

Attitudes to Ageism: Implications for an Ageing Population

Kate O'Loughlin & Hal Kendig
Faculty of Health Sciences

COTA National Policy Forum 16 June 2010
Canberra



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Presentation overview

- › Attitudes, stereotypes, discrimination: general comments
- › Ageing Baby Boomers in Australia (ABBA): perceptions of discriminatory behaviour in the workplace
- › Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA): attitudes of older and younger people
- › Academic research: Where to from here?

Presentation overview

Attitudes, stereotypes, discrimination: cause and effect?

- › Widely researched area: diverse, covers many themes/areas; conceptual clarity
- › Attitudes, stereotypes: how formed? opinions? beliefs?
- › Ageism: systemic? subtle? overt? Acknowledge, accept and use stereotypes in personal and public life? Young? Old?
- › Discrimination: behavioural expression of ageist attitudes; making decisions and acting on attitudes and stereotypes to the disadvantage of individuals or groups
- › Discourses commonly used: 'burden', 'dependency', cost
- › Key research areas examining attitudes, stereotypes, discriminatory behaviour: workplace, health care system

ARC Linkages Project (Latrobe University, National Seniors Australia, US AARP), 2008-2010

- › National survey (N=1009); baby boomers aged 50-64 years; 70% employed, 30% retired
- › Statement: Sometimes older workers feel they are treated less favourably at work compared to younger workers:
 - Have you ever felt you were treated less favourably at work because of your age? (Yes/No)
 - Have you ever felt you were treated less favourably when applying for a job because of your age? (Yes/No)

Variables of interest

- Relationship with ageism in the workplace?
 - gender
 - age
 - education level
 - work sector
 - perceptions of stress in job
 - job satisfaction
 - likelihood of job being eliminated in next year
 - work type: employed full time, part time or casual/contract basis
 - work sector: government/other public sector; private sector; self-employed
 - retired participants additionally asked about control over the circumstances of their retirement and main reason for their retirement
 - Pearson's chi-square test for all categorical data

Reported being *treated less favourably at work*

- › **Workers = 17.2%**
- › **Men 51.3%; women 48.7%**
- › **Age: 50-54 years (29.6%); 55-59 years (42.6%); 60-64 years (27.8%)**
 - The largest proportions who perceived they were treated less favourably were the younger men and women aged 60-64 years
- › **Work sector: private sector (44.3%); public sector (34%); currently self employed (21.7%)**

- › **Retired = 19.2%**
- › **Men 52.5%; women 47.5%**
- › **Age: 50-54 years (6.8%); 55-59 years (32.2%); 60-64 years (61%)**
 - The largest proportions who perceived they were treated less favourably were men and women aged 60-64 years
- › **Work sector: private sector (28.8%); public sector (64.4%); currently self-employed (6.8%)**

Treated less favourably at work

Significant associations

› Workers

- Experiencing stress at work
- Dissatisfied with current job
- Likely/very likely that job would be eliminated within next year

› Retired

- Experiencing stress at work before retiring
- › **Main reason for retirement:**
 - Health (50%)
 - Job-related (32.4%)

Reported being *treated less favourably when applying for a job*

- › **Workers = 25.2%**
- › **Men 52%; women 48%**
- › **Age: 50-54 years (29.6%); 55-59 years (42.6%); 60-64 years (27.8%)**
 - The largest proportion who perceived they were treated less favourably were women aged 55-59 years
- › **Work sector: private sector (55.6%); public sector (26%); currently self employed (18.3%)**

- › **Retired = 26.3%**
- › **Men 56.8%; women 43.2%**
- › **Age: 50-54 years (8.6%); 55-59 years (38.3%); 60-64 years (53.1%)**
 - The largest proportions who perceived they were treated less favourably were men and women aged 60-64 years
- › **Work sector: private sector (43.2%); public sector (44.4%); currently self-employed (12.3%)**

Significant associations

› Workers

- Dissatisfied with current job
- Likely/very likely that job would be eliminated within next year (for women)

› Retired

› Main reason for retirement:

- Health (45.7%)
- Family/lifestyle (25.9%)
- Job-related (12.3%)

Key findings to date

- › A potential link in feeling that one is being treated less favourably both in the workplace and when applying for a job emerged for:
 - work sector (private sector)
 - reporting high job stress
 - feeling dissatisfied with current job
 - and/or thinking that job may be eliminated in the next year
- › Further analyses required:
 - Multivariate analyses
 - Include occupation

AuSSA Study

Evans, A. Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2009, The Australian National University: Australian Demographic & Social Research Institute.

- › Questionnaire B Social inequality module: Section C Older People in Society (Qs drawn/adapted from AARP survey 2004)
- › Ten questions: comparing older with younger
 - **Two questions about older workers** (those aged 50 years and older): 1) treated by employers better, worse or same as younger workers? 2) on average contribute more, less or same to the workplace than younger workers?
 - **Five questions about older (65+ years) vs younger adults**
 - Treatment by health professionals (better, worse, same)
 - Treatment in public places/spaces (better, worse, same)
 - Amount of respect (too much/little, about right, don't know)
 - Influence of older, retired Australians (too much/little, about right, don't know)
 - Fair share of government benefits (more/less than, fair share, don't know)

Section C Older People in Society

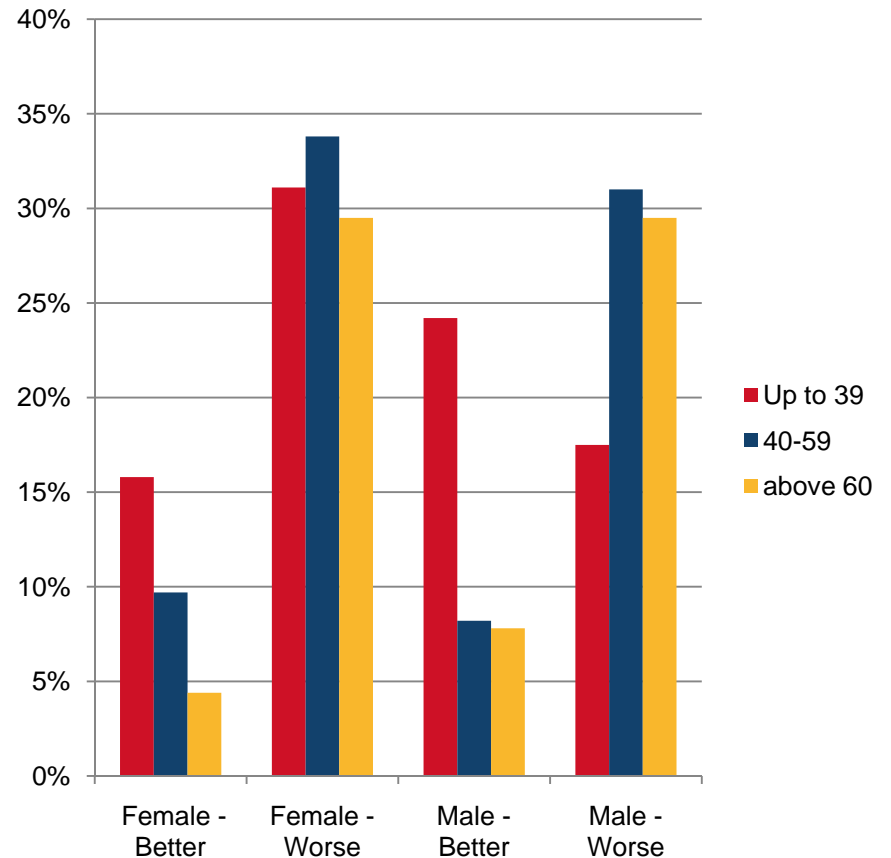
- › **Two questions about baby boomers (better, worse, same):**
 - life-long opportunities for baby boomers (aged 50 to 64 years now) compared to those for younger people today?
 - life-long opportunities for baby boomers compared to those for older people who have already retired?
- › **One question about raising eligibility age for pension:**
 - Support/oppose raising pension age to 67 years

How Treated by Employers

Younger men feel that older workers are treated better by employers

Younger females agree that older workers are not treated as well

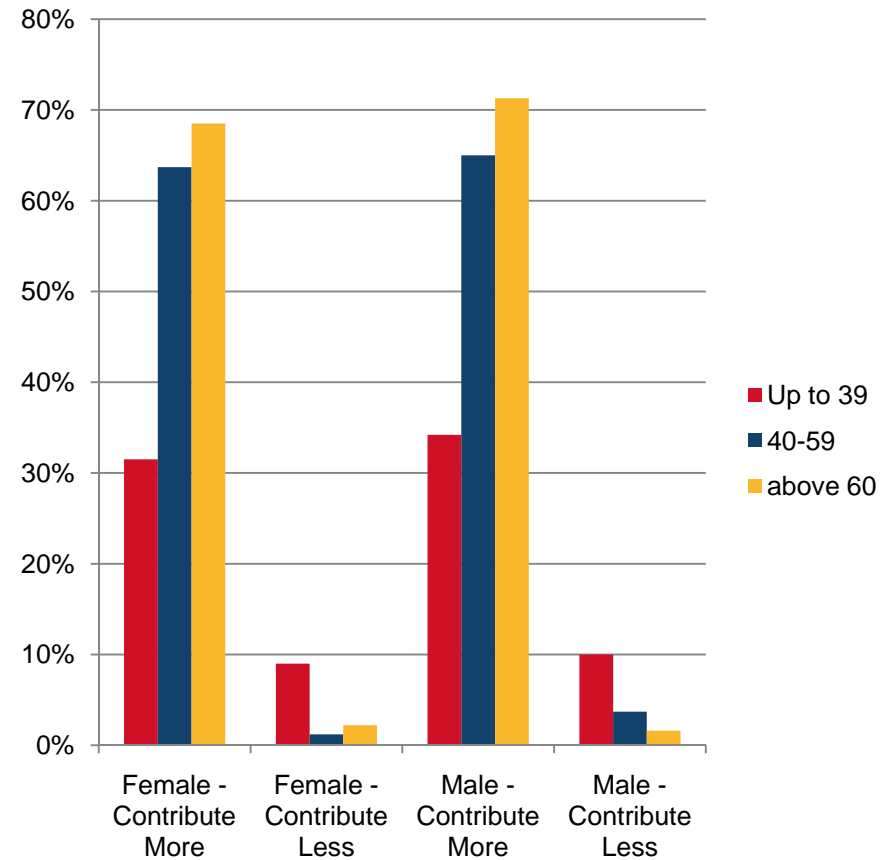
How Treated By Employers



Contribution to the Workplace

Older groups clearly think they contribute more than younger workers

Contribution to Workplace

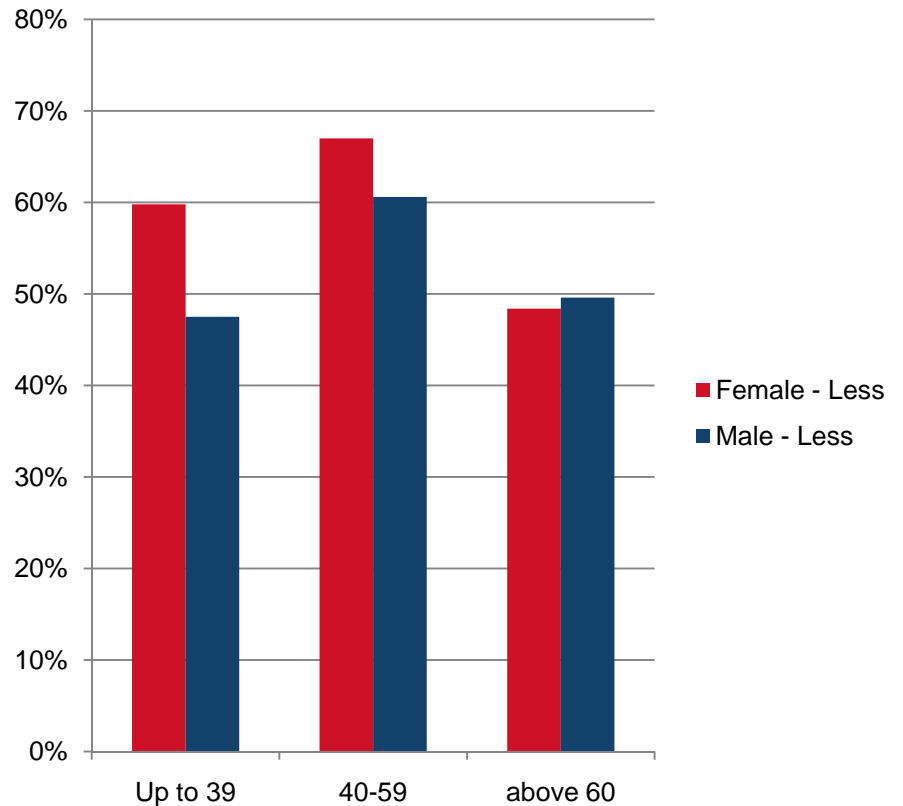


Amount of Government Benefits

Boomer age group think that older people are getting less than their fair share of benefits

Younger females have similar views

Amount of Government Benefits

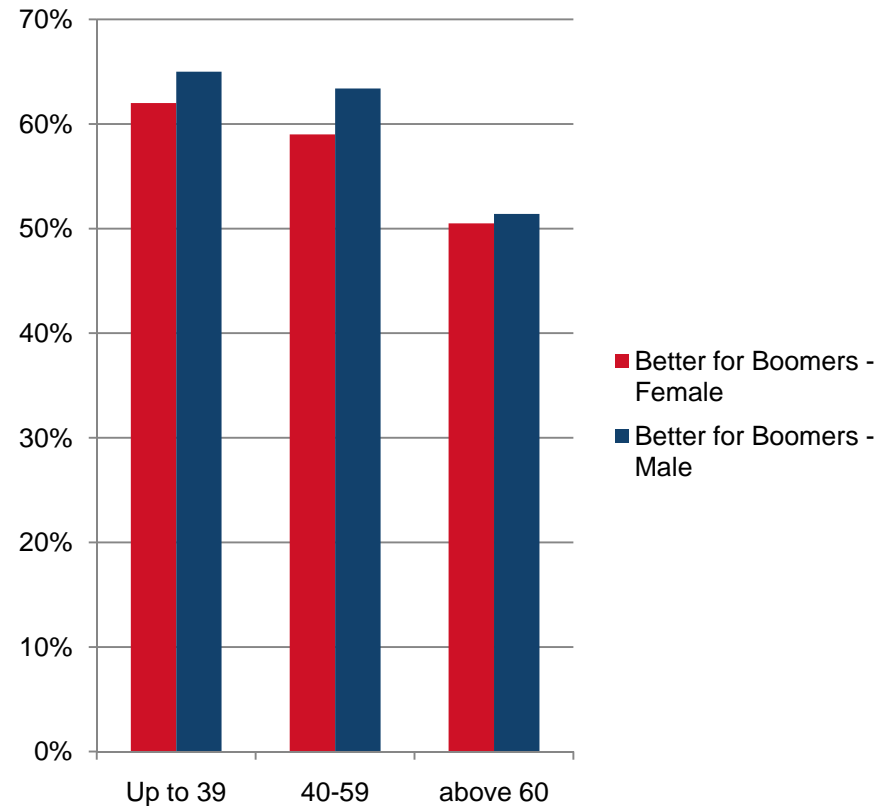


Boomers better off than Retired

All age groups thought that Boomers and Younger had similar opportunities

All age groups thought Boomers better life-long opportunities than Retired

Boomers better off than Retired

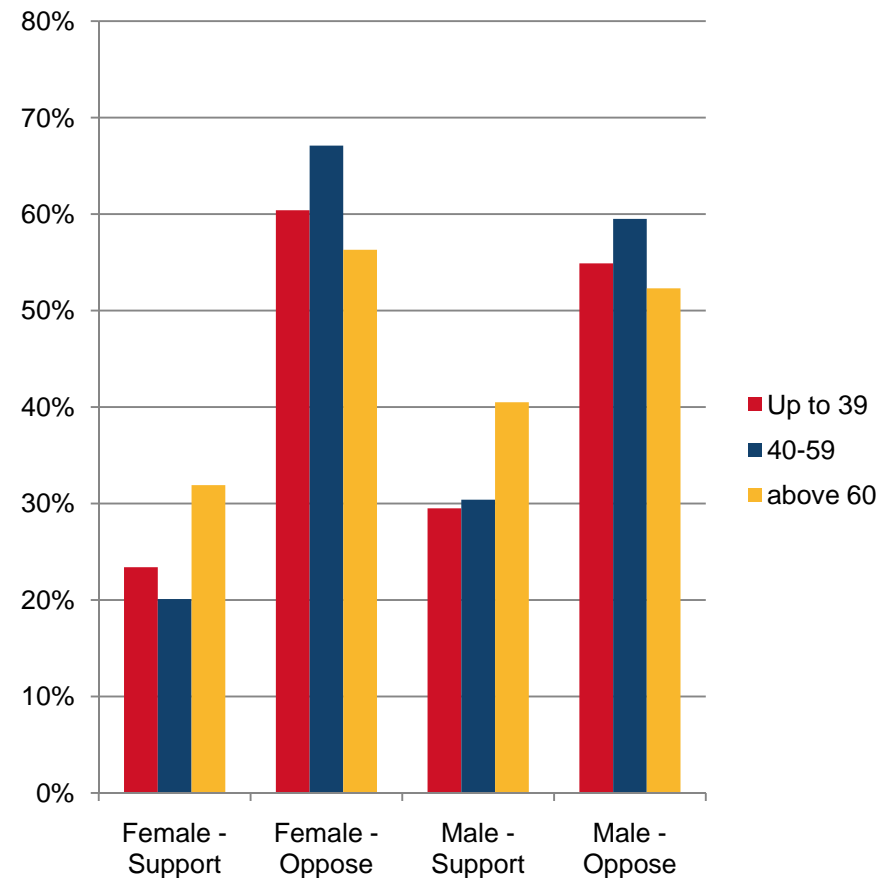


Raising the Pension Age

The Boomer and Younger age groups who would be the most affected, oppose the raising of the eligibility age to 67 years of age

The Older age group who would be unaffected, seem to support such a move

Raising the Pension Age

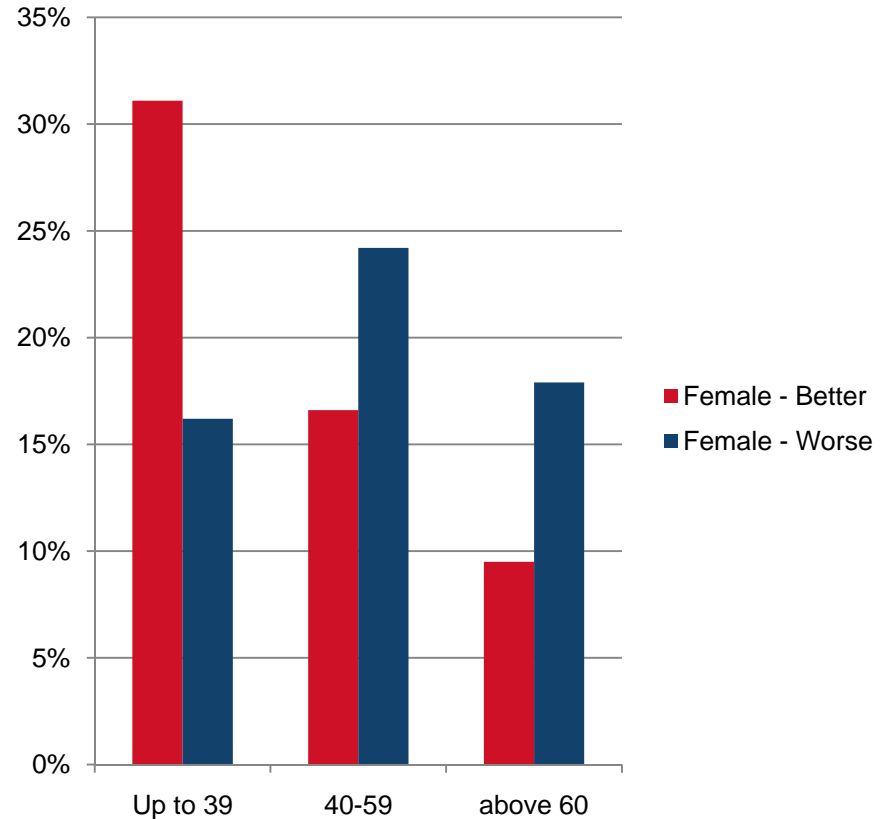


Treatment of Older people by Health Professionals

Younger women perceive that older people are treated better by health professionals

There was no difference in the perceptions of men across the age groups

Treatment by Health Professionals



Other Findings

- › All age groups and both males and females perceived older people to have too little influence and too little respect
- › One fifth of all age groups and gender perceived there to be strong conflict between older and younger people
- › Over half of all age groups and gender perceived there to be not much conflict between older and younger people
- › Younger men and women perceive that strangers treat older people better than younger people

Where to from here?

- Research – multidisciplinary, multi-method approaches, collective action
- › Formation and maintenance of age-related attitudes: socially constructed
 - Personal influences; generational, inter-generational
 - Socio-cultural/structural influences
 - › Interaction of age stereotypes with other stereotypes (sexism, racism)
 - › Participation of older people: attitudes and experiences of ageism in their personal, professional and public life
 - › Public representations of ageist attitudes and practices (government, media)
 - › Partnerships with key stakeholders: government, advocacy and consumer groups
 - › Examine the institutional and policy forces and interests that underlie ageist attitudes