

# Diabetes did not increase early retirement

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A Finnish study examined diabetes and work loss due to early retirement during the work careers of approximately 13,000 people.

The findings were exciting – and somewhat surprising. Those with a diagnosis of [diabetes](#) had fewer work-loss years than those without such a diagnosis. Among those who retired early, the ones with diabetes worked, on average, two years longer than did the ones without diabetes.

The study was based on the Helsinki Birth Cohort Study which includes people born in Helsinki between 1934 and 1944. Retirement was followed up on between 1971 and 2011. During that time, about 63 percent of the cohort members transitioned to disability, unemployment or part-time pension, or died before receiving their pension. Of the cohort, 37 percent transitioned to an old-age pension. The findings were similar for men and women. The cohort members have been followed up from the ages of 20 to 30 and information from multiple unique Finnish registers have been combined to these data.

"In previous studies, the follow-ups have been shorter and thus the long-term consequences of diabetes on work careers have been less well studied," says Docent Mikaela von Bonsdorff from the University of Jyväskylä. "In our study, 7.5 percent of the men and 4.3 percent of the women had a record of diabetes at some point during their working careers. The information on diabetes was extracted from inpatient and outpatient records and from purchases and special reimbursements of [diabetes drugs](#). The first records of diabetes date back to 1964."

In the study, one main interest was on work-loss years. Thus, [premature mortality](#) before retirement was also explored. Of the cohort, almost eight percent died before transitioning to their pension. Almost a third transitioned to a disability pension. The leading causes of disability [pension](#) were mental disorders, musculoskeletal disorders and cardiovascular diseases.

"In earlier studies, the consequences of diabetes were primarily investigated around the retirement transition," says Professor Johan Eriksson from the University of Helsinki, "which might influence the findings in a significant way."

Diabetes research has a long tradition in Finland. High-impact Finnish diabetes research has been conducted from the 1980s onwards. Findings from these studies have influenced the national diabetes treatment and prevention programs.

"It should be noted, however, that the under-diagnosis of diabetes is about 20 percent to 50 percent," von Bonsdorff and Eriksson say. "Type 2 diabetes is often first detected in healthcare check-ups or it might be a chance finding."

"Our findings indicate that comprehensive diabetes care is beneficial not only for the individual but also for society," says Eriksson. "Recent findings from a Danish study (STENO-2 follow-up) show that type 2 diabetes did not increase premature mortality, provided that the disease was treated properly. This supports our present findings."

**More information:** Mikaela B. von Bonsdorff et al. Work-loss years among people diagnosed with diabetes: a reappraisal from a life course perspective, *Acta Diabetologica* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s00592-018-1119-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00592-018-1119-x)

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