

MID-CAREER RESEARCH

2022

This research summary was written by the National Careers Institute (NCI) based on research undertaken by PM&C's Behavioural Economics Team of Australia

BACKGROUND

In late 2021 the National Careers Institute (NCI) partnered with the Prime Minister & Cabinet's Behavioural Economics Team of Australia (BETA) to better understand people in their mid-career (defined broadly as people aged 30-49), and how they approach career choices and changes.

Career decisions are complex and influenced by a range of internal and external factors. These could include life events, job satisfaction, willingness to take risks, and other personal attributes such as level of confidence and self-belief.

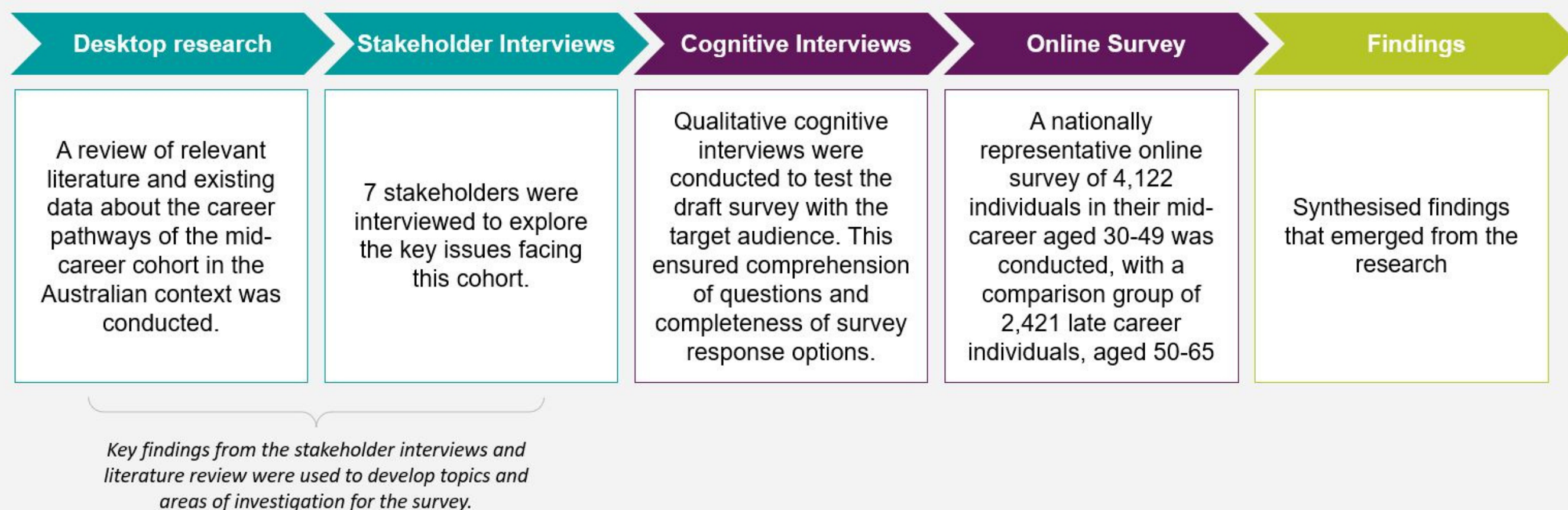
OBJECTIVE

The aim of this research was to gain a better understanding of mid-career individuals' motivations, influences and preferences for career choices, and career information.

In particular, this exploratory 'deep dive' was designed to develop a deeper understanding of:

- Career attitudes and priorities
- Drivers and barriers of job / career changes
- Intentions to upskill and/or reskill
- Drivers and barriers of undertaking further training

METHODOLOGY



FINDINGS – Key groups

The research identified 3 mid-career groups, differing on career engagement, attitudes, future plans and behaviours:

Stayers: 42% of the mid-career cohort are stayers. They are people who have not made any recent job/career changes, and have no intentions to make a change within the next year. Stayers are content and stable in their chosen careers, and generally do not see a need to upskill or reskill.

Thinkers: 23% of the mid-career cohort are thinkers. They are people who would like to make a career change or re-enter the workforce in the next year, but have not yet taken any active steps to do so. This group has a strong need for career information and support.

Doers: 35% of the mid-career cohort are doers. They are people who have made a career change recently, or who are taking active steps to make a career change within the next year. This group is engaged with advancing their career and focused on maintaining their skillset.



FINDINGS – Subgroups with interesting results

Gender

Men more commonly make changes to advance, whereas women make work fit around other commitments.

- Men were significantly more likely to mention pay or salary as motivating future job changes (23% vs 16% of women).
- Women are more likely to be seeking a change to achieve better work-life balance, to have more flexibility or to accommodate personal circumstances (including looking after children) –23% vs 12% of men.

Not in the labour force

Over 8 in 10 of mid-career Australians not in the labour force or unemployed would like to re-enter the workforce. Of those, 25% are looking for a job now, and a further 27% are open to work within the next year.

Late career

43% of mid-career Australians have made a recent job change. Most commonly, these job changes involved switching to a different industry (26% had changed jobs within the past 2 years), getting a new job in the same industry (26%), and getting promoted at their current job (15%).

For people later in their career (aged 50+), about half that number (22%) had made a recent job change. Those later in their career were also less likely to report getting a promotion (7%), indicating a slowing of career progression after 50 years of age.

KEY FINDINGS

The research found:

- Almost 7 in 10 mid-career individuals are open to making some type of job change within the next year.
- Main motivations for a mid-career change are increased earnings and new challenges.
- The COVID-19 pandemic influenced how they think about their career, and they now prioritise their work-life balance.
- Overall, 68% are open to a change at any point in the future and would be open to some form of further training or study within the next 2 years, but many face barriers to doing so. Costs, lack of time and motivation are the key barriers to upskilling and reskilling. Women are more likely to face barriers to training and study, due to their child caring responsibilities.
- More than half of those unemployed and not in the labour force are not confident in their ability to find a suitable job.
- Overall, mid-career women (vs men) are much more open to receiving support to make a career change.
- Most in their mid-career are looking for practical, individualised support and information to make career changes. Practical support could include help with updating resumes, preparing for interviews, and tools to help figure out what type of jobs they would enjoy or what prospects they have in different industries.

Mid-career individuals in Australia ...



OPPORTUNITIES

The research found most in their mid-career are keen for careers support and are open to advancement, upskilling and reskilling, but they need help in order to do so. Opportunities to support career decision-making include:

- Developing and promoting practical, hands-on career-related support, such as, resume writing and interview preparation. This could also include finding opportunities to partner with industry and peak bodies to connect mid-career Australians with quality career development practitioners.
- Tailoring careers support for people (particularly women) who have been out of the labour force long-term to re-engage with the labour force. Address barriers relating to confidence and highlight options for flexible, fulfilling careers.
- Helping mid-career Australians connect with online careers information, including government websites. Exploring ways to improve partnerships with industry, peak bodies, states and territories and other entities to promote career information and support and reduce duplication.
- Socialising research findings with industry and peak bodies to highlight how and when people make career decisions, their influences and what type of career information and support they require. This may assist attracting people in their mid-career to a wider range of industries.