

PRODUCTIVE AGING AND WORK

One in five American workers is over 65, and in 2020, one in four American workers will be over 55. These demographic shifts have made the issue of healthier workers, especially those of advanced age, more pressing. The **National Center for Productive Aging and Work** (NCPAW) advances lifelong well-being for workers of all ages and supports a productive aging across the working life. The Center continues to work on such important issues as how organizations are addressing the needs of an aging workforce and identifying interventions and strategies to support both workers of all age groups and organizations that employ them.

What is Productive Aging?

Productive aging is an approach that emphasizes the positive aspects of growing older and how individuals can make important contributions to their own lives, communities, organizations, and society. In the context of work, productive aging involves providing a safe and healthy work environment through strategies that allow workers to function optimally at all ages.



Four attributes of the Center's approach to productive aging include:

- [A Life-Span Perspective](#) that considers the patterns of change and transition that occur in different domains (e.g., biological/physical, cognitive, social) from the first day on the job to the last. This perspective extends the concept of productive aging to workers of all ages and views the aging process as dynamic, adaptive, and influenced by the environment.
- [A Comprehensive and Integrated Framework](#) for improving worker safety, health and well-being in a coordinated program that utilizes a range of education and intervention strategies. These strategies draw from a growing knowledge base of factors that have particular significance for an aging workforce where people are working longer (e.g., ergonomics, injury prevention, chronic disease management, healthy lifestyles, workplace flexibility, etc.).
- [Outcomes that Recognize the Priorities of Both Workers and Organizations](#) . A productive aging approach targets both types of outcomes with the understanding that each type of outcome can potentially influence the other. These outcomes may range from improving safety and well-being (worker-centered) to reducing health care costs and maintaining job performance (organization-centered).
- [A Supportive Work Culture for Multi-Generational Issues](#) arises when up to four generations (WW II; Baby Boom; Generation X; Millennial Generation) work side-by-side. Although often subtle, differences between generations can include attitudes toward work and supervision, preferred communication style, training needs, and work habits. Learning to manage these differences and build upon the unique strengths of each generation creates an inclusive workplace culture that also contributes to productive aging.

References

1. Butler, R. N. (1985). *Productive aging: Enhancing vitality in later life*. New York: Springer Publishing.
2. Rowe, J. W. & Kahn, R. L. (1996). Successful aging. *The Gerontologist*, 37 (4), 433-440.

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