



Disrupting Ageism for Better Health, Connection, & Safety

Hosted by the Maine Council on Aging • Funded by the Point32Health Foundation

Jess Maurer, Executive Director, Maine Council on Aging
Don Harden, Director, Leadership Exchange on Ageism

Setting the Stage

Maine is on the leading edge of a permanent demographic shift with big implications for us all.

Maine's Demographics

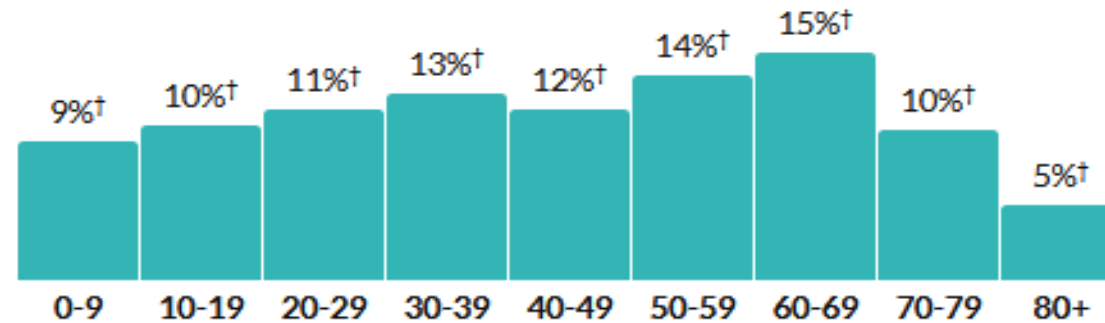
Age

45.1

Median age

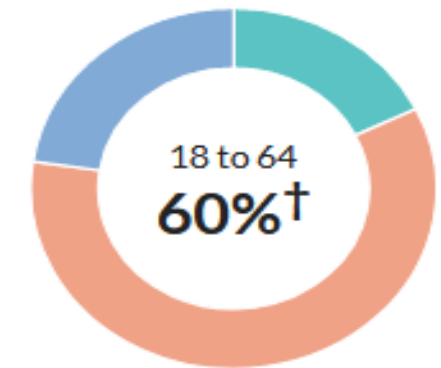
about 20 percent higher than the figure in United States: 39

Population by age range



[Show data / Embed](#)

Population by age category



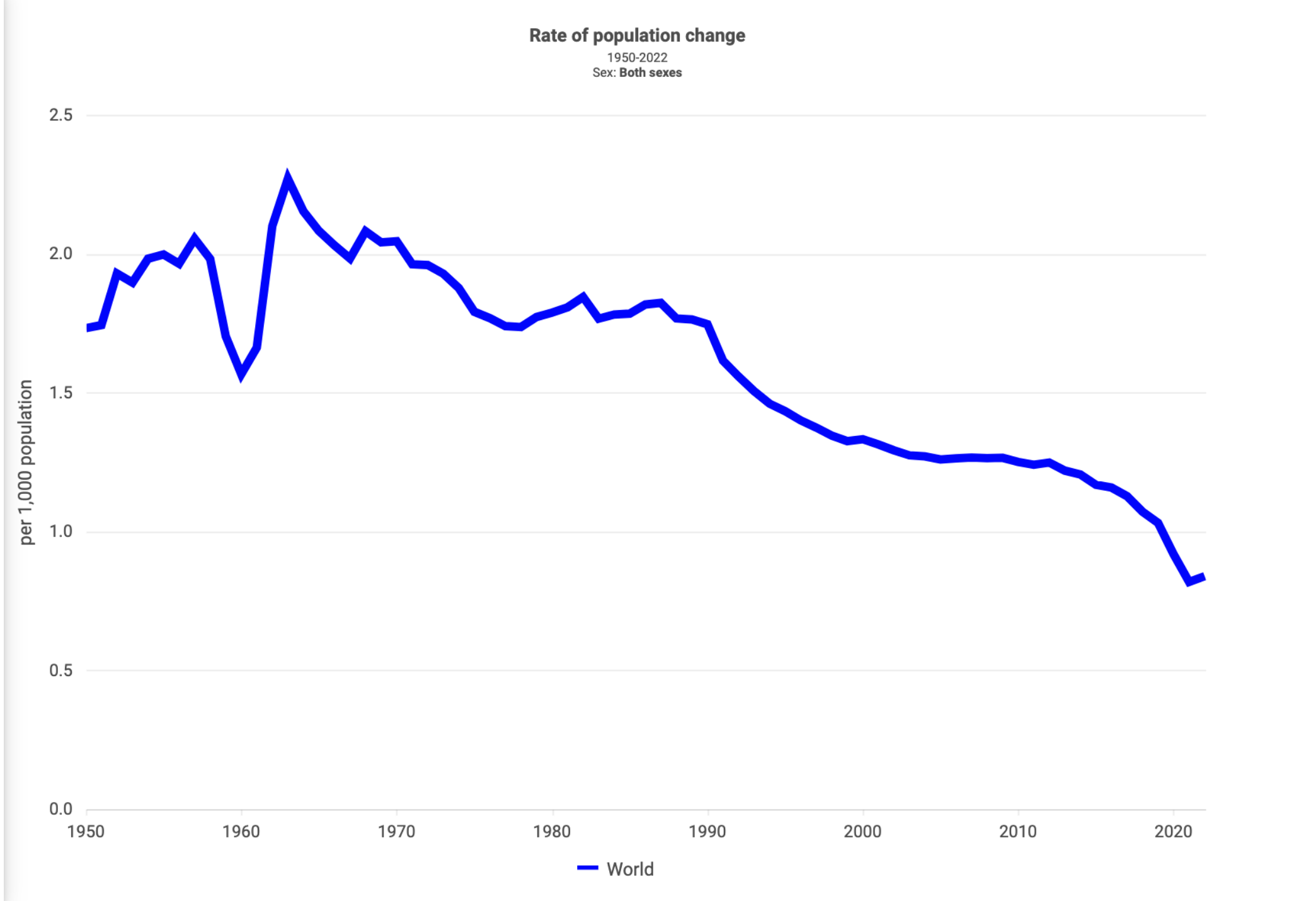
■ Under 18 ■ 18 to 64
■ 65 and over

[Show data / Embed](#)

Population by age category (Table B01001) [View table](#)

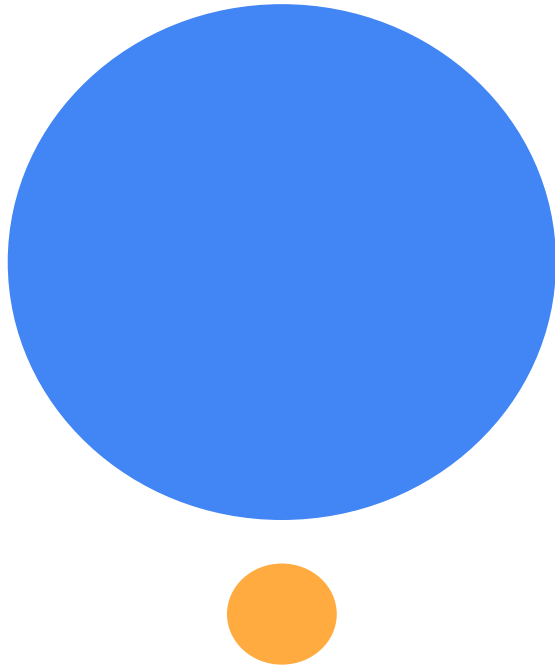
Column	Maine		United States		United States		United States	
	Percentage	Population	Percentage	Population	Percentage	Population	Percentage	Population
Under 18	17.7%†	±7106.4%	245,491	±5,067.7	21.7%†	±36.2%	72,325,602	±101,759.8
18 to 64	59.7%†	±23938.5%	826,956	±9,322.9	61%†	±101.6%	203,139,645	±158,280.3
65 and over	22.6%†	±9057.6%	312,893	±6,336.9	17.4%†	±28.9%	57,822,315	±95,293.6

Source:
Jennifer
Sciubba,
Author, 8
Billion &
Counting



Worldwide Birthrate shift

Year 1968



Source:
Jennifer
Sciubba

Women had 5+
children on
average

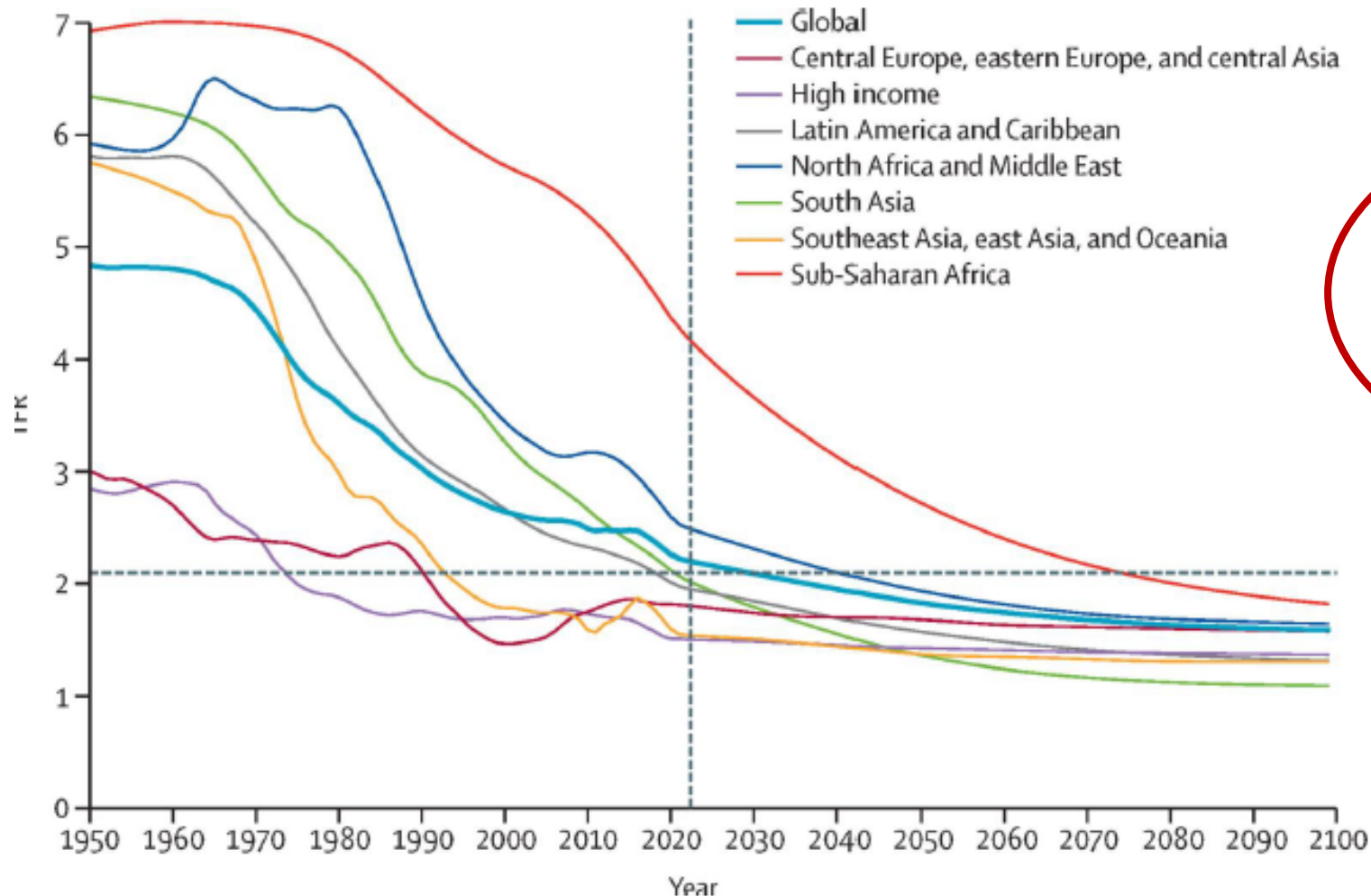
Women had ≤ 2
children on
average

Year 2022



“This shift towards fewer babies is permanent and not a problem to be solved...That’s why I always start by putting this in global context. This is not some fluke; this is not an exception; **this is a permanent shift the likes of which we’ve never seen before.**”

The Lancet published a study in March 2024 on global fertility rates



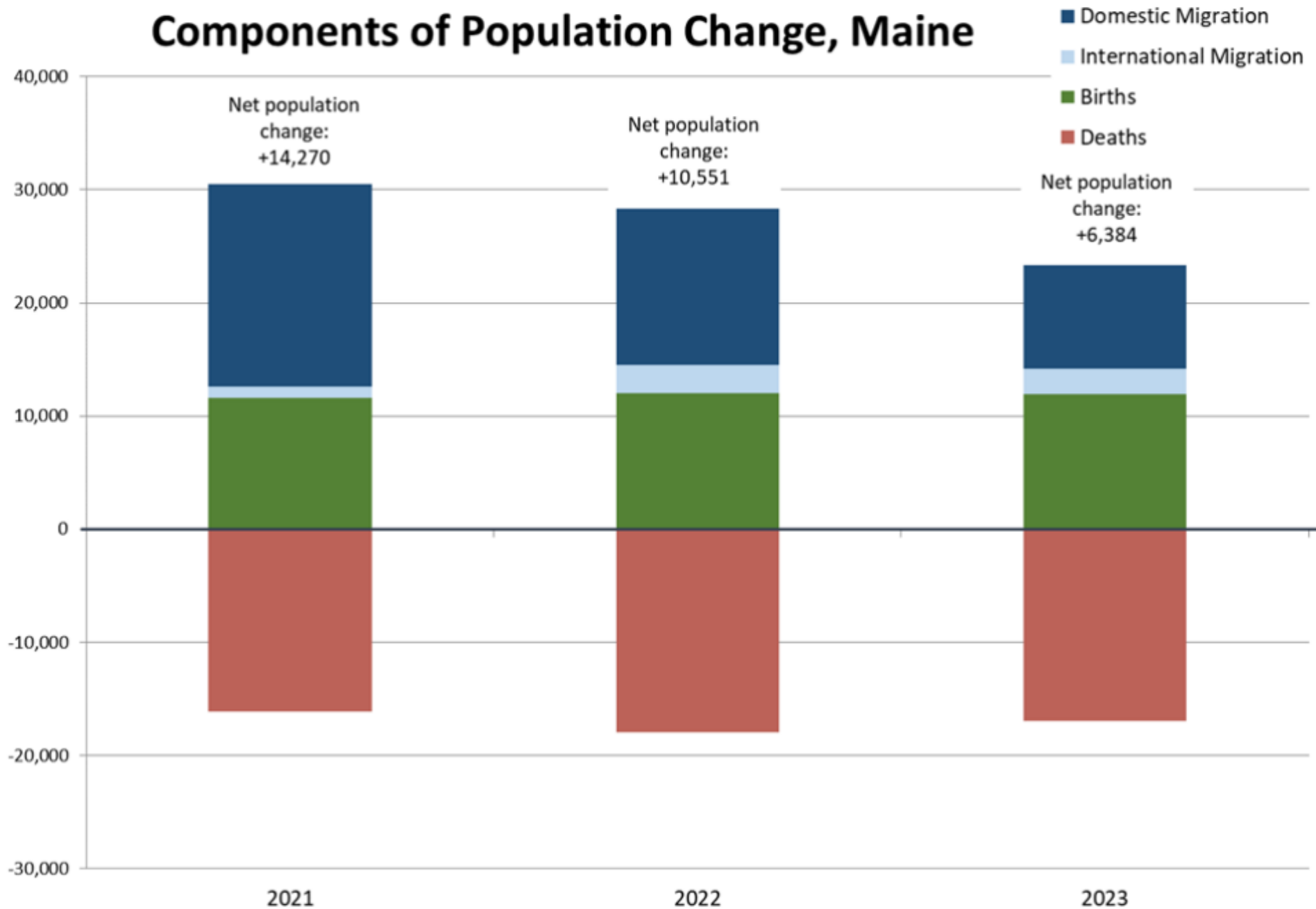
The study finds that by 2050, over 75% of countries will have natural population decreases (i.e. total fertility rates below the replacement rate)

Migration won't solve our workforce shortage

“We have the world’s largest stock of migrants in the US. So, we tend to think global migration is really high. But really, 2 to 4 percent of people live outside the country in which they were born. There are actually far more older people worldwide than there are migrants. ***If you look at those ages sixty-five to seventy-four, there are about 200 million more of them than all global migrants.***”

Jennifer Sciubba, International Demographer

Components of Population Change, Maine



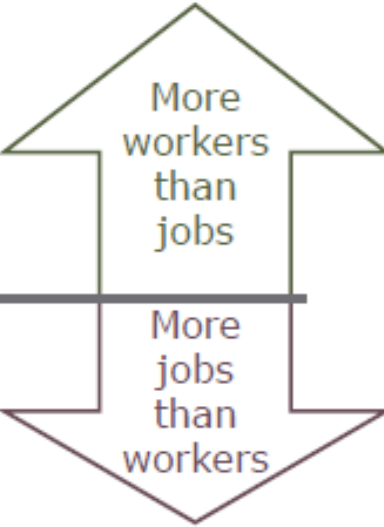
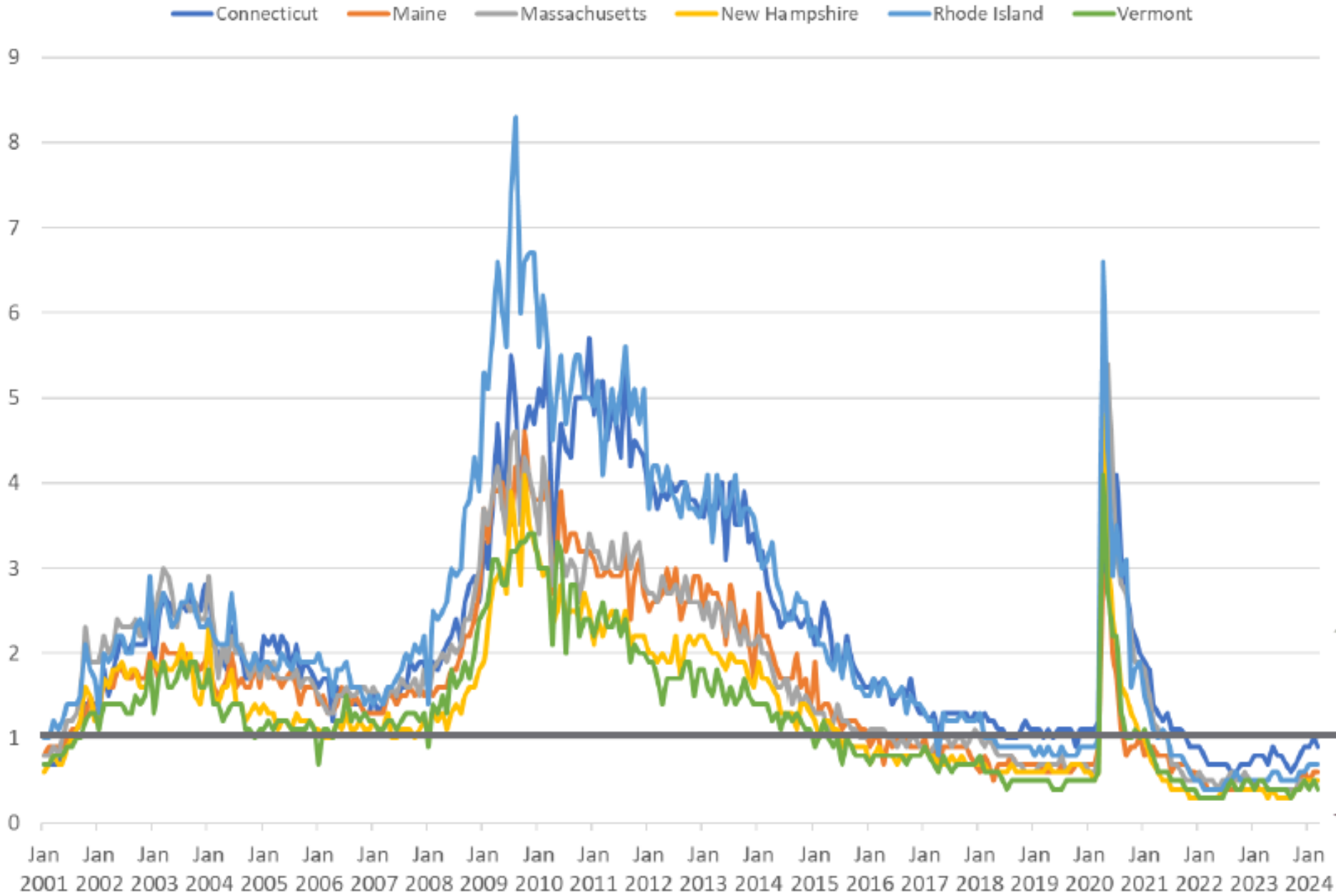
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, 2023 vintage

New England has the highest median age in the U.S. and the three states with the highest median ages (ME, NH, VT)

- CT and ME were the only two states in the U.S. to see a decline in the median age in 2021
- ME was one of only four states in the U.S. to see no increase in the median age in 2022

	2022 Median Age	2022 National Rank	Change from 2020 to 2021	Change from 2021 to 2022
Massachusetts	40.1	34	0.1	0.2
Rhode Island	40.6	41	0.2	0.2
Connecticut	40.9	43	-0.1	0.1
Vermont	43.2	48	0.0	0.2
New Hampshire	43.3	49	0.2	0.1
Maine	44.8	50	-0.1	0.0

Unemployed Persons per Job Opening Ratio



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

A Widening Care Gap with Big Implications

“Our collective failure to adequately support direct care workers is *keeping more than 8,000 people out of Maine’s labor force.*”

The High Cost of Undervaluing Direct Care Work
A report of the Maine Center for Economic Policy

“Maine *needs more than 2,300 additional full-time workers to bridge the gap* between the care people are entitled to and approved for and what is available.”

MECEP’s analysis of the underlying data for this report reveals more than **23,500 unstaffed hours per week for older people** entitled to receive home care.

Closing the Gap: Maine’s Direct Care Shortage and Solutions to Fix It
A report of the Maine Center for Economic Policy

But, there is good news!

Life expectancy increased

Life expectancy at birth

The average life is now 42 years longer!

31 years

1800

1800

1850

1900

1950

2000

73 years

2023

COVID-19

Spanish Flu

World War 2

Great Leap F.

All over the world, people live much longer lives now compared to previous generations. Thanks to lots of improvements like reduction of accidents and violence; better access to food, water and sanitation; life-saving inventions like antibiotics and vaccinations; and increased incomes, widespread public education and basic healthcare.

The Demographic Take-Away

Older People Are Our Future!

- With 30 new years of life, older people will be a large part of the solution to Maine's workforce shortage.
- The health of Maine's economy will be tied in part to the health of older people - to our ability to participate in the economy and meet our basic needs.
- Only 1 in 4 older people will need care...75% of us will not. Investments we make in the formal and informal care economy will be pivotal.

The Perfect Storm or A Big Audacious Opportunity?

An ever-shrinking direct care workforce;
Increased need for family and friends to provide care with few supports and real potential for harm (penalties for caring v. pay to care);
Insufficient investments in supports and services that maintain health, connection, and safety in later life;
Forced reliance on others for basic needs;
Age-bias in employment impacting financial security later in life;
Continued push toward segregation instead of new community housing options:
Increased incidents of elder neglect and maltreatment

The Perfect Storm or A Big Audacious Opportunity?

It depends.

Can we shift our thinking?

The wave we've been sold

Cartoon by
Graham
Mackay –
approved to
be shared.

THE SILVER TSUNAMI

IMPACT

Flight, Freeze, or Fight?





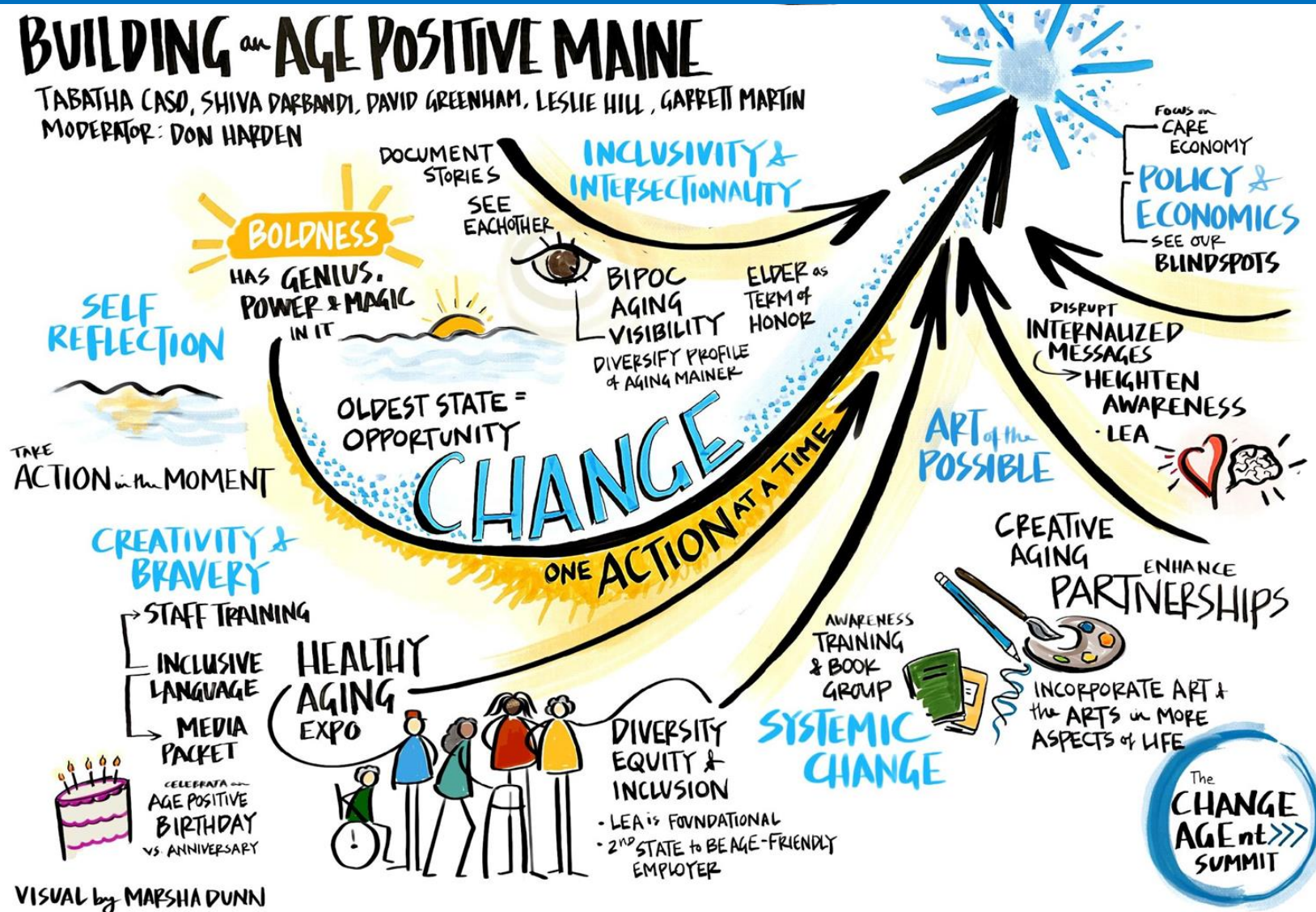
Shout It Out!

What are some of the messages, stereotypes, assumptions, attitudes, or beliefs about aging and older people?

The Wave of Change We're Riding

BUILDING an AGE POSITIVE MAINE

TABATHA CASO, SHIVA DARBANDI, DAVID GREENHAM, LESLIE HILL, GARRETT MARTIN
MODERATOR: DON HARDEN



VISUAL by MARSHA DUNN

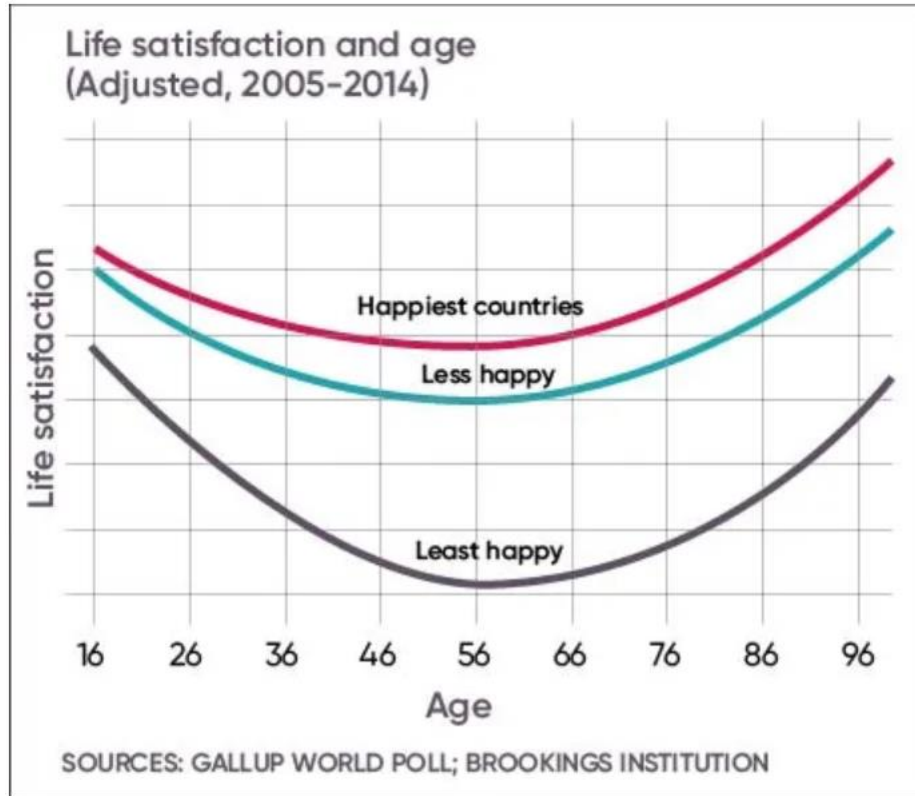
Effects of Age-Positive View/Culture

People who ***embrace positive views*** about aging:

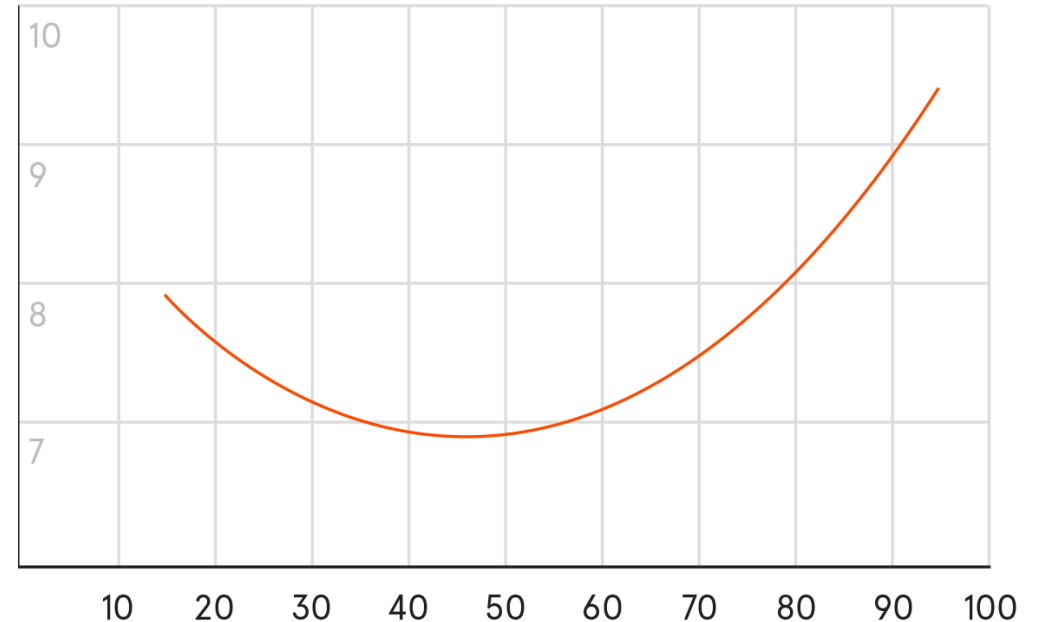
- ***Live 7.5 years longer*** than those with less positive perceptions of aging
- Are **44% more likely to recover** after experiencing a new disability
- Experience **less depression and anxiety**
- Have **less cardiovascular disease and better brain health**
- Have **fewer chronic conditions**

Purpose, inclusion, and belonging are key elements.

Life gets happier with age



How Americans Rate Their Happiness, By Age



SOURCE: "HAPPINESS, STRESS, AND AGE: HOW THE U CURVE VARIES ACROSS PEOPLE AND PLACES," JOURNAL OF POPULATION ECONOMICS, JANUARY 2017

NEO.LIFE

Even **joy** and **gratitude** have been proven to reduce stress, increase sleep, and reduce serious health events like strokes.

What's holding us back from...



- Building an age-positive culture?
- Living our most productive and healthy lives as we age?
- Making infrastructure investments to support our changing needs as we age?
- Embracing the value of older workers?

...from seeing the opportunity of our current age?



Photo by Ed Olson
FRAME, 2021

Photo by Lisa Pratt
FRAME, 2021

Photo by Elise Klyza
FRAME, 2021

Photo by Beverly Olson
FRAME, 2021

Photo by Ross Fletcher
FRAME, 2021

Ageism

“Ageism pervades many institutions and sectors of society, including those providing health and social care, the workplace, the media and the legal system.”

“Ageism...is associated with a shorter lifespan, poorer physical and mental health, slower recovery from disability and cognitive decline.”

WHO Global Report on Ageism, March 2021

What is Ageism?

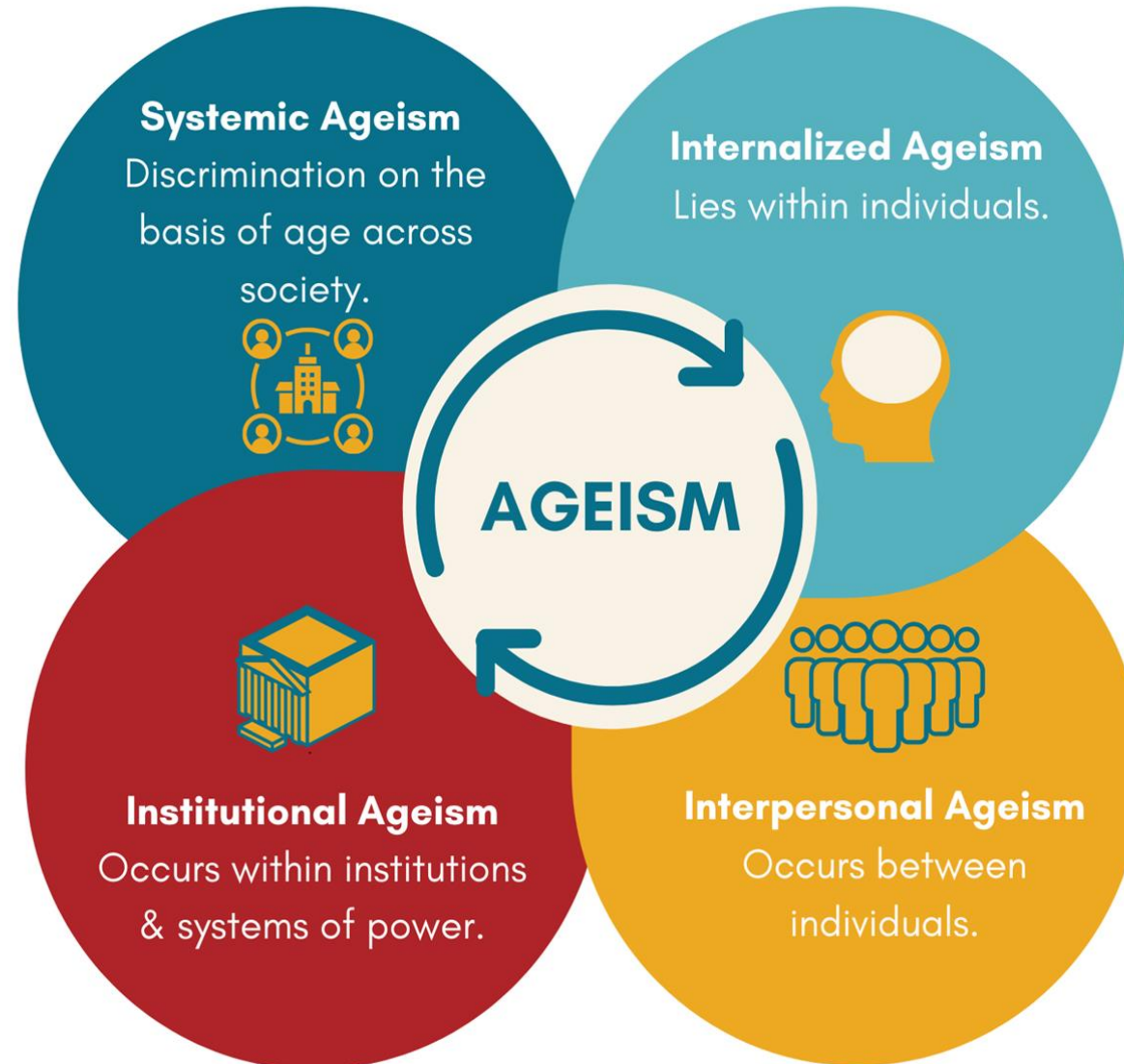
Ageism is stereotyping, prejudice, bias or discrimination on the basis of age.

- Stereotyping: how we **think**
- Prejudice and bias: how we **feel**
- Discrimination: how we **act**

Ageism manifests both as:

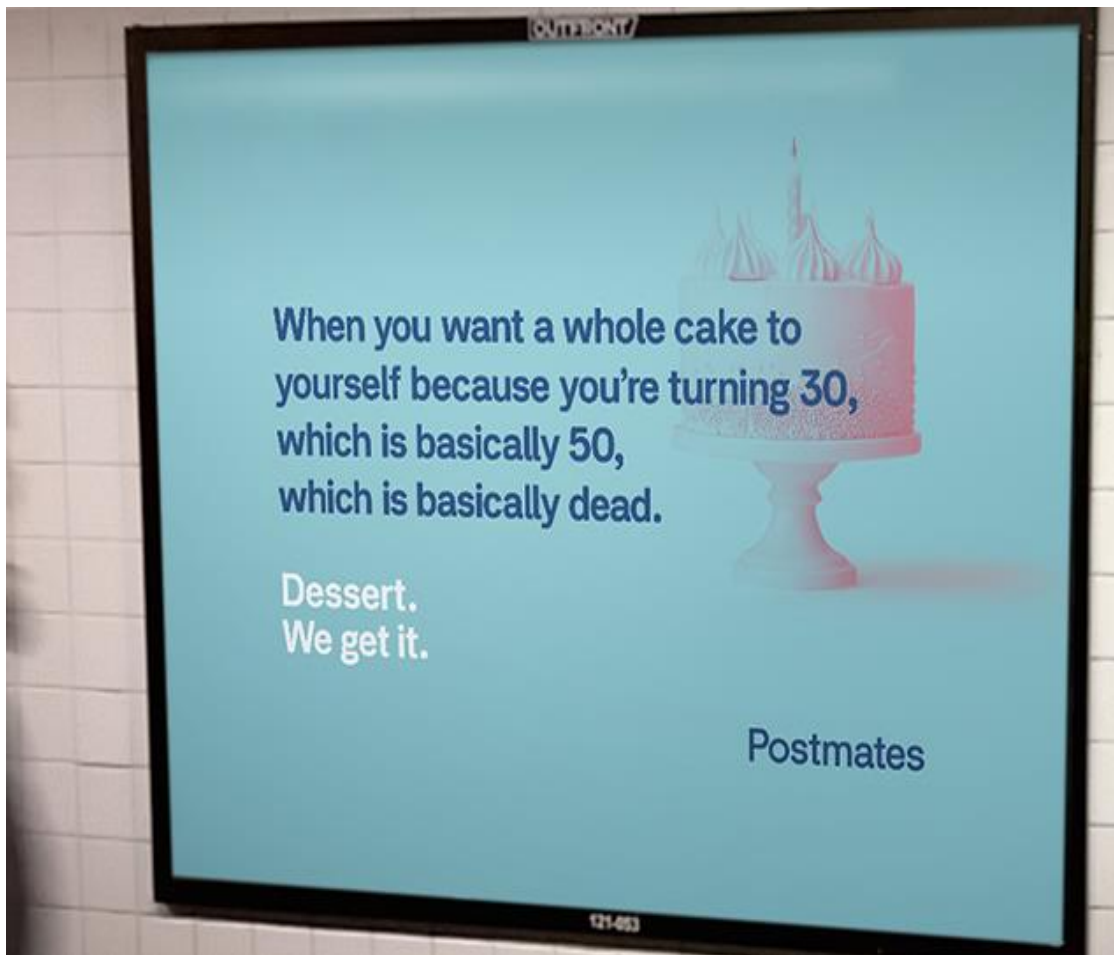
- discrimination against older people (and sometimes younger people),
- and as a privileging or idealizing of youth.

Ageism at Work



Cultural Messaging

"...50, which is basically dead."



The Invisibility of Ageism

It happens regardless of:

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS
ABILITY
ETHNICITY
RACE
GENDER
SEXUAL ORIENTATION
COMMUNITY

EVERY1 KNOWS SOME1
Domestic Violence Awareness Month 2021



We welcome:

All **rac**es
All **rel**igions
All **cou**ntries of origin
All **sexu**al orientations
All **g**enders
All **eth**nicities
All **ab**ilities

We stand with you.

diversity.ucsf.edu/WelcomeAll

UCSF

University of California
San Francisco

2019 National Poll on 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.

Impacts of Ageism - Workplace



Bias against older workers cost the U.S. economy an estimated \$850 billion in gross domestic product in 2018.

Age discrimination leads to personal economic challenges in later life, social isolation, and health challenges.

Systemically, age-bias holds us back from solving our workforce shortages by embracing older workers.

Impacts of Ageism - Health

In addition to poor health outcomes for older people, ageism in healthcare leads to significantly increased costs to our health system.



In 2020, the first study on the cost of ageism to the US economy was published – it found that annually one in every seven dollars (**\$63 billion**) spent on health care for the eight most expensive conditions was due to ageism.

WHO found that in 96% of studies conducted, ageism was associated with worse outcomes in all of the health domains examined.

Impacts of Overt Ageism During COVID?

93% of all U.S. Deaths 50+



“Systemic Ageism’ To Blame For COVID-19 Deaths In Quebec Care Homes, Inquest Hears”

11.1.21



Ageism and other systems of discrimination

Disparities from other systems of discrimination (race, gender, rurality, class, sexual orientation, ability, etc.) all get worse as people age.

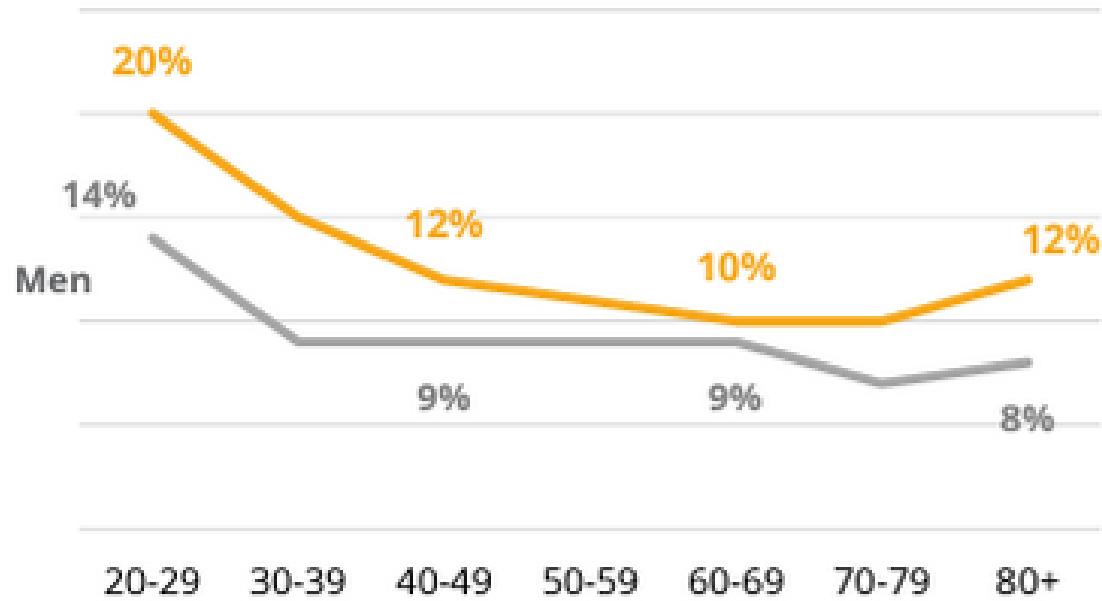
Other systems of discrimination are ALSO operating at all four levels and ALSO affect messages, resources and rules.



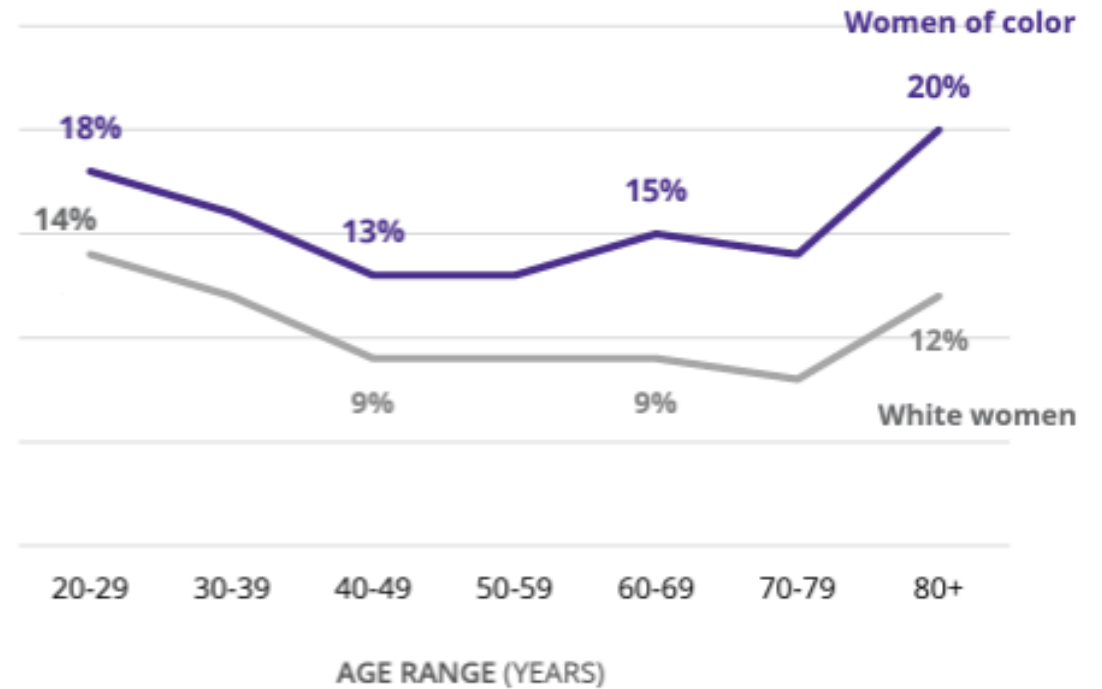
The intersection of age, gender, race and poverty

Percent of population living in poverty, 2019

Women



Percent of population living in poverty, 2019



Reducing Internalized Ageism

Prejudice is a *habit of the mind*.



It can be unlearned – ***but not from a single training***; it takes lots of repeated practice.

Shame mindset – “*I am biased, I am a bad person*” – **does not** result in change.



Growth mindset – “*I have been shaped by a biased system, I’m not okay with that, and I’m going to change it*” – **does** result in change.

Reducing age-bias starts with us!

1. Don't participate in sharing ageist messages.
2. Call people (gently) out for ageist remarks.
3. Include yourself - we're all aging. Shift to "us" instead of "them."
4. Live your age - lead by example by embracing your own age and the accumulated skills and knowledge that come with aging.
5. Use neutral words to describe older people - avoid "senior" "elderly" "elder" - let's just call them people - or older people if you have to.
6. Avoid painting all older people with the same brush.
7. Build defenses against the ageism present in everyday culture.
8. Take every chance to learn more about age-bias.

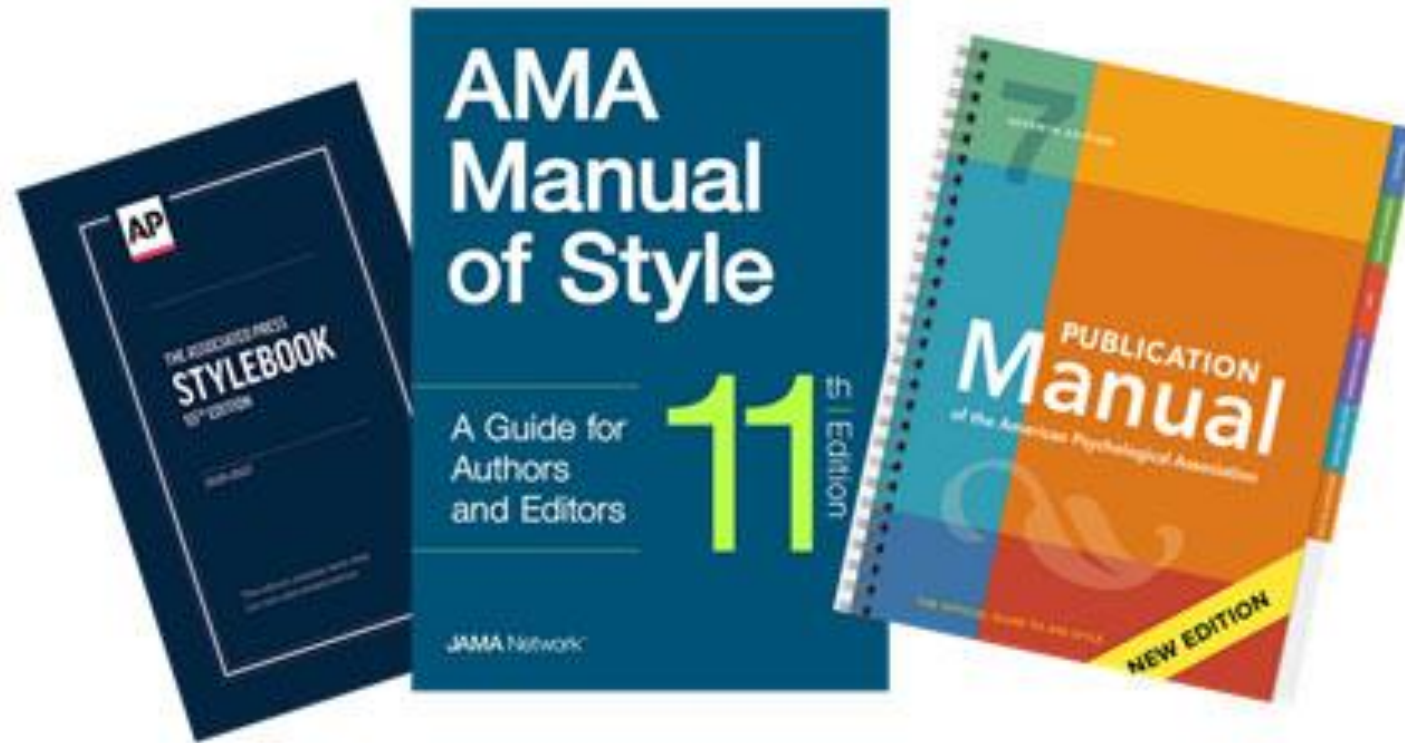
Preventing Ageism in your Organization

- Include ageism in your organization's Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion program
- Train HR managers and supervisors on ageism and implicit age-bias
- In a clinical setting, make sure clinicians are trained and implementing disrupting practices
- Address unintended and overt age discrimination directly:
 - Hold employees accountable for interpersonal acts of age-bias.
 - Call out age-based stereotypes, bias, humor, comments, and jokes.
 - Language matters: use "older people/person" or "older adults"
 - Avoid painting all older people with the same brush – check out the messages you send by the images you use on webpages/social media.

Pair Share – Turn to a Neighbor

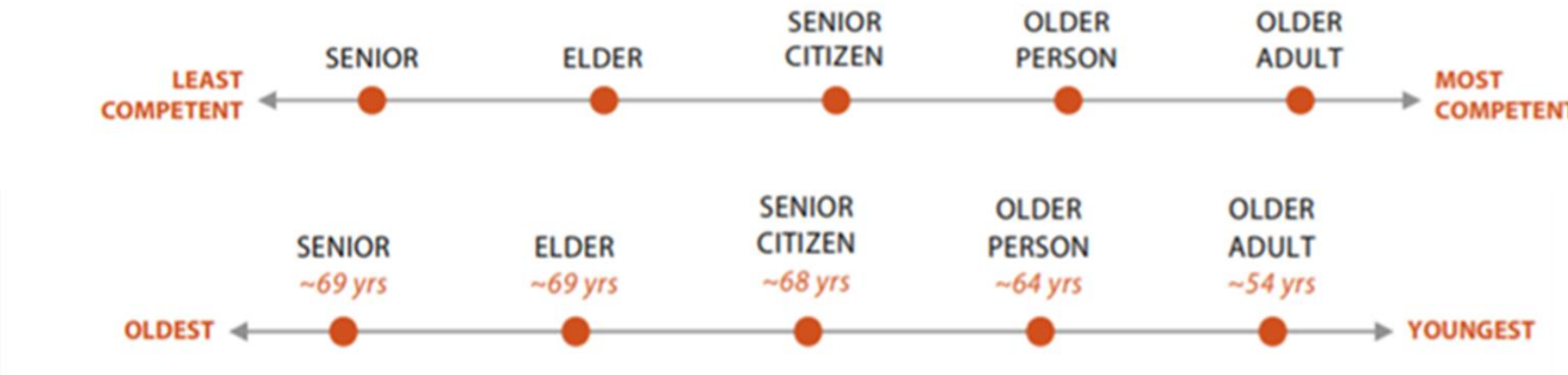
How could ***our own*** internal age-bias (the way we think about our own aging and older people) get in the way of our collective efforts to end elder neglect and mistreatment?

Language Matters



What Americans think...

How do American's view words describing older people:



From FrameWorks Institute

AMA Manual of Style

“Discrimination based on age (young or old) is ageism.

Because terms like seniors, elderly, the aged, aging dependents, old-old, young-old, and similar "other-ing" terms connote a stereotype, *avoid using them.*

Terms such as older persons, older people, older adults, older patients, older individuals, persons 65 years and older...”

Othering

Types of Othering



Age



Sexual orientation



Religion



Gender identity



Skin color



Political affiliation

Othering attributes negative characteristics to people we perceive as not like us and creates an “us vs. them” way of thinking.

Othering can negate another person's humanity and lead to seeing people as less worthy of dignity, rights, or resources. This can make it easier for us to care less about what happens to them.

When we use terms like “the poor” or “the elderly,” we trigger unproductive stereotypes about an entire group of people.

Associated Press Stylebook

Recommendations:

- Use older adult, older person/people versus senior, senior citizen, elderly when appropriate.
- Aim for specificity when possible.
- Provide context when possible.
- **Do not use “the elderly” as reference to a group.**
- As with all people, describe the person as the person wants to be described.*

Elderspeak

Refers to the way some people speak to older adults:

Automatically Speaking Slowly & Loudly

Using a high-pitched voice

Using terms of endearment such as honey, dear, sweetie

Speaking to an adult as if they were a young child

Speaking to the caregiver instead of the older person

Elderspeak: Why not?

- It's degrading and patronizing
- Contributes to depersonalization
- Implies power/ powerlessness
- Conveys presumed incompetence
- Increases challenging behavior



Elderspeak: Avoid it!

- ❖ **Focus on the older person (as much as possible, even if they have limited capacity)**
- ❖ **Individualize – don't rely on stereotypes**
- ❖ **Avoid speech mannerisms of elderspeak**
- ❖ **Ensure that people around you know about elderspeak and avoid it**

Pair Share – Turn to a Neighbor

We're good at activating age-negative stereotypes, how can we be better at activating and holding age-positive beliefs?

Flipping the Script on Ageism

Word Cloud
from a group
sharing
positive
messages
about aging
and
older people.



Overcoming Systemic Ageism

systemic ageism is age-related bias *across society*.

Systemic ageism shows up in:



cultural
MESSAGES



distribution of
RESOURCES



policies and
RULES

Age Equity

Equity *acknowledges difference* and explores how an organization can be *deliberately inclusive* to promote fairness and correct systemic injustices.

An “age equity lens” offers tools we can use to *interrupt the impact of unintended age-bias*.

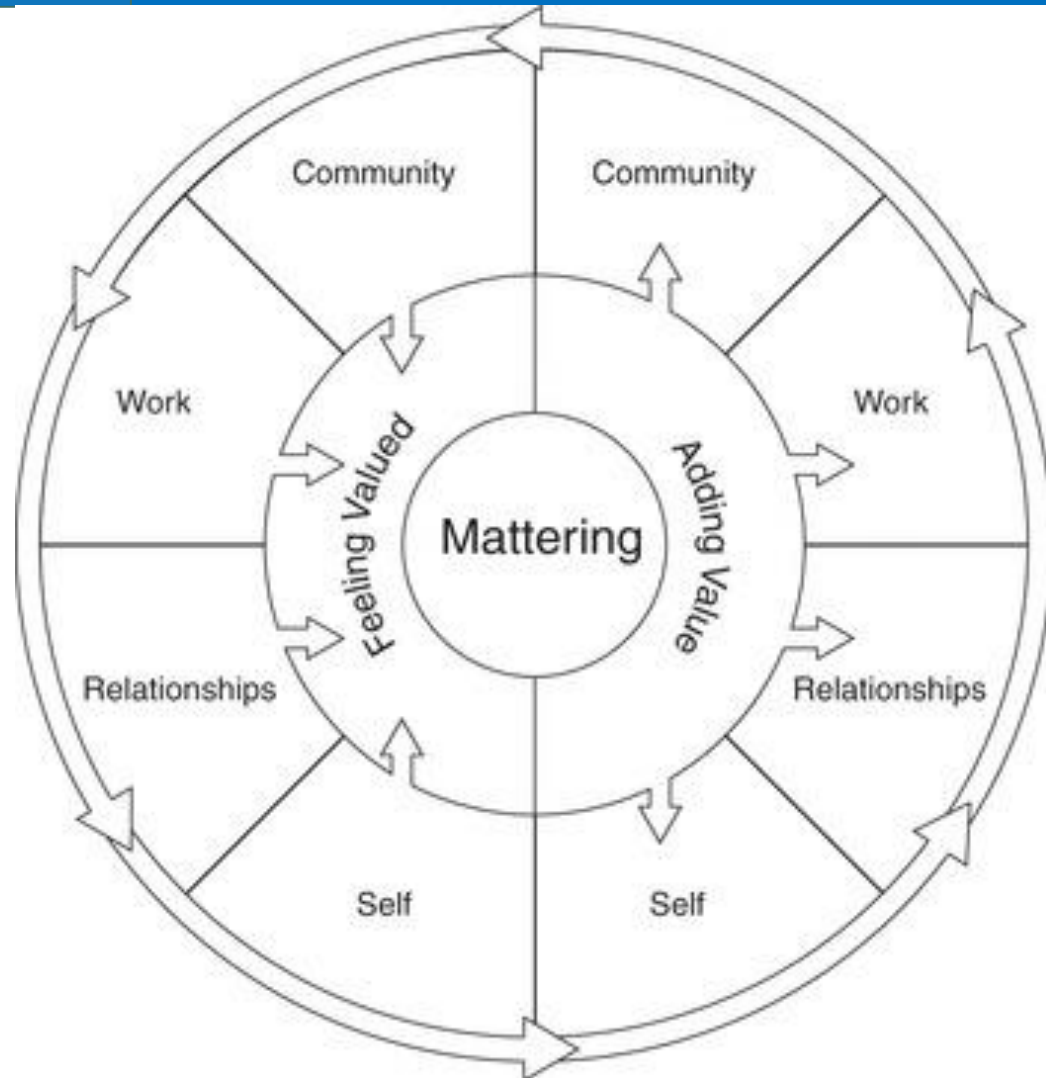
Equality



Equity



Getting to what “matters” – An Age Positive Culture



Mattering = *feeling* valued and *adding* value

Feeling valued = inclusion and belonging

Adding value = purpose

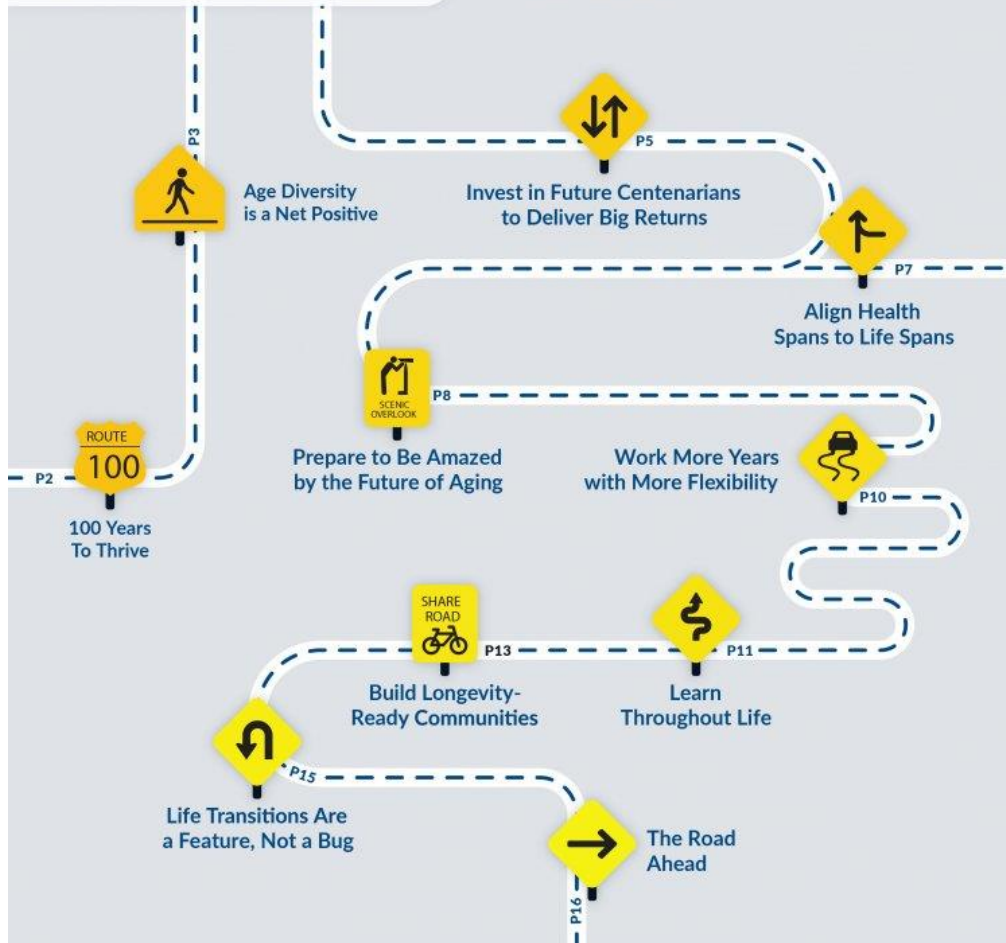
Purpose, inclusion & belonging = better physical and mental health, longer, more productive life!

The New Map of Life



A Report from
**The Stanford Center
on Longevity**

NOVEMBER 2021



Report Recommends:

- Align health span with life span
- Age-diversity is a net positive
- Work more years with more flexibility
- Build longevity-ready communities
- Ensure lifelong learning
- Life transitions an expected feature
- 100 years to thrive!

Age Equity & Dependancy



Pauline has progressive supranuclear palsy and vascular dementia

Pauline's daughter writes: "so what do you do with a bi-ped who has strong legs and arms but cannot walk without assistance? Someone who sometimes doesn't know what both hands are doing at the same time? Give them the chance to be successful doing something completely different! Something that takes their mind off what they can't do but still utilizes their capabilities in a new and focused way...."



Self Reflection: 3 minutes

Think about how what you heard as it relates to your work.

Write down two ideas for action that you will bring back to your team.

Group Discussion – 10 minutes

In groups of 3 or 4, each person shares 1 idea they will bring back to their work team. After everyone has shared, have a quick discussion about the ideas you heard. Can you build on each others ideas?

What if we shifted our thinking and actions?

What if...

- we change our perspective about our own aging and embrace the view that an age-positive culture is key to a longer, healthier life?
- we disrupt our stereotypes about older people and embraced older people fully as an important part of Maine's future?
- we build pathways to purpose and a sense of belonging for everyone?

We think our communities, economy and workforce will be stronger, fewer older people will need care, and we'll live safer lives in later life!

Age+ ME – How to Join the Movement

Maine is the first state in the country to launch a statewide initiative to end ageism. Join us through one of our programs or bring us into your work.

- **Leadership Exchange on Ageism** – 14-hour intensive peer learning experience – 260 leaders have graduated
- **Disrupting Ageism Intensive** – 8-hour in-service for leadership teams
- **Power in Aging Presentations** – 90 minutes for everyone – great start!
- **Community Conversations** – 4 week in-community program
- **Reducing Ageism in Healthcare** – training for HC teams
- **Age-Positive Workplace Training & Ageism Audits**
training and TA to improve work flows and processes





Questions?

Thank you!