

# AGEISM:

## Holding Businesses Back



# Ending Ageism Together

Sandy Jamil

Founder and Strategist, Ageism Awareness Hub  
CEO Startex Enterprises





# What we'll cover in our time together

1. Ageism, its prevalence and effects
2. Evidence-based strategies for addressing ageism
3. Moving to action
4. Your ideas and questions

SECTION 1

What is ageism and  
how does it show up?

# What is ageism?

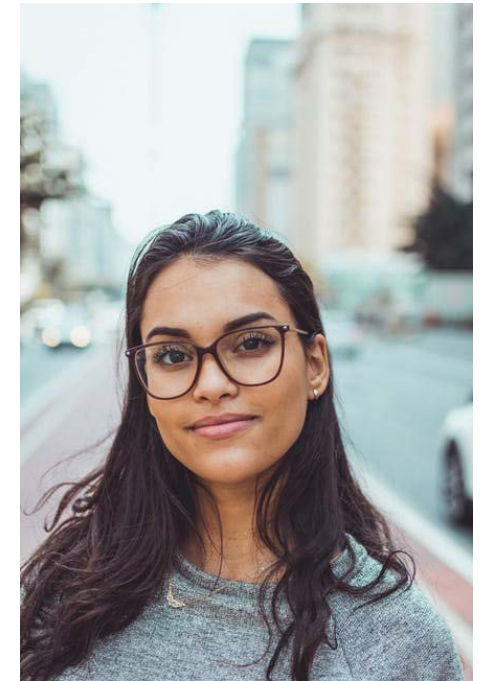


based on age

**Prejudice** (*how we feel*)

**Stereotyping** (*how we think*)

**Discrimination** (*how we act*)



# Internalized ageism

when a person internalizes ageist beliefs and applies them to themselves



# Internalized ageism

- **I'm too old to learn/do/start that.**
- **I'm having a senior moment.**
- **Oh, that knee? It's just getting older.**



Interpersonal ageism

which occurs in social  
interactions



# Interpersonal ageism

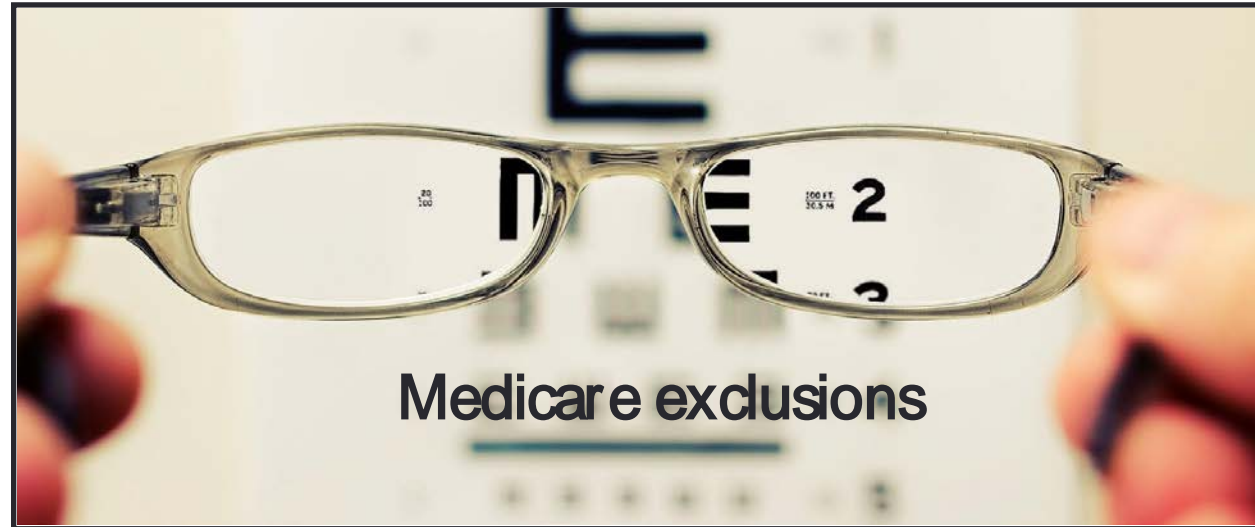
- George? He's too old to learn the new software.
- Not going to hire him—he's in his 60s and won't stick around.
- Of course your knee hurts. You're just getting older.



# Institutional ageism

which occurs when an institution perpetuates ageism through its actions and policies

# Interpersonal ageism





WITH OLD AGE  
YOU ACQUIRE  
NEW SKILLS..

*...You can laugh, cough, sneeze  
and pee all in one go!*



What did one  
saggy boob  
say to the other?



## The Senility Prayer



Grant me the  
senility to forget  
the people I  
never liked  
anyway, the good  
fortune to run  
into the ones I  
do, and the  
eyesight to tell  
the difference.

HAPPY 50TH  
BIRTHDAY...  
SEE YOU SOON!



YOUR CHARIOT  
AWAITS...



HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

# Older workers find a less tolerant workplace: Why many say age discrimination abounds



[Daniel de Visé](#)  
USA TODAY

Published 7:02 a.m. ET Feb. 11, 2024 | Updated 11:30 a.m. ET Feb. 11, 2024



An investigation by the New York Times and ProPublica allege age discrimination in Facebook job recruiting ads. *Buzz60*

FROM  
THE  
HEADLINES

## Continued

Roughly two-thirds of adults over 50 believe older workers face discrimination in the workplace, according to a new AARP report. Of that group, 90% believe ageism is commonplace

The 65-and-up workforce has [quadrupled in size](#) since the mid-1980s. Nearly one-quarter of the workforce is [55 or older](#).

“Ageism is really one of the last acceptable 'isms' that society tolerates,” said Heather Tinsley-Fix, a senior adviser at AARP.

“The landscape of the labor market has changed drastically,” she said, “but our attitudes have not caught up,” said [Maura Porcelli](#), senior director of the Senior Community Service Employment Program at the National Council on Aging.

# FROM THE HEADLINES

## NEWS

OCTOBER 09 2024

### **Kaine Leads Push to Examine Ageism's Impacts on Quality and Equity of Health Care**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, on Ageism Awareness Day, U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA), a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, led a group of senators in sending a letter to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) requesting that the agency examine the impact of ageism on quality and equity of care, patient safety, and health outcomes. Ageism in health care is associated with a decreased likelihood that older adults will receive care that meets medical guidelines, an increased likelihood that they are not properly reimbursed for care, and exclusion from clinical trials and other research that is available to the public generally.

“While ageism is often subtle, it is woven into our workforce, our health care system, and our everyday interactions,” **wrote the senators.**



# Diverse images of older adults can help combat ageism — and tap in to a growing customer base

More work is needed to show older adults on the job, with family and using mobility-devices, AARP found.

By Jessica Hall [Follow](#)

Published: Oct. 9, 2024 at 1:44p.m. ET

[Share](#) [AA Resize](#) [Comment](#)

[Listen \(8 min\)](#) [More](#)



It's becoming more common for images to reflect the diversity of older adults and the things they do.

PHOTO: CREDIT: TOM SANDERS.

# FROM THE HEADLINES

Overall, negative sentiment in online media and marketing images of older adults dropped to 10% in 2023, down from 28% in 2018, AARP found.

But there is more work to be done. Images of older adults in the workplace remained “unrealistically rare,”

“As the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. In the age of social media, and with the ubiquity of advertising across people’s daily lives, this is more true than ever. The images we see shape what we think and can even influence how we act toward one another.”



# FROM THE HEADLINES

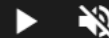
YORK

## Too old for the job? Too young? York anti-ageism advocate says we're asking the wrong questions

by: [Seth Kaplan](#)

Posted: Oct 7, 2024 / 06:26 PM EDT

Updated: Oct 9, 2024 / 01:57 PM EDT



0:19 / 2:41



SHARE



YORK, Pa. (WHTM) — It's not the first "Ageism Awareness Week."

But this year, the topic is as relevant as ever in a year when one presidential [candidate dropped out](#), under pressure, because of what some people considered ageism but others considered a lack of fitness for the job regardless of age — while another [faces some similar questions](#).

"This is the one 'ism' we all have in common," Cathy Bollinger, executive director of Embracing Aging and TroveStreet in York, said Monday at a seminar marking Ageism Awareness Week.

TRENDING STORIES

SECTION 2

Why should we care about  
ageism?



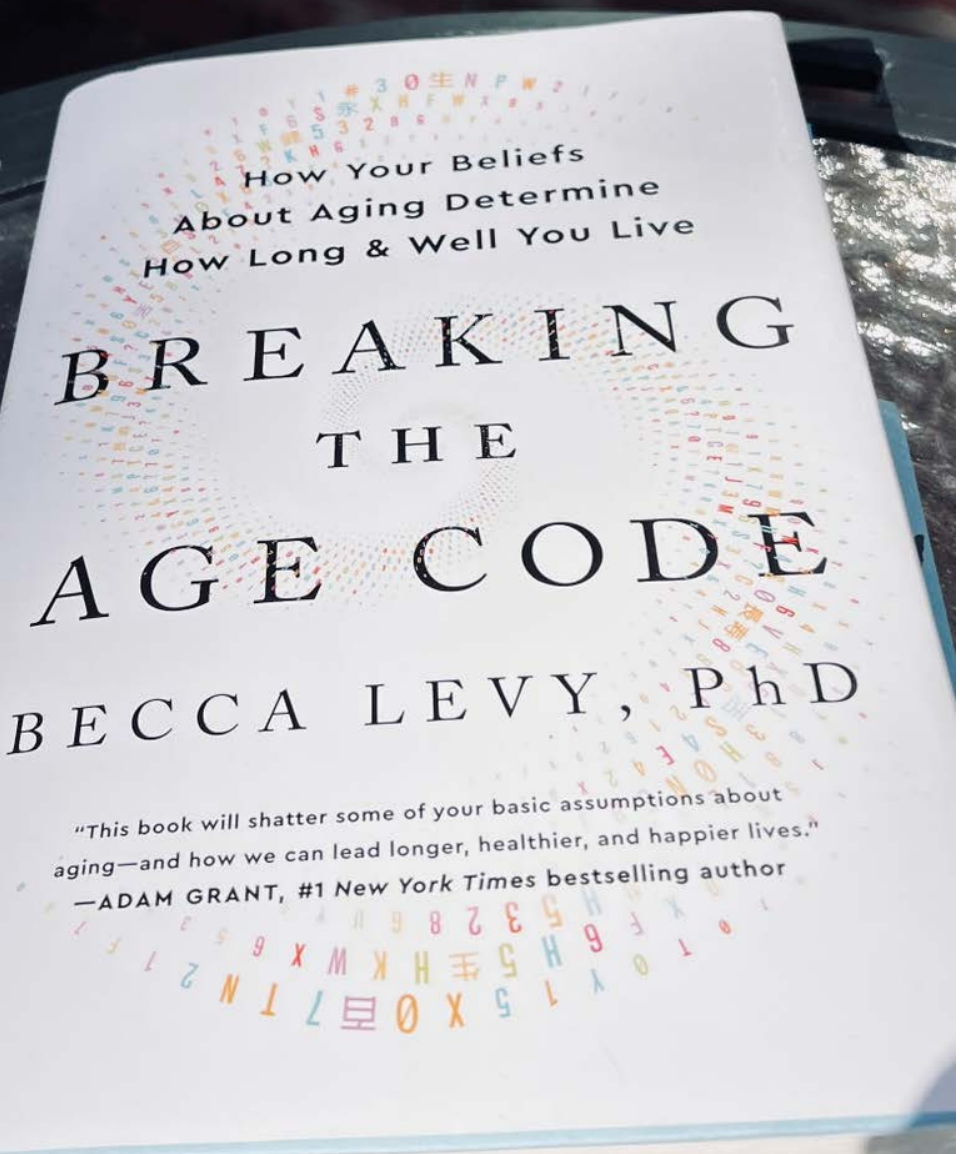
# How different groups can benefit from being more aware of ageist behaviors



<b>Audience</b>	<b>Whys</b>
Older adults & general public	Financial and health impacts
Professionals in aging	Policy and funding, impacts on older adults
Policymakers	Economic arguments
Employers	Talent shortages
Students	Ageism also affects younger people

# 1. Ageism has affected, or will affect, us all

- **93%**  
Experienced one of more forms of ageism in day-to-day lives [[Allen et al., 2022](#)]
- **93%**  
Say workplace age discrimination is common [[AARP, 2022](#)]
- **56%**  
Of those entering 50s employment pushed out or laid off [[Urban Institute, 2018](#)]
- **49.5%**  
Of young adults reported experiencing ageism at work [[Chasteen et al., 2020](#)]

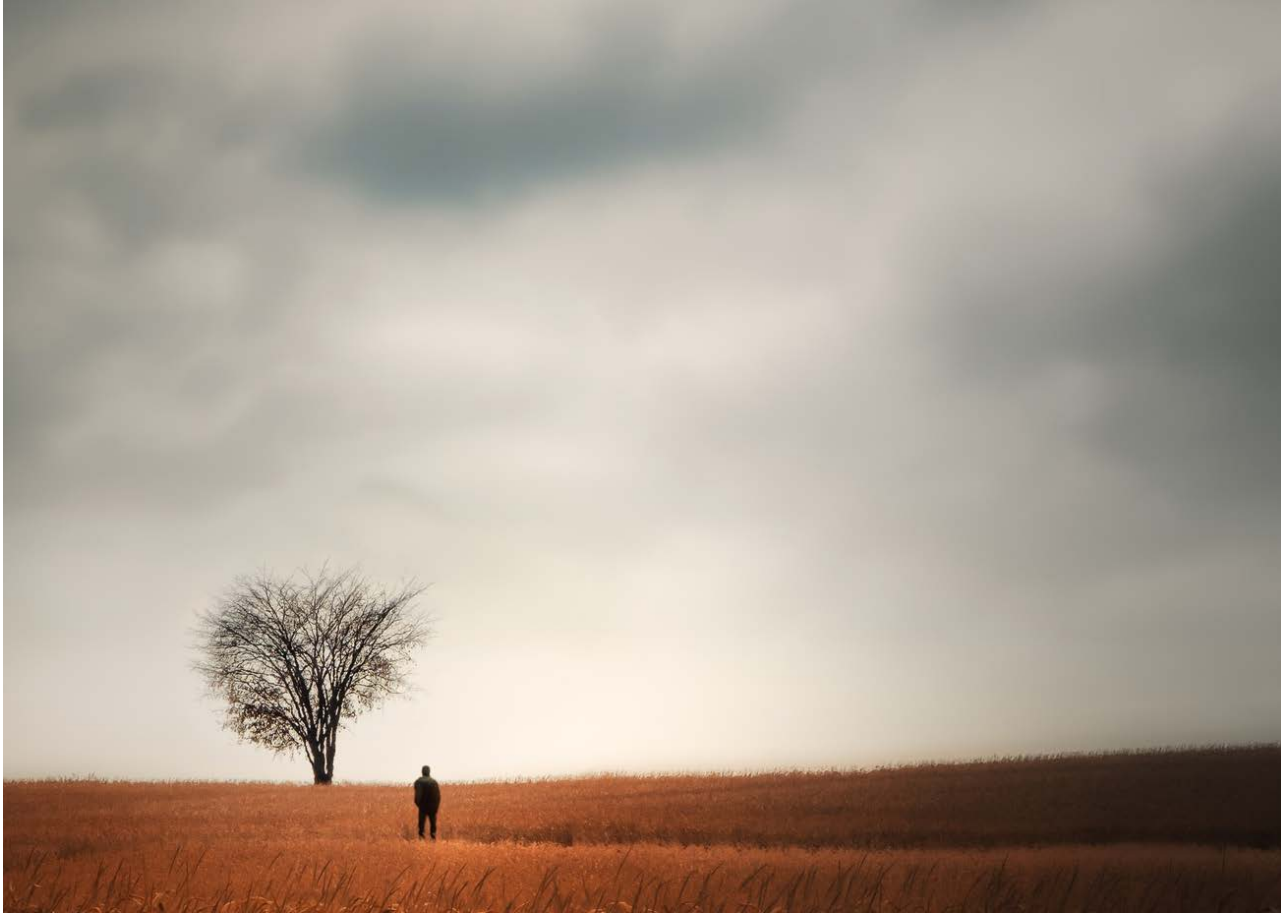


## 2. Thinking positively about aging is linked to:

- Increased longevity (7.5 years)
- Improved health
- Greater ability to recover
- Reduced likelihood of dementia (by almost half)
- Improved memory and reversing cognitive decline
  - [Source: Dr. Becca Levy, Yale School of Public Health](#)



# 3. Ageism has impact on an individual's



- Economic security
- How long we live
- Physical and mental health
- Cognitive decline
- Isolation

# 4. And our communities and the economy

- Less support for age-friendly policies and systems
- Lowered funding for older adult programs
- \$63 billion in annual health care costs
- Workplace age discrimination that costs economy \$850 billion



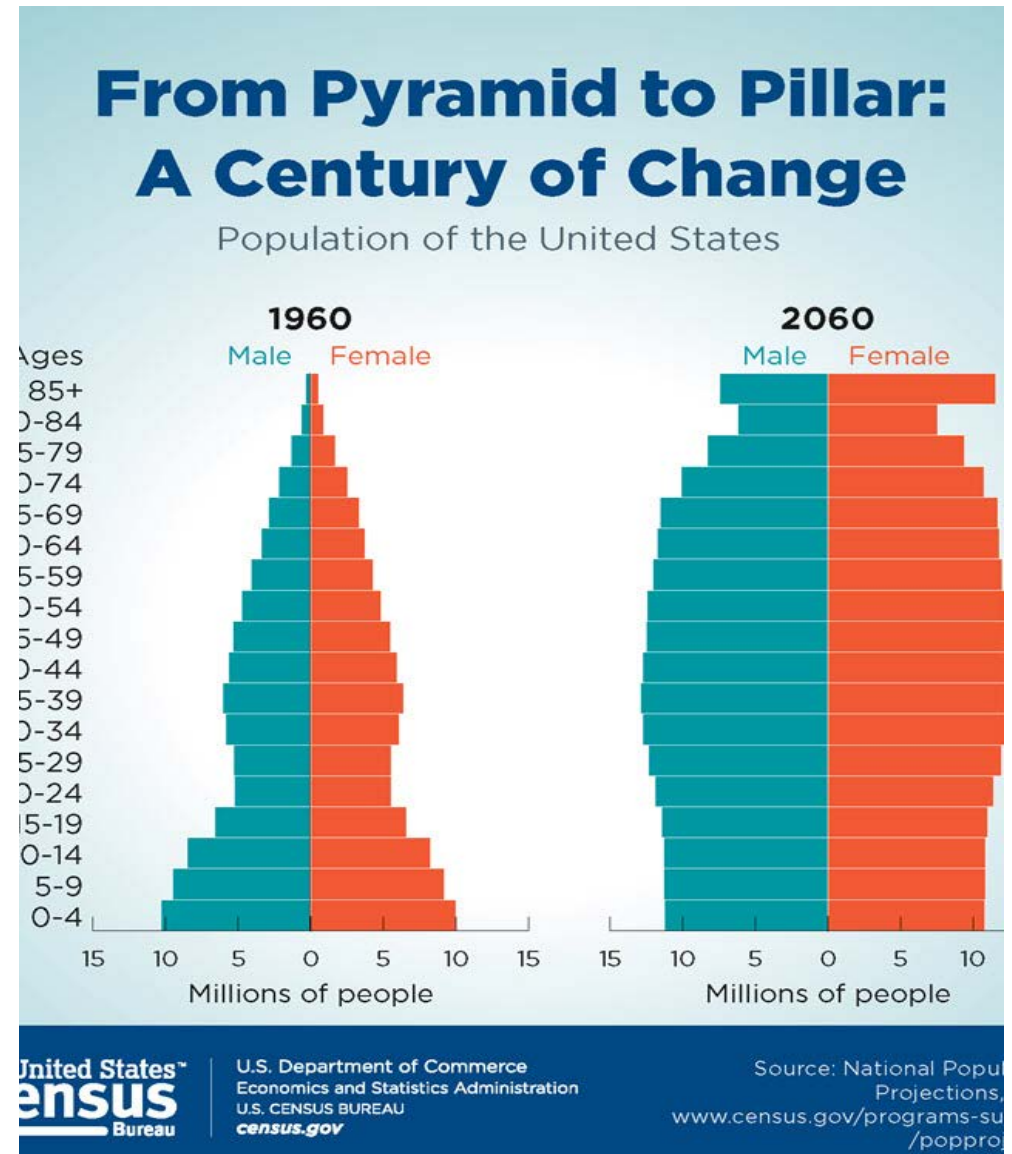
# 5. Our world is changing

## Older workers are a growing share of the workforce

Workers aged 55 and over as a share of all employed, January 2000 to October 2019



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, October 2019



United States™  
**census**  
Bureau

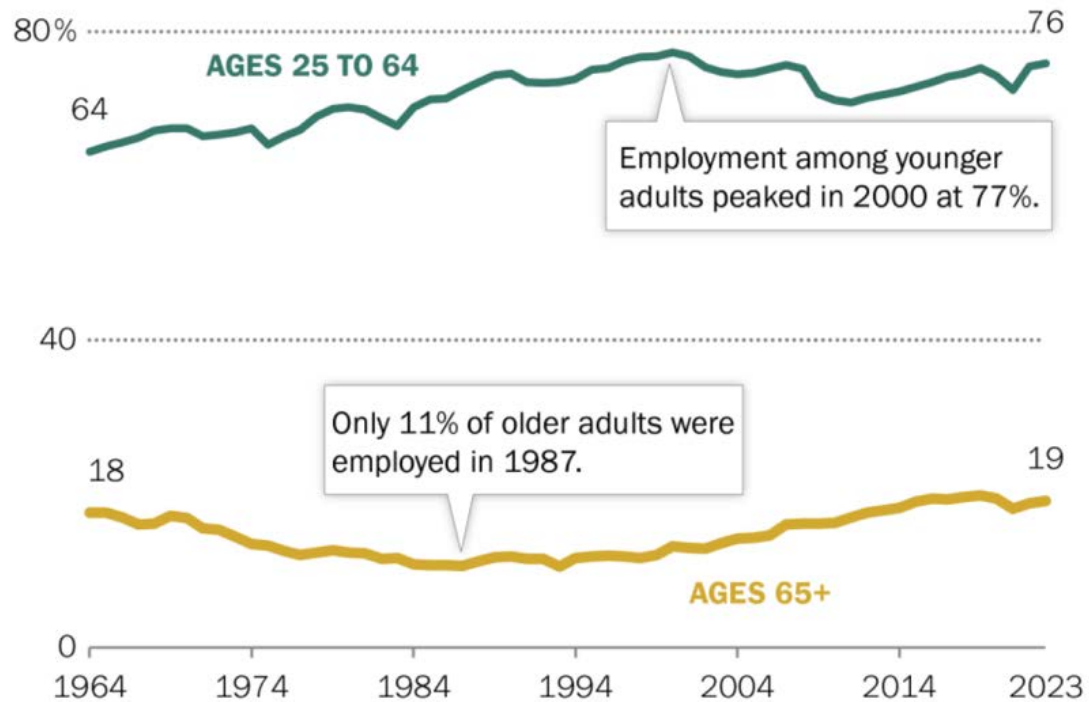
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

Source: National Popu  
Projections,  
[www.census.gov/programs-su/popproj](https://www.census.gov/programs-su/popproj)



## Since the early 1990s, a rising share of older Americans are working

*% of population who are employed*



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS).

“Older Workers Are Growing in Numbers and Earning Higher Wages”

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

## Older workers increasing in Labor Force

(Bureau of Labor Statistics)

In 2023 , 19% of adults ages 65 and older are employed compared to 11% in 1987.

Policy changes have discouraged early retirement

## 6. Ageism is related to talent pipeline

**10**

**Million**

Unfilled Jobs in  
the US  
*Bureau of Labor  
Statistics*

**38**

**Percent**

Hiring  
managers  
admitting to age  
bias in  
reviewing  
resumes  
[\(ResumeBuilder  
, 2022\)](#)

**80**

**Percent**

Hiring  
managers  
admit to  
screening out  
people under  
25 and over 60

SECTION 3

# What works in combatting ageism?

# Research-based strategies to reduce ageism



- 1. Educate ourselves about ageism and implicit bias**
- 2. Foster intergenerational connection and education**
- 3. Advance age-friendly policies**
- 4. Use research-based communications to talk about aging**



# 1. Educate ourselves about ageism and implicit bias



“Because of the messages our brains receive from childhood on, we subconsciously form negative judgments about people based on their age, but just being aware of these biases makes us less likely to act on them and more likely to treat people fairly.”

Start with your yourself:  
take the test

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

# Learn to refute common myths and stereotypes



Great retirement



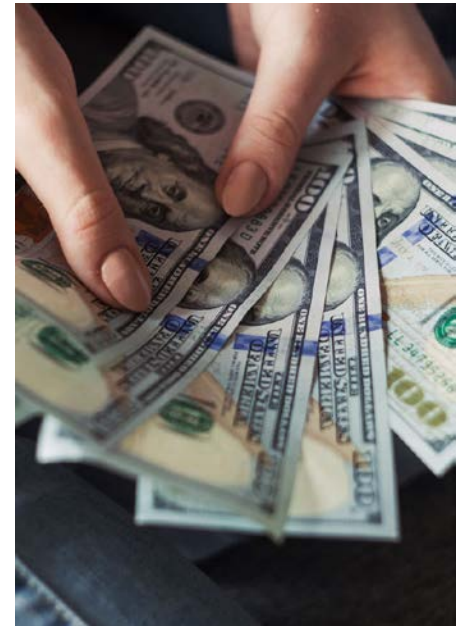
Won't learn



Will leave



Take jobs



Cost too much



## 2. Foster intergenerational connection

What are YOUR ideas?

How can we accomplish or facilitate intergenerational connection?





### 3. Champion policy solutions

- In workforce
- In healthcare
- Age-friendly communities
- Caregiver support
- What public policies do you want to see in your community?

# Policy changes: workforce

- Eliminate graduation dates from applications
- Train managers on implicit bias
- Advocate to include age in DEI policies
- Establish better systems for hiring
- Educate employers on the business case for older workers
- Ensure stimulus dollars are used to upskill, reskill and nextskill older workers
- Strengthen age discrimination laws





# 4. Reframe aging, using research-based communications



- Conducted research
- Mapped messages and language that give us a path forward :
  - **Improved attitudes about aging**
  - **Decreased implicit bias against older people**
  - **Increased understanding of need, and support for public policy**



# Sometimes stories we think are helpful, aren't



“Super senior” stories



Demographic crisis:  
Silver tsunami



The other “ism” |  
comparing to civil  
rights



Compassionate ageism

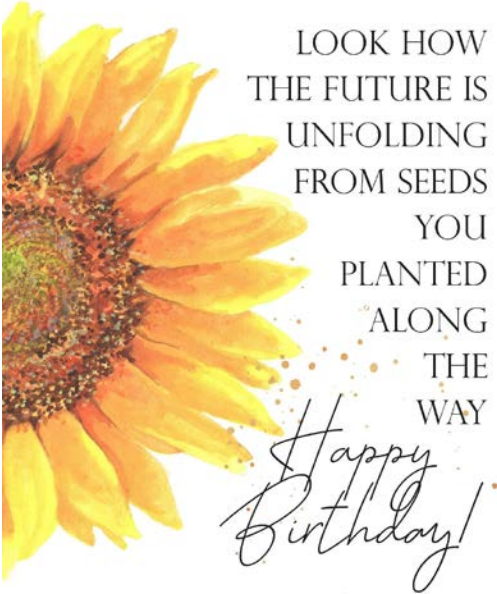
# This concept can be used to make the case for older workers

[Film: Profit from Experience](#)



- ***Value:*** We need to apply our spirit of ingenuity to address the hiring challenges our local businesses are facing.
- ***Building momentum metaphor:*** Older workers have insight, experience, strong communications skills and connections.
- ***Solution:*** Employers can bring on older workers to help address their talent shortages and “**profit from experience.**”

How  
Changing  
the  
Narrative  
used  
Birthday  
cards to  
reframe  
aging



SECTION 4

# Language and images matter



# Demographic change

## AVOID

Silver tsunami,  
grey wave, going  
off the  
demographic cliff

Finite resources |  
zero sum



## INSTEAD USE

People are living  
longer and mostly  
healthier lives  
Birth rates are  
declining

Let's use our ingenuity | re-  
envision what's possible |  
create new policies and  
programs to address a  
changing world



## Instead of these words and cues:

**“Tidal wave,” “tsunami,” and similarly catastrophic terms for the growing population of older people**

**“Choice,” “planning,” “control,” and other individual determinants of aging outcomes**

**“Seniors,” “elderly,” “aging dependents,” and similar “other-ing” terms that stoke stereotypes**

**“Struggle,” “battle,” “fight,” and similar conflict-oriented words to describe aging experiences**

**Using the word “ageism” without explanation**

**Making generic appeals to the need to “do something” about aging**

## Try:

**Talking affirmatively about changing demographics: “As Americans live longer and healthier lives . . .”**

**Emphasizing how to improve social contexts: “Let’s find creative solutions to ensure we can all thrive as we age.”**

**Using more neutral (“older people/Americans”) and inclusive (“we” and “us”) terms**

**The Building Momentum metaphor: “Aging is a dynamic process that leads to new abilities and knowledge we can share with our communities.”**

**Defining ageism: “Ageism is discrimination against older people due to negative and inaccurate stereotypes.”**

**Using concrete examples like intergenerational community centers to illustrate inventive solutions**

# Older adults and aging

## AVOID

Elderly, senior,  
senior citizen

They and them

"Battling" aging,  
anti-aging

Choice, better  
planning, control



## INSTEAD USE

Use older adults |  
persons, or descriptive  
language

Us and we

Acknowledge that aging  
is a normal, dynamic  
process

Improve social context |  
creative solutions



# Ageism

## AVOID

Using the term  
without defining it



Comparing  
ageism to other  
isms



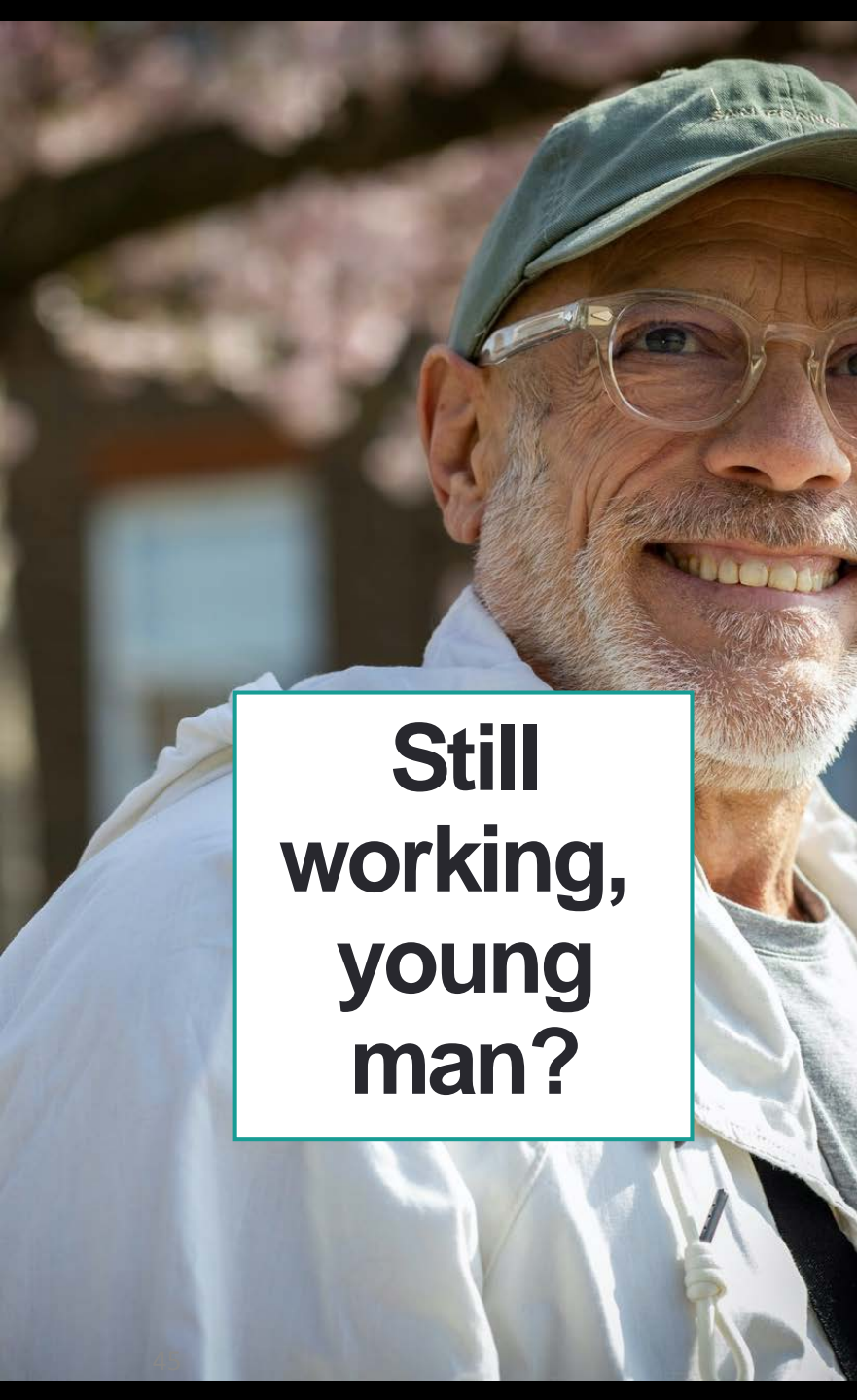
## INSTEAD

Always define and  
explain how it  
works

Talk about ageism  
as a matter of  
justice





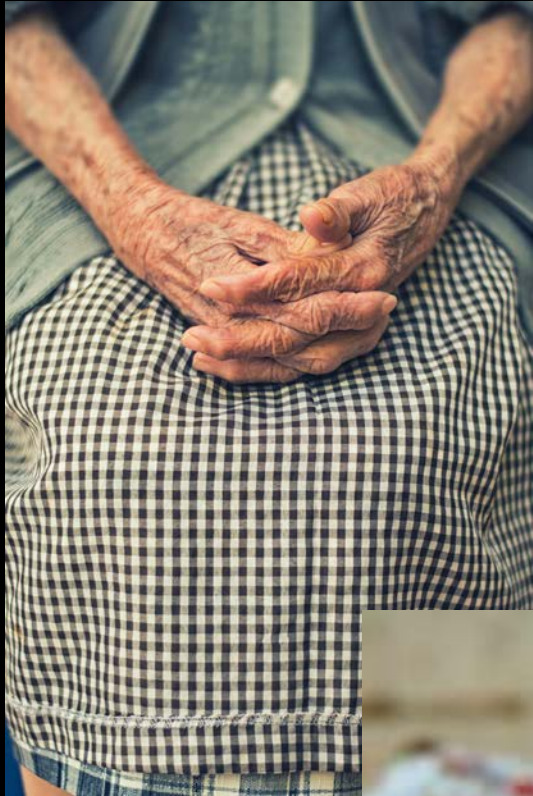


**Still  
working,  
young  
man?**

# And some of the classics...

- "Still..."
- "You look great for your age."
- You don't look a day over...
- Vulnerable, frail...
- "Young man, young lady"
- Elderspeak: Sweetie, honey (in elevated voice)

Instead of...



USE



SECTION 5

# Benefits to Businesses



# RETENTION

In 2014, the median tenure of workers ages 55-64 in all industries was 10.4 years, more than three times the 3.0 years for workers ages 25-34 years (US Bureau of Labor Statistics).

Take less days off, good work ethic

Businesses facing high worker turnover – like retail and restaurants which can see 100% worker turnover in a year – consistently said they prefer to hire older workers





# EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE

Bring a level of experience, critical thinking and sheer knowledge that cannot be taught. In some industries it takes a decade or longer for workers to gain the technical skills necessary to do their job.

Have spent several decades in the workforce, learning and growing as employees and leaders

Can apply skills learned in different industries; see the big picture



# MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS

- Evidence that mixed age teams in the workplace are more productive than teams of workers of the same age (Zwick, Göbel and Fries (2013)).
- Approach decision-making and creativity with their own unique life experience, increasing the range of perspectives in the office and fostering innovation
- When younger workers learn from their older colleagues, and vice versa, bridges are built and stereotypes are broken down



# MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Older employees can serve as mentors to younger staff, fostering knowledge transfer and professional development within the organization.

Seniors in the company can improve organizational resilience. Can offer lessons learned from their previous experience to help organizations navigate changing times.





# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Hiring older workers contributes to a diverse workforce

Can improve creativity, innovation, and decision-making by incorporating different perspectives

Because older workers can face age discrimination in hiring, their ideas and demographic can sometimes be overlooked

Hiring seniors can contribute to a positive and inclusive workplace demonstrating an organization's respect for people of all ages





# Fast facts: Age diversity in the workplace

6%

of companies employ unbiased recruiting processes<sup>1</sup>

48%

of businesses feel other areas of diversity are more significant than age<sup>1</sup>

33%

of executives don't believe age is important to address<sup>1</sup>

89%

of employees age 45+ perform as well as, or better than, younger workers<sup>2</sup>

8%

of companies include age in their DEI strategy<sup>3</sup>

Sources:

1. AARP, Global Insights on the Multigenerational Workforce report (August 2020)

2. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, The Midcareer Opportunity (November 2023)

3. Advisory Board, The 5-generation workforce: How to harness the power of 'age diversity' (April 2022)



# Employers: Hiring

- Consider images and language
- Remove age-identifiers
- Train hiring managers | those screening
- Use skills-based assessments
- Become known as age-friendly

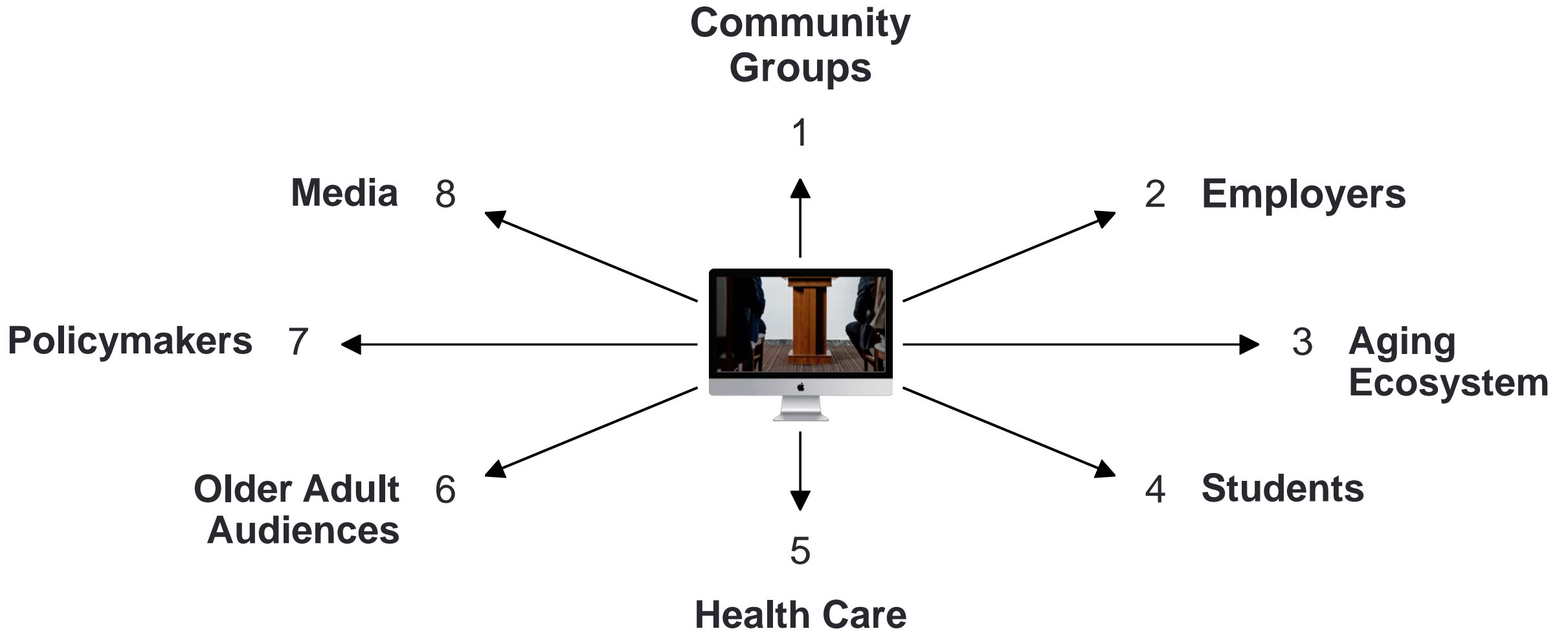


# Employers: Retention

- Include age as part of DEI
- Educate your teams about ageism, stereotyping, etc.
- Invest in staff development for all ages
- Encourage reciprocal mentoring
- Your overall culture and retention strategies



# Potential platforms



For most impact, think: Who has *influence*?



# EDUCATION IS KEY!

- Help to identify ageist biases and stereotypes
- Be aware that age discrimination exists
- How age discrimination presents itself





# Let's connect!

📧 [ageismawarenesshub@outlook.com](mailto:ageismawarenesshub@outlook.com)

🌐 [www.ageismawarenesshub.com](http://www.ageismawarenesshub.com)

📷 [@ageismawarenesshub](https://www.instagram.com/ageismawarenesshub)

# Other Great Resources

Changing the Narrative – <http://changingthenarrativeco.org>

AARP – [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)

Reframing Aging – [www.reframingaging.org](http://www.reframingaging.org)

American Society on Aging – [www.asaging.org](http://www.asaging.org)

EEOC [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)

Your ideas?

Questions?

