

Maximising workforce participation for older workers

Issue 6, April 2021

Welcome to the sixth 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

Our December webinar drew upon qualitative data from the 2020 Health, Work and Retirement longitudinal survey. Using over 730 accounts by older adults, this work described the diverse experiences of anxiety among older adults in Aotearoa/New Zealand following the initial period of COVID-19 lockdown, and how these experiences were influenced by employment, occupation and caregiving roles.

Results indicate that while adults expressed anxiety for themselves and for others during the period of lockdown, for those who were retired, able to work at home, or eligible for wage subsidies, the experience was generally very enjoyable. Findings highlighted the need to broaden the focus of concern to the circumstances of older people's lives rather than their age *per se*.

Missed the webinar?

Watch the recording [here](#) and report on impacts on employment [here](#).

Research Programme Investigator Profile: Dr Joanne Allen

Dr Allen is a quantitative researcher within the School of Psychology, Massey University. Her research focuses on how experiences of ageing vary with personal capacities and environments. She is a member of the WHO Consortium on Metrics and Evidence for Healthy Ageing.

In the current research programme, Dr Allen is a project manager and analyst on the Health, Work and Retirement longitudinal study, investigating the motivations, capacities and workplace factors that influence work participation and engagement among adults 55+.



Dr Joanne Allen

New webinar: '*Impact of COVID-19 on Aotearoa/New Zealand's older workforce*'

The next presentation in the webinar series will look at the impact of COVID-19 on physical, mental, social and financial wellbeing among older adults in New Zealand using data from longitudinal surveys conducted 2014-2020. Analyses will examine how impacts varied for those in paid employment and those considered essential service workers. In this 60 minute session, stakeholders will be invited to discuss how this knowledge may be used by New Zealand employers.

When: 11am NZST, May 20, 2021

Presenter: Dr Joanne Allen

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

Overview of milestones October 2020-April 2021

- Over 4350 adults aged 55+ responded to the 2020 NZ Health, Work and Retirement longitudinal survey. This is the second of two surveys focused on experiences of older workers, supported by the '*Older Workers*' research programme.



- Seven Senior Entrepreneur workshops were held in the final quarter of 2020 involving 110 stakeholders from enterprise support agencies, government, mentors and people who have started a business in later life. Events were informed by interviews with older entrepreneurs on their experiences of starting their first business after age 50.



- Reports of two case studies focusing on understanding the needs and practices of employers of older workers in New Zealand have been **released**. These studies - of a regional port company with an average workforce age of 52 and a DHB with an average workforce age of 47 - will inform recommendations for older age-friendly HRM policies and practices.

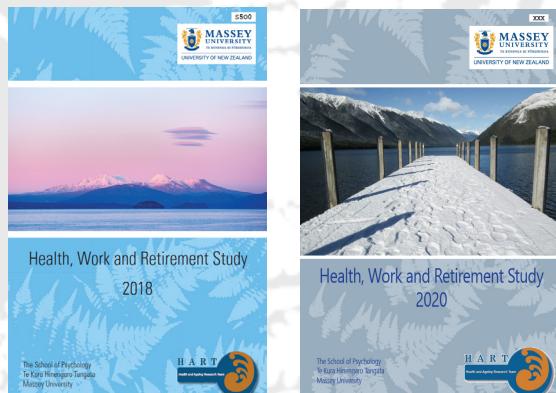


- A briefing event on senior entrepreneurship was held in March to present findings and policy recommendations to the Office for Seniors, MSD and MBIE. Full report on this component of the programme will be released Q3 2021.

- A report on perceptions of ageism by older job-seekers and employed adults in the 2020 Health, Work and Retirement study was prepared and **released** in response to a request for evidence on age discrimination and discouragement in the NZ labour market, supporting MSD's Older Workers Employment Action Plan 2021.

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

Spijker, JJA, Alpass, F, Allen, J, & Stephens, C. What factors enable mid-life carers to re-enter the labour market in New Zealand? *Australasian Journal on Ageing*.



Allen, J, Alpass, F, Szabó, Á, & Stephens, C. Impact of flexible work arrangements on key challenges to work engagement among older workers. *Work, Aging and Retirement*.

Noone, J, Earl, J, Stephens, C, Rafalskid, J, Allen, J, Alpass, F, & Topa, G. An application of the Resource-Based Dynamic Process model in the context of retirement planning. *Work, Aging and Retirement*.

Stephens, C, Szabó, Á, & Breheny, M. Social inequalities over the lifecourse and healthy ageing in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Differences by Maori ethnicity and gender. *Ageing and Society*.

New Health Research Council COVID-19 Equity Response project: A pandemic response and recovery framework supporting equity for older people

The HRC will support a project evaluating the immediate and 12 month impacts of the pandemic on older adults. A 2021 Health Work and Retirement survey and surveys of Pasifika Matua and Chinese seniors will be used to inform this work.

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.