



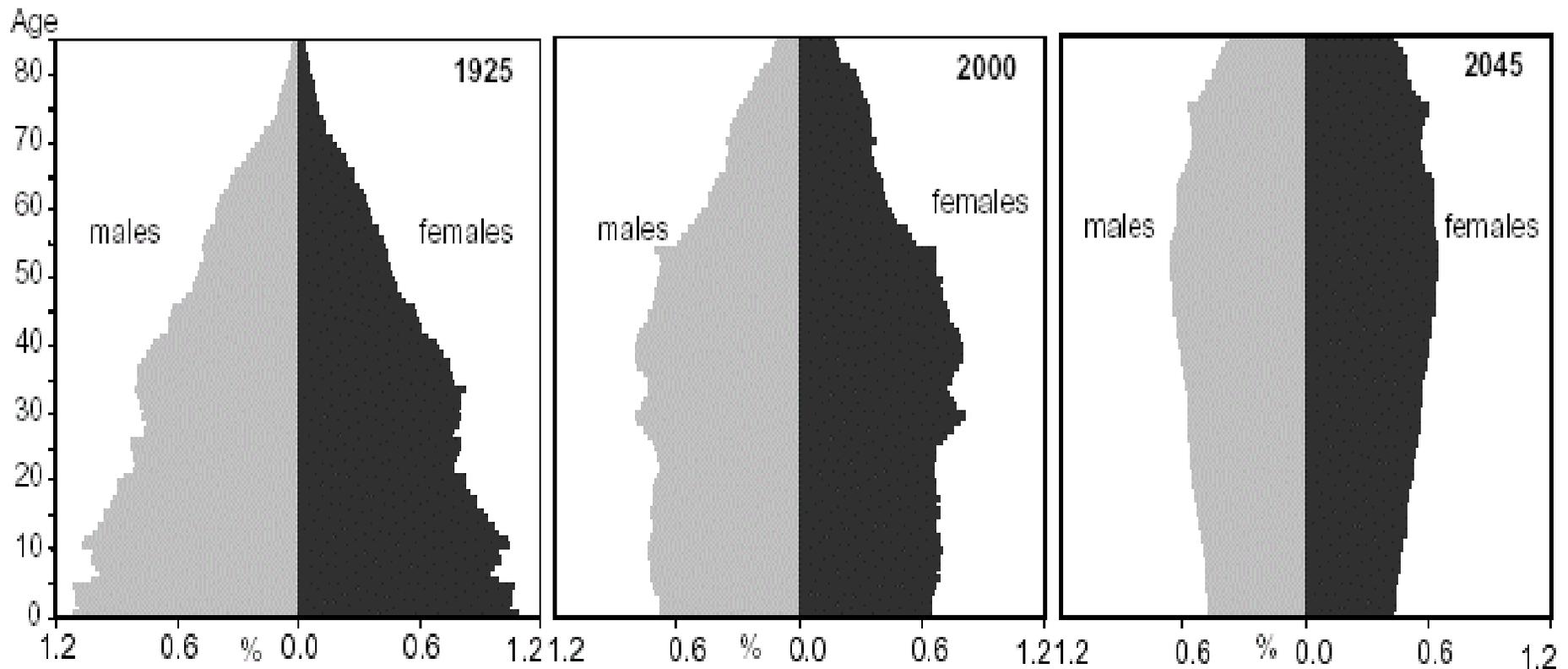
Skill development for older workers

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Effective skills development for a diverse older workforce (45+)

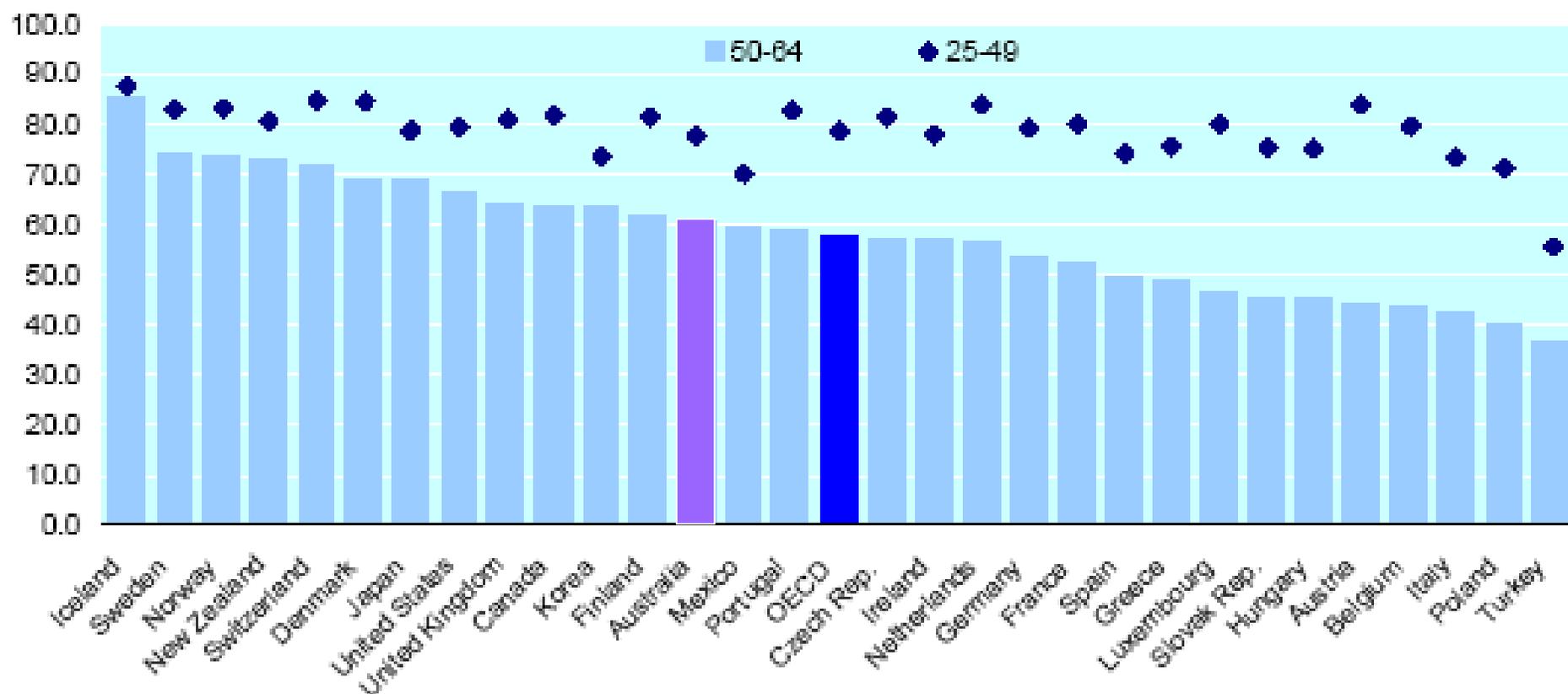
- Data and previous studies on:
 - ▶ older people and work
 - ▶ older people and participation in education and training
- 7 Case studies of skills development for older people in, or seeking, paid employment

Changes in the age structure of the population



From pyramid to coffin- shape

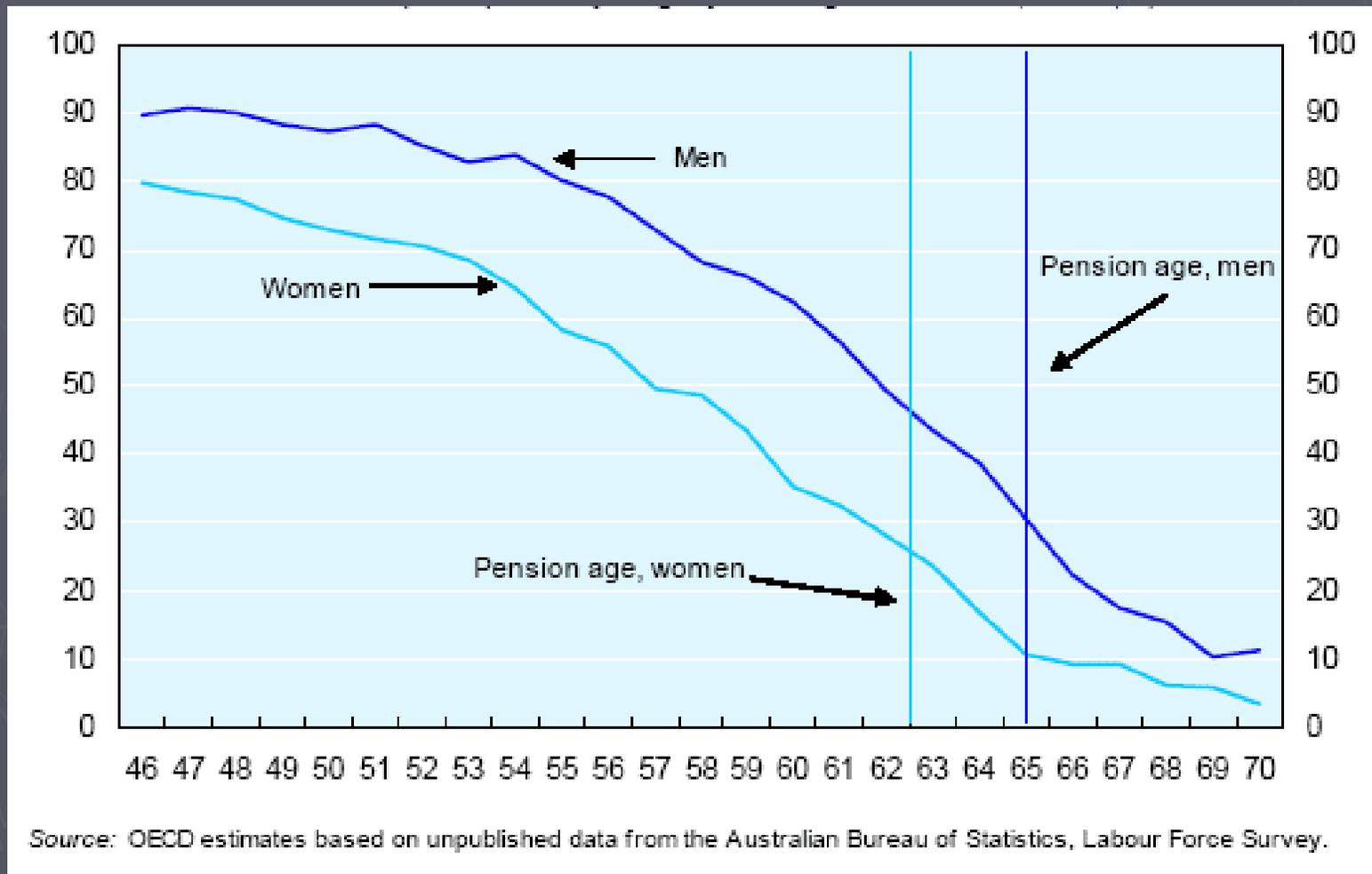
Percentage of the population aged 25-49 or 50-64 who are employed, 2004



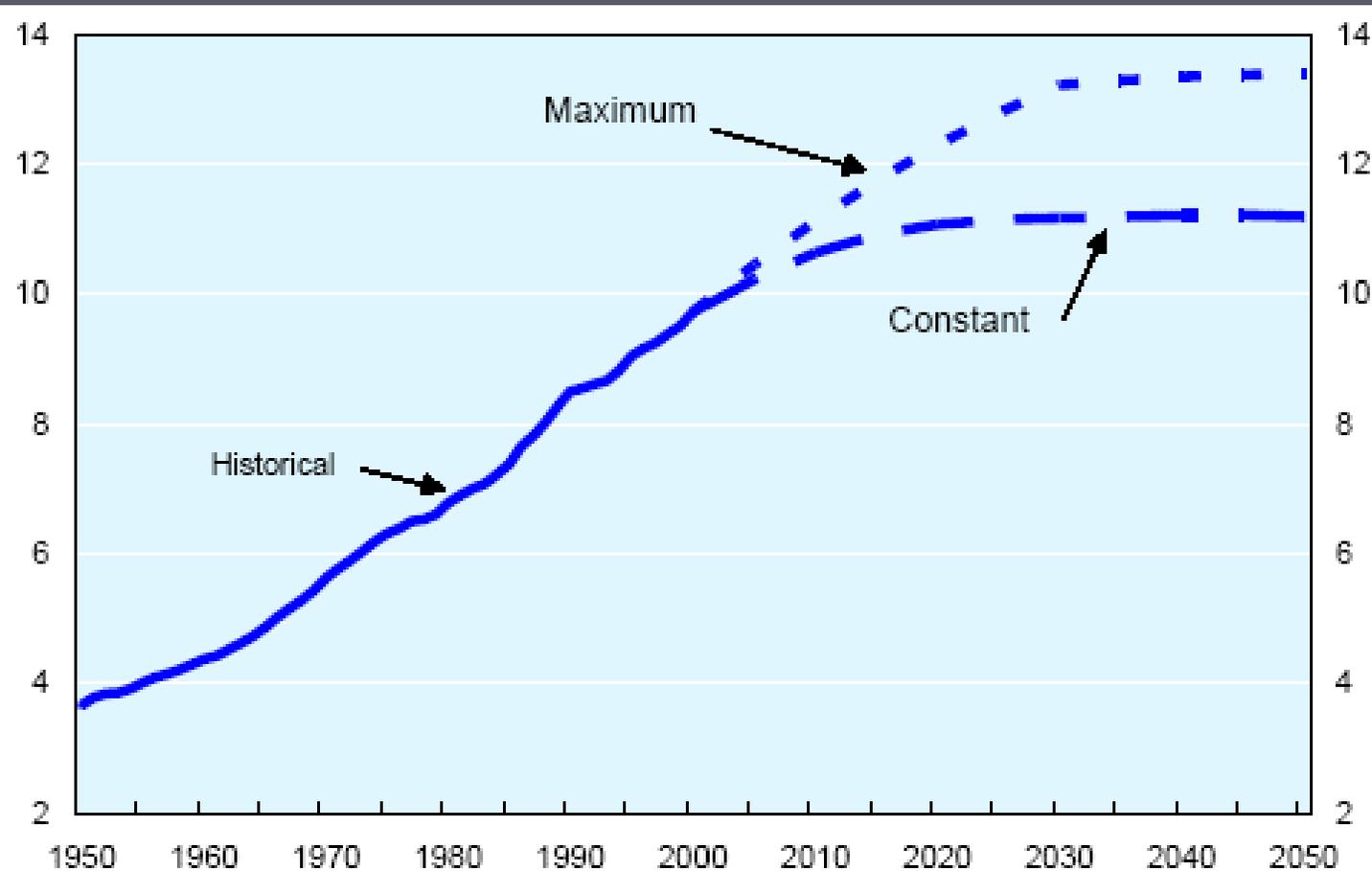
Source: OECD

On average in OECD countries, less than 60% of 50 - 64 year olds are in paid employment, compared with 75% of those aged 25-49.

Labour force participation by single year of age in Australia 2003 (%)



Projections of the Australian labour force



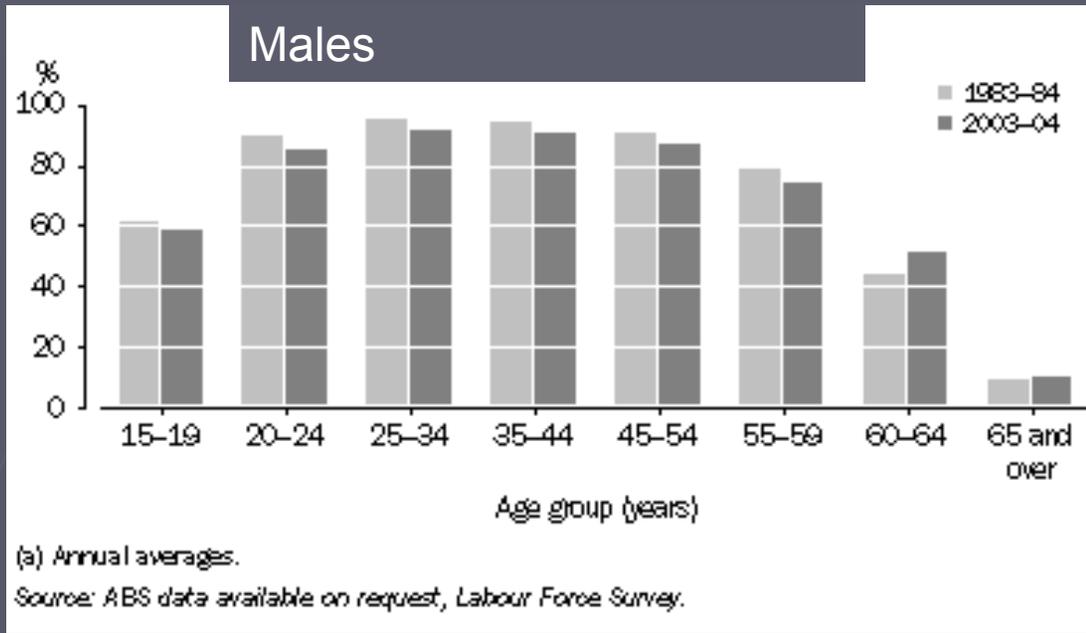
a) The constant scenario assumes that current participation rates by five-year age group and gender remain constant over the period to 2050. The maximum scenario applies the maximum participation rates (for older workers 50 and above) in the OECD area by five-year age group and gender from 2030 to 2050, with a gradual adjustment over the period 2000-2030 to reach these maximum rates.

Source: OECD, *Ageing and Employment Policies: Australia*.

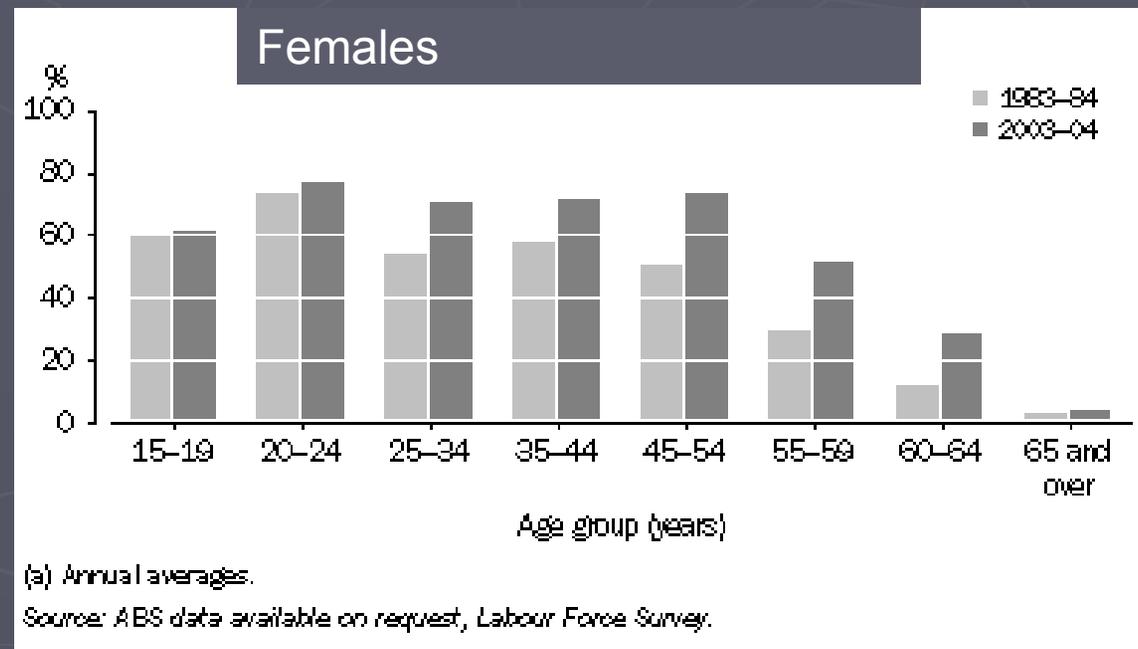
Policy changes to promote workforce participation by older people

- ▶ Remove incentives to early retirement (changes in pension and superannuation arrangements)
- ▶ Counter age discrimination

Changes in labour force participation 1983/4 – 2003/4



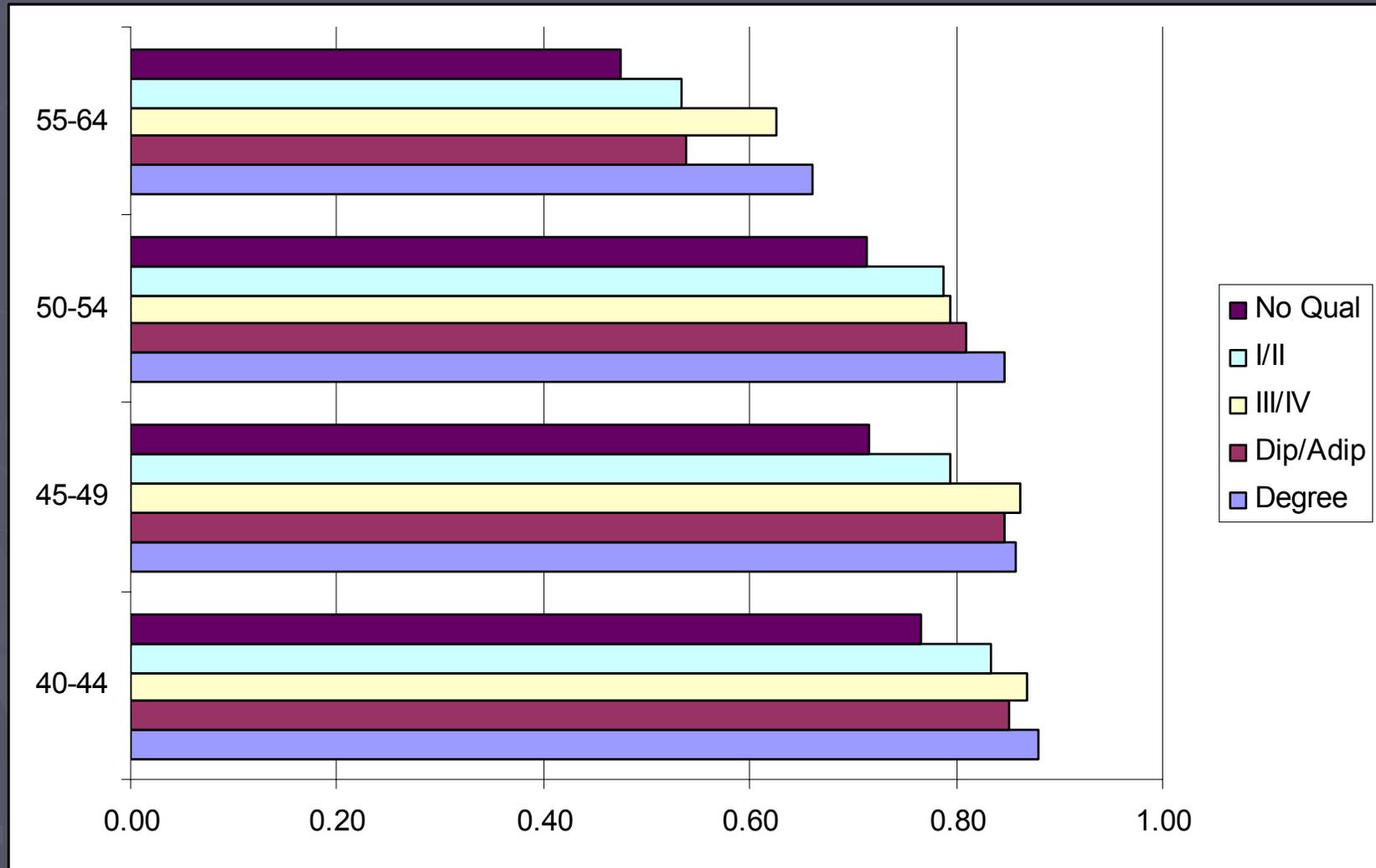
Participation by older workers has increased, particularly among women



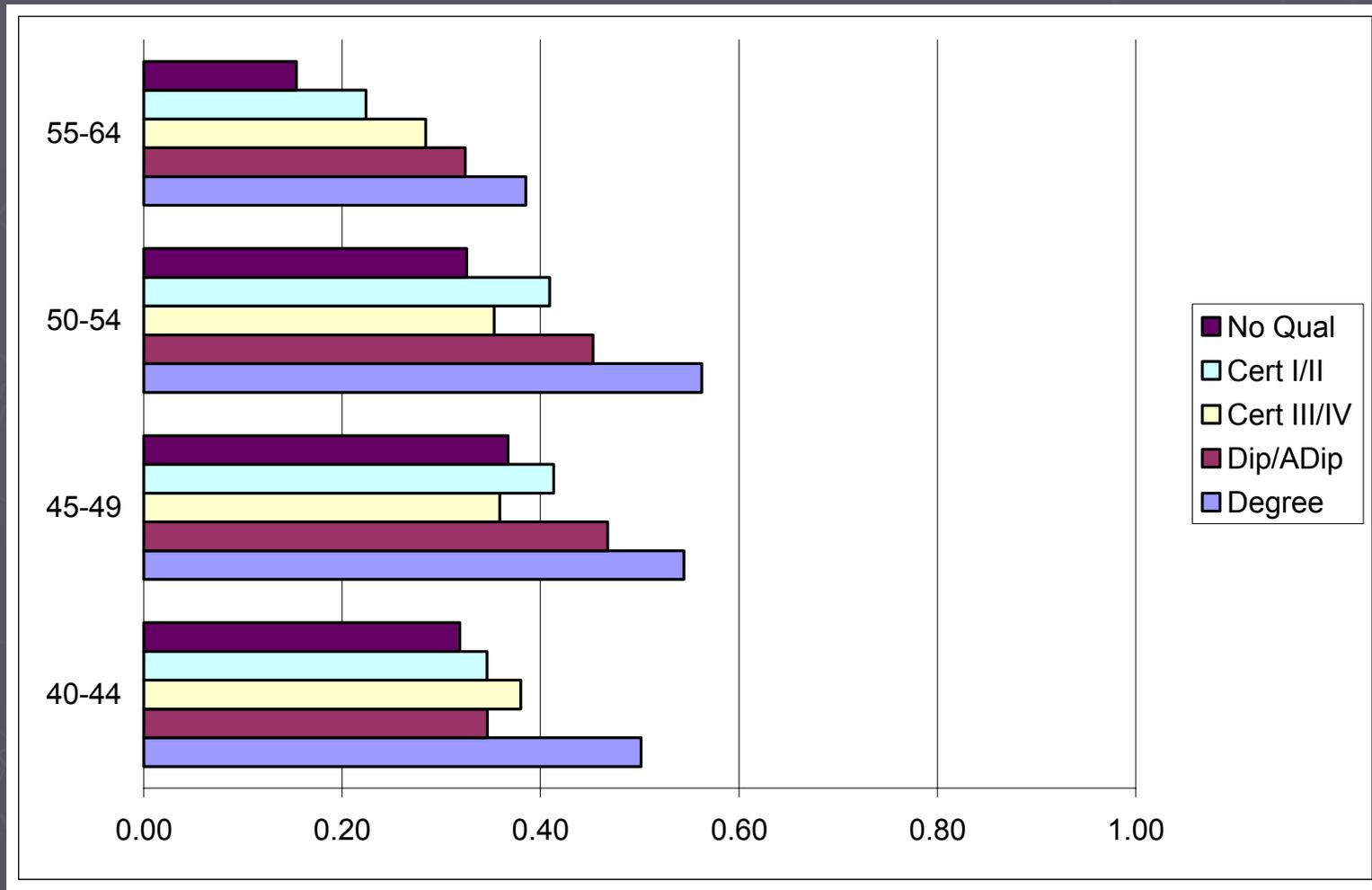
Education and Training

- ▶ Higher levels of education attainment are associated with greater labour force engagement
- ▶ Education attainment is growing in population
- ▶ 'Flow through' as currently highly educated cohorts age
- ▶ May be possible to slow the decline in the growth of labour supply by increasing opportunities

Males in full-time work by age and qualification Australia 2004



Females in fulltime work by age and qualification 2004



Occupations

Occupations with the largest proportions of mature age workers tend to be those requiring higher skill levels.

In 2003-4 the occupation groups with the largest proportion of workers aged 45-64 years were:

- ▶ managers and administrators (47%)
- ▶ advanced clerical and service workers (38%)
- ▶ professionals (37%)

Education attainment – older males

Data point to three main groups:

- ▶ A small group of older males with qualifications for associate professional/professional occupations
- ▶ A larger group with qualifications for a skilled occupation
- ▶ A much larger group of older males with no formal school or post-school qualifications.

Education attainment – older females

Two large groups:

- ▶ A very large group of older women with no formal qualifications
- ▶ A smaller but still large group of women with qualifications for associate professional/professional occupations

There are large groups of older workers with no formal school or post-school qualifications.

Employer-provided training

The probability of receiving employer-provided training is highest for workers aged in their late 20s and early 30s and lowest for the oldest members of the workforce.

Barriers to education and training for older workers

Myths about older workers, eg

- that productivity declines with age.
- that older workers lack the drive of younger colleagues.
- that older workers are just waiting for the clock to tick over.
- that training older workers is a waste of time, because they will retire soon anyway.
- that older workers frequently miss work for health reasons.

Views of Managers

Managers viewed investment in training as worthwhile for all age-groups,

but expected the return on that investment to decline with age.

They did not believe that the skills of older workers would increase after training as much as those of younger workers and they expected that older workers would not remain with the firm for as long. They appeared to hold the view that it was more sensible economically to train younger workers than older ones

(Ranzjin 2005).

Views of older people

While older workers who are unemployed or marginally attached to the labour force recognise the value of training, they have concerns about a lack of suitable training and feelings of uncertainty about employment possibilities.

When they do undertake skills development they tend to do this outside, rather than within, the VET system

(Chappell et al 2003).

Barriers – VET policy and practice

- ▶ Employment support not targeted towards older disadvantaged workers
- ▶ Education and training options not targeted towards older disadvantaged workers
- ▶ Pathways to employment for older workers not clearly established or resourced
- ▶ Needs of the group unsuited to interventions delivered by a single service
- ▶ Few modes of training delivery specific to the group.

(Dawe and Elvins 2006).

Case studies - issues

- ▶ What factors contribute to the effectiveness of skills development for older workers?
- ▶ How important is responsiveness to special needs e.g. relating to characteristics such as their cultural and language background?

Case studies

- ▶ A 5 star hotel
- ▶ A utility company
- ▶ Building skills for men
- ▶ Retail/hospitality for unemployed older people
- ▶ Engineering skills for older men and migrants
- ▶ Planning for a career change
- ▶ Regional study

Program outcomes

- ▶ Many unemployed individuals obtained employment.
- ▶ Many participants increased in confidence, self-esteem, and life skills.
- ▶ Some participants went on to further study.
- ▶ Those already in employment were able to take on new roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ Enterprises were able to reduce costs and increase efficiency.
- ▶ Benefits to communities.

Success factors -structure

- ▶ Support
 - Funding
 - Senior management
- ▶ Key staff - skills + rapport
- ▶ Partnerships between organisations
- ▶ Combine training with work

Effective work-related skill development for diverse older people is built on:

- ▶ An understanding of learner needs, characteristics and goals
- ▶ An understanding of employer and workplace needs and expectations
- ▶ Good practice – adult learning

- ▶ Begins where participants are – builds on the skills and experiences that learners bring.
- ▶ Enables success – ensures that all participants can complete.
- ▶ Provides additional assistance and support where required, e.g. with English language skills.
- ▶ Builds-in flexibility to accommodate emerging needs – so that aspects of the program can be changed quickly and easily.
- ▶ Encourages collaboration – using mentoring and team work to enhance learning, through the sharing of experiences and knowledge.
- ▶ Acts on feedback

Meeting the needs of sub-groups:

Some modifications may be necessary to meet the specific needs of particular sub-groups, but these are likely to be small.

No significant changes in skill development programs are required where good practice principles for adult learning are adopted.

These guide appropriate responses, ensure that the required flexibility is built in, and that learning is enjoyable and productive.



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