

## **Conference Stream:** Ageing, Occupation and the Politics of Longevity: Reconfiguring Labour, Class and Inequality in an Ageing Workforce

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**Abstract submission details:** All abstracts must be submitted via the main conference website. Abstracts should be no more than 500 words (excluding references).

**Submission deadline:** 31 October 2025.

**Conveners:** Nicholas Black, Clive Trusson, Catherine Casey, Sarah Barnard, and Victoria Phillips – Loughborough Business School, UK. For any enquiries, please contact: [N.Black@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:N.Black@lboro.ac.uk)

### **Stream Outline:**

A profound demographic transformation is underway, driven by the rapid growth of the global population aged 60 and over (Field et al., 2013). This group reached 1 billion in 2020 and is projected by the World Health Organization to rise to 1.4 billion by 2030 and 2.1 billion by 2050. By 2030, one in six people worldwide will be over 60, and by 2050, one in four. These demographic shifts pose major challenges for labour markets, welfare systems, and the political economy of work, raising urgent questions about how labour is organised across the life course.

The implications of ageing are deeply occupational. The capacity to work beyond statutory retirement is uneven and shaped by job demands and working conditions. Retirement ages, still applied as universal benchmarks tied to state pension entitlement, reflect social constructs more than actual capacity (Johfre & Saperstein, 2023). Physically demanding roles in construction, healthcare, and emergency services impose far greater strains on the body than professional or administrative work (Vermeer et al., 2016). As a result, white-collar workers are often able to extend their careers, while manual and care workers are more likely to exit the labour force prematurely through exhaustion, injury, or chronic illness. These unequal capacities intersect with class, gender, race, and migration histories, producing sharply divided trajectories of ageing and labour force participation (Moen et al., 2022).

In this context, policy actors such as the World Economic Forum (2025) have promoted the idea of the “longevity economy,” portraying older populations as untapped human capital. Framed around lifelong learning and age-inclusive workplaces, this discourse presents extended working lives as both empowerment and sustainability. Yet it obscures the structural realities of capitalism, where later-life security is increasingly individualised. For many, particularly those in low-wage or precarious occupations, continued employment is less a matter of choice than necessity. At the same time, older workers often encounter subtle and institutionalised ageism. Stereotypes cast them as resistant, less capable, or costly (Cebola et al., 2023). These biases are unevenly distributed since professionals are more likely to be retained for their expertise, while workers in lower-status roles are deskilled, marginalised, or made redundant—despite often having the greatest financial need to remain employed.

This stream invites papers that critically examine the intersections of ageing, occupation, and the restructuring of labour under capitalism. We welcome studies that explore how occupational groups experience ageing in relation to job demands, precarity, health inequalities, and institutional discrimination. We also encourage analyses of the macro-political economy of ageing and work, including the role of digitalisation, welfare reform, and employer practices in shaping extended working lives.