

Extended working life – research about the conditions of employees and of the labour market



Foreword

Through the Riksdag Administration's Evaluation and Research Secretariat, the Committee on the Labour Market has produced a research-based background report on the conditions for extending working life. The focus of the report is on employees aged 55 and above. The background is the increasing life expectancy and ageing population, both of which have brought to the fore the question of how to acknowledge the benefits of an older workforce. The main questions are what are the physical and cognitive conditions for extending working life and what provision the labour market makes for recognising the benefits of an experienced workforce. The background material highlights the conditions on the basis of gender and different sectors in the labour market, as well as how the situation has developed to date and can be expected to develop. The Committee has previously highlighted these issues, for example, at a public seminar on experienced labour force in March 2013. The report was submitted in January 2014. It has been published in the Reports from the Riksdag series, 2013/14:RFR8 and may be downloaded from the Riksdag website www.riksdagen.se. This brochure is a summary of the report.

Summary

We live longer today. As a result, we can expect more pensioners and a greater number of years of retirement under the current pension system. In addition, the age of establishment on the labour market has risen, which means fewer working years and that the dependency burden on the population of working age is increasing.

Research findings agree that eyesight, hearing, muscle strength and memory etc. deteriorate with rising age. However, the change in these various functions varies greatly from person to person, and there are good opportunities for individuals to influence their own capacity. Many people therefore retain these capacities with rising age. The research shows that conditions for older people to continue to work are better today than for previous generations.

However, the labour market is not always adapted to taking advantage of employees over the age of 55. It could be better adapted to dealing with the conditions for continued employment, for example, by making changes to the working environment. Within this area, however, there are knowledge gaps regarding problems relating to specific professions. These concern, for example, what causes early retirement within certain professions, and what can be done to prevent problems in especially vulnerable parts of the labour market. More knowledge is also required concerning the mechanisms behind age discrimination.

The conclusions of established research within the field show that changes should be made at the levels of the individual, workplace and society in order to increase the participation of older people in the labour market. For the individual, it is, among other things, important to take advantage of possibilities for continuing professional development. Employees in the 55+ age-group should also pay attention to their health by listening to their bodies' signals. Employers need to create an environment where all employees can perform well according to their conditions and capabilities, regardless of age or gender. It may be necessary to develop age-awareness among the organisation's management, including knowledge of the ageing process and of conditions for a longer working life. An age-aware management focuses on individual capabilities.

At the societal level, it is important to influence attitudes to the 55+ workforce.

SVERIGES 
RIKSDAG 