

# Snapshot on Older Workers

149 survey respondents identified as older workers, based on the following criteria: 55 and older has been used as the benchmark for determining which respondents are classified as older workers because Employment Ontario services for older workers (such as the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers) are geared towards individuals between the ages of 55 and 64.

In the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region, the labour participation rate for 55-64 year olds is 2.3% lower than the Ontario average. As worker age increases, most individuals have accumulated more workplace experience and frequently have higher earnings than their younger colleagues. The age of workers and job seekers may also make them vulnerable to discrimination. While there was no mention of discrimination in the survey questions or response choices, comments about age discrimination were frequently mentioned by respondents in this age group, as noted earlier.

According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, “the term ‘ageism’ refers to two concepts: a socially constructed way of thinking about older persons based on negative attitudes and stereotypes about aging, and a tendency to structure society based on an assumption that everyone is young, thereby failing to respond appropriately to the real needs of older persons.” In 2014, *The Globe and Mail* published an article about lawsuits related to age discrimination in Canada in which employment lawyers reported an increase in age-related discrimination cases resulting from the elimination of mandatory retirement and, correspondingly, older workers staying in the workforce longer than before. The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario reported that, of discrimination-related claims in 2012-2013 (the last year for which data is publicly available), 15% were related to age discrimination.

In May 2018, *The Globe and Mail* cited a study in which “roughly 25 percent of employees make judgments about their coworkers’ and supervisors’ abilities to do their job based on their age alone.” Several studies confirm that unfavourable perceptions and beliefs about older workers’ abilities negatively impact their ability to both remain employed and to secure new employment opportunities, as compared to younger workers. In 2016, *Canadian Human Resources Reporter* cited a study suggesting that age discrimination may begin as early as mid-forties.

Despite the positive value older workers bring to the labour market, many feel they have experienced discrimination in the workplace. Widespread research points to age as a potential employment obstacle, particularly for those who find themselves searching for work later in their careers. Labour relations and Canadian law associations have also published on age discrimination, in an effort to educate both employees and employers, and popular news outlets have focused on this issue in recent years.

## Key Findings Compared to Younger and Middle-Aged Workers




- Were the only age cohort to report that “newspaper ads” as a top job seeking method
- As respondents’ age increased, the percentage who reported using their skills in the workplace at least 75% of the time also increased
- Were less likely than younger or middle-aged workers to report that they would prefer a full-time job

## OLDER WORKERS SURVEY RESPONDENTS

**79%**   
ARE EMPLOYED

**21%**   
ARE UNEMPLOYED

**19%**   
hold more than one job

**48%** *would prefer*  
A FULL-TIME JOB

**27%**   
have been  
*looking for*  
**WORK FOR**  
**OVER A YEAR**

**71%** *use their skills*  
**75%+ OF THE TIME**  
in the workplace

**94%** *feel it is*  
**EXTREMELY IMPORTANT/  
SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT**  
to use their skills in the workplace

## Top 3 JOB SEEKING METHODS for respondents who are currently looking for work

### OLDER WORKERS

Online job boards  
Word of mouth  
Newspaper ads



## Top 3 MOST IMPORTANT THINGS when looking for a job

### OLDER WORKERS

Pay or salary  
Hours of work  
Ability to use skills



## Top 3 MOST IMPORTANT THINGS when staying in a job

### OLDER WORKERS

Being treated with respect and dignity  
Feeling role is valued and work is recognized  
Positive relationships with coworkers and supervisors



## Top 3 REASONS INDIVIDUALS QUIT a job within the last year

### OLDER WORKERS

Experienced harassment or bullying  
Had health concerns (including mental health) that required leaving a job  
Found a different job that paid more\*  
Not using skills\*  
No grievance process for addressing concerns in the workplace\*



\*Tied for third most frequent response