
EDITORIAL

A quaint notion that prevails in modern concepts of careers and employment is the idea that people change jobs a lot, and that somehow the world of work is like a vast inter-planetary expedition or a fairground in which people try different amusements and hop on and off various rides. However, evidence shows that people's careers are quite stable.

In February 2000, 52 per cent of employed people had worked in their current job for 1–10 years and 24 per cent had worked 10 years or more in their current job (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Mobility, Cat. No. 6209.0, February 2000). Moreover, 1 in 12 employed people had spent 20 years or more in their current job. It was Holland who noted that:

... stability is the norm—because workers soon become active seekers of a limited range of congruent jobs and because employers discourage change through common hiring practices and biases of age, appearance, sex, training, and work history. Family, friends, co-workers and relatives also press for stability because they usually have a stake in a worker's income, friendship and power. (*Making Vocational Choices* 3rd ed., 1997, pp. 12–13)

We recognise that some 'job shopping' occurs in the early part of careers and that changes in employment exist that force people to move jobs or alter their career paths. However, one thing that has caught my eye is the effect of age on participation in particular occupations. Furthermore, there is a link between occupational mobility and age. This is not the



place to deal with this in detail, but we seem to neglect age when we think about specific occupations.

Participation in the labour force is clearly dependent on age, but you may not be aware that some occupations have very unusual patterns of participation across the age span. Some occupational patterns are shown in the charts opposite.

To put it simply, people entering some occupations that you might recommend (e.g. hospitality, IT, some trades or aspects of finance) would have very little chance of remaining in this occupation to age 60 or 64. On the other hand, in some occupations careers are more consistently long term and stable.

Because of space limitations, we will look at male occupations as an example (and some assumptions have been made about classifying jobs to simplify the analysis). Before I list the occupations, think about what you would consider to be the most stable or long-lasting occupations.

The average for males is that around 3.8 per cent of all employees are still working at 60–64 years. What would you indicate to someone as being a job in which they had a good chance of working to age 60–64? The following are occupations that 10 per cent or more of males from age 60–64 are still employed: judge, crossing supervisor, elementary clerks, tailor, court orderly, proof reader, tribunal member, tobacco grower, retail pharmacist, livestock farmers, caretaker, beef cattle farmer, counsellor, bookmaker, sheep farmer, manager hospitality and accommodation, hospital pharmacist, sugar cane grower, historian, bus driver, obstetrician and

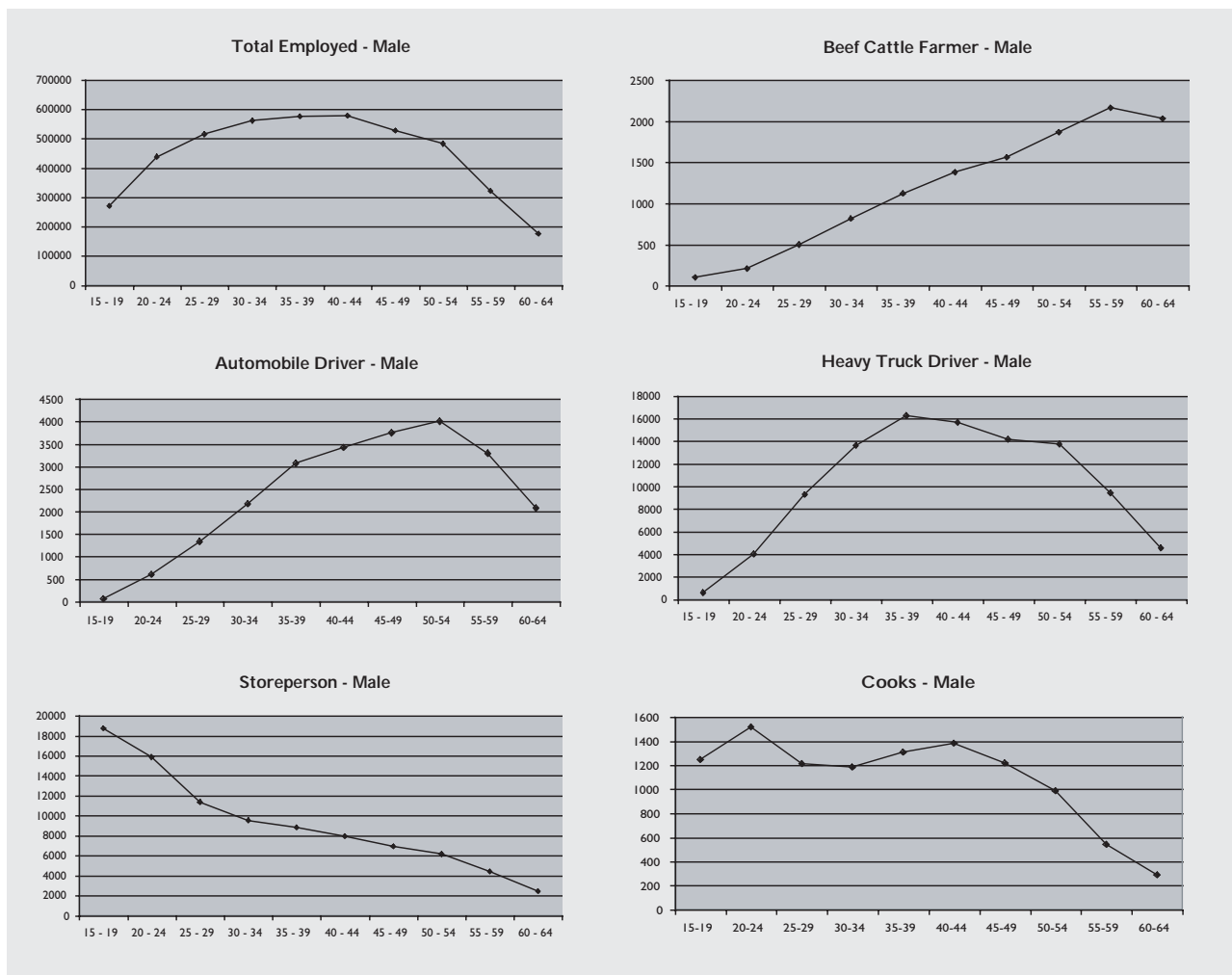


FIGURE 1: AGE AND NUMBER OF MALE WORKERS IN VARIOUS OCCUPATIONS

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing

gynaecologist, apiarist, minister of religion, bookmaker's clerk, magistrate, glass blower, manager caravan park and camping ground, plumber, engineering associate, piano tuner, funeral director, farmers and farm manager, and intermediate clerical worker.

Surgeons just miss out at 9.99 per cent, but clerks, farmers, funeral directors (and obviously not their clients), piano tuners, plumbers' assistants, glass blowers and so forth all seem to have occupational longevity. Some of this is structural, in the sense that some occupations are second careers. In cases such as crossing supervisor, tribunal member or judge, it is linked obviously to the type of job, but in other cases such as retail pharmacist, proof reader, tailor, bus driver or obstetrician, it is not as apparent.

All this is important because it means that in some occupations you can stay a long time and earn for a long time. So if you wish to give up your job and enter a career where you can last, then I can recommend becoming a judge, crossing supervisor or clerk, because you can be sure that some 20 per cent of these people are working at around age 60. What about the other end of the spectrum? Here are some occupations in which there were almost no males aged 60–64 years employed: pressure welder, supervisor, vehicle body makers, child or youth residential care assistant, veterinary nurse, supervisor, chemical production machine operators, nuclear medicine technologist, electrical or electronics engineering technologists, photographer's assistant, pulp mill operator, production assistant (film, television or

radio), television equipment operator, checkout supervisor, jockey and footballer.

Well, I am close to my word limit for this contribution but if you wish to contact me then I shall let you know which other jobs do not last and a similar analysis for females. The point of all this is that when someone comes to you and says they want to be a police officer, a chef, an air traffic controller, a defence force officer, a futures trader or sound technician, then tell them their chances of lasting in

that occupation to age 64 are probably less than 1 per cent and if they are looking for a long lasting career, I recommend you tell them to consider becoming a judge or a crossing supervisor, obstetrician or maybe even a funeral director—that should just about cover all the life spectrum! (An earlier version of this editorial appeared in the Curriculum Corporation's newsletter, 2004)

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CALL FOR EDITORS

The *AICD* will be launching a new feature to inform readers of the latest news and current changes in policy and the profession. The section will be called At My Desk and the feature editor will take responsibility for compiling up-to-date information on news about the profession. The copy deadline will be two months before publication of the *AICD* issue in which it appears; to ensure news and information are current and relevant.

At My Desk is to function as a bulletin board of approximately 600 words about:

- activities in the careers field around Australia
- the progress of various HR and career advice projects
- up-to-date resources

- activities
- conferences
- what is going on in government that affects the profession— for example, a Professional Standards progress report.

The At My Desk feature will have a personal slant and anyone interested in being a hub for careers networks is welcome to apply. Strict adherence to deadlines and reliability is required. You will liaise with the editor of the *AICD*, Jim Athanasou, but have complete responsibility for initiating and responding to items for inclusion, creating copy and meeting deadlines.

Please send an email to JoyWhitton (whitton@acer.edu.au) stating your reasons for applying and your experience by 2 August.