



# Pushing Back Against Ageism

August 16, 2023  
Lunch and Learn Series  
Care Partners of Cook County

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## Presentation Objectives

		
<b>Learn about</b>	<b>Define</b>	<b>Understand</b>
Learn about the unprecedented shift in age demographics & why it matters.	Define ageism and learn to recognize it. What factors contribute to the development of ageism?	Better understand how we can have an impact on ageism in our own lives and our community.


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## Who Are We?

- Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging serves the entire seven counties of the Arrowhead Region – including Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Lake, Koochiching, and St. Louis covering 21,530 sq. miles
- AAAs were created by the federal Older Americans Act (OAA.) The OAA was intentionally designed to mandate that AAAs use the flexibility granted by the Act to ensure that local needs and preferences are taken into consideration and that the resulting local delivery system is tailored to the community.
- AAAA's vision is that all people 60+ in the Arrowhead have access to supportive services and the choice to be independent, active and stay in their own homes as long as possible.

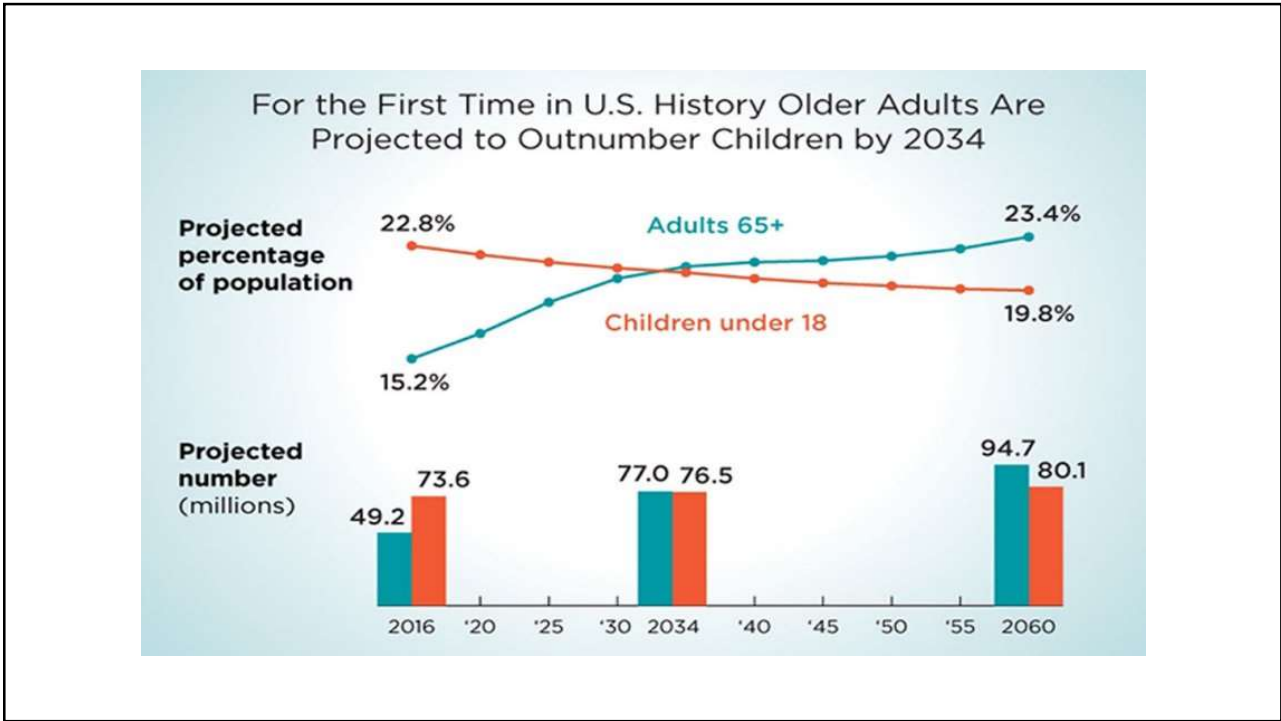


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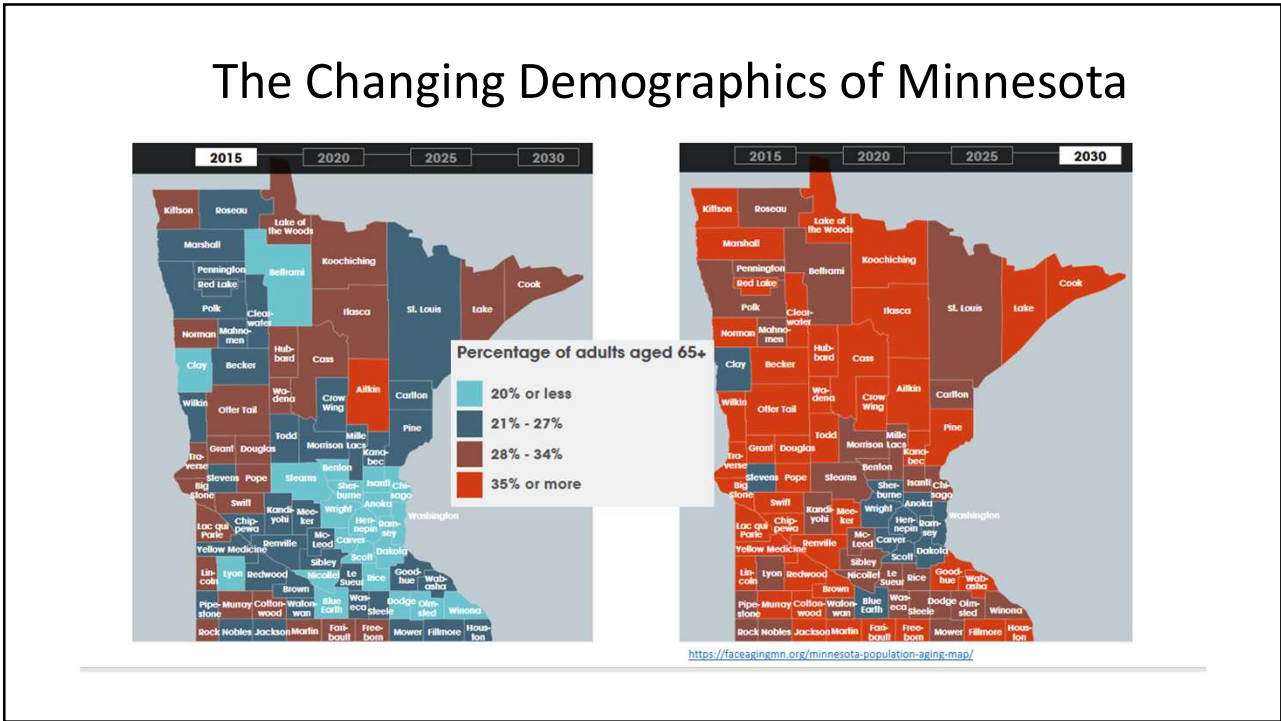


## Objective 1: Recognize Shifting Demographics

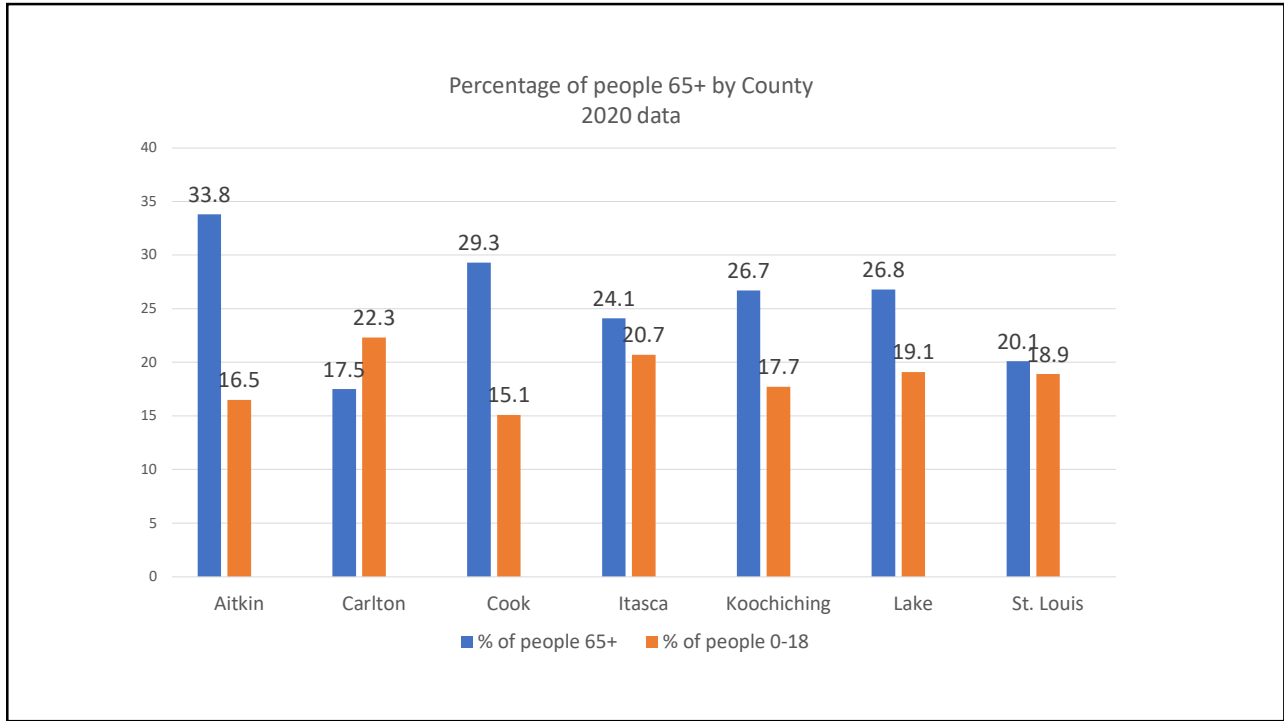
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Objective 2:  
What is Ageism, Where Does  
It Come From, and Where Do  
We See It Show Up?

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## What is Ageism?

According to the Gerontological Society of American, **ageism** is a product of negative, fear-provoking, and false messages about aging. Ageism messages may be based on exaggerations, myths about aging, or the omission of facts, or the messages may simply suggest that youthfulness is more desirable than maturity.



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## How Do We Become Ageist?

- During early childhood, our world expands when new sources of learning and entertainment are introduced to us through picture books, cartoon characters, and through the words and actions of family members and friends.
- As teenagers and adults, our social world and learning environments continue to expand. We continue to receive negative messages about aging, but the sources of the messages change.
- Older people with factual beliefs and positive attitudes about aging may encourage others to be positive and spend time with more positive people. They are also more likely to respond to ageism messages with humor, defiance, or by consciously ignoring or rejecting the ageism messages in other ways.

Source: GSA Ageism First Aid

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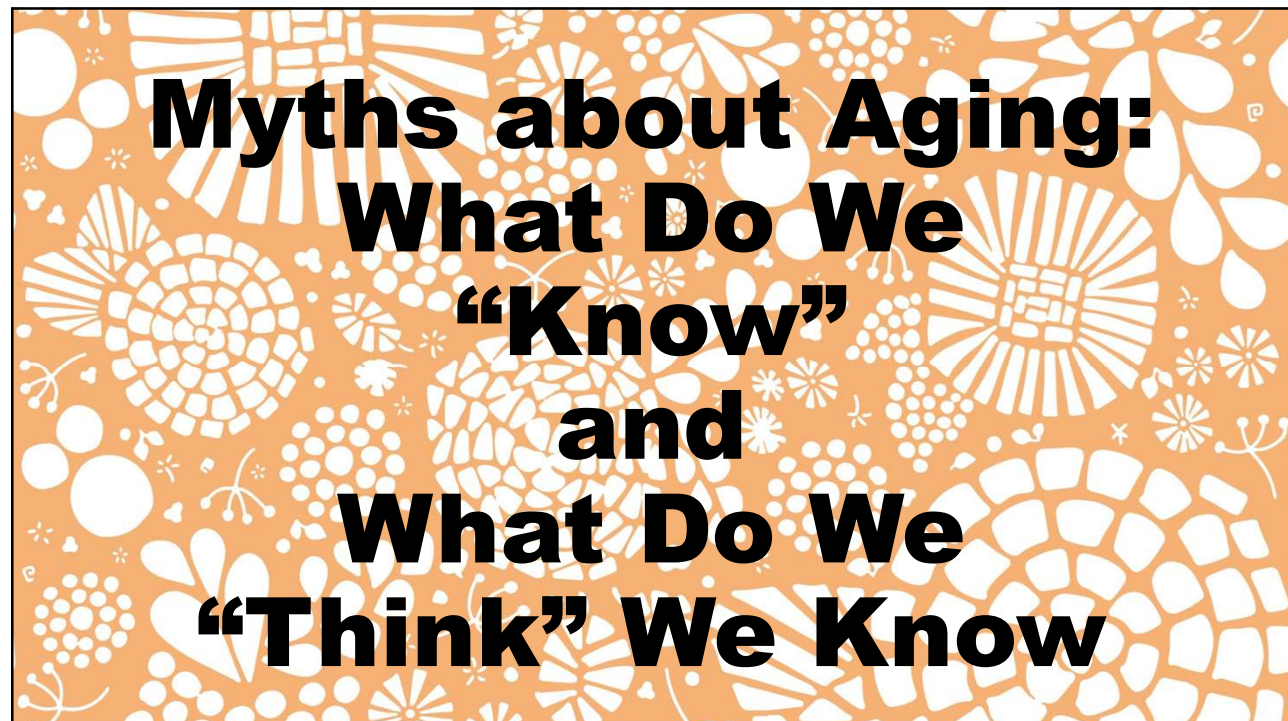
## Where Do We See Ageism?

**Interpersonal:** The idea that one identity/societal group is better than others gives permission for people to disrespect or mistreat individuals (jokes, slurs, stereotypes, threats, physical assaults, bullying). Example: Someone makes a joke at a party.

**Institutional:** The idea that one group is better than another gets rooted in the institutions—the laws, legal system, police, education/schools, hiring, housing, media images, political power—so that discriminatory or unequal practices are condoned and implemented. Example: An older individual is not considered for position because the employer assumes that the older adult is overqualified.

**Internalized:** The idea that one group is better than others gets internalized so that people start to believe the stereotypes, prejudice and negative messages about themselves (that they are weak, too old, not smart or competent). Example: An individual doesn't register for pickleball because they think they won't be able to keep up.

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## Myth #1: Older individuals are pretty much all the same.



**Fact:** The fact is, as we get older, we get **more** unique. We begin our lives shaped by our genetics and influenced by our environment, our family circumstances and the choices of others. As we grow into adulthood, our lives are shaped by our own choices, including our health, employment, whether we have a family, hobbies/habits, etc. As we grow older, we evolve into multi-faceted individuals with our own stories, experiences and lifestyles.

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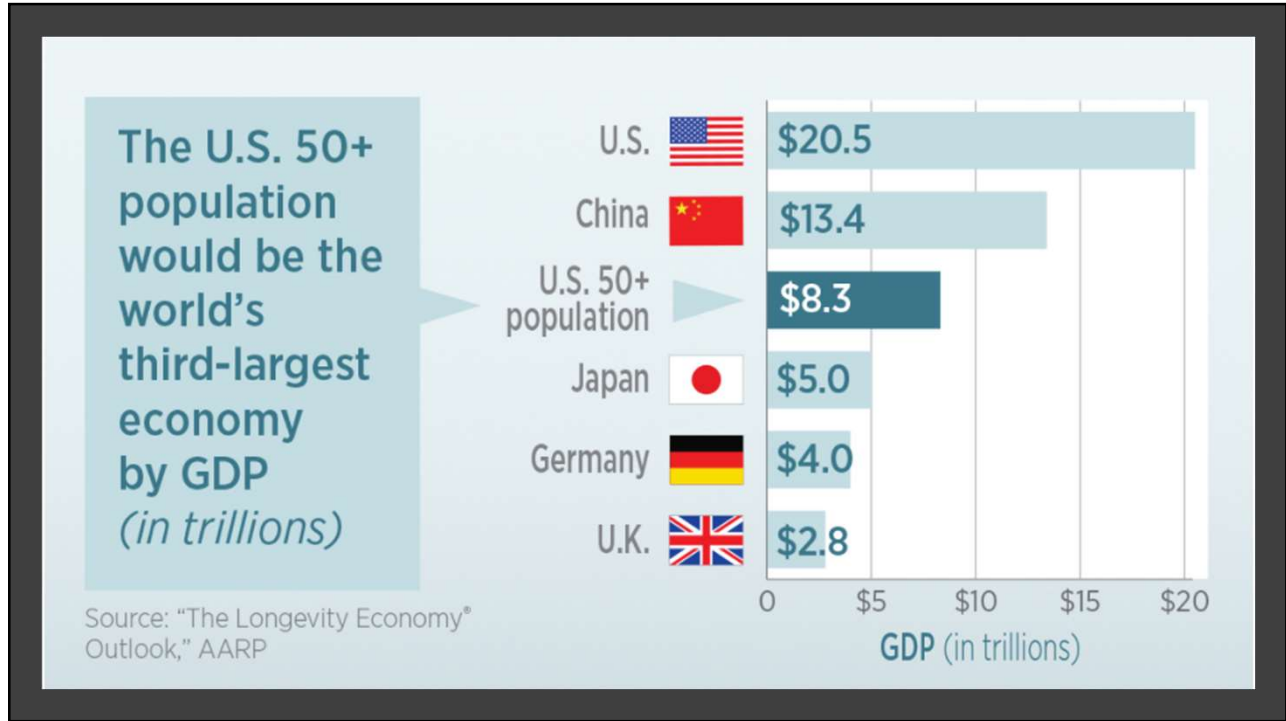
## Myth #2: Older people are an economic burden on society and contribute little.



**Facts:** According to the Longevity Economy® Outlook by AARP:

- **The economic contributions of age 50-plus Americans totaled \$8.3 trillion last year**, which puts them just behind the U.S. and China when measured by gross domestic product.
- **People aged 50-plus contributed \$745 billion worth of unpaid activities** such as volunteering and caregiving across the country.
- **The 50-plus age demographic has a major impact on taxes.** In 2018, the 50-plus age demographic contributed \$2.1 trillion in tax revenue, made up of \$1.4 trillion in federal taxes and \$645 billion in state and local taxes. That figure will increase four times by 2050.

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**Myth 3#:**  
Most older people will end up in a nursing home.

**Fact:** In 2014, there were about 48 million people over age 65 living in the United States. Of those, about 84% of older people lived in homes within the community and were not receiving any support or care services to stay in their home. Fewer than 14% of older people, were receiving support through the Aging Network to stay in their homes.

That means that **fewer than 3% were living in nursing homes** and other long-term care settings.

**Note:** These percentages were calculated using U.S. Census 2014 data, resident counts provided in the Nursing Home Data Compendium 2015, and the AARP Fact Sheet, Long-Term Support and Services 2017.

**Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging**  
A Division of ARDC

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# Myth #4: All older people are unhealthy.



**Fact:**

- While there are physical ailments that become more likely as we get older, getting older does not automatically mean poor health. Many older adults enjoy good health, often better than many younger people. There is no such thing as “normal aging” that applies to all of us.
- Preventive measures like healthy eating, exercising, and managing stress can help reduce the risk of chronic disease or injuries later in life.



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## What Is Normal Aging?

- Eyesight Changes
- Hearing Changes
- Hair Loss or Graying
- Slower Healing
- Less Muscle Mass
- Depletion of Minerals
- Slower Thoughts
- Decreased Metabolism

## What is NOT Normal Aging?

- Dementia and Cognitive Decline
- Depression and Loneliness
- Insomnia
- Mood Changes
- Decreased Activity
- Physical Deterioration

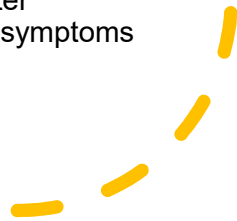
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## Myth #5: Dementia should be expected as a part of aging.



### Fact:

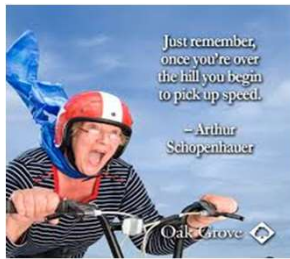
- Although 5.8 million people in the U.S. have dementia, it is not normal aging of the brain.
- There is growing scientific evidence that healthy behaviors may reduce risk for memory loss.
- Certain medical conditions and vitamin deficiencies, like a vitamin B12 deficiency, can mimic dementia symptoms.
- Some prescription and over-the-counter medications can cause dementia-like symptoms also.



# Less of This...



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# More of This...



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## Ageism in the News

### **“Seniors decry age bias; say they feel devalued when interacting with health care providers” – CNN Health**

“Clinicians should not allow their own preconceptions about aging to prevent them from providing optimal care to their older patients, according to the lead author of a study linking everyday ageism to a higher prevalence of physical and mental health problems.” – Renal and Urology News

### **‘They Treat Me Like I’m Old and Stupid’ - KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION**

“The higher a person's score on a scale of everyday ageism experiences, the more likely they were to be in poor physical or mental health, to have more chronic health conditions, or to show signs of depression.” – Michigan Medicine

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## Ageism in the Workplace – What Does it look like?

- Refusing to hire people over or under a certain age
- Asking for dates of education on a job application
- Enacting policies that unfairly privilege one age group over another
- Viewing older people as out of touch, less productive, or stuck in their ways
- Viewing younger people as unskilled, irresponsible, or untrustworthy
- Bullying or harassment
- Making assumptions based on employee’s age and offering opportunities to younger staff

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## How common do you think workplace age discrimination is?

Approximately two thirds (64%) of older workers ages 45–74 say they have seen or experienced age discrimination at work. Of those, 92% say it is somewhat or very common. In addition, older workers ages 60–74 say they have not been hired due to their age (25% for workers ages 60-74 compared to 17% for workers ages 45-59).

Source: Staying Ahead of the Curve 2013: AARP Multicultural Work and Career Study Perceptions of Age Discrimination in the Workplace – Ages 45-74 (Washington: AARP, 2014)

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## Impact of Ageism on Health

- Ageism has harmful effects on the health of older adults. Research by Levy et al. shows that older adults with negative attitudes about ageing may live 7.5 years less than those with positive attitudes.
- Ageism has been shown to cause cardiovascular stress, lowered levels of self-efficacy and decreased productivity.
- Socially ingrained ageism can become self-fulfilling by promoting in stereotypes of social isolation, physical and cognitive decline, lack of physical activity and economic burden.
- Negative attitudes about providing long-term care for those who need it also make it difficult to recruit paid care workers in many countries.

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## Ageism scenarios

## Using What We have Learned So Far



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### Community

George is a widower who lives alone. He often uses public transportation to get to his doctor appointments, pick up his groceries, and run errands. George utilizes a walker to get around. George requires assistance to board the bus. On this particular day, the bus driver is running late and is impatient and obviously frustrated at having to help George. Other passengers on the bus are getting upset that the bus is delayed in departing from the bus stop. George can tell that both the driver and passengers are irritated. George feels like a burden and that he is unwelcome. He is hesitant to use the bus route in the future.

Is this an example of ageism?

What negative consequences might arise from this situation?

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## Healthcare

Helen has been experiencing depression for a several months and finally decides to address her concerns with her primary care physician. Dr. Swenson listens to Helen describe what she has been feeling and suggests that it is not uncommon for older adults to feel depressed and lonely in later life and suggests that she should try to get out and have more fun.

Is this an example of ageism?

What negative consequences might arise from this situation?

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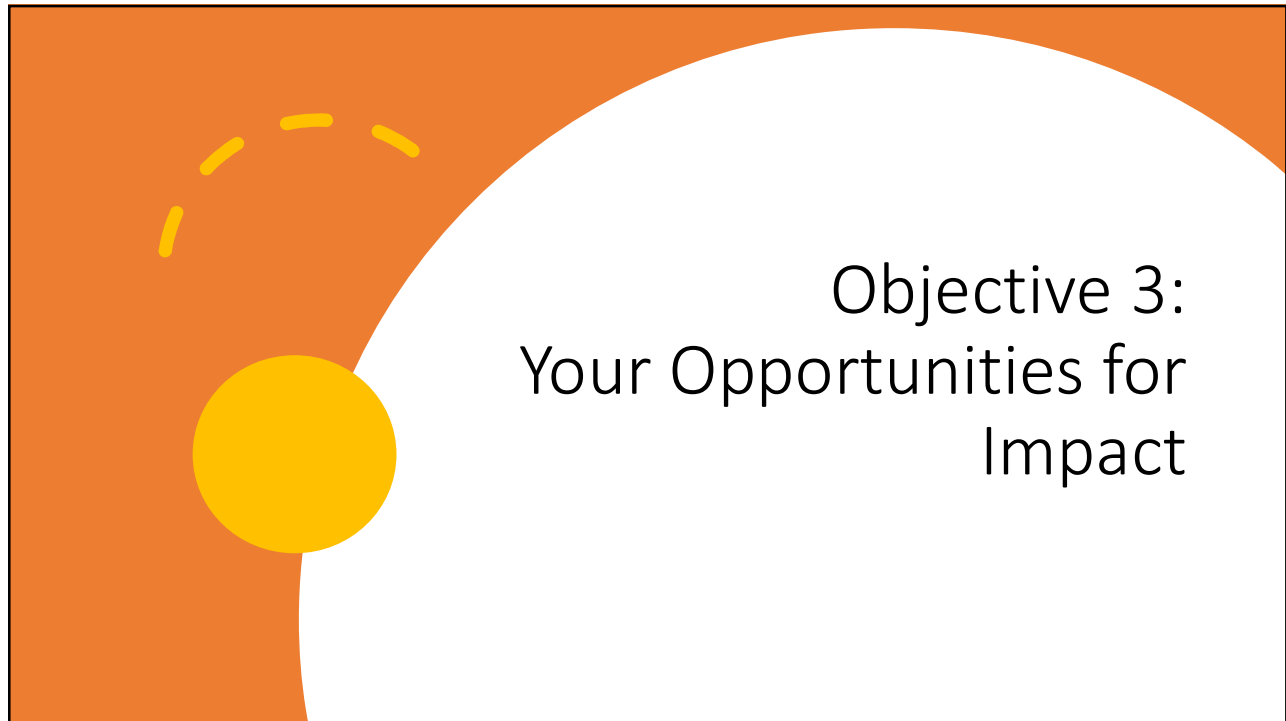
## Workplace

Jim is 62 years old and has worked for his employer for the last 15 years. Jim is interested in learning some new platforms that are being utilized in his field and pursuing additional training. Jim's employer assumes that Jim would not have interest in taking on new responsibilities or taking advantage of some upcoming training at an industry conference. As a result, Jim's employer has offered the upcoming opportunities to several younger employees.

Is this an example of ageism?

What negative consequences might arise from this situation?

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## What Can You Do to Confront Ageism?

1. Be aware of biases in the media and in your own professional practice with people of all ages
2. Take time to learn about the aging process and adopt an understanding of maturation and development rather than decline.
3. Practice strategies to speak up against stereotypes, such as asking clarifying questions, like "What do you mean?"
4. Contribute to an Age Friendly Community.
5. All of the above.

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## How to Speak Up Against Stereotypes

1. Assume good intent and explain impact. "I know you meant well, but that hurts."
2. Ask a question. "What do you mean?"
3. Interrupt and re-direct. "Let's not go down that path." or "Let's not go there."
4. Broaden to Universal Behavior. "I don't think that's a 'Mexican thing.' That can apply to anyone."  
[Of course, you can replace "Mexican" with gay / black / old lady / Polish / Jewish / redneck / old man / Methodist / liberal / conservative / etc.]
5. Make it Individual. "Do you mean all managers, or are you speaking of someone in particular?"
6. Say "OUCH!" People don't always realize how harsh their words can come across. Saying, "ouch" can help a person realize how critical they sound without being confrontational.

Source: Certified Diversity Educator, Rev. Michael J.S. Carter michaeljscarter@gmail.com



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## Consider Implementing a Community Respect and Inclusion Pledge\*

I hereby pledge to respect and include all people, regardless of age, by

- ... learning more about aging and the experience of older adults;
- ... gently educating people when they make demeaning comments about older adults;
- ... making no assumptions about the age of slow or bad drivers;
- ... holding doors for all people because it is the polite thing to do;
- ... helping someone or giving up my seat because they need it, not because they are old; and
- ... never telling another person – or myself – “you’re too old for that!”

\*Age Friendly Edmonton

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## Time for Action!

- Schedule an "Age Friendly 101" presentation for your next organizational meeting or event.
- Nominate a business or organization for the Aging Impact Award.
- Request a consultation with an Age Friendly Planner to incorporate an Age Friendly Lens into your work.
- Request a customizable article on Age Friendly work in your newsletter or social media.
- Convene community stakeholders to discuss the issue.
- Get support in pursuing an Age Friendly Designation in your community.
- **Attend the upcoming Age Friendly Minnesota Conference and Regional Exchange at the end of September**
- **Register for the Aging with Gusto Community Discussion in September hosted by Care Partners of Cook County and AAAA.**

To make a request, email [agefriendlyarrowhead@ardc.org](mailto:agefriendlyarrowhead@ardc.org)



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## Aging with Gusto – Community Discussions on Aging

Aging with Gusto strives to ignite more positive views of aging. And there's never been a better time. More and more people are living to 100—and they're doing so with more "gusto" than ever. How we think about aging matters: Research shows that people with more positive views of aging live an average of seven-and-a-half years longer than those with less positive views and have better health outcomes. (Levy, 2002)

That's why Aging with Gusto discussions are so important.

Aging with Gusto discussions:

- Encourage more positive views of aging.
- Heighten appreciation for the capacity of people of all ages to contribute in their families and communities.
- Increase awareness of ideas, behaviors and practices that are based on misconceptions and biases about older people.
- Develop ideas for how to
  - "age with gusto."

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## Aging Impact Award *for businesses & organizations*


- **GOAL**
- **Strengthen** the network of businesses responding to the needs of older adults in the community. **Reach** toward an Age Friendly Minnesota
- **CRITERIA**
- Business or Community Organization in the 7-county Arrowhead Region that is responding to the needs of older adults by providing an innovative service; adapting or making improvements to the physical space; marketing to older adults; hiring practices; training and customer experience.
- **NOMINATE SOMEONE TODAY!**
- Email [agefriendlyarrowhead@ardc.org](mailto:agefriendlyarrowhead@ardc.org) to request a nomination form. Nominations will be accepted on a rolling basis and awarded bi-annually.

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## Check Out Age Friendly Resources


**COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS**



**Parks and Public Spaces**  
Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages: A Step-by-Step Guide (D20447)




**AARP Walk Audit Tool Kits**  
Self-Service Guide (D20381)  
Leader Guide (D20382)



**AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities**  
An Introductory Booklet (D19860)


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**INFORMATION, INSTRUCTIONS and IDEAS**



**AARP Roadmap to Livability**

1. Roadmap to Livability (D20361)
2. Community Listening Session Tool Kit (D20362)
3. Housing Workbook (D20363)
4. Transportation Workbook (D20364)
5. Health Services and Community Supports Workbook (D20365)
6. Economic Development Workbook (D20366)




**Where We Live**

Book 3: 100+ Examples From America's Local Leaders (D20439)

Book 2: 100+ Ideas From America's Community Leaders (D20336)

Book 1: 100+ Ideas From America's Mayors (D20258)



**Community Engagement**  
Engaging the Community to Create Community (D20461)

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## CONTACT US!

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