



Critical Perspectives on the Transition from Work to Retirement: ‘Extended’ or ‘Precarious’ Working Lives?

Chris Phillipson

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

MANCHESTER INSTITUTE FOR COLLABORATIVE
RESEARCH INTO AGEING

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

AREAS FOR DISCUSSION

- **Changes to work-ending**
- **Changing debates on work & retirement**
- **Key research & policy questions**
- **Transforming work and retirement**

Major changes to the end of (paid) working life

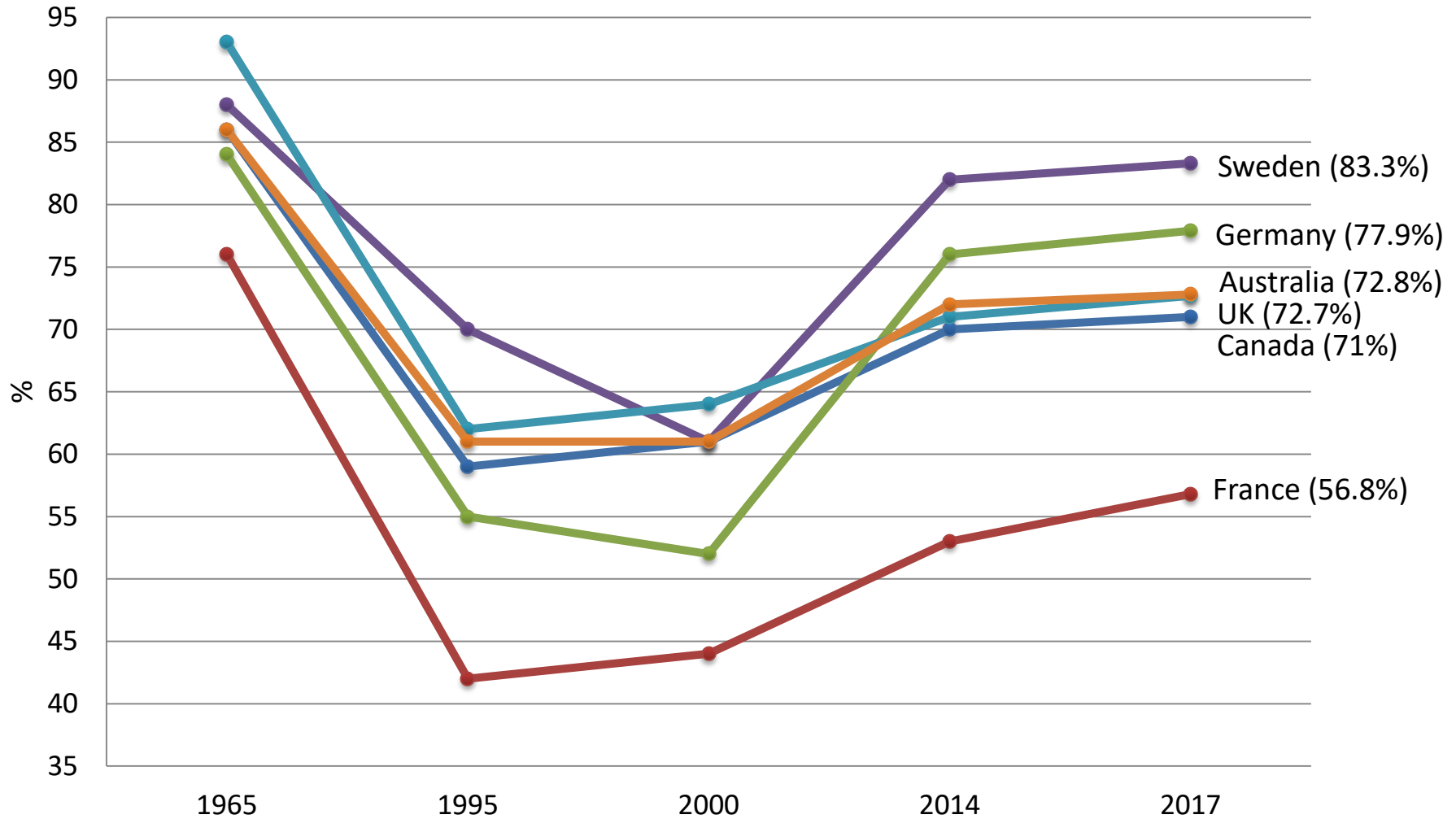
Changes to work- ending:

- extended working lives
- fuller working lives
- active ageing
- gradual retirement
- flexible retirement
- partial retirement
- working retirement
- retirement career
- unretirement

Changing debates on work and retirement

- **1950s – 1970s Institutionalisation of retirement** – driven by welfare state, occupational pensions, and full employment: *'The Triumph of Retirement'* (Graebner, 1980).
- **1980s – mid-1990s Break-up of retirement** – driven by economic recession, crisis in manufacturing industries, high unemployment, 'early exit/retirement' (*'Time for Retirement'* (Kohli et al. 1991)
- **Late-1990s onwards: Compression of retirement** - extension of working life driven by welfare state retrenchment, debates around inter-generational equity; longevity (*'The 100-Year Life'*, Gratton & Scott, 2016)

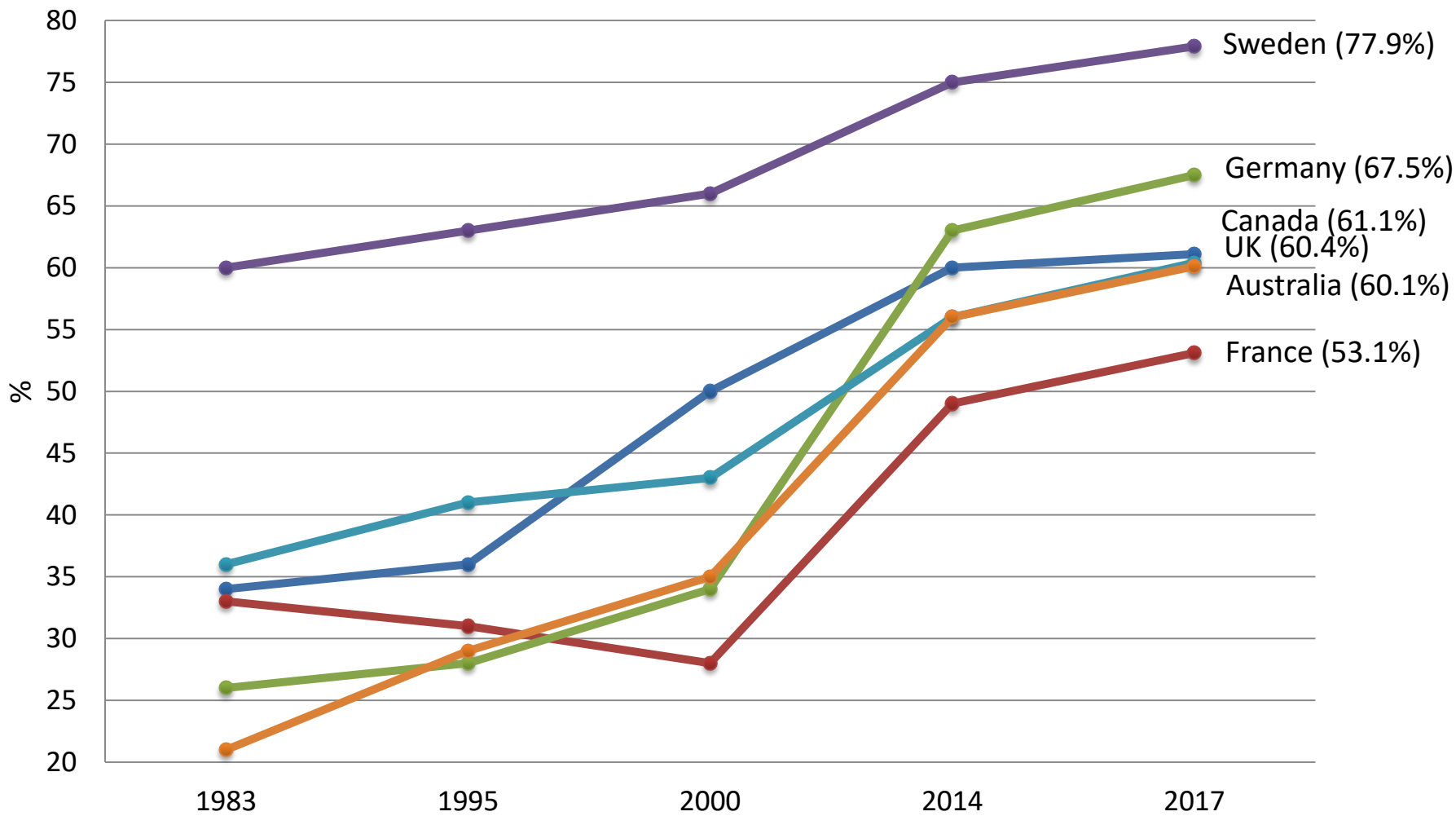
**Table 1: Labour Force Participation among men 55-64:
Selected Countries (1965-2017) (%)**



Source: OECD Economic Outlook.

Canada France Germany Sweden UK Australia

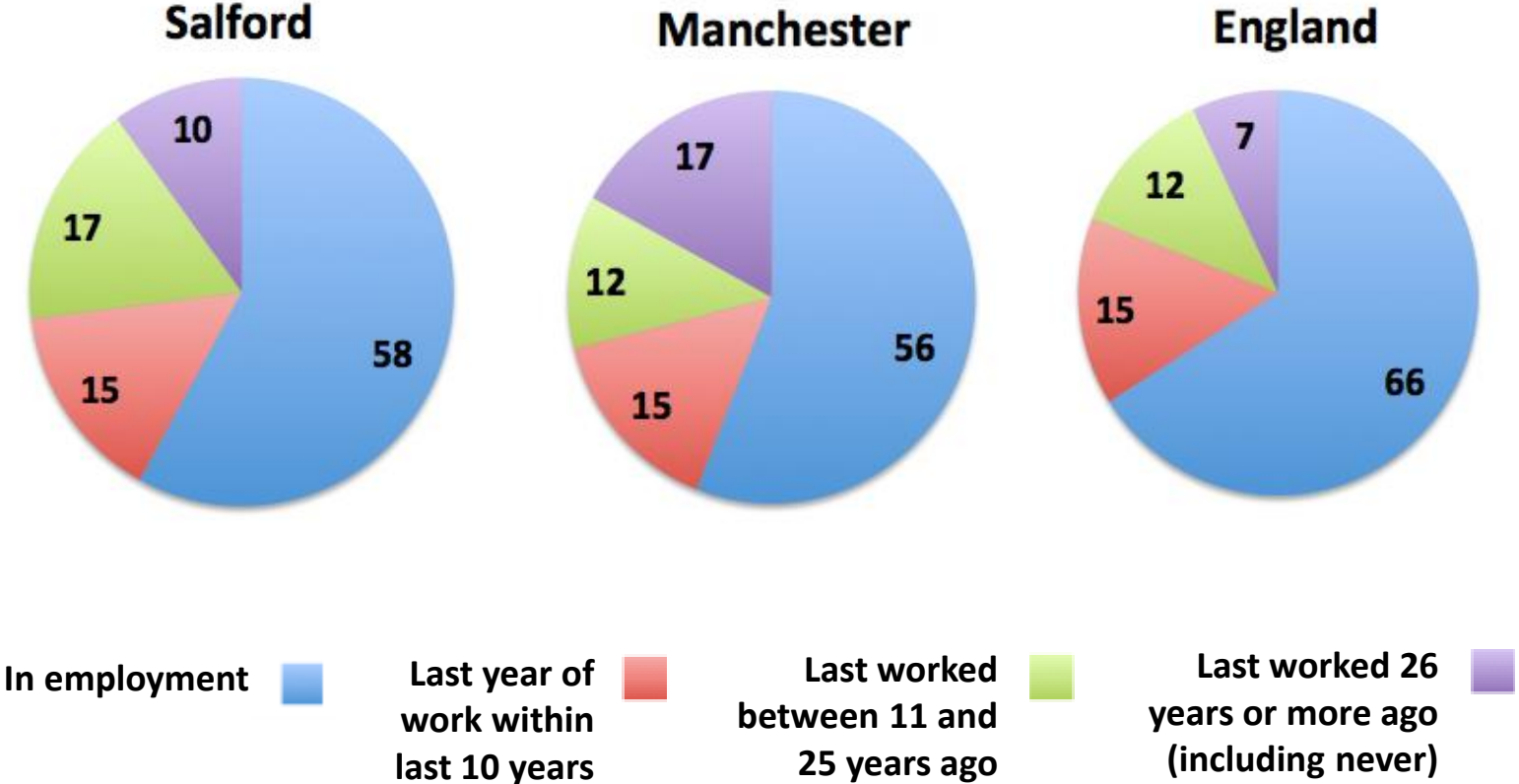
**Table 2: Labour Force Participation among women aged 55-64:
Selected countries (1983-2017) (%)**



Source: OECD Economic Outlook.

Canada France Germany Sweden UK Australia

Figure 1: Last year in employment: all adults aged 50-64 (%) (Salford, Manchester & England)



Office for National Statistics 2011 Census: Aggregate Data (England and Wales).

KEY RESEARCH AND POLICY QUESTIONS

- Is the debate about an '**extended working life**' beyond 60s into 70s? (*quantitative*)?
- Is the debate about a '**fuller worker life**' (focus on *retention, recruitment and re-retraining*) (*qualitative*)?
- Is the debate about managing '**insecure**' & '**precarious**' working lives? (*existential*)

Academic and policy response

- **Growth in research literature** around EWL, gender & working, retirement decision-making, health issues (*but lack of theory*)
- **EWL now mainstream** (and often *unquestioned*) in IGOs/NGOs
- Issue of whether retirement is **'lost'** (McDonald & Donahue, 2011) or simply **'evolving'** in new ways

CHALLENGES TO AN EXTENDED & FULLER WORKING LIFE

- RETIREMENT AGE PREFERENCES
- DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES
- WORK ISSUES
- TRAINING ISSUES
- INEQUALITY ISSUES

**Table 3: Mean desired retirement ages (men & women)
selected European countries: 45-plus
(economically active)**

MEN	
Holland	63
Germany	62
UK	61
Spain	61
Belgium	61
Greece	60
France	60

WOMEN	
Holland	62
Germany	61
UK	61
Spain	61
Belgium	60
France	60
Greece	59

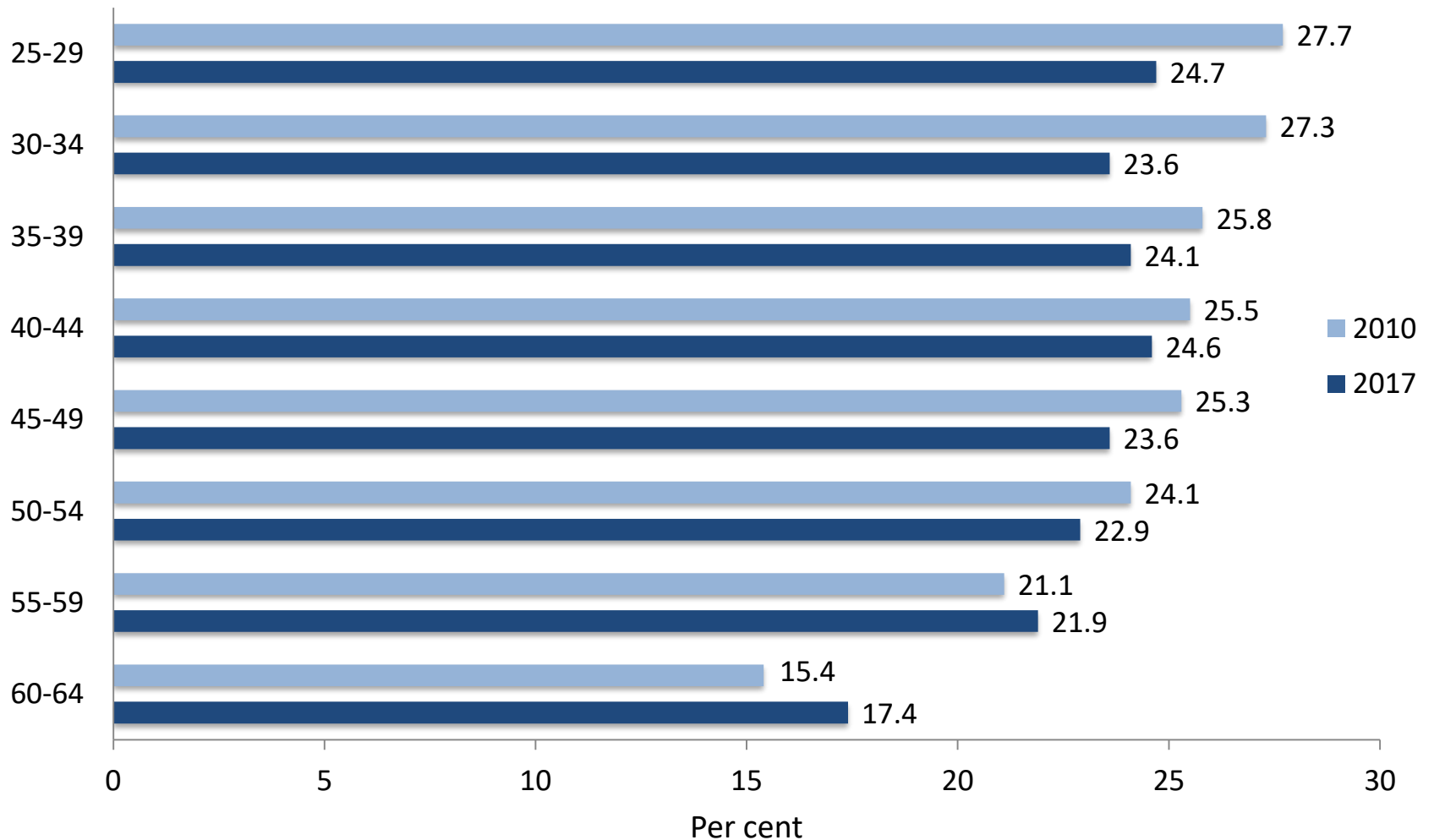
Demographic variations

- **Germany:** population projected to **decline** by *19%* over the period 2015-2060 (Berg et al., 2015)
- **Swedish** population projected to **grow** by *30%* over 2015-2060 (Statistics Sweden, 2015)
- **Inter-country variations** in size and composition of baby boom cohorts – from highly **compressed** (Finland), **‘two peaks’** (UK), to **‘sustained’** (Australia, USA)
- Importance of **global migration** – Europe as the ‘prime source of destination’ (Porter, 2015) for populations forced to move through climate change, civil war, lack of opportunities

'PRECARIOUS' LATE WORKING LIVES?

- Rise of '**non-standard working**' amongst older workers in Europe and North America (**casual, temporary** forms of employment) (Standing, 2011; Kalleberg, 2018)
- **19% of 50 plus** in UK **self-employed** (**2/3rds** of self-employed adults in UK not contributing to a pension (Resolution Foundation)
- Long-term impact of **automation** (Frey & Osborne, 2014; Haldane, 2015; ONS, 2019)
- Limited labour market prospects for women faced with **increase in SPA** (Beach & Bedell, 2019)

Figure 2. Percentage of people who participated in training in 2010 and 2017, by age group

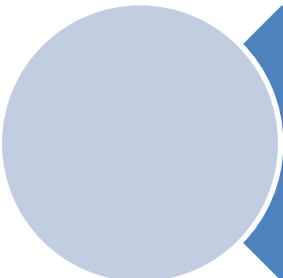


Source: Social Mobility Commission, 2019

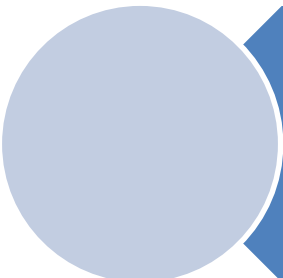
INEQUALITY ISSUES



Will EWL **accentuate** processes of cumulative advantage & disadvantage?

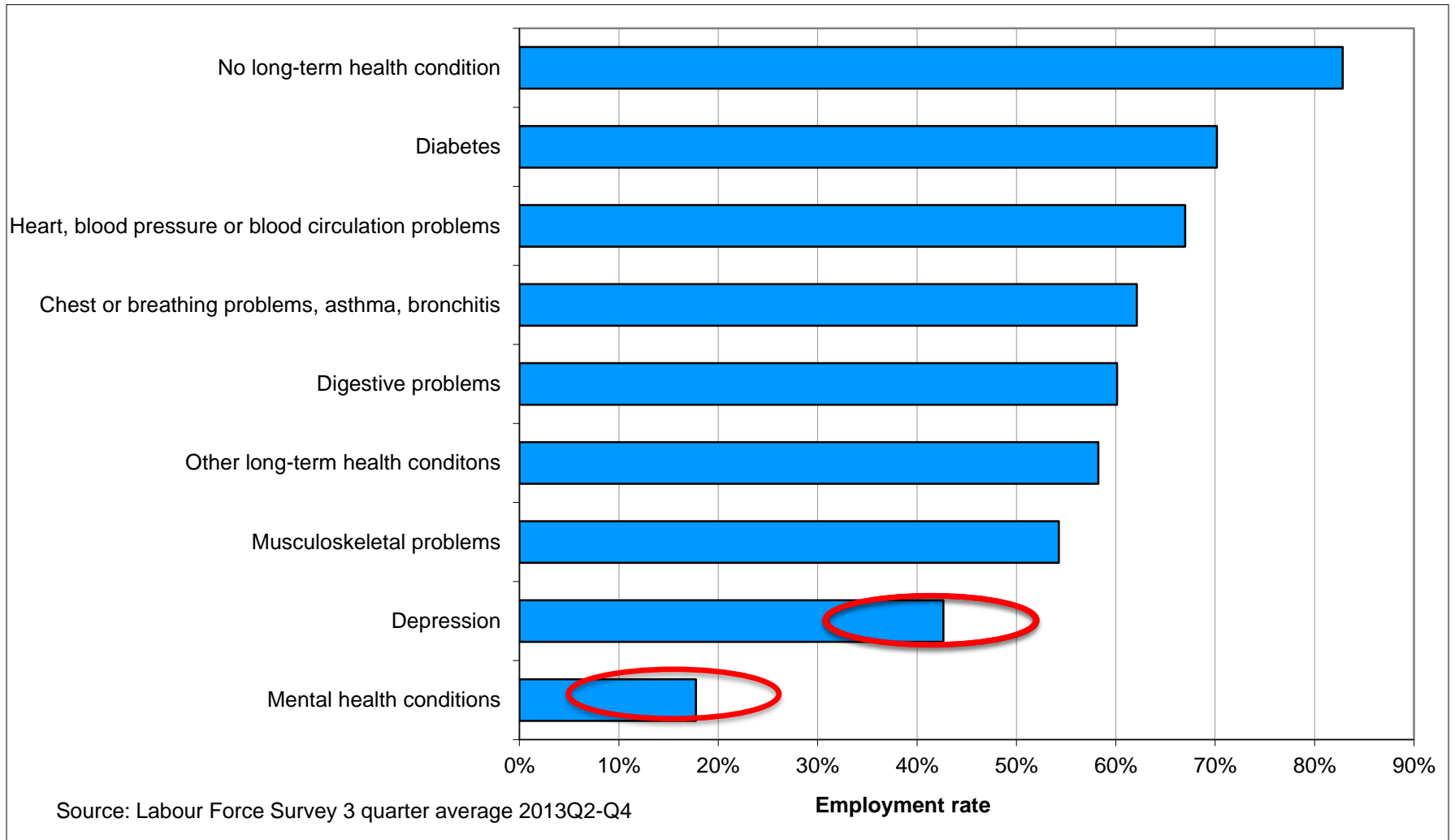


Restriction of early exit pathways an issues for those with low or limited skills, disabilities



Raising pension ages can be seen as **cross-subsidy** from poor to middle-income/wealthy groups given variations in life expectancy

Figure 2: Employment rate by main long-term health condition (all aged 50-60/65)



Right to retire/Right to work

‘The key issue that has emerged in recent years and remains unresolved is: how we can reconcile.. the **right to retirement** for those who wish to retire and need to retire when aged in their sixties (e,g, those with poor health, those with caring responsibilities [...]) with, on the other hand, the **right to work** later in life for those who wish to do so and need to do so...*Neoliberalism shows no interest in resolving this dilemma humanely: instead, its only concern is to flood the labour market with [older] job seekers*’.

(Macnicol, 2015)

Changes to employment

- Recognise that EWL *will* almost certainly contribute to the expansion of ‘**precarious**’ forms of working but importance of matching this with corresponding *rights* for vulnerable groups (**minority groups, women**), through, for example, ensuring access to trade unions, living wage, guaranteed hours, and regular training
- EWL may itself be seen from an economic perspective as **underpinning** the increase in ‘precarious working’

Interventions in the workplace

- **Occupational Health**
- **Training**
- **Management of ‘work-ending’**

Occupational health provision

- Importance of **occupational health services**, but:
 - no **legal requirement** for mandatory provision by state or employer
 - only **13% of UK workers** can access an occ.phys.
 - **SMEs** especially affected
 - shortage of doctors and nurses specialising in **occupational medicine** (Carry, 2019; Raynal, 2015; APPGOSH, 2015)
- **36% of people** with depression/nerves believed condition caused by work; **35%** of those with disabilities or problems with back or neck (Young & Bhaumik, 2011)

Training interventions

- Further training as a **legal entitlement** for those changing careers or moving into 'bridging' forms of employment
- More imaginative use of e-learning/**distance learning** to assist those working from home & those juggling work & caregiving responsibilities
- Specific obligations placed upon employers to expand training and learning as a **precondition** for creating part-time and related forms of employment
- Encouraging a more prominent role for **universities and colleges** in workforce development (UPP Foundation Civic University Commission, 2019)

Universities and older learners

- **Expand with employer organisations courses aimed at supporting older workers**
- **Establish partnerships with NGOs working with older people**
- **Research needed on new approaches to training older workers**

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2010/ActiveAgeing.pdf>

Management of 'work-ending'

- Collapse of '**pre-retirement education**' (Phillipson, 1981)
- Invention of the '**mid-life**' **M-o-T** (Select Committee on Intergenerational Fairness, 2019)
- Retreat by line managers from **managing retirement** because of concern that it would lay them open to charge of ageism/ discrimination (Phillipson et al., 2018)
- Shift from retirement as collective/corporate to **individual responsibility**.

- **WILL THE MOVE TO EXTEND WORKING LIFE LEAD TO A MORE UNEQUAL SOCIETY?**

- **Raising pension ages may reinforce health inequalities** (Increasing number experiencing ‘**job lock**’ – forced to stay at work despite health and other problems) (Benjamin et al., 2008)
- **Raising pension ages may reinforce social & economic inequalities** (those with **least** financial need **most able** to remain in the labour market) (Platt et al., 2019)
- **Raising pension ages may highlight care inequalities**: 1 in 4 women & around 1 in 7 men (50-69) provide care (ONS, 2018)

Public policy solutions

- ‘...it is critical to create differentiated paths to labour-force exits depending upon health (which in turn depends on economic and social experiences earlier in life)...**This may mean the implementation of both a general retirement age that is indexed in some way to life expectancy and an early-retirement option based on the ability to work.**
- For older workers in poor health, it is obviously better for their health and well-being not to have to work. This may mean that certain groups within the population may need the option to **take an early path to retirement**’. (Berkman et al., 2015; Beach & Bedell, 2019; Phillipson, 2019)

CONCLUSIONS

- Linking debates on EWL/FWL **with technological developments** and changes affecting the workplace
- Examine the impact of transitions from work to retirement in generating new **inequalities** (Platts et al. 2019)
- Develop new approaches to **training** and continuing education (Social Mobility Commission, 2019)

Conclusion

- Re-think the idea of the ‘older worker’ – is it still a meaningful **sociological** label?
- Does it help the **management** of ‘work-ending’?
- Do we need a more ‘**socially inclusive**’ model/concept which better understands experiences of women & minority groups?

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Bloodworth, J. (2018) *Hired: Six months under cover in low wage Britain*. Atlantic Books
- Beach, B. & Bedell, G (2019) *The EXTEND project: Exploring pension reforms, work and inequality*. London: ILC
- Department for Work and Pensions (2017) *Fuller Working Lives: A Partnership Approach*. London: DWP
- Ford, M. (2015) *The Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of Mass Employment*. Oneworld
- Komp, K. et al. (2010) 'Paid work between 60 and 70 years in Europe: a matter of socio-economic status?' *Int.Jrnl.of Ageing and Later Life*. 5, 45-75
- Lain, D. (2016) *Reconstructing Retirement: Work and Welfare in the UK and USA*. Policy Press
- McDonald, L. & Donahue, P (2011) 'Retirement Lost?' *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 30, 401-422
- Phillipson, C (2013) *Ageing Polity Press*
- Phillipson, C (with Shepherd, S., Robinson, M. and Vickerstaff, S.) 'Uncertain Futures: Organisational Influences on the Transition from Work to Retirement', *Social Policy & Society*, First View, 2018
- Phillipson, C. 'Fuller' or 'extended' working lives: Critical perspectives on changing transitions from work to retirement', *Ageing & Society*, 39 (3) 629-651
- Phillipson, C., & Ogg, J. (2010). *Active ageing and universities: Engaging older learners*. London: Universities UK.

References

- Berkman, L., Boersch-Supan, A., & Avendano, M. (2015). Labor force participation, policies and practices in an aging America: Adaptation essential for a healthy & resilient population. *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, 144(2), 41-54. doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00329)
- van Solinge, H and Henkens, K (2014) Work-related factors as predictors in the retirement decision-making process of older workers in the Netherlands *Ageing and Society* 34, 1551-1574
- Ní Léime et al. Gender, Ageing and Extended Working Life: Cross-National Perspectives. Policy Press
- Vickerstaff, S. (2010) Older workers: The 'unavoidable' obligation of extending our working lives. *Sociology Compass*: 4, 869-879
- Vickerstaff, S., Phillipson, C. & Wilkie, R. (eds) (2013) *Work, Health and Well-Being: The Challenges of Managing Health at Work*. Policy Press
- Wise, D. (2010) Facilitating Longer Working Lives: international evidence on why and how. *Demography*, 47: S131-S149

References

- Haldane, A. (2015). Labour's Share – speech by Andy Haldane to Trades Union Congress, London. Retrieved from <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Documents/speeches/2015/speech864.pdf>
- Kalleberg, A. (2018) Precarious Lives: Job Insecurity and Well-Being in Rich Democracies. Polity Press
- Macnicol, J. (2015) Neoliberalising Old Age Cambridge University Press
- Platts, L et al. (2019) Returns to work after retirement: a prospective study of unretirement in the UK. *Ageing & Society* 39 (3) 439-464
- Statistics Sweden. (2015). *The future population of Sweden 2015-2016*. Stockholm: Statistics Sweden.
- Siegrist, J. and Wahrendorf, M. (2010) Quality of Work, Health and Retirement. *The Lancet*, Vol. 374, 1872-1873
- Srnicek, N. & Williams, A (2015) *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a world without work*. Verso Books
- Standing, G (2011) *The Precariat* Bloomsbury