



Age, assumptions and access at work: Employee experiences of age inclusion in the workplace

We surveyed 3000¹ workers across Australia and found age-based assumptions are shaping who is respected, included and supported at work.

We grouped workers as:

Younger workers
18-29

Mid-aged workers
30-54

Older workers
55+

What we found

Discrimination and harassment are high for younger workers – especially younger carers

- **Over 1 in 3** (39%) younger workers experienced discrimination or harassment at work in the past year – much higher than other age groups.
- **1 in 3** (36%) younger workers experienced sexual harassment at work.
- **3 in 5** (59%) younger workers with caring responsibilities experienced discrimination or harassment at work, much higher than carers of other age groups.

Older workers lack career support – especially older women

- **Only 1 in 2** (50%) older workers had the opportunity to participate in career development activities – far less than the other age groups.
- **Less than 1 in 5** (18%) older workers had access to mentors.
- **Only 41%** of older women had development opportunities and 13% had mentors.

Age-based discrimination is widespread but under-reported

- Age was one of the most common reasons for perceived workplace discrimination and harassment, yet complaints under the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* make up only 5% of Australian Human Rights Commission cases.

What organisations can do to build age inclusion

Be age inclusive with your learning & career development

- evaluate training uptake by age demographics to see if some age groups have a lower uptake
- promote intergenerational mentoring, including older workers as both mentors and mentees
- offer digital upskilling and mentorship pathways.

Be proactive about workplace health & wellbeing

- implement and monitor health and wellbeing programs, including ergonomic assessments and adjustments
- redesign jobs and provide ergonomic adjustments to support employee health and reduce injury risks, including training and reskilling
- ensure leave and wellbeing supports reflect life-stage needs (e.g. elder care, compassionate leave, menopause).

Include age in discrimination & complaints processes

- start at the top – ensure senior leaders role model inclusion and a no tolerance stance on discrimination and harassment
- train people leaders on response obligations, and ensure timely, fair complaint handling
- clearly communicate complaint pathways and processes for discrimination and harassment
- collect anonymised exclusion data to understand the state of age discrimination in your workplace.

Normalise flexibility access & transition support

- ensure remote work, flexible hours, job share, and part-time options are accessible across all ages, genders, and caring statuses
- provide coaching to support work-life balance and career transition pathways for return to work, mid-career shifts and retirement planning
- advertise roles internally and invest in reskilling for redeployment to reduce exclusion during change.

Disrupt age bias & build an age inclusive culture

- demonstrate leader commitment to age inclusion through clear strategies (e.g. targets and reporting on progress)
- invest in initiatives to combat age-related stigma, including ageism awareness training
- showcase younger and older workers in workplace materials and communication
- establish employee reference groups/networks focused on age inclusion to inform culture and change initiatives.

Want to learn more?

Visit www.dca.org.au and www.humanrights.gov.au to learn more about age inclusion at work.