



Health Promotion for An Aging Workforce

Forum on North Carolina's Aging Workforce

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Objectives

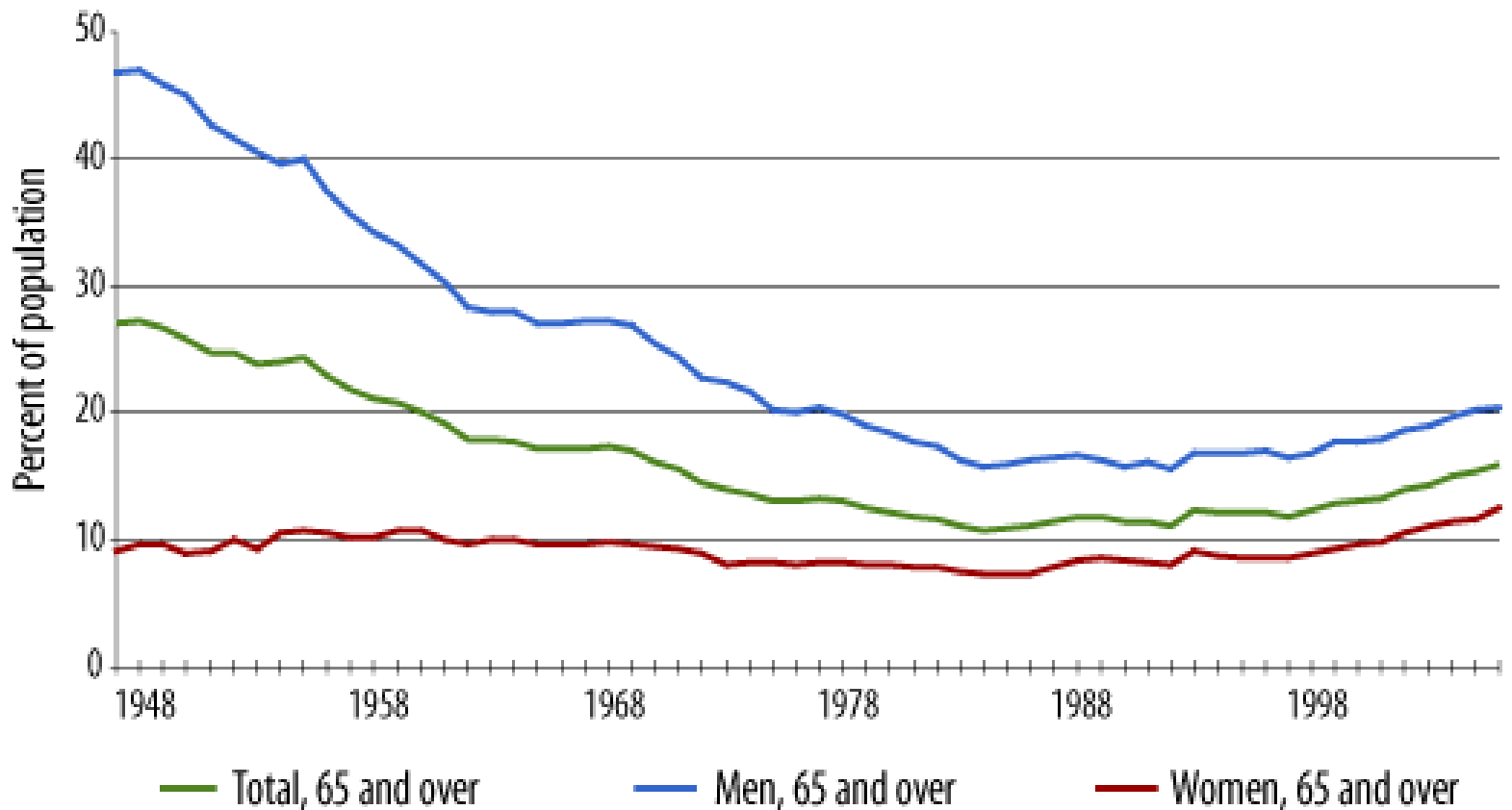
- ★ To what extent is the US workforce aging?
 - What health issues do aging workers face?
- ★ How might comprehensive worksite health promotion address the needs of the aging workforce?
 - What do we mean by “comprehensive” worksite health promotion?
 - How to address health needs of older workers at work?
- ★ Recommendations for research and practice



***To What Extent is the US
Workforce Aging?***

History of Labor Force Participation Among Workers Age 65+

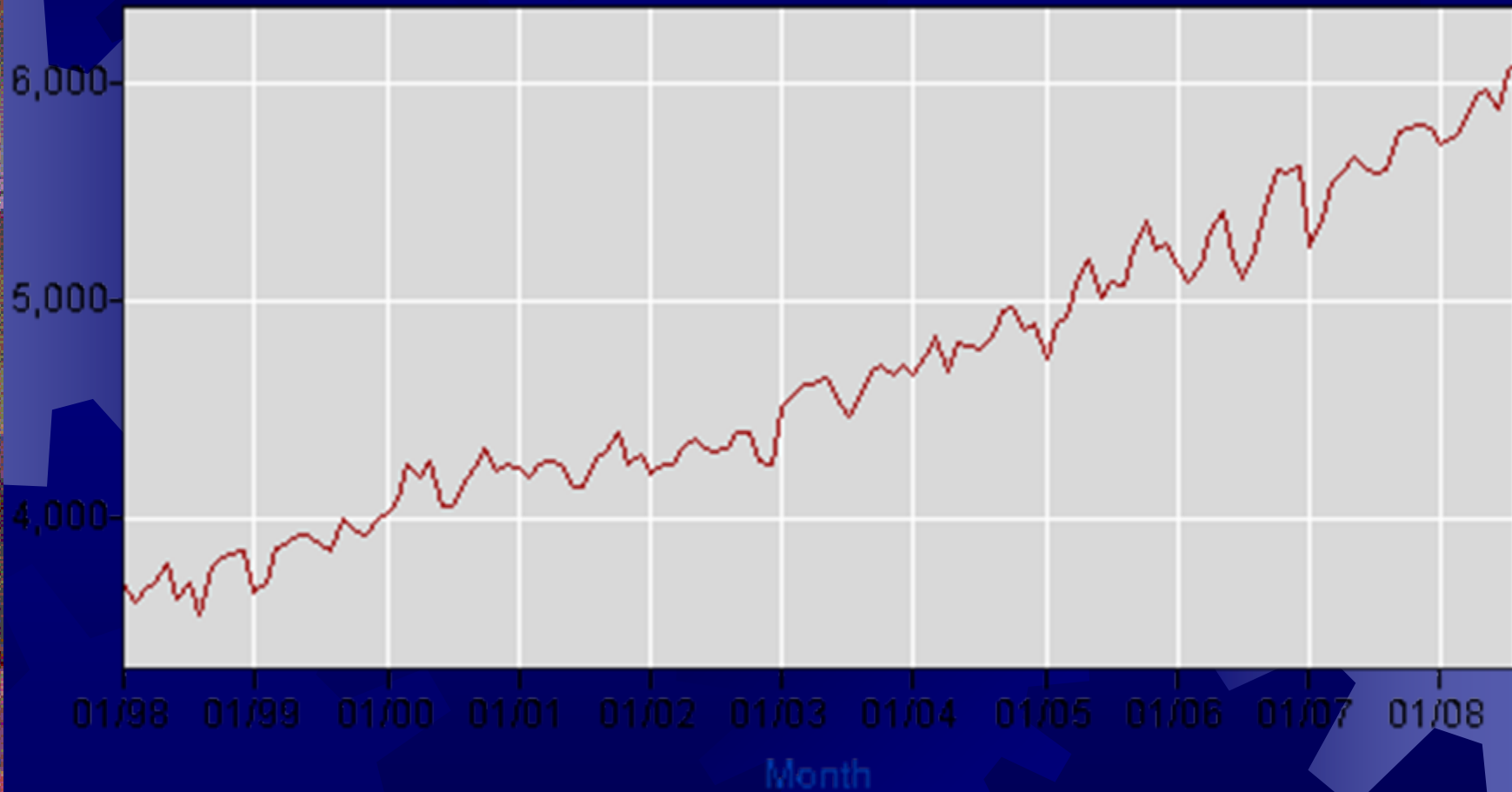
Labor force participation rate of workers 65 and over, 1948-2007



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

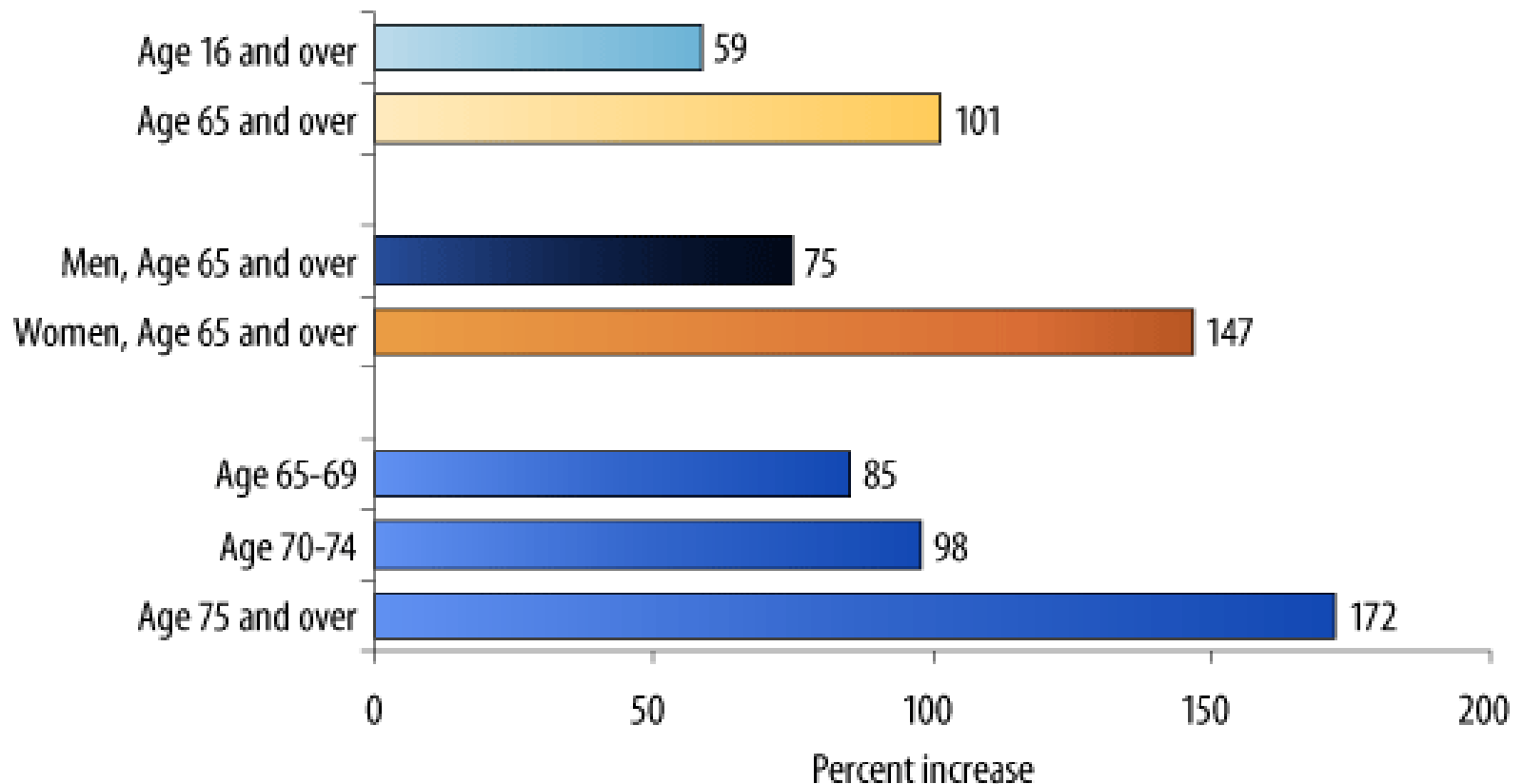
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Aging Workers (age 65+) Hired at Increasing Rates Between 1998-2008



% Increase in Employment by Age and Sex

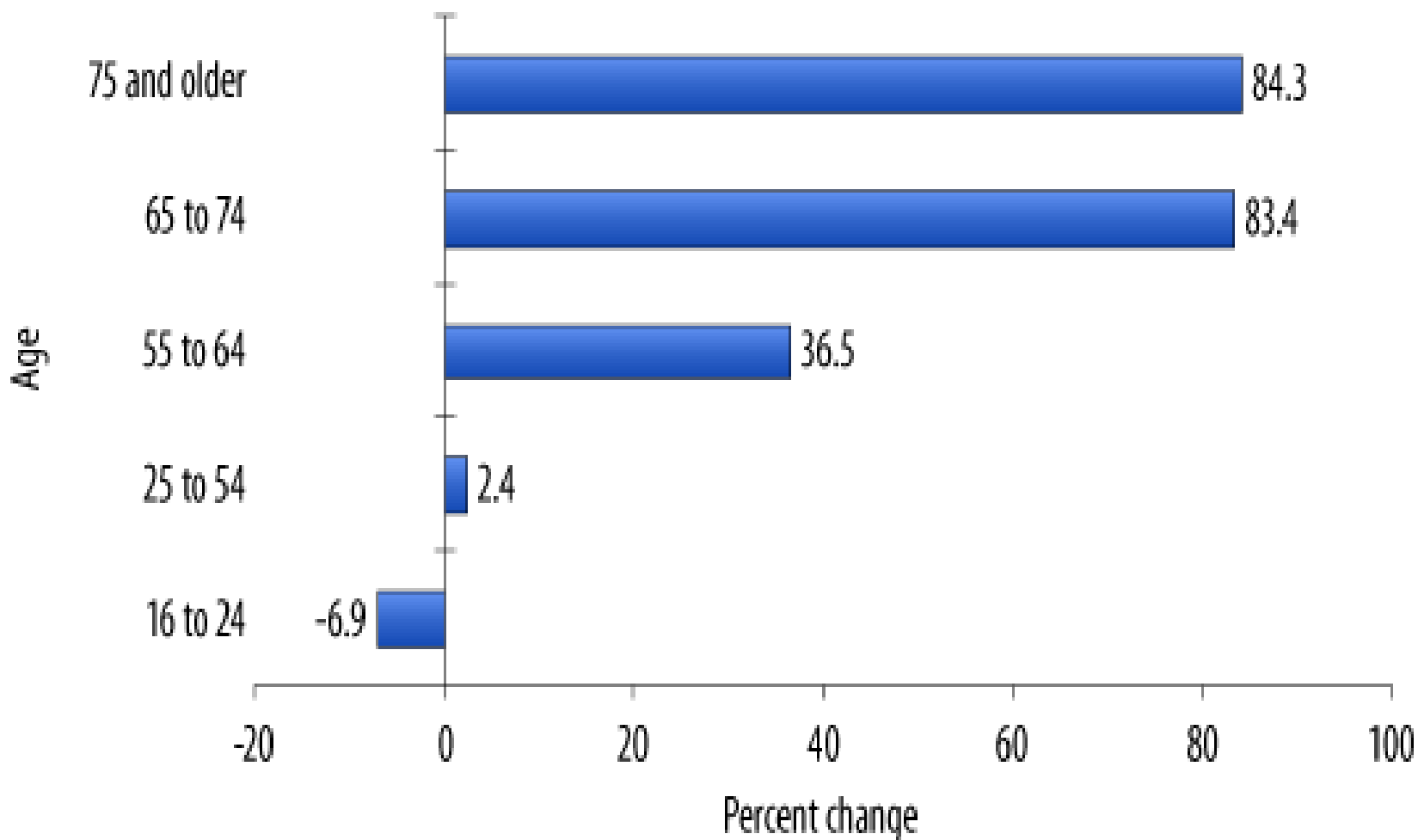
Percent increase in employment by age and sex, 1977-2007



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

Projected percentage change in labor force by age, 2006-2016

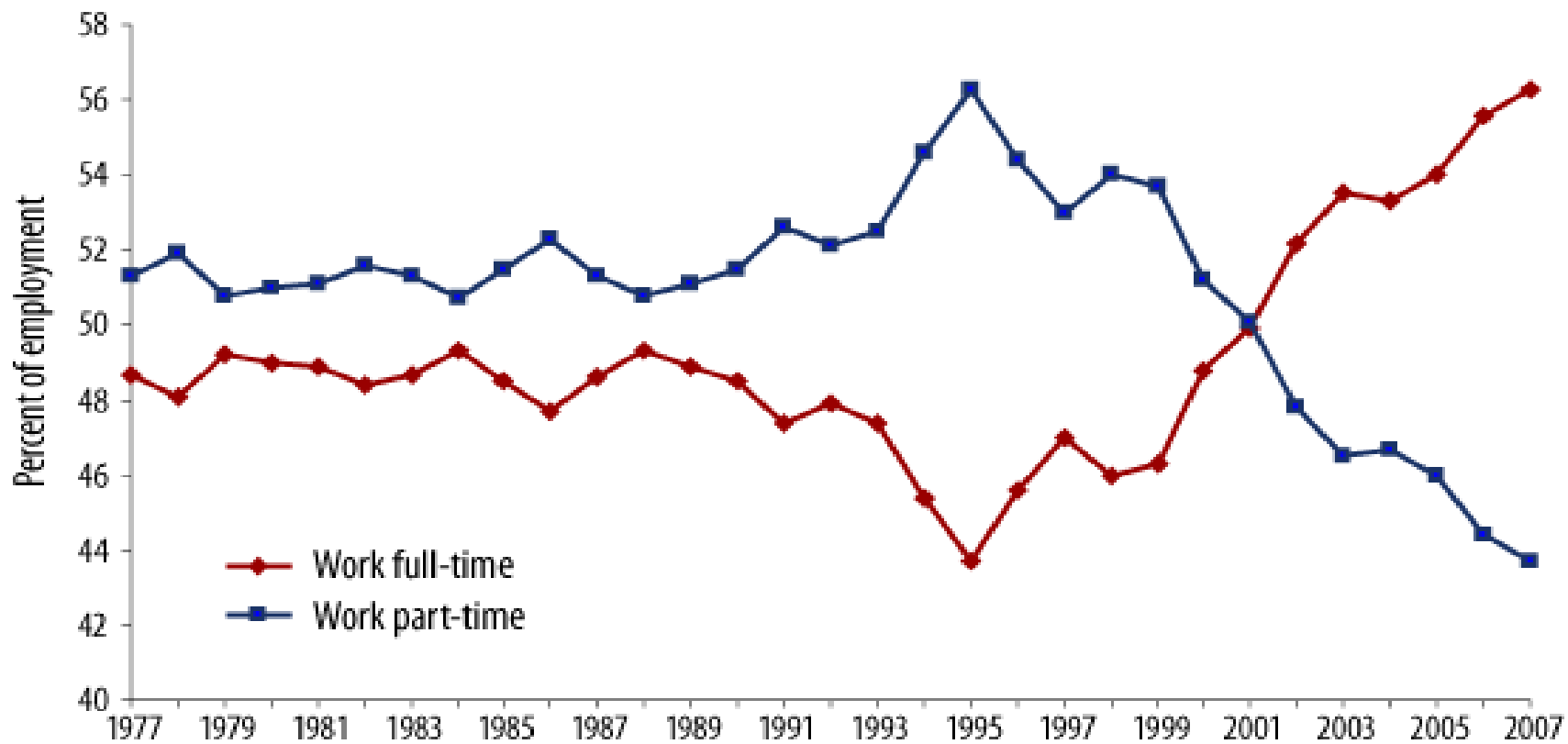


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

Older Workers More Likely to Work Full-Time

Workers 65 and over by work schedule, 1977-2007



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

Will These Trends Continue?

★ Between 2006-2016....

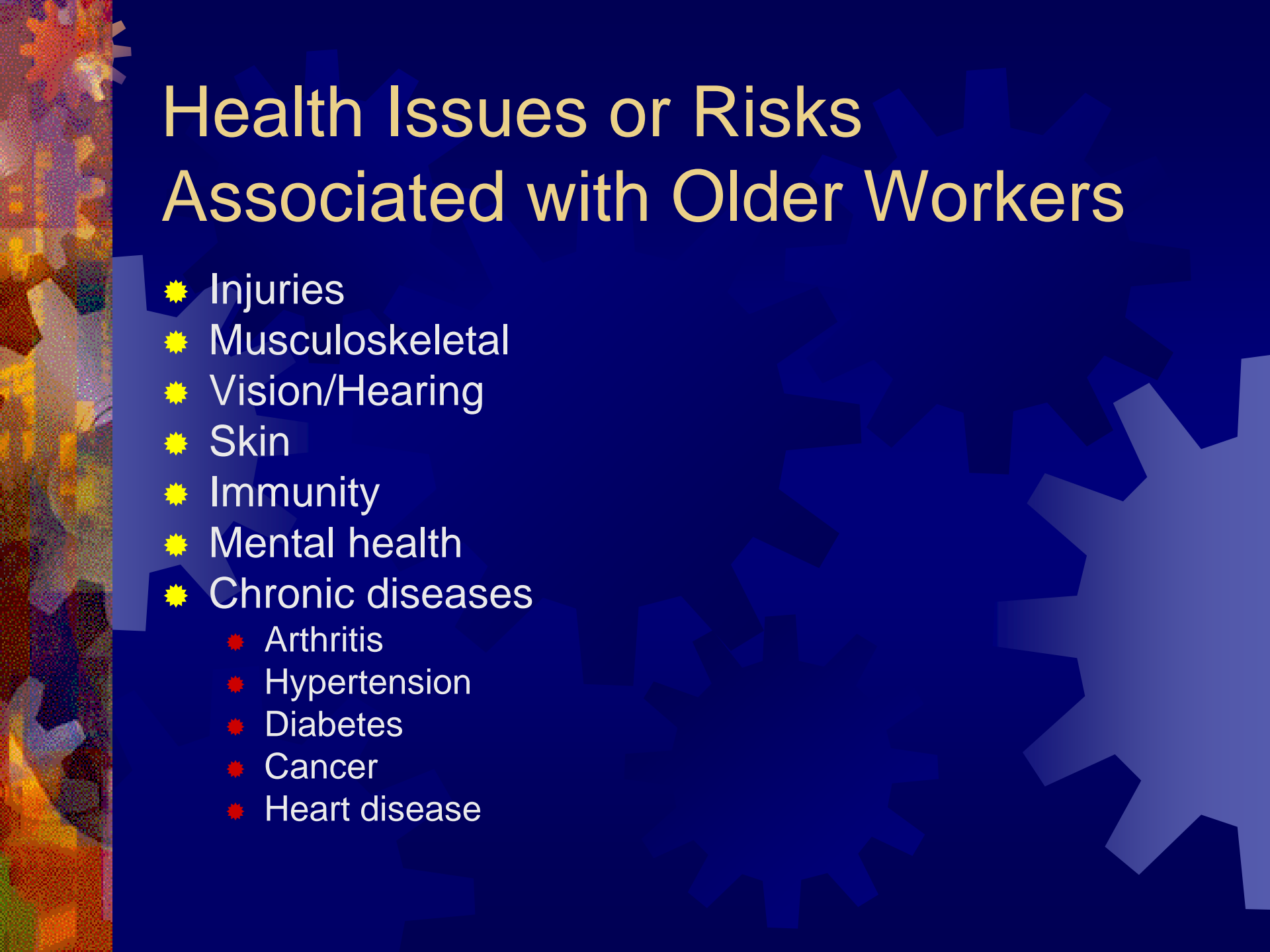
- ★ Total labor force is projected to increase by 8.5% overall, but differences by age exist:
 - Age 16-24 -- projected to decline during the period
 - Age 25-54 -- will rise only slightly
 - Age 55-64 -- are expected to climb by 36.5 percent
- ★ The most dramatic growth is projected for the two oldest groups:
 - Ages of 65 -74 and those age 75 + are predicted to increase by more than 80%.
 - By 2016, workers age 65+ are expected to account for 6.1 percent of the total labor force, up 3.6% in 2006.



*What Health Risks Do Older
Workers Face?*

Characteristics of Older Workers

- ✦ Health, function, and survivorship of each older worker cohort depends on exposures /events that occur earlier in life; along w/ environmental (e.g. work) exposures concurrent with aging
 - Older workers are not a single population due to different exposures over lifetime
- ✦ Normative changes of aging (vision change) vs. age-dependent increases in the likelihood of developing certain conditions (e.g. risk of CHD or cancer)
- ✦ For older workers, these changes can result in
 - Disadvantages - work performance is diminished or susceptibility to environmental hazards is increased
 - Advantages - experience may enhance capabilities and performance at work; knowledge of personal health



Health Issues or Risks Associated with Older Workers

- ☀ Injuries
- ☀ Musculoskeletal
- ☀ Vision/Hearing
- ☀ Skin
- ☀ Immunity
- ☀ Mental health
- ☀ Chronic diseases
 - Arthritis
 - Hypertension
 - Diabetes
 - Cancer
 - Heart disease

Chart 3. Median days away from work due to occupational injury or illness, by age of worker, 2003

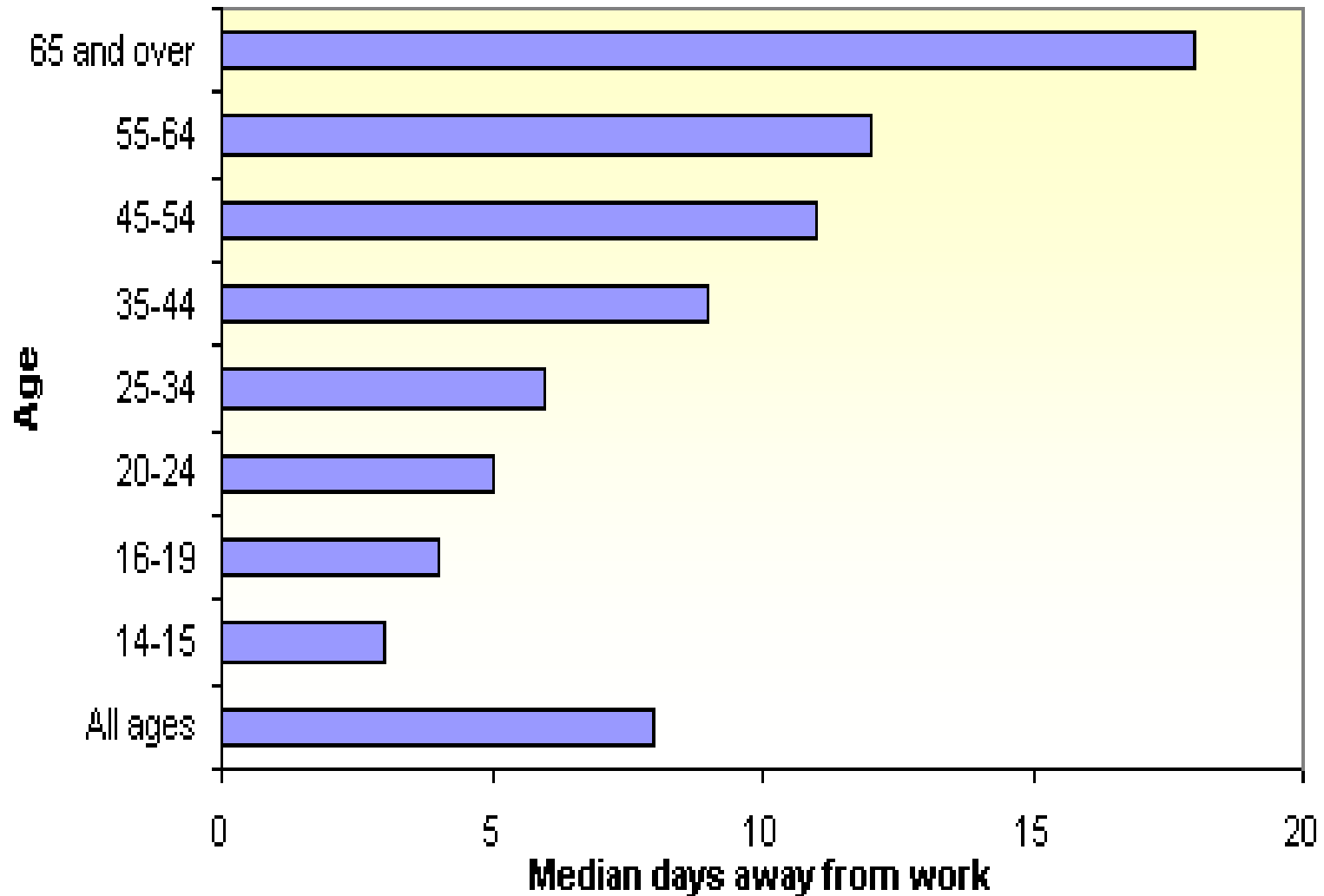
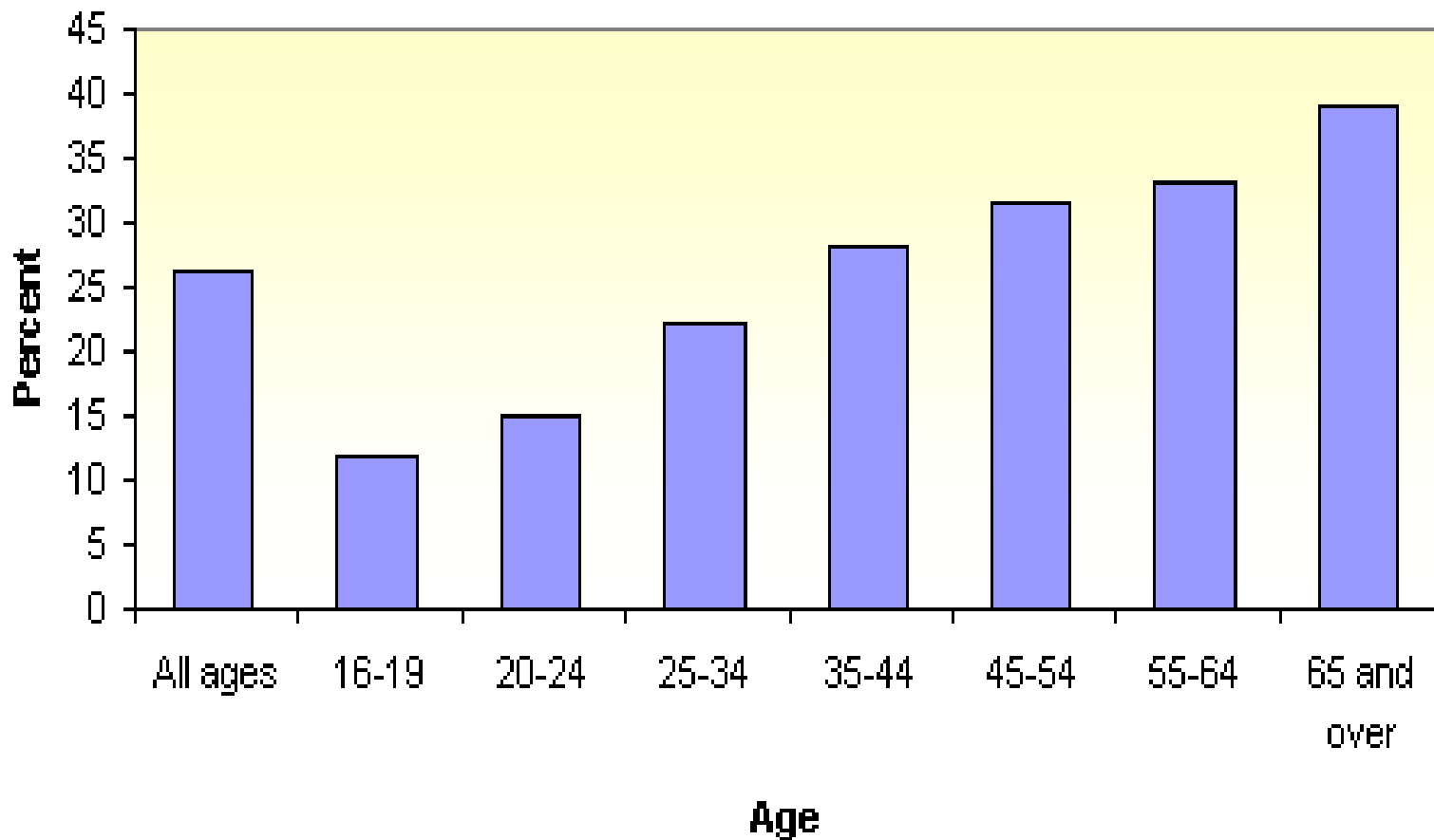


Chart 4. Percent of occupational injuries and illnesses involving 31 or more days away from work, by age of worker, 2003





Work Organization Factors

- ✦ Work organization factors also cause adverse health effects (e.g., musculoskeletal disorders and CVD) on the workforce:
 - ✦ Organizational restructuring, downsizing, outsourcing, job insecurity, nonstandard work arrangements, and stressful job characteristics
 - ✦ Job demands, flexibility and control are also important factors associated with health outcomes (e.g. Karasek/Theorell)

Mental Health & Substance Abuse Issues

- ✦ Mental health problems – particularly depression – have adverse effects on worker health and productivity
- ✦ Problem drinking and alcoholism among older workers is not known; but the consequences of alcohol abuse are more serious among the elderly
 - ✦ Alcohol and drug abuse at work may increase as the baby boomer cohort grows older since this cohort had higher rates of substance use, including alcohol, than previous generations
- ✦ Problems associated with medication abuse among older workers are also unknown

The background features a dark blue field with several light blue gears of various sizes scattered across it. On the left side, there is a vertical strip with a colorful, abstract, and textured appearance, possibly representing a gear mechanism or a mechanical part.

***How Might Comprehensive
Worksite Health Promotion
Programs Address Older Worker
Health Needs/Interests?***

Why Worksite Health Promotion?

- ✦ More than 60% of US adults are employed
- ✦ Employees spend a considerable number of waking hours working
- ✦ Health care for US adults is directly linked with employer-provided health insurance; many working adults are without health insurance
- ✦ Many of the leading causes of death (CVD, cancer, stroke) are preventable through lifestyle behavior changes (smoking, diet, PA)

Why Are Employers Interested in Worksite Health Promotion Programs?

- ☀ Employer medical costs average \$7910/employee annually (O'Donnell, 2007)
- ☀ Preventable illness makes up 70% of the total burden of disease and their associated costs; employers pay for these costs
 - ☀ 10 *modifiable* risk factors account for approximately 25% of all employer healthcare expenditures (Anderson, 2000)
- ☀ ***Comprehensive worksite health promotion programs have demonstrated a positive impact on employee morale, employee health and risk behaviors, productivity, and health care costs***

What Do We Mean by “Comprehensive” Worksite Health Promotion Programs?

- ✦ Health education programs
- ✦ Supportive social/physical environment
- ✦ Linkages to related programs (e.g. EAP)
- ✦ Medical screenings with adequate follow-up and treatment
- ✦ Integration of health promotion into the organizational structure (e.g. staffing, budget)

National Worksite Health Promotion Benchmarks for Success

★ Healthy People 2010 Worksite Objectives

- ★ Increase to 75% the proportion of worksites that offer a ***comprehensive*** worksite health promotion program
- ★ Increase to 75% the proportion of employees who participate in employer-sponsored health promotion activities

So -- How Are We Doing?



Comprehensive Worksite Health Promotion Programs

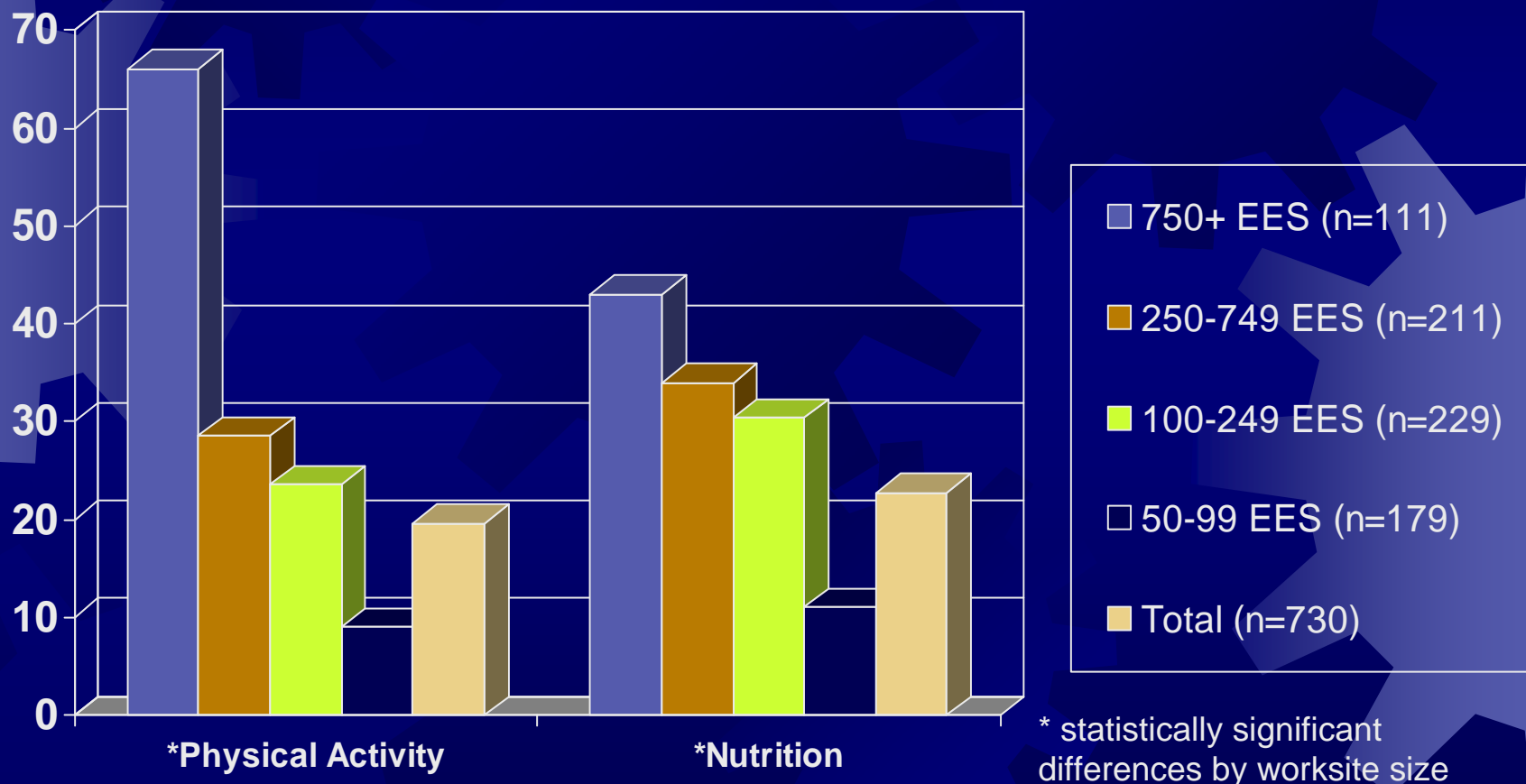
- ★ Only 6.9% of respondents offered all 5 elements of a comprehensive worksite health promotion program
 - ★ Linkage programs (41.3%)
 - ★ Supportive social/physical environment (29.9%)
 - ★ Program integrated into organizational structure (28.6%)
 - ★ Health education programs (26.2%)
 - ★ Screening plus adequate follow-up/treatment (23.5%)

Predictors of Comprehensive Worksite Health Promotion Programs

Controlling for all factors (e.g. adjusted for size, staff, experience, industry type), we found:

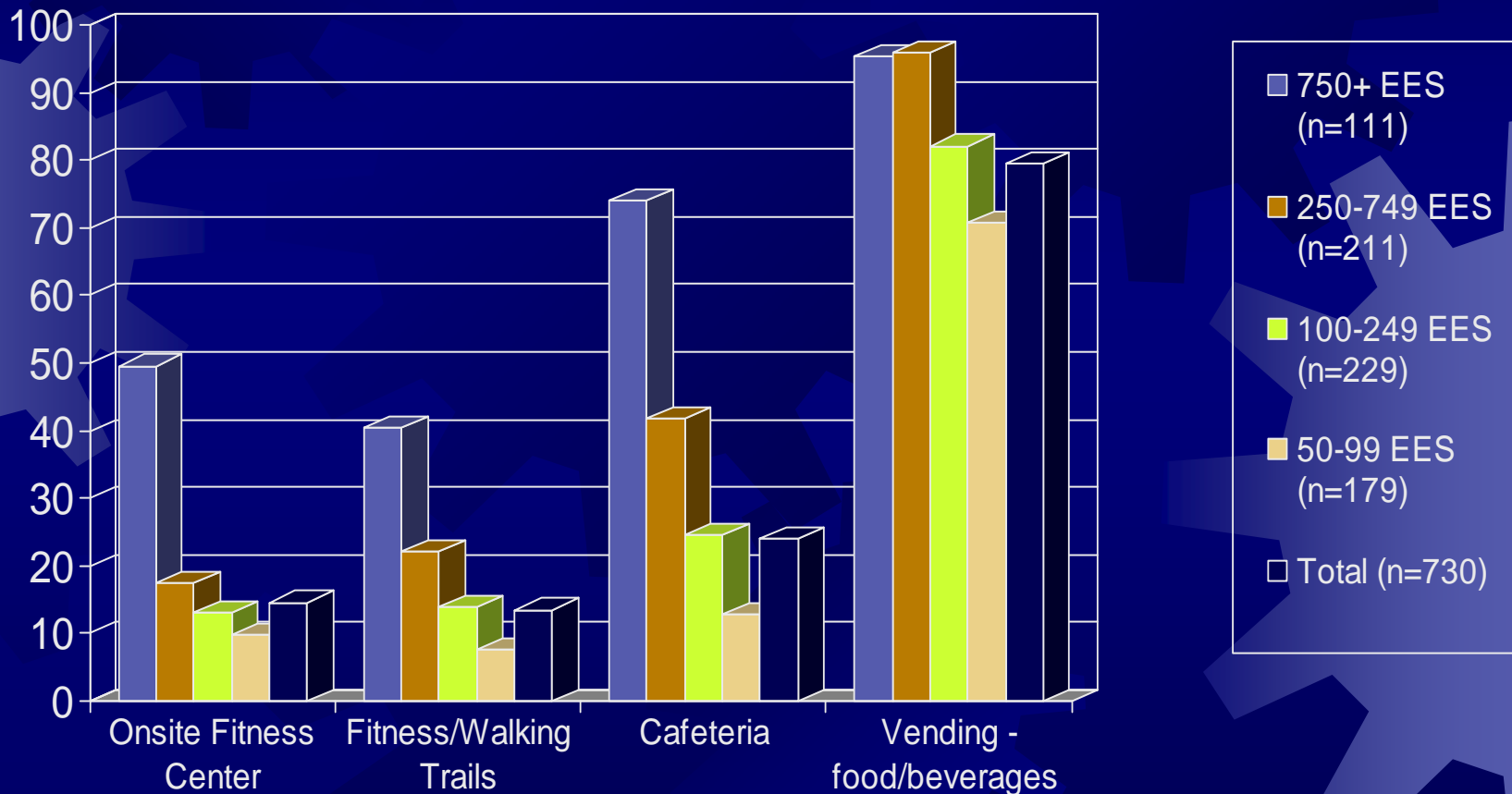
- Worksites with 750+ employees were 4.4 times more likely to have a comprehensive program ($p=.06$).
- Worksites with a dedicated staff person were 10.3 times more likely to have a comprehensive program ($p<.05$).
- Finance/agriculture/mining industries remained significantly less likely to have a comprehensive worksite health promotion program ($p<.05$).

Physical Activity and Nutrition Programs by Worksite Size



* statistically significant differences by worksite size

Select Environmental Programs by Worksite Size



Recommendations for Worksite Health Promotion Programs that Can Help Older Workers...





Health Education Programs

☀ Chronic disease prevention/risk factor reduction programs

- Smoking cessation
- Healthy eating
- Weight gain prevention/weight loss

☀ Physical activity programs

- Low impact aerobics
- Balance/core training
- Strength training

☀ Stress management/depression

Medical Screenings w/Follow-up

- ★ Onsite nursing/medical services
- ★ Age-specific screening according to Clinical Guide for Preventive Services
 - ★ Cancer – colonoscopy (age 50)
 - ★ HPB/HBC/Diabetes screenings
 - ★ Vision/hearing screening and follow-up
- ★ Medication use information/education

Supportive Social, Physical & Policy Environments

- ✦ Enhance the social climate in the workplace (e.g., empower workers thru wellness committees)
- ✦ Interventions to improve work organization, job design, and reduce job stressors
 - Work pace/demand-control-strain
 - Limit exposure to hazards
- ✦ Enforce national policies – eliminate age-based discrimination
- ✦ Create better access to physical activity opportunities and healthy foods at work
- ✦ Offer training opportunities for older workers
- ✦ Physical workspace – lighting, stairs, rails, ergonomics

Linkages to Related Programs

- ☀ Accommodations & return to work programming
- ☀ Training and re-training programs
- ☀ Links to safety programs
 - Injury prevention and treatment
 - Lifting/repetitive motion
- ☀ Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
 - Financial and retirement planning
 - Mental health treatment / Grief counseling
 - Coping with loss
 - Substance/alcohol abuse treatment



Integration Within Organization

- ✦ Hire personnel trained to do strategic planning, implementation & evaluation that includes subgroup programming for older workers
- ✦ Solicit top and middle management support for programming
- ✦ Identify budget/space/support services
- ✦ Inventory local/community resources
- ✦ Use data to drive planning efforts

Key Recommendations

- ★ Offer a “comprehensive” worksite health promotion...
 - Move beyond individual employee focus to whole worksite → address toxic work environments!
 - Avoid “spray and pray” approaches → assess needs, develop/implement marketing plan and evidence-based programs, provide incentives, evaluate success
 - Integrate worksite health promotion into all layers of the organization (e.g. safety, benefits, marketing)
 - Leverage opportunities within larger community (e.g. coalitions, chambers of commerce, state/local health departments, voluntary health organizations, university partners)

Key Recommendations

- ★ Address social contextual influences on worker health
 - Diverse and aging workforces
 - Health care system/health plan collaborations
- ★ Small businesses require special assistance
 - Cost of health insurance and health promotion is prohibitive – creates double jeopardy for workers
 - Conflict with owner beliefs about employee privacy (e.g. see Eakin “Leave it up to workers”)

Recommendations for Future Research....

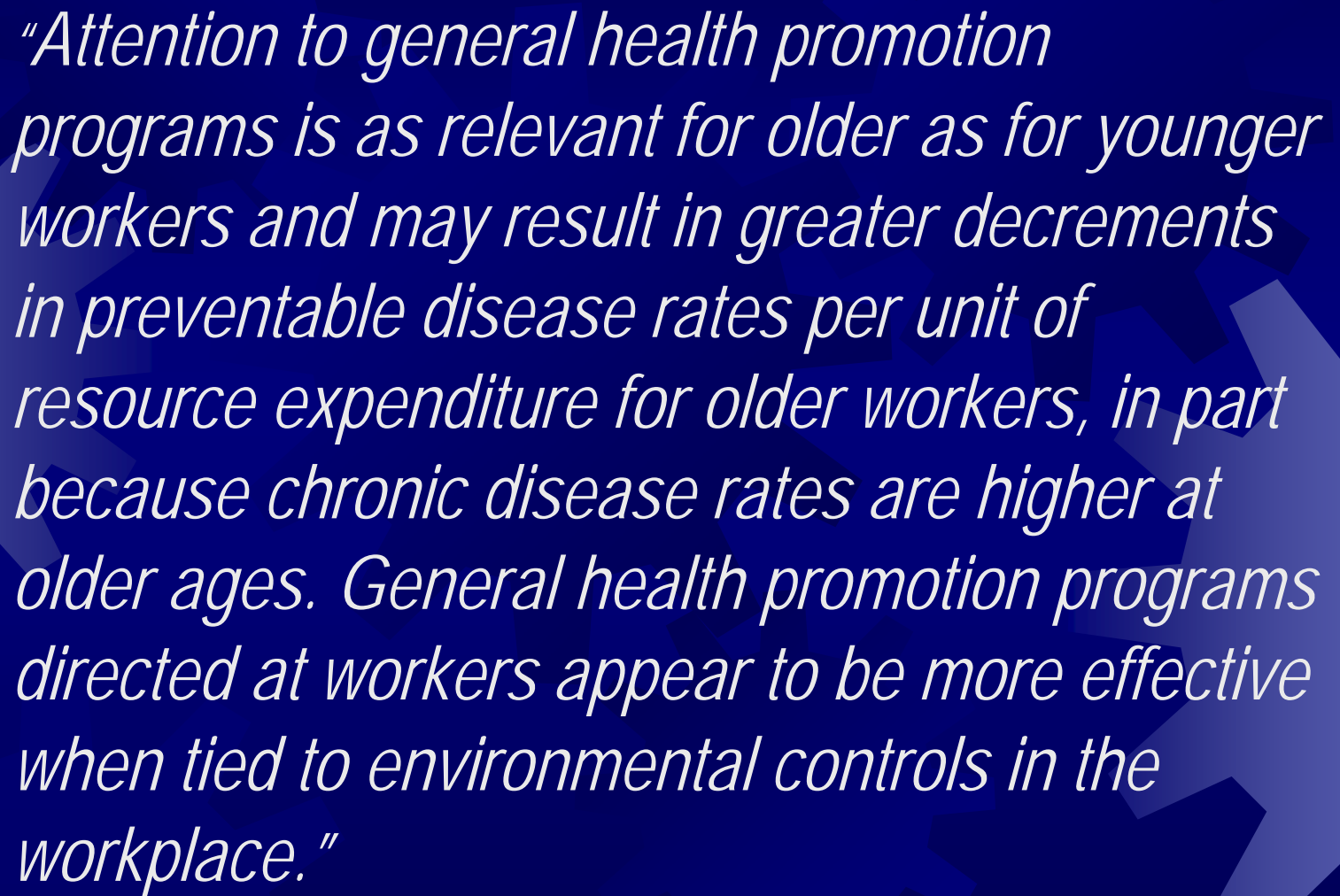


Future Research

- ✦ Consider important social determinants of health and how they influence older work health and safety
 - Political, economic, social, historical factors driving health of older workers
- ✦ Understand the factors (programs and policies) that relate to the health and safety needs of older workers
 - ✦ Measure common and potentially harmful worksite exposures on older workers
 - ✦ Understand the changing nature of work and its' impact on health

Future Research

- ★ Assess the effectiveness, benefits, and costs of comprehensive worksite health promotion and safety programs – for the general population and specifically tailored to older workers
 - ★ Consider potential outcomes: ROI, health, safety, quality of life, productivity, recruitment and retention
 - ★ Measurement work is needed
- ★ Investigate promising job design, training, and workplace accommodation interventions



“Attention to general health promotion programs is as relevant for older as for younger workers and may result in greater decrements in preventable disease rates per unit of resource expenditure for older workers, in part because chronic disease rates are higher at older ages. General health promotion programs directed at workers appear to be more effective when tied to environmental controls in the workplace.”

IOM Report, 2007

Questions??

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