6 Which older workers participate in which personnel policies?

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Introduction

The workforce is aging in all Western countries, and governments throughout Europe aim to improve the sustainability of their economies by promoting the lengthening of working lives. Organizations employing older (50+) workers are central actors in this ambition, as they have a wide range of human resource (HR) policy options at their disposal to support prolonged working lives. The most frequently mentioned tool in this field is on-the-job training. However, a wide range of research indicates that older workers participate less often in on-the-job training compared to their younger colleagues, due to a combination of older workers' lower motivation to do so and employers' lower inclination to offer it (Arulampalam, Booth, & Bryan, 2004; Carmichael & Ercolani, 2014; Taylor & Urwin, 2001). Hence, this chapter analyses participation in two other types of arrangements that are used to support older workers: flexibility policies (such as the option to work from home) and phasing out arrangements (such as a reduced workload for older workers). Indeed, several studies suggest flexibility policies (Moen, Kojola, Kelly, & Karakaya, 2016; Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011) and phasing out measures (Göbel & Zwick, 2013) potentially contribute to the goal of prolonged working lives.[1]

Flexibility and phasing out policies are among those most frequently offered by organizations to their older personnel (Lössbroek, 2018). There have been several studies on the average level of participation of older workers in phasing out policies (e.g., Tros, 2010). However, little is known about which employees are most likely to use the phasing out measures that are available to them. The field on the use of flexibility policies is far more developed, but the argumentation is often strongly tied to childcare and career planning (Den Dulk & Peper, 2007; Dikkers et al., 2007; Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). Evidently, these considerations are less relevant for older workers than for the prime-age workers that are central to most of these studies. In order to understand the impact of personnel policies on prolonged working lives, it is essential to understand which older workers are covered and which are not. Additionally, a study on engagement of older workers has shown that phasing out arrangements may be beneficial for some workers, but may contribute to disengagement for others

(Bal, Kooij, & De Jong, 2013). To understand the relevance of older-age adaptation policies, and to enable organizations to reach older workers currently overlooked by their policies, it is vital to know the extent to which employability arrangements reach the workers who could benefit from them. Therefore, this chapter studies which older workers use which policies.

Participation may be influenced both by older workers and by their managers for a combination of two reasons. On the one hand, participation in personnel policies is known to be influenced by cost–benefit calculations (Carmichael & Ercolani, 2014), based on the extent to which a job is compatible with using certain personnel policies and an employee's age. On the other hand, participation may be influenced by the attitudes held by workers and managers, namely, gender role socialization (Courtenay, McCreary, & Merighi, 2002; Kristiansen, 1990) and agism. The central research question is thus: How is the participation of older workers in flexibility and phasing out policies influenced by cost–benefit considerations and attitudes?

The chapter contributes to our current knowledge in three ways. First, many organizations have implemented policies specific to older workers, such as semi-retirement and reduced workloads. A growing body of research has studied which organizations implement which older-age adaptation policies (Armstrong-Stassen & Cattaneo, 2010; Conen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2012; Lössbroek, Lancee, Van der Lippe, & Schippers, 2017; Principi, Fabbietti, & Lamura, 2015; Van Dalen, Henkens, & Wang, 2015). Yet, none of these studies also analyses the extent to which policies which have been implemented and are used by older workers. Second, the role of age in participation in personnel policies is usually studied in the context of a focus on training participation (Armstrong-Stassen & Cattaneo, 2010; Fleischmann, Koster, & Schippers, 2015; Martin, Dymock, Billett, & Johnson, 2014). This chapter analyzes the extent to which theories about training and older workers also apply to other arrangements. Third, we use data from the European Sustainable Workforce Survey (ESWS) (Van der Lippe et al., 2016) which allows us to pay attention to the fact that participation in personnel arrangements is strongly clustered within departments inside organizations, leading to more reliable results than purely employee-based surveys. Theoretically, this allows us to test hypotheses that recognize that participation in personnel arrangements is the result of an interplay between employers and older employees.

Flexibility and phasing out arrangements

Organizations can offer a variety of personnel policies that aim to improve the employability of their older workers. In the academic literature, studies tend to focus on training arrangements (Fouarge & Schils, 2009; Leppel, Brucker, & Cochran, 2012; Picchio & Van Ours, 2013). To further cater for the needs of older workers, organizations are known to offer other types of arrangements as well. Two of the most frequently offered types of personnel policies that may aid older workers in prolonging their working lives until an increased retirement age are flexibility and phasing out arrangements.

Flexibility policies give employees, old and young, greater responsibility and freedom in deciding when, where, and how they spend their working hours. This greater control enables employees to improve the relationship between work and private obligations and needs[2] and is found to contribute to greater work–life balance (Peters, Den Dulk, & Van der Lippe, 2009; Szücs, Drobnič, Den Dulk, & Verbiede, 2011). ESWS data includes three of the most common types of flexibility policies: freedom to decide when one's working day starts; freedom to work from home; and freedom to work during the commute and count this as working time.

In addition to arrangements that are in principle open to workers of all ages, many organizations have implemented policies that particularly target their older workforce, such as extra leave or a reduced workload for older workers. While a broad variety of policies has been documented, scholars have frequently distinguished two categories of policies, which have been called phasing out policies and activating policies (Bal et al., 2013; De Grip, Fouarge, & Montizaan, 2015; Kotiso & Lokhorst, 2009; Lössbroek et al., 2017; Van Dalen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2007; Ybema, Geuskens, & Oude Hengel, 2009). In this chapter, we study phasing out arrangements, which reduce the role older workers have within an organization and are built around making working life easier by lowering the demands placed on them; these have therefore been labeled "accommodating" or "comforting" policies (Perek-Białas & Turek, 2012; Van Dalen et al., 2015). Based on ESWS data, we study three phasing out polices: additional leave from work, lighter workload, and semi-retirement. These are among the most frequently implemented measures for older workers in Europe, particularly additional leave (Lössbroek, 2018), and are assessed at the employee level (unlike, for instance, a policy of mixed-age working teams).

Explaining older workers' participation in personnel policies

To understand participation in personnel policies, the perspectives of both the employer and the employee should be considered. Employers will expect less beneficial outcomes from policy participation if it is involuntary. Therefore, employers will not be eager to force employees to work during their commute or take extra leave (although this may to some extent depend on the measure). Employees have an active interest in maintaining good relations with their manager and may be persuaded to take the employer's preferences into account. They may be less eager to participate in arrangements if their manager disapproves of their doing so, even if they are formally entitled to participate. Hence, participation in a policy is assumed to signal mutual agreement. It has been found that implementation of *policies* for older workers is the result of an interplay between employers and employees (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008; Lössbroek et al., 2017). We believe this holds true for participation in implemented *arrangements* as well. Previous studies give empirical support to the theory that both managers' and employees' characteristics influence, for instance, (mostly)

younger workers' participation in flexibility arrangements (Den Dulk & Peper, 2007; Dikkers et al., 2007) and older workers' participation in on-the-job training (Carmichael & Ercolani, 2014; Fleischmann & Koster, 2017; Lössbroek & Radl, 2018). This theoretical section studies four drivers of policy use, relying on arguments from both the employee's perspective and the manager's perspective. Two arguments are based on the costs and benefits that employees and employers derive from policy participation; these relate to employee age and the compatibility of the job with policy use. The final two arguments are attitudinal and based on the views that employees and employers may have regarding employee gender roles and managerial agism.

Employee age

The first characteristic that may influence the costs and benefits of participation is an employee's age. Although the sample of 50+ workers already comprises a selective subgroup of an organization's personnel, age differences are still expected to influence policy use. Although older workers are less likely to need flexibility for childcare than their younger peers, new reasons for a desire for flexibility arise. For instance, working from home may be less stressful for persons with lower stamina or health, and flexible working hours can be tailored to biorhythms to make working life more comfortable. Studies indeed show that older workers attach greater value to flexibility policies (Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009), that older workers in particular become more engaged when they can use the flexibility policies they prefer (Pitt-Catsouphes & Matz-Costa, 2008), and that the presence of flexibility policies can contribute to being able and willing to work longer (Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011). It comes as no surprise, then, that many organizations have implemented flexibility programs specifically for their older workers (Conen, Van Dalen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2011; Oude Mulders, Henkens, & Van Dalen, 2018; Van Dalen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2009, 2010a; Vidovićová, 2014; Žnidaršič & Dimovski, 2009). Therefore, older workers are, plausibly, interested in general flexibility policies as well. The reasons that many older workers appreciate flexibility are likely even stronger for 'older' older workers, as preferences tend to shift gradually over time rather than abruptly at the threshold of becoming 50 years of age.

A comparable trend is expected for phasing out arrangements. These policies are specifically designed to cater for older workers' needs. Phasing out arrangements accommodate the gradual shift from being a 'core worker' to eventual retirement. As retirement is closer for 'older' older workers than for those who have just passed the threshold of being 50+, these workers are more likely to start scaling down responsibilities and burdens. Such considerations are presumably reflected in managerial attitudes toward policy uptake: managers may more readily expect workers close to retirement age to use phasing out arrangements, contributing to more positive responses to requests to use them. Therefore, our first hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 1 Among 50+ workers, age is positively associated with the likelihood of using flexibility and phasing out policies.

Job compatibility

A second cost–benefits-based mechanism influencing the likelihood of using personnel policies is the extent to which these are compatible with one's job. Flexibility policies are highly dependent on the job tasks that employees perform, including characteristics such as physical activity, team interdependence, and managerial control. Physical presence at the workplace is not required for some jobs, but others are hard to perform from home. Additionally, in some teams, colleagues may be highly dependent on each other's work in jobs that involve close cooperation. In this case, the time and place of the job may in principle be flexible, but only for the team as a whole, e.g., starting later in the morning would only be possible if everyone else decided to do so as well. Finally, employees whose jobs are characterized by high levels of skill and professionalism are generally more trusted and less directly controlled by managers. If the (perceived) managerial need to monitor is lower, they will be more supportive toward workers desiring to use flexibility policies.[3] For these reasons, use of flexibility policies is hypothesized to be greater in jobs that are more compatible with such policies, characterized by higher educated workers, high occupational class, and a low degree of physical work.

In respect of participation in phasing out policies, we expect the opposite relationship. Compared to flexibility, phasing out policies rely less on the ambition to maintain a situation in which an older worker continues to perform all the current tasks. Instead, such policies may be implemented from the perspective that a more comfortable job can support working longer, at a slower pace (Lössbroek et al., 2017). This change may even increase productivity per hour even though the number of hours worked may be lower. This 'comfort' may be particularly appealing to workers whose work involves heavy physical or mentally demanding labor, who may want to reduce their workload and increase their recovery time through extra leave or partial retirement.

A cost–benefit analysis from the employer's perspective also leads us to expect a relationship between job characteristics and policy use. An important perspective within cost–benefit analyses is that of human capital, the dominant argument in the literature on employers' considerations concerning personnel policies (Carmichael & Ercolani, 2014). From this perspective, employers aim to maximize the value and applicability of the human capital of their staff. Generally, it is harder to replace workers who are higher educated and in a job of a high occupational class, than it is to replace workers who are low educated and in a job of low occupational class. Therefore, employers are more likely to (informally) support the use of flexibility by the former groups of workers, as they still perform the same job tasks, and less likely to support the use of phasing out, as it is harder to reallocate the tasks that a worker no

longer performs to a colleague or to a new recruit. For all these reasons, our second hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 2 Among 50+ workers, higher educated, higher occupational class workers with less physical jobs are more likely to use flexibility policies and less likely to use phasing out policies.

Employee gender roles

Third, it may be expected that participation in these arrangements for older workers is associated with attitudes, such as the way workers are socialized into certain gender roles. Among older cohorts, in particular, traditional gender roles may be relatively influential in shaping behavior. In respect of flexibility arrangements, this concerns the still influential gender role that assigns women the primary responsibility for care-related and household tasks. Although the burden of child care plausibly wanes for women over the age of 50, this demographic group tends to become increasingly involved in providing informal care to parents, relatives, or friends. Compared to men, women, on average, spend more hours on informal care (Principi et al., 2014), and this unequal distribution of household tasks is perpetuated among older couples (Hank & Jürges, 2007). Moreover, the content of tasks differs: women more often perform tasks that are time-inflexible, such as cooking, whereas men more often perform tasks that are more time-flexible, such as financial administration (Shelton, 1990). Since gender roles contribute to greater private sphere responsibilities for older women, and flexibility policies are known to potentially reduce work–family conflict (De Sivatte & Guadamillas, 2013; Peters et al., 2009), women may have more to gain from flexibility arrangements. Conversely, men may have more to lose, as studies on gender roles indicate that men experience 'chronic presenteeism': a strong pressure to spend many hours at the workplace (Sheridan, 2004). Both older and younger men may feel that they should live up to these gender roles; indeed, previous studies indicate that men, particularly, are stigmatized and penalized for utilizing family leave (Rudman & Mescher, 2013) or flexibility policies (Vandello, Hettinger, Bosson, & Siddiqi, 2013). Therefore, we expect that compared to older men, older women will more often ask to make use of existing flexibility arrangements.

With regard to phasing out policies, the same mechanisms plausibly apply. Household production may also induce participation in certain arrangements that provide the employee with more time to attend to these tasks; a reduced workload may prevent overburdening at work, leaving more energy for private sphere activities. Additionally, the normative gender roles are expected to nudge older men into continued full-time work. This gives older women a greater incentive to apply for phasing out arrangements than older men. A counterargument is that, generally, the financial position of men is better that

of women (Christofides, Polycarpou, & Vrachimis, 2013). To the extent that using phasing out policies may affect (future) wages, it is easier for older men to bear these costs than older women.

From the employer's perspective, ingrained gender attitudes possibly contribute to a more supportive attitude toward female use than toward male use. If managers are more likely to approve a request from women to use a certain personnel policy than from men, that would also support the expectation that women are more likely to use flexibility and phasing out policies. On balance, these arguments support the expectation of greater use among older women than among older men. Therefore, our third hypothesis is:

> *Hypothesis 3* Among 50+ workers, women are more likely to use flexibility and phasing out policies than men.

Employer's agism

Finally, managers may be driven by agist stereotypes in their behavior toward their employees. Studies on the use of flexibility policies for working parents suggest that managerial support influences uptake (Den Dulk & Peper, 2007) and agism plausibly influences the support experienced. Many studies indicate that employers predominantly hold negative agist stereotypes concerning older workers' motivation (Ng & Feldman, 2012) and productivity (Conen et al., 2012; Van Dalen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2010b). To some extent, negative agist stereotypes can be counterbalanced by positive agist stereotypes, such as those that maintain that older workers score higher on interpersonal skills, patience, and commitment (Loretto & White, 2006). However, particularly for employees in non-managerial positions, negative stereotypes tend to be dominant. Previous studies indicate that employer agism contributes to a disadvantaged position for older workers in various aspects of HR, including job applications (Büsch, Dahl, & Dittrich, 2009; Oude Mulders, Henkens, Liu, Schippers, & Wang, 2018; Taylor & Walker, 1998), training availability (Gray & McGregor, 2003; Lössbroek & Radl, 2018; Taylor & Walker, 1998), and promotion opportunities (Taylor & Walker, 1998).

Considering the central role of managers in these arrangements, it is plausible that managerial agism also influences participation in flexibility and phasing out arrangements. This builds on the previous argument that managers prefer phasing out rather than flexibility policies for workers who are less central to the organization. In the same way, it may be expected that managers are less likely to promote these arrangements among older workers if they hold negative, agist ideas about them. For phasing out arrangements, the influence of agism is plausibly different. If a manager thinks of an older worker as someone about to retire rather than as someone who is a worker like any other worker, this is rather compatible with arrangements that

gradually phase a worker out from work and into retirement. Hence, our final hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 4 Among 50+ workers, use of flexibility policies is less likely and use of phasing out policies is more likely for workers with more agist managers.

Data and methods

Operationalization

This chapter uses data from the ESWS (Van der Lippe et al., 2016). The design and fieldwork for the data collection can be found in Chapter 3. Below, the operationalization of each variable used in this chapter is discussed. The precise phrasing of each question and the descriptive statistics are presented in Table 6.1.

For the dependent variables, participation is measured by asking whether a certain policy was available to the respondent and, if so, whether they had or had not used it in the past 12 months. For both flexibility and phasing out, these items were combined into a single variable. For flexibility, if a respondent used one or more flexibility policies (working from home, working during their commute, deciding their own working times), they scored 1; if a respondent had not used any flexibility policies, they scored 0; if no flexibility policies were offered by their organization, they were coded as 'missing.' The same procedure was used for phasing out policies (extra leave, reduced workload, partial retirement).

In respect of employee gender, a question was asked whether a respondent was female (1) or male (0); employee age was asked in years, and we followed common practice by placing the threshold for older workers at age 50. To capture job compatibility, three characteristics were included: the extent to which the job involves physical activity, ranging from (almost) never (0) to (almost) always (4); educational attainment, which was recoded into years of education; and proxies potential for flexibility and occupational class, which were generated by recoding answers to the open-ended question of what occupation the employee had into the European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC) (Rose & Harrison, 2007). Manager agism was proxied by asking managers the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that older workers are biding their time until retirement, a measure that has been used to predict older workers' training participation (Lössbroek & Radl, 2018).

We controlled for employee health, working hours, tenure period, hours of household production, manager age, manager gender, and whether the employee works for a 'core' or a 'supporting' department. Full descriptive statistics and question phrasing can be found in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Descriptive statistics

	mean	std.	min	max
Dependent variables				
Flexibility policies				
Decide working hours	0.40		0	1
Work from home	0.26		0	1
Work during commute	0.10		0	1
Use of flexibility	0.49		0	1
Phasing out policies				
Additional leave	0.54		0	1
Lighter workload	0.37		0	1
Semi-retirement	0.13		0	1
Use of phasing out	0.43		0	1
Independent variables (employee)				
Age	55.74	4.26	50	77
Female	0.54		0	1
Years of education	12.97	3.24	3	21
Physical job	2.24	1.42	0	4
Occupation				
Routine worker	0.09		0	1
Higher salariat	0.23		0	1
Lower salariat	0.27		0	1
Intermediate occupations	0.17		0	1
Higher blue collar	0.06		0	1
Lower sales and service	0.09		0	1
Skilled workers	0.04		0	1
Working hours	36.43	8.23	3	80
Tenure	18.44	12.14	0.08	52
Supervisory position	0.20	0.40	0	1
Health	2.76	0.75	0	4
Immigrant	0.07		0	1
Household hours	24.55	19.85	0	80
Employment contract type				
Permanent contract	0.95		0	1
Fixed-term contract	0.04		0	1
Other type	0.01		0	1
Independent variables (manager)				
Managerial ageism	1.37	1.01	0	4
Manager age	48.90	8.12	25	71
Manager is female	0.37		0	1
Supporting department	0.26		0	1

Notes

N = 2,202.

Mean scores of individual policy participation refer to the subsample of organizations offering the policy.

Estimation strategy

To estimate which older workers are most likely to participate in older-age adaptation policies, multilevel regression is used. Evidently, the availability of the arrangements discussed in this chapter is strongly dependent on organizational characteristics. Additionally, among organizations which offer certain arrangements, participation is still strongly clustered. Intraclass correlations are >0.10 for both flexibility and phasing out use, at both the organization and the department level. Therefore, we use a three-level regression analysis with mixed effects at the organization and department level. As there seems to be no consensus about the optimal choice between linear probability models and logistic regressions for binary dependent variables with non-extreme probabilities (Hellevik, 2009), both approaches are used.

Results

In Table 6.2, the three-level regressions are displayed for the use of flexibility and phasing out policies.

There are no indications of the expected higher female participation in flexibility or phasing out policies. Surprisingly, being female even has a significant negative effect on the use of flexibility policies, although this is only significant in the linear probability model. This counterintuitive finding for flexibility policies may be due to a 'survivor bias': older women, on average, tend to retire earlier than older men. Older women who wish to reduce work strain or who struggle to combine work with giving informal care may be more likely to retire early and drop out of the workforce than an older man in the same situation. This could generate higher participation in flexibility options among older male workers. There is no effect of gender on the use of phasing out policies. Hypothesis 1 is rejected for both policies.

Age has no effect on the use of flexibility measures. In respect of the use of phasing out policies, however, age has a robust positive effect. As expected, phasing out is more popular among 'older' older workers. Hypothesis 2 is rejected for flexibility and supported for phasing out.

Job characteristics have the expected influence on the use of flexibility policies: uptake is greater among workers who are higher educated and have a job in a higher occupational class. The extent to which the job involves physical work is not significant for flexibility. It is significant in the expected direction for phasing out: the more physical the work someone does, the more likely they are to use phasing out measures. However, educational attainment and occupational class of the job do not influence uptake of phasing out. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported for flexibility and rejected for phasing out.

Finally, the coefficients for managerial agism are in the expected direction, but not significant for either policy. Models with fewer control variables show a significant positive effect on phasing out, but this is not robust. Hence, Hypothesis 4 is rejected for both flexibility and phasing out.

Table 6.2 Coefficients from mixed-effects linear probability models and logistic regression predicting use of flexibility and phasing out policies

	Flexibility	Flexibility	Phasing out	Phasing out
	Logistic	LPM	Logistic	LPM
Female	−0.30	−0.05*	0.03	0.00
Age	−0.03	−0.00	0.13***	0.02***
Physical job	−0.09	−0.01	0.22**	0.004**
Years of education	0.14***	0.02***	0.01	0.00
Occupation (ref. =routine workers)				
Higher salariat	1.81***	0.26***	0.54	0.10
Lower salariat	1.02***	0.16***	0.70	0.13
Intermediate occupations	1.28***	0.19***	0.58	0.11
Higher grade blue collar	0.75*	0.11*	1.12*	0.22*
Lower sales and service	0.73*	0.10*	0.62	0.12
Skilled workers	−0.24	−0.00	0.83	0.17
Managerial ageism	−0.10	−0.02	0.17	0.03
Working hours	−0.01	−0.00	0.01	0.00
Hours of household work	0.00	0.00	−0.00	−0.00
Supervisory position	0.48*	0.06*	−0.47	−0.08
Health	0.10	0.01	−0.19	−0.04
Immigrant	0.27	0.04	−0.66	−0.12
Employment type (ref. =permanent contract)				
Temporary contract	0.25	0.02	0.29	0.06
Other contract	−0.19	−0.01	−1.86*	−0.37*
Tenure	−0.01	−0.00	−0.01	−0.00
Manager age	−0.00	−0.00	−0.01	−0.00
Manager is female	−0.47*	−0.07*	−0.32	−0.06
Supporting department	0.95***	0.14***	0.04	0.01
Constant	−0.81	0.41*	−7.77***	−1.03***
N employee	2,202	2,202	929	929
N department	479	479	285	285
N organization	214	214	148	148

Note
* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$ (2-sided).

Discussion and conclusion

It is widely recognized that personnel policies potentially support older (50+) workers in prolonging their working lives (Göbel & Zwick, 2013; Moen et al., 2016; Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011). However, a substantial proportion of older workers does not use these policies, even in organizations that implement them. Moreover, the usefulness of such policies depends in part on which older workers are using them (Bal et al., 2013). Therefore, this chapter analyzed which older workers participate in two of the most frequently offered types of policies: flexibility and phasing out policies. Using the employee and employer characteristics available in the ESWS data, we tested two cost–benefit considerations, related to employee age and job compatibility, and two attitudinal considerations, related to gender roles and managerial agism.

We found that employers' cost–benefit considerations are more important than the attitudinal considerations in explaining policy participation. Most predictably, the phasing out policies implemented for older workers are most frequently used by 'older' older workers. It should be noted that our findings reflect the situation of employees working in organizations that offer particular arrangements, and should be generalized with caution. For instance, age did not influence participation in flexibility arrangements in our study, and additional analyses comparing workers aged 50+ to those aged 49 or under also showed comparable participation rates. However, these within-organization comparable rates obscure the fact that older workers are over-represented in organizations that do not offer any flexibility arrangements. Moreover, as expected, we found that high-end older workers more frequently use flexibility policies. In respect of more physical jobs, we expected that phasing out would be more likely, which is indeed the case.

Concerning the 'attitudinal' theoretical framework, neither managerial agism nor gender roles had the expected influence on policy participation. Managerial agism did not influence participation in any policy. Possibly, agist managers could consider participation in these arrangements as a double-edged sword: on the one hand, participation reduces the role of older workers in the organization if they work fewer hours and are less often present at the workplace. On the other hand, these arrangements potentially delay retirement. Managers with agist attitudes could plausibly accept either of these two arguments, which may, overall, cancel each other out. A comparable argument has been made in a study about implementation of phasing out measures: managerial age norms strongly influenced implementation of activating arrangements, but not of phasing out arrangements (Lössbroek et al., 2017).

The expected higher female participation in flexibility and phasing out measures was not found; older women may even use flexibility policies less often than older men. A study on Dutch older workers found that older men experienced more workplace flexibility than older women, because they worked more hours, were more highly educated, and worked in different occupations in different sectors, compared to older women (Damman & Henkens, 2018). Models

without these variables indeed show wider gender differences, thus supporting this argument. However, as presented in our model, some differences remain. This could be the result of selection into labor market exit (a 'survivor bias'): some workers are more likely to continue working until the statutory pension age than others. It is possible that 50+ women with the greatest informal care burden have already left the labor market, which could explain the lack of support for our expectations regarding this group. Also, it should be noted that because older women more often ask for policies that can improve their work–life balance, this does not necessarily mean that older men do not need these policies as well. To some extent, the conclusions tacitly support the argument that participation is most likely in situations of mutual agreement between employer and employee. The more frequent use of phasing out by 'older' older workers and flexibility use by more high-end workers was hypothesized based on both employer and employee considerations. For the hypothesis on gender difference in the use of phasing out policies, employers' gender attitudes would suggest more frequent use by women, whereas older workers' cost-benefit considerations would suggest that the financial costs could more easily be borne by older men. However, alternative explanations cannot be ruled out.

In addition to the previously mentioned selection issue, two other limitations of this study should be kept in mind. The data is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal, which means that participation in certain arrangements could, in theory, influence other employee characteristics. Fortunately, it is highly unlikely that participation in specific personnel policies would influence employee gender, level of education, or agist attitudes that their manager may have. Occupational class could in theory be influenced by participating in the arrangements studied here, but this generally stabilizes before an employee turns 50. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to replicate this study using longitudinal data. Lastly, the availability of arrangements varied substantially between organizations, so the sample was not the same for different subsamples of employees. Future researchers are invited to gather data including a sufficiently large number of organizations that offer (nearly) all arrangements, in order to be able to assess the extent to which participation in the various arrangements substitutes or complements each other. This would also involve taking into account that job hunters may base their decisions on where to work partially on an organization's personnel policies.

The lack of importance of managerial agism appears to be hopeful: even if managers hold discriminatory ideas about older workers, they still participate in different types of arrangements. The group of older workers with incompatible jobs, however, appear to be more restricted in their usage of flexibility measures. To the extent that this is driven by employers' desire to spend limited HR budgets on the most valuable employees, governments could explore options that would make spending HR budgets on more peripheral workers more attractive. It should be emphasized that job compatibility with certain policies is not 'fixed' and may change over time. Technological changes have had a major impact on both occupations themselves and the possibilities of working flexibly

with regard to time and place, and will probably continue to expand the options available to combine work with the use of desired personnel policies. Finally, the role of gender socialization in combining work with informal caregiving may be hard to change. Yet, the need to combine these two, for both older men and women, is increasing due to the shift from a demographic pyramid to a demographic pillar and growing labor participation among female older workers. It is therefore in the interests of older workers, employers, and governments to continuously develop personnel policies and to support the use of these options.

Notes

1 We emphasize that the contribution is potential rather than automatic, as other studies find preferred or actual retirement age is not affected by participation in flexibility policies (Van Solinge & Henkens, 2014) or phasing out policies (Hermansen, 2015; Midtsundstad, Hermansen, & Nielsen, 2012; Van Solinge & Henkens, 2014).
2 These include both social duties, such as informal care for elderly parents or relatives, and health-related needs, such as working at times that match one's biorhythm.
3 Technology could reduce the complications, such as through digital monitoring or an administrative system through which workers with comparable skills can swap working hours (e.g., Intus, www.intus.nl/online-ruilen). Still, we expect that employees and employers prefer policy use with as few complications as possible.