

# Ageism

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**Ageism** is stereotyping and prejudice against individuals or groups because of their age.<sup>[1]</sup> The term was coined in 1969 by US gerontologist Robert N. Butler to describe discrimination against seniors and patterned on sexism and racism<sup>[2]</sup>. The term has also been used to describe discrimination against teens and children, by ignoring their ideas because they're young or by assuming that they should behave a certain way because of their age.

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## Effects

### Discrimination

Ageism commonly and most likely refers towards negative discriminatory practices, regardless of the age towards which it is applied. The following terms are subsidiary forms of ageism:

- Adultism is a predisposition towards adults, which is seen as biased against children, youth, and all young people who aren't addressed or viewed as adults.<sup>[3]</sup>
- Jeunism is the tendency to prefer young people over older people. This includes political candidacies, commercial functions, and cultural settings where the supposed greater vitality and/or physical

Part of a series of articles on

## Discrimination

### General forms

Racism · Sexism · **Ageism**  
Religious intolerance · Xenophobia

### Specific forms

*Social* [show]  
*Against cultures* [show]  
*Against beliefs* [show]

### Manifestations

Slavery · Racial profiling · Lynching  
Hate speech · Hate crime  
Genocide (examples) · Ethnocide  
Ethnic cleansing · Pogrom · Race war  
· Religious persecution · Blood libel ·  
Paternalism  
Police brutality

### Movements

*Discriminatory* [show]  
*Anti-discriminatory* [show]

### Policies

*Discriminatory*  
Race / Religion / Sex segregation  
Apartheid · Redlining · Internment ·  
Ethnocracy

### *Anti-discriminatory*

Emancipation · Civil rights  
Desegregation · Integration  
Equal opportunity

### *Counter-discriminatory*

Affirmative action · Racial quota  
Reservation (India) · Reparation  
Forced busing  
Employment equity (Canada)

### Law

#### *Discriminatory*

Anti-miscegenation · Anti-immigration  
Alien and Sedition Acts · Jim Crow laws  
Test Act · Apartheid laws  
Ketuanan Melayu · Nuremberg Laws

#### *Anti-discriminatory*

Anti-discrimination acts  
Anti-discrimination law  
14th Amendment · Crime of apartheid

beauty of youth is more appreciated than the supposed greater moral and/or intellectual rigor of adulthood.

- Adultcentricism is the "exaggerated egocentrism of adults."<sup>[4]</sup>
- Adultocracy is the social convention which defines "maturity" and "immaturity," placing adults in a dominant position over young people, both theoretically and practically.<sup>[5]</sup>
- Gerontocracy is a form of oligarchical rule in which an entity is ruled by leaders who are significantly older than most of the adult population.
- Chronocentrism is primarily the belief that a certain state of humanity is superior to all previous and/or former times.

Ageism is said to lead towards the development of fears towards age groups, particularly:

- Pedophobia, the fear of infants and children
- Ephebiphobia, the fear of youth.<sup>[6]</sup>
- Gerontophobia, the fear of elderly people.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Employment

### Discrimination against younger workers

Like race and gender discrimination, age discrimination, at least when it affects younger workers, can result in unequal pay for equal work. Unlike race and gender discrimination, age discrimination in wages is often enshrined in law. For example, in both the United States<sup>[8]</sup> and the United Kingdom<sup>[9]</sup> minimum wage laws allow for employers to pay lower wages to young workers. Many state and local minimum wage laws mirror such an age-based tiered minimum wage. Outside of the law, older workers, on average, make more than younger workers do. Firms may be afraid to offer older workers lower wages than younger workers.

Labor regulations also limit the age at which people are allowed to work and how many hours and under what conditions they may work. In the United States a person must generally be at least 14 years old to seek a job, and workers face additional restrictions on their work activities until age 16.<sup>[10]</sup> Many companies refuse to hire workers under 18.

### Discrimination against older workers

While older workers benefit from higher wages than younger workers, they face barriers in promotions and hiring. Employers may also encourage early retirement or lay off disproportionately older/more experienced workers.

Age discrimination in hiring has been shown to exist in the United States. Joanna Lahey, Economics professor at Texas A&M, found that firms are more than 40% more likely to interview a younger job applicant than an older job applicant.<sup>[11]</sup>

In a survey for the University of Kent, England, 29% of respondents stated that they had suffered from age

#### Other forms

Nepotism · Cronyism · Colorism  
Linguicism · Ethnocentrism · Triumphalism  
Adultcentrism · Gynocentrism  
Androcentrism · Economic

#### Related topics

Bigotry · Prejudice · Supremacism  
Intolerance · Tolerance · Diversity  
Multiculturalism · Oppression  
Political correctness  
Reverse discrimination · Eugenics  
Racialism



*Discrimination Portal*

discrimination. This is a higher proportion than for gender or race discrimination. Dominic Abrams, Social Psychology professor at the University, concluded that ageism is the most pervasive form of prejudice experienced in the UK population.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Government responses

In the US, each state may have its own laws regarding age discrimination. In California, the California Fair Employment and Housing Act permits discrimination against persons under the age of 40. The FEHA is the principal California statute prohibiting employment discrimination, covering employers, labor organizations, employment agencies, apprenticeship programs and/or any person or entity who aids, abets, incites, compels, or coerces the doing of a discriminatory act. In addition to age, it prohibits employment discrimination based on race or color; religion; national origin or ancestry, physical disability; mental disability or medical condition; marital status; sex or sexual orientation; and pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions.<sup>[13]</sup>

The federal government governs age discrimination under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA). The ADEA prohibits employment discrimination based on age with respect to employees 40 years of age or older as well. The ADEA also addresses the difficulty older workers face in obtaining new employment after being displaced from their jobs, arbitrary age limits.<sup>[14]</sup> The ADEA applies even if some of the minimum 20 employees are overseas and working for a US corporation.<sup>[15]</sup>

The United States federal government has responded to issues of ageism in governance through several measures in the past. They include the creation of the 1970s-era National Commission on Resources for Youth, which was created in the late 1960s as to promote youth participation throughout communities. Recently the federal government implemented the Tom Osborne Federal Youth Coordination Act, aiming to curb redundancy among federal service providers to youth.

Other countries that have laws addressing ageism include Australia, Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom.

## Advocacy campaigns

Many current and historical intergenerational and youth programs have been created to address the issue of ageism. Among the advocacy organizations created in the United Kingdom to challenge age discrimination are Age Concern, the British Youth Council and Help the Aged.

In the United States there have been several historic and current efforts to challenge ageism. The earliest example may be the Newsboys Strike of 1899, which fought ageist employment practices targeted against youth by large newspaper syndicates in the Northeast. During the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was active in the national youth movement, including the formation of the National Youth Administration and the defense of the American Youth Congress. She made several statements on behalf of youth and against ageism. In one report entitled, "Facing the Problems of Youth," Roosevelt said of youth,

"We cannot simply expect them to say, 'Our older people have had experience and they have proved to themselves certain things, therefore they are right.' That isn't the way the best kind of young people

think. They want to experience for themselves. I find they are perfectly willing to talk to older people, but they don't want to talk to older people who are shocked by their ideas, nor do they want to talk to older people who are not realistic."<sup>[16]</sup>

Students for a Democratic Society formed in 1960 to promote democratic opportunities for all people regardless of age, and the Gray Panthers was formed in the early 1970s with a goal of eliminating ageism in all forms.<sup>[17]</sup> Three O'Clock Lobby formed in 1976 to promote youth participation throughout traditionally ageist government structures in Michigan, while Youth Liberation of Ann Arbor started in 1970 to promote youth and fight ageism.

More recent U.S. programs include Americans for a Society Free from Age Restrictions, which formed in 1996 to advance the civil and human rights of young people through eliminating ageist laws targeted against young people, and to help youth counter ageism in America.<sup>[18]</sup> The National Youth Rights Association started in 1998 to promote awareness of the legal and human rights of young people in the United States.<sup>[19]</sup>, and the Freechild Project was formed in 2001 to identify, unify and promote diverse opportunities for youth engagement in social change by fighting ageism.

## Related campaigns

- In 2002 the Writers Guild of America West has waged a legal battle within the entertainment industry to eliminate age discrimination commonly faced by elder scriptwriters.
- Director Paul Weitz reported he wrote the 2004 film, *In Good Company* to reveal how ageism affects youth and adults.<sup>[20]</sup>
- In 2002 The Freechild Project created an information and training initiative to provide resources to youth organizations and schools focused on youth rights.<sup>[21]</sup>

## Accusations of ageism

- In a recent interview, famed actor Pierce Brosnan cited ageism as one of the contributing factors as to why he was not cast as James Bond in the Bond film *Casino Royale*, released in 2006.<sup>[22]</sup>

## See also

- Effects of Aging
- Memory and aging
- Aging brain
- Allophilia
- Prejudice
- Adultism
- Ephebiphobia
- Pedophobia
- Gerontophobia
- Gerontocracy
- Social criticism

## References

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9. ^ Age Positive ([http://www.agepositive.gov.uk/news/minimum\\_wage.asp](http://www.agepositive.gov.uk/news/minimum_wage.asp)) , Department for Work and Pensions in Sheffield and London
10. ^ Youth & Labor - Age Requirements (<http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/youthlabor/agerequirements.htm>) , US Department of Labor
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21. ^ (n.d.) Survey of North American Youth Rights (<http://www.freechild.org/SNAYR/index.htm>) The Freechild Project website.
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## External links

- 2005 issue of the Journal of Social Issues (<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/toc/josi/61/2>) Thematic journal issue devoted to empirical and theoretical research on ageism.
- Ageing at work ([http://osha.europa.eu/priority\\_groups/ageingworkers/](http://osha.europa.eu/priority_groups/ageingworkers/)) EU-OSHA

- **Ageism In America** (<http://www.ilcusa.org/prj/ageism.htm>) Detailed report on ageism from the International Longevity Center.
- **Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice Against Older Persons** (<http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?ttype=2&tid=10385>) Edited scholarly volume of the latest research and theory on Ageism.
- **Article on Older Drivers** (<http://www.luhs.org/depts/injprev/Transprt/tran3.htm#Older%20Drivers>) .
- **An in-depth look at ageism** by Linda M. Woolfe, Ph.D., of Webster University (<http://www.webster.edu/~woolfm/ageism.html>)
- **Everyone deserves to be given a chance** ([http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/engramja/projects&evals/sem2\\_mag1/chantellemag/chanceessay.htm](http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/engramja/projects&evals/sem2_mag1/chantellemag/chanceessay.htm)) An essay against ageism towards teenagers, written by a Canadian adolescent.
- **Age discrimination laws by the BBC** (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/5334972.stm>)

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