

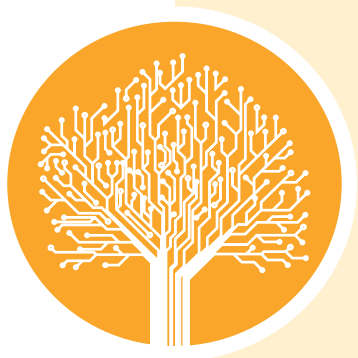
## Analytical Report



# AGE DISCRIMINATION AND MEDIA:

Experience of  
Older Adults  
(60+)

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**Objective of the research:** to identify dominant frames of representation of older adults (60+) in the news media discourse and to analyze the experience of age discrimination in older adults, taking into account their ideas about the role of media in shaping this experience.

A mixed methods approach was chosen for the research, it consisted of focus group discussions with older adults as well as media monitoring using the Semantrum AI analytics platform with frame analysis elements.

In February 2026, 4 focus group discussions were held with older adults (online, Zoom platform), attended by 22 respondents. There was a separate group of older journalists (60+).

**Media monitoring** using the Semantrum AI analytics platform (<https://www.promo.semantrum.net/>) covered two months (**March-April 2026**) and publications (N=9 409) of central and regional media outlets (N=1 383 including online and print media, TV and radio). **The subject of the monitoring** was the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of representation of older adults in media texts, i.e.: topics, social roles, age stereotypes (ageism), emotional tone, frequency of mentions, etc.

Following the review of research literature and preliminary monitoring of the information space, a list of frames was defined:

## Frame 1 Biological Fragility/ Vulnerability

- **Markers:** Diseases, disempowerment, need in care, diminutives ("grandma", "elderly"), solitude.
- **Tone:** Compassion, pity.

## Frame 2 Social Burden

- **Markers:** Benefits, pension crisis, "support", burden on the budget, "eating up" taxes.
- **Tone:** Alarmism, negativity.

## Frame 3 Cognitive Rigidity

- **Markers:** Inability to adapt to change, no creativity, struggles with learning, conflicts with young colleagues due to "outdated methods", emphasis on digital gap (cannot use a smartphone/ Diia).
- **Tone:** Anger, arrogance, condescending pity.

#### Frame 4 Family Objectification

- **Markers:** Mentions exclusively in the roles of "grandmother/grandfather", emphasis on baking, needlework, raising grandchildren or gardening; no sexuality, personal interests, professional past beyond the family.
- **Tone:** Positive but condescending.

#### Frame 5 Active Agency (Subjectivity)

- **Markers:** Training, volunteering, business, professional activity, expertise, travels.
- **Tone:** Positive, partner.

#### Frame 6 Idealized Activity (Super-Ageing)

- **Markers:** Marathons at 90, models without wrinkles, defying age-related changes as a standard.
- **Tone:** Admiration, sometimes unrealistic.

#### Frame 7 Electoral Conservatism

- **Markers:** "Buckwheat electorate" (voters who trade votes for cash or favors), "nostalgic for the USSR", "reform brakes", "voting for the past", emphasizing that older adults stand in the way of youth building the future.
- **Tone:** Accusing, judging, perhaps ironic/sarcastic.

In the process of media monitoring, the presence of a respective frame in the media was confirmed or refuted.

# SUMMARY



## Focus group discussion findings:

1

The wording preferences used to address older adults vary significantly depending on the region and socio-cultural environment. The participants respond positively to expressions that emphasize the experience and dignity, like “people of respectable age”, “people of golden age” or “elegant age”. The addressing terms “pan” (Ukrainian term for “sir, mister”) and “pani” (Ukrainian term for “madam”) are considered universal. Whereas, the words “zhinochka” (Ukrainian term for “woman”, belittling tone) or “titonka” (Ukrainian term for “auntie”) often cause a negative reaction.

2

Though some discriminatory practices in the field of labor, healthcare, social protection and access to services persist, the focus group participants say that the full-scale war has partially changed the attitude toward older people: the shortage of staff and active volunteer engagement of older adults increased recognition of their experience, professionalism and contribution to support the country.

3

Unlike participants of other focus groups, journalists experience age discrimination in their profession more strongly (in newsrooms or when searching for a job).

4

The respondents do not generally perceive the Ukrainian media as openly ageist but underline poor visibility and subjectivity of older adults in the public space. According to them, the media rarely involve older adults as recognized participants in social discussions and do not cover enough the problems and needs of this age group.

## Media Monitoring Results:

1

The subject of older adults (60+) was secondary or occasional in most media materials of the sample, and main and cross-cutting topic in only 38.5%.

2

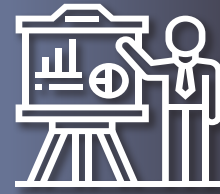
Although direct ageism is rare in Ukrainian media, reporting about older adults is generally extremely stereotypical. For example, Ukrainian media portray people 60+ either as requiring care and assistance or in the context of pension and social security issues and demographic crisis.

3

Materials about active older adults and their stories of development or success are scarce, and even if they do get posted, they are usually about well-known Ukrainians or about foreign pensioners. Older adults' voices are rarely heard in the media: other people (journalists, experts, relatives, etc.) comment in place of them.

- 4 The term “elderly people” most commonly used in the media (27,3% mentions) is discriminatory. Although it is still present in the Ukrainian legislation, linguists recommend removing it from public use and from the language of official documents as it is insulting.
- 5 When speaking of older adults, the media focus on social problems, health and pension issues; this once again confirms the trend of perceiving and representing older adults mainly as a socially vulnerable group that needs care and support.
- 6 The topic of ageism is still underrepresented and sporadic in the media (about 2% of the materials). Hardly any publications provide a clear explanation of what age discrimination is, how it manifests, and what impact it has on society. This may indicate a lack of public attention to the problem of ageism and a limited awareness of its importance as a separate form of discrimination.
- 7 The frames with negative connotations dominate in the media field, in particular (1) about the biological fragility and vulnerability of older adults; (2) about older adults as a burden for families or for the country.
- 8 The active agency frame comes up occasionally in Ukrainian media and does not construe the image of people 60+ as an active and independent group. Thus, the model of active long life remains not visible enough in the information space.
- 9 The family objectification frame is one of the most common examples of hidden ageism, since even with a positive tone it limits the diversity of social roles of older adults and narrows their representation to traditional family functions.
- 10 The idealized activity or “super-ageing” frame is not that common, but it may create a new type of age-related stereotypes by imposing an unrealistic standard of “successful aging”.
- 11 The electoral conservatism frame, though rare in the media so far, has the potential to grow if the political activity restores. This frame is of destructive nature, since it deepens the opposition of generations and pins responsibility for social and political problems on a certain age group.

# CONTEXT. OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH



The world's population is aging rapidly. According to the UN World Population Prospects (2024), by the end of the 2070s, the persons aged 65 or older will reach 2.2 billion and exceed the number of children (under 18). And by the mid-2030s, it is expected that the number of persons aged 80 and over in the world will outnumber infants (1 year of age or less) (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2024:12). In Ukraine, the trends are similar and, affected by the war, the demographic ageing of the population has only intensified (Honcharova & Parkhomchuk, 2025; Kopytko, 2025). According to the Pension Fund of Ukraine, as of 1 April 2026, Ukraine has 10.1 million pension recipients, among which 7.32 million (or 72.5%) are old-age pensioners (Pension Fund of Ukraine, 2026).

Increasing older population requires higher attention: from their social support, active inclusion in social life to taking into account that they will constitute a significant part of the voters in future elections. This overview of context and references focuses on how older people are represented in the media. Since the representation in media has a significant impact on attitudes to, perception of the role and value of senior people in social life, and can help both in overcoming and reinforcing stereotypes.

Age-related bias and discrimination are called ageism. The term was coined in 1969 by the American psychiatrist Robert Butler, bringing up senior persons' problems and regarding ageism as equal to racism (Butler, 1969). 1). Another prominent researcher of ageing Erdman Palmor claimed that senior people should be seen as a minority, a vulnerable social group (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018: 3)

Scientific research on the representation of senior people in media confirms the widespread prejudice against them. The systematic review of *The Social Construction of Age: Media Stigmatization of Older Adults* (Camacho-Markina and Santos-Diez, 2025), synthesizing 21 scholar studies, demonstrates that the media predominantly portray senior people through negative and stereotypical images. For example, their dependence, passivity, susceptibility to diseases as well as their role as a socio-economic burden are highlighted. Moreover, this group is presented as homogeneous and devoid of diversity of experience. At the same time, senior people rarely act as direct sources of information, including cases when media talk about them. Even positive images of so-called active ageing often remain idealized and unrealistic and ignore existing social inequalities.

According to the systematic review above, media often resort to derogatory or biased wording about this age group. These may be both offensive words (wrinklies, crumblied) and at first glance neutral words (pensioners or the elderly), which, however, overgeneralize the diverse experience and depict people as a passive and dependent group. The same applies to the use of the word "grandparents" ("grandfather" "grandmother"), while this is a descriptor of a family role and applying it to the entire age group is incorrect (ibid.).

This stereotypical representation of senior people is typical not only for traditional media but also for social media. For example, Makita et. al (2021) analyzed the patterns of representation on Twitter around the terms ageing, old age, older people and elderly with a sample of 1,200 tweets and found similar to the above trends: reinforcing negative discourse on age and ageing, representing older people as a powerless, vulnerable, and homogeneous group, perceiving old age as a process to re-

sist, slow down, or hide. According to the authors, social media reproduce and reinforce the ageist discourse of traditional media that shape the society's opinion of older people and ageing (Makita et. al, 2021).

Media research on representation of older people in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic deserves special attention since people over 60 were in high-risk groups and been placed at the center of public discussion. The research conducted in the USA, China, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Spain and Germany (Jeong et al 2022; Zhang & Liu 2021; Yang et al.2024; Morgan et al. 2021) show that during the pandemic the media have reinforced stereotypical perceptions of older people, presenting them as a homogeneous group and diminishing the diverse life experiences of millions of people to their vulnerability and passivity.

Another interesting aspect of media representation of older people is related to visual illustration in media texts. The study of Myrczik et al. (2023) covered the images that accompanied material about older people and COVID-19 on the four most popular websites in Germany. It showed that the visual representation of this age group in the media is consistent with the stereotypical text that previous studies had found. The authors observed the German online media actively using the practice of visual othering, alienation and distancing from the depicted group. The analysis has demonstrated that 60.8% of the images had no human faces, they were showing hands (19.9%), legs or feet (9.9%) instead. The authors understand that this situation is largely conditioned by the routines of news media and the availability of stereotypical stock photos, but interpret the obtained results as visual ageism by the media teams and speak about the need to revise these practices as they have an impact on people of all ages.

There are a number of Ukrainian scientific articles dedicated to media representation of older people. For example, in the article by Balandina and Pankevych (2021) Ageism Traits in the Media Image of Older Persons, having analyzed 296 news pieces, the authors found that the most common construction of the image of older people is as victims, then as offenders or criminals, as well as carriers of aggressiveness, poverty, unattractiveness, inadequacy, spatial disorientation, carelessness, venality, selfishness, disempowerment, loneliness, and hyper thriftiness.

Thus, the research in different countries shows that media regularly reproduce stereotypes about ageing and older people, portraying them as a homogeneous, vulnerable, and dependent group. Such representation affects opinions about ageing and restricts the involvement of older people in social life.



## SECTION 1.

# SELF-PERCEPTION AND MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF OLDER PEOPLE (60+) (Focus Group Findings)

In February 2026, four focus group discussions were held to discuss the self-identification of older people, their opinions of representation of their age group in media, and their experience of age discrimination.

The respondents were selected taking into account regional and, if possible, gender representation. The total number of participants is 22 people, where 4 men and 18 women. They represented the cities: Kyiv (7), Odesa (4), Lviv (1), Lutsk (1), Kropyvnytskyi (2), Kharkiv (1), Ivano-Frankivsk (1), Zaporizhzhia (1), Vinnytsia (1), Rivne oblast (1). One of the groups included the participants with journalistic experience only who work or used to work in journalism or related fields. Respondents of three other focus group discussions had different professional experience: former department heads at enterprises, accountants, IT specialists, academic circles representatives. Most of the participants continue to be active through volunteering or professional employment.

### Self-Identification and Wording



The analysis has shown that the wording preferences used to address older adults vary significantly depending on the region and socio-cultural environment. In Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk, it is customary to address «пані» (“pani”, Ukrainian term for “madam”) and «пане» (“pane”, Ukrainian term for “sir”, Vocative case), emphasizing respect for a person. Meanwhile, in Zaporizhzhia and Odesa, there

is still a tradition of addressing like «тьотя» (“tiotia”, Ukrainian term for “auntie”), «дядя» (“diadia”, Ukrainian term for “uncle”), «бабушка» (“babushka”, Ukrainian term for “granny”).

The participants respond positively to expressions that emphasize the experience and dignity, like “people of respectable age”, “people of golden age” or “elegant age”. The addressing terms “pan” and “pani” are considered universal because they sound polite and neutral. Whereas, the words «жіночка» (“zhinochka”, Ukrainian term for “woman”, belittling tone) or «тітонька» (“titonka”, Ukrainian term for “auntie”) often cause a negative reaction because they sound overly familiar. Similarly, the words «бабуся» (“babusia”, Ukrainian term for “granny”) and «дідусь» (“didus”, Ukrainian term for “grandpa”) are appropriate in the family circle only, and not in public communication, most of the participants of the discussions believe.

” I feel a bit offended when people address me “babushka”. Once I was shopping in Silpo and dropped an onion, it rolled somewhere. A woman told her boy of four years: “Please bring the onion to that granny.” In this situation, I took it normally because for a small child I am a grandmother. But if someone of almost my age or even a little younger addresses me that way, then it is not very pleasant for me” (a female participant from Kyiv).

Many participants do not like the expression “elderly age” because it is associated with decline and is unpleasant. The word “pensioner”, as the discussions suggest, is mostly perceived as a formal status not a characteristic of a person. One of the participants suggested an approach common in some European countries when the addressing term retains a professional identity and the person is addressed/ introduced, for example, as “a pensioner engineer”. This allows to underline that a person remains an expert even after retirement and their identity is not reduced to age or social status.

” When we retire, how do we introduce ourselves? Like, Nadiya (name changed – ed.), retired. I like the way people introduce themselves in Germany, in the UK. They say, “Roland, engineer, retired, 76 years old.” I mean they do not miss to add their profession or occupation. They have it in their culture. And we have a dismissive “pensioner.” Though a person has achieved something in their life, has seen a lot...” (a female participant from Lviv).

## Discrimination in Daily Life and in Public Spheres



As some of the participants noticed, before the full-scale war, the CVs of candidates 60+ were often ignored. The war has brought a positive shift, as the HR shortage made employers reconsider these discriminatory practices. Some of them said that if before the pensioners had been asked to make room for young people, now the age threshold does not play such a role, the most important thing is whether a person meets professional requirements.

Others cited examples of discriminatory practices by employers. Although the law prohibits age discrimination and age cannot be a condition of employment or a reason for dismissal, several participants mentioned that such practices still exist, particularly in the media sphere (see more detail below in this section).

Also, based on the discussions, the problems in banking services and social protection bodies are still pressing, the participants face indifference or rudeness there. As for the healthcare sector, the

participants spoke about cases of negligent treatment, the practice of treating older people last, especially those over 80 years old.

” *I think we, the ones here, can still be called young ones, young pensioners, if we may say so. So we do not experience yet this kind of attitude towards people who are older. And if you take those who are much older, like my mother, who will soon be 89, she faces a different attitude. She doesn't walk, and I have to accompany her. At the hospital, for example, she is treated as if she were, let's put it that way, a kind of exhausted material (a female participant from Kyiv).*

One of the female participants pointed out that they have difficulties because some institutions require patients to print out medical referrals, and this is an obstacle for those who have not got equipment, skills or mobility level for that. It was also mentioned about the insulting stereotype that older people a priori are not able to learn to use modern technologies.

At the same time, some participants say that during the war young people began to treat the older generation with greater respect, appreciating their experience: *“I feel more respect now, during the war. Young people appreciate those who have knowledge and know how to”* (a female participant from Odesa). Many older people actively joined helping the front: they weave nets, cook food, this way they feel useful to society.

## Media and Stereotypes about Older People



Media representation of older people was one of the focus group discussion blocks. When the participants were asked to share observations of how the media portrayed their age group, the majority said they did not notice a blatant discriminatory or derogatory attitude. It was also said that the quality of coverage of older people depends on the professionalism of a particular media outlet. However, the participants expressed their wish that the media would pay more attention to the opinion of older people when it comes to their problems or needs.

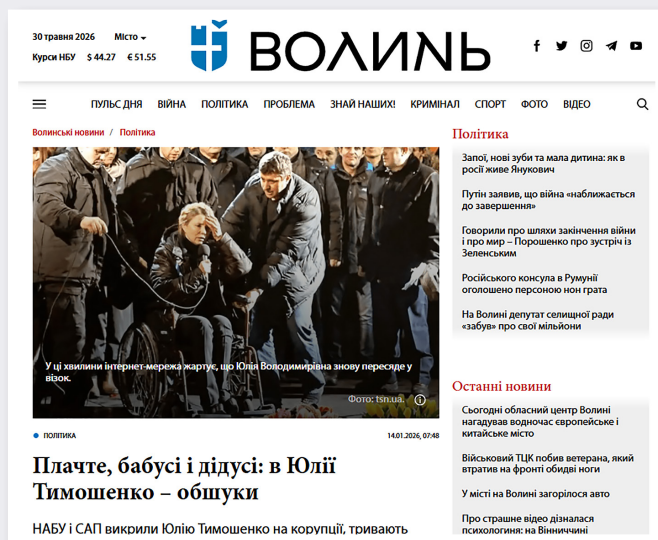
” *I think they'd better take (into account) the opinion of pensioners and present our pressing problems. (...) For example, when they re-purpose some premises, which was a clinic in this area, and hand it over to another institution, I would very much appreciate at least a minimal blitz survey of pensioners whose neighbourhood had that clinic. Is it convenient for them to commute to another part of the city? In such moments, I think, they could show at least a bit of consideration ”* (a female participant from Lviv).

Also, several news materials from different media outlets that contained ageism or stereotypical representation of people 60+ were brought to the focus group participants.

### Case 1

## News piece of the Volyn online media (volyn.com.ua) about searches in the office of the Batkivshchyna Party headlined Cry Grandmas and Grandpas: Searches at Yulia Tymoshenko's.

The news headline sparked indignation among the participants. It was called provocative, offensive, manipulative, ageist. Many participants pointed out that using the words “grandmas” and “grandpas” in the context of this news is unacceptable.



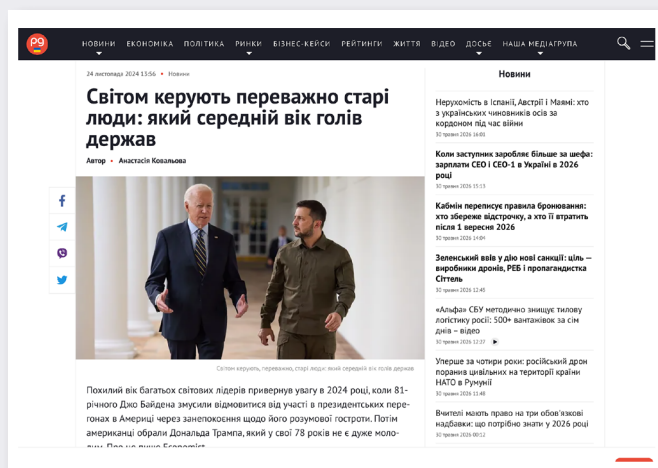
Source: Screenshot of [Volyn website](http://Volyn website)

” Those authors are not my grandchildren. Why would we cry? Why are they addressing grandparents? I personally believe that they treat us as so primitive so, you know... that grandparents do not understand anything” (a female participant from Lviv-1).

” From the point of view of journalism, this is completely unprofessional. These journalists wanted to “hype”, that’s all” (a female participant from Lutsk).

## Case 2

The text on The Page website titled “The World Is Mostly Run by Mostly Old People”, it presents The Economist infographics about the age of leaders of states.



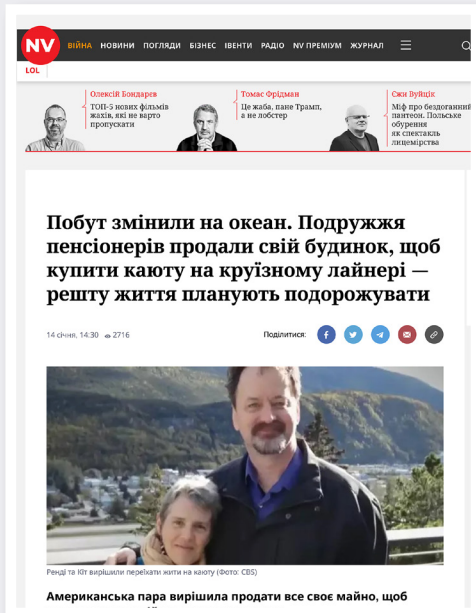
Source: Screenshot of [The Page website](http://The Page website)

The wording “the world is mostly run by old people” was also criticized by the participants as ageism. One of the participants suggested replacing it with a more correct “older people”. They also underlined that age is not the determining factor, it is more about mental health and the professional team behind the leader, because young people may be inadequate as well. However, they also expressed criticism and suggestions of the age threshold for politicians: one female participant expressed an opinion that after 80 years politicians cannot properly perform their duties, as they may have problems with memory.

” I think that first of all you need to consider the health of a particular person. (...) two elements must be taken into account. The first is adequacy, and I do not mean physical but rather mental health. After all, we know that young people also happen to be completely inadequate or not quite healthy. The second point is people who are next to the head of state and who help him” (a female participant from Lviv-2).

## Case 3

## News on the NV website about a US couple with the headline “Ocean for Routine Life. A Retired Couple Sold Their Home to Buy a Cruise Ship Cabin: Planning to Travel for the Rest of Their Lives.”



Source: Screenshot of the [NV](#) website

The article about American pensioners on a cruise ship had mixed reactions. Overall, the picture was called positive as an example of active life, but for the Ukrainian context it was considered not relatable as Ukrainians have different economic conditions and no opportunities for such a scenario.

” In terms of the publication itself, no complaints, good for them. But I want to add that Ukrainian pensioners can only envy them, in a good way. At their age, they can afford to do what they want. Maybe it was the dream of their life: they worked, earned pension, certain wealth, sold their house and left. (...) But tell me, are there many pensioners in Ukraine who can afford something like that? (a female participant from Lviv-2).

## Age Discrimination and Media Representation of Older Adults. Opinion of Journalists



One focus group had 6 journalists and other media professionals aged 60+, consisting of four women and two men. All participants of this focus group had extensive experience in the media or continue to work in journalistic teams, press services or public media organizations.

Having a dedicated focus group with journalists allows to record cases of discrimination or internal ageism in journalistic groups, which often go unnoticed by an external observer. It also helps to understand the practices of covering the older people's subjects by Ukrainian media outlets. However, it should be noted that the findings of one focus group cannot be considered sufficiently representative. And for a deeper analysis of editorial practices, additional focus groups or surveys media teams are needed.

When asked whether the larger experience (and, respectively, the age) is an advantage in their work, all participants were positive. “I have been working for a long time and I can say that experience is an advantage. It makes it possible to see processes in dynamics, compare different periods and draw conclusions. As long as one is certain of their own professional capability, they can work and enjoy it,” a female participant of the discussion said. However, a few of them have noticed some difficulties in adapting to new work formats (for example, not appreciating Instagram, where photos matter more than text).

**Unlike participants of other focus groups, journalists experience age discrimination in their profession more strongly (in media offices or when searching for a job).**

Several participants shared their experience of age discrimination. One of the female participants talked about unethical practices of dismissal of older colleagues by younger executives; and another male participant told how he tried to get a job and was rejected because of age: *"They want someone younger. Not someone more professional, more resilient, but younger. It's a serious problem."*

Another male participant of the discussion, on the contrary, had experience of positive discrimination: they tried to make tasks or schedule easier for senior colleagues.

In terms of wording and self-identification, the participants said that in professional communication they try to use neutral words when referring to the age group in question, such as "older people" or to avoid mentioning the age of a person, if possible. Some allow in everyday contexts the use of the term "people of elegant age" about themselves. The group members unanimously agree that the words "babushka" (granny) and "didus" (grandpa) are inappropriate, unless this is about family.

They also discussed addressing using the first name and patronymic name: the participants believe this is a soviet tradition and suggest replacing it with more universal and respectful options "pan" and "pani".

When asked whether they see trends in reporting about older people, most participants said it was difficult to identify trends, particularly because their news consumption is limited to a number of quality outlets, "which, except in some cases, give no grounds for complaints in this sense." However, one of the female participants shared her thoughts as a media consumer. According to her observations, presentation of older people is often limited to a few roles: 1) grandmothers who care for grandchildren, 2) sufferers from low pensions and household problems, who barely survive, below the poverty line and need protection, 3) or active older adults practicing sports in their senior years, etc. Another female participant mentioned materials about the military 50+ and 60+ as an example of positive stories in the media.

According to the participants, the practices of covering older adults in the media heavily depend on how journalists themselves understand ethical standards and human rights as well as on whether editorial teams have relevant policies.

**”** *It seems to me that not only the attitude to age is a problem for young journalists, but also the lack of professionalism, understanding of basic principles and values. Will the editorial policy be of any help for that? I think yes, it will. Because if the editorial team has it not as an extra piece requested by grantors but as an efficient tool, and the first thing that they do (while onboarding) is to make staff aware of these basic principles and restrictions – it should be helpful.”*

The female participant believes that cases of inappropriate coverage of older people are more often associated not with bad attitude and are not intentional – but rather it is a consequence of the

overall cultural background. She says that, today, when a rapid change of generations in the media is taking place because of the war, it is important to talk to new journalists more often, show them best practices and share experiences.

## Analysis of Media Materials



As in the other three focus groups, the participants were offered similar examples of news materials for discussion (see cases 1, 2, 3 above). The journalist participants analyzed them in terms of compliance with professional standards.

If the material about the retired couple on a cruise ship did not cause lively discussion and was perceived neutrally, the other two (about the searches in the Batkivshchyna Party office, and the age of world leaders) were called click-bait and unprofessional by the participants. They said that using the words “grandmas” and “grandpas” in the title to the text about Yulia Tymoshenko is unreasonable. “*This is stereotyping and labeling,*” said one of the participants. Another female participant called this media practice ageism.

The article “The World Is Mostly Run by Mostly Old People” was also rated unethical. To be more specific, one of the female participants said that this kind of a headline should be backed by facts and statistical data: “*The headline is on the verge, clear and hard-hitting. (...) (If) the text contains some kind of statement, statistical data concerning the age of presidents, heads of governments (...), if the material really contains information of this kind – it is hard-hitting, it attracts attention, it is on the verge of ethics and appropriateness, but in this form I could accept.*” Presenting Biden next to Zelensky, in her opinion: “*This is not about exploring what age politicians are, but an absolutely politically motivated thing that targets a very simple idea: “What those old fools are good for?” And here comes a young politician who’s got an advantage. This is absolutely unacceptable, the same discriminatory thing as we talked about. In this context, this is unacceptable.*”



## SECTION 2.

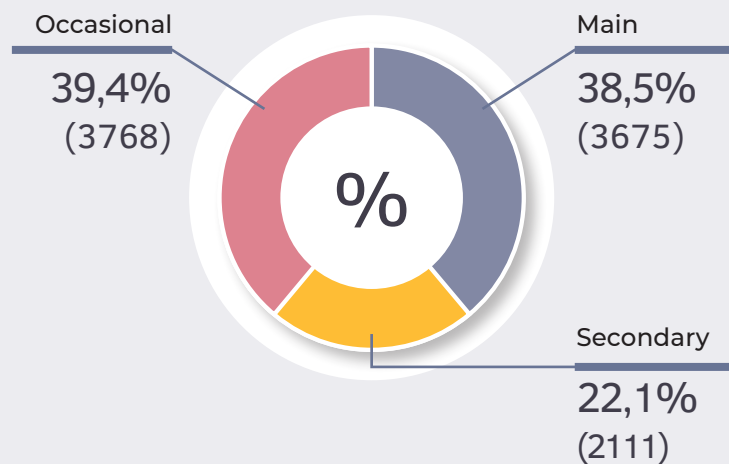
# REPRESENTATION OF OLDER PEOPLE IN UKRAINIAN MEDIA (Media Monitoring Results)

During April-March 2026, experts of the Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute were monitoring Ukrainian media for ageism or other negative media practices regarding people 60+. The Semantrum system was used to collect data, its source database has 6 100 media.

The sample included 9 409 texts published in 1 383 media. Among them:

1365	2	9	7
online media	radios and their websites	TV channels and their websites	print media
regional and national	Hromadske and Radio NV	UA:Pershyy, United News Marathon, Channel 5, Espresso TV, Channel 24, My - Ukrayina, Priamyi, TRK Kyiv, Novyny.LIVE;	Ukrayina Moloda, Holos Ukrayiny, Ratusha (Lviv), Svoboda (Ternopil), Volynska Hazena, Cherkaskyi Krai, Apteka

## Rank of the older adults subject in media texts



Source: Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute / Data collection and analysis tool – Semantrum. Total number of mentions is 9 409.

Most of the selected texts are news pieces.

The subject of older people (60+) was secondary or occasional in most media materials, and main and cross-cutting topic in only 38.5%.

All media texts were taken into account in this monitoring, as it was important to record what terminology media use when they write about older people.

Monitoring data show: although direct ageism is rare in Ukrainian media, coverage of older adults is generally extremely stereotypical. In particular, Ukrainian media portray people 60+ either as requiring care and assistance or in the context of pension and social security issues and demographic crisis. This frames the society to perceive this age group as a burden. Materials about active older people and their stories of development or success are scarce, and even if they do happen, they are usually about well-known Ukrainians or about foreign pensioners. Older adults' voices are rarely heard in the media: either journalists or other people (experts, relatives, etc.) comment instead of them.

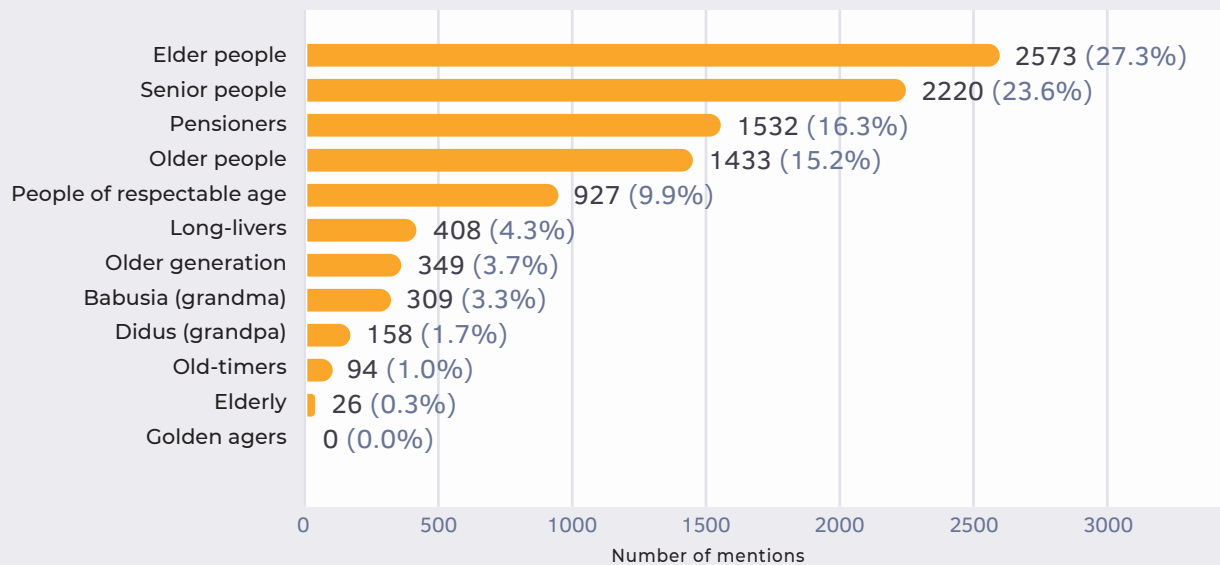
## Terminology. How Media Call Older People



Almost two-thirds of phrase mentions fall into three key categories. The most common wordings in the media are “elder people” (27.3%), “senior people” (23.6%) and “pensioners” (16.3%).

The term “elder people” most commonly used in the media is discriminatory. Although it is still present in the Ukrainian legislation, linguists recommend removing it from public use and from the language of official documents as it is insulting (Dutsyk, 2026).

## How Ukrainian media call people 60+ (number of mentions)



Source: Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute / Data collection and analysis tool is Semantrum. Total number of mentions is 9 409.

The most controversial is the term “senior people”, which is in second place (23.6%) in terms of mentions in media. In Ukrainian language, they use «літні люди» (“litni liudy”) for “senior people”; it is confusing as the adjective «літній» (“litnii”) deriving from an old Ukrainian word «літа́» (“litá”, meaning years) is often confused with «літо» (“lito”, meaning summer). Linguists consider the term acceptable but opinions of people 60+ about this term are contradictory: not everyone knows its origin.

The lexical form “pensioners”, the third in terms of mentions in the media (16.3%), may be used only in a certain context when it comes to people who already have a defined status of pensioners. This category covers people of different ages, including those who are younger than 60 but may have the status of a “pensioner” (for example, firefighters or policemen can retire at 45-55; or the pension may be granted because of disability). The monitoring showed that the word “pensioners” is used by Ukrainian media, as a rule, when it comes to pension benefits.

The lexical form “older people”, mentioned in 15.2% of media materials, is neutral, and is positively perceived by people 60+, as shown by the focus group discussions.

Meanwhile, the Barrier-Free Vocabulary (Словник безбар'єрності) (2021) defines the wording “people of respectable age” (9.9% of mentions in media) as inappropriate, although some linguists consider it quite acceptable. The target group 60+, as shown by focus groups, has positive feelings about this wording.

The words “grandmother” and “grandfather” are appropriate in the family circle only. These lexical forms are unacceptable in public discourse; they also cause rejection in older people themselves.

They don't like to be called this way in media or in public places. Although, as evidenced by the monitoring, such wording is present in the media.

The use of the lexical form of “elderly” is marginal (0.3%) in Ukrainian media, which is a positive trend. However, this word still occurs in the media, for example, it occurs when television and radio presenters speak. Most often it is used in the phrase «будинки престарілих» (“budyanky prestarilykh”, Ukrainian term for “nursing homes”, literal translation: homes for elderly). But this form is discriminatory and therefore unacceptable in public discourse, it should be abandoned, according to linguists. (Dutsyk, 2026). It is also inappropriate to use the word “old-timers” in public discourse, since it portrays the group as a social burden. Although it does not dominate in the Ukrainian media, it is still present there (1% of mentions).

Lexical form “long-livers” occurs in 4.3% of the monitored media. This form is neutral and appropriate if it is used in relation to people who have reached the age of 90+.

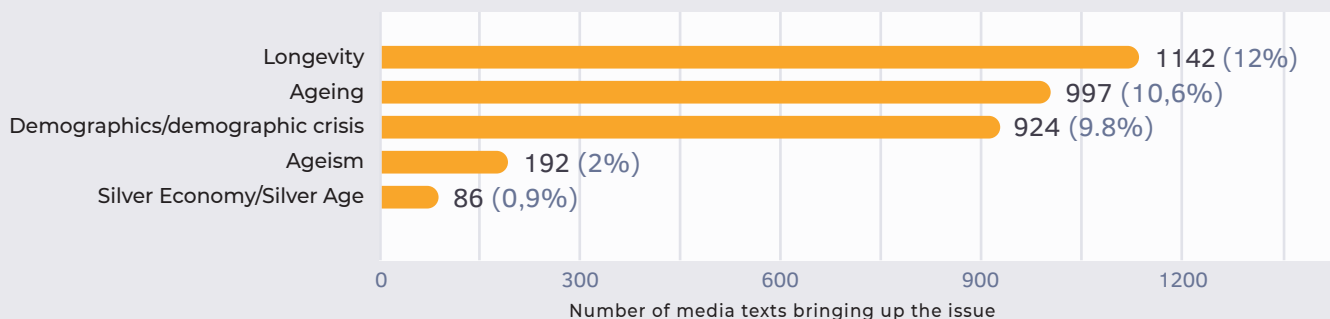
## Topics. In What Context Media Mention Older People



To understand what role is molded by the media for older people in society, it is important to analyze not only the wording but also a broader context and topics of journalistic materials. It is the topics and contextual frames that shape how older people are portrayed in the media — either as active participants in social life and keepers of experience and knowledge, or mainly as a vulnerable group associated with challenges of ageing.

The largest number of media materials addresses the issues of longevity. Such publications can predominantly be grouped around the concept of ‘secrets of longevity’: they have tips on healthy diet, physical activity, disease prevention as well as recommendations on how to “preserve youth”

### Topics of materials about people 60+



Source: Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute / Data collection and analysis tool is Semantrum. Total number of mentions is 9 409.

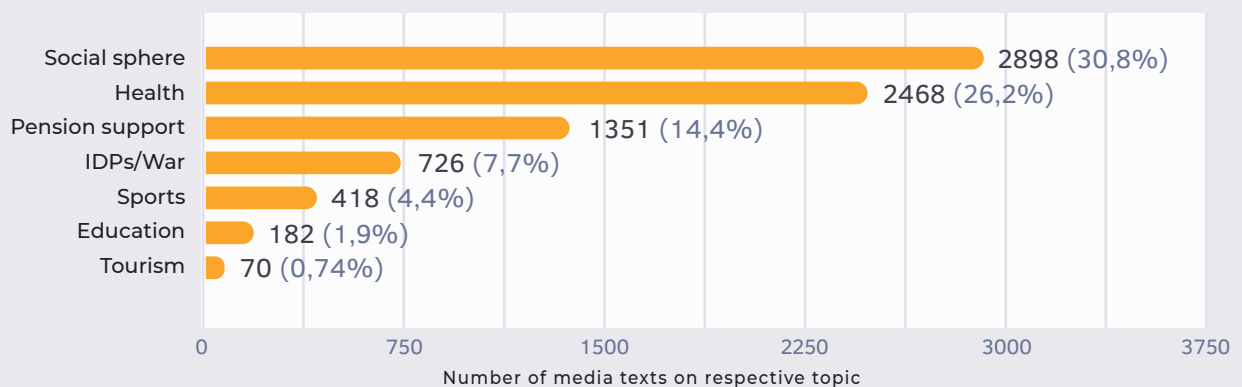
and “prolong life”. Thus, the topic of longevity in the media is mainly presented through personal responsibility for health and the desire to slow down the ageing process.

In the process of monitoring, there was identified a separate array of materials related to the longevity of Russian dictator Vladimir Putin, like publications about the so-called “elixirs of youth” or “vaccines of immortality”. The interest of the Ukrainian audience in this subject is largely explained by the war: at the beginning of a full-scale invasion, part of society linked the possible end of the war with the death of the Russian president. Although these convictions have changed over time due to the lasting war, interest in the subject has remained, influencing the decision of the media to continue talking about it.

The topics of growing old in media materials are presented in two main dimensions. The first one is the “ageing of the population” as a demographic problem, in the Ukrainian context it is tightly associated with the consequences of war, migration and demographic crisis. The second dimension is “ageing” as a physiological process. In this case, a significant part of the texts is devoted to biological ageing of the body, ways of slowing it down and maintaining an active lifestyle at an older age.

At the same time, the topic of ageism is still underrepresented in the media. Occasional mentions of ageism were recorded in only about 2% of the materials. Hardly any publications provide a clear explanation of what age discrimination is, how it manifests, and what impact it has on society. This may indicate a lack of public attention to the problem of ageism and a limited awareness of its importance as a separate form of discrimination.

## Topics of materials that mention people 60+



Source: Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute / Data collection and analysis tool is Semantrum. Total number of mentions is 9 409.

The least represented is the topic of the “silver economy”, i.e. economic opportunities associated with older people. It is present only in 0.9% of materials. This indicates a weak media representation of the discourse about the economic, professional and consumer potential of the older generation as well as the dominance of an approach where older people are more often perceived as a social group needing support rather than as active participants in economic and social life.

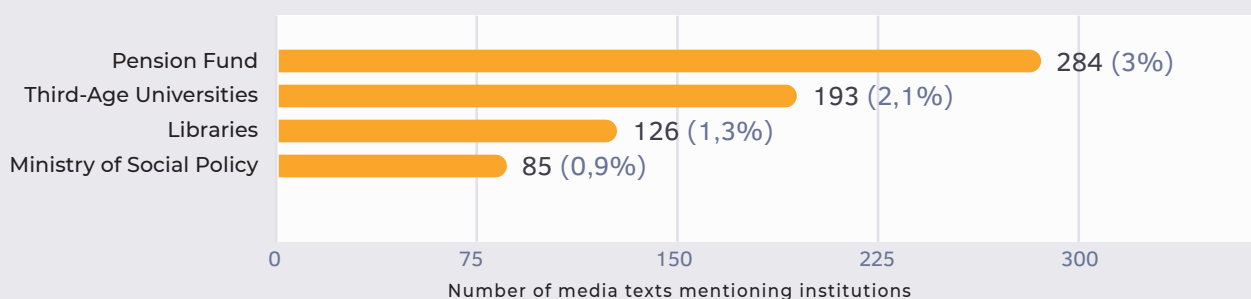
The media focus on social problems, health and pension issues once again confirms the trend of perceiving and representing older people mainly as a socially vulnerable group that needs care and support. In this approach, older people often become objects of social policy or support rather than actors with subjectivity in social life.

The media has a special attention to the topic of internally displaced older persons affected by the war. But most of the materials also cover the support or social security of these people in the new conditions.

Meanwhile, the topics related to the participation of people 60+ in sports, education, tourism, professional activities, cultural life or other forms of active longevity are represented in the media space to a much lesser extent. This shows the lack of visibility of alternative, more positive and diverse older models in Ukrainian media.

The analysis of the institutions mentioned in the materials about older people also gives an idea of how media represent the audience of 60+. The Pension Fund has the most most mentions (3%): in this context, the age group in question is primarily associated with social benefits, governmental support and social security. The institutions associated with active learning and social integration are much less mentioned: the Third Age Universities – 193 mentions (2.1%) and libraries – 85 mentions (1.3%). This may indicate insufficient visibility of the topic of education and active longevity in the media.

## Institutions mentioned in the materials about people 60+



Source: Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute / Data collection and analysis tool is Semantrum. Total number of mentions is 9 409.

## Frame Analysis: Vulnerability and Biological Fragility as the Dominant Frame of Media Discourse



UMCI experts, based on the monitoring above and other research, have identified seven frames that are used by the media the most to depict older people and that affect the stereotyping of this age group in society.

In the process of media monitoring, it was found that frames with negative connotations dominate in the media field, in particular (1) about the biological fragility and vulnerability of older people; (2) about older people as a burden for families or for the country. In contrast, the positive frame “Active Agency”, denoting subjectivity of this age group, is practically absent, except for few media texts about volunteering of older people for the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the war time or their active engagement.

A positive trend is that the media do not have many texts under the frames “Family Objectification” and “Electoral Conservatism” (the number of texts in this frame may grow when the political process is activated and the elections approach).

### Frame 1 Biological Fragility/ Vulnerability

This frame is one of the dominant ones in the media discourse. Older people in texts under this frame have no subjectivity, they are represented as needing guardianship, care and compassion.

#### This frame is characterized by the following headlines:

- Terrible Living Conditions for Senior People in an Institution in Cherkasy Oblast
- Fainted 80-yo Man on the street of Sloviansk (PHOTO)
- Kirovohrad Oblast Police Helped Senior People while on Patrol
- Rescue via Balcony: In Kryvyi Rih Patrol Police Saved Elderly Woman in Distress
- Rivne Patrol Police Helped Disoriented Man Get Home.
- Chernihiv Patrol Police Helped an Elderly Woman Get Home
- In Ternopil, They Helped 83yo Grandpa Who Had Lost His Way Home
- In Mukacheve, Police Officers Helped a Lost Man Get Home.

A significant amount of news is about the inability and disorientation of older people, as in the quotes below:

” On 25 April, at about 17.00, the patrol police Kryvyi Rih received a call from a worried citizen, she reported: a woman of respectable age entered the territory of the kindergarten, she seemed confused, barefoot and could not remember where she lived” (Kryvyi Rih LIFE, 27.04.26).

” *The video shows an elderly man trying to get out of the tram through the front door. It is very difficult for him to walk because he is holding a cane and a package in his hands. Having noticed this, the compassionate driver immediately comes to the help, holding the **grandfather** under his elbow. Such a gesture demonstrates high empathy and humanity in modern society” (politinform.net, 29.04.2026).*

Guest quote in the studio: *“There are a lot of **elderly** people in Kherson. And we would like to bring up very unpleasant statistics. More than 60% are **elderly people**, people with disabilities. And over 40 thousand people living now in the Kherson region are IDPs who moved from the left bank, who moved from other parts of the Kherson region where it is dangerous. And with such statistics, we would like, you know, to talk about such an important topic, that is children abandoning their parents” (Radio NV, 30.04.2026).*

The dominance of this frame leads, among other things, to the exploitation of a vulnerable image of older people in fraudulent schemes, as in this piece of news: [Scam at the Border: A Woman Told How Ukrainian Women Are Lured Into a Terrible Trap](#):

” *Inessa said that fraudsters can impersonate vulnerable people — elderly women, mothers with children or pregnant women, manipulating compassion and asking to drive them across the border.*

*- If you travel with a man, this kind of scam was not detected. Or a **grandmother, you know, a kind of a fragile being,** a mother with little angels, pregnant women approaching you...” (Radio Trek, 30.04.26).*

**This frame is also characterized by the use of diminutives by media – reduced forms of words, such as “grandma”, “grandpa”, “oldies”. The use of such lexical forms is permissible in the family circle but not in public discourse, since they can be perceived by older people as humiliation or disrespect. In fact, diminutives are part of ageist practices in the media and in public discourse in general, so it is recommended to avoid them.**

## Frame 2 Social Burden

As can be seen from the monitoring results above, the number of mentions of older people in the context of pension security issues and other social matters is one of the highest. This shapes the perception of this age group as being permanently dependent and a kind of burden either for the family or for society. While, the contribution of people 60+ to the development of the country before their retirement as well as the fact that they were paying taxes and social contributions (including for the prospective pensions) is ignored. This construes an image of a large group of people as dependents, perceived as a burden on the younger generation and on the nation.

**This frame is characterized by the following headlines:**

- Food for Free for IDPs and Pensioners in Odessa: Regular Aid Centres
- Home Care and Social Support: How Older People and Persons with Disabilities Are Supported in Vinnytsia
- Vorzel Has Opened Third Stage of Boarding House for Senior IDPs.
- In Zaporizhzhia, Free Food for IDPs and Pensioners: Distribution Points

A striking set of clichés and stereotypes is detected in this quote from the [website of the Lubny Town Council](#):

” *Elderly* are people who have got experience, a respectable age and need special attention and support of society. This is a period of life when various physical, mental and social changes can occur. *Pensioners often experience reduced physical activity, health problems or isolation.* However, they also have extensive life experience, knowledge and wisdom that they can pass on to the younger generation. Thus, it is important to ensure proper support and respect for such persons in society” (22.04.2026).

First, the discriminatory wording “elderly” is used here. Secondly, there is an unacceptable generalization for the entire age group that construes an image of a burden, although this group is not homogeneous.

## Frame 3 Cognitive Rigidity

Indicators of the cognitive rigidity frame are representations of older adults as incapable of adapting to change, struggling with learning, conflicting with younger generations due to 'outdated approaches' in work and not knowing to use modern gadgets and digital services.

Often, journalistic materials or official messages of various government agencies state that “especially the older people” are either more vulnerable, or need additional attention, clarification, etc. Like in these quotes:

” Explain to your close ones (especially children, teenagers and older people) how recruitment techniques work as well as the dangers of communicating with strangers” (Malva TV, 29.04.26)

” The Zalishchyky community stepped up efforts to protect **elderly** from cybercrime and phone scams. Anatoly Zadvorny, a police officer of the community organized a special preventive meeting to explain to pensioners the techniques of modern fraudsters. It is senior people who are most often targeted by criminals because they are gullible and do not have information about digital threats” (MyNewsUa.com, 24.04.2026).

Another example of stereotypical attitudes towards older people is in [Best Simple Phones for Senior People in 2026](#), when even the title says that this age category needs a "simple" gadget. And the quote from the text: “When it comes to choosing a phone for parents or **grandparents**, the main thing is not about the number of functions but convenience. The ideal device should perform basic things without extra complications: phone calls, answering calls, and simple use without the constant need to set up or explain anything. In this case, it is not the specifications but how the phone works in everyday life that matter” (KyivWEEKLY, 25.04.26). It basically says that older people are not able to master more complex functions. In fact, this age category is very diverse, and this diversity applies to gadget and digital world proficiency. This age group includes those who, for example, used to or continue to work in IT or in the field of education, those who actively use various AI tools, etc.

The discriminatory approach can be observed in the following article: [8 Signs of Mental Disorder in a Senior Person](#) (Krayina Zdorovia, 24.04.26). The focus on mental health by age, although this kind of problems can affect people of any age.

#### Frame 4 Family Objectification

This frame is marked by the representation of older adults mainly by means of their family roles as "grandmother" or "grandfather". Such materials put the emphasis primarily on taking care of grandchildren, running a household, farming, cooking, handmade, or household wisdom. At the same time, there is almost no mention of professional identity, personal interests, social activity, new hobbies or emotional and private life of older people. This frame is also characterized by the de facto de-sexualized representation of older age: older people are depicted exclusively as holders of family function.

The tone of such materials is often positive or nostalgic but at the same time condescending and paternalistic. Older people appear there not as independent actors with a variety of life experiences but as symbols of “traditionalism”, “home cosiness” or “people's wisdom”. This reinforces the stereotype that the main social role of older people is limited to family and everyday household life.

An example of a text built of clichés and stereotypes: [Wisdom of Generations: What We Can Learn From \*\*Old-Timers\*\*](#)? The very headline contains generalizations, since not every older person can be called an "old-timer". The text uses clichés: "old-timers are the living treasures of our community, the keepers of traditions, history and perpetual wisdom," and they also describe exclusively household

competencies: "they know how to keep the house", "they know secrets of storing food", "ways of growing vegetables without chemicals", "herbal recipes for treating". Thus, the older age is romanticized through the image of the "keeper of traditions" but at the same time it is narrowed to a set of predictable social roles.

Another example is a piece [How Parents to React If Grandparents Do Not Want to Spend Time with Their Grandchildren?](#) (newsyou.info, 13.04.2026). Although the text partly criticizes general expectations that older people "should" engage in grandkids, the headline itself already reproduces the idea that such a role is natural and mandatory for older people. In this case, they are considered primarily through the function of helping younger generations, not as people with their own needs or the right to autonomous use of their time.

The headline is also typical for this frame: Why Did **Farming Grandpas** Bury Matches in Dacha Gardens in 90s: Life-Hack 1000 Times Better than Fertilizers (newsyou.info, 28.04.2026). Here one can see several stereotypical images: "grandpa", "farming", "dacha", "people's wisdom". Such materials shape a simplified and somewhat caricature image of an older person, linking it exclusively with routine life, household and past experience.

Explicit gender ageism was detected in [Ways To Stand Up to Mother-In-Law](#) (Osvita Ukrayiny/OUK, 02.03.2026). It has a whole set of stereotypes about older women in the status of "mother-in-law". They are presented here as "narcissistic", aggressive, unfair to the daughters-in-law, etc. The article contains tips: "Try to prevent children from playing various games and manipulations of the grandmother", this is outwardly discriminatory.

As a matter of fact, the family objectification frame is one of the most common examples of hidden ageism, since even with a positive tone it limits the diversity of social roles of older people and narrows their representation to traditional family functions.

## Frame 5 Active Agency (Subjectivity)

The active agency frame is one of the least represented in the investigated array of media texts, nevertheless, it is there. Within this frame, older people are represented not as a passive, dependent or vulnerable group, but as fully recognized subjects of social life, able to make decisions, implement their own initiatives, study, work, travel, be experts and take an active part in life of their community.

The main markers of this frame are mentions of training, volunteering, professional activity, entrepreneurship, creativity, social activity, travels or mastering new skills at an older age. The tone of such materials is mainly positive and partner.

For example, the article [Lady Pensioner From Dnipro Runs Two Dance Groups](#) presents an older woman as a leader and organizer of cultural life, and not just a "pensioner" or "grandmother". Such texts destroy the stereotype of old age as a period of depleting social activity.

Nevertheless, even within this frame, the media often make mistakes. Cases in point: [Centenarian Local of Kramatorsk Area Is Getting Ready for Trip Abroad: Migration Officers Issued Her Passport](#) (KRAMATORSK.info, 22.04.2026), and [It Is Never Too Late to Travel: Transcarpathian Lady Got](#)



Source: Screenshot of [Dniepr.Hlavnoe](https://dniepr.hlavnoe.com) website, 29.04.2026

[International Passport at 94](#) " (PNG.ua, 27.03.2026). The pieces of news potentially have stories that could be a good example of activity, mobility and openness to new experiences at a very respectable age. However, both pieces are reprints of the press release of the governmental institution: they do not have voices of women, their motivation, emotions, or stories of their lives. Thus, an older person is more of a background for institutional communication than a central heroine of the story.

One may find similar contradiction in the TV story of the United News marathon about older women who launched new businesses. On the one hand, the story shows an example of their activity and self-organization. On the other hand, the use of the phrase "donuts by grandmothers" brings the audience back to a stereotypical image, this partially diminishes the subjectivity of female figures.

To sum up, the active agency frame comes up occasionally in Ukrainian media and does not construe the image of people 60+ as an active and independent group. Despite few positive examples, it is rare for media to regularly represent older age as a period of development, self-realization, professional or social activity. Thus, the model of active long life remains not visible enough in the information space.



Source: screenshot from the story.

## Frame 6 Idealized Activity (Super-Ageing)

The frame of idealized activity or “super-ageing” is noticeable although not dominating in the media. Within this frame, the older age is represented through uncommon examples of physical activity, youthful appearance, or age defying. Older people appear as those who supposedly “do not age”, maintain youth, high productivity and fitness in spite of biological age.

The headings typical of this frame are::

- [Frankish Local Won Bronze Award at European Championship in 85-89 Category \(PHOTO\)](#) (PIK)
- [Record at 91: An Australian Became The Oldest “Young” Grandfather](#) (Vysokyi Zamok, 20.04.2026)
- [Even the Ex Got Invited: 96YO Babusia Getting Ready for Party Went Viral](#) (Channel 24, 27.03.2026)

Pieces in Vogue [How to Lose 10 years with a Hairstyle](#) (Vogue, 26.03.2026), or on Channel 24 [Hairstyle instead of Botox: Trendy Haircut with Instant 10 Year Younger Effect](#) promote the idea of “eternal” beauty and youth as a socially desirable standard. This approach practically promotes the idea that ageing requires correction or disguise.



Source: Screenshot of [Channel 24](#) website, 27.03.2026

In many cases this frame is also realized by means of presenting celebrities or public figures. For example, this way:

- [Singer Lama Went Viral with Her 20-Year-Old Archival Photo: Are You Planning on Getting Older?](#) (News.Hochu.ua, 18.03.2026)
- [“You Are Not Ageing Well”: These Hollywood Celebrities Get Constantly Criticized for Their Looks](#) (Radio Lux)
- [The ‘Old Guard’ of Hollywood: Which Cinema Legends Lived Almost to 100 and What They Look Like. Photo](#) (OBOZ, 25.03.2026)

Thus, the media mold the idea of “right” and “wrong” ageing, where the socially approved model is to preserve the young appearance and high activity for as long as possible. The materials focus primarily on how people look at an older age, not on their experience, professional achievements or life story.

The concern of this frame is that it can establish a new type of age stereotypes: not through the image of weakness and dependence but by imposing an unrealistic standard of "successful ageing". Some older people, as shown by the focus group discussion, are critical about such representation, they believe it is unrealistic and out of touch with real life conditions of most people 60+.

All in all, the "super-ageing" frame is ambivalent: on the one hand, it undermines negative stereotypes about old age as years of helplessness; on the other hand, it may increase the pressure on older people because of overinflated expectations about appearance, fitness and lifestyle that are not affordable/available or desired in a significant part of this age group.

## Frame 7 Electoral Conservatism

Through the electoral conservatism frame, older people are represented as carriers of "outdated" political views, supporters of the Soviet past, or a group that allegedly prevents social change and modernization of the country.

Even though the elections in Ukraine are officially postponed due to the war, the political and public discussions in the media space go on. We decided to check whether the electoral conservatism frame is present in the media, as it demonstrates a high ageist stigma. Our hypothesis is that with growing political activity the number of materials with this frame will grow as well. In the process of monitoring, few media texts with this frame have been detected, but they already demonstrate its destructive nature.

A striking example is a piece of news [Cry Grandmas and Grandpas: Searches at Yulia Tymoshenko's](#)" (Volyn); it was brought for discussion at focus groups. Here, the addressing term to older people ("grandmas and grandpas") is used as a way of political ridiculing of a certain group of voters, as a generalized image of a politically "outdated" audience. Such rhetoric deprives older people of political subjectivity and reduces their role to a stereotypical "conservative voter".

Another media text that uses unacceptable wording and has ageism is a post on [informer.ua](#) website with the headline [It Has Been Established Where Tankies Come from — Since the Time of Aztecs](#). The text uses generalizations about "grandparents" who allegedly tend to idealize the Soviet past and be negative about modern changes. Feeling nostalgic for young years or periods in the past is interpreted here as "lagging behind": *"... if you ask Ukrainian grandmas and grandpas, many of them will remember the soviet past with nostalgia and tell about delicious ice cream for a few kopecks and a very strong friendship. Meanwhile, they'd speak negatively about the present time, although a lot of life improving technologies have emerged."*

This example shows the destructive influence of the electoral conservatism frame, since it deepens the opposition of generations and pins responsibility for social and political problems on a certain age group. As a result, older people are not represented as full members of the democratic process but as a symbol of "the past" supposedly hindering the development of the country. If political processes get active, this approach may reinforce polarization in society and legitimize discriminatory attitudes about older generations in political discourse.

To sum up, the frame analysis has shown that Ukrainian media mainly represent older people through the prism of vulnerability, dependence, biological ageing or family roles, while active agency frames remain marginal. Beneficiaries of assistance, keepers of “traditional wisdom”, the ones to be cared about or symbols of physical ageing are dominant images of persons 60+. At the same time, even positive stories are often accompanied with paternalistic tone, stereotyped wording or an emphasis on the “exclusivity” of active ageing. This indicates that the media generally do not perceive older people as legitimate participants in social, economic and cultural life. The limited representation of topics of professional activity, education, civic activity or decision-making as well as no voices of people 60+ in the media reinforce the symbolic exclusion of this age group from the public space. However, posting of certain materials on volunteering, learning, travels or new professional roles of older people demonstrates the potential to establish a more inclusive and non-discriminatory media representation of ageing.

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