



Your partner
in progress

Evolving Together

Flourishing in the
age-diverse workforce



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Foreword



Kate Field

Global Head, Human and Social Sustainability, BSI

The world of work is changing. When we work, how we work, where we work, the tools we use - and who is working. Demographic shifts in many economies mean that, as populations age, people will be working for longer. Multiple generations will be in the workplace at any one time, even more so than they are already. The opportunities this will create and the impact it will have – much of which we can't even conceive of yet – are likely to be transformative for individuals, organizations and society.

At BSI, our view is that we have the opportunity to partner across society to respond to these changes. We can take steps today to ensure people can flourish and organizations can grow in the workplace of tomorrow. Our purpose is to accelerate progress towards a fair society and a sustainable world. A key component of that is ensuring the well-being of workers in the future, whether they are starting their careers or further on in their working life.

In that light, we have chosen to explore the 'accelerating factors' that will contribute to a successful age-diverse workforce, with the aim of starting a conversation around

what we can do now. How can we respond to AI and digital transformation? How can we maintain worker well-being as the way we work fundamentally changes? How can we ensure the gains are shared equally and the future of work is sustainable?

The results have been enlightening, showing the different areas for action across different countries and sectors, and setting a clear path forward. The opportunity for organizations and governments to prioritize their people by supporting improved physical health and psychological and mental well-being is unmistakable. So too is the desire for greater flexibility; for work to fit into our lives rather than it being the other way round. The picture this presents is exciting; a chance to collaborate across society and shape a future of work that meets all our needs, whatever age or stage we are at.

BSI is committed to being a partner on this journey to the future of work and proud to present this research as a first step.

Introduction

Over the last year, BSI has explored a phenomenon that can be termed “the Second Glass Ceiling”, whereby women are leaving the workforce early and for reasons other than personal preference, with significant consequences for individual lives, organizational productivity and overall economic growth. Having published landmark guidance on menstrual health and menopause at work, we sought to interrogate this topic by conducting research into the experiences of women across five major economies (the UK, US, China, Japan, Australia).

This gave us insight into the factors pushing women away from work and the steps that can be taken across society and organizations to address this. What we identified was that the question of retaining experienced women is part of a bigger conversation, around the future of work and the demographic shifts that are on the horizon in many major economies.



The World Health Organization¹ projects that the proportion of the world’s population that is over 60 will nearly double from 12% to 22% by 2050

When the modern workplace was developed female employees were in the minority. Now, however women make up a significant portion of the workforce in most countries. Similarly, the prevailing expectation has long been that careers span roughly 40 years, with people retiring by the time they reach their 60s.

With the World Health Organization¹ projecting that the proportion of the world’s population that is over 60 will nearly double from 12% to 22% by 2050, this expectation is changing. As populations age and the pool of new workers entering industries shrinks, many if not all of us will be considering a world in which the norm is that we work for longer.

This poses many questions, including around skills, health and well-being and individual preference. Among these questions is: what does the workplace look like when a greater number of age groups share it? And from there, in a world in which workforce demographics are shifting, how can organizations support meaningful careers and sustainable work throughout everyone's lifetime? What can we put in place now to ensure individuals can thrive and remain productive throughout their careers and give organizations the confidence to grow?

To answer these questions, we have looked into the 'accelerating factors' that will be pivotal to a successful age-diverse workforce. These factors were identified via a combination of interviews with stakeholders within and beyond BSI, including the CBI, British Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, HRflag and more. We also consulted existing research sources to deepen our understanding of the context.

We then commissioned research with Yonder into how business leaders in different markets and sectors prioritized these factors, to create a clear picture of areas for development and opportunities to accelerate progress.



The results indicate that flexibility about when, where and how much we work, along with government incentives and support for physical and mental health and well-being, will be key drivers to support people so they can remain a productive part of the workforce well into later life. Reward and remuneration, along with policy levers around tax and financial arrangements, also have a critical role to play. Notably, there was strong emphasis across all markets on skills and retraining; a clear opportunity for future-thinking organizations to get on the front-foot as Artificial Intelligence (AI) shapes ways of working.

Across sectors and markets, business leaders made clear their desire for proactive moves to enable individuals and organizations to flourish in the future world of work. The age-diverse workforce is on its way. As the research shows, there are many strategies we can deploy to make it a success.

Executive summary

Context

Globally, people are living longer and populations are getting older. With a shrinking labour pool affecting many economies and sectors, it follows that more people will remain in the workforce for longer out of either choice or necessity. In the future age-diverse workplace, we will see even more generations working in the same organizations at the same time.



Accelerating factors

We considered the 'accelerating factors' that can help individuals flourish and organizations grow in the future world of work. These include:

Individuals

- Health and an age-diverse workforce
- Flexible working practices
- Skills and training
- Reward and recognition
- Inclusive culture

Organizations

- Creating an equitable, affirmative culture
- Skills, training and retention
- Flexible working practices and policies
- Health and well-being
- Rewards and recognition

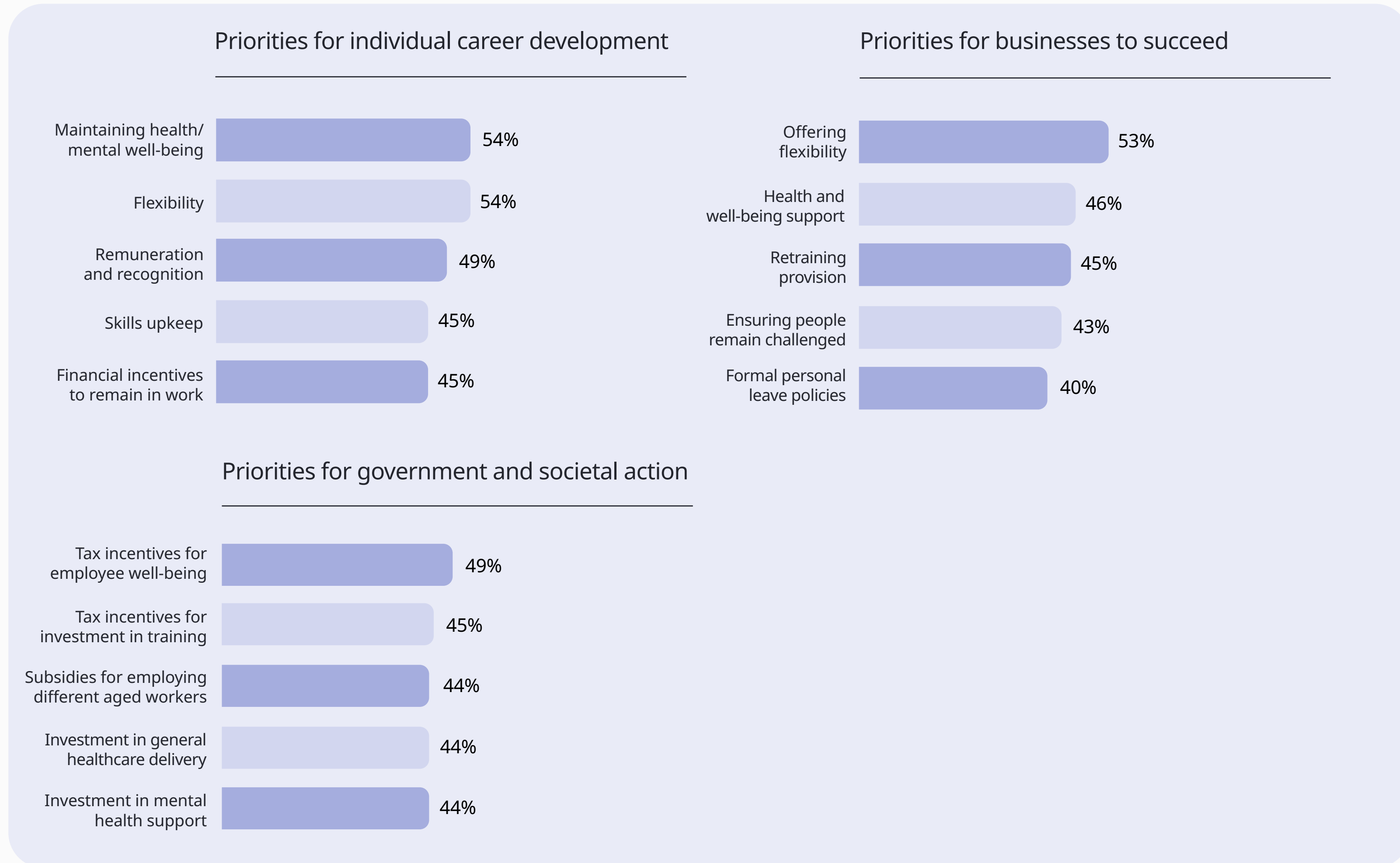
Policy and society

- Positive fiscal frameworks
- Social care policy
- Supply-side incentives
- Public education and affirmative culture



Key findings

Our research consulting 932 business leaders spread across nine global markets and seven sectors showed the following results:



Key takeaways

- 1 Plan ahead**
Think now about how to respond to the age-diverse workforce.
- 2 Rethink work**
Open the conversation around how flexibility can be enabled for the long-term.
- 3 Support health and well-being**
Support workers to manage their health.
- 4 Train, retrain and refresh**
Prioritize opportunities to upskill, returnships or the chance to shift roles.
- 5 Make work worthwhile**
Ensure people feel their contribution is appreciated.
- 6 Enable an inclusive culture**
Employers can partner with employees to embed a supportive culture.



Chapter one

Context



Globally, people are living longer and populations are getting older. According to the World Health Organization², the proportion of the world's population that is over 60 will nearly double from 12% to 22% between 2015 and 2050, while by the end of this decade one in six people will be over 60 and by 2050 there will be 426 million people who are 80 or older. That's equivalent to the entire South American population³.

At the same time, population growth is forecast to slow (albeit that it remains high outside of Europe). UN data⁴ suggests fertility worldwide has dropped from an average of 5 births per woman to 2.3 between 1950 and 2021, with this expected to decline further to 2.1 by 2050.

Not every octogenarian will remain in the workforce, and inward migration may stem declines in some countries. But according to the International Labour Organization⁵ "population ageing in almost all advanced and many emerging countries has accelerated, causing a depression of labour supply that is unlikely to be offset by outward migration from demographically more dynamic regions."

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Population ageing in almost all advanced and many emerging countries has accelerated.

– International Labour Organization



With a shrinking labour pool affecting many economies and sectors, and with fewer younger workers able to contribute via taxation, it follows that employers will be competing for people in a smaller talent pool. More people will remain in the workforce for longer out of either choice or necessity.

“The upper age boundary of working life – using 65 as a reference – will have to increase substantially to prevent the decline in the relative size of the labour force,” explains the OECD⁶. They further note that extending the so-called prime working years age span from 20-64 to 20-70 by 2050, “would maintain the current population share of people at working age”.

In the future age-diverse workplace, we are therefore likely to see more generations working in the same organizations at the same time; Baby Boomers alongside Generation Y. In 2002, the expected duration of working life in the EU was 32.4 years – by 2022 this had risen to 36.5 years⁷.



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We are, therefore, at a turning point; one that is perhaps as significant as the mass entrance of women to the workforce in key economies from the 1960s onwards. The question that therefore arises is this: in a world where working for longer becomes the norm, how can we ensure individuals, organizations and society, across sectors and geographies, can flourish? What can accelerate progress towards a successful age-diverse workplace?

Chapter two

Accelerating factors



A sustainable future is one in which individuals of all ages and skills, across countries and sectors, can thrive at work and in which their organizations can have the confidence to grow. This will require changes in how individuals relate to their work but also new ways of thinking from employers and policymakers.

As a first step we considered what we have called the “accelerating factors” that can help us get to this sustainable future. We looked at these from the perspective of factors that can help individuals flourish and organizations grow, and what changes could happen at the policy or societal level to enable this.

Individuals

Health and an age-diverse workforce

The positive impact of working longer on physical and mental health and well-being is highlighted in several studies, including by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development⁸ and in the journal BMC Public Health⁹. Harvard Medical School also cites research indicating that working past retirement age is associated with improved longevity and better health outcomes, but their paper suggests these benefits may depend on the type of employment – avoiding stressful, physically demanding or unfulfilling work. This is a view echoed by the OECD whose research indicates working longer may not suit certain physically demanding occupations.

There is an opportunity for age-diverse workplaces to boost businesses and economies, while also delivering individual physical and mental health benefits for employees. Where governments and organizations recognize and effectively accommodate the needs of older workers, including, as highlighted by Demos¹⁰, supporting provision of appropriate occupational health policies, there is a clear opportunity to help individuals to thrive.



Flexible working practices

A successful age-diverse workplace will be one that can accommodate the needs of its workers – including around when and where they work and for how much of the week. According to the OECD¹¹, workers increasingly value flexibility as they age, and older workers are more likely to work for longer if their jobs are more flexible¹². Research by the National Bureau of Economic Research in the US supports this, finding that flexible work hours had the largest effect on whether people worked after 70¹³, while prior BSI research into women’s experience specifically found that 76% of women globally felt greater flexibility would help them remain in work longer¹⁴. Since the need to combine work with caring responsibilities is a contributory factor in the exit of experienced workers – 29% of women globally told BSI’s Second Glass Ceiling research this was a specific barrier - flexibility may actually give them the feeling they have more choices.

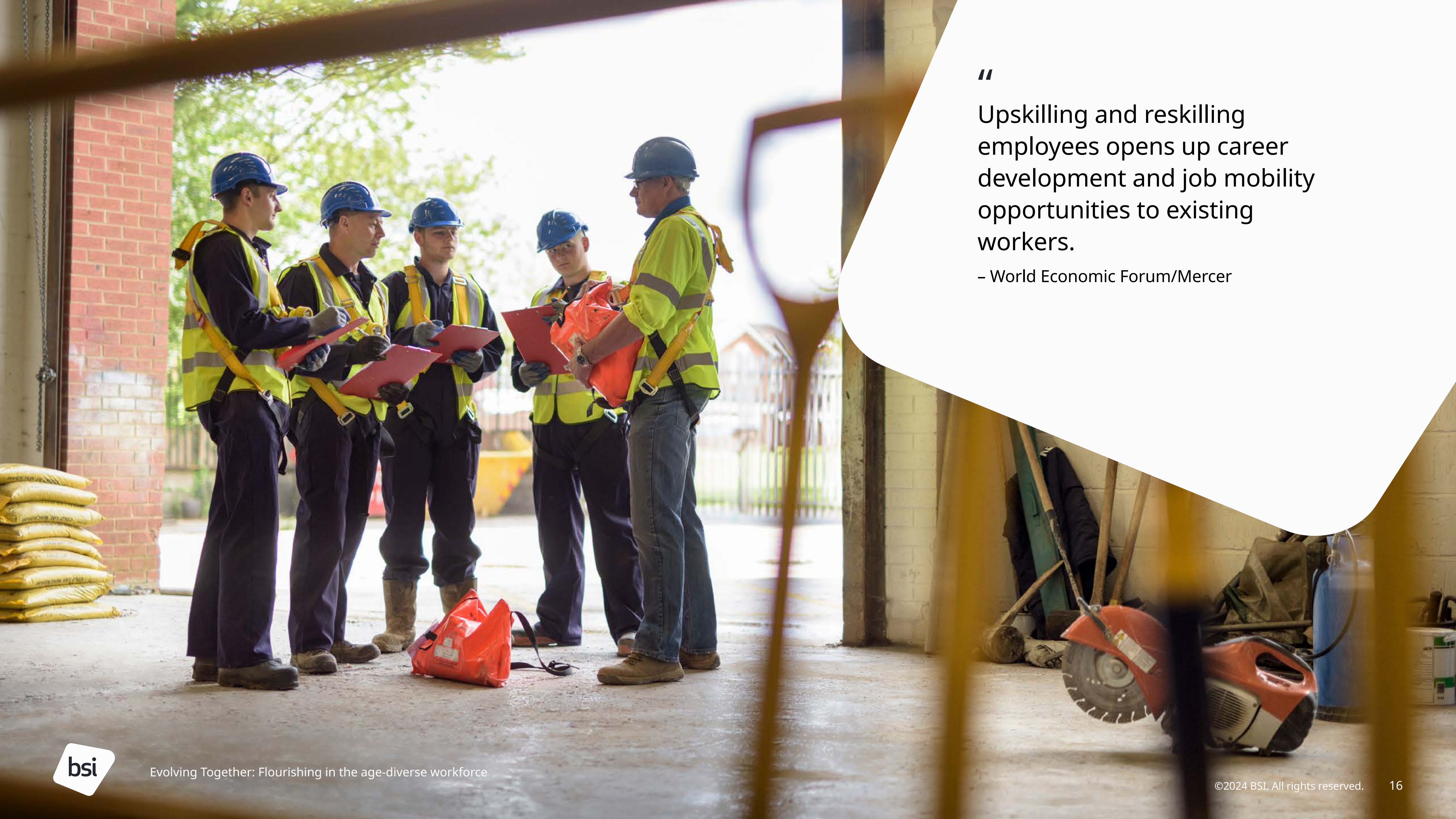
76% of women globally felt greater flexibility would help them remain in work longer – BSI research

Increasingly, phased retirement is becoming a popular choice, whereby people reduce their hours, or start part-time work after their retirement¹⁵. This may be partially driven by financial needs. A Centre for Ageing Better report found that “a low state pension, increasing unemployment and the transition to workplace pension schemes reliant on employee contribution are all factors leading to a generation without adequate savings in retirement”.

Skills and training

A key opportunity to enable experienced workers to remain in the workforce for longer and flourish in the future workplace comes from skills maintenance and development – although this is still important for younger members of staff. Engaging retirement-eligible employees in training can aid retention, according to research published by the American Psychological Association¹⁶. Korean data concurs, suggesting that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training for ageing workers can mitigate age-related productivity decreases¹⁷.

Experienced workers are often eager for more training. AARP International found that the opportunity to learn something new is an essential element of the ideal job for most workers aged 45 to 65¹⁸. As noted by the World Economic Forum and Mercer, “upskilling and reskilling employees opens up career development and job mobility opportunities to existing workers” and is key to filling both skills gap and preparing for the future¹⁹. Additionally, opportunities for lifelong learning can be a critical factor for individual well-being, which in turn can help individuals stay healthy for longer²⁰. So taking a holistic approach to supporting an age diverse workforce is crucial.



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Upskilling and reskilling employees opens up career development and job mobility opportunities to existing workers.

- World Economic Forum/Mercer

Reward and recognition

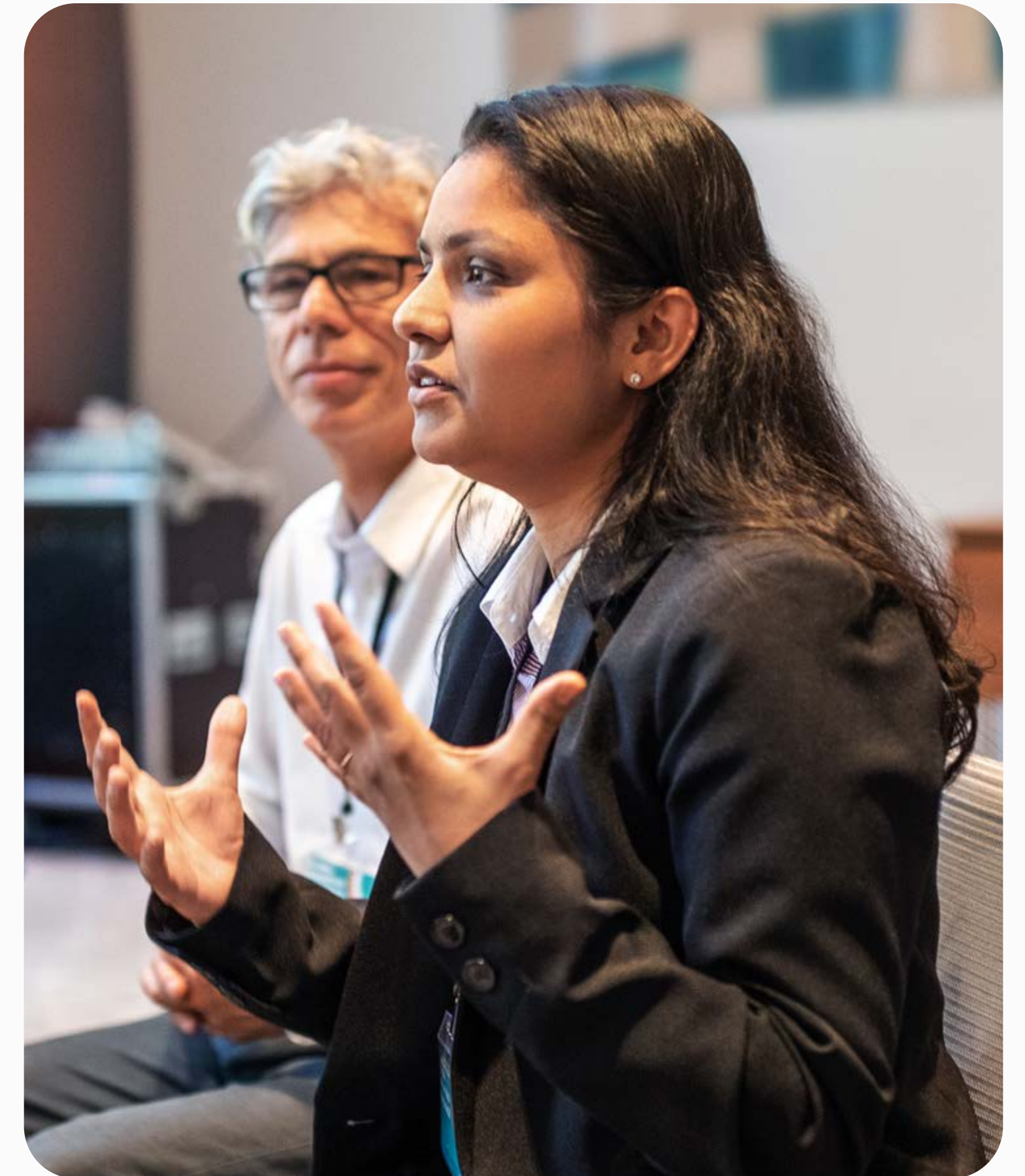
The World Economic Forum notes financial resilience as one of the three core principles needed for individuals to be successful in a potentially 100-year life²¹. In BSI's Second Glass Ceiling research, nearly a fifth of women globally specifically called out lack of pay parity as a barrier to remaining in work. Good pay is the second most important factor in choosing a job behind flexible working hours for 50 to 65-year-olds considering returning to work in the UK (ONS)²². In an age-diverse workforce, fair pay that responds to people's economic needs and experience levels will be a critical factor. Conversely, there are specific instances where the perception of financial risks such as limits on pension tax relief may keep workers, particularly high-earners, from working longer, for example at the upper echelons of the UK healthcare sector²³.

Non-financial employee recognition can also have a positive impact on both the health of middle-age and older adults and their longevity in the workplace, according to the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE)²⁴. Research suggests that if workers perceive an 'effort-reward imbalance', the result can be stress and adverse health effects²⁵.

Inclusive culture

Culture has the potential to be a critical factor in enabling all age-groups to enjoy work and remain in post. Research by the Centre for Ageing Better finds that older workers look for open, inclusive work cultures where their voices are heard, and for environments that prevent and tackle discrimination and prejudice at all levels²⁶. Research also found that older workers in the US valued social opportunities²⁷.

There is a perception that age discrimination continues in the workplace²⁸, but OECD research shows the presence of experienced workers can boost productivity by enhancing team performance through interaction with others and their direct contribution²⁹. Bain research reinforces that older workers are looking for work that fascinates them and allows them to help others³⁰ - aligning with younger generations, of whom it has been found that purpose is critical to keeping them in their jobs³¹.



Organizations

In this section we explore the factors that could help organizations accelerate progress to a successful age-diverse workplace.

Creating an equitable, affirmative culture

Prioritizing age inclusion can help organizations to recruit and retain talent³², and creating a favourable workplace culture can be more important than putting specific policies in place.

It is important to give older workers a voice in the organization and managers, particularly line managers³³, must have the tools to support them³⁴. Reviewing recruitment, training and benefits are all part of establishing an age-inclusive culture according to the Reward & Employee Benefits Association (REBA)³⁵. AARP suggests appointing a diversity manager and introducing formal groups and social opportunities to encourage employee engagement.



Skills, training and retention

According to EBRD, “forward-thinking organizations” understand how retaining older workers, with their expertise and experience, can add value to the business³⁶. Career reviews provide the opportunity to understand how older workers’ individual requirements best fit with company goals, informing the organization’s approach to training and redeployment³⁷. Tailoring training to better suit older workers, for example through self-paced and online programmes, can be effective and accommodates those in need of flexibility, according to AARP³⁸.

Mentoring can play an important role, improving core job skills as well as ‘soft skills’, and helping participants understand the benefits brought by both younger and older workers, according to AARP’s research³⁹. Reverse mentoring programs with senior employees serving as mentees can also increase knowledge sharing, improve collaboration and promote respect⁴⁰.



Flexible working practices and policies

Flexible working can lead to happier, healthier and more productive employees, according to OECD⁴¹, and more than four in five professionals surveyed said flexible working hours made them more productive, according to a World Economic Forum report⁴².

Many organizations have already seen the benefit of offering flexible working: Qantas’s Flex@Q recognizes that workers’ lifestyles vary⁴³, so offers different kinds of flexibility from contractual changes (such as part-time working) to variable hours and shift patterns, flexible leave and a choice of working locations. While ranked slightly higher by older generations, flexibility, according to McKinsey, is among the top four reasons employees of every generation take a new job⁴⁴.

Health and well-being

More than half of workers have a long-term health condition by age 60 (according to the HR professional body, CIPD)⁴⁵, but comprehensive workplace health or well-being programmes can counter lost productivity and improve worker retention⁴⁶. While cost and resource barriers can keep smaller companies from implementing such programs, the OECD suggests SMEs may be well-placed to implement them effectively given less bureaucracy, easier implementation and more opportunity for bonding than might be found in larger organizations.

Organizations can support workers' physical and mental health by adapting to accommodate needs that can change with age⁴⁷. This includes provision for carers⁴⁸, menopause support⁴⁹, and accommodation of changing physical capabilities, such as redeployment and retraining⁵⁰. Businesses can also adapt their work environment to help prevent injury, for example through modifications to accessibility, safety (e.g. non-slip floors), and workstations⁵¹. In the U.S., the Surgeon General has issued a framework of "five essentials" organizations should institute to encourage workplace mental health and well-being⁵².

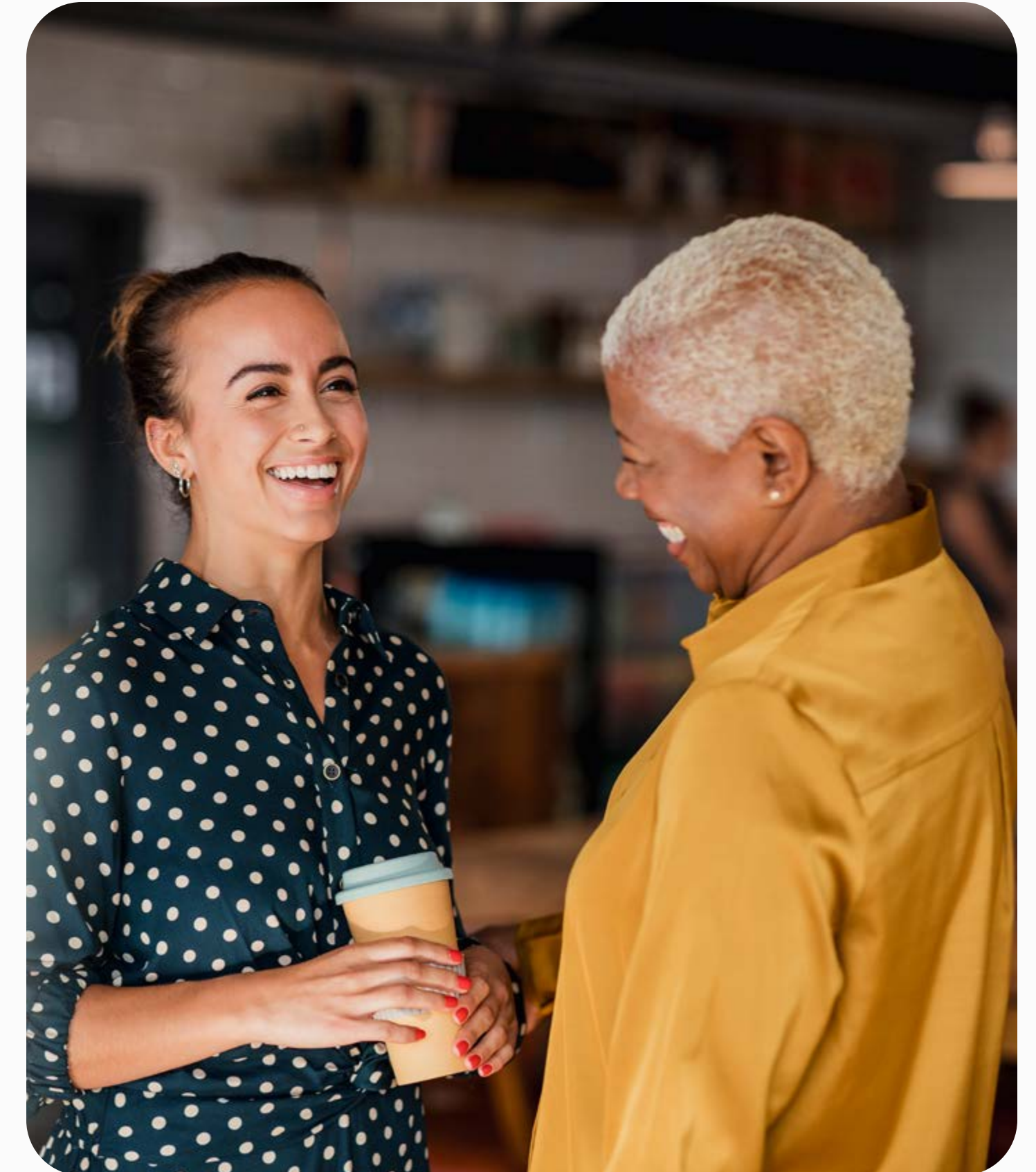
Over 65s are most likely to find their job enjoyable and fulfilling

– Pew Research Center

Reward and recognition

Job satisfaction increases with age, with over 65s being most likely to find their job enjoyable and fulfilling, and least likely to find it stressful, according to a Pew Research survey⁵³.

Nevertheless, the Rewards and Employee Benefit Association (REBA) asserts that, as more people work into older age, age-appropriate rewards and benefits should be used to attract, retain and engage them⁵⁴. As part of its efforts to forge an age-positive workforce, Unilever's policies aim to support all life stages⁵⁵, and include support for chronic conditions, funding care for elderly relatives and menopause support. Benefits Canada reports on how some employers are innovating to meet the needs of older workers by offering 'grandernity' leave⁵⁶.



Society

In this section we explore the areas for societal or policy change that could accelerate progress to a successful age-diverse workplace for individuals and organizations.

Positive fiscal frameworks

These can be useful tools to encourage longer workforce participation⁵⁷ and have been recommended as critical actions by the OECD⁵⁸. Such fiscal policy incentives can include raising state pension age; encouraging tax structures to reward retirement in line with longer life expectancy; and ensuring that the benefits and welfare systems are used as intended (and not skewed to support older workers exiting the workforce through ill health).

The UK found that phased-in changes to state pension age to 66 years old have been successful in encouraging those in work to remain economically active⁵⁹. The number of men working to 66 increased by 7.4% and woman by 8.56%⁶⁰. However, the policy may be a double-edged sword, as it is predominantly lower earners who are likely to remain economically active for longer⁶¹. Additionally, the OECD acknowledges that while fiscal policy has the power to encourage later life work participation, “reforms can face strong (public) resistance”.



Social care policy

Despite the vital importance and prevalence of government and employer paid sick-leave, older workers are leaving the workplace through ill health. For example, the UK found that in 2022 138,000 people left the workforce through ill health and have yet to return to work⁶².

A 2023 OECD report considered dimensions of social care policy that could have a positive outcome on tackling early work force exit through ill health, including “tax credits that can be used to encourage investments in health and well-being; targeting incentives at older and vulnerable groups; and the promotion of phased retirement”⁶³. The UK’s GBP 2.5Bn Back to work plan, announced in 2022, features social care policies including priority access to training for long-term unemployed; a focus on helping those with mental health conditions remain in the work force; and work well pilots to encourage those with long-term health conditions back the workforce⁶⁴. While many of these policies have been welcomed, some elements of the plan have been questioned as less positive, especially those related to changes in means tested benefits for the vulnerable⁶⁵.

Supply-side incentives

A recent OECD report found that governments and social partners can support high performing work practice (HPWP) through supply-side incentives⁶⁶, a crucial cultural and behavioral imperative to encourage later life economic participation⁶⁷.

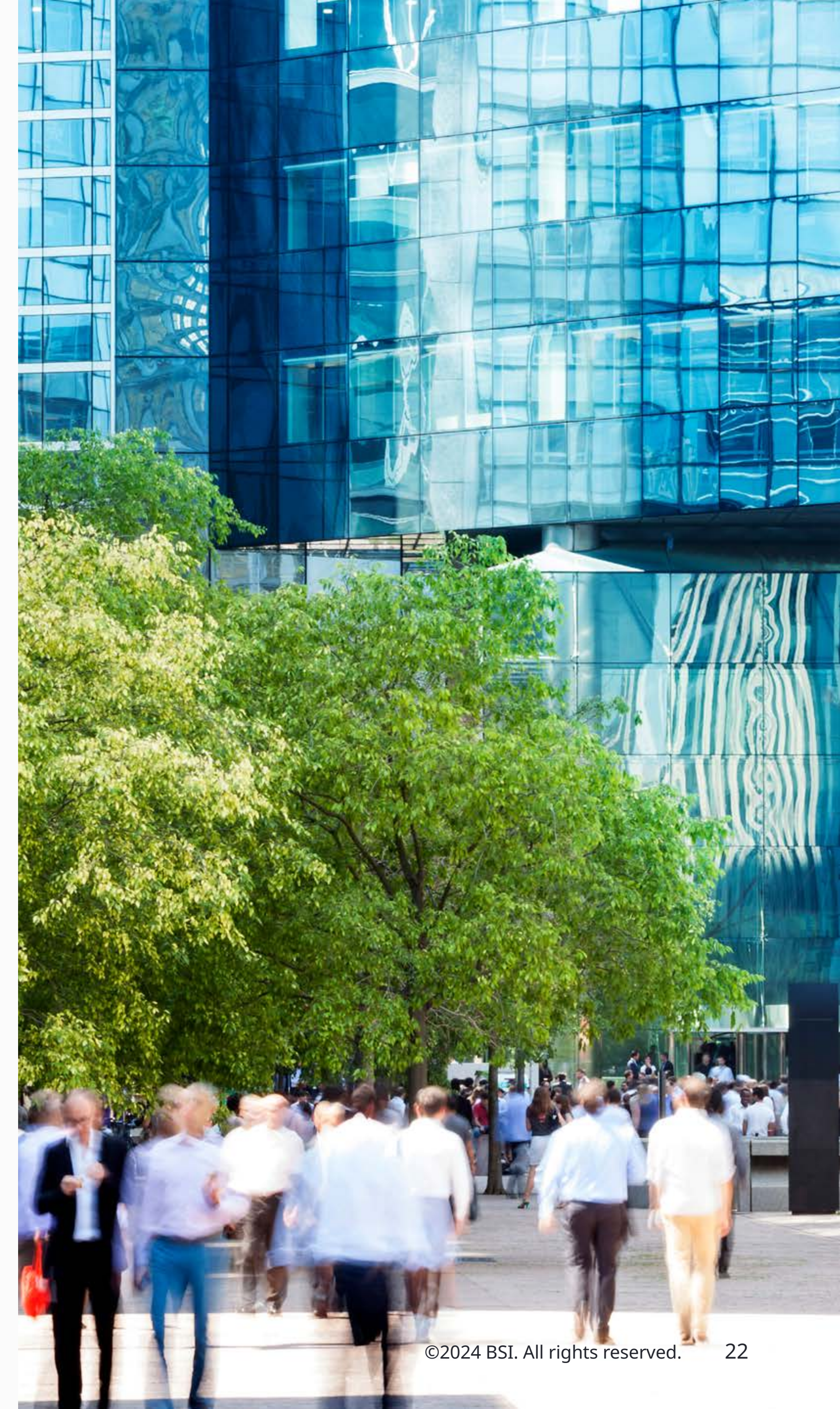
Examples include the European Commission Innovation Network, a sharing platform for business to access training best practices; and New Zealand's High-performance work initiative, a government policy to help small and medium sized enterprises with government-funded consultant delivered training. Additionally, the OECD found that government authority sponsored training networks "enable economies of scale and help bring down the costs of per-worker training". For example, in Austria training costs can be reduced by 50% through companies accessing training via 'Impulse Training Networks', training specifically aimed at older workers.

Public education and affirmative culture

The Bain study found that prejudices exist against older workers, despite the socio-demographic realities of an ageing workforce⁶⁸.

"Governments can play a positive role with the creation of positive and affirmative culture" – OECD

The OECD found that here too, governments can play a positive role with the creation of positive and affirmative culture as regards older workers. For example, Holland launched a publicly-funded awareness campaign utilizing a local, older famed sports personality to reduce negative stereotypes of older workers.



Chapter three

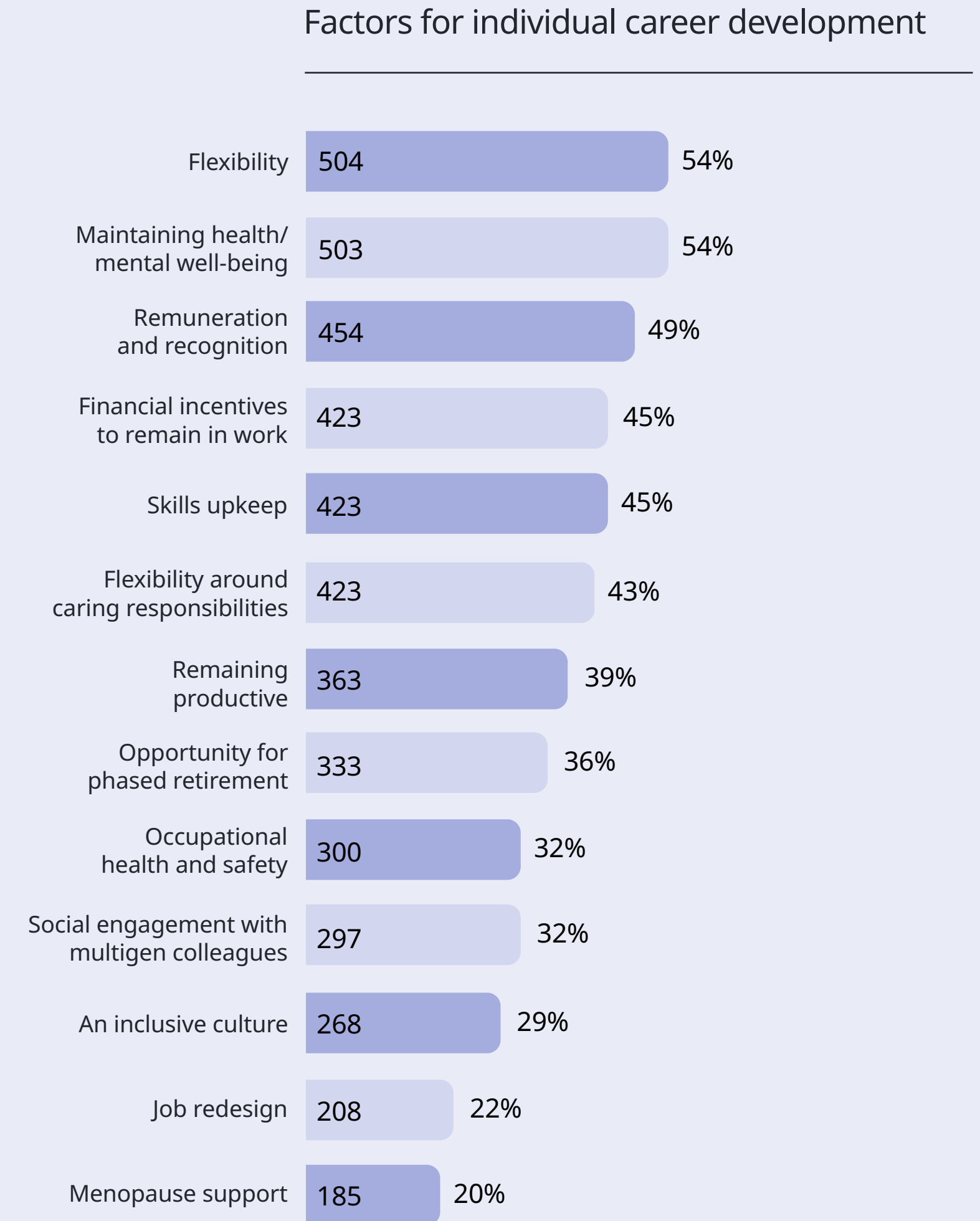
Overall findings



What emerges from the data are clear patterns. While each market and sector differ slightly in which accelerating factors are prioritized, across the board flexibility, access to healthcare, well-being and mental health support, and policies that incentivize workforce participation are considered key. Notably, the factors that are deemed to be key to a successful age-diverse workforce tend to be structural – the way in which work is done and the economic realities around it, or formal policies around leave, for example – rather than around workplace culture.

While some respondents scored levers related to diversity and inclusion highly, most were more focused on practicalities, for example opportunities for retraining or insurance premiums. Notably, there was less desire for governments to force the hand of businesses around creating and enabling the age-diverse workforce, with just a third backing laws or regulation prohibiting discrimination based on age. Instead, the focus was on positive, enabling moves and giving people both the motivation to remain in work and remain productive throughout life, and the physical and mental ability to do so.

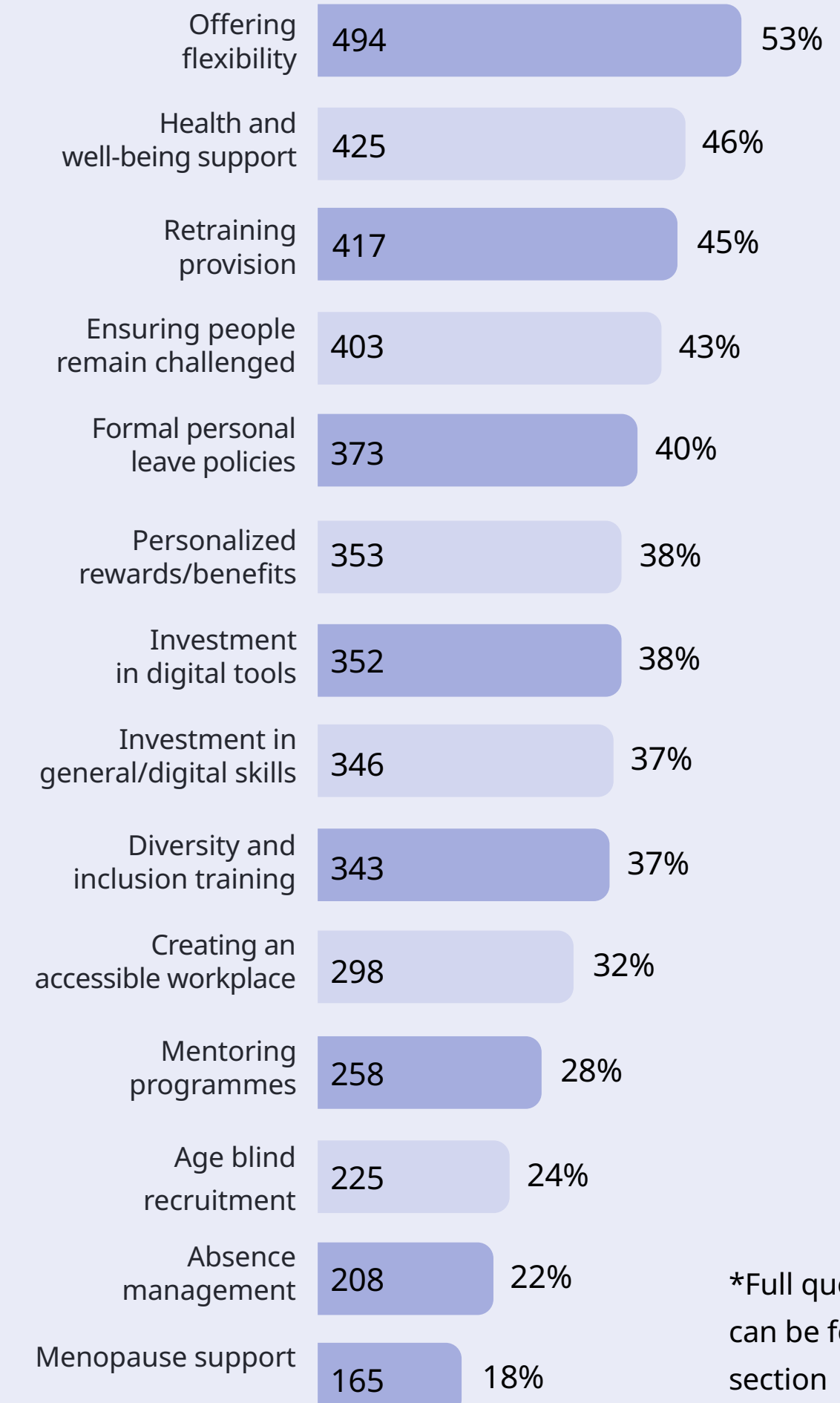
Factors all respondents support in a future age-diverse workforce*





Factors all respondents support in a future age-diverse workforce*

Factors for businesses to succeed

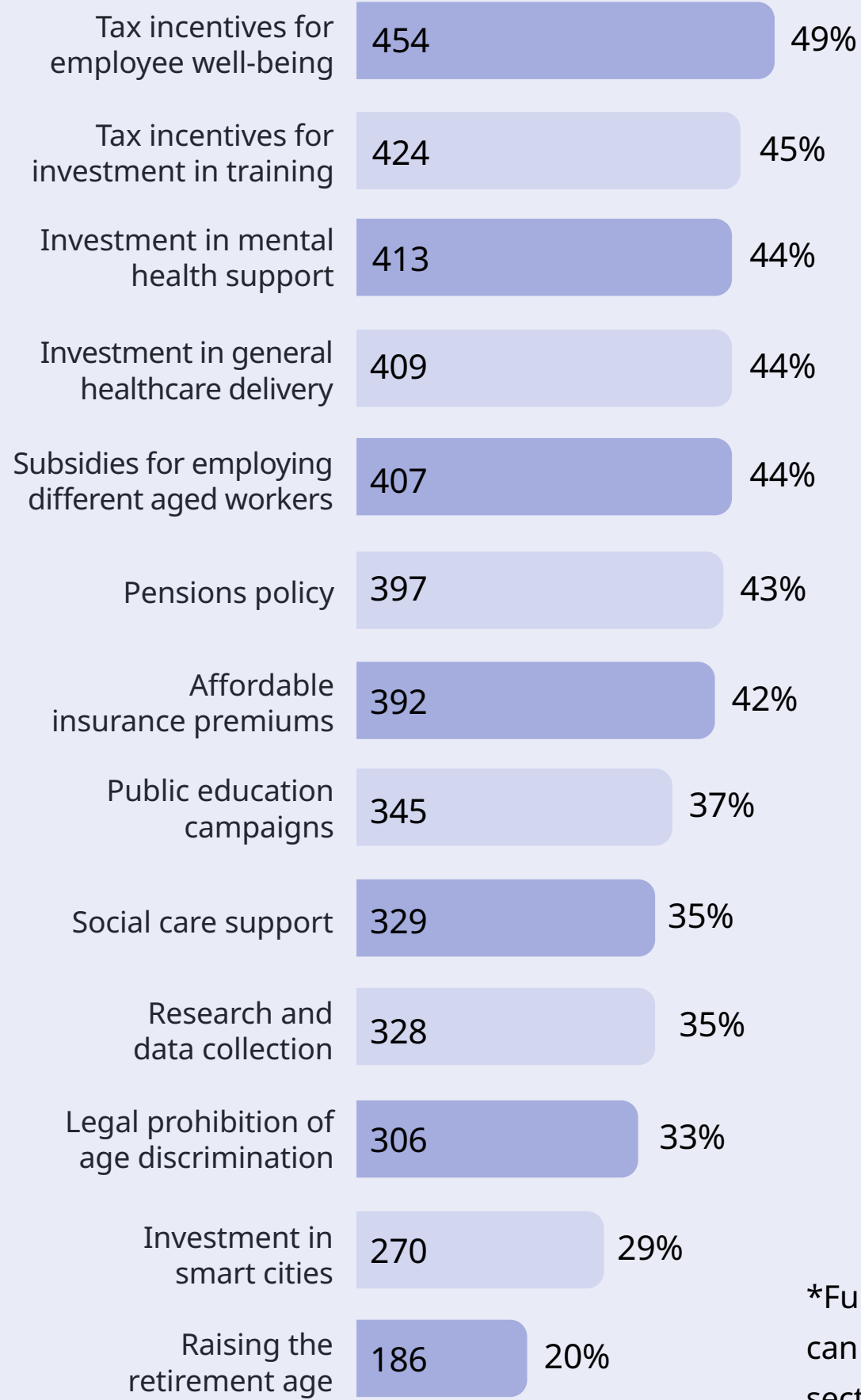


*Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section

Factors all respondents support in a future age-diverse workforce*



Factors for government and societal action



*Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section

Chapter four

Market analysis



Australia

Australia's population is ageing⁶⁹, linked to low birth rates and rising life expectancy. At present, 16% of the Australian population is over 65; between 2000 and 2020 the proportion of children fell from 20.7% to 18.6% of the Australian population.

Notably, the proportion of the population that is deemed working age has declined. In the 20 years to 2020, that cohort grew by 31.4%, whereas the wider population grew by 42.2%⁷⁰.

The Australian Treasury has noted that the demographic shifts will have an impact on the economy⁷¹. Last year, they forecast growth at "a slower rate over the next 40 years than in the past, at an average of 2.2 per cent a year". This is expected to come as population growth slows from

At present, 16% of the Australian population is over 65

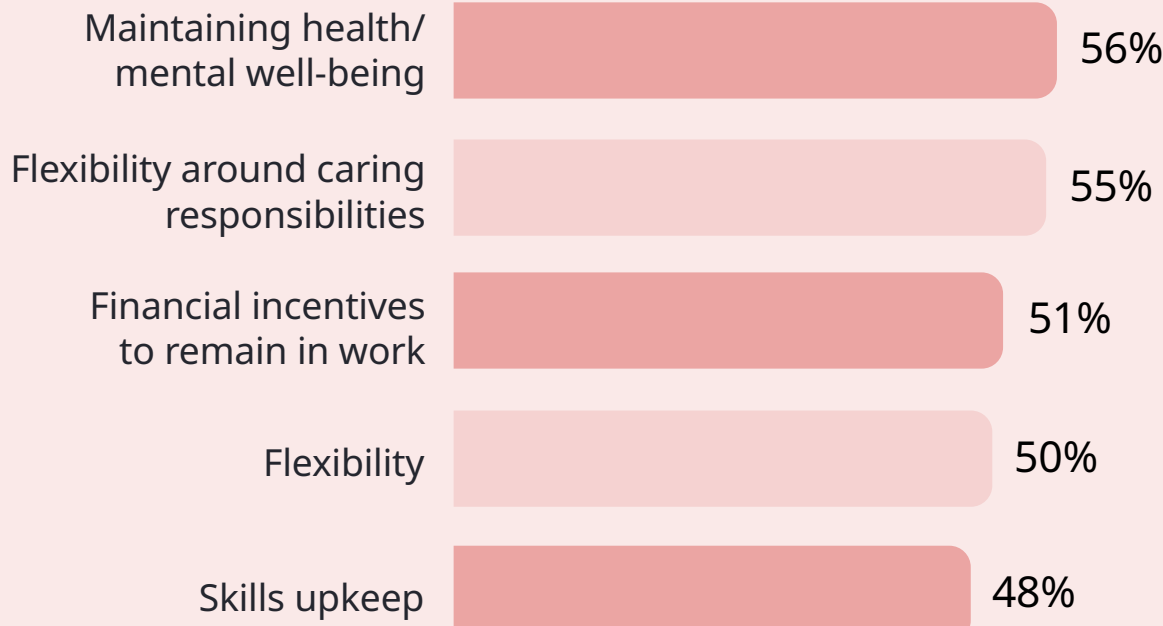
1.4% a year over the past 40 years to 1.1% over the next 40, in a context of falling migration and a doubling of the number of over 65s. Their findings also indicate that in the coming four decades the rate of people participating in paid work is set to decline from 66.6% to 63.8% - meaning there is a clear reason for action now to support workforce participation throughout people's lives.



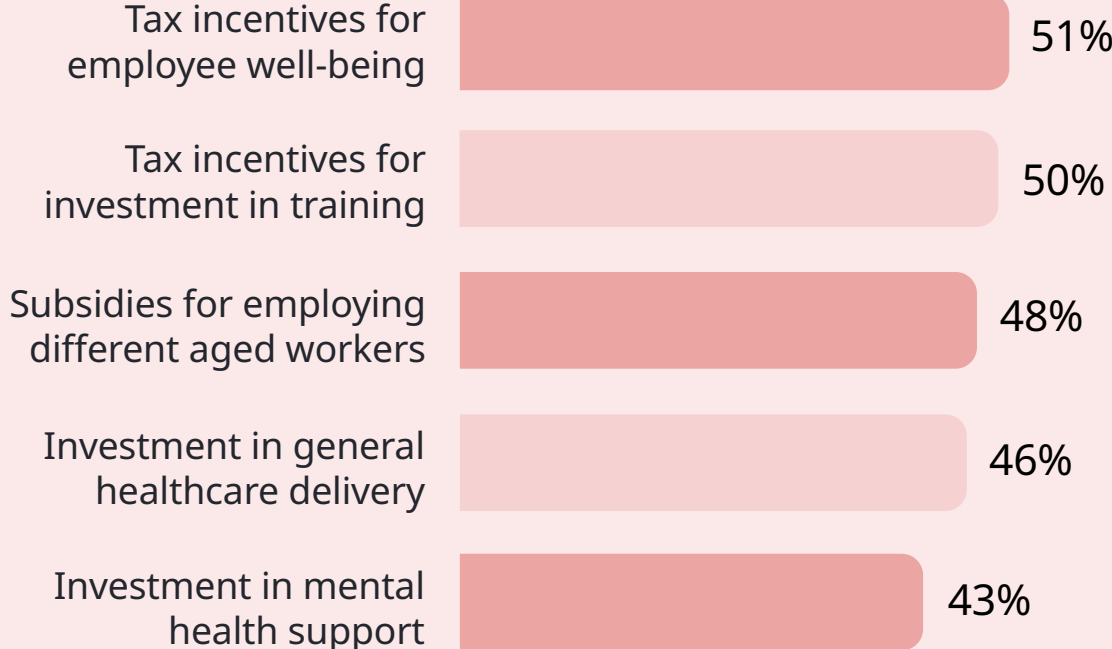
Australian priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*



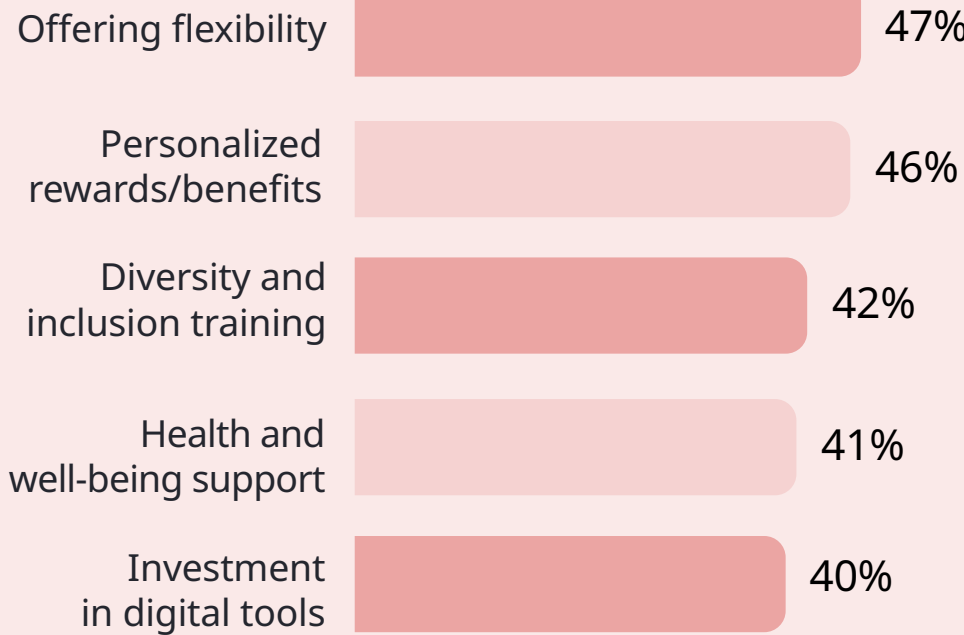
Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section

Priorities for action

The survey reveals Australians prioritize mental health and well-being above all else. They want their government to provide tax or financial incentives to encourage employers to support their employees with this. Australians, for their own needs, value the ability to maintain physical health and well-being the most (56%), slightly higher than the global average. Flexibility around caring responsibilities also scored higher than in other countries.

Australia was one of the few markets to prioritize training staff around diversity and inclusion (42% compared to the global figure of 37%). For business needs, Australians placed slightly lower emphasis on offering flexibility

and greater focus on offering personalized reward and benefits programmes. This includes financial advice around retirement planning, which ranked sixth globally but second for Australians.

The data suggests mental health is a key priority for Australians. When asked about the top things government should do to help people and business succeed, tax or financial incentives to encourage employers to invest in employee physical health and/or psychological/mental well-being came at number one.



Charlene Loo, Managing Director, Australia and New Zealand, BSI

“Our research suggests that Australians value flexibility, well-being support and ongoing learning above traditional workplace norms. The top priority, focusing on physical and mental well-being, reflects a growing recognition of the integral role that health plays in employee productivity and satisfaction and will do as the workforce becomes more age diverse. This will only be more pronounced as the workforce becomes more age-diverse. Together, these preferences paint a picture of the opportunity to enable Australia’s future workforce to flourish via a holistic approach to work-life balance, continuous personal and professional growth, and adaptive employment practices that support a range of needs and lifestyles.”

“The emphasis on such inclusive policies and health investments signals a societal shift towards a broader understanding of what it will take to cultivate a thriving economy and community in the face of demographic shifts and cost of living pressures. Equally key will be investment in digital tools to support employees of all ages, given the importance of technology in bridging generational gaps and the role it will play in the future economy.”

China

Although China has one of the world's largest populations, low birth rates over the past few decades mean it also has one of the world's fastest growing ageing populations. By 2040, the World Health Organization predicts over 60s will make up 28% of the population⁷².

In 2023, the population is estimated to have shrunk by 2.08m, in light of a halving in the number of births⁷³. This is expected to have significant implications for the workforce, with recent predictions suggesting the working age population will shrink to 210 million, and forecasting that by 2077 the number of Chinese people of retirement age will overtake the number of Chinese of working age.

Another recent report suggests that in the coming decade, 300 million people aged between 50 and 60 will leave China's workforce⁷⁴. According to Xiujian Peng, senior research fellow at the Centre of Policy Studies at Victoria University⁷⁵, "China's age structure change will slow down economic growth". By acting now, China has the chance to get a headstart on other countries grappling with more imminent demographic shifts.

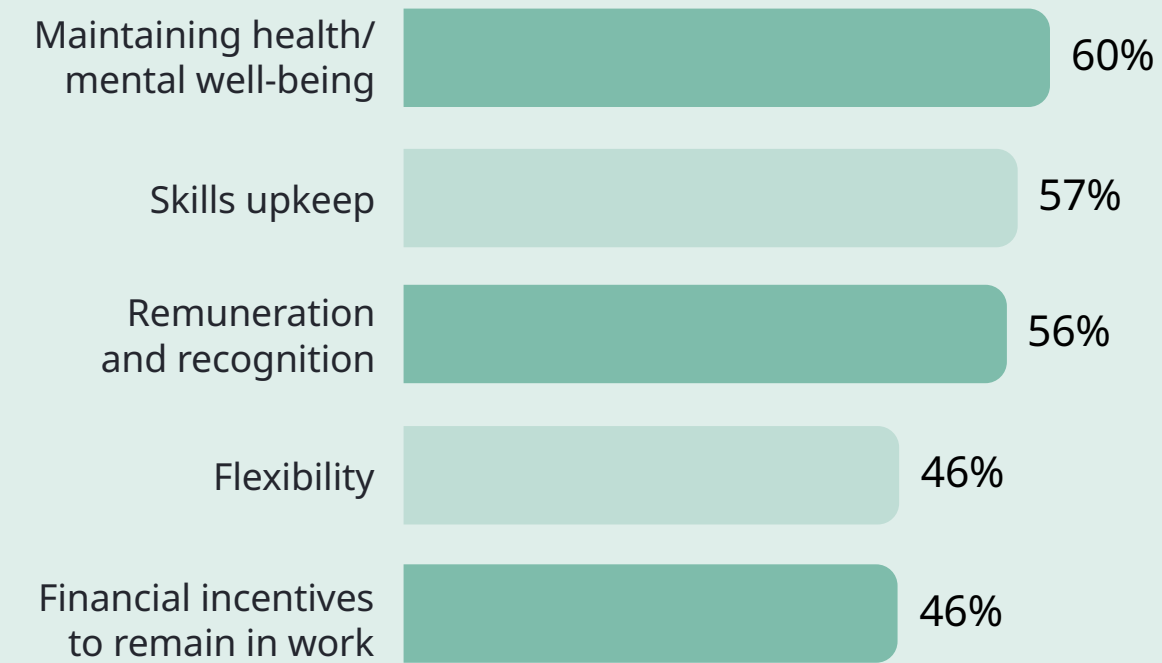
By 2040, predictions suggest over 60s will be 28% of China's population

At present, the country has an unusually low retirement age, sitting as low as 50 for women in manual roles, 55 for women in knowledge economy roles and 60 for men. However, reports suggest the Chinese government intend to raise this⁷⁶. Additionally, China experiences high outward migration; in 2017 figures suggested there were 10 million Chinese migrants living and working overseas, although these numbers dipped during the pandemic⁷⁷.

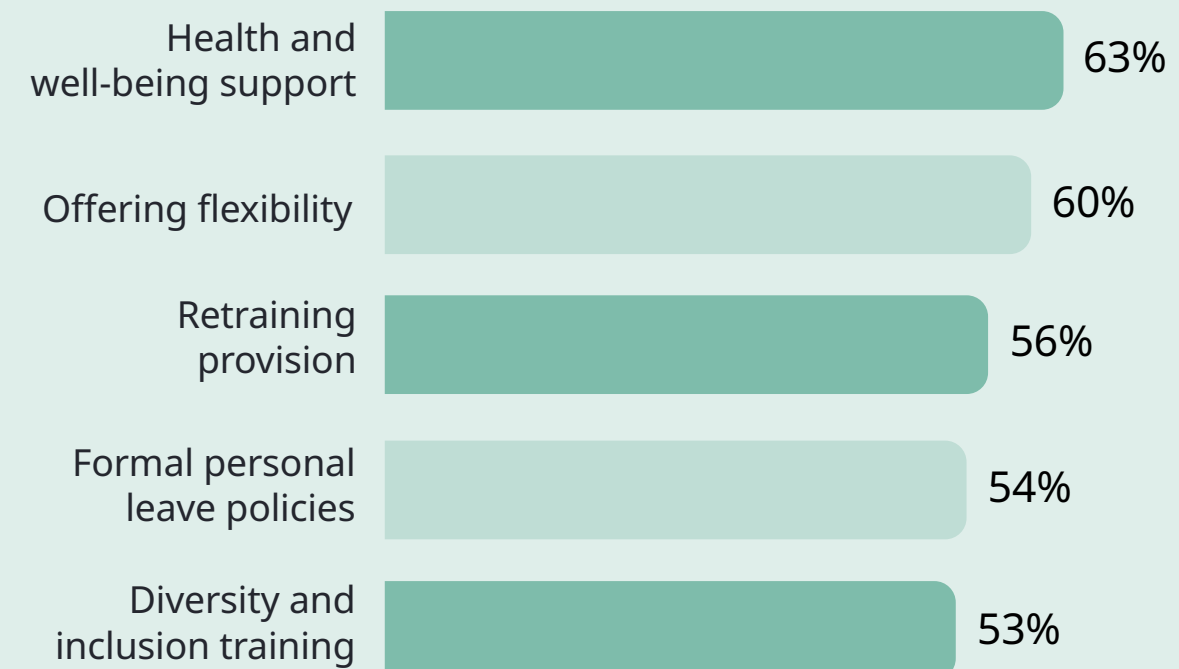


Chinese priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

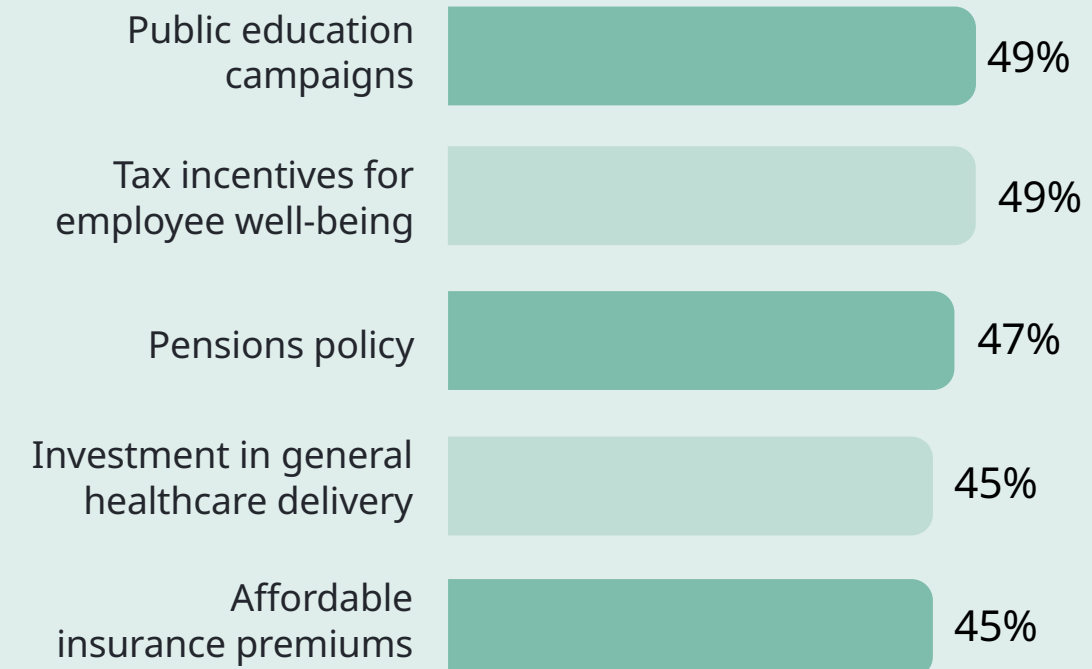
Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for businesses to succeed



Priorities for government and societal action



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section



Priorities for action

Physical and mental health is a big priority for Chinese people. This can explain the emphasis they place on being able to maintain physical health and/or psychological/mental well-being (top of the list at 60%, above the global average).

Similarly, at the business needs level, Chinese business leaders placed a much higher value on providing support around these matters than respondents from other countries. Only respondents in India and Germany rated it as a factor of similar importance, but the score is much lower than in China (51% in India and 55% in Germany).

This was followed by Chinese respondents calling for more tax or financial incentives to encourage employers to invest in employee health or well-being (49%) in order to make the age-diverse workforce a success. Interestingly, skills upkeep and access to training was the second most popular choice for personal accelerating factor, prioritized by 57% of Chinese respondents. This is much higher than in any other countries surveyed (all other countries are below 50%). This suggests Chinese people want to improve and advance their skills in the workplace as they look to the future of work. It can also be assumed that Chinese employees have a stronger sense of the need to improve their skills.



Michael Lam, Managing Director, Assurance, APAC, BSI

“It is evident from the research how highly Chinese people rate the importance of their physical and mental health at work. The call for providing more support for this reflects a growing awareness of the benefits that can come from cultivating a balanced, welcoming and supportive workplace for all, irrespective of age.”

“It is therefore no surprise that most business leaders we surveyed advocated for tax or financial incentives to foster employer investment in both physical and mental health. They recognize that employee well-being has the potential to enhance productivity and business outcomes as well as societal prosperity. Lastly, the emphasis on skills upkeep and training underscores the recognition that lifelong learning has an essential role to play in supporting people working throughout their careers in an ever-changing job market.”

Europe

France

France has the honour of being the country in Europe with the most centenarians, yet its birth rate has fallen to levels last seen in the Second World War, dropping 6.6% between 2022 and 2023 and down 20% on 2010⁷⁸. Meanwhile life expectancy is on an upward trajectory, despite blips during the Covid-19 pandemic⁷⁹.

France's population is expected to decline from the next decade onwards, with growth concentrated amongst the over 75s⁸⁰. Data projections suggest that the population will peak at 69.3 million in 2044 but by 2070 will have fallen to 68.1 million, even accounting for net migration. INSEE figures suggest that the over 75s already represent 10% of the population.

Although France is experiencing a less radical demographic shift than comparable countries, with INED citing data showing over 65s are expected to make up 28% of the

France has the honour of being the country in Europe with the most centenarians

population by 2050 against a Southern European average of 36%⁸¹, a key opportunity for France is to find ways to increase participation in the workforce at this stage.

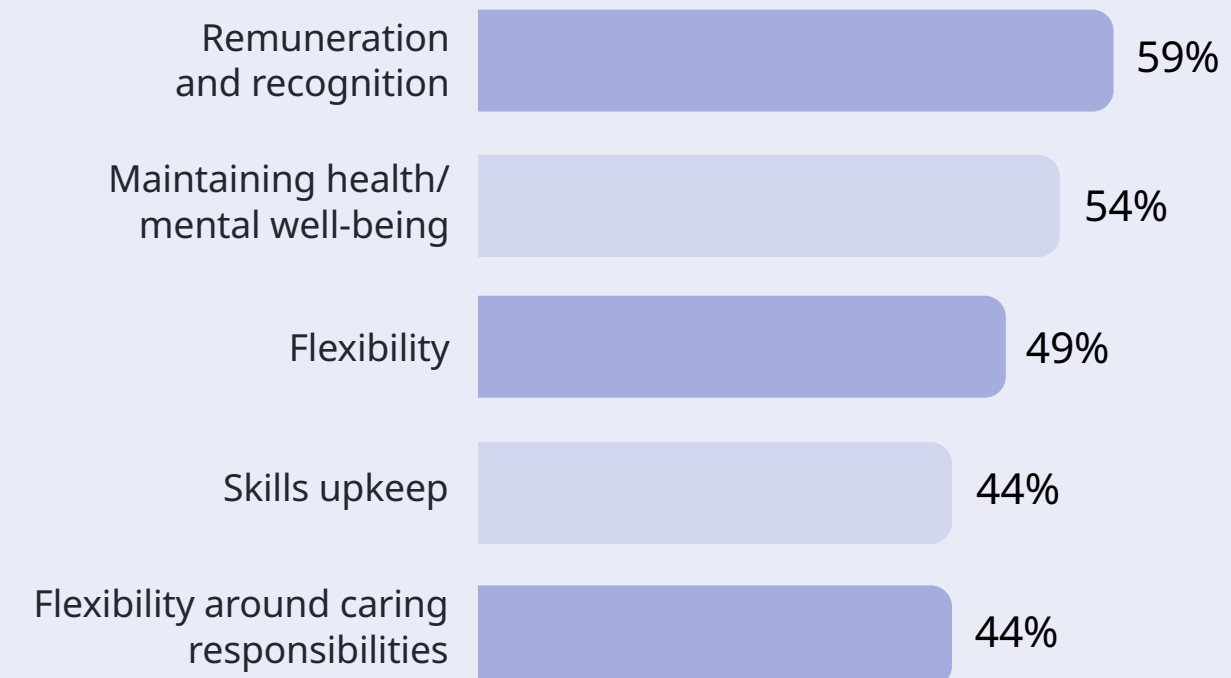
Data from 2021 showed that 16% of people between 55 and 69 were neither employed nor retired⁸², while French government efforts to raise the retirement age to 64 sparked significant protests, although the change was signed into law last year⁸³. The French employers' organization (MEDEF) previously published proposals to make the 35-hour rule more flexible, drawing condemnation from trade unions⁸⁴.



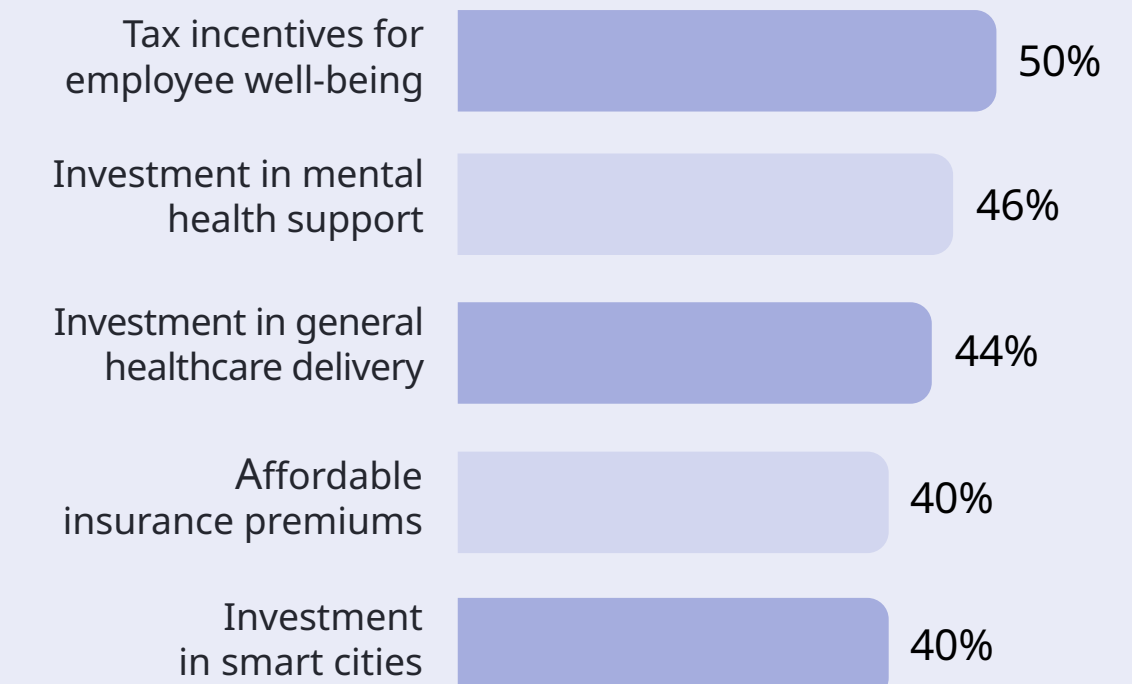
French priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*



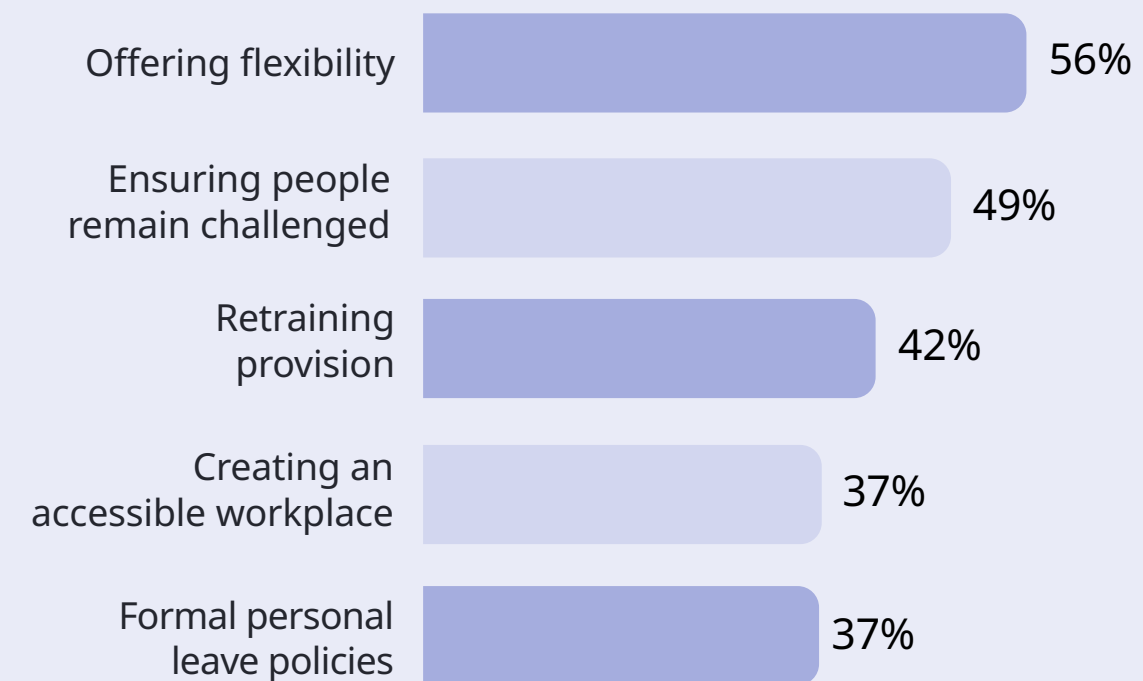
Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section

Germany

Germany's already higher retirement age and above average workforce participation levels amongst close to pension age may put it in a better position to grapple with oncoming challenges, albeit that labour shortages and the age-diverse workforce are likely to become reality. Figures suggest the proportion of 55 to 64 year olds in employment in Germany increased 10 percentage points to 72% in 2021, compared to an EU average of 60%⁸⁵.

This matters because, by 2035, Germany is expecting to have 4 million more people aged over 67, the current pension age in the country. Equally, birth rates are low, which Destatis note is linked to the "declining number of women in their late 20s to late 30s"⁸⁶.

The Federal Statistical Office also predicts that in the coming 15 years there will be significant decline in the number of people of working age in the country, falling between 1.6 and 4.8 million. According to the OECD⁸⁷, the median age in Germany is currently 45.7 but will rise to 49.2 by 2045, and is already four years higher than that of France.

According to the OECD, the median age in Germany is currently 45.7 but will rise to 49.2 by 2045

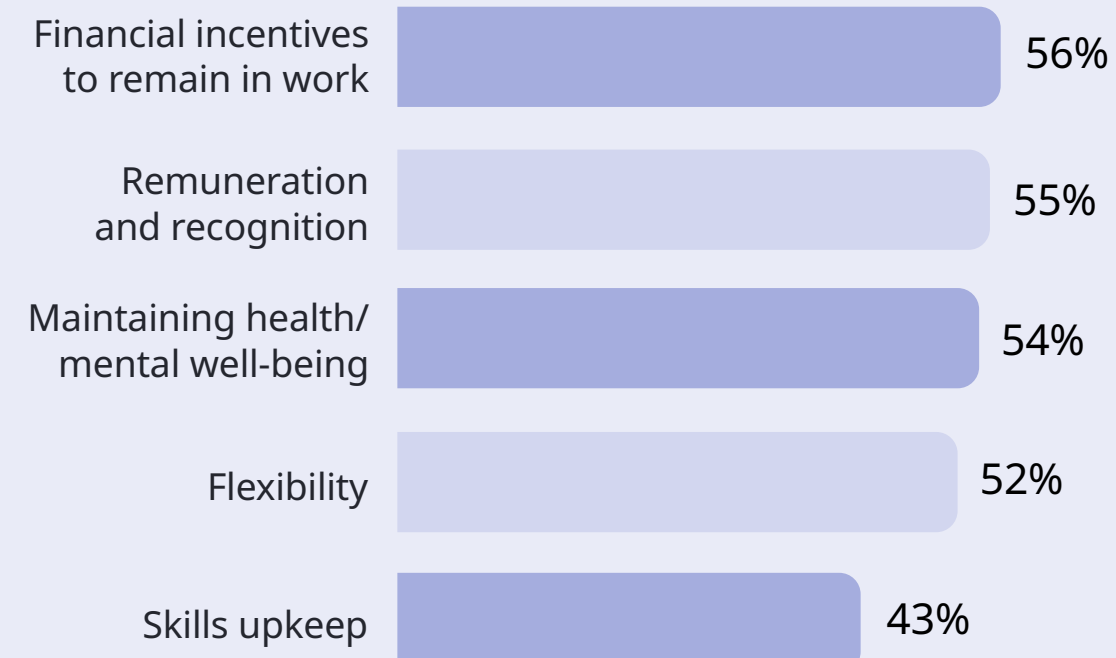
Against this context, and despite skills shortages, a decision by the German rail operator Deutsche Bahn to cut driver working hours to 35 after months of rail strikes can be seen as instructive⁸⁸. The move is seen as a precedent for other unions, and what's key is that drivers have the option of working five additional hours, with the extra time explicitly linked to remuneration and incentives.

The German pension system is also being updated, to ensure pensions are linked to wage rises. This has been criticized as disincentivizing older people to keep working and placing a financial burden on younger generations⁸⁹.

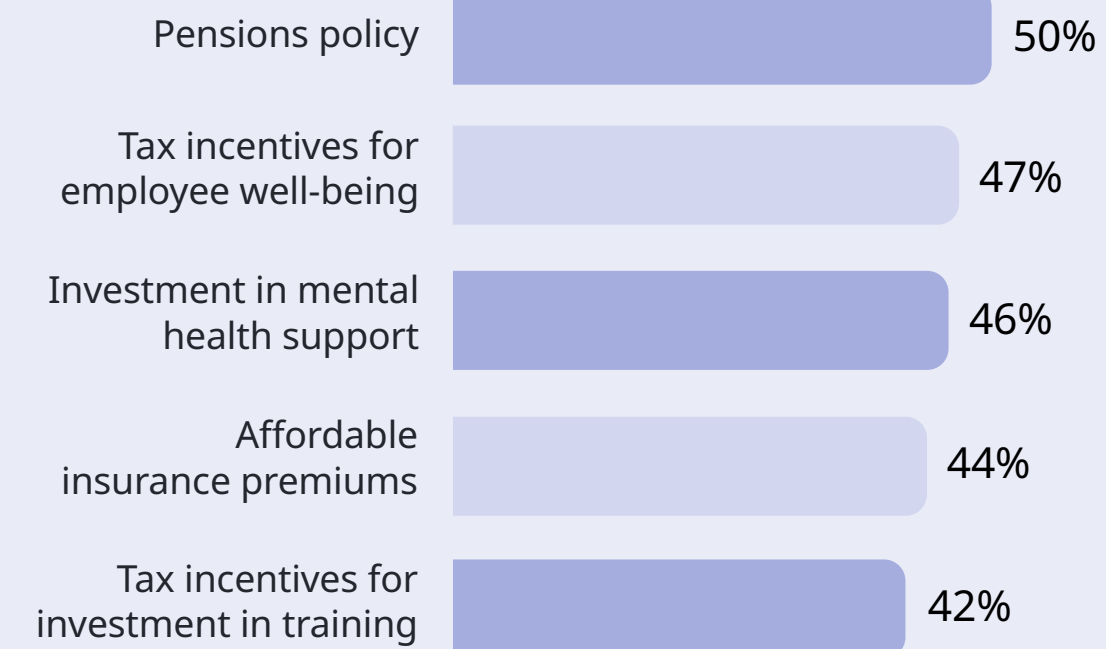


German priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

Priorities for individual career development



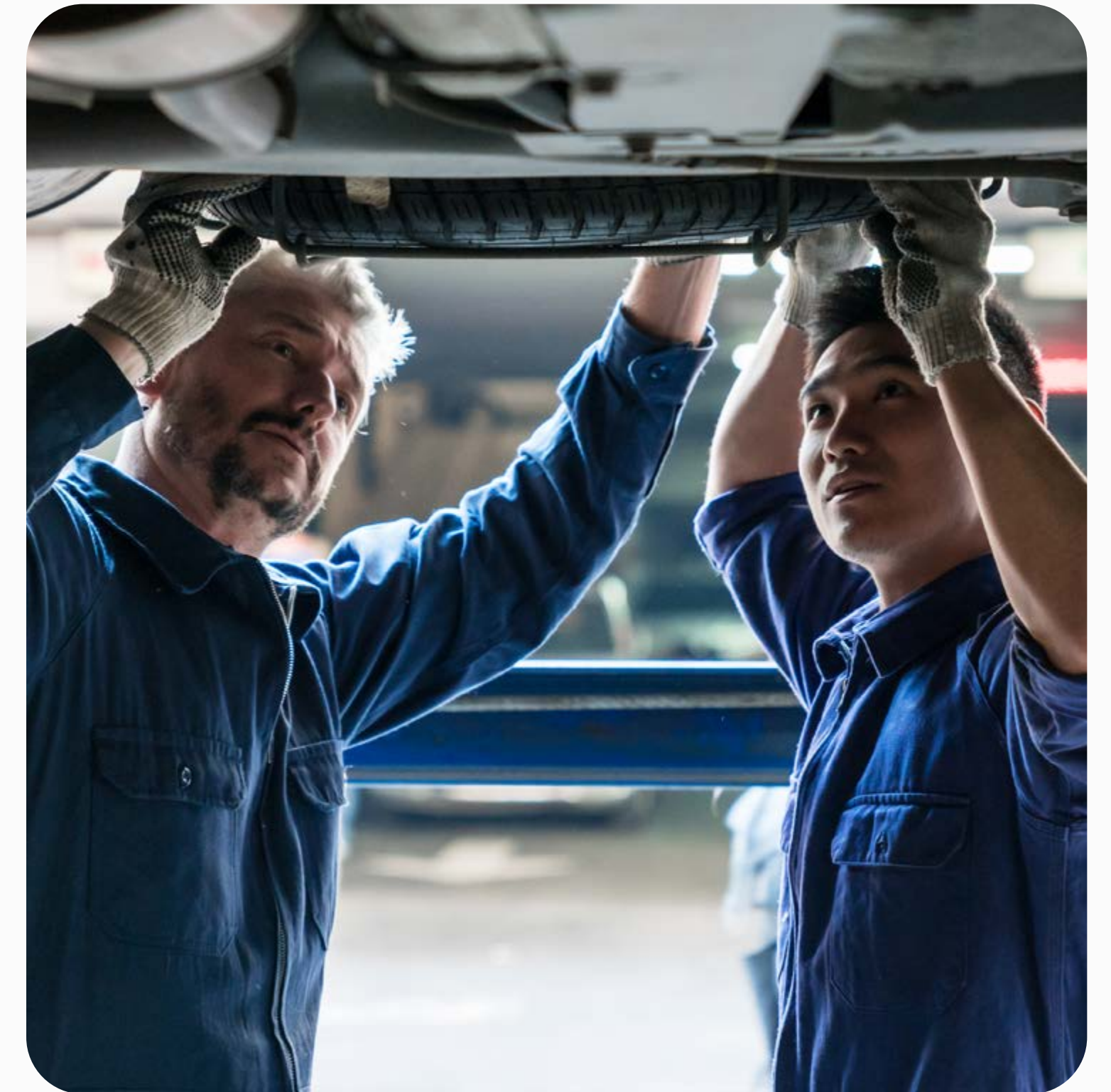
Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section



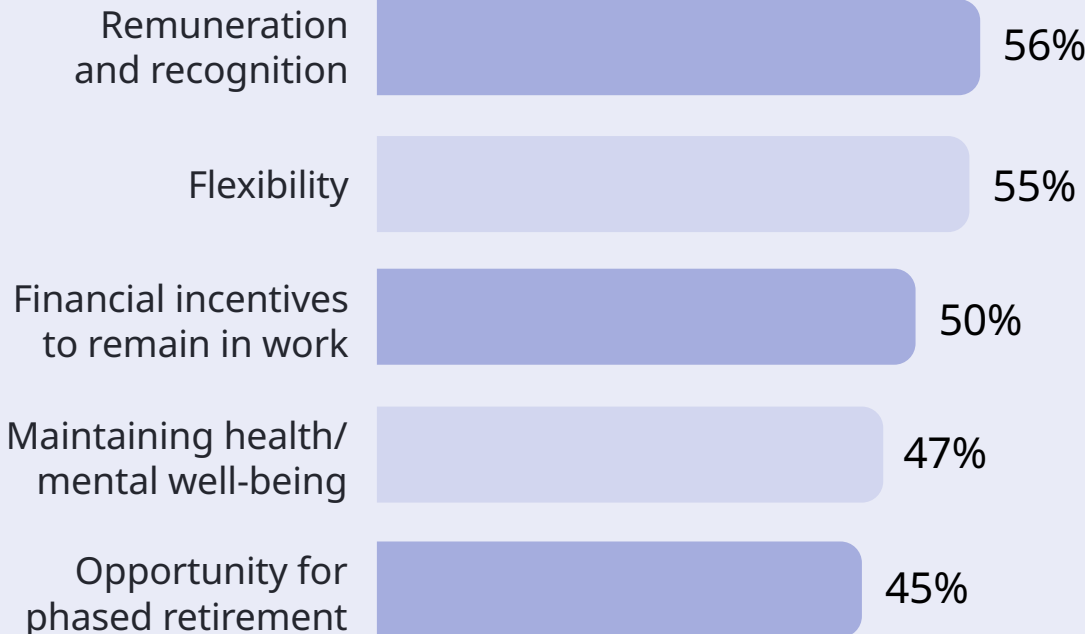
Netherlands

According to the AARP, the Netherlands was “the last Western European country to become an aged society” but it is now among the region’s fastest-aging societies⁹⁰. A fifth of the population of the Netherlands is over 65, up from 12.8% in 1990. Projections suggest that there are currently three people of working age for every person over 65 in the country, but in the coming years this will rise to 50%⁹¹.

The Dutch government has acknowledged the importance of preparing for these shifts, launching the “lifelong learning” programme (leven lang ontwikkelen) two years ago, designed to encourage career development. Additionally, the government introduced the STAP budget⁹² to allow workers or jobseekers to apply for up to €1,000 per year for training and development. This subsidy ended abruptly late last year, prompting criticism⁹³.

Dutch priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

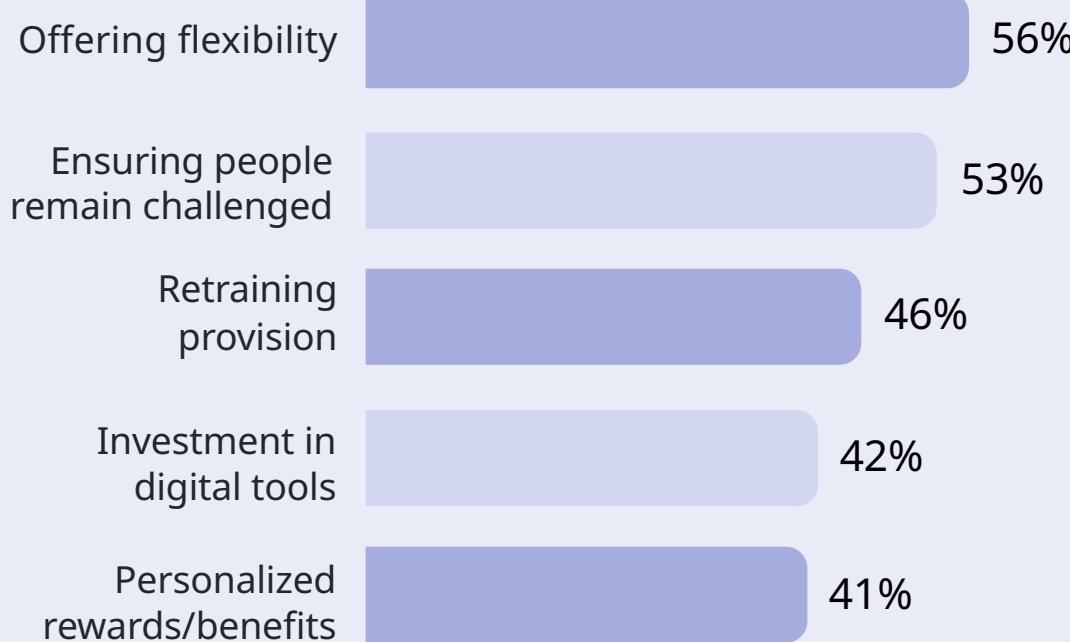
Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section



Priorities for action

In **France**, financial factors appear to dominate, which can be understood in the context of general opposition to raised retirement age in the country. Equally, greater emphasis is placed on personal factors – both on employees feeling recognized for their contribution (59% compared the global figure of 49%) and for businesses to ensure people remain challenged by the work they are doing.

Given the recent controversy over the 35-hour week and other alternative working models, it is perhaps no surprise that financial incentives scores first for **Germans** about what would keep them in work, with remuneration a close second. At the same time, the the higher than average pensions policies that don't disincentivize work indicates concern that the working age population may be burdened

with working to fund those who are already retired. Germans clearly desire flexibility and consider maintaining their health to be key to business growth in an age-diverse workforce. Yet it is notable that the policy priorities focus on making it worth the while of individuals and organizations to remain in work throughout their careers, rather than communicating the benefits of doing so.

The picture for the **Netherlands** focused on feeling valued at work, financially motivated to remain in post and offered the flexibility to succeed. While remuneration and recognition were important to Dutch respondents, ability to maintain physical health and well-being and flexibility in working hours were ranked lower by Dutch respondents than in the global results.



Denelise L'Ecluse, Managing Director, Assurance, Continental Europe, BSI

“Like many parts of the world, European countries are looking ahead to the twin demographic changes of an ageing population and a falling birthrate. Now is the moment for European businesses and leaders to put in place policies and plans to ensure working for longer is both desirable and possible.”

“What this research tells us is that there is an opportunity for employers to answer the desire for flexibility and invest in the training and skills development that can help people flourish in the workplace of the future, especially as artificial intelligence and digital innovation transforms work. When it comes to governments, there is clear appetite for structural reforms to incentivize staying in work and make it financially advisable to do so, along with the desire seen around the world for greater investment in the health and well-being of the workforce. Such steps have the potential to ensure people and organizations in Europe can flourish over the coming decades.”

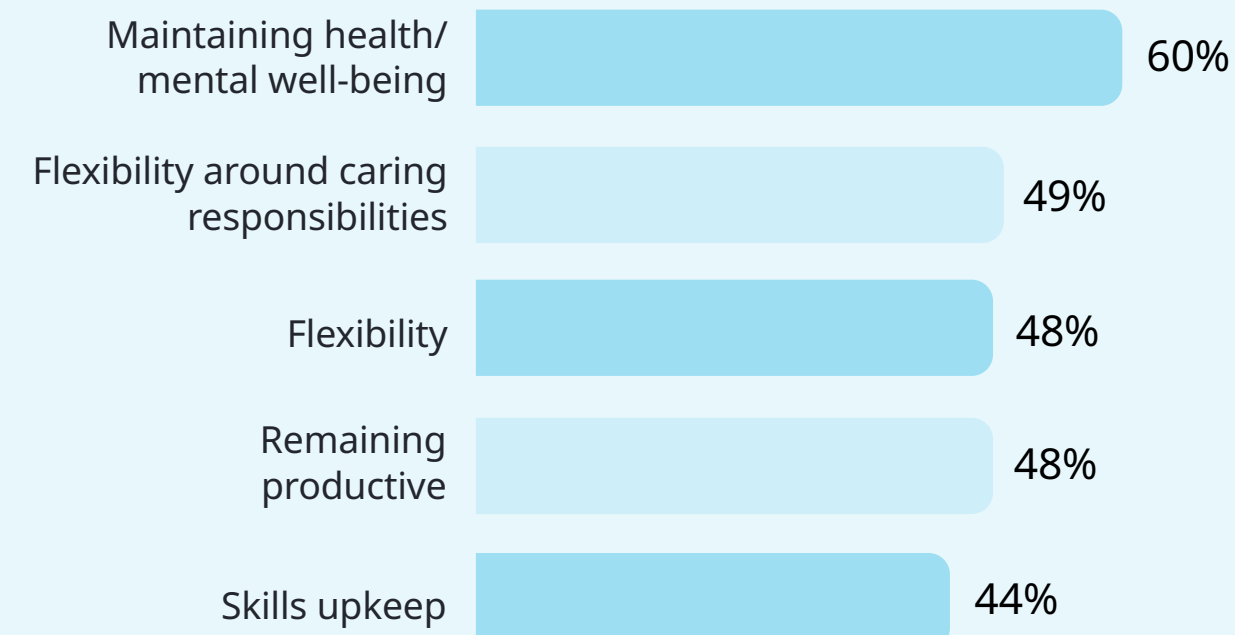
India

India is not yet facing the demographic shift impacting the other countries we reviewed. India's population is both growing and, at present, younger rather than ageing. The population, now outstripping that of China⁹⁴, are estimated to have risen by more than 1 billion people since 1950. Of this soaring population, two fifths is estimated to be under 25⁹⁵, and over 65s make up just 7% - a figure not expected to exceed 20% until 2063. The birth rate remains far higher than countries in Europe, although this too is falling⁹⁶.

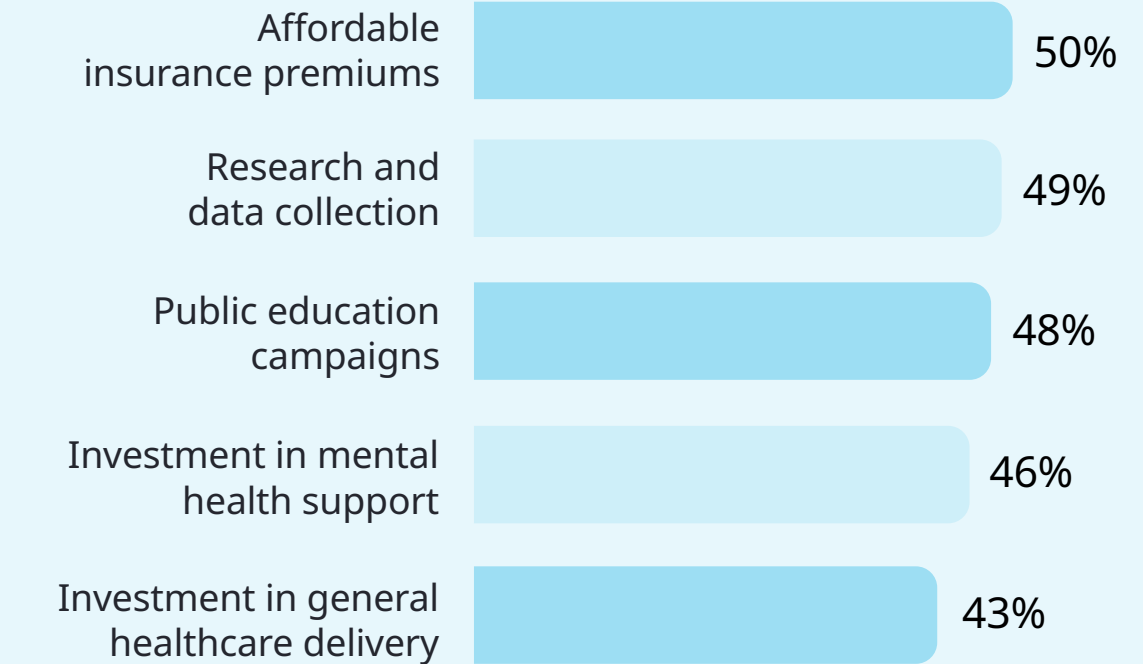
A key challenge for India is migration. In 2020, India replaced China as the main country of origin of new migrants to OECD countries in 2020, and has continued to hold that position since⁹⁷. Equally, workplace participation is stubbornly low; according to research by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy India's workforce has fallen from around 445 million to 435 million in the past six years, meaning only 40% are working or seeking work⁹⁸.

Indian priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section

Priorities for action

Given that India’s population is younger than the other markets explored for this research, it’s instructive that health and well-being still score highly. The implication is that these are important for Indian workers of all ages.

India was unusual in that respondents prioritize public education or awareness campaigns to break down stereotypes and encourage workplace participation amongst older generations, highlighting the importance of communicating the benefits of the age-diverse workforce even before it becomes a reality in the country. In the post-Covid era, both employers and employees have redirected their attention towards physical and mental well-being in India. If this is successful, it could bring significant benefits for the future of the workforce in India.



Theuns Kotze, Managing Director, Assurance, India, BSI

“It’s encouraging that post-Covid, employers and employees in India have turned their attention towards physical and mental well-being. Whilst India is not currently facing the demographic shift impacting the other countries surveyed, this is something that is important for all employees, regardless of age.”

“The report also highlights the importance of public education campaigns around the benefits of different ages working side-by-side and of older people remaining in the workforce for longer. Businesses and leaders in India now have an opportunity to invest in the relevant policies and plans that could bring significant benefits to the workforce and help their organization succeed in the future.”

Japan

Japan has been grappling with its status as an ageing society for some years now and to some degree can be seen as a test case for others. Today, Japan is classified as a Super-aged society - one in which the percentage of the over 65s is 21% or higher⁹⁹. In Japan, that figure stands at 28.7%, and this is expected to rise to a third by 2036¹⁰⁰. Japan has the world's second highest proportion of people aged 65 and over, according to World Bank data. According to the Nippon Foundation, as early as 2025, one in five people will be aged 75 or older, placing extreme stress on social security and the economy¹⁰¹. Meanwhile, the number of births in Japan is falling. Together, these trends mean an increase in the population in need of public services and a relative decline in the population of the younger generation¹⁰².

A European Parliament briefing sets out the opportunity as follows¹⁰³: in response to economic pressures, job impacts and depopulation of rural areas “the silver economy is meanwhile flourishing and Japan is at the forefront of robot development to face a declining labour force and to take care of its elderly.”

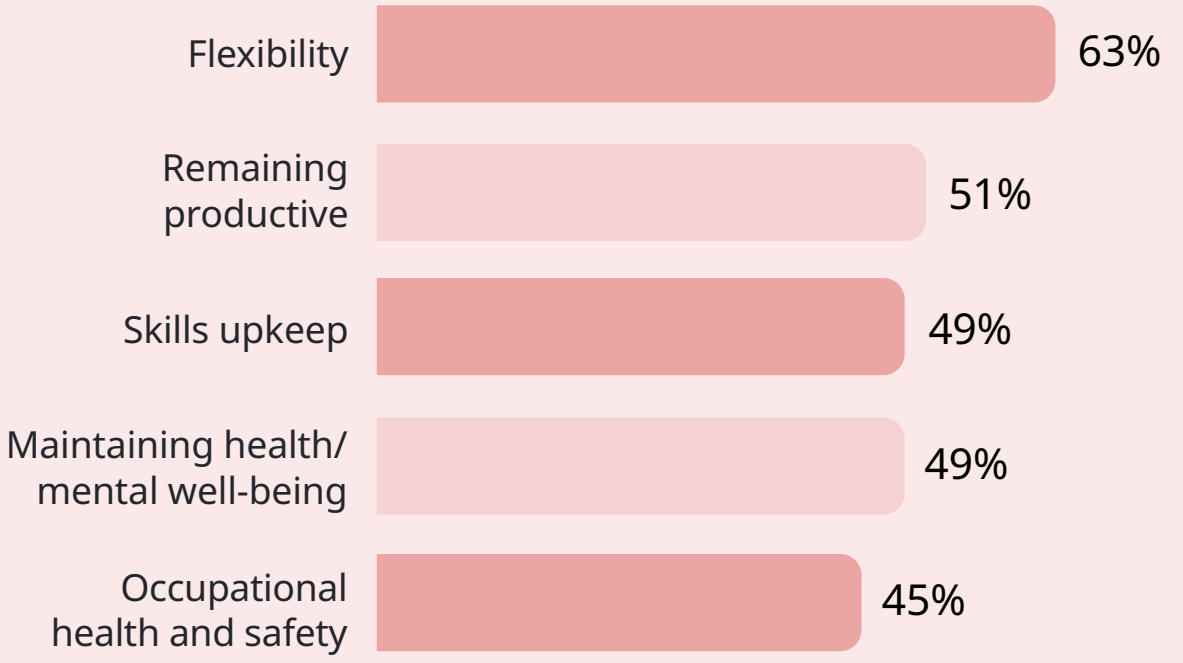
Japan is classified as a Super-aged society - one in which the percentage of the over 65s is 21% or higher

Prime Minister Kishida of Japan has recently instructed government ministers to explore a policy package for the next three years to address the serious challenges the country's economy is facing¹⁰⁴. And there appears to be appetite to work for longer; government research shows that about 40% of those aged 60 and over want to work as long as they can¹⁰⁵.



Japanese priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

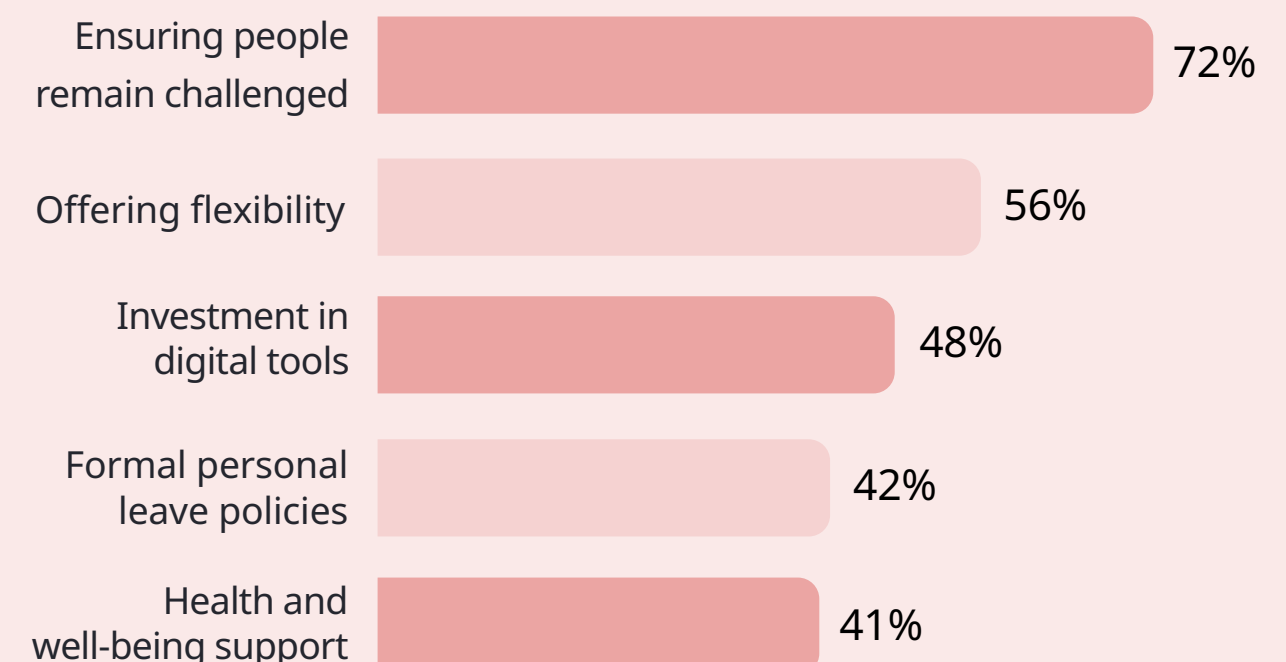
Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section



Priorities for action

What stood out most from the survey results was the Japanese term “ikigai” - a concept unique to Japan that encourages people to discover what truly matters to them and to live a life filled with purpose and joy. Hence, the opportunity to do something good for people and society and / or remain productive throughout life was ranked second for Japanese people, compared with seventh globally. This signifies the profound impact of purpose on individuals. It can be inferred that Japanese individuals value not only how they work but also why and what they accomplish.

Flexibility and ensuring people remain challenged at work were key for individual and business needs, despite an increasing need in Japan to improve mental well-being (and

reduce work-related illness and death), which ranked lower. Meanwhile the ability to maintain physical health and/ or psychological/mental well-being ranked fourth despite Japan’s so-called Karoshi culture of work-related stress¹⁰⁶.

Focus on raising the retirement age is relatively high in Japan (30% compared to 20% globally), along with pension policies that encourage people to continue working throughout their lives. From the business perspective, a focus on ensuring people remain challenged by their work (72%) ranked the highest, above the 4th placed 43% global average, which may speak to the constant push for doing and being better in the workplace.



Masaki Urushihara, Managing Director, Assurance, Japan, BSI

“The research offers profound insights for Japanese society and policymakers, especially as Japan is facing the economic realities of an ageing population. When considering the key priorities for individuals in Japan, flexibility and opportunities for learning were ranked highest. The former indicates a desire for more personalized employment structures that can cater to the varied lifestyles and responsibilities of an age-diverse workforce.”

“The appetite for a pension policy that encourages people to continue working underscores the value of workforce age diversity and the potential economic benefits that can come from hiring and retraining older workers. Finally, the opportunity to do something good for people and society and remain productive throughout life is central to Japanese culture. The Japanese value not only how they work but also why they work and what they accomplish.”

United States

Like comparable economies, the US population is getting older. Unlike people elsewhere, Americans are also working for longer. By 2032 a quarter of men and 17% of women over the age of 65 are expected to still be in the labour market¹⁰⁷. This longevity offers the promise of a thriving future workforce, provided those people can remain productive and healthy at that stage in life.

By 2050, over 65s are expected to make up 23% of the population¹⁰⁸. The median age of the population stood at 38.9 by 2022, up from 30 a generation before in 1980¹⁰⁹. Population is growing across all states, although this is more pronounced in some areas. As the Census Bureau's Population Division explains, "without a rapidly growing young population, the US median age will likely continue its slow but steady rise". While births briefly jumped in the midst of the pandemic, "US births have returned to a downward trend"¹¹⁰.

By 2032 a quarter of American men and 17% of women over the age of 65 are expected to still be in the labour market

As elsewhere, the US social security age has risen and now sits at 67. However even within that, the US offers a lower level of support to retirees; research suggests that while on average countries pay around 57.9% of workers' earnings in retirement benefits, that falls to 41% in the US¹¹¹ – meaning American workers may be more incentivized to remain in the workforce for longer.

Notably, research suggests America's older workforce has nearly quadrupled since the mid-1980s, with the over 75s making up the fastest-growing age group in the workforce¹¹².



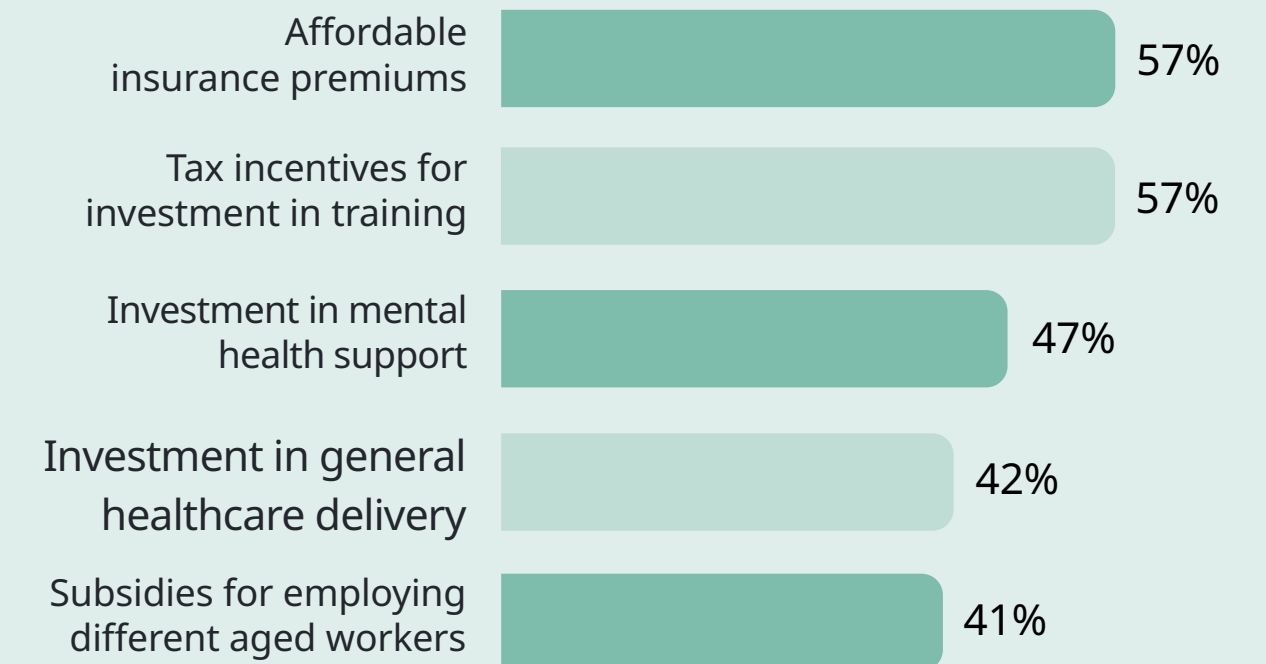


American priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section

Priorities for action

The US data speaks to ongoing characteristics of the country's workforce structure, not least a lower focus on provision for maternity leave, health and caring responsibilities. For example, the US was one of the few countries to note that benefits around caregiving (whether for children or the elderly) would be extremely important moving forward; contrasting with nations that already have stronger national systems of care in place.

When considering the government's role in the future of business, especially as this becomes more age-diverse, the research also shows that people are calling for increased care. Whether that is better insurance for older people, returnships or more support for mental and physical well-being, there is a desire from US business leaders for policy drivers to enable a healthy and well-supported workforce. Aligned with three of the five highest GDP countries, the US (like the UK and Japan) prioritized flexibility of work as the key to the future workforce.



Xavier Alcaraz, Global Practice Director for Health, Safety & Well-being, BSI

“As the US navigates the impact of demographic changes on the workforce, this research places such interventions as flexible work schedules, well-being, and upskilling/re-training high on the agenda. While policymakers have a role to promote this agenda, there is a clear opportunity for businesses to invest in their people and their future workforce through greater engagement to understand their challenges and needs followed with prioritized actions.”

“As advanced automation technologies and AI disrupt how work is done, and demographic shifts become more significant, now is the time for businesses to partner with their people to drive strategies that harmonize new technologies with health and safety. Companies that have adopted this strategy are better positioned to ensure a healthier, more engaged, and productive workforce in the generations to come while realizing a competitive advantage in the marketplace.”

United Kingdom

The 2021 census made clear that the England and Wales are experiencing an ageing population¹¹³, with the numbers of people aged 65 and over rising from 9.2 million to more than 11 million in the preceding decade. The share of the population in that bracket now sits at 18.6%. Age UK¹¹⁴ suggest the numbers of over 65s will rise by 10% in the next five years and by 32% by 2043 – adding another 3.5 million people in this cohort to the population. – and representing a new group who could be contributing to a productive economy, provided they are supported to stay in work.

Meanwhile, England and Wales are experiencing a declining birth rate¹¹⁵. The picture is similar in Scotland, with the latest census there showing that there are 258,700 more over 65s than under 15s¹¹⁶, with a 22.5% rise in over 65s in the decade between the censuses. In Northern Ireland, in the decade to 2021, the overall population grew by 5% but the number of over 65s grew by nearly 25%¹¹⁷.

Age UK suggest the numbers of over 65s will rise by 32% by 2043

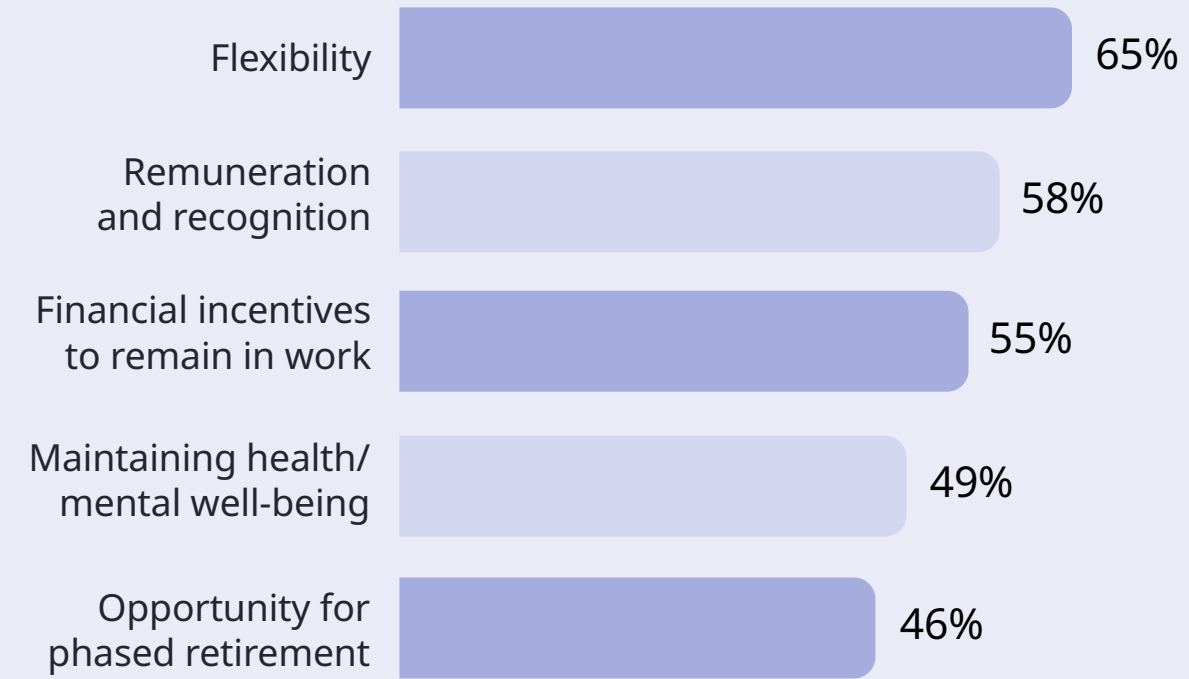
While in the medium term the ONS forecasts¹¹⁸ that the population will grow by 9.9%, largely due to projected net international migration, there will still be a growing ageing population in this context – and by the middle of the next decade they expect the UK to experience more deaths than births.

Pension age has risen in the UK in recent years and will rise to 67 by March 2028, with further rises expected beyond that. However research by the International Longevity Centre think tank¹¹⁹ suggest that to meet the demographic shifts, this will need to rise to 71 “to maintain the status quo of the constant number of workers per state pensioner”.

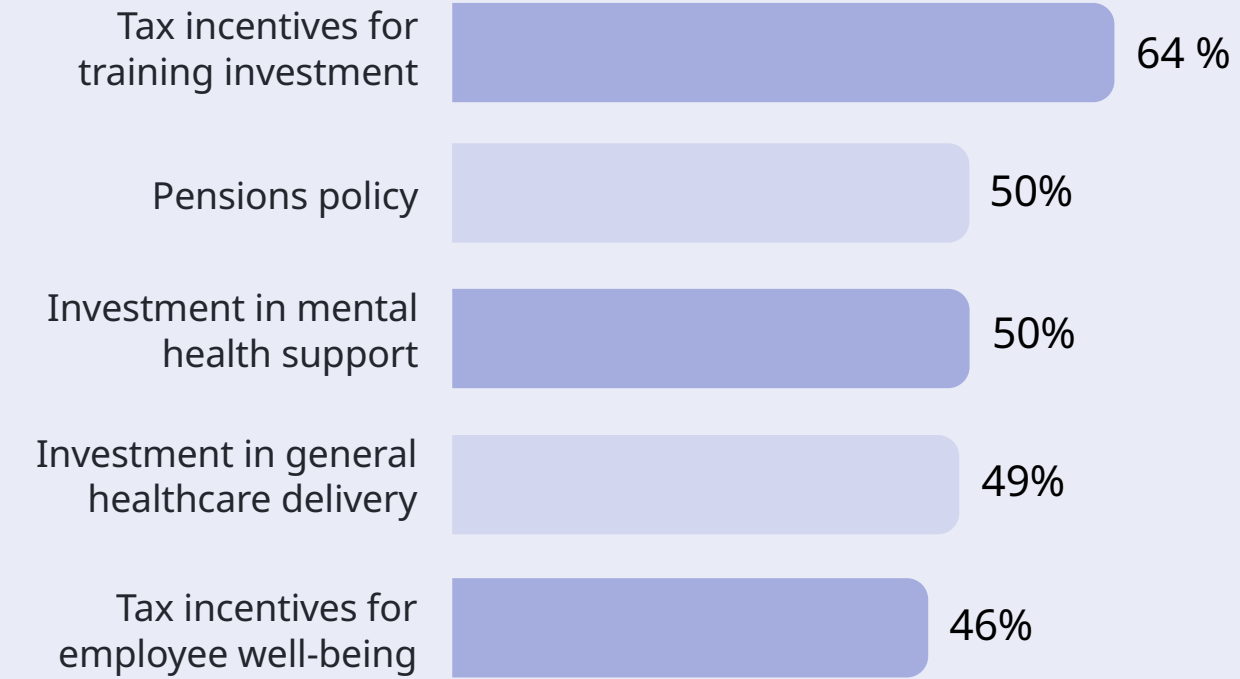


UK priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

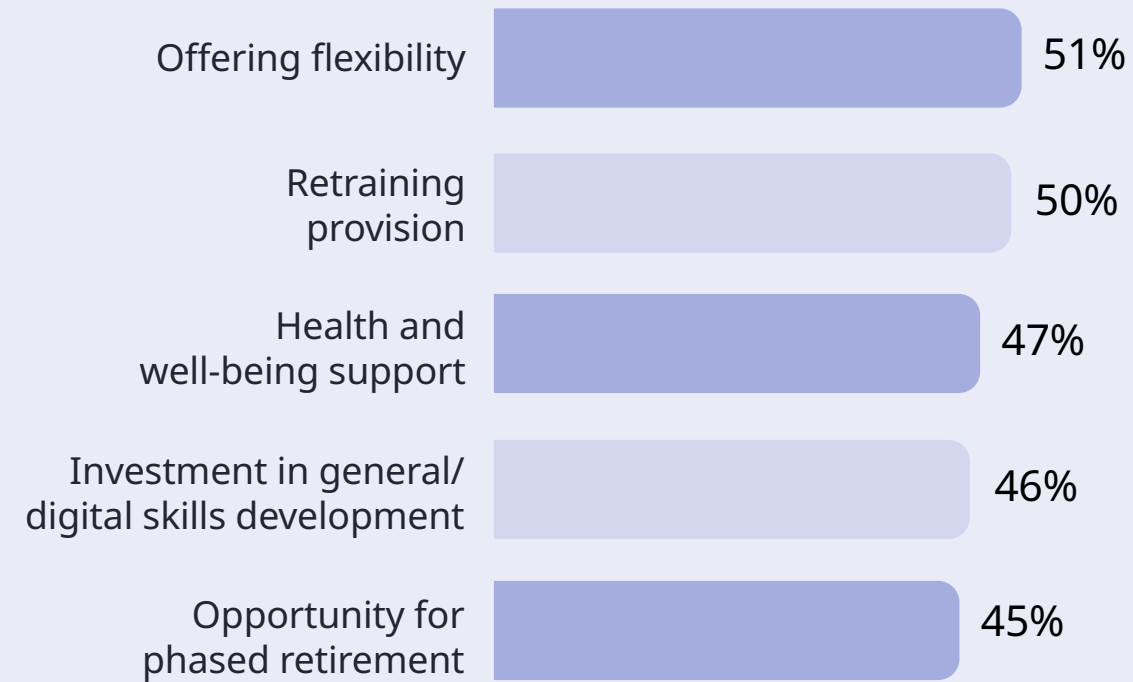
Priorities for individual career development



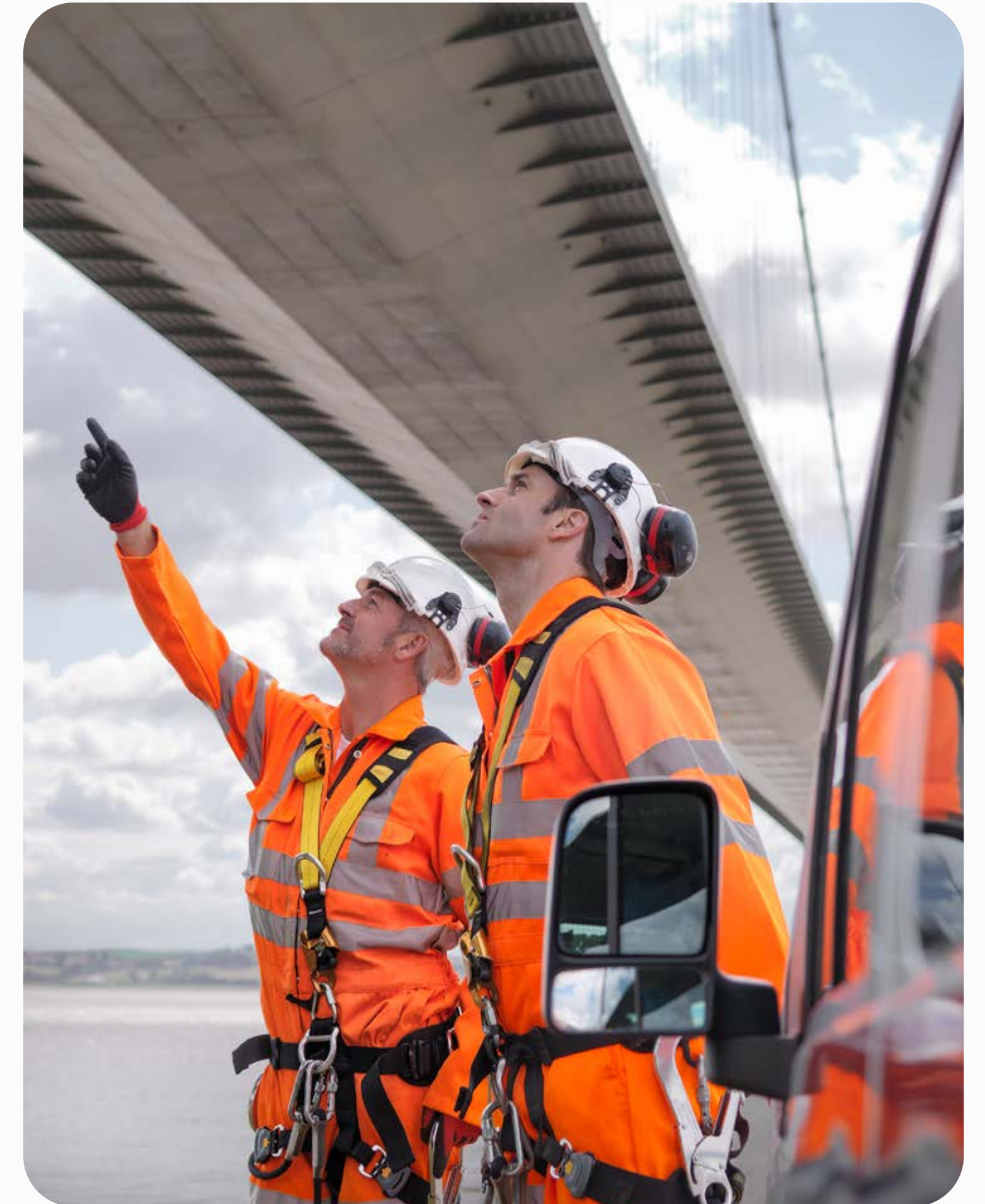
Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section



Priorities for action

For UK business leaders, flexibility and financial incentives were the overriding accelerating factors identified to enable success in the future workplace (65% for the former against the global average of 54%, and 58% for the latter compared with 49% globally). This suggests an opportunity for employers to build on and consolidate changes to working structures since the pandemic.

In light of the UK cost of living crisis¹²⁰, it is perhaps unsurprising that the financial component also scored highly; the implication being that organizations and governments can look now at what incentives are in place to keep people working later in life. Given high rates of economic inactivity amongst UK adults¹²¹, it is notable that organizations are being encouraged to consider

opportunities for retraining and returnships, which could help address this trend. The top area for policymakers to consider was incentivizing businesses to recruit older people or invest in retraining.

The role for businesses and governments to support improved health and well-being is also clear from the data. And while not featuring in the top five, a fifth of business leaders surveyed put employers providing support around menopause symptoms as a key priority, in line with prior BSI findings around this being an inhibiting factor for women remaining in work later in life.



Anne Hayes, Director of Sectors, BSI

“When the modern workplace emerged the expectation might have been that most UK careers would span about 40 years – and that there would be far more men at work than women. Tomorrow’s workplace will look very different, with far greater diversity across both age and gender.”

“Our experience tells us that organizations that build an inclusive, flexible workplace have greater potential to retain experienced colleagues and flourish in the future. We’ve already seen steps in the right direction as more UK organizations acknowledge the importance of providing menopause support to tackle the Second Glass Ceiling. Now is the moment to build on that, and for business leaders and policymakers to come together and invest in the health and well-being of people of all ages, while incentivizing those who might otherwise leave the workforce to remain through training, skills development and other levers.”

Chapter five

Sector analysis



Built environment and construction

Now is the moment for sector leaders to consider what the coming decades look like for built environment workers and how to upskill them in response

As a sector where many roles are manual (although not all) it is perhaps unsurprising that the built environment faces specific pressures as worker demographics shift, at least in some economies, prompting concerns around skills gaps or reliance on migrant labour. Businesses now have the chance to seize the opportunity of technology to fundamentally shift how work is undertaken in the sector and alleviate some of these pressures.

Globally, the picture is mixed. Whereas in India the relative youth of the population offers what one report termed “a demographic advantage” for the growing built environment and construction sector¹²², in Germany, for example, predictions suggest it will face a shortfall of 100,000 workers by 2030¹²³. In Japan, 2019 figures suggested the construction workforce had shrunk by 27% in 20 years¹²⁴, while data also suggests only just over a tenth of workers in the sector in Japan are under 30¹²⁵.

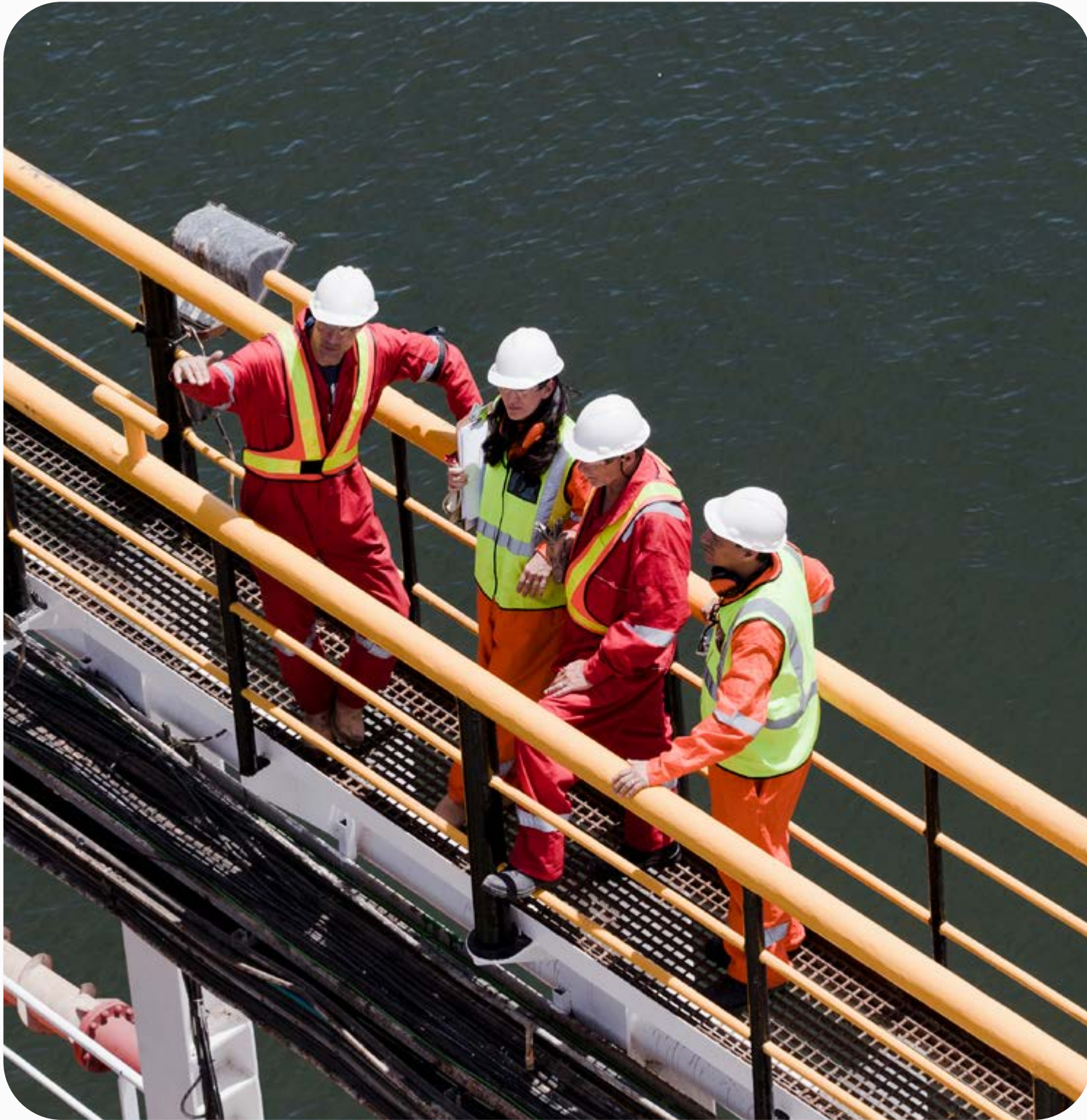
In Japan, 2019 figures suggested the construction workforce had shrunk by 27% in 20 years

According to one survey of UK construction workers, only 15% of workers intended to keep working beyond retirement age, compared to 29% overall. That research also found that nearly three fifths (58%) of those in the sector expect to retire between 61 and 65¹²⁶. The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) noted in a recent report¹²⁷ that “given the ageing construction labour force, retirements from the industry are likely to be high for a while. The combined impact is likely to exacerbate skills shortages in the future.”

Similarly, US Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that only 10% of the construction workforce is under 25, lower than average for the workforce. Conversely, the share of over 55s in the sector has grown radically in the last decade¹²⁸.

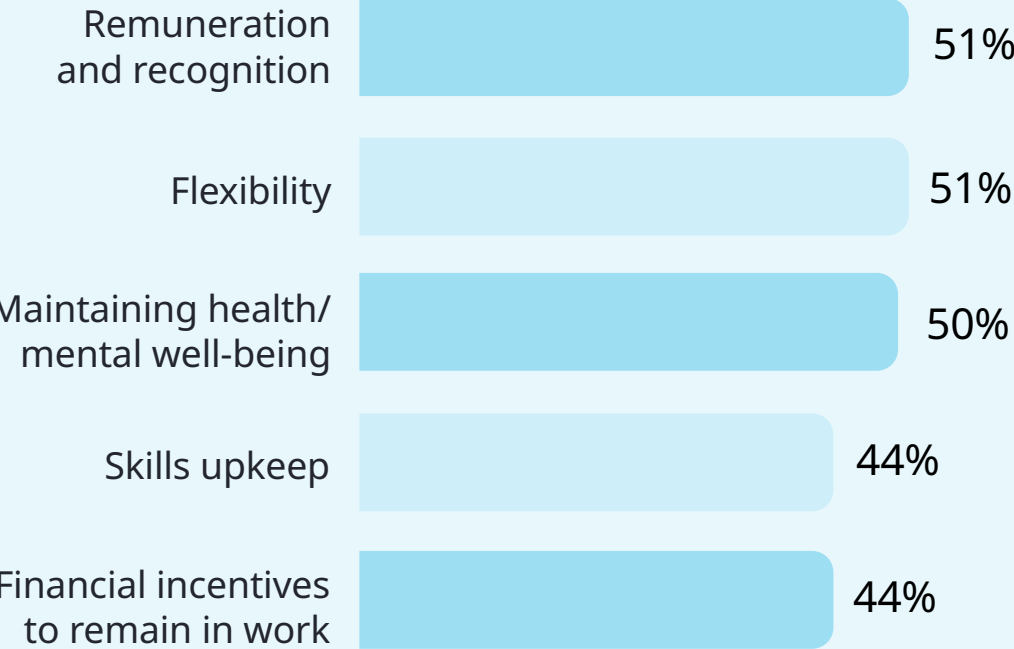
The availability of figures varies, but one study, zeroing in on Perth, drew on Australian Bureau of Statistics data showing a growth in the construction workforce aged over 35 and a fall in that group under 35 in the decade to 2021. Quyen Quach, Head of Research at Cygnet West, suggested the region’s construction sector was “possibly set to lose more than 18 per cent of its most skilled and experienced workers over the next five years as those workers progress towards retirement”.

The specific needs of the sector mean that in responding to the ageing workforce, a consideration of the role of technology – especially where it can relieve workers of physical roles - will be critical. The built environment also has a key role to play in responding to the challenges of an ageing workforce in the context of creating the infrastructure and accessible buildings that will be needed in the future.

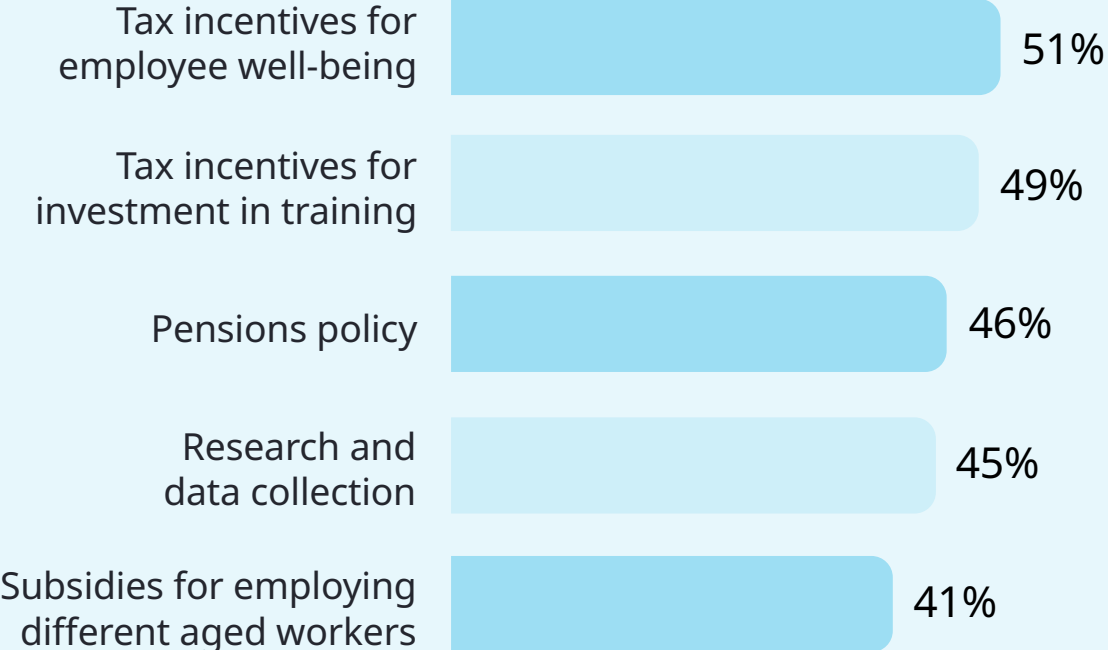


Built environment: priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

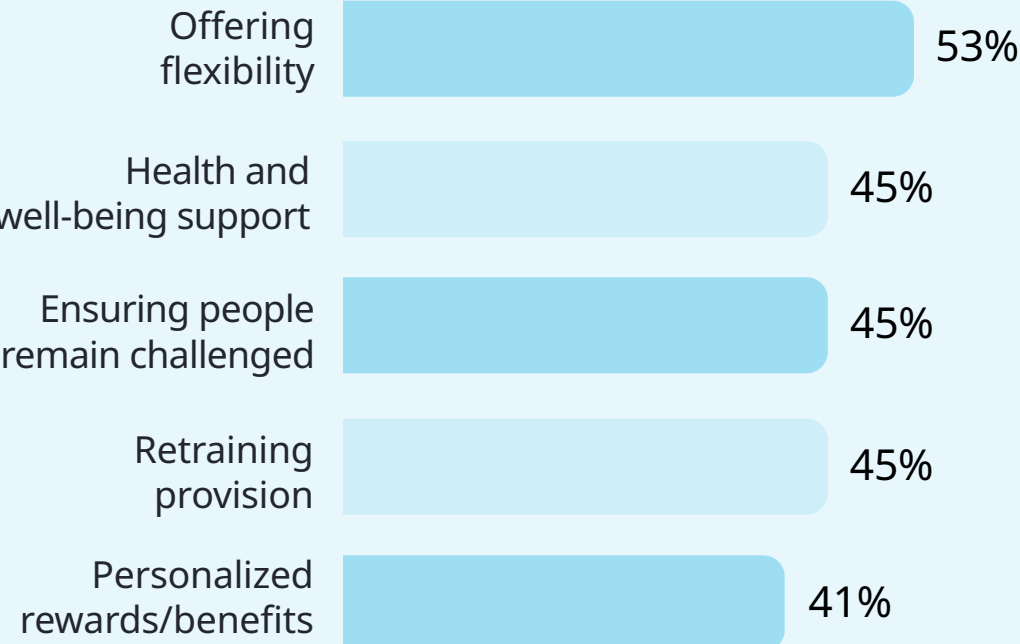
Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section

Priorities for action

Notably, the built environment and construction was one of the few cohorts to prioritize data collection as a priority for government to enable a successful age-diverse workforce (45% against a global figure of 35%). This reflects the value of better information to guide the solutions.

More generally, business leaders in the built environment highlighted the importance of people feeling valued in their role as a key driver of a successful future of work. 45% of those in the sector specifically picked out ensuring people remain challenged by their work as an accelerating factor, above average. Equally financial compensation and structural considerations around making it economically advisable to remain in work were key.

There was clear appetite for policymakers to look at incentivizing the built environment sector to develop an age-diverse workforce via tax or financial incentives, whether these were aimed at health and well-being, skills development or simply choosing to employ people of different ages and stages.



Andy Butterfield, Managing Director, Global Built Environment, BSI

“The built environment and construction sector is far from alone in already having to address the implications of an ageing workforce. Skills development and training, attraction and retention of younger workers, and productivity have long been central to discussions about the sector’s future.”

“The data shows enthusiasm for business actions and government policies intended to shift the dial to make the built environment an attractive sector for people at all ages and stages. With that in mind, now is the moment for sector leaders to collaborate across society and consider what the coming decades look like for built environment workers. Technological innovation is already changing ways of working but this is one side of the conversation. The other is how to support people of all ages in the built environment workforce to succeed and contribute to their organizations’ growth.”

Food and retail

As we look to the future, there is a clear opportunity to ensure roles in food, farming and retail remain attractive.

Food and farming

With the UN predicting that 60% more food will be needed worldwide by 2050¹²⁹ to feed our growing population, demographic shifts will inevitably have a significant impact on the food sector, at every stage from farm to fork. Not least, an older population will shape consumer preferences and impact what food is grown and produced in all parts of the world.

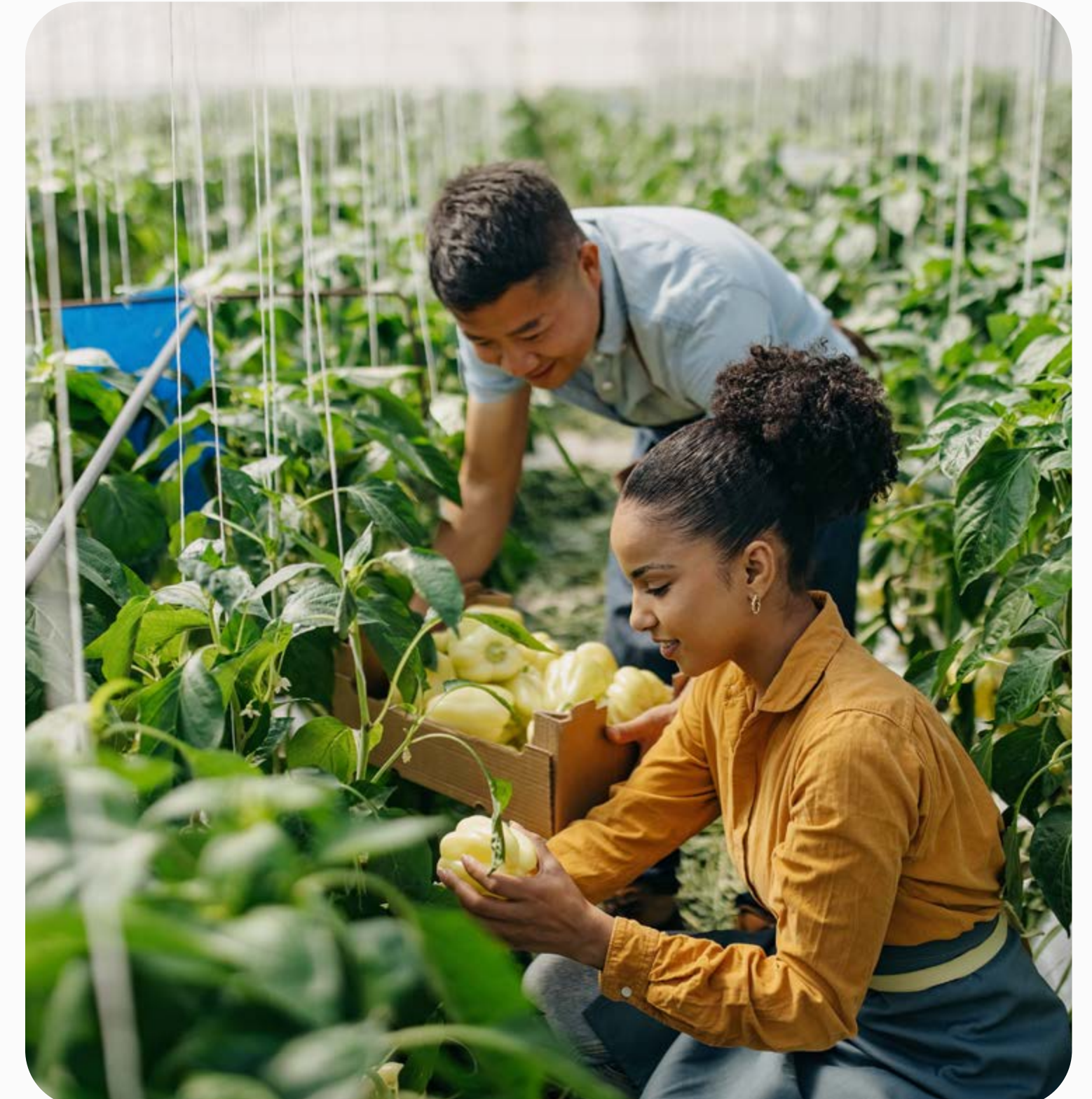
Different stages of the food production cycle will have different considerations. Already, the agriculture sector is experiencing an ageing workforce. In England, for example, more than a third of farmers are over 65, and a further third (32%) are between 55 and 64¹³⁰. In the US, census data suggests the average age of farm producers rose to 57.5 years in the five years to 2017¹³¹.

The same trend is seen in Japan, where by 2022 the average age of farmers was 68.4¹³². In Europe, the average age went from 49.2 in 2004 to 51.4 a decade later¹³³. While countries can continue to import food rather than grow it themselves, there is an opportunity for them to be looking now at the implications of their reliance on agricultural labour abroad for food security and the environment as well.

The UN predicts that 60% more food will be needed by 2050 to feed our growing population

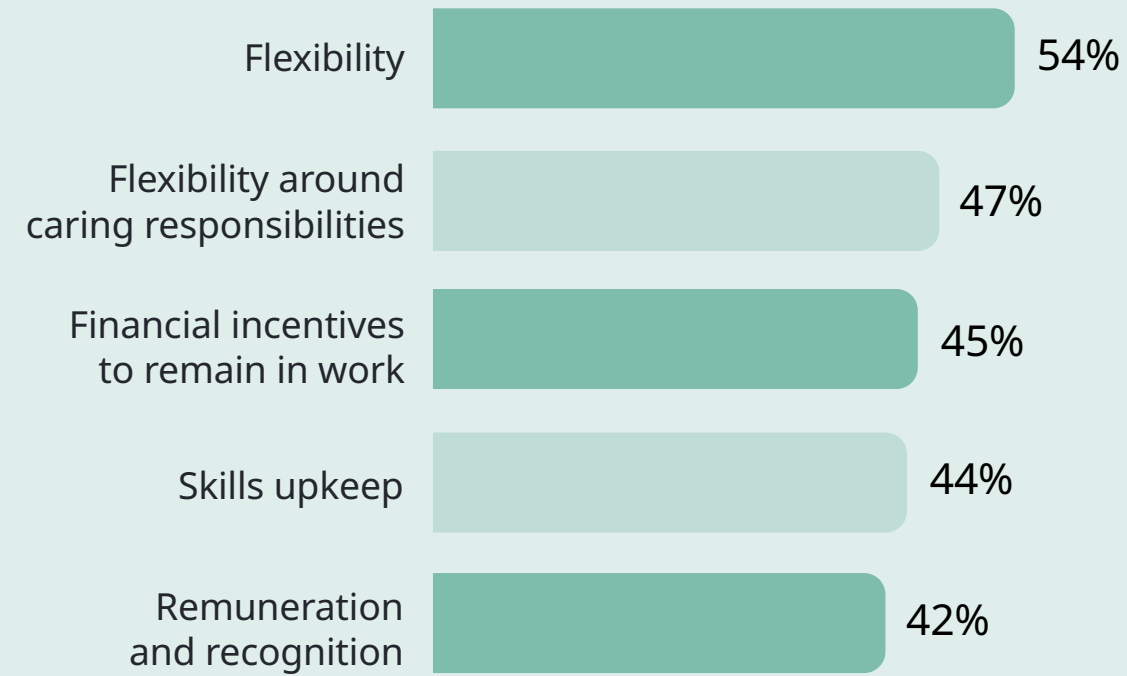
Elsewhere in the food sector, there are sustained questions about skills gaps and a shrinking workforce. In Australia, experts have projected the sector's workforce is facing a shortfall of 172,000 workers¹³⁴, while ONS data suggests the food manufacturing sector in the UK lost 4,000 jobs between 2022 and 2023¹³⁵.

Amid the demographic changes, technology has the potential to radically transform food production, whether in terms of smart farming tools like crop robots to AI being used in factories to support food safety.



Food and farming: priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

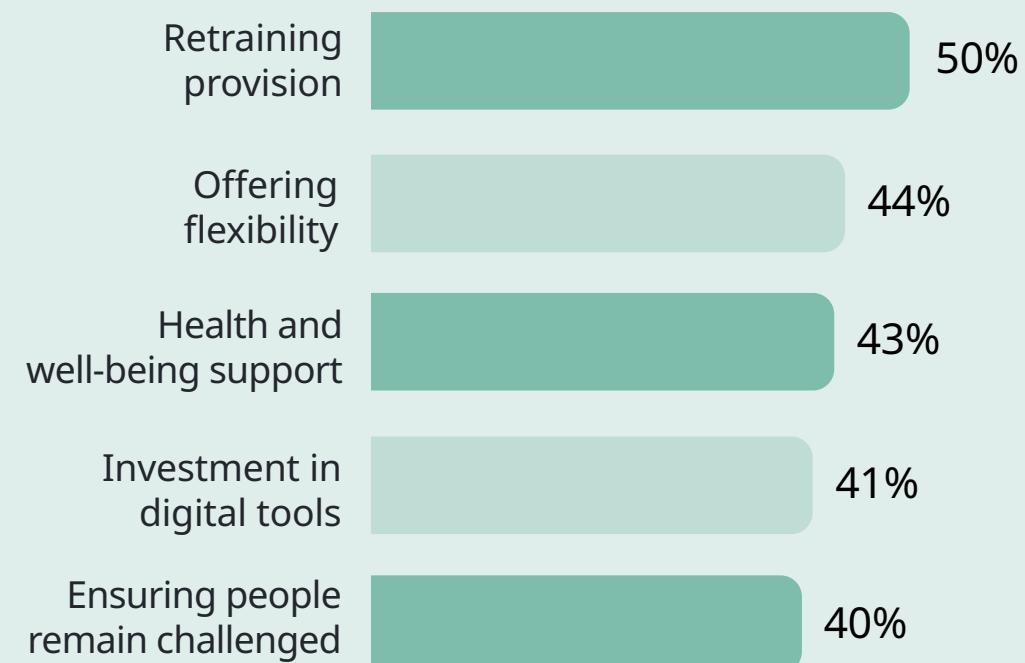
Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section



Retail

For the retail sector, the immediate consideration presented by demographic shifts is how to cater for older consumers. But there are implications for the workforce as well, with the potential to positively impact workforce participation amongst workers looking for flexibility further on in their careers.

As a sector, retail skews younger than others, often because jobs are low-skilled or flexible. At present, many frontline retail roles are physically demanding and therefore could be less desirable to a more mature workforce, although technology could change that in due course.

ONS data drawn from the 2021 census recorded that a quarter of jobs in the sector in England and Wales were held by people aged 16 to 29¹³⁶. In the US, the median age of a retail worker was 40 in 2019, and a fifth of workers in frontline retail roles were under 24¹³⁷.

Many of the advantages that recommend the sector to new entrants to the workforce could also be desirable to older worker

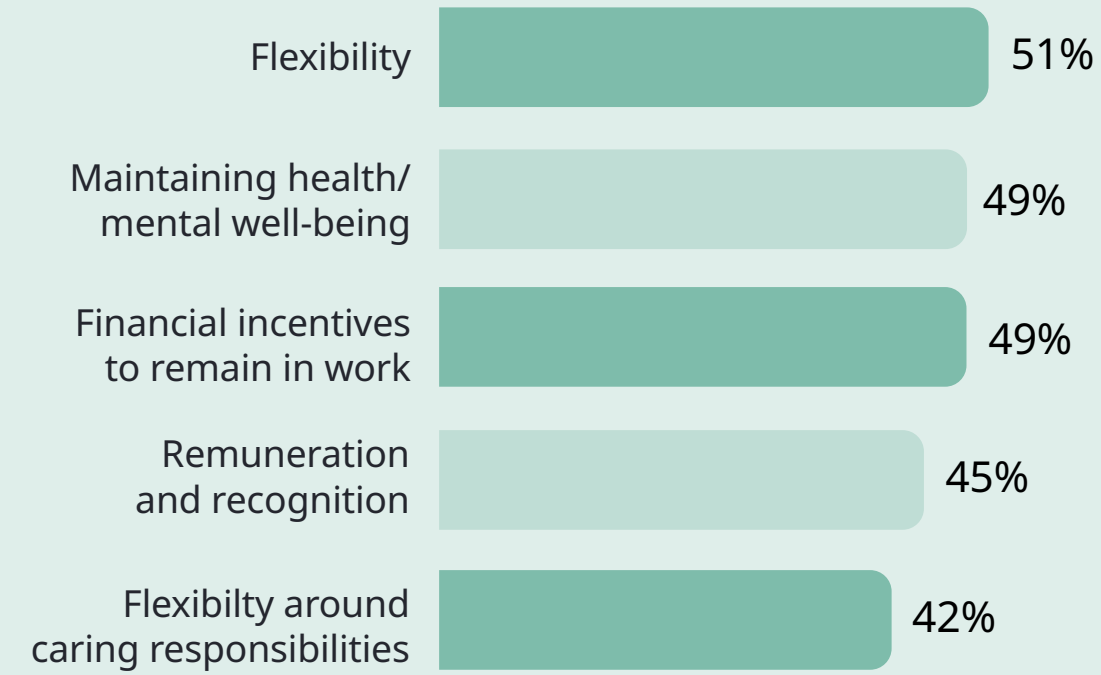
The opportunity for retail may therefore come not from the incumbent workforce ageing out of the sector, as is the case in other industries, but from tackling ageism and ensuring opportunities are available for older workers as the pool of younger workers shrinks. Many of the advantages that recommend the sector to new entrants to the workforce – not least ability to work part-time – could also be desirable to older workers.



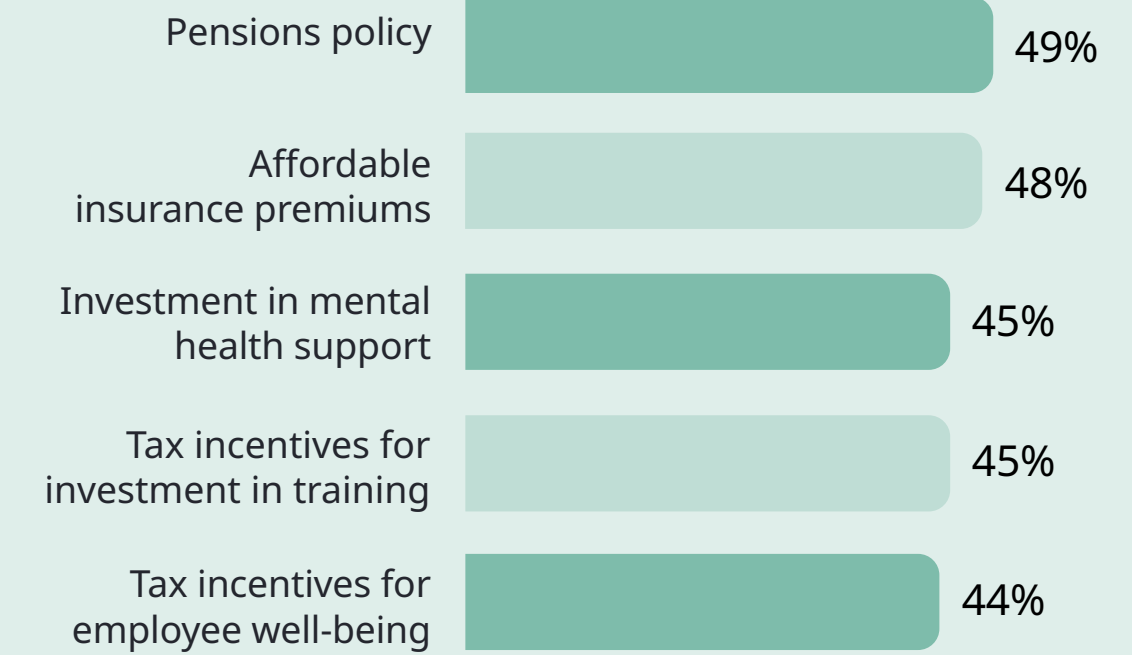


Retail: priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

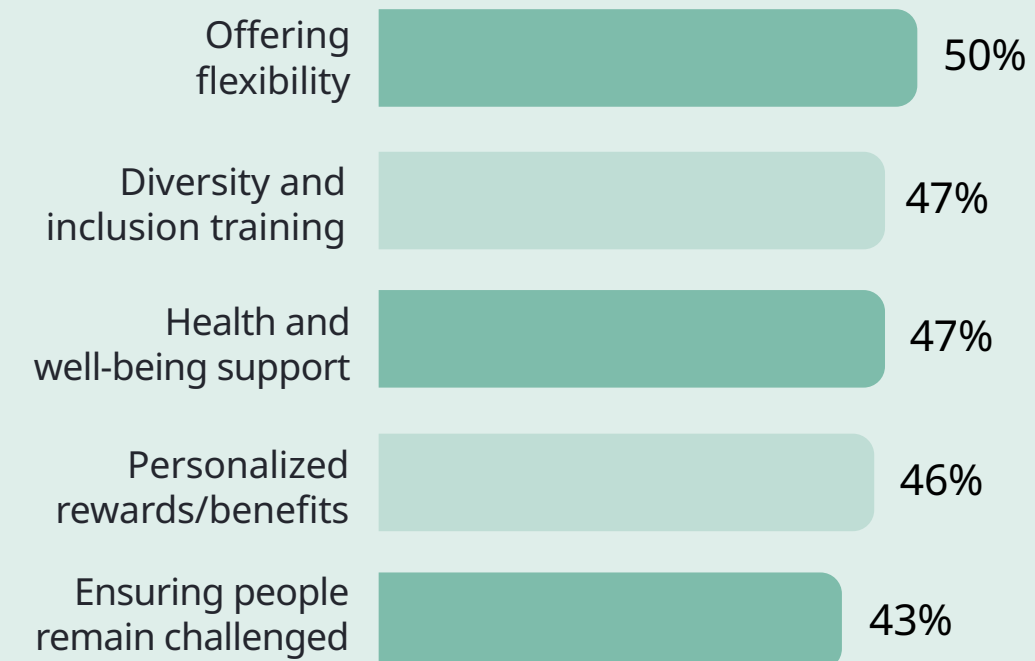
Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



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Priorities for action

Flexibility coming high on the priority list is indicative of food being a sector that may have unsociable working hours or require shift work. The same is true for retail, particularly for those working in online retail as opposed to shops with traditional opening hours. Likewise, the desire from food and farming for organizations to invest in retraining and career opportunities and for policymakers to incentivize this highlights the opportunity for greater emphasis on career progression. This is something that may traditionally have been less of a focus for people in what were expected to be transient roles. Ensuring that people in these industries have the chance to sustain a career in the long-term, conceivably over decades, will be vital in ensuring there is a ready workforce in the future.

In food and farming, there is appetite for investment in digital tools to support people of all ages to carry out their roles. This highlights the potential for older workers to contribute their experience alongside technology that can perhaps take on more physical or manual responsibilities. In retail, health and well-being maintenance scores highly, along with a desire for affordable insurance premiums for older workers in manual roles, highlighting the physicality of these roles and the prospect of helping older workers remain in retail careers. Again, there is a clear opportunity for employers and governments to invest in delivery of healthcare and similar services to support the food and retail economies in the decades to come.



Todd Redwood, Managing Director, Global Food and Retail, BSI

“To some degree, food and retail might historically have been seen as sectors better suited to younger workers at the start of their careers looking to build up experience in the working world. In reality, both have always supported meaningful lifelong career journeys for many.”

“As we look to the future and a reality in which more generations are working together at one time, there is a clear opportunity to ensure roles in food, farming and retail remain attractive and desirable. The research points to the fact that healthcare and well-being support will be critical. Equally, investment in skills development and training will only grow in importance.”

“Both sectors are central to the global economy. Now is the moment to consider how we can collaborate across society to ensure the people and businesses in food, farming and retail can flourish in the decades ahead.”

Healthcare and life sciences

As populations age, the healthcare sector will be at the forefront of enabling more people to be able to work for longer.

Healthcare professionals

The immediate impact of an ageing population on healthcare professionals is the pressure this places on the sector from a patient care and treatment perspective. As prior BSI research¹³⁸ notes, “many healthcare systems were understaffed before the pandemic. Ageing populations with multiple chronic conditions inexorably raise demand, even in healthcare systems that are well-resourced”. As management and policymakers grapple with these issues, there is a chance for them also to consider steps that can enable those working in the sector to flourish in the decades to come.

The make-up and size of the healthcare sector varies enormously from country to country, but of the countries covered by this research, most were dealing with either workforce shortages or rising average workforce age – pressures that have become more pronounced following the pandemic. In Japan, research found that labour shortages were affecting more than two thirds of nursing facilities, with nearly seven in ten having staff over the age of 65¹³⁹. In the Netherlands, while the number of workers in the sector is experiencing sustained growth, vacancies are at record levels¹⁴⁰. In France, the rate of older doctors leaving the profession is not being met by new joiners, while the picture is similar in Germany¹⁴¹.

Forecasts warn that by 2036, NHS staff shortages could be higher than 570,000, partly as a consequence of an ageing workforce

In the US, Moodys¹⁴² has warned that “the growing portion of the population 65 and older is expected to place unique labor demands on healthcare compared with other parts of the economy”. And in the UK, 47% of the NHS workforce is over 45, with the situation particularly acute amongst general practitioners, and the data suggests two in ten of this group are over 55¹⁴³. Forecasts warn that by 2036, NHS staff shortages could be higher than 570,000, partly as a consequence of an ageing workforce¹⁴⁴.

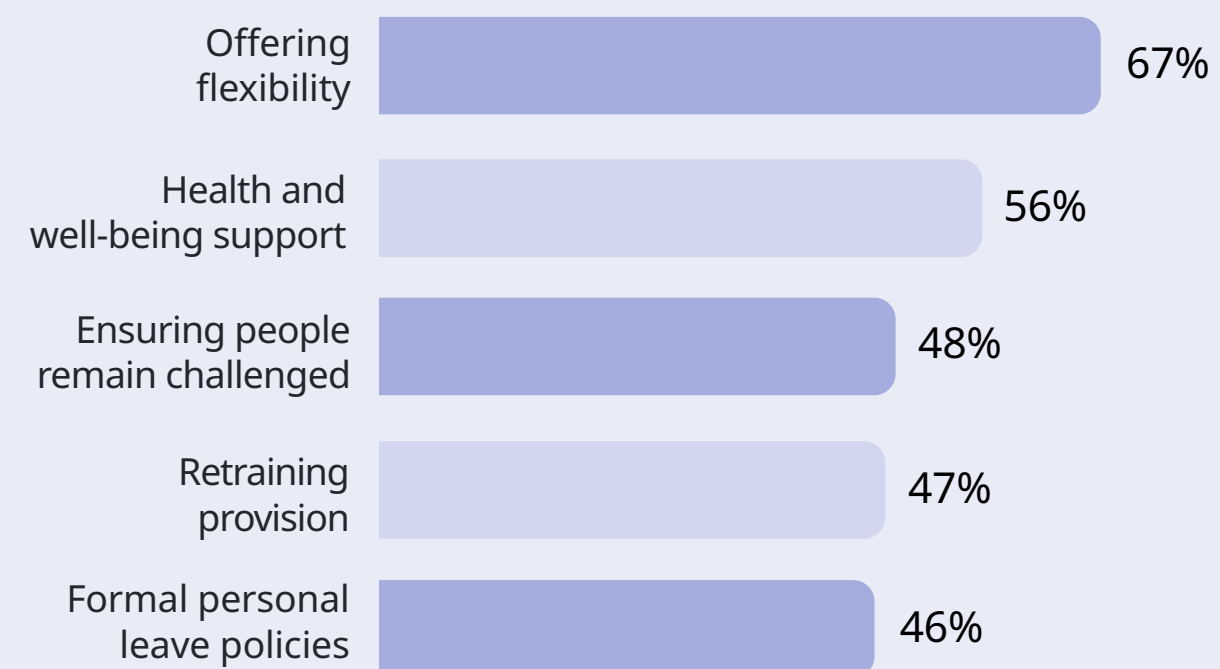


Healthcare professionals: priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

Priorities for individual career development



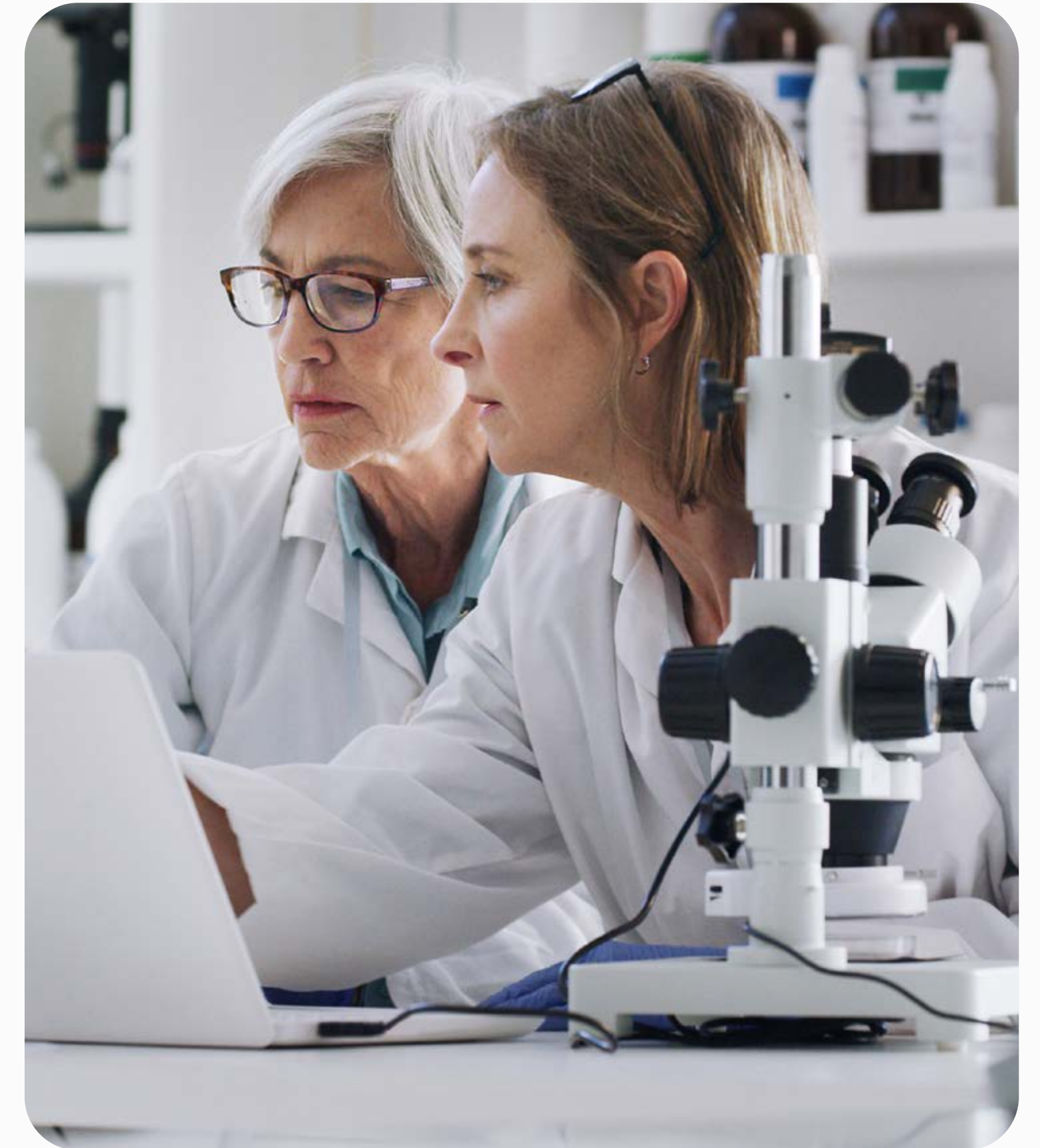
Priorities for businesses to succeed



Priorities for government and societal action



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section



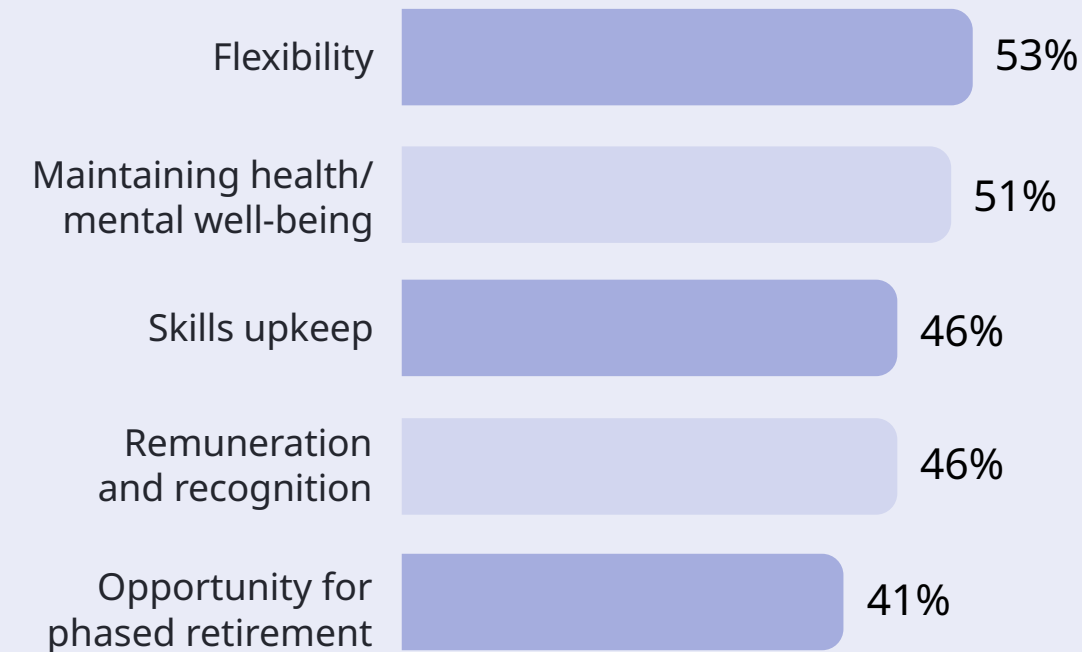
Life sciences and pharmaceuticals

An ageing population presents an opportunity for the life sciences and pharmaceuticals sector to respond by innovating to address complex diseases. Like all sectors, a declining younger population has the potential to put pressure on the workforce and augment the need to invest in training and skills development.



Life sciences and pharmaceuticals: priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

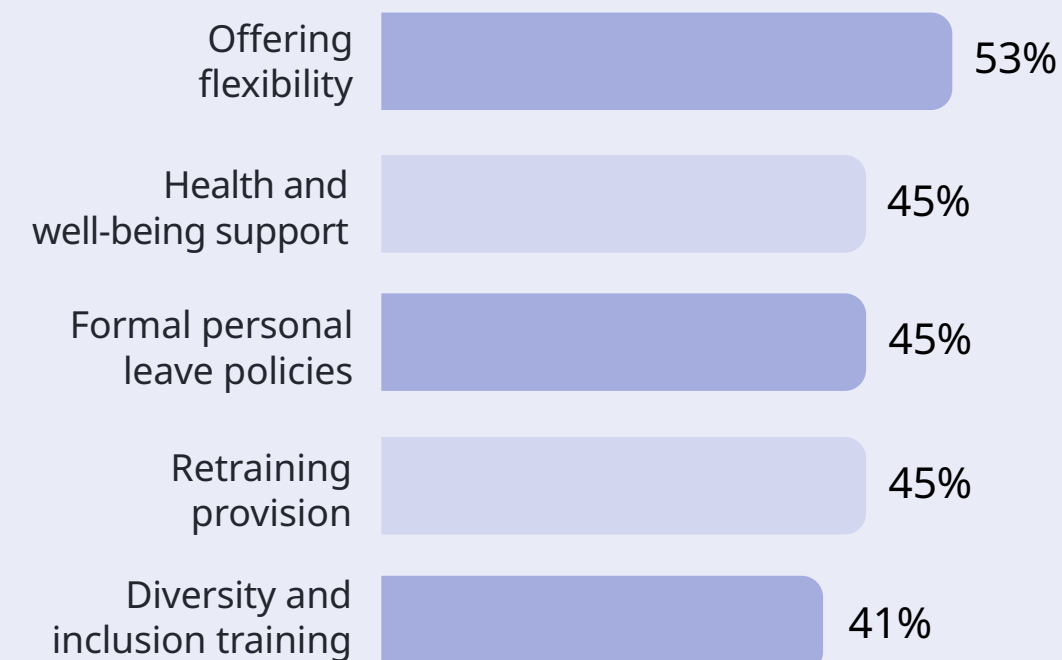
Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section

Priorities for action

Given the pressures on those working in the healthcare sector, especially in the aftermath of Covid-19, it is no surprise that, for a successful age-diverse workforce, respondents highlighted investment in healthcare delivery and the ability for people to maintain physical health and psychological and mental well-being. 60% prioritized the former, compared to 44% generally. This, along with flexibility in working structures and around caring responsibilities, is of clear importance.

Maintaining a happy, healthy workforce was equally a priority for those in life sciences and pharmaceutical research. This appeared along with an enhanced focus on establishing an inclusive culture involving diversity and inclusion training. The opportunity for phased retirement reflects that many of those in the sector would want to be able to continue to contribute but with the flexibility to do so at a slower pace.



Angus Metcalfe, Managing Director, Global Healthcare, BSI

“As populations age, the healthcare sector will be at the forefront of enabling more people to be able to work for longer, both physically and in terms of their mental and physiological well-being. Ensuring that people working in the sector can flourish in the future of work will be critical, whether they are the professionals caring for patients or those developing the medicines and treatments we all rely on. Supporting them to work for longer can help maintain the experience and talent needed to deliver the best outcomes for patients.”

“Healthcare organizations, businesses and governments now have the opportunity to partner for the long-term so that all can succeed in the-age diverse workforce.”

Technology

AI innovation can be a force for good in helping us to meet the challenges prompted by an increasingly age-diverse workforce

The technology sector's role in the age-diverse workforce may be around innovating to automate manual roles, freeing people from physical tasks but maintaining their ability to participate in the labour market.

On the surface, at least, the global technology sector skews younger than other industries, with many prominent Silicon Valley start-ups established by youthful creators. In reality, of course, this varies between countries. US data puts the average age of an internet worker as 34.6 against an average of 42.3¹⁴⁵. In the UK just over a fifth of those working in IT are understood to be over 50¹⁴⁶. In India, this is even more stark, with data suggesting under 2.5% of IT workers are over the age of 50¹⁴⁷, while in China ageism in the tech industry has been the subject of much discussion¹⁴⁸ after research found that three-quarters of tech workers there were younger than 30¹⁴⁹. In contrast in Japan, the ageing workforce is prompting the Government there to invest in schemes to bring older workers into the tech workforce¹⁵⁰.

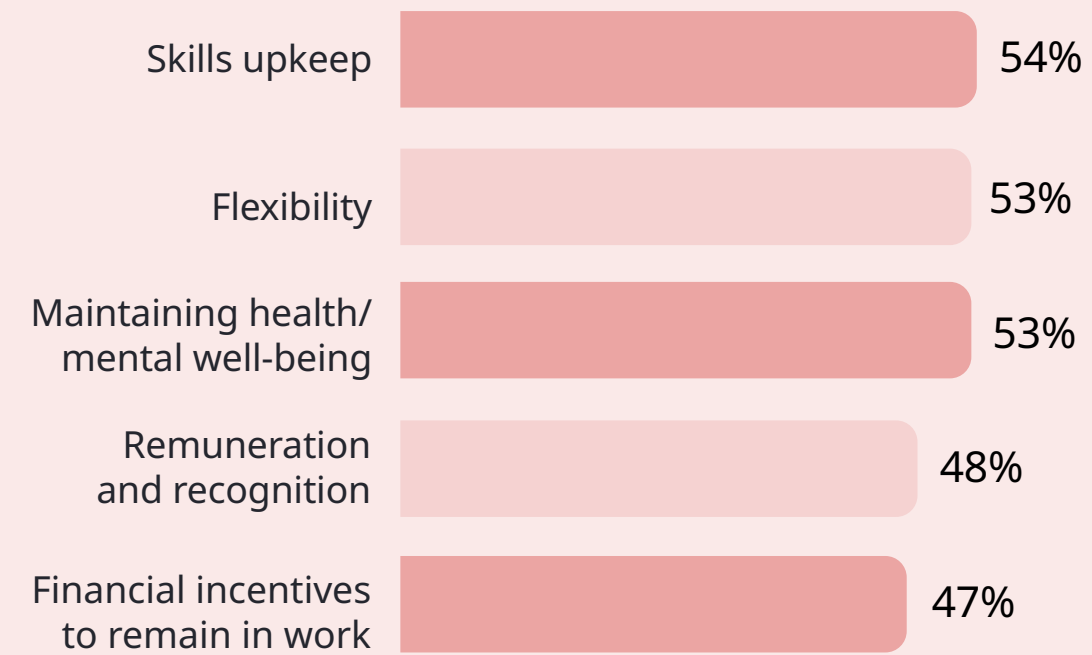
In Japan, the ageing workforce is prompting the government there to invest in schemes to bring older workers into the tech workforce



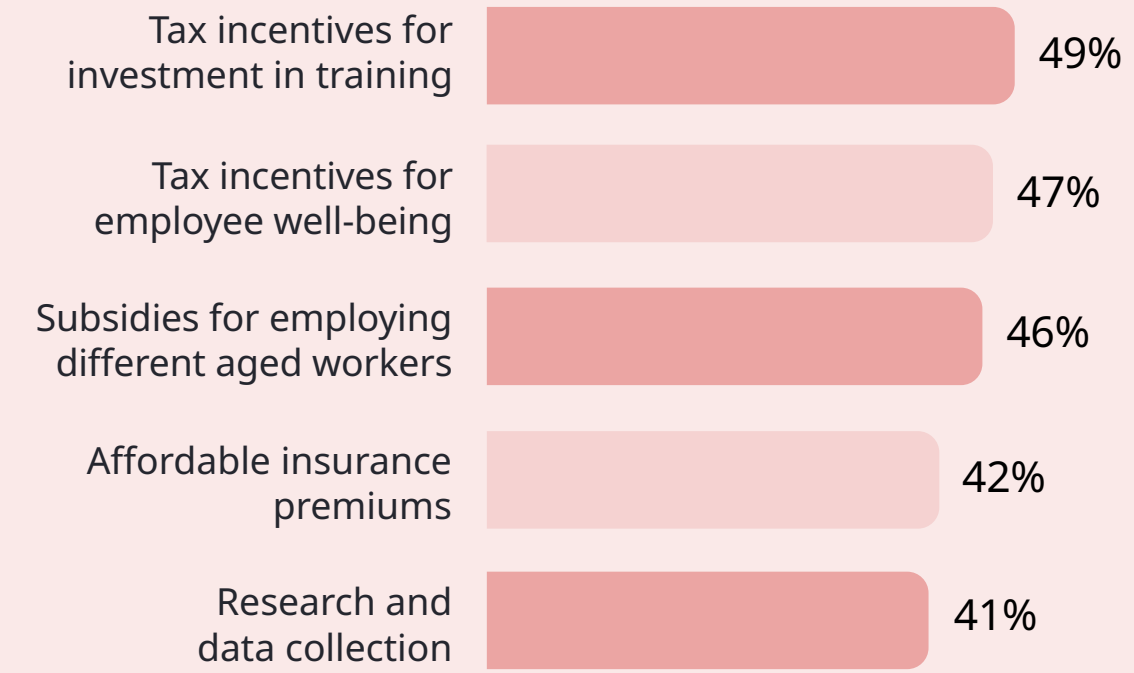
Equally, unemployment levels tend to be much lower in the technology sector than across the wider business world, with high-skilled talent in demand and well-documented recruitment shortfalls. Although 2023 saw some fall in employment as major technology firms reduced jobs, forecasts project technology and start-up hiring to grow. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics predict that in the next decade the tech workforce will grow twice as fast as the overall one¹⁵¹. According to CBRE analysis, all global markets (other than Sydney, Melbourne and Hong Kong) have recorded tech employment growth over the past five years¹⁵². At the same time, there has been underinvestment in developing the skilled workforce in countries including the US¹⁵³ and the UK¹⁵⁴ and in key sectors, linked in some instances to offshoring roles.

Technology: priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

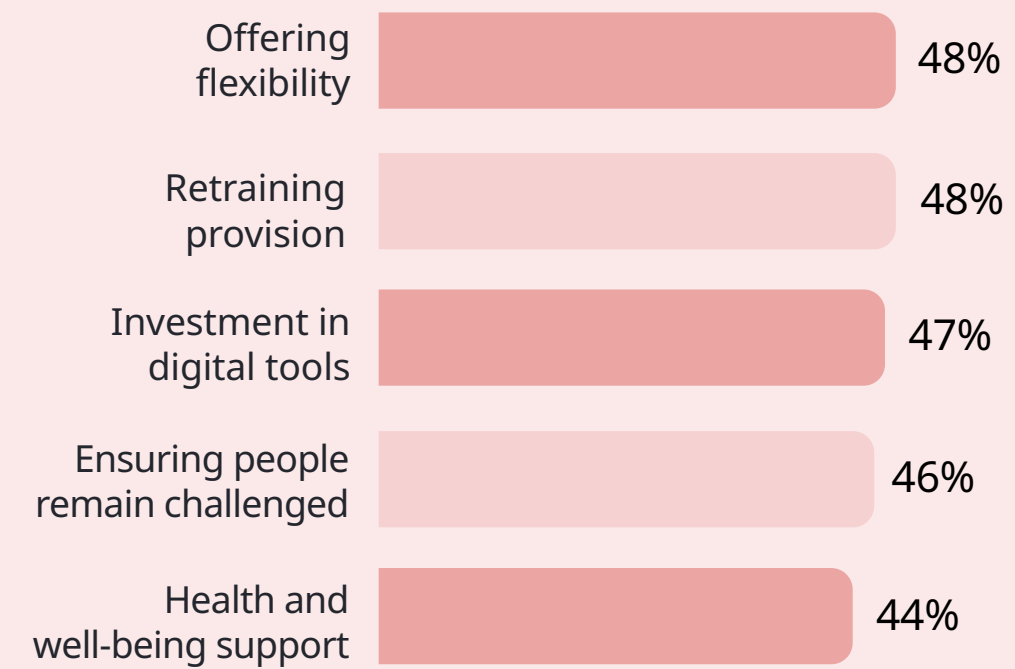
Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section



Priorities for action

Given the fast pace of change and competition for skilled talent, it follows that technology professionals would prioritize skills upkeep and retraining. These are seen as key drivers of a successful age-diverse workforce (54% compared to a global average of 45%), with financial incentivization for businesses to invest in this also scoring highly and well above average

As AI and other innovations shape the future of work, the technology sector will inevitably be at the forefront, meaning steady demand for highly-skilled experts of all ages and stages. Financial considerations and flexibility

also score highly, reflecting the fact that many roles in the sector already facilitate greater freedom of when and where to work. Many often also command salaries that sit far above average¹⁵⁵. Although still in the top five, health and well-being considerations generally were less prioritized. This could reflect that the sector primarily offers knowledge economy roles rather than physical or manual ones.



Mark Brown, Managing Director, Digital Trust Consulting, BSI

“As the AI transformation gathers pace and technology fundamentally changes ways of working around the world and across industries, a steady supply of skilled workers will be key. To properly fulfil the tech sector’s needs and ensure innovations reflect and respond to the diversity of society, an age-diverse workforce with multiple generations working side by side will be pivotal.”

“At the same time, AI innovation can be a force for good in helping us to meet the challenges prompted by an increasingly age-diverse workforce; for example taking on manual tasks and reducing the physical labour required. Individuals, organizations and policymakers have the opportunity to embrace the opportunity of AI to respond to the new era of working and the changing make-up of the workforce.”

Transport and mobility

A young woman with long blonde hair, wearing glasses, a green textured top, and a black backpack, is smiling and talking to an older man with a white beard and glasses. The man is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. They are standing in a train station next to a train. The woman has her hand on the man's shoulder. The background shows the interior of a train with a blue and white color scheme and a red door with a white number '2'.

Investing in the skills needed to prepare for the future of mobility can help the sector to flourish

As the automotive industry undergoes rapid change, it will need to recruit new talent and develop new skills in areas such as low carbon technologies, AI and data processing, and cybersecurity as well as sustainable manufacturing practices. Training and re-training new skills will be critical to meet demand from electric vehicles and ensure the ability to design, test and repair complex software-based systems such as self-driving technology. For example, the Renault Group plans to train 15,000 colleagues by 2025, as it pursues a strategy to become a next-generation automotive company¹⁵⁶.

A similar picture is reflected across the sector in terms of the need to respond to emissions policies, regulation and advances in digital technologies that can revolutionize how we manage and deliver transport. The aviation industry, for example, is also under considerable pressure to rapidly evolve, particularly in response to the push for net zero (including the changing use of fuel and fuelling) and from changing technology, including increased operational automation¹⁵⁷.

Globally, the transport and mobility sector is facing combined pressures of an ageing workforce and a shrinking number of new joiners. Similarly, aerospace skews in favour of the 50 to 54-year bracket¹⁵⁸. At the same time, the sector is experiencing rising demand as shopping habits and consumer behaviour shift and environmental pressures encourage use of public transport, with projections of a 79% increase in transport passenger demand and a 100% rise in freight demand by the midpoint of the century¹⁵⁹.

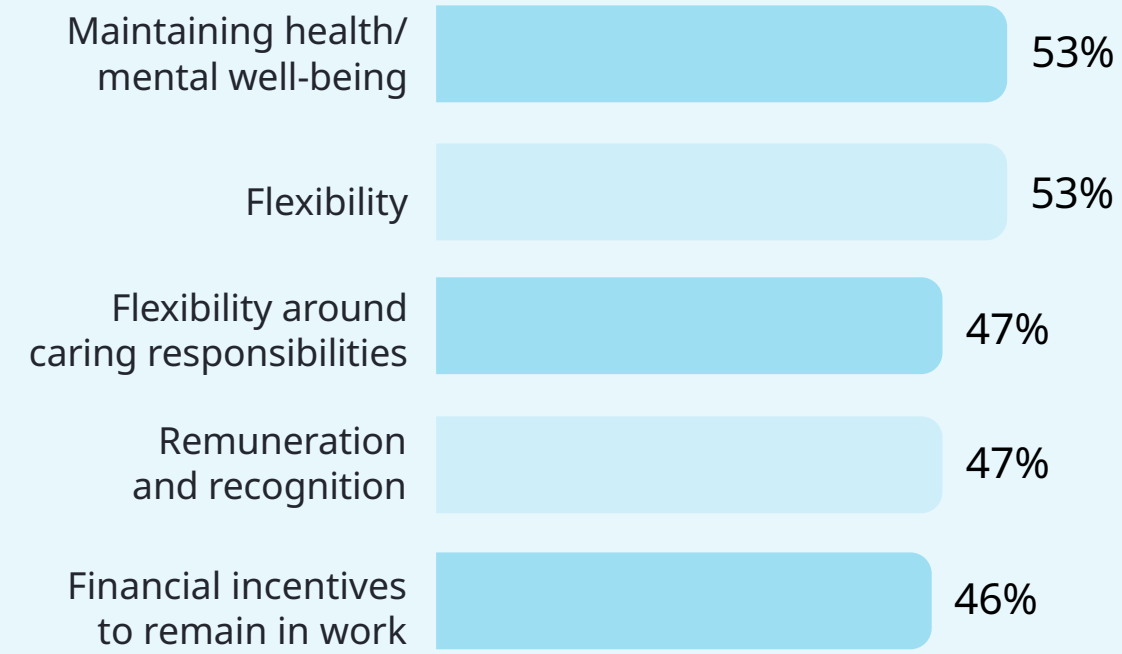
The International Road Transport Union (IRU) has described a demographic timebomb facing the sector, noting that with the exception of China and Uzbekistan most drivers are over the age of 25 (under 12% are younger globally, and only 5% are in Europe)¹⁶⁰. Their research also shows that in Europe, the average age of bus and coach drivers is 50¹⁶¹.

According to the RHA, 81.8% of transport managers in the UK are over the age of 45

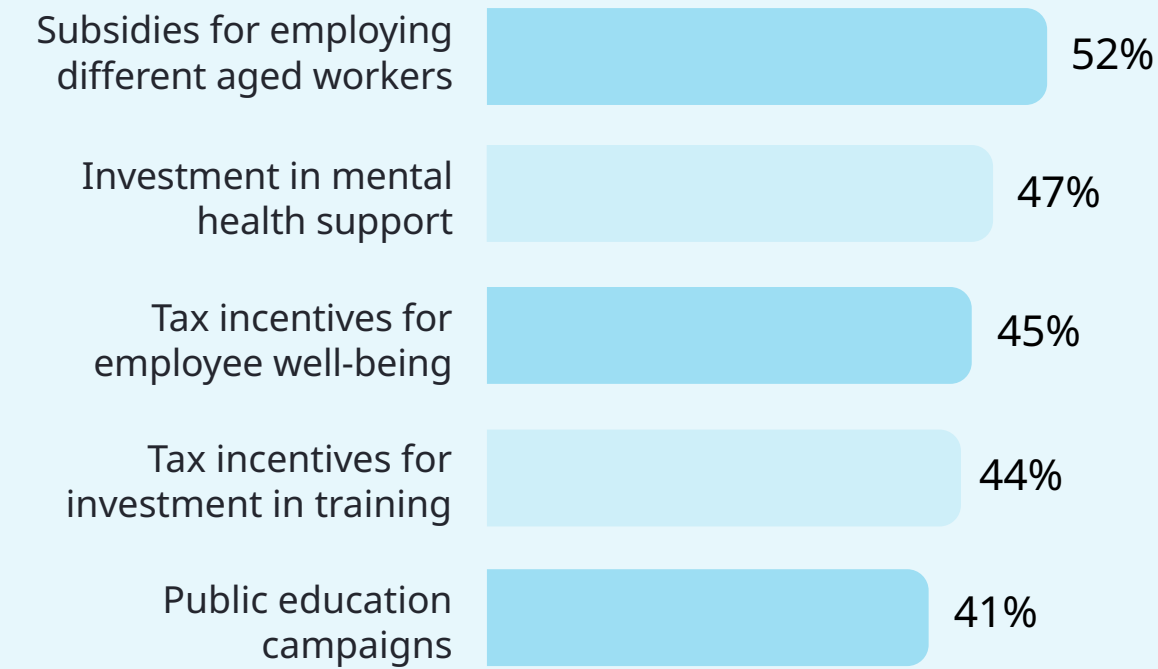
In the UK, 29% of HGV drivers are over the age of 56¹⁶², while in the US, the average age for men working in transport roles is 45.6¹⁶³, with 40% of those working in transit roles 55 or over¹⁶⁴. In Germany, the BGA, Germany's wholesale and trading association, has warned that 30,000 truck drivers are retiring every year, threatening the country's supply chains with collapse¹⁶⁵. Demographics shifts across society do not only impact drivers – according to the RHA, 81.8% of transport managers in the UK are over the age of 45¹⁶⁶.

Transport and mobility: priorities for success in a future age-diverse workforce*

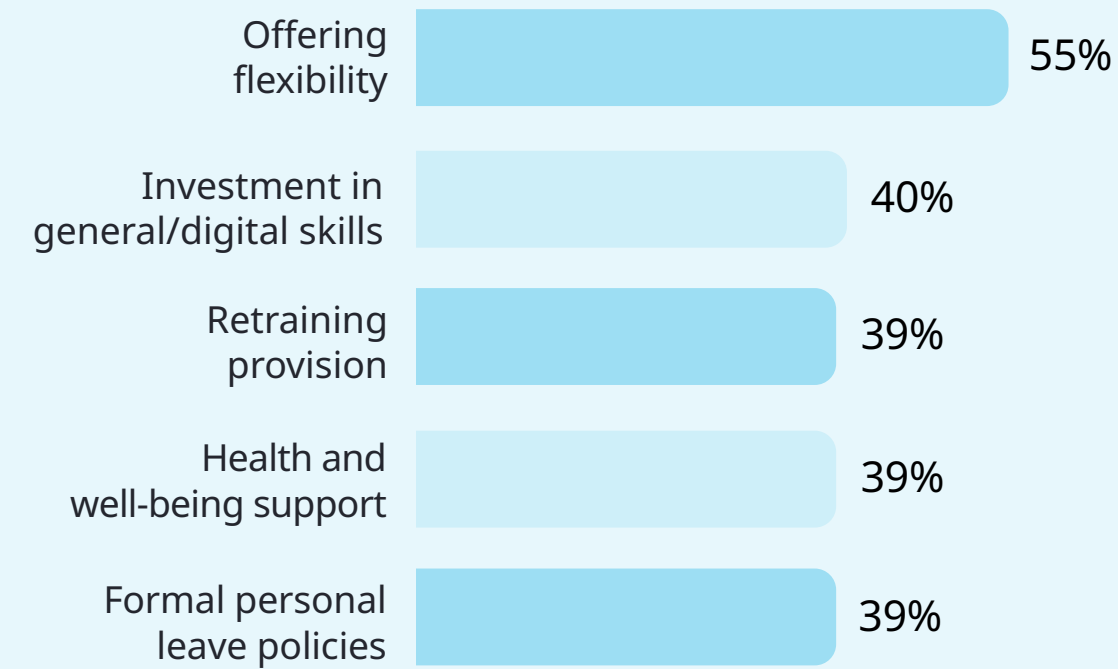
Priorities for individual career development



Priorities for government and societal action



Priorities for businesses to succeed



* Full question and answer lists can be found in the methodology section



Priorities for action

The impact of net-zero targets and introduction of digital technologies will require a merger of new and existing skills as the way we design, manufacture, operate, maintain or service our vehicles and wider transport systems changes. The global transport and mobility sector is a complex and rapidly changing ecosystem, including many transport modes and lifecycle phases – making, operating, maintaining, and repurposing vehicles for air, land, and water. Despite the different roles, flexibility from those working in it is seen as a key ingredient in the sector’s future success.

The complexity of the sector creates challenges for recruiting and developing skills during a significant transition towards vehicles operated by different

technologies and with increasing levels of automation. These technologies aren’t yet developed enough to displace essential roles, like drivers and operators, meaning people will still be front and centre. The focus on maintaining health and well-being (53%, on par with the global figure) speaks to the need to have a thriving workforce.

A well-managed transition will be critical to retaining skills to maintain current transport systems, while introducing new skills for future mobility. Investing in upskilling and retraining, which scored second in the list of factors to accelerate business success in the future, offers the potential to support redeployment of roles over time, in addition to recruiting for emerging and specialized roles.



Nick Fleming, Director, Transport & Mobility, BSI

“The introduction of advanced digital technologies, such as use of Automation and AI, and alternative energy pathways, drives change in the transport and mobility industry, across all modes of transport.

Investing in the skills needed to make this transition happen safely will be vital to ensure the sector is prepared to respond to delivering a cleaner, smarter future of mobility and can grow and flourish.”

“Electrification, automation, and connectivity of vehicles will fundamentally change the way they are made, operated, and maintained. And, as the transformation gathers pace and changes the nature of specific roles and skills required, a future skills roadmap that addresses the changing demographics of the workforce can help fulfil today’s needs whilst building the new transport and mobility workforce. This roadmap must provide for retraining and recruitment from a diverse society into a more diverse workforce, with multiple generations working side by side during a transformational era.”

Chapter six

Key takeaways



Key takeaways

Plan ahead

The age-diverse workforce is not a question but is fast becoming a reality in many major economies and sectors. Individuals, organizations, and society have the opportunity to boost growth and innovation by thinking about how this will change the workforce now and collaborating to develop strategies to respond.

Support health and well-being

A flourishing workforce will be one that has the ability to maintain physical health and psychological/mental well-being. For employers and governments, this may include proactive efforts to support workers to manage their health or investment in the services used by the wider population.

Make work worthwhile

Unsurprisingly financial considerations weighed heavily and reward and remuneration will be core to how people relate to their job at any age. Equally, value can come from ensuring people remain challenged by their work / roles and feel that their contribution is appreciated.

Rethink work

Across the board, being able to choose when, where and how we work was identified as key to keeping people in work. More than four years after the start of the pandemic, when working structures in some countries and sectors were fundamentally altered, now is the moment to open the conversation around how flexibility can be enabled for the long-term, so it benefits individuals and the organizations they work for.

Train, retrain and refresh

Skills upkeep and access to training is critical, especially in the context of the AI transformation. For people to continue to flourish opportunities to learn new skills, returnships or the chance to shift away from manual roles, are critical. As the age of the workforce diversifies, strategies like reverse mentoring can bring enormous benefits.

Enable an inclusive culture

An inclusive culture that creates an age-diverse workplace free from adverse social behaviour can strengthen trust and engagement and encourage the retention of experienced colleagues. Employers can partner with employees to embed a supportive culture by ensuring different generations are listened to and have an equal chance to contribute.

Appendix

Methodology

This research was compiled using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology, as follows:

- Interviews with relevant stakeholders, including from BSI, the CBI, the BCC, the Federation of Small Businesses and HRflag
- Evidence review undertaken by Malvern Insight
- Polling of 932 business leaders (manager level or equivalent and above) by Yonder Consulting between 12th and 25th March 2024, in the UK, US, France, Germany, the Netherlands, China, Japan, India and Australia

- Respondents were asked three questions:
 - Thinking about your own needs, pick the top five things you think would support your career development and help you succeed in a future age-diverse workforce, in order of priority?
 - Thinking about your business' needs, pick the top five things you think would enable your business to succeed in a future age-diverse workforce, in order of priority?
 - Thinking about your individual and business' needs, pick the top five things you think governments and/or wider society should do to help people and businesses succeed, in order of priority?
- Top five responses were drawn from the net total for each answer placed in the top five.

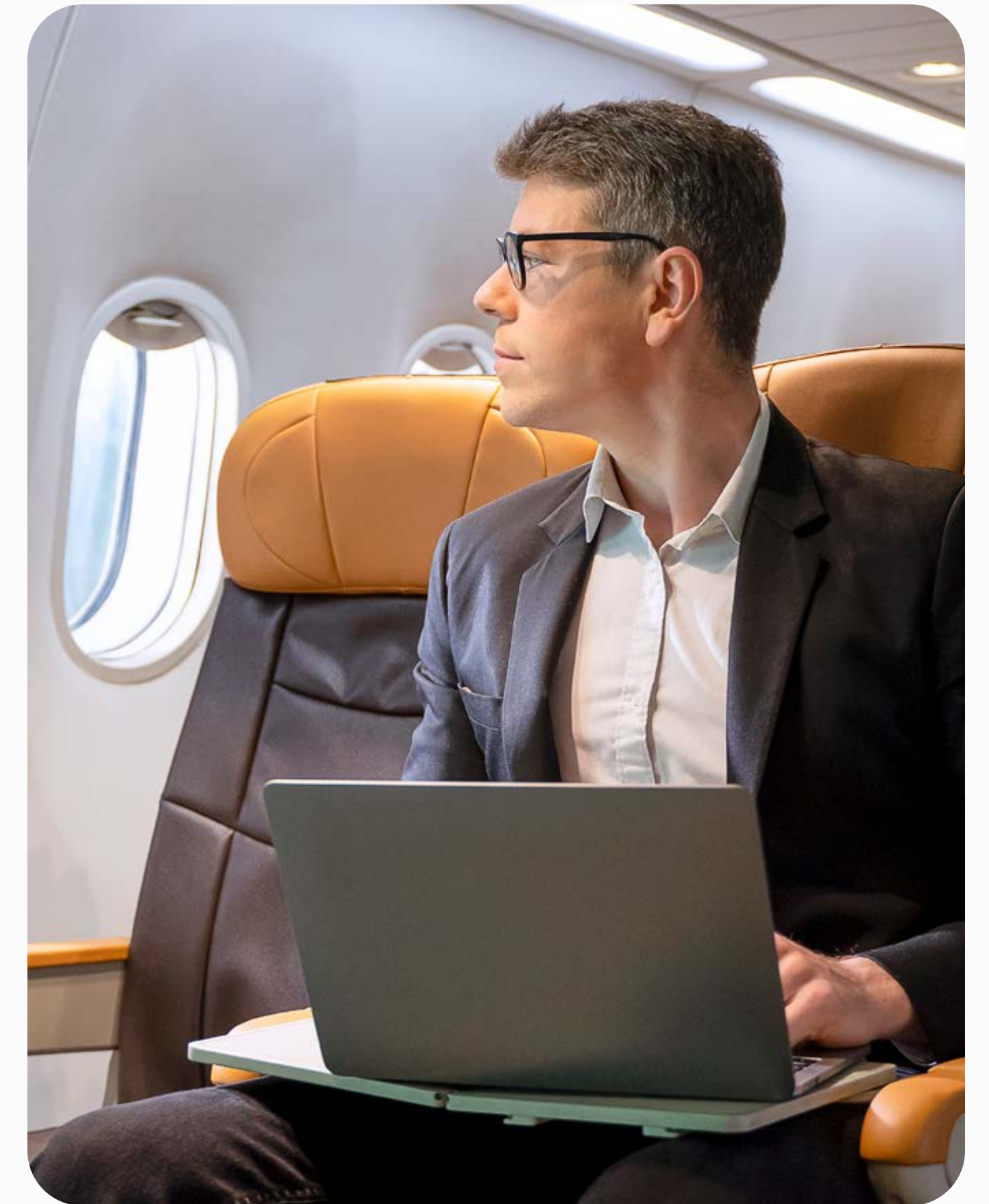
We extend our gratitude to all those involved in developing this research for their time and contributions.



Full questions

Respondents were asked the following questions as part of a wider survey conducted by Yonder.

- 1 Thinking about your own needs, pick the top five things you think would support your career development and help you succeed in a future age-diverse workforce, in order of priority?**
- a Ability to maintain physical health and / or psychological/ mental well-being
 - b Flexibility of when, where or how much you work
 - c Feeling appreciated with remuneration and recognition
 - d Skills upkeep and access to training and skills development
 - e Financial or tax incentives to make it economically desirable to remain in work
 - f Flexibility re: caring responsibilities e.g. time off to look after children, grandchildren or elderly parents
 - g Opportunity to do something good for people and society and / or remain productive throughout life
 - h Opportunity for phased retirement (for example changing role to reduce responsibility or stress levels)
 - i An inclusive culture that offers opportunity for social engagement with multigenerational colleagues
 - j Access to occupational health and safety support from employer
 - k An inclusive culture that creates a workplace free from adverse social behaviour
 - l Opportunity to retrain away from physical roles / job redesign
 - m Feeling understood and supported around menopause symptoms



Full questions

Respondents were asked the following questions as part of a wider survey conducted by Yonder.

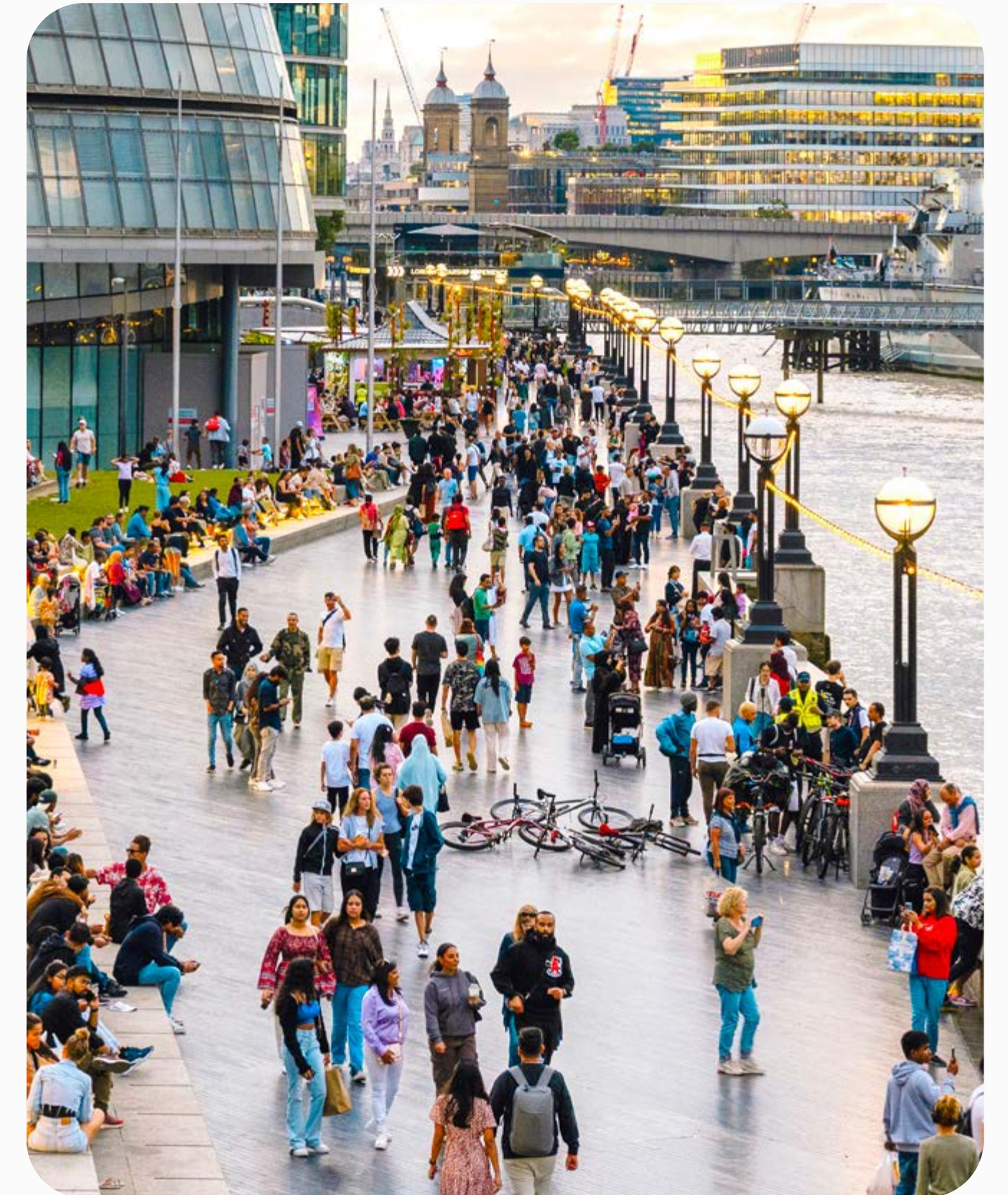
- 2 Thinking about your business' needs, pick the top five things you think would enable your business to succeed in a future age-diverse workforce, in order of priority?**
- a Offering flexibility around when, where or how much people work
 - b Providing support around physical health and / or psychological / mental well-being
 - c Providing opportunities for retraining people to new roles throughout their careers or supporting returnships
 - d A focus on ensuring people remain challenged by their work / roles
 - e Formal compassionate and personal leave policies
 - f Personalized reward and benefits programmes, including financial advice around retirement planning
 - g Investment in digital tools to support people of all ages to carry out their roles
 - h Investment in general and digital skills development
 - i Creating an inclusive culture including training staff around diversity and inclusion
 - j Creating an accessible workplace that takes ergonomic considerations into account
 - k Mentoring and knowledge transfer programmes
 - l Introducing or continuing age blind recruitment practices
 - m Absence management and rehabilitation programmes
 - n Providing support around menopause symptoms



Full questions

Respondents were asked the following questions as part of a wider survey conducted by Yonder.

- 3 Thinking about your individual and business' needs, pick the top five things you think governments and/or wider society should do to help people and businesses succeed**
- a Tax or financial incentives to encourage employers to invest in employee physical health and / or psychological / mental well-being
 - b Tax or financial incentives to encourage businesses to recruit older people or invest in retraining and skills development
 - c Tax benefits or other subsidies for employing workers of different ages
 - d Investment in general healthcare delivery for the population
 - e Investment in mental health and well-being support for the population
 - f Pensions policies that don't disincentivise work / incentivise continued work throughout life
 - g Affordable insurance premiums for older workers, including those in manual roles
 - h Public education or awareness campaigns to break down stereotypes and encourage workplace participation at all ages
 - i Research and data collection around workforce demographics to better inform organizations on how to manage the workforce
 - j Greater delivery of care support (children and social care)
 - k Introducing laws or regulation prohibiting discrimination based on age
 - l Investment in smart cities and smart communities



BSI products and services to help build your future-ready workforce

Assurance

- ISO 45003 Gap assessment, training and certification
- ISO 45001 Gap assessment, training and certification
- Inclusive Service Training (Coming in 2024)
- H&S Technical Training – Hazards, Risk Assessment, Culture, Performance Evaluation, Investigations, Legal and Other
- ISO 30416 menstruation and menopause in the workplace training
- ISO 30415 Diversity and Inclusion training
- Internal Audit - diversity and inclusion (incorporating all relevant D&I standards)

Regulatory Services Product Certification

- Kitemark: Inclusive Services
- Kitemark: Smart Cities and Communities
- AI training
- Algorithmic auditing and data set testing
- AI conformity assessments
- Artificial intelligence Management system certification (ISO/IEC 42001)

Consulting

- Risk Assessment
- Ergonomic Assessments
- Industrial Hygiene
- AI strategy development
- Data governance services for AI solutions



Standards

Health and Safety

- [BS ISO 45003:2021](#) Occupational health and safety management — Psychological health and safety at work — Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks
- [BS ISO 45001:2023](#) Occupational health and safety management systems
- [BS ISO 45004:2024](#) Occupational health and safety management — Guidelines on performance evaluation
- [BS ISO 10075-2](#) Ergonomic principles related to mental workload — Part 2: Design principles.
- [BS 8484:2022](#) Provision of lone worker services. Code of practice
- [BS ISO 26800:2011](#) Ergonomics — General approach, principles and concepts

Ageing

- [BS ISO 25550:2022](#) Ageing societies —General requirements and guidelines for an age-inclusive workforce
- [BS ISO 25551:2021](#) Ageing societies — General requirements and guidelines for carer-inclusive organizations

Human Resources

- [BS EN ISO 27500:2017](#) The human-centred organization. Rationale and general principles
- [BS ISO 27501:2019](#) The human-centered organization — Guidance for managers
- [BS ISO 30414:2018](#) Human resource management — Guidelines for internal and external human capital reporting
- [BS ISO 30415:2021](#) Human resource management — Diversity and inclusion
- [BS ISO 26000:2010](#) Social Responsibility
- [BS ISO/TR 30406:2017](#) Human resource management — Sustainable employability management for organizations
- [BS ISO 30405:2023](#) Human resource management — Guidelines on recruitment
- [BS ISO 23326:2022](#) Human resource management — Employee engagement — Guidelines
- [BS 76000:2015](#) Human resource. Valuing people. Management system. Requirements and guidance
- [BS ISO 30422:2022](#) Human resource management — Learning and development



- [PD ISO/TS 24178:2021](#) Human resource management. Organizational culture metrics cluster
- [PD ISO/TS 24179:2020](#) Human resource management. Occupational health and safety metrics
- [PD ISO/TS 30423:2021](#) Human resource management. Compliance and ethics metrics cluster
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Diversity and Inclusion

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- [BS ISO 53800 Guidelines for promotion and implementation of gender equality and women’s empowerment](#)
- [BS 30416 Menopause, menstruation and menstrual health in the workplace – guide](#)
- [PAS 1948 Diversity, equality, and inclusion in the workplace – Code of Practice](#)

Built Environment

- [BS 8300-1:2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment - External environment. Code of practice](#)
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