

Professor lends age discrimination expertise to US commission

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Patrick Button is co-author of a study that sent out 40,000 fictitious resumes that contained indicators of the applicant's gender and age such as name, high school graduation year or years of experience. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Patrick Button, an assistant professor of economics at Tulane University, recently demonstrated to the world that [older women often face discrimination](#) in today's job market. Button shared his research findings on the matter this week with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) during a public meeting at agency headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Button is co-author of a study that sent out 40,000 fictitious resumes that contained indicators of the applicant's gender and age such as name, high school graduation year or years of experience. While the resumes were fake, the job postings were real.

"The commission heard about the study and they thought it was important to their work," said Button of why he was invited to testify before the EEOC. "Older workers are working longer and hiring discrimination has a direct effect on the ability for them to do this."

The study found that older men also experienced discrimination, but older women experienced it at a higher rate.

During his testimony, Button discussed the resume study in addition to other issues like the inadequacy of existing age discrimination laws in helping women. He and four other invited experts—all experienced in working with the country's aging population—fielded questions from commissioners.

"After I gave my 7-minute testimony, the commissioners asked me to discuss further aspects of my study," said Button, whose goal was to drive home the intersection of sex-plus-age discrimination. "They had lots of questions for me and they were interested in what kinds of research would be helpful going forward."

The meeting's theme centered around the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) and was titled, "The ADEA @ 50 - More Relevant Than Ever."

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