

“Invest in people’s health to make a success of future workforce”

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A global study by [BSI](#) has found that employee health and employer flexibility are key elements to harness a future age-diverse workforce. Evolving Together: Flourishing in the age-diverse workforce considers how businesses and policymakers can respond to demographic changes and enable individuals to thrive and organizations to grow in the future, exploring how today’s business leaders think people and businesses can succeed as [greater numbers work beyond the age of 65](#).

Alongside appetite for support for long-term health and for greater flexibility, it finds that businesses want government support to create the conditions needed to attract, train and retain age-diverse talent and experience – through tax benefits or other financial incentives. Asked to rank priorities for policy action business leaders backed tax breaks to encourage employers to invest in employee health and well-being along with financial incentives to encourage them to diversify the talent pool by recruiting older people or investing in retraining, and subsidies for employing workers of different ages (see Table 1). There was, however, limited appetite for governments to formally raise the retirement age (13/13) or legislate to prohibit age-discrimination (11/13).

Senior professionals from nine countries, spanning seven sectors, prioritized structural shifts in work – how, where and when work is done, the economic realities and career pathways, formal policies on leave – over a focus on workplace culture. While health, flexibility, remuneration, skills training and acknowledgement of caring responsibilities were top six priorities for individuals (see Table 2), being part of an inclusive culture and the provision of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) training were prioritized by less than a third of respondents globally.

Asked how businesses could make the age-diverse workforce a success, the same was true, indicating that

to future-proof their operations they should focus on delivering flexibility (1/14), followed by the provision of support around physical health, psychological and mental well-being (2/14), providing opportunities for retraining or returnships (3/14) and formal compassionate and personal leave policies (5/14). Workplace accessibility measures, training staff around diversity and inclusion (9/14), and age-blind recruitment policies (12/14) were all towards the bottom of the priority list (see Table 3).

Overall, responses were similar across markets and sectors, indicating that despite social and cultural differences workers globally have much in common, mostly a united focus on health and mental well-being, showing that working for longer will require a thoughtful, holistic approach to care.

There was some differentiation between groups. Women ranked creating an inclusive culture including training staff around diversity and inclusion a top five priority (5/14), compared to men who did not (9/14). French respondents placed greater value on delivery of smart cities and communities (5/13), while the built environment sector prioritized a public education or awareness campaign to break down stereotypes and encourage workplace participation at all ages (6/13).

With the AI transformation gathering pace, respondents identified the value of upskilling and training people in new tools as important. They ranked pivotal measures that could enable opportunity in the age-diverse workforce with a focus on providing opportunities for retraining people to new roles throughout their careers or supporting returnships (3/14), a focus on ensuring people remain challenged by their work and roles (4 /14). It suggests that there is a key opportunity to enable experienced workers to remain in the workforce for longer and flourish in the future workplace with skills maintenance and development.

Susan Taylor Martin, Chief Executive, BSI, said: “Our working world is changing. Organizations and policymakers have the opportunity to harness these changes to help more people thrive in a future age-diverse workforce. Business leaders around the world agree that investment in health and well-being is vital. So too is being agile and creative when it comes to flexibility, skills, training and recruitment. Putting people and their needs at the centre of change offers the potential to unlock long-term productivity gains by empowering experienced people to stay in the workforce. BSI is committed to being a partner on this journey to accelerate progress towards a future of work where everyone can flourish.”

Kate Field, Global Head Human and Social Sustainability, BSI said: “The opportunity for businesses and governments to prioritize their people by supporting improved physical health and psychological and mental wellbeing, is unmistakable. So too is the desire for greater flexibility; for work to fit into our lives rather than it being the other way round. In response to the pandemic, many organizations introduced flexible policies. Now is the opportunity to build upon them and make them work for the long-term. The research paints a picture that change is a critical yet exciting opportunity, making clear the need for collaboration across society to shape a future of work that meets the needs of us all, whatever age or stage we are at.”

Evolving Together: Flourishing in the age-diverse workforce can be downloaded [here](#).