

# Greetings from the Health & Ageing Research Team

The 2016 Health, Work & Retirement survey marked a decade of research by HART into healthy ageing and retirement in New Zealand. Over 4000 kiwis responded to the survey, with over fifteen hundred of these responding to the survey since it began in 2006. We wish to extend a warm welcome to participants who were invited to respond to the survey for the first time in 2016. With your help, national and international research aiming to support older persons in the community has been significantly enhanced.

This newsletter aims to give you a snapshot of the most recent activities and findings. It will include information on major projects happening 2015-2017, the latest results of the Health Work & Retirement survey communicated to the scientific and general community, significant meetings and events, and a glimpse at plans for the survey in 2018.

## The 2016 survey: a focus on healthy housing

Each wave of the Health, Work & Retirement survey contains core measures of health, work, economic and social wellbeing, which are administered every two years. This enables researchers to look at how participants are tracking over time, identify factors associated with good and poor outcomes, and examine the impact of major transitions such as retirement on health for different groups.

To respond to issues of current concern to New Zealand, each survey also has a special section examining a more in-depth issue of relevance to current focus in New Zealand. In 2016, the survey focus on housing and neighbourhood quality, with views and experiences from 4,028 respondents aged 55-89. Conclusions from the 2016 wave will be communicated to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and other HART stakeholders.



## HART Newsletter September, 2017



## Want up to-date news on the latest findings...

In addition to newsletters and traditional media, we're now taking advantage of social media as a way to get the word out about the Health and Ageing Research Team's activities and findings. If you're a Tweeter, join our growing band of followers on [Twitter @MasseyHART](https://twitter.com/MasseyHART) for alerts on publications, presentations and reports from the Health, Work & Retirement Study.

## Over eight hundred telephone interviews completed

Between June-September 2017, HART ran a new project to assess the impact of life events such as childhood disease and adversity, work interruptions, relationships, assets, chronic illness and injury, on health and wellbeing in later life. We received overwhelming support for this project with 73% of participants approached completing a telephone interview. The interview covered aspects of the family, work and health, and experiences of discrimination and adversity. A team of 14 interviewers used a computer-assisted interview to cover these issues with participants, with 827 interviews completed. This represents a massive effort from this dedicated team and will help us to make comparisons with similar projects conducted internationally, including *the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing* and *Australian 45 and Up Study*. We will also evaluate the impact of social policies implemented in the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century on health outcomes in later life.

## Results from the national health record data linkage project

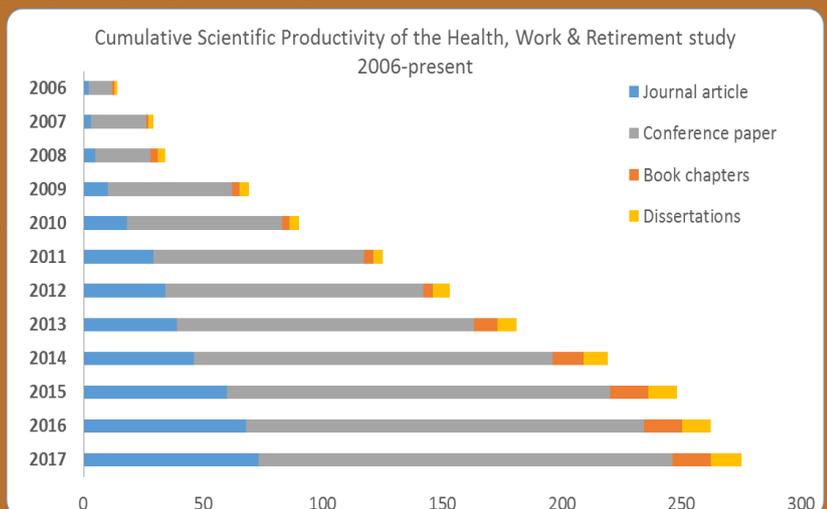
Between 2014 and 2016 the Health, Work and Retirement study has included links to national health records for participants who have provided written consent. This project will enhance the study's capacity to understand the key factors linked to health and healthcare utilisation, answer key questions relevant to the functioning of our health system, and compare our health trends with other data-linked studies of ageing from around the world.

Initial findings from the project were presented by Dr Joanne Allen to researchers in this emerging field at the second biennial [International Population Data Linkage Conference](#) held in Wales. Doctor of Clinical Psychology candidate, Eddie Barnard, is currently using these data to investigate the health impact of concurrent use of alcohol and prescription medications which may interact poorly with alcohol. This is the first study of its kind in New Zealand and has important implications for knowledge around health behaviours of older adults who may be particularly susceptible to the impacts of alcohol when taking medications.

## Communicating findings from the Health, Work & Retirement Study

When not conducting research, HART researchers are working to communicate results to a wide range of audiences. To date, results of the HWR study have been published in 73 peer reviewed articles, presented at 173 scientific conferences, and 16 book chapters have been developed drawing upon project insights.

Importantly, 13 research students have completed doctoral theses using the study data under the supervision of Health and Ageing Research Team members. The development of skills by these students remain some of our most important achievements and represent a meaningful increase in capacity in the field of ageing research in New Zealand.



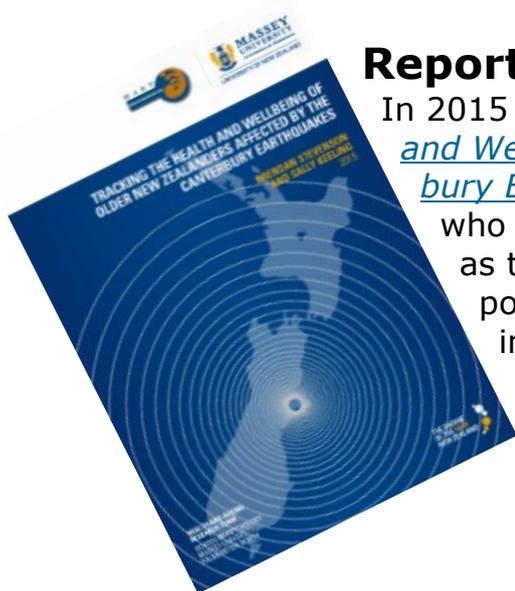
## HART in the media

HART researchers have been working to communicate findings to the public through popular media. Dr Andy Towers made headlines in New Zealand and Australia with his research indicating that the health benefits of moderate drinking are likely exaggerated and reflect the higher socio economic status of people who drink moderately. Check out his piece *'Maybe moderate drinking isn't so good for you after all'* in The Conversation, and listen to his full interview on ABC Radio National's Drive show online. Other popular stories have featured interviews with Professor Christine Stephens and Dr Agnes Szabo *'Future New Zealand: Oh, give me a home... housing security for an ageing population'* in the NZ Herald, and Dr Polly Yeung speaking about *'Treating our elders right'* on Radio NZ.



## Report to the EQC

In 2015 HART researchers released a report *'Tracking the Health and Wellbeing of Older New Zealanders Affected by the Canterbury Earthquakes'* on the health and wellbeing of older adults who lived in the Canterbury region during the events, as well as the impact on the wider New Zealand population. The report highlights that some effects of the earthquake actually increased over the longer term, including the emotional and financial impacts.



## Results well received at World Congress

HART once again raised the international profile of ageing research in New Zealand by presenting the latest findings from the Health, Work & Retirement survey at the 21<sup>st</sup> World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics, held in San Francisco. Dr Andy Towers convened a panel of international experts to discuss his research collaboration comparing rates of drinking among older adults across the world and this was picked up as a key theme of the conference by *Forbes* magazine in the article *'Tech, Alcohol And Ageism On The Minds Of Top Aging Experts'*. Professor Fiona Alpass presented findings on the health of older persons providing care for ill family or friends. Findings indicate that over six years, people who provided care on an on/off basis were in poorer health than those who always provided care or were not caregivers. Finally, Dr Agnes Szabo provided the first look at data on health trends pre- and post- retirement for our participants, finding that health was generally good and unaffected by retirement for those who were economically well-off and who had been employed in white-collar professions. However, those who reported poor health and economic living standards pre-retirement displayed an improvement in their health post-retirement. These findings represent important information for New Zealand debates regarding age of retirement and superannuation.



## **New report: key findings from the first 10 years of the HWR**

A new report 'The New Zealand Health, Work & Retirement Longitudinal Study 2006-2016' will present key conclusions that can be drawn from the first decade of study in an accessible and illustrative format. The report will highlight key groups of persons, classified in terms of their physical, mental and social wellbeing over the 2006-2016 period, and will describe their outcomes related to economic wellbeing, work, housing, caregiving, health behaviours and cultural identity and engagement. This report will be disseminated to key stakeholders and made available online via the HART website.

## **Hosting leaders from the Iranian Longitudinal Study on Ageing (IriLSA)**

From July-September 2017 HART hosted leaders of the IriLSA, Professors Nayyereh Aminisani and Seyed Morteza Shamshirgaran who are on sabbatical from Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. As part of this visit Professors Aminisani provided an overview of the establishment, protocol and pilot of the IriLSA, which is an extension of the Prospective Epidemiological Research Studies on IrAN (PERSIAN) research program <http://persiancohort.com/>. IriLSA focuses on the health and wellbeing needs of older persons in Iran and has been developed in close collaboration with a diverse international scientific advisory board, including HART's Professor Christine Stephens.



## **We're going green in 2018**

Since the study began in 2006, over 25,000 Health, Work & Retirement surveys have been returned. These surveys represent a significant volume of important data but also a lot of paper! To try and reduce the amount of paper required for this research, in 2018 participants will have the opportunity to complete the survey online. All participants will receive a letter containing a short link to the online survey along with a unique logi-n ID code and password. Participants will then be able to log in and complete the survey over the following four weeks.

We understand that many of our valued participants would prefer to continue to complete the survey in a paper format. As such, any participant who has not completed the survey online after four weeks will be posted a hard copy of the survey, as usual. We're excited about this new phase of the survey and testing is underway to ensure sure it runs as smoothly as possible. As for all our surveys, participants will be able to contact us on our free phone number (0800 100 134) or via email ([hart@massey.ac.nz](mailto:hart@massey.ac.nz)) with any questions about the online survey.

## **Let us know if you move...**

Every response we receive from participants is important to our research and we try our best to ensure that we stay in touch with participants for as long as they wish to be part of the study. The most common reason we lose touch with participants is not knowing where to post surveys and materials when they move. If you have recently moved and have not let us know, please call us on our free phone line 0800 100 134 or email us at [hart@massey.ac.nz](mailto:hart@massey.ac.nz). Just leave a message with your full name, old and new contact details and we'll update our records.

## Leading international collaboration on housing for older people

In 2016 HART won support from the MBIE Catalyst grant program to promote international collaboration in research of critical relevance to New Zealand. With this support, HART hosted meetings and presentations on housing and the environment and their relevance to the health of older persons from visiting experts including Professor Vanessa Burholt (Director, Centre for Innovative Ageing, Swansea University), Professor Norah Keating (University of Alberta) and Professor Judith Phillips (Stirling University). Prof Keating is also a co-editor of The World Health Organization's newly released *World Report on Ageing and Health*.

As chair of the Welsh Government Expert Group on Housing and Ageing Populations, Professor Phillips provided a public seminar in Wellington on the recent *policy report* and outlined areas of similarity and divergence between the Welsh and New Zealand contexts. Videos from all these presentations can be viewed on the '*Seminar presentations and materials*' section of the HART website: <http://hart.massey.ac.nz/>.

HART also hosted a meeting addressing ways in which results from the Health, Work & Retirement surveys can contribute to a national discussion, of housing and health with stakeholders from the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, Ministry of Social Development's Older People's Policy Team and Office for Seniors, Ministry of Health's Health of Older People Policy Unit, Grey Power, Abbeyfield, and the Retirement Villages Association.



*Professor Judith Phillips, Chair of Welsh Government Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population, presents at a public forum in Wellington (March, 2017)*

## The important contribution of the HART Māori Advisory Group

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Health and Ageing Research Team's Māori Advisory Group who are engaged as part of a voluntary peer review process on projects that have a focus on Māori populations to ensure that projects are conducted and reported with consideration and respect to Māori participants. This group consists of the team convener (Brendan Stevenson, School of Public Health, Massey University) and four community members, including representation by Mana Whenua. In 2016-2017 these roles were filled by Peti Nohotima (Tuhoe; Māori Researcher and Author), John Waldon (Tuhoe, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Porou; Māori Researcher), Natasha Tassell (Te Atiawa, Ngāti Makea ki Rarotonga; Lecturer, Massey University), and Roly Fitzgerald (Ngai Rangitane, Ngāti Porou; Māori educator).

## HART awarded MBIE support 2016-2021

The Ministry of Business Employment and Innovation has announced the support from the 2017 Research Endeavour Fund, in support of HART research into workforce participation by older Kiwis. This support will span five years, commencing October 2017. Congratulations to Professors Fiona Alpass, Christine Stephens, Dr Joanne Allen, and collaborators on this achievement.

# Health & Ageing Research Team quick snaps!



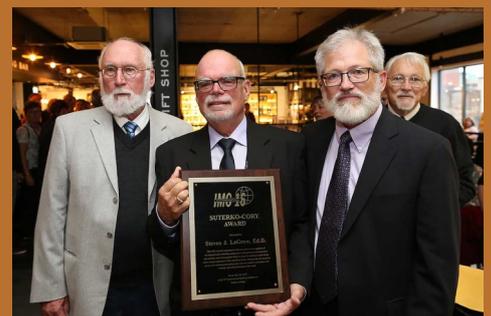
Professor Christine Stephens delivered a lecture on ageing in the New Zealand context to students from Osaka University (July, 2017). Students were interested in results from the Health, Work and Retirement study on the impacts of the 2010-2011 Christchurch Earthquakes on older adults as well as Professor Stephens' efforts to open her talk in Japanese.

Professor Fiona Alpass presented a seminar in Wellington (July, 2015) to outline the policy implications of results from the Health, Work and Retirement study. She emphasised a need for employers to consider more flexible work schedules and reduced hours to accommodate the needs of an expanding older workforce. Attendees represented the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development ACC, GreyPower, Superu, Ministry of Justice, National Health Committee, and Age Concern.



Members of the Health & Ageing Research Team presented to a meeting of research stakeholders in Wellington (February, 2017) on the implications of their research on housing and home ownership among older adults. Attendees represented the Human Rights Commission, the Older People's Policy team (MSD), Office for Seniors (MSD), Health of Older People Policy Unit (MoH), and Greypower, Abbeyfield NZ, and the Retirement Villages Association.

Emeritus Professor Steve La Grow, retired 2015, was recently awarded the Suterko-Cory Award, at the 16th International Mobility Conference (Dublin, Ireland) for contributions to the field of orientation and mobility for the blind. The award was bestowed in recognition of his efforts to improve services to individuals with visual impairment throughout the world.



Remember that you can access reports and presentations from the Health & Ageing Research Team through our website: <http://hart.massey.ac.nz/>

Or for the latest on activities from the Health & Ageing Research Team and affiliated graduates, follow us on Twitter: [@MasseyHART](https://twitter.com/MasseyHART)

As always, thank you for your contribution to the Health, Work and Retirement Study. Please do not hesitate to contact us on our Free Phone number [0800 100 134](tel:0800100134) or email [hart@massey.ac.nz](mailto:hart@massey.ac.nz)