

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tapping into Australia's ageing workforce: insights from recent research

The share of the workforce aged 55+ has more than doubled from 9% in 1991, to 19% in 2021, led by women re-entering work in mid-life and delaying retirement. By 2050, workers aged 55 and over are expected to make up about 40% of the adult population in Australia.

A new research brief – [Tapping into Australia's ageing workforce: Insights from recent research](#) – published by the ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research (CEPAR) presents the newest research insights and trends about Australia's ageing workforce, in anticipation of the release of the 2021 Intergenerational Report, expected this month.

Lead author and economist Rafal Chomik, a CEPAR Senior Research Fellow at the UNSW Business School said the demographic change is delivering a large talent pool of older people who will be healthier and more educated than ever before.

"Older Australians are a critical part of the workforce and economy. More mature workers could increase economic prosperity," he said. "Given the right opportunities, older workers could offset the adverse economic impacts of population ageing."

"If they are to thrive and prosper in the labour market, then Australia – compared to other countries – needs to do better to dismantle remaining barriers related to health, care, training, discrimination, and work conditions, and also to ensure that employers have the right strategies to recruit, deploy, and retain them. There's now good research pointing the way forward."

To help inform workplace policy and practice, the new CEPAR brief features and synthesizes research outcomes from more than 30 Centre researchers, including Chief Investigators Professor Sharon Parker and Professor Marian Baird AO.

Customised approach to flexible work is required

Professor Marian Baird and her colleagues investigated strategies that can support mature workers in balancing work with informal care responsibilities, allowing them to create flexible careers. She said care demands are one of the commonly cited examples of barriers to work, especially for women.

"Care demands change over time but are still widespread. We see the demands decline as children grow up but care for adults increases and peaks around the age of 60," said Marian Baird, Professor of Gender and Employment Relations at the University of Sydney Business School.

"For example, over 40% of women aged 50 and over who are working part-time, and about a third of those working full-time, are involved in some sort of caregiving.

"If organisations want to take advantage of demographic change, then they need policies and cultures in which employees can access the flexibility they require.

“For example, phased retirement and flexible late-stage careers can allow older workers to remain in the workforce longer, especially since retirement systems allow them to access part of their retirement benefits.

“Welfare support for parents and carers, especially the elder care that many older workers are involved in, allows workers to continue their careers more sustainably at different life stages, without forced exits or excessive interruptions.

“Work needs and preferences change over the lifecycle, which has implications for people’s careers and the organisations that employ them,” said Professor Baird. “Overall, one size does not fit all, and a customised approach is best.”

How employers can respond

The research brief presents a series of evidence-based strategies on what employers can do to manage a multigenerational workforce, and what they can do to respond to better recruit, deploy, and retain older workers.

This includes the new 3i framework – *Include, Individualise, and Integrate* – developed by CEPAR’s Chief Investigator Professor Sharon Parker and Senior Research Fellow Dr Daniela Andrei, based at Curtin University’s Future of Work Institute.

“For organisations, managing mature workers well brings productivity benefits. For individuals, high-quality work fosters successful ageing and the fulfilment of caring responsibilities. It’s a win-win,” said Sharon Parker, a John Curtin Distinguished Professor in Organisational Behaviour and an Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow.

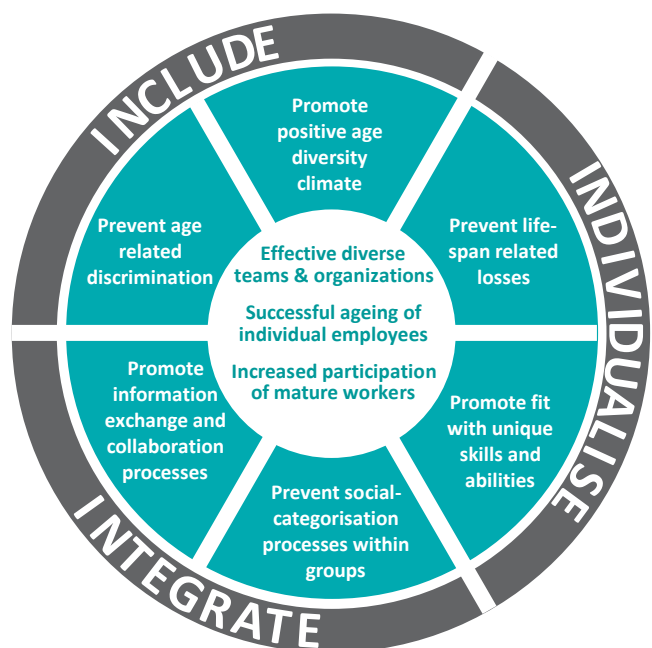
“Despite these benefits, many organisations remain reluctant to recruit mature workers and, when they do, there are few policies and practices in place to support them.

“Helping prepare employers for an ageing workforce is one aspect of this effort, and in our 3i framework we identify strategies that organisations can use to reap the benefits associated with a mature and age-diverse workforce,” she said.

“These strategies help employers better *Include* workers over the life cycle, *Individualise* their responses to different circumstances, and set up processes that better *Integrate* workers of all ages in an organisation.”

Read the research brief [here](#).

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3i framework
Source: Parker and Andrei, 2020

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The full report is available on request. The researchers are available for interviews.

Publication

Chomik, Rafal; Jamal Khan, Fatima (2021): Tapping into Australia's ageing workforce: Insights from recent research. CEPAR Research Brief, June 2021.

URL (live from June 10): <https://cepar.edu.au/resources-videos/research-briefs/australia-ageing-workforce-research-insights>

Graphic

3i framework. Source: Parker and Andrei, 2020

- Image file: <https://cepar.edu.au/sites/default/files/3i-framework-2020.png>
- Word document file (editable graphic): <https://cepar.edu.au/sites/default/files/3i-framework-graphic.docx>

About CEPAR

The Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research ([CEPAR](https://cepar.edu.au)) is a unique collaboration between academia, government and industry, committed to delivering solutions to one of the major economic and social challenges of the 21st century. The research centre is based at the University of New South Wales, with nodes at the Australian National University, Curtin University, The University of Melbourne and The University of Sydney.
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