

Ageism

A new law came into force on 1 October in the UK, making it illegal for employers to discriminate on the grounds of age. Will this new law help to get rid of ageism in the workplace?

1 Match the words and phrases (1–5) below with their definitions (a–e).

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|------------------|---|
| 1 Ageism | (a) to be told to leave a company because you are no longer needed |
| 2 Discrimination | (b) something that must be done due to a rule or law |
| 3 Compulsory | (c) to force someone to lose their job |
| 4 Dismiss | (d) unfair treatment of someone due to their sex, race or other personal features |
| 5 Made redundant | (e) the practice of not treating older people fairly, for example by not giving them jobs |
- (Definitions from or based on *Macmillan English Dictionary Text* © Bloomsbury Publishing Plc 2002)

2 Study the extract from a survey report and guess the correct options in the results. Check your answers in the article.

Survey details:	1,000 UK workers (16+) surveyed by the Employers Forum on Age.	
Survey results:	Q1 'Do you know about the age discrimination law, effective from 1 Oct?'	25% / 50% / 75% said YES
	Q2 'Have you heard of any cases of ageist behaviour where you work?'	21% / 41% / 61% said YES

New law designed to end ageism

From 1 October this year, new laws against ageism come into effect in the UK. From this date, employers will not be able to specify that a new recruit should be above or below a particular age. One big change under the new law is that employers will not be able to impose compulsory retirement before 65. When a company makes someone redundant because they are considered too old for the job, this is an overt kind of discrimination. However, many types of discrimination are indirect – making ageist comments for example. This type of comment betrays deeper attitudes, which may take a long time to change.

Denmark introduced age discrimination laws in 2004. There, it is already against the law to discriminate on the grounds of age in all aspects of recruitment, dismissal, training and retirement prior to 65. Will this new law make a difference in Britain? A recent survey of 1,000 workers above 16 years of

age revealed that only half of those interviewed actually knew about the new law. Worryingly, 61% of those questioned said they had heard about cases of ageist behaviour where they worked.

Laws have existed for a long time against sexism and racism in the workplace. What is behind this latest change in legislation? We are all, it seems, living longer, and have healthier lives. So, the government wants people to have the right to work longer. It is worried that the ageist attitudes of some employers are stopping people from doing this. We now must wait to see how effective the new law will be. Some think that it is a first step leading to the retirement age being completely abolished. Perhaps companies will now be able to tap in to the experience of older workers.

3 Read the whole article. What do you learn about ageism and the situation in the UK?

4 Write in the noun forms of the following verbs. Create sentence with some of the words about your own company.

(a) impose _____	(b) retire _____	(c) behave _____	(d) recruit _____	(e) dismiss _____	(f) introduce _____
(g) legislate _____	(h) abolish _____	(i) specify _____	(j) discriminate _____	(k) survey _____	(l) train _____

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report back your ideas to the class.

- (a) Do you know of any examples of workplace discrimination?
- (b) Should a similar new anti-ageism law be introduced in your country?
- (c) Should the retirement age be completely abolished?