Do Older Workers Who Experience Age Discrimination Leave?: Self-Reported Age Discrimination and Turnover Intention
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Abstract
The ageing baby boomer population is expected to trigger a significant increase in the proportion of the retired population relative to the working age population in the near future in developed countries. It is expected that this burgeoning older population will give rise to significant pressures on the social support system. It is important to understand the reasons older workers exit the labour market so that policymakers can develop targeted social policies that facilitate their voluntary continuation in the labour force so as to lessen the expected load on the social support system.

Most of the empirical literature on discrimination focuses on gender and race based discrimination. There is gap in the empirical literature exploring age discrimination faced by Canadian workers.

The data are drawn from the public use microdata file of the Public Service Employee Survey, 2002, to examine the effect of perceived age discrimination on turnover intention. This survey questionnaire collected information on work environment, skills and career development, harassment and discrimination, service delivery and labour management relations. A unique feature of the data set is that respondents were asked about their experiences of age based discrimination in the workplace.

I estimate the association between self-reported age discrimination and turnover intention with a logistic regression model. I first develop a model using all workers from the sample to examine the effect of individual and job characteristics on perceived age discrimination. I find that respondents who self-report experiencing age discrimination have higher turnover intention than respondents who do not. The results suggest that voice institutions in the unionized work environment may not adequately handle age discrimination allegations or that employees may not exercise their voice for fear of reprisals. The results also suggest that firms are not presently targeting older workers for anti-discrimination policies or that such policies are not effective. I also find a significant u-shaped association between self-reported age discrimination and turnover intention by age cohort and the size of the association is particularly large for younger workers.