

3. Physical Examinations

Stringent physical examinations may screen out the older worker with any medical history. Even some of the younger workers cannot pass the physicals--on one order 12 people were rejected, most of them under 40. Local office staff feel that physical requirements for some jobs are too rigid, and constitute a form of "hidden discrimination" against the older worker.

The following comment by the manager of a local office in a mountain community is typical of areas where physical capacity is at a premium in the labor market.

"The industry here is lumber. Mills will keep their help up to age 60--this is not in the union contract--because of the insurance. The worst thing here is back injuries. If a man injures his back, he is just out of the labor market. They sometimes lead to long, involved workmen's compensation cases, and the employers don't like that."

4. Wages

In general, wages offered to older workers are at the going rate for the occupation, and in fact premium wages may be offered to a worker with long and specialized experience. However, usual rates of pay are low for some jobs which employers and interviewers alike tend to consider as "older worker occupations"--for instance, room clerk, custodian, building watchman, or parking lot attendant. Low wages for domestic workers in some locations affect the earning capacity of many older women.

Older Worker Specialists feel that some placement interviewers tend to consider a job paying \$1.25 per hour as "something for the older worker". This was borne out by the response of many interviewers to the question: "In which jobs do you find it easiest to place older workers?" Low-paid service occupations for both men and women were almost invariably mentioned, while professional jobs were generally cited as among the most difficult for the placement of older workers.

Most local offices receive some substandard orders, and on some of these employers are undoubtedly angling for the older worker. In one medium-sized community with a large number of retired professional people, but few job openings in these classifications, the comment was made that "some employers think a pensioner should work for less money. They want to pay \$200 a month for a \$700 man." Some employers make special arrangements with pensioners to keep their earnings under the amount allowed by Social Security.