

Fighting Ageism Makes Our Businesses and Communities Stronger

As we approach National Ageism Awareness Day on October 9, conversations about ageism are becoming timelier than ever. While this year's national elections have sparked discussions around age and cognitive abilities, the broader issue of age discrimination extends far beyond politics and into our workplaces and everyday lives.

AARP reports that one in four workers aged 45 and older have encountered ageist remarks at work, and three in five have witnessed or experienced age-related discrimination on the job. However, despite evidence debunking stereotypes about older workers, age discrimination persists.

To combat this, stronger advocacy and innovative thinking are essential to protect older employees and promote workplace inclusivity. ElderSource is a local nonprofit that works in our community to provide resources to support older adults, including those facing age discrimination in their professional and personal lives.

By 2030, one in every three people in our Northeast Florida community will be older than the age of 65, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Ageism is likely to continue growing unless we recognize that older adults have built resilience and strength during their lives through successes, failures, joys, and difficulties. Businesses and communities that recognize and celebrate this are stronger.

While ageism can be subtle and difficult to identify in our daily lives, a recent [survey by the National Center to Reframe Aging](#) showed 81 percent of participants reported witnessing ageism in their workplace. Asked if their company had effective policies to address age discrimination, 52 percent said they were not confident. These numbers show a clear need to create more age-inclusive work environments. Stronger advocacy and new ways of thinking are needed to address illegal age-related discrimination.

Ending such discrimination is not limited to needed workplace changes, it must include individuals reframing our daily thoughts and actions. We can all be better at looking for and recognizing each person's circumstances holistically, and not letting unfair stereotypes affect our perceptions of older adults. That crucial paradigm shift requires conscious effort to recognize our own implicit biases. We can all do things in our daily lives to appreciate and be aware of older adults around us.



Simple things like considering some of the words we use daily can be an important part of the needed change. Rephrase how we identify older adults like not using the term elderly and avoid using stereotypes to define and describe older adults.

Know that as our population ages, our regular daily encounters at grocery stores, banks or on the road can be met with greater understanding and patience. Encourage officials and businesses to adopt age-friendly practices that improve the quality of life for everyone.

Recognize and tout all the benefits offered by older adults. Help neighbors see aging as a strength. Support family caregivers who are often carrying the responsibility of helping loved ones age well.

ElderSource has many resources to help older adults live and age in their homes and community with independence and dignity. This includes battling ageism. Some of the resources we provide can be found on our website at MyElderSource.org. For additional information, call the Helpline at 1-888-242-4464.



Linda Levin is CEO of Jacksonville-based nonprofit ElderSource, celebrating its 50th year as the Area Agency on Aging and Aging and Disability Resource Center for Northeast Florida.