

## How life of older people has changed

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## Ageism

- Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age.
- Ageism is
  - In policies that support healthcare rationing by age
  - In practices that limit younger or older people's opportunities to contribute to decision-making in the workplace
  - In studies and polls with upper age limits (often 75 years!)
  - In patronizing behavior used in interactions with older and younger people,
  - In self-limiting behavior, which can stem from internalized stereotypes about what a person of a given age can be or do.

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## Scientist find what they look for!

- Traditional aging research has concentrated on progressive decline of health and social life
- Only recently has research started to look at ageing from a more positive perspective
- People wish to live a long life and continue to participate in meaningful life situations
- Population aging vs. a long-lived population
- Individuals and populations live longer than before
- How has longer life influenced old age



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## Risk of death has been reduced by half up to age of 85 years -> Deaths happen at older ages, life becomes longer

Risk of death (%) during the following year

Age	Year 1990	Year 2019
0	0,56	0,21
10	0,02	0,01
20	0,12	0,06
30	0,11	0,07
40	0,28	0,11
50	0,49	0,24
60	1,14	0,57
70	2,97	1,55
80	7,83	4,16
85	13,09	7,45
90	19,00	14,45
95	29,37	24,00

The most typical age of death is 89



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## What constitutes ageing and old age

- Human development and ageing – single process – life span
- Ageing refers to a multidimensional process of physical, psychological, and social change that increase vulnerability to health decline
- Aging reflects cultural and societal conventions
- Traditional aging research has concentrated on progressive decline of health and social life
- Most measures of wellbeing included in studies assess illbeing
- Could it be possible to find wellbeing in old age, if it was studied?

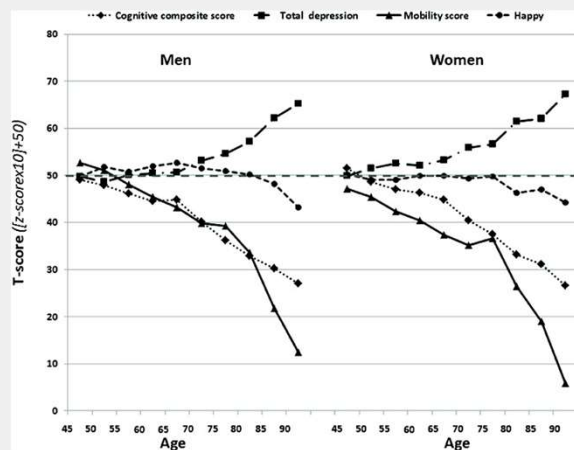
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## RESILIENCE

- A capacity to cope with adversity, bounce back
- A multisystemic process where individual and environmental resources interact
- In old age, resilience increases!
  - People learn ways to bounce back and maintain life satisfaction even when health declines



Vestergaard S, Thinggaard M, Jeune B, Vaupel JW, McGue M, Christensen K. Physical and mental decline and yet rather happy? A study of Danes aged 45 and older. *Aging Ment Health*. 2015;19(5):400-8. doi: 10.1080/13607863.2014.944089

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## When does old age start?

- Does the increased length of life prolong old age?
- Yes, if you consider age 65 as the onset of old age

### BUT OLD AGE IS NOT PROLONGED

- Studies suggest that old age comprises approximately 10 last years of life
- During 2 last years health decline become steeper
- Old age has moved to older ages

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## A new life phase has emerged between 65 and old age

YEAR	1986		2019	
	Life expectancy at the age of 65 (years)	Years between 65 and old age	Life expectancy at the age of 65 (years)	Years between 65 and old age
Men	13.4	3.4	18.5	8.5
Women	17.5	7.5	22.0	12.0

(50% of people live longer than the average life expectancy)



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## Positive gerontology

- Old age is considered a normal part of life
- Studies wellbeing, functional capacity, friendships, activity, and not solely illbeing, disability or loneliness
- Essential in diversifying the idea of old age among scientists, general public, business life, and decision makers



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## Have older people become younger?

- We studied 75- and 80-year-old people in 1989-1990 and 2017-2018
- Walking speed was 11-33% higher in the later born cohort
- Hand grip strength was 9-25% higher in the later born cohort
- Knee extension strength was 25-47 % higher in the later born cohort
- Especially 80-year-old women have much better functional capacity than before
- Current 85-year-olds are approximately similar than 75-year-olds were 30 years ago
- **Yes, older people are physically about 10 years younger than 30 years ago**

Koivunen K, Sillanpää E, Munukka M, Portegijs E, Rantanen T. Cohort Differences in Maximal Physical Performance: A Comparison of 75- and 80-Year-Old Men and Women Born 28 Years Apart. *J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci.* 2021 Jun 14;76(7):1251-1259. doi: 10.1093/gerona/glaa224.

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## Are older people psychologically younger than before?

- Cognitive capacity is meaningfully higher in later than earlier born cohorts of 75- and 80-year-olds
- Fewer people report depressive symptoms in later than earlier born cohorts of 75- and 80-year-olds
- Yes they are

Munukka M, Koivunen K, von Bonsdorff M, Sipilä S, Portegijs E, Ruoppila I, Rantanen T. Birth cohort differences in cognitive performance in 75- and 80-year-olds: a comparison of two cohorts over 28 years. *Aging Clin Exp Res.* 2021 Jan;33(1):57-65. doi: 10.1007/s40520-020-01702-0.

Kekäläinen T, Koivunen K, Pynnönen K, Portegijs E, Taina Rantanen. Cohort Differences in Depressive Symptoms and Life Satisfaction in 75- and 80-Year-Olds: A Comparison of Two Cohorts 28 Years Apart. *J Aging Health.* 2024 Jan;36(1-2):3-13. doi: 10.1177/08982643231164739.

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## How has old age changed?

- 1970-80's few survived to old age. The idea was to offer restful old age to hard working generations. Nursing homes were built (emphasis on institutional care)
- In Finland, **85-90%** of older people lead their lives like any adult person, and need no external support
- Old age is a normal phase of life
- 70-year-old people take care of their 90+ years old parents
- 80-year-olds have sibiligs, school mates and a spouse
- Families may have 4-5 generations
- Two generations in retirement
- Grand parents more important than before
- Ageing people do not dream of resting but strive for active and diverse roles



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## What prevents utilizing the potential of older people

- Ignoring the goals, abilities, and activity of older people
- Petrified and outdated ideas about different ages
- Age discrimination and institutional delay
- Considering ageing as an economic threat