

Employing and retaining older workers

APRIL 2021



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FOREWORD

AHRI is proud to partner once again with the Australian Human Rights Commission on this extremely important report which provides insight into the current employment climate for older workers, and the shift in perceptions around Australia's ageing workforce.

This is the fourth time we've conducted this research, and comparing the data year-on-year has been fascinating. Of particular note is respondents' perceptions of what constitutes an 'older worker'. We're slowly progressing towards an ageing workforce that has, according to our data, never looked younger.

This year, the majority of respondents (28.3%) classified an 'older worker' as someone aged between 61-65. In the inaugural survey in 2014, only 12.5% of respondents considered an older worker to be someone aged between 51-55. In 2021, this has jumped to almost 17%. At the same time, many of us plan to work longer with the majority of respondents expecting to retire between 66-70 years of age (39.6%), an increase of 7.7% from 2014. The number expecting to retire between 71-75 years of age has also grown, from 10.6% to 17.4% since 2014.

This means that the number of older workers in our organisations is increasing, with one third of respondents saying at least half of their workforce is made up of workers above 55 years old. So how are organisations taking advantage of all that older workers have to offer?

The answer is that not all organisations are. Only one in three respondents said their organisation 'somewhat sought' to retain older workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and nearly 16% didn't think their employers were prepared to deal with the challenges of an ageing workforce.

Despite our increasingly-aging workforce, over two thirds of respondents' organisations seldom or never offer unconscious bias training to their line managers. Of those who do offer such training, half say it does not address the age-related biases that are pervasive in many of our workplaces.

This could have significant ramifications on the representation and participation of older workers in our workforce; it puts up a barrier to their progression, development and retention rates – and that's if they can even get a foot in the door. It also means that organisations aren't taking advantage of all that older workers have to offer.

It's time we examined and potentially reassessed our bias training, mentorship programs and succession planning strategies to ensure we're not excluding a talented portion of the workforce – one that has a plethora of wisdom, experience, professional networks and institutional knowledge, all of which bolster an organisation's bottom line. It's simple: if you're not nurturing older talent, you are missing out.

I call on all HR professionals to reassess their recruitment practices to ensure they're not discriminatory against older workers. It's also critical that we facilitate programs that encourage knowledge transfer and craft policies that minimise age bias. It's my hope that this will make a start in addressing some of the worrying trends identified in this report. For many older workers, they've hit a point in their career where they're adding more value than ever before and doing some of their best work – let's support them on that journey.

*Sarah McCann-Bartlett
CEO, and Managing Director,
Australian HR Institute*

FOREWORD

It has been a pleasure to be involved once more in the AHRI older worker survey. Although the results this time have been mixed, there are some positive continuing trends from the 2014 and 2018 surveys.

There is a satisfying ongoing drop in the numbers of organisations that say they ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ have an age above which they are reluctant to recruit (from 51.6% in 2014 to 30.3% in 2018 and down to 26.8% in 2021), but the gains have gone to increase the number who said ‘maybe’ rather than those who said ‘definitely not’ or ‘probably not’. There is also a mix of responses to the question about what that age might be, though more respondents put the age as over 65 or over 70 than did in 2018.

The perception of what constitutes an ‘older’ worker has shifted to a younger age over the three surveys. For example, there has been a marked increase in those selecting 51-55, from 10.8% in 2018 to 16.9% in the current survey. Across the same period there has been an 8% drop in those selecting 61 – 65 as the appropriate age. This is of concern.

It is good to see an increase of 13.8% since 2014 in the number of respondents who recognise that the departure of older workers causes a loss of key skills or knowledge, but it’s unfortunate that there has been little or no increase in the same time period in organisations to capture corporate knowledge as older workers transition out of the workplace. This disconnect could usefully be addressed.

This survey was done in COVID time and it is likely that this had an impact on the answers and on organisational behaviours. Responses to the specific questions on this topic are interesting but not conclusive.

Overall there are some small continuing gains, but also a number of areas where progress has stalled or even gone backwards. Much remains to be done and we look forward to further collaboration with AHRI in this important work.

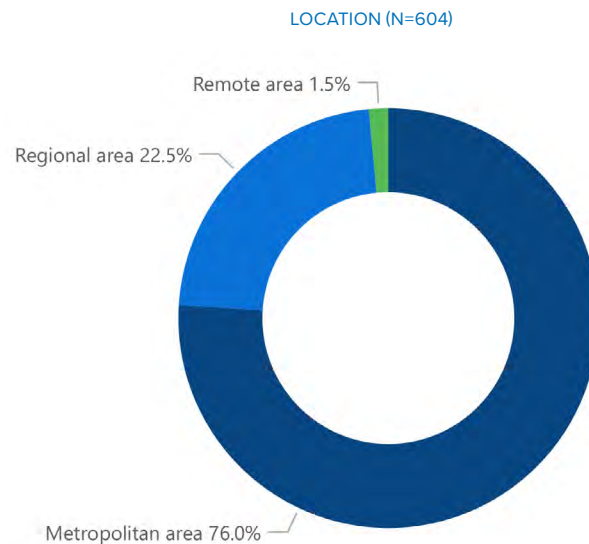
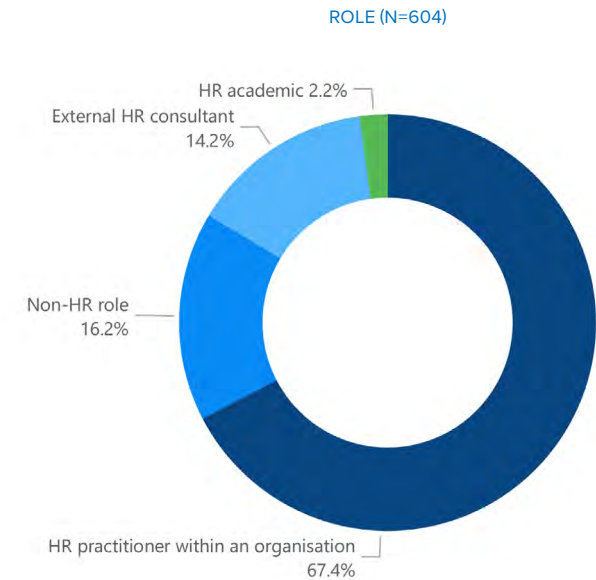
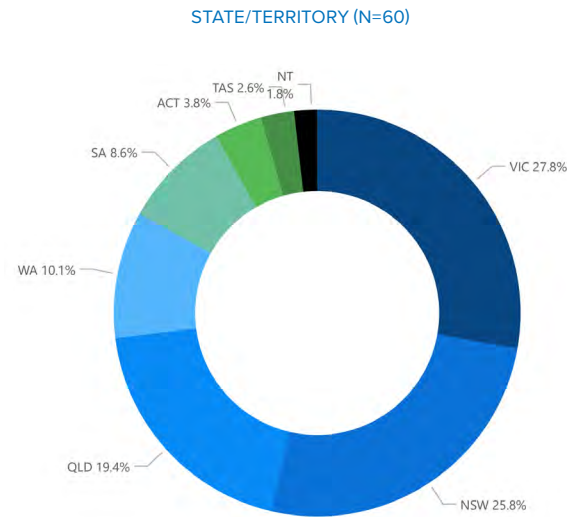
*The Hon Dr Kay Patterson AO,
Age Discrimination Commissioner,
Australian Human Rights Commission*

DEMOGRAPHICS

The Australian HR Institute and the Australian Human Rights Commission surveyed 604 HR leaders, academics, and business leaders between the 15th and 23rd of February 2021.

The aim of the study was to understand organisations' strategies to recruit and retain older workers, and how COVID-19 has impacted these strategies. Further, the study was to compare how these approaches have shifted in Australian workplaces over time, utilising data from previous surveys in 2012, 2014 and 2018.

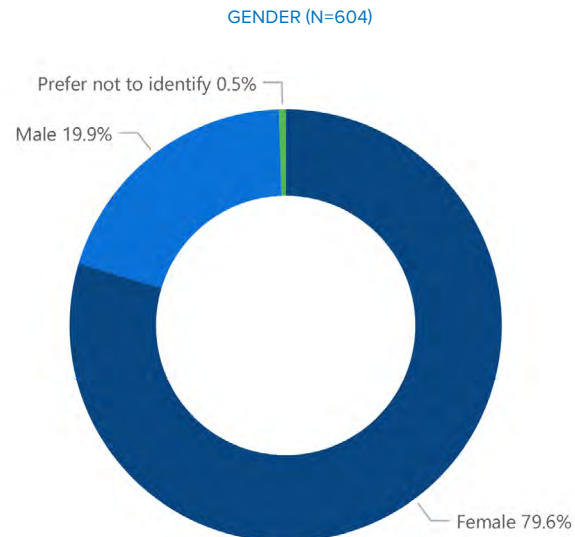
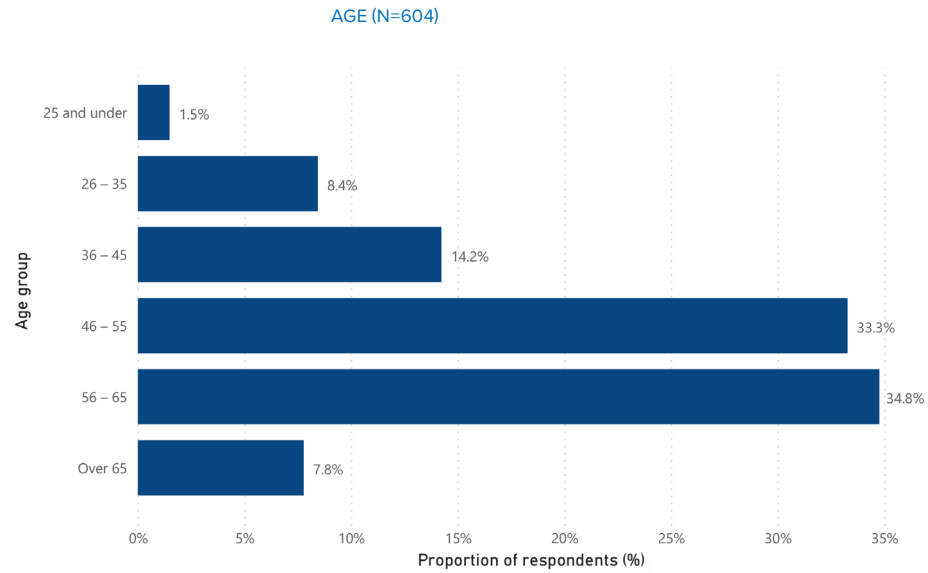
The majority of respondents reside in Victoria (27.8%) and New South Wales (25.8%), in a Metropolitan area (76%), and are HR practitioners working within an organisation (67.4%).



DEMOGRAPHICS

The majority of respondents to this survey are aged between 56-65 years (34.8%), followed by those aged between 46-55 (33.3%).

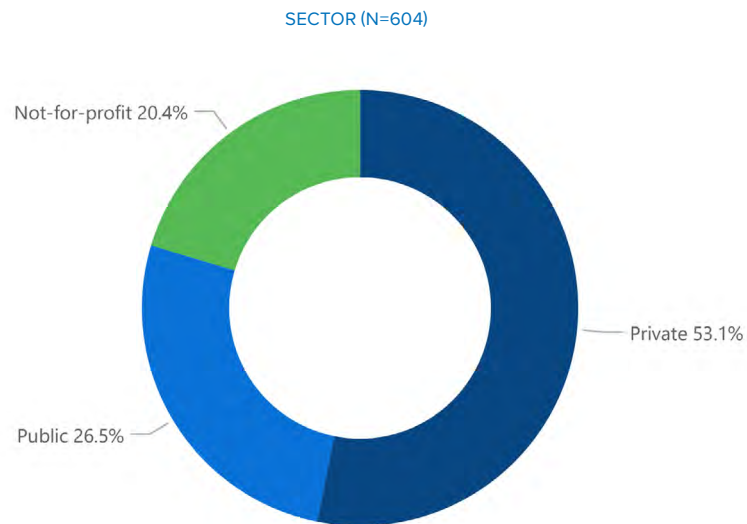
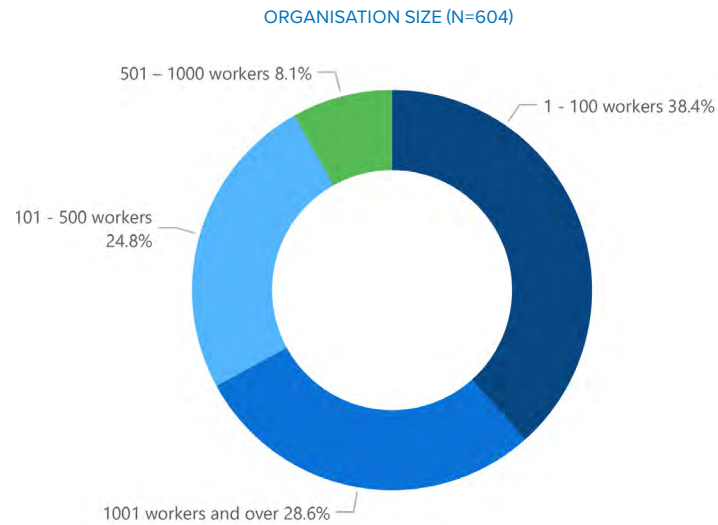
Responses were primarily from female respondents, representing almost 4/5 of the sample (79.6%).



DEMOGRAPHICS

Most respondents report working in small organisations (1-100 workers; 38.4%), followed by very large organisations (1001 workers and over; 28.6%).

Further, the majority of respondent are in the private sector (53.1%), and in the Healthcare and Social Assistance industry (15.1%). Many also report working in 'Other services' (17.6%), which includes 'Publishing', 'Member Organisations' and 'Software'.

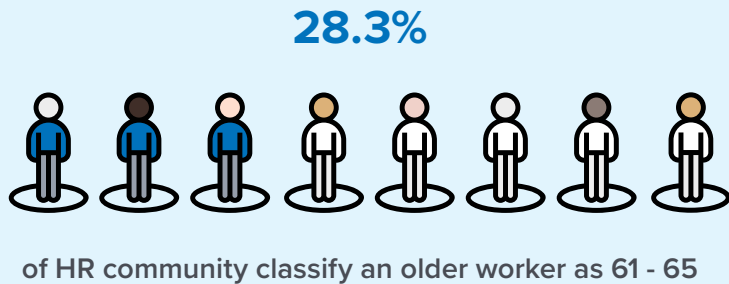


INDUSTRY (N=604)

Accommodation and Food Services	1.5%
Administration and Support Services	2.7%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1.8%
Arts and Recreation Services	0.8%
Construction	4.5%
Education and Training	11.6%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	2.5%
Financial and Insurance Services	5.0%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	15.1%
Information Media and Telecommunications	3.5%
Manufacturing	4.5%
Mining	2.5%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10.3%
Public Administration and Safety	10.4%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	0.8%
Retail Trade	1.8%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	2.0%
Wholesale Trade	1.3%
Other services (please specify)	17.6%

Attitudes and perception

The HR community in Australia is classifying 'older workers' as younger over time, even though the Australian workforce is aging



There is an increase in the % of workers above the age of 55 in the workplace



1/3

Consult with older workers on issues of specific concern to their workplace



Top 3

Reasons for older workers to stay with an organisation

- Flexible working
- Job satisfaction
- Phased retirement

Older workers are rated as being more
Loyal, Reliable, Aware

Younger workers are rated as having greater
Career ambitions, Technical capabilities
Physical capabilities

ATTITUDES & PERCEPTIONS

There seems to be a general shift in the HR community classifying an 'older worker' be a younger age bracket over time. While the majority (28.3%) of respondents classify an older worker as aged between 61 – 65, this proportion has decreased by 7.7% since 2018, and there is a higher proportion classifying an older worker as between 51-55 (16.9%; an increase of 6.1% since 2018).

The 2021 data on current workforces reflects an aging workforce over time. One third of respondents (33.3%) suggest that between 26-50% of their workforce is made up of workers above more than 55 years old. This is an increase of 5.9% since 2018 and 10.1% since 2012. Further, more workplaces are reporting that between 51-75% of their workforce are aged over 55 years of age (12.3%, an increase of 6.6% since 2018).

AT WHAT AGE WOULD YOU CLASSIFY SOMEONE AS AN OLDER WORKER?

ANSWER	2014 (N=1863)	2018 (N=834)	2021 (N=604)
40 - 45	1.6%	0.7%	1.8%
46 - 50	4.0%	5.0%	5.6%
51 - 55	12.5%	10.8%	16.9%
56 - 60	25.4%	20.5%	21.5%
61 - 65	32.6%	36.0%	28.3%
66 - 70	16.8%	18.8%	19.2%
71 - 75	5.1%	5.4%	4.3%
75+	2.1%	2.8%	2.3%

APPROXIMATELY WHAT PROPORTION OF YOUR ORGANISATION'S CURRENT WORKFORCE IS OVER 55 YEARS OF AGE?

ANSWER	2012 (N=1175)	2014 (N=1682)	2018 (N=824)	2021 (N=604)
Less than 5%	14.1%	5.3%	13.1%	8.8%
5% - 10%	20.3%	6.7%	17.0%	13.6%
11% - 25%	32.1%	35.1%	31.8%	25.3%
26% - 50%	23.2%	28.3%	27.4%	33.3%
51% - 75%	7.3%	5.9%	5.7%	12.3%
More than 75%	2.1%	1.5%	5.0%	6.8%

ATTITUDES & PERCEPTIONS

HOW OLDER AND YOUNGER WORKERS COMPARE ON THE FOLLOWING TRAITS:

OLDER WORKERS			YOUNGER WORKERS			NO DIFFERENCE			
ANSWER	2014 (N=1862)	2018 (N=841)	2021 (N=604)	2014 (N=1862)	2018 (N=841)	2021 (N=604)	2014 (N=1862)	2018 (N=841)	2021 (N=604)
More reliable	69.1%	59.7%	62.3%	0.4%	1.1%	0.8%	30.5%	39.2%	36.9%
More loyal	80.3%	73.8%	75.0%	0.5%	0.5%	0.2%	19.1%	25.7%	24.8%
Higher job performance	23.4%	16.1%	16.6%	9.2%	9.9%	8.9%	67.4%	74.1%	74.5%
More creative	5.0%	3.5%	4.5%	53.0%	50.8%	53.3%	41.9%	45.8%	42.2%
Greater concentration	43.3%	35.1%	34.4%	7.8%	6.8%	4.8%	48.9%	58.2%	60.8%
More committed	54.1%	50.9%	51.3%	1.2%	1.9%	0.8%	44.7%	47.1%	47.9%
Higher energy levels	2.1%	2.7%	3.3%	62.9%	50.2%	54.5%	35.0%	47.1%	42.2%
Greater awareness	58.0%	54.7%	57.3%	5.3%	6.2%	7.0%	36.7%	39.1%	35.8%
More able to adapt to change	7.7%	6.9%	10.9%	48.1%	46.6%	41.6%	44.2%	46.5%	47.5%
More physically capable	0.1%	1.3%	1.5%	73.5%	62.1%	64.4%	25.7%	36.6%	34.1%

While respondents rated older workers as more loyal (75%), more reliable (62.3%) and having a greater level of awareness (57.3%), respondents rated younger workers as having greater career ambitions (72%), better technology skills (67.7%), and being more physically capable (64.4%).

Respondents said that there were no major differences between older and younger workers when it came to higher job performance (74.5%), and greater concentration (60.8%).

ATTITUDES & PERCEPTIONS

The majority of respondents expect to retire between 66-70 years of age (39.6%). This has increased since 2014 by 7.7%. Further, the amount expecting to retire between 71-75 years of age has grown from 10.6% to 17.4% since 2014 (a 6.8% increase).

The majority currently do not consult with older workers on issues of specific concern to their workplace (48.7%). Less than 1/3 currently specifically consult with older workers on these issues (31.6%).

AT WHAT AGE DO YOU PERSONALLY EXPECT TO RETIRE?

ANSWER	2014 (N=1870)	2018 (N=837)	2021 (N=604)
40 - 45	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%
46 - 50	0.2%	0.5%	0.5%
51 - 55	2.0%	1.4%	1.2%
56 - 60	13.7%	10.8%	8.1%
61 - 65	34.7%	29.5%	25.0%
66 - 70	31.9%	37.4%	39.6%
71 - 75	10.6%	12.8%	17.4%
75+	6.6%	7.5%	8.3%

DOES YOUR ORGANISATION CONSULT WITH OLDER WORKERS ON ISSUES THAT ARE OF SPECIFIC CONCERN TO YOUR WORKPLACE?

ANSWER	2018 (N=833)	2021 (N=604)
Yes	21.3%	31.6%
No	52.0%	48.7%
Don't know	18.1%	12.4%
Plans to in future	8.6%	7.3%

ATTITUDES & PERCEPTIONS

Since 2018, flexible work options continue to be the number one initiative that respondents suggest would personally encourage them to remain in the workforce for longer (40.2%). This is followed by job satisfaction (29.3%) and the option of phased retirement (14.9%).

Other respondents suggested the availability of suitable work, having a purpose, having stimulating and worthwhile projects, and having good health would encourage them to remain in the workforce for longer.

Respondents were asked what have older workers described as issues of specific concern for their workplace. The following themes were suggested:

- Age discrimination
- Being able to transition into retirement
- Flexibility of hours and workload
- Being invisible
- Job security
- Mobility and accessibility to the workplace
- Technology
- Physical restraints of the job
- Lack of promotion opportunities

PERSONALLY, WHAT WOULD MOST ENCOURAGE YOU TO REMAIN
IN THE WORKFORCE FOR LONGER?

ANSWER	2014 (N=1865)	2018 (N=835)	2021 (N=604)
Flexible work options	31.8%	39.8%	40.2%
Job satisfaction	37.3%	28.1%	29.3%
Option of phased retirement	15.7%	15.2%	14.9%
Higher wages	6.0%	4.7%	3.5%
Promotion opportunities	3.1%	3.8%	3.3%
Training and development opportunities	1.9%	2.6%	2.7%
Other	4.2%	5.8%	6.1%

“ Some have requested to scale back working days and hours in preparation for retirement and we have embraced this. Others have changed roles to suit their skills and abilities better as they are now older. ”

“ The pace of work is high for an ‘older employee’ – that said, provided they can do the job it doesn’t matter what age the employee is. ”

“ Those with long tenure are concerned about the organisation’s shift of focus from being mission and values based to being financially driven. ”

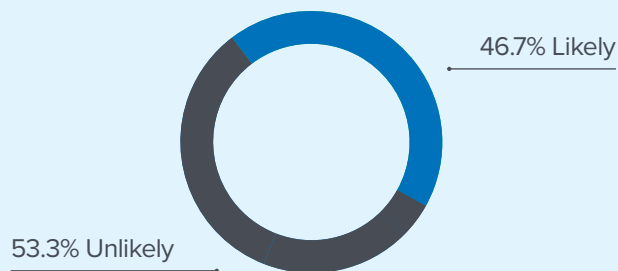
Recruitment



of respondents believed their organisation's recruitment practices have somewhat negatively impacted older workers

! This was more likely to be stated by public sector respondents

How likely is there an age which your organisation would be reluctant to recruit workers over?



Top 3 recruitment practices to encourage age diversity

- Flex working arrangements** (48.7%)
- Content of adverts attracts the full range of age groups** (44.4%)
- Excluding date of birth from application** (36.8%)

What's the advantage of hiring older workers in 2021?

- Experience** (76.9%)
- Professional knowledge** (64.4%)
- Age diversity** (34%)

RECRUITMENT

The three greatest advantages of recruiting older workers in 2021 are:

1. **Experience (76.9%)**
2. **Professional knowledge (64.4%)**
3. **Age diversity (34%)**

Other advantages reported include:

- Maturity in dealing with issues
- An ability to mentor others
- How they approach crisis
- Loyalty

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST ADVANTAGES OF RECRUITING OLDER WORKERS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION? (UP TO 3 ANSWERS)

ANSWER	2014 (N=1624)	2018 (N=812)	2021 (N=579)
Experience	74.3%	75.7%	76.9%
Professional knowledge	64.3%	68.4%	64.4%
Age diversity	20.6%	35.5%	34.0%
Reliability	36.1%	22.7%	25.9%
Reduced turnover	20.9%	20.1%	24.5%
Leadership	16.2%	16.6%	17.3%
Reflects customer base in workforce	10.7%	15.3%	15.9%
Communication skills	10.0%	8.5%	9.2%
Better attendance	16.3%	6.8%	7.3%
Other	1.3%	4.2%	3.5%
No advantages	2.5%	1.6%	1.6%

RECRUITMENT

The top 3 recruitment practices undertaken by organisations in 2021 to encourage age diversity are:

1. **Offering flexible working arrangements (48.7%)**
2. **Ensuring the content of adverts attracts the full range of age groups (44.4%)**
3. **Excluding date of birth from application forms (36.8%)**

Since 2014, the number of respondents reporting that their organisation offers flexible working arrangements to encourage age diversity has risen by 15.1%.

Very few organisations are using mature age-specific job boards to advertise vacancies (1.6%), or proactively recruiting older workers into a range of positions (9.7%).

23% of respondents report their organisation undertakes no recruitment practices to encourage an age diverse workforce, however this has dropped since 2014 by 6.6%.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING RECRUITMENT PRACTICES, IF ANY, DOES YOUR ORGANISATION UNDERTAKE TO ENCOURAGE AN AGE DIVERSE WORKFORCE? (UP TO 3 ANSWERS)

ANSWER	2014 (N=1600)	2018 (N=812)	2021 (N=579)
Offer flexible working arrangements	33.6%	42.5%	48.7%
Ensure the content of adverts attract the full range of age groups	43.5%	38.3%	44.4%
Train staff with recruitment responsibilities to ensure all recruitment practices are free of age bias	28.3%	32.1%	31.4%
Exclude date of birth from application forms	32.4%	27.3%	36.8%
Ensure the location of adverts attracts the full range of age groups	22.6%	11.6%	21.4%
Ensure recruitment suppliers have a Diversity & Inclusion policy	11.9%	9.4%	18.3%
Brief recruitment agents to ensure that processes do no disadvantage different age groups	13.9%	9.6%	16.2%
Proactively recruit older workers into a range of positions	5.6%	5.9%	9.7%
Use mature age specific job boards to advertise vacancies	2.3%	0.9%	1.6%
Other	1.3%	4.8%	4.5%
No practices undertaken	29.6%	25.4%	23.0%

“ We recruit seeking the best candidate for the role, and often this does not consider an age for the team member. We have a varied and diverse workforce with team members from young to older and anticipate continuing to do this. ”

RECRUITMENT

46.7% of respondents from the HR community reported that there was an age above which their organisation would be reluctant to recruit workers.

For this group (270 respondents), we asked what age they thought this might be. This varied largely between respondents, and while many suggested that age was over 65 (17.4%), many suggested they didn't know (17%). There have been no major changes in these proportions over time.

IS THERE AN AGE ABOVE WHICH YOUR ORGANISATION IS RELUCTANT TO RECRUIT WORKERS?

ANSWER	2014 (N=1655)	2018 (N=808)	2021 (N=579)
Definitely not	7.8%	27.7%	25.7%
Probably not	21.3%	28.0%	27.6%
Maybe	19.3%	14.0%	19.9%
Probably	28.8%	23.0%	20.2%
Definitely	22.8%	7.3%	6.6%

IF THERE IS AN AGE ABOVE WHICH YOUR ORGANISATION IS RELUCTANT TO RECRUIT WORKERS, WHAT AGE ARE YOU REFERRING TO?

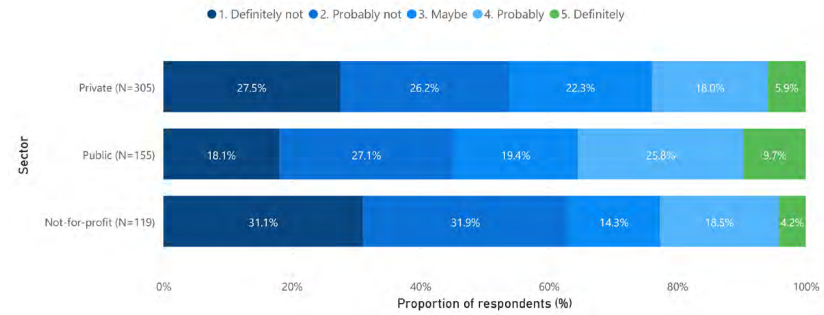
ANSWER	2014 (N=1655)	2018 (N=808)	2021 (N=579)
Over 35	1.4%	1.0%	1.5%
Over 40	2.1%	2.9%	3.0%
Over 45	6.1%	4.9%	4.4%
Over 50	16.2%	10.3%	12.6%
Over 55	16.3%	12.1%	13.3%
Over 60	22.4%	17.5%	16.7%
Over 65	16.6%	14.2%	17.4%
Over 70	19.1%	14.0%	14.1%
Don't know	N/A	23.1%	17.0%

RECRUITMENT

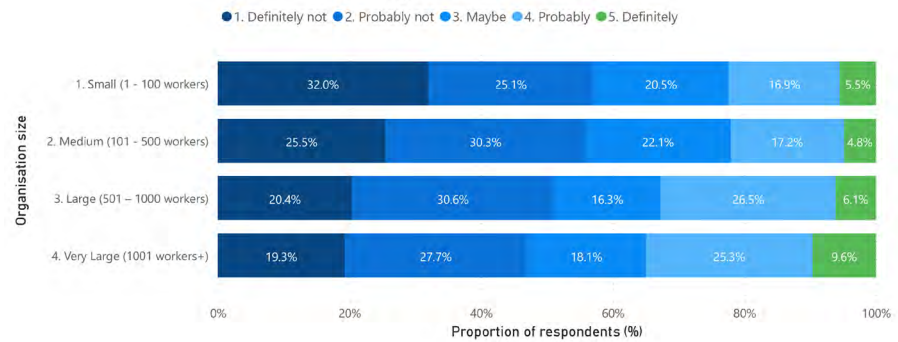
The hesitancy for organisations to recruit older workers was reported by a higher proportion of public sector respondents (35.5%) than by private (23.9%) or not-for-profit respondents (22.7%).

Further, respondents from larger organisations with more than 500 workers were at least 10.2% more likely to report this reluctance. 34.9% of those from very large organisations report the reluctance to hire older workers, and 32.6% from large organisations, as opposed to 22% from medium size organisations or 22.4% from small organisations.

IS THERE AN AGE ABOVE WHICH YOUR ORGANISATION IS RELUCTANT TO RECRUIT WORKERS? (N=579)



IS THERE AN AGE ABOVE WHICH YOUR ORGANISATION IS RELUCTANT TO RECRUIT WORKERS? (N=579)



RECRUITMENT

While almost 1/3 (30.6%) report no obstacles, the greatest obstacles reported by respondents in recruiting older workers to their organisation were:

1. **A lack of applications from older workers (24.9%)**
2. **Salary expectations are too high (22.6%)**
3. **A lack of the technological skills required (18.8%).**

Since 2014, there has been a 13.2% decrease in respondents saying that roles available are too physically demanding. Further, while it is still a top barrier, there are 8.3% less saying that older workers lack the technological skills required since 2014.

Other obstacles cited by respondents included:

- Age bias and unconscious bias
- Proportion of current older workers
- Culture
- Lack of flexibility
- An organisational policy to 'recruit young'

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST OBSTACLES FOR YOUR ORGANISATION IN RECRUITING OLDER WORKERS? (UP TO 3 ANSWERS)

ANSWER	2014 (N=1607)	2018 (N=812)	2021 (N=579)
No challenges/obstacles	27.1%	32.1%	30.6%
Lack of applicants from older workers	26.1%	27.6%	24.9%
Older workers lack the technological skills required	27.1%	20.3%	18.8%
Roles available are too physically demanding	29.6%	16.9%	16.4%
Salary expectation are too high	20.7%	15.5%	22.6%
Older workers do not fit into the organisation's culture	12.6%	14.0%	9.8%
Older workers have too much experience for the roles available	16.1%	13.4%	15.7%
Older workers' qualifications are out-dated	10.8%	7.1%	8.3%
Older workers lack the qualifications required	5.7%	4.2%	3.5%
Other	5.8%	13.3%	13.6%

“

The organisation's managers prefer younger workers and have an inherent bias towards younger applicants due to a number of false assumptions, in particular regarding use of technology, physical appearance and presentation – [They aren't recruiting] on skills and knowledge not on skills and knowledge.

”

RECRUITMENT

Over 1/3 (37.5%) of respondents believe that their organisation's recruitment practices do not negatively impact older workers at all. Another 1/3 (31.7%) believed their recruitment practices at least somewhat impacted older workers negatively.

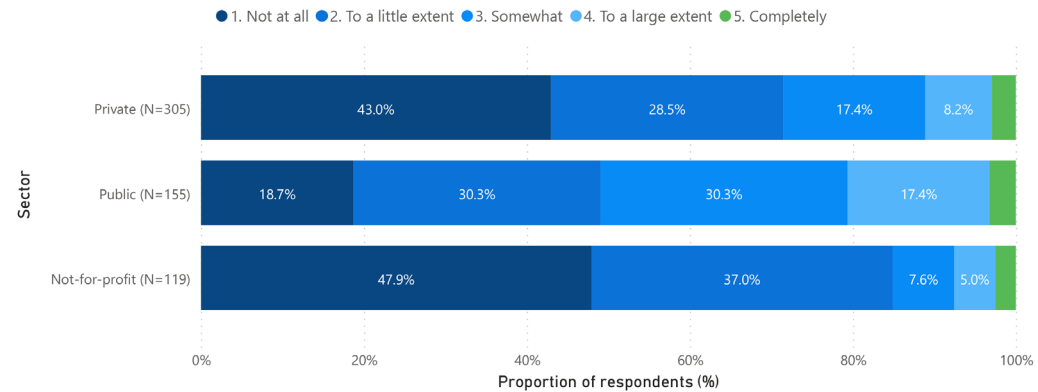
Public sector respondents reported the largest extent of negative impact on recruitment practices that affect older workers, with 54.2% reporting at least some negative impact.

This was much larger than in the private sector, where 28.6% reported at least some negative impact, and the not-for-profit sector where only 15.1% reported at least some negative impact.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR ORGANISATION'S RECRUITMENT PRACTICES NEGATIVELY IMPACT OLDER WORKERS?

ANSWER	PERCENT
Not at all	37.5%
To a little extent	30.7%
Somewhat	18.8%
To a large extent	10.0%
Completely	2.9%

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR ORGANISATION'S RECRUITMENT PRACTICES NEGATIVELY IMPACT OLDER WORKERS? (N=579)

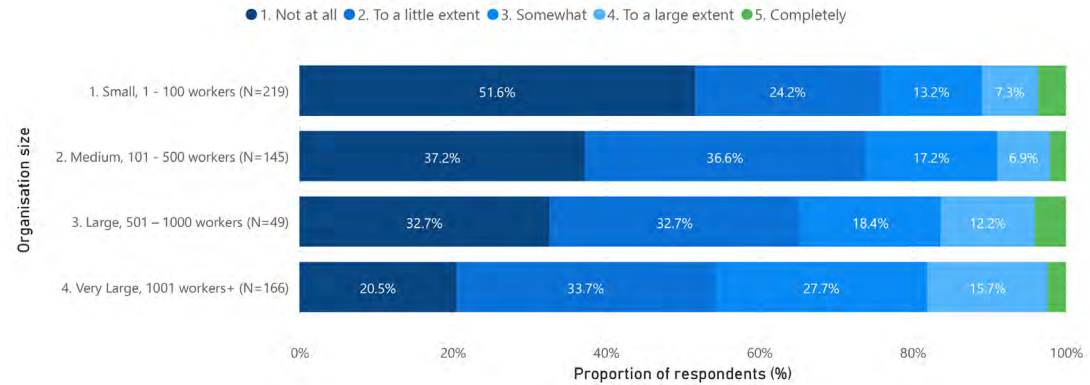


RECRUITMENT

There was a general trend where the larger the organisation, the larger the negative older worker recruitment impact reported by respondents with regard to their organisation.

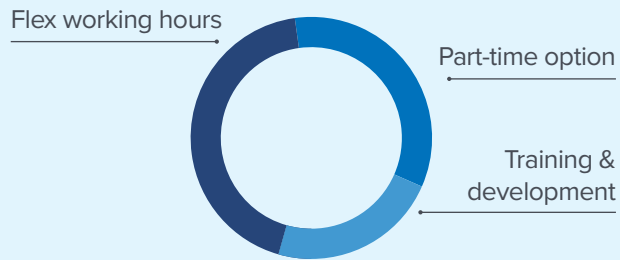
Very large organisations reported the largest negative impact of recruitment practices on older workers, with 45.8% reporting a negative impact to at least some extent.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR ORGANISATION'S RECRUITMENT PRACTICES NEGATIVELY IMPACT OLDER WORKERS? (N=579)



Retention

The top 3 initiatives for retaining older worker



The most common reasons that older workers leave:

- Retirement**
- Illness or injury**
- Caring for family member**

Other reasons for leaving included: Demanding hours, poor leadership, relocation, voluntary redundancy, and toxic work cultures

69.5%

of organisations do not offer line management training on how to manage different generations

59.5%

older worker departures have caused a loss of key skills or knowledge

But

Only 22% of organisations are methodically capturing corporate knowledge from exiting workers



RETENTION

Many report having flexible working hours (78%), part time options (68.2%) and continued access to training and development (54.6%) available for employees in their late careers.

Since 2014, there are less respondents suggesting they utilise long-service awards and recognition for employees in their late careers (14.1% less. Further, since 2014 there are 12.9% more respondents suggesting that flexible work locations are available to late career employees.

Other ways reported to retain older workers in organisations were:

- Work/life balance
- Valuing and rewarding their experience
- Listen and consult with them on their needs

WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE IN YOUR ORGANISATION TO EMPLOYEES IN THEIR LATE CAREERS?

ANSWER	2014 (N=1652)	2018 (N=791)	2021 (N=560)
Flexible working hours	74.6%	76.0%	78.0%
Part-time options	72.0%	65.6%	68.2%
Continued access to training and development	63.1%	54.5%	54.6%
Long-service awards and recognition	58.7%	46.4%	44.6%
Phased retirement	34.4%	33.1%	38.0%
Job-sharing options	33.1%	28.2%	27.0%
Flexible work locations	28.0%	27.6%	40.9%
Career planning and advice	24.7%	16.8%	19.3%
Flexible job design policies	13.4%	13.7%	13.4%
Elderly care leave	14.5%	11.4%	8.9%
Grandparental leave	9.3%	7.8%	7.0%
Return-to-work options for retirees	8.0%	7.5%	8.9%
Loyalty payments	5.7%	2.4%	3.6%
None of the above	7.6%	9.6%	8.2%
Other	N/A	N/A	2.9%

RETENTION

The most common reported reasons that older workers leave organisations are:

1. **Retirement (70.9%)**
2. **Illness or injury (26.1%)**
3. **Caring for a partner or older family member (20.9%)**

Since 2014, the number of respondents reporting retirement as a common reason has dropped by 12.6%. Further, redundancy has dropped by 12.5% since 2014. One reason for leaving that has grown since 2014, is caring for a partner or older family member (20.9%).

Other reasons for leaving include:

- Demanding hours
- Poor leadership
- Relocation
- Voluntary redundancy
- Toxic culture

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON REASONS WHY OLDER WORKERS LEAVE YOUR ORGANISATION? (PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

ANSWER	2014 (N=1635)	2018 (N=778)	2021 (N=560)
Retirement	83.5%	77.3%	70.9%
Illness or injury	27.3%	22.9%	26.1%
Redundancy	32.0%	22.2%	19.5%
Access to superannuation	17.7%	16.8%	12.1%
Job restructuring	20.1%	16.6%	15.5%
Poor relationship with manager	15.0%	16.2%	17.9%
Caring for partner or older family member	14.9%	15.4%	20.9%
Work too physically demanding	18.3%	14.3%	16.6%
Need for more flexibility	10.0%	12.9%	12.1%
Lack of promotion opportunities	12.2%	12.1%	11.8%
Caring for children or grandchildren	9.4%	10.0%	12.9%
Leaving for another role	N/A	N/A	15.0%
None of the above	N/A	N/A	6.4%
Other	6.3%	10.3%	7.5%

RETENTION

Many are saying that older worker departures have caused a loss of key skills or knowledge (59.5%), an increase since 2014 of 13.8%.

39.1% report that their organisation rarely or never captures corporate knowledge from older workers as they transition out of the workforce. Only 22% are doing this frequently. This proportion has remained consistent since 2014.

HAVE OLDER WORKER DEPARTURES CAUSED A LOSS OF KEY SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE?

ANSWER	2012 (N=1207)	2018 (N=787)	2021 (N=560)
Yes	45.7%	62.5%	59.5%
No	38.0%	22.6%	21.8%
Don't know	16.2%	14.9%	18.8%

DOES YOUR ORGANISATION CAPTURE CORPORATE KNOWLEDGE FROM OLDER WORKERS AS THEY TRANSITION OUT OF THE WORKFORCE?

ANSWER	2014 (N=1641)	2018 (N=783)	2021 (N=560)
Never	12.3%	11.6%	11.4%
Seldom	27.5%	24.4%	27.7%
Sometimes	37.0%	38.2%	38.9%
Often	16.8%	15.8%	15.0%
Always	6.3%	10.0%	7.0%

RETENTION

In 2021, only 1/5 (22.7%) report that their organisation has a mentoring program to facilitate knowledge transfer from older to younger workers. While this was consistent in 2018, it has dropped by 8.2% since 2014.

Almost ¼ (23%) report that their organisation has a transition to retirement strategy in place. Another 13.4% suggest they have plans to do this in the future.

DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE A MENTORING PROGRAM THAT FACILITATES KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER FROM OLDER TO YOUNGER WORKERS?

ANSWER	2014 (N=1654)	2018 (N=788)	2021 (N=560)
Yes	30.9%	22.7%	22.7%
No	62.9%	67.4%	69.3%
Don't know	6.3%	9.9%	8.0%

DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE A TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT STRATEGY IN PLACE?

ANSWER	2018 (N=760)	2021 (N=560)
Yes	20.8%	23.0%
No	55.6%	53.4%
Don't know	12.8%	10.2%
Plans to in future	10.9%	13.4%

TRAINING & INITIATIVES

Over 2/3 (69.5%) of respondents say that their organisation rarely or never offers line managers training on how to manage different generations. Another 7.1% are unsure about this.

Over 4/10 (43.9%) of respondents report that their organisation seldom or never offers unconscious bias training for employees. This proportion has decreased since 2018 by 10.2%.

Almost ½ (47.2%) state that this training does not address age-related bias.

ARE LINE MANAGERS IN YOUR ORGANISATION GIVEN TRAINING ON HOW TO MANAGE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS?

ANSWER	2014 (N=1635)	2018 (N=772)	2021 (N=553)
Never	49.4%	52.7%	50.5%
Seldom	27.3%	23.1%	19.0%
Sometimes	17.7%	17.8%	17.0%
Often	4.1%	4.0%	4.2%
Always	1.5%	3.5%	2.4%
N/A, Unsure	N/A	N/A	7.1%

ARE EMPLOYEES IN YOUR ORGANISATION GIVEN TRAINING ON UNCONSCIOUS BIAS?

ANSWER	2014 (N=1671)	2018 (N=771)	2021 (N=553)
Never	41.7%	33.7%	29.1%
Seldom	17.5%	18.3%	14.8%
Sometimes	24.2%	27.5%	26.0%
Often	10.6%	11.2%	14.5%
Always	6.0%	9.3%	10.3%
N/A, Unsure	N/A	N/A	5.2%

DOES THIS TRAINING ADDRESS AGE-RELATED BIAS?

ANSWER	2014 (N=950)	2018 (N=727)	2021 (N=553)
Never	18.6%	35.8%	34.0%
Seldom	27.4%	18.3%	13.2%
Sometimes	28.3%	23.8%	17.2%
Often	13.7%	9.5%	8.0%
Always	12.0%	12.7%	13.9%
N/A, Unsure	N/A	N/A	13.7%

COVID-19's impact



57.7%

Older workers have had difficulty in gaining employment or being retained as an employee during COVID-19

59.3%

believe their organisation is prepared to deal with the challenges of an aging workforce in Australia

Although only



said their organisation somewhat sought to retain older workers during 2020



The majority of respondents are unsure about how

JobSeeker (38.4%) | JobMaker (42.9%)

has positively or negatively impacted the recruitment and retention of older workers during COVID-19.

COVID-19'S IMPACT

Almost 6/10 (57.7%) reported that they believe older workers have had at least somewhat of a difficult time being employed or retained during COVID-19.

57.5% believe that older females have had at least somewhat of a difficult time being employed or retained during COVID-19, although many were unsure (16.5%).

Just over 1/2 (54.7%) of respondents believed that older ethnic minorities have had a difficult time being employed or retained during COVID-19, and another 1/5 were unsure (21.2%).

OLDER WORKERS HAVE HAD A DIFFICULT TIME BEING EMPLOYED OR RETAINED DURING COVID-19 (N=496)

ANSWER	PERCENT
Not at all	15.9%
To a little extent	11.7%
Somewhat	29.8%
To a large extent	20.8%
Completely	7.1%
N/A, Unsure	14.7%

OLDER ETHNIC MINORITIES HAVE HAD A DIFFICULT TIME BEING EMPLOYED OR RETAINED DURING COVID-19 (N=496)

ANSWER	PERCENT
Not at all	15.9%
To a little extent	8.3%
Somewhat	23.2%
To a large extent	23.2%
Completely	8.3%
N/A, Unsure	21.2%

OLDER FEMALES HAVE HAD A DIFFICULT TIME BEING EMPLOYED OR RETAINED DURING COVID-19 (N=496)

ANSWER	PERCENT
Not at all	16.3%
To a little extent	9.7%
Somewhat	25.2%
To a large extent	20.8%
Completely	11.5%
N/A, Unsure	16.5%

COVID-19'S IMPACT

Almost 6/10 of respondents believe their organisation is at least somewhat prepared to deal with the challenges of an aging workforce in Australia (59.3%).

Over 6/10 believe the use of technology over the last year has at least somewhat improved collaboration between generations in their organisation (64.2%).

During 2020, over 1/3 (37.1%) reported that their older workers were negatively impacted to some extent by their organisation's recruitment practices, although another 17.9% were unsure. Only 1/3 said their organisation at least somewhat sought to retain older workers during 2020 (33.7%).

OUR ORGANISATION IS PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THE CHALLENGES OF AN AGING WORKFORCE IN AUSTRALIA (N=496)

ANSWER	PERCENT
Not at all	15.9%
To a little extent	11.7%
Somewhat	29.8%
To a large extent	20.8%
Completely	71%
N/A, Unsure	14.7%

DURING 2020, OLDER WORKERS WERE NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY OUR ORGANISATION'S RECRUITMENT PRACTICES (N=496)

ANSWER	PERCENT
Not at all	16.3%
To a little extent	9.7%
Somewhat	25.2%
To a large extent	20.8%
Completely	11.5%
N/A, Unsure	16.5%

THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY OVER THE LAST YEAR HAS IMPROVED COLLABORATION BETWEEN GENERATIONS IN OUR ORGANISATION (N=496)

ANSWER	PERCENT
Not at all	15.9%
To a little extent	8.3%
Somewhat	23.2%
To a large extent	23.2%
Completely	8.3%
N/A, Unsure	21.2%

DURING 2020, OUR ORGANISATION ACTIVELY SOUGHT TO RETAIN OLDER WORKERS (N=496)

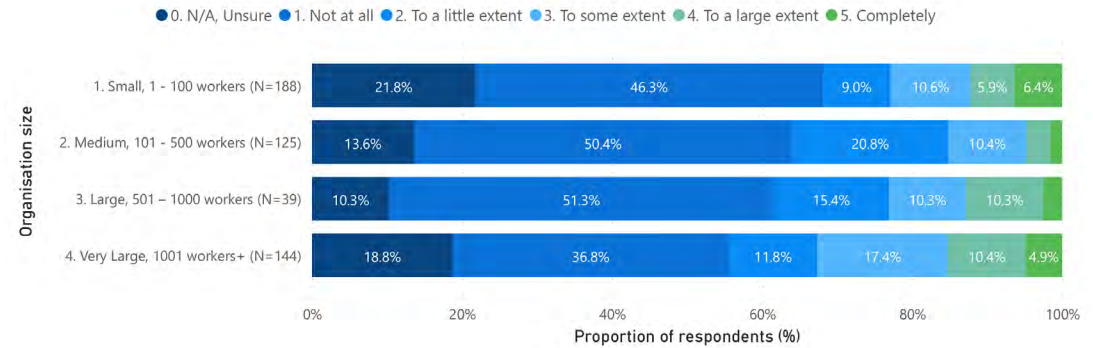
ANSWER	PERCENT
Not at all	30.4%
To a little extent	15.7%
Somewhat	14.3%
To a large extent	8.5%
Completely	10.9%
N/A, Unsure	20.2%

COVID-19'S IMPACT

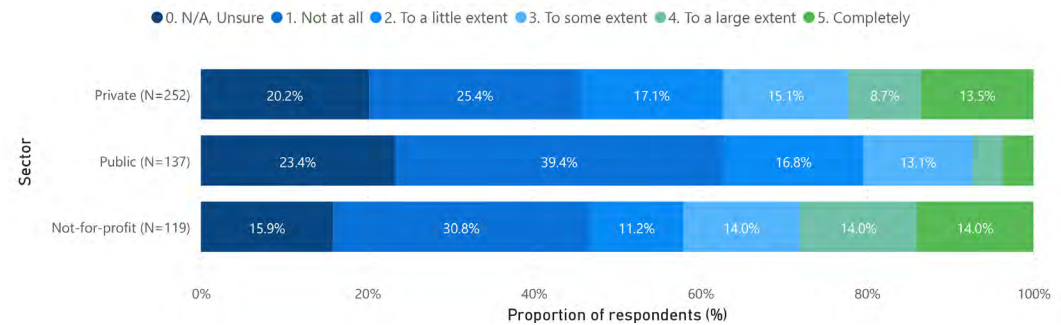
There is a general trend of respondents from larger organisations to be more likely to state that older workers were negatively impacted by their organisation's recruitment practices in 2020. 32.7% of respondents from very large organisations stated at least some impact in 2020, as opposed to large organisations at 23.2%, or medium at 15.2%. Conversely this trend did not hold for small organisations, where 22.9% of respondents reported at least some negative impact.

Respondents from public sector organisations were less likely to report that their organisations actively sought to retain older workers in 2020, with only 20.4% stating that they actively sought to retain at least to some extent, compared to 37.3% in the private sector and 42% in the not-for-profit sector.

DURING 2020, OLDER WORKERS WERE NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY OUR ORGANISATION'S RECRUITMENT PRACTICES (N=496)



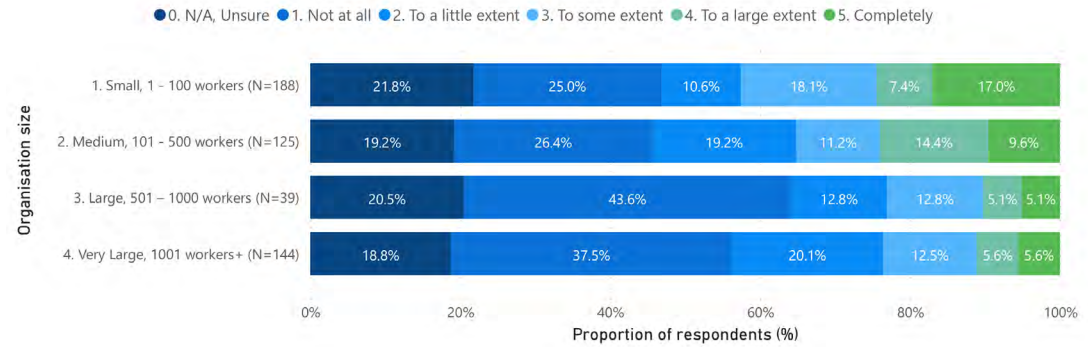
DURING 2020, OUR ORGANISATION ACTIVELY SOUGHT TO RETAIN OLDER WORKERS (N=496)



COVID-19'S IMPACT

Further, respondents from small organisations were more likely to suggest their organisation at least somewhat sought to retain older workers in 2020 (42.5%) than medium (35.2%), large (23%) or very large organisations (23.7%).

DURING 2020, OUR ORGANISATION ACTIVELY SOUGHT TO RETAIN OLDER WORKERS (N=496)



COVID-19'S IMPACT

The majority of respondents are unsure about how JobSeeker (38.3%) or JobMaker (42.9%) has positively or negatively impacted the recruitment and retention of older workers during COVID-19.

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS JOBSEEKER BEEN POSITIVE/NEGATIVE FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF OLDER WORKERS DURING COVID-19?

ANSWER	PERCENT
Completely negative	6.3%
Somewhat negative	7.9%
Neutral	27.4%
Somewhat positive	11.5%
Completely positive	8.7%
N/A, Unsure	38.3%

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS JOBMAKER BEEN POSITIVE/NEGATIVE FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF OLDER WORKERS DURING COVID-19?

ANSWER	PERCENT
Completely negative	9.5%
Somewhat negative	6.5%
Neutral	28.2%
Somewhat positive	8.1%
Completely positive	4.8%
N/A, Unsure	42.9%

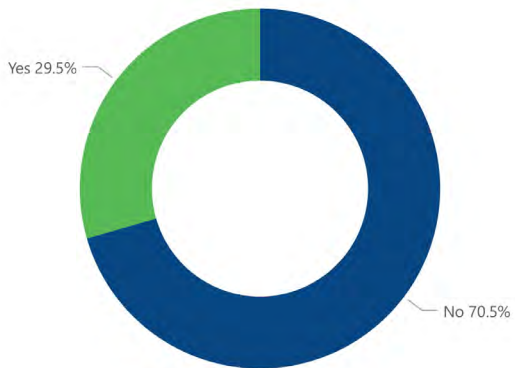
HR CERTIFICATION

The majority of the respondents of this survey were not certified HR practitioners (i.e. CPHRs or FCPHRs; 70.5%).

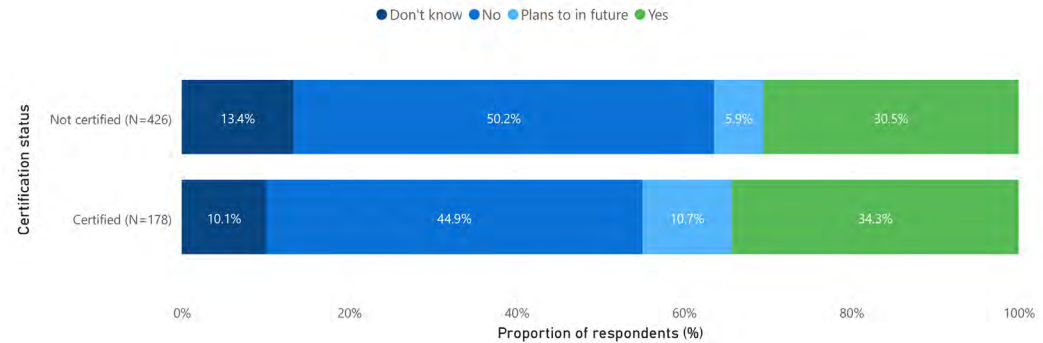
Certified HR practitioners were more likely to say that their organisation consults with older workers on issues of specific concern to their workplace (3.8% more likely) or are planning to do this in the future (4.8% more likely).

Further, certified HR practitioners were more likely to say their organisation captures corporate knowledge from older workers more often as they transition out of the workforce (6.7% more likely to do this often or always).

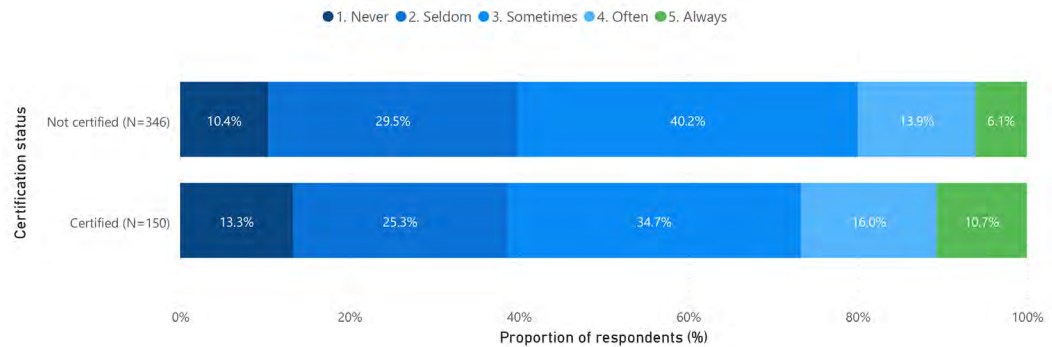
ARE YOU A CERTIFIED MEMBER, I.E FCPHR, CPHR, CAHR, FCAHR? (N=604)



DOES YOUR ORGANISATION CONSULT WITH OLDER WORKERS ON ISSUES THAT ARE OF SPECIFIC CONCERN TO YOUR WORKPLACE? (N=604)



DOES YOUR ORGANISATION CONSULT WITH OLDER WORKERS ON ISSUES THAT ARE OF SPECIFIC CONCERN TO YOUR WORKPLACE? (N=604)





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The vision of the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) is to shape the HR profession for the future.

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