# Public engagement activity: What is ageing?

## Aim
To introduce the concept of healthy ageing and start conversations about ageing research.

## Materials
Set of cards (printed from the below) and space at a table. You could also print out our infographics or bring along an object related to your research.

## Instructions
1. Before starting, write some statements related to your own research on the blank cards.
2. Use the information in the facilitator notes to familiarise yourself with any subject areas outside of your expertise.
3. Give participants a few statement cards and ask them to read through the cards and if there is any vocabulary they are not familiar with. Place the 'Agree', 'Disagree' and 'Not sure' cards across the table.
4. Ask participants to sort the various statement cards onto a scale of ‘agree’ to ‘disagree’.
5. Try not to lead participants’ answers, stress that the activity is not about ‘right’ answers. Be aware of your audience and their individual experiences and perspectives e.g. based on their age, cultural background etc.

(continued overleaf)
Once they have finished placing the cards, invite participants to share more conversationally their general opinions and ideas about ageing.

Discuss their responses, challenging misconceptions and opening conversation about:

- The future of ageing and healthy ageing research
- Challenging any ageing myths
- What is inevitable in relation to ageing and what is more likely a product of lifestyle factors
- Discuss what we can consider a ‘natural’ part of the ageing process, perhaps drawing on examples of things that were considered normal in the past but are no longer considered inevitable
- Discuss behaviours and environmental factors that are known to increase or decrease chances of ‘healthy ageing’, whilst stressing that these are not guarantees but statistical probabilities
Scale cards

Agree

Not sure

Disagree
People worldwide are living longer than in the past, but their healthy years are more or less the same. Most people in the world can expect to live into their 60s and beyond. By 2030, 1 in 6 people in the world will be aged 60 years or over.

Depression and loneliness are common in older adults. Older people cannot learn new things. Cognitive decline is a normal part of ageing.
Ageing is the result of molecular and cellular damage over time.

Ageing results in a gradual decrease in physical and mental capacity and a growing risk of disease.

Risk of disease is directly correlated with age.

As people age, they need less sleep.

Mild forgetfulness is a normal sign of ageing.

Older adults should avoid exercise so they don’t get injured.
An inevitable part of getting older is bad health.

It is not possible to have a good level of fitness past 60 years old.

It’s better to die quickly.

Inactivity speeds up the ageing process.

If you did not exercise regularly before you reached 60 there is no point in starting.

A healthy diet can help prevent age-related diseases.
A healthy diet increases your chances of ‘healthy ageing’.

A healthy lifestyle (diet & exercise) can help maintain good brain function.

Ageing can be prevented.

Your genes determine your health.

Your lifestyle (e.g. diet, sleep & exercise) play a bigger role in your overall health and longevity than your genes.

Taking vitamins helps you age more healthily.
In the future, people will live even longer.

In the future, people will have a longer ‘healthspan’ (years in good health).

Older people have a weaker immune system.

Even though people with two or more illnesses urgently need new treatments, they aren't usually included in clinical trials.

Some ageing drug treatments in development aim to reactivate biological processes that have stopped working properly in older age.

How well you are ageing is poorly measured by age alone.
In the UK, men spend on average over 16 years in poor health. For women, this rises to 19 years.

There is nothing you can do to influence whether you will get Alzheimer's disease.

Lifespan and healthspan (years in good health) vary from place to place and between men and women.