STREAM in 2017

STUDY on TRANSITIONS in EMPLOYMENT, ABILITY and MOTIVATION

We celebrate the tenth edition of the STREAM newsletter with a brand new look! And although the look is new, the aim of the newsletter remains the same: to keep you updated on developments of STREAM in the recent past, present and future.

In this tenth edition of the newsletter we will highlight a recently published study by Astrid de Wind, in which she used STREAM data to analyse whether older employees experience mental retirement. We will also accentuate the recently defended dissertation of Jos Sanders on sustaining the employability of lower educated workers through development, mobility and work redesign. Jos used STREAM data in two chapters of his dissertation.

We hope you will enjoy our new and improved news letter!

The STREAM-team
Before actual retirement, employees may already disconnect themselves from work, which could be referred to as “mental retirement”. To see whether “mental retirement” indeed exists, our study aimed to identify different trajectories of work engagement in older workers approaching the retirement age, and to examine the associations of these trajectories with actual retirement. In line with the concept of mental retirement we expected that the anticipation of retirement would be reflected in a decreasing work engagement.

The findings of this study do not support the existence of mental retirement, as decreasing work engagement was not associated with actual retirement. The analyses revealed that as many as 76% of the employees had a steady high work engagement and 5% of the employees even increased their work engagement over the years. One in eight employees (13%) had a steady low work engagement. And another 6% had a decreasing work engagement over the years (see figure 1).

Also, we did not find that employees with decreasing work engagement were more likely to retire. Counterintuitively, those with increasing work engagement were more likely to retire, which suggests that some groups of employees take a “final sprint” or develop “second thoughts” with regard to their work in the period approaching their retirement.

'Strategic Workforce Development' Trajectories of work engagement of older employees preceding retirement

Recently published in: Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health
de Wind A, Leijten FRM, Hoekstra T, Geuskens GA, Burdorf A, van der Beek AJ

Figure 1: Trajectories of mental retirement in older workers

On July 8th 2016, Jos Sanders, senior research scientist at TNO Sustainable Productivity and Employability successfully defended his dissertation at Maastricht University.

Central aim of the dissertation was to gain a better understanding of what causes low skilled workers to barely participate in activities aimed at sustaining their employability and on finding effective ways to stimulate this participation in order to cure current and prevent future skills mismatches. Jos’ dissertation uses STREAM data in two chapters and offers some highly relevant insights for HR practitioners, especially in companies employing low skilled workers. In August 2016, Dutch Nieuwsuur broadcasted a ten minute news-item relating Jos’ findings (on STREAM data) to the massive problems former V&D staff ran into trying to find a new job. Problems that were caused mainly by an absence of skills development during employment at V&D (in Dutch).

Dissertation Dr. Jos Sanders ‘Sustaining the employability of the low skilled worker, development, mobility and work redesign’

Job mobility among less educated older workers (chapter 5)

Less educated older workers are significantly less mobile across jobs than higher educated older workers, causing their employability to be relatively fragile in the dynamic 21st century labour market. This study uses STREAM data (T1 and T2, 2010 and 2011) and aims to answer the question “what role self efficacy plays in job to job mobility among less educated older employees”.

Results (see also: figure 2) show that lower levels of job change self-efficacy explain less educated older employees’ relative immobility. Active encouragement of job change self-efficacy could therefore be an important step in increasing voluntary job-to-job mobility. I suggest small steps in job changes, for instance through job crafting and work redesign.

Effect of development on perceived skills shortages (chapter 7)

Less educated older workers are also significantly less active in ‘developmental activities’, such as training. This will lead to an increase in skills shortages, causing their employability to be even more fragile. Remedy or preventing these skills shortages is therefore an important challenge for both employer and employee.

This study uses STREAM data (T1, T2 and T3) and aims to analyse whether the participation in developmental activities is effective in that it contributes to employees’ recovery from perceived skills shortages (skills rematch probability).

Results show that training, either short (1-5 days) or longer (>5 days), has a significant positive effect on the skills rematch probability. Instructions or training on the job does not have an effect. There is no difference between low and higher educated older employees.

Results also show a strong positive relationship between organisational stability and skills rematch probability.

I suggest to try and ‘slow down’ organisational change, but, since I am realistic in that this is may be an unrealistic strategy, I also suggest employers to learn to facilitate employees to cope with organisational instability and remain open and ready for change.

Figure 2: Path model for the prediction of job change intentions and actual job change
**Other selected publications**


*newly added to the list*
What is STREAM?

STREAM is a longitudinal study among persons aged 45-64 in the Netherlands. Participants fill in an online questionnaire on topics such as: health, work, knowledge and skills, social circumstances, and financial situation.

More than 12,000 employees, 1,000 self-employed persons, and 2,000 non-employed persons participated at baseline (2010). In 2016, almost half of them had participated in each wave. In 2015, a new cohort was invited to participate, to again include persons aged 45-49 and to include more working persons in the other age groups (N=6,738).

For data collection an existing Intomart GfK internet panel is used. For 89% of baseline participants, data linkage with information from Statistics Netherlands is possible.

STREAM is conducted by TNO. Collaborating partners are VU University Medical Center, Erasmus Medical Center and the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute.