



# What is Ageism?

Ageism is so widespread and accepted – in our attitudes, beliefs and institutions – that we do not even recognize it.

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## What is ageism?

- When you have thoughts, feelings or actions that diminish a person's worth based on their age.
- It exists in organizations, in relationships and can even be self-directed.

## Is ageism a form of discrimination?

- Yes, it is illegal and prohibited in Canada.

## What are some examples of common ageist language?

- You look good, for your age.
- It's time to put them out to pasture.
- Sweetie, you don't look a day over 29.
- You're too old to wear that outfit!
- I think she should act her age.

## How does ageism affect older adults?

- For older people, ageism is associated with a shorter lifespan, poorer physical and mental health, slower recovery from disability and cognitive decline.
- It reduces older people's quality of life.
- It increases social isolation and loneliness — worsening health problems.
- It limits their ability to work and volunteer.
- It increases the risk of violence and abuse against older people.

## How do we internalize ageism?

This occurs when a person internalizes ageist beliefs and applies them to themselves.

For example:

- I'm too old to try that.
- The grey hair needs to go.
- Lying about your age out of fear of a negative response.
- I can't remember anything anymore.
- I don't want to be a burden.
- All the best years are behind me.

## How is ageism portrayed in media and social media?

- Media play a key role in shaping the views of society. In particular, media can be an important influence on younger people who may have limited contact with older adults.
- Older adults are underrepresented in the media. Media may spread both negative and positive age-based stereotypes.
- Negative stereotypes are harmful, showing older people as dependent, helpless, unproductive and demanding rather than deserving.



## What is ageism in organizations/ workplaces?

- Refusing to hire people over a certain age.
- Asking someone's age at a job interview when it is not relevant.
- Viewing older people as out of touch, less productive, or stuck in their ways.
- Assuming older people cannot learn new things or it will take too long to train them.

## How is ageism seen in relationships?

- Treating older people as though they are invisible, unintelligent, or expendable, based on their age.
- Taking advantage of the older person in your life for personal gain (i.e. such as making money).
- Using age as justification to undermine, deceive, or control.

## How does ageism harm all of us?

- It shapes the way we think about ourselves and others as we grow older.
- Unconscious attitudes and beliefs that lead to inappropriate snap judgment also known as age biased.
- It contributes to social isolation, loneliness and declining mental health.
- Barriers for older workers to access training and jobs weakens the economy.
- Increases health costs — older patients are less likely to seek care, engage in preventative care and may be undertreated.
- Prevents society from benefiting from the fact that people are living longer.
- We might not learn from the wisdom gained from those who have many experiences over a lifetime.

## Aging is a universal experience and a normal part of life.

- Aging enables us to grow, connect, learn and experience life.
- As we age, we have the opportunity to deepen our relationships, gain wisdom and expertise, and find new passions, hobbies and interests.
- Aging presents us with the opportunity for personal growth and fulfillment.
- Embracing and accepting aging and all that it includes can help us live a more fulfilling life.

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