

# Ageism

## What's that got to do with elder abuse?



### What is ageism?

“Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) directed towards people on the basis of their age.”

*World Health Organization  
Global Report on Ageism*

Ageism against older people includes things like:

- bad-taste jokes about ageing.
- failing to notice older people or let them join in.
- failing to ask older people their views or ignoring their wishes.
- talking to older people as if they're children.
- talking about older people as if they're worthless or a burden.

In the wider society, ageism can make it harder for older people to be in jobs that make decisions affecting older people's lives.

When individuals and societies are ageist, older people's rights are more likely to be ignored.

### What is elder abuse?

“Elder abuse is any act that causes distress or harm [to an older person] and is carried out by someone they know and trust. The trusted person is often a family member or friend.”

*Tasmania Legal Aid  
Senior Assist*

### How can ageism drive elder abuse?

Because of ageism, some people:

- fail to recognise that older people have the same rights as everyone else.
- make ageist excuses for abusive behaviour.
- fail to take action against those abusing older people.

Because of ageism, some older people who are being abused:

- blame themselves, because they start to believe they're a burden.
- fail to seek help, because they think they don't deserve it, or no-one will care.

### What can I do about ageism?

- Watch the video at [www.everyagecounts.org.au](http://www.everyagecounts.org.au).
- Try not to be ageist in your own words, actions and decisions.
- Notice ageism, call it out when you can, and talk about it with your friends.
- If an older person you know devalues themselves, disagree and talk to them about their rights.
- Get to know more older people. and invite them into your groups.

If you think you or someone you know might be experiencing elder abuse, contact the **Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline** on 1800 441 169 for free, confidential information and referral.