

Rights and Duty

The voice of older persons as rights holders

Age & Opportunity & Straightforward Research and Development

Age & Opportunity

We are Age & Opportunity, the national organisation that provides a range of opportunities for older people who want to get more involved in arts and culture, sport and physical activity, civic engagement and personal development. Our aim is to enable the best quality of life for us all as we age, where we can be more active, more visible, more creative, more connected and more confident. One of our key priorities is to truly understand what ageing in Ireland means for people today. We do this by increasing the dialogue we have with older persons – conducting regular research through focus groups and workshops and by generating more opportunities for feedback across all of our programmes.

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Research and Development

Straightforward Research and Development is a Professional Research and Evaluation Practice established in 2001. We have over 20 years' specialist experience in completing strategic planning, research and evaluation assignments within the statutory, voluntary/not-for-profit and private sectors.

We have provided straightforward research solutions and insightful analysis for clients in the public, private and voluntary sectors over the past two decades.

We specialise in

- Consultation
- Data analysis and statistical research
- External Evaluations at project, programme and policy level

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Coimisiún na hÉireann
um Chearta an Duine
agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and
Equality Commission

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Section 1: Executive Summary

This research was commissioned by Age & Opportunity to carry out an older person led study about older persons' perceptions of themselves as rights holders and how their rights are compromised by ageism.

Findings


1. 302 older people responded to the survey distributed through age sector forums throughout Ireland.
2. Almost 40% of respondents indicated that they feel they had been treated unfairly on the basis of their age at some point in the past. Experience of being treated unfairly on the basis of age was relatively consistent across the four age groups responding to the survey.
3. Two-thirds (66%) of older people indicated that they have challenged or would challenge someone if they felt treated badly because of their age.
4. 61% of respondents indicated that they were aware that if they felt discriminated against, they knew they could do something about it, however more than 39% of respondents indicated that they did not know that they could challenge a person or service if they felt discriminated against.
5. The majority (more than 46%) indicated that they would approach a friend if they felt they needed support after being treated badly, followed by almost 40% indicating Age & Opportunity and another national age sector NGO.

Awareness of Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

6. Almost three quarters of respondents (72%) had not heard of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty in advance of completing this consultation process.
7. While a significant proportion of respondents had not heard of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, a high proportion were aware that there is a duty on public sector organisations to eliminate discrimination (74%), promote equality of opportunity (74%) and protect our human rights (78%).
8. A high proportion of respondents were aware that Ireland's equality laws outlaw discrimination on the basis of nine characteristics. The highest degree of awareness was for protection of discrimination on the basis of disability (77.5%), followed by gender (75.2%) and civil status 73.8%).

Awareness of status as a 'rights holder'

9. 35% of respondents were aware that they were 'rights holders' on the basis of their age.
10. The vast majority of respondents (88%) do not feel that government take enough notice of the needs of older people when planning services. Almost half of



respondents think that private sector business takes enough notice of the needs of older people and make adjustments to services to allow for their needs.

Differential Policy and service impact on older people

11. A high percentage of respondents felt that policies on financial services, employment, and health and social care have a differential impact on older people. Other significant policy impacts include insurance, transportation, and housing.
12. A high percentage of respondents felt that the services provided by insurance and banks were unfair to older people.

State Covid-19 response as experienced by older persons as rights holders

13. More than half of respondents indicated that they either did not like being singled out, or resented the fact they were advised to 'cocoon' during the pandemic.
14. Older people's responses highlighted a range of opinions and experiences related to cocooning during the pandemic, with some individuals viewing it as protective while others found it restrictive and potentially discriminatory based on age.

Prevalence and impact of ageism in Ireland

15. The majority of respondents felt that ageism is present in society in general (72%) and more than half of respondents felt that it was present in both private companies and government (61% and 51% respectively).
16. 70% of respondents indicated that they feel there is a better way to engage older people in services that affect them.
17. Respondents suggested giving older people a platform for their opinions, involving them in decision-making processes, ensuring representation in government and committees, and addressing age-related discrimination and challenges.

Section 2: Background and Introduction

This research was commissioned by Age & Opportunity to carry out an older person led study about older persons' perceptions of themselves as rights holders and how their rights are compromised by ageism. The project sought to build on learnings from Age & Opportunity's previous initiative 'Is Ageism Ever Acceptable?' – a series of Citizen Assembly style gatherings exploring the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on older persons. This initiative also received funding from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Grants Scheme and produced evidence that older persons often do not perceive themselves as rights holders.

It is intended to share the findings and recommendations of this project with the key relevant public bodies involved in developing inclusive policy and practices with the intention of supporting their implementation of Section 42 of IHREC ACT 2014 - The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. Based on a dual premise that (1) if older persons saw themselves as rights holders they would have increased capacity to hold duty bearers to account and (2) that increased awareness of the Duty among older persons will support adherence by public bodies to the Duty, the research has 5 objectives:

- Spotlight and recommend solutions to address elements of institutional ageism across public bodies;
- Raise awareness about the prevalence and impact of ageism in Ireland;
- Review and assess the State Covid-19 response as experienced by older persons as rights holders;
- Assess the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups (in this case, older persons) and make recommendations to give older persons a voice and deepen dialogue with duty bearers;
- Make recommendations for how the State should prepare to protect vulnerable groups in future years/pandemics/analogous situations.

As part of Age & Opportunity's commitment to PPI (Personal Public Involvement) the research involved older persons from the beginning. We are extremely grateful for the input of Age & Opportunity's PPI group members to the design, implementation and analysis of this research. We trust that their involvement and expertise will strengthen the findings, build skills in the age sector and sustain the legacy of this research across Ireland. The following members of our PPI group were invaluable to the completion of this project:

Patricia Dawson
John Flynn
Dore Fischer
Angela Gallagher

Joan Kavanagh
Lynda Mc Avinue
Bridie O' Reilly

This project was led by Age & Opportunity's Policy, Research and Evaluation Manager, Mary Harkin, with the support of the Engage Programme team.

Section 3: Methodology

Age & Opportunity has commissioned Straightforward Research as partners and has completed a significant amount of research recently using and incorporating Personal and Public Involvement (PPI¹) processes and principles, including collaboration and partnership working.

PPI Principles were integrated into this research through inclusion of Age & Opportunity's pre-existing PPI group at all stages of the research as part of the research steering group. This also included representatives from Age & Opportunity and Straightforward Research and Development.

The research steering group met several times throughout the assignment:

- At the beginning of the research – to advise on the consultation and ensure it captured the range of human rights and equality issues potentially impacting on older people. Training on research methodologies and PPI processes was also provided to group members at this stage of the research.
- Once the research tool and project plan had been agreed. The group assisted with formulation of the research instrument, assertive outreach and active promotion of the consultation phase with peers across Ireland and within voluntary sector and statutory sector stakeholders.
- Following completion of the consultation phase, the steering group held a number of workshops online and in person to consider and analyse the responses, explore trends in data and propose recommendations.

A survey was designed by the steering group and administered online through Age & Opportunity's cohort of participants and partnership organisations using mailing lists, membership and social media.

In total, 302 responses were received to the survey. Section 4 of this report provides an analysis of the responses including cross-tabulation of the results by key metrics agreed with the steering group.

¹ Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) is the term used to describe the concept of involving ordinary people and local communities in the planning, commissioning, delivery and evaluation of the health and social care services they receive.

Section 4: Research Analysis

This section of the report provides analysis of the data from 302 survey returns from older people throughout Ireland. A preliminary analysis of the data was discussed by the research steering group and more focused analysis and cross-tabulation of data completed in the following paragraphs.

Unless stated otherwise, charts and tables in this section are based on 302 valid responses.

4.1 Demographics

4.1.1 Age Profile

The chart below highlights the age profile of respondents to the survey.

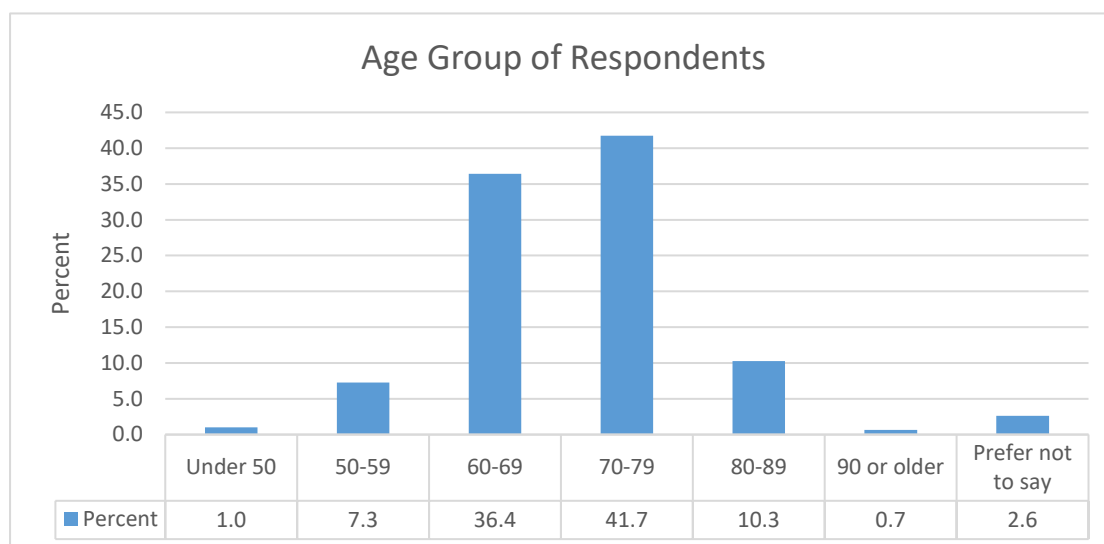


Figure 1 Respondent Age Profile

The chart shows that the highest percentage of respondents was in the 70-79 age group, followed by 60-69. A lower response rate was received from those under the age of 50 and those aged in their 80's and 90's². This was discussed by the steering group both before and after the consultation phase. While Age & Opportunity's programmes are largely aimed at people aged over 50, engagement from individuals in this age range has been lower than that experienced from those aged over 60 years of age.

² The survey was administered using online software and via email through Age & Opportunity's networks. This may account for a lower response rate from older people in their 80's and 90's given lower levels of digital literacy experienced in these older age groups.

4.1.2 Gender

The chart below shows the gender profile for responses to the survey.

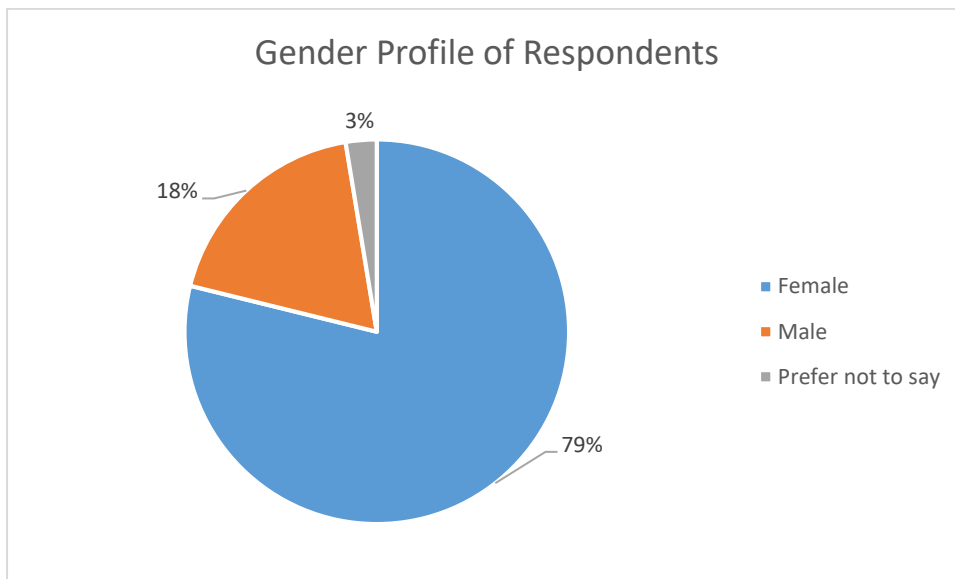


Figure 2 Respondents' Gender profile

The chart shows that a higher proportion of female respondents answered the survey than males. Discussion among the steering group at the post consultation meetings confirmed that this reflects the gender engagement profile in this area of work.

4.1.3 Location of Respondents

The table below highlights the location of respondents by county.

	Frequency	Percent
Dublin	48	15.9
Cork	47	15.6
Kilkenny	27	8.9
Clare	21	7
Kerry	19	6.3
Limerick	18	6
Tipperary	16	5.3
Kildare	13	4.3
Waterford	12	4
Meath	11	3.6
Leitrim	10	3.3
Roscommon	9	3
Donegal	7	2.3
Westmeath	6	2
Galway	5	1.7
Louth	5	1.7
Cavan	3	1
Wicklow	3	1
Laois	2	0.7
Longford	2	0.7
Mayo	2	0.7
Monaghan	2	0.7
Sligo	2	0.7
Wexford	2	0.7
Carlow	1	0.3
Offaly	1	0.3

Table 1 Location of Respondents

The table shows that almost 32% of respondents were located in Counties Dublin and Cork. This is slightly lower than the proportion of population in the country that live in both counties (39% of the population were living in both counties in the 2022 Census data versus 32% of responses³).

³ [Census of Population 2022 - Preliminary Results - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

4.2 Experience of age discrimination

This section of the research focused on respondents' experience of discrimination on the basis of their age.

4.2.1 Personal experience of unfair treatment on basis of age

Following discussion with the peer researchers during training sessions, we agreed that a useful introductory question for respondents would be to ascertain the extent to which they felt they have been treated unfairly because of their age. Terminology of this question was deemed important by peer researchers to minimise the possibility of older people diminishing unfair treatment as not constituting discrimination.

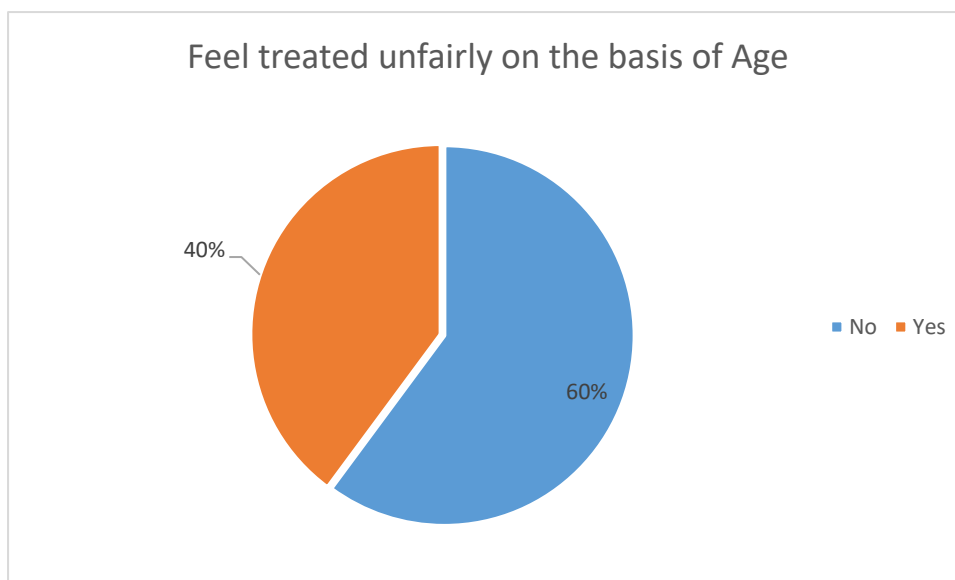


Figure 3: Experience of unfair treatment on basis of age

The chart above shows that almost 40% of respondents indicated that they feel they had been treated unfairly on the basis of their age at some point in the past.

The chart below shows that experience cross-tabulated by age group⁴.

⁴ We have omitted the under 50 and over 90 age groups as outliers in the data due to small numbers in the sample and the risk of distortion in analysis.

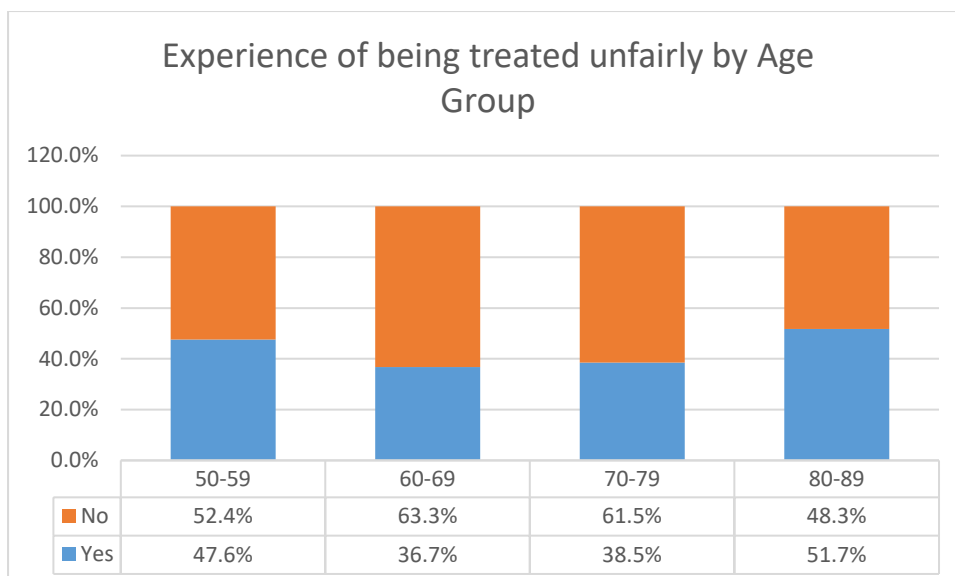


Figure 4: Experience of being treated unfairly by Age Group

The chart shows that experience of being treated unfairly on the basis of age was relatively consistent across the four age groups. A higher proportion of those in their 50's and those in their 80's indicated that they felt they have been treated unfairly on the basis of their age. It should be noted that there was a lower response rate in these age categories (22 in their 50's and 31 in their 80's) which may explain a variance in percentages.

4.2.2 Examples of unfair treatment on basis of age

We asked respondents to provide examples of where they had been treated unfairly on the basis of their age. This was an open question which enabled respondents to provide detailed examples, many of whom provided multiple examples of unfair treatment. In total, 128 respondents provided examples of where and how they had been treated unfairly.

Respondents highlighted the challenges faced by older individuals in various aspects of their lives, from employment and finance to healthcare and accessing services.

- **Banking Online** Many older people find it difficult to access and use online banking services, leading to feelings of exclusion and frustration.
- **Staying in Employment** Older people told us they feel forced into retirement due to their age, even if they want to continue working and contributing.
- **Limited Opportunities** Experiences of being overlooked for jobs, especially when employers favour younger candidates.
- **Access to Services** Difficulties in accessing government services, medical appointments, and information online due to lack of familiarity with technology.
- **Negative Attitudes and Stereotyping** Older people reported being treated with disrespect, spoken to loudly, and often patronised by others.
- **Insurance and Financial Services** Older people face challenges in obtaining loans, car insurance, and travel insurance due to their age.
- **Driving licences** Respondents and peer researchers noted the challenges faced by a

limited duration on driving licences in Ireland (5 years for 65-71 years of age, 3 years for 72 years and above⁵), compared to other EU countries⁶.

- **Healthcare** Older individuals reported feeling dismissed or not prioritised in healthcare settings due to their age.
- **Covid-19 Restrictions** Many older people feel that Covid-19 restrictions were patronising and unfairly targeted them.
- **Lack of Information** Difficulties in finding clear and accessible information, especially when dealing with government agencies and services.
- **Discriminatory Assumptions** Assumptions that older people lack technological skills or are incapable of using certain services.

We coded the open responses to provide a level of analysis. The following table provides an analysis of recoded answers to this question:

Examples of being treated unfairly	Frequency	Percent of respondents
Employment	32	30.2%
Banking	31	29.2%
Technology/online services	21	19.8%
Businesses/Councils	19	17.9%
Insurance	9	8.5%
Health Service Organisations/Services	9	8.5%
COVID	7	6.6%

Table 2 Examples of being treated unfairly

Employment

The table above shows that more than 30% of respondents indicated that they have felt treated unfairly as a result of their age in issues related to employment. The majority of responses concentrated on an apparent policy of compulsory retirement. Many respondents focused on this and the resulting impact this had on their confidence, health and wellbeing and financial status. Some respondents indicated that this actually led to them not being able to afford housing, or to get a mortgage for a house even though they felt capable and willing to continue working past the age of compulsory retirement. This was also an issue which was discussed at subsequent meetings with the steering group following completion of the consultation process. Some of the responses to this question outlining the impact of compulsory retirement are outlined below.⁷

⁵ [How to renew your driving licence \(citizensinformation.ie\)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/transport/transport-topics/driving-licences/how-to-renew-your-driving-licence.html)

⁶ According to Euractiv, Germany and Austria have pushed back against a European Commission proposal to oblige car drivers over the age of 70 to renew their driving licence every five years, an effort aimed at stopping those no longer fit to drive from using their cars. [EU countries criticise 'discriminatory' Commission proposal aimed at older drivers – EURACTIV.com](https://www.euractiv.com/en/transport/eu-countries-criticise-discriminatory-commission-proposal-aimed-at-older-drivers-123456789)

⁷ We have extracted identifiable information from these and subsequent quotations in this report, to anonymise the responses.

I was not allowed to stay in work. I had to retire at 65. I worked in X hospital as a porter. I had to sign on jobseekers for a year and was down at least 20 euro a week.

I had to give up work the day before my 65th year even though the manager wanted to keep me on but it was company policy.

I had to give up work the day before I was 65. My manager fought for me to stay, but because it was company policy she had to let me go. I quoted the EU ruling that according to their policy we could continue to work.

Other respondents felt that they missed opportunities and were treated unfairly while still in employment simply due to the fact they were older than other colleagues.

I felt discriminated in work by being undermined and then patronised by young members of staff when I hit my late fifties. I eventually took early retirement as I felt I had no option.

I was moved against my wishes to another part of the service I work for and I felt it has something to do with my being the oldest in the department.

Introduced in work as a senior PM even though my title didn't have senior in it.

I applied for a position in an office where it was made clear to me that I was older than they wanted even though I had all the qualifications and experience.

Company refused to accept my employment application as I was over 60 (I was 63 at the time).

Banking

Almost 30% of respondents indicated that they have felt treated unfairly on the basis of their age by banks, or through the inability to access services provided by banks. The gradual and persistent move to online banking was a significant issue raised by respondents to both the online survey and within focus group discussions with the peer researchers.

Respondents also focused on negative attitudes, stereotyping and a lack of patience by some banking staff towards older people. Finally, a number of respondents indicated that they have been refused loans or mortgages by banks, despite having the means with which to pay them back.

Some of the comments included:

Online banking. They expect OAPs to be super proficient in IT. I'm good but not that good.

Difficulty with banking. So difficult to get to talk to someone face to face.

Attitude in Banks, being told to bank on line (I can, but don't want too) as I don't think it's safe.

When I ask bank for online assistance it was suggested that I get a younger family member to manage my account. It turned out there was a fault in the bank's web site.

I was refused a loan.

Unable to get a mortgage although I have a lump sum and a regular State Pension.

Technology/online services

Almost 20% of respondents indicated that they have felt treated unfairly because of their age through technology or online services⁸. Respondents and peer researchers raised the issue of services moving online and the fact that older people often do not have the capacity or experience to conduct business online. This reflects findings from previous research completed by Age & Opportunity and Straightforward Research and Development which focused on the issue of digital literacy and access to digital technology.

Respondents reported the following observations and experiences:

Problems with online banking; online purchases; e-tickets only on your smartphone for some events; some special restrictions during pandemic.

Most business now is expected to be done online, booking holidays and overnight accommodation, one is expected to do all online, and the options I wish for may not be accessible.

Everything online no personal interaction.

Made to feel stupid by not being 'tech savvy'.

Everyone expects people to have a smart phone and apps. I don't and get that disbelief look.

I can't fill out forms on line. When I ask to have it by post the person on the phone continues to repeat it can be done online easily.

Don't have laptop or computer, can't afford one. Phone doesn't always lend itself to online technology if one can afford a smartphone, learn how to use it, no place gives regular lessons in same. So excluded already due to lack of money on own part and lack of support on part of government and local authorities. Computers in libraries - one has to know how to use them. NO proper inclusive support for older people and IT.

⁸ We have separated online services from online banking. Online services in this instance do not include issues raised with banking services moving online.

Businesses/Councils

Almost 18% indicated that they had felt treated unfairly on the basis of their age by businesses or local councils.

A parking management company runs the parking in my local care centre. The car park is split into a few public spaces and mainly staff permit-only spaces. As most of the public using this car park are elderly, the signage is not prominent enough and the impression is that it is a pay and display area as there is a pay machine placed at the exit to the hospital. I paid my fee and parked in a spot I believed was for outpatients. My car was duly clamped and I had to pay €100 to be released. It was a very stressful situation for me and I believe now the car park is designed to discriminate against elderly people and used as a money-making scheme. I appealed but it was immediately dismissed.

It's all around us from prominent media presenters' attitude to older people, to not having a choice re the GAA online programmes.

I've notified the County Council of how dangerous footpaths are in (my town) to older people. I was ignored. I've complained many times since. Now I've seen that they are going to make sections of the paths in the area safer because able bodied people have complained but had no plans to make other paths safe for us older people.

Dealing with my online provider I was treated with disrespect resulting with me withdrawing my custom.

In a clothing establishment, also in a café, I was ignored even though I asked for help I felt it was an age thing.

Outside dining...plenty of tables empty. Told me they were booked...I felt upset.

Health

Older individuals reported feeling dismissed or not prioritised in healthcare settings due to their age.

Hospital nurse insisted that she go through a long assessment form about my ability to dress myself, use stairs etc. when I was admitted as a day patient to have minor surgery on my finger – because 'all patients over 60 are assessed in this way'.

4.2.3 Action respondents take/would take if treated unfairly

We asked respondents what they currently do, or would you do if they felt they were treated unfairly as a result of their age? The table below outlines what they do (if they have

experienced it), or would do (if they were to experience it in the future).

	Percent
I would challenge it	65.9%
I would try to forget about it	15.9%
Other	11.3%
I would just accept that I'm an older person and maybe I don't need to have access to the service	7.0%

Table 3 Action respondents take/would take if treated unfairly

The table above shows that two thirds (66%) of older people indicated that they have or would challenge someone if they felt treated badly because of their age.

Further analysis showed that 61% of respondents indicated that they were aware that if they felt discriminated against, they knew they could do something about it, however more than 39% of respondents indicated that they did not know that they could challenge a person or service if they felt discriminated against.

The chart below shows responses by age group.

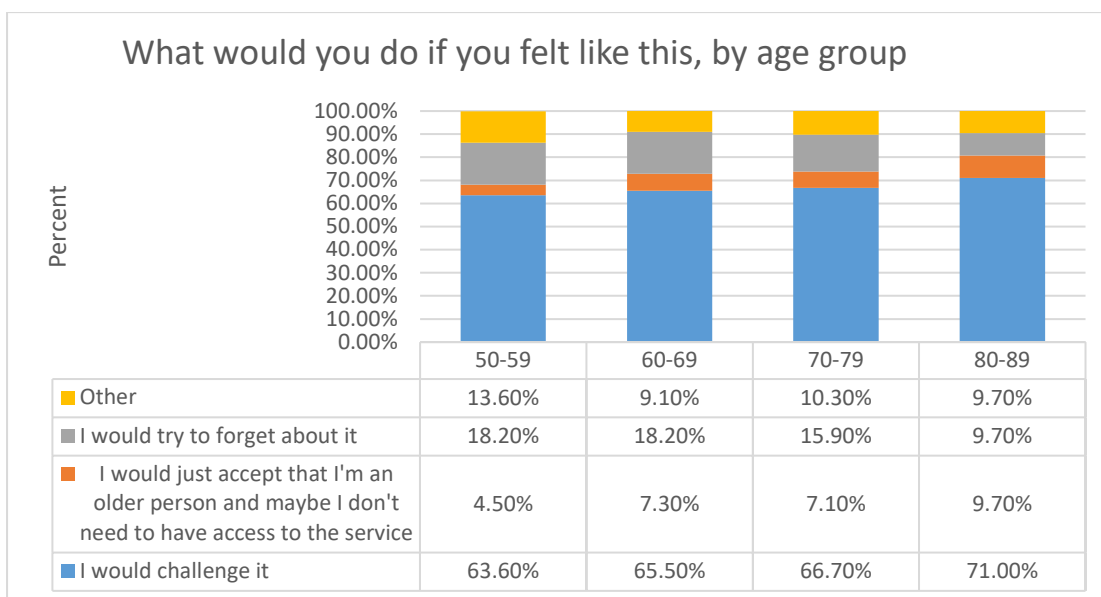


Figure 5 What would you do if you felt treated unfairly, by age group

The chart shows that the percentage of older people who would challenge it if they felt treated unfairly, increases by age group.

Where would you go for support?

The table below outlines where respondents indicated they would go for support if they felt they needed it.

	Percent
Friend	46.3%
Age & Opportunity	38.4%
Age Action	38.4%
Solicitor	25.0%
Alone	12.5%
Clergy member	0.9%

Table 4 Where would you go for support if you needed it?

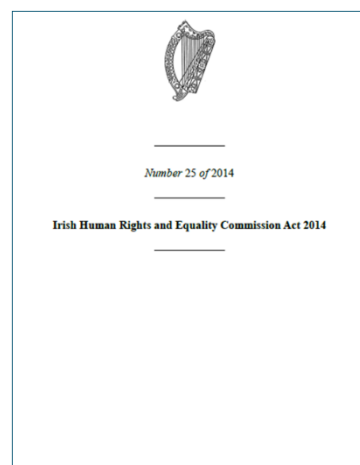
The majority (more than 46%) indicated that they would approach a friend if they felt they needed support after being treated badly, followed by almost 40% indicating Age & Opportunity and another national NGO in the age sector, Age Action. Further analysis shows that those who would approach a friend for advice were more likely to be in the younger age groups and those who would approach a solicitor in the older age groups listed.

A significant proportion of people added that they would approach Citizen's Advice Bureau for advice.

4.3 Awareness of Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

The public sector equality duty (the Duty) is a duty on public authorities to consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act. According to IHREC:

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty ('the Duty') is contained in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. 'The Duty' is a legal obligation on public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of all public sector staff and service users.



Implementation of the Public Sector Duty involves a three step approach. Public bodies are required to Assess, Address and Report. Section 42 of the IHREC Act states that these requirements have to be set out in the organisation's strategic plan (assess, address) and reported on in their annual reports 'in a manner that is accessible to the public'.

4.3.1 Awareness in advance of consultation

We asked respondents if they were aware of the Duty in advance of completing this consultation.

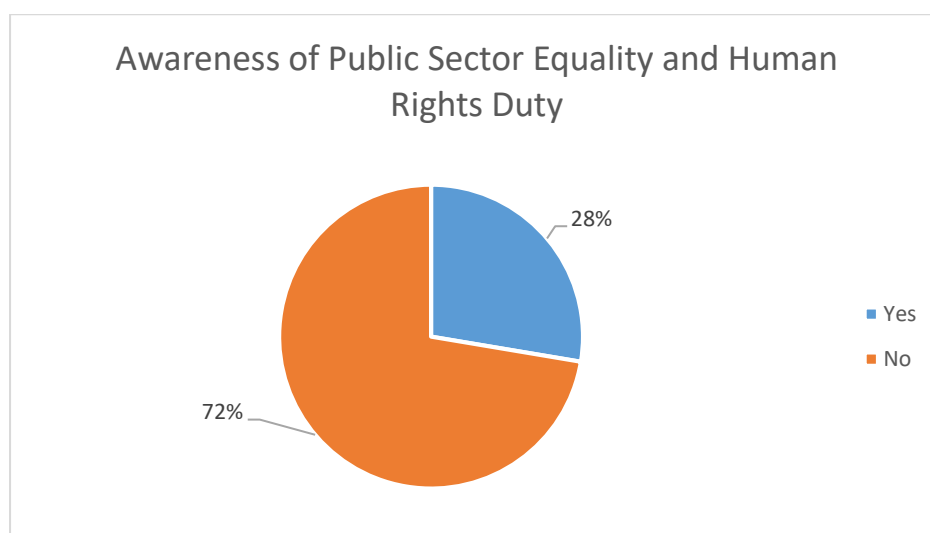


Figure 6 Awareness of Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

The chart highlights that almost three quarters of respondents (72%) had not heard of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty in advance of completing this consultation process.

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 imposes a statutory obligation on public bodies in performing their functions to have regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination;
- promote equality of opportunity and treatment for staff and persons to whom it provides services; and
- protect the human rights of staff and services.

We asked respondents whether or not they were aware of this duty placed upon public bodies. The chart below shows the responses.

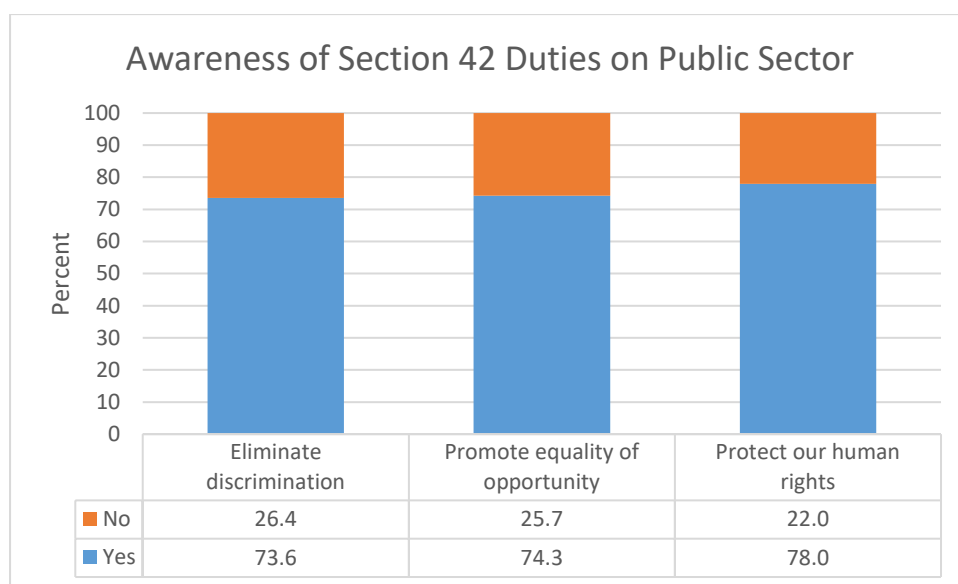


Figure 7 Awareness of Section 42 Duties

The chart shows that while a significant proportion of respondents had not heard of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, a high proportion were aware that there is a duty on public sector organisations to eliminate discrimination (74%), promote equality of opportunity (74%) and protect our human rights (78%). On consultation with the peer research group, the level of awareness of the duties contained within Section 42, compared to the level of awareness of the actual Duty itself could appear to be contradictory. However, further discussion would suggest that while respondents were aware and *au fait* with the ‘concept’ of government having regard to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and protecting human rights, they were not familiar with the *actual* legislation sitting behind this duty.

4.3.2 Knowledge of Equality Laws

As a Member State of the EU, Ireland is obliged to bring the provisions of these EU Directives into its national laws:

- The Employment Equality Acts promote equality in employment and protect workers against discrimination and harassment that may occur in the course of their working life – for example, in areas such as access to employment and vocational training, equal pay, terms and conditions of employment, and promotion;
- The Equal Status Acts protect people against discrimination and harassment when they are buying goods or using everyday services, for example booking hotel accommodation, using public transport or accessing public health services.

Ireland’s equality laws outlaw discrimination on nine characteristics: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age, race, and membership of the Traveller community. All of these grounds are protected from discrimination in employment and in access to good services and facilities.

We asked respondents to outline which of the nine characteristics they were aware that government and private sector companies have a legal duty to protect in respect of people's human rights.

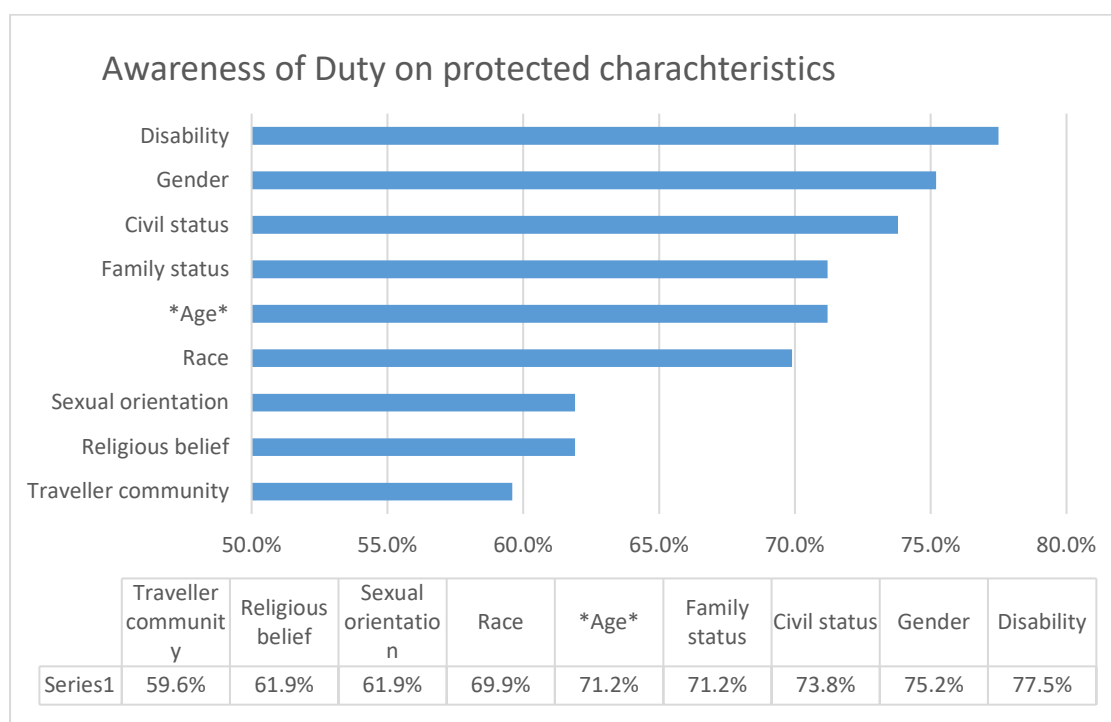


Figure 8 Awareness of Duty on protected characteristics

The chart above highlights that the highest degree of awareness was for protection of discrimination on the basis of disability (77.5%), followed by gender (75.2%) and civil status (73.8%).

71.2% of respondents were aware that age is one of the nine protected characteristics under equality law.

4.3.4 Awareness of 'rights holder' status on the basis of age

'Rights-holders' are people or social groups that have particular entitlements. There are often specific groups whose human rights are not fully realised, respected or protected. These can include for example women and girls, ethnic minorities, migrants, etc. We asked respondents if they were aware that they are 'rights holders' on the basis of their age.

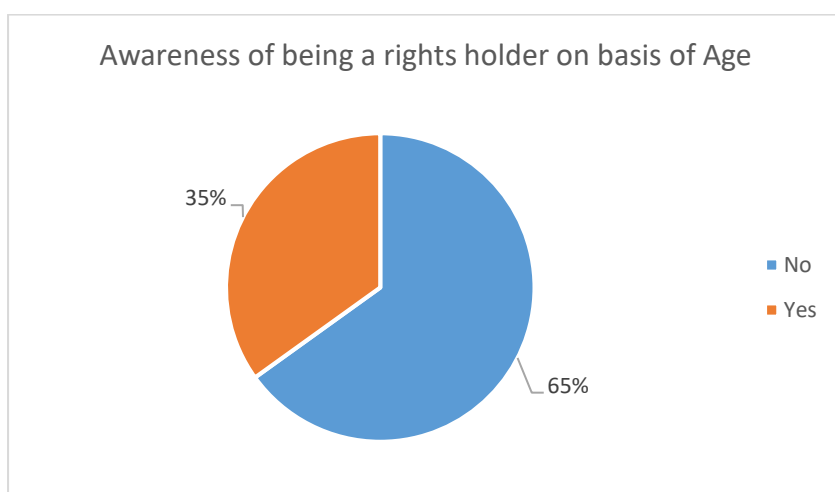


Figure 9 Awareness of being a rights holder on basis of Age

The chart shows that 35% of respondents were aware that they were 'rights holders' on the basis of their age.

4.3.5 Perceived due regard to older people in service planning and delivery

Taking into account The Employment Equality Act, The Equal Status Act and Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, we asked older people whether or not they feel that:

1. when government are planning services, they take enough notice of the needs of older people; and
2. private businesses take enough notice of the needs of older people and adjust services to allow for their needs.

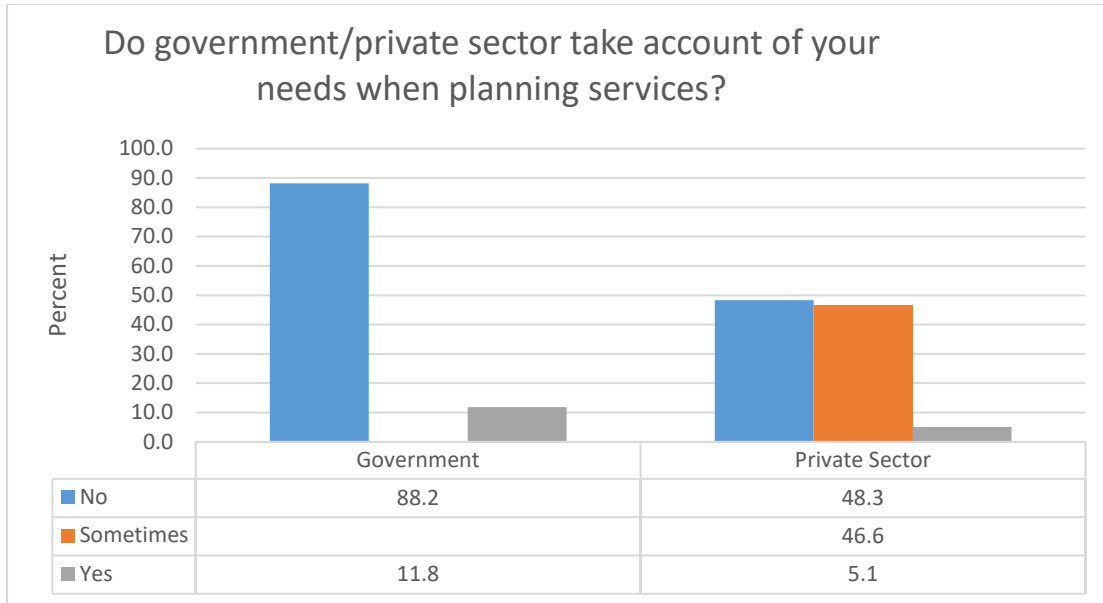


Figure 10 Do government/private sector take account of your needs when planning services?

The chart shows that the vast majority of respondents (88%) do not feel that government take enough notice of the needs of older people when planning services. Almost half of respondents think that private sector businesses take enough notice of the needs of older people and make adjustments to services to allow for their needs.

Following discussion with the research steering group, we completed further analysis of those who had initially indicated in the survey that they had not personally experienced discrimination. 85% of those who said they had not experienced discrimination personally, still felt that government do not take their needs into account when planning services.

40% of those who had not experienced discrimination felt the private sector do not take their needs into account when planning services.

4.3.6 Differential Policy impact on older people

Discussion with peer researchers identified a range of policies and practices in Ireland that they felt are unfair to older people in society.

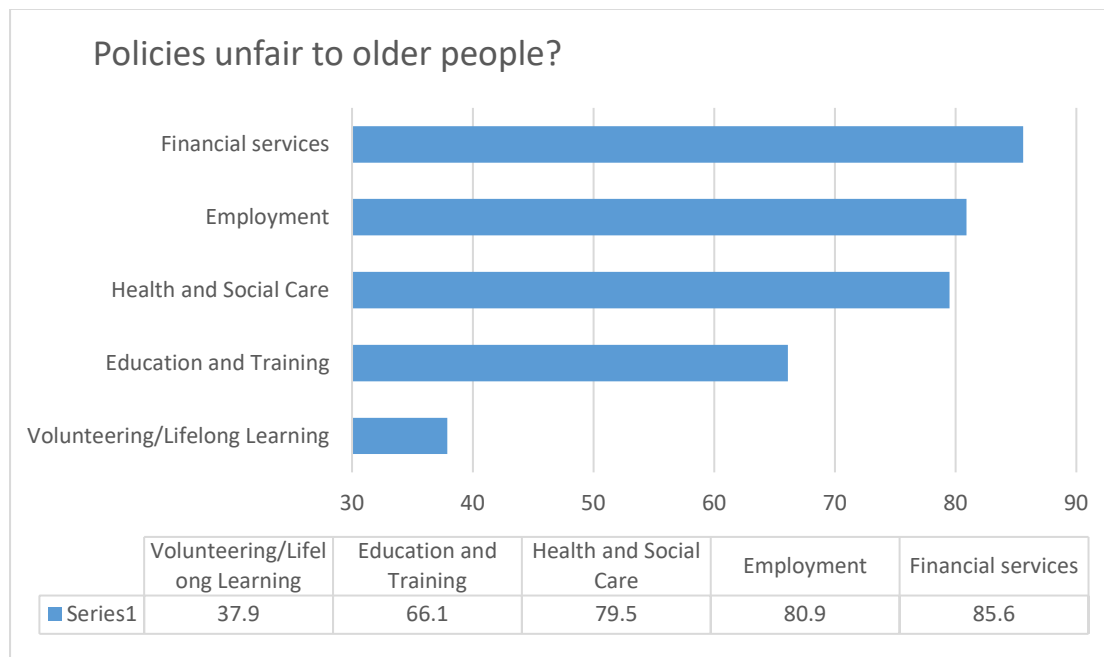



Figure 11 Policies which respondents felt were unfair to older people in Ireland

The top policies and practices that older people in Ireland think affect them:

1. **Forced Retirement at Official Retirement Age** Many older people feel that being compelled to leave their jobs at the official retirement age is unfair, as they believe they can continue to contribute to the workforce and society.
2. **Access to Services** Older people have concerns about the shift towards online services, as they find it restrictive and unfair. They would prefer face-to-face interaction for services like government business, financial transactions, and social welfare.
3. **Healthcare Discrimination** Some older individuals feel that healthcare assumes they can tolerate certain conditions that would be treated more aggressively in younger individuals. They highlight inequalities in treatment based on age.
4. **Insurance** Issues related to insurance, particularly travel insurance and car insurance, are a concern for older people. They find that premiums can be high and access to certain insurance policies limited due to age.
5. **Access to Financial Services** Older individuals find it challenging to deal with financial institutions that assume everyone is computer literate. They want more options for in-person assistance and are opposed to the push towards a cashless society.
6. **Housing** Housing issues, including lack of suitable housing for older renters and limited availability of housing for those reaching pension age, are concerns for older individuals.
7. **Transport** Older people express concerns about transportation services, including



lack of accessibility and issues with public transport, such as limited seating and changes to booking systems.

8. **Retirement Age** The concept of retirement age is a significant concern. Some older individuals believe that retirement should be a personal choice and that they should be able to continue working as long as they are willing and able.
9. **Social and Recreational Activities** Many older individuals desire more social and recreational opportunities tailored to their needs, including organised activities and events that encourage interaction and engagement.
10. **Communication and Consultation** Older people express a desire for better consultation and communication from the government regarding policy changes that impact them, especially in areas like active travel initiatives and other local policies.

4.3.7 Differential impact of Services on older people

Discussion with peer researchers identified a range of services in Ireland that they felt are unfair to older people in society. The chart below shows the percentage responses for all respondents.

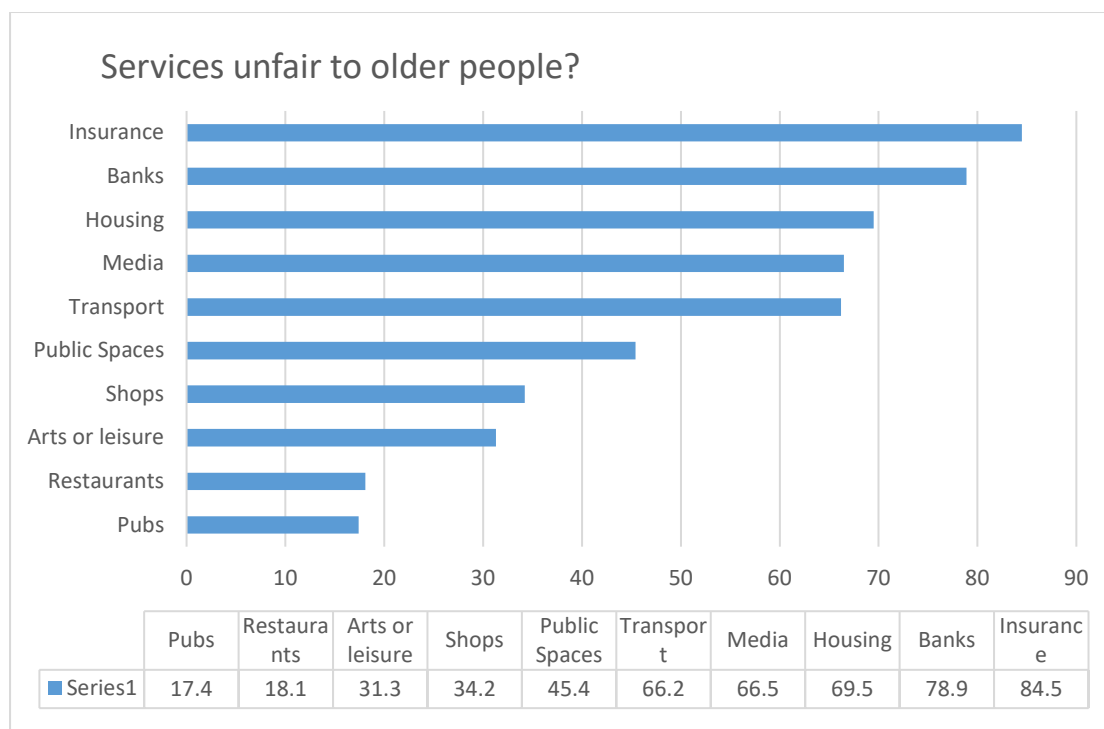


Figure 12 Services unfair to older people

The chart above shows the high percentage of respondents who felt that the services provided by insurance and banks were unfair to older people. This is consistent with discussion within the workshops with peer researchers. Housing, media and transport were also rated highly in terms of perceived imbalance of service provision for older people.

We analysed responses further, focusing on location of respondents in Ireland. There was a significant difference in responses around the perceived fairness of transport for older people between those who were located in County Dublin, and those located in the rest of the country. 50% of Dublin residents felt there was a level of unfairness in service provision, versus 86% in the rest of the country. This may well be consistent with the findings of the NTA research referenced below in this section which found a lower level of satisfaction with bus rather than rail and tram services.

Following data collection, discussion with the PPI group raised a number of issues regarding transportation:

1. **Mobility and access** There was significant focus on the ability of older people to access transport services. Physical access impacting on the ability of older people to get 'on board' was a significant focus – including the provision of platforms, the issue

of capacity of vehicles to take both older people who have mobility needs and parents with buggies at the same time; the extent to which drivers bring vehicles into the kerb to minimise the gap over which older people with mobility issues have to bridge to get onboard. Other participants noted the requirement for older people with mobility needs to book a seat at least 24 hours in advance – how do you know you are going to be well enough to travel the next day?

2. **Provision** Participants from more rural areas of Ireland who were involved in the research indicated that the policy of decommissioning rail transport over the years had a differential impact on older people as many older people rely on public transport availability. For example, the ability of older people from across Ireland to attend in-person workshops throughout this research project was practically limited by public transport availability and frequency.

Some members of the steering group had previously been engaged in research completed by the National Transport Authority⁹ which found that bus services rated worst out of bus, train and tram public transport services. Given the rurality of Ireland and the aforementioned withdrawal of train services in the west and northwest of Ireland, this has a concerning potential impact on older people.

From our survey respondents, feedback on differential impact for public transport ranged from the increased move to online booking and timetabling to additional costs and reduced availability.

In my community, there is one bus each day at 11am and it comes back at 4.30pm each afternoon. There is no bus on Sunday so if I wanted to get to mass, I couldn't do it if I didn't have good neighbours.

Public transport, for example moving bus stops further away from other connecting transport (Luas, Dart, train).


Despite the fact public transport is free for older people, there is still a cost if you need to book a seat due to health conditions. On the bus you have to pay €2.50 each way even with free travel.

There was also a significant difference in those who felt banking services were unfair to older people (62% in Dublin compared to 83% of those in rural counties). This may reflect the progressive withdrawal of banking services across rural area in the past number of years in Ireland.

Overall, the list below summarises the range of responses on the differential impact of service provision across Ireland for older people:

1. **Banking** Many older individuals feel that the move towards online banking and the closure of physical branches is discriminatory. They might not be comfortable with technology or have access to reliable internet, making it difficult for them to manage

⁹ Mystery Shopper for Accessibility on public transport, February 2023, Kavanagh and Barbonetti

- 
- their finances.
2. **Public Transport** Lack of accessible and reliable public transportation, especially in rural areas, is a major concern for older people. They feel that this limits their mobility and independence.
 3. **Healthcare Services** Some older individuals feel that healthcare services, including communication and appointments, are moving online without adequate alternatives for those who are not tech-savvy.
 4. **Booking/Online Services** Many services, such as booking tickets for events, travel, or appointments, are now primarily available online, which older people find discriminatory as it excludes those who are not comfortable with technology.
 5. **Housing** Some respondents mentioned difficulties with housing, including issues related to mortgages and housing management, that affect older individuals.
 6. **Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) Games** The requirement to purchase tickets/streaming services for GAA games online is seen as discriminatory against older people who may not have access to online booking/streaming systems.
 7. **Communication with Services** Older individuals feel that they are forced to communicate with services through automated systems, which can be difficult for those who prefer speaking to a person.
 8. **Post Offices and Local Services** The closure of post offices and lack of local services, especially in rural areas, is seen as discriminatory as it limits access to essential services.
 9. **Social Isolation** The emphasis on online services and reduced human interaction is seen as contributing to social isolation among older individuals.
 10. **Lack of Options** Many respondents mentioned feeling frustrated by the lack of options for in-person interactions or non-online alternatives for various services.

4.4 State Covid-19 response as experienced by older persons as rights holders

Previous citizens assembly style research completed by Age & Opportunity in 2021¹⁰ explored older people's experience and reflections on the societal lockdown during the COVID 19 pandemic and how this impacted on older people. During the pandemic, guidance was issued for people over 70 years of age, those who are at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) because of an underlying health condition, and for their family, friends and carers¹¹. The guidance was targeted at older people aged over 70 years of age and those who were medically vulnerable. It advised:

'Cocooning is advised for your personal protection and you will make your own judgement about the extent to which cocooning guidance applies to you. It is recognised that you have the right to exercise your own judgement as to the extent to which you consider the cocooning guidance appropriate for you. However, older people (aged 70 years and over) and those with pre-existing chronic conditions have been found to be more susceptible to COVID-19 infection and are most likely to experience severe consequences from infection so it is still recommended that you remain cocooned for your safety'.

A number of speeches were made by the Taoiseach in the early weeks of the pandemic in Ireland. Some extracts from the speeches are included below, in which advice to protect older people from the virus was provided:

On 11th March 2020 the Taoiseach said:

We know that older people and those with chronic diseases are at real risk. We have a duty as a society to protect ourselves and above all to protect others – our parents and grandparents, our family and friends, co-workers and neighbours.

On 17th March 2020 the Taoiseach said:

At a certain point we will advise the elderly and people who have a long-term illness to stay at home for several weeks. We are putting in place the systems to ensure that if you are one of them, you will have food, supplies and are checked on.

We call this "cocooning" and it will save many lives, particularly the most vulnerable, the most precious in our society.

It's going to be very difficult to stay apart from our loved ones.

On 27th March 2020 the Taoiseach said:

Shielding, or cocooning, will be introduced for all those over 70 years of age and specified

¹⁰ Is Ageism ever Acceptable Significant themes arising from five online Citizen's Assemblies, Maureen Gilbert, August 2021

¹¹ [gov.ie - Guidance on cocooning to protect people over 70 years and those extremely medically vulnerable from COVID-19 - updated guidance from 29 June \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/government-department/2020-06-29-guidance-on-cocooning-to-protect-people-over-70-years-and-those-extremely-medically-vulnerable-from-covid-19/)

categories of people who are extremely vulnerable to Covid-19. Detailed guidance will be available.

During the citizen's assembly research, older people were facilitated to explain how they experienced 'cocooning' and other pandemic-related restrictions and initiatives. A number of themes arose from the consultation:

- **Resentment and anger re cocooning.** Some respondents (while acknowledging to some extent the public health requirement) resented and were angry about a blanket order being placed for individuals aged over 70 without any consideration of underlying health and context at an individual level.
- **Gratitude** Most participants understood cocooning as a method for protecting older people from the ravages of a disease whose effects were generally more serious for older than for younger people. Even if they saw it as overkill, these participants were inclined to view it as benign in concept and that the lockdown imposed on those over 70 years of age was implemented with good intentions based on available evidence at the time.
- **Infantilisation** Many respondents felt that the experience of cocooning was demonstrative of the concept of infantilising older people and had a resulting impact on stripping their confidence, retaining an ability to exercise choice, and ultimately had an excluding impact on older people.
- **Family and community pressure** Many respondents reported feeling as if they had been bossed about by family members. Some referring to the role of 'Sergeant Virus' having been taken on by certain family members.
- **Societal ageism and internalised ageism** The research raised the question of an interplay between the two concepts of societal and internalised ageism. Some participants recognised that they had internalised ageist attitudes, seeing this as inevitable, given the predominance of ageism in Ireland and as a result did not challenge any of the orders. Others felt the ageist approach was imposed on them by the rest of society and family members. The necessity to cocoon forced many people over 70 into an apparent passivity which reflected this stereotype. Participants resented this status being thrust upon them and, without using this language, clearly understood it to be in contravention of their rights as well as damaging their confidence and self-image.

We asked older people in this current research what their feelings were when they were forced to stay at home throughout the various waves of the COVID 19 pandemic. Potential responses were based on the above research and discussion with members of the research steering group prior to completion of the survey.

The table below shows the overall response.

	Percent
Feel this was for my good and I was happy to do so.	43.3
Feel this was for my good, but didn't like being singled out from everyone else.	23.1
Resented it, but reluctantly stayed at home.	22.7
Resented it and carried on regardless	10.8

Table 5 Attitude towards public health lockdown for over 70's

The chart below shows a cross-tabulation of the responses by age group.

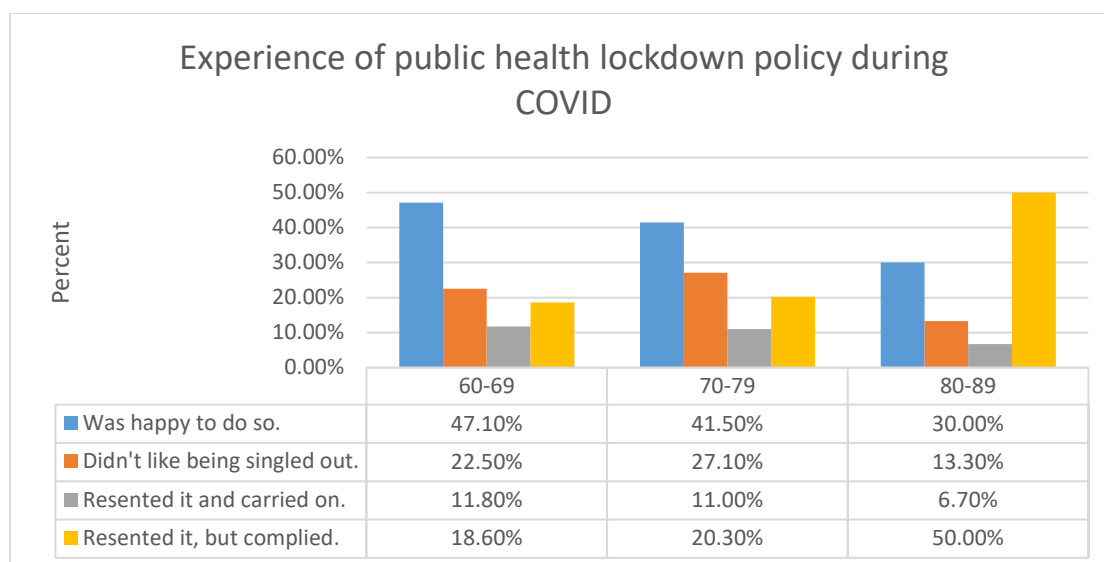



Figure 13 Attitude towards public health lockdown for over 70's by Age group

The chart above shows that majority higher proportion of people in their 60's and 70's said that they felt the general public health restrictions were for their own good and were happy to comply (47% and 41% respectively). A significant proportion indicated that they accepted the general public health restrictions, but did not like being singled out from everyone else (those aged 70 or over were advised to cocoon, not those aged in their 60's).

The majority of those aged over 80 however resented the public health restrictions; 7% of respondents resented it and carried on and 50% resented it and complied by staying at home.

Respondents provided some detail on their experience of cocooning during the COVID-19 pandemic, and experiences tended to vary widely.

- 
1. **Resentment and Case-by-Case Decisions** Some individuals resented the idea of cocooning and preferred to make decisions based on their common sense and personal circumstances.
 2. **Maintaining Mobility** Some older people noted that cocooning impacted their mobility, which deteriorated during this period.
 3. **Individual Actions** Some respondents said they used their common sense to adapt to the situation, meet people at a distance, and avoid crowded places, ultimately avoiding COVID-19.
 4. **Legal Concerns** There were concerns about the legal consequences of not adhering to the rules and uncertainty about whether they could be reported for going outside.
 5. **Age Discrimination** Some felt that cocooning amounted to age discrimination, especially when there were younger people with health conditions that put them at high risk. They believed it was patronising and unnecessary to put an age limit on restrictions.

Overall, responses highlighted a range of opinions and experiences related to cocooning during the pandemic, with some individuals viewing it as protective while others found it restrictive and potentially discriminatory based on age.

4.5 Prevalence and impact of ageism in Ireland

4.5.1 Prevalence

We asked respondents whether or not they feel ageism is prevalent across society, families, government or companies who are providing services.

	Percent
Society in general	71.5%
Private companies	60.6%
Government	50.5%
Families	30.1%

Figure 14 Presence of ageism in society

The table above highlights that the majority of respondents felt that ageism is present in society in general (72%) and more than half of respondents felt that it was present in both private companies and government (61% and 51% respectively).

The chart below highlights the level of response across all age groups.

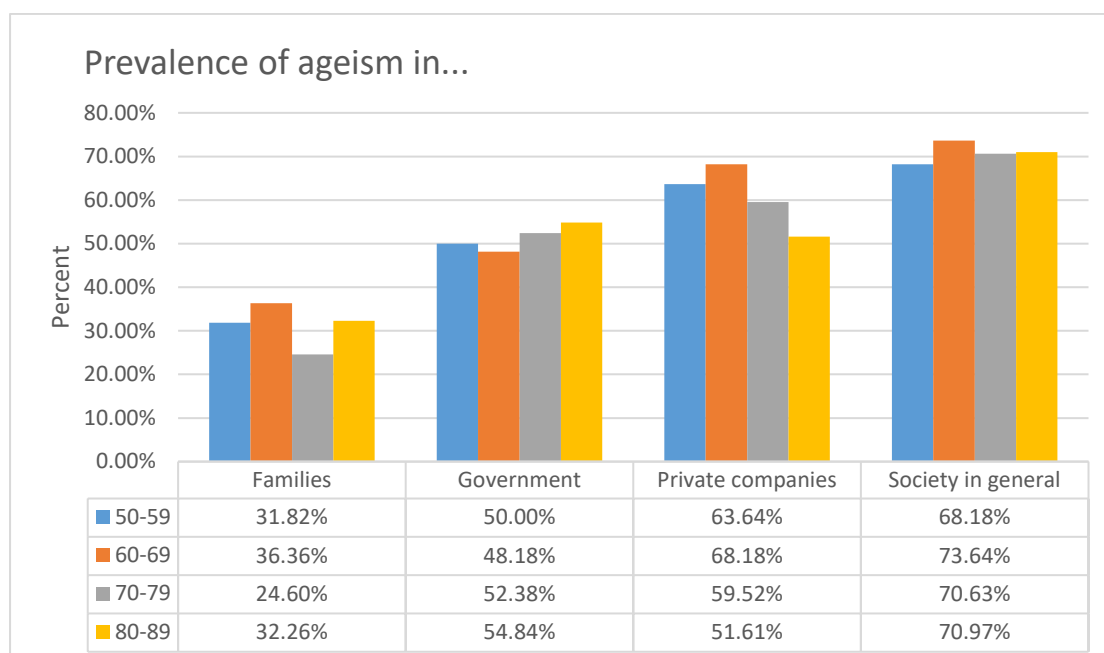


Figure 15 Prevalence of ageism in families, government, private companies and society.

The chart shows that responses are relatively consistent across age ranges. Slight variations in the data include:

- a higher proportion of respondents over 60 believing that ageism is present in society in general and within government;
- a higher proportion of those aged under 70 believing that ageism is present in private companies.

4.5.2 Older people having their say

We asked respondents whether or not they felt there was a better way for older people to have their say in services that affect them.

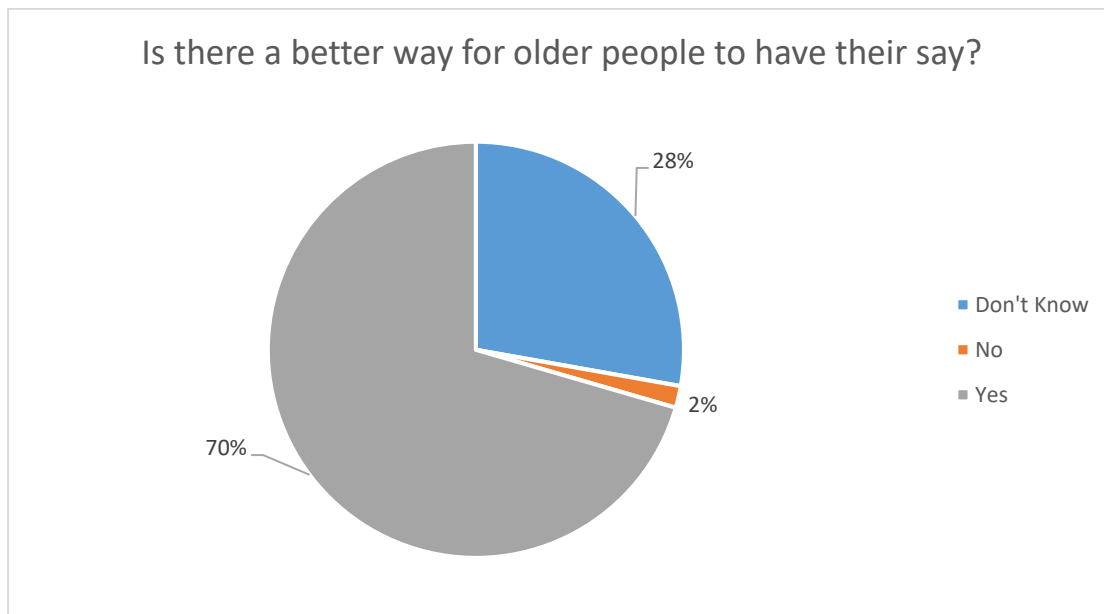


Figure 16 Is there a better way for older people to have their say?

70% of respondents indicated that they feel there is a better way to engage older people in services that affect them. Of those who felt older people should be engaged, the following table outlines the way in which they felt they should be engaged. This was an open text answer and we have recoded the answers into four categories.

	Percent of respondents
Views taken on board generally/ask us what we need/be involved in setting policy	50%
Commissioner/ombudsman/minister	46%
Community Groups/forum	9%
Board membership	4%

Figure 17 Suggestions for engagement of older people

Based on the open answers, the top 10 things that people think would help:

1. **Creation of a Commissioner or Ombudsman for Older People** Many respondents suggest having a dedicated authority that represents and advocates for the rights and needs of older people, similar to the model in Northern Ireland. This Commissioner would lobby on their behalf and ensure their voices are heard in policy decisions.
2. **Representation in Government and Committees** People think that older individuals should be better represented in various governmental bodies, committees, and boards. This representation would ensure that policies and decisions take into account the needs of older citizens.
3. **Involvement in Policy Decision-Making** Respondents emphasise the importance of involving older people in policy development and decision-making processes. They believe that their life experience and wisdom can contribute to creating better policies and services.
4. **Consultation and Listening to Older People's Views** Many respondents stress the need for more listening and consultation with older people before making decisions that affect them. They believe their insights and perspectives should be taken seriously.
5. **Advocates and Advocacy Groups** The idea of having advocates or spokespersons who specifically address age-related issues and advocate for the rights of older people was mentioned. These advocates could represent older individuals and ensure their concerns are addressed.
6. **Participation in Boards and Councils** Respondents suggest that older people should have a stronger presence in various councils and boards, including those related to housing, policy, and age-friendly initiatives.
7. **Eliminating Ageism and Discrimination** Many respondents highlight the importance of tackling ageism and discrimination in policies and services. They believe that older people should be treated with respect and dignity and that policies should be fair for all age groups.
8. **Accessible Information and Support** Respondents mention the need for accessible information and support for older people, particularly in areas such as technology and online services. They believe that having assistance available for online difficulties would be beneficial.
9. **Reviewing and Updating Policies** Respondents emphasised the need to review and update policies to accommodate the diverse needs of older individuals. They suggested policies that consider different living situations, financial constraints, and preferences.
10. **Integration of Older People in Community Life** Some respondents suggest integrating older people more actively into community life and activities, creating opportunities for interaction and involvement.

Overall, the recurring themes involved giving older people a platform for their opinions, involving them in decision-making processes, ensuring representation in government and committees, and addressing age-related discrimination and challenges.

As outlined above the highest proportion of respondents indicated that older people should be consulted and their views taken on board.

*Most definitely. I resent being treated like a bold child.
After working for 65 years I feel that I should have input to all services for Seniors.*

Perhaps there could be more consultation.

Give them their say in a national survey.

There should be a spokesperson for the elderly in every county.

A significant proportion felt there should be an individual who lobbies/advocates or speaks on behalf of older people. The response on this ranged from people feeling the model of a Commissioner for Older People in North of Ireland¹² should be replicated to the need for a dedicated Minister for Older People, or an advocate should be appointed to represent their views.

There should be a Commissioner for older people but not on their own bandwagon of their set of views but representative of all. But should present options.

Some people want to retire while others want to continue working so there should be the option but not force.

Staff who are close to retirement been given lesser or more boring tasks in the year or months prior is subtle form of discrimination.

Assuming all older people want to downsize or live in apartment blocks is very wrong. Many of us love the peace of our own back garden and the relief of nobody above us or below us.

Focus group discussion indicated that it is important to have someone who can give a voice to older people as the sector is often fragmented in terms of focusing on policy.

A number of respondents indicated that there should be a minister for older people in Ireland highlighting that there may be a lack of awareness in this regard.

There is a Government Minister Mary Butler in Waterford who is very good for older people but she has to work with mental health as well, if we had more people like her or even one like in Northern Ireland who is specifically for older people and can focus on them. Older people should definitely be involved in reviewing policies and services that affect them. Maybe we could work more closely with the Commissioner in the North and learn from them.

¹² [Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland |... \(copni.org\)](http://copni.org)

I think perhaps each county council should develop systems and programmes to facilitate the integration of older people not just back into the community but to the forefront. We are (mostly) all living longer which of course puts great strain on all services but we should turn this around and make a lifetime's experience provide more benefit to the community and not less.

Peer researchers discussed the example of older people being involved as mystery shoppers in research to inform National Transport Strategy (previously referenced in this report). A number of peer researchers were brought in as mystery shoppers by the National Transport Authority and had brought in a number of older people to advise researchers on their view and experience on national transport. Peer researchers felt this was a good example of engaging older people and taking their views on board.

As you get older, if you highlight this to groups, quite often you are viewed as a bit of a moaner, but we should have a proper structure in place to be able to highlight the reality of the impact of decision and policies on us as older people rather than be labelled otherwise.

I think something should be brought into the next Census as well in terms of feelings of older people. It would give us the opportunity to highlight this. We should make this as a recommendation for further research – public transport is a huge issue.

Older People's Councils


The role of and potential impact of Older People's Councils drew significant discussion among the research steering group. According to Age Friendly Ireland¹³, Older People's Councils are:

'a representative group of older people, established by local authorities as part of the development of the Age Friendly City/County programme. The group of older people identify priority areas of need, raise issues of importance and inform and influence the decision-making process of the City or County Age Friendly initiative... Representatives of Older People's Councils participate, alongside representatives of the relevant member agencies, on the Age Friendly City/County Alliance'.

Ireland's National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013) promotes the development of Older People's Councils in cities and counties across Ireland and the Age Friendly Guide outlines that:

The Programme for Government commits to the establishment of Older People Councils by local authorities. As part of the Age Friendly Cities & Counties Programme, such Councils help in supporting the voice of the local older person to be heard and for that voice to influence and inform.

¹³ Older People's Councils Guide, Age Friendly Ireland



Despite the policy imperative described above, members of the research steering group felt that the Older People's Councils should be more visible and that they should be allowed to speak for themselves:

- More visible and more inclusive of all older people, this may be helpful;
- Older People's Councils could have a budget to help promote activity;
- Older People's Councils should have the resource they require to be able to achieve their objectives.

Age Friendly Ireland work very hard and drive hard for older people. I was on a committee with ministers and high-powered people from government looking at housing for older people along with architects. We were looking at connectivity issues to housing – public transport etc. It was great the work we were doing.

A need for increased visibility for older people's councils. If they were more visible and more represented of general older people throughout community, addressing the real issues that everyone faces.

I was chair for 2 years, but hardly anyone in my area knew what I was doing or what the group was. I would have needed to have a booklet in my pocket all the time to explain it. I was a volunteer with no budget. Perhaps there is a need for each member to have a small budget to let their constituents know who we are and what we do.

Section 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The list below provides overall conclusions and recommendations at a high level for the specific components of this research.

1. Awareness of Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Conclusions A significant proportion of respondents were not aware of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, which reflects a gap in awareness about this important legal obligation.

Recommendations Public awareness campaigns should be conducted to inform people about their rights and the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. These campaigns can be targeted through various communication channels, such as media, government websites, and community organisations.

2. Knowledge of Equality Laws

Conclusions While a significant number of respondents were aware of the duty on public bodies to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights, there is room for improvement in terms of understanding the specifics of these legal obligations.

Recommendations Develop educational resources and materials that provide clear explanations of the Equality Acts and how they apply to various protected characteristics. These resources should be easily accessible and distributed through government websites, community centres, and workshops.


3. Differential Policy Impact on Older People

Conclusions Older individuals perceive several policies as unfair to them, including forced retirement, limited access to services, healthcare discrimination, insurance challenges, and transportation issues.

Recommendations Conduct comprehensive assessments of policies to identify potential age-related disparities and ensure that policies are inclusive and equitable. Engage with older people and their representative organisations to understand their concerns and perspectives when crafting policies.

4. State Covid-19 Response as Experienced by Older Persons

Conclusions Older people had varied responses to the COVID-19 lockdown and 'cooing'. While some felt protected and understood the necessity, others resented being singled out based on age and perceived it as a form of ageism.



Recommendations In the event of future public health measures, ensure that communication is clear, transparent, and respectful of individual autonomy. Avoid blanket approaches that might inadvertently reinforce ageist stereotypes. Engage with older individuals to understand their needs, concerns, and preferences during crisis situations.

5. Differential Impact of Services on Older People

Conclusions Older individuals believe that some services, particularly banking, insurance, and public transportation, disproportionately impact them due to age-related factors.

Recommendations Encourage service providers to offer alternatives that cater to the needs of older people. This might involve providing in-person assistance, simplified online interfaces, or specific support for digital literacy among older individuals.

6. Engagement of Older People in Service Planning

Conclusions Many older people feel that government and private sector organisations do not take their needs into account when planning services.

Recommendations Establish mechanisms for ongoing consultation and feedback from older individuals during the planning and design of services. Develop advisory groups or panels composed of older people to ensure that their voices are included in decision-making processes.

7. Addressing Ageism

Conclusions Ageism is evident in various aspects, including service planning, communication, and the perception of older individuals as a homogenous group rather than diverse individuals with unique needs.

Recommendations Implement anti-ageism campaigns to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about older people. Promote intergenerational understanding and collaboration to bridge gaps between different age groups.

In summary, there is a need to raise awareness about the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, ensure effective implementation of equality laws, address ageism in policies and services, and actively involve older people in decision-making processes. The recommendations provided aim to foster a more inclusive and equitable society for older individuals in Ireland.

Practical recommendations

Research

1. **Promote Awareness through Census** Include questions related to the feelings and experiences of older people in the national Census. This could provide valuable insights and highlight their needs.
2. **Complete additional focused research** Specific research investigating issues in banking, insurance, employment, transport etc. to influence future policy and practice and address differential impact on older people. This report clearly lays out the concerns/barriers faced by the participants of the research. The data provided by this report can inform an assessment of equality and human rights issues relevant to all public bodies. The report also includes potential actions/solutions to remove such barriers that can inform the development of actions/plans to address equality and human rights issues relevant to public bodies dealing with older members of the community.

Policy

3. **Enhance Representation in Government and Committees** Work on better representation of older individuals in various governmental bodies, committees, and boards. This will help ensure that policies and decisions consider the needs of older citizens effectively.
4. **Involve Older People in Policy Decision-Making** Include older people in the development of policies and decision-making processes. Their life experience and wisdom can contribute to creating more effective policies and services.
5. **Review and Update Policies** Regularly review and update policies to accommodate the diverse needs of older individuals. Consider different living situations, financial constraints, and preferences.
6. **Tackle Ageism and Discrimination** Address ageism and discrimination in policies and services. Ensure that older people are treated with respect and dignity and that policies are fair across all age groups. This includes raising awareness of 'The Duty' as a legal obligation on public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate age and other discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of all public sector staff and service users.
7. **Appoint a Minister for Older People** Consider appointing a dedicated Minister for Older People, who has reach across government departments. This could help raise awareness and profile of issues related to older individuals.
8. **Encourage Cross-Generational Solidarity** Foster better solidarity between generations, promoting engagement of older people in economic, social, cultural, community, and family life.

Practice

9. **Establish an Independent Commissioner or Ombudsman for Older People** Create a dedicated authority that represents and advocates for the rights and needs of older people, similar to the model in Northern Ireland. Ensure this Commissioner lobbies for their needs and amplifies their voices in policy decisions.
10. **Prioritise Listening and Consultation** Engage in more active listening and consultation with older people before making decisions that affect them. Take their insights and perspectives seriously.
11. **Advocate for Age-Related Issues** Establish advocates or spokespersons who address age-related concerns and advocate for the rights of older people. These advocates can ensure their concerns are properly addressed.
12. **Promote Participation in Boards and Councils** Encourage greater participation of older people in various councils and boards related to housing, policy, and age-friendly initiatives.
13. **Provide Accessible Information and Support** Make information and support easily accessible for older people, especially in areas like technology and online services. Offer assistance for online difficulties.
14. **Integrate Older People in Community Life** Actively involve older people in community activities and initiatives to create opportunities for interaction and involvement.
15. **Strengthen Older People's Councils** Make Older People's Councils more visible, inclusive, and representative of the general older population. Provide the necessary resources and budgets to allow them to effectively address real issues faced by older individuals.
16. **Improve Communication** Improve communication about the activities and roles of Older People's Councils. Consider creating informative booklets or materials to help constituents understand their purpose and objectives.



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