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Summary

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Work, health and social relations underlying retirement

Results from a survey among pensioners retiring from work

The aim of this study is to map out the perceptions of the newly retired on their pre-retirement work and examine the connection between factors relating to working conditions, social relations, leisure time and health to retirement on an old-age pension. The study is based on the 2022 survey “From work to retirement”. A total of 3,378 persons retiring from gainful employment on an old-age pension between 2019 and 2021 responded to the survey (68% response rate).

Work perceived positive but also hectic with too many changes

Nearly nine out of ten persons who had recently retired from work liked their pre-retirement work, found it meaningful and considered it an important part of their life. This was particularly common among persons who retired on an old-age pension at age 66 or older. The share was somewhat lower for those who faced challenges in terms of their health and ability to cope.

Slightly more than half of the respondents perceived that their work had been too hectic. Nearly as many assessed that too many changes had taken place in their work tasks or the organisation they worked for. Around one third of the respondents felt that the skill requirements had increased too much and that the work was mentally too strenuous. Particularly women, persons who had worked in the public sector,

white-collar workers, those who retired on an old-age pension at age 63 or younger, and those who assessed their health or ability to cope to be moderate or worse felt more often than others that their work was too hectic, that too many changes had taken place in the organisation or that the skill requirements had increased too much.

Atmosphere at workplace and the possibility to influence perceived good while leadership perceived lacking

Four out of five new retirees felt that the atmosphere at the workplace before retirement was good, and nearly as many perceived that they had been able to influence their work. The perception of the atmosphere was not linked to the age at retirement, but those who retired at a later age felt more positive than average about their possibilities to influence their work. In addition, men, private sector employees, recipients of a higher pension and those who perceived their pre-retirement health and ability to cope to be good assessed their possibilities to influence their pre-retirement work more positively than others.

Leadership and flexible working hours in pre-retirement work were perceived lacking more often. Nearly two out of five assessed these factors in negative terms. The experience of leadership was not strongly linked to the age at retirement, but those who retired early felt more often than others that the working hours were inflexible. In addition, women, public sector employees, those with a small pension and those whose health and ability to cope had weakened assessed more often than average that leadership and flexibility in working hours were lacking.

Most felt that the skills of older workers were appreciated, but only half assessed that continued working was supported at the workplace

It was commonly experienced that the skills of older workers were appreciated: 70 per cent of the respondents felt that they had been appreciated at the workplace. However, only slightly more than half felt that the workplace had supported them to continue working until their retirement age. Two out of five felt that they had not received any support, and every tenth was unable to give an assessment on this topic.

Those who were the oldest at retirement had more often than others positive experiences of being appreciated and supported. In addition, men and private sector employees assessed these matters more positively than average. Those with a weaker health and ability to cope, on the other hand, felt more often than others that the appreciation and support they received were lacking.

Most respondents assessed that, as far as their employer was concerned, they could have worked longer. Only 11 per cent felt that their employer did not want them to continue working. This was common among, on the one hand, those who retired early (under age 63) and, on the other, those who retired late (at age 66 or older).

Two out of five emphasized work and working conditions as an underlying reason for retirement

Around 40 per cent of the respondents who retired from work felt that issues relating to work and working conditions affected their retirement strongly or to some extent. One quarter assessed that these factors had not affected their retirement at all. The perception of working conditions affecting retirement was more common particularly among women, those who retired at age 63, those who felt that their health and ability to cope had weakened and those who received a small pension. The older the person was at retirement, the less work and working conditions were assessed to affect the decision to retire.

Three out of four felt that social relations in connection with working were important. Yet most (83%) assessed that this factor had not affected their decision to retire. Those who felt that their health and ability to cope were fair or weaker, as well as those who retired at age 63 or at an earlier age, assessed more often than others that they had retired early because of social relations. The older the person was at the time of retirement, the more often they assessed that the social relations at the workplace had deferred their retirement.

Leisure time and desire to spend more time with close relatives played a significant role in the decision to retire

More than half of those who retired from work perceived that increasing leisure time and recreational opportunities (64%) and the desire to retire while they or their spouse are in good health (54%) strongly or to some extent affected their decision to retire. The significance of these factors was highest among those who retired at age 63 and decreased the older the person was at retirement.

The desire to spend time with close relatives was an important motive for retirement. Health issues and problems with coping, on the other hand, affected the motive for retirement less often than the above factors. One fifth of the retirees assessed that a weakening ability to cope affected their decision to retire strongly or to some extent. More often than men, women perceived that the ability to spend more time with their close relatives, taking care of their children and grandchildren and a weakening of their own or their spouse's health or ability to cope had affected their decision to retire.

Work and working conditions linked to timing of retirement

Nearly all perceptions of work and working conditions and their importance in the retirement decision varied by the retirement age. More often than average, those who were the oldest when they retired liked work and perceived it to be meaningful and a really important area of life. Those who retired at or near their lowest possible retirement age, on the other hand, felt more negative about work than on average. Those who retired at a higher age also felt more often than others that they had been able to influence their work, that their working hours had been flexible and that their workplace had appreciated the skills of older workers and supported their continued

working until they reached their retirement age. As for the statements concerning the skill requirements of the work, the direction of the association is the opposite: those who continued to work until a higher age less often found their work to be hectic, straining or involving too many changes.

Those who had recently retired on an old-age pension from work felt that their decision to retire was affected by factors relating to both work and working conditions, social relations at the workplace, leisure time, family relationships, and their own and their close relatives' health. Particularly women and those who retired at or near their earliest possible retirement age often assessed that the impact of these factors on their decision to retire had been greater.

From the point of view of extending working lives and deferring retirement, it is important to note how the decision to retire is affected by factors relating to work and increased leisure time after retirement. Considering differences in demographic groups offers the opportunity to examine more closely those factors which can be influenced to support continued working.

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