

Age Demands Action campaign toolkit for the International Day of Older Persons 2020

Ageism in the time of COVID-19: challenging discrimination.

Welcome!

Thank you for downloading this toolkit! If this is your first time campaigning with us, we welcome you to the Age Demands Action family.

This International Day of Older Persons is a chance for us to come together to challenge the ageism that COVID-19 has exposed.

The evidence is clear that people in older age are among those most at risk of complications from COVID-19. Yet, the descriptions of COVID-19 as a disease of older people is exacerbating stereotypes and prejudice, and leading to age discrimination.

We have seen decisionmakers and media stereotype older people as frail and vulnerable. And we have seen many governments put age-based restrictions in place, which means these stereotypes are perpetuated.

1st October is our time to challenge stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. **This toolkit will help you to plan a campaign for the International Day of Older Persons and beyond. It suggests physically distanced actions that you can take to challenge ageism.**

What do we want to achieve?

We want Age Demands Action campaigners to challenge ageism in their contexts, and to keep challenging ageism beyond the International Day of Older Persons.

HelpAge International will celebrate the achievements of Age Demands Action campaigners who have challenged ageism during the pandemic. We will inspire others to challenge and expose ageism when they see it, by demonstrating how to recognise stereotypes, prejudice and age discrimination.

What is ageism?

Ageism is "the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age" (WHO). It means being treated unfairly because of your age.

Stereotypes are generalisations about a group of people (e.g. older people are frail). **Prejudice** is the feelings we have towards a group of people (e.g. older people should not work). **Discrimination** is treating a person unfairly based on a characteristic like age (e.g. older people are forced to retire at a certain age).

Let us know your plans for IDOP by [taking our survey here!](#)

Plan your campaign

This section takes you step-by-step through planning a campaign for IDOP. By the end of it, you will know how ageism is manifesting itself in your country, what you are asking your target to do about it, and what tactics you can use to encourage your target to make the change you want to see.

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



© FOPDEV. *I am older, but I have the skills to do many things*

Analyse the issue

1. Research what is happening in your country

Before you plan your campaign, you need to have a good understanding of the measures taken by your government to control COVID-19 so far and how older people are being talked about.

- Read newspapers, online articles, and government websites to find out what policies have been implemented so far, and what might be planned for the future
- Speak to contacts you have in government, the media and/or civil society
- Speak to older people from different backgrounds
- Read newspapers and online articles to understand how older people are being portrayed in the media. Look at the words and photographs that are used. Are older people being stereotyped?

2. Decide which COVID-19 measures are ageist

Check out the table in [Annex 1](#) to help you decide if a measure has discriminated against older people on the basis of their age.

3. Find out what effects policies have had on older people

Older people's voices must be at the front and centre of our campaigns. Speak with older people from different backgrounds (whilst respecting physical distancing) to understand how the pandemic has affected their lives so far.

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 the National Human Rights Institution, equalities commission or ombudsman about discrimination. Check what complaints mechanisms different services or programmes provide.

Write your objective

Use the results from your research to decide what you want to achieve from your IDOP campaign.

Your objective should be:

Specific. Be clear about the result you want.

Measurable. What will you measure to know you have achieved your objective?

Achievable. Be realistic about what you can achieve in a short period of time.

Relevant. The objective must be relevant to the goals of Age Demands Action to challenge and expose ageism.

Timebound. By which date will you achieve your goal?

Examples:

By November 2020 (a month after IDOP), the Equalities Minister will have made a commitment in writing to draft age discrimination legislation.

By 5 November 2020, The Guardian newspaper will have pledged in writing to end the use of stereotypical language to describe older people, and instead portray older people in all their diversity.

Decide who you want to target

Who has the power to make the change that you want to see? You need to identify who is your primary target – this is **the person** who can ultimately make the change you want to see. Name *a specific person* within government or an organisation.

For instance, your primary target may be Mrs J Smith, Ministry of Health *or* Mr S Jones, ageing correspondent at The Daily Star.

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 actions (see next sub-section). Make sure these are clear, precise, memorable and backed up by the evidence you have found in your analysis. Your key messages should include:

1. What you are asking for - a brief statement of what you want to change.
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/>

[The Frameworks Institute](#) has useful guidance on how to be effective and inclusive in how we communicate about ageing issues.

Plan your actions

Think about what actions you can take that will get the attention of your campaign target. What will motivate your target to make the change you want them to make? Ensure that any actions you take are in line with COVID-19 measures, and that you keep yourself and your colleagues safe.

Here are some ideas:

- Write directly to your target. See [Annex 2](#) for a letter template. Your letter will be stronger if it is signed by multiple civil society organisations
- Write an open letter to your target. If you feel you will have more influence by showing public support for your issue, an open letter published on your website and social media accounts may be more effective than a direct letter
- Ask older people to send letters to your target
- Set up an offline petition or an online 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
- Engage with radio to get messages out
- Write statements in reaction to policy decisions or events. Write opinion editorials, position statements or letters to newspaper editors (see [Annex 3](#))
- Engage with journalists to ask decisionmakers questions on your behalf at press conferences with decisionmakers or other forums. Email them, call them, or find them on social media like Twitter or LinkedIn.

Check your progress

Is your campaign working? Did you reach your objective? Keep track of how effective your campaign actions are. Do some analysis at the end of your campaign to see how close you were to reaching your objective.

If at first you don't succeed, try and try again! Keep campaigning beyond IDOP to achieve change for older people.



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Let us know what you are doing

We want to know how you will challenge and expose ageism! Let us know your plans for IDOP by [taking our survey here!](#)

Find useful resources on [our COVID-19 webpage](#). **We will release a social media toolkit before IDOP, so please keep reading our [Age Demands Action eNewsletter!](#)**

GOOD LUCK!

Annex 1: 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 (or the lack of it) 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	Yes	Yes	Age discrimination which denies older

resources, such as ventilators or hospital beds			people's right to healthcare
Women: Domestic violence prevention and support services do not have an age criteria but are designed in a way that exclude older women	No	Yes	Indirect age discrimination which denies older women's right to freedom from violence, abuse and neglect
Economy: Pension payments are temporarily increased to cover the rise in food prices during lockdown	Yes	No	No discrimination

Annex 2: 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].

Annex 3: 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]