

Age Equity 2022 Fall Forum



**Post-Event
Resource Package**

AEA
AGE EQUITY
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www.ageequityalliance.org

Curated Insights to Support Your Age-Equity Journey

A Big Thank You!

This is a Journey!

Creating workplace age equity is a journey. Ask any disenfranchised group if they are satisfied with the progress toward diversity, equity, and inclusion and they will all answer the same. **NO!**

As John Walter remarked in the Employee Resource Group session, “Generational diversity is still young in the diversity world.” Coming together in a four-hour forum to discuss the many different aspects of workplace ageism helps us collectively grow. Together we learned more about the inherent problem of ageism as well as new steps we can take to be more effective—not only to combat ageism, but ALL isms.

This post-event resource package has been carefully curated to highlight key takeaways from each session—not an easy task given the credibility of the speakers and trainers and the incredible sharing we experienced together!

Thank you for making the forum a success.

About Age Equity Alliance

Age Equity Alliance (AEA) works with progressive employers and business leaders to create a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining all-aged talent to grow their organizations, build positive work cultures, sustain business relevance, and stimulate innovation. Studies have demonstrated that diverse, all-aged teams increase creativity, smart problem-solving, and breakthrough innovation.

Unlike other organizations in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion space, AEA partners directly with employers and collaborators, using research and an empathy-based storytelling approach to cultivate age-inclusive behavior and establish age equity as a core value across all ages.

Our clients have included global companies headquartered in the U.S. and Europe. AEA is also a knowledge partner on a global collaborative project with AARP, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the World Economic Forum to examine the policies and practices needed to support an all-aged workforce.

Age Equity Alliance is a U.S.-certified non-profit 501(c)3. Our impact has been the result of dedicated volunteers in the U.S. and Europe. **Want to get involved? Just reach out!**



Dr. Vânia de la Fuente-Núñez

Originally from Spain, Vânia manages the Global Campaign to Combat Ageism at the World Health Organization and is a lead author of the first UN Global report on ageism.

Vânia also drives capacity building efforts on aging in countries and regions. She has led the creation and is responsible for the ongoing delivery of the first ever leaders program on Healthy Aging. Vânia is a physician who first joined WHO in 2014 and has worked with NGOs and research institutes in both high and low-income countries, including Switzerland, Spain, Senegal, and The Gambia.

Vânia holds an MD from the University of Santiago de Compostela; an MA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics of Health from University College London; and is completing a BA in Social and Cultural Anthropology.

[Connect with Vânia](#) on LinkedIn.

Why Eradicating Ageism is Important to All Ages

TOP TAKEAWAYS

When we talk about ageism we talk about how we *think, feel and act*.

Why we should all care?

Because ageism affects all ages. Children as young as 4 have awareness of age stereotypes which become internalized. Throughout our lives, internalized stereotypes guide how we interact with other people and how we perceive ourselves.

Just one reason why DEI practitioners need to include age in strategic programming!

Ageism is harmful and costly. It increases the risk of poverty, impacts health and social well-being, and can lead to earlier death. [A 2020 study](#) showed ageism led to \$63B in added healthcare costs.

Three Evidence-Based Strategies to Combat Ageism

- **Policy and Law** can address age discrimination and inequality while protecting the human rights of everyone. However, they can be ineffective if people don't know they have a right to them or how to make a claim in the event their rights are violated.
- **Educational Activities** inform and enhance empathy, considered among the most effective for reducing ageism. Education and training should be made available to leadership and employees, alike.
- **Intergenerational Interventions** bring different ages together, promoting age-diverse teams and leveraging different perspectives to impact solutions and project completion.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR AGE INCLUSION JOURNEY

The World Health Organization offers a free toolkit to combat ageism. Get the kit, plus the UN Global Report on Ageism, conversation starters, social media assets, and communication guidelines for avoiding ageism [HERE](#) and [HERE!](#)



Sheila Callaham

Sheila is a Co-Founder, Executive Director, and Board Chair for Age Equity Alliance, a 501(c)3 dedicated to making age equity a core value for every employer.

She is also a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion subject matter expert and regular contributor to Forbes' DEI channel. Sheila has experience in corporate communications and DEI across private, public, and non-profit sectors in the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East.

She is a passionate educator and equity advocate and believes employers who proactively build diverse, all-aged teams are in the best position to succeed in the future of work.

Sheila has an MA in International Studies and a BS in politics and history. She currently lives in northern Portugal where she is studying the language and culture.

[Connect with Sheila](#) on LinkedIn.

Age and the Power of Belonging

TOP TAKEAWAYS

Age bias occurs whenever age is used to diminish the competency and capability of another, disrupting the workplace and undermining employee trust and the sense of belonging **across the age spectrum**.

Companies should want their employees to feel they belong. Not only is it healthier, it increases performance while reducing turnover and absenteeism. (See [Deloitte study](#).)

Belonging cannot be created by the employer. It is an individual response to an external environment.

Companies' DEI strategies should include age to educate, address, and eliminate bias and discrimination across all dimensions of diversity—including age!

How Age Bias Manifests

- **Young, early career employees** feel dismissed regardless of potential or exploited with low pay, unrealistic demands, and the expectation of 24/7 availability. Entry-level jobs require years of experience, not demonstration of skill.
- **Older workers** are portrayed as disposable, out of touch, and no longer able and/or willing to meaningfully contribute. They have disproportionately been impacted by job loss and demotions, denied training opportunities and promotions, and forced to retire before they were ready.

The exclusion of older workers is particularly unsettling given that it impacts everyone regardless of how they identify, and it predicts the future work experience for anyone younger.

Accept that ageism is disrupting the employee culture.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR AGE INCLUSION JOURNEY

Follow [Age Equity Alliance on LinkedIn](#) for regular updates and to access vetted articles and resources. We also offer over 100 short videos and webinars on our [Youtube channel](#). Don't forget to subscribe for updates!



Daniel Jolles

Daniel is a Research Assistant in Behavioral Science at The Inclusion Initiative (TII) at London School of Economics, researching how diverse teams can work better together.

Daniel is also completing his PhD in Psychology at University of Essex. He has specific research interests in decision-making in the hiring of older workers and older worker attitudes towards work and retirement. Daniel holds an MSc and MSD in Psychology and has worked as a Behavioral Scientist in the private sector.

Prior to studying psychology, Daniel spent more than 10 years working as a project management consultant, delivering business change projects for large organizations in Australia, the UK and France. He volunteers as an Academic Advisor and co-facilitator for Age Equity Alliance.

[Connect with Daniel](#) on LinkedIn.

Age & Unconscious Bias: A critical perspective

TOP TAKEAWAYS

We all have biases!

There are many unconscious/implicit biases (stereotyping)

- perception bias: stereotype certain groups.
- affinity bias: warmer towards people like us.
- halo effect: think everything good about a person because we like them.
- conformity bias: a decision that has majority support to conform to the group.
- beauty bias: a well-known factor in hiring and promotions.

Conscious/explicit biases can be:

- uncomfortable when recognize that we have biases and not necessarily feel good about it.
- contradictory when we become aware of previously unconscious biases that do not align to our beliefs/values.

Often age-bias is explicit and has real-world consequences.

- In research, participants explicitly make ageist statements like, “I prefer a younger talent pool as they are more energetic and innovative.”
- This explicit bias hurts older workers seeking employment and perpetuates ageism, which hurts everyone.

Not all diversity is created equal.

- Historical under-representation of race and gender continues.
- While age is not a historically under-represented category, it is a protected category. **An aging population and strong societal age bias creates an urgent need for action.**

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR AGE INCLUSION JOURNEY

See the appendix for a full list of articles and research supporting Daniel's presentation. [HERE](#) is the link to Harvard's Implicit Association Test (IAT) for age. You will need about 10 minutes to complete it.



Nishant Nishant

Nishant is the Managing Director of Customer Success at Microsoft. He leads executive-level engagements for some of Microsoft's most strategic customers, where he is entrusted with hundreds of millions in investment to realize customer success, by bringing the best of Microsoft technologies and talent across the globe.

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Mahir Nisar

Mahir is the Principal at the Nisar Law Group, P.C., a boutique employment litigation firm dedicated to representing employees who have experienced discrimination within the workplace.

Mahir is also a Member of the Board of Directors for Age Equity Alliance.

[Connect with Mahir](#) on LinkedIn.

Discussion: When People Confuse Leadership with Youth

TOP TAKEAWAYS

Age bias challenges employees across the age spectrum, including early career entries and younger executives.

Age does not determine ability and skill set, but young executives, entrepreneurs, and applicants are often discounted due to the prejudice that experience determines competency.

Ageism undermines self confidence and makes people question if they have what it takes.

Age bias often results in employee covering, where an individual conceals an aspect of themselves to lessen attention to a given characteristic or make others feel more comfortable around them.

- When we participate in covering, we've given up celebrating our individual authenticity in order to feel accepted by what other people consider normal or acceptable.
- Age bias is transient. It doesn't discriminate against its target.

Companies take short-cuts when they arbitrarily require a certain number of years of experience instead of focusing on proven competencies. It's a lazy way of recruiting.

Workplace justice is social justice.

How to Push Back When Age Comes Up

- Say, "Tell me more," so that you may uncover assumptions, and engage in an authentic, informative dialog.
- Ask, "What does age have to do with anything?"
- Know your rights; advocate for yourself safely.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR AGE INCLUSION JOURNEY

Covering is defined by Yale Law professor Kenji Yoshino, in his [book](#) by the same name, to describe the practice of hiding crucial aspects of one's self to blend in with the dominant group. Covering included appearance, advocacy (the degree of sticking up for one's group), affiliation (identity), and association (groups). Age covering may include altering one's appearance to appear younger or older, not defending against ageist comments, or not identifying as a parent of adult children.



Elizabeth White

Elizabeth is the author of *55, Underemployed and Faking Normal* and an age solutions advocate for older adults facing uncertain work and financial insecurity.

When she could not find a book that met her needs during her own bout of long-term unemployment, she wrote it herself. She wrote it as a 62-year-old who has lived the stories she describes, and as a Harvard MBA, former retail entrepreneur, and C-suite executive who never expected to land here.

She is a frequent guest blogger, and speaker at conferences and workshops, and has been named one of the top 50 influencers on aging in the country. And her TEDx Talk has been elevated to the main TED stage where it has garnered over 2 million views.

[Connect with Elizabeth](#) on LinkedIn.

Why The Diverse, Age-Inclusive Company Wins

TOP TAKEAWAYS

Workplace Age Discrimination:

- We know it's illegal.
- We know it costs the economy billions in lost productivity.
- We know it's financially devastating for millions of older workers pushed out of their jobs into early, involuntary retirement.

Yet, Workplace Age Discrimination is Rampant:

- 6 out of 10 older workers report experiencing/witnessing age discrimination.
- Only 8% of organizations factor in age as a part of their diversity and inclusion strategies.

People are living longer, fitter lives:

Today, if you are in reasonably good health at 60, you have a 50% chance of living well into your 90s.

Leaders embrace the competitive edge of age diversity!

- Closes skills gaps.
- Sparks innovation.
- Reduces the rate of employee turnover.

Steps Companies Should Take:

- Collect and analyze workforce age demographics to understand underlying issues.
- Create age-inclusive hiring processes.
- Recruit talent intentionally across all ages.
- Create opportunities for collaboration.
- Provide the same level of training and employment.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR AGE INCLUSION JOURNEY

Elizabeth's book ["55, Underemployed and Faking Normal"](#) is available on Amazon.

Catch her TedTalk [HERE](#).



Steven Frampton

Steven founded the Age Diversity Group at 3M. Planned in 2021, launched in 2022, the group has members from 15 countries. Steven believes DEI is a foundation to business success and is a member of all 9 3M Employee Resource Networks. [Connect with Steven.](#)



Barb Smart

Barb is the Director of Modernization for BAE Systems. She also serves as the President of the BAE Systems GENERations Employee Resource Group, focused on building bridges across all ages and strengthening the community by providing an open forum for collaboration. [Connect with Barb.](#)



John Walter

John is a Senior Director of Product Strategy with Moody's Analytics. He is a former co-chair for EMEA Generational Business Resource Group, where he advocated for age equity across Moody's UK and European offices. [Connect with John.](#)



Megan Dean

Megan is a dynamic and motivated Senior HR professional with more than 24 years of experience in HR. She is also a member of the Board of Directors for Age Equity Alliance. [Connect with Megan.](#)

The Value of Age-Focused Employee Resource Groups

TOP TAKEAWAYS

Age-Related Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):

- Create workplace awareness for age, aging, and ageism.
- Help promote a cohesive work environment.
- Support company DEI objectives.

3M Takeaways:

- Newly launched this year and already has 200 members from 15 countries. Speaks to the global need and interest!
- Mission is to empower choices as employees age, provide networking opportunities, and add value to the business.
- Benefits include individual development, enabling positive impact on culture, increased company success.

BAE Systems Takeaways:

- 10 years in place, 3 executive sponsors that rotate every 2 years, and more than 2,000 members!
- Mission is to foster open communications, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing.
- Benefits include personal and professional growth and value the contributions of all ages.

Moody's Takeaways:

- In place for six years, 2 exec sponsors (US/Europe), grew to 300 in the first year.
- Mission is to promote all ages work together, but has grown to address a broader range of age diversity issues.
- Benefits include increased awareness and concrete actions taken by the company to improve age equity.

First Steps to Creating an Age-Related ERG:

- Executive sponsorship is critical for funding, access, and helping spread the message.
- Identify goals/metrics that are reasonable and achievable.
- Leverage DEI team or HR for contacts and budget.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR AGE INCLUSION JOURNEY

AEA offers two short videos on the value of age-related ERGs. Check them out [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). Forbes articles are [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). Finally, an [ARTICLE](#) from the AEA blog.



Nicole Washington

Dr. Nicole is a board-certified psychiatrist specializing in caring for and advocating for those who are not typically consumers of mental health services, namely underserved communities, those with severe mental illness, and high performing professionals.

Dr. Nicole works with organizations on wellness development, speaking on mental health topics, training employers to work with those who have mental illness, and consults on how to develop procedures that are inclusive of all regardless of age, gender identity, or race and ethnicity.

She is a medical reviewer for Healthline Media and has reviewed articles for age related content. Through her private practice, podcast, speaking and writing, she seeks to provide education in efforts to decrease the stigma associated with psychiatric illness.

[Connect with Dr. Nicole](#) on LinkedIn.

Age + Race + Gender: A Perpetually Dangerous Intersection for Black and Brown Women

TOP TAKEAWAYS

Intersectionality was defined in 1991 by law professor Kimberlè Crenshaw. **It is defined as the cumulative impact when a person identifies with multiple marginalized groups.** Living and maneuvering in the intersections drains energy and can create hardships.

People at the Intersections:

- expend enormous energy being hyper-vigilant about words and actions to avoid stereotyping.
- are often asked to become the voice of all, assuming DEI responsibilities without extra compensation and acknowledgment.
- feel compelled to code switch so that others are not uncomfortable by cultural language and references.
- feel responsible for other people's biases and change their behaviors to compensate.

Diversity is nothing without Equity and Inclusion!

How to Support Those at the Intersection:

- Make ageism a part of DEI initiatives in hiring and training protocols.
- Include age in anti-bias training.
- Consider value-based assignments.
- Create age-diverse teams the right way to ensure success.
- Avoid performative gestures. Walk the talk!
- Don't exclude... period!

Culture comes from the top. And every leader (should) want what's in the best interest of the employee.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR AGE INCLUSION JOURNEY

See the study, "[Understanding how race/ethnicity and gender define age-trajectories of disability: An intersectionality approach](#)," to better grasp the cumulative



Lisa Balsler

Lisa Balsler is an award-winning Creative Director and a Certified Diversity Executive whose passion is purpose-driven, cause-related, needle-moving, glass-shattering work that impacts business and the people in it.

Lisa's experience includes two decades as an ad agency creative in New York and Atlanta, where she fostered DEI efforts by developing DEI committees and engaging clients in the conversation.

Her lived experiences with DEI and allyship drove her to launch **New & Improved**, a diverse collective on a mission to modernize business culture with a brand new approach to DEIBA+.

In addition to her work as a change agent, Lisa is a featured awards show judge, podcast guest, speaker, panelist, moderator, and the former Director of SheSays ATL.

[Connect with Lisa](#) on LinkedIn.

Must-Do Steps to Create an Age-Equitable Workplace

TOP TAKEAWAYS

According to the World Health Organization:

- Half the world's population is ageist towards older people.
- In Europe, 1 in 3 report having been a target of ageism.
- Ageism is more prevalent against younger people than other age groups in Europe.

Ageism is insidious and like other systemic societal *isms*, it's baked into institutions, policies, and procedures and flows into our interpersonal interactions. That results in denying people power, opportunities, or access to resources.

Ageism is often coded:

- Over-qualified can be code for too old.
- Inexperienced can be code for too young.
- Saying someone is not a culture fit is problematic. We should be hiring for a **"culture add"** to foster diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplaces across the spectrum.
- Asking someone how old their children are to gauge age.
- Excluding older employees from after-work activities.
- Making references and assuming younger folks won't get them — "you weren't even born yet."

Action for Companies to Take—Teach Employees:

- Not to assume. Get curious instead!
- Check biases. Are you playing into or perpetuating them?
- Recognize it when you hear it and address it. Assume positive intent as the person may not realize the age bias.
- Avoid defensiveness. Listen and learn to grow.
- Hold self and others accountable for change.
- Create an age-inclusive mindset.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR AGE INCLUSION JOURNEY

AEA offers two short videos on the need for age equity action. Check them out [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). Forbes articles are [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). Additional resources are available in the appendix.



Ashton Applewhite

Ashton is an author and activist who has been recognized by the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, National Public Radio, and the American Society on Aging as an expert on ageism.

She blogs at [This Chair Rocks](#), speaks widely at venues that have ranged from the United Nations to the [TED mainstage](#), has written for Harper's, the Guardian, and the *New York Times*, and is the voice of [Yo, Is This Ageist?](#)

The author of [This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism](#), Ashton is a leading spokesperson for a movement to mobilize against discrimination on the basis of age.

[Connect with Ashton](#) on LinkedIn.

Want Age Equity? Ditch the G-Word!

TOP TAKEAWAYS

Aging is not:

- Aging is not something annoying and sad that old people do. Everyone is aging from the minute we are born.
- Aging is not dying. Dying is a discrete event at the end of all that living.
- Aging is not depressing. People are happiest at the beginning and end of their lives.
- Aging is not a disability.

Ageism is prejudice against our future selves.

- We can't challenge bias unless we are aware of it.
- We have to want to become less biased. It's hard. It's a practice. And, it's incredibly rewarding.
- We are just waking up to all the ways ageism harms us.

All discrimination is wrong. There is nothing natural or justifiable about giving ageism a pass in the workplace or anywhere else.

What is the G-word? Generation! Workplace generational framing and tension are widespread.

- G-labels are convenient, a cultural shorthand (and lazy).
- Media clickbait promotes age competition and resentment.
- G-consulting is lucrative—there is money to be made by asserting that differences are real and significant.

It's important to acknowledge age! We can't paper over the reality of aging with phrases like, "age is just a number." If you don't see race, you can't see racism. If you don't see age you can't see ageism.

How to avoid falling into old vs young thinking:

- Check your biases.
- Look hard at whether conflicts are *really* age-related.
- Consider other explanations for what other people do or don't have in common.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR AGE INCLUSION JOURNEY

Visit [Old School](#) for free resources to combat ageism. Read about the [Lump of Labor Fallacy](#).

Appendix

We hope these additional resources are helpful in your age-equity journey!

Global Eradication of Ageism:

Age Equity Alliance is part of a global coalition with AARP, the World Economic Forum, and the OECD called Living, Learning, Earning Longer. [This 159-page report by the OECD](#) (published prior to our joining as a Knowledge Partner) addresses the future workforce, how age diversity impacts workplace productivity, how to mobilize an all-aged workforce, and more.

Age and the Power of Belonging:

Additional sources included work from Sarah Vickerstaff at the University of Kent and Mariska van der Horst from the University of Amsterdam.

- Study on [how internalized age bias impacted retirement decisions](#).
- Shorter [journal article](#) on the same topic by van der Horst.
- [Forbes article](#) on the work of Vickerstaff and van der Horst.
- Short video discussing [how ageism and ableism are confused](#).

Age & Unconscious Bias: A critical perspective:

- Office for National Statistics (2019). Employment in the UK: September 2019.
- World Economic Forum. [We'll Live to 100 — How Can We Afford It?](#) May 2017.
- Mercer (2019). [Are you age ready?](#) [White paper]. Mercer LLC
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- Centre for Ageing Better (2021). [Too much experience: Older workers' perceptions of ageism in the recruitment process](#) [Whitepaper]
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- Abrams, D., Swift, H. J., & Drury, L. (2016). [Old and unemployable? How age-based stereotypes affect willingness to hire job candidates](#). Journal of Social Issues, 72(1), 105-121.
- Carlsson, M., & Eriksson, S. (2019). [Age discrimination in hiring decisions: Evidence from a field experiment in the labor market](#). Labour Economics, 59, 173-183.
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- Jolles, D., Juanchich, M., & Piccoli, B. [Too old for the job?](#) SJDM Conference Poster, 2020.
- Kaufmann, M. C., Krings, F., & Sczesny, S. (2016). [Looking too old? How an older age appearance reduces chances of being hired](#). British journal of management, 27(4), 727-739.

Appendix

Age & Unconscious Bias: A critical perspective, continued:

- Singal, J. (2017, January 11). Psychology's Favorite Tool for Measuring Racism Isn't Up to the Job. The Cut.
- Bezrukova, K., Spell, C. S., Perry, J. L., & Jehn, K. A. (2016). A meta-analytical integration of over 40 years of research on diversity training evaluation. Psychological Bulletin, 142(11), 1227–1274.
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- North, M. S., & Fiske, S. T. (2013). Act your (old) age: Prescriptive, ageist biases over succession, consumption, and identity. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 39(6), 720-734.
- North, M. S. (2019). A GATE to understanding “older” workers: Generation, age, tenure, experience. Academy of Management Annals, 13(2), 414-443.
- Martin, A. E., & North, M. S. (2021). Equality for (almost) all: Egalitarian advocacy predicts lower endorsement of sexism and racism, but not ageism. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.
- Chang, E. H., Kirgios, E. L., Rai, A., & Milkman, K. L. (2020). The Isolated Choice Effect and Its Implications for Gender Diversity in Organizations. Management Science.
- Akinola, M., Opie, T., Ho, G., Unzueta, M., Castel, S., & Brief, A. (2019). Diversity isn't what it used to be: The consequences of the broadening of diversity. Working Paper: Columbia Business School.
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Ageism Against Younger Workers:

- Forbes article Age Bias Hurts Early- and Late-Career Workers
- Harvard Business Review, Am I Old Enough To Be Taken Seriously?, (2020).
- BBC, The Acute Ageism Problem Hurting Younger Workers.
- North, M. S. (2021). Youngism: The Content, Causes, and Consequences of Prejudices Toward Younger Adults, Journal of Experimental Psychology.

Other Resources:

- Harvard Business Review, Harnessing the Power of Age Diversity
- Forbes, What Companies Must Do To Retain Talent (2022)
- Changing the Narrative: #AntiAgeist Birthday Card campaign.
- Becca Levy, Ph.D., Breaking the Age Code: How Your Beliefs About Aging Determine How Long and Well You Live (2022)
- Forbes, Generational Labels And Why It's Time To Put Them To Rest (2022)