



ARC/NHMRC Research
Network in Ageing Well

Workforce Ageing: Research Questions, by Martin O'Brien, WOU



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1. JOB MOBILITY OF OLDER WORKERS

Extending the working life of older workers is an important policy goal in Australian and overseas in the context of an ageing society. While there is substantial literature on the transition of older workers from employment to retirement little is known about factors affecting the successful job mobility for older workers; that is, the transition to another paid employment position after separation from employment at a previous firm. The main finding from existing research in Australia and overseas is simply that older workers display lower rates of job mobility than their younger counterparts. My IJES paper using ABS Labour Mobility Surveys was relatively unsuccessful at determining factors affecting the successful job mobility of older males due to a number of data deficiencies. Analysis should include the individual and employment characteristics affecting the likelihood of successful job transitions and aspects of pre and post mobility jobs such as wages, hours and types of employment (full-time/part-time, permanent/casual etc). Longitudinal analysis is required and could be achieved through the use of HILDA.

2. ANALYSIS OF WELFARE REFORM AS A POLICY TOOL TO MOBILISE THE OLDER WORKFORCE

Previous research has determined that a significant proportion of older males in Australia have historically been in receipt of social security pensions and allowances that directly or indirectly reflected unemployment or labour market conditions such as MAA and DSP. These pensions have now been removed or eligibility tightened as part of welfare reform, in part inspired by the ageing population. It has previously been argued by myself and others that there were a significant proportion of these social security recipients who were to all intents and purposes unemployed and thus hidden from official unemployment statistics. Unfortunately, DFACS (FaCSIA) are no longer providing public access to social security statistics since about 2002 so I have not been able to determine the impact of welfare reforms upon older worker employment and labour force participation, or indeed analyse the more recent composition of social security recipients (only Newstart statistics seem to be publicly available). This represents an important gap in the literature if welfare reform is to be used to mobilise older workers. A longitudinal analysis of welfare recipients would be available from social security administration data. There is also a plethora of OECD literature for international comparison of welfare reforms.

3. OLDER FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

In comparison to older males, research on older female employment and labour force participation is relatively scarce. Therefore we should also be looking at the determinants of labour force participation, social security data, industry and occupation representation, mobility etc as has been conducted for older males. Of particular interest would be access to non-wage income and the joint decision of labour force participation of married females. Data required can come from HILDA, ABS Labour Force Survey and supplementaries.

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