

# Perceptions of Older Workers

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A growing number of older adults find themselves looking for employment. Despite age discrimination laws, misperceptions regarding aging and older adults continue. Compiled studies, gathered from 1960-2010, suggests that these perceptions include both positive and negative assumptions. Each study had to include a comparison with older and younger workers, measure a relevant workplace outcome; and, include data for researchers to incorporate it with the other studies.

According to the authors, this meta-analysis uses an improved statistical method and looks at particular outcomes. As a result, the authors were able to examine whether age could have an effect on five separate workplace outcomes:

- potential for advancement,
- suitability for a particular job,
- workplace performance,
- interpersonal skills, and
- reliability.

Older workers were viewed negatively in four domains:

- potential for job advancement,
- suitability to be selected for any given job,
- general evaluations, and
- communication skills.

And positively in this area:

- reliability

The authors support their findings with the argument that cognitive biases brought to a given situation influence judgment and behavior. The authors outline several trends and changes within the labor market that will make cognitive age biases particularly relevant. For example, an increase in contract employment, flexible scheduling, and telecommuting translates to less interpersonal work contact. The authors also state that as the workforce ages, managers and trainers will need to look at judgment capabilities, gained from years of experience as a positive for employment. The emerging workforce will have to 'learn' judgment skills as they gain not only technical expertise, but personal engagement skills as well. Additionally, the exiting Boomer mind trust will impact all industries, compelling them to offer contract work for older workers.