

Act now to prevent exodus of older workers, businesses urged

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Measures should be taken by employers to ensure older workers don't become demotivated and head into early retirement, according to a new report.

It follows a three year study – led by Nottingham Trent University with Workplace Innovation Limited – aimed at preventing the loss of vital knowledge, skills and experience of increasingly ageing workforces.

[The report and study findings](#), being made available to [policy makers](#), employers and researchers across Europe, call for businesses to develop and implement strategies to find ways of managing and retaining employees over 50 who still have a huge amount to offer.

As part of the study, researchers found that interventions which seek to improve job design and the way in which work is organised can lead to better engagement and retention of [older workers](#) – as well as producing wider benefits for the business and its employees.

The project investigated work-related predictors of retirement for the over 50s, finding that manageable job demands and more control over roles were key factors in delaying a decision to retire.

Workplace practices which support good structures and procedures and allow for co-created leadership and employee voice were also important in keeping older workers optimistic about their futures and retaining them for longer, the researchers found.

The researchers worked with two large employers to develop pilot interventions aimed at addressing these challenges – resulting in improvements across workplace practices, job demands, occupational outlook and retirement intentions of older workers.

The first-of-its-kind study follows findings which reveal that by 2030 the number of people aged over 55 in high-income countries will have grown to 500 million.

"Up to this point, policy on retaining an increasingly ageing workforce has focused on raising the retirement age, reducing retirement benefits and legislating against age discrimination," said psychologist Dr Maria Karanika-Murray of Nottingham Trent University's School of Social Sciences.

She said: "Although these can have an impact, they ignore the nature of the work – the importance of the workplace and the job for supporting an ageing workforce has been very much neglected. Forcing older people to remain in unsatisfying roles, or worse, in jobs that they are no longer able to perform, is hardly a solution.

"Understanding the challenges of ageing workforces is hugely important in the current economically uncertain times that businesses are facing.

"We offer evidence that focusing on workplace innovation practices leads to healthier, empowering and more rewarding jobs, encouraging those aged 50 plus to stay engaged with work and delay retirement. This has huge implications for employers wanting to retain the skills and experience of ageing workforces, and we call on governments to recognise this as a critical component of policy frameworks to extend working lives."

"We want to be able to influence policy makers using this important new

research evidence," added Kingston University's Professor Richard Ennals, a collaborator on the study.

He said: We have a real opportunity to influence fresh thinking. The changing demography of the workplace gives new prominence to older workers, whose experience, skill and tacit knowledge underpin the success of organisations. If such workers are to be retained, maintaining high levels of productivity and innovation, it is vital to address issues such as job design, collaborative work organisation and workplace learning."

Provided by Nottingham Trent University

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