

Proclaiming October 9, 2024 Ageism Awareness Day in Los Angeles County

One in six Americans are age 65 or older, equating to nearly 56 million older adults. The share of older adults grew by more than a third between 2010 and 2020 and is projected to increase to 81 million by 2040. Los Angeles County is home to one of the nation’s largest concentration of older people. The older adult population is also becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. This underscores the need to ensure policies and systems are responsive to the needs of the County’s diverse communities. However, ageism continues to be a significant barrier to developing appropriate responses that meet the need of our older adult communities.

Ageism is a commonly held form of discrimination and is widely accepted. An international study of the prevalence of ageism found that at least one in two people hold moderately or highly ageist attitudes.¹ Ageism diminishes what a person contributes, preventing communities from fully benefiting from their gifts and talents. The issue is exacerbated when it intersects with other forms of discrimination.

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7246680/#B28-ijerph-17-03159>

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Ageism results in adverse health and social impacts such as shorter lifespan, poorer physical and mental health and increased social isolation and loneliness. Research indicates that people who have a more positive view of aging have a median survival rate 7.5 years longer than those with a negative perspective. In fact, the most important factor for longevity is how people think about and approach aging; it is more important than gender, socioeconomic status and functional health.² Older adults who held positive age stereotypes were 44% more likely to recover from severe disability than those with negative age stereotypes.³ Ageism accelerates cognitive impairment whereas positive self-perception slows it. Too many healthcare professionals and older adults themselves presume that conditions such as depression, fatigue and pain are typical and to-be-expected parts of aging, therefore less likely to seek or receive treatment for an issue that may have interventions. Due to this discrimination which can result in inappropriate or inadequate care, it is estimated that ageism results in \$63 billion in healthcare costs annually nationally.⁴

Ageism also has wide reaching economic impacts. Older adults experience longer periods of unemployment, discrimination during the hiring process and fewer professional development and promotional opportunities. According to AARP, involuntary retirement, underemployment and unemployment of older adults resulted in a loss of \$850 billion in Gross Domestic Product in 2018.

The County of Los Angeles has made significant strides and is a leader in combatting ageism as demonstrated by its designations as a Certified Age-Friendly

² <https://mcpres.mayoclinic.org/research-innovation/navigating-the-gender-and-health-paradox-longevity-healthspan-and-perceptions-of-aging/>

³ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/1392557>

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/ageing-ageism#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20ageism%20is%20associated, reduces%20our%20quality%20of%20life.>

Employer and as an Age Friendly region by the World Health Organization. It is our collective responsibility to build a more inclusive and age-friendly community wherein older adults are respected and valued as capable, competent, effective people. We all benefit from their active engagement and full participation. We can combat ageism through education, which dispels misconceptions and reduces prejudice and discrimination by providing accurate information, and intergenerational activities. Ageism Awareness Day is an opportunity to call attention to ageism, to reframe aging and for us to collectively identify and take actions to proactively address it.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Proclaim October 9, 2024, Ageism Awareness Day in Los Angeles County;
2. Encourage cities in the County of Los Angeles to also proclaim October 9, 2024 Ageism Awareness Day; and
3. Direct the Aging and Disabilities Department to provide educational material to all County Departments and other partners to encourage all residents to increase public awareness and combat ageism and to encourage residents to participate in intergenerational activities.

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