

knowledge partner

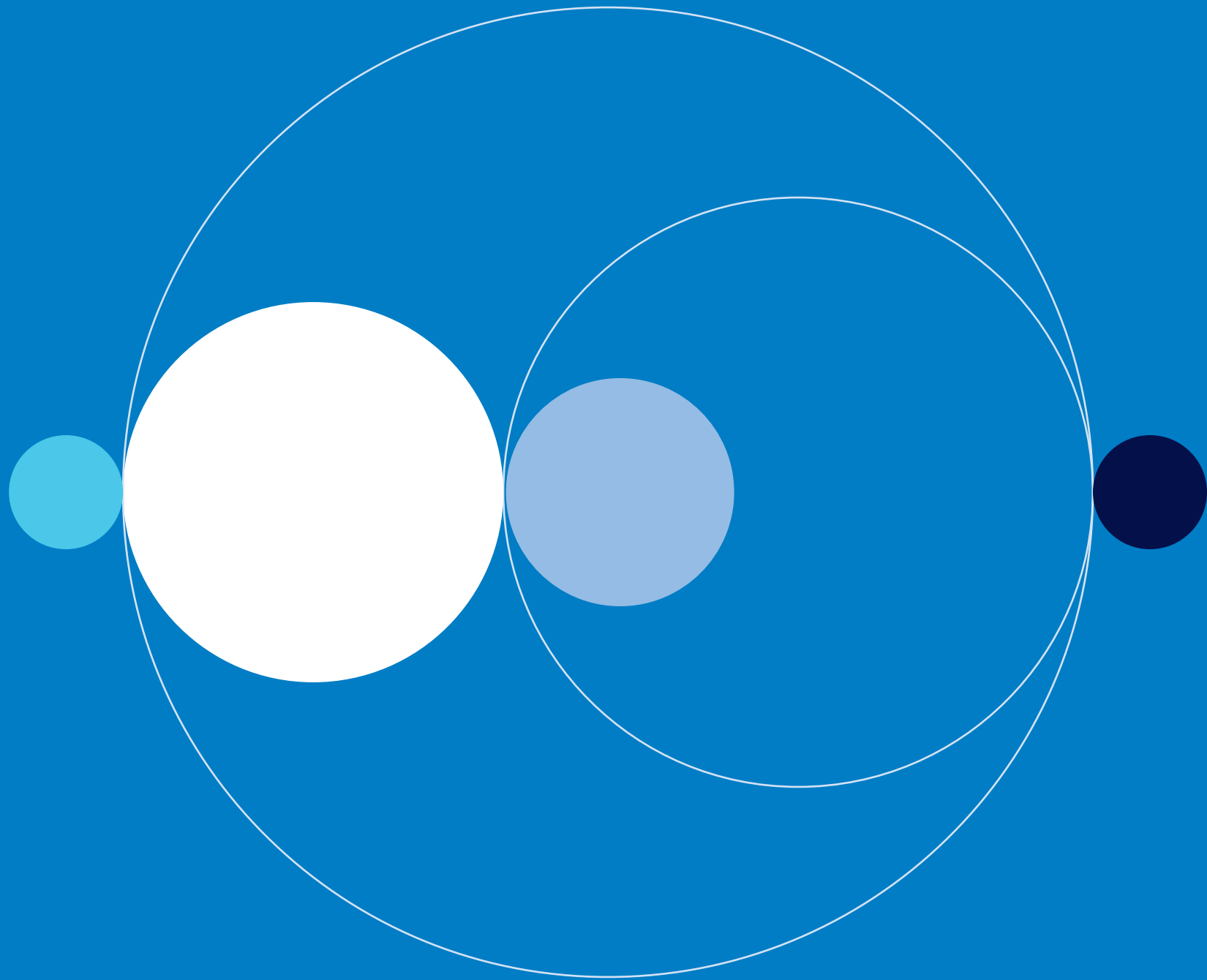


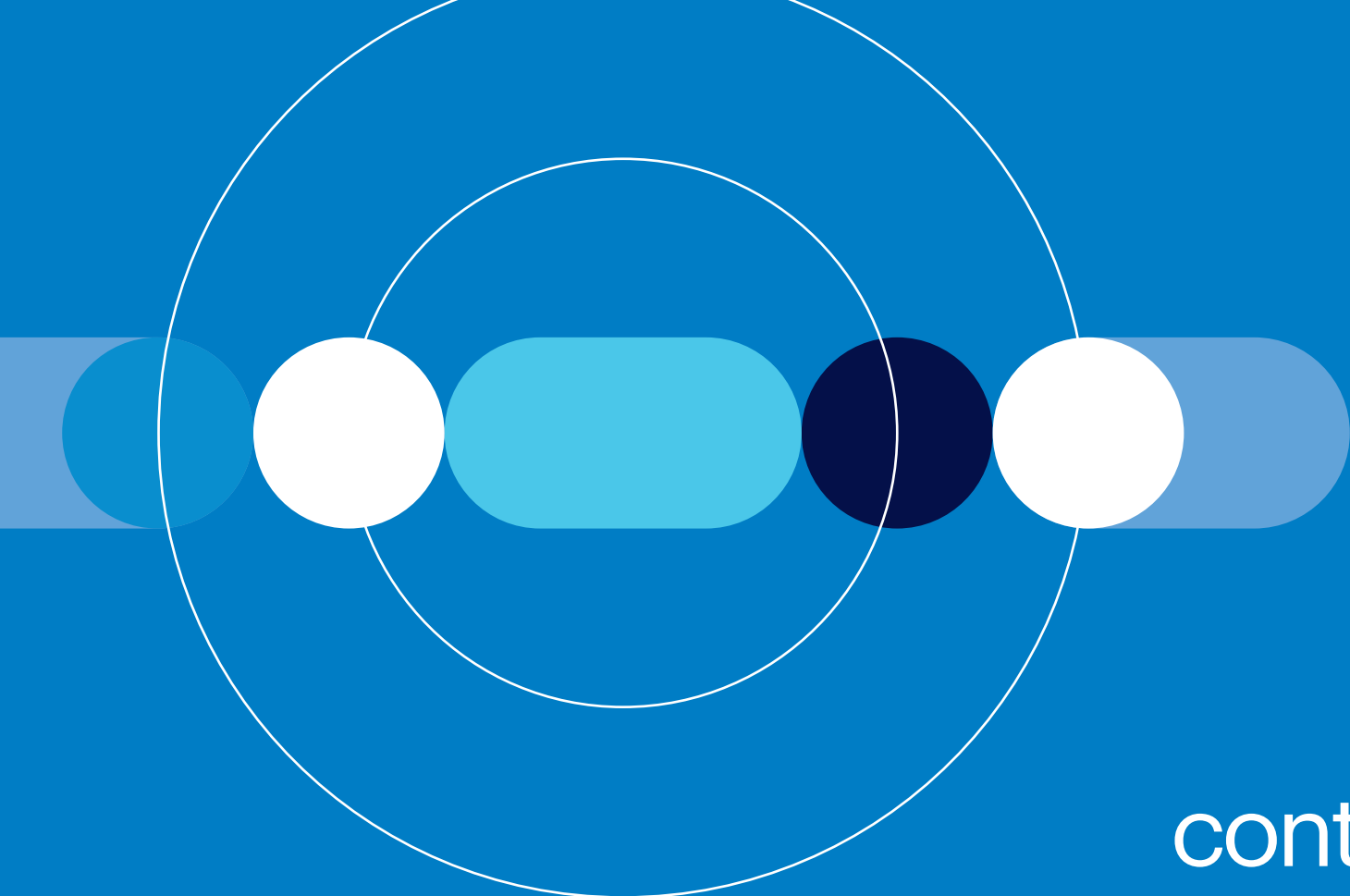
beyond numbers.

inter-generational
insights on ageism



partner for talent.





Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age.

Global report on ageism. World Health Organization. (2021)

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the need.

1. Skewed and limited view of ageism in India

Previous studies on ageism have focused on either young or old age groups and limited sectors¹⁻⁴.

2. Inadequate exploration of the impact of ageism in India

Age stereotypes influence employees' careers, performance, well-being and workplace behaviour^{5,6}. An intersectional approach of impact was missing.

3. Inadequate corporate response and strategy knowledge

Only 8% of Indian companies integrate age into their inclusion strategies⁷. A comprehensive perspective to tackle age discrimination was not found.

the study questions.

Manifestation of ageism

Representative study

How does age-based discrimination (for or against) manifest itself in the Indian workplace?

Impact of ageism

Emotional, Psychological and Financial impacts

What is the impact of witnessing or experiencing ageism in the Indian workplace?

Leveraging age diversity

Recommendations to organisations

How can organisations, teams and individuals leverage the multi-age diversity in India in today's workplace?

1. WHO (2021). Global report on ageism. World Health Organization. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240016866>

2. Press Trust of India (2020). Age-based bias becoming more prominent at workplaces: Survey. The Times of India. Retrieved from: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/age-based-bias-becoming-more-prominent-at-workplaces-survey/articleshow/74815225.cms>

3. Maurya, P., Sharma, P., & Muhammad, T. (2022). Prevalence and correlates of perceived age-related discrimination among older adults in India. BMC Public Health, 22(1), 1-10. Retrieved from: <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-022-13002-5>

4. Agarwal, D. (2022). Young or old, age needn't be a bar. Deccan Herald. Retrieved from: <https://www.deccanherald.com/education/young-or-old-age-needn-t-be-a-bar-1125728.html>

5. Kleissner, V., & Jahn, G. (2020). Dimensions of work-related age stereotypes and in-group favoritism. Research on aging, 42(3-4), 126-136. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0164027519896189>

6. Carr, D., & Namkung, E. H. (2021). Physical disability at work: how functional limitation affects perceived discrimination and interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Journal of health and social behavior, 62(4), 545-561. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00221465211023424>

7. Bhatt, S. (2022). Does India need an age-based employment discrimination law? HR World. The Economic Times. Retrieved from: <https://hr.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/news/workplace-4-0/does-india-need-an-age-based-employment-discrimination-law/89467382>

methodology and respondents.

A mixed methods study addressed the research questions across age groups, sectors and regions in India. This included quantitative study (anonymous online survey) and qualitative study (focus group discussions and individual interviews) involving people from all age groups as well as HR and ED&I experts.

qualitative study

6 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
across age-groups (18 to 55+)

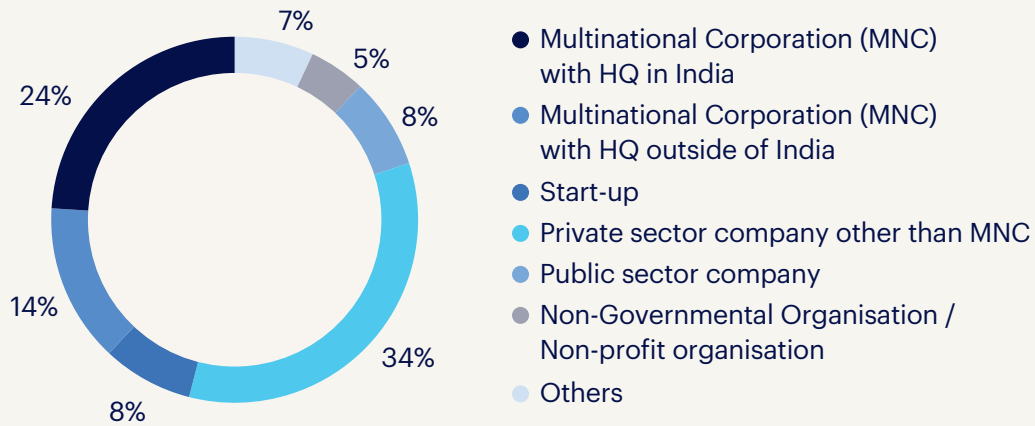
9 Individual Interviews
with employees and HR & EDI experts



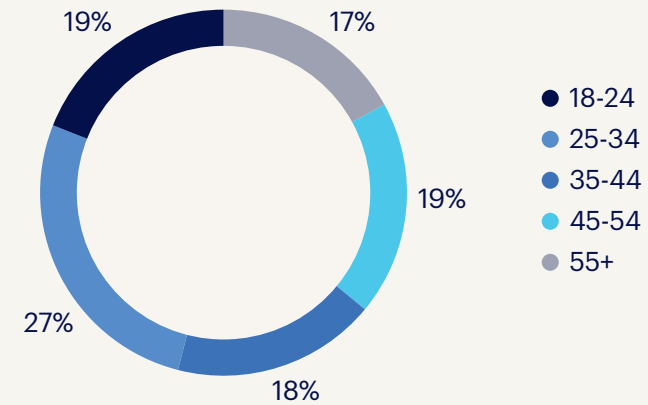
quantitative study.

956 respondents across job levels, industries and locations.

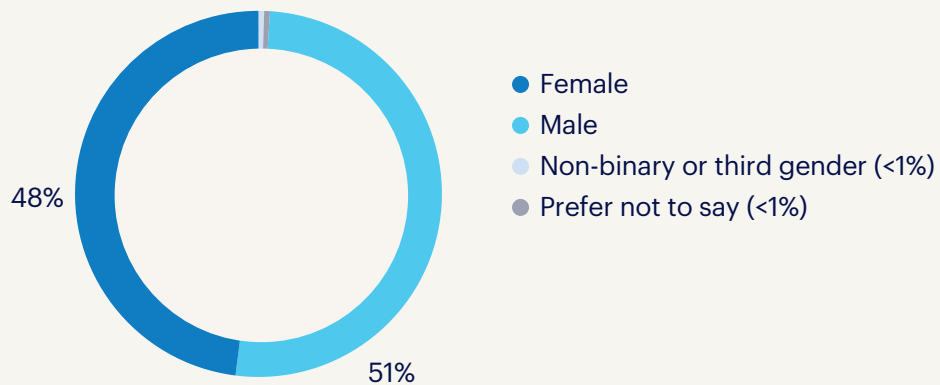
organisation type



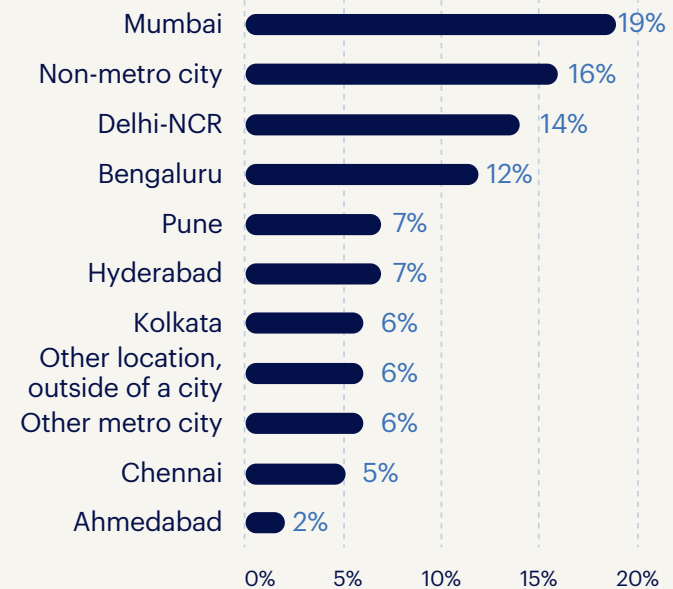
age



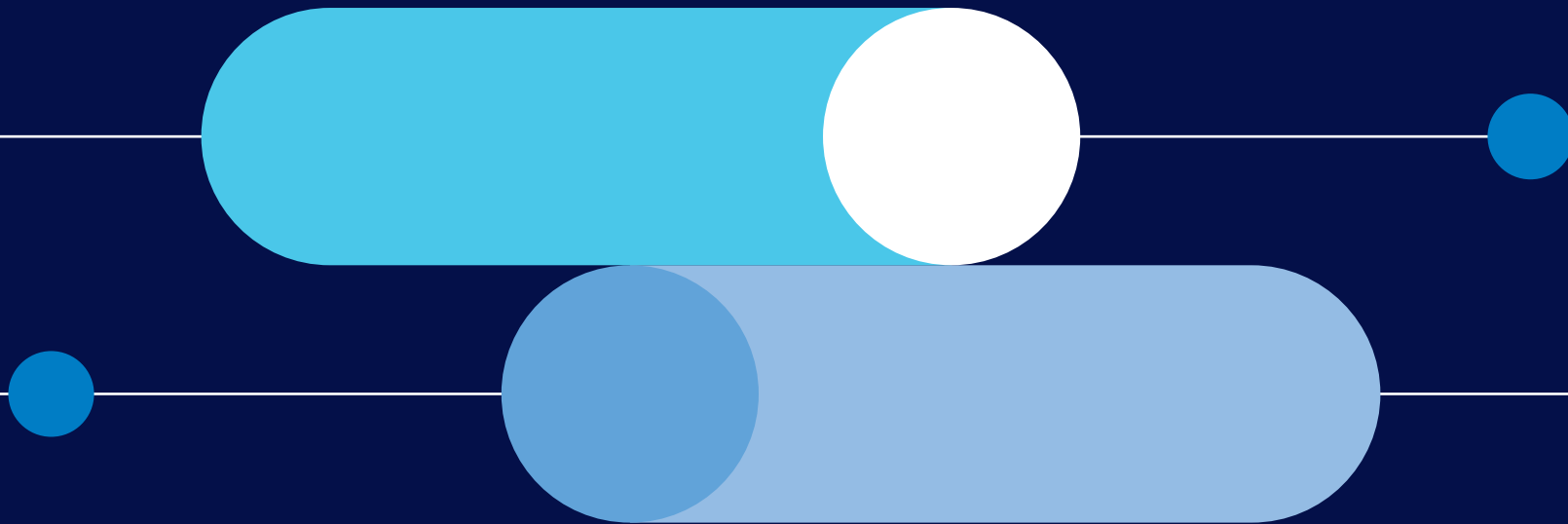
gender



responses by cities



manifestation of ageism.



understanding of ageism in India Inc.

what is ageism according to india inc.?

The study allowed participants to reflect on their experiences. They described ageism as the discriminatory treatment towards people based on certain assumptions about their age i.e., categorising people into boxes based on age.

Two key themes that emerged were:

1. The term 'ageism' is relatively new:

People reported experiencing the phenomenon but lacked an awareness of the term 'ageism' itself.

“I am reflecting on it right now because at that time I didn't know that this ageism concept existed. I thought that it's something that everyone has to face.”

Nihar Agrawal
CEO, Sai Oil Industries Pvt. Ltd. (25-34)

2. Ageism is intersectional and complex:

Age intersects with gender, ability, level of education, etc., positively or negatively. People of all ages recognised how gender and age intertwine. However, the urgency to address ageism is more pronounced among the older age groups.

“Age falls somewhere as an intersectionality piece for me; it manifests very, very different based on, you know, the different genders.”

– Pallavi Kumari
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisor

Other studies^{8,9} also found that ageism intersects with facets of identity, including gender, race, ability, and socioeconomic status and exacerbates the discrimination faced.

8. Ayalon, L., & Tesch-Römer, C. (2018). Contemporary perspectives on ageism. Springer Nature.

9. Marcus, J., & Fritzsche, B. A. (2015). One size doesn't fit all: Toward a theory on the intersectional salience of ageism at work. Organizational Psychology Review, 5(2), 168-188.

at a glance: how different age groups understand ageism.

18-24

- Ageism is not a serious issue, but it could manifest differently with other concepts and contexts.

25-34

- Ageism is discrimination towards both older and younger people.
- Age is not a diversity element; it intersects with gender to produce impact.

35-44

- Ageism is modulating thoughts and conversations to appear a certain age with different age groups.
- Gender and age interplay due to personal and professional expectations.

45-54

- Ageism is a real issue, and it is becoming more visible. However, its manifestation differs across sectors.
- Age and gender intersect to produce impact.

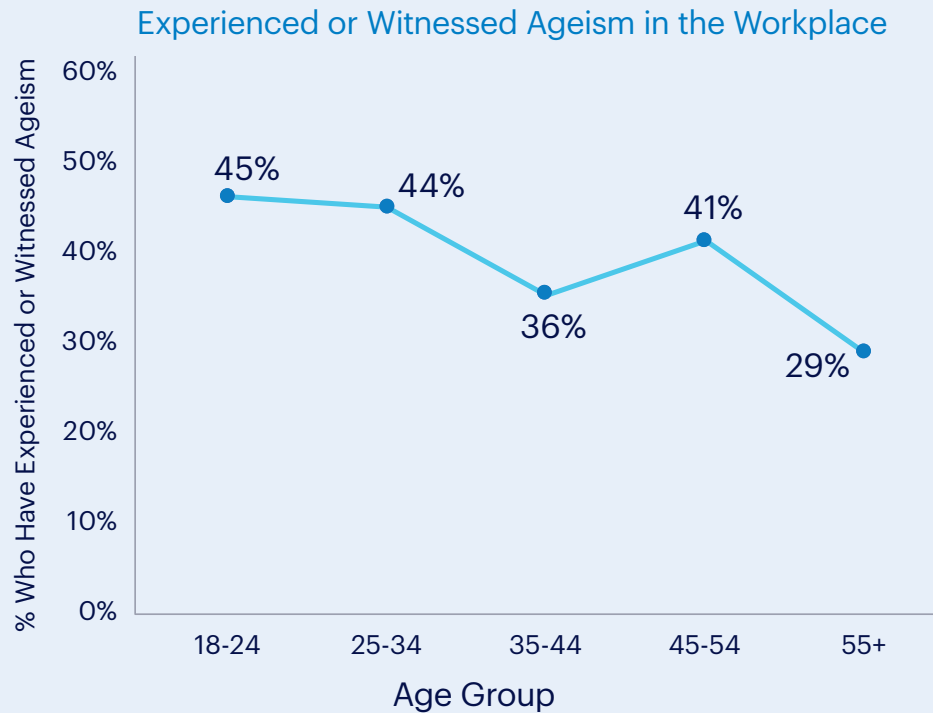
55+

- Ageism is a grave problem that needs addressing now.
- Age intersects with gender.

age-wise experiences of ageism in India Inc.

The study showed that all age groups experienced and witnessed ageism. The experiences largely intersected with gender, but the way they manifested differed.

According to the survey findings, 29% of employees above 55 years of age experienced or witnessed ageism in the workplace, compared to 42% of employees below 55 years.



Both qualitative and quantitative data suggested that younger age groups faced more age discrimination than older age groups. There was a general lack of trust in the youngest age group's abilities and skills while the oldest age group experienced the privilege of age-based and seniority-based respect widely seen in the Indian culture.

Similar to our findings, there is evidence of younger generations facing more ageism than the middle-aged people^{10,11}.

With perceptions of inexperience, seniority-based hierarchy and respect, generational differences and partial treatment during layoffs¹² ageism can negatively impact younger employees more than the older employees.

10. Cebola, M. M. J., dos Santos, N. R., & Dionisio, A. (2023). Worker-related ageism: A systematic review of empirical research. *Ageing & Society*, 43(8), 1882-1914.

11. Majumdar, D. (2023). Ageism in the tech workforce: from hiring to layoffs. *The Economic Times*. Retrieved

12. Bhate, A., Pande, R. & Khare, A. (2023). Ageism & the costs of being 'too young' or 'too old' in India Inc. *ResearchGate*. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.25950.00320>

age-wise experiences of ageism in India Inc.

The focus groups and interviews suggested that 18-24 and 25-34 age groups had similar experiences, and 45-54 and 55+ age groups had similar experiences.

18-24

- Lack of trust in their skills and capabilities.
- Burden of and conundrum between meeting unrealistic, rigid expectations of seniors and being themselves.
- Covert and overt ageism – deceptive job descriptions (expecting more experience); comments on age, ability and appearance; being ignored, undervalued, not heard.
- Treatment as the ‘other’- not given credit for work, given menial tasks; either over or under-estimated.

“I was taken less seriously than the others. If we were in a meeting, we were sidelined. Our ideas were heard but not valued. The report I prepared went with my senior’s name and not mine.”

Deepalika Deb
Intern – CSR projects

25-34

- Overt ageism is inversely proportional to age; intersection of gender such as fear of gender role expectations outside work influencing work.
- Feel more heard than 18-24, yet lack of trust in their skills and decision-making autonomy.
- Manipulation of appearance and personality in attempts to be taken more seriously.
- Experience confusion when it comes to hiring on questions about age, personal life and experience.

“In my 20s I would tell my friends that I really have to dye my hair and give it a salt and pepper look so that it gives me a little mature look.”

Arunima Sinha
Head - L&D, Times Internet

35-44

- Resistance to work with other age groups as they feel ‘sandwiched’ between younger and older generations and left out. While being in the middle highlights them as more relevant than older groups, they still face the bane of being led by younger leaders.
- Mismatch between chronological age expectations (family, marriage, kids) and societal expectations at work (certain pay/role by this age).
- Face the intersection of career switches, gender, age and caregiving responsibility.

“In India, it’s assumed you’d be married and settled by this age. But for me, since I was starting out in the teaching sector at this age, I ended up working longer hours.”

Nirav Rameshchandra Dipika Bhatia
Freelance Tester / Insurance Consultant

45-54

- Ageism and its repercussions more visible and felt.
- Face both covert and overt ageism - age barriers in job descriptions, asking for age in interviews.
- Lack of opportunities – new and promotional – seen as over-qualified and over-experienced.
- Less preference while hiring and developing – little to no investment in those approaching retirement.

“From the recruitment side of it, I was surprised in one of the interview calls that the leader’s second or third question was about my age. I was surprised as to what that has to do with the job. Why should that be a factor?”

Swarup Chilumkuru
Senior Director HR, Polygon (EX)

55+

- Lack of new job opportunities and difficulties getting hired.
- Difficulty being retained despite their experience and knowledge.
- Left out due to preference given to younger people.
- Under-utilization of their talent and experience.

“It is a real challenge to find another job in India after reaching a certain age, applicable to both reputed and smaller companies. Often, the feedback is that I’m overqualified, a coded language for age discrimination.”

David James
Author of “Your Mind At Siege”

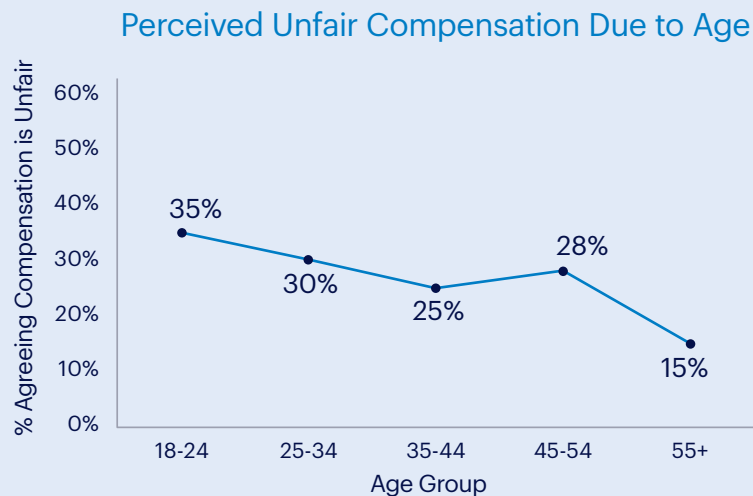
age-wise experiences of ageism in India Inc.

compensation

Younger employees felt that they were **unfairly compensated** due to their age, regardless of their role or work. The feeling of unfair compensation **seems to decrease as one gains more experience** in years.

Those who felt that they are not fairly compensated due to age:

Below 25years ← 35% 15% → 55years and above



Other studies also suggest that younger employees are likely to feel that they are not fairly compensated compared to those in the older age groups, especially those above 40¹³. However, a few participants in the IT sector noted that the younger employees were being paid more than older employees.

13. Bolden-Barett (2019). Younger workers are less likely to believe they are paid fairly. HR Dive.

“They are hiring interns from the younger generation and paying them more than managers”.

Anonymous survey response (25-34), IT sector

perceived value of self

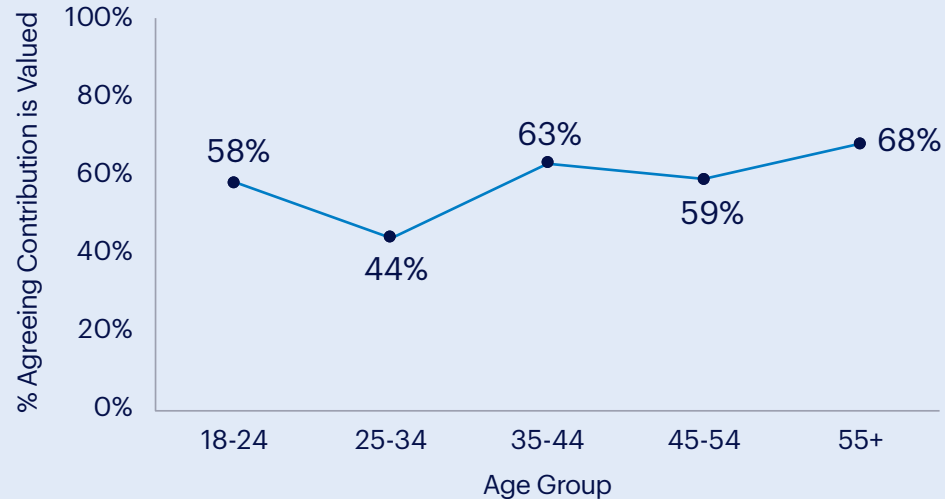
Fewer people in the younger age groups felt that their contributions were valued at work due to their age. 51% of survey respondents aged under 35 agreed their contribution was valued because of their age, compared to 63% of respondents above 35.

The study also found that compared to the older age groups, fewer people in the younger age groups felt that they could:

- Be their authentic selves at work
- Belong at work

Other studies also show that younger employees are often more undervalued at work due to their lack of experience compared to the older age groups¹⁵.

Perceived that Contribution is Valued Due to Age



“Most senior people at events think that I wouldn’t have anything valuable to add.”

Tanmay Mahamuni
Project Engineer, Maini Renewables (18-24)

“I work in a bank in a junior role and often misunderstood for being less knowledgeable since a lot of my colleagues are over a certain age.”

Anonymous survey response (18-24)
Banking sector

14. De Smet, A., Mugayar-Baldocchi, M., & Reich, A. (2023). Gen what?: debunking age-based myths about worker preferences. McKinsey.

15. Ray, S. (2022). Reverse ageism in the workplace. The Times of India.

experiences of ageism in India Inc.

across sectors

People reported that traditional sectoral differences such as skewed representation of specific age groups or genders in particular sectors (for e.g., older male in manufacturing) are now disappearing. The results suggest that ageism manifested differently in different sectors due to the **nature of work, role of individuals and situational context**.

Other studies also suggest that sector-wise preferences of role expectations vary, leading to age-related biases and, thus, the distinct treatment received^{16,17}.

Sales, hospitality and IT sectors favoured younger people ('flexible and creative') while manufacturing, energy, education, government and construction sectors favoured older people ('experienced, seasoned').

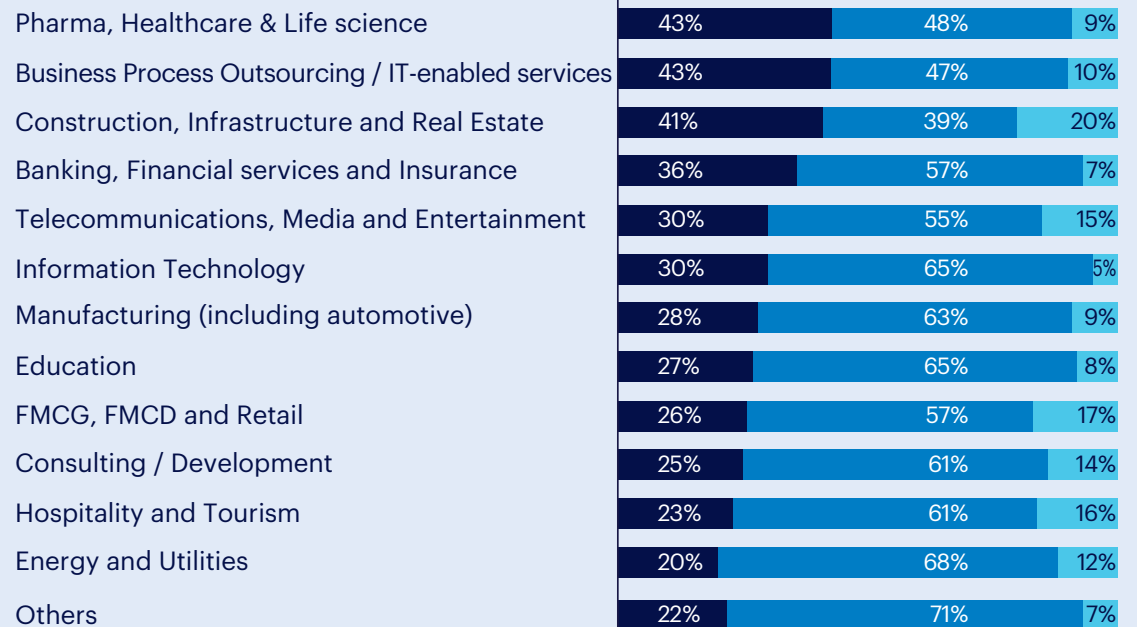
In sectors like banking and education, **young employees were not taken seriously, and old employees were not considered adaptable and relevant**.

Regardless of the sector, the following was found:

Scepticism about younger employees' decision-making capabilities regardless of their competence and merit, and about older employees' ability to keep up with new technologies, trends and advancement.

Perceptions of analytical acumen, authority, market insight and customer preferences are influenced by age impacting client trust and career advancement.

Have you ever experienced ageism in your workplace?



Yes No Cannot say

16. Singhal, T. (2023). What's the 'right age'? Is it time to have a policy around 'Ageism' at the workplace? HR World. The Economic Times.

17. Pushkarna, A. (2021). Is 'ageism' rearing its head in the Indian workspace? HRKatha.

experiences of ageism in India Inc.

across organisation types

Ageism was found across all types of organisations, with the highest prevalence reported in **Multinational Corporations (MNCs) headquartered in India**. In 2021, the WHO reported India among several low and middle-income countries that accounted for the highest prevalence of ageism and that might be reflected in the workplace culture too as seen here¹⁸. Additionally, there are no legal obligations on age discrimination within India and it is perhaps time to consider this.¹⁹

MNCs with HQ in India	Other organisations	Either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that
41%	28%	They experienced age-related stereotypes
71%	57%	There is age bias in job adverts
56%	48%	Other age groups are challenging to work with
45%	27%	Age determines layoffs
37%	24%	Age influences promotions
57%	38%	Age influences decision to leave

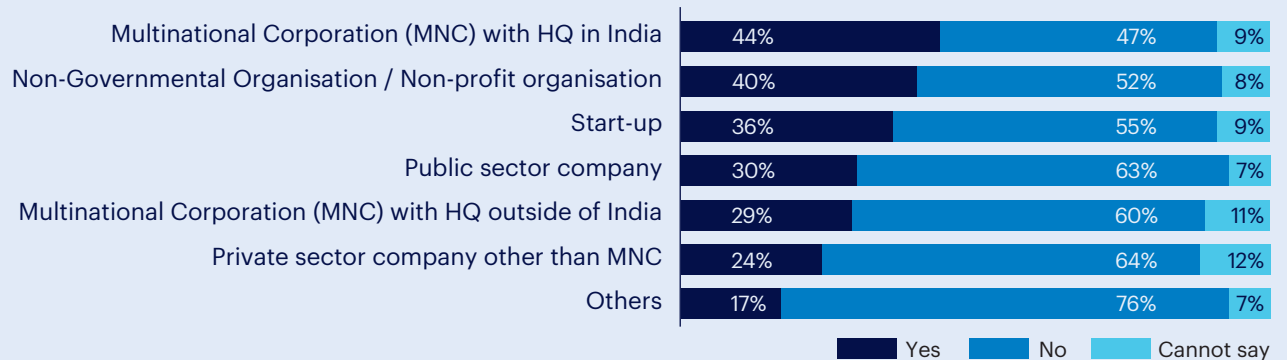
“Ageism is quite prevalent in the Indian market compared to that abroad.”

Aditya Kumar
Data Engineer, RUBIX (25-34)

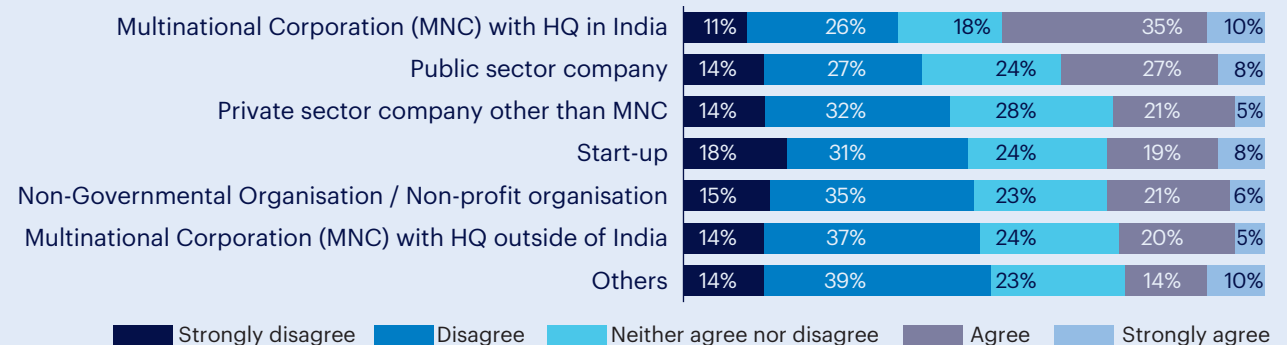
“The attitude to not invest in people approaching retirement was there in Indian companies.”

Nitin Halbe
Director - Sales & Commercials,
Auto Component Manufacturing sector (45-54)

Have you ever experienced ageism in your workplace?



I believe that in my organisation, age is a factor in the laying off of employees



18. The Wire Staff (2021). India Among Nations That Account for the Highest Prevalence of Ageism: WHO Report.

19. Bhatt, S. (2022). Does India need an age-based employment discrimination law? HR World. The Economic Times.

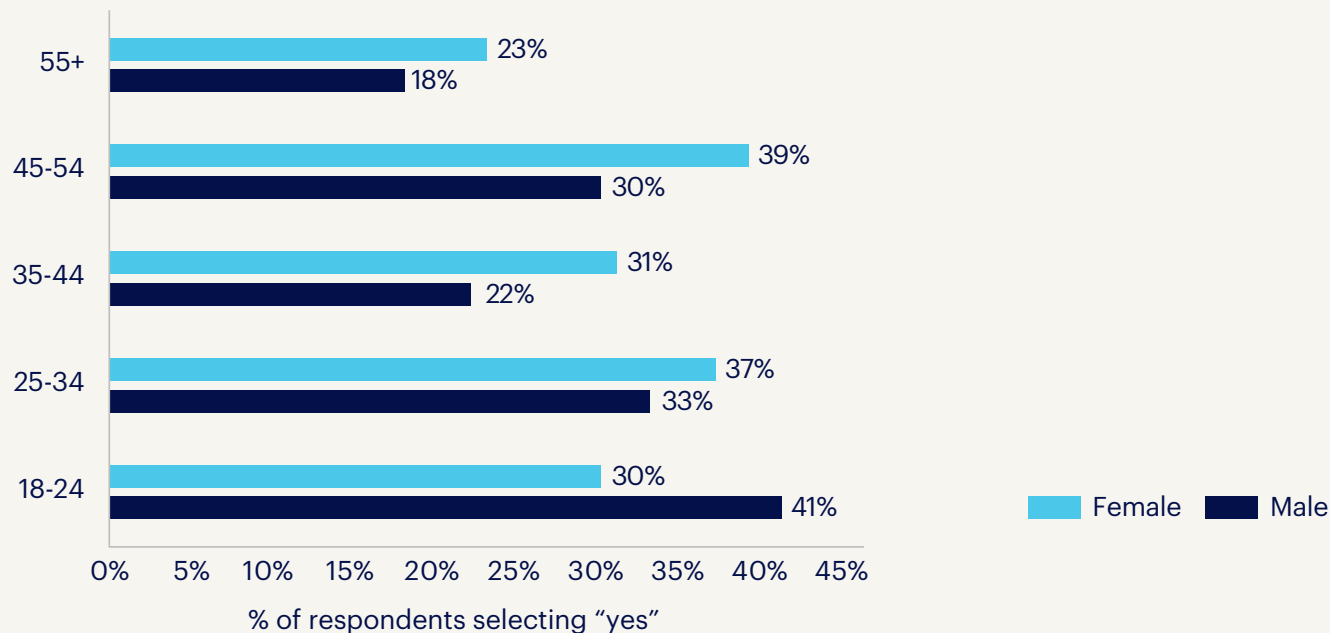
age-wise experiences of ageism in India Inc.

the intersectional view



Gender: 42% of women reported experiencing or witnessing ageism, compared to 37% of men, but this disparity is not large enough to draw conclusions based on the sample size (i.e., not statistically significant). However, the qualitative discussions highlighted that gender and age do intersect.

Have you ever experienced ageism in your workplace?



"All freshers at 21 faced ill treatment from seniors. The girls were not yelled at. They were let off the hook and told that it's OK. Us boys were yelled at in front of everyone".

Nihar Agrawal
CEO, Sai Oil Industries Pvt. Ltd. (25-34)

"I think with gender – there is a double bias. The moment a woman is 40+, it's not uncommon to hear things like, oh, she's having hormonal issues, let's discount her for her bad mood. After 45-50, for a lot of roles, women won't even get calls, whereas men will continue to get calls till they're 60 or even later."

Dr. Sweta Mohapatra
Executive Coach



Caregiving responsibility: 38% of those looking after children, elderly or others experienced ageism while only 17% of their counterparts did. This was greater for women above 25 years of age (41%) than men (31%). Other studies have also reported women with family and caregiving responsibilities facing ageism like being denied promotions and being ignored while younger males are listened to²⁰. It is important for organisations to be sensitised on the needs of people with caregiving responsibilities and make efforts to not just provide them with equal opportunity, but with equitable facilities.

“Five years into my first job, as a high performer, I was expected to do outstation fieldwork like my other male colleagues soon after relocation. With no support system in place yet to take care of my child, I had to leave my job.”

Panchali Banerjee
Co-founder and Director, Orchvate (55+)



Education:
82% of those with a graduation degree felt that they could be their authentic selves in the workplace, compared to 60% of non-graduates.



Sexual Orientation:
54% of those who do not identify as straight/heterosexual experienced ageism. Those who identified as heterosexual found working with other age groups less challenging and were less likely to cite ageism as a reason for leaving jobs.

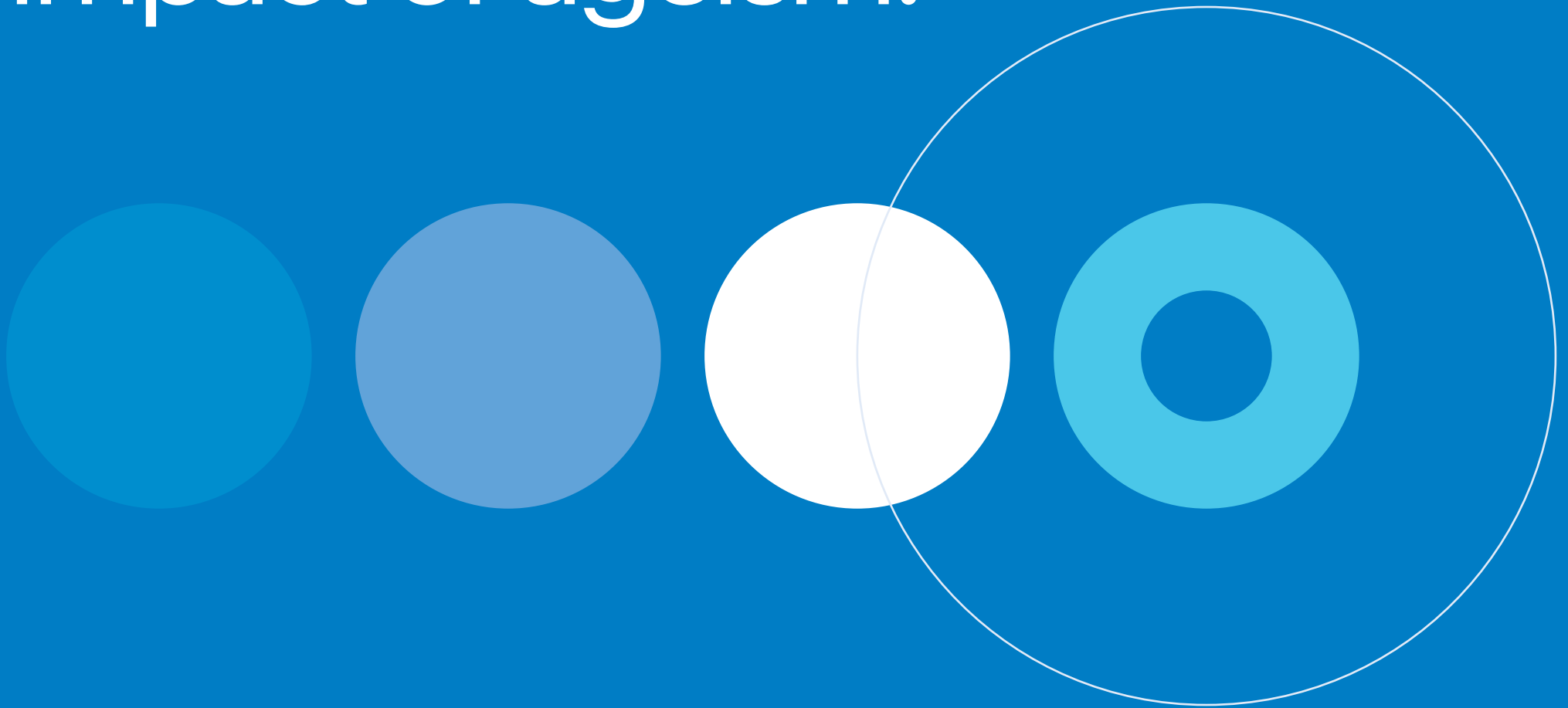


Disability:
57% of those with disabilities experienced ageism, especially in promotions. They felt that people held exaggerated stereotypes about them. Age can intersect with ableism to exacerbate its impact on health and well-being²¹.

20. Madhok, D. (2019). Indian workplaces have an ageism problem. Scroll.

21. Carr, D., & Namkung, E. H. (2021). Physical disability at work: how functional limitation affects perceived discrimination and interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Journal of health and social behavior, 62(4), 545-561

impact of ageism.

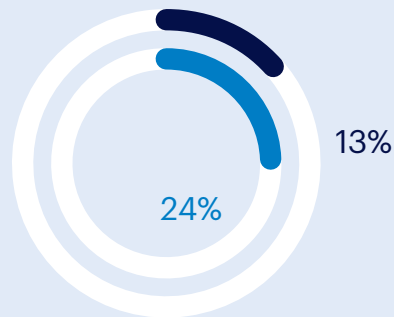


common assumptions and biases.

The study enquired about people's assumptions and stereotypes of different age groups in the workplace that could cause ageism. Two major findings are technology-related and leadership-related.

technology-related

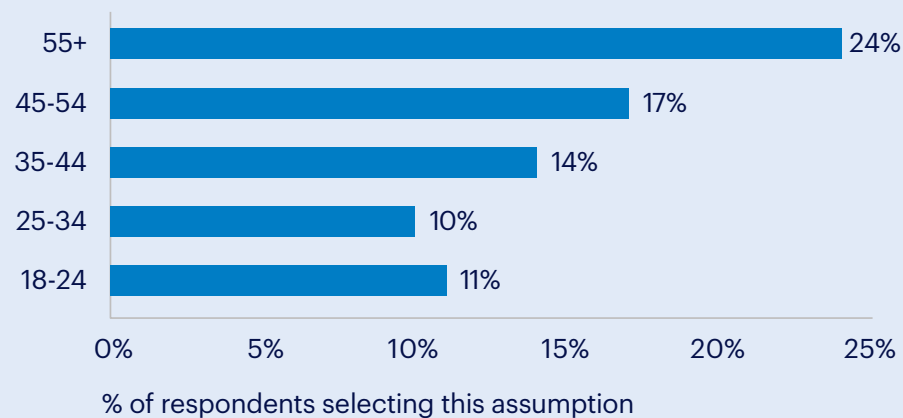
24% above 55 years of age reported that they are assumed to be less competent with technology, compared to only 13% people under 55 years facing this assumption.



“One assumption for people my age that comes on the top of the mind is not being tech savvy, taking a long time to learn technology. That's definitely one that can be a big problem”.

Panchali Banerjee
Co-founder and Director, Orchvate (55+)

I am less competent using technology



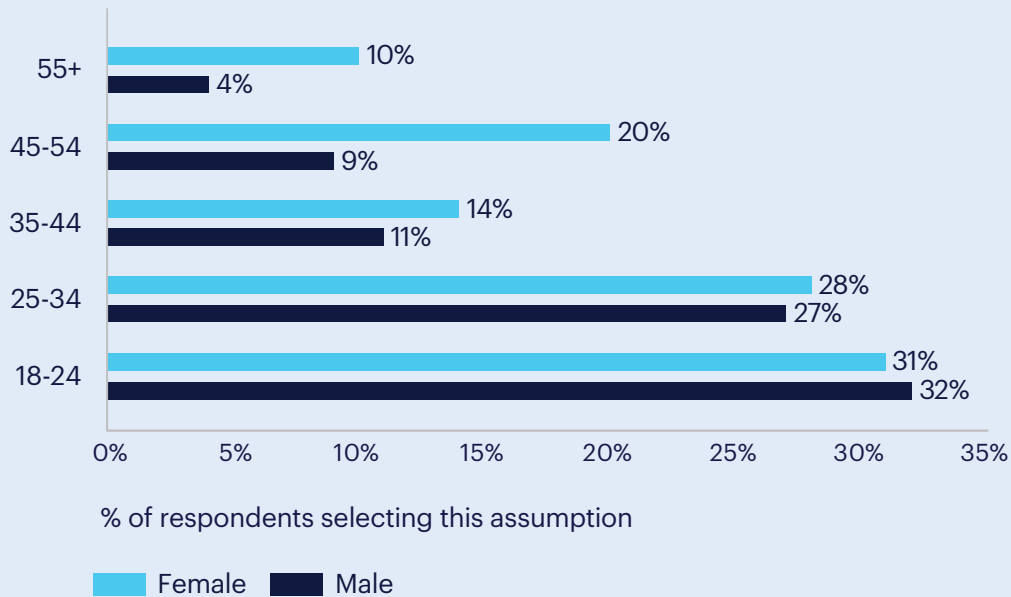
Other studies also found that older employees are commonly labelled as 'not tech-savvy' or 'incapable of learning,' and younger employees as 'narcissistic,' 'lazy,' or 'easily distracted'¹². However, biases only limit opportunities and organisations need to look beyond generalisations.

12. Bhate, A., Pande, R. & Khare, A. (2023). Ageism & the costs of being 'too young' or 'too old' in India Inc. ResearchGate.

leadership-related

People in younger age groups reported to be assumed as **less reliable, less responsible and less capable of leading** due to their age. They also reported saying that they lack decision-making autonomy, despite their job descriptions.

I am less capable to be in a leadership role



People aged 55+ were more likely to report that they are assumed to be **an asset due to their age**, particularly men. We found that 58% of survey respondents over 55 said this, compared to 44% of those under 55.

“Sometimes I work as a head cashier but due to my age no one follows my instructions. I have no final say”.

Anonymous survey response,
FMCG sector (18-24)

“In certain sectors such as manufacturing, you'll still see that they value age; they equate age with maturity.”

Dr. Sweta Mohapatra
Executive Coach

common assumptions and biases.

18-24

- Lack experience, expertise; reckless and irresponsible
- Have only work responsibilities
- Impatient and lazy
- More confident, tech-savvy, hungry to learn and grow
- Enthusiastic and physically fit, open-minded, fast learners

25-34

- The 'in-between' technology kids
- Ambitious, result-orientated, go-getters, physically energetic
- Have only work responsibilities
- Lack of experience and knowledge, easily distracted, lazy and impatient
- Confident, tech-savvy, enthusiastic, innovative

35-44

- Balance both younger and older generation qualities
- "Settled" in personal and professional life
- Too old to be young and too young to be old

45-54

- More experience, expertise, awareness and knowledge
- Less tech-savvy and old-school
- Inflexible, unapproachable
- Resistant to change, unwilling to grow, slow learner

55+

- Knowledgeable and experienced; supportive to younger employees
- Not tech-savvy, very opinionated
- Rigid, resistant to change, have ego issues
- Difficult to work with and slow learner

Busting myths: People from older age groups are open to learning and can learn quicker than the younger ones.

People from the younger age groups are skilled and competent to make well-thought decisions.

"I recently did a Power BI course for project management. The young instructor was paying more attention to me because he thought I would be slow since I was the oldest. In fact, he was surprised when I was doing the activities much faster than the younger lot."

Dr. Sammeer Addhikari
Associate Director, PwC India Pvt. Ltd. (35-44)

"Youngsters are better at adapting and learning new things. This young blood 'josh' and 'never die' spirit can open new avenues and perspectives for us."

Rajendra Vasantao Pawar
Director, First Light Consultants (55+)

common assumptions and biases.

what are biases according to India Inc.?

Biases are systematic, unconscious patterns of thinking or behaving that influence how we perceive and interact with the world.

Age-related biases are assumptions about people based on age i.e., putting them into boxes.

sources of bias according to India Inc.:

Past personal experiences – Learnt, inherent behaviour and mental shortcuts, intellectual laziness, generalization of ideas, not taking efforts to know more.

Same mental engine inside and outside of work.

Societal and cultural influences – Instilled since childhood in family, school and social circles, 'Respect elders, they are correct, don't talk back' culture, media and social media content consumed.

“All biases are a defense mechanism. We want to understand people, but we may not know everyone and therefore we create these age profile labels”.

Deepshika Thakur

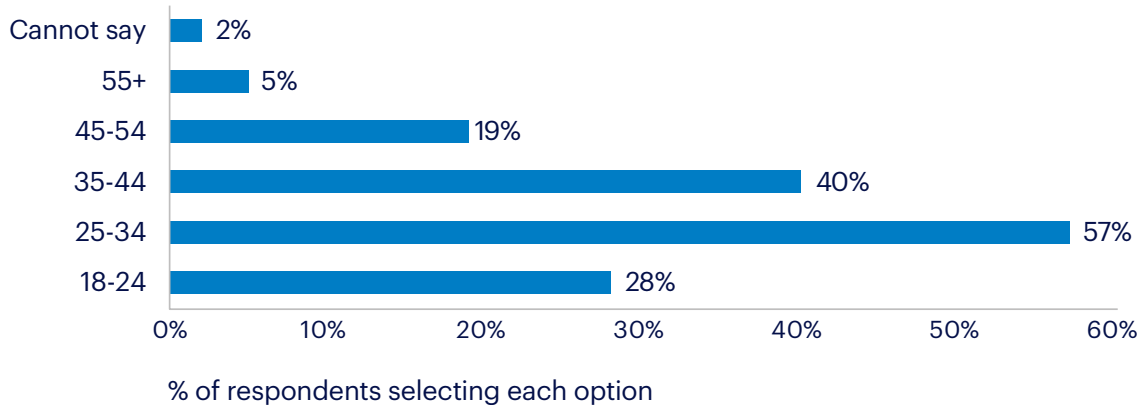
Head – Learning & OD, Shree Cement

recruitment-related biases

The study found age-related biases to be most prevalent during recruitment, especially in job advertisements of organisations.

61% say that job advertisements in India have age biases (qualifying age criteria or years of experience). 57% of this group state preference towards people from 25-34 age category.

In your opinion, which age groups were preferred on the advertisement?



what to do with biases?

Biases aren't inherently bad; some are helpful for quick decision-making. However, they can become problematic when they lead to unfair judgments, discrimination, or incorrect conclusions about age. Ageist biases affect both older and younger individuals. These unrecognized and unchallenged biases can have long-term consequences on well-being, economies and societies.²²

22. WHO (2021). Global report on ageism. World Health Organization.

“It's incredibly challenging to claim absolute freedom from biases. However, acknowledging and understanding our own biases is the first step towards a more inclusive and fairer environment.”

Pallavi Kumari
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisor

impact of ageism.

types of impact

1. emotional

Immediate feelings and reactions in response to ageism

Confusion

Hurt

Insult

Anxiety

Invalidation

Sadness

Worthlessness

Anger

Surprise

2. psychological

Long-term effects on a person's mental processes, behaviours, and overall well-being

Loss of confidence

Low self-esteem

Loss of motivation

Fear of pursuing dreams

Loss of interest

Loss of control

3. financial

Significant financial implications like limited income, growth, benefits

Loss of or limited income

Loss of promotions and growth

Financial insecurity

The intensity of impact varies according to individual's experience, way of thinking and circumstance. For younger age groups, the emotions due to experiencing and witnessing ageism ranged from fear, anxiousness and worthlessness to anger, hurt and invalidation. Older age groups also faced these emotions along with emotional disturbance.

“If I'm bringing my whole self to work, then I should be bringing all of myself. Where my opinions and doubts should be welcomed. My uncertainty should be welcomed as much as my knowledge and my experience are welcomed.”

Sayoni Walujkar
Special Educator, Manomay Counseling Center (18-24)

“All these comments on age and my ability started demotivating me. I lost interest in the job. I gave up because there was no pleasing the seniors. It affected my personal life. I started having panic attacks. At times I would wake up in the middle of the night thinking that I would get fired or my boss would yell at me again in front of everyone. My confidence got affected, everything got affected. I decided to quit then.”

Nihar Agrawal
CEO, Sai Oil Industries Pvt. Ltd. (25-34)

impact of ageism.

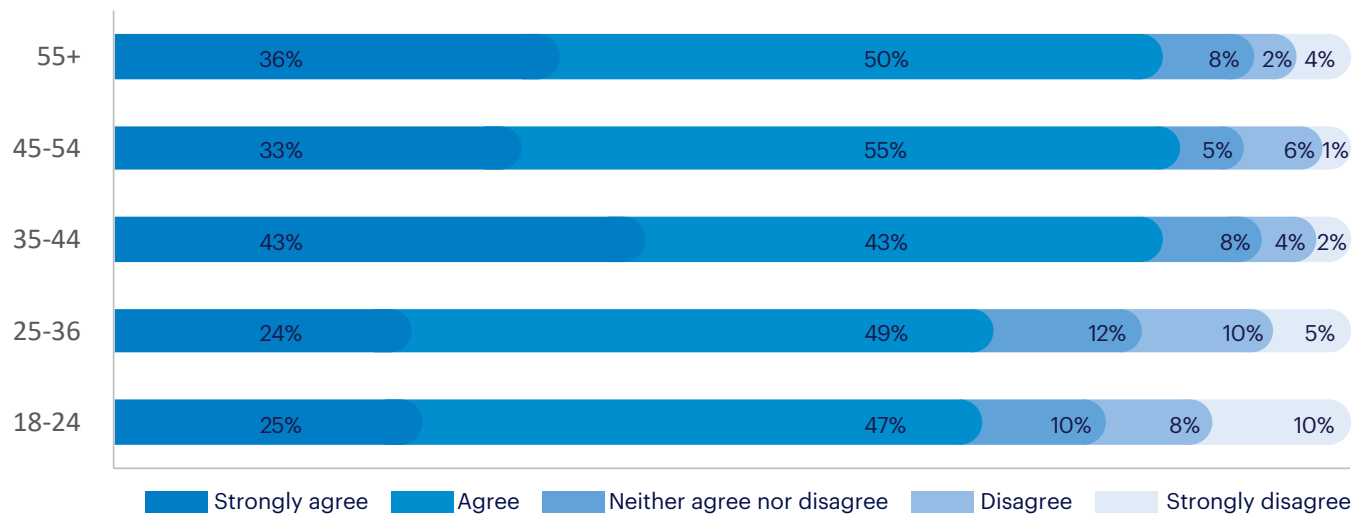
how does ageism impact belonging?

Younger groups felt less like they belong at work compared to the older age groups. They could be less authentic at work than the older groups.

Of those who reported experiencing ageism, 20% said they could not be their authentic selves at work compared to 7% of those who had not experienced ageism.

Such attitudes can lead to discrimination and influence employees' productivity, hiring, career development, resource allocation and work behaviours^{21,22}. It can also impact physical and mental health in the short and long term as our results indicate.

I can be my authentic self at work



“Any exclusion erodes sense of belonging.”

Dr. Sweta Mohapatra,
Executive Coach

21. Carr, D., & Namkung, E. H. (2021). Physical disability at work: how functional limitation affects perceived discrimination and interpersonal relationships in the workplace. *Journal of health and social behavior*, 62(4), 545-561

22. WHO (2021). *Global report on ageism*. World Health Organization.

at a glance: age-wise impact of ageism.

18-24

Lack of belonging and authenticity can cause life-long impact on mental health - fear of pursuing dreams, loss of confidence and self-esteem, feelings of anxiety and confusion.

25-34

Feelings of insult, hurt, invalidation, fear and anger, and loss of confidence, interest and motivation to work arise. The immediate impact can cause breakdowns and turnover.

35-44

Ageism affects financially in development, progression and appraisals. They feel torn between family and work responsibilities due to life and career age expectations.

45-54

Limited opportunities in recruitment, promotion and progression leave them emotionally shattered. Exclusion can cause loss of interest and motivation, impacting performance.

55+

Frustration of being unable to provide for families, loss of jobs and hence a loss of control. There is a fear of losing relevance to the work-world and loss of confidence.

how does it impact attrition?

Of all survey respondents who have experienced or witnessed ageism in the workplace, 48% are considering leaving their current job.

Of all survey respondents who are considering leaving their current job, 43% agreed age discrimination is one of the factors for leaving.

Other studies also found that due to being treated unfairly due to their age, respondents reported feeling like quitting their jobs¹⁵. At any age, if people lack meaningful work and feel like they don't belong, they will consider leaving¹².

Not getting promotions and appraisals, being laid off and leaving jobs due to ageism were said to have financial repercussions on the individuals and those dependent on them. Ageism can cause turnover, reduced productivity, and loss of expertise.

“Appraisals are impacted due to age. If new programmes are being designed, people who are a little senior in age get excluded from these offerings, and miss out on talent development and promotions.”

Anonymous survey response (35-44)

how does it impact finances?

Ageism may result in retrenchment and turnover. Financial insecurity rises for individuals losing out on work opportunities due to age-related biases.

“Navigating work dynamics in India has profoundly impacted me financially. If you're not hired, then you'll have to fall back on your assets and your savings, often limiting you to the gig economy. This is a widespread issue, resonating with many in my age group.”

David James

Author of “Your Mind At Siege” (55+)

22. WHO (2021). Global report on ageism. World Health Organization.


who is job searching?

% employees



48%

Of those who have experienced / witnessed ageism



55%

Of those who cannot be their authentic selves at work



38%

Of those whose contribution is not valued due to age



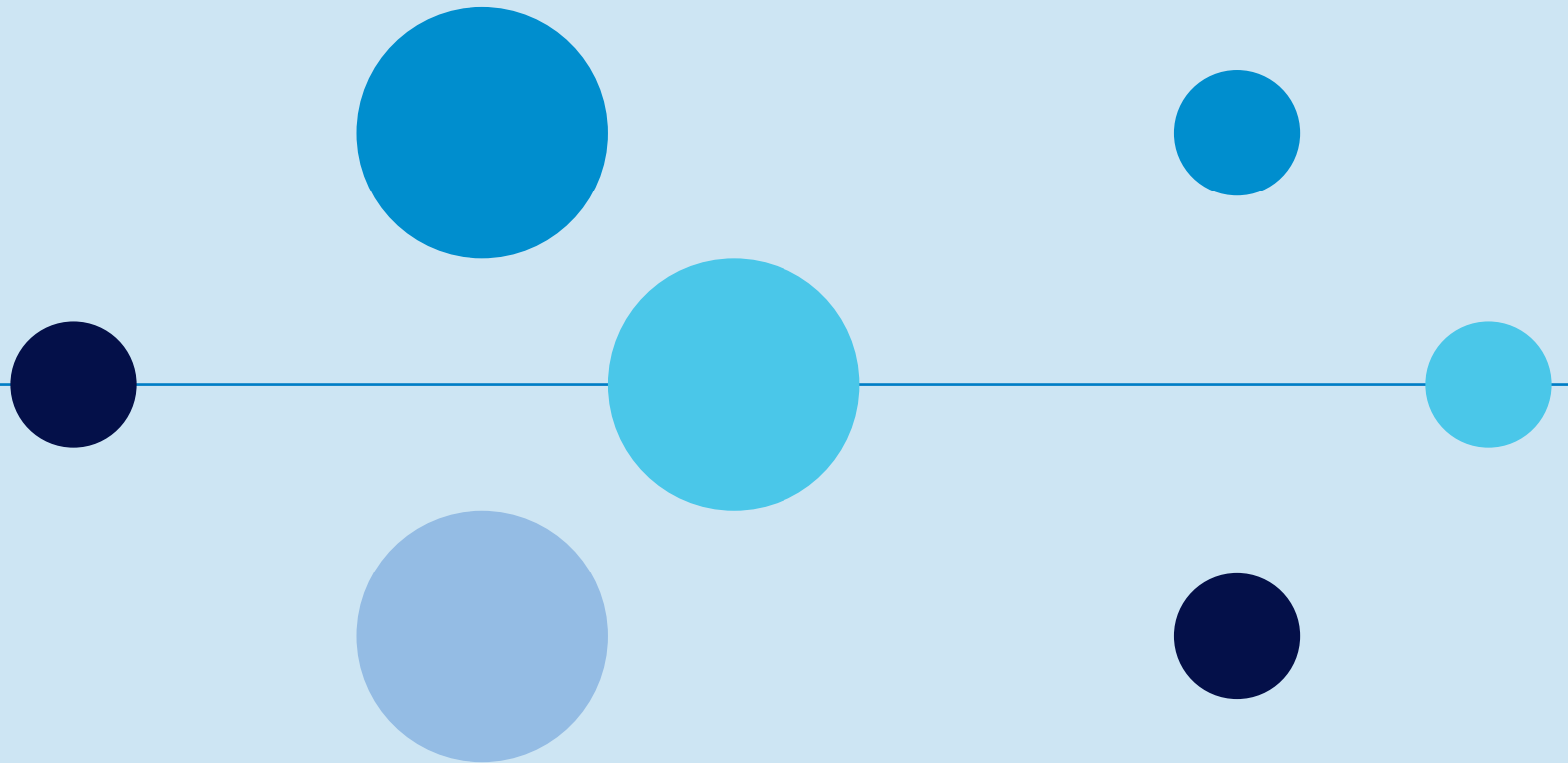
45%

Of those who say ageism is a factor in layoffs

support against ageism

Most employees reported having no formal support at work. They had informal networks within and outside of work – family, friends, colleagues, managers. All age groups agreed that there should be support in the workplace. Organisations need to build empathy and bust age-myths while promoting intergenerational activities²².

leveraging age diversity in India Inc.



benefits of leveraging age diversity in India Inc.

what are the benefits of age diversity?

All age groups agreed that there are **benefits to age diversity** and shared perspectives such as becoming empathetic, having cross-age collaboration and diversifying thought by learning from each other. Respondents said that they have seen elders taking responsibility for the youngsters' mistakes and youngsters teaching new technology to the elders.

Global research also suggests that working with age-diverse groups can lead to **better decision-making, more productive collaboration, and improved overall performance**^{23,24,25}.

Some benefits reported were:

Effective mix-and-match approach of balancing strengths and shortcomings

Aids in respecting, valuing and becoming non-judgmental

Opportunities to learn and grow

Synergy of skillset, thought and experience

More vibrancy in energy and perspectives

However, if there is no openness and acceptance, working together with different age groups might become challenging.

23. Harvard Business Review (2022). Harnessing the Power of Age Diversity. <https://hbr.org/2022/03/harnessing-the-power-of-age-diversity>

24. Gordon, P. A. (2018). Age diversity in the workplace. Diversity and inclusion in the global workplace: Aligning initiatives with strategic business goals, 31-47.

25. Wang, M., & Fang, Y. (2020). Age diversity in the workplace: Facilitating opportunities with organizational practices. Public Policy & Aging Report, 30(3), 119-123.

what does the data say?

Those who saw age diversity around them were less likely to be searching for jobs than those who did not see age diversity (28% vs. 48%).

“With multi-age diversity comes differential thinking, which is an asset. It's important that you have fresh minds, the best of minds and the best of lack of experience versus a lot of experience because experience comes with bias. With this divergent view of different age groups, pathways which will come together, make it more effective.”

Kripa Gopalan
Independent Consultant
(Healthcare and Social Development) (35-44)

the ALOI approach to leveraging age diversity in India Inc.

The study found two important factors to leverage age diversity – **Awareness and Leadership**. This implies identification of age-related stereotypes, conversations around ageism and age-neutral conduct of leaders. There cannot be a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. We recommend that each organisation take the required steps towards age inclusivity per their context, need and sector.

Other studies also suggest that organisations’ strategies for leveraging multi-generational and multi-age diversity lie in embracing diverse experiences and perspectives from human and social capital²⁶.

Hence, we recommend the following actions under what we call the “ALOI approach”:



26. Li, Y., Gong, Y., Burmeister, A., Wang, M., Alterman, V., Alonso, A., & Robinson, S. (2021). Leveraging age diversity for organizational performance: An intellectual capital perspective. Journal of applied psychology, 106(1), 71.

We recommend the following actions under our ALOI approach for organisations and their leaders, HRs and employees. Age diversity can be leveraged by creating value through cultivating [knowledge-based organisational resources](#), and through [educational and intergenerational activities](#) to dispel stereotypes and reduce prejudice^{22,26}.

1. awareness and communication

Raise awareness about ageism and create a strong business case

- Diversity week celebrations
- Knowledge-sharing platforms and forum
- Build respect

Use data-based decisions to drive inclusive change

- Generational dashboard, record and keep track of relevant metrics
- Anonymised opinion polls

Have feedback processes and communication strategies

- Understand needs
- Employee network and resource groups
- Buddy systems

2. leadership practices and behaviours

Demonstrate open-mindedness, inclusivity, and innovation

- Break stereotypes
- Consciously allot collaborative tasks

Encourage age representation in leadership roles

- Mentor successors
- Coach future leaders
- Adopt long-term thinking

Lead by example

- Walk the talk
- Show compassion
- Listen actively
- Act on diverse perspectives

22. WHO (2021). Global report on ageism. World Health Organization.

26. Li, Y., Gong, Y., Burmeister, A., Wang, M., Alterman, V., Alonso, A., & Robinson, S. (2021). Leveraging age diversity for organizational performance: An intellectual capital perspective. *Journal of applied psychology*, 106(1), 71.

3. organisational policies and HR practices

Baseline and review metrics

- Live dashboard – representation and progression
- Age-inclusive DEI audits
- Objective metrics in appraisals

Review of age-inclusive policies

- Language in job descriptions
- Competence-based hiring and promotion
- Zero-tolerance policies
- Customisation as per age needs

Age-interactive and collaborative programmes

- Reverse mentoring program
- DEI learning programs
- Sensitivity training
- Leverage senior talent
- Retirement transition (health, finance support)

4. individual actions and mindset

Self-awareness

- Educate yourself
- Be mindful to not categorise people
- Build trust
- Reflect on role in society

Language and behaviour inclusion

- Be mindful of jargon, language and actions with different age groups
- Listen non-judgmentally

Move away from stereotyping

- Get more exposure and interact mindfully with other age groups
- Keep learning

some existing practices for age inclusion:

reverse mentoring

Bridges the generational gap and promotes learning between younger and older employees. Aims to teach senior employees about digital skills, social media branding, AI, cybersecurity, and other relevant topics. Helps Gen Z become a part of the decision-making process and enables them to lead meetings and projects.

Examples of companies undertaking this:

EY India, Citi India, NatWest Group, Honeywell Technology Solutions, Merck, P&GC

flexible working hours

Often for people with care-giving responsibilities (towards children, elderly, or otherwise), generally middle-aged employees. Helps them design their workday to juggle work and caretaking.

Examples of companies undertaking this:

Pluss Advanced Technologies, Publicis Sapient

training and mentoring support

Leadership training and mentoring support to young leaders equips them for facing challenges such as being a working parent.

Examples of companies undertaking this:

Alvarez and Marshal, Dell Technologies

appointing retired professionals

To leverage experience and expertise, while also providing senior people with a sense of work satisfaction.

Examples of companies undertaking this:

Blue Star, Hitachi Energy, Suzlon Energy, Elgi Equipments

about randstad india:

Randstad India is a leading talent company providing services across four key specializations - operational talent solutions, professional talent solutions, digital talent solutions, and enterprise talent solutions. The organization is committed to providing equitable opportunities to people from all backgrounds and helping them remain relevant in the rapidly changing world of work. Randstad India has a deep understanding of the labour market to help clients create high-quality, diverse, and agile workforces they need to succeed. In the process, the organization helps talent secure meaningful roles, develop relevant skills, and find purpose and belonging in their workplace.

Randstad India has been a leading player in the industry for more than 30 years and continues to deliver innovative and specialized talent solutions to clients across sectors. Randstad is a global talent leader with the vision to be the world's most equitable and specialized talent company, active in 39 markets across the globe.

For more information, see: www.randstad.in

about randstad:

Randstad is a global talent leader with the vision to be the world's most equitable and specialized talent company. As a partner for talent and through our four specializations - Operational, Professional, Digital and Enterprise - we provide clients with the high-quality, diverse and agile workforces that they need to succeed in a talent scarce world. We help people secure meaningful roles, develop relevant skills and find purpose and belonging in their workplace. Through the value we create, we are committed to a better and more sustainable future for all.

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partner for talent.

For over 3 decades, Randstad India has been delivering innovative and specialized talent services across four key specializations - operational talent solutions, professional talent solutions, digital talent solutions, and enterprise talent solutions.

Randstad India has a deep understanding of the labour market to help clients create high-quality, diverse, and agile workforces they need to succeed.

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