Revera Report on Ageism

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Contents

Foreword 3
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About the Revera Report 4

Revera Report on Ageism: Key Results 5
- Ageism in Canada 5
- Two Unique Views on Aging 10
- We Need to Make a Change 13

Recommendations 14

Foreword

Ageism — stereotyping or discriminating against people based on their age — is widespread and the most tolerated form of social prejudice in Canada, according to the Revera Report on Ageism, produced by Revera and the International Federation on Ageing (IFA). Six-in-ten seniors 66 years of age and older report they have been treated unfairly or differently because of their age; more than one-third of Canadians admit to ageist behaviour; and 71 per cent agree older people are less valued in our society than younger generations.

We are not alone. According to 2009 data from the European Social Survey, an academically-driven social survey of the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns in 28 European countries, 46 per cent of respondents report experiencing at least one form of age-related prejudice. As a significant worldwide social issue, ageism must stand alongside those that have been waged for decades against gender- and race-based discrimination.

There's no question we are an aging society. In Canada, the number of people over the age of 65 is estimated to double by 2036. By 2051, one in four people in Canada will be 65 years of age or older. This seismic shift will bring immense change to the social and economic landscape of Canada, from healthcare to productivity to housing and transportation, and more. What remains unknown is whether our society possesses the tolerance, open-mindedness and inclusiveness that will be vital as the population ages.

Remedying the situation starts with understanding that ageism is not an old person's problem; it's a societal problem and a collective responsibility. Ageism affects us all, as employers, employees, policy makers, caregivers, relatives and friends of older adults — and personally, as we ourselves age. In 2011, the first Baby Boomers turned 65; an active, successful, 'take-charge' generation that has a different expectation about what it means to get older. Boomers are unlikely to accept being treated differently because of their age. In fact, previous Revera research revealed that 85 per cent of Boomers say they want a different aging experience than that of their parents or grandparents.

Against this backdrop, we need to challenge our assumptions of aging and recognize the valuable contributions of older adults to society. According to the Revera Report on Ageism, older adults themselves are very positive about their later years; in fact, increasing age correlated with increasing optimism about aging and happiness with life. It's time to focus on celebrating age, not discriminating against it.

Our goal is to do this through Age Is More (www.AgeisMore.com), an initiative aimed at challenging the negative attitudes and stereotypes faced by seniors, and celebrating the ageless spirit of older persons in Canada.

Now more than ever, we have an opportunity to meet the challenge of ageism head-on in an extraordinary, positive way. This is not a challenge that can be tackled by a single organization or segment of the population. Individuals, organizations and policy makers all have a role to play.

The Revera Report on Ageism concludes with a set of recommendations. Our hope is that they become the start of the conversation. Thank you for reading, and we welcome your engagement and ideas. Together we can build an age-inclusive Canada.

Jeffrey C. Lozon, C.M.
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Secretary General
International Federation on Ageing

About the Revera Report

The Revera Report on Ageism probed Canadians aged 18-32 (Gen Y), 33-45 (Gen X), 46-65 (Boomers), 66-74 (Seniors) and 75+ (Older Seniors) to find out their attitudes about aging and to gauge their level of awareness and experience with ageism.

The goals of the research are multifaceted: to draw attention to the misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding older people; to inform and advance dialogue around the issue of ageism; to give voice to the views of Canadians who embrace the positive qualities of being older; and to demonstrate that there are many ways people live their lives to the fullest at every stage of their life.

The research was completed online from August 24th to September 4th, 2012 using Leger Marketing's online panel, *LegerWeb*, with a sample of 1,501 Canadians. A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of 2.5 per cent, 19 times out of 20. The Revera Report on Ageism is one in a series of reports issued by Revera exploring different topics relevant to the aging experience of Canadian seniors.

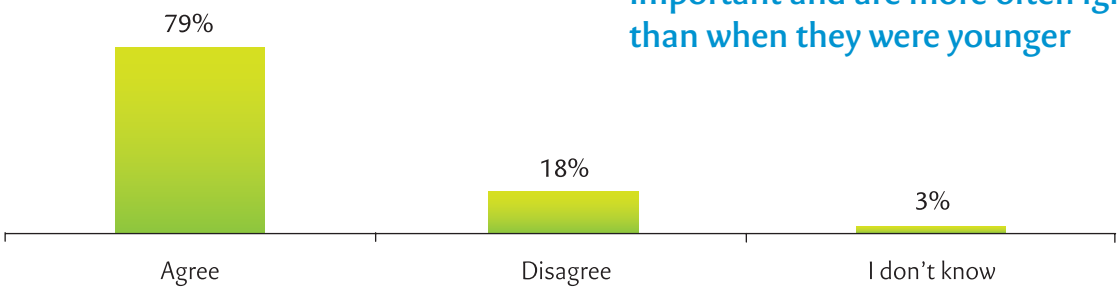
Revera Report on Ageism: Key Results

Ageism in Canada

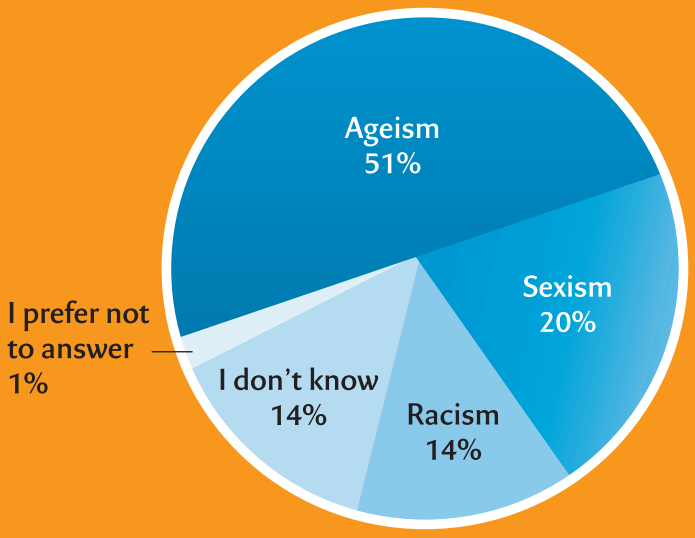
Despite an aging population, ageism is widespread in Canada. It is the most tolerated form of social prejudice when compared to gender– or race-based discrimination.

- Six-in-ten (63%) seniors 66 years of age and older say they have been treated unfairly or differently because of their age
- One-in-three (35%) Canadians admit they have treated someone differently because of their age; this statistic goes as high as 43% for Gen X and 42% for Gen Y
- Half (51%) of Canadians say ageism is the most tolerated social prejudice when compared to gender- or race-based discrimination
- Eight-in-ten (79%) Canadians agree that seniors 75 and older are seen as less important and are more often ignored than younger generations in society
- Seven-in-ten (71%) agree that Canadian society values younger generations more than older generations
- One-in-five (21%) Canadians say older Canadians are a burden on society

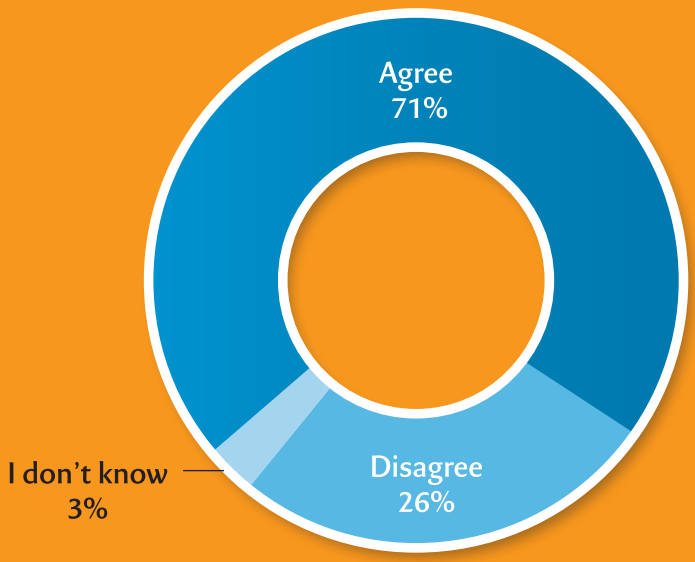
Older Canadians are viewed as less important and are more often ignored than when they were younger



Which prejudice do you think is the most tolerated in Canada?



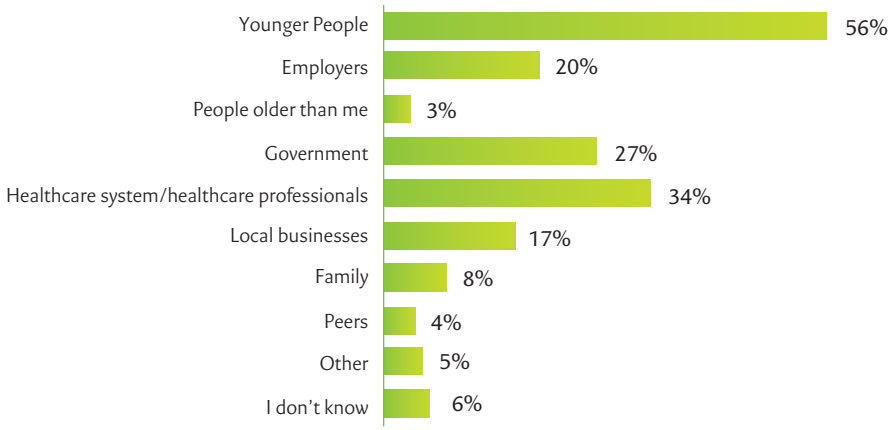
Canadian society values younger generations more than older generations



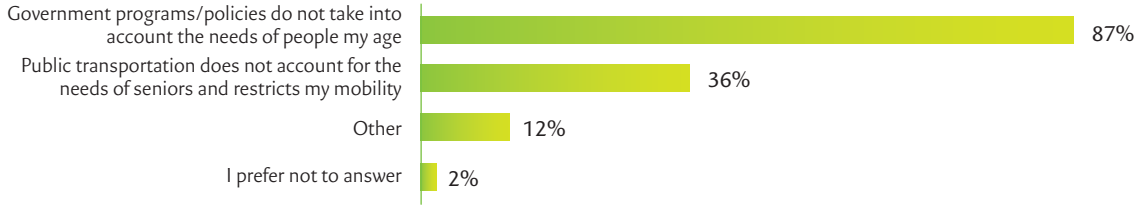
Ageism does not discriminate. It comes in many forms and from many different sources.

- Age discrimination towards seniors 66 and older comes primarily from younger people (56%). More than one-in-four (27%) seniors say they've experienced age discrimination from government and more than one-third (34%) from healthcare professionals and the healthcare system
- Nearly nine-in-ten seniors 66 and older who encountered ageism from the government, attribute it to programs and policies that do not take into account the needs of older people
- Nearly eight-in-ten seniors 66 and older who reported age discrimination in healthcare, said a healthcare professional had dismissed their complaints as an inevitable sign of aging
- The three most common forms of age discrimination faced by Canadian seniors include: being ignored or treated as though they are invisible (41%); being treated like they have nothing to contribute (38%); and the assumption that they are incompetent (27%)

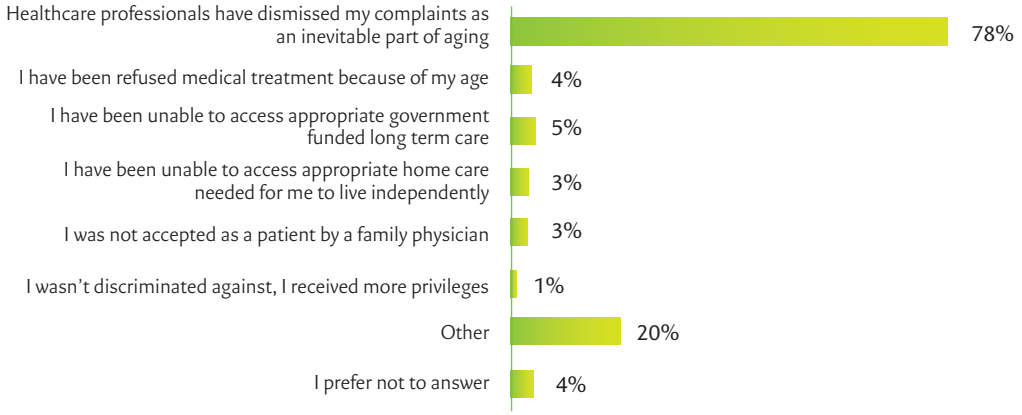
Sources of age discrimination seniors 66 and older experience



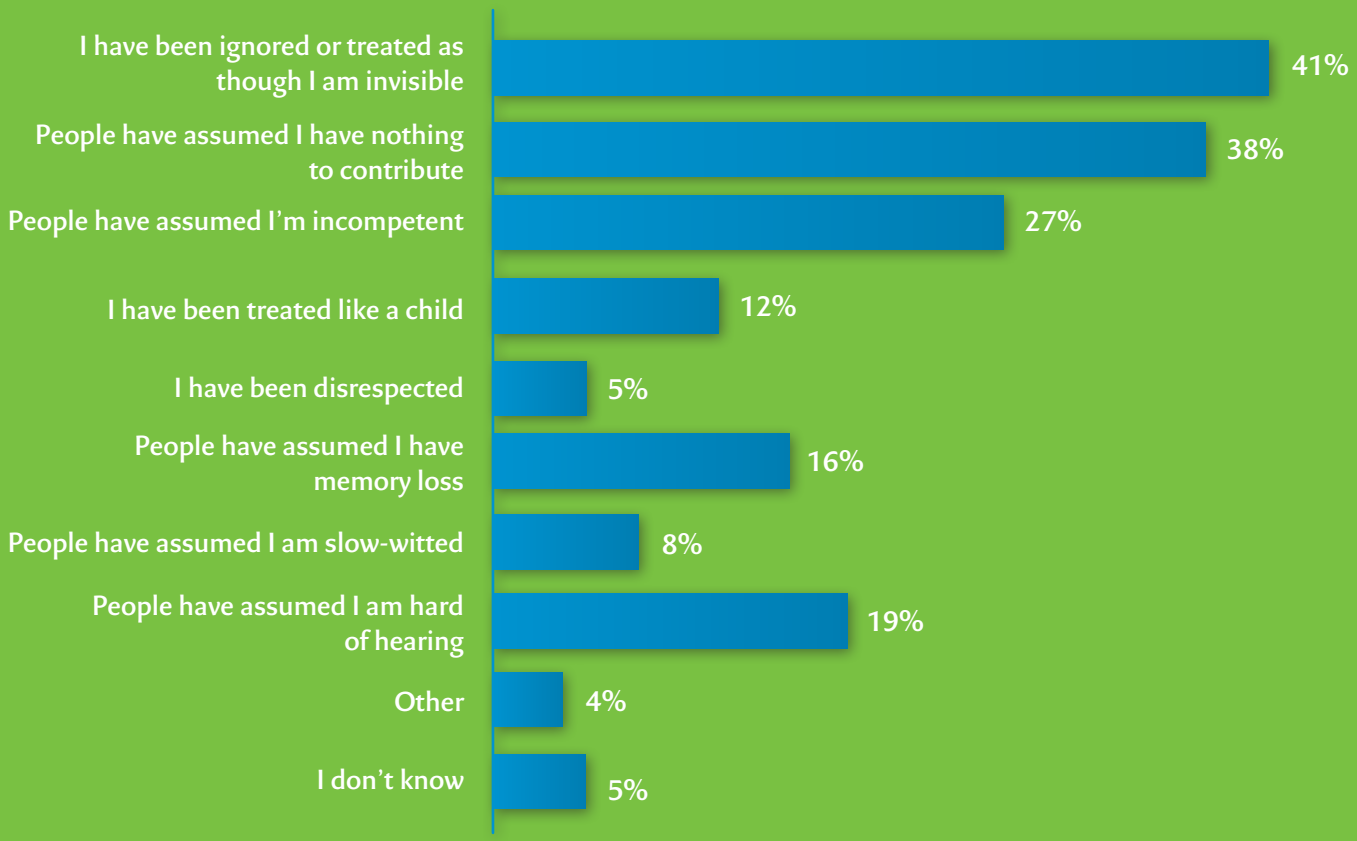
Types of discrimination seniors encounter from government



Types of discrimination seniors encounter from the healthcare system



Types of discrimination faced by Canadian seniors



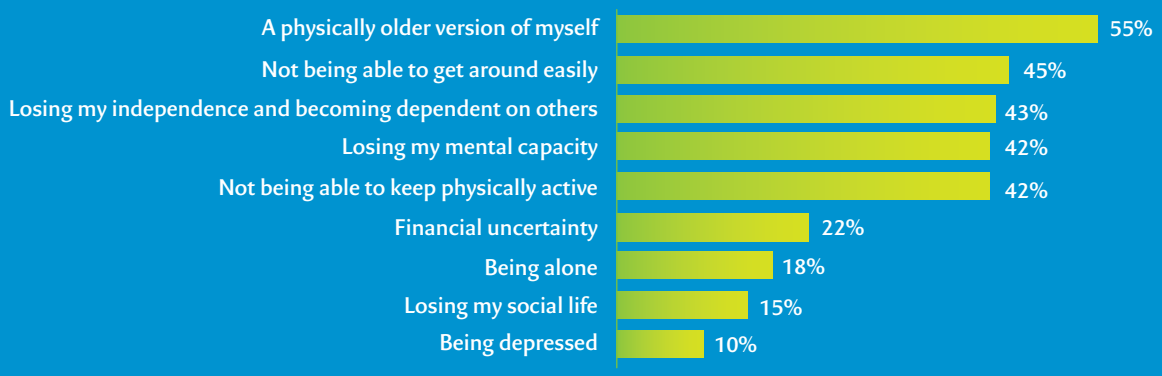
Two Unique Views on Aging

Older Canadians are much more positive about aging than younger generations, underscoring the need to challenge ageist attitudes.

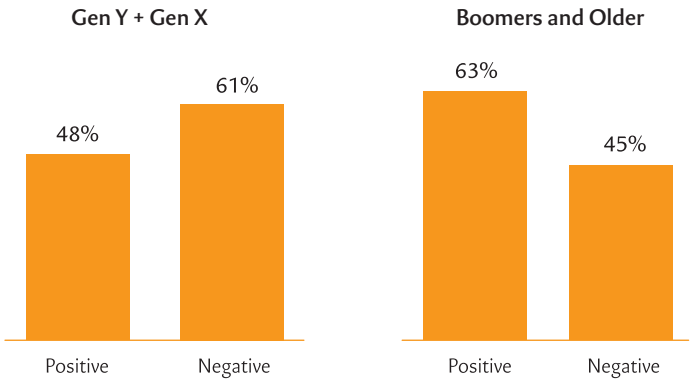
Canadians overall have a negative perception of aging.

- 89 per cent of Canadians associate aging with something negative like not being able to get around easily, losing independence or being alone
- Gen Y and Gen X are the most likely to hold a negative perception of aging; they are the least likely to think people 75 and older are pleasant, independent or healthy, yet the most likely to describe them as grumpy. A further one-in-three describe them as dependent, sick or frail

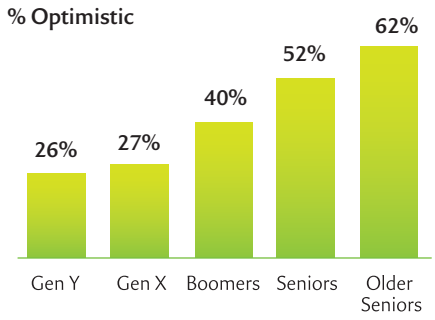
What does aging mean to Canadians 18 years of age and older?



How do you view Canadians 75 years of age and older?



On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely pessimistic and 10 is extremely optimistic, what is your outlook on aging?



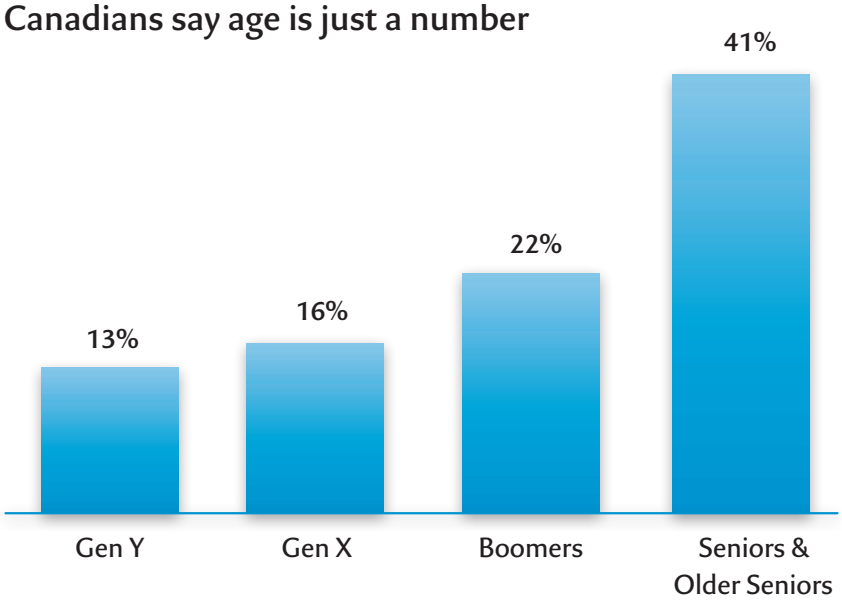
The older you get, the more optimistic you are about aging.

- While the majority of seniors 66 and older are optimistic about aging, the opposite is true of younger generations, specifically Gen Y's and Gen X's
- Canadians 66 and older are the most likely to associate aging with something positive like having more time to do things they love and more time to spend with those they care about, as well as being wiser and more self-assured
- Seniors 66 and older are the most likely to say "age is just a number" (41%) and approximately two-in-five say "you never stop living life to the fullest" (36%) and "the best is yet to come" (40%)

Canadians believe you never stop living life to the fullest

People stop living their life to the fullest...	GENERATIONS					
	TOTAL	GEN Y	GEN X	BOOMERS	SENIORS	OLDER SENIORS
NEVER	27%	22%	30%	24%	30%	42%

Canadians say age is just a number

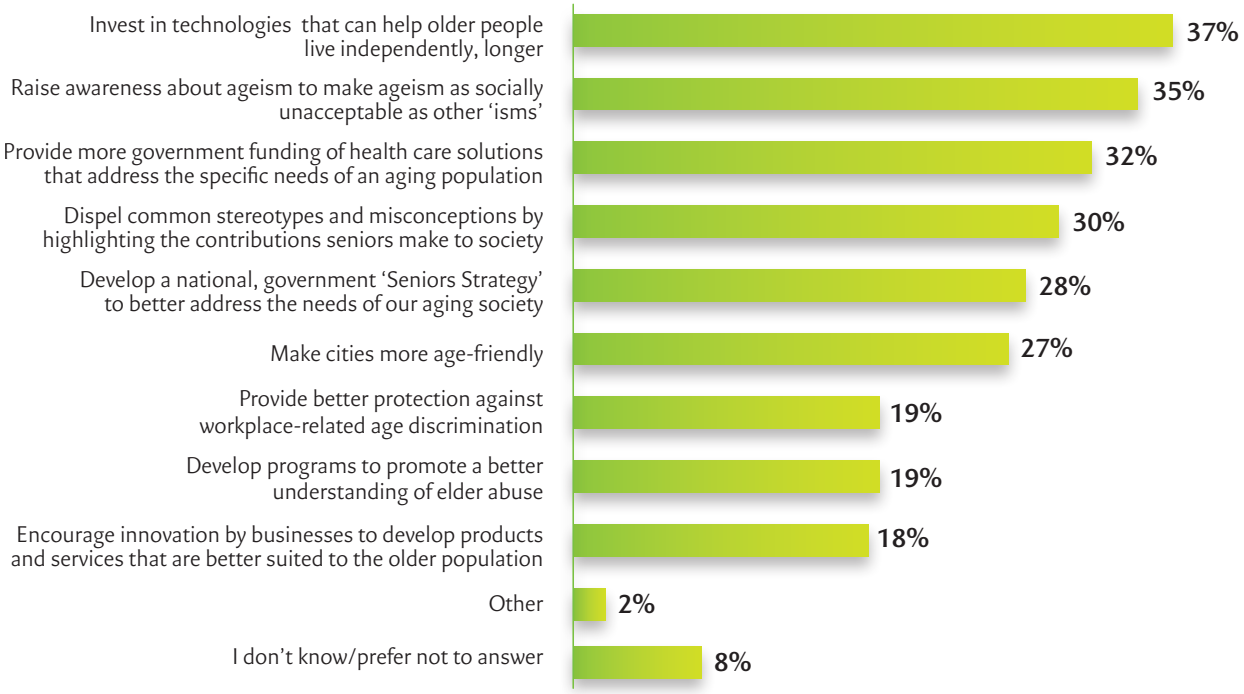


We Need to Make a Change

Change doesn't happen in isolation: individuals, organizations and policy makers all have a role to play in building an age-inclusive Canada.

According to Canadians, the top three changes suggested to combat age discrimination are:

- Invest in technologies that can help older people live independently for longer
- Raise awareness about ageism so that it is as socially unacceptable as other 'isms', like sexism and racism
- Provide more government funding of healthcare solutions that address the specific needs of an aging population



Recommendations

It's clear that if we don't address ageism as a societal issue now, it will compound and become more entrenched as our population ages. Change however, won't happen overnight, and it is not the exclusive responsibility of any one group. In collaboration and consultation with older people, individuals, organizations and policy makers all have a role to play in building an age-inclusive society.

As individuals and as a society, we must shine a light on the issue of ageism. We need to recognize, call out and challenge the negative stereotypes and assumptions about aging and older people. Rather than make assumptions about an individual's abilities or quality of life based on their age, we need to be open-minded, view aging with optimism and reach out to older adults as vibrant, important and valued contributors to society.

Organizations need to raise awareness of ageism and be active contributors to ending it. As employers, the value and significant contributions older workers can and do make should not be overlooked. We also need to better understand and meet the diverse needs of older consumers – after all, they encompass a broad age range, and the needs of a 65-year-old may be quite different to those of an 85-year-old.

Policy makers, both government and non-governmental agencies, need to collaborate and plan for an age-inclusive Canada. Building on the work that governments are already doing, there needs to be continued focus on developing policies that enable people of all ages to have the choices they need to live their lives to the fullest.

About Revera Inc.

Revera is a leading provider of seniors' accommodation, care and services; built on 50-year history of helping seniors live life to the fullest. Our nearly 30,000 dedicated employees continually strive to serve a diverse group of clients and to offer choices to meet their individual preferences. With more than 250 sites across Canada and parts of the U.S., we work to enhance lives in our retirement communities, long term care homes, U.S. nursing and rehab centres and through the provision of home health services. Canadian-owned and operated, Revera serves approximately 30,000 clients every day, with the core values of respect, integrity, compassion and excellence at the heart of our business. Find out more about Revera at www.reveraliving.com or find us on Facebook and Twitter.

About The International Federation on Ageing

The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is an international, non-governmental organization and point of global connection to experts and expertise in the field of ageing. We believe in generating positive change for older people through helping to shape and influence effective age-related and senior policies and practice. For more information about the IFA visit www.ifa-fiv.org.

For more information on Age is More, please visit www.AgeIsMore.com.

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