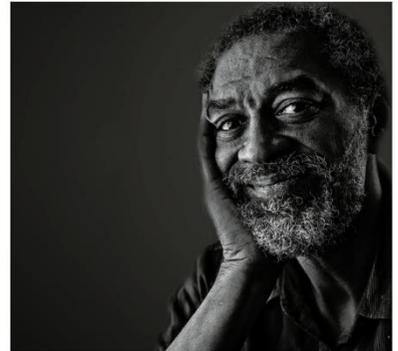


# Working Better with Age

Research on Barriers and Opportunities to Workforce Participation  
for Older Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador



February 25, 2022



St. John's Board of Trade

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## Final Report Checklist

Name of Proponent Organization: St. John's Board of Trade  
 Title of Research Project: Research on Barriers and Opportunities to Workforce Participation for Older Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador

Requirement	Included (yes/no/NA)	Refer To	Requires Revisions (yes/no/NA)
NLWIC boilerplate	YES	Pg. 4	
Executive Summary	YES	Section 1	
Recommendations for policies, programs and/or service delivery models	YES	Section 2	
If and how this research could be applied to other sectors and/or under-represented groups	YES	Section 4	
Dissemination plan post ending of the research project – in Appendix	YES	Appendix A	
Any sensitivities with respect to the dissemination of the Final Report and deliverables – in Appendix	YES	Appendix A	
Deliverables – listed, described and received, e.g. phase reports, tools, curriculum, etc.	YES	Section 5	
Areas/opportunities for further research	YES	Section 3	

**Research on Barriers and Opportunities to Workforce Participation for Older Workers in**

**Newfoundland and Labrador** is a research project led by St. John's Board of Trade and funded by the NL Workforce Innovation Centre (NLWIC).

Established in 2017 by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and administered by College of the North Atlantic, NLWIC has a provincial mandate to provide a coordinated, central point of access to engage all labour market stakeholders about challenges, opportunities and best practices in workforce development. The Centre's goal is to promote and support the research, testing and sharing of **ideas** and models of **innovation** in workforce development that will positively **impact** employability, employment and entrepreneurship within the province's labour force and particularly underrepresented groups. Funding for NLWIC is provided by the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills (IPGS) under the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Development Agreement.

St. John's Board of Trade has provided this *Working Better with Age: Research on Barriers and Opportunities to Workforce Participation for Older Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador* Final Report to NLWIC as a project deliverable outlined in the Agreement signed on October 10, 2019 between College of the North Atlantic and St. John's Board of Trade. Under that Agreement, the Final Report and all other research project deliverables are the Intellectual Property of IPGS.

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# Section 1

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**Executive Summary**

# SECTION 1 | Executive Summary

## Introduction

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This project, titled *Working Better with Age*, is a research initiative tasked with looking at barriers and opportunities to workforce participation for older workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. The project was led by the St. John's Board of Trade (SJBOT) and funded by the Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre (NLWIC).

In [The Way Forward on Workforce Development](#), the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador outlined a vision for strengthening the province's workforce and supporting a more robust, productive, knowledge-based economy (Government of NL, 2019, Pg. 3). Within that vision was a goal to prepare Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) for future labour market opportunities by identifying and addressing anticipated skills and labour gaps, and building training, recruitment, and retention strategies to address those gaps. A key to addressing labour shortages was to look at under-represented populations in the province and identify barriers to employment to increase labour market participation. One of the populations identified was older workers. Older workers are defined as individuals 55 years of age and over who are in the labour force; meaning they are working or are unemployed and actively looking for work (Government of NL, 2019, Pg. 10).

**Older workers are defined as individuals 55 years of age and over who are in the labour market; meaning they are working or are unemployed and actively looking for work.**

The Way Forward on Workforce Development, 2019

Like most industrialized countries, Canada's population is aging due to lower fertility rates and longer life expectancy (F/P/T, 2018, Pg.3). Within Canada, all provinces are experiencing transformative economic and structural changes because of an aging population, but no province is feeling the impact as intensely as NL. The province's population is aging faster than any other

province in Canada as a result of low fertility rates, out migration, and people living longer (Government of NL, 2022).

Based on research conducted by MQO for this project, it is estimated that as many as 43,000 older workers would potentially attach to the workforce if the right circumstances presented themselves.

If a population of persons 55+ were added to the workforce – with all their skills and experience – a more diverse and multi-generational workforce would result. This is good news. Research tells us that age diversity stimulates and supports creative thinking and innovation. However, to get there, we must create the right circumstances for persons 55+ to attach to the workforce. This report will explore the research as to what these circumstances might be and make the case for developing programs, policies, and campaigns which could generate positive employment outcomes for older workers in our province.

This Final Report presents an overview of the research project and its findings of the barriers and opportunities to workforce participation for older workers in NL. The report also identifies the number of older workers who, if circumstances were right, would attach to the workforce in this province.

The research was undertaken primarily by the Project Leads hired by the SJBOT for the project and MQO Research, with reference to many existing reports, input from The Social Fabric Institute Inc., and guidance from key stakeholders within the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors.

A significant amount of work has been done at both the federal and provincial level looking at the barriers and opportunities older workers face when attempting to stay in or re-enter the workforce. In September 2016, the [Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors Forum](#) issued a report titled *Promoting the Labour Force Participation of Older Canadians* (included in **APPENDIX D**). The Forum recognized labour force participation of older Canadians as a priority and the report identified Canadian and international “promising practices” that support the extended life of older workers.

The focus of this research project for NLWIC was not to redo the good work that has been completed by others, including the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors Forum. Instead, it is intended to overlay existing research onto our own provincial research, and to recommend practices, policies, and programs unique to this province that would create opportunities for workers 55+ to experience positive employment outcomes.

This report outlines the research design, results of our research on barriers to employment for persons 55+, a discussion of that research, and recommendations moving forward.

## Definitions

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**Older workers:** Individuals 55 years of age and over who are in the labour force (working or are unemployed and actively looking for work).

**Attach/Attachment:** Working or providing services in the labour market for remuneration, on a full-time, part-time, seasonal, or temporary basis, either as an employee or in self-employment (Bell, 2012).

**Labour Market:** The supply of people in a particular country or area who are able and willing to work, especially in relation to the number of jobs that are available (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022).

**Workforce:** The group of people who work in a company, industry, country, etc. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022).

### **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB):**

- Diversity is the demographic mix of community, with a focus on the representation of equity-deserving groups (University of Toronto, 2019).
- Equity is the fair and respectful treatment of all people. Equity is the process, equality is the result (University of Toronto, 2019).

- Inclusion is the creation of an environment where everyone feels welcome, is treated with respect, and is able to fully participate (University of Toronto, 2019).
- Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group. It is when an individual can bring their authentic self to work (Cornell University, n.d).

## Project Overview

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The SJBOT submitted a proposal to NLWIC in 2019 to research the barriers and opportunities persons 55+ faced when looking to retain employment or re-attach to the workforce.

This project was designed to answer three overarching research questions:

1. **What barriers exist for persons 55+ returning to the workforce?**
2. **What opportunities exist to address those barriers?**
3. **What is the size of the potential labour force in NL aged 55+ who would return to work if they could do so?**

It was agreed that, once research was complete, the SJBOT would analyze the results of the research and make recommendations on how best to overcome those barriers, with a view to identifying the most promising initiatives for moving the agenda forward.

This project took place over two years and came to life in four phases:

- **Phases 1-2** were managed by Lori Sheppard (to be referred to as Project Lead #1 in this document). This portion of the project focussed on data collection, research, and analysis.
- **Phase 3** was managed by Heather Elliott (to be referred to as Project Lead #2 in this document). This portion of the project synthesized the data collected in Phases 1 and 2, undertook additional research, completed the overall analysis, completed a pilot, and brought forward recommendations.



## Phase 1: Research into barriers and opportunities.

### Description

During Phases 1 and 2 of the project, the Project Lead focused on research – digging into resources to understand what was already available to answer our project’s three key questions:

1. What barriers exist for persons 55+ returning to the workforce?
2. What opportunities exist to address those barriers?
3. What is the size of the potential labour force in NL aged 55+ who would return to work if they could do so?

Phase 1 specifically looks at research questions 1 and 2.

From the research described in this phase, there is a consensus on the broad-based categories of barriers to employment for older workers. Based on this same research, there is also a consensus on important areas to explore to develop opportunities to overcome those barriers and encourage labour force participation of older workers.

Key reoccurring themes are:

- Ageism,
- education and training,
- workplace accommodation, and
- employment services.

A topline synthesis of barriers and opportunities to employment for older workers is presented here in **Section 1**, with a more detailed outline of recommendations for policies, programs, and service delivery models in **Section 2**.

The following sub-phases outline key findings and results of research undertaken by MQO into the barriers and opportunities older workers face when they are looking to stay in or enter the workforce. MQO’s reports can be found in **APPENDIX H** and **APPENDIX B**.

### Methodology

The methodology included a review of existing research on barriers to employment and workforce participation for older workers, best practice research in removing barriers, and other pertinent information on policy and practice to support older workers who wish to remain in the workforce. This information was gleaned through a literature review of current industry and peer reviewed publications.

To gain a better understanding of the experiences and barriers facing older workers in NL specifically, and to verify the findings of the literature, MQO undertook a focus group and employer survey. Further details of the focus group and employer survey are outlined in **Section 1.3**.

Research was also undertaken by the SJBOT and other key stakeholders at a *Newfoundland Labrador Older Workers Summit*. Further additional research was undertaken by Project Lead #2 with a review of the key findings from the 2018 Forum of Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors.

## Key Findings

### **1.1 | Barriers to Employment for Older Workers – International Perspective**

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According to a 2019 report published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the median age of populations across OECD countries is expected to raise from its current age of 40 to 45 years by mid-2050. Further, the proportion of older adults aged 65 and over to those of traditional working age (ages 15-64) is expected to rise to a rate of 2 in 5 by 2050. The proportion of older adults participating in the labour force has kept apace, and there are now more older adults active in the labour market across OECD countries than ever before. In Canada specifically, the employment rate among those 55 to 64 years of age has raised by 15 percentage points since the year 2000.

As life expectancies increase and individuals continue to want to work well into old age, Canada has launched policies and programs to support unemployed older workers in their reintegration into the workforce, such as the joint federal-provincial/territorial targeted Initiative for older workers. These types of programs will be paramount to tackling the demographic shifts associated with population aging and the raising proportion of retirees to workers. The OECD (2019) reports that, if nothing is done to address current work and retirement patterns, there will be significant strain in public expenditures and overall economic prosperity. According to the OECD (2019), population ageing may also play a role in compounding inequalities later in life as disparities in employment, income, and health continue to accumulate over the life course. According to the PwC Golden Age Index report released in 2018 which quantifies how well global economies harness the power of their older workers, Canada currently ranks 18<sup>th</sup> of 35 analyzed countries. Canada could see a boost to its GDP of \$99 billion if it were to rise to levels of one of the top-ranking countries, New Zealand. Overall, bringing global employment rates up to New Zealand's level represents a \$3.5 trillion economic opportunity. Thus, there are a number of factors associated with a need to help older workers remain or otherwise reintegrate into the workforce.

Much of the global economic policy for addressing these challenges has been focused on disincentivizing early retirement and rewarding longer working lives. One of the first levers policymakers have explored in this regard is pension reform. The most common global approaches to pension reform have involved reducing entitlements to workers and, therefore, costs, diminishing the incentive to retire; raising the pension age or otherwise introduce penalties for retirement at the statutory age; or raising the minimum age at which pensionable benefits can be accessed.

While many of the above factors are associated with what the OECD (2006) has termed pull factors (those which result in pulling workers into retirement) various push factors (those which restrict opportunities for older workers) play just as important of a role in an individual's decision to retire. As such, it is equally important to consider in an analysis of the barriers older workers face if they wish to

remain in the workforce. These factors include workplace structures and policies, employer attitudes, age discrimination, and skill mismatch.

## **1.2| Analyzing Barriers to Employment for Older Workers with a focus on Push Factors**

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This review of barriers will explore various push factors – those factors which restrict or discourage older workers from joining the workforce or extending their careers. In Phase 3 of this report, we will take key learning from Phases 1 and 2 and overlay that learning onto a workshop with employers and older workers. From Phase 3, we will outline recommendations to create opportunities for older workers to “experience the right circumstances” to attach to the workforce in this province.

### Age Discrimination

One of the major barriers for older adults who would like to remain in the workforce is the presence of age discrimination among employers, who play a key role in extending employee working lives and offering quality opportunities. Those involved in hiring may have negative perceptions of older workers, relying on stereotypes of inflexibility or lack of adaptability to make decisions regarding their hiring.

Evidence from a field study designed to test hiring discrimination of older workers by Neumark, Burn, and Button (2017) suggests that age discrimination makes finding new employment a significant challenge, especially for older women. While employment longevity among older workers stems in large part from remaining in their existing employment longer, they have fewer opportunities to find new jobs. Even in this case, age discrimination may factor into a lack of retention on the part of employers. As the OECD (2019) report notes, “if firms rely on seniority or efficiency wages as an incentive device, the cost of retaining workers at an older age or hiring them may be too high relative to their [perceived lower] productivity.” Although age discrimination legislation exists nationally, it is often difficult to prove that this discrimination has occurred, and the costs of bringing a case before courts may prove inaccessible for those experiencing it. It is, therefore, necessary to couple effective enforcement policy regarding age discrimination with awareness campaigns and employer best practices to promote impactful change in this area.

### Lack of employment services tailored to older workers

OECD (2006) also notes that existing employment services may be geared more toward the needs of younger workers rather than older workers. Yet, older workers face unique challenges in attempting to remain in the workforce or to re-attach to it. Several OECD countries have implemented strategies to ameliorate this discrepancy, creating specific initiatives and programs targeted at helping older workers in their job search and in providing counselling specific to their needs. However, if this element of labour force integration remains ignored and there is not focused investment in employment services unique to the needs of older workers, this may manifest in longer periods of unemployment for this group or a premature exit from the labour force.

## Skills Mismatch and Technological Advancement

With the advancement of digital technologies in all areas of life, and especially in the workforce, those who possess digital literacy and proficiency with information technologies represent an increasing norm among job seekers. Those who do not possess these skills, which can include older workers who were not introduced to digital technologies in the same way younger workers have been, are at an increasing disadvantage in seeking new employment and in retaining existing employment. Although older workers represent a diverse group in terms of their skills in the labour force, many still struggle as their skills are considered insufficient or outdated with respect to an increasingly digital world.

Upskilling and training are major avenues through which employers can close the skill gap between employee groups, yet many may not see the benefit to investing in their workers. Older adults across OECD countries were shown to consistently participate in less training than their younger counterparts, exacerbating their disadvantage in the workplace. In addition, public spending on labour force training and upskilling supports have been on the decline over the past few years in most countries. In the face of automation and the obsolescence of many previous roles as a result, failure to adapt to these changes could prove problematic for older workers.

## Inflexibility of employment arrangements

For many older workers, the option to gradually reduce workforce participation rather than retire abruptly is an appealing one but, there are challenges with this graduated approach. Older workers willing to work longer but looking for flexible work options (i.e., flexible hours, part time, telework) and physical accommodation (i.e., ergonomic workstations, less physically demanding work) do not have the same employment opportunities or options.

### **1.3 | MQO Older Workers Focus Group – Provincial Perspective**

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In November 2019, MQO held a focus group with four participants ranging in age from 57-75. The primary area of exploration for this session involved barriers that exist for older workers who would like to remain in the workforce. Participants consisted of two men and two women, all of whom had looked for work or new opportunities post-retirement.

Based on a synthesis of the discussions among participants during this focus group, the key themes which emerged regarding the challenges faced by older workers wanting to participate in the work force are included below. Participants were given the opportunity to suggest solutions to the issues they raised during the session. Topline recommendations included:

- Increase communication to create a greater awareness of the issues faced by older workers. Older workers must be engaged in conversations with policymakers in the workplace to address these challenges.
- Awareness campaigns celebrating older workers as valuable, skilled, and experienced, and debunking myths and stereotypes about older workers as inept, clumsy, non-competitive, and a liability, would be valuable.

A summary of the MQO employer survey and focus group are included in **APPENDIX B**.

Key challenges, which reiterated the universal themes of this report, are summarized here:

#### Age Discrimination

Participants felt that employers tend to place less value on their work and life experience compared to younger workers, and that young people are perceived to be “better at the job” than older workers due to learning quickly and adapting to new technology.

#### Work as Identity

For participants who were currently working, paid or unpaid, employment was thought to be a large part of their sense of purpose and “usefulness,” contributing to one’s feelings of self-worth. Further, work provides an avenue for social engagement; when one stops working, many social connections can become severed. For one participant, their workplace encompassed a part of their social community, which was lost when they left the workforce.

#### Challenges with Technology

Most participants noted that they felt “technologically obsolete” and less comfortable using technology in the workplace compared to younger workers. There was some fear on the part of those over the age of 65 that they would make a mistake using technology which would inadvertently break or crash a system. However, participants also did not want their work to be done for them, but rather to be shown how to use technology so they could be more independent.

#### Challenges with Workplace Policy

It was noted that, as one ages, their need for medical care and attending medical appointments increases. Yet participants felt that employers were not flexible enough in accommodating these needs, not only for older workers but for all workers.

#### Policy restrictions

Policy restrictions also had an impact on insurance and benefits for older workers. Most employer group plans, participants noted, are not designed for the needs of older workers, and some benefits are retracted once one turns 65, with all benefits disappearing after age 71. Several participants mentioned that benefits such as dental and vision coverage are clawed back as one ages.

### **1.4 | Older Workers Summit – Provincial Perspective**

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In addition to the Research conducted by MQO, the SJBOT partnered with the Office of the Seniors’ Advocate, Older Workers NL, and the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development to conduct an Older Workers Summit.

The purpose of the summit was to bring together representatives from business, unions, government, post-secondary education, seniors’ groups, labour market researchers, and older workers themselves to explore the issues, challenges, solutions, and opportunities that could be undertaken on behalf of older workers seeking to stay in or re-enter the workforce.

The Older Workers Summit echoed many of the same issues and challenges reported in the MQO secondary research. Key Findings from the Older Workers Summit include:

- Ageism in the workplace
- Lack of training and upskilling opportunities for older workers
- Lack of obvious employment opportunities due to retention and recruitment strategies that focus on young adults
- Employers not knowing how to seek out and recruit older workers
- Workplaces not ideally suited for older workers
- Public retirement policy and norms which discourage people from working past a certain age

The Summit also offered insight into potential solutions to overcome the challenges, including:

- Basic employment and technology training tailored to older workers (i.e., Excel, résumé writing, job search).
- Financial planning courses post-retirement for persons entering or returning to work.
- Community round table forums, with persons from other underrepresented populations facing similar challenges with workforce engagement.
- Comprehensive education and awareness campaigns dispelling myths and stereotypes about older workers. These campaigns should be targeted to audiences within the public, private, and not-for-profit business sectors.
- Create a pilot event focused on talent mapping for older workers. This could include financial planning, skills identification, job search strategies, networking with employers, experience sharing, and mentoring.

A summary of the Older Workers Summit is included in **APPENDIX C**.

## **1.5 | Report on Promoting Labour Force Participation of Older Canadians – National Perspective**

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*Promoting the Labour Force Participation of Older Canadians* was a report developed by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers responsible for Seniors (F/P/T). The report recognized the labour force participation of older Canadians as a priority, and the F/P/T were tasked with developing a report identifying Canadian and international promising practices that supported the extended life of older workers (F/P/T, 2018, Pg. 2).

Based on the results of the international and pan-Canadian research reviews undertaken for the report, five key barriers to employment were identified, as well as several opportunities for improvement.

Top five barriers to employment were identified as:

1. Ageism,
2. Lack of education and access to training,
3. Difficulty in finding and applying for jobs,
4. Health issues, work life balance issues, and lack of workplace accommodations, and
5. Disincentives or lack of incentives to work in the retirement income system (F/P/T, 2018, Pg. 1).

Key “promising initiatives” to combating barriers to employment for older workers were identified as:

1. Awareness initiatives,
2. Financial incentives,
3. Health and safety,
4. Employment legislation,
5. Retirement income system,
6. Skills development,
7. Workplace accommodation, and
8. Employment services (F/P/T, 2018, Pg. 12).

The full report is included in **APPENDIX D**.

## **1.6 | Employer Survey – Provincial Perspective**

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MQO was engaged by the SJBOT to conduct a multi-phase study of the status of older workers in the province of NL. As part of this research, which included a literature review and synthesis of focus group and survey data from older workers themselves, specific barriers were identified for older workers who want to remain in the workforce. Following this, MQO launched a survey of employers in the region to understand the hiring practices and perceptions of older workers in NL. Methodology was an online survey developed and sent to SJBOT members via email and shared as an open link for non-member business. Data collection took place from February 26, 2020 to March 28, 2020.

The three key objectives of this employer survey were to assess:

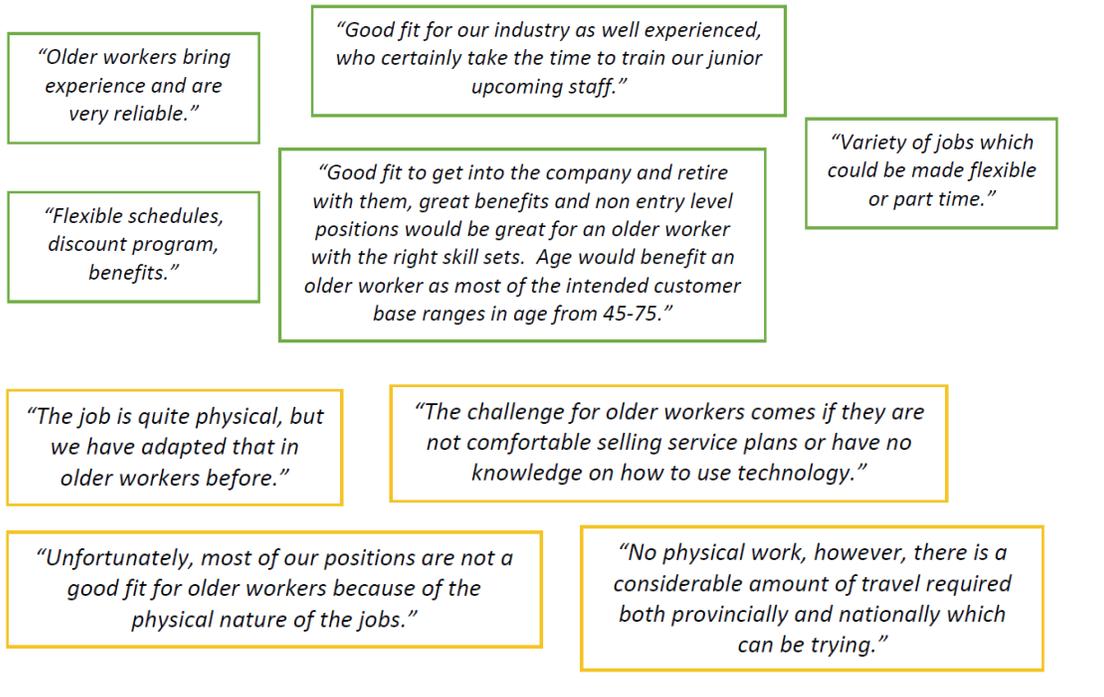
1. current employee make-up and hiring practices,
2. perceptions of older workers in the workplace, and
3. workplace policies with regards to supporting older workers during recruitment, as well as on the job.

A summary of the key takeaways from this survey are as follows:

- With regards to perceptions about older workers, most respondents held the view that older workers are more experienced than their younger counterparts.
- When asked what would make their workplace a good fit for older workers, responses centered around the experience and knowledge that older workers would have. Among those who stated they would be highly likely to hire an older worker if there were a new/vacant position, experience and reliability were cited as a top two reasons they would do so.
- Reasons for why older workers may be a “bad fit” for a particular workplace largely centered around the physical demands of the job, or the perception that older workers may be unfamiliar (or unable to keep up) with new technologies being used in the workplace. This notion of lacking experience with technology, or not being able to adapt to new technology, was the primary challenge cited with regards to hiring older workers.
- Several respondents were unable to identify any specific efforts made by their workplace to support older workers while recruiting, during the hiring process, or on the job. Among those who did provide examples of supports, it was frequently pointed out that older workers were supported in the same way that they would support any other potential hire or employee.

Specific mentions of supports offered to older employees were flexible hours, training, development, ergonomic assessments, and job modifications.

- Perceptions about older workers were largely positive, with dependable, hardworking, and knowledgeable being the top mentioned traits.
- In line with the perception that older workers may be unfamiliar with new technologies, fewer individuals felt that the word ‘adaptability’ accurately described older workers.



1 'Good Fit' vs. 'Bad Fit' Statements from Survey

Overall, results show that while there are not a lot of supports currently put in place for the recruitment and hiring of older workers, there is agreement that it is worthwhile to invest in job training for older workers. Individuals do believe that older workers have a lot to offer, particularly in terms of their experience and knowledge.

Recommendations include increasing support for older workers during the recruitment/hiring process, working towards creating communications that dispels negative myths about older workers, and investing in technology-related training to help those who may require guidance on current technologies being used to find jobs (i.e., Indeed, LinkedIn), as well as technologies used on the job.

Please see **APPENDIX B** for the full report, which includes key data points, insights, and recommendations which are of most importance to this research report.

## Phase 2: Understanding the Labour Market Potential

### Description

While Phase 1 of this project addressed the barriers and opportunities for persons 55+ returning to the workforce, Phase 2 aims to answer our third research question – “What is the size of the potential labour force in NL aged 55+ who would return to work if they could do so?”

To gain a thorough understanding of the status of the older workers in the province and, specifically, to assess the potential untapped resource that older workers represent, data from the Atlantic Matters Omnibus and Statistics Canada census data were analyzed during this phase of the project.

### Methodology

Review of Statistics Canada labour market data and the addition of five specific questions to the *Atlantic Matters Newfoundland and Labrador Omnibus* to assess percentage of individuals over age 55 who would participate in the workforce if they could.

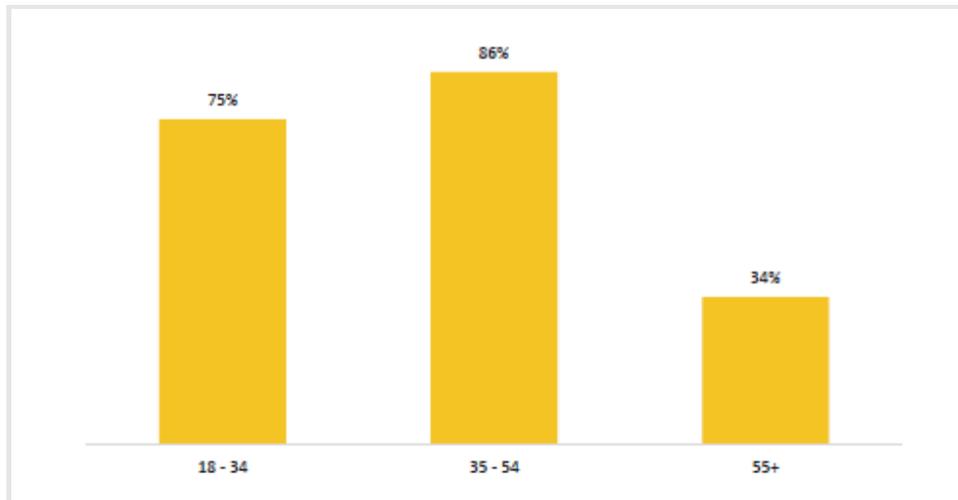
### Key Findings

#### **2.1 | Determining Potential Labour Market Contribution of Workers 55+ Through the Atlantic Matters Newfoundland and Labrador Omnibus**

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Five questions were added to the *Atlantic Matters Newfoundland and Labrador Omnibus* to assess the percentage of individuals over the age of 55 who would participate in the workforce if they could.

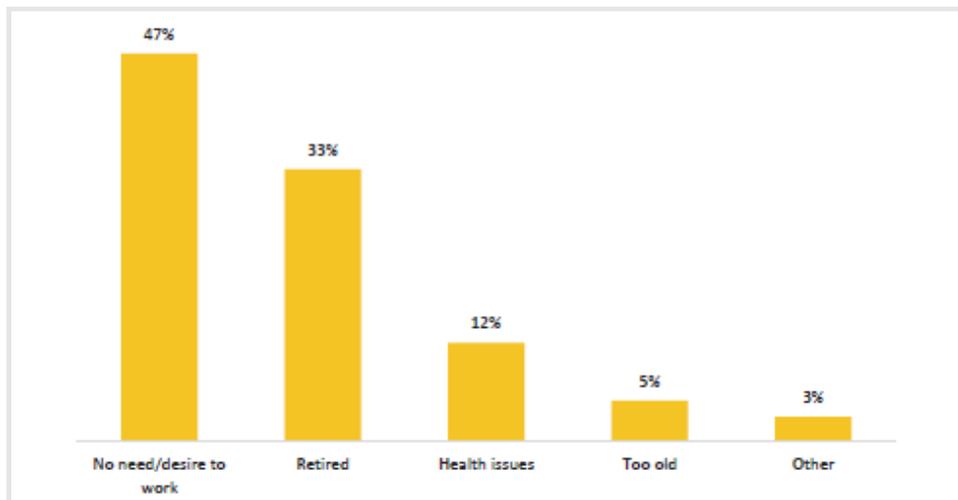
Participants were first asked whether they currently have a paying job. The proportion of responses for this question across age groups is depicted in Figure 2. Those between 18 and 54 were very likely to have a paying job (75% of those 18 to 34 and 86% of those 35 to 54). Those in the 55+ age group were the least likely to have a paying job (34%).



*2 Percentage of Each Age Group with a Paying Job*

If participants responded that they did not have a paying job, they were asked if they had looked for work in the past two years. Among the 55+ age group, the vast majority (92%) of those who do not have a paying job reported not having looked for work in this time.

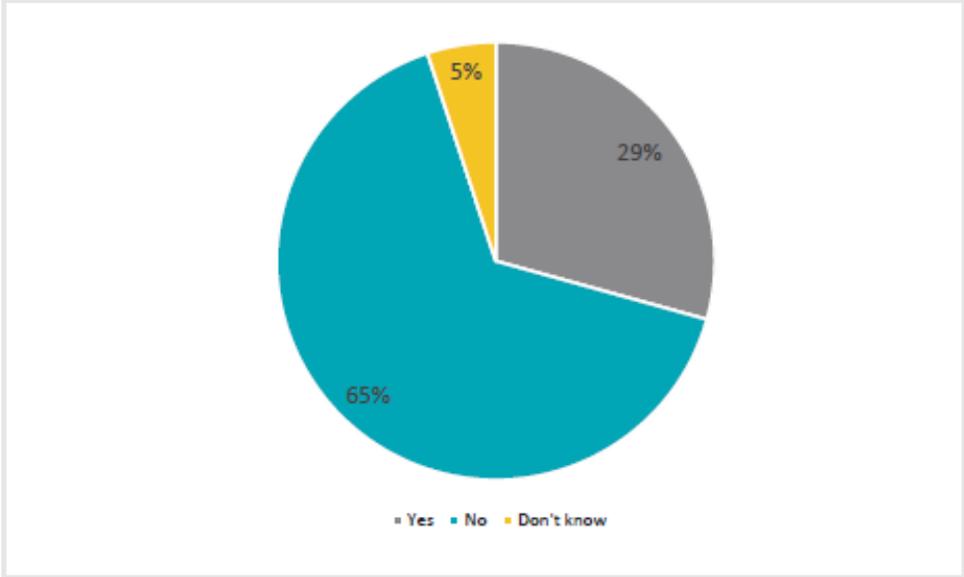
When asked why they have not looked for work in the past two years, those 55 and older who do not currently have a paying job cited not needing or wanting to work (47%), retirement (33%), health issues (12%), being too old to work (5%), and other reasons (3%).



*3 Reasons for Not Looking for Work in the Past Two Years Among Those 55+*

Participants were also asked what challenges or barriers they have faced in trying to find work, if they have looked for a job in the past two years. Among those 55+ who reported having looked for work in the past two years, the top mentioned challenges included: lack of jobs available (31%); being too old (13%); and other specified barriers (12%).

Participants who do not have a paying job were asked whether they would accept employment if an appealing job opportunity arose. The response distribution among those age 55+ is depicted in Figure 4. While the majority (65%) would not accept such an offer, a sizable portion (29%) reported that they would accept an appealing job offer



4 Whether or Not One Would Accept an Appealing Job Offer Among Those 55+

Finally, those who do not currently have a paying job and would not accept one if an appealing opportunity arose were asked their main reason for this decision. In the 55+ age category, the most commonly cited reason was that they do not need or want to work (38%), followed by illness, injury, or disability (31%), retirement or old age (30%), personal or family responsibilities (1%), and other reasons (1%).

Please see **APPENDIX H** for a detailed report of the Atlantic Matters Newfoundland and Labrador Omnibus.

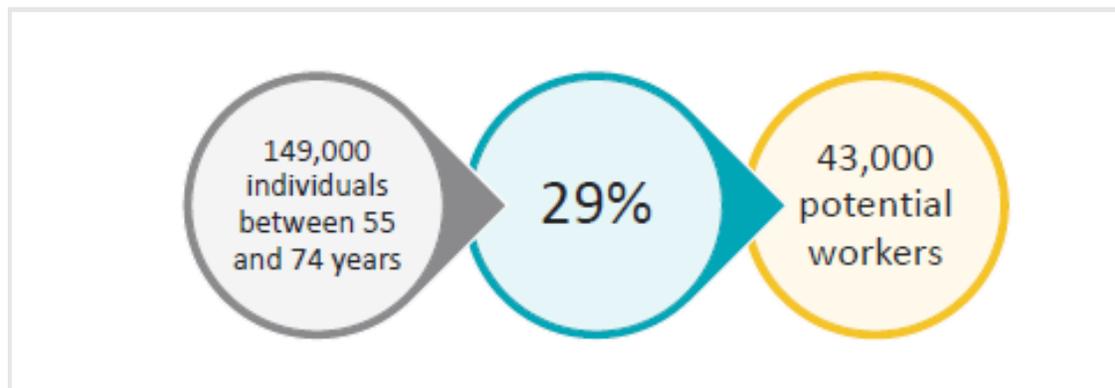
**2.2 | Determining Potential Labour Market Contribution of Workers 55+ by Extrapolating Statistics Canada Census Data**

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According to the Statistics Canada 2016 census, the total population of those in the labour force in Newfoundland and Labrador (ages 15 and older) is 256,855, constituting an employment rate of 49.5% and an overall labour force participation rate of 58.7%. The total population of individuals in the province between the ages of 55 and 74 is 148,760 individuals.

If one generalizes the findings of the Atlantic Matters Omnibus responses to the total population of NL in estimating the proportion of individuals in the 55 to 74 age group who would accept an appealing job opportunity to be 29%, the total number of individuals this encompasses is approximately 43,000. This suggests that there is a substantial portion of potential workers who could be recruited into the labour

force among this age group, considering that the Omnibus polling is weighted to be representative of the general public.



*5 Potential Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador, Ages 55-74*

In summary, respondents of the Omnibus aged 55 and older largely did not have paying jobs and, among those unemployed, the majority had not looked in the past two years. Participants cited a number of reasons for this centered around common topics related to the natural aging process and life stage, such as not desiring employment, retirement, health issues, or general old age.

Barriers emerged among those who had looked for employment related to age and a lack of available jobs for them, and specific verbatim comments have suggested age discrimination and reskilling issues as playing a role as well. At the same time, a third (29%) of respondents in this age category indicated that they would accept an appealing job offer should one become available. This suggests that there exists potential for increased labour force participation among older adults in NL, especially if one considers these results within the scope of larger population figures.

*“Statistics identified a steadily increasing percentage of older people in the workforce, as well as an increasing number of older people who are unemployed but looking for work. According to market research presented, many people who are retired would accept an employment offer that was appealing and practical.”*

Older Workers Summit Summary Report (2019)

Please see **APPENDIX H** for full reporting on the Statistics Canada Census Data pulled for this research project.

### Project Reset: April-August 2021

On April 8, 2021, The SJBOT requested a pause and extension for the Older Worker’s Project (officially known as *Research on Barriers and Opportunities to Workforce Participation for Older Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador*). The request was approved, and the project was paused from April 1, 2021 to August 31, 2021. The project schedule shifted ahead with a re-start date of September 1, 2021, and a new project end date of February 28, 2022.

With the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, new variants, and delays to vaccination, Summer 2021 was not the right time to launch a program that put older workers – those who arguably are most at risk for suffering severe consequences resulting from COVID-19 – into workshop sessions or, indeed, the workforce. We knew at that time that vaccines would bring increased safety and freedom, and that fear was high, and capacity was low within the business world to tackle new issues or opportunities. In addition, Project Lead #1 had left the position and there was a need to re-hire for the role. These were all barriers to project success and practical reasons why a pause and extension was required and approved.

In September 2021 following the orientation and onboarding of Project Lead #2, there was also a fresh review of the material, and an opportunity to ask how we, as the research lead for this project, could set job seekers 55+ up for success in a post-COVID environment. We questioned, as well, whether the COVID-19 pandemic presented a new barrier to employment for this population, or an opportunity to shift our paradigm and approach the problem from another angle.

This resulted in a subtle shift in focus, moving from putting the emphasis on older workers' efforts to attach to the workforce, to encouraging and empowering employers to seek out older workers and create a greater effort to retain or attract them for employment.

This shift in attention from older worker to employer as a strategy to overcoming barriers and creating opportunity was bolstered by the MQO Employer Survey research, which revealed that employers make little or no effort to specifically recruit older workers.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the next area to explore in relation to barriers and opportunities facing older workers was the attitudes of employers. In Phase 3 of this project, we focused on employers as one of the primary contributors to encouraging, engaging, and promoting the participation of older workers in NL's labour market.

### Phase 3: Working Better with Age

#### Description

This Phase aimed to refocus the project based on current events, as described above, and (1) incorporate the research from Phases 1 and 2, (2) acknowledge identified barriers and recommend opportunities to overcome them, (3) incorporate the findings from the MQO Employer Survey/ Focus Group and (4) take a closer look at ageism – one of the most significant barriers to employment – through the lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, job seekers 55+ already faced several challenges when looking to stay in or enter the workforce. The pandemic added an extra layer of vulnerability to this already challenged population when it comes to seeking or retaining employment.

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<sup>1</sup> When employers were asked to rate their effort to recruit on a scale of 1-10, 1 being “no effort at all”, and 10 the highest, 64% rated their workplaces efforts between 1 and 5, and no employer rated their workplace as a 10.

Therefore, this phase of the project also focused on employers as the key to creating opportunity for workers 55+, to overcome barriers to retaining or entering employment past 55. With potential workforce size, insight into barriers to employment, and broad-based opportunities to advance employment identified through Phases 1-2 of the project, this next phase looked for insight, best practices, and promising Initiatives that could be undertaken and implemented post-pandemic in NL.

## Methodology

The approach to gaining insight and developing best practices was through the design of a workshop and subsequent conversations with employers in the province. It should be noted that secondary research reported in this phase was done prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further research could be undertaken post-pandemic to determine if these findings have changed.

## Key Findings

As previously mentioned, if a population of 43,000 persons aged 55+ were added to the workforce – with all their life skills and experience – a more diverse and multi-generational workforce would result. This is good news, as research tells us that age diversity stimulates and supports creative thinking and innovation. But, to get there, we must create the right circumstances for persons 55+ to attach to the workforce. Phase 3 of this project, titled *Working Better with Age*, carried out new research to make recommendations as to what those right circumstances might be.

This phase was extensive in its outcomes and, therefore, key findings will be reported in sub-phases.

### **3.1 | Understanding Ageism and Barriers to Employment**

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It is clear from the secondary research outlined in Phases 1 and 2 that, although not overt, negative beliefs and attitudes about older workers exist in the form of stereotyping. Common stereotypes are that older workers have difficulty with technology, require greater supports from a health care perspective, do not want to advance their careers, and/or are not interested in committing to their jobs 100% of the time. These common negative stereotypes can work against an older worker when job seeking and can influence how employers look at older workers when recruiting.

Research conducted for the 2019 Forum for Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors concluded that most research on stereotyping is undertaken to determine if stereotypes are held. Much less research is undertaken to determine if the stereotypes are rooted in fact. However, most negative stereotypes appear to attribute characteristics of the minority of older persons who have health and cognitive challenges to all older workers, and to ageist views in general. These do not reflect actual older Canadians in today's labour force (F/P/T, 2021, Pg. 27).

The MQO employer survey conducted for this project spoke to this finding and reinforced the Forum's position that current day older worker stereotyping is based on a minority of the 55+ provincial population and does not represent today's older worker labour force in NL.

In Phase 1 of this research, we discovered that one of the barriers to employment for older workers was the perception that older workers would be a liability for businesses because they are prone to more

health issues than their younger colleagues. Also, that lack of current and/or advanced education and training rendered older workers less capable of adapting to new technology.

It should be noted that when SJBOT employers were surveyed and asked whether education or experience was more important when hiring, 82.6% stated experience was more important. And when employers were asked about perceived risk of hiring older workers, 83.7% responded that they do not consider older workers to be a greater Workers Compensation risk compared to younger workers.

Dispelling ageism myths and stereotypes, in a provincial setting, will be key to overcoming barriers to employment for our older workers. Good work has been done to date and successful programs have been implemented in support of other underrepresented groups, who are viewed through a diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) lens. For example, the Department of Immigration, Population, and Skills have developed a job matching employer program, called Pathways, which enables employers challenged to fill full-time, year-round job vacancies to be matched with New Canadians who are looking for work. Department staff work to match newcomer applications to the labour needs of participating employers.

To understand how best to encourage bringing employers and older workers together, SJBOT and MQO developed a workshop outline to review barriers and opportunities and to test the research to see if stereotypes do exist. In addition, the Social Fabric Institute was brought in to observe and provide insight to that workshop. This session is described in detail in Sections 3.2-3.4.

### **3.2 | Working Better with Age Workshop – Job Seeker and Employer Perspectives**

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MQO partnered with Project Lead #2 to design and test a workshop session aimed at bringing together organizations and job seekers to learn how to practically action research from Phases 1 and 2 in a collaborative setting. The Social Fabric Institute was included to monitor and review the workshop findings through a DEIB lens.

The goal of the workshop was to tackle the topline barriers to employment with workers 55+ and employers, with a view to the most notable barrier of ageism. In addition, we aimed to test/pilot a workshop concept that could be expanded for future implementation with a larger audience.

MQO had previously conducted secondary research on this topic, but the workshop allowed the research to transition from theory to reality by connecting older workers and potential employers, exploring how to turn the research into actionable change.

A total of six participants attended the in-person workshop, including four job seekers and two senior hiring managers representing two large employers in the province. This workshop was hosted during Provincial Alert Level 3 and was, therefore, kept small for safety purposes.

#### Workshop Design

1. Pre- and post-workshop survey to determine impact of session and gather feedback on how sessions could be improved to move from a pilot to a scaled-up version.

2. Dialogue between job seekers and employers on barriers to employment for older workers.
3. Further discussion on how employers can help create opportunities for improving the employment outcomes of older workers and better staffing and labour outcomes for employers.
4. A 'commitment statement' exercise for employers – to help key learnings live beyond the workshop day.
5. DEIB audit of the workshop, facilitated by The Social Fabric Institute, to provide insight and key learning around ageism and how it is experienced by job seekers 55+ and by those 55+ in the workplace.

### Workshop Results

The workshop echoed the broad-based barriers identified in Phases 1-2: ageism, workplace inflexibility, skills mismatch, employment, and recruitment services. From there, the next step was to encourage conversation between job seekers and employers, on how best to overcome these obstacles, with a view to the employer taking the lead on actioning solutions. Participants offered additional insight and suggested solutions, including:

- Incorporating age in Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statements.
- Invest in training and mentoring for older workers/employees.
- Celebrate experience; recognize where older workers' skills best fit in the organization.
- Be flexible to the needs of older workers.
- Use language that combats ageism in job postings and communications.
- Focus on continual growth for all employees, regardless of age.
- Government funding for employers to invest in a workforce that includes those who are 55+.
- Government/community groups/not-for-profits to provide free skills training for older workers.

The workshop also sought to identify actionable tools for job seekers to help improve their employment seeking efforts. Participants in the workshop discussed the value in reflecting on what the older worker really wants in this next phase of their lives, because an older worker with a good understanding of what they want in a role, will increase their likelihood of finding a good fit and strengthen their ability to negotiate. Key takeaways on insights and tools for job seekers to improve their ability to job search included:

- Spend time reflecting on what you want in a position.
- Assess if you are an appropriate fit for the role.
- Be clear about your salary expectations.
- Self-select out of a role if you determine it is not a good fit for you.

### Employer Commitment to Action Exercise

As part of the workshop, employers were asked to make a commitment to action some of the solutions that came out of the session, even if only to continue to work toward inclusion best practices with a view to ageism. The importance of the commitment statement is to build a mechanism that would encourage key learning from the session to live beyond the workshop day.

Employer feedback from the commitment statement exercise indicated that developing a commitment statement 'onsite' was uncomfortable, but another employer indicated that because of the workshop, and as part of an ongoing corporate website update and refresh, they would be updating their DEIB statement to recognize and include older workers.

### Looking Ahead

Workshop participants discussed several solutions to challenges faced by industry and individuals in increasing older worker participation in NL's workforce. It was agreed that further development of workshops, aimed at bridging the gap between industry needs and job seekers, would help industry overcome systemic barriers and, at the same time, help individuals succeed despite the barriers. Those workshops could also include:

- **Industry Workshops:** Training for Human Resource professionals to create more inclusive recruitment processes, with a focus on fighting ageism in recruitment. The workshop would aim to build awareness of processes and language that may discourage older workers from applying and provide support in crafting EEO statements to include in job postings.
- **Job Seeker Workshops:** Workshops to support older workers could focus on helping them identify what they want in a position, what they have to offer, and résumé optimization with the goal of integrating older workers back into the workforce.

The Working Better with Age pilot sought to shed light on barriers to older workers participation in the workforce in a practical context, at the organizational and individual level, and the session challenged industry and individuals to come together to have an honest conversation about difficult subjects in a welcoming space. The insights and key learnings from those conversations were further explored and reflected upon by the Social Fabric Institute in the following sub-section of the report. Full reporting is available in **APPENDIX G**.

To aid in turning research into action, MQO developed a recommendation for how to expand on the workshop and bring it to a larger audience. The workshop is referred to as the "Working Better with Age Workshop" and a detailed outline of the workshop model is included in **Section 2: Recommendations for Policies, Programs, and Service Delivery Models**.

### **3.3 | Working Better with Age Workshop – Reflections Through a DEIB Lens**

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The Social Fabric Institute was engaged by Project Lead #2 to participate in the Working Better with Age pilot as an observer, and provide insight and reflection on what was said, and what was not said, by participants. Willow Anderson, Principal Consultant and Founder of the Social Fabric Institute Inc., observed the session remotely via Microsoft Teams, and did not interact with workshop participants. Prior to the workshop, Willow was briefed on the research project objective as well as the work completed to date, specifically the MQO research including, the employer survey and focus group results found in **APPENDIX H** and **APPENDIX B**.

The Social Fabric Institute’s reflections document and recommendations for bringing research to action is included in **APPENDIX G**.

The Social Fabric Institute Inc. assists organizations and individuals in navigating and optimizing diversity so that they might be able to build their capacity to work more effectively within their organizations and externally with their clients.

Social Fabric Institute, 2022, [www.socialfabricinstitute.ca](http://www.socialfabricinstitute.ca)

Reflections from the workshop were broken out into three parts:

1. What was heard,
2. What warrants further discussion, and
3. What we did not hear.

### What was Heard

Participants reiterated the known themes around challenges and barriers to employment: ageism, new technology, and recruitment strategies geared toward younger workers.

There were emotional comments centered around work as identity/purpose, where participants shared that facing unemployment was like being “set adrift.” Comments made by job seekers made it clear how a lack of employment can lead to a lack of confidence, and even a more generalized sense of grief around one’s life.

Participants also talked of wants and needs, such as work-life balance, flexibility, but also the need to be one’s true self. It should be noted that this theme arises in DEIB discussions around belonging in the workplace quite often.

The report also showed the organizational benefits to a strong sense of belonging. For example, employees with a strong sense of belonging are 50% less likely to leave their jobs, have a 56% increase in job performance, and have 75% less sick days (Cornell University, n.d.).

“Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group. It is when an individual can bring their authentic self to work.”

Cornell University, n.d.

Participants discussed age discrimination, and their experiences trying to combat ageism, echoing those of other equity-seeking groups. Participants talked of changing their résumé and removing decades of employment experience and/or education, so as not to look “old.”

During the workshop participants spoke of how they (as older workers 55+) do not hear about themselves in the larger DEIB conversation. It is as if they are invisible. This feeling of “not being seen” is

reinforced by the MQO Employer Survey research which found that most employers make little or no effort to reach out to, seek out, or recruit older workers.

### What Warrants Further Discussion

Recruitment and retention strategies for workers 55+:

- There was a robust discussion within the group that job seekers 55+ do not understand current employment competitive norms. This theme is echoed often throughout the research into barriers and challenges workers 55+ face.
- Employers in the workshop also indicated that they do not know how to recruit and attract older workers. Developing tools, templates, and guidelines for employers to learn how to attract recruit and retain older works will be key to engaging the potential 43,000 older workers in this province.

The influence of gender identity:

- As indicated in the MQO Phase 1 Research, there is evidence that women 55+ are not as likely as men 55+ to find employment, but evidence connecting older worker gender to stereotypes is limited, for the gender of the stereotype holder, and for the worker.
- There is an opportunity going forward to work with organizations such as Newfoundland Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs (NLOWE) to look at older worker gender bias and stereotyping in the province.

Mental Health benefits of employment:

- The catalyst for understanding barriers to workers 55+ attaching to the workforce is clear with respect to strengthening the economy, but there are also economic benefits to ensuring older workers stay in the workplace, and maintain their sense of well-being, engagement, and mental health, resulting in reduced pressure on the health care system. As referenced in the workshop, a job seeker's mental health is challenged when they are not engaged in meaningful work.

### What We Did Not Hear

How do peoples' various social locations (such as their gender identity, racial identity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic affiliation) layer, and make more complex, their experiences when seeking employment? That is, what does it look like to be a 55+ trans man or a 55+ indigenous woman looking for work? Understanding how ageism plays into the lives of all job seekers will be an important consideration if/when undertaking a provincial advocacy and awareness campaign and developing DEIB programs and practices for employers.

## **3.4 | Working Better with Age Workshop – Pilot Outline and Recommendations**

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The Working Better with Age pilot not only sought to shed light on barriers to older worker participation in the workforce in a practical context (at the organizational and individual level), but it also challenged individuals to come to the table to create solutions and commit to change.

It is our opinion that the pilot was a success. Although it was executed on a small scale due to COVID-19, participating organizations responded positively to the session and feedback suggested that participating in the workshop positively affected job seekers, who now felt more comfortable responding to postings.

Participation also positively impacted how those job seekers viewed participating companies. Based on the pre-session survey, participants generally felt that organizations subconsciously discriminate against older job seekers. However, job seekers either agreed or strongly agreed that organizations who participated in the pilot workshop valued older workers and that they would be given equal consideration if applying for a job with one of the participating organizations.

It is our recommendation that the learnings from the pilot be applied to an expanded Working Better with Age program that would allow the opportunity for more organizations and older job seekers to attend as well as incorporate some of the solutions that job seekers and organizations identified during the pilot session. An improved and expanded event would follow the same model as the pilot but also provide additional opportunities for connecting job seekers and organizations. It should also incorporate workshops or training for how to enact some of the solutions identified by organizations and job seekers during the pilot session. This session is envisioned as an annual event that builds each year and continues to positively impact the available labour pool and increase labour market participation of older workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Further details of this expanded session are outlined in **Section 2: Recommendations for Policies, Programs, and Service Delivery Models** and a summary of the workshop prepared by MQO is included in **APPENDIX E**.

### **3.5 | Looking at Best Practice Business Models for Age Friendly Workplaces**

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Public, private, and not-for-profit organizations throughout Canada are working to incorporate age related DEIB best practices into their culture and environment. These organizations know that age diversity stimulates and supports creative thinking and innovation, and that a multigeneration workforce creates opportunities for knowledge exchange and mentoring.

[Canada's Top 100 Employers](#) publish an annual list of the best workplaces for older Canadians. These employers lead the nation in creating special programs and benefits of interest to employees aged 40+. Employers are evaluated on a series of criteria that work to provide a framework for best practices in combating ageism and creating a multigenerational workforce. Criteria includes:

1. Offer interesting programs to assist older workers
2. Actively recruit new workers aged 40 years or older
3. Have human resource policies that take into account the unique concerns of older workers, such as recognizing outside work experience in determining vacation entitlement
4. Offer a pension plan with reasonable employer contributions
5. Provide assistance to older employees with retirement and succession planning
6. Create opportunities for retirees to stay socially connected to former co-workers, such as through organized social activities and volunteering
7. Provide health coverage and similar benefits for employees after retirement

8. Offer programs such as mentorship and phased-in retirement to ease the emotional challenges of retirement and ensure older employees' skills are transferred to the next generation (Top Employers, 2021)

We believe that this is a great resource for organizations wishing to improve their DEIB and, specifically, welcome older workers to their workforce. It will allow them to assess progress against best practices in real time.



# Section 2

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**Recommendations**

## SECTION 2 | Recommendations for Policies, Programs, and Service Delivery Models

### Overview

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It is clear from the research that there are a significant number of older workers who would attach to the labour force in NL if the circumstances were right. We also know there are five key barriers to employment that discourage and/or prohibit them from being employed. Understanding what the barriers are and why the barriers exist are equally important.

1. Ageism
2. Lack of education and/or access to training
3. Difficulty in finding and applying for jobs
4. Health issues, work life balance issues, and lack of workplace accommodation
5. Disincentives or lack of incentives to work in a retirement income system

Barriers to employment for workers 55+

The key takeaway from this work is that there are myths and stereotypes surrounding older workers that prevent employers and job seekers from connecting, and it is best described as ageism. It affects how people engage with each other, how employers reach out to older workers, and how older workers reach out to employers for job seeking, professional growth, and career development.

This lack of commitment and/or effort affects how organizations educate and train older workers, how employers retain and recruit older workers, and how older workers feel about their place and sense of value in an organization.

This section of the report outlines opportunities to help tackle the block of ageism and turn research into action with initiatives that can help create better employment outcomes for older workers and ensure employers build a strong, vibrant economy in NL.

We will look at advocacy as a tool to create awareness, existing program models that can be modified to set employers and older workers up for success, and new outreach models that can create energy and excitement around a population that is rarely seen or heard in the labour market.

We will also delve into a discussion about how to create the right circumstances for older workers to attach to the workforce. These circumstances include employers embracing age as part of their BEIB and retention/recruitment strategies.

**Below, we have outlined seven recommendations for breaking down barriers and maximizing opportunities to welcome, integrate, and retain older workers in NL's labour market.**

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# 1

## Build Awareness of the Immense Value of Older Workers in NL

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Our research supports the belief that a provincial awareness campaign that celebrates older workers, embraces age, and debunks myths and stereotypes is an important first step in creating opportunities for older workers to attach to the workforce.

### **Awareness Campaign**

During Phase 2 of this project, a creative communications agency (Perfect Day) was commissioned to develop an awareness campaign that addressed the findings of the research in a way that encouraged employers to ensure they had inclusive hiring practices and to empower experienced workers to feel seen, heard, and valued.

The target audience for the campaign was employers, the secondary audience was older workers, and the tertiary audience was the general public. The main purpose of the campaign was to:

- Increase general knowledge of the province’s aging population and the barriers/stigma associated with the employment of older workers.
- Promote change in employer policies and procedures to be inclusive of older workers.
- Instill confidence in older workers and empower them to seek employment.

The campaign concept serves as an example of what an awareness campaign could look like if implemented. The creative brief and campaign concepts are included in **APPENDIX F**.

### **Awareness Platform**

From 2003 to 2006, the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, funded numerous projects through the Older Workers Pilot Projects Initiative (OWPPI). While it is difficult to measure the employment impact of awareness initiatives, surveys of the OWPPI found they successfully raised employer awareness of the many positive attributes of older workers.

In addition, the Government of Nova Scotia launched [SHIFT: Nova Scotia’s Action Plan for an Aging Population](#) and the Government of Alberta launched [Tools and Resources for Mature Workers](#) in recent years. These toolkits contain resources to help businesses attract, retain, and engage older employees. Both sites are comprehensive and offer insight into the work being done at the provincial level to support the engagement of older people in the workforce.

For this research report, we focused on one aspect of advocacy, which is an awareness campaign. However, it is recommended that the province applies this research to development of an overarching awareness strategy that may include both advertising and a platform, similar to those described above.

The success and design of sites/initiatives like those in Alberta and Nova Scotia could be developed here in NL to see if they would help advance the goal of increasing labour force participation of our older workers in our own province.



## Expand and Promote Education and Training for Multiple Groups

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Like many topics surrounding older workers in Canada, there is existing research and programming that avoids starting from scratch in addressing the challenges we're facing. Education and training is one such challenge where examples and resources are plentiful for multiple groups.

### Employers

A lot of emphasis has been placed on the older worker to adapt or keep pace with the times over the past couple of years. However, our research indicates that employers in this province are making little effort to recruit older workers, and that older workers feel ill equipped to be seen as competitive and worthy of consideration for new jobs, or even to stay in their jobs past a standard or expected retirement age.

It is clear from the research that establishing an education and training program for employers on the importance of a diversity within their organization is essential to the success of our Government's vision for strengthening the workforce as outlined in *The Way Forward on Workforce Development*.

We know from our research, and most notably our Working Better with Age workshop, that a focused employer approach must also include a commitment to the following items:

- Incorporating age in Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statements
- Invest in training and mentoring for older employees
- Celebrate experience; recognize where older workers' skills best fit in the organization
- Be flexible to the needs of older workers
- Use language that combats ageism (i.e., job postings, communications)
- Focus on continual growth for all employees, regardless of age
- Government funding for employers to invest in a workforce that includes older workers
- Government/not-for-profits to provide free skills training for older workers

These are all important recommendations, and there are private organizations throughout NL that offer diversity training which could be leveraged for this purpose. For example, the Social Fabric Institute Inc., a key advisor to this research project, offers training for organizations in this area. Their program outline is a good example of what is recommended in this report and aligns with key recommendations on diversity training.

The Social Fabric Institute’s model is presented as an example of training opportunities that would be beneficial if available to employers in the province, as follows:

“Social Fabric Institute Inc. can lead organizations (such as employers) through a useful DEI audit that offers insight into the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion within an organization. This brief, online tool is 100% customizable and can both collect information on the demographic makeup of an organization (e.g., age, racial identity), but also point to how various employees experience DEI within their organization. The final report shared with the organization offers both qualitative and quantitative insights (gleaned from employees and leadership) on six different key areas; by doing an audit such as this organizations learn where they currently are as it relates to DEI, but also which areas require the most attention. It should be mentioned that one of the most impressive features of the tool is that it is able to parse out the experiences of individuals by lived experience (for example, the report can share information such as "68% of those who said they feel they have little to no opportunity to advance in the organization were women over the age of 55"). Audits such as these could be an important means for employers to learn more about what more they could do to improve on their efforts to recruit and retain workers 55+.” (Willow Anderson, personal communication, January 19, 2022)

Overall, promoting a training and learning culture in the workplace is a long-term measure which can allow workers to remain employable over their working lives. By encouraging all generations – not just older workers – to adopt a continuous learning mindset, the skills challenges faced by today’s older workers become less likely for those in the future.

### **Education Institutions**

In addition, public and private education institutions in NL can be valuable partners in training initiatives because they have a good understanding of the logistics of training and the needs of workers and employers. Currently, there does not appear to be a cohesive strategy or approach to engaging learners 55+ in our community or reaching out to employers to offer support for skills training from our post-secondary institutions.

An interesting model to look at in advancing the case for skills development and training for persons 55+ is the [Plus 50 Initiative](#) in the United States (AACC, 2022). The Plus 50 Initiative benchmarks and showcases the most current and innovative community college programs that engage older learners. Organized by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the Plus 50 Initiative invests in community colleges to create or expand campus programs that engage the 50+ student population, with a focus on workforce training and preparing for new careers.

### **Older Workers**

The Government of Canada’s Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW), which ran from 2006 to 2017, was a federal and provincial/territorial cost-sharing initiative designed to assist unemployed older workers living in vulnerable communities of up to 250,000 people with their reintegration into the workforce. TIOW largely provided skills development programs to older workers in each province and territory, according to regional needs. For example, in NL and the Northwest Territories, TIOW projects were mainly focused on developing workers’ skills for the tourism industry.

A recent evaluation of the TIOW found that this program was successful in allowing older workers to attach to the labour market. Further development of the initiative has been recommended in the areas of better defining goals for participants, marketing projects to employers, peer support, and tracking of workers in the program. Therefore, revisiting TIOW with a view to how this program could be adapted for older workers beyond tourism would be helpful.



### Connect Employers with Older Workers Through Inclusive Services

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One of the key takeaways from our MQO focus group and workshop is that older workers find it difficult to identify jobs and employers that would be a good match with their skill set, age, and life circumstance. Also, if an older worker sees an opportunity that may be a good fit, they struggle to understand how to apply and what to say given the impact of ageist perceptions.

Employment services, like job matching programs for older workers, are one of the most effective initiatives to ensuring successful employment outcomes for older workers. Well-designed job matching policies and programs help identify skills, supply, and demand, and contribute to better employment outcomes for job seekers.

There are other public supports in place for job matching, such as the [National Job Bank](#) maintained by Employment and Social Development Canada and used as an online job matching service by most provinces. This site already addresses groups that can face barriers entering the labour market directly and could easily expand to include older workers in this listing. Further research would be required to determine if the National Job Bank is still viable for older workers seeking to find employment, or if this platform can be updated or modified to aid in the engagement of older workers in this province.

The Pathways Program is another excellent example of a job matching template that might be easily expanded to meet multiple groups finding it difficult to attach to the labour market, including older workers. The Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills' [Pathways Program](#) is a job matching initiative intended to help employers challenged to find employees to fill full-time job vacancies with newcomers to NL who are looking for work. This initiative is an excellent example of best practices in matching employers with job seekers from underrepresented populations, as both employer and job seeker are very clear on their expectations, intentions, and desired employment outcomes.

Overall, there are many great programs, platforms, and processes in Canada that can be expanded to include older workers as a target audience. We don't always need to create something from scratch when effective platforms exist already serving other Canadians looking to find work or hire workers.

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# 4

## Empower Employers to Develop Age Inclusive Recruitment Strategies

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We know from the MQO research that employers have not placed a lot of emphasis on the retention and/or recruitment of older workers.

Our research findings recommend highlighting positive characteristics of older adults, addressing discrimination in the workplace through improving practices from hiring through to exit, and using awareness-raising initiatives to discredit stereotypes as possible pathways to retention and recruitment of older workers.

Resources such as toolkits and guides for employers are emerging that foster age-friendly workplaces and recruiting/retaining older workers that could be of great benefit to employers in NL. Toolkits and guides could include reference materials, checklists, and best practices for helping to create a workplace that is welcoming to older workers.

Recruitment recommendations would include:<sup>2</sup>

- Review job descriptions and recruiting materials to make sure the language doesn't discourage experienced workers from applying for a job.
- Incorporate language in recruitment materials that says workers of all ages are encouraged to apply.
- Eliminate requests for date of birth and graduation from the application process.
- Eliminate requests for past salary history, which may contribute to a bias against experienced workers and gender-pay inequality. Instead, post salary ranges for all job postings.
- Train hiring managers not to use words and phrases that could hint at age bias, such as "digital native," "young," "fresh," or "recent graduate."
- Update your organization's brand materials to use images and text that showcase a diverse workforce, including older workers, and feature profiles of those employees.

Within an organization, toolkits could be used to help support an age inclusive environment:

- Conducting a companywide age discrimination workshop or lunch-and-learn program.
- Creating intergenerational or experienced employee resource groups.
- Setting up a career re-entry program for people who have taken an extended leave from the workforce.
- Building mixed-age teams and devising ways to evaluate their performance that celebrate integration and teamwork.

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<sup>2</sup> Please Note: This checklist concept was built for testing with businesses in Gander and in Labrador but, due to COVID-19 Pandemic Level 3 Alert Phase during November 2021 into January 2022, this was not able to be carried out.

- Establishing systems to assess the cumulative contribution of age-diverse and inclusive teams on the organization.
- Inviting your retirees, or experienced professionals from outside the organization, to participate in initiatives or on a project-by-project basis.
- Making flexible options such as telecommuting, phased retirement, and part-time work part of your talent management strategy.

# 5

## Fund Events Focussed on Connecting Older Workers and Employers

The Working Better with Age pilot (as described in Phase 3 of the Project Overview) not only sought to shed light on barriers to older worker participation in the workforce at the organizational and individual level, but also challenged industry and individuals to come to the table to create joint solutions and a commitment to change.

It is our recommendation that the learnings from the pilot be applied to an expanded Working Better with Age program. This program would allow more organizations and job seekers to benefit and would incorporate some of the solutions that job seekers and organizations identified during the pilot session.

An improved and expanded event would follow the same model as the pilot and provide opportunities for job seekers and organizations to connect. In addition, it would build in training to enact some of the solutions identified by organizations and job seekers during the pilot session. This session is envisioned as an annual event that builds each year to positively impact the available labour pool and increase labour market participation of older workers in NL.

We learned from the research that ageism affects older workers in different ways. For women, it makes finding employment harder. For older workers in general, it has an impact on their mental health, sense of wellbeing, and confidence. Ageism also affects employers, who do not understand why or how to attract older workers.

Project Lead #2, SJBOT, Working Better with Age Project

This model could provide additional opportunity for connections, as follows:

- **Increase the scale:** A larger scale event should aim to include 10-15 organizations and 30-40 job seekers. It would run in a world café style with smaller tables broken out for discussion that include a mix of industry representatives and older job seekers.
- **Incorporate a job fair:** Adding a job fair component to the Working Better with Age program will provide a job search opportunity dedicated to older workers and a safe space where older workers know that participating employers welcome applications from them.

- The job fair would open to participants, individuals, and organizations that did not participate in the full Working Better with Age session. It would be an opportunity for organizations to highlight their needs, and for job seekers to target companies and roles they are most interested in.
  - Not all individuals will feel comfortable participating in workshop-style sessions. The job fair would provide connections for individuals who may be interested in re-attaching to the workforce but may not be uncomfortable speaking in group settings.
  - The job fair would also open participation to organizations that may not be able to commit to a full-day workshop or may not recognize the value of participating in the full session but need experienced employees. Job fair participation would signal to older workers that they are an inclusive employer that values older workers. Participating in the job fair may also allow organizations to see the value of the full event and encourage them to participate more fully in the future.
- **Review the approach to gaining organizational commitment:** Feedback from the pilot session suggested that some organizations may be uncomfortable committing to change by signing a commitment statement. The goal of the commitment statement exercise was to encourage change after the session. Upon reflection and further research, we suggest that goal setting is certainly more effective when set in writing. Therefore, the commitment setting exercise could be adapted to a goal setting exercise. Removing the need for a signature and softening the positioning from commitment to goal may be more amenable to organizations, while still achieving the objective of increasing the likelihood of organizational change.
  - **Advertising and momentum:** Many of the barriers identified in research and through our pilot session come down to communication, or a disconnect between those organizations in need of skilled workers and older workers who are interested in participating in the labour market. Unconscious bias resulting in discrimination, negative perceptions, and lack of confidence create a chasm between organizations and older workers. Although the content of the Working Better with Age session seeks to chip away at the underlying causes of the disconnect between older workers and employers, it is not a quick fix. However, bringing the two groups together in a physical space and providing opportunities for that connection is a way to temporarily bridge that chasm.
  - **Actioning solutions identified by organizations and individuals in the pilot session:** The *Working Better with Age* participants discussed a number of solutions to challenges faced both by industry and individuals in increasing older worker participation in the Newfoundland and Labrador. Workshops aimed at bridging the gap between industry needs and job seekers helps industry overcome systemic barriers and at the same time helps individuals better succeed despite those barriers.

To maximize the effectiveness of the Working Better with Age session, we recommended that it is held as an annual event with appropriate marketing and advertising in place until awareness around the event is increased to 40%-60% of the population. Holding the event on an annual basis will allow continual growth and improvement, as content can build on solutions put forward in the previous year. It will also increase awareness of barriers for older workers and bias in recruitment processes as well as adapt to address new challenges.

It is recommended that workshops incorporated into the Working Better with Age session would show the momentum of the program. Participants would see feedback from each year actioned in the following year.

Examples of workshops based on pilot feedback are summarized below:

- *Workshops for Industry:* Training for human resource professionals on fighting ageism in recruitment, such as awareness of processes and language that may discourage older workers from applying, and support in crafting Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statements to include in job postings.
- *Workshops for job seekers:* Workshops to support older workers could focus on helping workers identify what they want in a position, what they have to offer, and résumé optimization with the goal of integrating older workers back into the workforce.



## Policy Recommendations to Promote Adoption of Inclusive Workplaces

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Further to the multiple recommendations above, all which would require government participation, this sub-section outlines recommendations on steps governments can take to improve the employability of older workers.

First, policymakers can explore the implementation of wage subsidies for older workers who lose their jobs. If an older worker loses their job for any number of reasons, they are more likely to see reduced wages in their next employment opportunity. Some OECD countries have employment subsidy programs to address this challenge. Under these programs, the government provides some top-up to older workers who take a new job at a lower wage following layoff or job loss.

Second, providing better access to upskilling should begin before an individual reaches an age at which they could be classified as an older worker could be very successful in avoiding problems before they start in a workplace. When mid-career professionals are given opportunities to update their skills, they will be more employable long-term than those who do not capitalize on these opportunities. According to the OECD (2006), France is one country that has implemented this approach. There, employees with more than 20 years in the workforce or who are aged 45 or older are given access to a skills audit. Moreover, employees with over two years of experience receive career counselling within their company and accompanying training passports show the skills and aptitudes an employee has gained through on-the-job or vocational training. Certain employees may also gain a workplace right to continued training within their organization.

In addition, promoting entrepreneurship and business ownership as a means of remaining in the labour market addresses many of the barriers older workers may face, especially those related to employer costs to hire older workers who bring an expectation of a higher wage.

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# 7

## Forge Partnerships Partners Within the Community

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Suggestions for organizations in the province that are well positioned to provide support, insight, training and guidance for both employers and job seekers are as follows:

- Research has told us that older women have trouble seeking and securing employment. Organizations such as [NLOWE](#), [Multicultural Women’s Association](#), and [St. John’s Status of Women Council](#) are well positioned to understand the challenges gender presents with regard to equity in the workplace. Armed with new key learnings around the barriers to employment for older workers, and women in particular, these organizations stand to be well positioned to provide guidance and support.
- [WorkplaceNL](#) is a support and resource for all workers in NL as they “work with employers and workers to promote safe and healthy workplaces, prevent workplace injuries, support injured workers and their families, and to establish strong return to work programs” (WorkplaceNL, 2022). We know from our research that an outcome of ageist attitudes can lead to mental and physical stress for older workers. Programs with WorkplaceNL that provide support for older workers could be beneficial to combatting these negative outcomes.
- Research has told us that many employers across the province do not have the insight, training, or tools to develop a recruitment strategy that attracts older workers. Many employers have also indicated that, although they understand the importance of a DEIB strategy for their organization, they do not have insight into how to incorporate age into that DEIB strategy. The Provincial Chamber Network, represented by the larger [Atlantic Chamber of Commerce](#), has direct access to hundreds of employers in the Province. Chambers are seen as resources for businesses and hubs for connections – a great fit for tackling the issues unpacked in this research project.
- The [Office of the Seniors Advocate](#) partnered with Memorial University’s Harris Centre, Older Workers NL, and the St. John’s Board of Trade on an impactful workshop initiative regarding older workers titled The Older Worker’s Summit. Coming out of that session, The Seniors Advocate committed to addressing labour market issues, including the need for development of more age friendly workplaces and as part of its mandate, to also examine age within the context of the Human Rights Act and its impact on pension/retirement plans, as well as employee insurance plans.
- [Seniors NL](#) is an information, resource, and referral service that is specifically tailored to seniors. The organization’s website has a comprehensive listing of public, private, and not-for-profit organizations that provide services to support seniors. This organization could provide helpful

guidance to older workers seeking information on financial, health, public policy, and other matters.

- The [Community Sector Council](#) has a program to aid in computer literacy and it offers a wide variety of classes including online job search and résumé writing.
- The [Murphy Center](#) also offers work readiness supports through its career services program.



# Section 3

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**Areas and Opportunities  
for Further Research**

## SECTION 3 | Areas and Opportunities for Further Research

There has been a significant amount of research done to date on the topic of older workers, as outlined in this report. However, there are areas where one could delve further into the details in support of launching programs, policies, or events that aim to fix the problem. These are presented in this section, by topic, for consideration.

### **Ageism in the workplace as it relates to urban and rural areas in our province.**

- How does our culture and tradition influence how we value our workforce, and what we value in our workforce. Do employers in rural Newfoundland interact and respond to employees and older workers differently than in the urban centres. Are expectations for older workers different in urban areas, than in rural areas.

### **How do we define “older worker” in Newfoundland Labrador and are we unique?**

- The age of an older worker varies internationally. In Canada, an older worker is defined as 55 years of age or older. However, the OEDC defines an older worker as 50 years of age or older. Definitions of age for older workers can be influenced by many factors (i.e., mandatory retirement age, anti age discrimination legislation). However, in 2022 there may be another influencer when it comes to defining age, and that is our evolving environment, as many older workers are employed beyond standard retirement age and younger adults extend their studies and potentially delay career trajectories. (F/P/T, 2021, Pg. 10). It would be interesting to know, based on our population and persons working, if how we define “older worker” stacks up with the pan Canadian or European definition or, if our older worker is actually aged 60+.

### **Diversity training for employers.**

- Our research would indicate that employers are aware of the importance of a DE&I strategy for employee retention and recruitment. And, that it will be important moving forward to ensure age is included in that diversity mix. But equally important is an understanding of how much knowledge there is, on this subject, in the business community and if there are partnerships i.e., STJBOT, that can help advocate for DE&I training, for all underrepresented populations.

### **Intersection of age-based stereotypes with other stereotypes.**

- Knowledge gaps relating to identity (e.g., gender, ability, and race), diversity (e.g., new immigrants, Indigenous communities, and LGBTQ people), and living environment (rural, urban, and Labrador reserve) and the intersections among these factors and age, are evident in the research.
- It is known that belonging to a racialized group may increase an older adult’s vulnerability to workforce discrimination.
- More research is needed to examine how age-based stereotypes interact with stereotypes in other identity and diversity categories.

- In [\*The Way Forward on Workforce Development\*](#), the Provincial Government identified underrepresented populations including indigenous people, persons with disabilities, women and newcomers as important sectors to support to help shore up the economy (Government of NL, 2019, Pg. 3). It will be important to understand how age impacts all underrepresented populations in this province.

#### **Older workers and technology.**

- Work to discover how we can debunk myths and stereotypes.
- Today's older workers have experienced considerable technological change in the workforce, and studies using data from 15+ years ago do not reflect current workers attitudes or aptitudes. Anecdotal research has told us that programs like Excel, statistical, and math-based skills are the areas most 55+ workers are uncomfortable with. However, more fulsome research should be undertaken to do a skills assessment of persons born after 1966 if government/organizations intend to develop programs targeted at upskilling older workers.
- Research may identify what advancements have been made, how persons 55+ have adapted, and the true technology barriers.



# Section 4

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**Application of Research in Other Sectors  
and/or Under-Represented Groups**

## SECTION 4 | Application of Research in Other Sectors and/or Under-Represented Groups

This research and knowledge are applicable to all industries and sectors. However, we believe the sectors that would most benefit from this research are those that support the business community and those that support older workers (or workers in general) in the province.

In addition, to our knowledge, there are no reference materials which speak directly to the engagement of older workers and identify barriers and opportunities to improved employment outcomes available to organizations in the province. Considering this body of research suggests that older workers themselves are an under-represented group when it comes to inclusion in the workforce, this research would also be of special interest to groups which advocate for or represent workers of all ages, as well as employers looking to improve DEIB in their workplaces and hiring practices.

“The demographic situation of the province requires us to create age-friendly workplaces. NL does not have enough young people to fill labour gaps, as well as the gaps in volunteer positions in our communities. The sectors with the highest percentage of older workers includes Other Services (except Public Services), Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas, and Retail Trade. The sectors with the lowest percentage of older workers are Professional, Scientific and Technical, and Educational Services. There is more temporary work amongst older workers; this could be for a multitude of reasons.”

Older Workers Summit Summary Report (2019)

Overall, we believe that this research could be of great interest and assistance to leaders, human resources professionals, and advocacy groups across the province.

Organizations that could benefit from access to this research, and share with their own audiences, include:

- Newfoundland Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs (NLOWE)
- Multicultural Women’s Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
- St. John’s Status of Women’s Council
- Seniors Resource Center
- Murphy Center
- Older Workers NL
- Workplace NL
- Newfoundland Labrador Employers Council
- Career and Employment Services Association of New Canadians
- Empower Disability Resource Centre NL
- Avalon Employment Inc.
- Aboriginal Employment Services Inc.
- Ability Employment Corporation

- Newfoundland and Labrador Public Service Pensioners' Association
- Advocacy Association for Older Canadians (CARP)
- Community Sector Council

We recommend a coordinated effort between the SJBOT and NLWIC in communicating the information contained in this research paper immediately following its approval, as well as NLWIC and its future partners to carry the message forward when appropriate to make a measurable change for older worker employment in NL.

Please see **APPENDIX A** for the Dissemination Plan for this research, which includes communications to other sectors.



# Section 5

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**Deliverables**

## SECTION 5 | Deliverables

### Deliverables Listing

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Materials significantly referenced and developed for this research project are included in the **APPENDIX** section of this report. Materials developed and now being passed to NLWIC in this document are as follows:

- MQO Research Report
- MQO Employer Survey
- MQO Working Better with Age Research to Action Summary Report
- Older Workers Summit Summary Report
- Perfect Day Campaign Materials (creative Brief, campaign concepts, and mock-ups)
- Social Fabric Institute What We Heard Reflection Report

### Actions Undertaken

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Action Item	Date	% complete
Hire project manager	November 2019	100
Orientation and onboarding	December 2019	100
Engage Research Company	October 2019	100
Complete Secondary Research, telephone survey and focus group	October 2019-December 2019	100
Analyze data from secondary research, telephone survey and focus groups	December 2019-January 2020	100
Deliver a preliminary report of research findings	January 2020	100
Share preliminary report findings with relevant stakeholders	January 2020-February 2020	100
Conduct Employers survey	February 2020-March 2020	100
Analyze data from Employers Survey	April 2020	100
Complete and deliver report on Employers Survey	April 2020	100

Determine from the research barriers that team will focus on.	May 2020	100
Research Job Skill Training Opportunities for Older workers	May 2020- August 2020	100
Design Social Media Campaign	June 2020- July 2020	100
Design Program Website	September 2020- December 2020	100
Develop Training Program for Older Workers	September 2020- December 2020	100
Develop Participant Intake Form	October 2020-December 2020	100
PROJECT PAUSE	April 1, 2021- August 31, 2021	-
Start date for new project lead	September 2021	100
Share research findings with SJBOT team and other relevant stakeholders	October 2021	100
Share materials that support older workers	October 2021	100
Develop Participant Content for Website	-	CANCELLED
Develop Website Concept	September 2021	100
Launch Social Media Campaign and website	-	CANCELLED
Develop social media concept	September 2021	100
Administer Program and report progress	October 2021-December 2021	100
Redefine research focus from job search portal awareness campaign and pilot to "Working Better with Age" concept*	October 2021	100
Additional research conducted, including MQO facilitated workshop	November 2021	100
Completion of provincial stakeholder outreach (i.e. Gander and Labrador employers, Social Fabric Institute)	November 2021	100
Development of employer tools, templates, and guides	December 2021	100

Develop final report for NLWIC	January-February 2022	100
PROJECT END DATE	February 28, 2022	-

## Research Project Contributors

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Organization	Name and Title
MQO	Leanne Sarson, VP Research and Engagement
Social Fabric Institute	Dr. Willow Anderson, PhD., Principal Consultant and Founder
Murphy Centre	Cathy Ryan, Career Consultant
Perfect Day	John Devereaux, Creative Director
Senior Resource Centre NL	Kelly Heisz, Executive Director
MUN Faculty of Social Science and Humanities	Dr. Lynn Gambin, Associate Professor in Economics and Director of Master of Employment Relations (MER)
Older Workers NL	Jean Graham, Representative
Gander Chamber of Commerce	Hazel Bishop, President and CEO
Labrador North Chamber of Commerce	Julianne Griffin, Chief Executive Officer
Central Labrador YMCA	Carolyn Turner, General Manager
Canadian Career Development Foundation	Sareena Hopkins, Executive Director
Seniors Advocacy Office	Tanya Billard, MSW, RSW Systemic Advocacy Consultant



# Section 6

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Citations

## SECTION 6 | Citations

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# Section 7

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Appendices

## SECTION 7 | Appendices

Appendix	Title	Author	Year
Appendix A	Dissemination Plan	Project Lead #2, SJBOT	2022
Appendix B	Employer Survey	MQO	2020
Appendix C	Older Workers Summit Summary Report	Office of the Seniors Advocate	2019
Appendix D	Promoting the Labour Force Participation of Older Canadians: Promising Initiatives	F/P/T Ministers Responsible for Seniors	2018
Appendix E	Working Better with Age Research to Action Summary Report	MQO	2022
Appendix F	Perfect Day Campaign Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative Brief</li> <li>• Campaign Concepts</li> <li>• Creative Mock-ups</li> </ul>	Perfect Day	2020
Appendix G	What We Heard Reflection Report	Social Fabric Institute	2021
Appendix H	Research Report	MQO	2019

# Appendix A

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## Dissemination Plan

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Once the final report has been approved, the SJBOT will work with NLWIC to disseminate the research to encourage successful employment outcomes for older workers and employers across the province.

The following table is an outline of recommended dissemination activities. This will be reviewed with the funder after the report presentation on February 24, 2022.

Audience	Goals	Knowledge products and strategies	Proposed role of funder and project partners
NLWIC	Increase knowledge of barriers/opportunities to employment for older workers in NL. Share research findings and recommendations.	Final Report. Presentation to NLWIC on 24/2/2022 and wider stakeholder group in March 2022 (exact date TBD)	SJBOT: complete two presentations and a Q&A with attendees at both.  NLWIC: approve report and dissemination plan.
SJBOT members	Share report research findings and recommendations. Advocate, educate, and increase awareness and knowledge of barriers and opportunities to employment for older workers in NL.	See <b>Schedule A</b>	SJBOT: communication and engagement.  NLWIC: Approval of report and dissemination plan; Assist with sharing SJBOT communications; advise of any limitations/parameters for social media posts and images.
Project partners and stakeholders	Share report research findings and recommendations.	Share final report with stakeholders via email, social media, website, events, etc.	NLWIC to determine best actions for this research post SJBOT's project end date.
Business community and/or other sectors	Share report research findings and recommendations. Advocate, educate, and increase awareness and knowledge of barriers and opportunities to employment for older workers in NL.	See <b>Schedule B</b> and <b>Section 4</b>	NLWIC to explore opportunities for themselves, future associations applying for funding, and project partners to disseminate learnings to community and other stakeholders.

The SJBOT, with approval from NLWIC, would disseminate the report following final approval in the following ways:

- Blog post on SJBOT website
- E-News article (distributed to members of the SJBOT)
- SJBOT website link to research and its findings with a forward from NLWIC on its importance to the business community.
- Social media post(s) with key findings from the report on National Seniors Day (Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022).
- Email from the SJBOT to Chamber Network advising them of the availability of the research report and key findings that might be of interest to their members.
- Email from the SJBOT to community stakeholders who have been connected to, consulted in, or involved in the research since 2019, advising them of the availability of the final report and thanking them for their time and participation.

**Schedule B | NLWIC Dissemination Actions | February 28, 2022 Onward**

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We would also recommend NLWIC use their own channels to continue to advocate, educate, and increase awareness of research findings. Our suggestions for future opportunities are included in **Section 3** of this report.

However, we do believe that one path forward should NLWIC wish to immediately continue with the project would be to engage MQO Research Inc. and/or Social Fabric Institute Inc. to support NLWIC in dissemination of academic and scholarly research to its stakeholders. These suppliers could provide quotes to that regard. These activities could include a job fair, additional workshops, and/or additional analysis/research/tools.

In **Section 2** we describe what a larger Working Better with Age event might look like. MQO have provided a sample quote for this type of event for future funded partners or NLWIC’s consideration, as follows:

<b>Working Better with Age Event Budget</b>	
Provided as an Example by MQO Research	
<b>Event Budget</b>	
Planning and Materials	\$2,100.00
Evaluation Pre/post follow up	\$5,000.00
Venue Rental/tables etc.	\$3,000.00
Marketing/Awareness	\$6,500.00
Audio/Visual Equipment	\$1,200.00
Catering	\$3,200.00
Facilitator/Support Staffing	\$2,200.00
Project Manager/Event Planner	\$4,500.00
Misc. Printing/overflow costs	\$1,200.00
<b>Total Professional Fees</b>	<b>\$28,900.00</b>
<b>Assumptions:</b>	

- Job fair costs included
- Participation of 10+ companies
- Facilitation support
- Catered coffee break and lunch (breakfast not included)
- Trainers for breakout training sessions not included

#### **Schedule B | Sensitivities with respect to the dissemination of the final report and deliverables**

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There are no known sensitivities related to the dissemination of this research. However, this can be confirmed with the funder (NLWIC) upon presentation, and with project partners before dissemination.

# Appendix B

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***Research on Barriers and Opportunities to Workforce Participation for Older Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador*** is a research project led by St. John's Board of Trade and funded by the NL Workforce Innovation Centre (NLWIC).

The NLWIC, administered by the College of the North Atlantic (CNA), has a provincial mandate to provide a co-ordinated, central point of access to engage all labour market stakeholders about challenges, opportunities and best practices in workforce development.

The Centre's goal is to promote and support the research, testing and sharing of **ideas** and models of **innovation** in workforce development that will positively **impact** employability, employment, and entrepreneurship within the province's labour force and particularly under-represented groups. Funding for NLWIC is provided by the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour (AESL) under the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Development Agreement.



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## 1.0 Executive Summary

MQO Research was engaged by the St. John's Board of Trade to conduct a multi-phase study of the status of older workers in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. As part of this research, which included a literature review and synthesis of focus group and survey data from older workers themselves, specific barriers were identified for older workers who want to remain in the workforce. Following this, MQO launched a survey of employers in the region to understand the hiring practices and perceptions of older workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The three key objectives of this employer survey were to assess: current employee make-up and hiring practices; perceptions of older workers in the workplace; and workplace policies with regards to supporting older workers during recruitment, as well as on the job.

With regards to perceptions about older workers, most respondents held the view that older workers are more experienced than their younger counterparts. When asked what would make their workplace a 'good fit' for older workers, responses centered around the experience and knowledge that older workers would have. Among those who stated they would be highly likely to hire an older worker if there were a new/vacant position, *experience* and *reliability* were cited as a top two reasons they would do so.

Reasons for why older workers may be a 'bad fit' for a particular workplace largely centered around the physical demands of the job, or the perception that older workers may be unfamiliar (or unable to keep up) with new technologies being used in the workplace. This notion of lacking experience with technology, or not being able to adapt to new technology, was the primary challenge cited with regards to hiring older workers.

A number of respondents were unable to identify any specific efforts made by their workplace to support older workers while recruiting, during the hiring process, or on the job. Among those who did provide examples of supports, it was frequently pointed out that older workers were supported in the same way that they would support any other potential hire or employee. Specific mentions of supports offered to older worker employees were *flexible hours*, *training and development*, and *ergonomic assessments/job modifications*.

Perceptions about older workers were largely positive, with *dependable*, *hard working* and *knowledgeable* being the top mentioned traits. In line with the perception that older workers may be unfamiliar with new technologies, fewer individuals felt that the word 'adaptability' accurately described older workers.

Overall, results show that while there are not a lot of supports currently put in place to support the recruitment and hiring of older workers, there is high agreement that it is worthwhile to invest in job training for older workers. Individuals do believe that older workers have a lot to offer, particularly in terms of their level of experience and knowledge.

Recommendations include increasing support for older workers during the recruitment/hiring process, working towards creating communications that dispels negative myths about older workers, and investing in technology-related training to help those who may require guidance on current technologies being used to find jobs (e.g., Indeed, LinkedIn), as well as technologies used on the job.

## 2.0 Project Overview

### 2.1 Objectives

In 2019, MQO Research was engaged by the St. John's Board of Trade (SJBOT) to conduct a multi-phase study of the status of older workers in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. As part of this research, which included a literature review and synthesis of focus group and survey data from older workers themselves, specific barriers were identified for older workers who want to remain in the workforce. Using this information as a starting point, MQO launched the present study.

In early 2020, MQO worked with the SJBOT to examine the hiring practices and perceptions of older workers among businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador. To explore this, an online survey was developed and shared with members of the SJBOT.

Specifically, the three key objectives of this employer survey were to assess:

1. Current employee make-up and hiring practices;
2. Perceptions of older workers in the workplace; and
3. Workplace policies with regards to supporting older workers during recruitment, as well as on the job.

### 2.2 Methodology

The online survey was developed by MQO Research, with collaboration and input from the SJBOT. Once the survey was finalized, it was sent to members of the SJBOT via email and shared as an open link for non-member businesses. Data collection took place from February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020. In total, 86 individuals responded to the survey.

The survey consisted of 25 questions, with a mix of close-ended and open-ended questions. Once data collection was completed, the raw data was cleaned and the responses to open-ended questions were coded and tallied to reflect percentages. Question-by-question results for each question are presented and discussed in detail in this report.

## 3.0 Survey Results

This section provides a question-by-question breakdown of the survey results.

### 3.1 Demographics and Organizational Characteristics

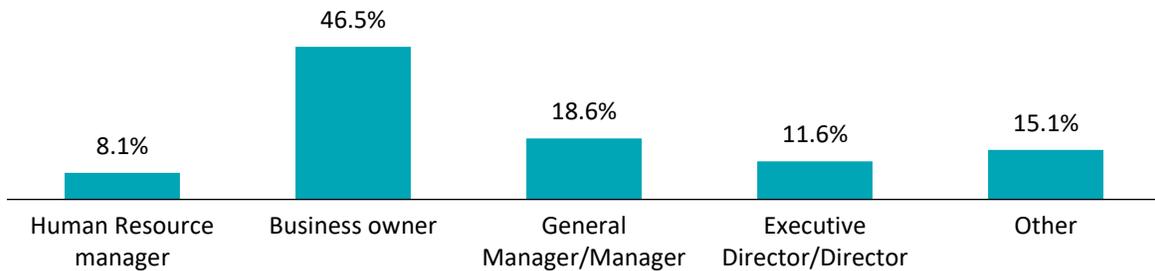
#### Respondent Profile

Approximately one-half of survey respondents (46.5%) identified as business owners. Another 18.6% were general managers/managers, and 11.6% were an Executive Director or Director. Eight percent identified as a human resource manager.

Examples of responses under 'other' include roles such as: *program associate, job developer, and Executive Assistant*. This distribution is shown in Figure 1.

Out of the 86 respondents, 83.7% stated that they were, in some way, responsible for hiring new employees at their workplace.

Figure 1: Which of the following best describes your role at your workplace?  
(n=86)



#### Employee Characteristics

Regarding *full-time paid workers*, one-quarter of respondents (25.3%) stated they had five or less full-time employees, while 27.8% stated they had between 6 – 10 employees. Approximately seventeen percent (16.5%) reported having between 11 – 20 full-time employees, 11.4% had between 21 – 30 employees, 5.1% had between 31 – 50 employees, and 13.9% had more than 50 full-time employees.

Regarding *part-time paid workers*, the majority (73.4%) reported having five or less part-time employees. Nine percent (8.9%) had between 6 – 10 part-time employees, 11.4% had between 11 – 20 employees, and 5.1% had between 31 – 50 employees. A small proportion (1.3%) reported having 50 or more part-time paid employees.

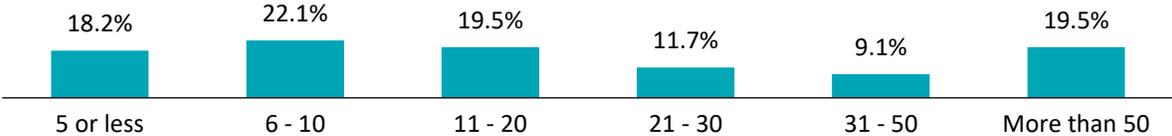
Table 1: FT/PT Paid Workers (n=79)						
Type of Paid Worker	Number of Employees					
	5 or less	6 – 10	11 – 20	21 – 30	31 – 50	More than 50
<b>Full-Time</b>	25.3%	27.8%	16.5%	11.4%	5.1%	13.9%
<b>Part-Time</b>	73.4%	8.9%	11.4%	-	5.1%	1.3%

Note: Don't know/Refused excluded from calculations.

In total, as shown in Figure 2, 22.1% of workplaces represented in the survey had a total of 6 – 10 employees. Twenty percent (19.5%) had between 11 – 20 employees, while the same proportion had over 50 employees.

Eighteen percent of workplaces represented in the survey had 5 or less employees, while 11.7% had between 21 – 30 employees, and 9.1% had 31 – 50 total employees.

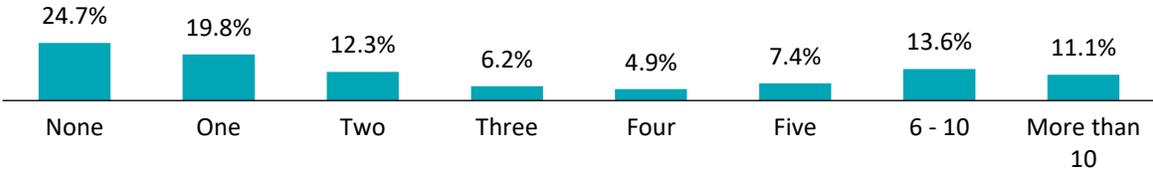
Figure 2: Full-Time + Part-Time Paid Employees [Total Paid Employees]  
(n=77)



Respondents were asked to identify how many paid employees in their workplace were older workers (i.e., someone who is 55 years of age or older). One-quarter of respondents (24.7%) stated their workplace did not have any older workers.

About one-third of respondents reported having either one (19.8%) or two (12.3%) older workers, and one-quarter stated their workplace had between 6 – 10 (13.6%) or more than 10 (11.1%) older workers. The remaining respondents reported having three (6.2%), four (4.9%) or five (7.4%) older workers.

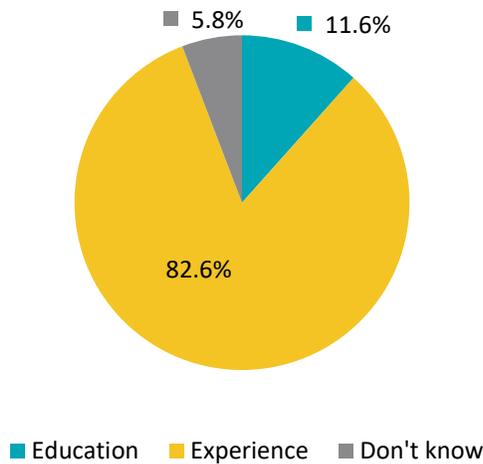
Figure 3: How many of these paid employees are older workers (someone who is 55 years old or older)?  
(n=81)



## Hiring Practices

Respondents were asked whether education or experience was more important when hiring. The majority (82.6%) stated that *experience* was more important, while only 11.6% felt *education* was more important. A small proportion of respondents (5.8%) stated that they 'did not know.' Figure 4

Figure 4: For your business, what is more important when hiring: education or experience?  
(n=86)



Respondents were asked to identify the top three qualifications or skills that an employee must have to be hired (or be successful) within their company. Figure 5 shows the proportion of respondents who mentioned a particular qualification or skill as part of their top three list. Just over one-third (34.9%) listed *communication/customer service/people skills* as part of their top three, and a similar proportion (31.4%) listed *experience*. Other top responses included skills such as *knowledge, abilities, competency, and efficiency* (22.1%) and *work ethic/willingness to learn* (22.1%).

Figure 5: What are the top three qualifications or skills that an employee must possess to get hired and be successful within your company?  
(n=86)



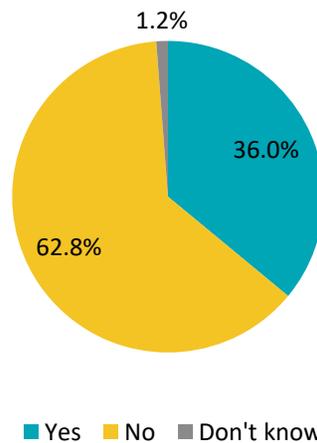
Respondents were also asked to identify how they typically advertised for new or vacant positions at their company. The top mentioned method of advertisement is *third-party websites* such as Career Beacon and Indeed, mentioned by 70.9% of respondents. Other mentions include advertisement through *social or professional networks* (59.3%), *employee referrals* (51.2%) and *third-party recruiters/staffing firms* (14.0%). (Table 2)

Table 2: Top Mentions for Advertising New or Vacant Positions (n=86)	
Top Mentions	%
Third-party websites (e.g., Career Beacon)	70.9%
Social or professional networks	59.3%
Employee Referrals	51.2%
Third-party recruiters/staffing firms	14.0%

Note: Multiple mentions allowed.

Approximately one-third of respondents (36.0%) stated that their workplace has hired an older worker within the last 12 months, while 62.8% have not. A small proportion (1.6%) did not know. (Figure 6)

Figure 6: In the last 12 months, has your workplace hired an older worker (someone who is 55 years old or older)? (n=86)



Respondents were asked to identify what would make their workplace a good or bad fit for an older worker. Responses to this question fit into four categories: 'good fit' responses; 'bad fit' responses; 'age is irrelevant' responses; and unclear responses (i.e., the response was vague/not enough detail was provided).

The 'good fit' responses were largely general mentions around older workers being a great fit or mentions around the knowledge and experience that older workers can contribute to the workplace. Other responses were around good customer service, reliability of older workers, and flexible schedules. Examples of responses are shown below.

*"Older workers bring experience and are very reliable."*

*"Good fit for our industry as well experienced, who certainly take the time to train our junior upcoming staff."*

*"Flexible schedules, discount program, benefits."*

*"Good fit to get into the company and retire with them, great benefits and non entry level positions would be great for an older worker with the right skill sets. Age would benefit an older worker as most of the intended customer base ranges in age from 45-75."*

*"Variety of jobs which could be made flexible or part time."*

The 'bad fit' responses were primarily about the physical demands of the job or the perception that older workers may be unfamiliar with technologies are that used at the workplace. Examples of responses are shown below.

*"The job is quite physical, but we have adapted that in older workers before."*

*"The challenge for older workers comes if they are not comfortable selling service plans or have no knowledge on how to use technology."*

*"Unfortunately, most of our positions are not a good fit for older workers because of the physical nature of the jobs."*

*"No physical work, however, there is a considerable amount of travel required both provincially and nationally which can be trying."*

Some respondents stated that their workplace was a good fit for everyone, regardless of age.

*"Age is irrelevant in our hiring. Fit is based on skills, goals, and interests."*

*"Very inclusive culture. Age not a factor over ability to do the job and fit."*

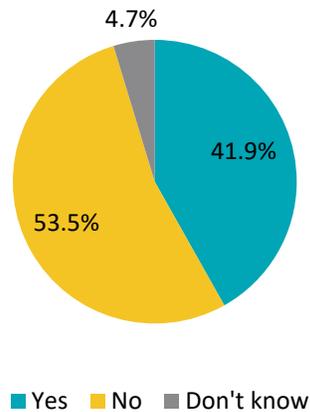
*"It is a good fit for an older worker in the same way that it is a good fit for a younger worker. It is just a good place to work. Age is irrelevant."*

*"We're flexible, but age doesn't matter to us; what's important is what the employee has to offer."*

Four in ten respondents (41.9%) reported being aware of subsidies and grants to hire employees, while 53.5% are unaware. (Figure 8)

Among the subset who are aware of grants and subsidies (n=36), 58.3% have utilized one in the past three years.

Figure 8: Are you aware of any subsidies or grants to hire employees?  
(n=86)



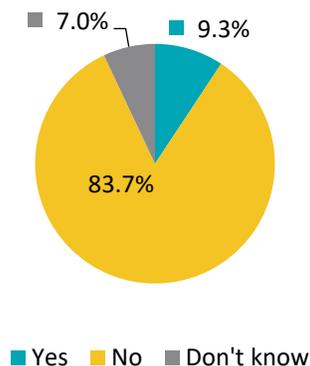
### 3.2 Perceptions of Older Workers

This section of the survey asked respondents about their perceptions of older workers. Virtually all respondents (95.6%) work (or have worked) alongside an older worker.

#### Perceived Risk of Older Workers

The majority of respondents (83.7%) *do not* consider older workers to be a greater Workers' Compensation risk compared to younger workers. Just under ten percent (9.3%) agree with this statement, while 7.0% do not know. (Figure 9)

Figure 9: Do you consider older workers a greater Workers Compensation risk than younger ones?  
(n=86)



## Rating Traits

Respondents were asked to rate a series of traits based on how well they felt each trait described older workers. Each trait was rated from 1 to 10, where 1 was ‘does not describe at all’ and 10 was ‘describes very well.’ Figure 10 shows the proportion of respondents who provided a rating of 8 or higher on each trait.

Most respondents believe that older workers are *dependable* (90.0%), *hard working* (84.0%) and *knowledgeable* (81.5%). Just over one-quarter of respondents feel older workers are adaptable (28.4%). Very few respondents (six percent or less) believe older workers are slow, difficult, useless, or require special attention.

Figure 10: For each of the following traits, please rate how well you think they describe older workers in general:  
(n=86)

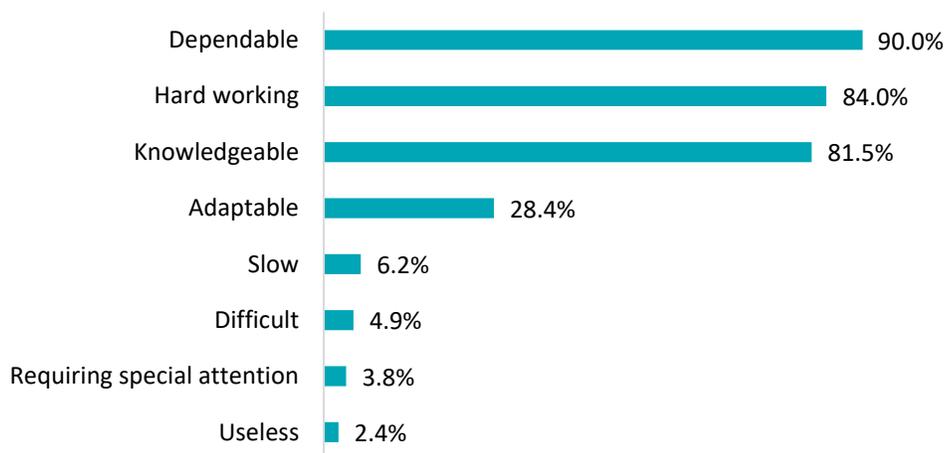


Table 3 shows the average ratings for each trait. For the traits *slow*, *difficult*, *requiring special attention* and *useless*, respondents who have hired an older worker in the past 12 months had lower average ratings on those traits. This means that these respondents were less likely to feel that those traits described older workers.

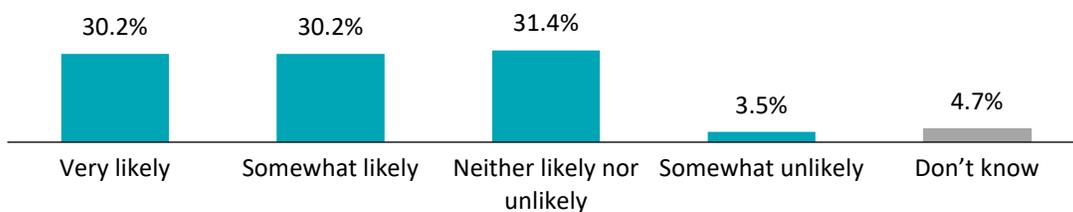
Trait	Total Average Rating	In the last 12 months, has your workplace hired an older worker?	
		Yes	No
Dependable	9.0	9.2	8.9
Hard working	8.8	9.0	8.6
Knowledgeable	8.5	8.4	8.6
Adaptable	6.2	7.2	5.6
Slow	3.6	3.0	4.0
Difficult	3.3	2.6	3.8
Requiring special attention	3.1	2.7	3.3
Useless	1.6	1.5	1.6

Note: Don't know/prefer not to say excluded from calculations.

## Likelihood of Hiring an Older Worker

Respondents were asked to state how likely they would be to hire an older worker if an employment opportunity were to become available at their workplace. Six in ten respondents (60.5%) stated they would be either 'very likely' (30.2%) or 'somewhat likely' (30.2%) to hire an older worker, while 31.4% stated they would be 'neither likely nor unlikely' to do so. A small proportion (3.5%) would be 'somewhat unlikely' while no respondent selected the option of 'very unlikely.' A few respondents (4.7%) stated 'don't know.' (Figure 11)

Figure 11: If an employment opportunity were to open at your workplace, how likely would you be to hire an older worker?  
(n=86)



Those who selected 'very likely' or 'somewhat likely' were asked to elaborate on why they would be likely to hire an older worker (n=52). Most respondents cited *looking for experience* (46.2%) as their primary reason, followed by *reliable/dependable* (17.3%). (Figure 12)

Of the three respondents who stated 'somewhat unlikely', two cited *lacking experience/skills for the job* as their main reason for being unsure about hiring older workers, while one respondent cited *it depends on the position and the person*.

Figure 12: Why would you be very/somewhat likely to hire an older worker?  
(n=52)



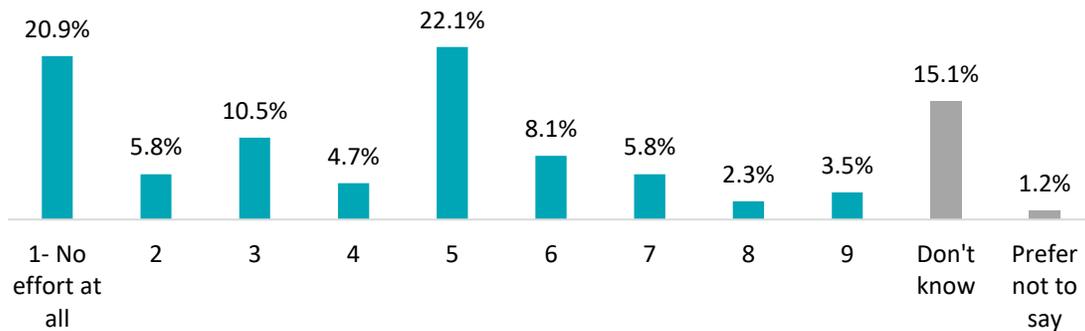
### 3.3 Workplace Policy

#### Efforts to Recruit Older Workers

Respondents rated their workplace's efforts to recruit older workers on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 was 'no effort at all' and 10 was 'the highest possible effort.'

Two-thirds of respondents (64.0%) rated their workplace's efforts between 1 and 5, while 19.8% rated their workplace between 6 and 9. No respondent provided their workplace with a rating of 10. A notable proportion of respondents (15.1%) stated 'don't know.' (Figure 13)

Figure 13: Please rate your workplace's efforts to recruit older workers.  
(n=86)

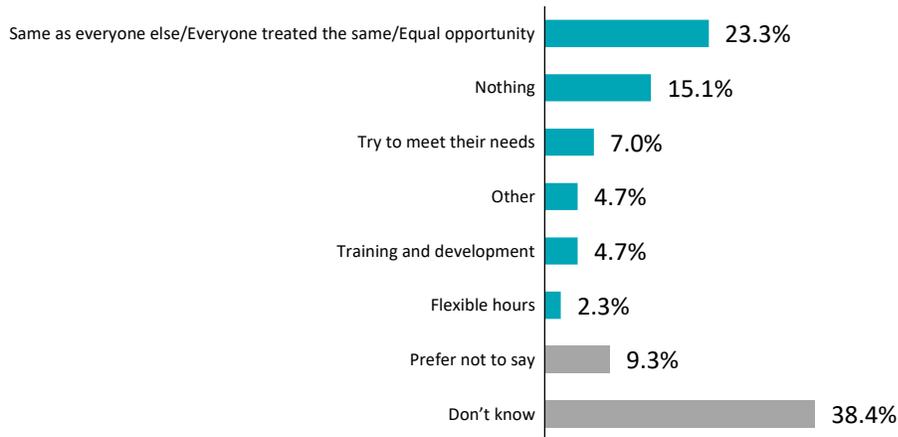


#### Support for Older Workers

When asked about what their workplace does to support older workers *in the hiring process*, 23.3% said that they support older workers in the same way that they would support any other potential hire. Respondents whose workplace has hired an older worker in the past 12 months were notably more likely to state this (41.9%) compared to those who had not hired an older worker in the past year (13.0%). (Figure 14)

A large proportion (38.4%) stated that they did not know how their workplace supported older workers, while 15.1% said that their workplace did not have any specific supports in place. Those who stated 'don't know' tended to be from a workplace that had not hired an older worker in the past year.

Figure 14: Can you describe what your workplace does to support older workers in the hiring process? (n=86)

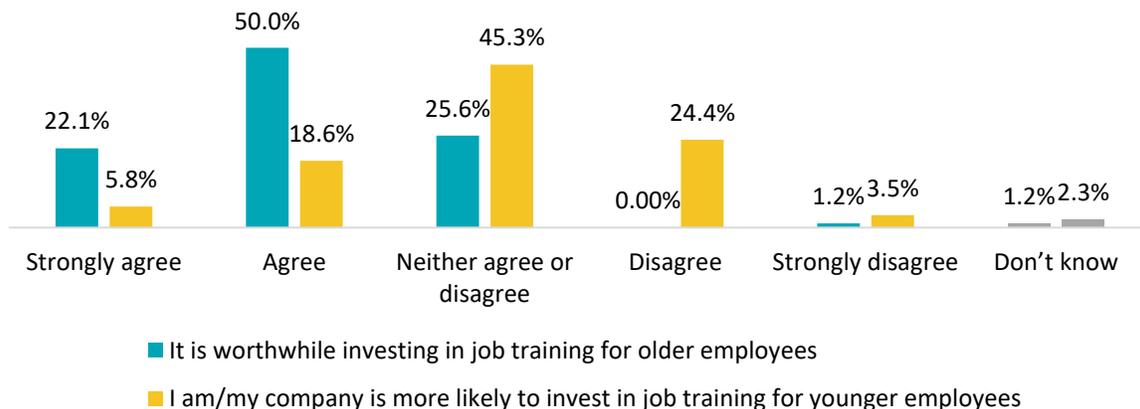


Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on two statements:

- *It is worthwhile investing in job training for older employees*
- *I am/my company is more likely to invest in job training for younger employees*

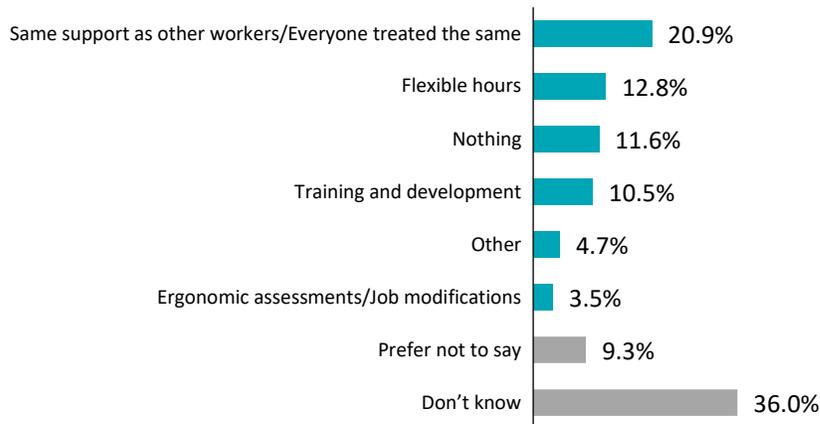
Over three-quarters of respondents either 'strongly agree' (22.1%) or 'agree' (50.0%) that it is worthwhile to invest in job training for older employees. About one-quarter (25.6%) 'neither agree nor disagree' with this statement, and a small proportion (1.2%) 'strongly disagree' with this statement. On the other hand, only about one-quarter of respondents 'strongly agree' (5.8%) or agree (18.6%) that their company was more likely to invest in younger employees, while the majority stated 'neither agree nor disagree' to this statement (45.3%).

Figure 15: Investing in Job Training (n=86)



When asked about what their workplace does to support older workers *on the job*, 20.9% said that they support older workers in the same way that they would support any other employee. Thirteen percent (12.8%) stated that they offer *flexible hours*, while 10.5% offer *training and development* and 3.5% offer *ergonomic assessments/job modifications*. (Figure 16)

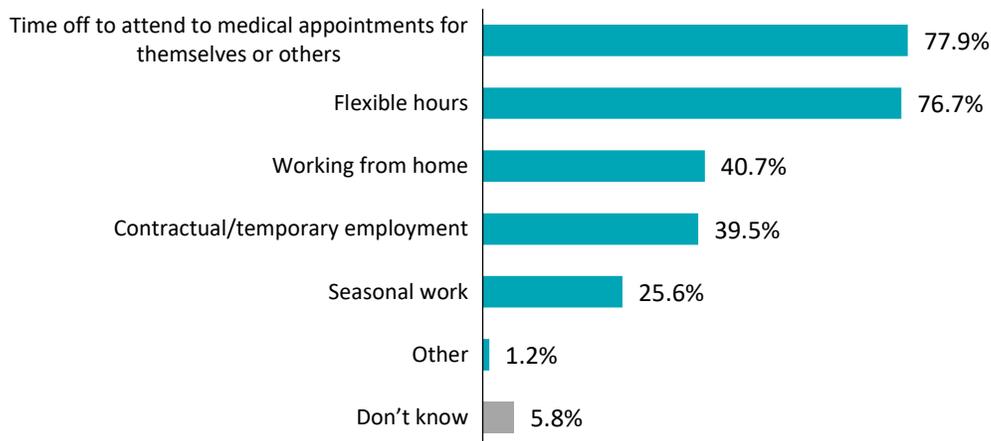
Figure 16: Can you describe what your workplace does to support older workers on the job? (n=86)



### Accommodations for Employees

With regards to accommodations, most workplaces represented in the survey offer *time off to attend medical appointments* (77.9%) and *flexible hours* (76.7%), while a smaller proportion offer the option to *work from home* (40.7%) and *contractual/temporary employment* options (39.5%). One-quarter of workplaces also offer *seasonal work* (25.6%). (Figure 17)

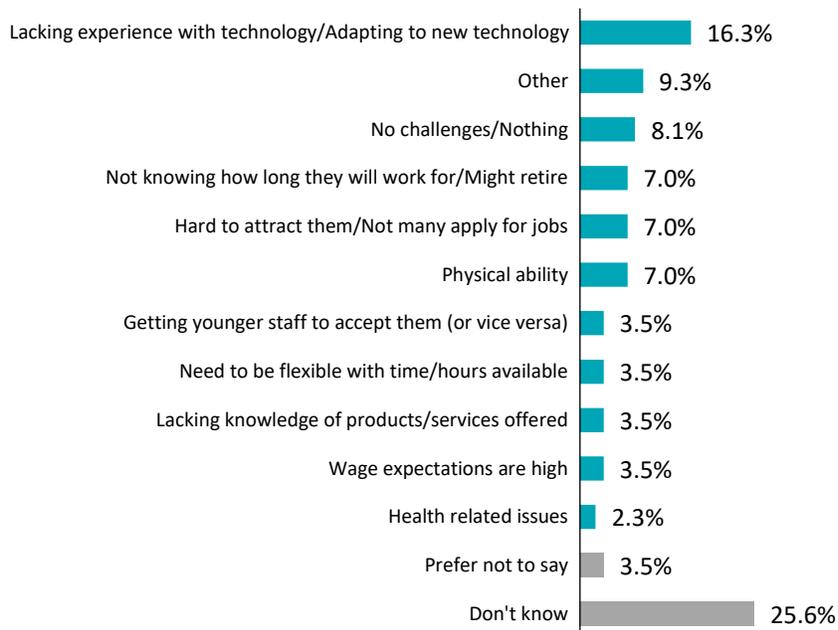
Figure 17: Which of the following accommodations do you currently make for your employees? (n=86)



## Challenges in Hiring Older Workers

Finally, participants were asked to identify what the biggest challenges were in hiring older workers. Responses were varied, with the most frequently cited challenge being around *lacking experience with technology/adapting to new technology* (16.3%). Other mentions include *not knowing how long they will work for/prospect of retirement* (7.0%), *difficulties in attracting older workers* (7.0%) and *physical demands of the job* (7.0%). (Figure 18)

Figure 18: In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge when it comes to hiring older workers?  
(n=86)



## 4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.1 Key Conclusions

**Three-quarters of workplaces represented in the survey (75.3%) had *at least one* older worker at the workplace, and about one-third (36.0%) had hired an older worker in the past 12 months.**

While one-quarter of workplaces represented in the survey did not have any older workers, about one-third had either one (19.8%) or two (12.3%) older workers, and one-quarter stated their workplace had between 6 and 10 (13.6%) or more than 10 (11.1%) older workers. The remaining respondents reported having three (6.2%), four (4.9%) or five (7.4%) older workers.

Just over one-third of respondents (36.0%) stated that their workplace has hired an older worker within the last 12 months, while 62.8% had not done so.

**Most respondents held the view that older workers are more experienced than their younger counterparts. When asked what would make their workplace a ‘good fit’ for older workers, most responses centered around the experience and knowledge that older workers would have.**

The ‘good fit’ included mentions around the knowledge and experience that older workers can contribute to their workplace, as well as the reliability of older workers. This notion also aligns with the high value respondents place on experience over education – specifically, 82.6% agreed that experience was more important than education when hiring.

Additionally, among the 60.5% who stated they would be highly likely to hire an older worker if there were a new/vacant position, *experience* and *reliability* were cited as a top two reasons they would do so.

**Challenges around hiring older workers largely centered around the physical demands of the job, or the perception that older workers may be unfamiliar (or unable to keep up) with new technologies being used in the workplace.**

In describing why older workers may be a bad fit for their workplace, responses were primarily about the physical nature of the jobs or the perception that older workers would not be familiar with technologies used at the workplace. This notion of lacking experience with technology, or not being able to adapt to new technology, aligns with the primary challenge that respondents cited with regards to hiring older workers.

**Most respondents did not identify any specific efforts made by their workplace to support older workers while recruiting, during the hiring process, or on the job.**

Respondents rated their workplace’s efforts to recruit older workers on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 was ‘no effort at all’ and 10 was ‘the highest possible effort..’ Two-thirds of respondents (64.0%) rated their workplace’s efforts between 1 and 5, indicating that most workplaces did not have specific efforts directed toward recruiting older workers. There was also a notable proportion of respondents (approximately one-third) who did not know (or were unaware of) what their workplace specifically does to support older workers during hiring or on the job.

Among those who did provide examples of supports, it was frequently pointed out that older workers were supported in the same way that they would support any other potential hire or employee. This finding aligns with a number of respondents who stated that age was irrelevant to their workplace, and that potential employees are only assessed on their skills and knowledge about the job, rather than age.

There were few specific mentions of supports offered to older worker employees, among them being *flexible hours, training and development, and ergonomic assessments/job modifications.*

**Perceptions about older workers were largely positive, and most did not feel that older workers were a greater Worker's Compensation risk compared to younger workers.**

General views about older workers were largely positive. Specifically, most respondents believe that older workers are *dependable* (90.0%), *hard working* (84.0%) and *knowledgeable* (81.5%). In line with the perception that older workers may be unfamiliar with new technologies, fewer individuals felt that the word 'adaptability' accurately described older workers (28.4%). Very few respondents (six percent or less) believe older workers are slow, difficult, useless, or require special attention.

Additionally, less than one in 10 respondents felt that older workers were a greater Workers' Compensation risk compared to younger workers, while the majority (over 80%) *did not* feel this way.

**Finally, although the results show that little is currently being done by workplaces to actively recruit and support older workers, most respondents agree that it is worthwhile to invest in job training for older workers.**

Over three-quarters of respondents agree that it is worthwhile to invest in job training for older employees, and only one-quarter stated their workplace was more likely to invest in younger employees. In conclusion, this finding indicates that while there may not be specific policies in place currently to recruit older workers, individuals do believe that older workers provide value to companies by virtue of their experience, knowledge, and reliability, and it is therefore worthwhile to invest in them as employees.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### 1. Increase Supports for Older Workers During the Hiring Process

Based on the results of this survey, it is apparent that businesses may not be putting effort into specifically providing supports to recruit and hire older workers. One recommendation would be for the SJBOT to work with its members' Human Resource departments to develop recruitment strategies for older workers. This may include helping businesses increase their awareness about hiring older workers, developing communications that will speak to older workers during recruitment or offering accommodations to job candidates during the hiring process (for example, if a candidate needs time off for medical reasons, offering a flexible schedule; offering an ergonomic assessment to a candidate who expresses back pain).

## 2. Work Towards Dispelling Myths

Although this survey showed that largely, perceptions about older workers are positive, there is still a small proportion who feel that older workers are “slow” or “unadaptable” - indicating that there is an opportunity to work towards dispelling negative myths and stereotypes about hiring older workers. The SJBOT can work with its members to increase awareness about age-based discrimination that can occur during the hiring process. An awareness campaign can also highlight the value that older workers can offer to a business – such as their depth of knowledge and experience – which were frequently mentioned in the survey.

## 3. Invest in Tech Training

A common theme that emerged during the survey was that respondents felt older workers may not be able to keep up with technology, and as a result, their workplace would be ‘bad fit’. While this could largely be attributed to dispelling myths about older adults, it may be the case that some older workers do not have an avenue to receive technology-related training. This finding aligns with research on this subject – one study with older adults has shown that older workers experience age discrimination when looking for work, and that they also feel they lack technology skills. However, this research also found that older workers express a desire to receive technology training<sup>1</sup>. There may also be a barrier for older workers, in that they could be unfamiliar with current avenues that are used to advertise jobs, such social media ads, LinkedIn, or online job websites<sup>2</sup>.

The SJBOT could explore feasibility of investing in grant programs for technology skills training to allow those who need it to remain competitive within the job market. This could involve offering workshops for older adults who wish to learn commonly-used technologies or learn how to apply for jobs online (in particular, increasing familiarity with social media advertising or LinkedIn), or it could involve working with businesses on a one-on-one basis to provide funding so that they can invest in job-related tech training for employees themselves.

---

<sup>1</sup> Training Older Workers for Technology-Based Employment. *Educational Gerontology*. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/42639649\\_Training\\_Older\\_Workers\\_for\\_Technology-Based\\_Employment](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/42639649_Training_Older_Workers_for_Technology-Based_Employment)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.workbc.ca/Training-Education/Skills-Training-for-Employment/STE-Older-Workers-55.aspx>

# Appendix A: Questionnaire

## INTRODUCTION

The St. John's Board of Trade is conducting a survey of its members of perceptions of older workers in the workforce. As an individual responsible for hiring within your workplace, **your input is extremely important**, so please take a few minutes to complete this survey.

*The NL Workforce Innovation Centre (NLWIC), administered by the College of the North Atlantic (CNA), has a provincial mandate to provide a coordinated, central point of access to engage all labour market stakeholders about challenges, opportunities and best practices in workforce development. The Centre's goal is to promote and support the research, testing and sharing of **ideas** and models of **innovation** in workforce development that will positively **impact** employability, employment, and entrepreneurship within the province's labour force and particularly under-represented groups. Funding is provided by the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour (AESL) under the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Development Agreement.*

Your responses to the survey questions will be treated as strictly confidential and will only be used in combination with those of other companies.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this survey. We appreciate your input. When you are ready to begin, please click the link below.

<Insert Link>

If you require assistance accessing the survey, please reply to this e-mail and the survey administrator will address any issues or concerns you may have.

### Introductory Screen:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is invaluable to help the St. John's Board of Trade understand perceptions of older workers in the workplace from an employer's perspective. Please be assured that all information is anonymous and neither you nor your workplace will be identified.

Please use the navigation arrow buttons at the bottom of the screen to navigate throughout the survey. Please do not use the back button of your web browser or the enter key or your information may be lost.

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

- D1. Which of the following best describes your role at your workplace?  
1) Human resource manager  
2) Business owner  
3) Other, specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
777) Don't know (**VOL**)  
999) Prefer not to say (**VOL**)
- D2. Do you have any responsibility for hiring new employees at your workplace?  
1) Yes  
2) No  
777) Don't know (**VOL**)  
999) Prefer not to say (**VOL**)
- D3a. How many full time paid employees, are employed by your workplace? If you do not know an exact number, please give your best estimate.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
777) Don't know (**VOL**)  
999) Prefer not to say (**VOL**)
- D3b. How many paid part time employees are employed by your workplace? If you do not know an exact number, please give your best estimate.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
777) Don't know (**VOL**)  
999) Prefer not to say (**VOL**)
- D4. How many of these paid employees currently employed by your workplace are **older workers** (someone who is 55 years old or older)? If you do not know an exact number, please give your best estimate.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
777) Don't know (**VOL**)  
999) Prefer not to say (**VOL**)
- D5. For your business, what is more important when hiring: education or experience?  
4) Education  
5) Experience  
777) Don't know (**VOL**)  
999) Prefer not to say (**VOL**)
- D6. What are the top three qualifications or skills that an employee must possess to get hired and be successful within your company?

- D7. How do you advertise for new or vacant positions?  
1) Employee referrals  
2) Third-party websites (Career Beacon, Indeed)  
3) Social or professional networks  
4) Third-party recruiters or staffing firms  
5) Other, please specify  
777) Don't know **(VOL)**  
999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**
- D8. In the last 12 months, has your workplace hired an older worker (someone who is 55 years old or older)?  
1) Yes  
2) No  
777) Don't know **(VOL)**  
999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**
- D9. In what ways is your company a good fit or bad fit for an older worker?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
777) Don't know **(VOL)**  
999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**
- D10. Are you aware of any subsidies or grants to hire employees?  
1) Yes  
2) No  
777) Don't know **(VOL)**  
999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**
- D11. [If yes] In the past three years, have you used any subsidies or grants to hire employees?  
1) Yes  
2) No  
777) Don't know **(VOL)**  
999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

PERCEPTIONS OF OLDER WORKERS
------------------------------

- P1. Do you consider older workers a greater Workers Compensation risk than younger ones?  
a) Yes  
b) No  
777) Don't know **(VOL)**  
999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

P2. Have you worked with or alongside an older worker?

c) Yes

d) No

777) Don't know **(VOL)**

999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

P3. For each of the following traits, please rate how well you think they describe older workers in general using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is "does not describe at all" and 10 is "describes very well:"

a) Adaptable

b) Difficult

c) Useless

d) Hard working

e) Requiring special attention

f) Knowledgeable

g) Dependable

h) Slow

777) Don't know **(VOL)**

999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

P4. If an employment opportunity were to open at your workplace, how likely would you be to hire an older worker?

1) Very likely

2) Somewhat likely

3) Neither likely nor unlikely

4) Somewhat unlikely

5) Very unlikely

777) Don't know **(VOL)**

999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

P5. Why would you be likely or unlikely to hire an older worker?

---

777) Don't know **(VOL)**

999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

## WORKPLACE POLICY

W1. Please rate your workplace's efforts to recruit older workers on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is "no effort at all" and 10 is "the highest possible effort."

- 1) 1 No effort at all
- 2) 2
- 3) 3
- 4) 4
- 5) 5
- 6) 6
- 7) 7
- 8) 8
- 9) 9
- 10) 10 The highest possible effort

777) Don't know **(VOL)**

999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

W2. Can you describe what your workplace does to support older workers **in the hiring process**?

---

777) Don't know **(VOL)**

999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

W3. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?  
It is worthwhile investing in job training for older employees

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Neither agree or disagree
- 4) Disagree
- 5) Strongly disagree

777) Don't know **(VOL)**

999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

W4. Can you describe what your workplace does to support older workers **on the job**?

---

777) Don't know **(VOL)**

999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

W5. Which of the following accommodations do you currently make for your employees?

- a) Flexible hours
- b) Working from home
- c) Time off to attend to medical appointments for themselves or others
- d) Seasonal work
- e) Contractual/temporary employment

- f) Other, please specify
- 777) Don't know **(VOL)**
- 999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

W6. In your opinion, what is the **biggest challenge** when it comes to hiring older workers?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 777) Don't know **(VOL)**
- 999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

W7. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?  
*I am/my workplace is more likely to invest in job training for younger employees*

- 1) Strongly Agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Neither agree or disagree
- 4) Disagree
- 5) Strongly disagree
- 777) Don't know **(VOL)**
- 999) Prefer not to say **(VOL)**

FINAL COMMENTS

FC1. Do you have any additional thoughts on hiring older workers and/or older workers in the workplace in general?

\_\_\_\_\_

*On behalf of the St. John's Board of Trade, thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!*

# Appendix C

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.....

# OLDER WORKERS SUMMIT

## Summary Report

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A collaboration between the Office of the Seniors Advocate, Older Workers NL,  
the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development,  
and the St. John's Board of Trade

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# Older Works Summit Summary Report

## OVERVIEW:

NL's aging workforce and shrinking population can have a great impact on the labour market and the ability of businesses to find workers. Newfoundland and Labrador's demographics could be viewed as an opportunity, as more and more people are working well into their 60s and 70s. However, many older employees are reluctant to remain in the workforce because of policies related to pensions, health benefits and working conditions, as well as social pressures to "make room" for younger workers. In addition, some employers are hesitant to retain or hire older workers because of preconceived, negative notions. However, research demonstrates that many older workers are more productive, have low absenteeism and contribute to intergenerational collaboration.

On November 13, 2019, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate partnered with Memorial University's Harris Centre, Older Workers NL, and the St. John's Board of Trade to present a day-long workshop regarding older workers.

The summit brought together representatives from business, unions, government, post-secondary education institutions, seniors' groups, labour market researchers, and older workers themselves.

The session began with an overview of the issue as presented in a keynote by Dr. Suzanne Brake, Seniors' Advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador. Dr. Brake presented a summary of observations from a series of consultations conducted by her office over the last 18 months – including many issues related to older workers, and older people who wish to engage in the workforce.

Dr. Brake was followed by Dr. Lynn Gambin, an economics professor and researcher at Memorial University's Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Economics. Dr. Gambin presented current statistics on the increasing numbers of older people in the workforce, and highlighted the fact that there has been a trend over the last number of years towards people staying in the workforce longer.

Stephen Moore, of MQO Research, a private market research firm, spoke about a research project they are currently undertaking with the St. John's Board of Trade regarding older workers. He pointed to an interest amongst retired individuals to reengage with the workforce in some way if appealing and appropriate job opportunities were available to them.

Following the presentations, a panel discussion was held with Dr. Brake, Older Workers NL representatives, Mike Kehoe and Jean Graham, and business owner, Kelly Mansell, of Rocket Bakery. The panel discussion covered challenges experienced by both Mr. Kehoe and Ms.

Graham, as well as challenges faced by Ms. Mansell in her attempts to hire older workers. The panel discussion was moderated by Bojan Furst, Manager of Knowledge Mobilization at the Harris Centre and host of the Centre's podcast, Rural Routes. Following the moderators questions, attendees were also given a chance to contribute to the conversation and pose questions to the panel.

Issues raised during the panel discussion and morning presentations set the stage for the second half of the summit, which was aimed at discussing possible solutions to the issue. In this portion of the session, participants formed collaborative teams, identified key actions or projects they wished to move forward, and developed action plans to continue the momentum of the day after the sessions' conclusion.

The key issues and suggested solutions from both the morning presentations, as well as the discussion tables, are included below.

## SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED:

**Labour market shortage:** The demographic situation of the province requires us to create age-friendly workplaces. NL does not have enough young people to fill labour gaps, as well as the gaps in volunteer positions in our communities. The sectors with the highest percentage of older workers includes *Other Services (except Public Services), Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas, and Retail Trade*. The sectors with the lowest percentage of older workers are *Professional, Scientific and Technical, and Educational Services*. There is more temporary work amongst older workers; this could be for a multitude of reasons.

**Increased number of older workers:** Statistics discussed identified a steadily increasing percentage of older people in the workforce, as well as an increasing number of older people who are unemployed but looking for work. According to market research presented, many people who are retired would accept an employment offer that was appealing and practical.

**Cost of living and longer life-expectancy means many seniors need to work longer and later in life:** the cost of living continues to rise and some seniors struggle to make ends meet on a fixed income; the need to work beyond the usual retirement age is a concern.

**Some seniors want to continue to work, but feel social pressure to retire:** Some seniors do not wish to retire for reasons other than financial constraints (social connection/contribution, active lifestyle, etc.), but do not feel welcome to stay in their workplace, and feel pressure to retire. In addition, some seniors are not able to avail of community services and programs for older people, as programming is often delivered during regular working hours, which makes those programs and services unavailable to older people who continue to work.

**Lack of information for older people wanting to continue to work:** There is a lack of information for older workers. Increased information would be helpful to determine what

solutions are needed. Many older individuals are heavily reliant on health benefits – some people fear if they work past retirement they will not be eligible for government-sponsored coverage and will also be unable to avail of employer benefits due to their age or the part-time nature of their work.

***Lack of training opportunities for older workers:*** Older workers feel they receive less employer-delivered training, and this puts them at a disadvantage. As we move towards a more high-tech, knowledge-based economy, it is important for training opportunities to be available to older workers, so that they are not left behind in the labour market of the future. It is important that training opportunities be offered through multiple mediums, not simply online courses or tutorials.

***Employers who wish to hire older workers struggle to find candidates:*** Employers who are interested in hiring older workers struggle to find and recruit candidates. There are ample programs and supports for hiring students, but few resources to help recruit and retain older workers.

***Workplaces are not age-friendly:*** Some older workers feel forced out of their employment by social pressure to retire, employment policies that limit benefits for older workers, limited training and promotion opportunities, as well as physical barriers to full work participations. There is a need to understand what it means to be an age-friendly workplace, and what intergenerational impacts exist.

## SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS AND ACTIONS IDENTIFIED:

***Recruitment programs for older workers:*** Programs designed for student positions could be replicated for older workers. This would be especially relevant in rural areas where there are more seniors and less students. There is an opportunity to have integrated older worker and student programs to contribute to intergenerational learning opportunities. Other suggestions related to recruitment included improved employment services, such as peer-mentoring, community-based work experience programs, job-matching, and job-shadowing to help older workers gain new skills and open up opportunities for them to engage in the workforce, or continue to be engaged in the workforce.

***Flexible working arrangements:*** Employers could provide flexible arrangements, such as job-sharing, part-time or remote-working options. This model could be piloted with willing organizations and promoted as a possible model for other groups to implement.

***Age-friendly workplaces models and examples:*** Flexible employment policies, intergenerational collaboration, and physical accommodations can make a big difference to the retention and recruitment of older workers. Models of age-friendly workplaces could be promoted and acknowledged to encourage other groups to implement similar practices.

Something as simple as a stool to be used for tasks that would otherwise have to be completed while standing can mean the difference between being able to participate in the workforce and feeling as though the workplace is no longer a place where they are welcome. These models and best practices could be promoted with awards through business and industry associations, as well as through public awareness campaigns.

**Public policy changes regarding discrimination:** The issue of businesses discontinuing health and other insurance benefits at specific ages, regardless of health status, was raised as a specific public policy issue that should be addressed.

**Better access to training opportunities:** Training to upgrade skills could be increased for older workers both at the public level and employer level. In addition, training should be made available in a flexible manner (not just online), accessible and affordable. Training opportunities could also include experiential training, such as peer-mentoring, community-based work experience programs, and job-shadowing.

**Employee and retiree information:** More information is needed for employees and retirees to better understand how earning an income later in life impacts their pension and benefits. This information could be available through peer support networks, online portals, webinars, or in-person information sessions.

## CONTINUED ACTION:

As part of the workshop, participants formed working groups based around five themes: Employee Supports, Employer Policy and Supports, Public Policy, Rural Workers, and Women and Workers with Disabilities. The groups discussed key concerns, as well as opportunities for actions. The main deliverable for these group discussions was to identify opportunities for projects to help tackle the issues related to the specific theme. Groups then chose one specific opportunity to work towards – some of the groups continued to meet after the session to continue moving their opportunity forward. All opportunities that were identified are included in *Appendix A: What we heard – Opportunities for Action*.

In 2019 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate released a report **Long May Your Big Jib Draw** which outlines the major issues seniors had brought to the attention of the Office. As well, this report details the Office's plans to ensure change.

One of the issues identified as a priority is seniors and labour force participation. Specifically, seniors' workforce concerns fall within three categories: continued attachment to the workforce, the stability of pensions, and access to benefits.

The Seniors' Advocate has committed to addressing labour market issues including the need for the development of more age friendly workplaces. In fact, the hosting of this summit was one

of the actions outlined in the Seniors' Advocate's September report. The second work force commitment in that Report is to examine "age" within the context of the **Human Rights Act** and its impact on pension/retirement plans, as well as employee insurance plans.

## Appendix A: What We Heard – Opportunities for Action

The following is a list of all the opportunities and recommendations that emerged through the discussions.

1. **Basic employment training:** Tailored to older workers on technology, resume writing and job search. This could also include job-matching, work-term or job-shadowing opportunities.
2. **Return to work (post-retirement) session:** Information related to financial impacts and assistance navigating the various scenarios.
3. **Peer support for older workers:** Focus on well-being and providing the opportunity to share information, network and mentor.
4. **Community groups education program:** Tool kit for community groups and municipalities; people offering learning opportunities.
5. **Round tables:** Discussions with older worker researchers; women in labour; 50+ group with a disability lens; get their perspective; bring people together with lived experience; discuss challenges.
6. **Public awareness campaign:** Presentations at schools, social media campaign, educating students about ageism.
7. **Education Campaign:** Fed by stakeholders, directed to policy makers on issues surrounding older workers; determine best practices.
8. **Submission forum:** Forum for generation of submissions to government for training in seniors.
9. **Identify gaps in data/knowledge and research opportunities:** Campaign to educate on policy gaps and needs for older workers; research idea to create evidence; adult literacy and training; stakeholder engagement and communication; discover governmental leadership role as employer; use connections to identify data gaps to create research needs.
10. **Communication tools:** Share knowledge; share success stories and job opportunities; connect people (employees and employers).
11. **Public event in rural area (networking opportunity):** Bringing together employers and employees aged 50+.
12. **Pilot event: talent mapping for senior workers:** Financial advising session; information finding sessions in rural NL; writing proposals for department of tourism to utilize seasonal senior workers; networking opportunity in rural areas; job matching for seniors in rural areas; publishing success stories newsletter; talent mapping session.
13. **Event/Workshop:** Using our skills and expertise and facilitation and public speaking skills and meeting spaces to hold event/workshop.
14. **Awareness Campaign:** Use knowledge and marketing skills to create an awareness campaign.
15. **Preparing Proposal for a Grant:** Using our contacts and our writing skills and expertise in order to create a proposal in order to successfully secure a grant.

## Appendix B: Older Workers in the NL Labour Market Presentation

Older Workers in the NL Labour Market, Presentation by Dr. Lynn Gambin

[https://www.mun.ca/harriscentre/Gambin\\_Older\\_Workers.pdf](https://www.mun.ca/harriscentre/Gambin_Older_Workers.pdf)

# OLDER WORKERS IN THE NL LABOUR MARKET

Dr Lynn Gambin  
Department of Economics  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Older Workers Summit  
13<sup>th</sup> November 2019

## Appendix C: Working Better with Age

Working Better with Age: Presentation by MQO Research, Stephen Moore

[https://www.mun.ca/harriscentre/MQO\\_Research\\_Presentation.pdf](https://www.mun.ca/harriscentre/MQO_Research_Presentation.pdf)



## Appendix D: Recorded Videoconference

Recorded videoconference of the Older Workers Summit November 13, 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFRYbUCGEkI>



# Appendix D

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# PROMOTING THE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF OLDER CANADIANS

**PROMISING INITIATIVES**

May 2018



## **PROMOTING THE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF OLDER CANADIANS**

This publication is available for download at  
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Quebec contributes to the FPT Seniors Forum by sharing expertise, information and best practices. However, it does not subscribe to, or take part in, integrated federal, provincial, and territorial approaches to seniors. The Government of Quebec intends to fully assume its responsibilities for seniors in Quebec.



## Promoting the Labour Force Participation of Older Canadians

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## Executive Summary

Like that of most industrialized countries, Canada's population is aging due to lower fertility rates and longer life expectancy. The combined effect of living longer and having fewer children is transforming population structures in Canada, although not all provinces are equally affected by population aging; it is more rapid in Eastern Canada.

With proportionally fewer young people moving into the workforce to replace the increasing number of older individuals retiring, population aging has had and will have direct implications on Canada's economy and labour market. And while widespread labour shortages are not expected over the next five to 10 years, skill shortages are expected to increase in certain occupations, sectors and regions. Consequently, there is a need to increase the labour force participation of older individuals, and of other groups of Canadians, to support businesses, economic growth and continued improvement in Canada's standard of living.

Overall, older Canadians fare relatively well in the labour market, with record-high labour force participation rates and a clear upward trend in retirement ages. However, there is still room for improvement, as Canada's participation rate of older individuals lags behind other countries. There are also many older adults who struggle when trying to stay in the labour market or re-enter the workforce because they face particular challenges, including:

- ageism;
- lack of education and access to training;
- difficulty in finding and applying for jobs;
- health issues, work-life balance issues and lack of workplace accommodations; and
- disincentives or lack of incentives to work in the retirement income system.

Based on an extensive pan-Canadian and international scan, eight broad categories of initiatives that seek to promote labour force participation of older individuals have been identified (see Chapter 2 for more details): awareness initiatives; financial incentives; health and safety; employment legislation; the retirement income system; skills development; workplace accommodations; and employment services.

To address the specific workforce challenges facing many older Canadians and to promote their labour force participation, this report highlights the most promising initiatives; these include a multifaceted awareness campaign to address ageism while promoting the benefits of hiring older individuals, funding for targeted training for older individuals, and supporting initiatives that would lead to more flexible work (see Chapter 3 for the complete list). The initiatives, either in combination with one another or on their own, can have diverse impacts on the labour force participation of older people.

## Introduction

For the first time in Canada's history, there are now more individuals over the age of 65 than there are children under the age of 15. As the population ages and more individuals exit the workforce, this will put pressure on labour force growth that could adversely impact economic growth. Canada will have to rely more heavily on productivity growth and increased workforce participation of all Canadians, including older individuals, to maintain its pace of improvement in living standards.

In addition, rapid globalization and technological changes have led to the changing nature of work. The traditional employee/employer relationship is evolving, sometimes leading to less secure relationships, as well as increases in different types of work. The economy is also restructuring, resulting in more opportunities that require highly skilled and knowledgeable workers. Making the adjustment to this new reality may be more difficult for some older workers.

In this context, on September 13, 2016, the Forum of Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors met in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Forum identified the labour force participation of older Canadians as a priority for the next work cycle. Federal, provincial and territorial officials were tasked with developing a report identifying Canadian and international promising practices that support the extended working life of older workers.

A working group made up of several provinces was established and chaired jointly by the Government of Manitoba and Employment and Social Development Canada. From fall 2016 until mid-2017, the working group collaborated with various groups within Employment and Social Development Canada and with provinces, territories and stakeholders, including private sector organizations, employers, and non-government organizations, to develop this policy report. The purpose of this report is to provide decision makers with effective policy and program solutions to the challenges faced by older workers with respect to their participation in the labour market.

The report was written with coordinated efforts by Employment and Social Development Canada, provinces and territories, and reflects federal, provincial, and territorial perspectives. Chapter 1 sets the context of older workers across Canada and identifies their challenges in the labour market. Chapter 2 reviews initiatives that governments and organizations have implemented, both in Canada and abroad, to reduce barriers to labour market participation faced by older workers and encourage them to continue working. From among these initiatives, Chapter 3 identifies promising initiatives for many players, including the different levels of government, employers, unions and non-governmental organizations, based on evidence-based research and federal, provincial and territorial consensus.

## 1. Context

### 1.1. An Aging Population

Like that of most industrialized countries, Canada's population is evolving and is experiencing significant changes: its population is aging due to lower fertility rates and longer life expectancy. Some of the baby boomer generation (born during the post-World War II boom between 1946 and 1965) have already transitioned into retirement, while many others begin preparing their retirement plans<sup>1</sup>. Hence, the age structure is changing in Canada—the number of people aged 55 and over increased from 6 million in the mid-1990s<sup>2</sup> (around 20 percent of the population) to 11 million in 2016 (around 30 percent of the population). Although not all regions are equally affected by population aging, the number of individuals 55 and over is expected to reach 17 million by 2036<sup>3</sup> (almost half of the expected population).

Furthermore, given that women have a longer life expectancy than men, the gender distribution is much different at later ages. While women account for a little more than half the population in Canada (50.9 percent in 2016), among people aged 65 years and older, the number of women exceeds the number of men by more than 20 percent, and in the 85-and-older population there are about two women for every man.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Canadians have fewer children*

Birth rates in Canada have fallen dramatically since the 1970s. Families are now smaller, women tend to be older when they have children, and more women do not have children at all.

Similar trends are observed in most advanced economies, as higher income and levels of education, urbanization, and greater access to inexpensive and effective birth control methods tend to be associated with having fewer children.

#### *Canadians are living longer*

Never have people lived longer, and the gains in the last decades have been particularly remarkable. Factors such as improved living conditions, better hygiene, preventive health care, and medical advances partly explain the rise in life expectancy.

Living longer has profound consequences. Not only does it affect the population age structure of societies, but it also requires that the design of social policies be reconsidered. For example, today, a Canadian at age 65 years old—an age that many associate with retirement—can expect to live almost six years longer than a person of the same age in the 1960s<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, *Generations in Canada* study.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 051-0001.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 052-0005; projections are based on medium growth scenario (M1).

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada, Age and sex, and type of dwelling data: Key results from the 2016 Census.

<sup>5</sup> Based on Canada's life expectancy at age 65 years old; source: <https://data.oecd.org/healthstat/life-expectancy-at-65.htm#indicator-chart>.

## *The age structure is changing*

In 2011, the first of the baby-boomers began to turn 65. This led in 2015 to a first in Canada's history: there are now more seniors over the age of 65 than there are children under the age of 15<sup>6</sup>. In addition, in the 1970s, there were about 7 people aged 20–64 for each senior over 65; that proportion dropped to 4 in recent years and is projected to decline to 2 in the 2030s.

## *Population aging is experienced differently across Canada*

Demographic changes in Canada mask some very different trends from one region to another. Indeed, the pace of population aging is not uniform across Canada; it is more rapid in Eastern Canada and slower among the Prairie provinces and territories.

In Atlantic Canada, more than one in three people is 55 and over, while that proportion drops below one in four in Alberta (Figure 1). Newfoundland and Labrador also had the highest median age (i.e. the age that divides the population in half) in 2016 (45.6 years), while Alberta had a median age of almost 10 years younger (36.3 years). The youngest population in Canada is in Nunavut, due to higher fertility rates and lower life expectancies.

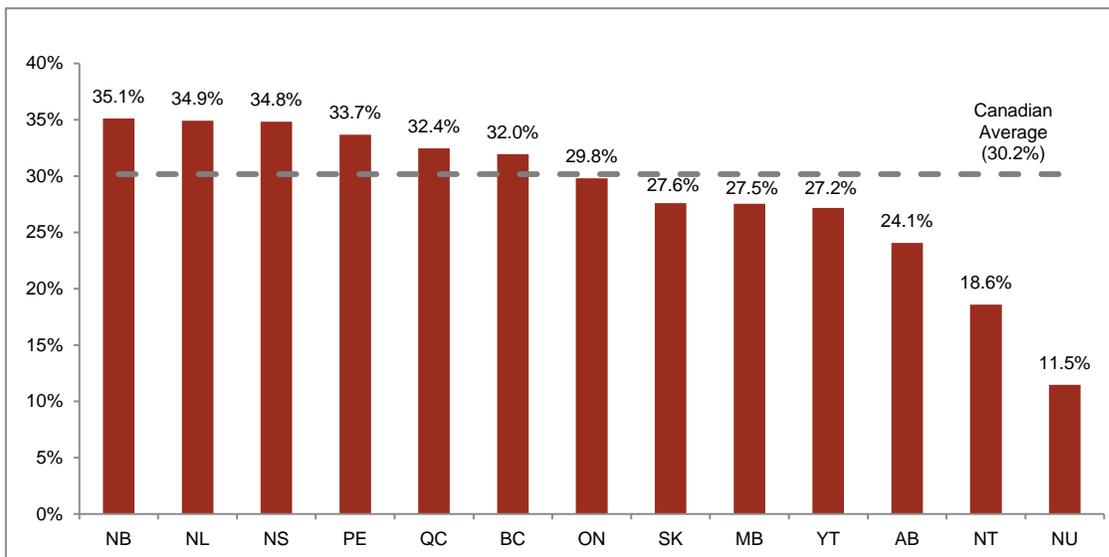
Not only do the Atlantic provinces have older populations, but those populations have aged more rapidly in the past 30 years. These trends are attributable to regional differences in demographic behaviours, in particular the change over time in fertility and substantial losses to interprovincial migration. Furthermore, projections show that Atlantic provinces will continue to age at a faster pace than the rest of Canada<sup>7</sup>.

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 051-0001.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 051-0001.

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada (Catalogue no. 91-520-X) projects that the median age in Newfoundland and Labrador will reach 53.3 years in 2038, an increase of 8 years from 2016. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia will also have a median age of about 50 years by 2038. As a comparison, Alberta's median age is expected to increase by only 3.4 years from 2016 to 2038 and should thus remain below 40 years.

**Figure 1 - Share of older individuals (55+) in total population, by province, Canada, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 051-0001.

## 1.2. Challenges and Opportunities of an Aging Population

As more people retire and proportionally fewer youth enter the labour market, an aging population in Canada has and is expected to have direct implications for labour markets. Everything else being equal, an aging population will reduce Canada's labour input growth (i.e. total hours worked in the economy) and, therefore, economic growth.

Furthermore, while widespread labour shortages are not expected over the next five to 10 years, skill shortages are increasingly likely in certain occupations and sectors of the economy due to an insufficient number of workers with required skill sets to replace those who will be retiring. A lack of skilled labour may result in businesses delaying or cancelling new projects or in hiring employees that are less of a "good fit." This could hamper economic growth and hurt Canada's competitiveness.

In the past, economic growth was mainly driven by large cohorts of youth entering the labour market. However, with population aging, to maintain its pace of improvement in living standards, Canada will have to rely more heavily on productivity growth and increased labour force participation of all working-age Canadians, particularly older Canadians and groups that are underrepresented in the labour market, such as recent immigrants<sup>8</sup>, Indigenous people and people with disabilities.

As the population age structure changes, it will likely have some corresponding impacts on public finances. The expenditure growth of social programs tends to fall in line with economic growth, and with an aging population, public expenditures like health and pensions will likely experience upward trends.<sup>9</sup>

Population aging is often presented as a burden. The potential detrimental impacts on the economy and public finance can overshadow the significant societal contributions of older individuals and the opportunities which may arise from the changing demographic

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada defines recent immigrants as those who settled in Canada less than five years ago.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that most seniors and retirees continue to pay taxes on their retirement income (although in most cases at lower levels than when they were working), thus contributing to the funding of public services and benefits.

structure. Employers can build on the networks, knowledge and experience of older workers, thereby adding value to their organization. Older individuals also make a large contribution to Canadian society both through caregiving and in the volunteer sector; they are a key resource for families and friends, as well as for charitable and not-for-profit organizations.

Concerns are sometimes raised that increasing the workforce participation of older individuals will reduce entry-level job opportunities for younger workers. This is the “lump of labour fallacy”—that the number of jobs available in the economy is fixed—when in reality, it is variable. According to Canadian and international literature, there is no evidence that the increasing presence of older individuals in the labour market has reduced job opportunities for young workers.

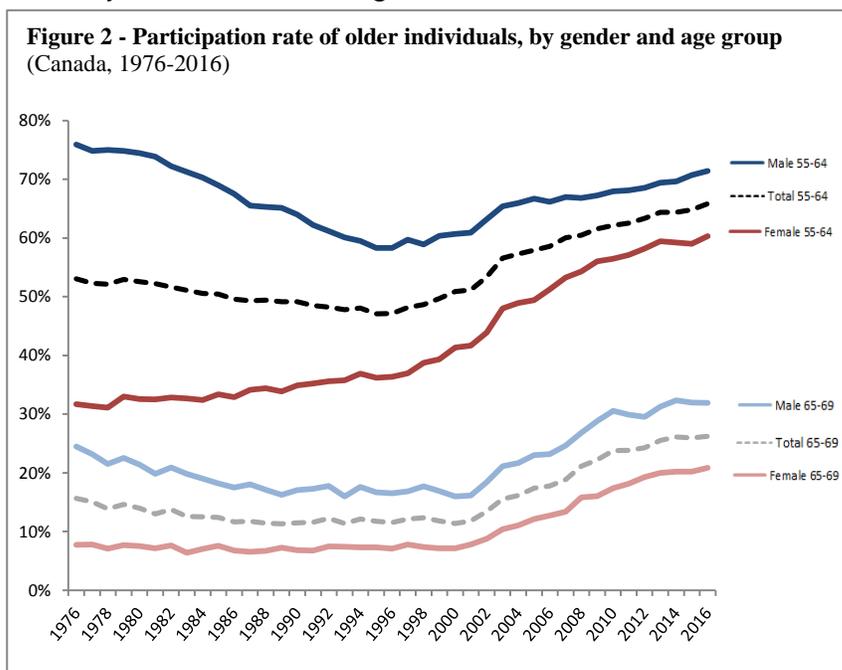
### 1.3. Key Trends for Older Workers

As mentioned in Section 1.1, workforce growth is slowing because of lower fertility rates. However, the cohort effect is not the only driver of change in the labour market. The work and retirement patterns of older individuals (defined in this section as those aged 55 and over) have undergone major changes during the past two decades that have mitigated the impact of lower fertility rates. Older Canadians are now more likely to work than before and are also more likely to retire at later ages.

#### Higher participation rates

Older Canadians have experienced large gains in labour force participation since the mid-1990s. For example, the participation rate<sup>10</sup> of those aged 55–64 grew from a low point of 47.1 percent in 1996 to a high of 65.8 percent in 2016 (Figure 2).

Trends by gender show slightly different stories. Both genders experienced an increase in participation rates over the past two decades, but the increase has been much higher among older women than older men. The



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, CANSIM Table 282-0001.  
Note: Labour force statistics by detailed age group are not available for the Territories.

<sup>10</sup> The participation rate is the number of employed and unemployed individuals divided by the total population in a given age group. In other words, it provides an estimation of the proportion of individuals who work or are available to work among people in a specific age group.

participation rate of men aged 55–64 is still lower today than it was 40 years ago, due to a significant decline that occurred from the 1970s to the mid-1990s.

Participation rates and trends also vary by province. In 2016, all provinces west of Quebec had higher participation rates among people aged 55–64 than Quebec and Atlantic Canada (with the exception of Prince Edward Island); Alberta had the highest rate (72.2 percent), while Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest (57.3 percent)<sup>11</sup>. However, it is important to note that Quebec and the Atlantic provinces have been closing the gap with the other provinces over the past 20 years, with higher increases in participation rates of older individuals.

Many factors can explain the recent increase in labour force participation of older individuals, including: improved health and life expectancy; relatively fewer physically demanding jobs; later labour force entry because of more years in school; higher levels of education; cultural shift (e.g. valuing work more than retirement); the need for social interaction and to keep busy; greater need to work for financial reasons (fewer private pension plans, lower savings rates and lower returns on savings, fear of outliving retirement savings); changes to the retirement income system (additional flexibility that facilitates working while receiving retirement benefits); and a tightening of the labour market, resulting in businesses being more likely to hire and retain older individuals (National Seniors Council, 2011; Carrière et al., 2015).

Despite record-high participation rates, there is still room to increase the labour market participation of older Canadians, as many countries continue to outperform Canada. For example, Canada's participation rate of people aged 55–64 (64.8 percent) ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in OECD in 2015, and lagged behind other countries like Sweden (78.9 percent), Japan (72.2 percent), and Germany (69.4 percent).

### *Working longer*

The increase in labour force participation among older Canadians is largely attributable to the fact that many are working longer as they delay retirement or return to work after retirement. The average age of retirement<sup>12</sup> increased by almost three years from the low point of 1998 (from 60.9 years to 63.6 years in 2016), although it still remains below the levels of the 1970s and 1980s (about 65 years in the late 1970s). In addition, today's older individuals are more likely to return to work following retirement and to remain employed thereafter (Uriarte-Landa et al, 2015). Overall, researchers (Carrière and Galarneau, 2011) estimated that the working-life expectancy of workers aged 50 increased by 3.5 years from the mid-1990s to 2008 – in the mid-90s, a 50-year-old could expect to work another 12.5 years, compared to another 16 years in 2008.

## **1.4. Challenges Faced by Older Workers**

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<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, CANSIM Table 282-0001

<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey asks people who are not working and who left their last job within the year prior to being surveyed, why they left this job. One of the response categories is "retired." The average or mean retirement age is calculated from this variable. For a complete description of who is represented and how the age is calculated, refer to the article *Measuring retirement age in Perspectives on Labour and Income*, catalogue number 75-001-XPE, summer 1997 issue.

Many older Canadians struggle to stay in the labour market or re-enter the workforce. For instance, after losing a job, many older adults have difficulty finding a new one. In 2016, the average unemployment spell for people 55 and over was 28.8 weeks, compared to 21.2 weeks for people 25–54<sup>13</sup>. Also, when unemployed older Canadians do find another job, they are more likely to suffer significant wage losses. In 2008, almost half of workers aged 50–75 who returned to work after displacement earned at least 25 percent less than at their previous job (Statistics Canada, 2008).

There are also several barriers to employment that could prevent older workers from remaining employed or that could push them to retire. Based on findings from previous consultations and reports (Expert Panel on Older Workers, 2007; Public Policy Forum, 2011; National Seniors Council, 2011 and 2013; Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2011; Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors, 2012), this section explores the specific challenges that older workers are likely to face, which are:

- ageism;
- lack of education and access to training;
- difficulty in finding and applying for jobs;
- health issues, work-life balance issues, and lack of workplace accommodations; and
- disincentives or lack of incentives to work in the retirement income system.

### *Ageism*

Ageism is prejudice and discrimination based on age that often results from myths and stereotypes that do not reflect the reality of aging and older individuals. It prevents people from recognizing the valuable contributions of older individuals and limits the choices and opportunities for older individuals to actively participate in society.

Ageism can be expressed through hiring practices when employers may have a bias or even consciously give preference to the hiring of younger workers. Some employers may believe that older workers are less productive, have an increased risk of workplace accident or illness, or are more resistant to changes. Ageism can also be felt in the workplace through preferential treatment of younger workers or ageist remarks. Older workers can also perpetrate ageism through self-denigration.

In 2008, 15 percent of older displaced workers indicated that their largest barrier to re-employment was an “age barrier” (Statistics Canada, 2008). Moreover, in 2012, a national survey found that 20 percent of seniors aged 66 years and older experienced age discrimination from an employer (Revera, 2012)<sup>14</sup>. Research suggests it is harder for older women than older men to find jobs.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Cansim Table 282-0047.

<sup>14</sup> The *Revera Report on Ageism* is based on a survey of 1,501 Canadians, collected from Leger Marketing’s online panel. At 95% confidence level, the sample as a whole has a margin of error of +/-2.5%. The sample yields responses only from individuals.

<sup>15</sup> Neumark, D., Burn, I., & Button, P. (2015). *Is it harder for older workers to find jobs? New and improved evidence from a field experiment* (No. w21669). National Bureau of Economic Research.

### *Lack of education and access to training*

Education is positively correlated with good labour market outcomes (higher employment rates, higher-paying jobs, lower risk of labour force disruption and unemployment). However, older individuals still have lower educational attainment than younger cohorts; in 2016, only 22 percent of people aged 55–64 had a university degree (bachelor or above), compared to 33 percent of the core-age group (25-54 years)<sup>16</sup>.

Even when older workers have post-secondary education, their formal credentials may no longer be fully recognized or meet current standards for employment in a given firm or sector. In some cases, workers are also challenged by new job requirements that oblige them to have diplomas or certifications that did not exist when they were in school.

Some workers and employers are reluctant to make significant training investments, given the late stage of career. Younger employees are more likely to be provided with training, as employers see them as a better investment because they could work longer for their organization ([OECD 2006](#); [Cully et al. 2000](#)). Sometimes even the workers themselves may be unwilling to invest time and money in training activities. In the long run, this can be detrimental to them, since training helps develop the knowledge and competencies that maintain their productivity and employability.

### *Difficulty in finding and applying for jobs*

For many older workers, a lack of access to information about employment opportunities that match their skill sets or that offer appropriate workplace accommodations can be a barrier to actively participating in the labour market. Consultations with employers and older workers showed that they would both welcome supports that would facilitate a match between employers and older workers (ESDC, 2011). That said, some older individuals lack the computer skills required to conduct a job search in today's world, while others have either limited or no experience in searching for a job.

In some cases, older individuals lack self-confidence or motivation to find a new job. Some believe that employers would not see value in them because of their age, while others are not willing to undertake new ventures at an older age, like a new job, training, education, or self-employment.

Geographic mobility, both within and across provinces, is also lower among older workers. Some older workers may be unwilling to relocate, or to invest in new employment opportunities. This reluctance can stem from a number of factors, including significant attachment to the community, strong family ties, home ownership, and a feeling of safety and security. For others, moving to obtain new employment is

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<sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, CANSIM Table 282-0004.

financially unfeasible, especially if they have to sell their home in a depressed area, buy at a much higher price in a more economically viable community, and take a job that may be at lower earnings.

#### *Health issues, work-life balance issues, and lack of workplace accommodations*

Health issues can have a significant effect on labour market participation and retirement decisions and can represent a major barrier to remaining in the workforce for a growing number of older workers. According to the Survey of Older Workers, 69 percent of those unable to work reported that they would go back to work if their health improved (Statistics Canada, 2008). In addition, people with disabilities are less likely to be employed (Statistics Canada, 2012). As people get older, the likelihood of having a disability or chronic illness increases.

An ailing spouse or parent may also affect retirement plans, forcing an earlier labour force withdrawal than anticipated to become a caregiver. Indeed, many older individuals are increasingly responsible for informal caregiving duties, sometimes impacting work commitments. In 2012, more than one-third of the Canadian workforce was providing informal care to a family member or friend: about 1.6 million caregivers took leave from work; nearly 600,000 reduced their work hours; 160,000 turned down paid employment; and 390,000 had quit their jobs to provide care. Most caregivers are aged 45 and over, and women are more likely to provide longer hours of care per week (Employer Panel for Caregivers, 2015).

Finally, some older workers would be willing to work longer if flexible work arrangements (e.g. flexible work hours, part-time work, telework) and physical accommodations (e.g. ergonomic work stations, transition to less physically demanding jobs) were available. This would help address the challenges of personal health issues and caregiving responsibilities, as well as help keep in the workforce those who prefer such arrangements. Unfortunately, many employers are not willing to implement, or do not have the resources available to implement, such workplace measures.

#### *Disincentives or lack of incentives to work in the retirement income system*

Certain features of the retirement income system and tax rules may create a disincentive for some older workers to stay in the labour market. However, much has been done in Canada in recent years to remove those disincentives or increase the incentives to work. For example, in 2008, the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) earnings exemption was increased to \$3,500 to remove disincentives to work for seniors. Starting in 2013, Canadians were offered the option to defer take-up of their Old Age Security (OAS) pension beyond age 65 and receive a higher monthly pension in the future. A series of changes were made to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) between 2011 and 2016 to provide greater flexibility for older workers; the CPP now allows individuals to start receiving the retirement pension before age 65 without a requirement to stop working, and the new post-retirement benefit allows working recipients of the CPP under age 70 to continue participating in the Plan and further

increase their future pension benefits. That said, many older individuals may not be fully aware of the flexibility in Canada's retirement income system.

Nevertheless, in some circumstances, provisions of the retirement income system may encourage some older workers to retire or reduce their working hours. For example, some jurisdictions and private pension plans do not allow phased retirement (i.e. receiving pension benefits while continuing employment), and many older individuals face high effective marginal tax rates due to provisions in public pensions (e.g. OAS recovery tax, GIS clawback).

## 2. International and Pan-Canadian Initiatives

From December 2016 until May 2017, Employment and Social Development Canada conducted extensive research on policies and programs both in Canada and abroad (focusing on countries similar to Canada, like European countries, Australia and the United States) that sought to increase the labour force participation of older individuals, even if the initiatives were no longer in operation. It is important to note that only initiatives that specifically mentioned older/mature workers were included into the research. This means that more general employment initiatives (e.g. employment centres that assist any unemployed individual find a job) were excluded. Older individuals were defined as people aged 45 and over.

In addition to the research conducted, Employment and Social Development Canada received input from most of the provincial/territorial governments and from stakeholders in Canada. These stakeholders—employers, academics, advocacy and non-governmental organizations—were identified by the provincial/territorial governments or were chosen based on previous Employment and Social Development Canada consultation work. The research and input were then reviewed by key federal, provincial and territorial officials.

Based on the results of the international and pan-Canadian reviews, all initiatives were grouped into the following eight categories:

1. Awareness Initiatives
2. Financial Incentives
3. Health and Safety
4. Employment Legislation
5. Retirement Income System
6. Skills Development
7. Workplace Accommodations
8. Employment Services

Chapter 2 is divided accordingly into eight sections that each highlight a different type of initiative. Every section begins with a description of the type of initiative then broadly summarizes its pan-Canadian trends and international practices.

It is important to note that Chapter 2 does not focus on best practices but on the general synthesis of pan-Canadian and international practices that promote, support or intend to increase the labour force participation of older workers. Chapter 3 presents the most promising initiatives for Canadian older workers.

## 2.1. Awareness Initiatives

### *Description*

Awareness initiatives are used to inform employees, employers, unions, employee and employer associations, and general society about the advantages of recruiting and retaining older workers. They can also help older workers themselves realize the strengths and potential they bring to their own jobs. Most importantly, awareness initiatives combat ageism, which is a significant barrier to older workers' workplace advancement and labour force participation. Awareness initiatives take the forms of media or social media campaigns, dialogue with social partners (employers and unions), expert panels, research/policy centres, informational websites, "age-management best practice" company prizes, and targeted information to employers.

### *Canada*

The Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, funded numerous projects through the Older Workers Pilot Projects Initiative (OWPPI) from 2003 to 2006, including a number of awareness initiatives that operated predominantly in Quebec and in Prince Edward Island. While it is difficult to measure the employment impact of awareness initiatives, surveys of these OWPPI projects found they successfully raised employers' awareness of the many positive attributes of older workers.

Some provinces and territories have spearheaded awareness initiatives for older workers. In 2011, the Government of Alberta launched its [\*Action Plan for Engaging the Mature Worker\*](#), which aims to engage employers, support mature workers, promote active aging and foster a policy environment geared towards improving mature worker participation in the labour force. Since then, the Alberta government has created several mature worker resources, including a human resource management guide series for employers (e.g. *A Guide to Midlife Career Moves*), tip sheets, and a publication for career counsellors. In 2017, the Government of Nova Scotia launched [\*SHIFT: Nova's Action Plan for an Aging Population\*](#), its comprehensive plan on the aging population that calls for specific actions to ensure that older individuals can stay connected and involved in the social, economic and cultural activity of the province. The British Columbia government has developed the [\*WorkBC Employer's Tool Kit\*](#), which contains resources to help businesses attract, retain, and engage older employees.

## *International*

Governments have spent considerable effort and money developing nation-wide awareness initiatives that promote the benefits of older workers to employers. For example, since 2001, the United Kingdom's Department of Work and Pensions has run the Age Positive campaign and works directly with employers to spread best practices about managing an age-diverse workforce and its business benefits. Since November 2011, Age Positive resources have been consolidated into a [central website](#) and include an employer toolkit for managers of older workers, other guidance documents on employing and supporting older workers, research and statistical publications on age and employment, and an Age Positive logo for employers to publicly signal that they champion older workers. The European Union, Finland, Germany, Spain, Denmark and New Zealand have all implemented similar awareness campaigns.

In Norway, the government appointed the tripartite [Centre for Senior Policy](#) in 2001 to coordinate a five-year National Initiative on Older Workers that promoted awareness of the benefits of hiring older employees. Since then, the Centre for Senior Policy has helped to mobilize social partners' organizations, run campaigns, research and development projects, and training courses. According to some evaluations, the Centre for Senior Policy was a driving force in putting seniors' policy on the national media's agenda and improving the general population's perceptions of older people (Eurofound, 2013).

The governments of Norway and of Missouri and Vermont in the United States have also sponsored "employer best practices towards older worker" awards and mature employee award contests. These contests raise awareness of the advantages of hiring older workers and encourage employers to implement initiatives that better accommodate older workers.

## **2.2. Financial Incentives**

### *Description*

Ageism by the employer or employee constitutes a major barrier that older workers face in the labour market. Employers may be less likely to recruit older individuals, falsely assuming them to be inefficient workers, and therefore unwilling to bear their hiring costs. Financial incentives can be an effective tool to mitigate the hiring costs for employers who would otherwise be hesitant to hire older workers.

Financial incentives can be used to influence both the supply and demand of older workers. They can take the form of earning supplements, wage subsidies, tax credits, hiring grants, or low-cost loans to either employees or employers. Earnings supplements and wage subsidies are typically temporary measures that range from six to 12 months; tax credits, hiring grants and low-cost loans can be one-time interventions to employees or employers.

Some literature suggests that while financial incentives boost employment of the targeted group, they may cause employers to hire less from the general workforce, ultimately reducing the net gain in overall employment (Hujer et al., 2002; Bell et al., 1999; Pilippon et al., 2000). However, this may be due to improperly designed financial incentives that provide an overgenerous subsidy amount to employers. Therefore, the policy design of the financial incentive is essential to its success.

### *Canada*

Both Quebec and Ontario have used financial incentives to encourage the labour force participation of older individuals.

The Government of Quebec offers a [wage subsidy](#) to employers who hire unemployed workers aged 55 and over (or 50 and over who are last-resort financial assistance recipients), and a [tax credit](#) targeted to low- and mid-income workers aged 63 and over. From 2009 to 2013, the Government of Quebec also offered the Income Support Program for Older Workers, which provided financial assistance to older workers who were dismissed or laid off because of the economic situation.

The Government of Ontario launched the [Rate Drop Rebate](#) pilot program in 2016 that provides discounted rates on financial products to owners of small and medium-sized businesses when they commit to hiring people facing barriers to employment, such as older workers. The Government of Ontario's [Late Career Nurse Initiative](#) subsidizes the salaries of nurses who are 55 or older to spend a portion of their work time in less physically demanding nursing roles (e.g. mentoring younger nurses). Public and private organizations that employ late-career nurses are eligible for funding through an annual application process.

### *International*

Most European countries, the United States, Japan, South Korea, Argentina and Australia have implemented financial incentives for employers who hire older workers. Hiring and wage subsidies are prevalent in Austria, the United States, France, Germany, Japan and Finland. Austria's Come Back program uses unemployment insurance funds to provide employers with hiring subsidies for workers aged 45 and over. Several evaluations have noted positive effects of the Come Back program, and one audit found that in roughly 65 percent of cases, employers retained their employees even after the subsidy had ended (European Commission, 2012). Japan has made significant investments into wage subsidies of part-time older workers. For example, the Silver Human Resource Centers in Japan coordinate the employment of part-time workers aged 60 and over with local employers. Australia's [Experience+ Corporate Champions](#) project offers funding to employers to improve their human resources practices towards recruiting and retaining older workers, with the help of industry experts.

Financial incentives like wage bonuses, tax credits, and income support are geared towards maintaining or growing the demand and supply of older workers in the labour market. In 2007, Sweden introduced a payroll tax credit for companies that hired workers older than 65 (the customary pension age). The credit reduced their payroll tax rate by about 16 percent, to a maximum of SEK 30,000 (around \$4,500 CAD) annually. The tax credit successfully increased employment rates for those aged 65 and over by 1.5 percentage points (Laun, 2012). In Belgium, since 2009, unemployed people aged 50 and over who return to work are eligible to receive a wage bonus paid fully by the government. The bonus, amounting to €194 (around \$288 CAD) per month, is typically paid for one year, but can be extended up to the end of a person's working life if they have 20 years of job experience. Otherwise, its payment is limited to three years and the amount decreases from one year to the next. Belgium's Professional Experience Fund disburses grants (an average of €17,716 or \$24,500 CAD per grant in 2010) for company projects designed to improve working conditions for workers aged 45 and over.

Across Europe, older people, and in particular retirees, have less access to credit (European Microfinance Network, 2012). European countries provide financial support in the form of non-traditional business loans to older individuals who wish to be, or are, self-employed but often have limited access to borrowing money through formal banking channels. Micro-loans are loans given in small amounts, normally with low interest rates, to borrowers who lack adequate or verifiable credit history. Micro-financing to older self-employed individuals is available in France, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland, Greece and Italy.

### **2.3. Health and Safety**

#### *Description*

As workers age, their likelihood of developing physical and mental illnesses or injuries heightens, raising the importance of health and safety in the workplace. This is especially true for older workers in more physically demanding positions (e.g. trades, health care). Health conditions of older individuals are highly linked to their labour force participation. In 2016, illness or disability was the most reported reason by Canadians aged 55 and over for leaving a job in the previous year.

Health and safety initiatives can be implemented through various policy tools, including legislation, awareness campaigns, healthcare services or training, and return to work programs.

## *Canada*

In Canada, occupational health and safety legislation is enacted and enforced by provinces, territories and the federal government, which outline the general rights and responsibilities of the employer, the supervisor and the worker. All jurisdictions generally have the same basic elements like health and safety laws, workplace resolution bodies, and workers' compensation boards with return to work programs. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety is a federal department corporation, governed by a tripartite Council—representing government, employers and labour—that provides voluntary information, training, education, management systems and solutions that support health, safety and wellness programs across Canada. A section of their website is designated for [aging workers](#) and offers resources for organizations, including fact sheets, courses, posters, podcasts, promotional items and webinars. Several provinces have launched strategies for seniors and older workers that equally emphasize the importance of active aging and healthy living, including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Ontario and Alberta.

## *International*

In order to deal with the increasing number of employees facing health challenges, training programs for assessing and managing health and safety risks have been utilized in Denmark, Finland, the United States and Australia. Finland's training program was part of the *Masto Project* that ran from 2008 to 2011 and was implemented through large-scale workshops for employers on how to use early intervention schemes for all age groups at risk of mental illness. Denmark's [Prevention Fund](#) also taught how to identify health and safety risks among all age groups, but it was implemented on a smaller scale, targeting industries with high attrition and burnout rates. Denmark's program started in 2012 and used 'prevention self-help kits' which consisted of informational and dialogue tools for managers and employees. [Australia's Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012–2022](#) produced educational resources for employers, workers, and safety committees to raise awareness about the health and safety needs of older workers.

Austria, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have created government programs designed to provide financial or consultative assistance to enable people to return to work post-illness. Consultative services can either be medical or about lifestyle, and can be used to assess the readiness and ability of an individual to return to work. For example, Austria's return to work program, Fit2work, provides free advisory services like medical exams, advice on training, assessment of current work and health situations, as well as individual coaching. One evaluation found that the Fit2work program had a positive outcome, as roughly 40 percent of the programs' unemployed clients re-entered the labour market (Jagsch, 2015). Sweden's Public Employment Service's rehabilitation chain is similar to the Fit2work program, but instead the government's employment agency provides assessment services to determine if an employee can handle their current work, if task modification is available at their current job, and if other employment opportunities are available.

These actions are taken over the course of a year to allow as much time as possible for a person to heal and, if health does not improve, workers are granted a disability pension and are removed from the workforce permanently. In addition to a return to work program, Sweden also used financial incentives to target those who started collecting disability pension benefits prior to 2008 by giving them 45,000 SEK (around \$6,800 CAD) per year for work-related training, transportation and living costs if they returned to work.

Some private sector companies have begun to offer occupational health services associated with assisting older workers that comprise ergonomic improvements, subsidized fitness, lifestyle advice, mental health counselling, and consultations with medical experts to help identify supports needed to maintain productivity. Ergonomic improvements at Safematic Ltd, a Finnish manufacturing company, resulted in reduced sick days and recognition that the firm had advanced attitudes towards the well-being of its workers (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 1998).

## 2.4. Employment Legislation

### *Description*

Older workers face some unique barriers in the labour force, among them age discrimination. According to a 2012 survey commissioned by Ceridian and the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, roughly 40 percent of older workers believe that they had fewer workplace opportunities due to their age and 17 percent said they suffered from age discrimination in their place of work. Legislation can be a useful policy tool for combatting age discrimination and promoting the labour force participation of older individuals.

### *Canada*

Legislation can be complemented with regulations, voluntary codes of practice, affirmative action programs or collective agreements. In Canada, provincial and territorial employment laws apply to about 90 percent of the Canadian workforce, and the remaining 10 percent are federally regulated (e.g. inter-provincial or international transportation, postal service, banking). Provinces and territories establish and enforce their own employment and human rights standards and the federal government enacted and upholds the *Canada Labour Code* and the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. Every jurisdiction has a human rights statute which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age. Moreover, provisions prohibiting age discrimination are grounded in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which is part of Canada's Constitution and applies to all jurisdictions and governmental entities.

As a result of the changing nature of work, the federal government and several provinces have reviewed, or are reviewing their employment legislation to ensure that it meets the current realities of work. The 2017 federal budget proposed amendments to the *Canada Labour Code* to give federally regulated employees the right to request

more flexible work arrangements, such as flexible start and finish times, the ability to work from home, and new unpaid leaves to help them manage family responsibilities. In June 2017, the Government of Ontario introduced Bill 148, which proposed comprehensive changes to Ontario's *Employment Standards Act, 2000* and the *Labour Relations Act, 1995* which would increase the minimum wage, ensure part-time, temporary, casual and seasonal workers doing the same job as full-time workers are paid the same hourly wage, ensure that all workers are entitled to 10 personal emergency leave days (including two paid ones), and step up enforcement of employment laws, all of which could help attract or retain older workers.

### *International*

Many countries have legislation which explicitly forbids age discrimination in employment, whether in hiring, training, promotion, or in tasks performed. Some countries have also implemented legislation to protect older workers in situations of layoffs. In Belgium, since 2013, all companies with 20 or more employees must include in their collective agreements plans of action for the employment of individuals aged 45 or older. The plan may contain a variety of obligations, such as the recruitment of a number of older employees, development of career plans and career management, internal job mobility, and task rotation. In Sweden and Latvia, legislation requires that workers with less seniority (who are usually not older workers) be laid off first when collective dismissals occur. In Germany and Belgium, older workers have priority for new job opportunities with the same employer if it resumes hiring following a mass layoff. South Korea has affirmative action legislation identifying 77 occupations for which priority in hiring is specifically designated for older workers. Businesses in South Korea are also required to ensure that at least three percent of their workers are aged 55 and over. These initiatives reduce the probability of older workers being laid off, or increase their chances of being re-hired if they are laid off.

However, it is important to note that protective legislation for older workers may sometimes lead to adverse consequences. It may impair employers' ability to retain their most valuable workers, who are not necessarily older workers, following layoffs. Some may question why priority is given to older workers and not to members of other groups who also experience labour market difficulties, such as women, youth, people with disabilities, recent immigrants, Indigenous people or visible minorities. Also, protective legislation could achieve the opposite effect and actually discourage firms from hiring older workers. For example, from 1987 to 2008, France had the Delalande tax that required employers who laid off employees over the age of 50 to pay a tax to the unemployment insurance system, proportional to the worker's gross wages. The tax's impact on layoffs was unclear, but it reduced an older worker's chances of being hired by 25 percent (Behaghel, Crépon & Sédillot, 2005).

## 2.5. Retirement Income System

### *Description*

The retirement income system can impact retirement decisions and whether or not older workers remain in or exit the labour force. People's individual choices in the labour market can vary according to the nature of the retirement income system's provisions and their own financial situation.

### *Canada*

The Canadian retirement income system is based on three pillars: Old Age Security (OAS)/Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), Canada Pension Plan (CPP)/Quebec Pension Plan (QPP), and private savings and retirement pensions. The OAS program is the first pillar of the retirement income system and its objective is to ensure a minimum income to seniors and to mitigate income disruptions in retirement. It is a quasi-universal, non-contributory, residence-based program financed through general tax revenues, and includes the OAS pension, the GIS for low-income seniors, and Allowances for their low-income spouses/common-law partners, or for low-income survivors. The CPP/QPP is the second pillar of Canada's retirement income system and provides contributors and their families with partial replacement of earnings in the case of retirement, disability or death. The third pillar of the retirement income system is voluntary employer and union-sponsored pension and retirement plans, and personal savings (including registered retirement savings plans and tax-free savings accounts). Over the past decade, the federal government, in collaboration with provinces and territories, has taken significant action towards revising the retirement income system to accommodate longer working lives and gradual transitions from employment into retirement.

The CPP was reformed between 2011 and 2016 to provide greater flexibility for older workers, especially those who seek to combine income from employment and pensions. Actuarial adjustments were rebalanced so that individuals who started the retirement pension early (i.e. between ages 60 and 64) faced larger reductions in the pension amount, while those who started it later (i.e. after age 65, up to age 70) received larger increases.<sup>17</sup> The work cessation test was also eliminated to allow workers to start taking their retirement pension as early as age 60 without having to stop working or reduce their earnings. In addition, the post-retirement benefit was created to allow working recipients of the retirement pension to continue making CPP contributions to further increase their retirement income.

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<sup>17</sup>The pension is now permanently reduced by 0.6% for each month it is received before age 65 and permanently increased by 0.7% for each month after age 65 that a contributor delays receiving it. This means that a pension taken at age 60 is 36% smaller than it would have been if taken at age 65, while a pension taken at age 70 is 42% larger than it would have been if taken at age 65. These actuarial factors are neutral to the plan (but not necessarily neutral to each individual).

In 2016, the federal government and provinces/territories agreed to enhance the earnings replacement provided by the CPP. In 2019, the CPP enhancement will begin to be phased in, eventually replacing one third of a worker's career average earnings, up from one quarter. The maximum earnings covered by the CPP will also gradually increase by 14 percent by 2025. Workers will have to contribute for a full 40 years to receive the full enhancement. Those contributing for less time, such as older workers, will receive partial benefits from the enhancement.

Changes have also been made to the OAS/GIS program to provide more flexibility and choice; since 2013, individuals can defer receiving their OAS pension for up to five years, in exchange for a higher monthly amount. Furthermore, in 2008, the GIS earnings exemption was increased from \$500 to \$3,500 per year, allowing low-income seniors who work to retain more of their GIS benefits before the benefit reduction applies.

Tax rules were changed to allow phased retirement arrangements under certain private workplace pensions, allowing individuals to receive a partial pension while at the same time continuing to accrue further pension benefits under their employer pension plan.

In 2011, the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and *Canada Labour Code* were amended to eliminate mandatory retirement for federally regulated employees in order to ensure that older Canadians who make the choice to continue working longer are able to do so.

### *International*

Most European countries have been incrementally increasing the age at which people can access public retirement pensions, primarily to ensure financial sustainability. Finland, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Slovakia have taken action towards linking pensions and life expectancy in their retirement income system. Partial retirement schemes<sup>18</sup> are prevalent in over half of the European Union Member States, as well as in several other countries around the world. Many countries have implemented actuarial adjustments, which mean reducing pension benefits for early retirement and/or increasing pension benefits for late retirement. For example, in Denmark, retirement pensions can be postponed for up to 10 years, and pension benefits increase based on an accrual principle for each year an older person eligible for statutory old age pension has remained in the labour market.

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<sup>18</sup> Partial retirement schemes substitute part of the income loss due to reduced working hours with a partial pension or benefits. The (partial) compensation of wage loss due to reduction of hours can be funded by public funds, employer contributions or by employees themselves through saving schemes or reductions in their own future pension entitlements.

Some governments even offer financial incentives to workers who are reaching the state pension age. In the United Kingdom, once the state pension age has been reached, if a person carries on working and defers their pension, it increases the basic pension benefits by 10.4 percent for each year of deferral. As a result, one in 10 people who have reached the state pension age in the United Kingdom delay their retirement (Saga Investment Services, 2016). Since 2007, Belgium has awarded pension bonuses to workers who continue working beyond age 62 or beyond 44 years of contributions. The bonuses are progressive, with those who are working longer receiving more, ranging from €1.5 (\$2.10 CAD) per day up to €2.5 (\$3.50 CAD) per day.

Many governments have tightened the link between public pension benefits and contributions paid, and thus moved away from the traditional defined-benefit pension schemes. By doing so, governments are able to reduce the financial burden of state-sponsored pensions and simultaneously incentivize individuals to work longer. Sweden, Italy, Norway, Poland and Greece replaced their defined-benefit plans with notional<sup>19</sup> contribution schemes, while other countries reduced the size of their public defined-benefit plans and strengthened the role of private pensions, as in Mexico, Chile, Australia and Norway.

A handful of countries have revised other benefit programs to achieve similar objectives. Both Germany and the Netherlands tightened the eligibility requirements of their unemployment insurance benefit systems to prevent older workers from withdrawing the labour market early.

## **2.6. Skills Development**

### *Description*

In today's increasingly competitive and globalized economy, fueled by technological disruption, it is essential for all workers to constantly maintain and upgrade their skills. Some studies have shown that older workers are sometimes found to be slower, less effective, and more heterogeneous than younger people in learning new skills (Picchio, 2015). At the same time, given the frequently higher turnover rates for younger workers, employers' return on investment in training older workers can be equivalent to or even higher than for younger workers (Lowe, 2011). Furthermore, skills development increases the productivity of older workers and can have positive spillover effects to younger employees (Gobel and Zwick, 2010).

Skills development programs, in coordination with education providers, could be delivered through legislated training leave, online training modules, training vouchers to older workers, and subsidies or funds to employers.

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<sup>19</sup> A notional contribution plan is designed to mimic a defined-contribution plan, where the pension depends on contributions and investment returns. Pension contributions are tracked in accounts which earn a rate of return. However, in notional contribution plans, the return that contributions earn is a notional one, set by the government, not the product of investment returns in the markets.

## *Canada*

The Government of Canada's Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW), which ran from 2006 to 2017, was a federal–provincial/territorial cost-shared initiative designed to assist unemployed older workers living in vulnerable communities of up to 250,000 people with their reintegration into the workforce. TIOW largely provided skills development programs to older workers in each province and territory, according to regional needs. For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador and in the Northwest Territories, TIOW projects were mainly focused on developing workers' skills for the tourism industry. One TIOW program in Nunavut was designed to support local elders in enhancing the skills they needed to participate in the local heritage sector economy, and to restore local elders' traditional role as teachers of cultural knowledge, skills, and languages for younger generations.

Provinces and territories have flexibility through other labour market transfer agreements to design and deliver programming for older workers, including projects similar to the former TIOW. Depending on client eligibility, this could include older worker programming funded through the Labour Market Development Agreements, the Canada Job Fund Agreements and the Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities. The 2017 federal budget announced that new Workforce Development Agreements will consolidate and replace the Canada Job Fund and Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities and the former TIOW. The proposed Workforce Development Agreements will provide flexibility and additional funding for provinces and territories to design and deliver programs that meet their local labour market needs, including programming for older workers.

The 2017 federal budget also proposed investments to help more unemployed Canadians get the training they need to adapt to a changing labour market. Starting in fall 2018, the Government of Canada will make better use of existing flexibilities within the Employment Insurance program that allow claimants to pursue self-funded full-time training and maintain their Employment Insurance status. These flexibilities would mean that adults who lose a job after several years in the labour market could return to school to get the training they need to find a new job—without fear of losing their Employment Insurance benefits.

Canada's post-secondary system includes both public and private institutions. While all institutions have made efforts to redesign programs to be more flexible for people who are unable or unwilling to study full-time, private institutions have been particularly focused in this area, since much of their client base consists of individuals returning to school after time in the workforce.

The 2017 federal budget announced measures to help adults who wish to return to school after spending several years in the workforce, including expanding eligibility for federal loans and grants for part-time students and for students with dependents, as well as a three-year pilot project to test new approaches to make it easier for adult learners to qualify for Canada Student Loans and Grants. These measures build upon broad changes announced in the 2016 federal budget that included measures to help make post-secondary education more affordable, increasing grants for full-time students, and measures to ensure that students who work while studying or who own a home or other assets remain eligible for assistance.

The 2017 federal budget also acknowledged that new approaches are needed to address skills gaps and support learning throughout Canadians' working lives. The Government of Canada has committed \$225 million over four years, starting in 2018–19, to establish a new organization to support skills development and measurement by: identifying the skills needed by Canadian employers; exploring new and innovative approaches to skills development; and by sharing information to help inform future skills investments and programming. These efforts will be undertaken in partnership with provinces and territories, the private sector, educational institutions and not-for-profit organizations. They will be aligned with the streamlining of the labour market transfer agreements, and will boost skills training and employment supports for unemployed and underemployed Canadians, including older workers.

### *International*

Very few of the skills development programs for unemployed individuals focus on older workers. With respect to in-work training, the German *WeGebAU* program, established in 2006, aims to increase the participation of unskilled workers and workers older than 45 in the labour market. It exclusively targets companies with fewer than 250 employees, offering employees training vouchers that reimburse 75 percent of their training costs. (The remaining costs are borne by the employee/employer.) Finland's *Noste* program was implemented from 2003 to 2009 and emphasized outreach to train older workers, whether unemployed or employed, to help them find employment or inoculate them against future unemployment. In 2014, Poland established a National Training Fund that covered 80 percent of employer training costs for employees aged 45 and over. Companies that have fewer than 10 employees are eligible for 100 percent compensation.

Education providers can be valuable partners in training initiatives because they have a good understanding of the logistics of training and the needs of trainees and employers. In the United States, the [Plus 50 Initiative](#) is a project to benchmark and showcase the most current and innovative community college programs that engage learners aged 50 and over. Organized by the American Association of Community Colleges, the Plus 50 Initiative invests in community colleges to create or expand campus programs that engage the 50+ student population, with a focus on workforce training and preparing for new careers. Also in the United States, with support from the United States Department of Labor, the National Council on Aging worked with the Paraprofessional Healthcare

Institute to develop a direct care worker training curriculum to train older people as home care workers in several areas of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York City.

The home care program trained 424 older individuals, successfully placing 218 of them into unsubsidized employment as community health workers (Heidkamp, Mabe & DeGraaf, 2012).

The concept of lifelong learning is becoming increasingly popular, particularly among European governments and employers. From 2007 to 2013, the European Union ran its [Lifelong Learning Programme](#), which promoted lifelong learning activities among member states of the European Union and funded the expansion of adult learning institutions.

Many countries around the world have recognized that even skilled workers require information on career pathways. Countries including Norway, Great Britain and Austria have developed national skills strategies in collaboration with employers and industry to ensure that their citizens are receiving industry-specific labour market information.

## **2.7. Workplace Accommodations**

### *Description*

As workers age, their ability or willingness to perform certain tasks may change due to declining health, increasingly demanding work conditions, personal preferences (e.g. transition into retirement), or the need to take care of an ill relative. The Survey of Older Workers and consultations by Employment and Social Development Canada in 2009–10 found that around two-thirds of older workers were willing to work longer if flexible work arrangements (e.g. flexible work hours, telework, part-time work, extra holidays) and physical accommodations (e.g. ergonomic work stations) were available (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2011). Therefore, older worker initiatives based on workplace accommodations are crucial to workplace success.

Workplace accommodations consist of flexible work arrangements and modification of the work environment or tasks. While all workers in Canada may seek flexible work arrangement and physical accommodations on human rights grounds, the public and private sector have also implemented workplace accommodations through policies and programs made available to workers to maintain their engagement in the labour force. Most workplace accommodation initiatives seek to maintain and increase the supply of older workers in the labour market. Some employers have cited workplace accommodations as having larger administrative and decision-making burdens, but numerous studies and survey results have repeatedly demonstrated that the positive benefits of reduced employee turnover and higher employee satisfaction far outweigh the negative aspects (Danziger & Boots, 2008; Gobel & Thomas, 2010).

## *Canada*

The governments of [Saskatchewan](#), [British Columbia](#) and [Alberta](#) have published guides presenting solutions and strategies to employers for accommodating older workers. In Budget 2017, the federal government proposed amendments to the *Canada Labour Code* to give federally regulated workers the right to request flexible work arrangements from their employer, such as flexible start and finish times and the ability to work from home, in addition to new unpaid leaves to better balance work and family demands. In June 2017, the Government of Ontario proposed legislation that would set out several new scheduling provisions for employees, including the right to request schedule or location changes after three months of employment.

Despite some of the public initiatives, progress in workplace accommodations for older workers has been predominantly carried out by employers in Canada. A notable example is the [Bethany Care Society](#), a non-profit organization in Alberta, which first conducted an employee survey to identify the issues related to the turnover rates of their employees over the age of 50. In response to the survey's findings, the organization offered employees more flexible work arrangements and attractive benefit packages that included up to 18 sick days, three weeks of vacation, new mentorship opportunities, and a minimum of three leave/flex days per year (Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors Report, 2012). In order to retain its older housekeeping room attendants, the [Fairmont Waterfront Hotel](#) in Vancouver provided information sessions on wellness activities and modified work tools that made work easier for employees with arthritis.

Various stakeholders, including governments, advocacy and non-governmental organizations, have underlined the absence of workplace accommodations and expressed concern that many employers fail to recognize their benefits to employees.

## *International*

Governments around the world have experimented with various types of workplace accommodation initiatives. In many European countries, workplace accommodation initiatives are mandatory, encoded either through legislation or collective agreements. Since 2008, all Norwegian employees were given the statutory right to reduce working hours from the age of 62 years. In Belgium, private and public sector employees are legally entitled to take career interruptions, known as time credits (*ortijdskrediet*). The basic principle of this measure is that employees can stop working or reduce working time for a certain period of time and under certain conditions (e.g. working for at least one year for the employer), but their jobs remain protected during the leave. Employees are paid their usual salaries by the Belgian state, supplemented by the employer. For employees aged 50 and over, a one-fifth reduction in hours can be taken for five years, without any restriction. Evaluations of reduced working hours in workplaces have generally found higher motivation amongst older workers and fewer days lost to sick leave (Gobel & Thomas, 2010).

In the United Kingdom, since 2014, all employees have had the [legal right to flexible work](#) and since then, survey results have shown a proliferation of flexible work arrangements among British workplaces. One survey found that nearly three-quarters of employers surveyed had noted some or significant improvements in employee relations as a result of offering flexible work arrangements (Danziger & Boots, 2008).

Some international companies have recognized the benefits of mixed-age teams. For example, *Continental AG*, one of Germany's leading manufacturers of tires, with a workforce of about 20,000 people, introduced mixed-age teams in order to balance the specific strengths and weaknesses of older and younger employees. This ultimately increased the productivity of older employees as it reduced their stress and workload (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 1998). One academic study noted that mixed-age teams have spillover effects and lead to higher relative productivity of not only older, but also younger employees (Gobel & Thomas, 2010).

## **2.8. Employment Services**

### *Description*

Employment services offered by governments or organizations aim to enhance older workers' employability by providing them with proper training and tools to secure jobs or self-employment. They seek to increase human capital and efficiency in the labour market. Employment services initiatives include job matching programs, job matching websites, job search training workshops, mentorship programs, networking opportunities, guaranteed employment opportunities and recruitment programs specifically targeted to older workers. The effectiveness of employment services may depend on external factors such as the attitudes of employers and their level of awareness on hiring older people, so it may be preferable to combine them with awareness initiatives.

### *Canada*

In addition to skills development programs, the former Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW) also delivered funding for provinces and territories to provide older workers with employment services such as: résumé writing; interview techniques; employment counselling and job search techniques; peer mentoring; skills training; and support for self-employment. As of March 2017, TIOW was operating in every province and territory except for Nunavut. A 2017 evaluation of the initiative deemed it to be largely successful and clients were reportedly well satisfied with its services. Provinces and territories also provide employment services through other labour market transfer agreements (i.e. Labour Market Development Agreements, Canada Job Fund and Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities).

The 2017 federal budget announced that new Workforce Development Agreements will consolidate and replace the Canada Job Fund and Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities, and the former TIOW. The proposed Workforce Development Agreements will provide flexibility and additional funding for provinces and territories to design and deliver programs that meet their local labour market needs, including programming for older workers.

For some older workers with extensive experience, education, and skills, self-employment is an ideal form of employment. A sizable component of TIOW funding supported self-employment services like business plan development, business shadowing and mentorship. A TIOW evaluation found that since 2014, approximately 30 percent of participants (194 of 646) from British Columbia, Yukon and Nova Scotia took part in activities that provided them with assistance in starting a new business.

Additionally, since 2015, the national [Job Bank](#), which is maintained by Employment and Social Development Canada and used as the principal online job matching service by most provinces and territories, has introduced functionality targeted to help older workers find employment with employers that self-identify as open to hiring mature job seekers.

Employment services in Canada have been offered not only by governments but also by private businesses and non-profit organizations. [Boomers Work](#), [emploiretraite.ca](#) and Retired Worker are all online private recruitment organizations that specialize in connecting older workers and employers. Employers are able to find experienced individuals and older workers are able to find employers that offer flexible work arrangements. [ThirdQuarter](#) was a national non-profit organization specializing in online recruitment services for mature Canadian job seekers, but it is no longer in operation. The [Mature Worker Program](#) offered by Opportunities for Employment in Winnipeg and the [Kerby Centre](#) in Calgary run programs that offer networking opportunities, career advice, and job matching services to older workers.

### *International*

Many governments have engaged their older workers through various forms of employment services. Both [Australia](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) have launched job matching websites that connect older workers to age-friendly employers. Since 1965, the United States government has administered its federal [Senior Community Service Employment Program](#) (SCSEP), an employment program for low-income and unemployed older Americans that provides job search training, skills training and matching services to part-time paid jobs. According to a 2012 evaluation of SCSEP, nearly half of program participants who were available for work were successfully placed into employment, and the overall level of customer satisfaction was high (Mathematica Policy Research, Inc & Social Policy Research, Inc, 2012).

Other governments have implemented employment services initiatives targeting self-employment. The [Prince's Initiative for Mature Enterprise](#) in the United Kingdom and the [Encore Entrepreneurs](#) program in the United States provide free information, workshops, training and business networking events for entrepreneurs 50 and older. Similar initiatives have been implemented across the European Union, including in Germany, Cyprus, Italy and Malta.

### 3. Promising Initiatives for Canada

Chapter 3 highlights promising initiatives for promoting the labour force participation of older individuals in Canada, most of which were drawn from the inventory of measures gathered in the pan-Canadian and international literature reviews. These measures were implemented in the past by various governments, are currently in place or, in some instances, are new and prospective initiatives that appear well positioned to handle certain issues.

It was difficult to label an initiative as a “best practice” since there is limited pan-Canadian and international evidence available. It was also challenging to develop the criteria for “best practice” initiatives, since up-to-date and reliable evaluations are rare. As such, instead of “best practice” initiatives, this chapter presents the most *promising* initiatives for Canada. The list of initiatives has been deemed promising according to the following key criteria:

- ✓ positive evaluation outcomes;
- ✓ cost effective;
- ✓ recognized by existing literature or stakeholders;
- ✓ implemented across multiple Canadian or international jurisdictions; and
- ✓ achieved consensus by the working group of the Forum of Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors.

These criteria allow for more flexibility in choosing promising measures that propose innovative policy solutions to complex issues. Some of the initiatives focus on the supply side of the labour market, others on the demand side, while several impact both the supply and demand of older workers in the labour market. The success of these initiatives involves many players, including the different levels of government, employers, unions and non-governmental organizations.

Each promising practice could help promote labour force participation of older Canadians by addressing at least one of the main challenges faced by older workers (identified in Chapter 1), namely: ageism; lack of education and access to training; health issues, work-life balance issues, and lack of workplace accommodations; difficulty in finding and applying for jobs; and disincentives or lack of incentives to work in the retirement income system.

## To address ageism

### ➤ *Multifaceted awareness campaigns*

- A multifaceted awareness campaign uses various marketing tools, such as television/radio commercials, conferences, publications, informational websites, social media and stakeholder engagement, to promote older worker initiatives, combat age discrimination, inform of the benefits of hiring older individuals, and initiate a shift in general attitude regarding working at older ages.
- Evaluations in Europe have shown that such campaigns greatly improved public perceptions of older workers, and for long-lasting effects, should be used as a continuous strategy rather than a one-off awareness initiative.
- Awareness campaigns could help address the health challenges faced by some older workers—for example, by raising awareness on best practices to improve health conditions for older individuals, and by promoting health and safety procedures in the workplace. Awareness campaigns similar to that conducted by the European Union to their member states and employers could also promote lifelong learning.

### ➤ *Research/policy centres on older workers*

- Evaluations have noted the success of research/policy centres abroad (Eurofound, 2013). Research/policy centres expand and promote research on issues related to older workers, fill knowledge gaps, raise awareness and support employers in creating older worker-friendly workplaces, as well as proposing innovative policies to combat ageism.
- Research/policy centres are relatively affordable, easy to implement and contribute to evidence-based decision-making. For example, Norway's Centre for Senior Policy coordinated a five-year National Initiative on Older Workers that promoted awareness of the benefits of hiring older employees, and was the driving force in putting senior policy on the national media's agenda and raising the general population's awareness of this topic.

➤ *Age-friendly “best practice” company prizes*

- This is a cost-effective measure that has been implemented in several countries, including across the United States. Annual awards are presented to employers who implement the best practices for older workers. These types of prizes encourage employers to implement initiatives that better accommodate older workers. They are also advantageous to employers who wish to attract talented older workers. Awards have been proven to be more effective when they recognize the contribution of all business sizes and when they reward those who have introduced solutions to problems identified by the industry.
- Employment and Social Development Canada currently operates the Employment Equity Achievement Awards, an awards program for employers that demonstrate outstanding achievement in employment equity in their workplaces for designated equity groups (i.e. women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities). This program could be expanded to include recognition for employers who excel in their commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce (including for older workers).

**To help with lack of education of older workers and to increase their access to training**

➤ *Targeted training for older individuals*

- Studies on the effectiveness of training on the employability and productivity of older workers found positive effects (Gobel & Zwick, 2010; Lowe, 2011). Training can also have positive spillover effects among employees (e.g. when trained older employees share their knowledge). To maximize the return on training investment of older workers, the training should normally be of short- or medium-duration, low cost, and within an in-demand occupation (if the older workers are unemployed).
- Resources could be dedicated to specifically train older individuals who are either employed or unemployed. Training programs can take various forms—for example, training allowances or vouchers for employees, wage subsidies for employers to reduce employee costs, training leave for employees—and can improve the employment outcomes of older workers, especially if they learn skills which are in demand.
- The Labour Market Development Agreements and the Canada Job Fund Agreements provide funding to provinces and territories for the delivery of training for both employed and unemployed individuals. Provinces and territories could commit a dedicated portion of these funds to training programs for older workers. (Canada Job Fund Agreements will be consolidated with the Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities and the former Targeted Initiative for Older Workers into proposed new Workforce Development Agreements.)

- The 2017 federal budget proposed to invest additional funds over six years under the Labour Market Development Agreements and the Workforce Development Agreements, to further boost skills training and provide employment supports for unemployed and underemployed Canadians, including older workers.

➤ *Job training grants to employers for training older employees*

- Many countries provide subsidies to employers for training their older employees, or to recruit and train unemployed older people. Training older workers could upgrade their skillsets and increase their productivity and their employability in the long term. It is essential to involve employers because they are in the best position to identify the skills related to business needs.
- Employers may be hesitant to invest in older employees because the perception of overall return on investment for older employees is generally lower than for younger workers, especially since older workers have fewer working years ahead of them in which training costs can be recouped. However, studies have shown that given the frequently higher turnover rates for younger workers, employers' return on the investment in training older workers can be just as high or higher than for younger ones, often making the investment worthwhile (Lowe, 2011). Furthermore, workers of all ages who receive training from an employer are more likely to stay with that employer. That said, it can be challenging to identify training that employers would have funded without a subsidy.
- The existing transfers and the proposed Workforce Development Agreements include flexibility for provinces and territories to support employer-sponsored training. This could include offering programming such as the Canada Job Grant, which was introduced as part of the Canada Job Fund agreements and directly connected skills training or other types of employer-sponsored training with employers.

➤ *Collaborating with education providers to make learning more accessible for older individuals*

- Several countries have strengthened their relationships with education providers to improve the design and accessibility of training programs for older individuals. Education providers often have a better understanding of the logistics of training, the needs of trainees, and also the needs of employers.

- For example, the Plus 50 Initiative in the United States invests in community colleges to create or expand campus programs that engage students over the age of 50, with a focus on workforce training and preparing for new careers. This type of initiative aims to increase access to education for older individuals.
- Given that older individuals have been out of school for many years, they may face challenges when returning to training or formal education. Educational programs and student financial supports are mainly designed for youth and can be less accessible to adult learners. It is important to be aware of and investigate these barriers in order to facilitate skills development for older people.
- The 2017 federal budget proposed to fund and establish a new organization to support skills development and measurement, including lifelong learning in Canada. This new organization will work in partnership with willing provinces and territories, the private sector, educational institutions and not-for-profit organizations to identify the skills sought and required by employers, explore innovative approaches to skills development, and share information and analysis to help inform future skills investments and programming.

### **To facilitate finding and applying for jobs**

#### **➤ *Job matching programs that specifically target older workers***

- Numerous evaluations found that job matching programs such as placement services and job matching websites help connect employers and older jobseekers (Eurofound, 2013). In the case of older individuals, job matching programs should be mindful of the special needs of these jobseekers in terms of working conditions, workplace accommodations, and training.
- Job matching programs for older workers are one of the most common initiatives implemented internationally. They are a key source of labour market information. Well-designed job matching policies help better balance skills supply and demand, and contribute to greater labour mobility.

- Building on the foundational investments in the national *Job Bank* that have introduced functionality<sup>20</sup> to support connecting older workers with appropriate employers, job matching programs could pair this technology with career guidance services to allow jobseekers make informed career decisions based on the realities of the labour market and economy. This is especially for older workers, who may require support to navigate information systems and interpret labour market information. Service innovations could be tested using planned future enhancements to the national Job Bank, including the résumé builder tool and a client e-assist tool to allow third party case managers to better assist older job seekers.

➤ *Targeted wage subsidies and targeted earnings supplements*

- Through bilateral Labour Market Development Agreements, provinces and territories can provide targeted wage subsidies as an incentive for employers to hire individuals they would not normally hire, and to help cover other employment-related costs of these employees. Participants could include older workers needing help to re-enter the labour market following a job loss. Provinces and territories can use targeted earnings supplements to encourage these workers to accept employment by offering them temporary financial incentives to top up their new income.

➤ *Targeting, referral and feedback*

- The federal Targeting, Referral and Feedback system is a powerful tool available to help provinces and territories identify Employment Insurance applicants for early intervention or quick returns to work based on criteria such as age, education level and gender included in their Employment Insurance application. Through this system, provinces and territories could strategically target older workers (using any age range) by providing service providers with their contact information.

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<sup>20</sup>A flagging function on the Job Bank website allows employers to indicate their willingness to hire older workers to fill their job vacancy. A filter in the Job Bank search options allows users to find all the job postings which employers have flagged for mature workers.

➤ *Older individuals interested in self-employment*

- Data shows that older Canadians are more likely to be self-employed than younger ones (Labour Force Survey, 2017). Compared to their younger counterparts, older entrepreneurs tend to have more advantages when starting a business, such as more developed networks, a higher level of technical and managerial skills, more work and industry experience and a stronger financial position. At the same time, some older entrepreneurs or older individuals interested in self-employment struggle alongside younger entrepreneurs with start-up business costs, the lack of business networks and appropriate training.
- Providing older individuals interested in self-employment with support (e.g. mentorship, financial resources, information and useful networks) could help them overcome barriers and successfully create or maintain their own businesses.
- Provinces and territories could fund these types of initiatives through the labour market transfer agreements. Governments could build on past initiatives that were offered through the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW), which provided funding to prepare for self-employment (e.g. capacity assessment, training, professional business support, mentoring), and expand support to older self-employed workers in all communities across Canada. A TIOW survey has found that preparation for self-employment was cited by 39 percent of respondents as one of the main reasons for participating in the program; approximately 15 percent of TIOW participants indicated being self-employed at the time of the survey.

➤ *Financial incentives to hire older displaced workers*

- Several countries have implemented temporary earnings supplements (provided to the employee) to encourage older workers to look for, consider, and accept a wider range of jobs and return to employment. Many of the international evaluations have shown positive results (Mathematica Policy Research, 2012; Weber, 2004).
- Earnings supplements temporarily cover part of the wage loss that older workers typically suffer when they accept a new job paid at a lower wage. Wage subsidies are given to employers who decide to hire older displaced workers. The aim is to help recently displaced older workers adjust to a lower-paying job as a first step to a new career, or until their local economy starts creating better-paying jobs.
- Earnings supplements and wage subsidies can be more or less costly, depending on the qualification criteria. The effectiveness of an earnings supplement or wage subsidy may also be increased if it is combined with other activation policies (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005).

- Provinces and territories could fund these types of initiatives through the labour market transfer agreements.

## **To improve health and work-life balance and provide more workplace accommodations**

### ➤ *Initiatives that lead to more flexible work*

- Evidence has shown that flexible work would likely increase the well-being and longevity of the working lives of older employees (Gobel & Thomas, 2010). Flexible work arrangements allow older workers to remain engaged in meaningful employment while providing flexibility to pursue other interests, activities, or responsibilities outside of work. They also serve as a means to retain informal caregiver roles and effectively balance care obligations and time at work.
- Support (e.g. grants or tax credits) is typically given to employers who propose flexible work arrangements for their employees (e.g. part-time work, working from home, variable hours, compressed hours, staggered start/end times, part-year work). Legislation could also be passed to protect workers who request flexible work arrangements.
- In the United Kingdom, all employees have had the legal right to flexible work since 2014<sup>21</sup>. Many employers had concerns about the legislation before it took effect. After the legislation was passed, however, nearly three-quarters of employers surveyed by the British Chambers of Commerce noted some or significant improvements in employee relations as a result of offering flexible work arrangements.
- In the 2017 federal budget, the Government proposed amendments to the *Canada Labour Code* to give federally regulated workers the right to request flexible work arrangements from their employer, such as flexible start and finish times and the ability to work from home, in addition to new unpaid leaves to better balance work and demands. In June 2017, the Government of Ontario proposed legislation that would set out several new scheduling provisions for employees, including the right to request schedule or location changes after three months of employment.

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<sup>21</sup> Employers must deal with requests in a “reasonable manner” but can refuse an application if they have a good business reason for doing so. If an employer does not handle a request in a reasonable manner, the employee can take the case to an employment tribunal.

➤ *Initiatives that lead to modifying work environment and tasks*

- Research shows that older workers are more likely to work longer if their working conditions are modified (Gobel & Thomas, 2010). Examples of modifying work environment include reducing environmental noise, increasing illumination of workplaces, providing more frequent breaks, providing ergonomic work equipment, switching to less laborious work tasks or working on mixed-age teams. Investing in adaptable work equipment and improving working conditions are likely to raise the health and productivity of all workers and reduce absenteeism.
- Support (e.g. grants or tax credits) is typically given to employers who offer their employees a modified work environment and tasks in accordance with their physical and mental needs. Legislation could also be passed to protect workers who request modified work environments.
- The costs and complexity of implementation vary depending on the scope of the support. Improving working conditions for older workers through legislation could be more complex, as employees have diverse needs (e.g. manual work in factory versus office work). Subsidies could be more costly for companies that develop their human resource management policies to take older workers into consideration (e.g. funding projects that improve working conditions).

**To enhance work incentives in the retirement income system**

➤ *Partial retirement*

- Reduction of working hours is one approach to enabling people to work longer. Partial retirement schemes facilitate the reduction of working hours by providing a partial pension or benefit, regardless of the statutory pension age. These schemes are abundant in many countries. Partial retirement could be encouraged where it is not allowed, or legislation could be passed to allow it where it is not permitted. Partial retirement could also be promoted to employers by informing them of the benefits, such as keeping skilled workers longer and facilitating knowledge transfer.

➤ *Communication about the retirement income system*

- Increasing awareness of all the work incentives offered in the retirement income system could maximize their impacts. For example, Canadians now have the option to defer take-up of their Old Age Security pension until after age 65 and receive a higher monthly pension; the Guaranteed Income Supplement earnings exemption was increased to \$3,500 to remove disincentives for seniors to work; the Canada Pension Plan now allows individuals to start receiving the retirement pension before age 65 while continuing to work; and the new post-retirement benefit allows working recipients of the Canada Pension Plan under age 70 to continue participating in the Plan and increase their pension benefits. This would be a relatively low-cost initiative that would likely increase the efficiency of recently implemented measures to increase the labour force participation of older individuals.

## Conclusion

This report presents the most promising initiatives for increasing the labour force participation of older workers. Chapter 1 set the context of Canada's aging population and identified the challenges older workers face in the labour market. Chapter 2 expanded on the eight types of measures that were established after extensive pan-Canadian and international research. Chapter 3 proposed initiatives that, through a set of predefined criteria, were deemed the most promising ways to increase the labour force participation of older workers.

The promising initiatives identified in this report are diverse: some ideas are practical and well-defined, while others are more bold and innovative. These initiatives can be operationalized in different ways. They could be implemented on their own or in combination, and may fall within one of or both the federal and provincial/territorial jurisdictions. Therefore, they provide many opportunities for governments to collaborate and collectively pursue strong policy solutions.

In June 2017, the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance released a report on the financial implications and regional considerations of Canada's aging population. The Committee made the following key recommendation:

*“The Government of Canada, in collaboration with its provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners, put measures in place to increase labour force participation of underrepresented groups and to better match labour demand with labour supply in order to mitigate the negative impact of population aging on the economy and on the labour market.”*

The most effective policies and programs tend to be ones for which everyone shares responsibility. Individuals, businesses, civil society, governments and even society at large all have a role to play in improving outcomes for older Canadians and in working towards a stronger and more inclusive Canada.

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# Appendix E

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January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022

# Working Better with Age Research to Action Session

Prepared for:

The St. John's Board of Trade



Section 1:

# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

## Background

In 2020, MQO Research was engaged by the St. John's Board of Trade to conduct a multi-phase study of the status of older workers in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. As part of this research, specific barriers were identified for older workers who want to remain in the workforce. MQO also launched a survey of employers in the region to understand the hiring practices and perceptions of older workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Following this study in 2021, MQO partnered with the SJBOT to create a pilot project that aimed to action the previous research by:

- Giving the research context through discussion of what is currently happening in Newfoundland and Labrador and understanding what the research looks like with workers in our province;
- Getting practical through 'real talk' about what can and can't be implemented and brainstorm how these best practices might work in real life; and
- Turning insight into action by making commitments to act on the solutions identified in the research.

Section 2:

# PILOT SESSION



# PILOT DESIGN AND EXECUTION

MQO partnered with the St. John's Board of Trade to design and test a session concept aimed at bringing together organizations and older job seekers to learn how to practically action research in a collaborative setting. MQO research prepared session materials as well as designing a pre and post session survey, the St. John's Board of Trade recruited participants and organizations and provided materials, workshop space and catering for the session which was titled the 'Working Better with Age – Research to Action'.

The session took place on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Older workers and industry were tasked with working together to come up with solutions and practical ways to action recommendations highlighted in the research aimed at increasing older worker participation in the workforce. Industry representatives were also asked to make some level of commitment towards effort to make their organization more inclusive for older workers or action some of the solutions discussed in the session.

## Participants

A total of **six participants** attended the in-person session, including:

**n = 4**

Mature jobseekers



**n = 2**

Individuals representing  
an organization



# PILOT SESSION

To the right is the agenda for the pilot project, outlining the three core components of the session.

## AGENDA

**9:30 - 10:00**

### **Introductions**

- The Research
- The Goal of The Session

**10:00 - 10:45**

### **Roundtable Discussion - Our Experience/Overcoming Road Blocks**

- What has this looked like in your experience?
- What are the roadblocks to job seeking?
- What are the solutions?
- What are the reasons these solutions might not be implemented?

**10:45 - 11:00**

Nutrition break

**11:00 - 11:30**

### **Insight to Action**

- What are steps to making practical changes, no matter how small?
- Introduction of the commitment statement
- Customize the statement – what are your action items?

**12:00 - 1:00**

Sharing (optional)

How to use to use commitment statement

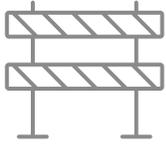
**1:00 - 1:30**

**Optional sharing (commitment actions)**

**How to**

# COMPONENT 1: OUR EXPERIENCE/OVERCOMING ROAD BLOCKS

The first part of the session involved a roundtable discussion of participant's experiences of employer barriers to hiring and retaining mature workers (age 55+). The main barriers discussed were:



1. **Inflexibility:** employers tend to be inflexible to the needs of mature workers (i.e., transportation challenges, reduced hours);
2. **Skill mismatch:** there is a perception that mature workers are unable to adapt to new technology, therefore employers tend to invest less in their training;
3. **Employment services:** most services cater to younger employees (i.e., work-family policies, maternity leave); and
4. **Ageism:** stigma or discrimination against older workers.

## COMPONENT 2: INSIGHT TO ACTION

The next task involved coming up with practical solutions to these barriers that organizations agreed would be realistic to implement going forward and that job seekers indicated would make a positive difference in creating a more inclusive job seeking and working environment.



### Solutions for Employers

- Including age in Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statements

Participants discussed the perception that mature job seekers are not being evaluated equally during the recruiting process and it can be discouraging to engage in this process. It was noted that highly skilled workers who want to work may not bother in the job seeking process due to these beliefs. Participants felt that visible equal opportunity statements on job postings and websites would increase comfort and encourage mature workers to apply.

- Investing in training and mentoring for mature employees

Participants acknowledged that some barriers that older workers face in succeeding in the workforce may be easily overcome with access to training. Training and mentorship are seen as key elements to successful transitions at any age. Organizations can support the development of employees in all age groups, emphasizing lifelong learning and giving mature workers access to professional development opportunities and mentoring.

# COMPONENT 2: INSIGHT TO ACTION



## Solutions for Employers continued...

- Celebrating experience; recognizing where mature workers' skills best fit in the organization

Although it was acknowledged that investment in training is of value to support older workers, it was also noted by some participants that experience should be celebrated and that organizations may be able to adapt to utilize experience, rather than the mature worker having to adapt to the organization. For example, some mature workers may be comfortable with the skills they have and may want to offer their expertise without having to learn new technologies or processes. Are there ways to find the best use of a mature workers experience as they are? This may involve pairing employees with complementary skills, for example consulting or advising roles for mature employees with more experience balanced by junior support staff.

- Being flexible to the needs of mature workers

Mature workers may be hesitant to re-enter the workforce because they may not believe organizations are willing to accommodate their needs and what they want in a role. For example, flexible hours, accommodation for health needs or remote work may be more appealing to mature workers. Organizations have become increasingly flexible in recent years, in particular by adapting to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flexible working arrangements are more normalized, and organizations may be more primed to create an inclusive working environment for mature workers by allowing for flexibility. Communicating a willingness to be flexible in working arrangements may make mature workers more likely to seek employment with an organization.

# COMPONENT 2: INSIGHT TO ACTION



## Solutions for Employers continued...

- Using language that combats ageism (i.e., in job postings, communications)

Participants discussed the impact of language used in job postings. Words like “recent college graduate” “tech savvy,” “go-getter,” “high energy” and “a digital native” are examples of language that may send a message to mature workers that they are not welcome to apply. Being conscious of how job postings may be perceived by older candidates and competing ageism in postings will create a more inclusive recruitment process. As previously noted, a diversity and inclusion statement that includes age is one way to combat perceived ageism in job postings.

- Government/non-profit organizations to provide free training for the mature workforce (i.e., SkillsNL)

Access to training without cost barriers would support organizations and mature workers in bridging the employment gap.

# COMPONENT 2: INSIGHT TO ACTION

## Solutions for Jobseekers



- Spend time reflecting on what you want out of a position
  - Assess if you are an appropriate fit for a role
  - Be clear about your salary expectations
  - Self-select out of a role if you determine it is not a fit for you

Participants discussed the value in mature workers reflecting on what they are looking for and knowing what kind of role they want. A mature worker with a good understanding of what they want out of a role will increase their likelihood of finding a good fit and strengthen their ability to negotiate. Job seekers who are sure of what they are looking for may be in a better position to find a relationship that works for both parties. For example, if the salary for a role is lower than expectations, could the role be done in fewer hours?

# COMPONENT 2: INSIGHT TO ACTION

## Solutions for Jobseekers



- Remember that many employers use an algorithm to screen people in using key words

Mature workers would benefit from support optimizing applications and resumes for key word searches.

- Additional training may be needed before or during a new role

Participants discussed that for the right role, participants need to be open to training support if organizations are willing to provide it.

# COMPONENT 3: COMMITMENT STATEMENT

## Commitment Statements

During the latter part of the session, members of industry were asked to make some level of commitment to action some of the solutions that came out of the mornings session, even if only a commitment to continue to work towards inclusion of older workers in the workforce and participate in future connection sessions. The importance of the commitment session is to build in a mechanism that would encourage the impact of the session to live on beyond the day that the session was attended.

Two organizations participated in the commitment statement exercise:

1. Telecommunications centre
2. Contracting/construction company

### Commitment Statement

\_\_\_\_\_ recognizes the value of experienced workers **and actively works to recruit across diverse age groups**. We believe in equal opportunity for all workers, regardless of age. We value diversity and consider all applicants on an equal basis as we hire for positions within our organization.

### We are working towards living these values by...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Section 3:

# **PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK**



# PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Participants completed a pre-session and post-session survey that assessed their attitudes and opinions of organizational behaviors toward mature workers; the post-session survey also assessed participants feedback of the session. The goal of the survey was to assess the impact of the session and gather feedback on how the session could be improved before moved from a pilot session to a scaled-up version of the workshop with a larger audience and broader intended impact.

Out of six participants that attended the session, three completed the pre-session survey and five completed the post-session survey. Please note that this is a low number of responses and results could change with higher response rates; therefore, the following results should be interpreted with caution.



# PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

## Overall Session Feedback

**Expectations:** Four out of five found the session met expectations, 1 indicated it exceeded expectations.

**Satisfaction:** All five participants indicated that they were very satisfied with the approach or concept of the session.

- Satisfaction with facilitation: 5/5 Very Satisfied
- Activities: 4/5 Very Satisfied, 1/5 Don't know/Prefer not to say
- Outcome: 2/5 Very Satisfied, 2/5 Somewhat Satisfied, 1/5 Don't know/Prefer not to say



Overall, mature workers either agreed (2/4) or strongly agreed (2/4) that organizations who participated in the session valued mature workers and that they would be given equal consideration if applying for a job with one of the participating organizations.

# PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

## Pre- and Post- Survey Comparisons

When asked about comfort level when responding to employment postings, two participants in the pre-session survey were uncomfortable or very uncomfortable.

In the post-session survey, all four respondents who answered this question felt either comfortable or very comfortable responding to job postings.

**This indicates that the practical solutions discussed in the session had a positive impact on job seekers.**

Q: How comfortable do you feel responding to employment postings?



# PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

## Pre- and Post- Survey Comparisons

When asked if organizations *actively* discriminate against older workers, the majority of respondents were unsure in the pre-session, while one agreed.

In the post-session survey, two participants remained unsure, while one agreed and one disagreed.

It seems that the discussions in the workshop changed the participants views slightly; however, **more participants would be needed to confirm this finding.**

Q: I feel that organizations actively discriminate against mature job seekers during the hiring process.

Pre-Session Survey  
(n = 3)



Agree  
n = 1



Don't Know  
n = 2



Post-Session Survey  
(n = 5)



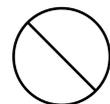
Agree  
n = 1



Disagree  
n = 1



Don't Know  
n = 2



Skipped  
n = 1

# PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

## Pre- and Post- Survey Comparisons

When asked if organizations *subconsciously* discriminate against older workers, two participants in the pre-session survey agreed while one was unsure.

In the post-session survey, two participants strongly agreed and one agreed.

During the session we discussed a myriad of ways that organizations may unintentionally/subconsciously discriminate against mature workers. **This is reflected in the post-session feedback.**

Q: I feel that organizations subconsciously discriminate against mature job seekers during the hiring process.

Pre-Session Survey  
(n = 3)



Agree  
n = 2



Don't Know  
n = 1

Post-Session Survey  
(n = 5)



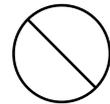
Agree  
n = 1



Strongly Agree  
n = 2



Don't Know  
n = 1



Skipped  
n = 1

# PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

## Commitment Statement Feedback

As mentioned previously, two organizations participated in the commitment statement exercise. As only one organization completed the post-session survey, we could only assess feedback from them.

This participant indicated they were *very uncomfortable* with the exercise. However, one response cannot be generalized to other organizations, and **more participants will be needed to assess the viability of this exercise.**

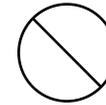
Eight weeks after the initial session, MQO followed up with the two organizations who attended to assess how they may have incorporated the proposed solutions in their organization. To date, follow up information has been obtained from one organization. This company indicated they getting ready to launch a new website by the end of next month, where their new inclusion statement for mature workers will be included.

Q: How comfortable were you with the commitment statement exercise?

Post-Session Survey  
(n = 5)



Very  
Uncomfortable  
n = 1



Skipped  
n = 4

Section 4:

# RECOMMENDATIONS



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The Working Better with Age pilot not only sought to shed light on barriers to mature worker participation in the workforce in a practical context at the organizational and individual level, but the session challenged industry and individuals to come to the table together to create solutions and a commitment to change.

The pilot was a success. Although run on a small scale, participating organizations responded positively to the session and feedback suggested that participating in the workshop positively affected job seekers who felt more comfortable responding to job postings. Participation in the session also positively impacted how participating job seekers viewed participating companies. Based on the pre-session survey, participants generally felt that organizations subconsciously discriminate against mature job seekers, however job seekers either agreed or strongly agreed that organizations who participated in the *Working Better with Age* session valued mature workers and that they would be given equal consideration if applying for a job with one of the participating organizations.

It is our recommendation that the learnings from the pilot be applied to an expanded *Working Better with Age* program that would allow the opportunity for more organizations and mature job seekers to attend and would incorporate some of the solutions that job seekers and organizations identified during the pilot session.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Improving and expanding the *Working Better with Age* Pilot

An improved, expanded event would follow the same model as the pilot but provide additional opportunities for connecting mature job seekers and organizations. It would also build in workshops or training around the event to enact some of the solutions identified by organizations and job seekers during the pilot session. This session is envisioned as an annual event that builds each year and continues to positively impact the available labour pool and increase labour market participation of mature workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### ✓ **Provide additional opportunity for connections**

*Increase the scale:* A larger scale event should aim to include 10-15 organizations and two to three times as many job seekers (30-40). It would be run in a world café style with smaller tables broken out for discussion that include a mix of industry representatives and mature job seekers.

*Incorporate a job fair:* A job fair style buffet lunch could be held between morning and afternoon with the goal of giving organizations and individuals dedicated time and space to connect. Adding a job fair component to the *Working Better With Age* Program will provide a job search opportunity dedicated to mature workers, a safe space where mature workers will know that participating companies welcome applications from older workers.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The job fair would open to participants as well as individuals and organizations that did not participate in the full *Working Better with Age* session. It would be an opportunity for organizations to highlight their needs, and for job seekers to target companies and roles they are most interested in.

Not all individuals will feel comfortable participating in workshop -tyle sessions. The job fair would provide additional connections for individuals who may be interested in re-entering the workforce but may be uncomfortable speaking in group settings.

The job fair would also open up participation to organizations that may not be able to commit to a full day workshop or may not recognize the value of participating in the full session but are in need of experienced employees. Job fair participation would still signal to mature workers that they are an inclusive employer that values mature workers. Participating in the job fair may also allow organizations to see the value of the full event and encourage them to participate more fully in the future.

## ✓ **Review the approach to gaining organizational commitment**

*Goal setting instead of a commitment statement:* Some feedback from the pilot session suggested that some organizations may be uncomfortable committing to change by signing a commitment statement. The goal of the commitment statement exercise is to encourage change after the session. Research suggests that goal setting is more effective when set in writing, therefore the commitment session exercise could be adapted to a goal setting session. Removing the need for a signature and softening the positioning from 'commitment' to goal setting may be more amenable to organizations, while still achieving the objective of increasing the likelihood of organizational change.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## ✓ Advertising and momentum

Many of the barriers identified in research and through our pilot session come down to communication, or a disconnect between those organizations in need of skilled workers and mature workers who are interested in participating in the labour market. Unconscious bias resulting in discrimination, negative perceptions and lack of confidence create a chasm between organizations and mature workers. Although the content of the working better with age session seeks to chip away at the underlying causes of the disconnect between older workers and organizations it is not a quick fix. Bringing the two groups together in a physical space and providing opportunities for that connection is a way to temporarily bridge that chasm.

To maximize the effectiveness of the working better with age session it is recommended that it is held as an annual event that has appropriate marketing and advertising in place until awareness around the event is increased to 40%-60% in the population. Holding the event on an annual basis will allow the event to continue to improve and grow. The content of the event can build on solutions put forward in the previous year. It will also increase awareness of barriers for mature workers and bias in recruitment processes as well as adapt to address new challenges as workforce needs adapt.

## ✓ Actioning some of the solutions identified by organizations and individuals in the pilot session

The *Working Better with Age* participants discussed a number of solutions to challenges faced both by industry and individuals in increasing mature worker participation in the Newfoundland and Labrador workforce. Workshops aimed at bridging the gap between industry needs and job seekers helps industry overcome systemic barriers and at the same time helps individuals better succeed in spite of those barriers.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that workshops incorporated into the *Working Better with Age* session would show the momentum of the program. Participants would see feedback from each year actioned in the following year. Examples of workshops based on pilot feedback are summarized below:

*Workshops for Industry to create more inclusive recruitment processes:* Training for Human Resource professionals on fighting ageism in recruitment such as awareness of processes and language that may discourage mature workers from applying and support in crafting Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statements to include in job postings.

*Workshops for job seekers:* Workshops to support older workers could focus on helping workers identify what they want in a position, what they have to offer and resume optimization with the goal of integrating mature workers back into the workforce.

# Appendix F

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Perfect  
Day

## **Creative Brief**

Experienced Worker Awareness Campaign

June 5, 2020

# Summary

### **The Experienced Worker Project**

"As the workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador continues to age there will be an increased need for experienced workers (those aged 55+) to remain in or return to the workforce. Evidence suggests that many workers want to work past retirement age for financial reasons, but also to remain engaged and pursue work they enjoy. The St. John's Board of Trade has embarked on a two-year project to identify and address the barriers that currently exist in the province that may be preventing experienced workers from remaining/reentering the workforce, as well as identifying opportunities that exist for this group. The Board of Trade has engaged MQO Research to help identify these barriers and the opportunities. An action plan will be developed based on the findings of this research.

Based on early results from MQO Research there may be as many as 44,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador between the ages of 55 and 75 who are looking for opportunities to enter/reenter the workforce."

### **The Experienced Worker Awareness Campaign**

Based on the research findings from MQO, the Board of Trade identifies the need to provide awareness and education on the barriers preventing experienced workers from remaining in the workforce and to encourage both employers and experienced workers to address these issues. Perfect Day has been hired to develop a social media awareness campaign that addresses the findings of the research in a way that encourages employers to ensure they have inclusive hiring policies and procedures, and to empower experienced workers to feel like seen, heard and valued members of the workforce.

### *Four main research objectives of the Experienced Worker Project:*

1. Understanding barriers that currently exist for older workers that want to remain in the workforce.
2. Examining potential contribution of older workers to the labour market, estimating the number of workers over the age of 50 in Newfoundland and Labrador that would remain in the workforce if they could.
3. Understanding employer attitudes towards older workers.
4. Developing recommendations to remove barriers and increase workforce participation of older workers.

### *The results of the research addressing these objectives can be found in the following documents:*

- Preliminary Report (November 2019)
- Research Report (January 2020)
- Employer Survey Report (April 2020)

## CREATIVE BRIEF: EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN

# Target Audience

The Board of Trade and Perfect Day have identified two key audiences for the awareness campaign – Employers and Experienced Workers (55+).

Sub-messaging will differ slightly based on the audience:

### **1) Employers**

Based on the recommendations outlined in the MQO research report, all six recommendations would be valuable information to potential employers. The goal would be to encourage employers to provide flexible working arrangements for employees; invest in skills and job training (this includes training for using digital technology); and review their policies and procedures to insure they are inclusive and allow options for older workers (this includes health coverage and pension options).

### **2) Experienced Workers**

Using the information outlined in the research report and after thoughtful conversation with Mike Kehoe of Older Workers NL, a key component of this campaign will be empowering experienced workers to have the confidence to re-join or continue on in the workforce. The message will be outlining the value of experienced workers, and encouraging them to have an open mind about working as an experienced worker and what that looks like.

While there are two key markets to target, there is overall benefit to this campaign reaching the broader general public as a way to educate on the barriers for experienced workers, and encourage people to do their part in helping end some of the stigma around experienced workers.

## CREATIVE BRIEF: EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN

### Purpose of Campaign

The main purpose of the campaign is to provide awareness on the barriers and stigma relating to experienced workers with the following goals in mind:

1. Increase general knowledge of our province's aging population and the barriers and stigma relating to the employment of experienced workers.
2. Promote change in employer policies and procedures to be inclusive of experienced workers.
3. Instill confidence in experienced workers, so if they would like to seek employment or remain in the workforce, they feel empowered to do so.
4. Increase the number of experienced workers in the workforce.

### Potential Challenges

#### Messaging

The main challenge in the development of this campaign will be the sensitivity of the subject matter. The wording and messaging around the campaign should be inclusive, friendly, and positive.

While the goal of the campaign is to promote experienced workers, we need to do so without alienating other groups of workers or employers.

Additionally, being in the workforce is an option and a choice for older workers, and the messaging shouldn't make people who chose to leave the workforce feel less than.

#### Call to Action

The quality of the information when a viewer follows through on a campaign and clicks to "learn more" is key to reaching the end goal of the campaign. It's important for viewers to be directed to somewhere they can learn more about the initiative and access necessary resources to implement action.

Right now, the Experienced Worker Project section on the Board of Trade website only includes a basic overview of the project. Perfect Day recommends that the Board of Trade develops the content on this web page further so that it can direct both employers and older workers to available information and resources.

#### *Tone of Voice for Experienced Workers Campaign Messaging:*

- Positive
- Friendly
- Empowering
- Accessible
- Educational

# Metrics of Success

### Short Term

Because this campaign is being broadcast on social media, our goal is to reach as many people within our target audience as possible through different social media channels. Although the metrics in the campaign are difficult to predict, there are some approximate numbers we would hope to achieve.

Looking at our potential spend across the various platforms, we would hope to achieve a ~1.2% clickthrough rate. Which means if 15,000 people see the post/video/tweet, we would like to have ~180 visit the site.

Another way to measure engagement is through shares and retweets. Is the content resonating with viewers enough for them to share it with their peers? Is anyone commenting on the post? Are people engaging with the BOT directly through Facebook and Linked In? These metrics are hard to quantify, and difficult to achieve, but the ability to adjust and re-target the campaign as it's active will allow us to maximize the potential reach.

When looking at the follow-through and call to action, the key metric to follow will be on the Board of Trade website itself. If subpages are created for both employers and employees, we would be able to track the real time engagement of each audience. If we feel that we are reaching more employers vs. employees, for example, we could adjust/re-target social media ads as well.

As mentioned above, the benefit of rolling out a campaign through social media, is the ability to track the campaign in real time, and adapt it overtime to reach our intended viewer.

### Long Term

When looking at the long term goals of the project, some metrics to look at would be comparing data of the percentage of the 55+ population in the workforce over time, and if there is an increase in the number of people in the workforce. Additionally, data on employers and their updated policies, procedures and hiring practices would be beneficial to understand if an impact is being made.

This data may be difficult to extrapolate and compare due to a wide range of variables over time. One course of action could be to engage MQO to provide a follow up survey after a period of time to evaluate the success of the project.

Perfect Day

**Campaign Concepts R1**

Experienced Worker Awareness Campaign

July 7, 2020

## EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN : CREATIVE CONCEPTS

### Summary

#### The Experienced Worker Project

"As the workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador continues to age there will be an increased need for experienced workers (those aged 55+) to remain in or return to the workforce. Evidence suggests that many workers want to work past retirement age for financial reasons, but also to remain engaged and pursue work they enjoy. The St. John's Board of Trade has embarked on a two-year project to identify and address the barriers that currently exist in the province that may be preventing experienced workers from remaining/reentering the workforce, as well as identifying opportunities that exist for this group. The Board of Trade has engaged MQO Research to help identify these barriers and the opportunities. An action plan will be developed based on the findings of this research."

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3. Instill confidence in experienced workers, so if they would like to seek employment or remain in the workforce, they feel empowered to do so.
4. Increase the number of experienced workers in the workforce.

*Tone of Voice for Experienced  
Workers Campaign Messaging:*

- Positive
- Friendly
- Empowering
- Accessible
- Educational

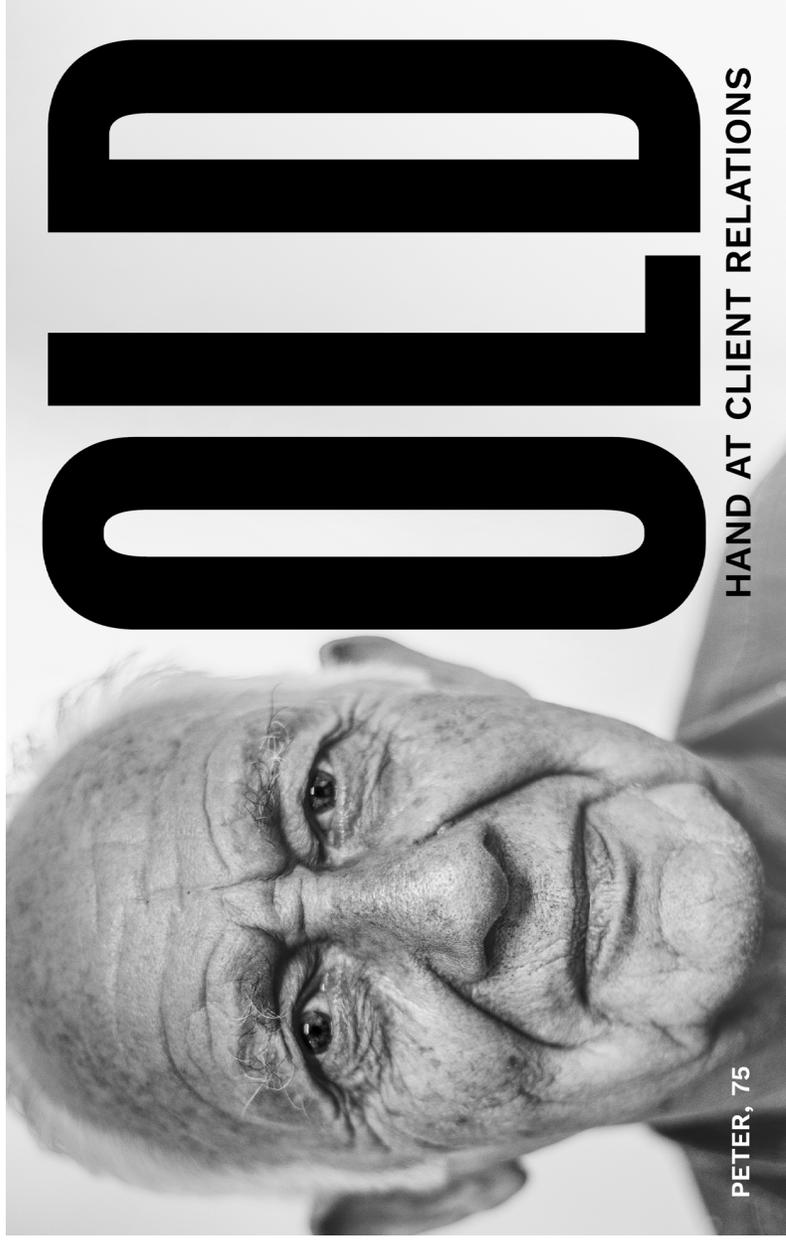
## EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN : CREATIVE CONCEPT 1

### Labels

Older workers often feel stereotyped because of their age. This campaign addresses labelling head-on, by showing large, bold synonyms for “old,” and unexpectedly pairing them with a positive attribute. The campaign grabs attention with a large headline and its subversion of a stereotype. Visually, people are compelled by faces, and this will help increase user recognition of the ad. The ad also works to help older workers relieve misconceptions about themselves, while at the same time targeting industry, to show the value of age in the workforce.

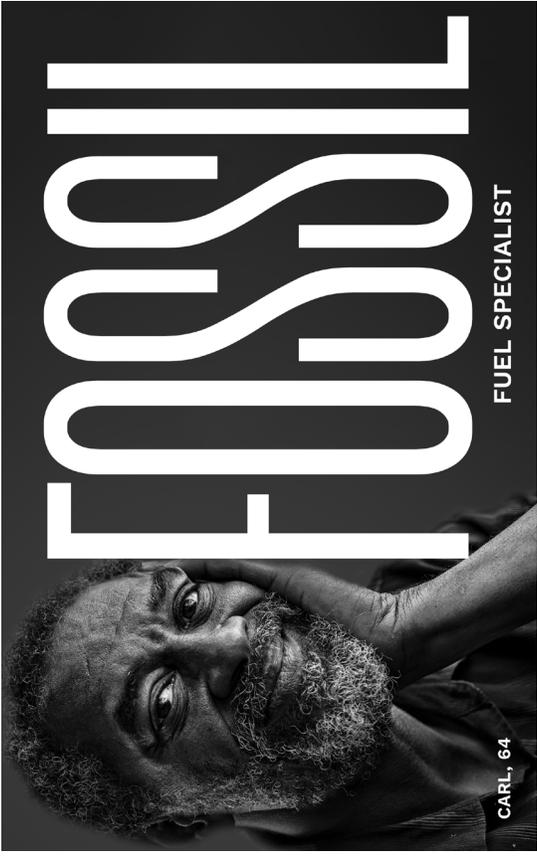
EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN : CREATIVE CONCEPT 1

## Labels



EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN : CREATIVE CONCEPT 1

**Labels**



## EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN : CREATIVE CONCEPT 2

### **The Experience of a Lifetime**

This campaign concept uses humour to reveal a very real fact: older workers have the experience (both holistic and professional) that comes with living a full life. Visually, the campaign references retro job advertising, which has nostalgic appeal and will stand out from the norm on social media. Other assets—profile pictures + posts—can adopt this vintage look to create a cohesive, visually arresting campaign.

# The Experience of a Lifetime



**THE Experience OF A Lifetime**

EXPERIENCE COUNTS.

The skills of older workers are an invaluable asset to Newfoundland and Labrador, but are often overlooked or counted out. Our economy needs to evolve to support what older workers have to offer. #experiencecounts

Visit us at [stjohnsbot.com](http://stjohnsbot.com)

There's an important place for older workers in the NL economy. If you're 55+ and still want to work, you may feel excluded from the workforce, or anxious about working in a new position. On the other hand, if you're an employer, the work ethic and experience typical of older workers may be just what you need. Let's break down barriers and find new ways to get working.

THE ST. JOHN'S BOT BOARD OF ADVANCED EXPERIENCED WORKER PROJECT EXPERIENCE COUNTS

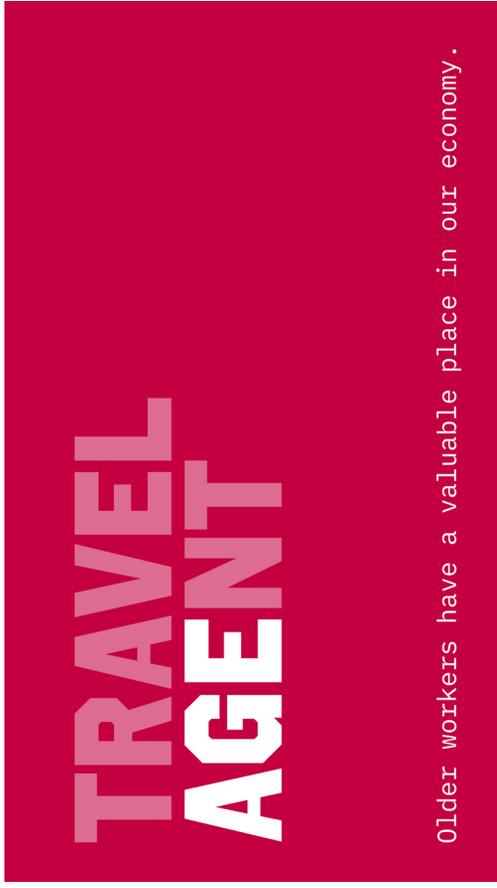
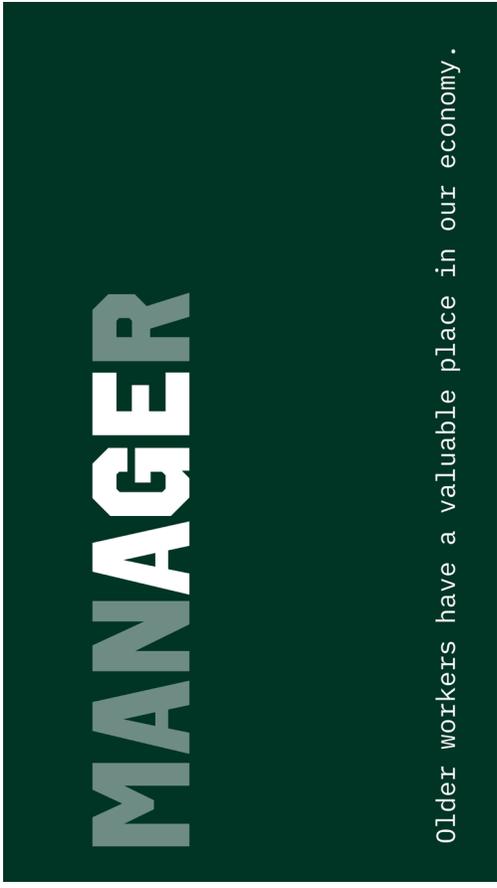
## EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN : CREATIVE CONCEPT 3

### Age

Using a simple typographic trick, this campaign highlights the importance of age in the workforce—literally. Clever and simple, it gets the message across efficiently and is general enough to appeal to employers as well as potential employees.

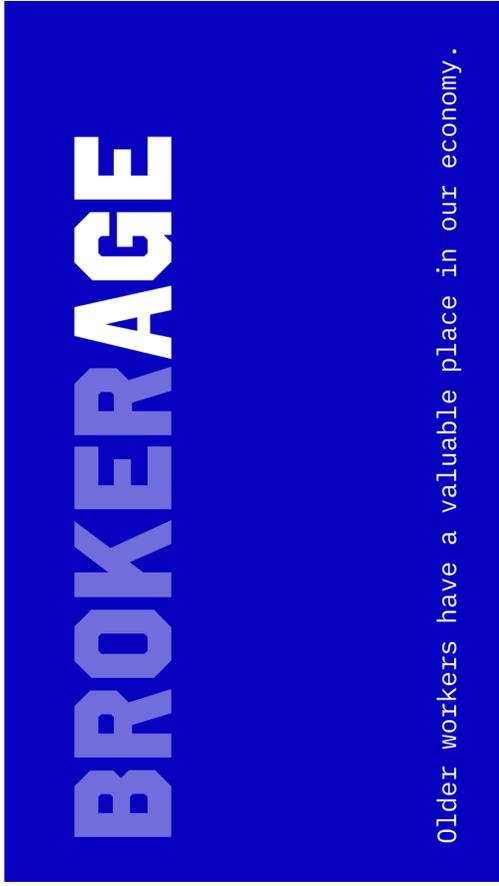
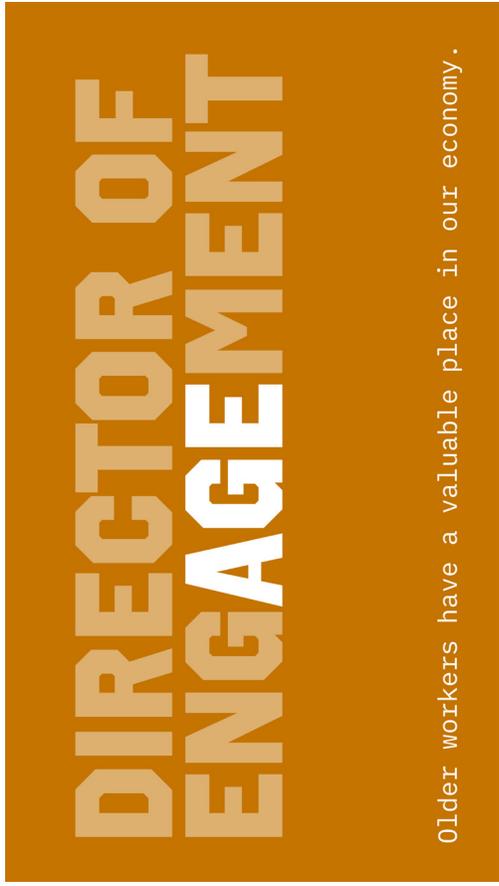
EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN : CREATIVE CONCEPT 3

**Age**



EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN : CREATIVE CONCEPT 3

**Age**



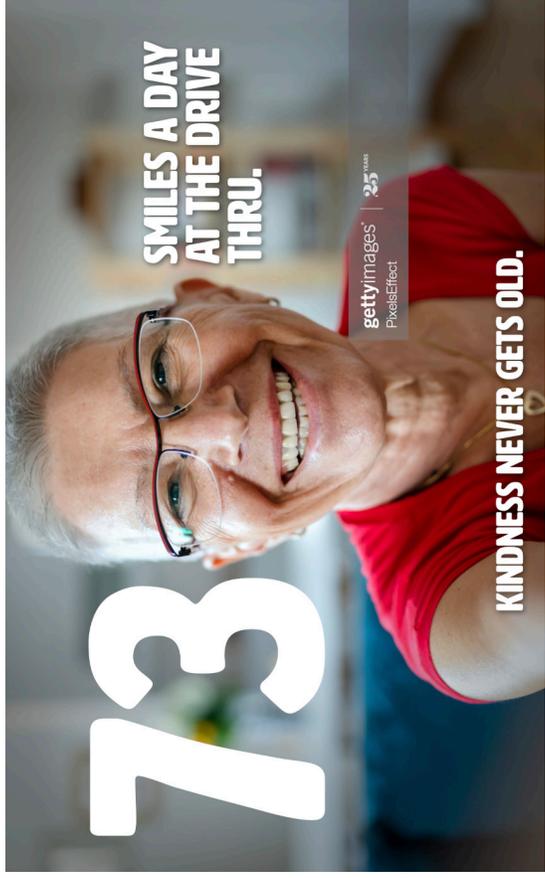
## EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN : CREATIVE CONCEPT 4

### Numbers

This campaign invites viewers in—with large numbers and smiling faces—but upon reading the ad, instead of a person's age, the number refers to a positive characteristic of their work ethic. This reversal addresses age stereotypes while also highlighting the attributes for which older workers are often praised. The idea is that good worker values never get old.

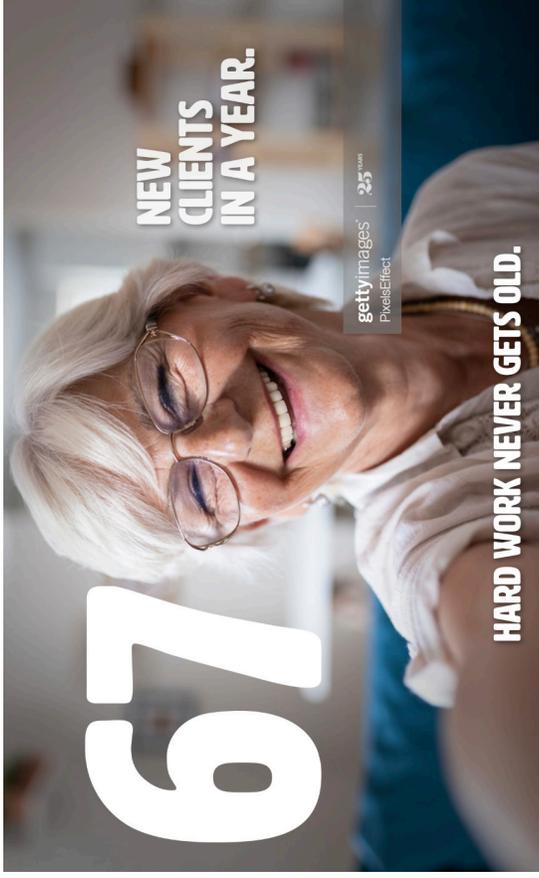
EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN : CREATIVE CONCEPT 4

Numbers



EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN : CREATIVE CONCEPT 4

Numbers



EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN | CREATIVE CONCEPT 1 | MOCKUPS

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**St. John's Board of Trade** 22m · 🌐

Got the experience, need the opportunity? Find tips on how to succeed as an older worker at [www.stjohnsbot.ca/experiencedworkers](http://www.stjohnsbot.ca/experiencedworkers)

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**St. John's Board of Trade** 22m · 🌐

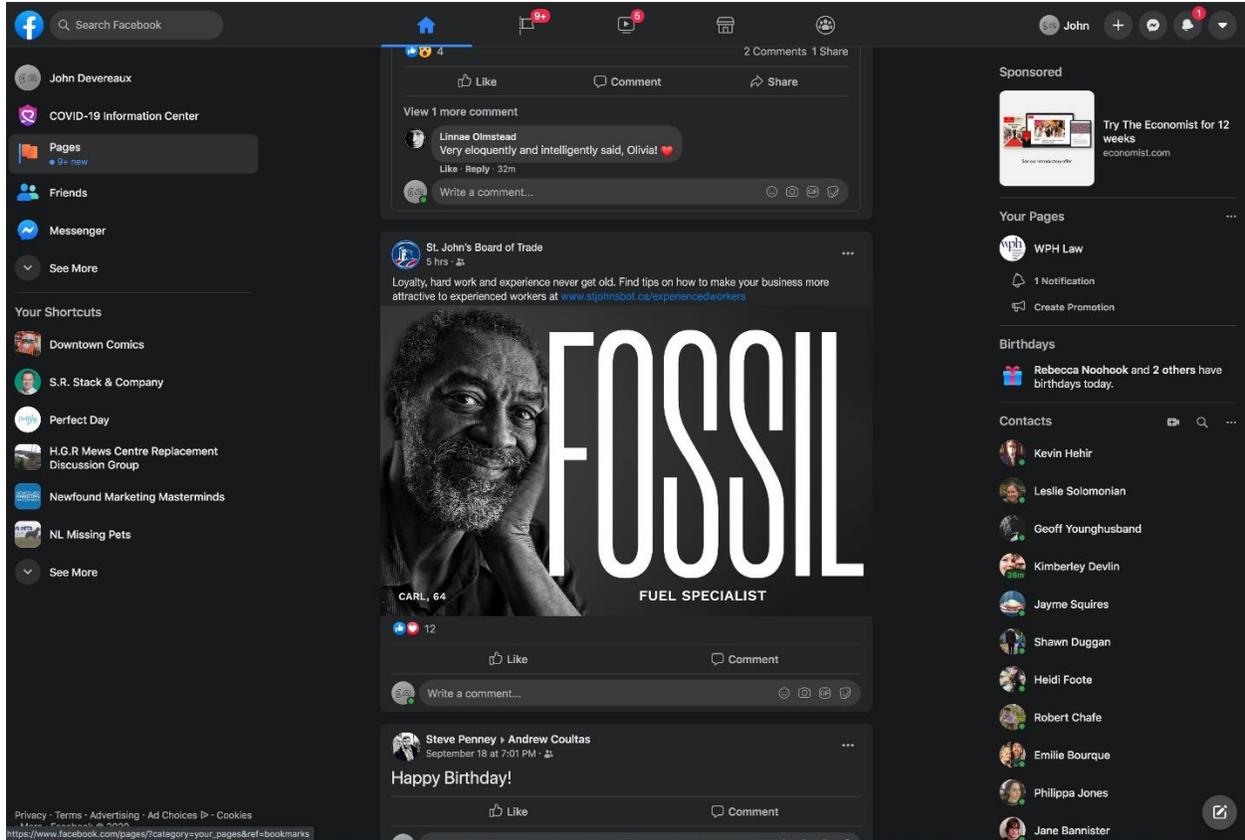
Loyalty, hard work and experience never get old. Find tips on how to make your business more attractive to experienced workers at [www.stjohnsbot.ca/experiencedworkers](http://www.stjohnsbot.ca/experiencedworkers)

**JULIA, 77** HISTORY PROFESSOR

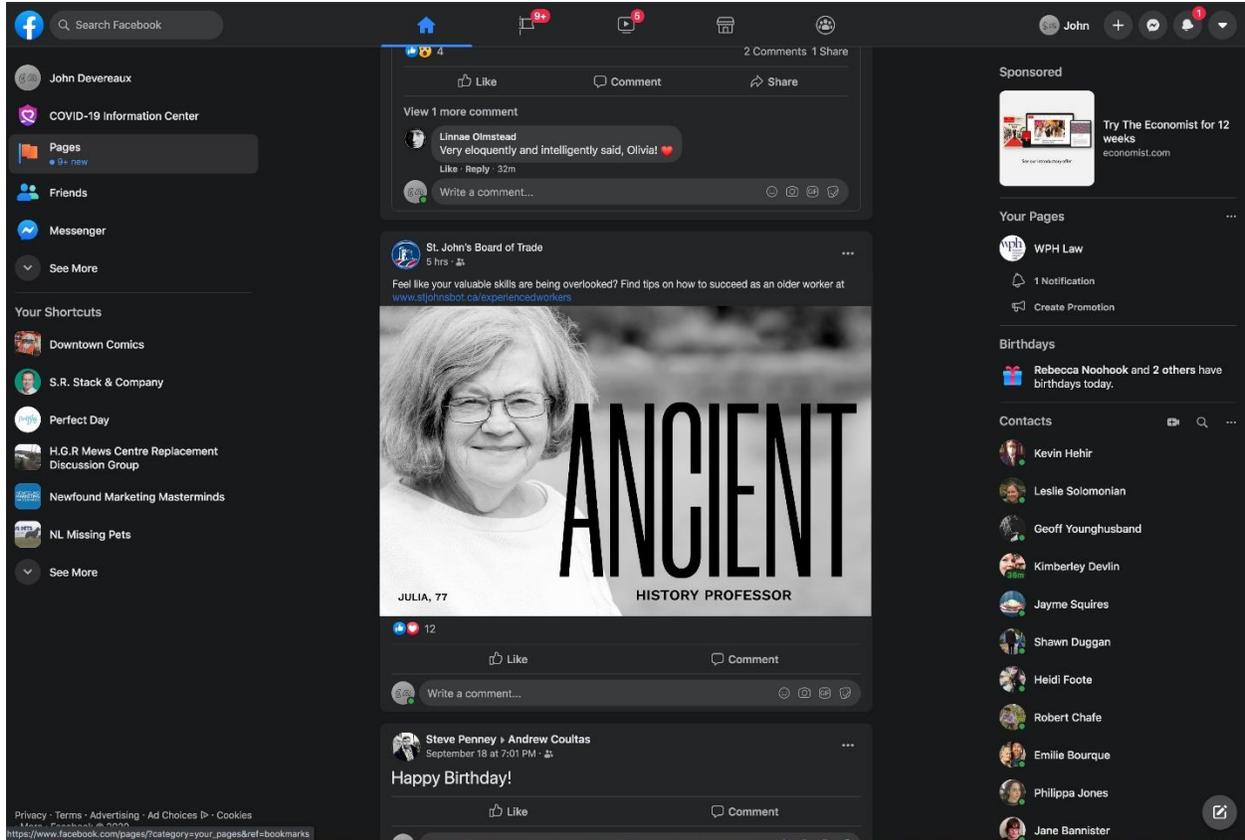
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# EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN | CREATIVE CONCEPT 1 | MOCKUPS



# EXPERIENCED WORKER CAMPAIGN | CREATIVE CONCEPT 1 | MOCKUPS



# Appendix G

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## What We Heard: A Reflection on the *Working Better with Age* Workshop

December 15, 2021

Willow Anderson, Founder and Principal of Social Fabric Institute Inc., was asked to attend the *Working Better with Age* workshop which happened on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. She was asked to listen to the dialogue and bring a diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) lens to the topic. What follows is a brief summary of what was heard – and not heard – as it relates to DEIB as well as reflections on how a DEIB lens may be useful when examining the recruitment and retention of 55+ workers in the labour market. Our hope is that these observations and reflections serve to help inform future directions of the project.

### What We Heard:

The following are some of the themes and observations that arose out of the workshop on November 30, 2021:

- Challenges and barriers: A large part of the discussion surrounded the challenges and barriers that people aged 55+ face in their job search and in the workplace: ageism, challenges of new technology, not fully understanding how current day job searches happen, etc. In fact, there was a significant amount of time/energy spent on focussing on real or presumed deficits.
- Work as identity, as purpose: The job seekers in the room pointed out the centrality of working to their lives and the significance of shifting careers. In the case of one individual on facing their unemployment they felt left adrift: “what am I now?” they asked. In the case of another individual, they spoke of the urge to read in job ads what contributions one might be making in a job (rather than just reading a laundry list of employer’s needs). Work can be, then, being appreciated, being valued, having a purpose. As one job seeker said “I want a reason to get up in the morning.”
- Topic as emotion-ridden: Comments made by job seekers made it clear how, for some job seekers, a lack of employment can lead to a lack of confidence and even a more generalized grief around one’s life.
- Job seekers wants and needs: Those in the room talked about wants and needs such as work-life balance, flexibility, but also the need to be “one’s true self.” This final theme, it should be noted, arises often in DEIB discussions around belonging in the workplace.

“Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group. It is when an individual can bring their authentic self to work.”<sup>1</sup> We know from research that there are huge

---

<sup>1</sup> Cornell University. (n.d). *Sense of belonging*. <https://diversity.cornell.edu/belonging/sense-belonging>

organizational benefits to a strong sense of belonging. For example, employees with a strong sense of belonging are 50% less likely to leave their jobs, have a 56% increase in job performance, and have 75% less sick days.<sup>2</sup>

- Job seeking as challenging: Job seekers in the session talked about the challenges of looking for employment. One person spoke of it as being a very isolating experience: “off in the abyss,” they shared. Another described the process as “sad, humiliating.”

Aware that they were facing age discrimination one individual admitted to trying to “fudge” their age on their resumé by removing decades from their job experience list; these same job seekers also described having employers explain that they could not hire them because they were “too experienced” or “over-qualified.” In addition, we know from earlier research that often employers will use the excuse of a candidate not being a good “fit.” These discriminatory experiences, unfortunately, echo those of other equity-seeking groups – such as racialized job seekers. Research done in Newfoundland and Labrador found that racialized job seekers have had to resort to strategies such as changing their name - and removing some of their post-secondary education – on their resumé to try to prevent discrimination on the part of prospective employers.<sup>3</sup>

- Age and DEIB: During the workshop there was talk about how 55+ job seekers do not hear about themselves within the larger conversation of DEIB. There seemed to be a general feeling of not being seen or heard. A couple of people added that they do not need age to “be ahead” of other equity-seeking groups, but that they do need to be included.

### What Warrants Further Discussion/Research

The following are some topics that arose out of the workshop on November 30, 2021, but that warrant further examination:

- Career Development Professionals (CDPs): There was conversation in the workshop about how some 55+ job seekers do not necessarily understand current employment competition norms (such as the use of software to scan prospective candidates resumé). In addition, one job seeker was questioning who they are as it relates to work and what kind of job they should be seeking. These topics are the professional realm of CDPs, but only passing reference was made to the work they do; existing and potential services and partnerships should be explored to fully understand how 55+ job seekers are – and can be – serviced by these professionals.

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<sup>2</sup> BetterUp. (2021). *Let's talk: 3 conversations you should have about belonging in 2021*. <https://grow.betterup.com/resources/3-must-have-conversations-about-belonging>

<sup>3</sup> Mind the Gap Consulting (2001). *“The Only Way In”: Centring the Employment Experiences of Diverse Job Seekers*. Community Employment Collaboration.

- Influence of gender identity: One of MQO's 2020 reports – and conversation in the workshop – briefly recognized that older women in particular have trouble finding work. Given that 55+ women are potentially more than 50% of those older workers who will be looking for work understanding what role gender plays in their employment experience is very important; primary or secondary research on this topic would help offer a fuller understanding of the challenges to more people 55+ being retained – or returning to – the workforce.
- Mental health benefits of employment: In the workshop, there was reference to the potential economic benefits of increasing the percentage of 55+ individuals who are actively engaged in the labour market; it is also worth exploring, however, the potential economic disadvantages that might exist should those people be unable to find meaningful work. As referenced above, for many, work is identity and gives a purpose to one's life; without that purpose there are potential mental health consequences for individuals which could potentially lead to overreliance on the health system, for example.
- Pull factors: One of MQO's 2020 reports referred to various push factors which might lead to individuals leaving the workforce. It would be prudent to also explore what are the pull factors (such as having a sense of purpose) which entice people to either stay or return to work.
- Value of 55+ workers: As reference earlier, there was significant time spent in the workshop in outlining the challenges and barriers that people aged 55+ face in their job search and in the workplace. A more asset-focussed approach, however, would help highlight what is the value that workers 55+ bring to a workplace? MQO's survey respondents used words such as dependable, reliable, hardworking, and knowledgeable; what do those contributions look like? How do companies benefit from those workers' positive traits? Understanding this more fully would help give language to potential advertising campaigns as well as help shape programs that support those 55+ in seeking meaningful employment.

### What We Did Not Hear

The following are a list of topics that did not come up in the November workshop that we feel warrant attention in future explorations on this topic:

- How do people's various social locations (such as their gender identity, their racial identity, their sexual orientation, their socio-economic affiliation) layer and make more complex their experiences of looking for and retaining work? That is, what does it look and feel like to be a trans man and 55+ and looking for work? To be an Indigenous woman? Understanding more about these experiences will add depth and breadth to understanding the province's 55+ workforce.

- What does a strong sense of belonging in an organization look like for a worker who is 55+? Knowing what this does – or could – look like would give employers an inclusive culture to strive for.

### Final Thoughts

Given the above reflections on what was heard – and not heard – in the *Working Better with Age* workshop as it relates to DEIB here are some final thoughts for consideration:

- There are a couple of areas which warrant further research:
  - How does one’s social location (such as gender or racial identity) influence the experience of workers/job seekers 55+?
  - What do employers really think about workers/job seekers 55+? Earlier research looked at this topic, but there may be issues with the validity of employers’ answers. That is, it may not be socially favourable to be honest around one’s perceptions of this group; as a result, employers’ self-assessment of their thoughts/behaviours/attitudes are not enough. Qualitative research might help supplement that quantitative work already completed.
  - What assets do 55+ workers bring to the workforce?
  - What pull factors might entice those 55+ to re-enter or stay in the labour market?
  - What does a strong sense of belonging in an organization look like for those who are 55+?

With the above knowledge in hand, there could be the development of both a well-informed advertising campaign as well as a targeted employment support programs.

- There may be merit in a dual-prong approach when speaking to employers on this issue:
  1. Spend time/consideration in making the business case for diversity. That is, educate employers on the value and benefits that workers 55+ - and other equity-seeking groups – bring.
  2. Combat age discrimination through thoughtful advertising and employment support programming (as referenced above).
- MQO’s earlier research pointed out that most employers make no special efforts to recruit or retain 55+ workers. If those same employers are interested in taking advantage of this part of the workforce, they will need to change their strategies; as the expression goes “if you keep doing what you’ve always done then you’re going to keep getting what you’ve always gotten.”

- The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is a large employer and yet, as those in the workshop pointed out, it is difficult for those 55+ to enter the provincial public service as most externally-posted jobs are for entry-level positions; there is an opportunity here for the Province to lead by example.
- As mentioned earlier, some individuals in the workshop referenced how they do not hear age talked about within the larger conversation of DEIB; one of the participants went as far as to say that older people are the “last bastion” in terms of who one is allowed to make fun of in society. This kind of thinking is not only inaccurate, but it is also dangerous and potentially very harmful; future work in this area should continue to be very careful not to pit the goals of 55+ job seekers against those of other equity-seeking groups.
- One of the successes of the *Working Better with Age* workshop was the positive rapport and relationships that were built in the intentional - and facilitated - interaction between employers and job seekers. It is worth exploring the factors that made this kind of interaction possible so that other related events might try to recreate them; factors such as small-scale interaction, storytelling, and focussing on areas of mutual benefit.

The topic of recruiting and retaining those who are 55+ in the workforce is an important one. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share our reflections on the topic as it relates to the November 30 workshop – and good luck with the project moving forward.

# Appendix H

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January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

# Working Better with Age

## St. John's Board of Trade



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## 1.0 Executive Summary

The following report outlines the results of research undertaken by MQO Research on behalf of the St. John's Board of Trade regarding the status of older workers in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Specifically, this research sought to address the following objectives: to understand the barriers faced by older workers who want to remain in the workforce; to examine the potential contribution of older workers to the labour market, and to estimate the number of workers over the age of 55 in Newfoundland and Labrador who would stay in the workforce if they were able to do so; and to develop recommendations to remove barriers and increase workforce participation among older workers.

To address these objectives, MQO Research conducted three research phases. Phase I comprised of secondary research outlining the existing literature on the emerging importance of increasing participation in the labour force among older workers, identifying major barriers that inhibit older workers from remaining in or returning to the workforce, and policy and practice aimed at addressing these issues. Following this, a focus group of older workers who wished to remain in the workforce was held to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of older workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Phase II involved the addition of five questions to the Atlantic Matters Newfoundland and Labrador Omnibus for Quarter 4 aimed at understanding the number and circumstances of individuals over the age of 55 who would remain in the labour force if they could. Data collection for the Omnibus occurred in October 2019. In addition, census data from Statistics Canada was compared with Omnibus results to illustrate the potential workforce impact of older workers. The third and final phase included synthesizing results from the previous two phases and developing recommendations for removing workforce barriers for older workers and increasing workforce participation of this age group.

A review of the literature in this area clearly illustrates the increasing need for focusing on extending working lives as the aging population continues to grow and public policy attempts to keep up with this growth. Secondary research identified pension reform as being a major avenue by which global economies have attempted to disincentivize retirement. In addition, several key barriers impacting older workers who wish to stay working were identified, including inflexibility of working arrangements, age discrimination, skill mismatch and technological advancement, and a lack of tailored employment services for older workers. Policy solutions have been proposed to address these barriers, such as leveraging pension reform, implementing wage subsidies for older workers who may have to accept lower wages than previous positions, and expanding existing initiatives to be more inclusive of older worker's needs.

Focus group discussions provided a more focused lens on this issue as it related to older workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Participants discussed the barriers they themselves faced in the workplace, many of which echoed the findings in the review of the literature. Participants were mindful of an ever-evolving technological world and the stress associated with having to keep up with this evolution and had real experiences with workplace inflexibility and age discrimination themselves. They proposed solutions to these issues which primarily involved open communication with stakeholders about the needs of older workers as well as granting a seat at the table for older workers to be involved in policy discussion.



The results from the Atlantic Matters Omnibus provided further insight into this issue, honing in on the potential workforce contributions older workers could make. Although many respondents aged 55 and older cited comfort with retirement, declining health, and general old age as being reasons not to seek any employment, a third (29%) reported that they would accept an appealing job offer if one became available. Common barriers among older workers who indicated they had looked for work included a lack of available jobs and considering themselves too old to work. Expanding the number of older individuals reporting that they would accept an appealing job offer to the total population of Newfoundland and Labrador, it is estimated that as many as 43,140 workers could potentially reattach to the workforce if they were able to do so.

Following the completion of the above research, five key recommendations were developed to address the emergent barriers for older workers and potential solutions for integrating older workers into the labour force. These recommendations are as follows: first, to provide more flexible working arrangements for older workers; second, to invest in skills and job training; third, to improve employment services for older adults; fourth, to leverage pension reform policy; and fifth, to combat age discrimination.

## 2.0 Project Overview

### 2.1 Objectives

The aim of the research undertaken was to look broadly at the status of older workers in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. More specifically, the research followed three major objectives:

1. Understand the barriers that currently exist for older workers who want to remain in the workforce;
2. Examine the potential contribution of older workers to the labour market, and to estimate the number of workers over the age of 55 in Newfoundland and Labrador who would stay in the workforce if they were able to do so; and
3. Develop recommendations to remove barriers and increase workforce participation of older workers.

Each of the above objectives coincided with focused research phases detailed below.

### 2.2 Methodology

#### Phase I: Understanding Barriers to Employment

During Phase I, secondary research was conducted to gain an understanding of the current research on barriers to employment and workforce participation for older workers. This included general background research on the emerging importance of increasing workforce participation among older workers, research which elaborates on specific barriers faced by older workers, best practice research in removing barriers to participation, and any other available information on policy and practice to support older workers who wish to remain in the workforce. This information was gleaned through a literature review of current industry and peer reviewed publications.

In order to gain a better understanding of the experiences of and barriers facing older workers in Newfoundland and Labrador specifically, and to verify the findings of the literature, a focus group was conducted in November 2019 with four older workers who wished to remain in the workforce, with ages ranging from 57 to their early 70s. Two men and two women participated, and all participants had noted looking for work after retirement. Further details of this focus group are outlined in Section 3.0 of this report.

#### Phase II: Estimating Potential Contribution to the Labour Market

The second phase of the research involved understanding the current untapped resource that older workers represent for the labour market in Newfoundland and Labrador. In addition to examining



Statistics Canada labour market data, five questions were added to the Atlantic Matters Newfoundland and Labrador Omnibus to assess the percentage of individuals over the age of 55 who would participate in the workforce if they could.

Atlantic Matters Omnibus is a telephone-based public opinion survey that is conducted every three months in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland Labrador. In Newfoundland and Labrador, this survey sample size is 400 and includes both landline and cell phone numbers. In terms of inclusion criteria, participants for this section of the Omnibus were required to be 18 years of age or older and to live in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Omnibus was deployed in October 2019, with data collected between October 24<sup>th</sup> and October 31<sup>st</sup>. Statistical analysis of this data occurred on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

### Phase III: Recommendations and Final Report

The final reporting phase involved synthesizing the data collected in Phases I and II and summarizing the contents of these findings to provide final recommendations to remove barriers and increase workforce participation of older workers in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. These suggestions are outlined in Section 5.0.

## 3.0 Review of Secondary Research

### 3.1 Introduction

According to a 2019 report<sup>1</sup> published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an international organization focused on policy development and addressing challenges faced by the world economy, the median age of populations across OECD countries is expected to raise from its current age of 40 to 45 years by the mid-2050s. Further, the proportion of older adults aged 65 and over to those of traditional working age (ages 15 to 64) is expected to rise to a rate of 2 in 5 by 2050. The proportion of older adults participating in the labour force has kept apace, and there are now more older adults active in the labour market across OECD countries than ever before. In Canada specifically, the employment rate among those 55 to 64 years of age has raised by 15 percentage points since the year 2000.<sup>2</sup>

As life expectancies increase and individuals continue to want to work well into old age, Canada has launched policies and programs to support unemployed older workers in their reintegration into the workforce, such as the joint federal-provincial/territorial Targeted Initiative for Older Workers.<sup>3</sup> These types of programs will be paramount to tackling the demographic shifts associated with population aging and the raising proportion of retirees to workers in particular; the OECD (2019) reports that, if nothing is done to address current work and retirement patterns, there will be significant strain in public expenditures and overall economic prosperity. According to the OECD (2019), population ageing may also play a role in compounding inequalities later in life as disparities in employment, income, and health continue to accumulate over the life course.<sup>4</sup> According to the PwC Golden Age Index report released in 2018 which quantifies how well global economies harness the power of their older workers,<sup>5</sup> Canada currently ranks 18<sup>th</sup> of 35 analyzed countries. Canada could see a boost to its GDP of \$99 billion if it were to rise to levels of one of the top-ranking countries, New Zealand. Overall, bringing global employment rates up to New Zealand's level represents a \$3.5 trillion economic opportunity. Thus, there are a number of factors associated with a need to help older workers remain or otherwise reintegrate into the workforce.

Much of the global economic policy for addressing these challenges has been focused on disincentivizing early retirement and rewarding longer working lives. One of the first levers policymakers have explored in this regard is pension reform. The most common global approaches to pension reform have involved reducing entitlements to workers and, therefore, costs, diminishing the incentive to retire; raising the pension age or otherwise introduce penalties for retirement at the statutory age; or raising the minimum age at which pensionable benefits can be accessed.<sup>6</sup> According to the OECD's 2019 report, many countries

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c4d4f66a-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/c4d4f66a-en&mimeType=text/html#>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/els/public-pensions/oecd-pensions-at-a-glance-19991363.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/evaluations/2016-targeted-initiative-older-workers.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c4d4f66a-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/c4d4f66a-en&mimeType=text/html#>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pwc.com/mx/es/publicaciones/c2g/2018-25-06-golden-age-index-2018.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer\\_9789264035881-en](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer_9789264035881-en)

have raised the statutory retirement age in public pension systems in alignment with life expectancy,<sup>7</sup> though Canada has not yet joined the host of countries to follow this route.<sup>8</sup>

Work published by Hurd, Michaud, and Rohwedder (2012) echoes the economic usefulness of pension reform: the authors report that, upon examination of data from OECD countries, investing an extra \$10,000 in public pension wealth reduces the average retirement age by roughly one month and functions to suppress private asset accumulation.<sup>9</sup>

While many of the above factors are associated with what the OECD (2006) has termed *pull* factors, those which result in pulling workers into retirement, various *push* factors, those which restrict opportunities for older workers, play just as important of a role in an individuals decision to retire. As such, it is equally important to consider in an analysis of the barriers older workers face if they wish to remain in the workforce.<sup>10</sup> These factors include workplace structures and policies, employer attitudes and age discrimination, and skill mismatch.

## 3.2 Key Employment Barriers

### Inflexibility of Employment Arrangements

For many individuals approaching retirement age, the option to gradually reduce workforce participation rather than retiring abruptly may be an appealing one. However, in some cases, pension rules restricting one's ability to combine pensions with income from other work may restrict older workers from these alternate arrangements. In addition, if there are substantial costs for employers hiring workers regardless of their number of working hours, it may be less financially prudent for employers to hire part-time over full-time workers.<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting, however, that Martin (2018) proposes this as a feasible option to improving workforce participation among older workers, and suggests that further attention should be paid to the rise of the "gig economy" in improving possibilities for older workers, though only if policymakers can agree upon proper definitions and measurements for determining its viability.<sup>12</sup>

The reality of declining health with age also presents a major barrier for older workers wishing to remain in the workforce. Older workers must contend with declining physical and, at times, cognitive functioning with age,<sup>13</sup> which may influence one's decision to reduce their work hours or to work from home.

Data from the PwC Golden Age Index Report (2018) also points to the strains of caring responsibilities which increase for older adults. Often, older adults must take on caregiving responsibilities for spouses, adult children, grandchildren, or other family members, and rigidity of working arrangements may inhibit

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<sup>7</sup> <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=263893d2-52dc-4aa2-83d0-bafb680a826b%40sdc-v-sessmgr03>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/els/public-pensions/oecd-pensions-at-a-glance-19991363.htm>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3630514/>

<sup>10</sup> [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer\\_9789264035881-en](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer_9789264035881-en)

<sup>11</sup> [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer\\_9789264035881-en](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer_9789264035881-en)

<sup>12</sup> <http://ftp.iza.org/dp11510.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://content.iospress.com/download/work/wor00874?id=work%2Fwor00874>

those wishing to continue to work from doing so.<sup>14</sup> This may cause one to retreat from the workforce altogether, rather than gradually reducing their working hours as they age.

### Age Discrimination

One of the major barriers for older adults who would like to remain in the workforce is the presence of age discrimination among employers, who play a key role in extending employee working lives and offering quality opportunities to older workers. Those involved in hiring may have negative perceptions of older workers, relying on stereotypes of inflexibility or lack of adaptability to make decisions regarding their hiring.<sup>15</sup> Evidence from a field study designed to test hiring discrimination of older workers by Neumark, Burn, and Button (2017) suggests that age discrimination makes finding new employment a significant challenge, especially for older women.<sup>16</sup>

While employment longevity among older workers stems in large part from remaining in their existing employment longer, they have fewer opportunities to find new jobs.<sup>17</sup> Even in this case, age discrimination may factor into a lack of retention on the part of employers: as the OECD's 2019 report notes, "if firms rely on seniority or efficiency wages as an incentive device, the cost of retaining workers at an older age or hiring them may be too high relative to their [perceived lower] productivity."<sup>18</sup>

Although age discrimination legislation exists nationally, it is often difficult to prove that this discrimination has occurred, and the costs of bringing a case before courts may ultimately prove inaccessible for those experiencing it. It is therefore necessary to couple effective enforcement policy regarding age discrimination with awareness campaigns and employer best practices in order to promote impactful change in this area.<sup>19</sup>

### Skill Mismatch and Technological Advancement

With the advancement of digital technologies in all areas of life, and especially in the workforce, those who possess digital literacy and proficiency with information technologies represent an increasing norm among job seekers. Those who do not possess these skills, which can include older workers who perhaps were not introduced to digital technologies in the same way younger workers have been, are at an increasing disadvantage in seeking new employment and in retaining existing employment. Although older workers represent a diverse group in terms of their skills in the labour force, many still struggle as their skills are considered insufficient or outdated with respect to an increasingly digital world.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.pwc.com/mx/es/publicaciones/c2g/2018-25-06-golden-age-index-2018.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c4d4f66a-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/c4d4f66a-en&mimeType=text/html#>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/files/el2017-06.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <http://ftp.iza.org/dp11510.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c4d4f66a-en/1/2/4/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/c4d4f66a-en&mimeType=text/html&csp=d7923bdee41bdf16059354ebbe19aa0f&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c4d4f66a-en/1/2/4/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/c4d4f66a-en&mimeType=text/html&csp=d7923bdee41bdf16059354ebbe19aa0f&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c4d4f66a-en/1/2/5/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/c4d4f66a-en&mimeType=text/html&csp=d7923bdee41bdf16059354ebbe19aa0f&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book>

Upskilling and training are major avenues through which employers can close the skill gap between employee groups, yet many may not see the benefit to investing their workers. Older adults across OECD countries were shown to consistently participate in less training than their younger counterparts, exacerbating their disadvantage in the workplace.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, public spending on labour force training and upskilling supports have been on the decline over the past few years in most countries in the OECD's purview.<sup>22</sup> In the face of automation and the obsolescence of many previous roles as a result, failure to adapt to these changes could prove problematic for older workers, as PwC (2018) estimates that as many as 25 percent of older workers could lose their jobs due to automation.<sup>23</sup>

#### Lack of Employment Services Tailored to Older Workers

The OECD (2006)<sup>24</sup> also notes that currently existing employment services may be geared more toward the needs of younger workers rather than older workers. Yet, older workers face unique challenges in attempting to remain in the workforce or to reattach to it. Several OECD countries have implemented strategies to ameliorate this discrepancy, creating specific initiatives and programs targeted at helping older workers in their job search and in providing counselling specific to their needs. However, if this element of labour force integration remains ignored and there is not focused investment in employment services unique to the needs of older workers, this may manifest in longer periods of unemployment for this group or a premature exit from the labour force altogether.

### 3.3 Policy Solutions

Based on a preliminary review of the extant literature in this area, there are several steps which governments can take to improve the employability of older workers.

First, promoting a training and learning culture in the workplace is a long-term measure which can allow workers to remain employable over their working lives. However, by encouraging all generations, not only older workers, to adopt a continuous learning mindset, the skills challenges faced by today's older workers become less likely for those in the future.

Second, providing better access to upskilling should begin before an individual reaches an age at which they could be classified as an older worker. When mid-career professionals are given opportunities to update their skills, they will be more employable long-term than those who do not capitalize on these opportunities. According to the OECD (2006), France is one country that has implemented this approach: employees with more than 20 years in the workforce or who are aged 45 or older are given access to a skills audit. Moreover, employees with over two years of experience receive career counselling within

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c4d4f66a-en/1/2/5/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/c4d4f66a-en&mimeType=text/html&\\_csp=d7923bdee41bdf16059354ebbe19aa0f&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c4d4f66a-en/1/2/5/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/c4d4f66a-en&mimeType=text/html&_csp=d7923bdee41bdf16059354ebbe19aa0f&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/retraining-and-reskilling-workers-in-the-age-of-automation>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.pwc.com/mx/es/publicaciones/c2g/2018-25-06-golden-age-index-2018.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer\\_9789264035881-en#page125](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer_9789264035881-en#page125)

their company and accompanying training passports show the skills and aptitudes an employee has gained through on-the-job or vocational training. Certain employees may also gain a workplace right to continued training within their organization.<sup>25</sup>

Third, policymakers can explore the implementation of wage subsidies for older workers who lose their jobs. If an older worker loses their job for any number of reasons, they are more likely to see reduced wages in their next employment opportunity. Some OECD countries have employment subsidy programs to address this challenge.<sup>26</sup> Under these programs, the government provides some top-up to older workers who take a new job at a lower wage following layoff or job loss.<sup>27</sup>

Fourth, in Canada specifically, the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW) is a program that shared costs between provincial and federal governments to support workers, usually aged 55 to 64, as they look for job opportunities. A recent evaluation<sup>28</sup> of the TIOW found that this program had success in allowing older workers to attach to the labour market. Further development of the initiative has been recommended in the areas of better defining goals for participants, marketing projects to employers, peer support, and tracking of workers in the program.

Finally, promoting entrepreneurship and business ownership as a means of remaining in the workplace addresses many of the barriers older workers may face, especially those related to employer costs to hire older workers who often bring with them an expectation of a wage premium.

### 3.4 Moving Forward

The review of the existing literature in this area presents common barriers and policy solutions regarding older workers who wish to remain in the work force. Synthesizing this literature with results of primary research in Newfoundland and Labrador helps paint a more detailed picture of what older workers have to say on this topic and how these issues might be addressed in this specific regional context.

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<sup>25</sup> [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer\\_9789264035881-en](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer_9789264035881-en)

<sup>26</sup> [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer\\_9789264035881-en](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/live-longer-work-longer_9789264035881-en)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/seniors/forum/labour-market-decisions-older-workers.html>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/evaluations/2016-targeted-initiative-older-workers.html>

## 4.0 Focus Group Insights

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019, a focus group was held with four participants with ages ranging from ages 57 to early 70s. The primary area of exploration for this session involved barriers that exist for older workers who would like to remain in the workforce.

### 4.1 Participant Profiles

Participants consisted of two men and two women, all of whom had looked for work or new opportunities post-retirement. All participants had worked in professional or school-based industries, with one participant also having worked in the construction industry post-retirement. All were self-identified recruits and knew each other. In terms of their employment situation, they can be described as follows: one participant was working for pay in full-time employment; one was self-employed and engaged in contract work; one was retired though focused on their involvement in volunteering and participation in several boards; and one had recently quit her job and was actively looking for employment.

### 4.2 Key Themes

Based on a synthesis of the discussions among participants during this focus group, the following section outlines the key themes which emerged regarding the challenges faced by older workers wanting to participate in the work force. These themes are summarized in **Figure 1**, with corroborating points and examples listed for each.

**Figure 1: Key Focus Group Themes**

Work as Identity	Challenges with Technology	Age Discrimination	Challenges with Workplace Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Sense of purpose</i></li><li>• <i>"Usefulness" and self-worth</i></li><li>• <i>Loss of social connections</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Feeling obsolete</i></li><li>• <i>e-Learning and digital training</i></li><li>• <i>Digital avenues for seeking new opportunities</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Experience, value of older workers overlooked</i></li><li>• <i>Passed over for training opportunities</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Inflexibility of workplace policy</i></li><li>• <i>Benefits not designed for older workers to access</i></li></ul>

#### Work as Identity

For participants who were currently working, paid or unpaid, employment was thought to be a large part of their sense of purpose and “usefulness,” contributing to one’s feelings of self-worth. Further, work provides an avenue for social engagement; when one stops working, many social connections can become severed. For one participant, their workplace encompassed a part of their social community, which is lost when one leaves the workforce.

## Challenges with Technology

Most participants noted that they felt “technologically obsolete” and less comfortable using technology in the workplace compared to younger workers. There was some fear on the part of those over the age of 65 that they would make a mistake using technology which would inadvertently break or crash a system. However, participants also did not want their work to be done for them, but rather to be shown how to use technology and for what was being done to be explained to them.

Additionally, the move toward e-learning for skill development and training in the workplace was a source of stress for participants: it was felt that employers did not tailor training methods to different learning approaches and that technology-based training was thought to be sufficient in meeting staff training needs. A few participants noted that they learn in what they called a more “old school” approach, using non-digital means such as a pen and paper.

Looking for work or new opportunities as an older worker was also impeded by technological challenges. While seeking new opportunities, one participant noted that while she sought the Independent Appointments Commission as an avenue to find positions, she still needed help typing her resume and submitting it online. Overall, the lack of confidence among participants in their abilities, especially as it related to technological ability, emerged as a prominent point of discussion. As one participant asked, “who is going to hire me? I’m 57 and I can’t put on my resume that I am computer literate.”

## Age Discrimination

Participants felt that employers tend to place less value on their work and life experience compared to younger workers, and that young people are perceived to be “better at the job” than older workers due to learning quickly and adapting to new technology. One participant noted how employers do not recognize the value of reliability, dependability, or strong work ethic present in older workers.

Moreover, several participants mentioned that employers believe that older workers are not interested in receiving new training and that they are better off training younger workers as they will be in the workforce longer. One participant mentioned that of three people in her department, two were sent to receive advanced training and she, despite being more senior in her role, was not offered this training by her employer.

## Challenges with Workplace Policy

It was noted that, as one ages, their need for medical care and attending medical appointments increases. Yet participants felt that employers were not flexible enough in accommodating these needs, not only for older workers but for all workers. One participant described the penalties he suffered as a result of having to attend medical appointments, such as losing eligibility for performance incentives and overtime hours; when this participant attempted to come to an alternative arrangement to make up for hours lost, his employer remained firm in adhering to workplace policy.



Policy restrictions also had an impact on insurance and benefits for older workers. Most employer group plans, participants noted, are not designed for the needs of older workers, and some benefits are retracted once one turns 65, with all benefits disappearing after age 71. Several participants mentioned that benefits such as dental and vision coverage are clawed back as one ages. It therefore becomes a challenge to access medical benefits in the private market within reasonable costs.

### 4.3 Solutions

Participants were given the opportunity to suggest solutions to the issues they raised during the session.

First and foremost, more communication is needed and there must be a greater awareness of the issues faced by older workers. Employers need to better understand the impacts their decisions have on older workers and adjust their approaches to be respectful of the differences between employee groups. Older workers must be engaged in conversations with policymakers in the workplace to address these challenges.

In addition, one participant suggested that the issues discussed need not be singled out as older worker or seniors' issues, but rather must be part of the general policy-making process. Older workers must be at the table when policies are developed in order to provide key input from their own perspectives.

## 5.0 Determining Potential Labour Market Contribution

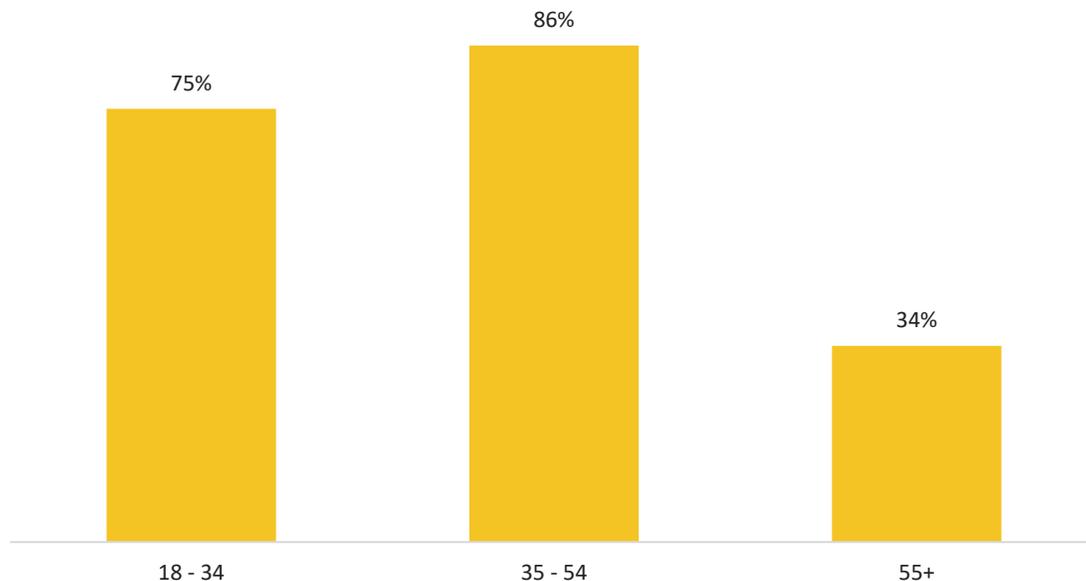
In order to gain a more thorough understanding of the status of the older workers in the province and, specifically, to assess the potential untapped resource that older workers represent, data from the Atlantic Matters Omnibus and Statistics Canada census data were analysed and synthesized.

### 5.1 The Atlantic Matters Omnibus Q4 2019

The following is a summary of the questions added to the Atlantic Matters Newfoundland and Labrador Omnibus for Q4, concerning workplace involvement and barriers to participating in the labour force. For the purpose of the present analysis, specific questions are described in terms of the responses of those aged 55 and older.

Participants were first asked whether they currently have a paying job. The proportions of responses for this question across age groups is depicted in **Figure 2**. Those between 18 and 54 were very likely to have a paying job (75% of those 18 to 34 and 86% of those 35 to 54). Those in the 55+ age group were the least likely to have a paying job (34%).

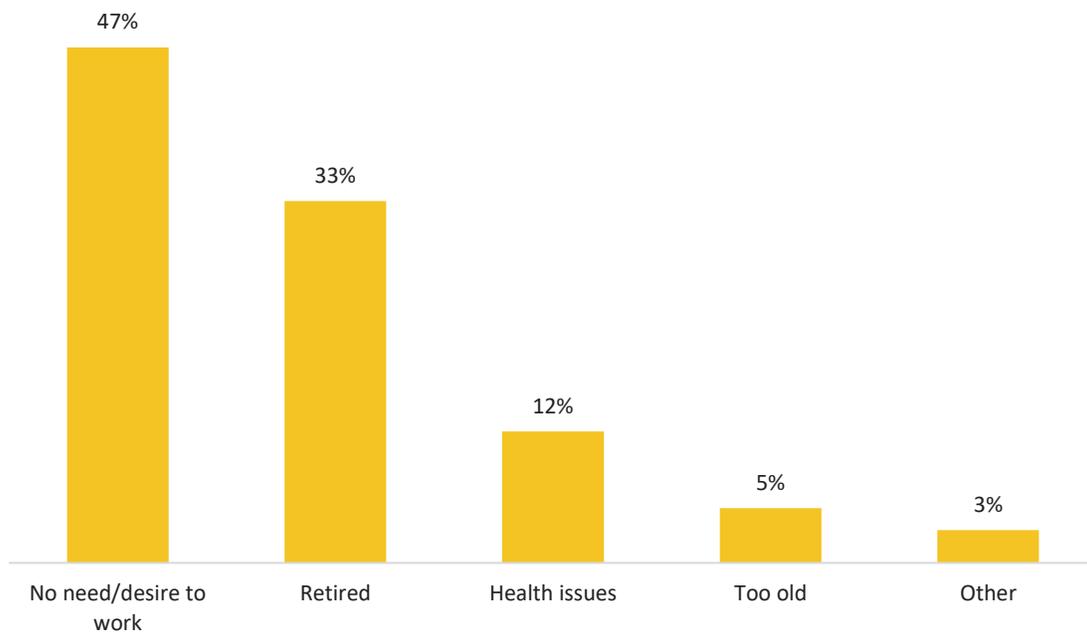
**Figure 2: Percentage of Each Age Group with a Paying Job**



If participants responded that they did not have a paying job, they were asked if they had looked for work in the past two years. Among the 55+ age group, the vast majority (92%) of those who do not have a paying job reported not having looked for work in this time.

When asked why they have not looked for work in the past two years, those 55 and older who do not currently have a paying job cited not needing or wanting to work (47%), retirement (33%), health issues (12%), being too old to work (5%), and other reasons (3%). **Figure 3** summarizes these results.

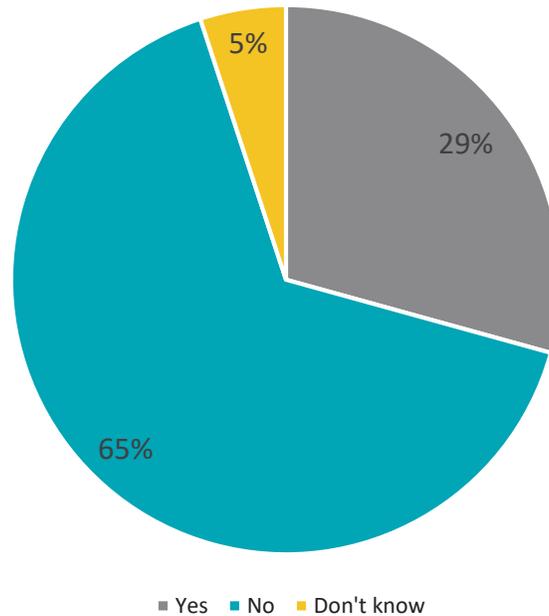
**Figure 3: Reasons for Not Looking for Work in the Past Two Years Among Those 55+**



Participants were also asked what challenges or barriers they have faced in trying to find work, if they have looked for one in the past two years. Among those 55+ who reported having looked for work in the past two years, the top mentioned challenges included: lack of jobs available (31%); being too old (13%); and other specified barriers (12%). On the subject of age, one participant offered, *“a lot of it has to do with our age. I’ve had a professional job all my life and after a certain age it is hard to be a hairstylist. Keeping up with the technology and keeping yourself up to the standards, it’s costly. You can’t afford it.”* Another noted that their main barrier was related to their age: *“I’m older. It’s a challenge, people usually don’t want to hire someone who’s older.”*

Participants who do not have a paying job were asked whether they would accept employment if an appealing job opportunity arose. The response distribution among those age 55+ is depicted in **Figure 4**. While the majority (65%) would not accept such an offer, a sizable portion (29%) reported that they would accept an appealing job offer.

Figure 4: Whether or Not One Would Accept an Appealing Job Offer Among Those 55+



Finally, those who do not currently have a paying job and would not accept one if an appealing opportunity arose were asked their main reason for this decision. In the 55+ age category, the most commonly cited reason was that they do not need or want to work (38%), followed by illness, injury, or disability (31%), retirement or old age (30%), personal or family responsibilities (1%), and other reasons (1%). Among recorded comments, one participant responded that they “*feel [they] would probably taking a job away from a young person.*” Another noted, “*I am 77 [years] old and although I would like to [work], my body couldn’t take it.*”

## 5.2 Extrapolating Statistics Canada Census Data

According to the Statistics Canada 2016 census,<sup>29</sup> the total population of those in the labour force in Newfoundland and Labrador (ages 15 and older) is 256,855, constituting an employment rate of 49.5% and an overall labour force participation rate of 58.7%. The total population of individuals in the province between the ages of 55 and 74 is 148,760 individuals.

If one generalises the findings of the Atlantic Matters Omnibus responses to the total population of Newfoundland and Labrador in estimating the proportion of individuals in the 55 to 74 age group who would accept an appealing job opportunity to be 29%, the total number of individuals this encompasses is **43,140**. This suggests that there is a substantial portion of potential workers who could be recruited into the labour force among this age group, considering that the Omnibus polling is weighted to be

<sup>29</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

representative of the general public. **Figure 5** illustrates this extrapolation, rounding numerical values to the nearest 1000.

**Figure 5: Potential Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador, Ages 55 to 74**



### 5.3 Key Conclusions

In summary, respondents of the Omnibus aged 55 and older largely did not have paying jobs, and among those unemployed, the majority had not looked in the past two years. Participants cited a number of reasons for this centered around common topics related to the natural aging process and life stage, such as not desiring employment, retirement, health issues, or general old age. Barriers emerged among those who had looked for employment related to age and a lack of available jobs for them, and specific verbatim comments have suggested age discrimination and reskilling issues as playing a role as well. Corroborating secondary research and focus group discussions, those 55 and older who would not accept an appealing job offer cited illness and disability as well as personal responsibilities as being reasons for this decision.

At the same time, a third (29%) of respondents in this age category indicated that they would accept an appealing job offer should one become available. This suggests that there exists potential for increased labour force participation among older adults in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially if one considers these results within the scope of larger population figures.

## 6.0 Recommendations

The following section outlines key recommendations for removing barriers faced by older adults wishing to remain in the workforce and increasing workforce participation among older workers. These recommendations are based on a synthesis of the results from Phases I and II of the present research.

For many aging adults, there are barriers to remaining in the labour force that are largely unavoidable, such as declining health and increased disability, lack of desire to work in old age, and, as a review of the secondary literature suggests, satisfaction with pension policy. However, when assessing the results of the Atlantic Matters Newfoundland and Labrador Omnibus survey, there is a sizeable portion of those who would like to work in old age in Newfoundland and Labrador, which can be extrapolated to around 143,000 potential workers in the total population according to Statistics Canada 2016 census figures. Focus group data and secondary research have honed in on several key barriers these older adults may face in attaching or reattaching to the work force. The proceeding five recommendations offer suggestions to removing these barriers.

### 1. Provide Flexible Working Arrangements

Echoed in data from secondary research, focus group discussions, and survey responses was the idea that older adults have many reasons for needing to divide their attention away from a primary focus on full-time work, such as personal health and attending to healthcare-related concerns, caregiving responsibilities, or the desire to gradually reduce working time rather than retire completely. Therefore, providing flexible working arrangements for older workers may be a key contributor to allowing older workers to continue to work if they wish to do so. This could include allowing for more opportunities to work part-time or from home, removing penalties for attending to healthcare or other responsibilities, or incentivizing employers to hire older workers at reduced hours by addressing associated financial concerns.

### 2. Invest in Skills and Job Training

Focus group participants expressed their discomfort with an increasingly digital workplace and their fear that they will be regarded as “technologically obsolete,” and, indeed, these concerns have emerged in the secondary literature as being a major barrier to older workers in securing employment. It may therefore be prudent for policymakers and employers alike to consider further investment in upskilling and job training. This need not only apply to older workers: continuing to upskill and train employees prior to their entrance into old age will ensure that they remain employable through their working lives and will preemptively remove future skill-related barriers. Fostering a culture of continuous learning and encouraging older workers, as well as their employers, to pursue advanced training will be crucial.

### 3. Improve Employment Services for Older Adults

In alignment with Recommendation 2, improving employment services unique to the needs of older adults may be another way for policymakers to remove significant barriers for those wishing to keep working. One focus group participant spoke of the challenges with existing job application processes, which frequently occur online and which require digital documentation. This participant needed help typing her resume into a digital format to be submitted for job opportunities. This participant's personal experience provides just one example of the challenges faced by older adults which could be efficiently tackled with more focused employment services, such as workshops focusing on digital skills.

### 4. Pension Reform

Policy-driven strategies for improving workforce participation among older workers may include pension reform, as outlined in the secondary literature. The three strategies common among nations globally have been to reduce public benefits, to raise the pensionable age, or to raise the minimum age at which pensionable benefits can be accessed. A closer inspection of policies surrounding pensions and areas for improvement of these policies may also be a fruitful avenue of exploration for retaining older workers in the labour force.

### 5. Combat Age Discrimination

Finally, one of the major themes emerging in both the focus group session and the secondary literature is the prevalence of age discrimination in the labour force and the importance of combatting this discrimination to the fullest extent. If older workers feel alienated, stigmatized, or unwelcomed into the workplace, they are far less likely to participate. Therefore, introducing or strengthening anti-age discrimination legislation, launching coinciding information and awareness campaigns, and supporting employers and their education on the topic of age discrimination and negative biases will be paramount to reducing the impact of this barrier on a provincial and national level.

***Research on Barriers and Opportunities to Workforce Participation for Older Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador*** is a research project led by St. John's Board of Trade and funded by the NL Workforce Innovation Centre (NLWIC).

The NLWIC, administered by the College of the North Atlantic (CNA), has a provincial mandate to provide a co-ordinated, central point of access to engage all labour market stakeholders about challenges, opportunities and best practices in workforce development.

The Centre's goal is to promote and support the research, testing and sharing of **ideas** and models of **innovation** in workforce development that will positively **impact** employability, employment, and entrepreneurship within the province's labour force and particularly under-represented groups. Funding for NLWIC is provided by the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour (AESL) under the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Development Agreement.

