

## Australians start to feel invisible after turning 50

*New research reveals contrasting perceptions as majority of over 50s feel overlooked by society, while many are met with slurs such as 'OK boomer' and 'Karen'*

**Sydney, May 2024** – In the face of prevalent ageist stereotypes, Australian seniors are displaying remarkable resilience and a renewed sense of fulfilment as they navigate their later years, with many saying their best days are yet to come. New research reveals the unique experiences of Australians over 50 in the ever-evolving modern world, highlighting a profound resurgence in their outlook on ageing.

While over seven in 10 (73%) feel less visible in society, particularly around the ages of 60 to 64, the research uncovers a striking disparity between societal perceptions and seniors' self-perceptions. Despite feeling overlooked by society, most (57%) respondents believe their best days are yet to come, illustrating a significant disconnect between societal views and individual optimism.

In fact, almost a third of seniors (32%) feel their happiest times have come after the age of 50, with wisdom and life experiences (35%), and life satisfaction (28%) reported to peak post age 50.

[The Gen Seen Report 2024](#), a comprehensive study commissioned by Australian Seniors in partnership with the consumer research group MyMavins, delves into the experiences of over 5,000 Australians aged 50 and above. The findings not only shed light on the challenges confronted by seniors but also celebrate their triumphs.

Despite most over 50s feeling positive about ageing, the research revealed that four in five (81%) feel ageism is prevalent in society, with around seven in 10 (71%) having experienced some form of ageism since turning 50. Social media emerged as the most likely place to experience ageism, cited by nearly three in 10 respondents (29%).

Further, almost half (45%) identified Generation Z as the worst 'ageist' offenders. Additionally, close to a quarter (23%) report being referred to derogatorily as a 'Boomer' or dismissed and mocked with the phrase 'OK boomer', and just under one in six (14%) women reported being called a 'Karen'.

For three in four responders (76%), ageism is considered prevalent in the Australian workforce, with over a quarter (27%) claiming the workplace or job interviews are where over 50s experience ageism the most. Since turning 50, more than two in five (42%) feel less seen or heard at work, and almost five in six (83%) feel undervalued and often unnoticed compared to younger peers (78%).

The study also highlights that a significant portion (55%) find media representations inaccurate, with three in four (75%) believing they differ from the stereotypical image of seniors portrayed in the media, underscoring a significant contrast between the self-image of over 50s and the portrayals perpetuated by the media.

Dr Marlene Krasovitsky, a consultant on the Global Campaign to Combat Ageism, World Health Organisation, notes, "We're facing a double-edged issue here. Firstly, ageism remains so deeply ingrained in our society that it often goes unnoticed. Secondly, a troubling consequence of ageism is the feeling of becoming invisible."

“While many believe their prime years begin at 51, this is often when perceptions of us begin to change. Despite our optimism for the future, especially regarding our potential, this sentiment is not always shared by others, particularly prospective employers.”

Encountering stereotypes remains a common experience for over 50s, with nine in 10 (90%) facing misconceptions, particularly regarding health issues (58%) and physical and mental decline (44%). As individuals cross the 50-year milestone, both gender and generational disparities emerge, with women feeling particularly disregarded by younger generations (41% vs. 33%), while men contend with perceptions of being politically incorrect (31% vs. 19%).

While the study found three in four (75%) are grappling with the emotional burden of negative stereotypes, experiencing feelings of disappointment (41%), patronisation (26%), and a drive to defy expectations (20%), many seniors are experiencing a resurgence of happiness as they embrace ageing.

Conversely, there’s a notable shift towards discussing taboo health subjects, with more than four in five (82%) now comfortable addressing these issues with their healthcare professionals.

Dr Marlene Krasovitsky commented, “Examples are everywhere. You feel invisible when people talk passed you as if you are not there, when you are overlooked for a promotion at work, when your symptoms are brushed off by a health professional as an inevitable part of ageing. But know that this is not just about you,”

“Because ageism can be hard to define, instead of getting sucked into a debate about what is or is not funny, you can describe how that joke or comment made you feel and ask the person to stop. Ask your health professional to explore your treatment options. At work, beware of the subtle hints about retiring, and if you are not thinking of retiring, let people know.”

When confronting stereotypes of appearance and ageing, the report shows that many (45%) respondents fully embrace the natural process, with more than a quarter (28%) showing a degree of acceptance. While most (67%) acknowledge societal pressures after 50, over half (52%) remain undaunted. Moreover, a quarter (25%) actively promote embracing ageing and prioritise self-acceptance (18%). Importantly, over half (55%) are choosing not to actively resist age-shaming.

The Gen Seen Report 2024 serves as a call to action for society to recognise the strength and vitality of Australians over 50. Further insights from the research can be found on the Australian Seniors website [here](#).

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#### **About Australian Seniors**

Australian Seniors launched in 1998 to meet the needs of the often ignored over 50s market. Since then, we’ve helped countless Australians protect the most important things in life – whether it’s their family’s future, valuable assets, or even their long-planned retirement.

We strive to be different through the diverse offering of our life, funeral, car, health, home & contents, landlords, pet, health and travel insurance products by carefully selecting underwriters that share our vision of providing insurance that's simple, easy to understand, and cost-effective. That's why our policies have helped everyone from hard-working over 50s to self-funded retirees take control of the things that matter most.

#### **About the Australian Seniors Research Series**

The Gen Seen Report 2024 forms part of the Australian Seniors Research Series. In its latest instalment, this study explores how life is changing for Australians over 50, and how they're finding their place in a fast-evolving modern world. The research delves into unique challenges such as ageism, representation in the media, inclusiveness, and keeping up with the rapid pace of societal changes. The findings also shed light on the attitudes towards other generations and whether seniors feel seen by those around them. The report is compiled based on research commissioned by Australian Seniors and conducted by MYMAVINS between 19 January and 12 February 2024. The research was conducted via a quantitative online survey, gathering 5,018 responses from Australians aged 50 and above. The sample is representative of the general senior population of Australia in terms of age, gender, wealth, and state/territory.