Getting Specific:
Context Effects on Facets of Subjective Age

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BACKGROUND

- Chronological age (CA) is a poor proxy for expected behaviors and events
- Subjective age (SA; e.g., felt age) is a better predictor of important work-related factors, including:
  - Health[1]
  - Stress[2]
  - Retirement intentions[3]
- SA may be context specific
  - A study of French workers found that:
    - Work-specific SA was related to, but distinct from CA
    - Work SA was a better predictor of job satisfaction and organizational commitment compared to either CA or general SA[4]
- Age identities (e.g., SA) vary throughout the lifespan; each context may be more salient at different points in the lifespan[5, 6]

STUDY AIMS

1. Continue investigation into context-specific (i.e., Work, Home, Social) subjective age, including facets of FELT-AGE, LOOK-AGE, and ACT-AGE[7, 8]
   - Expected significant context effects for each facet of subjective age
2. Examine the relationship of SA with other age related factors, such as awareness of age and emotional affect associated with subjective age
3. Explore differences in context-specific facets of subjective age measures by chronological age (younger and older) and gender

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Are there contextual effects for subjective age? Do gender or chronological age moderate these effects?
2. Which contextual felt age is the most important predictor of general felt age?
3. How frequently do people think about their age?
4. What affect is associated with general felt age? Does this affect correspond with assumptions made about feeling older or younger (i.e., feeling older is positive for younger adults but negative for older adults)?
5. Do people consistently feel older or younger than their chronological age? If not, what proportion of the time do people feel younger, the same, or older than their chronological age?

METHODS

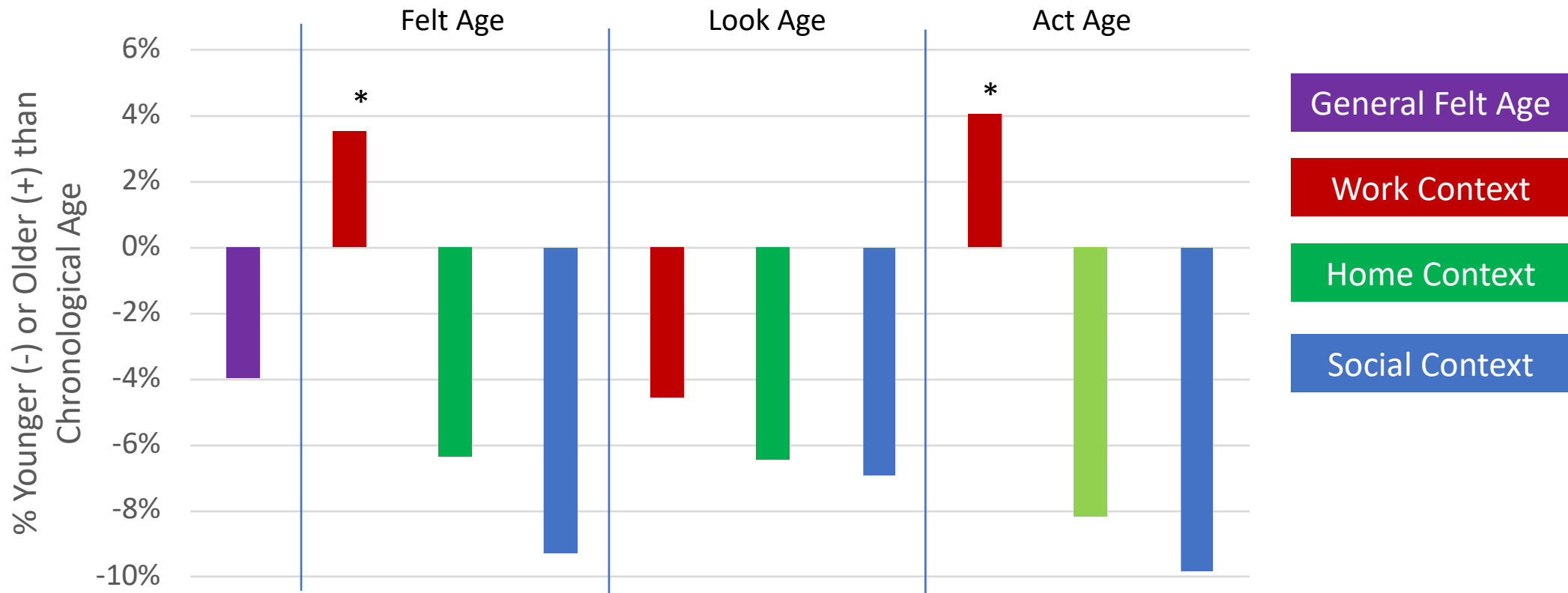*Participants*
- Working adults (*N* = 380)

Measures
- Chronological Age (CA) – Median = 28
- Subjective Age (SA) –
  Proportional Discrepancy (PD) = (SA – CA)/CA
  - General Felt Age
  - Facets of SA X Context
    - Facets: Felt, Look, and Act age
    - Context: Work, Home, Social
- Emotional affect toward overall felt age
  - Negative (1), Neutral (2), Positive (3)
- Frequency of thinking about own age
  - Never (1) to Always (5)
- % of time feel: Younger, Same age, Older
- Demographics
  - Gender (Male = 36.3%)
  - Race
    - White = 74.7%; Asian = 13.2%
  - Education
    - Some college = 31.3%; College + = 58.4%
  - Marital status
    - Single = 56.8%; Married = 36.3%

	M	*SD*	%
CA	34.17	14.43	
General FA	31.49	11.75	
FA Affect	2.49	.64	
Positive			56.9
Neutral			34.9
Negative			8.2
Think about age	2.96	.92	
Never			6.3
Rarely			21.8
Sometimes			43.9
Often			24.2
Always			3.2
% time feeling…			
Younger	32.52	30.62	
Same age	46.24	29.15	
Older	21.38	23.19	

RQ1: ARE THERE CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS FOR SUBJECTIVE AGE?
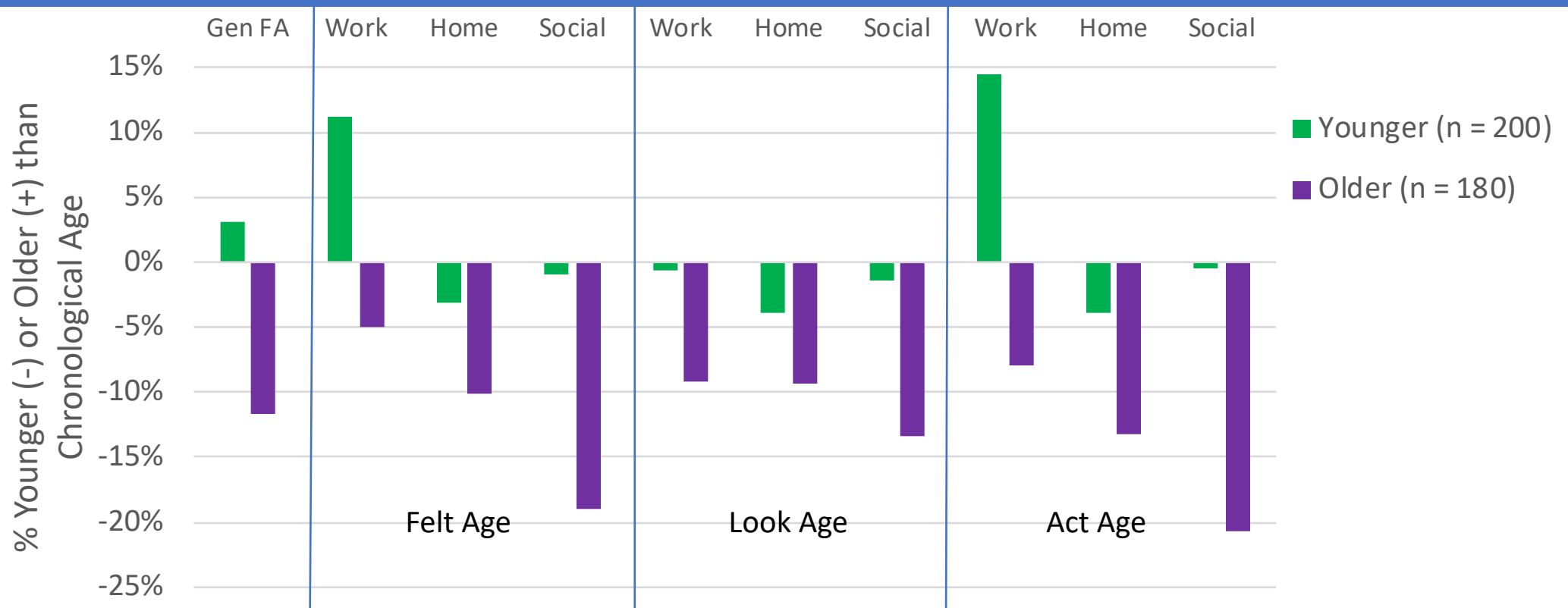## Subjective Age Facets Proportional Discrepancies x Context
ALL PARTICIPANTS

*Contextual effects: Participants reported *feeling* and *acting* significantly older at work compared to home or social settings.

RQ1: DOES CHRONOLOGICAL AGE MODERATE CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS?
Subjective Age Facets Proportional Discrepancies x Context
(YOUNGER = CA < 29; OLDER = CA > 28)

Significant differences between younger and older workers for all subjective age measures.
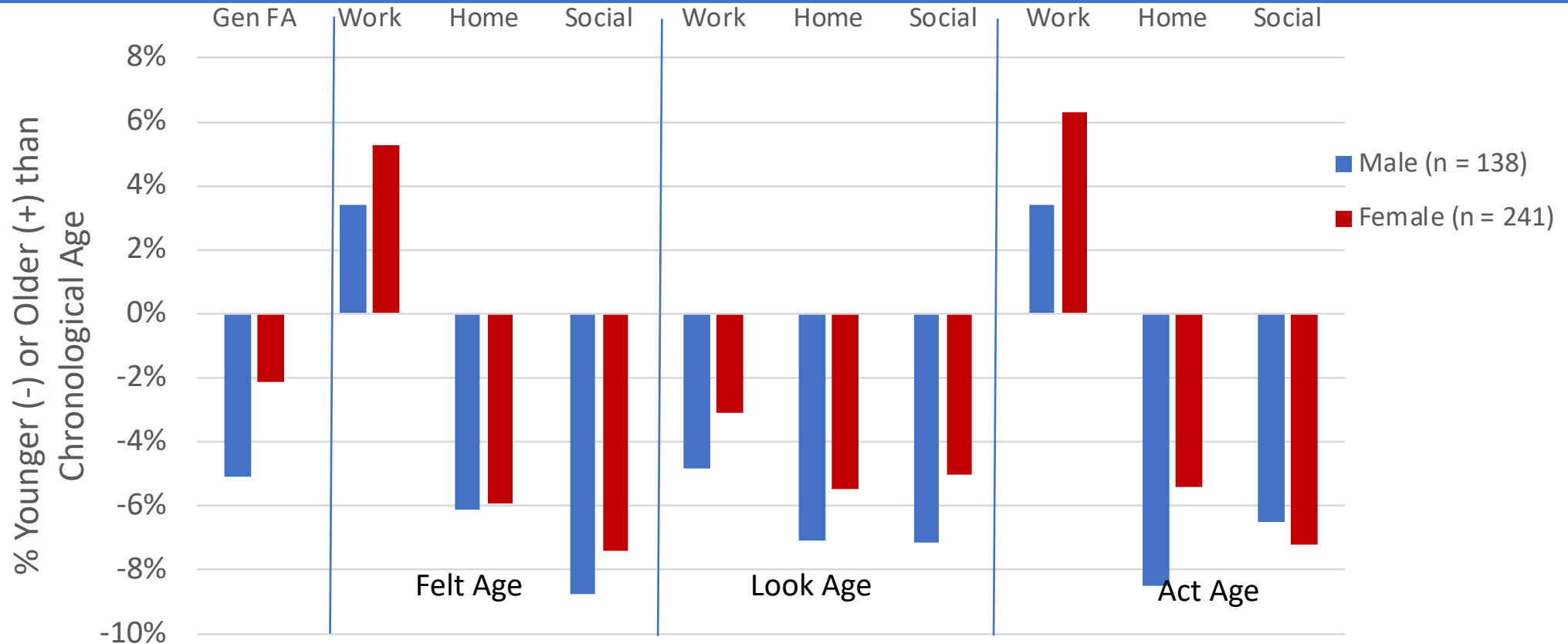
YOUNGER WORKERS (Within Group)
- **Felt Age**: Proportionally older at work than at home or in social settings.
- **Look Age**: Proportionally older at work than at home.
- **Act Age**: Proportionally older at work than at home or in social settings.

OLDER WORKERS (Within Group)
- **Felt Age**: Proportionally older at work than at home or social settings; also, older at home than in social settings.
- **Look Age**: Proportionally older at work than at home; also, older at home than in social settings.
- **Act Age**: Proportionally older at work than at home or social settings; also, older at home than in social settings.

RQ1: DOES GENDER MODERATE THESE CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS?
Subjective Age Facets Proportional Discrepancies x Context

NO significant differences **between** males and females for any subjective age measure.

MALES (Within Group)
- **Felt Age**: Proportionally older at work than at home or in social settings.
- **Look Age**: Proportionally older at work than in social settings.
- **Act Age**: Proportionally older at work than at home or in social settings.

FEMALES (Within Group)
- **Felt Age**: Proportionally older at work than at home or in social settings.
- **Look Age**: Proportionally older at work than at home or in social settings.
- **Act Age**: Proportionally older at work than at home or in social settings.

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CORRELATION MATRIX OF SUBJECTIVE AGE PROPORTIONAL DISCREPANCIES BY FACET AND CONTEXT ALL PARTICIPANTS (*N* = 380)

	CA	GENERAL FELT AGE	WORK FELT AGE	HOME FELT AGE	SOCIAL FELT AGE	WORK LOOK AGE	HOME LOOK AGE	SOCIAL LOOK AGE	WORK ACT AGE	HOME ACT AGE	SOCIAL ACT AGE
CA	1	FELT AGE – by CONTEXT									
FAPD	-.47**	1									
WFAPD	-.43**	.63**	1								
HFAPD	-.28**	.35**	.39**	1							
SFAPD	-.49**	.45**	.37**	.50**	1	LOOK AGE – by CONTEXT					
WLAPD	-.29**	.44**	.48**	.23**	.20**	1					
HLAPD	-.22**	.23**	.23**	.34**	.14**	.53**	1				
SLAPD	-.39**	.44**	.36**	.37**	.66**	.36**	.29**	1	ACT AGE – by CONTEXT		
WAAPD	-.54**	.64**	.64**	.30**	.35**	.51**	.36**	.44**	1		
HAAPD	-.36**	.36**	.16**	.48**	.35**	.40**	.52**	.35**	.46**	1	
SAAPD	-.42**	.44**	.36**	.44**	.71**	.11*	.08	.70**	.48**	.41**	1

NOTE: Significant multicollinearity for contextual subjective ages.

FELT AGE INTERCORRELATIONS

	WFAPD	HFAPD	SFAPD
All Participants			
WFAPD	1		
HFAPD	.39**	1	
SFAPD	.37**	.50**	1
Younger			
WFAPD	1		
HFAPD	.25**	1	
SFAPD	.25**	.39**	1
Older			
WFAPD	1		
HFAPD	.43**	1	
SFAPD	.22**	.52**	1
Male			
WFAPD	1		
HFAPD	.49**	1	
SFAPD	.45**	.69**	1
Female			
WFAPD	1		
HFAPD	.34**	1	
SFAPD	.32**	.38**	1

ALL: Strongest between home and social

BY AGE: Generally stronger for older, except work with social

BY GENDER: Stronger for Males

LOOK AGE INTERCORRELATIONS

	WLAPD	HLAPD	SLAPD
All Participants			
WLAPD	1		
HLAPD	.53**	1	
SLAPD	.36**	.29**	1
Younger			
WLAPD	1		
HLAPD	.36**	1	
SLAPD	.32**	.09	1
Older			
WLAPD	1		
HLAPD	.67**	1	
SLAPD	.28**	.45**	1
Male			
WLAPD	1		
HLAPD	.56**	1	
SLAPD	.18*	.07	1
Female			
WLAPD	1		
HLAPD	.52**	1	
SLAPD	.47**	.45**	1

ALL: Strongest between work and home

BY AGE: Generally stronger for older, except work with social

BY GENDER: Generally Stronger for Females, except work with home

ACT AGE INTERCORRELATIONS

	WAAPD	HAAPD	SAAPD
All Participants			
WAAPD	1		
HAAPD	.46**	1	
SAAPD	.48**	.41**	1
Younger			
WAAPD	1		
HAAPD	.23**	1	
SAAPD	.34**	.21**	1
Older			
WAAPD	1		
HAAPD	.57**	1	
SAAPD	.41**	.58**	1
Male			
WAAPD	1		
HAAPD	.39**	1	
SAAPD	.47**	.29**	1
Female			
WAAPD	1		
HAAPD	.48**	1	
SAAPD	.53**	.55**	1

ALL: Fairly similar relationships

BY AGE: Stronger for older

BY GENDER: Stronger for Females

WORK CONTEXT INTERCORRELATIONS

	WFAPD	WLAPD	WAAPD
All Participants			
WFAPD	1		
WLAPD	.48**	1	
WAAPD	.64**	.51**	1
Younger			
WFAPD	1		
WLAPD	.18*	1	
WAAPD	.54**	.26**	1
Older			
WFAPD	1		
WLAPD	.72**	1	
WAAPD	.62**	.66**	1
Male			
WFAPD	1		
WLAPD	.18*	1	
WAAPD	.68**	.21*	1
Female			
WFAPD	1		
WLAPD	.58**	1	
WAAPD	.62**	.61**	1

ALL: Strongest between feel and act

BY AGE: Generally stronger for older, except look with act

BY GENDER: Generally stronger for females

HOME CONTEXT INTERCORRELATIONS

	HFAPD	HLAPD	HAAPD
All Participants			
HFAPD	1		
HLAPD	.34**	1	
HAAPD	.48**	.52**	1
Younger			
HFAPD	1		
HLAPD	.04	1	
HAAPD	.22**	.35**	1
Older			
HFAPD	1		
HLAPD	.61**	1	
HAAPD	.67**	.65**	1
Male			
HFAPD	1		
HLAPD	.14	1	
HAAPD	.34**	.40**	1
Female			
HFAPD	1		
HLAPD	.45**	1	
HAAPD	.55**	.59**	1

ALL: Strongest between feel and act

BY AGE: Stronger for older

BY GENDER: Generally stronger for Females, except work with home

SOCIAL CONTEXT INTERCORRELATIONS

	SFAPD	SLAPD	SAAPD
All Participants			
SFAPD	1		
SLAPD	.66**	1	
SAAPD	.71**	.70**	1
Younger			
SFAPD	1		
SLAPD	.58**	1	
SAAPD	.67**	.69**	1
Older			
SFAPD	1		
SLAPD	.59**	1	
SAAPD	.64**	.53**	1
Male			
SFAPD	1		
SLAPD	.66**	1	
SAAPD	.71**	.72**	1
Female			
SFAPD	1		
SLAPD	.65**	1	
SAAPD	.74**	.69**	1

ALL: Fairly similar relationships

BY AGE: Fairly similar, except look with act stronger for younger

BY GENDER: Fairly similar relationships

- Relative importance: the proportional contribution of each predictor to model R^2 in a linear regression model[9, 10]
  - When predictors are intercorrelated (i.e., multicollinearity) regression weights cannot be used to determine predictor importance
  - Importance indices are used to determine the relative importance of predictors, even in instances of extreme multicollinearity
    - **Incremental R^2** (AKA unique commonality coefficient): the increase in R^2 when the predictor is entered last (i.e., stepwise regression)
    - **General Dominance Weights**[11]: The average contribution of a predictor to a criterion;
      $\sum$Dominance weights = R^2
    - **Relative Importance Weights**[12, 13]:The contribution of a predictor to a criterion when considered alone as well as jointly with other predictors;
      $\sum$Relative Importance Weights = R^2

RA2: WHICH FELT AGE CONTEXT (WORK, HOME, OR SOCIAL) IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PREDICTOR OF GENERAL FELT AGE PD?
Dominance Analysis Results – Rank Order of Importance*

ALL PARTICIPANTS
R^2 = .452 (with all predictors)
1. Work (.298)
2. Social (.107)
3. Home (.047)

YOUNGER (CA < 29)
R^2 = .263 (with all predictors)
1. Work (.203)
2. Social (.054)
3. Home (.006)

OLDER (CA > 28)
R^2 = .548 (with all predictors)
1. Work (.357)
2. Home (.120)
3. Social (.072)

MALES
R^2 = .369 (with all predictors)
1. Work (.334)
2. Social (.024)
3. Home (.011)

FEMALES
R^2 = .548 (with all predictors)
1. Work (.261)
2. Social (.249)
3. Home (.037)

Work felt age PD was consistently the most important predictor of general felt age PD.

The second most important (albeit much weaker) predictor for *older workers* was home felt age PD; for *younger workers* and *males* it was social felt age PD.

For *females,* social felt age PD was nearly as important a predictor as work.

*Results from Incremental R^2 and Relative Importance were consistent with these Dominance Analyses.

RQ3: How frequently do people think about their age?
RQ4: What is the affect associated with general felt age?

Legend: All (N = 380), Younger (n = 200), Older (n = 180), Male (n = 138), Female (n = 241)

BETWEEN GROUP DIFFERENCE

RQ3: Think Age Frequency
By Age Category: No significant differences between age categories.
By Gender: *Females think about their age more often than Males do.
(Additional analyses showed no inter-group differences in felt age associated with the frequency individuals think about their age)

RQ4: FA Affect
No significant differences between age categories or genders†.

† *p* = .056
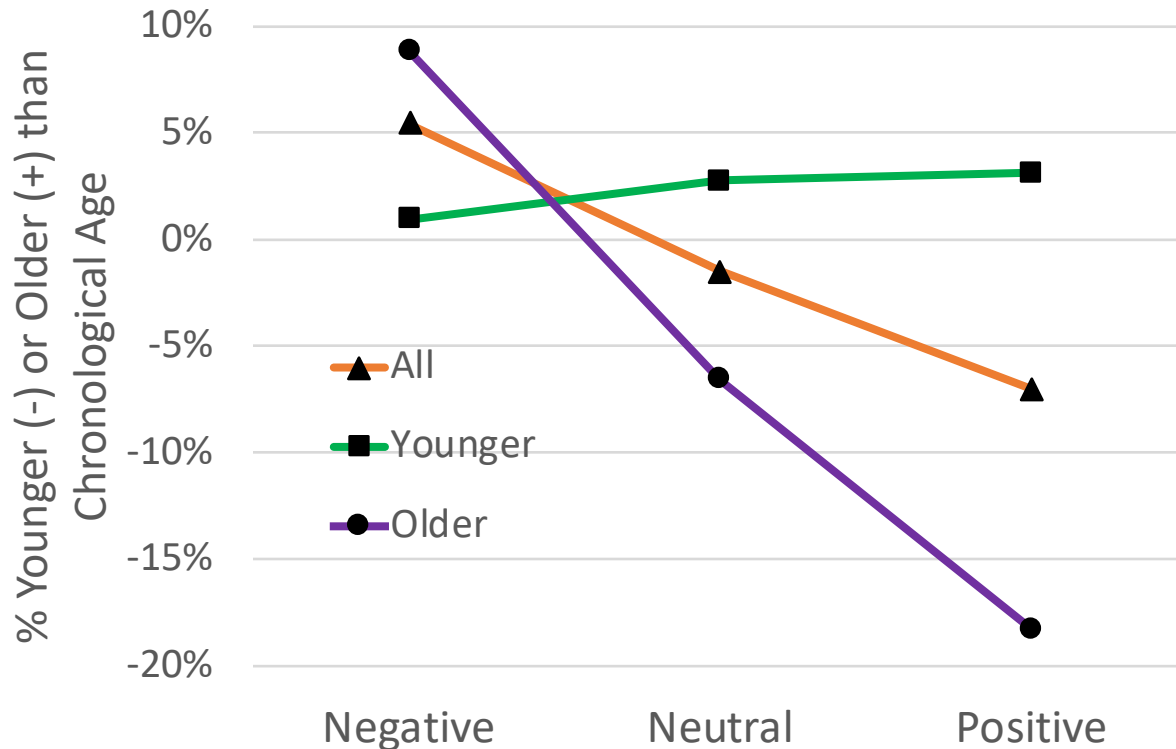
All Adults (N = 378)
- # in each category; range of FAPD
  - Negative = 30 range: -27% to 62%
  - Neutral = 131; range: -89% to 90%
  - Positive = 213; range: -67% to 100%

Younger Adults (*n* = 196)
- # in each category; range of FAPD
  - Negative = 13; range: -20% to 36%
  - Neutral = 71; range: -89% to 90%
  - Positive = 112; range: -38% to 100%
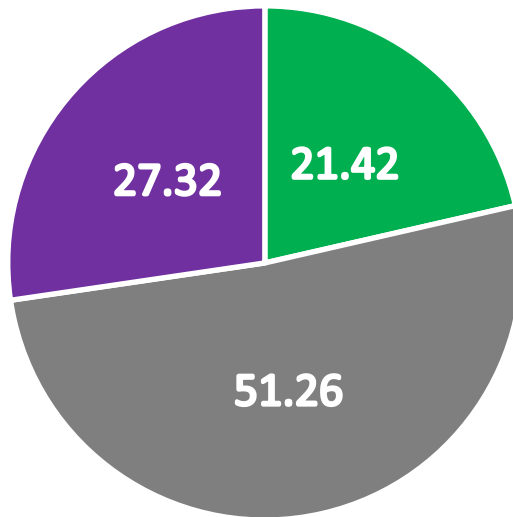
Older Adults (*n* = 178)
- % in each category; range of FAPD
  - Negative = 17%; range: -27% to 62%
  - Neutral = 60; range: -39% to 31%
  - Positive = 101; range: -67% to 21%

Results of One-Way ANOVA *within groups*

- **Younger Adults**
  - There were *no significant differences* in felt ages for negative, neutral, and positive affect ($F(2,193) = .085$, *ns*)
- **Older Adults**
  - There were *significant differences* in felt ages for negative, neutral, and positive affect ($F(2, 175) = 28.504$, $p < .001$); each was significantly different from the others.
- **Gender**
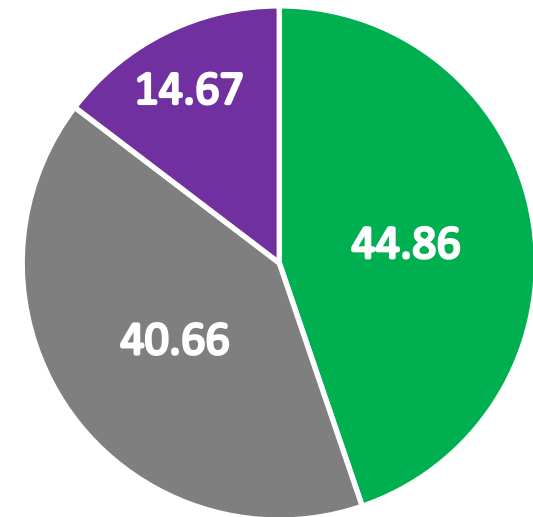 - There were *no significant* gender differences.
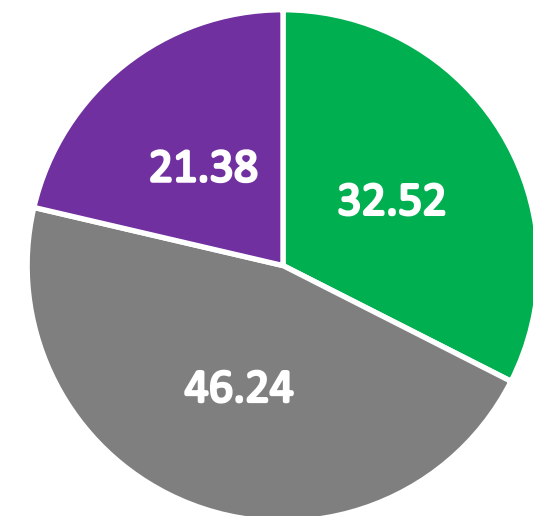
- **RQ1: We found contextual effects for subjective age.**
  - Some facets of subjective age were moderately interrelated with their context (e.g., Felt age at work, home, and social)
  - The strength of the relationship varied by chronological age (younger and older) and by gender.
    - These relationships were generally stronger for older adults.
    - Some facets of subjective age were more strongly related for men (i.e., Context-specific felt age), and others more strongly related for women (i.e., context-specific look age and act age)

- **RQ2: Work subjective age was the most important context predictor of general felt age, regardless of age or gender.**
  - The predictive strength was stronger for older adults than for younger adults.
  - For women, social felt age had nearly the same predictive strength as work felt age; thereby suggesting these contexts are both important in self-perceptions of age for women.

- **RQ3: On average, people only think about their age some of the time.**
  - Women think about their age significantly more than men.

- **RQ4: Overall, close to 60% of respondents felt positive about their stated general felt age.**
  - Among older adults, there were significant differences in general felt age proportional discrepancies associated with each felt age affect.
    - However, considerable variability in FAPD for each affect suggests we cannot assume which affect is associated with a given felt age (i.e., feeling younger is not always associated with positive affect for older adults, nor is feeling older always associated with negative affect).

- **RQ5: On average, people spend over 40% of the time feeling the same as their chronological age**
  - For younger adults the proportion was a little more than 50%; for older adults it was around 40%.
  - Older adults felt *younger* nearly 45% of the time, while younger adults spent over 25% of the time feeling *younger*.
    - This suggests that felt age may be less stable than researchers assume, and that it may change somewhat frequently, or at least with greater frequency than time lags seen in prior longitudinal research.

References

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