

**University
of Southampton**

Centre for Research on Ageing
School of Social Sciences
University of Southampton

Older Men, Work and Health

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A Report for Help The Aged and TAEN

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Headline Messages from the Review

- Work plays a central role in the lives and identity of men and therefore impacts on their health and well-being
- The occupational histories of men expose them to work-related and work-caused ill-health, which has consequences for life expectancy and chronic disease in old age
- Specific action is required to successfully target men for health promotion activities

Why the need for the review?

- To inform the policy agenda on work and health
- To reflect changing patterns in the nature of work and retirement for older people
- To begin to address the lack of gender sensitive approaches in research, policy and practice
- To draw attention to lower male life expectancy and explore connections to occupational history
- To illustrate the cumulative effects of health inequalities throughout the life course
- To complement the review of older women, work and health (Doyle and Payne 2006)

Challenges for the Research

- Definitions
- Taking account of past, present and future generations of working men
- Demonstrating the cross-cutting issues of socio-economic status, ethnicity, age and gender
- Exploring gender difference without continual comparison to women
- Defining the search terms across multiple research areas
- Making the review relevant to policy and practice development

Methodological approach

- Searching different bodies of evidence
- Scanning the policy landscape
- Integrating the cross-cutting issues of gender, ethnicity, age and socio-economic disadvantage
- Taking a life course approach
- Adopting a grounded approach to bring out key themes
- Documenting the searches and key words which further research could build on

Key themes in the report

- Older men and the labour market
- The changing nature of work and its impact on older men
- The critical link between gender, health and work, and the cumulative effects of inequalities over the lifecourse
- Work, family life and health
- Work-caused and work-related ill health
- Promoting workplace health

Older men in the labour market

- Less likely to be in full-time employment than workers aged 25 to 49 years (42% compared to 68%)
- More likely to be self-employed
- Three times more likely to report ill-health or disability
- 80% of White British men aged 40-65yrs are economically active compared with 66% of Pakistani and 58% of Bangladeshi men

The Changing Nature of Work

- Generational differences
- The move away from 'jobs for life'
- Routine and semi-routine occupations have poorer access to flexible employment
- Portfolio careers can lead to precarious existence for certain groups of older workers
- Men's retirement decisions are less likely to be influenced by their partner's retirement decisions

Gender, Work and Health

- Paid work is more salient for men's health and wellbeing
- Paid work occupies more of men's time than women's
- Men are more likely to be involved in potentially dangerous environments with more men suffering work-related mortality and disability than women
- Risk taking behaviours and work patterns
- Men face more structural barriers in accessing health care

Work, Family Life and Health

- Parental roles during mid-life, either alone or in combination with other roles, have negative health consequences for men
- Effects of the ‘sandwich generation’
- Lack of flexible working in male dominated workforces

Work-caused and Work-related Health

- Occupational histories influence the health of men in later life
- Occupational histories provide important lessons for policy makers about the health of future generations
- Increase in migrant workers has implications for the health of future generations
- **Example: asbestos exposure**
 - Older workers thought they knew all the risks
 - Those who had never had training were the most confident
 - Older workers had a strong influence over younger workers

Promoting Workplace Health

- Environment to engage men
- Lack of gender-sensitive evidence on interventions
- Need to be part of corporate wellness programmes
- Problematic in SMEs and self-employed male occupations
- Differences between health behaviours and health beliefs between men in different occupational groups
- Attitudes to bodily decline and ageing related to occupational history
- Work Fit

Recommendations: gaps in the evidence

The review found:

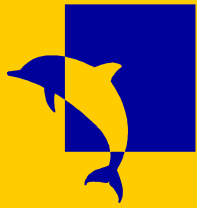
- A lack of a gender specific approach in the evidence
- Little empirical evidence on the cumulative effect of working lives on health as individuals age
- More research is needed on the impact of work on the health of different ethnic groups
- Gaps in the evidence on the impact of family life on health of older men
- Longitudinal research and pilot projects required to develop programmes which support behaviour change in the workplace

Recommendations: supporting policies

- A gender sensitive approach to co-ordination of the work and health strategy and the implementation of *Extending Working Lives*
- Global issues of work-caused and work-related ill health which resonate in the UK
- Health and safety policies
- Policies to protect freelance workers

Recommendations: informing public health practice

- Commissioning for health outcomes
- Implementation of gender equality policy
- More use of the workplace as a health promotion setting to reach men
- Designing gender sensitive health and wellbeing programmes
- Occupational health services to embed wellness programmes into organisational objectives
- Health promotion programmes to recognise the importance of the midlife transition
- Introduce workplace initiatives to support individual behaviour change, such as health trainers and the midlife life check.



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