

# Promoting Mental Health and Wellness in Older Adults

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University of North Dakota

April 19, 2023



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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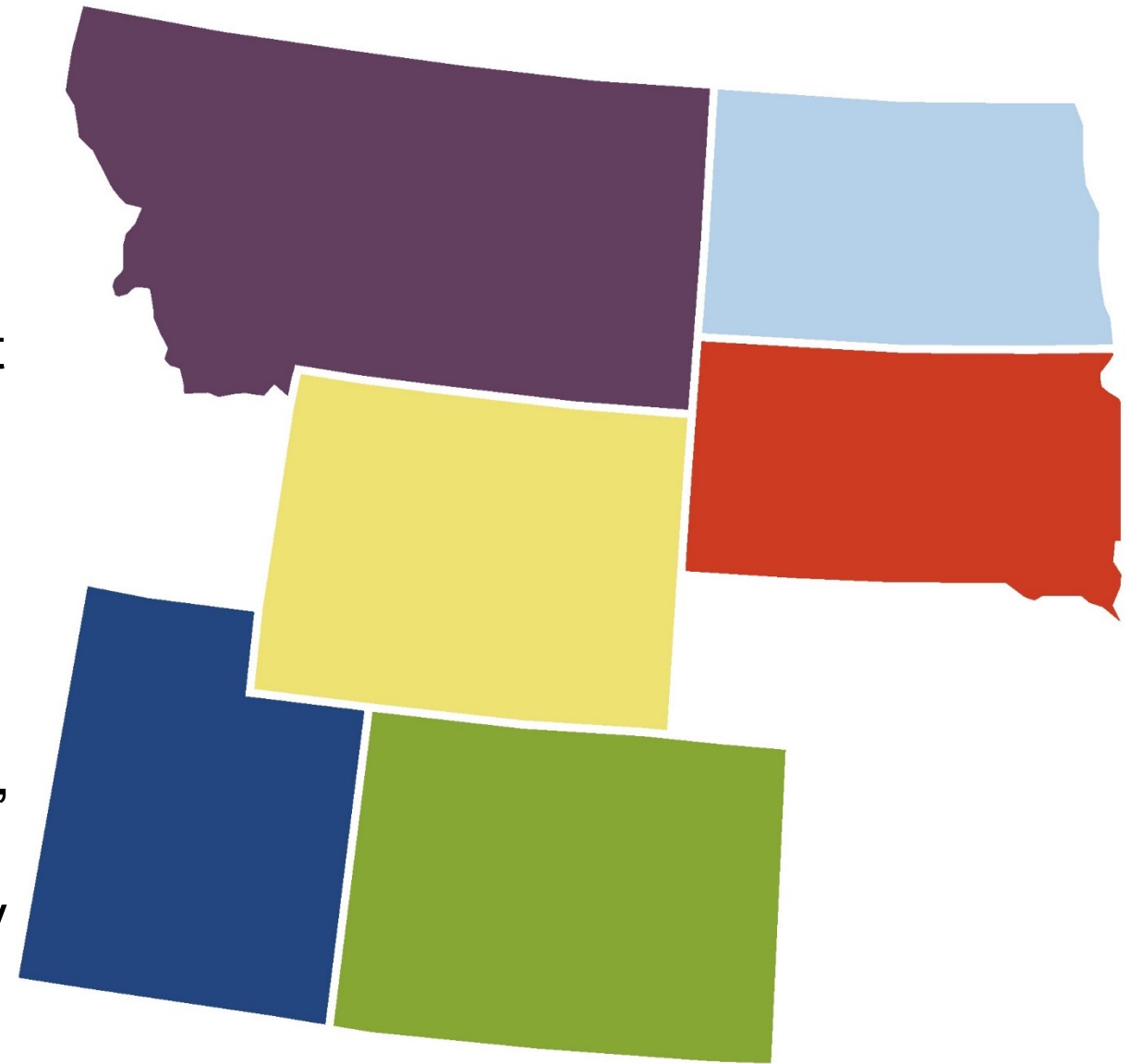
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The work of the Mountain Plains MHTTC is supported by grant H79SM081792 from the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

# The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (Mountain Plains MHTTC) provides training and technical assistance to individuals who serve persons with mental health concerns throughout Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming).

We belong to the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) Network, a national network of training and technical assistance centers serving the needs of mental health, substance use and prevention providers. The work of the TTC Network is under a cooperative agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA).





# Land Acknowledgement Statement

Today, the University of North Dakota rests on the ancestral lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate - presently existing as composite parts of the Red Lake, Turtle Mountain, White Earth Bands, and the Dakota Tribes of Minnesota and North Dakota. We acknowledge the people who resided here for generations and recognize that the spirit of the Ojibwe and Oyate people permeates this land. As a university community, we will continue to build upon our relations with the First Nations of the State of North Dakota - the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.





The MHTTC Network uses  
affirming, respectful and  
recovery-oriented language in  
all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED  
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND  
ACCEPTING OF  
DIVERSE CULTURES,  
GENDERS,  
PERSPECTIVES,  
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED AND  
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS  
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR  
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND  
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND  
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

RESPECTFUL, CLEAR  
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH  
OUR ACTIONS,  
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

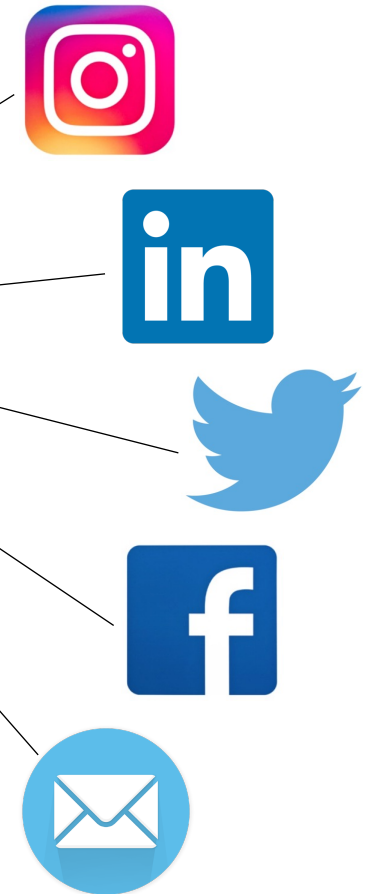
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# Promoting Mental Health & Wellness in Older Adults

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# Today's Webinar

The **number of older adults in the United States is increasing** and with the aging of **baby boomers** this increase will continue. In addition, the aging baby boomers **are changing the aging experience** much like they have changed other life stages prior to their older adult years.

This webinar will provide a **brief overview of the older adult population in terms of demographic characteristics**, the impact of aging baby boomers, address some common misconceptions of aging and introduce the **concept of healthy aging**. Building upon this concept of healthy aging the webinar will provide participants **strategies** that can be implemented to promote mental health and wellness. Some issues related to healthy aging in rural communities will also be highlighted.

A large, light blue puzzle piece is positioned on the left side of the slide. It has a white silhouette of a human figure cut out of its center. The puzzle piece is set against a bright yellow background that also features other puzzle pieces, some of which are partially visible at the edges.

# Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this webinar, participants will be able to:

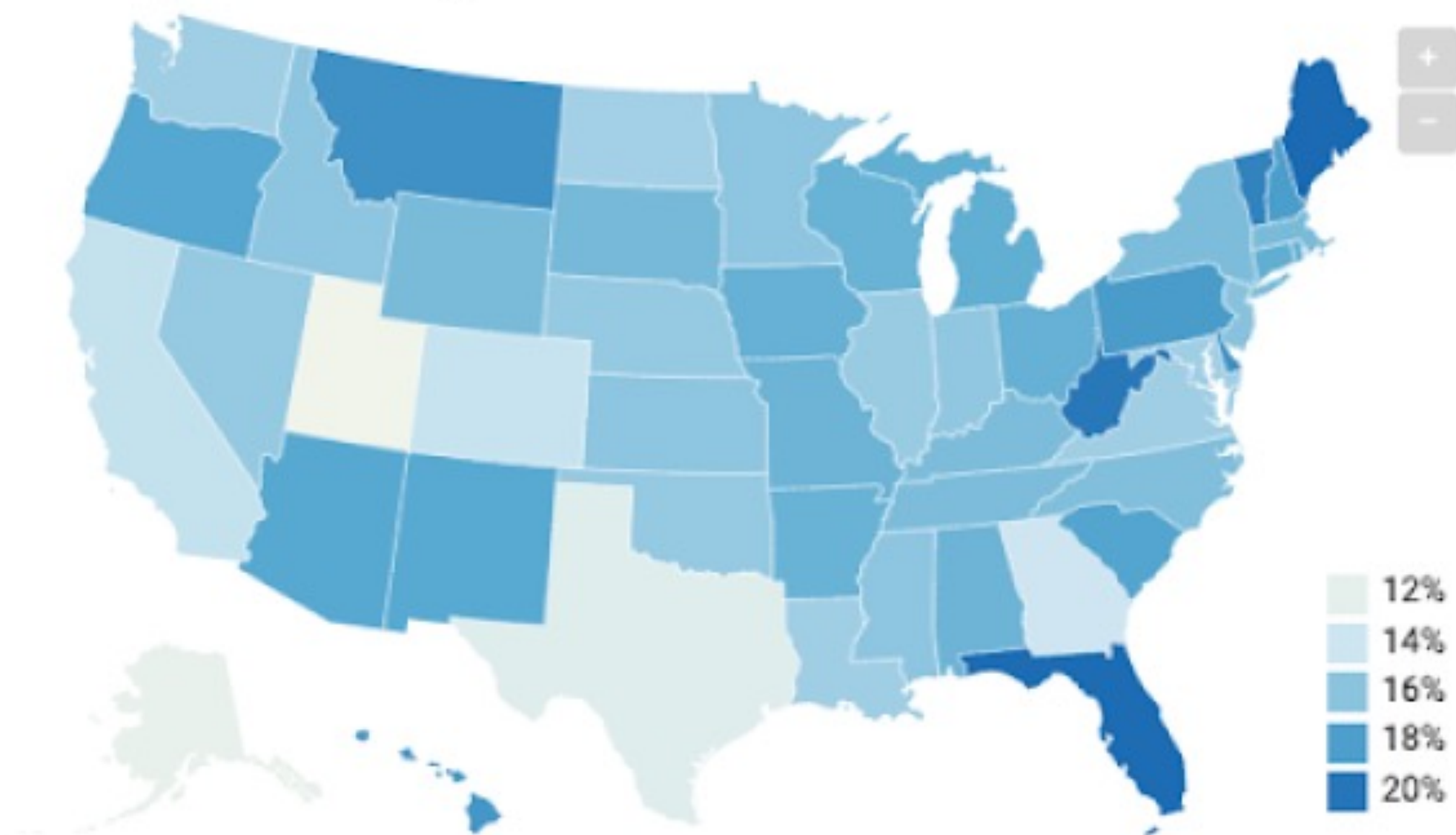
- Describe the aging process as it relates to the physical, emotional, and social areas of development
- Identify and explain healthy aging and social comorbidities that influence the aging process
- Identify misconceptions of aging and barriers to healthy aging
- Identify strategies that can be used to promote mental health and wellness in older adults who are seeking services from healthcare and community-based agencies.



# Introduction



## Share of Population Aged 65 or Older in 2018

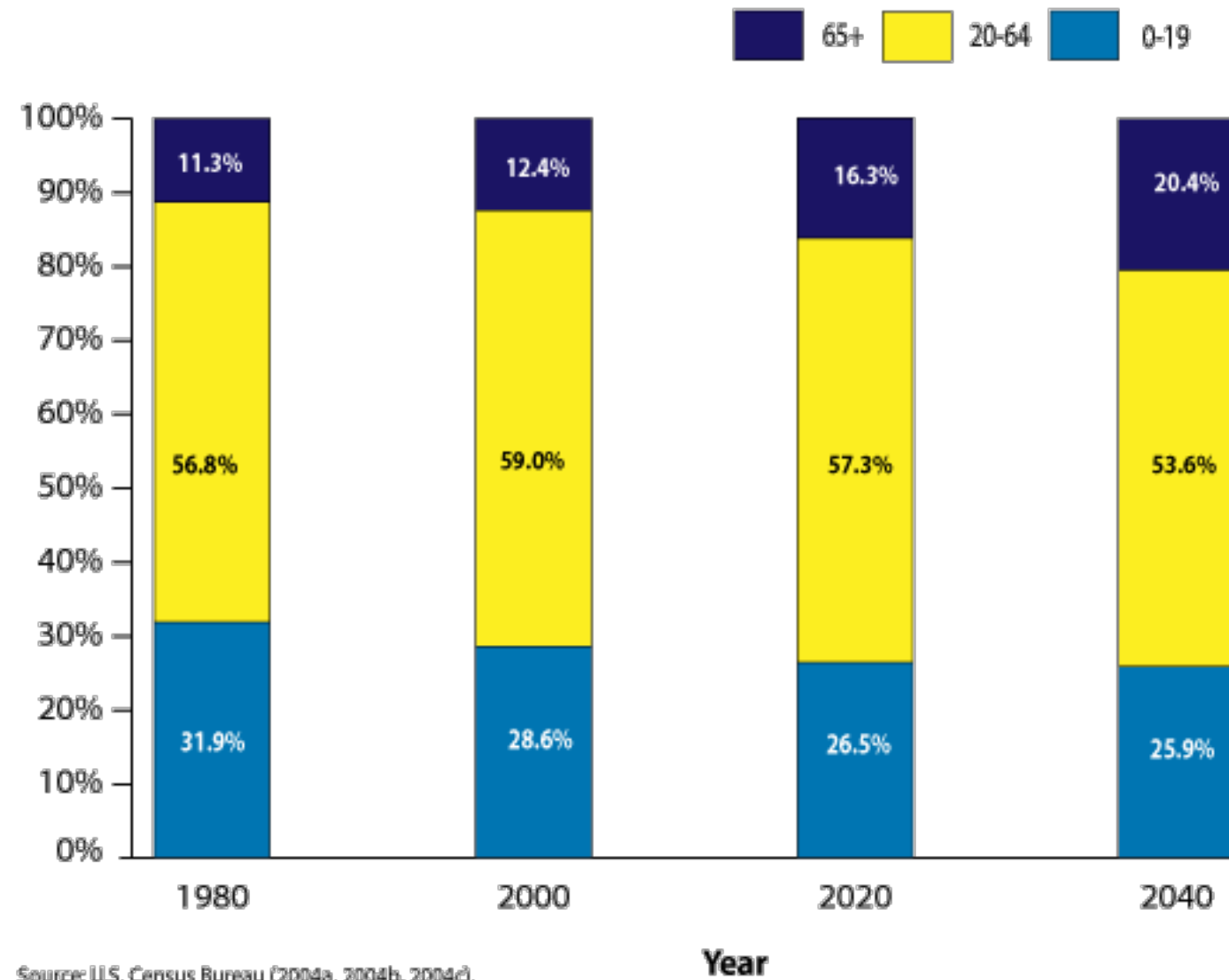


July 2018 population estimates

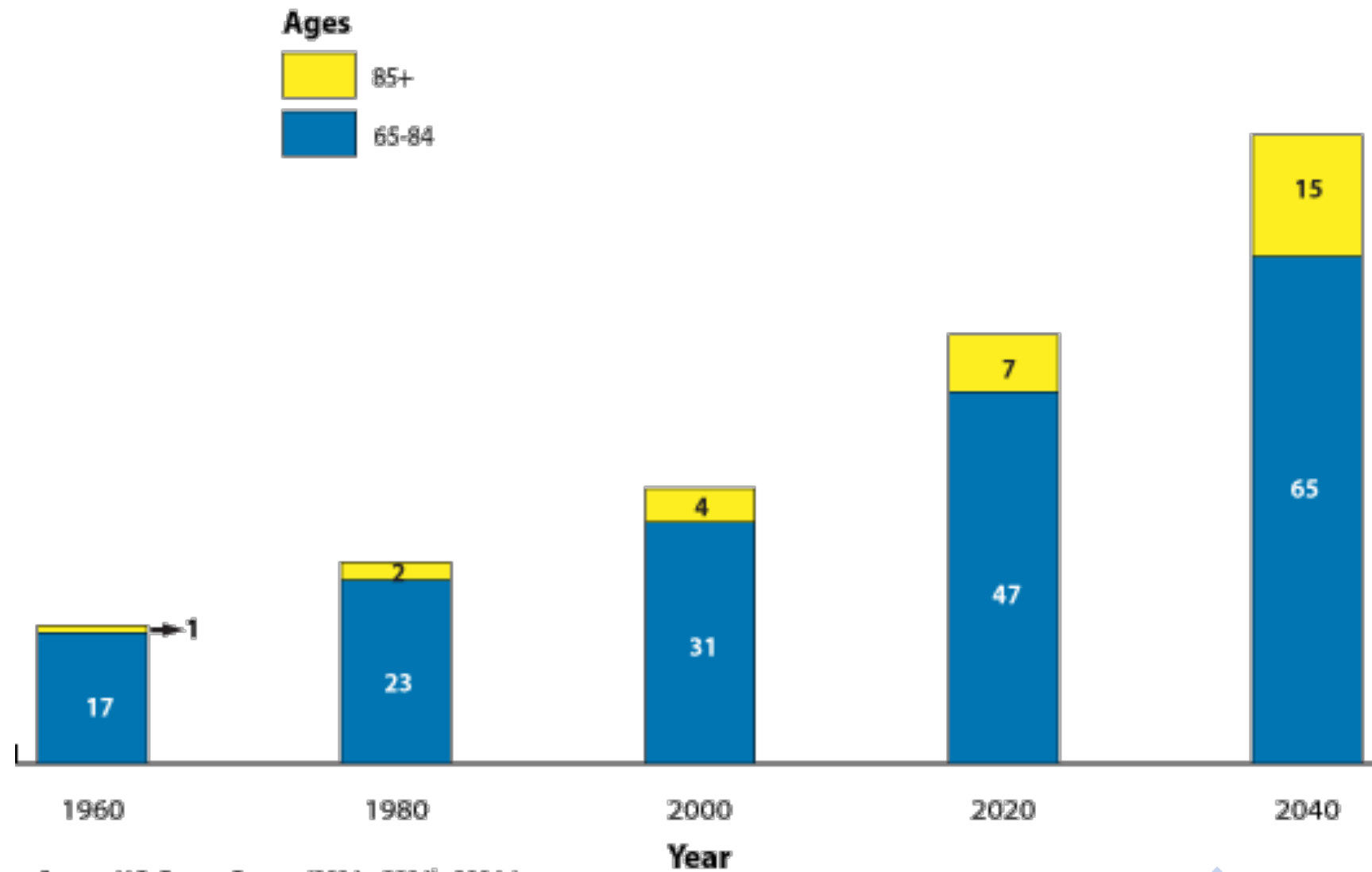
Map: U.S. News & World Report • Source: U.S. Census Bureau • [Get the data](#)

U.S. News

## Age Distribution of the Population, 1980-2040



## Number of Older Americans, 1960-2040 (in millions)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2004a, 2004b, 2004c).

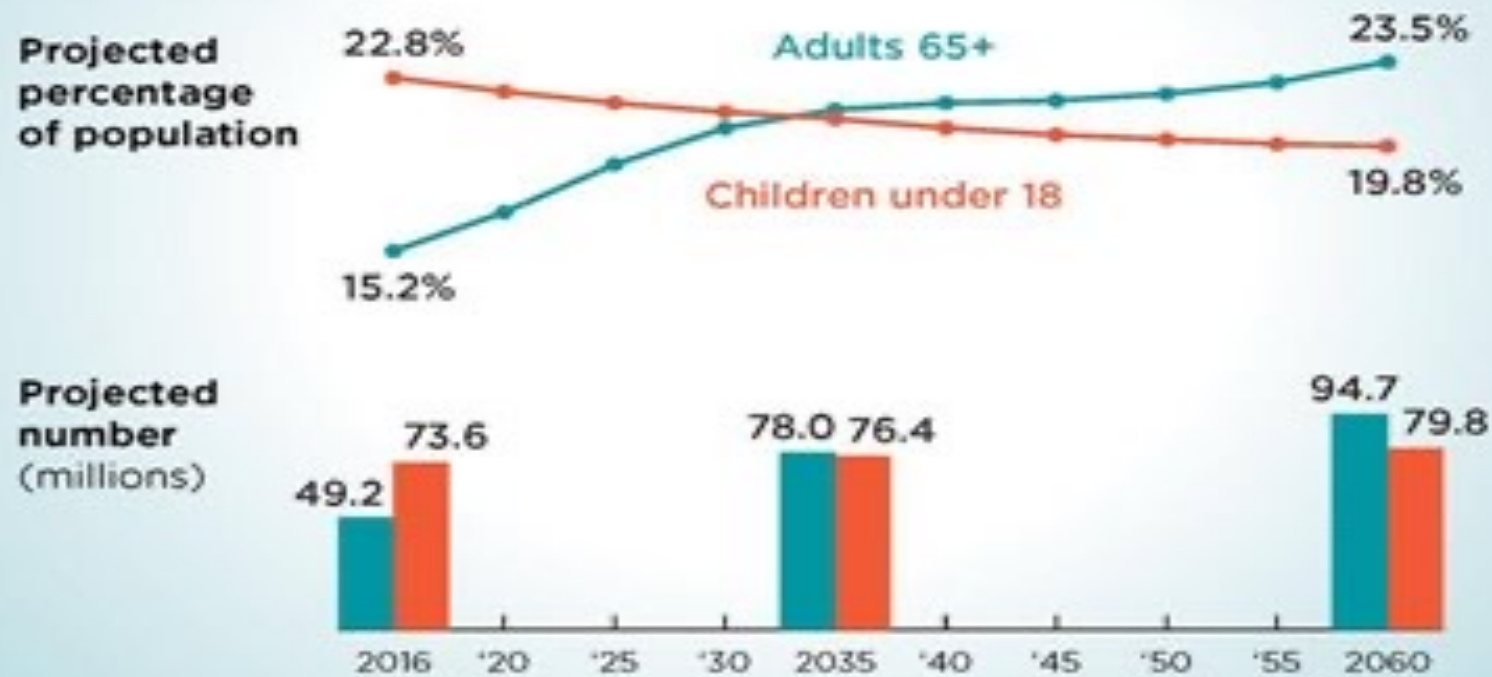




# An Aging Nation

Projected Number of Children  
and Older Adults

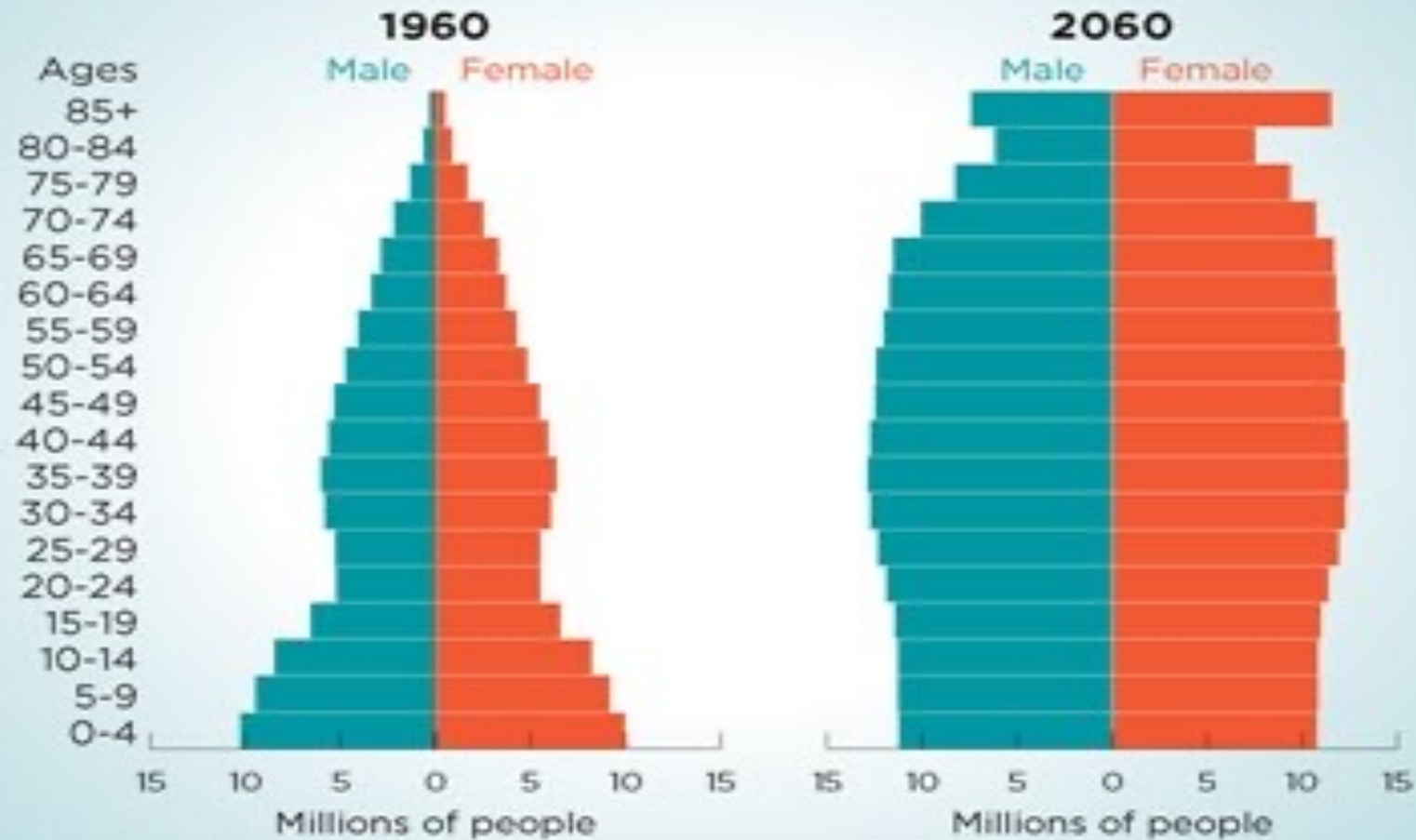
For the First Time in U.S. History Older Adults Are  
Projected to Outnumber Children by 2035



Note: 2016 data are estimates not projections.

# From Pyramid to Pillar: A Century of Change

Population of the United States



United States™  
**Census**  
Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

Source: National Population  
Projections, 2017  
[www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj.html](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj.html)



# Aging Baby Boomers



# Aging Boomers

- Increased life expectancy
- Increased diversity
- Longer work years
- Higher rates of obesity
- Higher divorce rates
- Higher income
- Higher number of individuals with substance use history's

<https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/population-bulletin-2015-70-2-aging-us.pdf>

<https://drugfree.org/drug-and-alcohol-news/baby-boomers-continue-substance-use-as-they-age/>

# LIVING LONGER. LIVING HEALTHIER?

[ TIPS FOR BETTER AGING ]

1900



2013

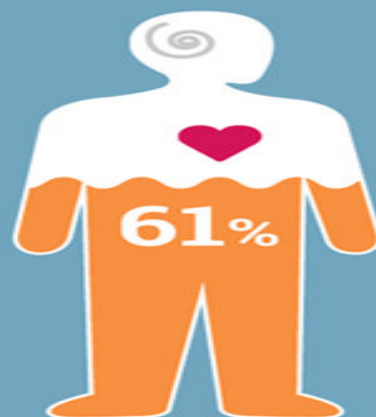


Average life expectancy

Americans  
are living  
longer.

National Center for Health Statistics, 2013

But nearly  
**61%** of  
Americans age 65+  
have multiple  
chronic conditions.



United Nations, 2011

Practice  
healthy aging:



Be physically  
active



Make smart  
food choices



Get regular  
health  
screenings



Participate  
in activities  
you enjoy

Visit [www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov) for more information from the National Institute on Aging at NIH, the leader in aging research.



National Institute  
on Aging

# Increasing Trajectory of Substance Use

- 50-54 - lifetime illicit drug use = 60.1%
- 54-59 - lifetime illicit drug use = 60.9%
- 60-64 - lifetime illicit drug use = 53.6%
- 65+ - lifetime illicit drug use – 25.6%

# Paradigm Shift

<https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article/52/2/149/618442>



From dependence to advantaged



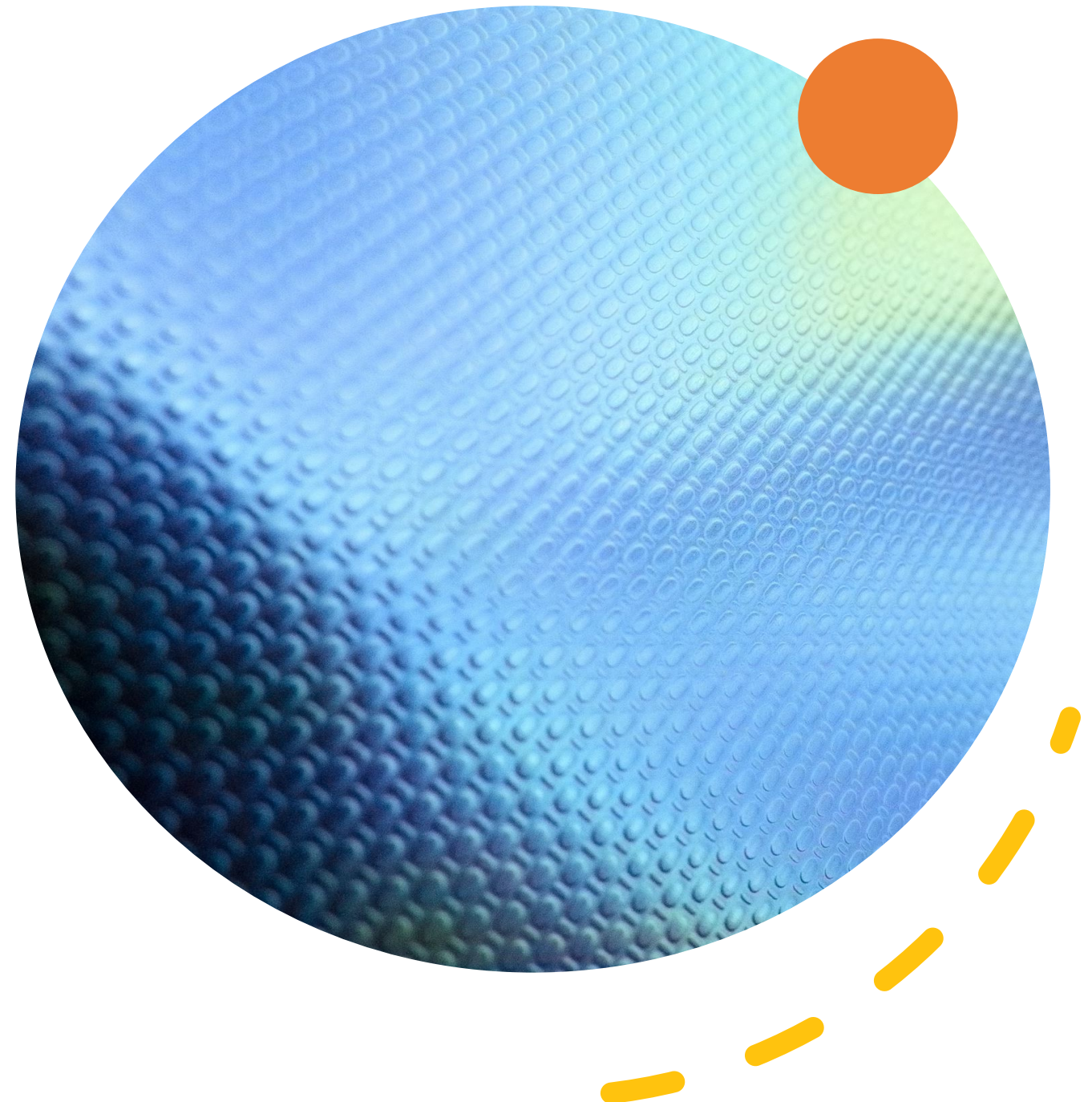
Contender status



Increased use and comfortability with technology



Increased use of health and social services





# Healthy Aging



**PAHO**




Pan American  
Health  
Organization



World Health  
Organization  
Americas

U.N. Decade of Healthy  
Aging  
2021-2030





***Healthy Aging*** is a continuous process of optimizing opportunities to maintain and improve physical and mental health, independence, and quality of life throughout the life course.

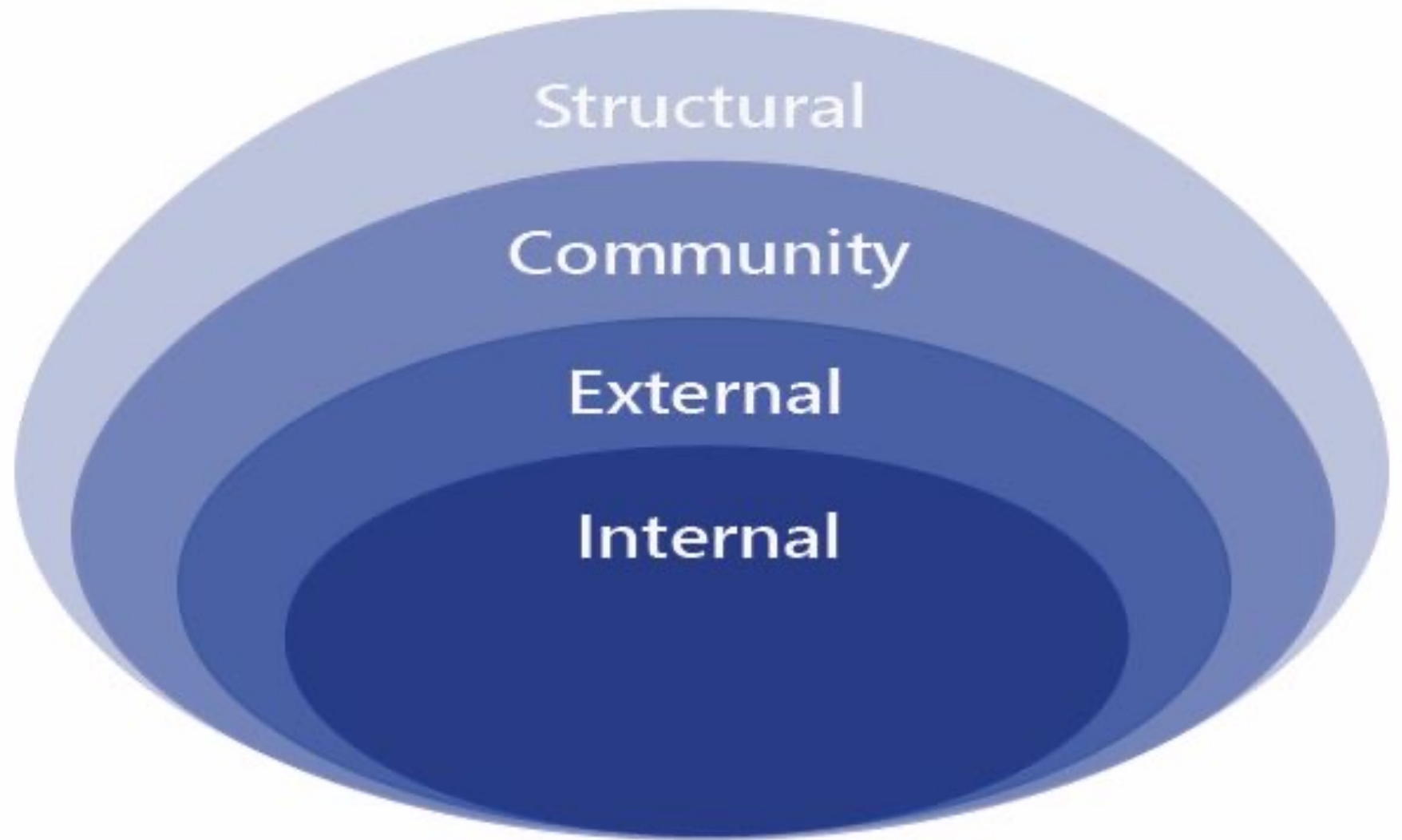
<https://www.paho.org/en/decade-healthy-aging-2021-2030>



# Barriers to Healthy Aging

# Stigma

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/HealthEquity/Stigma>





# Social Isolation

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- Social isolation vs. loneliness
- Social isolation refers to having few social contacts and relationships (objective measure). » Loneliness is the sense of being alone that includes distress or unpleasant feelings associated with having fewer-than-desired social relationships (subjective concept).  
<https://sprc.org/sites/default/files/Reducing%20Loneliness%20and%20Social%20Isolation%20Among%20Older%20Adults%20Final.pdf>
- One-third of adults aged 45 and older feel lonely, and nearly one-fourth of adults aged 65 and older are considered to be socially isolated.

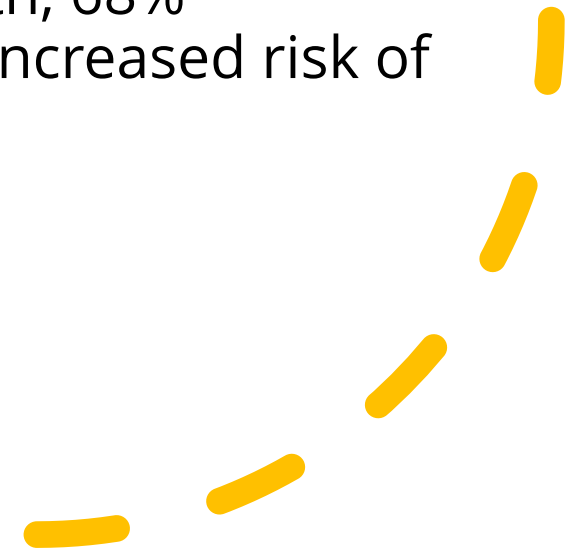
*(National Academy of Sciences, 2020)*



# Impact

- Social isolation significantly increased a person's risk of premature death from all causes, a risk that may rival those of smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.
- Social isolation was associated with about a 50% percent increased risk of dementia.
- Poor social relationships (characterized by social isolation or loneliness) was associated with a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke.
- Loneliness was associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide.
- Loneliness among heart failure patients was associated with a nearly 4 times increased risk of death, 68% increased risk of hospitalization, and 57% increased risk of emergency department visits.

*(National Academy of Sciences, 2020)*





# Substance Use

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Increasing number of adults aged 65 and older live with a substance use disorder.

Contributors:

- Pain and other prescription medications
- Cannabis usage
- Alcohol
- Nicotine







# Rural Aging

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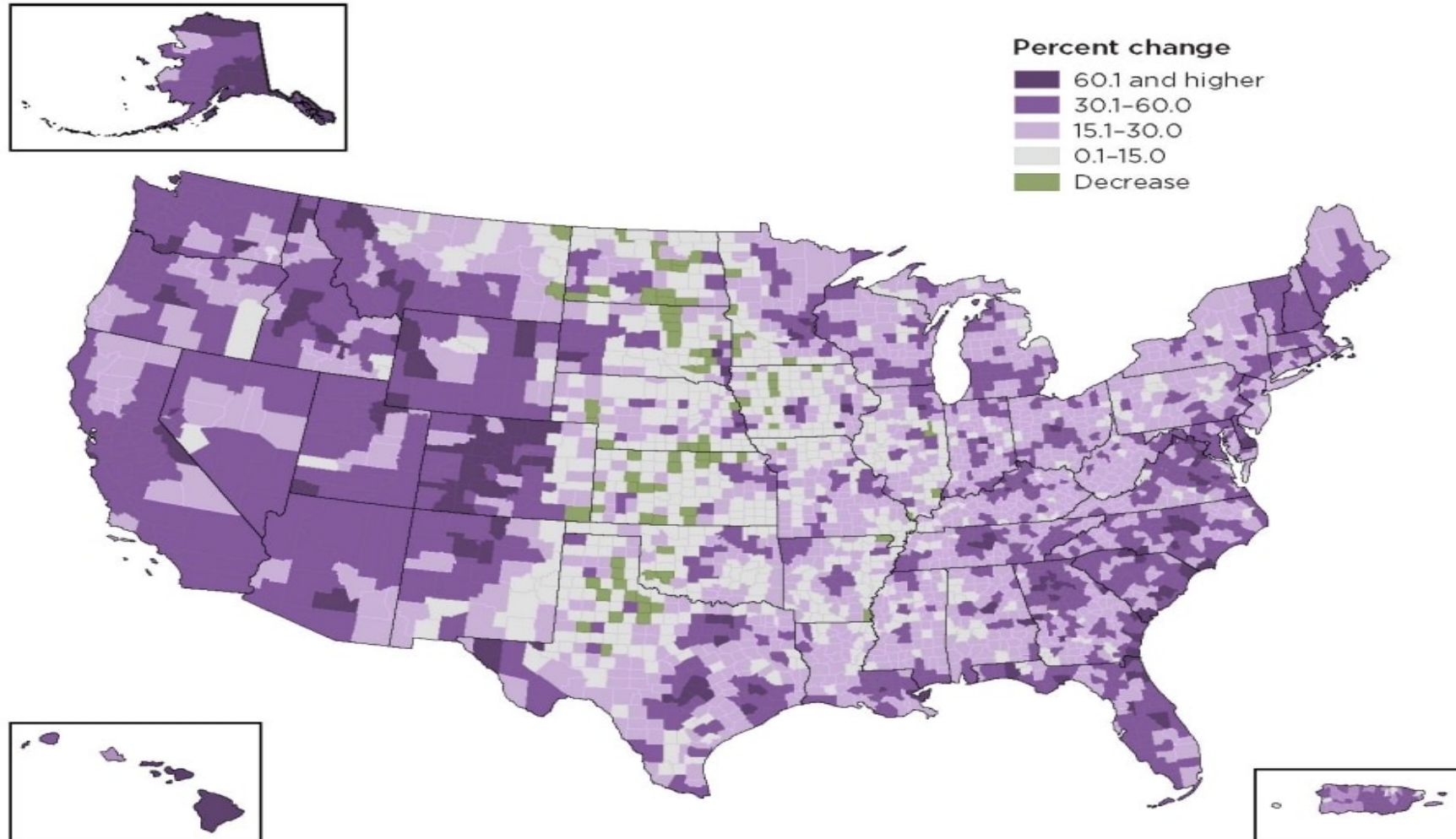
# Rural Aging

- have higher poverty rates, lower incomes, and fewer employment opportunities;
  - live in less adequate and older housing;
  - rely more heavily on themselves and informal networks for transportation;
  - are less healthy;
  - have less access to a wide range of community-based social, health, and mental health services; and
  - have fewer long-term care options.
- <https://www.giaging.org/issues/rural-aging/>
- 
- 



# Older and Growing

Percent Change among the 65 and Older Population: 2010 to 2019





Strategies

# Wellness

<https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/wellness-for-older-adults-in-daily-life.html>





# Health Strategies

Healthy weight

Healthy eating

Physical activity





# Spiritual Wellness

Breathing — Mindfully focus on your breathing to bring greater awareness of your body and the gift of life. It can also be a form of prayer or meditation.

Gratitude — Looking for both small and large graces of each day adds meaning and positivity.

Wonder — Allow yourself to be amazed by the world and the people around you.

Creativity — Find new ways to express yourself and challenge yourself to experience new things.

Kindness — Give others the benefit of the doubt, or make that extra little gesture in order to increase your capacity for compassion and empathy.

Releasing — Lighten your physical and emotional loads by letting go of excess possessions and expectations, as well as old resentments or wounds.

Connecting — Make new connections with people, and be intentional about maintaining good relationships with family and old friends.

Resting — Give yourself permission to slow down and create a little oasis in your day as a way to rejuvenate yourself.

Making music — Add rhythm and energy to your day by humming, singing or playing some kind of instrument, even if you can't carry a tune.

Being who you are — Say yes to the things that bring you joy and say no to those that don't. It doesn't matter what other people think of you. What matters is that you live as your authentic self

<https://www.wherewelivematters.org/spirituality-and-aging/>



# Intellectual Wellness

<https://methwick.org/2020/03/the-intellectual-dimension-of-wellness/>

- Reading a new book
- Learning how to play an instrument or learning a new language
- Taking a class on a subject that interests you
- Getting creative by drawing or painting
- Doing a crossword puzzle or sudoku
- Playing golf or chess
- Having an invigorating discussion with friends or family members



# Reducing Risks

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/cognitive-health-and-older-adults#reduce%20risks>

- Some physical and mental health problems, such as high blood pressure or depression
- Brain injuries, such as those due to falls or accidents
- Some medicines, or improper use of medicines
- Lack of physical activity
- Poor diet
- Smoking
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Sleep problems
- Social isolation and loneliness





## Occupational (Vocational) Wellness

<https://wellness.nifs.org/blog/senior-living-3-tips-for-better-vocational-wellness>

- Learn about vocational wellness and meditate on what it could look like in your life. Talk with your friends and neighbors about what they do for vocational wellness.
- Seek out opportunities to participate in activities, clubs, committees, or special events that interest you.
- Be involved with activities and endeavors that are enjoyable but contribute to the greater good of others.



# Emotional Wellness

Emotional wellness is the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and adapt to change and difficult times

<https://www.nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>



# Facts

- As many as 15% of older adults in community settings have anxiety disorders
- At least one in four older adults experiences some mental disorder, such as depression, anxiety, or dementia.
- Due to population aging, the number of seniors with mental disorders is expected to double by 2030.
- Depression is the most common mental health problem in older people.
- People aged 85 and older have the highest suicide rate of any age group.
- Two-thirds of seniors with mental health problems do not get the treatment they need (the "treatment gap").
- Mental health services for older adults are extremely limited.

[https://www3.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9877:seniors-mental-health&Itemid=40721&lang=en](https://www3.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9877:seniors-mental-health&Itemid=40721&lang=en)

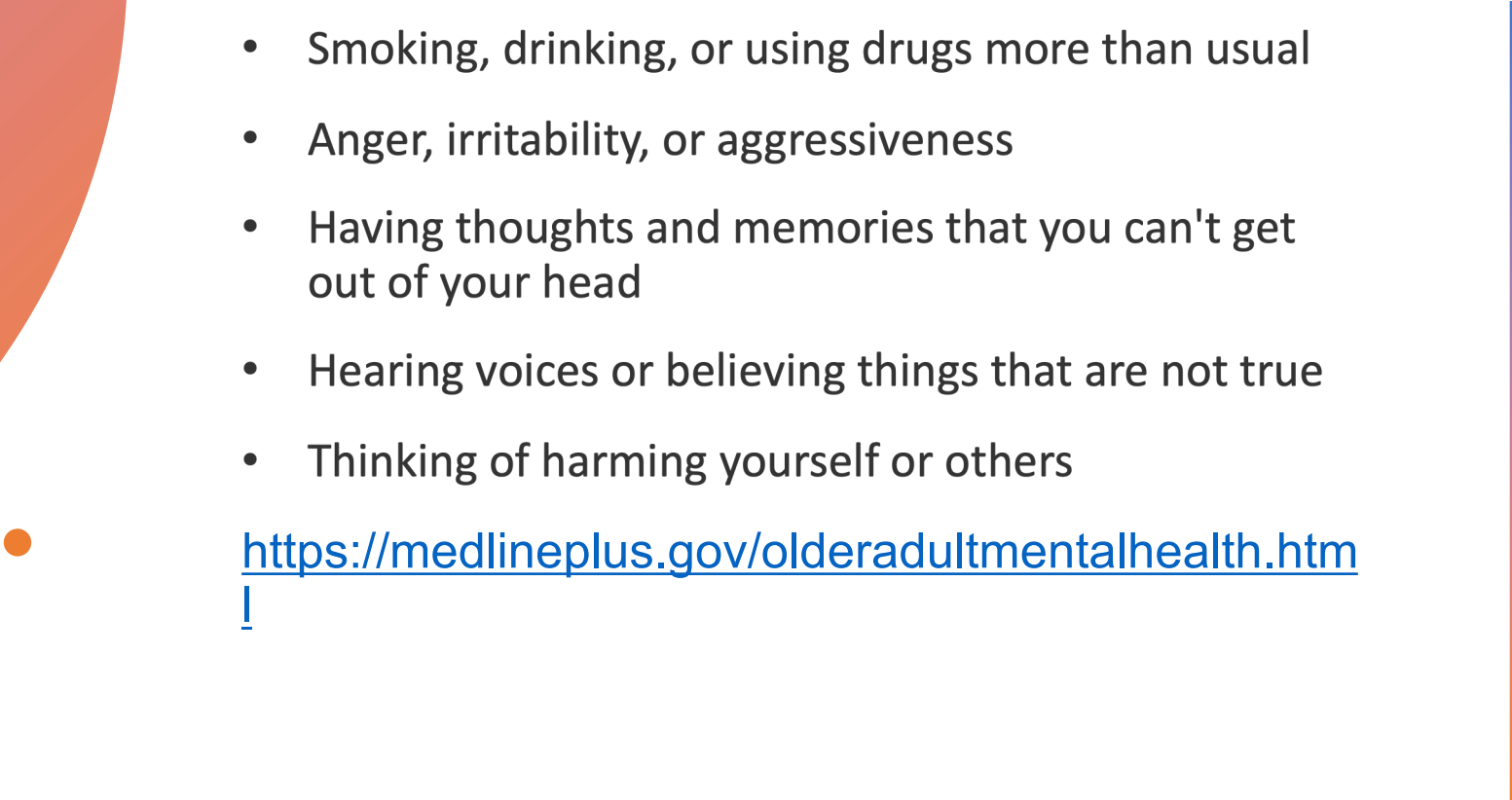




# Warning Signs

- Changes in mood or energy level
- A change in your eating or sleeping habits
- Withdrawing from the people and activities you enjoy
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling sadness or hopelessness
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Anger, irritability, or aggressiveness
- Having thoughts and memories that you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others

<https://medlineplus.gov/olderadultmentalhealth.htm>  
!



# Depression/Dementia/Delirium (Zarit & Zarit, 2007)

Confusion

Labile

Irritable

Low energy

Memory

Change in  
eating  
patterns

# Depression

Estimates of major depression in older people living in the community range from less than 1% to about 5% but rise to 13.5% in those who require home healthcare and to 11.5% in older hospitalized patients.

<https://www.cdc.gov/aging/depression/index.html>

# Dementia

- It is estimated that 6.2 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's dementia in 2021. Seventy-two percent are age 75 or older.
- One in nine people age 65 and older (11.3%) has Alzheimer's dementia.
- Almost two-thirds of Americans with Alzheimer's are women.
- Older Black Americans are about twice as likely to have Alzheimer's or other dementias as older Whites.
- Older Hispanics are about one and one-half times as likely to have Alzheimer's or other dementias as older Whites.
- <https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/facts-figures>

# Delirium

- A serious, time-limited condition with a **sudden onset** and short/fluctuating course marked by **impaired or altered consciousness and cognition**.
- Difficulty thinking clearly or perceiving the world around them.
- **Incoherent speech, confusion, memory impairment, disorientation.**
- Symptoms can include Hyper-arousal (overly alert/agitated) &/OR hypo-arousal (sleepy/groggy)
- Can be a sign of a serious medical condition that can lead to brain damage or death.
- Multiple causes: surgery, infection, medication, nutritional deficiencies(B-12), alcohol/drugs, head trauma, chemotherapy or environmental changes.



# Anxiety

- Anxiety is a common illness among older adults, affecting as many as 10-20 percent of the older population, though it is often undiagnosed. Phobia—when an individual is fearful of certain things, places or events—is the most typical type of anxiety. Among adults, anxiety is the most common mental health problem for women, and the second most common for men, after substance abuse.
- <https://www.aagponline.org/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=anxiety>

# Signs of Anxiety

Excessive worry or fear

Refusing to do routine activities or being overly preoccupied with routine

Avoiding social situations

Overly concerned about safety

Racing heart, shallow breathing, trembling, nausea, sweating

Poor sleep

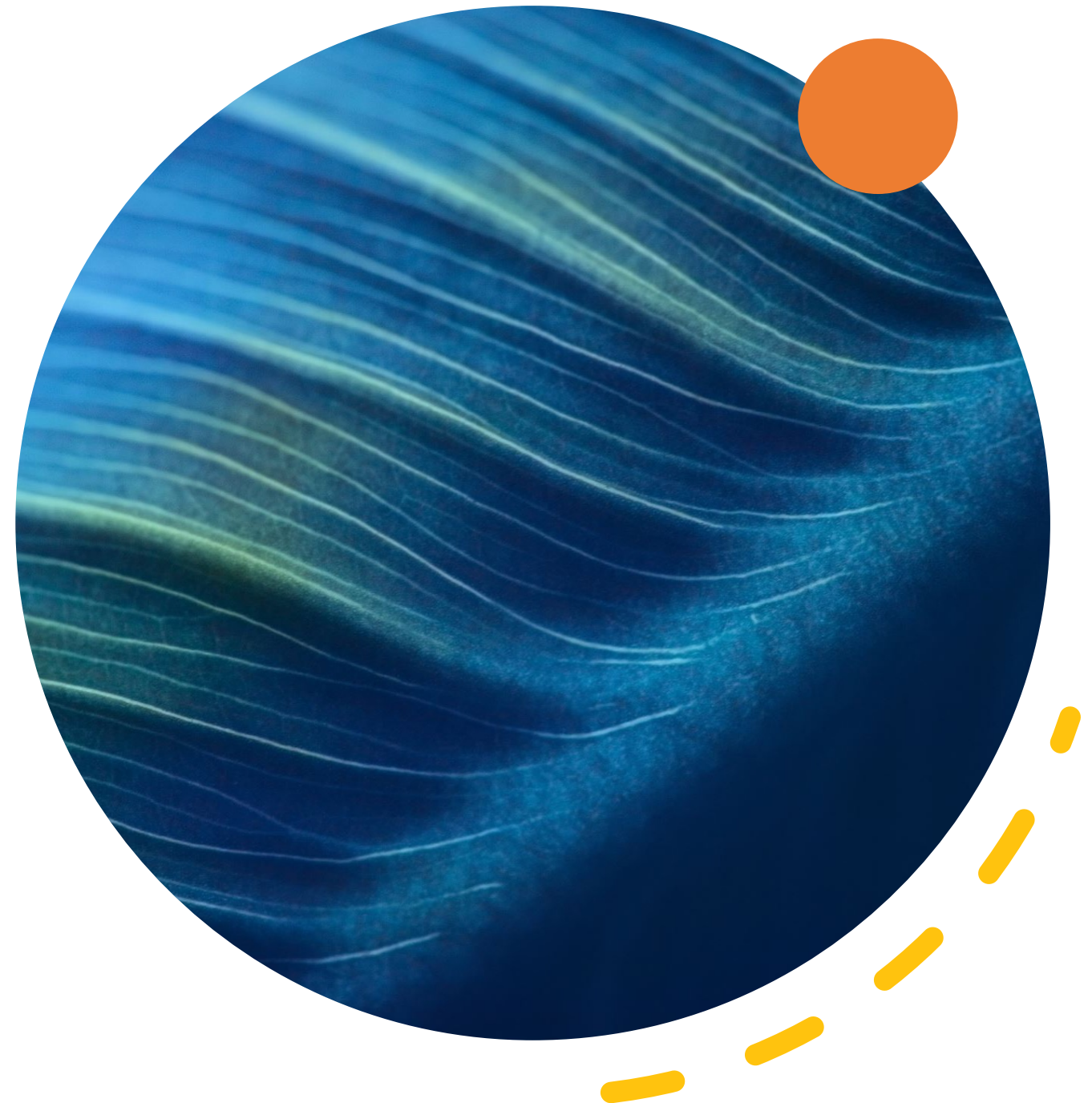
Muscle tension, feeling weak and shaky

Hoarding/collecting

Depression

Self-medication with alcohol or other central nervous system depressants

<https://www.aagponline.org/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=anxiety>



# Trauma

- Up to 90% of older adults have experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime.

*(Pietrzak, Goldstein, Southwick & et.al, 2012)*

- Approximately 70% to 90% of adults aged 65 and up have been exposed to at least one potentially traumatic event during their lifetime.

*(National Center of PTSD, 2017 <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/> )*

- ACE and older adults

<https://www.pacesconnection.com/blog/supporting-older-trauma-survivors-as-they-heal-their-pasts-grow-their-futures>





# Assessment



# Assessment Process

Presenting problem

Medical History

Current Medications

Mental Status Exam

<https://www.slu.edu/medicine/internal-medicine/geriatric-medicine/aging-successfully/assessment-tools/mental-status-exam.php>

Psychosocial History

Mental Health/Substance Use History

Risk Assessment

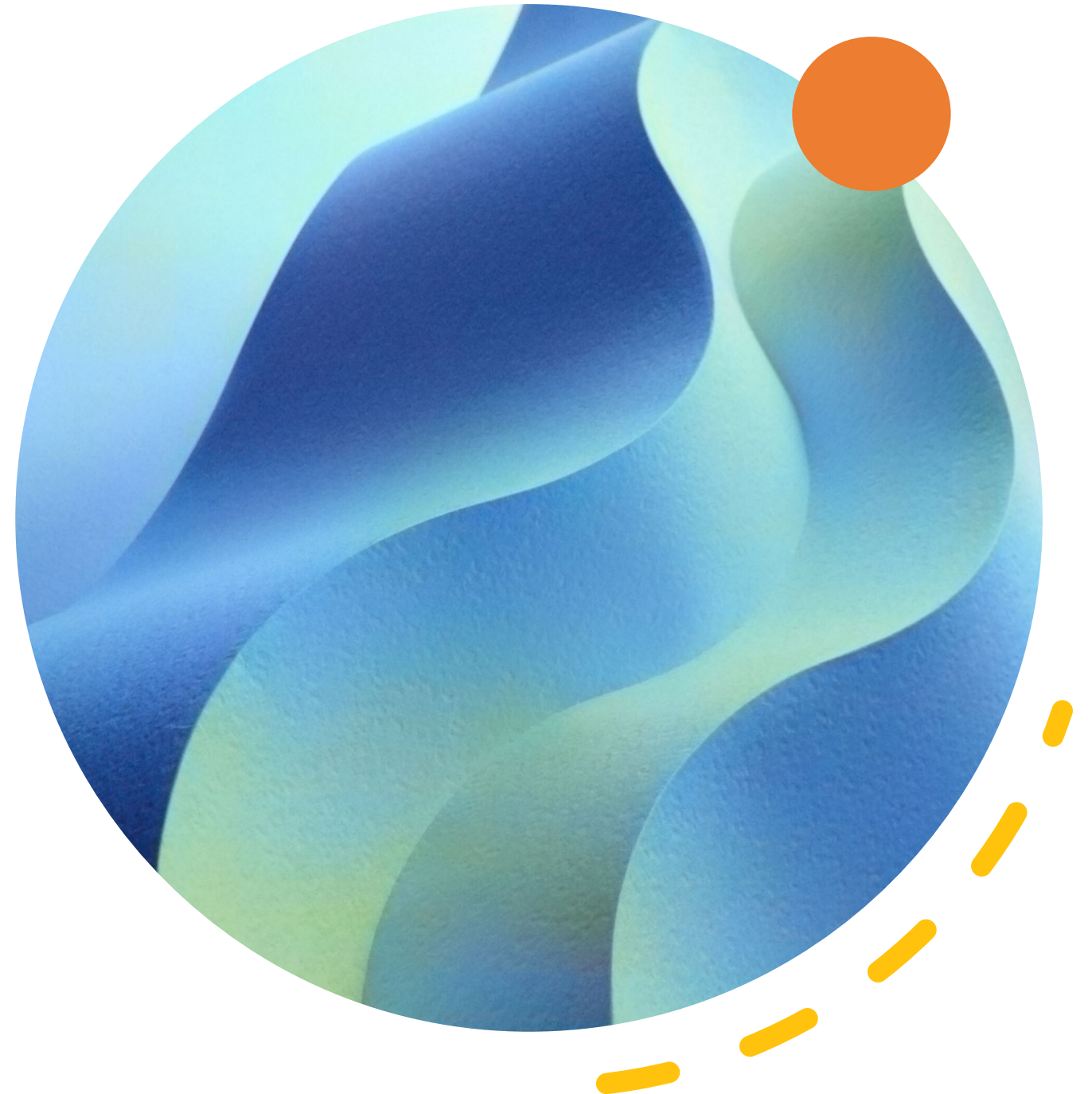


# Screening Tools

Geriatric Depression  
Form- Short

Confusion Assessment  
Method – Short

SBIRT  
Screening, Brief  
Intervention, Referral  
to Treatment



# Interviewing Considerations



Environmental



Engagement



Strategic



# Social Wellness

<https://www.nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>

- To build healthy support systems:
- Build strong relationships with your kids.
- Get active and share good habits with family and friends.
- If you're a family caregiver, ask for help from others.
- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, or painting.
- Take a class to learn something new.
- Volunteer for things you care about in your community, like a community garden, school, library, or place of worship.
- Travel to different places and meet new people.





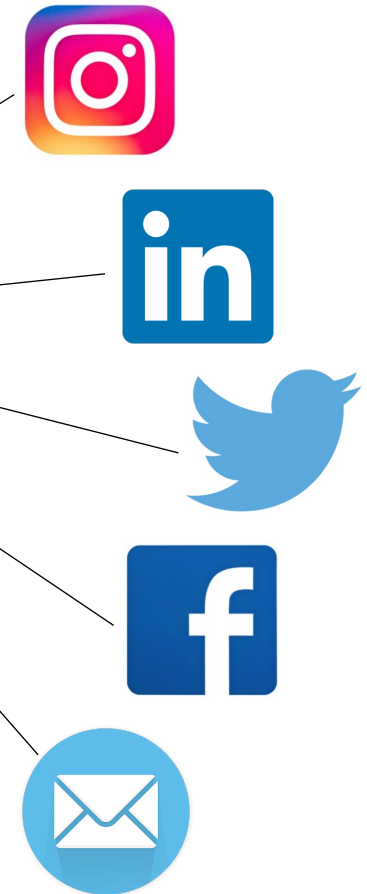
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# Promoting Mental Health & Wellness in Older Adults

THANK YOU!

