

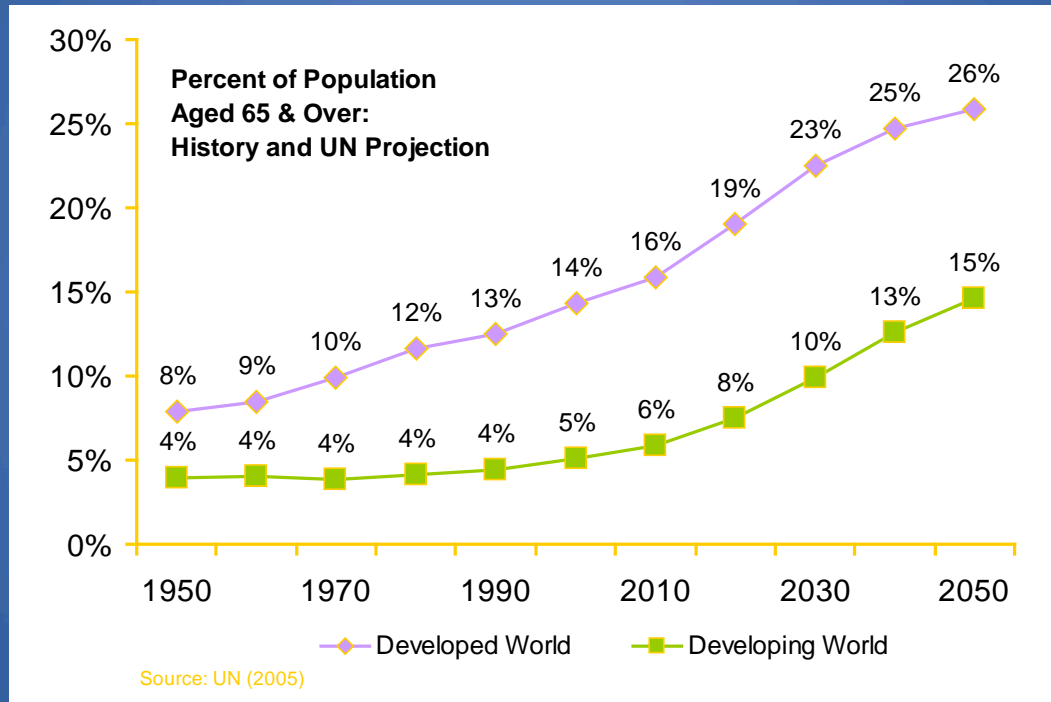
Adjusting for the Cognitive Effects of Normal Aging in the Work Place

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Demographics

- Population of older individuals (60+) rose from 205 million in 1950 to 606 million in 2000 (UN, 2002). Projected to reach the 2 billion mark by 2050.
- New Zealand, 2001 (12% of the population) aged 65 or over (Statistics New Zealand [SNZ], 2009). Projected 25% of population by 2026.

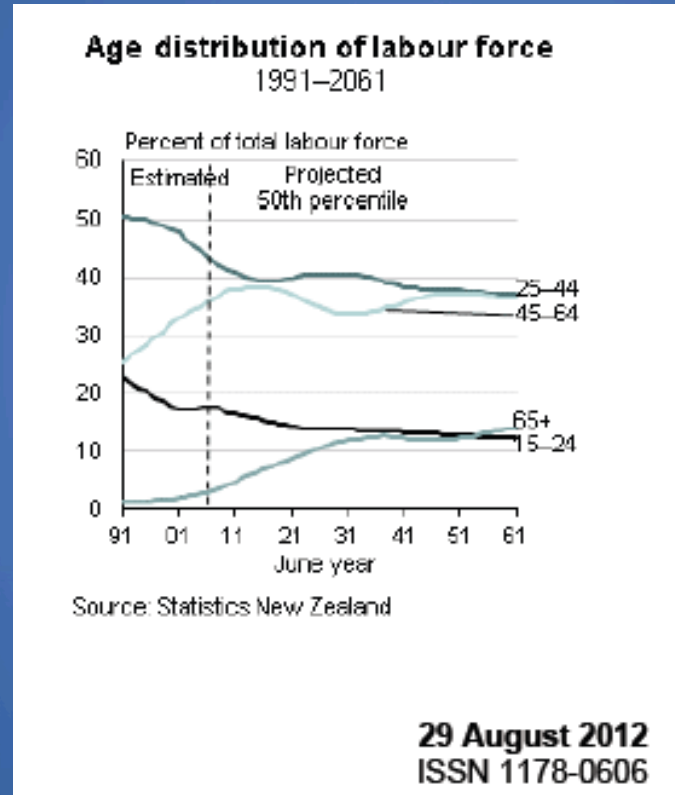
Demographics



Demographics: Workforce

- Number of people 65+ in workforce
 - 1991 (1/16)
 - 2012 (1/5)
 - 2020 (1/3)
 - 2036 (9-15% of labour force)
 - 2061 (10-18% of labour force)
- Largest growth between 2011 and 2031

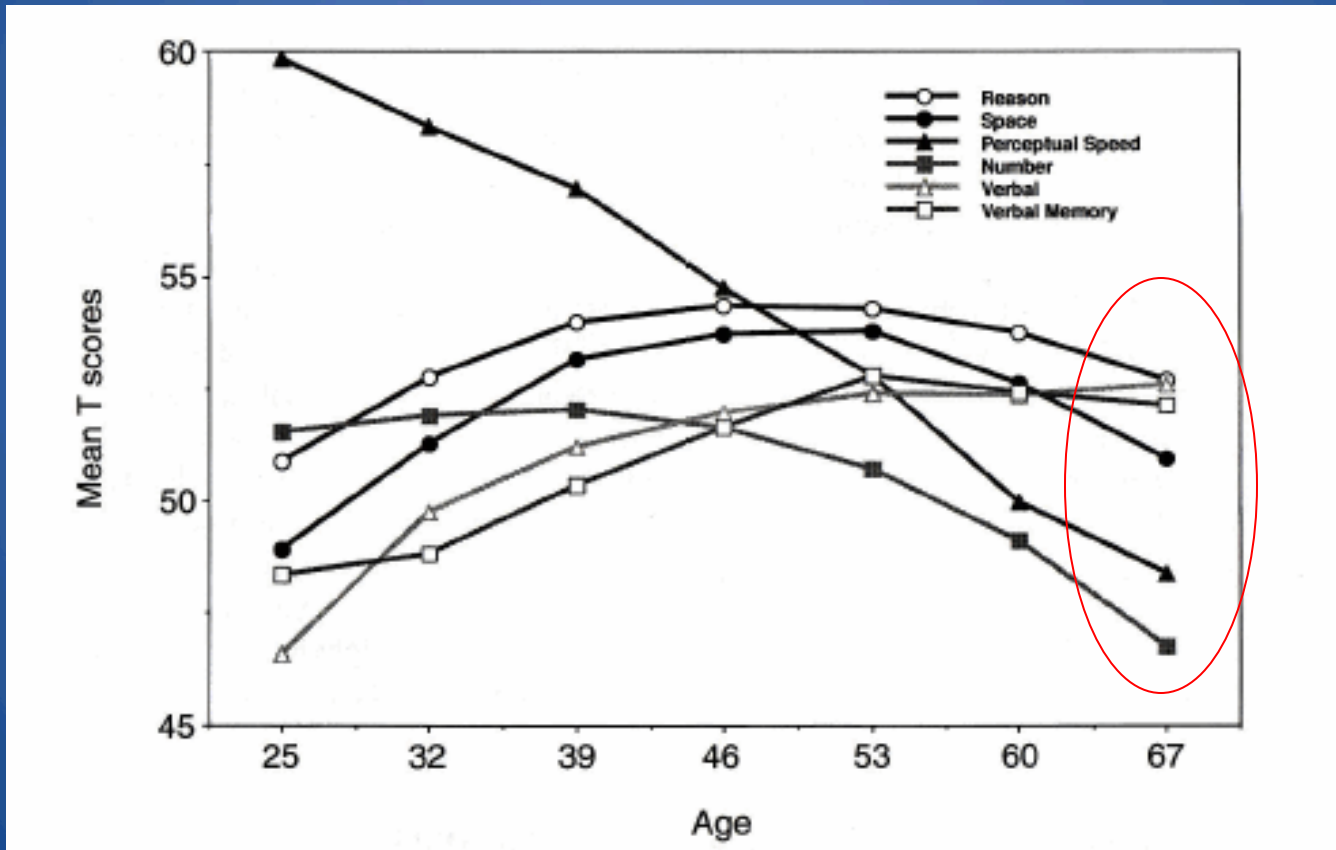
Demographics: Workforce



Cognitive Effects of Normal Aging

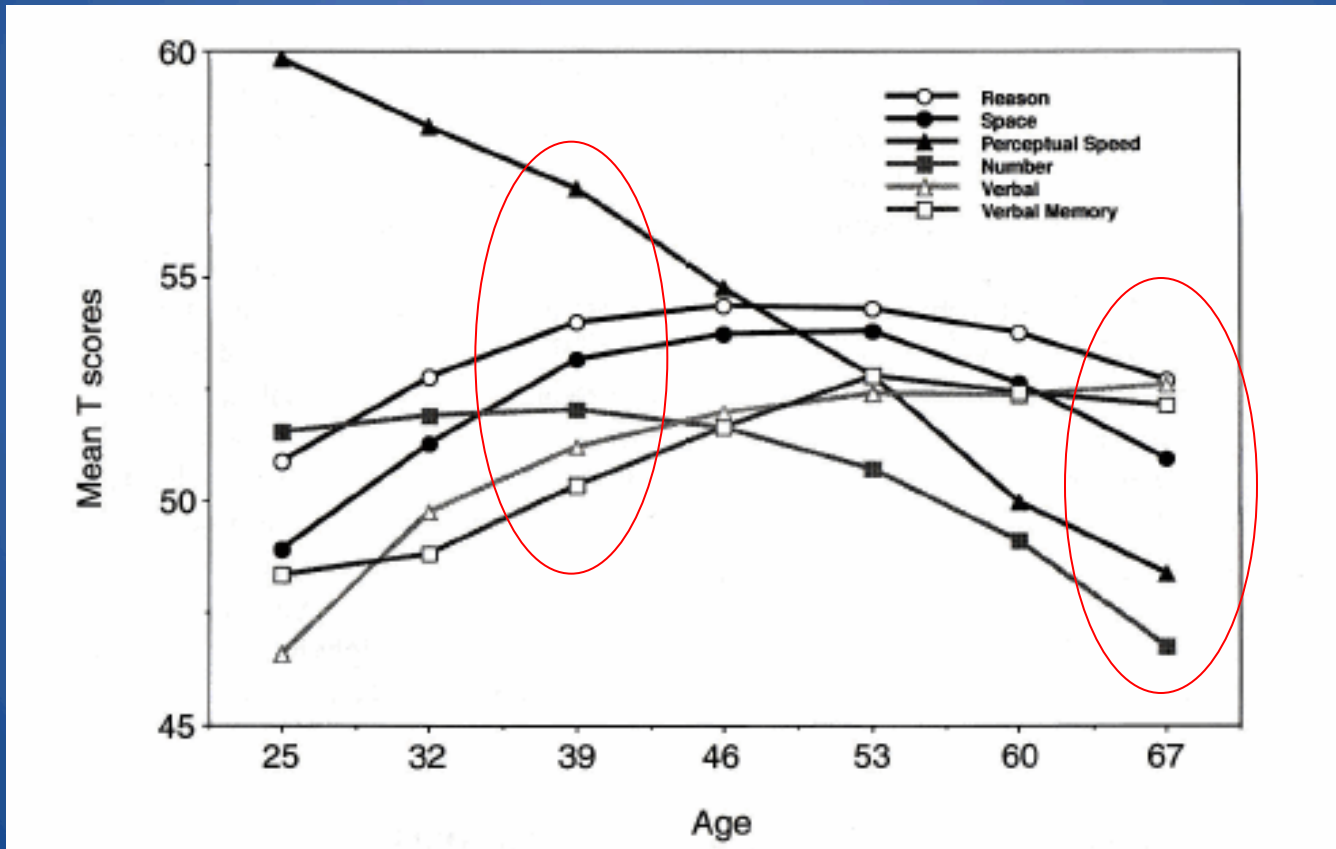
- Better or same
 - Verbal & Language skills
 - General knowledge, Vocabulary
 - Wisdom
- Lower
 - Information processing speed
 - Working memory
 - Divided/selective attention
 - Memory (new material)

Normal Aging: Cognition



(Willis & Schaie, 1999)

Normal Aging: Cognition



(Willis & Schaie, 1999)

Summary

- People are living longer
- Increasingly higher % of older adults in the general population.
- Choosing to remain in workforce longer
- Age related decline in some areas of cognition
 - Attention
 - Information processing Speed
 - Working memory
 - Executive function
 - Motor speed
- Pattern of cognitive strengths & weaknesses different than when younger
- Work performance concerns

Sally:

High school principal; 63 years; living alone

- Lupus Erythematosus 40 years
 - Cardiac & Urinary tract infections
- Steroids use increasing 35 years
 - Hip replacements

Sally:

High school principal; 3 adult children; living alone

- Lupus Erythematosus 40 years
 - Cardiac & Hip replacement
- Steroids used
 - Hip replacement



Sally:

High school principal; 3 adult children; living alone

- Problems
 - Leaving important things behind
 - *Forgot documents when flying to another city for meeting*
 - Forgetting why went somewhere
 - *Standing in room wondering what she went there to do*
 - Making errors
 - *Spelling errors in emails and documents*
 - Names
 - *Thinking quickly of peoples names when she meets them again*
 - Forgetting to do things
 - *Wondering whether she has taken medication*
 - Near accidents
 - *Went through a red light*
 - *Failed to check for other traffic before moving off*
 - Depressed
 - *About the future*

Sally:

High school principal; 3 adult children; living alone

- Problems
 - Leaving important things behind
 - *Forgot documents when flying to another city for meeting*
- Information processing speed low average
- Motor speed above average

Sally:

High school principal; 3 adult children; living alone

- Problems
 - Leaving important things behind
 - *Forgot documents when flying to another city for meeting*
- Test results
 - Information processing speed low average
 - Motor speed above average
- *Moving faster than she is giving herself time to think*

Sally:

High school principal; 3 adult children; living alone

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- Normal Aging
 - Attention
 - Vulnerability to distraction
 - Information processing speed
 - Worrying – more distraction

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Doesn't attend properly at outset, so doesn't learn, distraction, when can't remember doesn't give self time to think, then immediately worries about future, leading to more distraction.

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Bottom Line

- It's no wonder that older adults experience difficulty
- There is no reason for them to leave work if:
 - Awareness of effects of normal aging on cognition and adjust for them
 - Allow time
 - Attend
 - Avoid distraction-one thing at a time
 - Organise, plan & simplify to assist learning
 - Don't stress

Adjusting for the cognitive effects of normal aging in the work place

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