

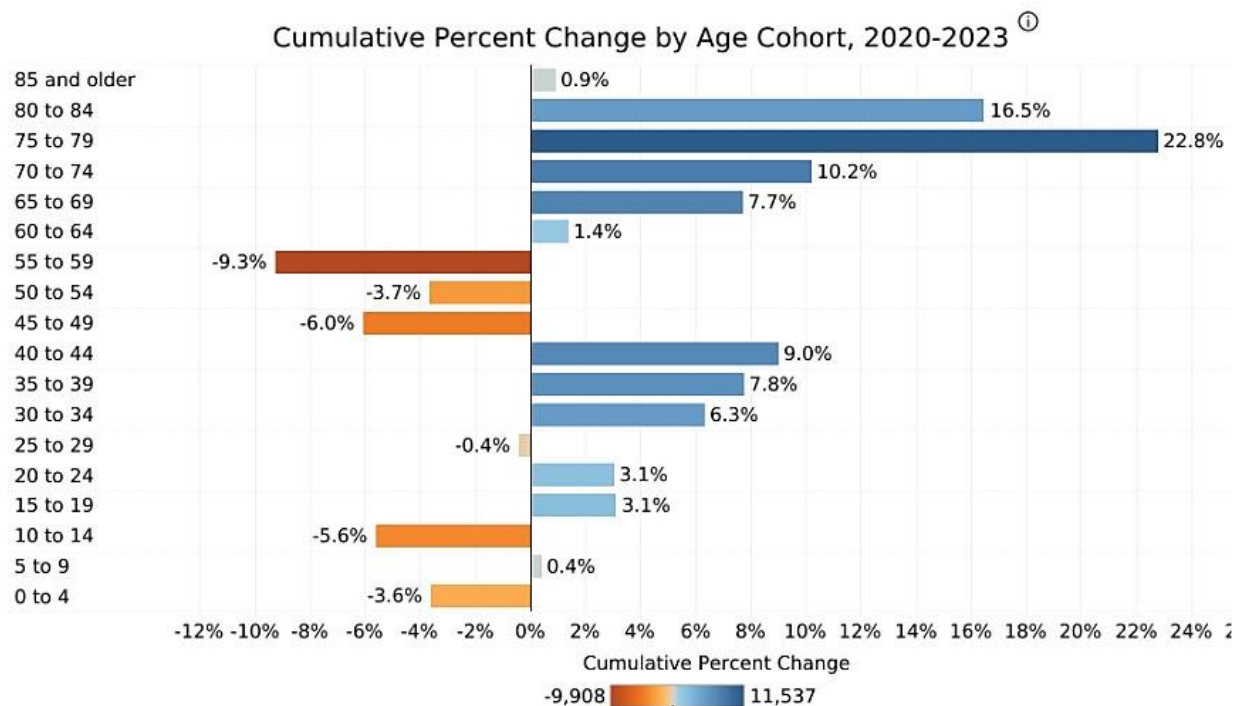
## Ageism Awareness Day: Shifting Demographics & Contributions of Older Adults

October 09, 2024 | Maine Office of the State Economist

### ***Aging Population: A Valuable Resource for Our Communities***

Maine, like many other states, is experiencing significant demographic shifts as its population ages. When measured by median age (44.8 years) and the percentage of the population over the age of 65 and older (23%), Maine is the oldest state in the nation [1]. This aging trend reflects broader national and global shifts, where populations are living longer, and birth rates are declining.

Recent data from 2020 to 2023 shows substantial growth in older age groups across Maine, with a 22.8% increase in the 75 to 79 age cohort and a 16.5% rise in those aged 80 to 84 [1]. Meanwhile, younger age groups under 60 have seen population decline, reinforcing the demographic shift. Contrary to common perceptions that attribute this shift solely to migration, much of the change is driven by Maine's existing population aging into older cohorts. *A more detailed look at Maine's changing age structure can be found on the [Maine State Economist Office dashboards](#).*

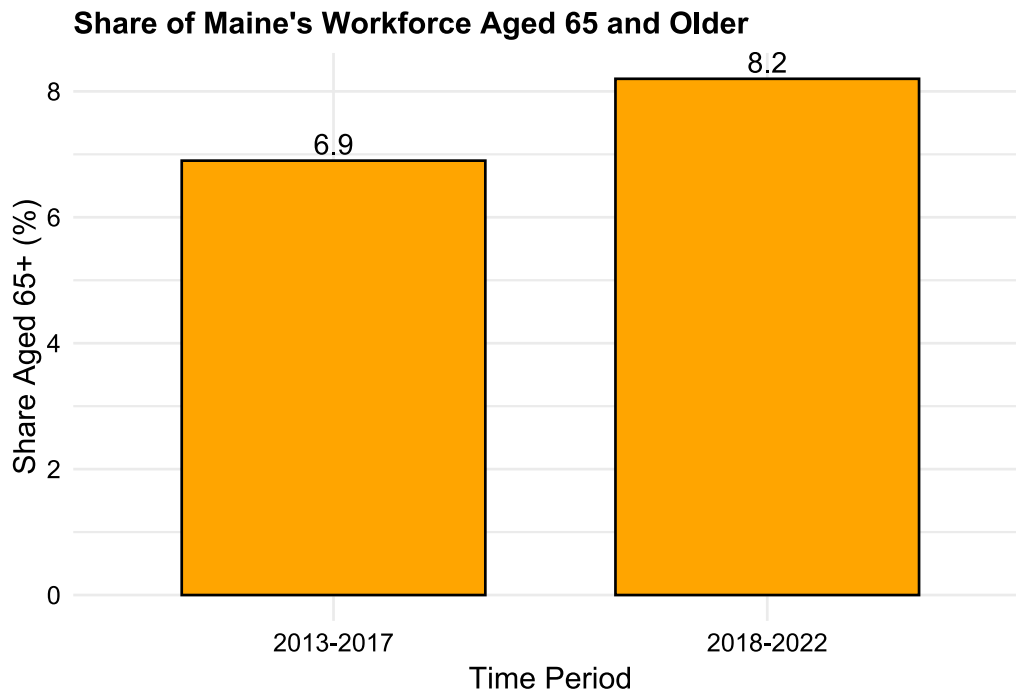


Source: U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates Program, Vintage 2023

As this population grows, so does the importance of recognizing the value older adults bring to our communities and economy. Ageism Awareness Day on October 9<sup>th</sup> is an opportune time to highlight the demographic and workforce trends that reflect the contributions of older adults and address age-related stereotypes.

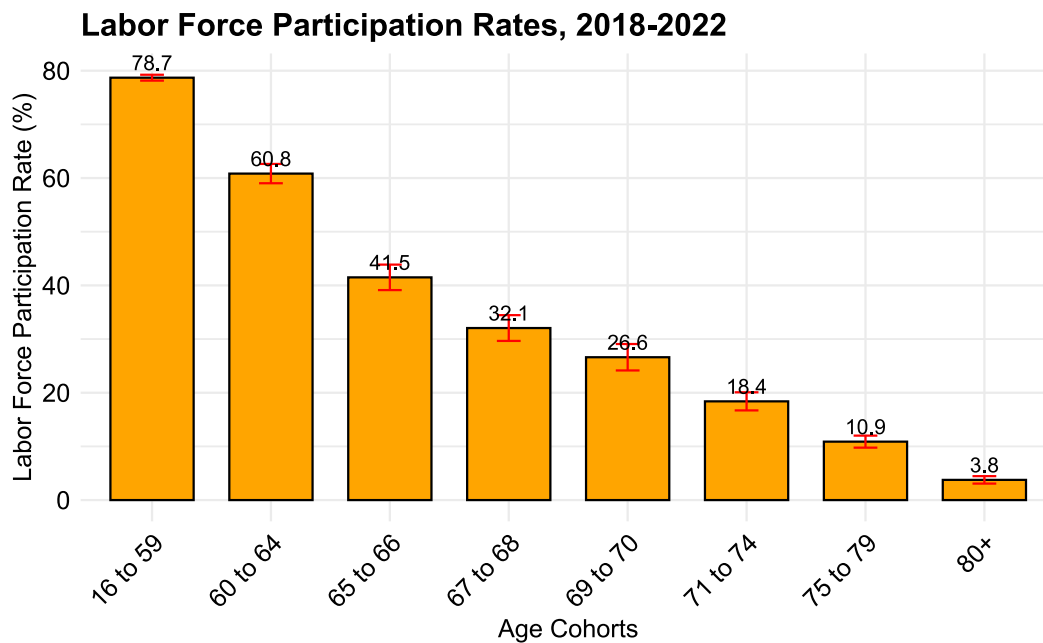
### ***Valuing the Contributions of Older Workers: A Workforce of Experience and Resilience***

The growth of Maine's older population is leading to growth in the older workforce. The share of the state's workforce aged 65 and older grew from 6.9% during the 2013–2017 period to 8.2% in 2018–2022 [2]. This 1.3 percentage-point increase reflects an 18% rise over just two consecutive 5-year periods and is a clear example of the growing role older adults play in the labor market [2].



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013- 2017 and 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample

Despite the natural decline in labor force participation as individuals age, a noteworthy number of older adults, particularly those aged 65 to 70, are still actively contributing to the workforce, with participation rates showing that many continue to work well beyond traditional retirement ages. During the 2017-2022 period, nearly 42% of individuals aged 65 to 66 remained in the labor force, and 32% of those aged 67 to 68 were still in the labor force [2].



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample

The workforce is one place where age-related stereotypes persist. However, older adults remaining in the workforce demonstrate resilience and adaptability, benefiting both themselves and their employers by enhancing workplace diversity and offering mentorship opportunities. Their decision to participate is critical in meeting workforce demands and addressing skill shortages.

As more older adults choose to stay (or return) to the workforce – whether out of financial necessity, personal fulfillment, or a love of their work – supporting age-friendly workplaces with flexibility and economic security becomes crucial. Instead of focusing on the challenges of aging, we can emphasize the valuable experience and knowledge that older adults bring to the workplace, strengthening Maine’s talent pool.

### ***Broader Impacts of Ageism***

Ageism goes beyond the workplace and affects many aspects of life, from healthcare access to social inclusion and overall well-being [3]. Staying active – through ongoing employment, volunteer work, or leadership roles – can combat isolation and enhance emotional well-being, enabling individuals to thrive and contribute meaningfully to society regardless of age. For example, in 2021, about 30% of older adults in Maine aged 65 and over reported volunteering (separately from workforce participation) compared to 22% nationally [4]. By supporting age-friendly environments and combating stereotypes, we can ensure that individuals of all ages have opportunities to thrive and fully engage in society.

### ***Local and National Initiatives***

Organizations like the [Maine Council on Aging](#) are working to combat ageism and promote an age-positive culture [5]. Initiatives like the Leadership Exchange on Ageism foster important conversations and strategies to ensure that older adults are valued and included [6]. On the national level, efforts such as the [Reframing Aging](#) initiative provide resources to shift public perceptions and create more inclusive environments [7]. [The American Society on Aging](#) also plays a vital role in raising awareness about ageism and promoting policies that support the dignity and rights of older adults, aligning with the goals of Ageism Awareness Day [8].

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### ***Sources & Resources***

[1] U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates Program, Vintage 2023

[2] U.S. Census Bureau, 2013- 2017 and 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample

[3] Kang, H., & Kim, H. (2022). Ageism and Psychological Well-Being Among Older Adults: A Systematic Review. *Gerontology & geriatric medicine*, 8, 23337214221087023. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23337214221087023>.

[4] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Volunteering and Civic Life Supplement, 2021 via America’s Health Rankings [https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/volunteerism\\_sr\\_c/ME#measure-trend-summary](https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/volunteerism_sr_c/ME#measure-trend-summary).

[5] Maine Council on Aging. (n.d.). AgePositiveMe. <https://mainecouncilonaging.org/agepositiveme/>

[6] Maine Council on Aging. (n.d.). Leadership Exchange on Ageism. <https://mainecouncilonaging.org/leadership-exchange-on-ageism/>.

[7] Communication Best Practices: Reframing Aging Initiative Guide to Telling a More Complete Story of Aging. <https://www.reframingaging.org/Portals/0/pdfs/RAI-Communication-Best-Practices-Guide.pdf>.

[8] American Society on Aging. (n.d.). About ASA: Who we are. <https://www.asaging.org/about-asa>.