



Do State Laws Protecting Older Workers from Discrimination Reduce Age Discrimination in Hiring? Experimental (and Nonexperimental) Evidence

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Abstract

We provide evidence from a field experiment — a correspondence study — on age discrimination in hiring for retail sales jobs. We collect experimental data in all 50 states and then relate measured age discrimination — the difference in callback rates between old and young applicants — to variation across states in antidiscrimination laws offering protections to older workers that are stronger than the federal age and disability discrimination laws. We do a similar analysis for nonexperimental data on differences across states in hiring rates of older versus younger workers. The experimental evidence points consistently to evidence of hiring discrimination against older men and, more so, against older women. However, the evidence on the relationship between hiring discrimination against older workers and state variation in age and disability discrimination laws is not so clear; at a minimum, there is not a compelling case that stronger state protections reduce hiring discrimination against older workers. In contrast, the non-experimental evidence suggests that stronger disability discrimination protections increase the relative hiring of older workers.

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