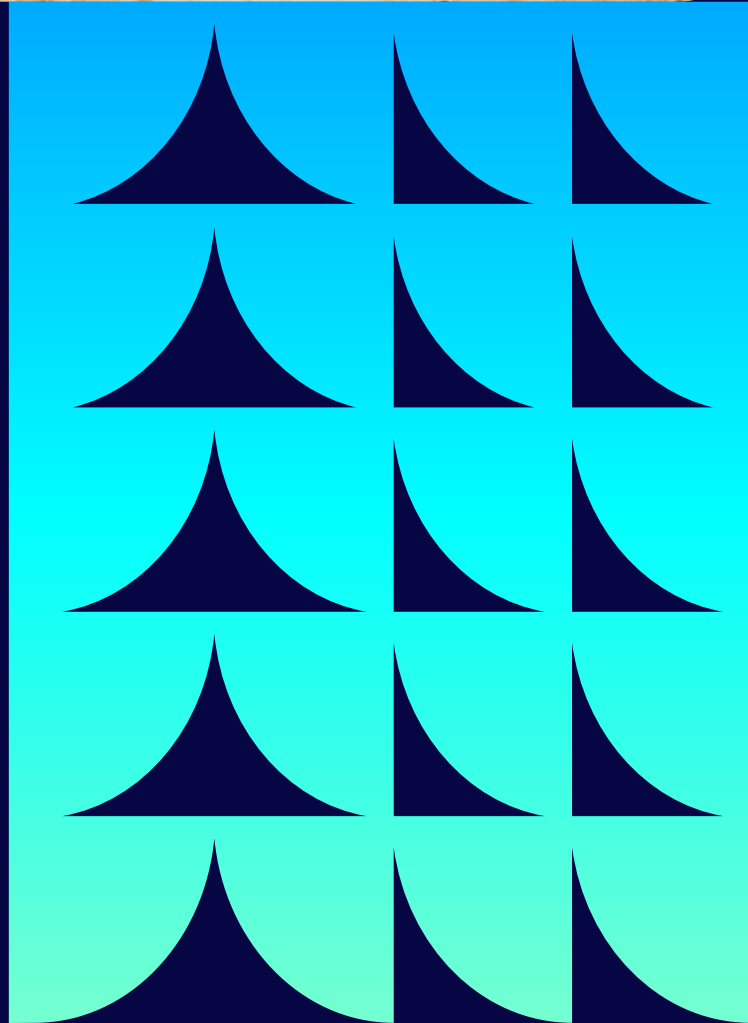




# Take Five to Age Well

Interim Short Report



# Interim Short Report

Environmental and nongenetic factors are responsible for 70–80% of our ageing outcomes, with behaviours such as physical activity and social engagement having a huge influence on health, especially with increasing age. With nearly a quarter of the UK population aged 50 or older, this percentage is expected to rise to 28% by 2030, significantly altering the country's social and healthcare dynamics (ONS, 2023). The challenges associated with ageing encompass a complex web of physical and mental health issues exacerbated by structural inequalities, including various risk factors such as deprivation, smoking, alcohol addiction, and obesity.

In September 2023, 3,254 adults completed the *Take Five to Age Well (Take5)* Pledge, which was developed to empower individuals to adopt or regain a healthier lifestyle. *Take5*, as a first-ever pledge of its kind, (looking at five different areas to track behaviour) was essentially a pilot to inform a nationwide public health campaign. *Take5* objectives were designed to realise short-term and long-term improvements in the health of people over 50 years of age. The analysis of data, however, showed that the intervention, was also popular with other age groups, as the age of the 3,254 participants ranged from 35–91.

Researchers from the Open University, led by Dr Jitka Vseteckova, highlight the importance of the 'Five Pillars for Ageing Well' (5P), good nutritional habits, hydration, physical activity, social engagement, and cognitive stimulation in creating the operational framework of the *Take5*.

In collaboration with specialists in public engagement, academics, behavioural scientists, practitioners, clinicians as well as commissioners in health and social care, the team co-designed and co-produced a plan of small, achievable, daily actions under each pillar to induce a change in behaviors suitable for a variety of ages and physical abilities. Participants were asked to choose one or more action(s) and commit to it for 30 days. During this time, the participants were supported by regular motivational communications sent to them by the *Take5* team.

*Take5* was built on participatory principles, the success of the Ageing Well Public Talk Series (AWPTS), which is a long-term educational programme and has made strategic partnerships with over 250 UK-wide stakeholder organisations. The AWPTS, as well as *Take5*, are reaching national and, in some proportion, global audiences. They both collectively support The Open University's Societal Mission and the Open Societal Challenges agenda.

*Take5* was offered mainly as a digital provision. However, in addition to the digital offering, we also partnered with Age Scotland to co-design, co-produce, and pilot an offline version of *Take5* to support the participation of people who might have found online participation challenging. The offline participants were offered a pack of paper-based resources, including a suite of health diary booklets (one for each of the five challenge areas: nutrition, hydration, physical activity, social and cognitive stimulation, co-produced specifically for offline *Take5*) and a calendar for individuals to track progress in introducing healthier routines.

In order to understand baseline habits and health behaviours across the cohort of participants as well as motivation for change, adherence to the pledge, and the longer-term impact of the intervention, researchers collected data via surveys at four-time points: TP1: the beginning of the pledge period, TP2: the end of the pledge period, TP3: five months after the pledge ended, and TP4: nine months after the pledge ended.





This current interim short report includes an analysis of participants demographics as well as an analysis of Surveys 1 and 2. A full report will be available in the first half of 2025.

## Key insights from Sign-ups, Survey 1, and Survey 2

Take5 attracted 3,254 participants. The majority of the Take5 participants were white British, highly educated (BSc and above), and mainly not living in deprived areas. Future Take5 initiatives will aim to access and engage participants from a wider range of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Women were more likely than men to sign up (83% of participants identified as female). As women are often at the centre of family social networks, more men may have been engaged with Take5 unofficially through their wives/partners/family members.

Overall, participating in the Take5 pledge induced healthier routines in those who took part (and responded to our surveys). A total of 230 pledgers completed Survey 1 which equals 7.5% of the participants. For Survey 2, the completion rate dropped from 230 to 98 – approximately 3% of the total number of pledgers. Over 80% of participants who completed Survey 2 reported that in the last week of pledging, they were still adhering to the action(s) they chose on five or more days in a week. In the last week of pledging, 15 % of the survey participants had committed to their chosen action for five days a week, 21% had committed for six days, and 45% remained committed for all seven days. The actions participants chose and committed to were varied. 'Eat' (good nutrition) and 'Move' (physical activity) were the most popular actions, reflecting perhaps that it is common knowledge that movement and diet are essential to living well longer.

In open-ended responses, participants reported increased motivation and were appreciative of the regular communication that the Take5 team established via emails. The engaging emails were rated as the best resource to support the participants keeping up with their chosen activities, as seen in the following quotes:

*Thanks for your emails! I very much enjoyed being part of this scheme. It definitely spurred me on to eat healthily and to exercise more. It has definitely improved my fitness levels already...*

*I have been following the Age UK videos that you sent; at the moment, I am working through the balance video (shared via email), and I am finding that a really great way to increase my movement. I aim to continue with this during this project and hopefully beyond.*

*... some of my groups of older people also really liked the materials – bright, positive but as one woman of 88 commented, 'not patronising and all eminently achievable'!*

The qualitative analysis showed that participants reported high levels of 'in-the-moment' honesty when reporting on their pledges. There were several quotes from participants demonstrating appreciation and willingness to try new things and/or find a way to keep going as the following quotes show:

*'Yikes – everyone is doing so well'. 'I need to up my game'. 'There is always today and tomorrow to get it right'.*

The main barriers to completing/engaging with the pledge were caring responsibilities and time pressures (42% of survey participants reported caring responsibilities for one or more person(s)). The Take5 team also recognises, that Take5 was mainly an online intervention (paper pledges were piloted in Scotland only), which is a barrier for many. These barriers will be considered when the Take5 re-runs.

The non-digital, offline pledging option received overall positive comments for providing the opportunity to those who may not feel comfortable operating the digital media to sign-up and complete the pledge. Age Scotland reported that approximately 100 participants took part across five remote groups in Scotland. This is discussed separately in the report. A longer lead-in time, more notice, and earlier provision of materials to interested groups would be beneficial going forward. We plan to collaborate with Age Scotland and other organisations interested in running *Take5* offline when *Take5* re-runs and address the barriers mentioned.

*Take5* also enabled the development of a UK-wide network of over 250 collaborating organisations that collectively supported the mission of the pledge and as a result the aims of the Open Societal Challenges Programme. Some of the collaborators have a national remit (examples include: NHS England, Carers Trust, Carers UK, Age UK, Age Scotland, Age NI, Linc Cymru, Unison Wales, Turning Point UK, Be Active Partnerships National Organisation, Parish Nursing Ministries UK, Voluntary Health Scotland, Hallmark Foundation, Goyal Foundation and others) whilst others operate at regional/local level (examples include: Bridgit Care, Carers Northamptonshire, Age UK Bucks, Age UK Northants, Leap Bucks, Bucks Council, Luton Council, Later Life Training).

### Take5 core team conclusion

Jointly with our partners, stakeholders, and ambassadors, we have been able to support our participants with:

- *making small changes and creating new routines that support their health and wellbeing;*
- *pledging with friends, carers, colleagues while also being supported by the Take5 team;*
- *offering them a public health campaign that is fun, easy, accessible, and engaging.*

In essence, we believe that these initial findings reflect the commitment and enthusiasm evident across the network of partners who supported the delivery of the pledge. Survey 3 and Survey 4, collected five and nine months after the pledge ended (currently being analysed) will help us understand whether there are any lasting impacts, whether newly formed routines were sustained over time, and contribute to *Take Five to Age Well* becoming an established, positive, and proactive way to support healthy ageing across the four UK nations.



This is just what I needed, a challenge to jolt me out of my blues! Had very unhappy and unfulfilling decade or so. To look at life afresh and make better use of time and strength will reap rewards. After participating in Take Five to Age Well I'm thinking differently too - making more positive decisions. Here's to looking forward to the future.



Take5 2023 participant



### For more information or to discuss this project, please get in touch

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