

Age, assumptions and access at work:

Employee experiences of age
inclusion in the workplace

June 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Human Rights Commission acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders – past and present.

About this report and us

Report embargoed until 30 June 2026.

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About Diversity Council Australia

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) is the nation's leading independent peak body for diversity and inclusion. We are a member-based not-for-profit, with a strong network of over 1,200 member organisations, including some of Australia's largest employers. For over 40 years we have been at the forefront of helping shape more equitable workplaces, contributing to a stronger economy and fairer society.

Our evidence-led approach is centred on lived experience, and our research consistently shows that inclusive organisations are more innovative, productive and resilient in changing environments.

Through groundbreaking research, practical tools, events, advocacy, education and training, we provide expert guidance across a spectrum of diversity dimensions to employees, leaders, policymakers and the broader community. We equip organisations with the tools and insights they need to champion the undeniable benefits of diversity and inclusion.

This work also supports our charitable purpose, which is to promote and advance diversity and inclusion in workplaces for the benefit of individuals, organisations and the broader community.

About the Australian Human Rights Commission

The Australian Human Rights Commission's vision is an Australian society where human rights are respected, promoted and protected and where every person is equal in dignity and rights.

The Commission's key functions include:

- **Access to justice:** We help people to resolve complaints of discrimination and human rights breaches through our investigation and conciliation services.
- **Fairer laws, policies and practices:** We review existing and proposed laws, policies and practices and provide expert advice on how they can better protect people's human rights. We help organisations to protect human rights in their work. We publish reports on human rights problems and how to fix them.
- **Education and understanding:** We promote understanding, acceptance and public discussion of human rights. We deliver workplace and community human rights education and training.
- **Compliance:** We are the regulator for positive duty laws requiring employers and others to address sexual harassment, sex discrimination and other unlawful conduct.

Contact us

Diversity Council Australia Limited

Hub Customs House,
Level 3 & 4, 31 Alfred Street
Sydney NSW 2000

P: (02) 8014 4300 Website: dca.org.au

Australian Human Rights Commission

GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001

P: (02) 9284 9600

Email: communications@humanrights.gov.au

Website: humanrights.gov.au

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DCA CEO and Age Discrimination Commissioner messages

DCA CEO foreword

Workplaces across Australia are navigating in a period of significant change. Demographic shifts, skills shortages and longer working lives mean organisations are increasingly reliant on workers across multiple life stages. In this environment, the ability to attract, retain and support people of all ages is not just a matter of fairness, it is essential to organisational resilience and performance.

Age, Assumptions and Access at Work: Employee Experiences of Age Inclusion in the Workplace draws on the voices of workers themselves to explore how age shapes their experiences of both inclusion and exclusion at work. Using data from DCA's 2025–2026 Inclusion@Work Index, the report provides valuable insight into where agebased barriers persist and how they are experienced across the workforce.

What the evidence makes clear is that age continues to play a quiet but powerful role in shaping working lives. Decisions about recruitment, development, and progression are often influenced by beliefs about when someone is “ready”, “past their prime” or “no longer a priority”. Over time, these judgements accumulate, affecting who is supported to grow, whose contribution is recognised and who is encouraged to stay and participate fully at work.

What's also clear is that age is not experienced in the same way by all workers. Gender and caring responsibilities shape how age-related barriers are felt. This highlights the importance of taking an intersectional approach to age inclusion and recognising how workplace policies and practices interact with overlapping factors that further marginalise certain employees.

When organisations take age inclusion seriously, they are better placed to retain talent, share knowledge across generations, and build sustainable, adaptable, and more productive workforces. This report offers practical, evidencebased insights for employers to do just that.

We are proud to partner with the Australian Human Rights Commission on this important work and look forward to continuing to support workplaces across Australia to build environments where workers of all ages feel valued, supported and able to thrive.



Catherine Hunter
Chief Executive Officer
Diversity Council Australia

Age Discrimination Commissioner foreword

As Age Discrimination Commissioner, I hear repeatedly that age-based assumptions continue to determine who is seen as capable, valued and worth investing in at work.

The Commission's 2024 survey with the Australian HR Institute *Older and Younger Workers: What do Employers Think*, confirms this, showing age still shapes recruitment and retention decisions. This employer evidence is important, but it does not reveal how age-based assumptions play out in everyday workplace interactions.

The Diversity Council Australia's Inclusion@Work Index data reveals how these assumptions shape workers' experiences of inclusion across age-cohorts. Critically, the data shows age-based exclusion is rarely experienced in isolation. It commonly intersects with other protected attributes such as gender, race/ethnicity, disability and personal circumstances, such as caring responsibilities.

The report shows that age is perceived as one of the most common grounds of discrimination and harassment across all age cohorts, yet it remains among the least reported. Supporting participation across the life course is not optional. It is essential to the future of a productive and sustainable workforce in Australia.

In a workforce spanning five generations, the cost of failing to address ageism is a missed opportunity to build a productive, sustainable and equitable workforce. This report provides a timely exploration of how ageism operates at work and a clear impetus for employers to take deliberate action to create age-inclusive work environments.

For employers, the report offers a strong incentive to view inclusion through a life-stage lens. It calls for employers to identify and remove age-based barriers and to understand where those barriers may exist so that all workers experience genuine inclusion.

Enterprises and organisations that embrace inclusive, multigenerational workforces, free of discrimination, will not only enhance the wellbeing of their workers but reap the significant productivity gains that will accrue.



Robert Fitzgerald AM

Age Discrimination Commissioner
Australian Human Rights Commission

Summary of key findings

Younger workers face the highest exclusion

- 39% of younger workers (aged 18-29) reported experiencing discrimination or harassment at work in the past year, and 36% reported sexual harassment, much more than the other age groups.
- Everyday exclusion is common: younger workers feel they are more likely to be ignored, be left out of social gatherings, or have assumptions made about their abilities.

Older workers feel comfortable but lack career support

- 82% of older workers (aged 55 and over) feel they can be themselves at work, the highest of all age groups.
- However, they receive fewer career development opportunities: only 50% had the opportunity to participate in development activities, and just 18% had access to mentors.

The intersection¹ of age and gender² make a difference to exclusion at work

- Younger women are least likely to feel included in their teams: 52% do compared with 61% of younger men, 58% of mid-aged women (aged 30 to 54), and 57% of older women.
- Older women report the lowest recognition for their contributions at work and the least career support – only 41% had development opportunities and 13% had mentors, compared with older men at 57% and 22%.

Caring responsibilities can amplify exclusion for younger workers

- Nearly 60% of younger carers report experiencing discrimination or harassment at work, compared with 32% of younger non-carers.
- Younger carers also reported much higher everyday exclusion, such as being ignored or left out of social gatherings.

Age-based discrimination is widespread but under-reported

- Age is one of the most common reasons for perceived workplace discrimination, yet complaints under the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* make up only 5% of Australian Human Rights Commission cases.
- Potential barriers to reporting include lack of awareness, fear of victimisation and difficulty proving discrimination.

Our approach

To understand how inclusion is experienced across age, we analysed key insights from DCA's 2025–2026 Inclusion@Work Index.

What is the Inclusion@Work Index?

DCA's Inclusion@Work Index is a nationally representative survey of 3,000 workers that maps inclusion in the Australian workforce once every 2 years. The Index survey captures how inclusive the Australian workforce is for a diversity of employees, including based on a worker's age.

See [Appendix A: Method](#) for more information on the Inclusion@Work Index survey sample, fieldwork and analysis.

What age groupings did we use?

For this research, we used the following 3 age groups:

- **Younger workers** – 18–29 years old
- **Mid-aged workers** – 30–54 years old
- **Older workers** – 55 years old and above.

Want to know more about DCA's Inclusion@Work Index?

Find out more about the Index at DCA's [Inclusion@Work Index Hub](#), including findings on:

- how Inclusion@Work benefits workers and businesses
- what the state of inclusion and exclusion is in Australian workplaces and how they are tracking over time
- what the state of inclusion and exclusion is for a diversity of workers.

Actionable insights: What can employers do?

Learning and career development

- **Upskilling and reskilling across age groups:** Support digital upskilling to prevent exclusion. Offer retraining, reskilling and upskilling programs for mid-to late-career employees. Provide returnship programs for those re-entering the workforce after extended career breaks.
- **Training participation and feedback:** Evaluate training uptake by age demographics. Use surveys and focus groups to gather feedback and tailor learning programs to meet diverse needs.
- **Intergenerational knowledge sharing:** Promote mentoring programs that support knowledge exchange across age groups. Include older workers as mentors or mentees to facilitate knowledge transfer and professional growth.

Workplace flexibility and transition support

- **Flexible work arrangements:** Normalise flexible work options such as remote work, flexible hours, job share and part-time roles. These will support caregiving, health needs and phased retirement, accommodating the needs of workers at different life stages.
- **Internal mobility:** Encourage internal mobility by advertising vacancies internally and support redeployment of displaced workers through training and development.
- **Transition support:** Provide coaching to support work-life balance and career transitions, including return to work, mid-career shifts or retirement preparation. Offer career transition support and phased retirement options.
- **Retirement pathways:** Support retirement planning through phased retirement programs, financial planning services and bridge-employment options. Facilitate succession planning and knowledge transfer.

Workplace health and wellbeing

- **Workplace health initiatives:** Implement and monitor health and wellbeing programs, including ergonomic assessments and adjustments. Programs might also provide support for employees with changing physical capabilities across the life course, for example by offering reproductive leave to those experiencing menopause or endometriosis.
- **Physical role adjustments:** Redesign jobs and provide ergonomic adjustments to support employee health and reduce injury risks. Support transitions into less physically demanding roles through training and reskilling.
- **Diverse leave options:** Provide leave options that meet employees' personal and caring needs, such as grandparent leave, elder care leave, compassionate leave and discretionary leave (with menopause as a valid reason).

Organisational culture and leadership

- **Leadership and strategy:** Demonstrate leadership commitment to age inclusion through clear strategies. These should set age diversity targets, track progress, offer workplace adjustments that enable staff, and embed inclusive practices such as career and transition planning.
- **Employee participation:** Establish employer reference groups focused on age inclusion or intergenerational collaboration to inform policy and culture. Encourage age-diverse teams to contribute to strategy, innovation and transformation initiatives.
- **Initiatives against ageism:** Invest in initiatives to combat age-related stigma, including ageism awareness training. Build manager capability to support employees across different age groups and life stages.
- **Representation and visibility:** Showcase younger and older workers in workplace materials and communication, highlighting their skills, experience and contributions.
- **Intergenerational programs:** Promote initiatives such as mentoring and peer learning programs that foster interpersonal relationships across age groups. Explicitly seek out younger and older workers for participation in mentoring opportunities, as mentors or mentees, to support knowledge sharing and professional development.

Discrimination and harassment

- **Promotion of a respectful culture:** Ensure senior leaders in the organisation model and promote a positive, inclusive workplace culture that respects individual difference with no tolerance for discrimination or harassment.
- **Training and guidance on discrimination and harassment:** Provide training and guidance to managers and supervisors on legal obligations and on strategies to prevent harassment and discrimination. Provide employees with accessible information on their rights and responsibilities.
- **Internal complaint processes:** Establish clear internal complaint processes for discrimination and harassment. Clearly communicate to employees how the organisation handles discrimination complaints, including who employees can speak to if they experience or witness discrimination, what the internal complaint-handling process looks like and where they can go to make a complaint externally.
- **Removal of organisational barriers:** Review organisational policies, practices and enterprise agreements to ensure that employees of all ages and circumstances – including those with caring responsibilities – are not discriminated against or disadvantaged in accessing flexible work arrangements, carers' leave and other inclusive workplace measures.
- **Data collection:** Gather anonymised workplace discrimination and harassment data disaggregated by age and gender. Ensure strong privacy safeguards for the collected data and monitor for inequalities affecting workers with intersecting attributes.

Want to capture age discrimination data in your organisation?

Use the following questions, adapted from DCA's Inclusion@Work Index to capture employee experiences of discrimination in your organisation.

Question 1: In the past 12 months at this organisation, have you personally experienced *discrimination* (unfair treatment/denied opportunities) because of any of these factors? (please mark as many as are relevant)

- your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background
 - your age
 - your caring responsibilities
 - your cultural background/ethnicity/race
 - your disability
 - your gender
 - your religious affiliation
 - your sexual orientation or gender identity
 - none of the above
-

Question 2: If yes, what action did you take?

- reported it to my manager
 - reported it to HR or another internal complaints process
 - sought external advice (e.g. from a lawyer or union)
 - lodged a formal complaint externally (e.g. with the Australian Human Rights Commission or Fair Work Commission)
 - discussed informally with a colleague or peer at work
 - took no action
-

Question 3: If you chose to take no action, why not? (please mark as many as are relevant)

- I resolved it on my own
- I did not think anything would change
- I did not know how or where to report
- I was concerned about negative consequences
- the process for making an external complaint is too complicated
- I thought it would be emotionally difficult
- process for making an external complaint is too time-consuming
- I thought the financial cost would be too high
- prefer not to say
- other (please specify)

Younger workers and Inclusion@Work

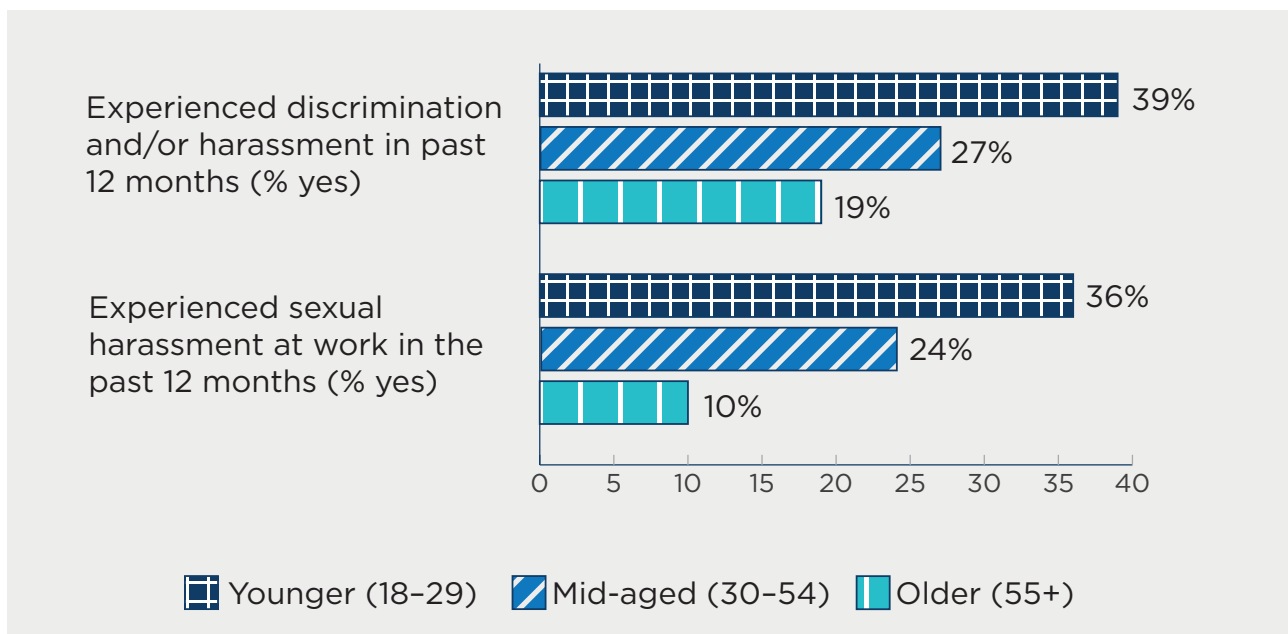
Younger workers reported the highest levels of workplace exclusion out of all 3 age groups – from experience with discrimination and harassment to everyday exclusion.

1 in 3 younger workers experienced discrimination or harassment

Compared with mid-aged and older workers, younger employees reported higher rates of workplace discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment:

- 39% of younger workers reported experiencing discrimination and/or harassment at work in the past 12 months, compared with 27% of mid-aged and 19% of older workers.
- 36% of younger workers reported experiencing sexual harassment at work in the past 12 months, a much higher proportion when compared with 24% of mid-aged and 10% of older workers.

Figure 1: Experience of discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment by age groups



How did the Inclusion@Work Index define discrimination and harassment?

The Inclusion@Work Index defined:

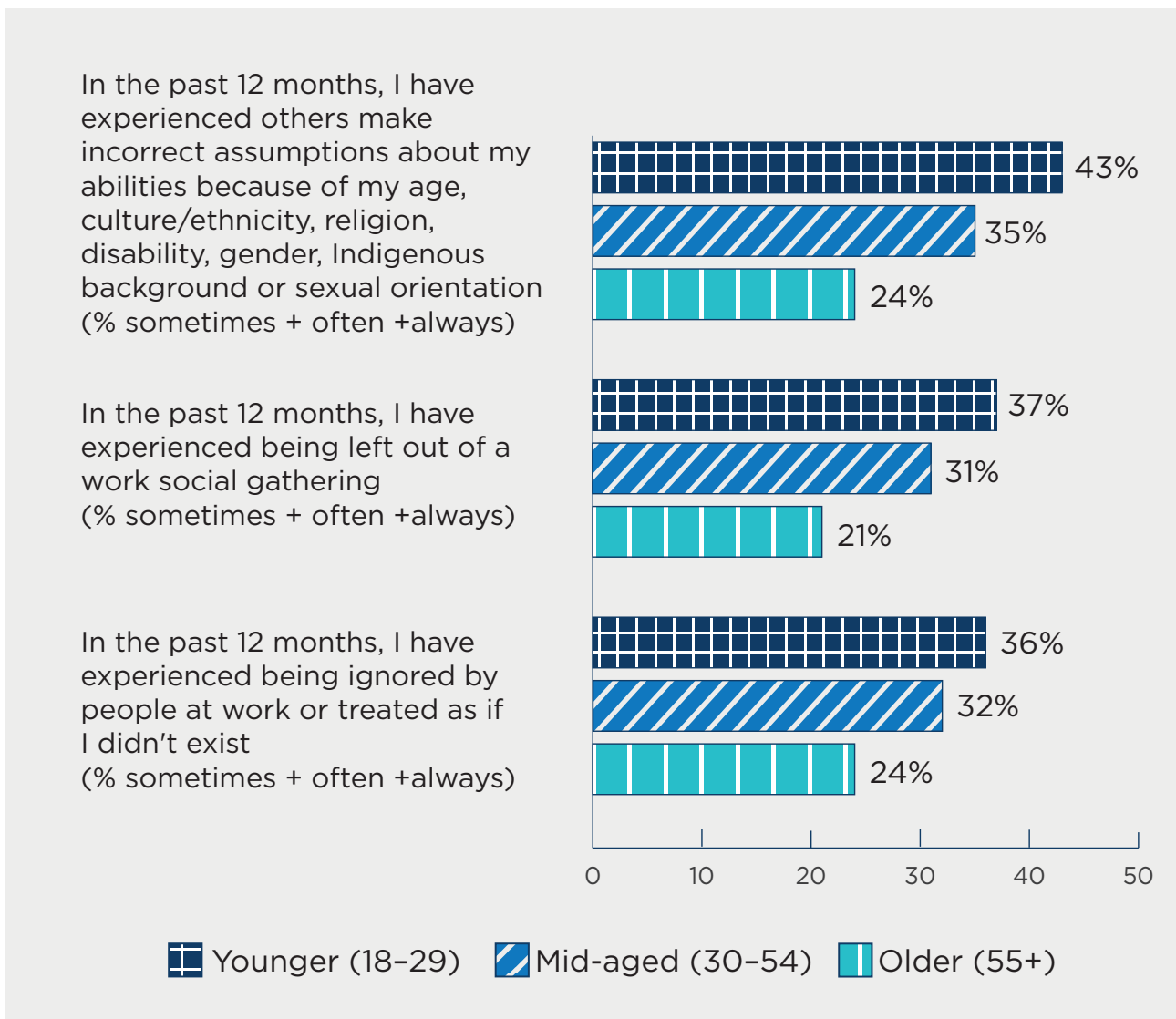
- discrimination as unfair treatment or denied opportunities,
- harassment as unwelcome comments, slurs, jokes, pictures or physical touch
- sexual harassment as non-consensual or unwanted sexual behaviour that can make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Youngers workers report experiencing the most everyday exclusion

Everyday exclusion at work includes behaviours like being treated as if you do not exist, being left out of work social gatherings and having people make assumptions about your abilities based on your identity. Younger workers reported the highest experience of these 3 behaviours out of the age groups we analysed. Specifically, younger workers were more likely to report:

- **others making assumptions about their abilities:** 42% of younger workers had sometimes, often or always experienced others making assumptions about their abilities based on their identity in the past 12 months, compared with 34% of mid-aged and 24% of older workers.
- **being left out of work social gatherings:** 37% of younger workers had sometimes, often or always experienced being left out of work social gatherings in the past 12 months, compared with 31% of mid-aged and 21% of older workers.
- **being ignored at work:** 36% of younger workers had sometimes, often or always experienced being ignored by people at work or treated as if they didn't exist in the past 12 months, compared with 32% of mid-aged and 24% of older workers.

Figure 2: Experience of everyday exclusion by age groups



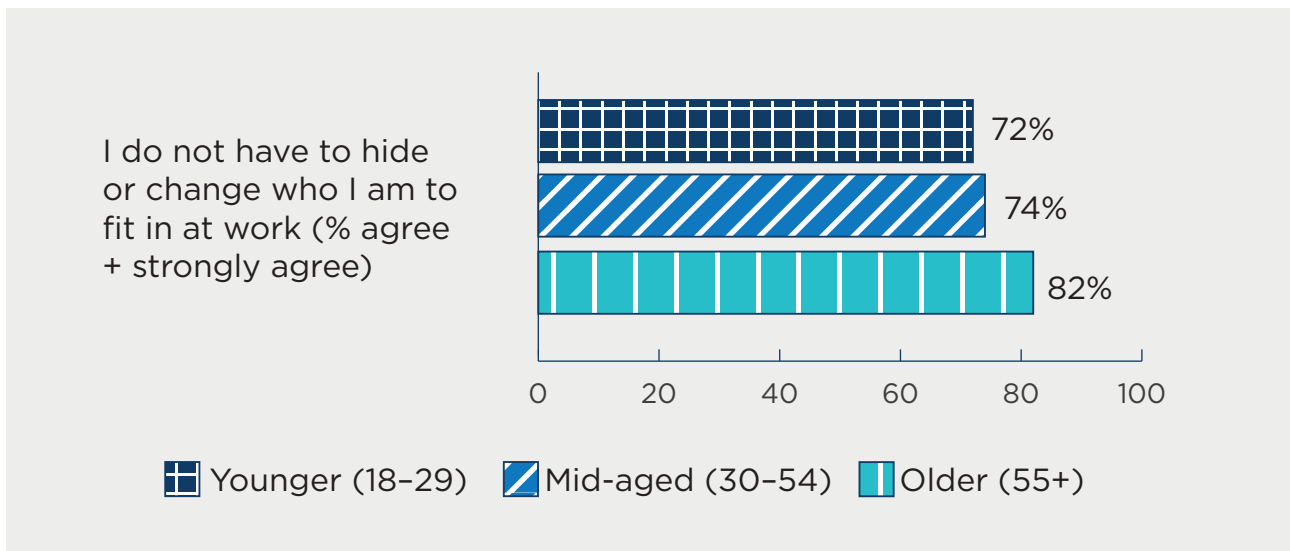
Older workers and Inclusion@Work

Older workers were the most likely to say they feel comfortable being themselves at work. But when it comes to career development, they're getting fewer opportunities than their younger colleagues.

Older workers are more likely to be themselves at work

Of the 3 age groups, older workers were the most likely to feel they can be themselves at work. In fact, 82% agreed or strongly agreed they did not have to hide or change who they are to fit in at work, compared with 74% of mid-aged and 72% of younger workers.

Figure 3: Experience of fitting in by age groups

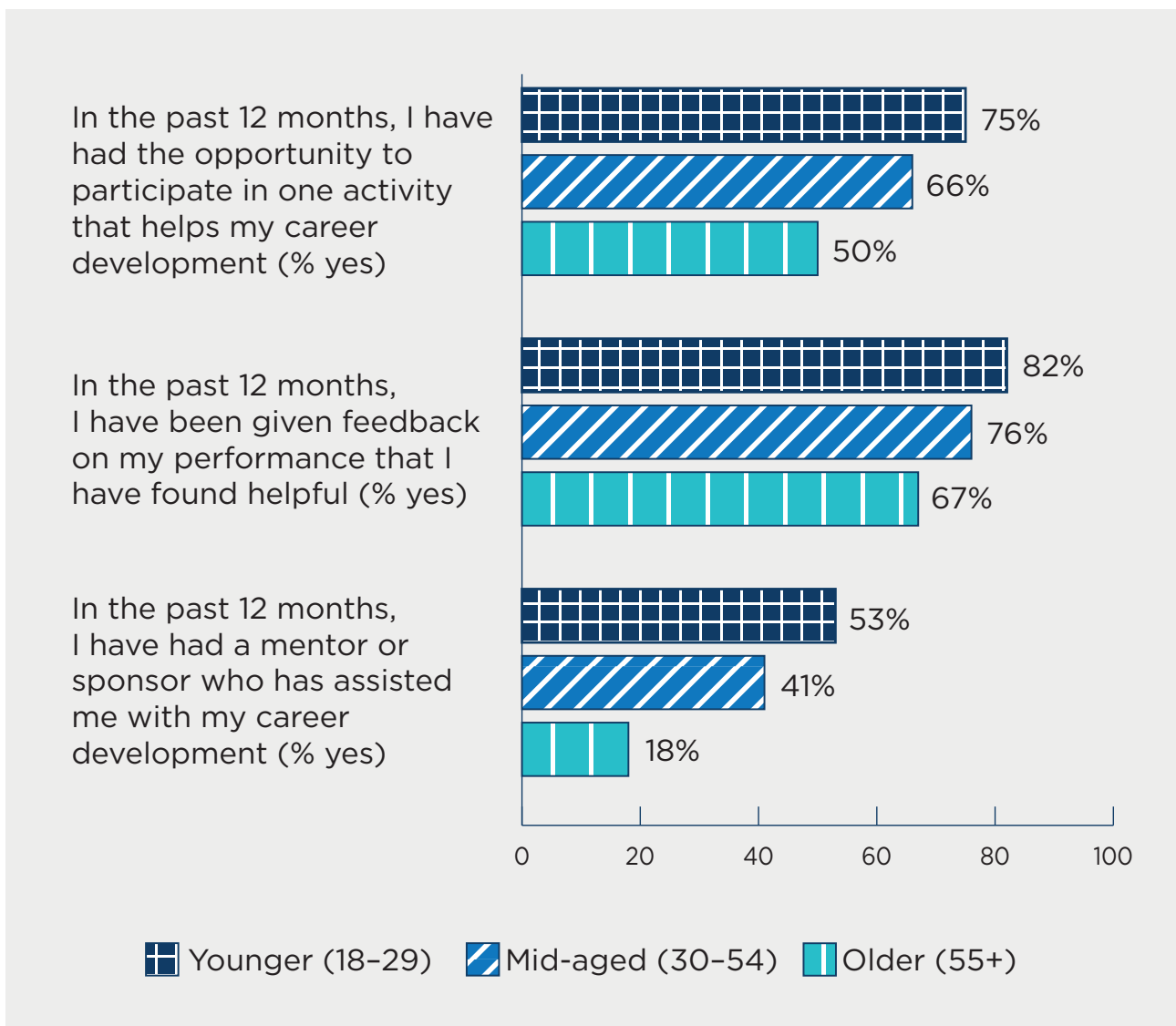


But older workers had less support for career development

Compared with their mid-aged and younger peers, older workers were consistently less likely to report receiving career development support over the past year. Specifically, older workers were less likely to report having, in the past 12 months:

- **the opportunity to participate in career development** like training for a more senior role, acting in a more senior role, joining a leadership program or going on secondment – 50% of older workers had participated, compared with 66% of mid-aged and 75% of younger workers.
- **been given feedback on their performance** that they had found helpful – 67% of older workers had received feedback, compared with 76% of mid-aged and 82% of younger workers.
- **access to mentors or sponsors** to help with their career development – only 18% reported they had access, compared with 41% of mid-aged and 53% of younger workers.

Figure 4: Access to career development opportunities by age groups



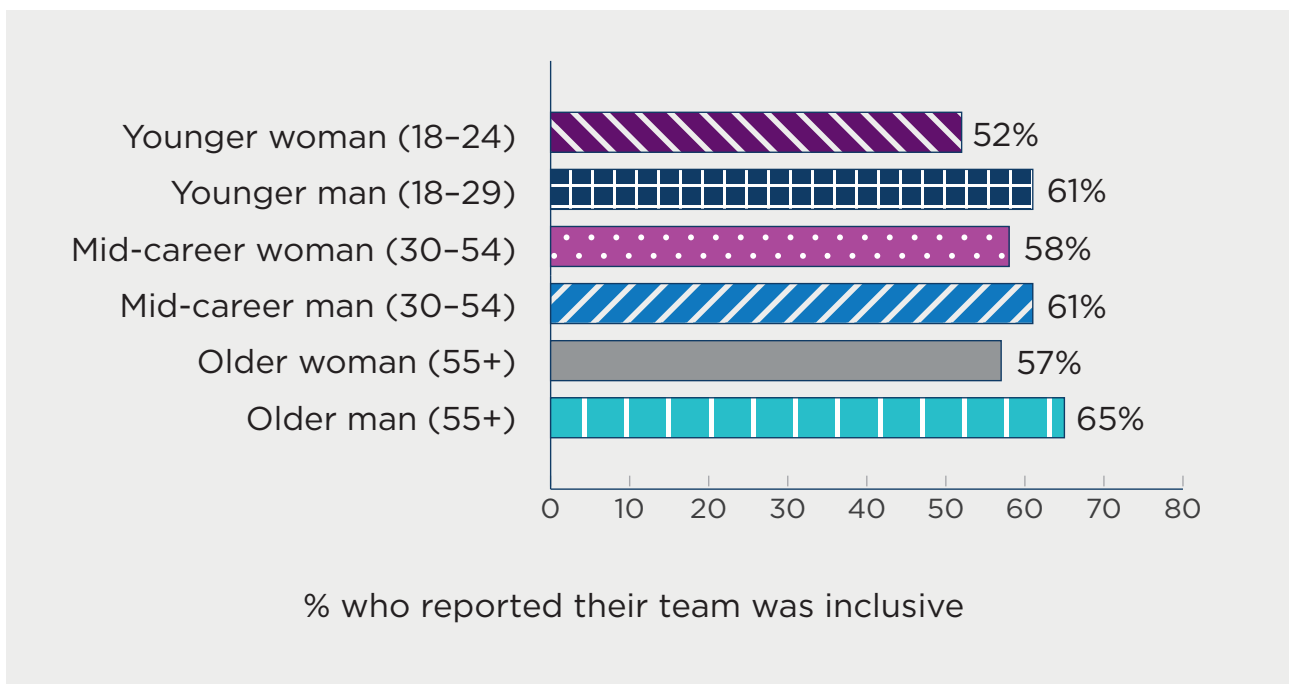
Age inclusion spotlight: The intersection of age and gender

Younger women feel less included in their teams, while older women face challenges in being recognised for their contributions. This extends to career development, with older women reporting low career development support.

Younger women are less likely to experience team inclusion

Younger women reported the lowest experience of team inclusion out of all the age and gender intersection groups. This includes feeling respected, connected, and able to contribute and progress work in their team. Just over half (52%) said their team was inclusive, compared with 61% of younger men. This was also lower than mid-aged (58%) and older (57%) women, and mid-aged (61%) and older (65%) men.

Figure 5: Experience of team inclusion by age and gender

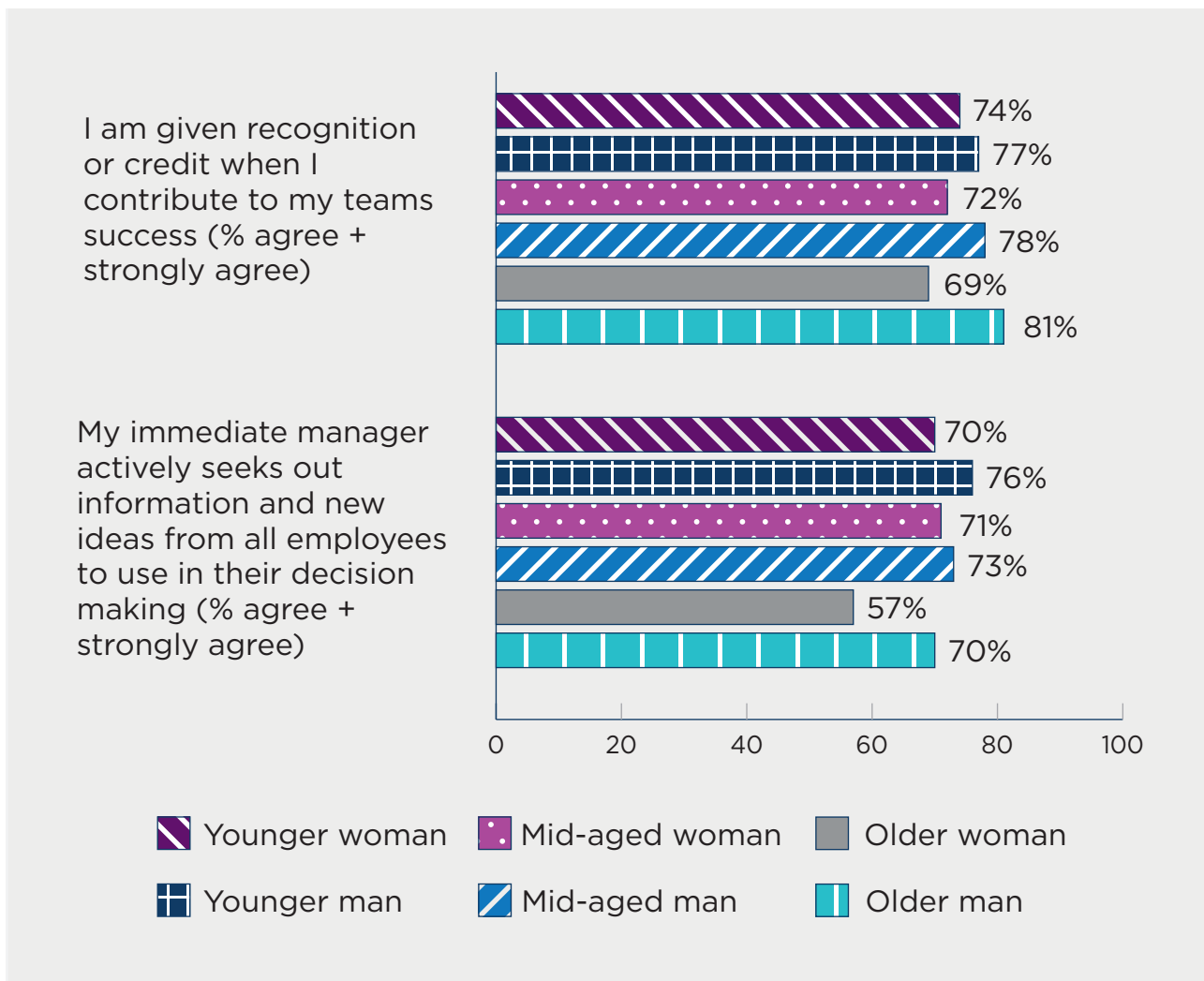


Older women receive less recognition for their work

Contribution and recognition were significantly lower for older women. Out of the age and gender groups analysed, older women were the least likely to:

- feel their **immediate manager actively seeks out information and new ideas from all employees to use in their decision-making** – only 57% of older women agreed or strongly agreed their manager did, compared with 70% of older men. This proportion was also much lower than for younger (70%) and mid-aged (71%) women, and younger (76%) and mid-aged (73%) men.
- be given **recognition or credit when they contribute to their team's success** – only 69% of older women agreed or strongly agreed they were given recognition, compared with 81% of older men – lower also than for younger (74%) and mid-aged (72%) women, and younger (78%) and mid-aged (77%) men.

Figure 6: Experience of contribution by age and gender

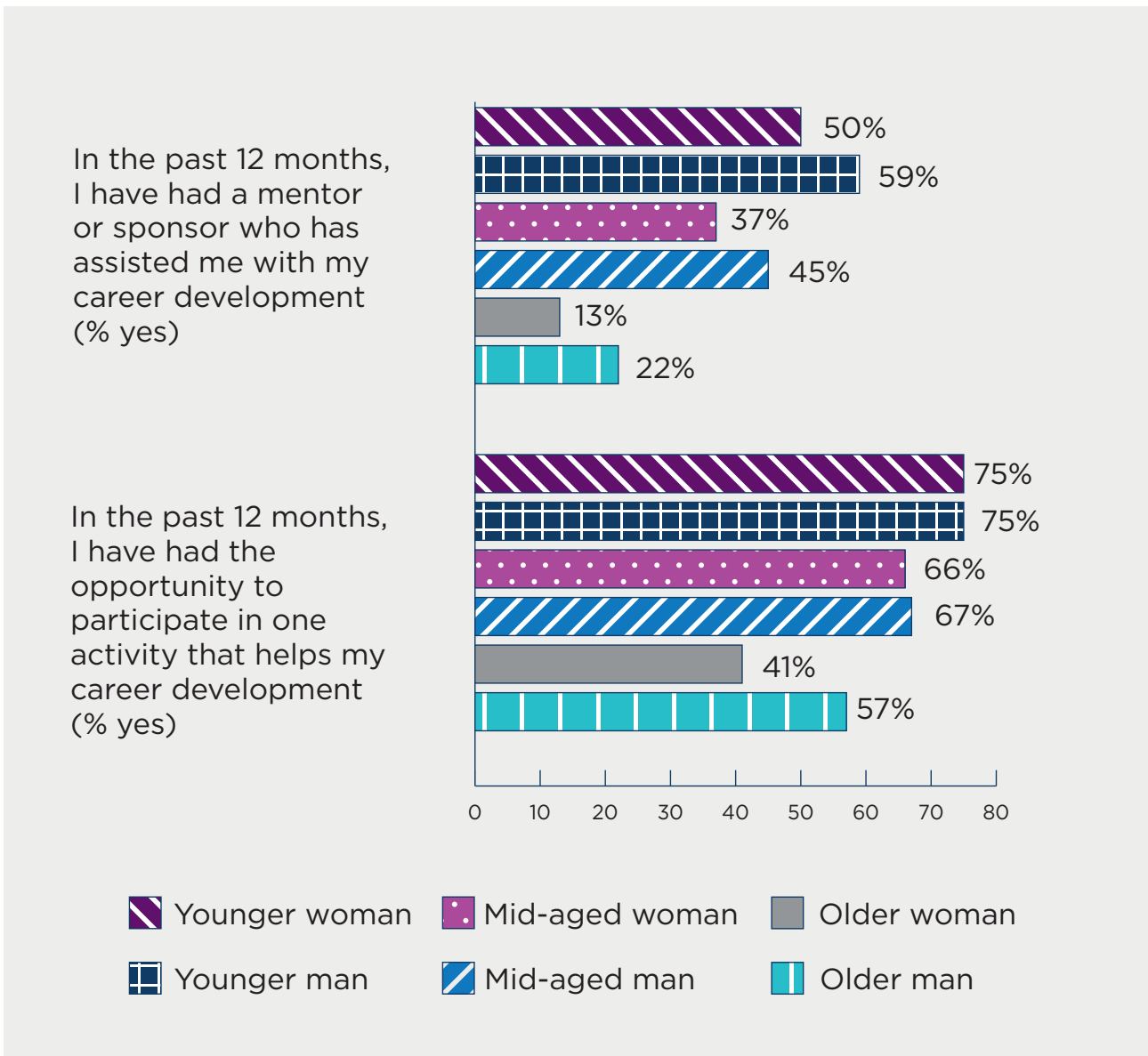


Older women receive less career development support

This lower sense of contribution and recognition appears to affect career development opportunities, with older women reporting the lowest levels of career support of the age and gender groups. Older women reported having, in the past 12 months, much less:

- opportunity to take part in **career development** – only 41% of older women had development opportunities, compared with 57% of older men. This was also much less than for younger (75%) and mid-aged women (66%), and younger (75%) and mid-aged men (67%).
- **access to mentors or sponsors** to help with their career development – only 13% reported they had access, compared with 22% of older men. Again, this was also much less than for (50%) and mid-aged women (37%), and younger (59%) and mid-aged men (45%).

Figure 7: Access to career development opportunities by age and gender



Age inclusion spotlight: The intersection of age and caring

Younger workers with caring responsibilities are much more likely to be excluded at work than those without caring duties or carers from other age groups.

3 in 5 young carers experienced discrimination and harassment

Younger carers experienced more discrimination and harassment at work than any other age group with caring responsibilities, with 3 in 5 (59%) reporting experience of this in the past 12 months.

How did the Inclusion@Work Index define caring responsibilities?

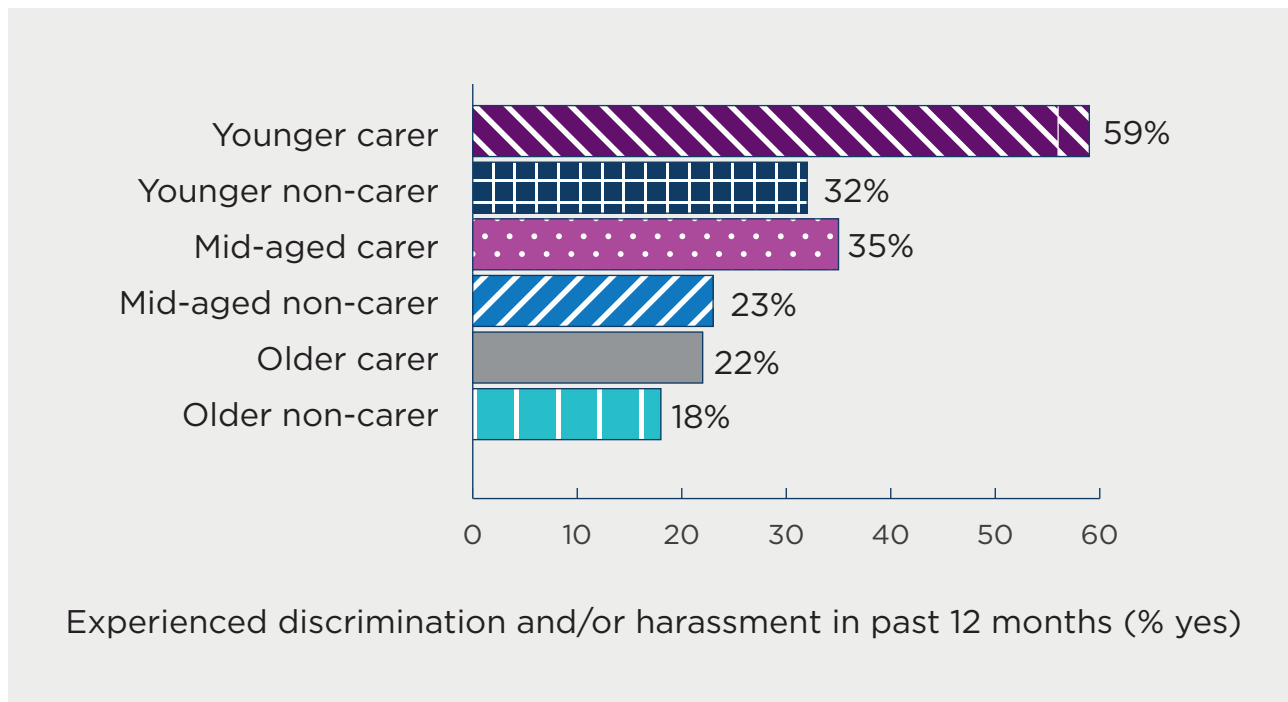
Workers with caring responsibilities are those who said they had provided unpaid care, help or assistance for family members or others in the past 2 weeks. This included caring for children with and without disability, as well as caring for adults with and without disability.

The age and caring discrimination gap closes with age

Workers with caring responsibilities were more likely to experience discrimination and harassment across all 3 age groups. However, the difference between the experiences of those who were carers and those who were not was the biggest for younger workers. Specifically:

- 59% of younger workers with caring responsibilities reported experiencing discrimination or harassment at work, compared with 32% of younger workers without caring responsibilities (27 percentage point difference).
- 35% of mid-aged workers with caring responsibilities reported this experience, compared with 23% of mid-aged workers without caring responsibilities (12 percentage point difference).
- 22% of older workers with caring responsibilities reported experiencing discrimination and harassment at work, compared with 18% of older workers without this responsibility (4 percentage point difference).

Figure 8: Experience of discrimination and/or harassment by age and caring status



Younger carers also experience more everyday exclusion

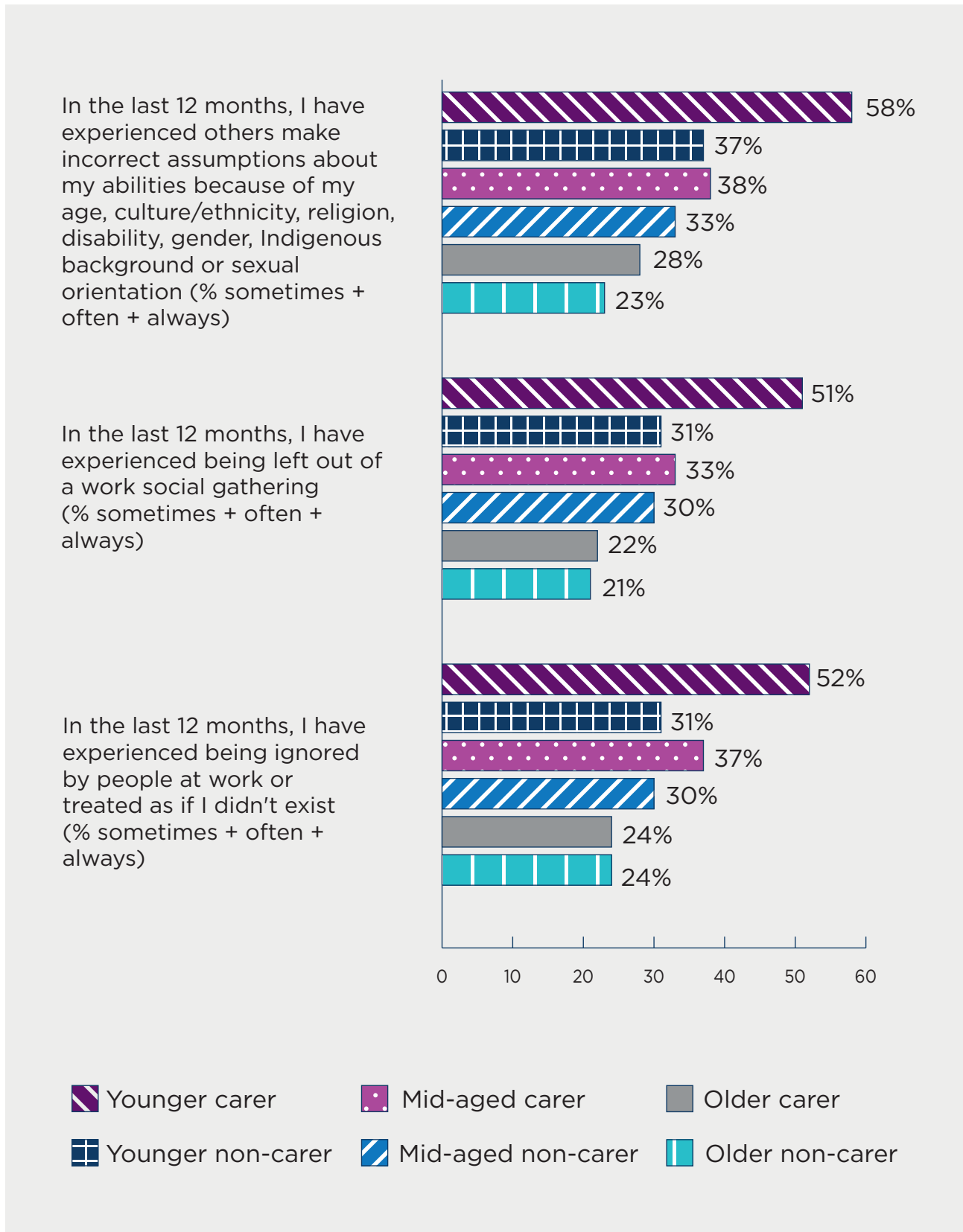
Younger carers were also much more likely to report experience of everyday exclusion at work – more so than younger workers without caring responsibilities, and mid-aged and older workers with caring responsibilities.

Younger workers with caring responsibilities were more likely to report, for the past 12 months:

- having **others making assumptions about their abilities** – 58% of younger carers had sometimes, often or always had others making assumptions about their abilities based on their identity. This is compared with 37% of younger workers without caring responsibilities, and 38% of mid-aged and 28% of older workers with caring responsibilities.
- being **left out of work social gatherings** – 51% of younger carers had sometimes, often or always been left out of work social gatherings, compared with 31% of younger workers without caring responsibilities, and 33% of mid-aged and 22% of older workers with caring responsibilities.
- being **ignored at work** – 52% of younger carers had sometimes, often or always been ignored by people at work or treated as if they didn't exist, compared with 31% of younger workers without caring responsibilities, and 37% of mid-aged and 24% of older workers with caring responsibilities.

Like experience with discrimination and harassment, the gap in everyday exclusion experienced between carers and non-carers decreased with age.

Figure 9: Experience of everyday exclusion by age and gender



Age inclusion spotlight: Perceptions of age-based discrimination

Workers are more likely to report discrimination and harassment based on age compared with other attributes such as gender, ethnicity or disability.

Age was the most commonly perceived area of personal discrimination and harassment

In the 12 months leading up to the survey, workers were more likely to perceive discrimination and harassment on the basis of age than any other protected attribute.

- **Personal experience of discrimination:** Age was the highest reported ground (9%), ahead of cultural background/ethnicity/race (6%), gender (5%), caring responsibilities (4%), disability (3%), religious affiliation (2%), sexual orientation or gender identity (2%) and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background (1%).
- **Personal experience of harassment:** Age was again the highest (6%), ahead of cultural background/ethnicity/race (5%), gender (5%), caring responsibilities (3%), disability (2%), religious affiliation (3%), sexual orientation or gender identity (2 %) and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background (1%).
- **Witnessed harassment of others:** Age was the third most commonly reported protected attribute in incidents of harassment that people witnessed (6%), behind cultural background/ethnicity/race at (6%) and gender at (6%).

Figure 10: Experience of discrimination by different grounds

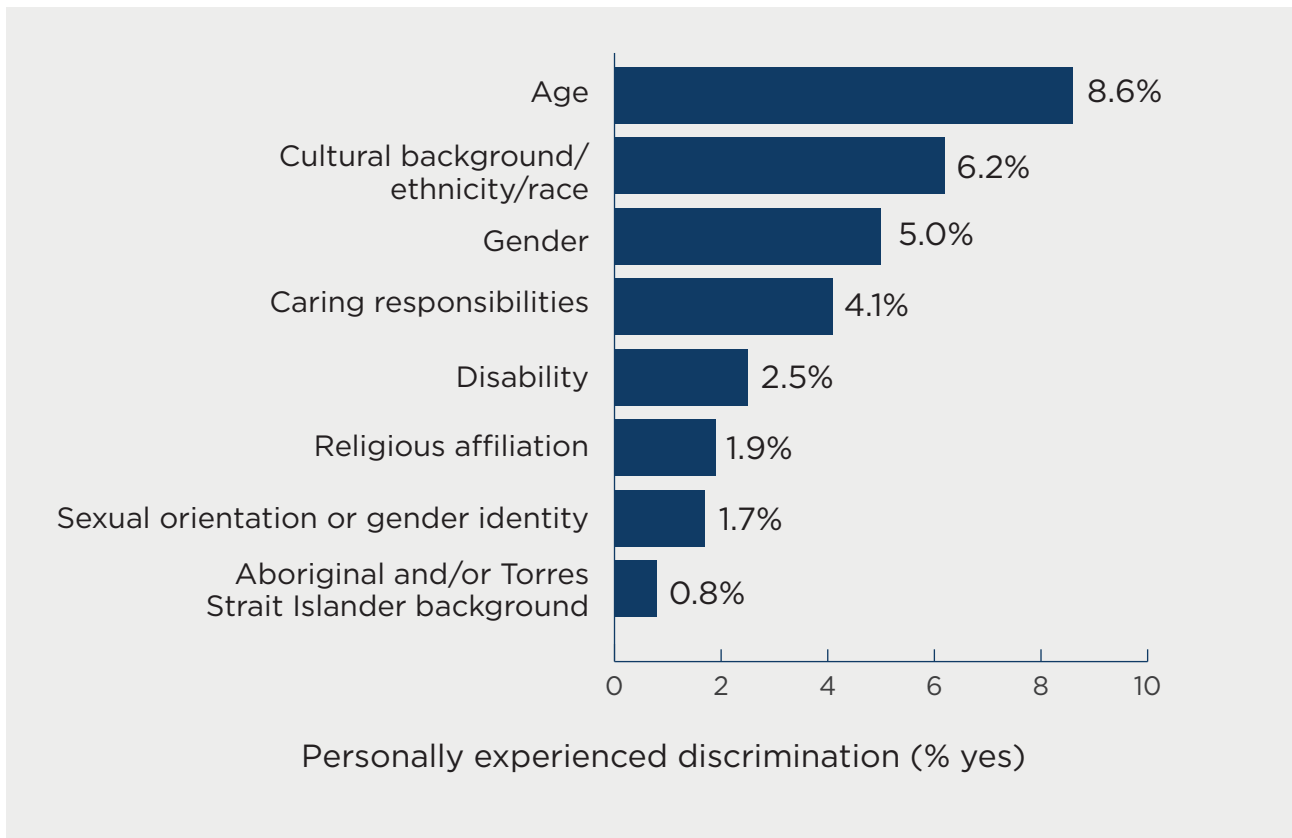


Figure 11: Experience of harassment by different grounds

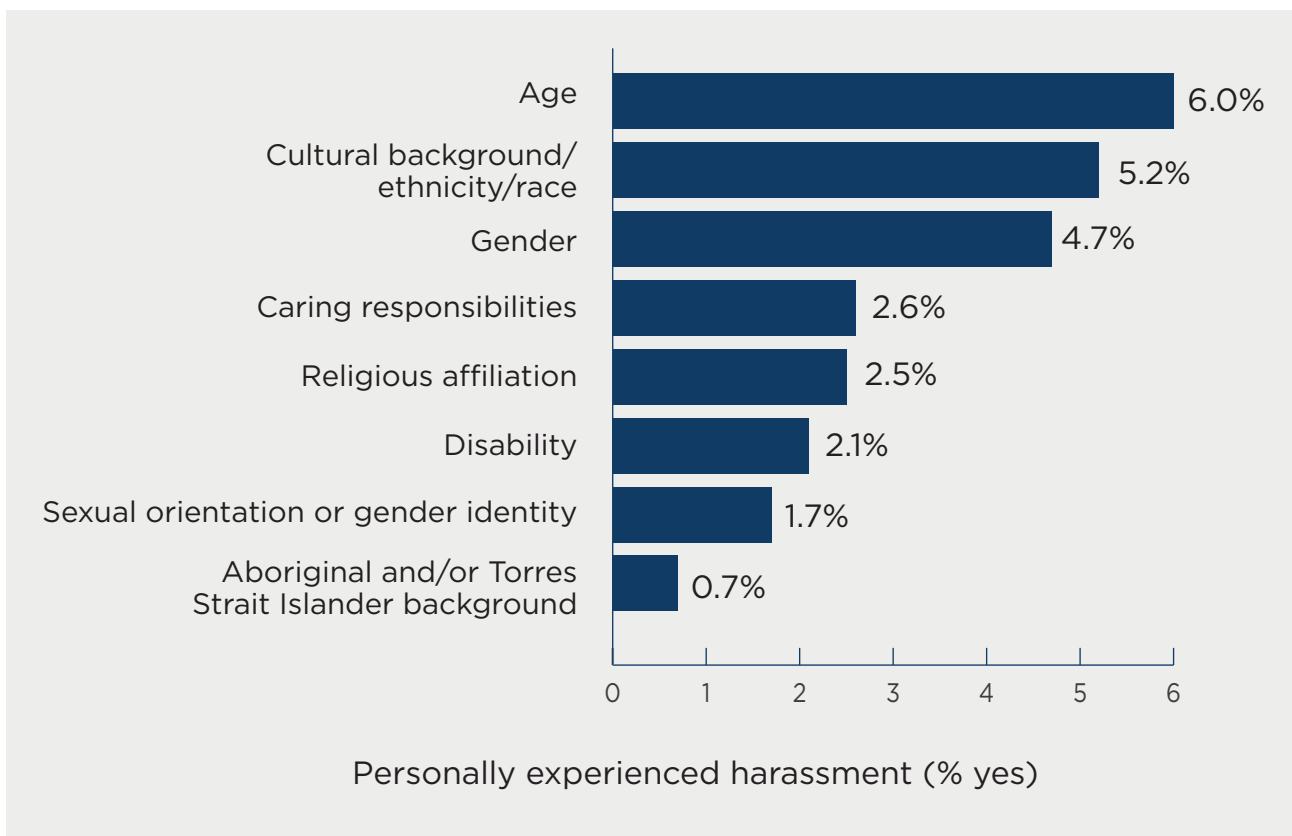
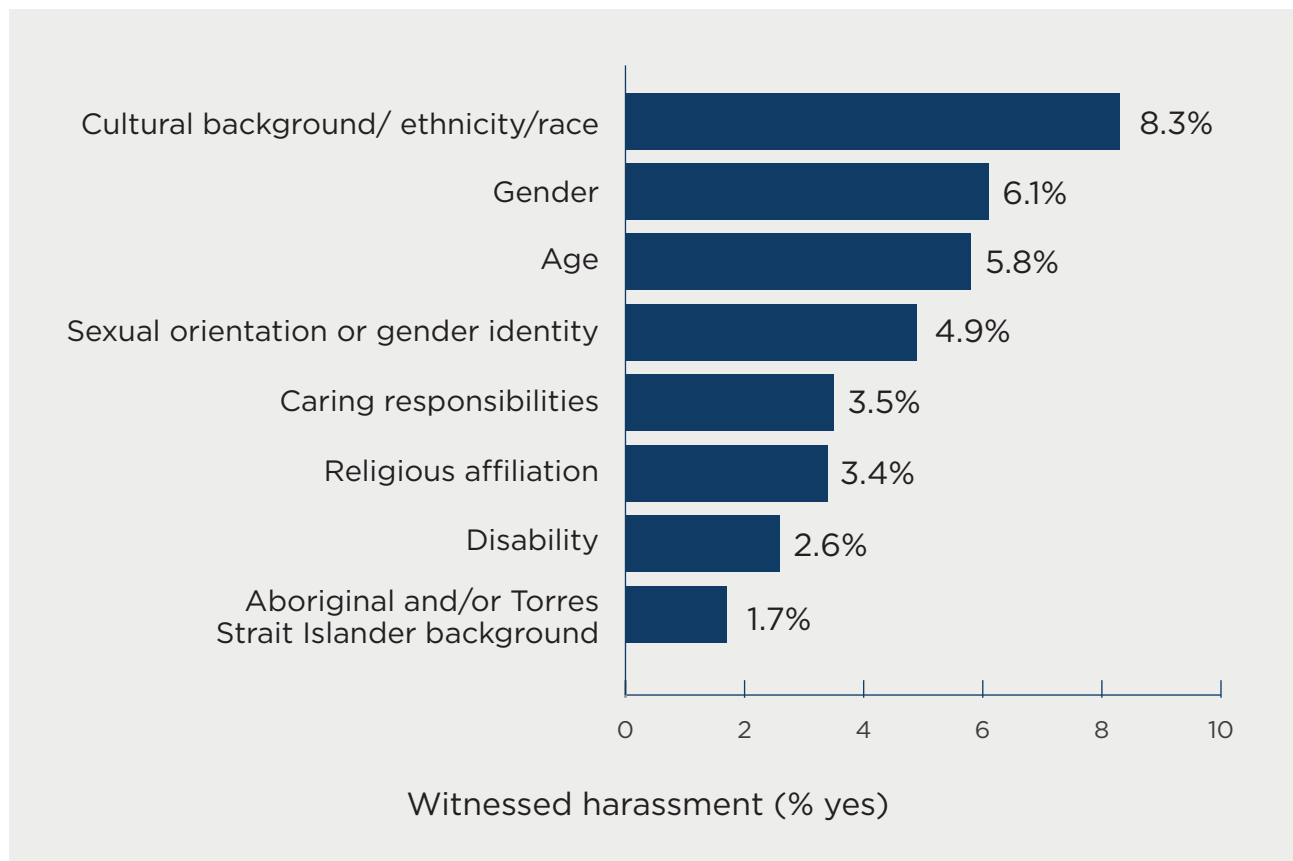


Figure 12: Experience of witnessing harassment by different grounds



These findings mirror results from other studies of perceived employment discrimination across protected attributes (such as gender, ethnicity and disability). Data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey 2018–2022 shows that age is the most commonly perceived basis for work-related discrimination among both job seekers and employees. Nearly 40% of job seekers who reported hiring-stage discrimination and 37% of employees who experienced discrimination in the workplace attributed these experiences to their age.³

A 2025 employer survey by the Australian Human Resources Institute and the Commission also found that only 56% of HR professionals reported being open “to a large extent” to hiring workers aged 50–64. This fell to 28% for those aged 65+ and just 41% for 15 to 24-year-olds.⁴

However, formal complaints of age discrimination remain low

Despite this, formal complaints of age-based discrimination remain comparatively low. In 2024–25, only 5% of the 2,797 complaints received by the Commission were made under the *Age Discrimination Act 2004*.⁵ Age discrimination in the area of employment made up 59% of complaints under the Act.

The relatively low number of complaints must be understood within a broader context. People may take personal steps to address or mitigate issues, rely on internal pathways for support or resolution, or be influenced by organisational culture and the perceived safety of reporting. Beyond formal complaints made to the Commission, people can

also access external complaint processes via state and territory equal opportunity commissions, the Fair Work Commission and other bodies, including industrial avenues in some cases. The reasons for not making a formal complaint can be complex and multifaceted. As a result, formal complaints represent only one narrow aspect of the actual experiences and stories of Australians.

Barriers prevent people from reporting workplace discrimination

The *Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability* (2016) found that individuals who experience age-based discrimination do not always make a complaint or pursue other forms of formal action.⁶ The inquiry identified several factors contributing to this under-reporting, although it should be noted that many of these barriers would equally apply to complaints relating to other protected attributes.

The barriers include the fact that many individuals are simply unaware of their rights or unsure where to start. With discrimination law for different attributes spread across multiple federal and state/territory legislative instruments, the system can feel complex and difficult to navigate. Even when people understand their options, the financial and emotional burden of pursuing a formal complaint or taking legal action can act as a strong disincentive. This challenge is often compounded by the evidentiary challenges of proving discrimination, particularly for those people whose experience of discrimination and harassment intersects across multiple attributes.

Employers can take action

While the Commission has set out proposals for strengthening and modernising federal anti-discrimination laws, employers can take practical steps now to support safer, fairer and more inclusive workplaces where age-based discrimination and harassment is actively prevented and addressed.⁷ These include the actionable insights we outlined at the start of this report, such as:

- promoting respectful workplaces
- providing training and guidance on discrimination and harassment
- removing organisational barriers
- establishing clear internal complaint processes for discrimination and harassment.

We note that the last national inquiry into age discrimination in the workplace happened more than a decade ago. Therefore, it would be beneficial for employers to collect contemporary anonymised data on workplace discrimination and harassment to identify barriers and better support workers.

Appendix A: Method

Survey sample

DCA commissioned Polity Research & Consulting to conduct a nationally representative online survey of 3,000 Australian workers, administered through a research-only survey panel. Workers were defined as those aged 18 and over who were employed in Australia at the time of the survey collection fieldwork.

The research did not use a probability sample – as with all internet surveying in Australia, the sample was drawn from non-probability opt-in panels of survey volunteers maintained by the commercial provider.

Fieldwork

The research was conducted online over 2 weeks in May 2025. Participants were recruited from a professional market and social research panel. They received a small incentive for their participation.

Weighting

The survey data was weighted to ensure the achieved respondent profile aligned with Australian Bureau of Statistics demographic indicators. These include Aboriginality, age, cultural background, disability status, gender, degree qualification, gender identity and location (state and urban/regional splits).

Analysis

Crosstab analyses were run on the unweighted sample to compare the inclusion and exclusion experiences of workers based on their age. SPSS software was used to run a series of crosstabs (contingency tables) to show possible differences in responses. For each contingency table, a chi-squared statistic was calculated to find whether there was an association between the 2 variables at the 95% confidence level. For contingency tables considered statistically significant, adjusted standardised residuals greater (in absolute size) than +/- 1.96 were examined to find what was driving the association.

Appendix B: Sample demographics

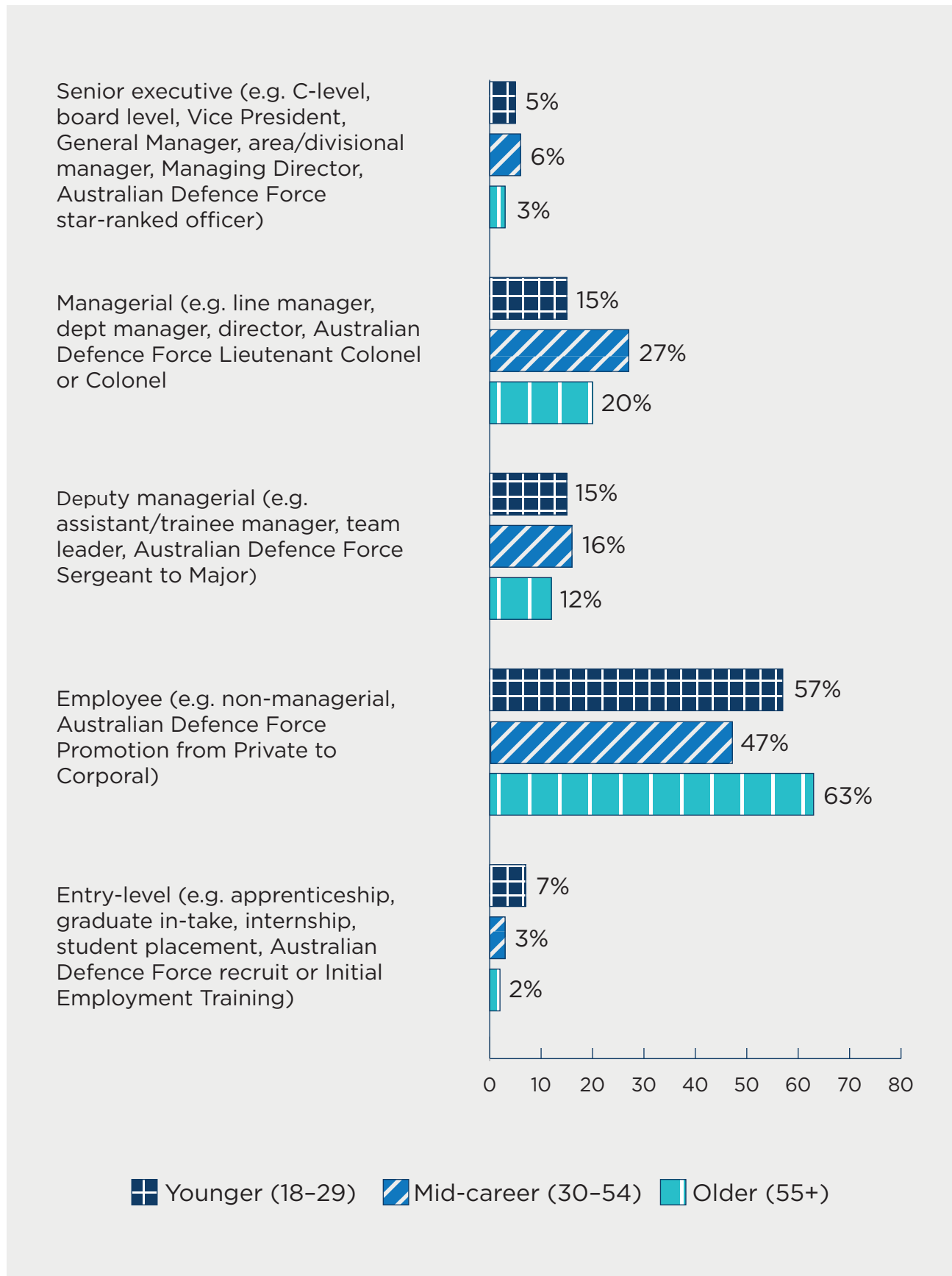
Table 1: Proportion of Inclusion@Work Index 2025-2026 respondents by age

Age group	Proportion of respondents
18-19	1.6%
20-24	8.9%
25-29	11.2%
30-34	13.0%
35-39	12.8%
40-44	12.1%
45-49	10.2%
50-54	10.1%
55-59	9.4%
60-64	6.4%
65-69	2.9%
70-74	0.9%
75-79	0.4%
85+	0.1%
Total	100.0%

Table 2: Proportion of Inclusion@Work Index 2025-2026 respondents by age and demographics

Sample demographics	Younger workers	Mid-aged workers	Older workers
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	21.3%	17.0%	5.5%
With caring responsibilities	26.1%	34.1%	26.8%
With disability	10.0%	12.3%	11.3%
Women	60.2%	48.6%	44.4%
Men	38.6%	51.2%	55.4%
Non-binary and gender diverse	1.2%	0.2%	0.2%
LGBTQI+	13.2%	9.7%	4.2%
Main English-speaking background(s)	53.0%	58.3%	70.3%
One or more non-main English-speaking background(s)	47.0%	41.7%	29.7%

Figure 13: Age groups by role type



Endnotes

- 1 This report includes the intersection of age with gender and caring responsibilities based on sample size across demographics captured and results that were statistically significant.
- 2 This report presents a comparison between respondents identifying as men or women as the number of non-binary/gender diverse respondents in our sample was not large enough to meet statistical analysis requirements.
- 3 Roger Wilkins, Ferdi Botha, Inga Laß, and Kyle Peyton, [*The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 22*](#) (Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne, 2024).
- 4 Roger Wilkins, Ferdi Botha, Inga Laß, and Kyle Peyton, [*The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 22*](#) (Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne, 2024).
- 5 Roger Wilkins, Ferdi Botha, Inga Laß, and Kyle Peyton, [*The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 22*](#) (Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne, 2024).
- 6 Australian Human Rights Commission, [*Complaints statistics 2024–2025*](#) (Report, 2025).
- 7 Australian Human Rights Commission, [*Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability*](#) (Report, 2016).



GPO Box 5218 SYDNEY NSW 2001
Telephone: (02) 9284 9600
National Information Service: 1300 656 419
General enquiries: 1300 369 711
TTY: 1800 620 241
Fax: (02) 9284 9611
Website: www.humanrights.gov.au



Hub Customs House,
Level 3 & 4, 31 Alfred Street
Sydney NSW 2000
P: (02) 8014 4300
Website: www.dca.org.au