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19 June 2025
By email

Dear Ms Owen,

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 follow up on my letter, 28 February, concerning your report: 'The Rights of Older People'.

In response to the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 36, we are delighted to share our [final report](#) on the 'Depiction of Older People in Ads'.

As the Committee's report recognised, "older people" make up an extremely heterogeneous group, and their diversity is increasing. Yet 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.

Witnesses to the Committee's inquiry identified a wide range of sources of ageist stereotypes. 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

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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 experiences. This presents a significant opportunity for the ad industry to drive change in the way we view 'getting older'. As your report recognises, 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 understand that this might be disappointing for the Committee but we're hoping 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.

Once again, thank you for the Committee's work in this area. We would be delighted to present the research findings to the Committee if your diary permits

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Jo Poots
Project Sponsor and Head of Complaints and Investigations