

# Does learning help? Learning for work and life after 50

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# The Learning and Work in Later Life project



- What is the impact of learning on employment in later life?
- Project funded by Nuffield Foundation
- Planned by CROW at Surrey University
- Delivered by CROW at NIACE
- Changed methodology

# Participants



- Yanina Dutton - NIACE
- Matt Flynn – CROW Surrey & Middlesex Business School
- Tony Maltby - NIACE
- Stephen McNair- NIACE
- Lynda Owen-Hussey – CROW Surrey
- Zeal Solutions – Leicester University

## Contextual issues

- Limited literature
- Policy disjunction – age v education policy
- Economic restructuring
- Historical change and cohorts
- Attitudes and discrimination – line managers
- Economic context – labour demand and public sector retrenchment
- Defining “training” and “skill”

## What we did

# 1 Reviewing the field

- review of relevant literature:
  - 23 academic databases
  - Keywords: age, training, 50+, retirement, work, later life, learning, older workers
  - CROW database (2500 documents)
  - 4777 documents, narrowed to 75 directly relevant, 37 post 2000
- review of the major relevant national datasets:
  - Labour force survey
  - Workplace employee relations survey
  - National adult learners survey
  - English longitudinal survey of ageing
  - NIACE annual survey of adult participation in learning
  - Also DWP research reports, European Social Survey, AARP, Campaign for Learning

## 2 Employee and employer perspectives



- examination of employee perspectives through:
  - specially commissioned survey of the adult population (11,900 aged 18-69)
  - pilot interviews with older workers
  - secondary analysis of transcripts from CROW ESF/HE project
- examination of employer perspectives through:
  - a secondary analysis of data collected in the Survey of Employer's Practices and Preferences (SEPP) relating to age
  - secondary analysis of employer transcripts from qualitative element of the SEPP project.

## 3 Three omnibus surveys

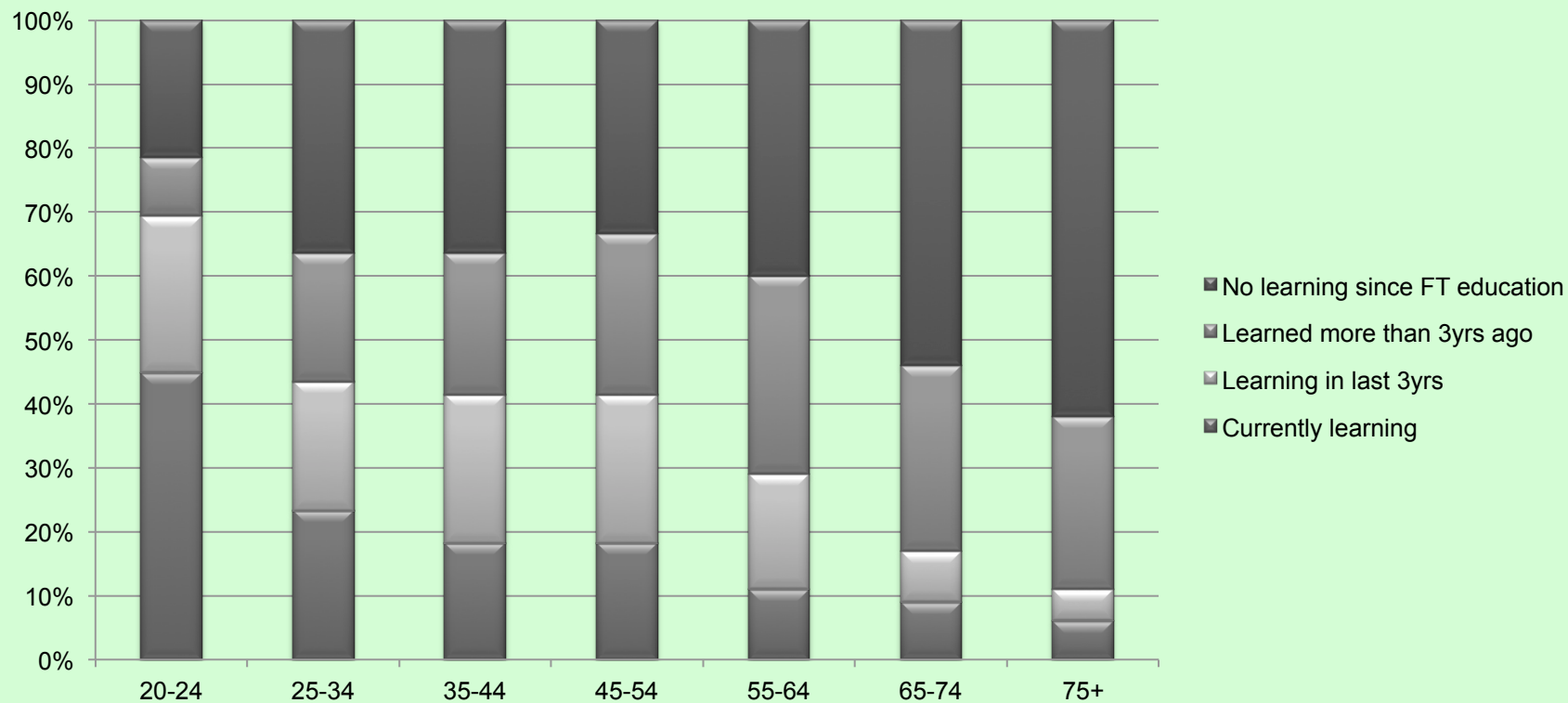
- Add two questions to
  - ONS Omnibus
  - NIACE annual adult learner survey
  - NIACE/CROW commissioned survey
- “Have you been offered training in last 3 months, and if so did you take it up?”
- “Do you think you are over or under skilled for your present job?”
- 10,760 responses
- 63% employed, 33% unemployed, 3% inactive



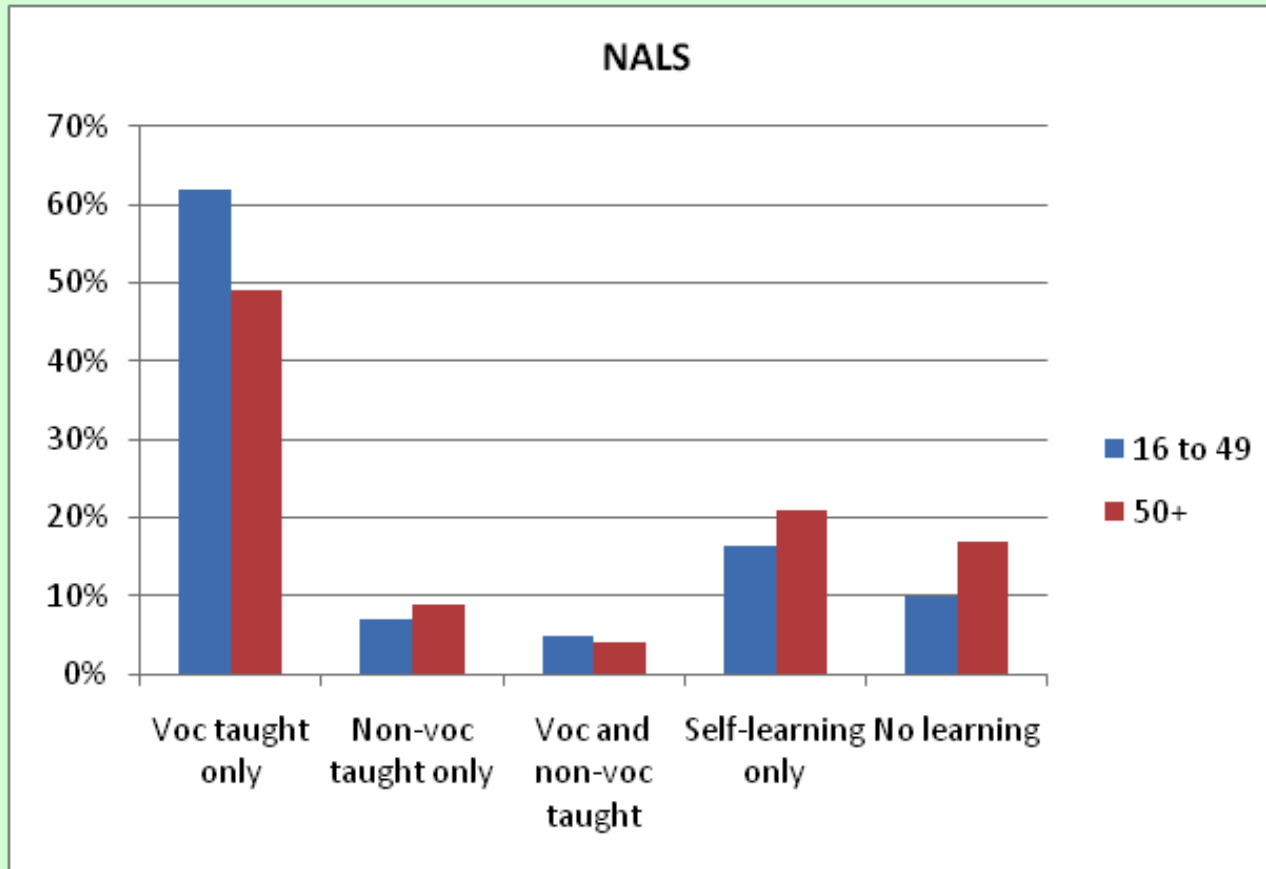
## What we found

# Learning declines with age (all forms)

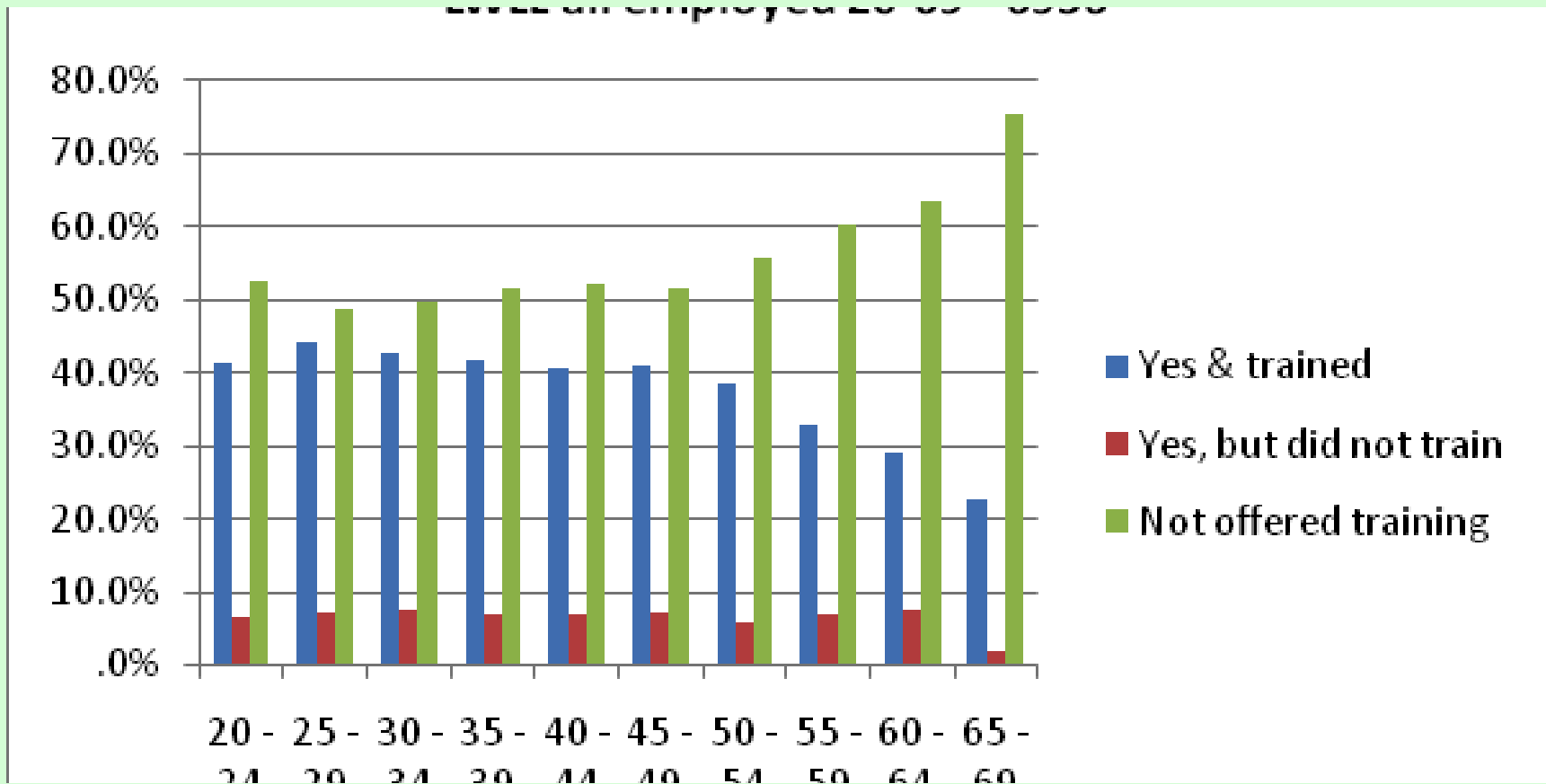
**NIACE Adult learning survey 2011**



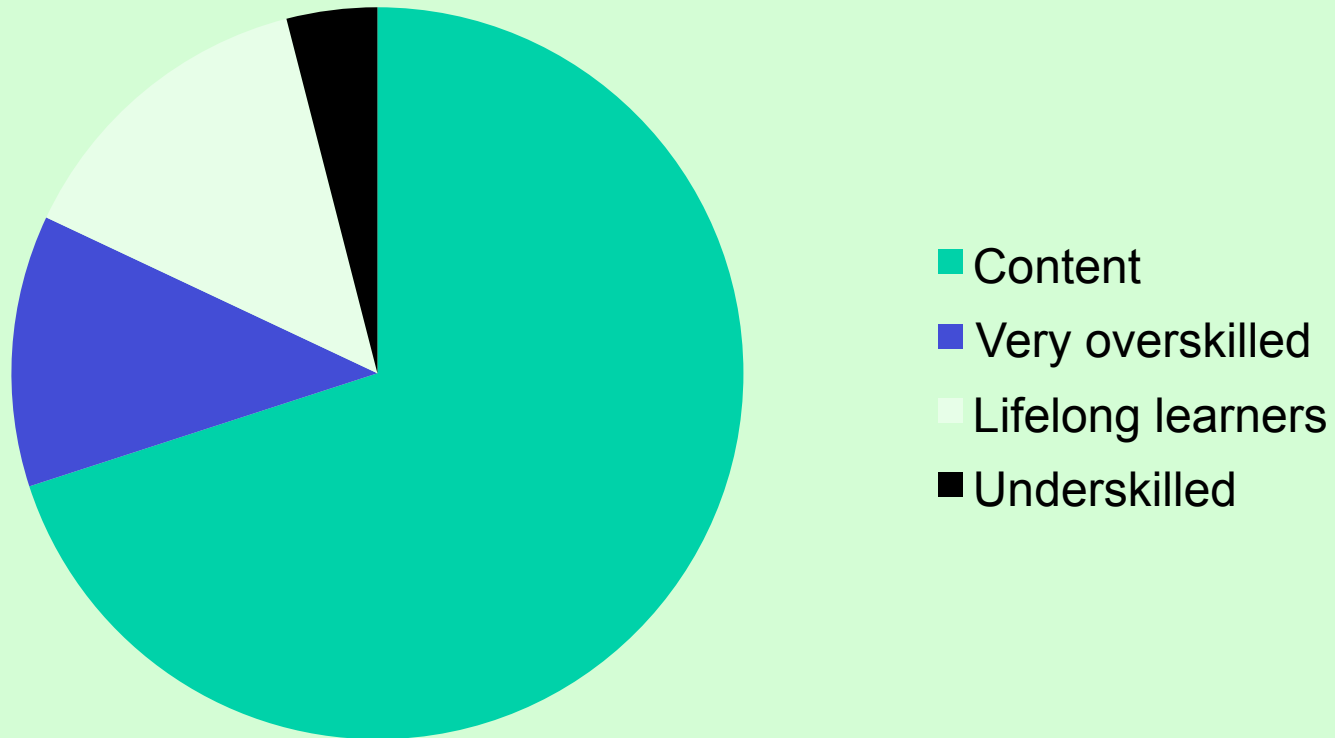
# Type of learning changes with age



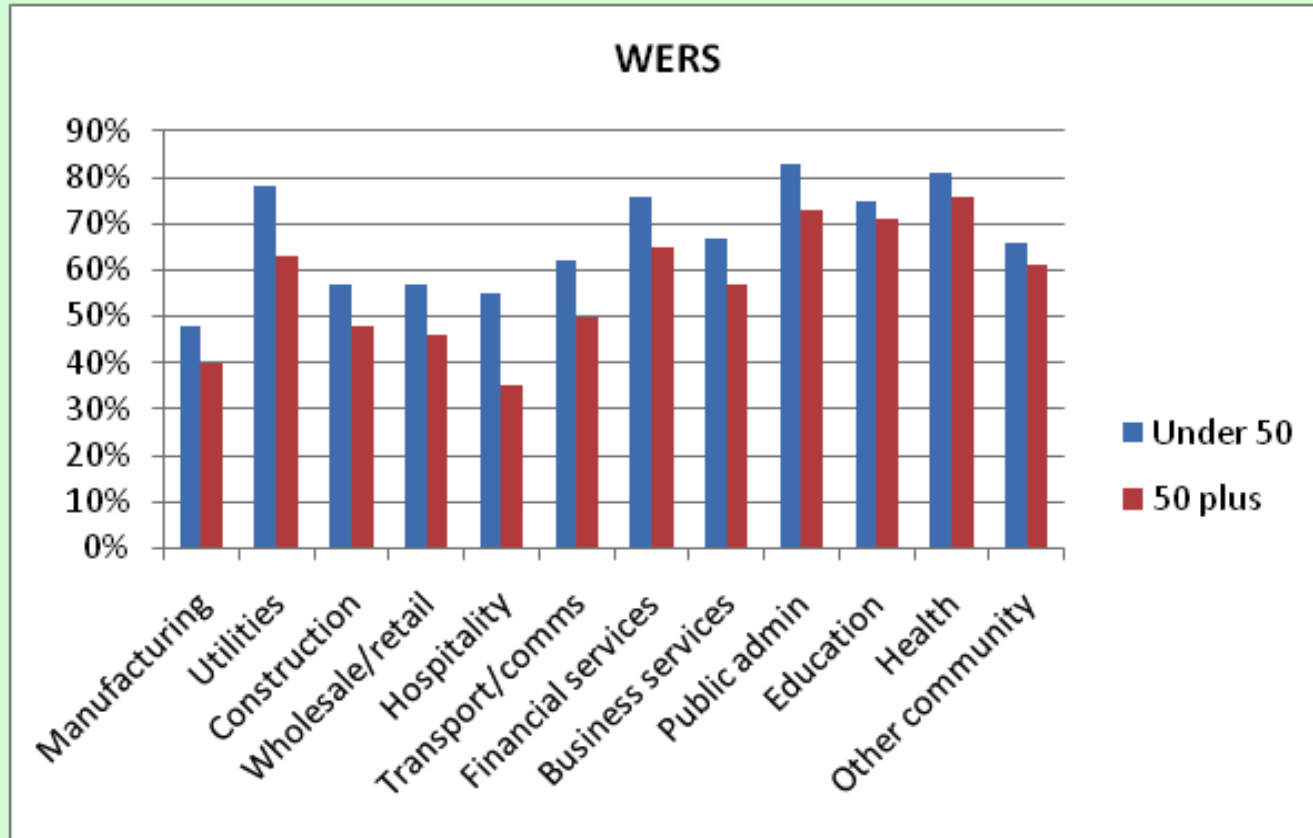
# People rarely refuse training



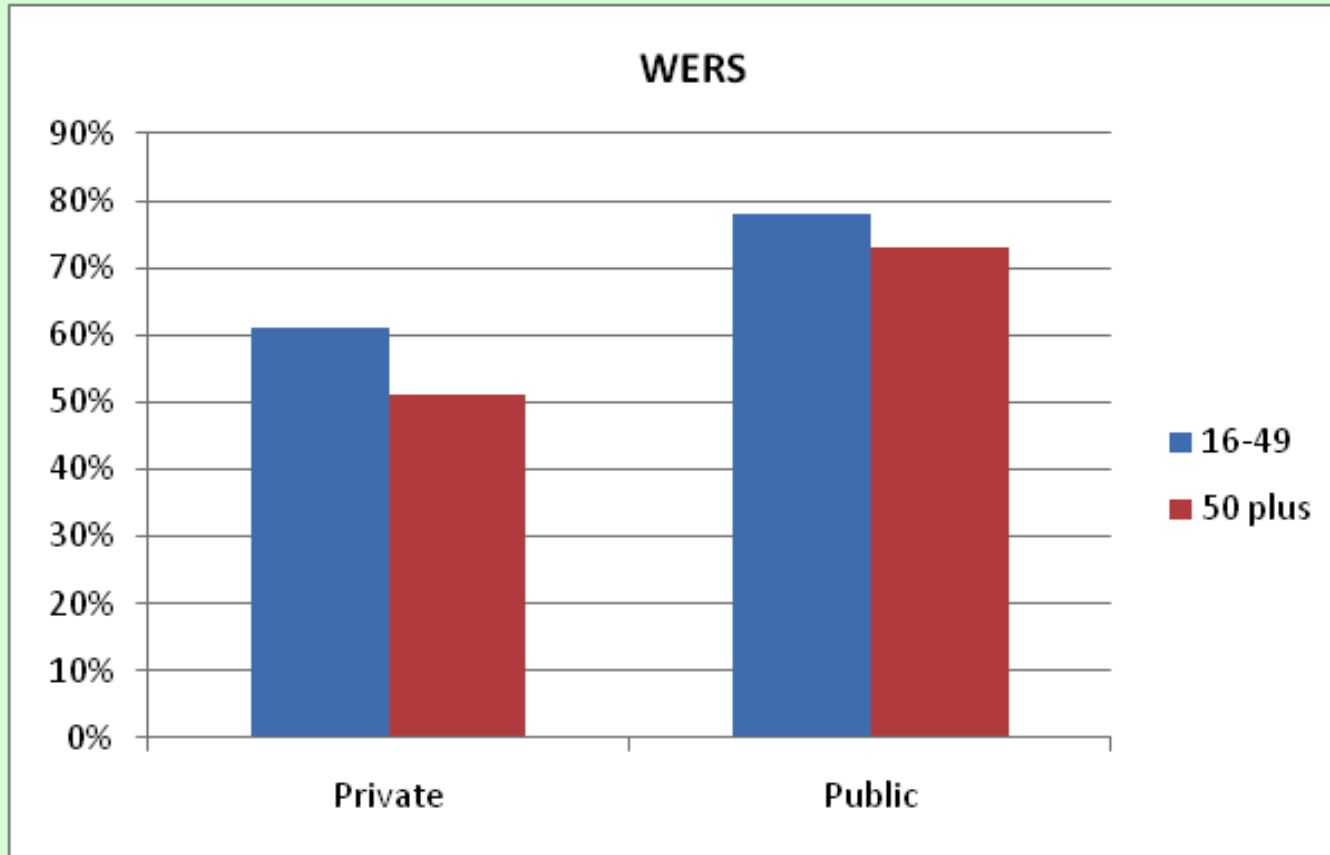
# Older workers don't think they need training *(at 50)*



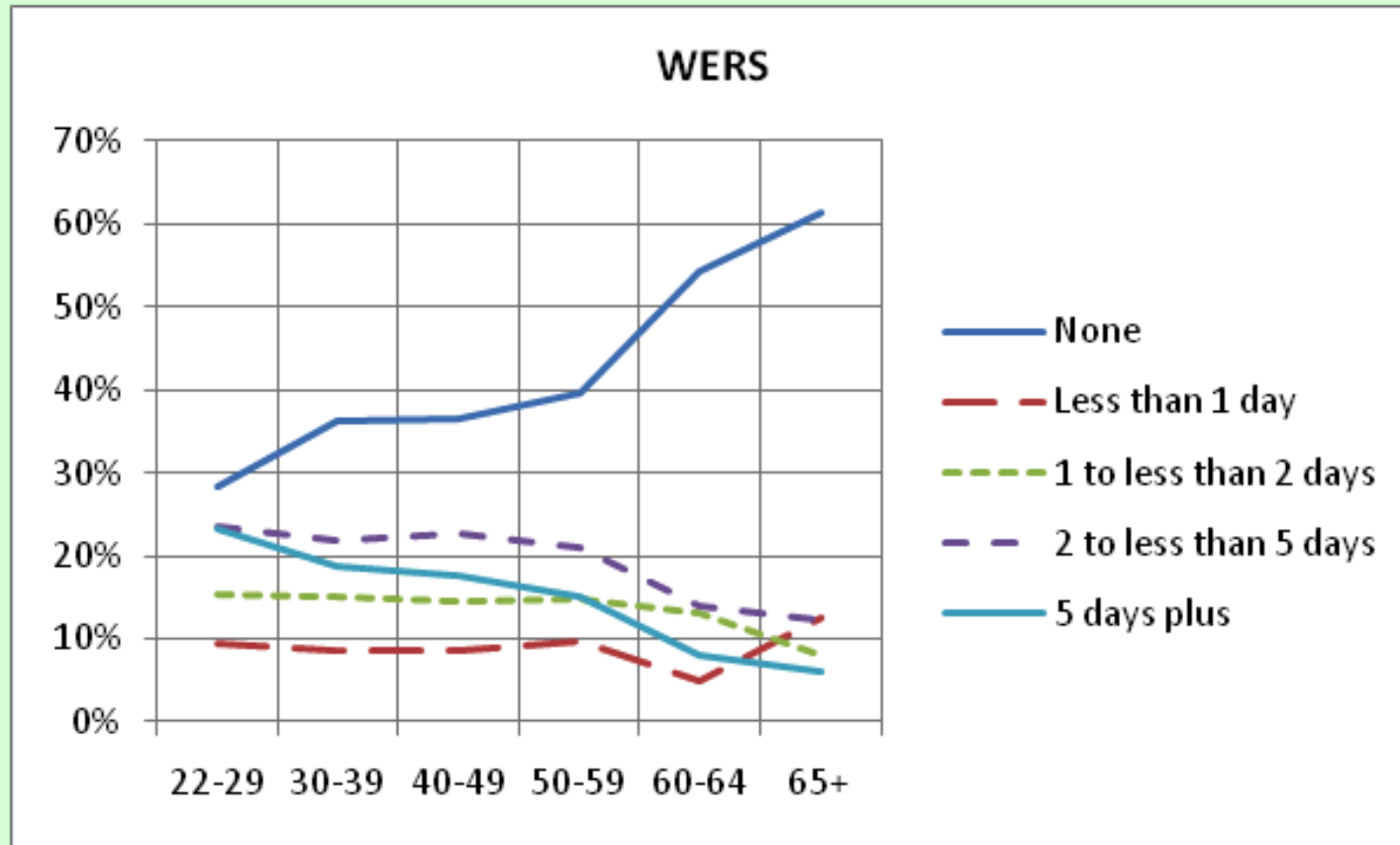
# Patterns of training vary by sector



# Training is stronger in the public sector

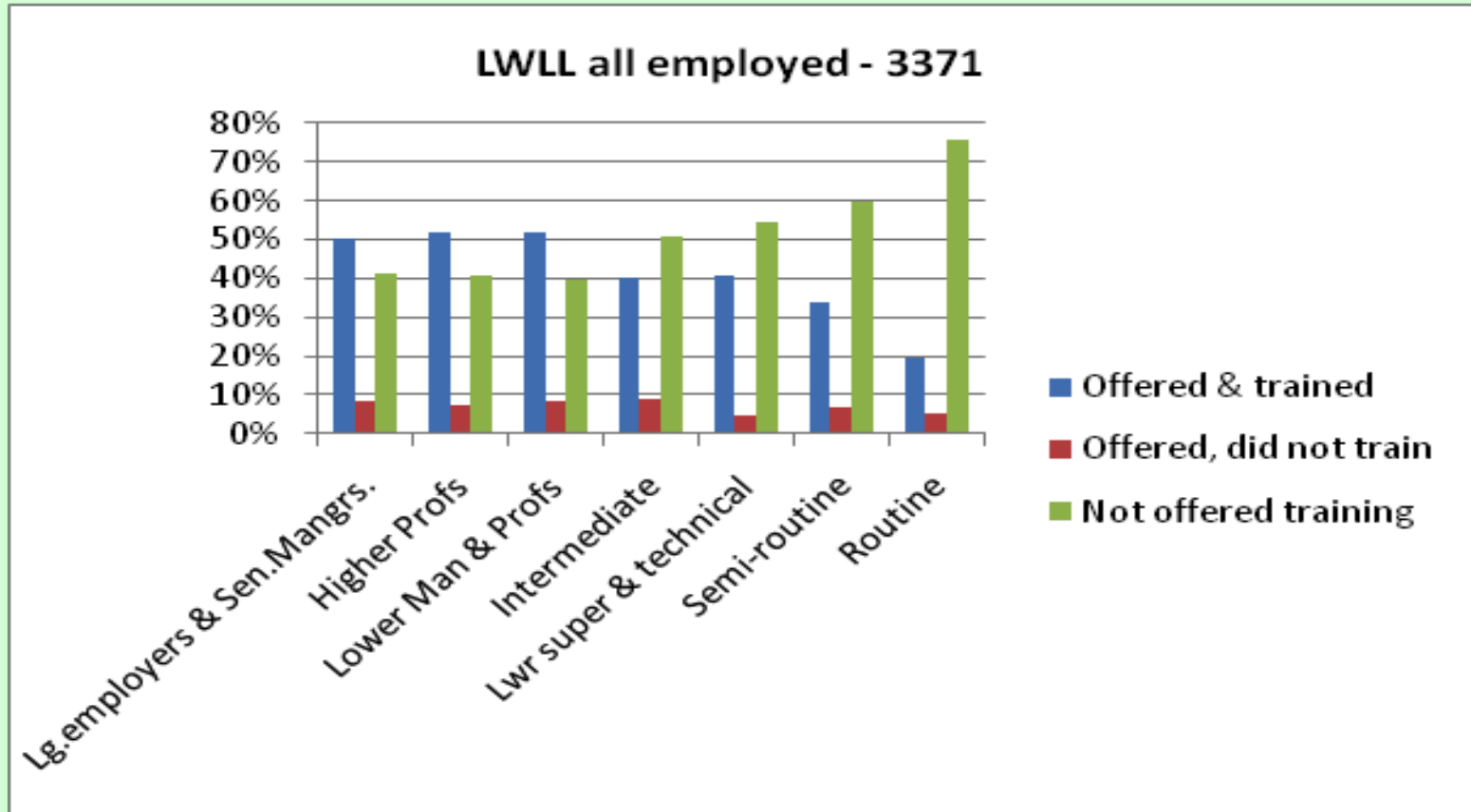


# Length of training falls with age





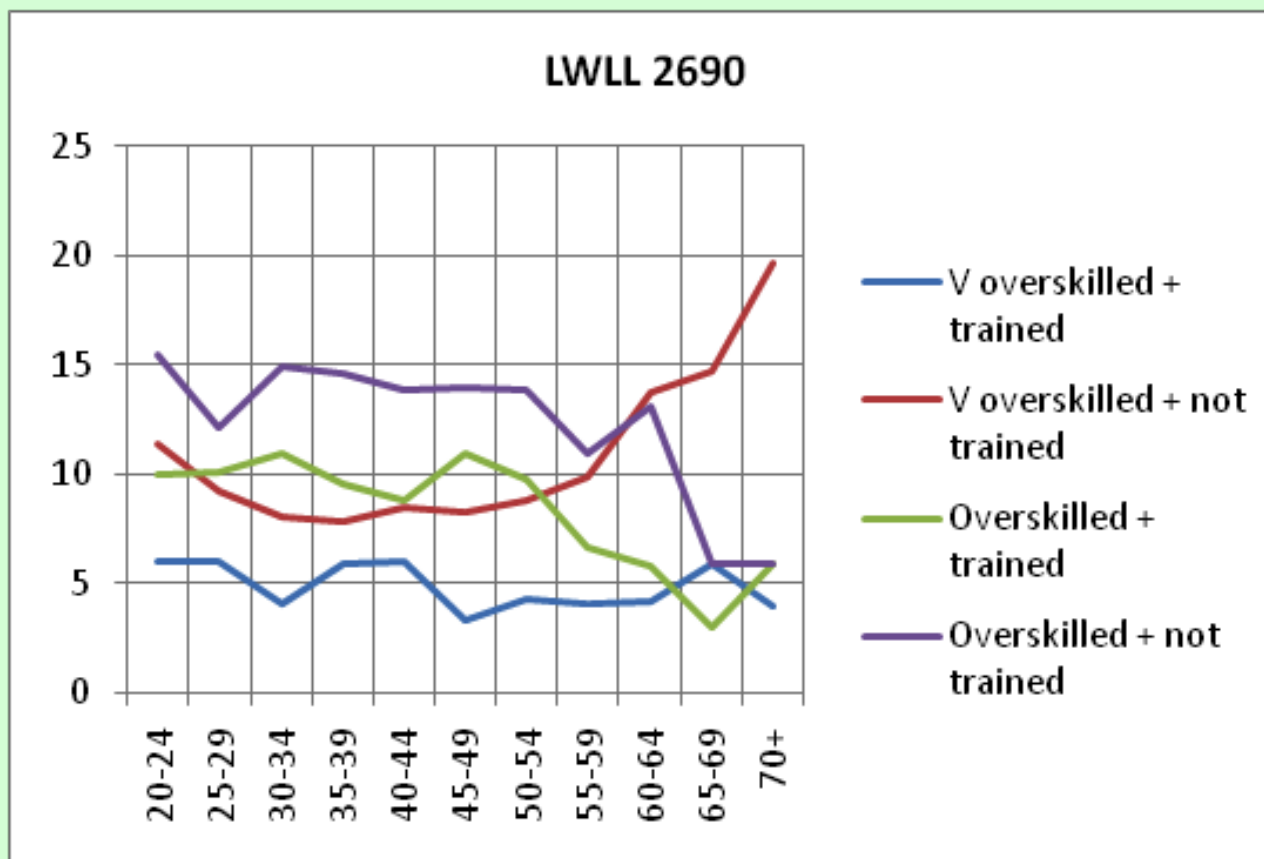
# Take up of training varies by occupational group



# Training offer does not reflect perceived skill level



# Skills and training by age



## Who trains older workers?

- Larger organisations
- Public sector
- High proportion professional/managerial
- High proportion female
- Implications in current climate?

# What makes training of older workers more likely



- Workplace culture
- Perceived “career stage”
- Past job mobility
- Evident need
- Cost effectiveness

# Training and unemployment

- Widely advocated, but little evidence
- Training improves morale, but not employability
- Need for good advice and guidance
- Attitudes
- Importance of embedded learning
- Waiting periods do not help

# Why is demand for training low?

## Five hypotheses



1. Underestimating future needs
2. 'Conspiracy to underperform' between workers and line managers
3. Poor management, making poor use of the latent skills of employees;
4. Perception of a low return on the effort and costs
5. Overvaluing formal qualifications

## Conclusions

- Little perception that there is a problem
- Little formal assessment of cost-benefit
- No simple reason for decline in training
- High training sectors/occupations continue to train
- Length and nature of training changes



## Policy implications

- Recognise diversity
- Promote positive images of age
- Promote learning for resilience
- Promote benefits of training to employers
- Link skills and age policies
- Train/support most vulnerable at 50
- Improve performance review/appraisal
- Further research on benefits

## Research areas

- costs and benefits of training/qualifications, to individuals and firms
- segmentation of the older workforce in motivation to work and learn
- how older people understand and manage work-life balance
- how training can best combine with other strategies like work placements to help unemployed older people
- how communication about career happens between older workers and employers,
- the experience and aspirations of older BME workers
- factors influencing individual retirement decisions
- types of flexible working arrangements: their appeal and implementation

CROW: [www.olderworkforce.org.uk](http://www.olderworkforce.org.uk)