



Age Demands Action Campaign Toolkit

Campaign with us to #ExposeAgeism

ADA
Age Demands Action

HelpAge
International

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What is Age Demands Action?

We are a group of grassroots campaigners across the world who are taking action to expose ageism. We campaign for legislative change, raise awareness of the damage that ageism can do, and challenge stereotypes of older age.

Our campaigns are planned and run by older people themselves and our HelpAge network members. Each campaign targets the different ways that ageism is expressed.

Check out our campaign principles in [Annex 1](#).



Fundación Horizontes (Bolivia)

Why should we campaign?

Everyone, everywhere has the right to freedom, equality and a life lived in dignity. But as we grow older, we may face stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination because of our age. This stops us from enjoying our human rights equally with others.

Right now, we are at a critical moment. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed how widespread and deeply-rooted ageism is in our societies. We saw older people stereotyped as frail, vulnerable and unable to make decisions for themselves. And we saw age limits put on who could access healthcare, or who could leave their homes.

As we grow older our lives do not become disposable. Older people are us. They are our family members, our caregivers, our workers and neighbours. When we are older, we should be able to enjoy our human rights in the same way as everyone else.

Now is the time to take action. We must campaign to expose ageism in all its forms.

Our goal

Our human rights do not diminish as we get older. We want to achieve a world where we are recognized and respected as individuals, embraced equally, and treated fairly and without discrimination in older age.

Securing rights in older age means securing rights for everyone. Protecting our rights in older age now will impact generations to come.

What is ageism?

Ageism is “the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age”¹.

It is a systemic problem. This means parts of society, including individuals and institutions, work together to sustain ageist attitudes, actions or language in laws, policies, practices or culture². Ageist actions are influenced by our thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs and social norms.

To challenge ageism effectively, we have to find ways to disrupt the system that keeps ageism alive.

Expressions of ageism

Ageism takes many different forms. We see it at all levels of society. It can be direct discrimination, or it can be indirect.

It is up to you to analyse how ageism is being expressed in your own context. Here are some examples:

- Denial of access to health services, and treatments
- Design of laws and policies that directly discriminate against older people, such as age-based lockdown measures in COVID-19
- Statistical and data systems that don't count older people. For instance, data on domestic violence often excludes women over a certain age
- Perpetration of verbal, physical, financial and sexual abuse against older women and older men

- Stereotypical and discriminatory language used by media, politicians and the public when talking about older people and older age.

How to decide if something is age discrimination

We need to ask:

1. Is age the basis on which a decision is made, action is taken, or no action is taken?
2. Does this have a negative impact on the person's rights compared to people of a different age?

If the answer is yes to both, then this is direct age discrimination.

If the answer to question 1 is no, but the answer to question 2 is yes, this is indirect age discrimination.

See [Annex 2](#) for examples.

¹ <https://www.who.int/ageing/ageism/en/>

² <https://www.age-platform.eu/publications/age-position-structural-ageism>

Steps to plan your campaign

You may choose to plan a big campaign over a number of years to secure major change. Or you may choose to plan shorter-term campaigns to respond to specific issues over a period of weeks or months.

In either case, there are seven steps to plan your campaign.

- a) Analyse the issue
- b) Write your objective
- c) Choose your target
- d) Write your key messages
- e) Choose your tactics
- f) Take action
- g) Monitor and evaluate.

Check out the campaign planning cycle in [Annex 3](#).

Older people's voices

Older people must be the leading voices at every stage of your campaign. We must make sure that we put older people's voices at the front and centre of our campaigns.

1. Older people's unique perspectives should be central to the design of your campaign.
2. Older people's stories and voices should be central to your campaign communications.
3. Older people should be supported to speak up on the issues most important to them
4. Consult with older people about the issue you wish to campaign on and ask them to lead on or take part in campaign actions where it is possible.



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Analyse the issue

This is where you identify a problem and what is driving it. Gather as much information as you can. Then you can decide where you think you can achieve change, and then plan your campaign.

Here are some ways you can find out more about the problem:

Speak to older people

Speak to older people about their experiences about the problem. Listen to older people from different backgrounds including older women, older men, people with disabilities, and people living in different settings. Their experiences should inform what you want to campaign on, and what your key messages are.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, speak to older people online or over the phone, so that you do not spread or contract the virus.

If they have had experiences of discrimination or have experienced something traumatic, make sure you can advise them on where they can go to seek support or make a complaint. For instance, they can complain to your national human rights institution, equalities commission or ombudsman.

If you want to use older people's stories in your communications later on, you must let that person know what the information will be used for, and gain informed consent from them to use it.

Explore what is driving the problem

The ageism that we see on the surface is driven by our thoughts, feelings, social norms, values and beliefs. You can

find guidance to brainstorm and analyse these drivers in HelpAge's [Exploring Systemic Ageism: A Practical Guide for Campaigners](#).



Do a context analysis

Take some time to understand the different trends that are affecting the issue you want to solve. Brainstorm the political, economic, social, environmental and technological changes that are happening in your context. Then, look at how they connect to the visible expressions of ageism, as well as the values, beliefs and social norms that you have identified.

Look at what is working in your favour

What are the thoughts, feelings, social norms, values and beliefs that are working in your favour? Consider who else is working on these issues, and what other changes are happening that may help us to achieve our goal. There may be positive things already happening that you can leverage to achieve change.

Decide where you want to intervene

Now that you have explored the problem, it is time to narrow down what you want to focus your campaign on. Take a look at your lily pond analysis, your context analysis and your analysis of what is working in your favour. Decide where in this system you think you can make a change.

Write your objective

Now, you can decide where you think you can achieve change, and in what timeframe. Your objective must be:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Timebound

For example:

By June 2021, the Guardian newspaper will have pledged to end the use of stereotypical language to describe older people, and instead pledge to portray older age in all its diversity.

By December 2024, the government of Germajland will have drafted, passed, and implemented equalities legislation.

Choose your targets

Who can make the change that you want to see? You need to identify who is your primary target – this the person who can ultimately make the change you want to see. [This Power Mapping resource](#)³ can help you map your stakeholders by how influential they are and how much they agree with your issue, and help you map out the routes to influence your primary target (it is available in different languages).



<https://www.beautifultrouble.org/toolbox/#/tool/power-mapping>

Be specific about your primary target. Name a person within an organisation or body – don't only name the organisation or body itself. For instance, your primary target may be Mrs J Smith, Ministry of Health or Mr S Jones, ageing correspondent at The Daily Star.

³ <https://beautifulrising.org/tool/power-mapping>

Write your key messages

Key messages are the core messages you want your target to hear and remember. Use key messages in all of your tactics. You may find you need to respond to emerging issues, so you may need a set of key messages to each issue you want to respond to.

Make sure these are clear, precise, memorable and backed up by the evidence you have found in your analysis. Here is a template to help you:

1. What you are asking for - a brief statement of what you want to change. It should be positive and inspiring
2. The reason for the "ask" - why the campaign wants to achieve this, why something has to change, or the reason behind the campaign action
3. What is at stake - what will happen if this change does not happen
4. The action you want your target to take. Make it clear and specific.

Adapted from <https://www.endvawnow.org/>



Choose your tactics

Which tactics will get the attention of your primary and secondary targets? Think about what you want to say, who you want to say it to, and the best way to reach them.

You may need to employ different tactics at different times throughout your campaign. Map out a timeline for when you will implement each tactic. You will need to be flexible and respond to events as they happen.

Ask older people to lead and take part in campaign actions where it is possible to do so, without putting them at risk of contracting COVID-19.

You need to decide for yourself which tactics will be most effective to gain attention. And you can be as creative as you like! Here are some examples to get you started:

- Online meetings with targets
- Reaching targets through [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).
- Social media campaigns at key times
- Direct letter-writing
- Open letters
- Set up a petition using a tool like [change.org](#) (read their guidance first to make your petition effective).
- Make complaints about instances of discrimination to your national human rights institution, equalities commission, or ombudsman
- Engaging with radio to get messages out
- Write press releases or statements in reaction to policy decisions or events. Write opinion editorials, or letters to newspaper editors. See [Annex 4 and 5](#) for templates.

- Engage with journalists to ask decisionmakers questions on your behalf at press conferences or other forums. Email them, call them, or find them on social media like Twitter.
- Work in coalition with other organisations to amplify your messages and reach a wider audience.
- Marches, demonstrations, protests or other mass meetings
- Using arts and crafts to get a message across
- Investigating, writing and releasing reports on an issue

Take action!

Get out there and start campaigning!

Monitor the situation and your progress

Constantly monitor the situation. Go back to your context analysis. Has anything changed? Keep monitoring instances of ageism and the impact of responses on older people's rights. You may need to change your target or come up with new campaign tactics, depending on developments during the pandemic.

Campaigning for a UN Convention

One of the key solutions to ending ageism is to secure a new United Nations Convention on the rights of older people. This would trigger legal and social changes, along with better access to services for older people. [You can find lots of campaigning resources on our website here.](#)

Useful resources

Ageism

The World Health Organisation and other UN agencies have released a [Global Report on Ageism](#), which has lots of information and statistics.

Check out HelpAge's guide to [Tackling ageism through consciousness raising](#) for starting conversations with older people about ageism.

Watch [these short animations](#) to test your own assumptions.

Campaigning

You can find lots of good campaigning tools at the [Blueprints for Change website](#) and [Mobilisation Lab](#) website.

Communications

[The Frameworks Institute](#) has useful toolkits on communicating about [COVID-19, elder abuse](#) and [ageing](#)

COVID-19

Find our policy brief on older people and COVID-19 here - [HelpAge Brief - Everyone Matters](#)

Find policy briefs from the United Nations below:

- [COVID-19 and Human Rights](#)
- [Policy brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons](#)

Check out the campaign for a [People's Vaccine](#) to ensure that EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE, has access to a vaccine.

Contact us

Want to join the campaign? Email us at campaigns@helpage.org!

Annex 1: Age Demands Action Campaigning Principles

We seek for everyone participating in Age Demands Action to follow these principles when designing campaign strategies, undertaking campaigning actions, and applying for funding.

We believe we have a right to be empowered and informed citizens in older age who can exercise our voices, be heard by those with power, and effect change. This means we collaborate with older people to decide on what we want to achieve in our campaigns and how we are going to get there.

We are committed to finding innovative ways to bring the voices of those most marginalised to the forefront of our actions. We find ways to harness older individuals' existing power and build the power of those with less.

Human rights are at the heart of everything we do. We want a shift from laws, policies and practices that make us dependant, to ones that mean we have autonomy, dignity, equality, non-discrimination and independence in older age.

We are in this for the long term. One-off actions aren't enough to end ageism. We take sustained courses of actions to build power, surprise people and create change.

We cannot tackle ageism without tackling other forms of discrimination too. That's why we are committed to taking an intersectional approach and mainstreaming gender equality into everything that we do.

We seek to form partnerships and identify allies who are a part of other movements. By working with others, we can strengthen our campaigns and make sure we take an intersectional approach.

We are committed to building evidence of how ageism manifests itself and the impact it has. But we know enough about how ageism manifests within ourselves, in the attitudes of others, and throughout systems and structures, to push ahead and **act now**.

Securing rights in older age means securing rights for everyone. We seek to engage for people of all ages to create impact to last for generations to come.

Campaigning is fun! We must stay motivated for the journey ahead, so we make sure to have fun when we take action. Together we take time to celebrate our achievements as a global campaign.



Annex 2: Assessing age discrimination

To decide whether something is age discrimination, we can look at two things:

1. Have older people been discriminated against?
2. Have older people been denied any of their rights?

To work out if older people have been discriminated against because of their age use the table below:

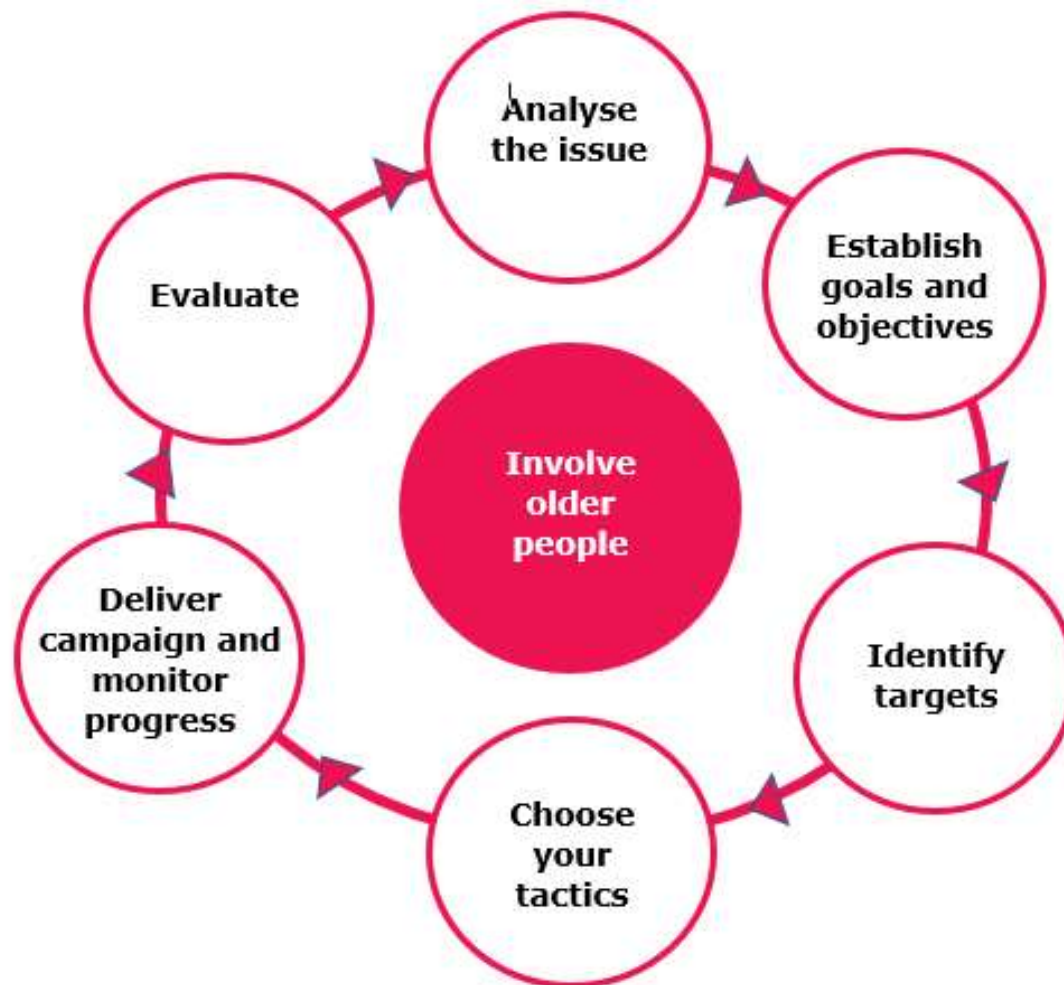
Question 1: Is a decision or action (or the lack of it) based on age?	Question 2: Does this decision or action (or the lack of it) have a negative impact on the older person's rights compared to younger people?	Outcome
Yes	Yes	Age discrimination
No	Yes	Indirect age discrimination
Yes	No	No age discrimination

For example:

Examples of decision or action	Question 1: Is the decision or action (or lack of it) based on age?	Question 2: Does this decision or action have a negative impact on the older person's rights compared to younger people?	Outcome
Health: Age limits are being used to restrict access to healthcare because there are limited medical resources, such as ventilators or hospital beds	Yes	Yes	Age discrimination which denies older people's right to healthcare
Women: Domestic violence prevention and support services do not have an age criteria but are	No	Yes	Indirect age discrimination which denies older women's right to freedom from

designed in a way that exclude older women			violence, abuse and neglect
Economy: Pension payments are temporarily increased to cover the rise in food prices during lockdown	Yes	No	No discrimination

Annex 3: Campaign cycle



Annex 4: Template for letter to decisionmakers

Dear [name of person receiving letter]

[Start by saying who you are and summarise why you are writing to them]

[Explain what you are asking this person to do. Include more about the problem you want solved and its impact on older people]

[Insert key statistics and quotes from older people as evidence to support your claims]

[Explain what is at stake if this problem is not tackled]

[End with a clear, specific ask. What action do you want this person to take?]

[Provide your contact details so they can respond to you. DO NOT do this for an **open** letter]

[Sign off with your name, and names of other supporters].

Annex 5: Position statement template

Position statements can be powerful, especially when done in collaboration with other civil society organisations as they signal a collective voice. They can be posted on websites, shared with the media or via social media, and sent directly to decision-makers.

You can adapt this position statement into a letter to send to newspaper editors.

[Start by summarising your position on the issue in one or two sentences]

[Explain more about the issue, your position on it, and its impact on older people]

[Provide a short personal quote from an older person]

[Explain what you want your target stakeholder to do about the issue]

[End with a short summary of your position and what you want your target stakeholder to do]

[List all the organisations that support your statement]