

**Protecting Older Workers  
Against Discrimination Act:  
A Survey of Louisiana Voters Ages 50+**

**May 2014**



# **Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act: A Survey of Louisiana Voters Ages 50+**

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**AARP**

**AARP Research**

**601 E Street NW**

**Washington, DC 20049**

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## **Acknowledgements**

AARP collected the data for this project through a survey administered by Woelfel Research Inc. Survey data was collected via telephone March 8-13, 2014 among a random sample of 501 registered voters ages 50 and over in Louisiana. The margin of error for a sample of 501 randomly selected respondents is +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Cheryl L. Lampkin of AARP's Research Center wrote the report, with assistance from S. Kathi Brown, Linda Barrett, and Jennifer Leslie. Inquiries about this report should be directed to AARP's Media Relations at (202) 434-2560.

# ***Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act: A Survey of Louisiana Voters Ages 50+ May 2014***

## **Key Survey Findings**

- ü About three in ten older Louisiana voters report that they or someone they know has recently experienced age discrimination in the workplace.
- ü About nine in ten say it is important for Congress to take action and restore workplace protections against age discrimination (91%).
- ü Across party and ideological lines, they support the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act (POWADA) (84%).
- ü Over eight in ten say they want their Member of Congress to support POWADA (83%).

Since the mid-1980s, older workers have been working longer. The decline of traditional pensions, inadequate savings, and now the losses in jobs and wealth due to the Great Recession mean that millions of older Americans face a future of economic insecurity unless they are able to work. The unemployment rate for older workers has soared in recent years, and once out of work, older jobseekers experience far longer spells of unemployment – nearly a year, on average – than their younger counterparts. Age discrimination is one of the significant reasons why it takes so much longer for older jobseekers to become reemployed. It can also pose barriers to those who want to stay employed or advance in their jobs.

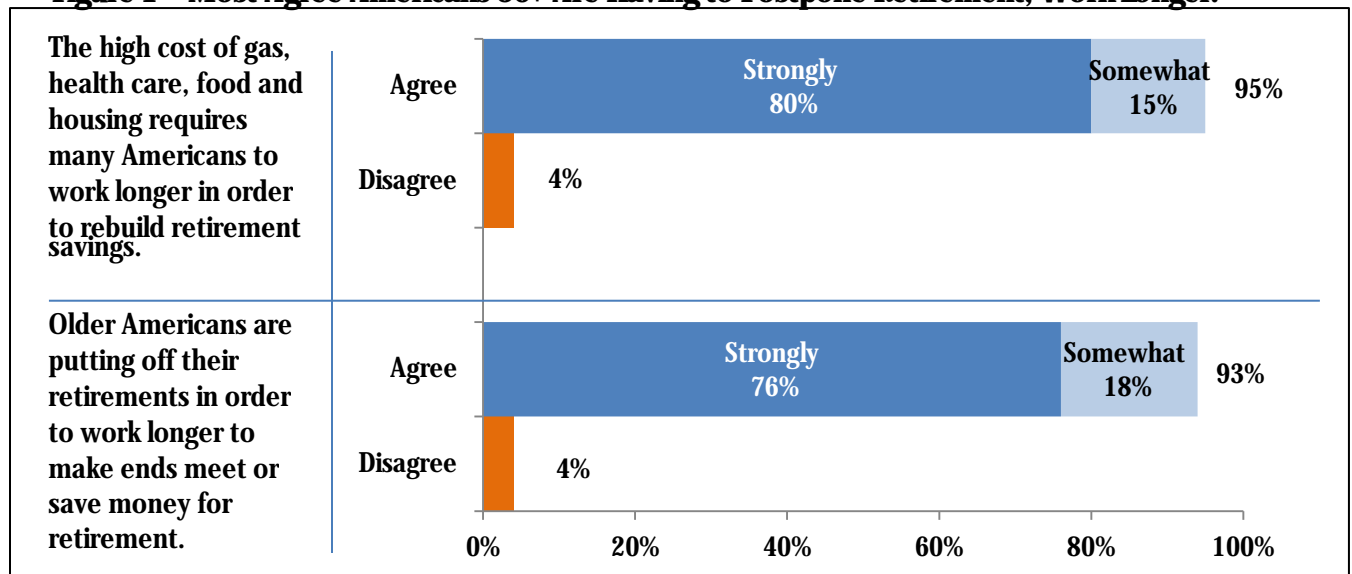
In 2009, the US Supreme Court changed the rules and decided that workers who assert they were discriminated against because of their age would have to do more than prove that age was *one factor* behind how they were treated, which had been the law for everyone for decades. Unlike the rules that apply to workers who have been discriminated against due to race, sex, nationality, and religion, older workers must now prove that age was the *decisive* factor, making it far more difficult to prove their case. A bipartisan group of lawmakers has introduced legislation, the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act (POWADA), to restore the previous legal rules and protections that existed before the 2009 decision.

To determine public views on older workers, age discrimination, and the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act (POWADA), AARP commissioned Woelfel Research Inc. to conduct a statewide survey in Louisiana. The survey was conducted by telephone from March 8 through March 13, 2014, with a random sample of 501 registered voters age 50 and over across Louisiana. Respondents were screened to ensure that they were ages 50+ and that they vote “always,” “almost always,” or “most of the time” “when there is a general election, such as for your state’s senator or member of Congress.” Results were weighted by age and gender. The margin of error for a sample of 501 randomly selected respondents is +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The full annotated questionnaire appears in the Appendix.

## **Finding: High Cost of Living, Making Ends Meet, and Saving for Retirement Require Americans 50+ to Work Longer**

Ninety-five percent of respondents agree that the high cost of gas, health care, food, and housing requires many Americans to work longer in order to rebuild their retirement savings, with 80% strongly agreeing (figure 1). Furthermore, 93% agree that older Americans are putting off retirement either to make ends meet or to save money for retirement (figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1 – Most Agree Americans 50+ Are Having to Postpone Retirement, Work Longer.**



<sup>1</sup> All percentages in the report are rounded to the nearest whole percentage point. Therefore, the sum of the individual rounded percentages may differ slightly from the actual results. For example, the percent of respondents who either “strongly” or “somewhat” agree that “older Americans are putting off retirement ...” is 93 percent even though the share who “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” round to 76% and 18%, respectively.

### **Finding: Three in Five Non-Retirees Are Not Yet Able to Retire (61%); 30% of Retirees May Need to Return to Work**

Only 28% of non-retirees say they have or are close to having enough to retire comfortably. Sixty-one percent (61%) say they will have to work for a number of years or are unsure when they will be able to retire (figure 2). Among retirees who are not currently working at all, 30% say that they may need to return to work.

<b>Figure 2 – Which of the following best describes your current financial situation?</b>	
<b>Non-Retirees (n=183)</b>	
You have or are close to having enough to retire comfortably.	28%
You have to work for a number of years to save enough to retire comfortably.	24%
You are unsure when you will be able to retire.	37%
<b>Retirees (n=264)</b>	
You have already retired but may need to return to work.	30%**
You saved enough prior to retirement to live comfortably.	59%**

Note: The base (n) shown for each column is unweighted. All percentages are weighted.

\*\* The responses shown are among retirees who are not currently working at all. The question was asked of all retirees, including those who consider themselves to be “retired and working at least part-time” as well as retirees who are not working at all. The responses among all retirees are displayed in the annotated questionnaire. (See Appendix.)

### **Finding: Four in Five Are Concerned Age Could Be an Obstacle to Finding Work**

Eighty-four percent of respondents are concerned that their age would be an obstacle to finding work if they had to find a new job in the current economic climate. In fact, 63% say they are “very concerned” (figure 3).

<b>Figure 3 – If you had to find a new job in the current economic climate, how concerned are you that your age would be an obstacle to finding work?</b>	
Very	63%
Somewhat	21%
Not too	7%
Not at all	7%

## **Finding: Seven in Ten Think People Age 50 and Older Face Age Discrimination in the Workplace; 31% Say They or Someone They Know Has Recently Experienced Age Discrimination**

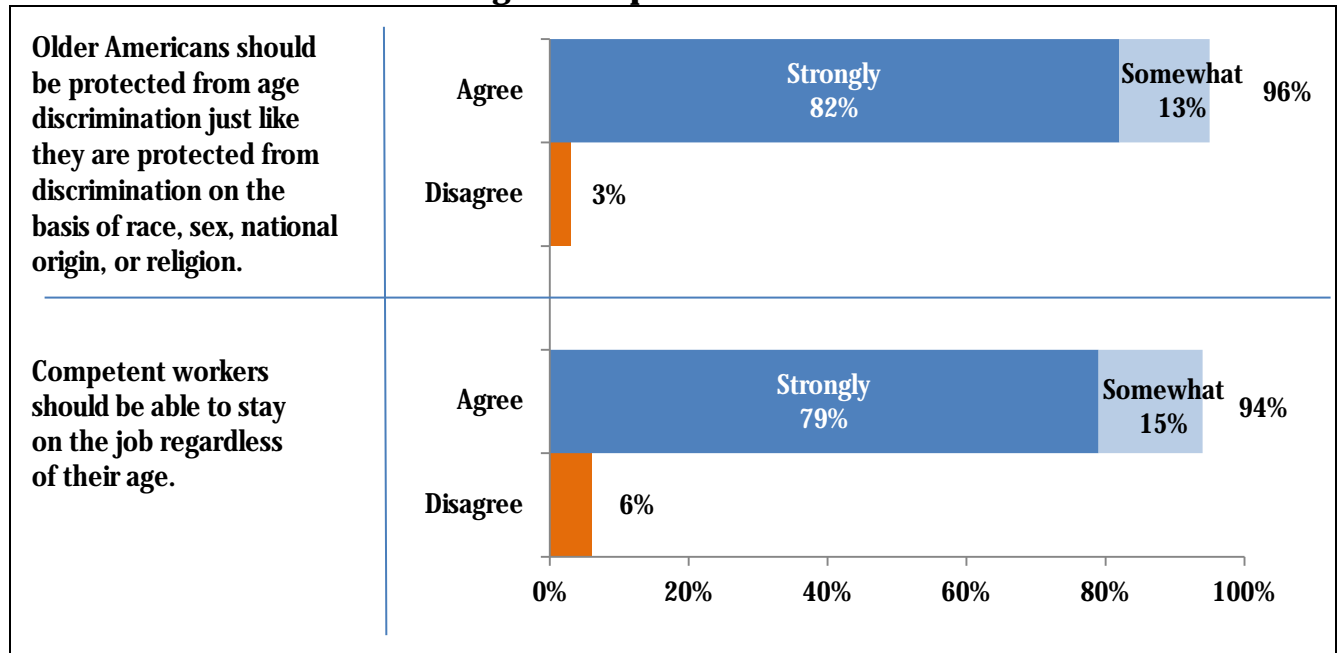
Age discrimination is an issue of concern for Louisiana voters 50 and over. Seventy percent of respondents think that people over age 50 face age discrimination in the workplace. Moreover, 31% report either they personally faced age discrimination in the last four years, or know someone who has, with 5% of total respondents having personally experienced age discrimination in the last four years (figure 4).

<b>Figure 4 – Experience with Age Discrimination</b>			
<b>Based on what you have seen or experienced, do you think people over the age of 50 face age discrimination today in the workplace?</b>		<b>In the last four years, have you or has anyone you know faced age discrimination in the workplace, such as refusal to hire, reduced compensation, or limitations imposed by an employer?</b>	
<b>Yes</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>Co-Worker</b>	<b>3%</b>
		<b>Family/Friend</b>	<b>16%</b>
		<b>More than One</b>	<b>7%</b>
		<b>NO</b>	<b>66%</b>

## Finding: Older Louisiana Voters Feel Strongly That Age Discrimination Should Be Treated on Par with Other Forms of Job Discrimination

More than nine in ten respondents (94%) say that competent workers should be able to stay on the job regardless of their age. Accordingly, a similarly large share (96%) agree that older Americans should be protected from age discrimination just as they are protected from other forms of discrimination, including a 82% majority of respondents who strongly agree (figure 5).

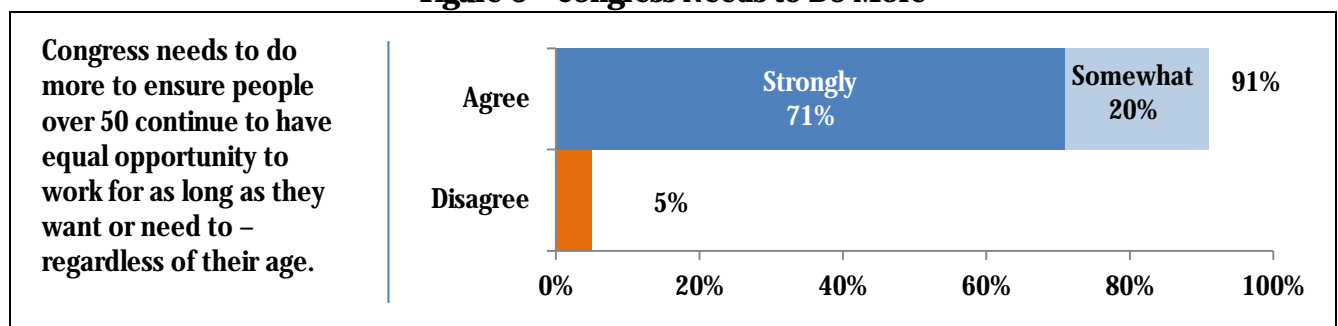
**Figure 5 – Equal Treatment**



## Finding: About Nine in Ten Think Congress Has a Role, Needs to Do More to Ensure Equal Job Opportunity for Americans Age 50+

About nine in ten (91%) agree that Congress needs to do more to ensure that people over 50 continue to have equal opportunity in the workplace,” with 71% strongly agreeing (figure 6).

**Figure 6 – Congress Needs to Do More**



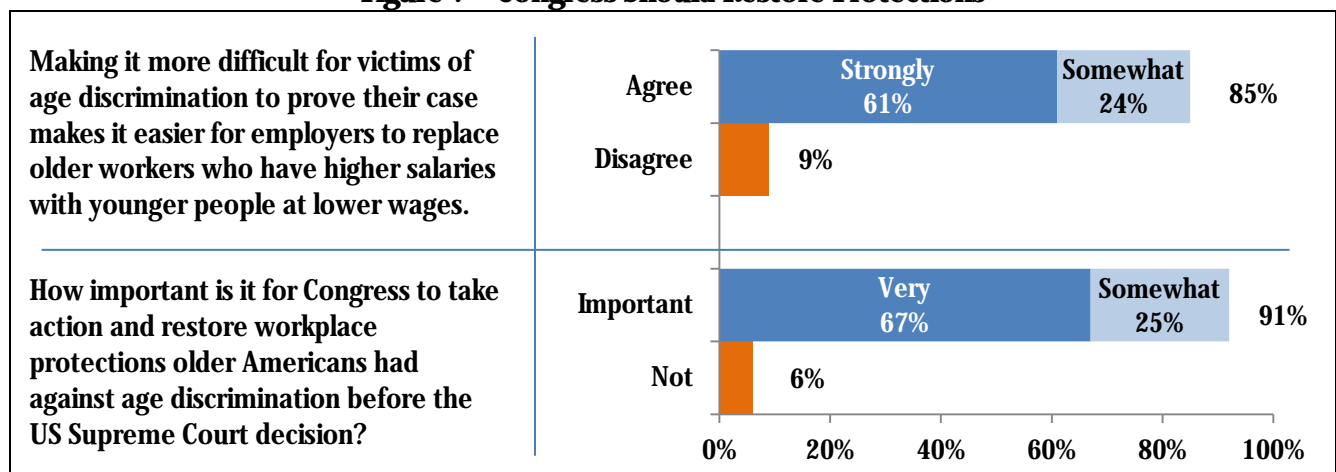


## **Finding: 50+ Voters Are Overwhelmingly Concerned about the Court’s Decision Making It Tougher for Older Workers, and Think It’s Important For Congress to Restore Legal Protections against Age Discrimination**

Respondents were provided a brief description of the 2009 Supreme Court decision that changed the legal standards that apply to age discrimination. **The 50+ public seems to understand the connection between the legal burden on workers challenging age discrimination and employer behavior.** Over 8 in 10 (85%) agree that making it more difficult to prove age discrimination also makes it easier for employers to discriminate, e.g., by replacing older, higher paid workers with younger, lower paid workers.

Moreover, about 9 in 10 (91%) also say that they think it is important for Congress to take action and restore the workplace protections older Americans had against age discrimination before the US Supreme Court decision, with 67% saying that it is very important that Congress take action (figure 7).

**Figure 7 – Congress Should Restore Protections**

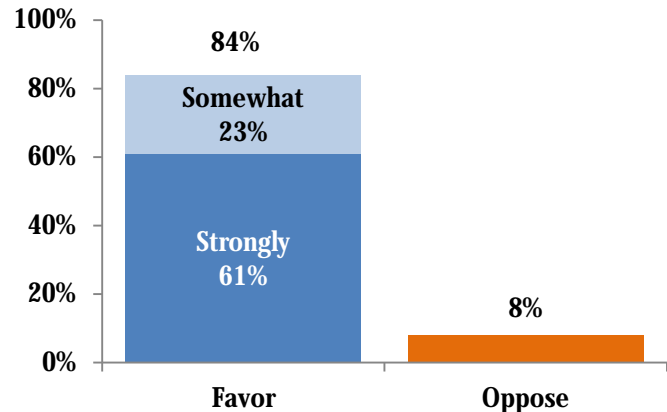


## Finding: 84% Favor the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act

Respondents were provided a brief summary of the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act (POWADA), then asked whether they favor or oppose the act. Eighty-four percent favor the legislation (figure 8). Even more striking, 61% *strongly* favor it.

**Figure 8 – POWADA Favor/Oppose**

A bipartisan group of senators has introduced legislation called the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act. This legislation would reinstate the civil rights protections for older Americans that were limited following the US Supreme Court's decision in 2009. Passing the legislation would restore for older workers the same workplace protections under the law as people who have been discriminated against because of their race, gender, religion, and national origin. Knowing this, would you favor or oppose this legislation?



## Finding: Support for POWADA Crosses Ideological and Party Lines

The support for POWADA is widespread, crossing ideological and party lines (figure 9). Favorable responses are nearly 80% or more across all subgroups, with at least 54% of self-identified conservatives and independents saying they strongly favor the bill.

**Figure 9 – POWADA Favor/Oppose**

	Overall (n=501)	Ideology			Party			Age	
		Lib* (n=81)	Mod (n=116)	Cons (n=258)	Dem (n=254)	Indep* (n=61)	GOP (n=171)	50-64 (n=187)	65+ (n=314)
<b>Total Favor</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>77%</b>
<b>Strongly</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Total Oppose</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>11%</b>

Note: The base (n) shown for each column is unweighted. All percentages are weighted.

\*Due to small cell size, data in columns marked with an asterisk is for directional use only.

## Finding: 83% Want Their Member of Congress to Support POWADA

About four in five respondents, again across ideological and party lines, say their member of Congress should support legislation like POWADA (figure 10).

Figure 10 – Would you want your member of Congress to support legislation like this?							
	Overall (n=501)	Ideology			Party		
		Iib* (n=81)	Mod (n=116)	Cons (n=258)	Dem (n=254)	Indep* (n=61)	GOP (n=171)
Yes	83%	92%	84%	81%	84%	81%	84%
No	8%	6%	6%	9%	10%	14%	5%
Don't know	8%	2%	8%	10%	6%	5%	11%

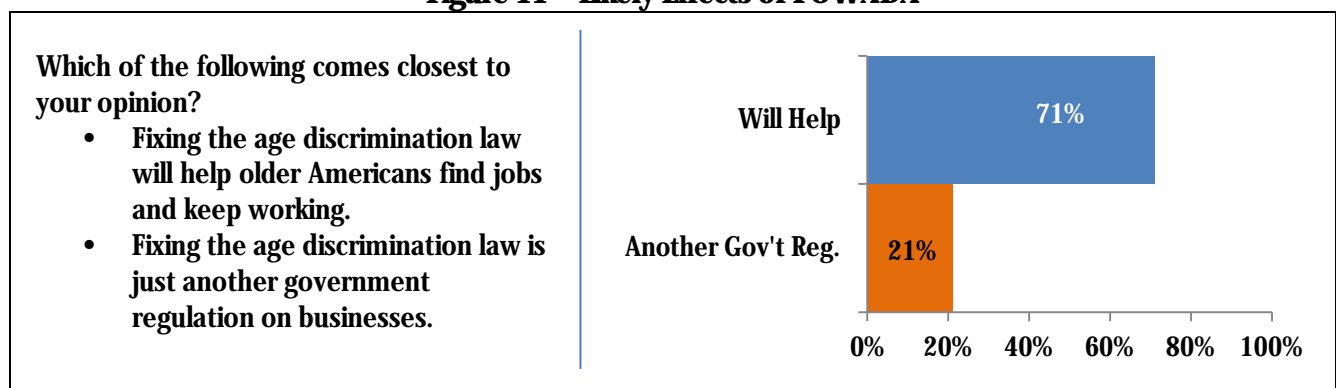
Note: The base (n) shown for each column is unweighted. All percentages are weighted.

\*Due to small cell size, data in columns marked with asterisk is for directional use only.

## Finding: 71% Believe POWADA Will Help Older Americans Find Jobs and Keep Working

Respondents were asked what they thought the effects of POWADA would be. When asked to choose between two possible outcomes, 71% say they think that the bill will help older Americans find jobs and keep working. Only 21% think that its impact would mainly be just another government regulation on businesses (figure 11).

Figure 11 – Likely Effects of POWADA



## Survey Respondent Demographics

A random sample of 501 registered voters age 50 and over in Louisiana was used. Respondents were screened to ensure that they were 50+ and that they vote “always,” “almost always,” or “most of the time” “when there is a general election, such as for your state’s senator or member of Congress.”

Results were weighted by age and gender using Current Population Survey benchmarks for the state of Louisiana.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 12 – Respondent Demographics			
Ideology		Party	
Liberal	17%	Democrat	47%
Moderate	22%	Republican	36%
Conservative	52%	Independent	13%
Age		Gender	
50-64	61%	Male	46%
65+	39%	Female	54%
Employment Status			
Employed	37%	Retired	51%
Full Time	32%	Not Working at All	42%
Part Time	6%	Working at least Part Time	9%
Not Employed	8%	Other	3%
Looking for Work	2%		
Not Looking	7%		

Note: For demographics other than gender and age, percentages do not add to 100% due to responses of “don’t know” and refusals, which are not displayed.

<sup>2</sup> Age weights were developed using CPS benchmarks for the percentage of Louisiana’s registered voters ages 50+ that fall into the following age categories: ages 50-64, 65-74, and 75+. Gender weights were developed using CPS gender benchmarks for the 50+ population in Louisiana (rather than Louisiana’s 50+ registered voters) because gender benchmarks for the state’s 50+ registered voters were not available.

## Appendix—Annotated Questionnaire

*Annotated questionnaire displays the distribution of responses for each question. All percentages are weighted. The base (n) for each question is unweighted.*

Introduction: Good evening. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling from [WRI], a national public opinion firm. This evening we're conducting a survey about public policy issues of interest to people ages 50 and older and we'd like to get your opinions. All answers are confidential and no one will try to sell you anything

**1a. Before we start, is your primary residence in [insert state on list]?**

Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana
N=501	%
Yes	100
No	-

**1. Can you please tell me your current age? [RECORD EXACT AGE]**

	Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana
	N=501	%
1. 50 – 54		14
2. 55 – 59		20
3. 60 – 64		27
4. 65 – 69		13
5. 70 – 74		11
6. 75 – 79		7
7. 80 +		8

**2. When there is a general election, such as for your state's senator or member of Congress, do you always vote, almost always vote, vote most of the time, vote some of the time, hardly ever vote, or never vote?**

	Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana
	N=501	%
1. Always		72
2. Almost always		16
3. Most of the time		12
4. Sometimes		-
5. Hardly ever		-
6. Never		-

**3. If you had to label yourself, would you say you are a liberal, a moderate or a conservative in your political beliefs? IF LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE, PROBE: Is that very or somewhat?**

	Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana
	N=501	%
1. Very liberal		7
2. Somewhat liberal		10
3. Moderate		22
4. Somewhat conservative		23
5. Very conservative		30
6. Don't know		6
7. Refused		2

## Appendix—Annotated Questionnaire

**4. With which political party are you registered or affiliated?**

	Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Republican	36
2.	Democrat	47
3.	Independent/No party	13
4.	Other	-
5.	Don't know	2
6.	Refused	2

**5. In general, how would you describe economic conditions in the country today? Excellent, good, only fair, or poor?**

	Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Excellent	<0.5
2.	Good	11
3.	Only fair	35
4.	Poor	54
5.	Don't know	<0.5
6.	Refused	-

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements . **IF AGREE/DISAGREE:**  
**PROBE:** Is that strongly or somewhat? **ROTATE Qs 6-9**

**6. Competent workers should be able to stay on the job regardless of their age.**

	Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Strongly agree	79
2.	Somewhat agree	15
3.	Somewhat disagree	2
4.	Strongly disagree	4
5.	Don't know	1
6.	Refused	-

**7. Older Americans are putting off their retirements in order to work longer to make ends meet or save money for retirement.**

	Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Strongly agree	76
2.	Somewhat agree	18
3.	Somewhat disagree	2
4.	Strongly disagree	2
5.	Don't know	3
6.	Refused	<0.5

## Appendix—Annotated Questionnaire

- 8. Congress needs to do more to ensure people over 50 continue to have equal opportunity to work for as long as they want or need to—regardless of their age.**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Strongly agree	71
2.	Somewhat agree	20
3.	Somewhat disagree	3
4.	Strongly disagree	2
5.	Don't know	3
6.	Refused	<0.5

- 9. The high cost of gas, health care, food and housing requires many Americans to work longer in order to rebuild their retirement savings.**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Strongly agree	80
2.	Somewhat agree	15
3.	Somewhat disagree	1
4.	Strongly disagree	3
5.	Don't know	1
6.	Refused	<0.5

- 10. Based on what you have seen or experienced, do you think people over the age of 50 face age discrimination today in the workplace?**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Yes	70
2.	No	21
3.	Unsure	9
4.	Refused	<0.5

- 11. If you had to find a new job in the current economic climate, how concerned are you that your age would be an obstacle to finding work – very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Very concerned	63
2.	Somewhat concerned	21
3.	Not too concerned	7
4.	Not at all concerned	7
5.	Don't know	1
6.	Refused	<0.5

## Appendix—Annotated Questionnaire

- 12. In the past four years, have concerns about being 50 or older ever discouraged you from looking for a job or from looking to change jobs?**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Yes	22
2.	No	74
3.	Unsure	3
4.	Refused	1

- 13. Thinking about how you are personally treated in the workplace or have been treated when searching for a job since you turned 50, do you think your age has generally caused the employer to treat you better, worse, or no differently than other workers? If you are not working and have not looked for a job, please say so.**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Better	4
2.	Worse	17
3.	No different	42
4.	Not working	31
5.	Don't know	4
6.	Refused	1

- 14. In the last four years, have you or has anyone you know faced age discrimination in the workplace, such as refusal to hire, reduced compensation, or limitations imposed by an employer? [Read Responses]**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Yes, Self	5
2.	Yes, Co-worker	3
3.	Yes, Family/Friend	16
4.	Yes, more than one of the above	7
5.	No	66
6.	Don't know	3
7.	Refused	<0.5



## Appendix—Annotated Questionnaire

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements . **IF AGREE/DISAGREE**  
**PROBE:** Is that strongly or somewhat? **ROTATE Qs 15-17**

- 15. Making it more difficult for victims of age discrimination to prove their case makes it easier for employers to replace older workers who have higher salaries with younger people at lower wages.**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Strongly agree	61
2.	Somewhat agree	24
3.	Somewhat disagree	4
4.	Strongly disagree	4
5.	Don't know	6
6.	Refused	1

- 16. Unfairly targeting older workers could increase costs for taxpayers because more will need to rely on government safety nets even though they want to work.**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Strongly agree	55
2.	Somewhat agree	26
3.	Somewhat disagree	7
4.	Strongly disagree	5
5.	Don't know	7
6.	Refused	<0.5

- 17. Older Americans should be protected from age discrimination just like they are protected from discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, or religion.**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Strongly agree	82
2.	Somewhat agree	13
3.	Somewhat disagree	1
4.	Strongly disagree	2
5.	Don't know	2
6.	Refused	<0.5

- 18. In 2009 the Supreme Court changed the rules and decided that workers who claim they were discriminated against because of their age would have to do more than prove that age was one factor behind how they were treated, they would have to prove that age was the decisive factor. In your opinion, how important is it for Congress to take action and restore the workplace protections older Americans had against age discrimination before the US Supreme Court decision—Very important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important?**

## Appendix—Annotated Questionnaire

**18. (continued) In your opinion, how important....**

Base: Total Respondents      Louisiana

N=501

%

1.	Very important	67
2.	Somewhat important	25
3.	Not too important	2
4.	Not at all important	4
5.	Don't know	3
6.	Refused	<0.5

**19. In fact, a bi-partisan group of Senators has introduced legislation called the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act. This legislation would reinstate the civil rights protections for older Americans that were limited following the US Supreme Court's decision in 2009. Passing this legislation would restore for older workers the same workplace protections under the law as people who have been discriminated against because of their race, gender, religion and nationality. Knowing this, would you favor or oppose this legislation? PROBE: Is that strongly or somewhat?**

Base: Total Respondents      Louisiana

N=501

%

1.	Strongly favor	61
2.	Somewhat favor	23
3.	Somewhat oppose	4
4.	Strongly oppose	4
5.	Don't know	8
6.	Refused	1

**CONTINUE ASKING ALL:**

**20. Would you want your member of congress to support legislation like this?**

Base: Total Respondents      Louisiana

N=501

%

1.	Yes	83
2.	No	8
3.	Don't know	8
4.	Refused	1

**21. Which of the following comes closest to your opinion?**

Base: Total Respondents

Louisiana

N=501

%

1.	Fixing the age discrimination law will help older Americans find jobs and keep working.	71
2.	Fixing the age discrimination law is just another government regulation on businesses.	21
3.	Don't know	7
4.	Refused	1

## Appendix—Annotated Questionnaire

***Now I'd like to ask you a few questions for statistical purposes only.***

**22. What is your current employment status: READ ALL CHOICES**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Employed full time	32
2.	Employed part time	6
3.	Retired and working at least part time	9
4.	Not employed but looking for work	2
5.	Not employed and not looking for work	7
6.	Student	<0.5
7.	Homemaker	3
8.	Retired and not working at all	42
9.	Don't know	-
10.	Refused	1

**IF ANSWERS 1,2,4,5,6,7 (NOT RETIRED)**

**23A. Which of the following best describes your financial situation? [READ CHOICES]**

Base: Not retired		Louisiana
		N=183
		%
1.	You have or are close to having enough saved to retire comfortably	28
2.	You have to work for a number of years to save enough to retire comfortably	24
3.	You are unsure when you will be able to retire.	37
4.	Don't know	5
5.	Refused	6

**IF ANSWERS 3, 8 (RETIRED and not working at all, or RETIRED and working at least part-time)**

**23B. Which of the following best describes your financial situation? [READ CHOICES]**

Base: Retired		Louisiana
		N=314
		%
1.	You have already retired but may need to return to work.	30
2.	You saved enough prior to retirement to live comfortably.	57
3.	Don't know	9
4.	Refused	4

**CONTINUE ASKING ALL**

**24. Are you currently an A-A-R-P member?**

Base: Total Respondents		Louisiana
		N=501
		%
1.	Yes	41
2.	No	57
3.	Don't know	1
4.	Refused	1

## Appendix—Annotated Questionnaire

**25. What is your current household income?**

	Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana N=501 %
1.	Under \$15,000	13
2.	\$15,001 to \$25,000	10
3.	\$25,001 to \$40,000	15
4.	\$40,001 to \$50,000	8
5.	\$50,001 to \$75,000	12
6.	\$75,001 to \$100,000	8
7.	Over \$100,000	13
8.	Don't know	-
9.	Refused	21

**26. Are you, or is any member of your immediate family, from a Hispanic or Spanish speaking background?**

	Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana N=501 %
1.	Yes	8
2.	No	91
3.	Not sure	-
4.	Refused	2

**27. Which of the following ethnic groups describes you?**

	Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana N=501 %
1.	White or Caucasian	75
2.	Black or African-American	17
3.	Latino, Hispanic or Mexican	1
4.	Asian or Pacific Islander	<0.5
5.	Native American	1
6.	Mixed Race	2
7.	Other	2
8.	Don't know	-
9.	Refused	2

**28. Gender**

	Base: Total Respondents	Louisiana N=501 %
1.	Male	46
2.	Female	54