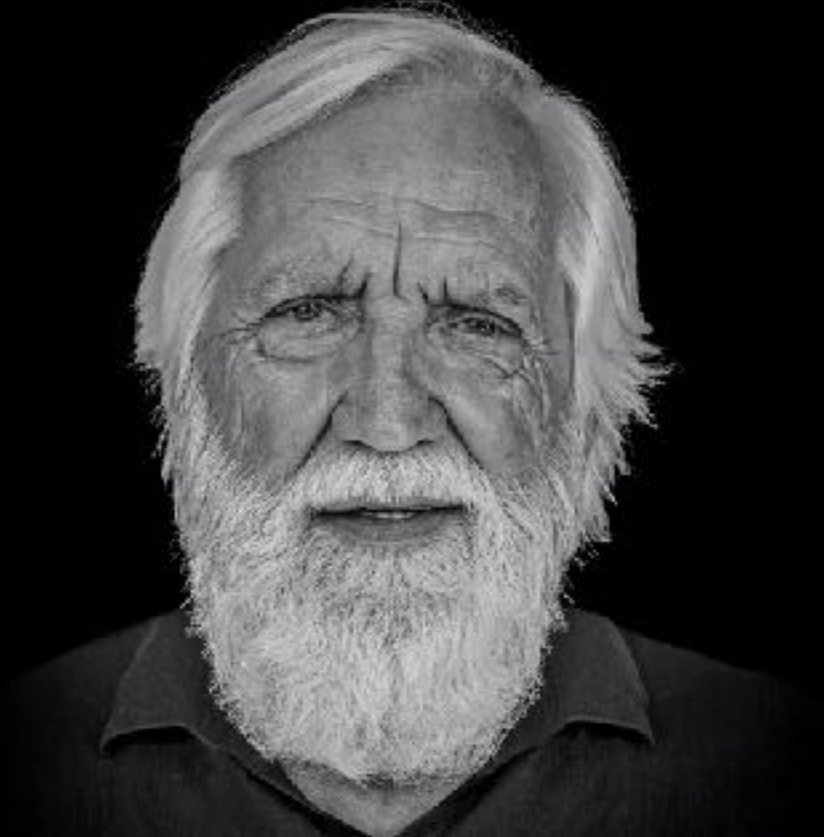




Practicing and producing ageing: how ageism unfolds.. and can be overcome?

Jolanda Lindenberg, 18 June 2024

Outline of the presentation

Brief introduction to Leyden Academy

Setting the scene

Background

The research

Research outline

Producing ageing

Older adults on being old

Practicing ageing

Older adults being old

Next steps



Theo (see [Verhage et al. 2024](#))

Leyden Academy on Vitality and Ageing

Leyden Academy is a knowledge institute conducting *research*, providing *education*, and pursuing *innovations* in the field of vitality and ageing.



Our mission

The mission of Leyden Academy is **to improve the quality of life of older people** by creating opportunities for a **vital** and **meaningful** life, closely **connected** with the community.



Connected

We aim to contribute to an inclusive society that appreciates the value of all generations, and where people of all ages feel invited to participate. This creates opportunities for older adults and for society at large.



Setting the scene

Some examples

Some things I heard in Australia

- Staying young
- Living younger
- I like to stay as young as possible
- Young at heart
- Crossing the line
- *Retirement*
- I am a young 65 year old

Headlines in the Netherlands

- Photovoice successful in involving vulnerable older adults
- Concerns about the building of care housing for older adults
- Research: older adults with broken hips
- How Geert and Irene deal with loneliness
- Older adults practice falling and getting up

Some examples

Older Australians

Australians enjoy one of the **highest life expectancies** in the world



Australians aged 55 years and over contribute **\$74.5 billion** each year in unpaid caring and voluntary work



AN AGEING POPULATION. BY 2050, AROUND **ONE QUARTER** OF AUSTRALIANS WILL BE AGED 65 YEARS AND OVER



Declining Workforce Ratio



MORE THAN **1 in 4** OLDER AUSTRALIANS LIVE IN POVERTY.

People aged 65 years and over make up **7%** of the homeless population

80% OF ALL AUSTRALIANS AGED 65 YEARS AND OVER RELY ON THE AGE PENSION.

3 in 4 people aged 85 yrs or over live in private dwellings

Impact of the ageing of the population

Socio-demographic changes in the population

	Number of people aged 65 and over
2015: 3.1 million	+55%
2040: 4.8 million	

	Number of people aged 90 and over
2015: 117,000	+191%
2040: 340,000	

	Number of people aged 65 and over living alone
2015: 920,000	+88%
2040: 1.73 million	

	50-64 year-olds per person 85+ (informal care givers)
2015: 10	-60%
2040: 4	

Consequences for population health

	Number of people with multiple chronic diseases
2015: 4.3 million	+28%
2040: 5.5 million	

	Number of people with arthritis
2015: 1.2 million	+92%
2040: 2.3 million	

	Number of deaths from dementia
2015: 14,000	+186%
2040: 40,000	

	Number of people with dementia
2015: 154,000	+114%
2040: 330,000	

	Number of people aged 75 and over feeling lonely
2015: 600,000	+117%
2040: 1.3 million	

	Number of people with urinary incontinence
2015: 495,000	+49%
2040: 740,000	

Consequences for healthcare

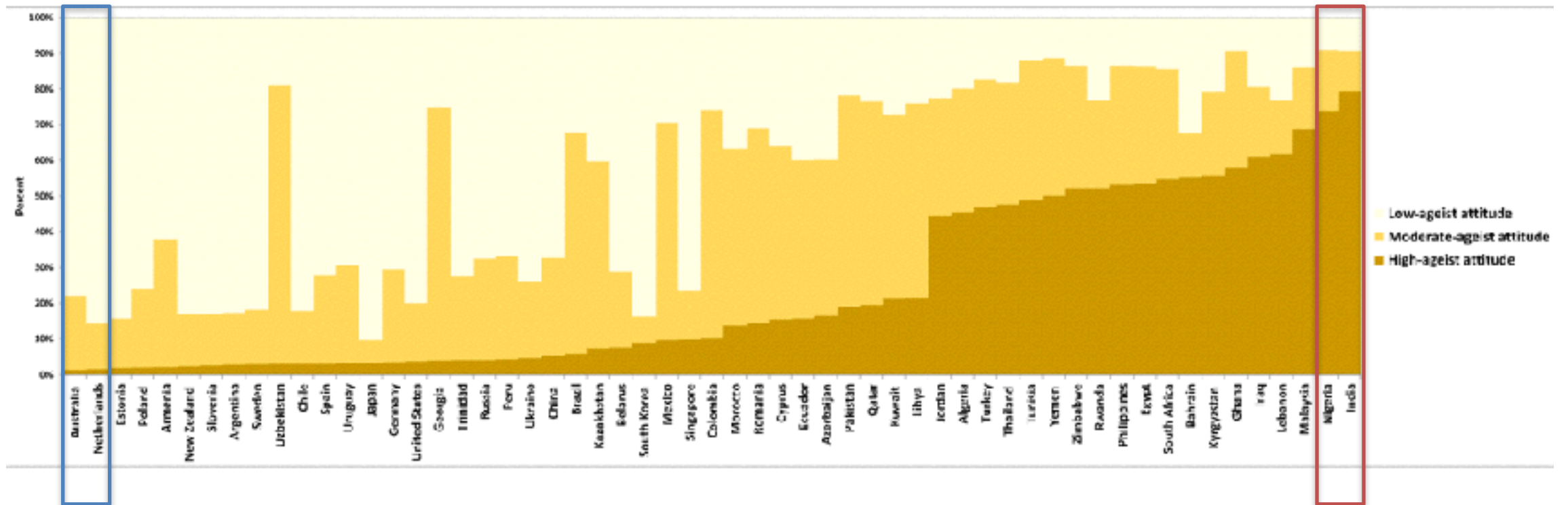
	Number of cataract operations among people aged 75 and over
2015: 62,000	+106%
2040: 128,000	

	Number of people with dementia who need nursing home care
2015: 76,000	+117%
2040: 165,000	

	First aid visits by people aged 85 and over
2015: 125,000	+143%
2040: 304,000	

	Expenditures on elderly care
2015: 17 billion	+157%
2040: 43 billion	

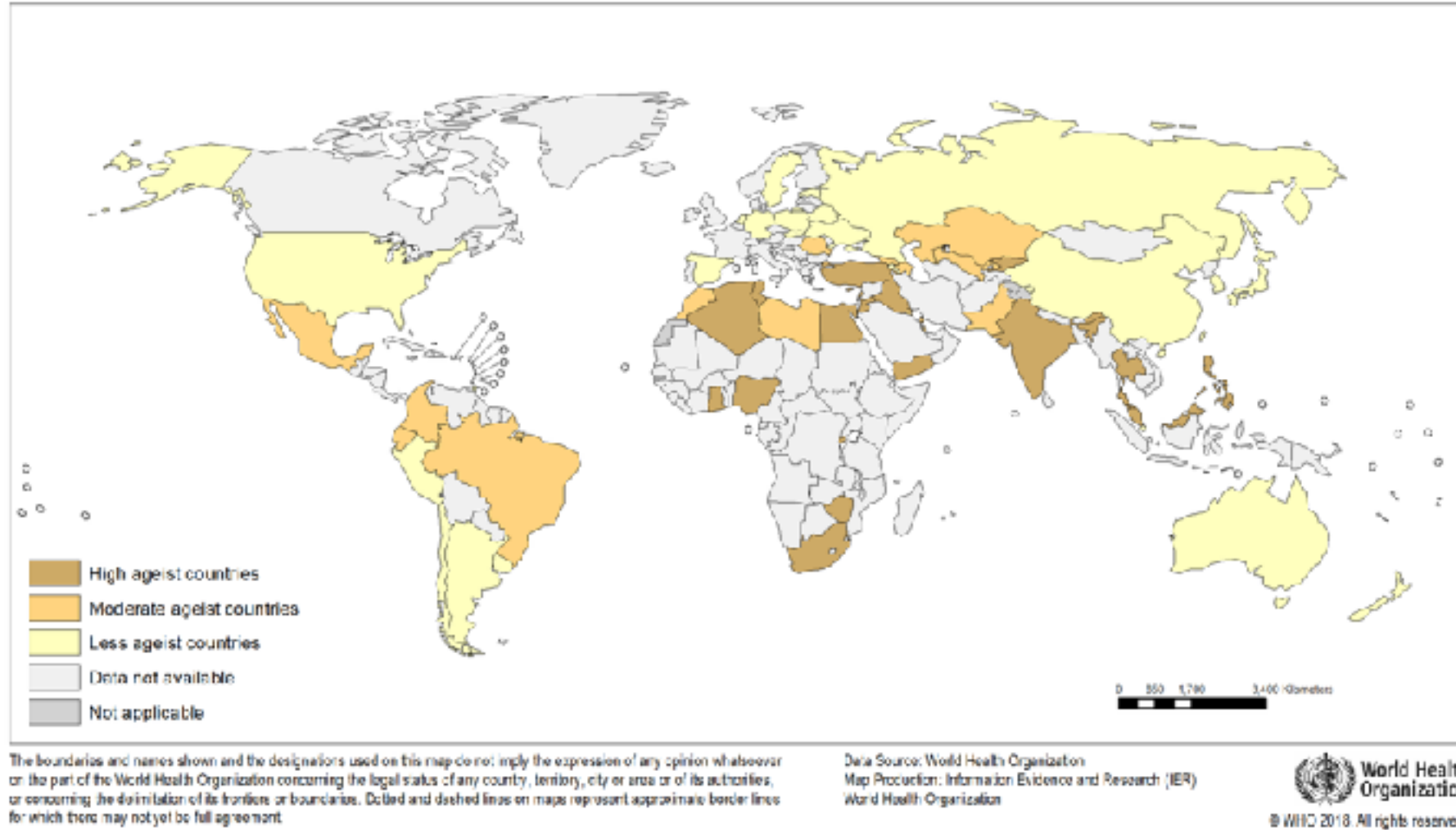
WHO ageist attitudes



Officer et al. 2020 Ageist attitudes across the world

Leyden Academy

ON VITALITY AND AGEING



Setting the scene

Research outline

Multi-methods study focused on ageing well among older adults in the community and living in aged care facility

Methods

- Fieldwork (period 2011-2017, in Amsterdam)
- Interviews (approx. 120, across the country)
- Focus groups (24 in total, across the country)
- Participant observations in care facilities, community centres and other public places

Population

- Age 58 - 98
- Diverse sample



I own a car and well I actually need it to visit my daughter, who lives in [another region], and my other daughter lives further away and at times I visit an old colleague of mine in Friesland. I bought a Vespa last year. Actually, I would need one of those four-wheelers [mobility scooters]. I am not an old man yet. I also owned an electric bike and that was dangerous because you cannot get away from a standstill. And nowadays when I stand at railroad crossings and there are all these students behind you... Then I am an old guy [oude vent] and I don't want to be that yet (male, 81 years old, divorced, born in the Netherlands).

Theoretical background

How can we explain ageism?

Main theoretical frameworks:

1. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)
2. Social role theory (Early & Wood, 2012)
3. Terror management theory (Greenberg, Solomon & Pyszczynski, 1997)

How can we explain self-ageism?

Main theoretical frameworks:

1. Stereotype embodiment theory (SET, Levy et al. 2009)
2. Stereotype content model (SCM, Cuddy et al. 2009)



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Producing ageing: Older adults on being old

Six main themes:

1. Marginalisation

The final stage of my work, due to aging, they no longer needed me. They didn't need me anymore. I was there, but I had nothing to do. So, you start looking up things. I could take a look at the website of our management. Then you start working on it. I also know which people I should contact, but then nothing happens with that. You don't hear anything about it. (male, 67 years, married born in the Netherlands)

2. Objectified

I think the elderly are a subordinate caste. They have gray hair, they are tired, they can't do anything, they are digitally illiterate [...] And an older person is not the most optimal person you can imagine, right? Because old people are going to die anyway? You shouldn't invest so much time and energy into that. I mean, right? And if you just put them away a little, a bit behind the sun, a cup of coffee, it'll be fine, you know? They can't do anything anyway? I know- I still feel, taste that everywhere (female, 74 years, married, born in the Netherlands)

Producing ageing: Older adults on being old

3. Subjugation

That's how people: I am an age, they think I really don't know anymore. That's how it goes, that's how you feel. You pick that up. Yes, recently too, I don't know exactly anymore, but then I said 'ohhhh yes too bad I have gray hair huh? I believe you would react differently otherwise.' Over the phone too, I always remain a lady - and that was probably also someone who hadn't slept well - And she snapped and then I thought, then I said 'are you still there?' and she said: 'yes, why?' I said: 'do you think it's polite what you're doing to me?' 'do you know what sorrow is? I start the day happy and cheerful and I pray for peace and I'm grateful that I wake up in my own little house every morning and then you start snapping at me, while I... 'oh sorry' she said.. I said, 'let's just hang up, I've done my bit, maybe you'll do something with it.' And really it's difficult. When you're older, it's really... you really have to stand up for yourself (female, 85 years, widowed)

4. Wither

They have somewhat lost touch with reality due to aging (male, 66 years, married, born in the former Dutch Indies)

Producing ageing: Older adults on being old

5. Freedom

I had never realized that so much free time is also very enjoyable and priceless. [It gives] A sense of freedom. You see, every obligation I take on now, I take on completely voluntarily. (male, 70 years, married, born in the Netherlands)

6. Self-assurance

Yes, I notice that I am retired. In contact with working people, I notice that the approach is different. People also look at you strangely if you take long vacations; you always get comments about that. I just say that their time will come. I don't pay attention to it. (female, married, 68 years, born in the Netherlands)

Liminal bodies

Existing in a state of liminality, occupying a space between different states of being, life and death, inclusion and exclusion, worthiness and unworthiness. These bodies are situated at the threshold, neither fully belonging to one category nor the other.

Practicing ageing: Older adults being old

B: Hello, I think I know you? But I forgot your name, I am really sorry...

Me: No, I believe we have met before, it's Jolanda

B: yes, well... I just came to drop by, because well, I am with the client council...

Me: yes...?

B: well yes, and I just, I written down some suggestions and so on...just...some minor things. I thought it might be of help?

Me: thank you, that's very helpful.

B: I have to write all these things down nowadays. The memory...

Me: oh yes, well we all have... and this is a rather long list.

B: well yes, but well... you know my brain, I think it is not working so fast anymore. Really. Like my radars are not working properly. You see my brain can not remember these things anymore, and names as well. I can recognise people but not... sometimes I really think my brain is not working so fast, I can simply not take it in anymore. [smiles] I am becoming an old bag (oud wijf).

Me: Ah no! [laughs], well everyone is here, and I am sure that your brain is still doing a pretty good job considering this note.

B: well yes, I would just like to help out, even though I am an old bag, think well perhaps, yes, it might be of use?

Me: sure, I'll pass on the message.

Practicing ageing: Older adults being old

B: yes, and then well, yes, can you read it? My handwriting is not so stable anymore.

Me: [looking at note] yes, I think I can.

B: yes, I added this [pointing]. It is warm weather, hem [waving hands, waving toward her]. My window, the handle is broken and now I can not open it anymore and with this weather...

Me: Oh yes that's bothersome.

B: well yes and remember last time we had this annual meeting and you were there and I asked the lady... [silence]

Me: but it's not yet fixed.

B: no, no... and it's... you see... I can't anymore...[long silence]

Me: I'll see what I can do.

B: really? That would be nice yes. Because I am no longer able to, with my leg, and my children, my daughter is ill herself, has rheumatism you see. And my son he visits only rarely because he lives far. I don't want to ask them.

Practicing ageing: Older adults being old

Strategies to deal with these meanings

1. Performing independence
2. Reciprocity
3. Engage
4. Withdrawing

I don't stay seated, I keep on moving. I start the day with 40 minutes of Tai Chi. Right now, I feel like I'm running out of energy. Taking steps, at home, 4000-5000. That's very difficult. I just have the feeling that I'm weakening after all. The walker isn't coming into the house. (male, 98 years old, widowed, born in former Dutch Indies)

Not in the form of complaining, but enduring, but just see the positive things in people, in the world, and not just the negative. Try to engage in as many activities as possible, make sure you look nice or good and stay healthy. Buy nice things for your home calmly or for example, don't say "I'm almost dying" or something like "I won't buy it". Just do it. (female, 61 years, married)

Implications

1. Older people and ageing
 - Negative association with [wellbeing](#), [health](#) and [survival](#) (esp. [Levy](#) et al., 2002)
 - and with [healthcare costs](#) (Levy et. al., 2020)
2. Care for older adults and caregiving
 - Over-accomodative [communication](#)
 - Different approaches, [treatment](#) and diagnoses (Pasupathi & Lockenhoff, 2002)
 - Attractiveness of working in aged care and geriatrics ([Kusumastuti](#) et al. 2017)
3. Position and approach of older people in society
 - [Self-fulfilling prophecy](#) (Wurm et al., 2013)
 - Age solidarity ([WHO](#), 2017)
 - Disengagement and loss of older workers ([Australian Human Rights Commission](#), 2015)



Next steps

1. Towards an inclusive society
 - How can we understand and tackle the global reach of ageism?
 - How can we come to a better understanding of diversity and an intersectional approach?
2. Intergenerational solidarity
 - How can we foster intergenerational connection?
 - What can we do to support life-friendly environments?
3. The meaning of *being* old
 - How can we support positive identification?
 - What is needed to create affordances for vulnerability?
 - How can we cherish interdependence?





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Resources

1. NARI age positive language guide: <https://www.nari.net.au/age-positive-language-guide>
2. GSA age-inclusive language Reframing Aging: <https://www.geron.org/News-Events/GSA-News/CEO-Blog/revised-style-guides-advance-age-inclusive-language>
3. WHO quick guide to avoid ageism: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/quick-guide-to-avoid-ageism-in-communication>
4. WHO Ageism theme: https://www.who.int/health-topics/ageism#tab=tab_1
5. WHO Connecting generations: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240070264>
6. Centre for ageing better age positive image library: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/news/age-positive-image-library-launched>
7. Centre for ageing better good recruitment for older workers guide: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/resources/good-recruitment-for-older-workers-a-guide-for-employers>
8. Aging unmasked podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/user-285270443>
9. Leading age ageism dialogue guides: <https://leadingage.org/topic/ageism/>
10. Healthy worker toolkit: <https://www.centreforwhs.nsw.gov.au/research/the-healthy-older-worker-toolkit>
11. HelpAge exposing ageism: <https://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/challenge-ageism/>
12. COTA on ageism: <https://cota.org.au/policy/ageism-and-discrimination/>
13. Every age counts Australia campaign and pledge: https://www.everyagecounts.org.au/who_ageism_report spa
14. UN- DESA policy and <https://social.desa.un.org/sdn/ageism-is-a-global-challenge>

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