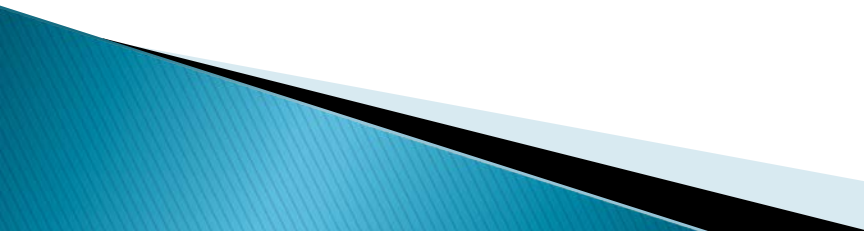


# Age-Based Inequalities in Health and Healthcare: An Ethics Framework

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# Overview

- ▶ *Describe age-based inequalities in health between young & old age groups*
  - ▶ *Should we make health more equal, by improving healthcare for older people?*
  - ▶ *Should we make healthcare more equal by imposing age-based limits?*
- 

# Overview

## *An Inverse Relationship*

*Increase  
Equality  
In Health*



*Decrease  
Equality  
In Healthcare*

# Overview

- ▶ Health System Reform

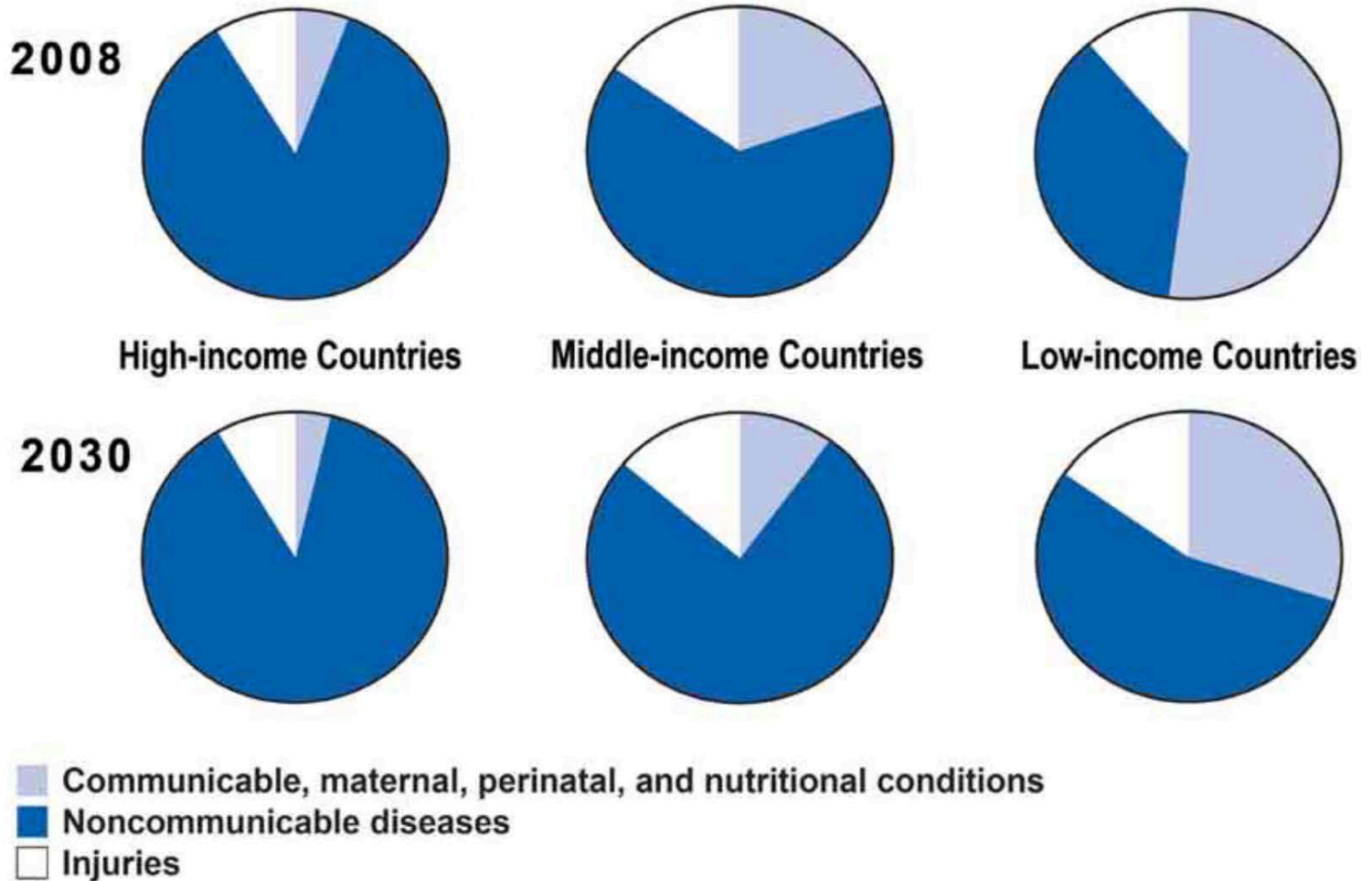
# *Age-Based Health Inequalities*



# Health Inequalities

- ▶ In developed nations, older people suffer worse health than younger people, primarily from chronic degenerative disease
- ▶ Developing nations have high child mortality, yet in the next 10–15 yrs, population aging will increase death & disability from chronic disease

## The Increasing Burden of Chronic Noncommunicable Diseases: 2008 and 2030



Source: World Health Organization, *Projections of Mortality and Burden of Disease, 2004-2030*.  
Available at: [http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global\\_burden\\_disease/projections/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/projections/en/index.html).

# Health Inequalities

*<65 are more likely than >65 to have:*

- *Stroke*
- *Heart disease*
- *Cancer*
- *Diabetes*
- *Depression*
- *Dementia*

*Dementia:  
Doubles every 5 years  
after 65:*

- *Affects <3% of 65–69*
- *Affects 30% of 85–89*

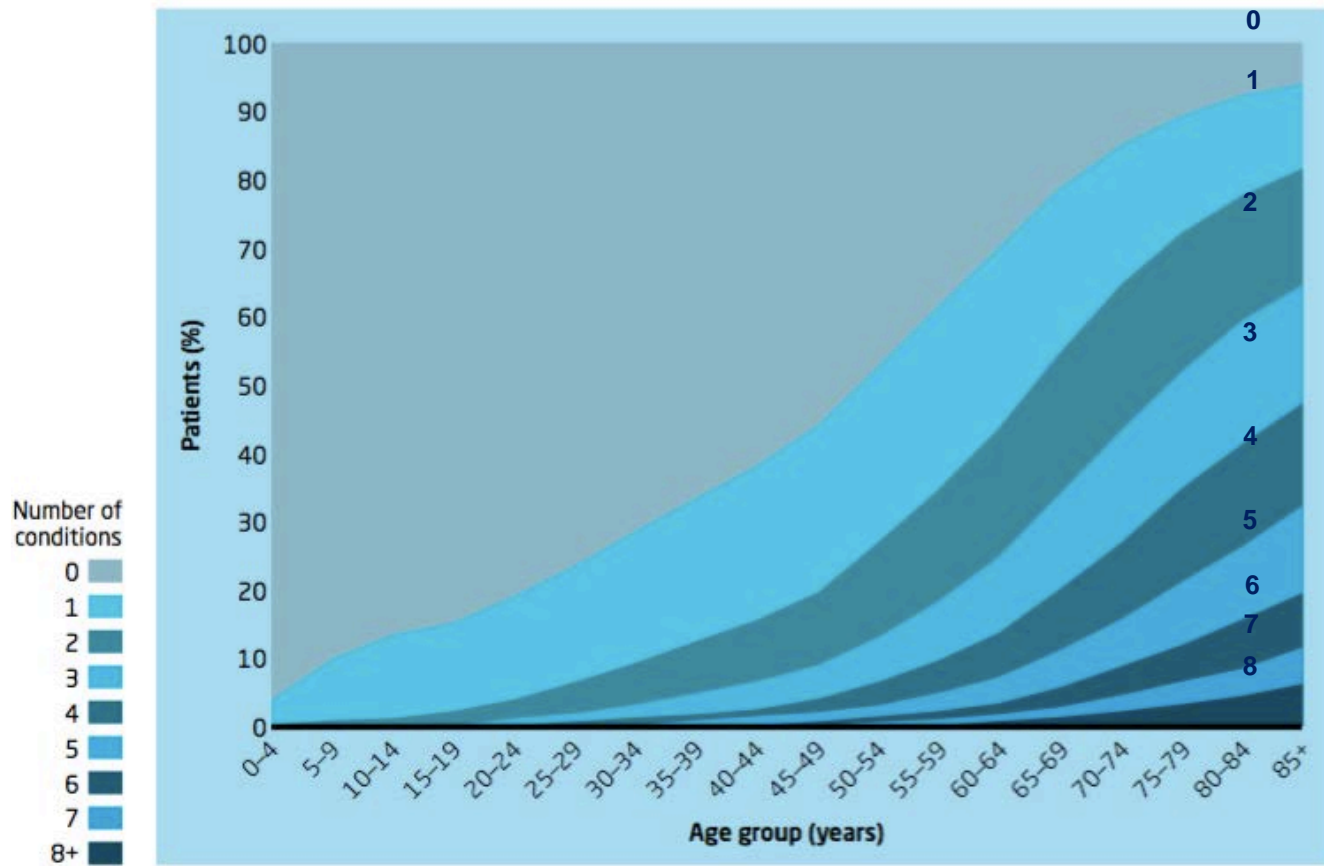


# Health Inequalities

- ▶ Diseases Affecting Older People Tend To Be
  - *Chronic*
  - *Progressive*
  - *Disabling*
- ▶ Chronic disease is a leading cause of death

# Health Inequalities

Figure 5 Morbidity (number of chronic conditions) by age group



*Oliver, Foot, Humphries, Making Our health and care systems fit for an ageing population, 2014*

# Healthcare Inequalities

▶ Utilization: *In developed countries, older people utilize more health care on average than younger people do*

▶ Expenditures (US):

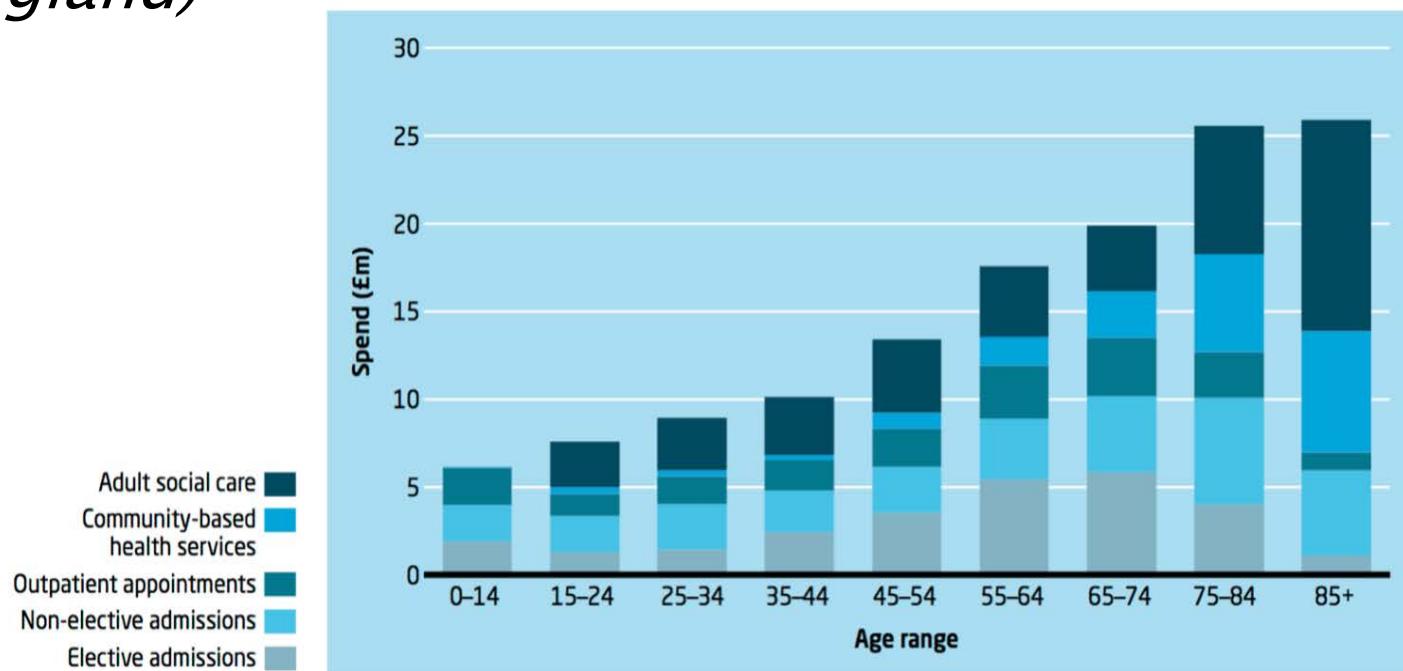
65+ = \$11,089/year

19-64 = \$3,352/year

# Healthcare Inequalities

## *UK Expenditures (Dorset, England)*

**Figure 1** Annual cost\* by age and service area for Torbay (population 145,000), 2010/11



\*Costs of primary care and prescribing are not included  
Source: Torbay Care Trust (reproduced with permission)

*Should societies  
reduce age-based  
health  
inequalities?*



# Luck Egalitarianism (LE)

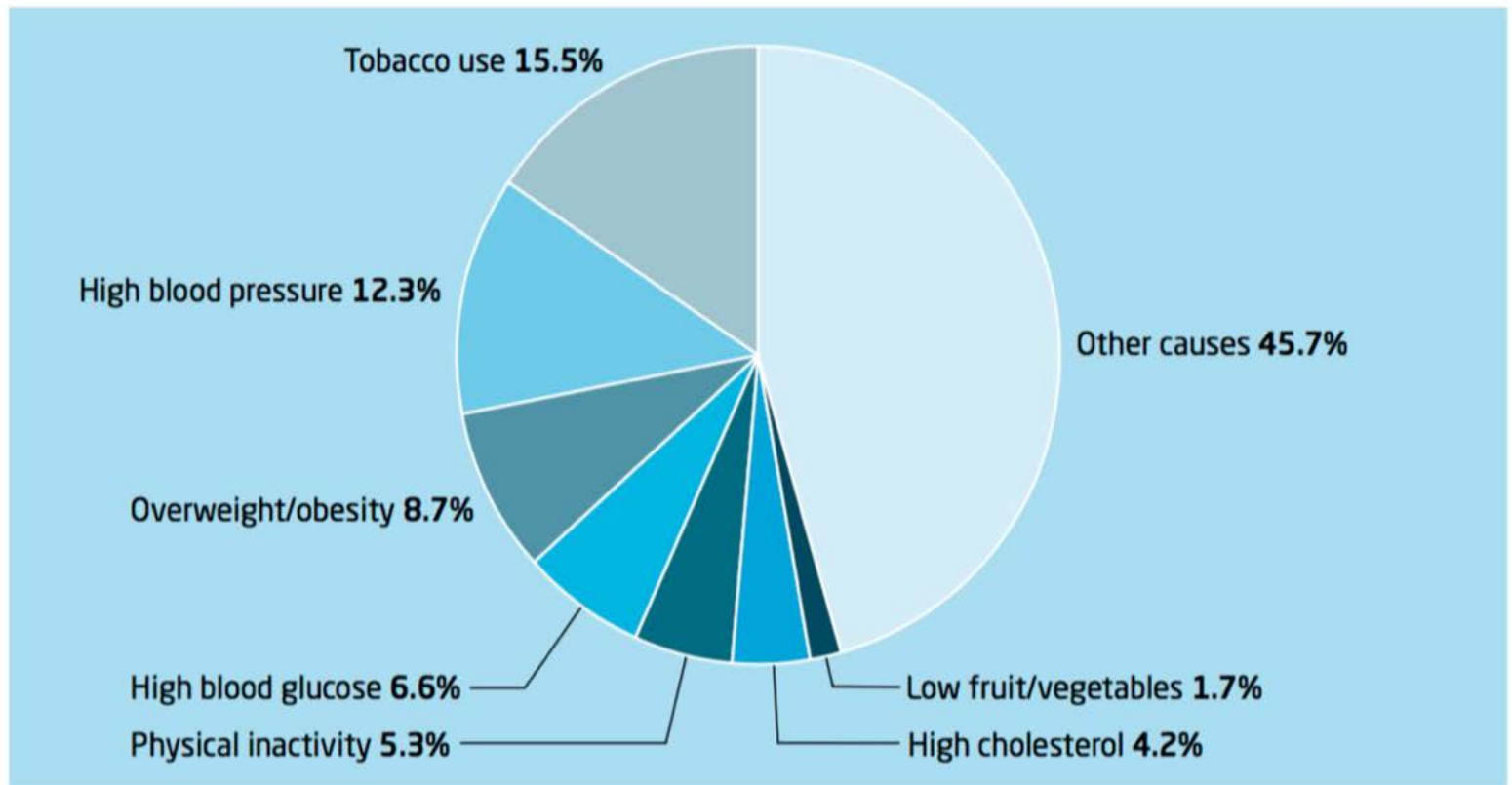
- ▶ *Inequality is bad when it results from factors beyond individuals' control*
  - Brute Luck: outcomes from risks that are not deliberate (e.g., genetic wins & losses)
  - Option Luck: outcomes from deliberate risk-taking (e.g., gambling wins & losses)

▶ *Principle of Compensating Bad Luck*

A just society intervenes to improve the health of older people to the extent required to offset age-related diseases & disabilities

# Limitations

**Figure 4** Burden of disease among people aged 60 and over



53% of disease among >60 potentially avoidable by lifestyle changes



# Limitations

- ▶ Compensating bad luck is necessary, not *sufficient*

# Social Relational Egalitarianism

- ▶ *Inequality is bad when it leads to unequal respect in relationships between old & young*

Anderson, "What's the point of equality?" *Ethics* 1999;  
Scheffler, "What is egalitarianism?" *Philos Pub Aff* 2003

▶ *Principle of Equal Respect*

*A just society improves the health of older people to the extent necessary to support equal respect between old & young*

# Limitations

- ▶ *Equal Respect vs. Sufficient Respect*
  - An Extremely Violent Society: people react to conflict with violence and no one is safe
  - Equal respect is *necessary*, not *sufficient*

# Sufficientarianism

- ▶ *Make sure that each of us has enough*
- ▶ *Principle of Sufficiency*

A just society improves the health of older people to the extent required to reach a minimal level of functioning and capability required for human dignity

# Principles of Age Group Justice

- ▶ *Principle of Compensating Bad Luck*
  - ▶ *Principle of Equal Respect*
  - ▶ *Principle of Sufficiency*
- 

# Time Slice Framing

Apply justice principles to each moment or “slice” of of a person’s life

▶ *Problem*

*The Fleeting Pains Case:* At  $t_1$  p undergoes a medical procedure that causes excruciating pain, but as a result of the procedure, p is much better off at  $t_{1+n}$  than  $t_{1-n}$

# Whole Life Framing

*Apply justice principles to whole lives*

▶ *Problem*

*The Slave Master Case:* P & Q agree to take turns being slaves & masters. P is a slave to Q for the 10 years,  $t_{1-10}$ . Q is a slave to P for the 10-years,  $t_{11-21}$



# Life Stage Framing

Apply Justice Principles to  
Each Stage of Life



Youth

Middle-Age

Old-Age

# Life Stage Framing

- ▶ At each stage we are required to :

**Compensate  
Bad Luck**

**Show Equal  
Respect**

**Establish  
Sufficiency**

# *Setting Priorities*





# Healthcare Priorities

## *Long-term Care*

- *There is a binding obligation on societies to ensure that health care systems are structured so that elderly people who are dependent and disabled have access to caregiving necessary to ensure that they have the capability to perform basic ADLs*



# Healthcare Priorities

## *Long-term Care*

- *Direct-care workers across the globe are poorly paid, receive few benefits, work under physically & emotionally conditions, receive little or no training, have high turnover rates*

*Nations need to grow direct-care work forces*



# Healthcare Priorities

## *Palliative Care*

- *There is a binding obligation on societies to ensure that health care systems are structured so that elderly people in pain have access to palliative care necessary to ensure that pain does not interfere with functioning & capability*



# Healthcare Priorities

## *Palliative Care*

- *Many countries have no or inadequate palliative care services, training is limited, poor access to RXs used in palliative care*

*Nations need to grow palliative care work forces*



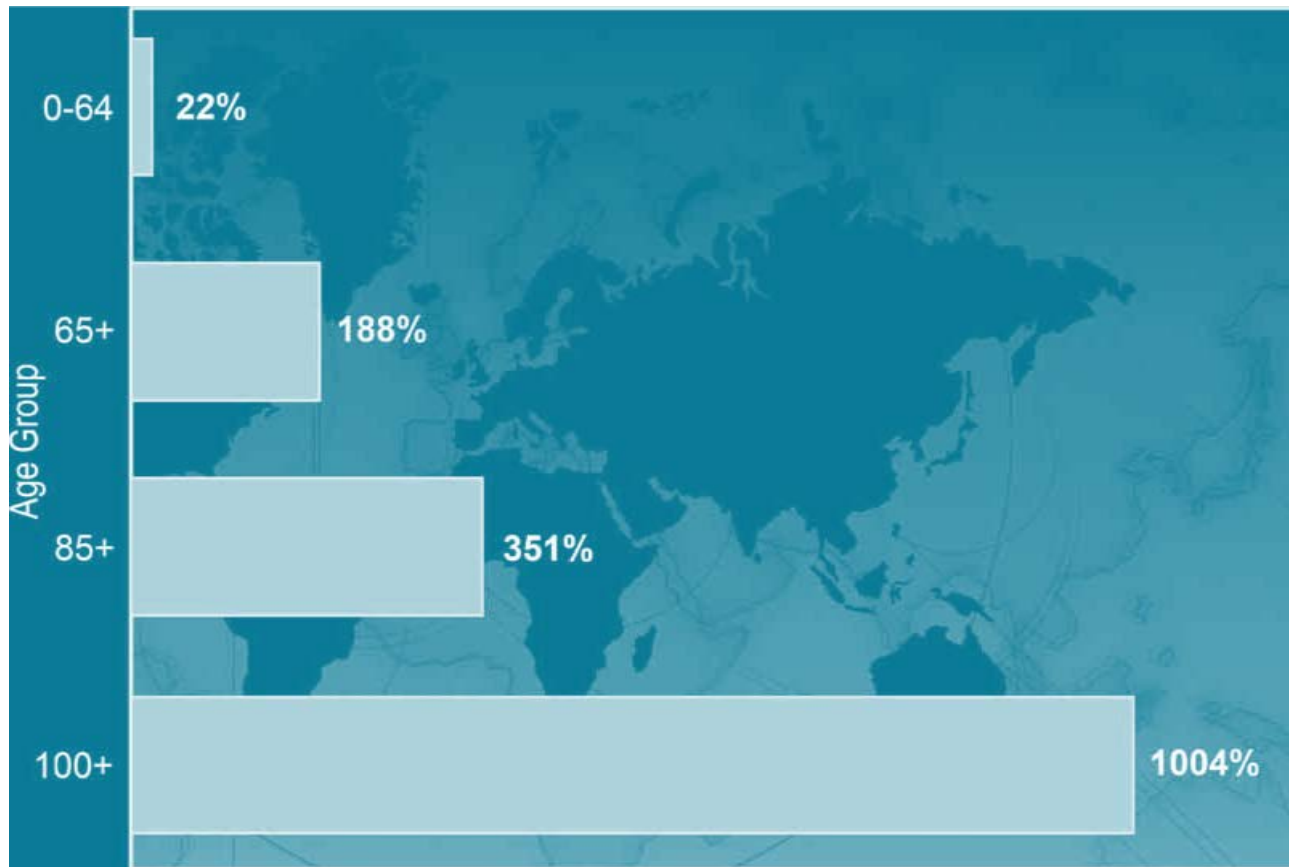
# Healthcare Priorities

- *Preventive care*
- *Advance care planning*
- *Case management systems to prevent social isolation*
- *Adequate nutrition*

*Nations need to grow other work forces to support elderly people*



# % Change in the World's Population by Age: 2010–2050



# Healthcare Priorities

- ▶ *Are the old a burden?*
- ▶ *Are the young?*



# Healthcare Priorities

- ▶ *Older people have a disproportionate share of health needs*
- ▶ *Limits are set by the 3 principles*
  - Compensating age-related inequality
  - Showing equal respect
  - Establishing sufficiency

# Thank You

