

Active, conscious ageing as an opportunity

Self-care as a response to ageism

Executive summary**Page 03****About this report****Page 04****We live longer than ever before****Pages 05 - 08**

- Who is considered old? Page 07
- Generation X has no model for the new old age Page 07
- Gen X must care about others, but where is self-care? Page 08
- Generational change between the ages of 50 and 69 Page 08

What is ageism?**Pages 09 - 11**

It affects every second 50-69-year-olds in Hungary, and we don't even have a word for it in Hungarian!

- What do we think of ageing? Page 10

Facts and beliefs about ageing in Hungary**Pages 12 - 15****The representative research of Haleon and HCAF**

- Key findings of the research Page 13
- We do not want to grow old Page 13
- Attitudes to ageing determine later quality of life Page 14
- Is it natural to hurt or become defunct? Page 14
- Ageism is within us Page 14
- Self-deception Page 15

Recommendations**Pages 16 - 19**

Active, conscious ageing as an option

References**Page 20**

Executive Summary

Hungarian society is ageing and unprepared. The number of people aged 50 and over is already more than 40%.

Most of them lack the knowledge of how to age healthily.

At least **1.4 million** Hungarians are affected by internalized ageism, limiting themselves by their own mindset.

Over 2/3 of Hungarians

believe that ageing is inevitably connected with health problems...

60%

believe it is associated with regular pain.

This pervasive belief in ageism causes millions of people to "shut down" their lives:

Withdrawing from social life

Neglecting physical activity

Ignoring their health

Giving up hobbies

This, in turn, leads to a worsening of their condition.

Conversely, a positive approach on ageing helps us to take active steps for ourselves - which in turn leads to better health, improved mood, and longer life expectancy.

People with more positive beliefs about ageing live an average of

7.5 years¹ longer

What is ageism?

how we think

how we feel

how we act

Ageism refers to the stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination towards others or oneself based on age.

World Health Organization (WHO)

What is internalised ageism?

self-ageism

One of the most damaging manifestations of ageism: the person applies discriminatory ideas and beliefs to themselves and uses age-related prejudices or limitations against themselves.

What is self-care?

The ability of to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health worker.

World Health Organization (WHO)

Adoption of self-care principles can help Hungarians to understand that it is in their own interests to take care of themselves and prepare for an active old age consciously and responsibly.

Recommendations to age healthily



Empower Yourself to Engage in Self-Care

Better understanding of your medical condition and available options leads to better health outcomes and reduced overall expenses.



Get Credible Information

Contact you pharmacist, doctor or other healthcare professional.



Understand Your Body

Recognize your individual sleep and exercise requirements. Benefit from available prevention and do not accept pain as an inevitable part of aging.



Grow Social Connections

Engage with supportive communities for mutual support and social interaction.



Keep Yourself Active

Embrace physical and mental activities; e.g. take the stairs and keep learning new things.

About this report

This report aims to provide an overview about the attitudes of the Hungarian population towards ageing. Highlights the presence of negative stereotypes and impact of ageism in Hungary. Additionally, it underlines the importance of self-care and provides experts' recommendations responding to key challenges and insights to reshape perspective on aging.

The report has been based on a representative survey conducted by Medián Public Opinion Research Institute in December 2024 in cooperation between Hekate Conscious Ageing Foundation (HCAF) and Haleon, a global consumer healthcare company.

Hekate Conscious Ageing Foundation (HCAF)

The Hekate Conscious Ageing Foundation (HCAF) is an NGO dedicated to fostering positive social change by promoting conscious ageing and living. Its mission is to reshape the narrative around ageing, enabling individuals to experience active, independent, and fulfilling lives. In addition to grassroots initiatives, HCAF actively engages in research and policy advocacy to drive systemic change in how societies perceive ageing. By integrating personal growth with community engagement, HCAF strives to build a more inclusive and supportive society for all ages.

<https://hekate.foundation/>



**CONSCIOUS
AGEING**
HEKATE FOUNDATION

HALEON

Haleon is a global leader in consumer health. The group employs over 22,000 people across 170 markets, who are united by Haleon's purpose - to deliver better everyday health with humanity. The product portfolio spans five major categories - Oral Health, Pain Relief, Respiratory Health, Digestive Health and Vitamins, Minerals and Supplements (VMS).

Self-care is a crucial yet often underestimated aspect of maintaining good health. Haleon believes that self-care in this area means consciously and responsibly taking actions to prevent illnesses, manage minor health concerns, and maintain overall well-being. The company supports conscious, responsible, and education-focused daily health care, broadly understood as prevention, self-diagnosis, or simple steps that help maintain good health.

www.haleon.com

We live longer than ever before

Ageing of the population affects almost all developed countries in the world, including the European Union¹

We live longer than ever before

Ageing of the population affects almost all developed countries in the world, including the European Union¹.

Aging populations are having a major impact on most aspects of society and the economy, including housing, health care, social protection, labour markets, demand for goods and services, macroeconomic and fiscal sustainability, family structures, and intergenerational relations.

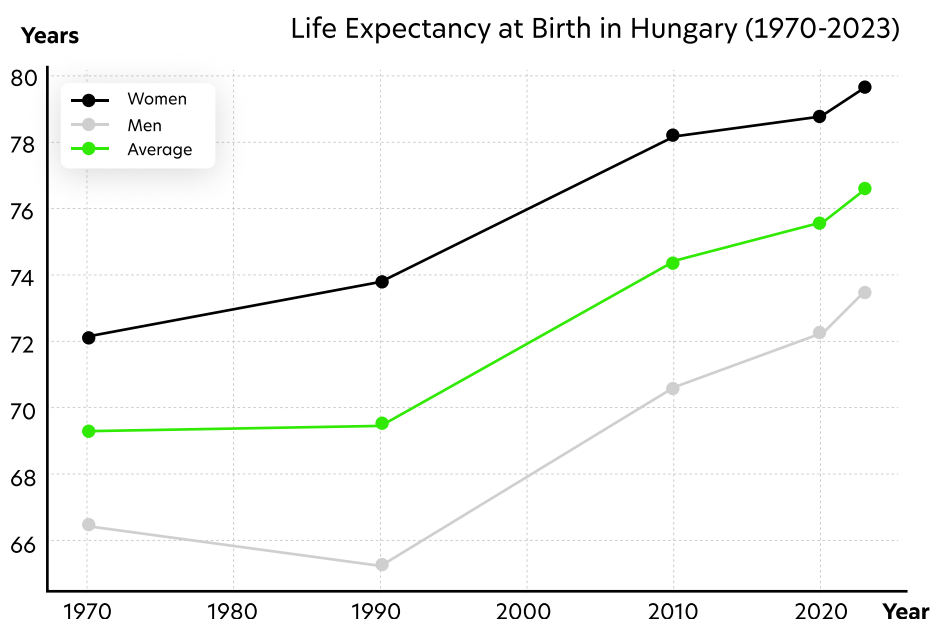
This trend is expected to continue over the coming years and decades.

Hungary is not an exception, and, to make matters worse, is also experiencing a surprisingly rapid population decline. Fewer children are being born, and a significant proportion of young people are leaving the country. The age tree seems to be turning upside down.

According to forecasts published by KSH, the Hungarian Central Statistical Office², in 20 years' time, i.e. by 2045:

- The expected population will be down to a mere 8.8 million, compared to nearly 9.57 million today (a decrease of 8%).
- The proportion of people aged over 50, which is already 40.9%, will rise to 46.4%. This means that by 2045 **nearly half of all Hungarians will be over 50**.
- 11.8% of the population (i.e. 1,036,154 people) will be over 75, while only 875,568 people (i.e. 9.95% of the population) will be under 10.

Meanwhile, KSH³ data show that **life expectancy at birth has increased recently by 7.5 years for women and 7.1 years for men**.



40.9%

POPULATION
AGED OVER 50,
TODAY

46.4%

POPULATION
WILL BE OVER
50, IN 2045

Life expectancy at birth (years)	1970	1990	2010	2020	2023
Women	72.1	73.7	78.1	78.7	79.6
Men	66.3	65.1	70.5	72.2	73.4
Average	69.2	69.3	74.4	75.5	76.5

Who is considered old?

Ageing is a biological process, but it also has a social aspect: it is not only the actual age of a person expressed in years, but it is the **perception of the society**. The way we learn who is old and who is young is the result of a socialisation process in early childhood. In the 1970s, the retirement age for women was 55, and grandparents in the 50-69 age group were already considered old. Indeed, they saw themselves as passive, marginal members of the society.

Generation X has no model for the new old age

While those aged 70 and over are already retired in Hungary, most of the generation aged 50-69 still have paid jobs and lead an active lifestyle. Their economic role, consumption and needs are also significant. In 2025, we are talking about 2,508,922 people, representing 26.2% of the current population. According to KSH forecasts there will be 2,488,692 people aged 50-69 in 2045, representing 28.3% of the population at that time.



“The basic assumption of Generation X is that old age starts somewhere around 55. They are the first generation to actively experience that ageing is not what they saw in their childhood. Members of Generation X will be working until at least 65, if not beyond, and will be expected to remain active. The problem is that they have no model for how to remain active, or even how to think about ageing when our current understanding is that old age begins after 65 or 70.”

Krisztián Steigervald
Generational Researcher

GenX must care about others, but what about self-care?

The old patterns, consensuses and ideas that suggest that younger generations will take care of the elderly are no longer sustainable or true in Hungary. The Sandwich Generation is the age group that is caring for both their own children and their elderly parents. The term “sandwich” comes from the fact that they are squeezed between the needs of their dependent children and their dependent parents like the contents of a sandwich between two slices of bread. In addition, they face the growing challenge and expectation that they should take more responsibility for their own self-care.

Generational change between the ages of 50 and 69

In recent years, there has been a marked difference between those in their 70s and those in their 50s or 60s. Today's 70+ age group has never really had the need, desire or opportunity to consciously prepare for their own old age. In contrast, according to the experiences of HCAF, a growing part of the 50-69-years-old generation is much better informed about what to expect in old age.⁴ Based on grassroots anecdotal evidence of HCAF this leads to intentions, activities and changes aimed at reducing later vulnerability and at consciously preserving autonomy and health. **Active, healthy, and conscious ageing**, or the pursuit of it, is now increasingly part of their everyday thinking. Many people are re-planning their lives at this stage, partly to prepare for their own later years and partly to cope with the burdens they carry as members of the Sandwich Generation. They understand that it is in their own interests to **take care of themselves and prepare for an active old age. But there is still a long way to go.**

50-69

YEARS-OLD
GENERATION IS
MUCH BETTER
INFORMED
ABOUT WHAT
TO EXPECT IN
OLD AGE



“Society has changed a lot in the past 50 years, both in terms of its structure and the way its members think about old age. Our goals, options, desires, and difficulties have changed. It is in our vital interest to think constructively about ageing, to plan and make positive changes. If anything, it is certainly a sound investment in our own and our family’s future.”

Kinga Milánkovics

Co-founder, Conscious Ageing Foundation

What is ageism?

It affects every second 50-69-year-olds, and we don't even have a word for it in Hungarian!

What do we think of ageing?

Our thoughts and beliefs about ageing affect how actively we take steps to ensure it is a positive experience for us.

A study⁵ at Yale University from 2002 found that people with more positive beliefs about ageing lived an average of 7.5 years longer than those with negative beliefs.

This is because **a positive outlook on ageing** helps us to take active steps for ourselves – which in **turn leads to better health, improved mood, and longer life expectancy**.

Ageism is one of the most common prejudices globally

Ageism, a term also used by the World Health Organisation (WHO)⁶, means **“stereotypes and discrimination based on age”**. Ageism is one of the most common prejudices worldwide. It is the reason why millions of people think negatively about the passing of time and ageing.

Examples of ageism:

- Middle-aged women often complain about feeling invisible.
- Older people are excluded from certain social or technological activities on the grounds that they “would not understand” them anyway.
- An applicant close to fifty is not hired for a job because they are considered too “old”.
- In the context of healthcare, there are assumptions about older people that they cannot tolerate certain medical treatments or that they need excessive medication.

Ageism often takes a hidden form, but it can have a serious impact on people’s self-esteem, opportunities, and social integration.

One of the most damaging manifestations of ageism is **“self-ageism”**, which is **“internalised ageism directed at ourselves”**. In this case, the person applies discriminatory ideas and beliefs to themselves and uses age-related **prejudices or limitations against themselves**. According to the representative research of HCAF and Haleon conducted in December 2024, at least **1.4 million Hungarians are affected by internalised ageism**.

A POSITIVE VIEW
OF AGING
ENCOURAGES
PROACTIVE
HABITS, LEADING
TO BETTER
HEALTH AND A
LONGER LIFE
UP TO

7.5 years¹

This self-critical attitude is often the result of the general influence of social norms and ageism. The person may feel that, because of their age, they are no longer capable of doing certain things or deserving of certain opportunities, even if these limitations are not realistic.

This leads to a tendency for **older adults to “shut down” their lives:** withdrawing from social life, giving up hobbies, neglecting physical activity and neglecting their health.

Examples of ageism:

- A 50-60-year-old person may think they are “too old” to learn a new hobby or change careers.
- A 60+ person may not care much about their physical appearance (body, looks, grooming) because “it doesn’t matter” anymore.
- Some people do not try modern technology because they think they “would not understand it anyway” because of their age.



“It would be important to have a nuanced picture of ageing. While signs of physical decline and experiences of loss tend to appear with age, ageing can also be about passing on knowledge and experience, caring for others. In a “positive old age” an active lifestyle, relationships and openness to new things are maintained.”

Dr Máté Szondy

Clinical Psychologist, Family Therapist, Associate Professor

Facts and beliefs about ageing in Hungary

**The representative research of
Haleon and HCAF**

At the request of the **Hekate Conscious Ageing Foundation** (HCAF) and **Haleon**, a global consumer healthcare company, the Medián Public Opinion Research Institute conducted a representative survey in Hungary in December 2024 to investigate the attitudes of the Hungarian population towards ageing. The results show that Hungarian society is characterised by both ageist stereotypes and positive responses to a changing world.

Key findings of the research:

- Hungarians feel 3.1 years younger than their actual age. People with positive perception of ageing feel younger than they are.
- People believe it is natural to hurt or become defunct:
 - Those who hold negative views about ageing tend to have poorer prospects for the future and, are less willing to take proactive steps to improve their well-being.
 - 69% of Hungarians believe that the elderly often have health problems, and 60% believe that ageing is associated with regular pain.
 - 58% of the adult population believe that with ageing bad teeth and dental problems are inevitable.
- At least 1.4 million people are affected by internalised ageism:
 - While only a quarter of Hungarians aged 50-69 experienced age-related limitations from the outside world, **56% said they were limited by their own minds.**

1.4 m

HUNGARIANS ARE
AFFECTED BY
INTERNALISED
AGEISM

56%

LIMITED
THEMSELVES BY
THEIR OWN
MIND

We do not accept our actual age

On average, Hungarians feel 3.1 years younger than their actual age. They do not identify with their actual age: the older they get, the younger they think they are.

For people aged 70 and over, the gap between their real and perceived age is 7.7 years.

In theory, 77% of people think that ageing can be something to be proud of, but there is a paradox: **Hungarians are reluctant to describe themselves as “old”**. Only 22% of those aged 60 and over and 46% of those aged 70 and over consider themselves old.

Today, when the idealisation of youth and perfect looks is commonplace, it is particularly difficult to accept the changes our bodies undergo as we age. People in their 50s experiencing physical signs of ageing are particularly bothered by them.

Attitudes to ageing determine later quality of life

The research found that people with a negative perception of age feel older than their actual age, while those with a positive perception feel younger than they are. Experts say that **positive beliefs about old age** help us actively take care of ourselves, which leads to **improved health, better mood, and a longer life expectancy**.

Is it natural to hurt or become defunct?

Current research also highlights the opposite: **those who hold negative views about ageing** tend to have poorer prospects for the future, are less willing to take proactive steps to improve their well-being and feel less able to shape these aspects of their lives.

Over two thirds (69%) of Hungarians believe that the elderly often have health problems, and 60% believe that ageing is associated with regular pain. And indeed, 75% of people aged 50-69 experience occasional joint pains, even though experts say this should not necessarily be the case at this age.

58% of the adult population believe that with **ageing bad teeth and dental problems are inevitable**. And the numbers confirm this: 48% of people aged 50-69 feel their teeth are getting weaker. However, only 21% are bothered and half of them are not worried at all.

Ageism is within us

Only 27% of Hungarians aged 50-69 have ever felt that other people think they are too old to do something. Ageism towards oneself is more prevalent in Hungary: **more than half (56%) of Hungarians aged 50-69, that is around 1.4 million people, have thought of themselves as too old** for certain activities, and **a third (37%) have not taken up something new because of age-related concerns**. Most of them stopped learning new things because of their age. Experts say that this should be one of the keys to an active and conscious ageing, because experiencing and learning new things keeps the mind fresh and slows down the process of decline.

69%

OF HUNGARIANS
LINK OLD AGE TO
HEALTH
PROBLEMS

60%

BELIEVE THAT
AGEING IS
ASSOCIATED
WITH REGULAR
PAIN

37%

AVOID NEW
EXPERIENCES DUE
TO AGE



Self-deception

The research shows also controversial results about the Hungarians' perception of taking an active care of their bodies. 80% of targeted people say they "exercise regularly", but other research shows that half of Hungarian society does not exercise at all. 60% of those surveyed say they "regularly visit the dentist", but targeted research shows that very few people go for a dental check-up every six months as it is recommended by dental experts.

Repressive effects of ageism and the emerging **new ideals** that now see **ageing as an opportunity** are acting simultaneously. A trend can be observed across Europe and in Hungary where a growing number of middle-aged, people are talking about "recalculating" and the "opportunities offered by the ageing B-side". The image and the ideal of a person **ageing in an active, aware, energetic way** has been increasingly visible in public discourse, media, podcasts and in friendly conversations for a few years now. But this approach is still not widespread enough, there is still a lot to do.

"Old beliefs and stereotypes live on but they are also replaced by new beliefs, goals, and behaviours. This transition influences differently the attitudes of individual generations towards the passage of time and their own ageing"

Kinga Milánkovics
 Co-founder, Conscious
 Ageing Foundation

Active, conscious ageing as an opportunity

Recommendations

The number of 50+ people in Hungary is already over 40%. While the 50-69-year-olds still have paid jobs and are expected to remain active, most of them have no model for how to do so and **how to think positively about ageing**. Our thoughts and beliefs about ageing affect how actively we take steps to ensure it is a positive experience for us.

Over two thirds of Hungarians believe that the elderly often have health problems, and 60% believe that ageing is associated with regular pain. At least **1.4 million people** are affected by internalised ageism and are **limited by their own minds**. More people should understand that it is in their own interests to **take care of themselves** and **prepare for an active old age** consciously and responsibly.



“Of course, it is not enough to prepare for positive ageing when you are already getting older, you need to start at a younger age. Although many biological and social changes are beyond our control, it is worth finding areas where we do have a say. In addition to good nutrition and regular exercise, we need to nurture our human relationships and remain open to experiencing and learning new things. This keeps our minds fresh and slows down the process of decline at a neurological level.”

Dr Máté Szondy

Clinical Psychologist, Family Therapist, Associate Professor

Recommendations from the Conscious Ageing Foundation

What are the means, methods and approaches that are accessible to a broad spectrum of society even in today's Hungarian conditions and realities?

01

ADOPT SELF-CARE EARLY

Begin taking proactive steps to care for your physical and mental well-being as early as possible. Be ready to prepare your living environment to support mobility in old age.

02

EDUCATE YOURSELF ON ACTIVE AGEING

Seek information from credible sources such as your pharmacist or general practitioner (GP). Engage with expert podcasts and join specialized communities like the Conscious Ageing Community of HCAF.

03

UNDERSTAND YOUR BODY AND MIND

Learn about your unique physical and mental needs. Discover what constitutes adequate sleep and physical activity for you. Respect and nurture your body according to its specific requirements.

04

MAINTAIN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Stay engaged with others by joining online or offline communities that offer mutual support and constructive interaction. For example, invest effort in enhancing neighbourhood relations.

05

INCORPORATE ACTIVITY INTO DAILY LIFE

Identify simple changes to your daily routine that can increase your activity levels.

Examples include:

- Taking the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Using the internet and media mindfully to stay focused and avoid aimless scrolling.

06

UTILIZE PREVENTIVE HEALTH SCREENINGS

Regularly take advantage of free screening tests available for your age group, such as lung X-rays, smear tests, mammograms, and dental checkups.

07

INVEST IN HEALTH IMPROVEMENTS

Depending on your financial situation, consider investing in the health of your teeth, eyesight, joints, digestive system, and mental well-being.

08

MANAGE PAIN EFFECTIVELY

Do not accept chronic pain, such as joint or back pain, as inevitable. Effective pain management can help you maintain an active lifestyle. Consult your pharmacist or GP for guidance.

09

LEVERAGE DIGITAL HEALTH TOOLS

Embrace digital transformation by using applications that support your ageing process, such as health monitoring devices and diagnostic or life management apps.

10

ENGAGE IN LIFELONG LEARNING

Continuously read and learn new things, such as foreign languages, scientific advancements, or brain games and puzzles, to keep your mind sharp and delay cognitive decline.



"We live longer than ever before, and it is our responsibility to spend those extra years in good health. Self-care is an essential but often underestimated part of staying healthy. At Haleon, we believe that self-care in this context means taking conscious and responsible steps to prevent illness, manage minor health problems and maintain general well-being. This includes a wide range of practices such as prevention, self-diagnosis and establishing and maintaining daily health routines."

Szilvia Lember
Director, Haleon Hungary

Our society is changing rapidly. It is advisable to respond to all these changes with a proactive attitude focusing on self-care. Active and conscious ageing can help you to have a better, happier, and healthier life.

References

- [1] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20200930-1>
- [2] <https://www.ksh.hu/interaktiv/korfak/orszag.html>
- [3] https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/nep/hu/nep0001.html
- [4] <https://tudatosoregedes.org/2025/01/23/generaciok-oregedes/>
- [5] <https://news.yale.edu/2002/07/29/thinking-positively-about-aging-extends-life-more-exercise-and-not-smoking>
- [6] <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/ageing-ageism>