

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT

ACE and the Ageing Population



AUSTRALIA, LIKE MOST COUNTRIES IN THE WESTERN WORLD, HAS A RAPIDLY AGEING POPULATION.

The benefit of an ageing population is that older people bring with them a wealth of skills and knowledge, brought about through experience, which has the capacity to boost productivity and tackle societal problems. However, to realise this potential, older Australians will need to remain in the workforce longer and maintain their independence and wellbeing in retirement. Lifelong learning is at the heart of this challenge and ACE organisations will have an important role to play.

OLDER AUSTRALIANS AND WORK

Currently there is a significant decline in labour force participation from 55 years of age, and by age 70 years few people remain in paid employment. Australia's workforce participation rate amongst older Australians is increasing (57%). However, it is still low compared to many other nations like New Zealand (72%), Japan (66%) and the USA (62%)

Reasons for involuntary "early exit" from the workforce include poor health and age discrimination. Also, the industries that are most suitable for older workers (e.g. clerical, administrative, managers and professionals) are also fields that require higher levels of literacy, numeracy and computer skills and overall literacy, numeracy and computer skills levels are lower amongst older Australians.

LATER LIFE LEARNING AND WELLBEING

Lifelong learning is critical to enabling senior Australians to remain adaptive and resilient; to better anticipate transitions and to self-manage health and wellbeing. Participation in learning reduces social isolation therefore leading to better health. There is some evidence that learning activities can reduce the costs of care in aged care facilities.

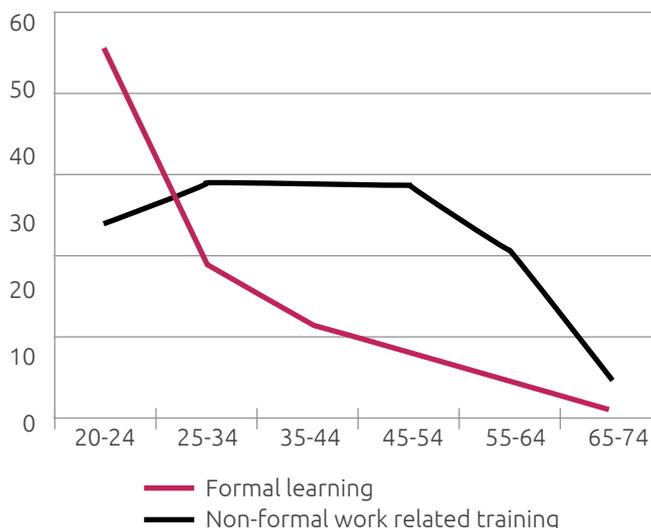
Learning activities provide 'bridging social capital', that is, social interaction with people from diverse cultures, religions and backgrounds, leading to more cohesive communities.

LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY

Advances in technology are significant drivers of the need for continual learning. 79% of all Australians use the Internet but only 37% of people aged over 65 use the internet. To remain in or re-enter the modern workforce, Australians need to be able to use new technologies. In addition, the Internet is becoming an increasingly important tool for social inclusion, allowing older people to remain in contact with family and friends, pursue interests and build communities of interest.

OLDER AUSTRALIANS AND LEARNING

Qualifications acquired later in life have as good, and in some cases, better, pay-off in terms of employment-to-population rates for older age groups. However opportunities for work-related learning and formal education reduce significantly beyond age 55, potentially leaving older workers vulnerable to early exit from the workplace.



Adapted from ABS 4234.0 - Work-Related Training and Adult Learning, Australia, Apr 2013

LEARNING AND ACE

Older people are often more interested in acquiring skills than qualifications and in participating in shorter and more holistic training. The ACE sector focus on digital literacy and the joy of learning and its model of small, local classes is ideally placed to meet these needs.

READ THE FULL PAPER

<https://ala.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/The-ageing-population-report-FINAL-WEB.pdf>



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