

10 Interesting Facts About Ageing

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It was Bette Davis who famously said “growing old isn’t for sissies”, and few people might argue. Aches and pains, slower metabolism and dependence on others are all situations we know we may have to face as middle age stretches into retirement and old age.

But it doesn’t have to be all doom and gloom, because with better medicine, facilities and understanding, right now is the best time it has ever been to be old. If you’re not convinced, here are 10 fun facts about ageing that you can look forward to in your golden years.

1. It’s easier to stay in your own home

For those who don’t want to move into a care facility, there’s plenty of home help available. Based on a care assessment, your local council may provide equipment such as grab rails, ramps, stair lifts and even carers or personal assistants. A [number of schemes](#) provide subsidised help with housework, gardening, meals, medication and social activities, and the technology available in [mobility furniture](#) such as [recliner chairs](#) and [adjustable beds](#) can make staying at home more comfortable and help reduce or even prevent several age-related [health conditions](#).

2. Things get cheaper

As well as your state pension, older people in the UK are entitled to a range of benefits to cover council tax, rent, heating, health treatments and carer’s allowances. According to Age UK, over [£2 billion](#) of state benefits goes unclaimed each year, mostly because people don’t realise they qualify (check out their online [benefits calculator](#) to see if you’re eligible). Senior citizens can enjoy discounts on all sorts of things from buses, trains and ferries to theatre tickets, sporting events and memberships.

3. You get smarter as you get older

While it’s true that certain brain functions slow down as we age, this doesn’t necessarily affect our intelligence. For example, [one study](#) found that when given a new task to learn, older people performed as well as young people if given a bit more time. [Another study](#) found that adults who combine memory training with regular exercise not only maintain their memory functions but show continual improvement.

4. You don’t have to give up driving

According to [Age UK](#) there are more over-60s driving now than ever before. They’re also one of the safest groups on the road, as they tend to avoid driving in bad weather or at night. Fortunately, in the UK there’s no legal age at which you must stop driving, though you must renew your licence at 70 years, declare any medical conditions and pass minimum eyesight requirements. Assuming you’re fit and healthy, you can then [make your own decision](#) about whether or not you feel safe on the road.

5. We’re living longer than ever before

According to [Public Health England](#), while life expectancy in the UK dropped slightly in 2020, it was still sitting at a healthy 79 years for men and 83 years for women. This compares to 76 years for men and 80 years for women in 2000, and 66 years and 72 years, respectively, in 1950, so there's plenty of time to reap the benefits of all those years in the workforce.

If you need inspiration, local libraries run regular courses in topics such as computer literacy and family history research, there are around 500 ramblers groups in the UK and organisations including [Age UK](#) run regular exercise and social activities.

6. Romance is not dead

If you're wondering – or worrying – what life will be like post-children or retirement now that you and your partner have more time together, never fear, as [research](#) has found that marriages tend to improve in old age. Reasons include having learned to better express affection, acceptance of each other's shortcomings, fewer arguments about children and stress through middle age bringing couples closer together.

7. There's good news for singletons

On the other hand, if you find yourself on your own and don't want to stay that way, the stats are in your favour. Last year, figures from the [Office of National Statistics](#) found that marriages between over-65s have increased more than any other age group. In a modern trend, [internet dating](#) was the most popular way to meet, mainly thanks to specialist sites for older singles and this age group becoming more comfortable with the internet and mobile devices. Furthermore, seniors were more likely to find happiness online than other age groups, as they tend to know what they want and take the process more seriously. If you're thinking it might be time to put yourself out there, check out this handy guide to [dating in later life](#).

8. Tick off your travel bucket list

If you regularly find yourself wistfully flicking through travel magazines, then there's plenty to look forward to, as in the 20 years up to 2018 the number of British travellers over 65 [increased by 35%](#). [Reasons for this](#) included having more savings with fewer financial commitments, extra time, the flexibility to travel off-peak, greater accessibility in popular tourist spots and more guided tours offering security, companionship and help accessing health care if necessary.

9. Less stress = more happiness

It may not surprise anyone to learn the biggest worry amongst the older population is health. But [studies have found](#) that concerns over work, money and family decrease as we get older so the balance is tipped towards more happiness overall. [Experts also found](#) older people are less likely to get angry, have better control of their emotions and are better at dealing with conflict, which they put down to a better understanding of different perspectives and more focus on making the most of life.

10. More job satisfaction

The longer you stay in the workforce, the more you can look forward to going in to work each day. This is because older workers are more likely to have worked their way to more desirable positions, but other factors include accessibility for workers with health and disability issues, flexible hours, a smaller gender pay gap and less tolerance of workplace discrimination and sexism. Opportunities for learning, career progression, the chance to mentor others and working for a company with values they shared also contributed to a sense of purpose and self-esteem, which was found to be one of the key elements in “super-ageing”: being able to live into our 90s or beyond with no significant physical or memory problems.

The Bottom Line

For those of us lucky enough to be approaching our golden years without any major health concerns, there’s plenty to look forward to including better relationships, a higher chance of remaining independent and more time to spend on things we enjoy. And people with problems or concerns can rest assured that more help and support is available now than there ever has been. With all that in mind, there’s no reason why our golden years can’t be some of the best of our lives.

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About Dr Rob Hicks?

One of the UK's most popular and well-known media-doctors, Dr Rob Hicks is an experienced GP who lives with his family in Greater London. He is the resident doctor on "The Chrissy B Show", medical adviser to the TV drama "Doctors", and is regularly heard on the radio. A prolific health writer and medical journalist, Dr Rob Hicks has written three books and regularly contributes to magazines and national newspapers.

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