

How Old is Old?

As Older Americans Month comes to an end, we ask the question, "How old is old?" Although the Older Americans Act supports home and community-based services for adults aged sixty and older, answering the question isn't so simple, and often leads to subjective and existential answers.

"Being old isn't like it used to be because people are living into their 80s, 90s and some, into their 100s," said Cindy Saverino, Aging and Disability Services Administrator for the DES Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS). "'How old is old?' is a state of mind. If you stay active and you continue to work or do activities, you may not feel old. If you're 80, you may not feel 80."

Older adults no longer want to sit at the senior center and play Bingo. Instead, they prefer yoga and more physical activities. With other generations climbing in age, we're seeing a shift in culture and mindset.

"How old you are is as old as you are in your heart and the perception of old in your mind," said Priscilla Kadi, Assistant Director of DAAS. "Clinically, old starts at 65, but I believe it's a state of mind."

Priscilla is not ashamed of saying that she is old. "I am old because I have an incredible amount of experience, life experience that qualifies me to say I have old age wisdom now."

When asked, "How Old is Old?" Frank Migali, Bureau Chief of Community Service Programs in DAAS responded, "I've never really thought about it. Programmatically, old is over the age of 60, but if I had to give you a number I would say over 70. But, there is definitely a difference in 70s, 80s and 90s when you look at health and accessibility."

There is no surprise that thoughts on age differs depending on your age. For six-year-old McKenna, Frank's daughter, age has to do with appearance. When asked why she thinks her 93-year-old great grandmother is old she said, "She has gray hair and wrinkles on her face. Oh, and she uses a walker." McKenna knows exactly how old her dad is, but when attributing age to others who didn't fit her criteria, it became difficult.

"I think starting to get old is fifty. Seventy is old and over that is really old," said McKenna. "My papa [her grandfather] is old. He's retired and he's 70."

The DES Division of Aging and Adult Services offers programs and initiatives for older adults in Arizona. These programs serve to protect the rights of older adults and prevent fraud and abuse. They also provide information and assistance on rights, benefits and options. For more information, visit the [DES website](#).