

## **Extended abstract for the European Population Conference, June 2022, Groningen**

### **Active Retirement? The impact of retirement on leisure activity engagement.**

O. Tunney, K. Henkens, & H. van Solinge

#### **Outline**

Engagement in leisure activity in older adulthood is often promoted by governments and policy makers given the growing evidence linking leisure activity to a variety of positive outcomes across domains such physical and mental health (Chang, Wray, & Lin, 2014; Lampinen, Heikkinen, Kauppinen, & Heikkinen, 2006), cognitive function (Lee, Chi, & Palinkas, 2019), and subjective well-being (Kuykendall, Tay, & Ng, 2015). There is also evidence suggesting that the impact of leisure activity engagement on well-being may be greater in later life (Nimrod & Shrira, 2016) and in retirement (Kuykendall et al., 2015). The transition to retirement may represent a particularly important life course transition in terms of leisure activity given that not only may this transition involve significant restructuring to an individual's perceived roles and identities, but also how they allocate their time.

However, to date, there is a dearth of research focusing on the impact of the retirement transition on leisure activity. Moreover, the majority of existing literature to date focuses predominantly, or exclusively, on physical activity. Of the limited studies available, many suffer from methodological shortcomings such as small sample sizes and limited generalisability (Bosse & Ekerdt, 1981), retrospective reports of pre-retirement activity (Rosenkoetter, Gams, & Engdahl, 2001), or cross-sectional designs (Wanka, 2020). Where longitudinal data does exist the scope of activities included is often limited (Leskinen et al., 2018; Scherger, Nazroo, & Higgs, 2011). Accordingly, the results of studies investigating the impact of retirement on engagement in leisure activity are equivocal; with some studies pointing to little or no increase in some domains (Rosenkoetter et al., 2001), while others report increases in activity across areas such as physical, social and intellectual activity (Henning et al., 2021). Likewise, research on other factors that may influence leisure activity in older adulthood such as gender, education, health etc., and how these may interact with retirement, has been limited or produced mixed results.

Our study aims to address some of these gaps in the literature and will contribute to the literature in a number of ways. First, our study will provide one of the few investigations of the impact of retirement on leisure activity that will use large-scale, longitudinal data to follow individuals pre and post retirement. Second, our design allows us to compare those who retire to those who have remained in their career jobs, ensuring that any changes in engagement found are as a consequence of the retirement transition as opposed to the ageing process more generally. Third, our study includes leisure activity across multiple domains -physical, social, and self-development- as opposed to exclusively examining physical activity. Finally, we hope to make a significant theoretical contribution by empirically investigating the hypotheses that the potential impact of retirement on leisure activity engagement may be influenced by individual preferences in leisure time activities and as constraints on an individual's resources such as time, finances, and health. Consequently, we will also investigate the interaction between retirement and resource constraints, and retirement and factors that may affect individual dispositions to leisure activities in addition to investigating the main effect of retirement status on leisure activity engagement.

## **Methods**

### **Data**

Our study uses data from two waves of the NIDI Pension Panel Study (NPPS). This large-scale longitudinal study was first conducted in 2015, with follow-up data recorded in 2018. Participants were drawn from the three largest pension fund providers in the Netherlands. A stratified sampling procedure based on organizational size and sector was used. Within this stratified sample, participants were randomly drawn from those who were aged 60-65 and worked at least 12 hours per week. Of the 15,480 questionnaires sent at wave 1(2015), 6793 completed questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 44 percent. A total of 5,316 respondents participated in the follow-up survey in 2018 (response rate of 79%). For the current study our analytical sample will comprise only respondents who participated in the NNPS at baseline and follow up and for whom we have data on the dependent variables.

### **Measures**

### Dependent Variables

Our dependent variables are Physical activity, Social activity, and Self-development activity engagement at follow up(wave 2). To measure engagement, respondents were asked how many hours per week they spent: engaging in in sport, other physical activity, and gardening and household chores (Physical activity); having visitors and/or visiting others (Social Activity); and engaging in hobbies, study/lectures/courses, and reading (Self-development Activity).

### Independent Variables

#### Retirement Status:

The main independent variable of interest is that of retirement status at wave 2. We will distinguish between 2 categories of respondents, those that have retired and those who have not retired. Retirement status will be determined from two survey items: one asking participants whether or not they are working for pay, and a second asking whether or not they have used a retirement arrangement to exit the career job (e.g., early retirement, reaching mandatory retirement age).

#### Constraints:

In addition to controlling for leisure activity hours at baseline, we will also include measures of various resource constraints (time, financial, health) that may limit and individual's ability to engage in leisure activities. To investigate the impact of potential time constraints we will include measures of whether respondents provide informal caregiving, whether respondents engage in grandparenting, and whether or not respondents engage in bridge employment. Financial resources will be measured through responses to an item measuring participant's total wealth (including own house, savings, stocks, etc. minus debts/mortgage) ranging from low (less than 50,000 euros), moderate (between 50,000 and 250,000 euros) and high (more than 500,000 euros) levels of wealth. Participants' self-rated health, measured by responses to the question "How would you characterize your health in general?", will serve as a proxy for health constraints to leisure participation.

#### Disposing factors:

We will also include measures of demographic characteristics such as gender and educational level that may affect an individual's likelihood to engage in certain leisure activities.

## Results

We use conditional change ordinal least square (OLS) regression analyses to investigate the impact of retirement on physical activity, social activity, and self-development activity.

Preliminary analyses suggest that retirement status is associated with leisure activity engagement in retirement; with retiring associated with increased leisure engagement across the three leisure activity domains. We expect to be able to present full models with extensive results at the time of the conference.

## References

- Bosse, R., & Ekerdt, D. J. (1981). Change in self-perception of leisure activities with retirement. *The Gerontologist*, 21(6), 650-654.
- Chang, P.-J., Wray, L., & Lin, Y. (2014). Social relationships, leisure activity, and health in older adults. *Health Psychology*, 33(6), 516.
- Henning, G., Stenling, A., Bielak, A. A. M., Bjalkebring, P., Gow, A. J., Kivi, M., . . . Lindwall, M. (2021). Towards an active and happy retirement? Changes in leisure activity and depressive symptoms during the retirement transition. *Aging & mental health*, 25(4), 621-631. doi:10.1080/13607863.2019.1709156
- Kuykendall, L., Tay, L., & Ng, V. (2015). Leisure engagement and subjective well-being: A meta-analysis. *Psychological bulletin*, 141(2), 364.
- Lampinen, P., Heikkinen, R.-L., Kauppinen, M., & Heikkinen, E. (2006). Activity as a predictor of mental well-being among older adults. *Aging and mental health*, 10(5), 454-466.
- Lee, Y., Chi, I., & Palinkas, L. A. (2019). Retirement, Leisure Activity Engagement, and Cognition Among Older Adults in the United States. *J Aging Health*, 31(7), 1212-1234. doi:10.1177/0898264318767030
- Leskinen, T., Pulakka, A., Heinonen, O. J., Pentti, J., Kivimäki, M., Vahtera, J., & Stenholm, S. (2018). Changes in non-occupational sedentary behaviours across the retirement transition: the Finnish Retirement and Aging (FIREA) study. *J Epidemiol Community Health*, 72(8), 695-701.
- Nimrod, G., & Shrira, A. (2016). The paradox of leisure in later life. *Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 71(1), 106-111.
- Rosenkoetter, M. M., Gams, J. M., & Engdahl, R. A. (2001). Postretirement use of time: Implications for preretirement planning and postretirement management. *Activities, Adaptation & Aging*, 25(3-4), 1-18.
- Scherger, S., Nazroo, J., & Higgs, P. (2011). Leisure activities and retirement: do structures of inequality change in old age? *Ageing & Society*, 31(1), 146-172.
- Wanka, A. (2020). Continuity and change in the transition to retirement: how time allocation, leisure practices and lifestyles evolve when work vanishes in later life. *European journal of ageing*, 17(1), 81-93.