



## **Challenge Area Symposium Series**

### **Financial Wellness and Employment**

**Empowering the Aging Workforce through Technology & Inclusivity**

**Chair: AnneMarie Levy, PhD  
Wilfrid Laurier University**



**Financial Wellness  
& Employment**

**AGEWELL**  
**Challenge  
Areas**

# Financial Wellness and Employment

Many older Canadians experience financial vulnerability and workplace exclusion as they age.

Example technologies:  
employment portals tailored  
for older users and caregivers,  
financial apps

AGEISM

The number of  
persons over 65 years  
of age will double by  
the year 2050

(UN, 2019)

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World population Ageing 2019 Highlights, United Nations

% of Canadians aged 65+

16.9

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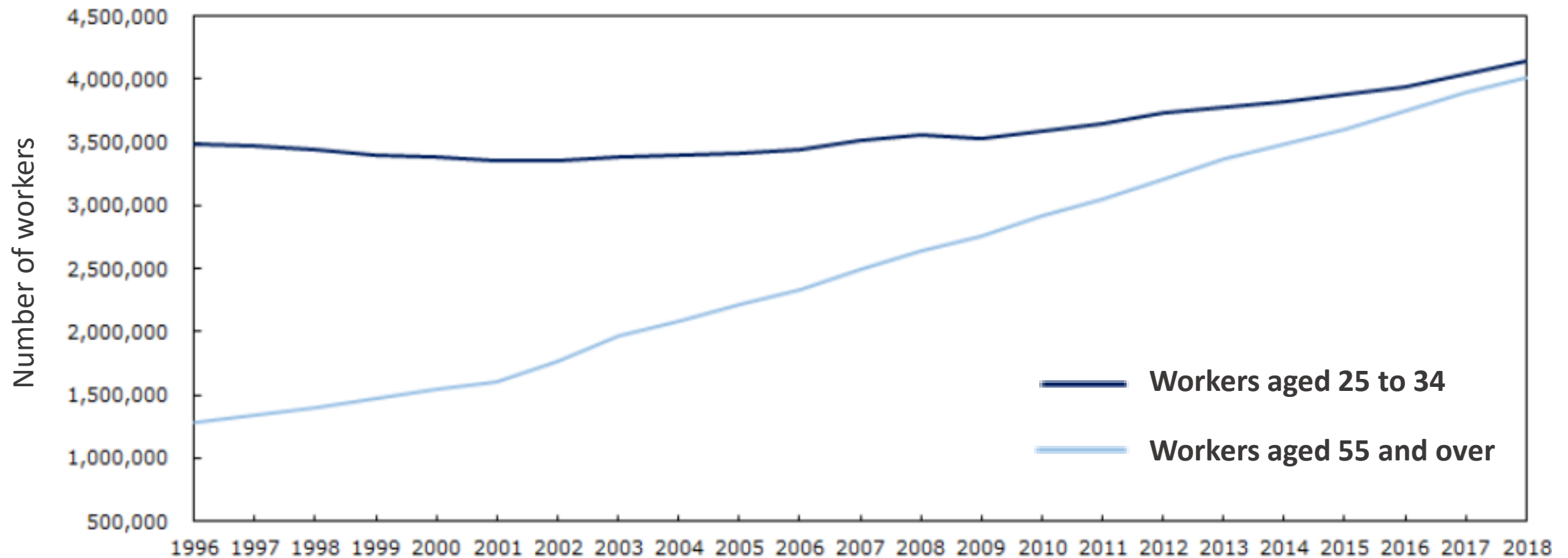
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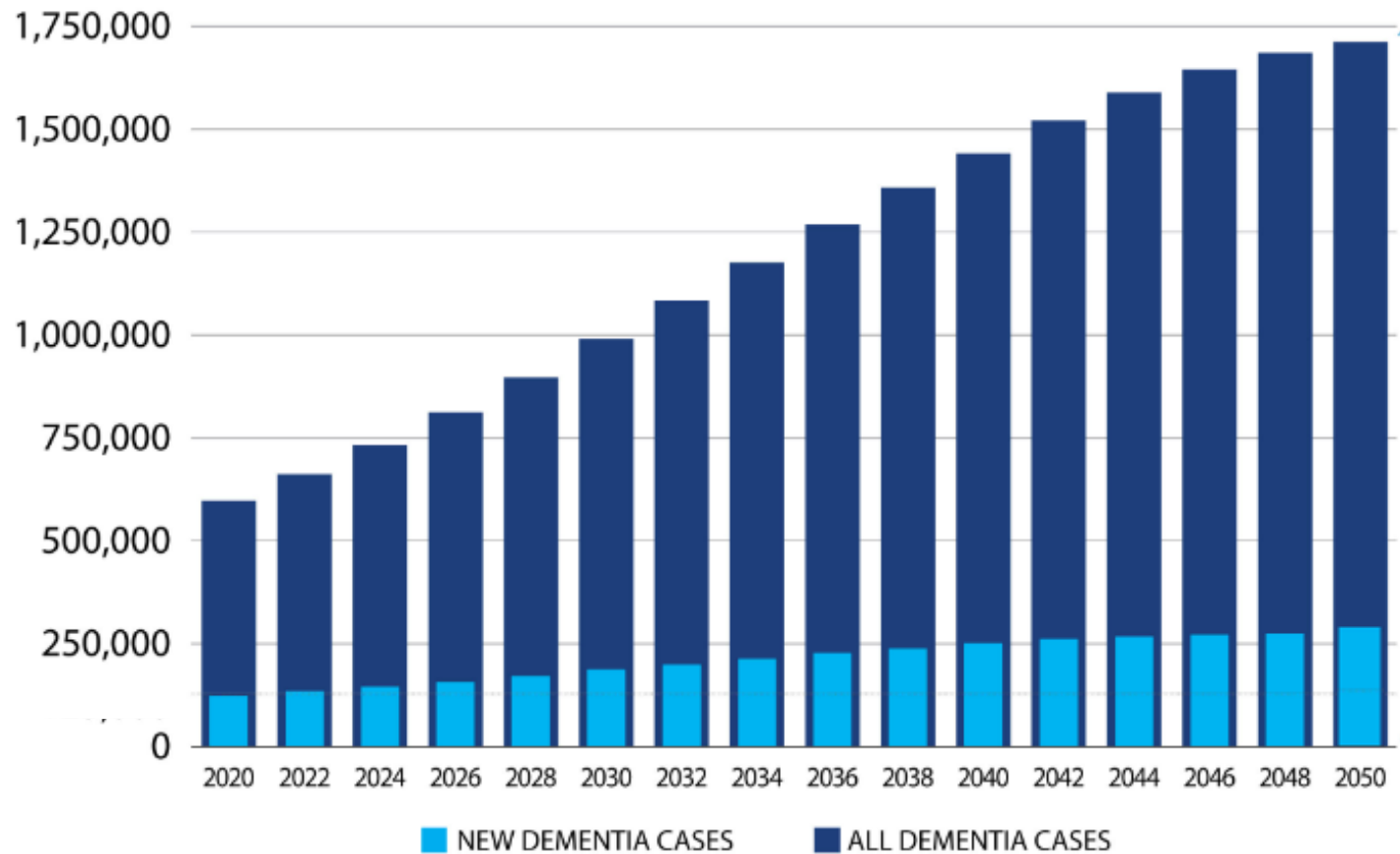
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## Number of younger workers (aged 25 to 34) and older workers (aged 55 and over), 1996-2018



Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 1996-2018

## Number of people living with dementia and the number of new cases of dementia per year in Canada, 2020 to 2050



Prevalence of mild cognitive impairment is also rising, presently impacting between 15-20% of the global population

Issues with measurement and diagnosis limit our understanding of the impact of mild cognitive impairment

(Casagrande, et al., (2022); Landmark Study (2022) Alzheimer's Society of Canada)



**Age** is a primary risk factor for developing mild cognitive impairment or dementia. As the risk of developing these conditions rises exponentially with age, and the number of older adults in the workforce rises, the number of people coping with symptoms of these conditions “on the job” will likewise rise







**Rosemary  
Leslie**



**Amanda  
Bull**



**Sabah  
Rasheed**



# **Breaking the stigma**

## **Navigating mild cognitive impairment at work**

Presented by: Rosemary Leslie  
Financial Wellness and Employment Symposium  
October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023



## **Hidden barriers: The Intersection of Ageism and Cognitive Impairment Stigma in the Workplace**

Presented by Sabah Rasheed, Wilfrid Laurier University  
AGE-WELL Annual Conference, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Symposium on Financial Wellness and Employment



Canada's technology and aging network



Cognitive Health and Dementia

Financial Wellness and Employment

# Our Team



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Empower employers with the information, skills, and technologies to co-create affordable, sustainable and inclusive workspaces for people with mild cognitive impairment and dementia

- Hardware
- Software
- Policies
- Culture change
- Education and awareness
- Built environment
- Legislation
- Transportation



# CASE STUDY





# Research Questions

- ✓ What are the perspectives of workers, human resources, and management towards workers with disabilities related to mild cognitive impairment or dementia and what factors impact their response?
- ✓ What technologies are, have been, are planned to be used, or are needed by employers to accommodate people with disabilities related to cognitive impairment to remain employed, transition to new roles, or exit the workplace.

# Methods

## Participants

Eligible participants were any English or French speaking employees with knowledge of the organizations' operations, strategies and culture - no other exclusion criteria

## Data Collection

- 5-minute online demographic survey
- In-depth, semi-structured 60-minute interview

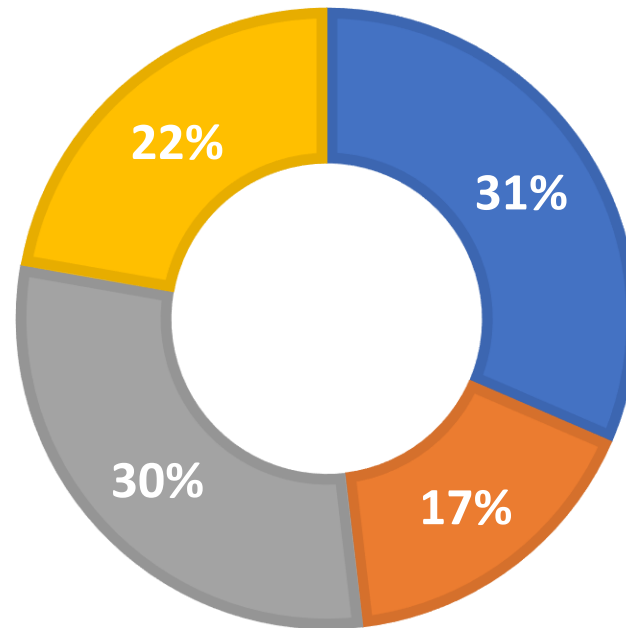
# Demographics Survey

	Employer 1	Employer 2
<b>Size of organization</b>	40,000+ employees	100, 000+ employees
<b>Type of organization</b>	Federally regulated	Provincially regulated
<b>Number of participants</b>	N=56	N=39
<b>Mean participant age</b>	~50 (age range 21-68)	~48 (age range 29-65)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	~74% Caucasian	~74% Caucasian
<b>Education</b>	~65% BA or higher ~24% College degree	~59% BA or higher ~28% College degree
<b>Sex</b>	~76% Female	~64% Female

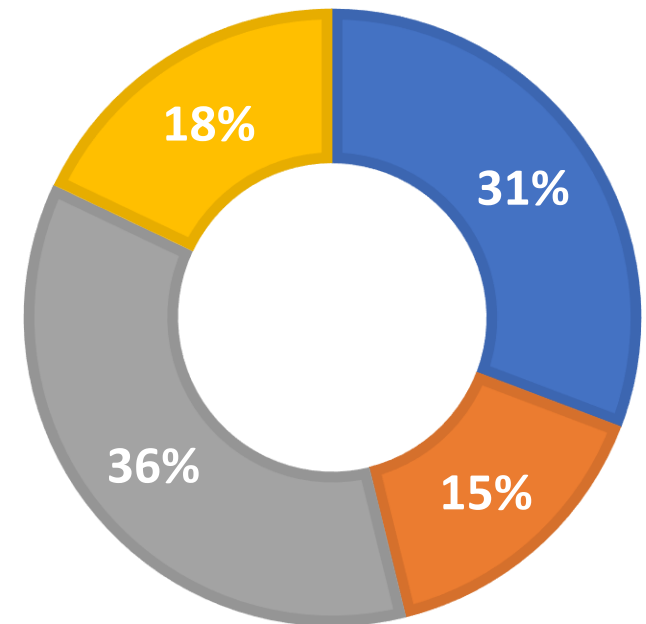
# Job Categories

- Employee
- Senior Employee
- Management
- Executive

Employer 1



Employer 2



# Culture of secrecy around age

“

*To be honest with you, there is the unconscious bias. I can tell you I am very careful how many people I share my age with. People will ask me, when do you think you'll retire? It's always I have no idea.*

Sr. Employee  
E2 20

“

*I've heard people say, don't announce your retirement too early because people will stop giving you interesting and challenging things to do.*

Executive  
E2 24

“

*I kind of feel sometimes you're not as sharp as you used to be, and you're not as quick as you used to be, and sometimes you forgot things...Quickly, I can cover it up, with all the [work] experience.*

Sr. Employee  
E2 35

“

*Once she announced her date of retirement... they took away her responsibility...they gave her things that are very mundane and redundant. She felt all her experience of work and knowledge and acquired wisdom over the years was not being put to use.*

Manager  
E1 43

# Technology is a double-edged sword

“

*She's in her early mid 60s. They basically sat her in front of a computer and said, "Oh, do all the training." She quit after a week and a half because she was like, "This is not for me. I'm stupid. I don't understand anything*

Executive  
E1 35

“

*We had a senior employee and there was a new computer program that came in that she was struggling with. The manager at the time just said, "Maybe it's time to retire." Not giving any coaching, not giving additional training*

Sr. Employee  
E2 20

“

*I see a lot of [skilled health workers] that weren't planning necessarily to retire just getting out because of the huge IT challenges ...The impact on [their] mental health has been really big*

Manager  
E2 27

“

*She was probably 70 years old...she was one of the most innovative and up-to-date on technologies that I've probably ever interviewed. She was terrific, and we talked about the need for us to check our bias about the fact that she's a lot older than what we normally think of*

Executive  
E2 24

# Intersectionality

“

*I would be worried --  
I'm speaking  
personally. If I at a  
certain age said, "Oh, I  
think I'm having  
trouble." You just  
wonder if your  
colleague would say,  
"Well, maybe it's time  
for you to retire"*

Executive  
E1 10

“

*I have seen  
employers say, "Hey,  
guess what, this  
person can't work.  
Tell them to take  
medical retirement  
...they even use their  
age and saying, "Oh,  
this person is getting  
older. Yes, she's not  
able to perform. She  
could just retire"*

Employee  
E1 12

“

*I just assumed that  
if a person got into  
the stage in their  
life where they  
were starting to  
"slip" then it would  
be, bye-bye and  
have a nice life.*

Employee  
E2 30

Failure to address  
these issue poses  
a risk to both  
employees and  
organizations



# Key Insights



Cognitive competency of older workers, whatever the cause, is a recognized disability. Ageist views will deprive older workers of the right to consideration for accommodation



Internalized ageism - the fact that this is an invisible disability means that some workers think that a clinical condition is "just aging" and will not seek an accommodation



Employers do not think there is a problem because older workers with cognitive impairment will often leave rather than be accommodated for an "old person's disease"



Technology has the potential to change this for older workers in both good and bad ways:

- Smart Technologies
- ubiquitous monitoring
- Training

# Thank you

## Social Media



**Website**

[www.cogatwork.ca](http://www.cogatwork.ca)



**Twitter**

Handle: @CogAtWork



# Summary & Questions