

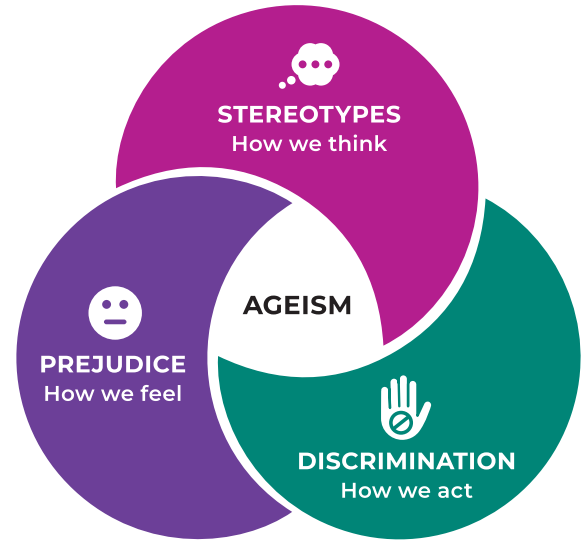
# College Students Q&A on Ageism

## What is ageism?

Ageism refers to **stereotypes** (how we think), **prejudice** (how we feel) and **discrimination** (how we act) towards others or ourselves based on age.

## Who does ageism impact?

Ageism impacts people from all walks of life, at every stage of life. Although age bias can be directed at both young and older adults, it most prominently affects older adults.



## How does ageism impact us as we age?

Ageism skews perceptions of the healthy aging experience, individual aptitudes, personal agency, and the vast diversity among the older population.



At the **individual** level, age-bias is manifested in private communications and social exchanges that stigmatize aging and devalue the abilities of older adults. It can contribute to internalized ageism and social isolation.<sup>1</sup>



**Societal** ageism appears in public discourse, media depictions, and everyday culture. It can result in employment discrimination, discrepant health care, and economic disparities for older people.<sup>2</sup>



Age prejudice is embedded in **institutional** practices, policies, and procedures that reinforce and perpetuate bias and discriminate against older adults. Structural inequities serve to degrade the quality of life for older adults.<sup>3</sup>

## Why should ageism matter to college students?

Ageism results in social, economic, and legal injustice. It is an insidious, often unrecognized, and socially accepted bias that diminishes the capabilities and contributions of older people. In addition to eroding elder rights, equity, and dignity in aging, ageism tears at the very fabric of a democratic society. It can also contribute to elder mistreatment. Age-prejudice is a pervasive and growing concern that impacts everyone across the age continuum.



According to the World Health Organization, **1 in 2 people** are ageist against older people<sup>4</sup>



Age-prejudice is associated with **poorer physical and mental health, lower quality of life, social isolation and loneliness**, and **premature death**<sup>5</sup>

Ageism results in **individual and societal harms** and **exacerbates other forms of disadvantage**<sup>6</sup>

## What do college students think about ageism?

According to the research, most college students lack awareness and education about older age, aging, and elder abuse.<sup>7</sup> Many of those surveyed expressed some level of confusion, discomfort, negative, and/or indifferent attitudes towards aging and older people.<sup>8</sup> Students, however, with greater knowledge and empathy regarding older people exhibited decreased levels of ageism.<sup>9,10</sup>

## What can you do to reduce ageism and effect culture change?

- Actively promote elder rights, equity, and justice on campus and in your communities<sup>11</sup>
- Avoid ageist language and assumptions in communications<sup>12</sup>
- Develop anti-ageism campaigns on campus<sup>13</sup>
- Advocate for your university to integrate aging-related content in curricula<sup>14</sup>
- Spend quality time with older family members, friends, and adults in your community<sup>15</sup>
- Volunteer with older adults, or become an intergenerational mentor or mentee to foster meaningful cross-generational connections with older people<sup>16</sup>
- Get involved in community initiatives to reduce elder loneliness and help improve health outcomes for older adults<sup>17</sup>
- Engage in research and evaluation to develop better measures of ageism and study its impact on elder mistreatment<sup>18</sup>



Ageism is a social justice issue that impacts us all.

**Don't stand by, stand up** to ageism and elder abuse. You can make a difference.

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