

# COMING OF AGE

*The impacts of an ageing workforce  
on Australian business*



Note: Numbers on graphs may not add to 100% due to rounding of individual percentage figures.

## Executive Summary

As more baby boomers enter retirement age and the ratio between the numbers of workers to the numbers of retirees' rockets, why should Australian business be concerned?

There has been much said in recent years on Australia's ageing population and workforce participation rates, but while 56% of employers believe that an ageing workforce will have a large or very large impact on their own organisation, they have been largely content to leave the issue to government policy makers.

Government, at least at a Federal level, has taken a significant role in encouraging older workers to delay retirement by targeting both employees (through policy and superannuation changes) and employers (through a range of incentives), but this approach appears to have had little impact.

The statistics regarding Australia's ageing population are stark: in 1970 there were five people of working age supporting each Australian over 65. At current trends, this will fall to just 2.7 by 2050<sup>1</sup>.

The pressure on the Australian business community is mounting. According to figures published by the Australian Treasury in their 2004 report *Australia's Demographic Challenges*<sup>2</sup>, 25 per cent of the population will be aged over 65 in 40 years—more than double the current level. At the same time, growth in traditional workforce ages is predicted to slow to almost zero.

Mature employees represent a valuable and often untapped source of increased productivity for organisations. Our research found that older workers have a strong drive to work, as well as a growing financial imperative to do so following the blow to their savings during the GFC. Yet despite this, 'grey workers' are underrepresented in the workforce and overrepresented in the joblessness rate. ABS figures clearly show a generation gap in the average duration of unemployment, with 45-54 year olds unemployed for 52 weeks on average and 55+ year olds for 75 weeks - more than twice the average period for those under 45<sup>3</sup>.

For *Coming of Age: the impacts of an ageing workforce on Australian business*, the latest in Chandler Macleod's whitepaper series, we surveyed 480 senior businesspeople and 672 Australian jobseekers on the advantages and challenges of increased mature worker participation. We sought to understand which industries are at greatest risk of skills shortages as a large body of skilled employees transition to retirement, and what employers are doing about it. Primary research was supplemented with insights from a range of publicly available publications, research reports and articles.

Our research identified the need for Australian business leaders to become more strategic in their approach to attracting and retaining mature workers. While there are compelling economic and social arguments for the need to keep workers in the labour force for longer which are the remit of governments, the reality is that it is individual organisations and their employees who make the decision whether or not to hire and retain an older worker, and how they will prepare for the impacts of an ageing workforce.

<sup>1</sup> Australia to 2050: future challenges, Commonwealth of Australia 2010, Attorney-General's Department, accessed via [archive.treasury.gov.au](http://archive.treasury.gov.au)  
<sup>2</sup> Australia's Demographic Challenges, Commonwealth of Australia 2004, Treasury Department, accessed via [demographics.treasury.gov.au](http://demographics.treasury.gov.au)  
<sup>3</sup> Employers get \$1000 bonus for taking on older workers, Lunn, S. 2012, *The Australian*, 18 April 2012

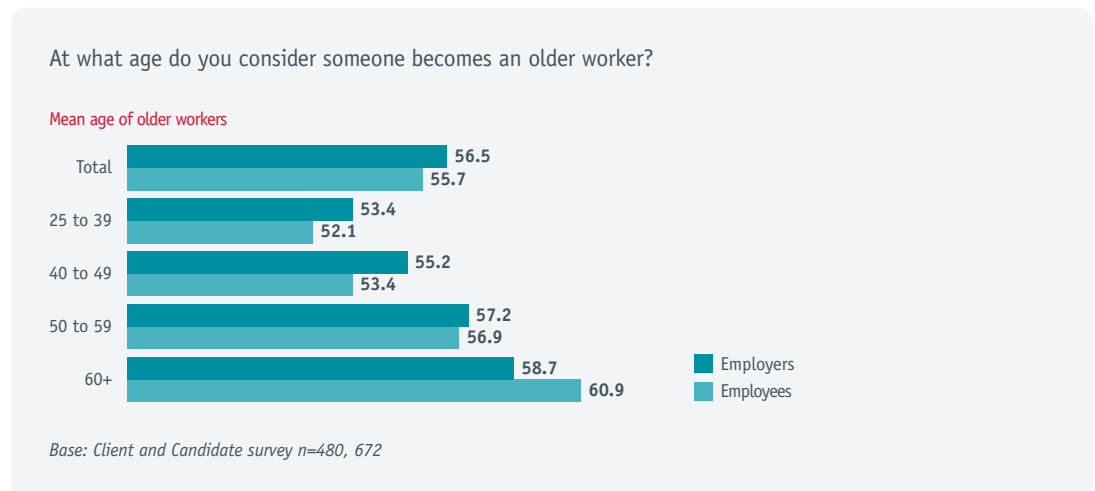
## Key Findings

1. 44% of employers are unprepared for the impact of an increasing ageing workforce, believing that changing demographics will have little or no impact on their organisation.
2. Only 20% of organisations have strategies in place to attract, engage or retain mature aged employees. Where strategies exist, there is a disconnect between what is being put in place by employers and what employees want.
3. Older and younger workers want broadly the same things from their jobs – feeling recognised and valued for their skills, a connection with the company culture and values, support from their direct manager and the opportunity to learn new things.
4. Contrary to popular opinion, the vast majority of older workers are not seeking an easy transition to retirement, with 75% of our survey respondents preferring a challenging and rewarding role.
5. Despite 61% of employers regarding their older employees as more productive and better in a crisis than their younger counterparts, 60% of respondents commented negatively on key issues related to hiring older workers. Many of these negative comments related to myths and stereotypes.
6. One in four (23%) of employers believe older workers have higher salary expectations, but 58% of workers over 50 stated they were willing to accept a pay cut for the right role, and 61% would accept a more junior position.
7. Age related discrimination is still a problem in Australia, with the average employer believing discrimination becomes evident at 54 years of age, while employees perceive age discrimination becomes evident for jobseekers as young as 48.
8. The surveyed businesses believe the main reason employers are not hiring older workers is that older workers simply aren't applying for the roles advertised.
9. Employers need to take action now to manage the future impacts of an ageing workforce. This requires multi-faceted and integrated strategies including workforce and succession planning, skills auditing and the identification of transferable skills, knowledge retention, culture and leadership development.
10. Older workers also need to take responsibility for their careers, keep their skills current and actively pursue opportunities.

## What is an 'Older Worker'?

Variations exist in the definition of an employee as 'older' or 'mature aged'. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations classifies workers and job seekers as 'older' at age 45<sup>4</sup>. The Federal Government's *Jobs Bonuses* scheme provides financial incentives for employers hiring new employees of 50 years and older<sup>5</sup>. And the Australian Bureau of Statistics defines an 'older person' as someone of 55 years and over<sup>6</sup>.

Amongst our respondents, employers and employees are aligned on when they think you can consider someone an 'older worker' – generally, around the age of 55-57 years. There is little variation across industries, although perceptions change with age; not surprisingly, as people get older their perception of when someone should be classed an older worker increases.



While chronological definitions may be useful from a policy perspective, are they creating arbitrary barriers to meaningful workforce participation?

According to the 'Work Ability' model developed in the mid 1980s by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health<sup>7</sup> (and subsequently studied over a 30 year research programme), an employee's ability to productively contribute to the workplace is calculated on health; confidence; skills; attitudes to their work, colleagues and the organisational culture; and how the work itself is performed.

Further, the concept of 'Age Management' as a human resource policy<sup>8</sup> takes into consideration the specific conditions and demands of employees in the different phases of their life and work career. Age Management distinguishes between 'calendar age (number of calendar years), functional age (number of years performing a job), organisational age (number of years working at a company), psychological age (self perceived age), and life span age (life stage)', noting that all these aspects have a different impact on work.

In our view, it is the latter definition of life stage which provides a better framework to address mature worker participation, and enables employers to achieve greater productivity and contribution from their older employees.

*"What's in a number anyway? I know 60 year olds who run rings around their 30 year old colleagues in terms of attitude, motivation and ability to learn new things..."*

<sup>4</sup> Investing in Experience Tool Kit, Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations, <http://deewr.gov.au/investing-experience-employment-charter-and-tool-kit-0>

<sup>5</sup> Increasing workforce participation, Parliament of Australian Budget Review 2012-13, [http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/budgetreview201213/workforceparticipation](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/budgetreview201213/workforceparticipation)

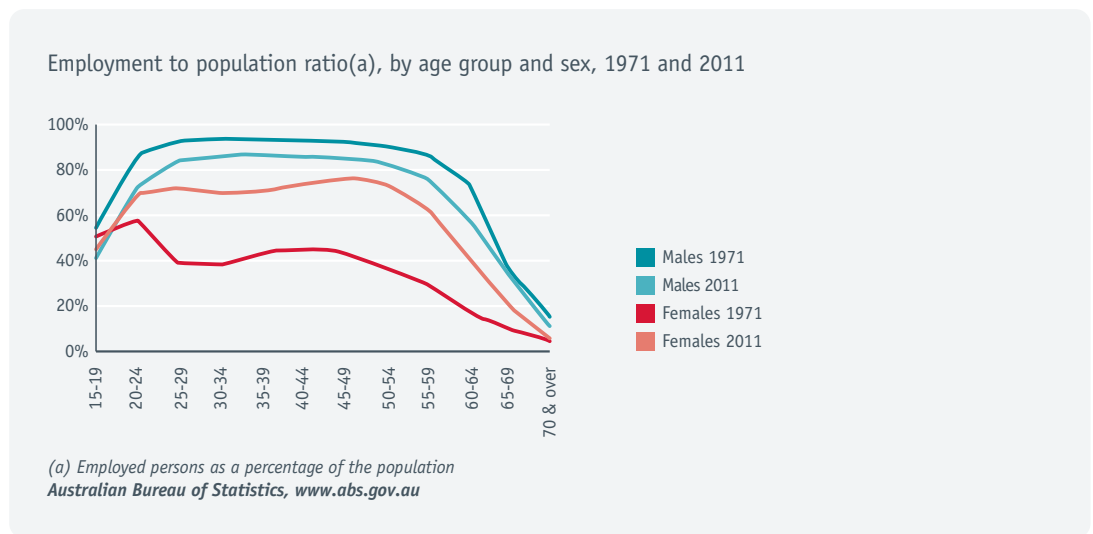
<sup>6</sup> Older People and the Labour Market, Australian Bureau Of Statistics, [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

<sup>7</sup> How WHS issues affect employees of different age groups, [www.workplaceohs.com.au](http://www.workplaceohs.com.au) 8 November 2012

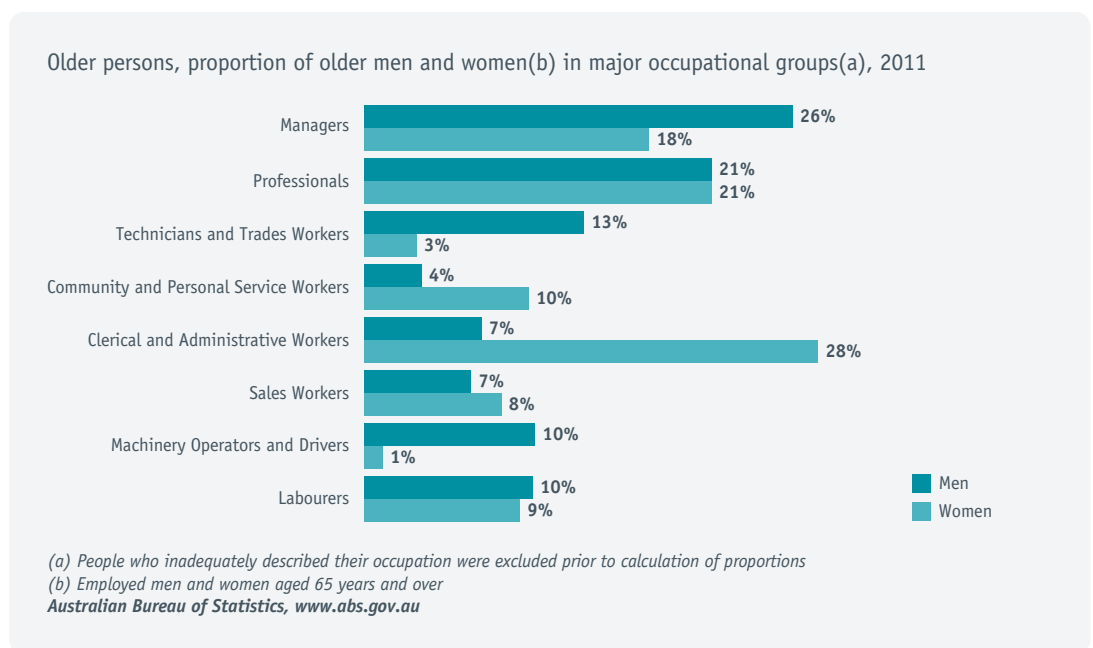
<sup>8</sup> Integral Workplace Health Age Management, [www.ageingatwork.eu](http://www.ageingatwork.eu)

## Are we facing an Ageing Workforce Crisis?

According to the last Australian Census (2011), the workforce participation rate of males aged 50 years and above has decreased since 1971. In keeping with general trends associated with female workforce participation, the involvement of females aged 50 years and above in the workforce has improved:



Amongst mature workers, participation is highest for males who classify as 'managers', whilst for females 'clerical and administrative workers' have the strongest participation rate:



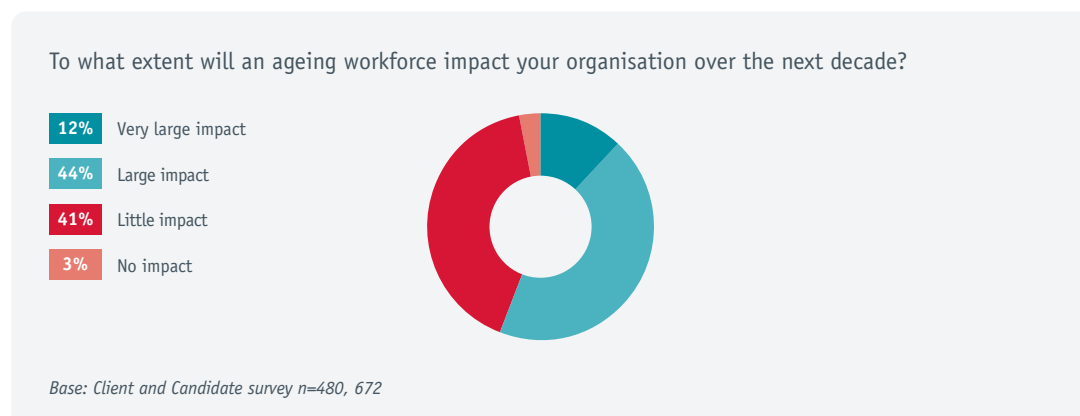
While economic growth has slowed in the last 12 months, Australia still faces skills shortages in a range of occupations. Mature aged workers have been regarded as an 'untapped' skills source for some time, and certainly the graph above would indicate that there are a range of transferable skills existing within the mature worker population which, with the right HR strategies, could be effectively utilised.

But the existence of these skills within a workforce sector close to retirement is also a source of concern for employers. 2002's Intergenerational Report<sup>10</sup> claimed that for every two people retiring, only one person was entering the workforce, and while this ratio has reduced in the last decade, organisations do foresee an impact of an ageing workforce at an enterprise level.

9 Australian Census of Population and Housing 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/census>

10 Intergenerational Report 2002-03, Commonwealth of Australia 2002, Treasury Department, accessed via <http://archive.treasury.gov.au>

In this research study, employers were evenly split on the impact that an ageing workforce will have on their organisation. Despite large bodies of research and public debate about Australia's ageing population, just over half of employers (56%) believe an ageing workforce will have a very large or large impact, while 44% deny it will have much (if any) impact on their organisation in the next decade.



There is a strong correlation between organisation size and the perceived impact of an ageing workforce. Amongst small businesses (with a workforce of less than 50 employees), one in three (34%) believe an ageing workforce will have a very large or large impact, compared with 44% for medium businesses (50-199 employees) and 69% of larger businesses (200+ employees). Interestingly, respondents indicated a similar impact across both metropolitan and regional areas.

Employers in NSW/ACT forecast the biggest impact to their organisations, followed by those in Victoria and Tasmania.

To what extent will an ageing workforce impact your organisation over the next decade?

	NSW/ACT	VIC/TAS	QLD	SA/NT	WA
Very large impact	15%	13%	6%	10%	11%
Large impact	45%	45%	46%	28%	41%
Little impact	38%	40%	44%	59%	41%
No impact	2%	1%	4%	3%	7%

Base: Client and Candidate survey n=480, 672

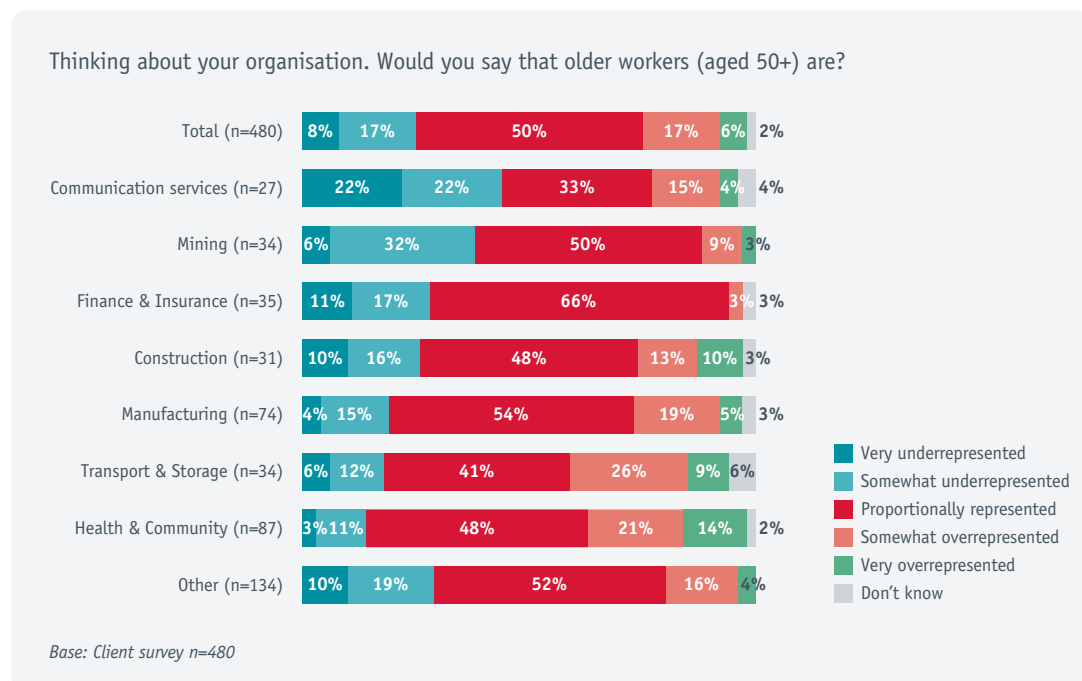
Those employers and employees working in the Health & Community sector forecast the greatest impact of an ageing workforce on their organisations, followed by the Mining sector:

To what extent will an ageing workforce impact your organisation over the next decade?

	MINING	MANUFACTURING	CONSTRUCTION	TRANSPORT & STORAGE	COMMUNICATION SERVICES	FINANCE & INSURANCE	HEALTH & COMMUNITY
Very large impact	15%	12%	10%	12%	11%	3%	18%
Large impact	44%	50%	48%	56%	41%	43%	46%
Little impact	35%	35%	39%	26%	48%	54%	34%
No impact	6%	3%	3%	6%	0%	0%	1%

Base: Client and Candidate survey n=480, 672

Nearly all employers believe they have an intergenerational workforce (96%). About half of all employers think that older workers are proportionately represented in their organisations, however some interesting differences occur by sector, with Communication Services and Mining the industries most likely to underrepresent older workers. Conversely Transport & Storage and Health & Community are the industries most likely to have an overrepresentation of older workers.



Unsurprisingly, workers in overrepresented sectors are also most likely to believe an ageing workforce will have a significant impact on their organisation.

Our findings are supported by the Government's National Training Authority, which lists Transport & Storage and Health & Community in the top four sectors for mature worker representation.

INDUSTRY	AVERAGE EMPLOYEE AGE	% OF WORKFORCE OVER 50 YEARS	ROLE OF OLDEST WORKERS (BASED ON MEAN AGE OF OCCUPATION GROUP)
Manufacturing	39.4	n/a	Managers and Administrators, aged 43.8 years on average
Accommodation & Restaurants	34.1	16%	Managers and Administrators, aged 43 years on average
Finance & Insurance	37.3	17.1%	Associate Professionals, aged 39.4 years on average
Mining & Energy	39.3	17.3%	Managers and Administrators, aged 45.1 years on average
Cultural & Recreational Services	36.3	18%	Advanced Clerical and Service Workers, aged 43 years on average
Retail	33.4	18.5%	Advanced Clerical and Service Workers, 41.4 years on average
Communication Services	38.8	20.4%	Labourers and Related Workers, aged 47 years on average
Personal & Other Services	38.6	22.3%	Managers and Administrators, aged 43.6 years on average
Wholesale	39	22.5%	Managers and Administrators, 43.4 years on average

Construction	38.5	23%	Managers and Administrators, aged 42.8 years on average
Utilities	41.2	23.2%	Managers and Administrators, aged 44.6 years on average
Property & Business Services	39.1	24%	Labourers and Related Workers, 42.5 years on average
Government & Defence	39.8	24.4%	Elementary Clerical, Sales, and Service Workers, aged 44.2 years on average
Health & Community Services	41.1	26.9%	Intermediate Production and Transport Workers aged 45.5 years on average
Education	42.1	28.1%	Intermediate Production and Transport Workers, aged 49.8 years on average
Transport & Storage	33.4	28.6%	Associate Professionals, 44.5 years on average
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	44.4	37.6%	Managers and Administrators, aged 49.4 years on average

Source: [www.valuingolderworkers.gov.au](http://www.valuingolderworkers.gov.au)

## Older Workers: Opportunities and Challenges

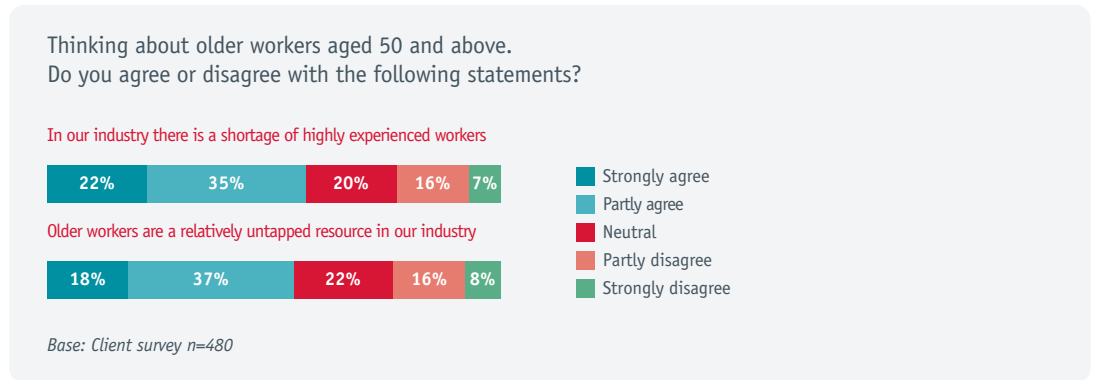
When employers were asked to comment (unprompted) on the key issues related to hiring and managing older workers, 33% of responses included benefits older workers bring to their organisation, while 60% encompassed negative issues.

Employers perceive older workers as more experienced and more reliable, yet less computer literate, more resistant to change and more prone to health issues.

What do you think are the key issues from having older workers in your organisation?			
POSITIVE RESPONSES	%	NEGATIVE RESPONSES	%
Better / more experience / knowledge	23%	Less computer literate / tech savvy	18%
Nett: more reliable / productive	18%	Less adaptable / resistant to change / less flexible	16%
More reliable / productive	(9%)	Have more health issues / injuries	15%
Less sick leave / holiday	(4%)	Need special treatment / OH&S / less hours	11%
Better work ethic / hard-working	(6%)	Potential loss of knowledge	9%
More stable / loyal	(7%)	Physical decline	7%
Better work quality	5%	Less energy / fatigue / slower	6%
Integrate well / easy to manage	3%	Less motivated / ambitious	4%
Able to train others / mentor	3%	Not integrate well with younger workers	4%
Contribute a lot	1%	Less vibrant/creative	2%
More drive / energy	1%	Need to retrain	2%
Less staff turnover	1%	Less productive	1%
Other positive	3%	Higher salaries	1%
		Other negative	75

Base: Client survey n=480

Many employers are concerned that older workers leaving the workforce will leave a skill gap<sup>11</sup>. Most (57%) of our respondents noted a shortage of highly experienced workers in their industry. By the same token, 55% agree that older workers are a relatively untapped resource in their industry.



There are strong variances between industries, with the well-documented shortages of highly experienced workers still prevalent in Mining despite recent slowdowns, and shortages also felt by employers in the Construction sector.

In our industry there is a shortage of highly experienced workers

	STRONGLY AGREE	PARTLY AGREE	TOTAL AGREE	NEUTRAL	PARTLY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL DISAGREE
Mining	24%	56%	80%	12%	6%	3%	9%
Manufacturing	27%	27%	54%	24%	18%	4%	22%
Construction	29%	42%	71%	6%	16%	6%	22%
Transport & Storage	18%	38%	56%	18%	24%	3%	27%
Communication services	33%	26%	59%	15%	7%	19%	26%
Finance & Insurance	6%	34%	40%	37%	17%	6%	23%
Health & Community	25%	31%	56%	13%	22%	9%	31%
Other	16%	38%	54%	25%	12%	8%	20%
Don't know	29%	25%	54%	21%	17%	8%	25%

Base: Client survey n=480

<sup>11</sup> Bonus cash for hiring a mature-aged worker, Zillman, S., news.com.au 16 January 2013

However, when asked whether older workers offered an untapped resource to resolve experience shortages, responses by industry are somewhat different, with employers from Communications and Finance the most likely to agree.

Older workers are a relatively untapped resource in our industry

	STRONGLY AGREE	PARTLY AGREE	TOTAL AGREE	NEUTRAL	PARTLY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL DISAGREE
Mining	32%	18%	50%	24%	21%	6%	27%
Manufacturing	22%	38%	60%	23%	11%	7%	18%
Construction	23%	32%	55%	13%	26%	6%	32%
Transport & Storage	21%	38%	59%	21%	21%	0%	21%
Communication services	15%	48%	63%	11%	7%	19%	26%
Finance & Insurance	17%	43%	60%	17%	17%	6%	23%
Health & Community	17%	22%	39%	22%	25%	14%	39%

Base: Client survey n=480

When considered in the context of zero forecast growth in the population of traditional workforce age<sup>12</sup>, the argument for retaining high value, skilled older employees is clear, while the impacts of losing them are broad and far reaching:

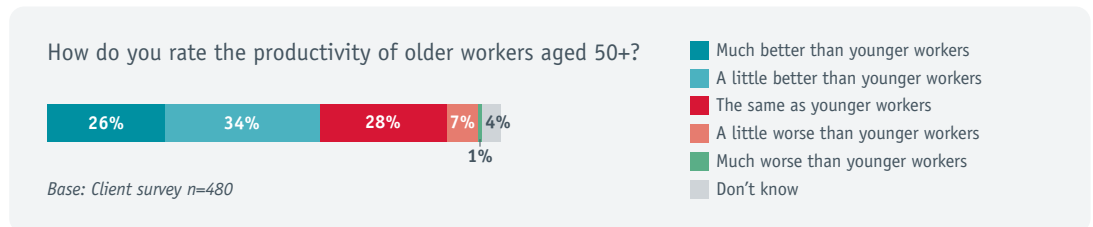
*"Losing the experience that those (older) people bring to any business - most clients crave that knowledge in their business partners".*

*"As people retire, sound work ethics and experience, self-sufficient staff will decline. Service and business standards (will decline), hence profits will also decline".*

## Myth 1. Older Workers are Less Productive

**Both employers and employees believe that older workers are better in a crisis, make better mentors and are more enthusiastic than their younger counterparts**

A common stereotype is that of lagging older worker productivity. However employers responding to our survey generally view older workers as being more productive than their younger counterparts. This trend was the strongest amongst employers who are themselves older workers, with 72% of employers aged over 60, and 68% of employers aged 50-59 believing older workers are more productive (cf. 53% of employers aged 40-49 and 35% aged 25-39).



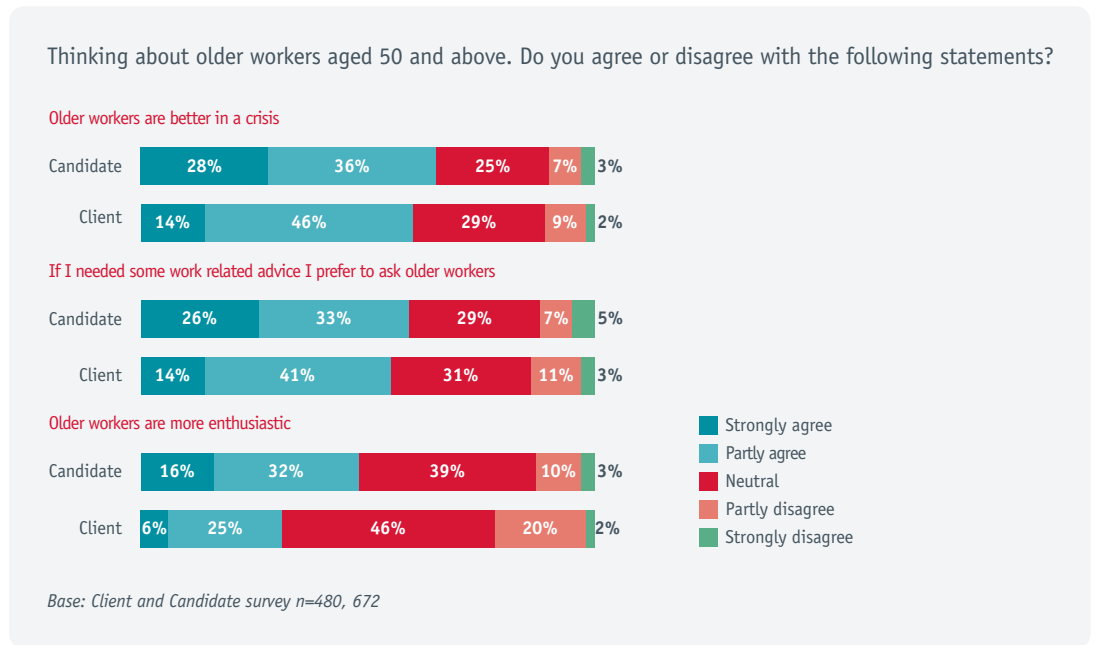
This is in keeping with the findings of Ernst and Young's Australian Productivity Pulse, which found:

*'Older workers aged 65+ have the highest productivity and motivation levels, yet they are on the lower end of the salary scale. This suggests that life stage and experience are key drivers of productivity and motivation<sup>13</sup>.'*

<sup>12</sup> Australia's Demographic Challenges, Commonwealth of Australia 2004, Treasury Department, accessed via demographics.treasury.gov.au  
<sup>13</sup> The Ernst & Young Australian Productivity Pulse, May 2012, www.ey.com

Furthermore, we found that 45% of employers think that older workers are less likely to make critical mistakes (cf. 24% disagree).

Both employers and employees believe that older workers are better in a crisis, make better mentors and are more enthusiastic than their younger counterparts.



Respondents in South Australia and the Northern Territory, and respondents from the Communications Services and Construction sectors had the most positive view of older worker productivity.

How would you rate the productivity of the older workers aged 50+

	NSW/ACT	VIC/TAS	QLD	SA/NT	WA
Much better than younger workers	28%	25%	23%	31%	28%
A little better than younger workers	35%	33%	37%	38%	31%
Total better	63%	58%	60%	69%	59%
The same as younger workers	23%	31%	29%	21%	31%
A little worse than younger workers	8%	6%	5%	7%	6%
Much worse than younger workers	2%	0%	2%	3%	1%
Total worse	10%	6%	7%	10%	7%
Don't know	4%	5%	4%	0%	3%

Base: Client and Candidate survey n=480, 672

How would you rate the productivity of the older workers aged 50+

	MUCH BETTER THAN YOUNGER WORKERS	A LITTLE BETTER THAN YOUNGER WORKERS	TOTAL BETTER	THE SAME AS YOUNGER WORKERS	A LITTLE WORSE THAN YOUNGER WORKERS	MUCH WORSE THAN YOUNGER WORKERS	TOTAL WORSE	DON'T KNOW
Mining	26%	35%	61%	26%	6%	3%	9%	3%
Manufacturing	23%	35%	58%	27%	11%	4%	15%	0%
Construction	29%	35%	64%	29%	6%	0%	6%	0%
Transport & Storage	21%	41%	62%	15%	9%	3%	12%	12%
Communication services	41%	26%	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Finance & Insurance	14%	31%	45%	37%	9%	3%	12%	6%
Health & Community	23%	30%	53%	36%	5%	1%	6%	6%

Base: Client and Candidate survey n=480, 672

Employers identified key productivity factors of mature workers including reliability, reduced leave, improved work ethic and loyalty to the organisation. 23% of employers believe that older workers add value through better experience and knowledge. Mature workers may hold a productivity advantage, with Chandler Macleod's October 2012 whitepaper *The Five Faces of Productivity* reporting that 60% agree that those with industry experience are more productive than those without, while half (48%) spend a lot of time educating new employees on things they would expect them to already know.

## Myth 2. Older Workers Are Less Safe

The different attitudes to health and safety amongst different age groups have been well documented. Yet it is often older workers who are perceived to present the greater safety risk at work. Insurers are encouraging organisations to consider the effects of Australia's ageing workforce on employees' injury-related claims, and the number of Workers' Compensation claims involving older workers is expected to increase<sup>14</sup>.

However, while it has been shown that older workers suffer a higher incidence of stress and strain-related injuries, often requiring longer recovery time, Safe Work Australia reports that in 2009–10, workers aged under 25 years accounted 66.1 work-related injuries per 1000 workers, 18% higher than the rate for workers aged 25 years and over, with older workers accounting for 56.2 injuries per 1000 workers<sup>15</sup>.

Perhaps some health and safety myths arising for older workers stem from the consequences of 'risky' behaviours adopted more frequently by younger employees but felt later in life, such as lifestyle factors including use of tobacco, misuse of alcohol, and poor diet and nutrition<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Preparation the key to dealing with ageing workforce, Human Capital Australia, 28 March 2013, [www.hcmag.com](http://www.hcmag.com)

<sup>15</sup> Work-Related Injuries Experienced By Young Workers In Australia, 2009-10, Safe Work Australia, 20 March 2013, [www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au)

<sup>16</sup> Different age groups — particular issues: Tailoring the WHS message to different age groups, <http://www.workplaceinfo.com.au/human-resources-management/hr-strategy/different-age-groups-particular-issues> 9 November 2012

Faced with a growing shortage of truck drivers, the Transport industry has compared the strategy of encouraging older drivers to continue working with one of attracting more young employees to enter the industry.

In a 7-year study by University of Newcastle and the Transport Workers Union, and funded by WorkCover NSW, the accident and incident rates of drivers in different age groups was compared.

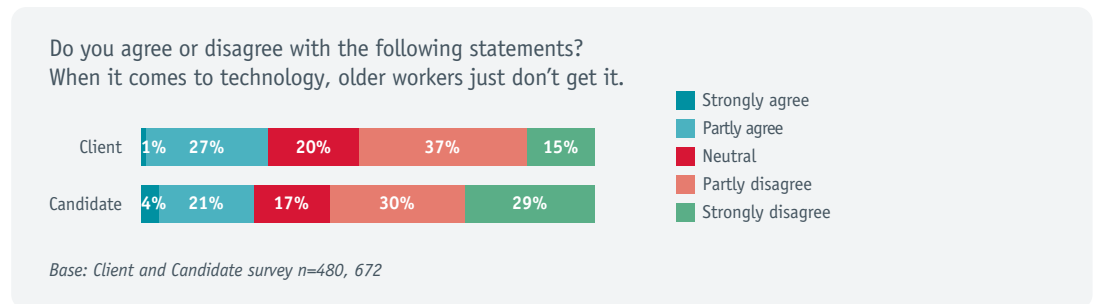
For passenger vehicles, drivers <25 years were many times more likely to be involved in accidents and incidents than those ages 35-44 (the safest age group), and drivers aged 65+ were 1.6 times more likely than the 35-44 year olds to have accidents or incidents.

However for drivers of rigid or articulated trucks, older drivers recorded similar results to those aged 35-44 and in fact were slightly better in rigid trucks. Younger drivers performed only slightly worse.

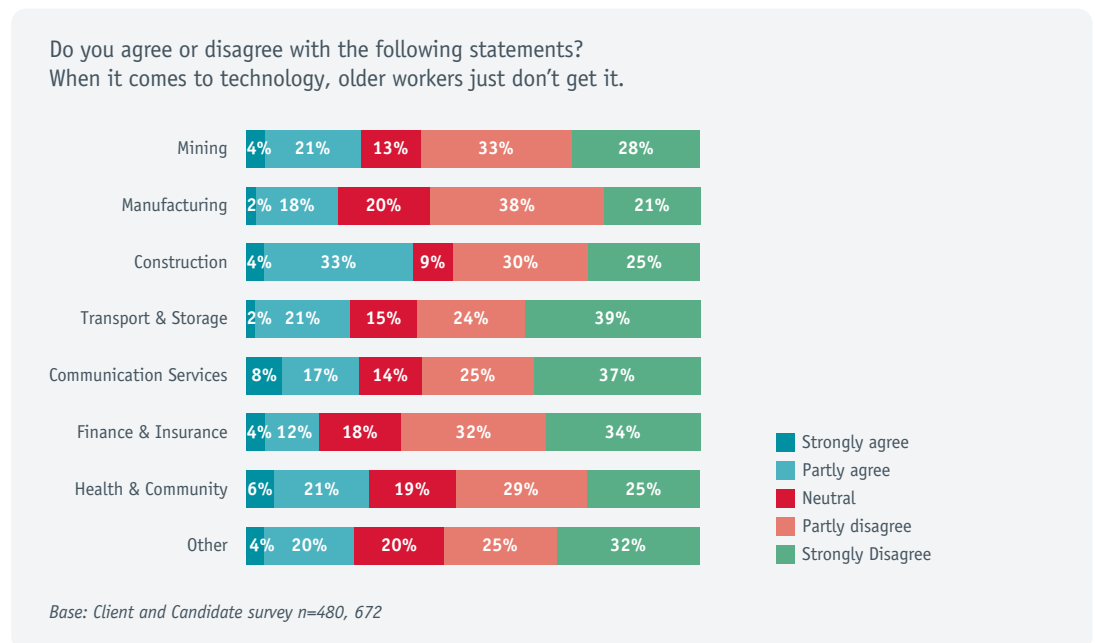
Source: [www.workplaceohs.com.au](http://www.workplaceohs.com.au)

### Myth 3. Older Workers Struggle with Technology

There's *some* truth to this one. The Australian School of Business<sup>17</sup> suggests that older workers' inability to come to grips with new technology is an issue for some employers. Our data supported this, determining that this is indeed an issue for *some* employers, however this view is not held universally. In fact, the majority of both the workforce and employers disagree with the statement 'When it comes to technology, older workers just don't get it'. With more than one in four (28%) employers holding this stereotype however, it is a significant issue likely to be impacting many older workers.



This stereotype was particularly prominent amongst those in the Construction sector, and of least concern in Finance:



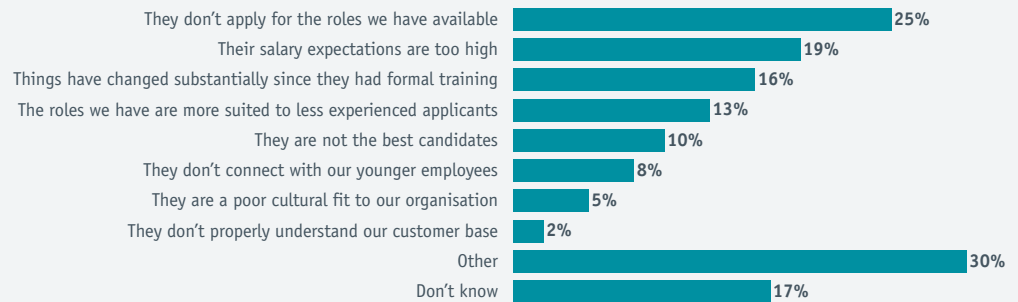
17 The 'Silver Tsunami': Why Older Workers Offer Better Value Than Younger Ones Knowledge@Australian School of Business

## The Big Question: So Why Aren't Employers Hiring?

If employers regard older workers as productive, motivated, safe and value their knowledge and experience, why aren't firms hiring more mature age employees?

Our survey results suggest that the key reason is simpler than may be expected – older workers simply aren't applying for the roles advertised.

What are the barriers to your organisation hiring more older workers aged 50+?



Base: Client survey n=480

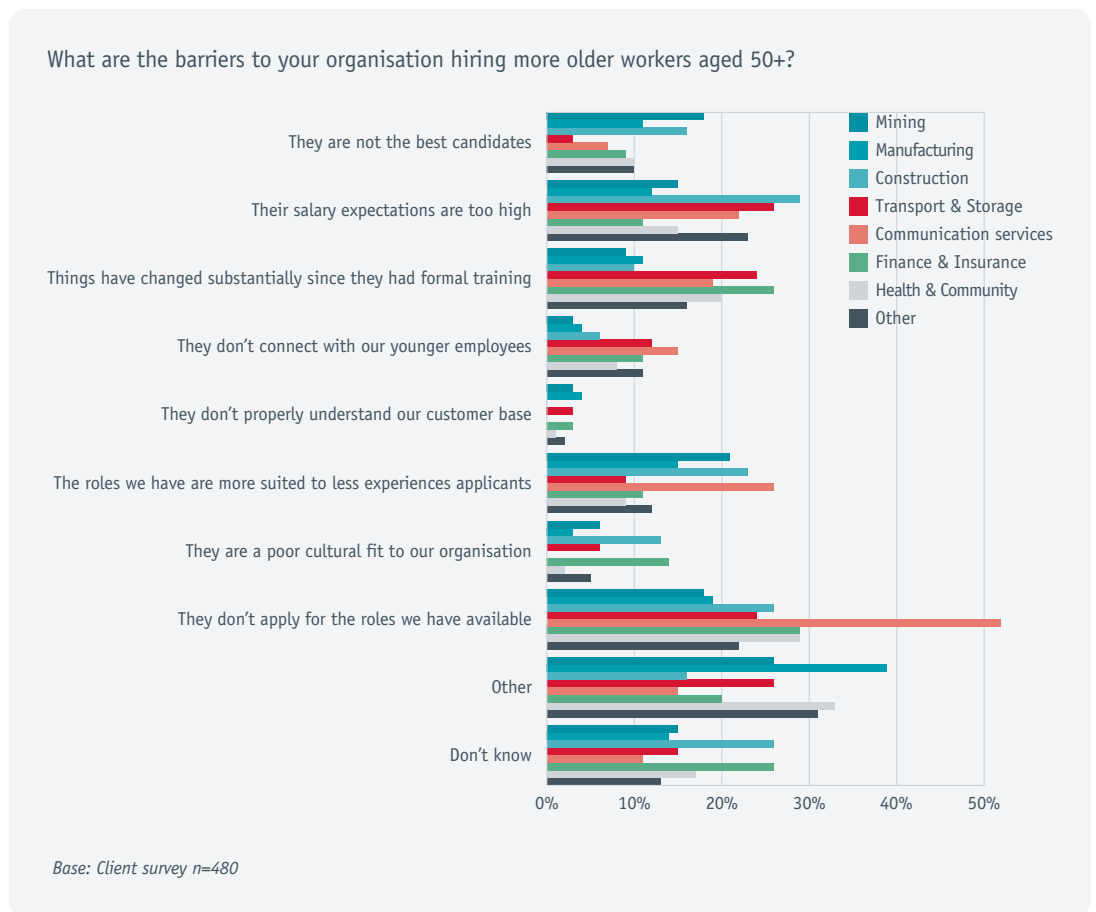
This barrier was noted in particular by client respondents from Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania, whilst the issue of high salary expectations was regarded as a significant barrier by South Australian and Northern Territory based employers.

What are the barriers to your organisation hiring more older workers aged 50+?



Base: Client survey n=480

Lack of response to advertised vacancies from mature-age workers was a particular issue for employers in communication services.



Literature indicates that mature age workers looking for jobs are out of work twice as long as younger job-seekers<sup>18</sup>, while half of all males discouraged from continuing to look for work cite being 'too old' as the main reason<sup>19</sup>.

High salary expectations was also cited by our respondents as a barrier to hiring mature aged employees; this has also been noted in other literature<sup>20</sup>. But this view is not held universally by employers. One in four (23%) employers agree that older workers have 'higher salary expectations, hiring them is not good value for our business', implying that this barrier is held by a significant number of employers. However, it should be noted that almost half (47%) of employers disagree with this sentiment.

This is also a view which is not generally shared by older workers themselves. Most (58%) workers over 50 stated they were willing to accept a pay cut for the right role (cf. 45% of workers 25-39 and 44% of workers aged 40-49). Furthermore, 61% would accept a more junior position (cf. 52% of workers 25-39 and 44% of workers aged 40-49).

18 Bonus cash for hiring a mature-aged worker, Zillman, S., 2013

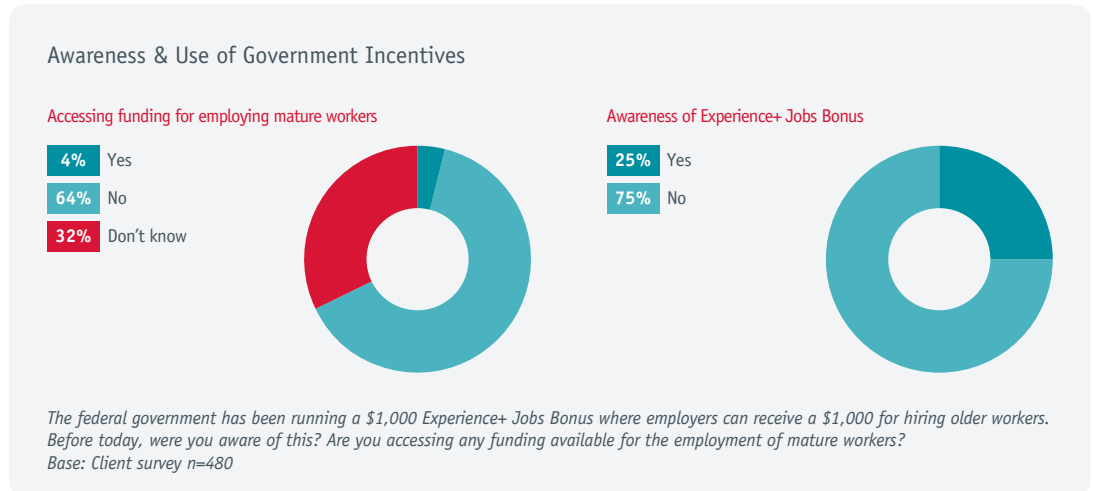
19 Future focus: Australia's skills and workforce development needs, Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, 2012, Canberra

20 Attitudes to older workers, Westfield Wright Pty 2012, Nicholas Wright, Sydney

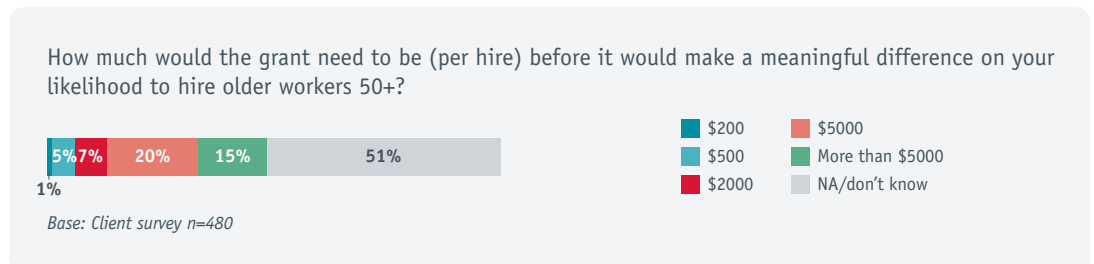
## Government incentives – are they working?

Under the Commonwealth Government Jobs Bonus scheme, which began in July 2012, employers can be paid \$1,000 if they take on a worker aged 50 or older for at least three months<sup>21</sup>.

Our data showed that only a quarter (25%) of employers are aware of government funding for hiring mature workers, and only 4% of employers are accessing any funding available.



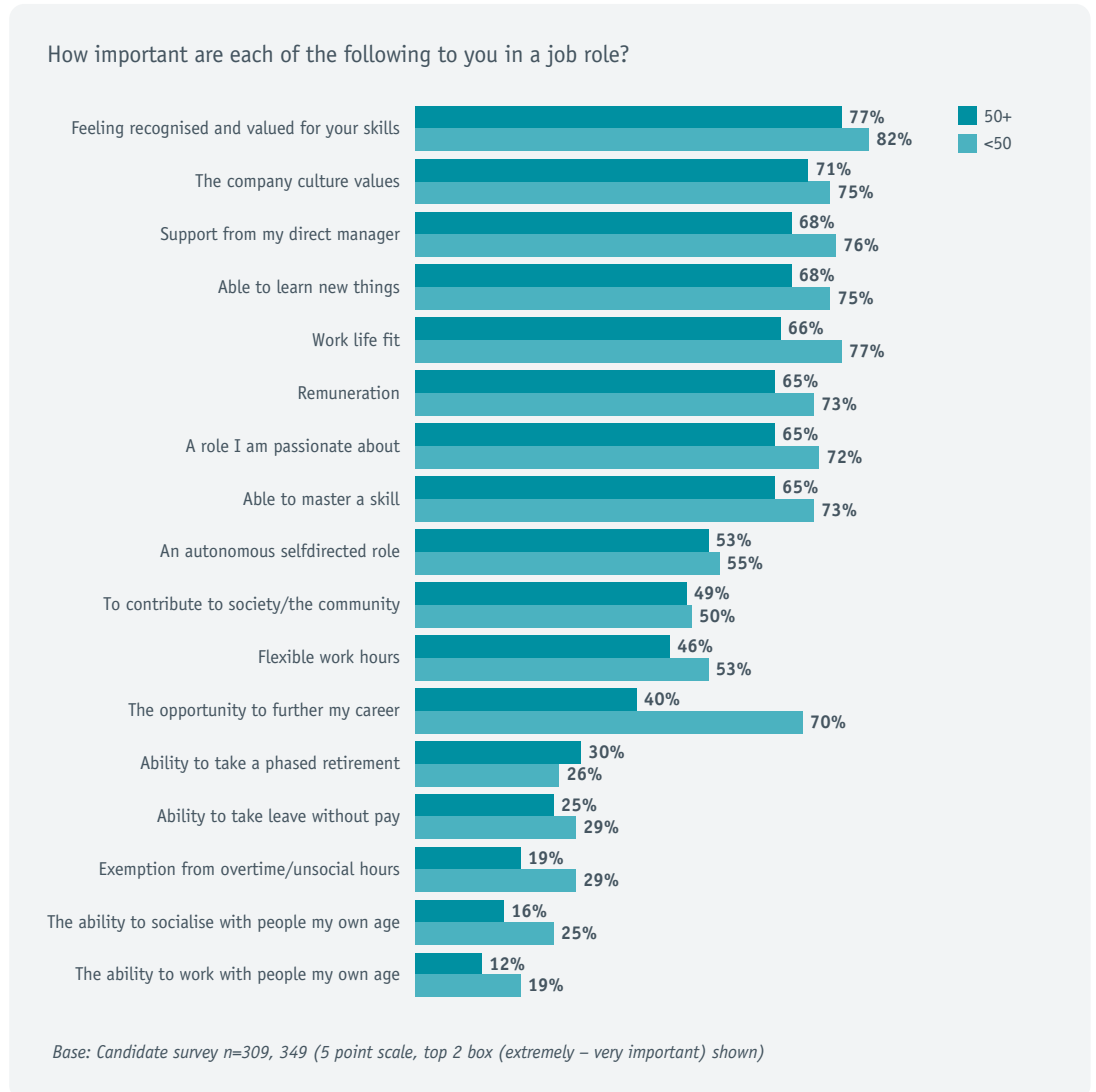
Most employers surveyed do not believe that \$1,000 makes any meaningful difference in increasing the likelihood to hire older workers. Amongst those with an opinion – the grant would need to be doubled to \$2,000 to change the hiring intention and behaviour of the average employer.



<sup>21</sup> <http://deewr.gov.au/experience-jobs-bonus>

## What do older workers want?

Our research indicates that older workers want generally the same things their younger counterparts do. The key elements workers are seeking in a role include feeling recognised and valued, the company culture and values, support from their direct manager, the ability to learn new things and work life fit. The only stark difference is that older workers are far less likely to feel a need to further their career.



There is of course, a financial imperative for many older employees to remain working. Two in three of our survey respondents disagreed with the statement *'I don't need the money I choose to work for other reasons'* (21% agree, 13% neutral).

This is also aligned to the perceived inadequacy of retirement savings. As life expectancy increases, so they do not outlive their retirement savings, people will need a larger nest egg<sup>22</sup>. The Global Financial Crisis exacerbated the situation with many retired, or those nearing retirement, losing superannuation savings requiring them to participate in the workforce for longer so as to have sufficient funds to see them through retirement<sup>23</sup>.

Two thirds (66%) of workers surveyed who were aged 50+ and approaching their 'golden years' did not feel confident they have enough savings to carry them through retirement.

<sup>22</sup> Where is your next worker?, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, 2011

<sup>23</sup> Attitudes to older workers, Westfield Wright Pty 2012, Nicholas Wright, Sydney

### How sufficient are your retirement savings?



Base: Candidate survey. Older workers n=363

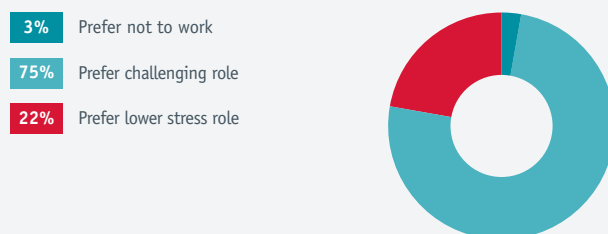
Three quarters (74%) of candidates aged 50-59 feel that, if forced to retire, they would have insufficient funds. This situation improves for the over 60s but still half of them (49%) believe that they have insufficient funds to retire. Only 5% of 50-59 year olds and 14% of those over 60 think that they could comfortably retire at the present moment. Three in five (60%) of those who are not currently working need to return to work to sufficiently fund themselves through retirement.

It's evident then that the majority of older workers need to continue to work well after the age of 60, but are they still motivated and what kind of work are they looking for?

Consistent with the findings of the Australian School of Business<sup>24</sup>, we determined that older workers remain motivated and seek challenges in their work. A large majority of candidates over 50 disagree that they are losing interest in their careers (73%) and this consistent even for the over 60 year olds (74%).

Older workers are not seeking an easy transition into retirement, with 75% preferring a challenging and rewarding role, in which they are prepared to work hard.

### How would you describe your current attitude towards working?



Base: Candidate survey. Older workers n=363

When older workers are segmented by the need and desire to work, half (52%) have both a financial need to work and prefer a more challenging role. One in ten (11%) have no financial need for work, and prefer a less challenging role.

CAREER ORIENTATION	FINANCIAL NEED TO WORK	
	No need	Have need
	Prefer challenging role	23%
Prefer less challenging role	11%	14%

24 The 'Silver Tsunami': Why Older Workers Offer Better Value Than Younger Ones Knowledge@Australian School of Business

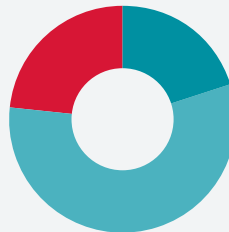
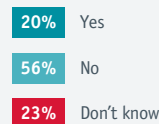
## The Employer-Employee Disconnect

Do the strategies employers are putting in place to attract older workers match the needs of older workers? This question assumes that most organisations have structures and strategies in place to address the impacts of an ageing workforce, however as our survey reveals, very few have either.

Despite 56% of employers believing that the ageing workforce would have a large impact on their organisation, just 20% of employers have specific planning strategies around ageing workforce participation and ways of mitigating the risks associated with loss of skills and knowledge as mature aged workers retire. Just one in four employers plan to implement or increase their workforce ageing strategies over the next decade. The industries more likely to be planning workforce ageing strategies are Transport & Storage (44%) and Health & Community (37%), those who also stated the proportion of older workers was overrepresented in their organisations.

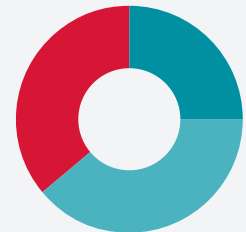
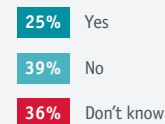
Does your organisation have specific planning strategies around ageing workforce participation/utilisation? Are you planning to implement/increase your focus on workforce ageing strategies over the next decade?

Planning strategies around ageing workforce



Base: Client survey n=480

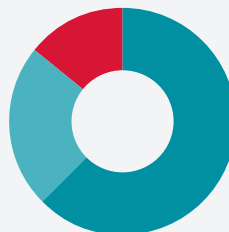
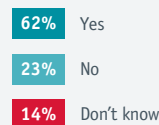
Plan to implement/increase workforce ageing strategies



Despite 20% of employers claiming to have strategies in place, only 9% of employees are aware of any strategies their employer has implemented. However most (62%) employees think it should be mandatory to have specific ageing workforce planning strategies in place.

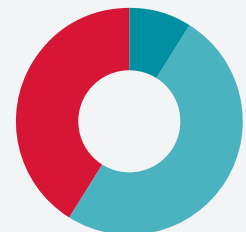
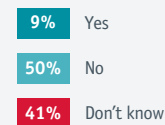
Do you think it should be mandatory for organisations to have specific planning strategies around ageing workforce participation/utilisation? Does your organisation currently have any specific planning strategies around ageing workforce participation/utilisation?

Should it be mandatory for organisations to have specific ageing workforce planning strategies?



Base: Candidate survey n=672

Specific planning strategies on ageing workforce



Companies with an over-representation of older workers are more likely to have aging workforce participation strategies (31% cf. 12% under-represented).

Thinking about your organisation. Would you say that older workers (aged 50+) are [representation]? Does your organisation have specific planning strategies around ageing workforce participation/ utilisation?

Under-represented



Proportionately



Over-represented



- Planning to implement/increase ageing workforce strategies over next decade
- Not planning to implement/increase ageing workforce strategies over next decade
- Planning to implement/increase ageing workforce strategies over next decade

Base: Client survey n=480

Similarly, companies with an over-representation of older workers are far more likely to be planning to implement or increase aging workforce participation strategies over the next decade.

Thinking about your organisation. Would you say that older workers (aged 50+) are [representation]? Are you planning to implement any workforce ageing strategies?

Under-represented



Proportionately



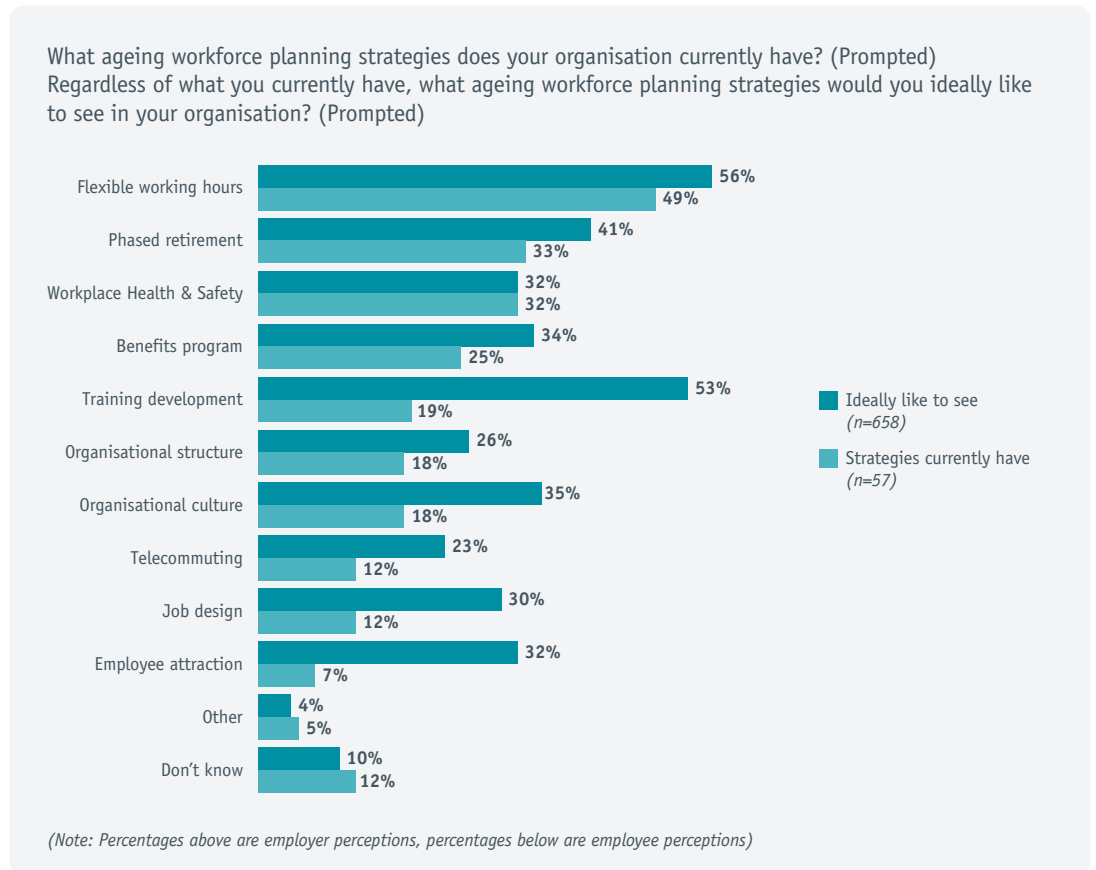
Over-represented



- Planning to implement/increase ageing workforce strategies over next decade
- Not planning to implement/increase ageing workforce strategies over next decade
- Planning to implement/increase ageing workforce strategies over next decade

Base: Client survey n=480

A disconnect is evident between the strategies being put in place by employers and what is being sought by employees:



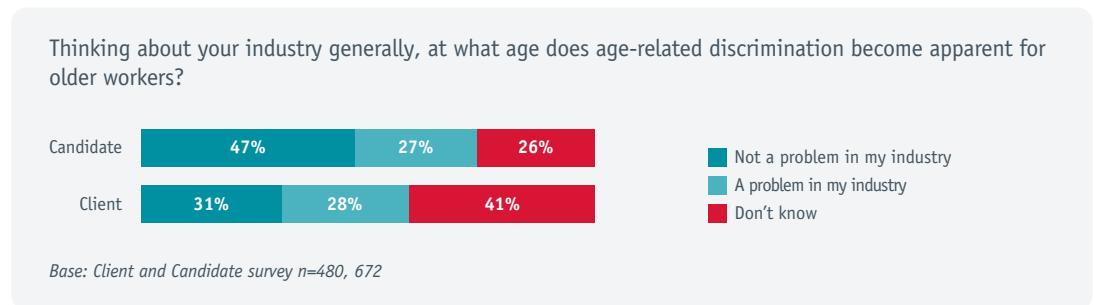
While some strategies are aligned to what older workers would like to see (such as flexible working hours, phased retirement and workplace health and safety), there are other strategies which older workers are crying out for that are not being offered by many employers or are being offered but to an insufficient degree. This includes training and development, and organisational culture and job design specific to the needs of an older workforce:

- 49% have implemented flexible working hours – consistent with older workers desire for a work life fit (important to 77% of older workers)
- 33% have implemented a phased retirement programme (this is important to 30% of older workers)
- 19% have implemented training and development, consistent with the ability to learn new things which is important to 68% of older workers.

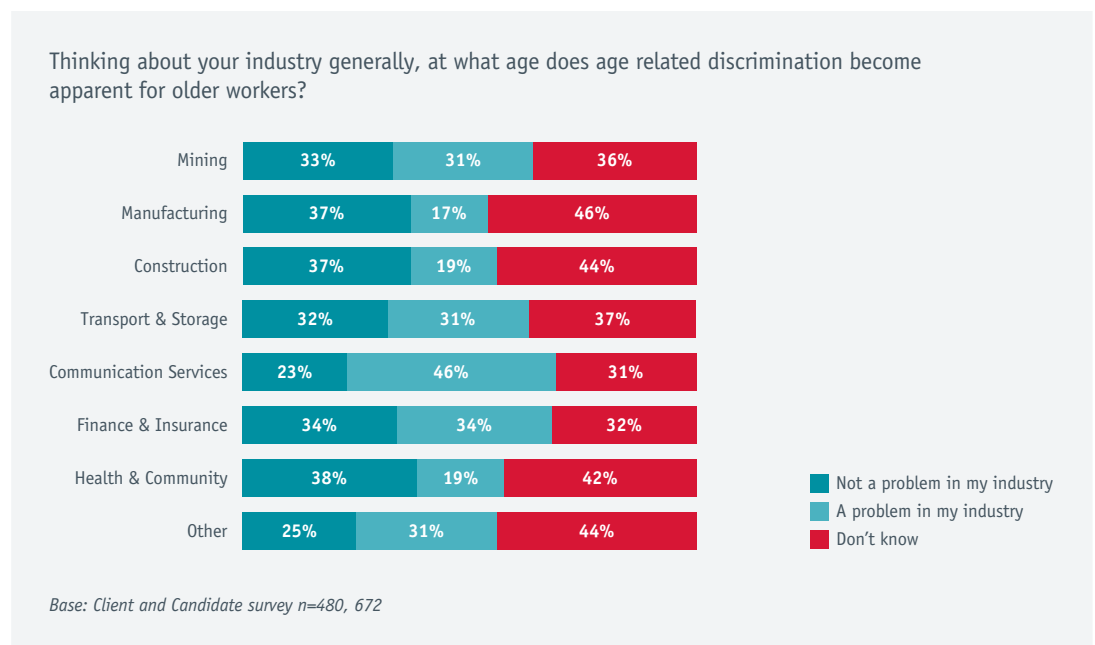
Although implemented by only 19% of our employer respondents, most employers are in fact open to offer training to older workers. Only 14% of employees think it is a waste of time to train older workers who are nearing retirement age (cf. 53% disagree) and only 18% agree there is less benefit in training older workers as they are near the end of their career (cf. 63% disagree).

## Age Discrimination: an ongoing issue

Sadly, our research confirms that age discrimination is an ongoing issue in Australia. Over a quarter of employers and employees believe age discrimination is a problem in their industry.



Alarming, almost half (46%) our respondents from the Communications sector regarded age discrimination as an issue in their industry, while around a third of respondents from the Mining, Transport and Finance industries indicated age discrimination was a problem.

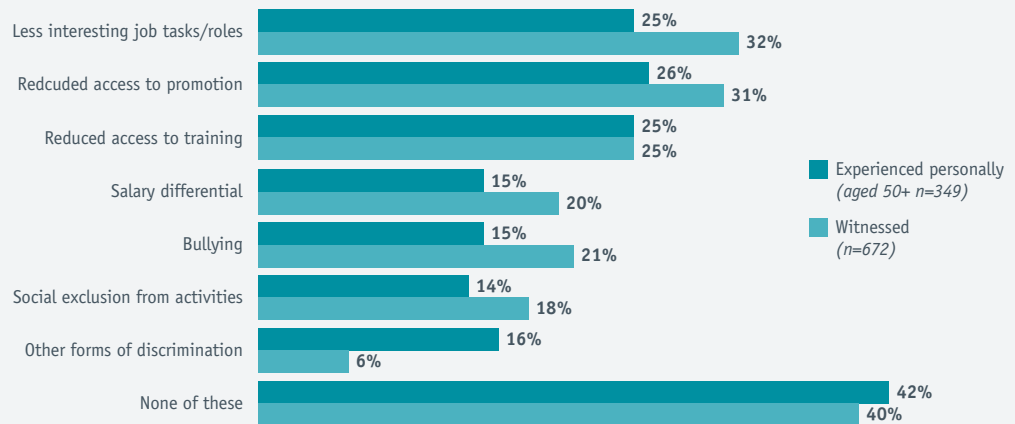


Amongst those who do perceive age-related discrimination to be a problem, the average employer believes this becomes a problem at 54 years of age, whereas the average worker perceives this to affect employees from just 48 years of age – more than 15 years before most are considering retirement.

In a recent survey<sup>25</sup>, three out of ten older workers said that they had experienced age-related discrimination. Our findings suggest that it is even more prevalent. At an individual level, three in five (58%) older workers said that they had experienced age-related discrimination in the past five years. A similar proportion (60%) of workers (of any age) said that they had witnessed it over this time period. This is most commonly manifested, they say, in the form of withholding interesting tasks, promotions or training from older workers.

<sup>25</sup> Attitudes to older workers, Westfield Wright Pty 2012, Nicholas Wright, Sydney

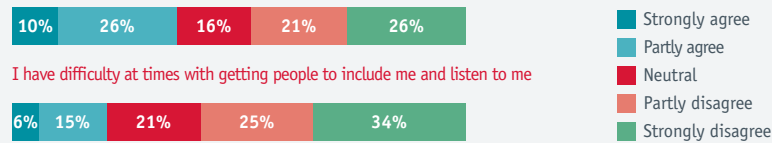
Thinking about age-related discrimination. Which of the following types of age related discrimination have you, personally experienced over the last 5 years? *Base: Older workers in candidate survey*  
 And which of the following types of age-related discrimination have you, personally witnessed which are directed at someone else over the last 5 years? *Base: Candidate survey*



More positively, although over one in three older workers sometimes feels invisible due to their age, and one in five has difficulty being included and heard, the proportion of older workers who disagrees with these statements is far greater:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

*I sometimes feel that I am invisible because of my age*



*I have difficulty at times with getting people to include me and listen to me*

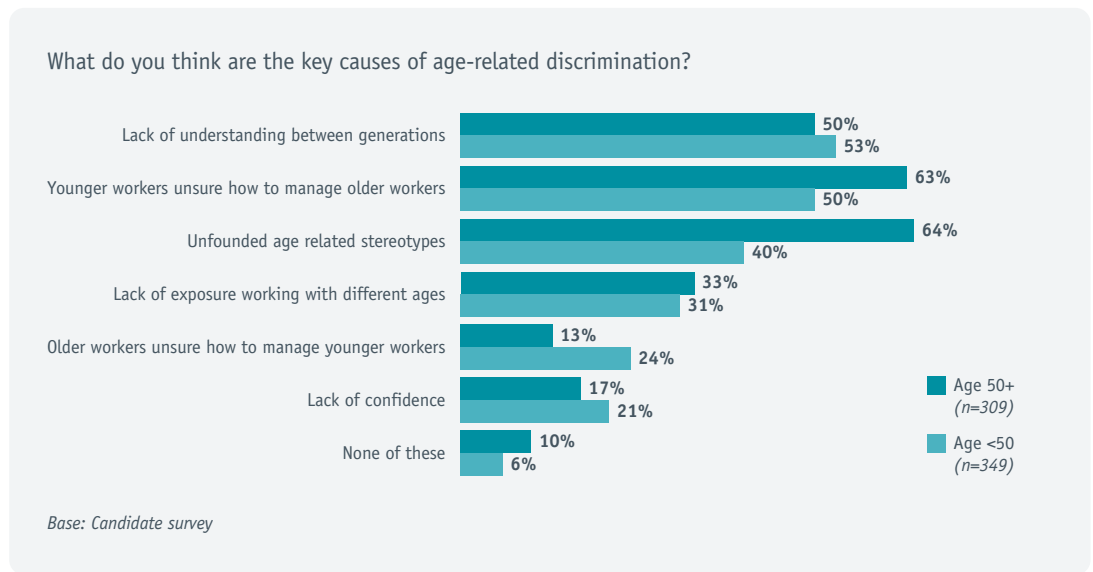


*Base: Older workers in Candidate survey n=383*

The Department of Health and Ageing asserts that younger workers often have negative attitudes towards the older generations, perceiving them to be less productive in the workplace, with young people being less certain of good reasons to hire older workers<sup>26</sup>. However, our research suggests differing opinions.

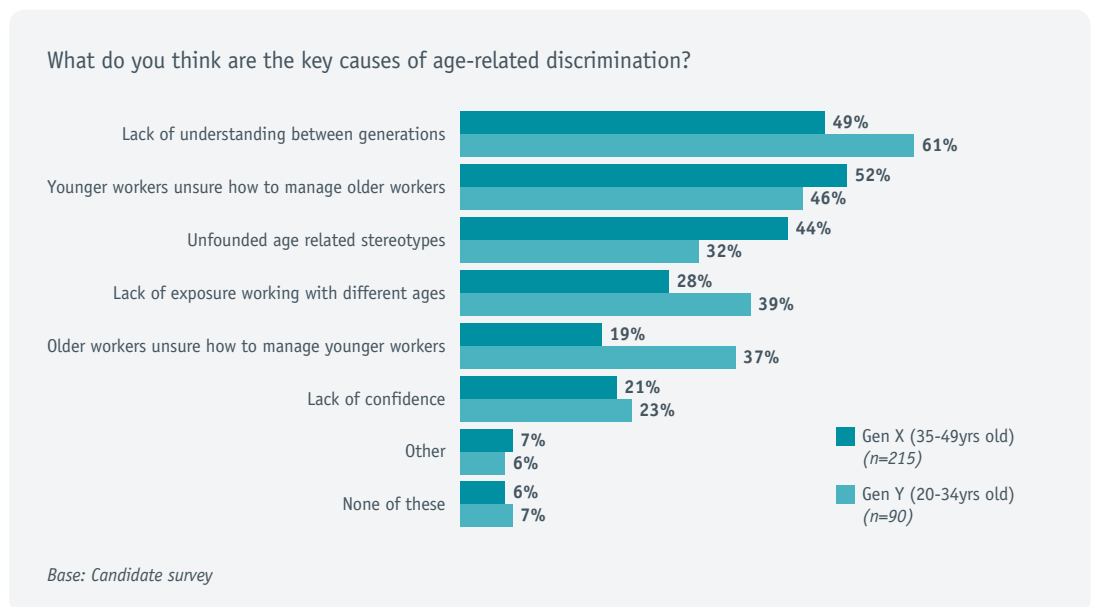
<sup>26</sup> Valuing and Keeping Older Workers, Department of Health and Ageing, April 2010, National Seniors Australia Productive Aging Centre

Older workers believe the key causes of age-related discrimination are unfounded age-related stereotypes and younger workers being unsure how to manage their older peers. Younger workers however, are more likely to believe age-related discrimination is due to a lack of understanding between the generations:



Generation Y is more likely than Generation X to attribute age-related discrimination to lack of understanding between the generations, lack of exposure or older workers being unsure how to manage younger workers.

Conversely, Generation X is more likely than their younger counterparts to attribute discrimination to younger workers being unsure how to manage their older counterparts and unfounded age related stereotypes. This challenge will not be short-lived – it is forecast that by 2014, five discrete generational groups will exist in the workforce: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Millennials.



*Can we take a lesson from the board table? According to an Australian Government Corporations and Markets Advisory Committee report in 2009, "the average age of directors of public companies in Australia is 53 years, with the average age of directors of larger ASX listed companies being 59 years."*

<http://www.camac.gov.au>

## Coming of Age - attracting, engaging and retaining older workers

There is no simple solution to mitigating the risk associated with skilled and experienced employees transitioning to retirement; nor to attracting, engaging and retaining older workers in your employee base. But the first step has to be taking some action, and as our research indicates, not enough Australian companies have strategies in place (or planned) to address these issues – even when they know it will impact their organisation.

### A PLANNED APPROACH

Any approach undertaken must be strategic, multi-faceted and not tokenistic - simply putting in place an option for flexible work hours or phased retirement is not going to cut it. Good workforce planning practices must be employed and identify:

- the number and location of employees who are of an age where retirement may occur in the next 3, 5 and 10 years
- the roles undertaken by these employees and the skills and experience they possess in order to fulfil these roles
- their current work patterns and the design of the roles they are currently performing.

Workforce planning information should then be used to develop a planned approach to risk quantification (what impact will losing these employees have on your business?), and mitigation (through succession planning, job re-design, training, coaching and mentoring, flexible work composition and retention strategies). Job analysis is an essential part of this process, and will provide a strong platform both to identify potential gaps or risks resulting from pending retirement, and to create competency frameworks for use in job and task re-design, succession planning and sourcing.

### ATTRACTING OLDER WORKERS

One might expect it to be easy to attract older workers, especially if you consider that one-third of retirees fear outliving their assets. So, why aren't older workers applying for roles? The answer may be as simple as where and how they are advertised. Are the advertisements highlighting those aspects of the role which are of most importance to older workers – recognition of their skills and experience, the culture and values of the organisation, opportunities to learn new things, and work-life fit? Unintentionally, many advertisers use language in their ads which gives the impression older workers are not encouraged – 'career-making' instead of a focus on experience and maturity which can add significant value. Ensure that your advertisement makes it clear that all people with the right skills (including transferrable), qualifications and experience will be equally considered.

According to Roy Morgan Research<sup>27</sup>, 89% of 50 to 64 year olds and 72% of 65+ year olds own a mobile or smartphone, while 91% of 50 to 64 year olds and 56% of 65+ year olds accessed the internet in 2008<sup>28</sup> – and no doubt this figure has increased since. However, far fewer used the internet for the purpose of finding job information, suggesting that the common practice of job board advertising is unlikely to be the most successful means of attracting mature-aged employees. A mix of media designed to attract both active and passive jobseekers, and enable the opportunity to be viewed by a broad age group, is more appropriate.

But the onus for older candidate responses to advertised positions does not rest purely with the employer. Older workers themselves need to take responsibility for their careers and actively pursue advertised opportunities. If indeed older workers are not applying for advertised roles, as our client respondents indicate, there are plenty of resources and support mechanisms available to help them to do this – and to do it well.

### TAKING STOCK OF SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

If an organisation's goal is to measure ability to work and not age, as the *Work Ability* model suggests, the use of competency and skills assessments is critical. The inclusion of unbiased and objective assessments will protect against age discrimination during the recruitment process, and is also valuable to identify the skills and competencies existing employees in older age brackets may have that could be deployed in other roles or projects. Job enrichment of this type is an important strategy in older worker retention, and provides productivity and quality of output gains to the organisation.

Competency and skills assessments are also essential tools in the identification of employees for succession planning and skills development, vital for those organisations needing to replace valuable skills and experience lost through the retirement of existing employees.

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***Job analysis is essential to provide a strong platform both to identify potential gaps or risks resulting from pending retirement, and to create competency frameworks for use in job and task re-design, succession planning and sourcing***

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***Ensure that your advertisement makes it clear that all people with the right skills (including transferrable), qualifications and experience will be equally considered***

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***If indeed older workers are not applying for advertised roles, there are plenty of resources and support mechanisms available to help them to do this – and to do it well***

<sup>27</sup> Mobile phone use grows as home telephone connections slow, Roy Morgan Research, 30/04/2012, accessed via [www.roymorganonlinestore.com](http://www.roymorganonlinestore.com)  
<sup>28</sup> Use of digital media and communication by older Australians, ACMA, accessed via [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au)

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***It is wrong to assume that a 'one size fits all' HR development strategy will work any better among this group than any other.***

Like any component of the workforce, 'older workers' are made up of individuals with differing needs, motivations and expectations. It is wrong to assume that a 'one size fits all' HR development strategy will work any better among this group than any other. With the wealth of information readily available through Human Resource Information Systems, employers should be able to audit the locations, roles, experience, education and skills of older employees, and use this information as a base to initiate targeted discussions with individual employees.

## **TRAINING AND RE-TRAINING**

The appetite mature aged workers have for training and new skills acquisition is significant - 68% of our respondents over 50 indicated this was important to them, and 75% indicated that they would prefer to work in a challenging role - and as our client respondents indicated, most employers are also open to providing it. Again, a targeted approach is recommended, taking into consideration the different learning styles of older workers and how relevant it is to their current and future contribution to the organisation. Many older employees have been through iterations of 'training for training's sake' and are justifiably wary of opportunities which do not offer a measurable benefit.

Training activities should also acknowledge the wealth of experience and expertise possessed, whether or not this is recognised by a formal qualification. Programmes which incorporate Recognition of Prior Learning are a valuable addition to the training agenda.

Training to develop and retain current skills in the use of technology is important for every employee, but based on the prevailing stereotype our research has identified, this type of skills acquisition is essential for older employees. Again, this is not the responsibility of the employer alone - older employees must be prepared to continually hone their skills and knowledge of technology, or risk being left behind.

Of course, learning is a two-way street, and older employees play a constructive role in training, coaching and mentoring others. This is particularly valuable for industries such as Engineering, which have a higher proportion of highly skilled and experienced older employees. However, only 3% of our client respondents identified this ability as a positive impact of engaging older workers. This attitude must be re-framed if the risks of losing intellectual property, corporate knowledge and skills are to be mitigated.

## **MANAGING OLDER WORKERS**

The hallmarks of good management apply to managing employees of any age - respect, support and encouragement, trustworthiness, openness, regular and honest feedback, and providing the tools and resources to enable the employee to excel in their role. The management of any employee is multi-faceted, and certainly there is no one-size fits all guide to managing mature-aged employees.

But as our candidate respondents identified, younger workers are often unsure of how to manage team members who are older than them. With 'support from my direct manager' a desirable component of the job for 68% of our respondents over 50, the skills and attitudes of leaders and managers are critical to older worker retention. Organisations must ensure that their managers and leaders are equipped with the skills and confidence to effectively manage diverse employee groups to ensure the employment experience is positive for employees of any age. The productivity, engagement and retention benefits of doing this are obvious.

The 'middle management' group also has an opportunity to mitigate age discrimination at the coalface. Providing access to interesting roles or projects, to promotion, or to training are in the remit of managers at all levels, and should be equally available to employees of all ages, based on their level of competency and their motivations - not an arbitrary number (which most sources can't seem to agree on).

When considering Work Health and Safety (WHS), the management of older employees does require a different approach. Different attitudes to health and safety exist based on the differing stages of life of employees, and the tailoring of WHS messages to account for this has been proven to be an effective means of encouraging safe working across age-diverse groups. And the payoff is tangible - promotion of corporate wellness initiatives assists all employees to maintain a healthy lifestyle which will enable them to work productively for longer. A recent study by Monash University found that health improvements for 10% of the unhealthiest older workers could have strong effects on the economy by way of reducing downtime, improving productivity and improving participation<sup>29</sup>.

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***Older employees play a constructive role in training, coaching and mentoring others.***

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***Organisations must ensure that their managers and leaders are equipped with the skills and confidence to effectively manage diverse employee groups.***

29 ROI in older worker health is quantifiable: Monash University, Stephanie Zillman, 22/04/2013, www.hcamag.com

# Recommendations

## FOR EMPLOYERS

**Re-frame:** how you think of your employees (existing and potential) in context of competencies and skills and life stage, not age groups.

**Personalise:** older workers don't fit one unique profile, and there is no one-size-fits-all strategy appropriate to this or any other group. For example, an employee of 50 in a metropolitan location may have different needs and motivations to one of 64 working in regional Australia.

**Review:** take stock of the competencies and skills possessed by your older workers. Audit the locations, roles, experience, education and abilities of older employees, and use this information as a base to initiate targeted discussions with individual employees.

**Prepare:** if you haven't commenced planning and preparation to limit the risks of skills retirement – do it now. Workforce planning, succession planning, flexible workforce models, skills auditing and acquisition, training and re-training are essential strategies.

**Align:** the strategies to attract, retain and engage older workers with what they want, not what's easy or inexpensive to implement. Ask older employees to form an ageing worker taskforce within your organisation.

**Rethink:** your recruitment strategies. Focus on second and third career options, ask older employees for referrals and invite high performing retirees to consider 'unretirement' or formal mentoring roles.

**Promote:** your culture and your values. An organisational culture which supports diversity, encourages learning, leads by example, and commits to the wellbeing of their employees is an asset to be leveraged.

**Support:** your older employees through leadership and coaching. Support your managers and train managers and supervisors who may be responsible for employees older than themselves.

**Invest:** in the health of all employees. Workplace wellness programs not only enhance productivity they help to unnecessary costs as the workforce ages.

**Protect:** valuable IP through knowledge retention strategies. This can include older employees acting as mentors to their younger colleagues.

**Re-train:** either formally or informally. This may include secondments, project work, mentoring and coaching arrangements, age-diverse work teams. Recognise prior learning and experience.

**Refuse:** to accept age discrimination in your company or industry, and hold others accountable for removing it. Dispel common stereotypes associated with older workers, particularly around productivity, safety, motivation, ability to acquire new skills, and use of technology.

**Adapt:** job design or organisational structures to enable better age diversity. This includes WHS considerations. More flexible work arrangements, working from home and review of roles and tasks to ensure employees are not becoming 'stale' are critical.

**Encourage:** communication and interaction of employees from a range of age groups. This may be work-related, social, or both.

**Leverage:** the wealth of support (financial and otherwise) offered to assist you to attract, engage and retain mature workers.

## FOR EMPLOYEES

**Re-think:** the value of your older colleagues and your approach to working with them.

**Avoid:** becoming the stereotype. Employees aged over 50 have a responsibility to keep abreast of new skills, trends and technologies in order to improve their employability. It's critical that older workers don't live up to the stereotypes getting in the way of their meaningful workforce participation. They must be able to keep up with the changing needs of employers.

**Embrace:** opportunities to transfer your skills and experience to a new industry. Change and challenge are exciting at all stages of your career. This does not necessarily mean climbing the career ladder, it means continually gaining skills, enjoying challenges, applying your experience to a new environment and looking to your work future with confidence.

**Ask:** for opportunities to share your knowledge, be involved in new things and receive training. For example, asking a Gen Y employee for an informal session on social media is a great way to both bridge gaps and learn new skills.

**Encourage:** your employer to adopt a diversity strategy.

**Promote:** yourself, your skills, your expertise and your experience.

**Seek:** new opportunities actively. If the reason employers are not hiring more older employees is because they're not applying for the roles – then apply!

**Refuse:** to accept age-based discrimination – whether you personally experience it, or witness it.

## Methodology

This whitepaper draws on a combination of both primary and secondary research. Chandler Macleod commissioned Loneragan Research to conduct an online survey amongst senior business people (employers) and amongst members of the workforce, including both older and younger workers. Respondents were sourced from the Chandler Macleod client and candidate databases.

A total of 480 surveys were completed amongst eligible employer respondents. All respondents identified themselves either as being in a senior management in their organisation, or were specialists (such as internal consultants with an appreciation and understanding of their business as a holistic enterprise).

A total of 672 eligible respondents completed the candidates (employees) survey, which include those who have had contact with Chandler Macleod either to place them in a job role, or as part of a managed workforce.

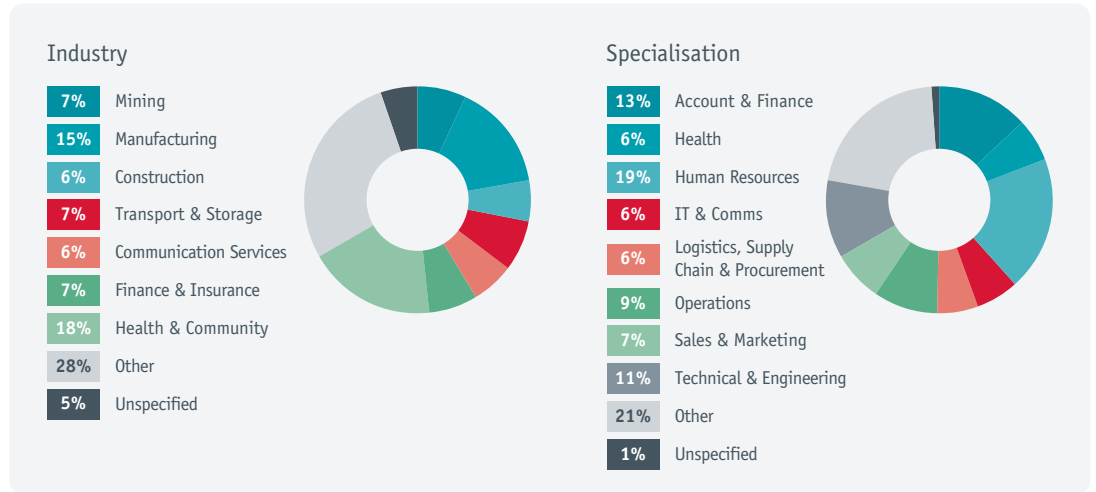
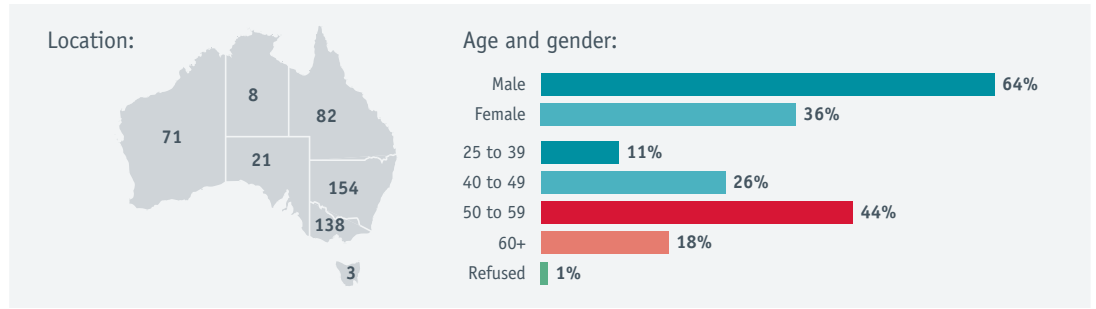
Fieldwork commenced on March 26 and was completed on April 14, 2013.

In addition to published sources referenced throughout this document, the following information sources were reviewed:

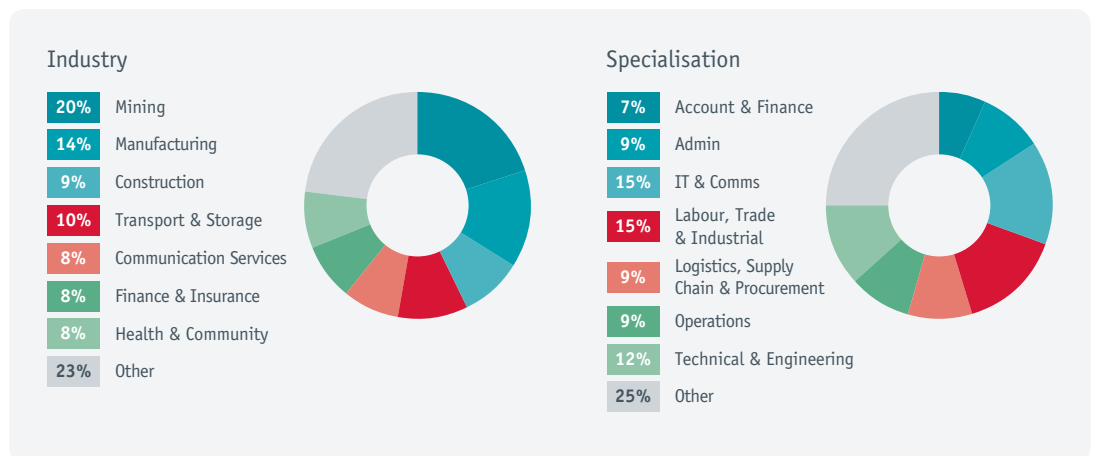
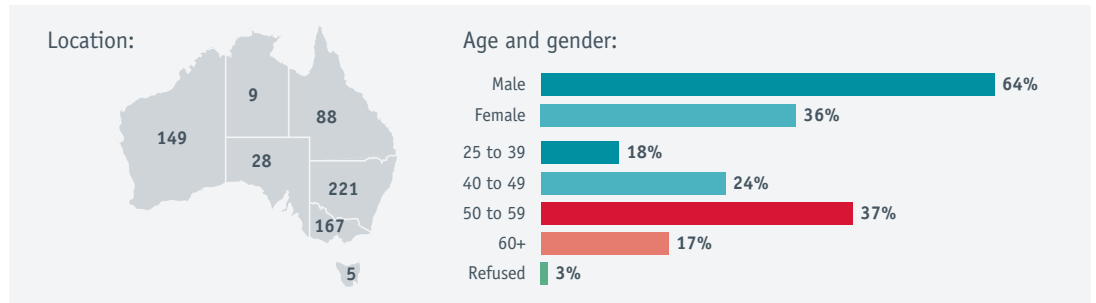
- A changing world looking for a fresh approach to meet age-old challenges, Fitzgerald, R. 2013 The Australian, 16 February 2013
- Engaging and Retaining Older Workers, Australian Institute of Management, February 2013
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# Respondent Profile

## EMPLOYERS



## EMPLOYEES



## Chandler Macleod truly believes in the power of people

It's true that an organisation's greatest asset is its people. When you have the right plan and the right people, in the right roles, at the right time, your company can increase its productivity and deliver on opportunities for growth and competitive advantage.

As a leading provider of human resources services, Chandler Macleod has more than 50 years experience working with individuals and organisations to help them to plan, source, assess, develop and manage their talent—enabling our employees, candidates and organisations to unleash their potential.

Our breadth of experience across every aspect of human resources will help you to:

**Plan** for your current and future workforce needs, and identify the best model for engaging critical talent

**Source** the right people across a range of disciplines using our proven BestFit™ methodology

**Assess** your people for maximised cultural and behavioural fit, and your organisation to assist with achievement of your target culture

**Develop** your people, teams and organisation to improve collaboration, engagement and retention

**Manage** individuals, teams and workforces to deliver productivity and ROI in a safe and scalable way.

Chandler Macleod is one of the largest employers in the Asia Pacific region, with 1,400 internal employees and more than 22,000 employees working on client sites. Our growing international network across New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, the UK and Ireland offers opportunities for sourcing new pools of talent and growing with our clients through the increasing influence of the Asian market.

Our proven track record in recruitment, consulting, workforce management, outsourced and managed services and HRIS and payroll technology means that we're equipped to deliver the right HR solutions to meet your strategies and objectives—delivering opportunities for organisations where they may not have been achievable before.

### CHANDLER MACLEOD QUICK FACTS

- Listed on ASX: CMG
- Over 1,400 internal employees
- Over 22,000 employees out working on client sites every week
- International branch network spanning Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, UK and Ireland
- Over 490,000 hours worked per week across Asia Pacific
- Over 400,000 people payrolled every week
- More than 650,000 assessments in the last five years
- Over 8,000,000 hotel beds made nationally
- Provided hands on care at over 18,000 aged care beds nationally
- Applied specialist sector knowledge with over 3,100 companies
- Outstanding workplace safety record with a national LTIFR of 1.0
- Working with over 60% of ASX Top 100 companies

