



Pearn Kandola Research

# Age Discrimination At Work (2024)

**PEARN | KANDOLA**

# Contents

- 06 > Approach
- 08 > Attitudes and Perceptions
- 22 > Recognising Age Discrimination
- 24 > Experiences of Age Discrimination
- 30 > Actions taken by Organisations
- 32 > Recommendations
- 34 > References

## Introduction

### Background

Ageism has been reported as the most reported form of workplace discrimination, with half of adults over 50 in England having experienced age discrimination in the last year and work appearing as the most common domain. This is a pressing issue as the workforce is ageing, [with a third of the workforce in England aged over 50 and predicted to reach 47% by 2030](#).<sup>1,2</sup>

Age discrimination at work is not only limited to within an organisation where one is employed but extends to career opportunities, [with 1 in 3 aged over 50 believing they have been turned down for a job because of their age](#).<sup>1</sup> As a result, despite an ageing workforce, the employment rate is lower than it could be, with the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing finding that [25% of men and almost 40% of women aged 60-64 capable of work are unemployed](#).<sup>3</sup>

Age discrimination is experienced by younger workers too, and to a similar degree, in areas such as job applications and promotions.<sup>4,5</sup> However, the research into workplace age discrimination tends to focus on older workers experiences.

**While middle-aged workers do experience age discrimination, research suggests it to be less than older workers and proposed to be reperceptive of middle-aged workers being seen as representing an ‘idealised worker’<sup>6</sup>**

The reason behind discriminatory behaviours towards older and younger workers appears to manifest from negative attitudes and stereotypes. Younger workers are commonly viewed as entitled, having a poor work ethic and being disrespectful of others.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, older workers are typically seen as less motivated, less healthy and less willing to change, despite no significant evidence to support these stereotypes.<sup>8</sup>

Attitudes and stereotypes then hinder workers as during decision-making tasks, managers may rely on their attitudes, as proposed in by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). In recruitment for example, negative attitudes towards older workers were positively related to an avoidance of hiring older people.<sup>9</sup>

Stereotypes not only influence manager behaviour but also can be internalised by workers themselves, such as older workers self-excluding themselves from promotion opportunities.<sup>10</sup> This is unsurprising as we are exposed to ageist stereotypes throughout life, perpetuated by the media. A study of language related to older age in web-based publications across 20 countries found the UK media to be the most ageist,<sup>11</sup> and recent evidence suggests the media is painting the next generation of younger workers similar to how younger Millennial workers have been portrayed in the past. This has been referred to as a generational cycle, with research suggesting the negative stereotypes once had for Millennials, such as 'lazy' and 'arrogant', are now being transferred onto the new cohort of Gen Z workers.<sup>12</sup> Negativity bias further suggests that we are more inclined to remember and internalise these negative stereotypes.

Some differences noted between older and younger workers were the most frequent forms of ageism experienced, with younger workers reporting lack of respect but older workers reporting social/ physical assumption. Older workers also reported experiencing unwanted help or attention, which was not reported by younger workers.<sup>3</sup>

### **Another difference found was higher rates of age discrimination among women than men.**<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, workers' wellbeing is impacted when discriminated against in the workplace, experiencing significantly more negative emotions when ageism is directed from an employer or co-worker than stranger.<sup>3</sup> In addition, organisations suffer as age discrimination has been associated with poor job satisfaction and commitment,<sup>14</sup> which can be costly to organisations. For instance, the US are already expected to experience economic losses of up to \$3.9 trillion by 2050 from age discrimination.<sup>15</sup>

In summary, workers in the UK are experiencing age discrimination despite age being a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, organisations and individuals need to be aware of, and act on any signs of discrimination.

## **This Study**

To build upon the existing research, Pearn Kandola conducted a survey to explore attitudes and experiences of age discrimination in contemporary UK workplaces. The aims of our study were to:

1. Explore potential differences in attitudes and beliefs of the existence of age discrimination in the workplace between younger (18-34 year olds), middle-aged (35-50 year olds) and older workers (51+ year olds).
2. Explore potential gender differences in these beliefs.
3. Investigate whether there are group differences in recognising age discrimination at work.
4. Uncover the commonality of experiences of age discrimination between the groups, either directly as victims or indirectly as witnesses.
5. Identify organisations' actions against age discrimination and to promote age inclusivity in the workplace.

## **Analysis of results**

The survey contained several 'yes'/no' questions due to the distinct experiences of many areas explored (e.g. "Have you ever experienced age discrimination in the workplace?"). Differences in frequencies between groups were analysed using Chi-Square statistical tests and supplemented with odds ratio analyses.

## **This research**

The current study identifies people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences of age discrimination at work, as well as the actions taken by both individuals and organisations. This report presents our findings from respondents living and working in the UK in 2024.

The following section will describe how we collected the data and subsequent sections will share key findings, highlighting any differences between groups.

# Approach

## Our sample

Using Prolific (an online research recruitment platform), we collected data from a total of

1,501

respondents in the UK via an online survey. The main criteria to be included in the analysis was that respondents lived in the UK.

Participants were also screened for gender identity:

<b>50%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>1%</b>
Female	Male	Self-described

The sample size for each age subgroup were also screened:

<b>500</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>498</b>
Younger workers (18-34)	Middle-aged workers (35-50)	Older workers (51+)

There is no standardised distinction between younger, middle-aged and older workers, therefore the age distinctions decided on between groups was based on previous research.

## What we measured

The survey was divided into the following sections:

- **Section 1** asked for respondent's current employment status and whether they felt age discrimination had played a part in their status.
- **Section 2** explored respondent's attitudes and perceptions to ageing and age discrimination. This included scenarios that described different forms of age discrimination from 'overt' to 'subtle' and common stereotypes associated with younger and older workers.
- **Section 3** explored the experiences of age discrimination, either directly as victims or indirectly as witnesses.
- **Section 4** explored organisations' actions against age discrimination and how they promote age inclusivity in the workplace.
- **Section 5** asked for demographic questions about the respondent (age, gender, race, work sector).

# Attitudes and Perceptions

## Do you think age discrimination exists in the workplace?

Respondents were asked whether or not they thought that age discrimination exists in the workplace.

**Overall, 88% responded "Yes".**

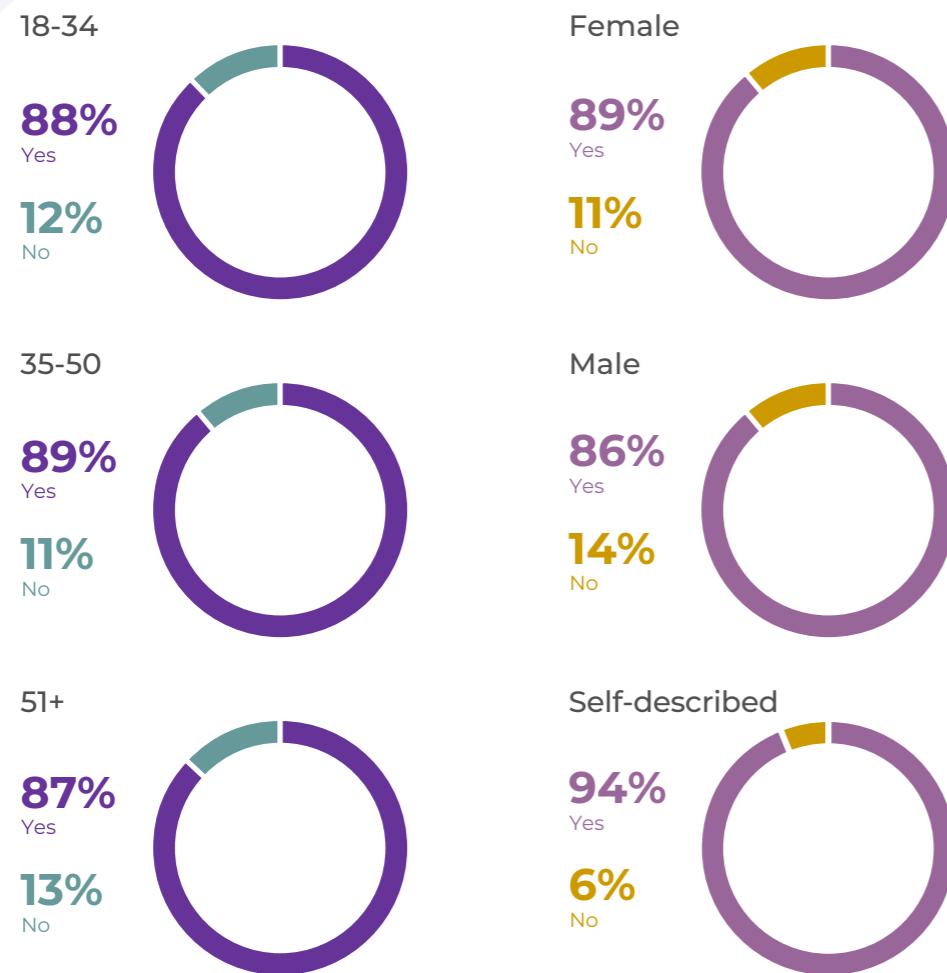


Figure 1. "Do you think age discrimination exists in the workplace?"  
Breakdown of "Yes" responses by age groups and gender identity.

A Chi-Square test revealed a non-significant difference in the responses of individuals from different age groups ( $\chi^2 = (2, N=1501) = 3.727, p = .155$ ).

A Chi-Square test revealed a non-significant difference in the responses of people from different gender identities ( $\chi^2 = (2, 1501) = 5.897, p = .052$ ).

These results suggest that, although believing that age discrimination being a problem in the workplace can vary depending on whether someone is a younger, middle-aged, or older worker, or can vary depending on someone's gender identity, these differences were not statistically significant.

## Do you consider age discrimination to be a problem in the workplace?

Respondents were asked whether or not they thought that age discrimination is a problem in the workplace.

**Overall, 70% responded "Yes".**

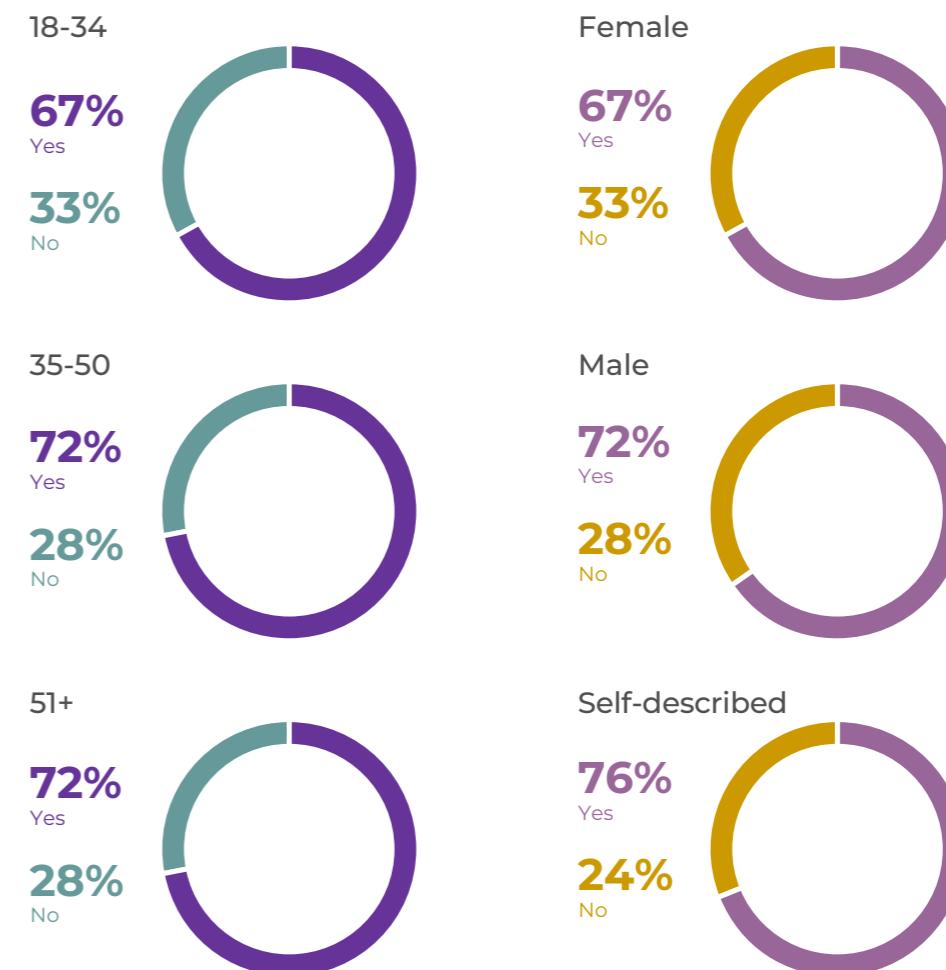


Figure 2. "Do you consider age discrimination to be a problem in the workplace?"  
Breakdown of "Yes" responses by age groups and gender identity.

These findings highlight how, despite a large majority of respondents thinking age discrimination does exist in the workplace, a smaller proportion consider it to be a problem.

A Chi-Square test revealed a non-significant difference in the responses of individuals from different age groups ( $\chi^2 = (2, N=1501) = 3.727, p = .155$ ).

A Chi-Square test revealed a non-significant difference in the responses of people from different gender identities ( $\chi^2 = (2, 1501) = 5.897, p = .052$ ).

These results suggest that, although believing that age discrimination being a problem in the workplace can vary depending on whether someone is a younger, middle-aged, or older worker, or vary depending on gender identity, these differences were not statistically significant.

## When you are at work, how comfortable do you feel discussing age?

Respondents were asked how comfortable they felt discussing age in a work environment.

**Overall, the mean score of all the respondents was 73/100.**

Each age group are fairly comfortable in discussing age in the workplace, with older workers being the most comfortable.



Figure 3: "When you are at work, how comfortable do you feel discussing age?"  
Mean scores per age group (1 = Very uncomfortable, 100 = Very comfortable).

A one-way between subjects ANOVA of the data revealed a significant difference between comfort ratings of at least two of the age groups ( $F (2, 1498) = 3.468, p = .031$ ).

A Bonferroni post hoc test revealed the mean score for older workers ( $M = 74.82 SD = 24.225$ ) was statistically different to the mean score for middle-aged workers ( $M = 70.90 SD = 23.362$ ). There was no significant difference in comfort between younger workers and both middle-aged workers and older workers.

## In the workplace, have you ever witnessed someone discriminating against someone else because of their age?

Respondents were asked if they have witnessed someone discriminating against someone else on the basis of their age.

**Overall, 38% of respondents said "Yes".**

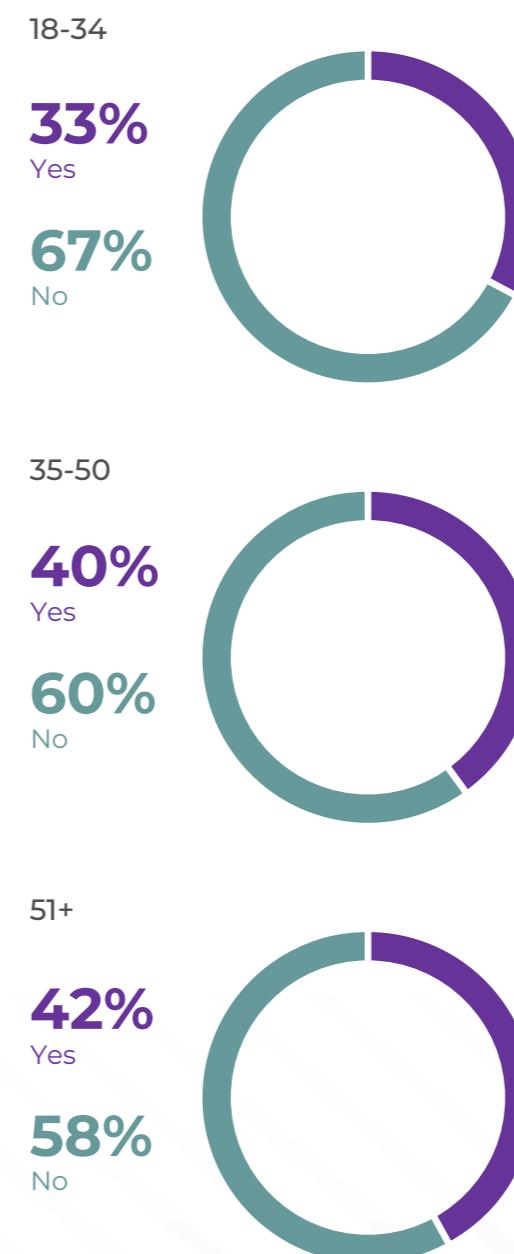


Figure 4. "In the workplace, have you ever witnessed someone discriminating against someone else because of their age?" Breakdown of "Yes" responses by age groups.

A Chi-Square test revealed a significant difference in the responses of the individuals from different age groups ( $\chi^2 = (2, N=1501) = 9.522, p=.009$ ), suggesting that experiences of witnessing age discrimination in the workplace vary depending on whether someone is a younger, middle-aged, or older worker.

**Odds ratio of the data revealed older workers were 1.5 times more likely to have witnessed age discrimination in the workplace than younger workers.**

## How did you respond after witnessing this event?

Overall, of respondents who said they had witnessed age discrimination in the workplace, 41% took no action, 26% spoke to the victim, 19% confronted the perpetrator, 12% reported the incident to a manager or HR department, and 1% filed a complaint with an authority.

18-34

**44%**  
I took no action

**25%**  
I spoke to the victim

**12%**  
I confronted the perpetrator

**18%**  
I reported the incident to a manager or HR department

**1%**  
I filed a complaint with an authority

35-50

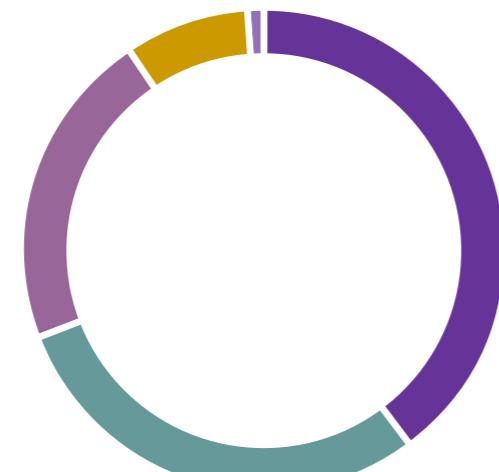
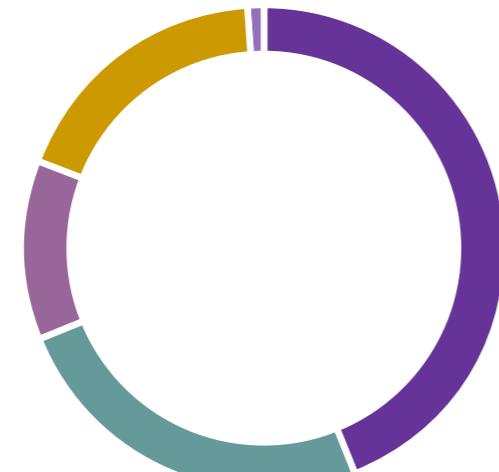
**39%**  
I took no action

**29%**  
I spoke to the victim

**21%**  
I confronted the perpetrator

**8%**  
I reported the incident to a manager or HR department

**1%**  
I filed a complaint with an authority



**Of those who witnessed age discrimination at work, a larger percentage of each age group took no action after witnessing age discrimination at work than took action.**

51+

**41%**  
I took no action

**23%**  
I spoke to the victim

**24%**  
I confronted the perpetrator

**11%**  
I reported the incident to a manager or HR department

**1%**  
I filed a complaint with an authority

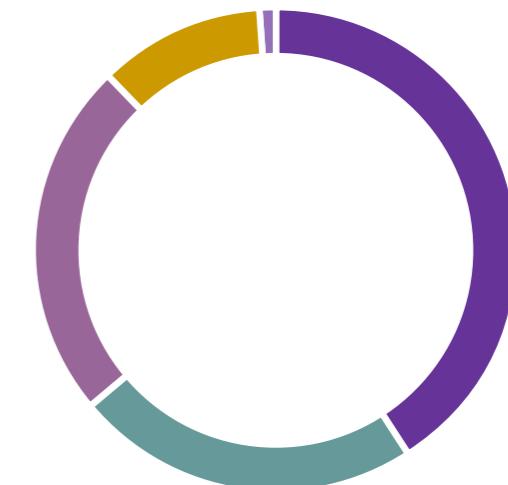


Figure 5. "How did you respond after witnessing this event?"  
Breakdown of "Yes" responses by age groups.

## What was the outcome of the action?

Those who said they had taken action when they witnessed age discrimination in the workplace were then asked what the outcome of the action was. Overall, 45% stated the action led to appropriate outcomes and the situation was dealt with. However, 31% stated the issue was not resolved, followed by 23% who said the action was ignored and 1% finding the action worsened the situation.

**45%**  
The action led to appropriate outcomes and the situation was dealt with

**31%**  
The issue was not resolved

**23%**  
The complaint was ignored, or no action was taken

**1%**  
The action worsened the situation

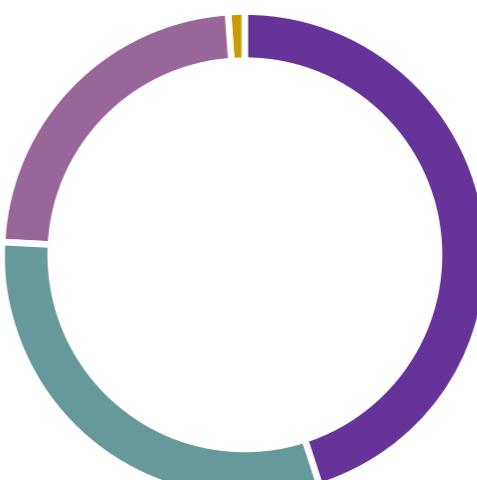


Figure 6. "What was the outcome of the action?"  
Breakdown of "Yes" responses by age groups

Figure 6 highlights how taking action can have a positive impact when dealing with incidents of age discrimination (45%) but also emphasises how in a majority of situations (55%), the issue was either unresolved, ignored, or worsened and therefore intervention is needed.

## Was there a particular reason for not taking action?

Of the respondents who took no action, the most common response was "I didn't consider it serious enough to report" (36%), followed by "I feared the consequences" (33%) and "It wasn't my business" (15%), "I was unsure of who would be appropriate to talk to" (14%), and "I didn't have time" (1%).

18-34

**40%**  
I didn't consider it serious enough to report

**22%**  
I feared the consequences  
(i.e., being penalised by the person carrying out the discriminatory behaviour)

**15%**  
It wasn't my business

**19%**  
I was unsure on who would be appropriate to talk to

**3%**  
I didn't have time

35-50

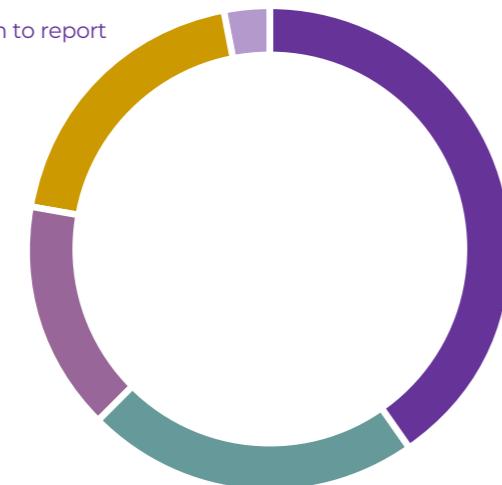
**42%**  
I didn't consider it serious enough to report

**33%**  
I feared the consequences  
(i.e., being penalised by the person carrying out the discriminatory behaviour)

**15%**  
It wasn't my business

**10%**  
I was unsure on who would be appropriate to talk to

**0%**  
I didn't have time



## "I didn't consider it serious enough to report"

51+

**28%**  
I didn't consider it serious enough to report

**43%**  
I feared the consequences  
(i.e., being penalised by the person carrying out the discriminatory behaviour)

**15%**  
It wasn't my business

**14%**  
I was unsure on who would be appropriate to talk to

**0%**  
I didn't have time

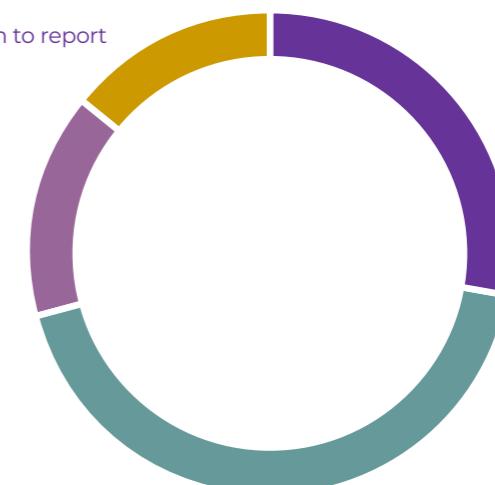


Figure 7. "Was there a particular reason for not taking action?"  
Breakdown of "Yes" responses by age groups.

As highlighted in figure 7, responses varied by age group:

- Younger and middle-aged workers were more likely to report that they 'didn't consider it serious enough to report' in regard to why they took no action.
- Older workers were more likely to report that they 'feared the consequences' if they were to report age discrimination.
- 15% of workers from each group that took no action reported it was because they felt it wasn't their business.
- Only younger workers reported that they 'didn't have the time' as to why they took no action.

## How do you feel about ageing?

18-34

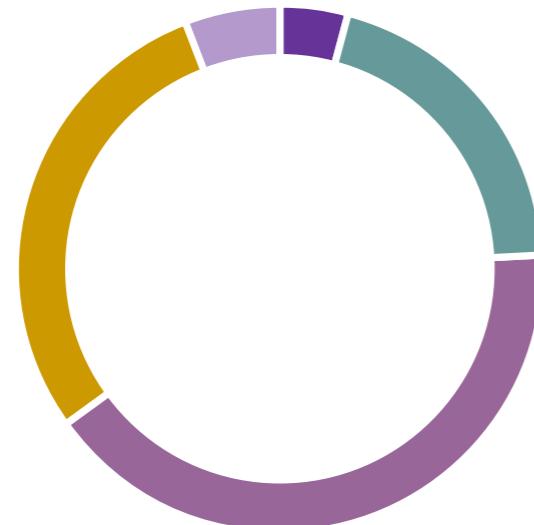
**4.4%**  
Very positive

**20%**  
Positive

**40.8%**  
Neutral

**29.2%**  
Negative

**5.6%**  
Very negative



51+

**4.4%**  
Very positive

**25.9%**  
Positive

**38.7%**  
Neutral

**27.5%**  
Negative

**3.4%**  
Very negative



35-50

**4.4%**  
Very positive

**22.5%**  
Positive

**42.5%**  
Neutral

**27%**  
Negative

**3.6%**  
Very negative

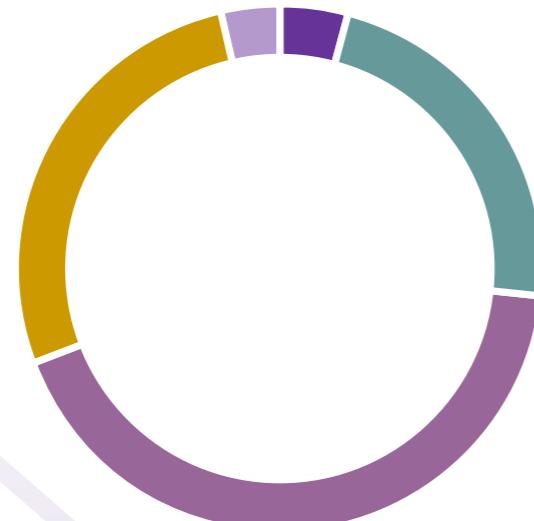


Figure 8. "How do you feel about ageing?"  
Breakdown of "Yes" responses by age groups.

Participants were asked how they felt about ageing to understand the general attitude towards getting older. Overall, most respondents felt neutral about the ageing process (41%). However, this was followed by a negative attitude towards ageing (28%). Positive feelings towards ageing amounted to 23% and very positive and very negative both at 4%.

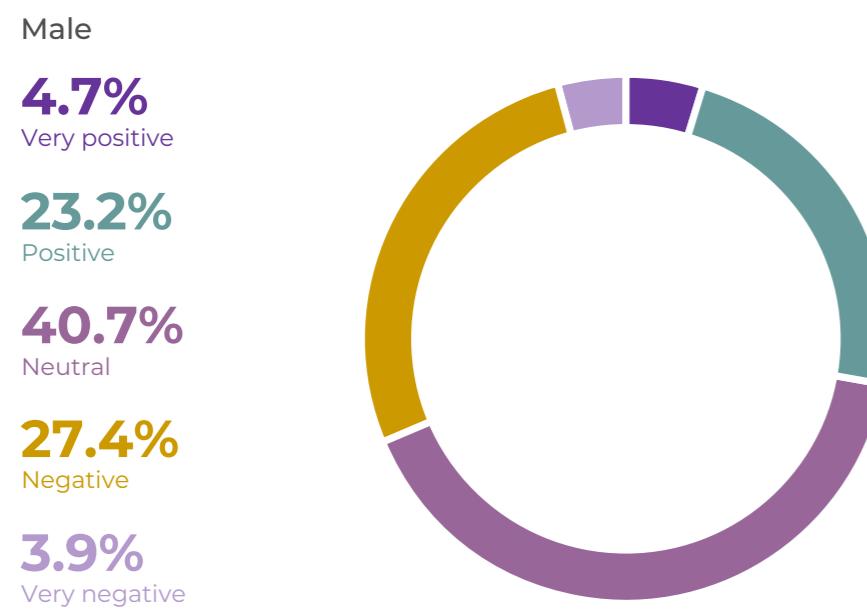
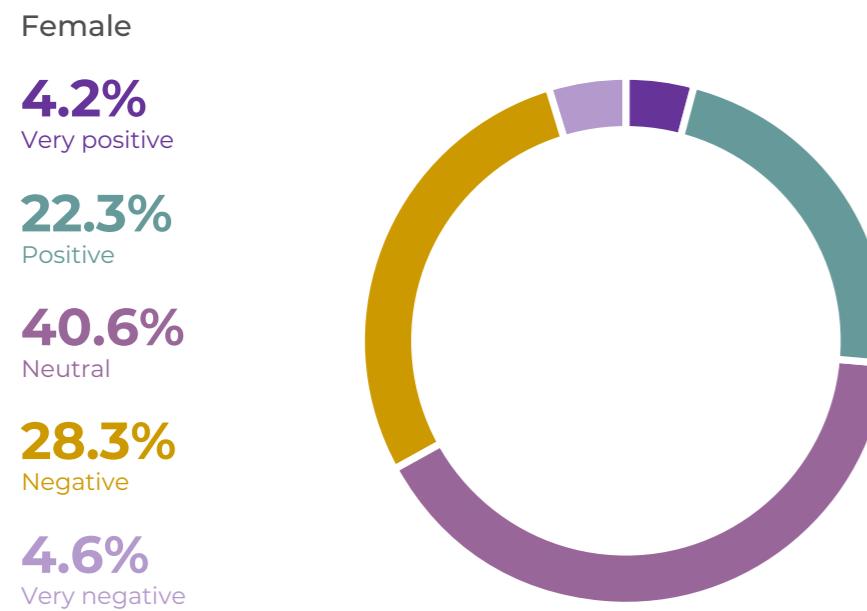


Figure 9. "How do you feel about ageing?"  
The number of responses between females and males.

While respondents most commonly reported feeling neutral to ageing, the next commonly reported attitude was negative. Having a negative attitude towards ageing plays a role in the endorsement of negative stereotypes of older workers.

## To what extent do you agree that...

Participants were asked to what extent they agree with positive and negative statements regarding older and younger workers. One-way ANOVAs and post hoc tests were conducted to determine any significant differences between the extent workers of different age groups or attitudes to ageing agreed with the statements.

Overall, workers were found more likely to disagree with negative stereotypes about their respective age group. For example, older workers disagreed significantly more with the following:

**Older workers are reluctant to be trained.**

**Older workers are less motivated than younger workers.**

**Older workers' health limits their capabilities.**

Similarly, younger workers disagreed significantly more with the following:

**Younger workers are entitled.**

**Younger workers have a poor work ethic.**

**Younger workers are untrustworthy.**

In addition, respondents were more likely to disagree with negative statements about their respective group that were framed in a positive manner towards another group. For example, older workers disagreed significantly more with the statement that 'Younger workers are more competent than older workers'. Younger workers disagreed significantly more that 'Older workers are warmer than younger workers'.

There was also evidence to suggest workers are significantly more likely to agree with positive statements about their respective group, with older workers agreeing most with the statement 'Older workers are conscientious'.

It was further found that younger workers agreed most with the statement that 'Younger workers experience age discrimination as much as older workers'. This could be reperceptive of younger workers currently being in that respective group and therefore finding it easier to recall on own experiences or others their age, compared to older workers.

One explanation for these findings is that age is seen an important indicator of our identity, with British individuals ranking 'age/generation' as the second most important factor to their identity if they are introducing themselves to someone. As a result, we are likely to disagree with negative stereotypes about our age to maintain a positive self-identity.

In terms of attitude to ageing, respondents with a very positive/positive attitude to ageing were found to significantly disagree more with negative stereotypes about older workers, including:

**Older workers are reluctant to be trained.**

**Older workers are less motivated than younger workers.**

**Older workers' health limits their capabilities.**

There were no significant differences between different attitudes to ageing and the extent they agreed with statements about younger workers, except for the statement:

**'Younger workers are more competent than older workers.'**

Respondents with a negative attitude to ageing disagreed significantly more with the statement than respondents with a neutral attitude to ageing.

## Summary

Individuals with a positive attitude disagreed more with negative stereotypes about older workers, suggesting that improving attitudes to ageing could reduce the endorsement of negative stereotypes towards older workers and in turn, prevent discriminatory practices towards older workers, such as avoidance of hiring.

# Recognising Age Discrimination

The ability to challenge age discrimination in the workplace will be influenced by individuals' ability to recognise such incidents when they occur.

## Are the following scenarios discriminatory?

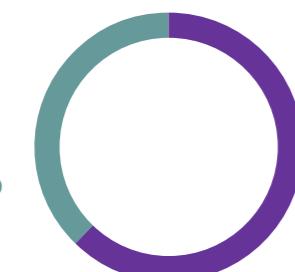
Respondents were presented with a range of scenarios which described, or did not describe, incidents of age discrimination. We were interested in how effective UK employees were at recognising different forms of age discrimination in the workplace. The following shows the percentage of respondents that correctly identified each type of discrimination, classified by age group.

### Subtle, benevolent

Acting in a prejudiced manner and framing these behaviours as positive or beneficial to the recipient (Romani et al., 2019).

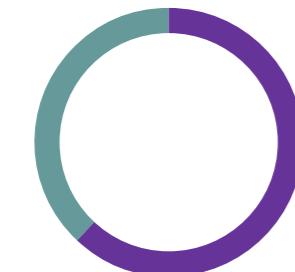
18-34

56%  
Yes  
44%  
No



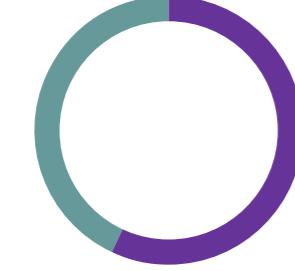
35-50

62%  
Yes  
38%  
No



51+

57%  
Yes  
43%  
No

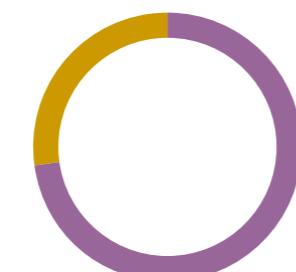


### Subtle, malevolent

Subtle acts that are commonplace and ambiguous (e.g. *micro-incivilities*; Kandola, 2018). These can be intentional or unintentional.

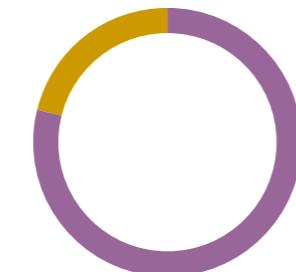
18-34

73%  
Yes  
27%  
No



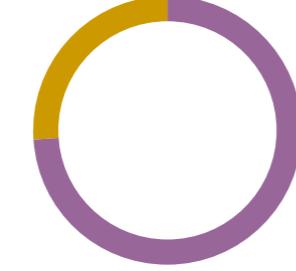
35-50

79%  
Yes  
21%  
No



51+

74%  
Yes  
26%  
No

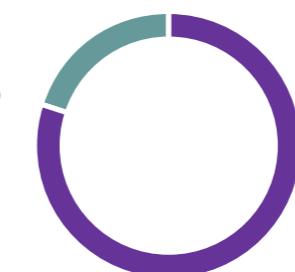


### Explicit, malevolent

Behaviours that are exclusionary, verbally and/or physically antagonistic and avoidant (Blank et al., 2014).

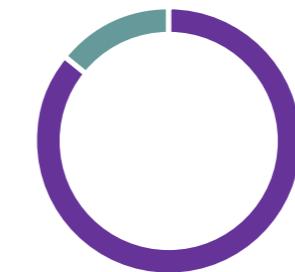
18-34

80%  
Yes  
20%  
No



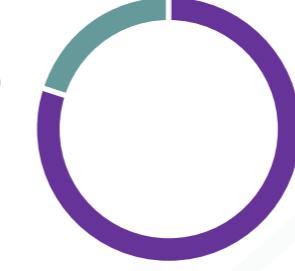
35-50

86%  
Yes  
14%  
No



51+

80%  
Yes  
20%  
No



### Overall, respondents were more likely to recognise forms of 'explicit, malevolent' discrimination (82%), compared to 'subtle, malevolent' (76%) and 'subtle, benevolent' discrimination (58%).

Figure 10 suggests it was harder for respondents to identify subtle, benevolent discrimination, suggesting that intervention is needed to teach workers how age discrimination can manifest in multiple ways to enable them to spot it.

Figure 10 also suggests middle-aged workers were more able to recognise the three forms of discrimination than younger and older workers.

Figure 10. "Are the following scenarios discriminatory?"  
Breakdown of "Yes" responses by age groups.

# Experiences of Age Discrimination

Have you ever experienced age discrimination in the workplace?

Overall, 25% of the respondents reported having experienced age discrimination in the workplace.

A Chi-Square test revealed a significant difference in the responses of the individuals from different age groups ( $\chi^2 = (2, N=1501) = 16.653, p = < .001$ ), suggesting that experiences of age discrimination in the workplace vary depending on whether someone is a younger, middle-aged, or older worker.

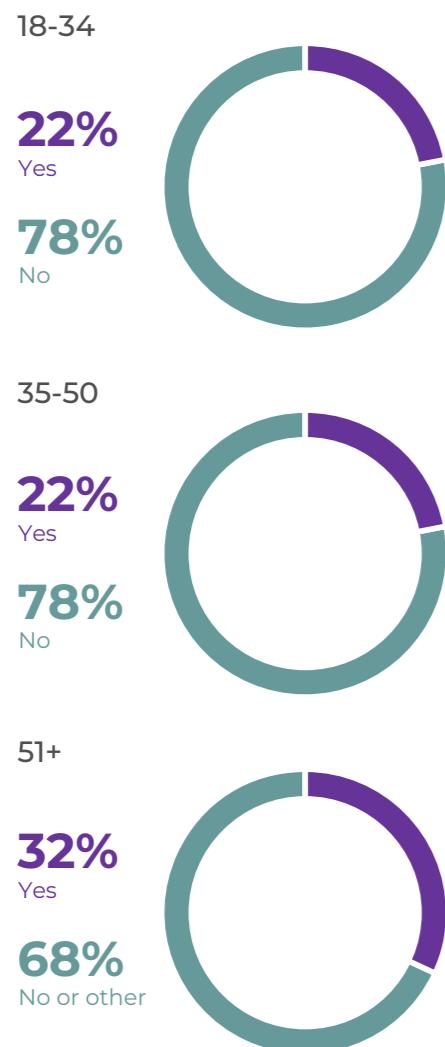


Figure 11. "Have you ever experienced age discrimination in the workplace?" Breakdown of "Yes" responses by age groups.

**Odds ratio of the data revealed older workers were 1.7 times more likely to have experienced age discrimination in the workplace than younger workers.**

Older workers recorded experiencing the highest level of discrimination in the workplace (32%). Middle-aged and younger workers recorded experiencing the same level. These findings are in line with the existing research that middle-aged workers, while they do experience age discrimination at work, do not to the same extent as older workers.

A reason for the group differences may be that older workers have been in the workforce for longer and in turn had more time to experience discriminatory practices, with the results not reflecting at what age they experienced the discriminatory behaviour. Therefore, respondents who answered "Yes" were then asked to specify the age(s) they experienced the age discrimination.

Experienced age discrimination between the ages of			
	18-34	35-50	51+
18-34	100%	N/A	N/A
35-50	62%	38%	N/A
51+	16%	16%	67%

Table 1. "Specify the age(s) you experienced the age discrimination?" Breakdown of "Yes" responses by age groups.

Table 1 shows that a majority (62%) of middle-aged workers experience of age discrimination came from when they were between the ages of 18-34 (younger workers). Only 38% of their experiences were between the ages of 35-50, further supporting the existing literature.

When broken down, older workers experience of age discrimination when over 50 (116 reports), is not far off younger workers experience of age discrimination between the ages of 18-34 (105 reports), suggesting younger workers and older workers experience similar levels of age discrimination when in the corresponding age range. This is in line with previous research.

Overall, 27% of female respondents, 23% of male respondents and 19% of self-described respondents had experienced age discrimination at work.

A Chi-Square test revealed no significant difference in the responses of the individuals from different gender identities ( $\chi^2 = (2, N=1501) = 16.653, p = < .001$ ). This suggests that, although experience of age discrimination can vary depending on gender identity, these differences were not statistically significant.

## Have you experienced any of the following situations?

Participants were asked whether they had experienced any of a range of situations in the workplace. Below is a table demonstrating the percentage of participants in the age groups that had experienced each of the scenarios.

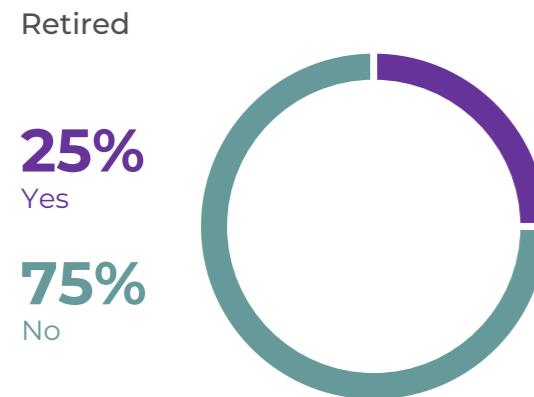
	18-34	35-50	51+
I have been intentionally excluded from work or social events because of my age	5.0%	5.6%	8.8%
I have been verbally or physically abused from work or social events because of my age by other colleagues	3.6%	4.0%	3.6%
I have been falsely accused or criticised by colleagues because of my age	6.4%	4.6%	3.6%
Colleagues have made assumptions about my ability, character or behaviour based on stereotypes of my age	28.4%	20.5%	28.7%
I have sometimes felt that because of my age, I am not always actively included by my colleagues	13%	10.5%	18.9%
I sometimes feel that because of my age, colleagues treat me differently	21.0%	13.7%	20.3%
I have been asked intrusive questions about my age by my colleagues	10.2%	11.1%	8.0%
I have experienced unwanted help or attention from colleagues because of my age	10.4%	5.4%	6.4%
I have experienced colleagues policing my outfit choices because of my age (e.g.: suggesting that I dress more age appropriately)	6.0%	4.8%	3.0%
I have been on the receiving end of jokes about my age	19.7%	16.3%	27.1%
<b>None of the above</b>	<b>52.5%</b>	<b>58.3%</b>	<b>47.2%</b>

Table 2. "Have you experienced any of the following situations?"  
Breakdown of "Yes" responses by age groups.

As highlighted in the table, responses varied between different age groups:

- One of the most common experiences of age discrimination amongst workers of all ages was having assumptions made about their ability, character or behaviour based on stereotypes of their age.
- Younger and older workers similarly felt that they were treated differently because of their age, whereas middle-aged workers did not report experiencing that as much.
- Older workers reported being on the receiving end of jokes noticeably more than younger and middle-aged workers.
- Younger workers reported experiencing unwanted help or attention because of their age more than older workers. Previous research found the opposite.
- Further analysis found that a majority of those who experienced unwanted help or attention because of their age were female (64%), compared to male (33%) and self-described (3%).
- A large proportion of respondents from all ages reported having experienced none of the above examples.

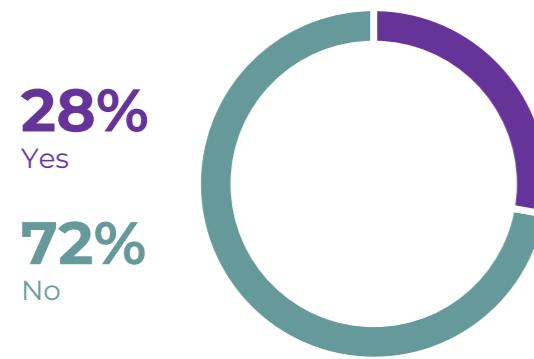
Did discriminatory practices related to your age play a part in your current employment status?



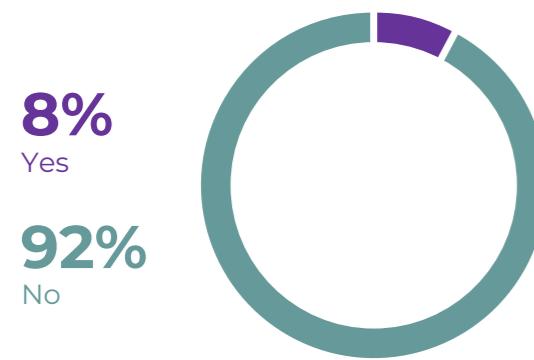
Participants who listed their current employment status as retired or unemployed were asked whether age discrimination had played a role.

**Overall, 18% of respondents said that age discrimination had played a part in their employment status.**

Unemployed (seeking work)



Unemployed (not seeking work)



**Of participants that responded “Yes” to age discrimination playing a part in their current employment status, 77% were older workers, followed by 15% younger workers and 8% middle-aged workers.**

Moreover, unemployed individuals seeking work reported age discrimination playing a role in their current employment status the most (28%), highlighting how the workforce is suffering from the absence of capable workers due to age discrimination.

Figure 12. “Did discriminatory practices related to your age play a part in your current employment status?” Breakdown of “Yes” responses by employment status.

# Actions Taken by Organisations

Respondents were asked whether their organisation had taken any action to promote an inclusive culture and/or a positive attitude towards people of all ages in their respective workplace.

**Overall, 40% of all respondents said that their organisation had taken action to promote age equality in the workplace.**

Respondents whose organisation had taken actions were asked to identify the type(s) of action taken. Below are the most common actions taken by organisations to promote inclusive culture and positive attitudes towards people of different ages.

**Championing equality in the workplace (increasing equality and/or awareness):** This was the action a majority of respondents reported (66.8%).

**Change internal policies and practice:** 48.3% of respondents reported their organisation changed internal policies and practices to increase equality and inclusion within the workplace. This broader aspect of organisational action involved ensuring there are sufficient opportunities to report exclusion, offering equal opportunities, and developing better employment and recruitment practices.

**Culture and communication:** 43.5% of respondents reported that their organisation took action under the title of increasing culture and communication. This involves developing inclusive culture and improving communication in attempt to increase equality in the workplace. This was listed in the form of supporting organisations that champion age positivity, hosting events, starting networks and/or support groups for individuals in the workplace.

**Education:** 37.8% of respondents listed actions related to 'education'. The 'education' action consisted of workshops and training, seminars and talks, and training and development programmes. age discrimination in the workplace and promotes inclusive behaviour.

How long has this activity been going on for?

**65%**  
More than 2 years

**16.3%**  
1-2 years

**7%**  
6-12 months

**4.7%**  
1-6 months

**1.7%**  
Less than a month

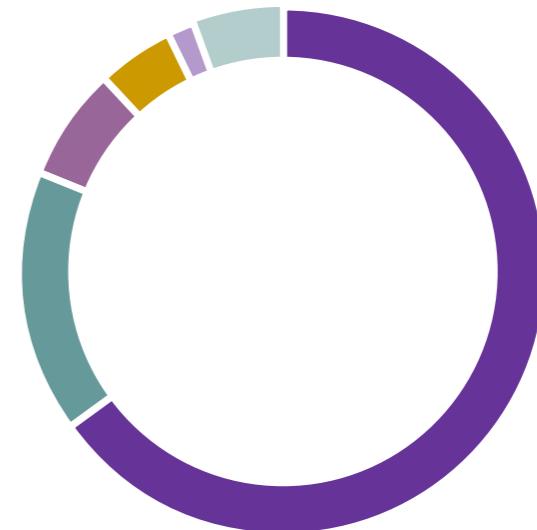


Figure 13. "How long has this activity been going on for?"

A pattern begins to emerge as it was found workers tend to take no action when witnessing age discrimination. If organisations are failing to take action, then a standard is set to employers for their own actions.

As it was found that a positive attitude to ageing led to greater disagreement of negative stereotypes about older workers, organisations should be taking action to create inclusive workplaces that promote a positive attitude towards all aged workers to prevent age discriminatory behaviours and prevent the negative consequences of perceived age discrimination, such as poor job satisfaction and commitment.<sup>11</sup>

**The findings suggest that a majority of organisations (60%) are not taking any action to promote an inclusive culture and/or positive attitude towards people of all ages.**

# Recommendations

Age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act and therefore organisations need to be aware of, and act on any signs of discrimination. Beyond legal requirement, understanding where and how age discrimination may inhibit organisations is necessary in preventing it to establish inclusive work environments.

The recommendations below are based on the findings and the implications of this research, alongside our wider expertise in understanding race and gender discrimination.

**1**

## **> Awareness of biases and negative stereotypes**

Stereotype training should be for all ages as younger workers will become older workers at a later stage. Should also be a focus on subtle, benevolent stereotypes as these were proven harder to identify.

**2**

## **> Cross-collaboration between age groups**

Ensure cross-collaboration between workers of different age groups. This can be work-based, implementing inter-group theory or more social, e.g. implementing a buddy system. There is evidence of positive effects from intergenerational communication.

**3**

## **> Encourage education and awareness**

Raise awareness of age discrimination and promote positive attitudes to ageing, e.g. by signing up to the Age-friendly Employer Pledge from the Centre for Ageing Better. Research suggests that implicit preferences for younger workers were lowered the more positively older adults are perceived.

**4**

## **> Make the legality of age discrimination clear**

Ensure human resources professionals and hiring managers are aware that age discrimination is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act (2010) and that they have the necessary procedures, policies and interview skills in place to minimise bias.

**5**

## **> Make employees aware of actions they can take**

Make employees aware of actions they can take in the event of discrimination occurring and that any action taken is followed up to completion.

**6**

## **> Inclusion policies**

Mention your inclusion policies in your attraction materials, this will help to attract older workers capable of working who are unemployed.

# References

1. Centre for Ageing Better, 2024, [www.ageing-better.org.uk/news/are-you-ageist-englands-first-ever-anti-ageism-campaign-launches](http://www.ageing-better.org.uk/news/are-you-ageist-englands-first-ever-anti-ageism-campaign-launches)
2. Legal and General Group Plc, 2021, [www.group.legalandgeneral.com/media/g05n4fmy/working-late-launch-final.pdf](http://www.group.legalandgeneral.com/media/g05n4fmy/working-late-launch-final.pdf)
3. English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), 2023, Ageing better? Life over 50 in the 21st Century, [www.elsa-project.ac.uk/post/ageing-better-life-over-50-in-the-21st-century](http://www.elsa-project.ac.uk/post/ageing-better-life-over-50-in-the-21st-century)
4. Snape, E., & Redman, T. (2003). Too Old or Too Young? The Impact of Perceived Age Discrimination. *Human Resource Management Journal*. 13. 78-89. 10.1111/j.1748-8583.2003.tb00085.x.
5. Chasteen, A. L., Horhota, M., & Crumley-Branyon, J. J. (2021). Overlooked and Underestimated: Experiences of Ageism in Young, Middle-Aged, and Older Adults. *The journals of gerontology. Series B, Psychological sciences and social sciences*, 76(7), 1323–1328. [www.doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbaa043](http://www.doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbaa043)
6. Finkelstein, L. M., Ryan, K. M., & King, E. B. (2013). What do the young (old) people think of me? Content and accuracy of age-based metastereotypes. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 22(6), 633–657. [www.doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2012.673279](http://www.doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2012.673279)
7. Raymer, M., Reed, M., Spiegel, M., & Purvanova, R. K. (2017). An examination of generational stereotypes as a path towards reverse ageism. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, 20(3), 148–175. [www.doi.org/10.1037/mgr0000057](http://www.doi.org/10.1037/mgr0000057)
8. Ng, T. W. H., & Feldman, D. C. (2012). Evaluating six common stereotypes about older workers with meta-analytical data. *Personnel Psychology*, 65(4), 821–858. [www.doi.org/10.1111/peps.12003](http://www.doi.org/10.1111/peps.12003)
9. Fasbender, U., & Wang, M. (2017). Negative attitudes toward older workers and hiring decisions: Testing the moderating role of decision makers' core self-evaluations. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, Article 2057. [www.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.02057](http://www.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.02057)
10. van der Horst, M. (2019). Internalised Ageism and Self-Exclusion: Does Feeling Old and Health Pessimism Make Individuals Want to Retire Early? *Social Inclusion*, 7(3), 27+. [www.link.gale.com/apps/doc/A624293913/AONE?u=anon~b83a90d2&sid=googleScholar&xid=8be51eab](http://www.link.gale.com/apps/doc/A624293913/AONE?u=anon~b83a90d2&sid=googleScholar&xid=8be51eab)
11. Ng, R., & Lim-Soh, J. W. (2021). Ageism linked to culture, not demographics: Evidence from an 8-billion-word corpus across 20 countries. *The Journals of Gerontology. Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Science* 76(9): 1791–1798.
12. Duffy, B. (2021). *The Generation Divide: Why We Can't Agree and Why We Should*. Atlantic Books.
13. Stypinska, J., & Turek, K. (2017). Hard and soft age discrimination: The dual nature of workplace discrimination. *European Journal of Ageing*, 14(1), 49–61. [www.doi.org/10.1007/s10433-016-0407-y](http://www.doi.org/10.1007/s10433-016-0407-y)
14. Macdonald, J., & Levy, S. (2016). Ageism in the Workplace: The Role of Psychosocial Factors in Predicting Job Satisfaction, Commitment, and Engagement. *Journal of Social Issues*. 72. 169-190. 10.1111/josi.12161.
15. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), 2022, Age Discrimination Costs the Economy Billions, [www.aarp.org/politics-society/advocacy/info-2020/age-discrimination-economic-impact.html](http://www.aarp.org/politics-society/advocacy/info-2020/age-discrimination-economic-impact.html)
16. Ipsos MORI, BBC Identity Polling, 2014, [www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/migrations/en-uk/files/Assets/Docs/Polls/ipsos-mori-bbc-identity-poll-2014-tables.pdf](http://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/migrations/en-uk/files/Assets/Docs/Polls/ipsos-mori-bbc-identity-poll-2014-tables.pdf)
17. Kleissner, V., & Jahn, G. (2020). Implicit and Explicit Measurement of Work-Related Age Attitudes and Age Stereotypes. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 579155. [www.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.579155](http://www.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.579155)

# Difference inspires business

Pearn Kandola LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England No. OC346998.  
Registered office: Latimer House, Langford Business Park, Kidlington OX5 1GG

A list of members is available from our Registered Office.

Copyright in these materials is owned by Pearn Kandola. All rights reserved. No part of these materials, including the design and layout, may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means (electronic, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of Pearn Kandola

[info@pearnkandola.com](mailto:info@pearnkandola.com) | [PearnKandola.com](http://PearnKandola.com) | +44 (0) 1865 399060

