



ARC CENTRE OF
EXCELLENCE IN
**POPULATION
AGEING
RESEARCH**

COVID-19 and Mature Workers

Dr. Daniela Andrei & Dr. Jane Chong

2021 Policy Dialogue on Mature Workers in Organisations



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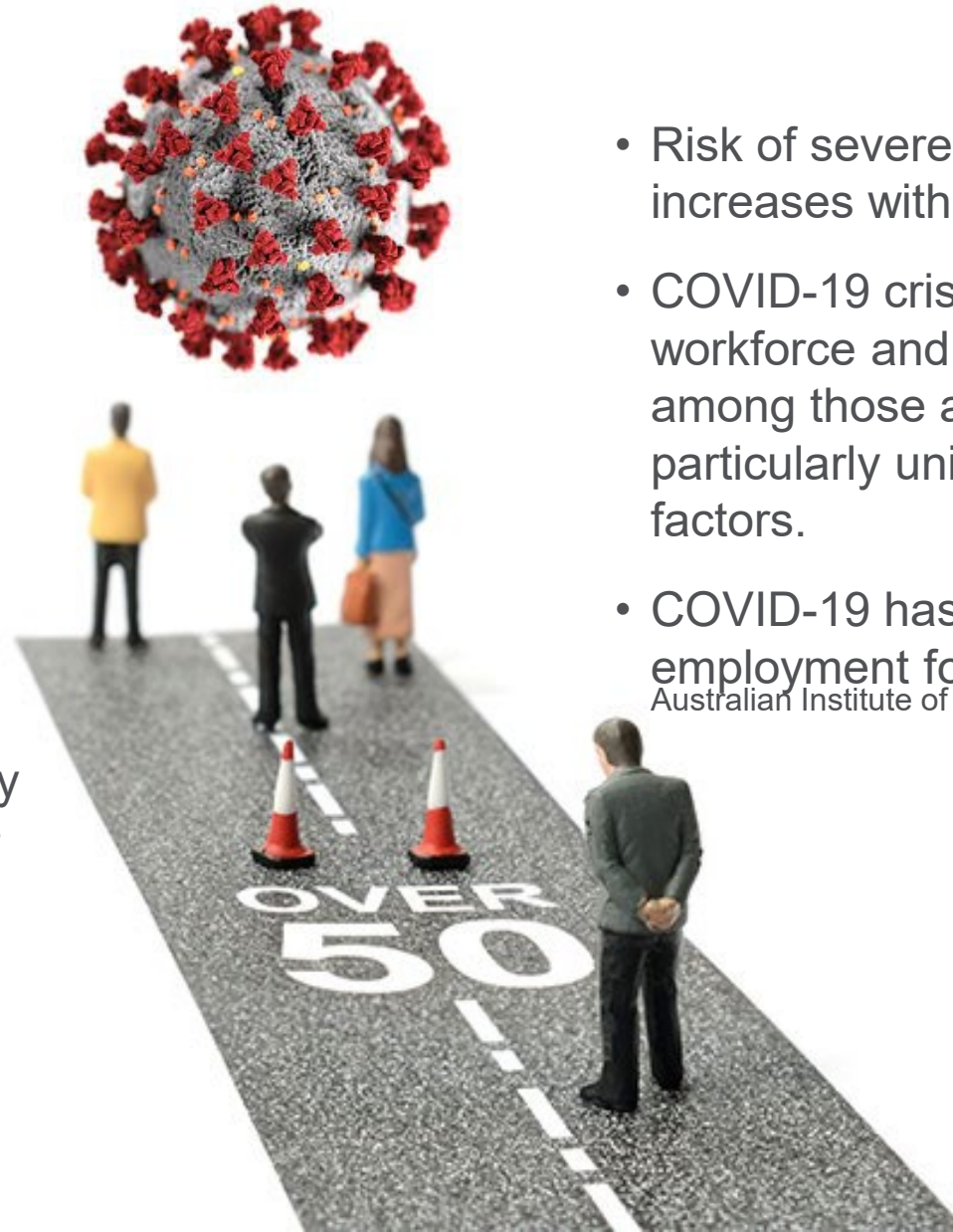
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Pre-COVID

- The aging workforce presents both challenges and opportunities for individual, organisations, and economies.
- Many Australians aged over 50 experienced age discrimination in the workplace and gave up looking for work Australian Human Rights Commission (2016)
- Employers were reluctant to employ people over 50 Australian Human Resources Institute (2018)



COVID

- Risk of severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age Healthdirect.gov.au
- COVID-19 crisis combined with aging workforce and higher morbidity rates among those aged 60+ presents a particularly unique combination of factors.
- COVID-19 has amplified the barriers to employment for mature-aged workers Australian Institute of Business (2020)

Wider Research on COVID-19 and mature workers

Government & Industry

- Cohort bearing the brunt of **unemployment** during the pandemic ^{ABS (2020)}
- 57.7% of older workers have had **difficulty gaining employment or being retained** during COVID-19 ^{AHRC & AHRI (2021)}
- Compound impact by COVID-19 and public health response for **mature-age, low-income people** ^{BSL & NOUS (2020)}
- Older workers may **especially benefit from paid sick leave policies** to curtail the spread of the virus ^{Forbes (2020)}

Hidden in plain sight: The impact of the COVID-19 response on mature-age, low-income people in Australia

Brotherhood of St Laurence and Nous Group

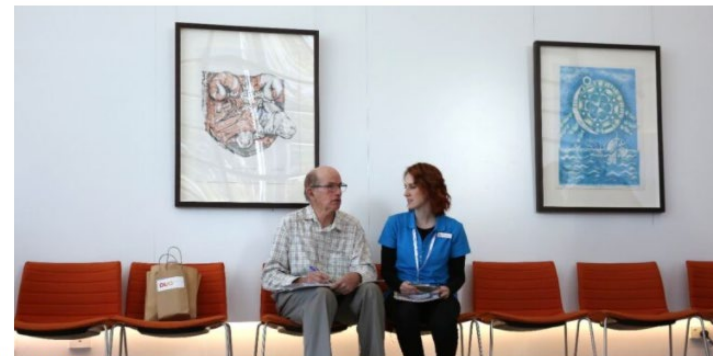
30 June 2020

It gets worse before it gets better: Why older workers will be left out of the COVID-19 job market

Age Matters

20 August 2020

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NEWS

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MELBOURNE LOCKDOWN

Keep up to date with the latest tier 1 and tier 2 COVID-19 exposure sites in Melbourne

Middle-aged Australians struggle to claw back their careers after COVID-19

Reporter Rachel Clayton

Jan 2021 at 2:49am, updated Wed 6 Jan 2021 at 4:28pm



Forbes

EDITORS' PICK | Mar 15, 2020, 05:19pm EDT | 10,718 views

Vulnerable Older Workers Need Paid Sick Leave To Stem Coronavirus Spread



Teresa Ghilarducci Senior Contributor @

Retirement

I am an economics professor focusing on retirement security and jobs.



Listen to this article now

05:08



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LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES

Academic Research

Research commentaries:

- Organisations are encouraged not to hastily customise workforce policies to people of different ages
- Pitfalls of “generations management”
- Encouraged to focus on developing interventions to mitigate age-related effects.



INSIGHTS FROM
WORKFORCE AGEING EXPERTS

Academic Research

- Characteristics of pandemics and pathways of influence on older workers

Mortality Salience

- Impact on how mature workers navigate exit decisions

Remote work and learning

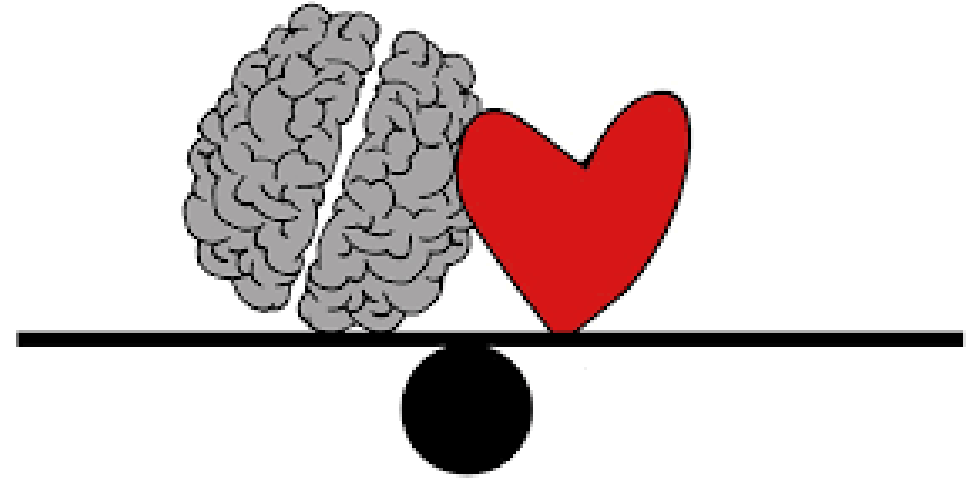
- Advantageous due to greater autonomy and flexibility **vs** drawbacks from reduced opportunities for informal social interactions
- Highlights importance of motivation and capacity to develop new work skills


Unemployment, job search, and work exit

- High job insecurity among retained older workers, but low successful job search expectations among unemployed, older job seekers

Academic Research

- Age was negatively associated with distress in the first week of the lockdown period linked to COVID-19 outbreak in Spain; older workers responded more effectively to measures that counter COVID-19 Losada-Balter et al. (2020)
- Higher rates of death of among the elderly triggered some older workers to start retirement planning, others worked more/ came out of retirement to help with high demands in healthcare Akkermans et al., 2020
- Personal resources help make the COVID-19 career shock, loneliness, and psychological distress more manageable Akkermans et al. (2020), Losada-Baltar et al. (2020)
- Organisation can help improve self-regulation strategies and personal resources Kooij et al. (2020)





CEPAR Stream 3 Research on COVID-19 and Mature Workers

Commentary & Analysis

- Pandemic does not only affect the aging workforce due to natural developmental processes or increased physical susceptibility to illness
- It exacerbates existing **attitudes** and **biases** toward older workers in age-diverse teams and organisations, which can lead to **hostile work environment for older workers** and limiting their access to work opportunities

Tribunal claims for ageism at work soar since Covid lockdown

Age discrimination cases in England and Wales increase by 176% in last three months of 2020

- [Coronavirus - latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)

Industrial and Organizational Psychology (2021), 14, 66–70
doi:[10.1017/iop.2021.15](https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2021.15)

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COMMENTARY

Age bias in the time of Coronavirus: Implications for research and practice

Lucinda J. Iles* and Sharon K. Parker

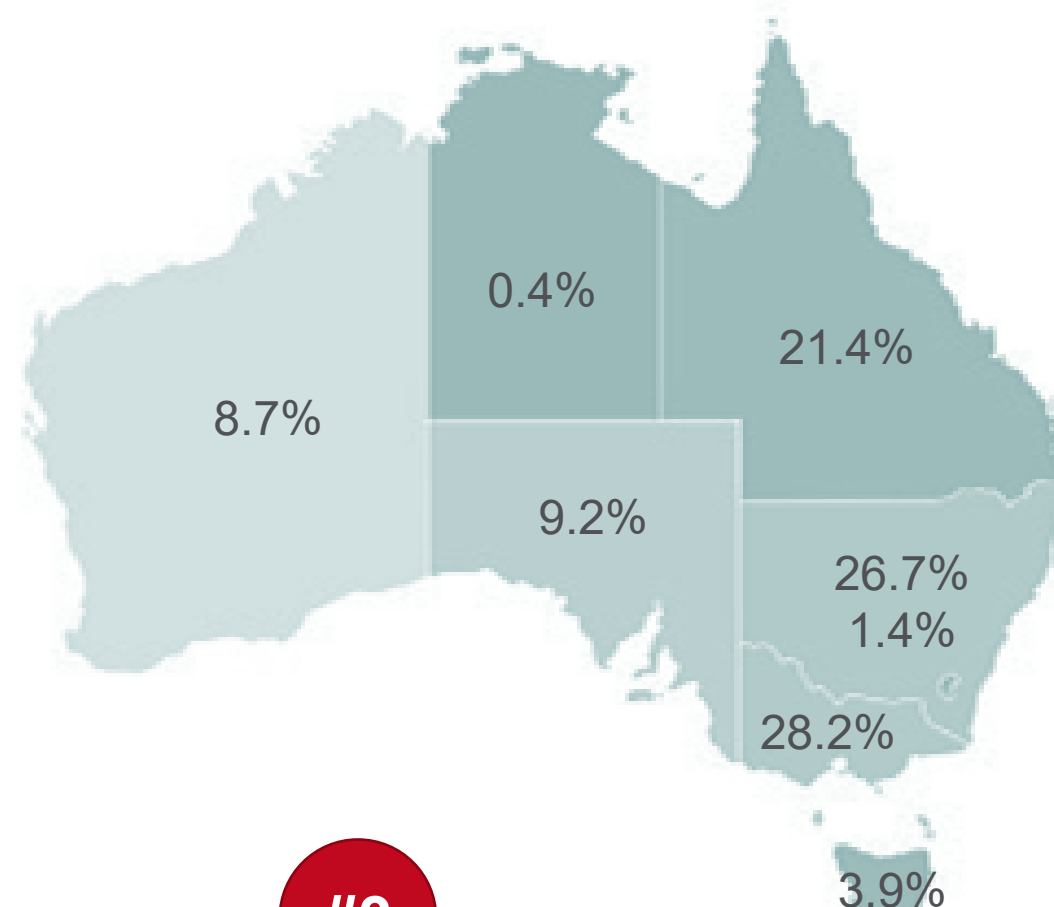
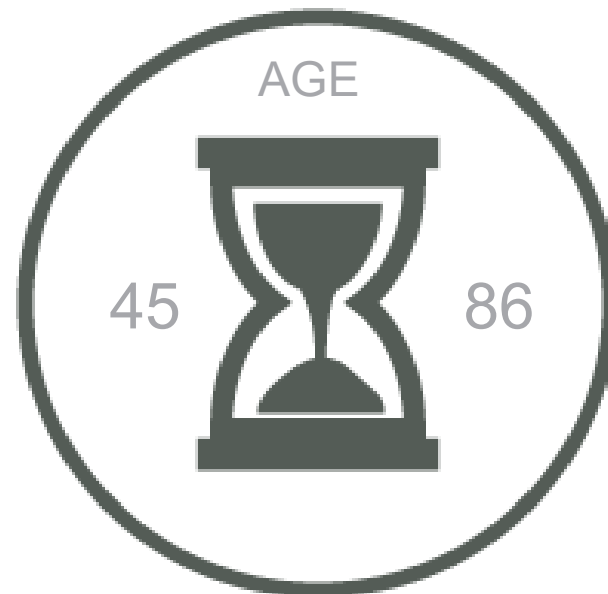
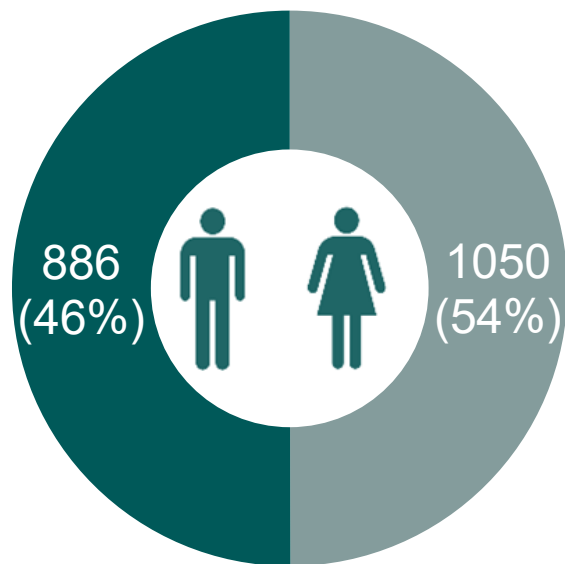
Centre for Transformative Work Design, Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia

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Supporting evidence:

- the pandemic has exacerbated age discrimination in both the workplace and recruitment process (number of age discrimination claims rising in the UK)

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE: MWOS COVID SURVEY



#1

JUNE 2020

- Few months of lockdown
- Easing of lockdowns

#2

NOVEMBER 2020

- Zero locally acquired COVID cases for the first time since June
- Small outbreaks but quickly contained

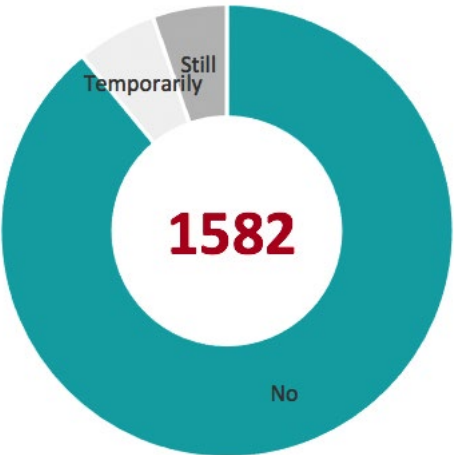
#3

MAY/JUNE 2021

- Vaccine roll out
- Small outbreaks but quickly contained

Redeployment and perception of the job market

Redeployment/reassignment



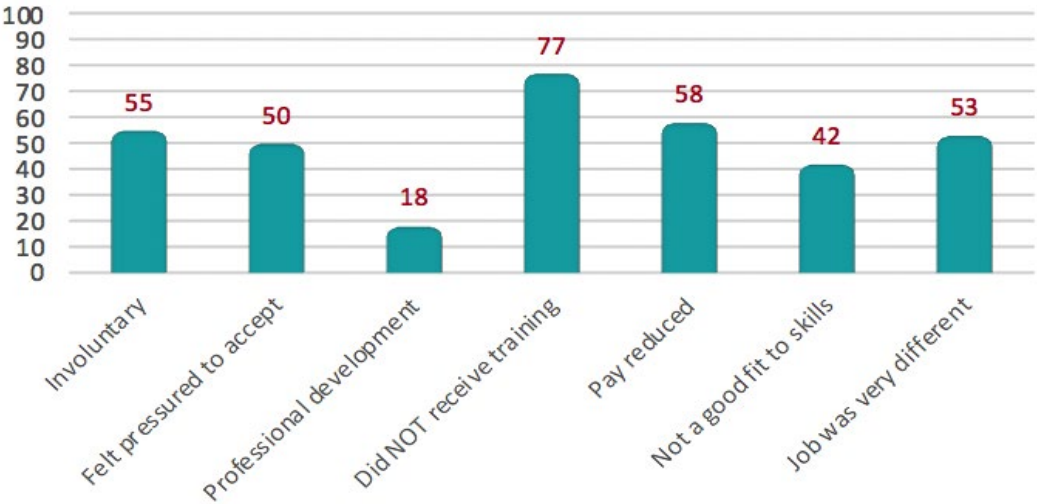
81% / 65%

Rated the job marked ad being bad/extremely bad

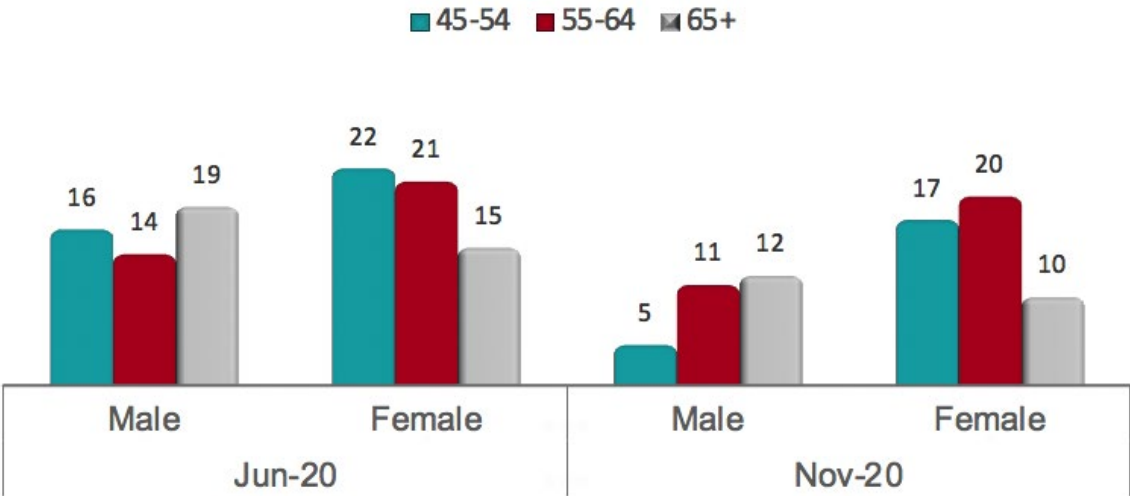
11% / 11%

Reduced confidence that employer will remain in business

Redeployment characteristics (%)



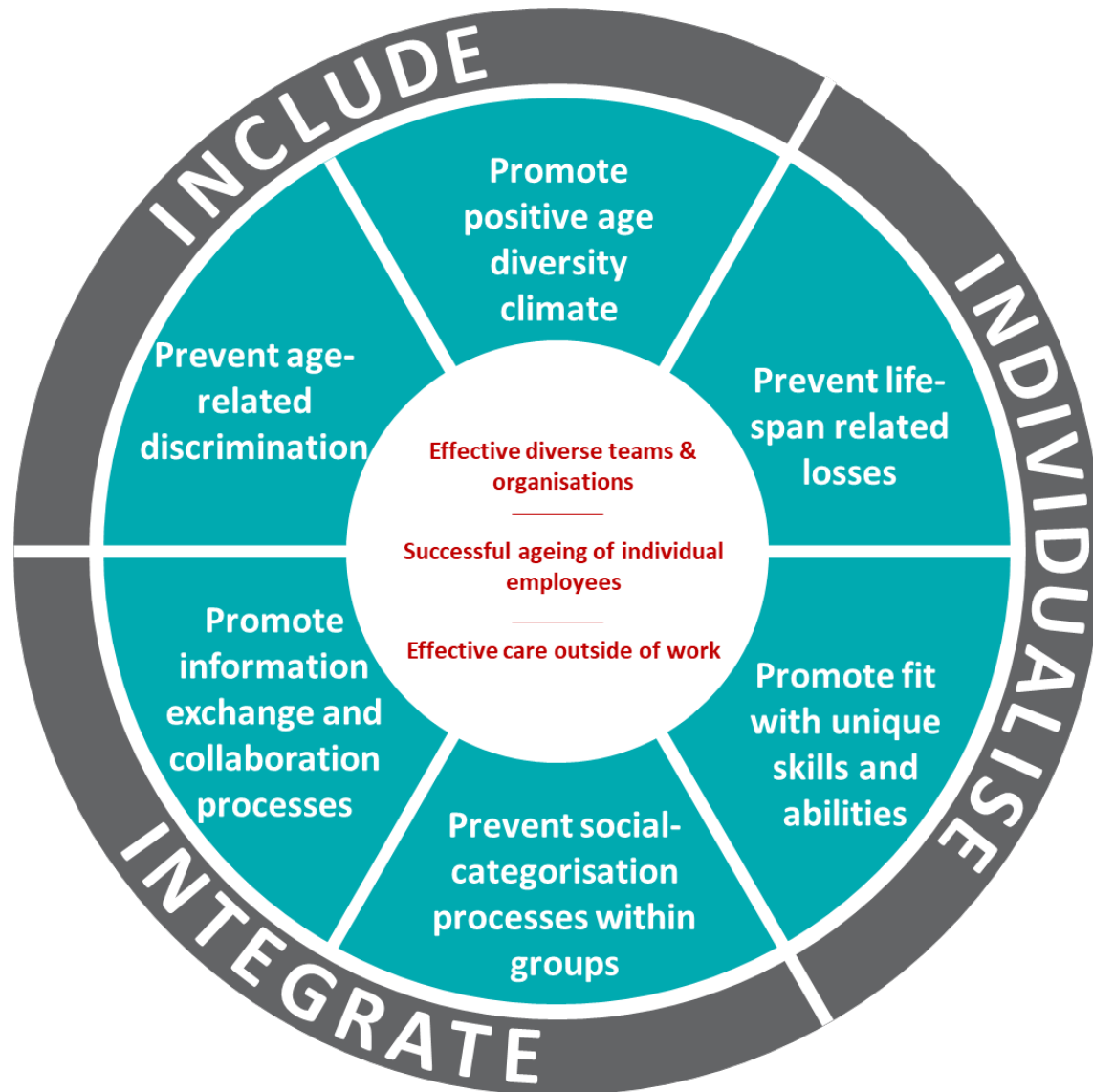
I have felt vulnerable to contracting COVID-19 whilst carrying out my work - % Agree/Strongly agree



Attitudes towards work and retirement



The 3i model: The key ingredients for managing age diversity



INCLUDE

Mature workers are included, and their contribution is valued, without discrimination or stereotyping.

INDIVIDUALISE

The needs of mature workers are accommodated in their jobs and careers, to ensure workability, productivity & retention.

INTEGRATE

The strengths of mature workers are actively used through effective team design and positive interactions across different age groups.

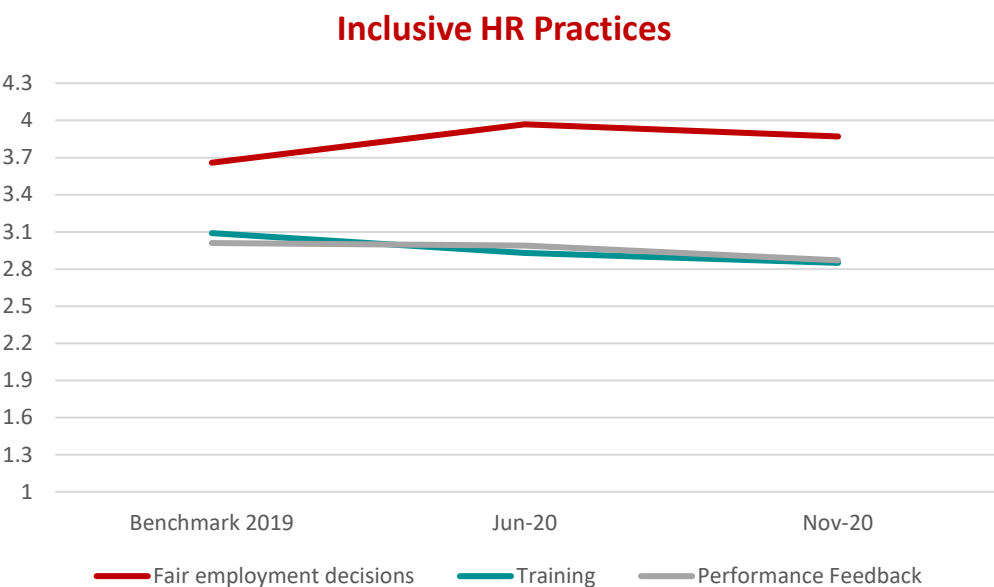
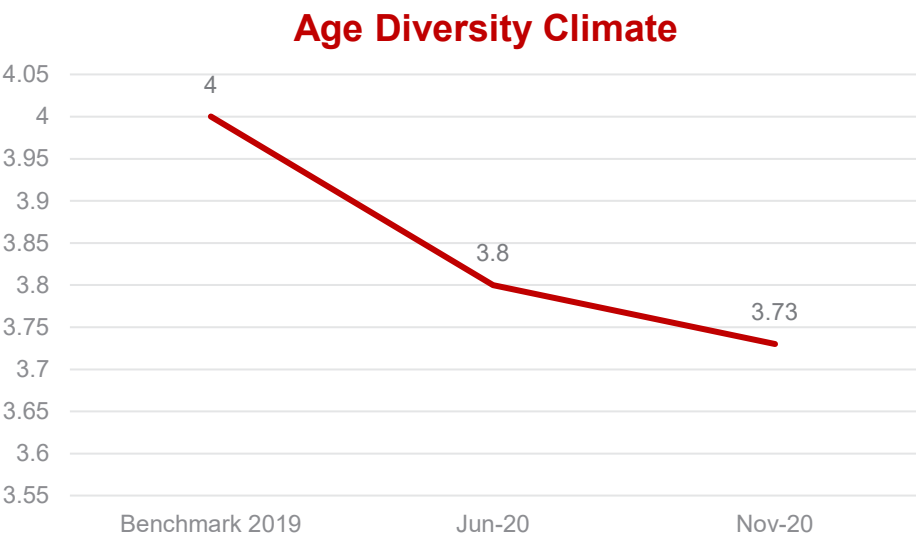
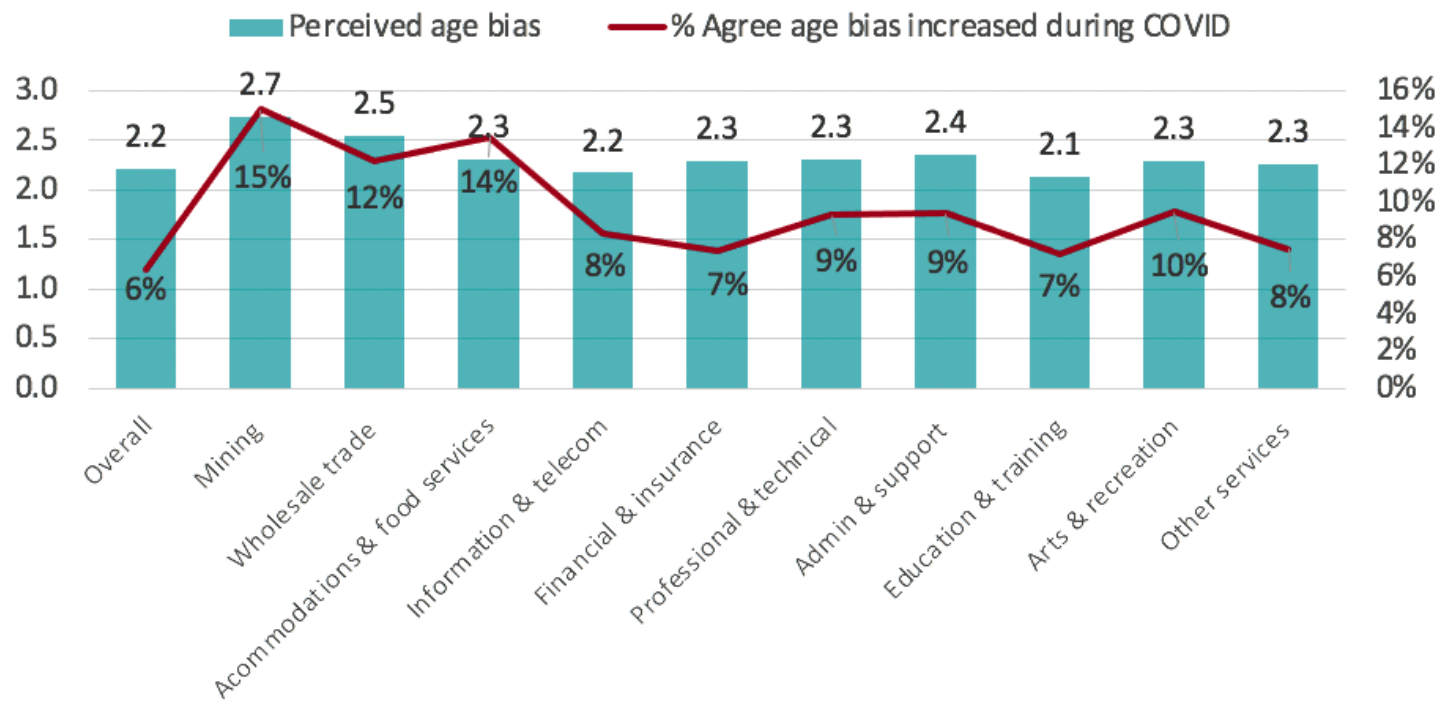


Include

Age Diversity Climate & Age bias

Despite overall scores still on the positive side of the scale, Age Diversity Climate shows a negative trend in between the two MWOS-COVID measurements (and compared to Benchmark)

On average, perceptions of Age Bias remained stable between the two measurements. However, around 10% of the sample agree that age bias increased during COVID.

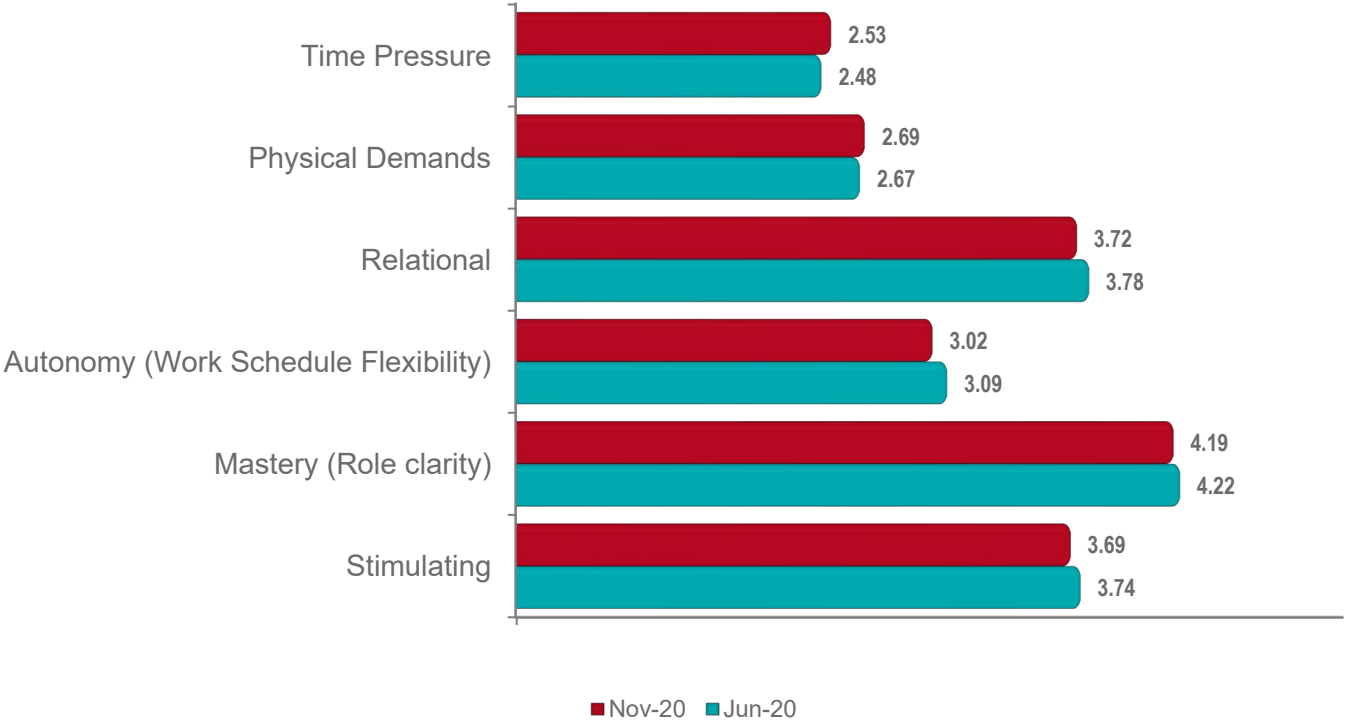




Individualise

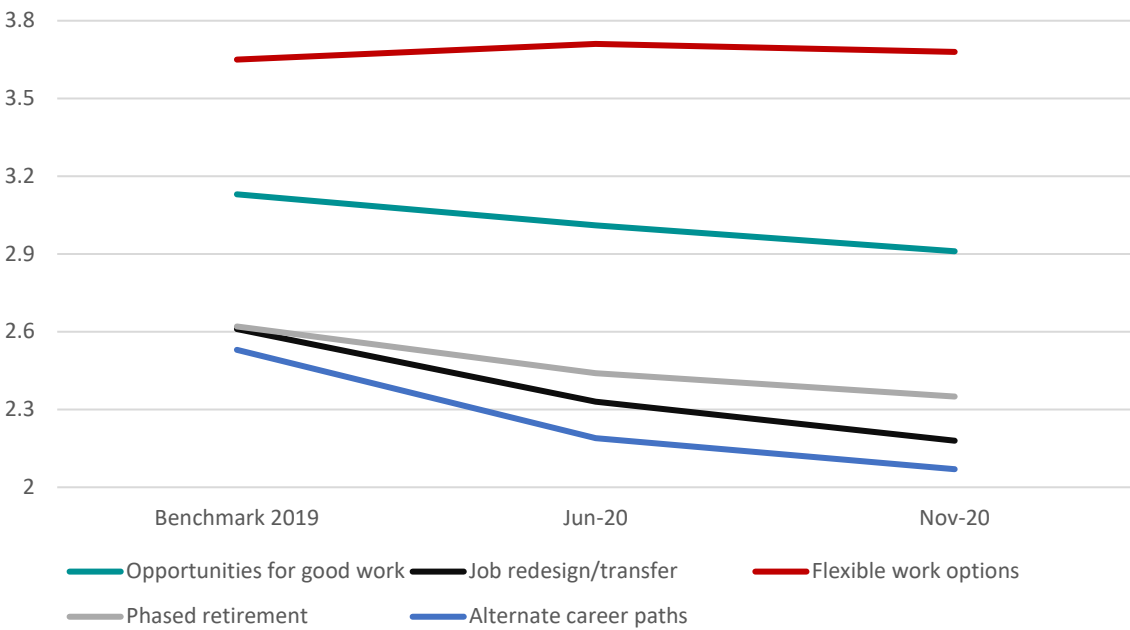
Work Design for mature workers

SMART Work Design During COVID



Small but consistent trends of reduced resources and increased demands

Individualising HR Practices

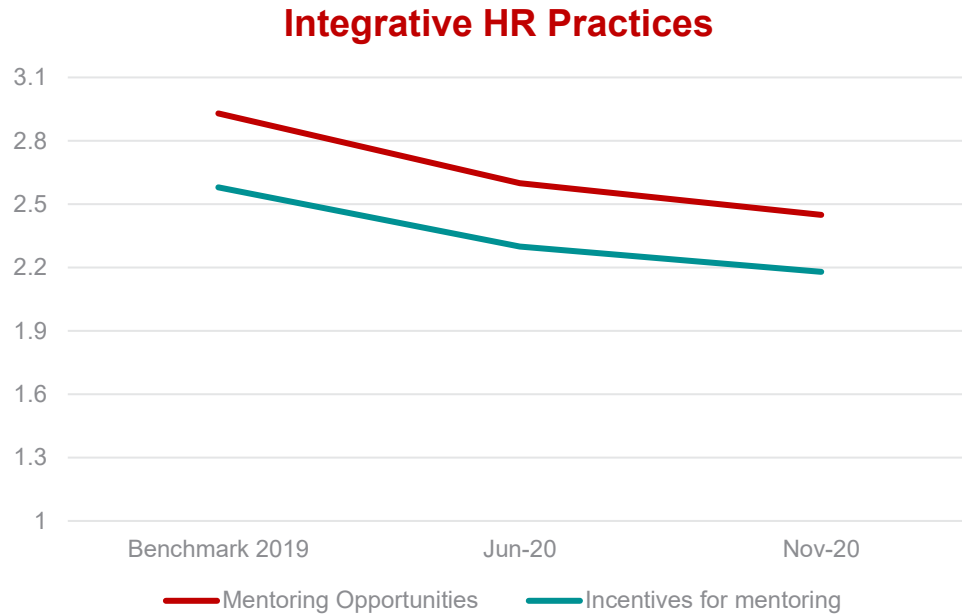


Increasing trend for HR Practices around flexibility
Decreasing trend for all other individualizing HR Practices

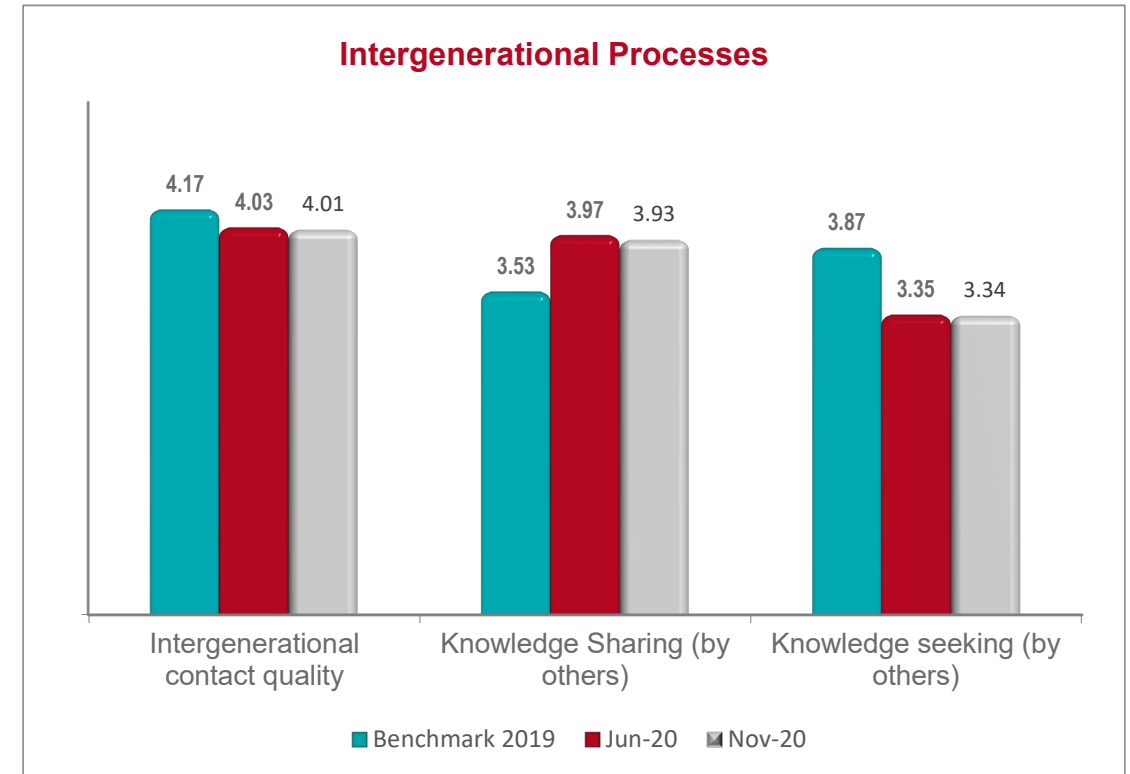


Integrate

HR Practices and Intergenerational Processes



Availability of Integrative HR practices was perceived to be low compared to pre-Covid. Comparisons between the two timepoints show a slight decline.

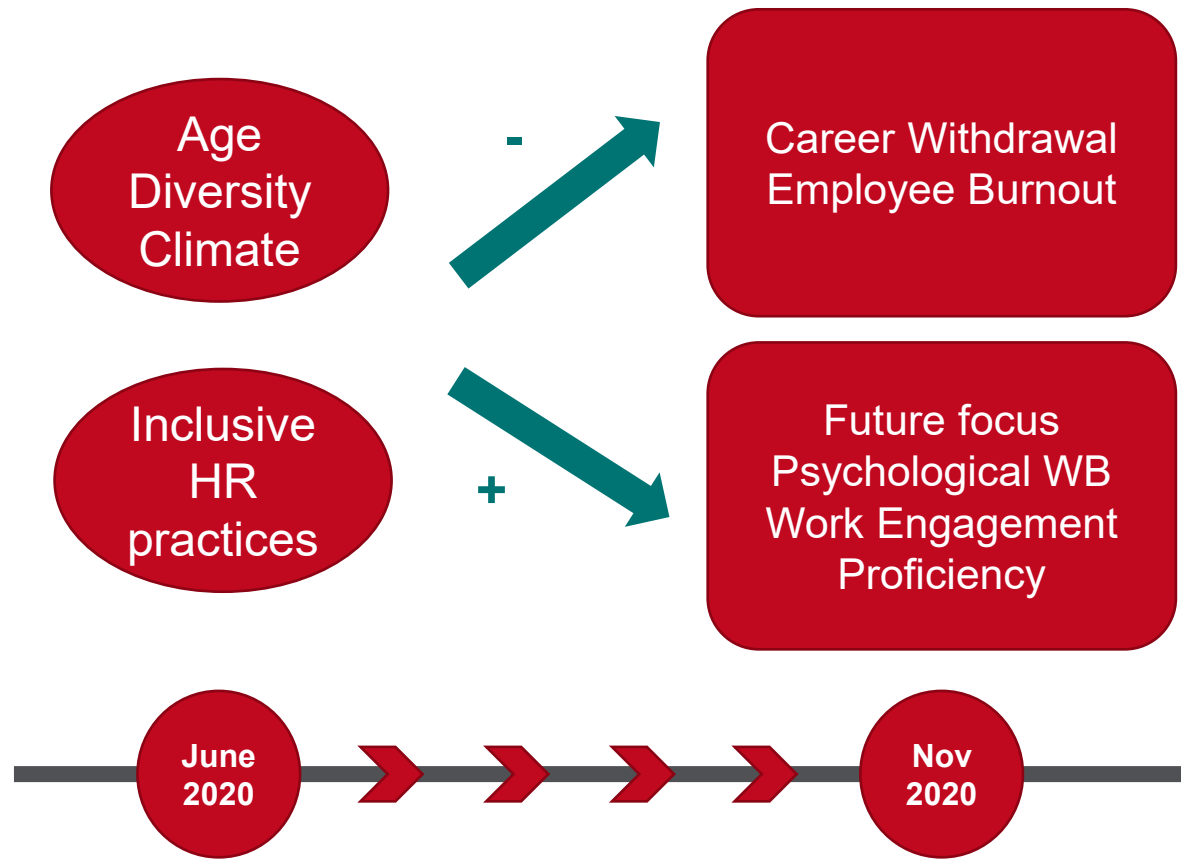


Intergenerational processes remained stable in between the two measurements. When compared to pre-COVID, we see increased scores for colleagues sharing information with mature workers, but reduced scores for colleagues seeking knowledge from them.



Implications

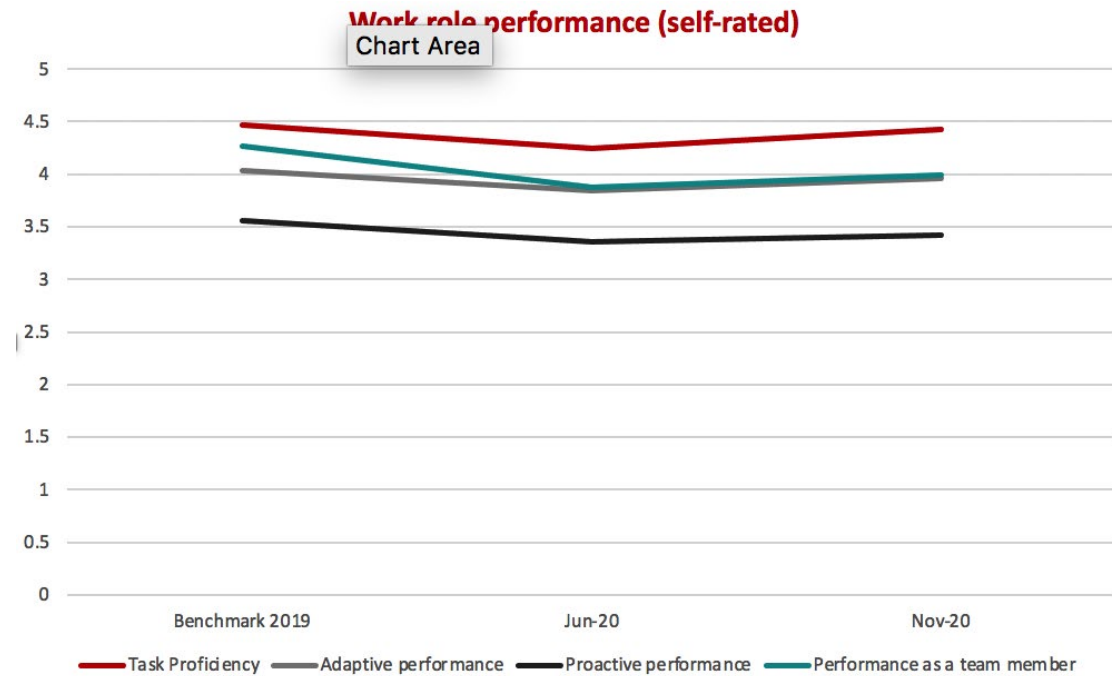
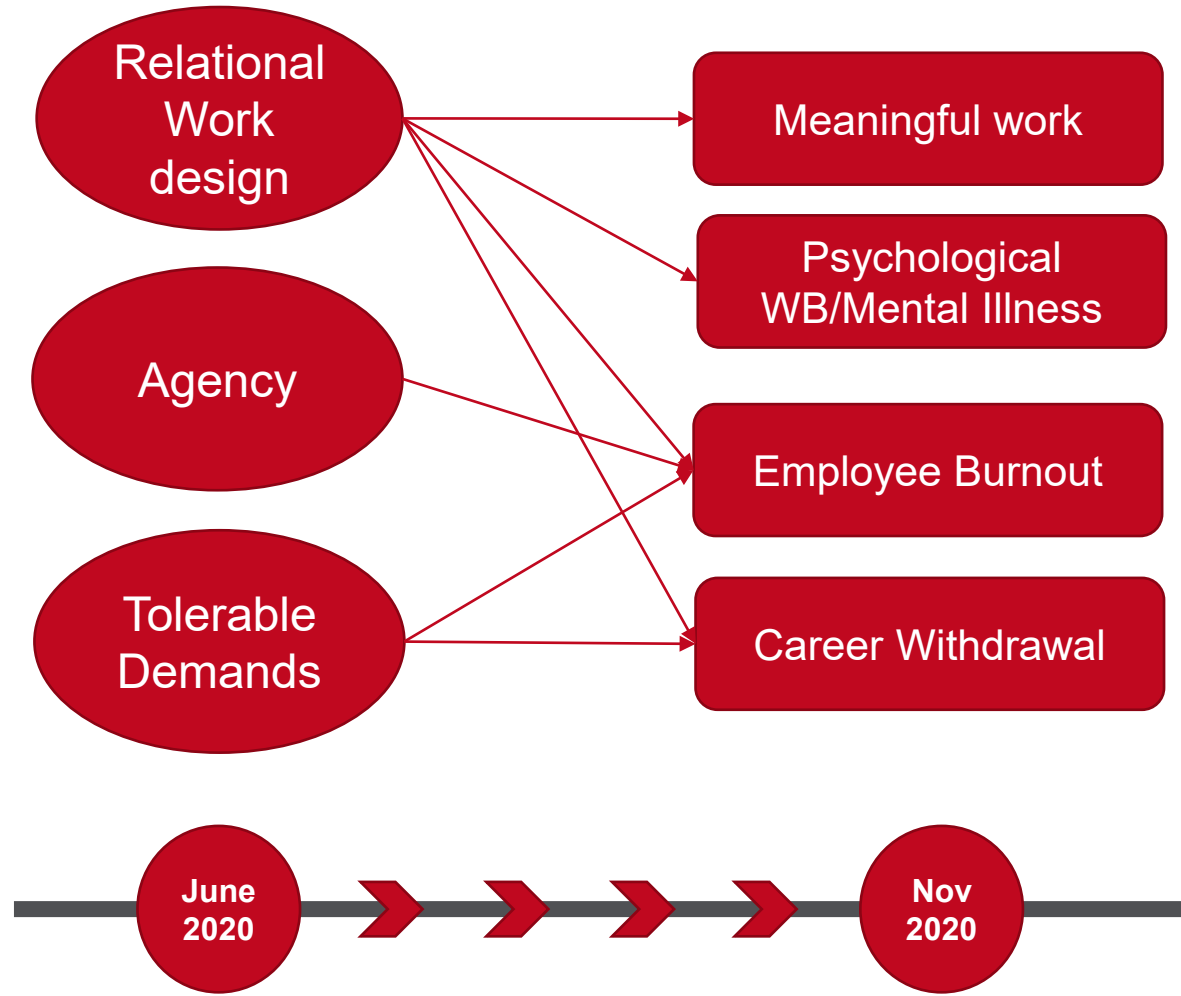
Why these trends are important?



Levels of Age Diversity Climate and Inclusive HR practices were significant predictors of employee related outcomes in 6 months time (controlling for initial levels of employee outcomes)

These results suggest possible negative spirals that can reduce employee wellbeing and career involvement, with potential negative effects on retention.

Why these trends are important?



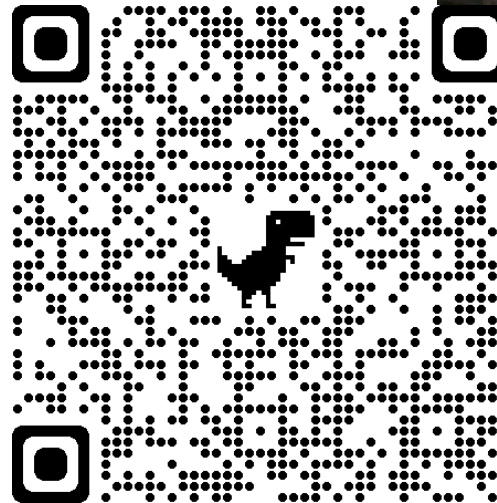


Employers' perspective

Employer's lens on COVID-19

- Report released 8 February 2021
- Provides the first detailed analysis of how Australian employers have experienced and adapted to COVID-19.
- While not representative of all businesses in Australia, the actions of the 28 participating organisations and the findings from our analysis highlight innovations in response to government directives to work from home and the emergence of good practices that may transform the work-life balance of Australians.

Scan to download



An Employer Lens on COVID-19: Adapting to change in Australian workplaces

Marian Baird, Myra Hamilton, Lisa Gulesserian, Alison Williams, Sharon Parker



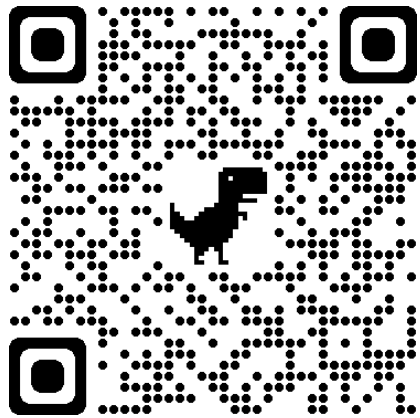
CEPAR Industry Report, February 2021

Australian Government
Australian Research Council



Conclusion

- More empirical research to come
- Decreasing trend in quality of work for mature workers
- Increasing trend in work-role performance
- Mismatch between employer-employee perceptions



Scan to visit



Mature Workers in Organisations

We're aiming to help age-diverse workplaces to grow and thrive

OUR RESEARCH

JOIN THE STUDY