

CHICAGO—Contrary to conventional wisdom, younger workers [36% of 18-34 year olds] are more likely to say they experienced age discrimination than older, 35+ workers [24%] in a national online study from Age Lessons, the Boomer consulting firm, fielded by Harris Interactive®.

In follow-up phone interviews conducted by Age Lessons, 93% of respondents said they had “witnessed or experienced” ageism and were hesitant to report it for reasons including a perceived inability to change the status quo, fear of being labeled a problem or getting targeted for future layoffs.

“Ageism isn’t about old people, it’s about all people. To avoid a ‘war of the ages’ in the workplace, companies need to address generational diversity across the age spectrum and develop strategies for leveraging the richness and value-add of a diverse workforce,” noted Laurel Kennedy, Age Lessons president.

Another unexpected finding: men [30%] were more likely than women [23%] to admit to a personal experience with age discrimination at work. Women may be more focused on issues of gender equality, or men may simply be more vocal about their experiences.

Additional findings include:

- *Companies need to walk the talk.* Younger workers told interviewers that older workers seemed to be “kicked to the curb” at a disproportionately high rate during layoffs. They also wondered aloud about how loyalty was being repaid by employers. Lesson for management: your employees are watching!

- ***Mentoring is not a popular option.*** Fewer than five percent of employees selected “mentoring opportunities” as a possible benefit. Older interviewees felt mentoring was just corporate code for “picking their brains dry” and saw specialized knowledge as an excellent longevity strategy.

- *Dependent support/care options needed.* More workers need help caring for new classes of dependents--elderly relatives who are outliving retirement savings, and adult children looking for subsidies from the “bank of Mom and Dad”. Fully 22% of respondents picked long term care insurance and 20% health coverage for seniors or adult children as appealing benefit options.