



The workplace think tank.

The Kentucky Aging Workforce Study

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Introduction:

Twenty-three percent of Kentucky's population will be over 50 by 2020. Research indicates that two thirds of older adults plan to work well into traditional retirement age. Yet, there is significant underemployment and unemployment among older workers in our state, and workforce development systems are ill-prepared to readily assist older adults seeking employment. Moreover, there is some evidence that employers discriminate based on age. This is despite the fact that research suggests that older workers are more engaged, satisfied, loyal, and committed to their jobs than younger workers. Research also indicates that older people who stay engaged in employment are more likely to have better health than those that are not connected to the labor force.

To address this looming crisis, the Institute for Workplace Innovation at the University of Kentucky, in collaboration with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, is conducting a study of Kentucky employers to gain a better understanding of the issues and challenges they are facing or expect to face as their workforce ages.

Goals:

The primary focus will be on examining:

- current practices and policies employers use related to employee safety, health and engagement;
- needs employers expect to have as the population continues to age; and
- promising practices for creating healthy and productive workplaces for older workers.

Study Description:

The study will be designed and conducted in partnership with leaders within Kentucky's primary industries: retail, services (banking and finance), government, energy/trade/transportation, manufacturing and others. We expect to conduct 4-8 focus groups with Kentucky-based employers and 8-12 key informant interviews with industry and policy leaders.

Questions for the focus groups/key informant interviews will concentrate on the following areas:

- attitudes and challenges regarding the aging workforce;
- current workplace policies/programs that impact older workers;
- barriers to creating an age-friendly workplace;
- safety and health issues of an aging workforce; and
- future needs employers expect to face as the workforce continues to age.

Findings from this study will be presented in a "white paper" on Kentucky's Aging Workforce, and will be used to inform workforce and economic development policy.

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