



THE WORKING PATTERNS OF OLDER WORKERS

Key Findings

This paper describes the characteristics, jobs, working time patterns, employment conditions and employment outcomes of older workers using data collected in Statistics New Zealand's Survey of Working Life 2008. Key findings from this analysis include the following:

- For people aged 55 to 59 years, work arrangements and working time patterns were broadly similar to those of prime-aged workers. More marked differences in employment patterns were evident for those aged 60 to 64 years and, in particular, for those aged 65 to 69 years.
- A higher proportion of older workers were working part-time and, or in temporary jobs than prime-aged workers and the rates of part-time work and temporary employment increased with age among older workers. Part-time employment increased from 18 percent for employees aged 55 to 59 years to 45 percent for employees aged 65 to 69 years.
- Rates of temporary work were particularly high for those aged 65 to 69 years. Older employees who were in temporary jobs showed a clear preference for continuing to work in a temporary or seasonal job rather than getting a permanent job, with this preference highest among those aged 65 to 69 years.
- Older workers had a much higher rate of self-employment than prime-aged workers (29 percent and 18 percent, respectively) and, in particular, they were more likely to be self-employed without employing others.
- It was somewhat more common for older employees than prime-aged employees to work in the health and community services and the education sector. This was mainly due to female employees aged 55 to 64 years being more likely to work in these industries than female employees of all ages.
- On average, older workers had been in their current main job or business for twice as long as prime-aged workers, and mean job tenure increased with age for older employed people.
- Older employees were less likely than prime-aged employees to have done some employer-funded study or training in the previous 12 months (29 percent and 35 percent, respectively). The lower rate of training was most evident for those aged 65 to 69 years – only 19 percent had participated. Within the older age group, it was more highly qualified individuals, those with longer job tenure and those who worked full-time, who were more likely to participate in training.



- There were some notable differences in older people's experience of work compared with that of prime-aged workers, in terms of higher job satisfaction and satisfaction with work-life balance, fewer difficulties for those working long hours and at non-standard times, and more positive health and safety outcomes.
- Older full-time employees were more likely than prime-aged full-time employees to say they would prefer to work fewer hours and earn less. However, only 36 percent of employees working 35 hours or more per week thought their employer would let them reduce their hours to part-time.
- Median weekly earnings from employment were lower for older workers than prime-aged workers. In relative terms, the median weekly earnings of older employees were 90 percent of those of prime-aged employees and median hourly earnings of older employees were 95 percent of the median hourly earnings of prime-aged employees. By comparison, the median weekly income of older self-employed workers was only 70 percent of the median weekly income of prime-aged self-employed workers.