

# Ageism in the Workplace

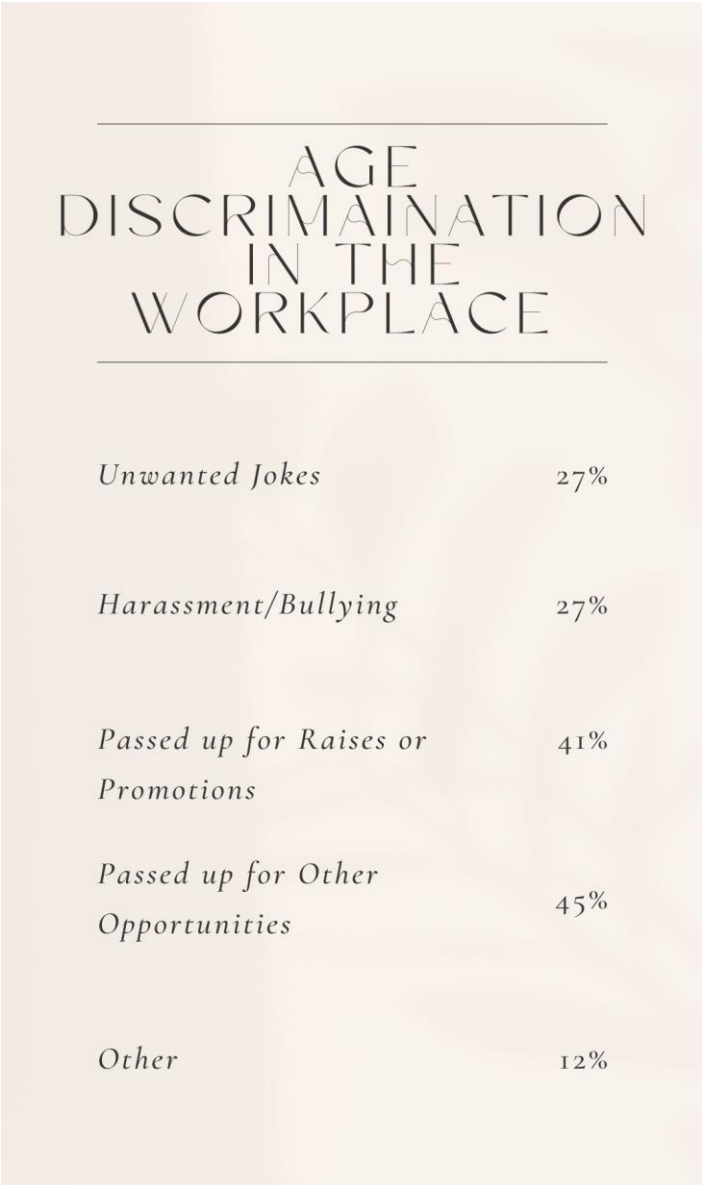


While many companies and organizations value a diverse and inclusive team, there is still one issue that is often overlooked in the workplace: Ageism. Ageism refers to discriminating against someone because of their age. The younger and older generations can both experience this, but it is more common for those that are 45 years old or older to experience ageism in their workplace. Although the older employees can bring substantial value to companies due to their knowledge and experience, employers still put more value towards the younger, less experienced employees. There are many reasons associated with this, but some of the main reasons that ageism exists is employers assuming older employees are slow, stubborn, and not technologically savvy.

## Overview of Ageism in the Workplace

Employees experience ageism more than before due to the delays in retirement. Retirement has become less easy to attain throughout the years, especially compared to the late 90s when employees began retirement at age 60. Employees are now beginning to retire around age 66, and some are retiring even later than that, if retirement is even an option. Some voluntarily stay in their jobs, but careerism is not the only factor affecting the age of retirement. Money is a big concern when individuals are planning to retire, which can be difficult to obtain when older

generations are constantly competing with younger generations for promotions and new positions. In 2022, only 46% of U.S. households had savings for retirement, and only 26% had saved more than \$100,000. This amount doesn't improve much with older generations, with the estimated median retirement savings being \$162,000 for those in their 60s. If individuals are not meeting their retirement goals, then they have no choice but to continue working, making the age of retirement older as the years go by.



About one in five workers over 40 years old and one in four over 60 years old have experienced age discrimination at their job. Another one in five in their 40s have witnessed age

discrimination and nearly half of the workers 40 years old or older have heard stories of colleagues facing age discrimination. Age discrimination can keep people from making a living, which, again, results in a later retirement. However, some industries are worse than others when it comes to age discrimination. 30% of older people in business, 27% in government, and 27% in retail had experienced age discrimination.

## **Ageism in the Job Search**

It's never too late to have a career change, and older employees have proven this over and over again. Often, discrimination begins at the hiring process. Employers want younger employees that recently graduated college or university to begin the entry level positions, but these positions should be available for anyone that is looking to pursue something new. Researchers in the United Kingdom found that those looking for jobs that are 50 years old or older are three times less likely to be selected for interviews than younger professionals with less experience.

Even though companies are choosing younger workers over older ones, this has not deterred older professionals from carrying on their careers or beginning career transitions. Individuals between ages 55 and 64 who left the workforce have rejoined it at higher rates than younger professionals between 2020 and 2022. 55% of retirees have rejoined the workforce due to financial concerns, and another 15% are now considering rejoining the workforce.

Global health threats from Covid-19 and the economic consequences have impacted all workers in the United States, but older workers are still having a harder time getting to the interview process, let alone being hired for a position. 76% of respondents in an AARP survey believe that their job search will last longer due to age discrimination. This means that older professionals are falling into the same issue as recently graduated college students, where they are expecting to be unemployed for longer than expected.

Although not required, many individuals place their high school graduation and college graduation dates on their resumes. Some even put their birth dates on their resumes. All this information allows for age discrimination in the job search process. A study conducted in 2020 by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that workers 40 years old or older are about half as likely to receive a job offer than younger professionals if the employer knows their age. To overcome age discrimination against younger professionals and college graduates, universities and career centers are now telling people to leave this information out to eliminate any possibility of discrimination.

## **Differences in Ageism in the Workplace**

Ageism affects many people, but it can affect those with diverse backgrounds in a unique way. Factors of race, gender, and ethnicity can change how ageism affects an individual. Researchers found that white men under 50 are nearly two times more likely to receive and interview over those that are 50 and above. Older men and women of color are even more likely to experience age discrimination. The same study revealed that younger white men are more than two times more likely to receive an interview than a white woman in her 50s and a black man in his 50s, and three times more likely to receive an interview than a black woman in her 50s. It seems that the issue of inclusivity and diversity all around is a problem in the workforce.

As women continue to have a large presence in the workforce, they have also taken the role of noticing ageism in the workplace and calling for change. A heightened awareness of ageism has led to women filing more reports of ageism at work. While women are still facing consequences of their gender in the workforce, they are also attempting to solve the problem of ageism. This is prominent in women 50 years old and older.

Race and ageism aren't always connected, but they intersect with one another making it harder for people of color to receive offers for professional positions. These issues deeply affect one's career. Researchers found that 75% of Black workers experience discrimination in the workplace and 61% of Hispanic workers experience discrimination. Although Black workers below the age of 40 are two times more likely to experience discrimination, there is still 17% of Black workers above age 40 that report discrimination at work. These variables add yet another obstacle for employers to overcome, making it more difficult for those looking to find a new job.

## **Overcoming Ageism in the Workplace**

Ageism is way too common in the United States, but employers can take preventative measures to ensure that ageism does not occur in their workplace. More than 1,000 companies have recently pledged to provide more job opportunities to older workers and provide a more equal recruitment process for workers of all ages.

Ageism affects all industries, but it has become a major problem in the tech industry. This may be due to tech companies assuming older professionals are not as tech savvy as younger professionals. Tech workers are claiming that they want a more diverse future, insinuating that

they are trying to eliminate the problem of ageism. While youth is often associated with tech and innovation, this is a false assumption. The average age of an entrepreneur is 45 years old, so it is time that tech companies start building more open-minded spaces where older workers are welcome.

In addition to offering more job opportunities to older workers, companies also need to begin taking decisive action to combat age discrimination. AARP researchers found that flexible work options could have helped 75% of people 50 years old and older stay in the workforce. They also found that additional training could have helped older employees stay in the workforce.

Employers need to begin recognizing that the increase in diversity increases the productivity of teams in the workplace. Overall, companies that are diverse in age experience increased productivity and reduced turnover. Each generation has something valuable to offer to a company, and this needs to be appreciated to overcome this obstacle. Companies need to break away from biased practices and combat ageism and other forms of ableism to not only help their company, but also help our economy and the overall happiness of others.

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<https://builtin.com/diversity-inclusion/ageism-in-the-workplace>

<https://www.seniorliving.org/research/age-discrimination-statistics-facts/>

[https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK588538/#:~:text=Both%20overt%20and%20covert%20forms,et%20al.%2C%202016\).](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK588538/#:~:text=Both%20overt%20and%20covert%20forms,et%20al.%2C%202016).)