

Personality traits are associated with well-being and satisfaction in life after work

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A new study has identified novel associations between older adults' personality traits, the routes they took to leave their jobs, and their well-

being after exiting the workforce. Dusanee Kesavayuth of Kasetsart University in Bangkok, Thailand, and colleagues present these findings in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* on March 30, 2022.

As the world's population of older adults grows, communities and [policy makers](#) are increasingly interested in the well-being of those leaving the [labor market](#). Researchers have begun to explore how different exit paths—mandatory retirement versus voluntary retirement, for instance—may be associated with subsequent life [satisfaction](#). But few studies have addressed how such associations may vary depending on people's [personality traits](#).

To help clarify, Kesavayuth and colleagues analyzed data from more than 2,000 adults aged 50 to 75 who participated in the British Household Panel Survey. The dataset included assessment of participants' "Big Five" personality traits—a standard evaluation of personality—and subsequent life satisfaction after participants left their jobs, whether voluntarily or not, without plans to begin working again.

Statistical analysis of the data uncovered associations between the routes people took to exit their jobs and their subsequent satisfaction with life, income, and leisure. However, these associations did indeed vary according to their personality traits.

For example, the trait of conscientiousness was linked to increased satisfaction with leisure time for [older adults](#) who underwent mandatory retirement, and to increased life satisfaction for people who became unemployed. The authors suggest that conscientiousness might act as a "psychological buffer", with conscientious individuals being more proactive in finding new fulfilling life patterns.

Among people who retired early, extraversion was linked to lower satisfaction with life, income, and leisure. However, for people who

stopped working due to ill health or caregiving demands, extraversion was linked to higher satisfaction with [leisure time](#). The authors speculate that extraverts might miss [social relationships](#) at work, but might also be motivated to find sociable, rewarding hobbies.

Associations were also found for the traits of agreeableness, openness, and neuroticism. These associations do not confirm any causal relationships between the various factors, and proposed explanations can only be speculative at this stage. However, the findings could help guide targeted interventions and policies to boost the well-being of aging adults. Such efforts could be especially relevant during the current mass exodus of workers from the [labor force](#) in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The authors add: "Our study uncovered associations between the routes people took to exit their jobs and their subsequent satisfaction with life, income, and leisure. These associations varied according to people's personality traits. Conscientious individuals were more proactive in finding new fulfilling life patterns."

More information: Leaving the labor market: Exit routes, personality traits and well-being, *PLoS ONE* (2022). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0263670](#)

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