

MePlan50+

Action Points and Final Results from Ireland



EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund
Article 6 Innovative Measures



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The Research Project

MePlan50+ is an ESF project funded under Article 6, with partners drawn from Wales, Germany and Ireland.

- ❖ The Irish partners include Westmeath Employment Pact (WEP), the Midlands Regional Authority (MRA), , the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DS&FA) and the National Counselling Institute of Ireland (NCII). WEP is the lead Irish partner.
- ❖ The Welsh partners include Newport and Gwent Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (NGCCEI, Overall Lead body), Monmouthshire County Council (MCC), Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) and Prime Cymru (PC).
- ❖ The German partners include KIZ gemeinnützige GmbH (KIZ), Stadt Offenbach am Main (SOM) and MainArbeit GmbH (MAG.)

The main objectives of the Me Plan 50+ research are to:

- ❖ Map and identify past and future trends in each partner region for demographics, sectors, education, employment, self-employment, volunteering and existing 50+ practices, systems, provision and opportunities.
- ❖ Survey older workers preferences in relation to employment and life planning and help to identify the barriers faced in realising their goals.
- ❖ Survey Employers Attitudes and Practices in the recruitment, employment and retention of older workers.

Methodology

This report is based on the results of a survey of 155 individuals in Westmeath (Questionnaire attached as Appendix One), the views of 121 individuals who completed the individual matrix (Attached as Appendix 2), an employers survey (Attached as Appendix 3) which reached 225 employers in Longford, Westmeath, Offaly and Laois. In addition twenty five case studies have been completed and some thirty policy makers were interviewed (Questionnaire Attached as Appendix 4). The surveys are further supplemented by desk research.

This research provides the background to the key action points, given the current economic climate, for action across the Midland Region.



Summary and Action Points

The issue of demographic aging is one which EU Member States are addressing with various degrees of urgency. Demographic projections show that the proportion of the populations aged 65 and over is increasing. In all cases these projections are based on assumptions about future levels of fertility, mortality, and net migration. In some instances demographic projections underpin 'crisis thinking' as regards the cost to the State of population ageing, and in particular the cost of health care and pensions. Such 'crisis thinking' tends to treat older people as an homogenous group.

Assumptions are only assumptions, and, in the past, the assumptions built into demographic projections have proven to be off the mark. Nevertheless, Ireland is currently in the process of pension and health care reform as it is widely accepted the long-term cost to the State of pensions and eldercare are unsustainable without reform.

This reform it should be noted began in the context of a newfound focus on healthy ageing and the beginnings of a national discourse as to how best to retain and enhance the participation of older workers in the workforce. However, the recent economic downturn has thrown a significant question mark over the level of commitment to and the direction of these reforms, at least, in the short-term.

Nevertheless, rethinking our ideas on retirement and on the retention of Older Workers in the workforce could enable us to manage the challenge of demographic ageing, to place it in a wider and more holistic context and renew our understanding of, and commitment to, the shared risk and rights of citizenship, and the common good.

The importance of older workers in the Irish economy is reflected in their number, which comes to more than half a million or more than 30% of the overall workforce. In analysing the responses of older workers and the economically inactive who were surveyed as part of this research the key value which they identified both directly and indirectly is that of choice i.e. older workers should have greater choice as to when they retire, whether they work shorter hours as

they near retirement etc. In addition, workplaces will have to change to accommodate and become more supportive of older workers, and Older Workers also require access to better training and progression.

The survey of Employer attitudes towards Older Workers confirmed that while there are employers who value older workers there is substantial ageism to be overcome with older workers over-represented in the public sector, traditional, and declining industries. So significant an issue is the need for such a culture shift that *Towards 2016* – the current National Understanding – makes a number of commitments to promoting a cultural mindset change among both employers and employees to encourage and support older workers as well as to tackling ageism. These commitments reflect an understanding that current policies and employment practices will have to change so that older workers are more effectively supported by employers and by society generally. It should be noted that these commitments may not survive the current recession and conventional wisdom as to the need to focus on the retention/employment of younger workers is likely to take precedence over the needs and rights of older workers.

The research carried out in the Midlands point to five areas where change is required

- ❖ **The voice and input of the Over 50s** : the main challenge here will be to change the role of the Over 50s from ‘shadow people’ who are largely viewed as either ‘retired-people in waiting’ or an untapped pool of workers. In order to have an input into policy formation and practice the Over 50s will need support to build their capacity and a more engaged approach to volunteering is required which incorporates self-advocacy and active citizenship.
- ❖ **The Attitudes of Employers:** the main challenges will be to change the attitudes and expectations of employers, raise awareness of the benefits and need for training, and increase the number of companies providing supports via flexible working arrangements.
- ❖ **Training** : the critical issues here are
 - Dealing with the low levels of formal education/ literacy

- Improving the assessment of training needs
 - Providing certification
 - Improving the delivery of training - agreeing who is to deliver what and how it is funded
 - Challenging the attitudes of employers and workers to training
 - Ensuring that the over 50s secure a proportionate share of the training places available.
- ❖ **Work-Life Balance:** specific issues that arise for older workers are
- Healthy ageing issues – workplaces accommodating illness and disability
 - Workplaces accommodating caring responsibilities
 - Older workers needing more flexible /reduced working hours and, in some cases, phased retirement options. There is a need for a Life-Course understanding of Work Life Balance.
- ❖ **Pensions** – while change in this area is one which is beyond the scope of local actors and local action plans, it is clear that the issue of equity is one which needs to be addressed in pension reform. At local level those agencies charged with supporting self-employment need to pay greater attention to pension provision as this emerged as a significant issue in the research with many self-employed people having made no provision.

While demographic ageing is not as urgent an issue in Ireland as elsewhere in the EU and it is unlikely that older workers will be prioritised in the current recession there is some scope to influence local strategic plans and in particular the plans of the four County Development Boards in the Midlands. In this context it is worth noting the *National Council on Ageing and Older People's* views (2005) on the potential of CDBs to make a substantial contribution to the promotion of social inclusion for older people at local level. The NCAOP made two critical observations:

- ❖ Social inclusion initiatives are as much about the process of decision-making as about tangible outcomes, therefore the involvement of older people themselves should be part of the social inclusion process give that older people are best able to identify their own needs and how these

should be met.

- ❖ There is a general lack of focus on themes including work retirement, accessible public spaces, gender-specific issues and income. In particular, the current debates about older people and the labour market have not been addressed to any significant degree in local actions.

Recognising that County Development Boards have limited resources and power the key areas to focus on will be

- ❖ The inclusion of a commitment to work with Older People to articulate their agenda and to resource this process. This will mean a particular focus on the 50 – 65 year age group and a commitment not to treat the Over 65's as essentially the responsibility of the Health Sector.
- ❖ Training and re-skilling will be critical responses to the re-orientation of the economy and for each County Development Board a critical challenge will be to ensure that their respective County secures a proportionate share of the national training/re-skilling budget and that the Over 50s secure a proportionate share of the training places on offer.

Introduction

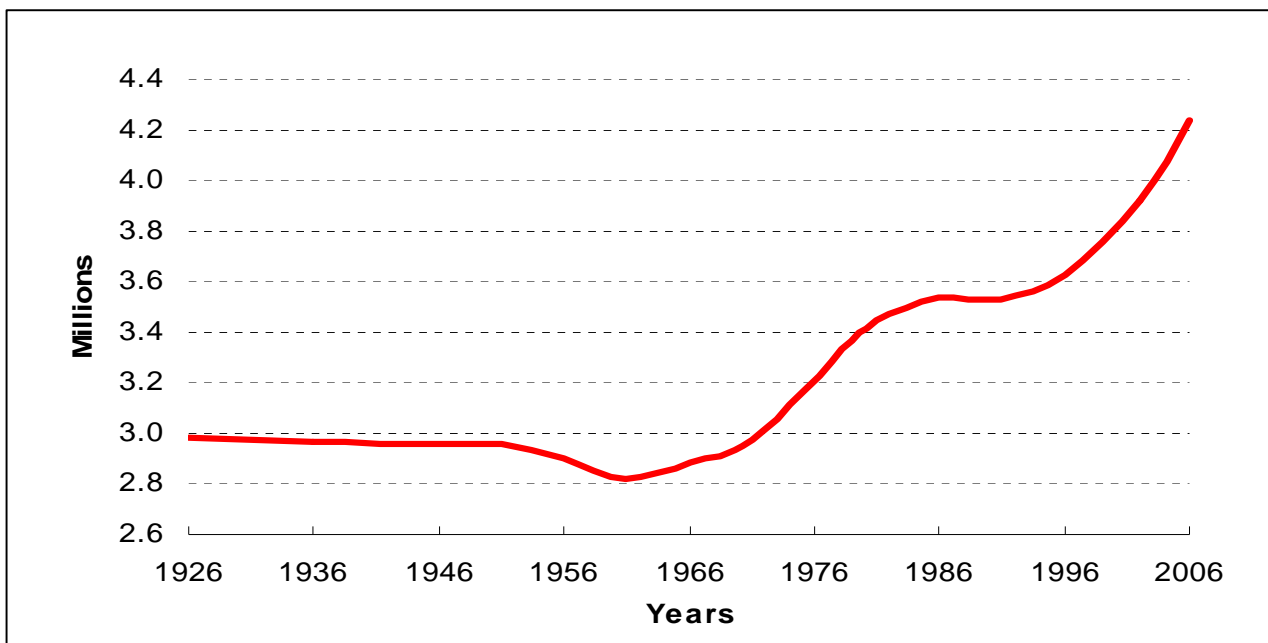
Population Change – Fertility, Migration and Ageing

Ireland differs from both Wales and Germany in that it is currently cresting a positive demographic wave based on a natural increase in the population (i.e., births less deaths) and significant inward migration.

The April 2006 census shows that Ireland's population had reached 4,234,925 persons bringing it to its highest level since 1861, and representing an increase of 8.1% or 318,000 persons in the four years since the last census in April 2002.

The fertility rate has recovered somewhat and in 2005 was the second highest in the EU 27, after France, at a rate of 1.88 compared to an EU 25 average of 1.52. In addition, life expectancy for men in Ireland was 1.3 years above the estimated EU 25 average of 75.8 years, while that for women was 0.1 years below the EU 25 average of 81.9 years.

Population Change Ireland 1926 - 2005

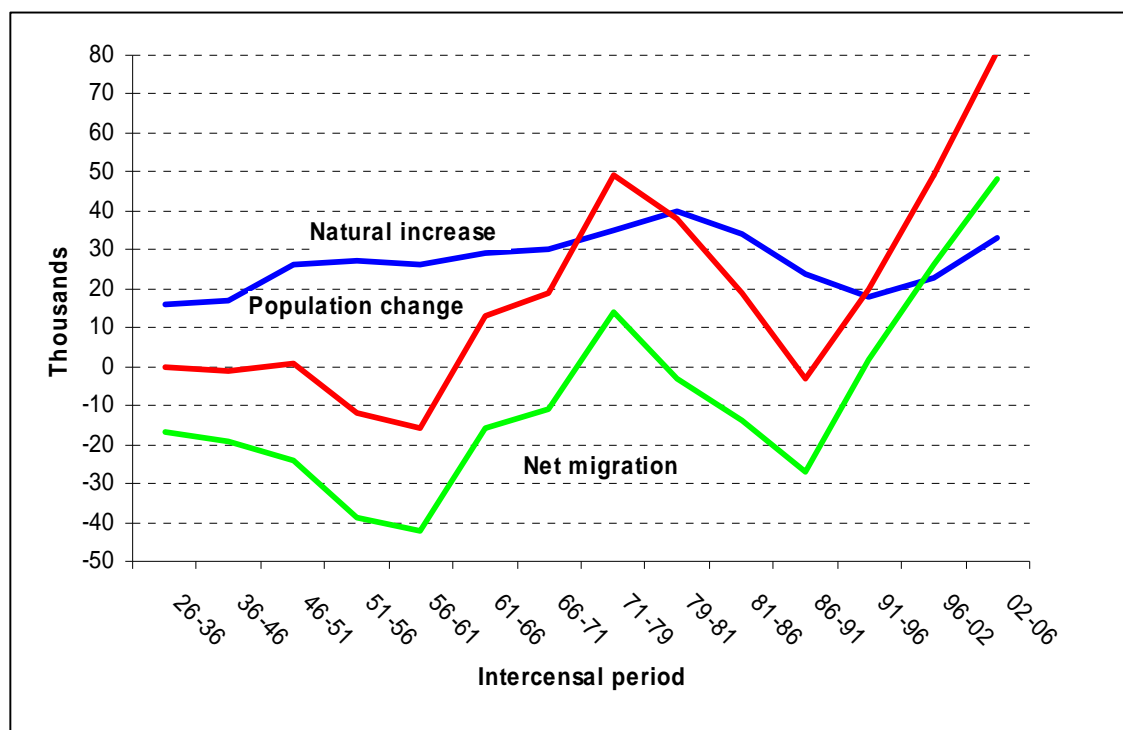


However, the most significant component in Ireland's recent population growth is the impact of inward migration which, since the mid 1990s, has played an increasingly significant role in filling skill and labour shortages. Indeed, net migration has been the most volatile component of population change for Ireland since the foundation of the State. Migrant workers currently comprise one in every eight workers in Ireland.

Population growth has continued in the year from April 2006 to April 2007 with a further increase of 106,100 persons (+2.5 %) in the population. Nearly two-thirds of this increase was accounted for by net migration with the remaining one-third due to the natural increase (i.e., births less deaths) in the population.

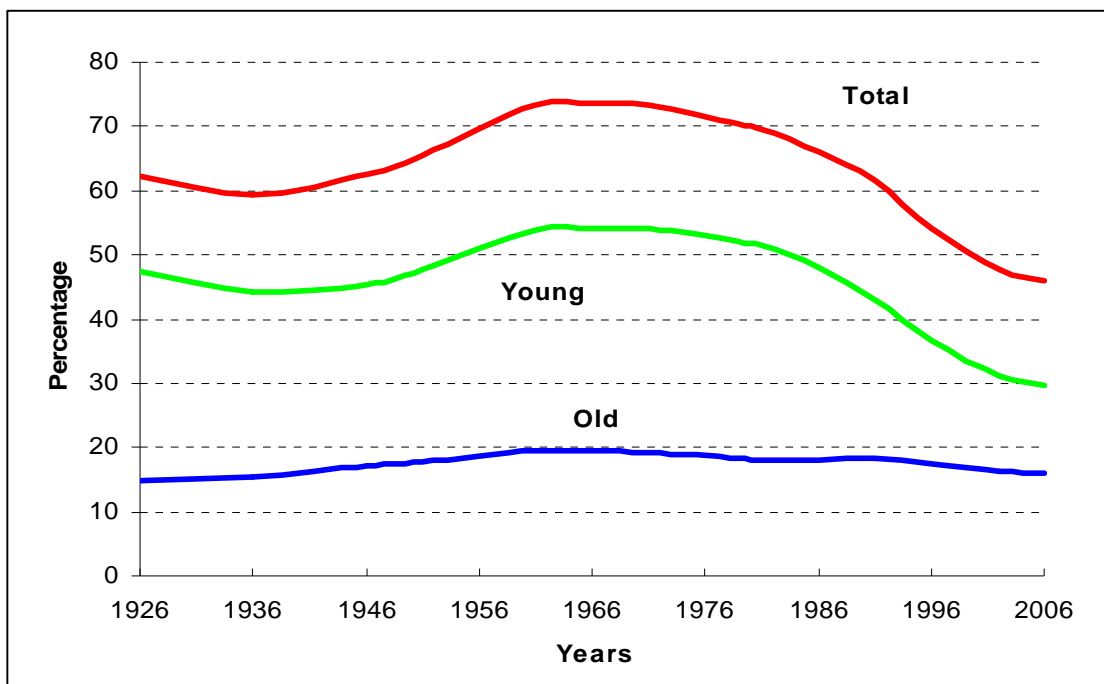
In the Midlands the population has grown to 251,380 an increase of 22.3% on the 1996 census figures. In addition to inward migration the region is increasingly affected by developments in Dublin and the expansion of the Dublin commuter belt.

Components of Population Change 1926 – 2006



The age profile of Migrant workers has contributed to another demographic reality i.e. relatively low youth and age dependency rates. The number of persons aged 65 & over increased by 54,000 people between 1996 and 2006. However, persons aged 65 & over accounted for 11.0% of the population in 2006 compared to 11.4% in 1991 reflecting the younger age of immigrants.

Age Dependency Rates



Dependency ratios measure the ratio of people in so-called dependent ages (defined as 0–15 and ages 65 and over) to people in the working ages of 15 to 64. These dependent age groups can be separated to construct a youth dependency ratio and an aged dependency ratio, with their sum equalling the total dependency ratio. Much of the literature in relation to Demographic Ageing has fixated on the aged dependency ratio and ignores the youth and total dependency ratios. Analyses which ignore the counterbalancing effects of the youth and aged dependency ratios on the total dependency ratio result in misleading conclusions. In such contexts older peoples are viewed as sick and frail non-contributors to society — as ‘users’ of social programmes who give nothing in return.

Dependency ratios create a false dichotomy — between people who are dependent and those who are not, and ignores the web of interdependence and reciprocity that make up the warp and weft of social life. Dependency ratios are based, after all, on the arbitrary assumption that people below and above a certain age are dependents. There are many in the so-called dependent age groups who are not dependent, such as people who engage in paid labour after the age of 65, just as there are people in the ‘working ages’ who are dependent for various reasons. Secondly, dependency ratios do not count unwaged labour, and it is well-established that women undertake significant amounts of unpaid caregiving. In addition, many older people are engaged in considerable amounts of voluntary activity, that is similarly not factored into dependency ratios. In using dependency ratios is critical that we avoid this inbuilt tendency to homogenise people on the basis of age,

In 2006, Ireland had the lowest proportion of its population aged 65 & over among EU countries at 11.0%, this compared to an EU 27 average of 16.8%. While Ireland requires a high, and sustained net inward migration to reverse the underlying trend of falling PSRs (the ratio of people in employment to those aged over 65) our demographic situation is relatively favourable over the medium term. The Irish working age population is projected to peak in 2041 at around 29% higher than its current level and to fall back thereafter. (Pension Green Paper) Irish domestic labour force growth is expected to fall to 0.5 % annually in the near future, compared with annual growth of 3.5 % over the past decade.

While older workers are eventually projected to form a significant part of the labour force, the reality is that active ageing is not a very important policy issue. A Junior Minister with responsibility for Older People was appointed recently. However, the responsibilities of this Junior Minister are confined to the policy domains of health and pensions, and unlike the Junior Minister for Children she does not attend Cabinet Meetings.

One of the most contentious issue arising from demographic ageing i.e. who pays for older peoples pensions when the workforce is shrinking, has been partially addressed through the establishment of a *National Pensions Reserve Fund*. This fund was established by the Government in 1999, and each year it adds the equivalent of 1% of Irish GNP to the fund. At the end of 2007 the fund

had a value of €21.3 billion and will help pay for social welfare and public sector pensions from 2025. However, the key pension issue remains distributional in that some people have better pensions than others and women generally have poorer pensions than men.

It should also be noted that it is only recently that Ireland ended a de facto policy of encouraging older workers to exit the workforce early, with the extension of the National Employment Action Plan to include all persons over 55 years who are more than six months unemployed and the decision to allow no new claimants access the Pre-Retirement Allowance which is paid to long-term unemployment assistance recipients aged from 55 to 65 years on declaration of retirement from the workforce.

The Landscape of the Midlands Region

The Midlands Region consists of Counties Longford, Westmeath, Offaly and Laois, and is situated in Ireland's central plain with the river Shannon forming the western boundary. It covers an area of 6,524 sq. kms and accounts for 9.5 per cent of the land area of the State, being at the extremes about 130km from north to south and about 70km from east to west. The area is of limestone covered with glacial deposits of clay and sand. Land quality is for the most part poor, and includes lakeland, mountainous areas and bogland.

The Shannon, the last great-undrained river of Europe and the longest river in the British Isles, is the central feature of the Midlands Region. It flows through three lakes on its journey to the sea – Lough Allen, Lough Ree and Lough Derg. Other waterways in the region include the Grand and the Royal Canals.

It is the raised bogs which remain the most unique feature of the Midlands and which were the basis for what was formerly the most significant industrial activity in the region. Bord Na Mona was established in 1940 to harvest turf for domestic and commercial use. In 2005/2006 it produced 3.94 million tonnes of milled peat (valued at €74.6 million), approximately 230,000 tonnes of peat briquettes (valued at €35.3 million), and 1.7 million cubic metres of horticultural peat (valued at €51.3 million), the majority of which was produced in the Midlands. While peat fuelled energy production no longer provides as much employment as in the

past, new peat fired energy stations have been built at Edenderry (2001) Lanesborough (2005) and Shannonbridge (2005). In recent years, the high level of bog being destroyed by what is essentially strip mining has raised environmental concerns and there is increased focus on the preservation of intact bogs and on the future uses of cut-aways.

To the east of the region, the Slieve Bloom mountains stretch across Counties Offaly and Laois. There are 55,000 ha of forest in the Midlands, approximately half has been planted privately and the rest is owned and managed by Coilte the state forestry organisation.

Socio-Economic Profile Midlands Region

The Irish economy has enjoyed almost fifteen years of sustained economic growth up to the middle of 2007. Between 1993 and 2003, unemployment decreased from 15.7% to 4.4%, and the number of persons in employment increased by over 50% from 1,183,100 to 1,793,400. By 2005 the figure had risen to 1,929,200, and the total labour force exceeded the 2 million mark for the first time

Economic progress is underpinned by a series of Social Partnership Agreement. The first in 1987 was the *Programme for National Recovery* (PNR). In these agreements international competitiveness, job creation and control of the public finances take precedence over all other issues. The Government and the Social Partners have pursued a liberal economic agenda with varying levels of commitment to social issues. In essence this approach can be summed up as 'a rising tide lifts all boats.'

Little has been done to explicitly encourage older workers to remain longer in the workforce or increase their employment opportunities if made redundant. Investment in education/training is linked directly to economic development and Irelands capacity to secure jobs in the areas of IT, Chemicals, Financial Services etc and targets younger people.

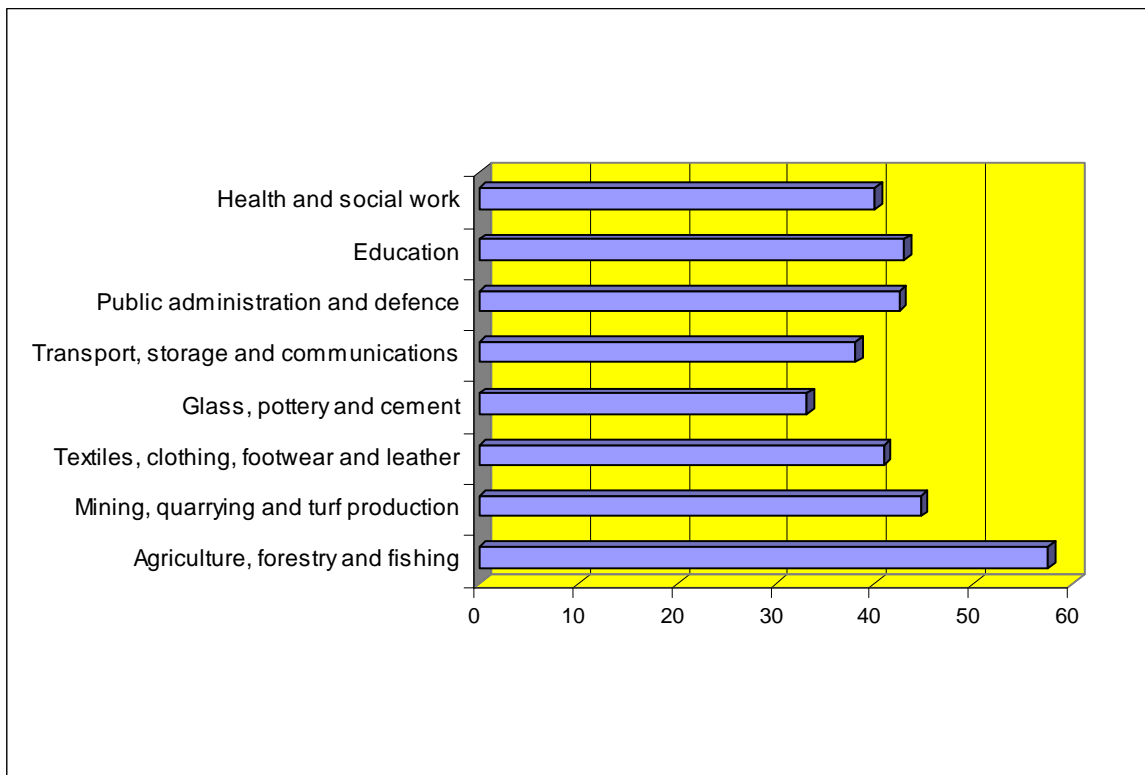
Supply side interventions for older workers - training, education and work experience programme - have until recently lacked any strategic imperative.

While those measures which did target older workers did not enjoy the same political and economic priority as those aimed at younger workers.

Nearly half of older men (50-64) in employment are in manual occupations, and the share of part-time employment among older women exceeds 45%. Older workers are over represented in the Public Sector and declining industries such as farming, forestry and fishing.

Nevertheless, 65.7% of men aged 55-64 were employed in 2005 compared with 37.4% of women. The average exit age from the labour force was 64.1 years in Ireland in 2005, the highest age among reporting EU 27 member states. The average exit age in Ireland for women was 64.6 years compared with 63.6 years for men. One reason why Irish workers have relatively longer working lives is that spending on pensions here is one of the lowest in Europe and only 38% of employees in the private sector have pension coverage.

Sectors/Industries where the Over 45s comprise in excess of 32% of the workforce Census 2006



Industry and Employment by Sector

The Midlands has a strong industrial base with the medical devices, healthcare, pharmaceutical and chemicals, and engineering categories accounting for the largest segment of this sector. There are also numerous food and drink producers in the Midlands. The software sector is represented but has yet to forge a strong presence. The peat industry, which played a most important role in the industrial development of the Midlands, is in decline. Wood processing is an important sector with just over one-third of all processed timber in Ireland produced in the Midland region. Current timber production in the Midlands cannot alone sustain the region's timber processing mills and a substantial amount of timber is brought into the region to be processed

Persons aged 15 years and over in the Midlands classified by principal economic status, 2006

Midlands	
At work	111446
Looking for first regular job	1814
Unemployed having lost or given up previous job	8566
Student	17675
Looking after home/family	24763
Retired	21456
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	8431
Other	1278
Total	195429

The services sector is the most rapidly expanding sector in the Midland region. The number of retail sales outlets has increased steadily as has the provision of information technology. The region hosts telecommunications-based service companies, some financial services companies and software companies.

The agricultural sector is the only sector not to have grown since 2002. Nationally the number of active farms has fallen by some 6.2%. While a little over half (56.4%) of farmers described farm work as their sole occupation. In 2005 47.7% of family farm holders were aged 55 or over and just 8.2% were aged under 35. Specialist beef production was the most common type of farming, accounting for

over half of all farms in 2005.

The Midlands has much to offer in the line of tourism and leisure facilities. Two of the prime tourist attractions are the Shannon River and its tributaries and nearby lakes and also the early medieval monastic settlement of Clonmacnoise. Just under a quarter of a million overseas tourists visited the four midland counties during 2005. A little under half of these visited County Westmeath and this is reflected in its share of the total revenue generated in the four counties. Most of the overseas tourists originate in Britain.

Persons, Males aged 15 years and over in the labour force in the Midlands, classified by broad occupational group, 2002 and 2006

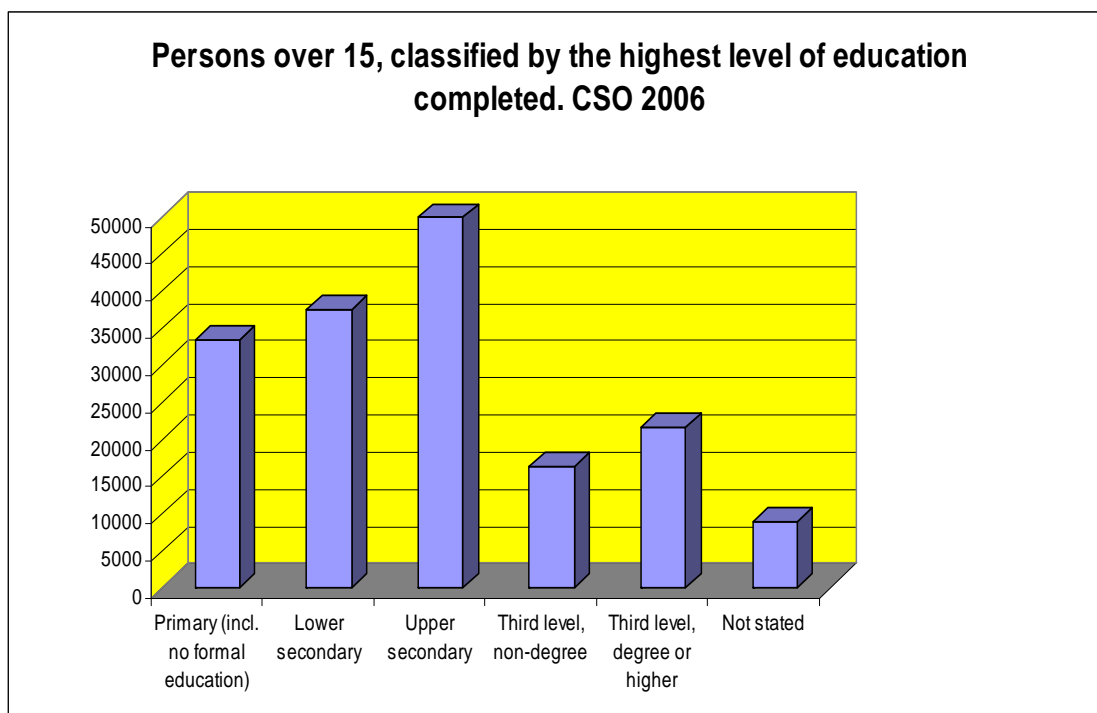
Occupation	2002	2006	Change
Farming, fishing and forestry workers	8,228	7,554	-8%
Manufacturing workers	14,497	16,301	12%
Building and construction workers	9,249	13,333	44%
Clerical, managing & government workers	14,607	17,684	21%
Communication and transport workers	4,999	6,233	25%
Sales and commerce workers	11,577	14,412	24%
Professional, technical and health workers	13,798	17,044	24%
Services workers	9,556	12,684	33%
Other workers (incl. not stated)	11,902	14,767	24%
All occupations	98,413	120,012	22%
Looking for first regular job	1,113	1,814	63%
Total in labour force	99,526	121,826	22%

Employment grew in all sectors over the past fifteen years with the exception of farming and here the rate of decline was slowed to some extent by the availability of off-farm work. Two areas which showed exceptional and unsustainable growth were construction which grew by 44% in the last four years and services which grew by 33%. There was also considerable growth in sales/commerce and in the public sector. Given that Ireland is now entering a recession and that those looking for their first regular job grew by 63% between 2002 and 2006 it is likely that it is the needs of entrants and younger workers which will take precedence. Yet older workers constitute approximately 30% of the total Irish workforce.

Persons, aged 15 years and over, classified by Intermediate Occupational Group, 2006

Occupational Group	State	Midlands
Farming, fishing and forestry workers	4.19%	6.20%
Electrical trades workers	1.82%	1.84%
Engineering and allied trades workers	3.76%	4.58%
Textile, clothing and leather workers	0.35%	0.29%
Food, drink and tobacco production workers	1.24%	1.55%
Chemical, paper, wood, rubber, plastics and printing workers	0.91%	1.02%
Other manufacturing workers	3.54%	4.12%
Building and construction workers	8.70%	10.94%
Managers and executives	5.94%	4.14%
Communication, warehouse and transport workers	5.45%	5.12%
Clerical and office workers	8.64%	7.06%
Sales occupations	9.72%	9.75%
Business and commerce occupations	3.75%	2.08%
Computer software occupations	2.16%	1.11%
Scientific and technical occupations	2.80%	2.35%
Health and related workers	4.41%	4.75%
Social workers and related occupations	0.84%	0.83%
Religious occupations	0.18%	0.18%
Other professional workers	2.00%	1.34%
Personal service and childcare workers	9.73%	9.16%
Teachers	3.83%	3.61%
Central and local government workers	2.75%	3.31%
Garda Síochána	0.58%	0.55%
Army occupations	0.35%	0.70%
Other gainful occupations (incl. not stated)	10.95%	12.12%
All occupations	98.61%	98.51%
Looking for first regular job	1.39%	1.49%
Total in labour force	100.00%	100.00%

The above table breaks employment down by occupational group and allows for a comparison between the average level of employment in particular occupations across the State and the level of employment in that occupation across the Midlands.



As can be seen from the above table 42% of those who have completed their education have only lower secondary or less, with 10% having Third Level non-degree education and a further 13% with a Third Level degree or higher.

The changing nature of Ireland's economy means that without up-skilling many low-skilled workers will be in low-paid precarious employment, including periods of recurring unemployment. The rapid decline in employment in the construction sector necessitates the re-training of semi- and unskilled-construction workers on a substantial scale. Indeed, Ireland faces a substantial challenge in upskilling its workforce to meet the needs of a more competitive knowledge-based economy – evidenced by the need to upskill 500,000 individuals by 2020.

Household or Disposable Income in the Midlands Region

In 2004 the Household or Disposable income per person of people in the Midlands, was 91.2% of the national average and this grew to 91.8% in 2005. In measuring 'Household Income' or Disposable Income per person for 2004 and 2005 the CSO are recording

- ❖ Wages and salaries (including employers' contributions to social insurance and pension funds and imputed pension contributions by the State for its employees)
- ❖ Income from self employment
- ❖ Transfer payments from the State; these include the imputed value of some non-cash benefits, which accrue to households such as secondary and university education, free medicines and free fuel and transport for the elderly.

Household or disposable income as recorded on this basis is therefore not the same as the cash income that accrues to private households

Gross Value Added for the Midland Region

The Midland Region had the lowest Gross Value Added per person in 2005 at 66.5% of the State average, repeating the regions performance in 2004. Gross Value Added is not a measure of household income. It is a measure of the value of goods and services produced in a region. It therefore includes, in particular, the profits of multinational companies, much of which accrue to non-residents.

Overall, the Midlands Region is the second disadvantaged region of Ireland in Ireland as a whole. The recent NESF Report on ***Building a More Inclusive Workforce*** makes a number of observations in relation to the situation and prospects of older workers

- ❖ Ireland is now a wealthier but more unequal society than before, with the richest 20 % of the working-age population earning 12 times as much as the poorest 20 % - one of the highest levels of income inequality among OECD countries.
- ❖ There is less equality of opportunity here than in many other European countries and this has changed little over the last decade, despite a huge expansion in education and economic growth.

- ❖ 14% of households in poverty are now headed by those with a job, a rise from 7% since 1994 - an indication that employment on its own does not always provide a route out of poverty
- ❖ Ireland is currently ranked 51 out of 56 countries in terms of equality of economic opportunity for women and has one of the highest penalties in pay reduction associated with motherhood - with working mothers having lower earnings than women without children
- ❖ The level of lifelong learning remains low compared to other best performing countries. Here, less than 10% of those aged 25 to 64 are involved in lifelong learning, compared with 34% in Sweden, 21% in the United Kingdom, 19% in Denmark, 18% in Finland and 17% in the Netherlands. Almost 75% of lifelong learners are in employment and only 3% are unemployed. The remaining 23% are not economically active
- ❖ Over 40% of our male working-age population (15-64) is low-skilled, compared with 20 % in Germany
- ❖ 23% of our working age population lacks functional literacy skills. This is the second highest rate of illiteracy among 18 industrial economies surveyed.

Policy – Overview

The various Social Partnership Agreements entered into by the Government and Social Partners since the Programme for National Recovery (PNR) in 1987 form the political and policy backdrop for most policy development in the Republic. The PNR, which was entered into at a time of high unemployment and public debt, made international competitiveness the key policy goal with control of the public finances as a central component. Although sight may have been lost of these goals during the ‘Celtic Tiger’ years, they have re-emerged as key components of all efforts to address Ireland’s current economic difficulties.

Despite the elaborate consultative structures which were created on foot of Social Partnership a critical feature of the PNR was an acceptance that younger and more skilled workers would be prioritised over older workers, people with disabilities, lone parents and so on. Welfare reforms were shaped by a need to meet minimum needs, to avoid the creation of poverty traps and to promote active labour markets. Housing was treated as a market problem with limited commitments by the State to the provision of social housing. While minimal commitments were made to equal access to health, it was increasingly treated as a market problem. Indeed, the dominant themes of the health debate were the need for more private sector involvement and the growing cost of healthcare, particularly eldercare. While there has been a strong emphasis on educational disadvantage, investment in education was and is linked to economic development and Ireland’s capacity to secure jobs. Although neo-liberal economic thinking underpinned the PNR and all subsequent Social Partnership Agreements, economic prosperity made it possible to soften the edges.

However, when addressing the needs and concerns of Older Workers the focus has been on economic issues – such as the recruitment and retention of Older Workers. Almost all work done to address disadvantage has been progressed as part of the overall effort to promote economic dynamism and prosperity and couched in terms of how best to use Older Workers/People to achieve this.

To a large extent social exclusion replaced poverty within official discourse as the preferred method for fanning social ills. The dominant idea was, and still is, that employment is the solution to poverty or to put it another way *‘a rising tide lifts all*

boats.'

Recently published population projection (Eurostat '08) show that by 2030 Ireland can expect 16.2% of its overall population to be aged 65 years and older. By 2060 this is expected to increase further to a quarter of the overall population. Not only is the population ageing but life expectancy is also increasing. It is expected that men will live up to 85.2 years by 2060 (from 76.7 years recorded in 2004-2006) and women to 89.2 years (from 81.5 years in 2004-2006). Policy initiatives in relation to Older Workers have been fragmented and largely confined to the immediate concerns of the Government Agency or Department taking the particular initiative. In the current economic climate it is likely that Older Workers will fare badly and that few initiatives will be taken to improve their situation.

Active Ageing – A Global Catchphrase.

The issue of demographic ageing has prompted a variety of policy responses from organisations as diverse as the World Health Organisation, (WHO) the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development,(OECD) and the European Union to name but a few. 'Active ageing' has emerged as the catchphrase which encapsulates the virtues these international organisations are promoting. However, although these organisations may use the term 'active ageing', it has a variety of meanings.

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition stresses the human rights of older people and builds upon the UN principles of independence, participation, dignity, care and self-fulfilment. In this way it represents a rights-based approach that recognises the rights of people to equality of opportunity in all aspects of life, as they grow older. It stresses that "active" refers to continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force. Another important aspect of the concept as applied by the WHO is the life course approach. This perspective recognises that older people are not a homogenous group and that individual diversity tends to increase with age. In short ageing is process not an event, and

it is not a process that negates other societal processes. Older people may share certain characteristics but each one will have his or her own life history, and prospects, as a result of variations in wealth, health, education, race, gender and class.

The life course perspective is also essential for focusing on the role of preventive policies, i.e. how less costly measures at an earlier stage of the life course may remove the need for costly curative/compensatory measures at a later stage. In addition, the WHO definition stresses the importance of maintaining autonomy and independence for Older People, and stresses that ageing takes place within the context of friends, work associates, neighbours and family. This is why interdependence as well as intergenerational solidarity are important tenets of active ageing. The WHO places demographic ageing in a wider and more holistic context, stresses the shared risk and rights of citizenship and the common good.

The OECD, 2000, defines active ageing *“as the capacity of people as they grow older, to lead productive lives in society and the economy. This means that people can make flexible choices in the way they spend time over life – learning, working, and participating in leisure activities and giving care.”*

The OECD's main concern is the capacity of people to be productive and how to keep or enhance this capacity, as they grow older. Instead of a life course perspective the OECD argues for a narrower policy focus than the WHO. In terms of policy fields, attention is focused on the financing and duration of retirement, the work-retirement transition as well as the health, social and economic well being of people of traditional retirement ages and their contribution to the economy and society. This 'productivist' approach may result in the exclusion of those who do not fit into the new active ageing paradigm as the role of preventative measures as stressed by the WHO is severely reduced and increased responsibility is placed on individuals. The assumption being that all individuals are in a position to make autonomous choices and that individual circumstances, prospects, and variations in wealth, health, education, race, gender and class can be ignored.

In “***Towards a Europe of All Ages***”, the European Commission identified the challenges of the ageing process to the supply of labour force, the retirement system, the health system and equality of living conditions and suggested a range of policy responses. The European Union’s approach to active ageing “is about adjusting our life practices to the fact that we live longer and are more resourceful and in better health than ever before,” it is “about seizing the opportunities offered by these improvements. In practice it means adopting healthy life styles, working longer, retiring later and being active after retirement. Promoting active ageing is about promoting opportunities for better lives, not about reducing rights. Adequate income provision and care is a part of the agenda.”

There is a tension in the EU definition of active ageing between what we must do to deal with demographic ageing across Europe and the maintenance/protection of rights. Significantly the EU is clearer about what we must do than it is about how existing rights are maintained/protected. The EU is recommending a life-cycle approach as opposed to a life-course approach to active ageing, although it does recognise the need for linkages between different policies which should include education, training, health, family policy and culture etc

Questions of ‘affordability’ have entered the debate around pension reform and health care. Headlines such as ‘*demographic time bomb*’ and questions over older people’s share of public resources relative to younger people presents distinct challenges. The myth of the ‘time bomb’ is based on a narrow reading of the ‘old age support ratio’ – those aged 65 or more years relative to the number in working age. A more accurate measure of dependency is the ‘total economic support ratio’ which compares those in work against those who are not, including children. Using this measure and including in the calculations for example the impact of delayed retirement plus the savings from, for example, reduced primary education level expenditure suggests that any changes in economic dependency will be manageable. In passing, it is worth noting, that private transfers of wealth/resources within families are usually downward, but this fact and the contribution of unpaid/informal care is seldom mentioned in arguments built on the need to deal with the ‘demographic time bomb’ or generational inequity.

The political climate across Europe is varied and the process of policy development in this field is uneven. There were very strong pressures for fundamental changes to the European social protection systems coming from international economic agencies, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and vested interests in the private pensions field. The conventional wisdom being that Europe cannot afford to age without fundamental reform. The current economic downturn is unlikely to improve matters but it may call into question the efficacy of exclusively private solutions to public/social problems.

Policy Initiatives – Ireland

The establishment of twelve Partnership Companies under the PESP Programme – the successor to the PNR - and the subsequent evolution of these companies means that there are now three Departments of Government responsible for labour market activation i.e. the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment/FAS, the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Department of Rural Community and Gaeltacht Affairs. In addition, the establishment of County Development Boards which are an attempt to link local development and local government has brought a fourth Government Department into the frame. However, the County Development Boards should be viewed as having a largely coordinating role.

Irish equality legislation established the Equality Tribunal which is essentially a court and a separate entity called the Equality Authority. The Equality Authority can support individuals to take cases under the equality legislation, can carry out Equality Audits, has a policy making and research role, and in collaboration with the Social Partners is working to build a culture of compliance in relation to equality legislation.

Age discrimination is the largest component of the Equality Authority's caseload, and points to ageism as a deeply ingrained but largely unacknowledged phenomena. Given that only an estimated 13% of companies have formal diversity management policies and only 15% of companies have a formal equal opportunity policy there is clearly a need, in the view of the Equality Authority, for

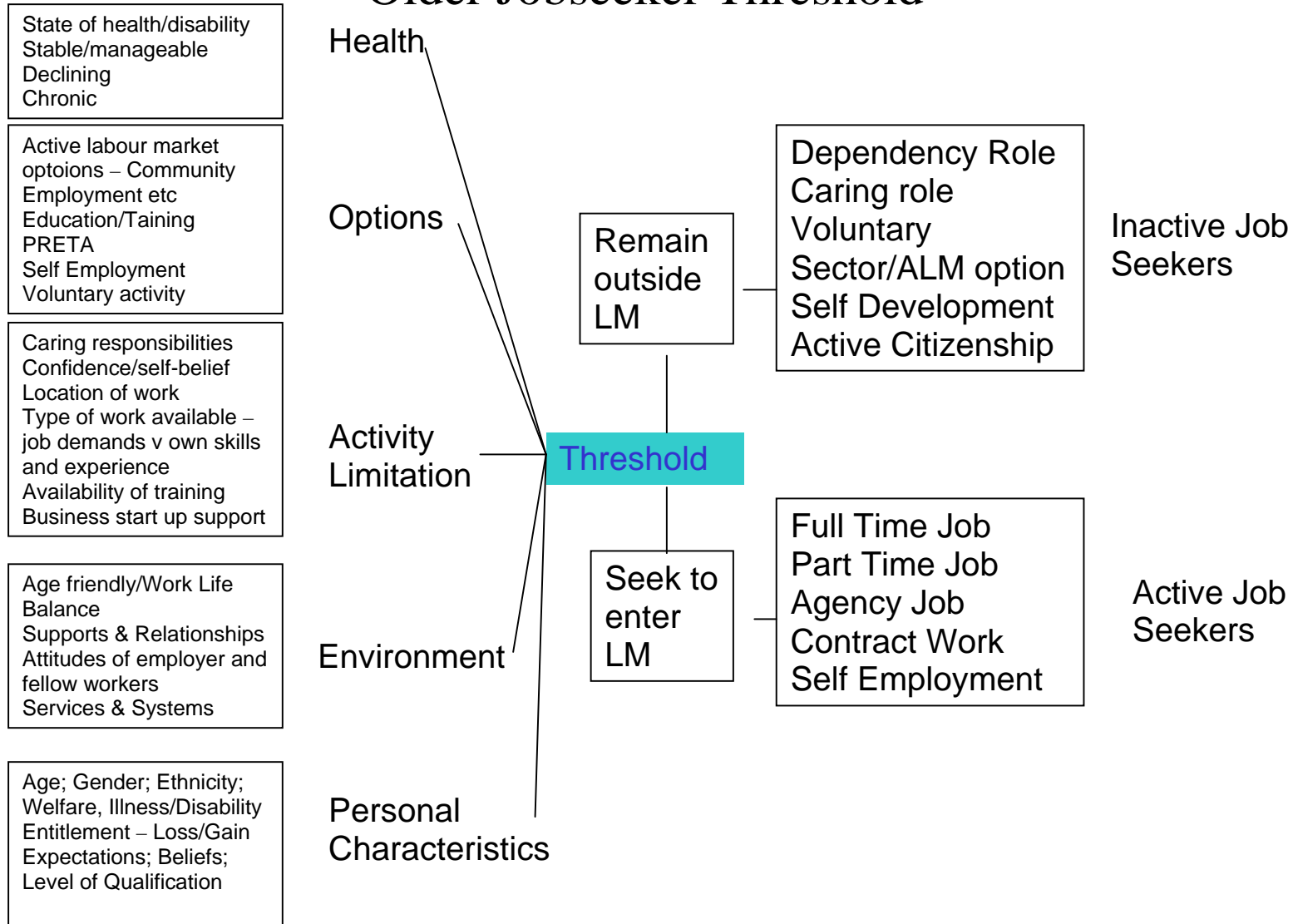
legislation requiring employers to put equality policies in place and to provide equality training. In addition, it is worth noting that while the Equality Employment Act provides for positive/discriminatory actions to promote equality for the over 50's this provision is seldom used.

In 1999 the Government used the proceeds from the privatisation of Telecom Eireann the State owned phone company to establish a **National Pensions Reserve Fund**. Each year it adds the equivalent of 1% of Irish GNP to the fund. At the end of 2007 the fund had a value of €21.3 billion and will help pay for social welfare and public sector pensions from 2025. It appears, in the short term, that the fund will be used to underwrite the purchase of shareholdings in Irish Banks who have run into difficulties. However, the critical issue in pension policy remains one of distribution in that some people have better pensions than others and women generally have poorer pensions than men.

In 2002 the Equality Authority produced **Implementing Equality for Older People**, a report which contained 72 specific recommendations, intended to form the basis of a comprehensive strategy for equality for older people in Irish society. On its release the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) was asked to consider how those recommendations could be implemented, paying attention to potential difficulties, and suggesting ways to overcome them. The NESF project team included representatives of employer and trade union organisations, community and voluntary sector organisations, Government Departments, the National Council on Ageing and Older People, the Equality Authority and Local Authorities. Its report **Equality Policies for Older People - Implementation Issues** (2003) concluded that many of the Equality Authority's recommendations involve little or no cost. For example areas such as 'age proofing' age awareness training and increased consultation with older people. The NESF recommended that these be implemented as soon as possible. It further recommended that the Government prioritise the balance of the recommendations and set a specific schedule for their implementation. It would appear that little action has been taken on foot of these recommendations.

In 2003 the OECD published **Labour Market Issues for Older Workers - Ireland**. This report took a 'productivist' view of the situation and pointed to

Older Jobseeker Threshold



number of gaps/failings – active labour market provisions for older workers, such as Community Employment had to a large extent become de facto grants to the sponsoring organisations and as such needed to be re-examined, employers had negative attitudes towards older workers, and Disability/Long-term Illness had become an early route from employment. It also made a number of suggestions in terms of making work pay. The diagram on the previous page is an attempt to summarise the issues raised in the report from the perspective on the Older Jobseeker.

This report fed into the decision to abolish PRETA – a Pre-Retirement Allowance which is paid to long-term unemployment assistance recipients aged from 55 to 65 years on declaration of retirement from the workforce - and to include the over 55s in the National Employment Action Plan.

In 2005 the National Economic and Social Council produced a report entitled the ***Developmental Welfare State***. The report advocated the adoption of a lifecycle framework which it is argued places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery, by assessing the risks facing him/her, and the supports available to him/her to address those risks, at key stages in his/her life.

The key lifecycle stages were identified as: Children, People of Working Age, Older People, and People with Disabilities. There is considerable focus on activation and the use of ‘participation packages’. However, despite the challenges it poses in terms of restructuring the delivery of services by public bodies, it did not deal adequately with the issue of rights and standards. Issues such as long-term dependence on social assistance, educational disadvantage, poverty in old age, the barriers faced by people with disabilities and limited access to childcare and eldercare are not addressed. In many respects it appears to be a repackaging of existing policies and supports with a focus on life stages rather than on life course. While there is something very appealing about the idea of life stages, they are essentially social constructs which encompass the norms and expectations that society associates with particular chronological ages. Life stage associated with older people tend to be based on ageist thinking.

The National Council for Ageing and Older People published “***A Society for All***”

Ages" (2005) and, given that its parent Department is Health & Children, it is not surprising that the report reflects the World Health Organisation's perspective on active ageing. The report emphasised the interdependence of generations and of individuals; the recognition of diversity; the protection of individual identity, values and beliefs; and the fostering of social cohesion through the adoption of socially inclusive policies and priorities. It argued that in a Society For All Ages, the generations are valued equally and intergenerational solidarity is part of the social contract. It also argued for the adoption of a life course perspective, consistency and equity in the treatment of all citizens and the pooling of risks between and within generations.

Although it is beyond the scope of this report to detail the policy debate in relation to the health needs of older people in Ireland, suffice it to say that the debate has fed into and been informed by 'common sense notions' about the elderly as an homogeneous group. Older people, for example, are sicker and frailer than younger people — therefore their increasing numbers will place an unmanageable strain on the health system. Yet little has been done to quantify the costs for society and the economy, in terms of the lost productivity of older workers and the long term costs of health care of those excluded from economic activity.

The current Social Partnership Agreement – **Towards 2016** contains a number of commitments of relevance to the over 50s in that the Government will:-

- ❖ provide further encouragement and support for older people to access further and higher education and lifelong learning, with targets to be set for their participation; and
- ❖ support their continued participation in the labour market, including family literacy projects, upskilling, and tackling ageism.

Finally, support for older workers would appear to have been further strengthened with the commitments in the current **Programme for Government 2007-2012** to:

- ❖ introduce phased retirement to allow workers a greater say in their

- retirement age;
- ❖ increase the State Pension for every year that a person over 66 delays taking it; and
 - ❖ extend the earnings disregard for those on the State Non-Contributory Pension without affecting their pension entitlement.

However, in the current climate with unemployment growing and an urgent need to replace the tax revenues lost as a result of the collapse of the construction industry it is likely that many of these commitments will be put on hold. Indeed, it is interesting to note that In defending the Government's decision to reduce the Equality Authority's budget for 2009 by over 40%, Billy Kelleher T.D, Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, pointed out that the Equality Authority had recently spent €230,000 on an anti-ageism campaign, stating that there were good and sound reasons in the current economic climate to question that spending. It would appear that older workers and older people will have to wait until the economy recovers.

It passing, it is worth noting the impact of the *Atlantic Philanthropies* on voluntary sector organisations working with and on behalf of Older People. In its efforts to support Ireland to develop appropriate responses to the issue of demographic ageing it has grant aided many of these bodies enabling them to develop strategic plans and to advocate in the knowledge that they have a sound resource base. It could be argued that until relatively recently the voice of Older People has largely been absent from the policy debates.

The Views of Local Policymakers

Some thirty policy makers across a range of organisations in the Midlands were interviewed as part of the research for this report, and they identified a range of gaps in current policy as it pertains to the Over 50's. The results in summary point to absence of an overall strategy which takes account of the economic needs of the Over 50s and the exclusion of the Over 50s as role models from public view/knowledge. While there is Equality Legislation it is thought to be

poorly understood, with the Over 50's likely to experience discrimination on age grounds from employers.

Strategy

In response to the statement that '*There is a strategy which takes account of economic needs of the over 50's*', respondents took the view that the only strategy in place revolves around welfare and welfare related payments or that there was no obvious and specific strategy evident or that supports for over 50's were inadequate in almost all areas.

Culture

In response to the statement that '*There are support guides for the over 50's*', respondents noted that there was little specifically for the over 50s that they were aware of and that support guides tend to focus on those aged 65+.

There were mixed views on the statement that '*The over 50's are valued by society*' with a significant number of respondents linking respect to production/economic activity and a tendency for the over 50's to be seen as having health issues which overlooks the experience and life learning they have gained. A number of respondents suggested that as 'society' ages the over 50s are becoming more valued.

While respondents agreed with the proposition '*That society values volunteers*', a number wondered if the over 50's are viewed as only being fit for volunteering. Noting the calls for more volunteers, the consensus appears to be that society does not fully appreciate the volunteering people actually do i.e. sport, caring in the home, etc.

In response to the statement that '*There are regular events targeted at the over 50's*', respondents noted that FAS events were open to all but that there were no specific events for the over 50's. The bulk of respondents were of the view that most events are targeted at the over 60's and the over 65's. In addition, such events are usually charitable in nature

POLICY FRAMEWORK		AVERAGE SCORE
THEME	STATEMENT	SCORE 1-4
STRATEGY	There is an overall strategy for the Over 50's in the area	1.60
	There is a strategy which takes account of economic needs of the over 50's	1.50
	Average score strategy	1.55
CULTURE	There are support guides for the over 50's	1.73
	The over 50's are valued by society	2.28
	Society values volunteers	2.53
	There are regular events targeted at the over 50's	1.47
	There are role models and case studies appearing regularly in the media.	1.33
	Average score culture	1.75
ECONOMIC CONDITIONS		
Employment	There are age positive employers	1.87
	Employers encourage applications from the over 50's	1.60
	There are sufficient regulations to cover age discrimination at work	3.20
	There is a good reporting system for age discrimination	2.43
Self Employment	There is easy accessible support to help individuals into self employment	2.10
Volunteering	There is easy accessible support to help individuals into volunteering	2.27
	Average score economic conditions	2.25
TRAINING	There are easy accessible training courses in ICT	2.70
	There are easy accessible training courses in confidence building, motivation etc.	1.80
	There are easy accessible training courses in CV writing and job skills.	2.27
	Average score training	2.26
MONEY	Pension rights are easily understood	1.70
	Over 50s can access funding to start-up new businesses	1.43
	Average score for money	1.57
	Overall Average	1.88

In response to the statement that '*There are role models and case studies appearing regularly in the media*' most respondents stated that the 50+ age group are not highlighted as role models. In the absence of positive role models there is nothing to counterbalance or challenge the typecasting of older people as inflexible, dependent and lacking dynamism. This is a critical issue as the

under-representation or exclusion of older people from employment which, along with the ageist assumptions underpinning many aspects of the health care debate, not only reinforces this message but these attitudes become part of the thinking and rules of the institutions that govern the conduct of everyday life

Economic Conditions

In response to the statement that '*There are age positive employers*' respondents noted that although some employers are very supportive such as B&Q stores, the public services and Penney's & Tesco - these are the exception and that more age positive employers are needed.

In response to the statement that '*Employers encourage applications from the over 50's*', the view of respondents was that employers do not discourage rather than that they encourage applications – and there is no evidence of positive discrimination. One respondent felt that the wording within a lot of job applications excludes the over fifties i.e. must be energetic, bubbly etc.

In response to the statement that '*There are sufficient regulations to cover age discrimination at work*'; most respondents cited the Equality Legislation but some felt it was inadequate as while there are sufficient regulations they are not always enacted as they should be, or they are easily accessed if you know how or if you knew who to contact.

In response to the statement that '*There is a good reporting system for age discrimination*', respondents appeared to feel that the system is too complex, although there are clear and concise regulations. Others stated that it can be difficult to process complaints and that the system is difficult to understand. Publicity is poor so awareness is an issue.

Local policymakers would appear to be in tune with the findings of the July 2008, Eurobarometer Survey "***Discrimination in the European Union: Perceptions, Experiences and Attitudes.***" The results reveal that, on the face of it, Ireland is combating ageist attitudes. When asked about whether ageism was widespread, Irish people classed themselves as among the least ageist in Europe. However, while one in ten of those surveyed said they had been discriminated against,

which is lower than the EU average, researchers point out that this is mainly because Irish people are two times less likely than other Europeans to report being discriminated against on age grounds. This fact is made even more worrying when the researchers discovered that only three out of every ten people would know their rights if they were being discriminated against and that people over 50 are the least likely to know what to do when faced with discrimination

In responses to the statement that '*There is easy accessible support to help individuals into self employment*', respondents cited the County Enterprise Boards, FAS, Social Welfare and the Partnership Companies. However, they felt that such support is not publicised and is disjointed, that the Back To Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme was an option but funding wasn't easily accessible and that you needed to be knowledgeable/empowered

In response to the statement that '*There is easy accessible support to help people into volunteering*', respondents noted the existence of Volunteer Centres but pointed out that routes into volunteering often depended on ones geographical area/location. More encouragement is needed, and more promotion. A number of respondents were unaware of any support network.

Training

In response to the statement that '*There are easy accessible training courses in ICT*', respondents cited provision by FAS, the VEC and others. While the general view was that there was a good selection available there were issues of access, whether people had their own PCs, cost - means testing and a limited number of places.

In response to the statement that '*There are easy accessible training courses in confidence building, motivation etc*', respondents were aware of provision by the Partnership Companies and Social Welfare but most felt that they were not easily accessible or if accessible could be costly. One respondent questioned the confidence/ability of people to go on these courses. While another raised issues in relation to funding, eligibility criteria and means testing.

In response to the statement that '*There are easy accessible training courses in CV writing and job skills*', respondents noted the existence of Jobs Clubs and the

Training Analysis FAS – Over 50s as a Percentage of the Total – Midlands 2007

Over 50s as a % of	In Training	Completed	Total	Placed
Longford	9.4%	6.6%	7.5%	7.9%
Westmeath	7.3%	5.8%	6.5%	6.2%
Offaly	8.4%	10.5%	9.8%	12.4%
Laois	7.5%	11%	9.6%	15.5%

VEC Guidance Service but questioned how accessible they were and, in some instances, the cost of accessing such supports.

Figures are not readily available for all training delivered in the Midlands by age. However, the figures in the table above show, the over 50s are not taking up a proportionate number of the training places on offer from FAS. The figures for each county show the Over 50s as a percentage of those in training, those who have completed their training and those placed in employment

Money

In response to the statement that ‘Pension *rights are easily understood*’ respondents, in general, felt that the whole pension system is very complicated, with no allowance made for inadequate literacy or educational skills. They noted that the some support is available via the Citizens Information Centres who can help with pension queries.

In response to the statement that the ‘*Over 50s can access funding to start-up new businesses*’, respondents were aware of the supports offered by the County Enterprise Boards, Partnerships and Social Welfare but felt that funding is no longer easily available. The general view was that access to credit may be a problem and that the difficulties faced by older entrepreneurs are exacerbated by the current economic climate.

Volunteers without Influence?

A focus on volunteering often obscures the constraints which prevent Older People from shaping the decisions that affect them. Acheson and Harvey in their recent publication “**Social Policy, Ageing and Voluntary Action**” suggest that both Britain and Ireland fall well behind the European norm in ensuring Older People are able to influence the decisions that affect them. They compare the situation of Older People’s organisations in Northern Ireland with their counterparts in the Republic. Questions were mainly asked of local organisations, about local services, often in the health area, arguably those that matter most.

Are Older People’s Organisations consulted about the decisions that affect them?

	<i>Northern Ireland</i>	<i>Republic of Ireland</i>
<i>Never</i>	18.3%	37%
<i>Occasionally</i>	20.7%	34%
<i>Regularly but informally</i>	20%	14%
<i>Formally represented</i>	27.3%	15%

The results for the Republic should come as no surprise. For example in 1988, the main national policy for older people, “**The Years Ahead**”, recommended that Health Boards establish advisory committees of Older People. Ten years later in 1998, the **National Council on Ageing and Older People** examined what progress had been made, it found that only two Health Boards had done so. Six health boards had decided that such advisory boards would be “too hard to manage”. In 2008, the only change is that the **National Council on Ageing and Older People is** being integrated into its parent department. Will it be able to analyse and to critique policy when it no longer an independent entity?

One of the most recent expressions of the official view of the role of Older People’s Organisations is to be found in the National Health Strategy “**Quality and Fairness - a health system for you**”, which declared that the role of

community organisations is to “facilitate volunteers in providing support services such as shopping, visiting and transport for older people”.

While the reports cited above focus on the area of health it is clear that the experience of Older People in this arena is not untypical. Although important work is being done by representative organisations, such as the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament and Age Action, the mobilising of voluntary and community organisations to influence decisions in Ireland at a national level is still at a relatively early stage. It is clear that Older People are not influential and for this to happen volunteering will need to encompass self-advocacy and a more political engagement by Older People in Irish society. A more political type of activism by Older People could contribute to a climate for change towards newer more positive visions and experiences of Older People both within and outside employment .

Conclusions

Given that Ireland is ageing at a far slower rate than most other EU States demographic ageing is not an urgent policy issue. Within the domestic policy arena the Over 50s were until relatively recently facilitated to exit the labour force, and with the global economic downturn and a return to high levels of unemployment it is likely that this policy will be revived.

Although the WHO has argued cogently for the adoption of a life course perspective on active ageing, Ireland has adopted a life cycle approach and in addressing the issues of Older Workers has focused on economic issues – such as the recruitment and retention of Older Workers. Almost all work done to address disadvantage has been progressed as part of the overall effort to promote economic dynamism and prosperity and couched in terms of how best to use Older Workers/People to achieve this.

While the Employment Equality Act (EEA) 1998 and the Equal Status Act (ESA) are progressive pieces of legislation, the recent reduction in the Equality Authority’s budget for 2009 and the level of inertia in relation to Implementing the recommendations contained in ***Equality Policies for Older People*** -

Implementation Issues points to a level of ingrained ageism that will not easily be ended. Indeed, the absence of Older People from the policy debates and their focus to date on defending pension and medical card entitlements results in a failure to adequately reflect or confront the roots of ageist prejudices. It may be that a teasing out of 'active ageing' and the life course perspective offers the Over 50s a more fertile ground for dialogue and for the building of alliances than a narrow focus on equality or on simply defending their minimal entitlements.

Neo Liberal economic thinking has dominated political thought and policy making for over 20 years and is best summed up in the mantra that 'a rising tide lifts all boats.' The consultative structures of Social Partnership which allow a variety of groups and interests to advise government on economic and social policy do not necessarily result in the Government taking that advice or in the advice having a long lasting and significant influence on policy.

At local level the scope for influencing policy is limited. However, as the economic downturn continues it would be in the interests of all those living in the Midlands to ensure that the region secures a proportionate share of all training provision available and that the Over 50s receive their proportion of what is secured for the region.

In the longer term there is a need to build capacity with the Over 50s in terms of their ability to articulate and advance their agenda, and for building alliances across and between the generations.

This capacity building should include the development of the skills and analytical tools to challenge conventional and ageist thinking, and result in the emergence of confident and competent role models.

Persons aged 15 years Ireland and over, at work in each intermediate industrial group, by age group, Census 2006

Age Group	15-19 yr	20-24 yr	25-34 yr	35-44 yr	45-54 yr	55-64 yr	65 plus
Industry	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0.73	3.96	15.10	22.71	24.63	22.16	10.71
Mining, quarrying and turf production	1.32	6.45	23.60	24.00	25.51	17.57	1.56
Manufacturing industries	1.42	9.52	35.39	27.59	17.26	8.00	0.82
Food industries	1.52	9.74	31.24	26.69	19.95	9.87	0.98
Beverages and tobacco	0.88	6.75	31.82	28.29	21.96	9.41	0.88
Textiles, clothing, footwear and leather	0.89	6.25	23.74	28.24	23.05	15.51	2.32
Wood and wood products	2.57	11.82	31.94	25.71	18.07	8.82	1.06
Paper, paper products, printing and publishing	0.81	7.61	32.54	27.61	18.60	11.20	1.64
Chemical, rubber and plastic products	0.66	7.47	39.75	28.71	16.35	6.59	0.47
Glass, pottery and cement	1.89	8.92	29.10	26.89	20.73	11.45	1.01
Metals, metal products, machinery and engineering	1.54	10.69	39.03	27.60	14.78	5.82	0.55
Other manufacturing (incl. transport equipment)	2.29	10.96	31.41	27.67	18.25	8.50	0.93
Electricity, gas and water supply	0.78	5.22	21.51	25.30	30.97	15.32	0.91
Construction	5.21	16.15	31.30	22.77	15.50	8.19	0.89
Wholesale and retail trade	3.71	14.26	29.56	24.03	17.33	9.51	1.59
Hotels and restaurants	3.42	18.31	34.61	20.26	14.45	7.61	1.36
Transport, storage and communications	0.88	6.65	27.21	27.22	24.04	12.61	1.40
Banking and financial services	0.72	13.34	41.59	22.94	15.35	5.49	0.57
Real estate, renting and business activities	0.79	10.62	39.10	24.57	15.59	8.00	1.33
Public administration and defence	0.43	5.45	23.90	27.76	28.97	12.70	0.79
Education	0.49	5.93	25.09	25.55	26.44	15.17	1.33
Health and social work	0.52	5.93	26.97	26.50	25.21	13.58	1.30
Other community, social & personal service activities	3.15	13.94	28.60	23.34	17.05	11.05	2.87
Industry not stated	6.52	10.89	27.84	22.16	17.34	12.99	2.26
All industries	2.32	10.64	30.30	24.65	19.52	10.82	1.75

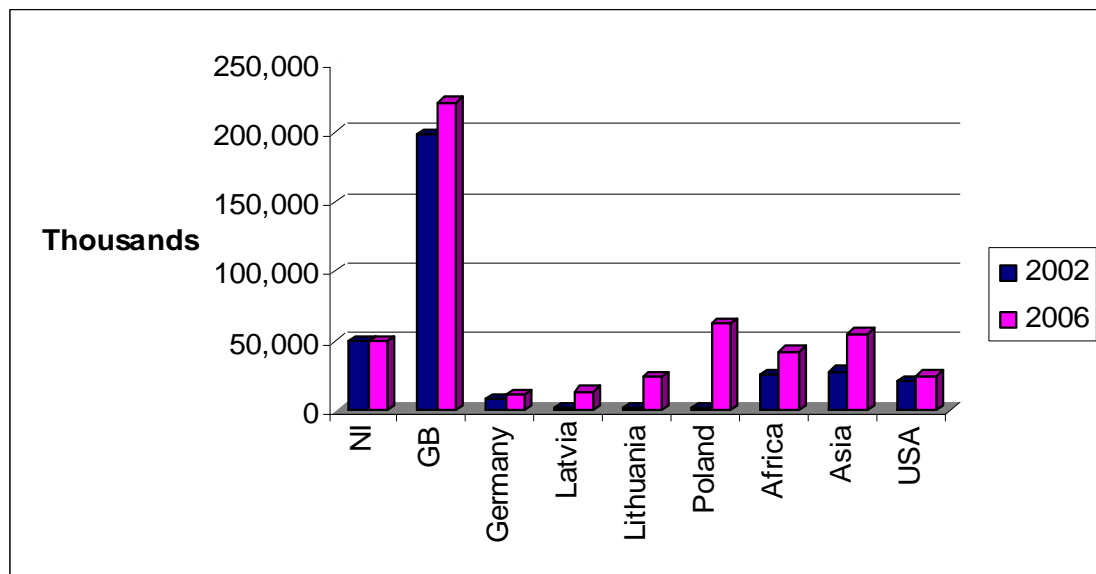
Individual Questionnaires – Results

The Sample

The sample consists of 155 individuals i.e. 83 males and 72 females, with 20% in the 46 – 50 age group, 25% in the 51 – 55 age group, 21% in the 56 – 60 age group, 18% in the 61 – 65 age group, 11% in the 66 – 70 age group and 5% in the 70+ age group

83% of the sample described themselves as Irish with the remainder describing himself or herself as English or other. Given the relatively large number of migrants from Eastern Europe it is easy to over look the fact that the largest non-Irish group are British citizens. While the percentage of usual residents born in Ireland stood at 89.6% in 2002 it had fallen to 85.3% in 2006.

Place of birth 2002 and 2006



Approximately 15% of respondents had a primary education only, 6% had completed the Group Certificate – A technical/apprenticeship orientated two year course at second level, 7% had completed the Intermediate Certificate, 28% had completed the Leaving Certificate, 20% had a Third Level Education, and the remainder had a Higher or Professional Qualification.

The higher the educational level attained the less likely the risk of unemployment. The risk of unemployment was nearly five times higher in 2006 for a person with only a Primary education than for someone who had completed a Third level (degree or higher) course. As many as 50% of those aged 65 and over never went beyond primary education, while 61% of those aged 50-64 never completed secondary education.

The incidence of training and education uptake by older workers aged 50-64 is 5% compared to 8.5% for workers aged 25-49 (OECD 2006). Past under-provision in education has left a significant skills deficit amongst the over 50s and there is as yet no agreed mechanism to fund the costs of lifelong learning between the State, Employers and Employees

In terms of economic status 52% of the sample are currently in employment, 5% are self-employed, 19% are economically inactive and the remainder are unemployed in receipt of unemployment benefit/assistance.

Of those unemployed 14% are signing for less than months, 21% are signing for between six and twelve months, with 32% signing for twelve to eighteen months and a further 32% signing for over eighteen months.

The economically inactive are grouped as follows – just over half are retired, with 27% on incapacity and one fifth responsible for family or caring duties.

Figures from the 2006 census show that nearly 41,000 persons, representing more than one in four carers, provide regular unpaid help for 43 or more hours each week (i.e. on average more than six hours per day throughout the week). Two-thirds of these heavily committed carers are women. A half of all those aged 65 years and over who are carers spend more than 43 hours each week providing help to others.

Section B

Employed and Self Employed

In terms of age they would like to retire, 8% of the employed and self-employed would like to retire between 50 and 59 years, 82% would like to retire between 60 and 69 years, with 14% opting for 70+ years. The remainder either don't want to retire at all, or they want to do so early.

Half plan to retire completely, 22% plan to look for alternative work, approximately 31% plan to volunteer, with six percent taking on caring responsibilities i.e. with children or older adults.

In reply to the question do you there is sufficient help and assistance available to enable you to plan for the future? Just over half stated that more help was needed, 28% stated that some help was available and the remainder stated that most of what I need is available. Those who were satisfied with their situation noted for example that 'I am fortunate, I have skills and contacts so I managed to keep working on reduced hours as I wanted' However, others noted a need for financial and other advice, that if advice was available it wasn't advertised, and that a wind down process – gradually reducing the working week as people approach retirement would be a good idea. A number of women noted that part of 'my difficulty isn't age, it's that I took time out to raise a family'. There was also a question as to the role of trade unions with one respondent describing the union as 'not very helpful on retirement planning and future options'.

In response to the question 'Do employers value the experience of the over 50s?' 57% of the employed and self-employed answered yes with 43% answering no. In terms of improving the situation to one where employers value the over 50s more highly respondents suggested 'raising awareness of the value of experience', allocating a percentage of jobs to the over 50s educating managers/employers regarding the health of over 50's, that more prosecutions under employment/equality laws may be needed, and that while the strong bias towards over 50's needs to be challenged many over 50's are under skilled compared to younger workers.

In reply to the question regarding plans after retirement 20% stated that they planned volunteer with Charitable organisations, and 26% with Local community groups.

In response to the question do employers encourage applications from over 50s, approximately 35% responded no, 38% responded that a few do, 28% responded that some do some don't and the remainder responded that a lot do. This view from those in employment suggests a strong perception that there is a bias against employing older workers.

Comments from respondents as regards how this might be improved included - this will only happen when there is a shortage of foreign workers, by identifying the experience and willingness of older workers to work rather than focus on qualifications, employers don't exclude us from applying for jobs – they just don't employ us. - A quota system might work, carrot and stick – apply laws and give employers PR awards, bottom line is benefits for employers, educate employers on the benefits of experience vs. enthusiasm. Also educate the over 50's in selling themselves at interviews, need to appreciate experience and be more open to flexible working arrangements. These responses indicate an awareness of the various approaches which need to be adopted if the situation of older workers is to improve.

Amongst the employed and self-employed the attitude towards retirement varied with 10% not going to retire, 9% not looking forward to it, 18% a little apprehensive, a further 18%, 41% stating that it should be OK, 16% looking forward to retirement, while 8% cannot wait to retire.

In response to the question 'What would motivate you to work beyond your intended retirement age' answers varied from finance or lack of finance, to flexible hours, to enjoyable work avoiding boredom, to job satisfaction and staying in touch with the people. A concern for many respondents was that working might affect their pension

Amongst the employed and self-employed the attitude towards retirement varied with 10% not going to retire, 9% not looking forward to it, 18% a little apprehensive, a further 18%, 41% stating that it should be OK, 16% looking

forward to retirement, while 8% cannot wait to retire.

In response to the question 'Would you consider part time work', 48% of the employed and self-employed answered yes, 23% answered possibly, 16% answered maybe and 10% probably not.

While roughly half the employed and self-employed thought that they will have sufficient pension to retire, a similar number felt that they would not.

Respondents made a variety of comments in relation to the question What are the main issues you face in future employment? However, three key issues to emerge were the need to supplement/increase a pension, ageism and its likely effects and fears around health/capacity to work a regular 40 hour week. Other issues related to training/upskilling, and a lack of guidance towards employment that fits the older workers needs. Just under half the self-employed surveyed had an exit strategy. Recent work by WEP with people who had entered self-employment via the Back To Work Enterprise Scheme indicates a far lower percentage of pension provision is the norm.

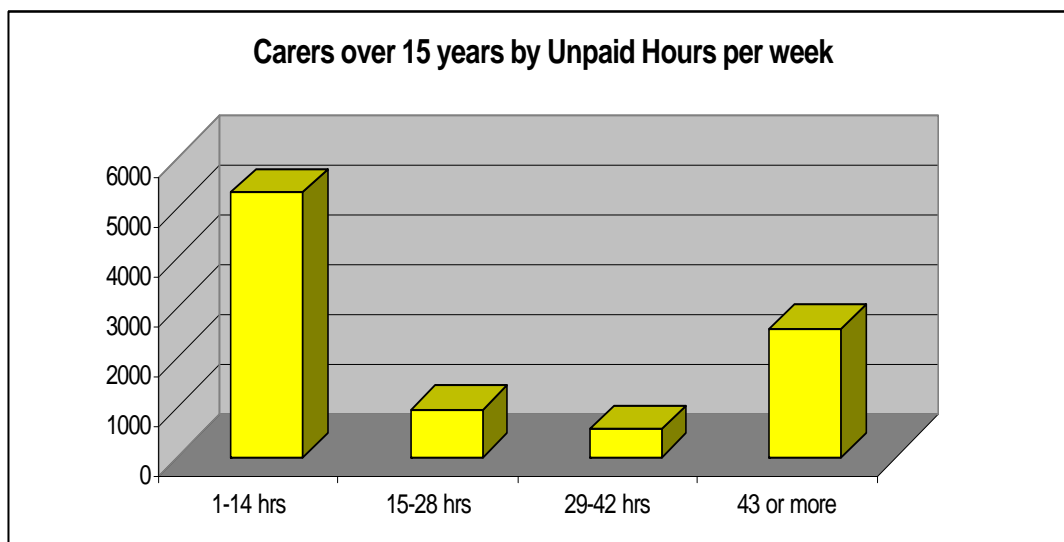
Section C

Economically Inactive

The term economically inactive is somewhat of a misnomer in that it disregards all activity that cannot be measured within a narrow economic productivist framework – people are either labour units within the economy or they are not. In addition, such thinking tends to create a hierarchical value system in which those who are not economically productive are viewed as lesser beings.

In reply to the question 'What are the reasons behind you being unemployed, retired etc?' 21% of the economically inactive stated that they were over 65 and retired, 24% replied that they were in ill health and the remaining 55% offered a variety of reasons – age, discrimination, family responsibilities and so on. Redundancy or early retirement voluntary or due to stress/ill health was a

common factor.



48% of respondents are seeking to change their situation either through employment or self-employment, with 96% of this group opting for employment as their first option and roughly one third considering self employment as an alternative to employment

In terms of the main issues facing this group 33% identified health/age, 3% identified employer attitudes, 19% identified lack of skills. Over half of this group identified a range of other issues – transport, pensions and so on. Training or retraining, attempting to re-enter the workforce and health concerns also featured as concerns. For female respondents the burden of care – whether childcare or eldercare was one that posed a significant obstacle.

For those who are economically inactive, excluding those already retired, their preferred retirement age varies as follows – 12% would like to retire between 50 & 59 years, 72% would like to retire between 60 and 69 years and 21% would like to work up to an beyond seventy.

In response to what do you plan to do when you retire – 47% plan to retire completely, 19% plan to seek alternative work, 22% plan to volunteer, and 9%

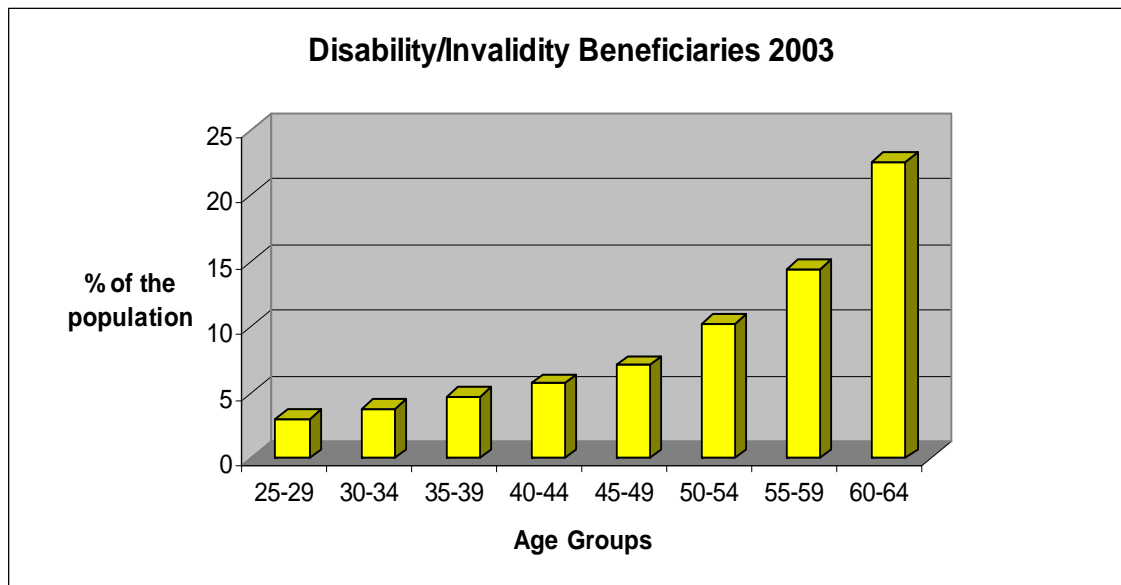
plan to become self employed. Another 9% will have care duties.

In response to the question is there sufficient help available to you – 67% stated that more was needed, 14% stated that there was some help available and 19% stated that most of what they needed was available.

Respondents noted a need to make up for a limited or interrupted education, a lack of advice guidance and support specifically for older workers, having been pigeon-holed as a carer, issues of skin colour and racism, lack of transport particularly in rural areas. There was a sense of futility for some respondents, one observed that 'It's hopeless, no one really thinks that I can find a job'.

In response to the question 'Do employers value experience of over 50's?' Some 27% of the economically inactive responded yes but the majority replied no. The replies to the question 'Do employers encourage applications from the over 50s?' found 40% stating no, 26% said a few do, 27% said some do some don't, and the remainder said that a lot of employers encourage applications from the over 50s. In commenting on how this could be improved respondents noted a need for a number of approaches – no cost to employer, trial periods, senior apprenticeships, also flexi-time for older workers. Perhaps an agency to take up this agenda and have its work assessed. Others suggested spreading the B&Q ethos on age acceptance or using the example of Dunne Stores and Tesco's.

What type of support would be of benefit to you? There were a variety of answers to this question including help with child and eldercare, back to work type courses, training/education that meets the needs of the older person, a need for support/training/guidance/advocacy, a need to tailor the job to suit the older worker, better pension arrangements, supports to start a business and so. Some respondents noted that certain types of employment which required physical stamina such as agriculture, building, labouring etc were not suitable for older workers. Others observed a need to find a way of challenging employers – they are getting around the law. There was also a significant level of despondency amongst respondents as to barriers they faced



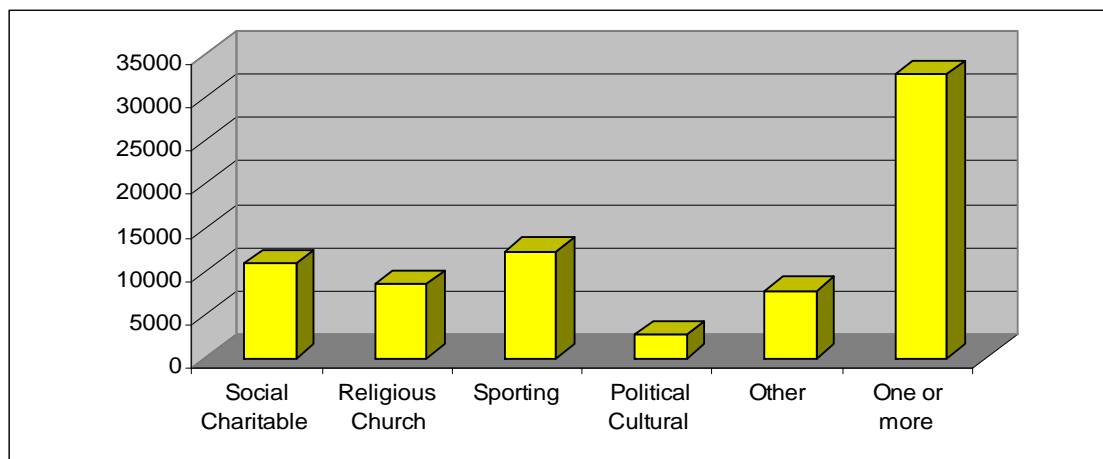
The above table shows disability/invalidity beneficiaries as a percentage of the working age cohort, as can be seen the percentage rises rapidly after 44 and clearly disability/invalidity is a route out of employment. The accelerated rise post 44 suggests that employers are unwilling or unable to adapt their workplaces to accommodate the needs of such workers and coping with their reduced capacity.

Section D

Volunteering

Approximately 28% of the sample are currently volunteering. Almost 70% of those volunteering are doing so for less than ten hours a week with the remaining 30% volunteering for over ten hours a week. Of those who are not currently volunteering roughly half would consider doing so. This suggests that there is an far larger untapped pool of volunteers which could be tapped into than might be expected. Amongst those who were open to volunteering work with the elderly, a need to contribute and to give something back, a need to be active, to meet people and to use skills acquired over a lifetime, emerged as the key reasons for volunteering.

Volunteers over 15 in the Midlands Census 2006



Figures from the census show over 553,000 persons, representing 16.4% of the population aged 15+, are involved in voluntary activity, and the activity with the highest recorded number of volunteers is social or charitable work followed by sporting activities. These figures confirm the findings of an earlier *National Economic and Social Forum 2002* report with respect to the greater likelihood of volunteering in mid-life (40-64 years of age), the positive relationship between socio-economic/professional status and volunteering and, the likelihood, that people with a lower socio-economic/professional status will not volunteer.

The Over 50s on Volunteering

'Stop thinking – Do it!'

'I look forward to retirement and being actively involved with helping others through volunteering'.

'I feel that volunteering is ultimately about helping others and having an impact on people's wellbeing'

'I believe that with volunteering there is no better way is to connect with your community and give a little back'

'As a volunteer, you certainly return to society some of the benefits that society gives you.'

'I believe that the importance of volunteering in the community cannot be stressed enough and would advise anyone who may have time on their hands to get involved in some type of voluntary activity in their locality'.

'Sometimes a volunteer experience can lead you to something you never even thought about or help you discover a hobby or interest you were unaware of.'

'I believe that volunteering is a brilliant way to get life experience'.

'One of the many good things about volunteering is that you can do it no matter what age you are or what experience you have and it can give you an immense sense of fulfilment.'

'Through my work as a volunteer I have met many new people and I enjoy getting together with them on a regular basis'.

'Through my time with the cycling club, I have been involved in voluntary work. I have taken part in many sponsored cycles across the country in aid of breast cancer research'

.Approximately 17% of the population in the Midlands volunteer with men dominating sporting activities, and women social/charitable and religious/church. Significantly many volunteers are active in one or more organisations. Many

commentators have noted that political action/engagement scores lowest in terms of voluntary activity.

The 2006 Census indicates that 23% of people in the 45 – 54 age group, 21% of people in the 55 – 54 age group and 15% of people in 65+ age group volunteer. Significantly, the 2006 Census records a much higher percentage of persons aged 65 and over engaged in volunteering (15%) than the NESF 2002 study (6.1%).

Skills for the future

Some 59% of the sample answered yes to the question ‘Do you believe you have the skills for the future?’ While 64% of respondents would consider undertaking more training, a significant number had reservations in that they would have to see a value in it or it would need to be a ‘Back to work type course’ and useful job wise not just a way of passing time. Other comments reveal a concern with self-fulfilment and personal attainment. However, a number of respondents implied that training opportunities weren’t open to the over 50’s

IT and computer training were perceived as the most appropriate/useful training for older people to undertake.

Valuing Older Workers

Some 37% of respondents think that society values older workers. However, 52% though otherwise and 11% were undecided. Respondents noted the influx of young, energetic Eastern Europeans, that its about cost – who can do it the cheapest, that society only values older workers as ‘free workers’ caring for the sick or children. Others noted that older workers are more experienced, more mature and are generally committed to what they do, and that older female workers are valued as they have no childcare issues and they are more reliable.

Approximately 47% of respondents would go to FAS, the National Training and Employment Agency, for help with employment opportunities, with 7% going to private recruitment agencies or using personal contacts.

Of those respondents who might be interested in self-employment 62% would go to the County Enterprise Board or to the Partnership, with the remainder – some 38% - going to a variety of other organizations or agencies in search of support.

Of those interested in volunteering 55% would approach a Local Community Group, 42% would approach a Charitable Organisation and the remainder would contact the local Volunteer Centre. This indicates that while potential volunteers are reasonably clear as to their volunteering preferences, they are largely unaware of the potential role of Volunteer Centres in brokering a connection with their preferred organisation. A willingness to volunteer, or interest in volunteering may not otherwise translate into action.

Introduction – Employers Survey

The importance of older workers in the Irish economy is reflected in their number, which comes to more than half a million or more than 30% of the overall workforce. In analysing the responses of older workers and the economically inactive who were surveyed as part of this research the key value which they identified both directly and indirectly is that of choice i.e. older workers should have greater choice as to when they retire, whether they work shorter hours as they near retirement etc.

However, the views of employers are somewhat less clear as there is a considerable difference between their stated views on Older Workers and their practices. It is also clear that while employers have an awareness of Equality Legislation, rather than viewing it as a tool for facilitating the development of a supportive environment for Older workers the legislation is frequently viewed by employers as something to be worked around. However, it should not be assumed that ageism and ageist based employment practices are features unique to the private sector.

It is only recently that Ireland ended a de facto policy of encouraging Older Workers to exit the workforce early, with the extension of the National Employment Action Plan to include all persons over 55 years who are more than six months unemployed and the decision to allow no new claimants access the Pre-Retirement Allowance which is paid to long-term unemployment assistance recipients aged from 55 to 65 years on declaration of retirement from the workforce. In addition, from the mid 1990s, the State spearheaded the active recruitment of young migrant workers to fill skill and labour shortages and its agencies have on a number of occasions been found in breach of employment/equality legislation on age grounds. Despite the rhetoric of lifelong learning and upskilling there has been little done in a systematic fashion to address the educational/training deficits amongst Older Workers. Figures from the 2006 census show that some 42% of those who have completed their education have only lower secondary, and projections of future skills needs indicate that some 500,000 individuals will need to upskill by 2020 if Ireland is to achieve its goal of building a knowledge based economy.

Live Register Changes – August 2007 – August 2008				
	August '07	August '08	Increase	% Increase
County Laois	2,663	4,437	1,774	66.62
Portlaoise	1,200	2,070	870	72.50
Portarlinton	1,030	1,745	715	69.42
Rathdowney	433	622	189	43.65
County Longford	2,388	3,286	898	37.60
Longford	2,388	3,286	898	37.60
County Offaly	3,256	4,705	1,449	44.50
Tullamore	1,498	2,318	820	54.74
Edenderry	826	1,126	300	36.32
Birr	932	1,261	329	35.30
County Westmeath	4,353	6,064	1,711	39.31
Castlepollard	457	702	245	53.61
Mullingar	2,169	3,010	841	38.77
Athlone	1,727	2,352	625	36.19
Midlands Total	12,660	18,492	5,832	46.1

The Irish economy doubled in size during the 1990s, and achieved the fastest growth rate in the OECD area up to 2005. Economic growth was accompanied by a dramatic fall in unemployment levels which declined from over 16% of the labour force in the 1980s to 4.5%, below the OECD average, in 2007. The share of long-term unemployment in total unemployment fell from two-thirds in 1990 to 30% in 2007. However, with the collapse of the construction and related service sectors in 2007 the number of vacancies declined and unemployment began to grow. The impact of the economic slowdown spread throughout the economy and by November 2008 Live Register numbers had grown by 107,000 or 66% above levels a year earlier.

FAS, October 2008, noted that there were significant declines in the numbers of vacancies notified to it across virtually all occupations. Noticeable falls occurred for transport workers (-50%), IT-related occupations (-43%), construction (-43%) and retail sales workers (-26%). Overall, vacancies were down 24% year-on-year. FAS also noted an economy-wide slowdown in earnings growth in the first

half of 2008 which when adjusted for inflation, with the exception of banking and finance, was negative across all sectors. Their economists predict that negative spill-over from the construction sector to the services sector will be significant, and that the contraction in the labour market may result in net emigration of some 27,000 people in 2009.

Another reality to be faced in the Midlands is that much of the employment generated during the 'Celtic Tiger Years' is unsustainable and not only are employees at risk but so are a whole range of employers.

From an economic and social perspective the critical issue is whether the labour market enjoys a full recovery or returns to the persistently depressed conditions of the 1980s and early 1990s. The impact of the global recession plus the fallout from the collapse of the construction sector places significant burdens on all parts of labour market policy administration, and will have a negative affect on programme outcomes. It is likely that recent changes which included the Over 50s in activation measures will be abandoned. The immediate priority, for a variety of agencies, is to tackle the cyclical rise in unemployment with a particular focus on supporting the short term or recently unemployed. This will inevitably result in a withdrawal of resources/supports from the more difficult to place with pragmatic decisions being made as to value for money and the likelihood of a successful outcome.

Senior Select and Retain

The ***Senior Select and Retain*** Project which was funded under Round 2 of the Equal Programme in Ireland surveyed a number of recruitment agencies – both Public and Private – and found that ageism is present in many aspects of the hiring of jobseekers.

FAS and other State Sector Placement Agencies emerged as more jobseeker-orientated raising a large number issues concerning jobseekers and relatively few concerning employers. On the other hand, Private Sector respondents were more likely to discuss employer issues.

EMPLOYERS Comments on the Over 50'S – Case Studies

'We have no formal policy for recruiting older workers however we would prefer to employ people over 50 rather than 17/18 year olds because of the greater life experience that older workers can offer.'

'We believe that by employing older workers you are employing someone who carries a life time of experience and knowledge which in turn will benefit the hotels management, staff and customers.'

'I believe that presently there are more opportunities for older workers as employers often feel that the experience of the mature worker can cut out the need for training in some cases.'

'No matter what age the employee is, training is the key for keeping ones skills up to date.'

'Generally speaking, supervisory and advisory roles are more suitable for older workers than younger ones because of the life experience, knowledge and people skills the mature worker acquires over the years.'

'I think that older workers are often more willing to work and have no family ties, which s

'I believe that there is a business case for employing older workers because in my experience they have better people skills and are more tolerant'.

'Older workers are not as quick to judge people as their younger co-workers, which is very important in the hospitality business.'

'Be flexible with older workers if you can and be open to listening to their advice– they have more life experience than most'

'I feel that employing older workers has benefits for companies as they retain their experienced staff thereby reducing recruitment and training costs for new staff.'

'While younger workers can sometimes replace the skills of older workers the knowledge and learning acquired by the older worker are harder to replace.'

'A diverse workforce has been shown to lead to greater innovation leading to new products and services.'

'I believe that older workers are open t training, upskilling and taking on more responsibility, certainly in my experience anyway'

This is not surprising given that the Private sector relies on their employer clients for their income, whereas the State sector, does not. The main findings are as follows

Agency Issues:

- ❖ Some employers use employment agencies to circumvent equality legislation on ageism;
- ❖ It is often difficult to place an older jobseeker in appropriate employment because of ageist attitudes

Jobseeker Issues:

- ❖ The more well educated an older jobseeker is the more difficult it is for him/her to find employment;
- ❖ Less well educated male jobseekers are reluctant to be retrained in order to find employment;
- ❖ Less well educated women jobseekers are willing to be retrained and have a tendency to do well in employment;
- ❖ Older jobseekers want flexibility of hours and may prefer part-time to full-time work;
- ❖ Older jobseekers who have been made redundant are often traumatised by this event;
- ❖ Many older jobseekers prefer to have a more flexible job than those usually on offer;
- ❖ Older jobseekers are not prepared to travel long distances to work.

Employer Issues:

- ❖ Employers seeking executives are generally reluctant to hire an employee over 45 years of age;
- ❖ Age is not an issue for employers seeking workers for lower level jobs;
- ❖ Employers are unwilling to employ jobseekers with disabilities especially those with mental health problems.

Manpower Older Worker Survey

During 2006/2007 Manpower Inc. conducted a survey of over 28,000 employers in 25 countries and territories as to their practices regarding the recruitment and

retention of older workers. For the purpose of the survey they defined Older Workers as the Over 50s. The 25 countries surveyed were: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, the UK, and the U.S.

Employers were asked two questions regarding their practices in relation to the recruitment and retention of older workers.

A large percentage of the population is aging and will be eligible for retirement soon, which is expected to create talent shortages for employers over the next 10 years and beyond. In light of this challenge, has your organization developed a strategy to recruit older workers into your organization and retain your older workers past retirement age?

The survey is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly it allows some comparisons to be made between countries, and secondly it was conducted by a private company which is perhaps the only private recruitment agency in Ireland in Ireland with a section dealing specifically with the Over 50s i.e. Manpower Mature.

As part of the Irish Survey Manpower sought to establish the average age of the Irish workforce and to establish the level of awareness amongst Ireland's employers of the consequences of Ireland's ageing population. To facilitate the survey a representative sample of 681 Irish **employers** were asked two questions

"What is the average age of your workforce?"

"Do you foresee any significant changes in the average age of your workforce in the coming years? Why/Why not?"

The key results from the survey are that:

- ❖ Only 5% of Irish companies employ a workforce with an average age of 50+ in companies with 50 or more employees, this figure falls to 0%
- ❖ 68% of companies employ a workforce aged between 30-44 years of age

- ❖ Employers in Dublin have an older workforce on average with 11% of all companies having a workforce aged on average 50+ years of age
- ❖ Employers in Connaught have a younger average workforce with 70% of companies falling between the ages of 30-45 years of age and 0% averaging 50+ years of age
- ❖ 58% of employers surveyed believe that the average age of their workforce will stay the same over the next 10 years
- ❖ 13% of employers surveyed believe that the average age of their workforce will decrease over the next 10 years
- ❖ 30% of employers surveyed believe that the average age of their workforce will increase over the next 10 years

Ireland - Recruit/Retain Older Workers

Ireland	Recruit Workers				Retain Workers			
	Yes	No	Don't know	Doesn't apply	Yes	No	Don't know	Doesn't apply
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
National Total	9	87	4	0	26	65	9	0
Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry, & Fishing	13	87	0	0	20	77	3	0
Community Social & Personal	7	91	2	0	24	63	13	0
Construction	2	98	0	0	39	51	10	0
Electricity, Gas & Water	14	81	5	0	23	59	18	0
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Business Services	5	92	3	0	23	66	11	0
Manufacturing	10	85	5	0	22	71	7	0
Mining & Quarrying	13	85	2	0	22	66	12	0
Pharmaceutical	11	88	1	0	13	85	2	0
Restaurants & Hotels	1	85	1	0	24	62	14	0
Transportation, Storage & Communication	7	90	3	0	25	68	7	0
Wholesale & Retail Trade	11	80	9	0	28	65	7	0
Connaught	9	88	3	0	20	68	12	0
Dublin	9	85	6	0	28	62	10	0
Leinster	14	85	1	0	40	56	4	0
Munster	5	89	6	0	21	71	8	0
Ulster	9	90	1	0	21	72	7	0

(Total number of respondents 665 Overall Margin of Error: +/- 3.8%)

But perhaps the most striking finding was that in spite of the fact that almost 70% of the average workforce is currently aged between 30-45, 72% of organisations have failed to recognise that the average age of their workforce is going to increase, perhaps dramatically, in the coming years. Of course the survey and its findings were published before the full extent of the current economic downturn were known. It may also be that employers who believe that the average of heir workforce won't change or work decrease have unwritten or unstated plans to achieve that result.

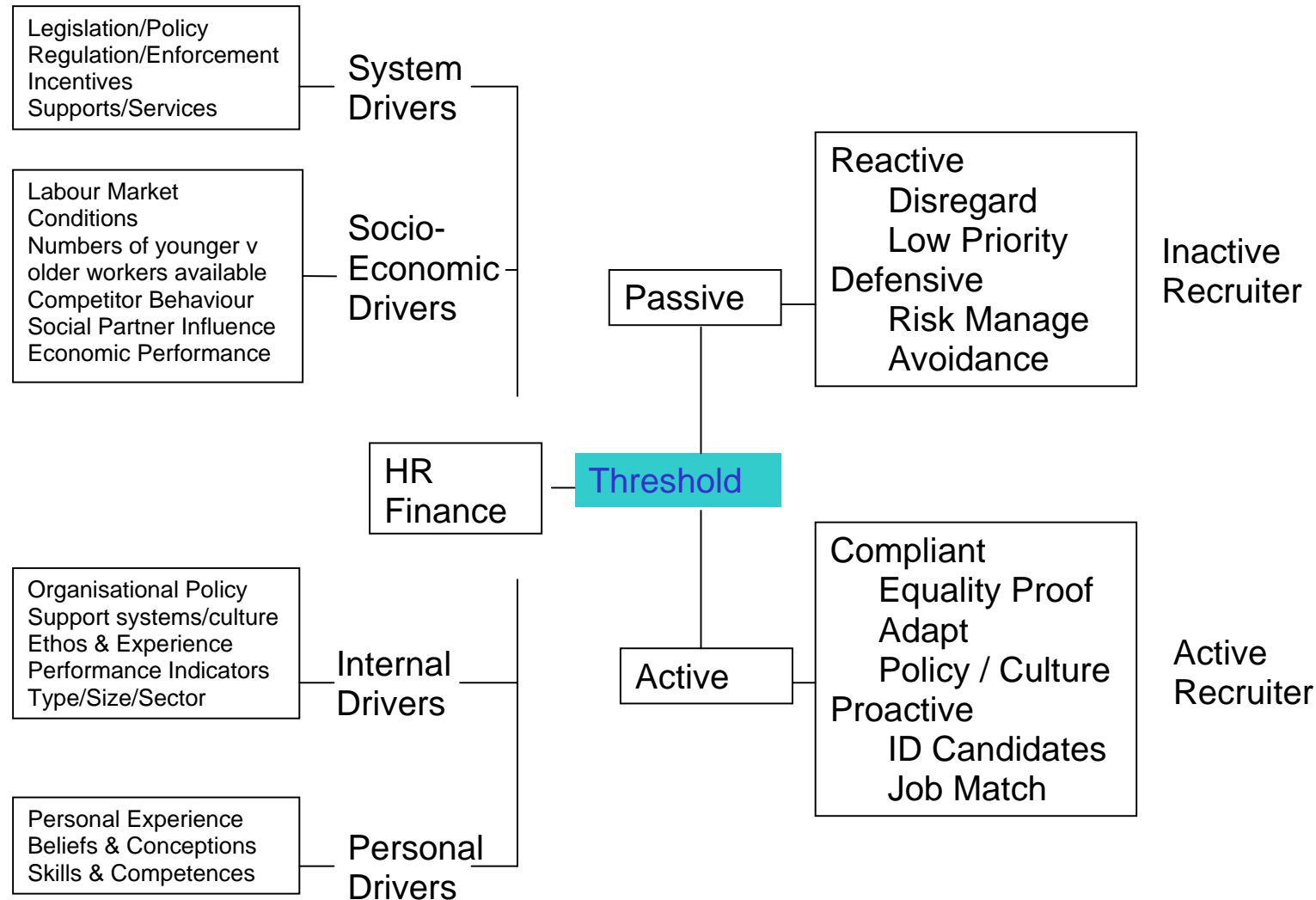
Employers attitudes and Practices.

Some 225 employers in Longford, Westmeath, Offaly and Laois were surveyed as part of the research.. The overall response to the matrix survey was significant in that no item under the headings of Culture, Employment, Volunteering or Skills scored a green light or to put it another way is not a matter for concern. It confirms the need for a major a cultural mindset change among both employers and employees to encourage and support Older workers as well as tackling ageism.

The full results are attached and organised so as to show the overall average, the results for employers with employees over 50, and for employers without employees over 50 or not stated.

Interestingly, Employers who have no employees over 50 were the ones who identify the lack of support mechanism for employees over 50. It is also the case that this same group of employers disagree with the propositions that there is support for employers seeking applications from the over 50s, that Employers encourage applications from the over 50s and that there is general awareness of job vacancies for the over 50s. Yet all Employers disagree with the proposition that there are barriers to employing people over 50.

Recruiter Threshold for Older Workers



The diagram on the previous page – ***Recruiter Threshold Older Workers*** – attempts to capture some of the drivers that influence the recruitment practices of employers. It would appear that a significant number of employers are reactive or defensive in relation to the recruitment of Older Workers and as such work around the employment equality legislation. In the longer term it may be that the reality of demographic ageing and the absence of a large pool of younger workers, will force a change of attitude. But for now, in the scramble for employment, the prospects for the Older Worker appears quite bleak.

Public sector employers typically offer a ‘job for life’ contract of employment and not surprisingly employ significant numbers of older workers. The process of ageing within the Public Sector is expected to increase dramatically in the future, with the proportion of staff over 50 nationally expected to increase from 25% at present to around 45% over the next decade. Although there are currently calls to reduce the numbers employed in the Public Sector it is unlikely that older workers will form a disproportionate percentage of those offered redundancy. This points to a need for more active skills development and training to fill competency gaps, succession planning and the integration of the Performance Management Development Systems with other HR policies.

With the exception of larger retail companies who had explicit HR policies and marketing reasons underpinning their employment of staff over 50, in other retail/service sector employment it would appear that the age of the employer and the type of business were critical factors in determining whether or not they employed staff over 50. For example retail outlets selling mobile phones and PCs tended to be managed and staffed by a relatively young workforce, as opposed to a typical garage which had a more diverse staff mix age wise. Older owner/managers also demonstrated a preference towards employing/retaining older workers. There is no general awareness of the ‘silver economy’ and the economic clout of older people.

However, few of the Employers interviewed demonstrated an awareness of the particular nature and needs of Older Workers. In almost all cases the Older Worker was expected to meet the same requirements as younger workers. The notion of life-work balance as it pertains to Older Workers was missing from all

Average for Employers, Employers with Employees over 50, and Employers without Employees over 50 or Not Stated

		Average	With	Without
THEMES	Statement			
CULTURE	There is sufficient help and assistance for employers to aid the over 50s in planning their future.	2.2	2.25	2.15
	Society values workers over 50	2.69	2.89	2.47
	There are role models and case studies of 'Age Positive' employers appearing regularly in the media	1.9	1.89	1.92
	There are support mechanism for employees over 50	2.05	2.1	1.99
	Average score for culture	2.22	2.3	2.14
EMPLOYMENT	There is encouragement for the over 50s to keep working	2.42	2.5	2.34
	There is encouragement for the over 60s to keep working	2.22	2.31	2.12
	There are special incentives to retain staff over 50	2.08	2.15	2.01
	There is support for employers seeking applications from the over 50s	1.96	2.06	1.86
	There is easy accessible support to help individuals into employment	2.12	2.18	2.07
	Employers encourage applications from the over 50s	1.99	2.02	1.95
	There are sufficient regulations to cover age discrimination at work	2.8	2.92	2.67
	There is a good reporting system for age discrimination	2.72	2.86	2.56
	There is general awareness of job vacancies for the over 50s	2.01	2.08	1.93
	There is support for developing CVs and help with the application process	2.3	2.29	2.31
	There is support for career planning within the organisation for the over 50s	2.12	2.19	2.05
	Most employers provide flexible working arrangements	2.23	2.31	2.14
	Part time work is readily available	2.32	2.42	2.21
	There are barriers to employing people over 50	1.93	1.93	1.93

Average score for employment		2.23	2.31	2.15
		Average	With	Without
VOLUNTEERING	Mechanisms are in place to support volunteering by employees	2.22	2.24	2.2
Average score for volunteering		2.21	2.24	2.2
SKILLS	Employees over 50 have the skills I need for the future	2.68	2.71	2.64
	Employees over 50 have adequate IT skills	2.16	2.17	2.15
	There is support for employees over 50 to develop their skills	2.5	2.65	2.34
Score for skills		2.45	2.51	2.38
Overall Average		2.28	2.34	2.21

feedback, even from Employers who had Employees over 50, and typically employers had a ‘plug in and play’ attitude.

The experience of older workers who lost their jobs points to a need for dedicated employment service supports, such as those currently provided by the Local Employment Service (LES) and some Partnership Companies, which could help could help older workers find alternative employment if made redundant and/or take up more suitable work. This could include job-search assistance and additional supports for employers.

Conclusion

The key findings of the Employer Survey is that ageism is a major barrier to be overcome by Older Workers, and that Employers have found ways to circumvent existing Equality Legislation. There is a need for ongoing education and the challenging of ageist practices but the recent decision to cut the Equality Authority’s budget and question the spending of monies on an Anti-Ageism campaign does not bode well for the immediate future. Employers who are

disposed to employing Older Workers tend to have no cognisance of the particular support needs of Old Workers and a poor understanding of Work Life Balance.

Local responses to the current economic downturn may offer opportunities for Older Workers but they will need to be 'political' in a way that they have not in the past. Ageism has a tendency to present itself in dishonest forms and the expectation that Older Workers should loose out to give younger workers an opportunity will probably gain strength.

More recent contacts with employers suggest that many do not know what to do or how they will navigate their way through the current economic situation and that significant joblosses are likely with some estimates suggesting that it could exceed 400,000 nationally by the end of 2009.

Appendix One



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MePlan 50+ Individuals Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of an EU funded project to encourage and support employment, self-employment and volunteering for the over 50s and help people prepare for retirement.

We would welcome your views and would appreciate your time in completing the following questions.

The information provided will remain confidential to the project and any data used with be summarized without any personal data.

If you require any assistance please do not hesitate to ask.

Section A

1. **What gender are you:** Male Female

2. **Please indicate your age group:**

46-50	<input type="checkbox"/>	51-55	<input type="checkbox"/>	56 – 60	<input type="checkbox"/>
61-65	<input type="checkbox"/>	66-70	<input type="checkbox"/>	70+	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. **What is your Ethnic Group?** _____

4. **Qualifications – please state the highest level of qualifications achieved, i.e. Primary/Group/Intermediate/Leaving/Other** _____

5. **What is your current employment / economic status?**
 - Employed How many hours do you normally work? _____
 - PLEASE PROCEED TO SECTION B:**
 - Self Employed
 - PLEASE PROCEED TO SECTION B**
 - Unemployed & signing at the job centre – please indicate length of time signing:

Less than 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 - 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 - 18 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
18 months +	<input type="checkbox"/>
 - Economically Inactive:

Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>
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On Incapacity Benefit

Family Commitments / Caring

Other _____

PLEASE PROCEED TO SECTION C



Section B: Employed or Self employed

6. At what age would you like to retire? _____

7. What do you plan to do when you retire from your current employment?

Retire completely

Look for alternative work

Volunteer

Caring responsibilities older younger

If employed would you consider self employment YES NO

8. Do you think there is sufficient help and assistance available to enable you to plan for the future?

More help is needed

Some help is available

Most of what I need is available

Are there any comments you wish to make? _____

9. Do you think employers value the experience of the over 50's? YES NO

How could this be improved? _____

10. Do you think employers encourage applications from over 50s?

No, I think they definitely do not

I think a few employers do

I'd say some do and some don't

I think a lot of employers do

Yes, I fully believe all employers do

How could this be improved? _____

11. What is your attitude to retirement?



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- Not going to retire
- Not looking forward to it
- I have a bit of apprehension
- It should be ok
- Looking forward to it
- Cannot wait to retire

12. What would motivate you to work beyond your intended retirement age?

13. Would you consider part time work after retiring?

- Yes
- Possibly
- Maybe
- Probably Not
- No

What type of work would you be interested in? _____

14. Do you think employers provide flexible working arrangements for older workers? YES NO

15. Do you think you will have sufficient pension in retirement?

YES NO

16. What are the main issues you face in future employment? _____

17. If self employed do you have an exit strategy? YES NO

If Yes what is it?



Section C : Economically Inactive

18. What were the reasons behind you being (unemployed, retired etc.) ?

19. Are you seeking to change your situation? YES NO

Through employment opportunities? YES NO

Through self-employment? YES NO

If NO why?

20. What do you believe are the main issues facing you

Now _____

In Future _____

21. At what age would you like to retire? _____

22. What do you plan to do when you retire?

Retire completely

Look for alternative work

Volunteer

Caring responsibilities older younger

Would you consider self employment YES NO

23. Do you think there is sufficient help and assistance available to enable you to plan for the future?

More help is needed

Some help is available

Most of what I need is available

Are there any comments you wish to make? _____

24. Do you think employers value the experience of the over 50's? YES NO



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How could this be improved? _____



25. Do you think employers encourage applications from over 50s?

- No, I think they definitely do not
- I think a few employers do
- I'd say some do and some don't
- I think a lot of employers do
- Yes, I fully believe all employers do

How could this be improved? _____

26. What type of support would be of benefit to you ?

Now _____

Future _____



Section D : ALL

27. Are you currently volunteering? YES NO

If YES how many hours per week _____

What organisation is this with _____

If NO would you consider volunteering? YES NO

Reasons and what type would you be looking for:

28. Do you believe you have the skills for the future? YES NO

29. Would you consider undertaking more training? YES NO

Comments? _____

30. Do you think society values older workers YES NO

Comments? _____

31. If you were interested where would you go for help with:

➤ Employment opportunities _____

➤ Self employment: _____

➤ Volunteering _____



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Thank you for helping us with this study.



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Do you want to be involved?

If you would be interested in receiving information about future events or activities please provide us with your contact and personal details.

Are you particularly interested in

Employment Self employment Volunteering Preparing for retirement

All the following fields are optional:

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

Post Code:.....

Age

Home Telephone No (inc STD).....

Mobile Telephone No:.....

Email Address:.....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Appendix Two

Individuals SUMMARY	
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Region **Midlands, Ireland**
Name of Expert **A. McCormack, J. MacLeod, E. McCormack**



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Number			
THEMES	Statement	Score 1- 4	Comments
CULTURE	There is sufficient help and assistance available to enable you to plan for the future?		
	Society values those over 50		
	Society values volunteers		
	There are regular events targeted at the over 50's		
	There are role models and case studies appearing regularly in the media.		
	There are support mechanisms for the over 50s		
	Employment, self-employment and volunteering are acceptable options for the over 50's		
	Employment, self-employment and volunteering are acceptable options for the over 60's		
	There are other lifestyle options for the over 50's		
	Average Score for culture		

EMPLOYMENT	There is encouragement for the over 50s to keep working		
	There is encouragement for the over 60s to keep working		
	There is easy accessible support to help individuals into employment		
	Employers encourage applications from the over 50s		
	There is general awareness of job vacancies for the over 50s		
	There is support for developing CVs and help with the application process		
	There is support for career planning for the over 50s		
	Most employers provide flexible working arrangements		
	Part time work is readily available		
	The tax, benefit and pension rules are easily understood		
	Average score for employment		

SELF EMPLOYMENT	There is specialised support for the over 50s to start up in business		
	There are networks which are open to all entrepreneurs		
	grants are available to cover start-up costs (running costs, advice, test trading...)		
	Average score for Self-employment		
VOLUNTEERING	Mechanisms are in place to support volunteering		
	Benefit rules are easily understood		
	Average score for volunteering		
SKILLS	I have the skills I need for the future		
	I have adequate IT skills to access the internet and for emails		
	I have adequate IT skills for word processing and spreadsheets		
	There is sufficient training available for me to access to develop my skills		
	Average Score for skills		

FINANCE	Mechanisms are in place for finding out the real financial needs of the over 50s		
	Most people over 50 will have sufficient pension provision		
	Average score for finance		
	Overall Average		

Appendix Three

Employers

Region

Name of Expert

Industry Type

Public/private/voluntary

% of employees over 50

Number of employees over 50 recruited in the last 12 months



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4 = totally agree, 3 = Agree

2 = Disagree 1 = Totally Disagree

THEME	STATEMENT	Statement	Comment
CULTURE			
	There is sufficient help and assistance for employers to aid the over 50s in planning their future		
	Society values workers over 50		
	There are role models and case studies of 'Age Positive' employers appearing regularly in the media.		
	There are support mechanisms for employees over 50		
	Average score culture		
Employment			
	There is encouragement for the over 50's to keep working		
	There is encouragement for the over 60's to keep working		
	There are special incentives to retain staff over 50		
	There is support for employers seeking applications from the over 50's		
	There is easy accessible support to help individuals into employment		

	Employers encourage applications from the over 50's		
	There are sufficient regulations to cover age discrimination at work		
	There is a good reporting system for age discrimination		
	There is general awareness of job vacancies for the over 50's		
	There is support for developing CVs and help with the application process		
	There is support for career planning within the organisation for the over 50s		
	Most employers provide flexible working arrangements		
	Part-time work is readily available		
	There are barriers to employing people over 50		
	Average score employment		
Volunteering			
	Mechanisms are in place to support volunteering by employees		
	Average score volunteering		
Skills			
	Employees over 50 have the skills I need for the future		
	Employees over 50 have adequate IT skills		
	There is support for employees over 50 to develop their skills		
	Average score for skills		
	Average overall		

Appendix Four

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Region

Name of Expert



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THEME	STATEMENT	SCORE 1-4	EVIDENCE
STRATEGY			
	There is an overall strategy for the Over 50's in the area		
	There is a strategy which takes account of economic needs of the over 50's		
	Average score strategy		
CULTURE			
	There are support guides for the over 50's		
	The over 50's are valued by society		
	Society values volunteers		
	There are regular events targeted at the over 50's		
	There are role models and case studies appearing regularly in the media.		
	Average score culture		
ECONOMIC CONDITIONS			
Employment			
	There are age positive employers		
	Employers encourage applications from the over 50's		
	There are sufficient regulations to cover age discrimination at work		

	There is a good reporting system for age discrimination		
Self Employment	There is easy accessible support to help individuals into self employment		
Volunteering	There is easy accessible support to help individuals into volunteering		
	Average score economic conditions		
TRAINING			
	There are easy accessible training courses in ICT		
	There are easy accessible training courses in confidence building, motivation etc.		
	there are easy accessible training courses in CV writing and job skills.		
	Average score training		
MONEY	Pension rights are easily understood		
	Over 50s can access funding to start-up new businesses		
	Average score for money		

Average overall

