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賽馬會長者計劃新里程  
*A Jockey Club Initiative for Seniors*

# CADENZA Community Project: Elder-Friendly Employment Practice

## Research Report

Identifying the Needs of Older Workers  
to Remain in the Workforce:  
A Guide for an Ageing Hong Kong



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Mr. Kevin T.K. LAU  
Professor Jean WOO

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### Identifying the Needs of Older Workers to Remain in the Workforce: A Guide for an Ageing Hong Kong

by

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# Preface

As in many developed cities around the world, the proportion of elderly population in Hong Kong is expanding. We can foresee not only the need to increase the quality of Hong Kong's services for the elderly, but also the need to initiate new services to cope with the changing profile of the elderly population.

Paving the way ahead, The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has proactively funded the "CADENZA: A Jockey Club Initiative for Seniors" project since 2006. CADENZA, in partnership with The University of Hong Kong and The Chinese University of Hong Kong, aims at creating an elder-friendly community that fosters positive public attitudes towards older people and continuously improves the quality of care and quality of life for Hong Kong's elderly. It also encourages strong collaboration with NGOs and community partners.

The Elder-Friendly Employment Practice (EFEP), funded under the CADENZA Project, is championed by The Hong Kong Society for the Aged, one of Hong Kong's leading NGOs dedicated to the well-being of the elderly. EFEP echoes the Active Ageing framework in which participation is also the key to engaging the retired and enhancing the quality and value of retirement life.

We congratulate The Hong Kong Society for the Aged on championing this successful EFEP project, which seeks to enhance the role of retired people as a valuable social asset. This could have a profound impact on creating a more elderly-friendly environment in Hong Kong. It also changes the general perception of the elderly from passive welfare recipients to active players in the community. 'Retiree' could call for a new interpretation once this Project finds itself expanding its scope in the community.

Mr. Douglas SO  
Executive Director  
Charities, Legal & Corporate Secretariat  
The Hong Kong Jockey Club

# Preface

With a significant number of baby-boomers fast approaching retirement, the retired population will become better educated on the average, and will comprise an increasingly important part of Hong Kong talent's pool. With the funding support from The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, the Elder-Friendly Employment Practice (EFEP) project has been commissioned with the aim of promoting a new perspective towards active participation after retirement and exploring means to encourage elder-friendly employment in Hong Kong. An EFEP framework has been established through social science research, indentifying success factors for achieving an elder-friendly environment. A STAR (Senior Talent Acquisition & Retention) Program helps the elderly to better prepare for post-retirement employment. Furthermore, liaison with enterprise has been conducted to gain substantial recognition for the elderly as an important source of talent, and to facilitate the development of the EFEP framework.

This project has successfully brought new insights through partnership among the business sector, the retired and the public. By the first quarter of 2010, hundred of STAR graduates have completed their training. It is very encouraging to learn of their successful post-retirement employment as well as the positive comments from their employers. With the forthcoming Job Expo in 2010 and 2011, an EFEP employer award planned, and the setting up of a database of retired talents, the impact of this project will continue to grow for many years.

I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust for its dedication to the well-being of the elderly and its funding support for this project.

Dr. MAK Kin Wah, Kim

Chairman

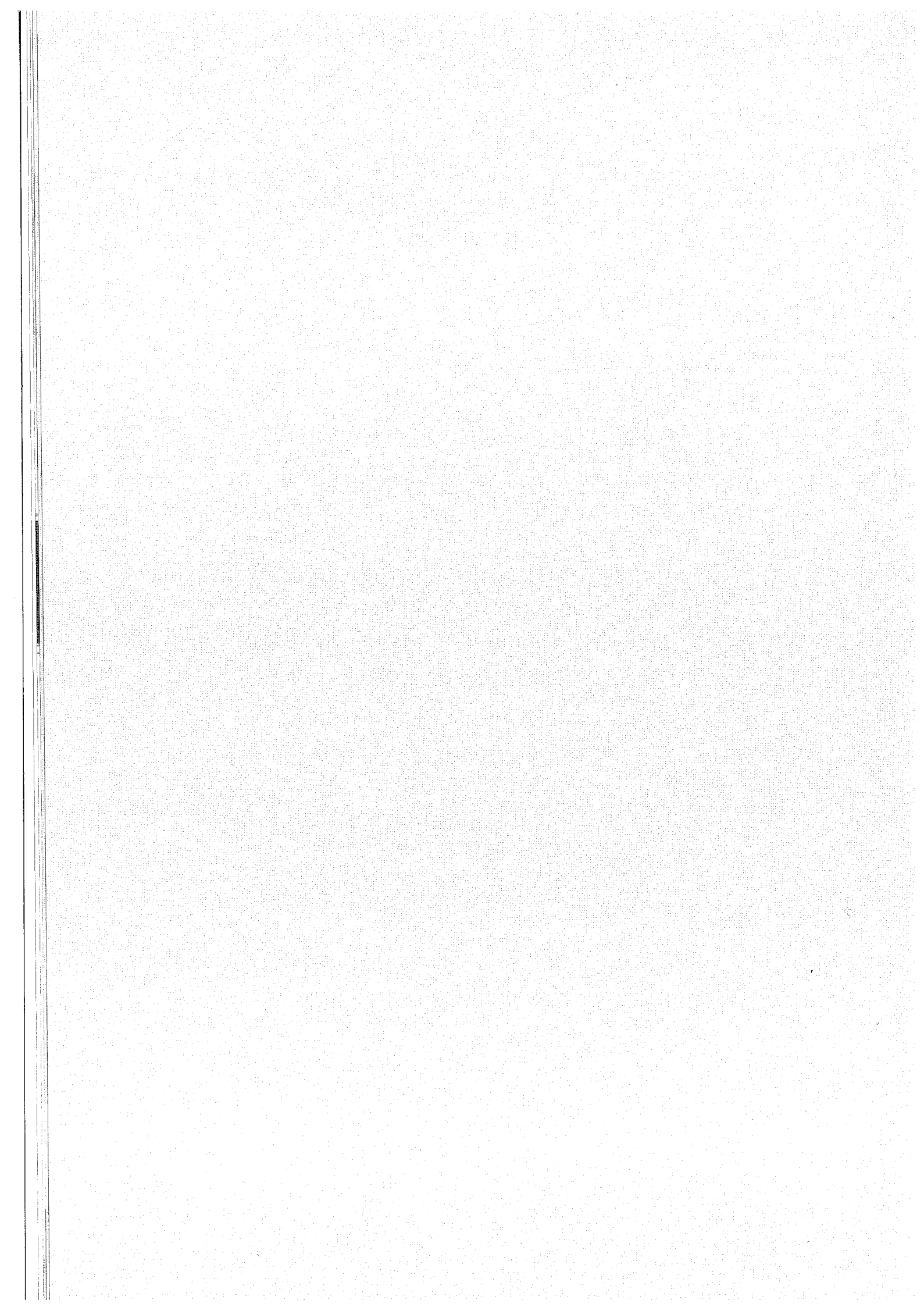
The Hong Kong Society for the Aged







# Executive Summary



# Executive Summary

As a result of increasing life expectancy and declining fertility rates, Hong Kong like many other countries is experiencing a rapid ageing population. If nothing changes in the work and retirement patterns, we shall be facing a labour shortage in the next 30 years. Older people represent an enormous potential for the economy and society. However, age discrimination in the workplace is widespread. Many policy measures and workplace practices pose barriers to older workers staying in work or create strong incentives to encourage them to retire early. This practice however is no longer viable in order to achieve more sustainable social and economic development. The current employment policies and practices should be reformed. Hong Kong's future economic growth, competitiveness and efficiency will largely depend on how we can utilize the ageing workforce effectively.

Survey, studies and evidence all confirm that older workers are a valuable resource. It is true that the performance of older people can deteriorate in functions that require speed and precision but this can be managed quite successfully by relatively minor adjustments in the work environment. Older workers can be as productive as younger ones by creating a working environment that meets their needs. Hence, this report focused on older workers' needs in continuing to work after retirement that can serve as a guideline for private and public companies as well as the government to attract and retain older workers. To identify the needs of older workers, we adopted a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies: a focus groups study and a questionnaire survey.

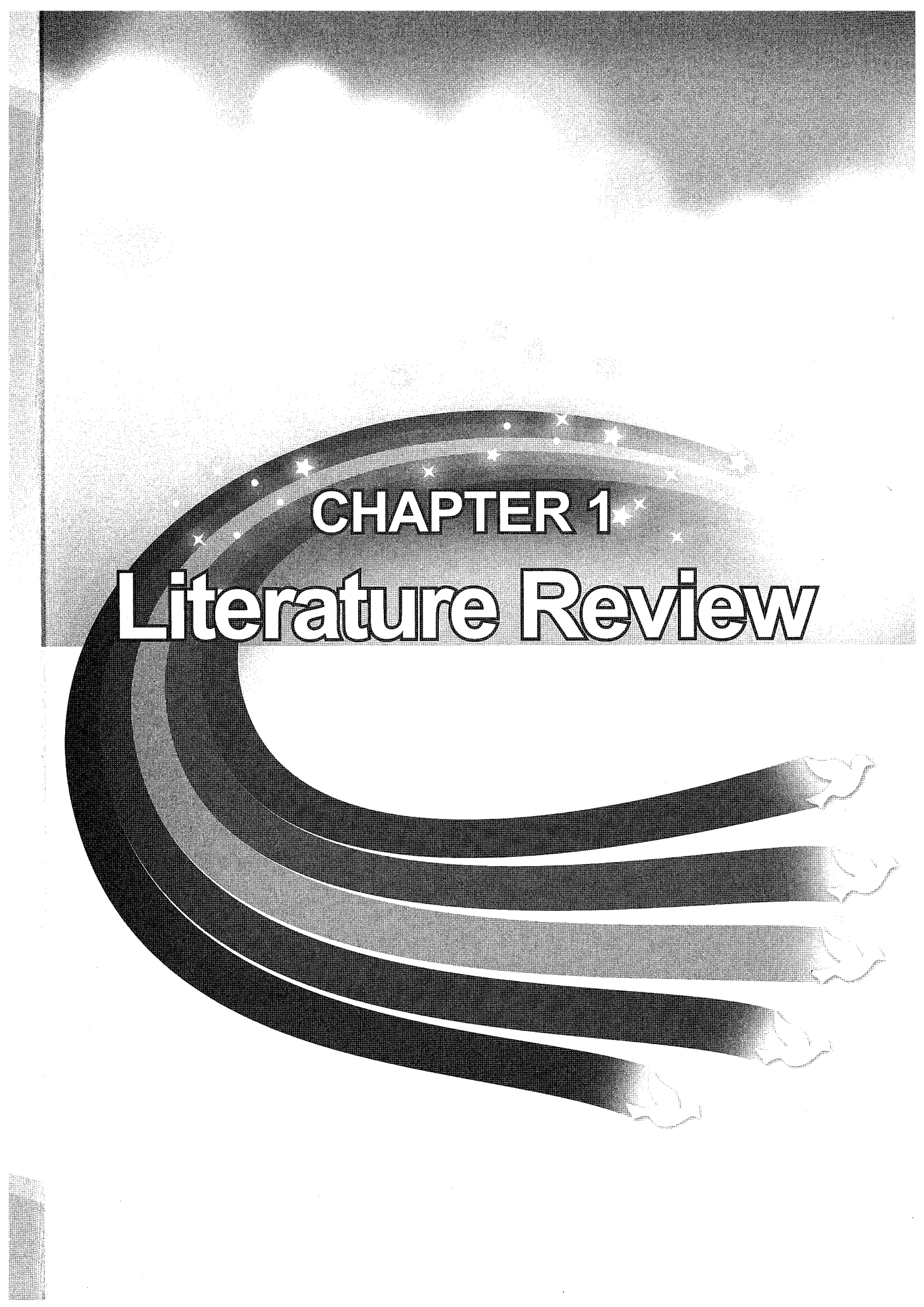


Results show that in order to attract and retain older workers, we need to create a working environment that meets their needs: 1) Flexible work schedule, 2) Chance to use skills, 3) Being respected, 4) Able to learn new things, 5) Can work part-time, 6) Flexibility to balance work and personal life, and 7) Reasonable salary. In addition, older workers need to be given better job opportunities. This requires a range of measures. Based on the current findings, these measures include:

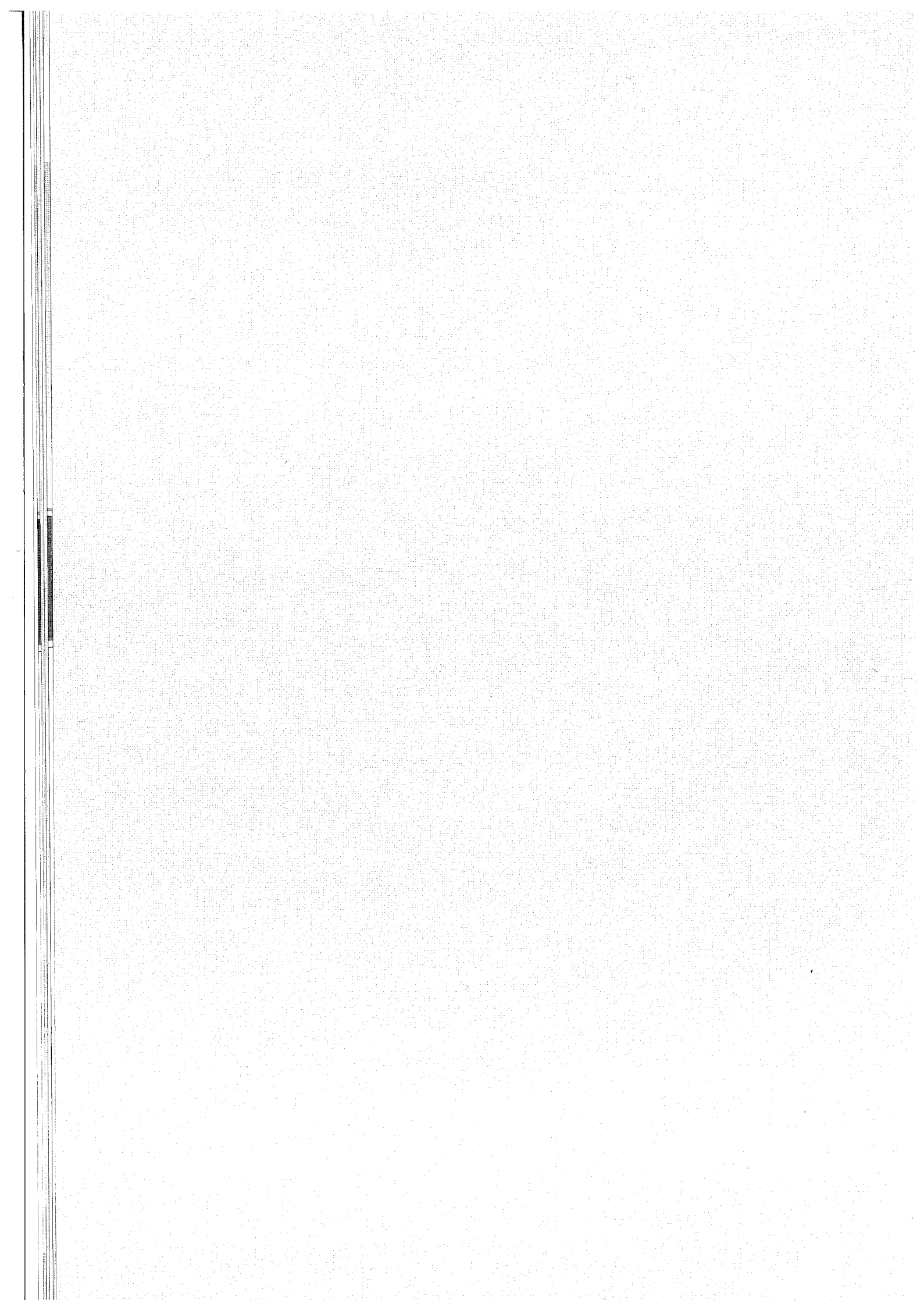
- 1) Improving working conditions;
- 2) Maintaining the employability of older workers;
- 3) Providing better employment services for older job seekers; and
- 4) Tackling age discrimination.

Population ageing is both a challenge and an opportunity. It poses social and economic challenges but it is also an opportunity if longer and healthier lives are matched by longer working lives. The challenge for Hong Kong is to turn our gains in longevity into opportunities for older people to spend more fulfilling years both in employment and in retirement. This will require the involvement of the government, social partners and organizations to adopt and implement a new agenda of age-friendly employment policies and practices and to remove barriers to employment of older workers. Age discrimination and negative stereotypes of older workers must be tackled. Working conditions and employment opportunities must be adapted to an age-diverse workforce.

We hope that this report is the first step in the development of research and recommendations on conditions of work and employment for older workers, which have not been adequately addressed or even ignored, and will stimulate further discussion on the issues.



**CHAPTER 1**  
**Literature Review**





# CHAPTER 1

# Literature Review

## Introduction

In Hong Kong, older workers are generally not desirable employees as they are often viewed as more expensive and less productive. Hence many policy measures and workplace practices pose barriers to older workers staying in work or create strong incentives to encourage them to retire early. This practice however is no longer sustainable in this era of rapid population ageing that would place upward pressure on public finances while dragging down economic growth. It is time for us to look beyond our stereotypes about ageing and to benefit from the growing numbers of older people. Many older people, in fact, would choose to work longer given appropriate incentives, policies and workplace practices. In order to encourage them to remain in the workforce, our current employment policies and practices should be reformed. Hong Kong's future economic growth, competitiveness and efficiency will largely depend on how we can utilize the ageing workforce effectively.

## Demographic change and its impact on economic growth

Hong Kong, like many other countries, stands on the cusp of a demographic revolution. Increasing life expectancy and declining fertility rates are radically transforming our demographic profile. This rapid ageing of population poses profound social and economic challenges (Murray, 2008; OECD, 2006; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2005; Villosio et al., 2008). Statistics show that in 2009, there were about 893,500 persons in Hong Kong aged 65 and over, comprising 12.7% of the total population (Census & Statistics Department, 2009). This figure will jump to nearly 2,261,000 persons in the year of 2036, made up 26% of the total population; that is, 1 out of 4 people will be a retired person (Census & Statistics Department, 2007a). Elderly dependency ratio (that is, the number of persons aged 65 and over per 1,000 persons aged between 15-64) will rise from 168 in 2006 to 425 in 2036. These numbers in effect will be even higher as early retirement and early exit from the labour market are very common in Hong Kong. An international study shows that Hong Kong people retire very early compared with those from the rest of the world (See Table 1.1) (AXA, 2007). The average retirement age of Hong Kong people is 57; it is the third youngest just behind Singapore at the age of 56 and China at the age of 52.

Table 1.1. Average retirement age of different countries

Country	Retirement Age
Spain	61
Germany	60
Japan	60
Belgium	59
France	59
UK	59
Australia	58
USA	58
Hong Kong	57
Singapore	56
China	52

At the same time, as a result of falling fertility rates we are also experiencing a large decline in the share of the population of prime working age (aged 25 to 59), from 56.8% in 2010 to 46.2% in 2036 (Census & Statistics Department, 2007a). Consequently, the number of workers retiring each year increases and eventually exceeds the number of new entrants in the labour market. Statistics show that the labour force participation rates will decline progressively from 61.5% in 2007 to 55% in 2026 (Census & Statistics Department, 2007b). We shall be facing a labour shortage. If nothing changes in the work and retirement patterns, ageing on this scale would eventually reduce Hong Kong's economic growth.

## Importance of retaining older workers in the workforce

Some suggest that we can turn to immigration to fill labour shortages. However, with declining fertility rates, immigration is only part of the solution (Bermingham, 2001; Coleman, 2004; OECD, 2003; Tapinos, 2001). The ultimate solution to sustaining economic growth is to mobilize all available labour resources and one of the most significant sources of labour supply is older people who are currently inactive (OECD, 2006). However, only a small proportion of Hong Kong employers have a policy to recruit older workers and retirees (Manpower, 2007). Statistics show that only 24% of Hong Kong employers have recruitment strategies targeting older people and 20% have implemented retention strategies to help older workers staying in employment. These are far below than Singapore's 48% and 53%. It seems that most Hong Kong employers remain unaware of the adverse impact of our demographic change on the labour market and fail to see a reason to encourage older workers to continue working. They still hold the beliefs that older workers are expensive, inflexible, resistant to change, less productive and less motivated than younger workers (Hakim, 1993; Rosen & Jerdee, 1976; Walker & Taylor, 1993).

## **Stereotypes of older workers**

Age discrimination in the workforce is widespread (Chiu et al., 2001; Chiu & Ngan, 1999; Ilmarinen, 1997; Ngan et al., 2004; Walker & Taylor, 1993). Attitudes and stereotypes towards older people are the principal obstacle to opening up employment opportunities (Chiu & Ngan, 1999; Taqi, 2002). The most common stereotypes are that older workers are less productive (Hakim, 1993; Rosen & Jerdee, 1976; Walker & Taylor, 1993) and they should give way to younger workers (Taqi, 2002). However, most of these stereotypes are myths.

## **From myths to reality**

A great deal of research has been carried out to ascertain the validity of the myths about older people (e.g., McEvoy & Cascio, 1989; Ng & Feldman, 2008; Posthuma & Campion, 2009; Rhodes 1983; Waldman & Avolio 1986). The conclusion being drawn from research is that differences in work performance between younger and older workers are insignificant. It is true that the performance of older people can deteriorate in functions that require speed and precision with regard to sight, hearing and movements (Stenlund, 2004). However, this can be managed quite successfully by relatively minor adjustments in the work environment (Harper & Marcus, 2006; Ilmarinen, 1997; Paul & Townsend, 1993; West & Berman, 1996). There are also examples where older workers with greater experiences outperform their younger counterparts (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Waldman & Avolio 1986).

## **Need for an elder-friendly workplace**

There is an increasing body of knowledge regarding ageing and its impact on older people's ability to stay productive (Harper & Marcus, 2006; WHO, 1993). Older workers can be as competent as younger ones by creating a working environment that meets their needs and in which they are able to achieve their potential without being disadvantaged by their age (AARP, 2002; Costa & Sartori, 2007; Hursh et al., 2006; Ilmarinen, 1997; WHO, 1993). Hence, this report focused on older workers' needs in continuing to work after retirement that can serve as a guideline for private and public companies as well as the government to attract and retain older workers. To do so, we adopted a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies: a focus group study and a questionnaire survey.

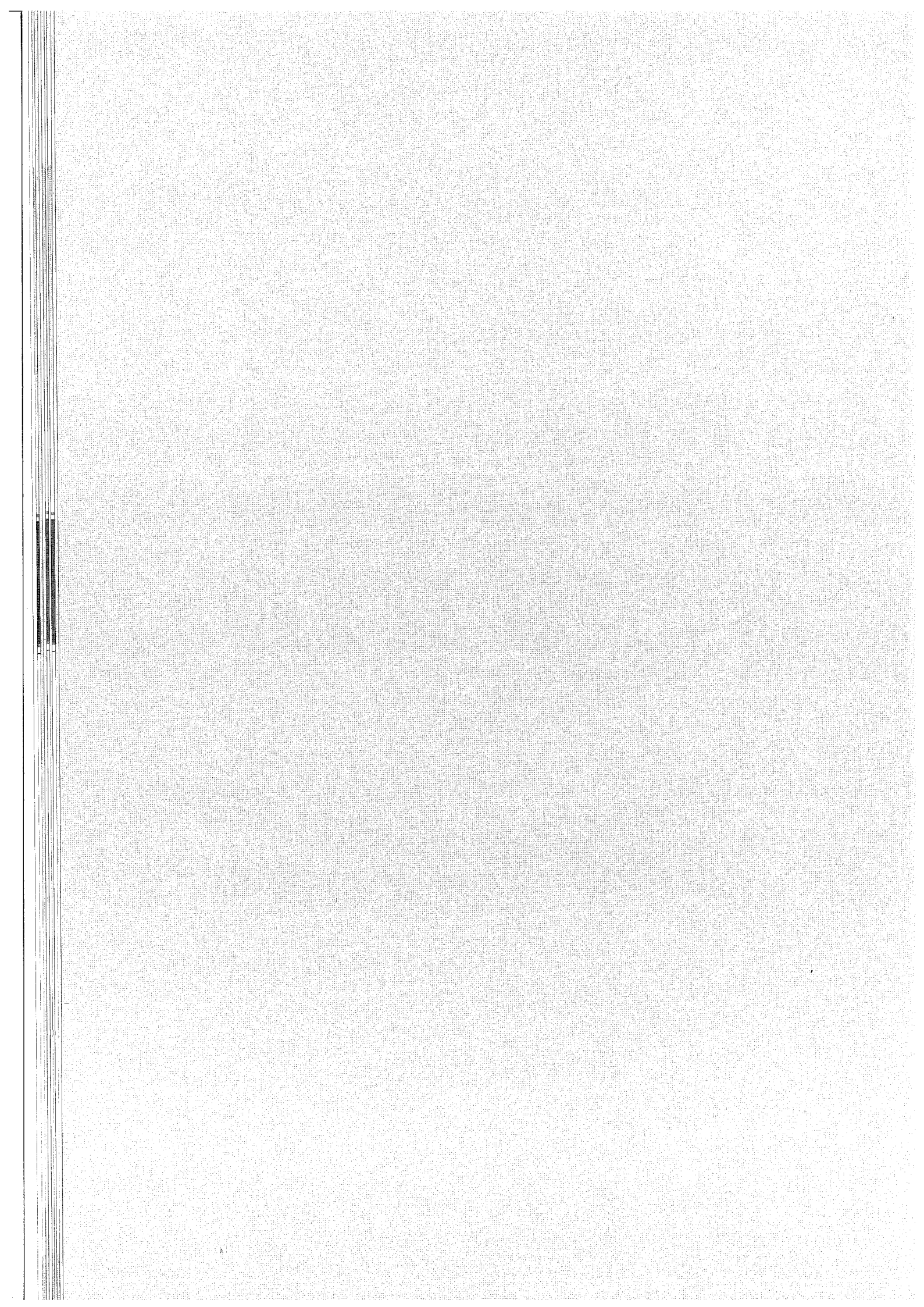






**CHAPTER 2**

**Focus Group  
Study**





# CHAPTER 2

# Focus Group Study

## Methodology

This is a preliminary study to identify the needs of older workers in order to stay in employment. Focus group was used because it is an appropriate technique to gather opinions from older workers regarding what their needs are. A key strength of focus groups is their ability to get an in-depth exploration of the participants' perspective and understanding through group interaction. According to Krueger (1988), focus group is beneficial for identification of major themes and is an effective means of obtaining information from special audiences. Unlike one-to-one interviews and questionnaires, focus group offers greater insight into participants' experiences and opinions through dynamic interactions.

## Participants

Sixteen focus groups with a total of 100 participants aged 50 and over (mean age 59; 54 men and 46 women) were conducted from July to December 2008. Details of the sample's sociodemographic characteristics are shown in Table 2.1. Aiming for a minimum focus group size of six people, six to eight people were invited to each of the 16 focus group discussions. Participants were identified through purposive sampling through social service agencies and units as well as through private companies and Retirees' Associations that cover a broad spectrum in terms of socio-economic background.

Table 2.1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

	Total (n=100)
<b>Age Group:</b>	
50-59	47 (47%)
60-69	45 (45%)
70 or above	8 (8%)
<b>Education Level:</b>	
Form 5	15 (15%)
Form 6 to 7	12 (12%)
Vocational and Post-secondary	21 (21%)
University	39 (39%)
Professional Qualification	13 (13%)
<b>Current Employment Status:</b>	
Retired, but returning to work	22 (22%)
Retired	71 (71%)
Employed	7 (7%)

## *Procedure*

Each focus group was conducted by two members of the research team. One member served as the facilitator, and the other member served as an observer/note-taker. The facilitator engaged the participants with active listening, sought clarification and ensured adequacy and accuracy of content where appropriate. The observer/note-taker took field notes during the focus groups and also immediately afterwards.

The facilitator began each group session after explaining the purpose of the study to the participants and obtaining their written consent. Participants were then asked to discuss their views on re-employment after retirement, for example, what needed to be offered to older workers in order to encourage them to continue working. The facilitator encouraged participants to discuss freely and took steps to involve all participants in the discussions. Each session lasted for approximately 90 minutes. With the participants' permission, the focus group interviews were audio-taped for data analysis.

Transcripts were reviewed and analyzed by two members of the research team. Recurring themes within and among groups were identified through a process of framework analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). In framework analysis, transcripts were read a few times and field observation notes were studied. Key ideas and recurrent themes were recorded as research notes. Main issues, concepts and themes were identified, drawing upon the original research aims, emergent issues raised by respondents and themes arising from patterns of particular experiences, which eventually formed a thematic framework. Relevant passages of transcripts were then extracted from the original context and rearranged according to the appropriate thematic reference. In the analysis stage, charts of themes and extracts, research notes and field notes were reviewed. Comparisons and contrasts were made between perceptions, accounts and experiences both within and between participants. Patterns and connections were noted and accounted for in the final results.

In order to ensure the descriptive validity of results, audio-recordings of focus group sessions were made which were then transcribed verbatim. Interpretative validity of results could be ensured as the chosen themes were supported by the participants' own words. Observation field notes were referred to when selecting quotations to illustrate a theme and when making associations between themes, to ensure theoretical validity (Chioncel et al., 2003).

To ensure reliability, data were analyzed by the two research team members respectively to know that no themes were overlooked. In case of discrepancy in opinion between the researchers, discussions were made until a consensus was reached.



## Results

### **Observation of Focus Group Dynamics and Interactions**

#### *Rapport and participation*

In a relaxed atmosphere, participants were able to exchange opinions freely. After warming up initially, the participants openly shared their opinions with the group facilitator and also with other participants. Interactions were frequent and complex, participants were able to elaborate on their comments when prompted by the facilitator, and they were also able to express their own opinions to further the comments of others.

#### *Group conformity*

Uniformity of responses was not an issue as a variety of different attitudes and opinions were elicited from participants.

#### *Dominance vs. withdrawal*

To the talkative/dominating participants, the facilitator gave less attention and reinforcements in dialogue. On the other hand, the less out-spoken were given more encouragements and sometimes actively invited to express their opinion.

#### *'Flow' of opinions*

At times when participants dwelled on a topic for a prolonged period, the facilitator intervened to diverge the discussion, by summarizing previous points and moving on to the next topic of interest.

### **Main Themes**

The main themes regarding age-friendly workplace were: 1) Flexible work schedule, 2) Can work part-time, 3) Being respected, 4) Age-friendly working environment, 5) Reasonable salary, 6) Health care benefits, 7) On-the-job training, 8) Able to learn new things, 9) Chance to use skills, 10) Knowledge transfer, and 11) Flexibility to balance work and personal life.



### 1. Flexible work schedule

The most frequently expressed opinion was that flexible work arrangement is preferred.

*'I can be self-employed, so that I can arrange when, where and how work is done. It is more flexible.'*

### 2. Can work part-time

Another frequently expressed opinion was to be able to work part-time.

*'I don't want to go to work everyday. I can work on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays but not weekends.'*

*'No more eight hours a day. Four hours work suits me better.'*

### 3. Being respected

Being respected and treated friendly in the workplace is very important to older workers. Since they have been working all their lives, nothing but being respected can keep them engaged and committed and motivate them to continue to work.

*'I have been working all my life; if I were to be scolded by others, I would have no face at all. It is really unacceptable.'*

### 4. Age-friendly working environment

Older workers are more likely to have visual and auditory deterioration, including decreased visual acuity and loss of high frequency hearing. This can be managed successfully by providing, for example, larger computer screens, and brighter and appropriate office lighting.

*'I need nothing but a magnifying glass and a computer amplifier programme.'*

### 5. Reasonable salary

Many older workers prefer to get paid for work after retirement. Some may not ask for a high salary but they need some monetary rewards for being valued.

*'I don't need a high pay job. I work mainly for killing time and getting a sense of being valued.'*

*'I like my company and would like to help them. I can work with half of my salary or even one third, but at least with a pay.'*

## 6. Health care benefits

Some older workers expect to have health care benefits.

*'I am willing to get less pay for reasonable health insurance coverage.'*

## 7. On-the-job training

Older workers' skills may be obsolete. They should be given the training and re-training opportunities to develop new skills and to learn new technologies.

*'To keep abreast of the advancing society, we have to learn new skills and technologies.'*

## 8. Able to learn new things

Some older workers prefer to venture into a very different field of work after retirement.

*'I have worked for a certain field for almost my lifetime; I don't want to do the same thing after retirement. I want something new.... like, gardening. It will bring me new exposure, new experience, new knowledge and new friends.'*

## 9. Chance to use skills

Nevertheless, some older workers wish to stay in the same field so that their professional knowledge and expertise can be utilized in a meaningful way.

*'Working in the field of my profession, I would have more confidence to use my expertise to contribute to the society.'*

## 10. Knowledge transfer

Working after retirement allows older workers to pass their skills and knowledge onto younger workers.

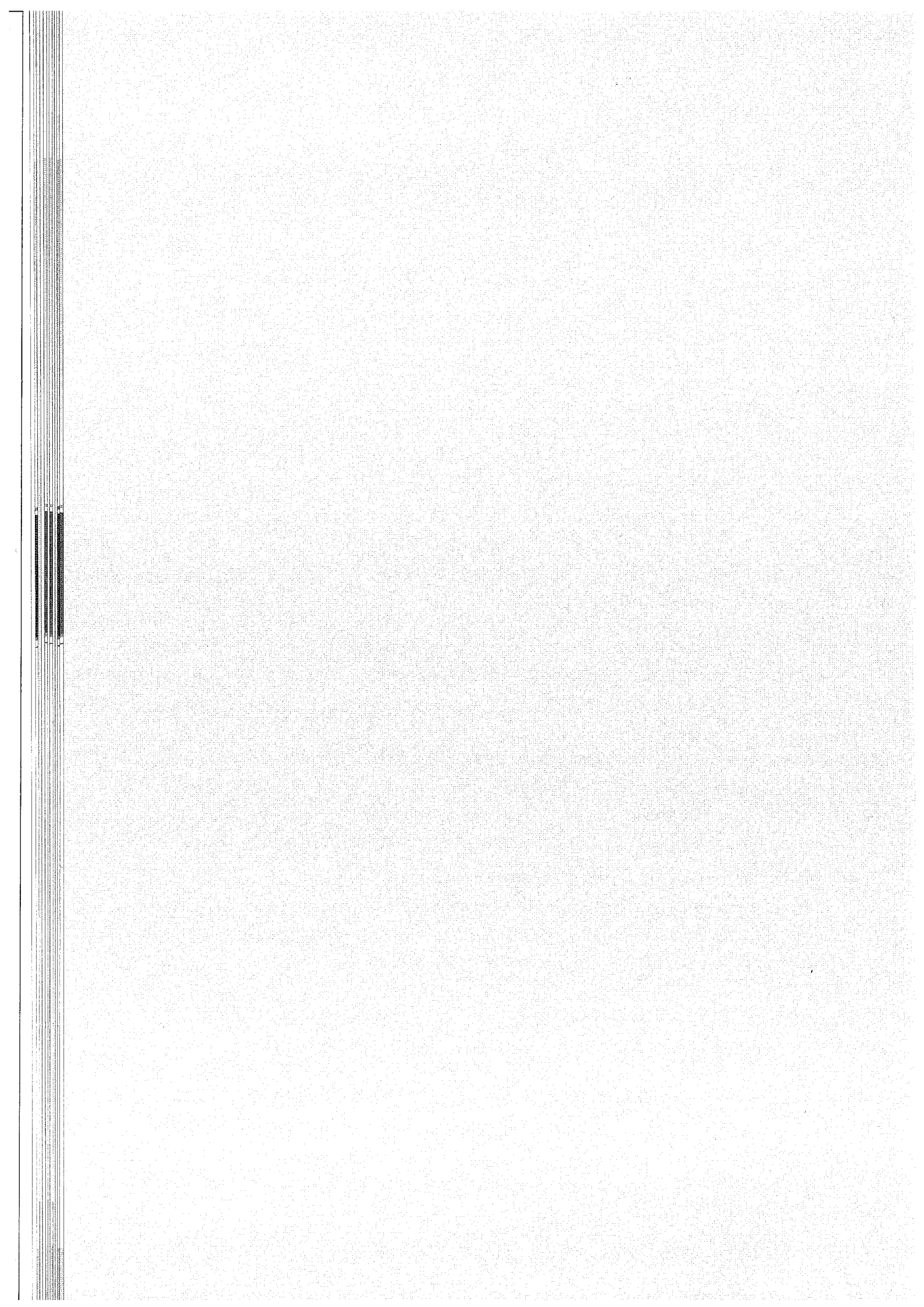
*'You have more than thirty years' experience; you have valuable knowledge and experiences. After retirement, you can transfer all these to your next generations. It is not necessary to be a knowledge transfer; it can be a sharing of experience.'*

## 11. Flexibility to balance work and personal life

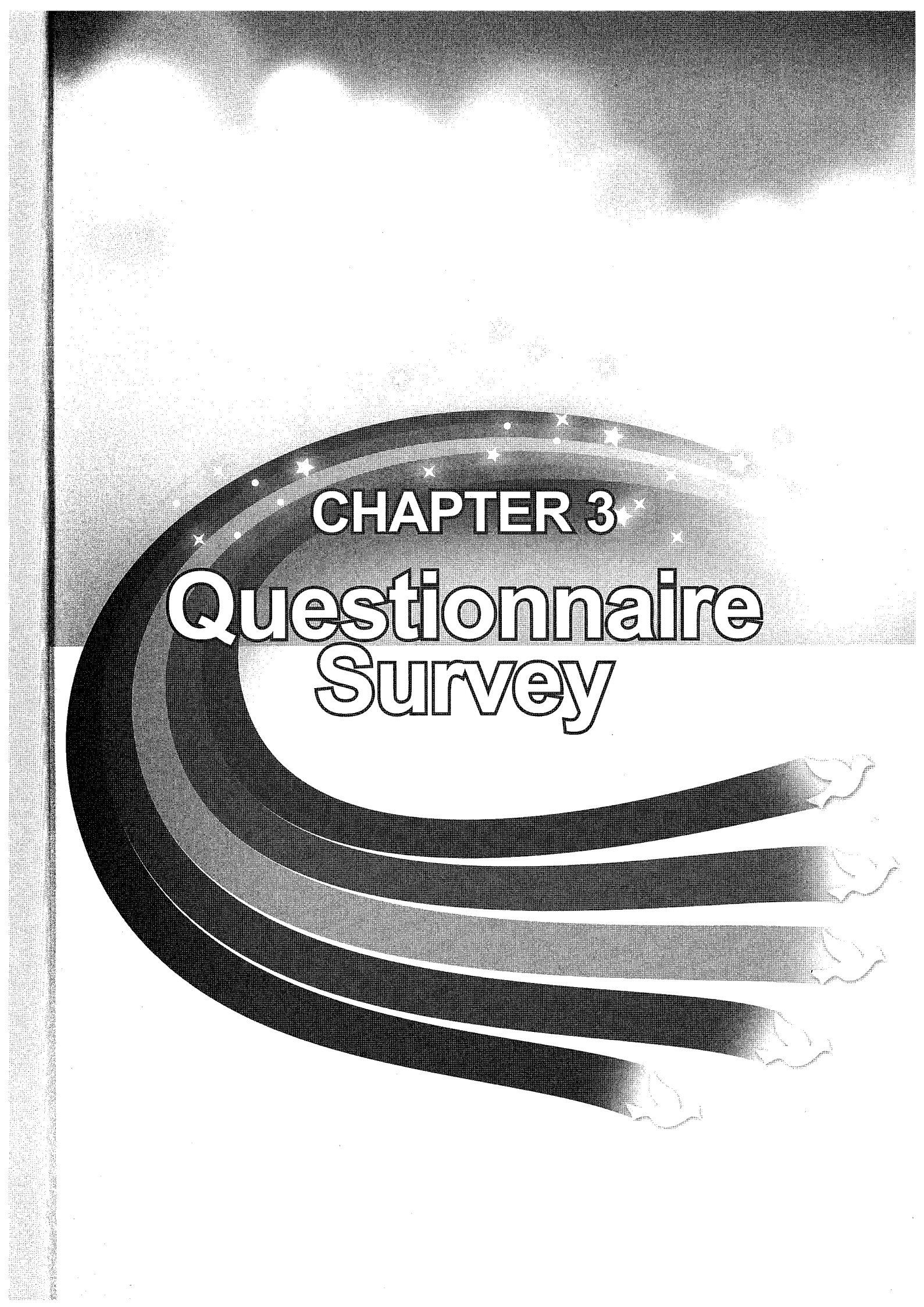
Unlike younger workers who have to work to support their family, older workers do not have much pressure in working and they treasure more personal and family life.

*'I don't want to work under pressure; I don't want to work more than five days a week; I need to go to church, to have family life, and to go out with my children.'*

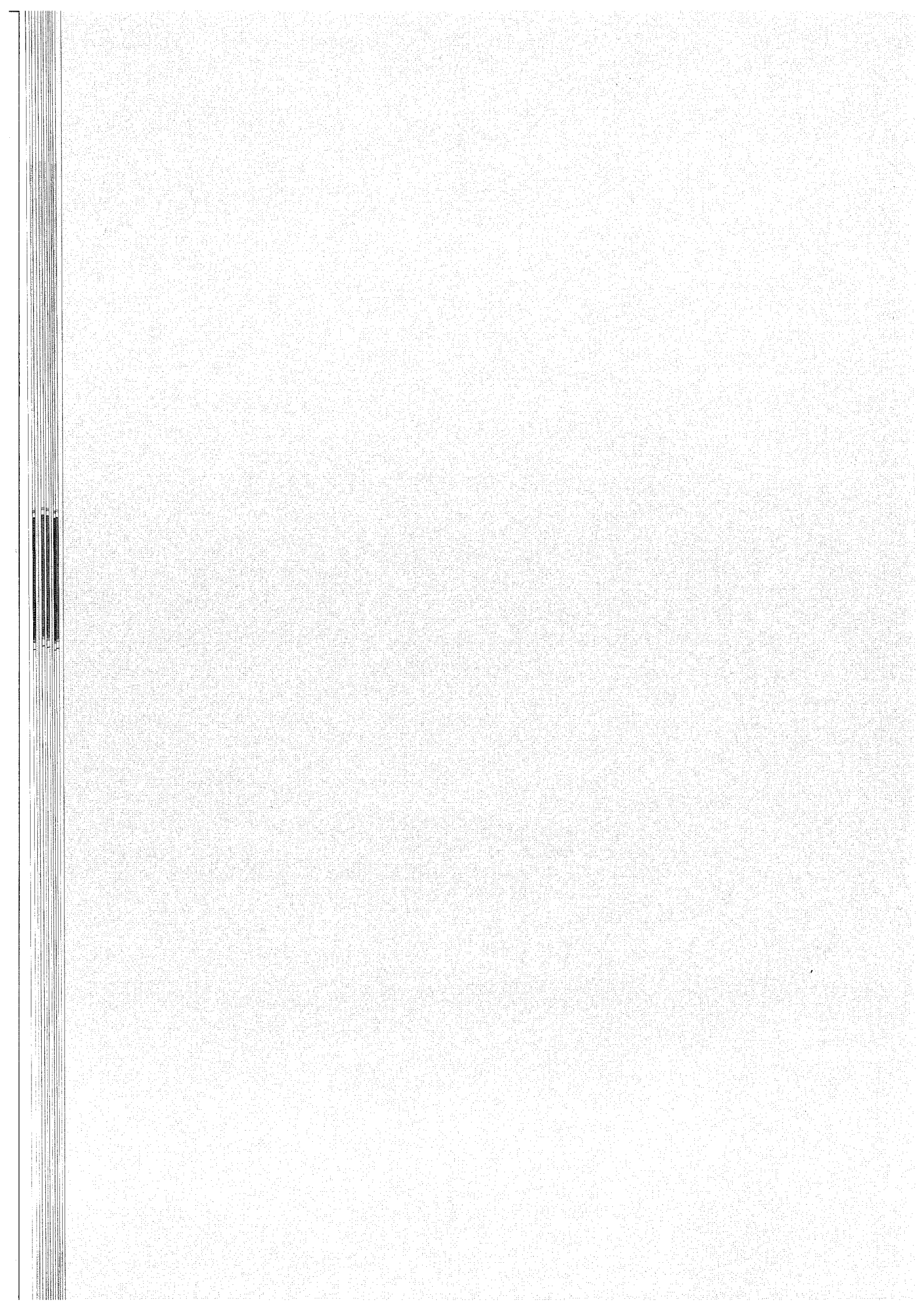
*'I prefer working part-time; I don't want to work like a slave; I need to enjoy life.'*







**CHAPTER 3**  
**Questionnaire  
Survey**



## CHAPTER 3

# Questionnaire Survey

### Methodology

From the focus group study, we identified 11 major concerns of older workers in their consideration of continuing to work after retirement. To verify if the 11 conditions are significant among older workers in general, a questionnaire survey that aimed to test for a larger sample size was carried out from February to December 2009.

### *Questionnaire*

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate if they viewed each of the following working conditions as important in their consideration of returning to work after retirement: 1) Flexible work schedule, 2) Can work part-time, 3) Being respected, 4) Age-friendly working environment, 5) Reasonable salary, 6) Health care benefits, 7) On-the-job training, 8) Able to learn new things, 9) Chance to use skills, 10) Knowledge transfer, and 11) Flexibility to balance work and personal life. Moreover, sociodemographic data were also collected.

### *Procedure*

1,661 questionnaires were distributed to people aged 50 and over through social service agencies and units as well as through private companies and Retirees' Associations and 755 questionnaires returned, giving a response rate of 45.5%.

### *Statistical Analysis*

To examine if the participants' affirmative answers to each question were significantly above 50% chance level, one-sample t-tests were used. Factors associated with differences in affirmative responses were analyzed with 3-way ANOVAs. The potential factors included gender, age and education level. SPSS version 17.0 was used for statistical analysis and a significance level of 0.05 was used.



## Results

Of the 755 respondents, about 40% were 50-59 years of age, 45% were 60-69 years and 14% were 70 years and over. Details of the sample's sociodemographic characteristics are shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample**

	Female	Male	Total
<b>Age Group:</b>	<b>(n=454)</b>	<b>(n=284)</b>	<b>(n=738)</b>
50-54	88 (19.4%)	39 (13.7%)	127 (17.2%)
55-59	115 (25.3%)	56 (19.7%)	171 (23.2%)
60-64	122 (26.9%)	90 (31.7%)	212 (28.7%)
65-69	70 (15.4%)	52 (18.3%)	122 (16.5%)
70 or above	59 (13.0%)	47 (16.5%)	106 (14.4%)
<b>Education Level:</b>	<b>(n=455)</b>	<b>(n=284)</b>	<b>(n=739)</b>
Form 5	256 (56.3%)	126 (44.4%)	382 (51.7%)
Form 6 to 7	59 (13.0%)	37 (13.0%)	96 (13.0%)
Vocational and Post-secondary	51 (11.2%)	45 (15.8%)	96 (13.0%)
University	68 (14.9%)	66 (23.2%)	134 (18.1%)
Professional Qualification	21 (4.6%)	10 (3.5%)	31 (4.2%)
<b>Current Employment Status:</b>	<b>(n=451)</b>	<b>(n=284)</b>	<b>(n=735)</b>
Retired, but returning to work	16 (3.5%)	21 (7.4%)	37 (5.0%)
Retired	339 (75.2%)	200 (70.4%)	539 (73.3%)
Employed	69 (15.3%)	53 (18.7%)	122 (16.6%)
Unemployed	27 (6.0%)	10 (3.5%)	37 (5.0%)

Table 3.2 shows the percentages of affirmative responses in the questionnaire survey. Data show that 7 out of the 11 factors were significant. They included:

1. Flexible work schedule (66.8%)
2. Chance to use skills (66.1%)
3. Being respected (60.9%)
4. Able to learn new things (55.8%)
5. Can work part-time (55.5%)
6. Flexibility to balance work and personal life (55.1%)
7. Reasonable salary (54.7%)

**Table 3.2. Percentages of the factors considered by the respondents in their consideration of returning to work after retirement**

Working Conditions	One sample t-test	
	Yes	Sig. (1-tailed)
(1) Flexible work schedule	66.8%	.000*
(2) Can work part-time	55.5%	.001*
(3) Being respected	60.9%	.000*
(4) Age-friendly working environment	44.8%	-
(5) Reasonable salary	54.7%	.005*
(6) Health care benefits	50.1%	.486
(7) On-the-job training	40.8%	-
(8) Able to learn new things	55.8%	.001*
(9) Chance to use skills	66.1%	.000*
(10) Knowledge transfer	50.3%	.428
(11) Flexibility to balance work and personal life	55.1%	.005*

Table 3.3 shows that responses to the condition "Being respected" were significantly associated with gender. Older female and male workers were different in considering the condition of "Being respected;" women (67.2%) tended to see this as more important than men (52.8%). Table 3.4 and 3.5 show that responses to the condition of "Chance to use skills" were associated with age and education level. Younger (50-54) and older (>70) age groups considered "Chance to use skills" as more important than those aged between 55-69, and participants with tertiary education viewed the "Chance to use skills" as more important than those without.

**Table 3.3. Percentages of the factors considered by the respondents in their consideration of returning to work after retirement by gender**

	Female	Male	Total	P-value
<b>Working Conditions:</b>	<b>(n=454)</b>	<b>(n=284)</b>	<b>(n=738)</b>	<b>(n=738)</b>
(1) Flexible work schedule	70.3%	61.3%	66.8%	0.405
(2) Chance to use skills	68.5%	62.0%	66.0%	0.336
(3) Being respected	67.2%	52.8%	61.7%	0.043*
(4) Able to learn new things	61.9%	46.8%	56.1%	0.149
(5) Can work part-time	59.9%	48.6%	55.6%	0.103
(6) Flexibility to balance work and personal life	59.3%	48.9%	55.3%	0.158
(7) Reasonable salary	59.7%	47.5%	55.0%	0.422

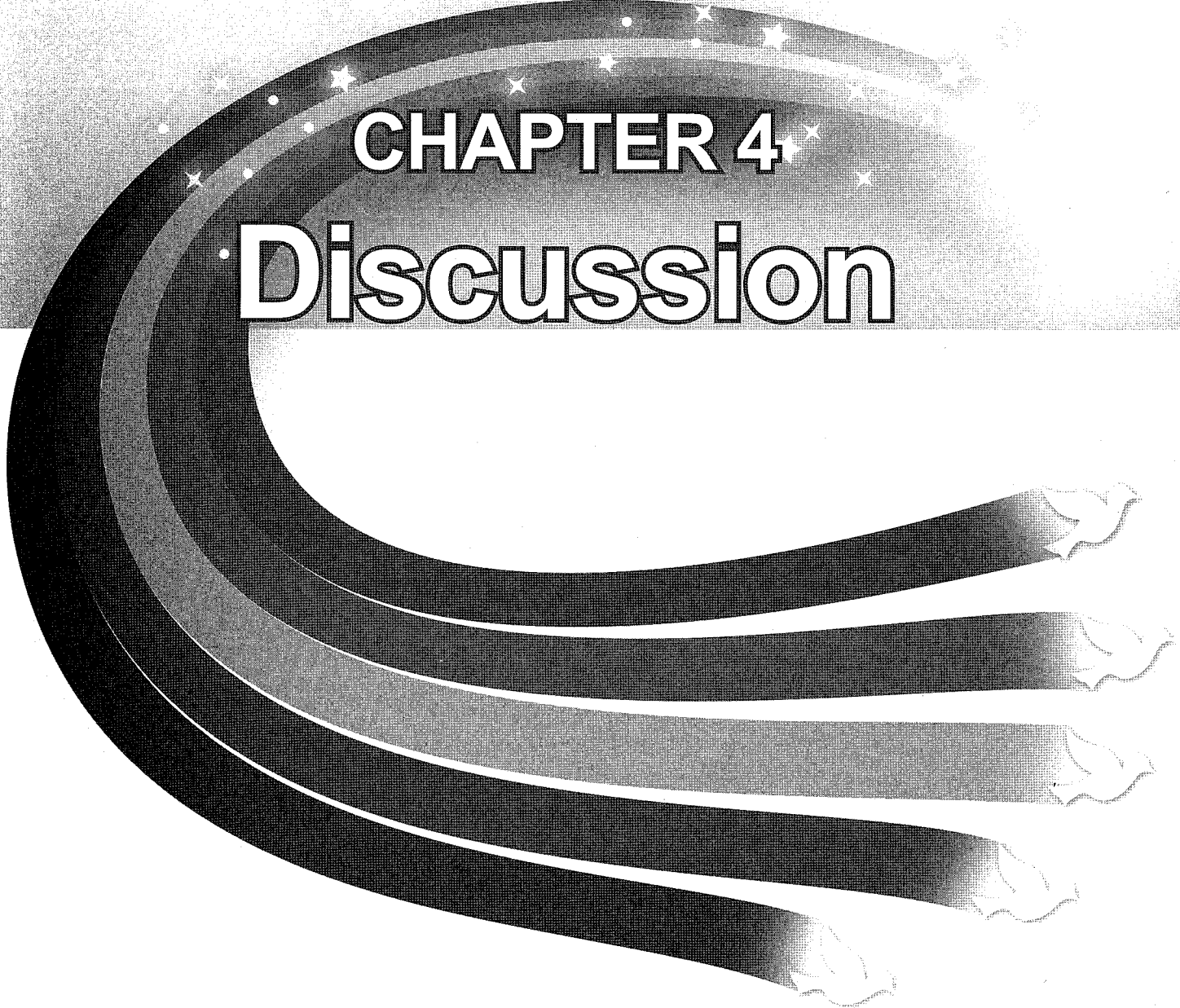
Table 3.4. Percentages of the factors considered by the respondents in their consideration of returning to work after retirement by age

	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	Over 70	Total	P-value
<b>Working Conditions:</b>	<b>(n=127)</b>	<b>(n=171)</b>	<b>(n=212)</b>	<b>(n=122)</b>	<b>(n=106)</b>	<b>(n=738)</b>	<b>(n=738)</b>
(1) Flexible work schedule	66.1%	69.0%	63.2%	64.8%	73.6%	66.8%	0.568
(2) Chance to use skills	72.4%	70.8%	60.8%	56.6%	71.7%	66.0%	0.037*
(3) Being respected	64.6%	62.6%	57.1%	59.0%	68.9%	61.7%	0.138
(4) Able to learn new things	61.4%	50.9%	56.6%	54.9%	58.5%	56.1%	0.224
(5) Can work part-time	60.6%	62.0%	53.8%	52.5%	46.2%	55.6%	0.767
(6) Flexibility to balance work and personal life	55.9%	57.9%	53.3%	52.5%	57.5%	55.3%	0.689
(7) Reasonable salary	59.8%	57.3%	56.1%	50.0%	49.1%	55.0%	0.447

Table 3.5. Percentages of the factors considered by the respondents in their consideration of returning to work after retirement by education level

	Form 5	Form 6 & 7	Vocational & Post-secondary	University	Professional Qualification	Total	P-value
<b>Working Conditions:</b>	<b>(n=382)</b>	<b>(n=95)</b>	<b>(n=96)</b>	<b>(n=134)</b>	<b>(n=31)</b>	<b>(n=738)</b>	<b>(n=738)</b>
(1) Flexible work schedule	67.8%	68.4%	61.5%	67.9%	61.3%	66.8%	0.218
(2) Chance to use skills	60.5%	63.2%	69.8%	79.1%	74.2%	66.0%	0.020*
(3) Being respected	59.2%	64.2%	65.6%	64.9%	58.1%	61.7%	0.312
(4) Able to learn new things	57.3%	58.9%	57.3%	50.0%	54.8%	56.1%	0.517
(5) Can work part-time	57.9%	47.4%	60.4%	51.5%	54.8%	55.6%	0.731
(6) Flexibility to balance work and personal life	55.5%	47.4%	54.2%	59.0%	64.5%	55.3%	0.842
(7) Reasonable salary	57.9%	52.6%	55.2%	52.2%	38.7%	55.0%	0.637



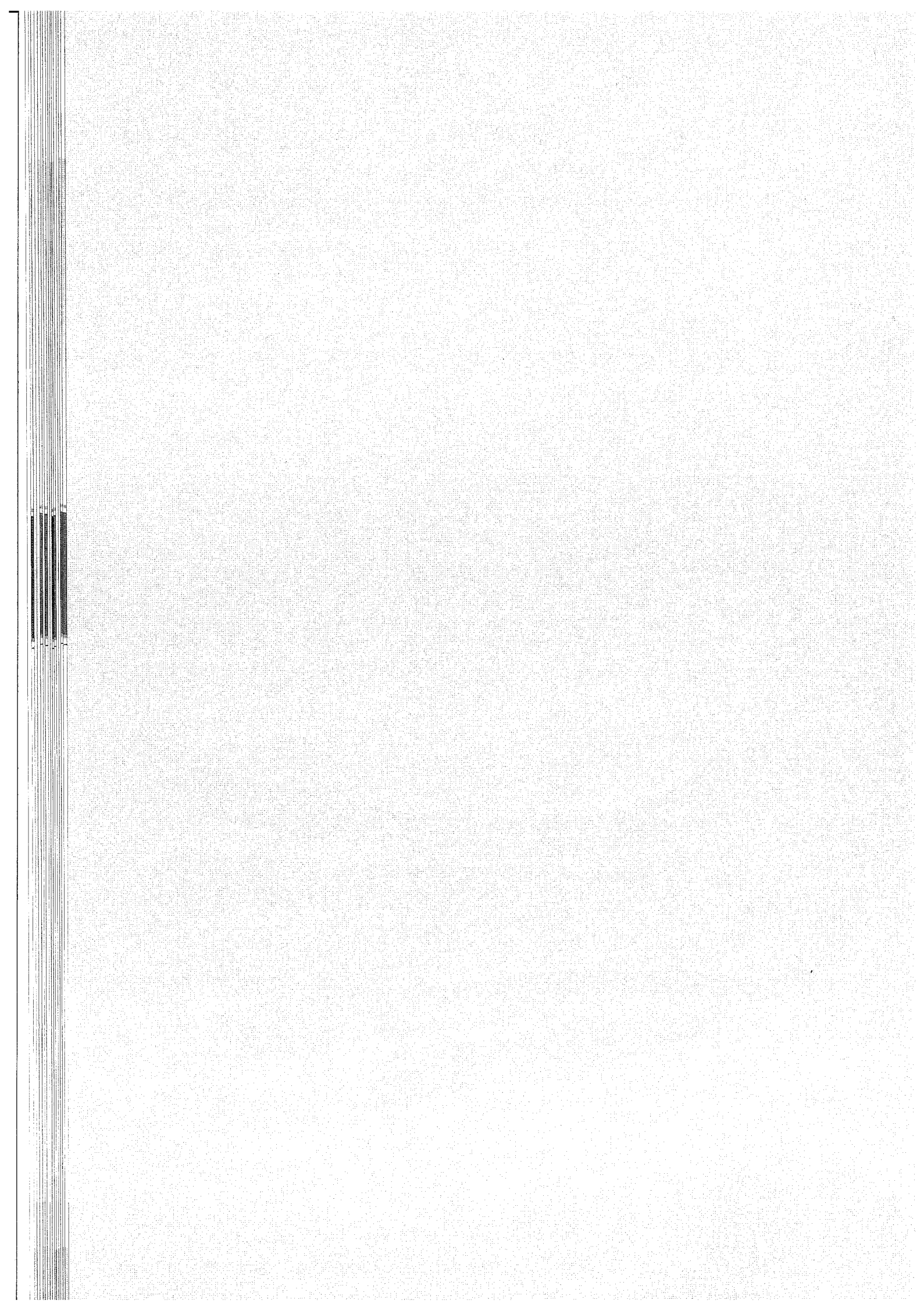


**CHAPTER 4**  
**Discussion**

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## CHAPTER 4

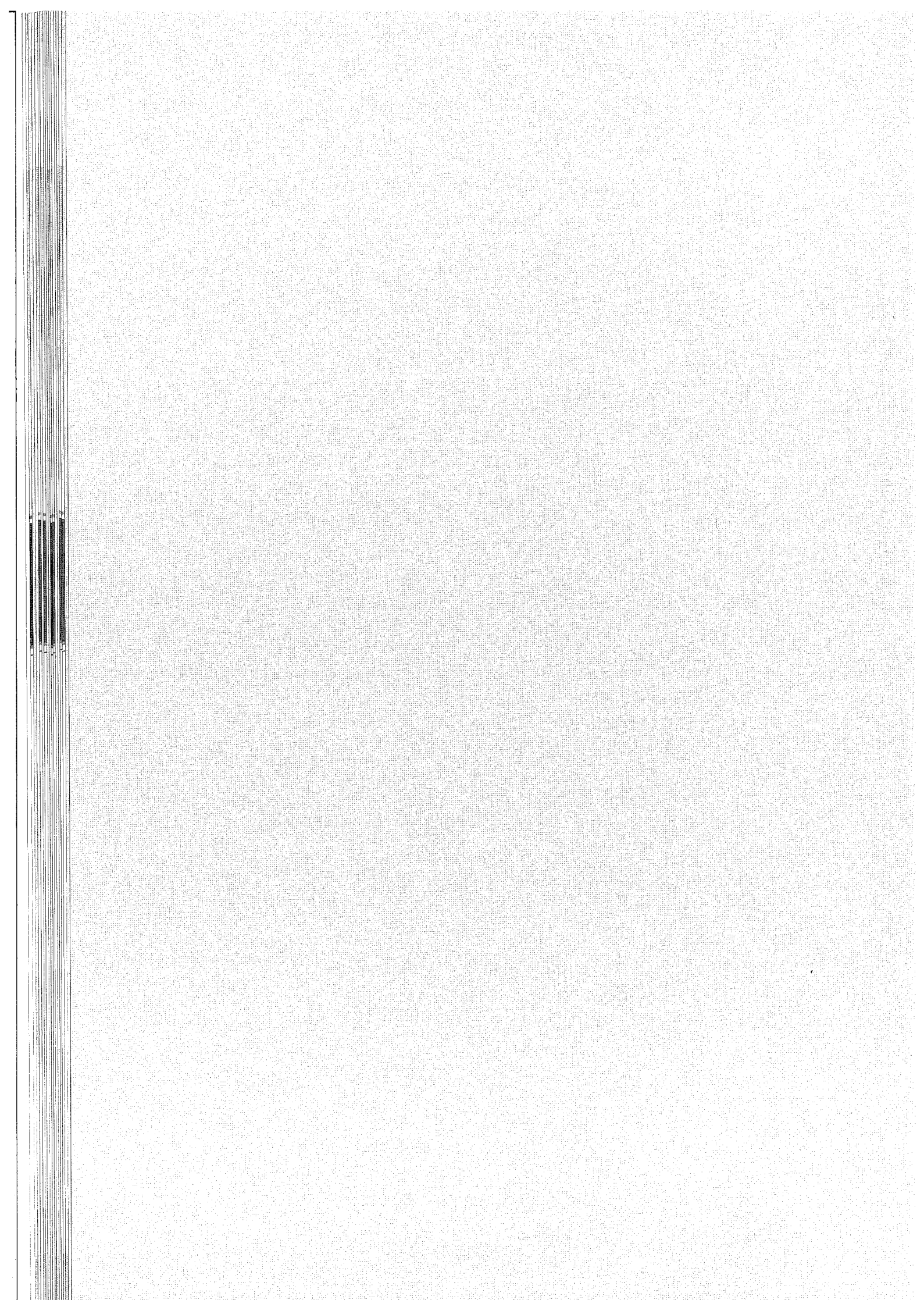
# Discussion

This is the first study identifying the needs of the older workers to retain in the workforce, which can help to formulate employment policies and practices among a Chinese population in Hong Kong. Findings show that in order to attract and retain older workers, we need to create a working environment that meets their needs: 1) Flexible work schedule, 2) Chance to use skills, 3) Being respected, 4) Able to learn new things, 5) Can work part-time, 6) Flexibility to balance work and personal life, and 7) Reasonable salary.

Older people are willing to work and have the experience and qualifications to carry on working (Paul & Townsend, 1993). They continue to work to remain active, for life experience, and for social network (Dendinger et al., 2005; Smyer & Pitt-Catsoupes, 2007). Older workers enjoy many benefits from working, such as a sense of self worth and feeling active, and maintaining their health and social connections (Aday & Kehoe, 2008; Kim & Feldman, 2000). Employment for older people can help to improve their quality of life and can thus be considered as an important strategy for active ageing (Hartlapp & Schmid, 2008). OECD defines active ageing as "...the capacity of people, as they grow older, to lead productive lives in the society and the economy. This means that they can make flexible choices in the way they spend time over life – in learning, in work, in leisure and in care-giving" (OECD, 1998). Moreover, employment for older people is also a key factor for economic and social inclusion because it generates income and provides opportunities for social participation, personal development and the formation of social capital (European Commission, 2005). Older workers are able to make tremendous contributions to Hong Kong society and economy.

However, older people face many barriers in finding jobs or staying employed (Chou & Chow, 2005; Villosio et al., 2008). They need to be given better job opportunities. This requires a range of measures. Based on the current findings, these measures include improving working conditions, maintaining the employability of older workers, providing better employment services for older job seekers, and tackling age discrimination.

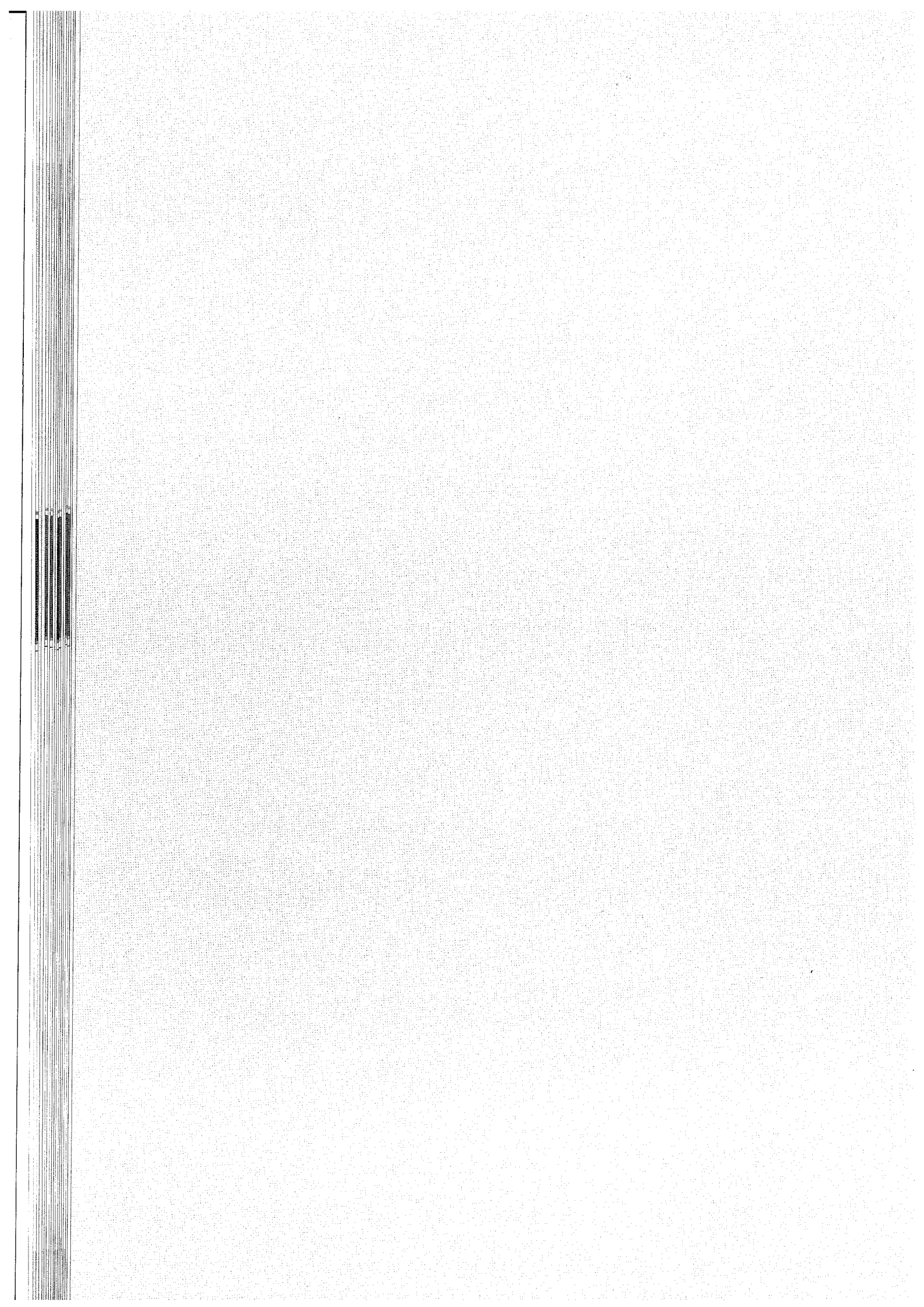






**CHAPTER 5**

**Recommendations**





## CHAPTER 5

# Recommendations

### Improving working conditions

People change as they age. Their capacity for long working hours may diminish. Jobs should be more flexible and better suited to the needs of older workers (WHO, 1993). Some older workers prefer part-time work so that they can enjoy more relaxed lifestyles and pursue leisure activities; some may need flexible schedules to accommodate family care responsibilities or their own physical limitations. Improving working conditions, such as providing part-time jobs, developing flexible work arrangement, relieving them from overtime work, and making minor adjustments according to the physical demands of the job, are ways to give older workers greater flexibility in their hours of work or in the timing and nature of their retirement (for example, partial retirement) (Eyster et al., 2008; Reday-Mulvey & Taylor, 1996; Stendardi, 2005; Villosio et al., 2008). Some studies have shown that improving working conditions can lead to better job sustainability, which can prevent early exit from the labour market and encourage stronger participation rates among older workers (Villosio et al., 2008).

### Maintaining the employability of older workers

Training can help older workers to master the latest skills, to maintain their productivity and employability, and to remain competitive in the labour market. This in turn can help businesses to fill skill gaps, be more productive and keep pace with technological progress. Training and developing older workers is a cost-effective solution as it enables business to build on their work experience and skills rather lose them to retirement. However, they are often thought of as being less productive than the young and rarely receive training and re-training (Brooke & Taylor, 2005; Ho et al., 2000; Ilmarinen, 1997; Taylor & Urwin, 2001; Villosio et al., 2008; Walker & Taylor, 1993). In fact, older workers are just as likely to benefit from training, including in new technologies, as younger workers (Benjamin & Wilson, 2005; OECD, 2006). They should not be neglected in training and career development. Opportunities for lifelong learning should be promoted. There is also a need to raise an awareness of the value of retaining older workers' specialized experiences, knowledge and skills.

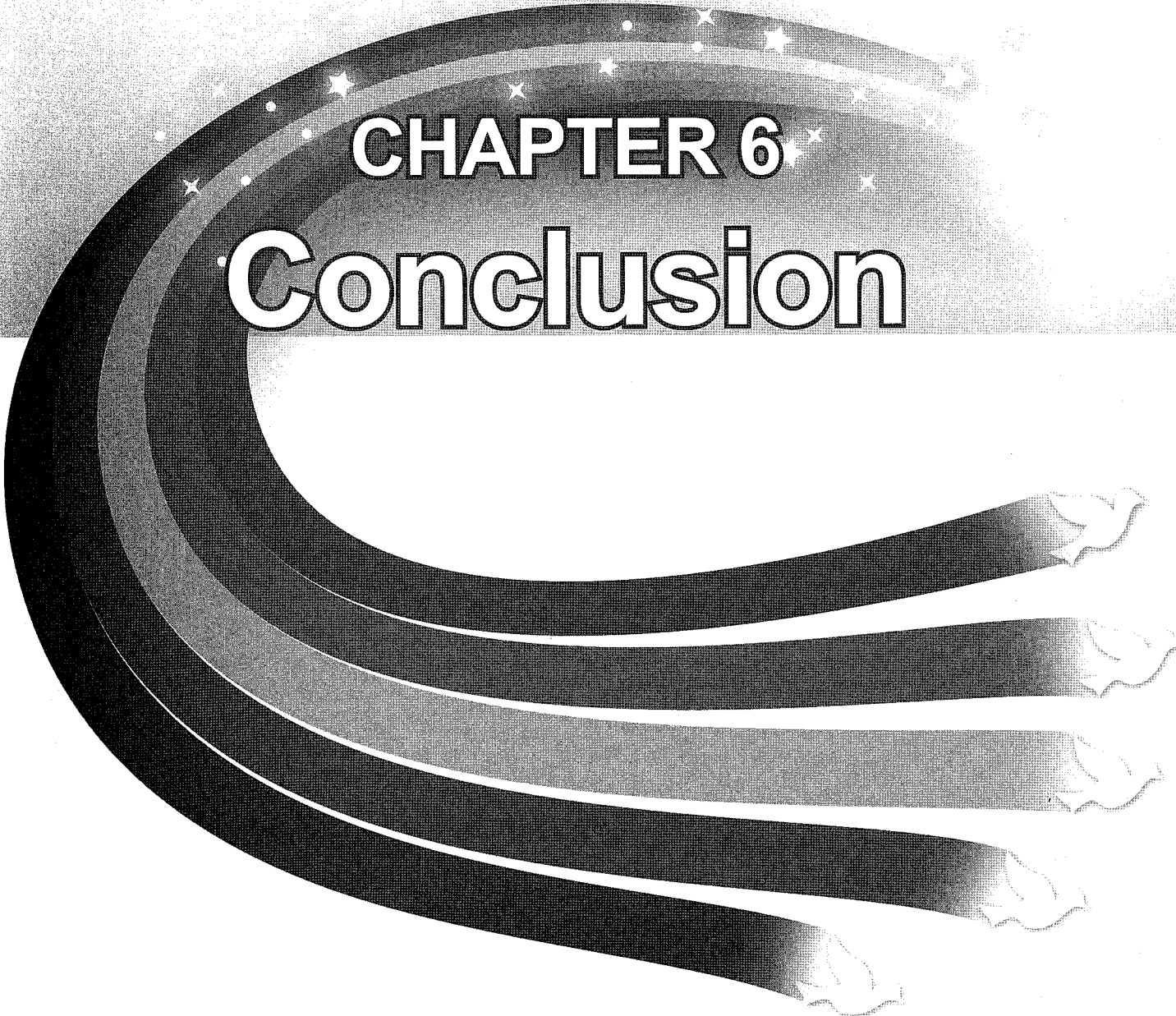
## Providing better employment services for older job seekers

Some older people are highly experienced, knowledgeable and skilled, but they have difficulties to find a new job and remain unemployed. This is partly because they do not have the information and means to match their skills and needs with those of employers. Suggestions to help these older job seekers include better advertising of positions, developing databases to match older workers with jobs, and setting up a register listing their experiences and skills for potential employers to consult (WHO, 2007).

## Tackling age discrimination

The stereotypes of older workers are numerous such as that older workers are less productive (Rosen & Jerdee, 1976; Walker & Taylor, 1993) and they should give way to younger workers (Taqi, 2002). These myths about the capacities of older workers and the way the labour market functions may hamper the adoption of age-friendly employment practices and need to be dispelled. A great deal of research has shown that these myths about older workers are not true and all confirm that older workers are a valuable resource (e.g., Ilmarinen, 1997; McEvoy & Cascio, 1989; Ng & Feldman, 2008; Paul & Townsend, 1993; Posthuma & Campion, 2009; Rhodes 1983; Stein, 2000; Waldman & Avolio 1986). Societal recognition of the value of older peoples' expertise in the workforce should be promoted.

It is also commonly believed that fewer jobs for older workers means more jobs for younger workers. However, this is not true. In some countries (such as, the USA, the UK, Japan and Korea), reduced elderly employment can result in reduced employment opportunities for younger workers because they use higher labour taxes to finance the costs of subsidizing early retirement (OECD, 2006). Fewer jobs for older workers can lead to fewer jobs for younger workers. Moreover, this myth is based on the assumption that workers of different age groups are perfectly substitutable for each other (OECD, 2006). Again, this is not true. Younger workers cannot be easily substituted for older workers. Various studies on younger and older workers show that each has relative strengths and weaknesses they can contribute to the workforce (Stenlund, 2004; WHO 1993). While younger employees may have greater technical skills, for example, in the use of the new technologies, older workers usually have considerable expertise that is lacking among younger workers. In some instance, employers have taken advantage of older workers' experience by inviting them to act as mentors to younger workers (Calo, 2005; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2005; WHO, 1993). While mentorship offers more stimulating and less physically demanding work for older workers, employers can ensure their valuable knowledge is preserved and passed on to younger workers (Peterson & Spiker, 2005). This points to the need of an age-diverse workforce that can draw on a range of strengths from different age groups (OECD, 2006).



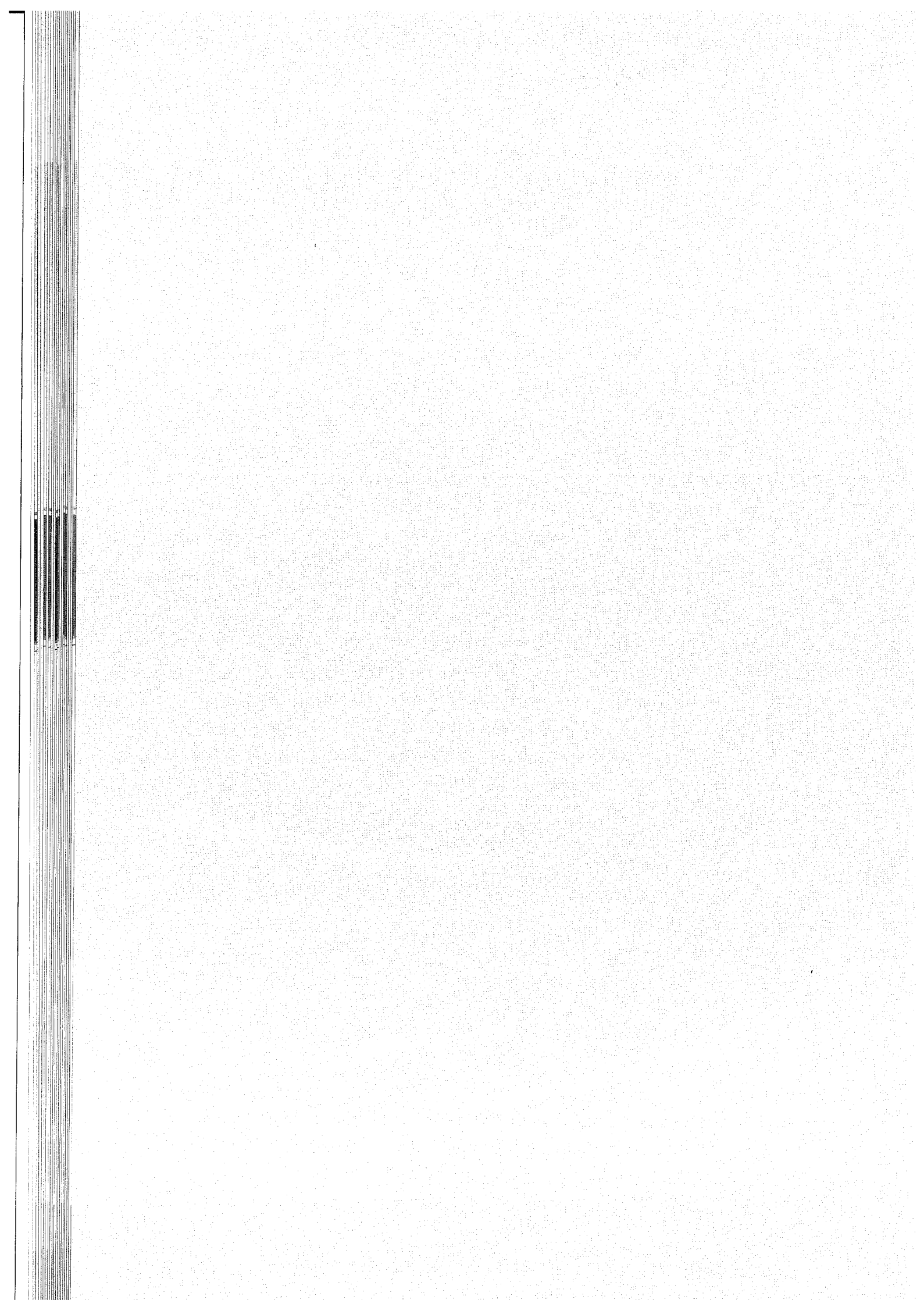
**CHAPTER 6**  
**Conclusion**

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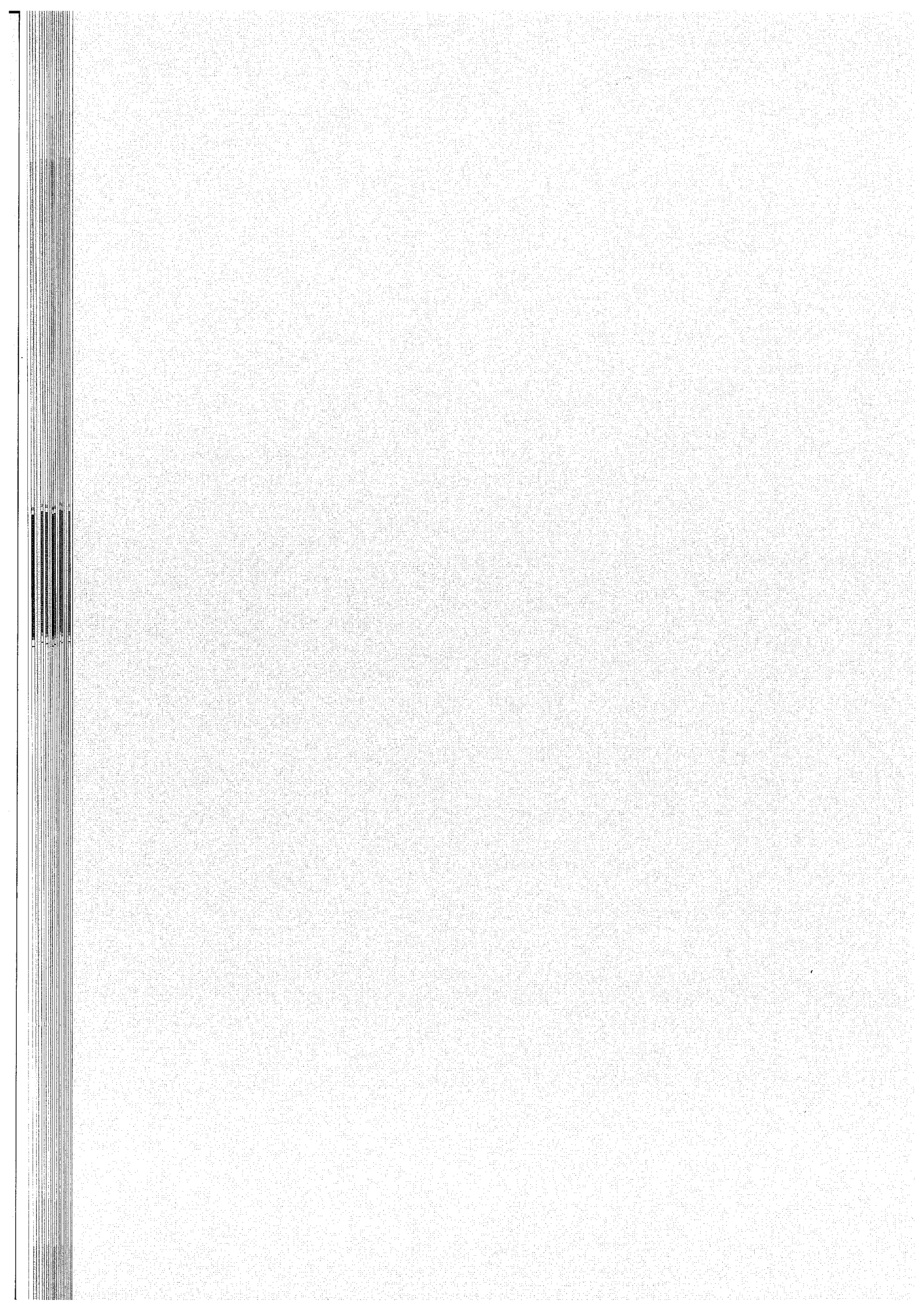
## CHAPTER 6

# Conclusion

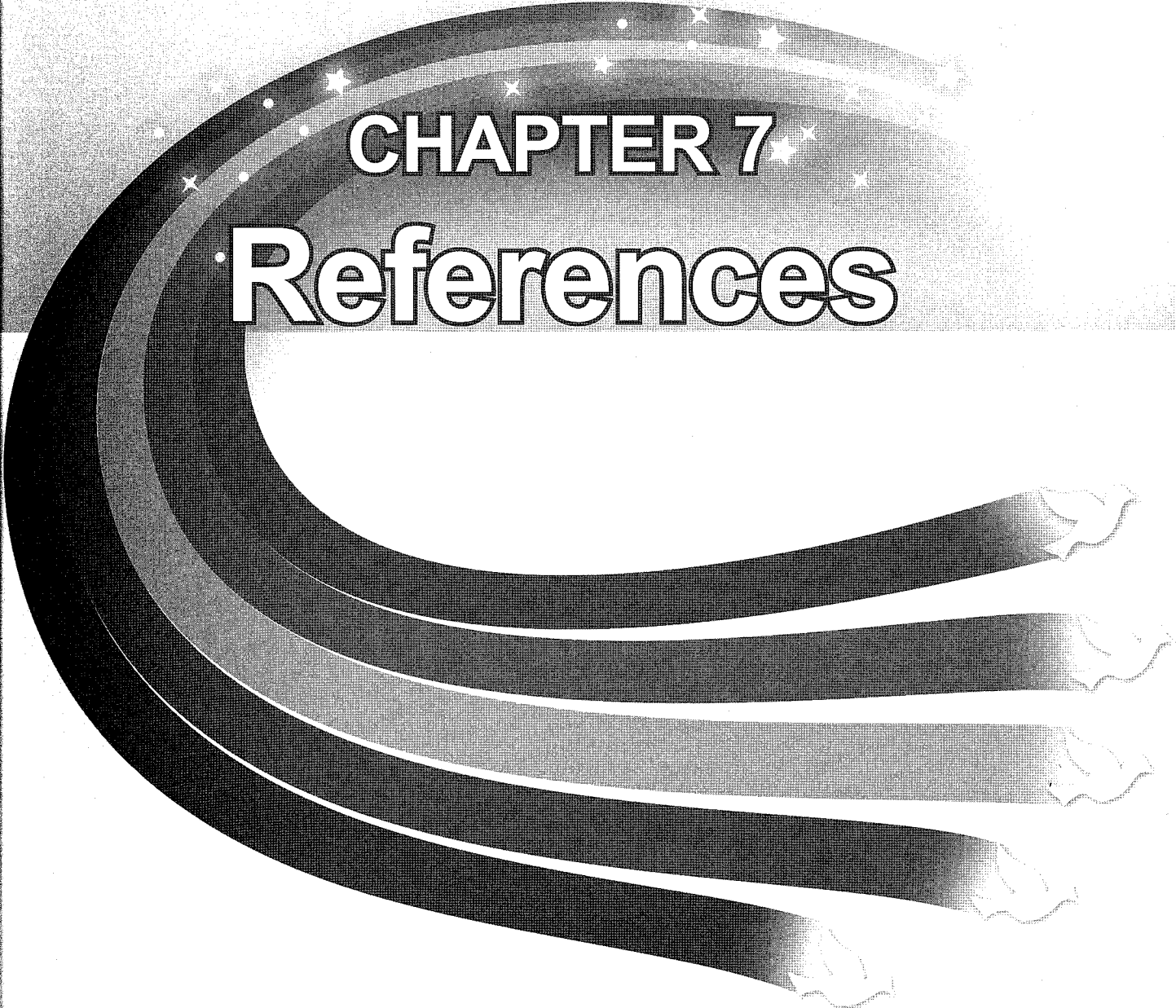
Population ageing poses serious social and economic challenges. It may put upward pressure on public expenditures while dragging down economic growth. Older people represent an enormous potential for the economy and society. Surveys, studies and evidence all confirm that older workers are a valuable resource. In order to achieve more sustainable social and economic development, Hong Kong should set itself a target of increasing the employment rate of older people. For this to be successful, the government, social partners and organizations need to work together to reform the current employment policies and practices and to remove barriers to employment of older workers. Age discrimination and negative stereotypes of older workers must be tackled. Working conditions and employment opportunities must be adapted to an age-diverse workforce. However, it is not only employers who should change their attitudes towards older workers. Older workers themselves should also need to change their attitudes towards working longer and acquiring new skills.

### Direction for future study

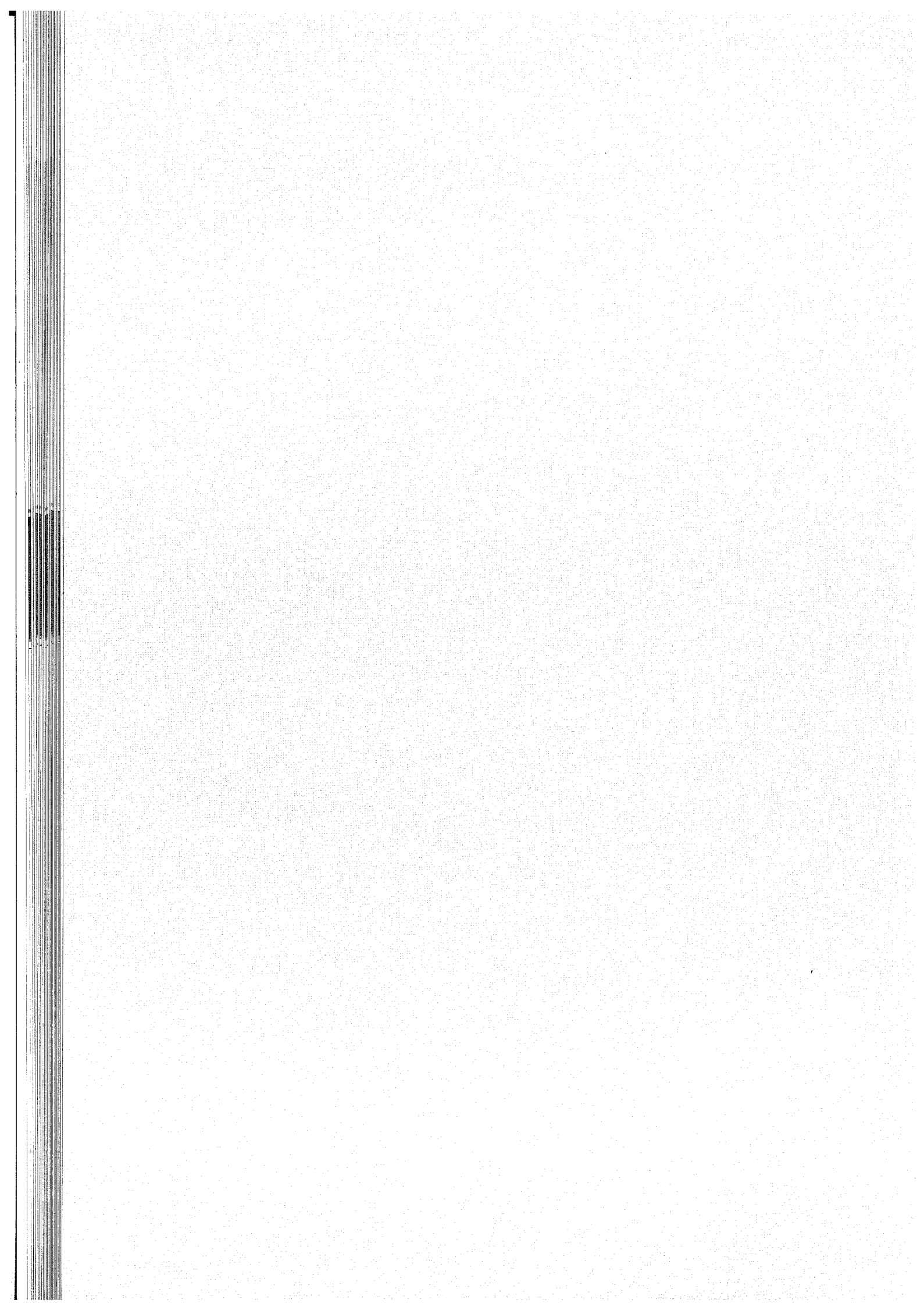
While this reports focused on the needs of older workers, Hong Kong employers may also face some barriers in retaining older workers. For example, they may have difficulties in providing appropriate insurance coverage for older workers. More research is needed in this respect.







**CHAPTER 7**  
**References**



# CHAPTER 7

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