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PUBLIC POLICY, AGE DISCRIMINATION AND AUSTRALIAN OLDER WORKERS: SOLUTIONS IN SEARCH OF A PROBLEM?

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Abstract

Issues of age discrimination in labour markets of industrialised nations, including Australia, are viewed as a serious impediment to older workers' employment. Focused on jobseekers and workers aged over 50, age discrimination seems not to consider other sociological factors that may influence older workers' prospects nor any experiences of younger workers. To assess limitations of this current focus, the concept of *everyday discrimination* was operationalised in the form of 12 survey items administered in a nationally representative sample of working Australians. Utilising these measures it was observed that discrimination was experienced by 25 per cent of respondents overall, with little evidence of age differences in the extent of experiences, except that in some regards younger workers appeared more likely to report discrimination than older ones. It is argued that presently there may be an over-emphasis on tackling age discrimination facing older workers that obscures proper consideration of barriers to their participation, and may in fact entrench ageist perceptions among labour market actors.

Keywords

Age discrimination, Australia, everyday discrimination, labour market, older jobseekers, older workers, public policy

Introduction

Australia, in step with the other industrialised and increasingly many developing nations, has been intent on delaying the age at which workers finally withdraw from the labour market. Underpinning this desire is the phenomenon of population ageing and associated concerns about the sustainability of social welfare systems and the future availability of sufficient labour to support economic growth. Displacing the previous promotion of early retirement, governments have begun focusing on issues of maintaining older workers' relationship with the labour market and implementing a range of measures aimed at facilitating their re-entry and retention (Field *et al.*, 2013; Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2015; Phillipson, 2009; Taylor and Earl, 2015; Wang, 2012). A key plank of policymaking across these ageing nations has been efforts to overcome age discrimination in the labour market. Such efforts have included legislation proscribing age discrimination in the labour market, employer awareness raising campaigns and wage subsidies aimed at overcoming an apparent employer reluctance to employ older labour (Vargas *et al.*, 2013).

In Australia there has been considerable interest recently in understanding older workers' relationship with the labour market (e.g. Appannah and Biggs, 2015; Billett *et al.*, 2011; Brooke *et al.*, 2013; Buckley *et al.*, 2013; Byles *et al.*, 2013; Humpel *et al.*, 2009; Mackenzie *et al.*, 2011; Taylor *et al.*, 2013a; Walter *et al.*, 2008). In this context the policy and advocacy literature has been largely unequivocal in considering age discrimination to be a serious social problem and such a major impediment to older workers' labour force participation that it has required a special policy focus. As Taylor and Earl (2015) have outlined, growing older in Australia has been often

described in pejorative terms: the national advocacy organisation COTA (2013) advocated that ageism is ‘endemic in our society’ and the Australian Human Rights Commission (2013, 2015a) reported that ageing has predominantly negative connotations.

In terms of recent public policy, the Australian government has focused particularly on changing employer behaviours by implementing various measures targeting the employment of older workers. In 2013 many of the existing federal employment measures aimed at older workers’ employment were dispensed with when the Coalition Government came to power. However, two programs were retained. Firstly, a program known as Corporate Champions which aimed to build employer capability in the area of ‘age management’ and to promulgate examples of good employer practice was retained, and, secondly, a wage subsidy scheme was retained and extended having been renamed Restart. From 1 July 2014 Restart comprised an incentive payment to employers of AUD\$10,000 per hire for eligible registered job seekers aged 50 and over employed for a minimum of 15 hours per week (Department of Employment, 2014).

Notable in 2015 was the announcement of the *Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability*. The *Willing to Work* age issues paper deployed statistics to make a case for endemic age discrimination across industries in Australia (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015b: 6). The Australian Human Rights Commission (2015b: 13) stressed that widespread discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in recruitment, in workplaces, from employers and others were the top one of ten barriers for

participation of older Australians, with the second being low levels of awareness of rights at work. This position drew on the National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre's (2012) *Barriers to Mature Age Employment* report which encompassed a broader and more nuanced perspective comprising 23 recommendations, including discriminatory attitudes in recruitment and employment which can manifest directly and indirectly, and which can interact with other barriers, such as caring responsibilities, a desire to pursue leisure activities, mental health issues, physical illness or injury, disability and other issues (National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre, 2012). Arguably, the relative narrowness of the *Willing to Work* issues paper simplified the complex social problem of older worker participation into one blunt issue of age discrimination. Furthermore, the Australian Human Rights Commission (2015b: 13-14) identified, although without citing an evidence base, four factors for employers, with the first three being their low levels of awareness to not discriminate, their limited resources, especially for small business, and their difficulties complying with laws.

For some time the Australian Human Rights Commission's aim to promote awareness of labour market age barriers facing older workers has centred on the issue of age discrimination in isolation from other barriers. Activities have included:

- *National Prevalence Survey of Age Discrimination in the Workplace* (2015a) providing data measuring prevalence, nature and impact of age discrimination in Australian workplaces;
- *Fact or Fiction? Stereotypes of Older Australians* (2013) identifying negative stereotyping about age, that the majority of Australians believe age discrimination

is prevalent, and that more than a third of older Australians have experienced age discrimination; and

- *Working Past our 60s: Reforming Laws and Policies for the Older Worker* (2012) identifying areas for action to redress the situation that locks older Australians out of the workforce due to age discrimination.

In contrast, a broader and more nuanced approach to barriers to older worker participation was taken by the Australian Law Reform Commission (2013) *Access All Ages: Older Workers and Commonwealth Laws* which was tasked with reviewing legal barriers to workforce participation for older people.

While the broad thrust of Australian public policy has considered age discrimination as a phenomenon exclusive to older people, the efficacy of this approach is questionable. Internationally, there has been recognition of the difficulties of disentangling discrimination on the basis of age from other sociological factors such as gender, race and/or class (Moore, 2009). Furthermore, Loretto *et al.* (2000: 285) have explained that ‘in policy terms and in public discourse, the phenomenon is still mostly associated with prejudice against older age groups. In recent times, however, this association has begun to loosen as evidence mounts that age prejudice in employment can be experienced at any age’. Or as Duncan (2003: 108) stated more directly: ‘age prejudice differs from other forms of discrimination in that there is no single, clearly defined, oppressed group. Everyone is of an age and can be subject to age discrimination’. Adding to this, Brooke and Taylor (2005) have argued that policies directed at older workers alone ignore the age and age group dynamics that inform workplace practices. Thus, despite the present Australian policy emphasis on

older workers in ageing societies, commentators have stressed the role age can play as a labour market barrier at any age and the intersections of age with other factors.

In tackling labour market age barriers, it seems, therefore, that a requirement has been established to move beyond considerations of the needs of a given so-called ‘age group’, such as ‘older workers’, to instead consider the management of an ageing and age diverse workforce. To date, however, such an approach appears to have manifested primarily as simplistic calls to consider how so-called ‘generations’ of workers can be managed (e.g. Adecco, 2013). Much has been said about the limitations of such approaches centred on an opaque concept of generations, as noted by Marshall and Wells (2013), among others. On top of this, in attempting to extend working lives, deploying a ‘one model fits all’ approach has been considered problematic as it does not recognise the diversity of older workers who, as they work across a range of different industries and in various roles and functions, do not comprise a unified cohort based on age (Earl *et al.*, 2015; Flynn, 2010). Thus, in considering ‘age management’ there is also a need to pay attention to how age intersects with a range of other sociological factors, including gender and socio-economic group. Arguably, therefore, a policy focus on a given ‘age group’ is a highly reductionist strategy that fails to appreciate the dynamics and diversity of modern workplaces and their workforces, with the consequence that neither workers nor employers may benefit.

Moreover, focusing the issue on employer practices may be overestimating the importance of the workplace. Notably, according to Duncan (2003: 104), there has been an over-emphasis by policymakers and advocates on discriminatory attitudes

supposedly held by employers in explaining early exit and lower levels of older worker labour market participation and, further, the empirical approach has been one of ‘searching for proof of ageism rather than testing for its extent or influence... semi-campaigning in tone, the investigative focus has almost exclusively been towards detecting instances of mistaken beliefs or irrational prejudice on the part of employers’.

At the same time as there have been difficulties in the conceptualisation of age discrimination, there have also been potentially serious methodological weaknesses in studies purporting to measure perceived experiences of age discrimination that render the validity of their findings open to question (Malinen and Johnston, 2013). For example, a recent Australian Human Rights Commission (2015a) survey of the prevalence of age discrimination against older people stated that more than one in four (27%) Australians aged 50 years and older who participated in the workforce in the previous two years reported experiencing some form of age discrimination in the workplace at least once during that time period. This was stated as most likely to be experienced by those in the 55 to 64 year age group. Significantly more older jobseekers reported experiencing age barriers (58%). The methodological issue arises as respondents in this study were asked directly about their experiences of age discrimination. Asking leading questions of this nature is known to have the potential to result in inflated reports (Freedman *et al.*, 2003) and, as a consequence, such findings have limited utility as a basis for understanding the prevalence of age discrimination in the labour market and, therefore, for formulating public policy.

The present study adopted a more indirect approach to the measurement of workplace

discrimination, drawing on the concept of *everyday discrimination*. Noting conceptual and methodological problems Taylor, *et al.* (2013b) argued that inadequate measurement might partly explain an inconsistency of findings in the age discrimination literature. While recent studies of age discrimination have commonly asked respondents a direct question about their experience of such discrimination, the wider discrimination literature provides useful guidance on how a different, less direct, approach to measurement might elicit a nuanced and, potentially, more accurate picture of the extent and nature of particular forms of discrimination in workplaces. For example, Deitch *et al.* (2003: 1301) explained that in workplaces people who do not regard themselves as discriminators are unlikely to engage in ‘overt expressions of prejudice’, but rather to engage in ‘more subtle discriminatory behaviours, such as avoidance of [their targets], “closed” and unfriendly verbal and nonverbal communication, or failure to provide assistance’. Exploring racial discrimination in the workplace, Deitch *et al.* (2003) argued that everyday encounters of prejudice are wider and more varied than a focus on blatant and major discriminatory acts, that forms of workplace discrimination are becoming less overt, and that focusing on *everyday discrimination* may more accurately measure the actual form and extent of discriminations in the workplace. Such everyday experiences of prejudice may not be classified by those experiencing them as instances of discrimination, but may nonetheless have deleterious consequences for workers.

In order to attempt to address some of the deficiencies in the Australian age discrimination literature this paper draws upon the concept of *everyday discrimination* to report findings from a study that explored the incidence of reported experiences of discrimination in Australian workplaces, with a particular emphasis on examining age

differences in such experiences. Building on the earlier work by Taylor *et al.* (2013b), this paper considers the implications for tackling labour market age barriers.

Methodology

The project utilised data collected via a computer-aided telephone interview (CATI) survey of 3,203 working Australian workers sampled via a mixture of publicly available residential telephone data (White Pages) and a purchased list of Australian residents. A list was purchased in order to ensure good representation of specific quota groups and also in order to cost effectively reach those population groups who are traditionally difficult to find by telephone (full-time employed, people between the age of 18-24 and single person households). The purchased list was derived from a list of over 2 million Australians (the Acxiom Consumerbase file) which is updated annually for accuracy. It is built from multiple marketing sources, both offline and online. Random selection was generated to a set formula (normally every third or fifth number) and, by adding the postcode selection criteria, a good geographical spread was achieved. Up to five attempts to contact each selected number were made, in order to minimise non-response. Including piloting, data collection took place between April and August 2011.

It was intended that the instrument would take approximately 20 minutes to administer. However, in practice this was far exceeded, with the average completion time being more than 30 minutes. In order to maximise the response rate a financial incentive was added shortly after the commencement of fieldwork as this problem

became apparent. This overcame the problem to some extent, although the size of the survey instrument continued to have a detrimental effect on the response rate.

Data pertaining to the response rate of the CATI survey are presented in Table 1.

Only 3.5 per cent of the total numbers called resulted in a complete survey. The highest proportion (42 per cent) of the 90,000 calls made was to individuals who did not qualify to respond to the survey because they were under the age of 18 or not currently in employment. Some 31 per cent of the total calls made were to individuals that were not interested in participating in the survey. A further 12.5 per cent of total calls made were to invalid numbers. Approximately 21 per cent of the total calls made were to numbers that were either invalid, no contact was made at the number during the campaign, numbers were disconnected or duplicated, numbers belonged to individuals who did not speak English, or they were fax numbers. A further 2 per cent of the total calls made were to individuals who were not available to participate during the administration period, had demographic characteristics for which quotas had already been achieved, or terminated the interview before completing the survey.

Table 1 here

Results

This section begins by considering the sample characteristics. In the next section the incidence of different kinds of discrimination is considered. Following this, factor analysis exploring underlying structures in the data is reported. Finally, comparisons

according to age group are reported using the latent variables identified in the factor analysis.

Respondent characteristics

Basic statistics concerning the key characteristics of the survey respondents are presented below.

Demographics

The mean age of respondents was 43.12 years (Median 43, Mode, 39, Standard Deviation 12.59, Range 18-83). Approximately 60 per cent of the sample was female, 40 per cent male. The majority were married or cohabiting (73.3%) followed by living alone (15.2%), living with parents (9.4%) and living with others who were not family members (1.8%).

Four-fifths of respondents (79.4%) were born in Australia, followed by Vietnam (9.4%), the United Kingdom (5.6%) and Ireland/Eire (2.6%). Less than two per cent of respondents were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Education

Most respondents had a secondary school education, with three-quarters of respondents having completed year 11 or 12 (75.2%) while the remaining quarter had completed year 10 (24.4%). Almost a quarter (23.3%) of respondents had not

obtained a post-secondary educational qualification. The most commonly completed post-secondary educational qualification completed was a Bachelor Degree (21.6%) followed by a Trade Certificate (19.3%).

Employment arrangements

The majority of respondents reported having only one job or business (85.6%). Over a tenth (11.6%) reported having two jobs or businesses while only a small proportion had three or more jobs or businesses (2.8%).

The majority of respondents (82.1%) worked for an employer, 17.1 per cent worked for themselves or within a business partnership, while a small proportion worked in an alternative capacity. Just over a third (37.4%) reported that they had employees. Approximately one third were working for micro-businesses, of greater than one but fewer than 20 employees. Just over a third of respondents worked for an employer with between 20 and 199 employees, while approximately a quarter worked for an organisation with 200 or more employees.

Three-quarters of respondents reported having paid holiday or sick leave entitlements (76%), with a significant proportion reporting that they did not (23.9%). The majority had no fixed finishing date for their employment situation (83.8%), whereas the remainder reported a fixed finishing date (16.2%). Two-fifths of respondents worked on a contract basis (40.1%).

Characteristics of work

The mean number of hours usually worked by respondents each week was 34.12, with a standard deviation of 17.4. The median number of working hours each week was 36 and the mode was 40. Approximately 23 per cent of respondents indicated that they were shift workers, with a further 3 per cent indicating that they worked shift work but that it varied.

Comparisons to national data

Considering the extent to which sampling was able to achieve quotas that were employed to ensure the possibility of robust between group comparisons, as can be seen below there was an under-representation of younger workers (Table 3
Table 4
, men (Table 3) and respondents from the state of Victoria (Table 4) in the sample. Quotas were used to ensure sufficient responses were obtained from participants in different demographic groups in to undertake multivariate statistical analysis.

Table 2

Table 3

Table 4

Data drawn from responses to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006 Australian population census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008) were used to assess the comparability of the sample to the Australian workforce. The proportion of

respondents was compared to the national workforce by gender, age group and industry sector and these data are presented in more detail below. Although the results suggested an over-representation of women, the proportion of respondents from different age groups was largely comparable. The representation of the different industry sectors in the sample was also incongruent to national counts. Overall these differences suggest that the conclusions drawn from the analysis of these data can be generalised to a large segment of the Australian workforce with some specific groups excluded.

Gender

Figure 1 presents the proportion of women and men in the sample compared to the Australian labour force. It is evident from this figure that the sample included a substantial over-representation of women.

Figure 1

Age

Eighty-five participants were excluded from the comparison of age groups because they were 18 and 19 years old. While the ABS collects employment data on Australians aged 15 and over, the present study obtained responses from Australian 18 years of age and older. The standard classification of age used by the ABS begins with Australians aged 15-19 and as such the national data can only be compared with

the present sample for employed persons aged 20 and older. Figure 2 presents the proportion of respondents in each age group for the sample and the national workforce. The only notable departure from what are largely comparable proportions was in the 25-34 age group where a 6 per cent difference was observed.

Figure 2

Industry

Figure 3 presents the proportion of respondents by industry compared to the national workforce. There are several notable departures from comparability of these proportions. First, electricity, gas, water, waste services, wholesale trade and the rental, hiring and real estate services industries were not represented in the sample. Second, there was an under-representation of the construction and manufacturing industries. Finally, a substantial over-representation of the education and training, professional, scientific and technical services and the health care and social assistance industries was observed. It is noteworthy that these distinctions may add some authenticity to the sample data as the under-represented industries have been contracting, whereas those industries that are over-represented are the three fastest growing industry sectors. This suggests that the differences between the observed proportions may be partially attributable to changes in the industry profiles in the intervening period between the collection of the census data and the present study. For example, between 2001 and 2006 the proportion of employed persons working in the manufacturing industry fell from 12 per cent to 10 per cent. Also, over the same period the proportion of employed persons working in the wholesale industry and the

accommodation and food service industry fell by 1 per cent. Conversely, in the ten-year period from 1996 the proportion of employed persons working in the healthcare and social assistance industry grew by 2 per cent and for the education and training industry and the professional, scientific and technical services industry this proportion increased by 1 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007).

Figure 3

Everyday discrimination

The *everyday discrimination* construct was assessed using 12 items adapted from the work of Deitch *et al.* (2003) and Taylor *et al.* (2013b). These studies demonstrated a good internal consistency of the scale. However, there was no evidence concerning its factor structure. Hence, in the present study, its factor structure was determined by way of principal components analysis with varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Guttman criterion (eigenvalues greater than 1) was used to extract factors. This analysis produced a two factor solution and it was deemed inadmissible because of cross-loadings on items 4 and 9 and a large discrepancy between the actual and reproduced correlation matrices (43%) with values greater than 0.05 (Table 5).

Having obtained an inadmissible solution with principle components analysis, a factor analysis was performed using maximum likelihood technique (Table 5). Again, a two factor structure emerged. Although the residuals between the actual and reproduced correlations were much smaller (9% non-redundant), cross-loadings were observed on items 4, 6, 9, 10, 12 and item 7 ‘your property being damaged’ weakly loaded on both

factors. Furthermore, the goodness of fit test revealed that the factors did not adequately account for these data ($\chi^2(43) = 506.9, p < 0.001$).

Table 5

Having obtained an inadmissible solution with both analyses, an attempt was made to apply a non-orthogonal rotation. This analysis produced two matrices: pattern and structure (Table 6). As a result, two factors with eigenvalues of less than 1 were extracted, accounting for 51 per cent of the variance. Although the goodness of fit test results and the residuals between the observed and reproduced correlations remained the same (9% non-redundant) as in the first exploratory two factor model, large cross-loadings were observed and the item 7 loaded weakly on both factors, hence items (7, 8, 9 and 12) were eliminated.

Table 6

Eliminating four items resulted in a substantial reduction of residuals between the actual and the reproduced correlation matrices (7% non-redundant) with values less than 0.05 and a significant improvement in goodness of fit index (Difference $\chi^2(30) = 331.2, p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the total of 51.4 per cent of variance in item responses were accounted for by the two factors. The first factor accounted for 44 per cent of the total variance. Overall, items 1, 2, 3 and 4 appeared to collectively measure a person's sense of exclusion from social or other activities and were labelled *social discrimination*, while items 11, 5, 6, 10 appeared to measure unfair treatment

experienced by an individual at work and were labelled *advancement discrimination* (see Table 7).

Incidence of everyday discrimination

Experiences of behaviours labelled *everyday discrimination* in the workplace showed significant variation in the frequency of occurrence (Table 7). Between 10 and 50 per cent of participants reported experiencing these behaviours in the workplace over the previous 12 months with, in most instances, less than a third reporting experiencing discrimination. The most commonly reported experience of discrimination was ‘receiving insufficient information to do your job properly’, reported by over half the respondents, with the least reported experience being ‘your property being damaged’, by 10 per cent of respondents. On average, 25 per cent of respondents reported experiencing these behaviours at work.

Table 7

Age group comparisons on the everyday discrimination indicators

Next the relationship between age and everyday discrimination was considered. One-way analysis of variance was applied to investigate the association between age and reports of everyday discrimination. Considering the two typologies of discriminatory behaviour, social and advancement discrimination, the average reported frequency of such behaviours was compared across the age groups: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 and 65+.

No statistically significant difference was observed in terms of social discrimination ($f(5, 2861) = 1.99, p = 0.077$). In the case of advancement discrimination, a statistically significant mean difference was detected ($f(5, 2861) = 2.23, p = 0.048$). Those aged under 65 reported a homogenous frequency of experiences. Those over age 65, on average, reported fewer experiences of advancement discrimination than those aged 24-54.

Further analysis that considered individual items was also undertaken. Dunnett's T3 post hoc comparisons indicated that participants aged 18-24 ($M = 4.5, SD = 1.0$) were more likely to report experiencing insulting jokes and comments than those aged 55-64 ($M = 4.7, SD = 0.8$). Dunnett's T3 post hoc comparisons indicated that participants aged 25-54 ($M = 3.8, SD = 1.2$) more frequently reported receiving insufficient information to do their job properly than those aged 55-64 ($M = 4.1, SD = 1.1$).

Dunnett's T3 post hoc comparisons indicated that participants aged 35-54 ($M = 4.4, SD = 1.0$) more frequently reported having their work performance evaluated unfairly than those aged 65+ ($M = 4.8, SD = 0.7$). Notably, given evidence for the over-representation of younger and older workers in organisational retrenchments, no age differences were observed for the item: 'Feeling as though you were being pushed out'.

Discussion and conclusions

This study contributes to the evidence base concerning age discrimination in the labour market, drawing on the *everyday discrimination* concept to examine the

incidence of reported discrimination among those in employment, with particular reference to age differences. Using this approach it was observed that a minority of Australians reported discrimination in paid work. Of some note, regarding age differences it was found that in some areas younger people were more likely to report experiences of discrimination, but there were few age differences in experiences of everyday discrimination overall.

There were methodological limitations to the study that should be acknowledged. First, given the relatively low response rate it is not possible to rule out sample biases which may have resulted in an under-representation of workers who had experienced discrimination, although it is difficult to posit a hypothesis that one age group who might have been more likely to report such experiences might have been less likely to participate, thus invalidating age group comparisons. Second, there may be limitations in terms of the questions used to assess everyday discrimination. While drawing on an existing body of work it is the authors' contention that the measure requires much greater refinement and validation. Finally, it is once again important to point out that the study was of people in paid work and, as such, ignored the non-employed who may be more likely to experience labour market age discrimination.

The findings of this study indicate that discrimination is a phenomenon that affects a minority of those in work overall, but with younger people more likely to report experiencing it in some forms. From a workplace perspective the conclusion that may be drawn from this study is that there is a broad homogeneity of experiences of everyday discrimination across age groups. That is, older workers are no more likely to experience such aspects of discrimination than younger workers. However, it is

necessary to state that this finding does not imply the absence of labour market barriers affecting older workers. Rather, that at least some of those they do face appear to be similarly experienced by other workers.

From a social policy perspective this study indicates that there would be merit in expanding consideration of age discrimination to include younger people. In this regard it would appear that the present policy position of the Australian government, via, for instance, its inquiry entitled *Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability*, has been too narrowly defined. Added to this, the Federal Government recently established two positions with oversight of issues of age and work. One was the Age Discrimination Commissioner and the other the Ambassador for Mature Age Employment, both positions held by one person since 2015. This would seem to suggest a conflation of issues that potentially emphasises and prioritises matters pertaining to older people over those of younger ones. Moreover, this structure misses potential opportunities to broaden the advocacy base for older workers and the benefits of age diversity in the workforce more generally by nesting mature age employment issues under a banner of age discrimination. Also arising from greater consideration of age discrimination and younger people is the potential to promote greater generational solidarity at a time when potential differences are being highlighted (Marshall and Wells, 2013).

Based on these findings and also the wider literature the proposition may also be posited that the problem of age discrimination in the Australian labour market may also be somewhat overstated, or at least lacking focus. Characterising the labour

market challenges facing older workers as primarily being a consequence of ageist attitudes and behaviours risks overlooking other critical factors inhibiting their labour market prospects. For instance, structural shifts in the Australian economy may make the labour market positions of some older workers highly tenuous and not open to ready remedy. Grounding the policy debate in terms of an ‘ageism’ discourse in isolation of other barriers may mean that equally important, if not more important, issues go unaddressed and unresolved. More invidiously perhaps, an over-emphasis on ageism and age discrimination in public debate may have the perverse effect of alerting employers to the supposed deficits of older workers, with the consequence that labour market age barriers are made that much harder to overcome.

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Tables

Table 1 Detailed response rates and total contacts of CATI survey

Outcome	Count	%
Invalid number	11302	12.56
No contact	5057	5.62
Unavailable for duration of campaign	940	1.04
Duplicate	100	0.11
No English	2726	3.03
No interest	27807	30.89

Survey complete	3203	3.56
Disconnected	244	0.27
Does not qualify	37826	42.03
Fax number	301	0.33
Quota full	368	0.41
Survey terminated	134	0.15
Total	90008	100

Table 2: Age breakdown of the sample

Age	Quota	Surveyed	Surveyed %
18-24	512	276	54
25-34	704	536	76
35-44	736	910	124
45-54	704	885	126
55+	544	596	110

Table 3: Gender breakdown of the sample

Gender	Quota	Surveyed	Surveyed %
Female	1596	1913	120
Male	1604	1290	80

Table 4: Geographical breakdown of the sample

Geographical location	Quota	Surveyed	Surveyed %
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ACT	51	51	100
NSW	1038	1145	110
NT	33	37	112
QLD	646	646	100
SA	236	240	102
TAS	73	74	101
VIC	795	632	79
WA	327	368	113

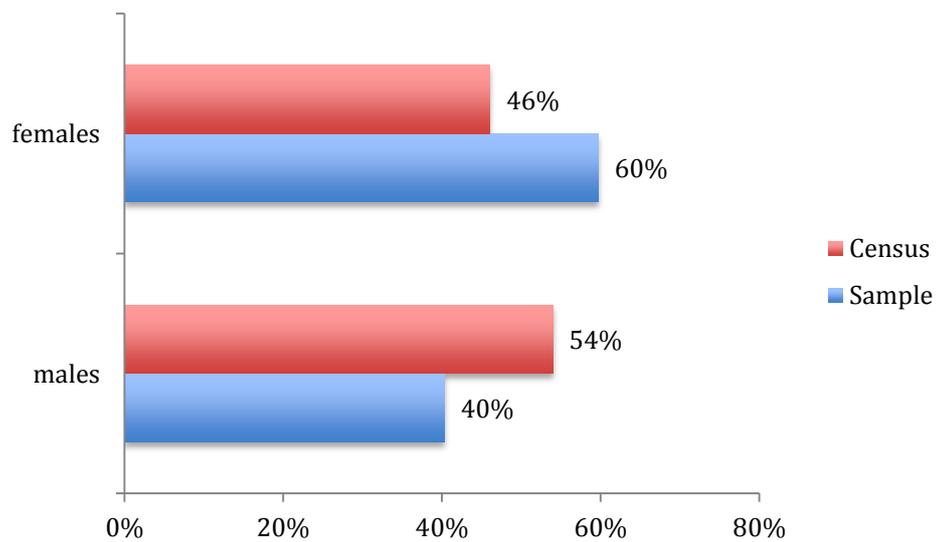


Figure 1 Proportion of genders in the sample and national work force

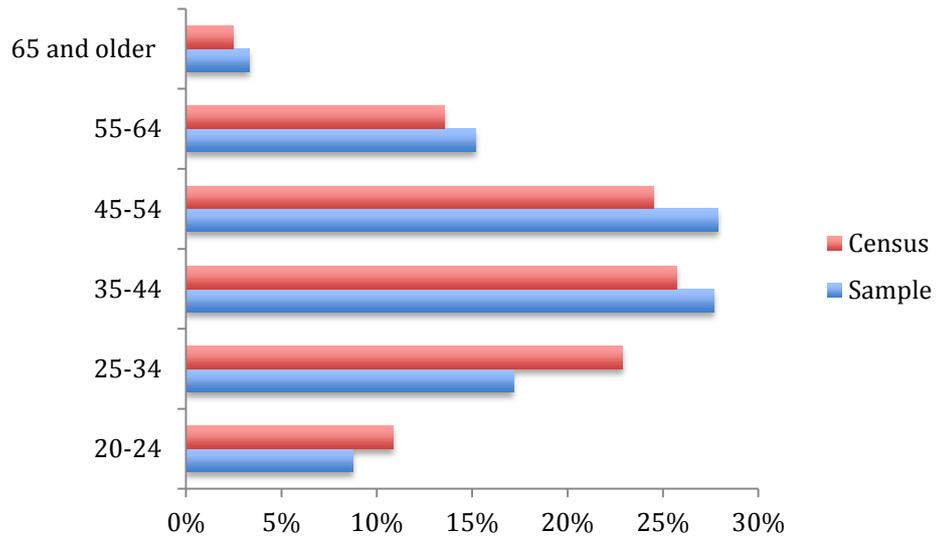


Figure 2 Proportion of respondents by age in the sample compared to the national workforce

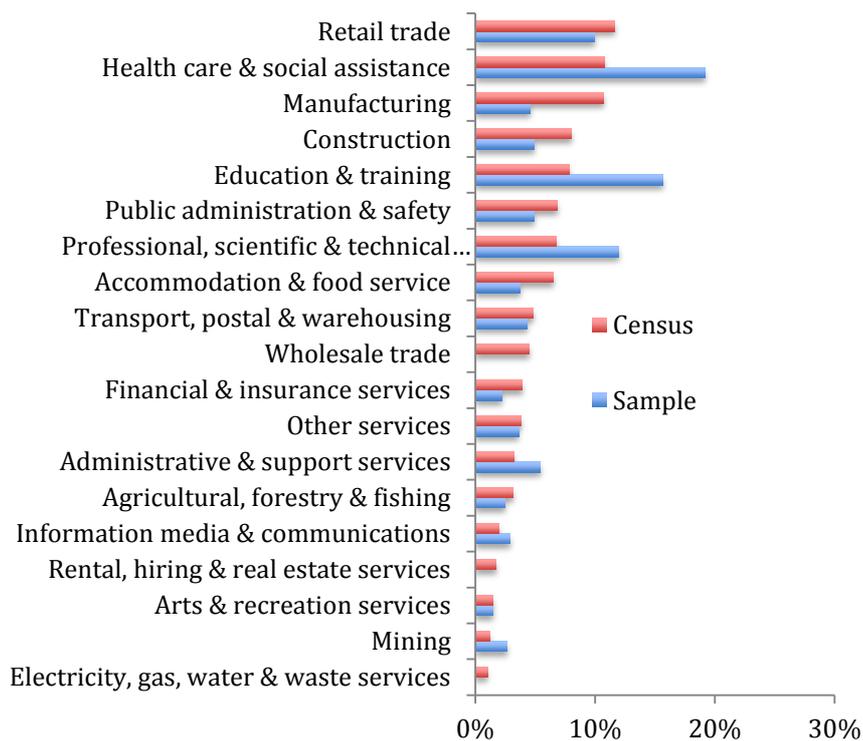


Figure 3 Proportion of respondents by industry sector for the sample and the national workforce

Table 5 Factor loadings for EPCA and EFA

	EPCA		EFA	
	1	2	1	2
Being ignored by your colleagues or treated as if you didn't exist (1)	.429	.628	.737	.248
Being left out of a social gathering at work (2)	.358	.637	.688	.211
Being excluded from a work meeting (3)	.396	.534	.573	.265
Your property being damaged (7)	-.125	.656	.211	.138
Insulting jokes or comments (8)	.272	.589	.428	.297
Receiving insufficient information to do your job properly (9)	.465	.458	.432	.405

Being set up for failure (4)	.582	.464	.573	.423
Being passed over for promotion (5)	.759	.048	.213	.653
Not getting privileges others received (6)	.659	.344	.427	.559
Your work performance being evaluated unfairly (10)	.676	.276	.399	.549
Not getting the opportunities needed to be competitive for promotions (11)	.810	.122	.244	.771
Feeling as though you were being pushed out (12)	.725	.340	.512	.568

Table 6 Pattern and structure matrices of the two-factor solution

Pattern Structure
Matrix Matrix

	1	2	1	2
Being ignored by your colleagues or treated as if you didn't exist (1)	.839	.094	.774	-.482
Being left out of a social gathering at work (2)	.793	.114	.715	-.431
Being excluded from a work meeting (3)	.620	-.017	.632	-.443
Your property being damaged (7)	.209	-.057	.248	-.201
Insulting jokes or comments (8)	.416	-.138	.511	-.424
Receiving insufficient information to do your job properly (9)	.372	-.271	.558	-.527
Being set up for failure (4)	.546	-.217	.695	-.592
Being passed over for promotion (5)	-.027	-.705	.458	-.686
Not getting privileges others received (6)	.293	-.469	.615	-.670
Your work performance being evaluated unfairly (10)	.261	-.472	.586	-.652

Not getting the opportunities you needed to be competitive for promotions(11)	-.042	-.837	.533	-.808
Feeling as though you were being pushed out (12)	.399	-.434	.697	-.708

Table 7 Reported experiences of everyday discrimination

Receiving insufficient information to do your job properly 54%
Being ignored by your colleagues or treated as if you didn't exist 31%
Not getting the opportunities you needed to be competitive for promotions 27%
Your work performance being evaluated unfairly 26%
Not getting privileges others received 25%
Being left out of a social gathering at work 23%
Being excluded from a work meeting 22%
Feeling as though you were being pushed out 22%
Being passed over for promotion 20%
Insulting jokes or comments 20%
Being set up for failure 17%
Your property being damaged 10%