

Portfolio summary: Age discrimination

What is the issue?

Too many older Victorians experience unfair treatment because of their age. Age discrimination limits people's ability to participate fully in employment, education, services, housing, volunteering, community life and decision-making.

Age discrimination can occur across business, government and community settings, including healthcare, banking, insurance, telecommunications, housing and employment. It may involve direct unfair treatment, exclusion, or systems and practices that disadvantage people because of their age.

Age discrimination is driven by ageism, which can include harmful assumptions, stereotypes, and attitudes about ageing and older people. It often overlaps with other forms of discrimination and disadvantage, including those related to disability, gender, race, sexuality and socio-economic status.

Despite growing awareness of ageism, age discrimination remains widespread and underreported. Many people face significant barriers to making complaints or achieving fair outcomes when discrimination occurs.

Key facts

- A COTA Australia survey (2021) found 37% of older Australians reported having experienced age discrimination - 70% in employment and 30% in goods and services.
- A National Seniors Australia survey (2024) found 40% had experienced age discrimination, particularly in access to goods and services, financial products, housing, volunteering, and driving.
- An Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey in 2022 found that people over 65 accounted for 18% of those experiencing disability discrimination, mainly involving services and employment.
- In 2023–24, the AHRC received 181 formal complaints relating to alleged age discrimination, just over half related to employment issues (55%) and a third to provision of goods and services (31%).
- Over the five years from July 2020, the VHREOC received 416 age-related complaints - 53% about employment, 36% goods and services, and 15% other settings.

Our advocacy agenda

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria advocates for a community where older people are treated fairly, respectfully and equitably in all areas of public life.

We advocate for:

- stronger recognition of age discrimination across policy, legal and regulatory systems;
- greater public awareness of ageism and its impacts;
- improved research and data collection on the prevalence and impacts of age discrimination;
- accessible advice, advocacy and legal support for older people experiencing discrimination;
- stronger organisational accountability and prevention measures across key sectors; and,
- reforms that better address discrimination occurring across multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage.

Our advocacy focuses particularly on age discrimination in employment, healthcare, housing, financial services and consumer settings.

Recent COTA Victoria documents

Recent examples of COTA Victoria's work on age discrimination include:

- [Briefing paper on age discrimination in Victoria](#) (October 2025)
- [Briefing paper on age discrimination in employment in Victoria](#) (April 2026)

Current ongoing COTA Victoria and SRV activities in relation to this topic include our [Beyond Age campaign](#) which addresses ageist attitudes and beliefs.

In addition to the recent briefing papers, we are undertaking a consultation process with leading statutory and peak bodies in relation to further advocacy and action priorities on age discrimination in the workforce. We are also pursuing various aspects of age discrimination as part of work on other policy topics including emergency response, digital inclusion, energy, and driving in older age.

Feedback on any issue raised in this briefing can be provided through our policy advocacy survey tool accessible at: [COTA Victoria Policy Advocacy - Feedback on Publications – Fill out form](#).

Last updated: June 2026