



**A collaboration between Brave Starts and ProAge**

# A multigenerational workforce: **Mapping the way forward.**

By Lucy Standing & Mike Mansfield



# Contents

<b>3</b>	.....	Foreword
<b>4</b>	.....	Introduction
<b>6</b>	.....	Prepare for a bend in the road ahead
<b>8</b>	.....	The road ahead will be bumpy
<b>11</b>	.....	Slow down before we speed up
<b>14</b>	.....	Oakleaf Partnership Findings

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# Foreword

We are on a journey and need a clearer roadmap to get us to our destination, an age-inclusive workplace where older workers are appreciated for their contribution and employers see the benefits of multigenerational teams.

In the spirit of true pioneers, we are taking a very methodical approach to drawing our map for the future by first scouting out the landscape in which we are operating, checking with important stakeholders to see where we are, and where we want to go. We have developed a three-phase approach to our work to ensure that the recommendations we develop will be implementable and have broad appeal from both employers and employees.

- Phase 1 took place between June and October 2023. In this phase we collected input via our Older Employee Decision Maker Survey from company decision makers, Human Resources and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion professionals.
- Phase 2 will occur between November 2023 and the middle of 2024. In this phase we will hold workshops around the country to discuss the findings from our survey with employers and get their input on what we can and need to do to promote a more age-friendly workplace.
- Phase 3 will occur in mid-2024. At this time, we will discuss the findings from our survey and input from employers with focus groups of older employees to get their input on what will make it easier and more appealing for them to continue working in meaningful jobs.

We hope you will join us on this journey to map out the road ahead and develop a set of implementable recommendations that benefit older workers and employers so that we can make the most of opportunities offered to us from a healthier longer life.

Lucy Standing – Co-founder Brave Starts  
Mike Mansfield - CEO ProAge

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# Introduction

When we create opportunities to be included, we all benefit.

Work provides us with a sense of identity and purpose. How many times have you heard someone introduce themselves by saying something along the lines of... “Hi, I’m Sam, I’m a teacher.” The money we earn from working, provides us with the economic independence we need to do the things we want and contribute to society. When an older worker who lose their job, they are twice as likely as younger workers to become long term unemployed, denying them the opportunity to make choices that are right for us on our own timescale.

From an employers’ perspective the benefits of employing older workers are clear. Research from the Centre for Ageing Better in 2021 shows that 79% of employers in England believe that older workers could help in knowledge and skill sharing[1]. Work done by the OECD indicates that firms whose share of the workforce aged over 50 is 10% higher than average are 1.1% more productive[2].

Society also benefits when we are more age inclusive. People over 50 are net contributors to the UK economy, contributing £602 billion to UK plc every year – £561 billion of that being through paid employment[3]. We also see that raising employment levels for workers over age 50 will have an estimated net economic impact on GDP of £417 billion in the UK by 2050[4].

In recent decades, great progress has been made both to raise awareness and create more equal opportunities for women and people from different minority backgrounds in the workplace. While great benefits accrue from being more age inclusive, ageism remains a pervasive issue in society and the workplace denying opportunities to older workers and consequently, the companies they work for and society at large.

As part of our survey work and subsequent stakeholder engagement, we want to raise awareness about the issues we have discovered and map a way forward where we all benefit and are included.

## About the survey

We surveyed company decision makers, Human Resource, and Diversity Equity and Inclusion professionals to understand where the topic of age-inclusion fitted on their agenda. We wanted to understand what companies are doing to create a more age-inclusive, multigenerational workforce today and what their plans are for the future. This report has been written based on the survey responses collected from 223 participants between June 19, 2023, and October 19, 2023.

Our survey respondents represent a cross section of British businesses both in terms of the size of companies and the nature of their operations.

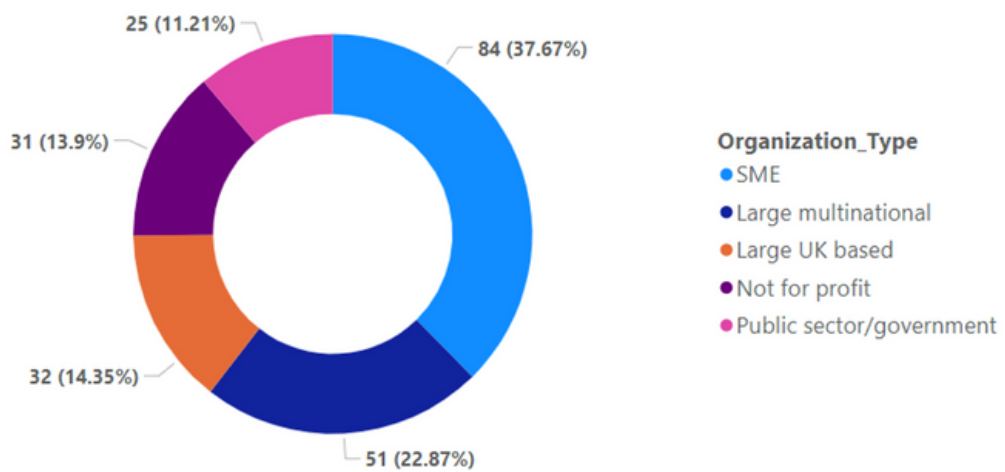
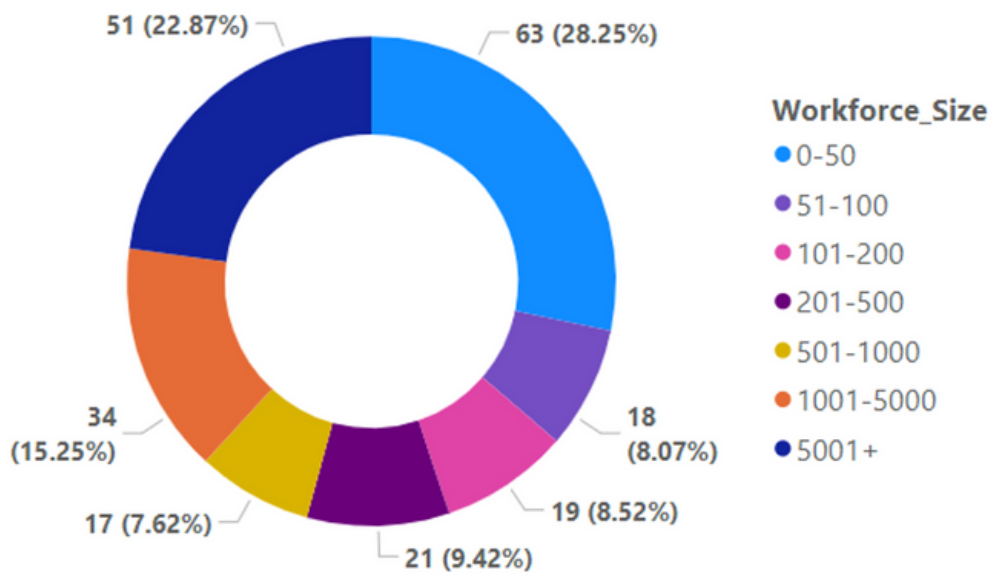
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[1] Research by YouGov for the Centre for Ageing Better conducted in 2021

[3] OECD Promoting an Age-Inclusive Workforce: Living, Learning and Earning Longer

[3] Saga Generation Experience the UK’s Economic Superpower

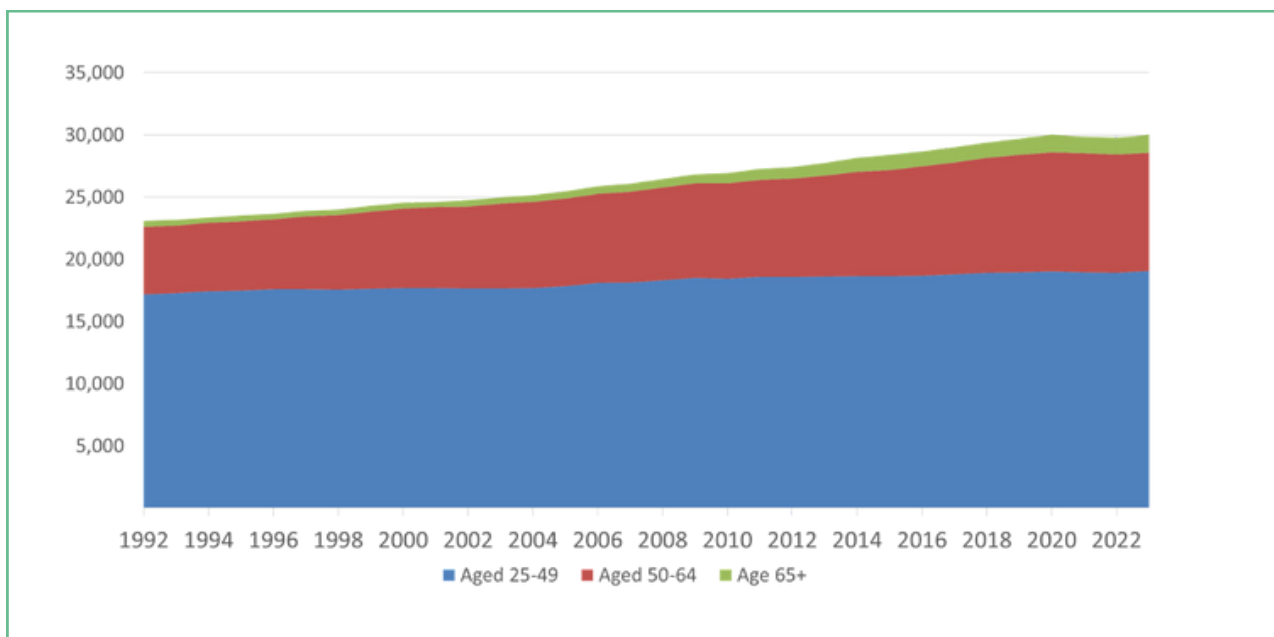
[4] World Economic Forum, OECD, AARP Growing with Age



# Prepare for a bend in the road ahead

Since 1960, in the United Kingdom, we have added ten years to life expectancy at birth. At the same time birth rates have fallen. These two demographic changes are having an impact on society at large and the labour market in particular. Older workers are becoming an increasing segment of the UK labour market, yet our views on when we start and stop work and attitudes towards older workers have not changed. Since 1992, there has been an increase of 4 million workers aged 50 to 64 compared with an increase of 2 million workers aged 25 to 49 compared.

Workers attitudes to work are changing with most workers now seeing retirement as a transition rather than a cliff edge event. Recent survey work by Aegon revealed that only 27% of workers in the UK saw retirement as a 'hard stop'[1]. The workplace has been slow to adapt to changes in demographics and employees' attitudes to work with many companies holding on to traditional views of when start and stop work, transfer between jobs, and ease into retirement. Research conducted by the CIPD in 2022 shows that age remains age inclusion is a topic that will continue to compete for attention with only 13% of organisations saying that age was something they are going to focus on in the next five years[2].

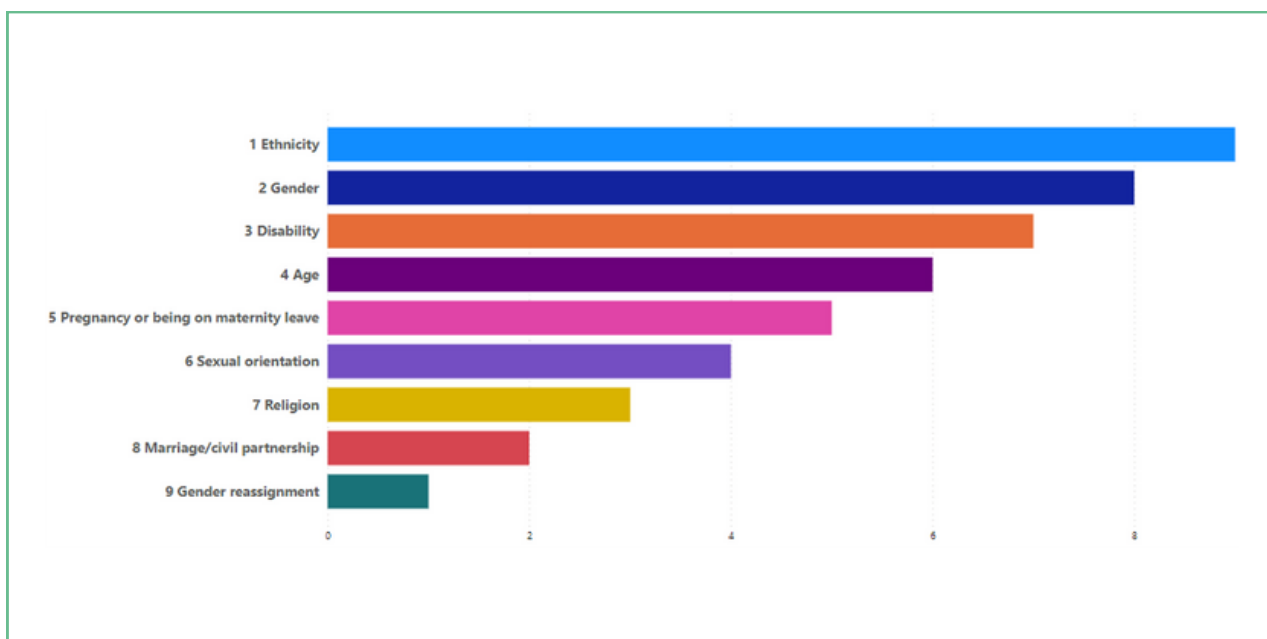


This finding from the CIPD is borne out in our research findings. The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination based on nine protected characteristics. We asked our survey respondents to rank, in order of priority, what areas they feel need the most focus. Age was listed as the fourth priority after ethnicity, gender, and disability. Regardless of the type of company, SME or large multinational, or whether the organisation was focused on recruiting or retaining staff, age consistently came number four on respondents' priority list.

[1] The Second 50, Navigating a multistage life – Aegon 2023

[2] Inclusion at work 2022 - CIPD

In the UK, legal protection in the workplace based on age (Employment Equality Regulation 2006) is relatively recent, compared with protections against discrimination based on gender (Sex Discrimination Act 1975) or race (Race Relations Act 1976). Even though there has been legislation to protect people based on their gender or racial background for several decades, much work still needs to be done to close the gender pay gap and ensure that people from different backgrounds have equal opportunities. While great progress has been achieved to make the workplace more inclusive, HR and DEI have competing agendas and need help and support, so that they can be stronger allies in helping us build the business case for greater age inclusion.



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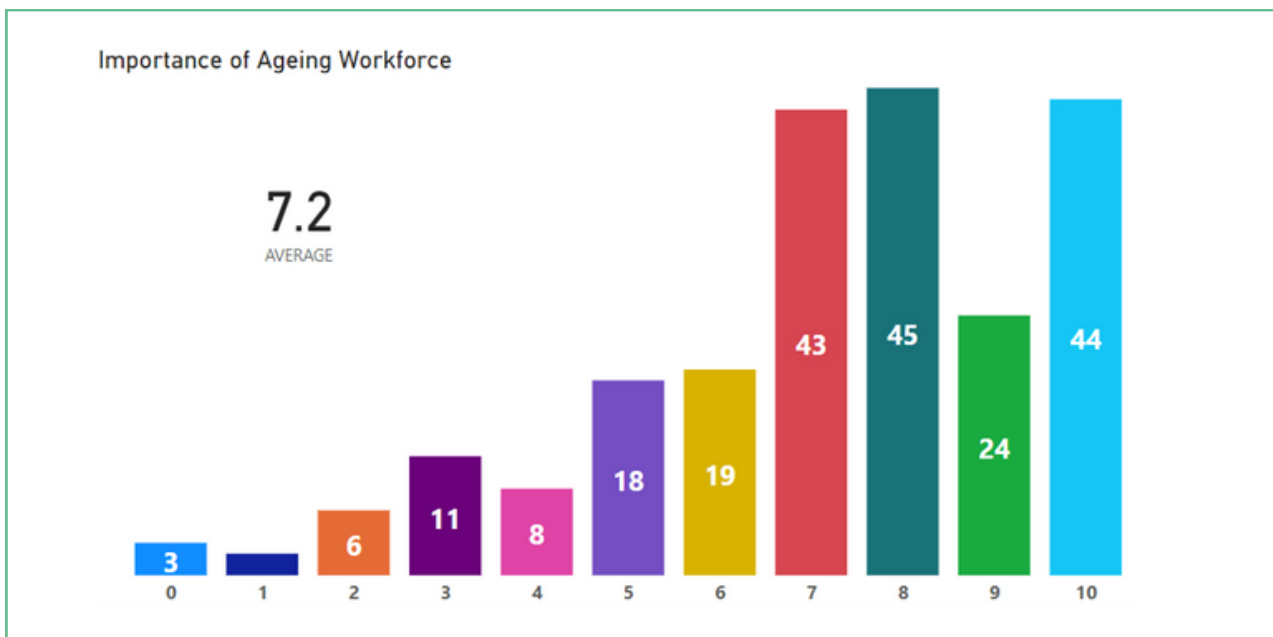
# The road ahead will be bumpy

We have left home later than we planned if we are to reach our destination on time. The pace of demographic change is going to increase, and we have a bumpy road ahead of us if we are to align different stakeholders to realise the benefits of creating more age inclusive, multigenerational workforces.

One of the first issues we need to address is the disconnect employers are seeing between the importance of addressing an ageing workforce and how they are reacting to it.

On a scale of zero to ten, with zero being 'no importance at all' and ten being 'yikes I need to sort this out yesterday', we asked respondents how important it is to consider and prepare for an ageing workforce.

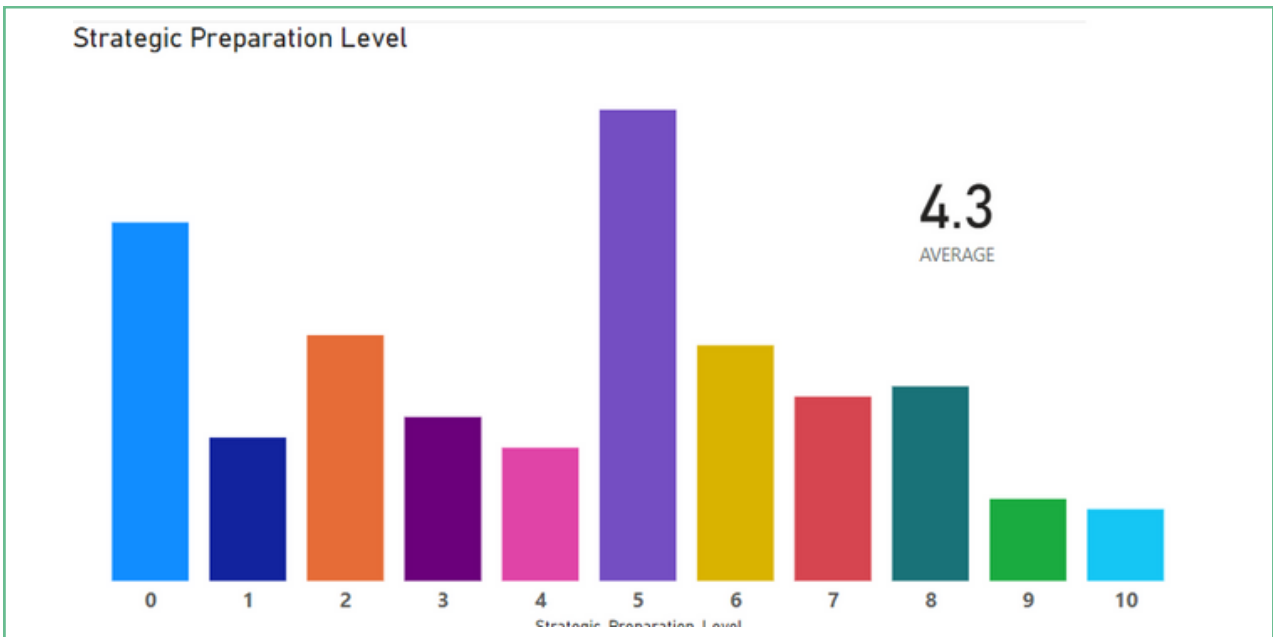
Encouragingly, respondents view the need to prepare for an ageing workforce as very important, ranking it 7.2 out of ten. Public sector/government organisations ranked it highest at 8.3 out of ten compared with SME's who ranked it lowest at 6.8. Whether an organisation was focused on recruiting or retention of staff did not make a significant difference to how importantly they viewed the topic.



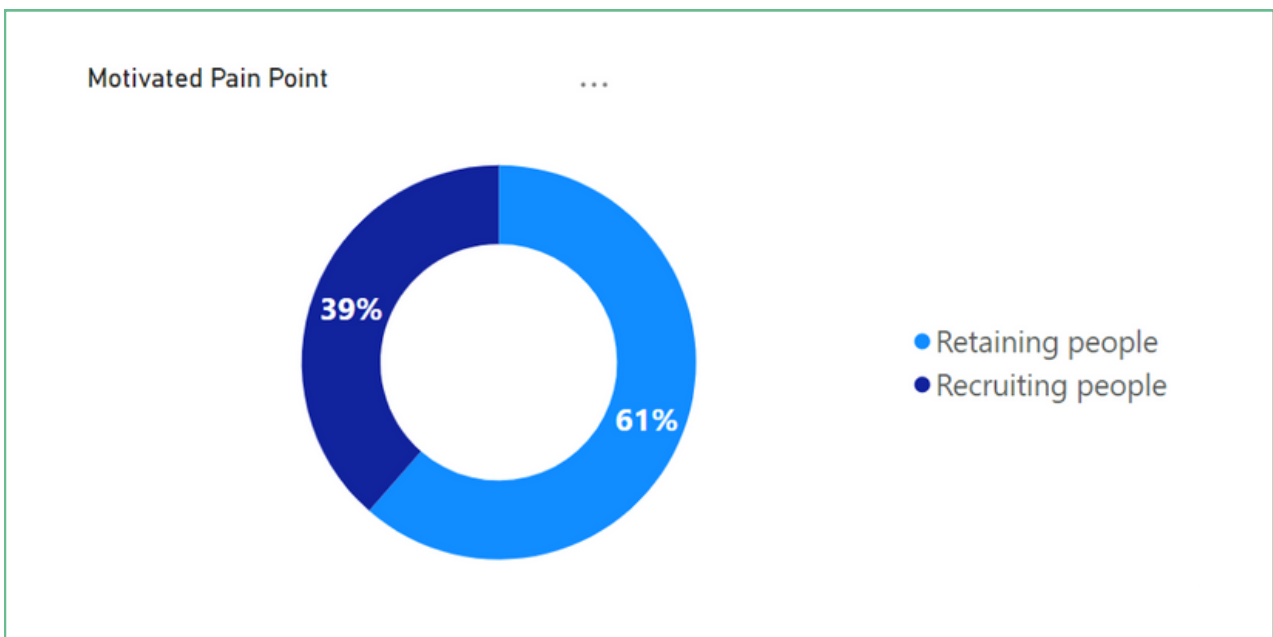
The disconnect comes when we see how strategically prepared employers are in strategically preparing for an ageing workforce. Respondents are not as strategically prepared as they need to be (4.3 out of ten) given the importance they assign to dealing with an ageing workforce.

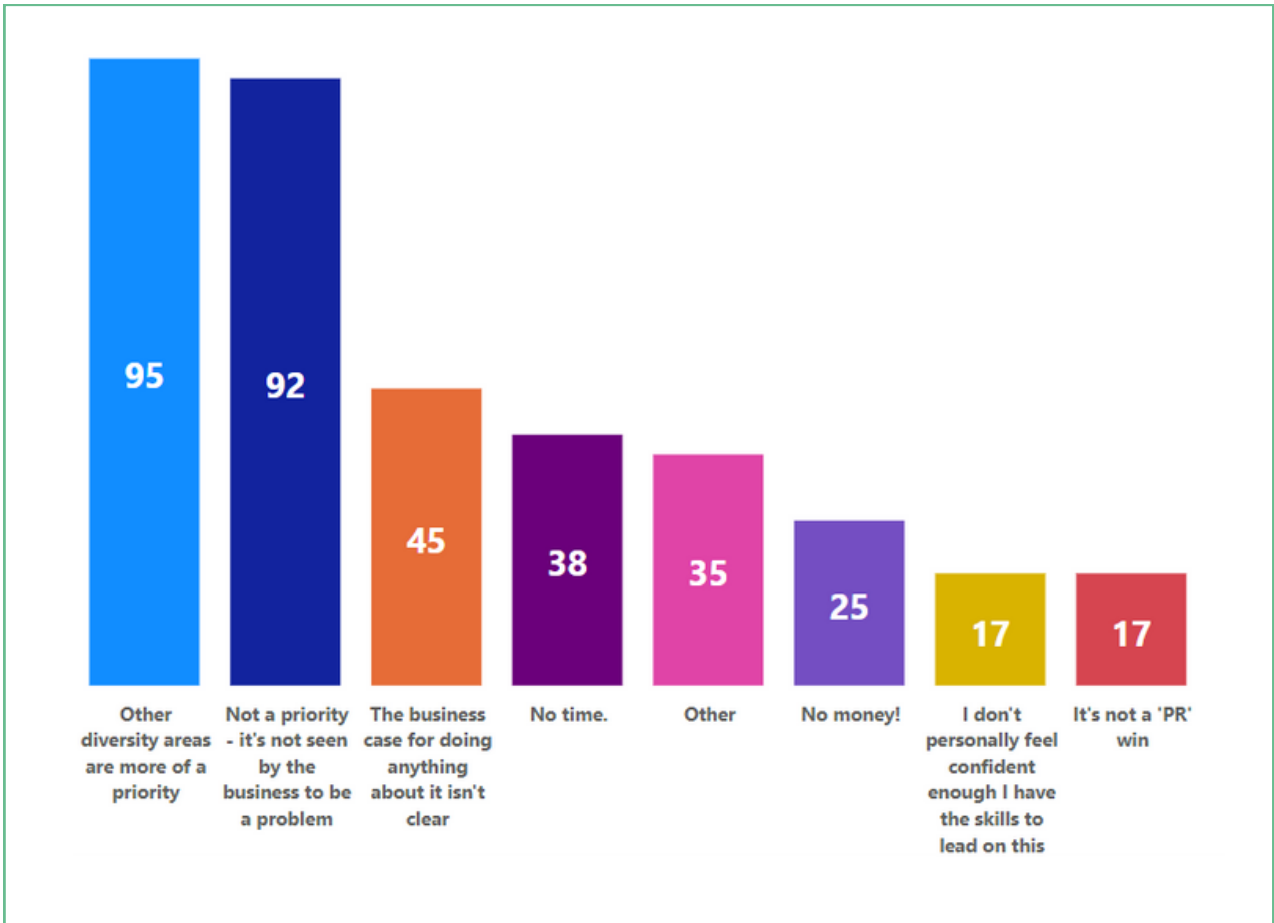
The types of organisation that were the most prepared were SME's and public sector/government (4.8 and 4.4 respectively) and those least prepared were large UK based organisations and large multinationals (3.4 and 3.8 respectively). Again, whether an organisation was focused on recruiting or retaining staff did not make a significant difference to how they reported their preparations.





Just over 60% of participants say the issue they are most motivated to solve is retaining people compared to almost 40% who are focused on recruiting new staff. Across all types of organisations, respondents said that their main pain point was retaining staff rather than recruiting new staff. At a time when the country is experiencing a labour shortage in many sectors, retaining existing staff helps an organisation retain institutional knowledge and experience and avoids the need for to compete for scarce resources in the market. Economically it also makes sense when you consider that research by Jager and Henning estimates that the marginal replacement cost of workers in Germany is between EUR65,000 and EUR85,000 or between 2.3 and three times the annual salary of the incumbent.



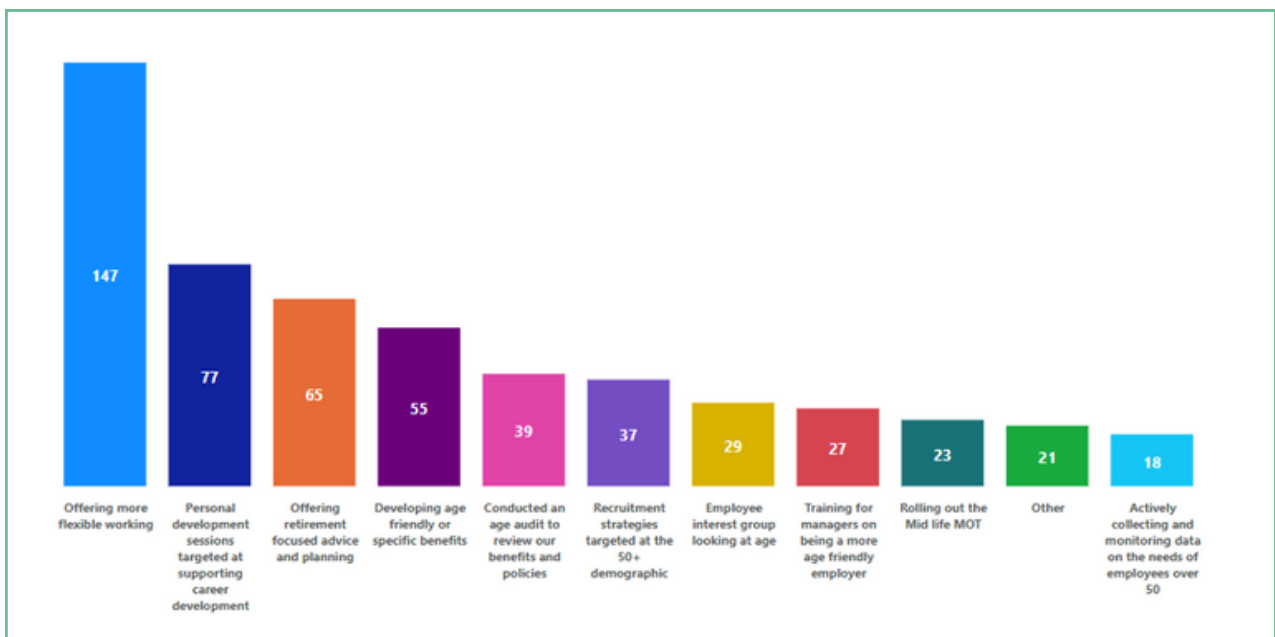


The good news is that four in five employers (80%) are prepared to invest over £50 per head in an intervention or programme for their employees aged over 50. The most common amount that employers were prepared to invest was between £100 and £250 (23%).

# Slow down before we speed up

In recent decades, great progress has been made in the field of social justice. People, who have been traditionally underrepresented, have fought hard for greater access to equal opportunity in society and the workplace. Many companies now promote the work they are doing to demonstrate the work they are doing to be an inclusive employer that appeals to a diverse workforce.

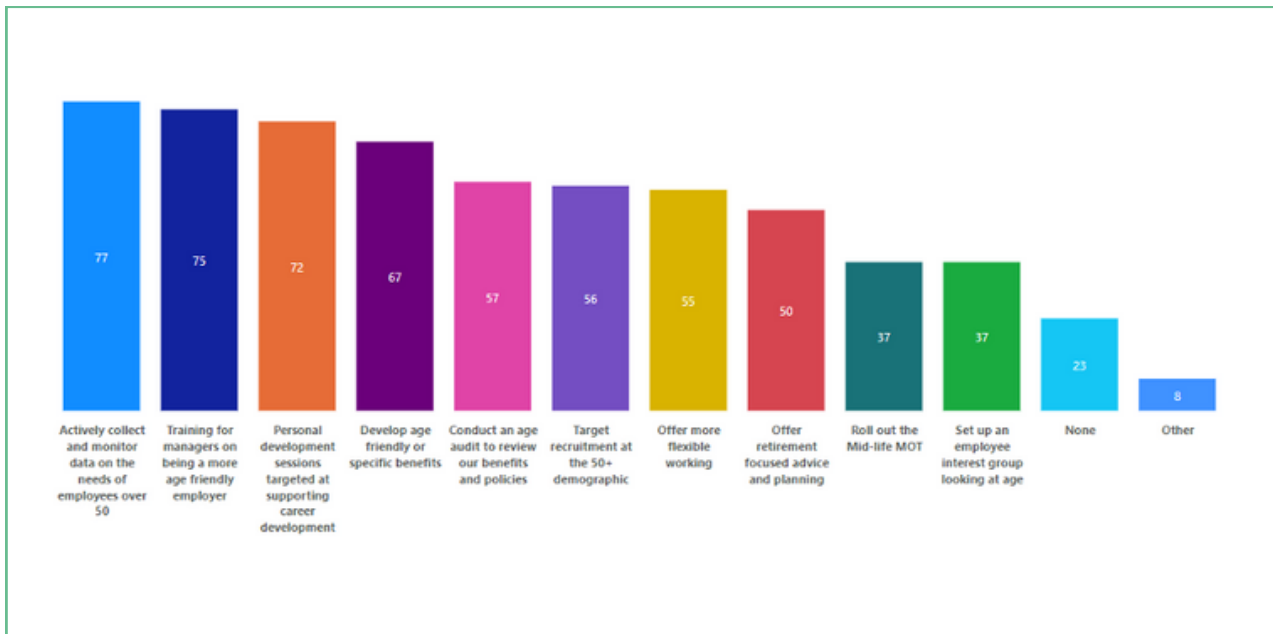
When asked what companies have done or are doing to appeal to an older workforce, several of the actions taken fell into the category of either being already mandated by law or good HR practice. For example, the top three actions taken by survey respondents were offering flexible working, personal development sessions targeted at supporting career development, and offering retirement focused advice and planning.



While offering flexible working is a benefit that appeals to older workers, it is a general benefit that was designed with working parents in mind. It appeals to people at all stages in life and, since December 2022, workers in the UK have the legal right to ask for flexible working arrangements.

The number of respondents who say they offer benefits targeted at older workers are disappointingly low: only 65 of our 223 respondents, or 31%, say they offer retirement focused advice and planning and only 55 respondents (27%) say they are developing age friendly or specific benefits. Organisations that are more focused on recruiting older workers show a slight change in the actions they are undertaking, with developing age friendly benefits taking the third place. Large multinational companies are placing more emphasis on tailoring the benefits they to older employees. For these organisations, developing age friendly benefits is the second most common action they have undertaken. Although a small sample, large multinational companies that are focused on recruiting older people almost equally say that they are offering flexible work and developing age friendly benefits.

The results of our survey indicate that, so far, organisations have been reactive to the challenge of appealing to an older workforce, with the majority offering general benefits that are not tailored to the needs of more mature workers. Going forward, employers are adopting a more targeted, data driven approach to design benefits that will benefit older workers with the top three answers being: actively collecting and monitoring data on the needs of employees over 50, training for managers on being more age friendly, and personal development plans supporting career development.

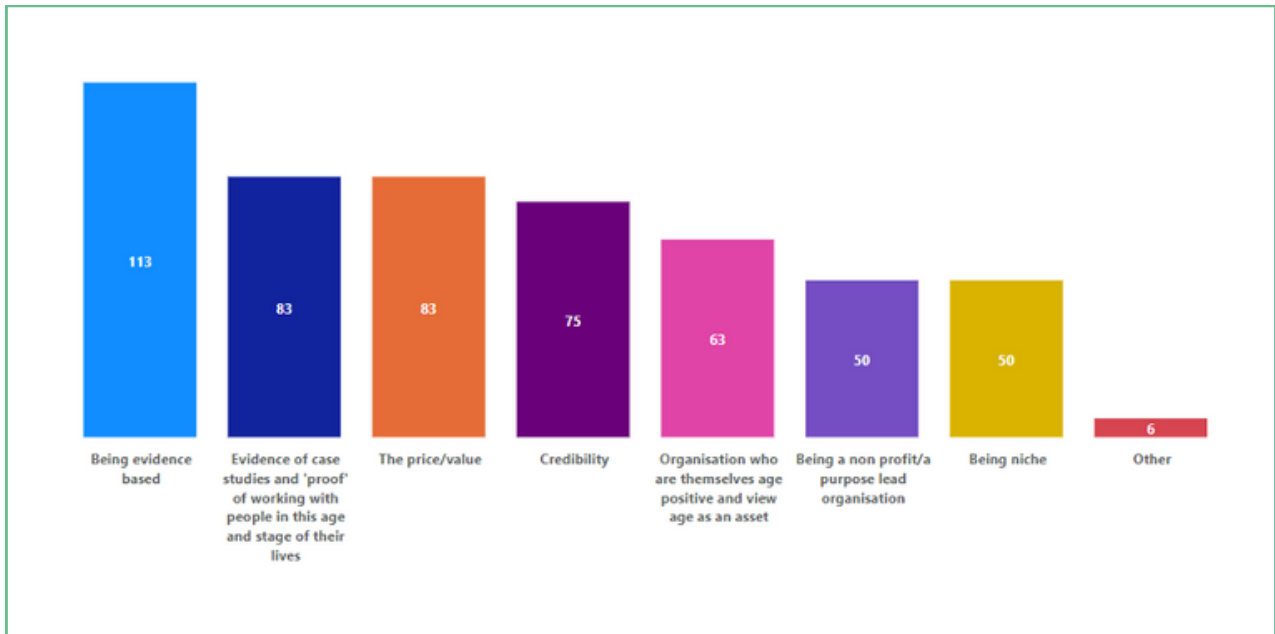


These results are a very positive sign. They indicate a collaborative approach to developing ways to make the workplace more age friendly by firstly understanding the needs of the target group and then creating the culture whereby older workers can thrive and have the opportunities they need to develop in their careers.

Organisations that are more focused on recruiting older workers have a different set of priorities going forward that reflect their goals. Their first priority is targeted recruitment at the 50+ demographic followed by training managers on being more age friendly and actively collecting data on the needs of employees over 50.

With the exception of SME's, all types of organisations are taking a data driven approach to developing the next steps in creating a more age inclusive workplace; however, there is a difference in approach between the corporate world and those working in the third sector and government. Large multinationals and large UK based companies both plan on actively collecting data, not for profit and public sector/government organisations plan on conducting an age audit to review benefits and policies. SME's are planning on diving straight in by developing age friendly benefits as their most common response with actively collecting data coming in as the sixth choice and conducting an audit eighth.

The move to a more evidence-based approach to creating and age inclusive workplace is borne out when we see the reasons companies have for working with third parties to help them on their journey. We asked respondents which factors would make them most likely to work with an organisation like Brave Starts and ProAge or another supplier in this field. The responses show that a combination of facts and human stories are the way we are going to win hearts and minds going forward.



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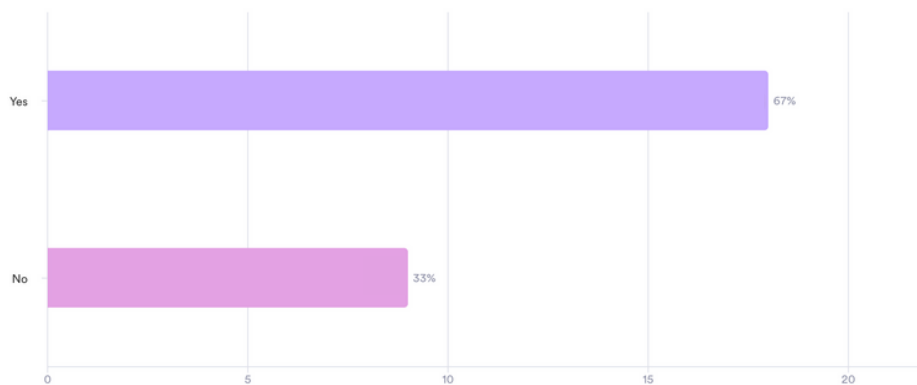
# Oakleaf Partnership Findings

## Experience shared by HR Director-level professionals.

Following on from the survey from ProAge and Brave Starts, Oakleaf surveyed 112 HR Director-level professionals.

67% of respondents affirmed they have either witnessed or personally experienced ageism in professional settings, including workplaces and job interviews. This suggests that age-related bias is a considerable issue, affecting a majority of individuals in their professional lives. The remaining 33% did not report such experiences, indicating that while widespread, ageism is not universal in all work environments.

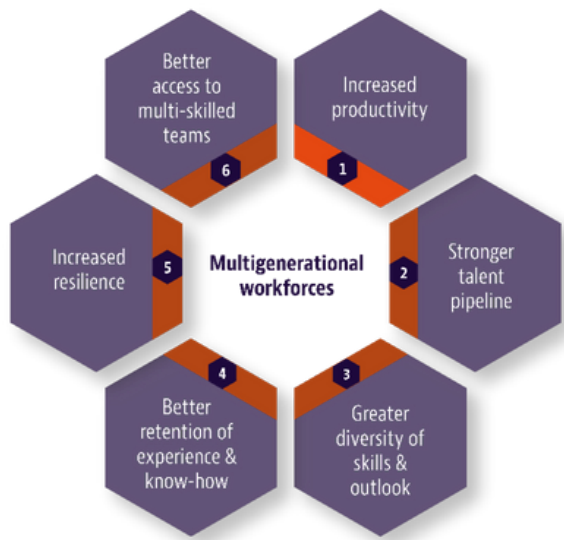
From a personal point of view, have you ever witnessed or felt you have experienced ageism, perhaps in the workplace or during an interview process as a job seeker?



The survey results highlight ageism is prevalent in professional settings in the UK, revealing a bias towards younger employees. It shows that online job applications often indirectly disclose age, leading to a preference for hiring less experienced candidates. Older job seekers frequently face labels like "too senior" or "overqualified," indicating age-based discrimination. Workplaces with predominantly younger demographics often subject older employees to harsher scrutiny, furthermore, ageism is evident in recruitment processes, with instances of rejections based on age, underscoring the subtle yet significant presence of ageism in employment.

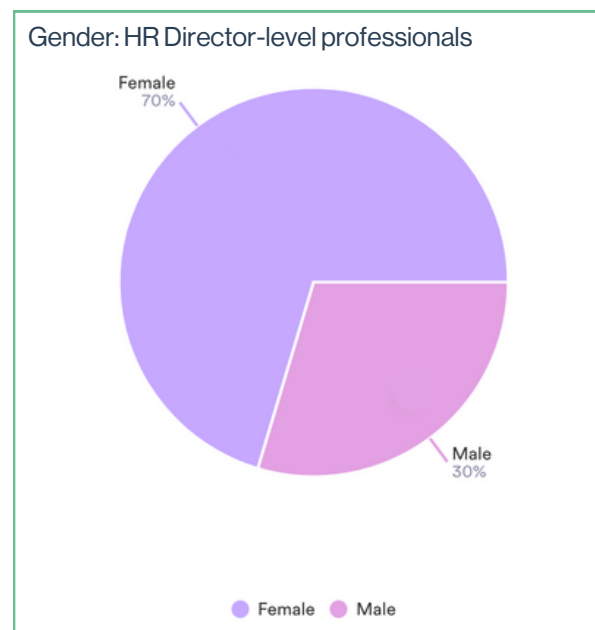
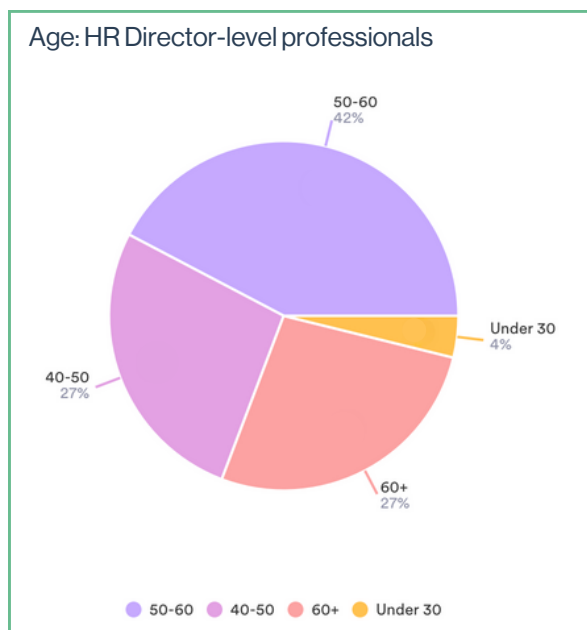
# Oakleaf Partnership Findings

Experience shared by HR Director-level professionals.



With the challenges facing various industries, it is pertinent to highlight the prevalent skills shortage and the impact of ageism in hindering businesses from attracting and retaining the necessary talent for maintaining competitiveness. There is a recognition that teams composed of individuals from multiple generations tend to exhibit higher productivity levels. The chart on the left highlights the benefits of a multigenerational workforce.

Source: oecd-ilibrary.org



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