

Older workers (1952)

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

U.S. OFFICE OF DEFENSE MOBILIZATION

August 14, 1952

(DEFENSE MANPOWER POLICY NO. 7)

Subject: Employment of Older Workers in the Defense Program

PREFACE

This Policy has been recommended by the interagency Manpower Policy Committee and by the national Labor-Management Manpower Policy Committee of the Office of Defense Mobilization. It is issued for information and guidance to labor and management concerned with defense production; and assigns to Government agencies the responsibility for providing assistance and leadership in the fields of action required of them.

I. Introduction

Approximately 3-1/2 million additional workers will be needed by the end of 1953 to meet defense production requirements and expected levels of civilian output. Older workers, here considered to be men and women over 45 years, constitute the largest potential source of needed additions to the labor force, with the largest single reserve being among women of these ages.

Traditional employment preference has been for younger workers despite the fact that the proportion of persons in our population who are between 16 and 34 years of age has progressively declined from 1900 to 1950. Obstacles to the employment of available and qualified older workers increase competition for the preferred and less available younger groups, contribute to unnecessary migration and turnover, and other types of community problems, and add unnecessarily to the adjustment problem of older peoples and to the burden of providing financial support for them.

In the field of employment, the older worker's problem is two-fold; first, the most serious, finding a new job once he becomes unemployed; and second, compulsory retirement at an arbitrary age. Older workers who become unemployed often suffer excessively long periods of unemployment as is indicated by a much higher proportion of older workers unemployed for periods of 20 weeks and over and exhausting unemployment insurance benefits. Studies by the Department of Labor show that older workers are at a heavy disadvantage in competition with younger workers. This is true in practically all occupational categories and in all types of labor markets, including tight labor markets. Orders placed with local employment offices restrict referrals of applicants by some maximum age limitation, usually 45 for men and 35 for women, in about 50-70 percent of the cases, depending upon the local area. These data contrast with the common assumption that high employment, with the attendant competition for workers, offers a complete solution to the problems of older workers. Restrictive conditions are found in areas of tight and surplus labor supply. To the extent that employment policies and practices stand as

MAR 5 1953

barriers to the recruitment and effective utilization of older workers, such policies and practices are undesirable from the point of view of employers, employees, and the public as a whole.

II. Purpose

It is the purpose of this Manpower Policy to direct attention to the importance of employing and effectively utilizing older workers and to stimulate voluntary action by labor, management, and Government to modify unnecessary restrictions which limit the employment and utilization of older workers in both private and public employment.

III. Statement of Policy

It is the policy of the Federal Government:

1. To promote the employment and effective utilization of older workers in public employment.
2. To encourage labor and management to adopt policies and practices which will promote the employment and effective utilization of older workers in private employment.

To aid in achieving increased employment opportunity and more effective utilization of older workers, it is recommended that the following policies be adopted and applied as rapidly as possible:

1. That selection of workers for employment or for training be made on the basis of individual ability and qualifications to perform the job, regardless of age.
2. That older women be given equal consideration with men for employment, on the basis of individual ability and qualifications to perform the job.
3. That, when their services are needed, older workers now employed who are eligible for retirement be encouraged to continue working at jobs for which they are qualified and able, and that retired workers who possess needed skills in critical occupations be encouraged to return to work to the greatest extent possible.
4. That workers who are subject to retirement or dismissal upon reaching a specified age be offered, where practicable, an opportunity to continue working at their regular jobs if they are still qualified to perform such jobs; that workers not qualified and able to continue their regular jobs be offered an opportunity to work at less exacting jobs wherever practicable.

5. That good labor standards, including health and safety measures and equal pay for comparable work be maintained as effective means of increasing the employment and effective utilization of older workers.

IV. Assignment of Responsibility

It is recognized that labor and management share the primary responsibility for action designed to achieve the objectives of this Policy. However, the Federal Government, through its appropriate agencies and in cooperation with labor, management, and other private groups, can promote the employment and utilization of older workers by providing assistance and leadership in the following fields of required action:

A. The Civil Service Commission shall:

1. In cooperation with other appropriate agencies of the Federal Government, explore the possibilities of: (a) further modifying or eliminating maximum age provisions in required qualifications for civilian positions in the Federal Government; and (b) measures designed to increase the opportunities in Federal employment of qualified older workers.
2. With the cooperation of appropriate agencies of the Federal Government, investigate and make recommendations regarding the possibilities of re-employing retired workers whenever such employment would be of value to the Government.

B. The Federal Security Agency shall:

1. In cooperation with other concerned Federal agencies, continue to explore and make recommendations with respect to retirement insurance programs provided for by Federal legislation other than those systems covering Federal employees exclusively as to whether revisions are needed in such legislation to further the policy of the Federal Government to promote the employment and effective utilization of older workers when their services are needed.
2. Working with states and community groups, extend and improve rehabilitation of older workers, including the provisions of assistance, encouragement, and retraining to older persons who have important skills which are in short supply (such as nurses and other health personnel, certain types of teachers, etc.).

3. In collaboration with other Federal agencies, primarily through the occupational health program of the U. S. Public Health Service, continue to exercise leadership in the promotion of high levels of health for older workers.
- C. The Department of Labor and the Federal Security Agency shall:
1. Provide available information on pertinent provisions of collective bargaining agreements and related pension plans to management and unions desiring to make appropriate changes in private pension plans.
- D. The Department of Labor shall:
1. With the cooperation of the Civil Service Commission, the Department of Commerce (National Production Authority,) the Department of Defense, and the Federal Security Agency, collect and disseminate widely facts concerning the employment and utilization of older workers to employers and labor groups, and to Federal, state, and local public agencies.
 2. Extend and improve counseling, placement and job analysis programs for older workers who are seeking work, are poorly adjusted in work, or are facing compulsory retirement. Special attention should be given to counseling older workers on ways and means of re-entering the labor market.
 3. Encourage, provide technical assistance, and undertake studies designed to establish facts regarding the performance of older workers in paid employment and problems arising in connection with their employment. The fields requiring comprehensive study include: productivity, turnover, absenteeism, accident rates, and mobility.
- V. This Policy shall take effect on August 14, 1952.

OFFICE OF DEFENSE MOBILIZATION

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