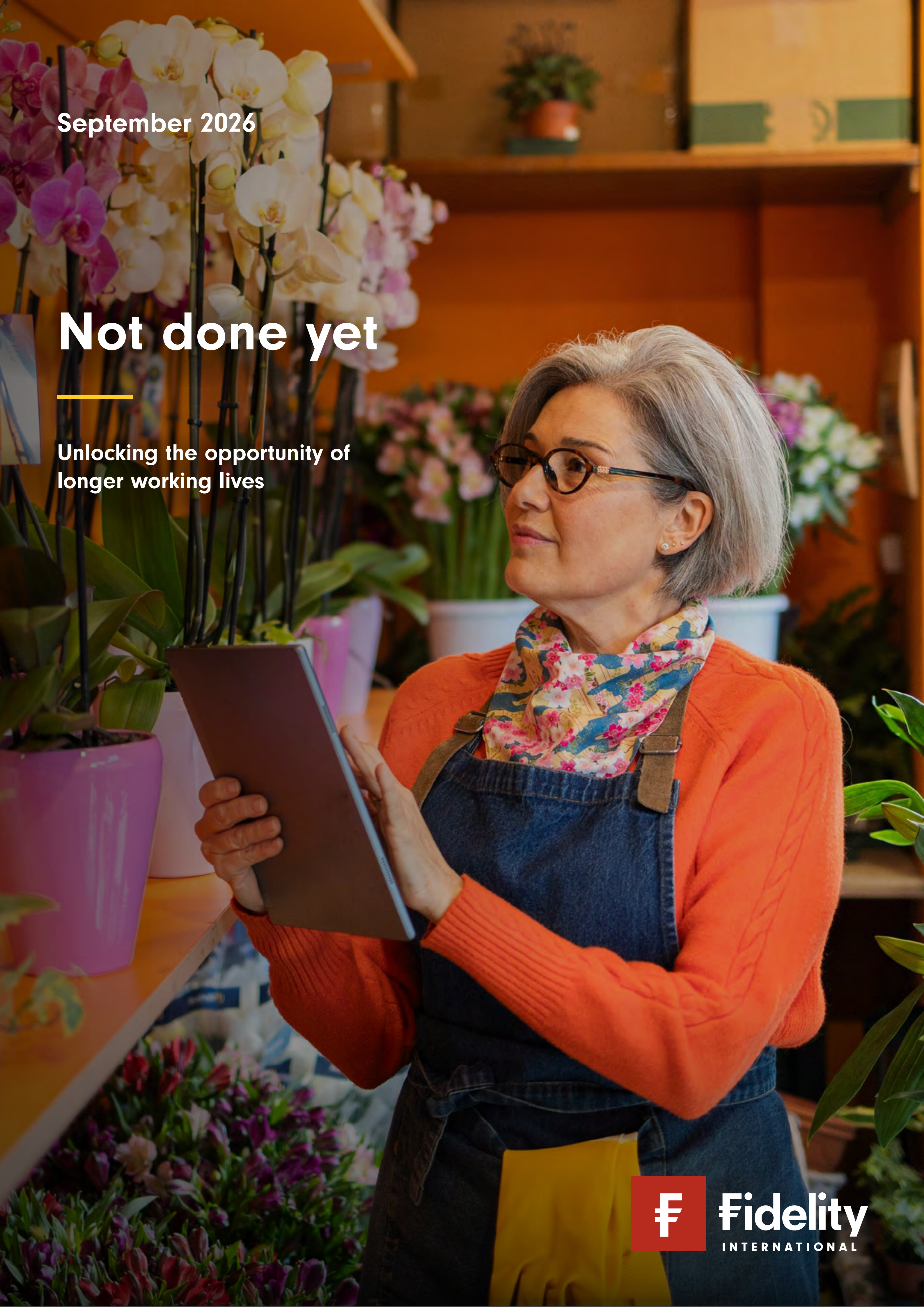
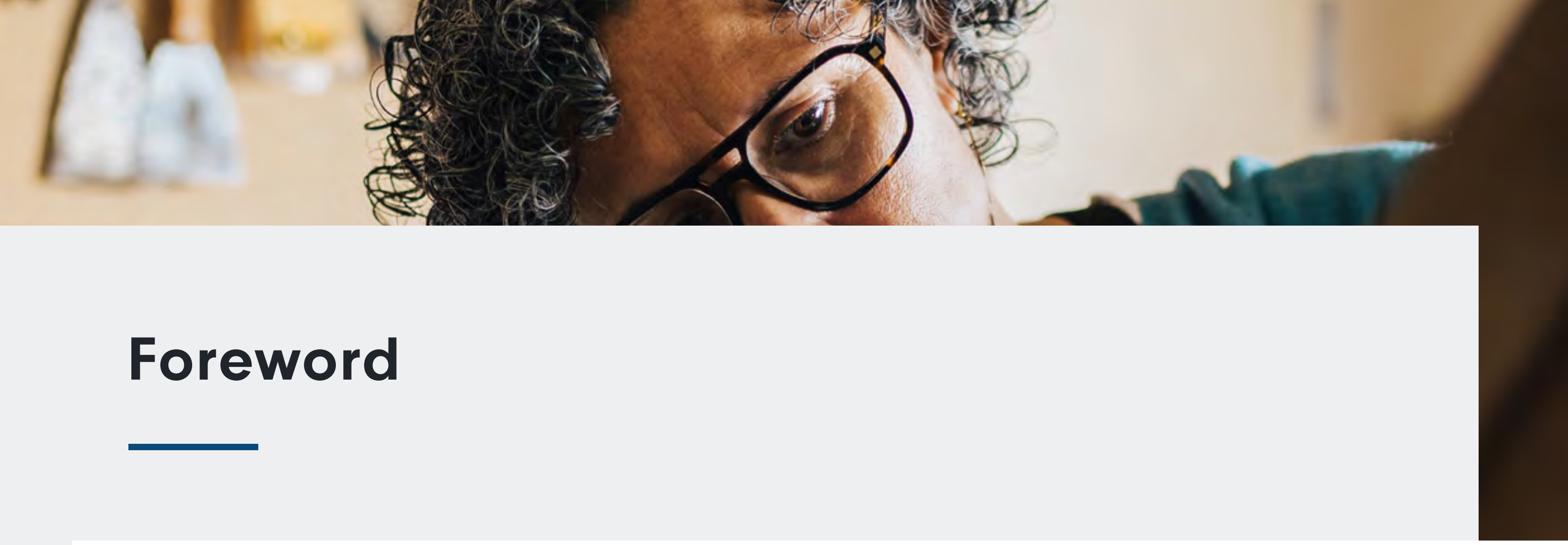
September 2026

Not done yet

Unlocking the opportunity of longer working lives



Fidelity International



Foreword

Samantha Ricciardi
Head of EMEA at
Fidelity International

Almost every retirement plan rests on one important assumption: that you'll be able to keep working until you choose to stop. Yet for millions of people, that assumption is proving increasingly fragile.

Across much of the developed world, people are living longer and State Pension Ages are rising. Many people will either need or want to work for longer. But the reality is many are leaving the workforce years earlier than they expected because of ill health, caring responsibilities, redundancy or other barriers. This can mean an early retirement they had not budgeted for and may not be able to afford.

At Fidelity International, our role is to help our customers build better financial futures. Often, that means preparing for retirement. But for every year someone leaves the workforce early, that's one less year of earning and saving into a pension, one less year of potential investment growth, and one extra year of retirement to fund.

This isn't simply a challenge for individuals. When an experienced worker leaves the workforce, it can mean employers lose colleagues with valuable knowledge, skills and relationships. Governments face growing pressure to support ageing populations while seeking to improve productivity and economic growth. And pension systems become harder to sustain when people spend fewer years contributing and more years drawing an income.

But this report is not about painting a bleak picture. It is about recognising an opportunity.

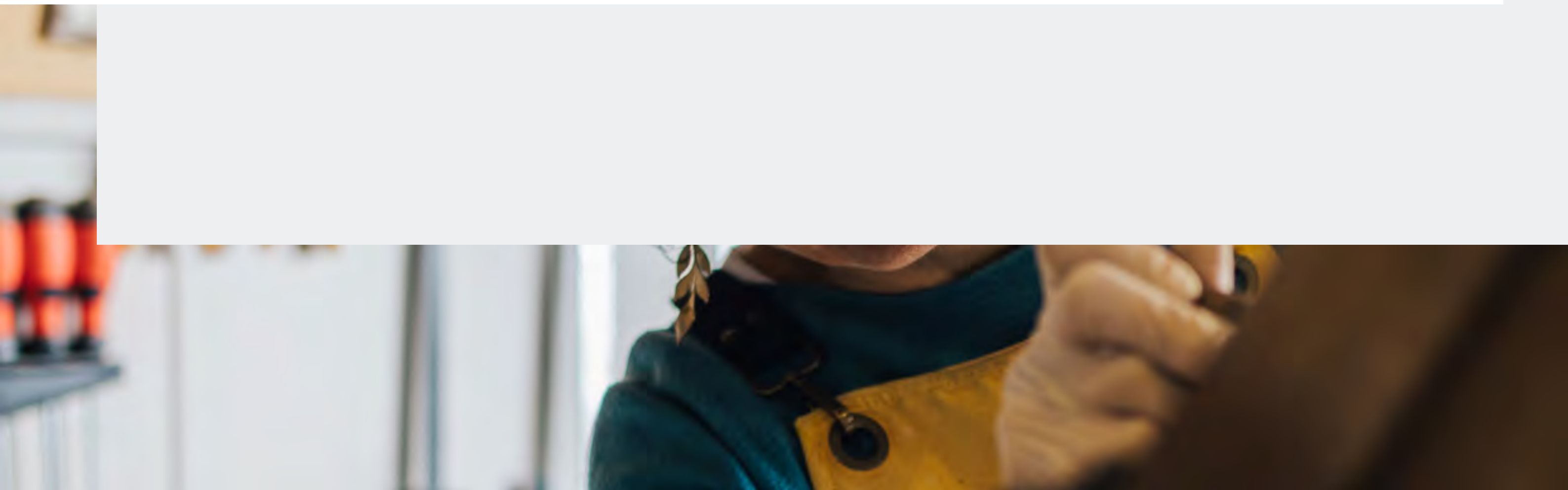
If more people who want to work for longer are able to do so – and in rewarding, fulfilling careers – the benefits could be substantial for individuals, employers and economies. That is why we created the Fidelity Longer Working Lives Index.

Our index compares how well the G7 nations support people to remain in work later in life. Rather than focusing solely on employment rates, it examines four important questions: can people continue working later in life, do they want to continue working, how many of them are actually in work, and, if they are working, are they able to do so in rewarding careers?

What we found is no country has fully solved this challenge. Some perform well because they support healthy, flexible working lives. Others because experienced workers are financially confident and feel they have more to give. Others because they create better opportunities for people to continue developing their careers. Every country has strengths, and every country has something to learn from the others.

Retirement security is about far more than building a bigger pension pot. It is about helping people to plan so they have greater choice and flexibility later in life. The more choice people have over how they earn, save and retire, the better their retirement outcomes are likely to be.

We hope this report helps deepen the conversation about longer working lives and what it means for the way people plan for retirement. Because the future of retirement is inseparable from the future of work. And because everyone who wants to continue contributing should have the opportunity to do so.



Executive summary

Introducing the Fidelity Longer Working Lives Index

The **Fidelity Longer Working Lives Index** compares how well the G7 countries support people aged 55 and over to remain in work.

Rather than looking solely at employment rates, the index considers four questions about the working lives of people aged 55 and over:

- **Can they work?** (Work Capability)
- **Do they want to work?** (Work Choice & Motivation)
- **Are they working?** (Participation in Work)
- **Are they in rewarding work?** (Work Quality)

Together, these provide a broader picture of how well countries enable people to remain in work later in life – and, crucially, whether they do so through choice or necessity.

Key findings

Our research highlights five key findings.

1. The UK ranks last overall

Among the G7 countries studied, the UK ranks last overall. It receives comparatively low scores on Work Choice & Motivation, Participation in Work and Work Quality. As a relative benchmark, however, these scores need to be considered alongside the underlying data.

The UK's particularly low score on Work Choice & Motivation is more directly reflected in the consumer data: UK over-55s report relatively low confidence in their retirement plans, while financial considerations feature prominently among the reasons they give for considering working longer.

2. No country has solved this challenge

While Italy and the US rank first and second overall, they achieve this in very different ways. The findings show there is no single blueprint for supporting longer working lives. Rather, each country offers different lessons that others can learn from.

3. Working longer should be a choice, not a necessity

One of the clearest findings from the research is that countries differ not only in whether people continue working later in life, but why. In the UK, many over-55s appear to be considering working longer because they are

uncertain whether they can afford to retire.

Helping people to feel more financially confident and prepared for retirement is therefore just as important as creating opportunities to remain in work.

4. Employment rates alone do not tell the full story

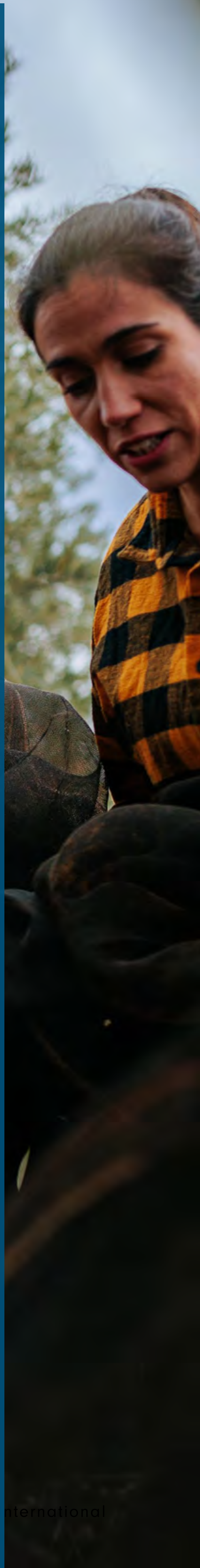
Japan has the highest employment rate among over-55s in the G7 yet only ranks fourth overall in our index because of low marks in many other areas. This illustrates that simply keeping more people in work is not enough. The quality of that work, opportunities for retraining, retirement preparedness, and job satisfaction all matter.

If we are going to have longer working lives, they should also be better working lives.

5. Supporting longer working lives could benefit everyone

Helping more people remain in work later in life is not solely about improving retirement outcomes.

Individuals can gain greater financial security and more flexibility over how and when they retire. Employers retain valuable skills, reduce recruitment costs and preserve organisational knowledge. Governments benefit from stronger labour market participation, higher productivity, more sustainable pension systems and a stronger tax base.



What does this mean?

Our findings suggest that helping people work for longer requires action from individuals, employers and policymakers alike.

Individuals need greater support to plan ahead, build resilient careers, and prepare financially for retirement.

Our 2025 research, the Longevity Revolution, demonstrated that one in three over-50s in the UK are underestimating how long their retirement savings need to last by at least a decade and many lack confidence in their retirement plans. The report also indicated that unpredictability around longer working lives may be a factor in these findings.

Employers have the opportunity to create workplaces where experienced workers can continue to develop, contribute and transition more flexibly into retirement as well as helping employees build the confidence to know how and when they can retire.

As for policymakers, the solutions will be different geography by geography. The UK, we believe, would benefit from a stable policy environment that recognises that retirement is a journey. However, the purpose of this report is not to provide a global blueprint but to share best practice and highlight areas for improvement.

About the Fidelity Longer Working Lives Index

For each of our four questions, we selected three key metrics to measure. Below are the metrics we chose, and sources used:

	Work Capability	Work Choice & Motivation	Participation in Work	Work Quality
	Can they work?	**Do they want to work?**	**Are they working?**	**Are they in rewarding work?**
Key metrics to measure and sources	Are they healthy enough to work? *Healthy Life Expectancy data from the World Health Organisation*	How financially prepared are they for retirement? *The Fidelity Global Sentiment Survey*	What proportion of this age group is in any form of employment? *Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*	How do earnings of full-time workers aged 55 to 64 compare with full-time workers of core working age? *OECD data*
	Do they have caring responsibilities that make it challenging to work? *The Fidelity Global Sentiment Survey**	How satisfied are they with their jobs compared with core working age adults? *The Fidelity Global Sentiment Survey*	How does unemployment among this cohort compare with unemployment among core working age adults? *OECD data*	What are their levels of participation in training relative to core working age adults? *OECD data*
	Do they have the flexibility they need to continue working? *The Fidelity Global Sentiment Survey*	Among those who are considering working into retirement, why is that? *The Fidelity Global Sentiment Survey*	Among those that are unemployed, what percentage have been so for more than a year, compared with core working age adults? *OECD data*	How many of this cohort are in involuntary part-time work (i.e. they want to be working full-time but can only find part-time work) compared with core working age adults? *OECD data*

The index focuses on people aged 55 and over because this period often marks the beginning of the transition towards retirement. Decisions made during these years – whether to remain in work, reduce hours, retrain or retire – can have a profound impact on long-term financial security.

For the economic indicators, we use OECD data covering people aged 55–64 rather than everyone aged 55 and over. We took this approach because the labour market experience of someone in their late 50s or early 60s is likely to be very different from that of someone in their 70s, many of whom will already have retired. For the consumer survey data, we look at all workers aged 55 and over.

At the same time, we recognise that there is no perfect age boundary. The experiences of someone aged 55 may be similar to those of someone in their early 50s, just as the experiences of someone aged 64 may differ considerably from those of someone aged 74.

In practice, the age ranges used in the index are largely determined by the availability of internationally comparable data. Using consistent age bands across all countries allows meaningful comparisons to be made.

Throughout this report, core working age refers to people aged 25–54 (or, for the consumer survey data: 20-54, given the available data). Where appropriate, we compare outcomes for our older cohort against this group to understand how the labour market experience of experienced workers differs from that of workers in their main working years.

The index is a relative benchmark and scores should not be interpreted as absolute measures of conditions for older workers. Some indicators measure outcomes for people aged 55–64 directly, while others compare their experience with that of people aged 25–54 in the same country. Those measures are then benchmarked across the G7.

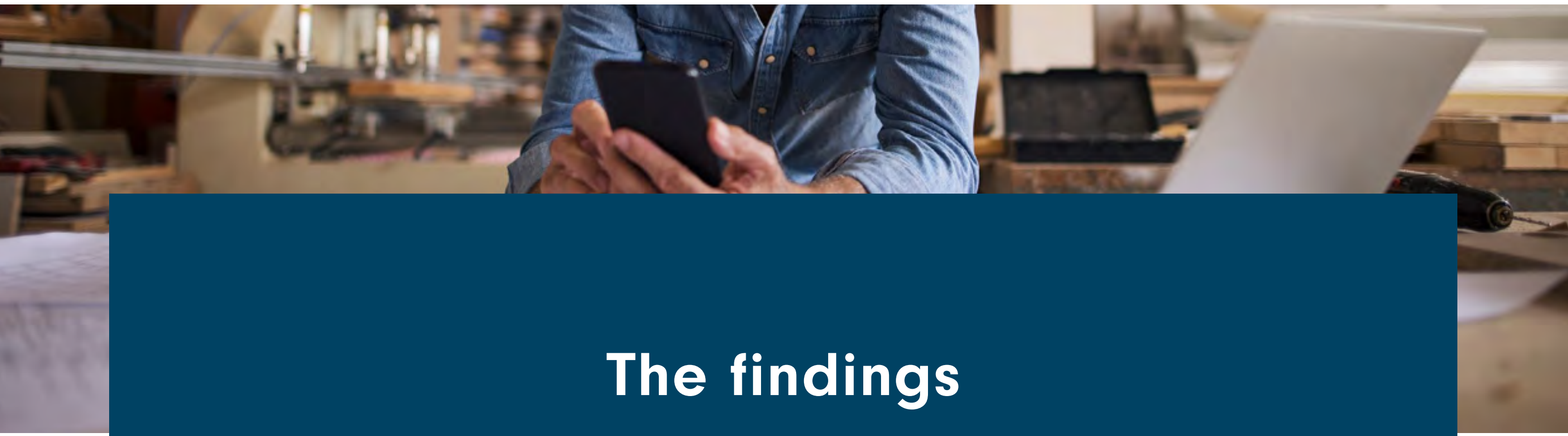
Deirdre Hughes PhD OBE specialises in careers, employment, and skills policies at international, national and regional levels. She is an Associate Professor at the University of Warwick's Institute for Employment Research and established research agency dmh associates in 2008. She is also co-founding Executive Director of CareerChatUK, a pioneering AI careers technology company. In 2012, she was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) by the late Queen Elizabeth II for services to lifelong career guidance.

A lower score can mean that older workers fare less well relative to younger workers than they do elsewhere in the G7, even where their outcomes are relatively positive in absolute terms. Throughout the findings, we therefore consider the underlying data alongside the index scores.

Each of the 12 indicators was normalised to create a score out of 100. The three indicators within each pillar were averaged to create the pillar score, and the four pillar scores were then averaged to produce each country's overall index score. Full methodological detail is provided in the Technical Appendix.

The index was developed by Fidelity with Associate Professor Deirdre Hughes OBE and Dr Chris Percy of dmh associates.

Chris Percy PhD is an economist and data scientist, specialising in careers transitions, careers interventions, economic development, and wellbeing. He has undertaken projects for the World Bank, the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, the International Labour Organisation and governments in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. Chris has honorary academic positions at the Universities of Warwick and Derby.



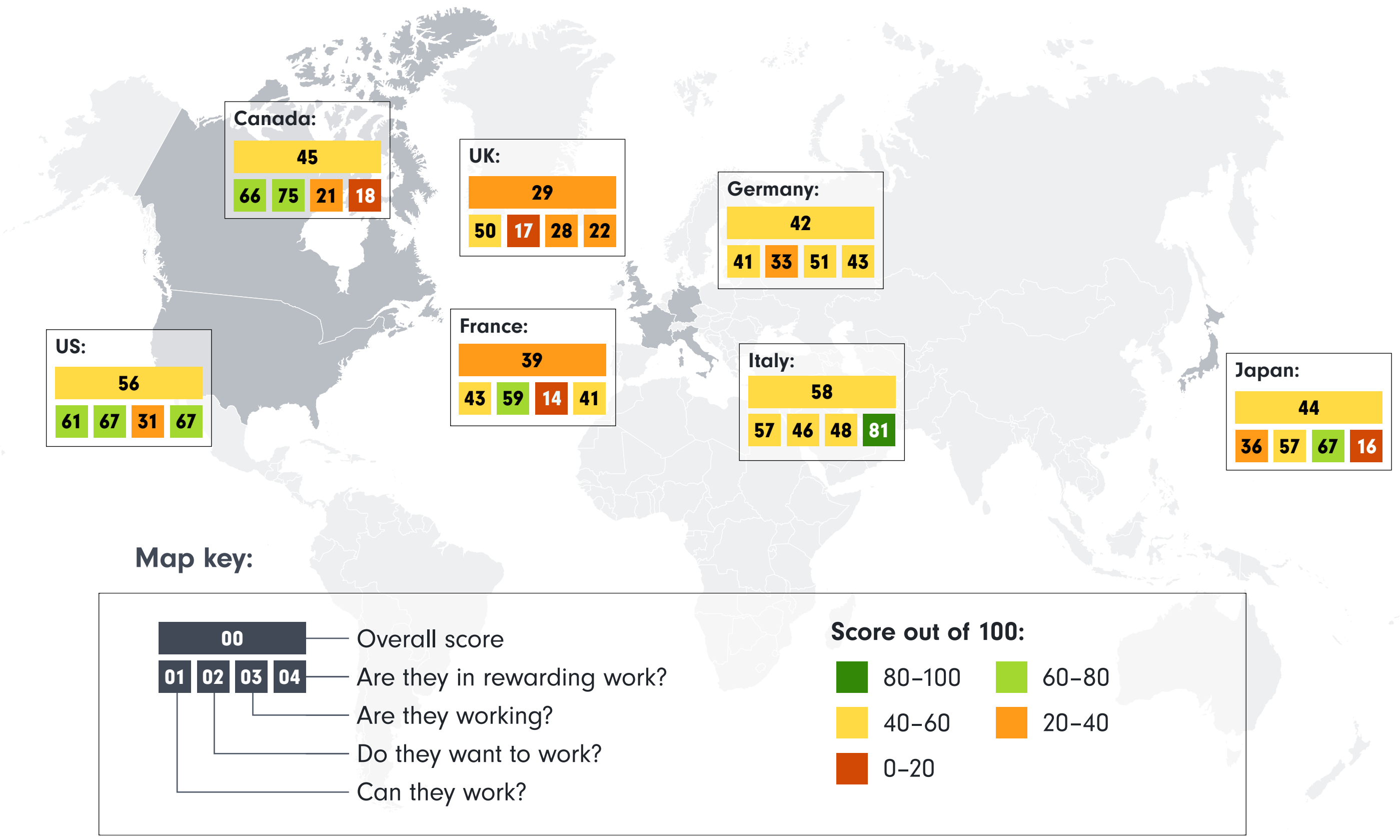
The findings

The Fidelity Longer Working Lives Index reveals significant differences in how well G7 countries support people aged 55 and over to remain in work.

Overall, Italy ranks first, followed by the US, Canada, Japan, Germany, France, and, finally, the UK. However, the overall rankings only tell part of the story.

Perhaps the most striking finding is that no country has found a perfect solution. The countries at the top of the rankings succeed for very different reasons, suggesting there is no single blueprint for supporting longer working lives. Similarly, countries scored poorly for different reasons.

The real value of the index therefore lies not simply in identifying which countries perform best, but in understanding what each can teach us.



Scores show relative performance within the seven G7 countries and should not be interpreted as absolute measures of performance.

The UK: working longer may not be a choice

The UK ranks last overall in the Fidelity Longer Working Lives Index, performing particularly poorly on Work Choice & Motivation. It scores 17 out of 100 on this pillar while Canada and the US achieve scores of 75 and 67 respectively.

Compared with the other G7 countries, a relatively high proportion of over-55s in the UK say they are considering working beyond retirement age for financial reasons rather than because they want to. Of those considering working longer in the UK, 37% say it is to get by in retirement while in the US just 29% of people give this answer.

They are also among the least confident in their retirement plans and their job satisfaction is low compared with younger workers. Almost a third (30%) of over-55s in the UK describe their retirement planning as "poor" compared with 12% in the US and 13% in Canada.

As our Longevity Revolution report found, the UK was the only country where worries around short-term changes in government policy were the number one concern for both those approaching and those already in retirement.

Taken together, these findings suggest that many experienced workers in the UK may feel less certain as to their retirement choices, and less confident that the choices they have made will enable them to achieve the financial future they want. This can create a situation where some feel they have less choice over when they retire than their counterparts elsewhere in the G7.

Of those considering working longer in the UK, 37% say it is to get by in retirement while in the US just 29% of people give this answer.

However, these findings should be interpreted in the context of the UK's wider pensions and labour market landscape.

It is important to recognise that today's over-55s represent something of a transitional generation. For example:

- Today's 55–64-year-olds entered the workforce long before automatic enrolment was introduced and therefore did not benefit from it for much of their careers.
- Many also experienced the transition away from the widespread private-sector defined benefit (final salary) pensions enjoyed by many previous generations.

Since its introduction in 2012, automatic enrolment has significantly increased participation in workplace pension saving and is widely regarded as a major policy success in strengthening retirement saving for future generations. However, the positive impact of automatic enrolment will be felt most strongly by younger generations who will benefit from it throughout their working lives.

The index also highlights that the challenge extends beyond pension provision alone. The UK's overall score reflects a much broader set of factors, including health, caring responsibilities, workplace flexibility, labour market participation, training opportunities and job quality, alongside financial preparedness for retirement.

Against that broader backdrop, the UK also performs poorly on Participation in Work and Work Quality, ranking fifth out of the G7 on both.

The unemployment rate among 55–64-year-olds in the UK is relatively low at 3.2%, and slightly below the 3.5% rate among those aged 25–54. However, the gap between the two age groups is much narrower than in some other G7 countries. As the index measures the relative unemployment experience of older workers compared with those aged 25–54, this results in the UK receiving a weaker score on this measure.

On incomes, UK workers aged 55–64 earn on average 2% less than those aged 25–54. By contrast, in every other G7 country apart from Canada, experienced workers earn as much as or more than the younger comparison group.

Across every G7 country, employed workers aged 55–64 were less likely than those aged 25–54 to have participated in job-related training in the period measured. However, in the UK, the gap was particularly large (approximately 43% versus 57%), hence why the UK scored fifth in the G7 on this measure.

A different challenge from youth unemployment

Unemployment among people aged 55–64 should be seen in context. In the UK, the unemployment rate for this group is considerably lower than the rate among young people aged 16–24.

The challenges facing the two groups are different. Our index is not intended to suggest that older workers are more likely to be unemployed than young people. Rather, it explores the particular barriers people can face towards the end of their working lives, and the consequences if they leave work earlier than planned.

Italy: top score but complex picture

Although Italy scores top in our index, it actually has the lowest employment rate for 55–64-year-olds in the G7. Just 61% of this cohort are in work in Italy. However, just because someone is out of work does not necessarily mean they are looking for work.

Unemployment among this group is low compared with younger workers: 3.6% versus 6.1%. This is partly because unemployment rates are relatively high across the workforce as a whole.

Italy's strongest performance is on Work Quality (scoring 81). It has the best earnings compared with younger workers in the G7, with those aged 55–64 earning 19% more than those aged 25–54.

Their participation in training is only a fraction lower than for the younger cohorts and they are less likely than younger Italians to be working part-time when they want full-time work.

As with the unemployment figures, these findings do not give the whole picture. While Italy scores well on involuntary part-time work relative to younger workers, this is because instances of involuntary part-time work among young people in Italy are by far the highest in the G7 (at 6.3%).

Therefore, while Italy ranks first in our index, it has not necessarily solved the challenge of how to support more experienced workers to remain in employment.

This report does not examine the historical and social factors that may influence these patterns in Italy, including historic early retirement pathways, labour market regulation and cultural norms around family caregiving. These factors may also have an important bearing on the statistics described.

The US: financial confidence can support choice

The US tells a different story. Its greatest strengths are Work Choice & Motivation and Work Quality, ranking second with scores of 67 in both.

Over-55s are more financially confident about their retirements than in any other G7 country and the least likely to say they would continue working because they need the income.

On Work Quality, over-55s in the US have the highest level of participation in training in the G7 (at 57% this is only slightly behind younger cohorts), and low levels of involuntary part-time work. Just 0.2% of over-55s in the US are having to work part-time when they want to work full-time – the lowest rate in the G7.

Canada: strong foundations, mixed labour market outcomes

Canada ranks first on Work Capability and second on Work Choice & Motivation, with scores of 66 and 75 respectively. Over-55s appear relatively healthy, financially prepared, and satisfied with their work.

Yet these strengths are not matched by equally strong scores on Participation in Work and Work Quality. Canada's unemployment rate among 55–64-year-olds is the highest for that age group in the G7, at 5.6%. However, it remains slightly below the 5.8% rate among Canadians aged 25–54. Canada's relatively weak index score on this measure reflects the fact that the older-worker advantage is much smaller than in several other G7 countries.

What's more, it is the only other country besides the UK where this age group earns less on average than 25–54-year-olds. Workers aged 55–64 earn around 1% less than those aged 25–54.

Finally, over-55s are just as likely as younger workers in Canada to be working part-time involuntarily, whereas in the US, Japan, Italy and the UK they are less likely than younger workers to do so.

High employment rates for over-55s do not necessarily translate into high overall index scores

	Employment rate for those aged 55–64
Canada	64%
France	62%
Germany	76%
Italy	61%
Japan	80%
UK	66%
US	64%

Japan: employment only tells part of the story

Japan demonstrates that high employment rates do not necessarily translate into strong performance across every aspect of longer working lives.

With 80% of 55–64-year-olds in work, it has the highest employment rate for this cohort in the G7 and scores best on healthy life expectancy. Yet its overall score is dragged down by weaker marks for Work Quality and Work Capability.

Over-55s in Japan are the least likely in the G7 to be participating in training

Japan ranks towards the bottom of the G7 on several measures in the index, although the underlying data reveal a more nuanced picture.

- Employment flexibility: Japan scores lowest among the G7 for the workplace flexibility reported by over-55s.
- Unemployment: Japan ranks last on our relative unemployment measure. Unemployment among 55–64-year-olds is very low at around 2.5%, but it is also virtually identical to the rate among 25–54-year-olds. Japan's low index score reflects the fact that older workers have less of an unemployment advantage over younger workers than in several other G7 countries.
- Training: Over-55s in Japan are the least likely in the G7 to be participating in training and there is a sizeable training gap relative to younger cohorts.
- Retirement planning: Over-55s in Japan report relatively low confidence in their retirement plans compared with respondents in other G7 countries.

It also had below average scores for involuntary part-time work and earnings, which compare outcomes for 55–64-year-olds with those for 25–54-year-olds.

These findings should be considered in the context of Japan's employment system, which includes mandatory retirement and re-employment arrangements.

Although employers must provide workers who wish to continue working with an opportunity to remain employed until age 65, they are not required to offer the same role, pay or employment terms. This may be one factor contributing to why Japan combines high employment among older workers with comparatively weaker scores on some measures of Work Quality.

Germany: high participation, financial pressures

Germany performs strongly on Participation in Work, ranking second only to Japan on employment. Almost three-quarters (76%) of 55–64-year-olds in Germany are in work – a full 10 percentage points ahead of the next best country. At 2.6%, it also has the second-lowest unemployment rate for this age group.

However, it performs less well on Work Choice & Motivation. German workers are more likely than those in any other G7 country to consider working beyond retirement age for financial reasons: almost two in five (39%) of those who are considering working for longer give this reason.

In addition, Germany scores bottom on involuntary part-time work compared with younger workers. Alongside France, it is one of only two G7 countries where 55–64-year-olds are more likely to be involuntarily working part-time than 25–54-year-olds.

France: lower participation but potentially greater choice

France ranks last on Participation in Work, but the underlying data reveal a more nuanced picture.

Just 62% of 55–64-year-olds are in employment in France, the second-lowest rate in the G7. However, unemployment among this age group is not particularly high relative to younger workers: around 5.2% of 55–64-year-olds in the labour force are unemployed, compared with approximately 6.5% of those aged 25–54.

Where France does stand out is long-term unemployment. Among 55–64-year-olds who are unemployed, around 44% have been out of work for more than a year, compared with around a quarter of unemployed 25–54-year-olds. This suggests that, while older workers are not more likely to be unemployed overall, those who do become unemployed may face greater difficulty returning to work.

France performs more strongly on several other measures. It ranks third for both job satisfaction among older workers relative to younger workers and confidence in retirement plans. Older workers also maintain relatively strong earnings: full-time workers aged 55–64 earn on average around 17% more than those aged 25–54.

These findings demonstrate why employment rates alone do not tell the full story. France combines relatively low employment among 55–64-year-olds with comparatively strong retirement confidence and earnings among those who remain in work, while long-term unemployment can present a particular challenge for those who lose their jobs.

These findings should also be considered in the context of France's wider retirement system. France has historically enabled people to access their state pension at a younger age than many comparable countries, although recent reforms are gradually increasing the minimum retirement age.

“I was a six-figure earner. In my 50s, I ended up at the Jobcentre”

By Stacey Duguid,
Founder of Encore, a community for women aged 45+ struggling to find work

I’ll never forget the day in 2005 when the Editor in Chief of ELLE magazine, aka my boss, told me to meet her in the boardroom for “a chat about pensions”. At age 31, the words, “It’s time to start planning”, were only ever applied to a massive night out. Needless to say: I ignored the conversation.

Back then, my earnings barely covered my mortgage and bills. I grew up in a northern, working-class family where financial literacy wasn’t a thing and conversations about money were generally limited to “there is none”. I wasn’t taught how to save or plan for the future.

I had my first child in 2011, and a second in 2013, after which I quit ELLE because it made no sense that the nanny earned more than me. Auto-enrolment into workplace pensions, which began in 2012, was therefore of little benefit to me, and for several years I worked as a freelance journalist.

I only started saving into a pension in 2018, when, aged 44, I took a job as Editorial Director at Harrods. I earned a six-figure salary plus bonuses and could finally begin to save for my future. A year later, I split from my husband. Then, in 2021, I was made redundant.

I managed to quickly carve out a ‘portfolio career’: I wrote a book, wrote a column for the Telegraph, and charged a lot of money for my fashion expertise. But I fell out of the safety net of a workplace pension.

When a contract ended in March 2025, I did what I’ve always done: rewrote and rejigged my CV and began preparing for the next job. Except, since I’d last needed to send out a CV, the jobs market had become unrecognisable.

As the months passed, I lost count of the jobs I’d applied for. Applications disappeared into the ether, often without even an automated response. I began to wonder whether a human eye had ever glanced at my CV. What was going on?

Filled with crippling shame, a month before my 52nd birthday, I swallowed my pride and logged onto the Universal Credit website. Telling the young man all about my career at Prada, Armani, ELLE Magazine, NET-A-PORTER, Harrods, and The Telegraph, I’m not sure if it was him or me that felt the most disbelief that I’d ended up at the Jobcentre. “We can see your last tax bill was over £40,000,” they said. For some reason, their knowing I was once a high earner made me feel less pathetic.

In the days that followed the Jobcentre meeting, the crippling shame turned into something different. Why hadn't I even received auto-replies? Why hadn't I been given the opportunity to speak to a human? Why did I have to go through endless AI interviews with a bot? As feelings of shame evaporated, something far more effective replaced it: anger.

"Anyone else struggling to find work in midlife?" were the words I posted to Instagram one day in late June. "Anyone else been told to remove their age and botox their CV?" What happened next came as a complete and utter shock.

Thousands of women responded with their own stories of struggling to find work in midlife: 11,000 messages landed in my inbox overnight. Many questioned whether automated recruitment processes could be contributing to the problem, forwarding research that raised concerns about the potential for AI recruitment tools to reproduce existing biases.

Just like me, these women were filled with shame and hadn't spoken about their financial insecurities with friends or family. Like me, they had nobody to talk to, so I quickly set up Encore, a community space for midlife women to network and share their stories. The Encore community is thriving and already has over 1,000 members. I wish I could say the same for my pension pot.

Regrets aside, the facts remain: I have less than £30,000 in my private pension and, under current rules, I won't receive my State Pension until 67.

As for future savings, well, I'm blindsided by the fact that I've been unable to find work for the past eighteen months. Coming to terms with the idea that I may never secure a 'big' job again feels like a wasted opportunity. Calmer, clearer, with no young kids, like so many women my age, I've finally reached a point in my life when I have so much to give.

Thousands of women responded with their own stories of struggling to find work in midlife: 11,000 messages landed in my inbox overnight.

Your pension isn't your only retirement strategy. Your employability is too.

By Lucy Standing,
Founder of Brave Starts

Brave Starts is a non-profit helping experienced professionals build longer, more sustainable working lives.

For decades we've encouraged people to invest for their retirement. In a world of longer working lives, we also need to invest in our employability.

Many people imagine retirement as a date they will choose. Increasingly, it isn't. The good news is that employability isn't something you either have or don't have. It's an asset that can be built.

Through Brave Starts we've found the biggest risk to our careers isn't our age. It's believing:

- The recruitment market is waiting for you.
- Your next role has to match the salary or status of your last one.
- Your job title is your value.

Ageism is real, but it isn't insurmountable. There are practical things we can all do to improve our employability.

So where should you invest your time?

1. **Keep learning.** I was recently asked by someone in a large public sector organisation why they kept losing out on internal promotions to external candidates. My answer was simple: become the external candidate. What are you bringing that your organisation can't already find internally? The World Economic Forum estimates that by 2030, almost 60% of today's workforce will require retraining. Employers increasingly hire for skills they don't already have. Learning has never been more accessible. Don't wait for your employer to develop you: you need to develop yourself.

2. **Create career optionality.** One of the biggest shifts we see at Brave Starts is that people stop searching for one perfect job and start designing a more interesting working life. They combine employed work with consulting, mentoring, teaching, volunteering or retraining for an entirely new profession. The result isn't just additional income. It's greater variety, resilience and purpose. If one source of work changes, another continues to grow. The future belongs to people with options.

3. **Redefine your value.** Experienced professionals often describe themselves by their job title or years of service, when, in actual fact, their greatest assets usually lie elsewhere: the trust they've earned, the breadth of their networks, their judgement, resilience and ability to solve complex problems. Experience matters, but people don't buy years. They buy solutions to today's

problems and this needs to be articulated as such. Your 'value proposition' if you will.

4. **Think in experiments, not life-changing decisions.** Successful transitions are rarely one step. They're built through a series of small experiments: a project, a conversation, a new qualification or a day a week exploring something new. Confidence rarely comes before action. It grows because we've taken the first step.

5. **Don't do it alone.** One of the strongest predictors of success we see isn't talent. It's community. Behavioural science consistently shows that change is easier when we attempt it alongside others rather than alone. The members who make the greatest progress stay connected. They share ideas, ask for help, support others and remain accountable. Reinvention can feel lonely, but it rarely succeeds in isolation.

Longer lives demand a different approach to retirement planning. Financial resilience and career resilience shouldn't be separate conversations - they are deeply connected.

The best time to invest in your pension was years ago. The best time to invest in your employability is today.

Why supporting experienced workers does not come at the cost of younger ones

By Associate Professor Deirdre Hughes OBE

With millions of young people out of work across much of the G7, some might question whether now is the time to focus attention on supporting those at the other end of their working lives.

Surely, the argument goes, by helping the over-55s to stay in the world of work, we are blocking younger people from entering it?

Economists call this the “lump of labour fallacy” – the idea there is only a finite amount of work to be done in the world and therefore that, by supporting one cohort into jobs, you take jobs away from another.

However, the lump of labour fallacy is not supported by wider economic evidence. Economies grow by increasing the number of people in work, by improving productivity, or both. As businesses expand and become more productive, they create new jobs rather than simply redistributing existing ones. What’s more, younger and older workers typically fulfil different roles in the labour market.

According to the OECD, research has “clearly dismissed the idea that older workers crowd out younger ones in employment”.[1] The organisation actually found a positive correlation between employment rates of older and younger workers in its member countries.[2] It concluded: “There is no evidence that workforce ageing has influenced opportunities of younger workers for moving up the job ladder.”

Rather than competing for a fixed number of jobs, younger and older workers often complement one another. Experienced workers transfer knowledge, mentor colleagues and strengthen productivity, while younger workers bring new ideas and skills.

As for skills and training, the answer is not simply to extend to adults what young people already receive. Provision for the young has itself been patchy and under-resourced in this country and many others. We are not scaling a success. Worse, the two are too often set against each other as claims on one limited pot. The evidence runs the other way, and all-age careers support is not a choice between generations. It is an urgent social and economic imperative.

My guiding principle throughout my career has been a straightforward one: that no one should be left behind in their search for meaningful learning and work. Across a fifty-year working life, that is a demanding standard. It is also the right one.

1 Reviving growth in a time of workforce ageing: The role of job mobility: OECD Employment Outlook 2025 | OECD

2 Promoting an Age-Inclusive Workforce (EN)

Turning insight into action

The index highlights some striking differences between the G7 countries, but understanding precisely what drives those differences would require much deeper analysis of each country's labour market, pension system and wider policy environment.

For the UK, however – where Fidelity supports 1.7 million savers through our platforms business – we believe the findings point towards two important themes.

1. **Help people plan earlier – and plan for the unexpected**

Many people delay focusing on saving for retirement until their 50s and 60s, assuming these will be their highest-earning years. Yet a job loss or drop in earnings can easily derail those plans.

That makes planning earlier particularly important. Fidelity believes that starting early is the single most important rule for achieving a comfortable retirement, enabling individuals to leverage the benefits of compound growth.

Building robust plans with contingencies for challenges such as ill health or job loss is also crucial. This can give people greater financial resilience and, ultimately, more choice over how and when they retire. All this is particularly relevant given the UK's performance on Work Choice & Motivation in our index.

Our research highlights another part of the equation: whether people can continue earning and saving for as long as they had planned.

This suggests that conversations around retirement should not begin and end with pension contributions. Career resilience, skills, employability and planning for unexpected changes in working life can all influence people's eventual retirement outcomes.

2. **Support more flexible transitions between work and retirement**

The traditional model of spending most of a career in full-time work before retiring on a single date does not reflect everyone's experience.

For some people, later working life might involve reducing their hours, changing careers, moving into a less demanding role, setting up their own business, or combining part-time work with drawing some retirement income.

Retirement systems should recognise these different journeys and give people greater flexibility over how they move between work and retirement.

What does this mean in practice?

There is no single solution. Individuals, employers, the pensions industry, and policymakers all have a role to play.

For individuals: plan before you have to

We believe retirement is a journey that should start with your first paycheque. Starting to plan sooner can help people understand whether they are on track and build greater resilience into their plans if life takes an unexpected turn.

Career planning matters too. Continuing to develop skills, maintaining professional networks and considering how a career might evolve can help people remain adaptable throughout a longer working life. The aim is not to predict every possible setback, but to build greater financial and career resilience before it is needed.

For employers and the pensions industry: help people see what comes next

Employers have an important role to play in helping employees remain engaged and productive throughout their careers, but also in helping them build confidence about how and when they might eventually retire.

Financial wellbeing support can be particularly valuable here. Giving people opportunities to understand their retirement position and explore their options can help them make informed decisions earlier rather than waiting until retirement is imminent.

At Fidelity, we are investing in tools and services designed to support this. Plan for Life helps workplace pension members build a personalised financial plan, bringing together their goals and finances to help them understand where they are today and the steps they could consider next. Our financial coaching service complements this by giving members access to one-to-one support to help them engage with their finances and turn those plans into action.

There is an opportunity for employers and providers to connect people with wider sources of support. The Government's Midlife MOT, for example, is designed to help people take stock of their work, wealth and wellbeing in midlife. We believe more can be done across the industry to raise awareness of services like this and help people find relevant support when they need it.

Employers can also consider how workplace flexibility, career development and phased retirement can help experienced employees continue contributing while giving them greater choice over how they eventually transition out of work.

For policymakers: create a stable, predictable policy environment that recognises that retirement is a journey

The UK government should introduce proportionate guardrails around pensions policymaking so individuals can plan for longer working lives and flexible retirement transitions with greater confidence. This should include clearer pre-Budget communications discipline, confirmation that material pensions changes will not normally take immediate effect, and a medium-term pensions tax roadmap.

Over time, government should consider independent policy-certainty assessments for major reforms and a standing pensions policy commission to support evidence-led, cross-party consensus.

The approach to policy should reflect modern retirement as a phased journey rather than a single event. For example, Guided Retirement should establish outcome-focused principles, consumer protections and governance standards rather than prescribe today's products. It should support consumers who retire gradually, continue working later in life, access pension savings in stages, or revise decisions as circumstances change.

Defaults, coaching, guidance, Targeted Support and regulated advice should be designed as complementary layers of support that help consumers make high-stakes decisions without assuming a single retirement date.

Technical Appendix

Method

The objective of this work was to develop an international index to measure employability transitions and outcomes for workers aged 55 and over.

Data availability varies widely by topic and country. The index method has been designed around metrics available for the G7 countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, and US. Our data scope incorporates publicly available metrics and survey data of working individuals[1] provided by Fidelity International. With inter-country comparison a priority, we chose survey questions that were consistent across all countries and chose public metrics from high-quality international comparative datasets (primarily the ILO and OECD), seeking data from national sources only by exception.

The draft metrics and aggregation methods were shared and reviewed by six international experts, whose feedback is incorporated in the Index reported in this appendix:

- Professor Emerita Jane Goodman, a Vice-President of the IAEVG and Professor Emerita of Counseling in the Department of Counseling, School of Education and Human Services, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan, US.
- Professor Nobutaka Ishiyama, Hosei University, Tokyo, Japan.
- Brandon Lee and Seah Lee, national experts for Singapore, with experienced roles at Workforce and Skills Singapore (WSSG).
- Professor Laura Nota, Professor of Career Construction and Career Counseling and Psychological Counseling for the Inclusion of Social Disadvantage at the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology, University of Padova, Italy
- Professor Peter Robertson, Professor in Career Development at Napier University, Edinburgh.
- Lisa Taylor, Founder & CEO, Challenge Factory, Inc., an Associate at the National Institute on Ageing (Canada) and an Advisor to the Center on Longevity Leadership (Lisbon).

The available data do not cover all topics that a Longer Working Lives Index might ideally cover but can support useful commentary on provision and represent an improvement on existing indices[2]. Pre-existing indices had relatively weak coverage of employment flexibility, health factors and caring responsibilities, as well as measures of work motivation and satisfaction. The experts' feedback was particularly valuable in identifying aspects of longer working lives that are not yet captured in the available metrics.

We prioritised three metrics in each of four topics to explore a broader view of working lives among those aged 55 and over, beyond looking solely at employment rates:

- **Can they work?** (Work Capability)
- **Do they want to work?** (Work Choice & Motivation)
- **Are they working?** (Participation in Work)
- **Are they in rewarding work?** (Work Quality)

For ease of reading, all scores fall between 0 and 1, from individual metrics to topic scores to overall score, where a higher number represents a more favourable working environment on average. The raw feature data behind each metric is rescaled to 0-1 based on the countries in the Index at the time[3]. This approach treats the observed variation in each feature as equally important. In other words, if one feature ranges across 0.1pts but another ranges across 0.2pts for the included countries, we treat the 0.1pts range as equally significant to the 0.2pts range. Future work could consider whether certain ranges are more significant than others, such as through focus group discussions. If Index constituent countries vary in future versions, previous years would need to be recalculated to enable fair comparison over time. The raw metric scores of between 0 and 1 are then converted to a 0–100 scale for presentation in this report.

Aggregated scores are generated by applying equal weights to all inputs. Specifically, the arithmetic average of all three metrics within each of the four topics creates a topic-specific score: averaging all four topic scores creates an overall score. The arithmetic mean allows high scores in one area to directly compensate low scores in another area.

Countries sometimes differ on their most recently available year of data. In such cases, the most recent year available is used, with detail on specific years and definitional variations available in this appendix.

Metrics construction and source data

The 12 metrics are defined as described in table A1. We have chosen age ranges that are most appropriate for approximate comparability within groups that are also available across the G7 countries.

Our standard age range for economic indicators from public datasets is age 55-64, chosen to support comparability and consistency across metrics. In some cases, to adjust for structural differences between labour markets, we normalised by the prime working age population, defined as 25-54 for the economic indicators.

For proprietary survey data, the equivalent age breakdown data are not available. Instead, we use metrics for those aged 55+, which primarily reflects those aged 55-64 given the survey restriction to those in work. The prime working age population comparison for the survey data is 20-54.

Draft metric	Details
1. Work capability: Can they work?	
1a. Healthy life expectancy Are they healthy enough to work?	Healthy life expectancy at age 60 for both sexes, as measured in years. A proportionate proxy for ability to continue working. **Source:** WHO HALE data (data date Aug 2024; underlying data is dated to 2021)
1b. Caring responsibility freedom Do they have caring responsibilities that make it challenging to work?	**Survey question:** What are the reason(s) you are likely to leave your current job? Please select all that apply. Score all respondents that select 'caregiving demands' as a '0' and all others as '1'. Average results across all question respondents aged 55+ (question base: all likely to leave job). Survey results weighted for representativeness. **Source:** Fidelity consumer survey data (2025)*
1c. Employment flexibility Do they have the flexibility they need to continue working?	**Survey question:** Below are several different kinds of flexibility that your organisation might provide to employees. Please indicate what your organisation currently offers as a kind of workplace flexibility? Please select things that are offered on a business unit or company-wide level and not just to very few employees. Select all that apply.[4] Average number of types of flexibility identified across all respondents (question base: all employees aged 55+). Survey results weighted for representativeness. **Assumption:** All types of flexibility are equally weighted for simplicity. Source: Fidelity consumer survey data (2025)
2. Work Choice & Motivation: Do they want to work?	
2a. Self-reported retirement planning quality How prepared are they for retirement?	**Survey question:** How would you describe the current state of your ...? Retirement planning Take net positive responses (very good; quite good) less net negative responses (very poor; quite poor), i.e. exclude those who 'prefer not to say' or report 'neither good nor poor'. Question base: all workers aged 55+. Survey results weighted for representativeness. **Assumption:** Those with better retirement planning are better able to choose whether they want to work and self-reported retirement planning is a reasonable proxy for actual retirement planning. **Source:** Fidelity consumer survey data (2025)
2b. Relative work satisfaction How satisfied are they with their jobs compared with core working age adults?	**Survey question:** How satisfied are you with your job overall? Define the net positivity score as the share with positive responses (very good; quite good) less the share with negative responses (very poor; quite poor), i.e. exclude those who 'prefer not to say' or report 'neither good nor poor'. The 'net positivity' score for those aged 55+ minus the 'net positive' score for those aged 20-54 produces the relative work satisfaction. **Question base:** all workers. Survey results weighted for representativeness. **Source:** Fidelity consumer survey data (2025)
2c. Degree of work choice Why are they considering working into retirement?	**Survey question:** You indicated that you would consider working [at least] part-time after you have retired. What reasons would you cite for working in retirement? Select all that apply Score all respondents that select 'For compulsory financial reasons (i.e. in order to get by in my retirement)' as a '0' and all others as '1'.[5] Average results across all question respondents (question base: those 55+ who would consider working at least part time in retirement[6]). Survey results weighted for representativeness. **Source:** Fidelity consumer survey data (2025)

3. Participation in work: Are they working?	
3a. Proportion in work What proportion of this age group is in any form of employment?	Employment to population ratio for age 55-64 **Source:** Country-level Labour Force Surveys aggregated by the OECD (2025 data); except for the US which uses 2024 BLS data for the civilian non-institutional population.
3b. Unemployment outperformance How does unemployment among this cohort compare with unemployment among core working age adults?	Unemployment rate (share of labour force) for age 25-54 divided by the unemployment rate for age 55-64 **Source:** Country-level Labour Force Surveys aggregated by the OECD (2025 data); except for the US which uses 2024 BLS data for the civilian non-institutional population.
3c. Long-term unemployment outperformance Among those that are unemployed, what percentage have been so for more than a year, compared with core working age adults?	Among those who are unemployed, what % have been unemployed for 1+ years. Take the % for age 25-54 and divide it by the % for age 55-64. **Source:** OECD (2024).
4. Work Quality: Are they in rewarding work?	
4a. Full-time earnings outperformance How do earnings of full-time workers aged 55 to 64 compare with full-time workers of core working age?	Percentage of senior employees mean wage (age 55-64) as ratio of prime-age employees mean wage (age 25-54). Gross earnings of full-time dependent employees. **Assumption:** Ability to sustain earnings is positive and restriction to full-time reduces (but does not remove) the possibility that lower earnings represents a choice. **Source:** OECD (2024 data for Canada, US; 2022 data for Japan, Germany; 2021 data for UK; 2018 data for Italy, France).
4b. Relative training participation What are their levels of participation in training relative to core working age adults?	Participation in job-related training, 55-64 (% of all employed in the age group), divided by the equivalent % for age 25-54. **Source:** OECD Older Worker Scorecard (produced in 2023). These data refer to training in the "prior year" for a survey administered in 2012 for Canada, US, and Japan, and in 2016 for France, UK, Italy, and Germany.
4c. Relative involuntary part-time work How many of this cohort are in involuntary part-time work compared with core working age adults?	Percentage of population in involuntary part-time work (would like to work full-time but cannot find full-time work) among age 25-54, divided by the same percentage among age 55-64. **Source:** OECD (2024)

*Throughout, Fidelity consumer survey data refers to Fidelity's Global Sentiment Survey, an annual study with around 37,000 respondents from 34 international markets. In each market, at least 1,000 workers were surveyed. In the UK, this excludes public sector workers.

The list of metrics we consider is not exhaustive. Subject to the availability of high-quality comparative data, other relevant factors that may be worth considering in future iterations include regional and gender disparities, healthcare access, employee sickness absence rates, and rates of self-employment.

Endnotes

[1] Includes employee, self-employed / sole proprietor, contractor / freelancer, gig economy. Part-time and full-time workers are included. If someone fits into none of these categories they are excluded. Data caveat: In the UK public sector workers are excluded.

[2] We reviewed existing indices: Golden Age Index 2023 (PWC, July 2023); Active Ageing Index (UNECE, Dec 2019); Natixis Global Retirement Index; Aegon Retirement Readiness; & existing databases: ILOSTAT; OECD employment/LMP/retirement sources; OECD Older Worker Scoreboard 2023; Eurostat & EU surveys.

[3] Details: Subtract the lowest feature value across all countries for the target feature and divide by the range (max - min across all countries' feature value).

[4] Options provided are:

- Ability to trade shifts
- Choice over work site location
- Choose who I work with
- Compressed work week
- Control over schedule / start and end times
- Control over which employer benefits I can engage with
- Control over work tasks
- Control over workload / pace of work
- Flexibility during the day (e.g., to go to an appointment)
- Fully remote work
- Hybrid work
- Paid sick leave
- Sabbaticals
- Something else (please specify)

[5] All other responses: For non-compulsory financial reasons (i.e. in order to enjoy and live comfortably in my retirement); To maintain social connections; For a sense of purpose; To bolster my mental health; Other – please specify.

[6] Answered 'I plan to work at least part-time after I start withdrawing an income from my pensions / retirement savings' or 'I would consider working at least part-time after I start withdrawing a retirement income but don't currently plan to do so' to the question 'Would you consider working and earning an income in retirement?' (asked of everyone). Exclude those who answered: 'I would not consider working part-time after withdrawing a retirement income' or 'I don't know'.

Important Information

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