

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

DATE

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VENUE

ESRI, Whitaker Square,
Sir John Rogerson's Quay,
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AUTHORS

Ivan Privalko
Helen Russell
Bertrand Maître



Background

- Extending working lives: key policy goal in Europe and Ireland (DPER, 2016; European Foundation, 2012)
- The EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014–2020 includes ‘taking account of the ageing of the EU’s workforce’ as a major health & safety challenge.
- Workers leave employment for reasons other than illness/injury, including family obligations and voluntary retirement (King and Pickard, 2013; Warren and Kelloway, 2010)

Health & Work related illness and older workers

- Work-related musculoskeletal disorders are more common among older age groups (Russell et al., 2016; EU-OSHA, 2016a).
- Work-related stress, anxiety, depression is lowest among workers over 65, peaks at 45-54 yrs then drops (Russell et al. 2016).
- 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
- Social construction of age – stereotypes/policies

Work related injury and older workers

- Younger workers and inexperienced workers are the most at risk of workplace injury (Crawford et al., 2010; Khanzode et al., 2012).
- Irish research finds injury declines with age, even when differences in sector & occupation taken into account (Russell et al., 2015)
- Older workers over-represented in fatal injuries (HSA reports)
- Injury rates are lower for older workers, but accidents involving older workers are likely to result in more serious injuries, permanent disabilities or death when compared to younger workers (EU OSHA, 2016a; Robertson and Tracy, 1998).

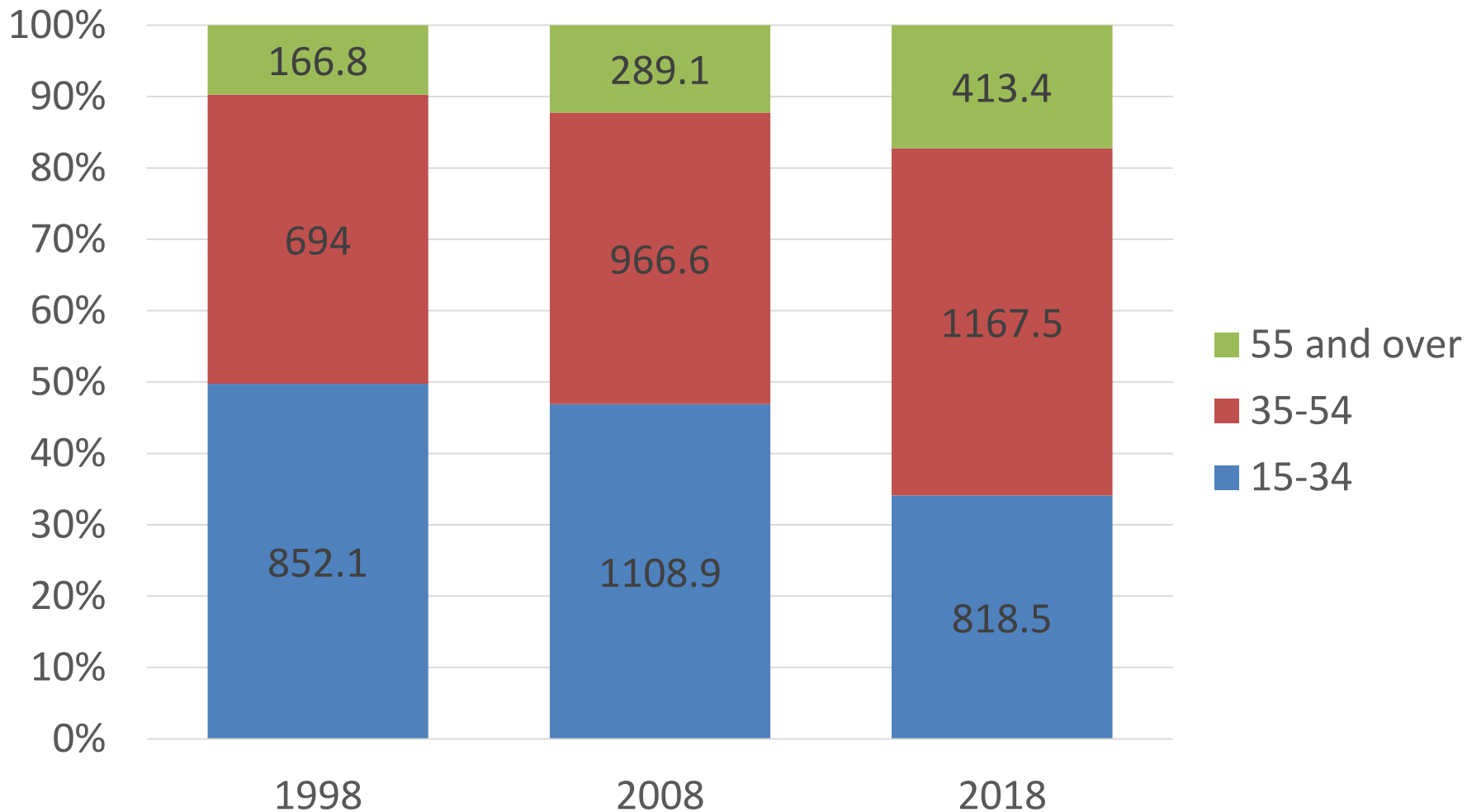
Research Questions

- *What are the working conditions of older workers? How do they feel about their conditions and their prospects to continue work?*
- *Which sectors and occupations are best at retaining older workers?*
- *What are the reasons workers give for early exit? Do these reasons differ by sector or occupation?*
- *Are older workers at greater risk of work fatalities?*

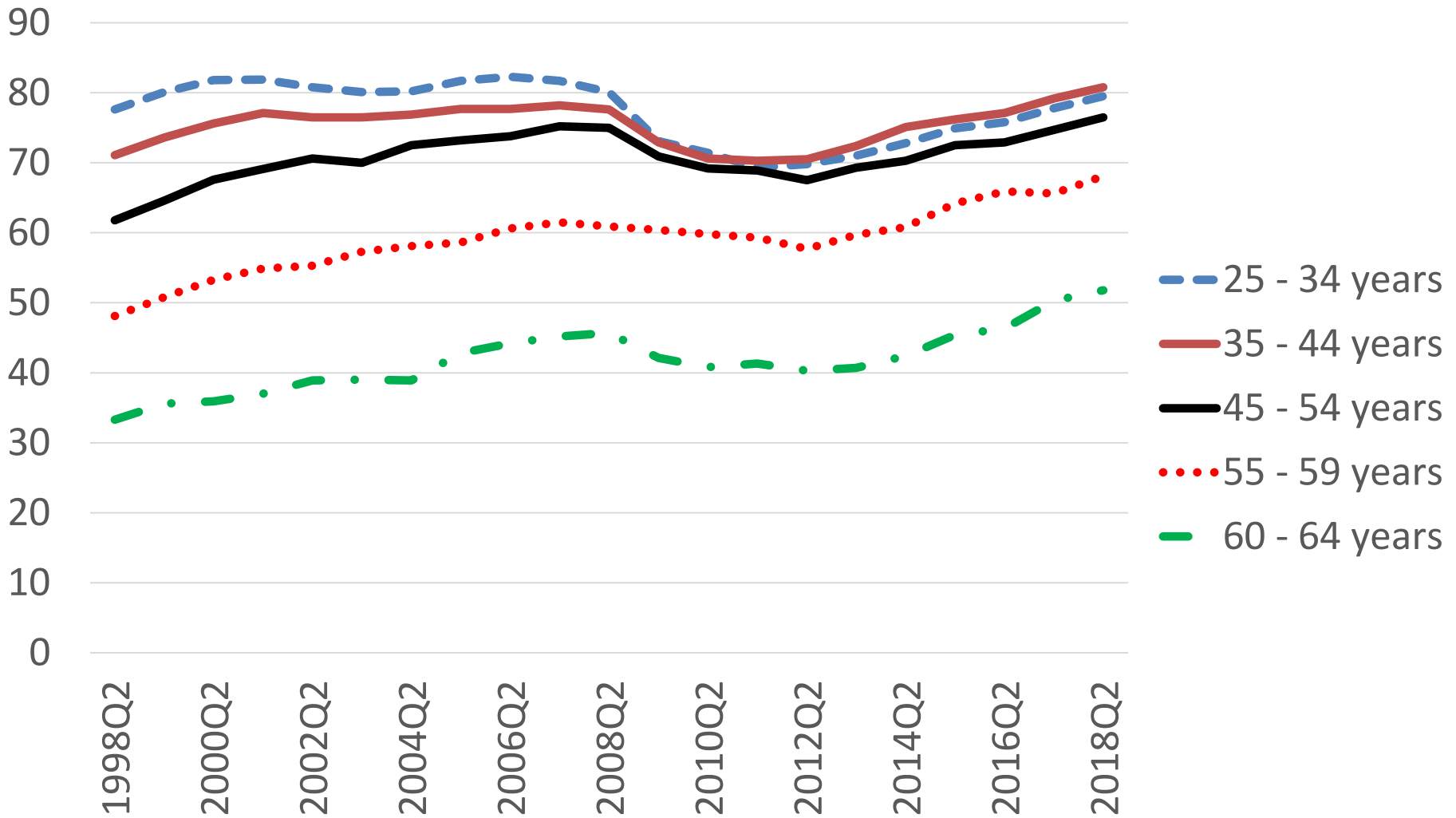
Data and analysis

- 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.

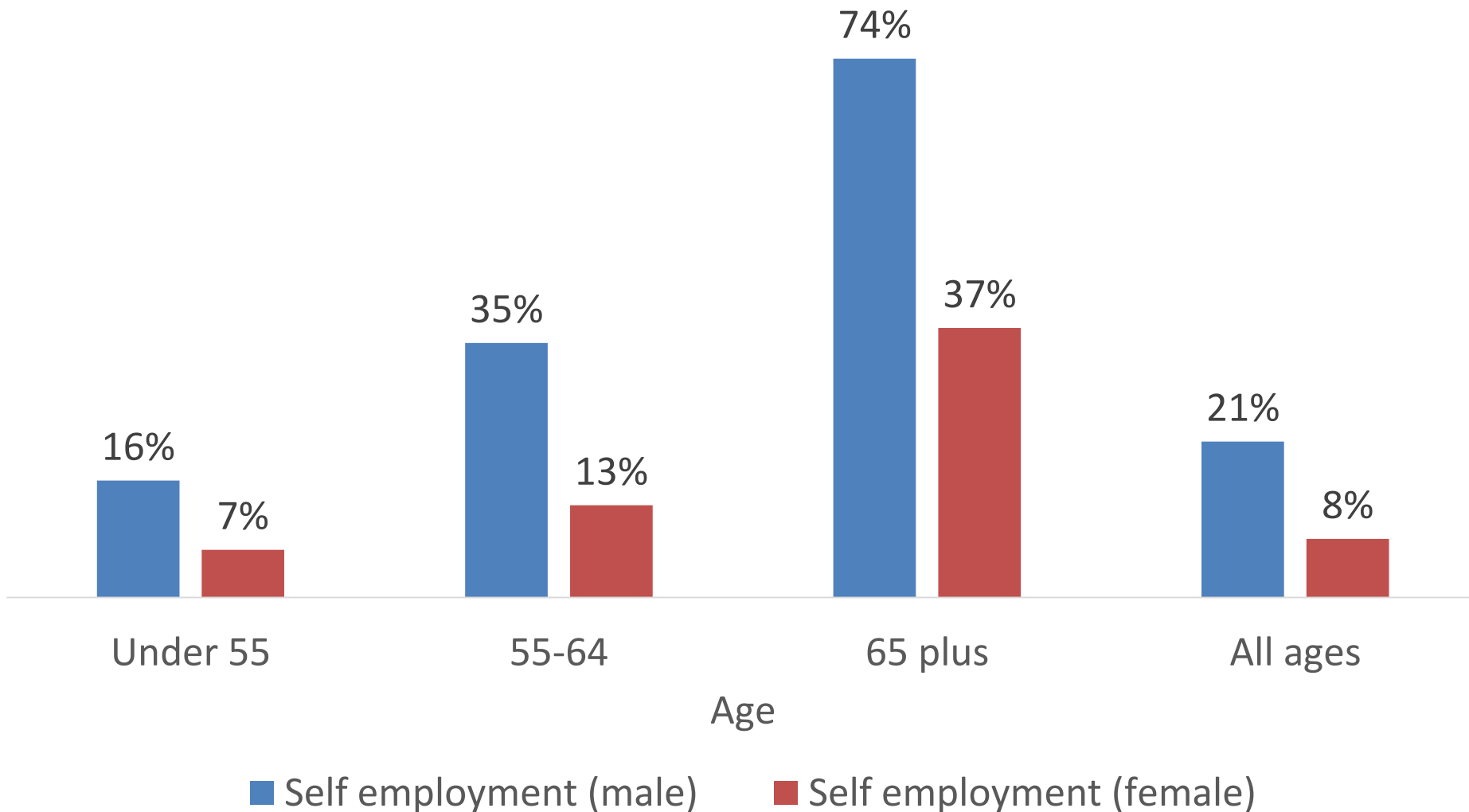
Age composition of Irish Labour Force (% & N), LFS



ILO Employment rate by Age (%), LFS



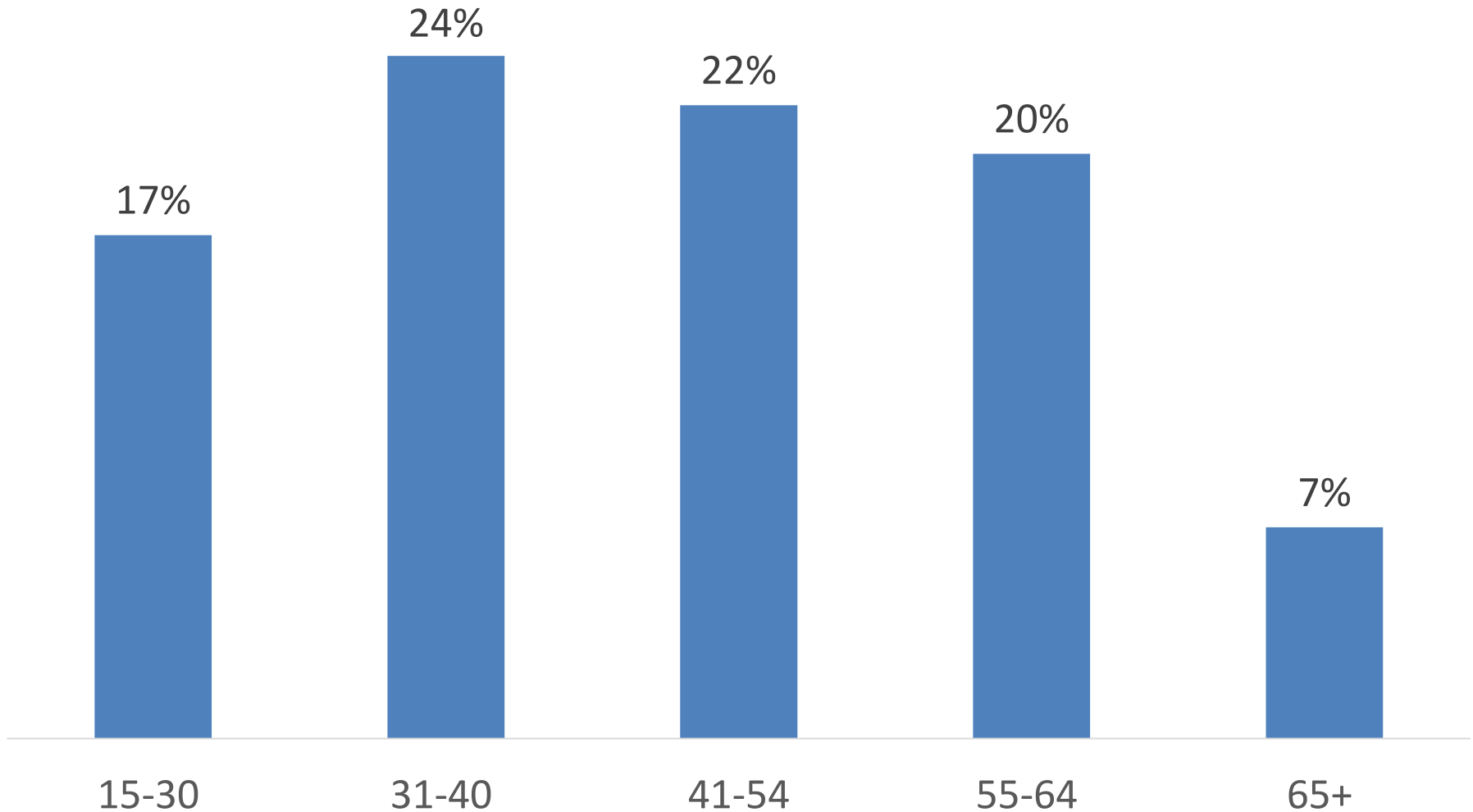
Self employment by age and gender, LFS 2018



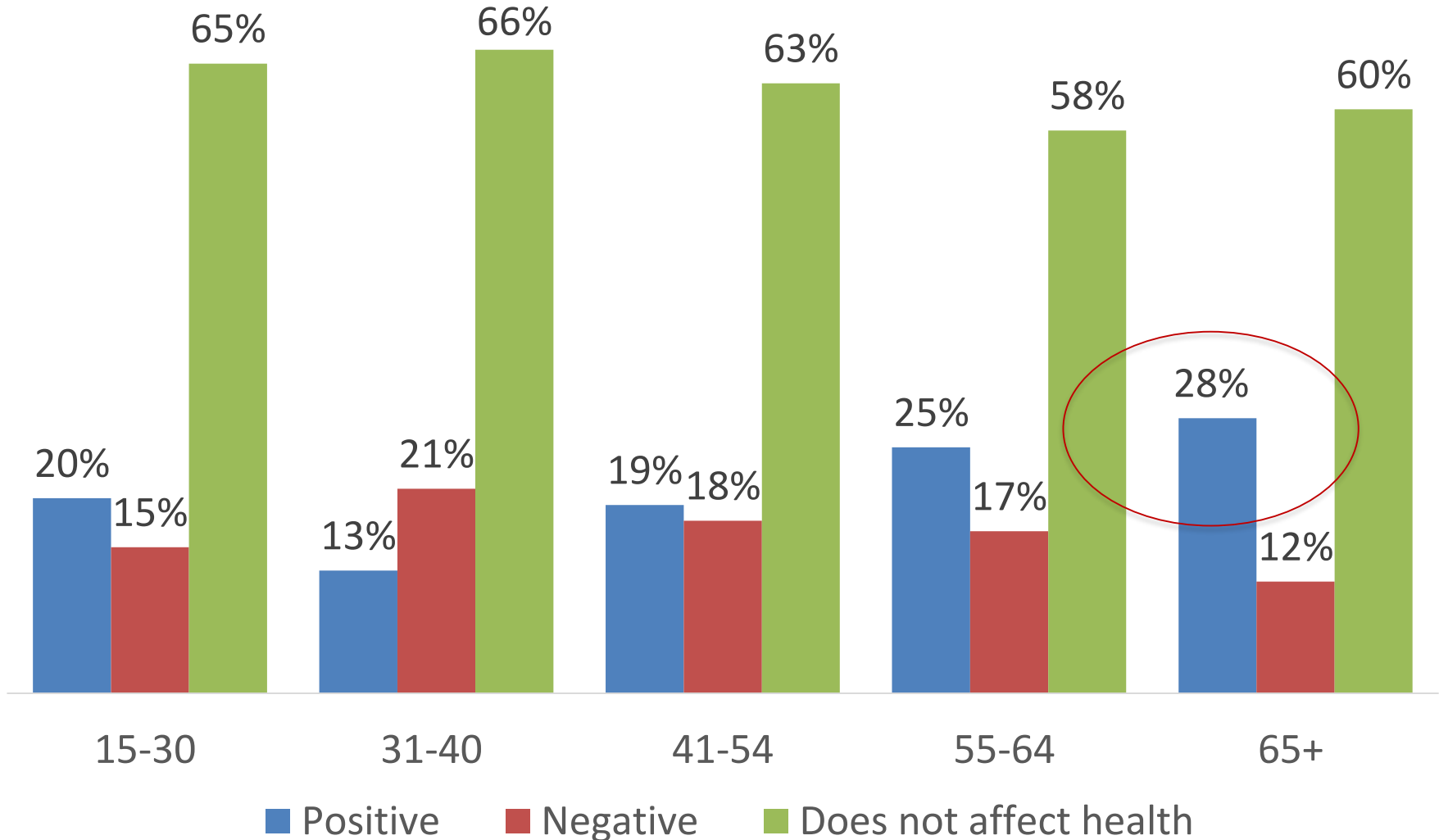
Polarised working time among older male workers; Reduced hours for older female workers

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

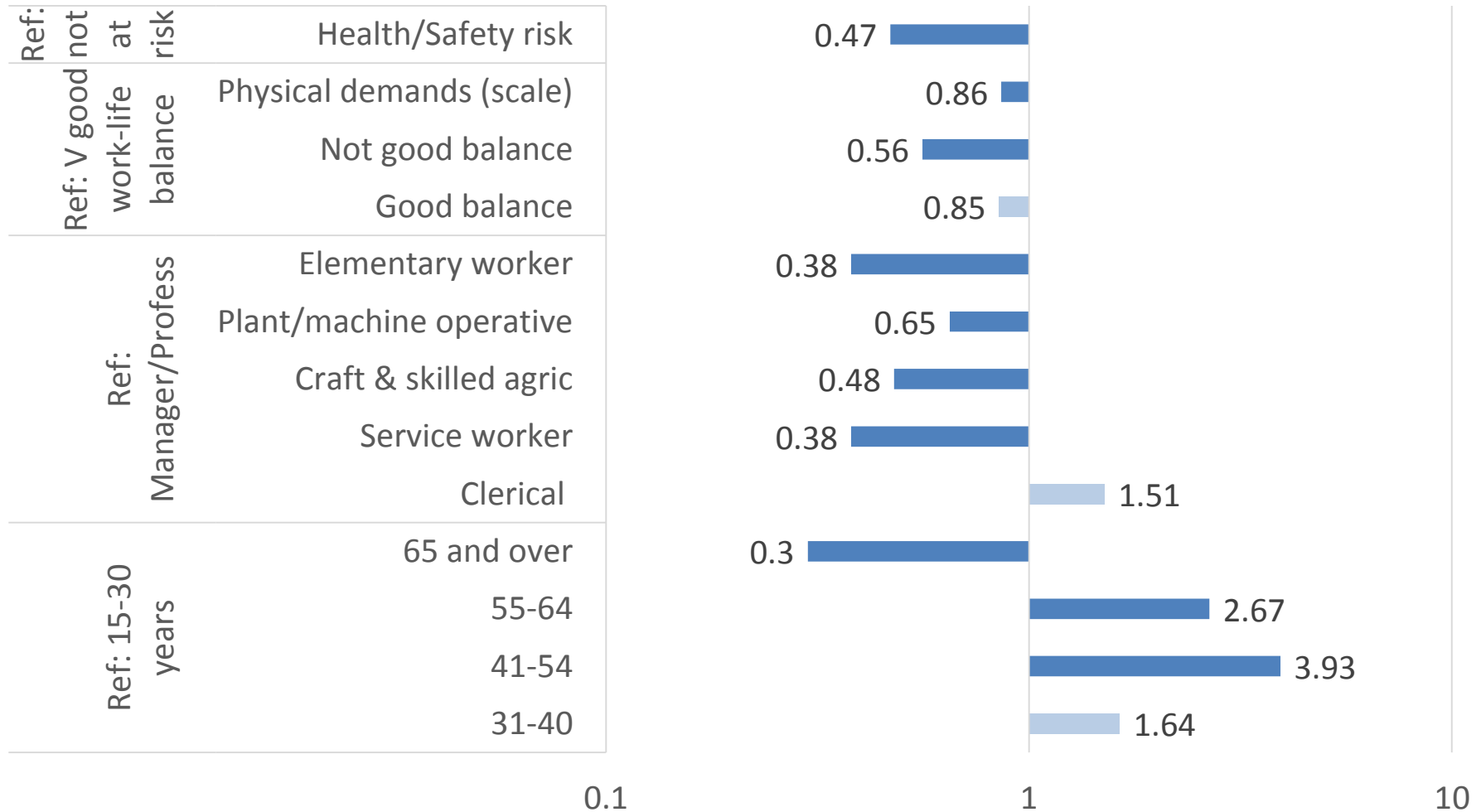
Health and safety “at risk” due to work by age, EWCS 2015



Perceived effects of work on Health by age, EWCS 2015



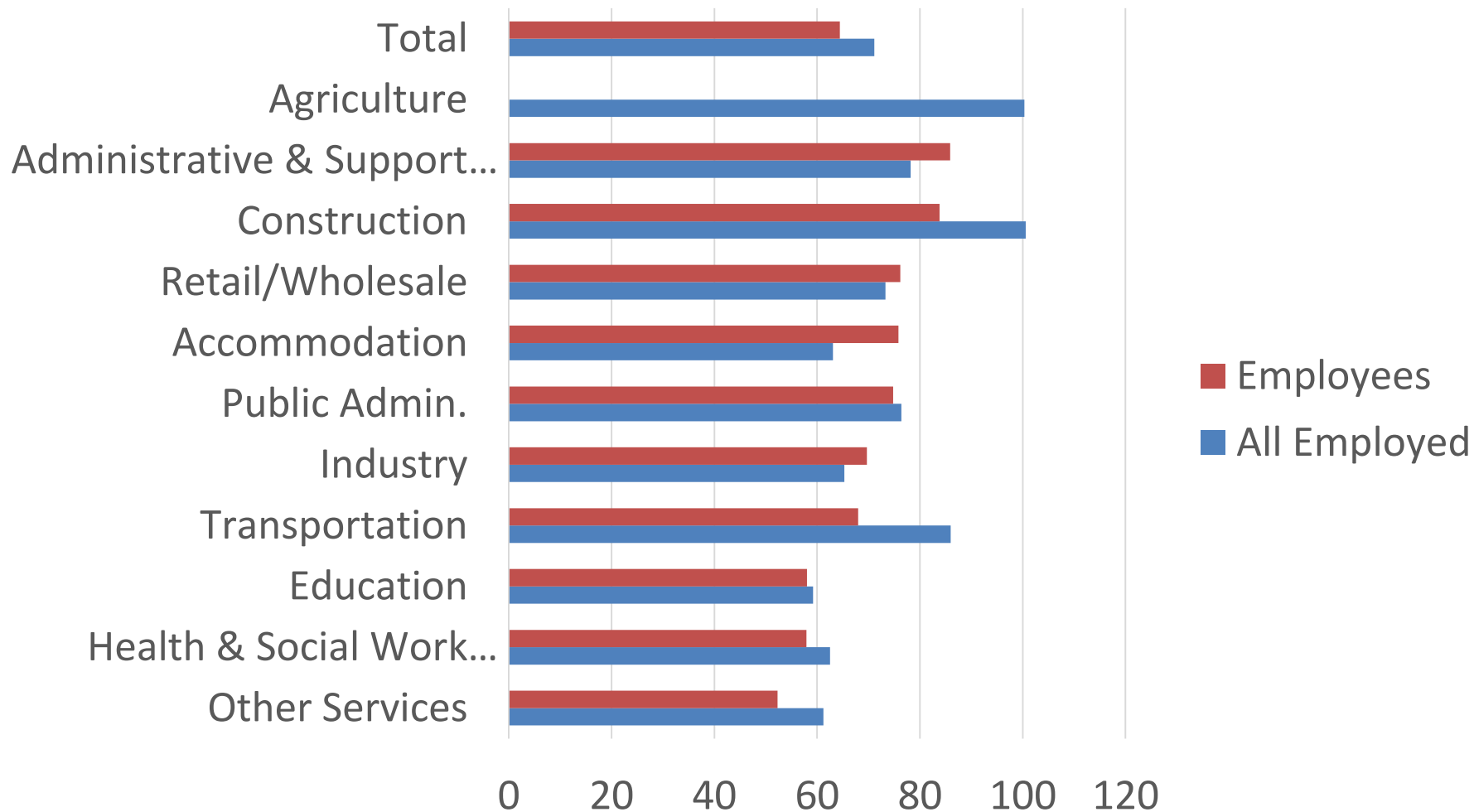
Odds of agreeing able to work till 60 (or another 5 years if over 55) in current or similar Job, EWCS 2015



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



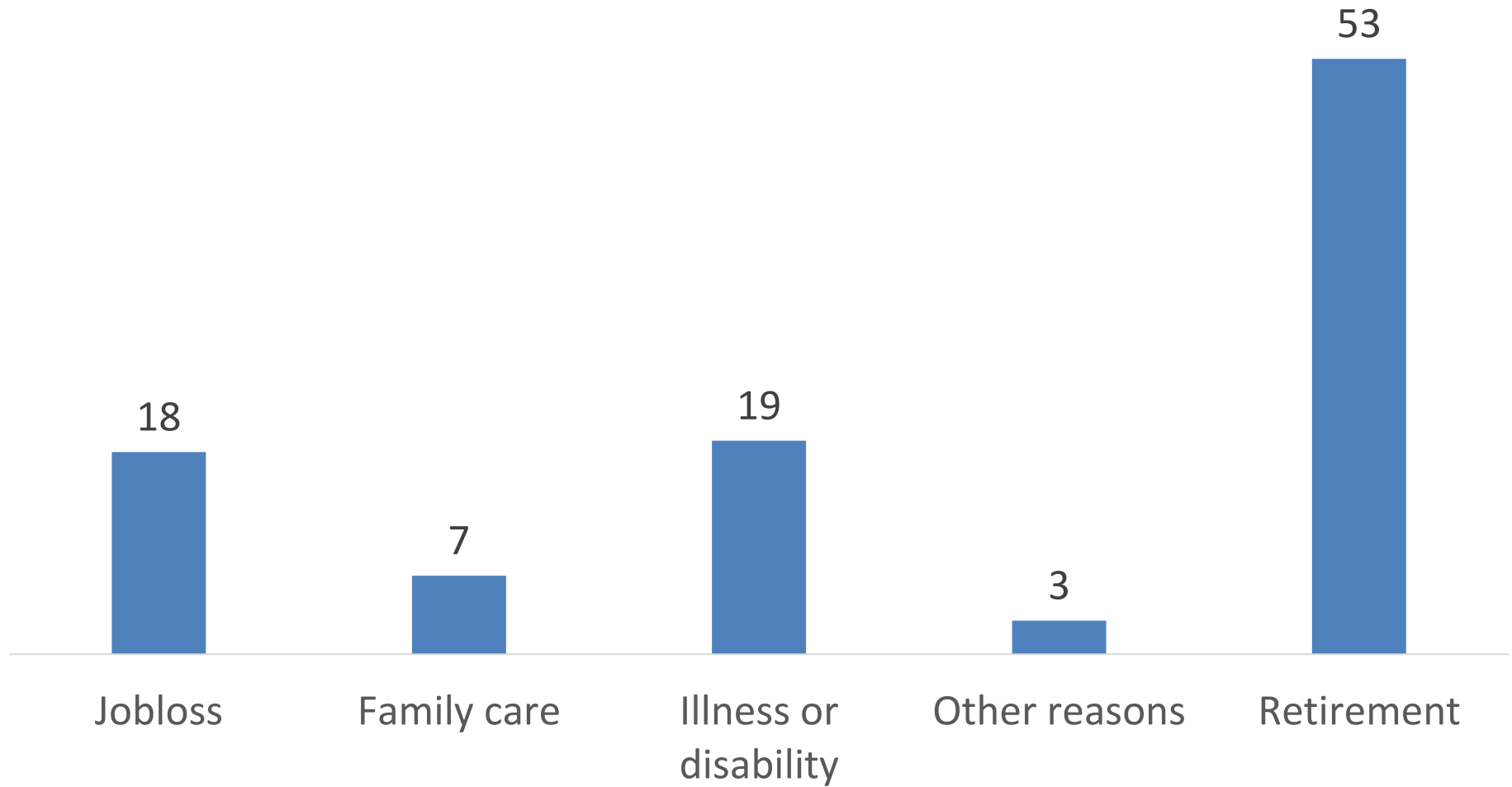
Retention rates by occupation 60-64 year olds, LFS 2018



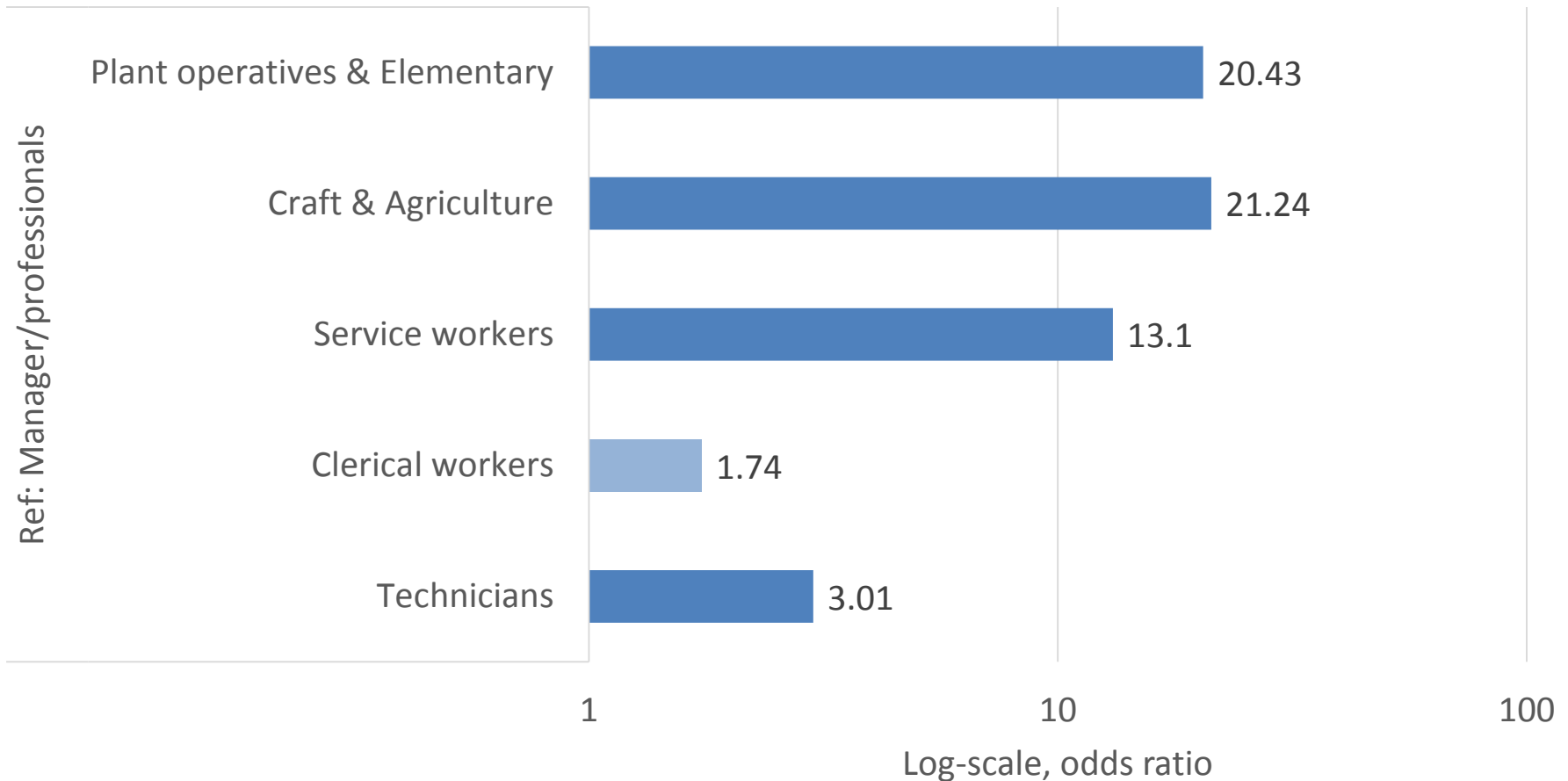
Early exit

- 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

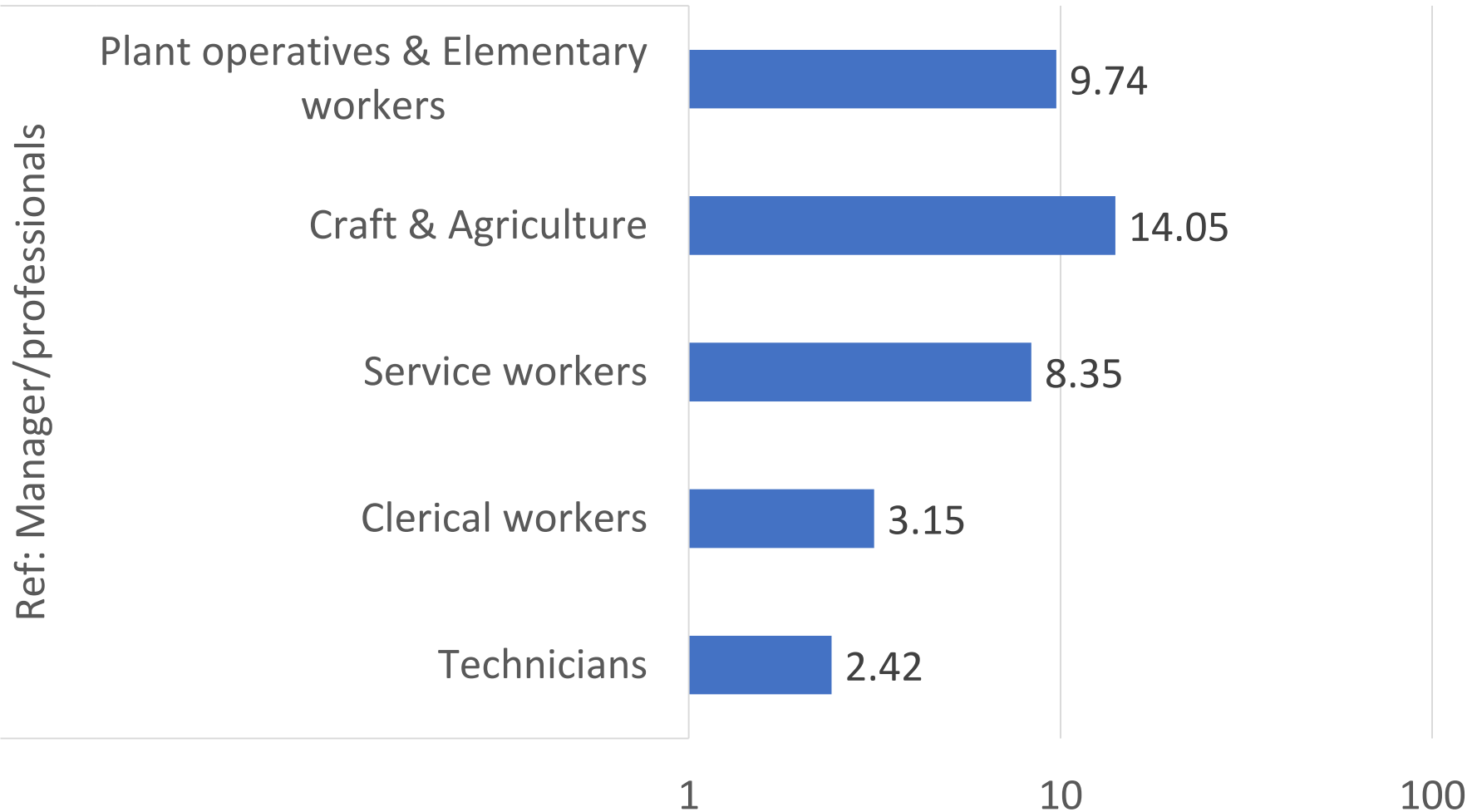
Reason for early exit (%), LFS 2018



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

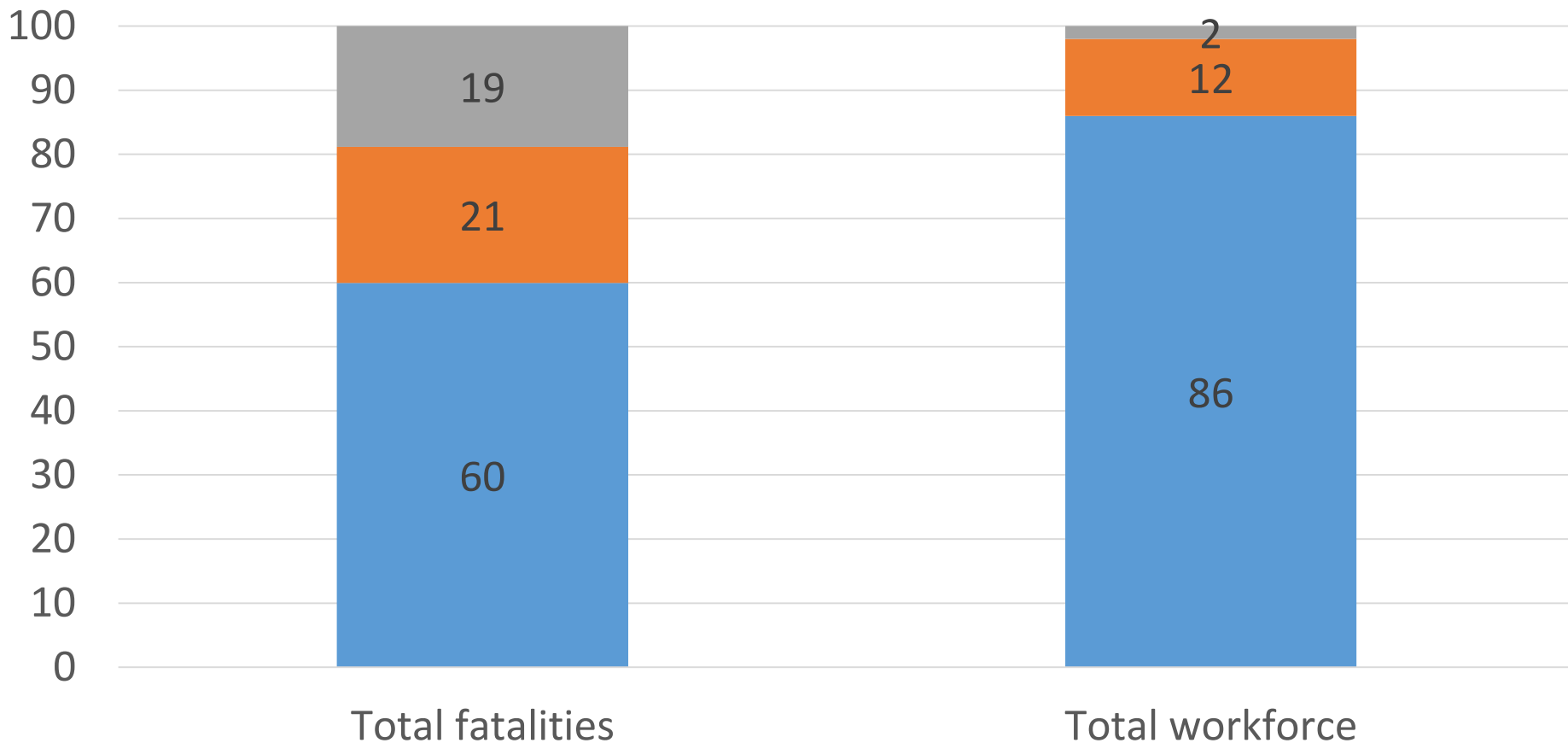


Odds of leaving due to “job loss” vs “early retirement”, LFS 2018



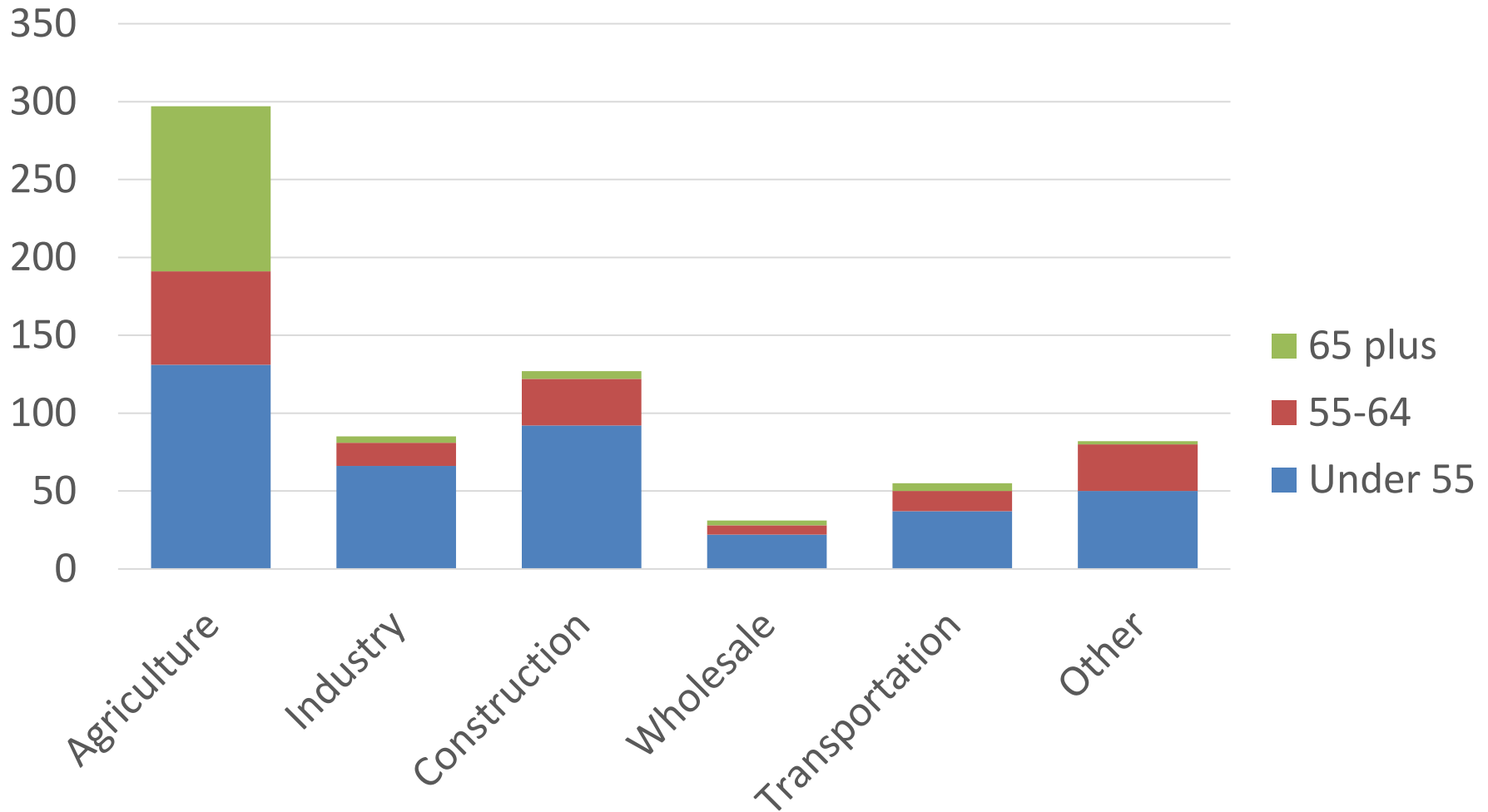
Older workers & fatality risks

Age composition of victims of fatal injuries (%), HSA (2004-2017)

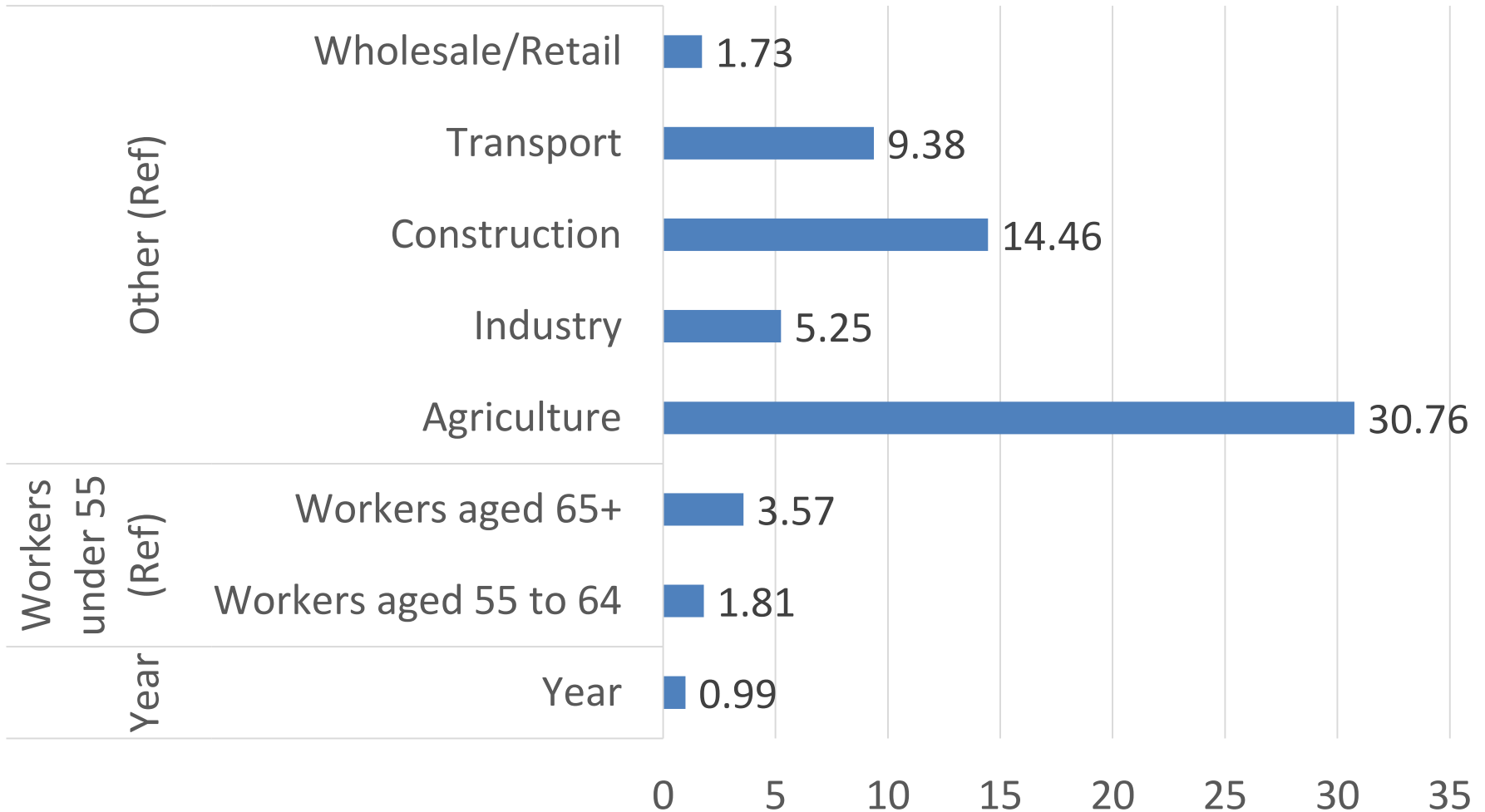


■ Less than 55
 ■ 55-64 years
 ■ 65+ years

Age composition of fatal injuries by high-risk sectors (N), HSA 2004-2017



Grouped Logistic Regression of Fatalities, HSA 2004-2017



Summary (1)

- Share of older workers of the total workforce increased.
- On most indicators, have equal or better working conditions than younger worker groups, but evidence of long working hours for some older male workers (and more temp employment, not shown)
- Selection effects likely: those with poorest working conditions and health already exited
- Retention of older workers has improved, but there are sectoral differences in retention
- Employee retention highest in admin services (white collar, secure)

Summary (2)

- Occupations: lowest retention at top and bottom of scale elementary and professional. Different reasons for early exit.
- Elementary (+ other manual) workers more likely to exit due to illness or job loss. Professional/managers due to early retirement
- 1 in 5 early exits due to illness/disability, another 1 in 5 to job loss, 1 in 17 due to family care.
- For workers of all ages work-life balance, less physical demands, and absence of H&S risk increases perceived job longevity
- Suggests need for policies to support retention – flexibility, accommodation, caring support, and prevention of health/safety risks throughout working life.
- Pensions/welfare also important but beyond scope of study.

Summary (3)

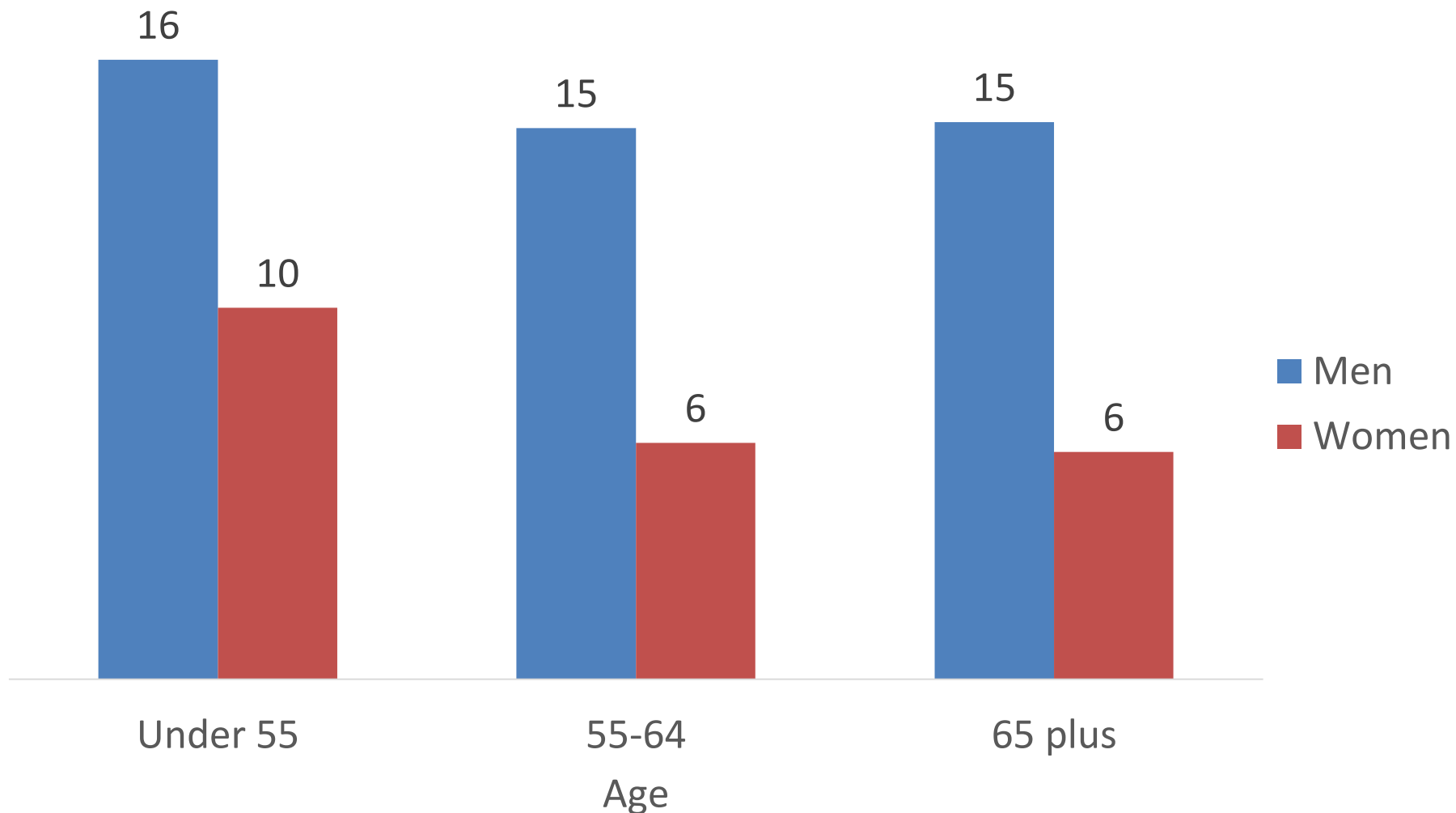
- Fatalities at work are uncommon but older workers have higher odds of fatality when compared to younger workers even within sectors.
- Need to target protection and prevention.

Thank you!

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

extras

Share of workers in Night Work by age (%), LFS 2018



Employees in Temporary Contracts by Age (2018)

