



THE UNIVERSITY  
of EDINBURGH



# IMAGES OF CARE

JULY 2023 PROGRESS REPORT

# THANK YOU

Dear Contributor,

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude for your involvement in the Images of Care project. Your contribution has been invaluable, and we appreciate your time and dedication.

We are excited to provide you with an update on our progress so far. With your help, we have successfully completed data collection and are now analysing the gathered information. Your insights have greatly enriched our research.

Thank you for committing to this project. Your active participation has made our research possible and has played a vital role in the research outcome. We will continue to ensure the utmost confidentiality and privacy throughout the research process.

Once again, we sincerely thank you for your support. We look forward to sharing the final outcomes with you soon.

Best regards,

Dr. Nichole Fernández and the ACRC team

# RESEARCH SUMMARY

The Images of Care research project is part of the Advanced Care Research Centre (ACRC). The ACRC is a multi-disciplinary research programme with an aim of generating high-quality data-driven, personalised, and affordable care that supports the independence, dignity, and quality-of-life of people in later life. The Images of Care project sits within the 'Understanding the Person in Context' initiative of the ACRC that utilises innovative qualitative methods to better understand how individuals and their families experience later life and care.

## RESEARCH AIMS

The aim of the Images of Care project is to gain a deeper understanding of care in later life by examining how care is portrayed in news images and how individuals themselves visually communicate their experiences of care. It is crucial to examine how care in later life is visually represented, as these visual representations shape societal norms and perceptions surrounding aging and care.

The research consisted of two main areas:

1. Investigating images of care in the news media.
2. Collaboratively creating alternative images of care.

## RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

To complete these two aims we conducted the following three research activities:

### 1. Media analysis:

We quantitatively analysed images of care in news articles to understand what care in later life looks like in the media.

### 2. Workshops:

To understand the meaning behind these images in news media we conducted workshops where participants actively engaged in the image analysis process.

### 3. Photography project:

In addition to studying existing media images of care, we had older adults create their own images of care in their daily lives.

Continue reading for an update on all three of these research activities.

# Images of care

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# in the news media

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Find out more about the analysis we conducted on images of care in the UK news media.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the news media focused more attention on care for older adults, a topic which had been previously overlooked. We decided to take advantage of this increased media attention to understand how care is visually represented. We analysed over 1,000 images from UK news articles on care and later life. The table on the right shows some of the key findings from our research.

Overall, these findings revealed that media images of care often reinforced negative stereotypes about aging and portrayed older adults as passive recipients of care. This limited representation overlooked their active contributions and the complexity of

caregiving. It also emphasised care as a private responsibility rather than a shared societal concern. The study raises important questions about the ethical use of images in journalism and the need to move beyond simplistic and ageist depictions.

This research serves as a valuable foundation for our photography project, which aims to create alternative representations of care. By delving into the complexity and diversity of care in later life, we can challenge stereotypes and promote a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of older adults.

This media research also acted as the perfect starting point for our workshops...

## summary of key findings

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- 1** Articles on care in later life predominantly show older adults alone, communicating lack of care, ignoring the relational aspect of care, and disregarding autonomy of older adults.

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- 2** The news sources frequently depict older adults with carers, mainly young women, neglecting other caregivers like spouses or family members.

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- 3** Images often present care in later life as unidirectional, given by young carers and received by older adults, ignoring the reciprocal nature of care.

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- 4** Care is mostly shown in indoor private settings, reinforcing the perception of care as a personal responsibility rather than a communal concern.

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- 5** Older adults are often shown engaged in passive activities and require assistance from others, framing them as dependent.

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- 6** Assistance and touch are commonly used to signify the presence of care, but they are usually initiated by others rather than by older adults themselves.

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- 7** The representation of older adults lacks diversity, with a limited number of images featuring older adults of colour.

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# 1,179

images

# 455

news articles

# 3

news sources

# 2

years

# Co-analysis Workshops

Read more about how we are progressing with our co-analysis workshops

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5

workshops

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22

participants

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To gain deeper insight into how the media images we studied are interpreted and understood, we recognised that we needed to include older adults in the analysis process. Therefore, we organised workshops that focused on care, later life, and media representation.

These workshops took place in Scotland and England, where we had the pleasure of meeting and

collaborating with many wonderful individuals. Together, we engaged in activities that generated meaningful discussions, shedding light on how these images shape meaning and perceptions.

Currently, we are analysing the data collected from these workshops and eagerly anticipate sharing more detailed findings with you in the autumn!

# Photography project

Over the past 8 months, we have been working on a fascinating photography project with 15 older adults (aged 50+).

**15**

interviews

**169**

photographs

During the project, participants photographed moments of care in their daily lives. We then interviewed them to delve deeper into the images and the process of taking these photographs.

In total, the participants created 169 images that showcased a variety of care-related moments, from small intimate gestures to significant life events.

These images beautifully reflect how care is intricately woven into every aspect of our lives. Through the interviews, we have gained valuable insights into the multiple layers of meaning embedded even in the simplest acts of care.

We are currently analysing this rich data, comprising both the images and the interview responses, to uncover further insights.

# What's next?

