

Ageing and Employment Prospects: The Case of Slovenian Unemployed Workers¹

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Abstract: *The paper analyzes the perceptions of older unemployed in Slovenian labour market. The empirical results are based on a survey, which was conducted in April 2009. The results show that even 52 % of older unemployed workers believe that they have been victims of age discrimination. They believe that age is a disadvantage when seeking work. The consequences of perceived discrimination are most often that the individuals do not apply for a job, because they feel that they would not be chosen, a highly undesirable result in an ageing population. The analysis is one of the few of its kind in the region. It also offers important policy conclusions and potential for future research.*

Keywords: *age discrimination, unemployed, demographic change, empirical analysis*

1. Introduction

Sargeant (2006) claims that age defines numerous aspects of our everyday lives: the right to drive, to vote, to marry, to retire, to use public transport for free, to have children, to take on a leading post in a company and many other. Some age limits are very clearly defined by law, others exist as a norm, an accepted standard, something considered as 'normal'. Therefore, as Sargeant (2006) says, the society at large constantly judges, whether someone is old, too old, or just old enough to do something.

When discussing age discrimination, it is important to distinguish ageism and age discrimination. Ageism is considered as attributing some general qualities that are understood as characteristic of older to a specific individual. Discrimination based on age, on the other hand, refers to the use of such generalizations as decision-making tools in employment process, promotion, additional on-the-job training and other. But ageism as such is closely related to discrimination (Macnicol, 2006).

Age discrimination and ageism (stereotyping) are especially problematic in the labour market. Many studies and data (discussed later on) report of the problems of older employed and unemployed in the labour market. Those employed have less chances of getting promoted, get less opportunities to receive additional training. They are perceived as a less productive, but expensive burden (OECD, 2006, pp. 63-64). Those unemployed on the other hand are less likely to find a job, have higher chance of becoming long-term unemployed; they feel discouraged and are prone to leaving the labour market as soon as possible (Age counts, 2009, Johnson and Park, 2011, Johnson, 2009).

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The problem of old age discrimination in Europe is especially fierce in view of the demographic change. By 2060 European population (EU27) will change significantly in size and structure. Those, aged 65 or more, will represent 30 % of total population compared to 'just' 17.1 % in 2008. Dependency ratios are expected to deteriorate dramatically. By 2060 the ratio between old and those aged 15 to 64 will be 1 to 2. In 2008 four people aged 15 to 64 lived for every person aged 65 or more (Eurostat, 2011). Changing demographics is feared to have a detrimental impact on economic growth due to lack of (productive) workers (e.g. Prskawetz et al., 2008). But, at the moment the employment of older people is far from desirable Stockholm and Barcelona targets. In view of coming change, such a situation seems unreasonable and should be analyzed.

Partially, the low employment of older workers can be explained also by (perceived) discrimination. We believe that ageism as a tool for discrimination in the labour market is not specific just for the employers. The unemployed also perceive themselves partially as society does. As old. And feel thus more discouraged, which contributes to their comparatively poor position on the labour market.

The aim of the paper is to analyze the perceptions of older unemployed in comparison with the younger in the labour market in Slovenia about the importance of age. Our main hypothesis is that the old are much more pessimistic than the rest (the younger²) about their situation, which is reflected also in the consequences of (perceived) discrimination and their actions to improve their situation. The analysis is based on survey results, conducted in April 2009.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, we discuss the problem of ageism and age discrimination and the problem of age discrimination in the context of the demographic change, then we provide a brief analysis of causes of discrimination, followed by the analysis of the perceptions of age discrimination among Slovenian unemployed.

The paper makes several contributions to the existing literature. It is to the best of our knowledge one of the few empirical analyses of such kind among the unemployed in the region, adding to the understanding of the perception of discrimination in the discriminated group itself and allowing the study of its consequences in the region. The analysis is relevant also because of its policy implications. The results also show the differences between the two groups in the labour market: old and young, allowing the interested institutions to make educated and differentiated policy proposals.

2. Age discrimination in the context of demographic change

European future is one of demographic ageing (Eurostat, 2011). Current situation in the labour market, problems in employing older workers along with the attitudes towards older could be detrimental to future economic success. Primarily because ageing directly impacts the availability of human capital and also indirectly by impacting the supply.

2.1 Definition of age discrimination

Discrimination is a social phenomenon, leading to less favourable treatment of individuals because of their sex, nationality, skin colour, age, religion and other factors. Although discrimination is forbidden in many countries, it is nonetheless present and can significantly impact the relative position and self-confidence of an individual. Age discrimination is just one aspect of discrimination (Discrimination in the EU, 2009, Equality and human rights commission, 2011).

According to the International Longevity Centre (2009) Robert N. Butler coined the term 'ageism' in 1968. Since then, the term has been widely used, but, as 'isms' usually do, it continues to denote something negative. According to Traxler (1980, 4, in Woolf, 1998) ageism is 'any attitude, action, or institutional

² Throughout the text we use 'old' and 'young(er)'. We use 'old' to capture those aged above 49 years of age. The rest are referred to as young(er). 49 years is also the delimiting age normally used in the literature and statistical tables (for example, see Eurostat).

structure which subordinates a person or group because of age or any assignment of roles in society purely on the basis of age'. Several other definitions relate the problem of stereotyping the older population. Ageism is less acknowledged than racism or sexism, but it is nonetheless a harmful prejudice resulting in widespread mistreatment, such as stereotypic, even degrading media images, physical and financial abuse, unequal treatment in the labour market, lack of appropriate medical care and services and other (Promoting active ageing – capitalising on older people's working potential, 2010).

Although ageism is not itself already age discrimination, it does serve as a foundation for it. According to Macnicol (2006) ageism is stereotyping, an attribution of generally perceived qualities to an individual without any solid base. Age discrimination is the use of these generalizations to make decisions about an individual. In case of the labour market, ageism or stereotyping of older is used to decide whether to employ, to promote, to provide extra training or education, to sack etc. Buesch et al. (2004) define age discrimination as fewer opportunities for older workers, which are not a result of lower productivity.

Data also show that discrimination is something to worry about, even if it is banned by law (see Ellis, 2005 on EU anti-discrimination law) and very clear guidelines on how to solve potentially questionable situations (e.g. dress codes, pregnancy, etc.) are prepared (for example see British Equality and human rights commission, 2010). Public opinion polls conducted by Eurobarometer (for example Discrimination in the EU 2007 and 2009) show that a large share of Europeans believe that discrimination based on age is widespread (46% in 2007, 58% in 2009). In 2009 Hungary was at the top with 79 % of respondents saying that age discrimination is widespread in their country, followed by citizens of the Czech Republic (74 %), France (68 %), Latvia (67 %) and The Netherlands (66 %). Slovenia is with 52 % ranked 19th. Age is also perceived by Europeans as an important disadvantage when seeking employment. In 2007 49% of respondents saw age as a disadvantage if companies had two equally qualified and skilled choices (a tie with disability). Interestingly, lookism won with 51%. In 2009 age discrimination was considered to be widespread by 58%. And people believed that financial crisis would actually increase discrimination, primarily based on age (64% of people), followed by ethnic origin (57%) and disability (56%).

2.2 Age and employment in the EU

Age is obviously perceived as disadvantage in public opinion polls. Unfortunately, employment data do not oppose this (we are not claiming any causality at this moment). The employment rate and activity rate of older population are lower than the averages in both Slovenia and EU and the rate of long-term unemployment among older is higher than among younger (Eurostat, 2011). What do these data imply for an ageing society?

By 2060 European population (EU27) will change significantly in both size and structure. Median age is expected to rise from 40.4 years (2008) to 47.9 years (2060). Those, aged 65 or more, will represent 30 % of total population compared to 'just' 17.1 % in 2008. Dependency ratios are expected to deteriorate dramatically. By 2060 the ratio between old (65+) and those aged between 15 and 64 will be 1 to 2. In 2008 four people aged 15 to 64 lived for every person aged 65 or more (Eurostat, 2011). This will increase the pressure on social welfare networks.

Ageing will affect macroeconomic performance and long term growth (Prskawetz et al., 2008), especially due to the changes in the labour force, which is still the most important production factor. The size and structure of the labour force will change. Domadenik et al. (2008) calculate that by 2040 the share of the workforce aged 50 or more in the total working age population (15-64) in Slovenia will reach 37 %, compared to roughly 27 % in 2005. Similar trends are also noticeable in other EU economies (Perlitz et al., 2010). In order to maintain macroeconomic dynamics, it is very important to ensure the participation of those aged 50 or more in the labour market.

Momentarily, the situation is rather grim. The EU Stockholm and Lisbon strategies' goals stress that the employment of those aged 55 to 65 should increase to 50 % by 2010 (Stockholm target) and that the

retirement is expected to be delayed by 5 years (Barcelona target) (Report requested by Stockholm European Council: "Increasing labour force participation and promoting active ageing", 2002). But Eurostat (2011) data show that both in the EU and in Slovenia, the retirement age has been increasing very slowly, from 2001 till 2009 it increased by roughly a year in the EU-27 (from 59.9 to 61.4) and for about 3 years in Slovenia (from 56.6 in 2002 to 59.8 in 2006, the data for 2001, 2007-2009 were not available for Slovenia).

The employment rates of older workers (55 to 64 years) in the EU and in Slovenia are with the overall employment rate of 46.3 years in the EU in 2010 and 35.0 % for Slovenia also below the desired targets. Employment rates for men are with 54.6 % in 2010 above the 50 % target in the EU on average, but Slovenia lags well behind with 44.5 %. The problem is even deeper among women with only 38.6 % employment in the EU and very low 24.5 % in Slovenia. Although the situation has been generally improving since 1999 both in the EU and in Slovenia, the data is still worrying (Eurostat, 2011).

The unemployment data are also very unfavourable for the older workers. The older represent slightly less than a third of total number of unemployed since 2000 on (Table 1). But there are differences within this group: while the share of those aged 50-59 remained relatively stable between 2000 and 2009, the number of those aged 60 or more increased by 72% (Data: Employment service of Slovenia, 2010).

Table 1. Structural characteristics of registered unemployment in Slovenia: endangered groups in % of total unemployed, 2000-2010

Year	Average number of registered unemployed	26 years old or less	First time job seekers	Women	Long term unemployed	No formal education	50 +	Disabled
2000	106,601	23.4	17.9	50.7	62.9	47.2	27.5	16.1
2001	101,857	24.1	18.8	50.8	58.9	47.0	27.0	18.3
2002	102,635	24.0	19.6	51.2	54.4	47.0	25.4	18.3
2003	97,674	26.1	23.2	52.8	48.6	44.2	21.4	10.7
2004	92,826	26.2	25.2	53.1	46.2	41.6	21.0	9.2
2005	91,889	24.2	24.3	53.8	47.3	40.8	22.7	9.9
2006	85,836	21.2	22.3	54.8	48.8	39.3	25.4	10.9
2007	71,336	16.7	19.4	54.9	51.2	39.3	31.1	13.8
2008	63,216	14.4	16.9	52.8	51.1	40.1	30.6	16.8
2009	86,354	15.4	14.3	49.1	36.5	39.4	30.3	14.1
Dec. 2010	110,021	16.5	14.6	50.9	39.4	36.3	30.0	17.3

Data: Employment service of Slovenia, 2010-2012.

Older are also much more endangered to become long term unemployed. The data for the duration of unemployment between 2001 and 2010 shows that on average, the duration of unemployment was decreasing in this period, and fell by approximately 1 year from 2 years 7 months to 1 year and 8 months in 2010. But the duration of unemployment depended on age. Already the 40-50 year-olds could expect to stay unemployed longer, only by 3 months in 2010, but the difference increases with age. Those aged between 50 and 60 stayed unemployed longer by about 9 months in 2010, while those aged 60 or more by a year and 3 months longer. The difference is systematic, very obvious both in men and women. Data definitely confirm the unfavourable position of older workers in the labour market in Slovenia (Table 2).

Table 2. Unemployment duration by age between 2010 and 2010 (May)*

Year	Total	Up to 18	Over 18 to 25	Over 25 to 30	Over 30 to 40	Over 40 to 50	Over 50 to 60	Over 60
All								
2001	2y 7m 6d	0y 5m 27d	0y 10m 14d	1y 6m 1d	2y 4m 26d	3y 4m 21d	3y 11m 11d	6y 2m 5d
2002	2y 4m 11d	0y 6m 30d	0y 10m 18d	1y 5m 0d	2y 2m 13d	3y 0m 15d	3y 8m 8d	5y 6m 20d
2003	1y 10m 22d	0y 5m 1d	0y 9m 22d	1y 3m 15d	1y 11m 26d	2y 5m 29d	2y 9m 10	3y 10m 7d
2004	1y 9m 8d	0y 5m 3d	0y 9m 0d	1y 2m 10d	1y 10m 5d	2y 5m 6d	2y 6m 20d	3y 4m 12d
2005	1y 10m 21d	5m 16d	9m 10d	1y 3m 4d	2y 0m 4d	2y 7m 2d	2y 7m 15d	3y 4m 11d
2006	2y 0m 16d	5m 28d	9m 16d	1y 2m 17d	2y 1m 13d	2y 9m 7d	2y 8m 0d	3y 1m 28d
2007	2y 2m 2d	5m 15d	7m 19d	1y 1m 19d	2y 1m 25d	2y 11m 23d	2y 9m 4d	3y 4m 15d
2008	2y 0m 25d	4m 16d	6m 3d	11m 3d	1y 9m 26d	2y 8m 25d	2y 10m 8d	3y 5m 21d
2009	1y 6m 25d	4m 27d	6m 14d	9m 13d	1y 3m 23d	1y 11m 20d	2y 3m 3d	2y 11m 11d
2010	1y 7m 27d	6m 19d	8m 14d	10m 12d	1y 4m 11d	2y 0m 23d	2y 3m 10d	2y 10m 27d
Women								
2001	2y 6m 2d	0y 6m 9d	0y 11m 20d	1y 7m 20d	2y 6m 16d	3y 3m 29d	3y 9m 0d	6y 3m 16d
2002	2y 3m 23d	0y 7m 28d	0y 11m 21d	1y 6m 13d	2y 4m 5d	3y 0m 0d	3y 8m 12d	5y 7m 10d
2003	1y 11m 15d	0y 5m 18d	0y 11m 0d	1y 4m 21d	2y 1m 27d	2y 6m 22d	2y 11m 5d	3y 9m 6d
2004	1y 9m 26d	0y 5m 18d	0y 10m 3d	1y 3m 7d	1y 11m 22d	2y 6m 1d	2y 8m 3d	3y 8m 25d
2005	1y 11m 6d	6m 8d	10m 14d	1y 3m 25d	2y 1m 7d	2y 8m 0d	2y 8m 6d	4y 2m 11d
2006	2y 0m 25d	6m 20d	10m 11d	1y 2m 16d	2y 2m 9d	2y 9m 26d	2y 9m 20d	4y 0m 7d
2007	2y 2m 8d	6m 0d	8m 6d	1y 1m 13d	2y 2m 27d	3y 1m 10d	2y 10m 3d	4y 11m 25d
2008	2y 1m 17d	6m 12d	6m 25d	11m 7d	1y 10m 26d	2y 11m 2d	3y 0m 19d	5y 2m 4d
2009	1y 8m 3d	5m 25d	7m 4d	9m 22d	1y 4m 23d	2y 2m 1d	2y 6m 2d	4y 10m 18d
2010	1y 9m 6d	6m 28d	8m 27d	10m 18d	1y 5m 12d	2y 3m 9d	2y 6m 8d	4y 3m 29d
Men								
2001	2y 8m 11d	0y 5m 18d	0y 9m 4d	1y 3m 26d	2y 2m 22d	3y 5m 14d	4y 1m 4d	6y 2m 1d
2002	2y 4m 30d	0y 6m 10d	0y 9m 12d	1y 3m 0d	2y 0m 3d	3y 1m 2d	3y 8m 4d	5y 6m 18d
2003	1y 9m 27d	0y 4m 17d	0y 8m 11d	1y 1m 25d	1y 8m 27d	2y 5m 0d	2y 8m 1d	3y 10m 9d
2004	1y 8m 18d	0y 4m 20d	0y 7m 25d	1y 1m 1d	1y 7m 29d	2y 4m 5d	2y 5m 19d	3y 4m 1d
2005	1y 10m 2d	4m 29d	8m 2d	1y 2m 2d	1y 10m 14d	2y 5m 25d	2y 6m 28d	3y 3m 14d
2006	2y 0m 7d	5m 11d	8m 17d	1y 2m 17d	2y 0m 1d	2y 8m 11d	2y 6m 19d	3y 0m 27d
2007	2y 1m 26d	5m 7d	6m 29d	1y 1m 29d	2y 0m 8d	2y 9m 24d	2y 8m 7d	3y 2m 14d
2008	2y 0m 2d	3m 5d	5m 13d	10m 25d	1y 8m 17d	2y 6m 9d	2y 8m 8d	3y 3m 10d
2009	1y 5m 19d	4m 12d	5m 29d	9m 2d	1y 2m 19d	1y 9m 4d	2y 0m 24d	2y 8m 21d
2010	1y 6m 22d	6m 15d	8m 4d	10m 5d	1y 3m 9d	1y 10m 5d	2y 1m 2d	2y 8m 24d

* Y denotes years, m denotes months and d denotes days.

Data: Employment service of Slovenia, 2011.

The position of older workers in Slovenia is grim. On the other hand, 'The 2009 ageing report' stresses that the labour market participation is expected to increase in the future, especially among older, those aged 55 to 64: by 20 percentage points for women and 10 for men. For now, the trends are not favourable. In the context of these changes, it is very important to examine and understand the motivation of all parties in the labour market. It is important to understand how and why the firms employ and what the logic of individual labour supply is and his motivation and drive to seek work at an older age. And potential discrimination is very important in this context. Will only the lack of labour solve the problem of discrimination or will just the barrier be moved to an older age?

3. Age and employment: employer and (potential) employee perspective

The obstacles for older workers in the labour market can be identified both on the side of companies as well as among workers themselves. Grossman (2005, p.72) stresses that despite the legal protection against age

discrimination; the general notion among the companies is still that 'it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks'. The workers inevitably feel this general attitude and can consequently become even more unmotivated to work, invest into training or seek work. The two phenomena can result in a negative spiral leading to low employment among old and worse results in comparison with the young.

This is similar to the opinion of Berger (2006), who stresses that the existing literature mistakenly links individual's identity to age and individual's identity to work. All three elements should be considered together, especially in cases when individuals seek work. Such an approach is also the starting point of our analysis. Therefore, we first analyze the position of the employers, followed by the attitudes of the workers.

Why are companies more prone to employing the young? According to many authors, the causes are in the perceived economic benefits of employing the young. According to Hutchens (1988) the young have the comparative advantage of being able to stay in the company longer, which is a rational cause for employing younger. Thus the company is more motivated to employ and invest into the training of younger workers, especially in those industries and jobs where specific knowledge and training is required. Consequently Hutchens (1988) claims that ageing leads to fewer job opportunities. Similarly, also Roscigno et al. (2007) claim that age discrimination is becoming more evident with ageing, and is most evident once a person is close to retirement age. Exclusion is the most common form and the primary causes are the standard stereotypes that older are less flexible, have a lower learning ability, are less productive and also simply the fact that clients might prefer younger employees.

Schwarz-Woelzl et al. (2008) claim that many managers believe that younger candidates are more energetic, flexible and have more desire for training. Also, they claim, that in many cases the organizational culture is such that younger workers are the yardstick. Consequently, authors stress, that mature job seekers get caught in a discrimination cycle, which stresses limited ability to benefit from training, thus to actual exclusion from training, outdated skills. Downsizing also comes as a greater expense for older, according to Schwarz-Woelzl et al. (2008).

But, as Schwarz-Woelzl et al. (2008) stress, ageing is an individual process, which includes both a decrease in certain functions but also an increase. And regardless of age, everyone faces the problems of adapting, learning, adjusting the behaviour and developing new perspectives in life, as a result of individual ageing process. The authors (2008, p. 6) thus emphasize that 'the decisive factors for a person's individual ageing process are to be found in his or her specific life and job history'.

The relatively bad comparative position of the older workers is in part caused also by the beliefs and attitudes of the workers themselves. Berger (2006) stresses the triangular linkage among identity, work and age. Usually, theory linked identity and age and separately also identity and work. But the three elements should be analyzed together in order to understand fully the individual's motives, attitudes and motivation in the process of seeking work.

Kooij et al. (2008) claim that there are a number of reasons that stem from the individual's attitudes and could explain, at least in part, why old age discrimination appears:

1. When a person is approaching the retirement age, often work becomes perceived as a burden and people become less involved with the job processes;
2. Older workers might feel less capable and more dependent on others, which has a negative impact on motivation;
3. Older workers are less productive due to rusted skills and knowledge, which can also be caused by the inability or the lack of desire to learn;
4. Age has also negative consequences on personal strength, reactions, abilities to learn, memory;
5. Older people appreciate leisure more, therefore their work drive and motivation are lower.

The analyses show that the causes of discrimination can be identified on both the supply and the demand side. In order to raise the employment of older workers, the understanding of these problems is crucial.

4. The case of unemployed in Slovenia

In Slovenia, the employment rate of older workers is below the desired targets, the unemployment rate is higher and the duration of unemployment is significantly higher than on average. One of the potential causes could be discrimination.

The purpose of the analysis is to identify whether older unemployed feel (perceive) that age discrimination is actually present and presents the nature and consequences of perceived discrimination.

The study is based on survey data, carried out in April 2009 with the assistance of 'Employment service of Slovenia'³, the national unemployment agency among the unemployed in all Slovenian regions. The response rate was 37.1 %.

4.1 Sample description

The sample of unemployed consisted of 371 people, 127 men and 241 women (3 did not provide information on their sex). The average age of the respondents was 37.36 years, 37.55 for men and 37.32 for women. 84 respondents were aged 50 or more, the average age of the older group was 54.33 years. 283 respondents were aged 49 or less, the average age in this age group was 32.34 years.

The majority of the respondents finished secondary schooling (41.8 %), followed by those with a 'vocational degree' (14.3 %), those with the university degree (13.2 %) and those with only primary degree or even less (11.6 %). The differences in educational attainment among the two age groups are only slight; the biggest difference is in the share of those with secondary diploma, which is bigger among the younger group (43.1 %) than the old (38.1 %). But cumulatively in both age groups around 75 % of the respondents have secondary schooling or less.

4.2 Results

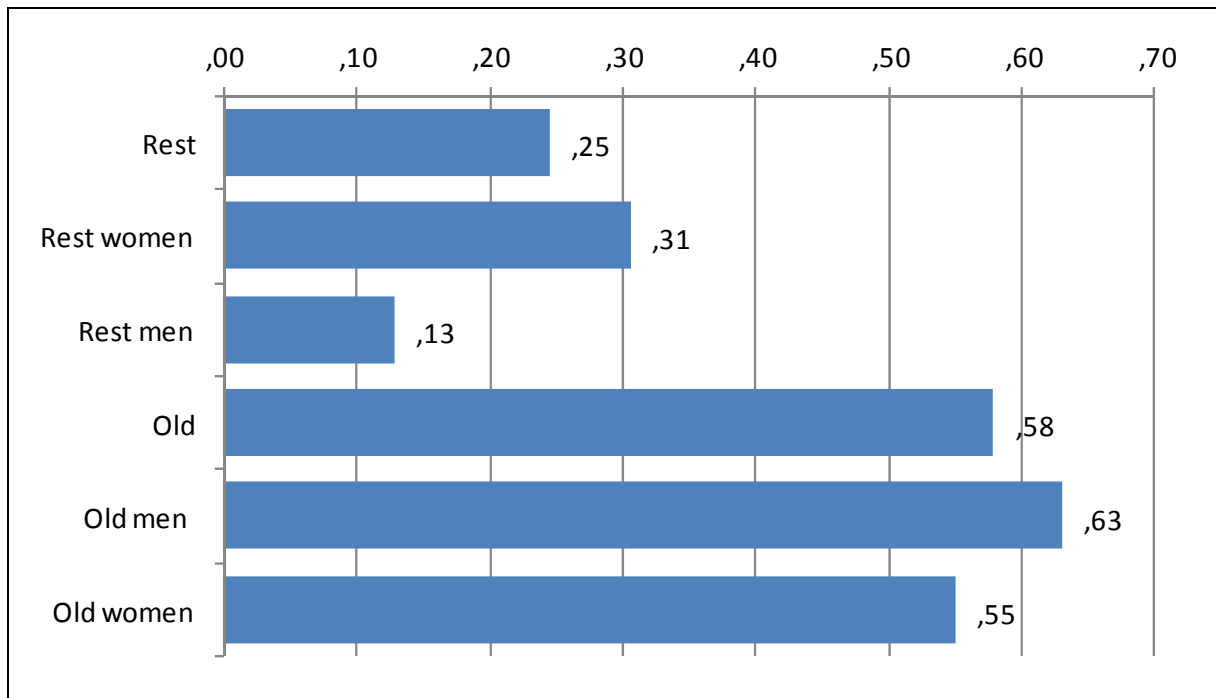
As we continue, we present the results of the survey. We show that there is a strong feeling among the older that age is a disadvantage.

The respondents were directly asked, whether they feel that they have been already victims of age discrimination. 52 % of older unemployed workers believe that they have been, while only 24 % of those younger than 50 (denoted as the rest in the Figure 1) feel so, while on average 30.5 % of respondents feel that they have been discriminated⁴. The average value of the binomial variable is quite informative: for older unemployed it is 0.58, while for the rest only 0.25. The differences between both groups (old and the rest) are highly statistically significant with $p=0.000$.

³ The Employment Service of Slovenia helped the survey by asking their regional offices for assisting us in distributing the questionnaires and returning them to us. Without their support such an analysis would be much harder. In total, 1000 questionnaires were distributed randomly.

⁴ The percentage generally might not be as high as expected given the Eurobarometer study, but our survey asked 'Whether you believe that you have already been discriminated', which is much different than the Eurobarometer (2009), where the question focuses on 'how widespread do the respondents believe that a certain type of discrimination is'.

Figure 1. Do you feel that you have been already victims of age discrimination? Average answer *



* Answers were either 0 (No) or 1 (Yes).

Gender differences are also highly interesting. The percentage of those who believe that they have been discriminated is also significantly higher among older men with 60.6 % than among older women (47.1 %). The differences are not statistically significant ($p=0.186$). It must also be noted that the minimum retirement age for men is higher than for women (56.75 years for women and 58 for men in 2010), which can influence the result given that men must be active longer and are therefore also longer exposed to this problem. Within the younger than 50 group (the rest) the differences are also quite notable with men being less affected as perceived by age discrimination. The differences between the two gender groups in this case are statistically significant ($p=0.000$)⁵.

In order to further examine the perceived status of older in the labour market, a series of questions was asked. The perception of age discrimination existence is also confirmed by the fact that the respondents believe that age is a disadvantage when seeking work and they report of mistreatment. Respondents were asked (on a scale from 1 to 5), whether they agree that the companies prefer to employ younger people. In the group of older respondents, the mode was even 5 and the average was 4.23. The younger group was indecisive with a mode of 3 and an average of 3.65 (Table 3).

⁵ It is very interesting that the gender differences within the group of older are much less notable than in the group of the rest. The average age of younger than 50 women was 33 years (median 31), while the average age of men in the group was 31.4 years (median 30). Given that in both cases, the majority of respondents were on the left side of the age distribution, the perceived age discrimination could be linked to the problem of motherhood (potential motherhood) in young women. Data shows that 58.9% of those younger women that claim to feel discriminated also have children (only 44.1% of those that did not feel discriminated).

Table 3. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Average answer.*

	Group	N	Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Companies always choose the younger of the two otherwise comparable candidates.	Old	84	4,23		
	Rest	281	3,65	4,394	,000
Older workers are in worse shape, have poorer health, therefore the employers rather don't employ them.	Old	83	3,66		
	Rest	280	3,69	-,173	,863
The older are not prepared to learn, therefore the employers rather do not employ them.	Old	83	3,16		
	Rest	278	3,22	-,387	,699
The older are less flexible and have problems adjusting to change, which is also an obstacle.	Old	83	3,24		
	Rest	281	3,31	-,426	,671
The younger are less loyal to the company, if a good opportunity arises, they change job.	Old	83	4,01		
	Rest	275	3,90	,763	,447
The younger are more productive.	Old	80	3,18		
	Rest	279	3,44	-1,636	,104
The younger are prepared to work overtime.	Old	81	2,84		
	Rest	270	3,20	-2,211	,029
The younger are prepared to work overtime in order to be promoted.	Old	83	3,08		
	Rest	277	3,42	-2,206	,029
Parents with young children also have problems when seeking work.	Old	83	4,02		
	Rest	281	3,84	1,338	,183
Young women are due to potential pregnancy and motherhood in a comparatively worse position.	Old	80	4,25		
	Rest	274	4,14	,854	,395
My experience is that family is an obstacle for finding a job.	Old	80	3,09		
	Rest	278	2,99	,650	,516
The older workers in higher positions are an obstacle for the promotion of the young.	Old	82	3,59		
	Rest	282	3,45	,923	,357

* Evaluated on a scale from 1 to 5 (1- strongly disagree, 2-do not agree, 3 – I do not know, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree).

Table 3 presents also some other stereotypical statements on age and labour market. Although the answer to the first claim on employers always choosing the young is very clear, the rest of the statements obtained much less 'stereotypical' support. It could be expected that those younger would claim older to be inflexible, not so eager to learn, but the differences are not as clear as expected. Although there is some indication that the young believe to be more productive ($p=0.104$) and clear indication that they believe to be more prepared to work overtime also in order to be promoted ($p=0.029$ in both cases).

Table 4 presents the personal experience of the unemployed in the labour market and in the companies. Importantly, there is again clear persuasion in the group of older workers that the companies prefer to employ the young (also differences significant with $p=0.000$). Consequently, the unemployed quite strongly agree to be consequently less motivated to seek work (again differences significant with $p=0.000$). Older also feel more pushed away than the younger, they feel that despite their education and experience, they do not get the appropriate decision-making power (with significant differences with the rest at $p=0.000$ in both cases). The results show that the older are less eager of attending additional training than the rest ($p=0.16$), although on average they agree more with the statement that they had opportunity in the past for it and also took it ($p=0.000$ and $p=0.062$).

Table 4. Answers to 'what extent do you agree with the following statements? Please, evaluate on a scale from 1 to 5 (1- strongly disagree, 2-do not agree, 3 – I do not know, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree).' Average answer value provided.

	Group	N	Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
I wish I had more opportunities for additional training in the company.	Old	83	3,82	-2,445	,016
	Rest	279	4,15		
I had the opportunity for training in the past.	Old	83	3,45	4,784	,000
	Rest	272	2,62		
If I got the opportunity for additional training, I always took it.	Old	82	4,30	1,883	,062
	Rest	276	4,07		
In the company, where I worked last, the working climate was good.	Old	84	3,67	-,281	,779
	Rest	273	3,71		
Good working climate is important for good work.	Old	83	4,67	-,638	,524
	Rest	274	4,73		
Companies prefer to employ young.	Old	82	4,27	4,855	,000
	Rest	275	3,69		
Since the companies prefer to employ the young, I am not motivated to seek work. I believe that I will not get it due to my age.	Old	82	3,60	6,683	,000
	Rest	273	2,58		
Due to my age, I do not get the appropriate decision-making power despite my education.	Old	83	3,46	3,196	,002
	Rest	275	2,99		
Due to my age, despite experience, I do not get the appropriate decision-making power.	Old	82	3,55	4,675	,000
	Rest	274	2,88		
I would expect faster promotions due to my education and experience, but I do not. I feel that it is because of my age.	Old	83	3,75	7,172	,000
	Rest	276	2,79		

* Evaluated on a scale from 1 to 5 (1- strongly disagree, 2-do not agree, 3 – I do not know, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree).

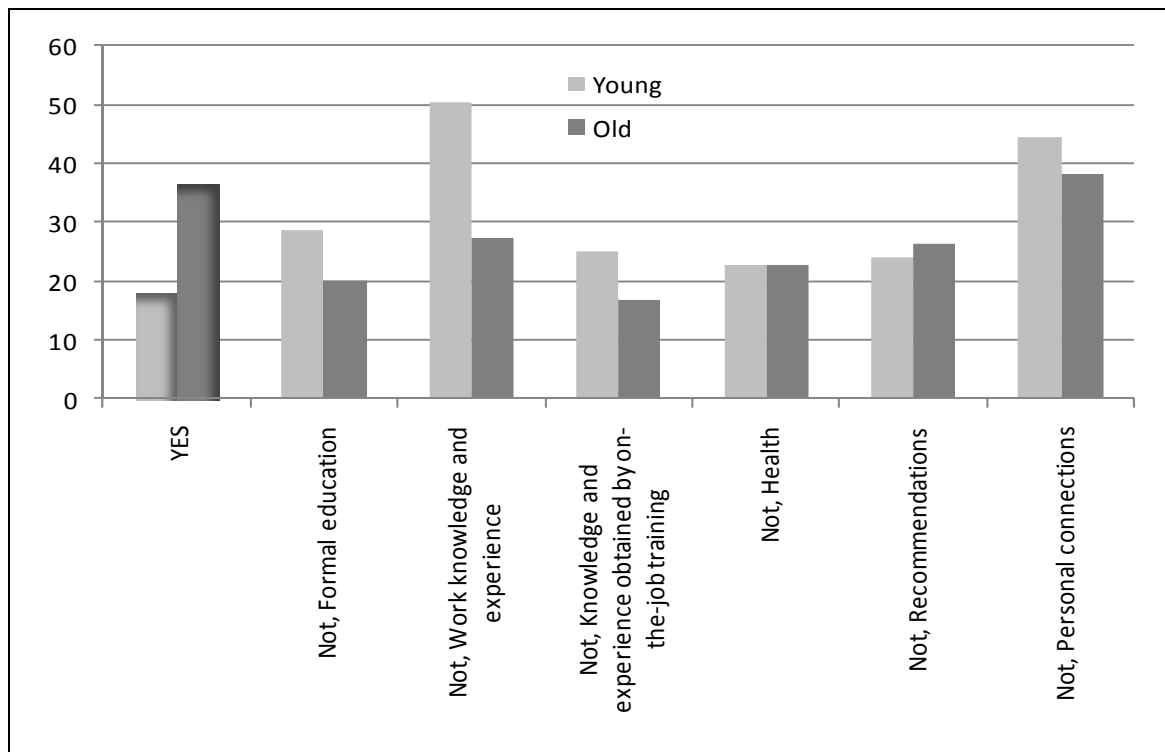
These results are very important in terms of motivation of older unemployed to actively seek work, to be involved in life-long learning and to remain motivated and involved at work.

The analysis was based on a sample of unemployed. The unemployed are those according to ILO that actively seek work. Employment prospects depend on a series of factors, most importantly experience and education. But if discrimination is felt to be a problem, the perspective of relative importance of employment factors could become skewed with age obtaining more than needed attention. Namely, the results show that although the candidates are comparable in all aspects, except age, the belief is that the younger candidate will have an advantage over the old. In order to examine the position of the older workers vs. the young, the respondents were also asked to choose whether age is the most important factor for obtaining work and if not, which is (Figure 2).

Each respondent either chose age or multiple other factors. 18 % of the younger respondents feel that age is the most important factor when seeking work compared to 37 % of the older respondents. The differences between the two groups are statistically highly significant ($p=0.000$). Among those in the younger group, that do not agree that the age is the most important factor, the most commonly chosen factor was 'work knowledge and experience', which was chosen by 50.5 % of all young people (143 respondents), statistically significantly more than among the old, it was chosen by 27.4 % of all older respondents (23 people) ($p=0.000$). Also 'work knowledge and experience' is not the most common factor chosen by the older, namely the older believe that it is the networking that is most important next to age. This was chosen by 38 % of all older respondents (32 people).

Among other factors, formal education was very important (40 % of younger, 20 % of older), recommendations (26 % of older, 23.9 % of younger) and health (around 22 % in both age groups). This again reveals that the older feel that their age is important and that this feeling is stronger than it is among the younger respondents. It is also interesting that those, that did not choose age as most important, often chose 'networking' as an important factor. This factor could also be understood in a manner that the older see 'connections' as their way out.

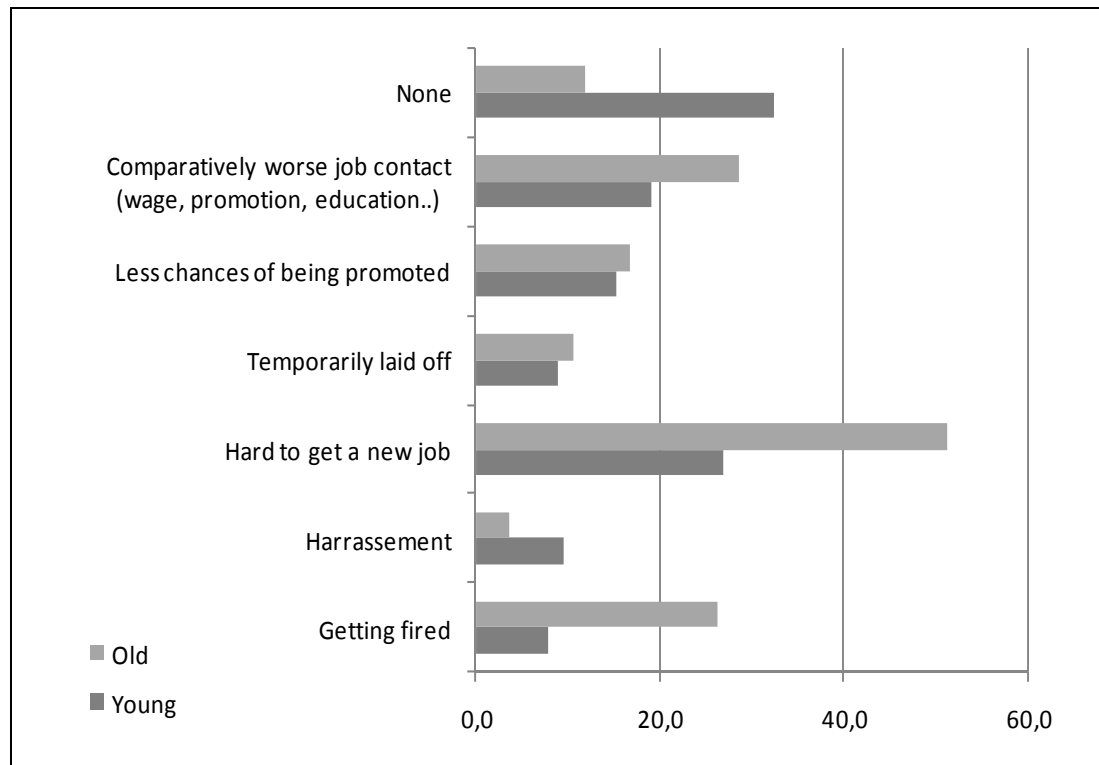
Figure 2. Do you believe that age is the most important factor when seeking a job? In % of all. *



* The respondents could choose Yes. If they chose 'not', they could circle multiple 'Not' answers and point to those that are more important than age according to their belief.

The respondents were also asked which of the listed events did, according to their belief, happen to them due to their age. Although the answers among the two age groups of respondents do not differ significantly, the results again indicate that age is a problem when seeking work. 51 % of older respondents (43 people) chose the answer 'the problem of getting a job', which was also chosen by 26 % of younger respondents (76 people). The older population also mentions getting a worse contract, which was chosen by 28.4 % of respondents (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Which of the following events did you, according to your belief, experience because of your age? Multiple answers were possible.

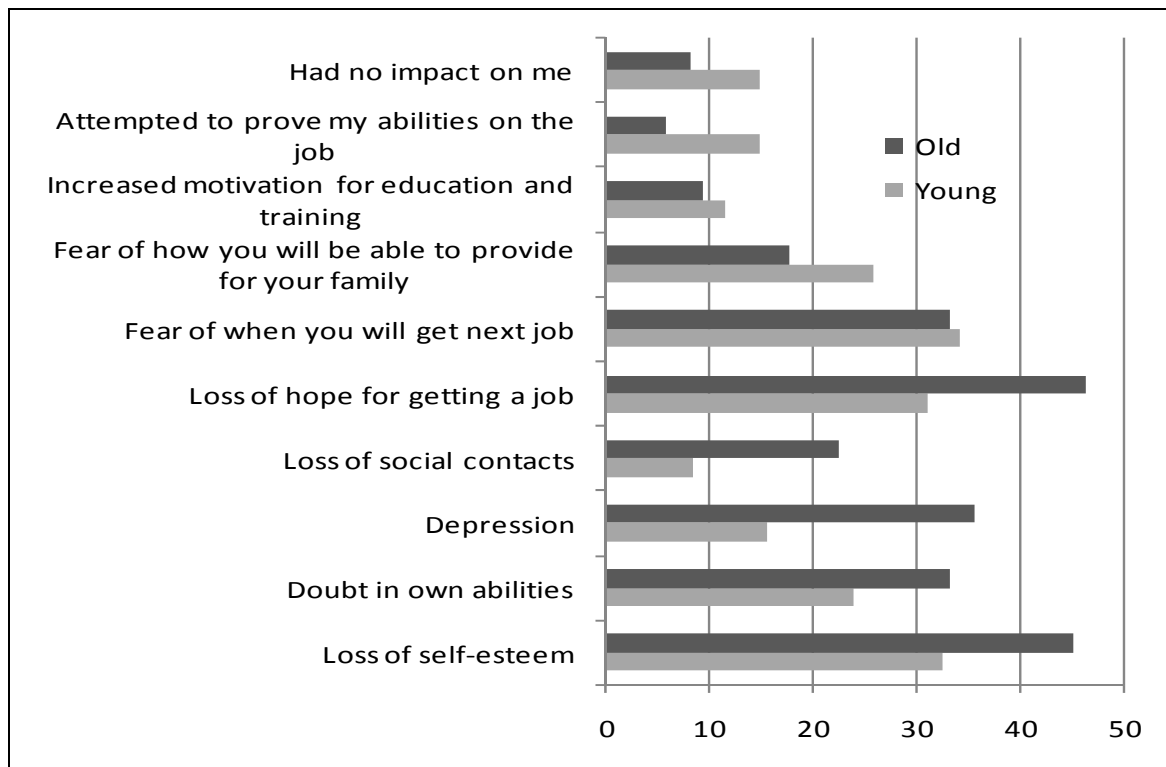


Usually, the older unemployed are the more problematic age group among the unemployed; the likelihood of becoming long-term unemployed is higher. Therefore it is even more important that the older group does not feel discriminated or that the feeling that age might be of importance does not change their motivation to seek work. Also, they might be more inclined towards trying to retire early, which is in the light of demographic change again an unfavourable consequence.

The consequences of perceived discrimination are just as important as the consequences of actual discrimination in terms of economic and social (individual) consequences. The analysis showed that the perception that age is important led to the most undesirable outcome – the individuals did not apply for a job, because they felt that they would not be chosen. 34.5 % of the older respondents claimed to have done so in comparison with 21.9 % of the younger.

An additional problem of feeling discriminated and having low chances for employment can lead also to other important consequences which further deteriorate personal self-perception and motivation to seek work. Therefore, it was also very important to examine the impact that the feeling of being discriminated had on the individuals (Figure 4). 32.5 % of younger respondents and 45.2 % of older (again, multiple answers were possible) chose the answer that this led to lower self-esteem. 31.1 % of younger and 46.4 % of older felt that they lost the hope for getting a job in the future. Similarly, a fear of when they would find work appeared in 34.2 % of younger respondents and 33.3 % of older. 24.0 % of younger respondents and 33.3 % of older also lost confidence in their skills, knowledge and abilities.

Figure 4. Answers to the question 'What impact did the discrimination have on you?' Multiple answers were possible.



Overall, the results indicate that age is perceived to be a problem among the older population of unemployed. Indeed, the analysis was limited by the sample, both its size and structure, heavily skewed in size towards the younger. Nonetheless, the majority of results would most likely be confirmed also in a larger sample. This remains one of the key challenges in future work.

5. Future research challenges and conclusion

Age discrimination refers to less favourable treatment of those of certain age, usually young and old age discrimination appears. It affects decisions whether to employ, promote, provide extra training or education, sack etc.

The article focused on old age discrimination. Given the forthcoming dramatic demographic shift the problem of age discrimination should be considered very seriously since it affects the ability and the desire or motivation of older to work. In order to formulate suitable policy measures to stimulate the employment of older, it is very important to examine and understand the motivation of all parties in the labour market. The article contributes to the problem by providing an insight into the logic of individual labour supply, the motivation and drive to seek work at an older age. The existence of both actual as well as potential (perceived) discrimination is very important in this context.

The purpose of the article was to analyze the situation among the unemployed in Slovenia. Primarily, we wanted to understand their comparative position as perceived by themselves. The results show that 52 % of older unemployed workers believe that they have been victims of age discrimination, and there is additional strong indication that they do believe that age is a disadvantage when seeking work. The older namely statistically significantly more often than the rest feel that age is the most important factor when seeking work, more important than education or experience. Also, they believe that it was harder due to age to get a job,

also a less favourable job contract and getting fired due to age are much more common beliefs among the older.

Unfortunately, the perceived worse position of the older in the labour market in the end as results show lead to the most undesirable outcome. Statistically significantly the older are less motivated to seek work as a consequence, even more, 34 % report that they do not apply for a job, because they feel that they would not be chosen. They feel more pushed away than the younger, they feel that despite their education and experience, they do not get the appropriate decision-making power and show less desire for additional training. In perspective of an ageing population such results are highly undesirable and should be tackled by a set of policy measure to keep older workers motivated and engaged in life-long learning.

The topic is very relevant also for future research. First, an analysis of the employees in a similar manner would be useful to obtain the comparative position of individuals' self-perception conditional on employment. Also, repeating the survey and increasing the sample would provide better and more reliable results and would also allow an important comparison in time and would also show the impact of the economic crisis. A similar analysis for the young, often mentioned as those in comparatively worse position in the labour market, presents an additional challenge. Merging these results with the views of the companies would provide a valuable input for the policy-makers.

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