

Executive Summary

The Missing Million Recommendations for Action



The Missing Million research, undertaken by ILC-UK with Business in the Community and PRIME, has identified more than a million people aged over 50 who are forced out of work involuntarily.

The research has also found that barriers to returning to work, such as age-related bias and poor understanding among employers of the needs of older workers, are leading many to seek self-employment. This, the third and final report in the series, highlights major themes and provides recommendations for business and government to help people to stay in work for longer.

Why it matters

Our population is ageing. Currently, 10 million people in the UK are over 65 years old and this number is projected to nearly double, to around 19 million, by 2050.

The first person who will live to 150 has already been born. As we all live longer and healthier lives, we will also need to work for longer to pay towards our pensions, health and social care in older age.

The changes that come with population ageing will leave some groups at a particular disadvantage – including the low paid, with few pension savings, and manual workers whose job is harder to do as they age.

Not only do we have the missing million people who have been forced out of work before retirement age, but we also have 1.1 million people who are currently working beyond state pension age. They are the second missing million – widely ignored in policy making and public discourse, yet vital as they set the precedent for the future model of working lives.

Older workers are vital for the future of the economy

The effects of an ageing population are apparent even in the short term. Between 2012 and 2022, an estimated 12.5 million jobs will be opened up through people leaving the workforce and an additional 2 million new jobs will be created, yet only 7 million new younger people will enter the workforce to fill these jobs.¹⁻³ We need to change the world of work now, to encourage and enable people to continue working in to later life.

We need to take action now

The need to develop a long-term strategic approach to recruiting and retaining older workers is crucially important for businesses. In particular, industries with a higher proportion of workers aged over 50 – including public administration, education and health, agriculture, forestry and fishing⁴ – will need to adapt their practices quickly to ensure they can retain and recruit the older workers who are fundamental to their workforce.

In partnership with



The role that business and the next government must play

There has been a major public debate over recent months about working longer, not least following the excellent work of the Older Workers Business Champion, Ros Altmann. As the voice of responsible business, we have built on that debate.

Our call to action for government focusses on areas of policy where government can support employers to drive real change.

Our call to action for business is built on existing research, and drawn from the knowledge and experience of our business membership.

Recommendations for change

Recommendations for the next government:

- Better integrate health and social care services with employers and employment support services, which alongside enhanced statutory flexible working, will enable people to remain healthy in work for longer and later in life
- Legislate for a right to request flexible working prior to the commencement of a role, rather than after 26 weeks
- Implement a cross-government national skills strategy for older workers, including apprenticeships, IT skills training and adult learning support
- Introduce 5-10 days of paid care leave from paid employment and review potential of tax breaks to support families, to bring statutory support for carers on a par with that for parents

The comprehensive recommendations are available in the full report, *The Missing Million – Recommendations for Action*, at www.bitc.org.uk

Recommendations for business:

- Address barriers to the recruitment of older people, for example by ensuring everyone involved in recruitment receives unconscious bias training and through opening up apprenticeships to older workers
- Innovate on agile work and job design, tailored benefits and new models of career success
- Adapt training and development to the needs of an age-diverse workforce
- Train line managers to provide the right support to people at all ages and career stages
- Introduce Mid Life Career Reviews and partner with other organisations to create more opportunities for greater personal fulfilment and social purpose at work
- Help people with disability to remain in work and carers to find a good work-life balance
- Harness the range of skills and perspectives that age diversity brings, for example by setting up intergenerational networks who share skills and perspectives

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References

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- 2 McNair et al. (2012) *Managing a Healthy Ageing Workforce: A National Business Imperative*. London: CIPD.
- 3 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (2013). *Employing older workers: An employer's guide to today's multi-generational workforce*. London: DWP
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