

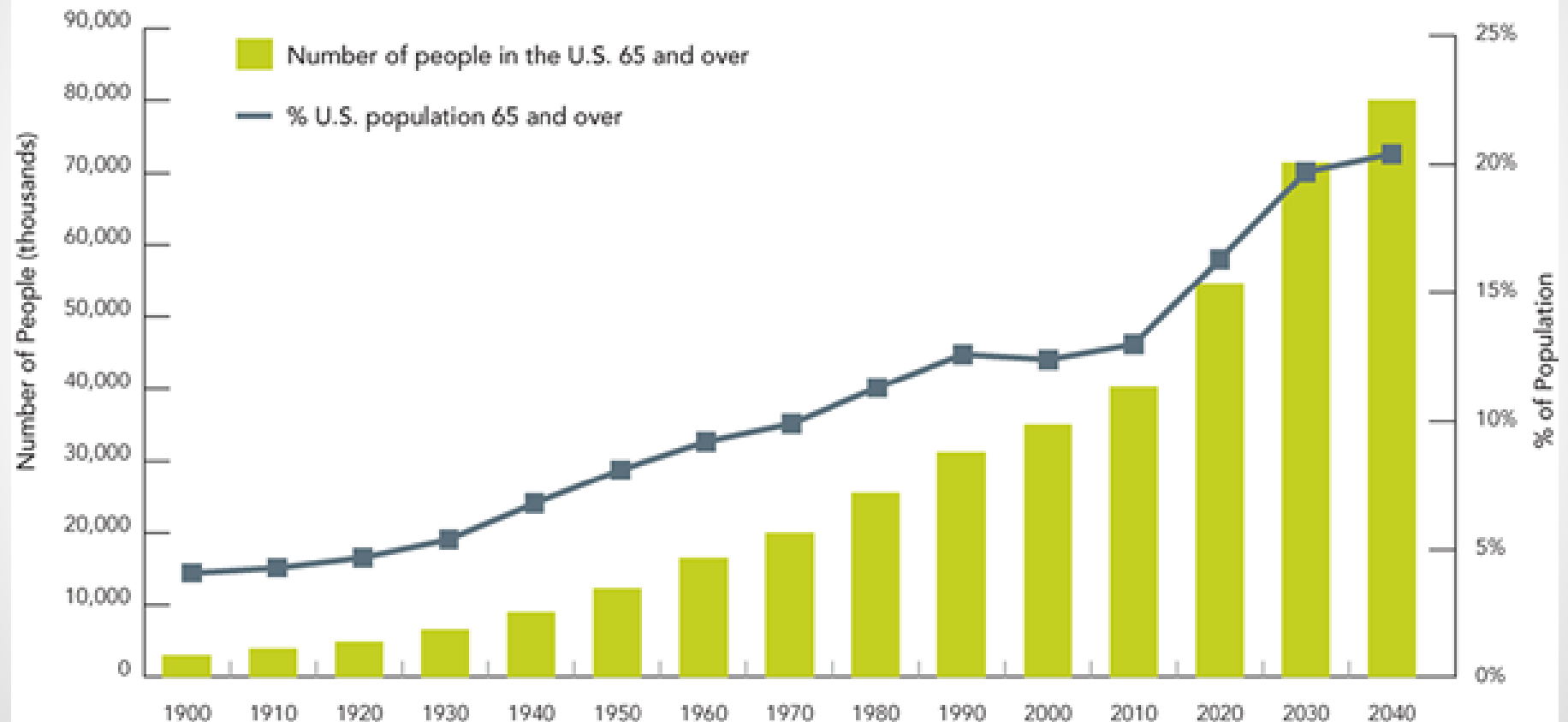
# Aging with and into Physical Disabilities

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# We're all getting older...

Aging U.S. Population



- Currently 12.4% of US Population are >65 (37.3 million)
- By 2030, expected to be 20.4% (71.5 million)

"True terror is to wake up one morning and discover that your high school class is running the country."

~Kurt Vonnegut



# The stereotypes of aging



# Older adults are only the “same” in that they’re so “different”

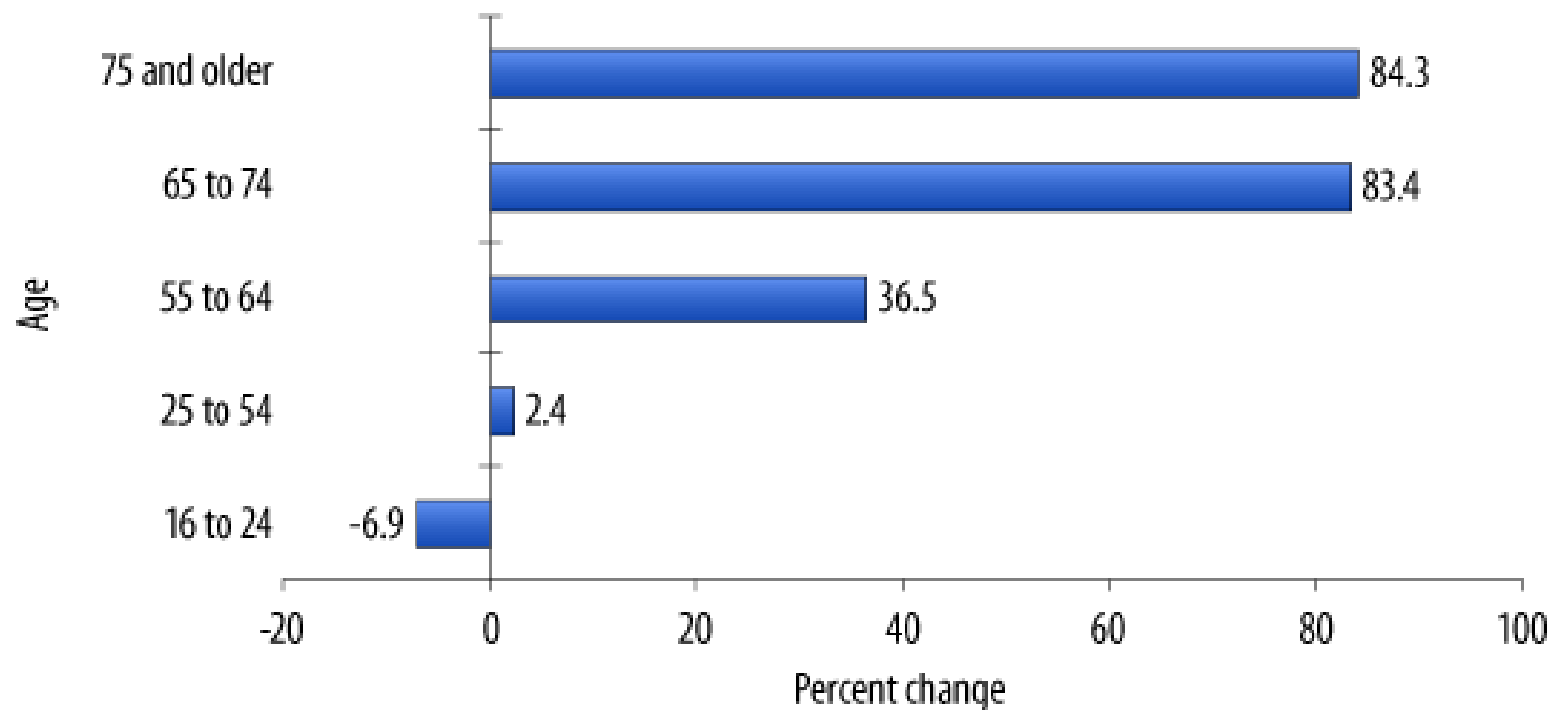
- Older adults show more intergroup variability than do younger adults in almost all areas
  - physical functioning and capability
  - cognitive abilities
    - Crystallized intelligence
    - Complex reasoning and problem-solving
  - emotional functioning
    - Depression, anxiety, happiness

# Employment is one area of variability

- In 1995, 30% of those over 55 had some gainful employment
- In 2016, the number was closer to 40%
- Most of this increase has been in the last 10 years
- Unemployment rate for people over 55 is 3.8% (in 2/16), lower than national rate (4.9%)

# The projections look at growth in the number of older workers

## Projected percentage change in labor force by age, 2006-2016



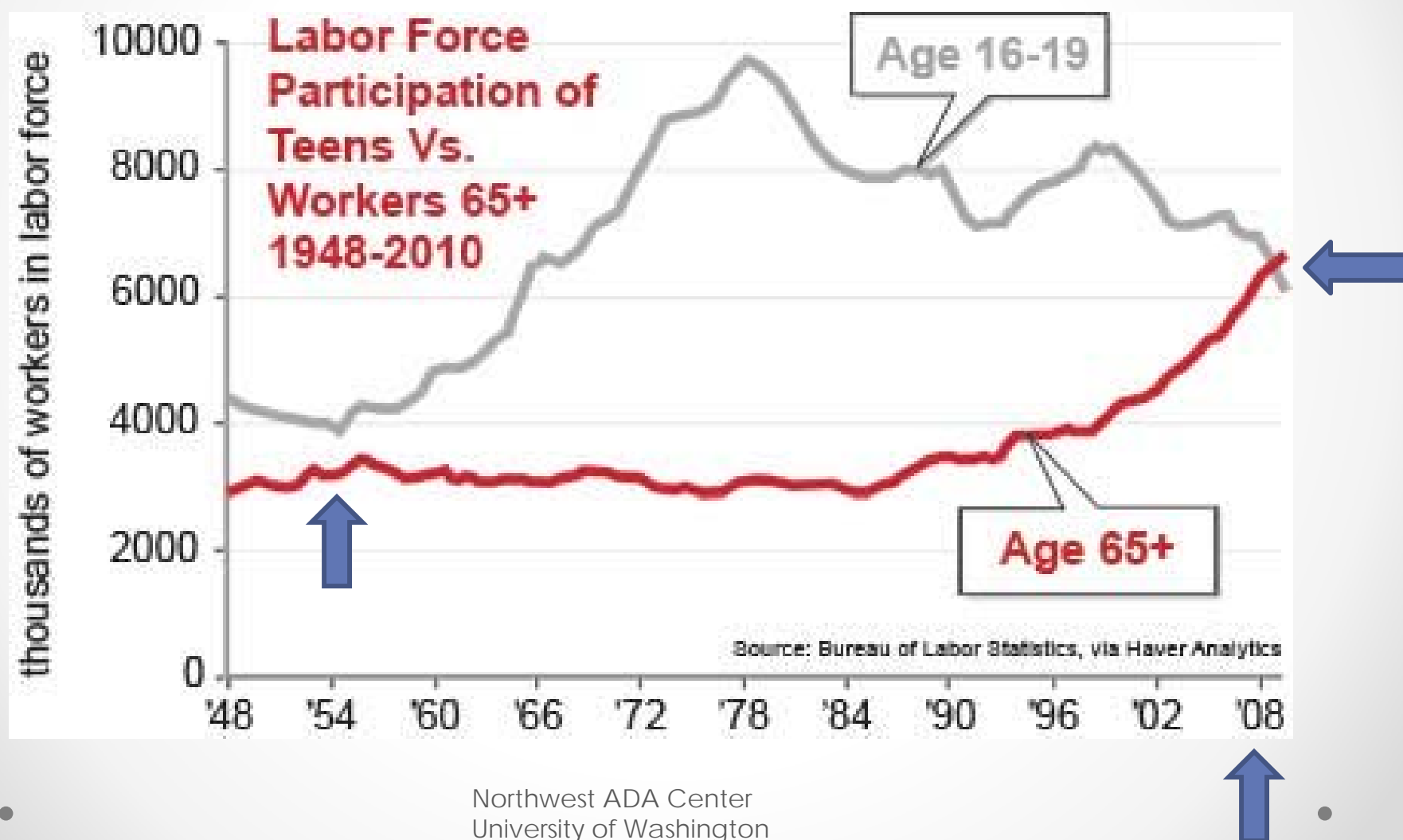
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

2008

[www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

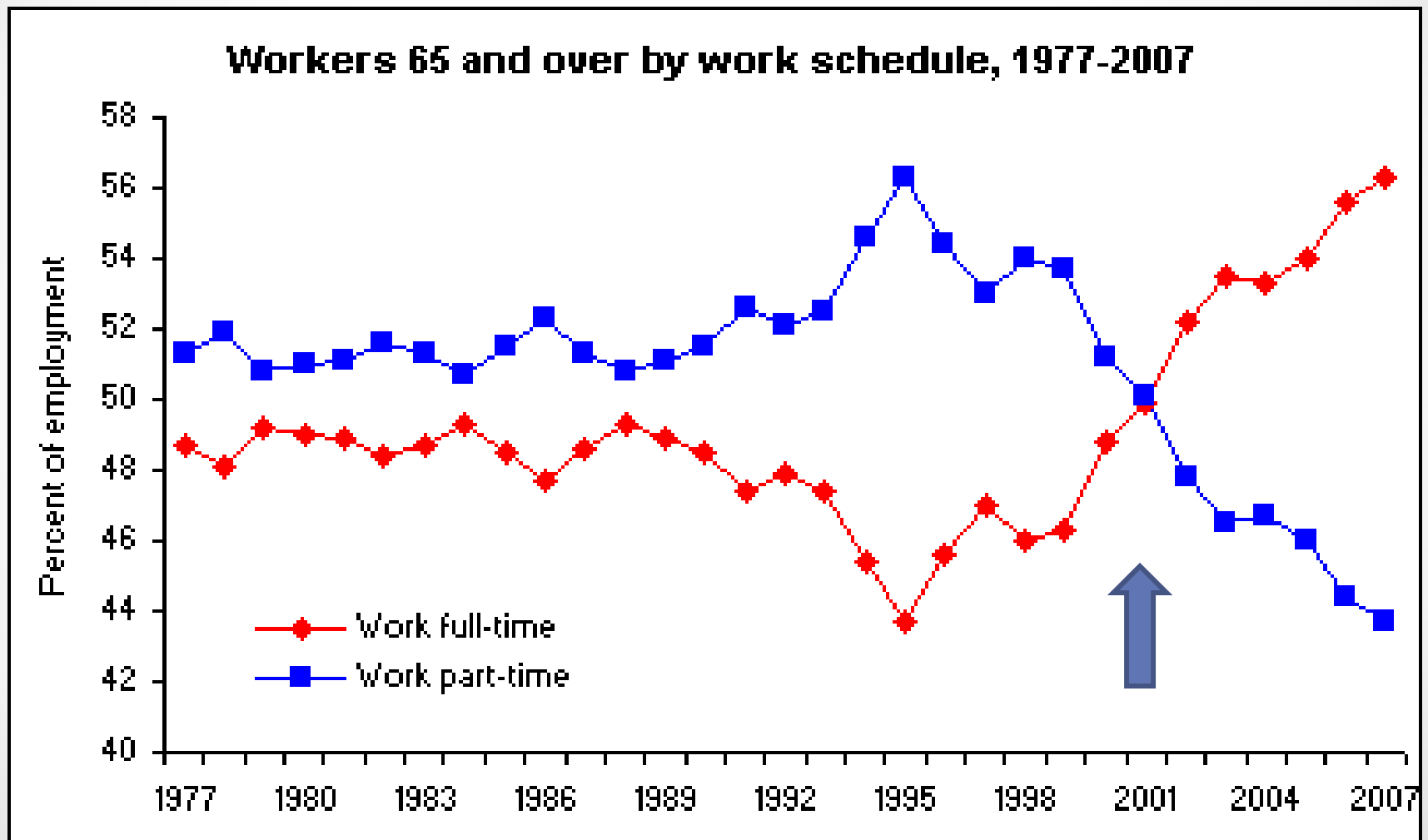
Northwest ADA Center  
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# Older workers now outnumber teens in the workforce





# More older workers are full time employees

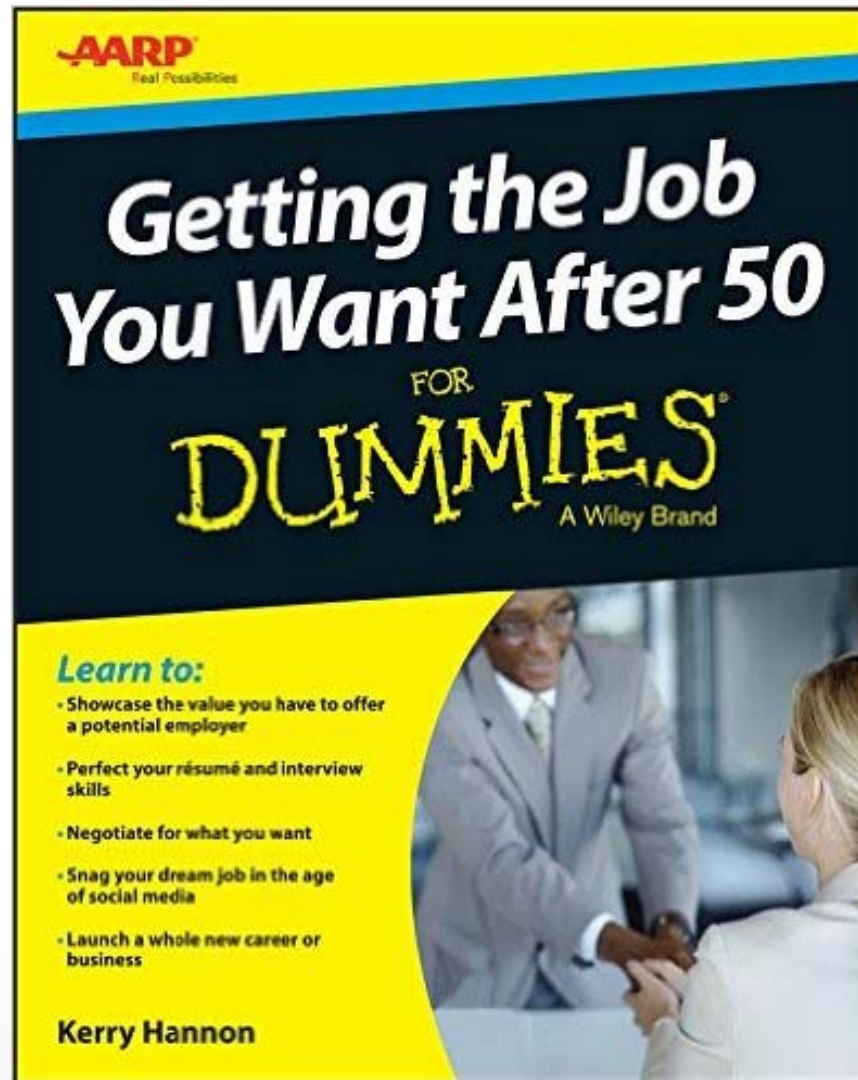


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# Ageism is alive and well in the workplace

- In the US, age discrimination claims have gone from 15,785 in 1997 to 21,396 in 2013
- Those age 55 and up spend 10 to 11 months looking for new work after leaving a job, compared with about four to seven months for workers age 16 to 34.
- Increasing age is associated with
  - More frequent firing
  - Lack of hiring
  - Perceived lack of support of supervisors
- Identified stereotypes among employers:
  - Older workers are “incompetent”, “behind” and “disengaged”
- Fears among older workers:
  - Tech is too advanced
- Perceived ageism in the workplace is associated with
  - Poorer job satisfaction, commitment and engagement

# Some “helpful” tips



- “Set up a gmail account – it looks more current than Hotmail or AOL”
- “People judge a book by its cover – you need to present a youthful and energetic appearance”
  - Hannon (“Getting the Job you Want After 50 For Dummies”)
- “Take a good enough job – one that pays less or is in another field.”
- “If you don’t get a new job right away, you have a short window... before becoming long-term unemployed.”
  - Chideya (“The Episodic Career: How to Thrive at Work in the Age of Disruption”)

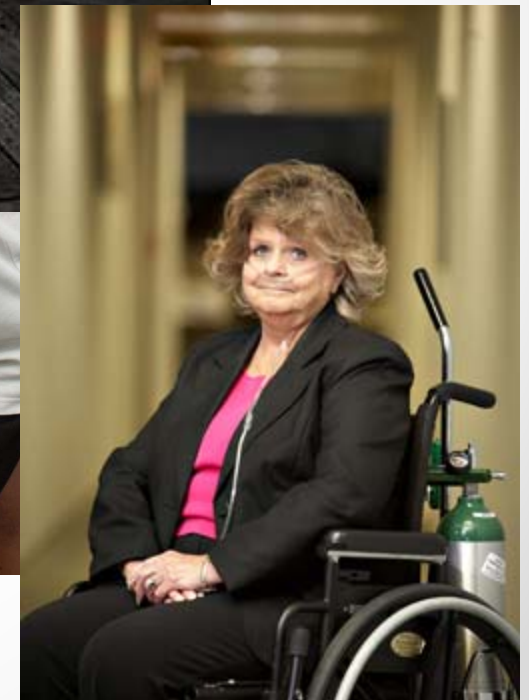
# Aging “into” and aging “with” physical disabilities

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# Aging “into” disability

- All these new older adults mean a greater incidence of new-onset disabling conditions
  - Osteoarthritis, MI, stroke, falls, amputation
- Over age 65, 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s suffer from multiple chronic conditions contributing to disability
- These individuals utilize 65% of the US healthcare budget





# Aging “*with*” disability

- In 2010, 29.5 million Americans aged 21-64 (16.6% of the working age population) reported physical disabilities
- 260,000 individuals with SCI
- 350,000 individuals with MS
- 50,000 individuals with muscular dystrophy
- 177,000 individuals with post-polio syndrome
- Each year, 1.7 million TBI's



# Aging *with* disability.

- *Those* with disability are living longer...
- Example: SCI
  - In 1940, average life expectancy post-SCI was 18 months
  - In 2005, average life expectancy with SCI is approximately 85% of normal (~68 years)
  - This means that in the past 50 years
    - survival for persons with SCI has increased 2000% percent
    - survival for the nondisabled population has increased only 30%

# Aging *with* disability

- Spinal Cord Injury
  - Average age now ~ 40 years
  - 40% are over age 45
  - Average age at onset increased from 28.7 to 38.0 from 1973
- Multiple Sclerosis
  - Mean age 49-53 years
  - 42% over the age of 65
- Post-polio syndrome
  - 90% are over the age of 55
- Cerebral Palsy
  - Death in childhood is now rare (about 2%)
  - 86% of those who survive childhood will live past age 50

# Many diagnoses


## Aging “*into*” disabilities

- Osteoarthritis
- COPD
- Vascular dementia
- Coronary artery disease
- Osteoporosis
- Diabetes (complications)
  - limb loss
  - peripheral neuropathies

## Aging “*with*” disabilities

- Spinal cord injury
- Traumatic brain injury
- Neuromuscular disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Developmental disabilities
- Post-polio syndrome

# Shared needs



Employment Support  
Risk of falls  
Chronic pain  
Risk for infections  
Risk for fractures  
Need for caregiver  
support  
Cognitive impairment  
Depression/withdrawal  
Changes in  
vision/hearing  
Mobility limitations

# Different philosophies

“for the disabilities system, aging is a success; for the aging network, disability is a failure.”

-Ansello, 2004

# There is an increased awareness of mutual opportunity

- 2009 federal expansion of the Aging and Disability Resource Center model
- Inclusion of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research *and* the Administration on Aging into the ACL
- Increasing pressure for community agencies to serve both older adults and those with disabilities

# Employment Consequences of Disability

- 78% of people with disabilities are not in the workforce
- Higher for people of color and certain disabilities
- Most people with disabilities would prefer to work
- Most people with disabilities can work

# Rates of employment

- In persons with MD, 32-40% maintain employment.
- In a UWMC survey, 18% of people aging with PPS were employed
- 30% in MS
- For people with SCI, about 60% were employed premorbidly and in general, only about 30% are employed 5 years later. For people who were injured at a younger age, employment rates increase as they get older. For people injured after the age of 55, rates go down



# Barriers to employment for people aging with a disability in the US

- Irrational subsidy system
- Necessity of close access to rehab care
- Functional limitations associated with the primary disability
- Social and environmental access issues
- Lack of vocational rehabilitation and related services

As individuals with  
disabilities age, the  
barriers to participation  
change

# There is a trade-off to living longer...

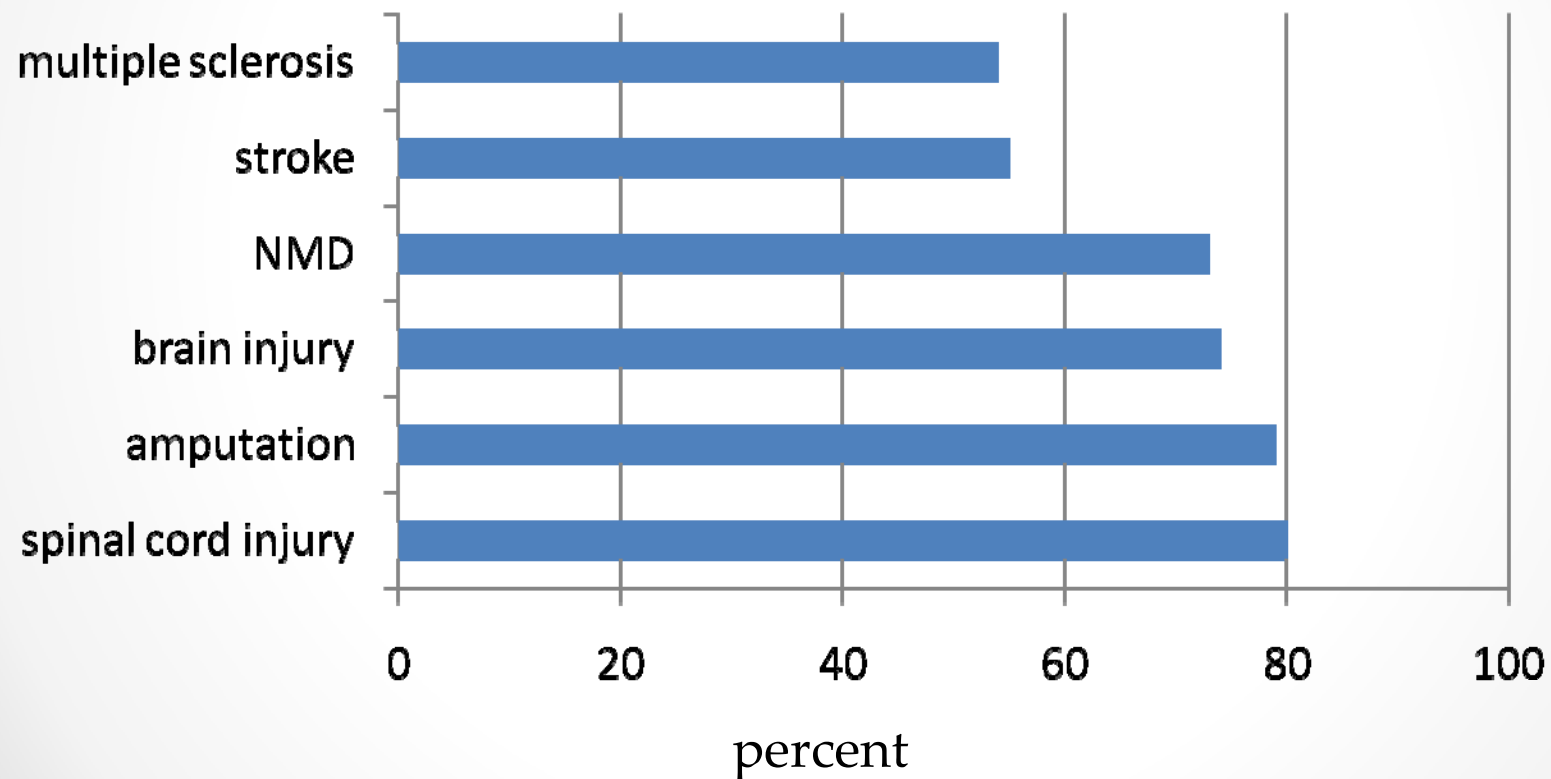
## Secondary Conditions

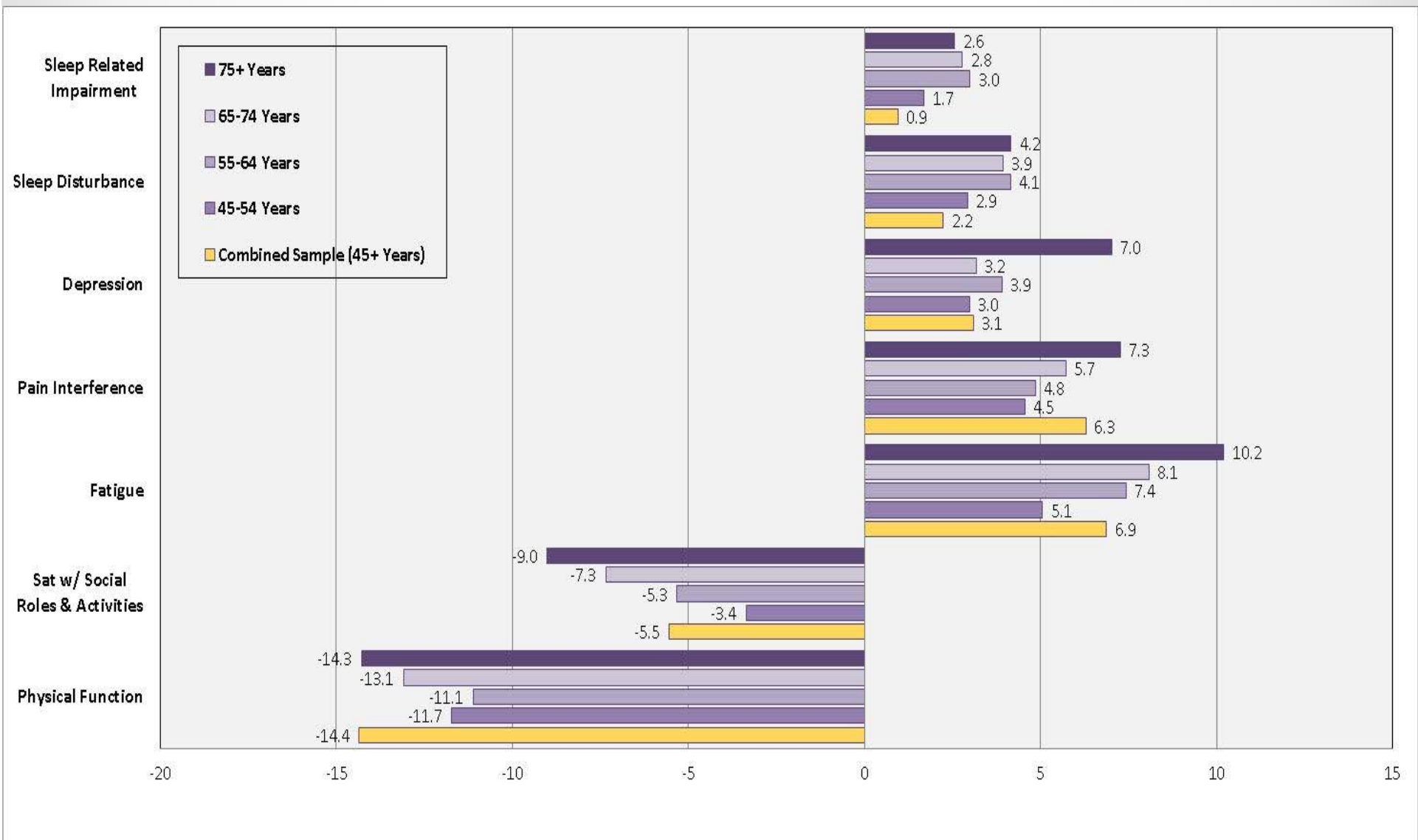
- Osteoarthritis
- Psychological comorbidities
- Chronic Pain
- Fatigue
- Pressure ulcers
- UTI
- Balance problems
- Vision changes
- Hearing changes

## “Accelerated Aging”

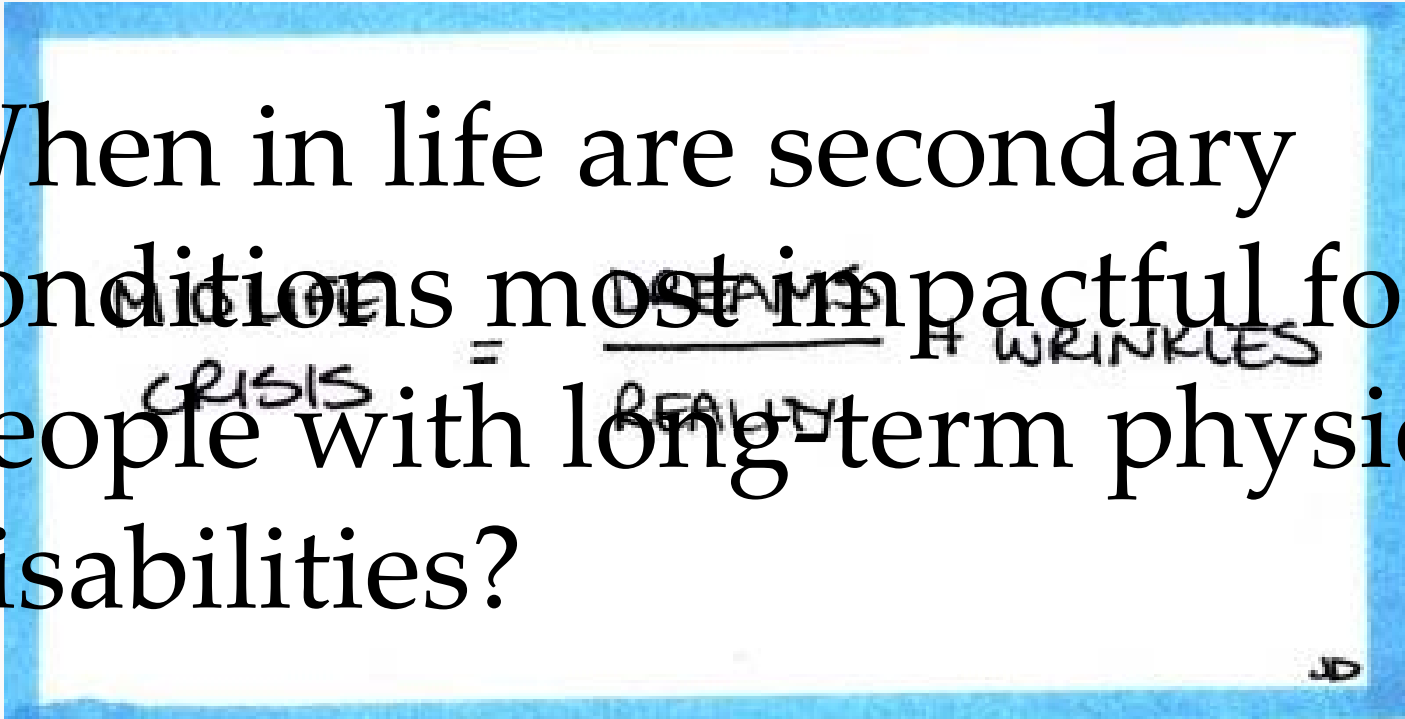
- More rapid development of
  - CHD
  - Diabetes
  - Dementia (in DD)
  - Osteoarthritis
  - Immunosenescence

# Chronic Pain In Acquired Disability: Point Prevalence





When in life are secondary conditions most impactful for people with long-term physical disabilities?

A whiteboard with a blue border. On the whiteboard, the text "MIDDLE AGE CRISIS = DREAMS + WRINKLES" is written in blue marker. Below "DREAMS", the word "REALITY" is written in blue marker. The text "When in life are secondary conditions most impactful for people with long-term physical disabilities?" is overlaid on the whiteboard.

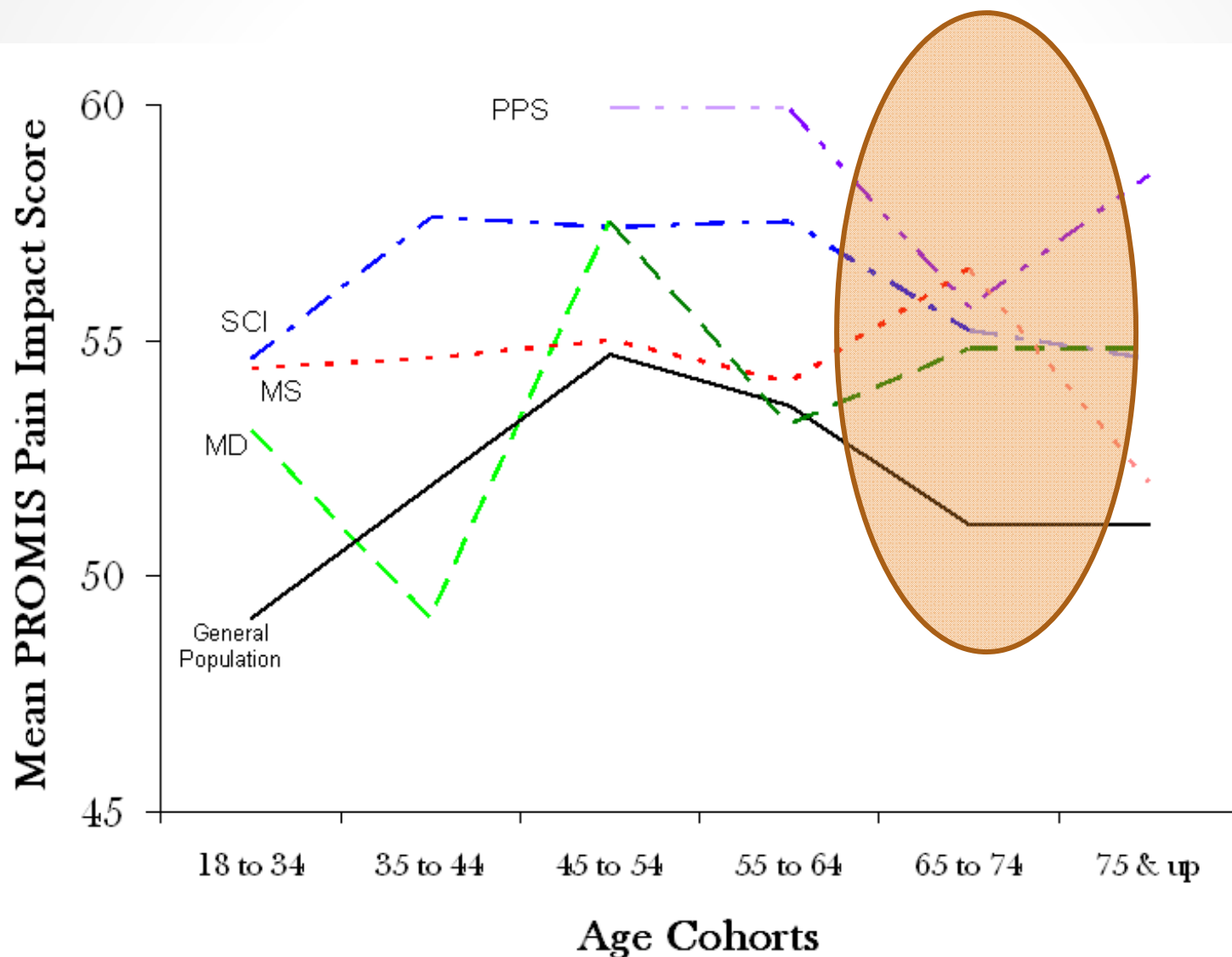
Middle age – rubber meets road

- In *nondisabled* people, 45-64 is a stressful time
  - Peak financial burden, parenting demands, pre-retirement planning, more “daily hassles”
- In people with disability, there is all of this plus worsening 2ndry health conditions, declining health, earlier involuntary retirement

- In persons with disability, middle-age is associated with
  - Highest rates of depression
  - Highest rates of falls and fall-related injuries
  - Highest rates of pain and pain interference
  - Highest levels of fatigue



# Pain Interference by age, disability and US general population samples.



# So where's the “retirement bonus?”

- This age group may be associated with
  - Highest levels of expectations for performance
  - Onset of new secondary health conditions
  - For some disabilities, ongoing degeneration
  - *Involuntary* decreases in work, associated with financial pressures
  - Increases in negative affect associated with activity restriction

Understanding the older adult who is aging *with* disability requires an understanding of the broader psychosocial context in which disability occurs.

# Age-related factors to consider in aging with disability

- Age at injury or onset
- Current age
- Years with disability
- Age “cohort”
  - An individual’s feelings about what it is to be a disabled person, based on their social context
  - The available medical treatments available at the time of injury
- Social/political influences around disability

# Social support in older adults

- Older adults have smaller, more selective social networks than do younger adults
- This probably involves intentional selection of closer partners (i.e., “social trimming”)
- Older women tend to receive support from larger and more empathetic sources than do older men
- Bereavement is a real issue: over the age of 65, 51% of women and 13.6% of men have lost a spouse

# Social support and disability

- Individuals aging with disability have unique social support needs
- At least in SCI, most individuals rely on their spouses to fulfill the majority of these needs
  - (41% of men with SCI report that their wife is their “only” source of support)
- Individuals with disabilities are less likely to marry, and have higher than average divorce rates (21%)
- Individuals aging with disability report that their caretakers are also aging

# What do we need?

- Greater awareness of the scope and nature of the “aging with disability” problem
- Improved access to rehabilitative care (especially for those in the middle-age “doughnut hole”)
- Workplace accommodations to manage secondary health conditions, not just to improve access/function

# Questions and Discussion?