

Age Differences in Discounting Depend on Delay Length

Background

According to **SST** & **FTP** older adults (**OA**) discount more than younger adults (**YA**). However, studies show mixed results for the effects of age on delay discounting

Delay discounting: a reward's value decreases as the time it takes to receive the reward increases. A smaller, sooner (**SS**) reward would seem more valuable than a larger, later (**LL**) reward.

Future Time Perspective (FTP): As individuals age and their time is limited, they prefer immediate rewards.



Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST): Younger adults prefer enriching experiences & older adults prefer emotionally fulfilling, familiar experiences.

What We Found

Sample: 288 participants, ages 25-84

$$\text{Discounting} = \frac{\# \text{ of SS choices}}{\# \text{ of LL choices}}$$

Measured as the *Proportion of SS Choices*

Fewer SS choices → smaller proportion, less discounting

Discounting greatly reduced with increasing age.

OA discounted less than YA for delays up to 1 year.

Both OA & YA discounted at the same rate for 5 and 10 year delays.

Takeaways & Future Directions

OA preference for SS rewards can change based on the time it takes to receive the reward.

Our results suggest researchers should consider the impact of delay length on delay discounting

Future studies can investigate:

- Other factors that might influence delay discounting (e.g., cognitive ability)
- How discounting is influenced by longer delays (> 10 years)

