

Abstract Submission

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Presenter: Dr Jimmy Doan

Dr Jimmy works as part of an interdisciplinary team of academics and policy makers on the ARC Linkage grant “*Working longer, staying healthy, keeping productive*” at ANU. The project investigates the complex longitudinal relationships between work participation, work conditions and hours, social and gendered disadvantage, income, and mature age workers’ productivity and health. Jimmy mainly manages the quantitative aspects of the project, liaise with partners, key stakeholders and contribute to project publications and reports. Before joining ANU, Jimmy worked in NZ academia and public sector for 9 years. He obtained PhD in Economics from Waikato University in 2011, specializing in human capital and development economics.

Title: Age, time and health limit: what hours should older workers work?

Keywords: older workers, work hours, health

Introduction:

The current policy aims at raising older worker participation and retirement age. Fast changing in workforce raises questions on what work hours could and should be for older workers. Will older workers be able to work in the same ways and for as long as their younger counterparts? What would be the prerequisites for optimising productivity, work time and employment participation in this aged group?

Research Questions: What work hours could people aged 50-70 work to achieve and maintain optimal health? Does the hours vary across occupation and age?

Methodology: The bootstrapped 3SLS estimation was used to adjust for reverse causality between wages, work hour and health, and to correct for heteroscedasticity in the error terms.

Findings:

Older workers have greater health issues, and health plays a major role in selecting who stays or exits as they age. We first show health selection issue for older workers; employed people have considerably better health. For these relatively healthy older workers, we find that optimal work hour limits are 41 weekly hours for mental health, 40 for vitality and 48 hours for bodily pain. These work hour-health relationships are similar to those observed among younger employees and vary by occupation and age.

Implications:

Healthy older workers can work almost as long as the overall workforce without health compromising. This implies that good health is fundamental to employment participation and productivity. The policy aiming at promoting participation for older workers should first focus on preventing ill-health to make sure we have a healthy ageing workforce.