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Age discrimination in IT: my take as a woman in tech

APRIL 22, 2025



The discrimination in the IT sector that I believe is prominent for women in tech and other workers is ageism.

Before I delve further into age discrimination in tech, I need to declare an interest, **writes Elaine Richardson** (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/elainecrichardson/>), **a consultant business analyst.**

My age and situation: full disclosure

I'm of the age that when I started in tech, I fully expected to have retired on a state pension by now; some 40 years later. Yet, as we all know, things have changed a lot, so I still have some way to go.

Let's start this personal take on ageism in IT at the other end of the tech worker population, however.

I don't have much firsthand experience with discrimination against the young.

Entry-level tech jobs, which somehow require 5+ years of experience

But you can see it yourself, live and kicking the 18-25-year-old cohort of the tech jobs market today on almost every tech job board.

When you see “entry-level” IT jobs that somehow insist on “5 years experience” of, say, Python, how are graduates (save those who did a STEM degree, perhaps,) supposed to get a foothold in the IT industry?

UK legislation could do more on ageism as ‘years experience’ in tech job adverts is still permitted

I rather agree with a digital industry lawyer’s stance on the inclusion of “years’ experience” in tech job adverts more generally. That’s even though the lawyer, [Charlotte Gerrish](https://www.free-work.com/en-gb/tech-it/blog/guide-to-freelancing/navigating-the-legal-landscape-of-freelance-job-adverts-in-the-uk-tech-sector), here (<https://www.free-work.com/en-gb/tech-it/blog/guide-to-freelancing/navigating-the-legal-landscape-of-freelance-job-adverts-in-the-uk-tech-sector>) cautions that UK legislation does not explicitly prohibit tech employers from stating the years of experience they’d like the candidate to have.

In my experience, I started as a trainee COBOL programmer.

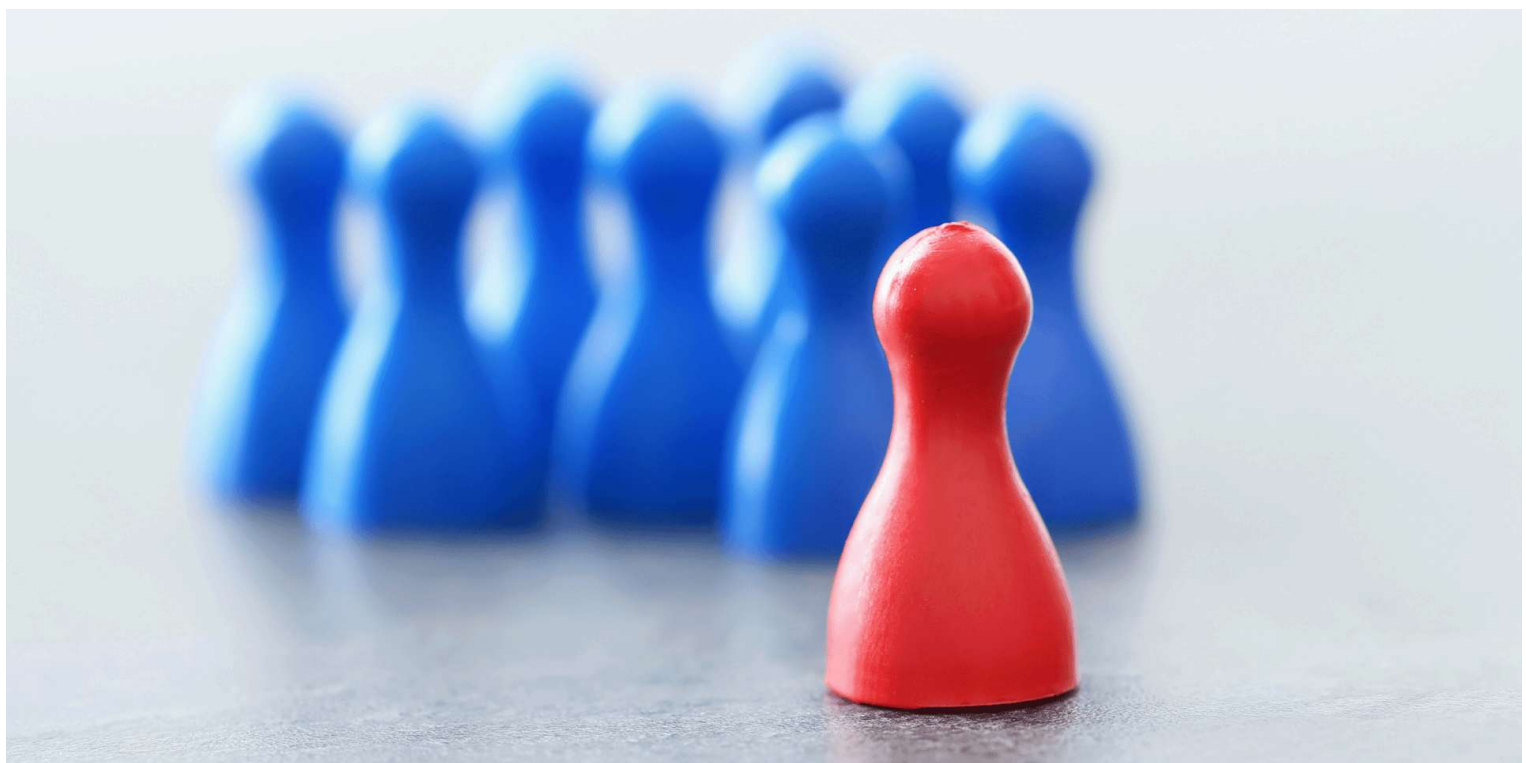
What does a non-ageist, purely logic test look like?

The only requirement to get onto the course (which was the first few weeks of fully paid employment) was to pass a series of logic tests.

I still remember some of the questions very well!

Question. *You are in a square house. Each wall faces south. A bear walks by. What colour is the bear?*

(The answer is at this article’s end).



What is discrimination? Here's my definition as a woman in tech

Discrimination is, by my definition as a woman in tech, treating people who aren't 'just like you' not as well as you would treat those who are just like you.

This approach you might unfortunately see in the tech sector in 2025 taken by the old-school-tie brigade, to those who have a different accent, colour or gender. The brigade sometimes can have a dreadful mistrust of anything 'foreign,' too.

'Not the sort of city resident we want working for us'

And a bit like the light discrimination I outlined in my [introduction to discrimination in IT](https://www.womenintech.co.uk/discrimination-in-tech-what-ive-seen-as-a-woman-in-software/) (<https://www.womenintech.co.uk/discrimination-in-tech-what-ive-seen-as-a-woman-in-software/>), the brigade can be covert in using their prejudices to affect things.

In fact, I once saw a hiring manager decline a CV because the sender was from Hull.

With age discrimination specifically, I'm pleased to say that I've come across very little from clients.

Clients aren't (generally) ageist when I'm contracting as a woman in tech

I sense this absence of ageism by end-hirers is because many clients hiring a tech contractor or IT freelancer realise they will get the six months or 12 months of effort most likely from someone with a far wider set of skills than anyone they have in-house.

Such clients also like that such a person is invariably happy to leave the job once it's done.

No, the age discrimination I see is primarily from recruitment agencies.

More specifically, it's from agents for whom their position at the staffing firm may represent their very first job.

'You're older than my Mum'

Perhaps it's understandable — I'm likely older than their Mum!

Yet worryingly, if they have a fixed opinion that 'oldies' can't cut it in technology, the CVs of older candidates like me will simply never make it to the clients.

Maybe the agent believes I won't be up for the social side of work. Well, anyone who thinks that has clearly never met me!

When women in tech report to younger managers

Or maybe first-time agents don't put us experienced-types forward because they think we might have problems reporting to managers significantly younger than us?

For me, such reporting has never been a problem. I've often worked with some brilliant managers, some of whose Mums were indeed younger than me! But why should that be a problem?

Management is a skill I know I don't have, so why would it be a problem to work for someone who is great at management?

Older managers with titles above their station

I have far more difficulty working for older managers who have been promoted beyond their capability.

And be aware if you're a woman in tech, there is quite a bit of that about!

I know it's not just me who regards some agents as potentially ageist against women in tech – and other IT job candidates.

Passing up 30 years of commercial experience? It's what Jade and Finn might do

Check out the following post which I saw on social media – it's from someone who was in the tech staffing space.

Please note, I saved this person's post when there was a vacancy to run the White House, so we're going back a bit – but that doesn't detract from the points within.

Joe Biden is 77 years old. Donald Trump is 74. But if a developer is on the wrong side of 50, some companies will find a multitude of 'other' reasons why this developer is not the right fit.

It makes me laugh that the US are happy to have two older guys potentially running one of the world's biggest superpowers.

But the [Jades] and [Finns] at 'Rando ERP Solutions' are passing on a 52-year-old with 25-30 years of commercial experience. Something to think about, eh?"

Separately, just so you no longer need to think about it, here it is:

Answer: White.

The bear is white. And no, I'm not explaining why!



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Elaine Richardson

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Elaine Richardson was raised on a Yorkshire farm and attended her local comprehensive school, before trying her hand as a pizza restaurant manager! Elaine holds a a BsC(hons) in Economics and Economic history, and a CCTA certification as a systems analyst. She has worked

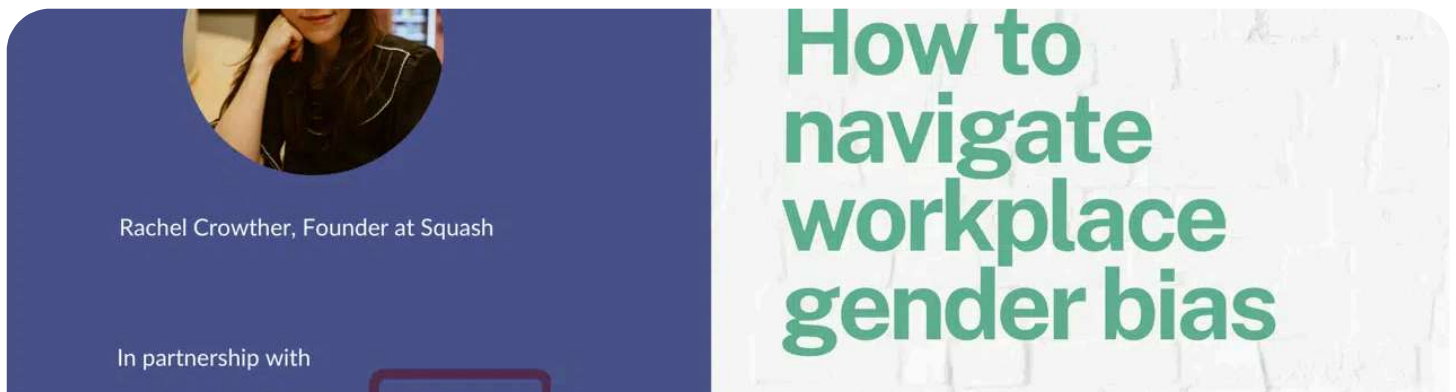
in IT since 1985 and contracted from 1993 to March 2020. Elaine won her IR35 case against HMRC in Feb 2011, with the FTT judgment in favour of ECR Consulting Ltd now framed above her desk. Elaine is today available to hire as a Consultant Business Analyst.



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