]		31[b]
Social class	**A**	**B**	**C1**	**C2**	**D**	**E**	
Age discrimination	28[a]	29[ac]	26[ad]	25[d]	24[d]	21[b]	

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b], as well as [c] and [d] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

6.5 Summary and discussion

Ageism was the most pervasively experienced form of discrimination, affecting 26 per cent of respondents. This figure seems surprisingly high given that the EB evidence suggested that 15 per cent of European respondents experienced some form of discrimination, and only six per cent experienced age discrimination (see Chapter 2). The EB report also concluded that respondents aged 25 to 39 years were less likely to experience age discrimination compared to all other age groups. One plausible interpretation of the difference in findings is that age discrimination was interpreted by respondents in the EB surveys as prejudice against old age whereas in the present surveys the questions were about the respondent's own age, whatever that might be.

The present research shows that ageism is experienced widely by both younger and older people. Half of respondents aged 16 to 25 years (52 per cent) reported experiencing age discrimination, which was substantially more than reported by

[6] Percentages presented are adjusted for covariates in this chapter. Percentages were converted from adjusted estimated means, as the means score between 0 and 1.

other age groups (for example, 21 per cent of respondents aged 64 to 79 years experienced age prejudice). Like experiences of most types of discrimination, experiences of ageism decrease as respondents get older, but ageism still remained the most commonly experienced type of discrimination, highlighting that it is an important problem across the age range.

Experiences of ageism were also related to working status. Once respondents' age had been controlled for, retired respondents and those not working were particularly vulnerable to age prejudice and discrimination. This juxtaposition between the experiences of ageism for younger respondents and older respondents perhaps suggest two things: First, younger respondents may be more sensitised to equality issues. This may be why younger respondents report experiencing more of all forms of discrimination except for those related to disability. Second, it seems plausible that ageism is experienced by younger and older respondents differently. Younger respondents might be experiencing a direct and hostile form of age prejudice (such as being suspected of loutish behaviour) which is easily detectable. Older respondents might be experiencing a more patronising but less directly confrontational form of age prejudice in terms of negative assumptions about their health or abilities.

The pervasiveness of ageism does not make it more important than other forms of discrimination but, like sexism, ageism has the potential to affect all people and may take different forms depending on the particular age category at which it is directed at. In policy terms, the evidence shows very clearly that ageism is something that affects large numbers of people and must be taken seriously. The fact that people can perceive age in such flexible and variable ways makes ageism a more slippery and complex form of prejudice. This may also mean that, while people can recognise the personal experience of age discrimination, it is more difficult for them to recognise when they are thinking or acting in an ageist way. The nature of age-related prejudice is explored more extensively in the next chapter.

7 Age stereotypes

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the stereotypes that respondents believe are applied to people aged under 30 and over 70. We established earlier that the average ages at which respondents stop describing themselves as young and start describing themselves as old are 30 and 70 years, respectively. The stereotypes of people either side of those age boundaries were measured using the stereotype content model (SCM) (Fiske *et al.*, 2002).

Research on the SCM shows that the basic elements of stereotypes about any group usually involve perceptions about the group's warmth and competence. Warmth and competence stereotypes also imply different emotional responses and these emotions reflect different types of prejudice. Groups that are viewed as having higher competence but lower warmth are more likely to be viewed with envy and dislike. Those perceptions are liable to translate into direct hostile forms of prejudice. Groups that are viewed as having higher warmth but lower competence are often viewed with pity, which is liable to be translated into 'benevolent' or patronising forms of prejudice. These are not directly hostile, but which are no less damaging.

7.1.1 Key findings

- Respondents perceived a clear stereotype that older people are friendlier, more admirable and moral than younger people. However, respondents also thought older people are viewed with more pity than younger people.
- There is a clear stereotype that younger people are viewed as more capable and regarded with more envy than older people.
- These stereotypes, which were perceived more acutely by respondents from white ethnic backgrounds and from higher social classes, are robust and pervasive across survey years and different social groups

- Although respondents of all ages agreed that older people are perceived to be warmer than younger people, there were larger differences in their perceptions of older people's competence. Older respondents were more likely to think others will view people aged over 70 as competent.

7.2 Comparisons between warmth and competence stereotypes

Respondents were asked 'To what extent do you think that other people in this country view people over 70 as friendly, capable and view them as moral, with admiration, pity, and envy'. Respondents answered on a five-point scale from 1 (extremely unlikely to be viewed this way) to 5 (extremely likely to be viewed this way). In 2004, 2006 and 2008 respondents were also asked how much people viewed people under 30 as friendly, capable and view them as moral, with admiration, pity, and envy.[7]

Of focal interest was how the warmth and competence stereotypes of younger and older people differ and whether these differences also change depending on people's age.

Figure 7.1 shows that, overall, people over 70 were stereotyped as warm but incompetent. Over half, 54 per cent of respondents thought people over 70 would be viewed as friendly or very/extremely friendly. However only 28 per cent of respondents thought people over 70 would be viewed as capable or very capable.

In contrast, people under 30 were stereotyped as competent but relatively cold. For example, 45 per cent of respondents thought that people under 30 would be viewed as capable or very capable, and only 29 per cent thought people under 30 would be viewed as friendly or very friendly.

Accompanying these stereotypes are different emotional orientations, as shown in Figure 7.2. People over 70 are perceived to be viewed with greater admiration, but also more pity, and as being moral when compared with people under 30. People under 30 are seen being envied more than those over 70. These different emotions reflect the implications for relatively 'benevolent' forms of prejudice that flow from stereotypes of people over 70 and the implications for relatively 'hostile' forms of prejudice that flow from stereotypes of people under 30.

---

7 The term 'capable' was replaced with 'competent' in 2008, but pilot research suggested these are treated interchangeably by respondents. In 2008 the response scale also changed slightly to 1=very unlikely to be viewed this way to 5 = very likely to be viewed this way.

Figure 7.1 Mean evaluation of warmth and competence stereotypes of people aged over 70 and under 30

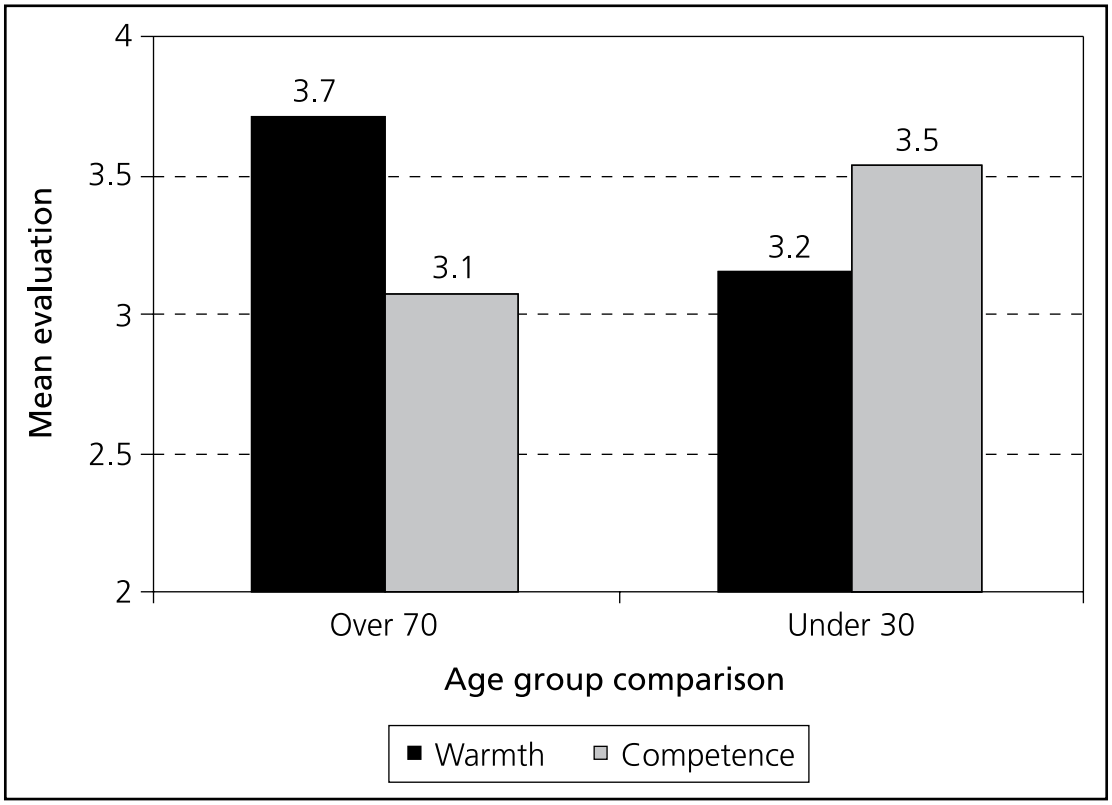
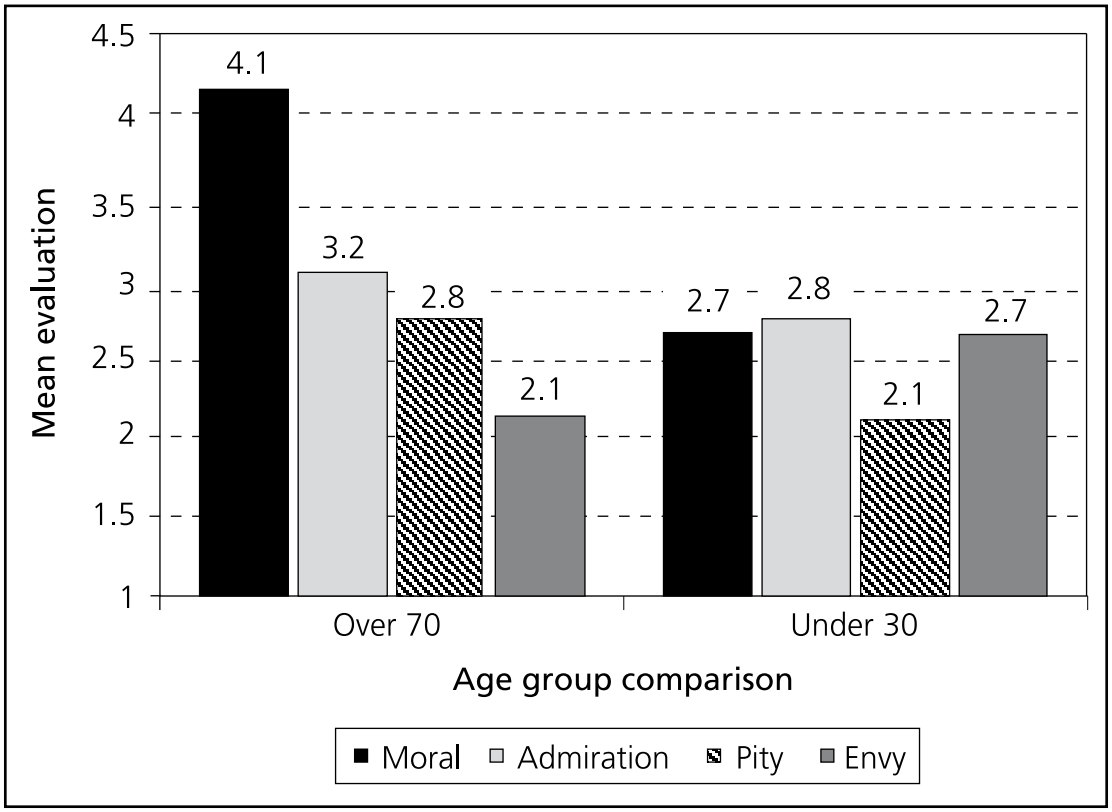


Figure 7.2 Mean evaluation of characteristics and emotional reactions perceived to apply to people aged over 70 and under 30



The extent to which these stereotypes were perceived to differ depended on respondents' own age as shown in Figures 7.3, Figure 7.4 and Table 7.1. For instance, the difference in the extent to which respondents perceived warmth stereotypes of people aged under 30 and over 70 was smallest among respondents aged 50 to 64. In contrast, differences in competence stereotypes associated with people aged under 30 and over 70 decreased linearly with age, driven by the fact that, older respondents were less likely to think others view people over 70 as incompetent.

Figure 7.3 Mean evaluation of the warmth and competence of people over 70 and under 30, by respondent's age group

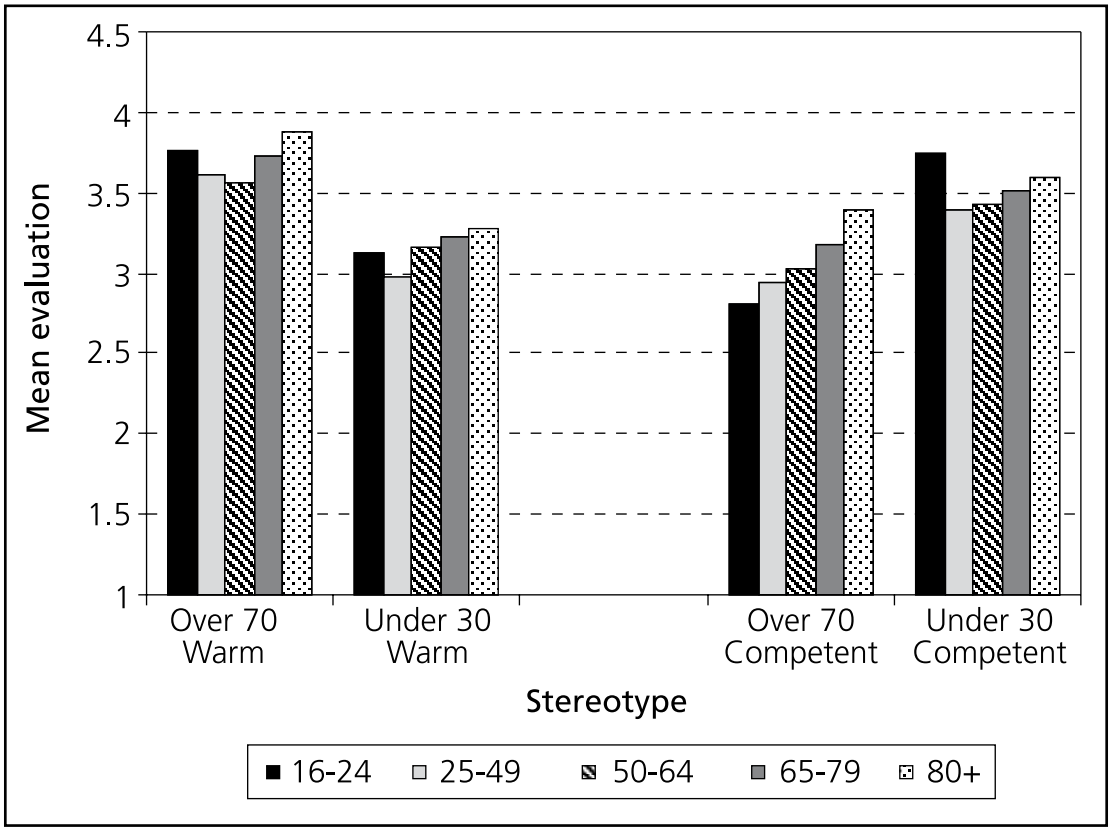
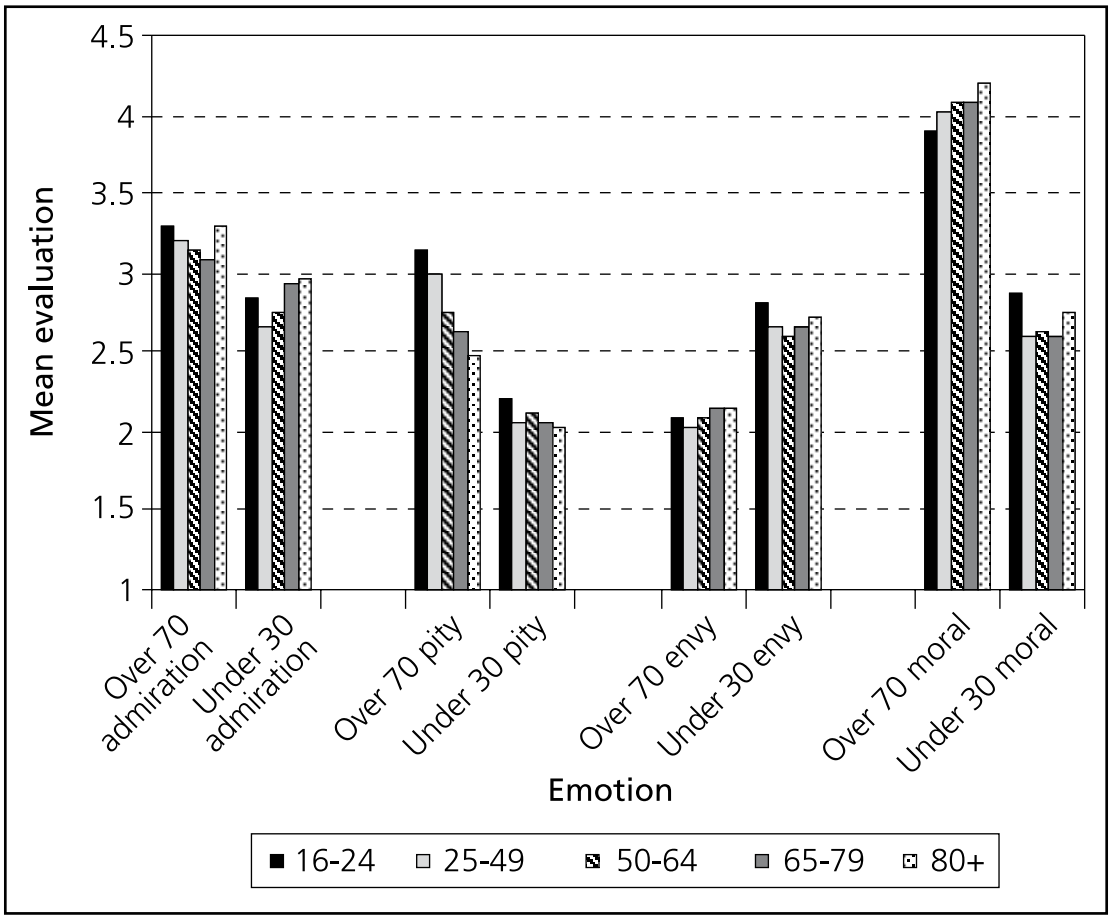


Figure 7.4 shows that older respondents agreed more that people aged over 70 are perceived as more moral than those under 30. Differences in perceived admiration of the over 70s and under 30s were smaller among the 65 to 79-year-old respondents than other age groups. Perceptions that people aged over 70 are viewed with pity decreased with age, whereas perceived pity for people under 30 remained constant across the age range. As a result, the difference in perceptions of pity toward the under 30s and over 70s decreased with age.

Figure 7.4 Mean evaluation of the emotions associated with people over 70 and under 30, by respondent's age group



Figures 7.3 and 7.4 above show that older respondents believed people aged over 70 are stereotyped more positively on both the warmth and competence dimensions (warmth and capability). Interestingly, respondents aged over 80 believed that both people aged under 30 and over 70 are viewed more positively than was perceived by respondents in the 50 to 79 year age range.

Table 7.1 shows that respondents aged over 50 thought people over 70 will be viewed as more capable and less pitied than did respondents under 50. However, respondents in both age categories held similar views of whether people over 70 will be viewed as friendly and moral. Respondents aged over 50 judged that people under 30 are viewed as more friendly and with more admiration than did respondents under 50.

7.3 Summary of age group differences

The Table 7.1 summarises age group differences in the way respondents perceived people aged under 30 and over 70 are viewed by society. Mean responses are compared between respondents aged under 50 and over 50. Further comparisons are made between age groups 50 to 64 65 to 79 and those aged 80 and over.

Table 7.1 Perception of stereotypes of people aged under 30 and over 70 among respondents in different age groups

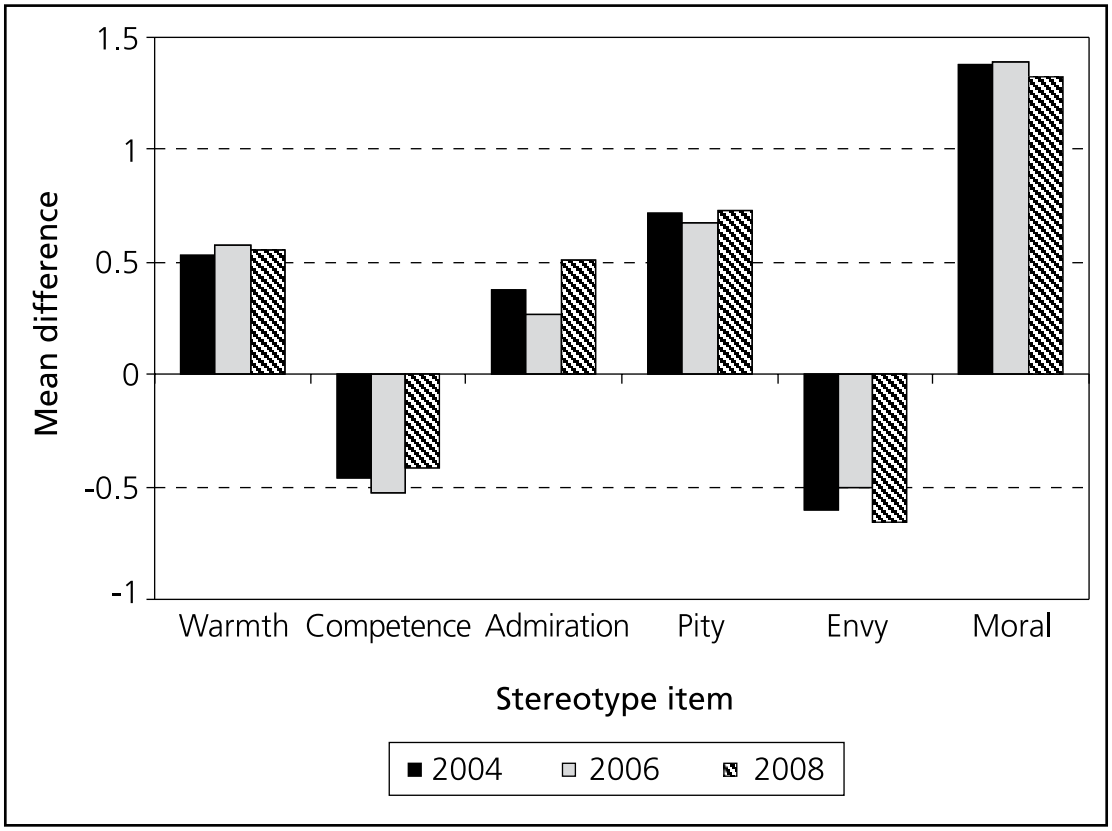
			Age group		
Stereotype	**Up to 50**	**Over 50**	**50-64**	**65-79**	**80+**
Over 70s					
Friendly (warmth)	3.65	3.63[a*]	3.57[b** c**]	3.74[d**]	3.96
Capable (competence)	2.93	3.05[a***]	2.99[b** c***]	3.18[d*]	3.38
Admiration	3.21	3.13	3.13	3.06[d*]	3.24
Pity	2.96	2.68[a***]	2.72[b*]	2.57	2.54
Envy	2.02	2.07	2.05	2.08	2.16
Moral	3.89	3.98[a**]	3.97	4.02	4.02
Over 30s					
Friendly (warmth)	3.03	3.18[a**]	3.15	3.23	3.28
Capable (competence)	3.49	3.46	3.44	3.50	3.59
Admiration	2.71	2.81[a*]	2.75[b*c*]	2.92	2.97
Pity	2.09	2.1	2.10	2.06	2.05
Envy	2.69	2.64	2.60	2.64	2.71
Moral	2.66	2.62	2.62	2.62	2.73

Note: [a]: difference between people under and over 50, [b]: difference between 50-64 and 65-79, [c]: difference between 50-64 and 80+, [d]: difference between 65-79 and 80+; *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, $pp < .001$. The scale used ranged from 1 (Not at all viewed that way) to 5 (Extremely likely to be viewed that way).

Figure 7.5 shows the differences in respondents' perceptions of stereotypes applied to people aged under 30 and over 70. Bars that rise above the zero point on the vertical axis show where a characteristic is applied more to people aged over 70 than to people aged under 30. Bars that drop below the zero point show where a characteristic is applied more to people aged under 30 than to people aged over 70.[8] Figure 7.5 shows that the differences between the stereotypes of people over 70 and people under 30 remain consistent across survey years.

[8] The difference score for every stereotype content item was computed by subtracting the evaluation of people under 30 from the evaluation of people over 70, the larger the difference score the greater the difference between the two evaluations. A positive score represents that people over 70 are more likely to be viewed this way than people under 30. Conversely a negative score represents that people under 30 are more likely to be viewed in that way.

Figure 7.5 Mean difference between the perceived stereotypes of people over 70 and under 30 for each stereotype item according to survey year



These stereotypes are illustrated clearly by the percentage of respondents that believed they apply more to one age group than another.

Consider the 'benevolent' aspects of stereotypes first. About half of respondents (47 per cent) believed people over 70 are perceived to be warmer than people aged under 30, whereas only 16 per cent believed the reverse to be true. Similarly, 43 per cent of respondents believed people over 70 are viewed with more admiration than people aged under 30, whereas only 21 per cent believed the reverse to be true. Most strikingly, 70 per cent of respondents believed people over 70 are viewed as more moral than people aged under 30, whereas only eight per cent believed the reverse to be true. However, the patronising tone of these perceptions is put into context by the fact that 53 per cent of respondents believed people over 70 are viewed with more pity than people aged under 30, whereas only 13 per cent believed the reverse to be true.

In contrast, 46 per cent of respondents believed people aged under 30 are perceived to be more competent than people aged over 70, whereas only 19 per cent believed the reverse to be true. Consistent with this result, about half (47 per cent) of respondents believed people aged under 30 are perceived to be envied more than people aged over 70, whereas only 17 per cent believed the reverse to be true.

In sum, stereotypes of people under 30 and over 70 show a very clear pattern, thrown into clear relief when the two sets of stereotypes are contrasted. Younger people are stereotyped as relatively competent but cold, and as attracting envy rather than pity. In contrast, people over 70 are viewed as relatively warm (friendly), and as admirable and moral, but not competent and thus as deserving pity more than envy. These differences in perceived stereotypes of people over 70 and under 30 were consistent throughout survey years.

We now consider how other independent variables were related to stereotypes after the effects of respondents' age and differences between survey years are accounted for. Discussion of these relationships follows in Section 7.4.

The implication is that whereas younger people are likely to be vulnerable either to more directly hostile expressions of prejudice (e.g. envious or contemptuous), older people are likely to be vulnerable to 'benevolent' (e.g. patronising) forms of prejudice. Both sets of stereotypes create the potential for misunderstanding, misperception and unfair treatment if a person is assumed to fit a stereotype when they are categorised as belonging to a particular age group.

7.4 Predictors of stereotypes of people over 70

7.4.1 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 as friendly (warmth stereotype)

As well as differences between survey year, warmth stereotypes of people aged over 70 were affected by respondents' gender, social class and working status.

Judgements that older people are viewed as friendly or very/extremely friendly were made more by males (57 per cent) than females (50 per cent), more by respondents in social class D, compared with C1 and more by retired respondents than those working full-time (Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Percentage of respondents that believed people over 70 are viewed as very or extremely friendly (warmth), by social class and working status

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Percentage	51[a]	49[a]	53[a]	58[b]

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	52[c]	50[a]	51[c]	54[b]	57[bd]	57[c]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b], as well as [c] and [d] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

7.4.2 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 as capable (competence stereotype)

As well as age and survey year, social class affected competence stereotypes. Age had the largest effect.

The percentage of respondents viewing older adults as capable or very capable increased from social class A to E (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3 Percentage of respondents viewing people over 70 as capable (competence), by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	19[a]	22[a]	24[bc]	27[b]	34[bd]	34[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b], as well as [c] and [d] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

7.4.3 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 with admiration

As well as age and survey year, social class and working status were significantly related to perceived admiration of people aged over 70.

Fewer respondents from social class B and more respondents from social classes D and E thought people over 70 are viewed with admiration compared with respondents from social class C1 (Table 7.4). Respondents who were not working perceived less admiration compared to those respondents in full-time employment (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4 Percentage of respondents that believed people over 70 are viewed with admiration, by social class and working status

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Percentage	34[a]	32	35	29[b]

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	9[a]	27[ac]	31[d]	35[bc]	36[bc]	38[bc]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b], as well as [c] and [d] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

7.4.4 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 with pity

As well as age and survey year, gender, working status and housing tenure significantly predicted perceptions of pity. Age had the largest effect.

Slightly more (27 per cent) female respondents thought people over 70 are viewed with pity than did male respondents (26 per cent). More respondents working full-time thought people over 70 are viewed with pity compared with retired respondents (Table 7.5). Respondents who rented privately perceived more pity for people over 70 compared with people who owned their own home outright (Table 7.5).

Table 7.5 Percentage of respondents that believed people over 70 are viewed with pity, by working status and tenure

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Percentage	30[a]	27[a]	32[a]	16[b]

Tenure	Mortgage	Owned outright	Rented from local authority	Rented privately
Percentage	30[a]	20[b]	27[a]	33[a]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

7.4.5 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 with envy

As well as survey year, gender, social class, ethnicity and tenure were significant predictors of envy towards people over 70. Survey year 2008 had the largest effect.

Respondents were more likely to perceive that people over 70 are envied if the respondent was male (10 per cent) rather than female (eight per cent), from social class D rather than C1, from a non-white ethnic background (14 per cent) rather than a white background (eight per cent), and were renting privately or from a local authority rather than owning their home outright (Table 7.6).

Table 7.6 Percentage of respondents that believed people over 70 are viewed with envy, by social class and tenure

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	9	7[a]	8	8	12[b]	11

Tenure	Mortgage	Owned outright	Rented from local authority	Rented privately
Percentage	7[a]	7[a]	12[b]	11[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

7.4.6 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people over 70 as moral

As well as age and survey year, ethnicity and housing tenure significantly predicted whether respondents thought people aged over 70 were viewed as moral. Age had the largest effect.

Two-thirds of respondents from a white ethnic background (67 per cent) thought that people over 70 are viewed as moral compared to about half of respondents from non-white ethnic backgrounds (52 per cent). More respondents who owned their home outright as compared to those renting from their local authority thought that people over 70 are viewed as moral (Table 7.7).

Table 7.7 Percentage of respondents that believed people over 70 are viewed as moral, by tenure

Tenure	Mortgage	Owned outright	Rented from local authority	Rented privately
Percentage	66	70[a]	60[b]	66

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

7.4.7 Summary

In general, age, survey year and social class were the most consistent and substantial predictors of stereotypes associated with people over 70. Younger respondents were less likely to believe people over 70 are viewed as competent and moral, and more likely to think they are viewed with pity. (Marital status was not related to perceptions of people over 70.)

7.5 Predictors of stereotypes of people under 30

7.5.1 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people under 30 as friendly (warmth stereotype)

As well as survey year, social class, ethnicity and marital status were significant predictors. Survey year (2008) had the largest effect. The effect of age was not significant.

Respondents from social classes C2 and D were more likely to believe that people aged under 30 are viewed as friendly than those from social class C1 (Table 7.8). Belief that people under 30 are viewed as friendly was stronger for respondents from a white ethnic background (27 per cent) than a non-white background (24 per cent), and for non-married (34 per cent) rather than married or living as married (26 per cent).

Table 7.8 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed as friendly (warmth), by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Mean evaluation	26	27	26[a]	28[b]	34[b]	32

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

7.5.2 The extent to which other people are perceived to view people under 30 as capable (competence stereotype)

As well as age and survey year, social class and working status were significant predictors. Survey year (2008) had the largest effect.

Respondents in social class D thought people under 30 are viewed as more capable than did those from C1. Respondents working part-time thought people under 30 are viewed as less capable than did respondents who worked full-time.

Table 7.9 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed as capable (competence), by social class and working status

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Percentage	44[b]	40[a]	48[b]	46[b]

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	40	44	43[a]	46[b]	48[b]	48

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

7.5.3 Extent to which other people in this country are perceived to view people under 30 with admiration

As well as survey year, social class, ethnicity and marital status significantly contributed to the overall model. Survey year had the largest effect.

More respondents from social class C2 and social class D thought people under 30 are viewed with admiration compared to respondents from C1 (Table 7.10). Over a quarter (27 per cent) of respondents from non-white ethnic background thought people under 30 are viewed with admiration compared to 15 per cent of white respondents. One-fifth (20 per cent) of non-married respondents thought that people under 30 are viewed with admiration compared to 14 per cent of married respondents.

Table 7.10 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed with admiration, by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	17[b]	15	15[a]	17[b]	20	19

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

7.5.4 Extent to which other people are perceived to view people under 30 with pity

As well as survey year, ethnicity and housing tenure significantly contributed to the overall model.

More respondents from a non-white background (13 per cent) perceived that others express pity for people under 30 compared to ten per cent of white respondents.

More respondents renting from the local authority compared to respondents who own their home outright and 10 per cent renting privately perceived that others pity people under 30.

Table 7.11 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed with pity, by tenure

Tenure	Mortgage	Owned outright	Rented from local authority	Rented privately
Percentage	9[a]	9[a]	12[b]	10[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

7.5.5 The extent to which other people are perceived to view people under 30 with envy

As well as age and survey year, gender and housing tenure significantly contributed to the overall model. Age had the largest effect.

More males (23 per cent) than females (20 per cent) perceived others to be envious of people under 30. In addition more respondents renting privately and those with a mortgage thought people aged under 30 are viewed with envy compared to respondents who owned their home outright (Table 7.12).

Table 7.12 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed with envy, by tenure

Tenure	Mortgage	Owned outright	Rented from local authority	Rented privately
Percentage	23	18[a]	23	24[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

7.5.6 The extent to which other people are perceived to view people under 30 as moral

As well as age and survey year, social class and ethnicity each had significant effects. Age had the largest effect.

Compared to respondents from C1 more respondents from social class C2 and social class D thought people under 30 are viewed as moral (Table 7.13).

About one in four (26 per cent) of respondents from a non-white ethnic background perceived others to view people under 30 as moral, compared with only 14 per cent of respondents with a white ethnic background.

Table 7.13 Percentage of respondents that believed people under 30 are viewed as moral, by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	9[a]	10[a]	14[a]	18[b]	20[b]	20

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

7.5.7 Summary

Age, survey year and social class emerged most often as significant predictors of stereotypes of people aged under 30. Generally, respondents belonging to higher social classes thought others would hold more positive views and evaluations of people under 30.

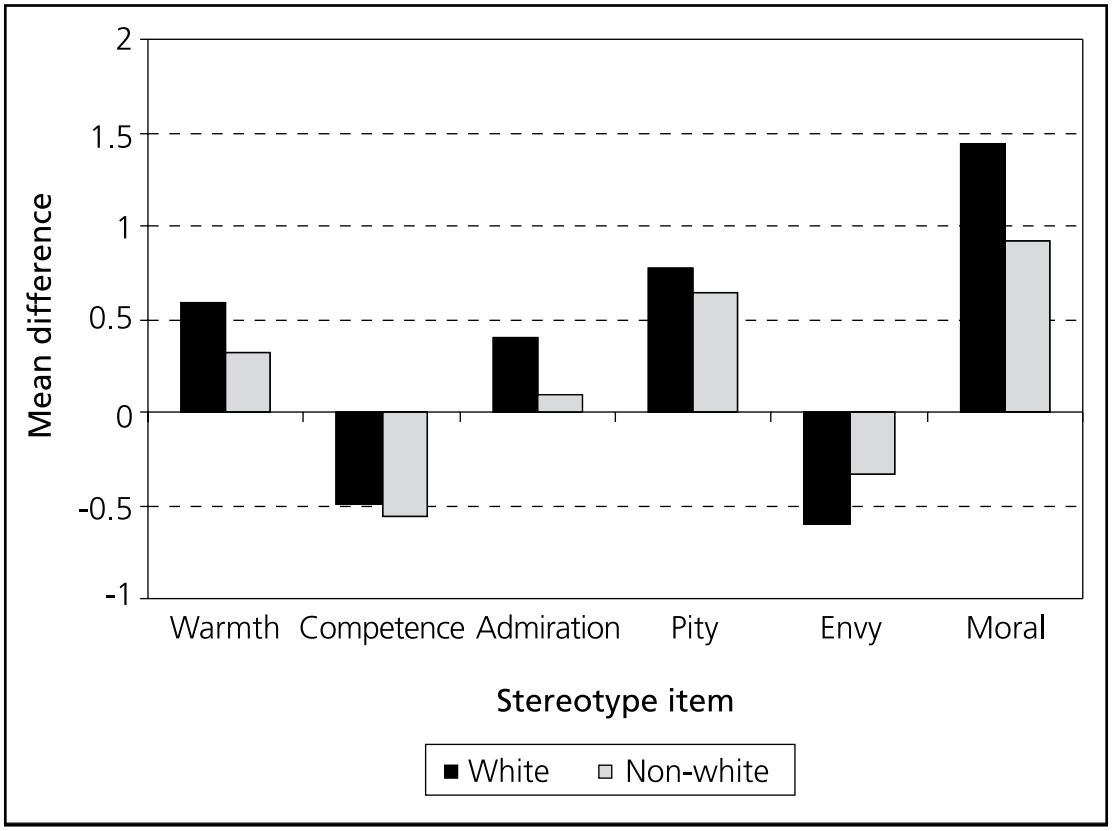
7.6 The effect of social class and ethnicity on stereotype differences

Sections 7.4. and 7.5 revealed numerous effects of social class and ethnicity, over and above any effects of age and survey year. These are captured fairly clearly by looking at the differences in application of each stereotype item to people aged

under 30 and over 70.[9] Figure 7.6 shows how white and non-white respondents perceived stereotype differences.

Ethnicity was a significant predictor of differences in perceptions that the different age groups would be viewed as friendly, would be admired, envied, and viewed as moral. Respondents with white ethnic backgrounds perceived more extreme stereotype differences than did those from non-white backgrounds. That is, respondents from white backgrounds viewed people over 70 as friendlier, more admirable and moral and they viewed people under 30 as more enviable than did respondents from non-white backgrounds. For example, 72 per cent of respondents with a white ethnic background, compared with only 56 per cent of respondents from a non-white background thought older people are perceived as more moral than younger people. Moreover, 46 per cent of respondents with a white ethnic background, compared with only 37 per cent of respondents from a non-white background thought younger people are envied more than older people.

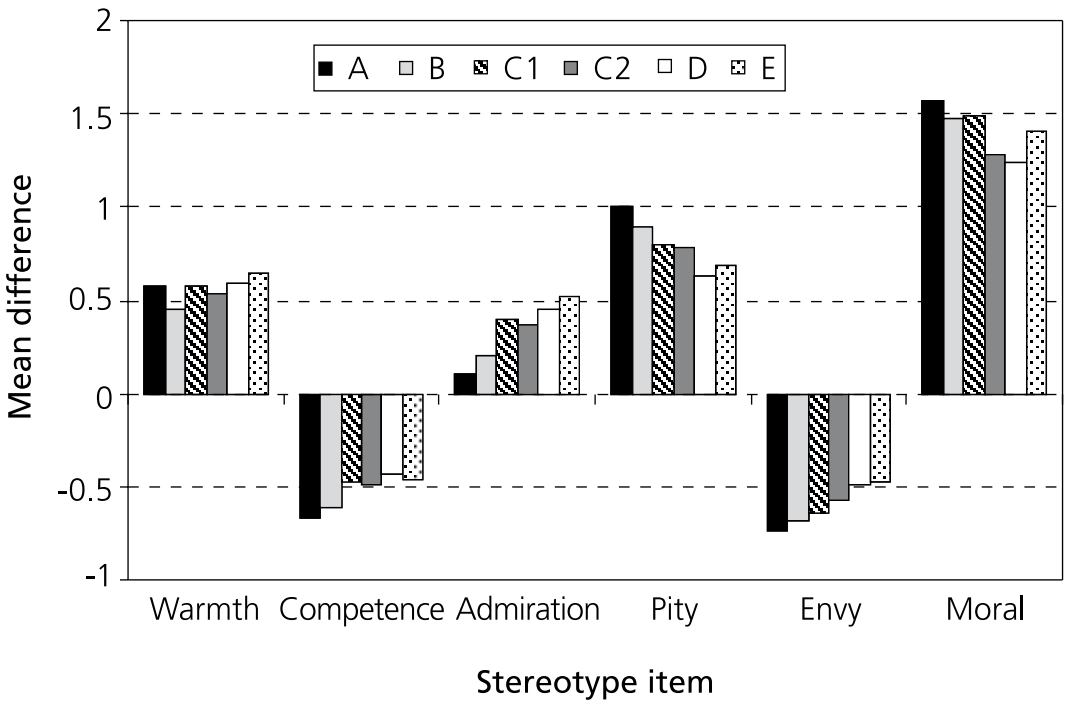
Figure 7.6 Mean difference between the perceived stereotypes of people over 70 and under 30 for each stereotype item, by respondent's ethnicity



[9] See footnote 8 for notes on the calculation of the difference score. Regression analysis was conducted on all six stereotype content item difference scores. Results converged with the previous analyses (i.e. same predictors were significant in comparison to previous regression models), and social class and ethnicity remained influential demographic variables on stereotype perception. Social class was a significant predictor for five stereotype content items and ethnicity was a significant predictor for four stereotype content items.

Social class significantly affected differences in perceptions of stereotypes of competence, admiration, pity, envy and morality. Figure 7.7 shows the difference scores for respondents from each social class. The pattern is fairly, if not completely consistent. Apart from warmth and admiration, respondents from higher social classes perceived more extreme stereotypes than others. For example, respondents from class A and B believed that people aged over 70 are viewed as more moral, but are also pitied more, and that people aged under 30 are viewed as more competent and with more envy than is believed by respondents from classes C1, C2 and D. For example, 57 per cent of respondents from social class A, compared with only 42 per cent of respondents from classes D and E thought younger people are envied more than older people.

Figure 7.7 Mean difference between the perceived stereotypes of people over 70 and under 30 for each stereotype item, by respondent's social class



Note: Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest level of subsistence.

7.7 Summary and discussion

The evidence shows clearly that distinct stereotypes exist for older and younger age groups. To assess these in a concrete way we asked respondents to judge stereotypes about people aged under 30 and over 70. Across survey years stereotypes of younger people were that they are more competent and enviable compared with older people. Older people are stereotyped as warmer, more admirable, more moral, but also more pitiable than younger people.

It is interesting that the differences in stereotypes of younger and older people are perceived to be more extreme by more advantaged and more heterogeneous parts of the population, namely respondents with a white ethnic background and from higher social classes. This finding partially echoes earlier results that perceptions of prejudice also tend to be larger in these sectors. However, these differences are relatively minor compared with the robustness of the overall pattern of age stereotypes across the population as a whole.

These stereotypes illustrate very clearly how and why it is not possible to view age prejudice as a simple unitary process. Some prejudices focus on dimensions such as warmth or morality but others focus on dimensions such as competence. An older person may be strongly disadvantaged if an employer applies competence stereotypes when assessing suitability for a complex technical job, but a younger person might be disadvantaged if the employer is looking for someone trustworthy and kind, perhaps for a role that involves caring or honesty. Such stereotypes may also mean that a health practitioner may be likely to assume an older person as more dependent or a younger person as less vulnerable, or more culpable for an illness than is really the case. Awareness of how these stereotypes are likely to come into play, therefore, provides better understanding of when we need to be aware of them and how we might challenge them.

8 Ageing as a perceived threat

8.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at ageing as a perceived threat. Negative attitudes toward social groups are often associated with the perception that these groups may pose various types of threat. The surveys examined and compared three potential types of threat that might be posed by an ageing population, and specifically by the needs, demands or actions of people over the age of 70. These were perceived threat to (demands on) the economy, material threat to people's security and well-being, and threat to national culture and lifestyle (symbolic threat). Knowing what type of threat a group poses provides insight into why it might be subjected to particular forms of prejudice or discrimination.

Economic threat was measured by asking people whether people over 70 years of age take out more from the economy than they (have) put in or whether they (have) put in more than they take out. Material threat was measured by asking how those aged 70 or over affect the safety, security, or health of other people in Britain. Perceived symbolic threat was studied by asking respondents to indicate how people over 70 affect the customs, traditions or general way of life of other people in Britain.

8.1.1 Key findings

- Older people were perceived as posing greater economic threat than either material or symbolic threat. Nearly a quarter of respondents believed that people over 70 take out more from the economy than they have, or currently, put in.
- Younger respondents perceived people over 70 as posing more threat economically, materially and symbolically than did older respondents.

8.2 Perception of threat to economic well-being

This question was worded slightly differently in the surveys conducted in 2004 and 2006 when compared to those conducted in 2005 and 2008. As a consequence the responses will be analysed separately. However, links between the two sets of questions will be made where the results converge or diverge substantially.

In 2004 and 2006 the question was, 'On balance how much do you think people over 70 take out more from the economy than they have put in?' with response options from 1 (take out a lot more) to 4 (put in a lot more). In 2005 May and July as well as in 2008 the questions were worded as 'On balance how much do you think that people over 70 take out more from the economy than they put in'. The response scales between 2005 and 2008 surveys also differed. Therefore, the responses were classified into the following three options: 1 (take out more), 2 (neutral), and 3 (put in more). Thus, when interpreting the findings from the surveys conducted in 2005 and 2008, it is important to bear in mind that some differences between the samples may be attributable to the different scales used.

8.2.1 Perceived threat to economic well-being: 2004 and 2006

Age, gender, ethnicity and marital status predicted perceived economic threat of those aged 70 or over to the economy. Ethnicity and age were the strongest predictors. There were no differences between survey years.

Overall, four per cent of respondents thought those aged 70 or over take out a lot more than they have put into the economy, 18 per cent thought they take out a bit more than they have put in, 38 per cent thought they put in a bit more than they have taken out, and 39 per cent thought they put in a lot more than they have taken out. The 16 to 24 age-group perceived a greater threat than all the other age groups. 36 per cent of 16 to 24-year-olds thought that those aged 70 or over take more from the economy than they have put in whereas between 19 per cent and 22 per cent of respondents from other age groups held this view.

Overall, respondents aged under 50 were more likely to perceive people over 70 as a threat to the economy than those aged 50 and over. There were no differences between the older three age groups (Table 8.4).

Almost one-quarter of males (24 per cent), compared with 22 per cent of females, 35 per cent of respondents from a non-white background, compared to 22 per cent of respondents from a white ethnic background, and 26 per cent of non-married respondents compared with 20 per cent of married/living as married respondents agreed that people over 70 take out more than they have put in to the economy.

8.2.2 Perceived threat to economic well-being: 2005 and 2008

Overall, 22 per cent of respondents thought those aged 70 or over take out more than they put into the economy, 56 per cent thought they put in more than they take out, and 21 per cent did not take either position. The mean ratings suggest that there was an increase in perceived threat to the economy posed by people over the age of 70 years from 2005 (mean = 2.4) to 2008 (mean = 2.2). This change in attitudes was not found from 2004 to 2006, and therefore, may be attributed to the way the question was phrased: In 2005 and 2008 there was an emphasis on the extent to which older people take out than they currently put in, whereas in 2004 and 2006 the question asked about their contribution now in relation to how much those aged 70 or over have out into the economy in the past. Therefore, it is likely that, on balance, people over 70 years of age are perceived to have contributed throughout their lifetime more than they take out, but do not do so at present. Alternatively, there may have been a recent increase in the perceived economic threat posed by those aged 70 or over that was not manifested in the earlier surveys.

Age, survey year, social class and ethnicity significantly predicted perceived economic threat. Age and survey year were the strongest predictors.

Younger respondents were more likely to believe that people over the age of 70 take out more from the economy than they put in.

Perception of economic threat was higher among respondents from social class C1 than those from C2, and more by respondents from non-white ethnic backgrounds (32 per cent) than from white ethnic backgrounds (21 per cent) (Table 8.1).

These results converge with those from 2004 and 2008 showing that younger people and those from non-white ethnic backgrounds tend to see people over 70 years of age as a greater threat to the economy.

Table 8.1 Percentage of respondents that viewed people over 70 as a threat to the economy (2005 to 2008), by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	29	24[b]	26[b]	18[a]	19	18

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

8.3 Material threat

Material threat was assessed by asking How do you think people over 70 in this country affect things like the safety, security or health of other people in Britain?'. It was included in the 2004 and 2005 surveys. Responses were given using a five-point scale (They make things… 1 = much worse, 2 = slightly worse, 3 = have no effect, 4 = slightly better, 5 = much better).

The question was more elaborately phrased in 2004, which should be taken into account when interpreting these results. In 2004, the question was worded as follows: 'There are now relatively more people over 70 than ever before, due to declining birth rate – fewer younger people – and people living longer. When thinking about how this affects general issues in society such as safety and security, standards of living, health, access to jobs and education, do you think that it makes life for all of us…much worse/slightly worse/has no effect/slightly better/ much better?'

Overall, only two per cent of respondents thought over 70-year-olds made things much worse, 18 per cent slightly worse, 57 per cent thought they have no effect on safety, security and health of other people (16 per cent of respondents thought they made things slightly better, and seven per cent thought they make things much better). These perceptions appear to have changed over time. In 2004, 35 per cent of respondents thought that those aged 70 or over make things slightly or much worse, while in 2005 only seven per cent held this view. It seems likely that clarifying the nature of the threat (increasing longevity) may have made respondents consider it to be more serious.

No differences were detected between the responses of people aged under 50 and over 50. However, respondents aged 50 to 64 perceived people over 70 to be more of a material threat than did those aged 65 to79 and over 80 (Table 8.4).

As well as survey year, working status predicted the perceived material threat of those aged 70 or over to other people in Britain. Survey year was the strongest predictor.

Retired respondents perceived people over 70 to pose less of a material threat compared to employed respondents who worked full-time (Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 Percentage of respondents that viewed people over 70 as a material threat, by working status

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Percentage	22[a]	20	18	19[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

8.4 Symbolic threat

Symbolic, or cultural, threat was explored with an item that asked, 'How do you think people over 70 are affecting the customs, traditions or general way of life of other people in Britain?'. It was included in all the four surveys. The responses were given on a five-point scale (They make things… 1 = much worse, 2 = slightly worse, 3 = has not effect, 4 = slightly better, and 5 = much better) in all the other surveys apart from 2008, where an 11-point scale was used. The 2008 responses

were therefore re-coded into five category responses.[10] In 2006 the item was a blend of material and symbolic threat, referring to 'quality of life'. For the purposes of the present analysis it is classified as a symbolic threat item.

Overall, 15 per cent of the respondents felt that people over 70 years of age make things slightly or much worse in Britain, 54 per cent thought that they had no effect, and 30 per cent thought that people over 70 make things slightly or much better.

All survey years were found to differ from each other (Figure 8.1). Respondents in 2008 (mean= 3.7) saw people over 70 in most positive terms, considering them primarily as making things better in Britain. In 2006 (mean = 2.8) on the other hand respondents were the most likely to perceive those aged 70 or over as a threat to customs, traditions and general way of life in Britain when compared to 2004 (mean = 3.5), 2005 (mean = 3.5) and 2008. This higher level of perceived symbolic threat in 2006 relates to the different phrasing of the questions; in 2006 the question emphasised the fact that there is a growing number of elderly people relative to younger people in society. This was not the case in the other surveys. When looking at the overall trend from 2004 and 2005 to 2008, it appears that there may in fact be a trend for a decrease in the level of perceived symbolic threat posed by people over 70 years of age.

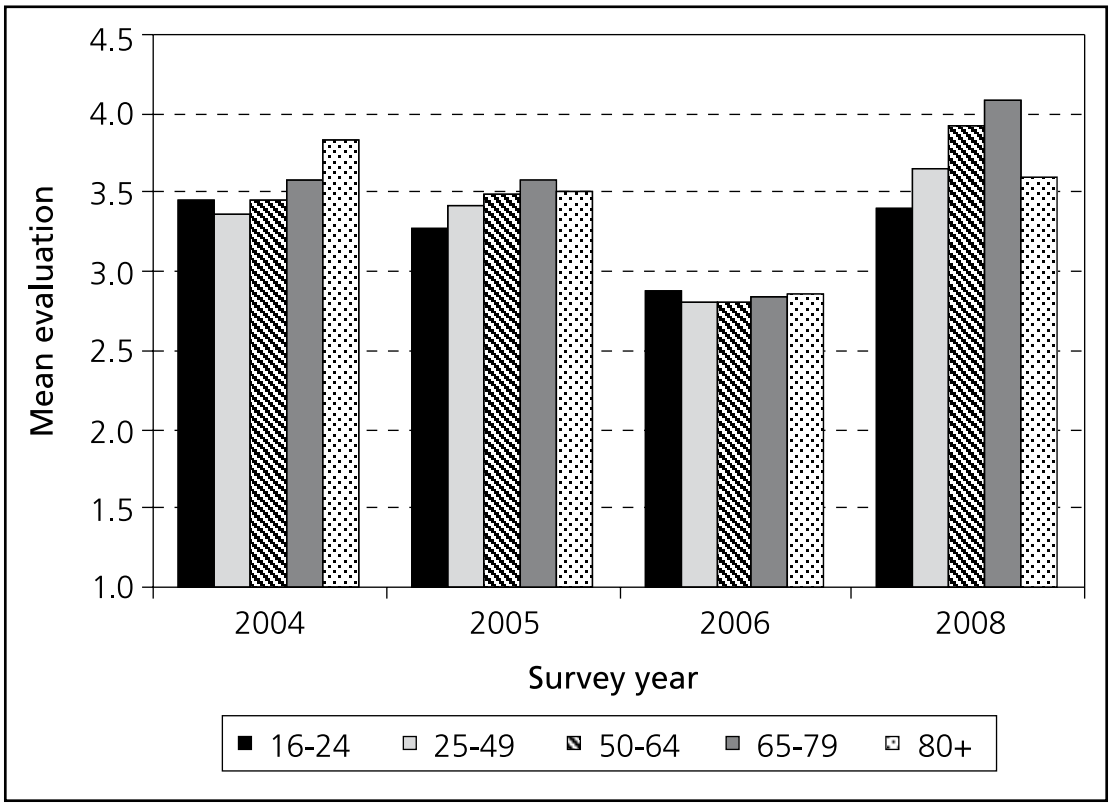
The perception of older people as a symbolic threat decreased with age as views became more positive until the age group of people over 80 (Table 8.4).

The analysis of interaction between survey year and age group showed that in 2005, 16 to 24-year-olds perceived those aged 70 or over less positively than all the other age groups (see Figure 8.1 for a summary of age group differences and Table 8.4). This was also true in 2008, except that the difference between 16 to 24 and 25 to 49-year-olds and 16 to 24 and 80 and over was not significant. In 2006 there were no differences between age groups, and in 2004 only the 16 to 24 and 25 to 49-year-olds were found to differ significantly from those aged 80 or over. In 2004, 2005 and 2008 the difference between young and old respondents in their perceptions of symbolic threat was in the same direction; younger respondents tended to see those aged 70 or over in less positive light than did the older respondents. In 2008 respondents aged 80 or over perceived greater symbolic threat from people aged 70 or over than did respondents aged 50 to 64 and 65 to 79-year-olds. This diverges from the results from the earlier surveys, and may indicate less positive views held by the eldest respondents regarding the impact of younger old people on the society.

---

10 The original 2008 variable was converted in z-scores and correlated with a version of the 2008 variable where responses were re-coded into a five-point scale. The correlation was significant. r (471) =.955 p<.001.

Figure 8.1 Mean evaluation of the effect of people aged over 70 on the country's customs, traditions and general way of life (symbolic threat), by respondent's age group and survey year



As well as age and survey year, tenure predicted perceived symbolic threat. Respondents living in accommodation rented from the local authority perceived people over 70 to be a symbolic threat compared to people who own their property outright (Table 8.3).

Table 8.3 Percentage of respondents that viewed people over 70 as a symbolic threat, by tenure

Tenure	Mortgage	Owned outright	Rented from local authority	Rented privately
Percentage	15	18[a]	12[b]	15

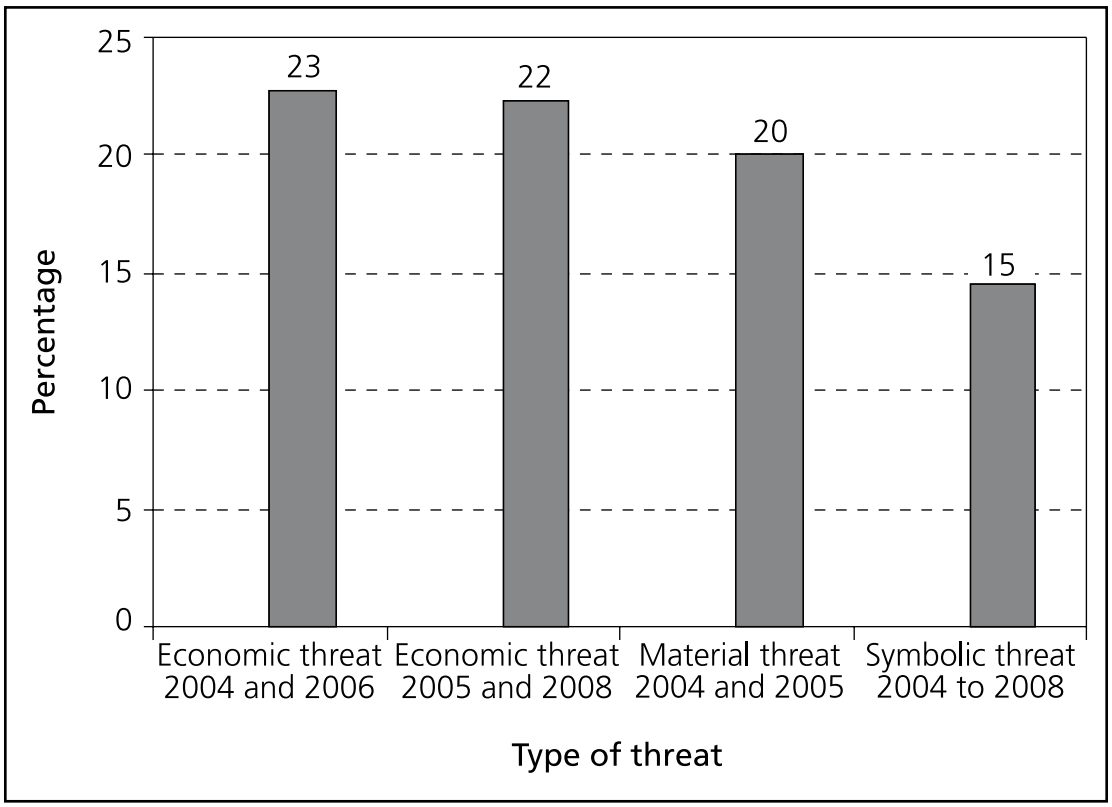
Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

8.5 Comparison of types of threat

It is interesting to consider the overall levels of perceived threats of different types. These are shown in Figure 8.2. Because two slightly different measures of economic threat were used, the overall results for both of these are shown in the figure. This shows that economic threat is regarded as more problematic than material or symbolic threat, respectively. Such evidence also suggests, however, that economic

conflicts of interest between younger and older parts of the population might well become more pressing and problematic as the country faces both economic recession and an ageing population.

Figure 8.2 Percentage of respondents that perceived people over 70 to pose an economic, material or symbolic threat



8.6 Summary of age group differences

Table 8.4 shows the age group differences in perceptions of each type of threat. Mean responses are compared between respondents aged under 30 and over 50. Further comparisons are made between age groups 50 to 64, 65 to 79 and those aged 80 and over.

Table 8.4 Perception of threat posed by people over 70 among the different age groups

Item	Under 50	Over 50	50-64	65-79	80+
Economic threat of over 70s					
(2004, 2006) [1]	3.1	3.17[a*]	3.17	3.22	3.09
(2005, 2008) [1]	2.31	2.32	2.34	2.35	2.34
Material threat [2]	3.06	3.07	3.03[b*c*]	3.16	3.23
Symbolic threat [2]	3.32	3.44[a***]	3.42[b*]	3.52	3.45

Note: [a]: difference between people under and over 50, [b]: difference between 50-64 and 65-79, [c]: difference between 50-64 and 80+, [d]: difference between 65-79 and 80+; *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$. [1] The scale used ranged from 1 (take out a lot more) to 4 (put in a lot more). [2] The scale used ranged from 1 (they make things much worse) to 5 (they make things much better).

8.7 Summary and discussion

Younger respondents perceived that people over 70 pose greater economic and symbolic, but not material threats than did older respondents. The differences in levels of perceived threat detected across surveys suggests that perceived economic threat may have increased from 2005 to 2008, while there appears to be an overall reduction in symbolic threat from 2004 to 2008. However, in 2006, when the question on symbolic threat emphasised the fact that the population of elderly people is growing in relation to younger people, greater perceived threat was reported.

Overall, it could be concluded that older people are perceived to be a relatively 'harmless' group. However, perceived threat increases when items explicitly referred to the increasing longevity of the population. In addition, a significant minority of respondents, particularly younger respondents and those from non-white ethnic backgrounds, perceived that people over 70 pose an economic threat to the rest of society. These perceptions may presage potential for intergenerational conflict and political argument in the years ahead and represents an important avenue for continuing investigation.

9 Expressions of age prejudice

9.1 Introduction

This chapter explores respondents' expressions of age prejudice. Direct questioning about survey respondents' prejudice is prone to various biases in responses. As well as the problem that respondents may not be aware of their own prejudices, it seems likely that assessment of prejudice is best done using a variety of methods and items. One such method is to ask indirectly about whether a group should be supported, another is to ask people to say how they feel about more than one group (and compare their answers to see which group they favour). The current surveys, therefore, examined three aspects of respondents' expressions of prejudice: indirect or 'subtle' prejudice, respondents' efforts to control their age-related prejudice, and their direct expressions of positivity or negativity toward people aged under 30 and over 70.

Indirect prejudice was measured by asking respondents to say to what extent attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70 have gone too far or not far enough. Two components of self-control over prejudice were then measured; how important respondents feel that it is not to have prejudice against people of other age groups (internal control) and how important they feel it is to be seen as not having prejudice against people of other age groups (external control). Direct prejudice was assessed using two items asking people how positive or negative they felt towards people under 30 and over 70 years of age and by asking how comfortable they would feel with a boss aged over 70 or under 30.

9.1.1 Key findings

- While the majority of respondents viewed older people in a positive light, nine per cent of them expressed indirect prejudice against those over 70 years of age.

- One in ten respondents did not feel that it was important to control their prejudice against other age groups.
- Older respondents viewed those aged over 70 in a more positive light and expressed more positive views about having a boss aged over 70 than did younger respondents.
- Younger respondents felt more positive toward people under 30 than did older people, and showed less differentiation between people aged over 70 and under 30 in terms of willingness to accept an older boss.

9.2 Indirect prejudice

The indirect prejudice item asked, 'Have attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70 in this country gone too far or not far enough?'. The item was included in the surveys in 2004, 2005 and 2006. The responses were given on a five-point scale (1 = gone much too far, 5 = not gone nearly far enough). In principle it is not logical to say equality has gone 'too far' because once groups have equality they can no longer become more equal. Therefore, this measure taps, indirectly, people's views that a group does not actually deserve to be treated equally.

Overall, only a small proportion of the respondents showed indirect prejudice against people over 70, with nine per cent of respondents finding that attempts to give equal opportunities to people over 70 had gone too far. Roughly equal numbers of respondents indicated either that these attempts have been about right (45 per cent of respondents) or these attempts had not gone far enough (46 per cent of respondents).

As shown in Figure 9.1, there was a trend for a decline in indirect prejudice, with 12 per cent of respondents indicating that equal opportunities employment law had gone too far or much too far in 2004 when compared to ten per cent in 2005 and seven per cent in 2008. This is a reduction of four per cent in two years from 2004 to 2006 and is paralleled with greater numbers of respondents finding that equal employment opportunities for people over 70 have not gone far enough.

Inspection of the responses of different age groups across the three survey years also revealed that the change in opinions in 2006 was due to reduction in indirect prejudice amongst younger respondents (aged 16 to 24, 25 to 49 and 50 to 64 years) (see Figure 9.2 and Table 9.4 for a summary of age group differences). For example, 35 per cent of 16 to 24-year-olds felt that the attempts to give equal employment opportunities had not gone (nearly) far enough in 2004, when compared to 51 per cent in 2006.

Figure 9.1 Percentage of respondents indicating that attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70 have gone (much) too far or have not gone (nearly) far enough, by survey year

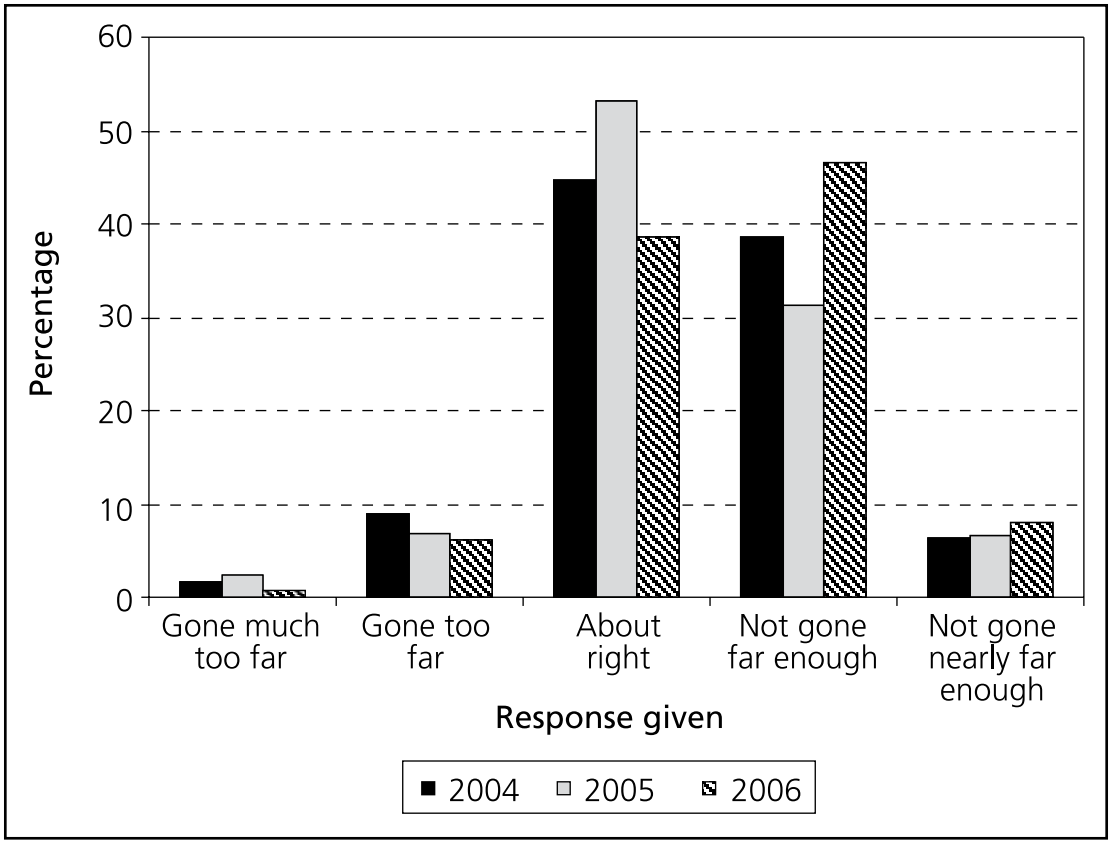


Figure 9.2 Percentage of respondents who perceived that attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70, have not gone far enough, are about right or have gone too far, by survey year and age group

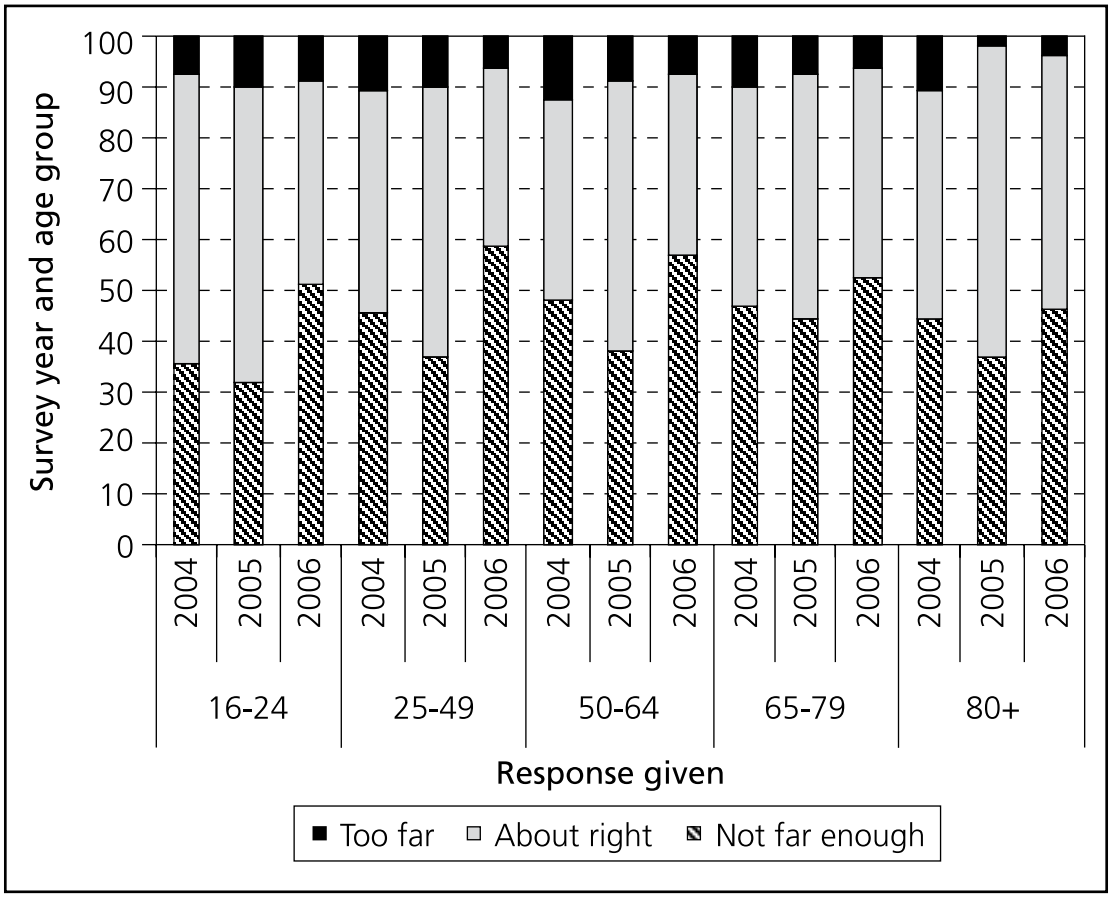
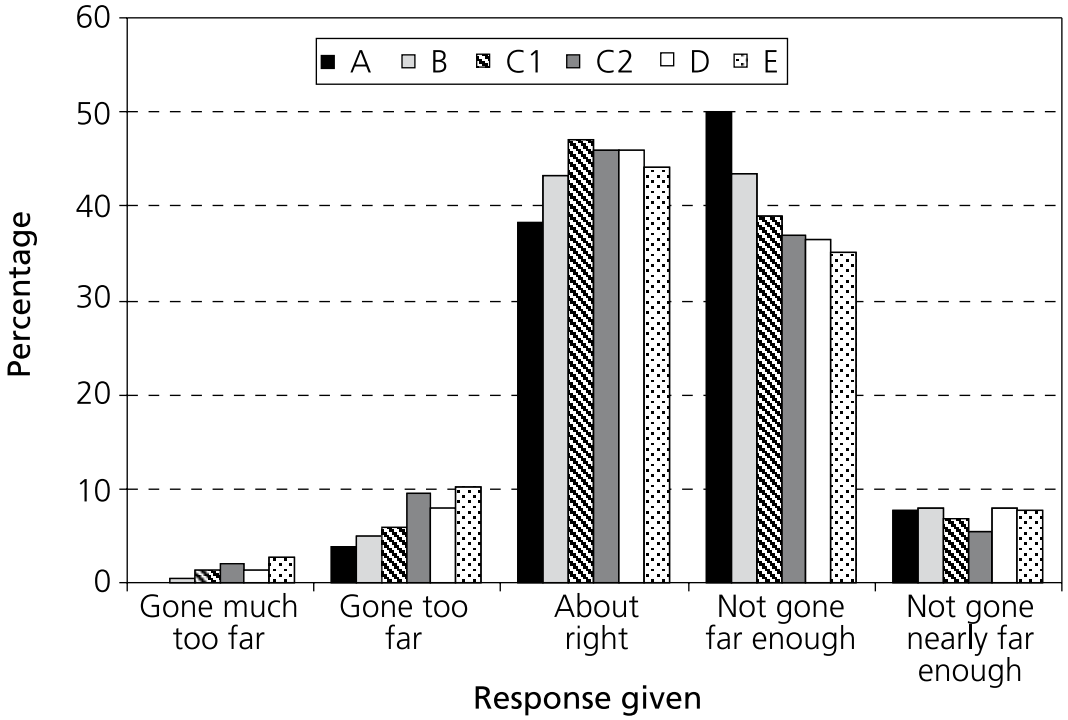


Figure 9.3 Percentage of respondents indicating that attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70 have gone too far or not far enough, by social class



Note: Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest level of subsistence.

In addition to age and survey year, social class predicted indirect prejudice. Respondents from social classes A and B were more likely to say that attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70 have not gone far enough when compared to all other social classes (Figure 9.4). For example, four per cent of those from social class A felt that these attempts have gone (much) too far when compared to 12 per cent of respondents from social class C2 (Table 9.1). This is paralleled with 58 per cent of respondents from social class A indicating that the attempts to give people over 70 equal opportunities of employment have not gone (nearly) far enough, when compared to 42 per cent of those from social class C2.

Table 9.1 Percentage of respondents indicating that attempts to give equal employment opportunities to people over 70 have gone too far (indirect prejudice), by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Mean evaluation	4[a]	5[a]	7[bc]	12[bde]	9[bf]	13[bd]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b], [c] and [d] as well as [e] and [f] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

In summary, the measure of indirect prejudice indicated relatively low levels of prejudice against people over 70, with decline from 2004 to 2006 among younger people. Those from social classes A and B were found to report less indirect prejudice against people over 70 than did people from other social classes.

9.3 Internal and external control of age prejudice

These items were included in the surveys in 2005 and 2008. The questions were worded slightly differently in these two surveys. In 2005 internal prejudice was measured with the question: 'I attempt to act in non-prejudiced way towards other groups because it is personally important to me.' In 2008 this was phrased as: 'Please say how important it is to you to have no prejudice against people of other age groups.' Thus, in 2005 the question concerned prejudice in general while in 2008 it focused specifically on age. Therefore, only the overall distribution of responses will be presented for the 2005, while the full analysis will be conducted with the data from 2008.

External prejudice was measured with the following question in 2005: 'I try to appear non-prejudiced toward other groups in order to avoid disapproval from others.' In 2008 it was phrased as: 'Please say how important it is for you to be seen as having no prejudice against people of other age groups.' Similarly to the items on internal prejudice, the overall distribution of responses is given for 2005, while a full analysis of the items for 2008 will be reported.

In 2005 a five-point scale and in 2008 an 11-point scale was applied. Therefore, for the comparison of the overall distribution of responses a binary score is used. Here the high and low control of prejudice were defined as follows: In 2005, those who agreed or agreed strongly that it was important not to be prejudiced and not to appear prejudiced were considered as having strong internal and external motivation to control prejudice. Those who responded neutrally, disagreed and disagreed strongly with these statements were considered to have low internal and external motivation to control prejudice. In 2008, those whose scores were between 0 and 5 were considered to have low internal and external motivation to control prejudice, while those who responded between six to ten on the scale for both items were considered to have strong internal and external motivation to control prejudice. All further analyses for the survey year 2008 were conducted using the original 11-point scale.

Table 9.2 Percentage of respondents indicating high and low levels of internal and external control over prejudice in general (2005) and in respect to age (2008)

Survey year	Strong internal (%)	Weak internal (%)
Strong external		
2005 (general)	33.5	6.3
2008 (age)	75.3	4.6
Weak external		
2005 (general)	36.4	23.8
2008 (age)	9.2	10.9

Overall, the majority of respondents (70 per cent) felt it was important to control their prejudice in general and in relation to age specifically (85 per cent) (Table 9.2). However, 24 per cent of respondents in 2005 said that they did not find controlling their prejudice important nor did they try to appear non-prejudiced because of others' disapproval. In 2008, 11 per cent of people indicated both low internal and external motivation to control age prejudice. Thus, almost one in four respondents did not find it important to control their prejudice in general and one in ten did not consider controlling their age prejudice to be important.

9.3.1 Internal motivation to control prejudice

Social class and ethnicity predicted internal control of prejudice. Respondents from white ethnic background and from social class B and C1 indicated stronger internal motivation to control age prejudice than those from non-white ethnic background and those from social class D. For example, 87 per cent of white respondents indicated strong internal motivation to control age prejudice when compared to 62 per cent of respondents from non-white ethnic background. Furthermore, 93 per cent of those from social class B showed strong internal control when compared to 78 per cent of respondents from social class D (Table 9.3).

Table 9.3 Percentage of respondents internally motivated to control prejudice, by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Mean evaluation	91	93[a]	81	87	78[b]	75[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

9.3.2 External motivation to control prejudice

Ethnicity was found to predict external control over age prejudice: Respondents from a white ethnic background indicated stronger external control than those from a non-white ethnic background. Thus, 82 per cent of respondents from white ethnic backgrounds showed strong external control when compared to 60 per cent of those from non-white ethnic backgrounds.

9.4 Direct age prejudice

Direct prejudice was measured with two items: One was a measure of the overall positivity or negativity respondents felt towards each age group, and the other was a traditional measure of 'social distance', i.e. how willing respondents were to have a person from a particular age group in relationships of varying closeness to themselves. These measures are relatively overt and explicit, and so we would not anticipate strong expressions of antipathy.

These items were included in the surveys in 2005, 2006 and 2008. Different scales were used in the different surveys: A five-point scale (-2 = very negative, 2 = very positive) in 2005, a nine-point scale in 2006 (1 = positive, 9 = negative) and an 11-point scale in 2008 (0 = extremely negative, 10 = extremely positive). As a consequence, these scales were converted into a five-point scale (1 = very negative, 5 = very positive). These converted scales correlated highly with the original scales ($rs > .94$).[11]

9.4.1 How negative or positive do you feel towards people over 70 and under 30?

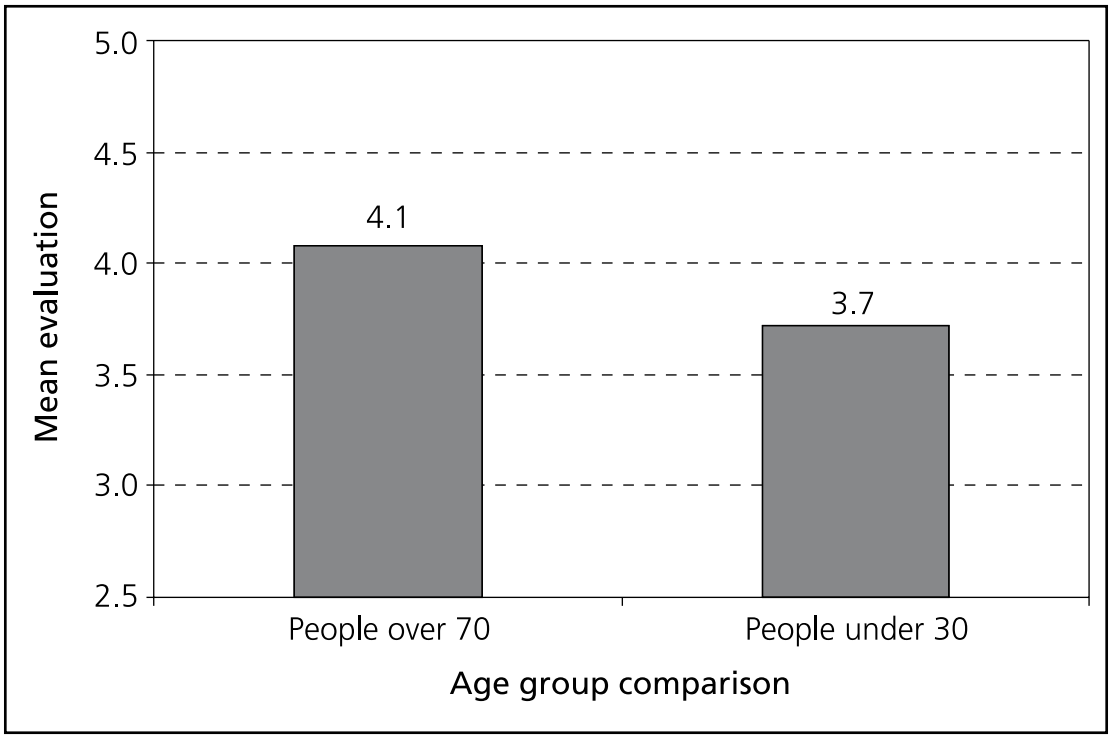
In general, a large majority of respondents reported feeling positive towards people over 70 and under 30. However, a substantially greater proportion of respondents said they felt positive or very positive about people over 70 (75 per cent) than they did towards people under 30 years of age (53 per cent). Likewise, fewer respondents reported feeling negative towards older people (two per cent) than towards younger people (seven per cent). Thus, although a small proportion of the respondents indicated negativity against either of the age groups, older people were clearly viewed in a more positive light than younger people (Figure 9.5).

Age significantly predicted these views; older respondents held more positive views about people over 70 while younger respondents held more positive views about people under 30 (Figure 9.6). More specifically, respondents under 50 years

[11] Z-scores were used to analyse the predictors of prejudice against people aged over 70 and under 30 in order to make sure that the different scales used would not confound the results. Subsequent comparisons between groups were analysed using the five-point scale. Survey year was excluded from the regression analyses as any differences between the three survey years would be difficult to interpret due to the different scales used.

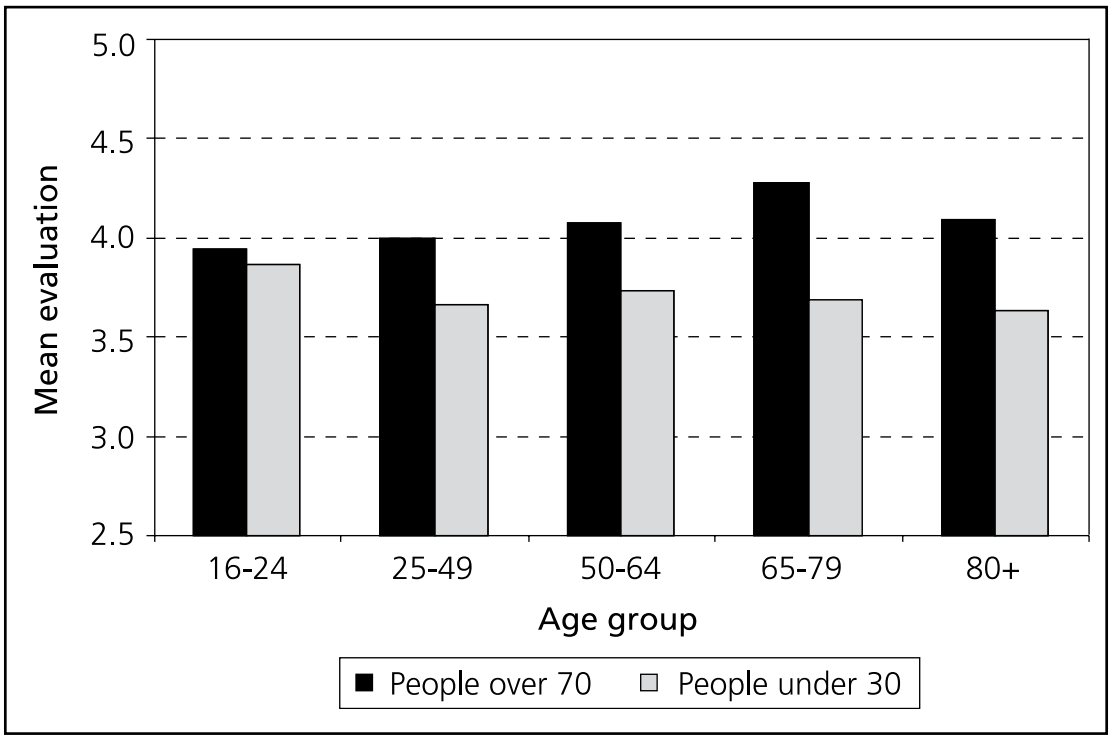
of age reported feeling slightly less positive towards people aged 70 or over (mean rating = 4.1) than did respondents aged over 50 years (mean rating = 4.1) (Table 9.4). 16 to 24-year-olds felt least positive about people over 70. Interestingly, the views of people aged 16 to 24 and over 80, did not significantly differ from each other (see Figure 9.6 and Table 9.4). The reported feelings towards under 30-year-olds differed only between the 16 to 24-year-olds and the other age groups, in that those aged 16 to 24 years held somewhat more positive views than others.

Figure 9.4 Mean rating of positive feelings towards people over 70 and people under 30 years of age



In addition to age, gender significantly predicted direct prejudice. Women felt more positive towards both older (mean rating = 4) and younger (mean rating = 3.7) people than did men (mean rating for over 70s = 3.9, and for under 30s = 3.6).

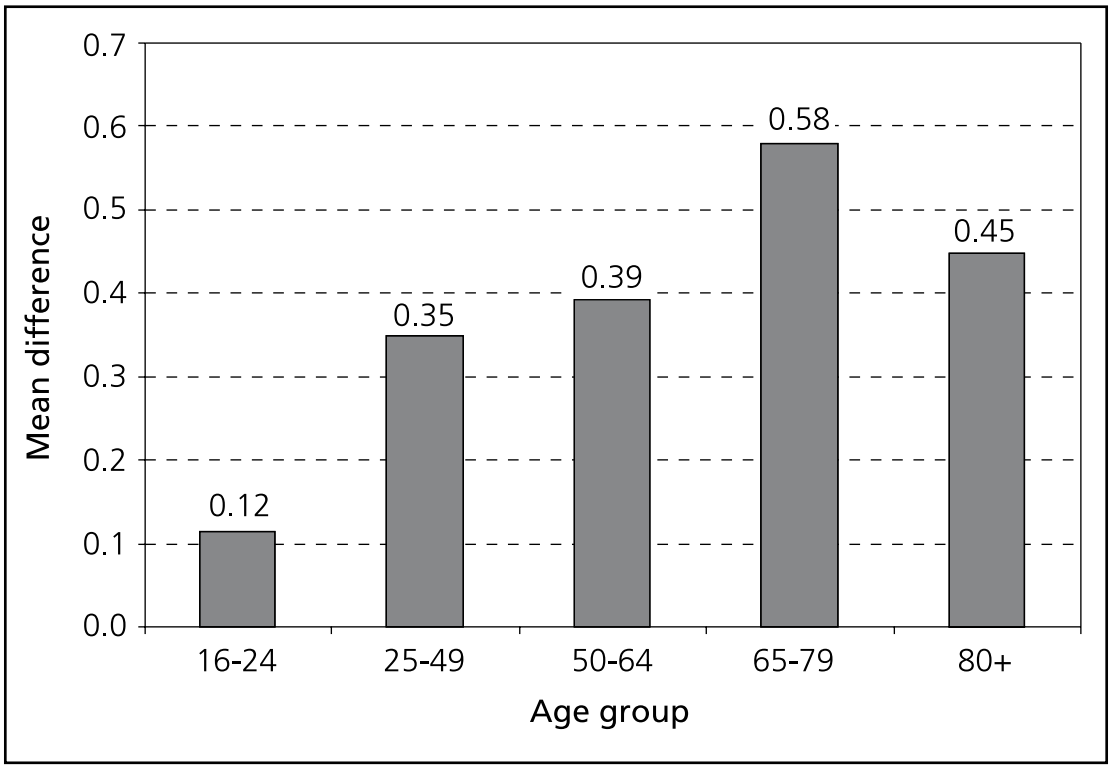
Figure 9.5 Mean rating of positive feelings towards people over 70 and under 30, by respondent's age group



9.4.2 Comparison between feelings towards people over 70 and under 30

Although respondents reported very limited amount of direct prejudice, what is striking is that there was a substantial discrepancy in the views towards younger and older people. As a consequence, these two types of age-related attitudes were compared directly. Older people were viewed more positively; 35 per cent of respondents indicated more positive views towards people over 70 while only ten per cent reported feeling more positive toward people under 30 years of age. This difference varied substantially depending on the respondent's age: The largest differences were found among 65 to 79-year-olds (mean difference = 0.6) and the smallest among those aged 16 to 24 years (mean difference = 0.1) (Figure 9.7). Thus, it was the older respondents who held more positive views concerning over 70-year-olds, while younger people showed less such positive bias.

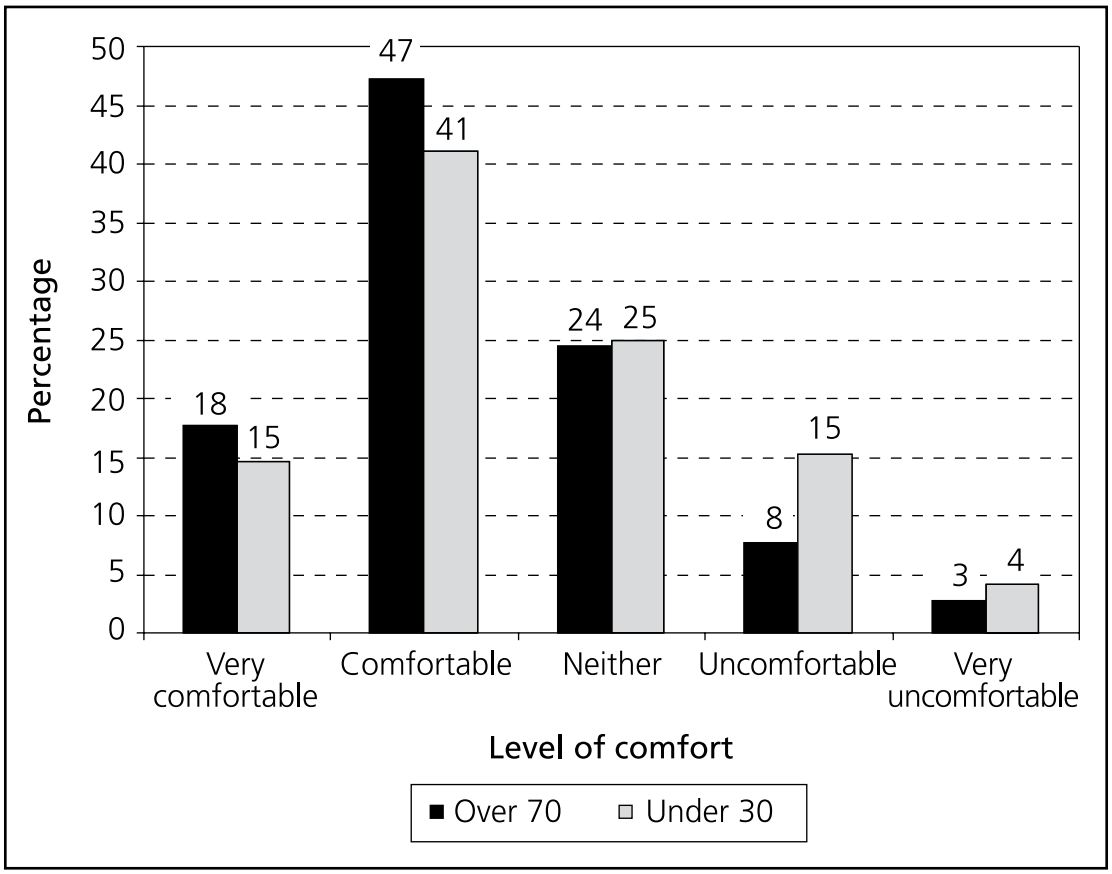
Figure 9.6 Mean differences between reports of feeling positive towards people under 30 and over 70, by respondent's age group



9.5 Age and employment relationships

To assess how comfortable people would feel about a potential employment relationship with a person over 70, respondents were asked 'How comfortable or uncomfortable do you think you would feel if a suitably qualified person over 70 was appointed as your boss?' Similarly, comfort with employment relationships with people under 30 was measured by asking 'How comfortable or uncomfortable do you think you would feel if a suitably qualified person under 30 was appointed as your boss?' These items were included in all surveys apart from 2008. The responses were given on a five-point scale (1 = very comfortable, 5 = very uncomfortable). Respondents aged 80 years and over were excluded from these analyses, as sufficient data were not available for this group in 2004.

Figure 9.7 Percentage of respondents stating different levels of comfort with having a boss over 70 years of age or under 30 years of age



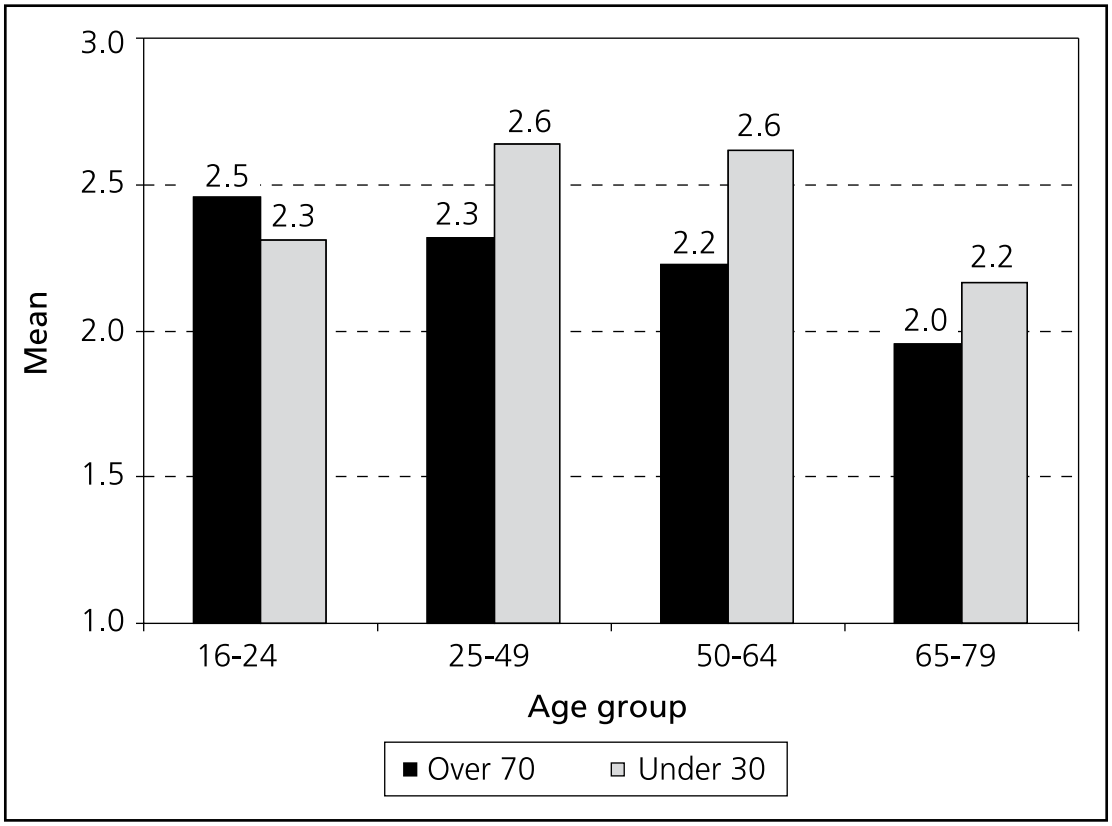
As shown in Figure 9.8, the majority of respondents indicated being comfortable or very comfortable with a boss over 70 (70 per cent) and under 30 years of age (59 per cent). Nevertheless, nine per cent of the respondents thought they would feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable with a boss over 70, and 21 per cent reported feeling uncomfortable working with a boss under 30 years of age. Thus, nearly one in ten people felt uncomfortable with a potential of being a subordinate to someone over the age of 70 and one in five indicated this in respect to under 30-year-olds.

These views were significantly predicted by respondents' age; respondents younger than 50 reported less comfort with a boss aged over 70 (mean rating = 2.3) than did respondents over 50 years (mean rating = 2.2). Those aged 16 to 24 years indicated the lowest level of comfort with a boss over 70 (mean rating = 2.5). Furthermore, respondents aged 50 to 64 were less positive about the possibility of having an older boss (mean rating = 2.2) than 65 to 79-year-olds (mean rating = 2) (Table 9.4).

The reports of comfort with a person under 30 as a boss revealed that 25 to 49 and 50 to 64-year-olds (mean ratings = 2.6) were less comfortable about having a boss aged under 30 than did respondents aged 16 to 24 years (mean rating = 2.3).

Marital status was also found to predict these views in respect to those under 30 but not over 70 years of age. Respondents who were married indicated less comfort with an employment relationship with a boss under 30 years of age (mean rating = 2.6) than did those who were not married (mean rating = 2.3).

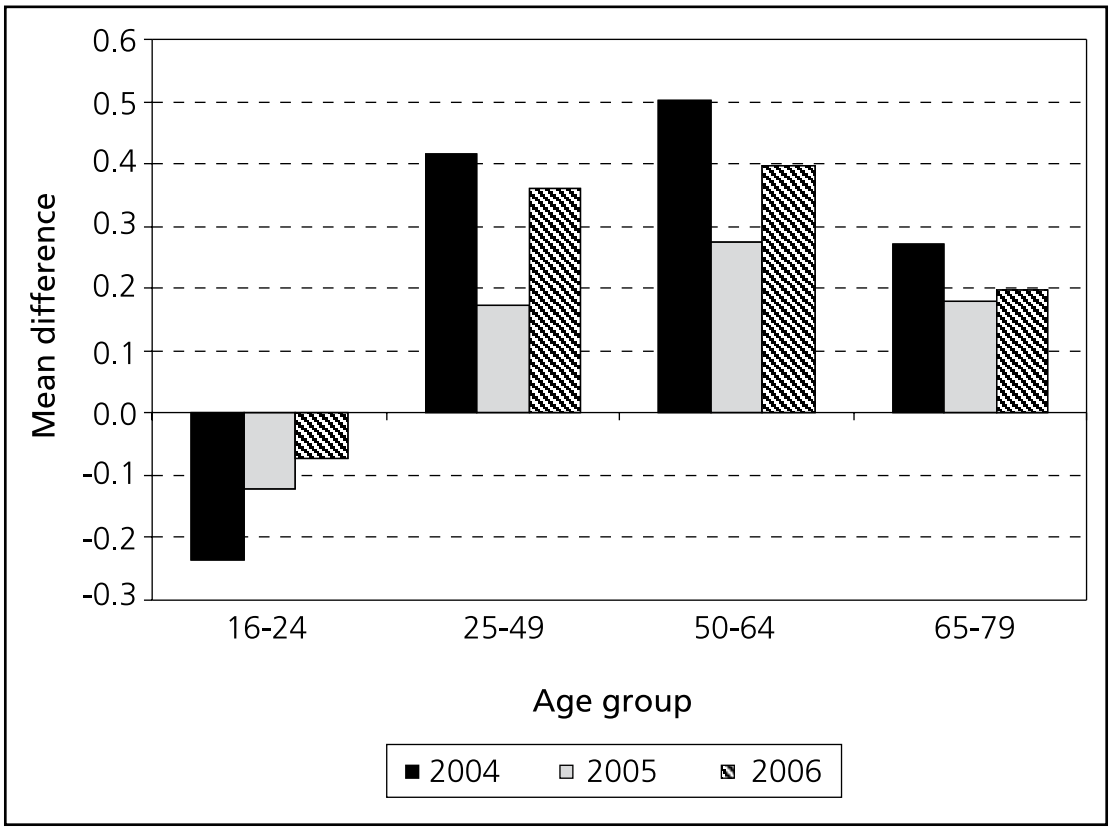
Figure 9.8 Mean level of comfort with having a boss over 70 years of age and under 30 years of age, by respondent's age group



9.5.1 Differences between comfort with a potential employment relationship with people over 70 and under 30 years of age

Similarly to the reports of feeling positive or negative towards people over 70 and under 30, the measure of comfort about a potential employment relationship showed a positive bias towards people over 70. However, this bias is not universal, but is substantially predicted by the person's own age. Respondents aged 25 to 49, 50 to 64 and 65 to 79 years showed this positive bias, but the youngest age group, 16 to 24, were in fact found to indicate bias towards under 30-year-olds (Figure 9.10).

Figure 9.9 Mean difference between stated levels of comfort with a boss aged under 30 and over 70, by respondent's age group and survey year



9.6 Summary of age group differences

Table 9.4 summarises age group differences in the measures of prejudice. Mean responses are compared between respondents aged under 50 and over 50. Further comparisons are made between age groups 50 to 64, 65 to 79 and those aged 80 and over.

Table 9.4 Mean responses in measures of prejudice among respondents from different age groups

Item	Under 50	Over 50	50-64	65-79	80+
Indirect prejudice[1]	3.39	3.43[a*]	3.42	3.48	3.47
Internal control of prejudice[2]	8.31	8.07	8.21	8.15	7.01
External control of prejudice[2]	8.12	7.67	7.91	7.49	7.01
Direct prejudice against over 70s[3]	4.02	4.11[a**]	4.07[b**c*]	4.28[d*]	4.09
Direct prejudice against under 30s[3]	3.72	3.69	3.73	3.69	3.63
Employment relationship with over 70s[4]	2.34	2.20[a**]	2.23[b**]	1.95	-
Employment relationship with under 30s[3]	2.54	2.54	2.62[b***]	2.17	-

Note: [a]: Difference between people under and over 50, [b]: difference between 50-64 and 65-79, [c]: difference between 50-64 and 80+, [d]: difference between 65-79 and 80+; *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$; [1] A five-point scale was used ranging from 1 (gone much too far) to 5 (not gone nearly far enough). [2] An 11-point scale was used ranging from 0 (not at all important; weak control over prejudice) to 10 (extremely important; strong control over prejudice). [3] A five-point scale was used ranging from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). [4] A five-point scale was used ranging from 1 (very comfortable) to 5 (very uncomfortable).

9.7 Summary and discussion

Overall, a large majority of respondents showed low levels of indirect and direct prejudice, and felt that it was important not to show prejudice against people from different age groups. However, nine per cent of respondents indicated indirect prejudice against people over 70 years of age, and 11 per cent showed low levels of internal and external control over age prejudice. Up to one in four respondents also indicated low levels of internal and external control over prejudice in general. Thus, it is notable that while most respondents said they wanted to avoid being prejudiced, a significant minority were not concerned about whether they were perceived to be prejudiced. This suggests that age prejudice is an issue that is low on some people's agenda.

While expressions of direct prejudice against people under 30 and over 70 were low, there was a substantial difference between respondents' attitudes towards these two age groups; older people were overall viewed in a more positive light than younger people. This concurs with our findings that older people are considered to be friendlier than younger people, whilst younger people are perceived to be more competent. Furthermore, when asked about the comfort of having a boss aged under 30 and over 70, respondents in general showed greater comfort with an older boss. Thus, although older people are not viewed as competent as younger people, in certain situations older people are perceived as more legitimate sources of authority.

Expressions of prejudice showed a clear age-related pattern. Older respondents showed more positive views towards people over 70 years of age, while younger respondents showed more positive views of people under 30 years of age. Likewise, older respondents indicated feeling more comfortable about a potential employment relationship with a boss aged over 70 when compared to younger respondents.

Taken together, it is striking that the levels of prejudice expressed overtly are low against older and younger people. However, this should be viewed in the context of the distinct stereotypes of different age groups and the fact that ageism is experienced so widely. Thus, there may be a gulf between people's awareness of their own prejudice, and the age prejudice and discrimination that is actually occurring.

10 Intergenerational closeness

10.1 Introduction

This chapter explores intergenerational closeness. An important index of potential inequality and prejudice is the extent to which groups share common goals and values, and the extent to which they understand one another. Research on prejudice and discrimination generally shows that stronger perceptions of similarity between (e.g. ethnic) groups, and stronger mutual categorisation as part of the same overall community, as well as the presence of friendships across the group boundaries, all help to reduce inaccurate stereotypes and improve intergroup relationships.

These surveys examined intergenerational closeness in two ways: First, they investigated the extent to which older and younger people are perceived to be similar, including whether respondents believed that people aged under 30 and over 70 share a larger common group or community. Perception of similarity provides an indication of the psychological cohesion that exists across generational boundaries.

Second, previous evidence from the Eurobarometer (EB) suggested that contact does occur across age boundaries but the EB did not illuminate the quality of that contact.

The extensive literature on intergroup contact demonstrates that positive personal relationships across intergroup boundaries, especially friendships, are likely to generalise to more positive attitudes and less stereotyping of an out-group. Therefore, an important indicator of a group's risk of discrimination or social exclusion is the extent to which its members are in regular positive contact with others. Therefore, the surveys examined positive contact, i.e. having close friends aged over 70 and under 30.

10.1.1 Key findings

- Across survey years respondents generally regarded people aged under 30 and over 70 as having little in common, but between 2005 and 2008 there was a trend towards perceiving greater commonality between the groups.
- Women and respondents from white ethnic backgrounds were less likely to see younger and older people as being from separate groups than were men and respondents from non-white ethnic backgrounds.
- Intergenerational friendships also showed a pattern of separation. Fewer than a third of respondents over 70 had friends under 30 and fewer than a third of respondents aged under 30 had friends over 70, whereas almost all of these respondents had friends of their own age.
- Regardless of their age, women, and respondents with a white ethnic background were more likely to have friends aged over 70, whereas men and respondents in full-time work were more likely to have friends aged under 30.
- Respondents who owned their own homes were more likely to have friends aged under 30 and over 70 than were non-home-owners.

10.2 Perceived intergenerational similarity

Perceived intergenerational similarity was measured in two ways. In 2004 respondents were asked 'How much do people aged over 70 have in common with people aged under 30?' Responses were given on a scale from 1 (a great deal), 2 (quite a lot), 3 (not very much) and 4 (nothing at all). From 2005 onwards respondents were asked whether they viewed people under 30 and over 70 just as separate individuals, as two separate groups, as members of separate groups that share a common group or simply as members of a common group. These questions enabled us to consider whether respondents perceived over 70 and under 30-year-olds as similar or different from each other, and in what way they differ.

10.2.1 How much do people over 70 and under 30 have in common?

Responses to the 2004 question revealed that, overall, 34 per cent of respondents considered people aged under 30 and over 70 as having a great deal or quite a lot in common, while 69 per cent thought they did not have very much or nothing at all in common. This indicates a strong perceived differentiation between the two age groups.

Social class was found independently to predict these views; respondents from social class A considered those aged over 70 and under 30 as having more in common (mean rating = 2.4) than did respondents from all other social classes. Respondents from social class D perceived the two age groups to have least in common (mean rating = 2.8). For example, 46 per cent of respondents from social class A thought that younger and older people had little or nothing in common, whereas 74 per cent of those from social class D indicated this.

Table 10.1 Percentage of respondents that viewed people aged over 70 and under 30 having quite a lot or a great deal in common, by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	54[a]	36[bc]	27[d]	29[d]	24[d]	33[cd]

Note: Based on estimated means, percentages with different superscripts differ significantly, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

10.2.2 In what way are people aged over 70 and under 30 viewed as different?

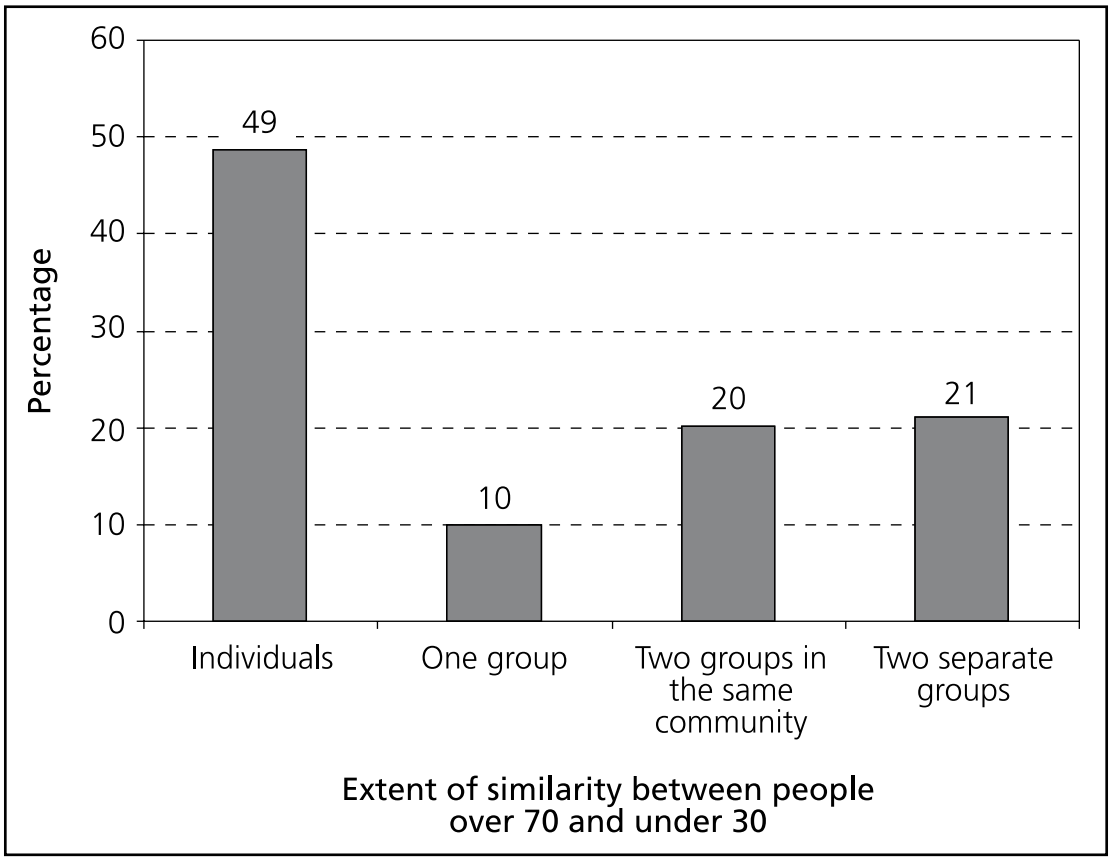
The measures from the 2005 to 2008 surveys asked whether respondents viewed people aged under 30 and over 70 as separate individuals, as members of separate groups, as members of separate groups that share a common group or simply as members of a common group.

Respondents were most likely to say that they considered people over 70 and under 30 to be individuals (Figure 10.1). However, 41 per cent of respondents indicated that they thought people under 30 and over 70 formed two groups in society rather than being individuals or a single group. Only one in ten respondents viewed them as belonging to the same group. This highlights that, psychologically at least, younger and older people are liable to be considered to be disconnected parts of society.

In order to establish which independent variables (demographic factors) influenced these views, three separate analyses were conducted. We compared the percentage of respondents who viewed people over 70 and under 30 as:

- individuals;
- two separate groups;
- two separate groups from the same community;
- part of the same common group.

Figure 10.1 Percentage of respondents who regarded people aged over 70 and under 30 as 'individuals' or as members of different, or common, groups



10.2.3 Perceptions that people aged over 70 and under 30 are all separate individuals

There was a significant effect of survey year on whether respondents viewed those aged under 30 and over 70 as individuals. In 2005, 48 per cent of respondents regarded them as individuals and 54 per cent did so in 2006, dropping significantly to 29 per cent in 2008.

In addition to the survey year, gender, ethnicity and working status independently predicted these perceptions. People aged under 30 and over 70 years were perceived as individuals more frequently by men (52 per cent) than women (46 per cent), more by white (50 per cent) than non-white (38 per cent), and also more by full-time than non-working respondents (Table 10.2).

Table 10.2 Percentage of respondents viewing people aged over 70 and under 30 as separate individuals, by working status

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Percentage	52[a]	51[a]	46[b]	48

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

10.2.4 Perceptions that people aged over 70 and under 30 are two separate groups with little in common

There was a significant effect of survey year on whether respondents viewed those aged under 30 and over 70 as belonging to separate groups. In 2005, 27 per cent of respondents regarded them to be two separate groups, but this dropped to 15 per cent in 2006 and 13 per cent in 2008. The reduction from 2006 to 2008 was not statistically significant however.

In addition to survey year, gender, working status and tenure independently predicted these perceptions. People aged under 30 and over 70 years were perceived as two separate groups more frequently by men (24 per cent) than women (18 per cent), more by retired respondents than full-time or part-time workers, and more by those who rented a property from the local authority than those who owned their property (Table 10.3).

Table 10.3 Percentage of respondents that viewed people aged over 70 and under 30 as two separate groups with little in common, by working status and tenure

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Percentage	19[a]	18[a]	22	24[b]

Tenure	**Mortgage**	**Owned outright**	**Rented from local authority**	**Rented privately**
Percentage	21[a]	18[a]	25[b]	21

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

10.2.5 Perceptions that people aged over 70 and under 30 are two separate groups but part of the same community

Across surveys there was a trend for respondents to see older and younger people more as two separate groups that are part of the same community, increasing from 17 per cent in 2005 to 19 per cent in 2006 with a significant increase to 44 per cent in 2008.

In addition to survey year, social class and ethnicity predicted these views: respondents from a non-white ethnic background (27 per cent) were more likely than respondents from a white ethnic background (20 per cent), to regard younger and older people as two groups that are part of the same community, and respondents in social class C1 did so more than those in D and E, as shown in Table 10.4.

Table 10.4 Percentage of respondents that viewed people aged over 70 and under 30 as separate groups but part of the same community, by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	20	19	23[a]	22	18[b]	18[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

10.2.6 Perceptions that people aged over 70 and under 30 are one common group

There was an increase across survey years in the percentage of respondents that considered people over 70 and under 30 as belonging to one common group, increasing from 9 per cent in 2005 to 13 per cent in 2006 to 14 per cent in 2008.

Respondents from different age groups held differing views on whether people under 30 and over 70 form one common group; 25 to 49-year-olds were less likely to consider younger and older people as one group than 50 to 64 and 65 to 79-year-olds. For example, eight per cent of respondents aged 25 to 49 considered younger and older people as one common group when compared to 16 per cent of those aged 65 to 79 years.

In addition to survey year, social class independently predicted these views, as shown in Table 10.5. Respondents from social classes D and E were more likely than those from social classes B and C1 to regard people under 30 and over 70 as belonging to one common group.

Table 10.5 Percentage of respondents that viewed people aged over 70 and under 30 as one common group, by social class

Social class	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Percentage	9	7[a]	8[a]	10	13[d]	13[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

Social classes: A = Upper Middle Class; B = Middle Class; C1 = Lower Middle Class; C2 = Skilled Working Class; D = Working Class; E = Those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

10.2.7 Summary

In summary, the majority of respondents in 2004 considered people over 70 and under 30 as having little in common. This was confirmed by the findings from 2005, 2006 and 2008, which showed that only one in ten of the respondents perceived younger and older people to belong to one common group. However, respondents often stated that those from the two age groups are separate individuals rather

than belonging to one group or two separate groups. There was also a trend over time for people to see over 70 and under 30-year-olds less as separate groups with little in common and instead consider them either as individuals, belonging to one common group or two separate groups from the same community. Men, retired respondents and those who rented accommodation were most likely to view people aged over 70 and under 30 as separate groups with little in common. Non-white respondents and those from higher social classes were most likely to view people over 70 and under 30 as individuals or as two separate groups but still part of the same community. Older, and lower social class respondents were most likely to view them as a single common group.

10.3 Intergenerational contact

Contact was measured in slightly different ways in different surveys and so this was coded according to whether respondents had, or did not have at least one friend who is over 70 and who is under 30. Overall, 49 per cent of respondents had a friend over 70 and 28 per cent had a friend who was under 30.

10.3.1 Contact with people over 70 years of age

Age was an important predictor of friendships with people over 70 years of age, older respondents having more friends of this age group than younger respondents (see Figure 10.2 and Table 10.1). In addition to age, gender, ethnicity and tenure independently predicted contact with people over 70. Of these, ethnicity was the strongest predictor.

Having friends aged over 70 was more likely among respondents who were women (53 per cent) rather than men (50 per cent), respondents from a white ethnic background (52 per cent) rather than a non-white ethnic background (45 per cent), those who owned their own property rather than buying their property on mortgage or renting their accommodation either from the local authority or privately.

Table 10.6 Percentage of respondents with friends aged over 70, by tenure

Tenure	Mortgage	Owned outright	Rented from local authority	Rented privately
Percentage	49[a]	56[b]	51[a]	50[a]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

10.3.2 Contact with people under 30 years of age

Similarly to the contact with people over 70, contact with those under the age of 30 was substantially predicted by respondents' own age, younger respondents having considerably more friends aged under 30 than older respondents. In addition to age, gender, working status and tenure independently predicted contact with younger people, the strongest predictor being tenure.

Having friends under 30 was more likely among men (63 per cent) than women (59 per cent), among those working full-time than those not in employment, and among those who owned their own property than those who were buying their property on mortgage. This latter finding is surprising, as those who were buying on a mortgage also said they had fewer friends over the age of 70 than respondents from other tenure groups.

Table 10.7 Mean level of contact with people aged under 30, by working status and tenure

Working status	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	Retired
Percentage	64[a]	60	58[b]	60

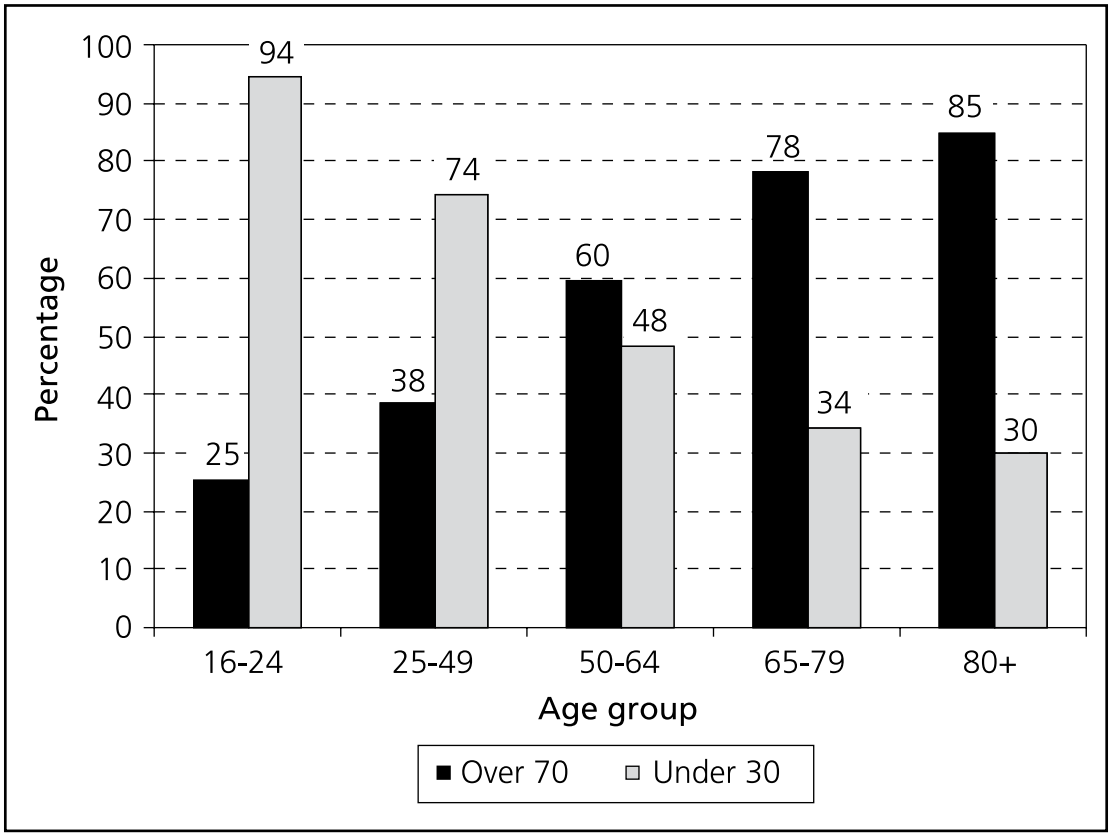
Tenure	Mortgage	Owned outright	Rented from local authority	Rented privately
Percentage	57[a]	63[b]	61[b]	65[b]

Note: Based on estimated means [a] and [b] are significantly different from each other, $p < .05$.

10.3.3 Age group differences in friendships with people under 30 and over 70 years of age

When viewed together, answers to the two contact questions show that respondents primarily had friends within their own age range. Figure 10.2 shows the weighted proportions of friendships held by respondents in each age group. Only those in the 50 to 64 range had a similar number of friends over 70 and under 30. Fewer than one third of people over 70 years had friends under 30 and fewer than one-third of under 30-year-olds had friends over 70. This reveals a picture of pronounced separation between age groups, which in turn means there is substantial scope for intergenerational misperceptions, stereotyping and prejudice. Table 10.1 shows that even after adjusting for effects of other demographic variables, respondents aged 50 and over are more likely to have friends aged over 70, and respondents under 50 years of age are more likely to have friendships with others aged under 30. The differences between the eldest age-categories showed also that respondents aged 50 to 64 are more likely to have younger friends under 30 compared to those aged 64 to 79 and over 80 years.

Figure 10.2 Percentage of respondents who had friendships with people aged over 70 and under 30, by age group



10.4 Summary of age group differences

Table 10.8 summarises age group differences in the perceived similarity between people aged under 30 and over 70 and respondents' level of intergenerational contact. Mean responses are compared between respondents aged under 50 and over 50. Further comparisons are made between age groups 50 to 64, 65 to 79 and those aged 80 and over.

Table 10.8 Mean responses to intergenerational closeness items among the different age groups

Item	Under 50	Over 50	50-64	65-79	80+
Similarity between young and old[1]	2.73	2.77	2.78	2.72	2.80
Over 70 and under 30 as separate individuals	0.45	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43
Over 70 and under 30 as two groups	0.18	0.19	0.20	0.15	0.18
Over 70 and under 30 as two groups but same community	0.27	0.26	0.26	0.27	0.28
Over 70 and under 30 as one group	0.10	0.12	0.12	0.16	0.12
Contact with over 70s[1]	0.51	0.52[a***]	0.58[b***c***]	0.72[d*]	0.79
Contact with under 30s[2]	0.63	0.59[a***]	0.49[b*]	0.41[d**]	0.36

Note: [a]: difference between people under and over 50, [b]: difference between 50-64 and 65-79, [c]: difference between 50-64 and 80+, [d]: difference between 65-79 and 80+; *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$. [1] A two-point scale was used ranging from 0 (no close friends aged over 70) to 1 (at least one close friend aged over 70). [2] A two-point scale was used ranging from 0 (no close friends aged under 30) to 1 (at least one close friend aged under 30). Contact estimates for the 65-79 and 80+ are higher than weighted sample percentages shown in Figure 10.2. because of adjustments for the independent variables.

10.5 Summary and discussion

The measures of intergenerational similarity showed that there is a substantial distance between generations. The majority of respondents, 69 per cent, considered that people aged over 70 and under 30 have little in common. About half of the respondents viewed people from the two age groups either to be separate individuals or as belonging to one group, but 41 per cent thought that they form two separate groups. This suggests that younger and older people are considered by many as separate sets of people that have relatively little in common. However, there was a change over survey years towards seeing the groups as having more in common.

These views were influenced primarily by gender, ethnicity and social class. Women, and respondents who were white or from lower social class backgrounds were less likely to view the two age groups as separate from each other than were men and those from non-white ethnic backgrounds.

Intergenerational distance was also revealed by the very segregated pattern of friendships between the generations. Younger and older respondents were much more likely to have close friends of their own age than from the other age groups, those aged 50 to 64 years showing greatest balance of friends under 30 and over 70 years of age. These results suggest that as people live longer they may become increasingly isolated from younger generations, resulting potentially in problematic intergenerational relationships and conditions that could allow prejudices and stereotypes to take root. Addressing intergenerational segregation is likely to be a key issue for policy in the future.

11 Regional differences

11.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the regional differences. In the 2004 to 2006[12] surveys, areas of the UK were categorised according to 11 Government Office Regions (GORs), which consist of Scotland, Wales, London (including inner and greater London), West Midlands, East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside, East of England, North East, North West, South East and South West.

Regional variation in attitudes to age could arise for several reasons including the age profile of each region, the region's economy, or other factors. To the extent that regional differences exist, this may suggest region specific strategies might be required for responding to age discrimination.

11.1.1 Key findings

- Respondents from London were more likely to categorise themselves as above 'middle age' and identified more with their age group compared to respondents from other regions. London respondents were also more likely to see people over 70 and up to the age of 30 as belonging to two separate groups.
- Experience of ageism was more prevalent among respondents in the South East than in any other region.
- Respondents from Yorkshire and Humberside regarded people over 70 as posing less economic and material threat than did respondents from most other regions.
- South East and East of England showed least indirect prejudice compared with other regions.

---

12 Government Office Region (GOR) information was available for all datasets except for year 2008, consequently the 2008 data was excluded from the analysis.

- Regions with a higher age proportion of older people also displayed higher levels of age identity, lower perceptions of economic threat but higher material threat, expressed greater acceptance of a boss over 70 and were less likely to perceive people over 70 and under 30 as separate groups.

11.2 Statistical note

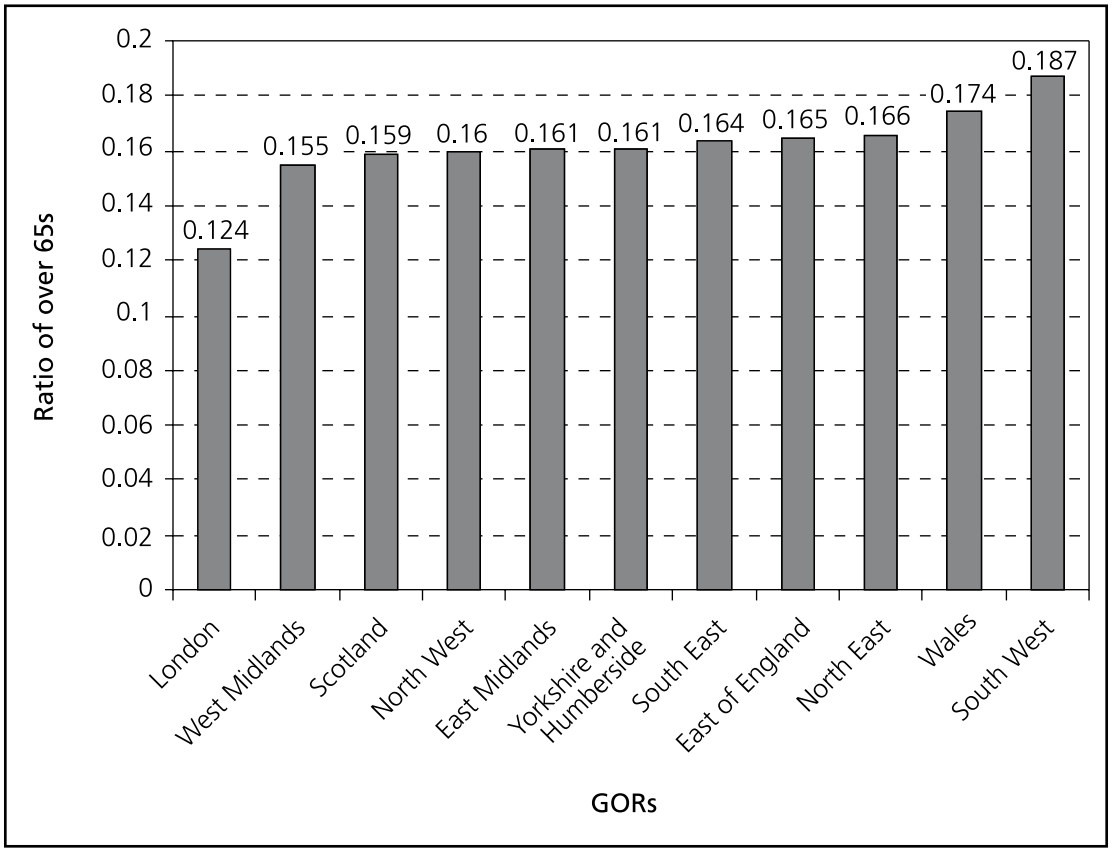
Dummy coded GOR variables were entered at the end of the appropriate regression or logistic regression models for each variable. There were three objectives for these analyses. The first was to see whether including region in our analyses improved the explained variance in each model, this means improved R^2 compared to previous models which did not include region. The second was to see whether there were any distinctive regional differences in responses. Finally, we wanted to explore what might be driving regional differences. The regression models already control for many demographic factors, some of which could be associated with regional differences. As well as controlling for respondents' age, one other factor to consider is the age demographic of the region. Considering that analyses thus far have demonstrated respondent's age to be strongly related to age-related attitudes it is conceivable that any regional differences in attitudes might be related to the region's age profile.

Yorkshire and Humberside was selected as the comparison reference category because it has the median age ratio profile. In order to separate out the effect of region from the effect of age profile an age ratio variable was created, using age demographic information from the 2001 census, the ratio represents the proportion of people aged over 65 in each region. Figure 11.1 shows the regions ordered according to their age ratio.

London has the smallest proportion of people over 65, Wales and South West has the largest proportion of people aged over 65. Therefore, if regional differences in attitudes are due to the age profile of the area we would expect that regions falling either side of the reference category would have a different relationship (either positive or negative) to the dependent variable. For example, regions above the reference category (with a higher age ratio) might show more positive attitudes compared to the reference category, whereas regions below the reference category (with a lower age ratio) may show more negative attitudes compared to the reference category.

In the following analyses we added dummy coded region variables as a further step in the logistic regression or regression models described in previous sections. Below, we only report results from analyses where including region improved the explained variance. In addition, the age ratio variable has only been reported when it was a significant predictor in the model.

Figure 11.1 Ratio of people aged over 65 within different GORs



11.3 Age categorisation and identification

For age self-categorisation respondents from London, West Midlands, Scotland, North West, East Midlands, North East and South West categorised themselves as older compared to the respondents in Yorkshire and Humberside. About one-fifth (21 per cent) of respondents in Yorkshire and Humberside categorised themselves above middle age (above the midpoint 5), which was the lowest percentage of all regions. Conversely, 35 per cent of respondents from London, with the lowest age ratio, categorised themselves above middle age.[13]

Respondents from the West Midlands perceived old age as starting earlier than respondents from Yorkshire and Humberside.

Age ratio was related to identification; respondents identified less with their age group if they were from regions with higher age ratios. Respondents from London, West Midlands, Scotland, North West, East Midlands and South West had higher identification towards their age group compared to respondents in Yorkshire and Humberside. Nearly half of the respondents from Yorkshire and Humberside

[13] Percentages presented in this chapter have been adjusted and account for all other covariates; age, survey year, gender, ethnicity, social class, working status, tenure and marital status.

(46 per cent) identified highly with their age group (above the midpoint 3), which was the lowest percentage of identification. In contrast 62 per cent of respondents from London identified highly with their age group. Respondents from the East Midlands also showed high identification with their age group (60 per cent). The other significant regions averaged 52 per cent.

In sum, regional age ratio only had a significant impact upon age identification, suggesting that age identification decreases as the age ratio increases. This seems partly to do with London, which has the smallest age ratio and where respondents showed the highest level of age identification (62 per cent) compared to respondents of other regions (mean 52 per cent, excluding Yorkshire and Humberside).

The pattern of regional differences for age identification is similar to that for self-categorisation. Yorkshire and Humberside and London are at opposing ends of the continuum, with a higher proportion of Londoners respondents categorising themselves as older and with a larger proportion highly identifying with their age group. Respondents from Yorkshire and Humberside are less likely to categorise themselves as 'old' and identify less strongly with their age group compared to respondents from London, West Midlands, Scotland, North West, East Midlands and South West.

11.4 Perceived age prejudice

There were no regional or age ratio differences for responses on the indicators measuring perceived prejudice.

11.5 Experiences of age discrimination

Respondents in all regions, except Wales were more likely to experience age discrimination than were respondents in Yorkshire and Humberside. Experience of ageism ranged from 18 per cent for Yorkshire and Humberside respondents to 30 per cent for South East respondents, with the average of 25 per cent for all other regions that were significant predictors. Therefore, respondents from Wales, with one of the highest age profiles, and Yorkshire and Humberside experience less age discrimination than all other regions. South East respondents experienced more age discrimination and have an age ratio similar to Yorkshire and Humberside respondents. The mean of the other regions (25 per cent) was closer to the level experienced by the South East (30 per cent) than the level experienced by Yorkshire and Humberside.

There was no influence of the age ratio on respondents' experiences of ageism, therefore the age profile of the region doesn't seem to explain regional differences in experiences of ageism.

11.6 Stereotypes of people over 70

Fewer respondents judged that people aged over 70 are viewed as friendly in London (51 per cent), the South East (47 per cent) and East of England (46 per cent) than did in Yorkshire and Humberside (58 per cent) and the North West (61 per cent).

11.7 Stereotypes of people under 30

More respondents from the East Midlands judged that people aged under 30 are viewed as friendly (36 per cent) than did respondents from Yorkshire and Humberside (29 per cent).

Fewer respondents from the South East region judged that people aged under 30 are viewed as capable (39 per cent) than did in Yorkshire and Humberside (48 per cent). Age ratios do not explain these differences.

In sum, there are few regional differences in stereotype content items and regional age ratio was not systematically related to stereotype content.

11.8 Age and perceived threats

First, consider perceived threat to economy posed by people aged over 70. In the 2004 and 2006 surveys the referent comparison was whether current economic requirements of people aged over 70 are too great relative to what they have contributed over their lifetime. Perceptions of such economic threat were associated with the regional age ratio. Compared to respondents in Yorkshire and Humberside, respondents in all regions, except the North East, perceived older people to pose a greater economic threat, ranging from 16 per cent in the North East to 31 per cent in London.

In the 2005 and 2008 surveys, the referent comparison was whether the current economic requirements of people over 70 exceed what they currently contribute. Compared to those in Yorkshire and Humberside, respondents in all regions except Scotland and East of England perceived that older people posed greater economic threat. Responses ranged from 12 per cent in the East of England to 29 per cent agreement from respondents in Wales.

The regional differences in perceptions of economic threat in 2005 to 2008 do not match those for 2004 and 2006. In 2004 and 2006, respondents from London (with the smallest ratio of people aged over 65) perceived the greatest economic threat, probably driving the effect of age ratio. In 2005 and 2008, respondents from Wales with one of the largest age ratios, perceived people over 70 as posing more economic threat than did respondents from other regions, however, there is no effect of age ratio.

Second, consider perceived material threat posed by people aged over 70. Age ratio was related to perceptions of material threat. In regions with higher age ratios respondents perceived greater material threat from people aged over 70.

Respondents from West Midlands, Scotland, South East, Wales and South West perceived people over 70 as posing a greater material threat than did those from Yorkshire and Humberside (17 per cent). Respondents from the North West and East Midlands were least likely to perceive a material threat (14 and 15 per cent, respectively), whereas those from Scotland were most likely to do so (23 per cent).

11.9 Expressions of age prejudice

There were regional differences in expressions of indirect prejudice and direct prejudice toward people over 70. Age ratio was related to indirect prejudice. Respondents from regions with a higher age ratio were more likely to agree that equal employment opportunities have not gone far enough for people over 70. Age ratio was also related to a respondent's comfort with a boss over 70. Respondents from regions with a higher age ratio expressed more comfort with a boss over 70.

Respondents from the South East and East of England showed less indirect prejudice than did those from Yorkshire and Humberside. The level of agreement that equal opportunities in employment have gone too far or much too far ranged from seven per cent from the South East and nine per cent in the East, to 11 per cent in Yorkshire and Humberside and 12 per cent from the North East.

Overall, differences between the respondents from various regions seem to show a South East and East of England compared to Yorkshire and Humberside and North East divide, with respondents in the South East of England showing least indirect prejudice.

For direct prejudice towards people aged over 70, slightly more respondents from Yorkshire and Humberside said they felt more positive towards people over 70 years of age (76 per cent) when compared to those from the West Midlands (74 per cent) and the South East (73 per cent).

For direct prejudice towards people aged under 30, respondents from the West Midlands, North West, South East, East of England, and North East (as low as 42 per cent) were less positive than those from Yorkshire and Humberside (55 per cent) or East Midlands (56 per cent).

The proportion of respondents saying they would feel uncomfortable having a boss aged 70 differed from Yorkshire and Humberside in every region, with agreement ranging from five per cent in Wales to 13 per cent in Scotland.

11.10 Intergenerational closeness

There were no regional differences in the amount of contact respondents had with people over 70 and up to 30. However, differences between regions were found for viewing people over 70 and up to the age of 30 as individuals, as two separate groups, and as a common group.

Respondents from regions with higher age ratios were less likely to see people over 70 and people under 30 as two separate groups. However, regional differences were not completely in line with age ratios. They ranged from Scotland, where 15 per cent of respondents perceived people over 70 and under 30 as two separate groups, to London, where 28 per cent perceived them to be separate groups. Yorkshire and Humberside with 26 per cent did not differ from London, but these differed significantly from Wales, the South West and East Midlands (all had fewer than 18 per cent perceiving people over 70 and under 30 as separate groups) as well as Scotland.

Compared to respondents from Yorkshire and Humberside, respondents from the North East were less likely to view people over 70 and under 30 as a common single group. The range across regions was substantial, from five per cent in the North East and just over six per cent in the South West to 15 per cent in the East of England and over 14 per cent in the East Midlands.

To summarise all these differences simply, London (with the lowest age ratio) was the region in which respondents were most likely to perceive people over 70 and under 30 as separate groups (28 per cent), whereas the East of England was the region in which they were most likely to be perceived as a single common group (15 per cent) or as two groups in the same community (25 per cent). The South West (with the highest age ratio) was the region in which they were most likely to be viewed as individuals.

11.11 Summary and discussion

Including regions in the regression models explained additional variance in 16 of the 53 measures included in the surveys. The age ratio of the region accounted for the differences for six of these items. Differences between London, which had the smallest age ratio, and other regions seem to be driving the effect of age ratio for age identification, threat to the economy 2004-06 and perceptions that people over 70 and under 30 are two separate groups. Respondents from London identified more strongly with their age-group, perceived people over 70 to be a greater threat to the economy (2004-06) and were more likely to perceive people over 70 and under 30 as belonging to two separate groups. Respondents from regions with higher age ratios showed less indirect prejudice and more comfort with having a boss aged over 70.

Differences between regions for the remaining ten items are harder to explain because the regression models control for many factors that might be associated with, and account for, regional differences, such as social class, ethnicity and working status. The differences between respondents from each region do not seem to fit to any particular pattern, such as North compared to South or East compared to West. Therefore, it is hard to conclude what other factors might be driving regional differences in age categorisation, old age is perceived to start, experiences of ageism, stereotype content, economic threat (2005 and 2008), direct prejudice towards people over 70 and up to the age of 30, or perceptions that people over 70 and people up to the age of 30 belong to one common group. Overall, however, it is clear that there are regional differences that bear on people's attitudes to age in Britain and that policy implementation will need to be sensitive to these regional differences.

12 Conclusions

Britain's ageing population poses a significant challenge for strategies to deal with the social and economic changes ahead. In the context of these demographic and economic changes, ageism and attitudes to ageing present significant obstacles to progress toward a society that meets the expectations and needs of people of all ages. This chapter summarises the key findings, important demographic differences, implications for policy, and some future steps for research.

12.1 Framing the problem

Previous research, such as evidence from the Eurobarometer (EB) and the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), suggested that respondents may disapprove of ageism but that it may only occur at a relatively low rate. However, an important and consistent finding from the present series of surveys is that ageism is experienced widely and is manifested in a variety of complex ways. These manifestations of ageism differ depending on the age of the perceivers and also the ages of those who are being perceived or evaluated.

Recent policy approaches have moved toward a single equalities framework that embraces gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexuality and age. However, the desire or intention to embrace age along with other axes of social inequality raises some problems that are unique to age. Age often defies easy classification and presents special challenges for policy because the difficulty of defining particular age boundaries at which particular policies should apply. Age is a continuous attribute which people judge differently depending on comparisons between specific people in specific situations. This means that tackling age discrimination must go beyond policies that target only people below or above particular age boundaries. Ageism can affect people of all ages. Therefore, tackling age discrimination and ageism demands a general and principled approach to formulate policies that will be acceptable to the population as a whole.

12.2 Key findings

Among the key findings from this series of surveys is that there is little social consensus in the way respondents apply age categories. Respondents set the boundaries of the categories 'young' and 'old' quite differently, depending on their own age and gender. As they get older, people push these boundaries upwards. Consequently, an individual could be perceived by one person as still in their youth while another person sees that individual as entering old age. At different times in their lives, people also attach different levels of importance to age as part of their own identity. Younger and older people feel a stronger sense of belonging to their age group than do middle-aged people.

The pattern of age identity coincides with another pattern, the social relationships across generations. This brings us to a second key finding. Whereas people in mid-life are quite likely to have friends who are younger than 30 and friends who are over 70, less than a third of people within those two age ranges have friends in the other. The high degree of separation between the generations is of concern because it is likely to sustain misperceptions, stereotypes and lack of mutual awareness. These are potentially damaging for young and old alike. Indeed, a large proportion of survey respondents believed that people under 30 and over 70 have little in common and do not see them as part of the same group.

A third important finding from this work is that more respondents reported experiencing age discrimination than reported experiencing any other kind of discrimination. This does not argue for prioritising ageism over other types of prejudice but it does highlight that ageism is at least as significant a social problem as other types of prejudice and that ageism directly affects a very large number of people, over a quarter of the population. Moreover, whereas reports of gender and ethnic discrimination appeared to decline between 2004 and 2008, the signs are that age discrimination is remaining at a consistent level or possibly even increasing.

Attitudes to age equality appear to be mixed, perhaps because many people do not have a clear idea of what age equality would actually mean. Most respondents did not express directly negative attitudes towards either younger or older people. However, a significant minority expressed more subtle prejudices, such as the belief that age equality might have gone 'too far', or that they did not mind being seen to be age prejudiced.

The evidence shows a disjunction between respondents' experiences of ageism against themselves and their (low) expressions of direct negativity toward other age groups. If so few respondents express negative attitudes how is it that so many experience negative treatment? The answer may be that, rather than following the patterns of traditional prejudices such as racism (which is often directly hostile), ageism, particularly towards older people, emerges in more subtle and apparently benign forms. This report has highlighted some of the multiple ways that prejudices might be formed and expressed.

It seems only realistic to accept that there are obvious age differences in physical, psychological and social characteristics. On the other hand, older and younger respondents do not always agree about these differences. The evidence from these surveys shows that respondents of all ages understand that younger people are widely perceived to be more competent than older people, and older people are perceived to be friendlier and more moral than younger people. However, these age stereotypes are contested by young and old alike. Older respondents do not believe they are viewed as incompetent as younger people do, and younger respondents do not believe they are viewed as being as unfriendly as older people do. Taken together, it seems that older and younger people have more in common than the stereotypes would suggest.

Stereotypes that older people are warm but incompetent while younger people are competent but cold, are associated with different emotions and feelings such as admiration, pity (e.g. towards older people) or envy (e.g. towards younger people). These emotions are likely to feed into different types of behaviour that end up causing discriminatory outcomes. On the basis of their age, individuals may find they are denied opportunities, treatment or services because others assume they do not want, need or deserve them.

Although older and younger people are not in direct conflict most of the time, the evidence from these surveys shows that there is a tension over the economic and material demands and contributions to society by younger and older people. This needs to be watched closely. We already noted that there is both a sense of separation and actual social separation between younger and older respondents. As the ageing population creates additional demands for pensions, health and social care, as well as competing with younger people for work, there is a possibility that younger and older people may find themselves in a political and economic battle for resources. Such conflicts are often at the root of prejudice and discrimination between groups and so there is a risk that age-related attitudes may become more directly hostile rather than mutually sustaining between people of different ages. These potential sources of conflict are much more likely to result in prejudice if the groups also lack a sense of commonality and similarity.

12.3 Demographic differences

As well as the strong evidence that attitudes toward age differ depending on the age of the person who expresses the attitudes, the research also revealed several other demographic differences.

There were consistent differences based on respondents' gender and their ethnic background. Compared with men, women perceive that youth ends later and are less likely to agree that people over 50 are written off as 'old', but they report that age prejudice and discrimination are more frequent and more serious. Compared to respondents with a white ethnic background, non-white respondents identified more strongly with their age group, perceived age prejudice to be more frequent

and more serious, perceived older people as posing a greater economic threat, were more likely to see younger and older people being from separate groups and were less likely to have intergenerational friendships. Thus, there are both gender and ethnic differences in age prejudice that may require different policy tactics.

Marital status was not strongly associated with many attitudes. However, compared with respondents who were without a partner, those who are married or lived as married perceived both the end of youth and start of old age to be later in life and they identified less strongly with their age group. They perceived people under 30 to be less warm or admirable, and felt less comfortable with the idea of a boss under 30 years of age, while perceiving people over 70 to pose less of an economic threat. These differences are not attributable to the age of the respondents, and suggest instead that old age is of less concern to respondents who have partners. Conversely, it suggests that age prejudice and stereotypes might have more acute implications for respondents who are without a partner, whether because of divorce, bereavement or other reasons.

Working status was also related to a number of attitudes and experiences. Interestingly, compared with full-time workers, it was respondents who were either not working or were retired who experienced more age prejudice. However, respondents also consider age prejudice to be less prevalent and perceive age discrimination directed towards people over 70 to be less frequent and less serious than those working full-time. This suggests that respondents not in work may be unaware that they are experiencing higher levels of age discrimination, which may be because they are not in situations which allow them to compare directly with other people's experiences.

There were also differences associated with social class and housing tenure. Respondents from higher social classes were more sensitive to the problem of age prejudice, but may feel less vulnerable to it. Compared with respondents from lower social class categories, they perceived larger differences between the stereotypes of older and younger people. They held more progressive attitudes, being more likely to agree that equal opportunities in employment for people over 70 has not gone far enough, that ageism is a serious issue, and that they want to avoid being ageist. They also perceived people over 70 and under 30 as having more in common. At the same time, they perceived themselves to be younger, believe old age starts later, and identify less strongly with their age group.

Respondents who were renting from their local authority, rather than owning their homes, were more likely to see older and younger people as belonging to separate groups with little in common. Conversely, home owner respondents were more likely to have friends both aged over 70 and under 30. This pattern of findings perhaps reinforces the idea that age separation and differentiation is more acute in parts of the population that have fewer resources, money and independence.

Finally, there were also some interesting regional differences. Some of these seem attributable to the age ratios within different regions. For example, in London, which has the lowest proportion of older people, respondents identified more

strongly with their age group, perceived people over 70 to be a greater threat to the economy and were more likely to perceive people over 70 and under 30 as belonging to two separate groups. Respondents from regions with a higher proportion of older people expressed less indirect prejudice and were more comfortable with the idea of an older boss. Other regional differences were not explicable in terms of the age ratio and appear to be due to cultural or perhaps economic differences. However, they highlight that it cannot be assumed that problems of ageism and age discrimination will be manifested in the same ways or at the same levels across all regions.

Overall, the findings show that age-related attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices are firmly embedded in British society and their scope is wide ranging. The fact that respondents do not see themselves as particularly prejudiced about age contrasts with the fact that ageism is experienced more commonly than most other forms of prejudice. Tackling ageism requires strategies that address people's assumptions and attitudes about age to ensure that they do not impinge on judgements about a person's ability, health, or rights to services. Finding ways to build stronger intergenerational bridges and enabling people to benefit from relationships that go beyond their immediate age group will also build a stronger social fabric that protects against ageist assumptions. Employment, education and other social structures reinforce age segmentation and inadvertently these structures may also reinforce age stereotypes. However, if the economy is to become increasingly flexible and dynamic, it seems both desirable and appropriate that policy should address ways to ensure that people do not allow such age boundaries to prevent everyone from fulfilling their potential.

12.4 Implications for policy

It is a substantial challenge to deal with the implications of social attitudes to age. Meeting that challenge will require a combination of strategies. These strategies will need to recognise that age is a more important category to some people than others, and that it may be easier to motivate some people than others to revisit their age-related views. The extensive literature on intergroup contact conveys the message that providing opportunities for intergenerational friendships to be formed will be a highly constructive way to tackle negative attitudes to age. However, intergroup contact theory also notes that such progress can be facilitated by institutional support and clarification of common aims and goals, which are areas that policy can address.

We end this report by highlighting implications of the findings for the successful implementation of current policy strategies. The Government's strategy to deal with the ageing population, *Building a Society for All Ages* identifies measures to move towards a society for all ages. These include measures for individuals, for families, for businesses, for public services and for communities.

12.4.1 Individuals

People are being encouraged to do more in order to prepare for later life. These preparations include financial arrangements as well as maintaining a healthy lifestyle so that, as they become older, people are able to play a full and active role in society. We have shown that the perception of the age at which old age begins is extended as people get older. Ironically, the shifting categorisation may make it more difficult for people in mid-life to prepare for old age, psychologically. Addressing the negative connotations associated with ageing (as revealed by high levels of agreement with the idea that people are likely to be 'written off as old' after the age of 50), might help smooth the transition between mid-life and later life. Talking to people about the implications of their age in a way that frees them from feeling categorised may enable them to think and plan about their life course more constructively.

12.4.2 Families

A potential barrier to creating a society for all ages is the extent to which people perceive older and younger people as similar, and whether they are perceived as belonging to groups within the same community. Although these surveys were not focused on families, intergenerational relationships within families are clearly relevant. Policy must consider ways of fostering intergenerational communication in communities, and for most people, their family provides the most direct opportunity to be involved in intergenerational activity. The opportunity to build across families to create larger intergenerational networks may be an under-explored route for creating stronger and more diverse communities that are less age segregated.

12.4.3 Business

Age discrimination is reported to be the most common form of prejudice experienced and is a barrier to people being able to participate fully in later life. Our research shows that, once age is accounted for, retired respondents and those who are not working are most vulnerable to age discrimination. Therefore, experience of age discrimination is also tied to accessibility of the world of work and to transitions out of employment. Eurobarometer evidence from 1993 revealed that two-thirds of older worker respondents felt discriminated against and evidence from 2002 revealed that 71 per cent of respondents thought those aged over 50 had less chance of getting a job than applicants under 50. By 2008, however, attitudes may have changed. For example, respondents in the present surveys were more comfortable with the idea of a boss aged over 70 than one aged under 30. Alternatively, this may reflect the idea that, only under certain circumstances are older people seen as legitimate sources of authority. It may be that a dual standard operates in which older age is a positive characteristic among high level professionals and employers but is regarded as a negative characteristic for subordinate employees (their competence is assumed to be in decline). This needs to be examined in more detail in future. Either way, tackling the stereotypes

that drive prejudice against older people remains a priority. Certainly in the domain of employment, the consistent and pervasive stereotype of older people as being warmer but less capable than younger people seems likely to have damaging effects. Such effects can occur even before someone has an opportunity to start a job, perhaps even at a selection interview. For example, experimental evidence shows that older people's performance on cognitive tests can be seriously impaired if they are conscious of age stereotypes, and this is especially likely if they lack intergenerational contacts and if they expect to be compared with younger people in the testing situation (Abrams *et al.*, 2006; 2008).

12.4.4 Public services

There is consensus that many people experience ageism and that ageism is a serious problem. However, we also need to be aware that younger people experience ageism just as acutely as older people. Because the damaging implications of age stereotypes are different for younger and older people this suggests that different types of support are likely to be required to tackle the problem for different age groups. For example, younger people are likely to face problems of being viewed as untrustworthy or unlikeable. Their understandable objections to such stereotypes need to be recognised. Likewise, the widely held perception that people over 50 are likely to be 'written off' as old, and that people over 70 are perceived as relatively incompetent shows clearly that the voices of older people need to be heard clearly at national, regional and local levels. However, we wish to note that the problems raised by stereotypes cannot be resolved by focusing solely on one age group or age range. It is necessary to create a dialogue about age-related issues that involves and recognises the perspectives of people of all ages. Otherwise the strategy risks reinforcing, rather than reducing, the boundaries and sense of difference between older and younger people.

12.4.5 Communities

The findings show that there is substantial distance between generations and that older and younger respondents find their friendships primarily within rather than across age groups. There is age separation in both the social and occupational worlds. Unsurprisingly, many feel that people under 30 and over 70 years of age have little in common. In order to build a society for all ages policy must consider ways of building stronger connections and bridges between older and younger people. This may be achieved in part by intergenerational programmes within communities. However, there is a risk that such programmes reinforce differences rather than enhancing understanding between generations and a sense of belonging to a shared community. Therefore, it is important that such programmes establish clear objectives and that their outcomes are monitored carefully. It is also important that intergenerational programmes are not sufficient to deal with age separation. Creating scope for greater flexibility in patterns of work, caring and leisure will also increase the likely overlap in the worlds of people of different ages, which can indirectly, but powerfully, enable stronger and more diverse relationships to form.

As well as refining strategies to meet the needs of different age groups, there are also important differences in attitudes to age that are associated with gender, ethnicity and other demographic characteristics. These differences highlight that age-related attitudes and experiences are textured by particular roles as well as cultural and local contexts. Building a society for all ages requires attention to the nuances of some of these differences.

12.5 Further steps

This series of surveys has provided important benchmarks for assessing future trends and changes in these attitudes and experiences in Britain. Part of the strategy for age needs to involve continued monitoring of changing stereotypes and expectations. Even within the five-year window of the surveys covered in this report there appear to be changes in experiences and expressions of age prejudice. Change takes time and it would be valuable to reassess population perceptions on a relatively regular basis to track these changes more systematically across people of all ages and backgrounds. The surveys revealed gender and class differences (women and respondents with higher socio economic status and greater independence generally showing more progressive attitudes), in line with other commentaries that socio-economic inequalities may be amplified or attenuated at particular stages of life (Estes, Biggs and Phillipson, 2003; Just Ageing, 2009). Therefore, it would be useful to draw larger quota samples of specific groups among which there may be unique aspects of age-related attitudes. For example, within some cultures and ethnic groups age is more strongly associated with increasing status and respect. Precisely because attitudes to age vary widely between different age groups and parts of the population, it is important to monitor how the strategy for age might be reaching these different sets of people. We hope that the present research has provided a useful and informative starting point for that process.

13 List of appendices

Technical appendices are supplied in a separate pdf document at http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp

Appendix A: Further details

A.1 Further details about the surveys (Chapter 1)
A.2 Further details about previous research surveys (Chapter 2)
A.3 Further details about the analysis (Chapter 3)

Appendix B: Tables for the analyses

B.1 Tables on age categorisation and identification (Chapter 4)
B.2 Tables on perceived age prejudice (Chapter 5)
B.3 Tables on experiences of discrimination (Chapter 6)
B.4 Tables on age stereotypes (Chapter 7)
B.5 Tables on ageing as a perceived threat (Chapter 8)
B.6 Tables on expressions of age prejudice (Chapter 9)
B.7 Tables on intergenerational closeness (Chapter 10)
B.8 Tables on regional differences (Chapter 11)

Appendix C: Means and standard errors for all items

References

Abrams, D. and Hogg, M.A. (2001). Collective identity: Group membership and self-conception. In M.A. Hogg and S. Tindale (Eds.) *Blackwell handbook of social psychology, vol 3: Group processes*. (pp. 425-461). Oxford: Blackwell.

Abrams, D., Hogg, M.A. and Marques, J.M. (Eds.) (2005). *The social psychology of inclusion and exclusion*. New York: Psychology Press.

Abrams, D., Eller, A. and Bryant, J. (2006). An age apart: The effects of intergenerational contact and stereotype threat on performance and intergroup bias. *Psychology and Aging*, 21, 691-702.

Abrams, D. and Houston, D.M. (2006). *Equality, diversity and prejudice in Britain*. Report for the Cabinet Office Equalities Review. DCLG.

Abrams, D., Christian, J.N. and Gordon, D. (Eds.) (2007). *Multidisciplinary handbook of social exclusion research*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Abrams, D., Crisp, R.J., Marques, S., Fagg, E., Bedford, L. and Provias, D. (2008). Threat inoculation: Experienced and imagined intergenerational contact prevent stereotype threat effects on older people's math performance. *Psychology and Aging*, 23, 934-939.

Age Concern England (2004). *How Ageist is Britain?* London: Age Concern England.

Age Concern England (2008). *The age agenda 2008: Public policy and older people*. London: Age Concern England.

Age Concern England and Help the Aged (2009). *One voice: Shaping our ageing Society*. London: Age UK (registered trade name of merged charities Age Concern and Help the Aged).

Banks, J. and Tetlow, G. (2008). Extending working lives. In J. Banks, E. Breeze, C. Lessof and J. Nazroo (Eds.). *Living in the 21st century: Older people in England: The 2006 English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (Wave 3)*. [Online] Available from: www.ifs.org.uk/elsa/report08/ch2.pdf [Accessed December 2008].

Blanchard-Fields, F., Chen, Y. and Norris, L. (1997). Everyday problem solving across the adult life span: The influence of domain-specificity and cognitive appraisal. *Psychology and Aging*, 12, 684-693.

Bowling, A. (2005). *Ageing well: Quality of life in old age*. Open University Press.

Brown, R.J. and Hewstone, M. (2005). An integrative theory of intergroup contact. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 37, 255–343.

Carstensen, L.L. and Hartel, C.R. (Eds.) (2006). *When I'm 64*. National Research Council of the National Academies.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (second ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection (2006). *Living well in later life: A review of progress against the National Service Framework for Older People*. London: Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection.

Council of the European Union (2000). Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. *Office Journal of the European Communities*. 303/16.

Cuddy A., Norton, M. and Fiske, S. (2005). This old stereotype: The pervasiveness and persistence of the elderly stereotype. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61, 265-283.

Demakakos, P., Hacker, E. and Gjonça, E. (2006). Perceptions of Ageing In J. Banks, E. Breeze, C. Lessof and J. Nazroo (Eds.) *Retirement, health and relationships of the older population in England: The 2004 English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (Wave 2)*. [Online] Available from: http://www.ifs.org.uk/elsa/report06/ch11.pdf [Accessed December 2008].

Department of Work and Pensions (2005). *Opportunity Age*. [Online] Available from: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/ageing-society/strategy-and-publications/opportunity-age-first-report/[Accessed May 2009].

Department of Work and Pensions, (2006). *Link Age Plus*. [Online] Available from: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/ageing-society/resources-good-practice-reports/linkage-plus/[Accessed June 2009].

Department for Work and Pensions (2008a). *Age isn't an issue – Employers' guide to your 21st century workforce*. [Online] Available from: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/employers-guide-21-century.pdf [Accessed May 2009].

Department for Work and Pensions (2008b). *Preparing for our Ageing Society: A Discussion Paper*. [Online] Available from: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/ageingstrategy.pdf [Accessed July 2009].

Department for Work Pensions (2009). *Empowering engagement: a stronger voice for older people*. [Online] Available from: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/empowering-engagement-stronger-voice-older-people.pdf [Accessed July 2009].

Elbourne, J. (2008). *Review of older people's engagement with the Government*. [Online] Available from: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/john-elbourne-181108.pdf [Accessed July 2009].

Estes, C., Biggs, S. and Phillipson, C. (2003). *Social theory, social policy and ageing: A critical introduction*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Eurobaromoter Report 296 (2008). Discrimination in the European Union: Perceptions, Experiences and Attitudes. *Eurobaromoter Report 296: European Commission*. [Online] Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_296_en.pdf [Accessed December 2008]

European Population Committee of the Council of Europe (2006). *Recent demographic developments in Europe 2005*. Council of Europe Publishing.

Fee, L. (1999). *Assessing older people's health and social needs*. Health Education Authority.

Fiske, S.T, Cuddy, J.C., Glick, P. and Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 878-902.

Gaertner, S.L. and Dovidio, J.F. (2000). *Reducing intergroup bias: the Common Ingroup Identity Model*. Philadelphia, Psychology Press.

Golub, S., Filipowicz, A. and Langer, E. (2002). Acting your age in T. Nelson (Ed). *Ageism: Stereotyping and prejudice against older persons* (pp 277-294). London: MIT Press.

Hagestad, O. and Uhlenburg, P. (2005). The social separation of old and young: a root of ageism. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61, 342-360.

Hess, T.M., Auman, C., Colcombe, S.J. and Rahhal, T.A. (2003). The impact of stereotype threat on age differences in memory performance. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 58, 3–11.

HM Government (2007). *PSA Delivery agreement 17: Tackle poverty and promote greater well being in later life*. Crown. [Online] Available from: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/pbr_csr07_psa17.pdf [Accessed June 2009].

HM Government (2009). *Building a society for all ages*. Crown.

Ipsos MORI polling (2008). In Age Concern England and Help the Aged (2009) *One Voice: Shaping our Ageing Society*. London: Age UK.

Jefferies, J. (2005). *The UK population, past present and future. Focus on People and Migration*. [Online] Available from: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/fom2005/01_FOPM_Population.pdf [Accessed June 2009].

Jost, J.T. and Banaji, M.R. (1994). The role of stereotyping in system justification and the production of false consciousness. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 22, 1-27.

Just Ageing? (2009). *Socio-economic inequalities in older people's access to and use of public services*. Equality and Human Rights Commission and Age UK.

Krauss, L., Whitbourne, S. and Sneed, J. (2002). The paradox of well-being, identity processes and stereotype threat. In T. Nelson (Ed.) Ageism: Prejudice against our feared future self. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2005, 61.

Levy, B. and Banaji, M. (2002). Implicit ageism. In T. Nelson (Ed.) *Ageism: Stereotyping and prejudice against older people*. (pp. 49-76). London: MIT Press.

Marsh, A. and Sahin-Dikmen, M. (2002). Discrimination in Europe. *Eurobarometer Report 168: European Commission*. [Online] Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_168_exec.sum_en.pdf [Assessed December 2008]

Marsh, A. and Sahin-Dikmen, M. (2002). *Discrimination in Europe: Report B*. Policy Studies Institute. London. [Online] Available from http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_168_Breport_en.pdf [Accessed December 2008]

Montepare, J. and Zebrowitz, L. (2002). A social-developmental view of ageism. In T. Nelson (Ed.) *Ageism: Stereotyping and prejudice against older people*. (pp. 77-125). London: MIT Press.

Nelson, T. (Ed.) (2005). Ageism: Prejudice against our feared future self. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2005, 61 (2).

Office for National Statistics (2008). Family Spending. In Office for National Statistics, *Expenditure and Food Survey*. [Online] Available from: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=284 [Accessed December 2008]

Office for National Statistics (2008a). *Population Change*. [Online] Available from: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?ID=950 [Accessed May 2008]

Office for National Statistics (2008b). *Ageing*. [Online] Available from: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=949 [Accessed June 2009]

Office for National Statistics (2009). *Key Population and Vital Statistics 2007*. [Online] Available from: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/KPVS34-2007/KPVS2007.pdf [Accessed June 2009]

Pasupathi, M. and Löckenhoff, C. (2002). Ageist behaviour. In T. Nelson (Ed.) *Ageism: Stereotyping and prejudice against older people*. (pp. 201-246). London: MIT Press.

Pettigrew, T.F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 47, 65-85.

Ray, S., Sharp, E. and Abrams, D. (2006). *Age discrimination 2006: A benchmark for public attitudes*. London: Age Concern England, Policy Unit.

Riek, B.M., Ania, W.W. and Gaertner, S.L. (2006). Intergroup threat and outgroup attitudes: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10, 336-353.

Rothon, C. and Heath, A. (2003). Trends in racial prejudice. In A. Park, J. Curtice, L. Jarvis and C. Bromley (Eds.) *British social attitudes – continuity and change over two decades*, Sage, London, 2003.

Schneider, D.J. (2004). *The psychology of stereotyping*. New York: Guildford Press.

Sidell, M. (1995). *Health in old age: Myth, mystery and management*. Open University Press.

Social Exclusion Unit (2006). A sure start to Later Life. [Online] Available from: http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/surestart [Accessed June 2009]

Tabachnick, B.G. and Fidell, L.S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics* (forth ed.). Allyn and Bacon.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tajfel, H. and Turner, J.C. (1986). The social identity theory of inter-group behavior. In S. Worchel and L.W. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup relations*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

The Equalities Review (2006). *The Equalities Review: Interim report for consultation. Cabinet Office*. [Online] Available from: http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/equalitiesreview/upload/assets/www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk/interim_report.pdf [Accessed July 2009]

Third Sector First (2005). *Things to do, places to go: promoting mental health and well-being in later life*. London: Age Concern England and the Mental Health Foundation.

Walker, A. (1993). *Age and attitudes. Eurobarometer Report 69: European Commission*. [Online] Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_069_en.pdf [Accessed December 2008]

Warr, P. (1999). Job performance and the ageing workforce. In N. Chmiel (Ed.). *An Introduction to work and organisationalpPsychology – A European Perspective*. Blackwell.

Watt, P. and Blair, I. (2009). *The business case for LinkAge Plus*. Department of Work and Pensions Research Report No. 573. Crown.

Wilkinson, J. and Ferraro, K. (2002). Thirty years of ageism research. In Nelson, T. (Ed.) *Ageism: Stereotyping and prejudice against older people*. (pp. 339-358). London: MIT Press.