

3,912 views | Jul 25, 2019, 08:11am EDT

The One Critical Element Missing From 92% Of Diversity And Inclusion Strategies



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Diversity & Inclusion

I write about age-related topics in the workplace.



Companies looking to attract and retain talent—and protect against potential litigation—need to ... [+] GETTY

While research shows bias around sexuality and race has declined precipitously over the last 12 years, the one area where unconscious

bias has barely shifted is ageism. The [EEOC reports](#) that *age* is the one critical element overlooked by a majority of companies in diversity and inclusion (D&I) programs and efforts. A study found that 64% of firms surveyed in its 2015 Annual Global CEO survey had diversity and inclusion strategies, but only 8% of those included age.

To combat workplace ageism, D&I strategies must actively address the issue by making it a critical part of the plan. That requires teams to proactively survey, analyze and train the workplace to understand how age [bias and stereotyping](#) impede business success.

Not sure if ageism is an issue in your organization or—if so—where to begin?

Whether you are starting from the ground up, building on a foundation from the middle or leading the way from the top, this tool will put you in just the right place for the best forward momentum. In less than 15 minutes, you can compare your organization against others and receive a tailored toolkit focused on your organization’s specific needs.

Created by the Boston College Center on Aging and Work, collected data is used on an aggregate basis to benchmark similar organizations.

To find out how your company stacks up:

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1. Take the [online assessment](#) (personal company information is

not stored).

2. Benchmark your organization against similar organizations.
3. Download a toolkit based on your results.

As the youngest from the Boomer generation turns 55, claims of age discrimination continue to rise. Now more than ever, [age-related training and tools](#) are needed to deepen understanding of ageist stereotypes and implicit bias. Without a focused effort on building and progressing a multigenerational workforce, companies are at risk of EEOC charges and litigation.

In the last year, lawsuits have involved some of the biggest companies including [Citibank](#), [IKEA](#), [IBM](#) and [PriceWaterhouseCoopers](#). Just last week, Google agreed to an \$11 million payout to settle a class-action lawsuit involving 227 people over the age of 40 who accused the company of age discrimination in the applicant process. While maintaining it did not participate in age discrimination, Google did *not* include diversity statistics for age in its report, or even reference age statistics. Under the final collective action [settlement agreement](#), presented to a federal judge July 19, plaintiffs will collect an estimated \$35,000 each. Additionally, the parent company Alphabet Inc. must train employees and managers about age bias, create a committee on age diversity in recruiting and make sure complaints are adequately investigated.

Conscious and Unconscious Bias

In early 2019, two Harvard researchers reported good and bad news regarding data collected from more than four million tests for conscious and unconscious bias against different social groups. Tessa Charlesworth and Mahzarin Banaji concluded both conscious and unconscious bias toward numerous groups in America precipitously

declined, including bias around sexuality and race. However, [negative stereotypes and bias](#) towards aging remain relatively unchanged.

Leaders who recognize the face of talent is as diverse in age as it is in ethnicity and gender fluidity will be ahead of the game. Actively valuing diverse thinking—including age diversity—will require age as a diversity metric as a first step. Additionally, actions to disrupt ageist bias and stereotyping impeding a healthy workplace culture can be addressed through ongoing training and employee assessments.

Taking the online assessment is a significant first step. Fortunately, it is just one of the [free online resources](#) to help promote an understanding of how age-related bias and stereotyping impede business success.

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I'm the executive director of the Age Equity Alliance, an organization partnering with organizations, companies and communities to create age equity in the workplace.

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