



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

A Healthy and High Performing Mature Workforce: **Inclusion, Individualise & Integrate** Strategies in Australian Workplaces

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&

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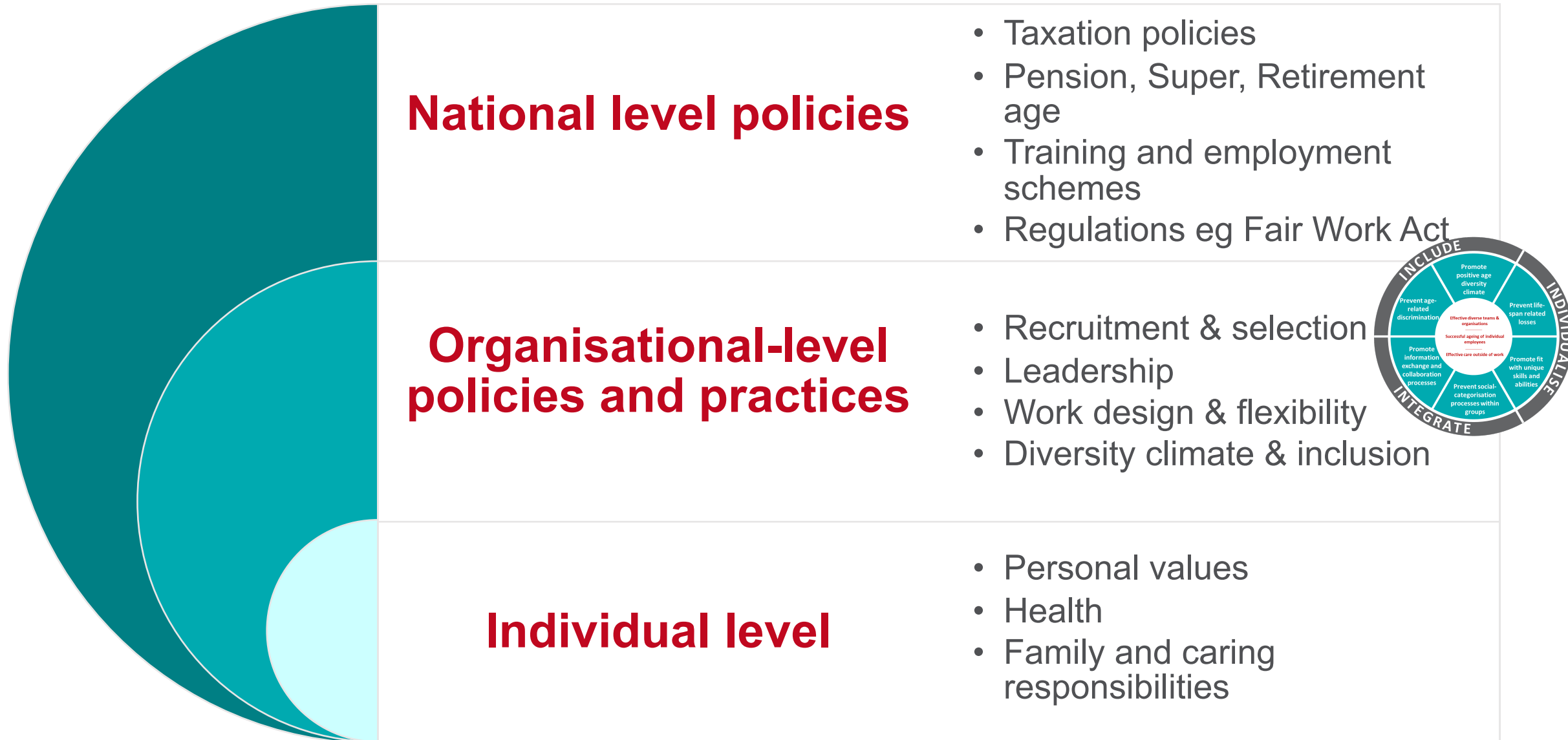


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A multi-level problem requires a multi-level response



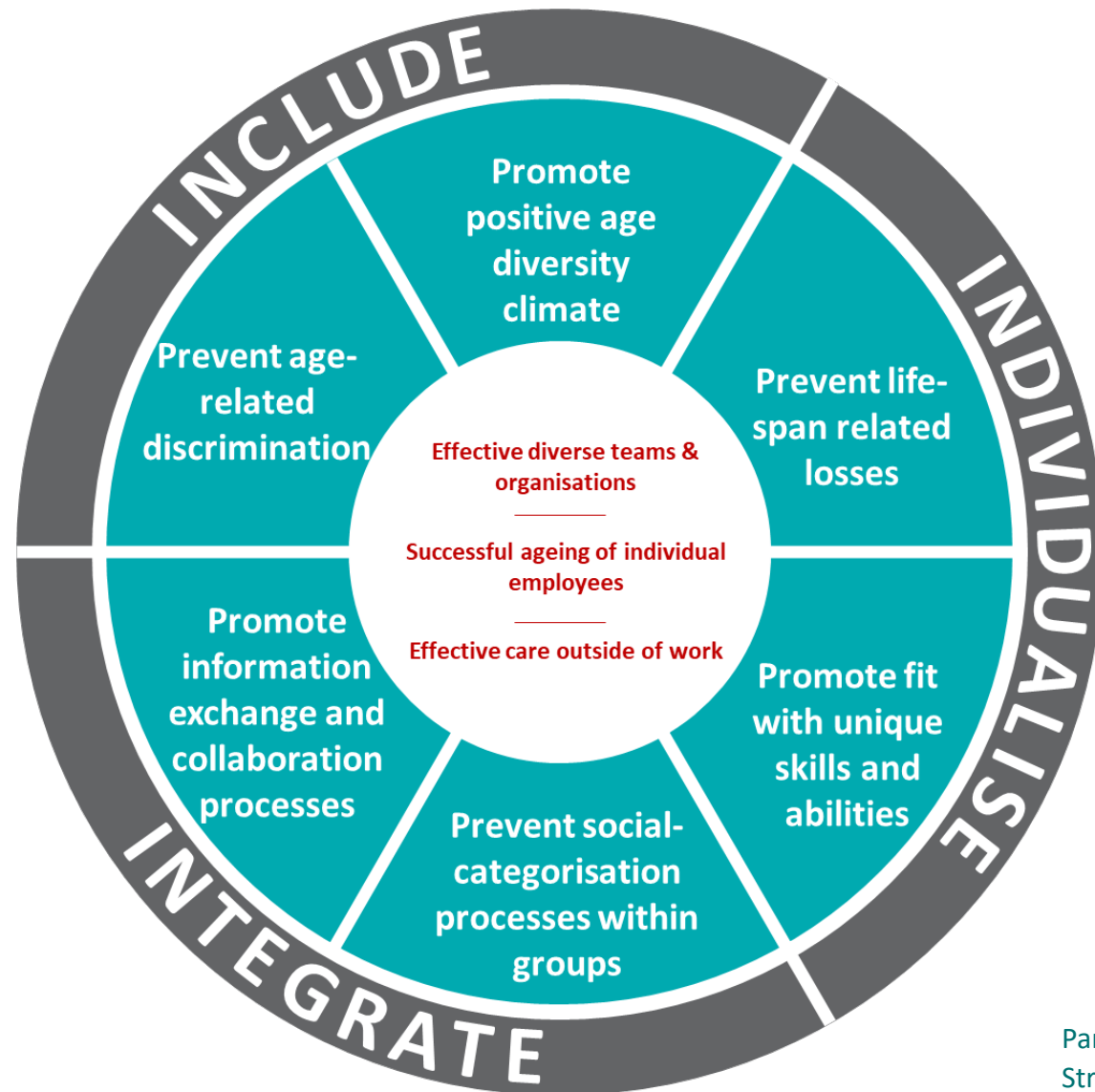
Organizational-level focus

- Necessary for macro-level policies to work
 - e.g., If can't get a job because of age bias in recruitment, later retirement age makes no difference
- Important complement to individual-level initiatives
 - e.g., individual health enhanced through participation in well-designed work
- Many Australian organisations lack comprehensive strategies to attract & retain older workers (Ikin et al., 2019)

“If as a society we want to aid Australia’s economic success by harnessing the full potential of the mature work force, we need to create different sorts of organisations and workplaces than those that typically exist right now”

(CEPAR Industry Report; Mature Workers in Organisations, 2019).

The 3i model: Meta-strategies for managing mature workers & age diversity



INCLUDE

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

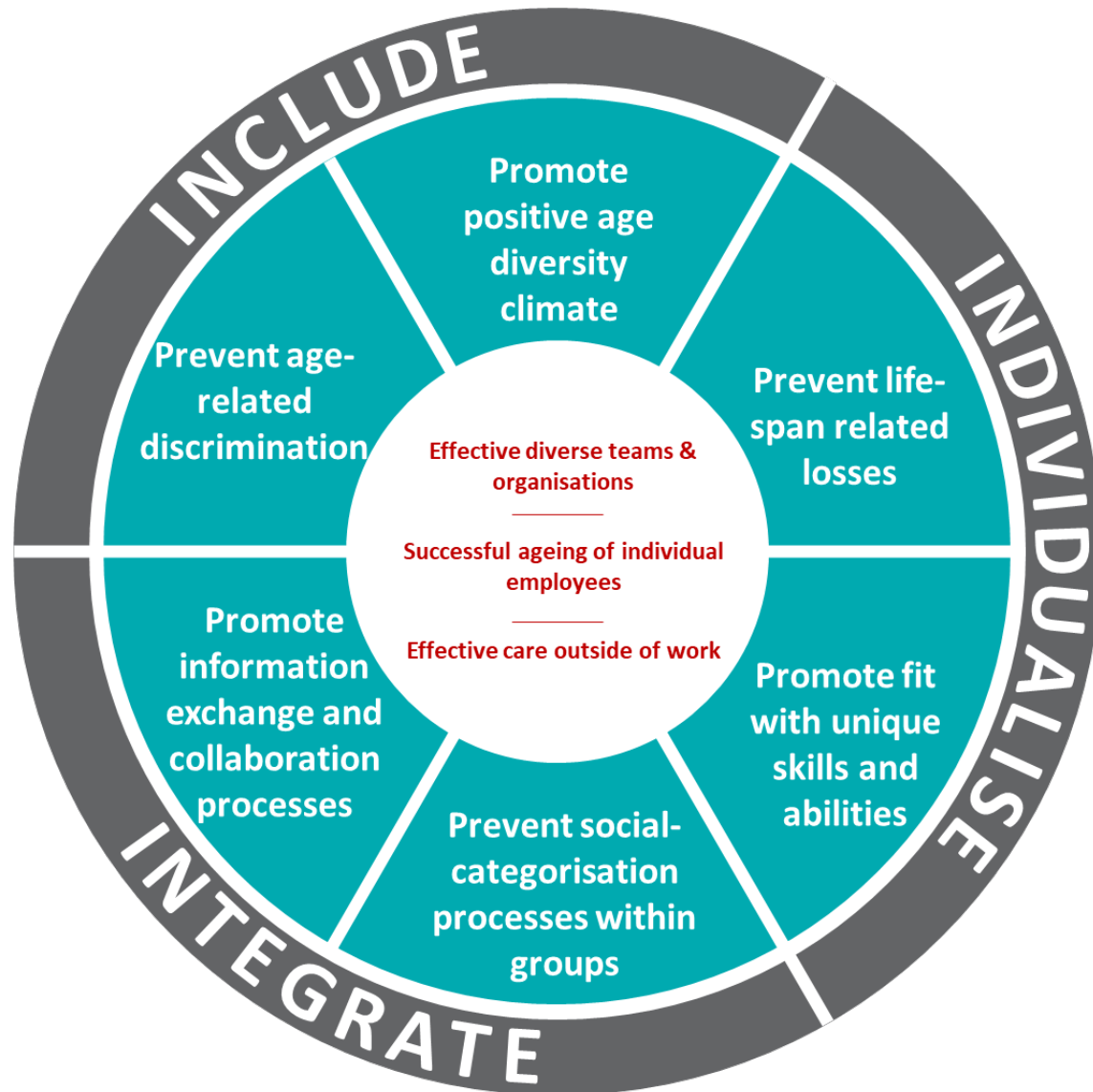
INDIVIDUALISE

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.

The 3i model... Include



INCLUDE

reducing discrimination and barriers to participation for workers of all ages, as well as creating an **inclusive environment** in which workers are welcomed, valued, accepted for their uniqueness, and fairly treated.

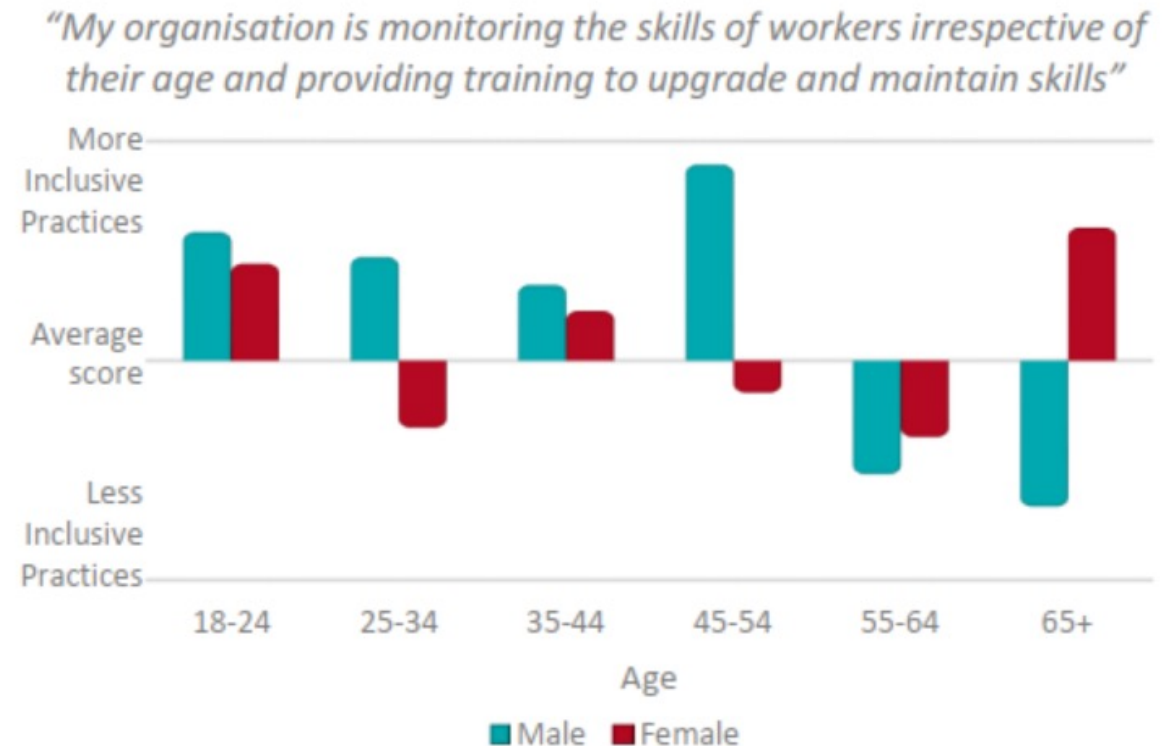
Include: Prevent age-related bias and discrimination

- **Theoretical underpinning:**

- Social psychological theories: social categorisation is a natural process that can create division between demographically diverse individuals
- Similarity- attraction theory suggests like people that are similar to ourselves
- Negative stereotypes can amplify these processes and result in unfair treatment based on age

Current Reality

Meta analysis of 87 studies: Older workers evaluated less positively in general, interpersonally, less likely to be selected etc (eg., Bal, Reiss, Rudolph, & Baltes, 2011),



Source: CEPAR (2019). *Mature Workers in Organisations study*

Example Study: Petery, Parker, et al., (2020)

- Participants rated 80 age related stereotypes in terms of how much they related to age (younger or older) and performance (poor to good performance)

10 strongest mature worker stereotypes

"Rely on out-dated knowledge/methods"

"Are stubborn and stuck in their ways"

"Are wise"

"Are uncomfortable with technology"

"Are resistant to change"

"Are good role models/mentors"

"Are financially secure"

"Do not keep up with changing methods at work"

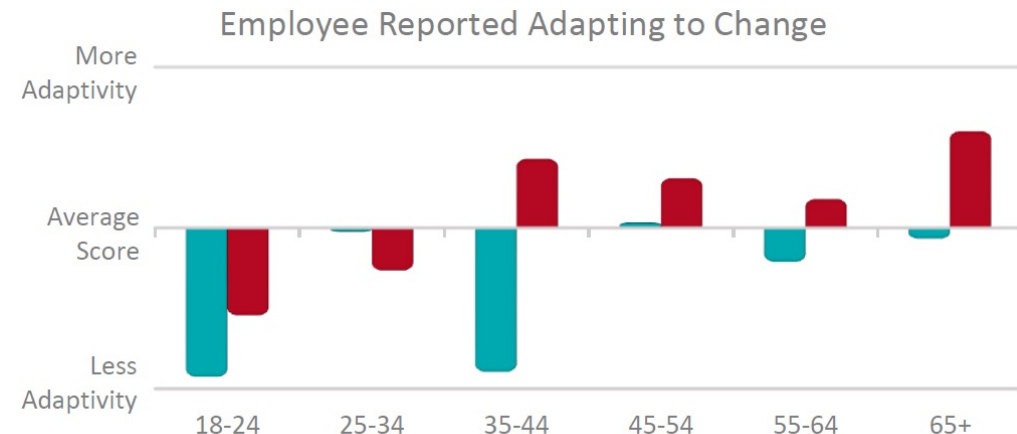
"Are loyal workers"

"Have good attendance records"

"Are close minded"

Mature workers seen as less adaptive to change, yet adaptivity is seen as a high performance attribute

It is important to note this is a stereotype, with little evidence it is correct!



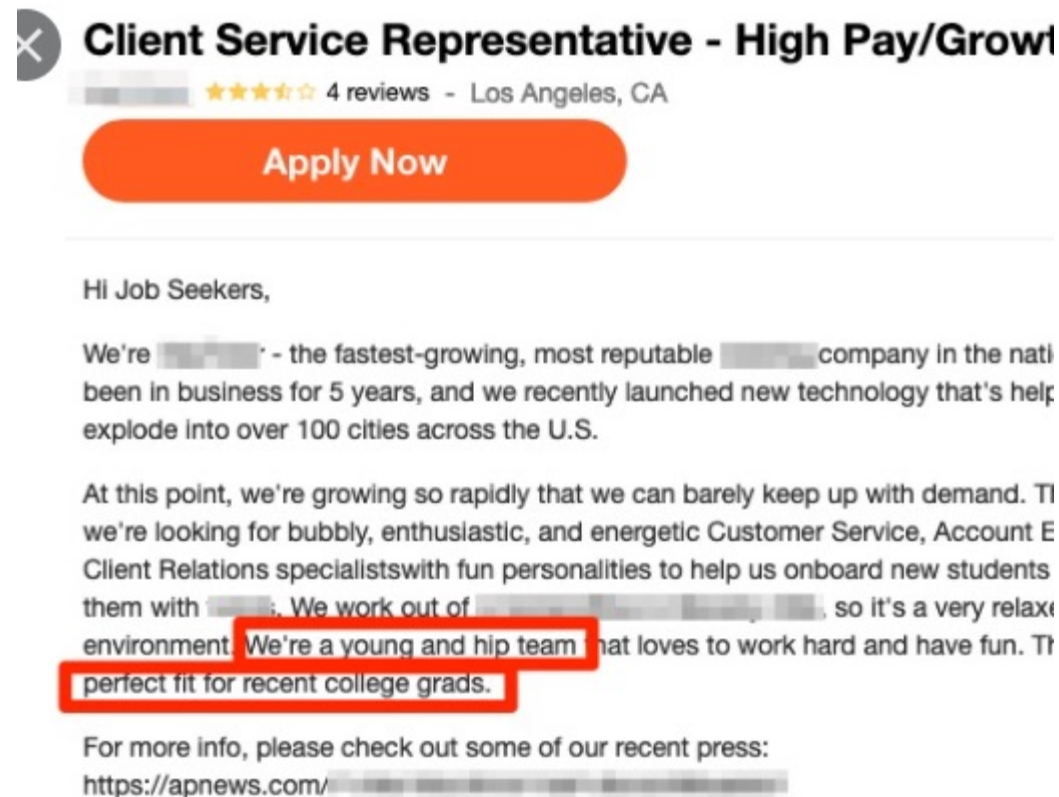
Include: Potential interventions

• Prevent bias:

- Remove age-related barriers to employment, promotion and development
- Target subtle and less overt forms of bias in the workplace (e.g., age-stereotypes in advertisements)

• Promote inclusion

- Actively recruit mature workers (eg ANZ bank)
- Show you “appreciate people irrespective of differences”.
- Train leaders in age-inclusive leadership approach (Eva Zellman)



Client Service Representative - High Pay/Growth

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Apply Now

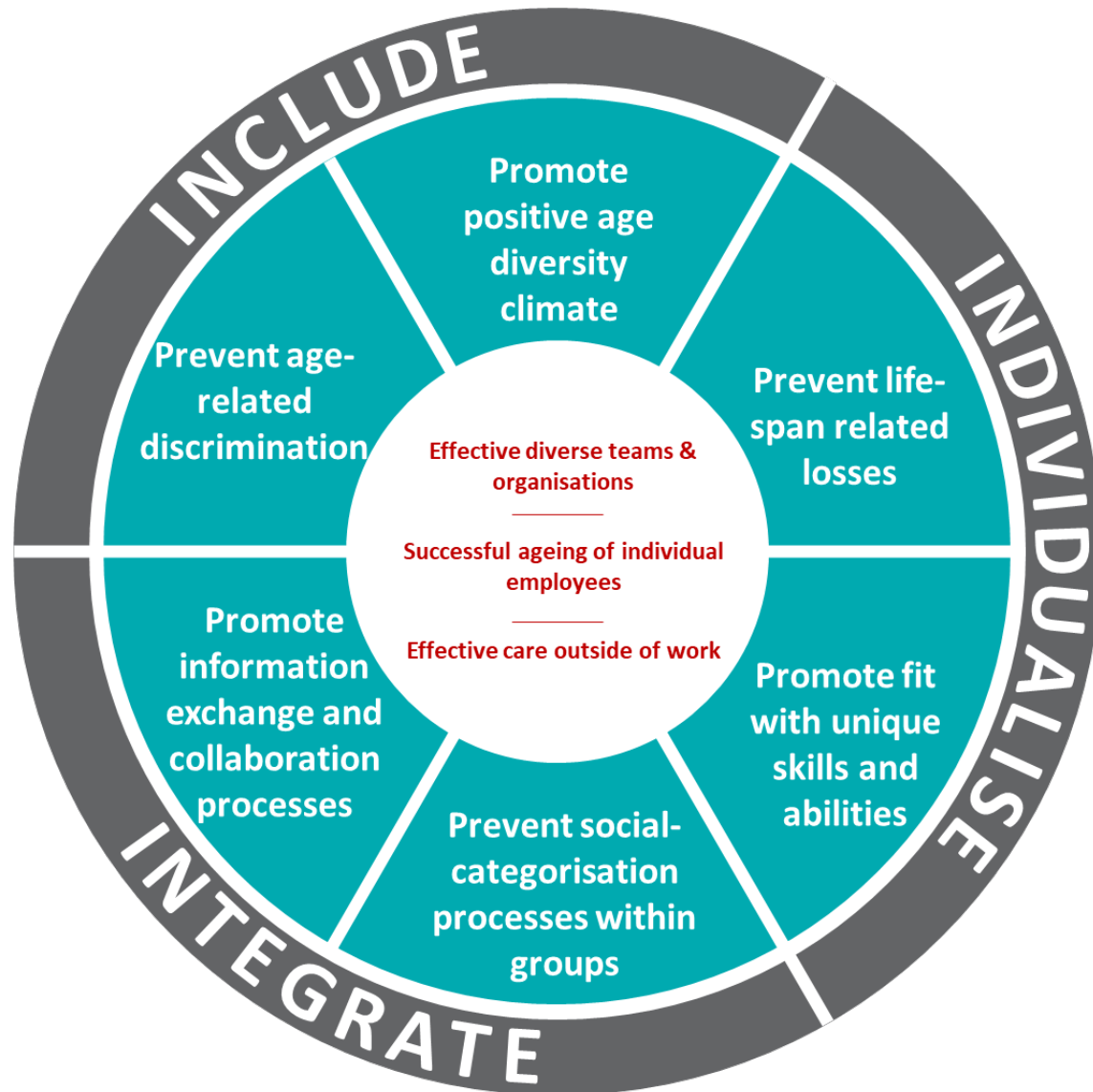
Hi Job Seekers,

We're [redacted] - the fastest-growing, most reputable [redacted] company in the nation. We've been in business for 5 years, and we recently launched new technology that's helping us explode into over 100 cities across the U.S.

At this point, we're growing so rapidly that we can barely keep up with demand. That's why we're looking for bubbly, enthusiastic, and energetic Customer Service, Account Executive, and Client Relations specialists with fun personalities to help us onboard new students and assist them with [redacted]. We work out of [redacted], so it's a very relaxed and fun environment. **We're a young and hip team that loves to work hard and have fun. That's why we're a perfect fit for recent college grads.**

For more info, please check out some of our recent press: [https://apnews.com/\[redacted\]](https://apnews.com/[redacted])

The 3i model....



INDIVIDUALISE

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

Individualise: Prevent losses and promote fit

Theoretical Underpinning

- Ageing is associated with both gains and losses that people adapt to (Lifespan developmental theories; Selective Optimization Compensation theory) and people change in terms of their preferences (Socioemotional selectivity theory)



Gains

- Interpersonal trust
- Loyalty
- Affective commitment
- Conscientious
- Emotionally stable
- Agreeable



Losses

- Physical strength
- Cognitive speed
- Reasoning abilities
- Memory decline

**LARGE AMOUNT OF
VARIABILITY FROM PERSON-TO-
PERSON!**

Different preferences

Mature workers report working for more intrinsic reasons compared to younger workers (p. 33). For example:

- For men and women aged 65+, the top reason for continuing to work was to stay active and productive (77%) while the top reason for workers under 45 years was the income (87.2%).
- Workers aged 65+ were more likely to say that they work because they enjoy it (70.5%) or it gives them a sense of purpose (71%) compared to their counterparts aged 45 and younger (45.5% and 46.9% respectively).

Individualise – Current Reality and Potential Interventions

Current reality- room for improvement

over 55 years of age (with the exception of females over 55). For example:

- 65.2% of workers aged 55-64 reported that 'alternate career paths with a specific focus on employees of different ages' are not available in the organisations they work for (compared to 42.1% of younger workers);
- Almost two third (62.8%) of workers aged 55-64 reported that their employer does not 'offer phased retirement programs' (compared to 41.3% of younger workers);
- 60% of employees aged 55-64 reported that there are 'little to no opportunities to have their jobs redesigned or to transfer to a less strenuous job' (compared to 40% of younger workers);

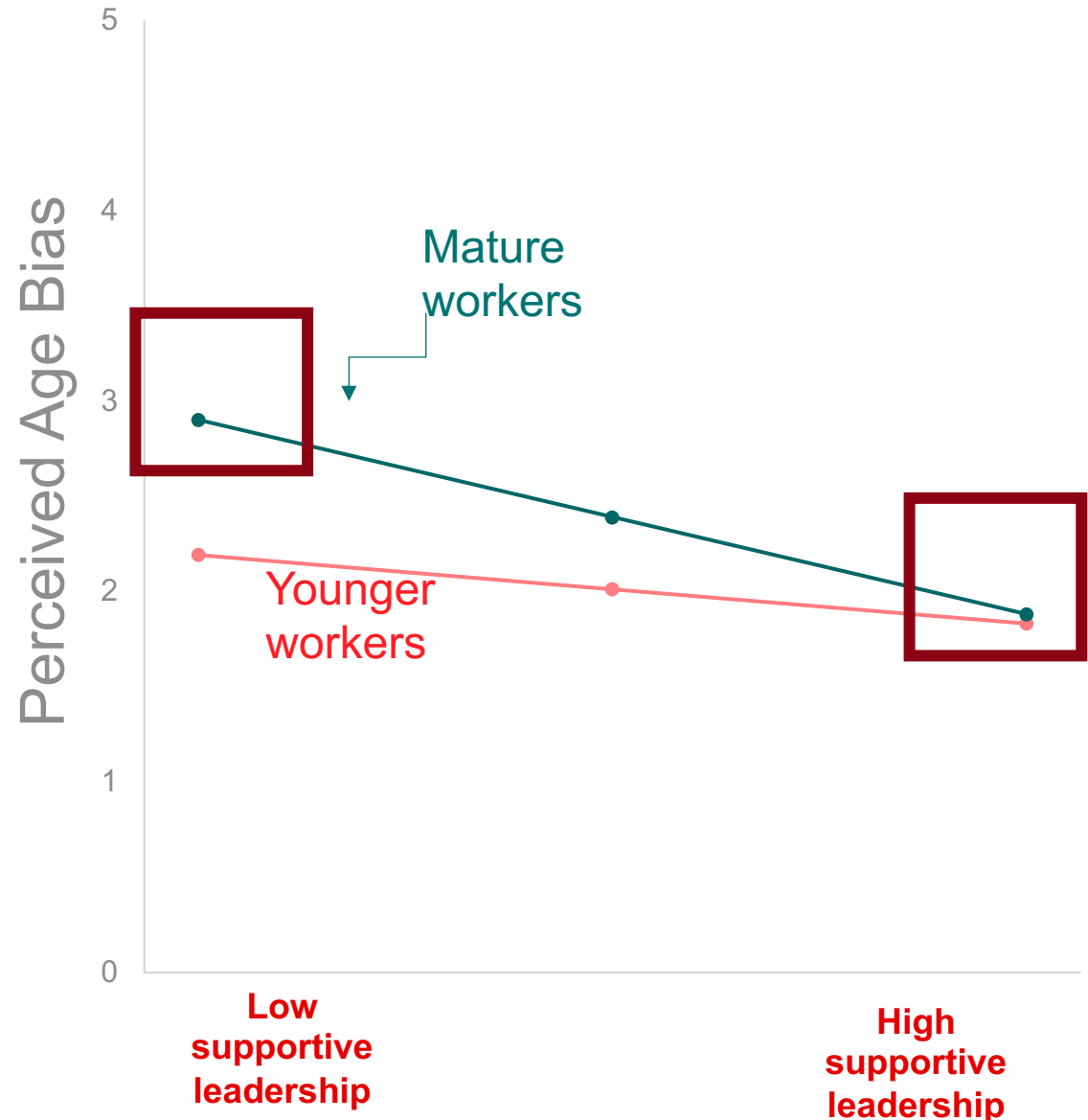
Example interventions

- Redesign work e.g., Enrich work designs for mature workers with autonomy, flexibility & skill variety; allocate tasks based on crystallized intelligence to mature workers; provide mentoring opportunities to mature workers; accommodate physical changes/ improve ergonomics eg BMW
- Introduce individualizing HR practices
- Encourage and allow mature workers to craft their work
- Target mature workers with health-interventions
- Train leaders to treat people as individuals

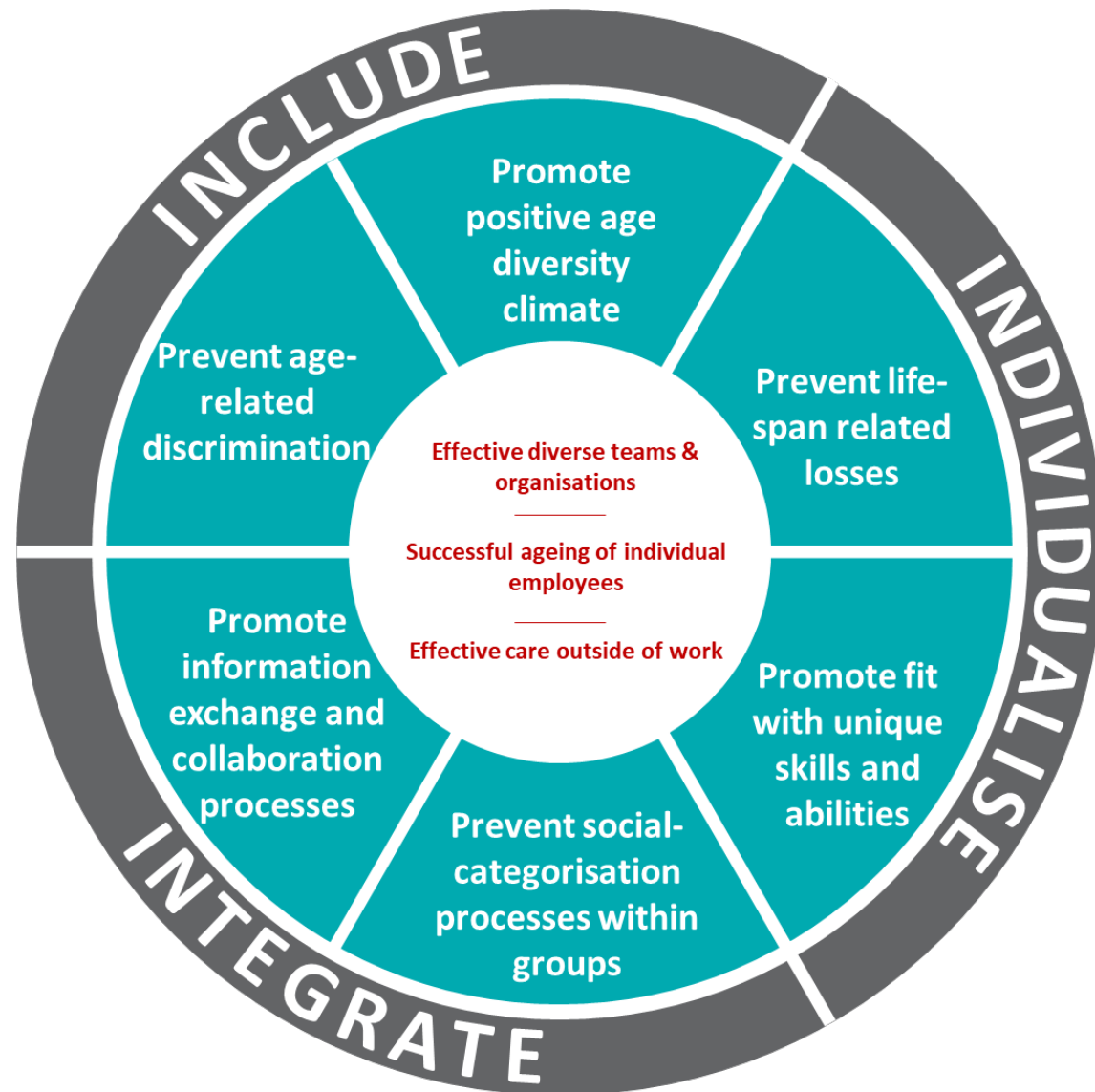
Example study: The role of leaders in individualizing work

- **Supportive leadership** – when leaders show consideration of the **individual needs and feelings of their employees**
- Across three studies, supportive leaders → mature worker turnover and career withdrawal through their ability to reduce perceived age bias over time
- Supportive leadership strongest effects in STEM workers and mature workers

Illes, L., et al. (under review) Attrition in later stages of STEM careers: The role of supportive leadership and perceived age bias



The 3i model...



INTEGRATE

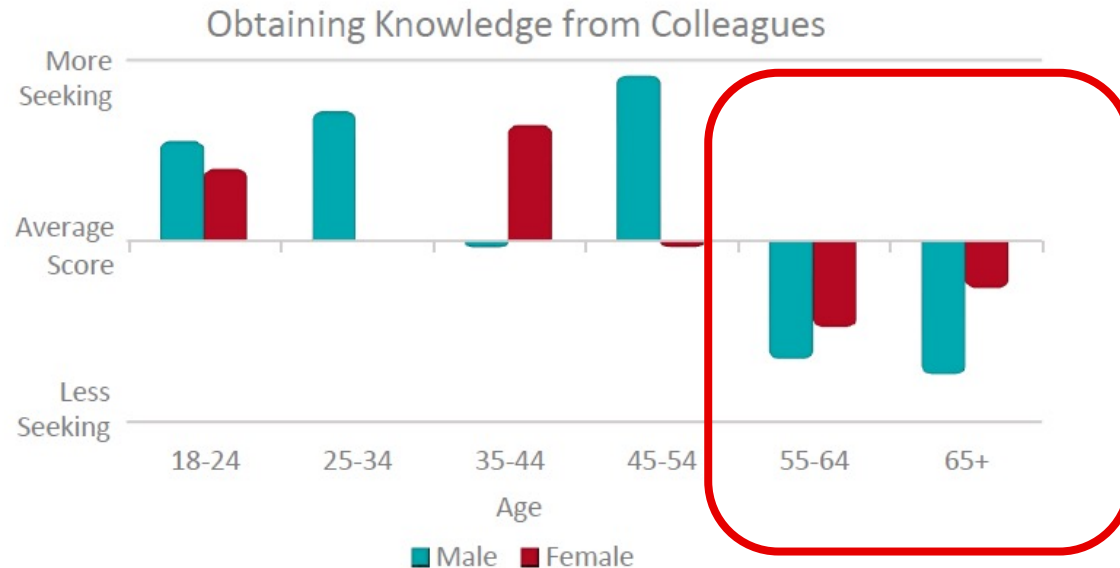
The strengths of mature workers are actively used through effective team design and by fostering positive interactions across different age groups.

Integrate: Prevent social categorisation and promote collaboration

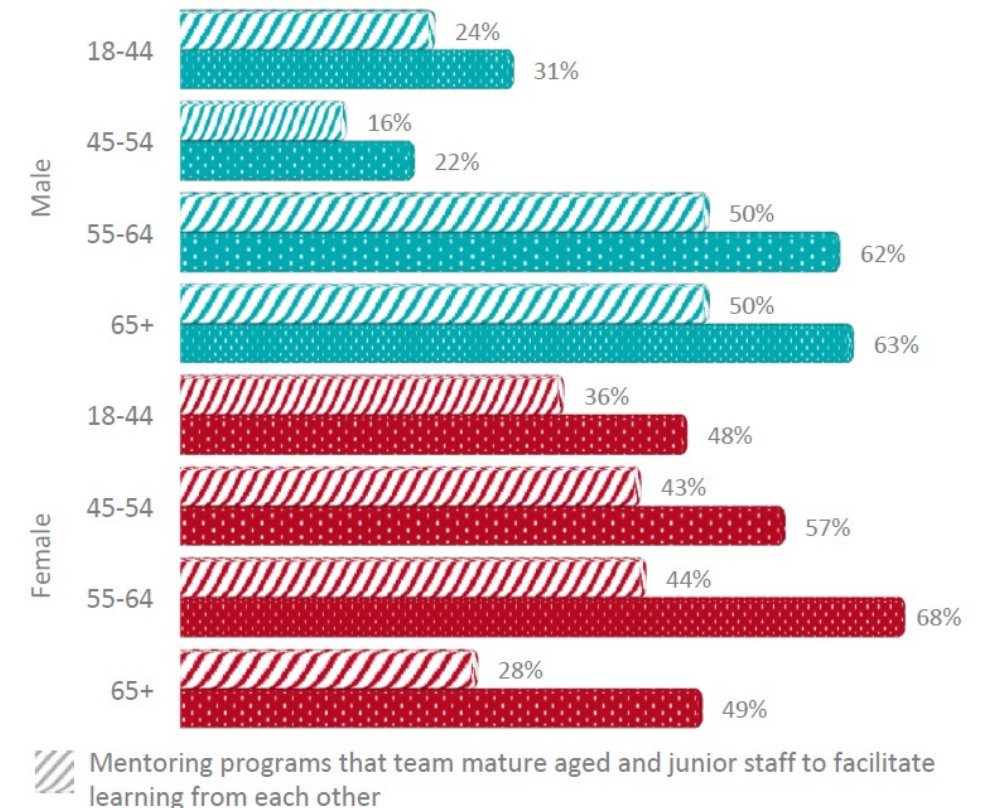
- Integrate focuses on improving the way age diverse members collaborate & exchange knowledge
 - Chance to draw on larger pool of knowledge, skills, experience (Van Knippenberg, 2004)
 - But also increased risk of conflict

Current reality

colleagues than employees aged 55 and over.



Percentage of Respondents who Reported **LITTLE OR NO** Access to Integrative HR Practices



Integrate: Prevent social categorisation and promote collaboration

- Potential interventions

- Training workers to make the most of diversity through “elaboration”
- Creating structures to share knowledge within and across teams
- Fostering high trust cultures
- Mentoring and reverse mentoring



Example Study: Case analysis of collaborating organisation

The context

- Multinational professional services firm
- Senior leadership noticed that the team was:
 - Young (approx. 50% under 30 years),
 - Experiencing intense pressure,
 - Under performing (over promising and under delivering to clients),
 - Working excessive overtime
 - Strong culture of blaming others for errors
- Senior leaders approached an ex-employee to return to the organisation in a mentorship capacity
 - E.g. Guiding less experienced project managers through stakeholder management processes
- Position enables younger workers to learn in safe environment.
- Also has helped team members craft better work design by helping them manage deadlines, reinforcing work-life balance

*“My role is...to try and impart some grey hair, for want of a better term onto some of these guys.”
(mentor)*

*“So [the team leader] uses me as a sounding board. And our relationship is, we've known each other for long enough now that we can do that. **We trust each other, I understand what he wants, what he needs. And I'll try and help him out as much as I can.**”*

*“The way [younger colleagues have] engaged with me, is very positive. **So they've been looking for some experience, they've been looking for some guidance, or someone they can ask questions.**”*

Each of the 3i strategies important for outcomes

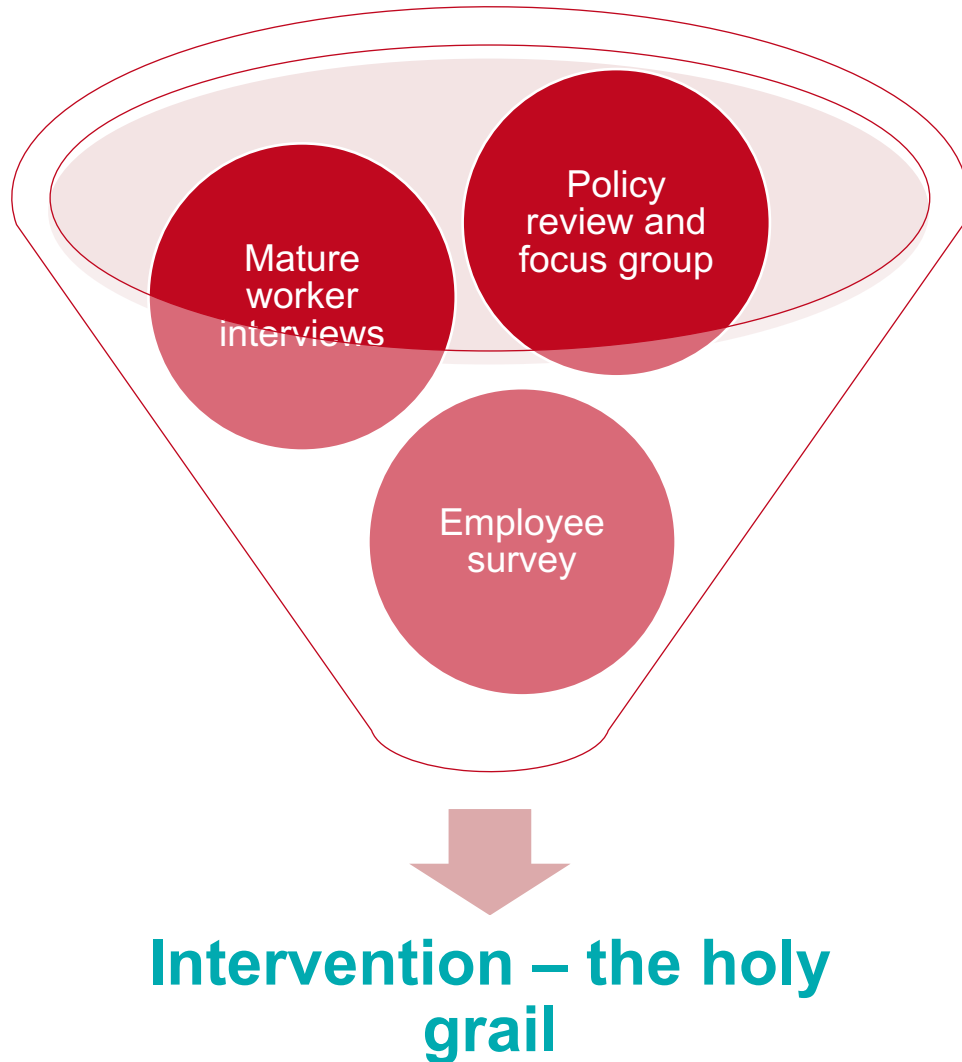
KEY DRIVERS FOR INTENTION TO LEAVE IN EMPLOYEES AGED 55 AND OVER



KEY DRIVERS FOR LIFE SATISFACTION IN EMPLOYEES AGED 55 AND OVER

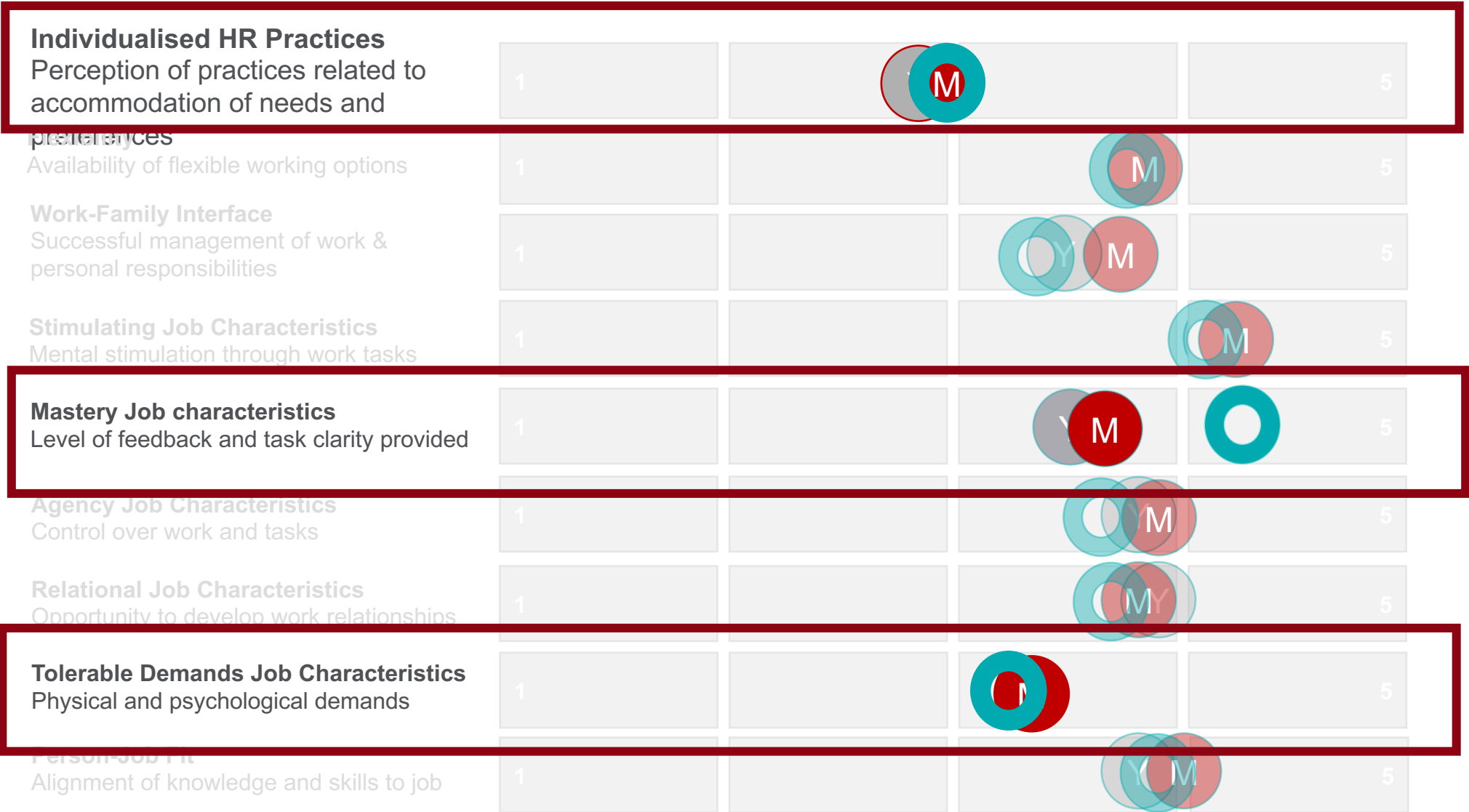


Next phase of research → 3i interventions



- Interventions involve extensive diagnosis phase
 - Multi-method evaluation based on 3i model
 - Organisational policies
 - How these are actually experienced by workers (interviews & surveys)
- Key insights are summarised for stakeholders
- CEPAR workshops work with stakeholders to identify **key focus areas** and **success criteria**
- Interventions are **customised** to the specific organisation

Results: Individualise: Red Flags



Interview Quotes:

“We do first aid courses, so if anyone has an accident then the other workers are able to... assist generally”

“Speaking for myself, I’d have to say that I’m well supported [by the organisation], but I’ve seen my team members not being supported”

“Very, very interesting and... for one day I don’t know what I am doing compared to the next day”

Example: Local Council (N = 254)

Organisational interventions under consideration

Area of concern

1. Low feedback, lack of career development, lack of alternative career pathways

Proposed intervention

- 1. Feedback and career development:** New career development/ feedback system for. Piloted in one directorate (business area). Guide with best practice but collaborative
 - Human centred design using consultation, focus groups before roll out and design

2. Low perceptions of individualised HR practices

- 2. Roll out newly developed flexibility program**
 - Develop a 'Menu' of flexible work and opportunities for each directorate/role to use
 - Capitalises on the difference between equal and equity by considering what type of flexibility *can* be applied to each role
 - Opportunity to pilot test and make use of existing practices in the organisation

3. Poor perception of mentoring opportunities

- 3. Strategically engage mature workers in mentoring tasks** to provide mentoring as part of their job (not on top of). Link to their KPIs.

Summary

- Organisational-level approaches are crucial to increasing participation & performance of mature workers
- One way to make sense of the many practices and policies is to use the 3i model – **include, individualise, integrate**
- There is much room for improvement in many organisations
- We are working with organisations to diagnose, intervene, and evaluate change in these strategies
 - Our goal is to create evidence + evidence-based resources (e.g., guidance, rigorous case examples, etc) to support larger scale change
- A challenge for you today....

Back to a multi-level response...



Thank you!



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*“To find joy in work is to discover the fountain
of youth”*

Pearl S. Buck

