

Older Workers and COVID-19: The Policy Response

This Time It's Different

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Despite glitches, relief measures have helped...

- Direct Economic Impact Payments (EIP)
- Expanded UI access, benefits (PUA)*
- Small biz Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)*
- Short-Time Compensation (STC)*

*Especially helpful to older workers.

Measures urgently needed:

- Extending EIP, PUA*, PPP* as long as needed
- More emphasis on STC*
- Aid to state & local governments*
- Paid sick leave, health coverage*
- Health & safety protections for workers*
- Housing assistance (incl. for self-quarantine*)

*Especially helpful to older workers.

How things play out should shape longer-term policy response:

- How effectively did we contain the outbreak?
 - Will older workers be afraid to go back to work?
 - Will they have lingering health problems?
- How effective was the fiscal response?
 - V- or L-Shaped Recession?
- Will employers discriminate when reopening?

Ensuring that older workers *who want to* can safely return to work

- Short-Time Compensation
- Expand EITC for childless workers
- Enforce ADEA
- OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard
- Hire older contact tracers
- Texas model: age as risk factor allowing older workers to refuse work, draw unemployment

➔ Targeted policies for older workers may be necessary but could backfire.

Bottom line:

Workers shouldn't have to put their lives at risk just to make ends meet. Those in essential jobs should be paid for the risks they take.