

Broadening Our Understanding of Predictors of Subjective Age

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Subjective Age: An Alternative to Chronological Age

Measurement

- Multi-faceted
- “How old do you feel?” (Felt age)

Better predictor than chronological age



Predictors of Subjective Age?

- Mostly from marketing and gerontological research
- Theory driven focus for selection
 - May hinder progress when phenomenon is not well understood
- Why not simple ask why?



Methods

417 individuals surveyed

- Felt Age

- Discrepancy calculated: $FA - CA$

- ✓ Negative value = feeling X years younger

- ✓ Positive value = feeling X years older

- “Why do you feel older or younger than your chronological age?”

224 (53.7%) provided CA, FA, and usable reason

- Male: $n = 82$ (36.6%)

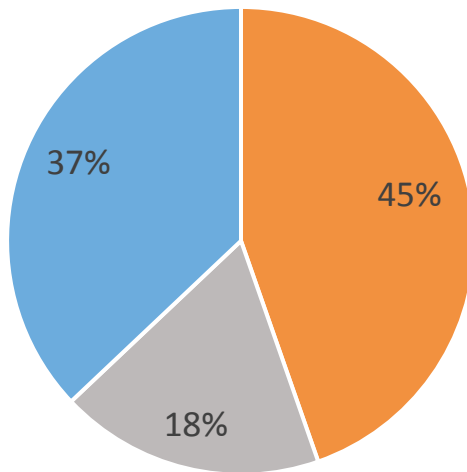
- Female: $n = 141$ (62.9%)

- Age: $M = 35.3$ (16.1), range 18-74

- ✓ Grouped in CA categories: Young, Middle-age, “Old”

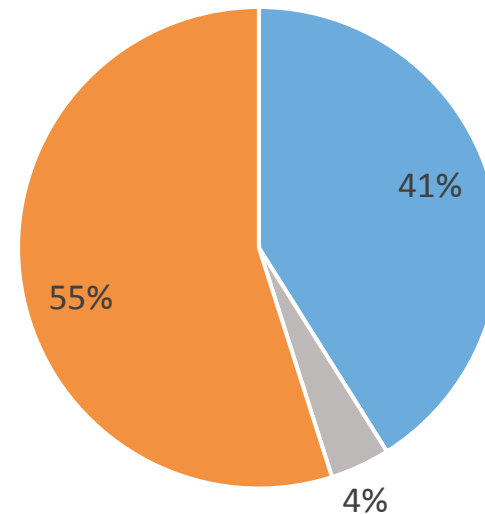
Sample size = 224

Percentage by Age Categories



- Young" 18-24 yrs old (n = 100)
- Middle Age: 25-44 yrs old (n = 41)
- "Old": 45 and older (n = 83)

Percentage by Felt Age



- Older than CA (n = 92)
- Same as CA (n = 9)
- Younger than CA (n = 123)

Procedure

Independent
Coding of
Themes

- Multiple themes possible per response
- ~50 unique themes emerged



Categories

- First author sorted themes into broad categories

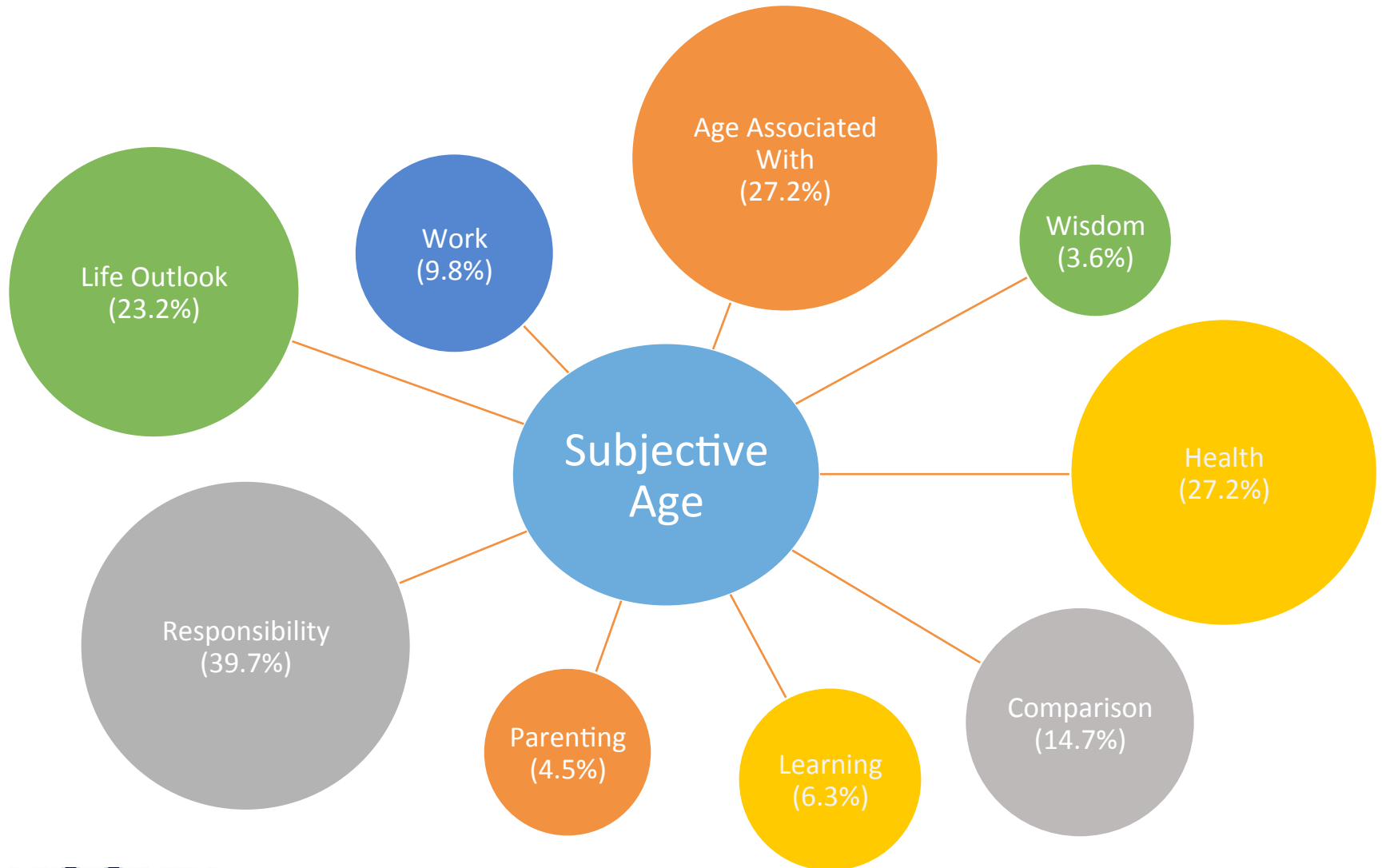


Independent
sorting of
themes into
categories

- Rater disagreement discussed until consensus reached



Nine Categories (% of responses)



Example Statements by Category

#1 Responsibility

- “Responsibilities on the job and living on my own”

#2 Health

- “Daily exercise and healthy eating”

#3 Age Associate With

- “I feel like my interests are more similar to people a few years younger than I am than to people my age”

#4 Life Outlook

- “I feel younger because I have a positive outlook on life and live life to the fullest”

#5 Comparison

- “Feel I do not seem as old as the people around me who are similarly aged”

#6 Work

- “Actively engaged in my job”

#7 Learning

- “Because I am still learning from those who are older than me, as if I’m still in college learning from older professors”

#8 Parenting

- “I am a single mom”

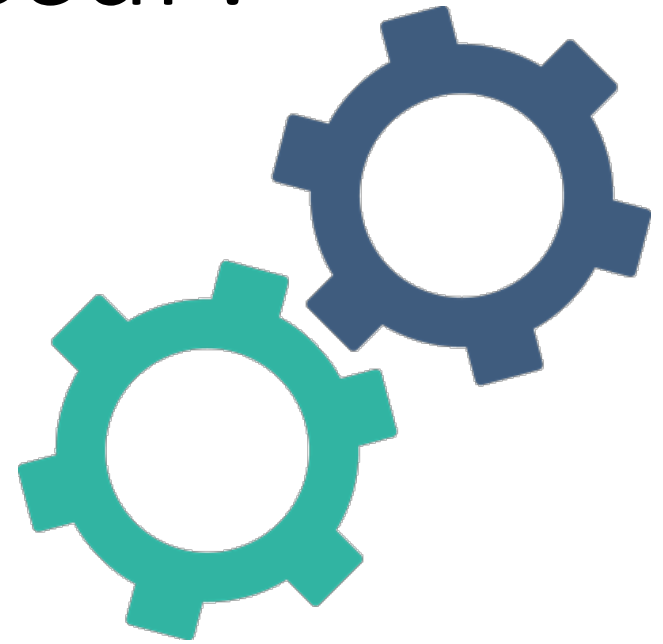
#9 Wisdom

- “I have some wisdom”

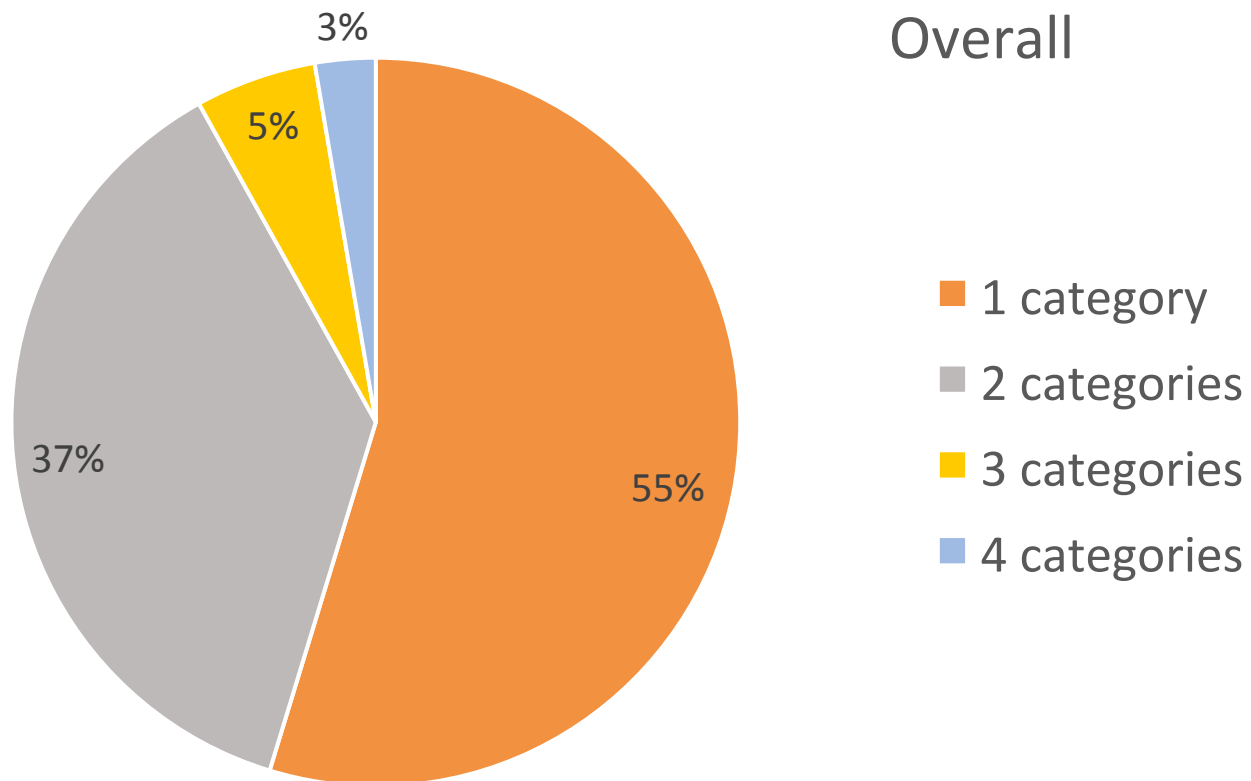
Additional Research Questions

- Are there categories that tend to co-occur?
- Are some categories more popular with different age groups or by gender?
- Were categories associated with feeling older or younger?

RQ1: Are there categories that tend to co-occur?



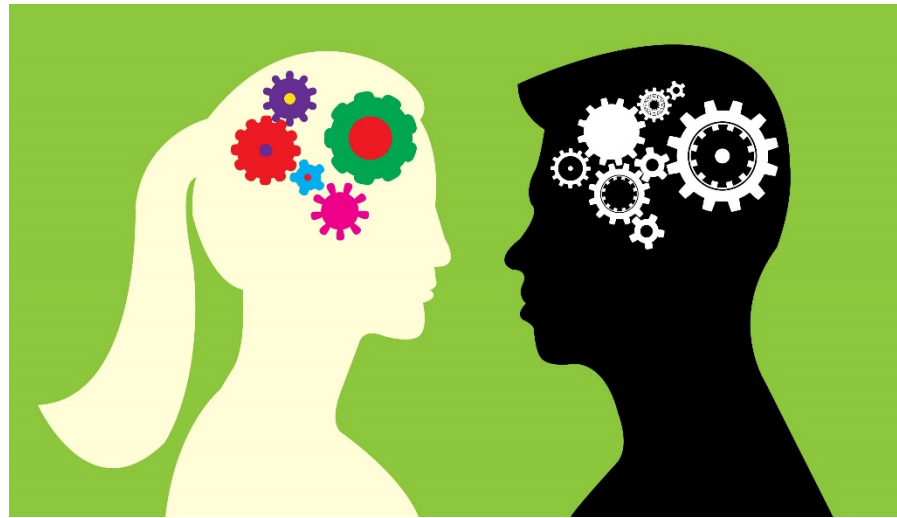
Number of Co-Occurrences of Categories



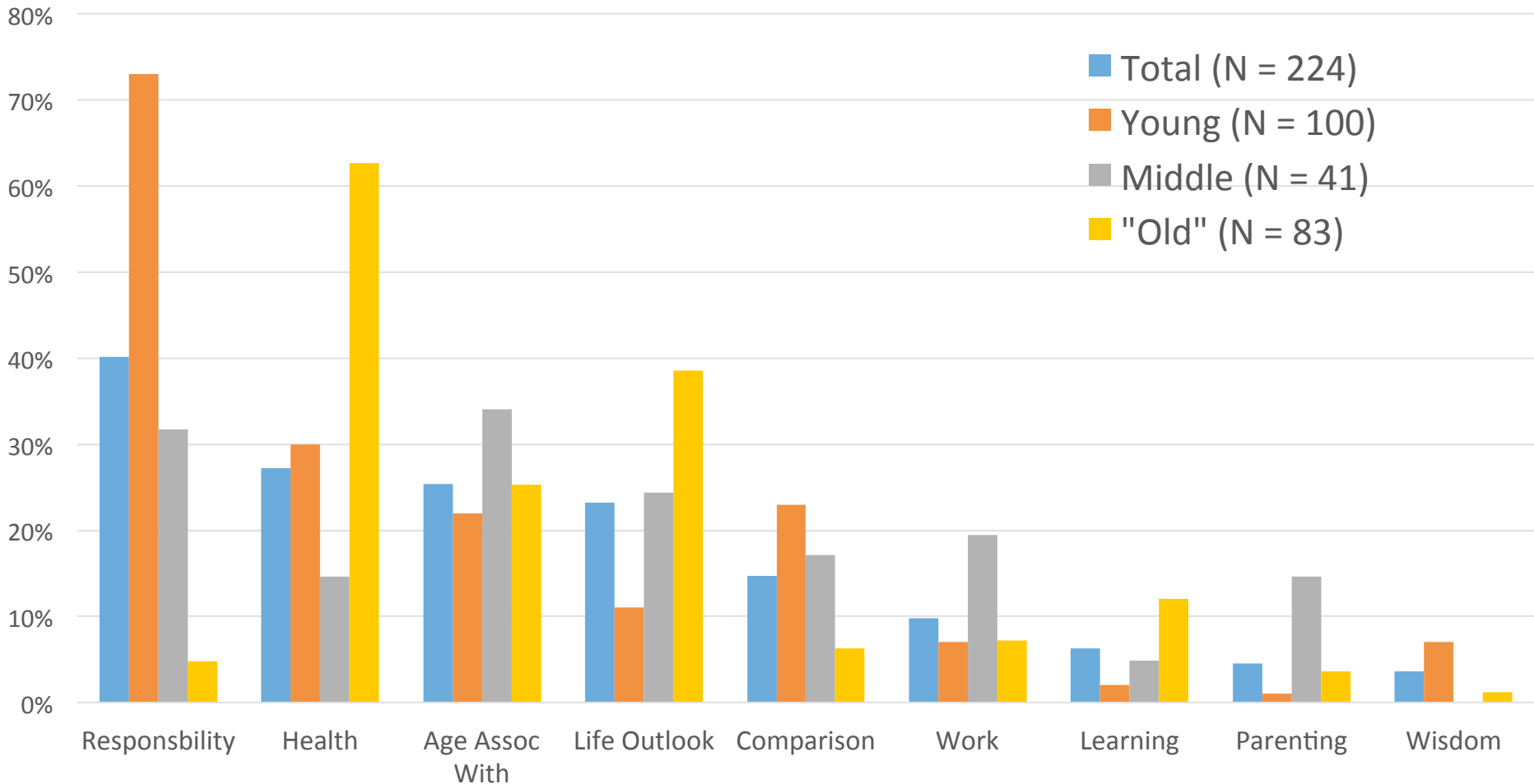
Top Co-Occurring Categories

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Responsibility | • Comparison (29%) |
| Health | • Life Outlook (24.6%) |
| Age Associate With | • Health & Comparison (15.8% ea) |
| Life Outlook | • Health (30.2%) |
| Comparison | • Responsibility (72.7%) |
| Work | • Responsibility (52.4%) |
| Learning | • Health (50%) |
| Parenting | • Responsibility (50%) |
| Wisdom | • Responsibility (50%) |

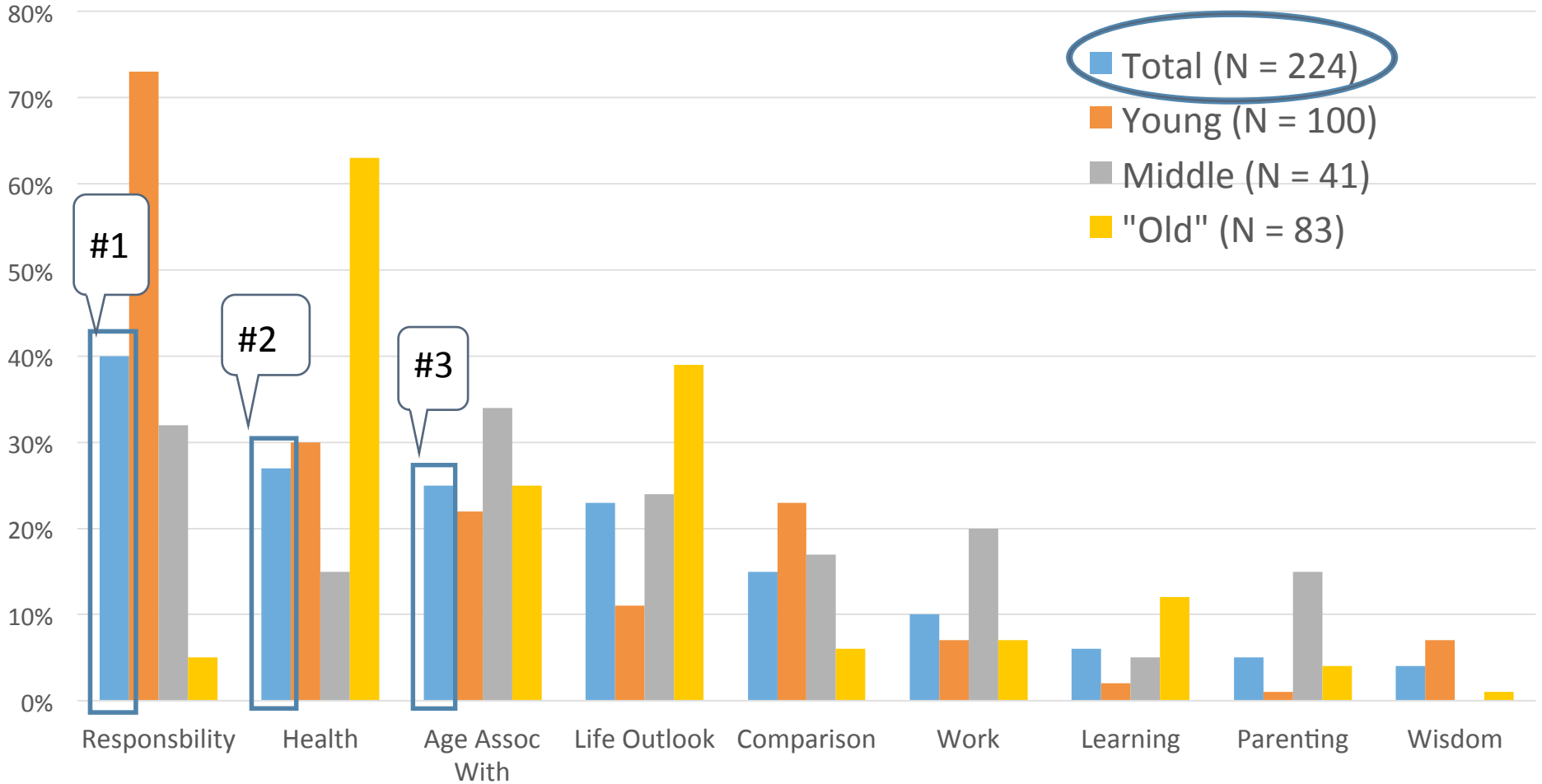
RQ2: Are some categories more popular with different age groups or by gender?



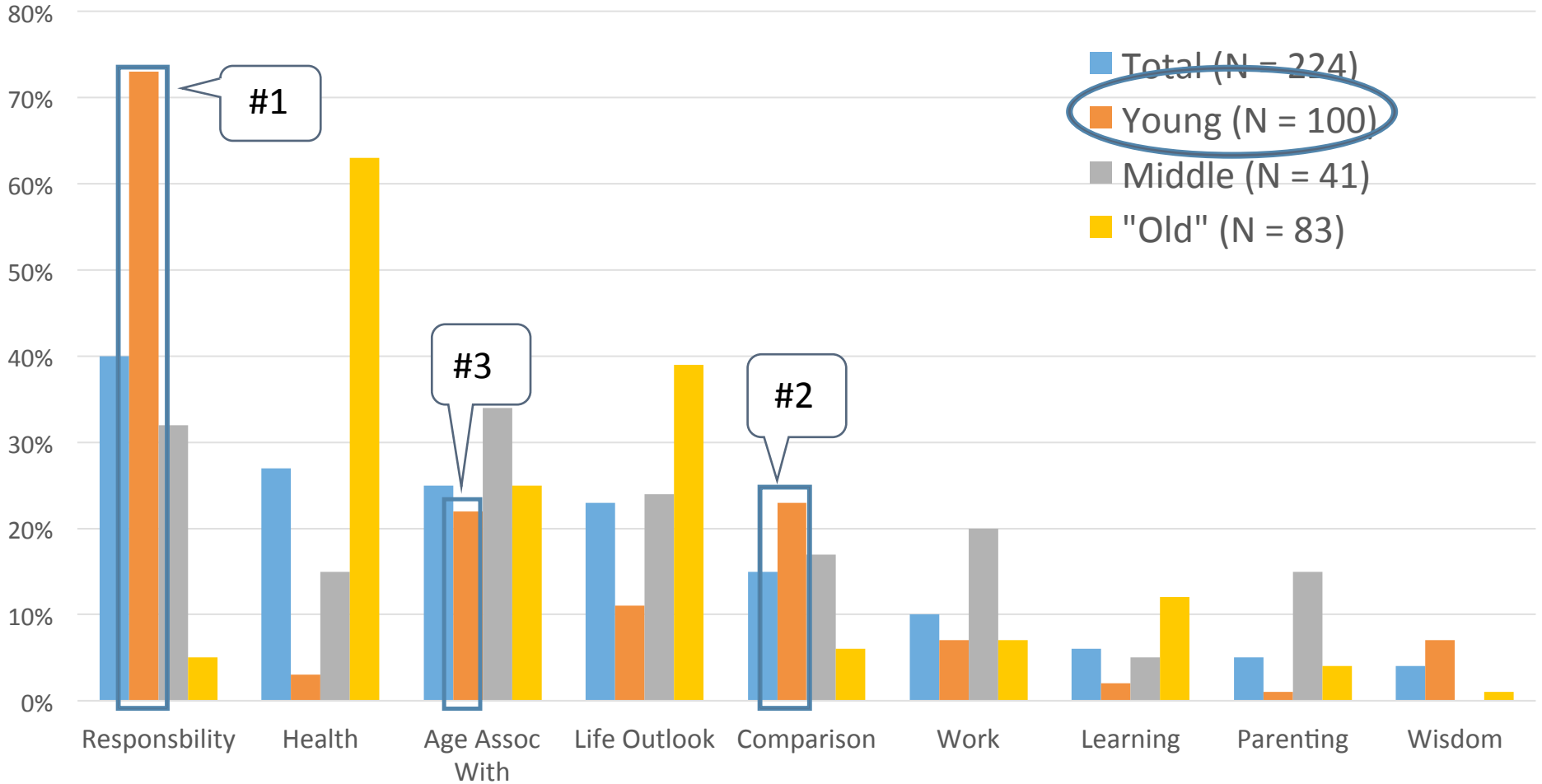
Which age group used each category (%)?



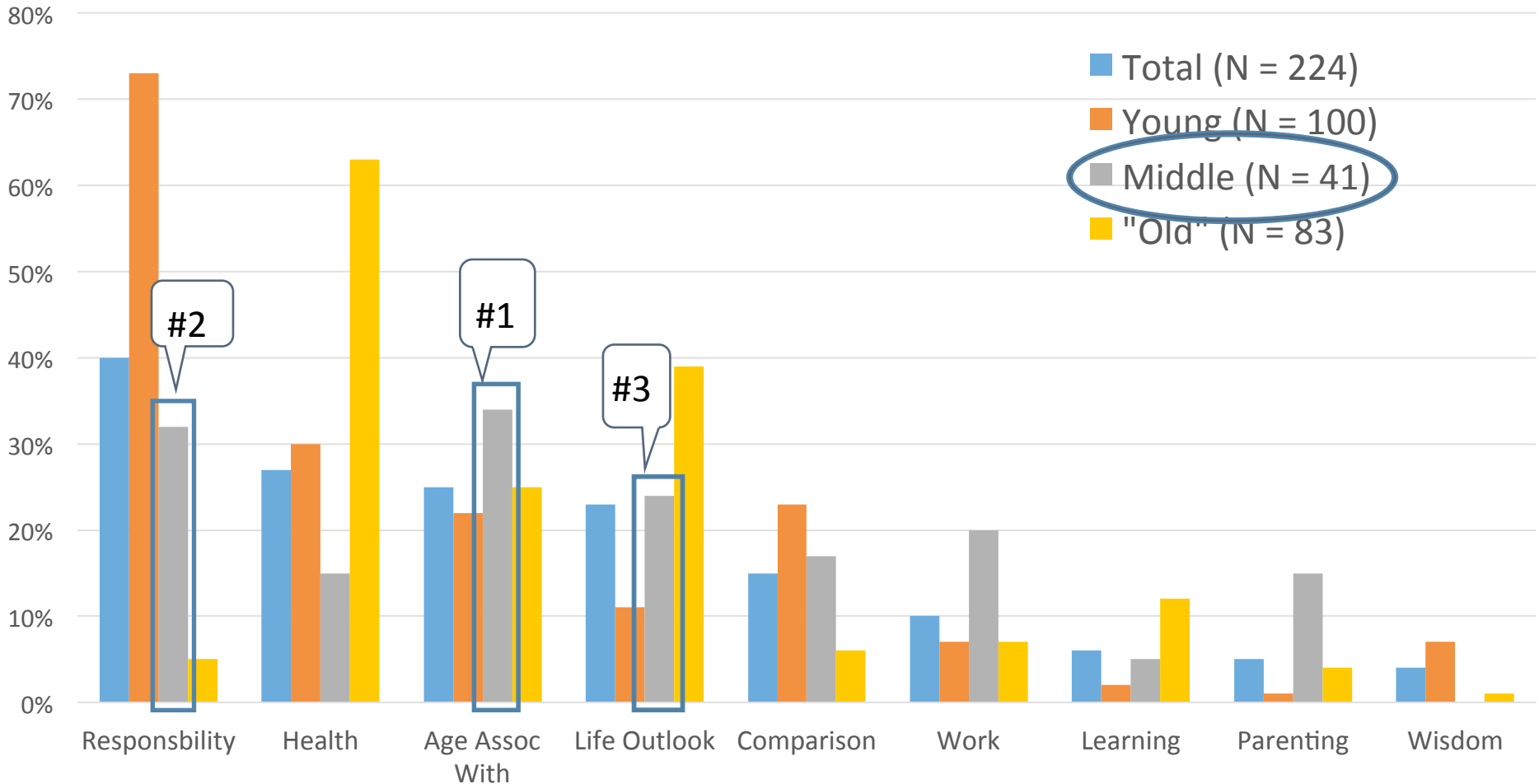
Which age group used each category (%)?



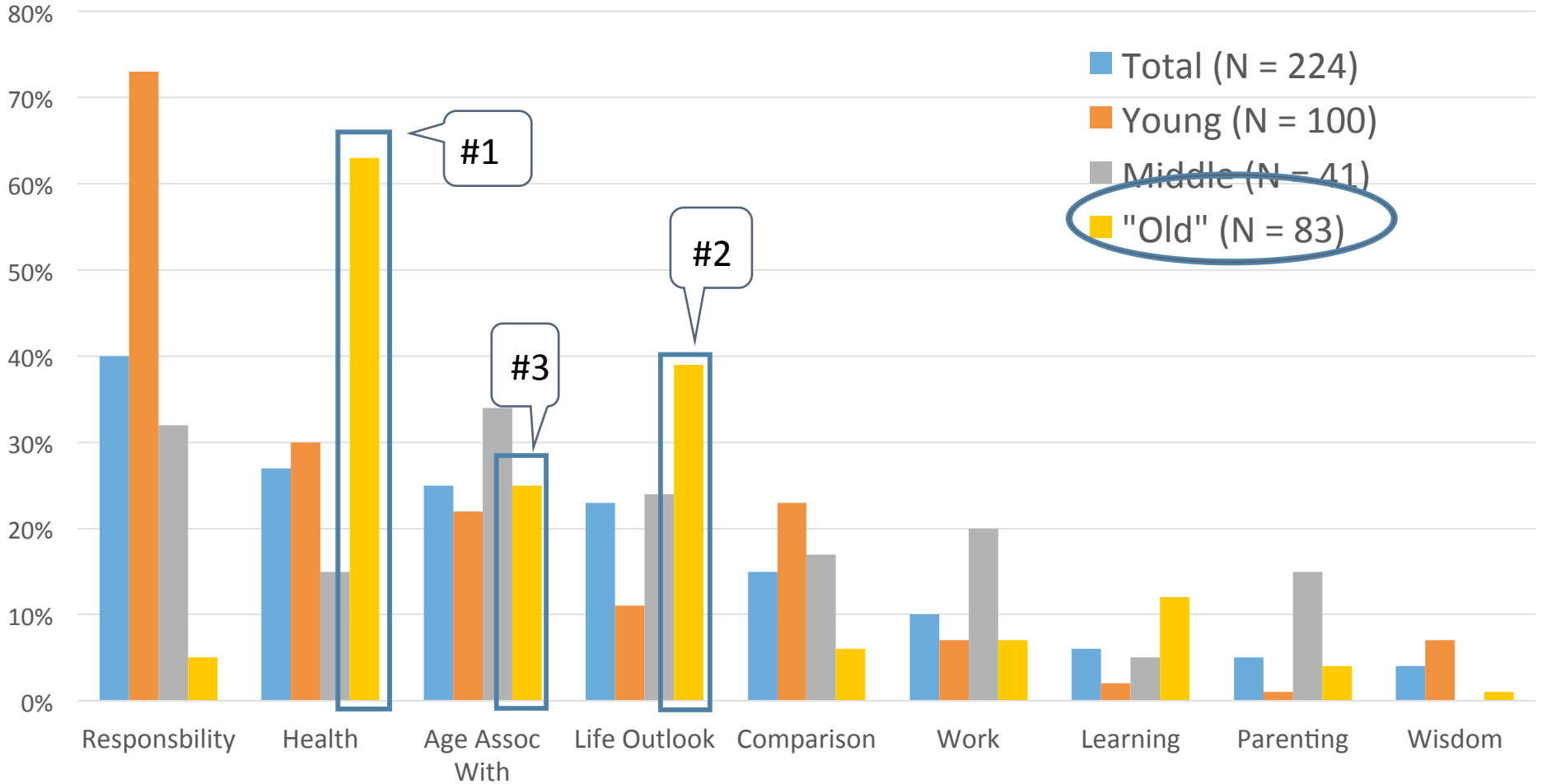
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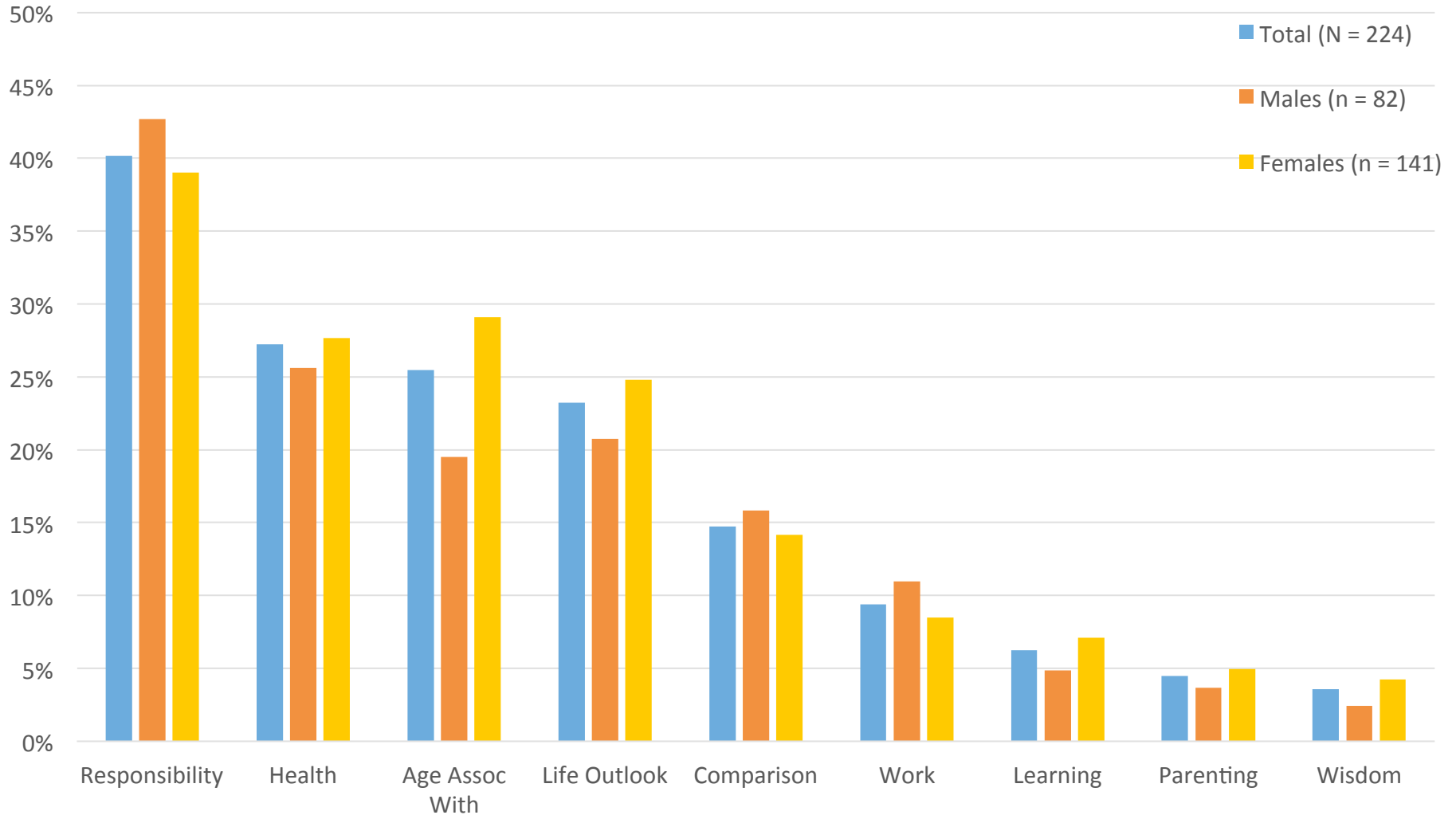
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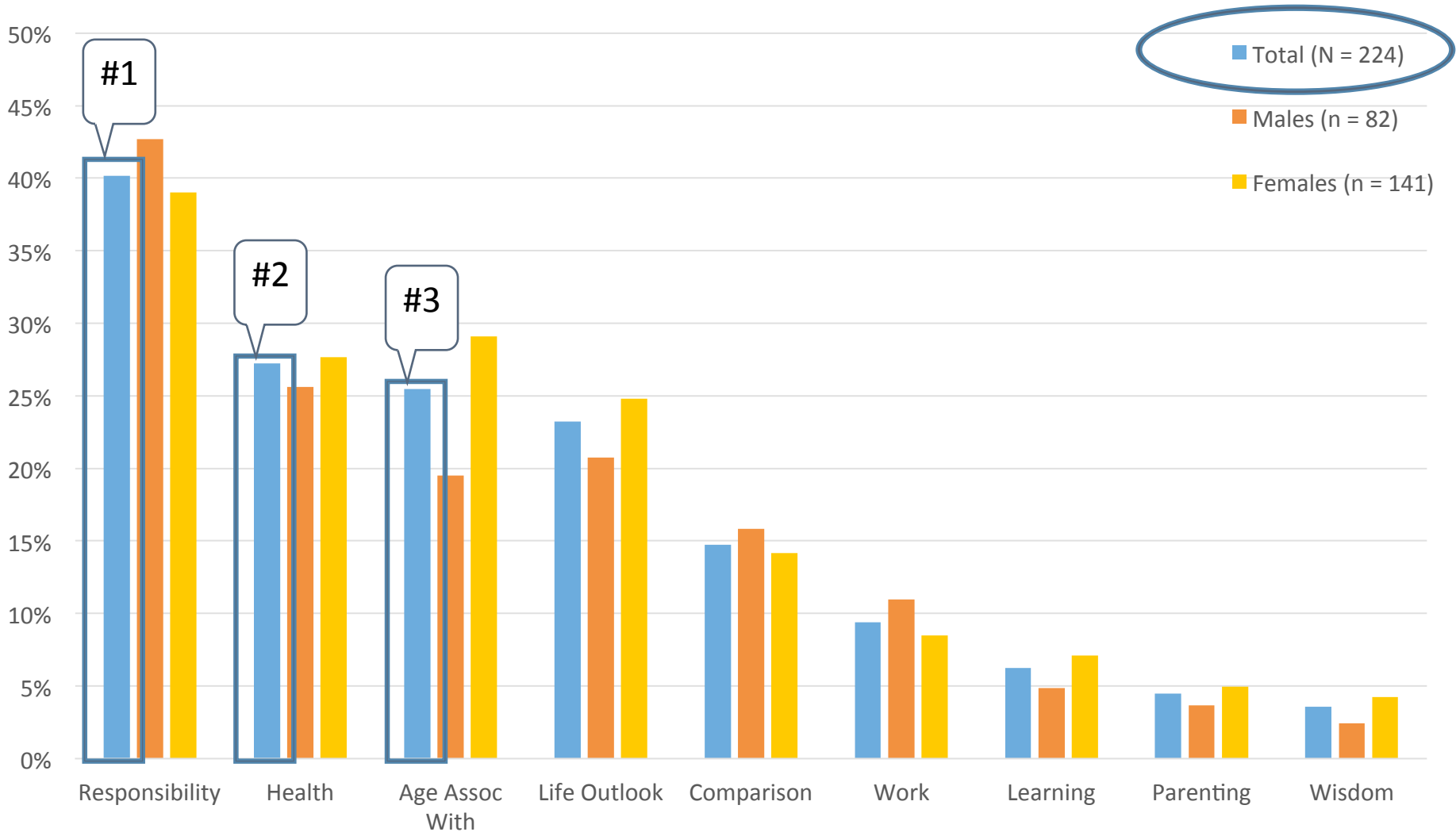
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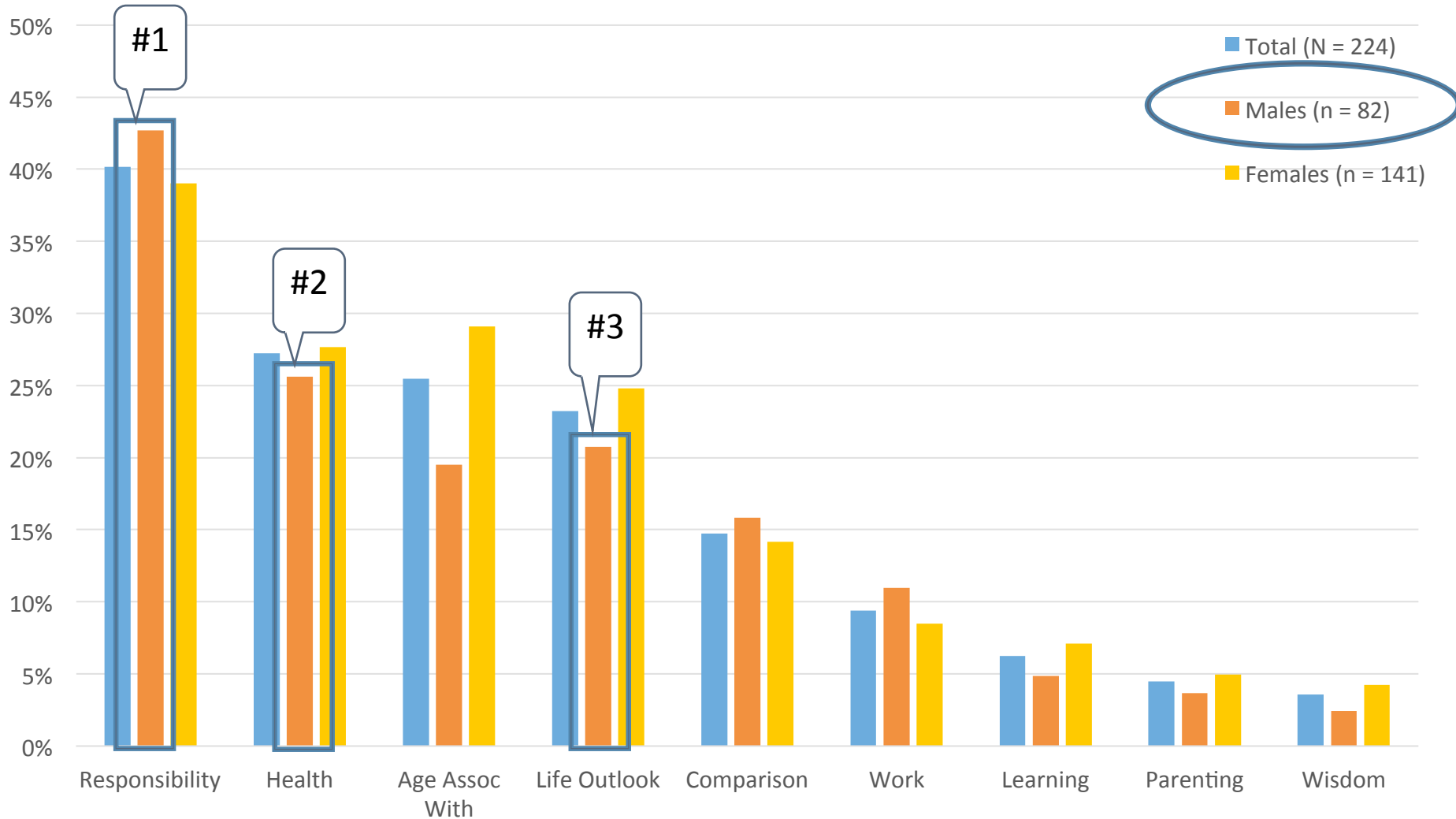
Were there gender differences in the categories used (%)?



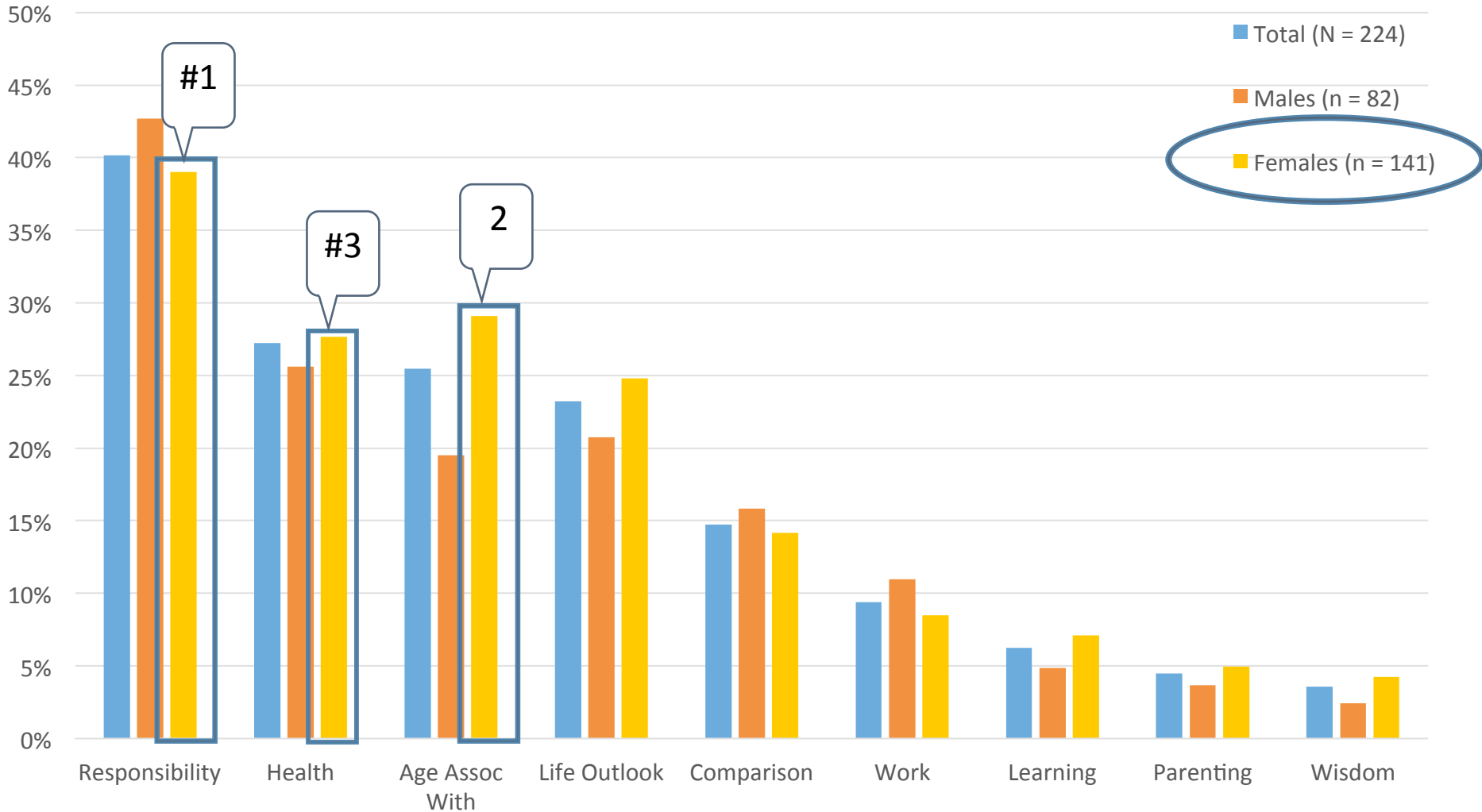
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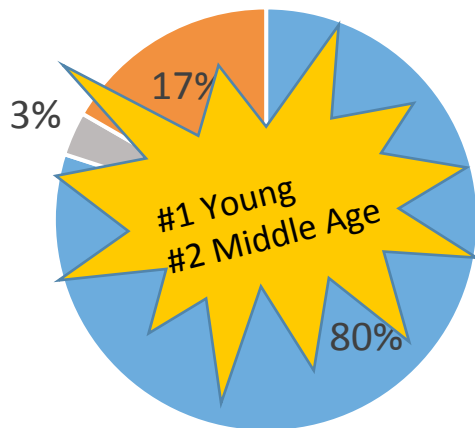


RQ3: Were categories associated with feeling older or younger?

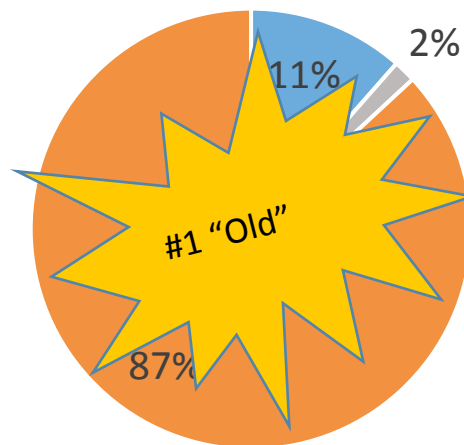


Feel Age Direction by Category

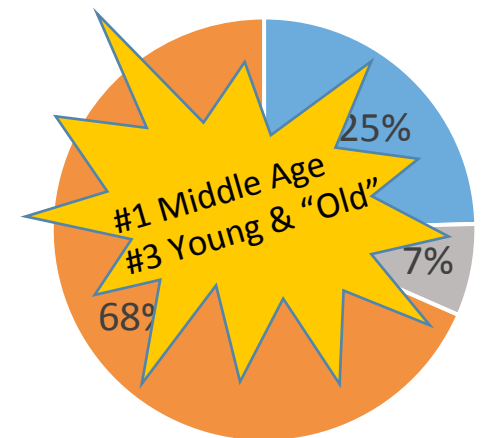
Responsibility (N = 90)



Health (N = 61)



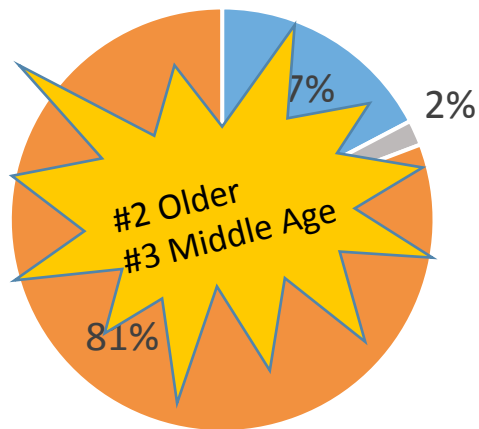
Age Assoc With (N = 57)



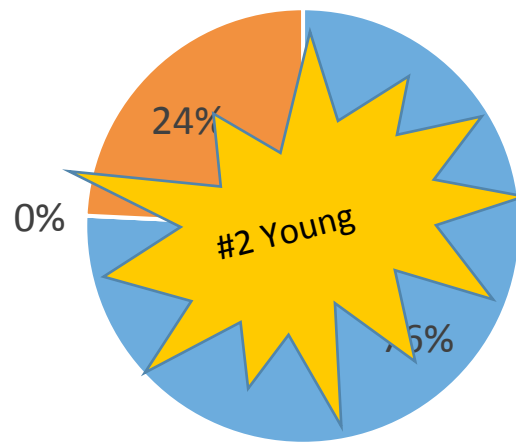
- Feel Older
- Feel Same
- Feel Younger

Feel Age Direction by Category

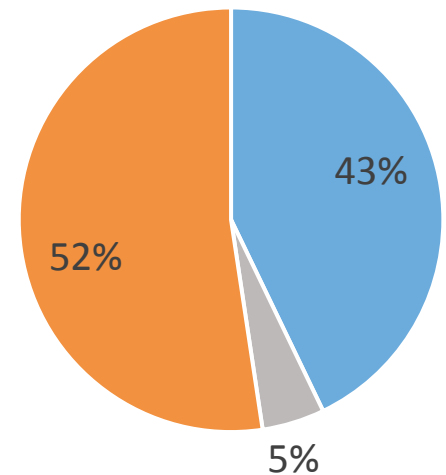
Life Outlook (N = 52)



Comparison (N = 33)



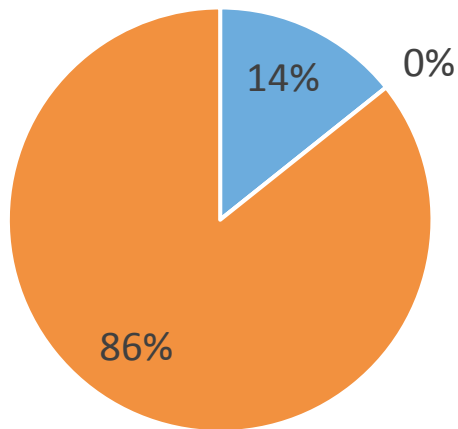
Work (N = 21)



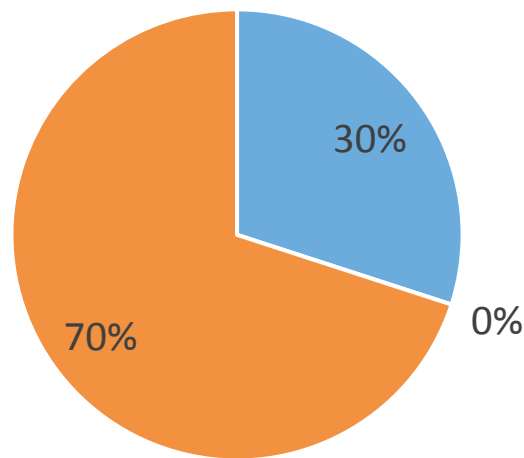
- Feel Older
- Feel Same
- Feel Younger

Feel Age Direction by Category

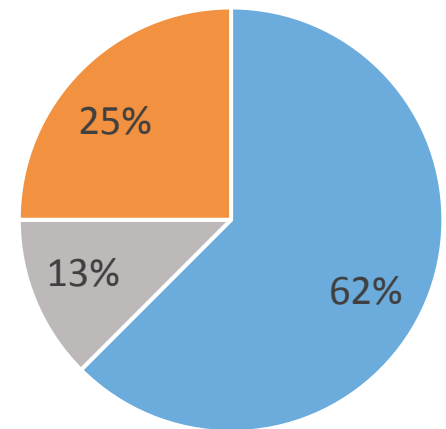
Learning (N = 14)



Parenting (N = 10)



Wisdom (N = 8)



- Feel Older
- Feel Same
- Feel Younger

Summary

- Qualitative study, Descriptive results
- Additional predictors of subjective age identified
- Nine, non-exclusive categories
 - Multiple reasons why
 - Different categories for age groups and gender
- Categories and direction of felt age
 - Differences related to chronological age
- Counter intuitive findings
- Limitations
 - Skewed age and gender distribution
 - Convenience sample
- Next step
 - Replication and expansion



Thank you!

Questions?

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Supplemental Slides

Themes Within Categories

Responsibility

- Responsibilities
- Maturity
- Experience
- Stress
- Burnout
- Focus
- Student
- Priorities

Health

- Physical health
- Functional Health
- Health
- Aches & pains
- Activity level
- Capabilities
- Diet
- Energy level
- Exercise/Workout

Age Associate With

- Act age
- Unexpected feeling
- Interests
- Looks
- Trendy
- Unconventional life
- Views
- Treatment by others
- Interact with different ages

Life Outlook

- Outlook
- Attitude
- Easy going
- Enjoyment
- Living full life
- Passage of time
- Social life
- Wishful thinking

Comparison

- Comparison

Work

- Work/Career

Learning

- Learning & development
- Mental stimulation
- Technology

Parenting

- Parenting

Wisdom

- Wisdom
- Decisions

Example Statements by Category

Responsibility

- Young: “Responsibilities on the job and living on my own”
- Middle Age: “I feel about my age because I am beginning to feel burnout and less motivated to achieve more in my field
- “Old”: “Tired of working”

Health

- Young: “Body pains”
- Middle Age: “Activity level”
- “Old”: “Daily exercise and healthy eating”

Age Associate With

- Young: “Because time goes by too fast so I don’t feel as old as I am”
- Middle Age: “I am surrounded by young people”
- “Old”: “I feel like my interests are more similar to people a few years younger than I am than to people my age”

Life Outlook

- Young: “Starting to get a little jaded. Starting to learn what does and does not work for me”
- Middle Age: “I feel younger because I have a positive outlook on life and live life to the fullest
- “Old”: “Still continue to have a busy schedule and social life”

Comparison

- Young: “More responsible and focused than my peers”
- Middle Age: “Feel I do not seem as old as the people around me who are similarly aged”
- “Old”: My health is very good compared to the other women in my family”

Work

- Young: “Feels like I have gotten a lot more experience for a longer time at my job”
- Middle Age: “My profession”
- “Old”: “Actively engaged in my job”

Learning

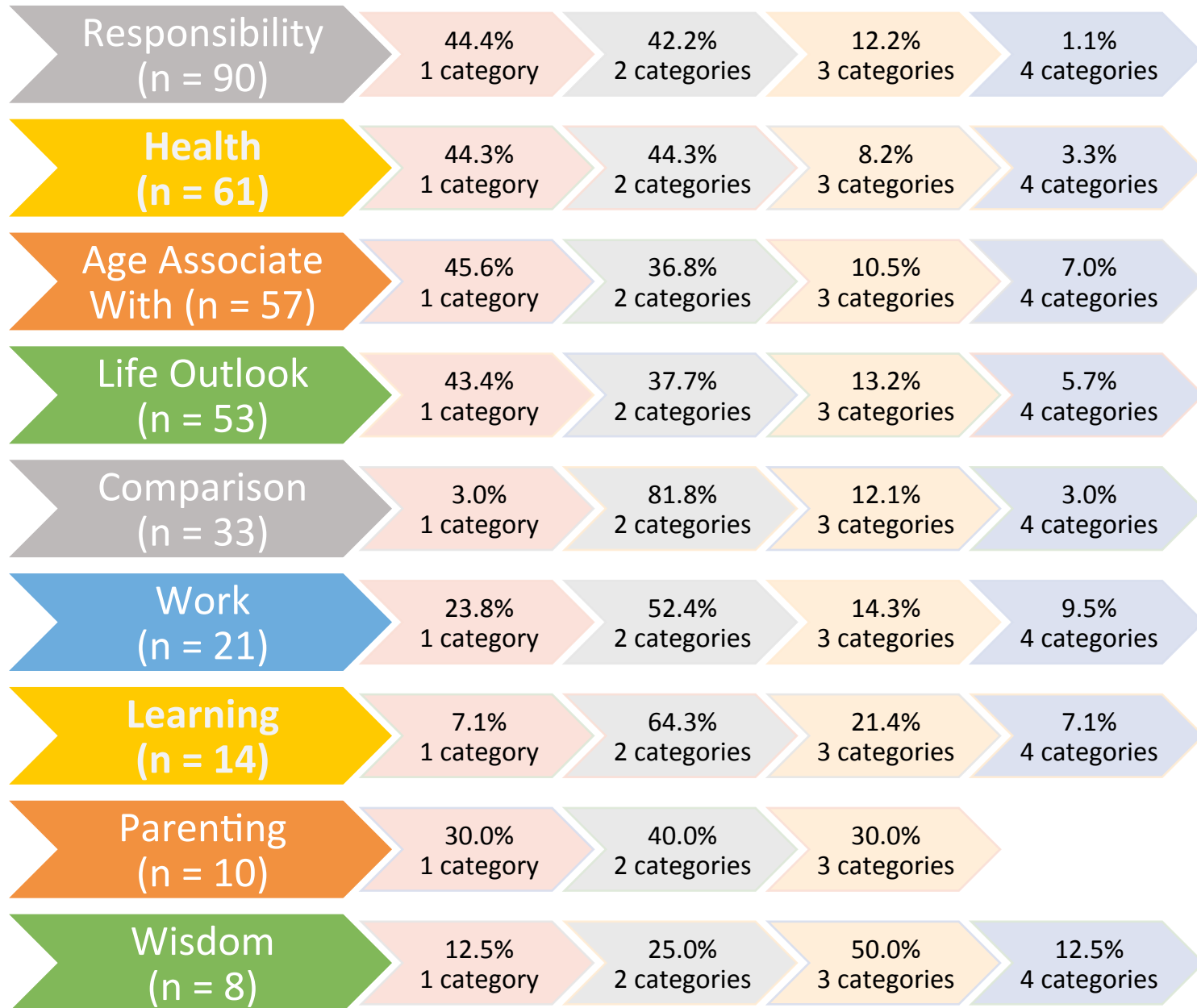
- Young: “Because I am still learning from those who are older than me, as if I’m still in college learning from older professors”
- Middle Age: “No interest in new tech”
- “Old”: I’m still learning!”

Parenting

- Young: “I am a single mom”
- Middle Age: “Being a mom”
- “Old”: Have 4 children = keeps me young”

Wisdom

- Young: “Less inclined to do stupid things”
- “Old”: “I have some wisdom”



Percentage associated with multiple categories

| | Responsibility | Health | Age Assoc With | Life Outlook | Comparison | Work | Learning | Parenting | Wisdom |
|----------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Responsibility (n = 90) | 100% | 3.3% | 12.2% | 8.9% | 28.9% | 11.1% | 0% | 4.4% | 5.6% |
| Health (n = 61) | 3.3% | 100% | 18.0% | 24.6% | 6.6% | 8.2% | 8.2% | 1.6% | 0.0% |
| Age Assoc With (n = 57) | 12.3% | 15.8% | 100% | 14.0% | 15.8 | 5.3 | 10.5 | 1.8 | 3.5 |
| Life Outlook (n = 53) | 13.2% | 30.2% | 13.2% | 100% | 5.7% | 7.5% | 5.7% | 1.9% | 3.8% |
| Comparison (n = 33) | 72.7% | 6.1% | 27.3% | 6.1% | 100% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 3.0% |
| Work (n = 21) | 52.4% | 19.0% | 9.5% | 14.3% | 0% | 100% | 0% | 14.3% | 0% |
| Learning (n = 14) | 0% | 50.0% | 42.9% | 28.6% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 0% | 7.1% |
| Parenting (n = 10) | 50.0% | 10.0% | 10.0% | 10.0% | 0% | 20.0% | 0% | 100% | 0% |
| Wisdom (n = 8) | 50.0% | 12.5% | 25% | 25% | 37.5 | 0% | 12.5% | 0% | 100% |

Which age groups used each category?

| Category | Total N = 224 | Young N = 100 | Middle-Age N = 41 | “Old” N = 83 |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Responsibility | 89 (39.7%) | 72 (72.0%) | 13 (31.7%) | 4 (4.8%) |
| Health | 61 (27.2%) | 3 (3.0%) | 6 (14.6%) | 52 (62.7%) |
| Age Assoc With | 57 (25.4%) | 22 (22.0%) | 14 (34.1%) | 21 (25.3%) |
| Life Outlook | 53 (23.2%) | 11 (11.0%) | 9 (22.0%) | 33 (39.8%) |
| Comparison | 33 (14.7%) | 23 (23.0%) | 7 (17.1%) | 3 (3.6%) |
| Work | 21 (9.4%) | 7 (7.0%) | 8 (19.5%) | 6 (7.2%) |
| Learning | 14 (6.3) | 2 (2.0%) | 2 (4.9%) | 10 (12.0%) |
| Parenting | 10 (4.5%) | 1 (1.0%) | 6 (14.6%) | 3 (3.6%) |
| Wisdom | 8 (3.6%) | 7 (7.0%) | 0 | 1 (1.2%) |