

Listen to Mr Griffin, a Human Resources expert, talking about discrimination in the workplace.

Comprehension activity

While you are listening, decide whether the following statements are true or false according to what Mr Griffin says. The answers are below the audio script.

Statement	True or False?
1. Although diversity is being dealt with, it is still an important concern for employers.	
2. A growing number of people are suing employers because they feel discriminated against because of their age.	
3. Insurance to cover discrimination claims is an enormous cost for companies.	
4. Security firms sometimes discriminate against people because of their age.	
5. Employers cannot discriminate against job applicants who have been convicted of any crime.	

Radio interviewer Tell me, Mr. Griffin are diversity risks really still an issue? Aren't companies these days dealing with diversity?

Alan Griffin Oh yes they are very much an issue. ... We have come a long way since those days when employers were allowed to discriminate against job candidates just because of their race or their sex. The trouble is ... the boundaries of diversity and discrimination are widening. Companies have a lot more to consider than a person's skin colour or a person's gender.

Radio interviewer So ... can you give listeners an example of what kind of things you are referring to here?

Alan Griffin Okay ... let's see well, one growing area of discrimination is ageism. In 1998, companies in the United States had to pay out more than fifty-five million dollars to employers who had filed age related discrimination complaints against their companies. That's a lot of money.

Radio interviewer Pheh ... so how should companies protect themselves from this kind of thing?

Alan Griffin Well, first of all they should think carefully about their recruitment policies and then they should take out insurance to cover themselves.

Radio interviewer Isn't that expensive? ... for the companies, I mean.

Alan Griffin No, not as expensive as you might think. These days most small and medium sized organisations take out EPLI ... that's Employment Practices Liability Insurance. The cost of the insurance has fallen over the years and if a company isn't covered and loses a discrimination case ... well, let's just say this is the cheaper option!

Radio interviewer You've mentioned ageism as a growing concern ... but what other kinds of diversity should managers be aware of?

Alan Griffin Well ... you'd probably be surprised to hear about some ... discrimination against single people, against married parents, against people who are too tall, too short, too heavy ...

Radio interviewer Really...

Alan Griffin Oh yes. Security firms are a good example here. They typically state that their employees need to be over or under a certain height or weight, They claim it's necessary for the job but there have been cases where people have claimed discrimination.

Radio interviewer And won't?

Alan Griffin Sometimes yes. Then there are people with a criminal background. Employers used to feel justified in turning away job applicants just because they'd been in trouble with the law.

Radio interviewer Isn't that still the case?

Alan Griffin No not exactly. The law states that employers can only reject a job applicant with a criminal record ... if the crime bears a direct relation to the job in question. So somebody who has served a sentence for ... let's say stealing cars ... would be alright in a job as a kitchen porter.

Radio interviewer And Mr. Griffin, tell me how many people actually go through with their threats to sue a company for discrimination?

Alan Griffin Well I haven't got the latest figures for the UK but in the United States the Equal Opportunities Commission receive around eighty five thousand complaints every year ... and that figure is rising. Race and sex account for most of the complaints that are filed but age discrimination is on the increase too.

Radio interviewer So ... any words of advice for risk managers?

Alan Griffin Well ... first of all make sure that you have adequate insurance. Then address the issues of diversity from within the organisation. Get the employees involved. Celebrate the differences and try to build up a reputation as a fair employer. And remember it is worth investing time and effort in addressing these issues because statistics have shown that you're much more likely to be sued by an employee than a third party.

Answers:

Statement	True or False?
1. Although diversity is being dealt with, it is still an important concern for employers.	True
2. A growing number of people are suing employers because they feel discriminated against because of their age.	True
3. Insurance to cover discrimination claims is an enormous cost for companies.	False
4. Security firms sometimes discriminate against people because of their age.	False. He mentions discrimination over their physical size.
5. Employers cannot discriminate against job applicants solely because they have a criminal record.	True. The crime must bear a direct relation with the job.