

Young people with older friends can help reduce ageism

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Young people are less likely to be ageist when their friends have friendships with older adults, research led by psychologists at the University of Kent has shown.

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Provided by University of Kent

Even when young adults have no social contact with older adults in their [everyday life](#), if they are aware of a friend who is friends with an older adult this can increase their positive attitudes towards older adults as a whole, the researchers found.

Psychologists Lisbeth Drury and Professor Dominic Abrams of Kent's School of Psychology, and Dr Paul Hutchison, London Metropolitan University, surveyed young adults to conduct the study, which is published online in the *British Journal of Social Psychology*.

Those responding indicated how often they had [social contact](#) with older adults, whether they experienced it as good contact, if they were aware of any friendships their friends had with older adults and how positively they felt towards older adults.

The researchers found that young adults who experienced good quality contact expressed less ageism towards older adults. More importantly, even young adults with no direct experience of older adults expressed less ageism when they knew of a friend that had a friendship with an older adult.

This indirect effect occurred because knowing that other [young people](#) in their close social network have positive relationships with older adults reduced [young adults'](#) anxieties about interacting with [older adults](#) and made such relationships seem more widespread and acceptable.

More information: Lisbeth Drury et al. Direct and extended intergenerational contact and young people's attitudes towards older adults, *British Journal of Social Psychology* (2016). [DOI:](#)

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