

Opinion | Aging and Ageism: 12 Seniors Discuss. - The New York Times

What do you hope will be better for Gen Z than it was for your generation?

Opinion

America In Focus

What Happened to America? We Asked 12 People in Their 70s and 80s.

Seniors play an outsize role in politics: On Jan. 20, 2025, Joe Biden will be 82 years old, and Donald Trump will be 78. More than half of current U.S. senators are 65 or older, and millions of seniors make their voices heard every election cycle. But despite these facts, we don't hear enough directly from regular Americans 65 or older.

That's why we invited 12 seniors, ages 71 to 88 and from several states, to tell us about what it's like to be an older person in American society today. For an hour and a half, they discussed and argued about the promise of aging, the perils of ageism and their views on the direction of the country today (and whether it should be led by a man in his 80s or late 70s).

Though many of our participants pointed to their favorite decades in the past, there was also a general sense that the so-called golden years really are golden. "Freedom from worry, struggle — this is the best decade of my life," said Eugene, 80, one of the participants. "People should look forward to the future," said Francis, 83. "I'm just going to make memory after memory."

The participants were split on how old is too old to run for and hold elected

office. "I go for younger ones. Get those old ones out of there," said Elizabeth, 82. "For me," said Elaine, 83, "it depends on the person. It's not the age. It's where they come down on these issues."

Asked whether politicians cared very much about the needs of Americans in their 70s and 80s, not a single participant thought politicians did. "They take one look at a senior and say, 'He's not producing a thing. He's doing nothing good for the people.' And it's wrong. They just look at us like we're numbers," said Francis. "So they look at us as irrelevant, I guess is the word. That's how I feel," said Elaine. We hope this focus group — and your reading it — is a step toward combating that feeling of irrelevance.

Patrick Healy, Kristen Soltis Anderson and Adrian J. Rivera

Mr. Healy is the deputy Opinion editor. Ms. Soltis Anderson is a pollster. Mr. Rivera is an editorial assistant in Opinion.

Participants



Alan 80, N.C., white, independent, retired



Barbara 71, Ore., white, Democrat, retired



Elaine 83, Mass., white, independent, retired



Elizabeth 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired



Elna 71, Ill., Latina, Democrat, employed part time



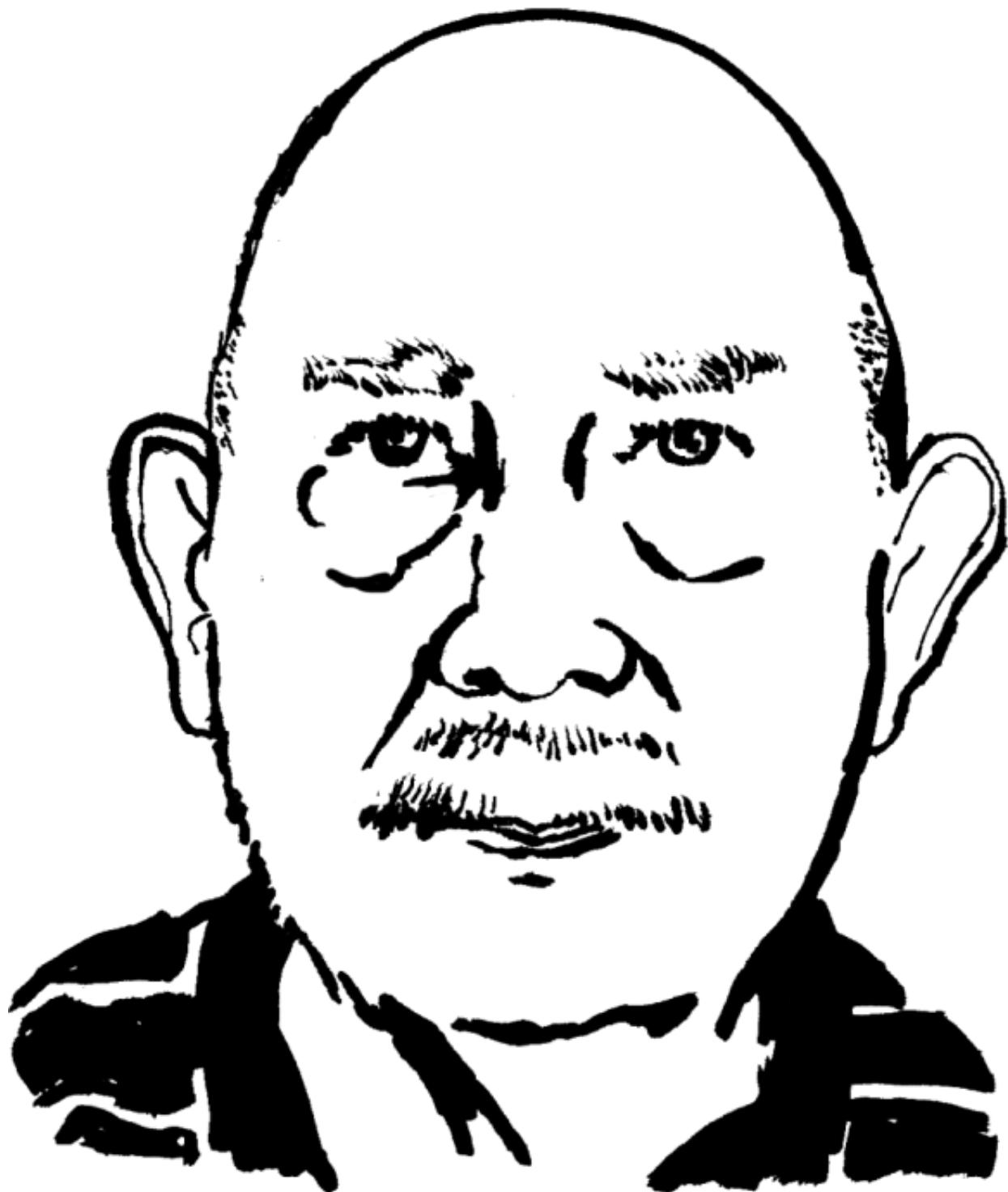
Eugene 80, Calif., white, Republican, retired



Francis 83, Pa., white, Republican, retired



John 78, N.Y., Asian, independent, retired



Mike 74, Texas, Latino, independent, employed part time



Pat 74, Tenn., Black, Democrat, retired



Ray 76, N.J., Black, Democrat, retired



William 88, Mo., white, independent, retired

Transcript

Moderator, Kristen Soltis Anderson

You're all in this group because you're in your 70s or 80s. Which decade of life would you say was or is your favorite?

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired

I'd say the '50s. That's when I was in high school. It was just a fun time for me, a carefree existence.

Alan, 80, N.C., white, independent, retired

In my 30s, we were able to go overseas on Uncle Sam's dime and enjoy traveling around Europe. Though we still had some issues, I think things in the world were pretty good.

Elna, 71, Ill., Latina, Democrat, employed part time

In my 20s, there was so much to do — roller-skating, dancing, just hanging out with friends and going bike riding. And it was simpler. It was easier then.

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, independent, retired

My favorite years are my college years: the late '50s, early '60s. The beatniks were still around, and I was an aspiring writer. I just spent that time learning who I was and what I wanted to do.

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Democrat, retired

I got excited when I heard this question. I knew immediately I'd have to say the '60s. Growing up in North Carolina, I was a part of the civil rights movement, and that activism helped shape my thinking for the rest of my life. I was in the middle of a revolution that I didn't even know I was a part of.

Mike, 74, Texas, Latino, independent, employed part time

The best times were the late '60s, going into the '70s. What I liked, which we'll never have again, is the music. Yeah, best music, best groups there ever was. There's good musicians out there today, but they can't compare to the '70s.

Moderator, Kristen Soltis Anderson

What would you say are the best things about getting older?

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired

Wisdom does come with age. It's the little things in life that really do matter. You shouldn't stress about so much in this world. It's easier to just enjoy life and do what you can for others.

Pat, 74, Tenn., Black, Democrat, retired

I'm enjoying being retired, enjoying being — as my kids and nieces call us — the Old Lady Gang. We're always going to things, and I don't have to worry about hitting the clock every day or going into work. So I'm enjoying being old.

Eugene, 80, Calif., white, Republican, retired

Freedom from worry, struggle — this is the best decade of my life. I've never had it so good. I get to go on cruises. I get to meet other people. I have interests that make me wonder how I ever found time to work.

William, 88, Mo., white, independent, retired

One time, my daughter said, "How could you have a day planner?" I said, "I've got more stuff in it now than I ever had." If there's a drawback to my age now, it's that living in a senior community like I do, we make friends, and we lose friends. When you get to my age, you have to expect that people are going to pass through.

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, independent, retired

You know that [poem](#) — “When I am an old woman, I shall wear purple”? I can do whatever I want. And I met someone a year ago, the love of my life, at my age, and I’m having the time of my life.

Francis, 83, Pa., white, Republican, retired

People should look forward to the future. I got married for a second time. With two kids and a new grandchild, I’ve really got something to look forward to. I’m just going to make memory after memory.

Barbara, 71, Ore., white, Democrat, retired

I think people in their 30s and 40s need to put enough money away, save money for retirement. It’s going to sneak up on them faster than they realize.

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired

One thing they can look forward to: the aches and pains.

Alan, 80, N.C., white, independent, retired

I think I would tell someone in their 40s and 50s to make sure they stay active, physically, socially. Don’t stop. Don’t sit on the couch. Get out. Do something that you like. I don’t care if you play golf, you bowl. But keep it up. Because when you get into our age group, you’re going to have aches and pains. If you keep moving, you’re going to be a lot better off.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

What are some of the changes that have happened over the course of your lifetime that you’d say are for the better?

Eugene, 80, Calif., white, Republican, retired

Running water, compared to a sod house on the prairie of South Dakota.

Barbara, 71, Ore., white, Democrat, retired

We've seen major changes in technology. When I was working 20 years ago, I was doing things on a typewriter or doing notes on a sheet of paper. It took time. Now we can do our budgeting and financing by using a computer and software that helps us track our expenses.

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired

There's the awareness that we have to be more concerned about conserving the environment that we have. I appreciate that.

William, 88, Mo., white, independent, retired

I've seen so many things change, especially with phones. My daughter is on vacation in Vietnam, and we text back and forth just like she was in the next room. It's amazing. If there's a negative about it, it's that as soon as you take something out of the box, it's obsolete already.

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Democrat, retired

For me, it's medical advances. My father died at 59, but now most of us look forward to living into our 80s. Technology has made everything convenient, but it's handicapping the human. It amazes me to walk down the street or drive down the street and watch how many people never see me because their faces never leave their cellphones.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

Any other changes that have happened over your lifetime that you think are for the worse?

Alan, 80, N.C., white, independent, retired

I don't think people want to serve the country anymore. Once we got rid of the draft in 1973, fewer and fewer people want to serve. If you have a strong military, you're going to have a strong country.

Elna, 71, Ill., Latina, Democrat, employed part time

Don't take offense, but it's all the moms and the women that are working, and the fathers are all stay-at-home dads. And a lot of them don't have jobs. It's the woman who is the main breadwinner, and they just — I think men are getting lazy or something. Just like —

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, independent, retired

We've forgotten how to be our brother's keeper. And the homelessness is totally out of control. The 1 percent — I hate to repeat a cliché, but the 1 percent has all the money, and the rest of us are struggling. And I guess I disagree with Elna. I love the idea that finally there's some egalitarianism between men and women and it's up to the couple to decide what they want to do.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

Let's switch gears a bit.

Do you want to stay in your current home
for as many years as possible? 11 people raised their hands.

Alan, 80, N.C., white, ind.

Barbara, 71, Ore., white, Dem.

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, ind.

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Rep.

Elna, 71, Ill., Latina, Dem.

Eugene, 80, Calif., white, Rep.

Francis, 83, Pa., white, Rep.

John, 78, N.Y., Asian, ind.

Mike, 74, Texas, Latino, ind.

Pat, 74, Tenn., Black, Dem.

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Dem.

William, 88, Mo., white, ind.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

How likely do you think it is that you'll be able to stay, and what are the factors you take into account when thinking about that question?

Francis, 83, Pa., white, Republican, retired

I think I've got a pretty good chance of that. I've got a little bit of a heart problem. But when you get to be our age, you're living on borrowed time. You try to keep healthy, live healthy, eat good, sleep good, socialize, be around people. Do things. But that's the way it's got to be.

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Democrat, retired

I can't even imagine not. I've lived here since 1982. As long as I can keep getting up and going every day, God willing, I'll probably stretch out right here in this place. This is it.

John, 78, N.Y., Asian, independent, retired

The big concern for me is shoveling snow. Having just turned nearly 80, I just kind of realized that, gee, maybe I'm not as young as I thought I was.

Barbara, 71, Ore., white, Democrat, retired

My husband and I are in the process of selling our home of 36 years and moving into a new house. I figure I'll be in there maybe 10 years if I'm lucky. But we're asking, "What can we do to make the house safe?" I'm having a ramp put in. I'm making sure there's no carpeting in the house, where you can slip and fall. And it's all one level. Because I can't go up and down stairs anymore. So sometimes you have to move to a smaller place when you're thinking about your age and how to take care of yourself.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is it to you to continue being able to live at home, as opposed to, say, moving to assisted living or a retirement community?

1 means I don't care and 5 means I care deeply.

1

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, ind.

2

No one raised their hand.

3

Eugene, 80, Calif., white, Rep.

William, 88, Mo., white, ind.

4

No one raised their hand.

5

Alan, 80, N.C., white, ind.

Barbara, 71, Ore., white, Dem.
Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Rep.
Elna, 71, Ill., Latina, Dem.
Francis, 83, Pa., white, Rep.
John, 78, N.Y., Asian, ind.
Mike, 74, Texas, Latino, ind.
Pat, 74, Tenn., Black, Dem.
Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Dem.

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired

I live in a rural area. The town has less than 1,000 people. So if I went into a nursing home, I'd have to be out of town. Probably, my choice then would be to live with my oldest son, who's married and has children. But as long as I can stay walking and talking and breathing, I'm going to try to stay here in my house.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

Do you ever feel isolated or lonely where you are?

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired

No. I'm very active. I play pinochle twice a month. I go to an exercise group. I go to an outreach program. And I'm working with these students four days a week after school. That keeps me young.

William, 88, Mo., white, independent, retired

I already live in a senior community. My wife was alive when we moved here seven years ago. I'm 88 now, and moving here was one of the best things we've ever done.

Moderator, Kristen Soltis Anderson

Right now, the official full retirement age is somewhere between 65 and 70, according to the government, depending on what year you were born in. What do you think about that?

Pat, 74, Tenn., Black, Democrat, retired

I don't think I would have made it to 70, no. I retired at 65.

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Democrat, retired

I think that our retirement system was designed, initially, so that no one would benefit. And I'm happy to say that we have outlived all expectations. And I don't think they should raise it again. They're trying to encourage people to go to 70, and I disagree with that. But the word "old" is not in my vocabulary. I'm a senior, but I'm not old.

Eugene, 80, Calif., white, Republican, retired

I worked three jobs for 17 years, so I retired from one when I was 55, and the next when I was 65. This is a decade where I've never had it so good. I have a stair climber. I have the ramps in. I have a roll-in shower. So it's just great for me and my new girlfriend, who doesn't climb stairs.

Moderator, Kristen Soltis Anderson

How many of you think that Social Security will exist as a program when your grandchildren retire?

Francis, 83, Pa., white, Republican, retired

It'll be different.

Barbara, 71, Ore., white, Democrat, retired

I think that the government will change it to something else. And people won't get as much out of it in the future as we're getting out of it today.

Elna, 71, Ill., Latina, Democrat, employed part time

They're already slashing all kinds of things with Social Security. I used to get transportation to and from my doctors and everything. Now my plan cuts that out.

William, 88, Mo., white, independent, retired

I don't like to say it, but I think by the time my grandkids get ready to retire, we'll be in socialism. I think we're headed that way.

Moderator, Kristen Soltis Anderson

Tell me why you think that.

William, 88, Mo., white, independent, retired

Well, the government seems to be taking over more and more of the things that we used to do for ourselves. In a lot of cases, it pays better not to work than it does to work. If I drive around here, I see people standing up with their signs saying, "Give me some money," and then right across the street, there's a help wanted sign.

Elna, 71, Ill., Latina, Democrat, employed part time

I agree.

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Democrat, retired

Social Security is socialism. It was designed to be a system whereby everybody contributed and then everyone got benefit. We've always had limited socialism. But what you're talking about, for me, is more a question of a big area that's been forgotten: mental health. We have tons of homeless people on the streets, begging for jobs. They don't have a work problem. They have mental problems. If we have an issue with Social Security, it's maybe that our younger generation does not want to work and invest,

because they're more into entrepreneurship and independent applications. Everybody wants to be an entrepreneur, not a part of a company, like we did. We worked for a place for 30 and 40 years. This generation is not interested in working for anybody but themselves for 20 or 30 years.

Moderator, Kristen Soltis Anderson

We've talked a bit about Social Security, but how do you think Medicare is doing these days?

John, 78, N.Y., Asian, independent, retired

Well, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, they take, like, four months to send you a statement. Sometimes you try to read through the statements, and it's kind of like hieroglyphics. You think us oldsters remember that we went to the doctor six months ago?

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired

I like Medicare. About seven years ago, I had my shoulder replaced. Between Medicare and my Blue Cross Blue Shield coverage, I didn't have to pay anything. And then just this fall, I've had surgery on my left eye twice. And again, I've had no bills. So, yeah, I like the way Medicare is taking care of my old body.

Alan, 80, N.C., white, independent, retired

I have no complaints with Medicare. My wife's had a few surgeries. And instead of 50,000 bills, I had zero bills. And because I'm retired military also, I have Tricare for life, so they pick up the other 20 percent. Medicare, to me, is a godsend.

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, independent, retired

I don't think I would have decent health care without Medicare. The problem

is not with the idea. The problem is with the way it's managed. I hear a lot of seniors complaining that they can't get to the doctors because the doctors are so overbooked.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

I'd like to turn to politics for a bit. We know that politicians like to get the votes of older Americans.

Do you think politicians care very much about the needs of American voters in their 70s and 80s? 0 people raised their hands.

Alan, 80, N.C., white, ind.

Barbara, 71, Ore., white, Dem.

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, ind.

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Rep.

Elna, 71, Ill., Latina, Dem.

Eugene, 80, Calif., white, Rep.

Francis, 83, Pa., white, Rep.

John, 78, N.Y., Asian, ind.

Mike, 74, Texas, Latino, ind.

Pat, 74, Tenn., Black, Dem.

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Dem.

William, 88, Mo., white, ind.

Francis, 83, Pa., white, Republican, retired

I don't think they really care. They take one look at a senior and say, "He's not producing a thing. He's doing nothing good for the people." And it's wrong. They just look at us like we're numbers.

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, independent, retired

We're on the fringes. We're not earning all the money and paying all the taxes that we did before. So they look at us as irrelevant, I guess is the word. That's how I feel.

Mike, 74, Texas, Latino, independent, employed part time

I think they promise us the moon so that we can give them our vote. And then once they get it, they don't deliver.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

Let me ask a devil's advocate question, though. We were just talking about Social Security and Medicare. And a lot of politicians say they will protect those benefits. Isn't that looking after the needs of older Americans?

William, 88, Mo., white, independent, retired

I think the politicians are interested in only one thing, and that's being re-elected. And whatever it takes to get re-elected, they will do, they will promise. And I don't think they'll deliver. And I think that's everywhere, from local to national.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

What about politicians who are in their 70s and 80s? Do they care more about older Americans, do you think, or is it just a wash?

Francis, 83, Pa., white, Republican, retired

They just want to stay there. They want to stay there so they can get that

bigger pension.

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Democrat, retired

The one politician that I would hang a hat on would be Bernie Sanders. Bernie Sanders legitimately talks a senior citizen's game. And he is an advanced senior citizen. Everyone, they either talk about the budget being too expensive and we got to trim Medic — until there's a backlash. And then it's back to "Oh, no, we're not going to touch senior citizens." AARP is our only arm.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

When you're evaluating candidates to vote for, do you think more or less favorably about candidates who are around your age?

Elna, 71, Ill., Latina, Democrat, employed part time

It depends on their politics.

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired

I go for younger ones. Get those old ones out of there.

Barbara, 71, Ore., white, Democrat, retired

I agree, the older ones, they've been there for so long, they're millionaires anyway. They don't care.

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, independent, retired

For me, it depends on the person. It's not the age. It's where they come down on these issues. And I know a lot of the politicians are just trying to keep their power as long as they can. I wish there were more like Bernie Sanders who really seems to care about doing something for the country.

Eugene, 80, Calif., white, Republican, retired

I'm from California, where Dianne Feinstein only gave up her position because she can't afford the airplanes anymore. And Nancy Pelosi and her husband have \$120 million. They've already made theirs. They live behind walled, protected communities. They pay for their own security.

Alan, 80, N.C., white, independent, retired

I'd like to see term limits. But age doesn't bother me.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

How do you think being in your 70s and 80s affects your ability to be in office, generally? Is it a benefit, a disadvantage? Does it have no effect?

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired

Some politicians that are in their 70s and 80s may be worth their weight in gold. And others, maybe they're getting a little senile.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

We have now a presidential candidate running, Nikki Haley, the former governor of South Carolina. And she's proposed that those who run for office should have to pass a cognition test if they're over the age of 75. What do you think about the idea?

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Democrat, retired

I think that would be horrible. It's horrible to assume that there is a magic age where my cognition decreases. I'm 76. And I can sit in a room with Nikki Haley, and we can talk about anything at any point in time. And I will be present for that conversation.

Francis, 83, Pa., white, Republican, retired

I think when you get to be 70 years old, 72, 73, you should be out of politics.

Barbara, 71, Ore., white, Democrat, retired

I don't think a blanket test is a good idea. There are people that are 70 that are just as cognitively capable as a person in their 30s.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

Do you think that there should be a maximum age limit for being elected to office?

Pat, 74, Tenn., Black, Democrat, retired

There's a minimum age, so why not have a set one for the maximum?

Moderator, Patrick Healy

Earlier, someone mentioned Dianne Feinstein, the senator from California, who has served for nearly 30 years. She just announced she'd be retiring from the Senate. Does anyone have a strong view one way or another about that decision?

Pat, 74, Tenn., Black, Democrat, retired

I was happy, even though she's not in my state.

Eugene, 80, Calif., white, Republican, retired

She should have done it two election cycles ago.

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Democrat, retired

Three.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

Why do you think so?

Eugene, 80, Calif., white, Republican, retired

It was three election cycles ago that we voted \$3 billion to provide for reservoirs and water for the state. That remains unspent.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

So it's about effectiveness in office, Eugene?

Eugene, 80, Calif., white, Republican, retired

Oh, yes.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

As you know, President Biden is currently 80. Do you think his age is a benefit for him or a disadvantage?

Alan, 80, N.C., white, independent, retired

I don't think it's an issue, really. As long as he has his faculties, it'll be fine. I just want to see something positive come out of all of this.

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, independent, retired

Yeah, I guess I agree. Elizabeth mentioned earlier, we look at each person individually. An 80-year-old sometimes is smarter and sharper than a 40-year-old because of experience and attitude and persistence. I have mixed feelings about the age cognition test, because there are people in Congress now I wish they would give a cognitive test, and they're not 80.

Mike, 74, Texas, Latino, independent, employed part time

There's nothing wrong with Biden or anyone else in their 80s, or late 70s. The problem is that once you start slowing down or you're not as sharp or

quick as before, they use it against you. So he may be the best guy there ever was, but they'll focus on that little fault and use it against him. And they'll hound him and hound him. And he'll start feeling that pressure. And then they convince him that "Well, I'm getting old, and I can't do this anymore."

Moderator, Patrick Healy

Former President Donald Trump is 76 years old. Do you see his age as an issue, either as a benefit or a disadvantage, regarding his campaign for president in 2024?

Elna, 71, Ill., Latina, Democrat, employed part time

I just wouldn't vote for him. I don't trust him after what he did with that Jan. 6 thing. It's not age related.

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, independent, retired

Maybe there needs to be a test for ethics and morality, not just for cognitive ability.

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired

As far as his age, no, I don't think that's an issue. I think we all agree that it may be his personality that's an issue but not his age.

Mike, 74, Texas, Latino, independent, employed part time

For an old man, he has a gift. He can talk. He can talk, and he can argue. And he'll convince you. And that's why people, they listen. They want answers. He tells them what they want to hear.

Moderator, Patrick Healy

How would you feel about a rematch between Biden and Trump for president

in 2024?

William, 88, Mo., white, independent, retired

In a country this size, we could find better candidates. I have been in one party for a long time. I don't agree with what they're doing. And I don't like what the other party does, either. I think I'm becoming an independent.

Francis, 83, Pa., white, Republican, retired

I'd say dig deeper. But if you stop and think, not one of us right here can honestly say that we're better off now than we were two years ago. Not one of us.

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Democrat, retired

I am doing much better today than I was two years ago. I've never been as well off as I am today. But the mistake we would make sitting here now would be to think that anyone sitting on this panel chooses who they're going to make as a candidate for president. That's done by a roomful of people far out of our pay grade. My problem with another election of Trump and Biden is that I think it will turn away a large body of potential elected voters, particularly young people, because they're going to feel once again that they're being disenfranchised, that they're not being heard or listened to. It took people like Barack Obama to energize young people and get them out and get them involved in the electorate. We've got to step aside at some point and give this country to the next generation. Now is the time.

Moderator, Kristen Soltis Anderson

Last question. I want you to think about the generation that comes after Generation Z, people born in the last 15 years. What things do you hope will be better for them than they were for your generation?

Mike, 74, Texas, Latino, independent, employed part time

I think they're going to be worse off. It's not getting any better.

Elizabeth, 82, Kan., white, Republican, retired

I'd like to see less crime, less hatred and more kindness in this world. So I just pray and believe that this can come about.

Barbara, 71, Ore., white, Democrat, retired

I want to see the next generation be more concerned about taking care of this planet and each other as human beings. I want to see more tolerance.

Alan, 80, N.C., white, independent, retired

I think our education system really has to be ramped up. I think we're missing the boat if we don't educate the younger people and get them on the right track.

Francis, 83, Pa., white, Republican, retired

Yeah, we should do better on education. I talked to a girl about a month ago who's got a college education. We were talking about Pearl Harbor. And she actually stood there and asked us who was Pearl.

Elaine, 83, Mass., white, independent, retired

I hope there's going to be more kindness, people getting along. Right now, it's just not good at all. We need more time, more love. Money's not the answer to everything.

Eugene, 80, Calif., white, Republican, retired

I pray that they have more physical and emotional security.

William, 88, Mo., white, independent, retired

Well, I think the bad kids get a lot of publicity. And I see an awful, awful lot of

really, really good kids. And I think that the younger generation is probably going to do pretty well. The bad ones get the publicity, and the good ones are doing the good work.

Ray, 76, N.J., Black, Democrat, retired

Hopefully the next generation will study our generation and correct our mistakes, because what's happening in the world, we can't pass it all off to the generations after us. We have been responsible for a lot of how the world has become today. And hopefully, the next generation will return to a feeling of being one set of people, united together as one country.

More from this series