

The Ageing Workforce in Ireland: Working Conditions, Health and Extending Working Lives

DATE

13 Jan 2021

VENUE

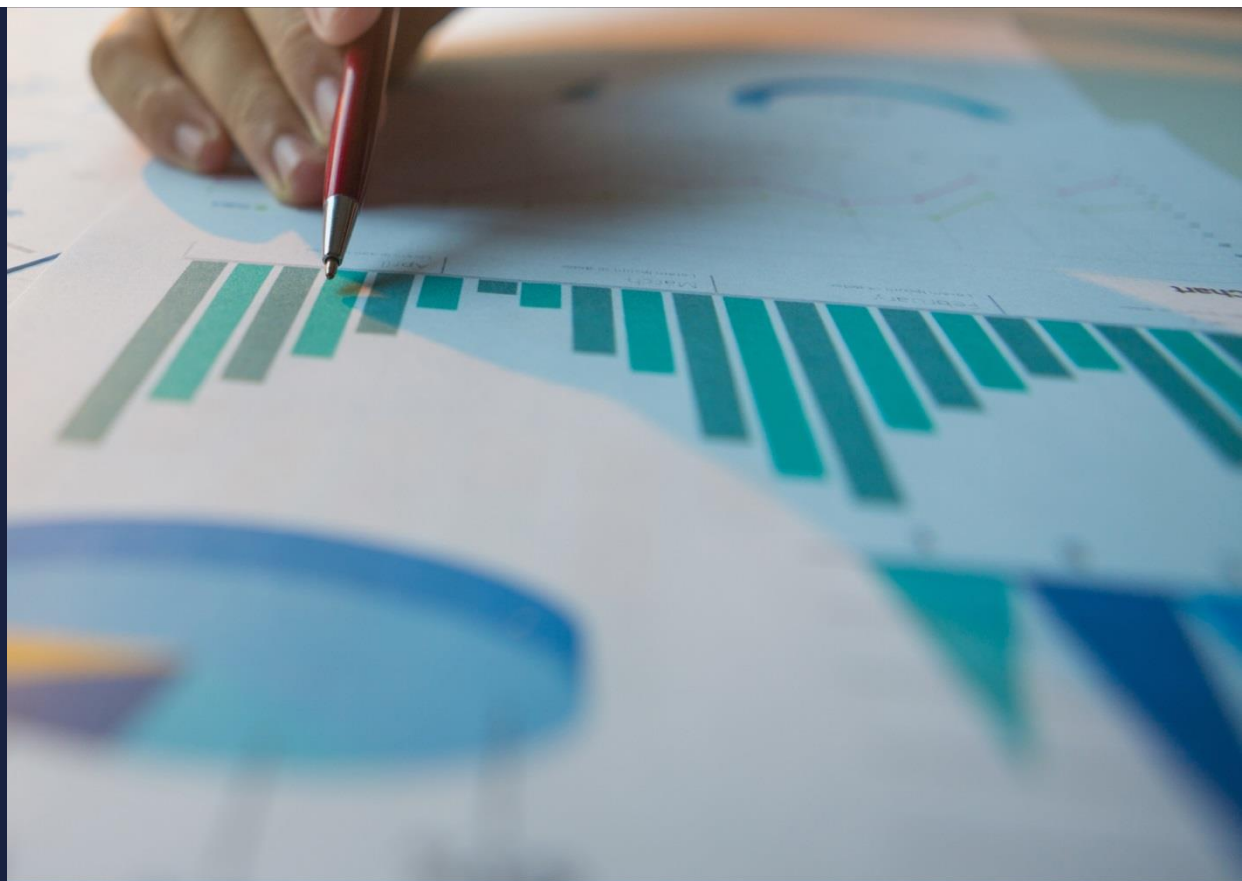
Pensions Commission

AUTHORS

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Background

- Extending working lives: key policy goal in Europe and Ireland (DPER, 2016; Eurofound, 2012)
- Sustaining welfare and pension system
- Positive ageing strategy
- Focus of study with HSA was on health and working conditions as potential barriers to longer working

Plan

- Myths and reality around older workers and working longer
- Working conditions of older workers
- What factors make people more optimistic about working longer?
- Which sector/occupations have higher retention of older workers?
- Who leaves early and why?
- Policy lessons

MYTH: Older workers more likely to experience illness and injury

REALITY:

- Younger workers and inexperienced workers are the most at risk of workplace injury (Crawford et al., 2010; Khanzode et al., 2012). Also found in Ireland (Russell et al., 2015)
- Work-related musculoskeletal disorders are more common among older age groups (Russell et al., 2016; EU-OSHA, 2016a).
- BUT work-related stress, anxiety, depression is lowest among workers over 65, peaks at 45-54 yrs then drops (Russell et al. 2016).

MYTH: Older workers are less productive

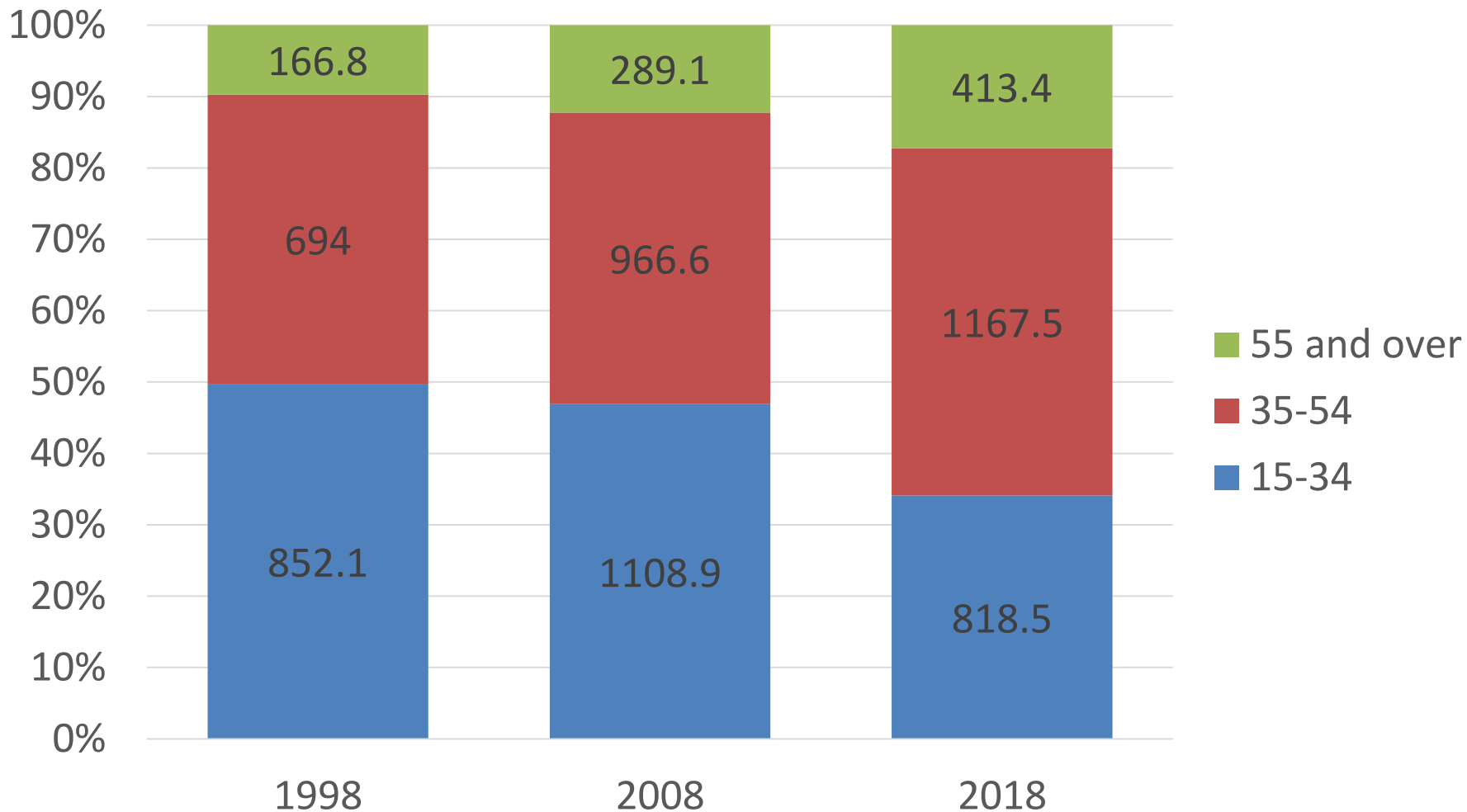
REALITY

- Age is not a determinant of performance or ability to work (reviews by EU OSHA 2016; Borsh-Supan 2013)
- *Biological ageing* varies across individuals and influenced by past and current working conditions;
- Experience compensates for any deterioration in physical abilities; Adjustments to tasks, hours can accommodate biological ageing
- Older workers higher intrinsic work motivation (Ng & Feldman, 210)
- Age is partly socially constructed - stereotypes/policies

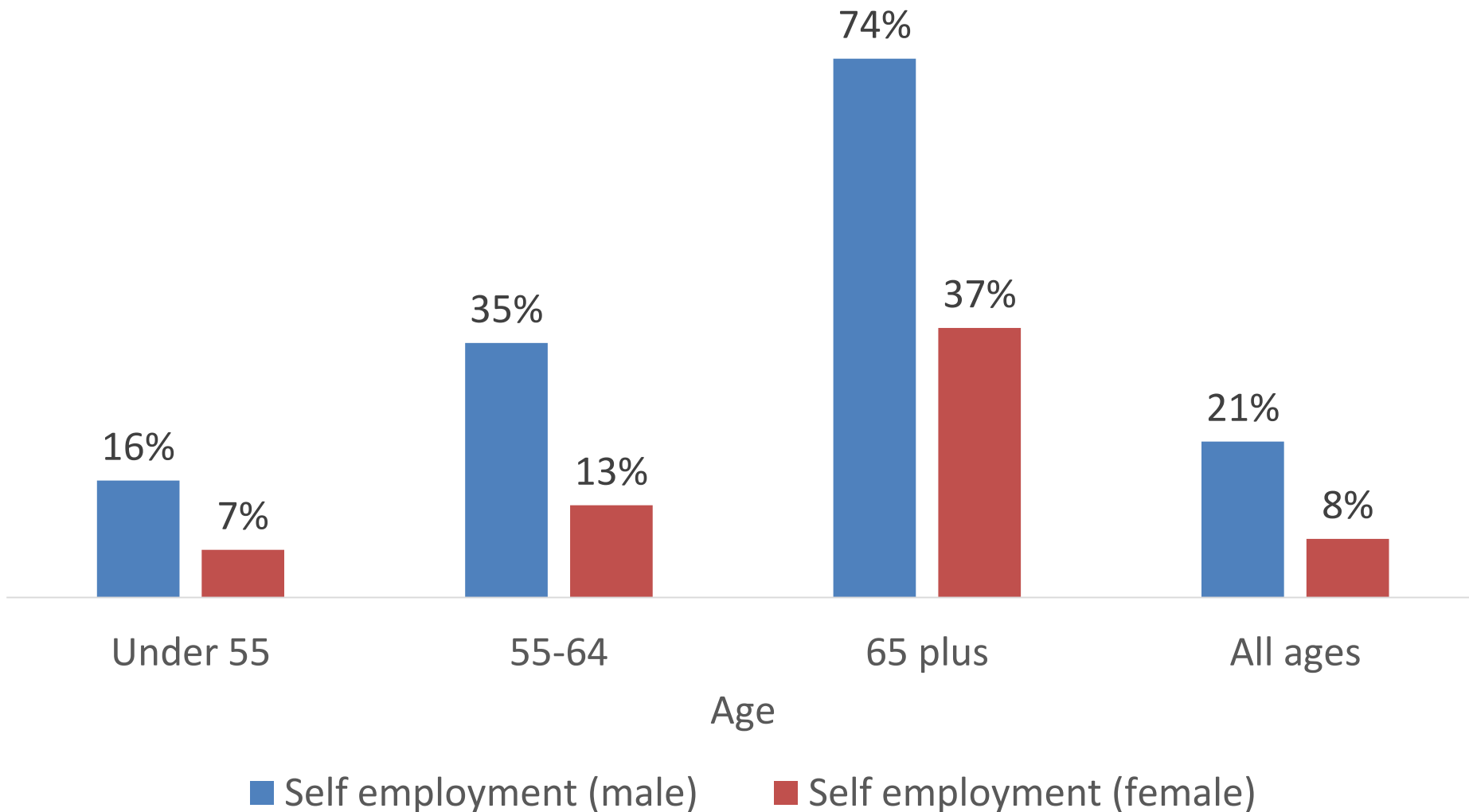
Data and analysis

- Data
 - European Working Conditions Survey **2015**
 - Labour Force Survey Q4 2017- Q3 **2018**
 - Health and Safety Authority Fatality Statistics 2004-2017
- Sample definition
 - **Older workers:** Respondents in employment 55 and over.
 - **Early leavers:** Respondents out of work for more than a year, who left employment in the last 8 years, and who were aged 55-59 when they left.
- Possibility of selection effect when comparing older and younger workers.

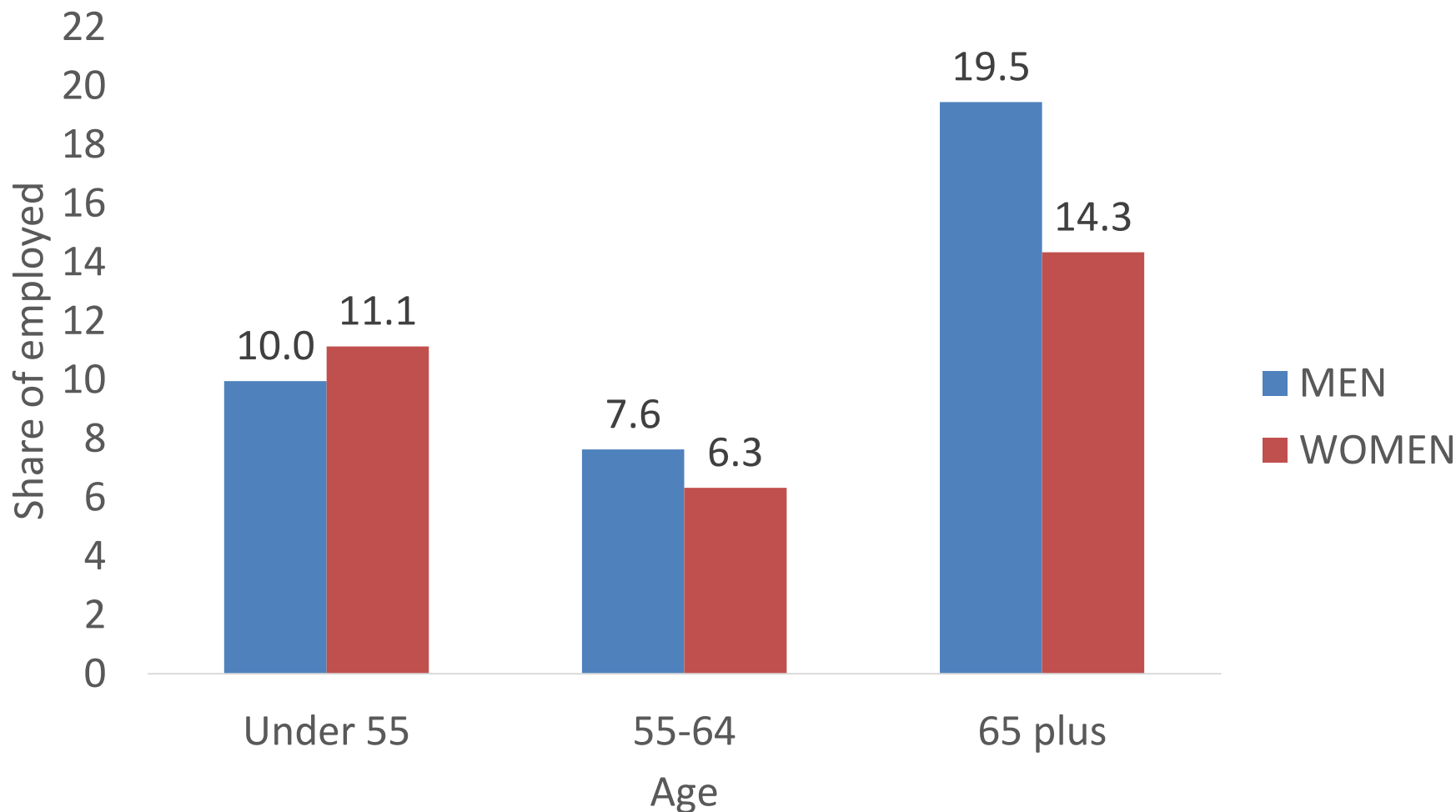
Age composition of Irish Labour Force (% & N), LFS



Self employment by age and gender, LFS 2018



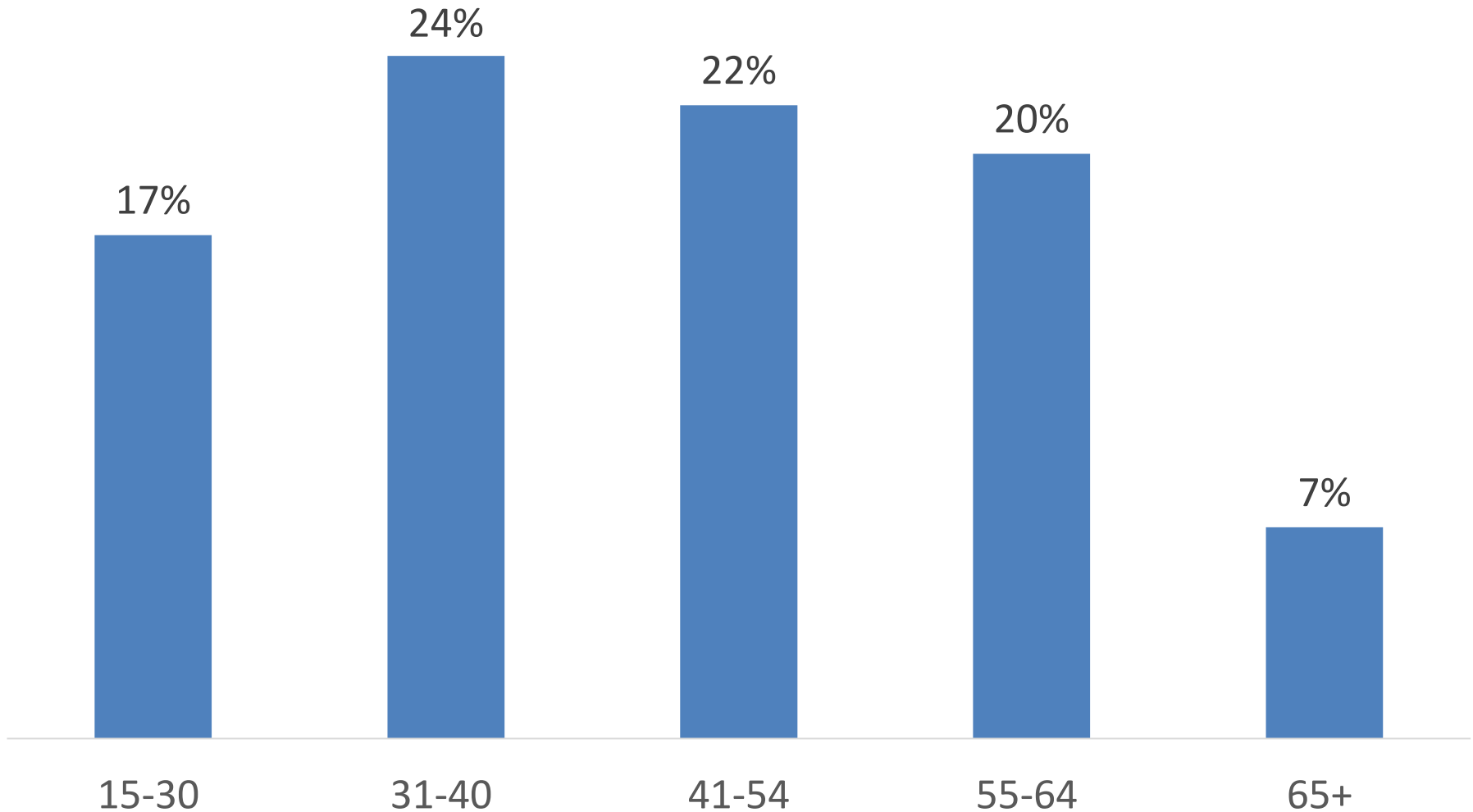
Employees in Temporary Contracts by Age (2018)



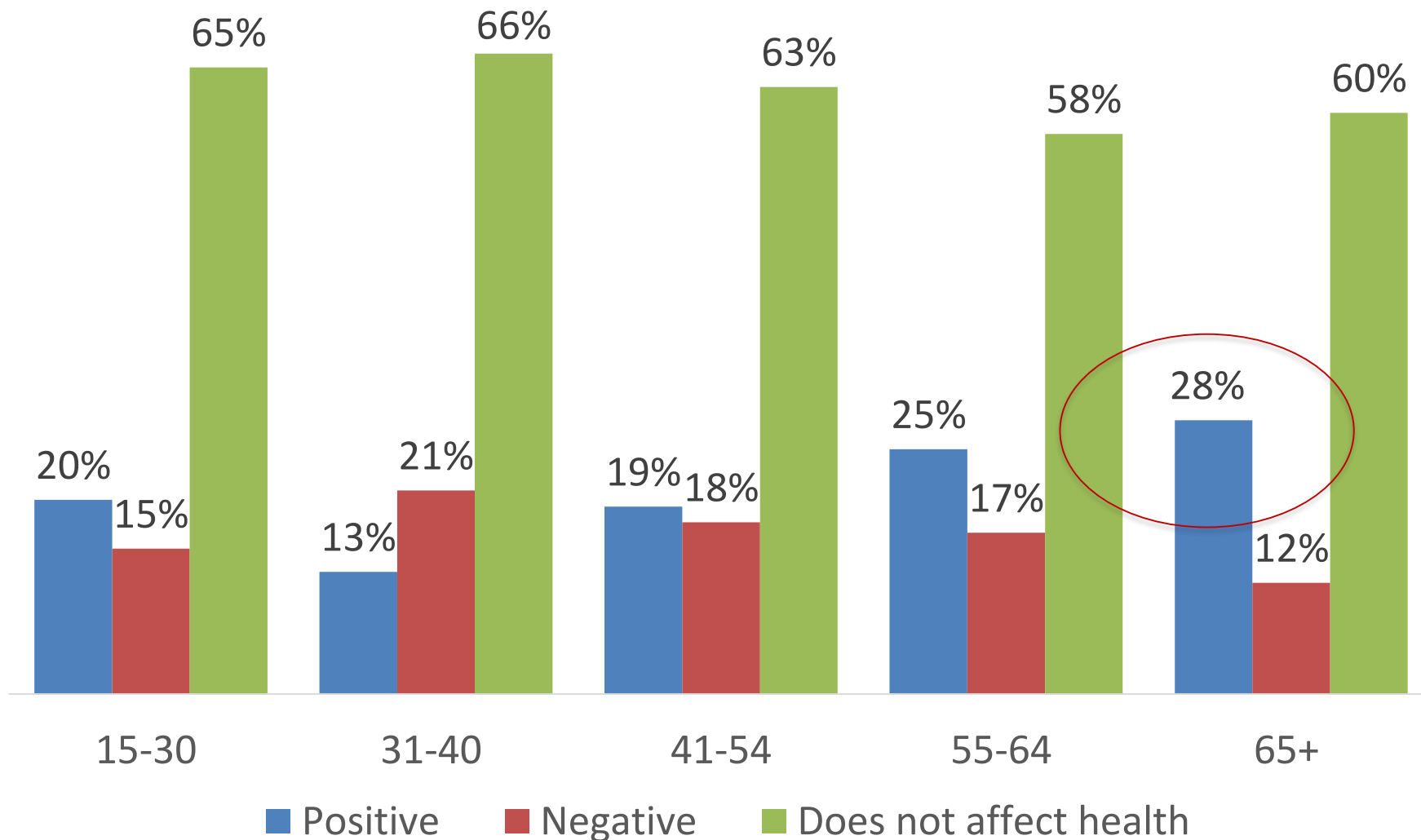
Polarised working time among older male workers; Reduced hours for older female workers

Men	Under 55	55-64	65 plus
Weekly hours worked	%	%	%
<15hrs	2.9	2.4	9.7
15-29hrs	7.8	10.6	18.9
30-39hrs	32.3	30.5	18.0
40-49hrs	41.5	32.7	20.3
50hrs plus	15.5	23.8	33.1
Total	100	100	100
Women	Under 55	55-64	65 plus
	%	%	%
<15hrs	6.3	9.1	28.6
15-29hrs	24.8	32.9	35.6
30-39hrs	41.5	40.7	20.3
40-49hrs	23.4	13.5	9.9
50hrs plus	4.0	3.8	5.6
Total	100	100	100

Health and safety “at risk” due to work by age, EWCS 2015

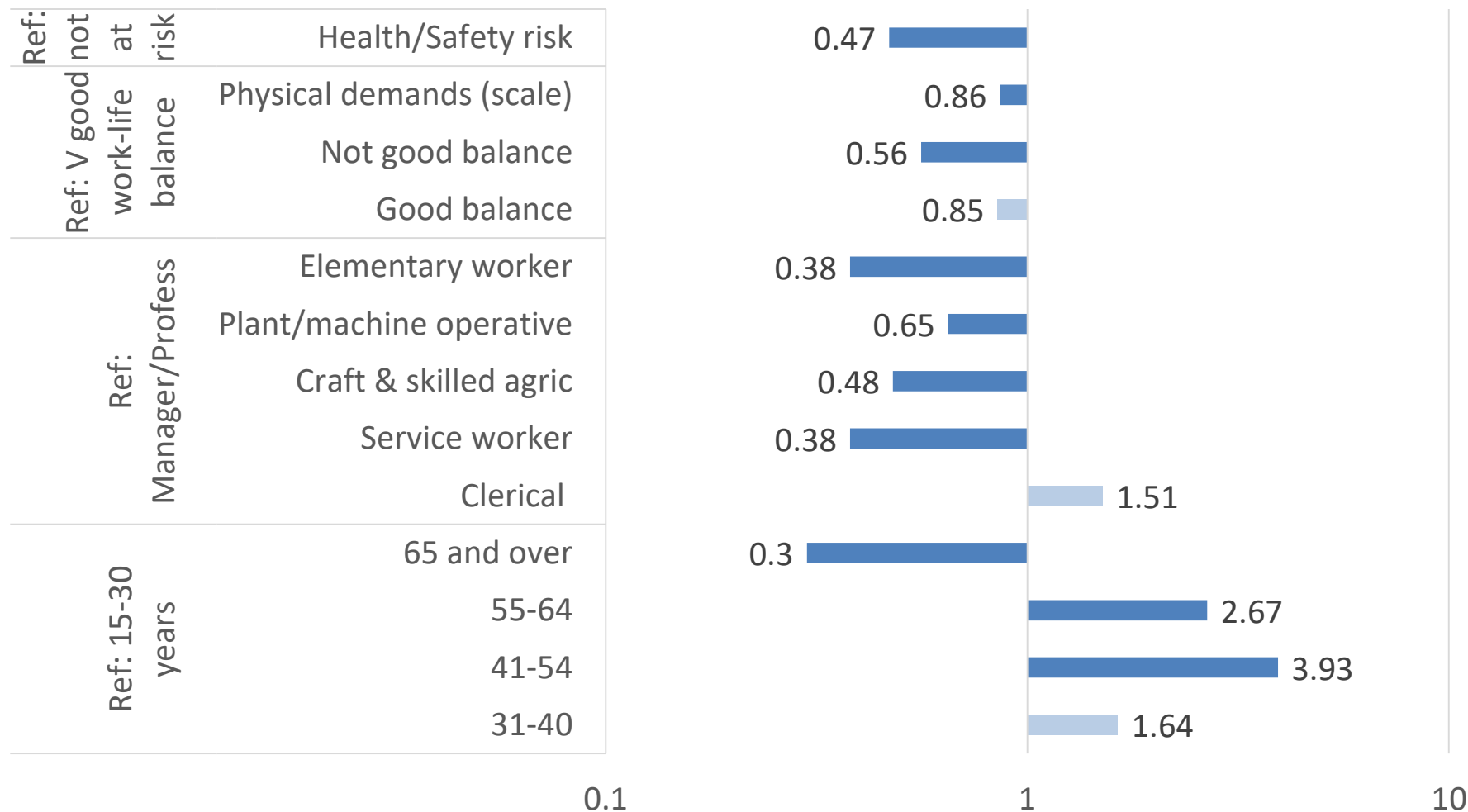


Perceived effects of work on Health by age, EWCS 2015



What conditions make workers more optimistic about working longer?

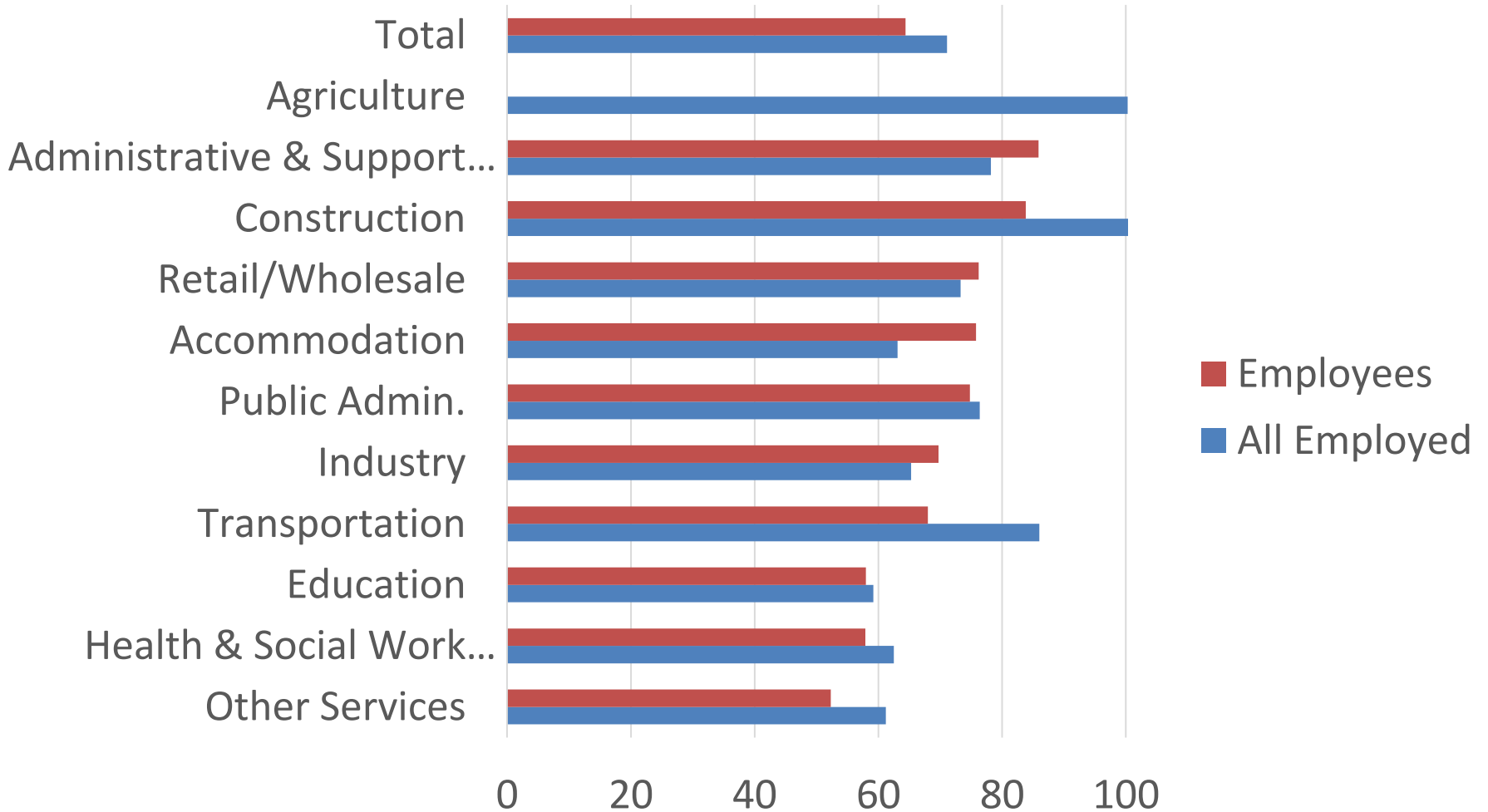
Odds of agreeing able to work till 60 (or another 5 years if over 55) in current or similar Job, EWCS 2015



Retention Rates

- A retention rate calculates the proportion of employed aged 55 to 59 years still in employment at age 60 to 65 years (OECD Older Workers Scorecard)
- Synthetic cohort. Compares numbers employed aged 60-65 years with 5 years or more job tenure in 2018 to the numbers of 55-59 years employed 5 years earlier (2013)

Retention rates by sector 60-64 year olds, LFS 2018



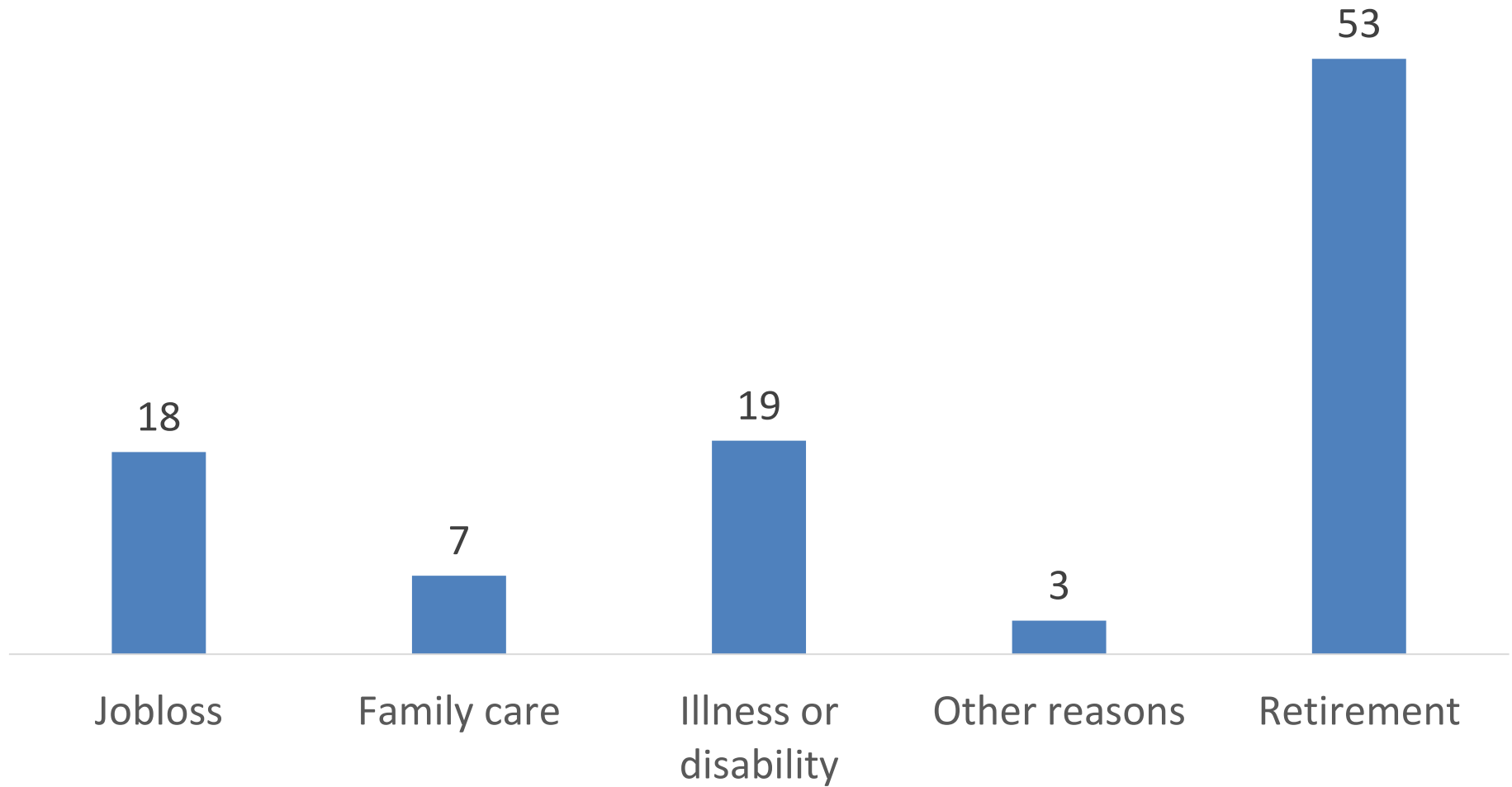
Retention rates by occupation 60-64 year olds, LFS 2018



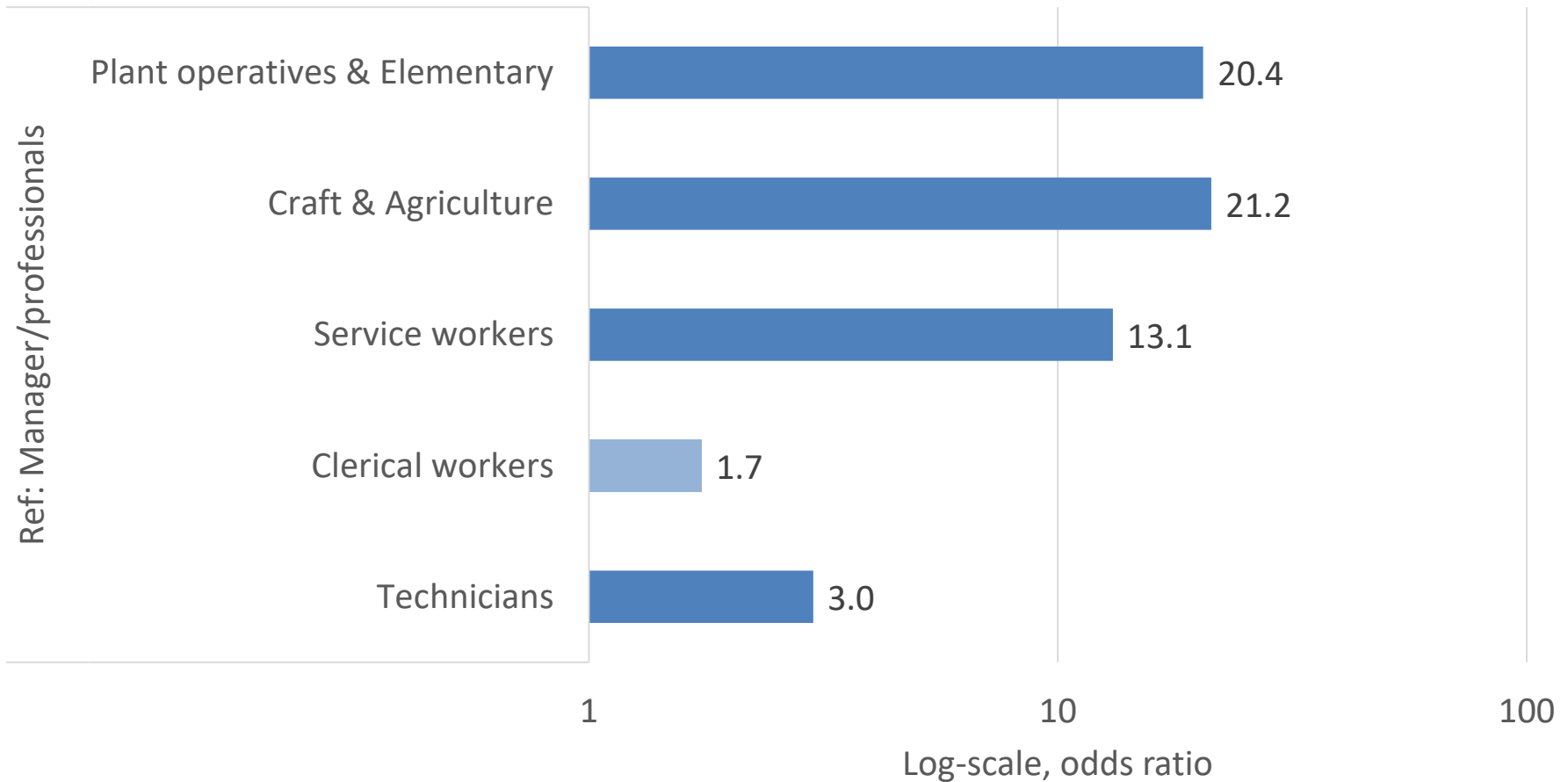
Early exit

- Aged 55-59 years when they left work
- Select respondents out of work for at least a year to reduce chance that exit is not temporary
- Refer to the occupation and industry of their last job

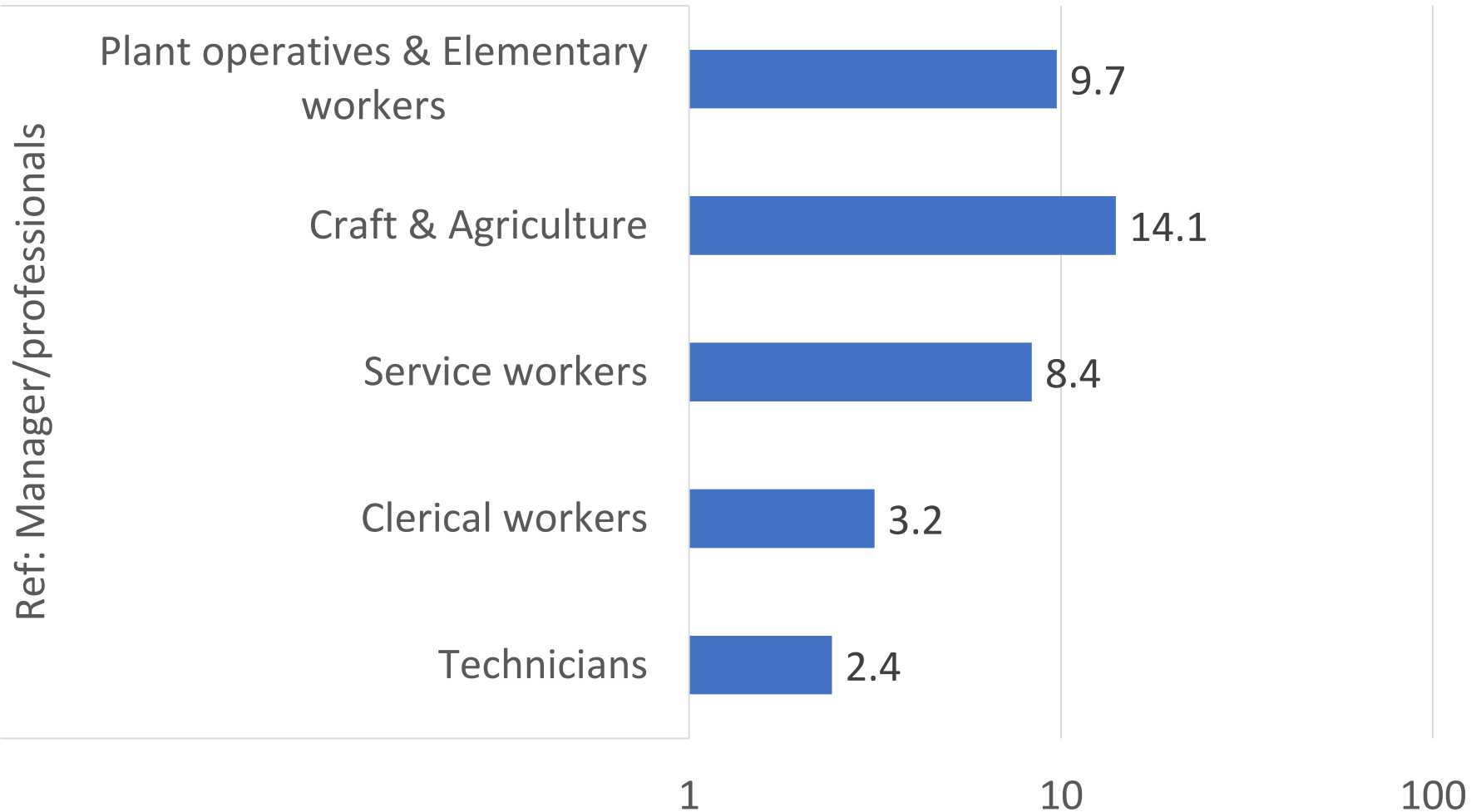
Reason for early exit (%), LFS 2018



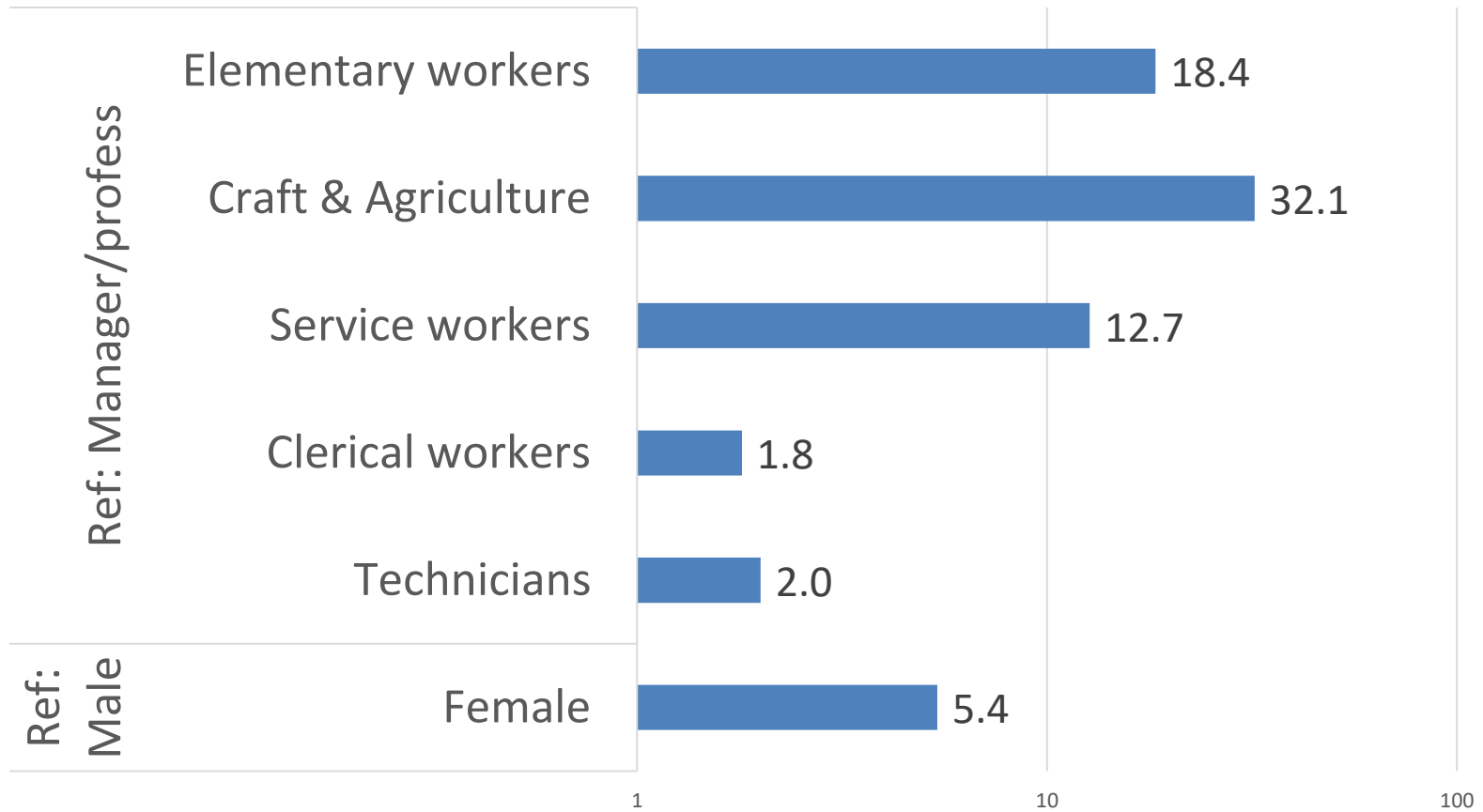
Odds of leaving due to “illness or disability” vs “early retirement”, LFS 2018



Odds of leaving due to “job loss” vs “early retirement”, LFS 2018



Odds of Leaving Early for Family Reasons



Summary (1)

- Generally older workers have equal or better working conditions. Selection effects likely.
- Retention of older workers has improved and higher than OECD average, but significant sectoral/occupational differences
- Around half of early exits involuntary or unplanned.
- Others may wish to retire early but cannot. Steiber & Kohli find that **involuntary retirement** is a more common than **involuntary work**

Summary (2)

- For workers of all ages work-life balance, less physical demands, and absence of H&S risk increases perceived job longevity
- Policies to support retention – flexibility, accommodation, care supports, and prevention of health/safety risks **throughout working life.**
- Pensions/welfare also important but beyond scope of study.
- Important that myths and stereotypes about older workers do not influence workplace decisions and behaviours.

Thank you!

Full report available to download at
www.esri.ie and www.hsa.ie