DISRUPT AGING CLASSROOM

UNIVERSITY FACULTY TOOLKIT

Disrupt Aging Classroom was co-created and co-designed by AARP staff and volunteers and Borrow My Glasses, LLC. All rights reserved.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the world's largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. Learn more at **aarp.org.**

Borrow My Glasses, LLC (BMG) is an education company dedicated to aging and caregiving from a new perspective, co-founded by gerontologist Donna Fedus and producer Lauren Lewis. They work with organizations and universities who want engaging and effective ways to educate audiences on issues of aging, and with professionals, caregivers and students who want to better understand aging issues to navigate their life and career. BMG clients benefit from the unique combination of Donna's deep subject matter expertise with Lauren's ability to shape the look, feel and flow of content so it engages and resonates with audiences. BMG develops learning and evaluation strategies, designs and delivers educational programs, creates content and produces multimedia workshops and events delivered in workplaces, communities, and classrooms nationwide. Learn more at **borrowmyglasses.com.**

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Disrupt Aging Classroom wouldn't have been possible without the exceptional efforts of the original core team in Connecticut: Nora Duncan and Erica Michalowski from the AARP Connecticut State Office; AARP Connecticut volunteers Betty Bajek, Migdalia Cruz, Marilyn Diaz, Tia Murphy and Malinda Polite; and Donna Fedus and Lauren Lewis, co-founders of Borrow My Glasses.

HOW TO CITE DISRUPT AGING CLASSROOM

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ORIGIN STORY

Disrupt Aging is a book by AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins, which is a nationwide call to action for people to find a bold new path to living their best life at every age. Each AARP state office rolled out the national initiative to match their states' landscape. AARP Connecticut chose to engage gerontology education company Borrow My Glasses (BMG) to design Connecticut's Disrupt Aging strategy. The two organizations found synergy – AARP wanted to change the conversation about aging, and BMG brought new perspectives to aging issues.

AARP Connecticut and BMG created Disrupt Aging Classroom to help students at higher education institutions understand what it means to age and to examine their preexisting perceptions about getting older. It's important for students to learn about aging for many reasons. Students will soon be entering a workforce with colleagues, clients, customers and/or patients of varying ages and backgrounds. From an economic standpoint, older generations contribute more to the economy than any other demographic – opportunities abound to successfully address aging-related issues and challenges. Finally, rejecting ageist stereotypes and instead embracing aging can make a positive impact on students' own lives and that of others.
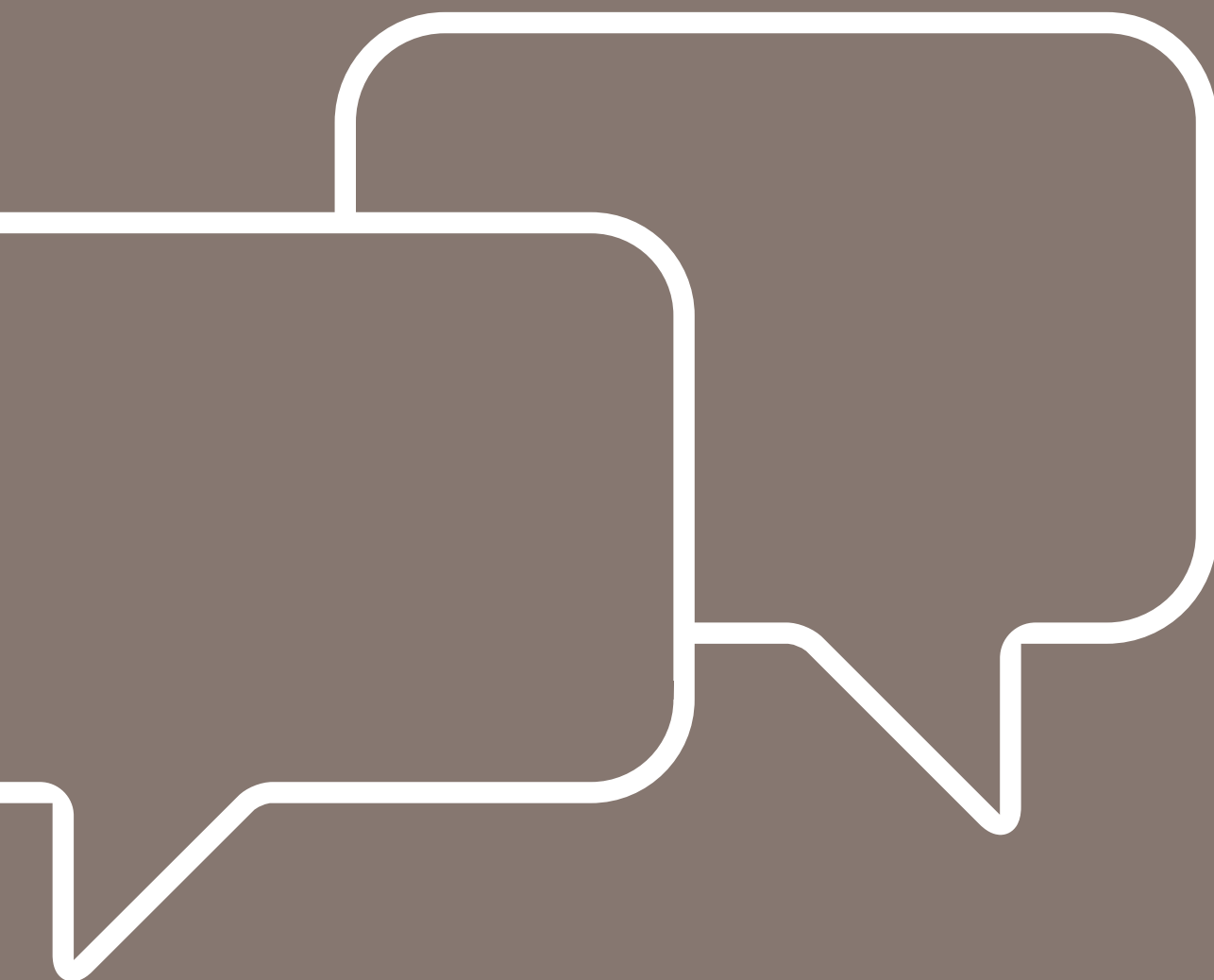
Disrupt Aging Classroom is one of three Disrupt Aging initiatives co-created, evaluated and piloted by AARP Connecticut and BMG, with evaluation support and data analysis provided by AARP Research. All three initiatives have the common overall goal to transform attitudes about aging. The models have been presented at national and statewide conferences, and featured in publications.
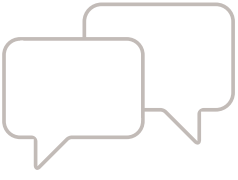
In addition to Disrupt Aging Classroom, AARP Connecticut and Borrow My Glasses developed *DISRUPT AGING IN YOUR COMMUNITY*, a 90-minute interactive peer-led program available in English and Spanish for community-based audiences. It's presented in places such as libraries, senior centers and faith communities.

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DISRUPT AGING CLASSROOM: CHANGING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT AGING

We're entering a new era of aging. People are living and working longer, and experiencing more while doing it. Statistics show:

- By 2035, there will be more people age 65 and older than under age 18.[1]
- A child who's age 10 now has a 50 percent chance of living to age 104.[2]
- In the U.S., 56 cents of every dollar is spent by adults age 50 and older – and this number is only expected to rise.[3]

With older adults as the fastest growing demographic, opportunities abound for innovation. Consumers need expanded health care services, creative designs and adaptive technologies. Companies must grow and update policies to embrace a multi-generational workforce.

Unfortunately, most college graduates lack aging knowledge and experience with older adults outside of their own families – causing them to miss key areas for success. Disrupt Aging Classroom seeks to change that trend.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND AGING
Institutions of higher education play a critical role in helping students become more age-inclusive through broadening understanding and interactions.

- New professionals entering the workforce need to understand how to work and interact across generations, no matter their industry.
- Many young adults will be caregivers earlier than they may expect – today, more than 10 million millennials find themselves in this role, caring for an aging parent or grandparent.[3]
- Students also need to recognize how their aging perceptions and mind and body care will affect how they age later.
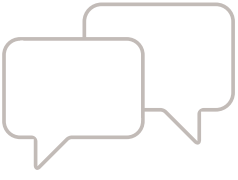
DISRUPT AGING CLASSROOM
Disrupt Aging Classroom is a 2.5-hour, interactive curriculum that challenges students to examine their aging perceptions and think about how the growing aging population is relevant to their personal lives and future careers.

The curriculum is presented by AARP volunteer facilitators, who are trained extensively on the content and effective delivery. Facilitators can present either in the classroom or virtually through a live video presentation. The curriculum complements any course of study and can be presented across disciplines at university campuses. **It's offered at no cost to higher education institutions.**

1 Arigoni, Danielle. "Preparing for an Aging Population." AARP Liveable Communities, May 2018.
2 "The Longevity Economy® Outlook: How people age 50 and older are fueling economic growth, stimulating jobs, and creating opportunities for all." AARP, December 2019.
3 Jenkins, Jo Ann. "Millennials and Caregiving? Yes, It's a Thing." AARP, May 29, 2018.

DISRUPT AGING CLASSROOM LEARNING OBJECTIVES
The curriculum covers five themes and includes interactive activities:

- Describe demographic trends in aging.
- Define and discuss examples of ageism.
- Recognize older adults as multi-dimensional individuals.
- Examine your personal stake in the aging trend.
- Identify opportunities stemming from the aging trend.

TOOLKIT AUDIENCE

This toolkit was created as an overview of Disrupt Aging Classroom for:

- University faculty members hosting or considering hosting Disrupt Aging Classroom
- University faculty wishing to build on interest generated during Disrupt Aging Classroom
- Universities who have achieved the Age-friendly University (AFU) designation from Dublin City University, or are in the process of applying for the designation
- Universities affiliated with professional associations in the aging field, such as The Gerontological Society of America (GSA), Academy of Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) or the American Society on Aging (ASA)
- Universities who want their students to be prepared for their future at home and in the workplace

TOOLKIT OBJECTIVES

The information provided in this toolkit:

- Gives university faculty ideas on how to build off the momentum of Disrupt Aging Classroom and create a more age-inclusive campus.
- Helps identify strategies university faculty can use to enhance student learning in all academic disciplines after the Disrupt Aging Classroom presentation.

LET'S CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION!
*TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DISRUPT AGING CLASSROOM OR BRING THE CURRICULUM TO YOUR CAMPUS, EMAIL MELINDA ALTER AT **MALTER@AARP.ORG**.*

STRATEGIES
AND OPPORTUNITIES

The strategies and opportunities described here are based on actual results experienced by Connecticut university professors during the pilot phase of Disrupt Aging Classroom. The suggestions illustrate how the university professors who participated in the program:

- Prepared students for their future with the aging demographic trend.
- Created a more age-inclusive environment on their campus.

STRATEGY #1: UTILIZE WITHIN YOUR EXISTING COURSE

- Build content about aging into your existing curriculum to prepare students for their future career and life with their own family.
- Determine the optimal time on your syllabus to introduce Disrupt Aging Classroom so it will complement the rest of your course.
- Create assignments, quizzes or exam questions based on the module.

QUOTE FROM THE CLASSROOM

"Aside from any experience they have with their families, students don't have a good understanding of the complexities of the older population: they don't have client experience yet, and they have misconceptions, like what they see in the media – that older people are crotchety or forgetful. Disrupt Aging Classroom is a wonderful base of info to get students started learning about older adults as an eye-opener experience before they learn more upper level OT concepts."

— *Nicole A. Fidanza*
Clinical Assistant Professor,
Department of Occupational Therapy Quinnipiac University

CASE STUDY

The Occupational Therapy (OT) department at Quinnipiac University adopted Disrupt Aging Classroom for their entire student body. All OT majors now receive the 2.5-hour Disrupt Aging Classroom curriculum at the start of their junior year spring semester. Professors Nicole Fidanza and Norene Carlson use Disrupt Aging Classroom as a touchstone throughout the semester and base several midterm and final exam questions on the module.

QUOTE FROM THE CLASSROOM

"I now incorporate concepts about aging throughout the breadth of my Sociology 101 course. The Disrupt Aging Classroom module helped me realize it's important to teach about aging, but it isn't necessary – or even appropriate – to teach aging as a stand-alone unit. Aging intersects with gender, race, socioeconomic status, stigma and stereotypes, culture, and so much more."

— *Jim Buccini, LMSW*
  Assistant Teaching Professor, Internship Coordinator
  Department of Sociology, Criminal Justice & Anthropology
  Quinnipiac University

QUOTE FROM THE CLASSROOM

"The students seemed interested and engaged with the materials. The information was thought-provoking for these undergraduates who spend much of their time in age-segregated activities. It was helpful for them to learn about ageism, to be presented with positive views of aging and to also see that ageism affects young people. The program was powerful and informative. Students reported to me that they enjoyed the program and learned a lot."

— *Linda Scacco*
  Coordinator of Undergraduate Internships
  Department of Psychology,
  College of Arts and Sciences

STRATEGY #2: PROPOSE NEW COURSES

- All universities review their course list periodically. Adding new courses with a focus on aging can help attract and retain student interest.
- Propose an interdisciplinary course.

QUOTE FROM THE CLASSROOM

"After Disrupt Aging Classroom, I gave an optional extra credit assignment asking students what they learned, how they see aging issues relating to criminal justice, what they'd be interested in learning more about, and whether they'd take a course on aging and criminal justice. Most students completed the assignment and showed significant interest."

—*Michelle A. Cubellis, PhD*
Assistant Professor,
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Central Connecticut State University

CASE STUDY

As a result of participating in Disrupt Aging Classroom, Sociology Professor Christina Barmon and Criminal Justice Professor Michelle Cubellis of Central Connecticut State University were inspired to collaboratively propose the development of a new course at their university. The new course addresses the intersection of aging and criminal justice.

STRATEGY #3: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL COLLABORATORS ON CAMPUS

- Recommend courses or training opportunities for students who want to learn more about how gerontology or aging training may benefit them in their career.
- Collaborate with professors across a range of academic disciplines.
- Connect with any gerontology-focused interdisciplinary group that exists on your campus. Some universities have a Gerontology Committee and/or been designated as an Age-friendly University (AFU) – see the "Selected Resources" section for more information.

QUOTE FROM THE CLASSROOM

"In my college class, students learn about adult development at key stages of life and how to apply it to their own adult journey. We try to make it relevant. Aging is contextual. If they expect to live to age 104, how would they plan their life? How will demographics of aging impact their opportunities, their careers, their lives? Disrupt Aging Classroom was engaging and thought-provoking and a welcome addition to my class."

— *Amy Jaffe Barzach*
Executive Director, The Women's Advancement Initiative
Continuing the Legacy of Hartford College for Women
Instructor, Adult Journey and Leadership
University of Hartford

CASE STUDY

Samantha Kusiak Murphy, Kaitlyn Kos and Victoria Soley are three adjunct professors who teach Sociology 101 at Quinnipiac University. Before including Disrupt Aging Classroom in their courses, they hadn't covered aging in a significant way for various reasons. One of the professors remarked, "It wasn't on my radar." After seeing how students reacted to Disrupt Aging Classroom, the professors plan to include aging topics in future semesters.

QUOTE FROM THE CLASSROOM

"Students in my Managerial Communications classes are initially surprised I want them to learn about aging. But after they experience Disrupt Aging Classroom, they end up surprised at how many ways this information will help them in their personal lives and careers. While it's not a traditional or expected lesson, learning about aging is very important for business students. They could potentially end up working with someone two or three generations older than they are. They need to understand and know how to navigate that."

— *Connie Yan*
  Adjunct Professor,
  School of Business
  Central Connecticut State University

QUOTE FROM THE BOARDROOM

"It's imperative for universities to be at the forefront of considering how aging impacts our society – especially given the demographic shift happening in the U.S. Disrupt Aging Classroom is a powerful tool to engage both university students and professors to think deeply about these issues. I've seen firsthand how quickly this curriculum catches students' and professors' attention. AARP hopes to see more programs like Disrupt Aging Classroom expand to universities nationwide to help address this critical need."

— *Kamili A. Wilson*
  Vice President, Enterprise Initiatives
  AARP

STRATEGY #4: IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

- Identify career ladders to help students understand educational and occupational pathways involving gerontology or aging.
- Seek partnerships with relevant internship sites to prepare students for an aging-related career in their field.
- Create opportunities for students to connect with older adults so they can learn about their perspectives firsthand.

QUOTE FROM THE CLASSROOM

"This program was beneficial for two groups of students – those with some gerontology knowledge and those without. Students who already had exposure to gerontology-related content expressed a deeper understanding of the pervasive nature of ageism and its harmful effects. Students who had no previous exposure to this aging content found it to be eye-opening. Increasing college students' awareness of ageism and arming them with strategies to combat it are important objectives met through Disrupt Aging Classroom."

— Claudia E. Oakes, PhD, OTR/L
Associate Professor,
Department of Health Sciences and Nursing
University of Hartford

QUOTE FROM THE CLASSROOM

"Students often enter our Schools of Social Work intending to work with children. Many new social work students haven't even thought about how enriching working with older adults can be, or the many career opportunities for social workers with specialized training in this area. A program such as Disrupt Aging Classroom can really change attitudes toward working with older adults and introduce aging specialization to new social work students."

— Suzanne Marmo Ph.D., LCSW
Assistant Professor,
Advanced Palliative Hospice Social Worker – Certified
School of Social Work
Sacred Heart University

STRATEGY #5: USE WHEREVER YOU ARE ON THE AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY CONTINUUM

- Disrupt Aging Classroom is one tangible tool universities can use to spark innovation and purposeful learning tied to the Age-friendly University (AFU) designation from Dublin City University.
- Disrupt Aging Classroom can be used broadly in:
  - Universities already designated as an AFU
  - Universities in the process of becoming designated as an AFU
  - Universities not seeking the AFU designation at this time
- **The curriculum aligns with the following five of the 10 AFU principles:**

1.	To encourage the participation of older adults in all the **core activities** of the university, including educational and research programs.
2.	To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue **second careers.**
3.	To recognize the **range of educational needs** of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Master's or PhD qualifications).
4.	To promote **intergenerational learning** to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.
5.	To widen access to **online educational opportunities** for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
6.	To ensure that the university's **research agenda** is informed by the needs of an aging society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.
7.	To increase the understanding of students of the **longevity dividend** and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.
8.	To enhance access for older adults to the university's range of **health and wellness** programs and its **arts** and **cultural activities.**
9.	To engage actively with the university's own **retired community.**
10.	To ensure regular **dialogue** with organizations representing the interests of the aging population.

CASE STUDY

A professor from The University of Hartford, a newly-designated AFU, offered Disrupt Aging Classroom as a kickoff event on campus to build interest in aging. The event brought together an intergenerational group of about 40 students, faculty, staff and AARP volunteers on a Friday afternoon!

QUOTE FROM THE CLASSROOM

"The program you're cultivating in Connecticut is exactly the kind of university-based initiative needed to begin changing future generations' perspectives on aging. GSA's Academy of Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) has taken on the mission of promoting the new AFU movement in America. I believe the model you're developing could be scaled to reach universities across the country."

— *James C. Appleby, BSPharm, MPH, DcD (Hon)*
   Chief Executive Officer
   The Gerontological Society of America

SELECTED RESOURCES
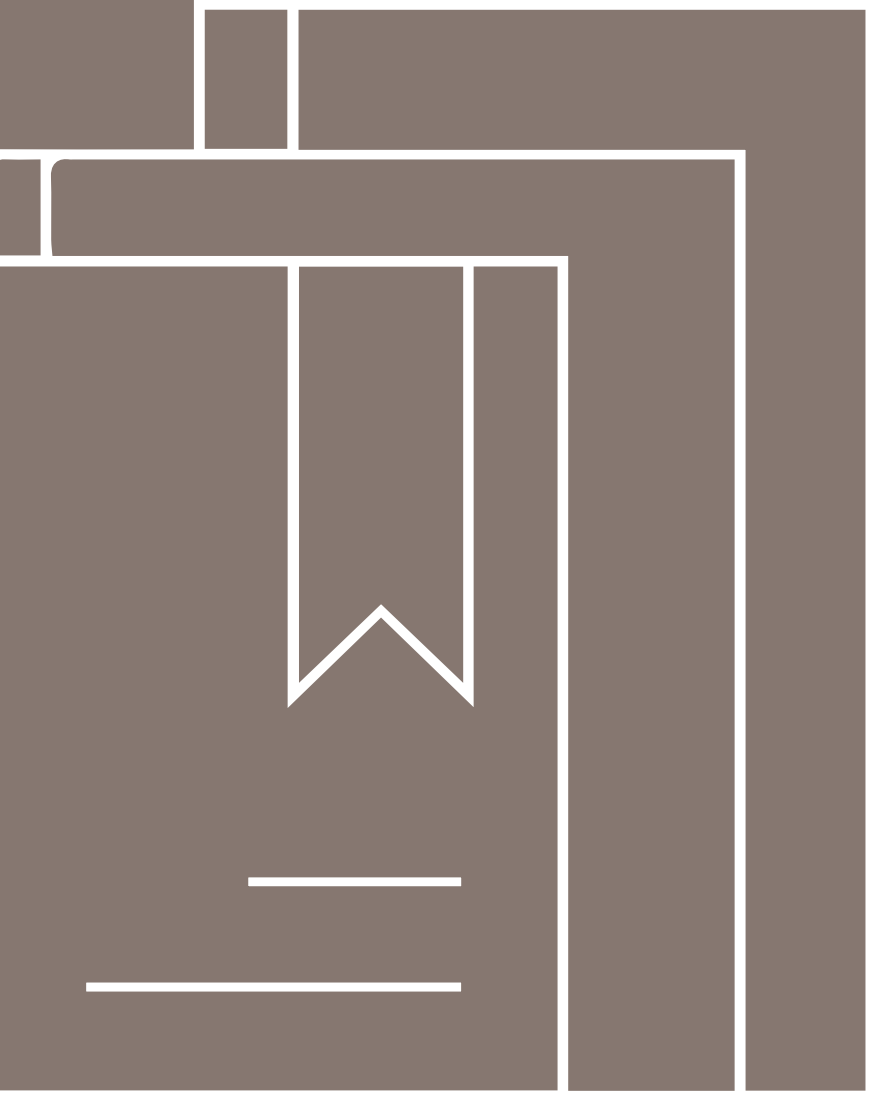
AARP PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE

The Public Policy Institute (PPI) is the central hub for public policy research, analysis and development at AARP. PPI develops creative policy solutions to address our community's common need for financial security, health care and quality of life. PPI issue experts publish policy analyses and provide insights and updates on a range of topics, including current AARP priorities and emerging issues that affect older adults: **aarp.org/ppi/about-ppi**

PPI produces several state and local level resources including:

- *DATA EXPLORER,* which is a clearinghouse of publicly available state data on a variety of issues: **dataexplorer.aarp.org**
- *LIVABILITY INDEX,* which measures the quality of life in American communities across multiple dimensions: housing, transportation, neighborhood characteristics, environment, health, opportunity, and civic and social engagement. Data is available on their interactive website: **livabilityindex.aarp.org**

AARP RESEARCH

AARP Research provides integrated insights on the motivations, needs, interests and behaviors of adults ages 50+. They support AARP membership, multicultural strategies, communications, publications, and social impact and advocacy agendas. They focus on key issues including Social Security, Medicare, financial security, long-term care and caregiving, transportation, housing, older workers, utilities, and consumer protection: **aarp.org/research**

AARP Research also supports states' implementation of AARP's strategic priorities in advocacy, communications and education efforts. They also serve as AARP's external presence on initiatives such as evaluation of AARP community efforts, polls to support state lobbying efforts on utilities, and state specific information about the wants and needs of older adults: **aarp.org/research/state-surveys**

Find AARP offices in your state to connect with news, events, programs and more: **aarp.org/states**

AARP DISRUPT AGING

Disrupt Aging is a book written by AARP's CEO, Jo Ann Jenkins. Jo Ann saw the book as a call to action for people to find a bold new path to living their best life at every age. The Disrupt Aging movement challenges outdated beliefs about aging and encourages everyone to look at growing older as a time of new opportunity: **https://www.aarp.org/disrupt-aging**

AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY

The Age-friendly University (AFU) network consists of institutions of higher education around the world who have endorsed 10 age-inclusive principles. The schools have also committed to becoming more age-friendly in their programs and policies. AGHE endorses the AFU principles and invites its members and affiliates to encourage their institutions to become part of this pioneering initiative: **geron.org/programs-services/education-center/age-friendly-university-afu-global-network**

ACADEMY FOR GERONTOLOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (AGHE)

The Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) is GSA's educational branch. It's a unique network of institutions dedicated to advancing scholarship in gerontology. AGHE programs set the benchmark for standards in academic programs across the country: **geron.org/programs-services/education-center**