Test Yourself

TILDA IS THE IRISH LONGITUDINAL STUDY ON AGEING. 'Longitudinal' indicates that a study involves repeatedly observing and recording the same things over a period of time to identify trends and fluctuations. TILDA has been studying the same 9,000 participants for 12 years, testing them in great detail every two years. The sample was randomly selected in a particular way at the start of the project to make it a 'representative' sample of people aged 50 years and older in Ireland. Therefore, we can generalise the findings to the entire population and consequently have generated 'normative' graphs from the data.

You now have an opportunity to try some of the tests used in TILDA to evaluate ageing and apply your test results to the population graphs to assess how you perform in comparison with those of a similar age. Although the graphs apply to people 50 and older, younger readers can also do the tests and their scores should be close to the long dashed line. In the case of happiness, you can see how they compare with older persons. If you are below

average on any of the quality of life domains – that is, close to the short dashed line – then you should consider the elements we discussed in the chapters on friendship, laughter, downtime, diet, sexuality and cold water to improve your ratings. The tests that I have selected assess quality of life, perceptions of ageing, levels of worry, depression, anxiety, loneliness, purpose and how long you can stand on one leg! All of which are strong indicators of biological ageing.

QUALITY OF LIFE – CASP-12

How would you rate your quality of life? This assessment picks up on the important features that drive how much we feel we are getting out of our lives – control, autonomy, pleasure/happiness and fulfilment of potential. Higher scores on each dimension represent higher quality of life. Test each separate component and then add up the individual scores to get the total score. Compare the score for each of the components with the general population – you should be near to the long dashed line for a really good result.

This test measures the different aspects of life quality.

Put a circle around your response to each item then add the numbers together to yield your overall score for each section. Please do not leave any items blank.

Control – the ability to actively participate in one's environment

	Often	Sometimes	Not Often	Never
My age prevents me from doing the things I would like to.	0	1	2	3

I feel that what happens to me is out of my control.	0	1	2	3
I feel free to plan for the future.	3	2	1	0
I feel left out of things.	0	1	2	3

Total: _____

Autonomy – the right of the individual to be free from unwanted interference

	Often	Sometimes	Not Often	Never
I feel that I can please myself in what I can do.	3	2	1	0
My health stops me from doing the things I want to do.	0	1	2	3
Shortage of money stops me from doing the things that I want to do.	0	1	2	3

Total: _____

Pleasure – the sense of happiness or enjoyment derived from engaging with life

	Often	Sometimes	Not Often	Never
I look forward to each day.	3	2	1	0
I feel that my life has meaning.	3	2	1	0
I enjoy being in the company of others.	3	2	1	0

Total: _____

Self-realisation – the fulfilment of one's potential

	Often	Sometimes	Not Often	Never
I feel satisfied with the way my life has turned out.	3	2	1	0
I feel that life is full of opportunities.	3	2	1	0

Total: _____

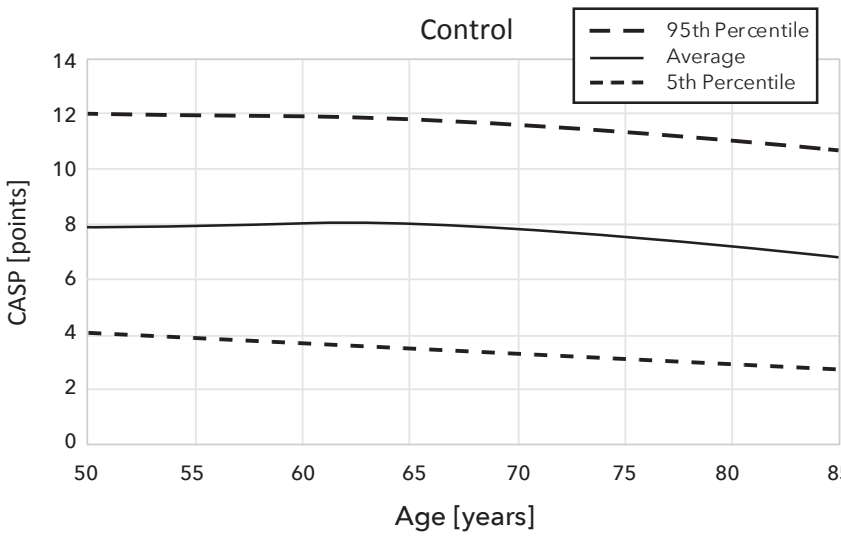
Overall Total Score

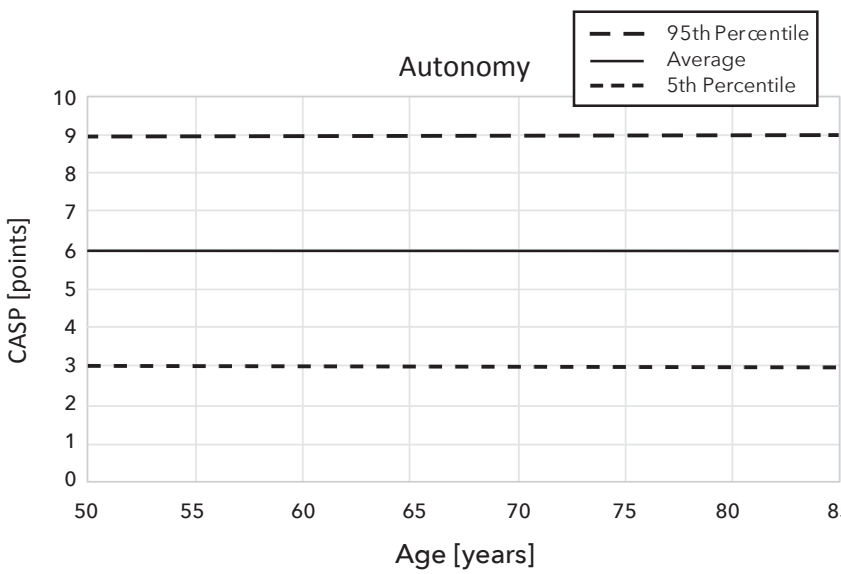
Add up the four totals above for your overall total score, generated by summing scores for control, autonomy, self-realisation and pleasure.

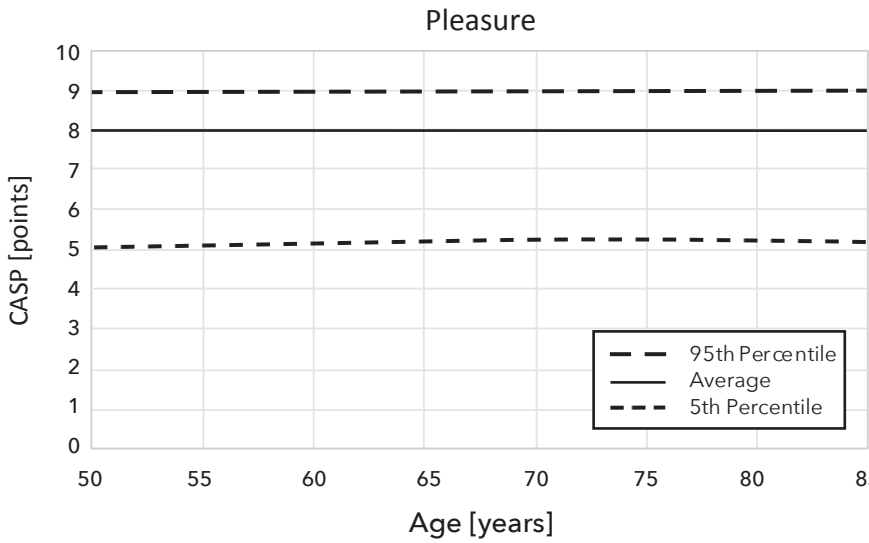
Overall total score: _____

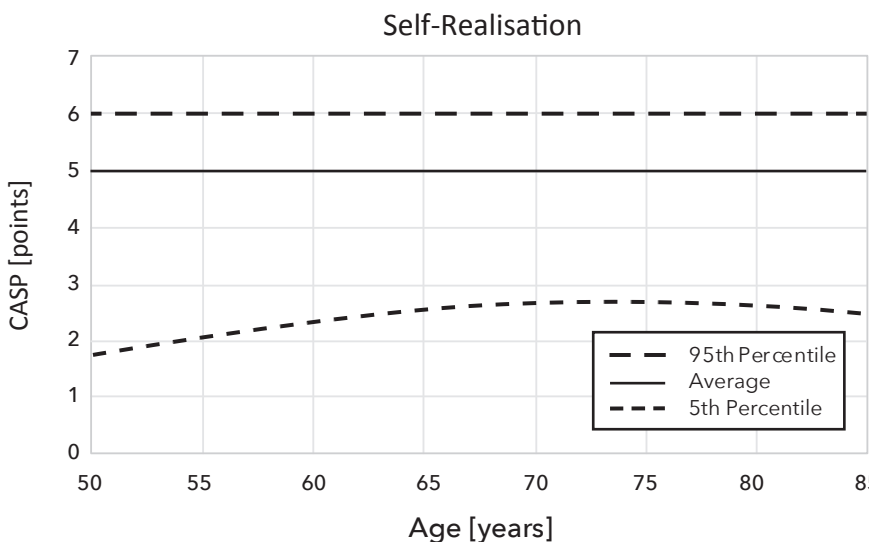
How do you compare?

Find your age along the horizontal axis and total score for each category along the vertical axis to see where you are on the scale. Nearest to the solid line is average; towards the long dashed line (95th percentile) is above and towards the short dashed line (5th percentile) below. Ninety per cent of people are between the limits indicated by the long and short dashed lines.






Pleasure
CASP [points]
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
Age [years]
95th Percentile
Average
5th Percentile


Self-Realisation
CASP [points]
7
6
5
4
3
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1
0
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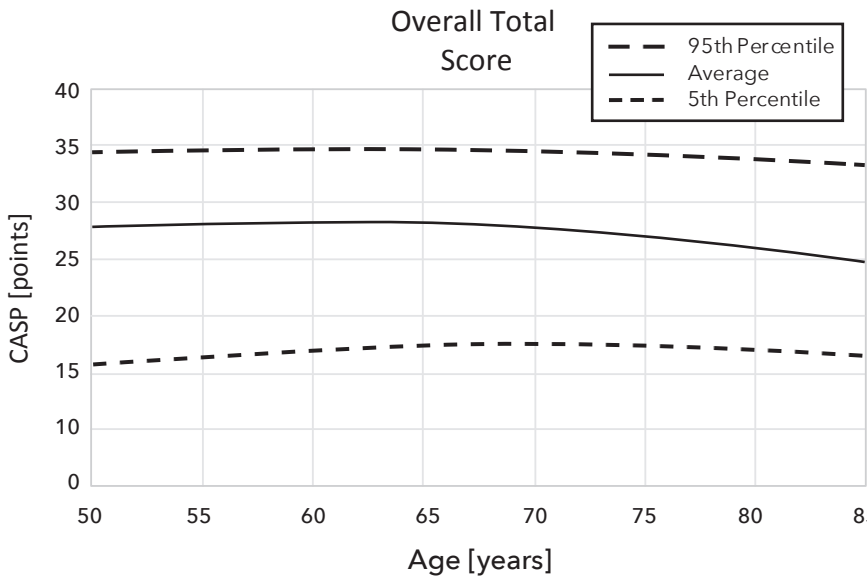
75
80
85
Age [years]
95th Percentile
Average
5th Percentile



THE PENN STATE WORRY QUESTIONNAIRE (PSWQ-A)

Are you a worrier? This test measures the different dimensions of worry and anxiety. A higher score indicates greater fears or worries. If you are above the average – i.e., close to the short dashed line – then you should consider the mechanisms we discussed in Chapter 6 to reduce stress. For the purposes of this test, a lower score means that you have less fear and worry and are closer to the long dashed line.

How to score: Put a circle around your response to each item then add the numbers together to yield your overall score. Please do not leave any items blank.

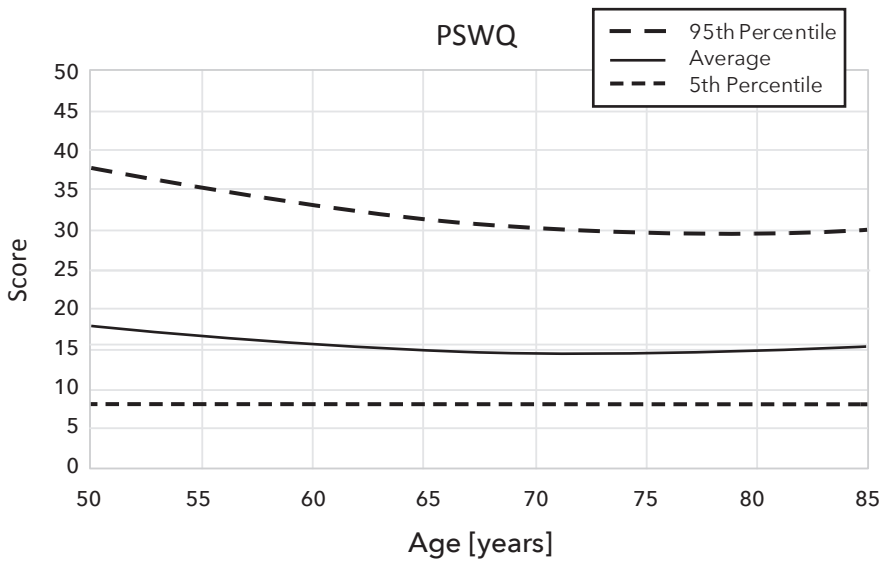
	Not at all Typical		Somewhat Typical		Very Typical
My worries overwhelm me.	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all Typical		Somewhat Typical		Very Typical
Many situations make me worry.	1	2	3	4	5
I know I should not worry about things, but I just cannot help it.	1	2	3	4	5
When I am under pressure, I worry a lot.	1	2	3	4	5
I am always worrying about something.	1	2	3	4	5
As soon as I finish one task, I start to worry about everything else I must do.	1	2	3	4	5
I have been a worrier all my life.	1	2	3	4	5
I have been worrying about things.	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

How do you compare?

Choose your age and total score and see where you are on the scale. Nearest to the black line is average; towards the long dashed line (95th percentile) is above and towards the short dashed line (5th percentile) below average. Ninety per cent of people are between the limits indicated by the long and short dashed lines.



PERCEPTIONS OF AGEING

In Chapter 1 we discussed how one's perceptions of how one aged actually influenced future pace of ageing. The younger you believe yourself to be, the slower your pace of ageing. Below are a number of tests of your perception of ageing. The closer you are to the short dashed line, the better your perception of ageing. The tests measure the changes in perception (timeline) of the benefits of ageing, your control over ageing benefits, what you perceive to be the downside of ageing, and whether you consider that you have control over these 'downsides' and whether any of your negative perceptions vary through time.

How do you view ageing? This test measures the different aspects of ageing perceptions. Higher scores indicate greater agreement with the specific perception of ageing.

Put a circle around your response to each item then add the numbers together to yield your overall score for each section. Please do not leave any items blank.

Timeline Acute/Chronic – the extent to which awareness of one's ageing is constant

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am conscious of getting older all of the time.	1	2	3	4	5
I am always aware of my age.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
I always classify myself as old.	1	2	3	4	5
I am always aware of the fact that I am getting older.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel my age in everything that I do.	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

Consequences positive – awareness of the benefits of ageing

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
As I get older I get wiser.	1	2	3	4	5
As I get older I continue to grow as a person.	1	2	3	4	5
As I get older I appreciate things more.	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

Emotional representations – one's emotional responses to ageing

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
I get depressed when I think about how ageing might affect the things that I can do.	1	2	3	4	5
I get depressed when I think about the effect that getting older might have on my social life.	1	2	3	4	5
I get depressed when I think about getting older.	1	2	3	4	5
I worry about the effects that getting older may have on my relationships with others.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel angry when I think about getting older.	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

Control positive – perceived control over the benefits of ageing

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
The quality of my social life in later years depends on me.	1	2	3	4	5
The quality of my relationships with others in later life depends on me.	1	2	3	4	5
Whether I continue living life to the full depends on me.	1	2	3	4	5
As I get older there is much I can do to maintain my independence.	1	2	3	4	5
Whether getting older has positive sides to it depends on me.	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

Consequences negative – awareness of the downsides of ageing

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
Getting older restricts the things that I can do.	1	2	3	4	5
Getting older makes me less independent.	1	2	3	4	5
Getting older makes everything a lot harder for me.	1	2	3	4	5
As I get older I can take part in fewer activities.	1	2	3	4	5
As I get older I do not cope as well with problems that arise.	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

Control negative – perceived control over negative experiences of ageing

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
Slowing down with age is not something I can control.	1	2	3	4	5
How mobile I am in later life is not up to me.	1	2	3	4	5
I have no control over whether I lose vitality or zest for life as I age.	1	2	3	4	5
I have no control over the effects of getting older on my social life.	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

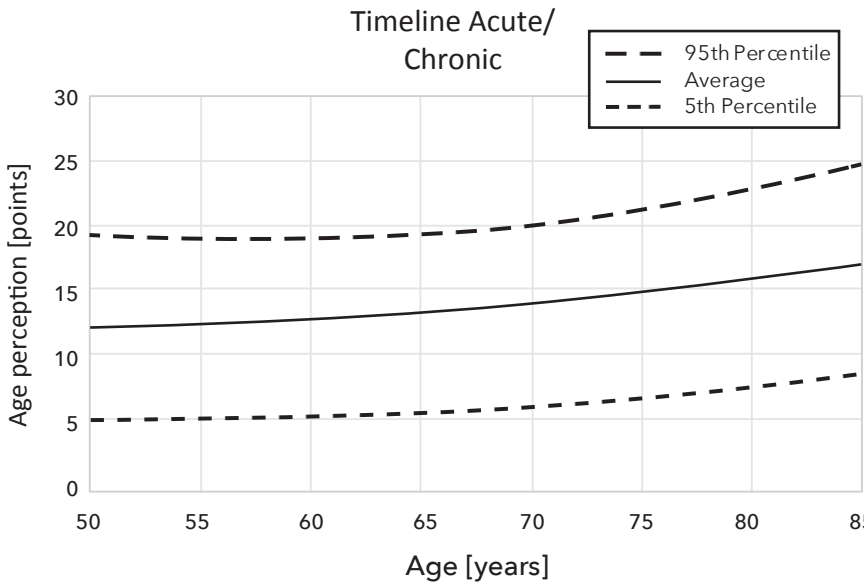
Timeline cyclical – the extent to which one experiences variation in their awareness of ageing

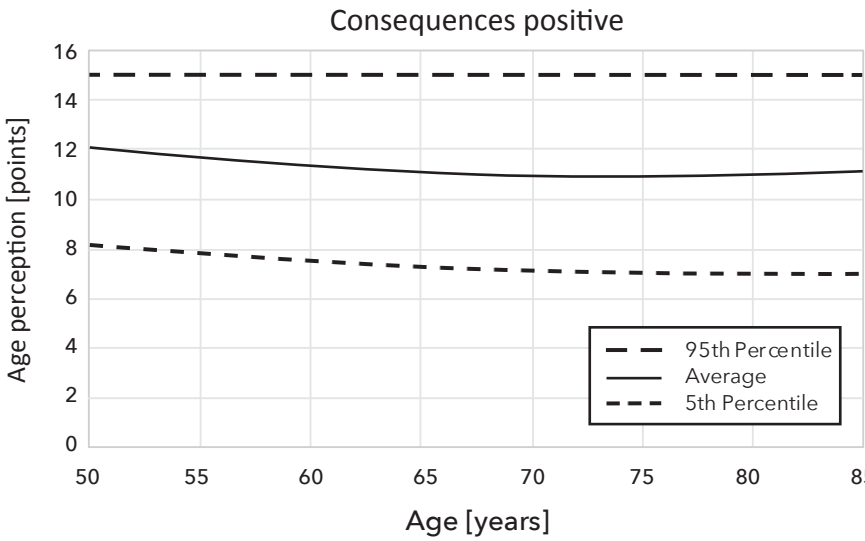
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
I go through cycles in which my experience of ageing gets better and worse.	1	2	3	4	5
My awareness of getting older comes and goes in cycles.	1	2	3	4	5
I go through phases of feeling old.	1	2	3	4	5
My awareness of getting older changes a great deal from day to day.	1	2	3	4	5
I go through phases of viewing myself as being old.	1	2	3	4	5

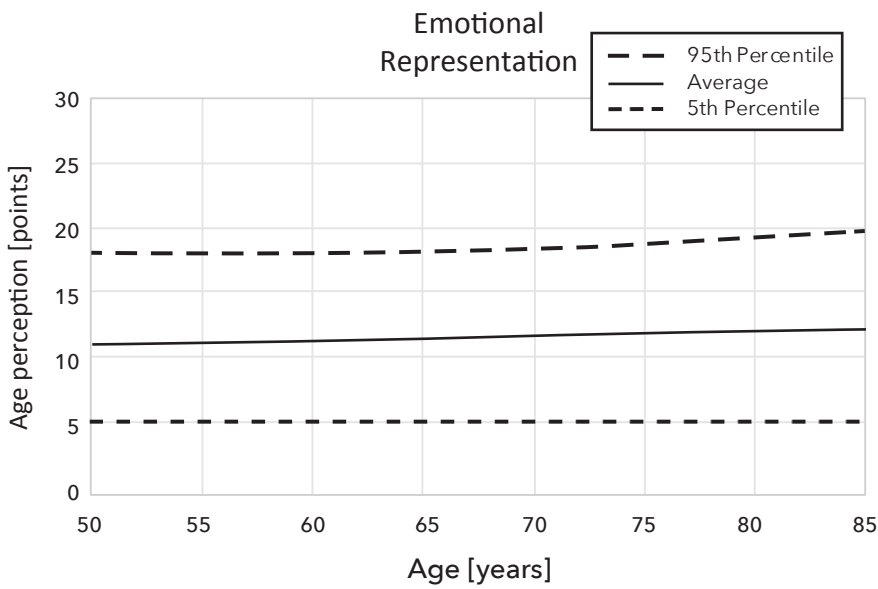
Total: _____

How do you compare?

Find your age along the horizontal axis and score for each category along the vertical axis to see where you are on the scale. Nearest to the solid black line is average; towards the long dashed line (95th percentile) is above and towards the short dashed line (5th percentile) below average. Ninety per cent of people are between the limits indicated by the long and short dashed lines.




Consequences positive
Age perception [points]
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
Age [years]
95th Percentile
Average
5th Percentile


Emotional Representation
95th Percentile
Average
5th Percentile
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20
15
10
5
0
50
55
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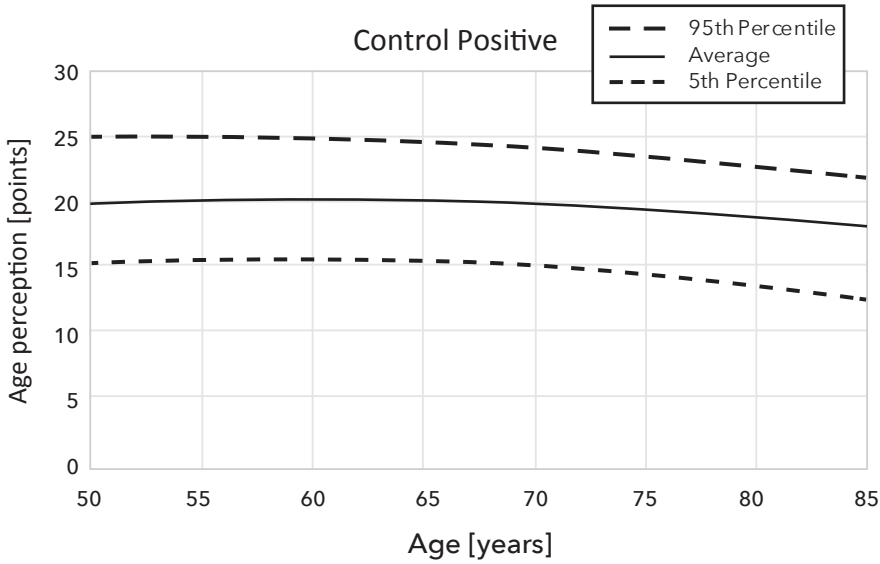
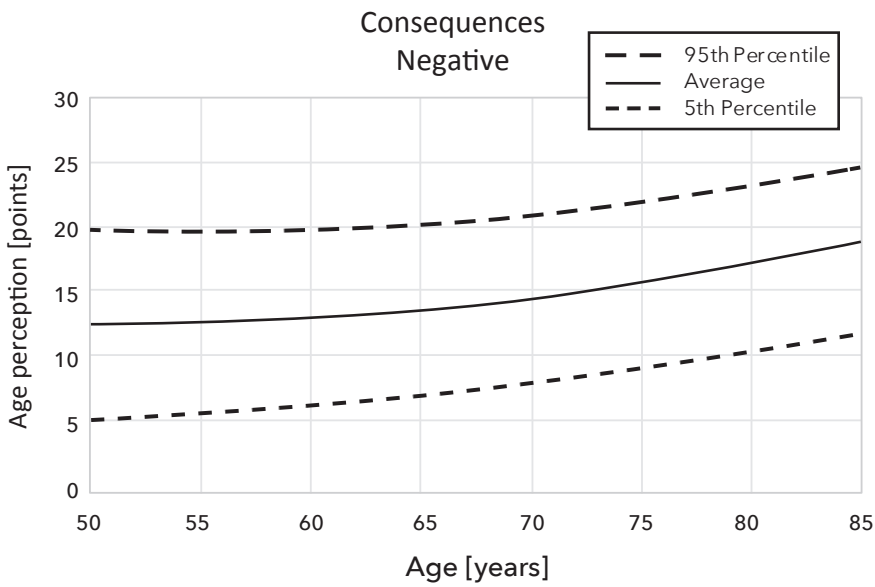
80
85
Age [years]


Control Positive
95th Percentile
Average
5th Percentile
Age perception [points]
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
Age [years]


Consequences
Negative
95th Percentile
Average
5th Percentile
Age perception [points]
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25
20
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10
5
0
50
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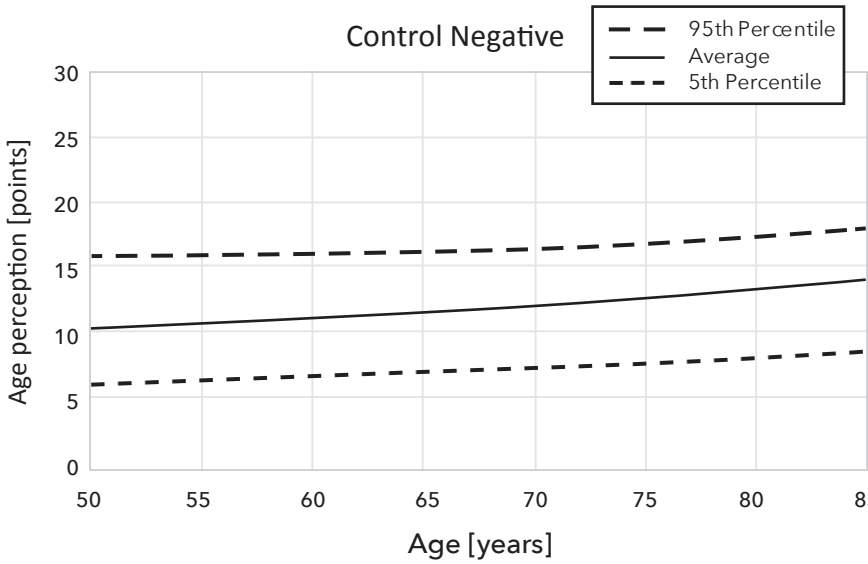
65
70
75
80
85
Age [years]


Control Negative
95th Percentile
Average
5th Percentile
Age perception [points]
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25
20
15
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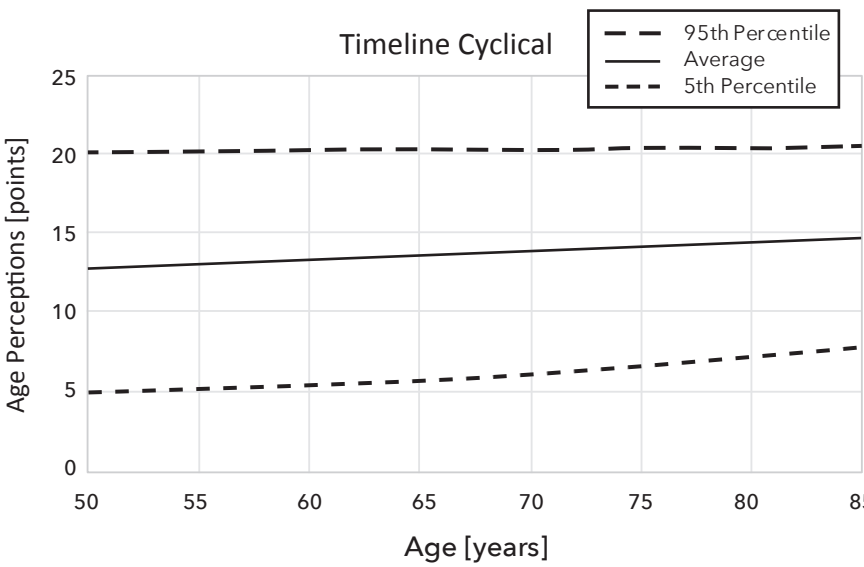
5
0
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
Age [years]


Timeline Cyclical
95th Percentile
Average
5th Percentile
Age Perceptions [points]
25
20
15
10
5
0
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
Age [years]

PURPOSE IN LIFE SUBSCALE OF THE RYFF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING SCALE

Having a purpose in life is important for successful ageing. Most successful super-agers have purpose. Scientists agree that we can create purpose for each day. This can be a big task – such as employment – or small meaningful task – like household chores, assisting neighbours and friends, volunteering, gardening and other hobbies, including creativity. Grandparenting gives great reward and purpose to many. Your score should be close to the long dashed line. Once you have summed your total score, plot it against your age on the graph.

This test gives a measure of purpose in life, one of several measures of psychological well-being.

Put a circle around your response to each item then add the numbers together to yield your overall score. Please do not leave any items blank.

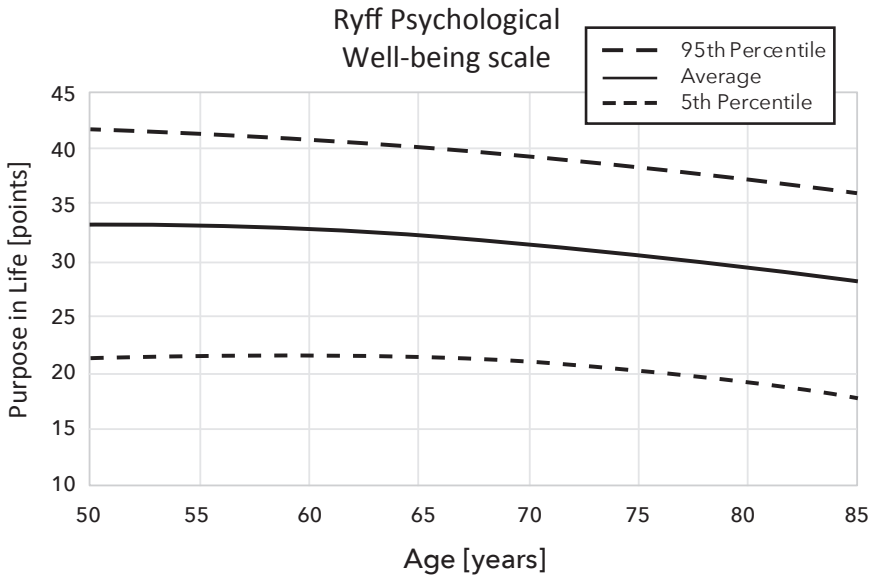
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Slightly	Agree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality.	1	2	3	4	5	6
My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me.	6	5	4	3	1	0

I am an active person in carrying out the plans I set for myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life.	6	5	4	3	2	1
I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.	6	5	4	3	1	1
I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future.	6	5	4	3	1	1
I have a sense of direction and purpose in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Total: _____

How do you compare?

Find your age along the horizontal axis and your total score for the questions above along the vertical axis to see where you are on the scale. Nearest to the solid black line is average; towards the long dashed line (95th percentile) is above and towards the short dashed line (5th percentile) below average. Ninety per cent of people are between the limits indicated by the short and long dashed lines.



UCLA LONELINESS SCALE

This test is a measure of loneliness. Higher scores represent greater feelings of loneliness.

The questions are about how you feel about different aspects of your life. For each one, please say how often you feel that way.

Put a circle around your response to each item then add the numbers together to yield your overall score for each section. Please do not leave any items blank.

	Often	Some of the time	Hardly ever or never
How often do you feel you lack companionship?	2	1	0
How often do you feel left out?	2	1	0

How often do you feel isolated from others? 2 1 0

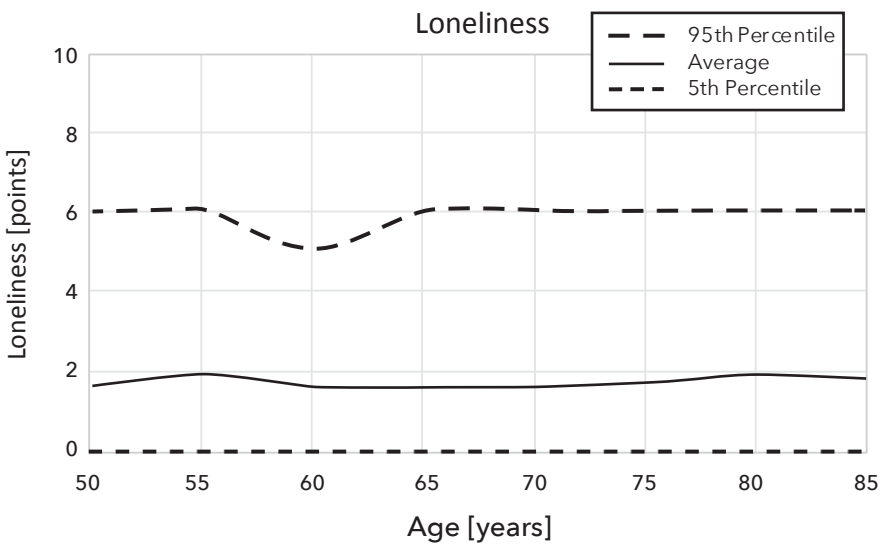
How often do you feel in tune with the people around you? 0 1 2

How often do you feel lonely? 2 1 0

Total: _____

How do you compare?

Find your age along the horizontal axis and total score along the vertical axis to see where you are on the scale. Nearest to the solid black line is average; towards the long dashed line (95th percentile) is above and towards the short dashed line (5th percentile) below average. Ninety percent of people are between the limits indicated by the long and short dashed lines.



CENTER FOR EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDIES DEPRESSION SHORT FORM SCALE

This test gives a measure of depressive symptoms. Higher scores represent higher feelings of depression.

Put a circle around your response to each item then add the numbers together to yield your overall score for each section. Please do not leave any items blank.

	Rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day)	Some or a little of the time (1–2 days)	Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3–4 days)	All of the time (5–7 days)
I felt depressed.	0	1	2	3
I felt everything I did was an effort.	0	1	2	3
My sleep was restless.	0	1	2	3
I was happy.	3	2	1	0
I felt lonely.	0	1	2	3

I enjoyed life. 3 2 1 0

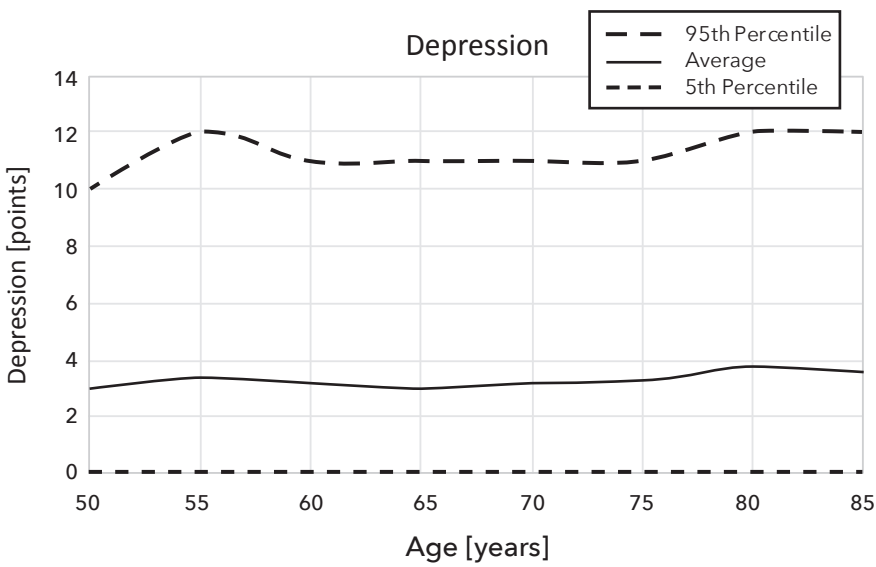
I felt sad. 0 1 2 3

I could not 'get going'. 0 1 2 3

Total: _____

How do you compare?

Find your age along the horizontal axis and total score along the vertical axis to see where you are on the scale. Nearest to the solid black line is average; towards the long dashed line (95th percentile) is above and towards the short dashed line (5th percentile) below average. Ninety per cent of people are between the limits indicated by the short and long dashed lines.



ONE LEG STAND

This test gives a measure of balance. Longer times represent better balance indicative of younger biological age. Ensure you perform this test on a stable surface.

One leg stand with eyes open

Stand on one leg and raise the other leg off the ground a few inches. Stand for as long as you can for up to 30 seconds. Your arms are free to move but make sure you do not hook the leg around your other leg, or rest it on it. You can choose either leg for this test.

One leg stand with eyes closed

Only perform this part of the test if you can complete the one leg stand with eyes open for five seconds or longer.

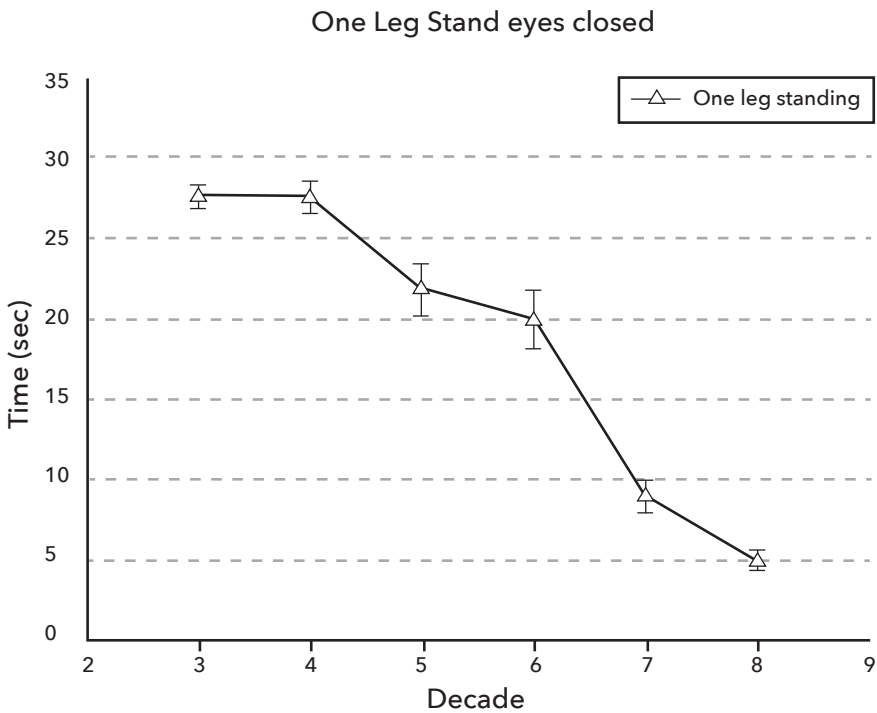
Close your eyes, lean your weight onto one leg and raise the other leg off the ground a few inches for as long as you can for up to 30 seconds. Your arms are free to move but make sure you do not hook the leg around your other leg, or rest it on it. You can choose either leg for this test and you do not have to use the same leg you used in the eyes open part of the test.

Record your time in seconds from the one leg stand with eyes closed.

Time (seconds): _____

How do you compare?

Find your age along the horizontal axis and total score in seconds along the vertical axis. The black line is the average.



Data from Luc Vereeck, Floris Wuyts, Steven Truijen and Paul Van de Heyning (2008) Clinical assessment of balance: Normative data, and gender and age effects, International Journal of Audiology, 47:2, 67-75, DOI: 10.1080/14992020701689688