Fairness and Age: Intergenerational inequality, stigma and stereotypes
**Key points**

- It is becoming increasingly important to challenge ageism, ‘old vs young’ messages present in media and cultural stereotyping\(^2\)
- The harmful effects age stereotyping include increased hate-crime or incidents, elder abuse, age segregation and impacts on individual mental health
- People with positive self-perceptions of ageing live on average 7.5 years longer than people with less positive self-perceptions
- While it is true that in general people under 55 faced rising inequality due to lack of economic growth, each ‘generation’ faces inequalities – some are intra-generational and some are inter-generational
  - A young person with low income, rising rent costs and student loans faces a situation *equal* to many peers, but also likely *unequal* to that of parents, siblings and people with other combinations of protected characteristics and inequalities (e.g. variations in paygaps due to disability, gender, race etc).
  - Variation in inheritance (e.g. large wealth or debts) could have a further impact on life outcomes that could override positive or negative gaps
- **Key life milestones** are consistent across generations and can be a means of developing shared understandings, creating meaningful conversations and solidarity across age groups
- Age segregation and social isolation (not just older people) is raised as key concern that prevents different age groups from learning from and helping each other

**Discussions points raised at the FCE Fairness and Age Equality Workshop:**

- There is an increasing need to challenge negative age-based stereotyping in policy and practice, as well as encouraging and support *informal* inter-generational social networks (e.g. social cafes, school and care home activities)
- This involves creating and facilitating more civic spaces for young people and older people to take formal roles as active citizens (e.g. community mapping and consultation exercises) to improve community cohesion as well as workshops on addressing loneliness
- Also, raising awareness of stigma and fears around creating positive inter-generational friendships (e.g. resulting from high media profile of paedophilia, negative portrayal of relationships with age gaps and negative images of ageing generally)

\(^1\) FT (17 May 2018) ‘The focus on intergenerational inequity is a delusion’
\(^2\) E.g. “Generations at war: the election has laid bare a huge old vs young divide. Spectator 10 June 2017”
Raising awareness of both inter-generational inequality and barriers to social mobility

Next steps

- FCE will commit to doing a longitudinal research for older people of all protected characteristics in Fife over the next 3 years
- We will work with volunteers, Equality Factfinders and partner organisation to increase knowledge and understanding of the impact of protected characteristics on the experience of ageing

Background

What ‘Fairness’?

Most people tend to value fairness as meaning the quality of being reasonable, right, and just. This can take different forms in practical terms or contexts. Scotland’s Fairer Scotland Action Plan aims to:

“build a better country - one with low levels of poverty and inequality, genuine equality of opportunity, stronger life chances and support for all those who need it”

Locally, the Fairer Fife Commission aims for:

“A Fife where all residents have the capability to live good lives, make choices and reach their full potential and where all children are safe, healthy and happy”

How does this relate to ‘Equality’?

Equality also can take different meanings. It tends to be thought as ‘giving everyone the same amount’, giving everyone ‘equal opportunities’, taking positive action (or positive discrimination), or combinations other meanings.

FCE looks at equality in terms of legal protection from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 and by extension the Human Rights Act 1998. Those acts aim to protect people from discriminatory behaviour across protected characteristics, guarantees freedoms and safeguards equality in terms of:

- **Autonomy** - ‘equality in life choices’
- **Opportunity** - ‘equal chances to compete’
- **Process** - ‘equal treatment, dignity and respect’

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3 Scottish Government (2016)
4 Fairness Matters (2015)
Equality Briefing: Fairness and Age

Equality of outcome, (e.g. equal wealth or income) across all people is a type of equality that many people consider extreme or impossible to achieve. However, income inequality is becoming a major issue as wealth is becoming concentrated with few (in 2017\(^5\), the richest 1% held 50% of the world’s wealth).

**How can we talk about equality (or inequality) across generations?**

There are two main inter-generational concepts about equality: equity and the (age) social-contract

*Intergenerational Equity*

This is the idea of each generation being the ‘good wards of the earth’, before passing it on to the next. It is traditionally linked with environmental groups, preservation or culture and heritage, it is also usually considered a distant economic concept with little relevance to everyday life. It is still present in public policy as countries and governments however pay for public services by ‘borrowing’ from future generations of tax-payers. However, this is usually not experienced at personal level.

With austerity politics, cutbacks on welfare have been justified as measures to address the national debt. One equality issue in the background of political debate is ‘how fair is it, or how much is fair to borrow from future generations of tax-payers and allocate towards the previous or future ones (e.g. health, social care, education, childcare etc)?’

*Intergenerational Contract*

The inter-generational version of the social contract can be summarised as:

> “Wisdom gets passed on, fresh eyes provide new perspectives. Family resources respond to the shifting needs of their members”\(^6\)

The prime example for this is the extent of unpaid care in everyday life. In the UK there are 14 million parents in UK and 6.5 million also care for an elderly, ill or disabled relatives. This is not counted as being part of the ‘economy’ but is part of the inter-generational contract, of which wealth transfer is a component, but not the only part of the exchange.

**Current Problem:**

- Economic and welfare systems have been and are still built on the premise that the next generation would be better off than the last, i.e. growth\(^7\)

- Half of UK adults believe that millennials and subsequent generations will have a worse life than their parents

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\(^5\) UK House of Commons (2017) APPG on Inclusive Growth Report
\(^7\) Work and Pensions Committee Inquiry (2016) Intergenerational Fairness
• One third of UK Millennials say they would prefer to have been born in their parents' time, just slightly less for Gen X.

Generations and Growth (or lack of):

Figure 6.1: Millennials have so far made no income progress on generation X

Median real household annual net income after housing costs (CPI-AHC-adjusted to 2017 prices), by generation: GB, 1961-2016

Taking into consideration the past 20 years:

• Between 1997 and 2007, gross domestic product per head rose by 29%
• Between 2007 and 2017, GDP rose 3.5%

The crunch

While the 2008 financial crash, credit crunch and austerity policy affect all age groups, through circumstance there is also systemic intergenerational inequality as the current economy (2017) is tipped towards older people and/or wealthier people. The two main polarising issues are:

- Lack of housing (in quantity and quality), meaning people who already own houses or on housing ‘ladder’ are relatively better off
- Shift of risk from employers towards employees (for contract conditions and as well as pensions), meaning people who are nearly retiring, retired and/or with final salary schemes are relatively better off

Further issues: Thinktank Stereotypes

The ‘Intergenerational fairness’ issue⁹ has become more popularised from 2010 onwards. Views from thinktanks range across various positive or negative views on the experience of generations and different opinions on inequality and solidarity. Broadly they can be summarised as:

1) Young people nowadays face an unfair burden in terms of work, prospects, wealth and quality of life and/or the ‘ageing population will cost too much’¹⁰

![Unfair burdens](Intergenerational Foundation - Youtube)

2) problems facing young people are concerns for citizens of all ages and/or ‘we all have an interest in repairing the social contract’¹¹

![Generational solidarity](Intergenerational Commission – Vimeo)

Further Issues: *Media and Workplace Stereotypes*

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¹⁰ Intergenerational Foundation (2017)

¹¹ Intergenerational Commission (2016)
Equality Briefing: Fairness and Age

Working with Partners and Communities to make Fife a fair, equal and inclusive place to live, work and study.

• Baby Boomers
  Hardworking, affluent, early retired, living in fast, appreciating homes, enjoying holidays aplenty. Inflexible.

• Gen X
  Mixed bag; skilled managers, many not following the ideal life path – largely ignored by mainstream media as also main customers/audience. Not cost-effective.

• Millennials / Gen Y
  'Perma-adolescence', student debt, no housing ladder, no retirement saving. Self-obsessed.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The points above do not represent the views of Fife Centre for Equalities, this is an illustration of how common are age stereotypes

**More stereotypes: The Idealised Timeline**

Another concept that arises when discussing generational stereotype and fairness is life outcomes, or the notion of ‘success’ and happiness – and how this is different for different groups.
The timeline below was created as part of a Citizen’s Jury on Intergenerational Fairness\textsuperscript{12}. By ‘Ideal’ is not meant for this to be seen as ‘perfect’, but instead a background idea about when key life events or milestones should take place. It is learnt or internalised through a combination of upbringing, media, social norms etc.

The report describes how the extent to which the timeline has been internalised and how closely aligned to a person’s actual life journey is known to have a major impact personal health and wellbeing.

![Ideal Life Journey Timeline](image)

**Actual life vs Inherited Ideal Timeline**

The report also points out how lived experience follows and also differs from the ideal timelines, for all age groups. This again suggests that inter-generational solidarity can be built from shared experiences, despite different sets of circumstances. Some key discussion points included:

**Boomers**

- In majority have paid off their mortgages or financially secure
- Financially supporting struggling children and parents in need of care
- Inequality remains an issue for women who have experienced a 7-year shift to retirement age

**Gen X**

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• Higher proportion able to go to university irrespective of background and without the fees or subsequent debt.
• Age of children being able to leave home is much later than planned
• Least likely to pay off mortgage at ideal age
• Not retiring till around 65-70, a decade later than their ideal.

Gen Y / Millennials

• Despite all descriptions of ‘being different’, still have milestones in more or less in same order
• **BUT**: Between five and ten years later on average

Impact of Internalised Ageism

Age is the broadest protected characteristic (we all experience being of a certain age once) and correspondingly ageism is also the most commonly experienced form of prejudice and discrimination. In 2013, a UK and Europe-wide survey reported 35% of participants over the age of 18 experiencing this\(^\text{13}\). In the UK in 2011, 64% of people across all age groups report age discrimination as a very or quite serious problem\(^\text{14}\).

More recent research carried in 2017 and 2018 show that ageism is more ingrained than expected:

• **Ageism starts very young**: Negative attitudes about age can begin to form among children as young as 6 years old\(^\text{15}\)

• **Ageism directly impacts on Life expectancy**: A 2017 study\(^\text{16}\) found that those with more positive self-perceptions of ageing live on average 7.5 years longer than those with less positive self-perceptions of ageing

• **Intergenerational segregation and isolation**: Nearly two in three of the public (64%) don’t have a single friendship with an age gap of 30 years or more

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\(^{15}\) RSPH (8 June 2018) *That Age Old Question How attitudes to ageing affect our health and wellbeing*

\(^{16}\) Robertson, G. (2017) Ageing and ageism: the impact of stereotypical attitudes on personal health and well-being outcomes and possible personal compensation strategies
What do we know about Age and Equality in Fife?

(Note: below are just very short extracts of our reports, we selected some facts people tend not to be aware of. There is however there is a much wider range of patterns, for more details visit [https://centreforequalities.org.uk/fife-equality-statistics/](https://centreforequalities.org.uk/fife-equality-statistics/))

Demography

The population estimate in mid-2017 for the total population of Fife is **371,410**, equivalent to 6.8% of the population of Scotland, with 48.5% of Fifers being male and 51.5% female.

Children make up 17% of Fifers; 62% are of Working Age and with an increase of 1% on the previous year, 21% are of Pensionable Age. The population structure of Fife maintains the previous year profile of having slightly young people (under 16) and older people, while having fewer people of working age than the national average. The proportion on older people is expected to increase over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fife’s age groups:</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All aged under 16</td>
<td>64333</td>
<td>33029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All aged under 18</td>
<td>72081</td>
<td>37071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All aged 16 &amp; over</td>
<td>307077</td>
<td>147283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All aged 18 &amp; over</td>
<td>299329</td>
<td>143241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working age</td>
<td>230159</td>
<td>113548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension age</td>
<td>76918</td>
<td>33735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All aged 65 &amp; over</td>
<td>74592</td>
<td>33735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All aged 75 &amp; over</td>
<td>32089</td>
<td>13459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All aged 85 &amp; over</td>
<td>8587</td>
<td>3027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td><strong>371,410</strong></td>
<td><strong>180,312</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1 Age groups and sex structure of Fife in 2017*

Source: [NRS Estimated population mid-2017](https://www.nhs inform.scot/)

Children and Young People (0-15)

Despite being the most highly educated generation in history, young people systemically struggle in the labour market. This is a consistent pattern in Fife and at the national level. Of note is that between the 10% most deprived and 10% least deprived areas in Fife, the child poverty gap is at -32.1% and increasing (-2.1%). At national level this is similar at -31.1%, however the gap is decreasing (+1.3%). There is also a higher proportion in Fife of 18-24 year-olds claiming benefits (5.1% vs 3.7% at Scotland level) and up to 5.4% of 18-21 year-olds (1,045).

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17 *Scottish government (2017). The Life Chances of Young People in Scotland*
**Working age adults** (16-64 years)

Employment rates of the working age group (16-64) in Fife in 2017 was at 74.8%; slightly above the average in Scotland’s at 74.3%. This is an increase of 2.5% on the previous year, or 2,500 people in employment.

The lowest rate of employment is in the 16-24 age group at 64.9%, which however higher than the national average of 59.4%. This is a very significant increase (+12.6%, or 4800 young people) on the previous year from 52.3%.

**Older People** (65 and over)

From the National Records of Scotland 2017 Population Estimates, 21% of Fifers are of Pensionable Age, which is slightly above Scotland’s average of 19%. There are more females of pension age (23% or 43183) than males (19% or 33735). This is consistent with females having a higher life expectancy.

A further breakdown in 5-year bands is given below for Older People and Very Old People (90+). There are over twice the number of females aged 90+ than males, with an estimated 2122 living in Fife in 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>65 - 69</th>
<th>70 - 74</th>
<th>75 - 79</th>
<th>80 - 84</th>
<th>85 - 89</th>
<th>90+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>305,066</td>
<td>259,530</td>
<td>188,262</td>
<td>137,893</td>
<td>80,091</td>
<td>41,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fife</td>
<td>22,609</td>
<td>19,894</td>
<td>13,652</td>
<td>9,850</td>
<td>5,518</td>
<td>3,069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males Scotland</td>
<td>147,373</td>
<td>122,353</td>
<td>83,611</td>
<td>57,034</td>
<td>29,462</td>
<td>12,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males Fife</td>
<td>10,787</td>
<td>9,489</td>
<td>6,255</td>
<td>4,177</td>
<td>2,080</td>
<td>947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females Scotland</td>
<td>157,693</td>
<td>137,177</td>
<td>104,651</td>
<td>80,859</td>
<td>50,629</td>
<td>29,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females Fife</td>
<td>11,822</td>
<td>10,405</td>
<td>7,397</td>
<td>5,673</td>
<td>3,438</td>
<td>2,122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2 Fife and Scotland Population breakdown, 65-90+. Mid-2017 estimates*

**Source:** Source: NRS Estimated population mid-2017

**Living Standards and age**

Compared to the national average, all Fife households tend to manage well (65% vs 56%), with the 65+ age group being the most better off (78%, compared to 65% nationally). Also home care clients in Fife receive on average more hours of care, at 17.1 compared to 11.7 in Scotland:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fife 2016</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>All Gender</th>
<th>16-39</th>
<th>40-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>All Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Manages well</td>
<td>68.32</td>
<td>60.92</td>
<td>65.209</td>
<td>61.852</td>
<td>58.523</td>
<td>77.842</td>
<td>65.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Gets by</td>
<td>26.548</td>
<td>30.12</td>
<td>28.05</td>
<td>27.478</td>
<td>33.276</td>
<td>20.667</td>
<td>28.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Does not manage well</td>
<td>5.132</td>
<td>8.96</td>
<td>6.741</td>
<td>10.67</td>
<td>8.201</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>6.741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

18 Regional Employment Patterns in Scotland: Statistics from the Annual Population Survey (22 May 2018) 1.4
Table 3 How the household is managing financially by sex and age of highest income householder

Source: Scottish Household Survey (2016) LA Tables (8 Feb 2018)

Disability and age

As expected, disability tends to increase with age. In Fife, Life Expectancy at birth is 79 and while Healthy Life Expectancy being is 64.3. This means a person is likely to experience 14 years of ‘not healthy’ years in old age (65+), this is consistent with the national average:

Of note is that Fife has a slightly higher employment rate for people with a disability than Scotland as a whole (42.1% vs 41.9%). In 2017, 17,200 disabled people were employed in Fife, equivalent to an additional 7,000 employees and representing a rate rise of +11.9% from 2016.

Correspondingly, there has been a marked drop in economic inactivity of people aged 16-64 with a disability in the same time period, of -13.9% and giving a figure of 41.6%. This is also significantly lower than the national average of 49.2%.

Gender Reassignment and age

There is no clear data on how many trans people live, work or study in Fife. We know that approximately 1 in 100 people may be experiencing some degree of gender variance and that around 1 in 500 may undergo transition.

With Fife’s population, this means that between 740 and 3700 people may be gender variant. In any year, between 11 and 56 people might undergo transition (that is, approach their doctor to discuss transition). The number of people who actually transition is highly dependent the specific set of barriers faced, and similarly to sexual orientation, younger people are more likely to identify as trans than older people.

Similarly to LGB people in general, trans people have very different life experiences depending of their age group, with younger generations experiencing an environment more aware of gender reassignment and transition than older generations.

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19 Local Authority web tables from the Regional Employment Patterns in Scotland: Statistics from the Annual Population Survey (22 May 2018) 1.5 & 3.5
Equality Briefing: Fairness and Age

Marriage & Civil Partnership and age

Marriages have been decreasing in Scotland (almost by a third over the past 40 years). Following the 2014 Marriage and Civil Partnership Act, the uptake of civil partnerships has levelled at around 70 per year in Scotland.

The majority of people in Fife are married or in a civil partnership (45%) and married or civil-partnership households make up 34.2% of households in Fife. In 2017, 1,568 opposite sex marriages and 47 same sex marriages took place in Fife and also 1 Male Civil Partnership.

Pregnancy & Maternity and age

Discrimination and stereotyping on pregnancy and maternity tends to endure across generations. Teenage mothers tend to face the highest level of poverty and also face often worsening employment conditions. There has been a marked reduction in teenage pregnancy in Fife over a period of 10 years from a high figure of 66.9 in 2007 to 36.5 in 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Fife</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>66.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>66.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Fife</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Year of conception ending 31 December 2015

The workplace shows patterns of inequality that are carried over both pregnancy and maternity (and/or paternity) stages. Research carried out in 2015 showed that on average 11% of mothers reported that they were either dismissed; made compulsorily redundant, where others in their workplace were not; or treated so poorly they felt they had to leave their job. 20% said they had experienced harassment or negative comments related to pregnancy or flexible working from their employer and /or colleagues. 10% of mothers said their employer discouraged them from attending antenatal appointments.

In Fife, this means we can expect that up to 413 mothers may lose their jobs every year due to their being pregnant, and up to 376 being discouraged from attending neonatal appointments.

Race and age

20 EHRC (2015) Pregnancy and Maternity-related Discrimination and Disadvantage: Experience of Employees. For BIS / IFF research
People from minority ethnic communities tend to face poorer outcomes than average across generations, this includes lower employment rates, higher risk of poverty, under-representation in public life and day-to-day experiences of racism that may also involve hate crime or incidents21.

However, attitudes in this area also showed substantial variation in attitudes to old age according to ethnic background; for example, more than three quarters (76%) of survey respondents who identified as from BME groups expected they would become wiser as an older person, compared to only 54% of White respondents22.

**Religion and Belief and age**

There is a clear relationship between age and religion and belief. Each new generation tends to be more secular across Scotland and in the UK. In Fife, people who said that they had “No Religion” increased from 35.4% in 2001 to 46.3% in 2011. Those who stated that they had “No religion”, were most common for all age groups up to 50-54, with the highest concentrations in the 0-9 and 25-34 age groups.

**Sex (Gender) and age**

A female born in Fife is expected to live an extra 3.6 years compared to males and females tend participate more than males in Education, training or other development across all age groups.

However, this is not reflected in employment with the gender paygap between male and female workers of working age at national level to be £81.9 weekly (£4258.80 per year before tax) and in Fife of £58.30 weekly (£3031.60 per year before tax).

For full time workers the paygap was at 17.9% between females and males, compared to a 6.1% pay gap at national level. For part-time workers there is a 11.8% pay advantage for women working part-time in Fife, compared to a 9.6% advantage nationally.

**Sexual Orientation and age**

The actual number of LGBO Fifers is not known, a more up to date estimate gives a figure between 18516 and 25923 people. However we know that there is also a generational effect. In Scotland, people aged 16-24 being over 5 times more likely to identify and report as LGBO than the 75+ group (3.7% vs 0.7%).

There are very distinct experiences of being LGBT between older and younger generations due to the transition of in laws and wider social attitudes. While the Sexual Offences Act decriminalising homosexuality passed in 1967, this applied to England and Wales, it only passed in Scotland in 1980 and Gay military personnel or navy could still be jailed until 1994. This

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Contact us:

Fife Centre for Equalities
New Volunteer House, 16 East Fergus Place, Kirkcaldy, KY1 1XT
Telephone: 01592 645 310
Email: info@centreforequalities.org.uk
Opening Hours:
Monday-Friday, 09:00 – 17:00

Tell us about your community concern online at:

https://centreforequalities.org.uk/support-and-advice/community-concerns/

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