



An Age-Old Problem

Imagine living in a country of 40 million and discovering a strange phenomenon. One by one, people you know begin to lose hope for their future. At some point, the vast majority ends up that way. And, worse, they have every reason to feel that way.

Judging by a recent and somewhat persuasive report, this happens to be the sad state of affairs for a class of Americans this size whom you undoubtedly know: workers over the age of 50. Sure, the trials and tribulations of this class get a lot of attention—from the pensions they no longer get to their struggles to become digitally savvy. But this new report takes their story to a whole new level.

The report, by the news outlet ProPublica and the think tank Urban Institute, analyzed a survey that has been tracking for decades the lives of thousands of Americans from the time they turn 50. According to the report, some 56 percent reported they have been laid off at least once or left jobs under financially damaging circumstances since turning a half-century old. The same report also found that only one in 10 who managed to return to work after these career “disruptions” ever earned what they did before.

Of course, it isn’t as dim as it may seem; the study goes up to 2016 and since then

the unemployment rate for older Americans has sometimes been better than the general population. But the report concludes that a lot of older workers are being pushed out of their jobs, sometimes with unwanted early retirement “packages” or offers of replacement jobs that pay too little. Who would have guessed that our near-golden years could be so risky to our careers?

Certainly, corporate leaders have a responsibility, legally but also to their financial benefit, to recognize the value of experienced workers. But, dare I say

it, those of us who have reached a certain stage—call it age—have an obligation to show our relevancy at work as well. To prove that our skill sets have been updated and that we have transformed as much as our companies have. And, if not,

then not be afraid to do some job-hopping for a few years—the same described in our cover story—until we land in a place where we can.

I worry when I hear about anyone clinging to a current job that isn’t working out. My advice, and that of many pros, is always the same: whether you are 21 or 51, in top management or below, the winning game is to keep growing, to learn more, and to upgrade skills. Sure, that isn’t always easy. But in my mind, it’s a great way to keep our career hopes alive. ▀

