

Raising the Profile of the Movement

Reasons to act.

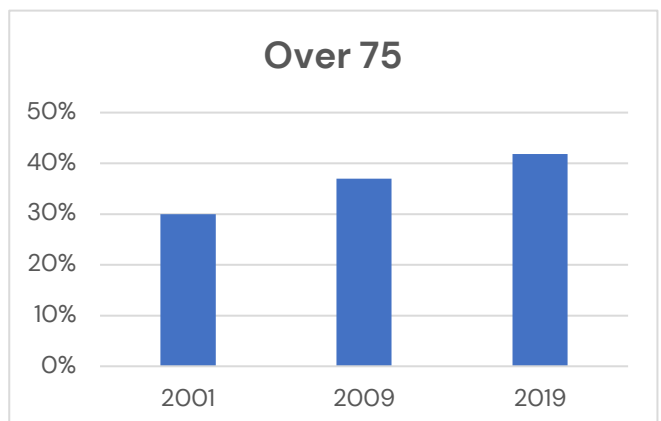
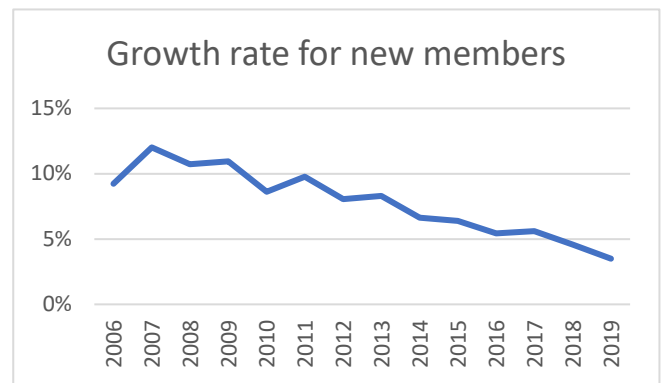
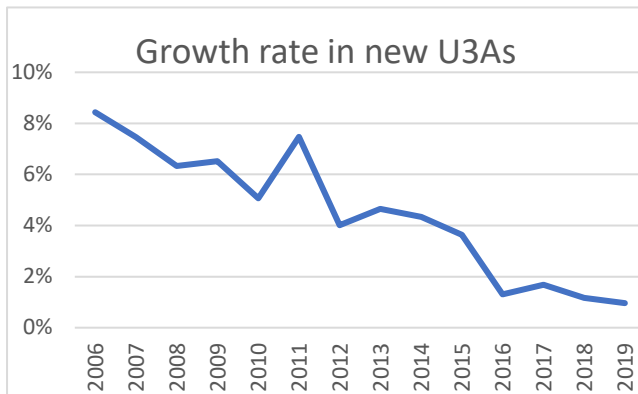
There are signs of a serious threat to the U3A movement which we need to address whilst we are still growing and in a healthy state. We are in our middle years, approaching our 40th Birthday, and signs of ageing need be taken seriously.

This briefing is to make you aware of the potential threat and to explain how the Third Age Trust Board is addressing it and to encourage your participation and support. The Trust is engaged in a major medium term Development Plan which includes upgrading its support infrastructure for the benefit of U3As everywhere. This however will take time and investment. Further briefings will follow over the coming months.

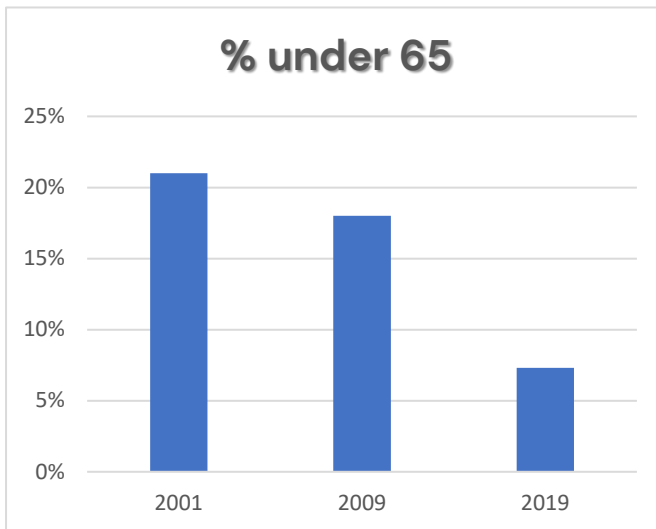
The comments below specifically concern raising the profile of the movement - a dominant issue raised during the Development Plan consultation with members two years ago. However, a more pressing issue effecting the future of the movement has emerged giving increased impetus. We must avoid the cry of 'too little, too late'.

The Threat

The continuous growth of the U3A since its formation has masked a number of factors that are now converging.



U3A 2020



The rate of growth in both new U3As and in members has been steadily declining for the past ten years. Growth is slowing down significantly and an increasing number of U3As are experiencing a decline in membership.

Further our membership is ageing and significantly fewer younger people are joining. We also have quite a narrow demographic as the recent membership survey has shown.

National Statistics Office (NSO) data shows that in 2018 there were 15.8 million people over the age of 60 in the UK. At that time U3A had about 2.7% of the over 60s as members. What is not known however is just how many people have tried U3A and moved on. There are never the less still many who will benefit from membership and who will benefit the movement.

Anecdotally, most of our growth has been as a result of word of mouth. Whilst this is highly effective in recruitment it does lead to the recruitment of similar sorts of people which tends to mitigate against diversity on a broader scale.

It is essential then that we broaden the base of the movement by attracting people from all backgrounds. The movement needs to be more diverse if it is to thrive. Diversity in its broadest sense - gender, age, educational attainment, urban and rural dwellers, fit and not so fit as well as those of a different ethnic heritage.

Many, if not most, U3As report difficulties in recruiting new Committee members to the point that their very survival is put at risk. It is all too easy to overburden those willing to serve. It is essential, therefore, that U3As remain open and encourage new people who understand and adopt the benefits of our self help principle.

The Trust Response:

Our strategic objective is that the U3A movement is still thriving in 2030. To do this we need to communicate to the outside world who we are, and what we do, more effectively than in the past.

Growth per se is not the objective as the quality of the experience must take priority. This depends on having active U3As that are committed to providing members with a life enhancing experience. Sustainability means that we have a steady supply of new members. Sustainability does not mean that we abandon our principles, nor diminish our social and participative learning activities.

U3A 2020

Brand Refresh

We are refreshing all our promotional material with the assistance of an external design agency. This is essential if we are to have any impact on today's brand aware population.

Brand awareness is:-

The impression in the 'consumers' mind of a brand's total personality (real and imaginary qualities). Brand image is developed over time through media exposure, influencing campaigns with a consistent theme, and is authenticated through the 'consumers' direct experience.

As there are many demands on third agers time we need to be able to attract and keep new members as well retaining the ones we have.

Communicating the message

The Trust has a clear media Communications Plan to raise our profile by using all media platforms to make our target audience more of the breadth, diversity and transformative benefits of U3A membership.

Mobilising the Membership

The U3A movement is rich in enthusiastic members who are keen to promote what they do locally. Hence engaging with and mobilising the whole U3A movement is essential to promoting our principles and activities.

U3A Day on 3rd June, 2020 is a key part of raising the profile locally. The more U3As that join in will give even more momentum to promoting U3A across the UK.

We aim to raise the awareness of the positive contribution that the U3A movement makes to society as a whole. It is self-evident that the number of members and the widespread network of U3As throughout the UK, from Shetlands to the Channel Islands, from Great Yarmouth to Enniskillen must be making a significant but unrecognised contribution through members, their friends and families and hence the local communities.

Building Partnerships

We aim to establish the U3A as a leading organisation in delivering active and positive third age. We will be seeking to work with legislators and pressure groups to establish our credentials in this area. Active and positive ageing, age friendly cities and other such ideas are gaining widespread currency. We have been doing it for years and yet we are unknown. The UK, like many Western countries has an ageing population, which is often seen as a burden on the rest of society. We are not, we make a huge if unrecognised contribution. We are part of the solution and we will be working to see that this is acknowledged.

U3A 2020

Summary

The main thrust of raising the profile is to communicate a clear and consistent message and to do that often and wherever relevant with skill and imagination. In this our membership is our greatest asset. We have a long reach if we all pull together.

We will be consulting through focus groups, and by others means, to ensure that our messages and approaches resonate with members. Our publicity will change as we sharpen our messages. As we do this, we may revise our logo so that it has a more modern and open style. If so, you will have time to adapt. This is a strategic programme- which will take time to develop and deliver,

This is an exciting time for the movement. U3A 2020 is about vision and action to take us into the future.

Ed Link, Chair, Communications and External Affairs Committee.

Ian McCannah, Chair Third Age Trust

Learn, laugh, live

U3A

No longer working full-time or raising a family? Now's the time to make the most of life. U3A gives you the chance to develop your interests, make new friends and enjoy yourself.

Type Your Local U3A
U3A Name
U3A Email
U3A Contact No.
U3A Website

u3a.org.uk

A world of new experiences is open to you in your third age – so what's stopping you?

U3A

Type Your Local U3A
U3A Name
U3A Email
U3A Contact No.
U3A Website

Contact the National Office
020 8466 6139
info@u3a.org.uk
[@u3a_uk](https://www.u3a.org.uk)
u3a.org.uk

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If you are no longer in full time work, or raising a family - or you just 'love' your life - U3A gives you opportunities to develop your interests, make new friends and have fun.

There are more than 10,000 U3A groups spread right across the UK - and members are making the most of their spare time. They create a social circle of people who share their interests and encourage a supportive atmosphere.

From Walking to Talking, Geology to Genealogy, Yachting to Yoga, Current Affairs to Supper Clubs – the choice is endless

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For a successful annual fest, you can join in many groups in your neighbourhood. Joining in is made easier when you're accompanied by others who have similar interests to you.

And once a month, when possible, U3A invite its members to a meeting where you can get together, chat and discuss to some great agreement.

For those not in full time work, U3A welcomes you - whoever you are, wherever you live and whatever your circumstances.

Examples of revised promotional materials. Soon to be available from the national web site shop.