



# CREATE A WORK CULTURE THAT IS AGE-INCLUSIVE

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act was enacted in 1967 to prohibit ageism in the workplace and promote employment based on talent and performance, rather than age. While the law prohibits age discrimination in the workplace, companies and their employees have found ways around the law, scraping but not quite crossing the line of age discrimination. This issue has been prevalent in the workplace for so long that it tends to be normalized or swept under the rug.

One may think of age discrimination as two categories; hard and soft. Hard age discrimination is illegal and involves firing, demoting, or harassing someone because of their age. Soft age discrimination is legal, but it involves age-based assumptions and stereotypes regarding employees. Soft ageism typically results in employees not valuing a coworker's efforts, accomplishments, or skills. This can "dissolve solidarity, limit the contributions of younger and older employees alike, and lead to people being devalued and excluded". This causes a decline in employee commitment, engagement, and satisfaction.

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## Important Statistics

- In a 2021 poll by (AARP), 78% of US employees 50 and older said they've seen/experienced age discrimination at work, which is the highest percentage since the question was first asked in 2003
- Female applicants ages 64 to 66 had a 47% lower callback rate for administrative assistant jobs and a 36% lower callback rate for sales jobs than female applicants ages 29 to 31

Age discrimination begins during the hiring process, so it is crucial that companies properly train their interviewing managers and those involved in the hiring process. Even something as simple as a website with pictures showcasing primarily young people can affect the age of applicants to that company.

## How to Combat Age Discrimination in the Workplace

- Making age discrimination training a prerequisite for all managers and employees with hiring power to ensure equality and fairness, in addition to using them as an educational resource for other employees
- Intermingling employees of all ages about seating arrangements and committees
- Ensuring all company policies are age-neutral
- Including photos of a variety of age groups on the company website
- Eliminating the use of language with ageist stereotypes and expressions
- Encouraging managers to make an equal effort to get to know everyone in the workplace

## Conclusion

Just like the many other biases that occur in the workplace, there are ways to combat them to make all team members feel valued, supported, and respected. With enough effort, communication, and compassion, we can work together to create a work culture that values diversity is age-inclusive, and highlights the skills of all employees.