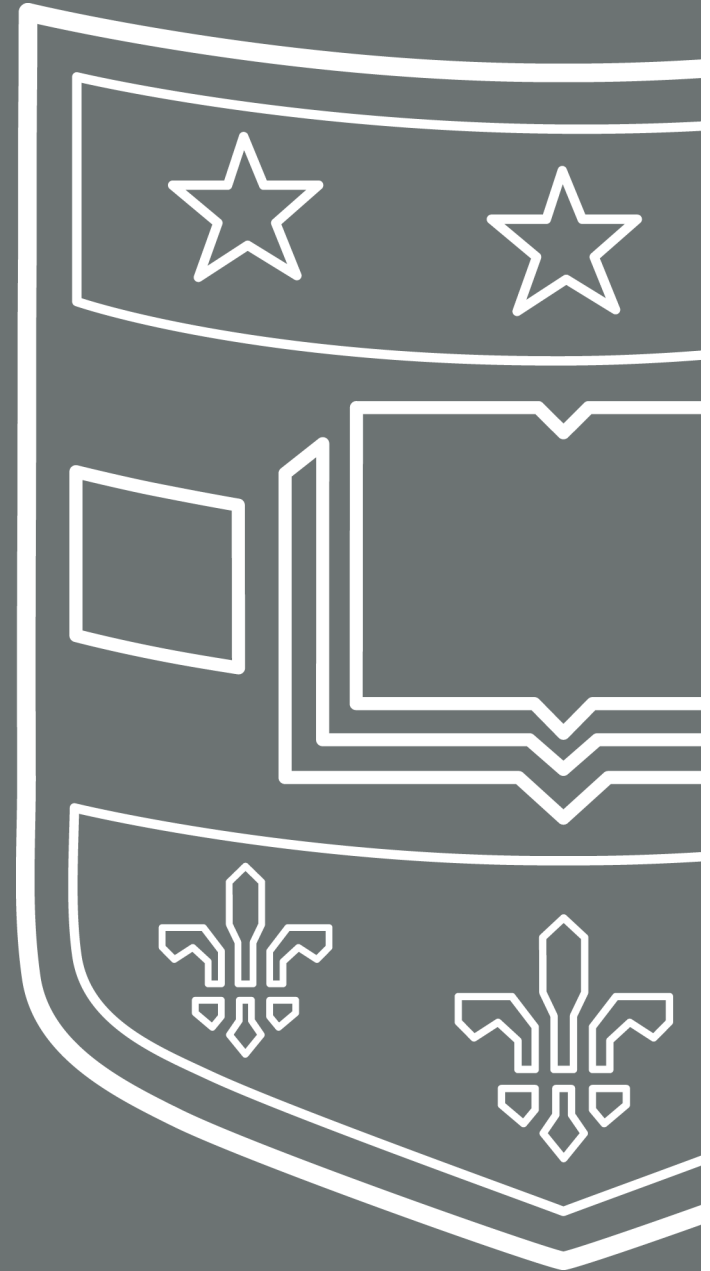


Reframing Aging

Nancy Morrow-Howell

Washington University in St. Louis



Today's Agenda



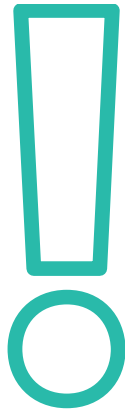
- Aging 101 REFRAMED
- Confronting Ageism
- Best communications practices to reframe aging
- Q & A



Why Framing Matters

Framing Is about Choices

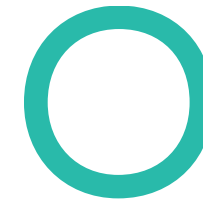
Frames are sets of choices about how information is presented.



What to emphasize

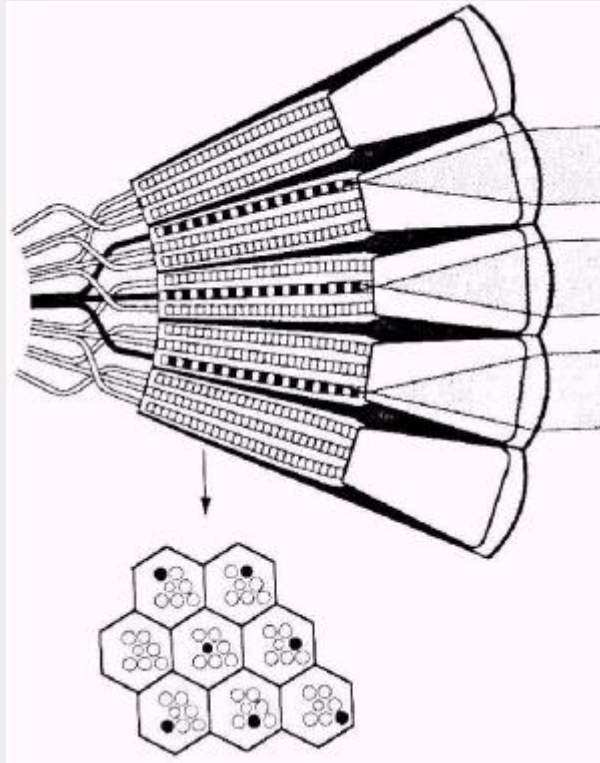


How to explain it



What to leave
unsaid

AGING 101



A new lens on aging

- Social construction of AGE
- Heterogeneity of the older population
- Multiple determinants of health
- Long lives, unequal distribution
- Age interacts with other risk factors
- Ageism hurts all of us
- Death rate is still 100%

AGING 101

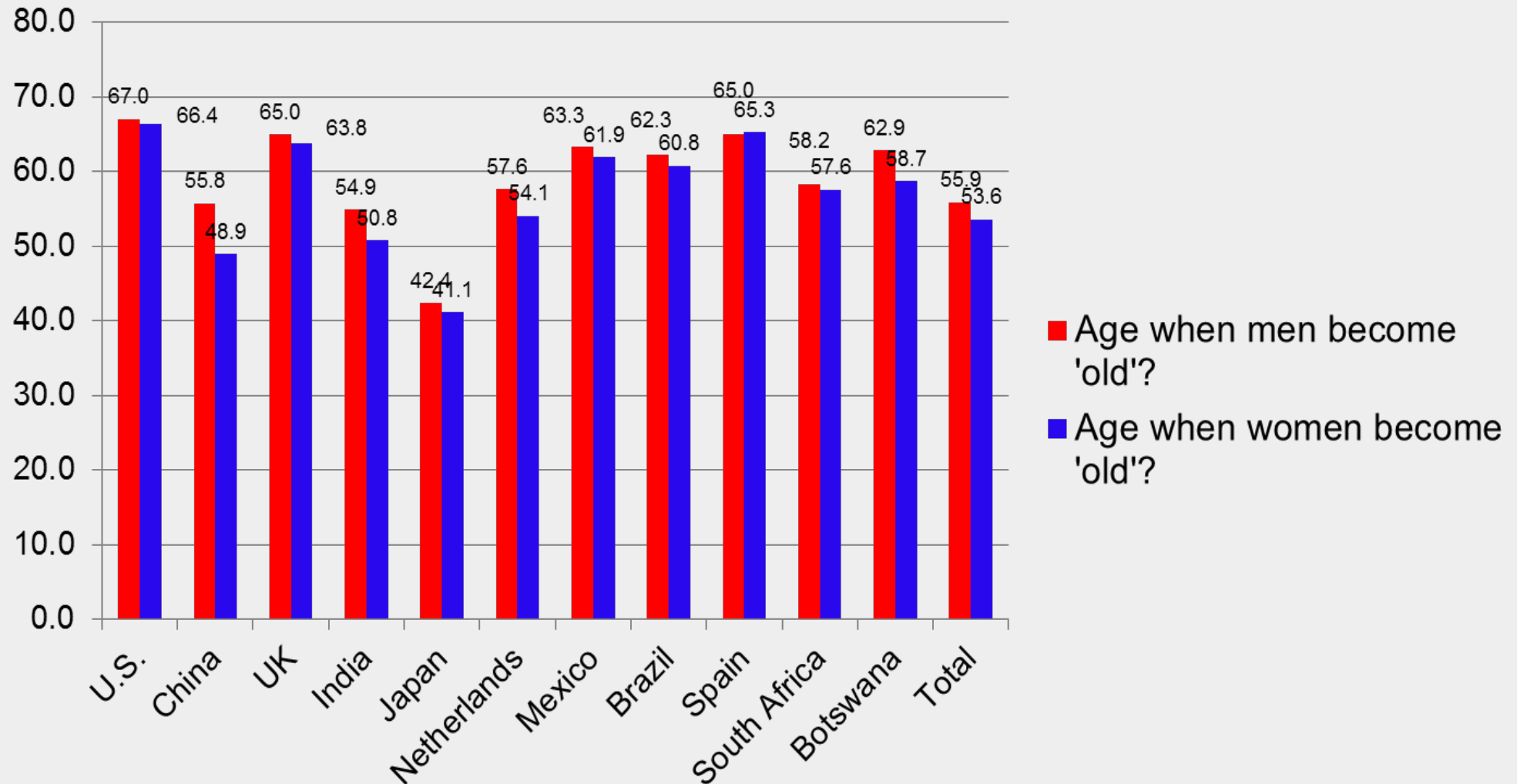
Social construction of AGE





At what age does a person become “old”?

A cross-national survey: When does a person become old?



Source: Sloan Center on Aging & Work (2014). unpublished data from the 2010 Generations of Talent Study. N-1589

How old is old?



- Aging is a biological, psychological, and social phenomenon -- and chronological age is a poor indicator.
- Where did we get “65 years” any way??!
- Age is **socially constructed**: ideas about aging and “old” are created by society and culture more than by biology

The frame



We invented what it means to be OLD -- we can reinvent it.

AGING 101



Social construction of AGE: Reinvent aging

Heterogeneity of the older population



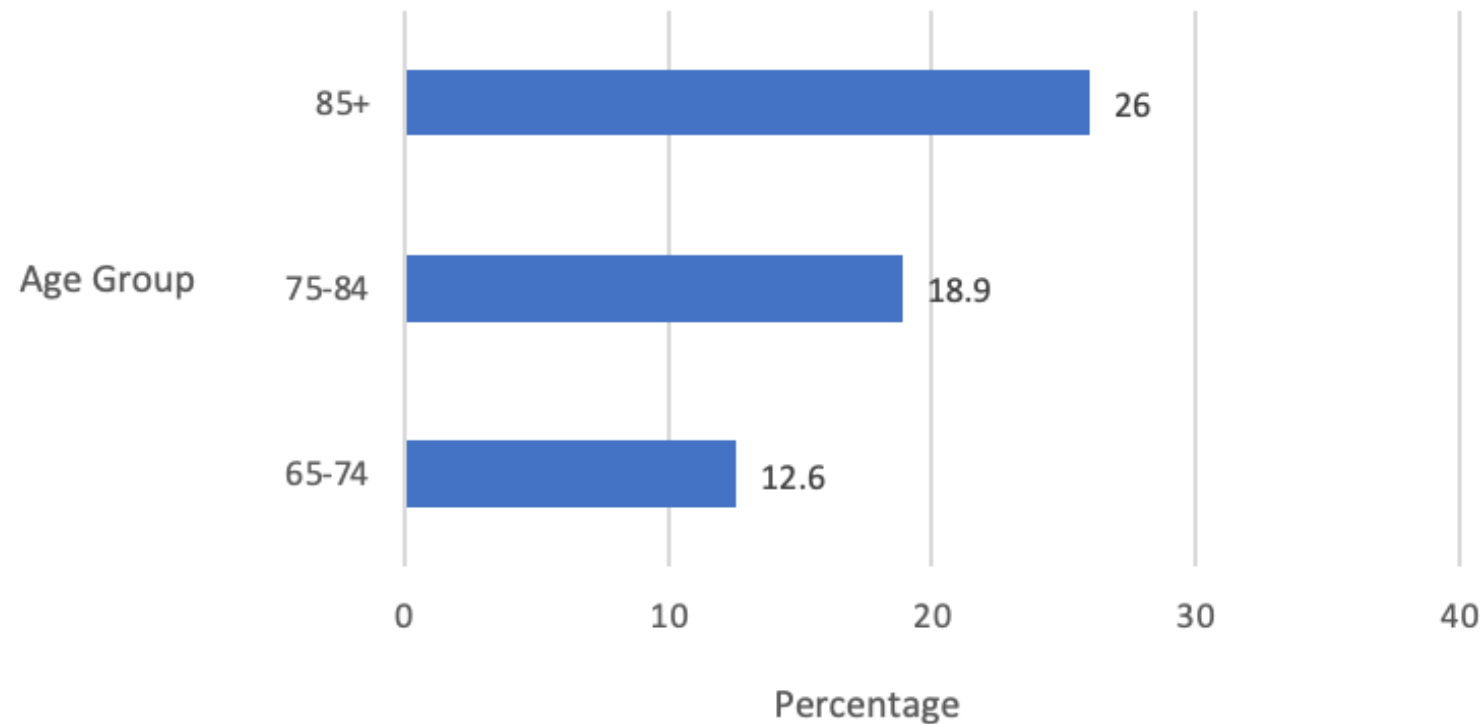
Heterogeneity

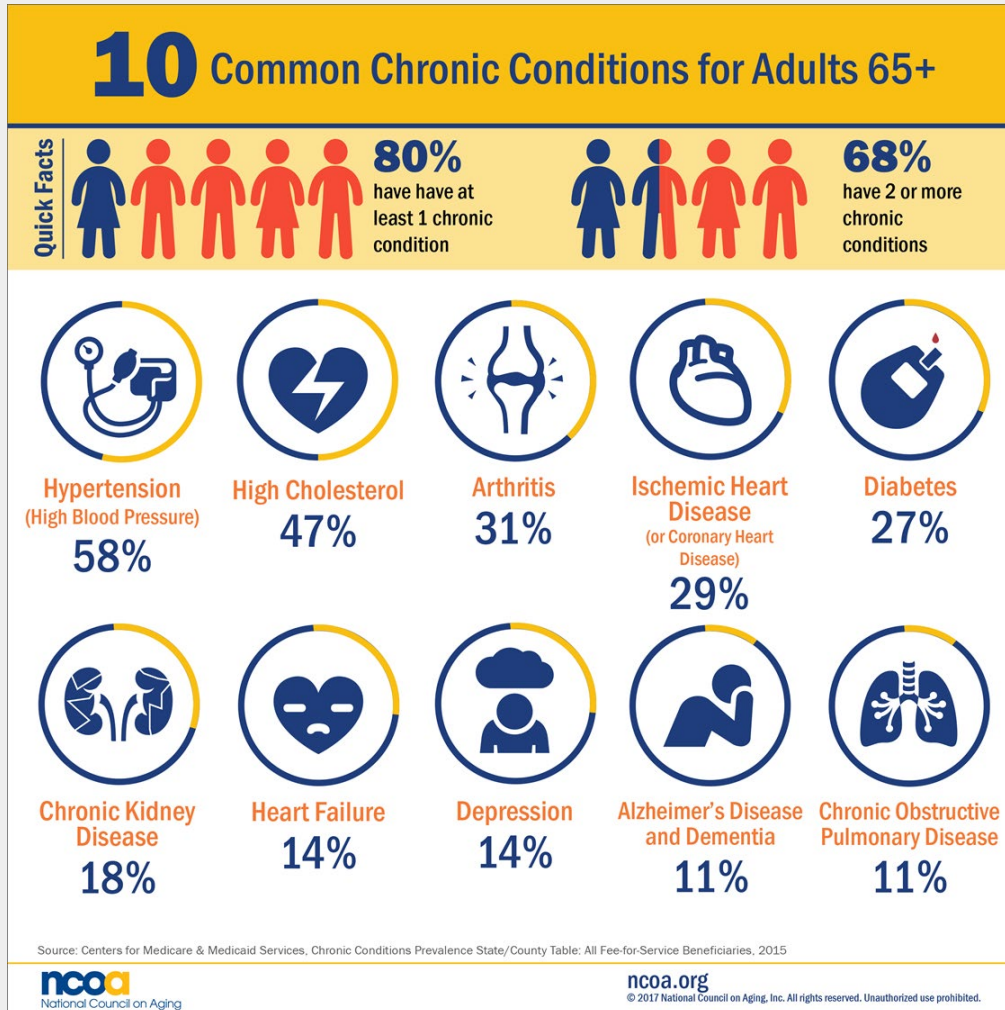


- There is great variation within the older population.
- Consider the differences between someone 65 and someone 85 (often termed 'the elderly').
- What about the difference between one 80-year-old and another?
- How to avoid this overgeneralization?



Percentage of medicare beneficiaries age 65 and over who 1-2 limitations in performing activities of daily living (ADL), by age group, 2017





WHAT PERCENT OF ADULTS 65+ DO NOT HAVE THIS CONDITION?

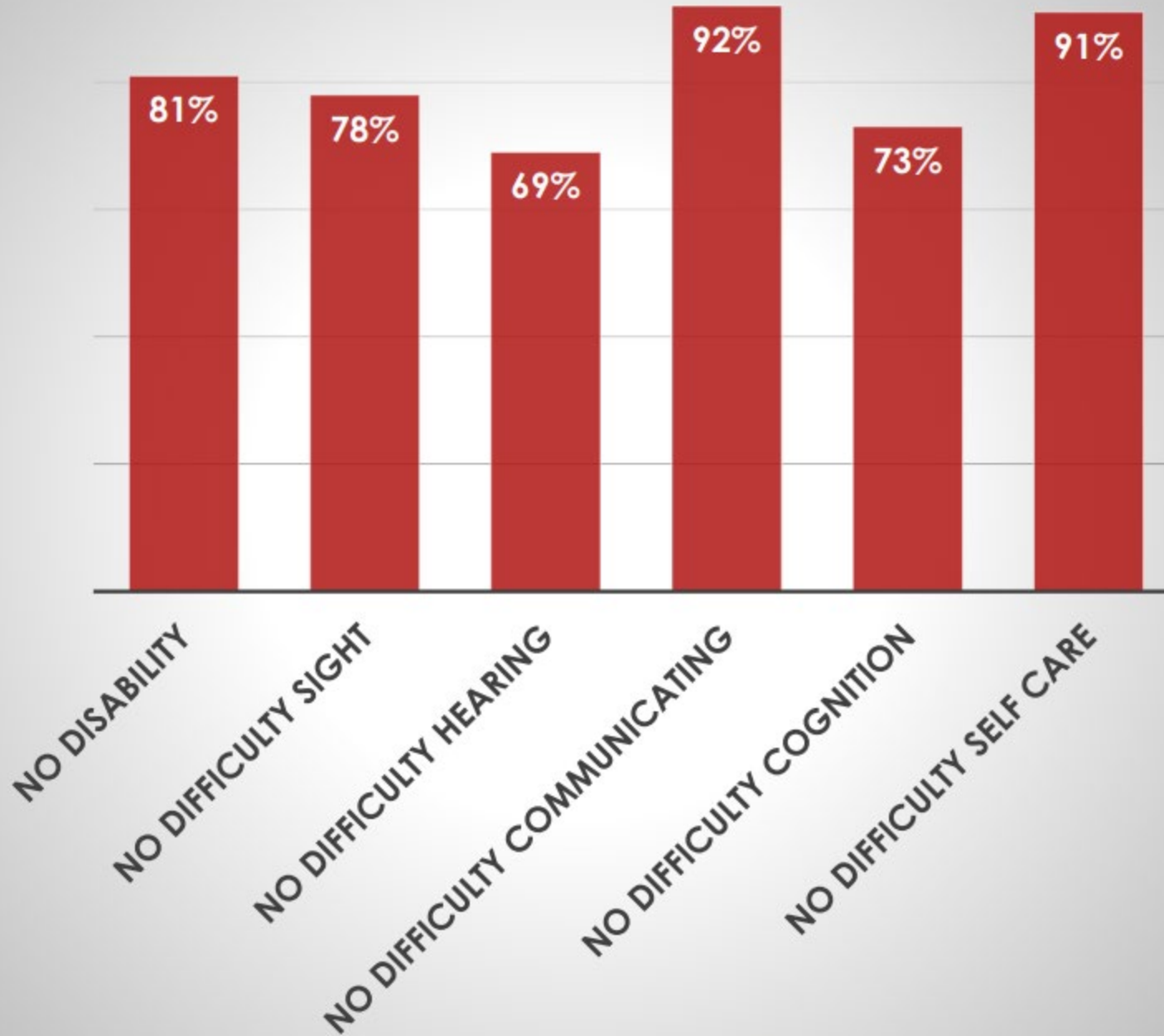
86% do not have heart failure

69% do not have arthritis

89% do not have pulmonary disease

89% do not have Alz or dementia

These percentages vary a lot by age group



Percent of 65+ population with NO DISABILITY

Administration on Aging, 2021

The frame



We can't treat people over the age of 65 as a monolithic group.

There exists disabilityas well as much capacity.

Tell the full story; tell an accurate story

AGING 101



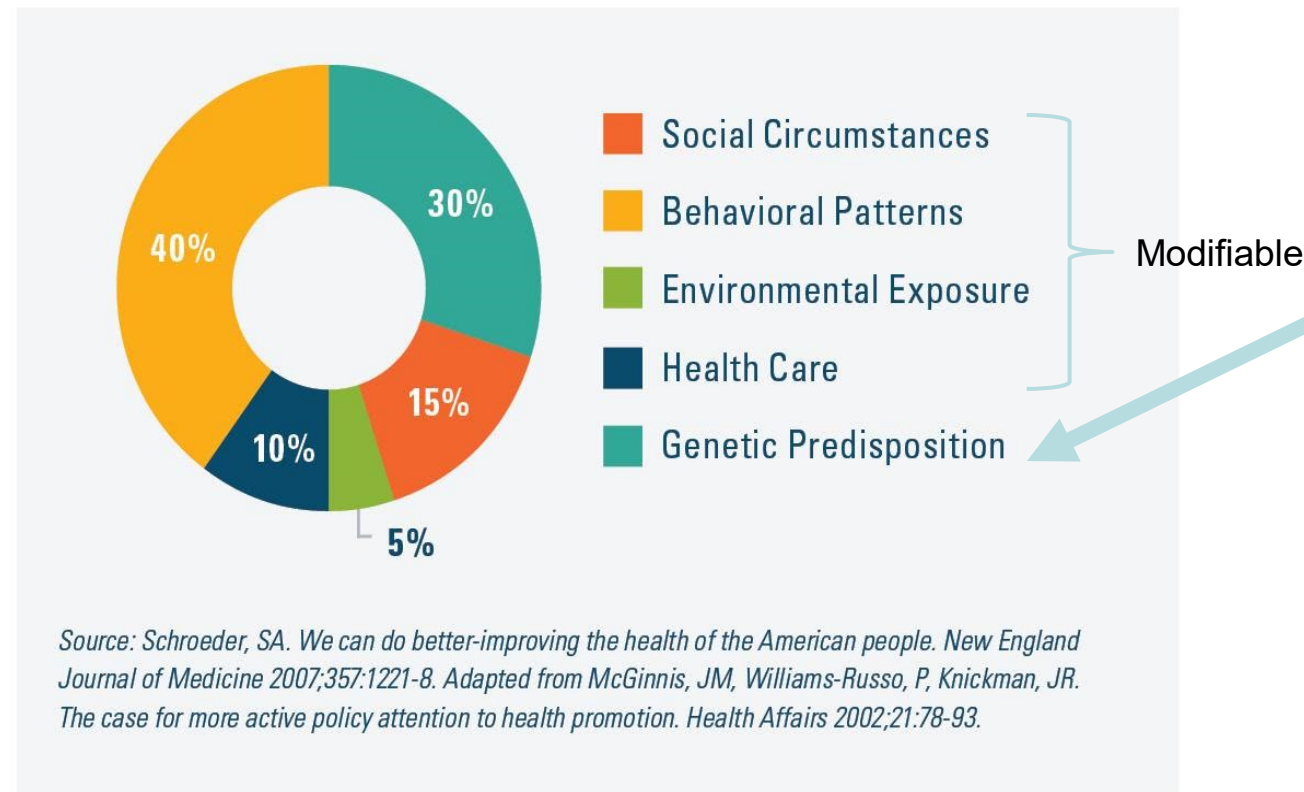
Social construction of AGE: Reinvent aging

Vast variation: Tell a fuller, more accurate story

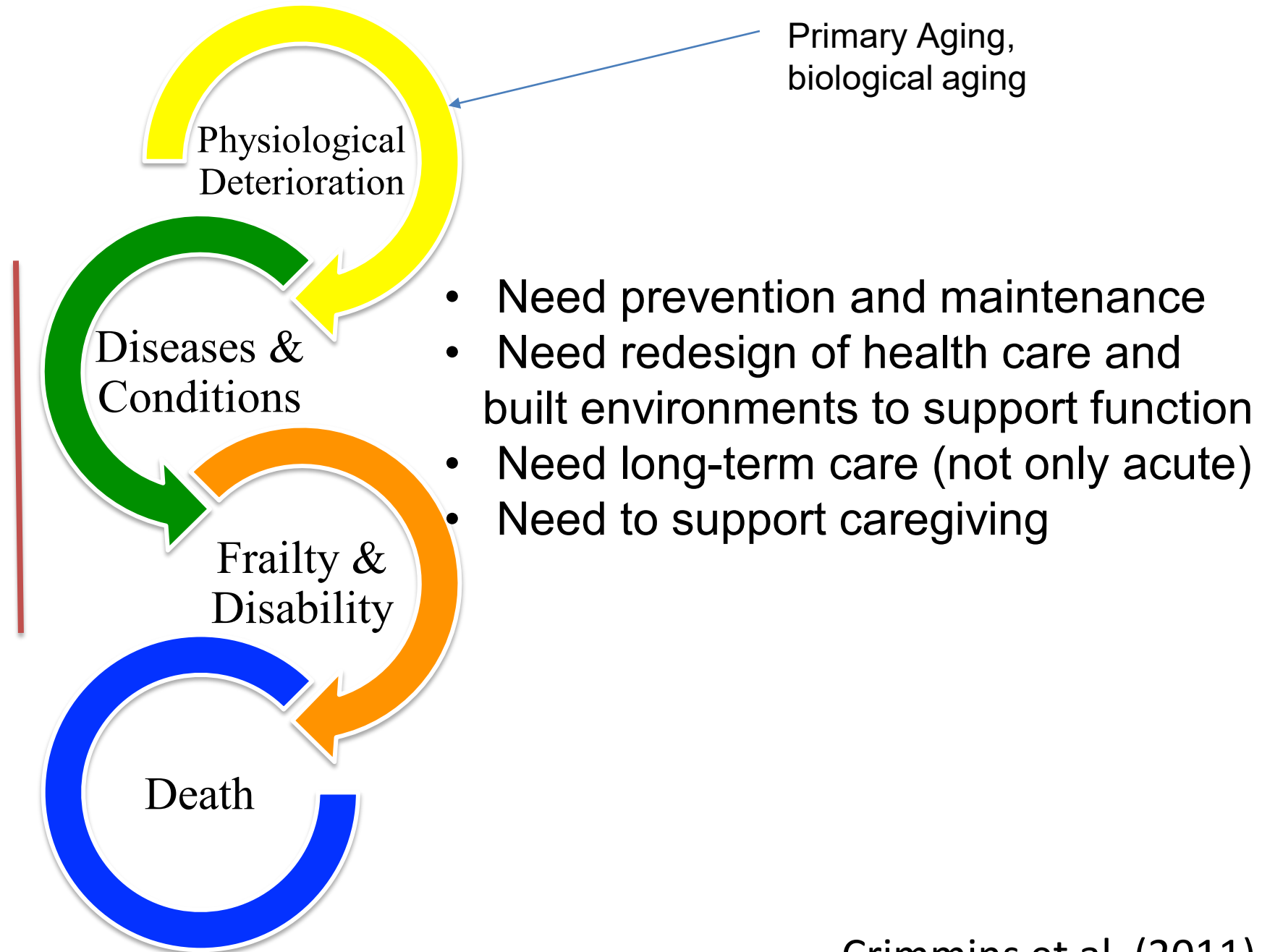
Multiple determinants of health

Factors affecting health

Figure 3. Factors Contributing to Premature Death



The aging process



The frame



We can manipulate the most powerful factors that produce long and healthy lives.

We can design for longer life (policies, programs, expectations, attitudes).

AGING 101



Social construction of AGE: Reinvent aging

Vast variation: Tell a fuller, more accurate story

Multiple determinants: Design for health

Long lives, unequal distribution

The average life expectancy in the United States in 2020 is:



A. 71.8

B. 74.2

C. 77

D. 79.8

The average life expectancy in the United States is:



A. 71.8 ← Black Males

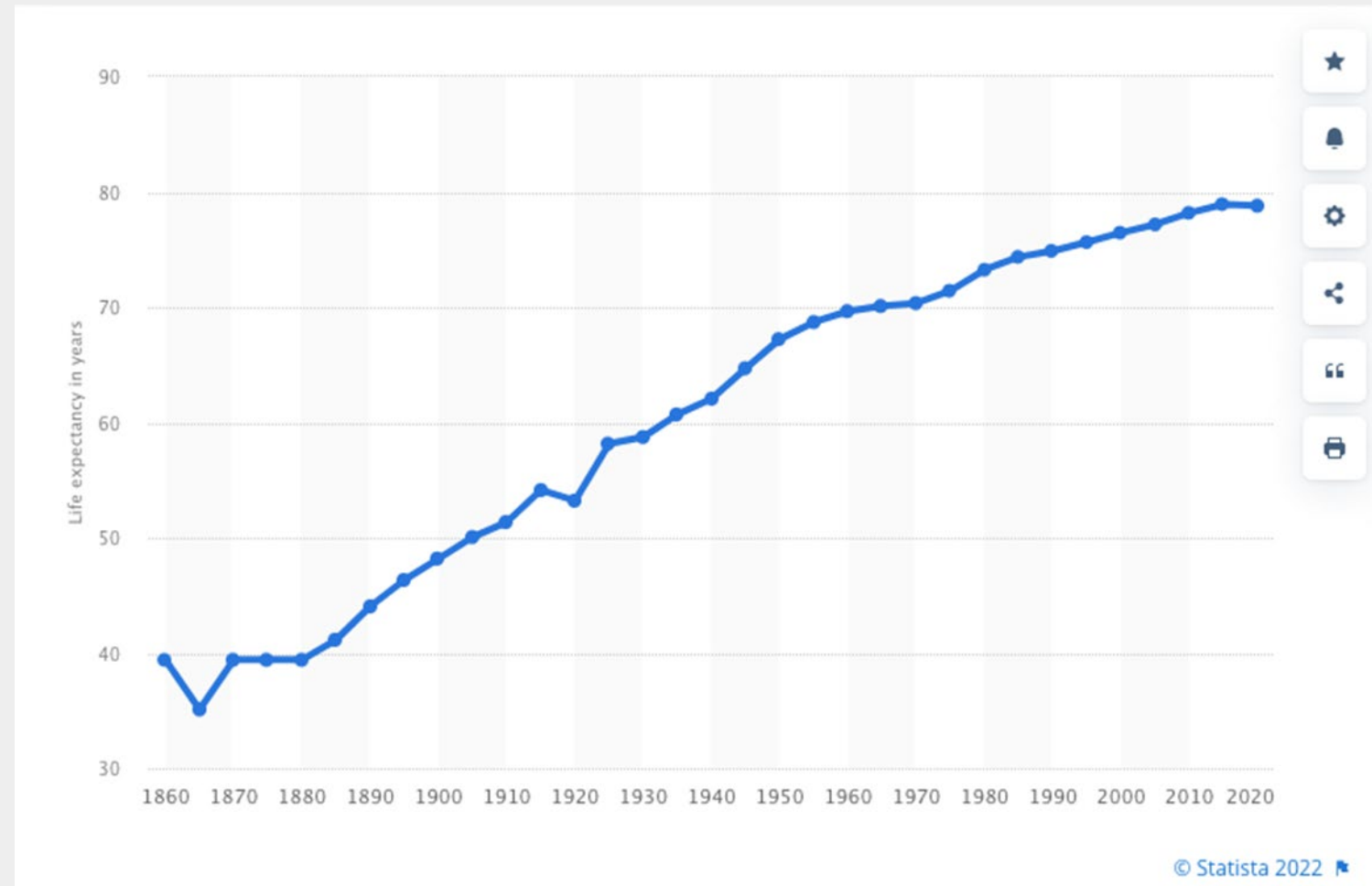
B. 74.2 ← Males

C. 77.0

D. 79.9 ← Females

We are living longer

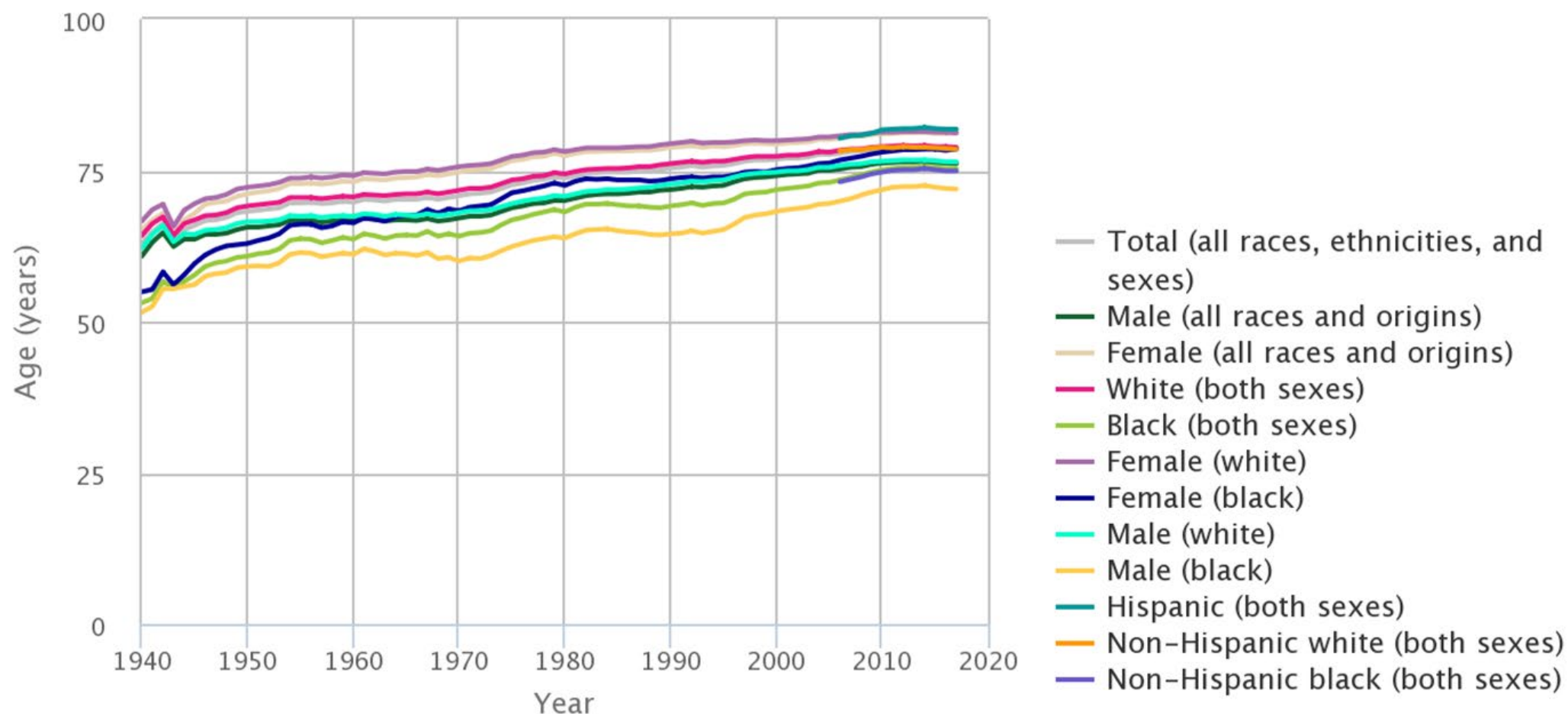
Life expectancy (from birth) in the United States, from 1860 to 2020



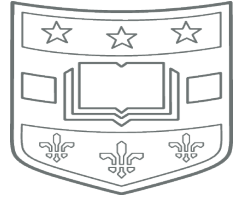
We are not all living as long



Exhibit 1. Life expectancy at birth in the U.S. by sex, race, and ethnicity, 1940–2017



The frame



We have doubled life expectancy in the last 120 years --- a great accomplishment in human history

But disparities are substantial (around the globe, within our country, within our region)

How can we reshape society to maximize this extension of life while reducing disparities?

AGING 101



Social construction of AGE: Reinvent aging

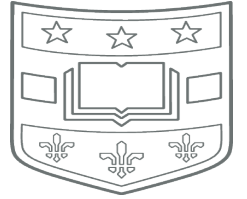
Vast variation: Tell a fuller, more accurate story

Multiple determinants of health: Design for health

Long lives, unequal distribution: Maximize the gift,
for everyone

Age interacts with other risk factors

It is never 'just age'



“Multiple jeopardy”: age interacts with SES, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, etc. to affect life experiences and outcomes.

Portray the older population in all of its diversity and expand the common image of economically secure, relatively healthy older people, living a life of leisure

The frame



People with all types of risk-factors grow old and accumulate a life time of experiences related to these circumstances.

Ensure that marginalized populations do not become more marginalized when they enter later life.

AGING 101



Social construction of AGE: Reinvent aging

Vast variation: Tell a fuller, more accurate story

Multiple determinants of health: Design for health

Long lives, unequal distribution: Maximize the gift, for everyone

It's never just 'old age': Prevent accumulating disadvantage

Ageism is pervasive and hurts all of us

Narrative: Age as Deficit



What is Ageism ?



- Ageism refers to **discrimination** (how people act), **prejudice** (how people feel) & **stereotyping** (how people think) based on age.
- Like other isms, ageism begins in childhood and is reinforced over the course of one's life.
- Unlike other isms, ageism in later life will be something everyone will face.



Types of Ageism



- **Explicit** (observable)
- **Implicit** (without conscious awareness)
- **External** (perpetuated by others)
- **Internalized** (perpetuated by self)
- **Compassionate** (meaning well)
- **Institutional/Structural** (practices/policies)

“Millennials have an inflated sense of entitlement”

“Old people go there”

“50 is the new 30”

“She is too young to be a manager”

“She looks so good for her age”

“I was having a senior moment”

“Wow! You don’t look 70”

Reframing Aging

How Prevalent is Ageism ?



Experiences with everyday ageism AMONG ADULTS AGE 50–80

82%

Experienced one or more forms of everyday ageism in their day-to-day lives

65%

Exposure to ageist messages

45%

Ageism in interpersonal interactions

36%

Internalized ageism

*Note: Percentages reflect responses of either often/sometimes or strongly agree/agree to forms of ageism.

Ageism hurts all of us



- **Impairs health**

- leads to poor physical health
- leads to with worse health behaviors
- delays recovery from disability
- negatively affects mental health
- reduces overall quality of life
- costs society billions of dollars in health care costs.²⁰

- Reduces income and retirement security
- Leads to dissatisfaction and discouragement in workplace
- Increases conflict between generations
- Inhibits research and training on aging and ageism itself.

Chang et al. 2020

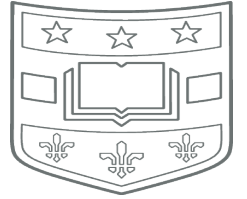
The frame



Ageism is pervasive and harmful to individuals and society.....a major barrier to achieving long, fulfilling lives

And ageism can be identified and confronted

AGING 101



Social construction of AGE: Reinvent aging

Vast variation: Tell a fuller, more accurate story

Multiple determinants of health: Design for health

Long lives, unequal distribution: Maximize the gift, for everyone

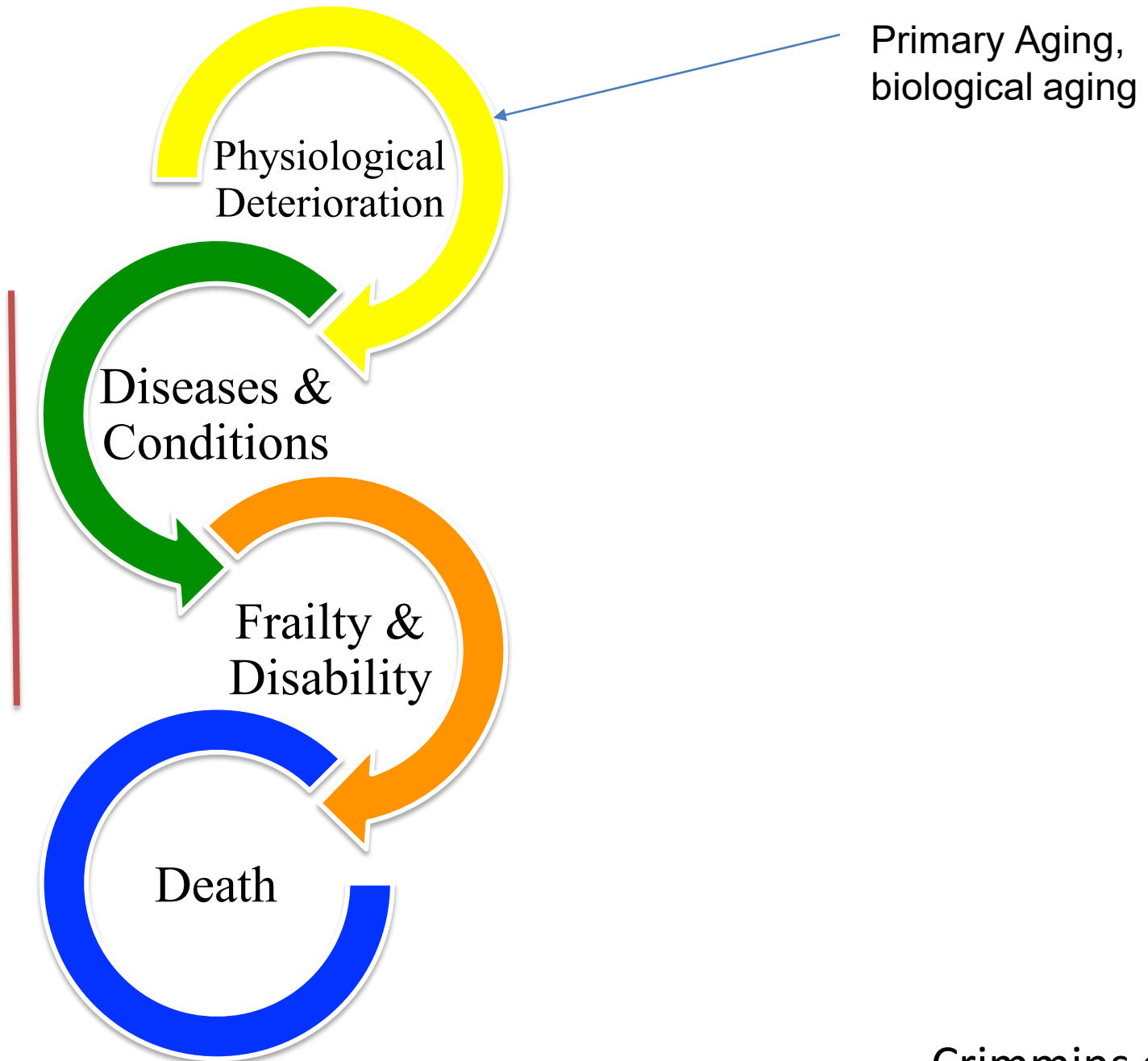
It's never just 'old age': Prevent accumulating disadvantage

Ageism is pervasive and hurts all of us: Confront it

Death rate is still 100%

The aging process

Compression of morbidity



The frame



Most all of us will experience chronic conditions and disability; and death is universal.

There are real limits to human life and functioning; but we have created artificial limits.

Remove the ARTIFICIAL limits so we can deal with REAL limits better.

AGING 101: Reframed



Social construction of AGE: Reinvent aging

Vast variation: Tell a fuller, more accurate story

Multiple determinants: Design for health

Long lives, unequal distribution: Maximize the gift, for everyone

It is never 'just old age': Prevent accumulating disadvantage

Ageism is pervasive and hurts all of us: Confront it

Death rate is still 100%: Real versus artificial limits



We can counter ageism



AGEISM

CAN BE COMBATTED



POLICY AND LAW
can protect human
rights and address
age discrimination
and inequality



**EDUCATIONAL
ACTIVITIES**
can transmit
knowledge and skills
and enhance empathy



**INTERGENERATIONAL
INTERVENTIONS**
can connect people
of different
generations

#AWorld4AllAges



GLOBAL
CAMPAIGN
TO COMBAT
AGEISM

Resources at Wash U


- Ageism Infographic
- Understanding and Confronting Ageism:
Background Paper
- Age Inclusive Language Guidelines
- Issue Briefs on Aging Topics
- Workshop on ageism

Visit

publichealth.wustl.edu/centers/aging/aging-resources

to access these and additional resources



**Harvey A. Friedman
Center for Aging**
INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AT WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
January 2022

AGEISM

HOW IT AFFECTS US ALL


What is Ageism?

According to the World Health Organization, ageism is "the stereotypes (how people think), prejudice (how people feel) and discrimination (how people act) directed towards others or oneself based on age."¹


Types of Ageism

Everyday ageism: age discrimination through daily interactions and exposure to ageist messaging. ²	Advertisements targeted toward women implying that the natural signs of aging are undesirable.
Self-directed ageism: when an individual is exposed to ageist messages and then believes that these biases are true of them.	An older adult believing that they are too "old" to keep up with technology.
Personal ageism: an individual's ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are biased against people or groups based on their age. ²	An admissions counselor suggesting to a prospective student that they're too old to go back to school.
Institutional ageism: age discrimination as a result of the laws, rules, social norms, policies and practices of institutions. ¹	A company only offering management training to younger employees.


Where Does Ageism Happen?¹

**WORKPLACE**


Workplace ageism exists throughout the work cycle including during recruitment, employment, and termination and retirement processes.

**HEALTHCARE**

Ageism in our healthcare system results in age-based healthcare rationing and the systematic exclusion of older people from health research.

**MEDIA**

People aged 50-plus in images are represented homogeneously, with similar clothing, hair color and other stereotypical characteristics.

**HOUSING**

Age discrimination in housing happens when potential tenants are evaluated based on their age, and there are different expectations and rules applied to tenants of different ages.

National & International Campaigns to end Ageism



- World Health Organization Global Campaign to Combat Ageism
- Gerontological Society of America's National Center to Reframe Aging
- AARP Disrupt Aging Classroom

Reframing Aging

A Social Change Endeavor
designed to improve the
public's understanding of aging



@ReframingAging

*Original research conducted by the
FrameWorks Institute and sponsored by the
Leaders of Aging Organizations*



Leaders of Aging Organizations (LAO)



Funding Provided by:



The
John A. Hartford
Foundation



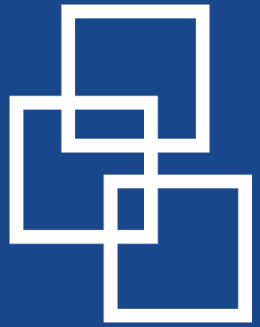


Nonprofit think tank with the mission to advance the nonprofit sector's capacity to reframe social issues

Conducts original, scholarly research on the communications aspects of social and scientific issues

Recognized in 2015 with the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions

Concepts presented today w/ permission, courtesy of the Reframing Aging Initiative and the FrameWorks Institute



Why Framing Matters



Thinking about Getting Older:

Before



Aging Field



Public

Embrace

How should we approach aging?

Battle

Environments

What determines outcomes and who is responsible?

Individuals

Important concern

How big of a concern is ageism?

Absent from thinking

Plenty

What can be done to ensure wellbeing in older age?

Nothing much

Central

What is the role of public policy?

Limited role

**Why we
need to
reframe
aging**

How Does Reframing Work?

Changes in Communication lead to

Changes in Discourse lead to

Changes in Thinking lead to

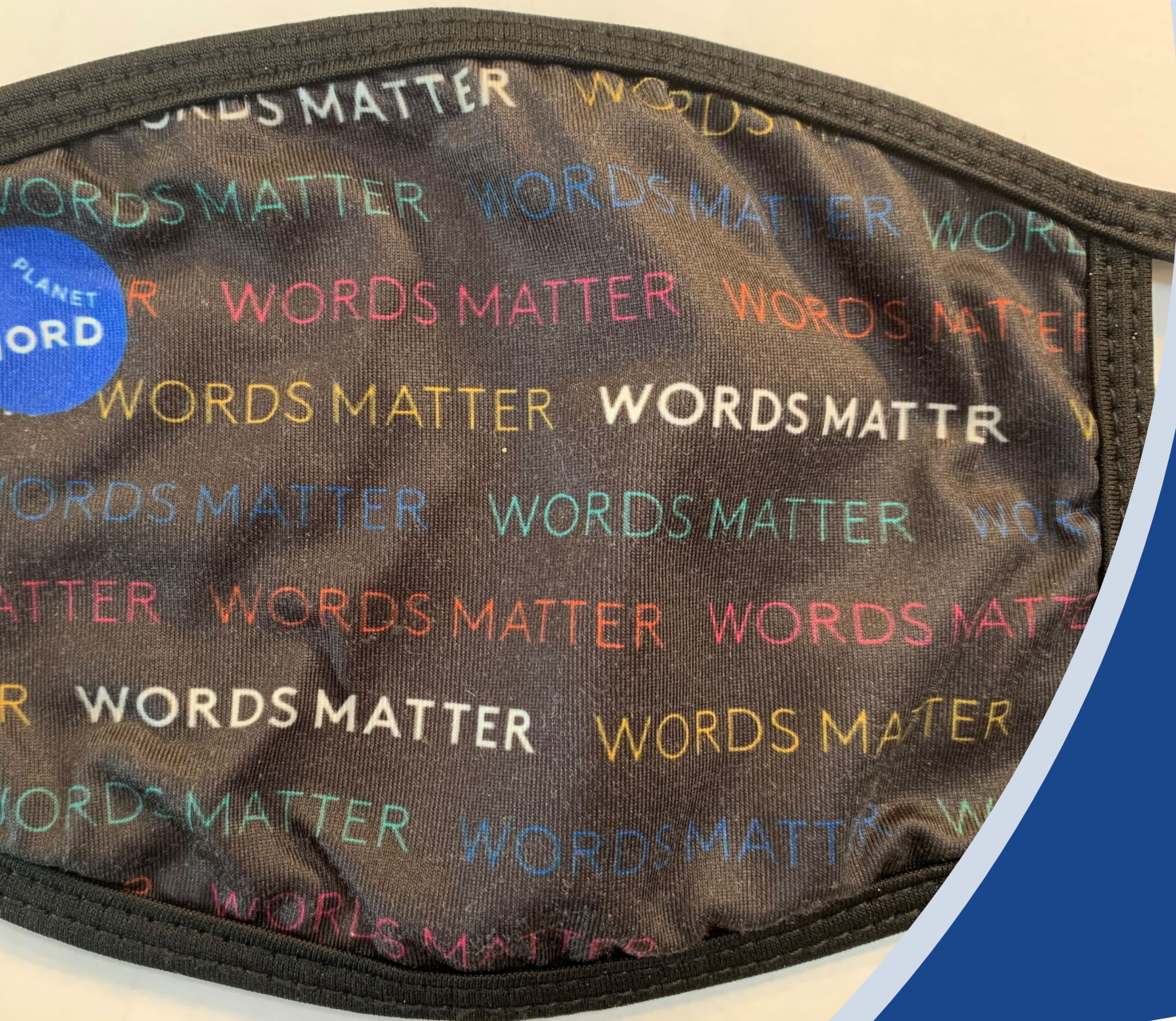
Changes in Behavior lead to

Changes in Policy and Practice



REFRAMING AGING INITIATIVE

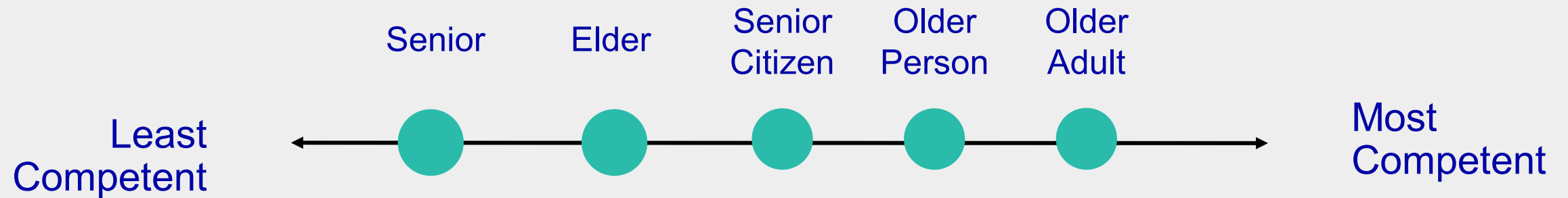
COUNTERING AGEISM BY CHANGING HOW WE TALK ABOUT AGING



Words Matter



Words matter



COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

1. Use Language That Is Inclusive and Free of Age Bias





US

(younger)

THEM

(older)

US THEM



COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

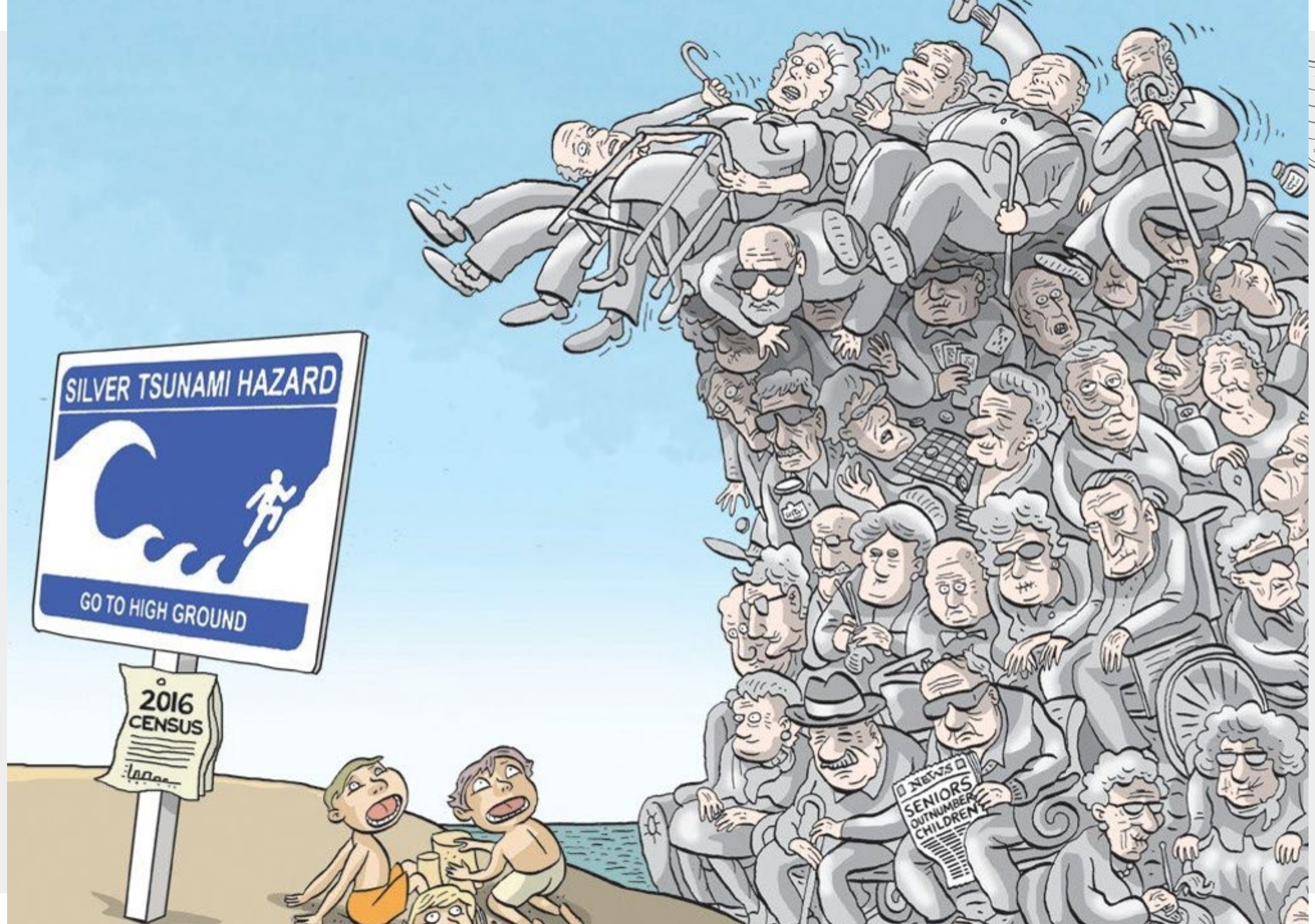
2. Highlight the Diversity That Exists in the Older Population



COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

3. Talk Affirmatively About Changing Demographics





COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

4. Emphasize Collective Responsibility and Social Context

Individualism

- Lifestyle choices
- Financial planning



Super Senior

- "Aging well" is determined by individual choices.
- "Positive aging" only means doing extraordinary things late in life.



COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

5. Talk About Aging as a Dynamic Process That Can Benefit Society



Before



After

Age Strong Shuttle Redesign

AGING.

SO **COOL** THAT
EVERYBODY'S
DOING IT!



worthington.org/agefriendly

Age-Friendly is a registered trademark of the American Geriatrics Society.

COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

6. Always Define Ageism When You Use the Term

AGEISM: Discrimination against persons of a certain age group, especially older adults

Stereotypes (how we think)

Prejudices (how we feel)

Discrimination (how we act)

It can be:

- **Interpersonal**
- **Compassionate**
- **Institutional**
- **Self-directed**

COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

7. Include Concrete, Systems-Level Solutions

Community centers with intergenerational programs

Advisory committees that require diversity of ages

Transportation systems that include bus stops in front of senior centers, libraries

Age-neutral workplace policies on hiring and advancement

COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

8. Incorporate the Concepts of Justice and Ingenuity



Justice



Ingenuity

Reframing Aging – Words Matter

www.reframingaging.org

Quick Start Guide

Our Words Matter
Here Are Tips on How to Choose Them Well

Instead of these words and cues:	Try:
"Tidal wave," "tsunami," and similarly catastrophic terms for the growing population of older people	Talking affirmatively about changing demographics: "As Americans live longer and healthier lives..."
"Choice," "planning," "control," and other individual determinants of aging outcomes	Emphasizing how to improve social contexts: "Let's find creative solutions to ensure we can all thrive as we age."
"Seniors," "elderly," "aging dependents," and similar "other-ing" terms that stoke stereotypes	Using more neutral ("older people/Americans") and inclusive ("we" and "us") terms
"Struggle," "battle," "fight" and similar conflict oriented words to describe aging experiences	The Building Momentum metaphor: "Aging is a dynamic process that leads to new abilities and knowledge we can share with our communities."
Using the word "ageism" without explanation	Defining ageism: "Ageism is discrimination against older people due to negative and inaccurate stereotypes."
Making generic appeals to the need to "do something" about aging	Using concrete examples like intergenerational community centers to illustrate inventive solutions





In a JUST society, everyone can participate

<https://www.reframingaging.org/Portals/GSA-RA/images/>





Nancy Morrow-Howell
morrow-Howell@wustl.edu



When I'm 64 *Transforming Your Future*





A class about (and with) “old” people



Our STL Villager & OLLI Students!

