

OLDER AND WISER – THE AGING WORKFORCE

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An oldie but a goodie

Wednesday, September 12, 2007


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**‘Older employees
have a great deal
of experience,
and strategies
are required to
ensure they pass
them on’**

Devonport nurses making a difference






- ◆ Average age of the population generally, and the workforce, steadily increasing

- ◆ Future – fewer people providing goods and services for the community, and financial support for an increasing cohort of older people



◆ 'Baby Boomer' generation – those born between 1945 – 1965

◆ Group now beginning to entire traditional retirement age



◆ A trend for employers to release older workers when downsizing, or replace older workers leaving with younger employees.

◆ The future - this policy not socially or economically acceptable

THE SITUATION

- ◆ 'New Zealand will need more people aged from 55 onwards to stay in paid work at a time when retirement and early retirement is popular'.

(EEO Commissioner)



New Zealand

◆ 2051 - 25% of NZers > 65

◆ Median age 2051 - 46 years

2004 – 35

1971 – 26

◆ 2012 - 50% NZ labour force > 42

2001 – 39 years

1991 – 36



United States

- ◆ Shortfall 10 million workers by 2012
- ◆ Only 29% of employed worked 'standard' working week
- ◆ 2000 – 12.9% workers > 55 years
- ◆ 2008 – 16.3 %
- ◆ 2015 – 19.6%
- ◆ 2025 – 20.1%

United Kingdom

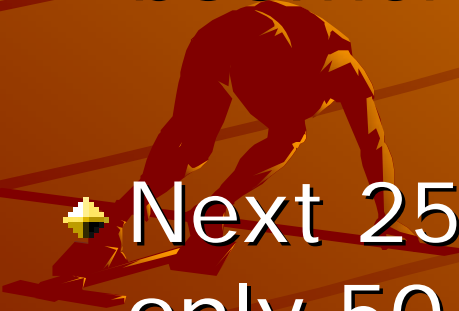
- ◆ Between 2005 and 2030 - 37% rise in number of workers aged > 50 years



OECD countries

◆ Past 25 years, 45 million workers replaced by 120 million 'baby boomers'

◆ Next 25 years, 70 million replaced by only 50 million



Reasons for upward age trend

- ◆ Effect of 'baby boomer' generation
- ◆ People less well-prepared financially for retirement
- ◆ Steady increase in life expectancy
- ◆ Overall improvement in management of many health conditions
- ◆ Improvement in < 5 child death rate

Labour market restructuring trends

- ◆ Growth in female workforce participation rate
- ◆ Growth in youth labour force participation rate
- ◆ Increasing use of night/shift work
- ◆ Ageing of population and labour force
- ◆ Decline in male workforce participation rate
- ◆ Growth of outsourcing/franchise arrangements
- ◆ Growth of employment share of small business
- ◆ Growth of S/E, casual, part-time, etc
- ◆ Declining proportion permanent full-time jobs
- ◆ Decline in average job tenure
- ◆ Shift manufacturing towards service sector

Career Models

- ◆ Traditional older worker - employment environment where people worked for few organisations in their career
- ◆ Responsibility for career mgt with employer
- ◆ Employment r'ship based on job security/loyalty
- ◆ Contemporary model characterised by flexibility
- ◆ Work for multiple employers; readily transferable
- ◆ Responsible for own career management
- ◆ Technologically skilled work force
- ◆ Workers flexible, continually learning, up to date with advancing technology

Global marketplace

- ✦ Preferred characteristics for employees based upon there being;
 - Greater level of competition
 - Rapid change (adaptability)
 - Entrepreneurship (new ideas/new markets)
 - Internationalisation of production (lower labour costs, proximity to supply chain and markets)
 - Access to latest technologies
 - Greater economic growth (increased efficiency and increased production)

Managers' preferences

◆ Employees rated highly on;

- Experience
- Commitment to quality
- Low turnover
- Attendance/punctuality
- Judgement

◆ Employees rated relatively weakly on;

- Flexibility
- Acceptance of new technology
- Ability to learn new skills
- Physical ability for strenuous jobs
- Higher contribution to health care costs

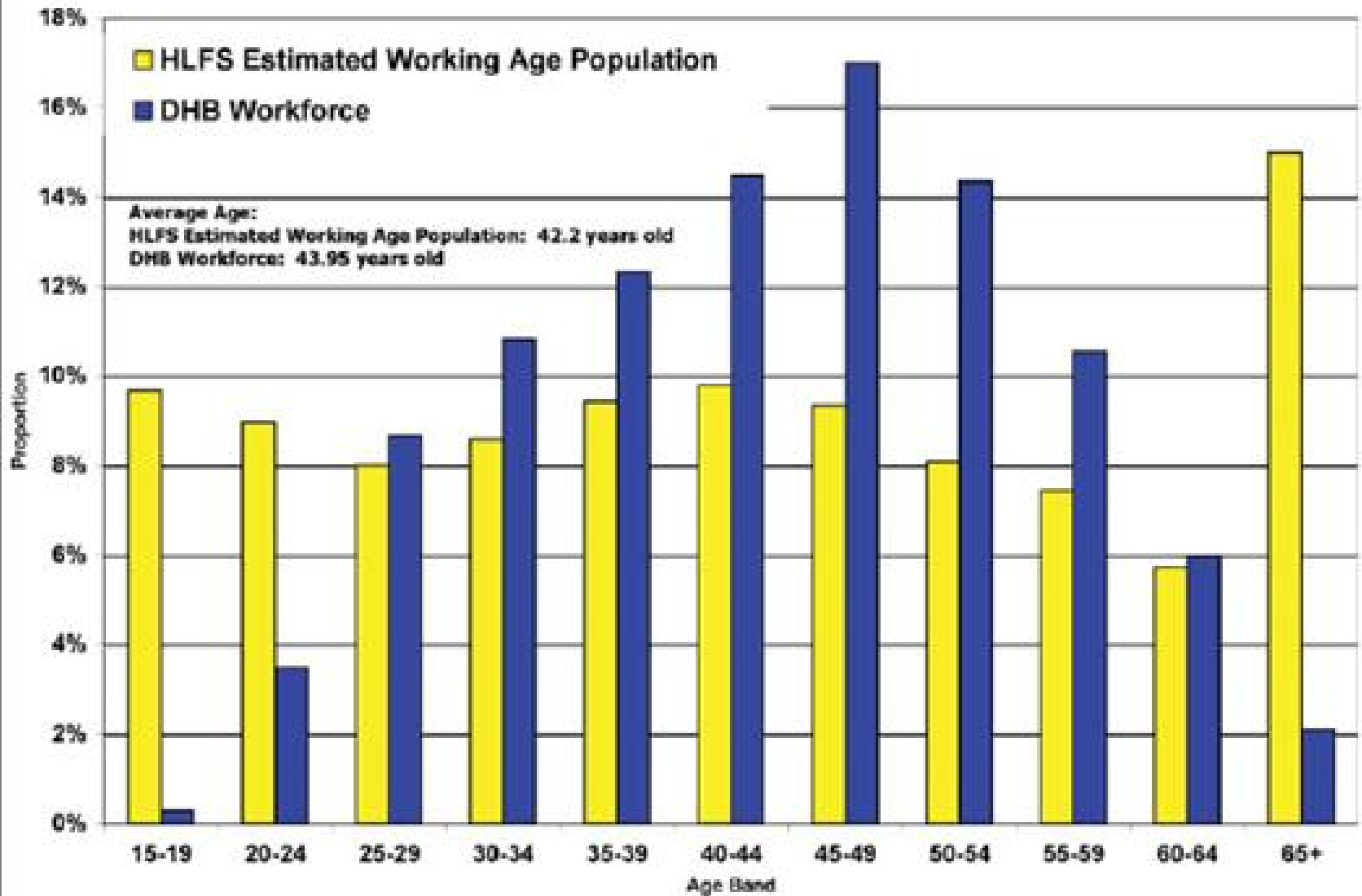
1990 Global Burden of Disease Survey

- ✦ Used projections of socio-economic development to model future patterns of mortality and illness for the period to 2030
- ✦ Predictions included;
 - Continuing increase in life expectancy
 - Lowered death rate for children < 5
 - Increased deaths non-communicable disease
 - By 2030, predicted that 3 leading causing of illness and disability will be HIV/AIDS, depression and ischaemic heart disease

Healthcare Workers

- ◆ Recognised to be an international shortage
- ◆ Particularly severe in developed countries
- ◆ Increase in migration of healthcare workers across international boundaries
- ◆ From developing countries to developed countries





Specific groups

- ◆ Average age of RNs 42.6 (1998) to 45.3 (2006)
- ◆ Median age GPs 41 (1998) to 48 (2005)
- ◆ 35% of University academic staff aged 55 years or older
- ◆ Public sector employees > 55 years 7.4% (1995), 14.3% (2002), expected 24% (2014)

Nursing

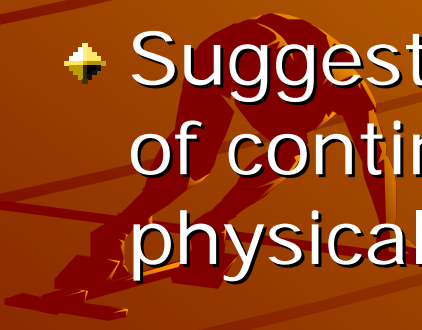
- ✦ Steady decline in younger women choosing nursing over the last two decades
- ✦ Reasons;
 - Increased opportunities other careers
 - Variable increases in salaries
 - Changing structures of training
 - Issues such as physical workload and staffing levels

Difficulties Facing Older Workers

- ◆ Gradually increasing prevalence of chronic and degenerative health conditions
- ◆ Chronic conditions not necessarily debilitating
- ◆ Can be alleviated with medication, disability aids and/or exercise, but ...
- ◆ Can significantly limit ADL and work
- ◆ Increasing prevalence obesity/assoc conditions
- ◆ Percentage adults healthy weight declining
- ◆ Obesity increasing (esp older men)

Income and physical activity

- ◆ Low income strongly associated with activity limitations
- ◆ Suggest that older persons most in need of continued employment may be the least physically capable of remaining at work.



National Academy on an Aging Society

- ✦ Majority people with chronic conditions work
- ✦ But workforce participation rate is lower
- ✦ Generally more likely to work part-time
- ✦ If older employees who leave the workforce experience more health problems than those who remain, then attempts to increase older worker participation could result in an even less healthy older workforce, with cost implications for employers

Sickness Absence

- ◆ Overall sickness absence rates similar
- ◆ Rate for illnesses/injuries higher for older than for younger workers
- ◆ Older workers generally less likely to be absent for other reasons
- ◆ Median days off work for non-fatal occupational injuries/illnesses double in workers 55 years of age and over
- ◆ Restricted work days and hospital days substantially higher for older workers

Health Insurance

- ◆ Premiums higher for the older person
- ◆ May act as disincentive for employers to employ older workers
- ◆ Salaries of older workers tend to be higher so sick leave benefits for older workers may be more costly to employers

Injuries

- ✦ Older workers more likely to sustain injuries with longer rehabilitation
- ✦ Work absences of long duration more common among older workers
- ✦ Complicated by the higher prevalence of medical co-morbidities among this older group

Injuries

- ✦ Greater severity of work-related injuries in older workers
- ✦ Often more costly to treat and compensate
- ✦ Workers over age 65 years most likely to present with;
 - a fracture or dislocation
 - an injury resulting from a simple fall
 - and to require hospitalization

Work-related injuries

- ◆ Case definitions (diagnostic criteria)
- ◆ Pre-existing age-related disease
- ◆ Increased tendency to attribute musculo-skeletal conditions/exacerbations to 'injury'
- ◆ Inequities, in both health care services and provision of income replacement, between govt and private providers
- ◆ Employers reluctant to assume responsibility for older worker

- ◆ Overall likelihood of poorer health increases with advancing age
- ◆ Increases risks of losing employment for health reasons
- ◆ Increases the potential difficulty in gaining employment
- ◆ Economic forces can influence the number of new employees that may be taken on by an employer
- ◆ Retirement rates and ages may vary across different occupations and professions

Specific health issues in older workers

- ◆ Inevitable reduction in stature
- ◆ Other changes in anthropometric factors
- ◆ May affect workplace posture and performance
- ◆ Reduced physical capacity (e.g. strength, endurance, co-ordination)



Physical health

- ◆ Older people differ from younger people in terms of physiological parameters, with age-related changes apparent in vision, hearing, bone mass and density, skeletal muscle, lung function, skin integrity, metabolism, motor function and immunity

Performance

- ◆ Shortfalls with age may not manifest until work demands exceed physical ability or when the system is stressed
- ◆ Most biological functions show a wider variation than in younger people
- ◆ Individual physical condition can mitigate age-related decreases in several parameters
- ◆ Older people who maintain a high degree of physical fitness may perform better than sedentary or unfit younger workers

Musculo-skeletal conditions

- ✦ Increasingly common in older workers, but ...
 - Non-specific 'muscular aches and pains' are common
 - Tissues less tolerant of load
 - May be significantly reduced muscular tone/strength
 - May be reduced skeletal flexibility
- ✦ Depression and emotional distress can be associated with somatic symptoms
- ✦ Muscle pains as adverse effects of medications
- ✦ Normal physical work activities may be intermittently associated with discomfort or other symptoms

Falls

- ✦ Many contributed to by diminished sensory input
- ✦ One of the leading causes of injury among all older adults
- ✦ Extrinsic/environmental sources of falls
- ✦ Intrinsic factors including diminished vision and hearing, depressed autonomic reflexes, and concomitant medication usage

Cognitive functioning

- ✦ Gradually declines with age, including response speed, working memory and selective attention
- ✦ Individuals can adapt to compensate for decline
- ✦ A range of variables that mediate relationship between age and job performance
- ✦ Intellectual decline not necessarily irreversible
- ✦ Age found to account for only small percentage of variance in individual's cognitive, perceptual and psychomotor abilities after controlling for type of occupation, experience and education

Work-related stress

- ◆ Debate whether older workers more prone to effects of work-related stress
- ◆ Stress-related effects occur among workers regardless of age and for variety of reasons
- ◆ 'An accumulation of minor insults and hassles, as well as the threat or onset of significant exposure to uncontrollable harm'
- ◆ May result from the nature of the job, workload, time pressures, or exposure to adverse physical environmental conditions
- ◆ Further, the organisational and social environment of the workplace may generate stressors, including through conflict with co-workers, threats to job security, low job autonomy and low support from management.
- ◆ Complex association between ageing and the stress and coping process

Work-related stress

- Older workers may experience stress that derives from different aspects of the job compared to younger workers
- ✦ HSE Act 1992 - requires employers to take all reasonable precautions to safeguard the health of employees
- ✦ Recent amendment - employer's obligation to protect employees from possible physical and mental harm caused by work-related stress

Job dissatisfaction

- ◆ High physical demand
- ◆ Rostering problems
- ◆ Unrealistic workloads
- ◆ Mandatory overtime
- ◆ Lack of management support
- ◆ Increased administration
- ◆ Increased severity of pt illness
- ◆ Regulations
- ◆ Staff turnover
- ◆ Second-language skills
- ◆ Time pressures

Work performance

- ✦ No evidence for reliable relationship with ageing
- ✦ Differences will exist depending upon age bracket, educational level and type of occupation
- ✦ Considered to be less adaptable; slower with new skills/knowledge
- ✦ Higher consistency; better quality work
- ✦ Better reliability, conscientiousness, sound decision-making
- ✦ Able to learn new skills
- ✦ Able to keep up with younger workers
- ✦ May be slower in new learning situations, partially explained by differences in learning styles, practice, or motivation

Hearing and vision

- ✦ Hearing problems have the potential to impact upon both work and non-work activities
- ✦ Difficulties in voice communication, hearing auditory signals and alarms, and isolation from social environment
- ✦ Reduction in visual functions, including in range of accommodation, loss of contrast sensitivity, dark adaptation, colour sensitivity, and problems with glare
- ✦ May interfere with direct communication and recognition, reading signs, driving, and with computer and document work

Advantages Of Older Workers

- ◆ Knowledge, skills, experience, reliability, stability, loyalty, strong work ethic, responsibility, people/customer care skills, motivation, initiative
- ◆ Companies with older workforces have experienced higher profits, lower turnover/higher retention and lower absenteeism
- ◆ Discipline, punctuality, commitment to quality and personal maturity
- ◆ Main perceived strength (NZ) is reliability
- ◆ Good customer service skills, communication skills, commitment to careers, skills in training people, initiative, ability to create a good atmosphere and technology skills

Benefits

- ✦ “The ability to deal with problems quickly and effectively”
- ✦ Can pass on benefits of experience to younger workers, promoting greater overall efficiency
- ✦ High level of relevant skills and experience, relating to the specific workplace or to the sector generally
- ✦ Avoid loss of experience, loss of corporate and sector knowledge, and loss of ability for teaching and mentoring which the experienced worker may be able to provide

Small business

- ◆ When hired older workers, employees exceeded expectations
- ◆ 'The benefits of maintaining a stable workforce and avoiding turnover costs can exceed the incremental compensation and benefit cost for older workers'
- ◆ Employees over 50 years of age are as productive as younger employees and just as committed to getting the job done.
- ◆ May also be more reliable and less distracted
- ◆ Willing to remain in the job longer
- ◆ Looking for flexible schedules and/or temporary assignments

Workplace Participation vs Work Withdrawal

- ✦ Reasons for early retirement from work include;
 - Ill-health and job loss
 - Belief that age is a barrier
 - Having a lack of skills
 - Belief that education level will preclude employment
- ✦ Older workers are disproportionately represented in redundancies in several countries
- ✦ Age discrimination from negative attitudes hinders efforts to return to the workforce
- ✦ Finances and health main reasons by current workers regarding eventually decision to retire
- ✦ Health and caring responsibilities central to women's decisions

Factors Affecting Retirement Decision

- ✦ Job satisfaction, interest, enjoyment
- ✦ Other interesting and challenging opportunities
- ✦ Partner's employment circumstances
- ✦ Mental and physical ability to do the job
- ✦ Redundancy
- ✦ Contribution in workplace still valued
- ✦ Wanting to spend more time with family
- ✦ Job opportunities
- ✦ Professional contribution still valued
- ✦ Need for mental stimulation/keep active

(EEO Trust [2006])

Remaining at work

- ✦ No longer compulsory retirement (outlawed 99)
- ✦ Surcharges on extra income earned while receiving superannuation were removed
- ✦ Changed age of eligibility to receive superannuation
- ✦ Economic necessity
- ✦ Improvements in health treatment
- ✦ Positive outlook and desire to keep active
- ✦ Changing nature of work, reflected in a shift away from manual labour

(Statistics New Zealand).

Remaining at work

- ◆ Quality part-time work
- ◆ Flexible working hours
- ◆ Extended leave and return to work
- ◆ Higher pay
- ◆ Work from home
- ◆ Challenging, interesting, varied work
- ◆ Ability to make a difference
- ◆ Experience needed and valued
- ◆ Reduced stress

Barriers

- ✦ Inappropriate recruitment processes and selection procedures
 - ✦ Employers considering older workers over-qualified, too experienced, not a 'good fit'
 - ✦ Advertising in unfamiliar media
 - ✦ Inequalities in training and development opportunities
 - ✦ Inappropriate and non-evidence-based assumptions
-
- ✦ Failure to offer or to assess the value of workplace accommodations for older workers

Barriers

- ✦ Workplace accommodations an important strategy for employers who want to retain experienced older workers
- ✦ However, employers not preparing for the impact of the demographic shift
- ✦ Often no special provisions or benefits in organisations with older workers in mind
- ✦ Increasing age of workforce only had a marginal impact on their organisation's recruiting, retention and management policies/practices

Solutions

- ◆ *New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy (2001)*
- ◆ Positive ageing goals in a framework comprising income, health, housing, transport, ageing in place, cultural diversity, rural, attitudes, employment and opportunities
- ◆ Goals included facilitating positive attitudes to ageing and older people, elimination of ageism, & promotion of flexible work options
- ◆ Addressing future recruitment and workforce management, recruitment and retention, flexible working arrangements, career planning and development, and health issues

Finding older/experienced employees

- ◆ Advertising in appropriate media
- ◆ Networking through communities and organisations (churches, sports' clubs, seniors groups, special interest groups, reunions, professional journals
- ◆ Encouraging greater female participation in the workforce, including through policies which are supportive of wider family commitments and needs

Job organisation

- ◆ More flexible employers and employment conditions
- ◆ Telecommuting and mixed home/office working
- ◆ Job sharing
- ◆ Flexible shifts
- ◆ Facilitating changing the nature of the work (work design and practices)
 - Increase demand for highly skilled/educated employees
 - Reduce reliance on physical strength and endurance
- ◆ Ergonomics committees and training

Job descriptions

- ◆ More open and flexible
- ◆ Job sculpting (redefining/redesigning work roles/reskilling)
- ◆ Recognition of teaching and mentoring capabilities/opportunities

Training/development

- ◆ Equal opportunities to pursue IT and other systems and general training
- ◆ Mid-career training
- ◆ Retirement planning
- ◆ Support with making greater use of new IT/communication media

Transitions

- ◆ Opportunities to move towards aspects of work for which they have continuing fitness, and away from areas of increased risks to health
- ◆ Phased retirement (moving from full-time to part-time, contracting, project work)
- ◆ Easier moves to alternative jobs (including sideways within the organisation)
- ◆ Financial/retirement planning assistance

Physical work environment

- ✦ Optimise ergonomics; minimise unnecessary standing/walking (flooring, lighting, layout, etc)
- ✦ Improved/high quality lighting, particularly in offices, stairways, paths
- ✦ Hand rails and guardrails, including in stairways and thoroughfares
- ✦ Reduced heavy and/or awkward lifting (particularly in non-manual work)
- ✦ Mechanical devices to assist manual handling
- ✦ Modifications to working hours and activities
- ✦ Limitations on physical aspects of specific jobs
- ✦ Provision of mechanical assistance

Optimise physical/psychological health

- ◆ Opportunities for physical exercise
- ◆ Early diagnosis and clinical management of health conditions with adverse implications for work fitness
- ◆ Implementation of wellness programmes
- ◆ On-site primary health care
- ◆ On-site/subsidized health club/gymnasium
- ◆ Stress reduction/relaxation training

Additional benefits

- ◆ Access to employer provided/funded health care
- ◆ Subsidised health/medical insurance
- ◆ Creche/childcare on-site
- ◆ Travel/recreation subsidies



Workability

- ✦ “The ability of workers to perform their jobs taking into account specific work demands, individual health conditions, and mental health resources” (distinct from workers’ professional ability, which refers to job competence)
- ✦ Workability is a function of:
 - Health and functional capacities (physical, mental, social)
 - Education and competence
 - Values and attitudes
 - Motivation
 - Work demands
 - Work community and management
 - Work environment

Employability

- Term is used to describe the actions needed to improve rates of employment



✦ **At the individual level, these two processes include;**

✦ Promotion of good health and associated functional capacity

✦ Adequate training to ensure competence to do the job

✦ Appropriate work scheduling to avoid overwork and exhaustion

✦ Optimised/improved ergonomics including reduction in unnecessary manual handling

Occupational health services

- ✦ Promoting the physical, mental and social well-being of workers
- ✦ Reducing the loss of workers due to ill-health arising from workplace risks
- ✦ Ensuring the placement and retention of workers in a work environment adapted to physiological and psychological needs
- ✦ Objective evidence-based assessment of functional capacity.



Occupational health services

- ✦ Pre-employment health screening and periodic health surveillance to identify and manage risks for workplace ill-health or injury.
- ✦ Assessing and minimising lost work time due to illness and injury
- ✦ Assessing medical fitness for work and matching older workers to appropriate work
- ✦ Adequate resourcing for assessing and managing increased numbers of workers with increased health conditions

Other strategies

- ✦ Policies which encourage increased birth rate
- ✦ Policies which assist in attracting national and international recruits, including immigration, salary and remuneration package, job satisfaction
- ✦ Encourage increased participation in specific occupations (e.g. nursing, physiotherapy, etc)

CONCLUSIONS

