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# Developing Good Practice in Managing Age Diversity in the Higher Education Sector: An Evidence-Based Approach

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The Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice

For further information about the project Developing Good Practice in Managing Age Diversity in the Higher Education Sector, please visit: [www.brookes.ac.uk/services/hr/cdprp/age](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/hr/cdprp/age)

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# Executive Summary

1. This report presents the results of a comprehensive Staff Age Survey and the findings from a series of focus groups with managers of different occupational groups, and senior academics to investigate age related issues in the HE sector. The Staff Age Survey and the focus groups were part of a project funded by HEFCE under its Leadership, Governance and Management Programme to support HEIs to take an evidence-based approach to develop good practice in managing age diversity.
2. Twelve institutions took part in the Staff Age Survey, six pre-1992 and six post-1992. The total number of employees in the participating institutions was 39,403 when the survey was conducted. Overall 7218 responses were received that represents a response rate of 18.3 per cent of the total sample population. The proportion of respondents is reasonably balanced among all different age groups, ranging from 25 and under to over 66, and broadly reflects the age profile of the whole HE workforce population in England. The proportion of women respondents (65%) is higher than that of men (35%). Although women appear to be over-represented in this survey compared to the whole of the HE workforce in England (53% women and 47% men), this can be explained by occupational group. The largest proportion of women respondents are in the role of support administrators where a very high percentage of women are employed in the whole of the HE workforce in England (81% HEFCE 2008/26 Staff employed at HEFCE-funded HEIs: update. Trends and Profiles: p. 39).
3. The key findings from this research are presented and discussed by following a thematic approach that includes: perceptions of age discrimination, managing retirement expectations, recruiting and retaining younger staff aged 30 and under, equality of access to training, development opportunities and career guidance by age group.
4. **Perceptions of age discrimination:** The great majority of the respondents (71%) do not know whether their university has a policy against age discrimination. Similarly many managers and senior academics do not know whether their institution has a policy that covers age discrimination.
  - 4.1 A relatively small percentage (9%) of respondents believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age. However, this result should not be under estimated as it equates to 598 responses. The survey results suggest that almost half of these respondents have taken some action to address the discrimination. This confirms the importance for HEIs to take action to prevent unfair age discrimination and avoid the risk of staff grievances or even legal action.
  - 4.2 Men are more likely to believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age (11%) compared to their women colleagues (8%). From an occupational perspective, academics (12%) are more likely to believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age compared to professional and support (9%), manual (7%) and senior management staff (5%).
  - 4.3 A higher proportion of respondents in the younger age groups, up to the age of 30 (11%), and in the older age groups aged 56 and over (15%), are more likely to believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age, compared to those in the age groups in the middle. The most common areas where respondents have reported having suffered age discrimination are: promotion, pay and recruitment.
  - 4.4 The majority of those respondents who believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age (66%) did not take any actions. The main reasons given for not taking any action, included 'nothing would happen' (66.6%), concerns about being 'labelled as a trouble maker' (43%), concerns about 'victimisation' (27%) and concerns about 'confidentiality' (25.5%). However, a large proportion of respondents (44%) did take some action either formally or informally, including taking advice from: their



line manager; their trade union representative, their Human Resource Department, raising a grievance, discussing the incident in the appraisal, and even looking for another job.

4.5 Some managers feel that age discrimination does not have the same high profile that other types of discrimination have: 'people aren't sensitised to this yet...they are better aware of gender issues'. However, some managers reported that younger staff are likely to experience difficulties when appointed to lead older staff, and that older staff are more likely to be perceived as resistant to change.

4.6 Different occupational groups seem to have different perceptions about who should be considered as an old worker. For example, in the case of academic staff it seems to depend on an individual's performance. While in the case of professional and support staff, employees aged 60 and over are generally regarded as old. This perception might be influenced by the fact that staff in this occupational group tend to retire around the age of 60.

4.7 A number of changes to recruitment practices have taken place as a result of the introduction of the Age Regulations. These include the removal of the date of birth from job applications, avoidance of terminology that could be interpreted as ageist, such as 'dynamic' or 'mature attitude', and use of the phrase 'substantial work experience' rather than years of experience. Many managers and senior academics believe that it is still important to see the dates of qualifications, particularly for mid career applicants, in order to ensure that they are sufficiently up to date with their subject area. There is also a general consensus about the importance of employment histories with dates to provide information about applicants' experience, career trajectory and attitude to work.

4.8 Some managers believe that age matters with regard to some type of posts. The most common examples given were IT jobs where the general view is that younger staff are more likely to be in touch with the latest technology; and posts related to widening participation working with school students, where younger staff are also seen as best suited. On the other hand there are also posts where it is felt that there is a need for more 'mature' staff. Dealing with international students and other cultures where age is seen as a sign of seniority were given as examples of roles where older staff would be as best suited.

4.9 There is general consensus that promotion depends entirely on merit and that age is irrelevant. It was noted however, by some senior academics that in the physical sciences academic staff tend to become professors between the age of 40-45, and in other subject areas even earlier. This suggests that there might be expectations in some subject areas about the speed of career trajectories and academic achievements which are linked to age. Such expectations could indirectly disadvantage some groups of academic staff like for example, women who have taken career breaks for childcare responsibilities, staff with a disability, or staff that have joined HE as a second career.

5. **Managing retirement expectations:** The majority of respondents support the idea of no retirement age in the workplace. Over half of them agree or strongly agree (58.6%) with the statement that 'a fixed retirement age unfairly discriminates against older employees', and they also agree or strongly agree (61.6%) with the statement that 'it is important not to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable HEIs to retain valuable expertise and specialist skills'. The results to this question were tested by age group and gender and they showed a similar picture.

5.1 The majority of respondents (65%) are aware of the 'right to request' to work beyond retirement age. However, the great majority of them (77%) do not know whether their university has a policy or procedure on the 'right to request' to work beyond retirement. These results were tested by age group, and they show that over half of the respondents in the older age groups, over the age of 50, still do not know whether their university has a policy or procedure on the 'right to request' to work beyond retirement.

5.2 In the survey respondents were asked to indicate their preferred retirement age, as opposed to the age when they expect to retire. The answers to these questions show some interesting gender differences as more men than women said that they would prefer to retire beyond the age of 65, while women's preferred retirement age is 60. Gender differences are less marked with regard to retirement expectations as virtually an equal percentage of women and men expect to retire at 65. However, more

men expect to retire over the age of 65 compared to women. Women's choices to continue to work beyond retirement are more likely to be influenced by a shortfall in their pension income compared to men.

5.3 Professional, support and senior management staff's preferred retirement ages are 55-59 (20.8%) and 60 (26.8). Smaller percentages of staff in these groups would like to retire over the age of 65 (11.8% and 8.4%, respectively). By contrast larger proportions of academic (28.8%) and manual staff (22.7%) would prefer to retire beyond the age of 65. The largest proportion of professional and support, and senior staff expect to retire at the age of 65 (33.7% and 28.9%, respectively) which is later compared to their preferences. The percentage of staff in these categories who expect to retire over the age of 65 is also higher compared to their responses on preferences (25.2% and 15.8% respectively). Higher proportions of academic and manual staff also expect to retire at 65 (28.8% and 43.6% respectively) or over 65 (35.9% and 30.1% respectively).

5.4 Managers of manual staff reported that many manual staff wish to continue to work beyond retirement. Managers are overall well disposed to let them continue if they do a good job. However, paradoxically the introduction of the right to request seems to have made it more difficult for manual staff to continue to work as university policies are largely driven by issues relating to the turnover of academic staff.

5.5 Senior academics believe that the main challenges, if more academics wish to continue to work beyond retirement, are a reduction in the staff turnover and financial implications for departmental budgets. The academic workforce tends to be rather stable. Lack of staff turnover through retirement would limit opportunities for career progression for younger staff as well as departments' ability to recruit new staff. Furthermore, there was a concern that, if too many academics delay retirement, departmental budgets could go 'out of control'. There was general consensus that if academics were allowed to continue past retirement, they should do so on a part-time basis to free up resources to employ new staff and to offer career opportunities to younger colleagues.

5.6 Managers of professional and support staff had the least experience of staff wanting to continue to work beyond retirement age as in their area of work staff tend to retire around the age of 60. The main concern for them was that many staff from the 'baby boom generation' are approaching retirement age, and this could cause significant staff recruitment issues, if they all retire at the same time.

5.7 A number of themes that apply to all different occupational groups also emerged consistently from all the focus group discussions, these include: the need to develop a fair and robust performance management system; the need to improve succession planning.

5.8 The overwhelming majority of respondents do not know whether their pension schemes provide for flexible retirement. This includes over half of the respondents in the older age group between the age of 51 and 65. A large proportion of respondents, across all ages and occupational groups, would be interested in considering to take flexible retirement. Staff over the age of 50 are the most interested group.

5.9 Many managers of professional and support staff expressed serious concerns at the prospect of a possible increase in flexible working, if staff wanted to take up the option of flexible retirement. They reported that flexible working has increased across the board in their institutions and that they would find it difficult to accommodate even more flexibility. This would also raise issues of space as there would be more 'bodies' to accommodate. However, not all comments were negative, and some managers saw the benefits of flexible retirement as it could help with succession planning, and enable them to build some overlap between retiring and new employees to ensure the flow of knowledge and expertise between different generations of employees.

5.10 Flexible retirement is not seen as a problem by the managers of manual staff. However, they think that it is unlikely to be of interest to their staff who could not afford a reduction in their income.

5.11 Senior academics see a number of advantages in the option of flexible retirement. It would help to release funds for more junior posts, and enable existing academics to maintain their 'freshness'.



6. **Recruiting and retaining younger staff aged 30 and under:** The survey results show that overall younger staff have a very positive view of working in HE. The great majority of them (73%) think that HE provides good opportunities to pursue further study/development, that HE provides good opportunities for training/staff development in their area of work (72%), and that HE provides good opportunities to take up different roles (67%). The three aspects of their current job that younger staff value most are: the opportunity to do interesting work (58.7%), followed by holiday entitlement (58.3%), and flexibility (57.5%). The main motivators likely to influence their choices when looking for another job appear to be pay (78.3%), career progression (71.8%) followed by the opportunity to do interesting work (61.4%).

6.1 The great majority of respondents (80.4%) indicated that their university operates an appraisal or personal development review system. However, a large proportion of them (49.8%) said that they did not receive any career guidance during their appraisal or personal development review, and a small proportion of them (9.9%) were not sure whether they did.

6.2 Over half of respondents (66%) age 30 and under do not think that they will still be working for their current employer when they reach the normal retirement age of 65. A large proportion of them (40.2%) do not know whether they will still be working in HE when they reach the normal retirement age of 65, and a significant proportion of them (30%) does not think that it is very likely that they will still be working in HE when they reach the age of 65.

6.3 Several managers suggested that universities should do more to try to recruit their own graduates into career jobs in professional areas such as human resources, accountancy, law, marketing and others. Offering students work placements could be a way of attracting future graduates and get them to find out about job opportunities in the sector. The use of apprenticeships was also suggested to recruit staff between the ages of 16-17, and train them in vocational areas such as catering and maintenance. Concern was expressed by many managers of professional and support staff about retention of younger staff as career opportunities are limited by institutional policies of advertising most job vacancies externally.

7. **Equality of access to training, development opportunities and career guidance by age group:**

The majority of respondents in all age groups believe that their university offer them enough training and development opportunities (69% overall) and that they are encouraged to take them (70% overall). However, there are also significant proportions of respondents who do not think that their university offers them enough training and development, and neither they feel encouraged to take them up (overall 22% and 24%, respectively). Over half of the respondents (59%) think that they are given the time they need to access training opportunities but equally there is a significant proportion of respondents (29%) who do not think that they are given enough time. An analysis of these results by age group show that although the majority of respondents in all age groups are satisfied with access to training and development opportunities, the proportion of those who are dissatisfied overall seem to steadily increase with age.

7.1 Although the great majority of respondents indicated (88%) that their university operates an appraisal or personal development review system, usually once a year, over half of them (58%) reported that they have not received any career guidance as part of their appraisal or personal development review. These results were tested by age group and they show that the proportion of respondents who believe that they have not received any career guidance increases significantly from the age of 41 onwards. These findings seem to suggest that there is a widespread perception of lack of career guidance among staff likely to be in their mid career as well as among staff in their late career.

7.2 Overall managers and senior academics are of the view that age does not matter in relation to training and staff development because as long as people are doing their job it is worth investing in them. To stop investing in people because of their age would send the wrong message: 'if you give up on them, they might give up on you'. However, it was pointed out by some, that 'proximity to retirement' would be a consideration when deciding whether or not to invest in expensive staff training.

7.3 A number of managers explained that they find it difficult to persuade some older staff to attend training courses. Sometimes staff avoid training opportunities as they are concerned about their work piling up while they are away on a course.

7.4 Approaches to access to sabbatical leave for academic staff close to retirement are mixed as they seem to depend on the likelihood of a member of staff to be included in the Research Assessment Exercise. Concern was raised about young researchers who are on a fixed term contract, and they may not be able to access training opportunities as there might not be a business case to invest in them.

8. This report concludes with a series of recommendations that specifically address the issues highlighted by the research findings under each theme. These include:

8.1 The need to raise awareness about unfair age discrimination among staff, provide guidance to managers to deal effectively with ageist attitudes, and incidents of age discrimination. Ensure an age neutral approach to staff recruitment and selection and in staff promotion procedures.

8.2 Develop separate criteria and guidelines to determine staff applications to continue to work beyond retirement for academic, professional and support, and manual staff, to reflect the varying expectations and demands of different job roles. Consult with managers, equality groups and trade union representatives, to develop fair and transparent criteria.

8.3 Adopt a fair and transparent system to review staff performance on a regular basis, to enable staff to perform to the best of their abilities at whatever age and stage of their career. Adopt a systematic approach to succession planning to take into account staff recruitment and retention needs in different areas of work.

8.4 Consider different models of flexible retirement that can be of mutual benefits both to staff and to the demand of services.

8.5 Review institutional provisions to monitor access to training by age, to ensure that younger staff have access to relevant training, and that they receive effective career guidance. Devise a strategy, including making use of student placements, to encourage young graduates to consider applying for jobs in HE. Make use of apprenticeships to recruit staff between the ages of 16-17 and train them into vocational areas, such as catering and maintenance.

8.6 Monitor staff access to training to identify and address any issue that might prevent some staff to take up training and development opportunities. Review institutional approaches to career guidance to ensure that this is delivered effectively to all staff at whatever stage of their working life.

# 1. Introduction

The HEFCE report on the HE Workforce in England (2006) draws attention to the fact that, although a lot of progress has been made in relation to equal opportunities in the sector, age is an area where ‘the situation is not known’ (p.63). Similar conclusions have been reached in a report commissioned by the Equality Challenge Unit on ‘The Impact of Age Discrimination Legislation in the Higher Education Sector’ (Parry and Tyson, 2007) that has also looked at the experience of the HE sector in other countries. This report highlighted that the impact of age discrimination in the HE sector is ‘extremely under-researched’ and concludes that ‘insufficient attention has so far been paid to age discrimination in the HE sector’ (p.24). Furthermore, a study on age issues and employment practices in the workplace, including the HE sector, undertaken on behalf of the DTI (McNair, S. et al., 2005) has found that there is widespread concern among HR managers about the difficulty of ‘establishing when different treatments of individuals of different ages would be seen legitimate or illegitimate’ (p.86) and the potential conflicts with other equality legislation strands such as, for example, the Disability Discrimination Act. HR managers also acknowledged that ‘there were wider issues around promotion criteria for academic staff which could have indirect age and gender discriminatory effects’ (p. 138). For example, research on the causes of women under-representation in senior positions in HE, found evidence of age discrimination against women who were advised against applying for promotion on the grounds that they were too young (Doherty and Manfredi, 2005). All these findings show that there is a need for the sector to gain a better understanding of age discrimination issues, of how to balance the requirements of the age discrimination legislation with other strands of equality legislation, and how to develop sound age neutral policies and practices. Since the Age legislation was introduced in 2006, 972 tribunal claims were submitted up to 31 March 2007 (Ashtiany, 2007). This is a rather high number of claims considering that by that date the legislation had only been in force for less than a year, and therefore it is important for university employers to be alert to age discrimination issues.

There is also a need to gain a better understanding of the impact of demographic changes on the HE sector workforce to enable HEIs to manage workforce planning more effectively. This is evidenced by the 2006 HEFCE report on the HE workforce which shows a complex picture in relation to present and future staff recruitment needs. It outlines that there are academic subject areas, such as Business and Law, and occupational groups of non-academic staff, where HEIs are experiencing recruitment difficulties, but also subject areas which are in decline. It is hoped that the findings presented and discussed in this report will help HR departments in HE to understand the implications of demographic changes in the sector, and assist them with ‘workforce mapping and planning’. A survey of HR Directors in HEIs carried out by the Equality Challenge Unit (2007) shows that there is a lack of information about the average retirement age of staff, that hardly any of the HEIs that took part in that survey had engaged in consultation with their staff about their attitudes towards retirement, and that the monitoring of job applicants by age is patchy. The Equality Challenge Unit work has identified the need to investigate patterns of staff progression and attitudes towards retirement across all different categories of staff. Equally, it is important to investigate younger employees’ career aspirations and expectations. A better understanding of the implications of demographic trends and employees attitudes towards career planning and the impact of changes in pension arrangements is essential for effective HEIs workforce planning. There is also a demand for training and guidance for line managers to develop best practice and understand the benefits of age diversity in the workplace.

# 1.1 Project aims and objectives

This report is part of a project funded by HEFCE under its Leadership, Governance and Management Programme to support HEIs to develop good practice in managing age diversity. The specific aims and objectives of this project are :

- To support HEIs in implementing the age discrimination legislation by understanding how to balance its requirements with other strands of equality legislation and develop age-neutral policies
- To assist HEIs to gain an understanding of the likely impact of demographic changes in the HE sector workplace;
- To support HEIs to develop good practice in managing age diversity effectively and improve succession planning
- To identify innovative approaches to career management for older staff, flexible retirement and the use of positive action to increase age diversity
- To bring about organisational cultural change on age-related issues

In order to achieve these objectives information was needed to gain an understanding of age related issues, and attitudes towards retirement across all different categories of staff in the HE sector. When this project began only limited information was available about these issues and it was based on studies of academic staff, some of whom had already retired (Sargeant, 2003; Tizard and Owen, 2001). No research had taken place focusing on all different categories of HE staff at different stages of their career. Furthermore, no in-depth information was available about the views and attitudes of managers and senior academics towards age-related issues and retirement policies. This category of staff play a key role in the interpretation of policies and procedures and in the implementation of change.

Therefore it was necessary to collect new information in order to enable HEIs to take an evidence based approach to develop age neutral policies, deal with the impact of demographic changes in the workforce and overall develop good practice in managing an age diversity. For this purpose a comprehensive Staff Age Survey was developed that was complemented by the collection of in-depth qualitative data through focus groups with managers and senior academics.

The overall project was undertaken in partnership with main HE stakeholders such as the Equality Challenge Unit, the Universities Colleges Employers Associations (UCEA), the Universities Personnel Association (UPA), the Higher Education Equal Opportunities Network (HEEON), the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, the Trade Unions, UCU and UNISON and the University of Aston, Sheffield Hallam University, Staffordshire University, and the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick.

In addition to this report a Resource Guide to Develop Good Practice in Managing Age Diversity has been developed as well as other materials that can be used for training purposes. This documentation can be accessed through the project website: [www.brookes.ac.uk/services/hr/cdprp/age](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/hr/cdprp/age)

## 1.2 Methodology

Institutions across the sector were invited to take part in the project through the circulation of an open invitation that explained the aims and objectives of the work to be undertaken and its benefits for the HE sector. About twenty universities expressed an interest to take part in the project and twelve were selected, six pre-1992 and six post-1992. The selection was made to ensure a wide geographical spread and a good cross section of HEIs in England to include large civic institutions as well as smaller ones.

In order to gather information about age related issues in the HE sector and staff's attitudes towards retirement across all different occupational categories, a self-completion anonymous questionnaire was developed to cover the following areas:

- Personal information to include age, gender, and occupation
- Information about what staff value most about their job and about working in HE
- Awareness about the Age Regulations and the right to 'request to work beyond retirement'
- Access to training and staff development and career guidance
- Age discrimination
- Preferences and expectations about retirement
- Flexible retirement
- Work beyond retirement
- An equal opportunity monitoring section to include ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and caring responsibilities

The questionnaire was distributed on-line to all staff in the twelve participating institutions. A paper version of the questionnaire was made available in all the participating institutions to manual staff who may not be regular e-mail users to ensure inclusion of all staff. The questionnaire was first piloted on a small number of staff to ensure clarity and consistency and deal with any technical issues. When this survey was conducted a total of 39,403 staff were employed in all the participating institutions. Overall 7218 responses were received which equates to a response rate of 18.3 per cent of the total number of staff. It is clear from the response rate that this topic is of great interest to many staff working in HE as unlike other discrimination strands, age concerns everybody. The overwhelming majority of responses were returned on-line, while the return of the paper questionnaires was disappointingly poor. This is in spite of the fact that a lot of effort was made by the project team and by the participating institutions to reach out to manual staff. With hindsight perhaps the use of a self-completion questionnaire was not an effective medium to investigate the views of this group of staff, and perhaps other media such as focus groups or interviews should be used in any future research to obtain better information.

The results from the Staff Age Survey were analysed by using SPSS and Chi-square analysis was used to explore the level of statistical significance between a number of variables including gender, age group, and occupation. The questionnaire also included a series of open questions which were analysed for themes. Responses from pre and post 1992 universities were also analysed separately to investigate possible differences. Overall no significant differences were found between these two groups of institutions save for the fact that a number of pre 1992 universities have a fixed retirement age over 65 for academic staff. Attention to this difference was drawn in chapter 4 on 'Managing Retirement Expectations', when discussing the interpretation of the survey results about staff retirement preferences and expectations. For the purpose of the data analysis, responses from academic related, and administrative, clerical and technical staff, were merged into a single category of professional and support staff to mirror the one used by HEFCE in its latest report on HEIs staff profile (HEFCE 2008/26 Staff employed at HEFCE-funded HEIs: update. Trends and Profiles). Similarly contract research staff were included in the broader category of academics.

The number of responses to the section of the questionnaire on work beyond retirement was too small to be statistically representative and therefore it has not been included in this report. When the questionnaire was launched in November 2007, it was probably too soon to investigate staff experiences of applying to continue to work beyond retirement as 'the right to request' had been introduced relatively recently. This is an area where it would be worth it to undertake further research in a couple of years, once more requests to work beyond retirement are likely to have been submitted, in order to investigate the impact of 'the right to request' in the HE sector. Additionally not enough data was collected either in the equal opportunities monitoring section of the questionnaire about disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief to undertake a meaningful investigation of the interaction between age and these equality strands. Equally with regard to race the number of responses under each different ethnic group was too small to undertake any meaningful investigation.

The findings from the Staff Age Survey were complemented by a series of focus groups that were conducted with managers of professional, support and manual staff, as well as senior academics who have responsibilities for managing academic departments and/or make decisions about applications to continue to work beyond retirement. A general invitation was sent to managers and senior academics in the participating institutions to take part in the discussion groups. Participation in the focus groups was self-selective, and entirely voluntary. The focus groups were conducted in most of the participating universities save for a couple of institutions, where, they could not take place due to lack of volunteers. Overall 94 managers and senior academics took part in these discussions. The findings from the focus groups were analysed by taking a thematic approach.

## 1.3 Report structure

This report follows a thematic approach and it is articulated in a series of chapters that present and discuss the main findings from the Staff Age Survey and from the focus groups with managers and senior academics. Each chapter is divided up into different sections, and each of them start with an outline of the main research questions followed by a presentation and discussion of the findings. Key findings from the survey and the focus groups are summarised at the end of each section of this report. On the on-line version of this report it is possible for the reader to focus exclusively on the key findings, and skip the presentation and discussion sections, by selecting the appropriate option. Each chapter concludes with some general reflections about the implications of the findings for the HE sector and a set of recommendations for HEIs. In order to support HEIs with the implementation of these recommendations, they are linked on the on-line report, as appropriate, to sections of the *Resource Guide to Develop Good Practice in Managing Age Diversity*, that can be viewed by clicking on the link at the end of each recommendation. A copy of the survey questionnaire and of the focus group discussion questions, used to collect the data for this research, can be accessed on the on-line version of this report that can be found at [www.brookes.ac.uk/services/hr/cdprp/age](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/hr/cdprp/age)

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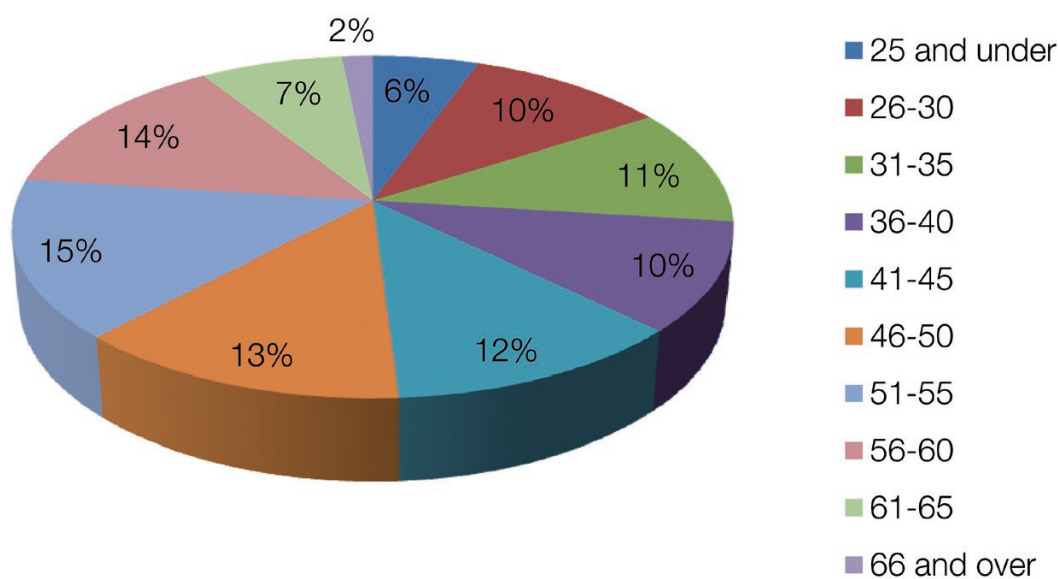
## 2. Staff Age Survey: the respondents' profile

This chapter presents the respondents' profile by age group, gender, occupation, length of service in HE and in their current role and mode of employment. In order to establish the representativeness of the respondents' profile in this survey to that of the HE workforce in English institutions, it has been compared, in so far as possible, to the HEFCE 2008/26 Staff employed at HEFCE-funded HEIs: update. Trends and Profiles.

### 2.1 Respondents' profile by age

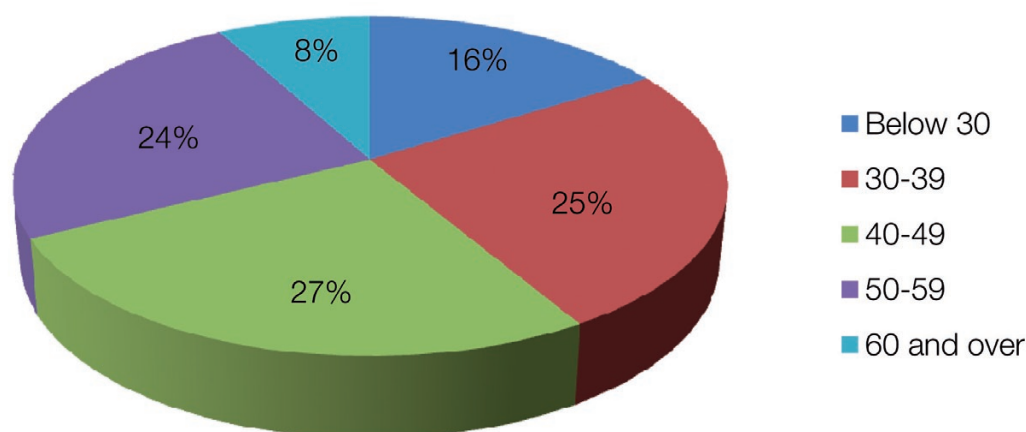
Figure 1 highlights that there is a reasonably balanced representation of respondents in all age groups. For the purpose of this survey more detailed age categories were adopted compared to those used in the HEFCE report mentioned above. The reason for this was to obtain a more in-depth understanding of staff's experiences in the different age groups, particularly in relation to younger staff, under the age of 30, and older staff over the age of 60. Nonetheless, although the HEFCE report uses broader age categories, it is still possible to make an overall comparison which shows that the age profile of the respondents in this survey, broadly reflects the age profile of the total HE workforce population in England, as shown in figure 2.

Figure 1 : Respondents' profile by age



(Total response = 7218)

Figure 2 : Age Profile of the workforce in English HEIs 2006-07

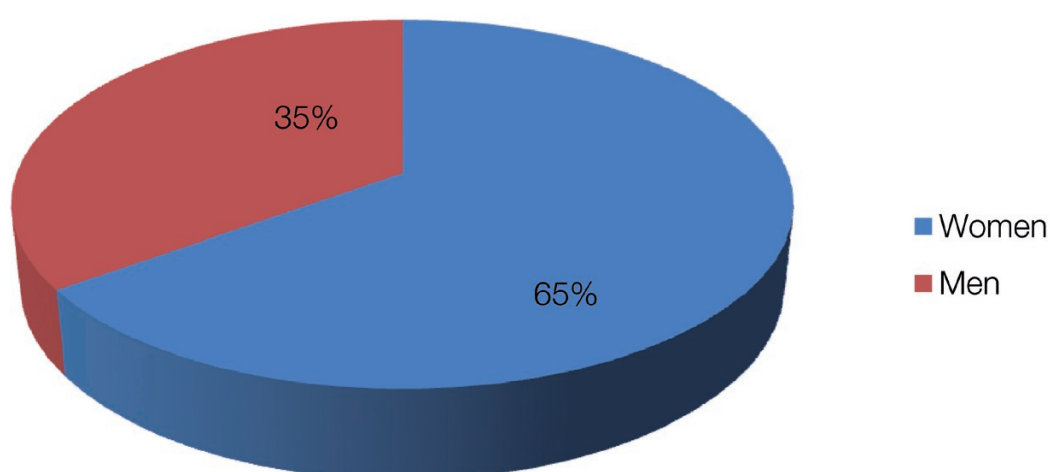


(Source: HEFCE 2008/26 Staff employed at HEFCE-funded HEIs: update. Trends and Profiles)

## 2.2 Respondents' profile by gender, occupation, age and length of service

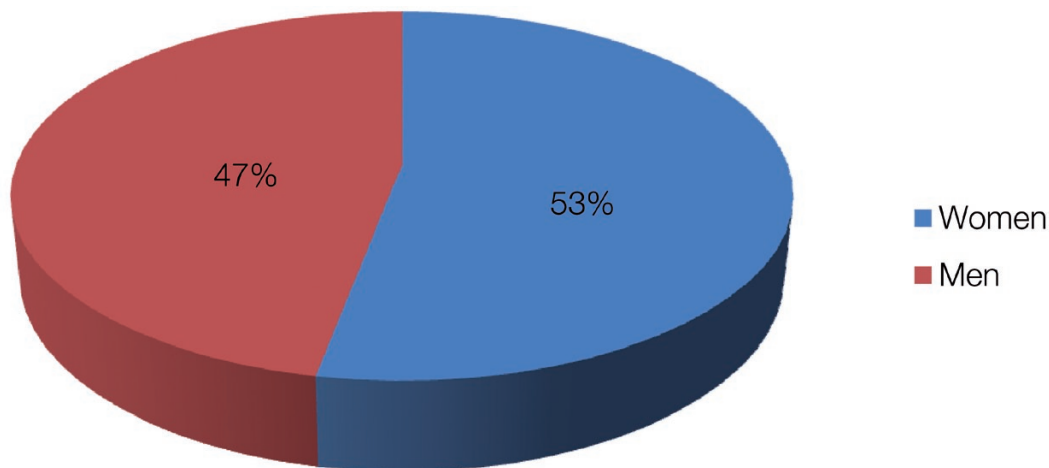
Figure 3 shows the respondents' profile split by gender. In this survey there is a higher proportion of women respondents (65%) compared to the proportion of women in the total HE workforce population (53%), as shown in figure 4, and a lower proportion of men (35%) compared to the proportion of men in the total HE workforce population (47%) as shown in figure 4.

Figure 3 : Respondents' profile by gender



(Total response = 6922)

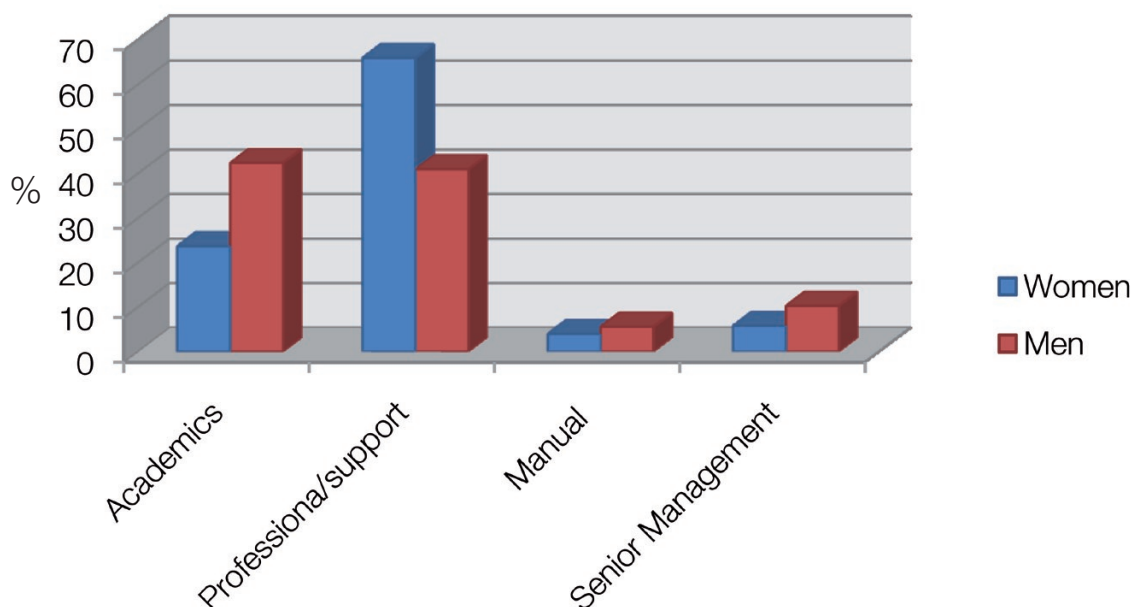
Figure 4 : Staff in English HEIs by gender



(Source: HEFCE 2008/26 Staff employed at HEFCE-funded HEIs: update. Trends and Profiles)

However, further analysis of the data by gender and occupation highlights that the great majority of the women respondents are concentrated in the professional and support roles (66%) as shown in figure 5. This result reflects the fact that women are over-represented among professional and support roles in the HE workforce population as a whole, particularly in the role of support administrators (81%) (HEFCE 2008/26: p.39). By contrast the larger proportion of men respondents (42.4%) is concentrated among academics, while the proportion of women respondents in this category is significantly lower (23.7%). There is a slight difference in the proportion of men and women in manual jobs (5.6% and 4%, respectively), while there is a higher proportion of men (10.3%) in senior management compared to women (5.8%), which reflects women's under-representation as a whole in this occupational group.

Figure 5 : Gender and Occupation

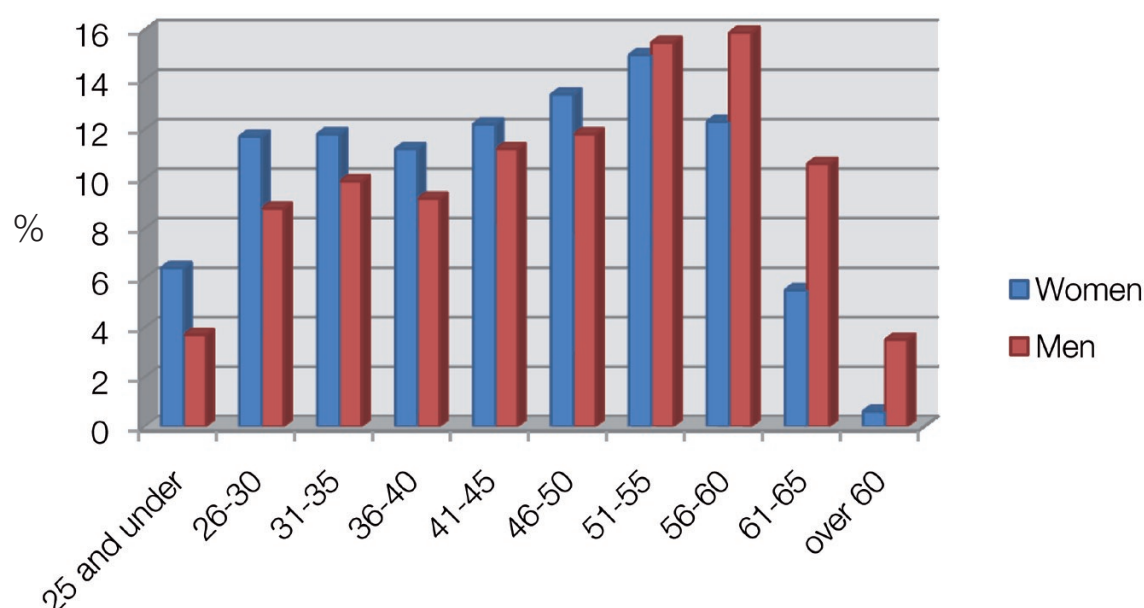


(Total response = 6897)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between gender and occupation.

With regard to age, figure 6 shows that overall, women appear to have a younger age profile compared to men. There are more women in the younger age bands up to the age of 50, while the proportion of men and women is almost equal in the 51-55 age band (15.5% and 15% respectively), but the proportion of men over the age of 55 is significantly higher than that of women as highlighted below. This is partly explained by the fact that there are a greater number of academics among men respondents who are likely to have a more mature age profile.

Figure 6 : Gender and Age

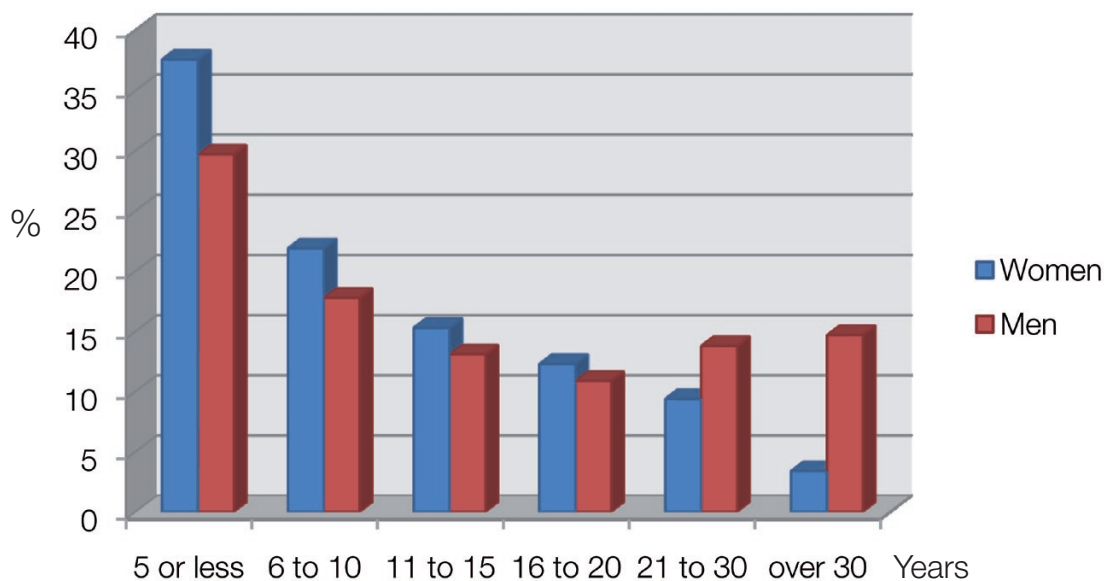


(Total response = 6915)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between gender and age.

The results shown in figure 6 are corroborated by those illustrated in figure 7, which highlights that women tend to have less years of service in the HE sector compared to men. For example, at one end of the scale a higher proportion of women (37.6%) than men (29.7%) have worked in HE for less than five years. While, at the other end of the scale a significantly higher proportion of men (14.7%) have worked in HE for more than thirty years, compared to a much smaller proportion of women (3.4%).

Figure 7 : How long have you worked in Higher Education?

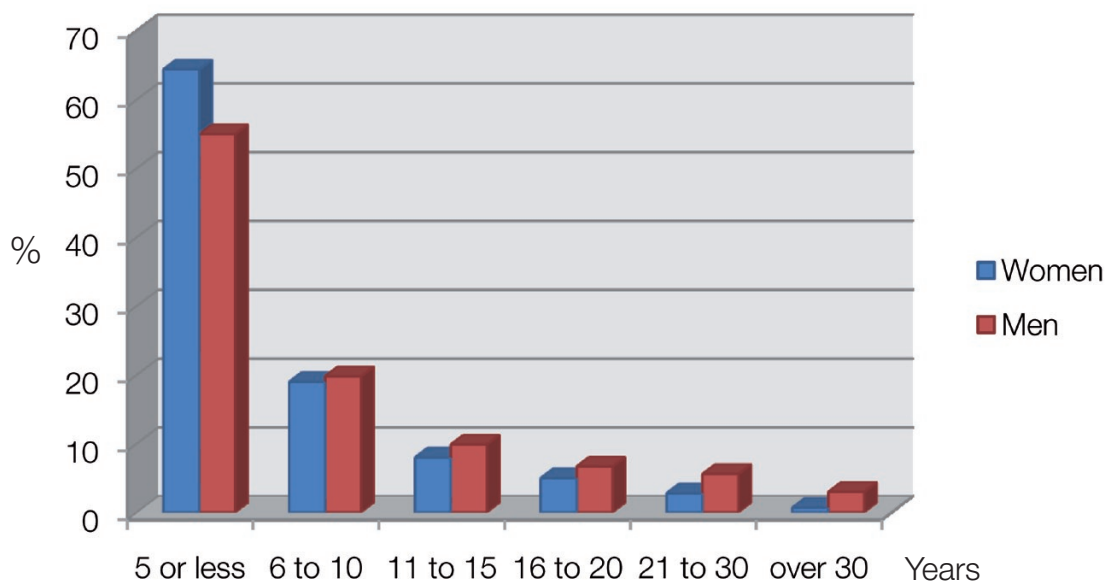


(Total response = 6785)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between gender and length of time in HE.

Figure 8 shows the results by gender of how long staff have worked in their current role. It is interesting to note that the majority of respondents from both genders indicated that they have worked for less than five years in their current role (64.4% of women and 55.1% of men). This result suggests a significant degree of mobility either within the sector: in terms of staff moving between institutions; staff coming from other sectors; or even staff changing roles within the same institution.

Figure 8 : How long have you worked in your current role?



(Total response = 6873)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between gender and length of time in current role.



These findings about staff mobility are reinforced by the results of another question in the survey that asked about staff's intentions to continue to work for their current university employer, and the HE sector, until they reach the normal retirement age of 65. Table 2.1 below shows that a large proportion of respondents (44.7%) think that it is not very likely that they will still be working for their current employer when they reach the normal retirement age of 65. Furthermore a significant proportion of them (27.2%) think that it is not very likely that they will still be working in HE when they reach the normal retirement age of 65. These results were also analysed by gender and occupation and they showed a similar picture to the overall findings.

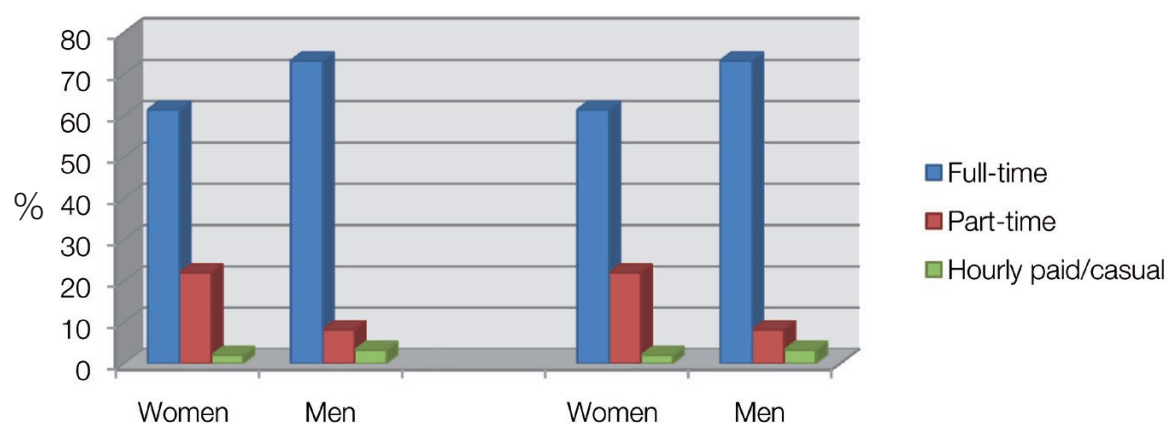
Table 2.1

	Very likely	Likely	Not very likely	Don't know
How likely is it that you will still be working for your current employer when you reach the normal retirement age of 65?	14.5%	22.6%	44.7%	18%
How likely is it that you will still be working in HE when you reach the normal retirement age of 65?	19.4%	30.5%	27.2%	22.9%

(Total response = 5765)

Finally figure 9 shows the mode of employment split by gender. More than half of the respondents from both genders work full time (61.4% of the women and 73.3% of the men), not surprisingly more women (22.1%) work part-time compared to the men (8.2%). While the proportion of respondents of both genders on hourly paid or casual work is very small (2% of the women and 3.3% of the men).

Figure 9 : Type of contract by gender



(Total response = 6858)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between gender and type of contract.

## 2.3 Respondents' profile: summary of the survey key findings

Total number of responses to the Staff Age Survey	12 institutions took part in the survey, six pre-1992 and six post -1992. The total number of employees in the participating institutions was 39,403 when the survey was conducted. Overall 7218 responses were received that represents 18.3% of the total sample population.
Respondents' profile by age	The proportion of respondents is reasonably balanced among all different age groups and broadly reflects the age profile of the whole HE workforce population in England.
Respondents' profile by gender	Overall the proportion of women respondents (65%) is higher than that of men (35%). Although women appear to be over-represented in this survey compared to the whole of the HE workforce in England (53% women and 47%), this can be explained by occupational group. The largest proportion of women respondents are in the role of support administrators where a very high percentage of women are employed in the whole of the HE workforce in England (81% HEFCE 2008/26 Staff employed at HEFCE-funded HEIs: update. Trends and Profiles: p.39).
Respondents' profile by gender and occupation	The majority of women are concentrated in professional and support roles (66%) compared to men (41%). A higher proportion of men respondents are academics (42.4%) compared to women (23.7)
Respondents' profile by gender and age	Overall women appear to have a younger age profile compared to men. There are more women in the younger age bands up to the age of 50. There is almost an equal proportion of men and women in the 51-55 age band (15.5% and 15%, respectively). While the proportion of men over the age of 55 is significantly higher than that of women.
Respondents' profile by gender and length of service in the HE sector	A higher proportion of women (37.6%) have worked for less than five years in the HE sector, compared to men (29.7%). At the other end of the spectrum a significantly higher proportion of men (14.7%) have worked for more than 30 years in the HE sector, compared to that of women (3.4%)
Respondents' profile by gender and length of service in their current role	The data suggest some degree of mobility either within the sector, or within institutions themselves, as over half of the respondents of both genders (64.4% of women and 55.1% of men) have worked for less than five years in their current role. These findings are reinforced by further results which show that a large proportion of respondents (44.7%) think that it not very likely that they will still be working for their current employer when they reach the normal retirement age of 65. Furthermore, a significant proportion of them (27.2%) think that it is not very likely that they will still be working in HE when they reach the normal retirement age of 65.

## References

HEFCE 2008/26 Staff employed at HEFCE-funded HEIs: update. Trends and Profiles

# 3. Perceptions of age discrimination

This chapter presents the results from the Staff Age Survey about employees' perceptions of age discrimination in their workplace. It also discusses the findings from the focus groups with managers and senior academics, to explore their views about age discrimination and ageist attitudes.

## Survey's questions

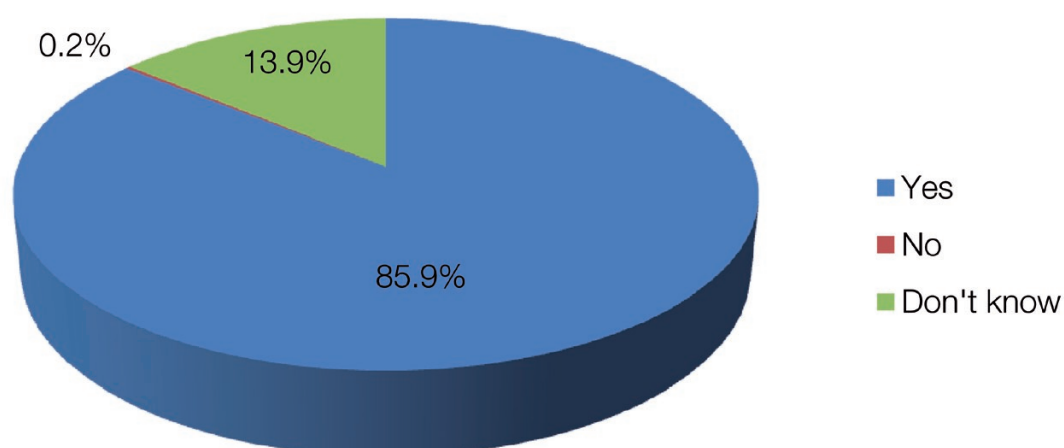
Information was gathered through the survey in order to address the following questions:

- To what extent are staff aware that their institution's equal opportunities policy covers age discrimination?
- How many staff believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age in the workplace?
- If staff believe that they had suffered age discrimination, in which area of employment practices did the discrimination take place and how was it expressed?
- What did they do about it?

## 3.1 Staff awareness of age discrimination policies

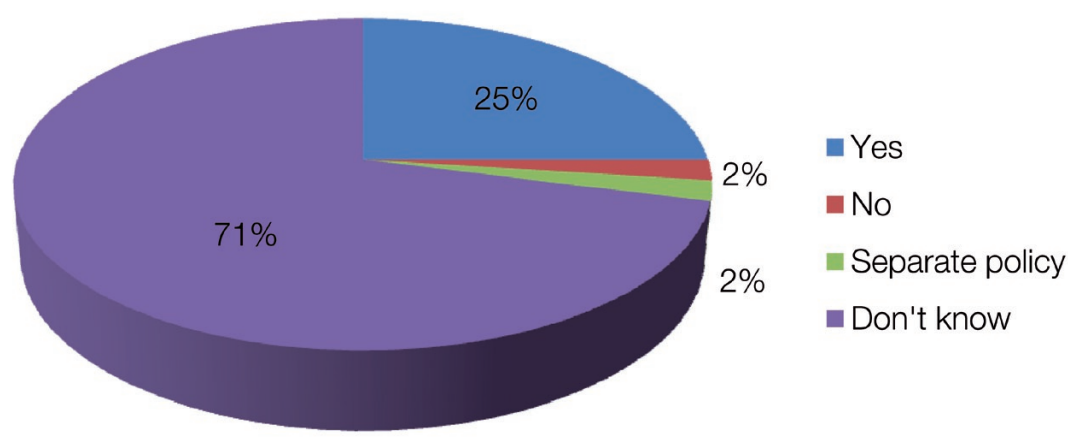
Respondents were asked whether their university had an equal opportunities policy and the great majority of them (85.9%) were aware that their institution had one, as shown in figure 1. However, as highlighted in figure 2, when they were asked whether their institutions equal opportunities policy covers age discrimination or whether there is a separate policy on age discrimination, the overwhelming majority of respondents (71%) did not know.

Figure 1 : Does your university have an equal opportunities policy or statement?



(Total response = 6519)

Figure 2 : Does your university have an equal opportunities policy that covers age discrimination?



(Total response = 5583)

### 3.2 The perspective of the managers – findings from the focus groups

**Managers and senior academics were asked how they found out about changes in the legislation and to what extent they were aware of university policies relating to age.**

Overall managers are aware of the age legislation and the introduction of the ‘right to request’ to work beyond retirement age, but many are not aware whether their institution has a policy on age discrimination. If they had to deal with a complaint of age discrimination they said that they would treat it as any other complaint and follow their institution’s procedure to deal with staff complaints or seek advice from the Human Resource Department.

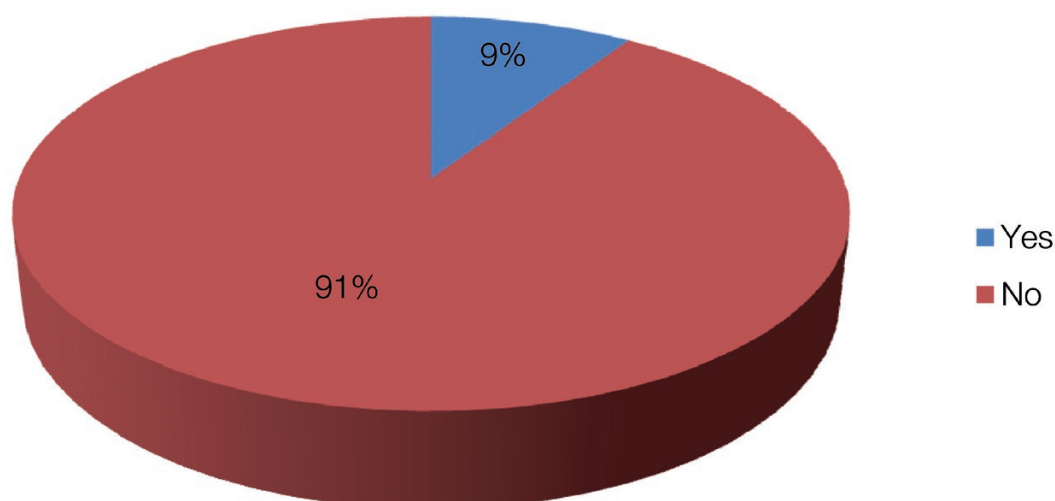
### 3.3 Staff awareness of age discrimination policies: summary of the survey key findings and focus groups

Awareness of university policies on equal opportunities	The great majority of respondents (85.9%) are aware that their university has an equal opportunities policy.
Awareness of university policies on age discrimination	The great majority of the respondents (71%) do not know whether their university has a policy against age discrimination. Similarly many managers and senior academics do not know whether their institution has a policy that covers age discrimination.

## 3.4 Staff perceptions of age discrimination

Respondents were asked whether they believe that they have suffered discrimination because of their age at their current university. As figure 3 shows, a relatively low percentage (9%) of respondents answered affirmatively to this question. However, although this percentage is small, it is still significant as it represents 598 responses. Results from this survey, as discussed later on in section 3.7, suggest that almost half of these respondents have taken action to address the discrimination. This affirms the importance for HEIs not to underestimate age related issues as these could result in a high number of grievances or even legal action against university employers. Furthermore, it is worth noting that a survey undertaken on a sample of just under 2,000 employees from different sectors, reported by *Personnel Today* in January 2008, shows that 11% of the respondents believed that they have been discriminated on the grounds of their age. The same survey shows that this percentage is rather high compared to other instances of discrimination. For example only 3% of the respondents believed that they have been discriminated because of their gender, race or disability and only 2% because of their sexual orientation or religion or belief. Therefore it is important that the HE sector does not underestimate these results, but rather takes a pro-active approach to prevent age discrimination.

Figure 3 : Do you believe that you have suffered age discrimination at your current university?



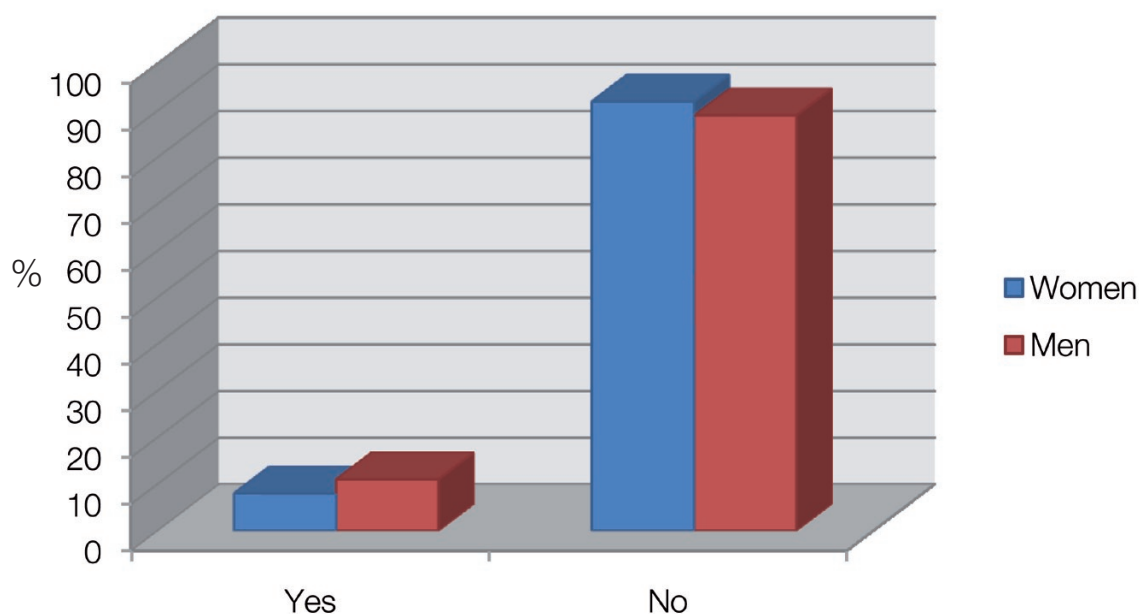
(Total response = 6458)

In order to obtain a more detailed picture of those staff who believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age, the data were further analysed by gender and occupation, and age groups as discussed below.

### 3.5 Gender, occupation and perceptions of age discrimination

Figure 4 below shows perceptions of age discrimination by gender. It is interesting to note that the proportion of women who believe that they have suffered age discrimination is slightly lower (8%) compared to the survey overall percentage, while by comparison, the proportion of men (11%) is higher.

Figure 4 : Perceptions of age discrimination by gender



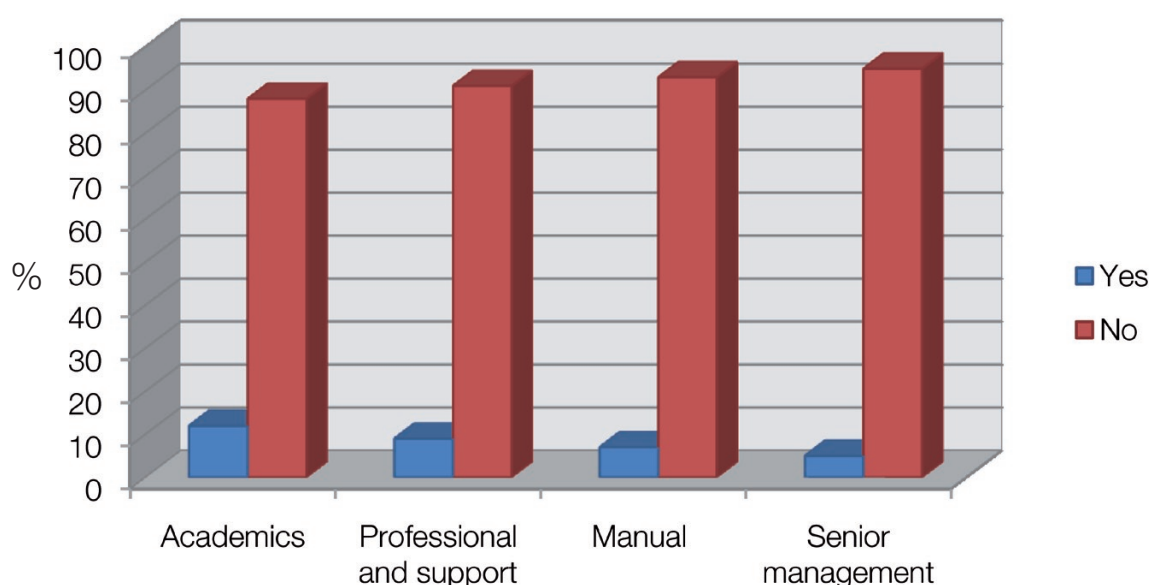
(Total response = 6186)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between gender and perceptions of age discrimination

With regard to occupational groups, figure 5 shows that the highest proportion of respondents who believe that they have suffered age discrimination are among academics (12%), followed by a slightly lower percentage in professional and support groups (9%). The proportions of staff in the manual and senior management occupational groups, who believe that they have suffered age discrimination, are much lower (7% and 5%, respectively).



Figure 5 : Perceptions of age discrimination by occupation



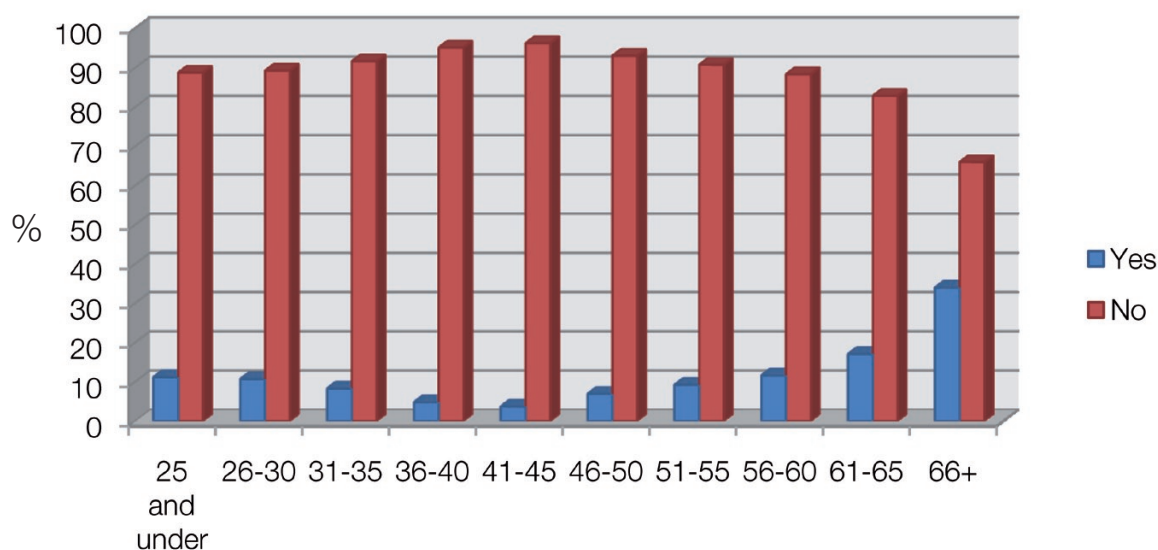
(Total response = 6442)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between occupation and perceptions of age discrimination

### 3.6 Age group and perceptions of age discrimination

With regard to age, the results in figure 6 suggest that a higher proportion of respondents in the younger age groups (up to the age of 30 - 11%), and in the older age groups (56 and over - 15%), are more likely to believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age, compared to those in the age groups in the middle. It is important to note that the proportion of respondents in the older age groups who believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age is significantly higher compared to the proportion of respondents in the overall survey (9%). This may be partly explained by the fact that, as seen earlier in chapter one on 'The respondents' profile', there are larger proportions of men in these groups and, as highlighted in figure 4 earlier in this section, men are more likely to believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age compared to women. In any case such high levels of perceived unfair age discrimination in the older age groups should be cause for concern for HEIs and action should be taken to address the causes of such negative perceptions.

Figure 6 : Perceptions of age discrimination by age groups



(Total response = 6458)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and perceptions of age discrimination

Further questions were asked of those respondents who believed that they have suffered age discrimination in order to investigate in which areas of employment practices the discrimination took place and in what form the discrimination was expressed. An analysis of the responses suggests that the areas in which younger staff of both genders are more likely to feel discriminated against include:

- Recruitment
- Promotion
- Pay
- 'Not being considered experienced enough'

The areas in which older staff of both genders are more likely to feel discriminated against include:

- Recruitment
- Promotion
- 'Being excluded from opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities'
- Feeling marginalised
- Reduced access to facilities (e.g. grants to attend conferences, use of office accommodation)

Respondents were offered the option to explain their experiences of age discrimination via an open-ended question and the following selection of quotations summarises the most typical issues reported by the respondents:

*'I am a young female manager and I feel that I have to work twice as hard as everyone else to prove myself.....There is still a mindset that 40-60 years old white males are the traditional manager'*

*"Tendency to assume that you are slowing down so less able to accept and handle change, make change happen"*

*"...The older and more experienced you are the more expensive you are and the grant bodies do not necessarily like that. They are actively asking PIs (Principal Lecturers) to go for younger staff"*

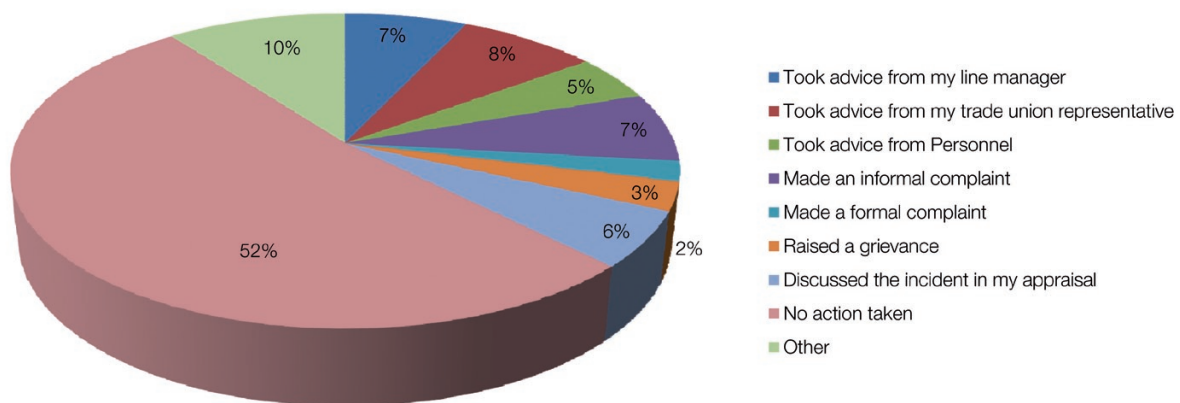
*"Being treated as a marginal staff member"*

*"No grants to attend conferences, reduced working facilities"*

### 3.7 Taking action against unfair age discrimination

Finally those respondents who believe that they have suffered age discrimination were asked to indicate what kind of action they had taken. Figure 7 below shows that the majority of them (66%) did not take any action. It is worth noting however, that a large proportion of them (44%) did take either some formal or informal action as indicated below. Respondents were also given the option to briefly explain what they did about the discrimination via an open-ended question. Several of them said that they were looking for another job and a few indicated that they had already changed jobs as a result of having suffered age discrimination. A few said that they had taken legal advice and in the remaining cases respondents explained that they made a complaint either to their line manager or to a member of their university Human Resources department, or discussed the matter with a colleague.

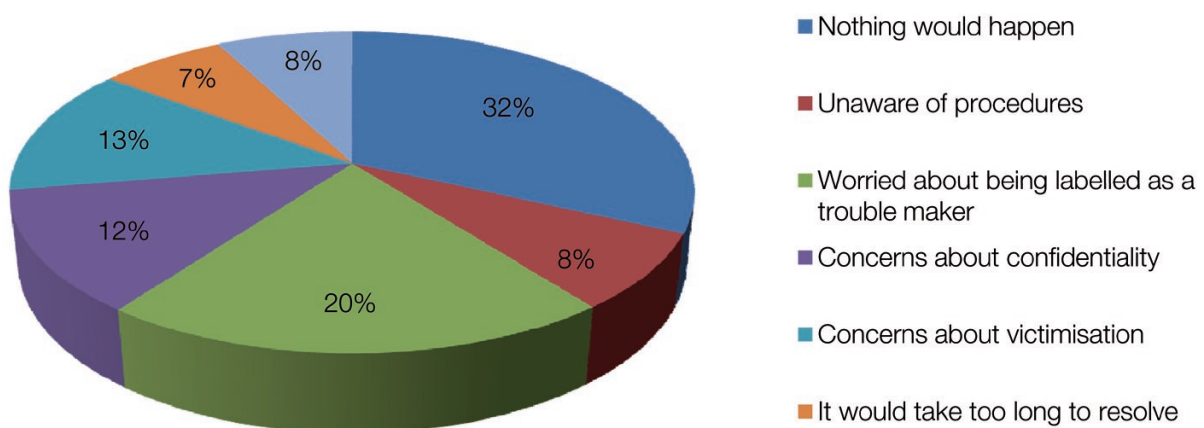
Figure 7 : If you believe you have suffered age discrimination what action did you take?



(Total response = 539)

The respondents who stated they had not taken any action, were asked to indicate the reason why. Figure 8 shows that the great majority of them believed that 'nothing would happen' (66.6%). The other most given reasons for not taking action included concerns about being 'labelled as a trouble maker' (43%), concerns about 'victimisation' (27%) and concerns about 'confidentiality' (25.5%).

Figure 8 : Reason for not taking action



(Total responses = 419)

These results suggest that there is a risk that age related issues might remain undetected if staff do not have confidence in their institutions' response to a complaint of age discrimination, either because 'nothing would happen' or because of possible repercussions from making the complainant. The results also show that in some of these cases staff may seek to resolve the issue by looking for another job. But equally it is important to point out that the survey results show that there is a large proportion of respondents who have taken action and therefore HEIs need to take action to prevent the occurrence of age discrimination, and to be able to resolve effectively age issues which may arise, in order to avoid the risk of staff grievances or even legal action.

### 3.8 Perceptions of age discrimination: summary of the survey key findings

Overall responses	A relatively small percentage (9%) of respondents believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age. However, this result should not be underestimated as it equates to 598 responses. The survey results suggest that almost half of these respondents have taken some action to address the discrimination. This confirms the importance for HEIs to take action to prevent unfair age discrimination and avoid the risk of staff grievances or even legal action.
Responses by gender and occupation	Men are more likely to believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age (11%) compared to their women colleagues (8%). From an occupational perspective, academics are more likely to believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age compared to professional and support (9%), manual (7%) and senior management staff (5%)
Responses by age group	A higher proportion of respondents in the younger age groups, up to the age of 30 (11%), and in the older age groups aged 56 and over (15%), are more likely to believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age, compared to those in the age groups in the middle. This should be a cause for concern for HEIs and action should be taken to address the causes of such negative perceptions.
Perceived areas of unfair age discrimination by younger staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Recruitment</li> <li>· Promotion</li> <li>· Pay</li> <li>· 'Not being considered experienced enough'</li> </ul>
Perceived areas of unfair age discrimination by older staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Recruitment</li> <li>· Promotion</li> <li>· 'Being excluded from opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities'</li> <li>· Feeling marginalised</li> <li>· Reduced access to facilities (e.g. grants to attend conferences, use of office accommodation)</li> </ul>
What did they do about it?	The majority of those respondents who believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age (66%) did not take any actions. The main reasons given for not taking any action, included 'nothing would happen' (66.6%), concerns about being 'labelled as a trouble maker' (43%), concerns about 'victimisation' (27%) and concerns about 'confidentiality' (25.5%). However, a large proportion of respondents (44%) did take some action either formally or informally, including taking advice from: their line manager; their trade union representative, HR, raising a grievance, discuss the incident in the appraisal, and even looking for another job.

## 3.9 The perspective of the managers – findings from the focus groups

**In order to explore age discrimination issues and ageist attitudes with managers and senior academics, a series of questions were discussed in the focus groups. These included whether they had come across instances of unfair age discrimination, and, to what extent, in their view, age mattered in relation to staff recruitment, promotion and in the allocation of job roles.**

Some managers felt that age discrimination does not have the high profile that other types of discrimination have. For example one manager commented that ‘people aren’t sensitised to this yet...they are better aware of gender issues’. The majority of managers had not come across instances of discrimination although a few managers reported that some of their younger staff complained to them as they felt that they had not been taken seriously by older colleagues, because of their age. Some managers expressed the view that there is a culture in HE that values age over youth as in academia ‘age and esteem seem to be linked in a very traditional way’. In all the focus groups there was some discussion about the difficulties that younger people may face if appointed to lead older colleagues. A few of the managers who took part in the focus groups, including a senior academic, had direct experience of being regarded as too young, by their colleagues, to cover a managerial role. These findings appear to mirror those that emerged from the survey which show that younger staff are more likely to believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age and feel that ‘they had not been considered experienced enough’. At the other end of the spectrum ageist attitudes also emerged towards older staff. There was a clear perception among some managers that older staff are resistant to change and they can be ‘hardened in their ways’ of doing things. Health issues were also raised as a concern in relation to older staff. On the other hand some managers of manual staff who are used to having staff over the age of 65 in their teams, appear to have less stereotyped views about older workers. One manager for example was very clear that health and age should not be confused, as the causes of staff absenteeism are not linked to age.

Discussion about older workers led to the question: ‘at what age staff are perceived to be old?’. Answers to this question varied depending on the occupational group. For example in the case of academic staff the general view was that it depends on an individual’s level of activity, as ‘there are many people who are really at their peak in a number of subject areas both in teaching and research in their mid 60s and therefore, if they are in good health, there are no competence reasons why they should not continue’. It was noticed however, that some external research grants are age related and this can disadvantage older academics. By contrast many managers of professional and support staff considered colleagues aged 60 and over as old. This might be explained by the fact that so far in this occupational group retirement trends appear to have been around the age of 60 as discussed in chapter four on ‘Managing Retirement Expectations’. In comparison, it is rather common for manual staff to continue working over the age of 65, as mentioned earlier.

## 3.10 Staff recruitment and selection: age related issues

In all the focus groups in the different institutions, managers reported that some changes have taken place in recruitment practices as a result of the introduction of the Age Regulations. The most common are the removal of an applicant’s date of birth from job applications, avoidance of terminology that could be interpreted as ‘ageist’ in job adverts. Some managers however, feel that their institutions are overly ‘politically correct’ as they have been advised to avoid the use of words such as ‘dynamic’ or ‘mature attitude’. One manager said that ‘I was not allowed to use enthusiastic, I argued the fact that you can still be enthusiastic at any age’. Managers have also been advised to avoid asking for specific years of experience, and instead use expressions like ‘substantial work experience’. It was felt by most that it is still important to see dates of qualifications, particularly for mid career applicants to academic posts, in order to ensure that they are

sufficiently up to date in their subject area. There was also a general consensus about the importance of being able to see employment histories with dates as they provide information on applicants' experience and their career trajectory. It was acknowledged by some managers that in many cases selectors 'do try to piece age together' from the information on applications forms. Some managers of manual staff made the point that although age was not important, employment history with dates is important in order to determine an applicant's attitude towards their work. Although specific years of experience are in many cases no longer a requirement included in job specifications, there is still the possibility that selectors can work out an applicant's age and years of experience from the dates of employment histories and of qualifications, which may influence their decisions.

Some managers also admitted that in their view age mattered in relation to some type of posts. The most common examples given were IT jobs, as the general opinion is that younger people are more likely to keep in touch with the latest technology, and posts related to widening participation of students where staff should have a younger age profile in order to relate better to students in schools. On the other hand, examples were also given of roles where it is believed that staff should have an older and hence more 'mature' profile. These were senior roles where staff have to operate at all levels within institutions, where good negotiation skills and self-confidence are needed. A senior academic also made the point that it can be tricky to assign younger staff to deal with staff or students from other cultures that consider older age as a sign of seniority. It was acknowledged, however, that the same issue could arise either in relation to gender or race when dealing with people from countries that have different cultural norms from those existing in the Western countries. In one focus group 'maturity' was also deemed important in some administrative roles where staff work with international students. However, it was recognised that although it was acceptable to make this sort of judgment in relation to age it would not be acceptable to say that either men or women would be better at dealing with international students. This seems to reinforce the point, discussed earlier in section 3.9, that 'people aren't sensitised' to age discrimination yet and 'they are better aware of gender issues'.

Finally another point was raised by senior academics with regard to age and recruitment, as they explained that some disciplines such as Law, Education and Sociology tend to attract mid career applicants from professions such as law, teaching and others. It was pointed out that when considering mid-career applicants, particularly for research intense institutions, the question arises as to whether they would have enough time ahead of them to develop a research portfolio 'from scratch'. In comparison, some managers of professional and support staff made the point that age was less of a factor in HE with regard to recruitment of new staff compared to other sectors that are more biased against older people. For this reason in their experience HE was more likely to attract mid career applicants.

### 3.11 Promotion and career progression: age related issues

Although there is a general consensus that promotion depends exclusively on merit, and that age is irrelevant, there seems to be an expectation among some senior academics that in the physical sciences, the average age for staff to become professors is 40-45. Similar views were also expressed about academic careers in the social sciences area, where, for example, one senior academic commented 'I am telling my research students 24 lecturer, 29 senior lecturer, 32 reader, professor 36'. These findings seem to suggest that there might be expectations about the speed of career trajectories and academic achievements which are linked to age. Similar findings emerged from an exploratory study on the application of selection criteria in the promotion of academic staff, where 'career velocity' was found to be a factor that was valued by senior academics involved in making decisions for professorial conferment (Kumra, 2007). However, such expectations about the speed of career trajectories could indirectly disadvantage those academics whose career have proceeded at a slower pace for whatever reason. This, for example, could be the case for women, who due to childcare responsibilities had to take career breaks, academics with a disability or staff that joined HE as a second career.



### 3.12 The perspective of the managers on age related issues: key findings from the focus groups

Lack of awareness about age discrimination	Some managers feel that age discrimination does not have the same high profile that other types of discrimination have: 'people aren't sensitised to this yet...they are better aware of gender issues.'
Stereotyped views about younger and older staff	Some managers have received complaints from younger staff who believe that they have not been taken seriously by older colleagues, because of their age. Some younger staff have experienced difficulties when appointed to lead older staff. On the other hand there is a perception that older staff are resistant to change.
At what age is an employee considered to be old?	Different occupational groups seem to have different perceptions about who is old. For example, in the case of academic staff it seems to depend on an individual's performance. In the case of professional and support staff, employees aged 60 and over are generally regarded as old. This perception might be influenced by the fact that staff in this group tend to retire around the age of 60.
Age related issues in relation to staff recruitment and selection.	A number of changes to recruitment practices have taken place as a result of the introduction of the Age Regulations. These include the removal of the date of birth from job applications, avoidance of terminology that could be interpreted as ageist, such as 'dynamic' or 'mature attitude', and use of the phrase 'substantial work experience' rather than years of experience. Many managers and senior academics believe that it is still important to see the dates of qualifications, particularly for mid career applicants, in order to ensure that they are sufficiently up to date with their subject area. There is also a general consensus about the importance of employment histories with dates to provide information about applicants' experience, career trajectory and attitude to work.
Does age matter in relation to some job roles?	Some managers believe that age matters in relation to some type of posts. The most common examples given are IT jobs where the general view is that younger staff are more likely to be in touch with the latest technology; and posts related to widening participation working with school students, where younger staff are also seen as best suited. On the other hand there are also posts where it is felt that there is a need for more 'mature' staff. Dealing with international students and other cultures where age is seen as a sign of seniority were given as examples of roles where older staff would be as best suited.
Age related issues in relation to promotion and career progression	There is a general consensus that promotion depends entirely on merit and that age is irrelevant. However, it was noted, by some senior academics that in the physical sciences academic staff tend to become professors between the age of 40-45, and in other subject areas even earlier. This suggests that there might be expectations in some subject areas about the speed of career trajectories and academic achievements which are linked to age. Such expectations could indirectly disadvantage some groups of academic staff like for example women, who have taken career breaks for childcare responsibilities, or staff with a disability, or staff that have joined HE as a second career.

## 3.13 Implications of these findings for the HE sector

The findings presented and discussed in this chapter are based on staff's perceptions of age discrimination and they provide a clear indication that there are age related issues that need to be tackled in the HE sector, in order to prevent unfair age discrimination, ageist attitudes and stereotypes that can affect employment practices. The ban on age discrimination, except in those circumstances where there is a genuine occupational requirement or an objective justification, was introduced relatively recently, and this makes age discrimination the most recent addition to the legislative equality strands. Therefore there is a need for cultural change to take place in order to ensure that employment practices are genuinely age neutral and that staff of all ages are supported and enabled to perform to the best of their abilities. Cultural changes cannot be expected to take place overnight, and the findings presented here show that the HE sector needs to take a more pro-active approach to eradicate ageist attitudes from their employment practices. The fact that there is a high proportion of staff and managers who do not know whether their institutions' equal opportunities policies cover age discrimination, suggests that there is a need to raise awareness among staff about age discrimination and use training to alert managers to ageist practices and attitudes. The results from the age survey have highlighted that a significant number of respondents believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age, particularly amongst younger staffs up to the age of 30 and older staff aged 56 and over. The findings from the focus groups have confirmed that younger staff may not be taken seriously and may be dismissed as 'not experienced enough', simply because of their age and that there is a tendency of labelling older staff as 'being resistant to change'. These findings are consistent with those of research on age discrimination in other sectors which shows 'that discrimination on the grounds of being too young is at least as common as discrimination on the grounds of being too old' (Snape and Redman, 2003: 78)

Perceptions about who is considered to be an older worker, depends on the type of jobs that people do, and retirement trends in certain occupational groups. For example, as seen earlier, for academics being perceived as 'old' appears to be linked more to their level of performance rather than their age, as well summarised well by this quotation, 'there are many people who are really at their peak in a number of subject areas both in teaching and research in their mid 60s'. While in the case of professional and support staff, people are more likely to be considered old around the age of 60, which probably reflects retirement patterns that are more common to this occupational group.

The survey results also show that the most common areas where respondents believe that age discrimination occurred, regardless of their age group and their gender, are recruitment and promotion. The focus group discussions provided an opportunity to try to shed some light on this and explore the extent to which age might influence decisions on both staff recruitment, selection, and promotion. The findings from the focus groups indicate that a number of changes have taken place to recruitment and selection practices, such as removing applicants' date of birth from job applications, avoiding references to age in job adverts and focusing on the actual competences and skills needed, rather than number of years of experience. However, it appears that in some cases such changes have affected the form but not so much the substance within it. It is still possible to 'piece together' the age of job applicants from the dates of their qualifications and their employment history. Many managers and senior academics, as discussed earlier, feel that qualifications with dates are important in order to establish how up to date an applicant may be in a subject area and, likewise employment histories with dates, are deemed to provide useful information about applicants' experience and their career trajectory. However, older applicants are more likely to have acquired their qualifications in a distant past, and thus it is arguably more important that these applicants demonstrate that they have kept up to date with their subject area rather than the dates of their qualifications. Furthermore, employment histories with dates could influence selectors to judge applicants on the number of years of experience rather than focusing on the substance of the experience that applicants have actually gained in their previous jobs. On the other hand, there might be good reasons for wanting to see dates of qualifications and past employment, and in these cases it is important that such reasons can be objectively justified.

With regard to promotion the findings from the focus groups indicate that although there is a general consensus that this depends exclusively on merit, there nonetheless seems to be some tacit expectations in certain academic disciplines about the speed of career trajectories and academic achievements that are linked to age. This might explain in part the survey results that show that academics are the occupational group more likely to believe that they have been discriminated because of their age.

Finally the survey results show that men are more likely to believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age than their women colleagues. The focus groups findings do not appear to have provided clues as to the reasons for this gender difference. One can only speculate on the possible interaction between different forms of discrimination and individuals' understanding of the reasons for what is perceived as unfair treatment. For example, it might be possible that if women believe that they have been unfairly treated they are more likely to ascribe this to their gender, while men are more likely to ascribe it to their age. This is an area where further research would be needed in order to gain an insight into gender differences in relation to age discrimination.

## 3.14 Recommendations

- Ensure that age discrimination is covered by institutional equal opportunities policies and that this is communicated effectively to all staff and students. (Resource Guide: policies on age equality; methods of communication).
- Raise awareness about unfair age discrimination, stereotyped and ageist attitudes through training, and other initiatives, to ensure understanding among all staff of the negative consequences of age discrimination and to promote a culture that values age diversity. (Resource Guide: promoting organisational and cultural change).
- Provide guidance to managers to deal effectively with ageist attitudes and incidents of unfair age discrimination.
- Address age related issues in staff recruitment and selection training to avoid that ageist and stereotyped attitudes may influence the decisions of those involved in staff recruitment and promotion. (Resource Guide: legal issues; age discrimination: the legislative framework; age discrimination frequently asked questions; age discrimination cases).
- Use staff satisfaction surveys to monitor perceptions of unfair age discrimination among staff and take action when appropriate.
- Use the Equality Impact Assessment process to raise awareness about unfair age discrimination and to eliminate it from employment policies and practices (Resource Guide: equality impact assessment).

## References

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## 4. Managing retirement expectations

This chapter presents the findings from the Age Staff Survey on employees' preferences and expectations with regard to retirement. It also discusses the findings from the focus groups with managers, and senior academics exploring their views about the challenges of managing an ageing workforce and dealing with requests to work beyond retirement.

### Survey's questions

Information was gathered through the survey in order to address the following questions:

- What do staff think about having a fixed retirement age?
- To what extent are staff aware about the 'right to request' to work beyond retirement and their institutions policies and procedures about it?
- How well informed are staff about their institutions retirement age?
- What are staff's preferences and expectations with regard to retirement?
- To what extent are staff interested in continuing to work beyond their institution fixed retirement age?
- Are staff informed about flexible retirement options and interested in them?

The responses to these questions were analysed by gender, occupation, and age group. They show some interesting differences which are discussed in the following paragraphs

### 4.1 Staff's attitudes towards retirement

In order to explore staff's views as to whether institutions should have a fixed retirement age, respondents were asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with a series of statements. These statements, which are outlined in table 4.1, were intended to reflect some of the views commonly expressed by managers, and human resource or equality practitioners about the reasons either in favour or against having a fixed retirement age in the workplace. Table 4.1 below shows that overall respondents are in favour of no retirement age. Over half of them agree or strongly agree (58.6%) with the statement that 'a fixed retirement age unfairly discriminates against older employees', and they also agree or strongly agree (61.6%) with the statement that 'it is important not to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable HEIs to retain valuable expertise and specialist skills'. A very large proportion of the respondents (46.4%) disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that 'it is important to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable younger employees to progress their career', and a large proportion of them (33.9%) neither agree nor disagree with this statement. Over half of the respondents (60.8%) disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that 'it is important to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable under-represented groups such as ethnic minorities and women to progress their careers. A large proportion of respondents also disagree or strongly disagree (46.9%) with the statement that 'it is important to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable HEIs to manage their workforce effectively', and a significant proportion of them (37.9%) neither agree nor disagree with this statement.

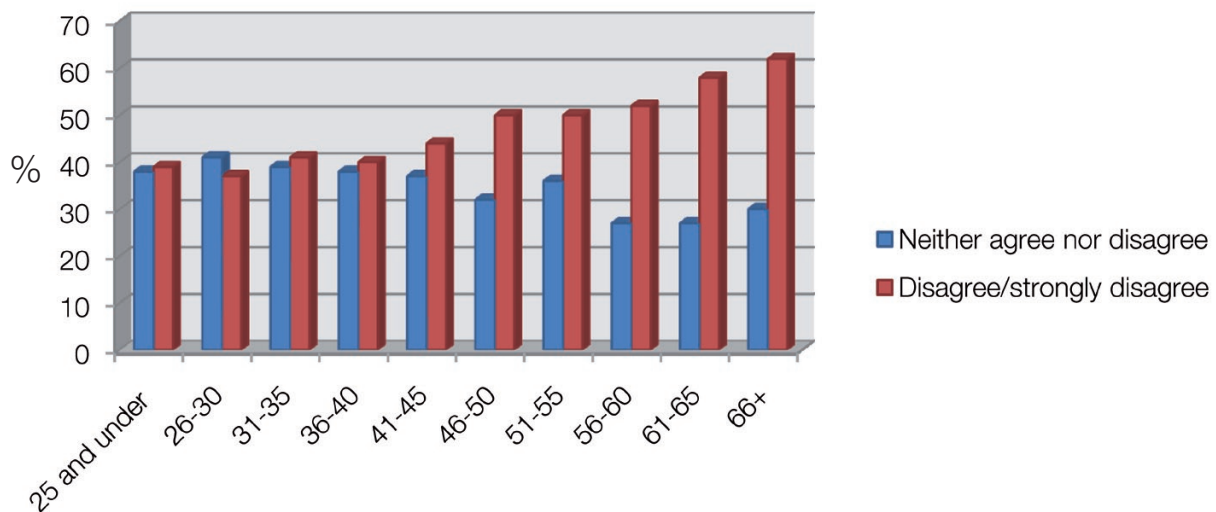
Table 4.1

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is important to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable younger employees to progress their careers	4.2%	15.5%	33.9%	36.2%	10.2%
A fixed retirement age unfairly discriminates against older employees	13.6%	45%	26.4%	13.4%	1.6%
It is important to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable under-represented groups such as ethnic minorities and women to progress their careers	1.1%	5.2%	32.8%	43.4%	17.4%
It is important not to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable HEIs to retain valuable expertise and specialist skills	15.5%	46.1%	26.3%	10.5%	1.5%
It is important to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable HEIs to manage their workforce effectively	1.7%	13.4%	37.9%	37%	9.9%

(Total response = 6161)

The results to this question were also tested by age group and gender, and as figures 1, 2 and 3 below highlight, they still show overall support for no retirement age. In particular, figure 1 shows that the largest proportions of respondents in the youngest age groups, either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that 'it is important to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable younger employees to progress their careers', and an equally large proportion of them neither agree nor disagree with this statement. Figure 2, instead, shows that half, or more than half of the respondents in all age groups, agree with the statement that 'a fixed retirement age unfairly discriminates against older employees'. Finally, figure 3 shows that over half of the respondents of both genders disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that 'it is important to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable under-represented groups such as ethnic minorities, and women to progress their careers'. It was not possible to test this question for ethnicity as the number of respondents under each different ethnic group was too small to be statistically significant. The responses in relation to the other statements show similar patterns and that overall large proportions of respondents do not support those statements which justify the use of a fixed retirement age.

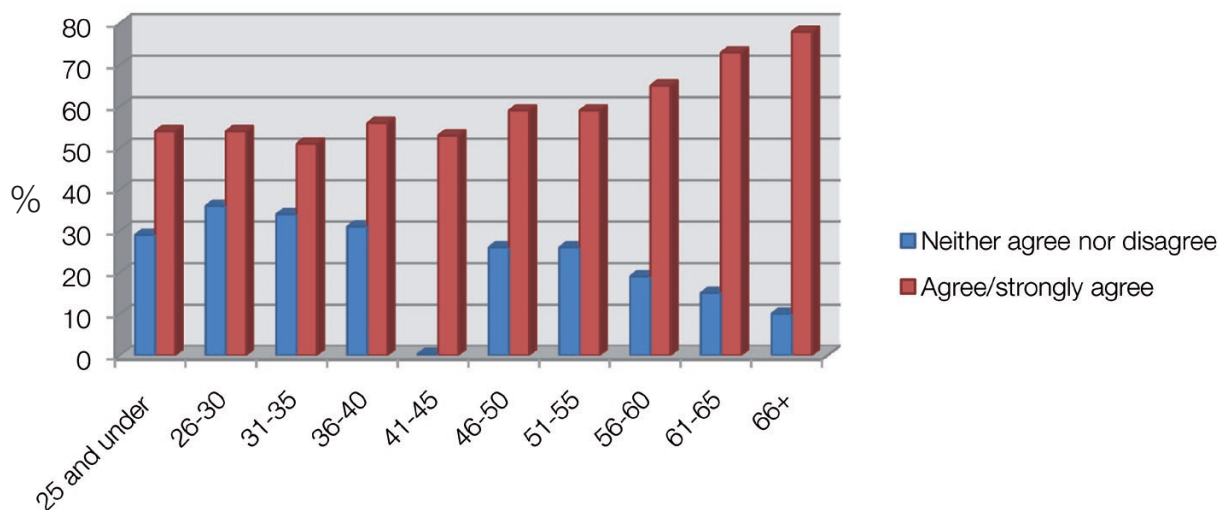
Figure 1 : It is important to have a fixed retirement age to enable younger employees to progress their careers, by age group



(Total response = 6112)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between the age and importance to have a fixed retirement age to enable younger employees to progress in their careers.

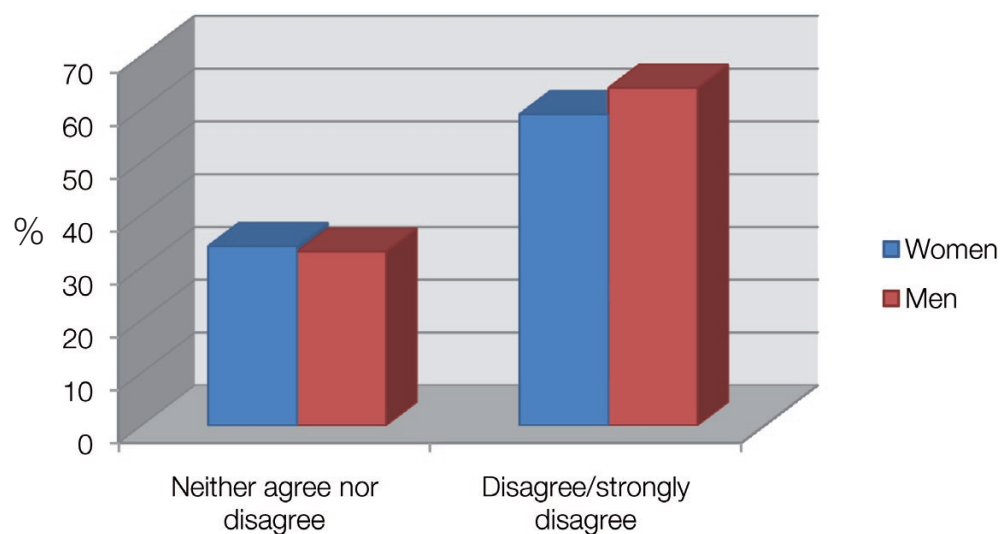
Figure 2 : A fixed retirement age unfairly discriminates against older employees, by age group



(Total response = 6103)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and a fixed retirement age unfairly discriminates against older employees.

Figure 3 : It is important to have a fixed retirement age to enable under-represented groups such as ethnic minorities and women to progress their careers



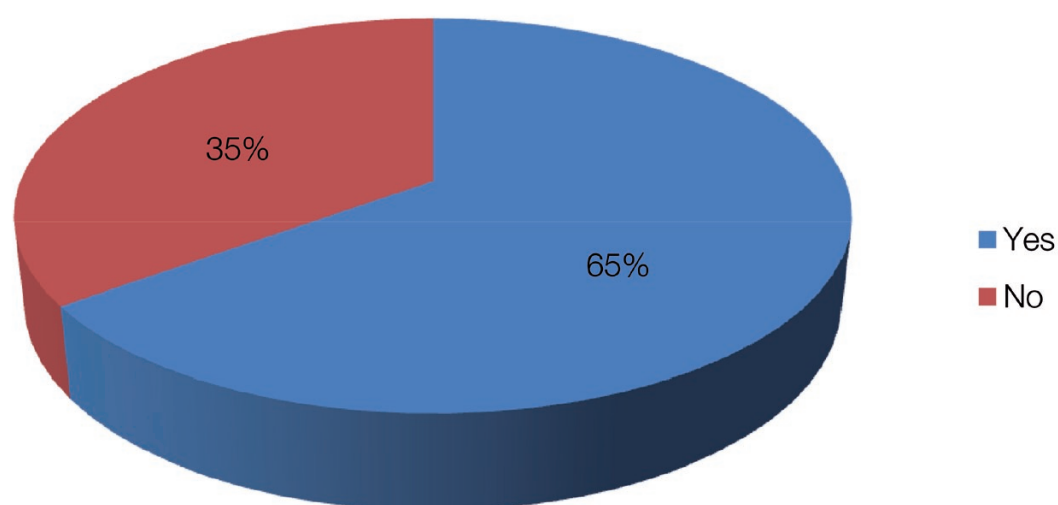
(Total response = 5850)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between gender and the importance of having a fixed retirement age to enable under-represented groups such as ethnic minorities and women to progress their careers

## 4.2 Awareness of 'the right to request' to work beyond retirement age

Over half of the respondents (63%) are aware of 'the right to request' to work beyond the retirement age, as highlighted by figure 4 below. However, figure 5 shows that the majority of them (77%) do not know whether their university has a policy or procedure on the right to request to work beyond retirement.

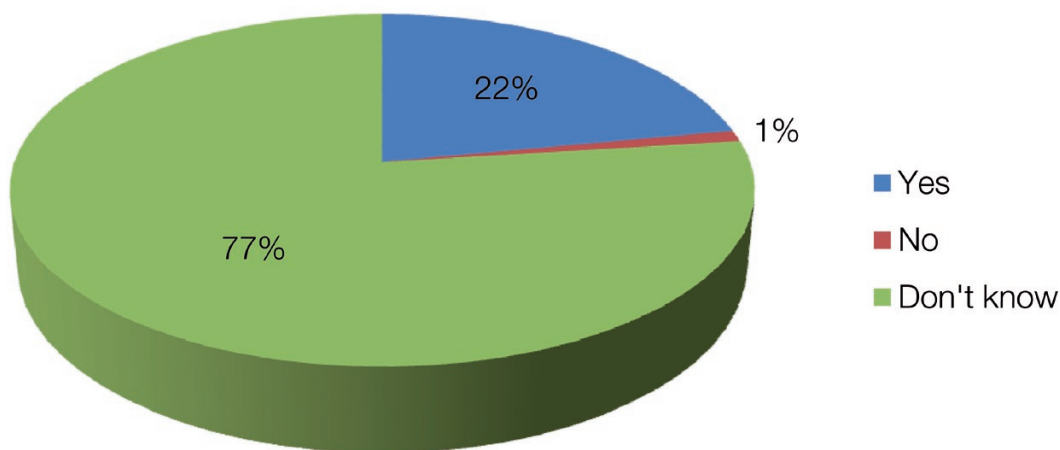
Figure 4 : Knowledge of 'the right to request' to work beyond retirement



(Total response = 6528)



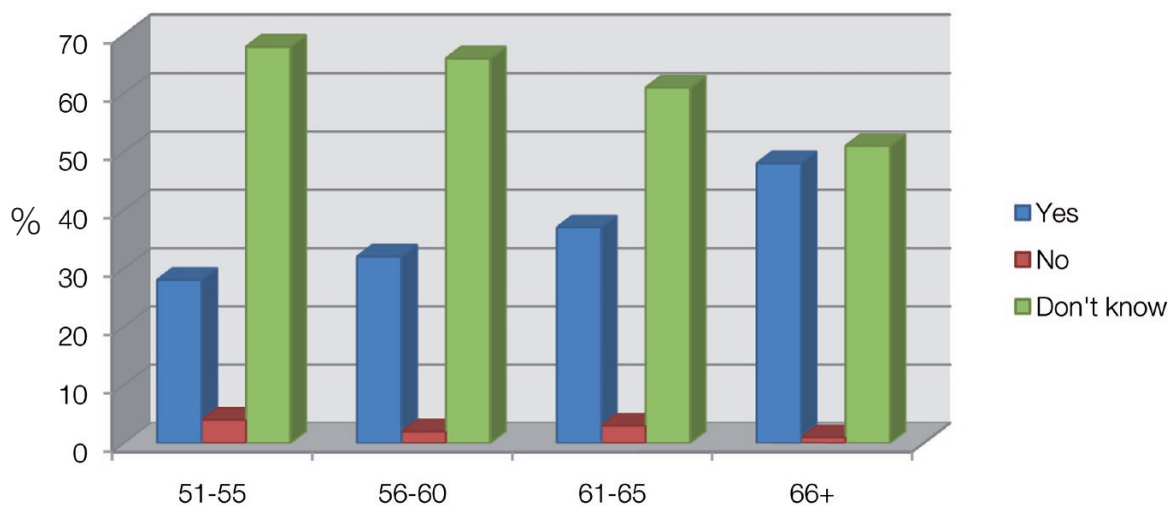
Figure 5 : Knowledge of the university's policy or procedure on 'the right to request' to work beyond retirement



(Total response = 6524)

Responses to the latter question were tested by age group and it is interesting to note that even in the older age groups, over the age of 50, over half of the respondents do not know whether their university has a policy or procedure on 'the right to request' to work beyond retirement as figure 6 shows.

Figure 6 : Knowledge of the university's policy or procedure on 'the right to request' to work beyond retirement, by age group

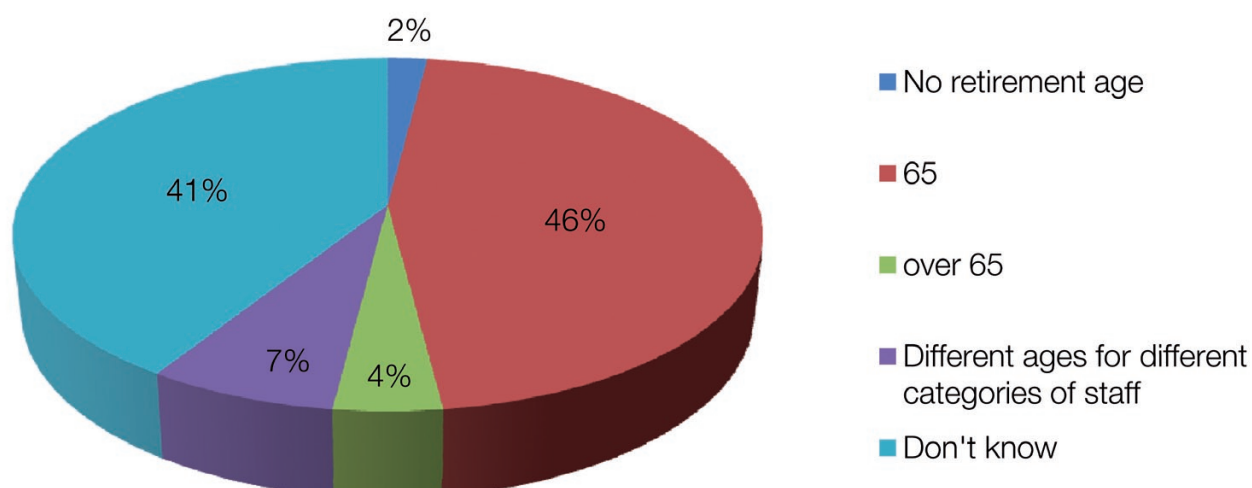


(Total response = 6506)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and knowledge of university's policy or procedure on 'the right to request'.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their university's retirement age, and, as figure 7 shows, the largest proportion of them reported that their university's retirement age is 65. However, it is interesting to note that a large proportion of them do not know their university retirement age, and a very small proportion of respondents is under the impression that their university has no retirement age. This is not the case as all the institutions that took part in this survey have a fixed retirement age, usually of 65.

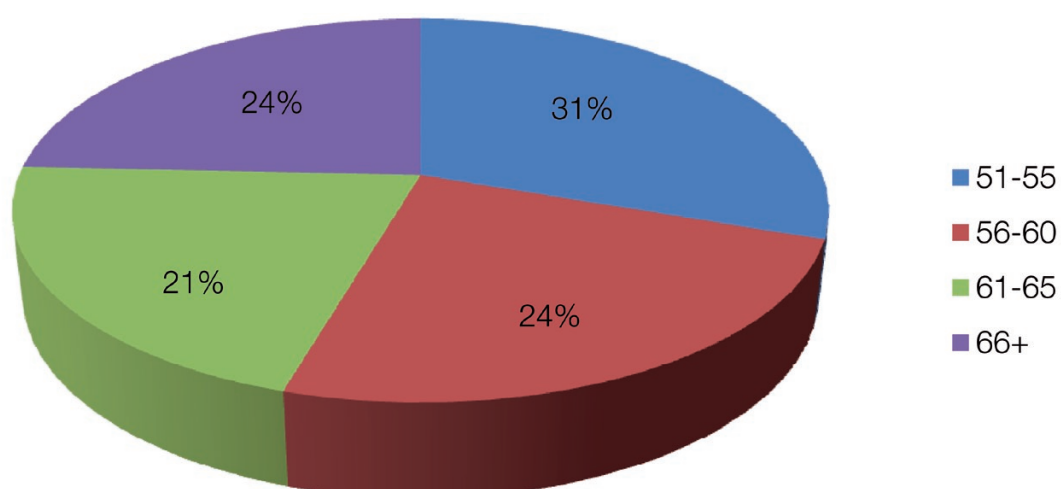
Figure 7 : Universities retirement age



(Total response = 6497)

This question was also tested by age group. Figure 8 below highlights the results only relating to those respondents in older age groups, over the age of 50, and it shows that significant proportions of them do not know their university retirement age.

Figure 8 : Respondents who do not know their university retirement age, by age group



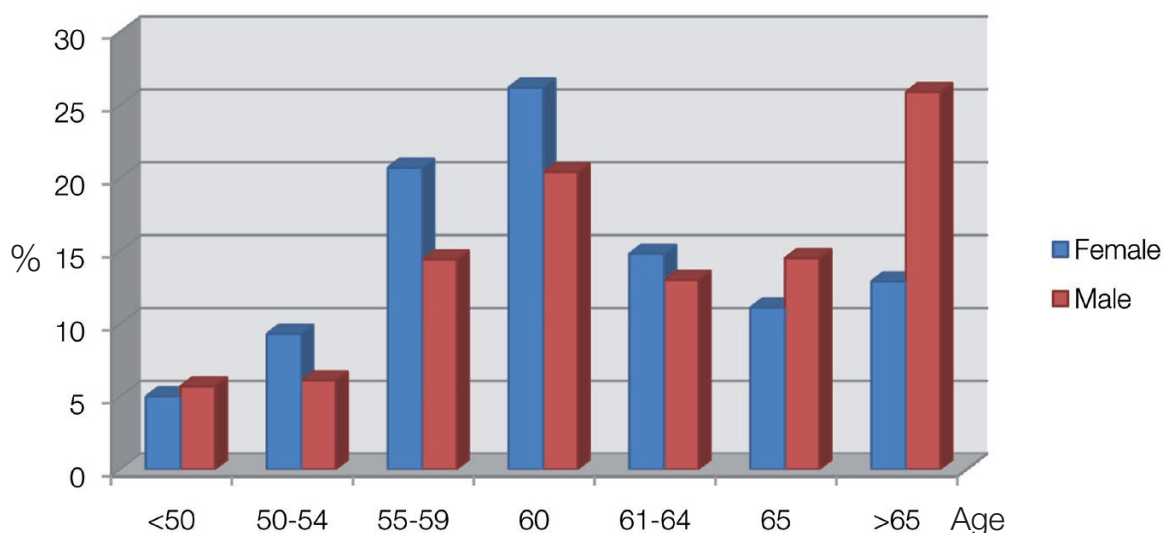
(Total response = 6480)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and knowledge of university's retirement age.

## 4.3 Retirement preferences and expectations by gender

Figure 9 shows preferred retirement age by gender. There seems to be a marked difference between women and men's preferences, as the largest proportion of female respondents (26.2%) indicated that they would like to retire at the age of 60, while the largest proportion of male respondents (25.9%) indicated that they would like to retire beyond the age of 65. The data in figure 10 however, show that the differences between men and women's responses are less marked when they were asked at what age they 'think they will retire'. Although a higher percentage of men (34.8%), compared to that of women (24.6%), think that they are likely to retire beyond the age of 65, there is almost no difference between the percentage of men (32.7%) and that of women (32.3%) who expect to retire at the age of 65. The data suggest that women are likely to retire much later compared to their preferred retirement age and that the retirement age of both genders is likely to equalise. This might be partly explained by the fact that the state pension age for women has been extended to the age of 65.

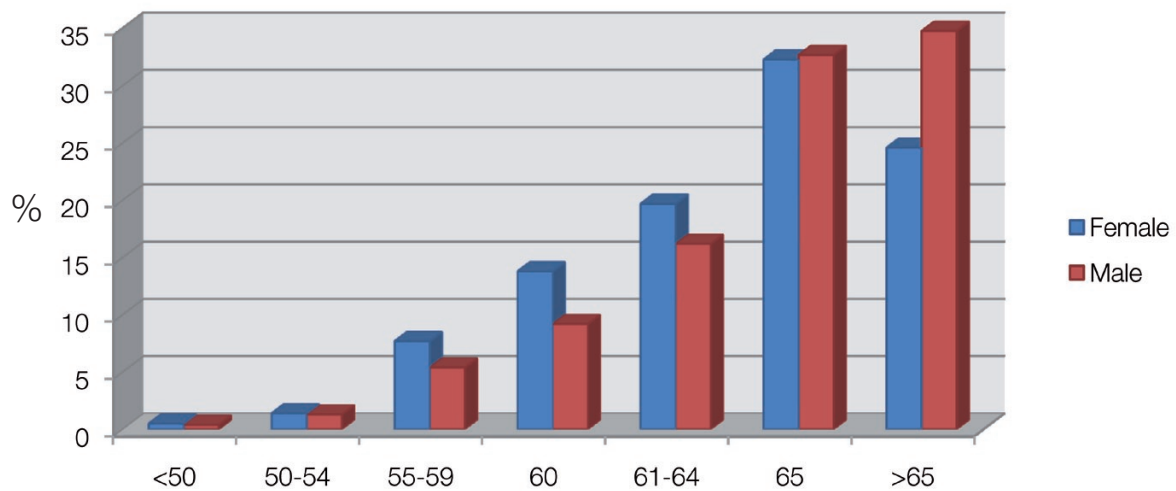
Figure 9 : Preferred retirement age by gender



(Total response = 5840)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between gender and preferred retirement age.

Figure 10 : Expected retirement age by gender

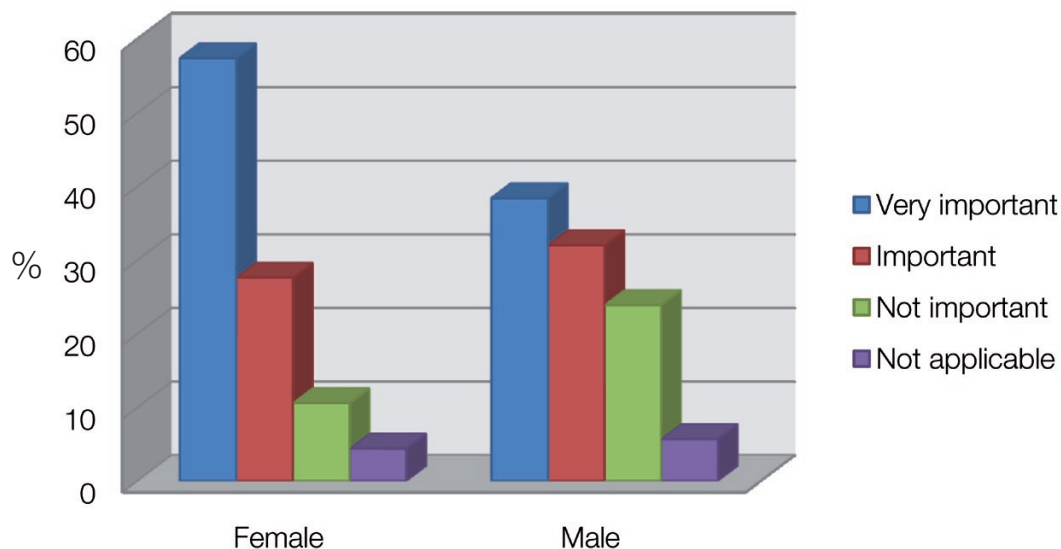


(Total response = 5827)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between gender and expected retirement age.

The data also highlight a marked difference between the responses of men and women, when asked to rank in order of importance to them, a number of factors that are likely to impact on their decision to continue to work beyond the age of 65. As figure 11 shows, over half of the female respondents (57.4%) indicated that sufficient pension income is a very important factor in determining their decision to request to work beyond the age of 65, compared to a smaller percentage of male respondents (38.4%).

Figure 11 : I have not built up enough pension



(Total response = 1394)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between gender and not enough pension.

This result is not surprising as the Government Gender Impact Assessment of the Pension Reform (2007) clearly shows that there is 'inequality in pension outcomes between men and women' (p. 8) which, is due to women's rate of participation in the labour market, employment patterns and interrupted working histories to care for families. These issues are reflected by some of the responses to an open ended question that offered respondents the option to explain briefly what main factors would influence their choice to continue to work beyond retirement age. The following quotations are typical of the most common reasons given by women:

*'I took years out and worked part-time for a while for childcare, and would like to keep working to have a full career. I think this should be an option for women and allow them to earn a full pension'.*

*'If I had enough pension I would retire early and work part-time from 55'.*

By contrast, the most common reasons given by men for wanting to continue to work beyond retirement are that they still have a significant contribution to make to their work, as well summarized by the quotations below:

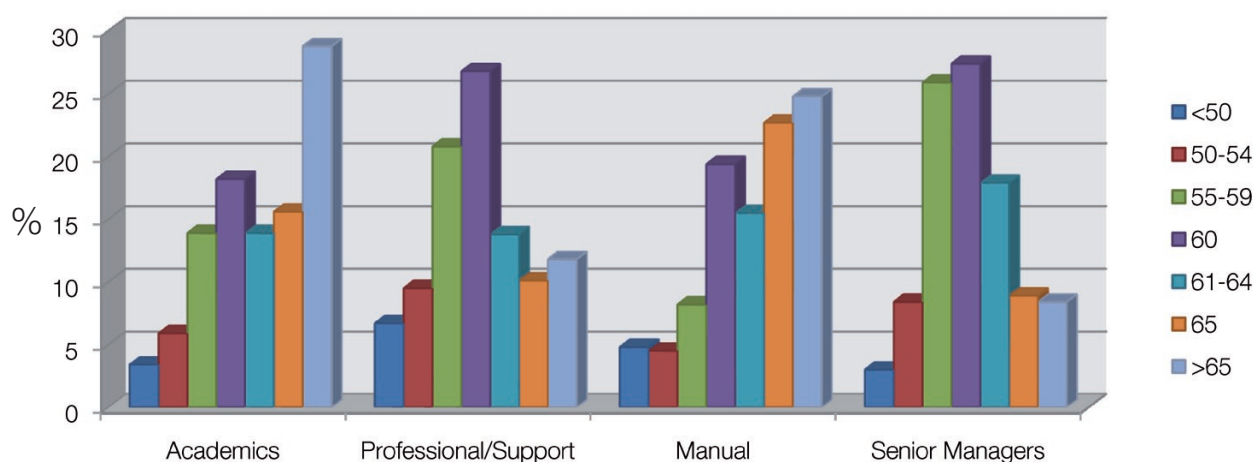
*'Still feel like a productive member of society'.*

*'My brain is just as good as it was when I was a young man. I now have a wealth of experience to add to my mental abilities. I am able to contribute to my science and society'.*

## 4.4 Retirement preferences and expectations by occupational group

Figure 12 shows preferred retirement age by occupational group which indicates that more academics (29%) and manual staff (24.8%) would prefer to retire beyond the age of 65 as opposed to professional and support staff (12%), and senior management (8.4%). Professional and support and senior management staff's preferred retirement ages are between 55 and 60.

Figure 12 : Preferred retirement age by occupation

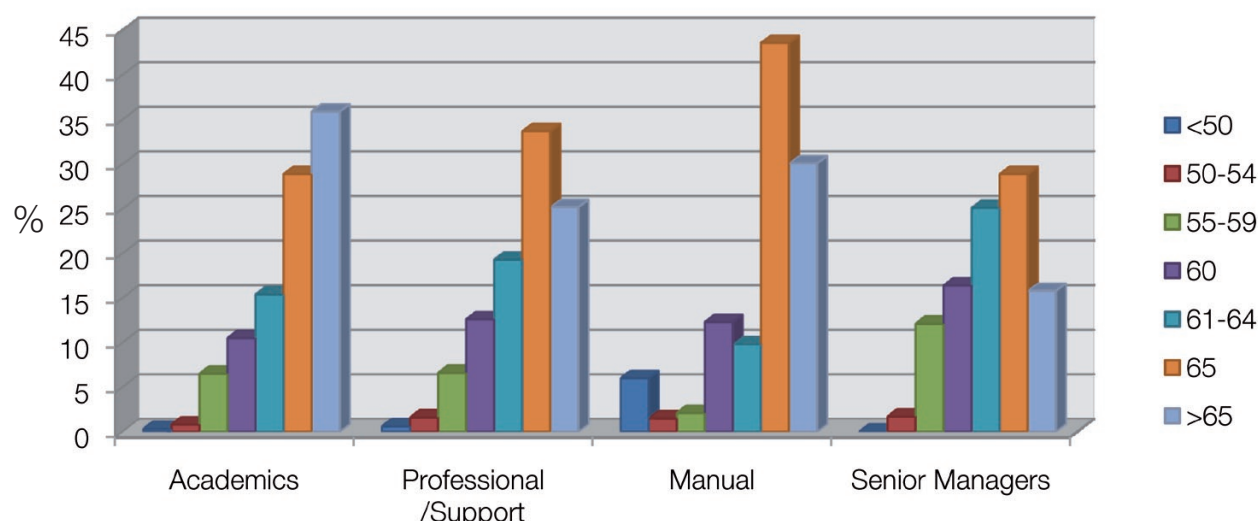


(Total response = 6083)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and preferred retirement age.

By contrast, the responses to the question about retirement expectations show a significant shift towards the later retirement age bands in all the job categories. Figure 13 highlights that the shift is more marked for professional and support staff and senior staff as the majority of the respondents expect to retire at the age of 65 (33.7% and 28.9%, respectively), and a significant proportion of them expect to retire over the age of 65 (25.2% and 15.8%, respectively). Considering that there are more women employed in professional and support jobs, there is consistency between the data showing preferred retirement age and expected retirement by occupational group and by gender.

Figure 13 : Expected retirement age by occupation

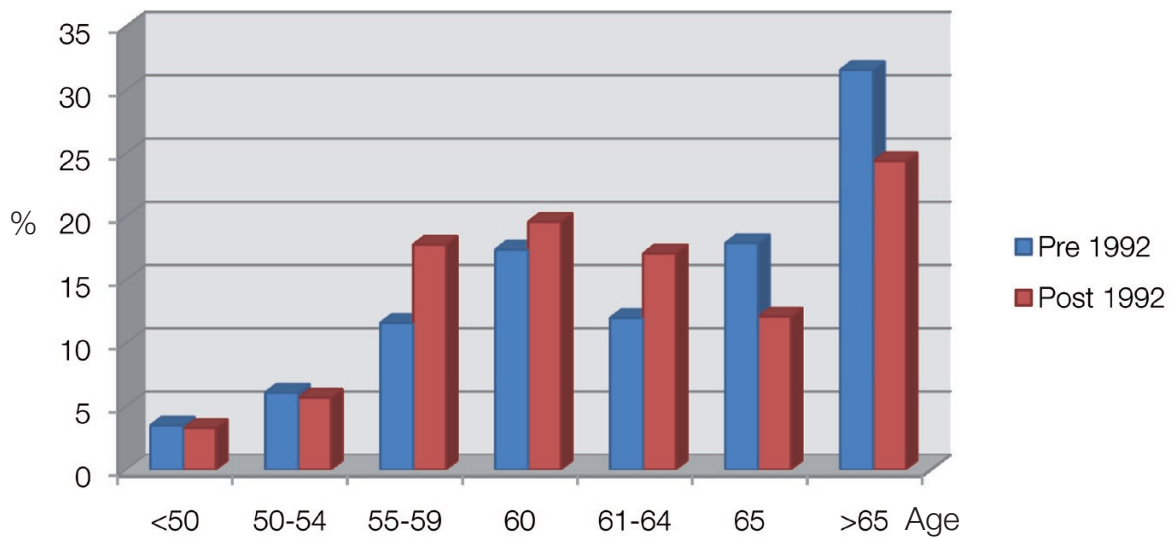


(Total response = 6068)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between occupation and expected retirement age.

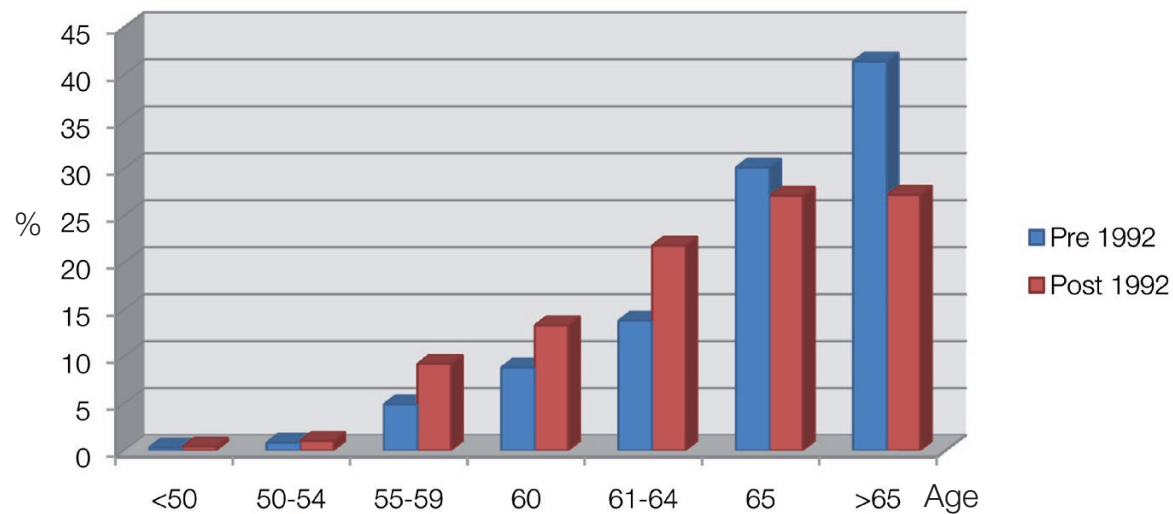
The data also show that manual staff (30%) and academics (35.9%) are the occupational groups more likely to expect to continue to work over the age of 65. The results concerning academic staff, however, may be skewed by the fact that some of the pre-1992 universities that took part in this project have a retirement age for academic staff of 67 or 68. Conversely, all the post-1992 universities that took part in this study have a retirement age of 65. Thus, in order to obtain a more accurate picture, the responses of academic staff from pre and post 1992 institutions were considered separately. Figures 14 and 15 show preferred and expected retirement ages for academic staff in pre and post 1992 universities. The proportion of respondents in the pre-1992 universities that expect to retire beyond the age of 65 (41.4%) is high, but as mentioned earlier, this partly reflects the fact that some of the participating universities have a higher fixed retirement age for academic staff. The responses of academic staff in post-1992 universities, show a significant proportion of academic staff intending to work up to the age of 65 (27%). They also show an equal proportion (27.2%) of academic staff who expect to continue to work beyond their retirement age of 65. The latest HEFCE report (2008) on the HE workforce has highlighted that there has been an increase in the proportion of academic staff aged 60 and over and, the findings from this research, seem to indicate that this trend is set to increase.

Figure 14 : Preferred retirement age for academics in pre and post 1992 universities



(Total response = 1883)

Figure 15 : Expected retirement age for academics in pre and post 1992 universities



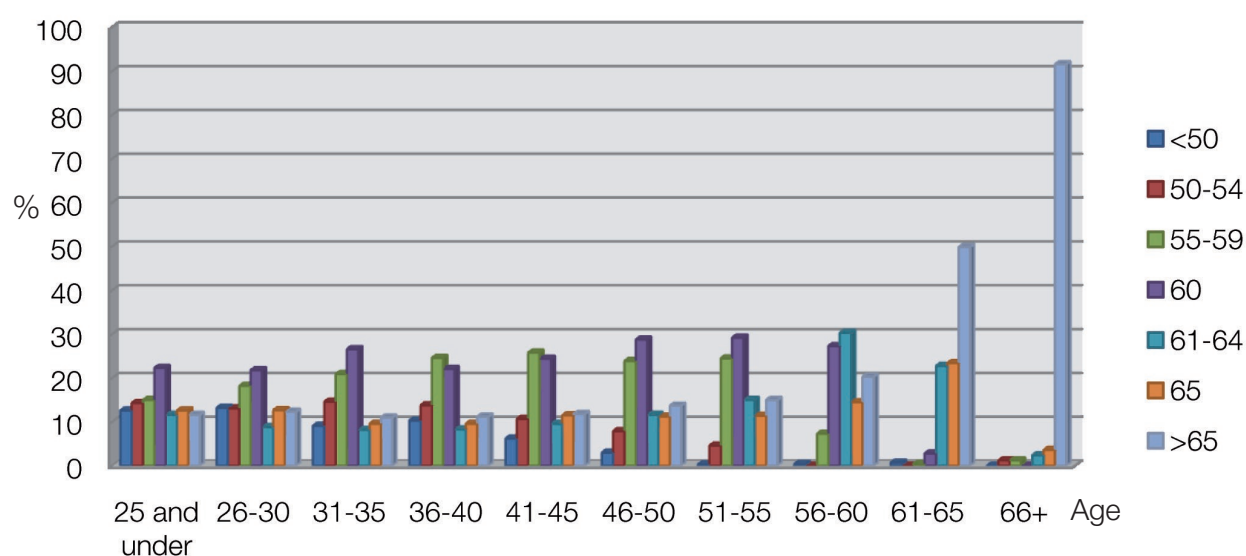
(Total response = 1881)



## 4.5 Retirement preferences and expectations by age group

Figure 16 shows that for younger staff up to the age of 35, the preferred retirement age is 60, while staff in the 36-45 age group would prefer to retire earlier between the ages of 55-59. Staff in the 46-55 age band, instead would prefer to retire at 60. Older staff, from the age of 56 and above, have expressed a preference for retirement over the age of 60.

Figure 16 : Preferred retirement age by age group

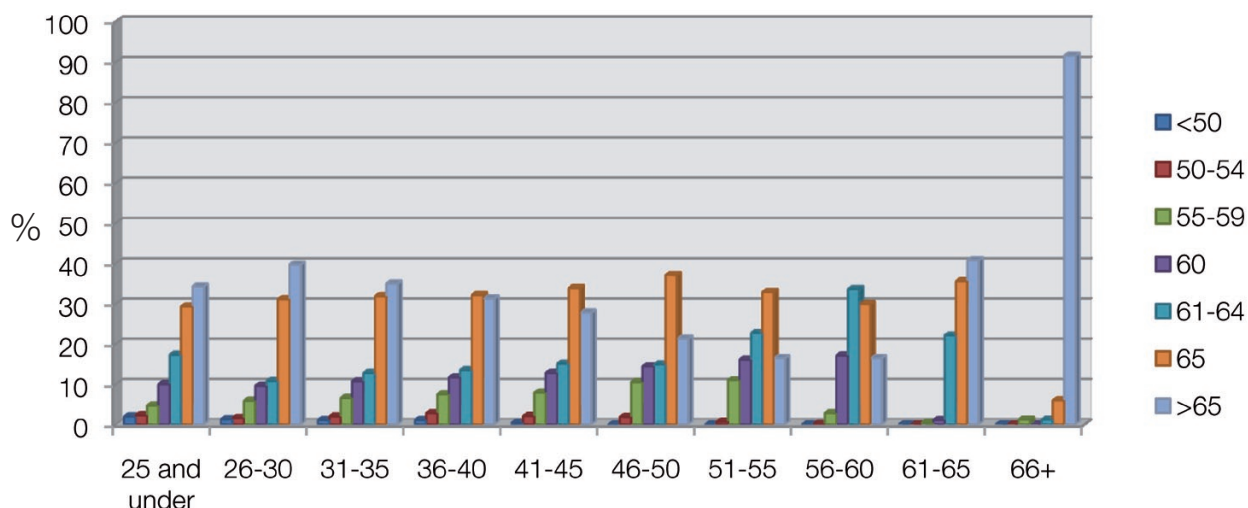


(Total response = 6079)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and preferred retirement age.

Figure 17 shows expectations about retirement by age group. The majority of staff in all different age groups expects to retire around the age of 65 or over. It is also interesting to note that staff in the younger age groups, up to the age of 40, and in the older groups aged 60 and over, are more likely to expect to retire over the age of 65.

Figure 17 : Expected retirement age by age group



(Total response = 6065)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and expected retirement age.

## 4.6 Staff's attitudes towards retirement and retirement preferences and expectations: summary of the survey key findings

Staff's attitudes towards retirement	The majority of respondents support the idea of no retirement age in the workplace. Over half of them agree or strongly agree (58.6%) with the statement that 'a fixed retirement age unfairly discriminates against older employees', and they also agree or strongly agree (61.6%) with the statement that 'it is important not to have a fixed retirement age in order to enable HEIs to retain valuable expertise and specialist skills'. The results to this question were tested by age group and gender and they showed a similar picture.
Awareness about the 'right to request' to work beyond retirement	The majority of respondents (65%) are aware of the 'right to request' to work beyond retirement age. However, the great majority of them (77%) do not know whether their university has a policy or procedure on the 'right to request' to work beyond retirement. These results were tested by age group, and they show that over half of the respondents in the older age groups, over the age of 50, still do not know whether their university has a policy or procedure on 'the right to request' to work beyond retirement.
Knowledge of retirement age	A large proportion of respondents (41%) do not know their university's retirement age. These results were tested by age group, and they still show that significant proportions of respondents, over the age of 50, do not know their university's retirement age.

Retirement	Preferences	Expectations
By gender	Women's preferred retirement age is 60 while men's preferred option is over the age of 65	<p>Gender differences are less marked with regard to retirement expectations as virtually an equal percentage of women and men expect to retire at 65. However, more men expect to retire over the age of 65 compared to women.</p> <p>Women's choices to continue to work beyond retirement are more likely to be influenced by insufficient pension income compared to men.</p>
By occupational group	Professional and support and senior management staff's preferred retirement ages are 55-59 (20.8%) and 60 (26.8). Smaller percentages of staff in these groups would like to retire over the age of 65 (11.8% and 8.4%, respectively). By contrast the majority of academic (28.8%) and manual staff (22.7%) would prefer to retire beyond the age of 65.	<p>The majority of professional and support and senior staff expect to retire at the age of 65 (33.7% and 28.9%, respectively) which is later compared to their preferences. The percentage of staff in these categories who expect to retire over the age of 65 is also higher compared to their responses on preferences.</p> <p>(25.2% and 15.8% respectively). Higher percentages of academic and manual staff also expect to retire at 65 (28.8% and 43.6% respectively) or over 65 (35.9% and 30.1% respectively).</p>
By age	Younger staff up to the age of 35 and staff in the 46-55 age bracket would prefer to retire at 60. Staff between the age of 36-45 would prefer to retire earlier between the age of 55-59. Older staff from the age of 56 and above would prefer to retire over the age of 60.	Staff in all age groups, save for those aged 60 or over, expect to retire at the age of 65 which is much later compared to their preferences. There is no significant difference between the preferred and the expected retirement age of staff aged 60 and over.

## 4.7 The perspective of the managers – findings from the focus groups

**Managers and senior academics were asked whether they thought that universities should have a role in preparing employees for retirement.**

There was general consensus that it should be a central university responsibility to prepare employees for retirement. To this end, offering pre-retirement courses can be helpful. It was noted however, that it is important to offer staff such courses sufficiently in advance, in order to assist them with their retirement plans.

There was a lot of confusion about pension provisions and virtually all managers were of the opinion that there is a need to provide HE employees with better information about pension entitlements, including state pension, to enable them to make informed decisions about retirement. Some also felt that managers too should have a broad understanding about pension entitlements to be able to provide some guidance to staff, although for detailed information they would need to be referred to Human Resources Departments.

Line managers appear to have mixed views as to whether they have a role to play in preparing staff for retirement, and these could be summarised as follows:

- Some think that it is important that they are involved in their staff's decisions about retirement, as this is part of their workforce planning. The appropriate forum to have this kind of discussion would be the professional annual review when discussing staff's future plans.
- On the other hand, others think that this is a sensitive area, and they are concerned about sounding 'intrusive' or 'unfriendly'. It was noted that it is difficult to know people's age and some felt uncomfortable about broaching the subject, especially with women in their 60s.
- Managers could have an important role to play to ensure that employees approaching retirement 'do not feel that they have been tossed aside', but training may be needed to help them to exercise such role.

## 4.8 Working beyond the age of 65

**Managers and senior academics were asked about what challenges they could foresee in their area of work, if staff in HE are likely to be working longer with more people working beyond the age of 65.**

A number of themes emerged consistently from all the focus groups that are common to all different occupational categories, as well as a number of issues that are specific to individual job categories. In the following paragraphs specific issues raised in relation to manual, academic and professional and support staff, are discussed first.

### Issues relating to manual staff

Most managers reported that they have received many requests from manual staff to continue to work beyond retirement. They explained that many manual staff wish to continue to work because they are low paid, need the income and often do not have a pension. Several managers already have staff over the age of 65 and, in general, if they do a good job, they are happy for them to continue beyond retirement. This was the practice in the past but, paradoxically, since the introduction of the right to request to work beyond retirement, it has become more difficult for this group of staff to continue to work past their universities fixed retirement age. Managers reported that while in the past applications from manual staff to continue to work were usually supported, their institutions have started to refuse them. In their view this was due to the fact that universities have developed policies that are largely driven by issues relating to the turnover of academic

staff and the need to have a strategic justification, or a clear business case, for allowing staff to continue to work past their retirement age. Managers made the point that such requirements disadvantage manual staff as it would be difficult to make a strategic case to retain them, unless there were significant recruitment difficulties. Thus, this leaves manual staff exposed to labour market forces.

A few managers reported that 'the right to request' has created the false impression among some of their staff that they have an absolute right to continue to work beyond retirement. Perhaps there is a need to explain more clearly that the 'right to request' does not mean that an application would be accepted, but simply that it would be considered by a university employer.

Concerns about health and safety, and the ability to continue certain types of manual jobs, were also raised by some of the managers. Some of these concerns appeared to be objectively linked to specific requirements of different jobs, while others were more vague and seemed to be linked more to a perception that health declines with age, rather than to any specific job requirement. Some managers, on the other hand, felt that health and safety were issues for all ages and not just for the older workforce. In one university managers were already used to having a large number of staff over the age of 65.

## Issues relating to academic staff

Most of the senior academics in pre-1992 universities, that took part in the discussion groups have already had experience of either being involved in making decisions about requests from academic colleagues to work beyond retirement, or of managing academics who worked past retirement. By contrast, for most of the senior academics in the post-1992 universities, the discussion was hypothetical as they have not yet been involved in considering requests to work beyond retirement and, in general, their experience was that their colleagues would retire at 65. However, there was a general consensus among all the senior academics from different institutions, that the main challenges for their universities, if more academic staff want to continue to work beyond retirement, would be staff turnover and the financial implications for departmental budgets. If academics continue to work beyond retirement this would cause a reduction in staff turnover in some departments where the workforce tend to be very stable. This would limit opportunities for career progression for more junior staff and the ability to recruit new staff. There are also financial implications about retaining senior staff as 'when someone is promoted to professorship, a planning assumption is made that the costs of the promotion will be balanced out by retirement'. Thus if too many academic staff delay retirement, departmental budgets can 'go out of control'. Space was also mentioned as a possible challenge by academic managers working in subject areas in the physical sciences where most of the work is laboratory based. Furthermore, in one post-1992 university academic managers expressed concern about the possibility of having to manage a high level of absenteeism among staff over the age of 65.

All the participating universities have developed broad criteria to guide decisions about requests to continue to work beyond retirement. One university have developed a set of criteria that apply specifically to requests from academic staff. These include: academic distinction; strategic justification and/or financial considerations, in other words the ability to generate significant external income. Those senior academics who were involved in making decisions on applications from colleagues explained that although 'academic distinction' had been an important criterion in the run up to the RAE 2008, now that the pressure from the RAE was over, they believed that the strategic case was more important. A 'strategic versus eminence argument' was developing among the academic community in this university as departments that supported applications to work beyond retirement were expected to provide a 'strategic justification' for retaining academics post retirement age. It was commented 'simply to have a very venerable academic who performed very well in post it is not sufficient because it does not answer the question why is it strategic'. It was acknowledged however, that some departments were struggling with this approach as they never had a personnel strategy. In other universities, academic managers were less clear as to what type of criteria should be used to guide these decisions or how these should be interpreted in practice. For example, one academic manager reported that his experience of dealing with an application to work beyond retirement

was 'a struggle' as it was difficult to define the terms of 'what is in the management's interest'. There was general consensus among the senior academics that if colleagues were to be allowed to continue to work beyond retirement, they should do so on a part-time basis, in order to overcome issues around lack of staff turnover and about departmental finances. The example of one department was reported where it had been decided that, if academic staff were to be allowed to continue post retirement, they would be required to step down from any senior position that they held, in order to free up opportunities for career progression for other staff. They would be allowed to continue on their substantive grade but on a half-time contract. It was felt that the advantages of this approach are that it would enable departments to retain staff past retirement age but also 'to balance the books', as the cost of a lectureship is half the costs of a professorship. It was acknowledged however, that such approach might cause financial hardship to an individual if he/she cannot start to withdraw a pension to compensate for the loss of income. Hence the importance of being clear as to whether pension schemes provide for flexible retirement. At the other end of the spectrum some noted that due to financial constraints, many academics were not replaced when they retired and that 'inevitably when people leave this is an opportunity to exercise workforce planning. Redundancies would be more destructive'. In the experience of some senior academics who work in universities that have different retirement ages, issues around continuation of work beyond retirement were more likely to arise for those academic staff expected to retire at 65 rather than 67.

Another couple of interesting points emerged from these discussions. One was that a fixed retirement age of 65 could drive some academics to migrate to the United States where there are no retirement age limits. The other point was about the relationship between age and gender. It was noted that many women were more likely to reach seniority in academia later in life, either because they entered in an academic role later in life, or because they took time out for childcare. This often implied that they had not accumulated a sufficient number of years to get a good pension, therefore the limited opportunities to work beyond retirement could disadvantage more women than men.

## Issues relating to professional and support staff

This was the group of managers who had the least experience of employees wanting to continue to work beyond retirement. For this group the issues were more about early retirement rather than late retirement. It was pointed out that many staff in this occupational group tend to retire around the age of 60 and managers are concerned about losing valuable expertise. However, they said that they would find it difficult to refuse requests for early retirement, as it would be counterproductive to keep people working against their will. The other issue that they raised was the prospect of having to cope with large numbers of employees, probably from 'the baby boom generation', approaching retirement age and likely to leave almost at the same time. This could cause significant recruitment issues, particularly for those universities located in parts of the country where it can be difficult to recruit due to the high cost of living. Some managers also reported that although they would like to encourage some of their staff to stay on, this was not an option for them due to financial pressure on their institution to reduce staff costs. Similarly to the managers of manual staff, interviewees in this group felt that their university's policy on 'the right to request' had been developed with academic staff in mind and it was difficult, under the terms of these policies, to justify the retention of staff in support roles. For example, in one focus group the question was raised as to whether it is meaningful to ask about the strategic contribution of a technician who may provide excellent service.

## General issues

As mentioned earlier, a number of themes that apply to all different occupational groups emerged consistently from all the focus group discussions. These include:

- the need to develop a fair and robust performance management system
- the need to improve succession planning

- who should be involved in making decisions about applications to work beyond retirement?
- period of notice required to request to work beyond retirement
- whether reasons should be given for refusing an application to work beyond retirement

**Performance management.** Many managers think that sometime there is a tendency to turn a blind eye to poor performance in the run up to retirement. However, in the future this could no longer be the case and performance issues would have to be tackled for all employees equally, especially if more people wanted to work longer. A number of senior academics felt that the notion of performance management would bring about some significant cultural change in some institutions. It was pointed out that to a certain extent, in the case of academic staff, universities are already reviewing their performance, when decisions about professorial points have to be made. Nonetheless, it was observed that 'at the moment it is a one way street, that is to say your competence is being reviewed for your salary going up. We have not yet bitten the bullet to say....you get your increase for two years and we review it again to see whether you should continue to have it or whether you should step down'. Managers in the other occupational groups also felt strongly that there should be a better performance management system in their area of work.

**Succession planning.** The general view was that provisions for succession planning are at best rather poor or at worst non existent. Yet, all managers agreed that effective succession planning should be a priority for their institutions, particularly in those areas where many employees, mainly due to the effect of the 'baby boom generation', are likely to retire at the same time. Many also thought that succession planning should include provisions for periods of overlapping between staff about to retire and newly appointed employees to ensure that valuable skills and expertise would be passed over to new staff.

**Who should be involved in making decisions about applications to continue to work beyond retirement?** In one focus group with academic staff an interesting point was raised about who should be involved in deciding applications to continue to work beyond retirement. It was noted that the composition of a university's committee charged with making such decisions, should be selected carefully as older staff might have vested interest in supporting applications to continue to work beyond retirement. Likewise younger staff may have a vested interest in replacing colleagues. In either situation people could be biased in their decisions. It was also commented that where a devolved budget model operates, heads of departments, should be involved in making these decisions, since these would have financial implications for departmental budgets. By contrast, in another focus group, an interviewee took the opposite view. He felt that when there is a devolved budget model, it could be very difficult for a head of department to take this kind of decisions that might involve close colleagues.

**Period of notice to request to work beyond retirement.** Many were critical of the short period of notice required by the legislation to request to work beyond retirement. Under the current regulations staff have a right to make a request within three months from their retirement date. Such period of notice was deemed to be far too short and in practice likely to create a lot of planning difficulties, and uncertainties, that could affect the delivery of services.

**Reasons for refusing an application to work beyond retirement.** Most managers were critical of the fact that employers are not required to give a reason for refusing an application to work beyond retirement. They realised that to give reasons for refusing an application could expose institutions to the risk of litigation. Nonetheless, many felt that it was not good practice to dismiss staff, who might have devoted many years of service to their university, without explaining why their request was turned down. They believe that this was a major weakness in the legislation.



## 4.9 The perspective of the managers on working beyond retirement: key findings from the focus groups

Universities have a responsibility to prepare staff for retirement	There is a general consensus that it should be a central university responsibility to prepare staff for retirement. Pre-retirement courses can be helpful particularly if offered sufficiently in advance in order to help staff to plan for their retirement.
There is not enough knowledge and understanding about pension entitlements	There is a need for better information about pension entitlements.
Should managers have a role in preparing staff for retirement?	<p>Managers have mixed views about their role in preparing staff for retirement. Some think that they should be involved as this is part of workforce planning. Retirement plans should be discussed as part of the professional annual review or appraisal.</p> <p>Others think that it is a sensitive area and they are concerned about sounding 'intrusive' or 'unfriendly'. Finally some feel that they could have a role in supporting staff approaching retirement to ensure that 'they do not feel that they have been tossed aside'.</p>

<p><b>Working beyond retirement: issues for manual staff</b></p> <p>Paradoxically the 'right to request to work beyond retirement' makes it more difficult for manual staff to continue to work past retirement.</p> <p>'Right to request' confused by some with the right to stay.</p> <p>Health and safety issues</p>	<p>It was reported that many manual staff wish to continue to work beyond retirement. Managers are overall well disposed to let them continue if they do a good job. However, paradoxically the introduction of 'the right to request' seems to have made it more difficult for manual staff to continue to work as university policies are largely driven by issues relating to the turnover of academic staff.</p> <p>Some manual staff are under the wrong impression that 'the right to request' means that they have a right to stay on. Thus there is a need to clarify that it is up to university employers to decide whether or not accept an application to work beyond retirement.</p> <p>Some managers feel that working beyond retirement can raise a number of health and safety challenges, but others take the view that health and safety are issues for all ages.</p>
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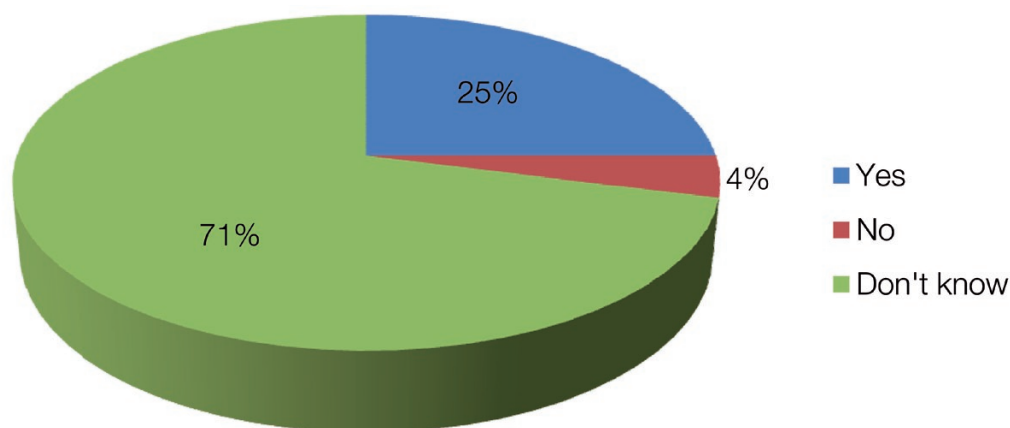
<p><b>Working beyond retirement: issues for academic staff</b></p> <p>Main challenges, academic staff turnover and financial implications for departmental budgets</p> <p>Academics, who want to continue to work past retirement, should work part-time</p> <p>Criteria to retain academic staff past retirement</p> <p>Strategic v eminence?</p> <p>Age and gender</p>	<p>Academic managers believe that the main challenges if more academics wish to continue to work beyond retirement are a reduction in the staff turnover and financial implications for departmental budgets.</p> <p>The academic workforce tends to be stable. Lack of staff turnover through retirement would limit opportunities for career progression for younger staff as well as departments' ability to recruit new staff. Furthermore, there was a concern that, if too many academics delay retirement, departmental budgets could go 'out of control'.</p> <p>There was a general consensus that if academics were allowed to continue past retirement, they should do so on a part-time basis to free up resources to employ new staff and career opportunities for younger colleagues.</p> <p>All universities have developed broad criteria to guide decisions about requests to continue to work past retirement. By and large most university policies require that there is either a 'strategic justification' or a 'business case' for retaining academics. However, the practical application of these criteria is far from being straight forward, particularly for those departments that do not have a clear Human Resource Strategy.</p> <p>A 'strategic versus eminence argument' was raised in one discussion group. It was argued that 'academic distinction' was an important criteria in the run up to the RAE, in making decisions to retain staff beyond retirement but now that the pressure for the RAE was over, it was felt that the 'strategic case' was more important.</p> <p>Limited opportunities to work beyond retirement may disadvantage women who entered into an academic role later in life and/or took time out for childcare.</p>
<p><b>Working beyond retirement: issues for professional and support staff</b></p> <p>Concerns about the effect on staff levels of the 'baby boom generation' approaching retirement age</p> <p>Universities policies on 'the right to request' have been written with academic staff in mind.</p>	<p>Managers in this group had the least experience of staff wanting to continue to work. In their area of work staff tend to retire around the age of 60. The main concern for them was that many staff from the 'baby boom generation' are approaching retirement age and this could cause significant staff recruitment issues.</p> <p>There was criticism about universities policies on 'the right to request' as it was felt that they had been developed with academic staff in mind. It was noted that it would be difficult to make a strategic case to retain staff in support roles who may provide an excellent service.</p>

<b>General issues</b>	
Performance management	Some managers think that sometimes there is a tendency to turn a blind eye to poor performance of staff approaching retirement. There was a general consensus among all managers for the need of a fair and robust performance management system if staff are likely to be working beyond retirement. This might involve significant cultural changes particularly in some academic departments.
Succession planning	Most managers felt that provisions for succession planning in their universities are at best poor and at worst non existent. Effective succession planning should be a priority, particularly for those departments that are going to be affected by the 'baby boom generation' retirement exodus.
Who should make decisions on applications to continue to work past retirement?	It was noted that it is important to limit the risk of bias in those staff involved in making decisions on applications to work beyond retirement. For this purpose attention should be paid to the composition of committees to ensure a balanced representation of staff.
Period of notice to work beyond retirement	Many managers are critical of the short period of notice to make an application to work beyond retirement allowed under the terms of the current legislation. It was felt that in practice it creates a lot of planning difficulties and could affect the delivery of services.
Should university employers give reasons for refusing staff to continue to work beyond retirement?	Although managers are aware that employers are not required by law to give reasons for refusing staff to continue to work past retirement, many felt that this is not good practice. They realise that to give reasons might expose universities to legal challenges. Nonetheless they feel uncomfortable that staff's applications might be turned down without giving a reason. There was consensus that this a major weakness of the Age Regulations.

## 4.9 Flexible retirement

Government policies support the notion of flexible retirement as this can play an important part in extending working lives and helping the labour market to adjust to demographic changes and an ageing workforce. Accordingly, a number of changes have been made to the tax system to allow employees to partially retire and start drawing part of their pension while continuing to work on a part-time basis. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a certain degree of confusion and lack of information among employees in the HE sector and, probably in other sectors as well, as to whether their pension schemes provide for flexible retirement. In order to explore this point, respondents were asked whether their pension scheme regulations allowed for flexible retirement. Figure 18 shows that the majority of the respondents (71%) do not know whether under the rules of their pension scheme flexible retirement is an option available to them.

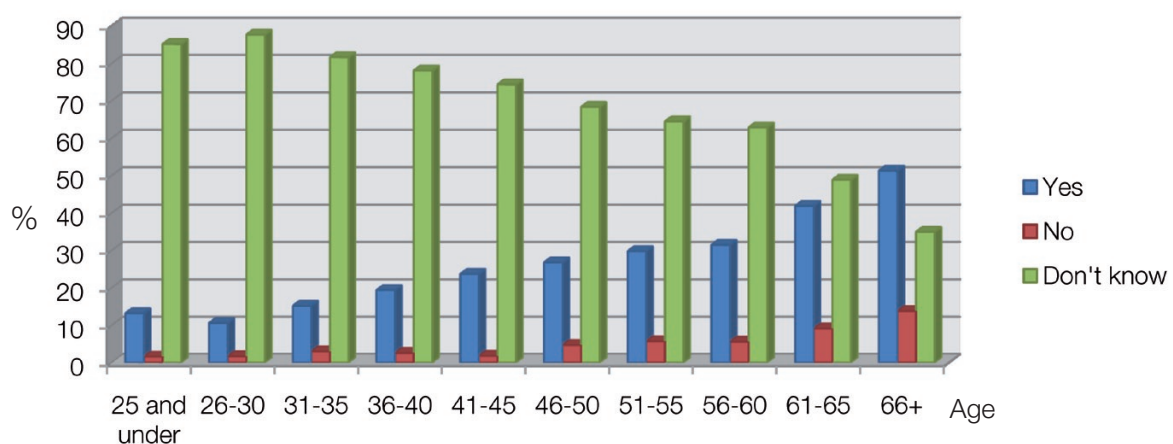
Figure 18 : Does your pension scheme allow for flexible retirement?



(Total response = 5763)

Further analysis was carried out to investigate whether the respondents' degree of knowledge varies according to age, proximity to retirement, and occupational group. It can be observed in figure 19, that over half of the respondents in the older age groups, from the age of 50 up to 65, still do not know whether their pension schemes provide for flexible retirement.

Figure 19 : Does your pension scheme allow for flexible retirement?



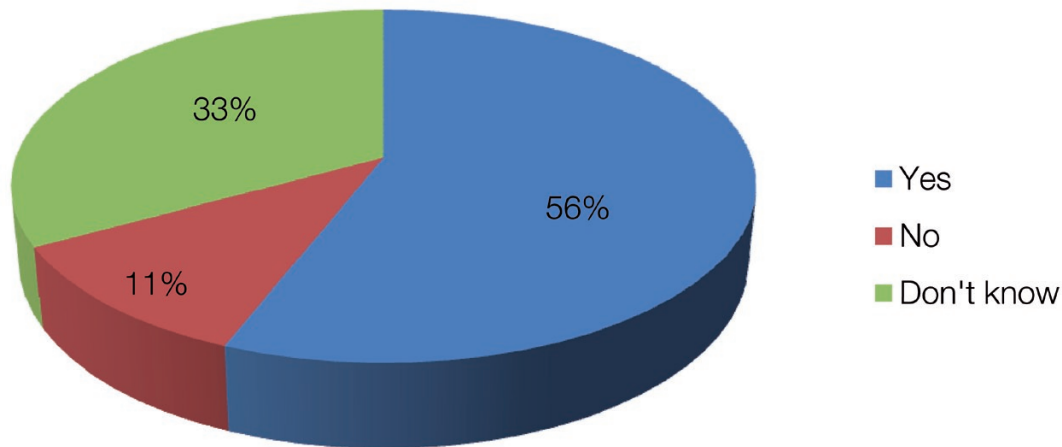
(Total response = 5747)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and knowledge whether pension schemes allow for flexible retirement.

Similarly the majority of respondents across all different occupational groups do not know whether flexible retirement is an option available to them.

Yet in spite of the lack of information about flexible retirement options, more than half of the respondents would be interested in considering taking flexible retirement as shown in figure 20.

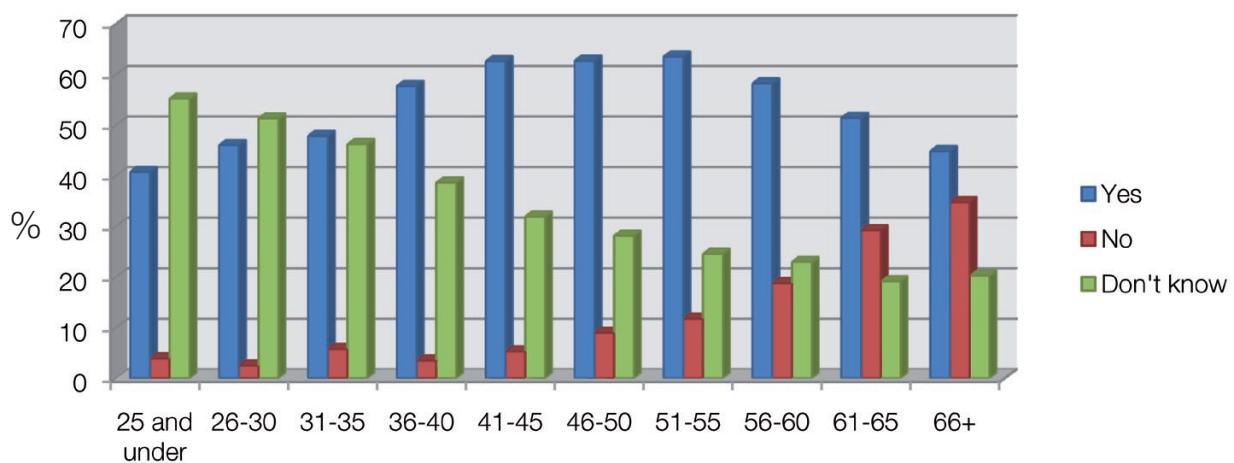
Figure 20 : Respondents considering taking flexible retirement



(Total response = 5532)

The data was broken down by age, occupation, and gender to investigate further the degree of interest about flexible retirement. Figure 21 shows that there is considerable interest in flexible retirement among all age groups. Equally, figure 22 indicates staff in all occupational categories, save for manual staff, are interested in flexible retirement.

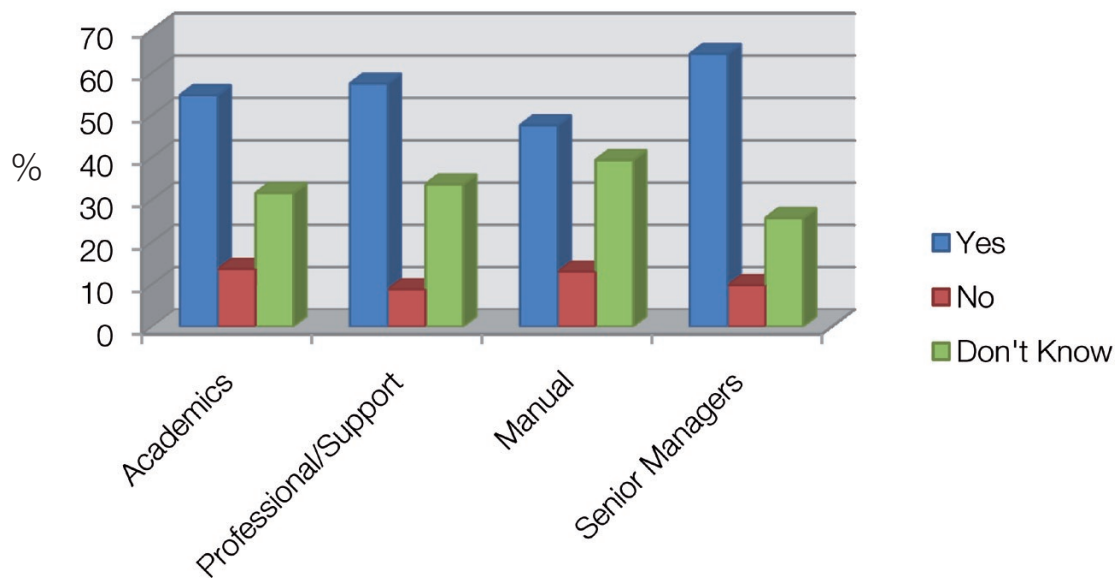
Figure 21: Would you consider taking flexible retirement?  
By age group



(Total response = 5516)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and considering taking flexible retirement.

Figure 22 : Would you consider taking flexible retirement?  
By occupation

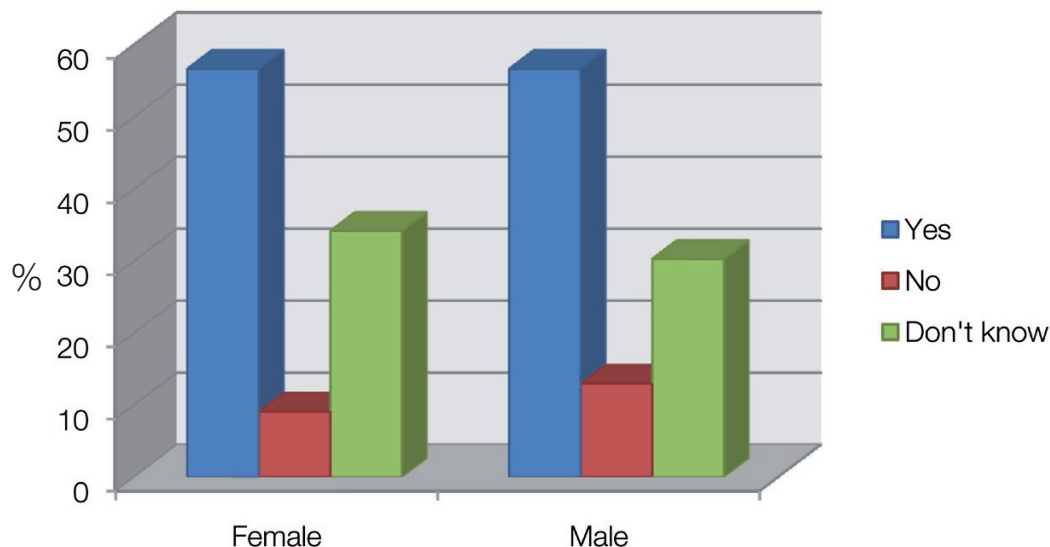


(Total response = 5518)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between occupation and considering taking flexible retirement.

Figure 23 shows that an exactly equal proportion of men and women (56.7%) are interested in flexible retirement.

Figure 23 : Would you consider taking flexible retirement?  
By gender



(Total response = 5308)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between gender and considering taking flexible retirement.

These findings highlight that although flexible retirement appears to be of interest the majority of respondents, they do not know whether, under the rules of their pension scheme, such option would be available to them.

## 4.11 Staff's awareness about flexible retirement options: key findings from the survey

Knowledge of pension scheme rules about flexible retirement	Interest about considering taking flexible retirement
The majority of respondents do not know whether their pension schemes provide for flexible retirement. This includes over half of the respondents in the older age group between the age of 51 and 65.	A large proportion of respondents, across all ages and occupational groups, save for manual staff, would be interested in considering to take early retirement. Staff over the age of 50 are the most interested group.

## 4.12 The perspective of the managers – findings from the focus groups

**Managers and senior academics were asked to comment about the impact on their department of potential increase in the demand for flexible working when approaching retirement.**

As in the case of the discussion about retirement issues, the responses to this question can also be distinguished by occupational group. Many managers of professional and support staff expressed serious concern at the prospect of a possible increase of flexible working, which was described by many as 'a managerial nightmare'. These managers reported that flexible working in their institutions had increased across the board, and that in their universities there was a strong culture of supporting work-life balance. However, these managers felt that managing flexible workers demands more management skills and more time. In their experience flexible working complicates the working environment. A number of difficulties were listed and the most commonly mentioned included the fact that many staff want to drop one day. This was a very popular option, but left one day almost impossible to cover. The difficulty of arranging rotas when staff work flexibly, and issues around space and more 'bodies to accommodate' were also mentioned. One manager said that in her area of work flexible retirement would pose more problems than retaining staff who want to work beyond retirement on a full-time basis. Another concern that was expressed by several managers was the risk of losing part of a post, due to pressure on financial resources, when staff want to reduce their hours. Finally, many believed that managers cannot work flexibly and therefore flexible retirement would not be suitable for managerial or supervisory posts. However, not all comments in this group were negative, and some positive views about the benefits of flexible working were also expressed. In particular, it was felt that flexible retirement could help with succession planning, and that it could be useful to arrange some overlap time between a member of staff who is retiring and a new one, in order to ensure the flow of knowledge and expertise between different generations of employees.

By contrast flexible working was not seen as problematic by academics and managers of manual staff. Many manual staff work either part time or do shift work, thus flexibility was not seen as a problem. Managers in this group believed that it was unlikely that their staff would be interested in flexible retirement as they needed the income. One manager reported that one of his staff asked for flexible retirement but then gave it up as it was not financially viable. Senior academics favoured the option of flexible retirement, and a reduction of hours when approaching retirement was seen as 'the way forward'. One commented that such option would be attractive to academic staff and it would help them to maintain their 'freshness'. A reduction of hours in the post of someone approaching retirement would also release funds for more junior posts. As discussed previously, in one department it was decided that academics would be allowed to work beyond retirement



only on a part-time basis to ensure a certain degree of turnover. An interesting idea was put forward by an interviewee who suggested that if an academic wanted to work part-time the surplus money could be carried over to continue to fund them working past the age of 65.

### 4.13 The perspective of the managers on flexible working: key findings from the focus groups

Flexible working a 'managerial nightmare'?	<p>Many managers of professional and support staff expressed serious concerns at the prospect of a possible increase in flexible working, if staff wanted to take up the option of flexible retirement. They reported that flexible working has increased across the board in their institutions and that they would find it difficult to accommodate even more flexibility. This would also raise issues of space as there would be more 'bodies' to accommodate.</p> <p>However, not all comments were negative, and some managers saw the benefits of flexible retirement as it could help with succession planning and enable them to build some overlap between retiring and new employees to ensure the flow of knowledge and expertise between different generations of employees.</p>
Manual staff unlikely to be interested in flexible retirement	<p>Flexible retirement is not seen as a problem by the managers of manual staff. However, they think that it is unlikely to be of interest to their staff who could not afford a reduction in their income.</p>
Flexible retirement: the 'way forward' for academics?	<p>Academic managers saw a number of advantages in the option of flexible retirement. It would help to release funds for more junior posts, help existing academics to maintain their 'freshness'.</p>

### 4.14 Implications of these findings for the HE sector

The results from the staff age survey show that there is widespread support among respondents of all age groups towards the idea of not having a fixed retirement age in the workplace. As seen in section 4.1 large proportions of respondents do not share the concern expressed by many human resource practitioners that the absence of a fixed retirement age in the workplace could impact negatively on the career prospects of younger employees. Similarly large proportions of respondents do not share the concern expressed by some equality practitioners that the absence of a retirement age could impact negatively on the career prospects of employees from under-represented groups such as ethnic minorities or women, as opportunities to access senior posts would be limited if staff who occupies these positions, many of whom are more likely to be men and white, do not retire. Besides large proportions of respondents in all age groups agree with the statement that 'a fixed retirement age unfairly discriminates against older employees', and perceive the imposition of a fixed retirement age as an affront to the dignity of older employees.

The survey's results also provide an indication about staff's preferences and expectations with regard to retirement in the HE sector. These show that although many employees, including women and staff in professional, support and senior management jobs, would prefer to retire around the age of 60, the majority of them expect to retire at the age of 65 or over. These findings are in line with staff trends highlighted by the latest HEFCE report on the workforce in HEIs (2008), which shows that there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of staff aged 60 or over, since 2003, particularly, but not exclusively, among academic staff (pp.24-27). This report also shows a higher rise in the proportion of staff over the age of 60 among academics and 'other' staff that includes manual staff. The results from the staff age survey also indicate that academic and manual staff are more likely to expect to retire over the age of 65 compared to other occupational categories.

The prospect of having to manage an increased proportion of older staff is posing a number of challenges for HEIs. The focus group discussions with line managers drawn from different occupational groups, provide an insight into the kind of issues that can arise as a result of an ageing workforce in HE. The findings from the focus groups have highlighted the complexity of dealing with staff requests to work beyond retirement. Many institutions have developed a broad set of criteria to determine these requests. However, they appear to be underpinned by issues around academic staff turnover, and these may not be appropriate to deal with staff retention issues for other occupational groups. An example of this is the case of manual staff where, as reported by some line managers, although there might be a fit between staff retention needs and staff's expectations to work beyond retirement, universities policies on the 'right to request' make it difficult for these staff to continue to work. With regard to flexible retirement options, senior academics see them as the 'way forward' to balance academic staff's expectations to work longer, with staff turnover and, budgetary issues. However, this might not be a practical solution for professional and support staff where specific service demands may make it difficult to offer increased work flexibility. What emerges is a complex picture that requires some careful planning on the part of HEIs, to chart their workforce demographic profile to the long term staff recruitment and retention needs in their different areas of service. These findings highlight the need for universities to reflect the varying expectations and demands for different job roles in their guidelines to define staff's applications for flexible retirement and to continue to work beyond retirement.

Two other main themes have emerged from the discussion groups: performance management and succession planning. These themes are not new to the HE sector, but they have been brought into focus by the workforce demographic profile and by the legislation introducing 'the right to request' to continue to work beyond retirement. As seen earlier in this chapter, most managers believe that if staff work for longer, there is a need for a robust and fair performance management system, not to be intended in a punitive sense, but rather as a way to ensure that all employees are enabled to perform to the best of their abilities, at whatever stage of their career. Improved succession planning is also seen as a priority, particularly to deal with the impact of a large number of employees from the 'baby boom generation' approaching retirement age.

Finally, it is worth noting that the high number of responses to the survey seems to indicate a significant degree of interest in age related issues by staff in HE. By contrast, the focus group discussions with line managers seem to suggest a degree of reticence, on their part, to discuss retirement plans with their staff for fear of sounding 'intrusive' or 'unfriendly'. Equally staff do not seem to be very forthcoming to talk about their retirement expectations with their line managers. More open communication about retirement plans should be encouraged between line managers and their staff, to help with workforce planning but also, to ensure that employees' expectations about retirement can be shaped constructively and uncertainty reduced.

## 4.15 Recommendations

Monitor the workforce age profile. Survey tools developed as part of this project may be used to gain an understanding of staff's expectations about retirement, to inform policies and practices to manage retirement.

Develop separate criteria and guidelines to determine staff's applications to continue to work beyond retirement for academic, professional and support, and manual staff, to reflect the varying expectations and demands of different job roles. Consult with line managers, equality groups and trade union representatives, to develop fair and transparent criteria.

Provide clear information about pension entitlements and pre-retirement courses to encourage staff to plan in advance and make informed choices about their retirement arrangements (Resource Guide: retirement: looking ahead-pre-retirement courses; pensions - increasing staff understanding).

Adopt a fair and transparent system to review staff performance on a regular basis, to enable staff to perform to the best of their abilities at whatever age and stage of their career (Resource Guide: performance management).

Adopt a systematic approach to succession planning to take into account staff recruitment and retention needs in different areas of work (Resource Guide: monitoring and workforce planning).

Develop post-retirement provisions. This could be of mutual benefit to universities and to retired staff. (Resource Guide: after retirement: continuing research; volunteering; short-term contracts; continuing links).

Consider different models of flexible retirement that can be of mutual benefits to both staff and the demand of services (Resource Guide: flexible and phase retirement; work-life balance and flexible working: flexible working; maintaining work ability; health and well-being).

## References

HEFCE, Staff employed at HEFCE-funded HEIs: update. Trends and Profiles. 2008)

## 5. Recruiting and retaining younger staff aged 30 and under

A selection of results from the Staff Age Survey are used in this chapter to explore the views of younger staff aged 30 and under about: work in HE in general; what they value most about their current job; access to training and development opportunities; and career guidance. The survey results are followed by a presentation of the findings from the focus groups with managers and senior academics that included discussion about issues around recruitment and retention of younger staff. The findings presented in this chapter intend to provide evidence-based information in order to assist HEIs to devise strategies to recruit and retain younger staff.

### Survey's questions

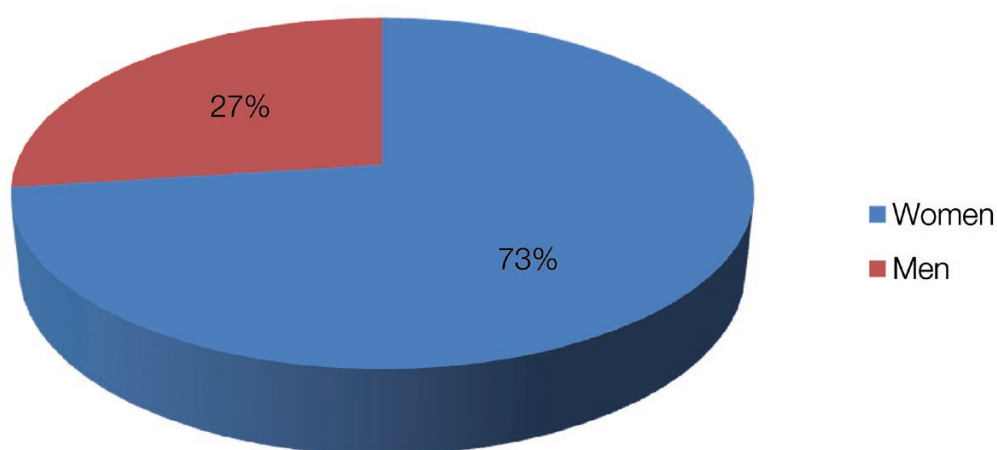
Information was gathered through the survey in order to address the following questions:

- What do younger staff think about work in HE?
- What do younger staff value most in their current job?
- If they decided to change their job which factors would be most likely to influence their choices?
- Do they think that their university offers them enough training/development opportunities? Are they encouraged to take them and are they given enough time to do so?
- To what extent are they given career guidance in their appraisal or personal development review?

### 5.1 Respondents' profile

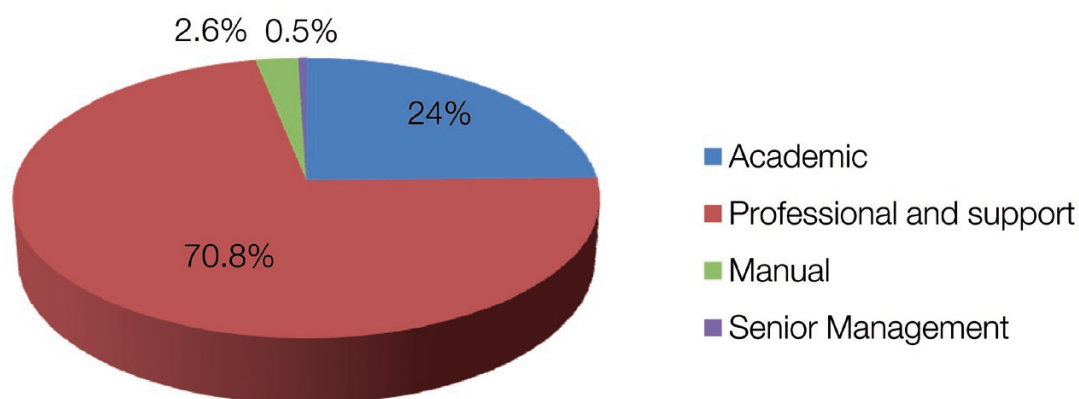
The overall number of respondents aged 30 and under was 1 149, which represents 16 per cent of the total number of responses (7, 218). This is also representative of the proportion of staff in this age group in the workforce as a whole in English universities (see Chapter 2, section 2.1 figure 2). Figures 1 and 2 below show that the majority of respondents in this age group are women (73%), and considerably more are employed in professional and support roles (70.8%), compared to a smaller proportion who are employed in academic roles (24%).

Figure 1 : Respondents' profile by gender



(Total response = 1115)

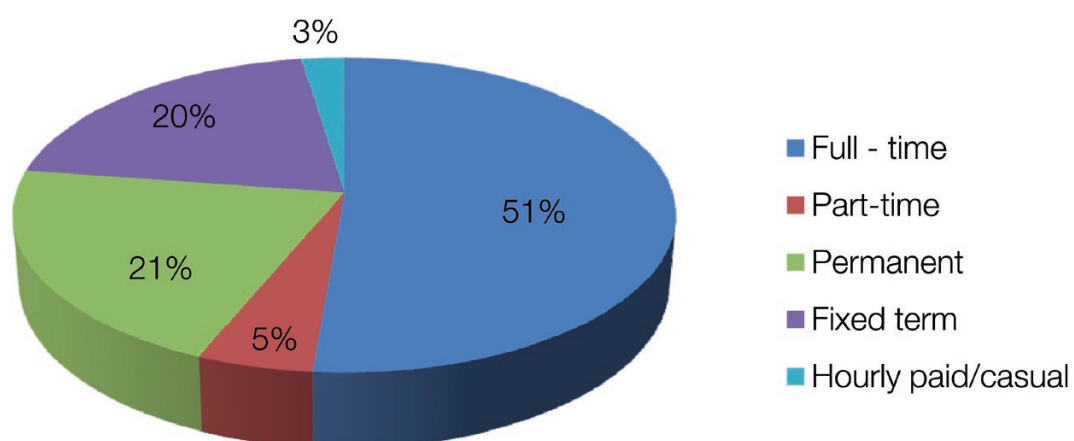
Figure 2 : Respondents' profile by occupation



(Total response = 1147)

Figure 3 shows that the majority of staff aged 30 and under are employed on full-time basis, and that the proportion of those employed on a permanent contract is slightly higher compared to that of those employed on a fixed-term contract.

Figure 3 : Type of Contract



(Total response = 1145)

## 5.2 What do younger staff think about working in Higher Education?

In the Staff Age Survey respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they either agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about working in HE. In order to explore the views of younger staff their responses were filtered and compared to those of all respondents. The results are presented in table 5.1 below and they show that all respondents have a positive view of working in HE. However, it is interesting to observe that the proportion of younger staff that agrees or strongly agree with the statements below is consistently higher throughout the table. Thus, this seems to suggest that they have a more enthusiastic view of working in HE compared to all respondents.

Table 5.1

	Respondents aged 30 and under: Agree/strongly agree	All Respondents: Agree/strongly agree
HE provides good opportunities for career progression	66%	51%
HE provides good opportunities to take up different roles	67%	57%
HE provides job security	60%	60%
HE provides fair pay for the work done	57%	48%
HE provides good opportunities for training/staff development in my area of work	72%	62%
HE provides good opportunities to pursue further study/development	73%	68%

(Total response staff aged 30 and under = 1027) (Total response all respondents = 6645)

A multiple choice question was also used to investigate what aspects of their job younger staff value most. Respondents were given a series of options and asked to select all those that they felt applied to their current job. Tables 5.2 and 5.3 below show that the three aspects of their current job that younger staff value most are the opportunity to do interesting work (58.7%), followed by holiday entitlement (58.3%), and flexibility (57.5%). The latter could be interpreted either as opportunities to work flexibly or a certain degree of autonomy in the way they carry out their work. The main motivators likely to influence their choices when looking for another job appear to be pay (78.3%), career progression (71.8%) followed by the opportunity to do interesting work (61.4%).

Table 5.2 : Which of the following factors do you value most in your current job?

<b>Flexibility</b>	<b>57.50%</b>
Pay	49.40%
Special leave arrangements	27.70%
<b>Holiday entitlement</b>	<b>58.30%</b>
Training/staff development	44.30%
Study/development	36.80%
Pension	33.20%
Career progression	33%
<b>Interesting work</b>	<b>58.70%</b>
Take up different roles	23%
Other	2.80%

(Total response = 1022)

Table 5.3 : If you decided to change job which of the following factors would most likely influence your choice?

Flexibility	35.50%
<b>Pay</b>	<b>78.30%</b>
Special leave arrangements	18.30%
Holiday entitlement	28.40%
Training/staff development	28.30%
Study/development	16.40%
Pension	16.80%
<b>Career progression</b>	<b>71.80%</b>
<b>Interesting work</b>	<b>61.40%</b>
Different roles	34.40%
Other	5.90%

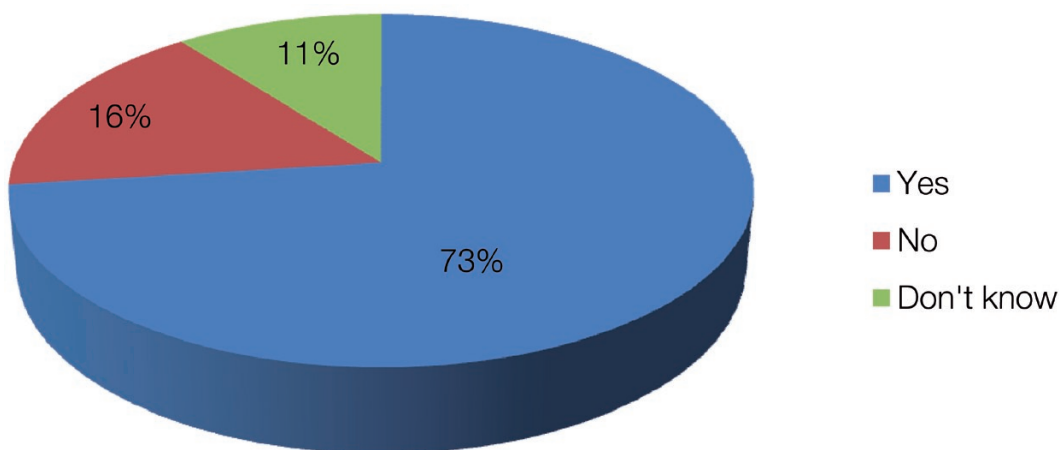
(Total response = 1020)



## 5.3 What do younger staff think about training and development opportunities?

Respondents were asked a series of questions about training and development, and the general results from these questions are discussed in chapter 6 on 'Equality of Access by Age Group to Training and Development Opportunities'. The responses of staff aged 30 and under were filtered in order to focus on their views on this topic. As highlighted in the previous section there is an expectation that HE employers provide good opportunities for training and development which are valued by younger staff in their current jobs, although they do not appear to influence significantly this group's decisions when considering to change jobs. Figure 4 shows a positive picture as a very large proportion of respondents in this age group (73%) believe that their universities offer them enough training and development opportunities. However, it also shows a significant proportion of respondents who either do not think that their university offers them enough training and development opportunities or they are not sure about it (16.5% and 10.5%, respectively).

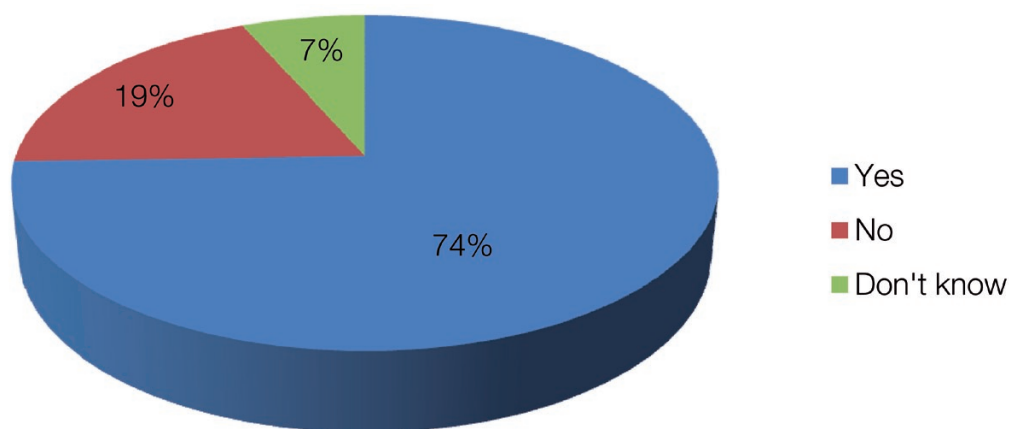
Figure 4 : Does your university offer you enough training/development opportunities?



(Total response = 1020)

Figure 5 shows that a very large proportion of respondents (74%) feel that they are encouraged to take on training and development opportunities, although there is still a significant proportion of respondents who either do not think that they are encouraged to do so or they are not sure about it (19% and 7%, respectively).

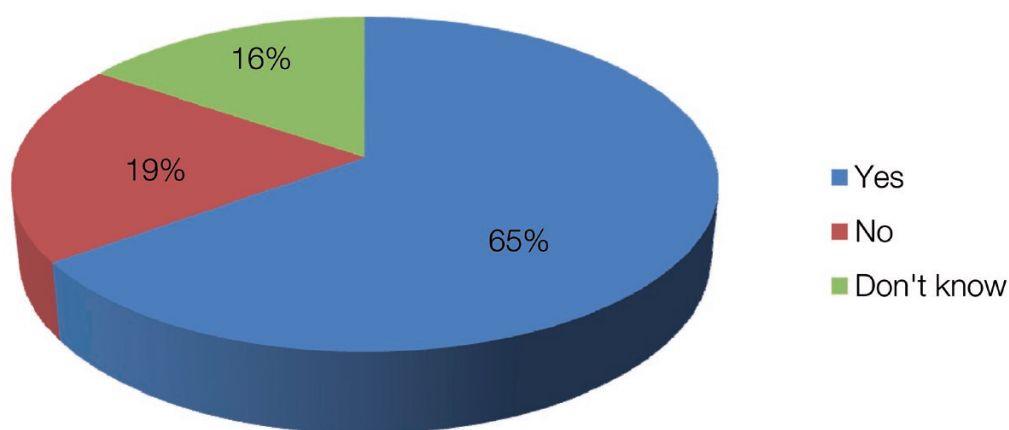
Figure 5 : Are you encouraged to take training and development opportunities?



(Total response = 1021)

A similar pattern may be observed in figure 6 below, which shows the extent to which younger staff believe that they are given the time they need to access training and development opportunities by their institutions. It is worth noting however, that although the majority of respondents (65%) believe that they are given enough time to access training opportunities, this proportion of respondents is lower compared to those in the previous questions. Consequently, there is a higher proportion of respondents who believe that either they are not given enough time to access training and development opportunities, or they are not sure about it (19% and 16% respectively). These results suggest that younger staff's perceptions about access to training and development are positive overall, but it should not be underestimated that a significant proportion of staff in this age group do not think that they are provided with enough training and development opportunities, nor encouraged to take them.

Figure 6 : Does your university provide you with the time you need to access training and development opportunities?

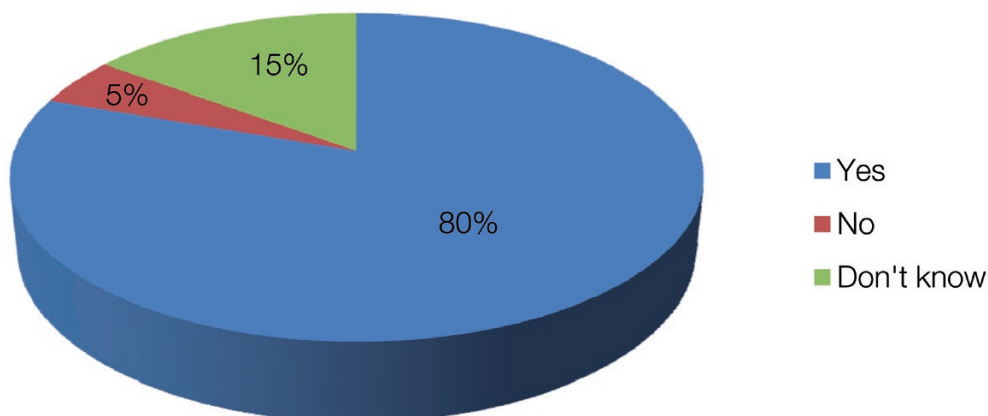


(Total response = 1020)

## 5.4 Career guidance

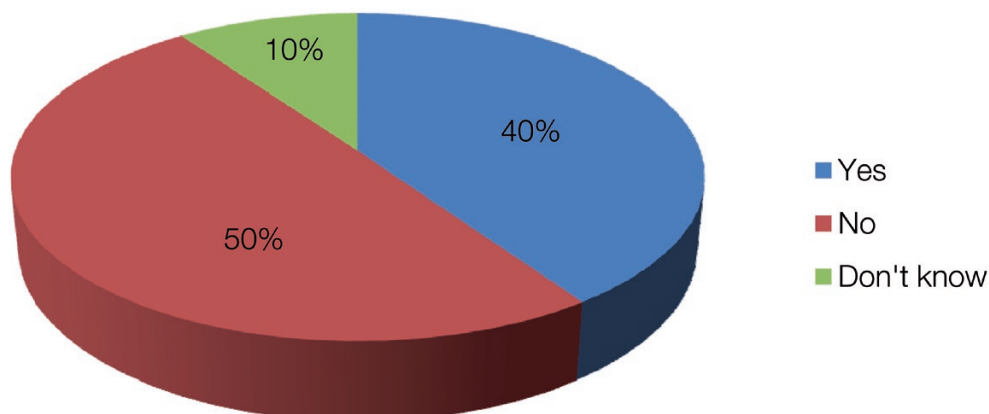
All respondents were asked to indicate whether their university operate an appraisal or personal development review system, and whether they have received any career guidance as part of this process. The responses of younger staff aged 30 and under were filtered in order to explore the extent to which they believe that they have received career guidance. As previously seen in section 5.2, career progression is one of the most important factors that can influence younger staff choices when looking for another job. Figure 7 below shows that the great majority of respondents (80%) in this age group have indicated that their institution operates an appraisal or personal development review system. However, when asked whether they have received career guidance as part of their appraisal or personal development review, the largest proportion of them indicated, as shown by figure 8, that they did not receive such guidance. Furthermore, it should be noted that the number of respondents who answered this question is significantly lower compared to the number of respondents who answered to the previous question. It is difficult to explain the drop in the response rate to this particular question, and any attempt to find an explanation would be pure speculation. However, this difference in response rate might simply due to the fact that some respondents may not have had an appraisal or personal development review yet. Although the results shown in figure 8 are based on a lower number of responses, they still highlight that a significant number of respondents in this age group do not feel that they have received any career guidance as part of the appraisal or personal development review process.

Figure 7 : Does your university operate an appraisal or personal development review system?



(Total response = 1020)

Figure 8 : During the course of your appraisal or personal development review meetings have you received any careers guidance?



(Total response = 685)

## 5.5 Future intentions

All respondents were asked to indicate their long term future intentions about working in HE, and how likely they think it is that they will still be working for the sector when they reach the normal retirement age of 65. The responses to this question were discussed in chapter 2 on the Staff Age Survey: The respondent's profile. Tables 5.4 and 5.5 below show responses from younger staff age 30 and under compared to those of all respondents. Given the age of respondents in the younger groups, it is not surprising that over half of them (66%) do not think that they will still be working for their current employer when they reach the normal retirement age of 65. However, a significant proportion (31%) of them do not seem to consider working in HE as a long term prospect, and a large proportion of them (40.2%) appear to be undecided.

Table 5.4

Younger staff age 30 and under	Very likely	Likely	Not very likely	Don't know
How likely is it that you will still be working for your current employer when you reach the normal retirement age of 65?	2.3%	9%	66%	22.2%
How likely is it that you will still be working in HE when you reach the normal retirement age of 65?	6.3%	23%	31%	40.2%

(Total response = 930)

Table 5.5

All respondents	Very likely	Likely	Not very likely	Don't know
How likely is it that you will still be working for your current employer when you reach the normal retirement age of 65?	14.5%	22.6%	44.7%	18%
How likely is it that you will still be working in HE when you reach the normal retirement age of 65?	19.4%	30.5%	27.2%	22.9%

(Total response = 5765)

## 5.6 The views of younger staff aged 30 and under about working in HE: summary of the survey key findings

What do younger staff think about work in HE?	The survey results show that overall younger staff have a very positive view of working in HE. 73% of them think that HE provides good opportunities to pursue further study/development, 72% that HE provides good opportunities for training/staff development in their area of work, and that 67% think HE provides good opportunities to take up different roles.
What do younger staff value most in their current job?	The three aspects of their current job that younger staff value most are: the opportunity to do interesting work (58.7%), followed by holiday entitlement (58.3%), and flexibility (57.5%). The latter could be interpreted either as opportunities to work flexibly or to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy in the way they carry out their work.
If they decided to change their job which factors would be most likely to influence their choices?	The main motivators likely to influence their choices when looking for another job appear to be pay (78.3%), career progression (71.8%) followed by the opportunity to do interesting work (61.4%).
Do they think that their university offers them enough training/development opportunities? Are they encouraged to take them and are they given enough time to do so?	The majority of respondents think that their university offers them enough training and development opportunities (73%), that they are encouraged to take them (74%) and that they are given enough time to access them (65%). However, a significant proportion of them do not think that they are provided with enough training and development opportunities, nor encouraged to take them.
Do they think that they have received career guidance as part of their appraisal or personal development review?	The great majority of respondents (80%) indicated that their university operates an appraisal or personal development review system. Respondents were also asked whether they have received any career guidance as part of their appraisal or personal development review. Half of those who responded to this question (50%) said that they did not receive any career guidance and a small proportion of them (10%) were not sure about this.
Do they consider working in HE as a long term career prospect?	Over half of respondents (66%) age 30 and under do not think that they will still be working for their current employer when they reach the normal retirement age of 65. A large proportion of them (40%) do not know whether they will still be working in HE when they reach the normal retirement age of 65 and a significant proportion of them (31%) does not think that it is very likely that they will still be working in HE.

## 5.7 The perspective of the managers – findings from the focus groups

**Managers and senior academics were asked whether they thought that their university should do more to attract and develop younger staff, given the extent to which HE is experiencing an ageing workforce.**

There was a general consensus that HEIs should do more to attract younger staff. In particular, many managers commented that universities should do more to reach out to their own graduates and recruit them into career jobs in professional areas such as human resources, accounting, law, marketing and others. For example, one manager said that ‘maybe the university has to look at how it sells its jobs...update its image’, besides it was commented that students may not be aware of all the different job opportunities that a university can offer. It was noted that universities can offer ‘a job for life’ as there are opportunities to move across departments and take on different roles. Some departments offer work placements to students, and in one university students are employed during the summer in the admission office. The manager in charge of this office finds that this is a good way of attracting young graduates because a few students who had worked in this office during the summer, applied for jobs after graduating. In the experience of this manager, working in the admission office may be seen by young graduates as a way of starting a career in university administration.

Many managers believe that universities should also make more use of apprenticeships to recruit staff between the ages of 16-17, and train them into vocational areas such as catering and maintenance.

A number of issues were identified that could make it difficult for universities to either recruit or retain younger staff. With regard to recruitment, these included: the geographical location of some universities, where the cost of properties is very high and can act as a deterrent to young applicants; and a general low staff turnover in many departments. With regard to staff retention, it was noted instead that young staff can sometimes become frustrated with institutional bureaucracy and the lack of a defined career structure. A number of managers of professional and support staff mentioned that university policies of advertising jobs externally limit promotion opportunities for existing staff. Some also felt that the reward system no longer motivates staff as an alternative to promotion.

In the case of academic posts, senior academics reported that opportunities to appoint younger staff were limited by low staff turnover and financial constraints on departmental budgets. It was pointed out that this situation could be exacerbated if many academics continued to work beyond their retirement age (for a full discussion about this, see chapter 4 on ‘Managing Retirement Expectations’).

## 5.8 The perspective of the managers on recruiting and retaining younger staff aged 30 and under: key findings from the focus groups

Universities should do more to attract younger staff	<p>Several managers suggested that universities should try to recruit their own graduates into career jobs in professional areas such as human resources, accountancy, law, marketing and others. Offering students work placements could be a way of attracting future graduates and get them to find out about job opportunities in the sector.</p> <p>The use of apprenticeships was also suggested to recruit staff between the ages of 16-17, and train them in vocational areas such as catering and maintenance.</p>
Issues relating to the recruitment of younger staff	These included low staff turnover in certain departments, and the geographical location of some universities in expensive areas, where the cost of properties can be a deterrent to young job applicants.
Issues relating to the retention of younger staff	These included the risk that younger staff may become frustrated with institutional bureaucracy, the lack of a defined career structure, and decide to leave. Career opportunities for younger staff are also limited by institutional policies of advertising most jobs vacancies externally.
Opportunities to appoint younger staff to academic posts are limited	This is due to low turnover of academic staff and financial restrictions. It was pointed out that this situation could be exacerbated if many academics continued to work beyond their retirement age.

## 5.9 Implications of these findings for the HE sector

The findings presented in this chapter show an encouraging picture, as overall, younger staff aged 30 and under appear to have a very positive view of working in HE, and value both the opportunity to do interesting work, and the flexibility in their jobs. It is also encouraging to see that the majority of the respondents in this age group believe that their institutions offer enough training and development opportunities which are relevant to them, and that they are given enough time to take them up. However, it should not be forgotten that a significant proportion of them do not feel that they are encouraged to take up training and development opportunities and that they are not been given enough time to access them. Many respondents also do not think that they have received any career guidance as part of their appraisal or personal development review. It is important for HEIs to address these issues and make sure that all younger staff have access to training and development and receive career guidance, as the survey results show that career progression is important to younger staff, and this is likely to be one of the main factors influencing their choices if they decide to look for another job. However, when asked what they value most in their current job, career progression did not score very highly. This result, considered in conjunction with the findings from the focus groups where the managers expressed concern about the lack of career opportunities particularly for younger staff, seems to point to the fact that HEIs ought to do more to provide younger staff with career guidance and good prospects regarding career progression. This might be more challenging in the professional and support roles where often there is not a clear career path, unlike in the academic roles. Thus, HEIs should consider innovative approaches to career progression which involve



not just 'vertical' career moves, but also 'horizontal' ones. These findings suggest that one of strength of the HE sector is that it offers opportunities to do 'interesting work' and a diverse range of roles in different departments. HEIs should capitalise more on these strengths and offer opportunities to acquire different skills and expertise in different areas that can contribute to staff career development, and ultimately lead to jobs on higher grades. Such opportunities should be made more explicit to younger staff, and they should be encouraged to consider working in HE as a long term career prospect. The results from the survey about staff future intentions suggest that, in spite of the fact that younger staff seem to have a very positive view of working in the HE sector, a significant proportion of them do not seem to look at the sector as a long term career prospect, and a large proportion of them are undecided about it. The perceived lack of opportunities for career progression might explain what appears to be a contradiction in the survey results. On one hand, the results show that younger staff have a very positive view of working in HE, but on the other hand, a large proportion of them do not seem to consider HE as a long career prospect, or they are not sure about it.

Another significant finding that emerged from the focus group discussions with managers is the need to take a more strategic approach to encourage young graduates to consider applying for jobs in the HE sector. A greater use of student work placements could increase the number of students considering universities as possible employers. Furthermore, managers suggested a greater use of apprenticeships to train young people into vocational areas, such as catering and maintenance.

The diversity of job roles that the HE sector can offer, combined with opportunities for further studies and development, put HEIs in a rather strong position to attract young applicants compared to other employers, and therefore HEIs should market themselves more effectively as employers of choice.

## 5.10 Recommendations

- Monitor access to training by age, to ensure that younger staff have access to relevant training, and that they received effective career guidance.
- Devise a strategy to encourage young graduates to consider applying for jobs in HE, including making use of student work placements (Resource guide: engaging with young employees: general issues; employing students; graduate trainees).
- Make use of apprenticeships to recruit staff between the ages of 16-17 and train them into vocational areas, such as catering and maintenance (Resource guide: engaging with young employees: general issues; apprenticeships).
- Monitor younger staff levels of job satisfaction through the university staff survey.
- Consider adopting more innovative approaches to career progression, particularly in professional and support roles that enable staff to acquire different skills and expertise in a number of areas that can lead to 'horizontal' career moves.
- Market HEIs more effectively as employers of choice who can offer opportunities to: do interesting work; work flexibly; and a series of benefits, including good holiday entitlements.

## 6. Equality of access to training, development opportunities and career guidance by age group

This chapter presents the results from the Staff Age Survey about equality of access to training, development opportunities and career guidance by age group. It also discusses the findings from the focus groups with managers and senior academics to explore whether age matters with regard to training and staff development.

### Survey's questions

To what extent do staff think that their university offers them enough training and development opportunities?

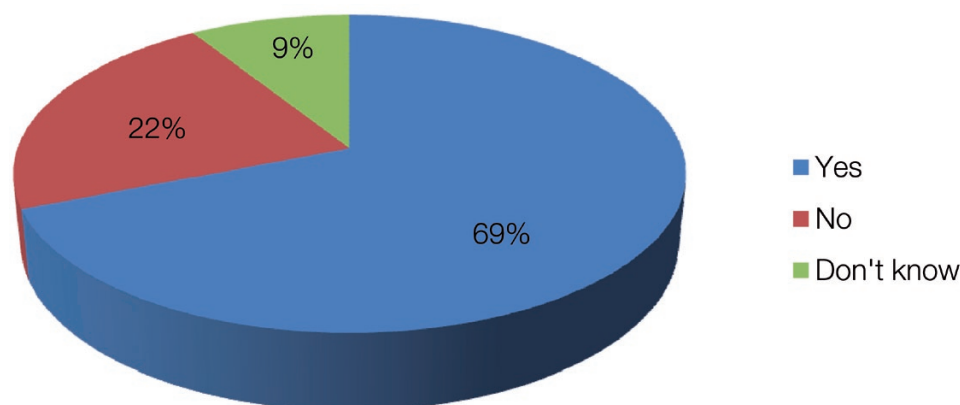
To what extent do staff think that they are encouraged to take on training and development opportunities and do they believe that they are given enough time to access them?

To what extent do staff think that they have received any career guidance as part of their appraisal or personal development review?

### 6.1 Access to training and development opportunities by age group

As seen earlier in chapter 5 on 'Recruiting and Retaining Younger Staff Aged 30 and Under', all respondents think that HE provides good opportunities for training, development, and to pursue further study (62% and 68%, respectively). Figure 1 below corroborates those results as the majority of respondents (69%) in all age groups believe that their university offers them enough training opportunities. Nonetheless, it should be noted that a significant proportion of respondents do not think that their university offer them enough training and development opportunities (22%).

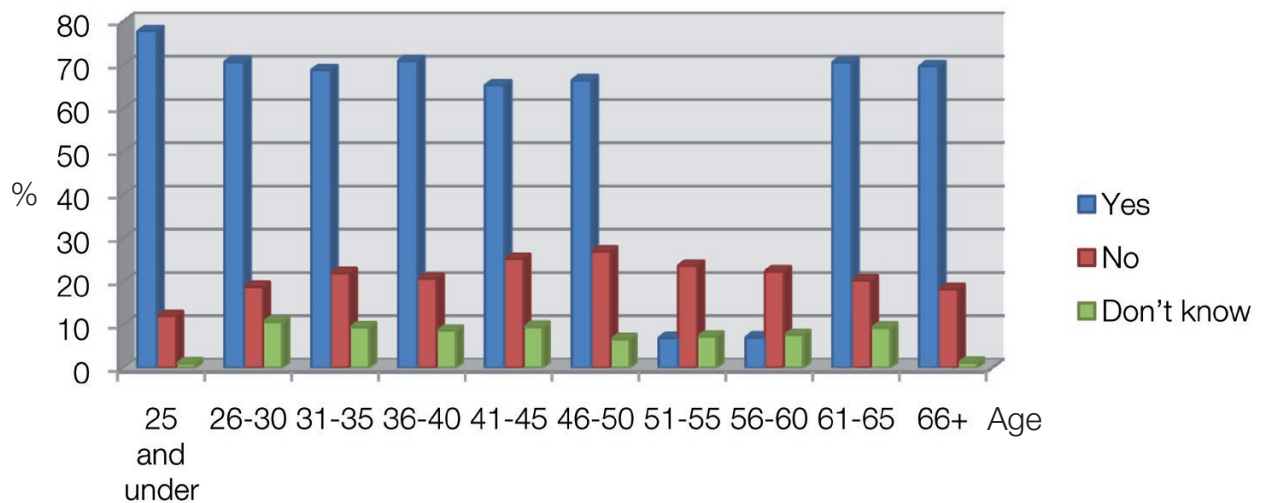
Figure 1 : Does your university offer you enough training/development opportunities?



(Total response = 6609)

These results were split by age group and show a similarly positive picture, overall, as the majority of respondents in all age groups believe that their university offers them enough training and development opportunities as highlighted by figure 2 below. However, significant proportions of respondents (over 20%) between the ages of 41-60 do not think that their university offer them enough training and development opportunities.

Figure 2 : Does your university offer you enough training/development opportunities?

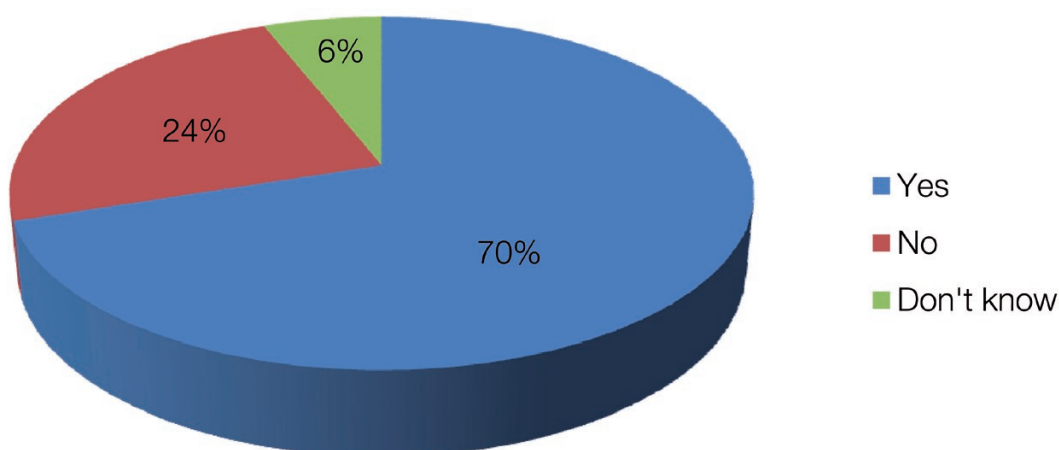


(Total response = 6593)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and enough training development opportunities

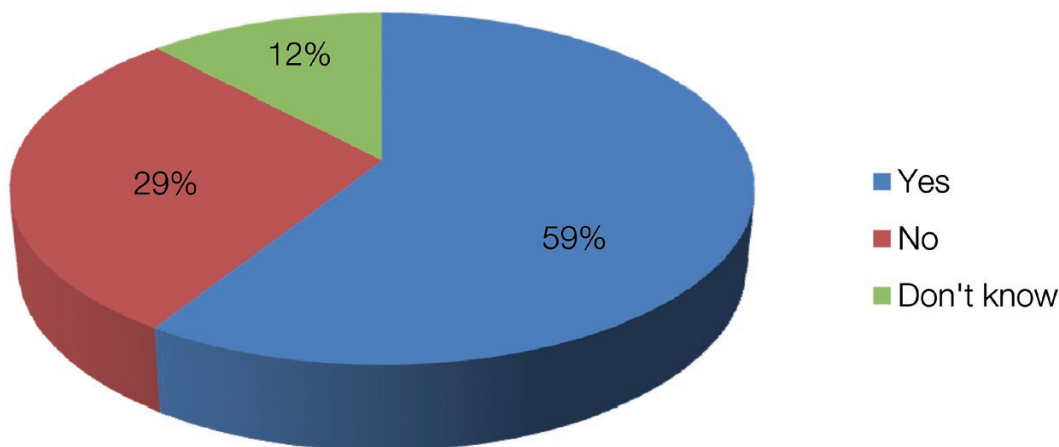
Figure 3 and 4 below show that the great majority of respondents (70%) believe that they are encouraged to take up training and development opportunities and over half of them (59%) think they are given the time they need to access them. But similarly to the findings highlighted in figure 1, these results also show significant proportions of respondents who think that neither they are encouraged to take up training, and development opportunities (24%), nor they are given the time they need to access them (29%).

Figure 3 : Are you encouraged to take on training/development opportunities?



(Total response = 6601)

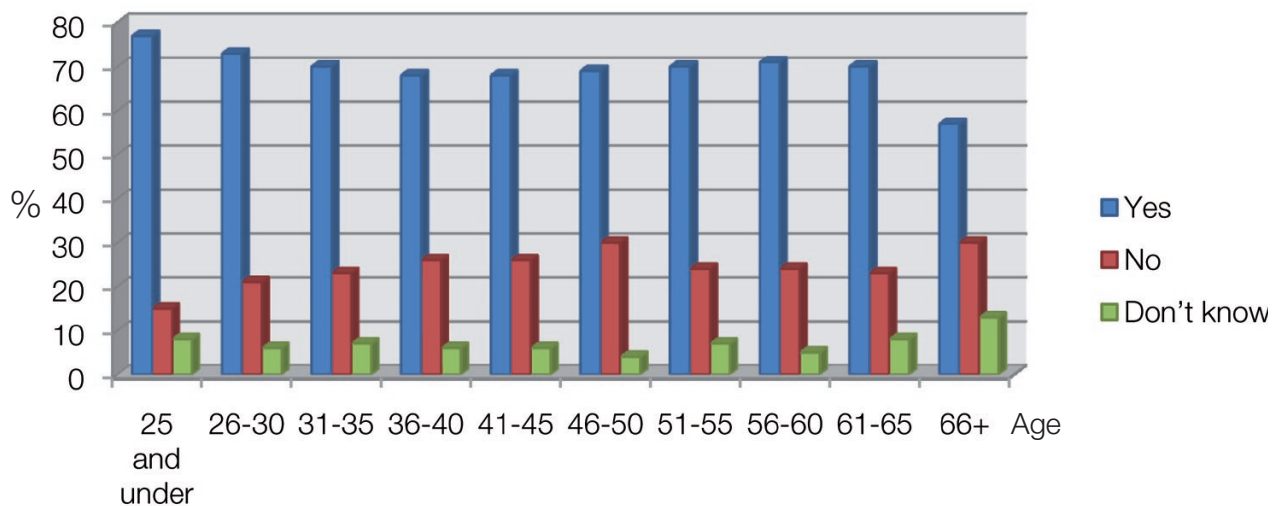
Figure 4 : Does your university provide you with the time you need to access training/development opportunities?



(Total response = 6595)

An analysis of these results by age group shows similar patterns as those highlighted in the previous figures. The majority of respondents in each age group believe that they are encouraged to take up training and development opportunities, and that they are given enough time to access them. However, the proportion of respondents who do not think that they are encouraged to take on training and development opportunities, and given enough time to access them, appears to increase steadily with age, and to reach its peak between the ages of 41 and 50, as indicated by figure 5 and 6 below.

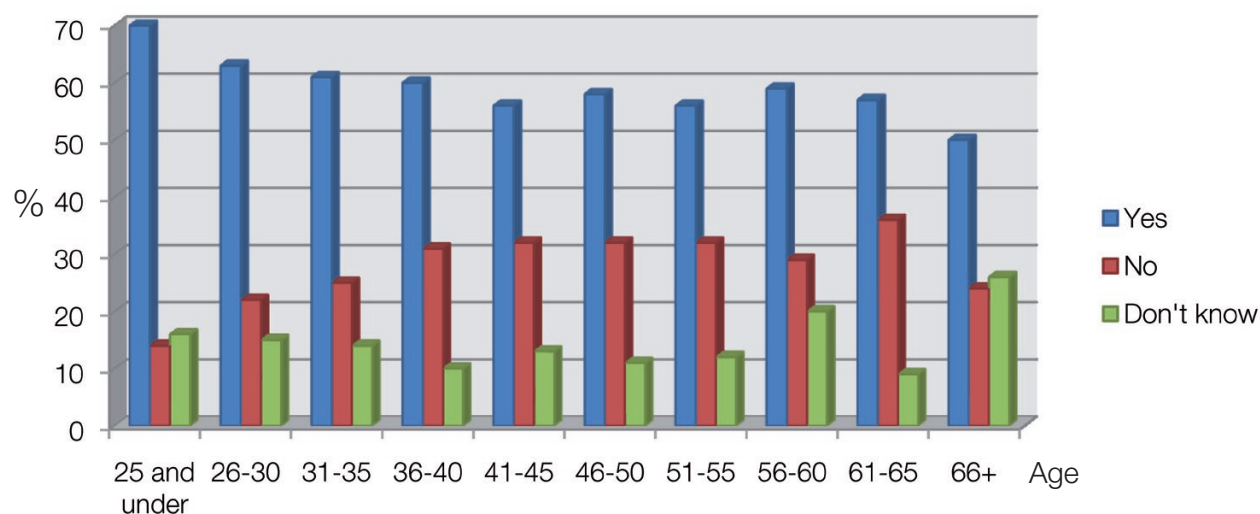
Figure 5 : Are you encouraged to take on training/development opportunities?



(Total response = 6585)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and encouragement to take on training/development opportunities

Figure 6 : Does your university provide you with the time you need to access training/development opportunities?



(Total response = 6579)

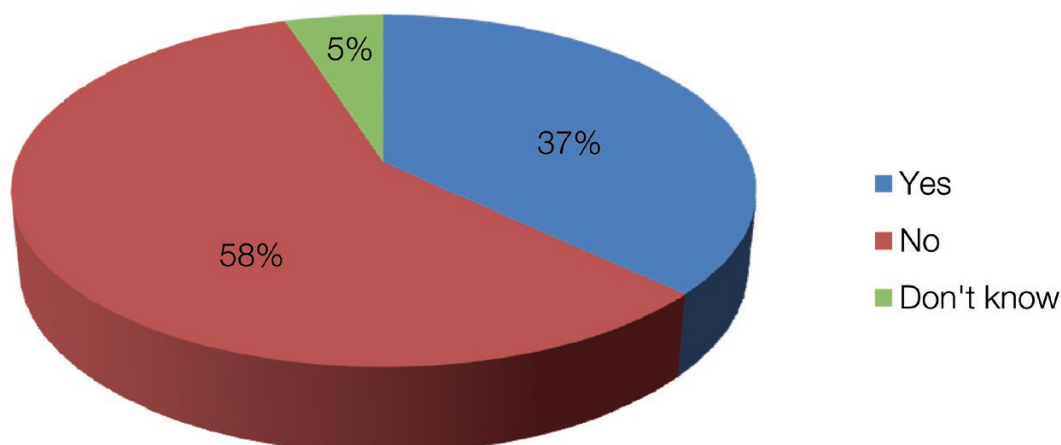
A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and time needed to access training/development opportunities

The patterns of responses seen in this section show that overall in each age group the majority of respondents appear to be satisfied with access to training and development opportunities, but they equally show that in any age group there is a significant proportion of respondents (over 20%) that are not satisfied with access to training and career development. The other point to note is that although over half of the respondents (59%) believe that they are given enough time to access training and development opportunities, this proportion is about 10% lower compared to the proportions of those who believe that their university offer them enough training and development opportunities (69%), and encourage them to take them up (70%).

## 6.2 Career guidance by age group

Respondents were asked whether their university operates an appraisal or personal review system. The great majority of them (88%) responded affirmatively to this question, and over half of them (56%) indicated that such system runs on an annual basis. Respondents were also asked whether as part of their appraisal or personal development review they have received any career guidance. Figure 7 below shows that over half of them (58%) do not think that they have received any career guidance, although, on a more positive side, a significant proportion of them think that they have received career guidance (37%).

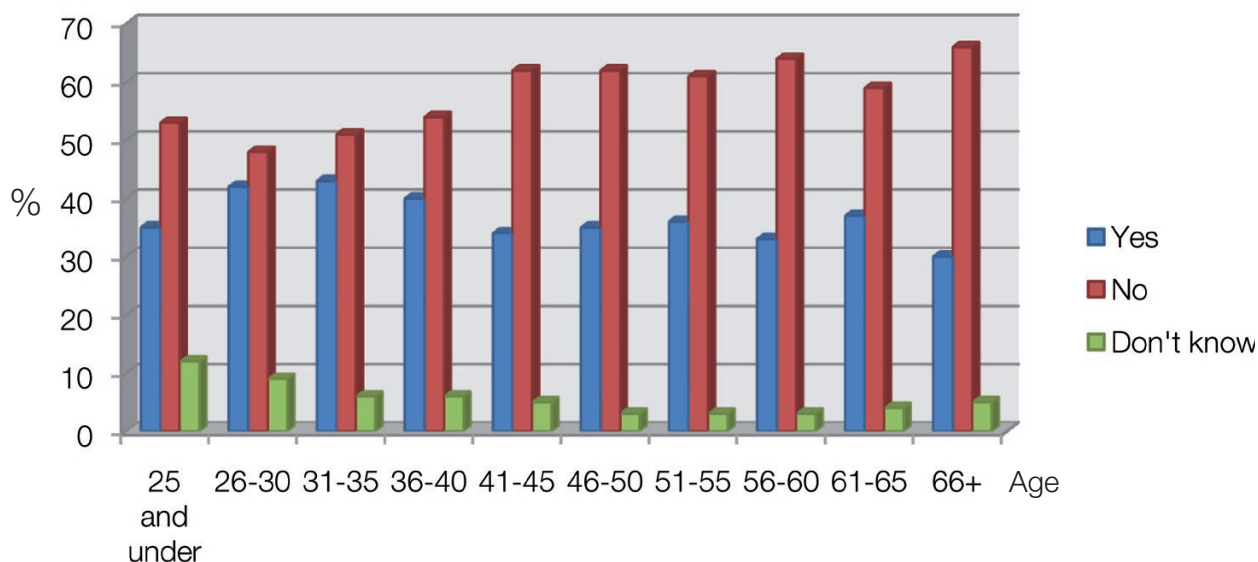
Figure 7 : During the course of your appraisal or personal development review meetings have you received any career guidance?



(Total response = 5187)

When tested by age group these results highlighted that the majority of respondents in most of the age groups do not think that they have received any career guidance. It is also worth noting that they show a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who reported that they have not received any career guidance from the age of 41 onwards, as figure 8 below indicates. These findings seem to suggest that there is a widespread perception of lack of career guidance among staff likely to be in their mid career as well as among staff in their late career.

Figure 8 : During the course of your appraisal or personal development review meetings have you received any career guidance?



(Total response =5174)

A highly significant Pearson Chi-Square result (at the 1% level) of  $P = 0.000$  highlighted a strong statistical interaction between age and career guidance

## 6.3 Equality of access to training, development opportunities, and career guidance by age group: summary of the survey's key findings

Access to training and development opportunities by age group	<p>The majority of respondents in all age groups believe that their university offer them enough training and development opportunities (69% overall) and that they are encouraged to take them (70% overall). However, there are also significant proportions of respondents who do not think that their university offers them enough training and development, and neither they feel encouraged to take them up (overall 22% and 24%, respectively).</p> <p>Over half of the respondents (59%) think that they are given the time they need to access training opportunities but equally there is a significant proportion of respondents (29%) who do not think that they are given enough time.</p> <p>An analysis of these results by age group show that although the majority of respondents in all age groups are satisfied with access to training and development opportunities, the proportion of those who are dissatisfied overall seem to steadily increase with age.</p>
Career guidance	<p>Although the great majority of respondents indicated (88%) that their university operates an appraisal or personal development review system, usually once a year, over half of them (58%) reported that they have not received any career guidance as part of their appraisal or personal development review. These results were tested by age group and they show that the proportion of respondents who believe that they have not received any career guidance increases significantly from the age of 41 onwards. These findings seem to suggest that there is a widespread perception of lack of career guidance among staff likely to be in their mid career as well as among staff in their late career.</p>

## 6.4 The perspective of the managers – findings from the focus groups

Managers and senior academics were asked to what extent they believe that age matters with regard to investing in staff training and development.

Overall managers and senior academics are of the view that age does not matter to training and staff development because as long as people are doing their job it is worth investing in them. One senior academic made the point that to stop investing in people because of their age would send the wrong message, and commented 'if you give up on them, they might give up on you'. Some however, pointed out that 'proximity to retirement' would be a consideration when deciding whether or not to invest in expensive staff training, expensive conferences, or expensive equipment. Nonetheless, it was noted that similar considerations may apply to staff who have not been in post for very long. Some universities use a 'tie in' clause requiring employment for a certain period of time after an expensive course, or else requiring to repay the course fees, and these provisions apply to all staff regardless of age. Other universities, instead, do not apply such clauses, and all staff enjoy equality of access to training. Approaches to access to sabbatical leave for academic staff close to retirement were mixed as they seem to depend on the likelihood of a member of staff to be submitted to the Research Assessment Exercise. Concern was raised about young researchers who are on a fixed term contracts as there might not be a business case to invest in them.



Some managers explained that they had difficulties in persuading older staff to go on training courses and that sometimes staff avoid training opportunities as they are concerned about their work piling up while they are away on a course. This might explain the survey's results highlighted in figure 4 that show around a 10% drop in the proportion of respondents who answered affirmatively to this question (59%), compared to those who believe that their university offers them enough training and development opportunities (69%), and those who believe that they are encouraged to take up such opportunities (70%).

Finally a point worth of note was made by a senior academic about career management for academic staff. He expressed concern about the fact that the level of research of some academics seems to drop significantly around their 40s. This is often linked to either holding roles that involve a lot of academic administration or demands from having a young family, and the latter also overlaps with gender. He thinks that there is a risk that these staff 'get styled as someone with nowhere to go', particularly when there might be long gaps between promotion opportunities. He believes that more attention should be paid to this age group and offer them better career guidance. He also thinks that there should be clearer career paths for academic staff either in research or academic management.

## 6.5 The perspective of the managers about equality of access to training and development: key findings from the focus groups

Age does not matter with regard to training and development opportunities	Overall managers and senior academics are of the view that age does not matter to training and staff development because as long as people are doing their job it is worth investing in them. To stop investing in people because of their age would send the wrong message: 'if you give up on them, they might give up on you'. However, it was pointed out by some, that 'proximity to retirement' would be a consideration when deciding whether or not to invest in expensive staff training.
Some older staff are reluctant to attend training courses	A number of managers explained that they find it difficult to persuade some older staff to attend training courses. Sometimes staff avoid training opportunities as they are concerned about their work piling up while they are away on a course.
Issues relating to access to training and career guidance for academic staff	Approaches to access to sabbatical leave for academics close to retirement are mixed as they seem to depend on the likelihood of a member of staff to be submitted to the Research Assessment Exercise. Concern was raised about young researchers who are on a fixed term contract, and they may not be able to access training opportunities as there might not be a business case to invest in them.

## 6.6 Implications of these findings for the HE sector

A mixed picture emerges from the survey's findings. On the positive side, the majority of respondents in all age groups are positive about access to training and development opportunities. Most managers and senior academics too believe that as long as staff are doing the job it is worth investing in them. These findings suggest an inclusive approach about training and development opportunities in HEIs, but on the other hand, they also show that there are significant proportions of respondents in all age groups who do not feel that they are given enough access to training and development opportunities. Perceived lack of time might be a factor that can deter some staff from taking up training and development opportunities as pointed out by some of the managers in the focus group discussions, and highlighted by the survey's findings. Training and development opportunities are among one of the aspects of working in HE that staff value, as seen earlier in chapter 5 on Recruiting and Retaining Younger Staff Aged 30 and Under, and a perceived lack of opportunities to access training might affect staff motivation and their professional development.

Another important finding from the survey is that the majority of respondents in most age groups believe that they have not received any career guidance as part of their appraisal or personal development review. As seen in chapter 5, career progression is one of those factors likely to influence younger staff choices when deciding to change job, but equally this is important to all staff of different ages. Effective career guidance is a key element of talent management, and it is also of strategic importance to deliver equality of opportunities among staff, increase the number of under-represented groups in senior positions, and support age diversity. There might also be an issue about the quality of career guidance that staff receive and it is important that HEIs review their provisions for providing career guidance. But equally it is important to be clear about career routes for different occupational groups. There appear to be a clearer career path for academic staff, than for some of the staff in professional and support roles as discussed in chapter 5, section 5.8. There seems to be an implicit assumption that pursuing a career involves 'a linear' type of progression, while as seen earlier in section 5.10, 'HEIs should consider innovative approaches to career progression which involve not just 'vertical' career moves, but also 'horizontal' ones', and offer staff opportunities to acquire different skills and expertise to develop their careers. Access to training and career guidance are inter-related and this is an area where HEIs need to take a more effective and strategic approach to ensure that staff in all age groups at whatever stage of their working life can access relevant training and development opportunities and receive effective career guidance to make informed career choices that can be of benefit both individuals and institutions.

## 6.7 Recommendations

- Monitor staff access to training to identify and address any issue that might prevent some staff to take up training and development opportunities (Resource guide: Monitoring and workforce planning).
- Review institutional approaches to career guidance to ensure that this is delivered effectively to all staff at whatever stage of their working life. (Resource guide: career development; career development of research staff; mentoring)

# 7 Overview of Recommendations

## 7.1 Perceptions of age discrimination

The findings from the survey show that the majority of respondents (91%) do not believe that they have been discriminated against because of their age at their current university. However, they also show that there is a significant proportion of respondents (9%) that believe that they have been discriminated against at their current university. Both the survey's results and the findings from the focus groups are based on staff's perceptions of age discrimination and they provide a clear indication that there are age related issues that need to be tackled in the HE sector, in order to prevent unfair age discrimination, ageist attitudes and stereotypes that can affect employment practices. Based on these findings the following recommendations are made:

- Ensure that age discrimination is covered by institutional equal opportunities policies and that this is communicated effectively to all staff and students. (Resource Guide: policies on age equality; methods of communication)
- Raise awareness about unfair age discrimination, stereotyped and ageist attitudes through training, and other initiatives, to ensure understanding among all staff of the negative consequences of age discrimination and to promote a culture that values age diversity. (Resource Guide: promoting organisational and cultural change)
- Provide guidance to line managers to deal effectively with ageist attitudes and incidents of unfair age discrimination.
- Address age related issues in staff recruitment and selection training to avoid that ageist and stereotyped attitudes may influence the decisions of those involved in staff recruitment and promotion processes. (Resource Guide: legal issues; age discrimination: the legislative framework; age discrimination frequently asked questions; age discrimination cases)
- Use staff satisfaction surveys to monitor perceptions of unfair age discrimination among staff and take action when appropriate.
- Use the Equality Impact Assessment process to raise awareness about unfair age discrimination and to eliminate it from employment policies and practices (Resource Guide: equality impact assessment).

## 7.2 Managing retirement expectations

The findings from the survey show that the majority of respondents support the idea of not having a fixed retirement age. They also provide an indication about staff's preferences and expectations with regard to retirement in the HE sector. These show that although many employees, including women and staff in professional, support and senior management jobs, would prefer to retire around the age of 60, the majority of them expect to retire at the age of 65 or over. The results also indicate that academic and manual staff are more likely to expect to retire over the age of 65 compared to other occupational categories.

The prospect of having to manage an increased proportion of older staff is posing a number of challenges for HEIs. The focus group discussions with managers drawn from different occupational groups and senior academics, provide an insight into the kind of issues that can arise as a result of an ageing workforce in HE. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Monitor the workforce age profile. Survey tools developed as part of this project may be used to gain an understanding of staff's expectations about retirement, to inform policies and practices to manage retirement.

- Develop separate criteria and guidelines to determine staff applications to continue to work beyond retirement for academic, professional, support, and manual staff, to reflect the varying expectations and demands of different job roles. Consult with line managers, equality groups and trade union representatives, to develop fair and transparent criteria.
- Provide clear information about pension entitlements and pre-retirement courses to encourage staff to plan in advance and make informed choices about their retirement arrangements (Resource Guide: retirement: looking ahead-pre-retirement courses; pensions - increasing staff understanding)
- Adopt a fair and transparent system to review staff performance on a regular basis, to enable staff to perform to the best of their abilities at whatever age and stage of their career (Resource Guide: performance management)
- Adopt a systematic approach to succession planning to take into account staff recruitment and retention needs in different areas of work (Resource Guide: monitoring and workforce planning)
- Develop post-retirement provisions. This could be of mutual benefit to universities and to retired staff. (Resource Guide: after retirement: continuing research; volunteering; short-term contracts; continuing links)
- Consider different models of flexible retirement that can be of mutual benefits to both staff and the demand of services (Resource Guide: flexible and phase retirement; work-life balance and flexible working: flexible working; maintaining work ability; health and well - being)

## 7.3 Recruiting and retaining younger staff aged 30 and under

The findings from the survey show that overall younger staff have a very positive view of working in HE. The three aspects of their current job that they value most are the opportunity to do interesting work, holiday entitlement and flexibility. The majority of them are satisfied with access to training and development opportunities but a significant proportion are not satisfied. There is also a significant proportion of them who believe that they have not received any career guidance as part of their appraisal or personal development review. The findings from the focus group show that there is a general consensus that HEIs should do more to attract younger staff, and many managers commented that universities should do more to reach out to their own graduates, and recruit them into career jobs in professional areas such as human resources, accounting, law, marketing and others. Based on these findings the following recommendations are made:

- Review institutional provisions to monitor access to training by age, to ensure that younger staff have access to relevant training, and that they received effective career guidance
- Devise a strategy to encourage young graduates to consider applying for jobs in HE, including making use of student placements (Resource guide: engaging with young employees: general issues; employing students; graduate trainees).
- Make use of apprenticeships to recruit staff between the ages of 16-17 and train them into vocational areas, such as catering and maintenance (Resource guide: engaging with young employees: general issues; apprenticeships).
- Monitor younger staff levels of job satisfaction through the university staff survey.
- Consider adopting more innovative approaches to career progression, particularly in professional and support roles that enable staff to acquire different skills and expertise in a number of areas that can lead to 'horizontal' career moves.
- Market HEIs more effectively as employers of choice who can offer opportunities to: do interesting work; work flexibly; and a series of benefits, including good holiday entitlements.

## 7.4 Equality of access to training and development opportunities by age group

The findings from the survey show a mixed picture. On the positive side, the majority of respondents in all age groups are positive about access to training and development opportunities. Most managers and senior academics too believe that as long as staff are doing the job it is worth investing in them. These findings suggest an inclusive approach about training and development opportunities in HEIs, but on the other hand, they also show that there are significant proportions of respondents in all age groups who do not feel that they are given enough access to training and development opportunities. Another important finding from the survey is that the majority of respondents in most age groups believe that they have not received any career guidance as part of their appraisal or personal development review. Based on these findings the following recommendations are made:

- Monitor staff access to training to identify and address any issue that might prevent some staff to take up training and development opportunities (Resource guide: Monitoring and workforce planning).
- Review institutional approaches to career guidance to ensure that this is delivered effectively to all staff at whatever stage of their working life. (Resource guide: career development; career development of research staff; mentoring)



## Partner organisations

