

## **RESEARCH ON THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF PEOPLE EXTENDING THEIR WORKING LIFE: PLAIN ENGLISH SUMMARY**

As governments around the world are encouraging people to continue working in older age it is important to understand what happens to people's health. The reason typically given is that people are living longer which results in longer retirement. Longer retirement causes strain on pensions, and many people have not saved enough to live comfortably.

It is important to understand what happens to people's health when they work into older age. It is possible that health differences between people who can afford to retire and those who cannot, are widened by government policies delaying the payment of retirement benefits.

The aim of this research was to systematically search for, and bring together the findings of existing studies, on the health effects of extending working lives. We looked for research in different ways including searching electronic databases of academic journals and relevant websites. We involved a public advisory group formed specifically for this study, who helped us understand what questions were important to the general public, what findings were of most interest and importance, and how we could get the findings known about and understood.

We found 17 relevant documents to examine. Four of the studies were carried out in the UK. Much of the other research we found did not give us enough information about the age of the workers, or looked only at the effects of retirement rather than the effects of working longer.

- From examining the 17 studies which met our criteria, the research showed that working beyond the age of 64 can be good or have a neutral effect on health, but any positive effects might be more for men, and those who carry on working part-time.
- Results relating to the effect of working longer on mental health were mixed.
- Workers in poor quality jobs (for example low pay, little control over their work, or high demands) may be at risk of adverse effects on physical or mental health.
- There was little research looking at the effects of working longer on people's quality of life including their well-being, comfort and happiness.
- The effects are different for different types of workers, and those who are already disadvantaged (for example in poor jobs, in poor health, or living in poverty) may have worse health outcomes as a result of working longer.

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This study is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Public Health programme (project reference 18/93 PHR Public Health Review Team). The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.