



# WE Party Conference

15 – 18 October 2020

**Title:** Combating Ageism requires action now

**Proposed by:** WE Windsor branch

**Proposer:** Deborah Mason

**Type of motion:** Policy motion

**Motion Text:**

1 The Women's Equality Party Conference 2020

2 *Notes that*

- 3 • ageism disproportionately affects women, both young and old.
- 4 • ageism and ageist stereotypes affect public health and our ability to age well
- 5 • women are disproportionately involved in dealing with the outcomes of a society that
- 6 doesn't age well.

7 The Women's Equality Party *calls* for:

- 8 • The UK Government (and devolved governments of Scotland, Wales & Northern  
9 Ireland where appropriate):
  - 10 ○ to ensure (by legislation if necessary) that all post-16 education, career-starting,  
11 career-boosting opportunities are to be available to all ages, taking into account  
12 different country-level systems and the need for safeguarding in schools (which  
13 may then require additional provision for those over 20). Where these are  
14 needed to boost/start careers post education, the educational attainment level +  
15 a number of years should be used as criteria rather than specific age bands e.g.  
16 'graduated with first degree within the last 5 years' rather than 'under 25'. Many  
17 people (particularly those facing multiple discriminations) miss out on tertiary  
18 education when they are young; they should not be penalised for returning to  
19 education later in life.
  - 20 ○ to institute an independent review of the representation of older people (aged  
21 55+) in the media (broadcast, online and in print, with particular focus on visual  
22 media).
- 23 • The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) to include "age" in the  
24 Editors' Code of Practice as a characteristic by which journalists must not  
25 discriminate.



- The beauty industry (both commercial firms and journalists) to stop using the term anti-ageing, replacing it with alternative phrases – for example ‘formulated for older skin’ or ‘addressing the needs of uv-damaged skin’.
- Providers of unconscious bias training to include ageism in their training.

### **Motion rationale:**

#### Ageism limits opportunity

When the Turner Prize removed its upper age limit it was immediately won by a black woman artist in her 60s, Lubaina Himid. The removal of the age limit recognised that artists could ‘peak’ at any age and make breakthroughs in their work. Implicit in this removal and the success of Himid is the fact that those facing multiple discriminations will often take longer to reach that peak – taking the rocky untrodden path without a map or guide. Meanwhile, on the other side of the mountain, others are racing to the top on the easiest path with the best equipment and guides and signs to show them the way.

Age discrimination also affects the young, for example the minimum wage is set lower for people under 25 even though they are doing the same work. Other examples can be found here: <https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/age-equality-five-examples-discrimination-young-workers/>.

#### Age discrimination affects employment of women:

In a 2015 study (revised in 2017) the authors concluded "there is robust evidence of age discrimination in hiring against older women, especially those nearing retirement age. But we find there is considerably less evidence of age discrimination against men after correcting for the potential biases this study addresses."

'Is it harder for older women to find jobs? New and improved evidence from a field experiment'  
David Neuman, Ian Burn, Patrick Button, National Bureau for Economic Research  
<https://www.nber.org/papers/w21669.pdf>

#### Ageism is wide-spread:

2 in 5/40% of 18-24 year olds believe dementia is inescapable.

1 in 4/25% of 18-34 year olds think it is normal to be unhappy and depressed when you are old.

1 in 4/24% of 18-34 year olds think older people can never really be thought of as attractive.

['Age Old Question' pub by Royal Society for Public Health 2018 <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/policy/older-people/that-age-old-question.html>]

#### How ageism affects public health/ageing well

Negative attitudes form in childhood (as young as 6) and are reinforced through the media, the beauty industry, lack of contact with older people, age based prejudice in the workplace and age based prejudice on social media (e.g. 'OK Boomer' 'Snowflake').

Stereotypes form, leading to:

- Direct age-based discrimination
- Social exclusion



- 63 • Mental health
- 64 • Employment issues
- 65 • Loss of other opportunities due to age band limits.

66 We apply negative stereotypes to ourselves and this leads to self-limiting behaviour: people with  
67 negative attitudes to ageing live, on average, 7.5 years less than those with positive attitudes.

68 Negative attitudes can also increase the potential for age related impairments such as memory  
69 loss, loss of physical function, impaired ability to recover from illness.

70 Reducing ageism therefore improves the health of the whole nation - young and old - and gives  
71 longer life expectancy to everyone. [ibid]