

Age Representation in AI-Generated Text and Images

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As global populations age, equitable representation of older adults in digital technologies has become a psychological and ethical concern. AI increasingly shapes perceptions of social roles, yet may reinforce ageist stereotypes through biased training data (Stypińska, 2022). Developmental psychology emphasizes that aging involves growth and adaptability rather than decline (Donizzetti et al., 2024), yet technologies often position youth as the default. This study investigates how popular AI systems portray age across common social identities (e.g., leader, doctor, genius). Five AI tools were examined: three text-based (ChatGPT, Gemini, Snapchat My AI) and two image-generating (Meta AI, Leonardo AI). Consistent prompts were provided across tools, with follow-up questions asked when age was not volunteered. Responses were coded into five categories: Child (0–12), Teen (13–17), Young Adult (18–35), Middle-Aged Adult (36–59), and Older Adult (60+).

Across 36 responses, most individuals were categorized as young adults (33%) or middle-aged adults (36%). Only one response (3%) depicted an older adult alone, and five (14%) included older adults solely as secondary family figures. No AI tool portrayed older adults as leaders, doctors, or geniuses. Additionally, 69% of responses required follow-up questioning to determine age, suggesting AI tools rarely volunteer this information. These findings indicate that generative AI defaults to younger and middle-aged adults, rarely representing older individuals in roles of competence or authority. This reflects and potentially reinforces societal ageism. Future research should examine interventions to diversify AI training data and explore how age-related bias shapes user perceptions of aging.