



PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES REGARDING OLDER WORKERS – WHAT EMPLOYERS IN WALES THINK

A joint report by Business in the Community Cymru and the Centre for Ageing and Dementia Research (CADR), as part of the Age at Work programme.



The Responsible
Business Network
Cymru



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The workforce in Wales is ageing. Already over a third of those in employment are aged 50 and over. This trend will continue with many workers in middle age saying that they expect to work in to their late 60's or 70s. It is essential for organisations in Wales that they develop strategies and policies to maximise the benefits and address any challenges of their ageing workforce.

To better understand the current state of policies and approaches to workforce ageing in Wales the [Centre for Ageing and Dementia Research](#) and [Business in the Community Cymru](#) teamed up to conduct a survey of employers in Wales.

During April and May 2022, an online survey of over 250 employers of various sizes and sectors in Wales were asked about their policies, practices, attitudes and perceptions of older workers in the workplace. The survey and subsequent report on the findings are part of the [Age at Work](#) programme, delivered by BITC in partnership with [Age Cymru](#), and supported by the National Lottery Community Fund.

We know that many older workers leave employment before the state pension age. The pandemic has hit older workers particularly hard, with many feeling that they have been pushed out of work into an early retirement. This can lead to a loss of key personnel, skills and experience within an organisation, and incur significant financial costs because of the need to hire and train new members of staff. Hence, if organisations in Wales wish to remain competitive, it is essential that they develop strategies to support their older staff to stay in work, if they so wish and to appeal to over 50s seeking to return to work.

There are a number of key benefits to be gained by having an age-diverse workforce:

- Reduced turnover cost and opportunity to plug skills gaps, by retaining experienced staff and recruiting from across the labour market
- Retention of skills, knowledge and experience
- Increased team productivity through cross-generational insight and ideas
- Improved customer service and product development, because a wider range of customer bases are reflected in the workforce
- Good for an organisation's profile, by improving its perception as an age-inclusive, diverse, forward-thinking and adaptable business

The findings from the survey highlight the need for employers in Wales to be more proactive in recruiting, retaining and training employees aged 50 and over as part of vital efforts to develop and support an age-inclusive workforce.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

- Very few organisations (5%) in Wales report that they have a strategy to address workforce ageing
- Only around one third of organisations say that they actively promote training and development opportunities to all age groups and very few (3%) say that they monitor participation rates in training schemes by age.
- Around one third of organisations say that they offer flexible working hours and/or part time options for older workers, and just under a quarter say they offer flexible working locations for older workers

- Around 1-in-10 organisations have policies to support workers experiencing symptoms of the menopause
- Only 13% of organisations in Wales say that they allow leave to care for older adults
- Around 15% of organisations in Wales say that they have a lack of job applications from older workers
- Less than 1-in-10 organisations say they provide retirement planning and only 5% say they offer career advice to older workers
- Only 10% of organisations in Wales say they provide workplace adaptations to support older workers, and only 15% of organisations encourage older workers to take an interest in their health and fitness
- Over half of organisations in Wales say that they benefit from the experience of older workers

The Age at Work programme began in June 2019 with the aim of challenging and supporting employers to take action and make positive changes that help meet the needs of over 50s in the workplace.

Some of the changes include: introducing menopause policies and support; ensuring they support employees with caring responsibilities; introducing employee support networks; adapting their recruitment processes to be more age-inclusive; and looking at workplace data through an age lens.

Organisations can benefit from the following FREE support through Business in the Community's Age at Work programme:

- **Age-Inclusive Learning Network** – Brings together HR, inclusion and wellbeing professionals, and others interested in age inclusion, to discuss challenges, share good practice and learn from each other on key topics relevant to older workers

- **Age-Inclusive Business Review** – An online self-assessment tool which helps an organisation to identify gaps and highlight strengths in current operations regarding recruiting, training and retaining older workers
- **Age-Inclusive Employer Toolkit** – A guide to good practice around age-inclusion. Provides tips and suggestions, employer examples, and signposts to useful resources for supporting staff of all ages
- **Mid-career Review Webinars** – For individuals over 50, these webinars allow them to reflect and consider their current circumstances regarding wellbeing, work and finances, helping them to make the later life they envisage a reality

If you would like to discuss how the Age at Work programme can support your organisation to become more age-inclusive, please visit: www.bitcni.org.uk/agecymru.

KEY FINDINGS



1/3

Around one third of organisations in Wales say they actively promote training and development opportunities to all age groups. Many over 50s still want to learn and progress their careers, and organisations that provide a higher level of training to older workers retain their staff until a much later age, thereby reducing turnover costs.



1/3

One third of organisations in Wales say they offer flexible working hours and/or part-time options for older workers. Flexible working can help with work-life balance as well as with caring responsibilities or health conditions.



15%

Only 15% of organisations in Wales encourage older workers to take an interest in their health and fitness. Yet health is the leading reason why over 50s leave the workforce before they want to.



5%

Just 5% of organisations in Wales report that they have a strategy to address workforce ageing. A strategy can help harness the benefits and minimise the risks of an ageing workforce.

BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY

Responsible business network [Business in the Community \(BITC\) Cymru](#) and the [Centre for Ageing and Dementia Research at Swansea University](#) carried out an online survey with employers in Wales to understand the current state of policies, approaches and attitudes of employers in Wales regarding older workers (aged 50+) and age inclusion in the workplace.

The survey was carried out as part of the Age at Work programme, a partnership project between BITC and Age Cymru which is supported by the National Lottery Community Fund.

The programme has three aims:

- Raise awareness of the impact of an ageing workforce and the need for an age-inclusive agenda in government, business and wider society
- Encourage and support employers to be more age-inclusive in recruiting, retaining and training older workers
- Support more individuals aged 50+ to remain in or return to work, to help them have enough income, stay connected, continue to learn and enjoy a fuller working life

OUR AGEING WORFORCE

COMPLETE THE AGE-INCLUSIVE BUSINESS REVIEW TO IDENTIFY GAPS IN YOUR APPROACH AND PRACTICES RELATING TO AN AGEING WORKFORCE.

Workforces throughout the world are ageing and the UK is no exception to this. As figure 1 shows, the proportion of those in employment who are aged 50 years and over has risen steadily in all parts of the UK over the last 17 years. In 2004 about a quarter of those in employment in Wales, Scotland and England, and just over a fifth of those in Northern Ireland, were aged 50 and over. By 2021 this had risen to around a third in all countries. There are a number of reasons for this. The scrapping of the default retirement age in 2011 and the steady rising of the state pension age have meant that more workers are remaining in work until later in life. Alongside this, fertility rates are relatively low in the UK which means that there are fewer younger people entering the labour market.

FIGURE 1. THE AGEING OF THE UK WORKFORCE BY COUNTRY: 2004-2021

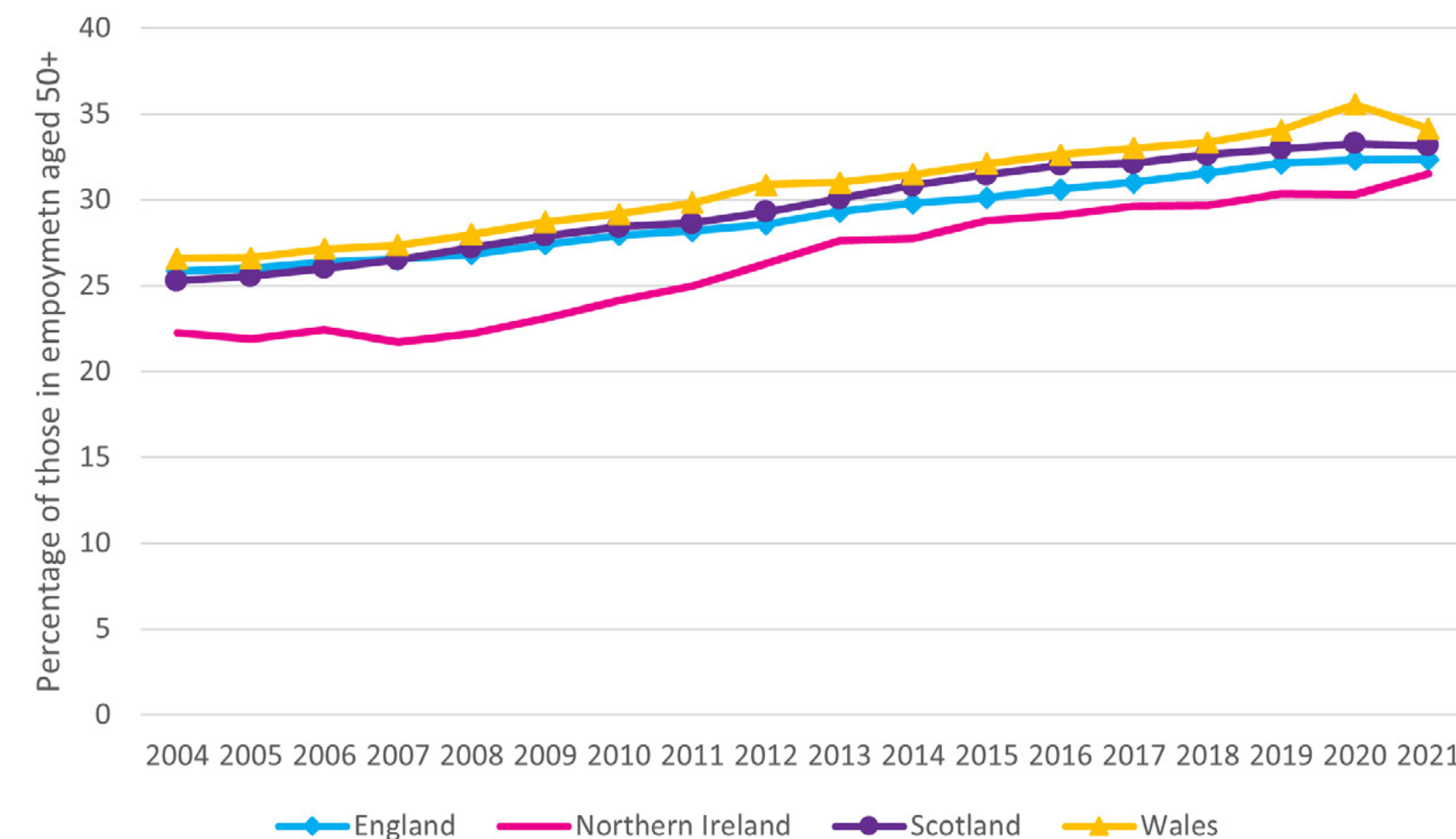


Figure 1. Source: Office for National Statistics

This trend in workforce ageing is likely to continue. A 2018 survey¹ found that three-quarters of UK employees say that they plan to work beyond state pension age. Crucially, it was workers who are currently in their mid-30s to mid-40s who were most likely to say they expect to retire after their 75th birthday. Hence, when we think about workforce ageing, we should not just be focused on the current group of older workers. We also need to be planning for future cohorts of older workers.

Although many organisations are concerned about workforce ageing, most are unprepared for it. Unfortunately ageist stereotypes about older workers, such as, that they are less creative, less able to learn new things and that they have health problems, mean that workforce ageing is seen as something negative. As a result, managers are slow or reluctant to put policies in place to fully realise the opportunities of a more age-diverse workforce.

¹ Muller-Heyndyk, R. (2018). 23 million will work beyond the age of 65. HR Magazine. <https://www.hr-magazine.co.uk/content/news/23-million-will-work-beyond-the-age-of-65>

OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR HIRING, RETAINING, TRAINING AND SUPPORTING OLDER WORKERS HAS NEVER BEEN STRONGER.

Contrary to these stereotypes research shows that older workers are just as capable, committed and productive as younger workers^{ii, iii}. Moreover, in purely demographic terms the reduction in the number of younger workers entering the labour market will mean that organisations that fail to respond positively to an ageing workforce will see their workforce shrink, and they will lose vital human capital. Research also suggests that workers entering the labour market today will change jobs every one to two years^{iv}. The projected high rates of turnover are cause for concern among businesses due to the costs associated with filling vacant positions. Estimates of the cost of turnover range from 25% to 250%

of the position's annual salary, depending on the skill requirements of the job^v. The business case for hiring, retaining, training and supporting older workers has never been stronger.

Fortunately, there are organisations around the world who are leading the way on this. From providing workers with ergonomic office equipment and assistive technologies to establishing inter-generational training programs, family caregiver support initiatives, and flexible paths towards work and retirement. There are many ways in which organisations can ensure that they do the best for their older workers and continue to get the best from them.

JOIN THE AGE-INCLUSIVE LEARNING NETWORK TO DISCUSS OPPORTUNITIES AND LEARN FROM OTHER EMPLOYERS.

Yet, we do not know what the situation is here in Wales. While the differences between the rate of workforce ageing across the UK countries are slight, it is worth noting that Wales has consistently had the highest rate of workforce ageing yet the third lowest employment rate of people aged 50-64 of the UK Nations – 70.2%.

ⁱⁱ Costanza, D.P., Badger, J.M., Fraser, R.L. et al. Generational Differences in Work-Related Attitudes: A Meta-analysis. *Journal of Business Psychology* 27, 375–394 (2012). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-012-9259-4>

ⁱⁱⁱ Viviani CA, Bravo G, Lavallière M, Arezes PM, Martínez M, Dianat I, Bragança S & Castellucci HI. (2021). Productivity in older versus younger workers: A systematic literature review. *Work*. 68:577-618. doi: 10.3233/WOR-203396

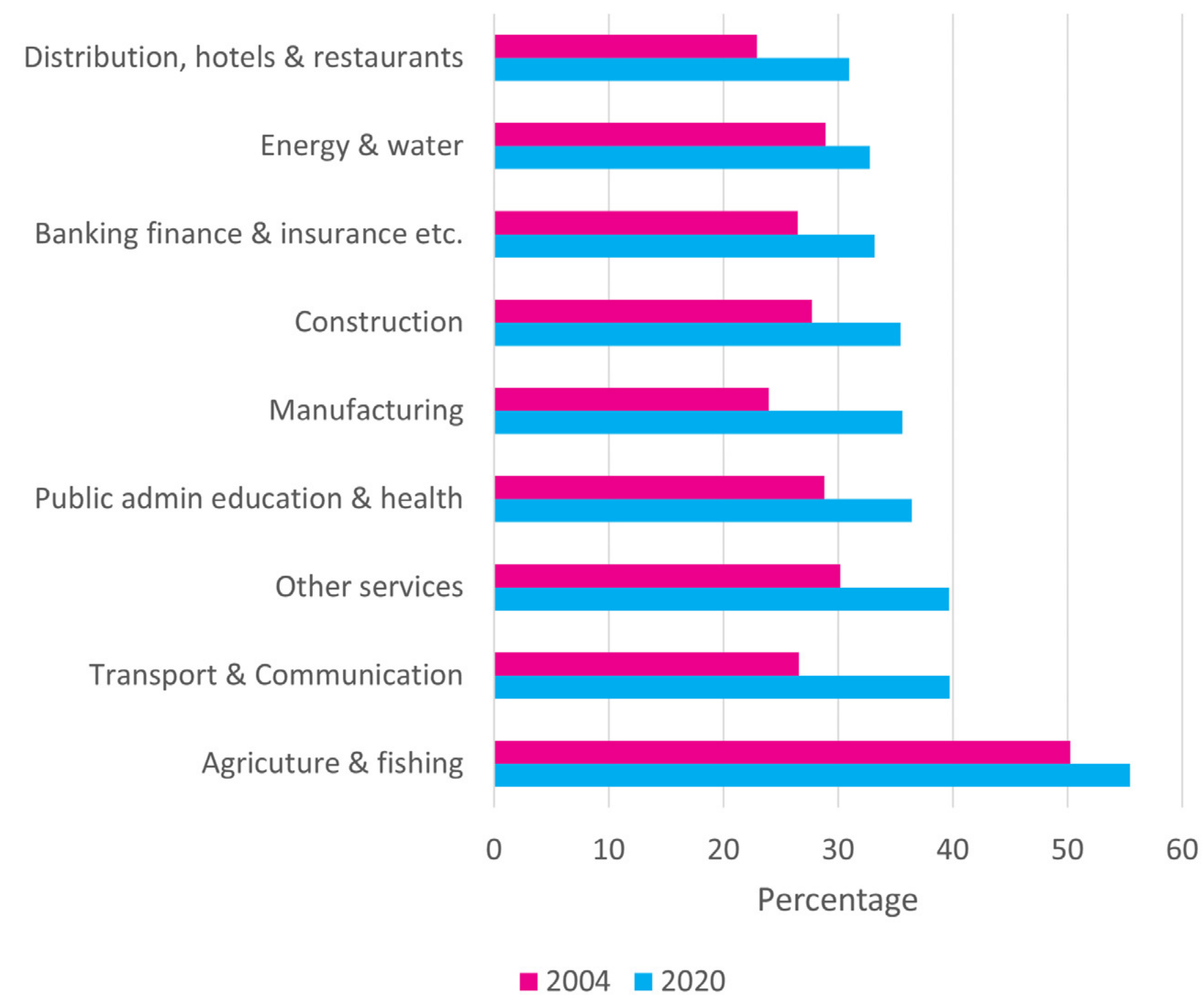
^{iv} Tishman FM, Van Looy S, and Bruyère SM. (2012). Employer Strategies for Responding to an Aging Workforce. The National Technical Assistance and Research Centre to Promote Leadership for Increasing the Employment and Economic Independence of Adults with Disabilities. NY.

^v Allen, S. (2010). The high cost of employee turnover. American Express Open Forum Website. <http://www.openforum.com/articles/the-high-cost-of-employee-turnover-scott-allen>

OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

As of 2021 there were just under half a million workers aged 50 and over in Wales^{vi}. Hence this issue is of particular relevance for organisations in Wales. However, just as there are national differences in the rate of workforce ageing in the UK there are sectoral differences within Wales. As figure 2 shows, in some industries, such as agriculture and fishing, the proportion of the workforce aged 50 and over was already substantial in 2004. Whereas, in others, such as transport and communication, the rate of increase has been rapid.

FIGURE 2. THE PROPORTION OF THE WORKFORCE AGED 50+ BY SECTOR IN WALES



^{vi} Data retrieved from Nomis (16/6/2022). Annual population survey – regional – labour market status by age – 2021. <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

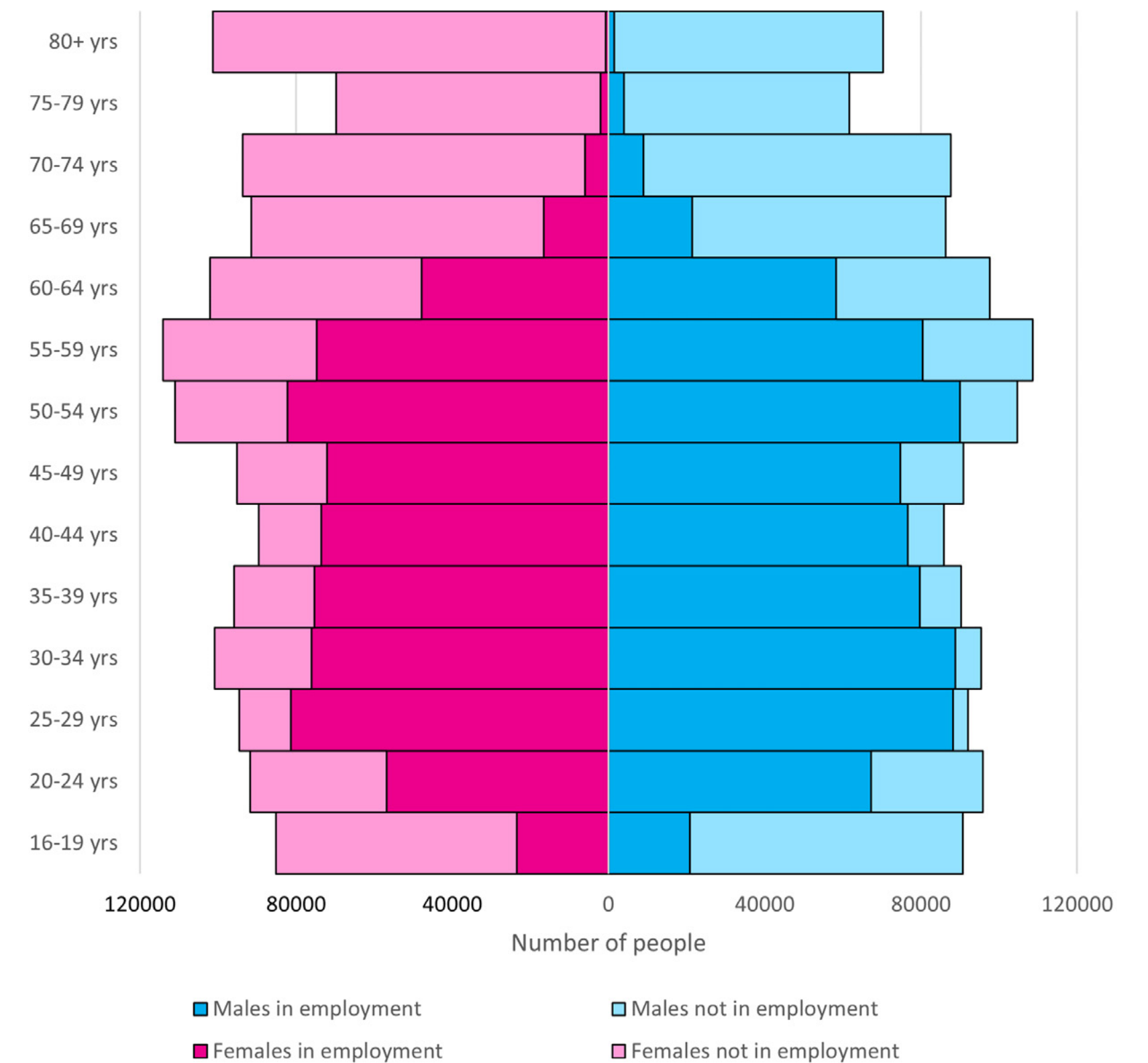
OLDER WORKERS ARE KEY TO ADDRESSING THE HIRING CRISIS AND THE SKILLS GAP

Organisations across the UK are struggling to fill job vacancies. Either they are simply not getting applicants or the applicants they do get do not have the required skills. There are real concerns that this hiring crisis could have a detrimental effect on UK's economic recovery^{vii}. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the Welsh working age population by age group. The bars on the right, in blue, show the total population of males in each age group. For example, there are 95,400 men aged 30-35 in Wales. The bars on the left show the total population of females in each age group. For example, there are 89,500 women aged 40-44 in Wales.

However, the bars have been split to show the numbers in each age group who are in employment (dark blue for males and dark pink for females) and those who are not in employment (light blue for males and light pink for females).

Looking at this graph one can clearly see that those aged 55-59 years represent the largest age group for both sexes. This is followed by those aged 50-54 years and then by those aged 60-64 years. Taken together, these groups account for 327,100 women and 310,900 men. This demonstrates that the consumers, clients, users, etc., of most Welsh organisations are likely to include a significant number of those aged 50 to 64. Hence, it is sometimes argued that having workers in that age group will benefit organisations as they understand the needs of this key demographics.

FIGURE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF MALES AND FEMALES IN WALES BY AGE GROUP AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS



^{vii} Houston D & Sissons P. (2022). Shortage of workers threatens UK recovery – here's why and what to do about it. The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/shortage-of-workers-threatens-uk-recovery-heres-why-and-what-to-do-about-it-183260>

OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

AGEING WORKFORCE STRATEGIES

Governments and third sector organisations are calling on organisations to develop strategies to harness the benefits and minimise the risks of workforce ageing^{viii}. However, the response so far has been slow. According to a 2015 report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) only 14% of organisations in the UK have a strategy in place to manage an ageing workforce^{ix}.

The figures show that the situation in Wales is even worse. Only 5% of organisations that we surveyed said that they had a strategy to address workforce ageing. Moreover, of those 5% only 20% said that they had key performance indicators to measure progress towards their ageing workforce strategy. Furthermore, only 14% said that their line managers were given training on how to

manage workers aged 50 and over. This last figure is especially worrying given the evidence that line managers play a crucial role in supporting older workers^x.

14%

of organisations in the UK have a strategy in place to manage an ageing workforce.

^{viii} OECD. (2020). Promoting an Age-Inclusive Workforce: Living, Learning and Earning Longer. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/59752153-en>.

^{ix} Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. (2015). Avoiding the demographic crunch: Labour supply and the ageing workforce. CIPD. London.

^x Leisink P and Knies E. (2011) Line managers' support for older workers. The International Journal of Human Resource Management. 22:9, 1902-1917, DOI: 10.1080/09585192.2011.573969

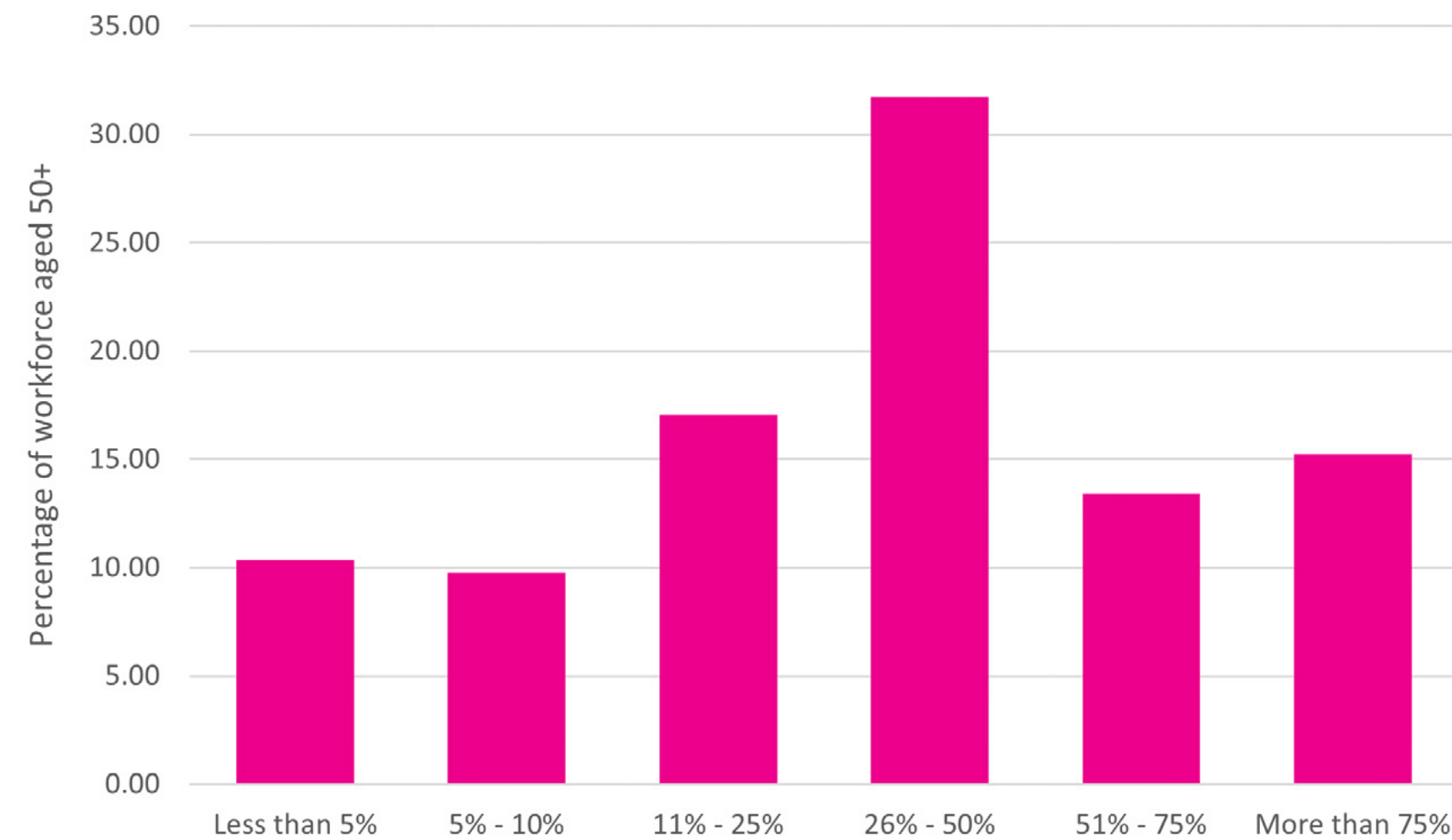
OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

WORKPLACE DEMOGRAPHICS

It is important to note that over a third of respondents did not answer this question. We cannot know why respondents chose not to answer the question, e.g. time pressure, or they did not like the response options given. But this does suggest that the proportion of organisations which do not know the size of their older workforce could be larger.

In addition to knowing the age profile of the workforce, organisations should be sure to understand the needs of their older workers and employees of all ages, so that they can put relevant practices in place to retain the skills, knowledge and expertise that over 50s bring to the workplace.

FIGURE 4. APPROXIMATE PERCENTAGE OF THE ORGANISATION'S WORKFORCE IS OVER 50 YEARS OF AGE



OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

AGE-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

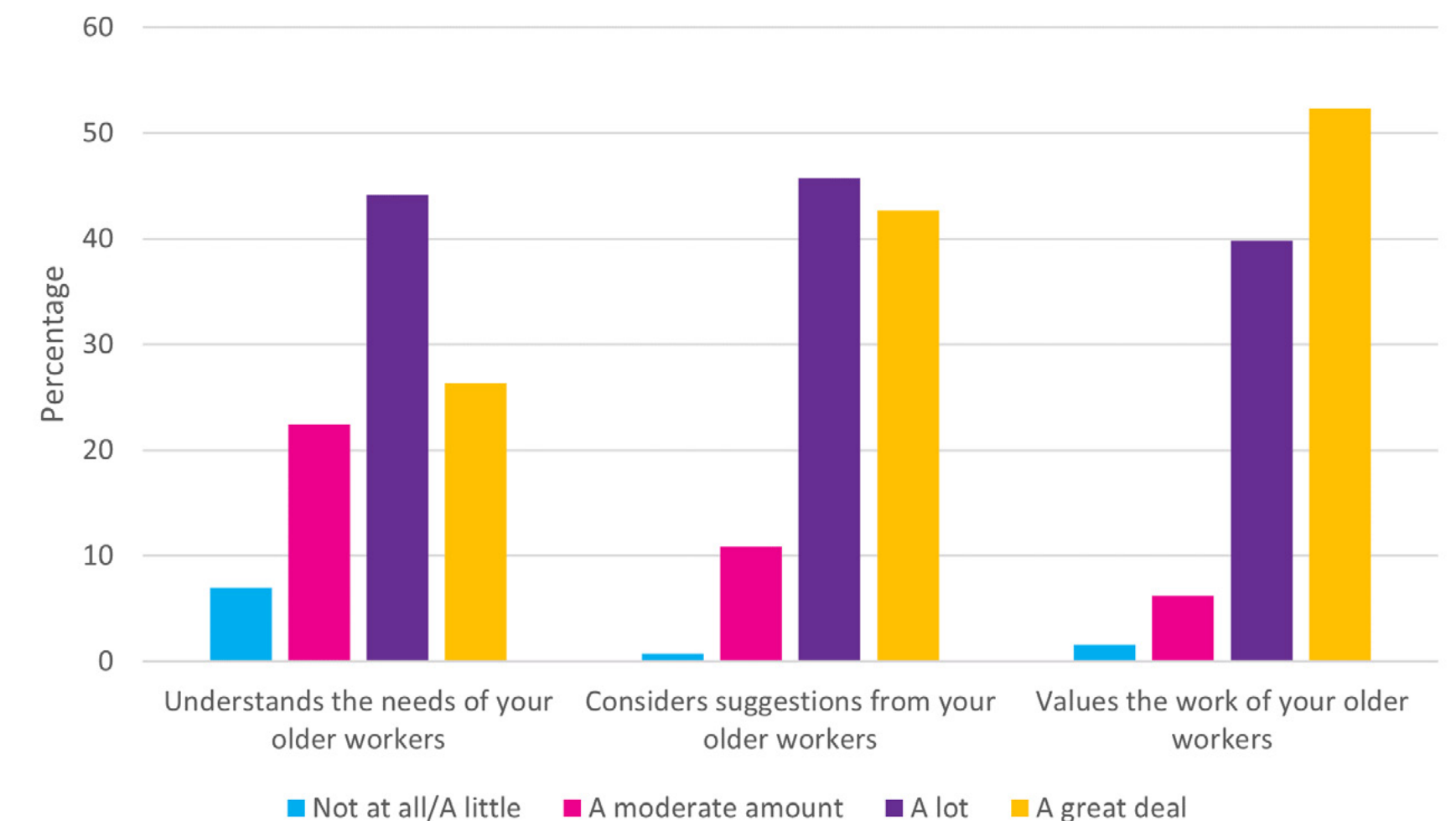
A crucial element in responding positively to workforce ageing is for organisations to develop age-friendly workplaces. Although there is no agreed upon definition of what makes a workplace ‘age-friendly’ a central component is understanding and valuing older workers^{xi}. BITC has produced a toolkit for employers to help them identify what features of their organisation they can improve upon to become a more age-friendly employer (click [here](#) to access the Becoming and Age-Friendly Employer Toolkit). Elements of this toolkit informed some of the questions in this study, e.g. the importance of creating an age-inclusive culture.

As figure 5 shows, the overwhelming majority of organisations in Wales say that they understand, value and consult with their older workers. 44% say that they understand the needs of their older workers a lot. This is roughly the same as the proportion who say

that they consider suggestions from their older workers a lot. Even more positively, over half of respondents said that their organisation values their older workers a great deal. Where there might be some area of concern is that, about 20% of organisations report that they only have a moderate understanding of the needs of their older workers.

However, when asked about specific policies and practices towards older workers a somewhat different picture emerges. Only 9% of organisations said that they consult with older workers on workplace issues, 7% said that they include older workers in the design and implementation of health promotion programmes and just 4% said that they surveyed older workers to understand their needs.

FIGURE 5. EXTENT TO WHICH ORGANISATIONS UNDERSTANDS, VALUES AND CONSIDERS SUGGESTIONS FROM THEIR OLDER WORKERS



^{xi} Age UK. (2021). What does it mean to be an age-friendly workplace? <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/work-learning/what-does-it-mean-to-be-an-age-friendly-workplace/>

OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

AGE STEREOTYPES

Sadly, stereotypes of older adults persist^{xii}. Studies in the USA show that managers have a number of preconceptions about older workers. Some of these can be seen as positive. For example, managers reported that older workers had more experience, greater knowledge, better work habits and attitudes, a commitment to quality, loyalty, punctuality and respect for authority. However, they also held more negative views. They saw older workers as inflexible, unwilling or unable to adapt to new technology, resistant to change, passive or complacent and physically less able^{xiii}. A survey of organisations in Australia produced similar results. Older workers were seen as more likely to have so-called 'soft skills', e.g. be more reliable, loyal and better able to cope with stress, but less likely to have 'hard skills', e.g. technology skills, creativity, etc^{xiv}. However, many of these stereotypes are not borne out by evidence^{xv}.

As figure 6 shows, when respondents were asked to say whether work-related skills were more typical of older or younger workers, a large proportion reported that they saw no age-related difference. However, when an age group was chosen there is evidence of age-based stereotypes of the competencies of older and younger workers within organisations in Wales. Older workers are seen as less likely to be off work, have greater concentration, greater job commitment, are more able to cope with stress, are more reliable, more loyal, and have better customer relations.

Conversely, younger workers are believed to be better with technological skills, be more physically capable, more able to adapt to change, have higher energy levels, better at learning new things and are more creative. They were also seen as keener to develop their career and have a greater interest in

^{xii} Swift H and Steeden B. (2020). *Dodderly but dear? Examining age-related stereotypes*. Centre for Ageing Better. London

^{xiii} Dennis, H & Thomas, K. (2007). *Ageism in the workplace*. *Generations*, 31(1), 84.

^{xiv} Begley P, Dunne L & Maxwell J. (2018). *Employing Older Workers: Research Report*. Australian Human Rights Commission and Australian HR Institute.

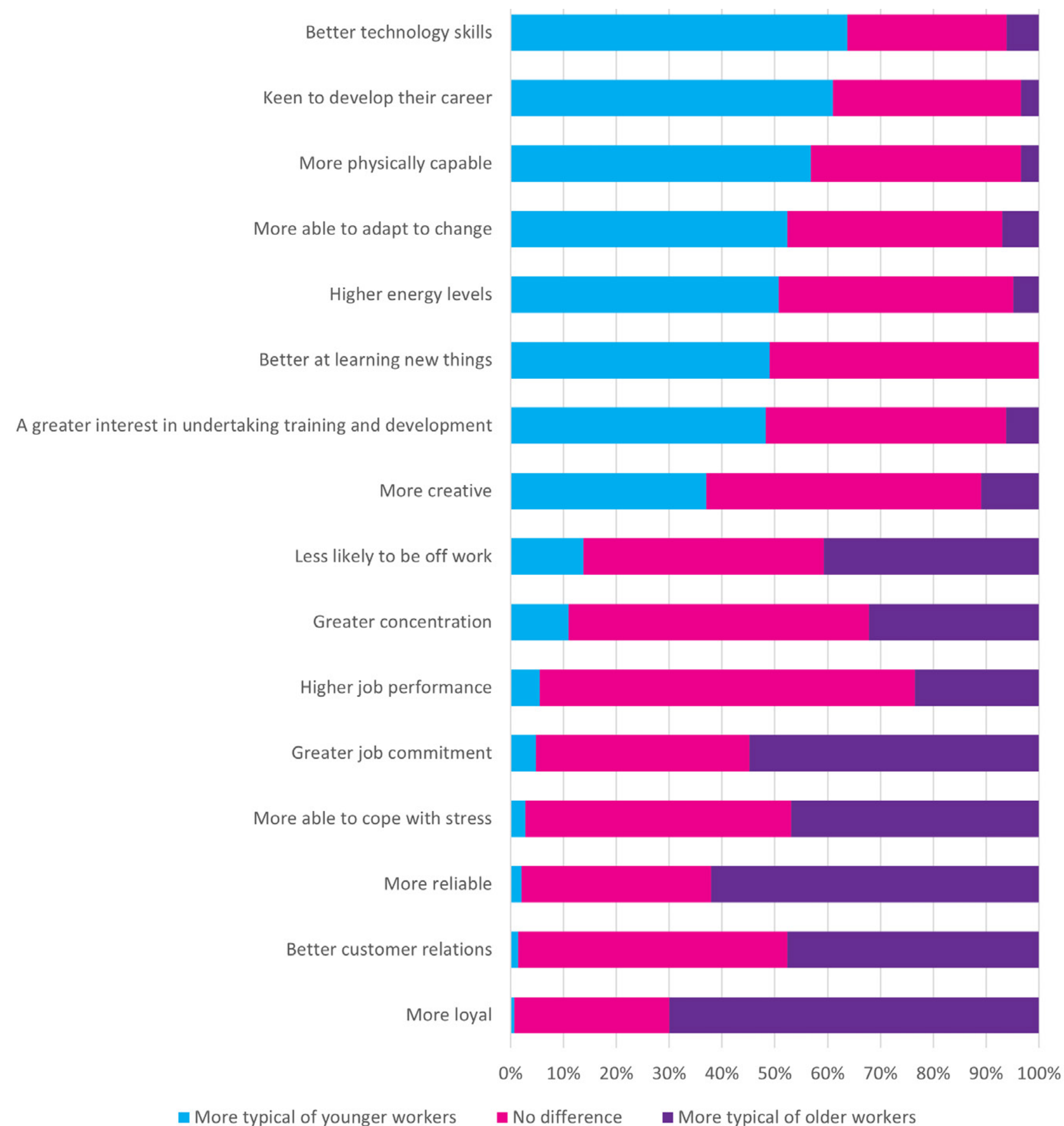
^{xv} Viviani CA, Bravo G, Lavallière M, Arezes PM, Martínez M, Dianat I, Bragança S & Castellucci HI. (2021). *Productivity in older versus younger workers: A systematic literature review*. *Work*. 68:577-618. doi: 10.3233/WOR-203396.



OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

undertaking training and development. This is a concern, as if organisations feel that their older workers are less likely to be keen to engage in career development and training opportunities then they might be less likely to offer these opportunities to their older workers. This is borne out by previous research which has shown that the main reason older adults do not engage in training and development is that they are not asked, not that they are not interested^{xvi}. This, in turn means that older workers do not acquire the skills and knowledge needed to meet the demands of the changing nature of work. Consequently, older workers might not feel confident to engage with new things, e.g. IT, which leads to the assumption that they are not good with technology or change more widely.

FIGURE 6. PREVALENCE OF WORK-RELATED AGE-BASED STEREOTYPES



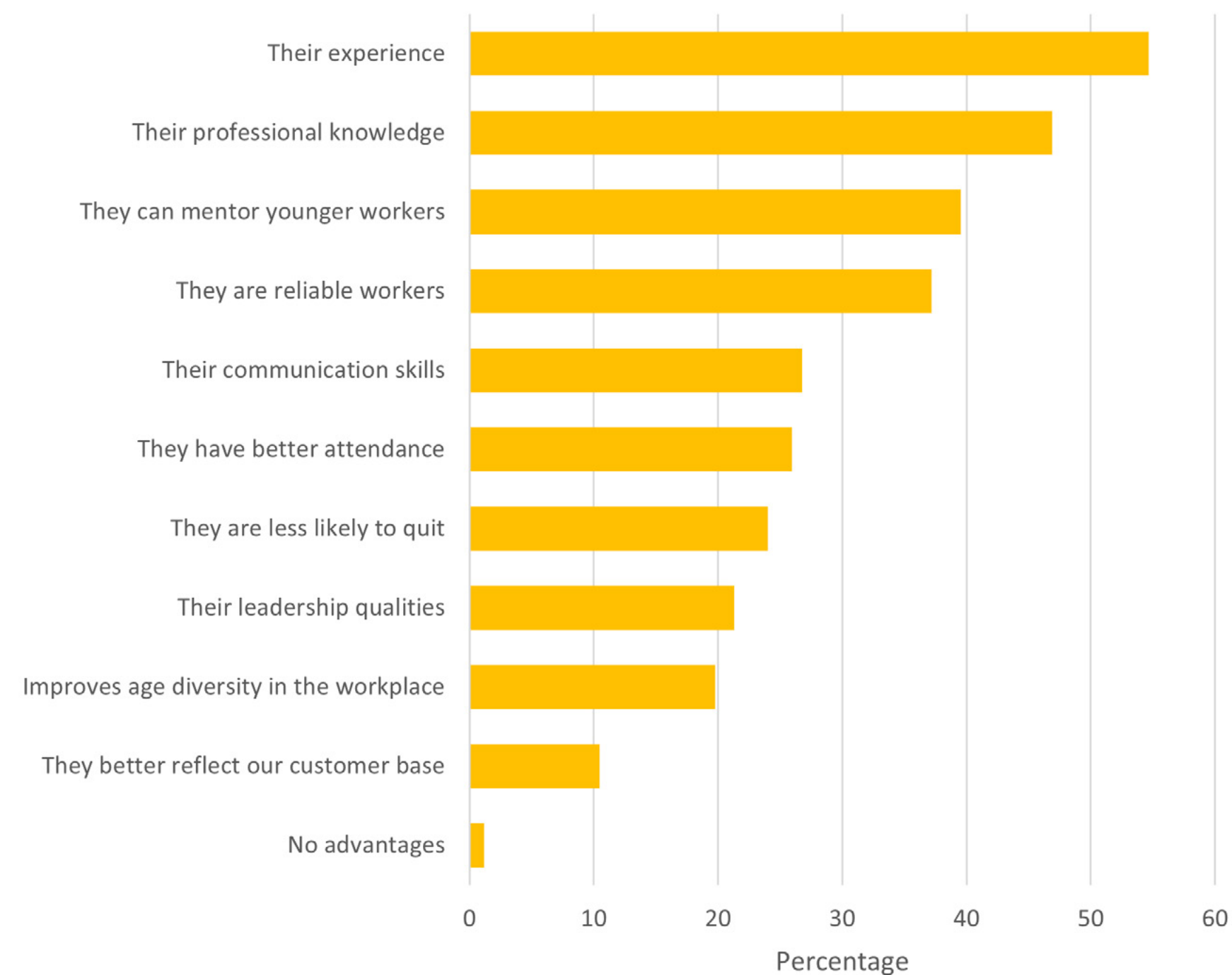
^{xvi} Hyde M & Phillipson C. (2015). How can life-long learning, including continuous training within the labour market, be enabled and who will pay for this? Looking forward to 2025 and 2040 how might this evolve? Foresight Report: Futures of Ageing. Government Science Office: London

OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

ADVANTAGES OF HIRING OLDER WORKERS

As figure 7 shows, organisations in Wales were generally positive about the benefits that older workers bring to the workplace. Indeed, only 1% of respondents said that there was no advantage to hiring older workers. Conversely, over half of the organisations surveyed (55%) said that they benefitted from the experience of their older workers. 47% of organisations said that they valued the professional knowledge that older workers brought to the workplace and 40% said that older workers provided important mentoring for younger workers. The other advantages that organisations identified are very much in line with the qualities that were seen to be most typical of older workers presented in figure 7. They found them to be reliable workers (37%), with good communication skills (27%), who had good attendance (25%) and were unlikely to quit work (24%).

FIGURE 7. ADVANTAGES OF HIRING OLDER WORKERS



OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

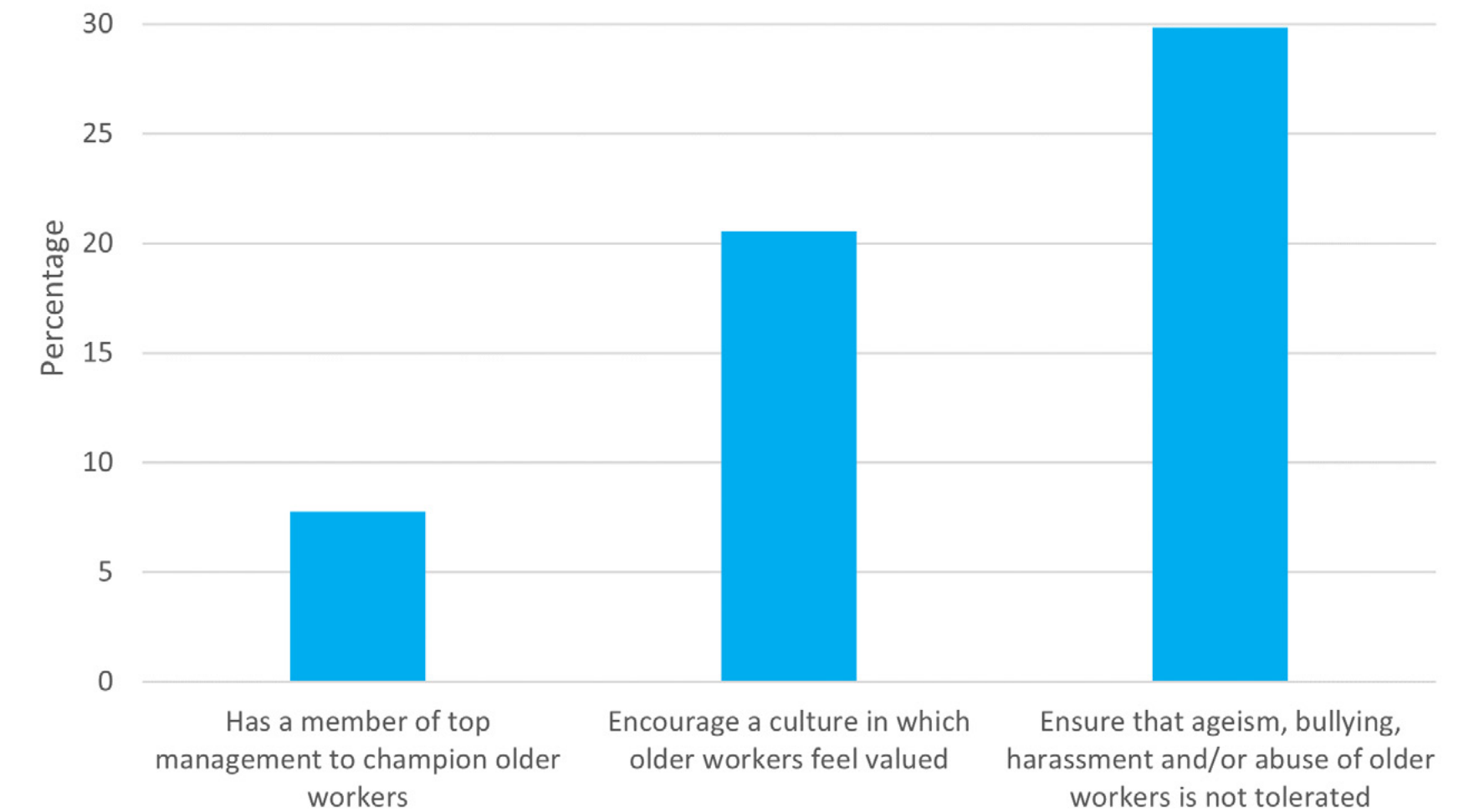
COMBATting AGEISM

Alongside sex, race/ethnicity, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity and religion/belief, age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act. However, studies suggest that many employers and individuals do not approach age discrimination in the same way as they do these other characteristics. A 2018 survey by the Centre for Ageing Better found that only 69% of employees were aware that age was a protected characteristic, compared to 80% who knew that disability was^{xvii}.

When asked about policies and practices to address ageism, the results of our study were a cause for concern (see figure 8). Only 38% of organisations reported that they provided unconscious bias training. This is a concern that extends beyond ageism and affects all forms of discrimination at work. However, of particular concern for this report is that even of those who did provide such training only

76% said that they addressed age-related bias. This means that even in the minority of organisations that recognise the need to address unconscious bias about a quarter do not tackle ageism. This is worrying as evidence shows that implicit or unconscious bias against older workers can be deep rooted^{xviii}. When asked more generally about policies to address issues around ageism at work and champion the voice of older workers relatively few organisations had such policies in place. Less than a third report that they have policies in place to tackle ageism, bullying or harassment of older workers. Around one fifth report that they encourage a culture in which older workers feel valued. Lastly, fewer than 1 in 10 organisations have a member of top management to champion older workers.

FIGURE 8. PROPORTION OF ORGANISATIONS WHO HAVE POLICIES IN PLACE TO COMBAT AGEISM



^{xvii} Centre for Ageing Better. (2018). Becoming an age-friendly employer. Centre for Ageing Better: London <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-09/Becoming-age-friendly-employer.pdf>

^{xviii} Malinen S and Johnston L. (2013) Workplace Ageism: Discovering Hidden Bias. Experimental Aging Research, 39:4, 445-465, DOI: 10.1080/0361073X.2013.808111

OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

RECRUITING OLDER WORKERS

Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed many older workers across the UK out of employment^{xxix}. In Wales there was an increase in the number of people who said that they have simply given up trying to find work (these are often referred to as ‘discouraged workers’) during the pandemic. Others opted to take early retirement^{xxx}. This is echoed in UK-wide figures from the ‘Over 50s Lifestyle Study’ which show that around 6 in 10 adults aged 50 to 70 years who left work during the pandemic said they had done so sooner than expected. As this suggests, the decision to retire was often due to compulsion rather than choice. Indeed, of those who retired early, 25% said they lost their job and then retired, 25% said they left their previous job because of the coronavirus pandemic, 18% said they were furloughed and then lost their job and 11% said they left their previous job because of illness or disability^{xxxi}. These figures, and those presented earlier in Figure 3, show that there is an opportunity to encourage older workers to return to work to share their skills and experience.

However, older workers often face barriers to recruitment. Evidence from the USA suggests that higher salaries and the expected expense required to train older workers in new technologies are obstacles to hiring and retaining older workers. Other negative stereotypes include the belief that older workers produce lower-quality work than younger employees, that they are less productive, and that they are resistant to change. A belief among employers and managers is that older workers are not current on required skill sets and that their skills are dated^{xxxii}.

Encouragingly the vast majority of organisations in Wales (83%) said that they are definitely not reluctant to recruit workers above a certain age. In fact only 2% of organisations reported that they would be likely not to recruit people over a certain age. Respondents were asked whether they experienced any challenges or obstacles to recruiting older workers. Over a quarter said that they had no challenges. The main challenge that organisations reported (15%) was that there

was a lack of applications from older workers. This may be due to the fact that employers don’t openly state that they welcome applications from all ages and may not have policies and practices in place that support over 50s such as health adjustments and menopause support, flexible working, training and development opportunities. Aside from this very few challenges were reported: 6% said that older workers salary expectations were too high and 4% said that older workers lacked the required technological skills.



**COMPLETE THE
AGE-INCLUSIVE
BUSINESS REVIEW
TO IDENTIFY GAPS IN
YOUR APPROACH AND
POLICIES TOWARDS
SUPPORTING OLDER
WORKERS.**

^{xxix} Office for National Statistics. (2021) Living longer: older workers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

^{xxx} Statistics for Wales. (2022). Labour Market Overview, June 2022 (SB 14/2022). <https://gov.wales/labour-market-overview-june-2022>

^{xxxii} Murphy R & Storey A. (2022). Reasons for workers aged over 50 years leaving employment since the start of the coronavirus pandemic <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/reasonsforworkersagedover50yearsleavingemploymentsinceshthstartofthecoronaviruspandemic/2022-03-14#reasons-for-leaving-work>

^{xxxiii} Taskforce on the Aging of the American Workforce. (2008). Report of the Taskforce on the Aging of the American Workforce. <http://www.aging.senate.gov/letters/agingworkforcetaskforcereport.pdf>

OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

TRAINING OLDER WORKERS

A survey of more than 12,000 workers aged 50 and over in the UK, for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), found that nearly two-thirds (63%) said there should be more training and retraining schemes to help older workers gain new skills and deal with technology^{xxiii}.

Figure 9 shows that there is a wide range in education and training activities amongst organisations in Wales. When looking at general training opportunities the picture is quite positive. Around 40% provide access to training and development and a slightly lower proportion review the training needs of their employees. However, it should be noted that this means that 60% do not provide access to continued training and development or review the training needs of their employees.

Moreover, when we look at education and training activities for older adults in particular the picture becomes somewhat less positive. Only 30% of organisations report that line managers are required to encourage employees of all ages to participate in training. Fewer than 25% offer a diverse range of training options and hardly any collaborate with education providers to make learning more accessible for older workers, or monitor participation rates by age.

FIGURE 9. PROPORTION OF ORGANISATIONS THAT UNDERTAKE VARIOUS TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES



^{xxiii} Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. (2018). Views on the ageing society: survey of older people. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/views-on-the-ageing-society-survey-of-older-people>

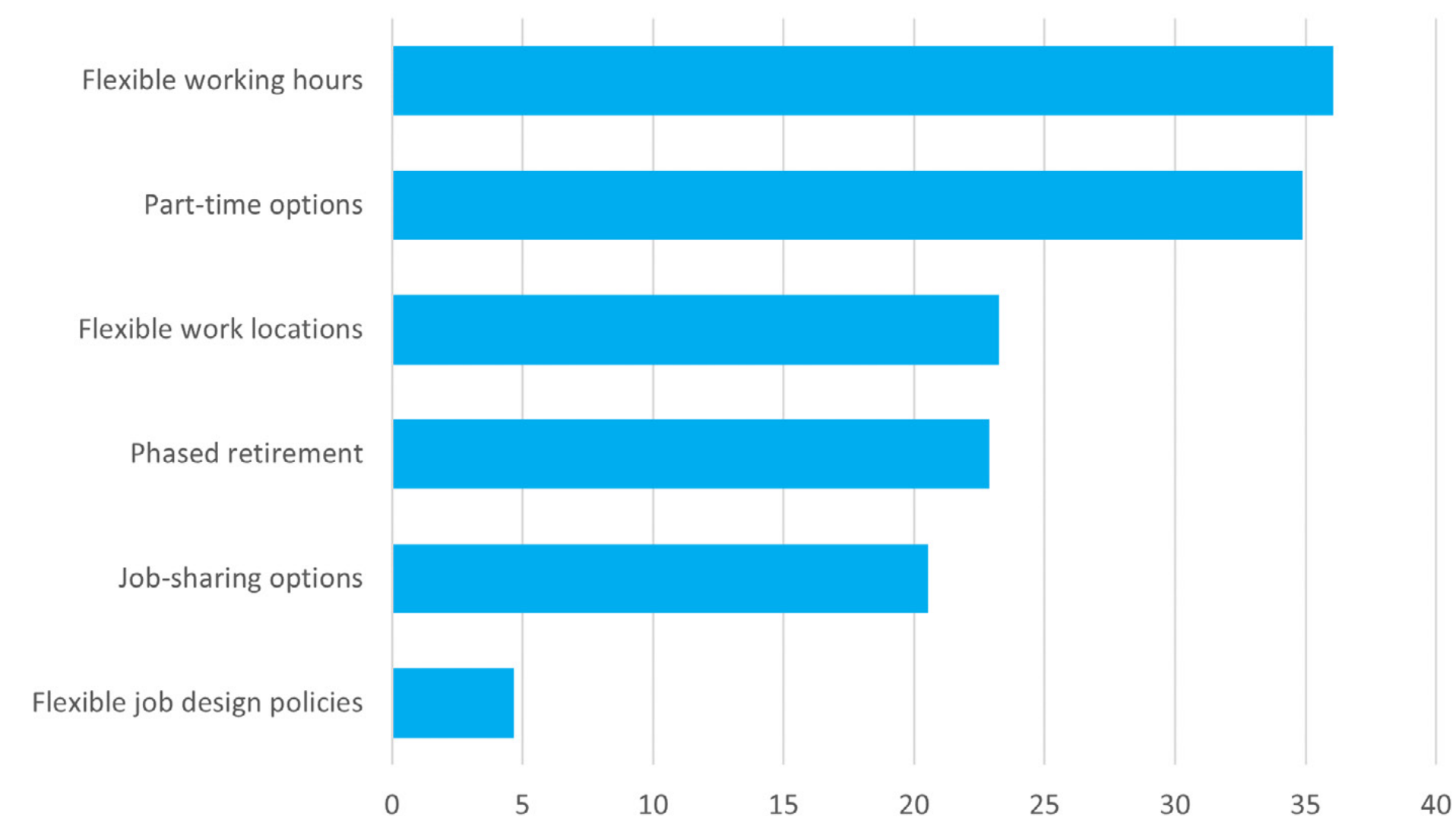
OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

FLEXIBLE WORKING

Flexible working does not only benefit those with long-term health conditions but can also help people with caring responsibilities. The aforementioned BEIS survey found that over three-quarters (78%) said they would like more flexible hours, and 73% said they wanted to see more part-time positions offered^{xxiv}. This fits with research by Timewise and the Centre for Ageing Better which found that 72% of older workers said flexi/part-time working helped improve work-life balance, 34% said it helped with caring responsibilities and 29% said it helped with health issues. However, that same report found that flexible working conditions are not always available or advertised to older workers^{xxv}. Findings from older workers in Wales, taken from the National Survey for Wales, show that there is only moderate

employer support for flexible forms of working^{xxvi}. These findings are corroborated in the results from our survey. Figure 10 shows that only a third of organisations in Wales offer flexible working hours or part-time options. Less than a quarter offer flexible working locations or phase retirement. About a fifth offer job sharing options and very few offer flexible job design policies.

FIGURE 10. PERCENTAGE OF ORGANISATIONS THAT OFFER DIFFERENT FORMS OF FLEXIBLE WORKING



^{xxiv} Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. (2018). Views on the ageing society: survey of older people. UK Government; 2018. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/views-on-the-ageing-society-survey-of-older-people>

^{xxv} Centre for Ageing Better and Timewise. (2020). Inclusivity through flexibility: How flexible working can support a thriving, age-inclusive workplace. London: Centre for Ageing Better.

^{xxvi} Hyde M. (2022). Employment trends and challenges for our ageing workforce. EnvisAGE. Age Cymru <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/our-work/policy/policy-publications/envisage/#~:text=EnvisAGE%20is%20a%20discussion%20journal,financial%20inclusion%20of%20older%20people>.

OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

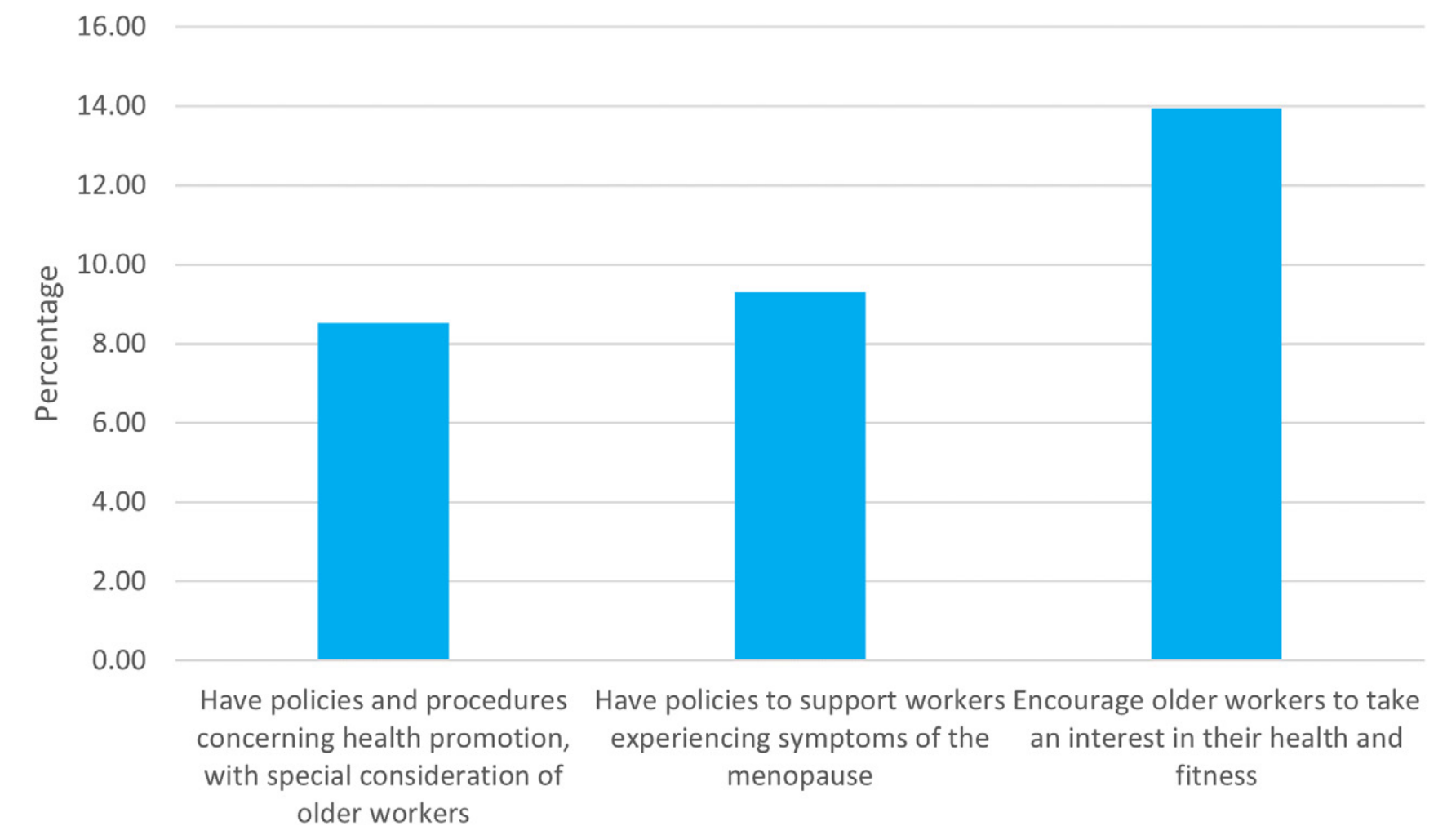
HEALTH AND WELLBEING AT WORK

Whilst it is not true that all older workers suffer from poor health or functional limitations it is the case that as part of the process of normal ageing people are at increased risk of health conditions. Ensuring the health of the ageing workforce is crucial if we are to enable people to remain active and productive for as long as possible. Poor health is the number one reason older workers give for leaving work before they want to. There is also growing awareness that the menopause, which can start in your 40s or even earlier, can have a significant effect on continued employment for women^{xxvii}. In response to this there have been a number of campaigns to address the challenges that workers experiencing the menopause face^{xxviii} and to create menopause friendly workplaces^{xxix}. However, results show that very few organisations in Wales have policies and practices to promote the health of their older

workforce. As figure 11 shows, only around 15% of organisations encourage older workers to take an interest in their health and just 9% have policies to support workers experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

MID-CAREER REVIEWS CAN HELP INDIVIDUALS AGED 50+ TO CONSIDER AND ASSESS THEIR HEALTH AND WELLBEING AS THEY GET OLDER.

FIGURE 11. PROPORTION OF ORGANISATIONS THAT UNDERTAKE VARIOUS HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICIES AND PRACTICES



^{xxvii} NHS. (2022). Menopause and the workplace. <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/womens-health/older-years-around-50-years-and-over/menopause-and-post-menopause-health/menopause-and-the-workplace/>

^{xxviii} TUC Cymru (2022). The menopause in the workplace - A toolkit for trade unionists Wales TUC Cymru. <https://www.tuc.org.uk/menopause-workplace-toolkit-trade-unionists-wales-tuc-cymru>

^{xxix} BITC. (2022). Menopause in the Workplace. <https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/menopause-in-the-workplace/>

OUR AGEING WORKFORCE

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP ORGANISATIONS IN WALES HARNESS THE BENEFITS OF AN AGEING WORKFORCE?

As a starting point, completing an [Age-Inclusive Business Review](#) at the initial stages of engaging with the programme can help employers to identify gaps and highlight strengths in their approach to age inclusion, providing a clear framework for age-inclusive action in specific areas, where needed.

With many organisations currently struggling to recruit and retain talent, there is an opportunity to widen their prospective talent pool, to take measures to increase their appeal to people over 50 and provide initiatives and support to retain over 50s to stay in the workplace.

When recruiting, it is important that organisations consider the language and images used in job advertisements, ensuring they are not discriminatory or unintentionally exclude older individuals. Ensuring their website includes age-diverse images is important too. Simply stating they welcome applications from all ages and that they are open to talking about flexible working can encourage more over 50s to consider applying.

Organisations can retain valuable older employees by ensuring they have practices and policies to support them to remain in work, such as flexible working and support for those with caring responsibilities or for those experiencing the menopause or health and wellbeing issues.

Employers should proactively offer training and development opportunities to older workers, helping them transfer their skills to different roles, be resilient to change, and ensure that their skills are up-to-date and relevant.

Via a range of tools and support services offered free-of-charge, thanks to support from the National Lottery Community Fund, [Age at Work](#) is supporting employers in Wales who have recognised the importance of building age inclusion into their wellbeing, diversity, and inclusion agendas.



LET'S MAKE AGE INCLUSION A REALITY IN WALES

As the workforce in Wales is changing fast, employers need to act now to unlock the opportunities of multigeneration teams. Understanding the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population is vital if we all want to create productive, innovative and inclusive multi-generational teams – as many of us will lead longer working lives.

Organisations can benefit from the following support through the Age at Work programme:

- **Age-Inclusive Learning Network** – Bringing together HR, inclusion, and wellbeing and other professionals interested in age inclusion to discuss challenges, share good practice, and learn from each other
- **Age-inclusive Business Review** – A self-assessment tool to identify gaps and highlight strengths in current operations regarding key areas relevant to older workers

- **Age-Inclusive Toolkit** – A guide to good practice around age inclusion. Provides tips and suggestions, good practice examples, and signposts to useful resources for supporting staff of all ages
- **Mid-career Review Webinars** – For individuals aged over 50, these webinars allow them to reflect and consider their current circumstances regarding wellbeing, work, and finances, helping them to take action to make plans for a positive future

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit www.bitcni.org.uk/agewales or contact jill.salter@bitc.org.uk for more information on how to get involved in the Age at Work programme and benefit from a more age-inclusive workplace.

APPENDIX A.

DATA AND METHODS

The data was collected using an online survey. These were made available in Welsh and English. Approval for the study was granted by Swansea University College of Human and Health Sciences Ethics Review Board.

The sample was made up of three components:

- A list of email contacts for 5303 businesses in Wales. This included for-profit and not-for-profit organisations. This was purchased from Business Lists UK. In most cases the email address was for the owner of the business or the HR contact.
- A list of email contacts for 500 schools in Wales. This was based on the publicly available list, compiled by Welsh Government, of nursery, primary, middle, secondary, special and independent schools in Wales <https://gov.wales/address-list-schools>. A random sample of 500 schools was taken from the total number of 1,554 schools. Email addresses for the schools were then added manually. However, in

some cases schools either did not have email addresses or had an online form for requests. Hence the final number of schools included was 457.

- A list of contact details for all 22 local authorities in Wales. This was created manually by visiting the websites of each local authority in Wales to find the most relevant email address. Where possible we used the email address for the HR/personnel manager or the Chief Executive. However, in some cases only generic email addresses were available. We were unable to find any email addresses for one local authority. Hence, the final number of local authorities included was 21.

The overall sample list was comprised of 5781 organisations in Wales.

Contacts were sent the initial invitation to participate in the survey on the 13 April 2022. Respondents were sent a reminder on the 5 May and again on the 25 May 2022. All emails were in both Welsh and English. The final sample size was 258 so the overall response rate is just 5%.

Typically organisations surveys get response rates between 10%-20%. Hence, the response rate for this study is low. However, there are a number of contributing factors. The industrial action across Higher Education at the start of the year interrupted the research process. This meant that we sent the survey out later in the year than originally planned. This coincided with the long Easter holidays when many people, especially schools, were off work. This also had knock on effects for the reminders. The first of these coincided with the local elections and the second of these coincided with the Platinum Jubilee celebrations and the summer half term holidays when people took time off work.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

Given that the response rate for this survey is low it is important to check to see to what extent the responding organisations compare to the wider Welsh economy. We included two questions about the nature of the organisation, 1) What sector the organisation was in and 2) the size of the workforce. However, we were unable to find figures on the distribution

APPENDIX A.

of organisations by sector for Wales as a whole. Hence, we had to use the distribution of employees by sector for the comparison. This means we are not comparing like with like. Bearing this in mind figure A1 shows that organisations in manufacturing, other services and banking, finance, insurance, etc., are over-represented relative to the distribution of employment by sector in Wales. Conversely, our distribution, hotels or restaurants and public administration, education or health were under-represented.

Table A1 shows that micro-businesses were highly under-represented in our survey compared to the wider Welsh economy. Conversely, all other sizes of organisations are highly over-represented.

When reading the findings one cannot assume that these relate to sole or micro-organisations. More work is needed to better understand the issues that workforce ageing poses for this type of organisation.

FIGURE A1. DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR COMPARED TO THE SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT IN WALES ACCORDING TO THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY 2021

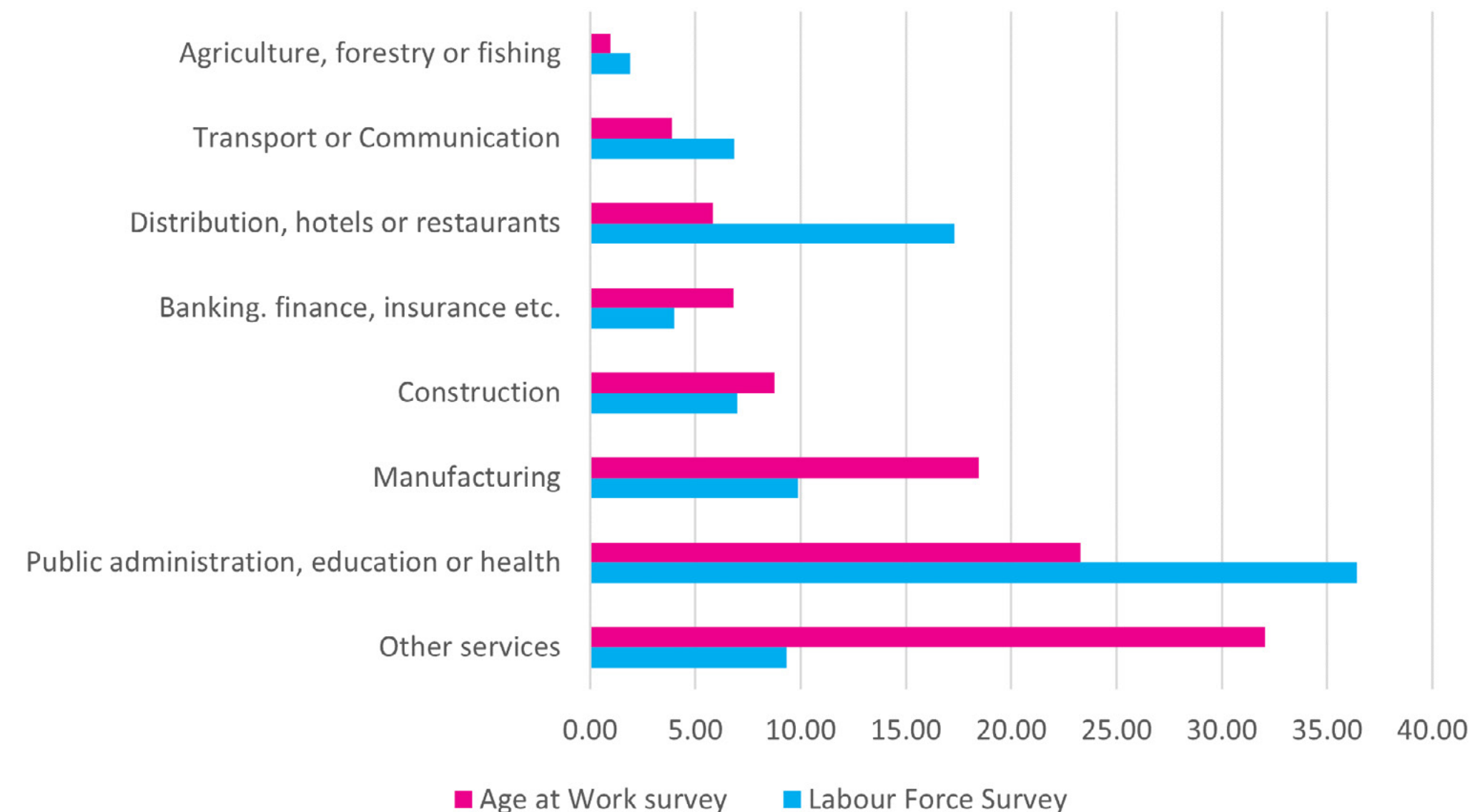


TABLE A1. DISTRIBUTION OF THE SIZE OF ORGANISATIONS IN THE AGE AT WORK SURVEY COMPARED TO THE WELSH ECONOMY AS A WHOLE

	Size of orgs in Wales	Age at Work Survey
Micro (0 To 9)	89.6	27.4
Small (10 To 49)	8.7	42.7
Medium (50 To 249)	1.4	20.2
Large (250+)	0.3	8.9