AGEISM IN THE WORKPLACE

JULY 2019
While ageism is widely discussed, there isn't a lot of data surrounding the topic. Recognized by the World Health Organization as a "prevalent and insidious problem," ageism can act as a dangerous employment discrimination tactic, even if it's unintentional.

The fastest growing segment of the American workforce is employees aged 65 and older, according to AARP, yet our survey results show that a majority of people experience ageism before the age of 45. Ageist remarks and comments, when internalized, have proven to have negative impacts on a person's mental and physical health so it's important to combat ageism at every level of a company.

In the summer of 2019, Fairygodboss surveyed 1,000 people over the age of 40 to understand the prevalence of ageism in the workplace, learn how it affects employees, and determine what employers can do to better combat ageism at work. We initially set out to see if there were any differences in the ways men and women experience ageism and while there were a few notable differences, there are far more similarities. We found that there are more distinctions between respondents who have and have not experienced ageism when it comes to their perceptions of ageism at work.
Have you observed a situation that you perceived to be ageism in the workplace?

- 44% have observed ageism in the workplace.
- 56% have not observed ageism in the workplace.
HAVE YOU OBSERVED A SITUATION THAT YOU PERCEIVED TO BE AGEISM IN THE WORKPLACE?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- 2% Other
- 13% A boss or manager making a negative comment about someone related to age
- 15% A highly qualified job candidate was not hired for reasons you believe are related to age
- 15% Someone was passed over for a promotion for reasons you suspect to be related to age
- 16% Someone was laid off for reasons you believe are related to age
- 22% A co-worker making a negative remark about another employee related to age
- 56% I have not observed ageism in the workplace
HAVE YOU OBSERVED A SITUATION THAT YOU PERCEIVED TO BE AGEISM IN THE WORKPLACE? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- Have not experienced ageism
- Have experienced ageism

- A boss or manager making a negative comment about someone related to age: 10%
- A highly qualified job candidate was not hired for reasons you believe are related to age: 6%
- Someone was passed over for a promotion for reasons you suspect to be related to age: 7%
- Someone was laid off for reasons you believe are related to age: 10%
- A co-worker making a negative remark about another employee related to age: 12%
- I have not observed ageism in the workplace: 74%
Have you personally experienced what you believe to be ageism in the workplace?

- 28% have experienced ageism in the workplace
- 72% have not experienced ageism in the workplace
IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED AGEISM IN THE WORKPLACE?

- You have been laid off for reasons you believe are related to your age: 18%
- Your boss or another manager has made a negative comment related to your age: 27%
- You were overlooked for a promotion for reasons you believe are related to your age: 31%
- You were not hired for a job for reasons you believe are related to your age: 36%
- A co-worker has made a negative remark related to your age: 43%
- Have Experienced Ageism: 44%

Other: 18%
HOW OLD WERE YOU THE FIRST TIME YOU EXPERIENCED AGEISM IN THE WORKPLACE?

- Younger than 45: 37%
- 45-49: 21%
- 50-54: 21%
- 55-59: 12%
- 60-64: 6%
- 65+: 1%
How old were you the first time you experienced ageism in the workplace?

- Female
- Male

Younger than 45: 39% Female, 35% Male
45-49: 21% Female, 21% Male
50-54: 20% Female, 23% Male
55-59: 12% Female, 12% Male
60-64: 6% Female, 7% Male
65+: 2% Female, 1% Male
WHAT LEVEL WERE YOU AT IN YOUR CAREER WHEN YOU FIRST EXPERIENCED AGEISM?
WHAT LEVEL WERE YOU AT IN YOUR CAREER WHEN YOU FIRST EXPERIENCED AGEISM?

- **Entry**: 26% Female, 20% Male
- **Mid-level**: 61% Female, 64% Male
- **Senior/Director**: 13% Female, 13% Male
- **Executive**: 1% Female, 3% Male
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT OLDER EMPLOYEES DO YOU THINK ARE TRUE?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- 10% Older employees usually don't have as much energy or drive as younger workers
- 20% Older employees typically don't have the same level of tech skills as younger workers
- 20% Older workers tend to be stuck in their ways and less open to new ideas
- 53% Teams with older and younger workers are more productive than teams without age diversity
- 67% Older employees often elevate a team by teaching and mentoring younger colleagues
- 13% None of the above
- 2% Other
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT OLDER EMPLOYEES DO YOU THINK ARE TRUE?

CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- Older employees usually don't have as much energy or drive as younger workers
- Older employees typically don't have the same level of tech skills as younger workers
- Older workers tend to be stuck in their ways and less open to new ideas
- Teams with older and younger workers are more productive than teams without age diversity
- Older employees often elevate a team by teaching and mentoring younger colleagues
- None of the above

Have not experienced ageism
Have experienced ageism
HAVE YOU PERSONALLY ENCOUNTERED NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES ABOUT OLDER WORKERS?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY. “OLDER WORKERS…”

Other

1%

Are not as productive

10%

Do not have the drive or stamina that younger workers do

15%

Salaries are too high, compared to younger colleagues doing equivalent work

20%

Do not have the necessary tech knowledge or skills

22%

Are not as willing or able to learn new skills or as open to new ideas

22%

None of the Above

53%
Have you personally encountered negative stereotypes about older workers? Check all that apply. “Older workers…”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Have not experienced ageism</th>
<th>Have experienced ageism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are not as productive</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not have the drive or stamina that younger workers do</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<td>Salaries are too high, compared to younger colleagues doing equivalent work</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not have the necessary tech knowledge or skills</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<td>Are not as willing or able to learn new skills or as open to new ideas</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>None of the Above</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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HAVE YOU EVER **LIED ABOUT YOUR AGE** TO GET OR KEEP A JOB, OR APPEAR YOUNGER AT WORK?

- **NO** 96%
- **YES** 4%
Have you ever lied about your age to get or keep a job, or appear younger at work?

- **Have not experienced ageism**: 2%
- **Have experienced ageism**: 98%

- **Have not experienced ageism**: 11%
- **Have experienced ageism**: 89%
HAVE YOU TAKEN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO APPEAR YOUNGER THAN YOU ARE FOR WORK PURPOSES?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- Elected to have plastic surgery: 1%
- Altered dates on my resume, CV, or LinkedIn profile: 2%
- Got botox or another non-surgical, anti-aging treatment: 2%
- Dressed in a style different from what I prefer: 6%
- Colored my hair: 18%
- None of the above: 78%
- Other: 1%
HAVE YOU TAKEN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO APPEAR YOUNGER THAN YOU ARE FOR WORK PURPOSES?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- Elected to have plastic surgery
- Altered dates on my resume, CV, or LinkedIn profile
- Got botox or another non-surgical, anti-aging treatment
- Dressed in a style different from what I prefer
- Colored my hair
- None of the above

Female

Male
HAVE YOU TAKEN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO APPEAR YOUNGER THAN YOU ARE FOR WORK PURPOSES?

CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- Elected to have plastic surgery
- Altered dates on my resume, CV, or LinkedIn profile
- Got botox or another non-surgical, anti-aging treatment
- Dressed in a style different from what I prefer
- Colored my hair
- None of the above

Have not experienced ageism
Have experienced ageism

- Other
- Elected to have plastic surgery
- Altered dates on my resume, CV, or LinkedIn profile
- Got botox or another non-surgical, anti-aging treatment
- Dressed in a style different from what I prefer
- Colored my hair
- None of the above
IN SEARCHING FOR A NEW JOB, HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- Other: 1%
- The interviewer has assumed your tech skills are not current: 8%
- You have been asked when you graduated from college: 19%
- You have been asked your age: 19%
- The job you were seeking paid less than your most recently salary: 28%
- You have been told you may be “overqualified”: 32%
- None of the above: 44%
IN SEARCHING FOR A NEW JOB, HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- The interviewer has assumed your tech skills are not current
- You have been asked when you graduated from college
- You have been asked your age
- The job you were seeking paid less than your most recently salary
- You have been told you may be "overqualified"
- None of the above

**Female vs. Male**

- 1% Other
- 1% Other
- 7% The interviewer has assumed your tech skills are not current
- 8% You have been asked when you graduated from college
- 17% You have been asked your age
- 22% The job you were seeking paid less than your most recently salary
- 23% You have been told you may be "overqualified"
- 31% None of the above
- 33% None of the above
- 28% None of the above
- 46% None of the above
- 41% None of the above
- 22% None of the above
- 8% None of the above
- 1% None of the above
- 1% None of the above
IN SEARCHING FOR A NEW JOB, HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- The interviewer has assumed your tech skills are not current
- You have been asked when you graduated from college
- You have been asked your age
- The job you were seeking paid less than your most recently salary
- You have been told you may be "overqualified"
- None of the above

Have not experienced ageism
Have experienced ageism

- Other: 1%
- The interviewer has assumed your tech skills are not current: 28%
- You have been asked when you graduated from college: 13%
- You have been asked your age: 15%
- The job you were seeking paid less than your most recently salary: 53%
- You have been told you may be "overqualified": 58%
- None of the above: 16%
HAVE YOU TAKEN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS TO COUNTER AGEIST STEREOTYPES?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- None of the above: 74%
- Faked knowledge of cultural references to avoid seeming "old": 19%
- Gotten tech or other training on new techniques in your field: 5%
- Faked tech knowledge you don't have: 4%
- Gone out drinking with younger colleagues to appear more "fun": 4%
- Other: 0%
HAVE YOU TAKEN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS TO COUNTER AGEIST STEREOTYPES?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- Have not experienced ageism
- Have experienced ageism

Options:
- Faked tech knowledge you don't have: 2%
- Faked knowledge of cultural references to avoid seeming "old": 12%
- Gone out drinking with younger colleagues to appear more "fun": 8%
- Gotten tech or other training on new techniques in your field: 31%
- None of the above: 53%
- Other: 0%
WHAT DO YOU THINK EMPLOYERS COULD DO TO HELP COMBAT AGEIST STEREOTYPES IN THE WORKPLACE?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:
WHAT DO YOU THINK EMPLOYERS COULD DO TO HELP COMBAT AGEIST STEREOTYPES IN THE WORKPLACE?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- Implement unconscious bias training for hiring managers
- Host team building exercises
- Encourage mentorships between younger and older employees
- Offer additional learning opportunities to all employees
- Avoid discriminatory interview questions
- None, employers can’t combat ageism

What do you think employers could do to help combat ageist stereotypes in the workplace? Check all that apply:

- Female
- Male

Other
Implement unconscious bias training for hiring managers
Host team building exercises
Encourage mentorships between younger and older employees
Offer additional learning opportunities to all employees
Avoid discriminatory interview questions
None, employers can’t combat ageism
WHAT DO YOU THINK EMPLOYERS COULD DO TO HELP COMBAT AGEIST STEREOTYPES IN THE WORKPLACE?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- Implement unconscious bias training for hiring managers (53% not experienced, 32% experienced)
- Host team building exercises (48% not experienced, 38% experienced)
- Avoid discriminatory interview questions (69% not experienced, 52% experienced)
- Encourage mentorships between younger and older employees (62% not experienced, 54% experienced)
- Offer additional learning opportunities to all employees (60% not experienced, 56% experienced)
- None, employers can't combat ageism (16% not experienced, 10% experienced)

Have not experienced ageism
Have experienced ageism
WHAT AGE RANGE DO YOU WANT TO RETIRE?

- Younger than 50: 5%
- 50-59: 17%
- 60-64: 33%
- 65+: 45%
DO YOU FEAR BEING ‘PUSHED OUT’ AT WORK BECAUSE OF YOUR AGE?

- 75% NO
- 25% YES
DO YOU FEAR BEING ‘PUSHED OUT’ AT WORK BECAUSE OF YOUR AGE?

- **Have not experienced ageism**
- **Have experienced ageism**

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<th>Have not experienced ageism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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</table>

14% have not experienced ageism
54% have experienced ageism
86% have not experienced ageism
46% have experienced ageism
WHEN DO YOU THINK YOUR AGE COULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO KEEP YOUR JOB OR GET A NEW ONE?

- Younger than 50: 6%
- 50-59: 28%
- 60-64: 25%
- 65+: 22%

Note: 20% did not answer the question.
WHEN DO YOU THINK YOUR AGE COULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO KEEP YOUR JOB OR GET A NEW ONE?

- Has not experienced ageism
- Have experienced ageism

Younger than 50: 14%
50-59: 39%
60-64: 25%
65+: 22%
I do not think my age will make it difficult to keep my job or get a new one: 14%