



AARP Oregon Poll of Employers in the State on Age 50+ Employees

February 2007



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**Data Collected by Alan Newman Research, Inc.
Report Prepared by Jennifer H. Sauer**

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Background

For decades now, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has been projecting two major shifts in workforce demographics that would prompt many American businesses to face unique human resource challenges – a substantial aging of the workforce and an ensuing cohort of fewer younger workers. Today, the growth and demographic shifts generated by the Baby Boom population of more than 76 million (those born between 1946 and 1964) is being closely observed by American businesses. While the proportion of workers ages 25 to 44 will decrease by about seven percent between 1998 and 2008, those ages 45 and older will increase from 33 percent to 40 percent during the same time period.¹ Included in this older cohort are baby boomers, who turn 60 in 2006 and now represent 40 percent of the U.S. workforce, and in the next five years, will reach the age of 65.^{2,3} However, rather than retire, many show a strong indication of choosing to continue to work. Indeed, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that by 2012, almost two-thirds of Americans ages 55 and older will be working and they will constitute one fifth of the U.S. labor force. Additionally, the growth rate of workers ages 65 to 74 has been increasing since 1982 and is projected to increase another 3.2 percent up to 23.6 percent between 2000 and 2012.⁴

There are many factors contributing to the increasing number of older workers in the United States including the prohibition of mandatory retirement, changes to Social Security, and the erosion of pension and retiree health benefits.⁵ Moreover, in a recent national study conducted by AARP, respondents ages 50 and older said they plan to continue working in retirement out of financial necessity, the need for health benefits, enjoyment of the job, staying mentally and physically active, and quite simply, the need to feel productive.⁶

So faced with an abundant potential 50+ workforce and a smaller pool of younger workers following close behind, American businesses, perhaps small firms in particular, could be confronted with the possibility of losing important organizational knowledge with every worker who leaves the company. If steps aren't taken, critical institutional knowledge such as best practices, corporate networks, client relationships, effective working teams, as well as the cultural knowledge of “how things are done” could be lost.⁷ Such losses could negatively affect the performance of an organization and possibly make it vulnerable to increased competition.

In response to the national trend, many states are assessing the idiosyncratic effects of an aging workforce on their own local industries and businesses and some are beginning to develop plans to deal with it.

¹ DeLong, D. (2004) *Lost Knowledge: Confronting the Threat of an Aging Workforce*. Oxford University Press, Inc.

² Bell, A. (2005) *To Raise Boomer Retention, Firms May Have To Update Benefits*. National Underwriter Company, Life and Health-Financial Services Edition.

³ Current Population Survey, 2005.

⁴ Toosi, M. (February 2004) *Labor Force Projections to 2012: The Graying of the U.S. Workforce*. Monthly Labor Review, p. 37, 43.

⁵ Rix, S. *Aging and Work – A View From the United States*. Washington, D.C: AARP (2004), p. 2,3.

⁶ Brown, S.K. (2003) *Staying Ahead of the Curve 2003: The AARP Working in Retirement Study*. Washington, DC: AARP, p. 20

⁷ DeLong, D. (2004) *Lost Knowledge: Confronting the Threat of an Aging Workforce*. Oxford University Press, Inc. , p. 20-25.

Purpose of Survey

AARP Oregon commissioned a survey of employers in the state to better understand the extent to which employers in Oregon are implementing or considering implementing approaches to recruit or keep workers ages 50 and older and retain organizational knowledge. This survey measures the reported likelihood of companies facing a worker shortage, approaches to keeping mature workers, and whether or not they offer certain benefits or programs that might appeal to these employees.⁸

Methodology

In November 2006, AARP engaged Alan Newman Research to conduct a series of research studies among employers in five states (New York, Delaware, Arizona, Oregon, and Idaho) regarding issues pertaining to older workers. AARP was identified as the sponsor of this research.

ANR completed 400 telephone interviews in each state with HR Executives, HR Directors, HR Specialists, HR Generalists, Managers of Compensation, or other individuals responsible for recruiting or hiring employees, managing benefits, supervising training, or conducting dispute resolution between employees, management, and/or unions. All interviewing took place November 13 through December 5, 2006. In order to qualify for this study, employers had to have at least 20 full-time employees and be located within the specified state. Eligible businesses were initially identified based on sample information. However, all respondents were re-screened based on job title, company location, and number of full-time employees. All qualified respondents were offered a monetary incentive for their participation. Respondents at companies with fewer than 100 employees were offered a \$10 incentive, while companies with 100 or more employees were offered a \$25 incentive for completing the survey. At the end of the interview, respondents were given the option of either providing the required contact information for incentive fulfillment or specifying a charity of the respondent's choice to whom the incentive could be donated. Respondents could also elect to not receive the incentive at all.

Sample was drawn by infoUSA from their database of Oregon businesses. The resulting sampling frame consisted of 4,000 total companies with 20 or more employees. The final sample of 400 completed interviews yields a maximum statistical error of $\pm 4.9\%$ at the 95% level of confidence. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would be within ± 4.9 percentage points of the results obtained had everyone in the population been interviewed.

⁸ Most of the questions included in this survey are modified versions of questions asked in other recent AARP state level surveys. For consistency, the background section and summary section of this report may include similar information. Please go to <http://www.aarp.org/research/work/> to view those reports.

Highlights

- A little more than one-third (36%) of responding businesses say they have taken measures to prepare for a potential labor shortage as a result of baby boomers retiring.
- Among the top strategies used to address an aging workforce are improving technology (85%), assessing their current workforce (73%), and increasing training opportunities (68%).⁹ Additionally, nearly seven in ten (67%) say they have indeed hired older employees and half say their organization has rehired retired employees.
- Over four in ten report it is extremely (21%) or very likely (22%) that their organization will face a shortage of qualified workers in the next five years, and another quarter (24%) think it is somewhat likely.
- Tapping the institutional knowledge of departing employees is extremely (33%) or very important (45%) to most responding employers, and almost a third (31%) have a process in place for employees to contribute their knowledge and experience gained on the job *after* they leave.
- The most common strategies *currently used* by employers to retain 50+ workers are: providing training to upgrade skills (79%), reducing work schedules to allow older workers to ease into retirement (60%), and hiring retired workers as consultants (59%).
- Roughly a third of responding organizations offer a defined benefit pension (34%), prescription drug coverage (33%), retiree health benefits (31%), and a payroll deduction IRA (30%). Most offer employees the opportunity to invest in a 401K plan (81%).
- Over half (53%) of the responding employers say their company offers a phased retirement program, but nearly all offer it on a case by case basis.
- Over four in ten (43%) of employers in this survey say they offer some sort of financial planning program to retiring employees. And among those who don't (55%), one in seven (16%) are considering doing so over the next five years.

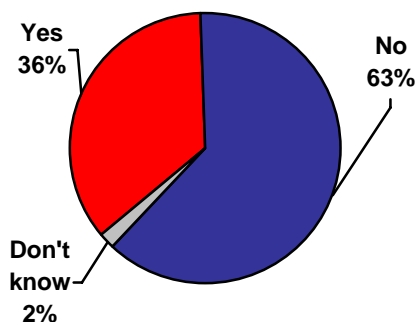
⁹ Derived from performing a count of all respondents who said 'yes' to the 14 possible steps tested in survey question 8.

Detailed Findings

Preparedness for Potential Labor Shortage Due to Baby Boomer Retirement

In Oregon, a little more than one-third of responding businesses say they have taken measures to prepare for a potential labor shortage as a result of baby boomers retiring. Interestingly, the majority of respondents (70%) also say they have used at 6 or more of the strategies tested in the survey to address an aging workforce. Among the top strategies used are improving technology, assessing their current workforce, and increasing training opportunities.¹⁰ Additionally, nearly seven in ten say they have indeed hired older employees and half say their organization has rehired retired employees to address an aging workforce (see Annotated Questionnaire, Question 3).

**Prepared for Baby-Boom Retirements
(n=400)**



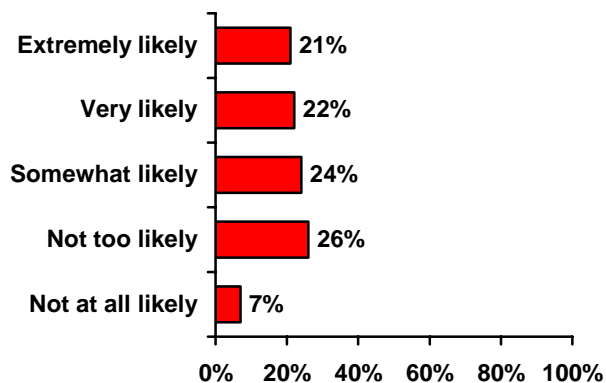
**Tactics Used to Address Aging Workforce
(n=400)**

	Yes	No	Not sure
Improve technology	85%	15%	<.5%
Assess your current workforce	73%	25%	3%
Increase training opportunities	68%	32%	1%
Hire younger employees	67%	29%	4%
Hire older employees	67%	30%	4%
Offer alternative work arrangements	59%	40%	1%
Conduct workforce planning	55%	41%	5%
Change recruitment efforts	52%	47%	1%
Rehire your retired employees	50%	50%	1%
Institute succession planning	45%	51%	5%
Institute a mentoring program	39%	61%	1%
Offer delay retirement incentives	10%	88%	2%

The Likelihood of a Future Shortage of Qualified Workers

Concurrent to the many responding employers who indicate preparedness for a possible labor shortage, many indicate that this issue will be a concern for them in the near future. Over four in ten report it is extremely or very likely that their organization will face a shortage of qualified workers in the next five years, and another quarter think it is somewhat likely. Still, almost one-third indicate a labor shortage is not likely to affect their organization.

**Perceived Likelihood of Qualified Worker Shortage in Next Five Years
(n=400)**

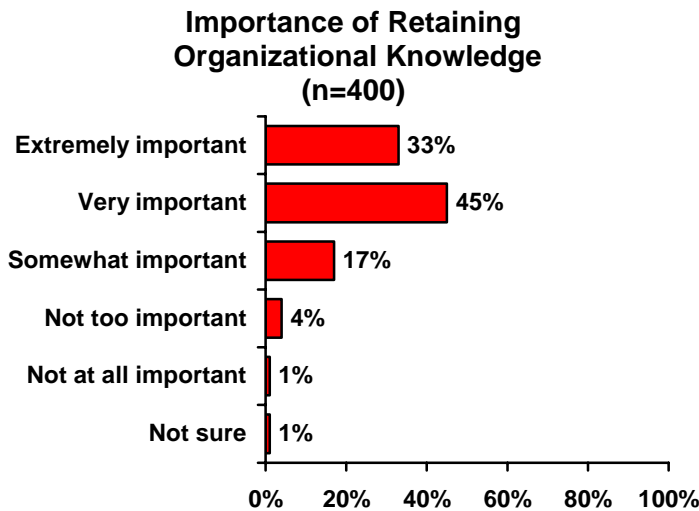


¹⁰ Derived from performing a count of all respondents who said 'yes' to the 12 possible steps tested in survey question 3.

Value of Organizational Knowledge Retention

When workers leave or retire from an organization, they take with them valuable knowledge of instruction, experience, and cultural nuances gained while on the job. Unless an organization has a process or strategies in place to preserve worker knowledge, its loss can negatively affect the organization's capacity to innovate and operate efficiently, and may even increase its vulnerability to competition.¹¹

Oregon businesses understand this – most say they experience a loss of knowledge when an employee retires or leaves the organization (major amount: 48%; minor amount: 42%) (see Appendix A, Question 4). So it is not surprising that for the majority of them, tapping the institutional knowledge of departing employees is extremely or very important, and almost a third have a process in place for employees to contribute their knowledge and experience gained on the job *after* they leave.



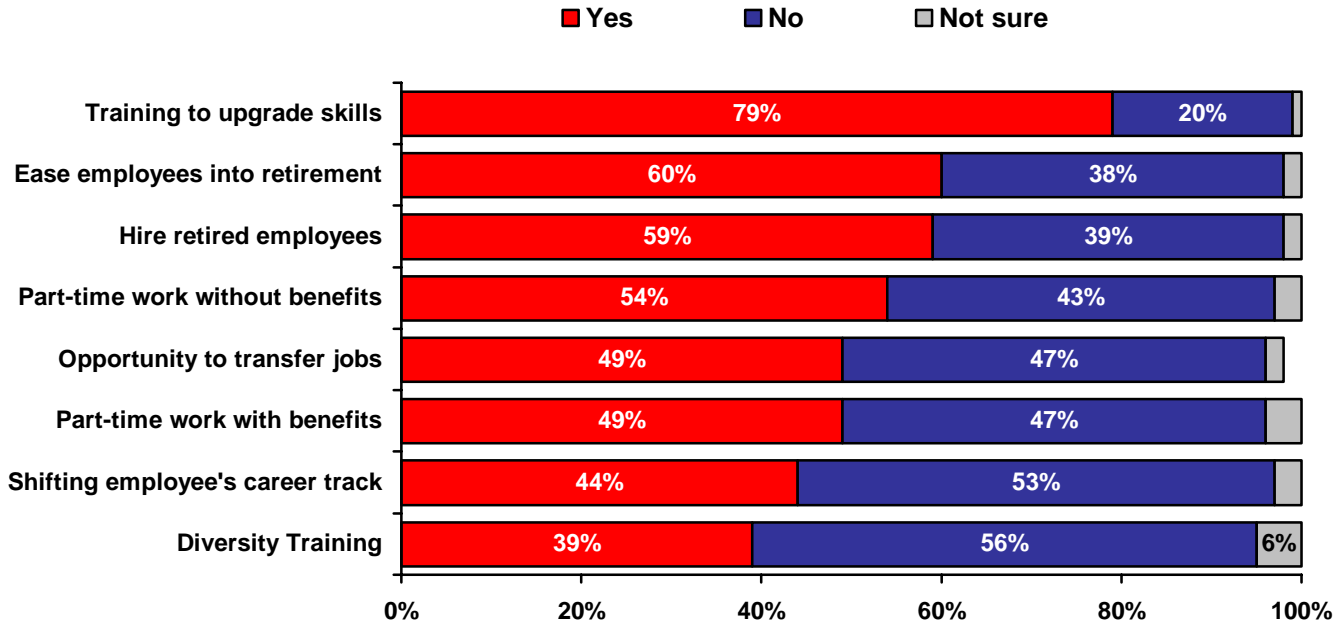
¹¹ Ibid. DeLong, D. *Lost Knowledge: Confronting the Threat of an Aging Workforce*. Oxford University Press, Inc. (2004).

Strategies of Oregon Businesses to Keep Older Workers

Oregon businesses were also asked how they were helping older employees stay on the job longer than traditionally expected or continue working beyond the conventional retirement age. The most common strategies *currently used* by most businesses are: providing training to upgrade skills, reducing work schedules to allow older workers to ease into retirement, and hiring retired workers as consultants.

Additional analysis shows that half (50%) of all Oregon employers surveyed *currently* use at least half of the eight strategies tested in the survey to accommodate employees who want to continue working beyond the traditional retirement age. Most (81%) of the employers say they currently use up to six of these eight strategies.¹²

**Strategies to Help Employees
Work Past Traditional Retirement Age***
(n=400)



*Blanks represent 5 percent or less respondents.

¹² Derived from performing a count of all respondents who said 'yes' they *currently* utilize any one of the 8 possible strategies tested in survey question 9.

Retirement Benefits

Most (80%) of the employers surveyed say their organization offers retirement benefits. Interestingly, with the exception of two possible retirement benefits – long-term care insurance, which one in five offers, and a 401(k) plan, which three in five offer – about one-third of all employers indicate they offer each of the benefits tested in the survey. Again, additional analysis shows that nearly half (48%) of the employers surveyed say their organizations offer three or more of the seven types of retirement benefits tested, and over one quarter (29%) of them offer two of the retirement benefits. Still, when asked about each of these benefits, the data shows that large proportions of employers say they do not offer them.

Benefit	Yes	No	Not sure
Retiree Health benefits	31%	6%	3%
Prescription drug coverage	33%	65%	3%
Long-term care insurance	22%	72%	3%
Defined benefit pension	34%	61%	5%
401(k) investment plan	81%	19%	1%
Payroll deduction IRA	30%	68%	3%

Retirement Benefits and Programs:

Phased Retirement

One benefit an organization could consider that would allow employees to ease into retirement is commonly known as phased-retirement – a program that allows employees to ease into retirement by reducing their work schedule. Data from this survey show that over half (53% or n=212) of responding employers say their company offers a phased retirement program, and among them, most (94%) offer this benefit informally on a case by case basis (see Annotated Survey, Questions 7 and 8).

Financial Planning Programs

Another benefit that organizations could offer employees considering or preparing to retire would be financial planning program or training to help them identify potential needs during retirement. Over four in ten (43%) employers responding to this survey say they offer such a program. However, among the half (55% or n=219) that do not offer a financial planning program, about one in seven (16%) of them are considering it over the next five years (see Annotated Survey, Questions 9a and 9b).

Summary of Findings

Skilled and experienced workers are vital to organizations and most will do what they can to provide incentives to attract or keep them. Oregon businesses are no exception. Many Oregon businesses are apprehensive about the prospect of a shortage of qualified workers in the next five years, and while over a third of respondents say their organization is prepared for a potential shortage of workers due to the retirement of boomers over the next six years, most are not.

A potential labor shortage due to the retirement of baby boomers is still debatable.¹³ Demographic trends, on the other hand, are more absolute and it is very clear that the composition of America's workforce is becoming noticeably older than in previous decades. As one expert points out, 50+ workers, including boomers, differ from their younger counterparts in that they are more likely to have remained with one organization longer. Employees who are able to work in organizations for long periods of time are more likely than short-term employees to accumulate job-specific critical knowledge about business operations, organizational culture, best-practices, and technological changes and adaptations – that is, “institutional memory”. It is easy to imagine the negative impact the loss of this type of knowledge could have on an organization or various parts of an organization. Findings from this survey indicate that Oregon businesses understand the value of knowledge and experiences employees gain while working for an organization, particularly over long periods of time. Most place a high level of importance on retaining departing employees' wisdom and recommendations, and thirty-one percent say they have an organizational process in place to preserve such institutional knowledge.

Recruiting and retaining the 50+ worker to bridge the labor shortage gap or prevent a loss in significant organizational knowledge or expertise should not be difficult for businesses in Oregon. While few businesses in the state currently have a formal strategy in place to help their employees continue working beyond retirement age, at least six in ten indicate their organization is currently using strategies listed in the survey, particularly:

- Providing training to upgrade skills and knowledge
- Enabling employees to ease into retirement
- Hiring retired employee as consultants

¹³ Ibid. DeLong, D. pg. 16

What can Oregon Businesses Do to Retain or Recruit Older Workers and Possibly Stave Off a Labor Shortage?

A recent report released for AARP by the consulting firm Towers Perrin suggests some steps organizations can take to effectively address their aging workforce.¹⁴ Their suggestions include:

- Inventory current talent and define near and long-term organizations goals
- Consider the investment needed and the total compensation costs of attracting 50+ workers
- Pay equal attention to revenue and performance considerations
- Study the available labor pool and define organizational talent strategies
- Align reward programs to support business and talent objectives
- Align workplace policies and culture to make work environment attractive to the 50+ worker

Small businesses are not as exempt from these ideas as they might have been in the past. Indeed, financial services firms like Charles Schwab & Co. and Fidelity Investments are now offering retirement planning services to small businesses to help them set up employee retirement accounts and 401(k)s.¹⁵ Other experts point out that adding or extending health and supplementary benefits packages, such as superior dental and vision plans and long-term care plans can be attractive employment incentives to baby boom workers.¹⁶

Engaging in strategies such as these may help organizations retain and recruit experienced and skilled 50+ workers, but they may also help organizations preserve the important knowledge gained by their retiring employees and enable them to efficiently pass it on to a current or new worker. Moreover, companies that actively address the impact of labor force issues and trends on their business and take the necessary steps to adjust their operations and policies will remain competitive in the marketplace. Turning to 50+ workers as a means of filling the potential labor shortage gap in the near future may actually put a business *ahead* of the competition.

Combined with the demographic projections and recent studies suggesting many boomers want or plan to work beyond the typical retirement age, organizations should begin (if they haven't already) to consider the 50+ worker as a viable and significant bridge to maintaining organizational knowledge and fostering corporate growth or stability.

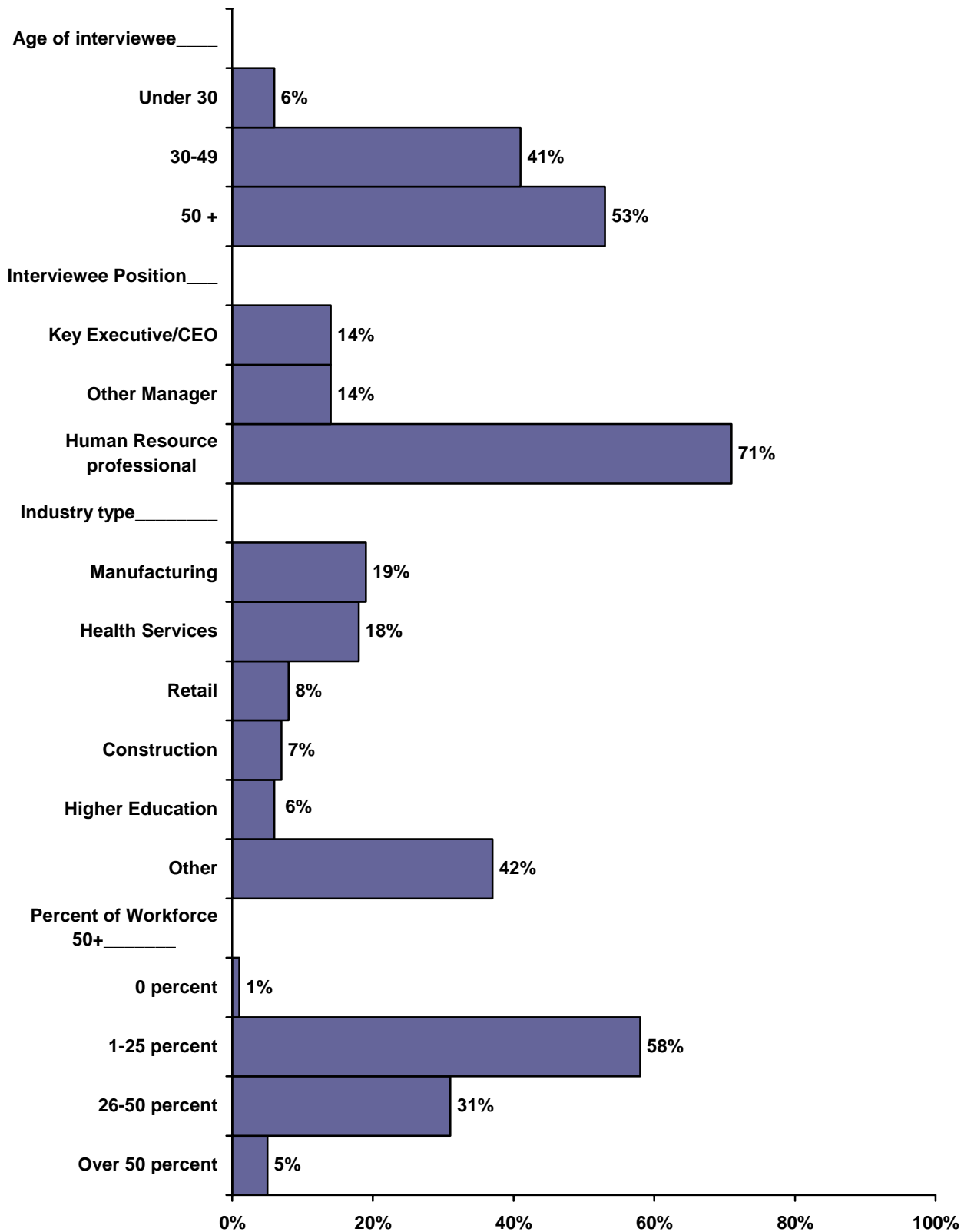
The findings from this survey also provide a likely opportunity for AARP Oregon to coordinate information sources for both workers and employers on a wide range of employment issues.

¹⁴ (2005) *The Business Case for Workers Age 50+*. A report prepared by Towers Perrin for AARP.

¹⁵ Opdyke, J. (2005) *Small Firms Offer More Retirement Options – Wall Street Pitches Plan To Underserved Market*. Wall Street Journal, 11/22/2005, D1.

¹⁶ Bell, A. (2005) *To Raise Boomer Retention, Firms May have to Update Benefits*. National Underwriter Company.

Responding Employer Profile (n=400)



Appendix A: Annotated Questionnaire

Oregon Employer Poll

N=400 Employers

MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. In your opinion, within the next five years, how likely is it that your company will face a shortage of qualified workers?

<u>%</u>	
21	Extremely likely
22	Very likely
24	Somewhat likely
26	Not too likely
7	Not at all likely
1	Not sure (DO NOT READ)

2. Baby Boomers, or those born between 1946 and 1964, are approaching traditional retirement age. Their retirement may create a shortage of employees since the generation following them is much smaller. Has your organization taken any steps to prepare for this possibility?

<u>%</u>	
36	Yes
63	No
2	Not sure (DO NOT READ)

3. I'm going to give you some examples of tactics some businesses might use to address the aging workforce. Please tell me whether your organization has done any of the following?

	Yes	No	Not Sure
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
a. Hire younger employees	67	29	4
b. Hire older employees	67	30	4
c. Increase training opportunities.....	68	32	1
d. Change recruitment efforts.....	52	47	1
e. Assess your current workforce.....	73	25	3
f. Conduct workforce planning.....	55	41	5
g. Improve technology	85	15	<.5
h. Rehire your retired employees	50	50	1
i. Offer incentives to delay retirement	10	88	2
j. Offer alternative work arrangements such as part-time work, job sharing, or telecommuting	59	40	1
k. Institute a mentoring program between older and younger employees	39	61	1
l. Institute succession planning	45	51	5
m. Other [SPECIFY] _____	13	86	1

4. How much knowledge loss do you think occurs when employees retire or otherwise leave your organization?

<u>%</u>	
48	A major amount
42	A minor amount
3	None
7	Not sure

5. In your opinion, how important would you say it is to retain the institutional knowledge that might be lost when employees retire or leave?

<u>%</u>	
33	Extremely important
45	Very important
17	Somewhat important
4	Not too important
1	Not at all important
1	Not sure

6. Does your organization have a formal process that enables employees who retire or otherwise leave to share the knowledge they have obtained on the job?

<u>%</u>	
31	Yes
67	No
3	Not sure

7. Does your company offer phased retirement, that is, allowing employees to ease into retirement by reducing their work schedule?

<u>%</u>	
53	Yes
44	No → [SKIP TO Q9]
4	Not sure → [SKIP TO Q9]

IF PHASED RETIREMENT IS NOT OFFERED, GO TO QUESTION 9.

8. Is phased retirement a formal plan, whereby there are protocols that employees must follow in order to take advantage of this, or is it informal and offered on a case-by-case basis to your employees, without structured or defined policies? (n=212)

<u>%</u>	
6	Formal
94	Informal
1	Not sure

9. Organizations use different approaches to accommodate employees who want to work past traditional retirement age. For EACH of the following strategies, please indicate whether your organization is currently using it.

	Yes <u>%</u>	No <u>%</u>	Not Sure <u>%</u>
a. Enabling employees to ease into retirement by reducing their work schedules.....	60	38	3
b. Shifting employees from one career track to another career track	44	53	3
c. Providing training to upgrade skills and knowledge of employees	79	20	1
d. Hiring retired employees as consultants or temporary employees	59	39	2
e. Providing opportunities for employees to transfer to jobs with reduced pay and responsibilities	49	47	4
f. Providing part-time work arrangements <u>without</u> continuation of benefits.....	54	43	3
g. Providing part-time work arrangements <u>with</u> continuation of benefits.....	49	47	5
h. Addressing age bias issues in the workplace by offering programs such as mentoring or diversity training.....	39	56	6

TWO State Specific Questions:

9a. Does your organization offer retiring employees a financial planning program or training that helps them identify potential financial needs during retirement?

<u>%</u>	
43	Yes
55	No
3	Not sure

9b. Is this something your organization IS considering over the next 5 years? (n=219)

<u>%</u>	
16	Yes
67	No
17	Not sure

The following questions are for classification purposes only and will be kept entirely confidential.

10. In the past year, about what percentage of your workforce was age 50 years or older for all locations of your organization in Delaware?

<u>%</u>	
1	0%
58	1% - 25%
31	26% - 50%
4	51% - 75%
1	76% - 100%
6	Not sure

11. Which of the following best describes the primary nature of your organization's business?

<u>%</u>		<u>%</u>	
3	Financial	0	Wholesale Trade
1	Insurance	2	Communication
1	Real Estate	4	Transportation
18	Health Services	3	Agriculture
19	Manufacturing	<.5	Forestry or Fishing
6	Higher Education	23	Some other type of business [PLEASE SPECIFY] _____
7	Construction	<.5	Refused
8	Retail Trade		

12. Does your organization offer any retirement benefits?

<u>%</u>	
80	Yes
20	No ► GO TO QUESTION 14

13. Does your organization offer any of the following *retirement* benefits: (n=319)

	Yes	No	Not Sure
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
a. Retiree health benefits	31	66	3
b. Prescription drug coverage.....	33	65	3
c. Long-term care insurance.....	22	75	3
d. Defined benefit pension	34	61	5
e. 401K investment plan	81	19	1
f. Payroll deduction IRA	30	68	3

13a. IF YES TO ANY IN Q13: Is your organization planning to phase out [INSERT APPROPRIATE PHRASE BASED ON NUMBER OF 'YES' RESPONSES IN Q13: "this retirement benefit" OR "any of these retirement benefits"] in the next five years? (n=305)

<u>%</u>	
4	Yes
93	No
3	Not Sure
<.5	No Response

13b. IF YES: Which ones? [PROGRAMMERS: IF ONLY ONE ‘YES’ IN Q13 AND A ‘YES’ IN Q13a THEN AUTOPUNCH BENEFITS BELOW AND SKIP TO NEXT QUESTION] (n=7)

	Yes	No
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
a. Retiree health benefits.....	43	57
b. Prescription drug coverage	57	43
c. Long-term care insurance.....	50	50
d. Defined benefit pension	55	46
e. 401K investment plan	25	75
f. Payroll deduction IRA	33	67

14. Which of the following best describes your position in the organization?

<u>%</u>	
14	Key Executive/President/CEO/Chairman/Owner
71	Human Resources Professional/ Human Resources Manager or Director
14	Other Manager/Director/Officer
2	Other [SPECIFY] _____

15. What is your age?

<u>%</u>	
6	Under 30
41	30-49
51	50-64
2	65 or older
1	Refused

Screener

S1. Are you the senior level executive responsible for making human resources decisions at your company?

<u>%</u>	
82	Yes → [SKIP TO S2]
18	No
<.5	DON'T KNOW / NOT SURE

S1a. Are you a Manager of Compensation, HR Specialist, OR HR Generalist for your company?

<u>%</u>	
78	Yes → [SKIP TO S2]
19	No
3	DON'T KNOW / NOT SURE

S1b. Are you responsible for any of the following human resource functions at your company? [RECORD ANSWER FOR EACH] n=16%

	Yes	No	Not Sure
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
a. Recruiting and/or hiring employees	44	56	0
b. Managing employee benefits and compensation.....	69	31	0
c. Conducting and/or supervising training and development programs for employees	38	63	0
d. Managing or conducting dispute resolution between employees, management, and/or unions.....	38	63	0

- 1 Yes → [YES TO ANY OF THE ABOVE = SKIP TO S2]
- 2 No [TERMINATE]
- 3 DON'T KNOW / NOT SURE [TERMINATE]

S2. Excluding contract or contingent employees, approximately how many full-time employees does your company have in all locations in Oregon? [IF NECESSARY: “Just your best estimate is fine.”] [RECORD ACTUAL # AND CHECK QUOTA BASED ON CATEGORIES BELOW]

<u>%</u>	
0	Less than 20 [TERMINATE]
20	20 – 49
30	50 – 99
30	100 – 249
13	250 – 499
6	500 – 999
3	1,000 or more
0	DON'T KNOW / NOT SURE [TERMINATE]
0	REFUSED [TERMINATE]

S3. Excluding contract or contingent employees, approximately how many part-time employees does your company have in all locations in Oregon? [IF NECESSARY: “Just your best estimate is fine.”] [RECORD ACTUAL #] (n=257)

<u>%</u>	
0	Less than 20
22	20 – 49
26	50 – 99
30	100 – 249
12	250 – 499
5	500 – 999
3	1,000 or more
3	DON'T KNOW / NOT SURE
0	REFUSED

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