

Central Alberta Older Adult Employment Strategy Assessment Project 2023

Presented by:
The Golden Circle Senior Resource Centre
in partnership with the
Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce



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The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.

Canada 

Alberta 

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Executive Summary

The Golden Circle Senior Resource Centre, in partnership with the Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce, with funding provided by the Province of Alberta, initiated the Central Alberta Older Adult Employment Strategy Assessment Project in April 2023. The project sought to understand the current barriers to employment faced by adults over 55 in Central Alberta (from here forward “Individuals”), as well as the needs of employers confronting a shortage of skilled, experienced, and available labour (from here forward “Employers”). By exploring the region's current employment services and listening to the experiences of Individuals and Employers, significant gaps and resources were identified within the 248 voices represented. The report provides recommendations to enhance systems navigation, address the intersectionality of ageism, gender, ability, and ethnicity, leverage community partnerships, and tailor resources specifically for adults over 55 and employers.

One of the key findings was a significant lack of awareness among Individuals and Employers regarding the existing employment resources, tools, and assistance available, particularly a shortage of programs tailored for adults over 55 (including mature workers, seniors, and older adults). In Central Alberta, although seventeen organizations offer resources, training, and employment services, only two have specific programs or resources for adults over 55. Only 6% of Individuals had received or identified resources specifically tailored to their age group while seeking employment opportunities, and only 8% of Employers were aware of or utilized resources that assist in recruiting or retaining adults over 55.

Survey data and interviews highlighted the influence of ageism on Individuals' self-perception and self-confidence and their ability to transfer their skills and experience to employment opportunities. A prevalent sentiment emerged where participants, despite substantial evidence suggesting otherwise, expressed skepticism about their ability to re-enter the workforce and the value of their experience.

The top barriers to employment identified by Individuals included an inability to identify their skills and experience in new job settings, feeling disrespected or excluded, the lack of financial compensation, and feeling unsupported by policies and practices related to adults over 55. Meanwhile, Employers expressed high regard for the work ethic, reliability, insight, experience, and dedication of adults over 55 but noted a substantial knowledge gap regarding existing resources to hire, recruit, and retain such adults.

Interestingly, the top core workplace skills that Individuals identified as having were almost identical to the top needs of Employers, suggesting a matching supply and demand. Adults over 55, like most working adults primarily seek flexible, meaningful, and stable employment that offers challenge and opportunities for social interaction.

We recommend tailoring existing employment resources and services to adults over 55. There is a pressing need to establish a navigation system that bridges the divide between current employment resources and the skilled, experienced workforce of this age group. Employers expressed the need for resources that inform and help to guide their hiring and retention practices for adults over 55.

We emphasize the importance of viewing employment not just as a job but as a vital component of holistic health and wellness for adults over 55.

For future endeavours, a comprehensive examination of the effects of various social identities, especially focusing on the intersectionality of ageism, gender, and ethnicity, should be prioritized.

Methodology

Survey Design: A single online survey was designed for individuals over 55, and for employers seeking to employ or interested in the employment of adults over 55. Each survey was comprised of 14 questions carefully crafted to collect relevant data on employment experiences, core employment skills, challenges, attitudes, and perceptions related to recruitment, hiring, and retaining adults over 55 in Central Alberta.

Survey Distribution: The surveys were open for a duration of 12 weeks; distribution channels included:

a. *Email invitations:* Surveys were sent via email by project partners and workforce consultant to a diverse sample of Individuals and Employers who in turn distributed the documents through their workplaces and contacts.

b. *Website:* The survey and focus group registration were accessible on the Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce Website, ensuring a wider reach. The project information and survey were advertised in local newspaper advertising, the Canadian Professionals in Human Resources of Alberta website, distributed by the workforce consultant, weekly newsletters at the Golden Circle Resource Centre and targeted social media campaigns.

c. *Print distribution:* Hard copies of the surveys were made available at various physical locations frequented by the target population.

Focus Groups: Two separate focus groups were conducted for Individuals and Employers, respectively. Each focus group consisted of 8-10 participants, leading to a total of 17 Individuals who participated in these interactive sessions. The focus groups aimed to gain qualitative insights into the participants' experiences, concerns, and perspectives related to employment for adults over 55.

Interviews and Correspondence: Formal and informal interviews were conducted with 41 Individuals over 55 years of age and 23 Employers. The interviews were held both in-person and virtually, accommodating the participants' preferences and geographic locations. The Individual interviews provided deeper insights into Individual experiences, preferences and recommendations related to finding, and maintaining work. The Employer interviews provided deeper insights into Employer attitudes, and organizational practices, barriers and opportunities related to adults over 55.

Data Analysis: The survey responses, focus group discussions, and interview transcripts were collected and analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and issues related to the experiences and needs of Individuals and Employers.

Ethical Considerations: Participants were assured of confidentiality, and their consent was obtained before participation. The study adhered to The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) adhering to ethical guidelines and protecting the rights and privacy of all respondents.

Limitations: It is important to acknowledge that the study's findings are limited to the participants' perspectives and represent a small sample of both Individuals and Employers.

Project Outcome 1

Identify current employment services or programs in Central Alberta for adults over 55.

Overview

There were **17 organizations** identified across Central Alberta who provide employment services resources, training, education, and career counselling. At this time there are only **two** organizations with resources or programming tailored for adults over 55 (seniors, mature workers, older adults).

Services Review Central Alberta Employment Services and Resources:



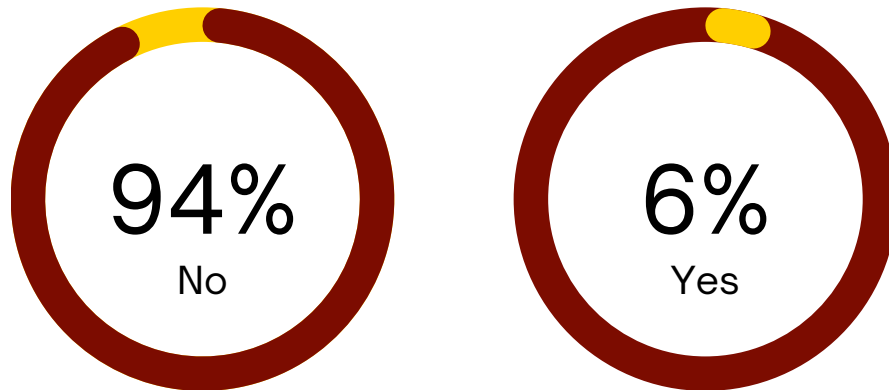
Considering multiple resources, many of them free, only 6% of our respondents identified that they knew of or accessed employment resources for people over 55.

Research Identified Specific Resources for:

1. Youth 18-30
2. New Canadians
3. People Living with Disabilities
4. Rural Communities
5. People Who Identify as Women
6. Indigenous Communities

Gaps Identified

Have you received any resources specifically tailored to adults over 55 as you look for employment opportunities?



- **Shortage of Dedicated Resources for Adults Over 55:** Lack of resources, training, or education dedicated to adults over 55, older adults, mature workers, seniors.
- **Absence of Job Matching Services for Adults Over 55:** Although many people mentioned the need for job matching services (matching people to employers), very few exist.
- **Need for Enhanced Mentorship and Intergenerational Interaction:** There appear to be very few programs that connect employment services to mentorship and intergenerational opportunities and programming.
- **Minimal Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship Guidance & Mentorship Programs for Adults Over 55:** Both areas are underrepresented and could greatly benefit from increased attention and resources.
- **Revealing and Demonstrating the Untapped Skills of Adults Over 55:** One of the key discussions with employment agencies included the need to help adults over 55 assess their skills and capabilities and to connect those to the needs of employers.



Recommendation

Tailor employment services, resources and tools for adults over 55.

Ninety-Four percent (94%) of the Individuals represented in this project had not received or did not have knowledge of employment resources in the community when looking for employment. We identified 17 organizations providing support, education and training for employment readiness, evaluation, and career preparation, only two with identified resources specifically for adults over 55 mature workers or seniors. Only 8% of Employers have used or know of any resources that currently assist employers to recruit or retain adults over 55 in the workforce.

Therefore, it is paramount to collaborate with established employment service providers to refine and expand their resources.

- **Reinforce existing partnerships:** Reinforce existing partnerships between local organizations working with underrepresented communities including but not limited to new Canadians, people living with disabilities, and organizations that represent women and immigrant workers.
- **Form Strategic Partnerships:** Form strategic partnerships with organizations serving adults over 55 to build employment services and resources that align with their skills, strengths and abilities.
- **Utilize Report Findings:** Utilize the findings of this report as a strategic tool in helping employment service organizations create inclusive, accessible resources, training and support for adults over 55.
- **Build Socially Accessible Resources:** Resources should be available in a way that considers the social context and needs of adults over 55. This might include support groups, social clubs, or community centres that encourage social interaction and combat isolation.
- **Provide Culturally Accessible Resources:** Central Alberta is culturally diverse; resources should be sensitive to and reflective of diverse cultural backgrounds. This could mean having materials available in multiple languages or providing employment services “in community”, being on location where people gather, feel safe and supported.
- **Update Resources with Diverse Representation:** It is essential that the imagery, language, and content of resources reflect the diversity of the older adult population, including those who are often underrepresented. This helps to ensure that all individuals feel seen, understood, and valued.



Project Outcome 2

Explore key barriers and opportunities adults over 55 experience when seeking or maintaining employment in Central Alberta.

Participant Overview

60% of participants in the survey responded as individuals interested in employment after 55 years old

25% of participants on the survey responded as being an employer or member of an organization interested in hiring, retention, or recruitment.

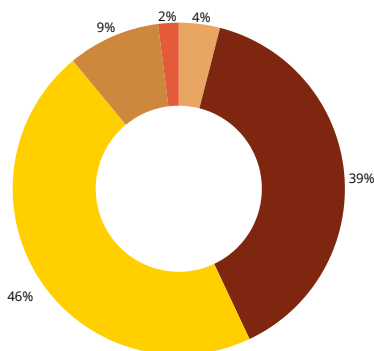
15% of participants on the survey asked to complete both surveys, their survey results were added to both the Individual's and the Employer's data.

Note:

In this survey, participants were provided with the option to select multiple responses for specific questions. Consequently, for these questions, the reported percentages do not represent the proportion of respondents who selected each individual option. Instead, they represent the proportion of total selections that each option received.

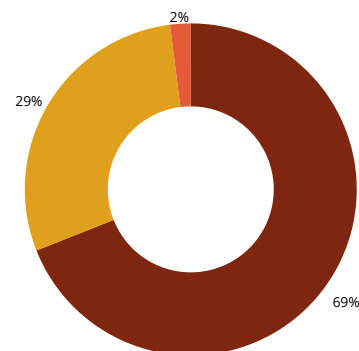
As a result, the sum of the percentages for these questions may exceed 100%, reflecting the frequency with which each option was chosen relative to the total number of selections made by participants.

Which age category do you belong to?



- 61 - 70 years old (46%)
- 51 - 60 years old (39%)
- 71 - 80 years old (9%)
- 40 - 50 years old (4%)
- 81 - 90 years old (2%)

I self-identify as:



- Female (69%)
- Male (29%)
- Prefer not to answer (2%)

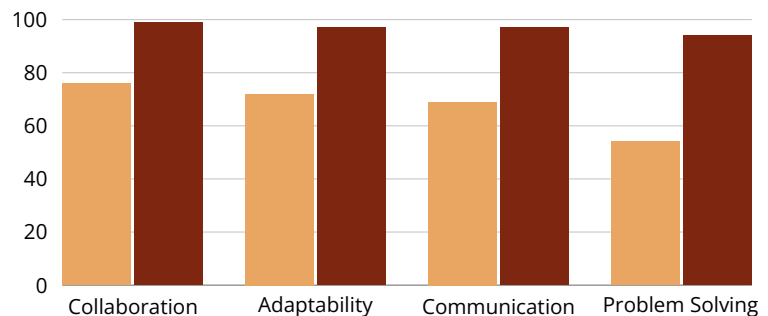
What We Heard

Matching Supply to Demand

The top four core employment skills identified by Individuals were: collaboration, adaptability, communication and problem solving skills.

The same four skills were identified by Employers as their current top employment needs.

Both Individuals and Employers were asked to identify multiple skills and needs.



Top 6 Industries Individuals Have Experience In:

Healthcare

Food Service

Public Administration

Retail

Education

Business

Barriers to Employment:

Based on the feedback provided from the survey, focus groups and interviews, we have identified the following themes regarding the barriers adults over 55 experience in finding and maintaining employment:

Age Discrimination: Individuals expressed feeling discriminated against due to their age. They believe age becomes a barrier when applying for both internal and external positions. Their experience is that younger candidates with less experience are often preferred, even when experience is emphasized in the job description. They expressed that stereotypes about older workers being less healthy or less adaptable, though untrue, are affecting their job opportunities. Individuals often see themselves as “ill equipped” as they have been told many times to “hide” their age in resumes and interviews as they look for work.

“Thank you for doing this, I just wanted to know I wasn't alone, so many people say, ‘we will get back to you’, and never do, it's not dignified to keep begging for work”. (Individual)

Negative Self-Perception, Uncertainty, Fear and Lack of Confidence: The survey data and interviews with adults over 55 consistently revealed a theme concerning the influence of ageism on self-perception and confidence. Participants' comments highlighted a linkage between their skills and abilities and the perception of aging by themselves and others. A prevalent sentiment emerged where participants, despite substantial evidence suggesting otherwise, expressed skepticism about their ability to re-enter the workforce and the value of their experience. A prevailing belief that older adults are less capable persists, even in instances where direct evidence contradicts this notion. Such skewed perceptions have potential implications for individual health and overall well-being. Many expressed feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and a reluctance to take on challenges or pursue opportunities due to a belief that they will inevitably not be accepted. This perception has affected their confidence and ability to present themselves as capable candidates on their resumes and in interviews.

Perceived as At The End of Their Career: Individuals felt and had experienced that many organizations view people over 55 as being at the “end of their careers”, however, most Individuals in the study suggested, they did not have set timelines for retirement or reducing their work schedule, and that what they **wanted most was to work**. They felt that this perception may lead organizations to overlook them in favor of younger candidates perceived to have more potential for long-term employment.

Loneliness: Individuals shared feeling overlooked and disheartened, as resources primarily target younger workers, disregarding their extensive expertise and experience. Many have expressed a sense of "shame" when seeking help, with cultural barriers intensifying this feeling. We heard in interviews expressions of deep loneliness and disconnection, when people ready and willing to work cannot find work.

Disability: Individuals stated fear of disclosing any disabling condition or accommodation required for employment as they are told often that this is a key reason why organizations do not employ adults over 55. Respondents have highlighted that their physical conditions, such as an inability to walk long distances or lift heavy weights can impede their pursuit of certain job opportunities, despite meeting all the job requirements.

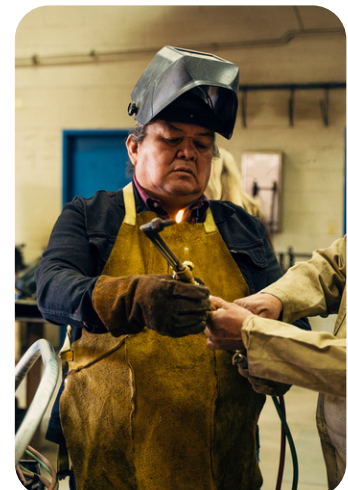
Diversity and Inclusion: There is also a significant lack employment resources offering diverse representation. Individuals stated that advertising for employment services did not represent them. This encompasses accessible job postings, employment service locations, and outreach to diverse cultural communities through established, trusted community leaders with lived experience.

“I think, generally, we forget what we offer as human beings in terms of empathy and connectivity, ability to work in a community, bringing that mentorship, that honesty, that integrity, that work ethic.”
(Individual)

Age-Based Assumptions:

Respondents mention instances of organizations rejecting their applications due to being considered “too old” for their team, or not being the right fit for culture. Their experience is that age-based assumptions and stereotypes influence hiring decisions, leading to disappointment and rejection during interviews; very few feel they have been “given a chance”. Individuals have also experienced being “pushed out” of the workplace as early as 50, as the perceived value of and perceived reduced cost of younger employees is assumed. Individuals stated feelings of loneliness and isolation.

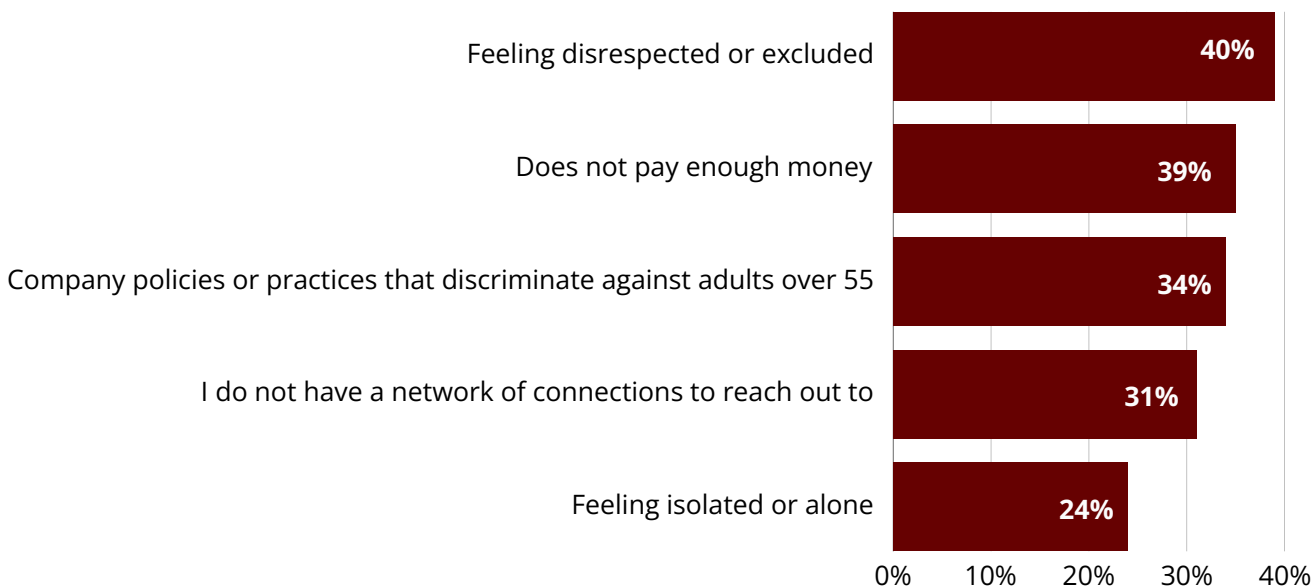
Lack of Networks: Numerous participants mentioned the absence of "network connections" in Central Alberta and the significant advantage that comes from having a personal connection to secure a job. This concern was particularly prominent among new Canadians, immigrants, and people living with low income. They expressed that their diverse backgrounds, accents, appearances, and beliefs directly influenced their capacity to secure and retain employment. Furthermore, these participants perceived that organizations throughout Central Alberta, which are actively seeking employees, often do not make job opportunities accessible to people outside of the cultural mainstream, and people they know. Their experience is that there is very little consideration of factors like language proficiency, location, and reading level.



Gender Discrimination: The theme of gender as a potential barrier to employment, indicates a perceived intersection of age and gender discrimination in the workplace. As a high percentage of survey participants identified as female, many of the comments indicated “being an older woman” and being perceived as more “fragile” also impacted their ability to attain and retain work after 55.

In this survey, participants were asked to select their top four preferences from a list of pre-selected factors based on research. Therefore, the data reflects which factors were most popular based on the proportion of participants who chose them.

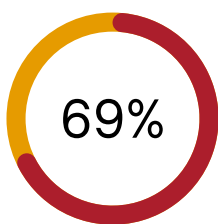
Have you faced any of the following challenges in finding or maintaining employment as an adult over 55? Check all that apply. (Top 6)



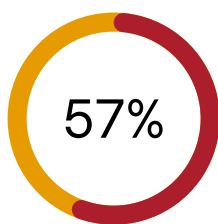
Note:

*Individual respondents on the survey indicated that a **low percentage** of survey participants are looking for work that is related to what they have done before. In the focus groups and interviews conducted a **majority of people** indicated that they **were** looking for work that was similar if not the same as the work that they were doing with reduced workload and responsibilities.*

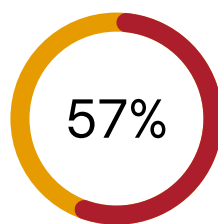
What would assist you to find or maintain employment? CHOOSE 4 that would be the MOST helpful.



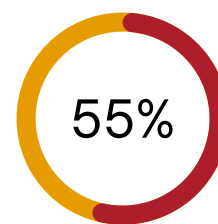
Work that makes use of my skills and experience



Work that supports me financially



Work that is personally meaningful



Flexible Hours

What We Heard From Individuals About Solutions & Opportunities

Intergenerational Mentorship: More than half of the participants discussed the opportunity for mentorship, the opportunity to share their experience with others as a motivating factor for remaining in the workplace.

Positive Experiences with Employment Agencies: Two Individuals in the project identified positive and hugely helpful resources and people in local employment agencies. They connect successful and meaningful employment to the assistance that they received. They felt this untapped resource was a place for growth.

“I’ve gathered a ton of experience and I would love to have people to pass that experience on to equip them, and shortcut their learning experience”
(Individual)

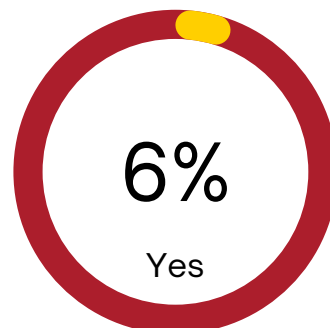
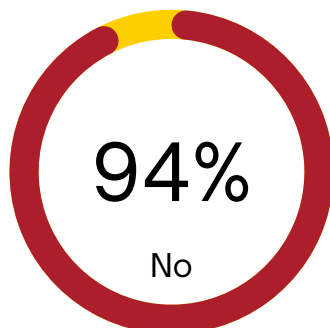
Age Identified as an Asset: This theme was reflected in multiple conversations where participants shared the importance of a workplace where “people really knew who I was and took into account how much I did and invested”. Participants were more likely to feel valued and satisfied in a workplace where their age was seen as an asset. They expressed that appreciation for the wisdom and expertise that comes with age fosters a more inclusive and supportive work culture where they wanted to stay.

Autonomy and Trust: Individuals highlighted the significance of workplace environments that allow them to manage their tasks independently, and safe to do things in their own way as essential to creating an inclusive work environment

Recognize the Stigma and Stress of Being Unemployed or Underemployed: Many Individuals shared that by the time they tried to reach out for assistance they were so overwhelmed, feeling stressed and ashamed for not being able to find work, that they were not capable of seeing the opportunities or strategies for employment. People felt an enormous amount of stigma around the fact that they were unemployed or underemployed, which reduced their motivation to include someone else in the process of finding employment. They shared the positive experience of reaching out for help.

Consulting and Self-Employment: When participants were prompted about potential future work options and their areas of interest, a recurrent theme emerged around the topic of consulting. Many respondents expressed a keen interest in understanding the nuances of consulting—particularly its structure, initiation process, and potential clientele. A notable entrepreneurial undertone was evident in a significant number of these responses.

Have you received any resources specifically tailored to adults over 55 as you look for employment opportunities?



Gaps Identified

Insufficient Services and Resources for Adults Age 55 and Older: Lack of age-specific resources and assistance for job-seeking adults over 55.

Challenges of Age Discrimination and Stereotyping: Presence of age-related stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes, behaviours, and practices in hiring and the workplace.

Low Self-Esteem and Low Self-Perception Among Individuals: Low self-esteem and lack of confidence among Individuals caused by consistent messaging reflected in ageist beliefs that result in self-exclusion, lack of confidence, and self-doubt.

Limited Networking Platforms and Opportunities: Limited network connections and opportunities for adults over 55, particularly for people from diverse backgrounds.

Age and Gender Bias: The perception of women and those identifying as women over 55 as more 'fragile' demonstrates a combination of gender-based and age discrimination in hiring and workplace environments.

Lack of Diverse Representation and Inclusivity: Lack of diverse representation and accessibility in employment resources. Individuals stated that they do not see themselves in the marketing materials, content, and examples.

Importance of Linking Employment to Overall Health and Well-Being: Individuals reflect that the experience of being unemployed, or underemployed has a direct effect on their psychological health, physical health, and social emotional health.

Limited Avenues for Intergenerational Mentorship and Learning: More than half of the participants discussed the opportunity for mentorship and the opportunity to share their experience with others as a motivating factor for remaining in the workplace.



Recommendation

Implement a System Navigator to streamline employment opportunities for adults over 55

Possible Core Functions of the Systems Navigator: This central figure would serve as the primary liaison for adults over 55 in their employment journey. Key aspects of this resource would be:

Bridge to Services and Support:

- Serve as the main contact for adults over 55 seeking employment, providing direction and assistance in navigating employment resources.
- Cultivate partnerships with community employment resources and providers to offer targeted support and services.
- Enhance outreach efforts, ensuring resources are physically and socially accessible, and culturally representative of the diverse older adult population.
- Educate organizations on the value and advantages of hiring from the over 55 demographic, thereby promoting age diversity in the workplace.
- Collaborate with employment agencies and consultancies to promote specialized programs tailored for the over 55 demographic.
- Prioritize outreach, opting for community-centric locations over fixed sites. This ensures broader accessibility and a more extensive reach.
- Engage adults over 55 as leaders and co-designers of employment initiatives, amplifying their voices and experiences.

Connect to Goals for Social Prescription:

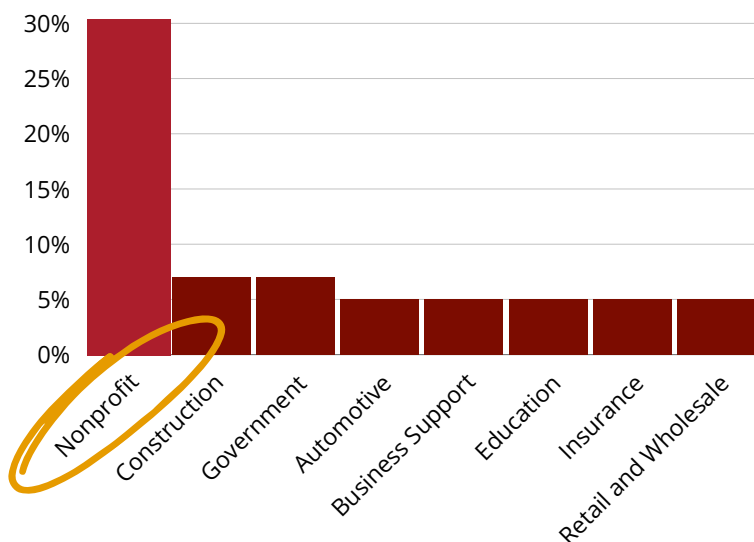
- Develop employment resources that are connected to social prescribing initiatives to address the holistic needs of older adults, including their mental health and well-being.
- Implement strategies to counteract ageism and its negative psychosocial impacts, fostering age-friendly communities and organizations.
- Advocate for employment as a critical aspect of healthy aging, ensuring it is recognized as a key determinant in the overall health and well-being of adults over 55.
- Advocate for holistic aging, where employment is intertwined with other health determinants.
- Address ageism head-on, targeting its adverse effects like diminished self-esteem and self-worth. By countering age-related stereotypes, we can fortify the mental health of older adults, ensuring they view their age as an asset, not a limitation.

This unified approach not only addresses immediate employment needs but also advocates for the holistic well-being of this demographic. This recommendation is aligned with the Healthy Aging Framework (Healthy Aging Alberta, 2023) created in Alberta and based on the World Health Organization's social determinants of health.

Project Outcome 3

Explore Key Barriers and Opportunities Employers Experience in Recruiting and Retaining Adults over 55 in the Central Alberta Workforce.

Participant Overview

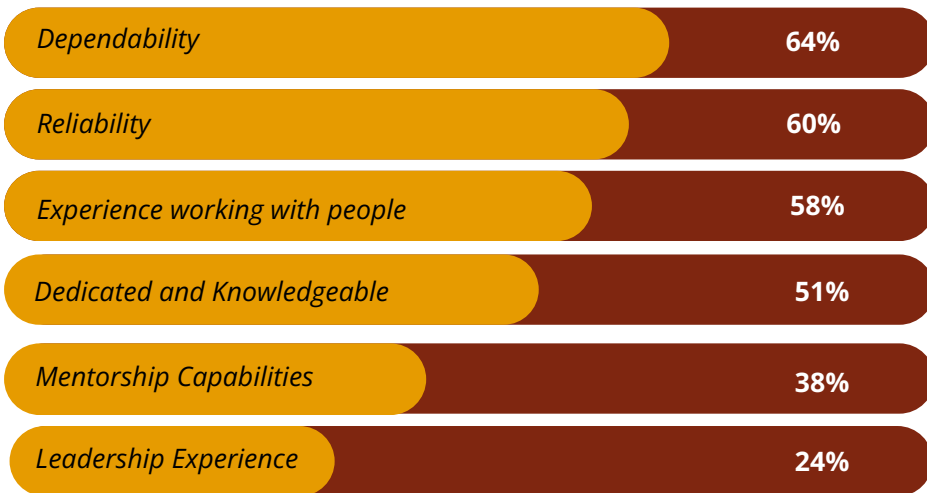


75% of Employers were looking for employees at this time.

76% of Employers who employed adults over 55 stated they were full time employees.

78% of Employers had considered adults over 55 in their employment strategies.

In your experience what are the benefits of hiring adults over 55?



“Our seasoned team members provide such rich insight and wisdom to our team and workplace. We would be less well-rounded and less strong as a team without their input and perspective” (Employer).

Strong Work Ethic and Reliability: Employers stated that they value the work ethic and reliability exhibited by older adults. They emphasize that older employees do what they say they will do, meet expectations, take responsibility for problem-solving, and are considered more efficient and reliable compared to younger counterparts.

Experience, Wisdom, and Insight: Older adults bring a wealth of experience, wisdom, and insight to the workplace. They provide valuable perspectives and contribute to the overall strength and well-roundedness of the team. Their knowledge of the company's history is seen as particularly valuable.

Long-Term Commitment: Many Employers expressed the belief that adults over 55 are less inclined to seek long-term employment, leading to concerns about the viability of investing in onboarding and training.

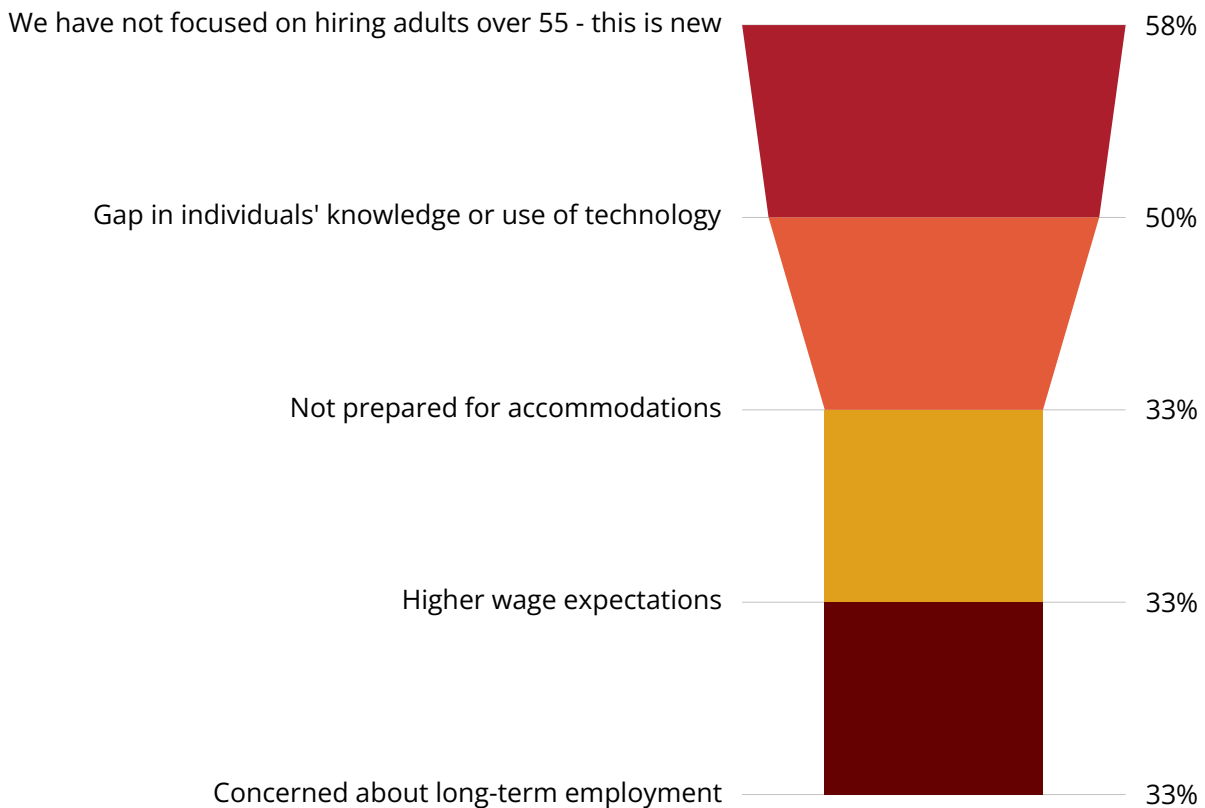
Intergenerational Mentorship Opportunities: Many Employers suggested that we are not taking advantage of the long-term opportunity for mentorship in this demographic.

Embracing Experience and Mentorship in Leadership Dynamics: Confident employers, particularly those who have themselves benefited from mentorship, tend to view experienced people as invaluable assets rather than threats. They understand that an organization's success is enhanced by incorporating diverse levels of experience. On the other hand, it was observed that younger or less secure leaders might perceive more seasoned colleagues as threats to their own positions or authority. This underscores a crucial challenge in leadership; the need to overcome personal ego and adopt humility. They emphasized the need to navigate ego, and embrace humility, and recognized that as a barrier and an opportunity.

*“Part of the problem is that we're not hearing about all the incredible positive stories about the capability and experience of older adults. We hear about stereotypes and ageism, but we are not telling the great stories. Every time you hire someone, there's no guarantee, but **what if works out?**” (Employer)*

What We Heard From Employers About Barriers to Employment:

What are the possible challenges or barriers to employing adults over 55 in your workplace?



Need For Resources and Training: Employers shared that they do not require “tip sheets” as they do not have the resources for implementation. Employers want to be inclusive but are sometimes “just trying to get workers”. Employers are open to both in person and web-based training and education about ageism, but needed clear, implementable solutions.

Assumptions of Employers as Ageist: Many Employers referenced that they often feel they are “doing everything wrong” when they are trying to be inclusive. For many hiring a diverse workforce is new and unpracticed, and although they are learning they are often told they are doing it wrong before being commended for trying and investing in education and development. Employers shared that at times the training feels like shaming, not on getting better, and that is not motivating.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Some Employers have observed that people over 55 may have varying levels of familiarity with inclusive language, diverse perspectives, and effective interaction with people in a customer-facing workplace and office environment. These Employers note that adapting to new ways of working, including adopting inclusive language and practices, can be a learning curve for all employees, rather than a characteristic inherent to a specific age group. To support a smoother transition, these Employers express the value of pre-employment training or resources that can be integrated into the onboarding process, designed to help people transition from diverse employment cultures and adapt to the inclusive and respectful culture of their new workplace.

“The biggest challenge we face lately, is two factor authentication. And what we found is, wherever possible, we're implementing two factor authentication to protect the security of data, and access to phones and computers limits that, not just for older adults but for many people” (Employer)



Digital Skills Gap: In-House Training Strains Limited Employer Resources: Employers identified a notable gap in digital skills among adults over 55, while also acknowledging that this issue doesn't affect everyone in this age group. Based on their experience, Employers observed that people younger than 55 tend to have a more intuitive grasp of digital problem-solving and critical thinking. As workplaces increasingly integrate digital tools into daily operations, such as using digital systems to sign in and out of work, the demand for digital literacy is growing. Employers report that adults over 55 generally require a more extended period of training to become proficient with these digital tools. However, many Employers express that they lack the necessary time and resources to effectively provide this extended training.

“So, I may come from a generation, and even a place of work where in the past we behaved disrespectfully to other people, but I care about people and I can and I want to learn to respect language and culture. Everyone can learn new skills but work ethic, integrity, dependability – you can't teach that.” (Employer)

What does your business require to continue to support the employment of adults over 55 in your workplace?

Resources and strategies focused on the recruitment and retention of adults over 55



We currently have all the resources we need



Specific employment placement services for adults over 55



Specific education and training for your organization



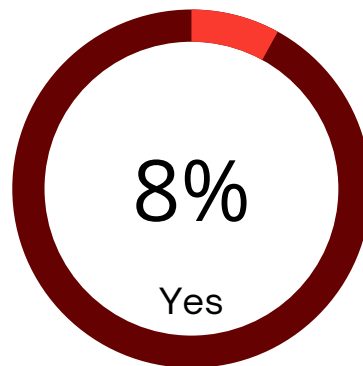
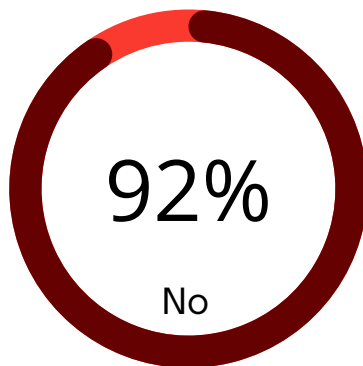
Access to on-boarding resources



Resources for workplace accommodations and inclusion



Have you used or do you know of any resources that currently assist employers to recruit, or retain adults over 55 in the workforce?



Gaps Identified

Mismatch Between Job Opportunities and Job Seekers: The gap between available employment positions and the skills or interests of potential candidates.

Limited Targeted or Age-Specific Strategies: The absence of industry-specific training modules aimed at both enhancing the skills and ensuring the retention of employees aged 55 and over.

Advanced Digital Skills Deficiency: The gap in advanced digital knowledge and the pressing need for specialized training beyond just elementary digital programs.

Retention over Recruitment: The need to shift the focus from primarily hiring to strategizing for effective employee retention as well.

Perception of Employers as Ageist and Not Inclusive: The sentiment among Employers feeling overwhelmed or defeated due to perceived age-biased attitudes, even with attempts to foster inclusive workspaces.

Enhanced Onboarding Resources for Transition: The demand for improved onboarding resources and training to help employees, especially those transitioning, to navigate and adapt to new work environments effectively.



Recommendation

Develop resources in collaboration with diverse community organizations, adults over 55 and employers to improve the recognition of and reduction of ageism in the workplace.

Recognizing the multifaceted challenges and opportunities associated with hiring and retaining adults over 55, a comprehensive approach is essential. We propose a holistic strategy that weaves together the principles of employer education, ageism awareness, workforce retention, and digital skills ability.

- **Ageism Awareness and Advocacy Training:**

- **Address Overt and Covert Ageism in the Workplace:** Initiate educational campaigns and training sessions tailored for employers and organizations, focusing on the detriments of ageism in hiring and retention within the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion environment.
- **Customized Training Sessions and Facilitated Discussions:** Introduce participatory discussions in workplace settings that address ageism and finding collective solutions and strategies for recognizing and reducing stereotypes and bias.
- **Inclusive Approach:** Ensure that the training is not an overview that reinforces ageist stereotypes but delves deep into the nuances of ageism. Seek expertise and perspectives from organizations with lived experiences in ageism. Recognize the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and skills of people over 55.

- **Workforce Extension and Retention Strategy:**

- **Value Current Employees:** Champion the notion of workforce extension, emphasizing the benefits of tapping into the skills and expertise of existing employees. Offer employers tools and strategies for job rotation, upskilling, reskilling, and fostering flexible work hours.
- **Leverage Employee Feedback:** Incorporate suggestions from workers, many of whom expressed a willingness to prolong their employment tenure if provided with flexible work hours and mentorship opportunities.
- **Combat Labour Shortages:** Highlight the potential of workforce extension strategies to alleviate labour shortages by capitalizing on the expertise of seasoned employees.

- **Addressing and Reframing the Digital Skills Narrative:**

- **Challenge Stereotypes:** Counteract the misconception that adults over 55 inherently lack digital skills. Emphasize that digital proficiency is about experience with technology, not age.
- **Tailored Digital Training:** Understand the evolving digital requirements of various sectors. Implement a sector-specific needs assessment to pinpoint areas of high labour demand and associated digital competencies.
- **Shared Solutions and Collaboration:** Collaborate with established training providers in Central Alberta. Aim to devise universally applicable digital training solutions, concentrating initial efforts on sectors with acute labour needs. Ensure that training modules cater to a diverse workforce and are accessible to all.

In unison, these initiatives present an integrative approach that not only addresses ageism and promotes inclusive hiring, but also equips employers with the tools and strategies to harness the skills and potential of adults over 55. This recommendation serves as a roadmap for fostering a workplace environment that values experience, encourages growth, and champions diversity.

Conclusion

The findings and recommendations from this project will play a crucial role in helping to shape future employment resources and opportunities for adults over 55 and employers in Central Alberta. By addressing the identified gaps and challenges, the region can leverage the wealth of skills and experience possessed by adults over 55, contributing to a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Furthermore, this endeavour aligns with broader societal goals of promoting age-inclusive workplaces, supporting adults over 55 in staying active in the labour market, and reducing potential skills shortages for employers.

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