

## How Old is Too Old to Lead?

Dora Mekouar, *VOA News*, 29 October 2023

The median age of Americans is about 39 years old, but many of the country's leaders, including some serving in the highest offices, are over the age of 60.

U.S. President Joe Biden is 80. Former president Donald Trump, the current front-runner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, is 77. The average age of U.S. senators is 64.

Health issues of some of the Senate's oldest leaders made news recently. Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, 81, recently seemed to have two cognitive incidents in public where he appeared to freeze for about 30 seconds. Senator Dianne Feinstein, who died at 90 in September, was the Senate's oldest member. Before her death, she suffered a string of health problems that led to an extended absence from the Senate.

"When it comes to politics, the challenge, of course, is that people like to have power and hold on to their power as long as possible," says Sheldon Jacobson, a computer science professor at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, who has studied decision-making under uncertainty and risk assessment. "And I think human beings, in general, tend to delay decisions of that sort a little too long. We have trouble understanding and assessing risk when it comes to our own personal situation."

How old is too old to lead? A 2022 poll showed that more than half of Americans, 58%, believe there should be a maximum age limit for elected officials, with 39% saying that limit should be age 70.

"Aging is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon, and different people might have different strengths and weaknesses at different time periods of their life," says Casey Brown, an assistant professor of psychology at Georgetown University who is on the steering committee for the university's Center for Healthy Aging. "So, I don't think there's a simple answer to the question of how old is too old to lead."

What science does tell us is that cognitive function begins to decline in early adulthood, she says. (...) About 10% of people older than 70 have some level of dementia.

U.S. presidents must be at least 35 years old to serve. The minimum age requirement in the House of Representative is 25, and 30 for the Senate. There is no maximum age limit.

1. **Sum up** the article (explain the title, give some of the answers...)
2. **Commentary:** Do you think there should be criteria to select our leaders?