

SIGNATURE INSIGHTS

# The Evolving Working Life

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Empowering you through  
the seasons of your career



# About SEEK

A leader in online employment marketplaces, SEEK has been helping people live more fulfilling and productive working lives and helping organisations succeed for more than 25 years.

Founded and headquartered in Melbourne, Australia, SEEK has grown into a multinational technology company with more than 3,300 employees and is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange.

SEEK's presence spans Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Additionally, SEEK has minority investments in employment marketplaces in China, South Korea and Bangladesh.

In 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024, SEEK was recognised as one of Australia's Top Ten Places to Work in Technology in the AFR BOSS Best Places to Work awards.

# About this report

SEEK's latest research provides a comprehensive look into Australian workforce demographics and trends. This study examines current workforce attitudes, retirement planning, career mobility, and generational perspectives on work, providing a broad view of the evolving context around a longer working life for Australians.

This research was conducted by market research agency Nature on behalf of SEEK, between October 2024 and February 2025 via an online survey. Responses were gathered from more than 5,000 individuals currently in the workforce (either employed or looking for work), aged 18 to 64, and living in Australia or New Zealand. To ensure accuracy, the data are weighted to be nationally representative of the labour force for each country, based on age, gender, location, and income.

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# Foreword

The nature of work and careers in Australia and New Zealand is undergoing a fundamental transformation. As I reflect on SEEK's latest research, one thing becomes abundantly clear: the traditional concept of a linear career path ending at 65 is no longer the reality for most people.

Australians are not just living longer, they're working longer too, with many expecting to work beyond their 70s, potentially stretching the average career length of 45 years up to 50 or more. Australians are also reaching milestones later in life, including home ownership and starting a family. These shifts bring opportunities to embrace and challenges to prepare for.

At SEEK, we believe that understanding these trends is a crucial first step for both employees and employers. In this report, we provide insights into Australians' attitudes towards their careers as well as practical guidance to help empower people to find enjoyment through every season of their working lives.

The playbooks we've provided in the last section of this report reflect our commitment to supporting sustainable, fulfilling careers that can span many decades, with strategic approaches to career development, skill building, and workplace flexibility.

Whether you're an individual planning your career or an organisation adapting to demographic shifts, I hope this report can serve as a valuable resource in helping you make informed decisions about the future of work.



Kathleen McCudden  
Group Executive, People and Culture  
SEEK



## PART 1

# A snapshot of life in Australia



Life in Australia looks very different today than it did just a few decades ago. We're living longer, starting families later, and spending more time in the workforce than ever before.

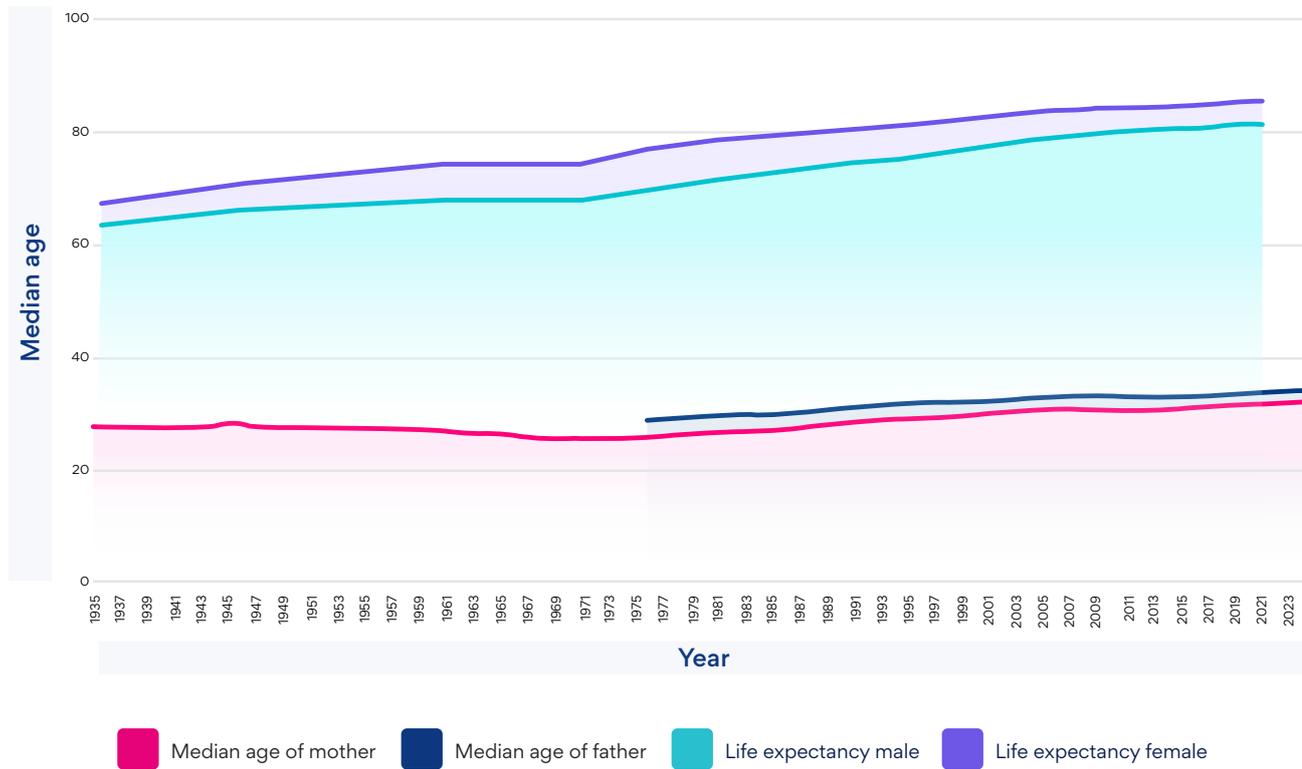
In 2025, the average Australian can expect to live to 83.2 years. To put this in perspective, that's 12 years more than life expectancy in 1960. Women today can expect to live to 85.3 years, with men at 81.2 years.

The journey to parenthood also looks very different today than it did 50 years ago. While parents in 1975 were typically starting families in their mid-20s (mothers at 25.8 and fathers

at 28.6 years), today's parents are waiting until their early 30s, with the median age now sitting at 31.9 years for mothers and 33.8 years for fathers. Along with this trend, Australian families are getting smaller, with two children becoming the typical family size.

This increase in life expectancy and career length means we have more generations and more gender representation in modern workplaces than we have ever had before. While this creates the need for adaptation, it also presents exciting opportunities for how we work in the future.

## Australian life milestones



## Australian life milestones then and now

In 1960		In 2020
Life expectancy for men was <b>67.9 years</b>	♂	Life expectancy for men was <b>81.2 years</b>
Life expectancy for women was <b>74.2 years</b>	♀	Life expectancy for women was <b>85.3 years</b>
Median age for mothers was <b>26.8 years</b>	👩👶	Median age for mothers was <b>31.9 years</b>
*Median age for fathers was not recorded	👨👶	Median age for fathers was <b>33.8 years</b>

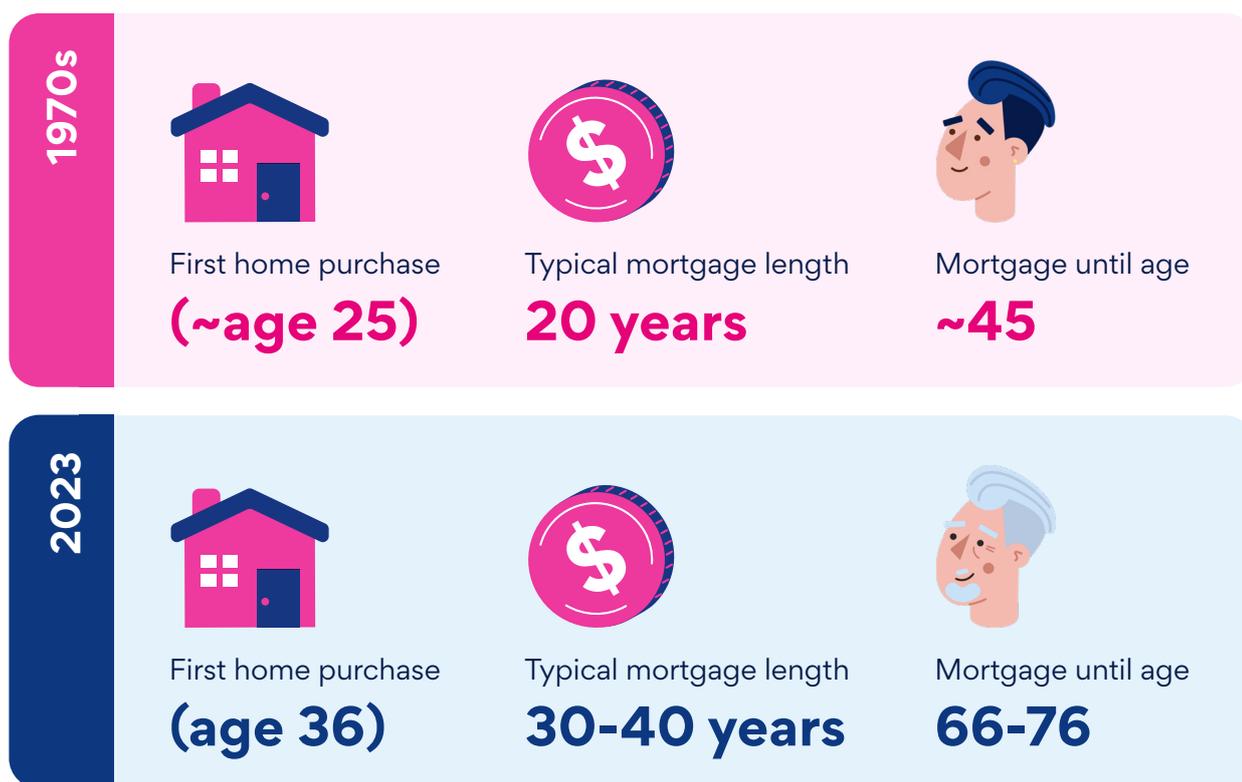
# The changing timeline of Australian home ownership

The timing of major milestones has also shifted, such as purchasing a first home. Today the average first-home buyer is 36 – a significant increase from the 1970s average of 25. Getting a mortgage later in life naturally means that more Australians are carrying mortgages into what used to be retirement years. In fact, the number of homeowners aged 55–64 still paying off their homes has increased from 14% to 47% between 1990 and 2015. That’s an incredible shift in just 25 years that outlines one reason why people are continuing to work later in life.

The reasons for delaying milestones are largely to do with financial situations. Many Australians simply can’t afford to buy a house at age 25, while women are delaying having children for a combination of factors, including education, career aspirations and financial stability.

As for delaying retirement, a 65-year-old today may live to be 95, and working longer may be necessary to maintain a comfortable standard of living. Australians may also choose to keep their jobs into older age for the social and cognitive benefits or because they’ve carved out a career over the years that aligns with their passions.

## Home ownership then and now



These changes in how we live, work and plan for the future are reshaping what a typical career looks like. With more years ahead of us, and financial commitments potentially stretching into our later years, the traditional idea of retiring at 67 may be an outdated one for many Australians – for a number of reasons, as highlighted in our study findings.

**PART 2**

## **How Australians feel about their careers**



SEEK's latest research paints a picture of how Australians feel about their careers and how they view their working future. It found that many expect to work beyond retirement age, with financial security the driving force behind extending their careers. However, some Australians – particularly those in their later career stages – find genuine fulfillment in continuing to work. One possible reason is that older people have had more time to gradually develop a career that aligns with their passions.

When it comes to career choices, many Australians have reservations about their career path, mostly for financial reasons. Changes in personal interests and hasty career decisions early in life also feature in reasons for career regret.

Despite concerns, there's a sense of optimism. Nearly half of those surveyed feel positive about their future careers, and many are open to the idea of a career change. Interestingly, fears about technology making jobs obsolete were less prevalent, suggesting Australians feel relatively secure about their role in the workforce of tomorrow.

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**Time, effort, money - nothing is ever truly wasted. Because it all builds up to something brighter and better down the track.**

- Johnson, 29

While many respondents expressed interest in a career transition, only a small percentage said they were actively pursuing new opportunities. The barriers? A mix of timing concerns, financial constraints, and uncertainty about where to begin.

Despite this, the research also found that career mobility is alive and well in Australia. Most Australians have worked in different roles across multiple industries, reflecting a positive mindset – an important trait to develop when considering a longer working life and the career opportunities it presents. Changing careers throughout life brings new challenges, diverse skills and continuous learning – all of which lead to cognitive benefits and long-term personal growth.

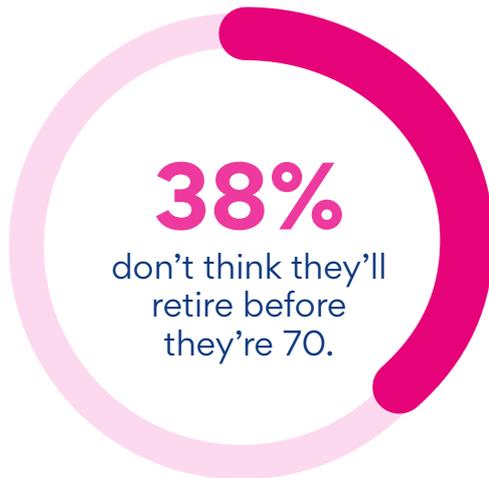
This section breaks down our findings in detail, revealing specific numbers and insights that tell a fuller story of modern Australian workers and their careers.



## KEY FINDING 1:

# Many Australians believe they will be working into their 70s

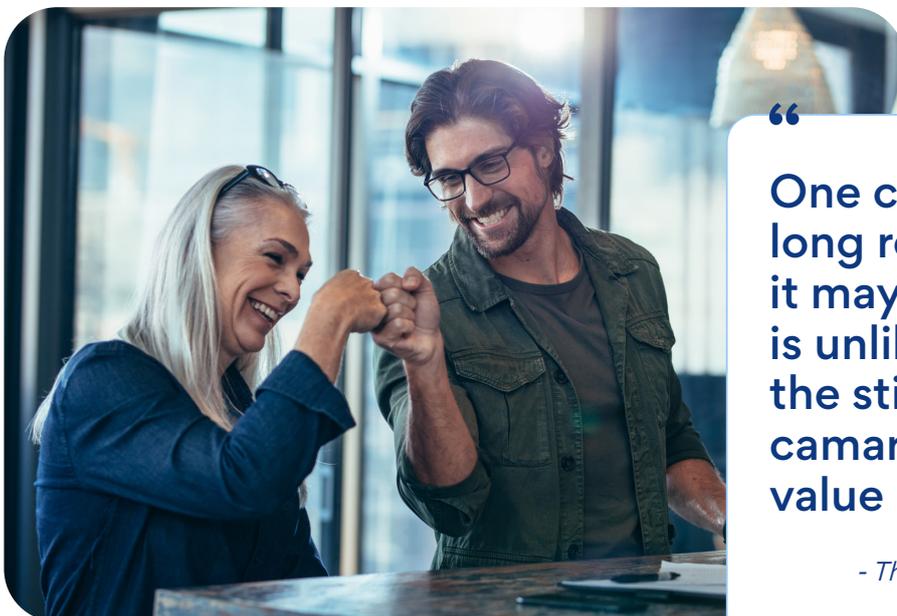
We asked respondents how old they think they will be when they retire, and how old they would like to be when they retire, and we found that 32% of Australians believe they'll be working longer than they would like to.



The reason for delaying retirement for the majority of respondents (60%) is that they don't think they'll have a choice; or in other words, their financial situation won't allow them to. We see this figure particularly pronounced for the younger generation, with 69% of Gen Z stating the case for working longer. Around 10% of respondents said they'd retire later because they want to maintain a sense of purpose, while 6% of

all respondents attributed delaying retirement to enjoying what they do for work.

It's key to note that this reason rings even truer for baby boomers (18%). We can hypothesise that by this stage many have settled into their careers and are choosing to keep working because they have found something they genuinely love to do.

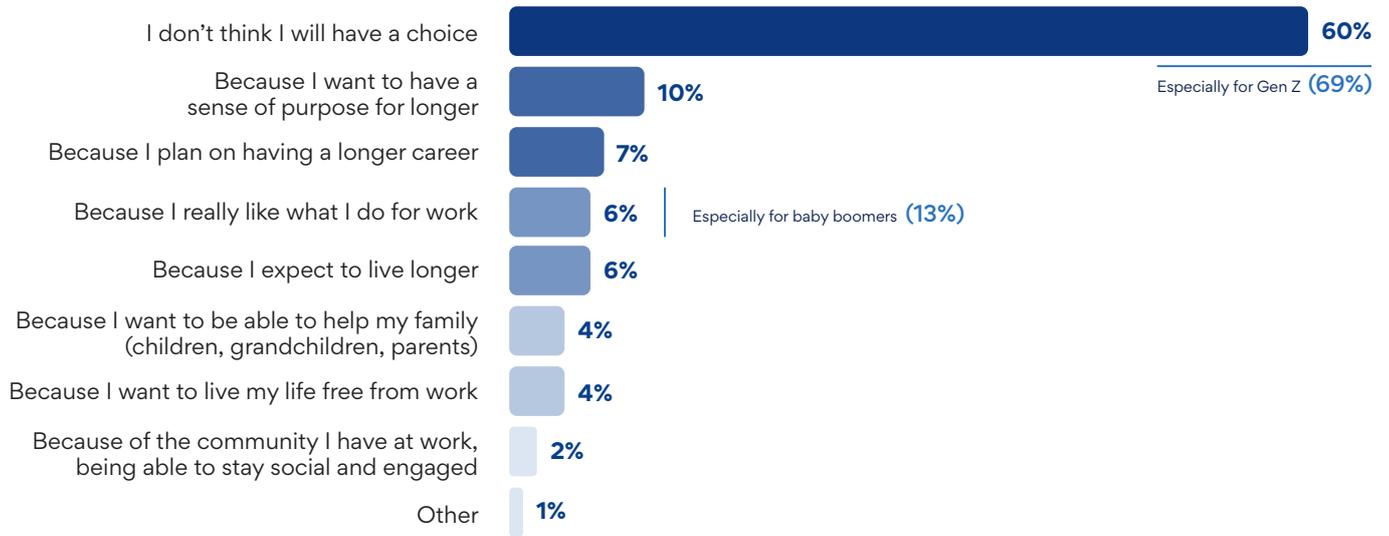


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**One challenge is that a long retirement, although it may sound appealing, is unlikely to provide the stimulation and camaraderie that people value and need.**

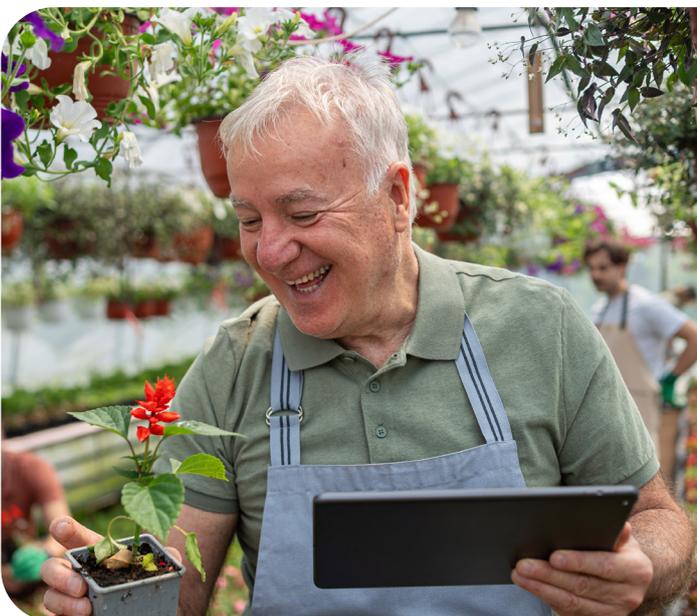
*- The 100-Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity*

# Reasons for retirement age



## TAKEAWAYS

- More than a third of Australians believe they'll be working into their 70s.
- The main reason for delaying retirement is lack of choice, due to their financial situation, particularly for the current younger generation.
- More baby boomers are continuing to work beyond retirement as they genuinely enjoy what they do for work.



“  
**Making the most of the gift of a long life requires everyone to face up to the truth of working into your 70s or even 80s. Simple as that.**

- *The 100-Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity*

## KEY FINDING 2:

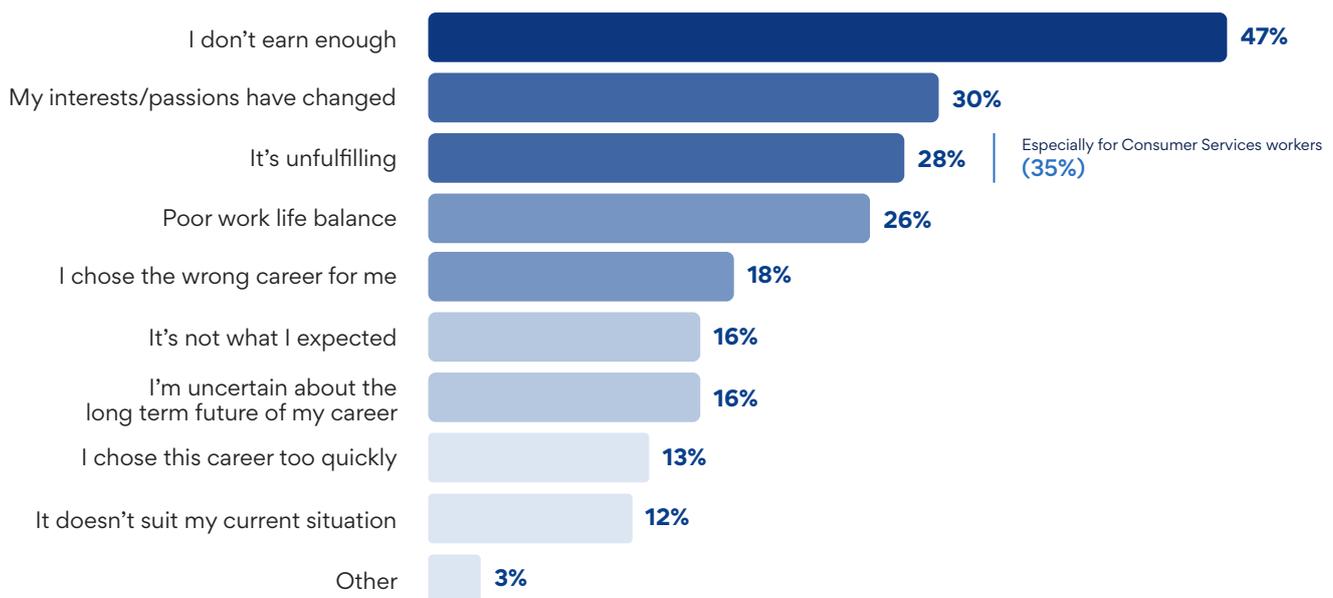
# Half of Australians regret their choice of career

Career satisfaction presents a complex picture, with more than half (52%) of Australians expressing regret about their career choices. The primary driver of this regret is financial, with 47% citing insufficient earnings.

Around 30% of respondents had regret because their passions and interests have changed, while 28% find their career choice unfulfilling, which is especially true for Consumer Services workers\* (35%).

If they could go back in time **52%** of Australians would choose a different career

## Reasons for career regret



**Note:** Consumer Services workers make up a third of the population and comprise people who work in these industries: Admin & Office support; Advertising, Arts & Media; Call Centre & Customer Service; Hospitality & Tourism; Real Estate & Property; Retail & Consumer Property; Sales & Business Development; and Sport & Recreation.



## TAKEAWAYS

- More than half of Australians regret their career choice.
- The main reasons for career regret are not earning enough and that their interests have changed.
- Reinforcing the findings of the [Workplace Happiness Index](#), 28% of people said they found their job unfulfilling.

### KEY FINDING 3:

## Australians are feeling optimistic about their future work life

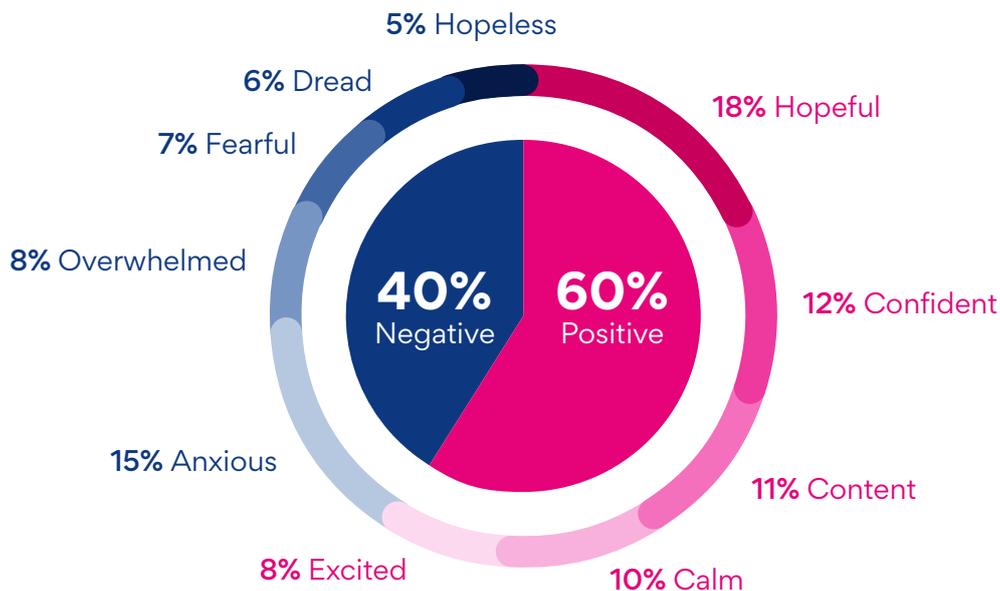
Our research reveals an interesting paradox: despite some Australians feeling regretful about their past choices, many Australians take a positive view of their future careers. Nearly half (47%) of workers surveyed say they look ahead with optimism, and a similar number (44%) feel ready to embrace career changes if the opportunity arises.

The survey also asked Australians to share some words to describe how they are feeling about their future working lives, and encouragingly, the

majority (60%) shared positive emotions such as ‘hopeful’, ‘confident’ and ‘content’. Not to be ignored however, a similar number of people also shared feeling ‘anxious’.

Interestingly, the study shows there’s little concern about automation replacing jobs – only 20% of workers worry about their roles becoming obsolete. This confidence suggests that despite rapid technological changes, Australians feel secure about their place in the future workforce and see opportunities on the horizon.

### Outlook on future working life



### TAKEAWAYS

- Almost half of Australians are optimistic about their future work life.
- Many are comfortable making a career change, defined as a different role in a different industry.
- Most Australians aren’t worried about automation taking their jobs in the next 10 years, suggesting this is not causing substantial concern.

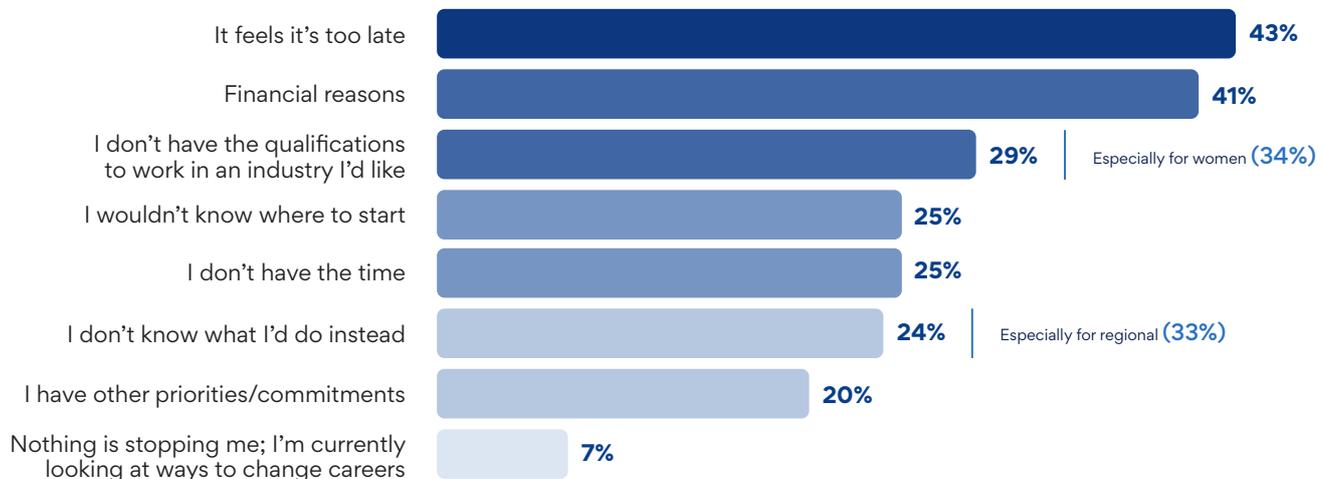
## KEY FINDING 4:

# Only 7% of Australians are actively looking at ways to change career

Even though many Australians feel regret about their careers and would be comfortable pivoting at this stage, the data show that a surprisingly small contingent of people are actively seeking ways to change careers. The reason cited by most people is that it feels too late to change (43%), with financial reasons mentioned by 41%. Many felt they didn't have the qualifications to work in their preferred industry (29%) which was more pronounced for women (34%).

Following that, a quarter said they either wouldn't know where to start or they simply didn't have the time, while a further 24% said they don't know what they'd do instead. What this tells us is that many Australian workers are lacking the confidence, knowledge or guidance around what options could be possible for them.

## Reasons for not making a career change



## TAKEAWAYS

- Only 7% of Australians are actively seeking ways to change careers.
- A sizeable proportion feel it is too late to pivot their career, and financial reasons were also cited by many.
- A quarter are feeling lost, they don't know where to start or what they'd do instead.

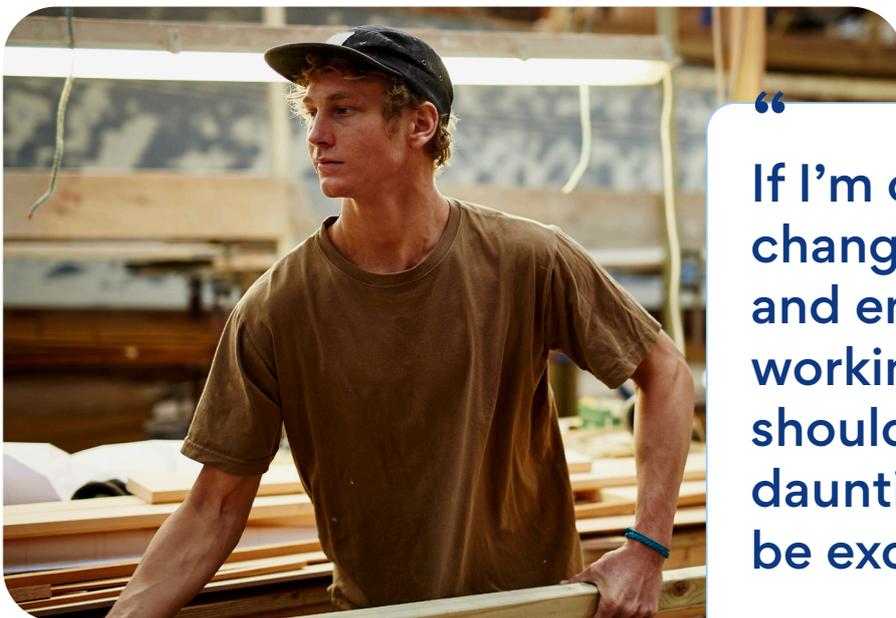
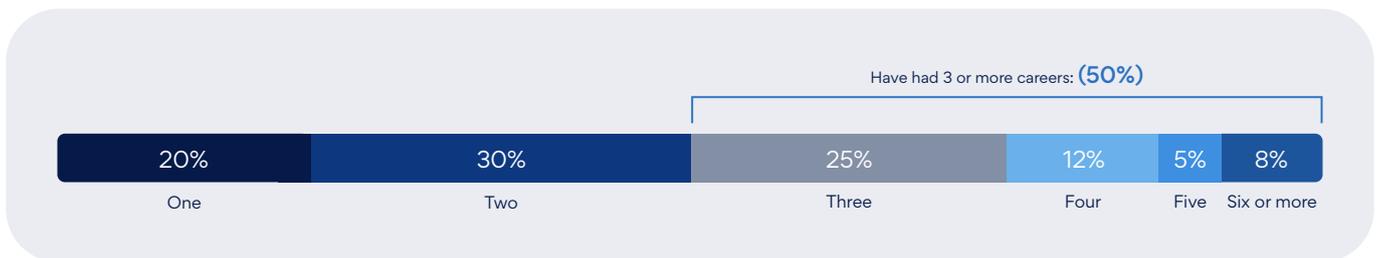
## KEY FINDING 5:

# Half of Australians have had three or more careers

Australians generally enjoy career diversity and high job mobility. SEEK research shows that more than half of Australian workers have worked across three or more roles and industries in their career. Naturally, the older the respondent, the more career changes, though we still see many young people enjoying diversity in their careers.

The top reasons for these career changes appear to be less proactive, being that the opportunity simply presented itself (44%) or they had a change in life circumstances (38%). This aligns with the research findings that prove only a small number of people are taking an active approach regarding career changes. Following that, we see people wanting to improve their skill set (32%) or their financial potential (29%).

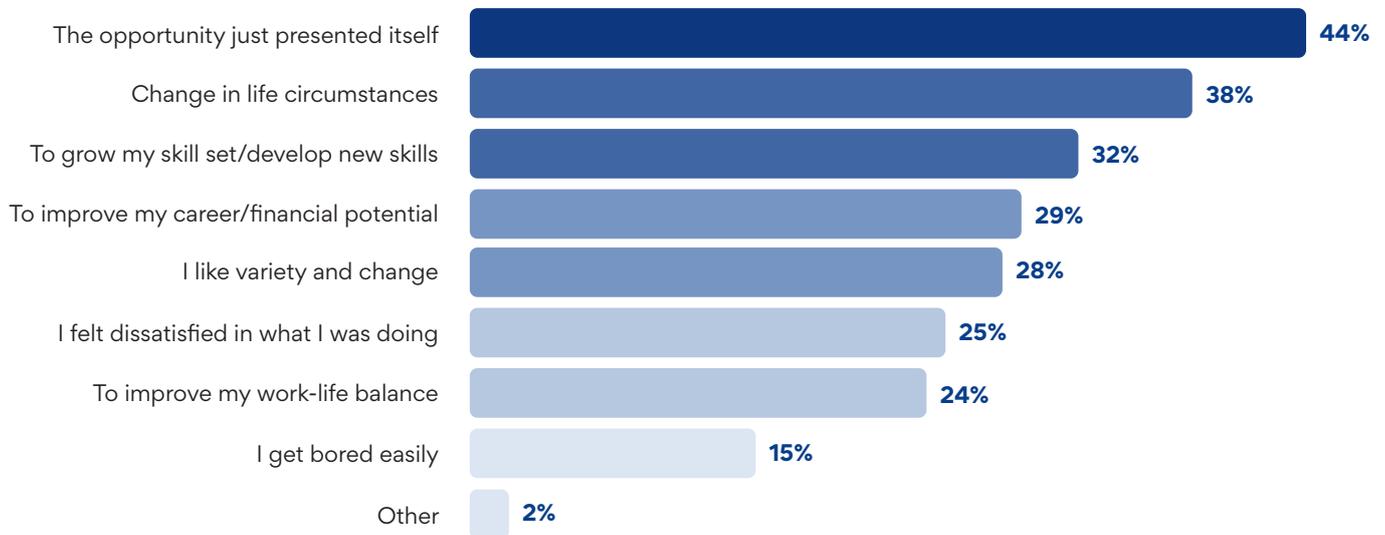
## Number of careers (different roles in different industries)



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If I’m constantly changing my career and enjoying it, then working into my 70s shouldn’t be scary or daunting. It should be exciting.”

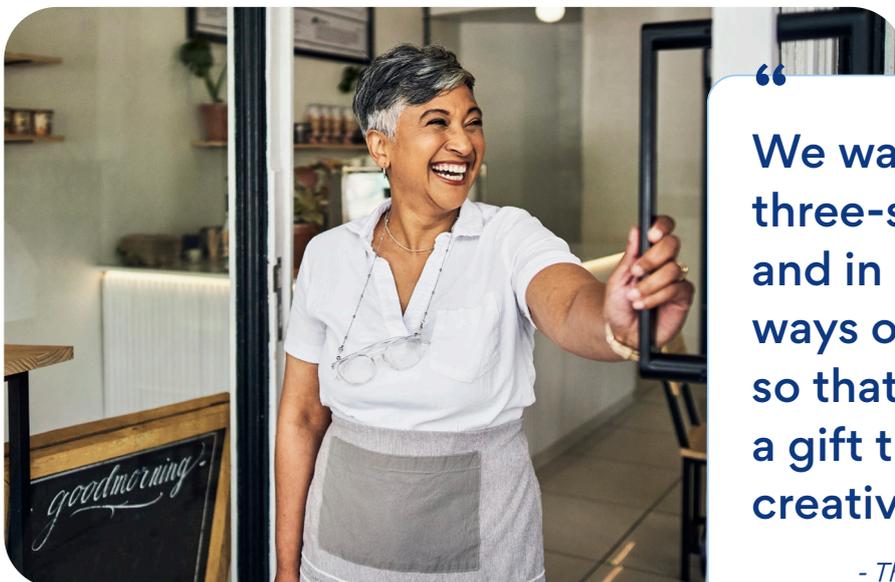
- Jake, 33

# Reasons for changing careers



## TAKEAWAYS

- Half of Australians, across the generations, have enjoyed three or more careers.
- The main reasons for these career changes, is due to a change in life circumstances or that the opportunity simply presented itself.
- Others have changed careers for more self-improvement reasons, either to develop skills or improve their financial situation.



“

We want to bury the three-stage working life and in its place, consider ways of redesigning life so that long lives become a gift that is energizing, creative and fun.

- *The 100-Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity*

## Meet the career changers



**Johnson, 29**

I went from clinical dentistry to working as a Strategy Analyst in Tech. While I felt comfortable and well supported in clinical dentistry, there was a nagging feeling that I wanted to move towards an area that allowed me to work on big picture projects and problems, in large teams where I can engage with people from multiple disciplines, and at the intersection of technology and business.

I'm quite happy with the move thus far! What I would say is that, as one collects new skills and experiences, there will be a natural evolution of what their career looks like. For example, it could involve a new role where they can combine their previous experiences, which is not a change per se but a progression.

“

**I got to the point where I realised that if there ever was a time to see what's out there, now's the time. If it turns out to be a good call, you'll be glad you did it. And if it's a bad call, you'll be glad you found out.**



**Fleur, 53**

Apart from many and varied part-time jobs since the age of 13 (my first job was in a florist!) I have worked in TV production, publishing, and for 20 years in IT, with roles in software testing, project and change management. In those 20 years I worked in the telecommunications, legal and finance sectors. I now work as a counsellor for a government funded agency.

Whilst my earlier career choices mostly evolved due to circumstance and opportunity, the change to counsellor was a longed-for pivot to something I had dreamed of for years. I had become very disillusioned with corporate life and struggled to maintain interest and focus on what I was doing. As I got older, I felt an increasing sense of discomfort that the work didn't align with my values, and didn't play to my strengths. This combined with an opportunity to take redundancy really propelled me to make the change.

“

**I still dream about other careers – interiors, real estate, writing, and art and craft – however instead of feeling like I need to make them my career, I hope to use my current work to allow me to dabble in those areas in the future.**



**Jake, 33**

I used to be a paediatric occupational therapist and now I'm a visual content agency owner. I actually really loved where I worked. I loved my boss. I loved the people I worked with. But my parents owned their own business, and I always wanted to follow in their footsteps and own my own business.

The idea of working into my 70s, I think used to probably be a little bit daunting. And if I'm constantly changing my career and enjoying it, then working into my 70s shouldn't be scary or daunting. It should be exciting.

My concerns? I guess taking the leap of faith and leaving my old job. Things like a university degree that I'm now not using. Or time wasted that I could have put into my current job. But... I have no regrets at all.

“

**If I were to give my younger self some advice about career decisions, I'd say simply give it a go. I'd recommend looking at your soft skills and thinking what could I do with those?**

## Three expert tips on changing careers

**Start small.** “Career change isn't about leaping off the cliff. It can start with micro-shifts, or career experiments, that allow you to test and evaluate potential career pathways that may build momentum over time.”

**Consider transferable skills.** “No one starts from scratch when they make a career change. There are always transferable skills that come with you from previous careers and life experience. It is all about packaging these up in the right way and finding employers who will appreciate what you can offer.”

**Do your research.** “Career change is a journey, not an event. It starts with self-assessment and needs to involve considerable research and experimentation if you want to get it right. Unfortunately, many people didn't have career guidance when they chose their first career and often these important steps are missed”



Leah Lambert,  
Career and interview coach

**PART 3**

# **Playbooks for workers and employers**



# Playbook for workers

## How to make a longer career work for you

As we have explored through this report, we know Australians are living and working longer. Many regret their career choices and feel it's too late to make a change, yet despite being open to a career switch, only a small percentage are actually seeking ways to make it happen, with most only pivoting when presented with the opportunity or due to circumstantial life changes. Overall, Australians are optimistic about their future careers but seem to lack practical guidance and knowledge about their career options.

Here are some important points to remember, based on our latest research.

**It's not too late to make a career change.** With an estimated career length of around 45 years, Australians have many years to make the switch. Someone in their 60s could still have a 15-year career ahead of them.

**Action:** Make a career plan. Give yourself goals to work towards so you can start making steps towards your chosen career. Use SEEK's [free online career plan template](#).

**You don't have to feel rushed to make a choice.** Given our longer lives and high job mobility in Australia, there's time to delay study or put off committing to a full-time career.

**Action:** Reflect on your strengths and interests, your values and your goals for the future and where you'd like to see yourself in five, 10 and 20 years. Even if you don't know exactly what you want to do, knowing yourself better will help you make the [right career choices](#).

**Later in your career you may have a better idea of your own strengths.** It is common to feel regret, and equally common to switch jobs. Perhaps that's why we see baby boomers delaying retirement because they like their jobs; they know themselves better and have had time to follow their passions.

**Action:** As you grow older, cultivate interests and upskill outside of work, whether that's in a sport, a hobby, or a side hustle. Following your changing interests and growing skills will help you find a job that is fulfilling and purposeful. Try SEEK's [tools and career quizzes](#).

**You can change if/when your values change.**

The days of staying at the same job for 30 years are over. More than half of Australians reported three or more career changes, proving it's possible to pivot according to changing priorities or interests.

**Action:** Stay up to date with your industry and aware of general employment trends in Australia. Browse career ads, even when you aren't looking to change jobs, to stay informed about growing sectors. If you feel 'stuck', investigate why. Create a career development plan that can help you progress towards a job or industry that feels right for you. Try SEEK's [Career Planner](#).

**You can make incremental changes, whether that is learning slowly in your own time, or training at work.** A long working life gives you the chance to make small, slow changes, to upskill in your own time and to gradually move towards a job you genuinely enjoy.

**Action:** Move towards a career change by first assessing what certifications or skills you need. Research online courses you can do in your spare time and ask your employer if they provide any career development training. Volunteer roles can also provide experience and give you skills that could help you make a career change. [Browse SEEK Volunteer for ideas](#).

**Working to 70 for financial reasons may feel more sustainable if you periodically go part time or find remote work.** There are many more types of jobs today than just full-time permanent work. You can explore options for remote work and flexible hours – if you don't have the right skill set or education, there is time to slowly work towards getting them.

**Action:** Create a later-stage career plan, taking into account different priorities, skills and financial needs. If you're looking for contract or casual professional work, consider contacting a recruiter who specialises in your industry or skillset. Investigate [jobs you can do from home](#) for more work-life balance. [Search SEEK for remote jobs](#).

## Benefits of working longer



### Keeps your mind active

Staying mentally engaged has cognitive benefits, especially as you age.



### Social connection

A social network is good for wellbeing and creates a sense of belonging.



### Fulfillment

A sense of purpose can help you maintain health and independence.



### Knowledge sharing

Pass on wisdom, help others and strengthens the economy.



### Financial independence

You can enjoy a good standard of living as you grow older and build a nest egg for your retirement years.

“

I see (working into my 70s) as part of an ongoing personal fulfillment, but also because I don't want to be idle, I want to be using my brain and I love working with people. I want to remain active.

- Fleur, 53





## Actions you can take

### Starting today

- Assess your skills and abilities, technical and aspirational
- Assess your values, passions and aspirations
- Make a career plan, or several
- Set goals

### At any time

- Stay up to date with job trends in your industry
- Be aware of overall employment trends in Australia. Find opportunities to study or upskill, which can be formal or informal. Research free or online training and workshops in your area
- Network with industry peers, attend meetups and connect with ex-colleagues
- Consider volunteering opportunities that provide new skills or relationships
- Consider hybrid and remote working opportunities

# Playbook for employers

## How to harness talent in an era of evolving work lives

The way we work is always changing. With Australians living and working longer, career paths becoming more diverse, and employees increasingly open to change, organisations need to adapt their approach to talent management. Our research shows that while many employees are optimistic about their future and open to career changes, they often need support and encouragement to take that next step.

Here are key strategies for organisations, based on our latest research.

**Create pathways for career evolution.** With half of Australians having worked across three or more industries, there's a deep pool of transferable skills to tap into.

### Actions:

- Build clear career progression frameworks that include non-traditional paths
- Create opportunities for cross-departmental moves
- Implement "career taster" programs or internal secondments
- Develop mentoring programs that pair experienced staff with those seeking new directions

**Support ongoing development.** Given that 44% of people feel it's too late to change careers and 29% don't know where to start, employers can play a crucial role in enabling transitions.

### Actions:

- Introduce regular career development conversations
- Provide access to training and upskilling opportunities
- Offer career coaching and planning support
- Create learning budgets for self-directed development
- Enable study leave or flexible arrangements for further education

**Embrace age diversity.** With 37% of workers expecting to work into their 70s, age-inclusive practices are essential.

### Actions:

- Review recruitment practices to eliminate age bias
- Create flexible work arrangements that suit different life stages
- Develop programs that facilitate knowledge transfer between generations
- Build teams that blend experience with fresh perspectives
- Consider part-time hours or job-sharing arrangements for senior roles

**Focus on financial wellbeing.** Given that financial considerations drive many career decisions, employers can help staff make informed choices.

### Actions:

- Provide financial planning resources and workshops
- Offer salary packaging options
- Create transparent pay structures
- Support transition-to-retirement arrangements
- Consider superannuation education programs

**Foster an inclusive culture.** With employees staying in the workforce longer, creating a supportive environment is crucial.

### Actions:

- Implement unconscious bias training
- Create employee resource groups for different career stages
- Celebrate diverse career paths and transitions
- Encourage knowledge sharing and mentoring
- Regular check-ins on career satisfaction and goals

## Benefits of supporting evolving working lives



### Enhanced knowledge retention

Experienced employees can share valuable institutional knowledge.



### Diverse perspectives

Multi-generational teams bring broader insights and innovation.



### Improved engagement

Supporting career development increases employee satisfaction.



### Better talent attraction

Progressive policies appeal to candidates of all ages.



### Reduced turnover

Career development opportunities encourage loyalty.



### Stronger succession planning

Internal mobility creates robust talent pipelines.

Supporting longer working lives isn't just about retaining older workers – it's about creating an environment where all employees can thrive and develop throughout their extended careers. By implementing these strategies, organisations can build a more adaptable, engaged, and sustainable workforce.



This study was led by SEEK's Customer Research and Insights team.

We are the voice of our customers.

We diligently listen to their experiences and expectations, delving deep into the underlying reasons behind their feedback.

By understanding what our customers truly need and want, as well as pinpointing their pain points, we actively influence business decisions and drive change.

Our unwavering dedication to understanding and advocating for our customer empowers us to make a meaningful impact.

## LEARN MORE

Reach out to Nicola Laver, Workplace Success Manager for more information, if you're interested in an industry deep dive of these insights or training for people leaders.

[nlaver@seek.com.au](mailto:nlaver@seek.com.au)

In this report we reference quotes from *The 100-Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity* by Lynda Gratton and Andrew J Scott.

Lynda is a Professor of Management Practice at London Business School. Andrew J Scott is Professor of Economics at London Business School and a Fellow of All Souls, Oxford University and the Centre for Economic Policy Research.