

Age-friendly workplaces could make people healthier in later life

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Australians could have longer careers and be healthier in later life if workplaces were more age-friendly and promoted healthy lifestyles to their employees, a new ANU study has found.

Lead researcher Dr Cathy Gong said the [health](#) of older workers was a crucial challenge for those who left the paid workforce, and people who

had a sense of control over their environment and life changes had better [wellbeing](#).

"Age-friendly workplaces, [work](#) flexibility, retraining and promotion of [healthy lifestyles](#) are vital to address the major causes of not working, enable people to have longer careers and enhance wellbeing in later life," said Dr Gong from the Centre for Research on Ageing, Health and Wellbeing (CRAHW) within the ANU Research School of Population Health.

The study used data from a national survey conducted over 10 years among about 1,700 people aged 45-64 to assess yearly changes in health, wellbeing and welfare dependency in relation to workforce transitions from paid work to unpaid work or early retirement, in comparison to others who stayed in paid work.

"People who left [paid work](#) involuntarily experienced significant decreases in their satisfaction with their finances, health and life, just in general," Dr Gong said.

"They were also more likely to be psychologically distressed and welfare dependent."

Dr Gong said people who were forced to retire early due to job loss or their own health reported significant declines in their income and wellbeing in retirement.

Co-researcher Professor Hal Kendig from CRAHW said the findings indicated that employment policies and practices needed to change to improve mature aged workers' control of their health and work environment.

"Voluntary retirement with control over the timing and manner of

retirement has a positive impact on a retiree's psychological and social wellbeing," Professor Kendig said.

"Enabling mature aged workers to have longer careers offers benefits for both individual wellbeing and government budgets."

As part of the study, the researchers analysed nationally representative data from the Household Incomes and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey 2002-2011.

The research is published in the *Australasian Journal on Ageing*.

More information: Cathy Honge Gong et al. Impacts of voluntary and involuntary workforce transitions at mature ages: Longitudinal evidence from HILDA, *Australasian Journal on Ageing* (2017). [DOI: 10.1111/ajag.12468](https://doi.org/10.1111/ajag.12468)

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