

Maximising workforce participation for older workers

Issue 7, November 2021

Welcome to the seventh newsletter in the biannual series prepared for stakeholders in the *Maximising Workforce Participation for Older Workers* research programme, supported by the MBIE Endeavour Fund.

This newsletter series aims to keep stakeholders up to date on the progress of the research programme, signpost new outputs from the programme and encourage engagement from stakeholders in events held by the research team.

Research aim

The research programme aims to answer a crucial question for an ageing population:

How can government, organisations and workers support older New Zealanders' participation in the workforce?

Webinar recap: *Impact of COVID-19 on Aotearoa/New Zealand's older workers*

Our May webinar drew upon 1,511 responses from older workers to the 2018-2020 Health, Work and Retirement surveys to examine the impact of working conditions in the early months of the pandemic on employment-related outcomes.

Results indicated that in the in the early months of the pandemic, 8.3% lost or left a job, 32.1% had their wage or hours reduced, 54.3% had worked from home, and 21.5% were offered skills training from their employer to support their ability to do their job during the pandemic.

Anxiety increased among those who lost their job. Those who were able to work from home experienced less decline in health-related ability to work, and increased organisational commitment. Those offered skills training reported less decline in health-related ability to work, and lowered perceptions of age discrimination in their workplace. Findings highlight workplace policies as important in supporting older workers in the early months of the pandemic response.

Research Programme Investigator Profile: Prof Christine Stephens

Professor Stephens co-leads the New Zealand Health, Work and Retirement study and Health and Ageing Research Team in the School of Psychology at Massey University. Her research is located at the intersection of health psychology and gerontology.



Prof Christine Stephens

New webinar: *The importance of housing and neighbourhoods for ageing well in Aotearoa*

The next presentation in the webinar series will look at the impact of housing on older people's wellbeing. The Health, Work and Retirement longitudinal study of ageing has been examining these effects in Aotearoa. This presentation will provide an overview of findings from the past 5 years focusing on older people's housing and neighbourhoods, their relationships to wellbeing, and their implications for policy change.

When: 11am NZST, February 10, 2022

Presenter: Prof Christine Stephens

You can register for this meeting [here](#)

Outputs from the Older Workers Research

Research papers, presentations, evidence based tools, newsletters and webinars will be made available through the Health and Ageing Research Team website <https://hart.massey.ac.nz> as developed, and promoted via the [@MasseyHART](#) Twitter.

Progress and output May-Nov 2021

- A chapter on work in later life Aotearoa New Zealand has been contributed to international publication '*Extended Working Life Policies - International Gender and Health Perspectives*' by Springer Nature and [is available to stakeholders](#).
- Conclusions of our interview series on experiences of starting their first business after age 50, have been shared with the general public in a piece written by Dr Judith Davey for [The Conversation](#).
- Early analyses of our qualitative longitudinal study on combining work and care-giving have been shared with the general public in a piece written by Dr Mary Breheny for [BusinessPlus](#). This informs employers of issues that arise for those combining work and care. To date all 11 working caregivers in this study have completed their second interview and 9 have completed their third.
- PhD student Caroline Day has received accolades for her complementary study [on the role of childcare provided by working grandmothers in enabling parents to engage in paid employment](#), making the Dean's List of exceptional theses.
- Interviews with 15 senior Māori entrepreneurs have been completed and analysed with the a report to be released early 2022.
- A case study of policies and practices for older workers conducted with a Pacific organisation has been completed and community fono talanoa are planned for engagement in research findings.

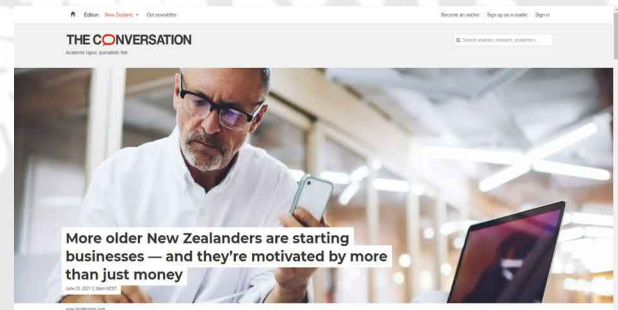
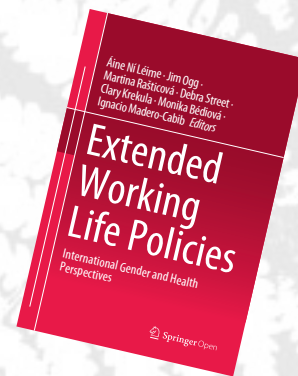
- **Selected peer reviewed publications (see the full list [here](#)):**

Allen, J., Uekusa, S., Alpass, F. (2021) Longitudinal cohort study of depression and anxiety among older informal caregivers following the initial COVID-19 pandemic response in New Zealand. *Journal of Aging and Health*.

Koreshi, S.Y., Alpass, F. (2021). Predictors of work ability and quality of life in older New Zealanders with and without an arthritis diagnosis. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*.

Myllyntausta, S., Gibson, R., Salo, P., Allen, J., Gander, P., Alpass F.M., Stephens. C.V. (2021) Daytime fatigue as a predictor for subsequent retirement among older New Zealand workers. *Sleep Health*.

Stephens, C., & Breheny, M. (2021). Diverse Experiences among Older Adults in Aotearoa/New Zealand during COVID-19 lockdown: A qualitative study.



HRC COVID-19 Equity Response project

Over 4,000 longitudinal participants have responded to the 2021 Health Work and Retirement survey. Following on from the 2020 survey of early impacts the global pandemic, the 2021 data provides insights into changes in health and wellbeing in the second year of the global pandemic, as well as issues of vaccine hesitancy and uptake among older adults. Surveys of Pasifika Matua and Chinese seniors will be conducted in 2022.

In collaboration with the Joint Centre for Disaster Research this project will develop a policy response framework to reduce the impact of future pandemics on older adults.