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**RŪTA BRAZIENĖ<sup>1</sup>**

## **Age and Workplace Discrimination in Lithuania**

**Abstract:** This paper aims to disclose an expression of age and workplace discrimination in the Lithuanian labor market. The paper is discussing theoretical aspects of age discrimination and presents the results of the sociological survey research results carried out in 2014. The purpose of this paper is to disclose age and workplace discrimination at the Lithuanian labor market. Analysis of scientific literature and quantitative research results allows to state that older adults are experiencing discrimination because of, among others, their age, gender, and stereotypes. Research results revealed that age and workplace discrimination is increasing with the age of the respondents, e.g., the expression in older age groups is more intensive. For the age group of 40-50, age discrimination is lower than the full sample average. Age discrimination is exposing for the age group of 56-60 and is the most intensive for persons 60 years old and older. The research results revealed that older employees have obstacles for career and future perspectives; older people are more often facing discriminative behavior, lacking social justice, insufficient personal respect labor relations, and are more often experiencing pressure to leave the job or facing unreasonable dismissal.

**Key words:** Age Discrimination, Labor Market, Older Workers

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## **Introduction**

By the processes of constant ageing of the Lithuanian society, the older adults constitute larger and larger part of the population. According to a myriad of studies, people are living longer; healthier, and productive lives and projections of the population growth for the next 50 years indicate that this trend will continue at an alarming rate (Turner, 2008). Their active participation in the labor market is a critical factor for the sustainable development of society. However, it should be noted that also in many other countries of the European Union, the labor market participation decreases with age. The analysis of the Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) data (2004-2015) allows to state, that the older the person, the more likely that she/he will experience discrimination and disadvantages on the labor market.

Possibilities for successful participation in the labor market is decreasing not only by the age, but also by other factors, e.g., gender, disability, lack of appropriate education, and poor or inadequate professional qualification. National and international research results revealed that 50-55 years old persons are experiencing first difficulties on the labor market (Eurobarometer, 2012; ILO, 2012). Persons 50-55 years old not only the experience social exclusion in job search processes but more often than young persons' experiencing age discrimination at the workplace (Eurobarometer, 2012a; Larja et al., 2012).

Older age becomes a problem for successful participation in the labor market due to age discrimination, older adult's health problems, and lack of appropriate or modern skills. Age discrimination in the labor market acquires various forms, e.g., discriminatory job advertisements, lack of professional retraining and dismissal before reaching old age pensions. Eurobarometer (2012) research revealed that 50-55 years old persons are facing negative stereotypes on the labor market, when older persons were identified as inefficient, inflexible, unable to adapt to innovations and technological progress. A Eurobarometer survey carried out in 2009 revealed an opinion of Lithuanian population about the prevalence of discrimination. As the most prevalent form of

discrimination respondents indicated age discrimination (59%) (Eurobarometer Survey, 2009).

Enhancing of the older adults' social inclusion into the labor market is one of the Lithuanian and European Union social policy priorities. In European social charter, which Lithuania ratified in 2001 is stated that one of the main goals and responsibilities of the EU member states is greater and more stable employment, free choice of employment, and an adequate standard of living. The European Council Directive 2000/78/EC is requiring the EU member states to introduce legislation prohibiting age and several other forms of discrimination (Taqi 2002, p. 117). Age discrimination is prohibited in Lithuanian legal and strategic documents: The general principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (Article 29), the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1998), and the Law for Equal Treatment (2005). Another key policy is the *National Program on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2015–2021*, approved in 2015. Other relevant legal documents regulating women and men integration into the labor market is Labour Code (2002) and Law on support on Employment (2016). In the Lithuanian Labour Code (2002) Article 92 states that “additionally in the labor market supported individuals (unemployed), having or likely to have difficulty finding a job because of lack of qualifications or work experience, long-term unemployment, or disability, as well as persons five years prior to retirement age.”

Theoretical discourse about age discrimination is widespread. There is a wide variety of research carried out. The main directions of the age and workplace discrimination research are the following:

- Older persons labor market participation trends (Semykina, Linz, 2007; Lazutka, Skucienė, 2005; Gruzevskis, 2006a; Okuneviciute-Neverauskienė, Moskvina, 2008; Eurostat, 2012; Eurobarometer, 2012a).
- Quality of Employment and Productiveness of Older Workers (McMullin et al., 2004; Hardy, 2011; UKCES, 2011).

- Older People Labor Market Discrimination (Riach, Rich, 2007; Sargeant, 2011; Eurobarometer 2012b; Eurobarometer, 2012b; Okuneviciūtė-Neverauskienė, 2011).
- Active Ageing and Gender Equality (Corsi, Lodovici, 2013).

It is important to stress that research on age and workplace discrimination is rather limited in Lithuania. Older adults integration into the labor market research is mainly focusing on older people *labor market participation possibilities* (Gruzevskis et al, 2006a; Lazutka, Skučienė, 2005; Okuneviciute-Neverauskienė, Moskvina, 2008), *the demand for professional training and consultation* (Gruzevskis et al, 2006b; Okuneviciute-Neverauskienė, Moskvina, 2007), and *social consequences of the labor market ageing* (Raskinis, 2008). There are also some attempts to analyze *older people labor market discrimination* (Okuneviciute-Neverauskienė, 2011).

The purpose of this paper is to disclose age and workplace discrimination at the Lithuanian labor market. The research questions are the following: What are the main obstacles for older people participation in the Lithuanian labor market? What types of discrimination older people are experiencing in the Lithuanian labor market? *Research methods:* analysis of scientific literature and legal documents and factor analysis.

### **Theoretical Considerations**

Research from different scholars indicates that age discrimination in the labor market is an important problem (e.g., Walker, 1993; Walker, 2005; Mykletun, 2010). Discrimination has a variety of forms. In the documents of the EU, there is a clear distinction between direct and indirect discrimination. Direct age discrimination is when inappropriate situations in the labor market persons because of her or his age were treated less favorably. Non-direct discrimination occurs when because of certain behavioral practices, criteria, older people find themselves in less favorable situations in the labor market (O’Cinneido, 2005).

Age discrimination is commonly seen as an obstacle for older people participation in the labor market. The concept of age discrimination is primarily identified by Butler (1969). She

described stereotypes and different discriminatory practices towards older adults. Also, age discrimination can be understood as a “*particular decisions towards employee based not on the employee competence or abilities, but on a biological age*” (Arrowsmith, 2003).

Concerning the age, it is possible to distinguish different aspects of an age, e.g., *biological age*, *psychological age*, e.g., “*individual ability to adapt their behavior to the needs of the environment and social age*,” which indicates “social norms and roles apply to individual age depending on the culture and society” (Sterns, Miklos, 1995).

It should be noted that depending on the individual factors (e.g., gender and health status), age group, and employment content, ageing workers represent a very heterogeneous group in the labor market. Age discrimination is also a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in the workplace and the labor market (Laczkó, Phillipson, 1991). Scholars are asserting that age stereotypes that are widely prevalent in society diminish older persons’ possibilities in work organizations and the labor market (Arrowsmith, 2003).

### *Forms of Age Discrimination in the Workplace*

Age discrimination pervades the entire employment relationship and can take a variety of forms. It occurs in relation to, among others, access to a job, to promotion, salary differentials, and access to training. Ageism or age discrimination on the labor market primarily manifested as prejudice, discriminatory or institutional practice of older persons. According to Binstock (1983), ageism is not only an adequate reflection of negative attitudes but also can form some stigma, when older persons are referred as weaker, less competent and/or they are to be treated in an exceptional way.

Looking at previous research on age discrimination in the labor market, we can state that it manifests in very different forms. Direct discrimination occurs when older people are looking for a new or better job. Also, older persons more often facing a risk that they will not be promoted, will not get salary supplement (Furunes et al., 2008). Older workers are, among others, less frequently

offered to attend various courses, and to seek for professional development (Schone, 1996; Taylor, Urwin, 2001; Mykletum, 2006). Taylor and Urwin argue that the fact that older people significantly less involved or offered to participate in various training reflects the fact that employers tend to invest in younger workers, with the latter linked the prospects of the company's activities (Taylor, Urwin, 2001).

Age discrimination is often considered as a barrier to participation in work by older people, and the workplace provides the most common grounds for that. Age discrimination predominantly affects older rather than younger groups, and it is based on myths and stereotypes attitudes about older people and older workers (e.g., Davey, 2007; Alpes's, Mortimer, 2007; Gray, McGregor, 2003). Age discrimination pervades the entire employment relationship and can take a variety of forms. It occurs in relation to access to, among others, a job, to promotion, salary differentials, and access to training. Moreover, older workers are not only facing fewer professional development opportunities but also rarely raised the salary (Brooke, 2003).

Garstka, Schmidt, et al. (2003) conducted a survey on discrimination. Although the study was not directly focusing on the labor market discrimination, it revealed that the age discrimination negatively affects the quality of life, social well-being, and satisfaction with life in general. Another study carried out by Chou and Chow indicated that age discrimination could have far-reaching consequences for an individual's economic and psychological well-being (Chou, Chow 2005).

## **Survey Research Methodology and Results**

### *Research Sample*

The survey research was conducted in 2014. The respondents to the study were selected using the following: age (40-74) and an individual's labor market status (currently in employment, unemployed, and retired or not retired). The random cluster sampling method was used. A quantitative representative sample of older person survey was conducted within 5 percent error-Rate at 95 percent reliability. In a representative survey research, 974 persons aged 40 to 75 years old participated. Every third

respondent was 40-49 years old, every second—50-59 years, and one in sixth was older than 60 years. This sample fully corresponds to the demographical characteristics of the Lithuanian population. The survey sample represents the entire territory of Lithuania. By education, mostly interviewed people with a bachelor's degree (48.7 percent), Having a college education consists of 16.1 percent. According to the labor market status, 71 percent of the respondents currently employed.

### *Research Results*

Age discrimination in the workplace measured by the 14 indicators (see Table 1).

**Table 1 Complex Age Discrimination in the Workplace Index, N=747**

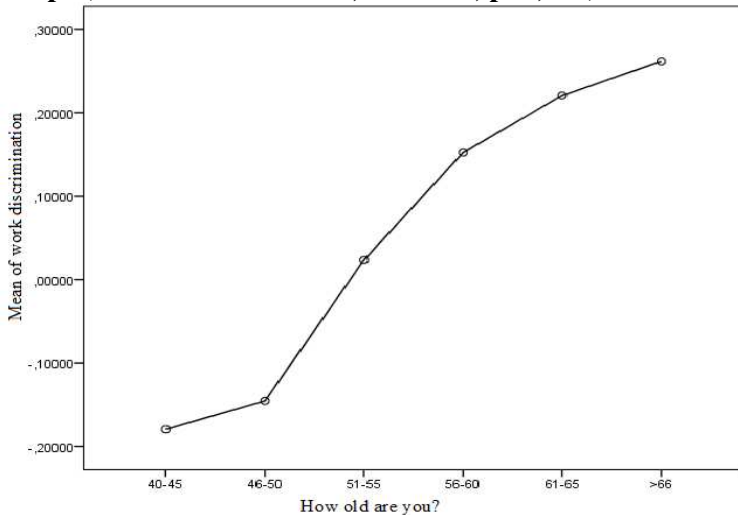
<b>Primary indicators</b>	<b>Explained variance %</b>	<b>L /it.</b>
<b>Age discrimination in the workplace (complex index)</b>	<b>62,7</b>	
Restricted work-related benefits		,841
Restricted work-related promotion		,835
Experienced pressure to leave job		,834
Lack equal opportunities to participate in the activities of work organization		,833
Demotion in working position		,823
Restricted training or learning opportunities		,814
Conducted extra certification		,800
Fewer tasks or restriction of functions, responsibilities		,796
Compared with other co-workers' lower wages for the same tasks		,760
Fired from work for no reason		,758
The allocation for tasks, shifts, etc. disregarded the needs of employee		,756
An employee was disrespected by the jokes or comments		,751
No recognition, appraisal, or acknowledgment for work achievements		,747
Not accepted to the workplace		,726



For the evaluation of the scale reliability, Spearman-Brown coefficient was used (0,926 and 0,907). This indicated the very high quality of constructed scale. Factor analysis was used, and complex age discrimination in the workplace index (covering all 14 primary indicators) was created. Created index complies with the requirements and scale intervals of normality condition; all statistical methods (including parametric methods) can be applied without any restrictions.

The study was aimed to assess the link between work-related discrimination and age. For the data analysis, ANOVA test was selected. This test allows determining statistically significant differences in more than two groups. In this case, the expression of discrimination was compared in more than six different age groups 40-45, 46-50, 51-55, 56-60, 61-65, and 65 and older age groups.

**Figure 1 Expression of Discrimination in the Different Age Groups (Discrimination Scale, ANOVA,  $p=0,007$ )**



Source: Own elaboration.

**Figure 2 Workplace Discrimination Index Z Scale, Comparison of Averages, N=747**



Source: Own elaboration.

The data analysis revealed that workplace discrimination is increasing with age, e.g., in the older age group, the discrimination is more intensive ( $p=0.007$ ) (Figure 1). This is also confirmed by the joint workplace discrimination index Z estimate averages comparison in different age groups (Figure 2).

For the analysis of differences of discrimination in various age groups, was carried out workplace discrimination scale transformation into z-scale, e.g., created scale which average equals 0 and standard deviation—1, measurement unit—one standard deviation. Differences between groups measured by evaluating them by standard deviation parts. It should be noted that negative z-scale values showing a lower level of discrimination than sample average, and positive—the opposite the lower level of discrimination than sample average. Differences of average in z-scale is one of the *effect size measurement* methods and can be interpreted according to Cohen (1988) proposed and in applied statistical research broadly applied scale: *less than 0,2—differences cannot be interpreted, 0,2-0,3—differences small, 0,3-0,8—average differences and more than 0,8—differences large*. The data analysis revealed that in the 40-50 years old age group the discrimination is relatively low, e.g., lower than a sample average. However, the more expressed discrimination is observed in 56-60 years old group and is increasing in older age groups (Figure 2). By comparing the expression of discrimination between women and men there, no significant statistical differences observed.

For the comparison of expression of workplace discriminations in different age groups according to the various criteria, *Kruskal-Wallis* test was applied, allowing to compare more than two groups independent sample mean differences. The expression of discrimination according to the different features was compared in 6 age categories. Comparing the expression of age workplace discrimination according to the separate characteristics (see Table 2) revealed that 9 out of 14 features of discrimination is statistically significantly associated with the age, e.g., older age respondents at work more often exposed to various forms of discrimination.

Research results revealed, that older worker facing working conditions with fewer opportunities for career and advancement, e.g., they are facing *restricted skills training or learning opportunities at work* ( $p=0,000$ ), *restricted promotion at work opportunities* ( $p=0,000$ ), also limited self-expression possibilities—older respondents more often facing *fewer tasks, restricted functions, responsibility* ( $p=0,009$ ). It was also noted that older workers are more exposed to discriminatory, lacking social justice and respect labor relations: the allocation of tasks, shifts, etc. often does not take into account their needs ( $p = 0,040$ ), and they paid a lower salary for the same job compared to the others ( $p = 0,004$ ), they have often heard against them jokes or comments ( $p = 0,001$ ), they less likely to receive recognition or evaluation for a well done job ( $p = 0,001$ ). The study has also revealed the extreme and discriminatory behavior forms towards older age respondents. For example, older age respondents more often *experienced pressure to leave workplace* ( $p=0,000$ ), for facing *dismissal from the workplace* ( $p=0,009$ ) *groundlessly*.

Age group	Restricted skills training / learning opportunities at work * (p=0,000)		Restricted promotion at work opportunities* (p=0,000)		Fewer tasks, restricted functions, responsibility * (p=0,009)		Lower wages for the same work compared to others* (p=0,004)		Conducted extraordinary certification		Unreasonable demotion in duties		Limited work related benefits	
	N	Mean range	N	Mean range	N	Mean range	N	Mean range	N	Mean range	N	Mean range	N	Mean range
40-45	160	367,20	158	340,60	157	363,82	157	361,14	157	374,24	155	369,79	156	366,71
46-50	199	367,86	197	375,06	195	384,37	198	403,76	193	401,09	196	394,31	196	393,52
51-55	216	436,19	213	428,19	212	411,74	214	412,13	212	402,61	209	413,73	212	414,16
56-60	176	456,91	173	448,29	171	443,09	171	425,40	170	417,95	171	420,40	172	426,70
61-65	56	474,14	53	495,36	53	448,80	53	460,44	52	447,95	53	438,15	53	448,33
>66	24	523,15	25	523,04	22	433,66	25	519,36	21	407,31	25	458,52	21	436,36
Total	831		819		810		818		805		809		810	

Age group	Experienced pressure to leave workplace * (p=0,000)		Have heard against them jokes or comments* (p=0,001)		Lack of equal opportunities to participate in the activities of organization		Did not get recognition for the well done job* (p=0,001)		Was not accepted for workplace		Groundlessly dismissed from the workplace* (p=0,009)		In allocation of tasks, shifts do not they into account persons needs* (p=0,040)	
	N	Mean range	N	Mean range	N	Mean range	N	Mean range	N	Mean range	N	Mean range	N	Mean range
40-45	155	358,06	156	353,94	156	375,84	156	369,39	155	377,75	156	365,14	156	369,24
46-50	195	392,13	197	390,22	198	392,21	197	372,03	193	384,91	191	374,90	191	379,25
51-55	212	406,80	211	409,43	215	420,89	211	425,97	206	396,83	206	402,49	207	401,62
56-60	170	424,49	170	445,76	167	415,87	173	447,26	168	424,10	169	429,64	171	431,13
61-65	54	479,11	54	457,57	52	445,75	54	473,06	48	386,58	46	397,30	50	443,22
>66	27	542,59	25	477,02	24	444,52	25	384,76	21	421,21	24	486,00	25	453,74
Total	813		813		812		816		791		792		800	

**Table 2** The expression of age discrimination at work in different age groups according to the distinct characteristics (Kruskal-Wallis criteria)\* Specific discrimination characteristic statistically significantly different in different age groups; N=the number of respondents in particular age group; Mean rank– the higher the rank, the greater the measured characteristic is expressed in the relevant age group

By comparing workplace discrimination according to the gender, there are no statically significant differences. Direct age discrimination in different age groups was evaluated by using crosstabs. One of the data relevance conditions for this method is then in one column of the table not less than 5 cases. This condition was satisfied in the survey. Direct discrimination was measured by asking the respondents if they are during the last five years have heard an expression “*You are too old for this work*“? Seven discrimination agents were indicated (persons or groups) (see Table 3).

**Table 3 Expression of Age Discrimination in Different Age Groups (Crosstabs),  $\chi^2$**

Age group	D i s c r i m i n a t i o n a g e n t s						
	Emplo yer * ( <i>p</i> = 0,0 00)	Potent ial emplo yer	Co- worker s* ( <i>p</i> = 0,0 00)	Employ ment agencies staff	Public sector (health, educati on, social service s etc.) staff * ( <i>p</i> = 0,0 01)	Family membe rs* ( <i>p</i> = 0,0 04)	Frien ds, relati ves
40– 45	0,0 %	6,3 %	1,9 %	5,2 %	1,3 %	2,5 %	3,9 %
46– 50	2,5 %	10,6 %	3,5 %	6,3 %	8,5 %	6,6 %	8,1 %
51– 55	5,0 %	6,2 %	4,2 %	6,2 %	4,8 %	6,0 %	7,4 %
56– 60	7,7 %	11,0 %	14,5 %	9,8 %	7,5 %	8,5 %	9,7 %
61– 65	14,3 %	2,4 %	28,3 %	7,5 %	15,2 %	14,0 %	11,8 %
>66	33,3 %	17,6 %	17,4 %	0,0 %	20,0 %	21,7 %	8,7 %

\*Statistically significant age discrimination

Source: Own elaboration.

The survey data revealed that direct discrimination is related to age in several groups: more likely to indicate directly that they

are “too old” to work, *employers* ( $p=0,000$ ), *coworkers* ( $p=0,000$ ), *public sector staff* ( $p=0,001$ ) and *family members* ( $p=0,004$ ). Even one in three over the age of 65 years old persons mentioned that suffered direct discrimination in the workplace from their employer; every fifth did not receive support from their family members (for more detailed see Table 3).

## **Conclusion**

Analysis of scientific literature and quantitative survey data allows saying that older adults are facing different forms of discrimination because of their age. Based on the survey research results every fourth older adult is facing discrimination at work. This limits their successful integration into the labor market. Research results revealed that workplace discrimination is increasing with the age of the respondents, e.g., in the older age group expression of discrimination is higher. Age discrimination in the age group 40-50 is lower than sample average. Age discrimination is becoming more evident in the age group 56-60 and is especially increasing for older age groups. Older age is not a single factor restricting older people employment opportunities. Every third respondent indicated that he or she lacks, e.g., necessary professional qualification and work experience. Research results revealed that older workers are facing obstacles for a career, they have limited possibilities for professional improvement, learning, or training; promotion, e.g., limited qualification or training possibilities, promotion, functions, and responsibilities. Also, older workers more often facing discriminatory, lacking social justice and respect working conditions, experiencing pressure to leave the job or intentionally. Directly to discriminate against older people because of age, saying that they are “too old” is more likely to employers and coworkers, not the public-sector employees and family members.

There is a lack of appropriate measures for the successful labor market participation of older persons. In most of the cases, older workers were often not considered as a priority group. In order to decrease a discrimination of older workers, different policy measures should be applied more effectively: partial retirement schemes, age management policies at the company

level, providing better opportunities for small business and training for older workers.

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