'Tis the season to be solo

December 9th 2025 — by Adrienne Wyper

The seasonal stereotype is of laughing groups gathered to celebrate together. But there's another side of the season we don't see portrayed so often: being alone at Christmas. About one in nine adults in the UK will spend Christmas on their own. And if that includes you, that statistic alone should make you feel less isolated.

Interestingly, a study from King's College London comparing Christmas 2024 with Christmas 1969 found that the number of over-65s spending it alone has remained the same, but for all other age groups, aged 21+, it has more than doubled.

I've never spent Christmas Day solo, but I came close the year a long relationship ended. (And the previous year the ex had disappeared on a mysterious, urgent errand for a large chunk of the day – I certainly felt alone then.) I couldn't bear the idea of going to my mum's, where I'd spent many Christmases with the ex, and was planning how to spend the day alone when my dad issued a last-minute invitation to spend it with friends of his. (Due to my fragile emotional state, I threw up everything I ate on Christmas Day. But driving down to Dorset late on the 24th and sharing panettone and Asti Spumante with my dad, who I rarely saw at Christmas, was special.)

If you know someone who'll be alone at Christmas, by all means extend an invitation, but do really mean it, don't just say it because you feel you ought to, and do say that you'll understand if they prefer not to.

This year, my partner and I have invited a friend for breakfast on Christmas Day, because her mum went into a care home this year, she's not close to her siblings, and her partner will be with his extended family. We're then going to my mum's for dinner, and she's going to see hers.

Photo: Jessica Fadel via Unsplash

How does it happen?

There are a myriad reasons, from adult children who've flown the nest doing their own thing to tricky family dynamics or loss and bereavement, from illness to having no family and friends nearby. And, of course, for some 25 December just isn't a celebration in the cultural calendar. Work can also make a cosy gathering logistically difficult – around 1.1 million people will be working on December 25, in healthcare, the emergency services, agriculture, hospitality…

Or you may be alone by choice. Being with other people isn't always best, and you can feel lonely in a crowd, but being on your own can be viewed negatively, especially at this time of year. You might prefer your own company, possibly when you don't get on with family, or simply feel overwhelmed by large, noisy gatherings, or prefer the comfort and timetable of your own home.

And, of course, with the unpredictable nature of life, even when you have plans with others, they can fall through at the last minute.

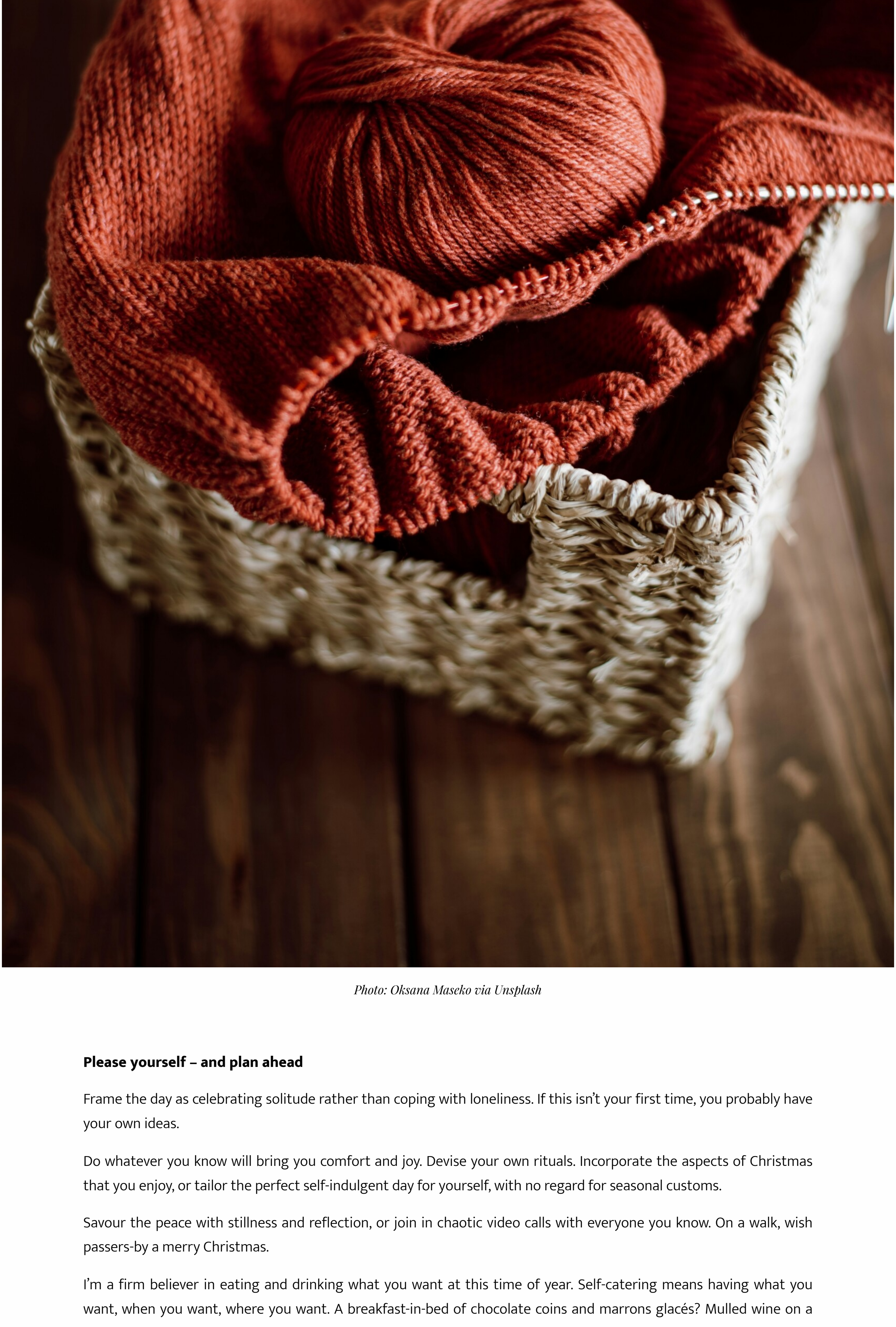

Photo: Oksana Maseko via Unsplash

Please yourself – and plan ahead

Frame the day as celebrating solitude rather than coping with loneliness. If this isn't your first time, you probably have your own ideas.

Do whatever you know will bring you comfort and joy. Devise your own rituals. Incorporate the aspects of Christmas that you enjoy, or tailor the perfect self-indulgent day for yourself, with no regard for seasonal customs.

Savour the peace with stillness and reflection, or join in chaotic video calls with everyone you know. On a walk, wish passers-by a merry Christmas.

I'm a firm believer in eating and drinking what you want at this time of year. Self-catering means having what you want, when you want, where you want. A breakfast-in-bed of chocolate coins and marrons glacés? Mulled wine on a walk first thing? Pickled onions dunked in cheese fondue in the bath at midnight?

If you're not happy at your situation, maybe swerve social media and ad breaks for the day. You might find yourself comparing Christmas present to Christmases past. If that triggers sadness, accept that, and spend some time with these thoughts, but try not to wallow all day.

You might want to organise a special sociable dinner on another day. Arranging something to look forward to between Christmas and New Year or in early January is also a mood booster.

If you want to connect with your local community, find out if there are any festive events, such as dinners in pubs, carol-singing, walks, runs (parkrun has loads on Christmas Day; you can exert yourself or be a marshal). You could embrace the goodwill-to-all spirit of Christmas by giving to a charity (for example, £29.80, an annually calculated amount that includes set-up, food, clothing and accommodation, travel and insurance) to the homelessness charity Crisis. And you can also volunteer for Crisis in person. You'll need to arrange volunteering in person in advance.

It's your time; so it's up to you how you spend it. Whatever you choose to do, you're sure to have more fun than the 4,409 people who, according to HMRC, were filling in their tax return on Christmas Day last year.

Remember, despite all the hype beforehand, Christmas is just one day. So, however you spend it, may your day be merry and bright.

Adrienne Wyper is a health and lifestyle writer and regular TNMA contributor.

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Thank you so much. Your contribution is crucial.

Discussion (13 Comments)

Sarah P
December 9, 2025 at 1:59 pm

I spent a Xmas day solo in my 20s while studying in Canada. I cooked a supermarket pizza in the oven and ate it in my PJs, then spent the afternoon reading and watching The Simpsons. It was delightful. A hot bath with bath bombs or scented bath oil is a good evening option.

We try hard not to leave our parents alone on Christmas Day (my mum lives alone, but my partner's parents live together). This year we'll be staying at my mum's the evenings of 23 and 24, having Xmas lunch at hers, then driving to my partner's parents late afternoon so we can see them for supper. That relies on being able to get between their houses in 2 hours.

Reply

Elizabeth
December 9, 2025 at 8:51 pm

This time of year is so overwhelming for me – with a close family member having a birthday and obligatory party with the family, closely followed by Xmas day with me mostly expected to do the catering on both events. The thought of being alone is very appealing at the moment! But I'd hate it if I was.

Reply

Christina
December 9, 2025 at 8:58 pm

This was a lovely editorial. Thank you for writing it.

Reply

Heather Cupit
December 9, 2025 at 9:03 pm

I spent a Covid Christmas alone. But I wasn't lonely. I would be happy to share Christmas with friend(s) if I happen to be alone on another occasion. I feel sorry for anyone who is alone and can't cope.

Reply

Cindy from Canada
December 9, 2025 at 11:30 pm

Adrienne, this was a wonderful post.

I agree with the last line – Christmas is just one day. I don't get caught up on the hype, glitz and glam of this time of the year. I don't decorate, I don't put up a tree, if I am invited to a get together, I don't wear sparkles or sequins. I believe in being kind the whole year. I don't use social media. I think my cancer diagnosis a few weeks before Christmas of 2023 put things in perspective for me – that I am grateful for what I have – the best gift I've received is being cancer free since November, 2024.

Reply

Angela
December 10, 2025 at 1:51 am

Thank you so much for this article. My partner and I spent our first Christmas alone last year. There were a number of reasons we found ourselves in this situation, partly because we had moved away and our adult children had their own plans. It was hard and I'll admit that I cried. We hadn't really made a plan and I didn't realise how much I would miss doing a family gathering. This year we have organised a little getaway and I'll do some Christmas baking to feel a bit more festive.
I think that is the key, having a plan. It may not be ideal but as Adrienne says, it's just one day.

Reply

MaureenC
December 10, 2025 at 8:05 am

I grew up with my Mum working Christmas Day most years as a ward sister in a hospital so she was only at home all day once every three years. Some years I would spend time at the hospital giving out presents. It saved me from it all becoming so pressurised and having any daft notions of a 'perfect' Christmas. It has struck me over the years that the level of pressure put on family members to conform to a pre set image of perfect holiday events is in direct relation to how emotionally dysfunctional they are as a family. It's really sad to watch.
My early experiences mean that none of it is a 'big deal' for me. So we have enjoyed lots of years with a variety of friends who find themselves alone, or friend and their kids who don't want to be in their own home following a divorce or bereavement plus a selection of our own children and their partners. We have now switched our main meal to Christmas Eve to make it easier for our grown up children to spend time with their partners' families.

Reply

Ruby Tuesday
December 10, 2025 at 8:53 am

A very good feature . The words "alone in a crowd" bought back memories of Christmas 1965.
I was 18, newly married and living in Ankara ,Turkey , with my husband's family. Christmas was not acknowledged there, so in the streets and shops and family home it was just another day.
However, my young brother-in-law had learnt of Christmas in a lesson at school . He filled an old olive oil tin with soil, stuck a little pine branch in it and decorated it with some hand drawn decorations. That was a gesture of love at Christmas that I will always remember.

Reply

> **Lois**
> *December 10, 2025 at 10:31 am*
>
> Such a touching story of Christmas kindness. x
>
> **Reply**

Patricia Higgs
December 10, 2025 at 8:54 am

What a heartwarming article.
Thank you.

Reply

Janet
December 10, 2025 at 9:52 am

I've spent the last two Christmas's on my own, as for both my husband was in hospital. In December 2023 he had a heart valve replacement operation and wasn't allowed home until after Christmas day, so I went to church in the morning, had a small Christmas lunch before visiting him in hospital for the afternoon. Last year he was in hospital again, recovering from sepsis, which he had while we were in France in late summer He'd been repatriated after very good treatment over there, but was still having lots of physiotherapy to get him walking again by the time Christmas came. This time I had Christmas lunch in hospital with him and a couple of other patients and their wives, so a more social occasion. The staff in the hospital – its a local rehabilitation centre – did their best to make it festive, with crackers, Christmas tree and so on, with turkey and the rest for lunch. This year we will be at home together for a change!

Reply

Annie
December 10, 2025 at 9:54 am

I am a person living on my own and I know others likewise and invite them to join me on Christmas Day. Even if they decide not to come they have an invitation. My parents did likewise despite having a family of eight. If the choice is to be alone that's fine. The invitations maybe are probably a way of avoiding being alone myself.

Reply

Mary
December 10, 2025 at 12:36 pm

Thank you so much for such a kind and thoughtful piece

Reply

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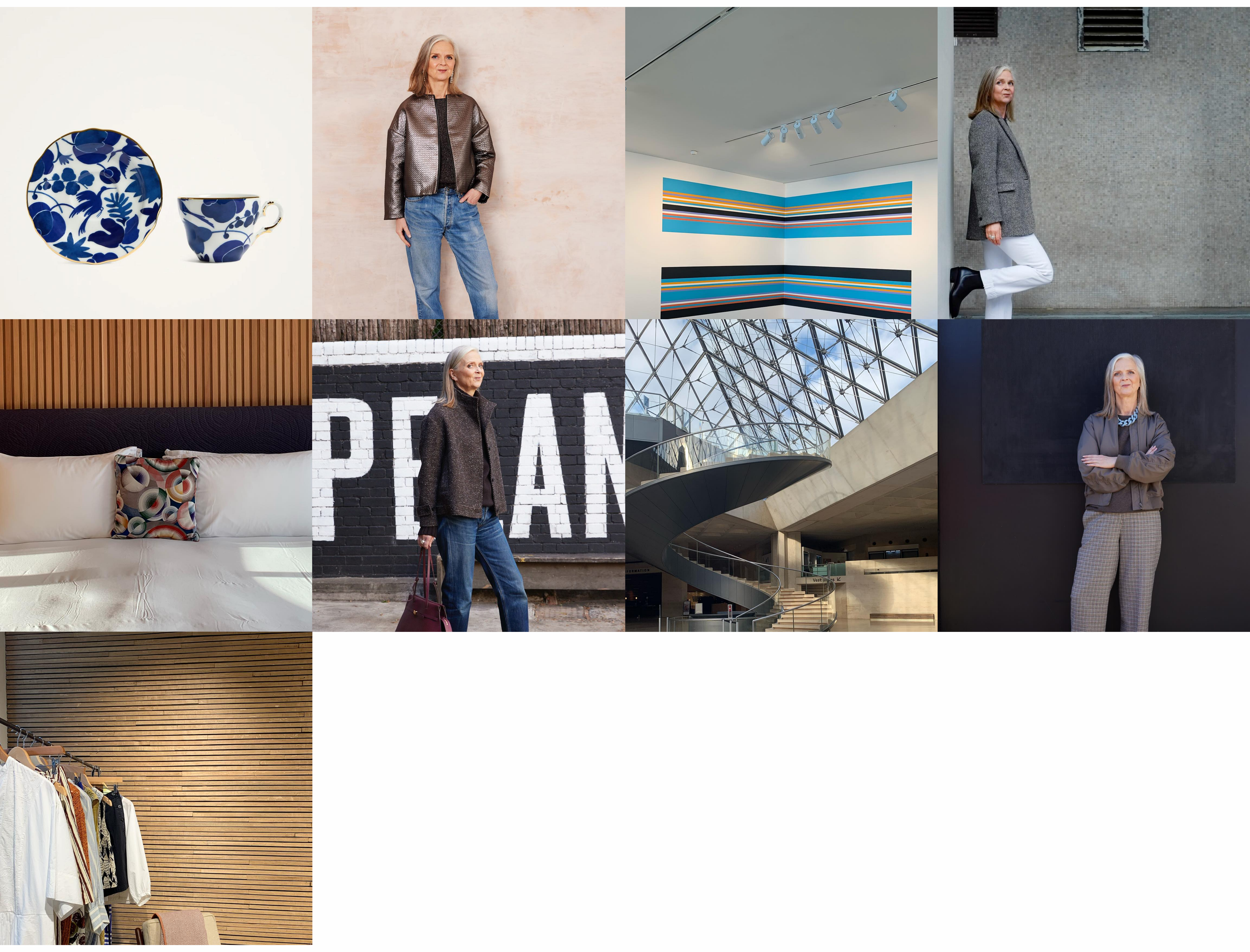

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