



Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
House of Commons
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By email

Dear Dame Caroline,

Ref: Advertising Standards Authority research into the Depiction of Older People in Ads

I'm writing on behalf of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to share our new [research](#) into the 'Depiction of Older People in Ads'.

In recent times, the ASA has noticed an increase in discussions about the portrayal of older people in the media, including in advertising. In order to understand the public's perspective on how older people are depicted in ads, the ASA commissioned research to understand to what extent, and how, certain depictions of older people in ads can give rise to offence and/or harm. Our research, involving focus groups and a survey of over 4,000 UK adults, signals that advertising needs to catch up with the modern reality of ageing.

Our report found that over a third (35%) of the UK population agree that older people tend to be negatively stereotyped in ads and nearly half of the UK public said ads using humour at the expense of older people could cause offence. Our findings also highlight the problem of ad targeting, with older people reporting feeling 'bombarded' with ads for funeral or cremation services, life insurance and care homes. Despite being active, engaged consumers, many feel overlooked. In fact, 42% of people in the UK believe older age groups are underrepresented in and omitted from ads, particularly in sectors like fashion, technology, beauty, and everyday household products.

We understand that people of all ages want to see more authentic and realistic portrayals of older people. The public told us that they want to see ads feature 'real' older people, for them to focus on individuals rather than their age, and to portray a wide range of

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experiences. This presents a significant opportunity for the ad industry to drive change in the way we view 'getting older'. Advertising has an impact on people's perceptions of older people, demonstrating that brands and advertisers can lead change by challenging stereotypes and reflecting the true diversity of later life.

The Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP), the ASA's sister body who write the advertising rules, will be reviewing our findings, but we are not currently proposing any new rules. We hope that by sharing this research, advertisers will understand how some portrayals of older people are landing with the public today – and where there may be unintended consequences.

The CAP Executive will, however, consider the evidence and explore whether further guidance is necessary to help advertisers identify the types of representation that have the potential to be problematic under the Advertising Codes. We will also take our research findings into account when assessing complaints about the depiction of older people in ads. The ASA will, at the end of Q2 2026, conduct a review of its decisions in complaints relating to the portrayal of older people since publication of the research, and present its findings to the ASA Council, CAP and BCAP to help ensure it is drawing the line in the right place.

If you have any questions, we would be delighted to share more information with the Committee.

Kind Regards,

Grace Curley
Public Affairs Adviser