



ARC CENTRE OF
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**POPULATION
AGEING
RESEARCH**

**Exploring the Role of Fact-Based Information, or Imagined
Intergenerational Teamwork to Improve Attitudes to Older
Workers: An Online Psychological Intervention**

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Exploring the role of fact-based information and imagined Intergenerational teamwork to improve attitudes to older workers

- Background – longevity and longer working lives
- Reports & Literature about ageism and barriers for older workers
- Age stereotypes, discrimination, triggers and activators of ageism
- What has been shown to improve attitudes to older workers?
- Are online EDI / DEI courses enough to improve attitudes to older workers and increase age-diversity and inclusion?
- Moving beyond convenience samples of college students to test attitudes to older workers ‘in the field’
- Future Directions



What is Ageism?

Ageism refers to the **stereotypes** (how we think), **prejudice** (how we feel) and **discrimination** (how we act) directed towards people on the basis of their **age**. (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2021)

Improving attitudes to older workers



Background

- Globally, population ageing has prompted governments to question best way to maintain revenue and workforce participation
- Proposed policy measures: removing early-retirement subsidies, increasing the retirement age and implementing age-based anti-discrimination legislation (Chomik & Piggott, 2012; Loretto & White, 2006)
- However, these efforts have been hindered by cultural and attitudinal barriers, and negative attitudes towards older workers.



International
Labour
Organization

ILOSTAT

Australia and Chile, 13,000 kilometres apart, have one thing in common: discouraged older workers.

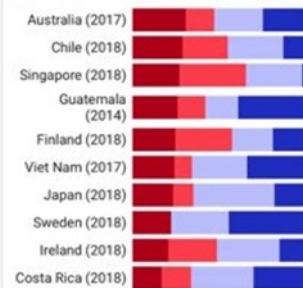


Australia tops a ranking of 102 countries with the largest share of discouraged jobseekers aged 65 years old and over, according to ILOSTAT data. Just shy of 30% of jobseekers in that age category are discouraged.

Countries with the largest shares of discouraged jobseekers aged 65+

This chart shows the proportion of discouraged jobseekers by age group (in percent) for the latest year available

65+ 55-64 25-54 15-24



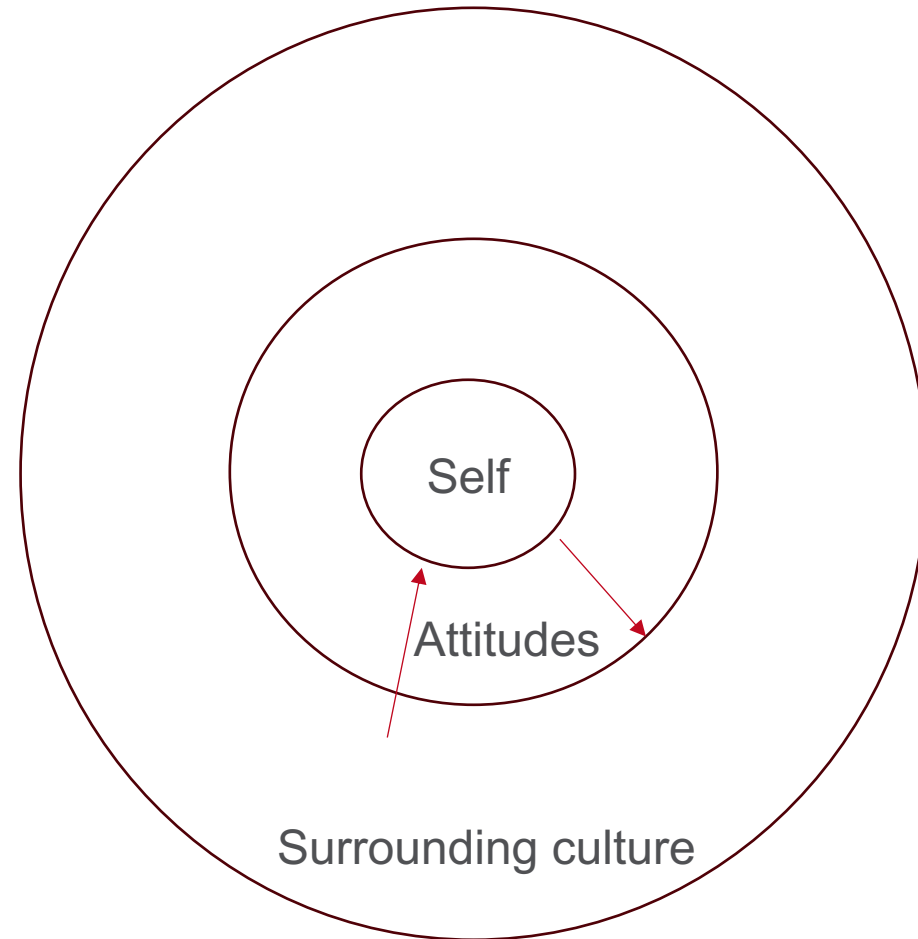
Source: ILOSTAT - Get the data
Created with Datawrapper

Australian Human Rights Commission
Surveyed 2,440 Australians
809 young adults
902 middle-aged people
729 older people
11 focus groups
(66 participants)

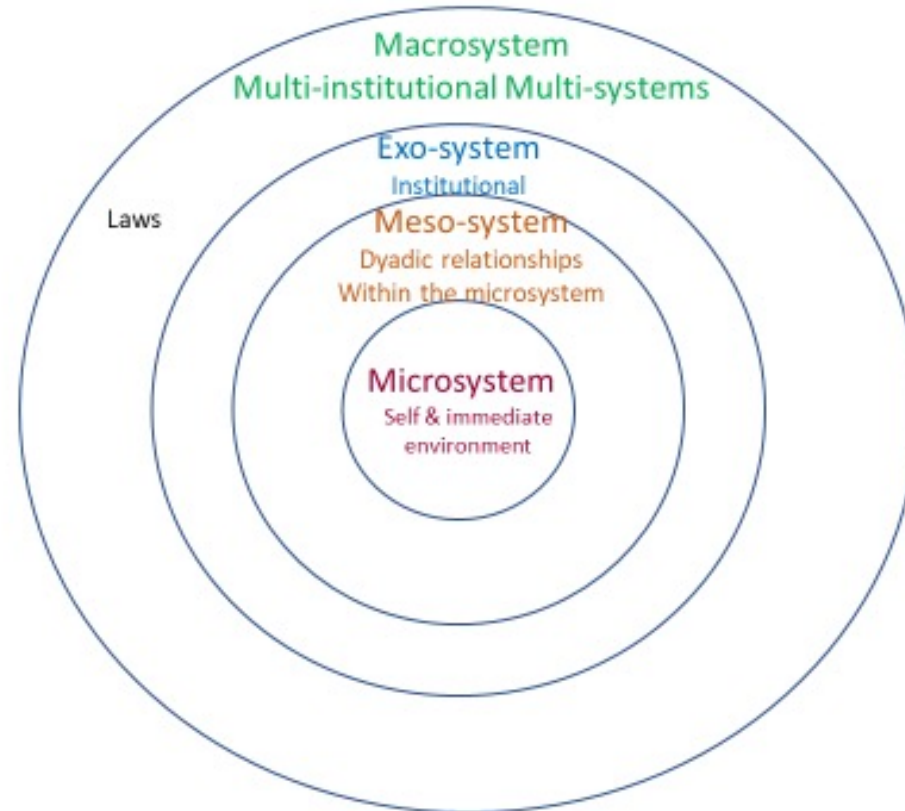


Most Australians (90%) believe ageism exists in Australia. While ageism is pervasive, Australians are more familiar with other forms of discrimination, such as racism or sexism. Young adults (18-39) are seen as 'attractive but still finding their way' Middle-aged (40-61) seen as being in 'their prime' Older people are seen as nice (if frail) onlookers to life

- Wilkinson & Ferrero (2002)
- Todd Nelson (2005)
- Thomas Hess (2003, 2004)
- Becca Levy (2009)



Ageism Interventions – Ecological Perspective



Gendron et al (2022)

Generational Stereotypes & Meta-Stereotypes

- Generational groups in the context of work, have been more recently described as a metastereotypes

“A person’s beliefs regarding the stereotype that out-group members hold about his/her/their own group,” and these may trigger generalised stereotypes about differing age groups.”

(Finkelstein et al., 2015; Vorauer, Hunter, Main, Roy, & psychology, 2000).

What has been found to work effectively?

- A review of ageism interventions by Burnes (2019) showed that **'facts on ageing'** and **'Intergenerational contact'** were effective with combined interventions the most effective.
- However, the majority of these interventions were carried out in school, college or healthcare settings and were not directed at older workers.
- **Knowledge-oriented training program** might be more useful in situations where age-based categorisation and intergenerational tensions are not a problem but when the benefits of age-diverse organisations (e.g., transfer of different knowledge, Burmeister et al, 2021).
- Lead on changing attitudes, create a psychological safety for sharing similarities and differences between the different generations, but **don't elevate one group above another** with special treatment or compensation (Iweins et al., 2012).

Scoping review: interventions targeting ageism in the workplace

- More intensive multi-component ‘workshop’ style interventions have stronger evidence
- Diversity of theoretical approach and methods
- Unclear how long effects last
- Dominance of ‘explicit’ measures – unclear whether implicit processes are changed
- Very few studies in actual workplace settings

~ Sinclair, Joffe, Ginnivan, Parker & Anstey (2023)

Journal of Work, Aging & Retirement

Online intervention ‘Workplace team dynamics’

Condition A – Facts + Vignette	Condition B - Facts	Condition C - control
1. Instructions	1. Instructions	1. Instructions
2. Imagined Intergenerational Collaboration (Vignette)		
3. Facts on Ageing Or Counter stereotypical Examples	2. Facts on Ageing Or Counter stereotypical Examples	
4. Attitudes to older workers (AOWS)	3. Attitudes to older workers (AOWS)	2. Attitudes to older workers (AOWS)
5. Anxiety about Ageing Scale (AAS)	4. Anxiety about Ageing Scale (AAS)	3. Anxiety about Ageing Scale (AAS)
6. Jeste-Thomas Wisdom scales	5. Jeste-Thomas Wisdom scales	4. Jeste-Thomas Wisdom scales
7. Self-presentation measure	6. Self-presentation measure	5. Self-presentation measures
8. Debrief on survey's focus predominantly about attitudes to ageing workers	7. Debrief on survey's focus predominantly about attitudes to ageing workers	6. Debrief on survey's focus predominantly about attitudes to ageing workers

Participants (n = 361, age = 40, 18 – 65, 52% female, 48% male) randomly assigned to either a treatment condition or control

Attitudes to older workers

Anxiety about Ageing

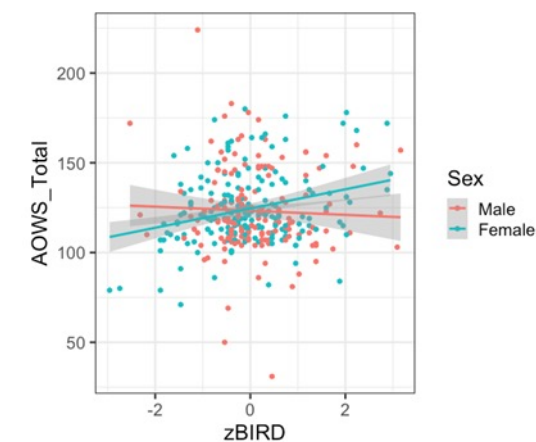
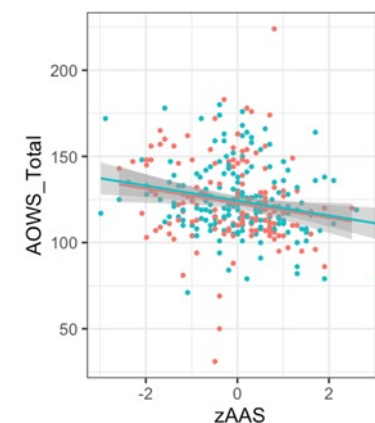
J-T Wisdom Scale

Social Desirability



Results of online Ageism Intervention

- A general trend that participants in the COMBINED condition had more positive attitudes towards older workers (AOWS) than those in the FACTS-ONLY and CONTROL conditions. However, the difference is not statistically significant
- A sig. interaction between Gender and Anxiety about Ageing (AAS)
 - Women with higher anxiety about ageing were more likely to have more negative attitudes towards older workers than men
- A sig. interaction between Gender and Social Desirability (BIRD)
 - Women scored higher in social desirability showed more positive attitudes towards older workers than men



Ginnivan, Leung, Li, Joffe, Sinclair & Anstey (forthcoming)

Exploring impediments and enablers to building multigenerational teams



Focus Group discussions with
younger (25-44yrs)
And older employees (45 – 80yrs)

In-depth Interviews with Senior Executives

(Rickwood, Li, Ginnivan &
Anstey, forthcoming)



Focus Groups – two different age groups (22 – 44) and (45+ years)

- *“The older people, older generation, they might not be seeing these programmes on a day-to-day basis, so they're not familiar with maybe going even if it's a different application that they're using, they'll still do A, B, C, D, like we would. But for them, A, B, C, D is, not what they would see in a daily basis. And so being tech savvy is more like the fact that it's not visibly apparent on a day to day basis. And so they struggle with it compared to maybe the younger generation.”*
- *“Communication. I think it just depends on the communication that you use, because I think it's also the difference in generation. So, I can understand, like those who are 20, they're all using these words that I don't understand and I'm not that much older than them.”*
- *“But like again, it's that idea, right? It's the communication piece. You might think the way that you communicate has been working, but the other person might take it incorrectly. But this is on the flip side. Vice versa, a younger person could react, they use that exact same. So, I think communication is a is one that's quite important because what you might say, they might not clearly understand it.”*

Conclusions

- There are not a lot of efforts 'in the field' to tackle ageism, age-diversity initiatives, age-inclusivity
- Societal structures and 'age segregation' within our major institutions make it difficult to encourage and improve multigenerational workplaces
- Awareness campaigns have their place, however, a mixture of different efforts that are more dynamic and inventive, with evaluation are required
- Ideally strong support from the management (structure), low age-salience, high affirmation for the productivity value and benefits of intergenerational teamwork

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