

Barriers and facilitators to extending working lives – how do we design sustainable work?

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Outline



- Demographic Change in the EU
- Why do people leave work early?
- What do we mean by sustainable work?
- Tools available to identify issues – current advice in the UK
- Age Management – Concepts and definitions

Demographic Change



- Very well documented that we have an ageing population and it is essential to extend working lives.
- In the UK the number of workers over the age of 65 have increased from 425,000 in 1994 to 1.2 million in 2015
- In examining when people actually retire this has increased from 63.8 to 64.6 years for men and 61.2 years to 62.3 years for women since 2004.
- State pension age is increasing to 66 years by 2020 and to 68 years by 2044

Why do people leave work early?

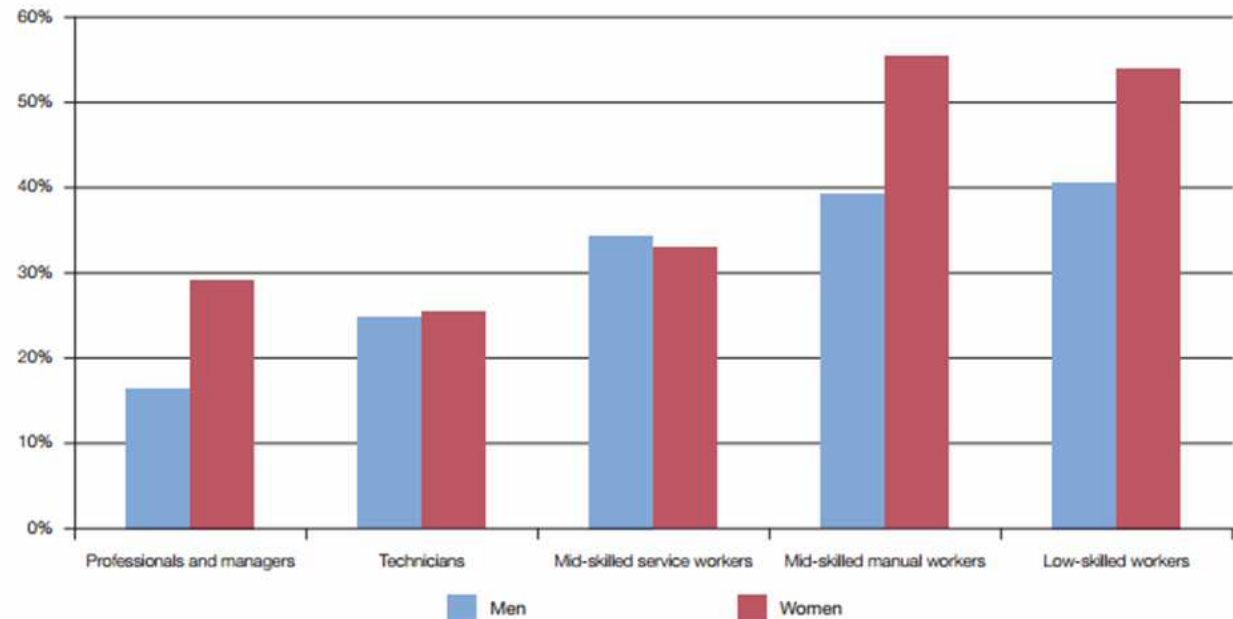


- We need to understand better why people don't (can't?) work to retirement or state pension age.
- A report from the UK Trade Unions Congress in 2016 identified that 12% of workers are unable to continue working due to poor health or disability.

Why do people leave work early?



Lets take a broader view across the EU, Eurofound (2012) identified that over a third of workers aged 50-54 thought they would be unable to do the same job at aged 60



Why do people leave work early?

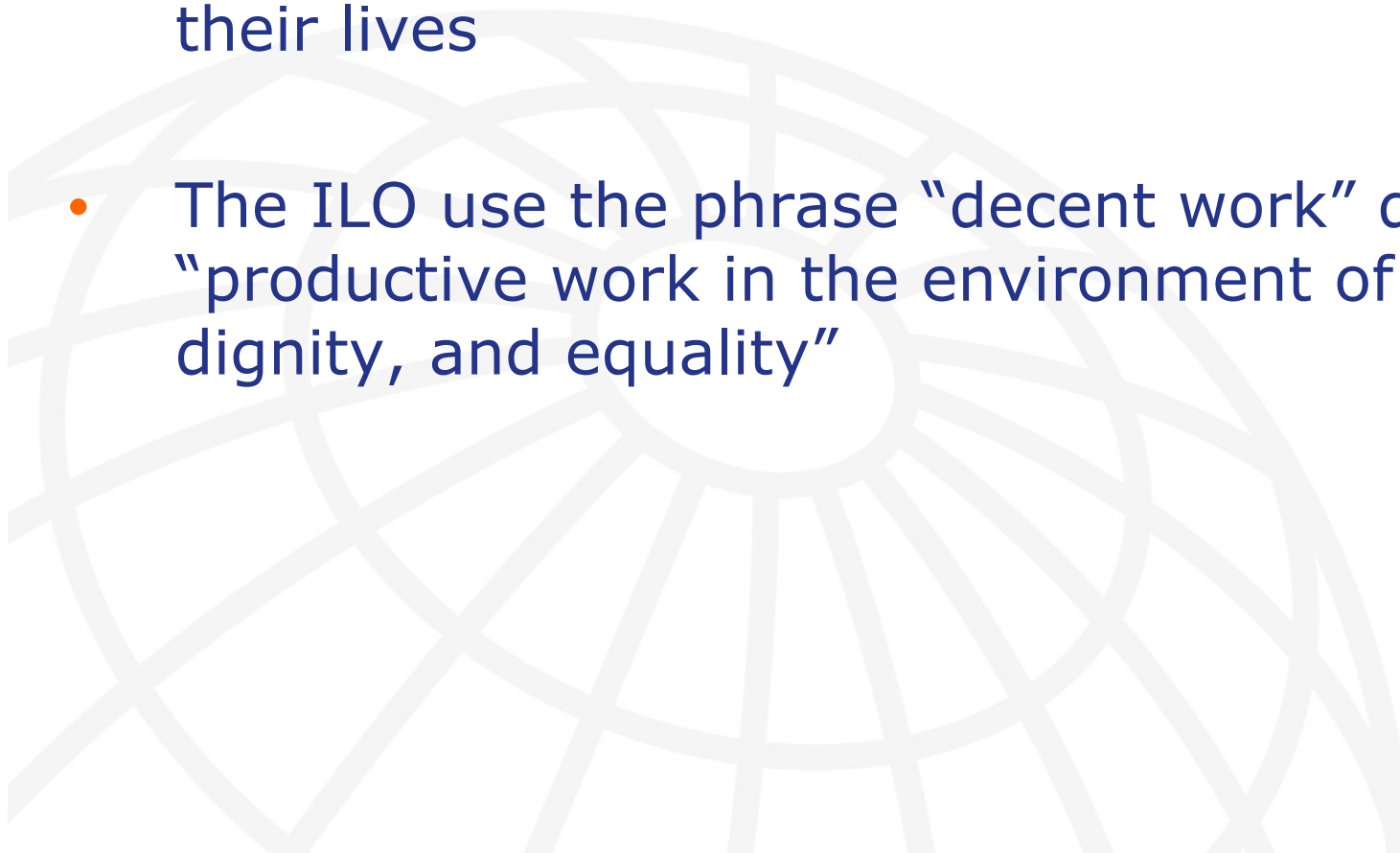


- In trying to improve our understanding of why people leave work early we need to understand
 - The health they bring to work
 - The impact of the work on health
 - What can exacerbate poor health in the workplace
 - What management and HR policies can help

What do we mean by sustainable work?



- Sustainable work is a concept defined by Eurofound as “achieving living and working conditions that enable people to engage and thrive in work over their lives”
- The ILO use the phrase “decent work” defined as “productive work in the environment of freedom, dignity, and equality”



What do we mean by sustainable work?

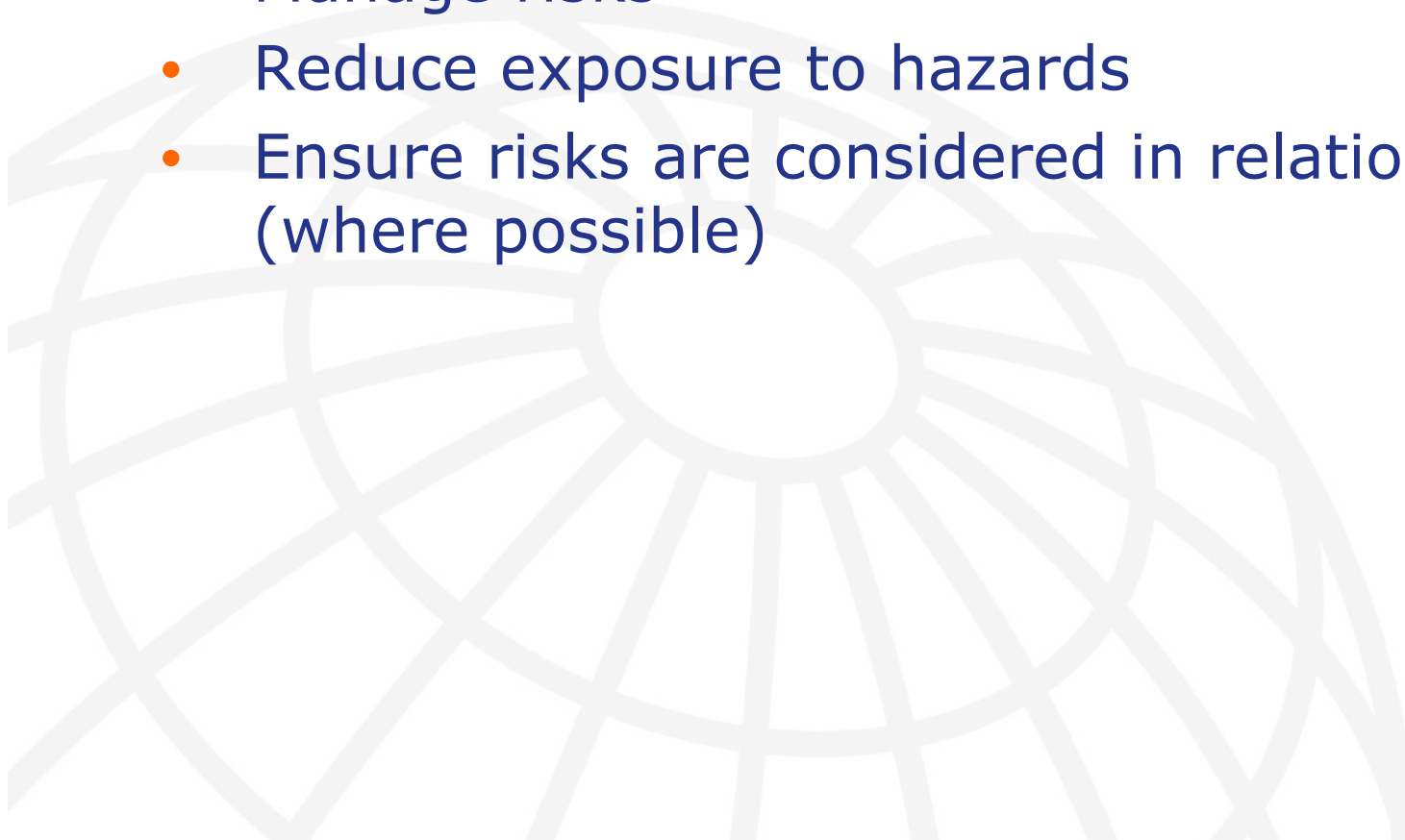


- Eurofound suggest the following are at the core of sustainable work
 - working conditions;
 - physical and psychological health;
 - the expressive dimension of work;
 - reconciliation of working and non-working time;
 - socioeconomic conditions

What do we mean by sustainable work?



- In relation to safety and health we need to consider how we
 - Manage risks
 - Reduce exposure to hazards
 - Ensure risks are considered in relation to age (where possible)



Tools available to identify issues



- There are a number of different models around in relation to age and work and possibly the most well known is the Work Ability Model
- The use of the Work Ability Index has allowed researchers and practitioners to identify where there are problems and how to reduce workplace problems

What do we do in the UK?



- Work ability has not become the accepted model in the UK, unlike Finland where it is part of occupational health practice.
- In the UK there has been the development of guidance by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)
- The development of the guidance highlighted the lack of an evidence base

UK NICE Guidance



- A number of factors were identified in the development of the UK guidance in relation to managing older workers including
 - recruiting managers with positive leadership traits
 - ensuring health and wellbeing policies are highlighted at induction and having a visible commitment to health and safety
 - developing and implementing workplace policies and procedures in line with statutory requirements, for example DSE and manual handling
 - mental wellbeing at work (the creation of a supportive environment and examining the demands, control, relationships and role of employees in the organisation).

Age Management



- Definition by Walker (1997) developed by others including (Naegele et al., 2006, The Age and Employment Network, 2007)
 - “The various dimensions by which human resources are managed within organisations with an explicit focus on ageing and, also, more generally, to the overall management of the workforce ageing via public policy or collective bargaining”

Age Management



- The eight dimensions of age management include:
 - job recruitment;
 - learning, training and lifelong learning;
 - career development;
 - flexible working time practices;
 - health protection and promotion, and workplace design;
 - redeployment;
 - employment exit and the transition to retirement;
 - comprehensive approaches covering the working life course.

What is our role in Age Management?



- Health protection and promotion, and workplace design
- The review by Buckle (2015) identified that the workplace can both help and hinder extension of working life. Key findings were:
 - both physical and psychological work demands frequently exacerbate existing conditions or lead to ill health
 - the use of risk assessments for those over 65 years lacks an evidence base.
 - The research on which the development of risk assessments or standards is based typically mostly included participants under the age of 50 years.

What we need to understand



- Extending working life is not dependent only on the health of the employee but is influenced by other factors including work ability, employability and caring responsibilities.
- A trans-disciplinary approach has the potential to identify the different influences on age and extending working life and to allow the development of better understanding of the pull and push factors.
- Age management can help us do this

What can we do



- We need build on current knowledge by collating more case studies and intervention studies and building evidence.
- This has been helped by the EU OSHA campaign “Healthy Workplaces for All Ages”
- As an ergonomist we need to apply ergonomic principles to develop good sustainable work.
 - Physical work demands
 - Mental work demands
- Ergonomics shouldn’t work in isolation but with our sister disciplines in occupational safety and health

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