

# Ageism and Its Impact on Health



# Objectives

- Explain the definition of ageism
- Recognize examples of ageism
- Describe the impacts of ageism
- Explore communication strategies and resources providers can use for overcoming ageism



# Definition of Ageism

- Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age.
  - Institutional
  - Interpersonal
  - Self-directed
- Ageism is everywhere.
  - **1 in 2** people worldwide are ageist against older people and, in Europe, more younger people report ageism than other age groups.
  - Ageism affects us throughout life and exists in our institutions, our relationships and ourselves.
  - Ageism intersects and exacerbates other forms of disadvantage, including those related to sex, race, disability, and social determinants of health.

# Examples of Ageism



- Attributing forgetting to age
- Belief that older individuals lack technological skills or have no interest in continuing their education
- Depicting older individuals as frail, dependent, and no longer active
- Viewing aging as something to “fight” or “avoid”
- Using ageist talk or elder speak
- Under-treating older patients
- Over-treating older adults

# Risk Factors for being a Target of Ageism

- Being older
- Being care-dependent
- Working in certain professions or occupational sectors, such as high-tech, entertainment, or hospitality sector

# Impacts of Ageism

- Change how we view ourselves
- Erode solidarity between generations
- Devalue or limit our ability to benefit from what younger and older populations can contribute

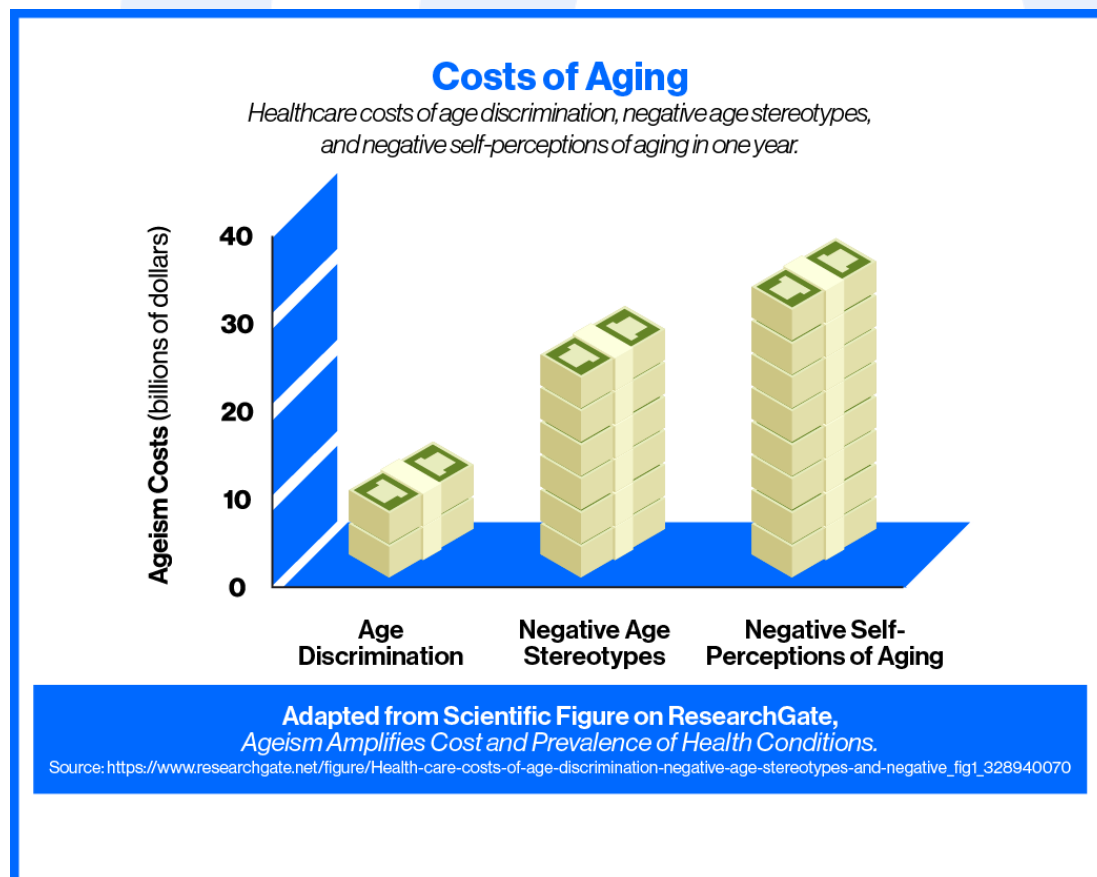
# Impacts of Ageism (Cont.)

- Affects our health, longevity and well-being while also having far-reaching economic consequences.
  - earlier death
  - linked to poorer physical health
  - risky health behaviors
  - poorer mental health
  - a lower quality of life
  - social isolation and loneliness



# The Impacts of Ageism (Cont.)

- A recent study showed that a one-year cost associated with ageism in healthcare in the US was \$63 billion.
- Research calculated that 17.04 million cases of the eight most expensive health conditions among individuals 60 and over can be attributed to ageism.
- This suggests that even a 10% reduction in ageism could result in 1.7 million fewer cases of these health conditions.



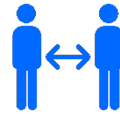


# Impacts of Ageism – Food Insecurity

- The limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.
- Factors influencing food insecurity:



Income



Social isolation



Disparities



Home ownership



Food deserts

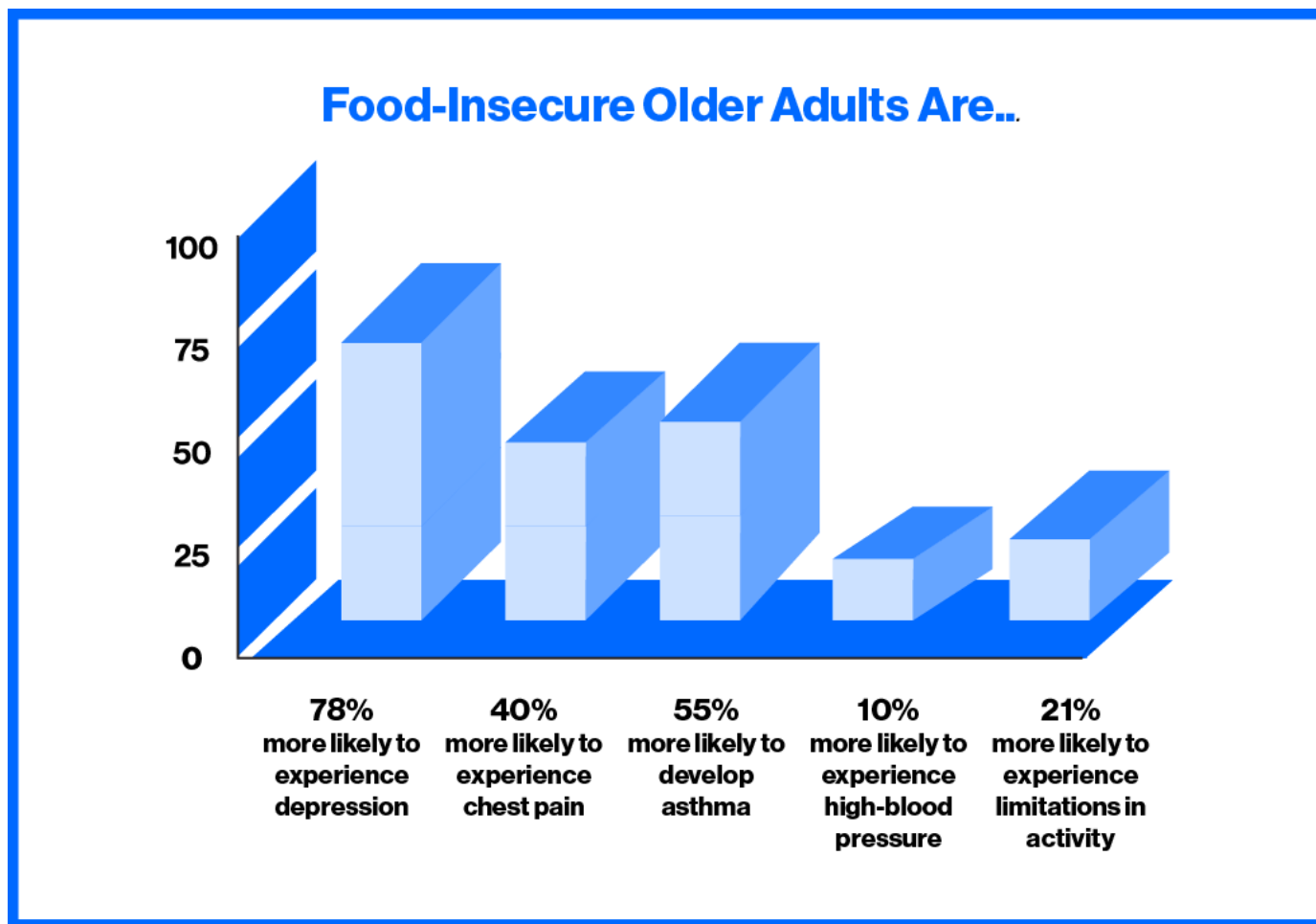


Education



Transportation

# Impacts of Ageism – Food Insecurity (Cont.)



# Strategies to Reduce Ageism



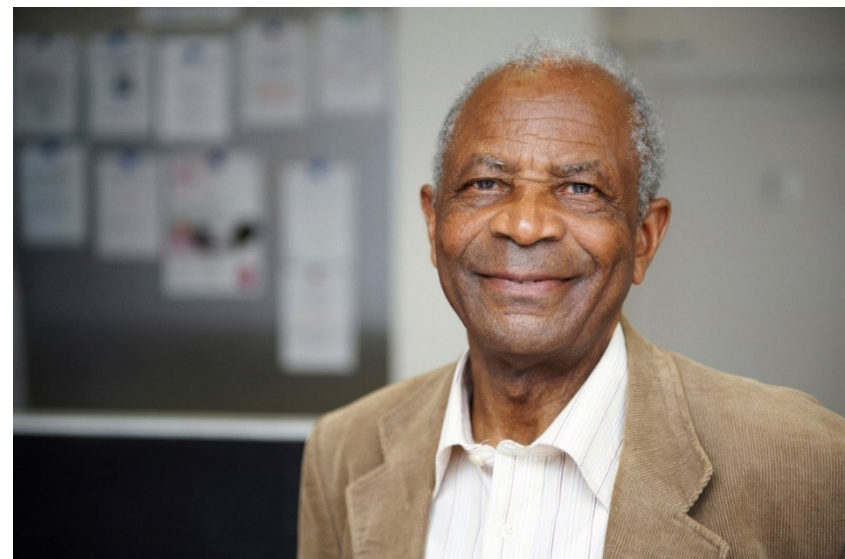
- Policies and laws to reduce inequity and discrimination against any age group.
- Educational interventions that dispel myths and stereotypes and raise awareness of the impact of ageism.
- Intergenerational contact interventions which foster interaction and empathy between age groups.

# Strategies to Reduce Ageism (Cont.)

- View aging as a normal process of living that doesn't necessarily mean disability, disease, and decline.
- Change our perceptions of work and retirement.
- Address institutionalized ageism by removing barriers prohibiting older people from engaging fully in civic and economic activities as part of the community.
- Provide more opportunities for individuals to be involved in the community through civic and social activities such as volunteer work, mentoring, and continuing their education.

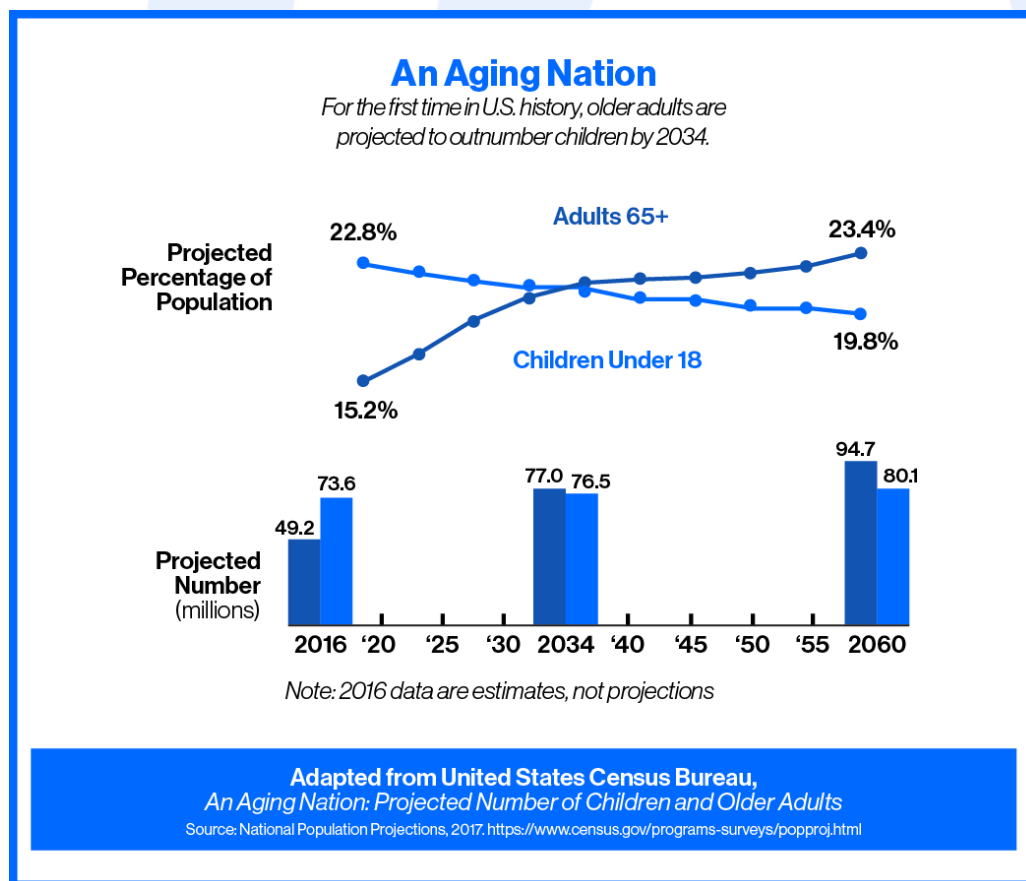
# Strategies to Reduce Ageism (Cont.)

- Assess your organizational policies and practices.
- Review and monitor the production of educational resources, materials, websites, and social media to ensure that they are not ageist.
  - Avoid overgeneralizations
  - Avoid the “problem” frame
  - Avoid euphemisms
  - Use neutral language
  - Avoid othering
  - Choose images wisely
- Utilize local, state, and national resources focused on reducing ageism.



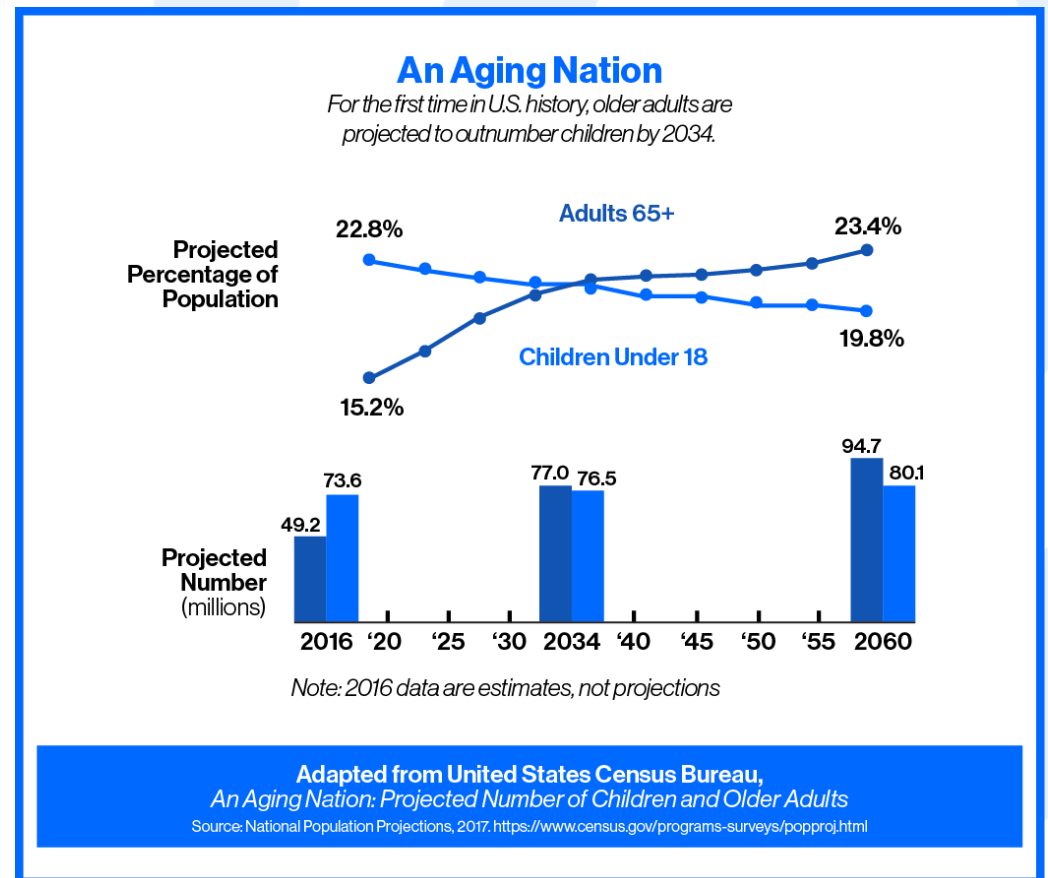
# The Reality of Aging

- The number of Americans ages 65 and older is projected to more than double from 46 million in 2016 to over 98 million by 2060.
- The older population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.
- Forty percent of adventure travelers are over age 50.
- Persons in their 80s now have a fitness coach, use smartphones, and book travel on the web.



# The Reality of Aging (Cont.)

- Older individuals in the last 20 years have contributed to the employment scene by 117% and that number continues to rise.
- Academics have found that older people in multigenerational teams tend to boost the productivity of those around them and such mixed teams perform better than single generation ones.
- An “older economy” is emerging indicating that people over 50 will soon account for 70 percent of disposable income according to a Nielsen study.



# Open Discussion

What strategies are you implementing within your practice to combat ageism in the community?





# Resources

## Changing the Narrative: Ending Ageism Together

- Ageism Facts and Stats  
[https://changingthenarrativeco.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Ageism-Facts-and-Stats\\_LB\\_05.30.18.pdf](https://changingthenarrativeco.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Ageism-Facts-and-Stats_LB_05.30.18.pdf)
- Ageism in Healthcare  
[https://changingthenarrativeco.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/JVAtoCtN\\_AgeisminHealthcare\\_WhitePaper\\_FINAL012821.pdf](https://changingthenarrativeco.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/JVAtoCtN_AgeisminHealthcare_WhitePaper_FINAL012821.pdf)
- Guidelines for Age-inclusive Communication  
[https://changingthenarrativeco.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Guidelines-for-Age-Inclusive-Communications\\_ChangingtheNarrative-1.pdf](https://changingthenarrativeco.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Guidelines-for-Age-Inclusive-Communications_ChangingtheNarrative-1.pdf)

# Resources (Cont.)

## World Health Organization

- Global Report on Ageism  
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240020504>
- Quick Guide to Avoid Ageism in Communication  
<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/quick-guide-to-avoid-ageism-in-communication>
- Q&A on Ageism  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/ageing-ageism>

## Qsource Tools and Resources

<https://qio.qsource.org/resources/>

# Thank You

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