

Age discrimination

What the law says

Age is one of 9 'protected characteristics' covered by discrimination law (Equality Act 2010).

Age discrimination includes direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Age discrimination is sometimes also known as ageism.

Discrimination can happen in any area of work. It can result from decisions made at work or from how people behave towards each other. This includes ageist language and behaviour.

It could be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident. It can happen in the workplace, at work social events or when people are working remotely.

In some circumstances, treating someone differently because of their age might not be against the law.

How the law defines age

The Equality Act 2010 defines age as a person:

- of a particular age
- belonging to an 'age group'

The law does not say how wide an age group is. It can be quite wide, for example the under 20s or over 50s. Terms such as 'Gen Z' or 'millennials' can also indicate an age group.

Who is protected by discrimination law

Age discrimination can happen to people of any age.

At work, the law protects the following people against discrimination:

- anyone who works for an employer
- contractors and self-employed people hired to personally do the work
- job applicants
- former workers

Understanding more about discrimination

[Find out about the different types of age discrimination](#)

If you need more general discrimination advice, you can read [discrimination and the Equality Act 2010](#). This includes advice on employer responsibilities and on other protected characteristics.

Contact the Acas helpline

If you have any questions about age discrimination at work, you can [contact the Acas helpline](#).