



# The World of the Multi-Generational Workforce: Possibilities and Challenges

## SECTORAL REPORT

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## OLDER WORKERS

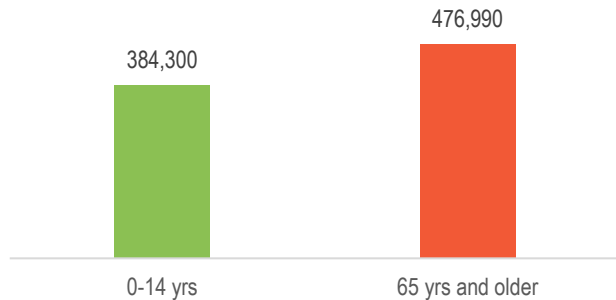
Age is an important element in a person's working life. On one hand, workers mature, gain more experiences, and become more proficient as they age. On the other hand, social and employment norms sometimes label jobs that may or may not be suitable for certain age cohorts.

*"The older worker is someone who wants to remain engaged in the labour force, wants to join or rejoin the workforce, may have recently left the labour force (due to early retirement, restructuring, inability to find work, etc.)".*

- (Fancey, P. et. Al., 2021).

Different academic disciplines have varying definitions of older workers. Factors such as the existence or non-existence of a national mandatory retirement age affect these definitions of older workers. However, age 40 is considered as the distinction point between younger and older workers, as this age traditionally marks a transition in working life age (Ilmarinen, J., 2001; Ng, T. & Feldman, D., 2008). In Canada, an older worker is frequently defined as 55 years of age or more (FPT Ministers Responsible for Seniors, 2019). Canada does not have a retirement age, although Canada Pension Plan (CPP), the retirement pension, can start at minimum 60 years of age (Canada, 2023).

**Figure 1: City of Toronto's Youngest and Oldest Population, 2021**



Source: City of Toronto, 2022

## Importance of Including Older Workers in the Labor Force

Presently in Canada the number of seniors aged 65 and older grows six times faster than children 0-14. As a result, Canada is seeing greater numbers of older workers in its labour force. Right now, 21.8% of working age people (more than 1 in 5 persons) are between 55 to 64 years old (Statistics Canada, 2022).

City of Toronto is no exception to this trend. Table 1 indicates that from 2016 to 2021 labour force participation rate of older cohorts in the city increased (Statistics Canada, 2023 a). Although, a couple of percentage increase may seem like a small change, considering higher population growth in the older cohorts, the increase in number of people participating in the labour force is bigger than expected (Toronto, 2022 a).

Recognizing the vital economic and social contributions of the older workers, it is important to create more employment opportunities and work environments that are inclusive and suitable for this cohort of workers.

### Existing Gaps and Challenges

- While youth employment is capturing attention of policy makers, older workers' employment support has been overlooked for long (OHCRIF Report).
- [There are] not enough programs and services to support older workers entry, re-entry, retention in the labour market (Toronto, 2022 a)
- Ageist views of society, employers, co-workers and workplaces pose further challenges for older workers (OW Report).
- Age related discrimination exists at all stages of employment ([OW Report](#)).

## OLDER WORKERS DATA USED IN THIS REPORT

Considering the varied definition of older workers, data availability and WoodGreen's program criteria, in this report we will look into an age range from **45 years to 74 years** (when available) as older workers.

Data in this report is extracted from Statistics Canada and City of Toronto's website and reports. Some data is presented as estimations when further numeric operations (e.g., calculated from rate) have been applied.

## TORONTO'S OLDER POPULATION AT A GLANCE

Figure 1 shows that in 2021, there were over 90,000 more people in the 65 years and above age group than in the 0-14 age group (Toronto, 2022). The 2021 population census data (summarized in table 1) further reveals that City of Toronto has a total of 982,700 people in the 45 years to 74 years age group (Toronto, 2022). This means 35% of the city's population belonged to the older worker age group. Of them 18% were men and 17% were women. Table 1 also indicates that that from 2016 to 2021 labour force participation of older population saw an increase.

Table 1: 2021 population census data summary for Toronto

Age Group	Total Population	Percentage	
45-74 years	982,700	35% of the total population	
		18% Men	17% Women
Age Group	Labour Market Participation Rate in 2016	Labour Market Participation Rate in 2021	
60-64 years	67.8%	69.1%	
65 years and up	26.5%	27.5%	

Source: [Statistics Canada, 2023 a](#), [Toronto, 2022](#)

## CONCENTRATION OF OLDER PEOPLE IN TORONTO

In Toronto, the neighbourhoods of Banbury-Don Mills, Annex, and Agincourt North have the highest concentration of population over the age of 65 years or older (by number). Percentage wise, we see the highest concentrations in Bayview Woods-Steeles, Hillcrest Village and Bridle Path-Sunnybrook-York Mill neighbourhoods. The top five neighbourhoods in Toronto that have highest concentration of older population (65 years or older) are shown in table 2 (both by number of people and by percentage) (Toronto, 2022).

## City of Toronto's SENIORS STRATEGY 2.0 Highlights Related to Employment

### Toronto Seniors Strategy Accountability Table

It is a network of City partners committed to making Toronto a more age-friendly, age-inclusive and age equitable place for a diverse population of seniors to call home. It outlines 27 high-impact recommendations in five action areas including employment and income of seniors.

#### Recommendation

Expand employment support services to further address the needs of older workers, focusing on Ontario Works recipients.

#### Actions Taken

In 2021, the Toronto Employment and Social Services division provided support to older workers through:

- ✓ Training and employment programs to clients aged 45+.
- ✓ Wrap-around supports programs to clients aged 45+ who require life stabilization supports and who face challenges compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, through non-profit and community-based providers for Ontario Works.
- ✓ A new Seniors 60+ Resource Guide, complete with key words search capability and needs prompts to support caseworkers to fully and holistically support low-income seniors.

(Toronto, 2022 a)

### Available Employment Programs

City of Toronto in partnership with other community and non-profit organizations offers number of employment support services and programs. However, only three programs are targeted for 45+ years old population:

1. [Age Advantage 45+ Program, Gateway Cafe](#)
2. [REBOOT, Springboard](#)
3. [Older Worker's Initiative, WoodGreen](#)

### Service Gaps

These programs only serve Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Supports Program (ODSP) recipients. The only employment support program targeted towards 45+ years population who are neither OW or ODSP recipients is [Skills for Success for Experienced Workers \(SSEW\)](#) at WoodGreen.

Table 2: Highest concentration of population 65years+ in Toronto Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhoods	Population	Neighbourhoods	% of population
Banbury-Don Mills	7,185	Bayview Woods-Steeles	30.4%
Annex	6,715	Hillcrest Village	28.7%
Agincourt North	6,660	Bridle Path-Sunnybrook-York Mill	28.2%
Tam O'Shanter-Sullivan	6,475	Markland Wood	27.9%
Steeles	6,380	Rosedale-Moore Park	27.8%

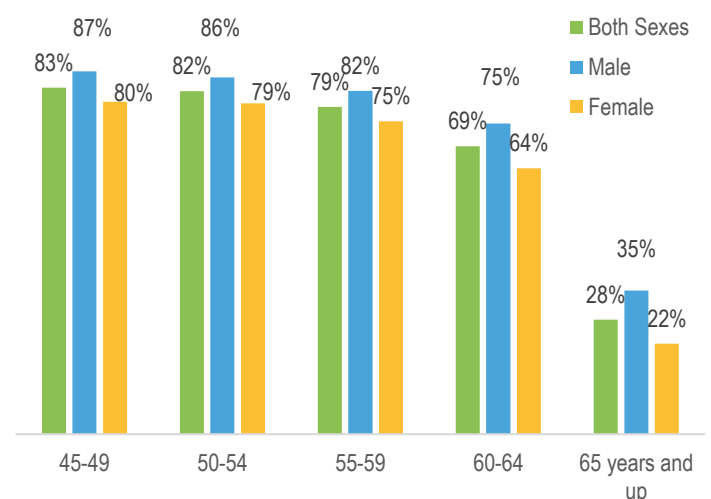
Source: Toronto, 2022

## LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION OF TORONTO'S OLDER POPULATION

In 2021 in Toronto, the highest rate of labour participation (86.4%) was noticed for the 25 to 29 year age group. For the older workers, labour market participation rate gradually declined. While 45 to 49 year age group had 83.2% participation rate, closer to the highest rate, for the 65 years and older age group the participation rate declined dramatically to 27.5% (Statistics Canada, 2023).

Figure 2 indicates gradual decline in labour force participation rate for 45 to 74 year population in Toronto. It also shows that older women's participation rate in the labour market tended to be slightly lower than their male counterparts.

Figure 2: Labour Participation Rate of Older Workers in Toronto



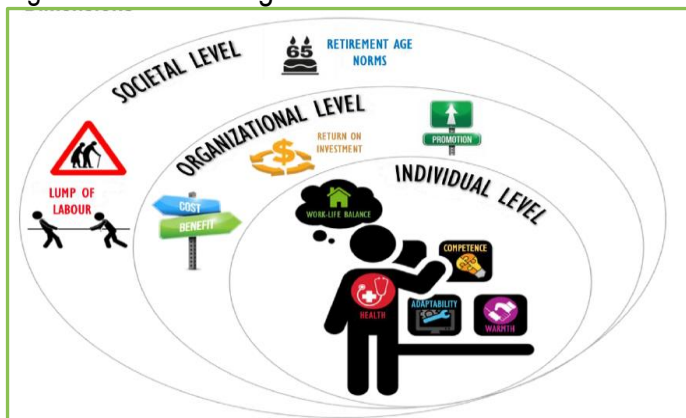
Source: Statistics Canada, 2023

## Ageism & Age-based Stereotyping are the “most tolerated forms of social prejudice” that older people face.

Both ageism and stereotypes may contribute to age discrimination at all employment stages, from recruitment to workforce exit. This discrimination can manifest in older workers being not considered for hiring, training or promotions as well as being encouraged to take early retirement. Effects of age-based discrimination, as shown in figure 3, radiates into three levels:

- **Individual level:** health, adaptability, warmth (friendliness), competence and work-life balance
- **Organizational level:** costs and benefits, return on investment and promotion
- **Societal level:** lump of labour (younger workers are denied employment opportunities when more older adults engage in work and delay retirement) and the retirement age norms

Figure 3: Effects of age -based discrimination



Common Stereotypes Specific to Older Workers:

**Less Competent**    **Sincere**  
**Kind**    **Trustworthy**  
**Poor Health**    **Work-Life Balance**  
**Less Adaptability**    **Less Mental Capacity**  
**Resistance to Change**    **Vulnerable to Work-Family Imbalance**  
**LUMP OF LABOUR**  
**More Cost to Employers**  
**Too Old to Work** (Fancey, P. et. Al., 2021)

## MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE: POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES

Right now, six generations co-exist on the planet earth! As a result, sometimes four generations, or even as many as five work together in the same workplace: (Alberta, 2021). On one hand, multi-generational workplaces can be **rich in experiences, skills, productivity, and innovation**. It can also lead to **misunderstandings and conflict**.

To address these, everyone at workplaces can:

- ✓ **Show less judgement**
- ✓ **Demonstrate more consideration**
- ✓ **Seek to understand each other, but not label anyone**
- ✓ **Be mindful of generational differences at work (e.g., hours of work, recognition and rewards from employers/jobs etc.)** ( Alberta, 2021)

## BEST PRACTICES TO BRIDGE GENERATION GAPS AT WORK

“Age-friendly workplaces” can be created by introducing a work culture where performance is not attached to age. Strategies can be:

- ✓ **Including age as part of diversity strategies**
- ✓ **Regular assessing and monitoring management’s attitudes and behaviours towards older workers.**
- ✓ **Future managers working with older employees and emphasizing greater variation within age groups**
- ✓ **Opportunities for positive intergenerational contact (e.g., mentorship, intergenerational partnering)**
- ✓ **Achieving certification: Age Friendly Foundation’s certification in the USA indicates that an employer is committed to age bias or discrimination free workplace.** (Fancey, P. et. Al., 2021)

Individual behaviour towards older colleagues can be improved by:

- ✓ **Making an effort to understand where other generations might be coming from.**
- ✓ **Keeping an open mind to challenge assumptions. What looks like arrogance may very well be competence and confidence.**
- ✓ **Focusing on the goal of getting the job done, and not judging the location or time when it was done.**
- ✓ **Accepting each generation’s differences.**
- ✓ **Being respectful to the hard-earned experiences of being in the workforce for many years.** ( Alberta, 2021)

**Public awareness initiatives can be implemented** to promote older workers’ value and importance. Highlighting positive attributes of older workers to refute existing negative stereotypes.

## 10 Signs of Ageism at Workplace

- **Hearing age related comments and insults**
  - **Seeing Patterns of Hiring only Younger People.**
- **Being turned down for promotion due to age**
- **Being overlooked for challenging work assignments**
  - **Becoming isolated or left out**
  - **Being encouraged or forced to retire**
    - **Experiencing layoffs**
- **Having your position eliminated**
  - **Receiving a performance improvement plan**
  - **Facing unfair discipline**

## STEPS TO CREATE A MORE AGE-INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

### Establish Policies

- Clearly define acts of age discrimination
- Outline follow-up procedure for management

### Rethink Interview Process

- Inappropriate interview questions (e.g., Asking about age or retirement plan) should be removed

### Review Existing Policies & Procedure

- To avoid indirect age discrimination

### Encourage Intergenerational Work

- Setting up intergenerational teams.
- Employees can benefit from supporting and learning from one another

## Toolkits and Resources

List of resources and toolkits available from home and abroad to create age-friendly workplaces:

1. [Age-Friendly Workplaces: Promoting Older Worker Participation \(Canada\)](#)
2. [Creating a more inclusive workforce](#)
3. [Certified Age Friendly Employer Program \(USA\)](#)
4. [WorkBC Booklet on How to Engage Mature Workers \(British Columbia, Canada\)](#)
5. [Employer Toolkit: Guidance for Managers of Older Workers \(UK\)](#)
6. [Anti-Ageism in the Workplace \(Canada\)](#)
7. [Resources for Mature Workers \(Alberta, Canada\)](#)

## STRATEGIES FOR OLDER WORKERS TO COMBAT AGEISM AT WORK

1

### REALIZING WHAT'S INTERNALIZED

Studies find that individuals with more positive self-perceptions of aging have better functional health and greater longevity

2

### FOCUSING ON GROWTH AREAS

Not worrying too much about a specific skill that is lacking, rather taking opportunities to acquire new skills

3

### BE PREPARED FOR THE BIAS

Responding to employers if they are concerned about age by affirming your skills and openness to work with a younger team

4

### REPORT INCIDENTS OF AGE DISCRIMINATION

It doesn't fix itself, reporting helps.

(Nova, 2022)

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