

Call for Papers (CfP)

Journalism, Media, Generations, and Aging

Journalistic portrayals of generations, age, and aging are often shaped by stereotypes. This applies to both older and younger generations. As early as 1969, sociologist Robert Butler coined the term ageism to describe forms of discrimination analogous to sexism and racism, referring to exclusion and disadvantage based on age. At the same time, age was already being discussed in connection with other social categories – that is, an intersectional perspective was being pursued. For example, in 1972, Susan Sontag pointed out the »double standard of aging« and criticized the fact that women are more severely affected by age discrimination.

These concepts remain relevant today, as does the issue of demographic change, which challenges societies worldwide while simultaneously opening up new perspectives on aging. While old age was long associated with deficiency and decline, views on older age have shifted since the 1980s. In tandem with developments in the advertising industry, more positive portrayals of aging have also emerged in journalistic media. New target groups were identified, and marketing terms such as »silver generation« or »best agers« were coined. At the same time, »youth« remains a relevant target group and a recurring topic in journalism.

What is striking is a structural imbalance in perspective: the middle generation often writes about »the elderly« or »the young.« This dynamic raises questions of interpretive authority, representation, and responsibility. Journalists shape perceptions of age and generations and, thereby, society's understanding of aging as well as the more or less conflict-ridden coexistence or competition between generations.

At the same time, journalistic media are under growing economic pressure and face competition from social media platforms and influencer-driven communication. Service-oriented topics – such as health, prevention, and lifestyle – are gaining importance. Terms such as »longevity« suggest that aging is primarily a matter of individual self-improvement. Such media narratives give rise to societal models of »successful« aging that promise empowerment but may also entail new forms of standardization and exclusion.

For our double issue 3-4/2026, we welcome scholarly articles, essays, and debate contributions that, from the perspective of journalism and journalism studies, and in engagement with fundamental concepts such as age, aging, youth, generation, cohort, and life stage, critically address topics including, but not limited to, the following:

- Media constructions of age, aging, and generations in the context of demographic change
- Ageism and the avoidance of discriminatory age and generational stereotypes
- Prevention and preventive healthcare as journalistic topics; longevity as a societal ideal: between the imperative of performance and a focus on health
- The »double standard of aging« and gender-specific images of aging
- Inclusion/exclusion and intersectional perspectives on age and generations
- Age, generations, and protest movements nationally and internationally: from *Fridays for Future* and *Last Generation* to *Grannies Against the Right* [Omas gegen Rechts]
- Generational perspectives in journalism: Who writes and speaks about whom, and with what consequences?
- Journalists' responsibility in dealing with images of age and generations
- Economic pressure and its impact on reporting on age and generations

Please submit your contributions by **September 1, 2026**, to redaktion@journalistik.online