

Older workers do not necessarily perform worse

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Do older staff members earn more than they deserve? Dutch research carried out into productivity and incomes among older workers by labour economist Jan van Ours (Tilburg University) shows that the difference in performance between older and younger employees is negligible.

It is generally thought that most employees reach their peak at some time between the ages of forty and fifty. After that, their [productivity](#) gradually declines.

According to Professor Jan van Ours, this decline in performance was always assumed to be so self-evident that no one carried out research to find out if it was actually the case. In fact, he himself decided to undertake research into a group of runners and discovered that physical performance begins to decline from around the age of forty. But when

he investigated whether older economists also publish less in scientific journals, he discovered that there was no noticeable fall-off in productivity. Van Ours also found that older employees in manufacturing tend to produce a little less than they are actually paid for. For younger workers, the opposite is true.

Van Ours' research confirms that productivity rates for physically demanding work in particular decline somewhat with age, but for work of a more intellectual nature, age does not matter much. Generally, [older workers](#) earn a little more relative to the level at which they perform, but this difference is negligible says Van Ours. The biggest problem, to which Van Ours thinks a solution should be found, is that older workers find it difficult to get another job if they find themselves out of work.

Provided by Tilburg University

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