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Age Discrimination Against Older Adults in Czechia: Evidence, Legal Limits, and Lessons from Singapore and Japan

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Abstract

This article examines how older adults in Czechia experience age discrimination, what the Czech legal framework does and does not deliver in practice, and which elements of the Singaporean and Japanese approaches to active ageing are transferable to the Czech institutional context. The argument proceeds in three steps. First, it sets out a conceptual framework that distinguishes interpersonal from structural discrimination, and legal equality from its enforcement. Second, it reports an exploratory pilot survey of 211 self-selected respondents aged 65 and over, conducted between January and October 2023 and analysed with descriptive statistics, together with illustrative case material from Czech practice. Third, it compares Singapore and Japan systematically on five criteria: policy objective, instruments, responsible institutions, evidence of implementation, and feasibility in Czechia. Of the 211 respondents, 175 (82.9%) reported at least one form of discrimination. The most frequently reported were social marginalisation and neglect (30% of those reporting discrimination), media stereotyping and negative public attitudes (23%), and employer-related discrimination (19%). Because the sample was self-selected, these shares describe the experience of the respondents and are indicative rather than prevalence estimates for Czech older adults. They are consistent with the international literature and with enforcement data showing that legal protection is weakly mobilised: the Czech equality body resolved 589 discrimination complaints in 2024, while a study of court practice found only 90 anti-discrimination lawsuits in the five years to 2019, with age in employment among the most frequently invoked grounds. The comparative analysis finds that Singapore and Japan differ from Czechia less in the instruments they use than in the coordination and framing that surround them. Three elements are transferable at reasonable cost: municipal coordination hubs, lifelong learning delivered through existing institutions, and grant-based incentives for phased and part-time re-employment. Two are not: the fiscal scale of Singapore's blueprint and Japan's long-term care insurance.

Keywords: ageism; age discrimination; older adults; Czechia; active ageing; comparative policy; Singapore; Japan

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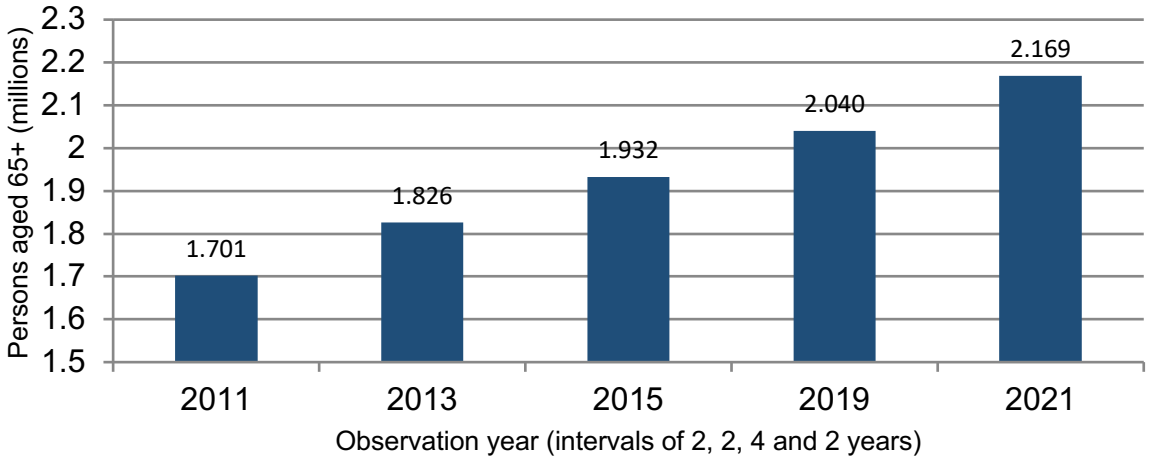
1. Introduction and Conceptual Foundations

Age discrimination is a recognised human-rights and public-health concern. It is also unusual among the protected grounds, because it attaches to a status that every reader will eventually hold. The literature on ageism has documented its effects on health, on labour-market participation and on the quality of social life (Van Den Heuvel, 2012; Rippon et al., 2013; Shimizu, 2021), and comparative work has shown that the perception of age discrimination varies widely across European societies (Rychtaříková, 2019). What that literature has established less clearly is how formal legal protection and everyday experience fit together: whether a country with functioning anti-discrimination legislation nevertheless produces discrimination in practice, and if so, through which mechanisms.

Czechia is a useful case for that question. Its population is ageing at one of the faster rates in the OECD: 20.8% of residents were aged 65 or over in 2024, some 2.27 million people, and the share is projected to approach 29% by the middle of the century (Czech Statistical Office, 2025). Its legal architecture is complete on paper. The Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms guarantees equality in dignity and rights, and the Antidiscrimination Act of 2009 transposes the EU equality directives, including the prohibition of age discrimination in employment, education, healthcare, housing and access to goods and services. Yet the enforcement record is thin, and the mechanisms by which older Czechs are excluded — redundancy dressed as organisational restructuring, consumer fraud aimed at isolated households, media portrayals of older people as a voting bloc to be managed — are not primarily legal in character.

Figure 1: Residents of Czechia aged 65 and over, 2011–2021 (millions).



Source: author's compilation based on Czech Statistical Office (2025). The observation years are those for which the series is published; the intervals are two, two, four and two years, so the horizontal axis is not a continuous time scale.

The Czech literature tends to treat these questions separately. Sociological and social-policy studies document attitudes and exclusion; legal commentary examines the transposition of the directives; policy analysis refers to Singapore and Japan as models without specifying what would have to be true for their instruments to work in a Czech

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municipality. This article connects the three. Its contribution is not a new prevalence estimate — the survey reported here cannot supply one — but an account of how interpersonal and structural discrimination interact in a country where the law is adequate and its enforcement is not, combined with a comparative analysis that states the conditions of transfer rather than asserting the desirability of borrowing.

Two research questions guide the study:

1. RQ1. How do older adults in Czechia describe their experience of age discrimination, and in which domains is it most acute?
2. RQ2. Which elements of the Singaporean and Japanese approaches to active ageing can be adapted to the Czech context, and under what conditions?

The article is organised as follows. Section 2 sets out the conceptual framework: ageism and stereotyping, interpersonal versus structural discrimination, legal equality and its enforcement, and active ageing. Section 3 describes the methodology, including the design and limits of the exploratory survey and the criteria used for the comparison. Section 4 reports the survey results and states what they can and cannot support. Section 5 presents illustrative case material. Section 6 conducts the comparative analysis. Section 7 discusses the findings in relation to both research questions, Section 8 concludes, and Section 9 sets out the limitations.

2. Conceptual framework

The literature on age discrimination is multidisciplinary, and its strands are often combined without explanation. This section separates four that the analysis needs, and states why the biology of ageing, which figures in much of the Czech writing on older people, is not among them.

2.1 Ageism and stereotyping

Terminology first. In Czech policy discourse the usual term is ‘senior’, defined variously by age, by entitlement to the old-age pension and by physiological condition, with many social workers using the threshold of 65 (Town Hall Frýdek-Místek, 2023; Česká správa sociálního zabezpečení, 2024). This article follows the international literature and uses ‘older adults’ and ‘older people’ interchangeably for people aged 65 and over, reserving ‘senior’ for quotations from Czech policy documents and for the names of institutions. The choice is not cosmetic: ‘senior’ carries an institutional connotation, whereas the research question concerns a phase of life.

Ageism is conventionally defined as the stereotyping of and discrimination against people on the basis of their age. Following the standard tripartite treatment, it is useful to distinguish stereotypes (beliefs about what older people are like), prejudice (affective evaluations) and discrimination (behaviour that treats a person less favourably because of age) (Van Den Heuvel, 2012). The distinction matters analytically because the three are measured differently and respond to different interventions: stereotypes are reached through media and education, prejudice through contact, and discrimination through law and organisational practice.

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Two features of ageism make it resistant to policy. First, it is prescriptive as well as descriptive: stereotypes about older people carry an expectation about how they ought to behave, which turns into a judgement when they do not (Shimizu, 2021). Second, it is often expressed as benevolence — concern, protection, the assumption that someone would rather not be troubled — which makes it harder to name and to contest than hostility. Comparative survey work shows that perceived age discrimination varies substantially between European countries, and that the variance is not explained by demographic structure alone (Rychtaříková, 2019). For present purposes, the implication is that self-reported experience is a measure of perceived treatment, not of its legal qualification; the two must be kept apart throughout.

2.2 Interpersonal and structural discrimination

A second distinction organises the empirical material. Interpersonal discrimination occurs in encounters between people: a dismissive official, an impolite shop assistant, a joke about technology. Structural discrimination is built into the arrangement of institutions — retirement rules that end careers at a fixed age, service design that assumes digital literacy, recruitment systems that screen on years of experience, housing and transport that presume mobility. Structural discrimination does not require an ill-intentioned actor; it requires only that the default arrangement suit one group better than another.

The distinction has a methodological consequence that shapes this article. Surveys capture interpersonal and perceived discrimination well, because respondents can report what happened to them. They capture structural discrimination poorly, because its effects appear as aggregate patterns — employment rates, service use, the distribution of digital access — rather than as incidents. A study that relies on survey data alone will therefore tend to locate ageism in manners and attitudes, and to miss the mechanisms that produce the largest material effects. This is why the analysis below pairs the survey with case material and with enforcement data, and why the comparative section concentrates on institutional design rather than on attitudes.

Digital exclusion illustrates the point. Internet use among Czechs aged 16 and over reached 88% in 2025, and usage among older people has risen steadily; but only six in ten households of older people were connected in the same year (Czech Statistical Office, 2025b). The gap is not primarily a matter of individual capability. It is produced by a combination of device cost, household composition, the withdrawal of face-to-face service channels and the assumption of digital-by-default administration — that is, by design decisions. Perceived discrimination in contact with public services and administrative offices is reported across the EU, at 5.2% of the population aged 16 and over in 2024 (Eurostat, 2025), and rises sharply for groups at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Age-based exclusion from services is thus a structural phenomenon that a survey of incidents can register only indirectly.

2.3 Legal equality and the limits of enforcement

Czech anti-discrimination law rests on three layers. The constitutional layer comprises Article 1 and Article 3 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which guarantee equality in dignity and rights and prohibit discrimination on enumerated

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grounds, with age recognised by the Constitutional Court as falling within the residual category of 'other status' (Poslanecká sněmovna ČR, 2021; Tomšej, 2025). The statutory layer is the Antidiscrimination Act (Act No. 198/2009 Coll.), whose § 3(1) defines direct discrimination as treatment less favourable than that given in a comparable situation on grounds including age, and whose material scope covers employment, access to goods and services, healthcare, housing, education and social protection (Česká republika, 2009). The labour-law layer is the Labour Code, which requires equal treatment in working conditions and prohibits discrimination in employment (Česká republika, 2006).

Formal completeness, however, is not substantive protection, and the Czech enforcement record shows why. Three findings from the European Commission's 2025 country report on non-discrimination are directly relevant. First, the volume of individual complaints is low relative to the size of the problem: the Public Defender of Rights, which acts as the equality body, resolved 589 complaints relating to discrimination in 2024, up from 362 in 2023, and 342 of these did not invoke a discrimination ground at all, so that the Ombudsman could not assess them as discrimination (Public Defender of Rights, 2025). Second, litigation is rarer still: the Ombudsman's study of court practice found that only 90 lawsuits under the Antidiscrimination Act were initiated in the five years from 2015 to 2019, that age and gender in employment were the most frequently invoked grounds, and that claimants were unsuccessful in 54 of the 90; monetary compensation was awarded in only 12 of the 59 cases in which it was claimed (Public Defender of Rights, 2020, cited in Tomšej, 2025). Third, the remedies available are weak and uneven: compensation for non-pecuniary damage is a subsidiary remedy under § 10 of the Act, awards have ranged from roughly CZK 5,000 to CZK 400,000, the shifted burden of proof under § 133a of the Civil Procedure Code does not apply in all discrimination cases; the Ombudsman has no power to represent victims before the courts; and actio popularis is not available for discrimination claims, so that neither the equality body nor NGOs can bring a representative action (Tomšej, 2025).

The consequence is a specific kind of gap. An older worker who is dismissed under § 52(c) of the Labour Code — redundancy for organisational reasons — must prove that the organisational reason was not the real one, in a procedure where the burden of proof shifts only partially, at the risk of bearing the defendant's costs if unsuccessful, for a remedy that may be a few months' salary. The rational response is not to litigate. The law therefore remains formally available and practically unused, which is precisely the condition in which structural discrimination flourishes: employers can rely on the low probability of challenge, and the absence of cases is then read as evidence that discrimination is not occurring. This mechanism, rather than any deficiency in the text of the Act, is what the phrase 'the law does not fully protect' should be taken to mean, and it is what the empirical sections below illustrate.

2.4 Active ageing and social participation

The fourth strand is the policy paradigm against which the Czech record is assessed. Active ageing, as formulated in the World Health Organization's framework, refers to the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to improve quality of life as people grow older (WHO, 2002). Its policy implication is a shift of emphasis from compensation to participation: from protecting older people against risk to enabling their continued contribution, whether in employment, care, volunteering

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or civic life. The paradigm has been criticised for placing the burden of staying active on individuals and for assuming that suitable roles exist; those criticisms are taken seriously in Section 6, where the conditions under which participation is possible are treated as part of the analysis rather than as an assumption.

The paradigm is relevant here because it reframes the problem the article addresses. If ageism were only a matter of attitudes, anti-discrimination law and awareness campaigns would exhaust the policy repertoire. If it is also structural, then the relevant instruments include the design of work (flexible and phased retirement, part-time and job-sharing arrangements), the design of learning (accessible, low-cost provision through existing institutions), and the design of care (community-based coordination that allows people to remain in place). Singapore and Japan are the two most frequently cited examples of countries that have attempted that broader repertoire, which is why they are examined in Section 6 — not because their instruments are automatically appropriate to Czechia, but because they make the conditions of transfer visible.

One consequence of this framework should be stated at the outset. The biology of ageing — cellular senescence, genomic instability, the physiology of functional decline — is well studied and relevant to gerontology, but it does not explain why a 66-year-old is passed over for promotion, why a 70-year-old is targeted by an energy-supplier scam, or why a service is redesigned around a smartphone. Those outcomes are produced by institutions and expectations, and it is those that the framework must describe. Biological material is therefore not reviewed here; readers seeking it are referred to the gerontological literature.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design and evidence base

The study combines four kinds of evidence, and it is important to be explicit about what each can support. A conceptual review of the literatures on ageism, discrimination law and active ageing establishes the analytical framework of Section 2. An exploratory pilot survey of 211 respondents aged 65 and over provides self-reported experience, analysed descriptively. Documentary case material — a published court judgment, a ministry analysis of consumer fraud, a widely viewed campaign video, and official statistics — illustrates the mechanisms through which discrimination operates in Czech practice. A comparative policy analysis of Singapore and Japan, conducted on published sources and secondary literature, addresses the second research question.

The study is therefore not a prevalence study, and the survey is not a representative sample of Czech older adults. It is an exploratory study in the sense that it generates hypotheses and illustrates mechanisms; its quantitative results are reported with that status throughout. Section 9 sets out the consequences of that design for inference.

3.2 The exploratory pilot survey

Design and period. The survey was a cross-sectional, self-administered questionnaire study of residents of Czechia aged 65 or over, conducted between January and October

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2023. Eligibility was restricted to people aged 65 and over living in Czechia at the time of response; no other inclusion or exclusion criteria were applied.

Recruitment and response. The sample was recruited by convenience rather than by probability sampling, through organisations serving older people. No response rate is reported: invitations were not tracked individually, so there is no denominator against which returns could be expressed.

The sample is self-selected in two senses: participation was voluntary, and the channels used over-represent people who are in contact with organisations serving older people, who are more socially engaged, and who are more likely to have formed a view about their own treatment. The direction of the resulting bias cannot be signed with confidence: engagement with such organisations may raise awareness of discrimination and thus reporting, or may reflect relative advantage and thus reduce it.

Instrument. The questionnaire contained items on demographic characteristics, exposure to discrimination, the form of discrimination experienced and its frequency, followed by an open item for comment. The discrimination items were self-report and self-defined: respondents were asked whether they had experienced discrimination because of their age, not presented with a behaviour checklist and asked to indicate which behaviours they had encountered. The form-of-discrimination item was single-response, so each respondent selected one principal form from five categories. The instrument is reproduced in Appendix A.

Ethics. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and no identifying data were collected. The research was non-interventional: it recorded respondents' own accounts of their experience, asked for no sensitive personal data beyond the topic of the study, and exposed participants to no risk beyond that of ordinary conversation. It was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the author's institution and with Regulation (EU) 2016/679. Because no personal identifiers were collected, no respondent can be identified in the data reported here.

Analysis. Responses were recorded in a spreadsheet and analysed with descriptive statistics: counts and percentage shares, cross-tabulated where cell sizes permitted. Percentages for the forms and frequency of discrimination are calculated on the base of the 175 respondents who reported at least one form, not on all 211, and this is stated in the table notes.

On sampling error. No margin of sampling error is reported. The often-quoted figure of ±6.7 percentage points at the 95% level for n = 211 presupposes a probability sample; for a convenience sample of this kind, it would be misleading, because the dominant error is selection rather than chance.

Readers should treat the percentages as descriptions of the respondents, with an unknown direction and size of difference from the population. This is a substantive limitation, not a formality, and it is the reason the results are framed as indicative throughout.

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3.3 Criteria for the comparative analysis

The comparison in Section 6 is structured by five criteria, chosen so that it yields an assessment of transferability rather than an inventory of good practice: (i) the policy objective the instrument serves; (ii) the instruments themselves, including their legal form; (iii) the institutions responsible for delivery; (iv) the available evidence of implementation or effectiveness; and (v) the institutional and fiscal preconditions that would have to hold for the instrument to work in Czechia. For each instrument the analysis distinguishes three degrees of transferability: transferable at low cost (design features that can be adopted within existing budgets), transferable with adaptation (requiring legal or organisational change), and not transferable in the short run (requiring fiscal capacity or institutional structures Czechia does not have).

The comparison is based on published primary documents — Singapore's Action Plan for Successful Ageing and the Ministry of Health's programme pages, Japan's New Orange Plan and official population statistics — together with peer-reviewed secondary literature on both systems (Tong and Pfau, 2017; Wada and Yano, 2018) and OECD comparative data on pensions and older-worker employment. It is a desk-based institutional comparison, not an evaluation: it does not estimate costs, model fiscal effects or assess outcomes against a counterfactual. Those limits are restated in Section 9.

3.4 Case material as illustration

The case material in Section 5 is used illustratively. A published judgment, a ministry's analysis of a fraud scheme, a campaign video and official statistics each show that a mechanism exists and how it operates; they do not establish how common it is, and they are not treated as corroboration of the survey. Where a case is cited, the claim is limited to what the document shows: for example, that a court found a redundancy to have been motivated by savings rather than by the stated organisational reason, not that such dismissals are typical.

4. Results: the exploratory pilot survey

4.1 The sample as documented

The survey covered 211 respondents, all aged 65 or over and resident in Czechia. Beyond age and residence, the demographic composition of the sample is not reported: the available record holds no breakdown by sex, region, education or household type, and none is estimated here. The percentages below therefore describe the respondents as a group and cannot be read as describing any subgroup of them.

Two properties of the sample should be kept in view while reading the results. It is small: with 211 respondents, a difference of five percentage points between two subgroups is well within the range that sampling and measurement artefacts can produce, and subgroup comparisons are therefore not reported. It is also engaged: recruitment through organisations serving older people selects for people who are in contact with such organisations, and the 175 respondents who reported discrimination may differ systematically from those who did not.

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4.2 Forms of discrimination

Of the 211 respondents, 175 (82.9%) reported at least one form of discrimination because of their age. Table 1 reports the distribution of the principal form reported, on the base of those 175 respondents.

Table 1: Principal form of age discrimination reported by respondents who experienced discrimination (n = 175)

Principal form reported	n	% of 175
Social marginalisation and neglect	52	30
Media stereotyping and negative public opinion	40	23
Employer-related (stress, forced retirement)	34	19
Vulgarity, aggression, lack of courtesy	28	16
Consumer (energy-seller) fraud	21	12
Total	175	100

Source: author's exploratory survey (2023), n = 211; base = respondents reporting at least one form (n = 175). Percentages are rounded to whole numbers and sum to 100. The item was single-response: each respondent reported one principal form.

Three features of the distribution deserve comment. First, the most frequently reported form is not an incident but a condition: social marginalisation and neglect, reported by 30% of those affected, describes a state of reduced contact rather than a discrete event, which is consistent with the literature's finding that ageism is often expressed through omission rather than hostility. Second, media stereotyping and negative public opinion rank second at 23%, which is notable in a survey that asked about personal experience rather than about attitudes in general; respondents appear to have interpreted the question as covering the climate in which they live, not only events they had lived through. Third, employer-related discrimination — stress at work and pressure towards early retirement — accounts for 19%, a smaller share than the policy debate would suggest, though this may reflect the age of the sample: at 65 and over, most respondents are no longer in employment, and those who left work earlier cannot report a dismissal they did not experience at the time of the survey.

The single-response design limits what the table can be read to say. A respondent who had been dismissed at 63, treated dismissively at a clinic and targeted by a fraudulent energy offer could report only one of the three, and the choice of 'principal' form is itself a judgement the instrument delegated to the respondent. The distribution should therefore be read as a ranking of salience, not as an estimate of the breadth of discrimination: the true incidence of any form is likely to be higher than the table shows, and the sum of the categories understates the number of distinct experiences. A multiple-

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response item, with each form asked about separately, would be the appropriate instrument for a replication.

4.3 Frequency of experienced discrimination

Table 2 reports how often respondents experienced the discrimination they described. The rows are ordered from most to least frequent, as the categories were administered.

Table 2: Frequency of experienced discrimination (n = 175)

Frequency reported	n	% of 175
Twice a week	94	54
Weekly	31	18
Every other month	27	15
At least once a month	23	13
Total	175	100

Source: author's exploratory survey (2023). Base = respondents reporting at least one form (n = 175). Single-response item; the four categories were administered as discrete options and are not a cumulative scale (see the text).

The distribution is heavily weighted towards frequent experience: 54% reported discrimination twice a week and a further 18% weekly, so that almost three-quarters of those affected place themselves in the upper half of the scale. Two cautions follow from the instrument. The categories are not a consistent scale. 'Twice a week' is more frequent than 'weekly', which is more frequent than 'at least once a month', but the last two options overlap as worded — a respondent discriminated every other month is also discriminated at least once a month — so the two cannot be read as adjacent points on one ladder, and the smaller number in the more inclusive category (13% against 15%) is a consequence of that overlap rather than an anomaly in the data. The scale is also incomplete: it offers no option for daily discrimination, for several times a month, or for less than once every two months, and it does not specify a setting, so respondents answered about their experience in general rather than about employment, healthcare or public space in particular.

The two-band summary reported below is an interpretive expedient for these data only, not a measurement solution: it is adopted because the four original categories cannot be ordered consistently, and it should not be read as a recommended design. A future collection should use a single monotonic ladder (daily; several times a week; weekly; several times a month; monthly; less often than monthly), specify the setting to which each item refers, and fix a reference period.

For interpretive purposes the four categories can be collapsed into two bands that are internally consistent: frequent experience (twice a week or weekly), reported by 125 respondents (71.4%), and monthly or less often, reported by the remaining 50 (28.6%). The collapse states the finding in a form the data can bear; it does not repair the

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instrument. A replication should replace the categories altogether with an exhaustive and monotonic scale — daily, several times a week, weekly, monthly, less than monthly, never — and should specify the setting and the reference period.

Read together, Tables 1 and 2 support a single descriptive claim: among respondents who reported discrimination, it is experienced often and is attributed mainly to exclusion and to the surrounding climate rather than to isolated hostile encounters. That claim is consistent with the conceptual framework of Section 2.2, in which structural and ambient forms of discrimination predominate over discrete interpersonal events, and it is the claim that the case material in Section 5 illustrates.

4.4 What the survey can and cannot support

Three conclusions are warranted. The survey shows that a group of 211 older Czechs, recruited through organisations serving them, report age discrimination at high rates and in forms that correspond to those documented in the international literature. It shows that social marginalisation, media stereotyping and employment pressure are the most salient forms for this group. And it shows that the experience is recurrent rather than occasional for most of those affected.

Three are not. It cannot estimate prevalence among Czech older adults, because the sample is self-selected and the direction of selection bias is unknown. It cannot compare forms or domains statistically, because the item was single-response and the categories are not exhaustive. And it cannot establish causation between reported experience and any policy arrangement, because it contains no comparison group and no measure of exposure. The claim that Czech older adults are discriminated against is supported by this survey only in the weak sense that a substantial number of them say so; the stronger claim requires representative data, which the Czech Republic does not currently collect on a systematic basis for this age group. That absence is itself a policy finding, and it is taken up in Section 7.

5. Illustrative case evidence

The cases below were selected because each makes a mechanism visible that the survey can only register as a response category. They are illustrations, not a sample: none of them establishes how widespread the practice described is.

5.1 Employment: redundancy under § 52(c)

The stereotype that older workers cannot learn new skills persists against considerable evidence. People continue to acquire expertise well past conventional retirement age, and many continue to work in highly specialised roles; the Czech debate has begun to address the myth directly, with researchers describing it as one of the standard justifications for excluding older applicants (Hovorková, 2022). International evidence on hiring discrimination points the same way (Bendick et al., 1997; Neumark, 2017). The same interview evidence points to a structural feature that matters more than attitudes: the Czech labour market offers relatively few part-time and flexible positions, so an older worker who wishes to reduce hours often has to leave employment altogether.

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The legal mechanism through which older workers leave is frequently § 52(c) of the Labour Code, which permits dismissal where the employer has decided on organisational changes and the employee becomes redundant (Česká republika, 2006; Beran, 2020). The provision is lawful and frequently used. What makes it a vehicle for age discrimination is the asymmetry of proof: the employer states an organisational reason, and the employee who believes the reason was pretextual must show it, in a procedure where the shifted burden of proof applies only partially and where an unsuccessful claimant may bear costs.

A case decided by the Blansko District Court illustrates the pattern. The court found that the employer had dismissed the employee in order to make savings on other workers rather than for the organisational reason stated (Okresní soud Blansko, 2017). The case is significant less for its outcome than for its rarity: it is the kind of finding that the enforcement data in Section 2.3 suggest occurs infrequently, because the route to it is long, costly and uncertain.

5.2 Negative perceptions in Czech society

Survey research based on more than 250 respondents documents behavioural discrimination against older people in Czechia, and its distribution is instructive: stereotyping about ageing was reported by 19.3% of respondents, disrespectful attitudes by 16.5%, cursing or excessive criticism by 11.4%, intolerance of older citizens by 11.4%, refusal to give up a seat on public transport by 7.9%, mockery and bullying by 6.1%, and dismissal or unemployment by 4.6% (Vidovićová and Gregorová, 2008). The pattern — attitudes and everyday incivility reported more often than employment outcomes — is the same pattern that the exploratory survey in Section 4 produced, and it is consistent with the international literature on the forms ageism takes (Van Den Heuvel, 2012; Rippon et al., 2013).

5.3 Social exclusion and access to care

Social exclusion is best understood as a relational process rather than a state: groups and individuals are denied a fair opportunity to participate in the material and non-material resources of the wider society, and the result is poverty combined with socio-cultural isolation (Chmelíková, 2019, p. 20). In Czechia the process operates through several channels at once — exit from employment, widowhood, the loss of a driving licence, the closure of local services, the migration of adult children — and its cumulative effect is a shrinking radius of activity.

The groups at risk are identifiable. They include older people living alone without close relatives able to assist them, those in remote areas without access to social services, and those at risk of poverty or of deteriorating relationships with family and acquaintances (Dořičáková, 2020). Family structure is the decisive variable in much of this literature, because the family is the primary source of independence and of protection against adverse outcomes; where it is absent or distant, the alternative is institutional provision, which is unevenly distributed.

Healthcare illustrates how interpersonal and structural exclusion combine. Older people report less favourable treatment in consultations, and the international literature documents exclusion from clinical trials and from allocation decisions on grounds that are

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difficult to justify clinically (Saif-Ur-Rahman et al., 2021; Godlovitch, 2003; Wareham, 2015). In Czechia, where coverage is universal, the exclusion is less often formal than practical: it takes the form of shorter consultations, of treatment decisions that discount quality of life in later years, and of services designed around the assumption that a younger relative will manage the digital and administrative interface.

5.4 Consumer fraud targeting isolated older people

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has documented a scheme in which salespeople call at the homes of older people offering a cheaper energy supplier, claim to negotiate on the resident's behalf, and obtain a signature on a contract containing a cancellation fee of at least CZK 5,000, shared between the assigned supplier and the salesperson (Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí ČR, 2021). The reported volume is small — seven cases involving older people in the year covered by the analysis — and that is part of the point: the practice is designed to be below the threshold at which enforcement becomes likely, and it exploits precisely the isolation and unfamiliarity with contractual language that Section 5.3 describes.

Fraud of this kind is a form of discrimination in the sense used in this article because it selects its victims by age-related vulnerability and because the vulnerability is socially produced. The response it has attracted — information campaigns, a voluntary code among suppliers, powers for the Czech Trade Inspection Authority — addresses the transaction rather than the conditions that make older people reachable. That is a structural problem, and it is not solved by legislation aimed at the individual contract.

5.5 Media stereotyping

The most frequently cited Czech example is the video ‘Přemluv bábu’ (‘Convince Your Granny’), released before the 2010 parliamentary elections and viewed 965,000 times on YouTube, and more on other platforms (Issová and Mádl, 2010). Its argument is addressed to younger viewers and treats older voters as a bloc to be persuaded out of their preferences; the title itself carries both a gendered and an age-based judgement. The video is a clear instance of the phenomenon it is cited for, and the analysis of why it is objectionable — that it denies older people political agency while claiming to protect their interests — does not depend on its audience figures.

A single video, however, cannot establish that media stereotyping is ‘one of the major challenges’ in Czechia, and the claim should be stated more narrowly. What can be said is that the case illustrates a wider pattern documented in the international literature, that Czech television and press coverage of older people has been criticised for framing them as a burden or as an electoral bloc, and that no systematic content analysis of Czech media representations of older people has been published, which is a gap this study identifies rather than fills. The survey result in Table 1 — 23% of respondents naming media stereotyping as their principal experience of discrimination — is consistent with the pattern, though it is self-report rather than a content measure.

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5.6 Technology and digital access

The technology domain is where the difference between capability and treatment is clearest. Official statistics show high and rising use: 88% of Czechs aged 16 and over used the internet in 2025, and older users have adopted smartphones, banking and online shopping in large numbers (Czech Statistical Office, 2025b). At the same time, only six in ten households of older people were connected in 2025, and the gap widens with age and with income. A significant share of older people also live with visual, auditory or motor impairments that make standard interfaces difficult to use.

The inference often drawn from the usage figures — that older Czechs are more capable than the stereotype allows, and that technology discrimination is therefore unfounded — does not follow. Usage measures capability under given conditions; discrimination consists in the conditions. When a public authority withdraws a counter service, when an appointment system exists only online, when a bank closes a branch in a small town, the effect is to require a capability that part of the older population does not have, and to convert a design choice into an individual failing. That is structural discrimination in the sense of Section 2.2, and it is invisible to a survey that asks respondents whether they have been treated badly.

Perceived discrimination in contact with public services and administrative offices is reported by 5.2% of the EU population aged 16 and over, and the share rises to 9.3% among people with activity limitations (Eurostat, 2025). Czechia does not publish a comparable age-disaggregated measure, which is one reason the survey reported here has value as an indication of the scale of the problem even where it cannot measure it.

6. Comparative analysis: Singapore and Japan

6.1 Case selection and analytical criteria

Singapore and Japan are the two cases most often invoked in Czech policy discussion of ageing, and they are useful precisely because they are different from each other. Singapore is a city-state with a centralised bureaucracy and a whole-of-government blueprint; Japan is a large federalised democracy whose ageing policy has evolved incrementally through employment law, long-term care insurance and municipal care coordination. Comparing them allows the analysis to separate what is specific to a small, rich, centrally coordinated state from what is a general feature of mature active-ageing policy. The comparison follows the five criteria set out in Section 3.3 and is summarised in Table 3.

6.2 Singapore: a coordinated national blueprint

Singapore's approach is organised around the Action Plan for Successful Ageing, launched in 2015 by the Ministerial Committee on Ageing with more than 70 initiatives in 12 areas and an initial allocation of S$3 billion (Ministry of Health, Singapore, 2015; Asian Development Bank, 2020), and refreshed in 2023 (Ministry of Health, Singapore, 2023). Its stated logic is to treat ageing as an opportunity rather than a cost, and its areas — health, social welfare, employment and infrastructure, supported by technology — are pursued as a single programme rather than as separate sectoral policies.

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On employment, the instruments are statutory as well as financial. The Retirement and Re-employment Act obliges employers to offer re-employment to eligible employees who reach the retirement age, up to the re-employment age of 67 (Ministry of Manpower, Singapore, 2024). On top of that obligation sit financial instruments: the Senior Employment Credit subsidises employers for retaining and hiring older workers; the Part-Time Re-Employment Grant supports employers who offer part-time re-employment to those approaching retirement; and job-redesign programmes fund the restructuring of roles so that physical demands fall without seniority or pay being lost. The effect has been to raise the employment rate of older residents well above the OECD average and to normalise part-time and phased retirement in a labour market that had previously treated them as exceptional (Ministry of Manpower, Singapore, 2024; Sun and Usui, 2022; OECD, 2025).

On lifelong learning, the Council for Third Age (C3A) coordinates provision rather than delivering it: courses are hosted in museums, libraries, community centres and online, and the Intergenerational Learning Programme pairs older learners with younger volunteers. The design principle is to use existing civic infrastructure instead of building a parallel system, which is the element most directly relevant to Czechia, where libraries and community centres are already widespread.

On care and social participation, district-level hubs coordinate day programmes, physical activity, social services and referral, so that an older resident has a single point of contact that adjusts as needs change (Ministry of Health, Singapore, 2023). The model assumes a dense, well-resourced municipal tier and a high degree of inter-agency data sharing, neither of which can be assumed in Czechia.

6.3 Japan: incrementalism, employment law and community care

Japan's population is the oldest in the world: 29.3% of residents were aged 65 or over in October 2024, some 36.2 million people (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2024). Policy has developed in three separate tracks rather than as a single blueprint.

The employment track has relied on legal obligation. Successive reforms of the Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons have extended the duty on employers to provide continued employment to older workers, first to 60 and then, in stages, to 65, with subsidies and job-redesign support attached to compliance. The approach differs from Singapore's in placing the obligation on the employer and using subsidy as an accompaniment rather than as the primary instrument; its weakness is that continued employment at reduced pay and status can become a form of disguised retirement.

The care track is the more distinctive. Japan introduced universal long-term care insurance in 2000 and has since built a system of community-based integrated care (chiiki hōkatsu kea) in which municipalities coordinate medical, nursing, preventive and living support around a defined catchment (Tsutsui, 2014; Nakayama and Hou, 2023). The system is fiscally strained and uneven in quality between municipalities (Tsutsui, 2014), but it has enabled a much larger share of older people to remain at home than would otherwise have been possible, and it has created a municipal planning capacity that Czechia does not possess.

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The dementia track is the New Orange Plan of 2015, which promotes dementia-friendly communities, early diagnosis and intergenerational exchange (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2015). It is the element most often cited in Czech discussion, and it is the least transferable in isolation: a dementia strategy without a care-coordination structure beneath it produces awareness without services.

6.4 What is transferable, and under what conditions

Table 3 sets out the comparison on the five criteria. Three conclusions follow from it.

Table 3. Comparative analysis of Singaporean, Japanese and Czech approaches to ageing, by analytical criterion

Criterion	Singapore	Japan	Implication for Czechia
Policy objective	'Successful ageing' as a whole-of-nation goal: work, health, social support and lifelong learning pursued as one programme	Ageing policy separated into employment, care and dementia tracks, each with its own legal basis	Czechia has objectives but no single framework; the 2021 national ageing strategy exists, delivery is sectoral
Main instruments	Action Plan for Successful Ageing (2015, S$3bn, 70+ initiatives in 12 areas, refreshed 2023); Senior Employment Credit; Part-Time Re-Employment Grant; job-redesign funding; C3A learning programmes	Continued-employment obligation extended by stages to 65; subsidies for job redesign; universal long-term care insurance (2000); community-based integrated care; New Orange Plan (2015) for dementia	Antidiscrimination Act; Labour Code § 52(c); 2024 pension reform raising retirement age by one month a year towards 67; municipal social services; no long-term care insurance
Responsible institutions	Ministerial Committee on Ageing; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Manpower; Council for Third Age; district hubs	Cabinet Office (dementia); Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (insurance, employment); municipalities (care coordination)	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; Czech Social Security Administration; 205 districts with extended competence among more than 6,000 municipalities; Public Defender of Rights
Evidence of implementation	Older-worker employment well above the OECD average; part-time and	Long-term care insurance universal since 2000; municipal variation in care quality	Low litigation (90 anti-discrimination lawsuits 2015–2019); 589 complaints to the

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Criterion	Singapore	Japan	Implication for Czechia
	phased retirement normalised; programme monitoring published	documented; continued employment often at reduced pay and status	equality body in 2024; no representative age-disaggregated prevalence data
Fiscal and institutional preconditions	Central fiscal capacity; single-tier state; strong tripartite institutions; compact employer base	Dedicated social insurance fund; 25 years of municipal capacity-building; cultural preference for ageing in place	Tight budget; fragmented municipal structure; low collective-bargaining coverage; deinstitutionalisation under way but uneven
Assessment of transferability	Low at the level of the blueprint; high for three design features (job-redesign grants, part-time re-employment incentive, C3A-style learning through existing institutions)	Low for long-term care insurance; partial for community coordination, which can be organised at district level; high for intergenerational programmes	Transferable at low cost: district coordination hubs, learning through libraries and community centres, state-administered employment grants. Not transferable in the short run: blueprint-scale fiscal commitment, social insurance for care

Sources: Ministry of Health, Singapore (2015; 2023); Ministry of Manpower, Singapore (2024); Asian Development Bank (2020); Statistics Bureau of Japan (2024); Cabinet Office, Government of Japan (2015); Tsutsui (2014); Nakayama and Hou (2023); OECD (2025); Tomšej (2025); author's compilation.

First, the instruments that matter most are cheap and organisational. Municipal coordination hubs, lifelong learning delivered through libraries and community centres, and grant-based incentives for job redesign and part-time re-employment can all be implemented within existing Czech budgets. What they require is not money but a decision to coordinate: a designated municipal officer, a shared client record, and a funding formula that rewards cooperation between social services, health providers and employers.

Second, the instruments that make the largest difference are the ones Czechia cannot adopt quickly. Singapore's blueprint rests on a fiscal commitment of the order of S$3 billion and on a single-tier state with a unified civil service; Japan's care system rests on a dedicated social insurance fund and twenty-five years of municipal capacity-building. Czechia has neither a long-term care insurance scheme nor a municipal tier of the necessary size: with more than 6,000 municipalities, most of them small, the unit of

coordination does not exist at the level at which Japanese or Singaporean hubs operate. The realistic Czech equivalent is the administrative district with extended competence (obec s rozšířenou působností), of which there are 205, and the transferable element is the hub function rather than the institution.

Third, the framing is a precondition, not a decoration. Both comparator countries present ageing as a resource to be mobilised, and that framing is carried into budget decisions, employer incentives and public communication. In Czechia, ageing policy is still largely discussed as a cost, and the labour-market instruments that would operationalise a different framing — part-time work, job redesign, phased retirement — are under-supplied. The recommendation that follows is therefore not that Czechia should adopt a Singaporean plan, but that it should adopt the three specific instruments whose preconditions it already meets, and treat the two whose preconditions it does not meet as long-term institutional projects rather than as next year's policy.

Two further observations follow from the comparison and qualify it. Singapore's model depends on a compact between the state and a relatively compliant employer base, in a labour market where tripartite institutions are strong; Czechia's collective bargaining coverage is low, so an employer subsidy would have to be administered through the state rather than negotiated. Japan's model depends on a cultural preference for ageing in place that has no direct Czech equivalent, although Czech policy has moved in the same direction through the deinstitutionalisation of social services. Neither dependence invalidates the transfer; both specify what would have to change for it to work.

7. Discussion

RQ1 asked how older adults in Czechia describe their experience of age discrimination and in which domains it is most acute. The evidence assembled here answers the question in three parts. The dominant forms reported are exclusion and climate rather than hostile encounter: social marginalisation and neglect is the most frequently reported principal form (30%), followed by media stereotyping and negative public opinion (23%), with employment pressure third (19%). The experience is recurrent: 71% of those reporting discrimination place themselves in the upper half of the frequency scale. And the domains in which it is most acute — social participation, public representation and employment — correspond to the domains in which the conceptual framework predicts structural discrimination to be concentrated, because they are the domains in which institutional defaults rather than individual intentions determine outcomes.

That answer is consistent with, but not proof of, the framework's central proposition. The survey could produce it even if Czech age discrimination were purely interpersonal, because self-report captures perception rather than mechanism. What strengthens the interpretation is the convergence of three independent sources: the survey's ranking, the case material's mechanisms, and the enforcement record's demonstration that legal remedies are rarely used. Taken together they describe a system in which discrimination is produced and reproduced by arrangements that no one is obliged to defend, and in which the law provides a remedy that few can reach.

RQ2 asked which elements of the Singaporean and Japanese approaches are adaptable to Czechia, and under what conditions. The answer is graded rather than affirmative. Three

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elements are transferable at low cost and should be adopted: municipal coordination hubs organised at the level of the 205 districts with extended competence; lifelong learning delivered through existing libraries and community centres, with older people as teachers as well as learners; and grant-based incentives for job redesign and part-time re-employment, modelled on the Singaporean instruments but administered through the state. Two are not transferable in the short run: a fiscal commitment of Singaporean scale, and a Japanese-style long-term care insurance. The condition that governs all five is coordination capacity, which is the variable Czechia can change at low cost and has not changed.

The comparison also revises the article's initial framing. The Czech literature tends to present Singapore and Japan as models to be emulated, and the implicit theory of transfer is that a good instrument works wherever it is installed. The analysis here suggests the opposite: instruments travel only as far as their institutional preconditions, and the analytically useful question is not which country has the best policy but which conditions Czechia would have to create for a given policy to work. That question has a practical corollary. Of the five elements examined, the three that are cheap are also the three whose absence is most often explained by a lack of coordination rather than a lack of money, which suggests that the binding constraint is administrative rather than fiscal.

Three implications follow for policy. First, enforcement should be treated as part of the policy instrument rather than as its remedy: extending the reach of the equality body, permitting representative actions, and applying the shifted burden of proof uniformly would change the probability of challenge, which is the variable on which employers' behaviour depends. Second, data collection should be institutionalised: the absence of a representative, age-disaggregated measure of discrimination is why a pilot survey of 211 respondents is being asked to carry an argument it cannot bear. Third, the framing of ageing policy should be aligned with its instruments; a strategy that describes older people as a resource while under-supplying part-time work and job redesign sends contradictory signals, and employers respond to the instruments rather than to the strategy.

8. Conclusion

This article set out to examine age discrimination in Czechia and to assess what Czech policy can learn from Singapore and Japan. It finds a problem with several faces: exclusion from social participation, a media climate that treats older people as a bloc, employment practices that use lawful redundancy to achieve age-based ends, consumer fraud that selects isolated households, and a digital transition that converts design choices into individual failings.

The legal framework is not the binding constraint. Czechia has a constitutional guarantee, a statute that transposes the EU directives, and a labour code that prohibits age discrimination in employment. What it lacks is enforcement capacity: few complaints, fewer lawsuits, weak and unpredictable remedies, and no representative action. The result is a system in which the law is formally available and practically unused, which is the condition under which structural discrimination persists without anyone having to defend it.

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The comparative analysis yields a differentiated answer to the second question. Three Singaporean and Japanese elements are transferable at low cost — coordination hubs at district level, lifelong learning through existing civic institutions, and grant-based incentives for phased and flexible employment. Two are not: the fiscal scale of Singapore's blueprint and Japan's long-term care insurance. The condition common to all five is administrative coordination, which is the cheapest thing to change and the one Czechia has been slowest to change.

Three lines of research would strengthen these conclusions. A representative, quota-sampled survey with a multiple-response instrument and a specified reference period would establish prevalence and breadth, which this study cannot. A systematic content analysis of Czech media representations of older people would test the claim that Section 5.5 can only illustrate. And an evaluation of a Czech pilot coordination hub — even a small one, in two or three districts — would test the transferability claim at the level at which it would actually be implemented.

9. Limitations

The limitations of this study are substantial and should be weighed in proportion to its claims. The survey rests on a self-selected sample of 211 respondents recruited through organisations serving older people. It is not representative of Czech older adults, no sampling error can be computed for it, and the direction of selection bias is unknown; its results are indicative of the experience of the respondents and are presented as such. The instrument was short, the discrimination item was single-response and self-defined, the frequency scale was neither exhaustive nor fully monotonic, and the questionnaire did not specify a reference period or a setting. These are the properties of an exploratory instrument, and a replication should correct them.

The case material is illustrative rather than systematic. A single judgment, a single ministry analysis, a single video and a set of official statistics show that mechanisms exist and how they operate; they do not establish frequency, and they were not selected by a sampling rule. The comparative analysis is desk-based and institutional: it does not estimate the cost of any instrument, does not model its fiscal effect in Czechia, and does not evaluate outcomes against a counterfactual. Its conclusions about transferability are judgements about preconditions, not predictions of effect.

The study is also limited by what it does not examine. It does not analyse Czech case law on age discrimination directly, relying instead on the published country report and the equality body's case-law study. It does not examine the position of older women as a distinct group, although the intersection of age and gender is material to employment and to poverty in later life. And it does not examine the situation of Roma older people, whose experience of discrimination is compounded by ethnicity and who are largely absent from the Czech literature on ageing. Each of these is a gap that further work should address.

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Appendix: Survey instrument

The instrument below reproduces the questionnaire as it was administered, with the wording translated from the Czech original. Items 4 and 5 are the two items on which Tables 1 and 2 are based.

1. Eligibility. Are you aged 65 or over and currently living in the Czech Republic? (If no, the questionnaire ends.)
2. Age band. 65–69 / 70–74 / 75–79 / 80–84 / 85+.
3. Household situation. Living alone / living with a spouse or partner / living with family / other.
4. Exposure and form. “Have you experienced discrimination because of your age?” (Yes / No). If yes: “Which of the following best describes the form it took?” — social marginalisation and neglect; media stereotyping and negative public opinion; employer-related (stress, forced retirement); vulgarity, aggression or lack of courtesy; consumer (energy-seller) fraud. Single response.
5. Frequency. “How often have you experienced this?” — twice a week; weekly; every other month; at least once a month. Single response.
6. Open item. “Is there anything else about your experience of age discrimination that you would like to add?” (free text).

Design notes for a replication: use a multiple-response item for the form of discrimination (asking about each form separately), specify a reference period (for example, the past twelve months), specify the setting (employment, healthcare, public services, public space, family), replace the frequency scale with an exhaustive and monotonic one (daily, several times a week, weekly, monthly, several times a year, less often, never), and record the mode and language of administration.

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