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## Seniors still much wanted in labor market

**Silver-haired workers remain in demand in the labor market, with 85 percent of 330 surveyed firms saying they would consider employing staff over 60 years old.**

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Silver-haired workers remain in demand in the labor market, with 85 percent of 330 surveyed firms saying they would consider employing staff over 60 years old.

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service survey also showed 66 percent of respondents believe having elderly staff will help improve their services to senior citizens.

"Businesses welcome the silver-haired. As the elderly interact with other elderly people, they share the same connection," HSBC Social Enterprise Business Centre senior consultant Howard Ling Ho-wan said.

"Just because they are aged does not mean they are regarded as cheap labor."

The poll also showed 77 percent of respondents vowing to stick to the "same job, same salary" policy. This finding reflects the value of senior citizens, particularly in the retail, hospitality and catering businesses, Ling said.

With technological and health-care advancements, the elderly are now healthier and more active, enabling them to work well into their later years.

Hong Kong faces an aging population problem, with the percentage of the elderly relative to total population forecast to rise to 20.5 percent by 2023 or one in five. However only 7.4 percent of citizens older than 60 work.

Ling said businesses should employ more senior citizens amid Hong Kong's changing demographics.

The survey also covered 723 people over 60 who were interviewed in April and June. Forty-three percent expressed hopes more senior workers could join the labor market.

Council director Anthony Wong Kin-wai said the survey shows companies stand to benefit from employing silver-haired workers as the elderly tend to patronize establishments that are friendly to senior citizens.