

Many shades of labor – older adult's motives for active participation

“Responding to personal motives helps keep the elderly productive for society”

Sonja Wendel, Benedict Dellaert – EUR

Productivity of the elderly involves more than just labor participation. Many 55- to 85-year-olds in the Netherlands undertake various paid and unpaid activities, that produce value to others. As age progresses, their motives for staying active also change. Financial and self-oriented (personal) motives become less important as people get older. In addition to financial incentives and regulations, responding to these different motives can have a positive effect on the productivity of the elderly at the labor market as well as in society.

Principal Findings

- Many people over 55 undertake various activities that add value to others.
- The most common are babysitting for (grand) children, providing informal care and volunteering for organizations. Retirees do this more often than workers.
- There appear to be four main motives for older people to be productive: financial, social, altruistic (“generativity”) and personal self-image.
- As age increases, financial and self-oriented motives become less important, which is reflected in the choice of activities people undertake.

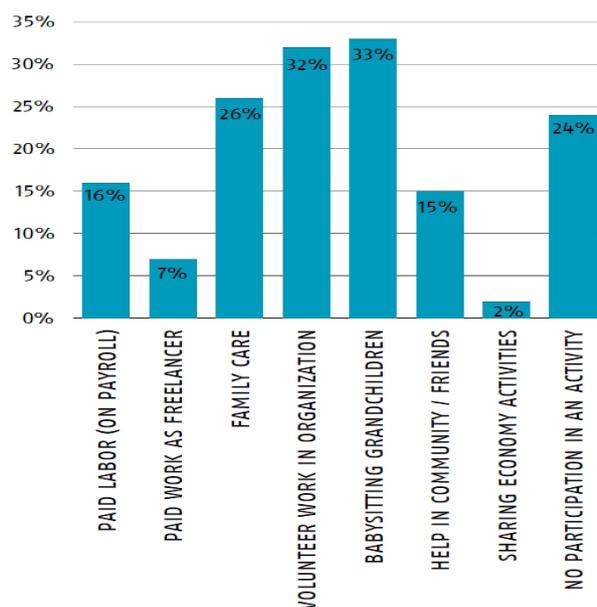


Figure: Percentage of research participants between 55 and 85 years of age per activity. 68% of the study participants were retired.

Key Takeaways for the Industry

- This study highlights the importance of embracing a broader definition of productive ageing which includes activities beyond purely labor market participation of older adults.
- A better understanding of older workers' motivation can help to keep them working longer.
- This study does not address the combination of paid work and unpaid activities that many elderly people are confronted with. This may be interesting for follow-up research.



Want to know more? Read the paper

'Shades of Labor: Motives of Older Adults to Participate in Productive Activities'