

Older Workers  
(1959-60 folder)

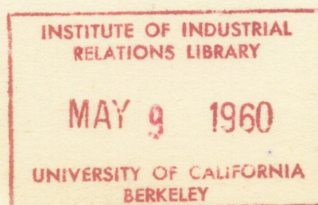


Canada.

ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH BRANCH, DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR

# AGE AND PERFORMANCE in Retail Trade

Two Case Studies  
of the Relation between Age and Selected Characteristics  
of Sales Personnel in Two Department Stores



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ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH BRANCH .

Canada. DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR.

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## INTRODUCTION

Early in 1953 an Inter-Departmental Committee comprised of representatives of the Departments of National Health and Welfare, Veterans Affairs, Labour, and the Unemployment Insurance Commission was set up to investigate the problems of the older worker in employment.

The Economics and Research Branch of the Department of Labour, because of its broad interest in the welfare of older workers in the labour market, has undertaken certain research projects at the suggestion of the Committee. **Pension Plans and the Employment of Older Workers** is one such study which has been published by the Department under the auspices of the Committee. The present study deals with a matter of particular importance to the older worker and his employer, viz., his performance on the job.

The labour shortages that developed during World War II and carried over into the immediate post-war years necessitated a closer look at manpower utilization problems in the Canadian economy. When a large proportion of men in the age group which normally forms the largest part of the work force was withdrawn, to enter the armed forces and defence jobs, a greater share of work had to be done by married women or by men and women beyond normal working age. As war-created demands slackened, more and more of these "breach fillers", particularly the older people, were considered surplus. The habitual preference of employers for younger workers soon became manifest. Employers were reluctant to retain older employees longer than was necessary, and similarly reluctant to fill new jobs or existing vacancies by hiring men and women of mature age. Labour force participation rates<sup>1</sup> for men of 65 and over, for instance, declined from almost 50 per cent in 1946 to 30 per cent in 1954. What happened in fact was that while the number of males 65 and over in the labour force remained fairly constant during this period, the labour force itself was showing substantial growth. Rates for women in this age category, though never high, also fell off considerably during the same period.

It is recognized that there is a wide variety of economic and social factors that influence labour force participation by older workers. Among these might be mentioned the increase in industrialization and urbanization, the trend from family-operated businesses to corporate forms of organization, the growth of pension plans, the changing outlook towards retirement caused by inflationary tendencies, and the growth of new production techniques that demand less physical effort on the part of workers generally. Some of these would tend to increase the participation of older workers, others to decrease it. From both the social and manpower resource points of view, the problems are sufficient to warrant investigation of the reasons for employers' inhibitions about hiring and retaining older workers.

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<sup>1</sup>The civilian labour force for a particular age-sex group, expressed as a percentage of the civilian non-institutional population in the same group.

The present study represents an attempt to assess in an objective and measurable way, within one industry, the frequent claim that as chronological age advances job performance declines. It may be described as a combination case study and statistical approach. It is a case study in the sense that the records of two independent businesses (each a large department store in a large Canadian city) comprised the basis of the investigation. It is statistical in the sense that separate sets of data were analysed in the case of each store, although at certain points in the study an effort was made to integrate the findings of both. The fact that observations drawn from one set of data were consistent with those drawn from the other would seem to enhance the validity of the findings, in spite of certain limitations which are discussed in a later section of the report.

This study was carried out in the Labour-Management Division of the Economics and Research Branch of the Department of Labour under the supervision of Mr. John L. Mainwaring. Field investigation and interviews and the statistical analysis were carried out by Mr. J.D. Love and Mr. George Saunders in 1956 and 1957, with assistance at various stages by other members of the Division.

The Committee wishes to express its appreciation to the firms who co-operated in making their records available and to the officers of those firms for their valuable contributions to qualitative analysis during interviews.

September 1959.

*W.R. Dymond,*  
*Director,*  
*Economics and Research Branch.*



## SUMMARY

The stores studied were large department stores called in this study Store A and Store B, located in two Canadian metropolitan centres. The study analyzes the relation between age and sales performance of clerks working in a wide variety of departments, varying from the sale of sewing machines and hearing aids to stationery and cosmetics. The personnel and sales records of the stores, together with the opinions of supervisors in one of the stores, constitute the basic research data for the analysis.

In general, the study has determined that the older sales employee has as good a record of performance as the younger employee, if not better. Experience on the job was found to have a favourable effect on sales performance which might account, in part, for the better record of older employees. However, when statistical techniques were developed to discount the favourable effect of experience on performance, the relatively high scores of older workers were not reduced.

One of the most important facts emerging from the study was that workers hired over the age of 40 tended to outperform those hired below the age of 30; i.e., the older worker attained a higher performance rating within a shorter period of service than the younger worker.

It should be emphasized at the outset that, to a very large extent, the study was experimental, involving new combinations of data and the development of new techniques to cope with them.

More specifically, the findings of the measurements made in the two stores are as follows:

- 1 - By and large, older employees perform as well as or better than younger employees;
- 2 - Performance improves with age, within limits, even when length of service is taken into account;
- 3 - Peak performance in terms of age seems to be reached between the age of 51 to 55. Beyond this point performance, while still comparing favourably with that of relatively young employees, appears to level off or decline slightly;
- 4 - Performance tends to improve with service, with the biggest improvement occurring in the first three to five years for Store A and between 6 to 10 years for Store B; and
- 5 - The advantage in performance gained with experience applies as much to older employees as to younger employees, and perhaps more.





## SOURCES AND COVERAGE OF THE STUDY

Data from a number of sources were combined to develop the statistics used to assess the relation between age, sales performance and length of service.

At Store A, the standard wage records provided the department name and number; the name, sex, marital status, dates of birth and of last hiring, and the basic earnings of each sales clerk: the individual compensation records gave the department number, the name and sex of each clerk, the number of days worked, total net sales and the wages and commission earned by each sales clerk. From this the average daily sales were obtained by dividing the total net sales by the number of days worked.

At Store B, the standard wage and individual compensation records were combined, providing the name and sales number of each sales clerk; the section and department; the number of four-week payroll periods in which each sales clerk worked during the year; the clerk's average weekly sales (i.e., total sales divided by the number of days worked multiplied by five); and the percentage adjustment factors to make allowance for the time spent on non-selling duties.

It was possible, therefore, to measure sales performance (in terms of average daily sales in Store A and weekly sales in Store B) for each sales clerk included in the study, and to relate this measurement to present age, age at last hiring, and the length of unbroken employment with the store.

At the time of the study the two stores together employed some 2,350 full-time sales clerks in 181 departments: that is, 1,025 sales clerks in 90 departments in Store B and 1,325 sales clerks in 91 departments in Store A. To ensure the highest degree of comparability of sales performance between the sales clerks, it was necessary to exclude a substantial number of the employees for the following reasons:

- 1 - Employees in a number of departments were excluded because information needed to measure their performance was not available;
- 2 - Employees in other departments that were too small to afford a reasonable basis of comparison were excluded;
- 3 - Employees in the remaining departments were excluded if they did not meet the following standards, designed to achieve a high degree of comparability:
  - a. permanent employment status;
  - b. a minimum of (i) 150 working days for Store A during the payroll period ending May 5, 1956, and (ii) 5 four-week payroll periods worked during the calendar year 1956 for Store B; and
  - c. equal selling opportunity within a department.

This selective process to establish comparability left some 1,018 full-time sales clerks in 101 departments (489 sales clerks in 45 departments in Store B and 529 sales clerks in 56 departments in Store A) to form the statistical basis of the analysis.

### **Some Limitations of the Research Technique**

For various reasons, the findings of this study should be interpreted with care. They are the results of a study of the performance of some of the sales employees of only two department stores, over a period of only one year. And it should be noted that the standards used to select employees for inclusion in the study do not ensure absolute comparability.

For example, in order to exclude the effects of seasonal fluctuations in sales, which vary from one department to another, a wholly arbitrary minimum period of employment during the year was set, and this may or may not have entirely served its purpose. Similarly, although employees were excluded whose opportunity to sell, in the opinion of the companies' personnel officers, was manifestly not equal to that of other employees in the same department, this does not mean that those left in the sample had precisely equal opportunities. On the contrary, it seems certain that the effects of some of the factors that make for inequality of selling opportunity were not entirely eliminated. The dollar value of merchandise varies from one counter to another and, according to information obtained in the interviews, there is a tendency in a relatively small number of departments for older employees with seniority to gravitate towards the high-priced counters. In some departments, the more senior employees tend to build up a personal clientele, thus restricting the selling opportunities of junior employees. Although store supervisors expressed the view that it was not a significant factor, there may be a tendency on the part of some junior employees to defer to more senior employees when a customer appears. There may be other factors of a similar nature. Their combined effect on the statistical findings cannot be precisely assessed. All that can be said is that everything was done that could be done to overcome the bias resulting from unequal selling opportunities.

The conclusion that older employees perform as well as or better than younger employees is not to be construed as evidence that any group of older employees would perform, on the average, as well as or better than younger employees. It is entirely probable that the degree of selectivity in hiring increases with the age of applicants: the older the applicant, the more there is in the way of job history and references on which to base a satisfactory decision to hire. Furthermore, as employees extend their period of service in the store a process of natural selection undoubtedly weeds out employees who fail to measure up to minimum standards of performance. On the other hand, promotions and separations undoubtedly remove from the sales staff some of the better, more aggressive employees. Finally, reference should be made to the possibility of

bias arising from the basic age composition of the staff of different departments. It may be that the average scores of some age groups were influenced by the relative lack in some departments of employees in certain age groups.

Most of these considerations are not thought to be too important, however, inasmuch as they would apply in virtually any employment situation.

### **The Technique of Measurement**

Performance was measured in terms of average daily sales in Store A and weekly sales in Store B. The level of dollar sales, which depends of course on the type of merchandise sold, varied widely from one department to another. It was therefore necessary to convert these figures on average daily and weekly sales into a measure that could be used to compare the performance of employees in different age groups regardless of the particular department or store in which they worked.<sup>2</sup>

To simplify the process of comparing performance, regardless of work location, a system of quartile rankings was developed based either on weekly or daily sales. By this system, the employees within each department analyzed were ranked in descending order according to the dollar value of their sales. The employees ranked in this way were then divided into quartiles or quarters. The 25 per cent of the sales clerks recording the top sales performances were placed in the highest quartile, the next two 25-per-cent groups of clerks respectively (in terms of their performance) falling into the second and third quartiles and finally the 25 per cent of the employees with the lowest performance range in the lowest quartile. The clerks in the highest quartile were given a score of 4, those in the second highest quartile a score of 3, the next 2, and those in the lowest quartile a score of 1. Thus, in a department with 80 sales clerks, 20 of these would be found in each of the four quartiles, and since the age of each of the employees was known, it was possible to use the individual's quartile score as a basis for a comparison between his age and his sales performance.

Because of great differences in the value of merchandise sold, the attainable level of dollar sales varied considerably, not only from one department to another, but also from one section to another within the same department. To provide a check on intra-departmental variations of this kind, a second measure of comparative performance was developed in the case of Store B by applying the ranking procedure described above to employees working in the same sections. In other words, the performance scores assigned to individual employees were based on their quartile ranking within the section rather than within the department. A minimum of four sales clerks in a section was considered necessary to

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<sup>2</sup>For this, in Store B adjustments were made to allow for time spent by clerks on non-selling duties, while in Store A clerks who spent a disproportionately large amount of time on such activities were omitted from the coverage.

provide a reasonable basis for sectional ranking, and consequently, the number of clerks covered by sectional performance scores was smaller than those covered by departmental scores. The sectional procedure was applied to 349 of the 529 sales clerks included in the performance study.

For the sake of simplicity, age and length of service were measured in terms of whole years. For example, an employee born any time in 1936 was considered to be 20 years of age.

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## THE RELATION BETWEEN AGE AND PERFORMANCE

The following tables show the relation between sales performance and present age in Store A and Store B, using average performance scores based on departmental rankings for both stores.

**Table 1 – Sales Performance and Present Age**

<b>A. – Store A</b>		
<b>Present Age</b>	<b>No. of Employees</b>	<b>Average Performance</b>
Under 26 .....	54	1.9
26–30 .....	51	2.3
31–35 .....	69	2.3
36–40 .....	64	2.5
41–45 .....	85	2.4
46–50 .....	53	2.7
51–55 .....	42	3.0
56–60 .....	32	2.4
Over 60 .....	39	2.7
<b>All ages .....</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>2.4</b>

<b>B. – Store B</b>		
<b>Present Age</b>	<b>No. of Employees</b>	<b>Average Performance</b>
Under 26 .....	40	2.0
26–30 .....	65	2.2
31–35 .....	91	2.5
36–40 .....	90	2.4
41–45 .....	76	2.5
46–50 .....	71	2.5
51–55 .....	57	2.7
56–60 .....	25	3.0
Over 60 .....	14	2.7
<b>All ages .....</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>2.5</b>

As explained above, the sales clerks in any department were ranked on a quartile basis. Thus the average performance scores shown for the various age groups in the above tables were obtained by totalling the individual performance scores of the employees in any one age group and dividing by the number of clerks in that age group. In the group under 26 the scores of each of the 54 clerks in that group were totalled; the total was then divided by 54, giving an average performance score of 1.9.

These figures indicate that, as far as sales employees of the two stores are concerned, average performance was below average in the case of employees under 31 years of age, about average in the case of employees between the ages of 31 and 40, and above average in the case of employees over 46 years. It will be noted that the best performance score in Store A relates to employees in the age group of 51 to 55, and in store B to the late fifties. This is also borne out by the sectional ranking<sup>3</sup>. In all cases the average score for employees over the age of 60 compares favourably with those of employees below the age of 51.

<sup>3</sup>For the sake of brevity the tables relating to sectional rankings have not been included. In all cases these sectional tables illustrated the same trends and "peaks" as the departmental-ranked Store B table.

Another illustration of this pattern will be found in the tables below. Based on departmental ranking, they show the percentage of employees in each age group that fell within the top quartile (indicating the best performance) and the bottom quartile (indicating the worst performance) in the two stores.

**Table 2 — Age Distribution of Employees in Top and Bottom Quartiles**

<b>A. — Store A</b>		
Present Age	Percentage of Employees	
	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Under 26.....	5.5	42.6
26—30 .....	17.6	29.4
31—35 .....	17.4	29.0
36—40 .....	28.1	31.2
41—45 .....	16.5	21.2
46—50 .....	24.5	15.1
51—55 .....	42.9	4.8
56—60 .....	21.9	18.7
Over 60.....	28.2	12.8

<b>B. — Store B</b>		
Present Age	Percentage of Employees	
	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Under 26 .....	12.5	37.5
26—30 .....	16.9	38.5
31—35 .....	20.9	22.0
36—40 .....	14.4	25.6
41—45 .....	23.7	21.1
46—50 .....	22.5	19.7
51—55 .....	29.8	19.3
56—60 .....	44.0	8.0
Over 60.....	28.6	14.3

In relation to the above tables, if sales ability were equally distributed among employees in each age group, 25 per cent of each age group would be found in each of the four quartiles. Tables 2A and 2B underline the favourable performance position of the older workers, illustrated in Tables 1A and 1B, by showing that in fact the various age groups showed disproportionately high or low groupings at different points along the performance scale. Thus, a disproportionately high number of employees aged 51 to 55 (42.9 per cent) were in the highest quartile and a disproportionately low concentration (only 4.8 per cent) were in the lowest quartile. In contrast, employees in the under-26 group showed a nearly opposite pattern: only 5.5 per cent were in the highest quartile, and 42.6 per cent were in the lowest quartile.

#### **Sales Performance and Age at Hiring**

The relation between sales performance and hiring age was also examined, and is illustrated by the following two tables. The table for Store A indicates that individuals hired above the age of 40 had average scores at least as good as those hired at a younger age. In the case of Store B the highest performance score was recorded by employees hired

between the ages of 41 and 45. It would appear that the performance of employees hired over the age of 45 was the same as or slightly better than the performance of those hired below the age of 26, and about the same as or slightly worse than employees hired between the ages of 25 and 40. The over-all picture presented by these tables indicates a comparison quite favourable to those hired over the age of 45.

**Table 3 – Sales Performance and Age at Hiring**

**A. – Store A**

Hiring Age	No. of Employees	Average Performance
Under 21.....	36	2.3
21-25 .....	67	2.3
26-30 .....	77	2.4
31-35 .....	88	2.6
36-40 .....	91	2.5
41-45 .....	68	2.6
46-50 .....	44	2.4
Over 50 .....	18	2.8
<b>All ages .....</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>2.4</b>

**B. – Store B**

Hiring Age	No. of Employees	Average Performance
Under 21 .....	60	2.3
21-25 .....	67	2.5
26-30 .....	104	2.4
31-35 .....	112	2.5
36-40 .....	80	2.5
41-45 .....	55	2.6
46-50 .....	26	2.3
Over 50 .....	25	2.3
<b>All ages .....</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>2.5</b>

**Sales Performance and Experience**

The tendency for performance to increase with age, as shown in the “present age” tables (Tables 1 and 2) and to a lesser extent in the “hiring age” tables (Table 3), should be interpreted with care because the experience factor (length of service) has not been eliminated. In other words, on the basis of these tables it might be concluded that better performance was due, not to age as such, but simply to longer experience on the job. The following two sets of tables, 4 and 5, show that performance did improve with service and that, as might be expected, the average older sales clerk had more service than the average younger clerk.

**Table 4 – Sales Performance and Length of Service**

**A. – Store A**

Years of Service with Store A	No. of Employees	Average Performance
Less than 3 .....	162	2.1
3 to less than 6 .....	125	2.6
6 to less than 11 .....	93	2.6
11 years or more.....	109	2.7
<b>All periods of service.....</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>2.4</b>



### B. — Store B

Years of Service with Store B	No. of Employees	Average Performance
Less than 3 .....	182	2.3
3 to less than 6 .....	97	2.2
6 to less than 11 .....	121	2.6
11 years or more .....	129	2.7
<b>All periods of service.....</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>2.5</b>

**Table 5 — Present Age and Length of Service**

### A. — Store A

Present Age	No. of Employees	Per Cent with Service of 6 Years or More
Under 26 .....	54	3.7
26-30 .....	51	17.6
31-35 .....	69	15.9
36-40 .....	64	31.3
41-45 .....	85	34.1
46-50 .....	53	56.6
51-55 .....	42	83.3
56-60 .....	32	90.6
Over 60 .....	39	94.9
<b>All ages .....</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>41.3</b>

### B. — Store B

Present Age	No. of Employees	Per Cent with Service of 6 Years or More
Under 26 .....	40	20.0
26-30 .....	65	38.5
31-35 .....	91	29.7
36-40 .....	90	41.1
41-45 .....	76	57.9
46-50 .....	71	63.4
51-55 .....	57	96.5
56-60 .....	25	60.0
Over 60 .....	14	35.7
<b>All ages .....</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>47.3</b>

The following set of tables deals with the relation between hiring age and length of service with each store.

**Table 6 — Age at Hiring and Length of Service**

### A. — Store A

Hiring Age	No. of Employees	Per Cent with Service of 6 Years or More
Under 26 .....	103	34.0
26-30 .....	77	35.0
31-35 .....	88	41.0
36-40 .....	91	46.0
41-60 .....	130	53.0
<b>All ages .....</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>41.3</b>

### B. — Store B

Hiring Age	No. of Employees	Per Cent with Service of 6 Years or More
Under 26 .....	127	70.1
26-30 .....	104	54.8
31-35 .....	112	44.6
36-40 .....	80	42.5
41-60 .....	106	28.3
<b>All ages .....</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>47.3</b>

Tables 6A and 6B appear to indicate exactly opposite trends regarding the possibility of employees of various hiring ages remaining with the respective companies. For example, Table 6A would appear to show that for Store A the chances of employees remaining with the company for six years or more increase as the age at hiring increases; whereas, in Store B, these chances seem to decrease as the age at hiring increases. However, there are at least two relevant factors which must be considered here as possible explanations for this discrepancy between the two stores.

The first qualifying factor concerns the hiring policy of Store B. In the period immediately following World War II, fairly rigid hiring age limits were in effect: 40 was the hiring age limit for men, and 35 for women. Since 1953, when the policy was changed, store officials have been authorized to hire female employees up to the age of 60 and male employees up to the age of 65. This means that, in all probability, a heavy proportion of the employees in the starting age group 41-60 (and, to a lesser extent, in the starting age group 36-40), as shown in Table 6B, were hired in recent years and had had **no opportunity to build up six years of service.**

Furthermore, the change in hiring policy meant that after 1953 the number of newly-hired employees under the age of 26 was less in relation to all new hirings than had been the case when there were restrictions on hiring older people. Since the rate of turnover is highest in the first few years of employment, especially among younger people, many of the under-26 people who were hired after 1953 left their jobs before 1956. This meant that the group of employees hired under age 26 before 1953, and remaining with the company, constituted a high percentage of all employees whose hiring age was less than 26.

In other words, because of the effects of the change in Company policy, the figures shown in Table 6B may well present a distorted picture of the service record of employees in the upper and lower starting age groups.

Another factor, perhaps less important, should also be kept in mind. It is quite possible that differences in the cultural background of the employees in the two stores produce a relation between hiring age and length of service that differs in some respects from that prevailing in stores located elsewhere in Canada. In an industry heavily weighted by female employees, social factors such as differences in education, in average ages of marriage and maternity, in attitudes towards married women in employment, could have significant effects on turnover and other patterns of employment.

#### **Sales Performance Related to Both Age and Experience**

In the following tables (7A and 7B) it is possible to examine the combined effect on performance of age and service. The bracketed figures indicate the number of employees represented by each average performance score.

**Table 7 – Sales Performance, Hiring Age and Length of Service****A. – Store A**

Hiring Age	Average Performance According to Years of Service				
	Less than 3	3 to less than 6	6 to less than 11	11 to less than 16	16 or more
Under 26.....	2.0 (46)	2.3 (22)	2.2 (13)	2.5 ( 6)	2.9 (16)
26–30 .....	2.1 (32)	2.4 (18)	2.4 (10)	2.4 (10)	3.3 ( 7)
31–35 .....	2.2 (33)	2.6 (25)	3.1 (12)	3.0 ( 6)	3.0 (12)
36–40 .....	2.3 (26)	2.5 (23)	2.7 (23)	2.7 (11)	2.3 ( 8)
41–45 .....	2.1 (21)	2.7 (23)	2.9 (16)	2.7 ( 6)	2.5 ( 2)
46–50 .....	1.8 ( 4)	2.5 ( 8)	2.4 (15)	2.6 (15)	1.5 ( 2)
Over 50 .....	—	3.3 ( 6)	2.0 ( 4)	2.9 ( 8)	—

**B. – Store B**

Hiring Age	Average Performance According to Years of Service				
	Less than 3	3 to less than 6	6 to less than 11	11 to less than 16	16 or more
Under 26 .....	1.9 (27)	2.1 (21)	2.6 (35)	2.5 (12)	2.7 (32)
26–30 .....	2.1 (32)	2.1 (15)	2.5 (26)	2.8 (11)	2.7 (20)
31–35 .....	2.2 (43)	2.5 (19)	2.8 (22)	2.7 (12)	3.0 (16)
36–40 .....	2.4 (32)	2.4 (14)	2.5 (17)	2.6 (11)	2.7 ( 6)
41–45 .....	2.5 (19)	2.2 (13)	2.8 (15)	3.1 ( 7)	3.0 ( 1)
46–50 .....	2.4 (13)	2.0 ( 8)	2.3 ( 4)	3.0 ( 1)	—
Over 50 .....	2.5 (16)	2.1 ( 7)	1.5 ( 2)	—	—

The tables, read from left to right for each hiring age, give an indication of the combined effect on performance of age and service, since age increases with service. In the case of Store A (7A), the performance of groups representing a hiring age in the twenties increases right across the table, whereas the performance of groups with a later hiring age levels out or declines beyond a certain point.

The position is somewhat different in the case of Store B. Table 7B indicates no “levelling-off” effect similar to that shown in Table 7A. Except in the case of the groups representing a hiring age of over 45, the highest performance scores apply to employees covered by the last two columns – those representing the longest periods of service – and there is a general tendency for performance to improve as service increases. Employees hired after the age of 45 recorded their highest performance scores within the shortest period of service. This might be taken to mean that, in recent years, the company has managed to recruit a better kind of employee in this age group than it was formerly able to do. Alternatively, it might mean that the performance of employees hired after age 45 tends to decline after a few years of service. The validity of either of these interpretations is not certain, however, because of the small number of employees hired after 45 who had more than 3 years service.

In the final set of tables an effort is made to isolate the effect of age on performance from the effect of service on performance.

**Table 8 – Sales Performance, Present Age and Length of Service**

**A. – Store A**

Present Age	Average Performance According to Years of Service				
	Less than 3	3 to less than 6	6 to less than 11	11 to less than 16	16 or more
Under 26.....	1.9 (40)	2.3 (12)	1.0 ( 2)	—	—
26–30 .....	2.1 (29)	2.5 (13)	2.6 ( 8)	4.0 ( 1)	—
31–35 .....	2.3 (36)	2.5 (22)	1.9 ( 8)	2.0 ( 3)	—
36–40 .....	2.2 (24)	2.6 (20)	2.9 (10)	2.3 ( 7)	3.0 ( 3)
41–45 .....	2.1 (28)	2.7 (28)	2.4 (18)	2.9 ( 8)	2.0 ( 3)
46–50 .....	2.0 ( 4)	2.6 (19)	2.9 (19)	2.4 ( 7)	2.8 ( 4)
51–55 .....	2.0 ( 1)	2.7 ( 6)	3.0 (17)	3.0 ( 9)	3.3 ( 9)
56–60 .....	—	3.7 ( 3)	2.1 ( 9)	2.8 (10)	2.0 (10)
Over 60.....	—	2.5 ( 2)	1.0 ( 2)	2.5 (17)	3.0 (18)

**B. – Store B**

Present Age	Average Performance According to Years of Service				
	Less than 3	3 to less than 6	6 to less than 11	11 to less than 16	16 or more
Under 26.....	1.8 (21)	2.1 (11)	2.7 ( 7)	1.0 ( 1)	—
26–30 .....	2.0 (29)	2.0 (11)	2.5 (23)	2.5 ( 2)	—
31–35 .....	2.5 (43)	2.3 (21)	2.7 (17)	2.3 ( 6)	2.8 ( 4)
36–40 .....	2.2 (36)	2.4 (17)	2.5 (24)	3.0 ( 7)	2.5 ( 6)
41–45 .....	2.5 (20)	2.4 (12)	2.7 (16)	2.7 (12)	2.4 (16)
46–50 .....	2.6 (14)	2.3 (12)	2.6 (20)	2.8 (12)	2.4 (13)
51–55 .....	2.0 ( 6)	2.0 ( 7)	2.9 (12)	2.7 (11)	2.9 (21)
56–60 .....	2.6 ( 9)	2.2 ( 6)	1.0 ( 1)	4.0 ( 2)	3.4 (12)
Over 60.....	2.8 ( 4)	—	2.0 ( 1)	3.0 ( 1)	3.3 ( 3)

Here, service is the same for each age group as the columns are read from top to bottom. The tables do not appear to present any clear-cut pattern. However, close examination of the figures suggests that employees in their forties and fifties had a performance record as good as or better than that of younger employees, irrespective of experience. In Table 8A the columns relating to service of less than 3 and more than 15 years are of limited value, since average performance scores do not exist for some of the age groups or encompass only a small number of employees. Even in these incomplete columns, however, the performance of the older age groups would appear to compare favourably with that of younger employees. More specifically, in three other columns, representing service of from 3 to 5, 6 to 10, and 11 to 15 years, employees in their forties and fifties are shown to have had performance scores that were on the whole superior to those of younger employees. However, there is evidence that after reaching a peak in the years between 51 and 55 there was some levelling of performance beyond that point. Generally, the same picture is maintained in Table 8B, relating to Store B.

Age is held constant as the figures are read from left to right. Tables 8A and 8B show tendencies for performance scores to jump markedly in the groups of service between 3 to 5 years in the case of Store A and between 6 to 10 years for Store B. Beyond these points performance scores tend to continue to rise but at a reduced rate, and/or to level off and then, in some age groups, to decline. It can be seen that the improvement in performance that accompanies increasing service seems to apply at least as much to employees in their late forties and early fifties as to those in younger age groups.

## PREFERENCES EXPRESSED BY SUPERVISORS

Departmental supervisors (managers or assistant managers) were interviewed in thirteen departments in one of the stores. This opinion tended to support the statistically-based conclusions, with certain qualifications. The great majority either stated a definite preference for employees over the age of 40 or 45 or expressed general satisfaction with their sales performance in relation to that of younger employees. Older employees were generally preferred, according to opinions expressed, because of a greater consistency of performance, a more highly developed sense of responsibility, a more settled attitude toward their jobs and, most important, a greater ability to inspire confidence in the customer. Several supervisors said that older employees were less inclined than younger employees to neglect their "housekeeping" (i.e., the care of stock) while pursuing sales.

The tendency to favour older employees on grounds of sales performance was not unqualified in all cases. Several supervisors referred to the spur provided to their staff by the drive and energy of younger employees. It was pointed out that, although the average performance of older employees might be higher than that of younger employees, the latter group normally provided the pool from which supervisory and managerial personnel were drawn. In one or two cases, reference was made to the fact that customers preferred to be served by younger clerks in buying some types of merchandise.

One department manager said that, although they inspired confidence in the customer, employees over the age of 45 tended to be slower than younger men because of the exertion required to climb up and down ladders to get at the stock. While expressing satisfaction with the sales performance of the small number of older employees on their staff, supervisors from one of the "glamour" departments stated a definite preference for young women as sales clerks.

There was no consensus about the peak age of performance. Most supervisors said that they had not discerned a peak age. However, a number stated that there was some tendency for performance to fall off slightly after the age of 55.

Comments made during the interviews suggested that, in the average department, it takes a new clerk between three and six months to reach a reasonable level of sales competence, and that the tendency for performance to increase with service is quite noticeable for the first year or two. One or two supervisors expressed the opinion that employees hired after the age of 40 tended to learn faster than younger entrants.