

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE >> CHANGING LIVES

NDSU EXTENSION
SERVICE

Are You Aging Well?

Understand the Variety of Factors
Influencing the Aging Experience

Objectives

- Understand the meaning of “aging well”
- Describe the factors or experiences that are barriers to aging well
- Identify strategies for improving wholistic approaches to aging well in the 21st century

What comes to mind when you think of the words “age/aging/old”?

- Talk for 1-2 minutes in groups of 2 or 3
- Write thoughts on sticky notes
- Place sticky notes on flipchart paper

What is aging?

- Time
- Example of aging
- Medical conditions are not aging
 - Causes: pathogen, internal dysfunction, accident or injury
- Relationship between aging and disease/disability
 - Increased risk: Ex: Minnesota nun study

What does “aging well” mean?

Aging well can be defined in numerous ways. Here is one definition:

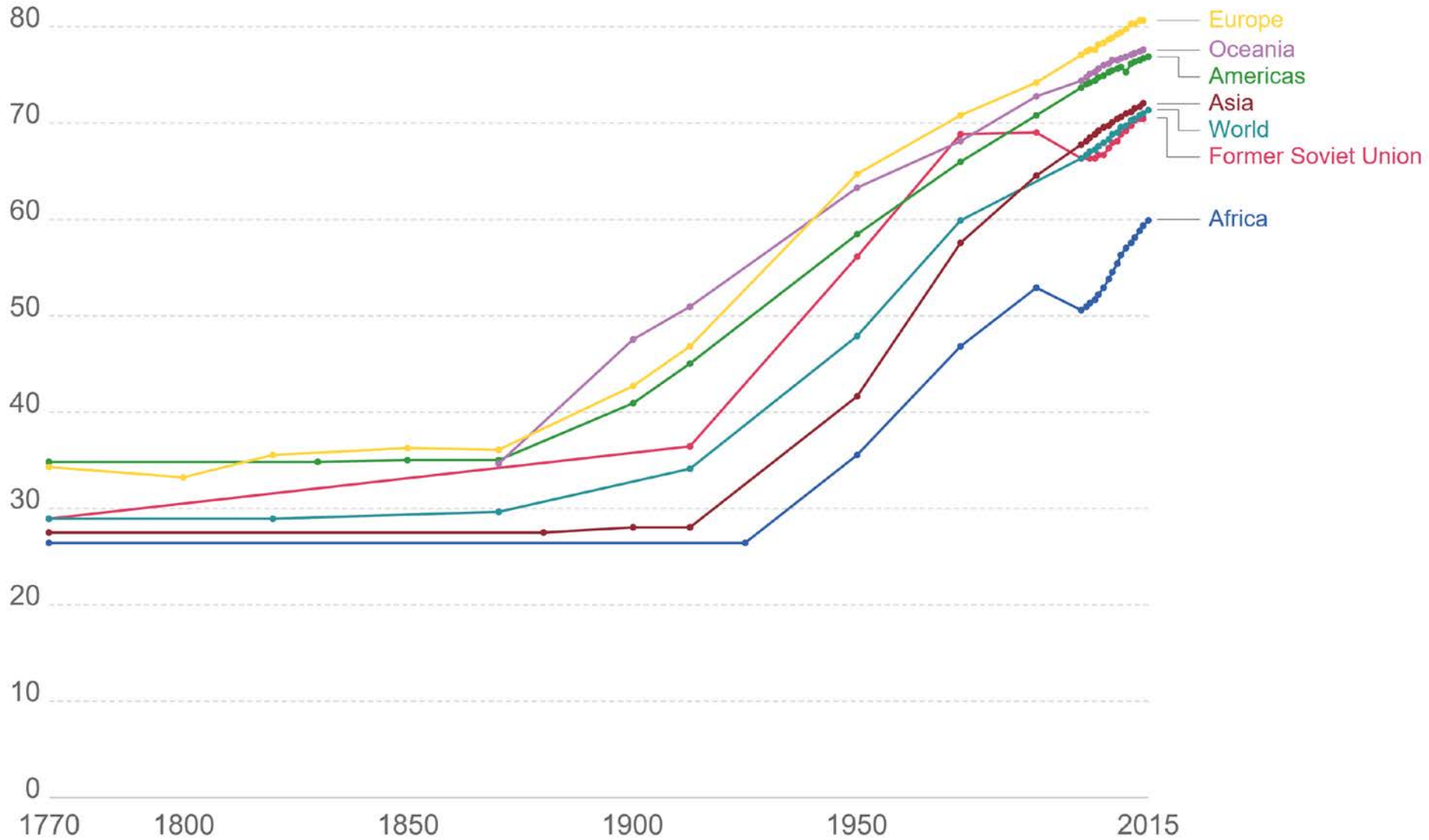
“Promoting health and preventing disease and disability, along with high physical and psychological functioning and social engagement”

Why the increased attention to aging well?

- Increase in human lifespan
- Increase in the aging population



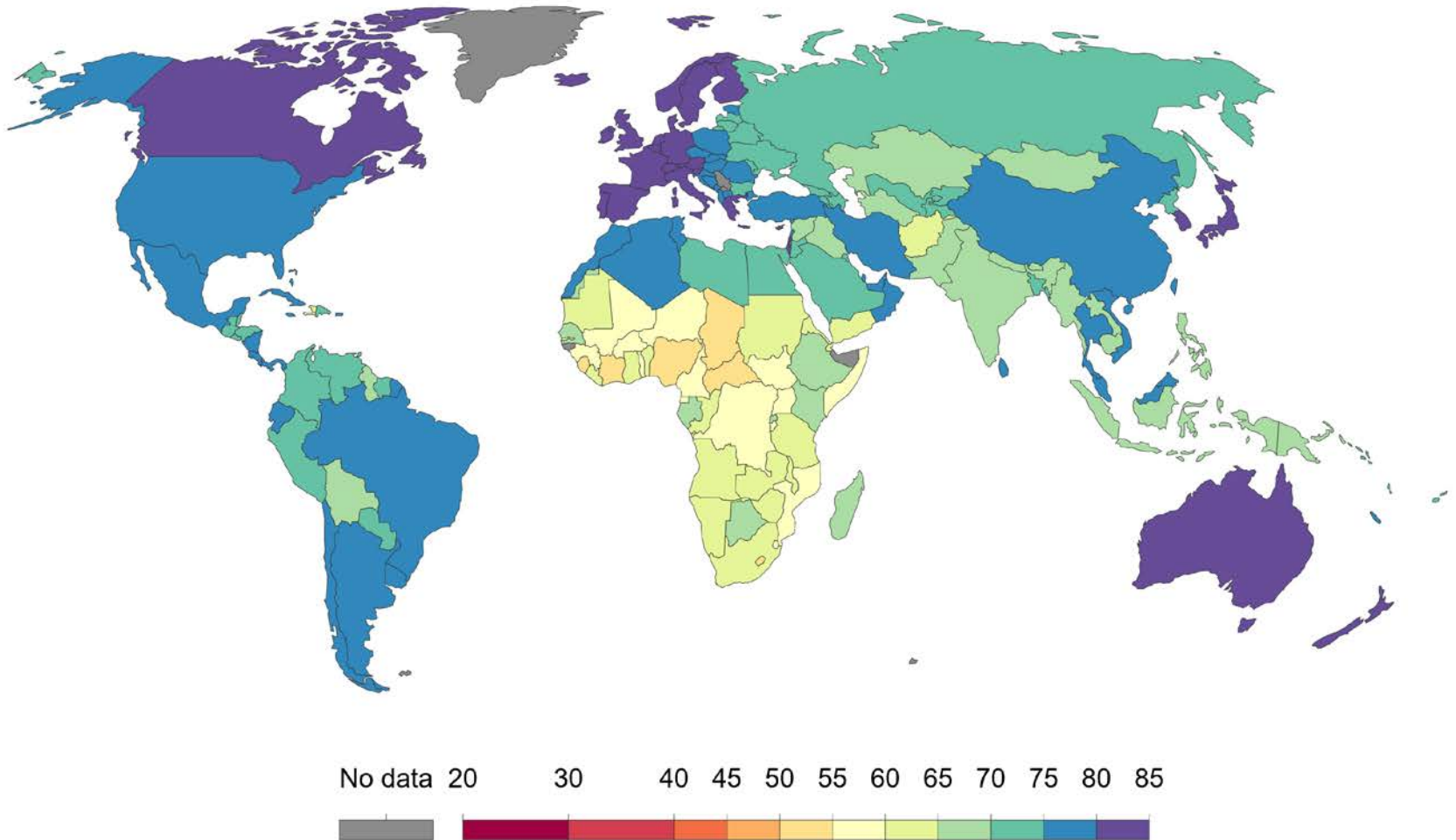
Life expectancy globally and by world regions since 1770



Source: Life expectancy – James Riley for data 1990 and earlier; WHO and World Bank for later data (by Max Roser)
OurWorldInData.org/life-expectancy/ • CC BY-SA

Life expectancy, 2015

Shown is period life expectancy at birth. This corresponds to an estimate of the average number of years a newborn infant would live if prevailing patterns of mortality at the time of its birth were to stay the same throughout its life



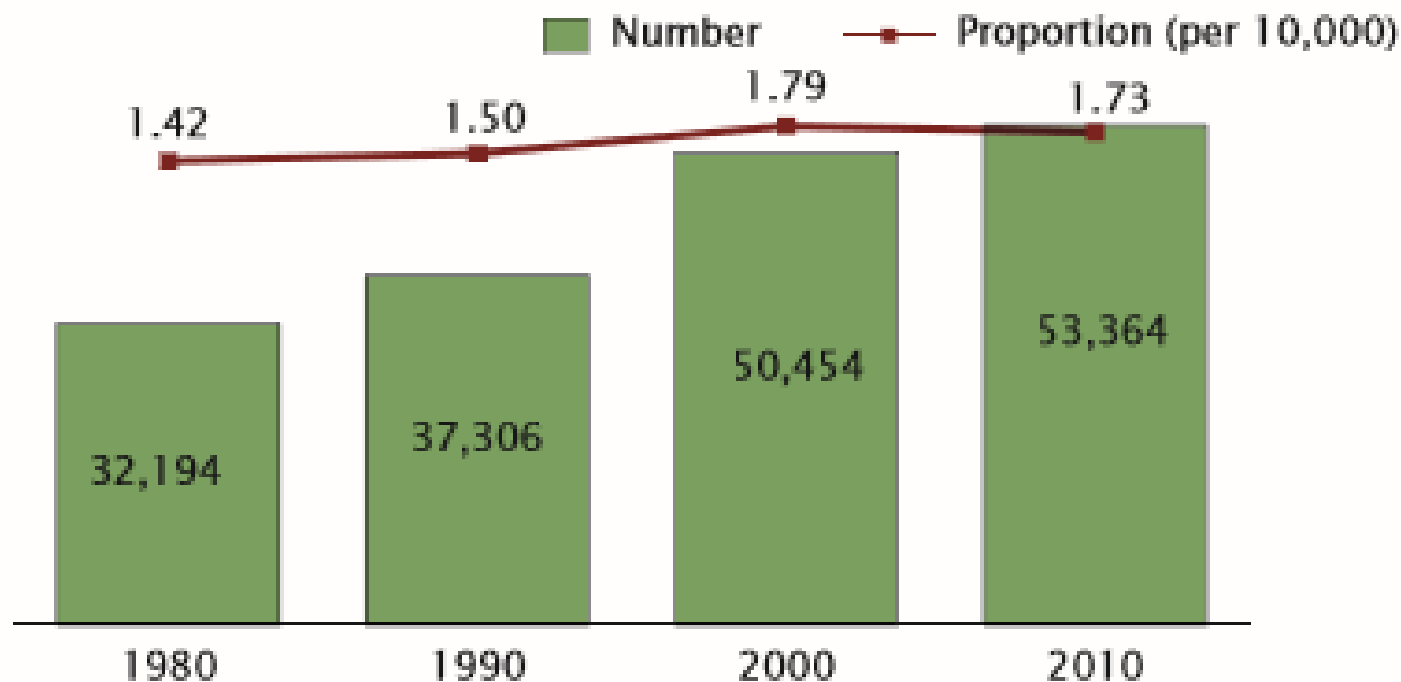
Source: Clio-Infra estimates until 1949; UN Population Division from 1950 to 2015

OurWorldInData.org/life-expectancy-how-is-it-calculated-and-how-should-it-be-interpreted/ • CC BY-SA

Figure 1.

Centenarians and Their Proportion of Total Population: 1980 to 2010

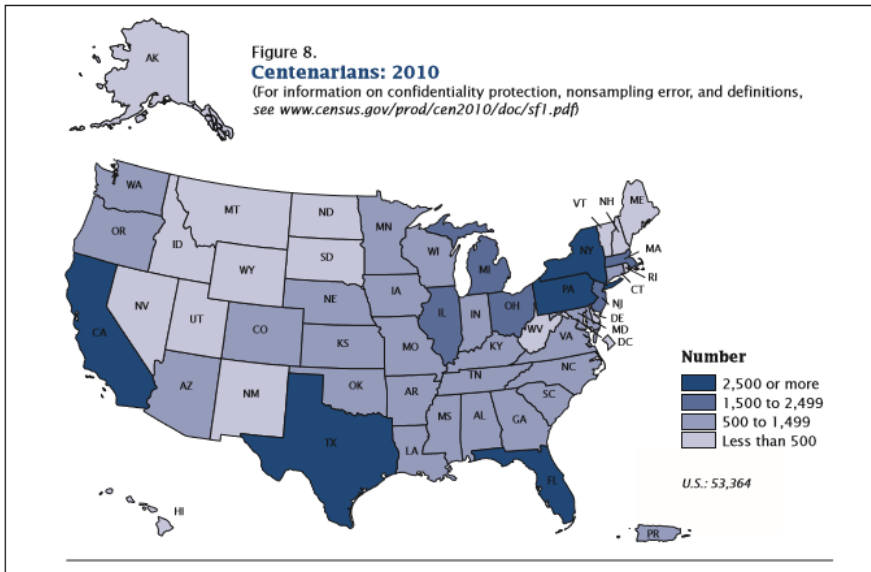
(For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/doc/sf1.pdf)



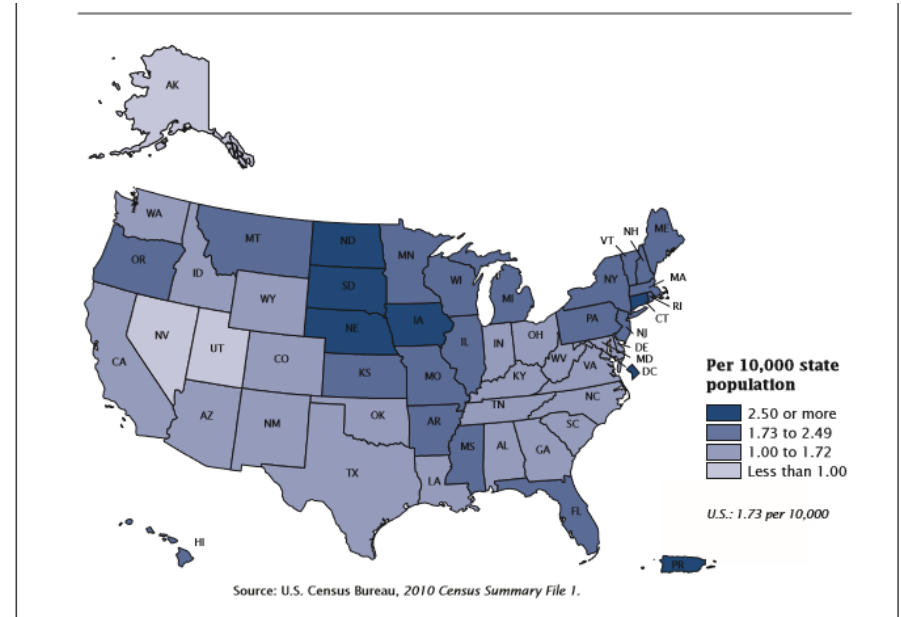
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *2010 Census Summary File 1; Census 2000 Summary File 1; 1990 Census of Population, General Population Characteristics, United States (1990 CP-1-1); 1980 Census of Population, General Population Characteristics, United States (1980 PC80-1-B1)*.

US Centenarians: 2010

Number



Per 10,000 state population



Whole Person Wellness



Interconnectedness

- Integration of multiple dimensions
- Lifestyle behaviors and choices are integrated
- Strong association between healthy lifestyles, prevention, and longevity

Barriers to aging well

- Attitude/stereotypes
- Health Changes (acute or chronic)
- Financial Deficits
- Physical/Mental Decline
- Changes in Environment (safety, residence, neighborhood, technology)
- Losses (loss of control)

Ageism

- Assumption that age predicts individual traits
- Aging Stereotypes
 - Memory loss
 - Economic drain
 - Grumpy
 - Depressed/lonely
 - Frail
 - Bored



Impact of ageism

- Aging self-perception predicts
 - Health outcomes
 - Behavioral intervention adoption



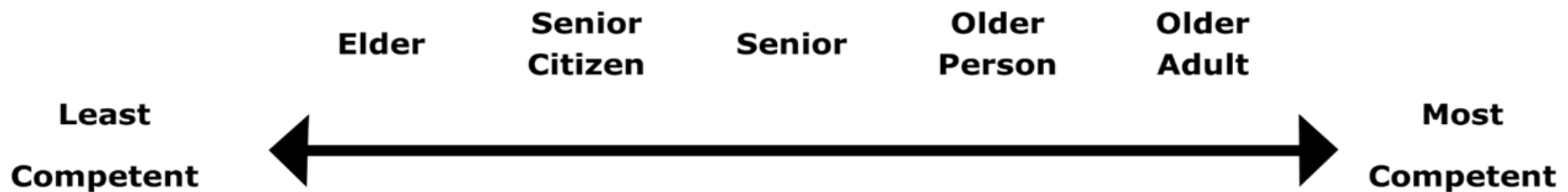
Impact of ageism

- Medical professionals
 - Under-treatment
 - Overtreatment
 - Communication



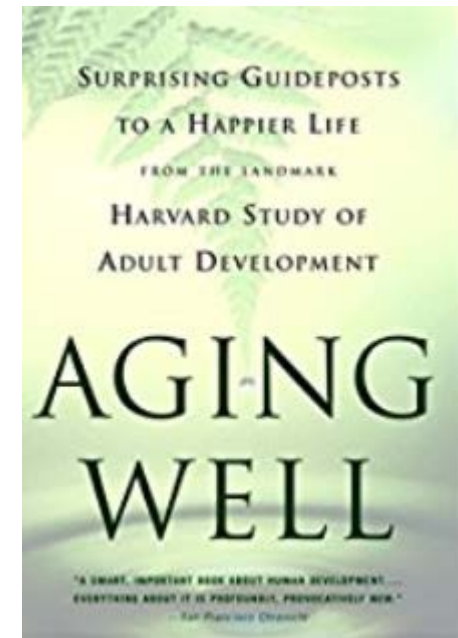
Strategies to mitigate ageism

- Recognize personal biases
- Meaningful subsets of older people
- Correct inaccurate beliefs
- Communication



Strategies to support aging well

- Major aging studies
- Centenarians
- Selected research findings
- Livable communities
- Individual differences



Findings from major aging studies

- Harvard Study of Adult Development – longest, most comprehensive examination of aging ever conducted.
 - Results were not exactly what investigators anticipated
 - Longevity of your parents, quality of your childhood and your cholesterol levels were not very influential in predicting a longer, healthier life.

Findings: predictors of aging well

- Avoiding cigarettes
- Good adjustment or coping skills
- Absence of alcohol abuse
- Keeping a healthy weight
- Exercising regularly
- Maintaining strong social relationships
- Pursuing education



Making the most of the aging process:

- Keep learning something new
- Maintain a playful spirit
- Find younger friends as you lose older ones
- Learn to adapt to changes



Set your own course to aging well...

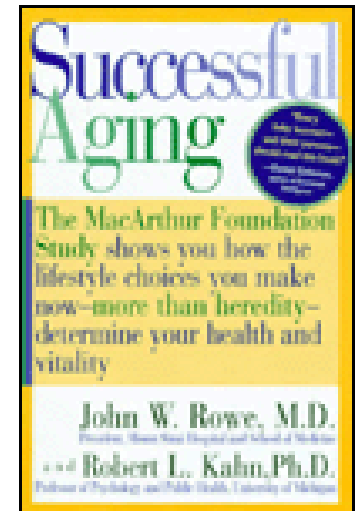


- Our genes may influence our longevity but many other factors within our control can predict having a happy and healthy life.
- It is never too late to make changes to our present lifestyle.
- Everyone can make lifestyle changes to move them in the direction of aging well.

MacArthur Foundation Study of Successful Aging

3 actions that positively influence the aging process & enhance quality of life:

- Avoid disease and disability
- Maintain high cognitive & physical function
- Stay involved with life and living



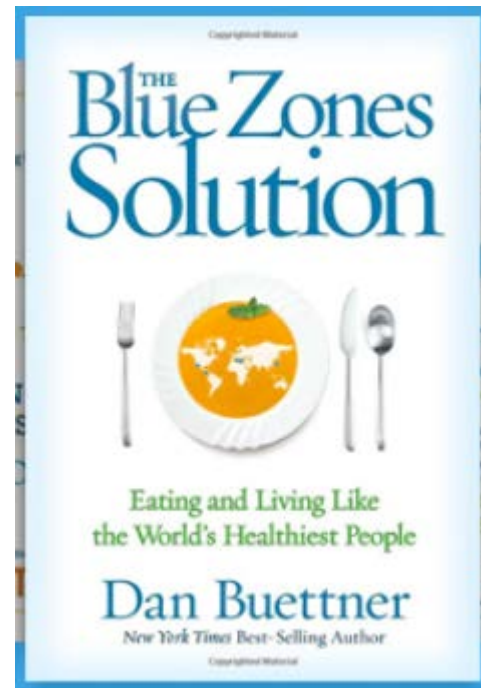
Selected findings – aging research

- **Physical factors:** exercise, better self-rated health, fewer chronic medical conditions, nutrition, weight
- **Psychological factors:** low rates of depression and high rates of resilience, sense of purpose in life, positive outlook
- **Social factors:** happy marriage, social support, and social contacts, enjoying favorite activities

Secrets from centenarians

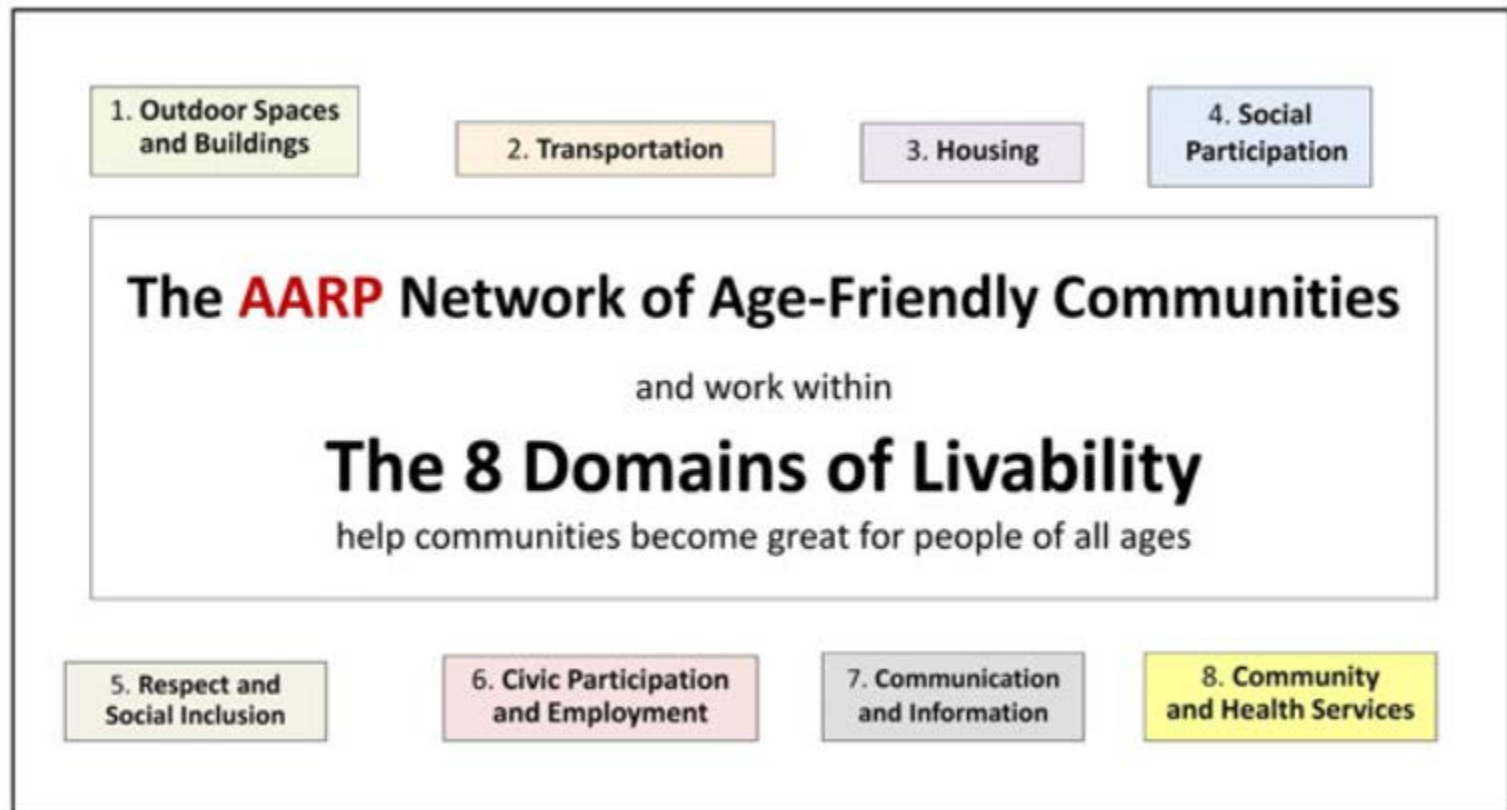
Blue Zones - The nine lessons:

1. Move naturally..
2. Know your purpose.
3. Kick back.
4. Eat less.
5. Eat less meat
6. Drink in moderation.
7. Have faith.
8. Power of love.
9. Stay social.



<https://www.bluezones.com/>

AARP Livable Communities



<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/>

Aging is an individual experience

- Subsets of older adults
 - Question the use of chronological age – biological age is a better determinant
 - Understand their motivations and desires
 - Examples: What would a good day look like for you? What is important in your life? What are your goals? What really matters to you?
 - Remember that aging embodies both growth and decline

Aging Well



Action Steps to Enhance Aging Well

- What can you do in your work with older adults to address barriers to aging well?
- What strategies can you incorporate into your work with older adults that will promote aging well?
- Write down 2-3 ideas on a sticky note and share with others at your table.

Thank You!

Jane Strommen, Ph.D.
Gerontology Specialist
NDSU Extension
jane.strommen@ndsu.edu
701-231-5948

