

ICOPE

INTEGRATED CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Ageism



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Learning objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Describe ageism and its effects
- Classify different types of ageism
- Identify common myths associated with ageing
- Explain the impact of ageism on individuals and society
- List strategies and recommended actions to combat ageism



Introduction

Age is one of the first things we notice about other people.

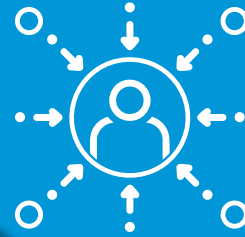
Ageism occurs when people are categorized, and divided by age, leading to harm, disadvantage and injustice, while undermining solidarity across generations.

What does ageism refer to?

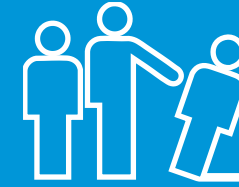
Ageism refers to:



How we think
(Stereotypes)



How we feel
(Prejudice)



How we act
(Discrimination)

towards others or ourselves based on age

Ageism across generations

Ageism takes on different forms across the life course.



A teenager might be belittled for initiating a political movement.

Individuals of both older and younger age groups may face job denial due to their age.

An older person might be excluded from potential health interventions simply because of their age.

Some stats on ageism



A 2020 systematic review found that age determined who received certain medical procedures or treatments in 85% of 149 studies.

85%

A survey shows that many older workers face age discrimination.

64% 

Older workers believe age discrimination is present at work.

41% 

Workers have experienced age discrimination in the past three years.

In the United States, a study conducted in 2020 found that ageism led to an excess of \$63 billion in annual costs related to the eight most expensive health conditions.



Ageism's ubiquity



Half of the people worldwide are ageist against older persons. In Europe, a higher percentage of young people report experiencing ageism compared to other age groups.

Ageism is everywhere



Ageism impacts us at every life stage and is present in our institutions, our relationships, and within ourselves.

Popular myths of ageing and its facts

Myths

"To be old is to be sick"

"You can't teach an old dog new tricks"

"Too little, too late"

"Life's lottery is won at birth"

"The lights might be on, but the voltage is low"

"Older people don't pull their own weight"

Facts

Most older people can perform daily living tasks and manage independently, even into very advanced ages.

Older people can learn new things and continue to do so over the life course.

It is never too late to reap the benefits of recommended healthy behaviours and interventions.

Genetic factors play a relatively small role in longevity and quality of life.

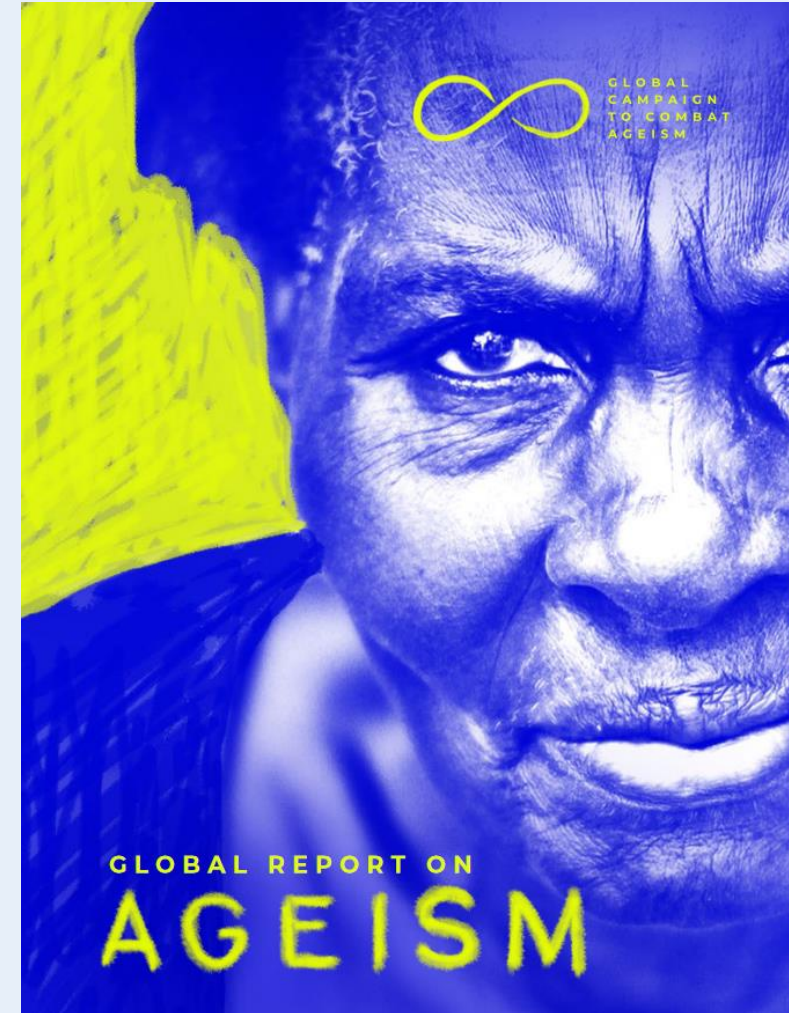
Most older people with partners and without major health problems are sexually active.

Most older people who are not working for pay engage in productive roles in their families or communities.

Global report on ageism

In 2021, the World Health Organization, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Population Fund, and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs released the Global Report on Ageism, summarising evidence on its nature, causes, and impact on health and well-being.

The report outlines strategies to prevent and address ageism, highlights research gaps, and guides future work. The Global Campaign to Combat Ageism aims for a world inclusive of all ages.



Types of ageism



Institutional

Refers to the laws, rules, social norms, policies and practices of institutions that unfairly restrict opportunities and systematically disadvantage individuals because of their age



Interpersonal

Arises in interactions between two or more individuals



Self-directed

Occurs when ageism is internalized and turned against oneself



Ageism

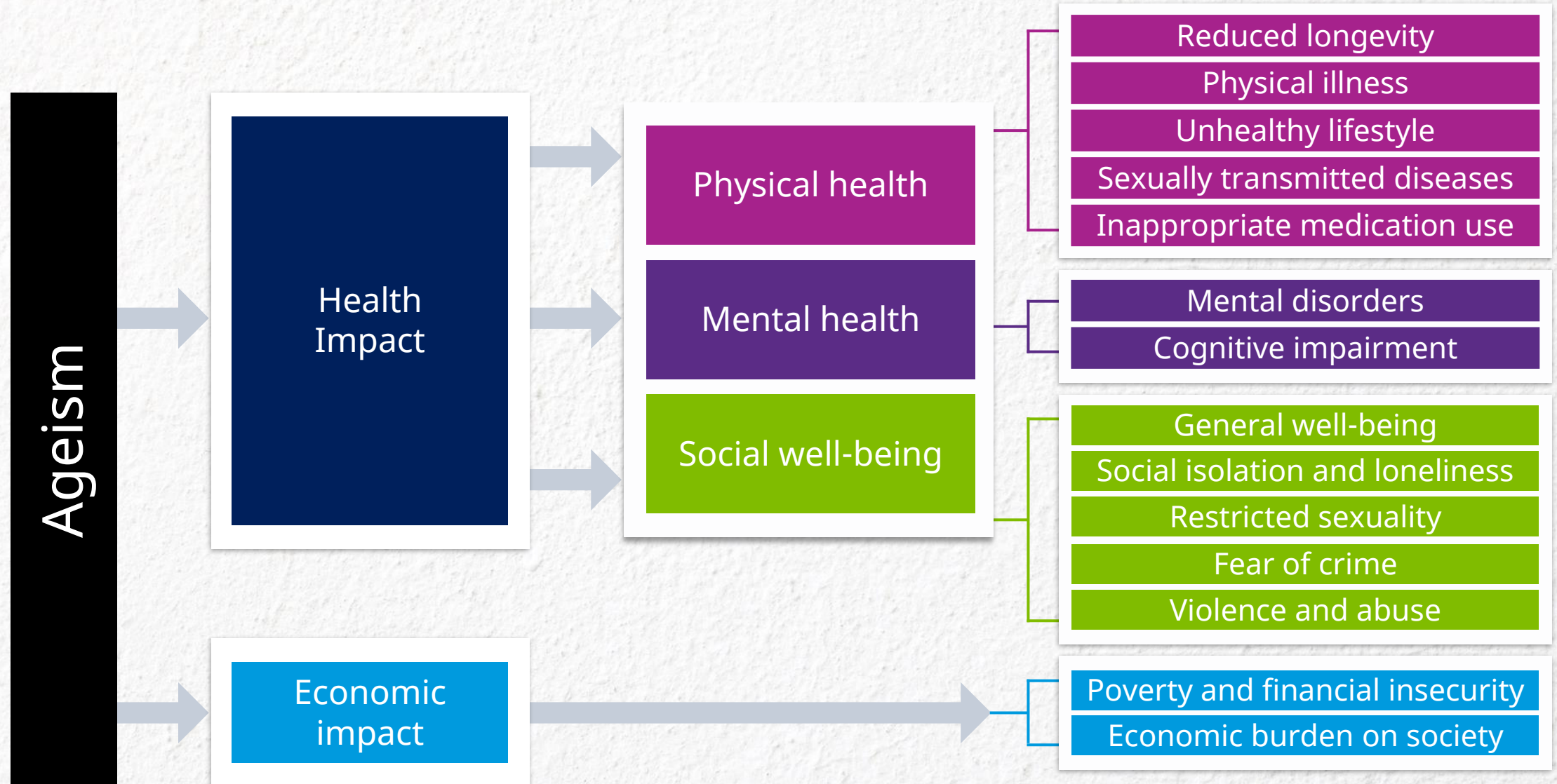
Intersections of ageism

Ageism starts in childhood and is reinforced over time.

Ageism often intersects and interacts with other forms of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.



The impact of ageism



Strategies against ageism

Three effective strategies for reducing ageism have been identified:



Policy and law

Policies and legislation that address age discrimination and inequality.
Human rights laws.



Educational interventions

In all levels and types of education, from primary school to university, both in formal and non-formal contexts.



Intergenerational contact interventions

To promote engagement and interaction among individuals from different generations.



Recommendations for action



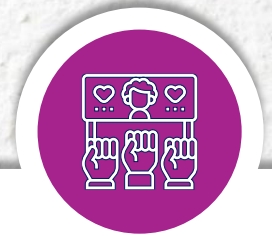
Invest in evidence-based strategies

- Prioritize the implementations and scaling up of the three most effective strategies.
- Adapt, test and scale up successful interventions in new contexts.



Improve data and research

- Collect comprehensive data on ageism, especially in low- and middle-income countries.
- Develop targeted strategies to reduce ageism using gathered insights.



Build a movement to change the narrative

- Initiate a collective movement to reshape the narrative on age and aging.
- Foster positive, inclusive dialogue to challenge stereotypes and promote an age-friendly society.

Summary



- Ageism occurs when people are categorized and divided based on their age.
- It involves stereotyping (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) based on age.
- Ageism can manifest within the laws and practices of our institutions, in interactions between individuals, and even be internalized against ourselves.

Summary



- Three effective strategies to combat ageism include policy and law initiatives, educational programs, and intergenerational contact interventions.
- Recommendations emphasize the importance of evidence-based methods, scaling up successful strategies and enhancing global awareness through data collection and fostering anti-ageism movements.
- Ageism is detrimental to our physical, mental health including cognitive health and wellbeing, and it results in relevant costs for our societies.

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