



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.¹

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.

Compassionate ageism: the belief that all older people are vulnerable and dependent on others.³

Healthcare workers using baby talk with older adult patients.

Youngism: discrimination of young people based on severe social judgments and memories of past generations.⁴

A young adult being passed over for a new job because others believe they are too young to handle the responsibilities.

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.

HIGHER EDUCATION



Ageism in higher education occurs through age-segregated practices, resulting in older learners having difficulty returning to school and having inadequate supports while in school.

Effects of Ageism



It typically takes twice as long for an unemployed older adult to find a job⁵ than a younger unemployed person.



Ageism in housing diminishes opportunities for intergenerational exchange and limits the contributions that older adults can make to their community.



Images in the media reinforce stereotypes that lead to older adults internalizing ageist ideas.



The annual cost of treating health conditions caused by ageism in people ages 60 and older is \$63 billion.²



At universities, research on ageism lags behind research in other areas of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination.



When ageism is prevalent in academia, it inhibits education and training in geriatrics and gerontology to prepare students to support an aging population.



Ageism shortens older peoples' lives and leads to poor mental and physical health outcomes.



Age-segregated housing can increase loneliness and isolation in older people.



The media representation of the consequences of aging explains why people go to great and expensive lengths, like dying their hair or getting Botox, to mask signs of aging.



Ageism in the workplace creates a less diverse workplace and deprives organizations of talented employees and age-mixed teams.

Ways to Combat Ageism¹



Educating learners at all levels about ageism and ways to promote understanding and dispel myths about aging.



Enforcing and strengthening policies and laws that address age discrimination and inequality.



Encouraging interaction between people of different generations, which can reduce prejudice and stereotypes.

Ageism Resources

Ageism First Aid is an online multi-module course that supports factual conversations about aging and positive aging-related language among people in the health and helping professions.



The World Health Organization Global Campaign to Combat Ageism conducts research and provides resources to reduce ageism.



AARP Disrupt Aging challenges misconceptions about aging and collaborates with communities and companies to find solutions to ageism.



The Reframing Aging Initiative is designed to combat ageism by increasing the understanding of aging and highlighting the positive contributions of older adults.



REFERENCES

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