

## The Title VII ruling and the economy

## Blog

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In the US your boss can no longer fire you if they do not like who you date. That is good news for the US economy.

On 15 June 2020 the US Supreme Court ruled that US firms were not allowed to fire workers if they did not like the gender of their employee's partner. About half the US workforce was employed in states where it had been legal to fire someone for their sexuality. What does this mean economically?

The impact is potentially quite big. Prejudice means that many LGBTQ+ employees chose not to be "out" at work. However, realistic estimates suggest LGBTQ+ people between 8% and 10% of the population. The Supreme Court ruling therefore extends employment security to another 5% of US workers.

There are three economic benefits from this.

Labor mobility should improve. An LGBTQ+ employee faced a higher risk when moving from a state with employment protection to a state employment prejudice. The cost of moving between states is now lower. Mobility will be important with the structural changes of the fourth industrial revolution. Mobility also helps reduce unemployment, as the cost of moving to find work is lower.

Productivity should improve. Diverse firms can more easily move workers to where they are most useful. Previously the risk of prejudice made individuals reluctant to move, either because of their own job security, or their partner's job security. LGBTQ+ employees may be more productive at work, although this is less likely. Fear of losing a job (or fear of being "outed" and then losing a job) causes stress. Stress reduces worker productivity. The problem is that a prejudiced firm is still a prejudiced firm; LGBTQ+ employees may not reduce their stress very much.

The saving behavior of LGBTQ+ people can now change. While there was a risk of being fired because of who you dated, it made sense for an LGBTQ + employee to hold more cash. If prejudice could cost someone their job,

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they needed cash as insurance. If that risk is reduced, LGBTQ+ investors can consider more diverse investment options. Taking money out of idle cash balances to invest should be positive for the economy.

The US economy should therefore benefit from the effects of the Supreme Court ruling. It gives the US an international comparative advantage. Around 60% of the countries in the world still allow your boss to fire you if they do not like who you date.

## **Appendix**

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