



what works wellbeing

Does retirement bring about happiness and boost wellbeing?
What guarantees a smooth transition into retirement and makes a happy retiree?



what evidence did we find?

There are three types of evidence



Strong evidence. We can be confident that the evidence can be used to inform decisions.



Promising evidence. Decision makers may wish to incorporate further information to inform decisions.



Initial evidence. Decision makers may wish to incorporate further information to inform decisions.

Strong, promising and initial evidence refer to high, moderate and low quality evidence / confidence as per GRADE and CERQual guidance.

All evidence should be considered alongside questions of possible benefits and risks, affordability, acceptability, feasibility and wider impacts, including equity issues, in the user setting. Where the evidence is less strong, these other considerations become even more important.

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I am retired. As you go through life, age has an effect on your confidence.

Public dialogue participant, Cardiff

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This briefing is based on a systematic review of the evidence, focusing on studies which follow the same person over time and look directly at the changes in their wellbeing as they retire.

key findings



Having some control over retirement matters. Wellbeing is lower for people who are involuntarily retired. It's higher for those who have control over the timing or plan for their retirement.



Type of job is important. The job that a person had before they retire, as well as household factors, like their support network or spouse's working status, are key elements that influence the link between retirement and wellbeing.



A 'bridging' job. This can act as a buffer to protect wellbeing during the transition into retirement.

In partnership with:



University of Essex



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Work and Learning Evidence Programme
What Works for Wellbeing
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what does the evidence tell us?

The link between retirement and wellbeing is complex. Wellbeing during retirement does depend upon levels of pension income and health, but control over the retirement decision is also key. Even after accounting for income and health, **wellbeing is higher for those who have control over the timing or plan for their retirement, and voluntary retirees derive greater pleasure from free time in retirement.** On the contrary, wellbeing is lower for those who are involuntarily retired, especially due to health reasons.



how can we turn this evidence into action?

Support workers' control over retirement timing.

This may include measures to support older workers with health problems who wish to stay longer in the labour market.

More support for pension saving (particularly for low earners), alongside better information about retirement planning.

Late career reviews, which encourage planning for retirement.

Support bridge jobs that support wellbeing during the transition into retirement.

what else affects the impact of retirement on wellbeing?



Type of job

People who retired from more satisfying, prestigious, career occupations have difficulties in adjusting and are more likely to be adversely affected by retirement.



Household factors

For men, the employment status of their wives influences how they react to retirement. Men felt psychologically better upon retirement if their wives were not working, whereas those whose wives continued to work when they were retired were more inclined to experience depression.



Family and support networks

Being satisfied with their family life and receiving emotional support from their family was positively associated with retirees' wellbeing.



managing the transition into retirement



'Bridging' jobs

Wellbeing is higher for those who 'wind-down' into retirement through bridging jobs.



One way in which some retirees manage retirement is by a gradual transition into retirement by a reduction in their hours or by taking a part-time or 'bridging' job. Those who take up bridge employment for enjoyment or social motivations have greater level of life satisfaction than their pre-retirement levels. However, the life satisfaction levels upon retirement are lower for those who took up bridge employment because of financial concerns.

To find out more about the Work and Learning programme, and read the other briefings in this series, please visit: whatworkswellbeing.org/work-and-learning.



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We are an independent organisation set up to produce robust, relevant and accessible evidence on wellbeing. We work with individuals, communities, businesses and government, to enable them to use this evidence make decisions and take action to improve wellbeing.

The Centre is supported by the ESRC and partners to produce evidence on wellbeing in four areas: work and learning; culture and sport; community; and cross-cutting capabilities in definitions, evaluation, determinants and effects.

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