

Experiences and Expressions of Ageism

Abstract:

Europe has a steadily ageing population, but the age ratios differ markedly between different European countries. This poses a major challenge both for people's personal and working lives and for public policy. This module is based on items designed and implemented in two major national surveys conducted in the UK (2004, 2006). The surveys used theory and research methods from social psychology to examine several key components of ageism: age stereotypes, attitudes towards ageing, intergenerational contact, intergenerational attitudes, and experiences of ageism. The surveys demonstrated reliable and important findings but only in the context of the UK. The most important finding was that age discrimination is more commonly experienced (by young and old alike) than any other form of prejudice, by a very substantial margin. Yet ageism has never been the subject of a comprehensive cross-national study. Different EU countries are introducing age-discrimination legislation at different rates and this provides an ideal opportunity to examine how different policy contexts, as well as cultural contexts, bear on the management of age-related demographic changes. The proposed module, with a team from the UK, Portugal and France will provide the first major European study of ageing related perceptions, relationships and stereotypes.

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