



# AGE DISCRIMINATION IN LABOUR MARKET

Based on the results of the 2018  
nationwide survey

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## INTRODUCTION

Age discrimination in the labour market is a serious problem in the whole world and in Estonia as well. Several exhaustive labour surveys have been carried out in Estonia<sup>1</sup> and some of them have shown that younger (15-19-year-old) and older (50+) labour suffer from unequal treatment more frequently.

We organised a representative nationwide survey to find out whether and to what extent age discrimination exists in the Estonian labour market. The survey was technically carried out by the polling firm Norstat Eesti AS at the request of the Estonian Institute for Open Society Research. The survey was financed by the Human Rights Centre and the Estonian Institute for Open Society Research.

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<sup>1</sup> Survey: 34% of job seekers feel age discrimination (Uuring: vanuselist diskrimineerimist tunnetab 34 protsenti tööotsijatest). Manpower, 2017. Estonian labour market today and tomorrow. A survey of the state of Estonia's labour market, need for labour and the resulting need for training. OSKA survey report. (Eesti tööturg täna ja homme. Ülevaade Eesti tööturu olukorrast, tööjõuvajadusest ning sellest tulenevast koolitusvajadusest OSKA uuringuaruanne). Tallinn 2017. Kutsekoda. Masso Märt jt. 2015. Study of subsistence of old and elderly people (Vanemaealiste ja eakate toimetuleku uuring). Praxis. Espenberg Kerly jt. 2012. The elderly in the labour market (Vanemaealised tööturul, Rake). Tartu Ülikool; Leetmaa Reelika jt. 2004. The elderly labour in the labour market and in employment (Vanemaealine tööjõud tööturul ja tööelus). Praxis.

## 1. GOALS OF THE SURVEY

The purpose of the survey was to find answers to the following questions:

- What are the most common attitudes and opinions in Estonia regarding 50+ people as labour?
- How common are in Estonia prejudice and stereotypes regarding elderly labour?
- How common is age discrimination in the labour market in Estonia?
- How frequently do various age groups encounter age discrimination in the labour market and how is it manifested?
- Which collectives are preferred, younger or older, how high is willingness to work in a mixed collective where age has no significance?
- How willing are the respondents to work in a collective with a share of 50+ people 30% or more?

## 2. ON THE ORGANISATION OF THE SURVEY

The concept and methodology of the survey were developed by the Estonian Institute for Open Society Research; the technical organiser of the survey was the company Norstat Eesti AS. The survey was carried out on request of the Estonian Institute for Open Society Research in the period February 28 – March 12, 2018. A self-filled questionnaire in Estonian and Russian was used for the survey. The method of polling used was online poll.

The survey covered 1,000 individuals in the age of 15+. The sample of the survey was selected at random and was representative as to the model of the population. The results of the survey can be interpreted as connections and trends characteristic of Estonia. The gender breakdown of the respondents was 567 women and 433 men. The age breakdown of the respondents was as follows:

Age group	Share of the sample
15-19	2%
20-29	17%
30-39	18%
40-49	17%
50-59	17%
60-74	24%
75+	4%

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Attitude towards elderly labour

A fixed opinion supported by 70% of respondents has developed in Estonia that the elderly (50+) encounter age-related obstacles in the labour market compared with the younger people. Only 13% of respondents believed that there are no obstacles. The opinions coincide also as to age groups; this position is more supported by the 50-74-years-old (75-77%).

**Table 1. Do the elderly (50+) encounter age-related obstacles and limitations in the labour market, which are significantly more serious than difficulties faced by young people?**

	All respondents	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-74	75+
Yes (definitely + mostly)	70	72	68	68	67	75	77	53
No (mostly not + definitely not)	13	5	14	12	18	13	10	8
Unable to answer	17	23	18	21	17	12	14	39

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, 2018

The answers lead to the conclusion that treating the 50+ people in the labour market differently (= worse) than younger ones is considered quite natural. The existence of restrictions and obstacles seems inevitable; it is presumed that 50+ people should be treated that way, since they have reached the critical age where the preferred position in the labour market should be yielded to the younger.

Despite the fact that the existence of limitations and obstacles to the 50+ people in the labour market is considered natural and inevitable,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of respondents believe that working should be continued after reaching retirement age (Table 2).

**Table 2. Do you believe that after reaching retirement age...**

	All respondents	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-74	75+
People should retire and make room in the labour market for the younger	15	28	16	20	14	16	9	18
Should continue working at their post as long as their health permits it	62	39	53	57	62	59	75	71
Could carry on working but at some less demanding post (charwoman, night-watchman, etc.)	10	11	15	10	11	7	10	3
Unable to answer	13	22	17	13	12	18	7	8

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, 2018

In the opinion of 62% people should continue working after reaching retirement age at the same post as long as their health permits; every tenth believes that they should continue working at a less demanding position (charwoman, night-watchman etc.). Every seventh respondent believes that people should make room for the younger after reaching retirement age, the 15-19-years-old support this position the most – 28%. As the respondent's age increases, so does the opinion that they should continue working at the old post after reaching retirement age.

### 3.2. Willingness to work with the elderly in the same collective

We studied in the survey the level of willingness to work together with 50+ people. As a comparison we provided ratings of willingness to cooperate with other so-called rejected target groups (Table 3). Since the question determines the level of tolerance, we divided the ratings in four level of tolerance. High level of tolerance (at least half of respondents are tolerant) applies to 50+ people (75%) and movement-impaired people. Only 2% object to working daily side by side with the elderly and only 8% would not like to see movement-impaired people among their close co-workers.

**Table 3. How would you feel about your close colleagues if they were...?**

	Would not mind at all	Rather not	Do not care
<b>A High tolerance level, above 50%</b>			
50+ people	75	2	23
Movement-impaired people	65	8	27
<b>B Average tolerance level, 30-49%</b>			
Foreign workers from outside the EU	35	31	34
Homosexuals	34	26	40
<b>C Low tolerance level, 15-29 %</b>			
Refugees, immigrants	27	39	34
Ex-prostitutes	26	29	45
HIV-positive, AIDS-infected	15	54	31
<b>D Very low tolerance level, less than 15 %</b>			
Criminal record, ex-convicts	9	64	27
Drug addicts	3	83	14

*Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, 2018*

The average tolerance level (30-49% tolerate) applies to foreign workers from outside the EU and homosexuals. The share of intolerant respondents in this category remains somewhat lower than that of tolerant ones. Other target groups as refugees, former prostitutes, HIV-positives, AIDS-infected, ex-convicts and drug addicts fall into the low or very low tolerance categories with low or almost nonexistent willingness to accept them as co-workers.

It can be concluded that 50+ people are expected into working collectives and enjoy a preferred status when compared with so-called rejected target groups.

Question about the age breakdown of the preferred collective shows that the so-called mixed collective is the most preferred (Table 4).

**Table 4. In which collective would you rather work if you had the choice?**

	All respondents	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-74	75+
I would rather work in a collective of younger people	14	33	32	17	8	6	9	16
I would rather work in a collective of middle-aged and elderly people	18	11	16	14	20	16	22	13
I do not care about the age breakdown of the working collective	61	49	48	64	66	70	61	58
Unable to answer	7	6	3	6	6	8	8	13

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, 2018

More than half of the respondents, 61%, are willing to work in a collective formed of people of different age. Support to a collective of people of different age is above average starting from the age of 30+; the highest support is among the 50-59-year-olds (70%). Among the younger respondents, 15-29 years, every third prefers to work among younger people.

**Table 5. Would you be prepared for having the share of 50+ people in your closest collective reach one third or more?**

	All respondents	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-74	75+
Yes (I am prepared + mostly prepared)	81	72	75	78	88	87	82	56
No (mostly not prepared + definitely not prepared)	4	5	7	6	1	2	2	6
Unable to answer	16	23	17	17	11	12	15	39

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, 2018

The level of preparedness for having the share of 50+ people in one's closest collective reach one third or more is very high; 81% gave the positive answer (Table 5). Although every fourth 15-19-year-old is hesitant,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them are also prepared to work with older colleagues, whose share of the close collective is one third or higher.

### 3.3. Age discrimination

We studied how the elderly are treated at work compared with the younger (Table 6). Approximately one half (45%) estimate that the younger and the older (50+) are treated equally. Every fourth respondent believes that the younger are preferred and only 4% state that their collective prefers the older. 27% are unable to offer an opinion. The answers lead to the conclusion that although approximately half of the respondents work in collectives without age-related discrimination, a critical amount, nearly one third (29%) does perceive age discrimination.

**Table 6. Are the elderly (50+) treated equal to the younger people in your collective?**

	%-s
The younger are preferred in most cases	11
The younger are slightly preferred	13
The younger and the older (50+) are treated as equals	45
The older (50?) are slightly preferred	4
The older (50+) are preferred in most cases	-
Unable to answer	27

*Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, 2018*

We asked whether the respondents had personally experienced groundless unequal treatment and in which circumstances (Table 7).

**Table 7. Have you experienced groundless unequal treatment compared with other workers during the past 12 months?**

	Yes, it has happened	No, it has not happened	Unable to answer
...in work assignments	19	69	12
...in remuneration	16	71	13
...in providing work-related information and opportunities to express opinion	16	72	12
...in the attitude of co-workers or management	16	73	11
...in recognition of performance	15	72	13
...in promotion, career opportunities	10	76	13
...in hiring	8	81	12

*Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, 2018*

It appears that unequal treatment at work is relatively frequent; at least every fifth employee has experienced it within one year. Unequal treatment has been observed most frequently in work assignments as well as the remuneration of work, providing information, attitude of co-workers, the least frequently in hiring and promotion.

We studied the possible causes of unequal treatment and the role of age in it (Table 8).

**Table 8. When you experienced unequal treatment, was it caused by your...**

	Yes	No	Unable to answer
...age	19	66	15
...(personal) relations with manager (managers)	14	70	16
...limited command of Estonian	10	77	13
...disability or long-term health problem	8	78	14
...ethnicity	8	78	13
...gender	5	79	15
...pregnancy / pregnancy of wife or partner	2	85	12

*Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, 2018*

Cause No. 1 which may cause unequal treatment at work is age; every fifth respondent cites it, while 2/3 of respondents have not experienced it. The second important cause cited is



relations with the manager(s). Limited command of Estonian, as well as disability or ethnicity may also serve as causes of unequal treatment. Unequal treatment caused by gender has been experienced less frequently.

Unequal treatment due to age has been experienced the most frequently by 15-19-year-olds (61%), 60-74-year olds with every second respondent having encountered it, as well as 50-59-year-olds, of whom 40% have experienced it.

### 3.4. Stereotypes and prejudice concerning elderly labour<sup>2</sup>

We studied the attitudes concerning stereotypes and prejudice regarding older workers (Table 9.). We asked the respondents to rate two positive and ten negative stereotypes and prejudices.

**Table 9. How do you rate older workers compared with younger, are they in your collective.... Answers to rating “yes”, %**

	All respondents		15-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50-59		60-74		75+	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Positive stereotypes</b>																
more conscientious	67	9	50	33	54	14	58	15	71	8	74	5	76	4	66	3
more loyal to the firm	60	8	33	17	53	12	56	15	63	9	67	4	64	4	60	3
<b>Negative stereotypes</b>																
less used potential	22	42	6	61	19	43	20	45	16	55	24	45	31	32	26	19
less demanding regarding wages, working conditions etc.	42	27	22	45	29	32	38	28	35	34	45	30	57	16	37	18
often have health problems	29	35	11	33	28	34	29	40	30	41	30	40	31	27	27	18
unable to use modern technologies	25	44	27	33	36	38	30	40	26	49	16	55	21	43	13	36
tired, less enduring	25	41	27	22	33	33	25	45	23	49	22	47	21	39	26	24
oppose innovation and changes	24	44	38	11	34	31	35	35	24	47	18	51	13	55	5	39
More pessimistic, have lost joy of working	19	49	16	28	23	43	22	45	18	50	17	55	17	52	13	40
unwilling to learn and develop	16	50	5	55	24	44	21	47	14	53	9	58	13	48	13	35
have lost creative attitude towards their job	14	50	16	28	18	42	23	46	14	57	11	54	10	54	10	43

<sup>2</sup> A **stereotype** is a judgemental, attitude-related and stable intensive generalisation regarding the features, behaviour etc. of some group. Stereotypes mainly support negative attitude. A stereotype is based on imagined properties, simplified and also distorted. A stereotype is formed on random characteristics, which in reality certainly do not apply to all members of given group. A **prejudice** is a stereotypic attitude developed from insufficient information (often mainly second-hand opinions), which is adopted before obtaining direct objective information about the object. This term is primarily used to denote negative preconception.

unsuitable to management	7	49	6	39	8	50	7	47	8	57	6	52	7	47	8	32
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Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, 2018

It appears that stereotypes are quite widespread, positive ones are supported by 60-67% of respondents, negative ones by 7-42%. 27-50% of respondents do not agree with negative stereotypes. Negative stereotypes are more supported by younger people, 15-29-years-old, who believe more frequently that older people oppose innovation and changes, have lost creative attitude towards their job, are incapable of using modern technologies etc.

Stereotypic mindset provides a strong basis and motivation for exclusion and age discrimination of older staff members.

### 3.5. Opinions of personal competitiveness in the labour market

We asked the respondents to rate their competitiveness in the labour market, using their judgement as labour from different viewpoints, including age. The survey results show that age is one of the strongest factors influencing the developments in the labour market. It can be argued that due to ageism labour is divided into closed hierarchic casts.

**Table 10. How do you rate your chances of finding paid job according to your...?**

Answers to options "good" (very good + good) and "bad" (very bad + bad)

	All respondents		15-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50-59		60-74		75+	
	Go od	Ba d	Go od	Ba d	Go od	Ba d	Go od	Ba d	Go od	Ba d	Go od	Ba d	Go od	Ba d	Go od	Ba d
Age	37	33	46	33	84	-	73	2	35	16	8	55	4	72	5	66
Ability to sell yourself as labour	33	21	40	11	50	10	48	11	33	20	23	23	16	34	22	24
Language skills	40	19	62	11	51	10	53	11	36	23	32	20	30	26	26	19
Speciality, qualification	46	15	34	38	58	9	54	12	48	15	40	16	37	18	46	7
State of health	54	14	78	6	78	1	76	5	57	9	41	17	31	26	21	42
Education	47	11	34	16	62	4	50	11	45	13	43	11	40	16	45	8
Work experience	58	9	24	38	50	14	62	8	68	7	62	7	53	10	71	3
Communication skills	62	5	56	6	71	3	68	4	67	5	58	6	54	4	53	3

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, 2018

Age serves as the greatest advantage in the labour market for 20-39-year-olds, of whom 73-84% believe that their age grants them a very strong advantage in finding a good job.

20-39-year-olds perceive age advantage in the labour market and rate their chances of finding a good job due to their age as good or very good:

1. 20-29-year-olds - 84%

## 2. 30-39-year-olds - 73%

People, who have reached the so-called critical age group perceive strong ageism and rate their chances of finding a good job in relation to their age rather as bad or very bad:

1. 60-74-year-olds - 72%
2. 75+ -year-olds - 66%
3. 50-59-year-olds - 55%
4. 15-19-year-olds - 33%

Based on the survey we can observe that the 40<sup>th</sup> year of age marks the beginning of the “down staircase” towards excluded labour; that people already perceive their critical age and only every third believes that their age grants them an advantage in the labour market.

Age serves as an obstacle to every third 15-19-years-old, every second 50-59-years-old and to ¾ of 60+ people.

Table 11 lists two major advantages and disadvantages of every age group regarding their rating of their chances in the labour market

**Table 11. Ratings of competitiveness in the labour market: biggest advantages and disadvantages**

	<b>Two biggest advantages in labour market</b>	<b>Two biggest disadvantages in labour market</b>
15-19	Health - 78% Foreign languages - 62%	Work experience - 38% <b>Age - 33%</b>
20-29	<b>Age - 84%</b> Health - 78%	Work experience - 14% Ability to sell one's labour - 10%
30-39	Health - 76% <b>Age - 73%</b>	Ability to sell one's labour - 11% Foreign languages - 11 %
40-49	Work experience - 68% Communicating skill - 67%	Foreign languages - 23% Ability to sell one's labour - 20% <b>Age - 16%</b>
50-59	Work experience - 62% Communicating skill - 58%	<b>Age - 55%</b> Ability to sell one's labour - 23%
60-74	Work experience - 53% Communicating skill - 54%	<b>Age - 72%</b> Ability to sell one's labour - 32%
75+	Work experience - 71% Communicating skill - 53%	<b>Age - 66%</b> Health - 42%

*Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, 2018*

The advantages of the so-called excluded groups (from 40+) like work experience and communicating skills are less significant in the respondents' opinion and cannot compensate for the influential factor of age. A disadvantage of 60+ labour is also health, which 26-42% rate as an obstructive factor in finding employment (see Table 10 and 11).

## 4. CONCLUSIONS OF THE SURVEY

At first sight, the facts revealed by the survey may lead to the conclusion that Estonia is quite tolerant towards older labour and there is no extensive discrimination or unequal treatment. This is supported by the following figures:

- ¾ of respondents believe that people should continue working after retirement age;
- 61% of respondents are willing to work in a collective joining people of different age;
- 75% are willing to work closely with 50+ people;
- 81% are prepared to have the share of 50+ people among their closest co-workers reach one third or more;
- Approximately half (45%) state that younger and older (50+) people are treated as equals in their collective.

The figures cited above are positive and show that Estonia has overcome the active exclusion of the elderly in the labour market, which has last for a long time and has been characterised by the idea that people in retirement age should certainly retire and create vacancy for the younger.

Exclusion has been replaced by tolerance, which is, however, quite superficial, neutral and indifferent rather than empathic and understanding. Strong ageism dominates the labour market and divides labour into a hierarchy. 20-39-years-old feel very secure, the other age groups are more or less excluded from the labour market and employers' viewpoint:

- 15-19-years-old – excluded group, since they are too young and inexperienced
- 20-39-years-old – best working age
- 40-49-years-old – past their best working age, competitiveness declining
- 50-59-years-old – have reached critical age, low competitiveness
- 60-74-years-old – too old for labour market, very low competitiveness, have to accept the worst jobs and low wages.

Strong ageism is further confirmed by the fact revealed by the survey that the respondents consider quite natural that 50+ people are treated differently (=worse) in the labour market than the younger. The existence of restrictions and obstacles seems a social norm and inevitable; it is presumed that 50+ people should be treated that way, since they have reached critical age where preferred position in the labour market should be yielded to younger ones.

Estonia lacks knowledge-based information about elderly labour, knowledge can frequently be replaced by stereotypes, which are sometimes quite discriminating and humiliating. The

survey shows that many respondents, especially younger, believe negative stereotypes and, without having any proof, are certain that the elderly oppose innovation and changes, have lost creative approach to their job, are incapable of using modern technologies etc.

As the survey shows, negative stereotypes create a strong motivational basis for the exclusion of the elderly and discrimination against them. Stereotypes also have a negative effect on the competitiveness of the elderly, making them question their ability, skills and eventually can completely demolish one's self-esteem.

Estonia still has a long way to go before valuing the elderly and treating them as equals. It is difficult to predict how long can take the relaxing of negative stereotypes and when the elderly will be treated as equal members of the society, who have the same right to proper (working) life as 20-39-years-old.

Although including the elderly labour is inevitable and many countries are addressing it, progress is quite slow in this respect and requires overcoming many barriers. Above all, it presumes a radical change of mindset.

## 5. EXPLANATION – WHY ARE THE ELDERLY EXCLUDED?

The reason of excluding 40+ people in the labour market is the **ageism**. **Ageism** is one of the most widespread forms of discrimination among others forms like gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation and religious convictions. Systematic studies of ageism began in the 1950s-60s. The first to recommend the introduction of the term “ageism” was the US sociologist R. N. Butler, the director of the National Institute on Aging, in 1969. *Ageism* means negative, prejudiced attitudes, which are based on age – unjustified overestimation of the young and undervaluing of the elderly (discrimination against them).

Researchers have actually observed that the more civilised a society, the higher is its level of ageism and the stronger are the stereotypes.<sup>3</sup> This is caused by the fact that the real cause of negative attitude – competition – cannot be influenced. Incessant competition as an active form of self-assertion and demonstration of superiority is hard-wired into the society; it is one of the basic values. A market economic society is largely built on the winner-loser logic, which essentially means that success belongs to the strong, those able to dominate and assert themselves.

Modern Western societies are mainly shaped by imperatives of economic success, where productivity and profitability hold the central position. Economic growth is of paramount importance, everything else is subordinated to it. Both ends of the life cycle – children and the elderly – are economically unproductive. People between children and the elderly have to take care for both. But according to this mindset it is more rational to invest in children, since they, unlike the elderly, contain future economic potential.

<sup>3</sup> Pasupathi M., Lockenhoff C. Ageist behavior//In T. D. Nelson (Ed.) , 2002. Ageism: Stereotyping and prejudice against older persons.

The elderly are viewed as second-rate individuals, who are unable to contribute to the society. The negative attitude on which ageism rests, is expressed in multiple forms in the life of every older person. Negative attitude towards the elderly also influences the attitudes and beliefs that the welfare of the old is less important than the welfare of the young.

Studies show that compared with the young and the old, the most discriminatory group are the 20-40-years-old – the so-called adult group<sup>4</sup> - and especially men in that age group.<sup>5</sup>

## 6. WHY DO THE ELDERLY SUBJECT TO EXCLUSION AND BREAK?

The most important factor forcing people to leave work is not biological but social aging. Although there is no conspiracy against the elderly, social mindset, organisational policies and scientific opinions combine to form a force, which exerts pressure on people to terminate their career at a certain moment. A person can perceive the strength of these forces directly and indirectly, it is conveyed by the attitude of others and the practice of the employers.<sup>6</sup>

A person finds himself/herself in a psychological vicious circle, which was first described by B. Rosen and T. H. Jerclec<sup>7</sup>, and which has been described as “self-fulfilling prophecy”.<sup>8</sup> A person, who has passed the critical age limit (50+) ends up in a psychological vicious circle or a “cycle of self-fulfilling prophecy”. One feels the negative attitude of the society because of having reached the age group, which is not considered productive and valuable, unworthy of investment (e.g. in the form of additional training), whose career opportunities at work are cut off. Thus the cycle of “self-fulfilling prophecy” is started. Since the employer and the society as a whole no longer believe on the working ability of a person in critical age, the person also loses faith in himself/herself sooner or later.

One knows that a working person cannot be old and accepts the new identity assigned by ageism. This has a highly negative effect on the self-esteem of the elderly and is the main cause of their passivity. A person encountering ageism first loses his position in the labour market, retires or accepts some second-rate and lowly-paid job. Since the income declines steeply, it is followed by a loss of economic independence and standard of consumption, which in turn leads to dependence on other people. The breaking occurs at the point where a person accepts the status of a dependent, the behaviour as well as the role. This essentially

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<sup>4</sup> Kite M.E., Stockdale G. D., Whitley Jr. B.E., Johnson B.T., 2005. Attitudes toward younger and older adults: an updated meta-analytic review // *Journal of Social Issues*. Vol. 61, No. 2, pp. 241-266

<sup>5</sup> Fraboni M., Saltstone R., Hughes S. The Fraboni Scale of Ageism (FSA), 1990. An attempt at a more precise measure of ageism // *Canadian Journal on Aging*. Vol. 9, pp. 56-66;

<sup>6</sup> Greller, and L. K. Stroh, 2002. Variations in Human Capital Investment Activity by Age. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61, 109-188.

<sup>7</sup> Rosen B., Jerclec T.H., 1976a. The Influence of Age Stereotypes on Managerial Decisions // *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Vol. 61, No. 4, pp.128-132

<sup>8</sup> Kuypers J.A., Bengston V.L., 1984. Perspectives of older family // *Independent ageing* / Quinn W.H., Hugston G.A. (ed.). Rockville: Aspen Publications, pp. 3-19

means a whole new identity where the earlier abilities, skills and self-confidence have disappeared. A person is helpless and can no longer surface on one's own.

However, not all elderly are broken by ageism. Two criteria are important when reaching retirement age – whether a person can carry on working or loses one's job. Secondly, the values towards which the activity is directed. Independent and active people are better able to adjust. Constructive people (a small minority) can, despite negative stereotypes, retain high self-esteem and positive attitude to life in older age. A constructive individual has been generally successful in life, they had a happy childhood, successful marriage, stable working life and were free of financial problems. When aging they can retain a wide circle of interests, active social life, they have ideas and new creative strategies of action. Psychologically and emotionally balanced, energetic, independent and self-supporting people are critical of all kinds of social stereotypes and public opinion.

The unconstructive (a majority) cannot handle the new identity. Typical are inability to adjust, isolation, discontent, decline of self-esteem and sense of usefulness, contraction of the circle of interests, increase of egoism, decline of emotional self-control, exaggeration of some traits of character, concentration of interests in oneself, inability to control one's behaviour, decline of sensitivity, the world seems confusing and unpredictable.

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