

Willingness to Pay for Job Characteristics in Later Life: Evidence from a Stated Choice Experiment

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Colophon

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Abstract

This paper studies how workers in the Netherlands value key job characteristics in the later stages of their careers. Using survey data from individuals age 45 to 75, we analyzed how much compensation workers require for more demanding working conditions and how much pay they are willing to give up for less demanding ones. We focused on four dimensions: changes in working hours, flexibility, physical demands, and work stress. The results show that older workers are strongly attached to their existing job characteristics. They require substantial compensation to accept any deterioration in working conditions, while their willingness to trade wages for any improvement is limited and varies widely. Gender differences were most pronounced in the area of working hours, with women valuing part-time work more strongly. These findings highlight which job characteristics are most important for making continued employment attractive to older workers.

JEL Classification: J22, J24, J14

Keywords: Older workers, Job amenities, Reservation wages, Strategic survey questions

Samenvatting

Dit paper onderzoekt hoe oudere werknemers in Nederland de waarde inschatten van belangrijke baankenmerken in de laatste fase van hun loopbaan. Met behulp van een speciaal ontwikkelde enquête in het representatieve LISS-panel analyseren wij de bereidheid van personen tussen 45 en 75 jaar om loon in te leveren of juist compensatie te eisen bij veranderingen in werktijden, flexibiliteit, fysieke belasting en werkstress. Centraal staat het concept van het *reservatieloon*: het minimale loon waarvoor iemand bereid is een baan te accepteren.

De analyse is gebaseerd op *strategic survey questions*, waarin respondenten hypothetische banen beoordelen die identiek zijn aan hun huidige of meest recente baan, behalve op één kenmerk. Deze opzet maakt het mogelijk om gehechtheid aan de bestaande baan te onderscheiden van de monetaire waardering van marginale veranderingen in arbeidsomstandigheden.

De resultaten tonen een sterk en consistent patroon. Oudere werknemers zijn sterk gehecht aan hun bestaande baanpakket. Gemiddeld vragen zij aanzienlijke compensatie om verslechteringen in arbeidsomstandigheden te accepteren, terwijl de bereidheid om loon in te leveren voor verbeteringen relatief beperkt en zeer heterogeen is. Deze asymmetrie is consistent met verliesaversie en statusquogedrag.

Gendersverschillen zijn vooral relevant bij werktijden. Vrouwen hebben een duidelijke voorkeur voor deeltijdwerk en zijn bereid hiervoor loon in te leveren, terwijl mannen gemiddeld compensatie verlangen om minder uren te werken. Voor flexibiliteit, fysieke belasting en werkstress zijn de gemiddelde waarderingen van mannen en vrouwen grotendeels vergelijkbaar. Leeftijdseffecten zijn over het algemeen beperkt, maar de aversie tegen fysiek zware en stressvolle banen neemt duidelijk toe hoe dichter werknemers bij hun pensioenleeftijd komen.

Voor de Nederlandse pensioensector zijn deze bevindingen direct relevant. Beleidsmaatregelen gericht op langer doorwerken veronderstellen vaak dat betere arbeidsomstandigheden de arbeidsdeelname substantieel verhogen. Onze resultaten suggereren echter dat veel oudere werknemers al redelijk goed gematcht zijn met hun baanvoorkeuren, waardoor de ruimte voor extra prikkels beperkt is. Tegelijkertijd blijkt dat verslechteringen in arbeidsomstandigheden — met name toenemende stress en fysieke belasting — de aantrekkelijkheid van werk sterk verminderen en leiden tot een hogere vereiste compensatie. Aanvullende analyses onder gepensioneerden suggereren dat dergelijke factoren ook een rol spelen rond de uittredingsbeslissing, al gaat het hier om hypothetische en retrospectieve beoordelingen.

1. Introduction

As populations age, many countries are implementing policy measures to extend working lives. These include reductions in financial incentives for early retirement, increases in statutory retirement ages, and the promotion of partial over full retirement. In the Netherlands, the statutory retirement age (*AOW-leeftijd*) has been rising gradually since 2013. It is currently set at 67 years and 3 months until 2031 and will thereafter be linked to life expectancy. Supporting sustainable employment among older workers has therefore become a key policy priority, particularly in light of projected labor market tightening due to demographic changes. Similar challenges are occurring in many advanced economies. The recently introduced Dutch *Pension Agreement* as outlined in the Future of Pensions Act (*Wet toekomst pensioenen*, or *Wtp*) aims to facilitate longer and more sustainable working lives, supported by policy instruments such as the MDIEU (*Maatwerkregeling Duurzame Inzetbaarheid en Eerder Uittreden*) subsidy scheme, which finances employer investments in sustainable employability (SZW, 2025).

Despite these policy efforts, relatively little is known about how older workers value specific job characteristics. Observed labor market outcomes reflect equilibrium allocations shaped by both worker preferences and employer constraints, making it difficult to disentangle the valuation of job attributes from realized job matches. Existing survey data typically document job conditions but do not elicit information about trade-offs between wages and job characteristics, limiting their usefulness for quantifying underlying valuations. While a small number of studies have documented the stated preferences of older workers—for example, Hudomiet et al. (2021) for the United States and the Nationale Enquête Arbeidsomstandigheden (NEA, 2022) for the Netherlands—they do not measure workers' willingness to pay (WTP) for specific job amenities.

This paper provides new evidence on how older workers value key job characteristics using original survey data collected through the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS panel), a nationally representative household survey in the Netherlands. We elicited stated preferences using strategic survey questions (SSQs) that require respondents to trade off wages against job attributes, thereby allowing us to quantify WTP in monetary terms. The survey was specifically tailored to individuals age 45 to 75 and focused on four dimensions that are particularly relevant at later stages of the working life: (i) working hours (full-time versus part-time arrangements), (ii) workplace flexibility (such as scheduling autonomy and remote work), (iii) physical demands, and (iv) stress levels at work.

Our analysis contributes to a growing literature on older workers' labor market preferences. Ameriks et al. (2020) showed that retirees value flexible work arrangements, even at the cost of substantial wage reductions, but that study focused narrowly on working hours and on a selective sample of wealthy individuals. Maestas et al. (2023) inferred valuations of job amenities using a representative U.S. sample, yet did not directly elicit

reservation wages or target older workers specifically. Hudomiet et al. (2021) documented the importance of flexibility, low stress, and reduced demands among older individuals but stopped short of quantifying WTP. To our knowledge, this paper is the first to estimate WTP for a broad set of job characteristics among a representative sample of older workers.

We found substantial heterogeneity in how older workers value job characteristics and strong asymmetries between improvements versus deteriorations, consistent with loss-aversion in the domain of valuing job characteristics (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979; Tversky and Kahneman, 1991). On average, respondents require sizable compensation to accept more demanding jobs, while their WTP for improvements is considerably smaller, consistent with a strong attachment to existing job bundles. Gender differences were very pronounced for working hours, whereas valuations of flexibility, physical demands, and stress were broadly similar for men and women. Age gradients were present but modest overall, with the strongest age-related changes observed for stressful and physically demanding jobs.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the related literature. Section 3 describes the survey data and the design of the SSQs. Section 4 presents descriptive statistics on the sample and on the reservation wages and WTP measures. Section 5 analyzes the determinants of WTP. And Section 6 presents our conclusions.

2. Literature

There is a growing body of literature studying how workers value non-wage job characteristics, commonly referred to as job amenities. Using stated preference methods, vignette experiments, and discrete choice frameworks, this work has documented that wages alone do not fully capture the attractiveness of jobs and that workers are willing to trade earnings for features such as flexibility, autonomy, and reduced demands. Early contributions have established that job amenities play an important role in labor market sorting and compensation differentials (Eriksson and Kristensen, 2014). And subsequent studies have shown that preferences for amenities are heterogeneous and vary systematically by gender, age, and life-cycle stage (Mas and Pallais, 2017; Wiswall and Zafar, 2018).

A more recent strand of this literature has focused explicitly on older workers. As individuals age, preferences shift toward jobs that are less physically and psychologically demanding and offer greater control over the working time and effort required. Using survey-based evidence, Hudomiet et al. (2021) showed that older individuals are more likely to expect continued employment when jobs feature low stress, limited physical demands, and flexible schedules. Similarly, Maestas et al. (2023) documented older workers' greater tendency to place a relatively high value on autonomy and moderate physical activity compared to younger cohorts. While these studies provide rich insights into the types of job characteristics valued later in life, they generally fall short of directly quantifying monetary trade-offs across a broad set of amenities.

Several papers have estimated willingness to pay (WTP) for job characteristics using discrete choice experiments. Maestas et al. (2023) employed a mixed logit model to infer WTP for a wide range of job attributes in a representative U.S. sample, while Nagler et al. (2023, 2024) focused on specific dimensions such as work pressure and remote work, documenting substantial heterogeneity and gender differences. These approaches are well suited to recovering relative preferences but typically rely on stylized job descriptions that are not anchored to respondents' actual employment situations.

Most closely related to our approach is Ameriks et al. (2020), who elicited reservation wages for hypothetical job offers among older individuals, explicitly anchoring these offers to respondents' own work histories. Using a sample drawn from the Vanguard Research Initiative—which overrepresents wealthy and financially sophisticated households—they showed that many older Americans would be willing to work longer if jobs offered greater flexibility, particularly with respect to working hours. Their analysis is primarily geared toward identifying labor supply responses and estimating the elasticity of labor force participation with respect to job flexibility and earnings. Our contribution differs in several important respects. First, we use a nationally representative panel for the Netherlands, allowing us to study preferences for job characteristics among the broader population of

older workers. Second, while Ameriks et al. (2020) focus primarily on working hours and scheduling flexibility, we analyze a wider set of job amenities, including physical demands and job-related stress, which are central to employment decisions later in life. Third, their analysis emphasizes labor supply responses to hypothetical job offers, whereas our focus is on quantifying how older workers value different dimensions of their jobs, as conditional on their existing employment situations. Finally, by varying job characteristics in both directions relative to each respondent's reference job, our design allows us to document asymmetric valuations between improvements and deteriorations in job quality, providing new evidence on reference-dependent preferences in the labor market.

3. Survey Design

3.1 Survey and the LISS Panel

The survey was fielded in May 2025 through the LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences), which is administered by the Centerdata research institute at Tilburg University. The LISS panel is based on a probability sample drawn from the Dutch population register and is designed to be representative of the entire non-institutionalized population of the Netherlands. Approximately 5,000 households, comprising about 7,500 individuals age 16 and older, participate in monthly online surveys. Panel members receive a monetary incentive for each completed questionnaire, and households lacking internet access or computer equipment are provided with these to ensure equal participation.

A distinctive feature of the LISS infrastructure is the annual core survey, which collects rich demographic and socioeconomic information, including on work histories, income, education, health, housing, and preferences. Custom survey modules, including the one used in this study, can be linked to these background data, enabling analysis both across multiple domains and over time.

Our module targeted all panel members age 45 to 75. A total of 2,365 respondents completed the module (response rate: 76.9%). For the main analysis, we focused on current workers, although our survey targeted the full population.¹ The sample selection is described in Section 4.

The survey design anchors each respondent in a personalized reference job before eliciting preferences over job characteristics to ensure that the hypothetical questions are grounded in realistic and respondent-specific job contexts.

3.2 Reference Job Information

The questionnaire first collected information on demographic characteristics, job characteristics, and labor market status. Based on these answers, respondents were assigned a reference job. For currently employed individuals, the reference job corresponds to their main job at the time of the survey, and detailed information was collected on weekly hours, workplace flexibility, the physical demands of the job, and perceived stress levels. For non-workers with past labor market experience, the reference job corresponds to the longest-held job since age 40, using retrospective information on the same attributes. Respondents who have never been employed received a constructed job profile based on stated preferences, although this group was excluded from the current analysis.

The key job amenities used in the analysis were: weekly working hours, flexibility, physical demands, and stress. In addition to reporting their current weekly hours, full-time workers were asked to indicate whether they would prefer a schedule of 24 or 32 hours per week if they were to work part-time. To measure flexibility, respondents were asked about several

¹ Further results from retirees are shown in Appendix B.4.

aspects of autonomy in their current job:

- The option to work from home one or more days per week;
- Autonomy in determining their own start and end times;
- Autonomy in choosing the days on which they perform their work;
- The ability to take occasional time during the workday for personal matters (e.g., phone calls or small errands);
- Discretion in working irregular hours (e.g., overtime, night shifts, or weekend work); and
- Having no flexibility in any of these dimensions.

Respondents were also asked about the type of flexibility they valued most. This information was later used to tailor the flexibility attribute in the hypothetical job offers presented in the strategic survey questions (SSQs).

Physical demands and stress levels were recorded using five-point scales ranging from “not at all” to “very much.” Working hours, flexibility, and other job characteristics were collected directly based on respondents’ reference jobs. Before proceeding with the survey, respondents were given a summary of their reference job to review and could revise any attribute if needed. An example is shown in Figure 1.

Next, we describe how these attributes were used to construct the SSQs. These were constructed based on respondents’ reference job characteristics. Working hours were classified as part-time (fewer than 36 hours) or full-time (36 hours or more). Stress was recoded into a binary indicator, grouping the three lowest categories into “low stress” and the two highest categories into “high stress.” Flexibility was defined based on whether the reference job offered any flexibility; scenarios with increased flexibility refer to the respondent’s preferred flexibility dimension. For physical demands, we distinguished between three categories (none, moderate, and high) and varied scenarios locally around the reference job. Respondents were only presented with changes to adjacent categories (e.g., from high to moderate or from moderate to low), resulting in a finer grid for physical demands than for the other attributes. In all cases, the hypothetical job differed from the reference job in exactly one characteristic.

3.3 Strategic Survey Question Design

Respondents were asked to evaluate hypothetical job offers in a setting in which they were to imagine having lost their current job and be considering a new job offer. The offered job is described relative to their current job, which serves as the reference point for the SSQs. The design ensures that each hypothetical job differs from the reference job in exactly one characteristic, allowing us to isolate the valuation of individual job attributes. This job-loss

Figure 1: Job Characteristics Table (Example)

We have summarized the information about your current job in the table below. We have estimated missing data.

From now on, we will call this data your "reference job". Whenever this work situation is discussed, there will be a button that you can click to take another look at the table below. Assume that characteristics not listed in the table are the same as in your current work situation.

Click "Continue" if the information is correct, or click "Previous" to edit your answers.

Characteristic	Your answer
Annual Earnings	60400 euros
Regular working hours	38 hours per week It is a full-time job
Physically demanding or not	A little heavy
Stress level	A little stressful
Flexibility in choosing work schedule and workplace	Some flexibility, but without the key flexibility you value most

Note: Example for a respondent with certain job characteristics. The original screenshot was in Dutch and has been translated into English using AI-assisted translation.

framing follows Ameriks et al. (2020) and is intended to elicit reservation wages at the margin of employment, consistent with standard labor supply theory.²

Each module presents five SSQs. The first SSQ reproduces the respondent's reference job exactly, serving as a baseline scenario to familiarize respondents with the choice format. The remaining four SSQs each introduce a hypothetical job offer that alters exactly one attribute of the reference job. The attributes considered are working hours, workplace flexibility, physical demands, and stress level. The direction of each variation depends on the respondent's baseline. For instance, individuals working 36 hours or more per week are classified as full-time and only shown reductions in hours, whereas part-time workers only see increases. Similar restrictions apply to flexibility, physical demands, and stress, ensuring that hypothetical changes constitute realistic deviations from each respondent's own job environment.

Figure 2 illustrates the format of an SSQ. Respondents are presented with a job offer and must choose between accepting the offer (Option A) or continuing to search for alternative opportunities (Option B). Each SSQ specifies a set of conditions governing the offer. Respondents are informed that the job characteristics shown in the scenario are fixed and will remain as described. The only exceptions in this case are weekly working hours, which could be adjusted after one year, and salary, which would evolve according to standard collective agreements. In other words, any change in the job attributes beyond these

² For respondents who were not currently working, including retirees, the survey design differed slightly. These respondents were asked to evaluate hypothetical job offers either relative to their last job or in the context of entering or reentering employment. Assignment to these modules depends on employment status and age, with some random variation among nonworking respondents. As the main analysis focuses on currently employed individuals, these differences do not affect the results presented in the paper.

Figure 2: Sample SSQ Screen Shown to Respondents

We would like to know how your choices would change if you were offered a job with a **part-time** option. With a part-time job, you work fewer hours per week than with a full-time job. Option B is the same as in the previous question.

Option A	Option B
A job where you work part-time , so you would only work 24 hours . The annual salary would be adjusted proportionally to 38147 euros , because you work fewer hours. For the rest, everything remains the same as with your Reference job , including flexibility of schedules, flexibility of workplace, physical demands, stress level and all other job characteristics such as occupation, sector, location, etc.	Explore other options, such as looking for another job, not working, or retiring/staying in retirement. Assume that there are other job opportunities and that you would not be long-term unemployed if you choose this option.

Here are some **new details** to consider in this scenario:

- The salary will be adjusted proportionally. This means that you would earn less money with fewer hours, but that the *wage per hour* remains the same.
- If you choose **Option A**, you can decide for yourself what to do with the extra time you get because you work fewer hours.

The **following conditions are the same** as in the previous scenarios and also apply in this scenario:

- If you choose **Option A**, the following applies:
 - You can keep the job until you decide to retire.
 - You can change employers, but the job characteristics must remain the same as in your **Reference job**, except for working hours.
 - After 1 year, you can adjust your hours. Your annual salary will then be adjusted proportionately accordingly. All other features remain the same as in your **Reference job**.
 - Your hourly wage will only change due to changes in collective bargaining agreements (collective bargaining agreements) or due to inflation adjustments.
 - You can continue to work while receiving a supplementary pension (if you are eligible) and while receiving an AOW benefit.
- If you choose **Option B**, Option A will no longer be available.

Previous Further

Note: The example shown relates to an SSQ offering a part-time job. The original screenshot was in Dutch and has been translated into English using AI-assisted translation.

predetermined elements would require leaving the job and searching for a new position.

For SSQs that involved changes in working hours, respondents were informed that annual earnings would adjust proportionally, thereby holding the hourly wage constant. To ensure that respondents fully understood the hypothetical setting, the survey included a short series of comprehension questions following the instructions and preceding the SSQs. These questions verified whether respondents correctly interpreted the key elements of the scenario, including job duration, the mechanics of wage adjustments, pension implications, and the degree of choice over working hours or employers. Respondents who answered incorrectly were allowed a second attempt or shown corrective information. These checks help ensure that subsequent choices reflect informed preferences rather than misunderstandings. The full set of comprehension questions is provided in Appendix A.

Several attribute-specific features of the SSQs merit clarification. For changes in working hours, full-time workers were presented with part-time offers based on their stated preference for either a 24-hour or a 32-hour schedule. Likewise, hypothetical changes in workplace flexibility were tailored to each respondent's preferences: the SSQs either added or removed the type of flexibility they had indicated as most important. For physical

demands, we did not use a simple binary classification but instead distinguished between three levels—low, moderate, and high. Respondents in jobs with low physical demands were therefore only offered jobs with moderate demands, rather than being confronted with unrealistically strenuous work. In contrast, stress was kept as a binary attribute and respondents were shown a job that differed from their reference job only by moving to the opposite stress level.

Figure 3: Reservation Wage Elicitation Screen (Option A)

Suppose the annual salary is **reduced** with Option A. Then, What is the **lowest salary** you would accept for Option A before moving to Option B?
 The slider below starts with the salary of the reference job. Move the slider to the lowest amount where you would still choose Option A. If you leave the slider on the amount of 60400, it means that you would switch to Option B with every salary reduction.

The lowest annual salary at which I would still choose Option A: **46508** euros
 Corresponding hourly wage: **23.54** euros

Previous Further

Note: Screenshot of the reservation wage elicitation when the respondent initially chooses Option A. The salary for Option A is decreased from the reference job level to identify the lowest wage at which the respondent would still prefer Option A over Option B. The slider is initialized at the reference job salary. The reported value defines the individual's reservation wage for the job scenario.

3.4 Reservation Wage Elicitation


Respondents choose between accepting the job offer or continuing to search. Depending on their choice, a slider appears with which they can choose the lowest salary (or wage) at which they would change their decision. For those accepting the offer, respondents were asked to report the lowest wage at which they were willing to accept it (see, e.g., Figure 3). Note that the bounds of the slider go from zero to the salary of the reference job and respondents could choose any value in between. Respondents who initially rejected the job offer were then asked to indicate the minimum annual salary that would make them reconsider, as shown in Figure 4. The first slider (Screen A) begins at the reference salary and allows respondents to choose any value up to twice that amount. If respondents indicated that even this upper bound was insufficient, a second slider appeared (Screen B) with an expanded range extending up to ten times the annual salary of the reference job. Only at this stage could respondents select the option stating that no salary would induce them to accept the job.

Overall, the SSQs provide monetary measures of respondents' willingness to pay (WTP) for improvements in job characteristics or, equivalently, their willingness to accept compensation for deteriorations. Because all scenarios are anchored in respondents' actual or reconstructed job histories, the resulting valuation measures reflect individualized but comparable trade-offs across workers.

Figure 4: Reservation Wage Elicitation Screens (Option B)

Suppose the annual salary is **increased** with Option A. We would like to know what the **lowest salary** is where you would choose Option A instead of Option B.
The slider below starts with the salary of the reference job. Move the slider to the lowest amount where you would switch to Option A.

The lowest salary at which I would choose Option A: **63325** euros
Number of working hours per week (part-time): 24 hours
Corresponding hourly wage: **50.74** euros




For comparison, we will show you the same information for your reference job:
Annual salary for reference job: 60400 euros
Number of working hours per week for reference job: 38 hours
Hourly wage for reference job: 30.57 euros

Even if my annual salary is twice as high (€ 76294) I would still not choose Option A.

(a) First Screen

Below you will find a new slider that starts at the double salary of the reference job. Move the slider to the lowest amount where you would switch to Option A.

The lowest salary at which I would choose Option A: **381474** euros
Number of working hours per week (part-time): 24 hours
Corresponding hourly wage: **305.67** euros



I would never choose Option A, for any annual salary.

(b) Second Screen

Note: Screenshots of the reservation wage elicitation when the respondent initially chooses Option B. The salary for Option A is increased to determine the minimum wage at which the respondent would switch from Option B to Option A. The first screen shows the initial slider starting at the reference job salary, while the second screen extends the upper bound to more than twice the reference job salary. Respondents can also indicate that they would never choose Option A. The reported value defines the individual's reservation wage for the job scenario.

4. Descriptive statistics

This section provides descriptive evidence on the survey sample and on respondents' reservation wages and willingness-to-pay (WTP) measures. We first document key demographic and job characteristics of the estimation sample. We then describe the prevalence and distribution of reservation wages for the reference job and summarize average WTP amounts in euros for changes in job characteristics elicited through the strategic survey questions (SSQs).

Sample selection. We started with the full survey sample, which amounted to 2,365 respondents, and excluded observations for which the retrospective age was under 40. This restriction removed 38 observations. We then focused solely on the sample of current workers (1,075 observations, i.e., 46% of the sample). We also elicited information for current retirees (34% of the sample) and current non-workers (20% of the sample) which we used in a companion paper (Groneck et al., 2025). Finally, we constructed the estimation sample by retaining only respondents with non-missing values for the reservation wage of the reference job and for all covariates used in the regression analysis, including age, gender, working hours, job flexibility, physical job demands, education, employment status, partnership status, and (log) earnings. Our resulting final sample consisted of 1,018 observations. The number of observations for each SSQ can be found in Table B.1 in Appendix B.

4.1 Sample Statistics

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the estimation sample of current workers. Respondents were, on average, 56 years old and the majority lived with a partner.³ Educational attainment was relatively high, with about 39% holding a medium-level qualification and 44% having completed higher education.⁴ Overall, the sample reflects the characteristics of older workers in the Netherlands.

Table 2 documents substantial gender differences in the characteristics of respondents' reference jobs. Women report markedly lower annual earnings and hourly wages than men. These differences are partly explained by large disparities in working hours: women work about 28 hours per week on average, compared with roughly 37 hours for men, and are much more likely to be in part-time schedules of under 32 hours a week. Women also exhibit slightly shorter job tenures. Differences in stress levels and physical demands are small and mostly not statistically significant.

A notable pattern concerns job flexibility. Across several dimensions—including the possibility to work from home, autonomy over start and end times, and the ability to take

³ Note that the current age corresponds to the "scenario age," as all individuals were evaluated in the context of their current job.

⁴ Low education corresponds to primary education and lower secondary vocational programs (e.g., VMBO). Medium education includes upper secondary general and vocational education (e.g., HAVO, VWO, and MBO). High education consists of tertiary education at universities of applied sciences (HBO) and research universities (WO).

Table 1: Respondent Characteristics (Workers Sample)

Variable	Mean	SD
<i>Demographics</i>		
Female (=1)	0.48	0.50
Has partner (=1)	0.75	0.43
Age	56.26	6.34
<i>Education</i>		
Low education	0.17	0.38
Medium education	0.39	0.49
High education	0.44	0.50
Observations	1,018	

Note: Means and standard deviations are reported for the sample of current workers. For categorical variables, the mean corresponds to the share of respondents in that category.

time for personal matters—men report somewhat higher levels of flexibility than women. At the same time, a larger share of women report having a flexible job that is aligned with their preferences. This suggests that, despite lower measured flexibility on specific margins, women may be better matched to their preferred working conditions.

Preferences with regard to flexibility are broadly similar across genders. Women do not express a systematically stronger preference for flexible arrangements; differences are small and mostly insignificant.

Overall, the descriptive evidence highlights pronounced gender differences in wages and working hours, but only modest differences in job characteristics such as stress, physical demands, and flexibility.

4.2 Reservation Wage Prevalence

Next, we document descriptive patterns in the reservation wages reported by respondents across the different SSQs. For each SSQ, the reservation wage is recorded relative to the pay in the respondent's reference job; a value of 100 therefore indicates that the respondent is willing to accept the alternative job at exactly the same pay as in the reference job. We distinguish between five scenarios: (i) a job identical to the reference job; (ii) a change in hours (part-time or full-time); (iii) more or less flexibility in the preferred dimension; (iv) higher or lower physical demands; and (v) higher or lower stress.

Figure 5 presents the distribution of reservation wages for the scenario in which the offered job is identical to the reference job. We classify responses into four categories: reservation wages below the reference job wage ($RW < RJW$); reservation wages equal to it ($RW = RJW$); reservation wages above it but at most double ($RJW < RW \leq 2 \cdot RJW$); and reservation wages above twice the reference job wage, the latter including respondents who stated that they would never take the job.

The largest fraction of participants, 41.2% of men and 34.1% of women, were willing to accept the reference job at a lower wage than previously earned, implying that their current or past wage exceeded their reservation wage. The second largest fraction, around 30% of

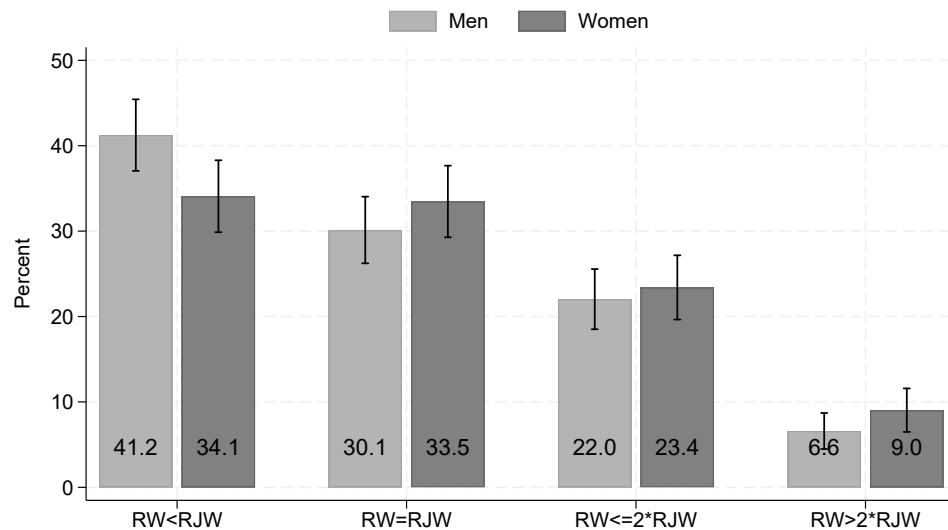
Table 2: Job Characteristics in the Reference Job

	Women	Men	Men – Women
<i>Earnings, tenure, and hours</i>			
Annual gross income (euros)	39,195.44	57,918.24	18,722.80***
Hourly wage (euros)	26.46	30.40	3.93***
Job tenure (years)	16.25	18.20	1.95*
Hours worked per week	27.58	36.80	9.22***
Hours < 16	0.14	0.02	-0.11***
16 ≤ hours < 24	0.11	0.02	-0.08***
24 ≤ hours < 32	0.27	0.07	-0.20***
32 ≤ hours < 36	0.27	0.15	-0.12***
Hours ≥ 36	0.22	0.74	0.52***
<i>Stress at work</i>			
Not stressful	0.21	0.14	-0.07**
A little stressful	0.40	0.43	0.02
Fairly stressful	0.24	0.26	0.02
Stressful	0.11	0.14	0.02
Very stressful	0.03	0.04	0.00
<i>Physical demands</i>			
Not physical	0.61	0.60	-0.01
A little physical	0.20	0.21	0.02
Fairly physical	0.11	0.12	0.00
Physical	0.06	0.05	-0.01
Very physical	0.02	0.02	-0.00
<i>Overall flexibility and match</i>			
No flexibility	0.35	0.26	-0.09**
Flexible job, not matched	0.14	0.16	0.02
Flexible job, aligned with preference	0.51	0.58	0.07*
<i>Flexibility attributes in reference job</i>			
Possibility to work from home	0.38	0.45	0.07*
Can choose own start and end times	0.38	0.46	0.09**
Can choose own working days	0.24	0.23	-0.01
Can take time for personal matters	0.35	0.48	0.13***
Can schedule irregular working hours	0.12	0.15	0.03
<i>Preferred flexibility attribute</i>			
Prefers possibility to work from home	0.33	0.34	0.01
Prefers own start and end times	0.22	0.22	0.00
Prefers own working days	0.22	0.18	-0.04
Prefers time for personal matters	0.16	0.18	0.02
Prefers irregular working hours	0.07	0.08	0.01
Observations	487	531	

Notes: Entries are means for the sample of current workers. For categorical variables, the mean represents the share of respondents in the indicated category. Annual gross income is measured in euros per year, hourly wage in euros per hour, job tenure in years, and working time in hours worked per week. The difference column reports men minus women. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

men and 33.5% of women, reported a reservation wage equal to the wage in the reference job, indicating that they were currently employed at (or recalled having been employed at) their personal reservation wage. Overall, these patterns are broadly similar across genders.

Figure 5: Reservation Wage Distribution for Reference Job



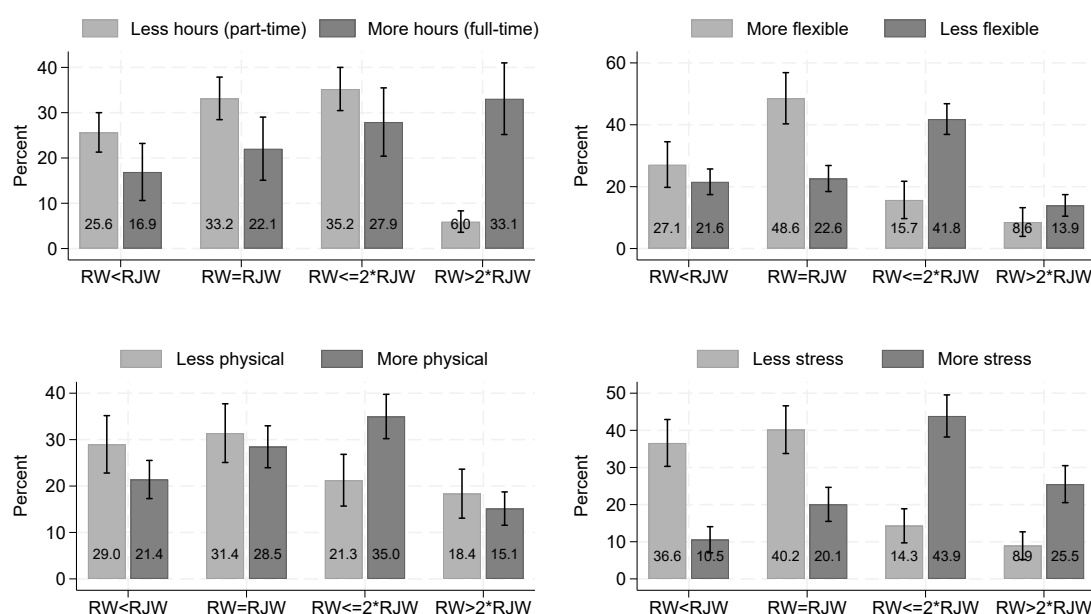
Notes: The figure shows the distribution of reservation wages relative to the current reference job wage for the sample of workers. Four categories have been defined: (i) a reservation wage below the reference job wage ($RW < RJW$); (ii) a reservation wage equal to the reference job wage ($RW = RJW$); (iii) a reservation wage above the reference job wage but not exceeding twice that wage ($RJW < RW \leq 2 \cdot RJW$); and (iv) a reservation wage above twice the reference job wage, which includes respondents who reported that they would not accept the job at any wage. Bars indicate the share of respondents in each category and vertical lines denote 95% confidence intervals.

The remaining respondents—about 29% of men and 32% of women—reported that they would return to their reference job only for a wage strictly higher than the one they currently received. This pattern likely reflects frictions or constraints embedded in the survey design. In particular, the SSQs impose a small set of restrictions on job characteristics (see Figure 2), such as the requirement that characteristics other than hours remain fixed for at least one year. These constraints may have induced some respondents to demand compensation even for returning to an otherwise unchanged job.

While there are some differences in the distribution across genders, these are not statistically significant. In particular, men are somewhat more likely to accept a wage below their current earnings (41.2% versus 34.1%), but the confidence intervals overlap across all categories. Overall, the distribution of reservation wages is broadly similar for men and women.

Figures 6 (men) and 7 (women) display the distribution of reservation wages for the SSQs in which a single job characteristic is altered relative to the reference job. For ease of exposition, the light bars correspond to scenarios that are less demanding—fewer hours, greater flexibility, lower physical demands, and lower stress—while the darker bars indicate

Figure 6: Reservation Wage Distribution: Men



Note: The figure reports the distribution of reservation wages relative to the reference job wage for men by job attribute. Definitions of the reservation wage categories and confidence intervals are the same as for Figure 5.

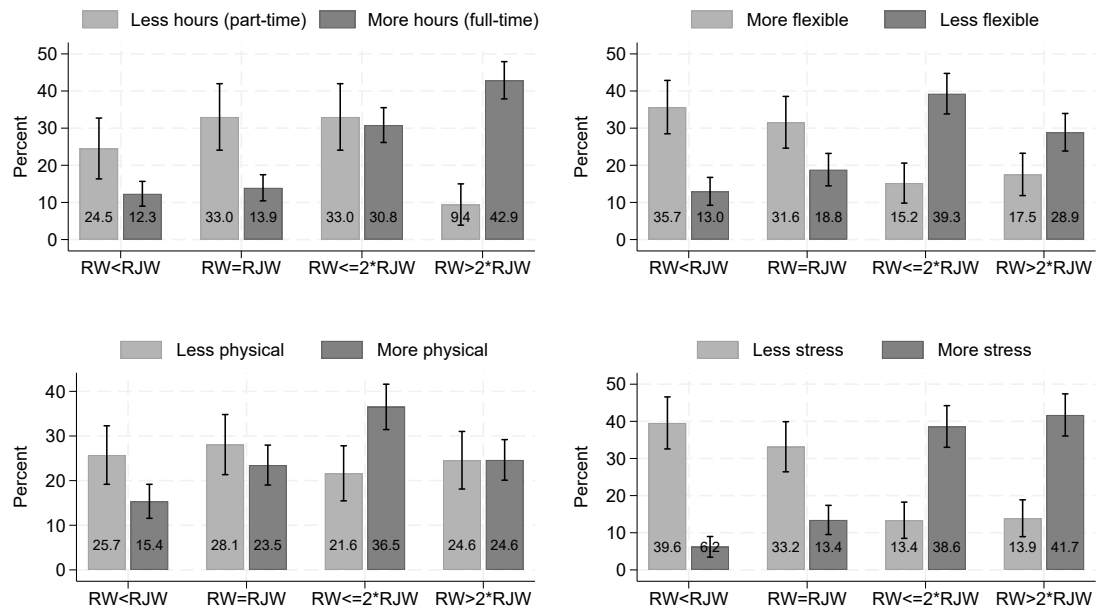
more demanding job conditions.

A clear pattern emerges across all four characteristics. More demanding job attributes are associated with substantially higher reservation wages, including a sizable increase in the share of respondents reporting values above twice the reference job wage. By contrast, improvements in job characteristics lead to comparatively modest shifts toward lower reservation wages. While a non-negligible fraction of respondents is willing to accept lower wages for better working conditions, these responses are much smaller in magnitude than the compensation required to accept more demanding conditions. This asymmetry is consistent with loss aversion and status quo behavior.

Across all attributes, roughly one third of respondents reported a reservation wage equal to that of the reference job. These respondents were not willing to trade off wages for changes in job characteristics, either because they value the current job bundle or because they face constraints that limit such adjustments.

Figures B.1 and B.2 in Appendix B compare the distribution of reservation wages between men and women for different changes in job characteristics. Differences between genders are generally modest, but some systematic tendencies emerge. Men are somewhat more likely to accept changes that increase working time or job demands—such as transitions to full-time work or higher stress levels—at lower wages, as reflected in a higher share of reservation wages below the reference job wage. In contrast, women are more likely to require substantial compensation for such changes, particularly for full-time work or taking

Figure 7: Reservation Wage Distribution: Women



Notes: The figure reports the distribution of reservation wages relative to the reference job wage for women by job attribute. Definitions of the reservation wage categories and confidence intervals are the same as for Figure 5.

on more stress, with a larger fraction of them reporting very high reservation wages.

For changes that reduce working time or job demands—such as part-time work, greater flexibility, or lower stress levels—gender differences are less pronounced, although women continue to exhibit a slightly thicker upper tail of the reservation wage distribution. While many of the differences are not statistically significant, the results point to a consistent tendency for women to be less willing to accept increases in working time and job demands.

Comparing these distributions to the reference job situation (Figure 5) shows that the share of respondents willing to accept a lower wage for improved job characteristics is broadly similar in magnitude. For men, this share is generally lower than or comparable to the reference job benchmark, with the exception of reduced stress. For women, improvements in flexibility and stress are associated with somewhat higher shares. Overall, these patterns indicate that while some respondents are willing to trade wages for better conditions, the magnitude of these effects is limited relative to the baseline distribution for the reference job.

We obtained similar patterns when restricting the sample to retirees with a previous job (Appendix B.4). In particular, more demanding job characteristics were again associated with a substantially higher share of respondents reporting very high reservation wages, with especially pronounced effects for full-time work, low flexibility, and high stress. At the same time, the distribution for retirees is more strongly skewed toward very high reservation wages overall, with a larger share of respondents reporting values above twice the reference

job wage. This suggests that the patterns documented above are not specific to current workers, but also characterize individuals at the retirement margin, while reflecting that many retirees are effectively out of the labor market.

4.3 Willingness to Pay for Job Characteristics

We quantified respondents' WTP for changes in job attributes using the reservation wages elicited in the SSQs. For each attribute, individuals report a reservation wage for their reference job, RW_{ref} , and a reservation wage for an alternative job that differs in exactly one characteristic. The basic WTP measure for alternative k is defined as $WTP_k = RW_{ref} - RW_{k}$, where positive values indicate a willingness to forgo income to obtain the alternative job and negative values imply the amount of compensation required. Since the reference job reflects respondents' own starting points in terms of hours, flexibility, physical demands, and stress, each individual evaluates only feasible changes relative to their baseline. The WTP is measured in percent of the salary in the reference job.⁵

For each attribute, respondents may face a change in either direction relative to their reference job. To facilitate comparison across individuals, we constructed a combined WTP measure that captures the valuation of moving toward the less demanding version of each attribute. Concretely, for respondents who were asked about a less demanding alternative (e.g., part-time instead of full-time work), the WTP is given by the observed reservation wage difference. For respondents who faced a more demanding alternative (e.g., full-time instead of part-time work), we take the negative of the corresponding reservation wage difference. This ensures that positive values consistently reflect a willingness to accept lower wages for less demanding job characteristics. This construction imposes symmetry between valuations of improvements and deteriorations, which we relax in the analysis of directional WTP measures below.

For example, consider an individual with a reservation wage of €40,000 for the reference job. If the reservation wage for a part-time alternative is €38,000, the WTP for part-time work is +€2,000. If, instead, the individual is asked about a full-time job and reports a reservation wage of €45,000, the implied WTP for avoiding full-time work is also +€5,000. The combined measure therefore captures the valuation of moving toward less demanding conditions, regardless of the direction of the elicited scenario.

Monetary WTP amounts are generally calculated by scaling the percentage difference by the reference job salary. An exception arises for changes in working hours, where part-time and full-time alternatives imply different annual hours. In these cases, the WTP is computed by comparing the change in the hourly wages between the reservation wage in the reference job and the implied reservation wage for a job offer with a change in hours. This is then

⁵ We coded respondents who indicated that they would never take a specific job as having a reservation wage of $1.0e10$; the WTP for a certain job attribute when respondents indicated such high reservation wages is coded as zero.

multiplied by the annual hours from the offered job to get an annual number.

Table 3: Willingness to Pay (WTP) Relative to Reference Job (in euros)

	WTP < 0		WTP > 0		All	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<i>Changing Hours</i>						
Part-time job	-16 005	-17 815	6249	7172	-6459	-6223
Full-time job	-31 297	-25 497	8983	5595	-14 094	-14 332
Comb. part-time	-14 926	-10 553	12 877	19 806	-2211	7311
<i>Changing Flexibilities</i>						
Flexible job	-16 323	-5658	14 424	7198	-1864	-105
Fixed job	-22 289	-23 489	27 579	11 239	-10 143	-12 238
Comb. flexible	-21 689	-7662	21 193	20 084	6873	7375
<i>Changing Physical Demands</i>						
Less physical job	-15 554	-8672	19 387	4690	-794	-1620
More physical job	-24 684	-15 706	15 487	10 047	-11 161	-7084
Comb. less physical	-15 514	-9460	24 103	14 675	8354	4816
<i>Changing Stress Level</i>						
Low-stress job	-10 399	-8035	16 388	12 669	2155	1668
Stressful job	-29 339	-21 583	9937	14 527	-19 179	-12 616
Comb. less stress	-10 308	-9498	25 454	18 760	11 179	7507

Notes: Willingness to pay (WTP) is defined as $WTP = RW_{ref} - RW_j$, with reservation wages RW_k for each job alternative k and RW_{ref} for the reference job. Positive values indicate a willingness to accept a lower wage for the alternative, while negative values indicate required compensation. WTP amounts in euros (2025 prices) equal $(WTP/100) \times salary_{ref}$. Combined WTP per job characteristic measures the valuation of moving from the higher-demand to the lower-demand version of a given job characteristic. Columns labeled WTP < 0 and WTP > 0 report conditional means; the final columns report unconditional means. All values are in annual euros (2025).

Table 3 reports the resulting WTP amounts. Two clear patterns emerge. First, average WTP values differ markedly depending on the direction of the change in job characteristics. Changes that increase working time or job demands—such as transitions to full-time work, lower flexibility, higher physical demands, or higher stress—are associated with substantial negative WTP values, typically ranging between about -€7,000 and -€19,000 per year. This indicates that respondents require sizable compensation to accept such changes.

In contrast, changes that reduce working time or job demands are associated with much smaller negative WTP values and, in some cases, slightly positive average valuations. This pattern reflects substantial heterogeneity in preferences within the sample, as a sizable fraction of respondents requires compensation even for changes that lower working time or job demands, while others are willing to accept wage reductions.

Second, conditional WTP values exhibit pronounced asymmetries. Respondents who favor a given change are willing to give up earnings to obtain it, whereas respondents facing increases in working time or job demands require substantially higher compensation. This pattern is highly consistent across all dimensions and aligns with loss-averse behavior in job

evaluations, whereby changes that move away from the reference job are weighted more strongly than comparable changes in the opposite direction (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979; Tversky and Kahneman, 1991).

The combined WTP measures provide a summary of these responses in a single metric, but they conceal the strong asymmetries between increases and reductions in job demands documented above. These asymmetries are therefore more clearly reflected in the directional WTP measures. On average, moving from higher to lower levels of working time or job demands yields positive valuations for both genders, with particularly large effects for stress and working hours. Gender differences are moderate overall. Men tend to exhibit somewhat larger responses in both directions, while women display a somewhat higher compensation requirement for increases in working time and stress.

Taken together, the results reveal a strong attachment to existing job bundles and substantial heterogeneity in how workers value alternative job attributes. While many respondents are willing to trade wages against job characteristics, the compensation required to accept increases in working time and job demands is consistently large.

5. Determinants of Willingness to Pay

This section examines how the willingness to pay (WTP) for job characteristics varies systematically with age, gender, and observed job attributes. Although we also analyzed the determinants of the reservation wage (RW) of the reference job, that benchmark measure was hardly affected by age or gender; details are thus relegated to Appendix B.3. Here, we focus on the willingness to pay, defined as $WTP_{is} = RW_{ref,i} - RW_{is}$,⁶ where s indexes the job scenario. Each scenario corresponds to a hypothetical job that differs from the reference job in exactly one characteristic, such as working hours, flexibility, physical demands, or stress level. For each characteristic, we observe either an increase or a decrease relative to the reference job, depending on the respondent's baseline situation.

To exploit all available variations jointly, we stacked the different scenarios into a single dataset and estimated a unified model. Formally, for individual i and scenario s , the latent willingness to pay, WTP_{is}^* , is specified as

$$WTP_{is}^* = \alpha_s + \beta_{1s} \text{Age}_i + \beta_{2s} \text{Age}_i^2 + \beta_{3s} \text{Female}_i + \beta_{4s} (\text{Age}_i \times \text{Female}_i) + \beta_{5s} (\text{Age}_i^2 \times \text{Female}_i) + \gamma' X_i + \varepsilon_{is}, \quad (1)$$

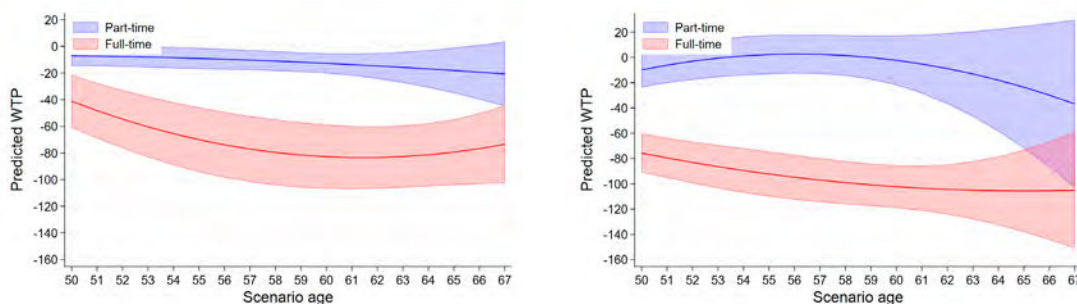
where α_s denotes scenario-specific intercepts and the coefficients β_{ks} allow the effects of age, age squared, and gender—as well as their interactions—to vary flexibly across scenarios. This is equivalent to estimating a full set of interactions between scenario indicators, age, age squared, and gender. The vector X_i includes controls for the characteristics of the reference job and the respondent, including indicators for stress levels and physical demands, weekly working hours, job flexibility, log reference job salary, partnership status, and education.

The outcome variable is censored due to the survey design. In both the reference job and the hypothetical SSQ scenarios, reservation wages were elicited using a slider bounded between 0% and +200% of the reference job wage. Respondents who indicated that they would not accept a job under any circumstances are therefore observed at the upper bound. To accommodate this feature, we estimated the specification using a Tobit model with two-sided bounds of -200 and 200 for WTP. Standard errors are clustered at the individual level to account for the fact that each respondent contributes multiple scenario observations in the stacked dataset.

We used the estimated model to compute predicted WTP profiles over age separately by gender and job characteristic. The visualizations shown in Figures 8–11 reveal several robust patterns. Across all job characteristics, respondents exhibit a pronounced asymmetry between changes in job conditions. The WTP for less demanding job conditions is generally modest in magnitude and varies relatively little with age, whereas the compensation required to accept more demanding conditions is large and often becomes more negative as workers

⁶ See Subsection 4.3 for details.

Figure 8: Predicted WTP for Changes in Working Hours

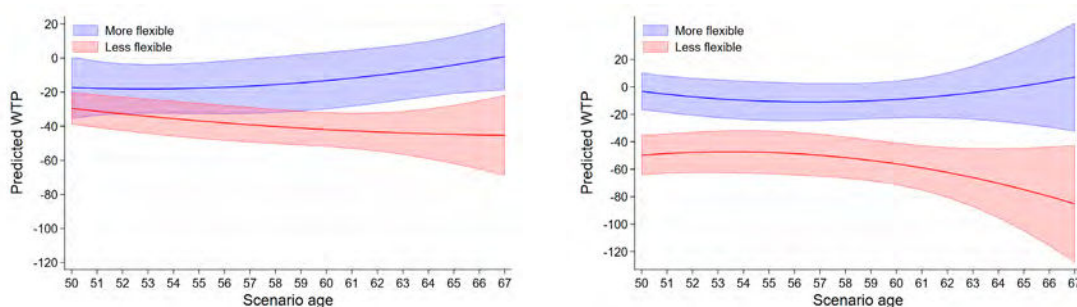


(a) Men

(b) Women

Note: The figure plots predict willingness to pay for changes in weekly working hours, based on the Tobit specification described in the text. Predictions are shown for ages 50–67, separately for men and women and for both SSQ conditions (working more or fewer hours). Positive values indicate a willingness to accept a lower wage to obtain the alternative hours, while negative values indicate the required compensation to change hours of work.

Figure 9: Predicted WTP for Changes in Job Flexibility



(a) Men

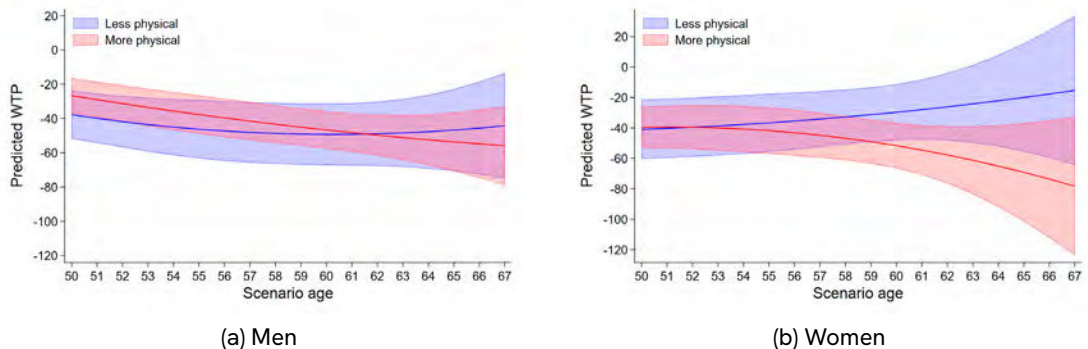
(b) Women

Note: The figure plots predict willingness to pay for changes in job flexibility, as obtained from the Tobit specification discussed in the text. Predictions are shown for ages 50–67, separately for men and women and for both SSQ conditions (more flexible and less flexible work arrangements). Positive values indicate a willingness to accept a lower wage to obtain the alternative, while negative values indicate the compensation required to accept reduced flexibility. Predictions are based on a stacked specification that jointly estimated all job characteristics.

approach retirement. This asymmetry mirrors the unconditional, combined WTP patterns reported in Table 3 and underscores the central role of aversion to deteriorations in job quality.

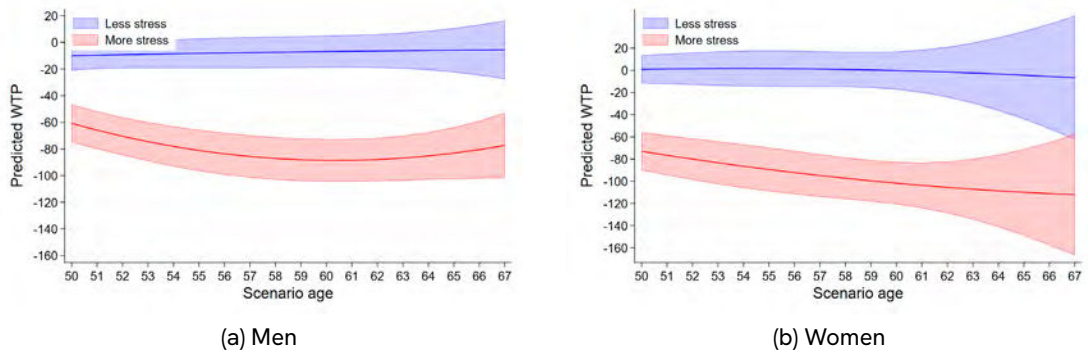
Gender differences are particularly pronounced for working hours, especially with respect to full-time work (Figure 8). Women display a strong and consistently negative WTP for full-time work, which becomes more negative with age, indicating a substantial disutility from increasing hours. For part-time work, the pattern is less clear: the WTP is relatively small in magnitude and exhibits a non-monotonic age profile, with estimates close to zero in mid-working ages but more negative at younger and older ages. Men, by contrast, require compensation to move to part-time work at all ages, with relatively flat profiles over the life cycle. Overall, the main gender difference lies in the much stronger aversion of women to

Figure 10: Predicted WTP for Changes in Physical Demands



Note: Predicted willingness to pay for changes in physical demands, based on the Tobit specification discussed in the text. Predictions are shown for ages 50–67 for both men and women, under conditions of more and less physically demanding work. Positive values indicate a willingness to accept a lower wage for reduced physical demands; negative values indicate the compensation required to accept more demanding work. Predictions are based on a stacked specification that jointly estimated all job characteristics.

Figure 11: Predicted WTP for Changes in Job Stress



Note: Predicted willingness to pay for changes in job stress, derived from the Tobit specification discussed in the text. Predictions cover ages 50–67 and are shown separately for men and women for both lower-stress and higher-stress job conditions. Positive WTP indicates a willingness to accept a lower wage for reduced stress; negative WTP indicates the compensation required for increased stress. Predictions are based on a stacked specification that jointly estimated all job characteristics.

full-time work.

For job flexibility (Figure 9), both genders display a clear asymmetry. For men, the WTP for more flexibility is modest in magnitude and increases with age, while the WTP for less flexibility is strongly negative and becomes more negative over the life cycle. For women, the WTP for more flexibility is close to zero over most of the age range, whereas the WTP for less flexibility is again strongly negative and declines further with age, indicating that the compensation required to accept more demanding job attributes rises as workers approach retirement. Overall, both genders exhibit a pronounced aversion to reduced flexibility, while the valuation of additional flexibility is comparatively limited.

The WTP for physical demands (Figure 10) is negative for both genders across most of the age range. The WTP for more physically demanding work is strongly negative and declines with age, particularly for women. The WTP for less physical demands is also negative, but

less steeply so, and shows a weaker age gradient. Compared to other characteristics, the valuation of changes in physical demands is more symmetric, although the compensation required for increased physical strain still rises as retirement approaches.

For job stress (Figure 11), we observed the strongest asymmetry between conditions. The WTP for reduced stress is modest in magnitude, slightly negative for men and close to zero or mildly positive for women at older ages. In contrast, the WTP for more stressful jobs is strongly negative and becomes substantially more negative with age, particularly for women. These profiles indicate that tolerance for stress diminishes as workers age, while the valuation of stress reductions remains comparatively limited.

The results for retirees with a previous job are reported in Appendix B.4. The qualitative patterns broadly mirror those for current workers but differ in important ways. For working hours, the overall pattern remains similar, but the valuation of full-time work is less negative among retirees, particularly for women. More generally, the predicted WTP profiles are flatter and display greater heterogeneity. In particular, retirees—especially women—more frequently exhibit a small or positive WTP for less demanding job characteristics, such as part-time work, greater flexibility, or lower stress. Differences between retirees and workers are most visible for working hours and stress, where the age gradients are less steep and the asymmetry between more and less demanding conditions is somewhat reduced. Overall, these results suggest that while the qualitative ranking of job attributes is similar, valuations around the retirement margin are more heterogeneous and less strongly tilted toward avoiding more demanding conditions.

Taken together, the predicted WTP profiles point to a coherent valuation structure. Changes that increase job demands generate large and increasingly negative valuations as individuals approach retirement, whereas changes that reduce demands yield comparatively modest effects. Gender differences are particularly pronounced for working hours, especially with respect to full-time work, and are also evident for job stress, especially at older ages. Differences in flexibility and physical demands are more limited and less systematic. Combined with the unconditional WTP estimates, these results highlight a strong reluctance to accept more demanding job attributes in later working life.

6. Conclusion

This paper studies how older workers value key job characteristics using stated preference data from a nationally representative Dutch survey. By eliciting reservation wages and willingness-to-pay (WTP) measures through strategic survey questions (SSQs), we quantify the trade-offs older individuals make between wages and working hours, flexibility, physical demands, and stress levels and examine how these valuations vary with age and gender.

The results point to a strong attachment to existing job bundles. On average, respondents require substantial compensation to accept more demanding job conditions, while their WTP for improvements is considerably smaller and highly heterogeneous. These asymmetric valuations suggest that deteriorations in job quality loom larger than comparable improvements, consistent with loss-averse behavior in job evaluation. At the same time, the data indicate that improvements do not uniformly generate positive valuations: a non-negligible share of respondents requires compensation even for changes that reduce job demands. This pattern contrasts with parts of the existing literature and may reflect that many workers are already well matched to their current jobs, so that changes in job characteristics are associated with unobserved trade-offs and reductions in hours or demands may affect income or job roles.

Gender differences are most pronounced for working hours. Women display a strong preference for part-time work, whereas men are, on average, less willing to reduce hours. Importantly, the Dutch institutional setting allows employees to request adjustments in working hours under the Dutch Act on Flexible Working Hours and Work Arrangements (*Wet flexibel werken*), which may partly explain why the observed WTP for reduced hours is relatively modest: many older workers appear to already have working arrangements that align closely with their preferences for part-time work.

More generally, the limited average WTP for improvements in job characteristics suggests that many older workers are broadly well matched in their current jobs. This implies that policies aimed at extending working lives may be less effective if they focus solely on improving job characteristics. At the same time, our results indicate that respondents react much more strongly to increases in job demands than to comparable reductions. In particular, rising stress and physical strain are associated with large negative valuations and become increasingly salient at older ages. To the extent that such adverse changes reduce the attractiveness of continued employment, limiting increases in these job demands may play an important role in supporting extended working lives.

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Appendix A: Comprehension Questions

Figure A.1: Comprehension Questions

For the research, it is important that we are sure that you understand the made-up situations and the choices. Therefore, we will ask you some questions. After these questions, we will provide you with the right information for questions that you have not answered correctly. We do that to make sure everything is clear.

	Yes	No
1. If you choose Option A, you have the option to switch to another job, but the job characteristics should remain the same as in your reference job except for the working hours?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. If you choose Option A, can you also apply for supplementary pension (accrued through your employer) while you are still working if you are eligible?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. If you choose Option A, will all characteristics such as your salary, the flexibility of the schedule or workplace, the physical requirements, the stress, match your reference job?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. If you choose Option A, can you choose how many hours you will work right at the start of your new job?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. If you choose Option B, can you look for a new job in the future, in whatever form?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. If you choose Option B, will the offer remain in Option A?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. If you choose Option B, can you expect to find other vacancies and that you will not remain unemployed for a long time?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Vorige Verder

Note: The original items were presented in Dutch and have been translated into English using AI-assisted translation.

Figure A.2: Comprehension Questions for a Change in Hours

To make sure you understand the fabricated situations again, we will ask you some questions again. After these questions, we will provide you with the right information for questions that you have not answered correctly. We do that to make sure everything is clear.

	Yes	No
1. If you choose Option A, will you work 32 hours a week for this job?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. If you choose Option A, will all characteristics except the number of hours worked remain the same as in your reference job?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. If you choose Option A, your salary will be adjusted proportionately. Does this proportionate adjustment mean that your hourly wage will remain the same?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Vorige Verder

Note: The original items were presented in Dutch and have been translated into English using AI-assisted translation.

Appendix B: Reservation Wage and Willingness to Pay

B.1 Sample Size per SSQ

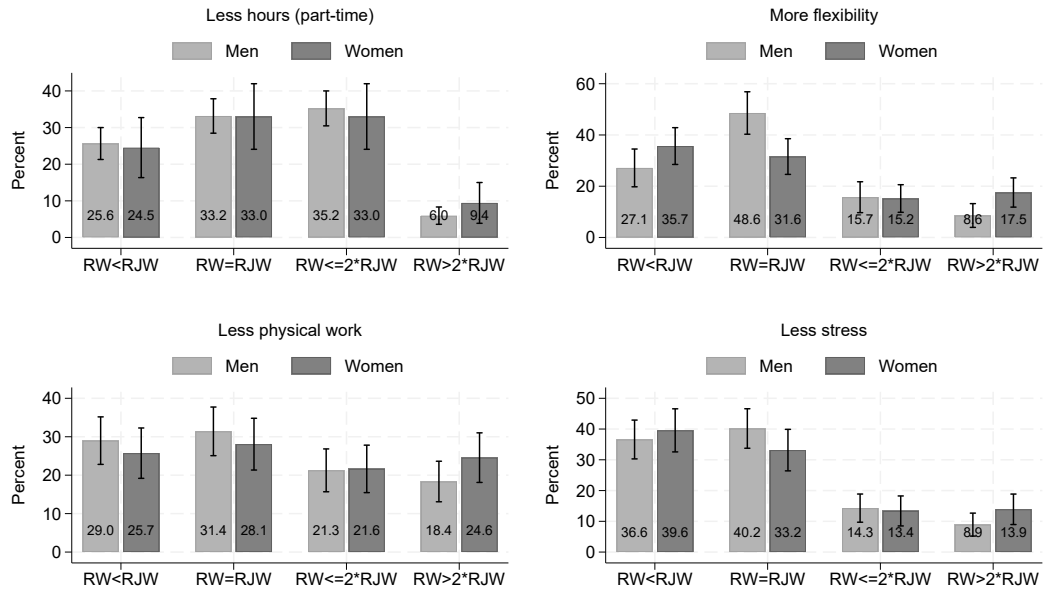
Table B.1: Number of Observations for Reservation Wage Questions

SSQ Alternative (relative to reference job)	Men	Women	Total
Reference job (RW_{ref})	531	487	1,018
<i>Changes in working hours</i>			
Part-time alternative (RW_{pt})	386	106	492
Full-time alternative (RW_{ft})	136	373	509
<i>Changes in flexibility</i>			
More flexible job (RW_{flex})	140	171	311
Less flexible job (RW_{fix})	380	308	688
<i>Changes in physical demands</i>			
Less physically demanding job (RW_{phys-})	207	171	378
More physically demanding job (RW_{phys+})	383	345	728
<i>Changes in stress</i>			
Lower-stress job ($RW_{stress-}$)	224	187	411
Higher-stress job ($RW_{stress+}$)	294	290	584

Notes: The table reports the number of observations for each reservation wage scenario (as gleaned from the SSQs) for the sample of current workers. Respondents receive only the scenarios corresponding to feasible changes relative to their reference job. Gender is based on self-reported sex.

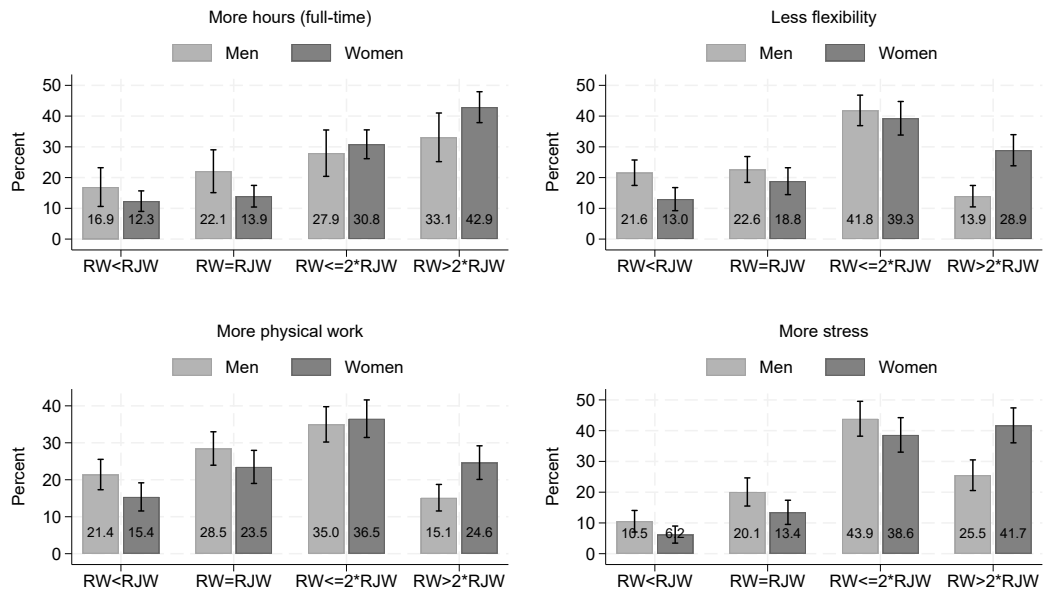
B.2 Reservation Wages over Gender

Figure B.1: Reservation Wage by Gender: Less Demanding Job Characteristics



Notes: The figure shows the distribution of reservation wages relative to the reference job wage by gender, separately, for less demanding job characteristics (part-time work, more flexibility, less physical work, and less stress). Within each panel, bars compare men and women. Definitions of the reservation wage categories and confidence intervals are the same as for Figure 5.

Figure B.2: Reservation Wage by Gender: More Demanding Job Characteristics



Notes: The figure shows the distribution of reservation wages relative to the reference job wage by gender, separately, for more demanding job characteristics (full-time work, less flexibility, more physical work, and more stress). Within each panel, bars compare men and women. Definitions of the reservation wage categories and confidence intervals are the same as for Figure 5.

B.3 Determinants of Reservation Wage of the Reference Job

This section focuses on the determinants of the reservation wage for the job exhibiting the same characteristics as the reference job. We again determine gender-specific age profiles but now explicitly allow these profiles to differ by the characteristics of the reference job itself. This provides a benchmark for the willingness to pay (WTP) analysis by isolating how reservation wages vary with existing job attributes rather than hypothetical changes.

To this end, we introduce an indicator D_{io} for the condition under consideration (working hours, stress, physical demands, or flexibility).⁷ For each dimension, we estimate a separate specification in which D_{io} captures the relevant job characteristic (e.g., full-time vs. part-time, high stress vs. low stress, etc.).

The latent reservation wage of the reference job is specified as

$$RW_{ref,io}^* = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{io} + \beta_2 \text{Age}_i + \beta_3 \text{Age}_i^2 + \beta_4 \text{Female}_i + \beta_5 (D_{io} \times \text{Age}_i) + \beta_6 (D_{io} \times \text{Age}_i^2) + \beta_7 (D_{io} \times \text{Female}_i) + \beta_8 (\text{Age}_i \times \text{Female}_i) + \beta_9 (\text{Age}_i^2 \times \text{Female}_i) + \beta_{10} (D_{io} \times \text{Age}_i \times \text{Female}_i) + \beta_{11} (D_{io} \times \text{Age}_i^2 \times \text{Female}_i) + \gamma' X_i + \varepsilon_{io}, \quad (2)$$

where X_i includes the same set of controls as in the main specification. This formulation corresponds to a fully interacted model in which the effect of the job characteristic D_{io} is allowed to vary flexibly with age and gender.

The outcome variable is censored due to the survey design. Reservation wages are elicited on a bounded scale, implying that some responses are observed at the upper limit. We therefore estimate the model using a Tobit specification with an upper bound of 200.

Figures B.3-B.6 display the predicted reservation wages based on this specification. For each job attribute, predictions are shown over ages 50 to 67 separately for men and women. Within each panel, the two lines correspond to the less and more demanding conditions of the respective job characteristic.

Across most dimensions, reservation wages increase with age for both genders, with relatively similar profiles across conditions. Differences between conditions are generally modest, indicating that reservation wages for the reference job are only weakly differentiated by existing job characteristics.

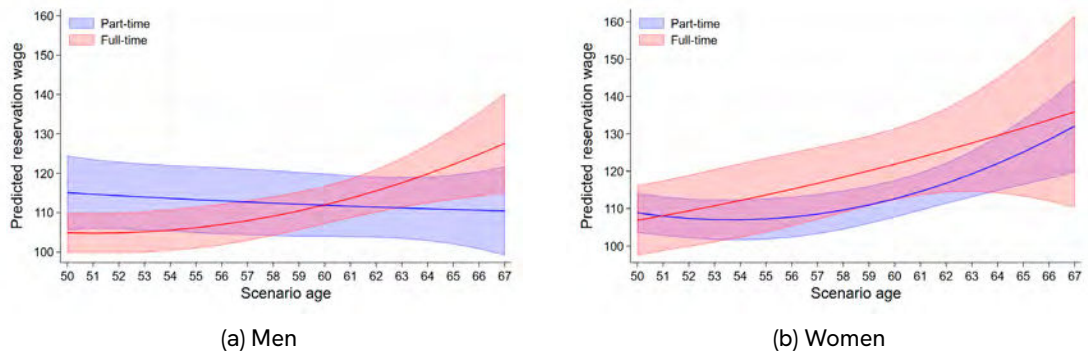
Two patterns stand out. First, for working hours, reservation wages for full-time jobs increase more strongly with age than for part-time jobs, particularly for women, leading to a widening gap at older ages. Second, for stress levels, high-stress jobs are associated with higher and more steeply increasing reservation wages for both genders, indicating a growing compensation requirement for stressful work as retirement approaches.

For flexibility and physical demands, by contrast, age profiles are broadly similar across conditions and genders, with only limited divergence between less and more demanding

⁷ The original variables are measured on a five-point scale. For tractability, we collapse them into binary indicators distinguishing less and more demanding conditions, where the middle category is assigned to the less demanding group.

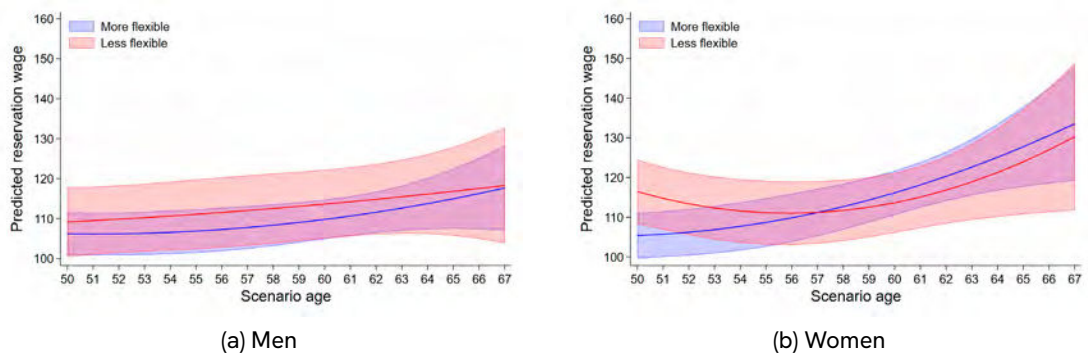
jobs. Overall, the results suggest that reservation wages are primarily shaped by age, with comparatively small differences across existing job attributes. These patterns provide a stable benchmark against which the WTP responses to hypothetical job changes can be interpreted.

Figure B.3: Reservation Wages by Working Hours in the Reference Job



Note: Predicted reservation wages for the reference job by working hours. Predictions are based on Tobit regressions and shown for ages 52-67, separately for men and women, under part-time and full-time working hour conditions.

Figure B.4: Reservation Wages by Job Flexibility in the Reference Job



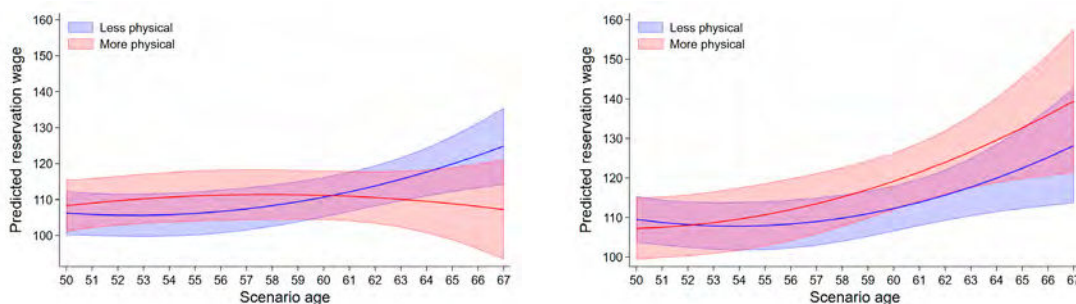
Note: Predicted reservation wages for the reference job by flexibility. Predictions are based on Tobit regressions and shown for ages 52-67, separately for men and women, under more flexible and less flexible job conditions.

B.4 Retirees with a Previous Job

This appendix section presents supplementary results for the subsample of retirees with a previous job. Starting with the full LISS SSQ sample, we first restricted the data to respondents age 40 and over. We then kept only retired respondents and excluded individuals who had not had a previous job. This left 782 respondents. Finally, we restricted our attention to the complete-case sample used in the regression analysis, requiring non-missing values for the reference job reservation wage and all control variables included in the Tobit specifications. The resulting estimation sample consisted of 660 retirees.

This subsample is useful because it allows us to assess whether the main patterns documented for current workers also appear for individuals who have already left employment. In contrast to the worker sample, these respondents had to evaluate their

Figure B.5: Reservation Wages by Physical Demands in the Reference Job

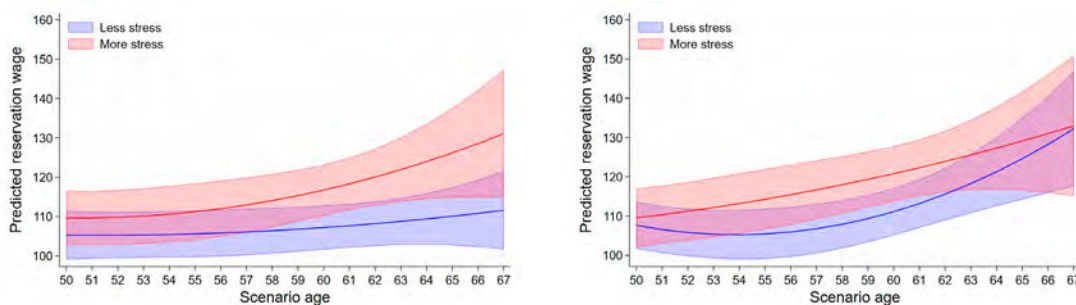


(a) Men

(b) Women

Note: Predicted reservation wages for the reference job by physical demands. Predictions are based on Tobit regressions and shown for ages 52–67, separately for men and women, under less physically demanding and more physically demanding job conditions.

Figure B.6: Reservation Wages by Stress Levels in the Reference Job



(a) Men

(b) Women

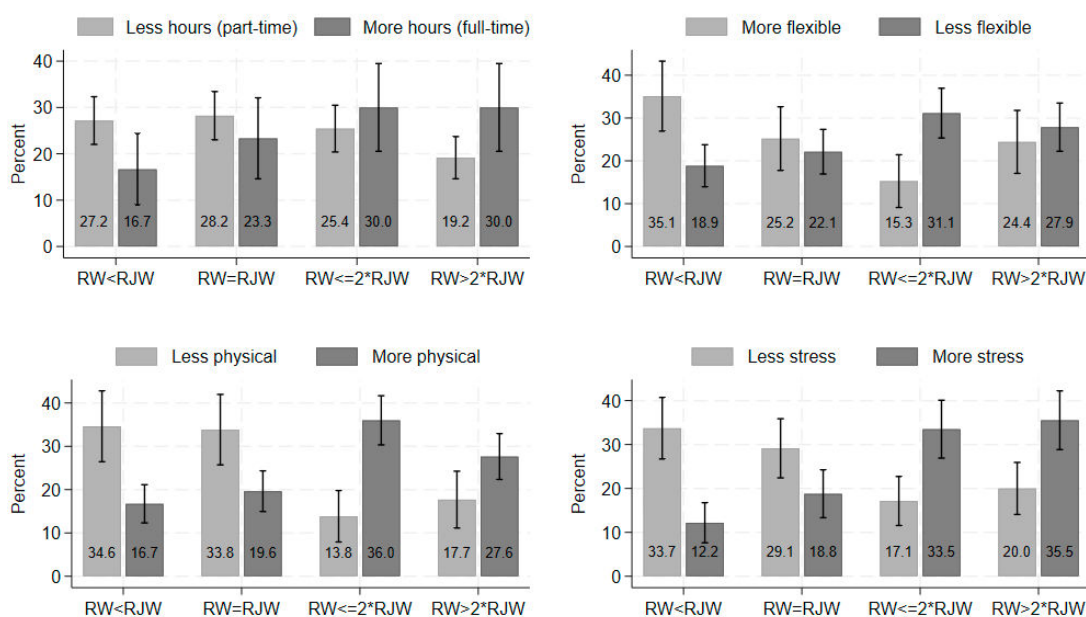
Notes: Predicted reservation wages for the reference job by stress levels. Predictions are based on Tobit regressions and shown for ages 52–67, separately for men and women, under lower-stress and higher-stress job conditions.

former job retrospectively. The results should therefore be interpreted as evidence on retrospective valuations around the retirement margin rather than current job acceptance decisions.

Two differences relative to the worker sample are worth highlighting. First, the distribution of reservation wages among retirees is more strongly concentrated in the upper tail, with a substantially larger share of respondents reporting reservation wages above twice the reference job wage. This is consistent with many retirees being effectively out of the labor market.

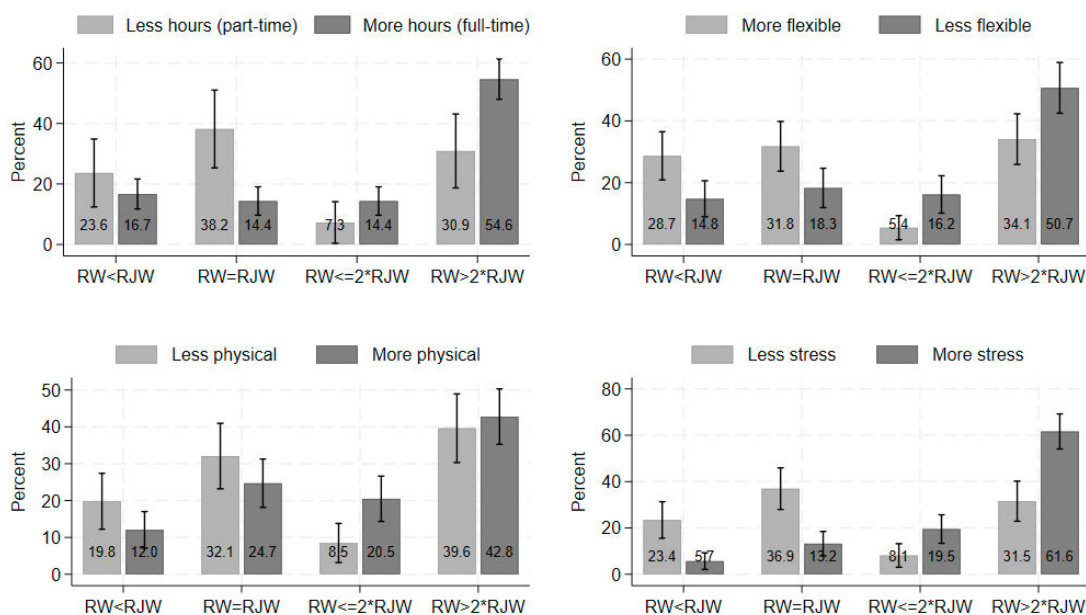
Second, while the qualitative patterns in the WTP profiles are similar, the magnitudes are generally less pronounced and more heterogeneous. In particular, retirees—especially women—more frequently exhibit a small or positive WTP for less demanding job characteristics. Differences between retirees and workers are most visible for working hours and stress levels, where the age gradients are flatter and the asymmetry between more and less demanding conditions is somewhat attenuated.

Figure B.7: Reservation Wage Distribution: Men, Retirees with a Previous Job



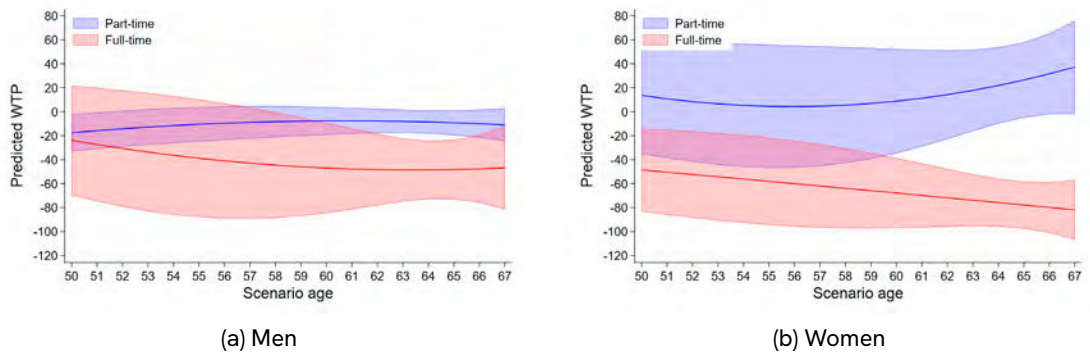
Note: The figure shows the distribution of reservation wages relative to the reference job wage for men with a previous job by job attribute. For each attribute, the two bars compare less demanding (e.g., part-time, more flexible, less physical, less stress) and more demanding (e.g., full-time, less flexible, more physical, more stress) conditions. Definitions of the reservation wage categories and confidence intervals are the same as for Figure 5.

Figure B.8: Reservation Wage Distribution: Women, Retirees with a Previous Job



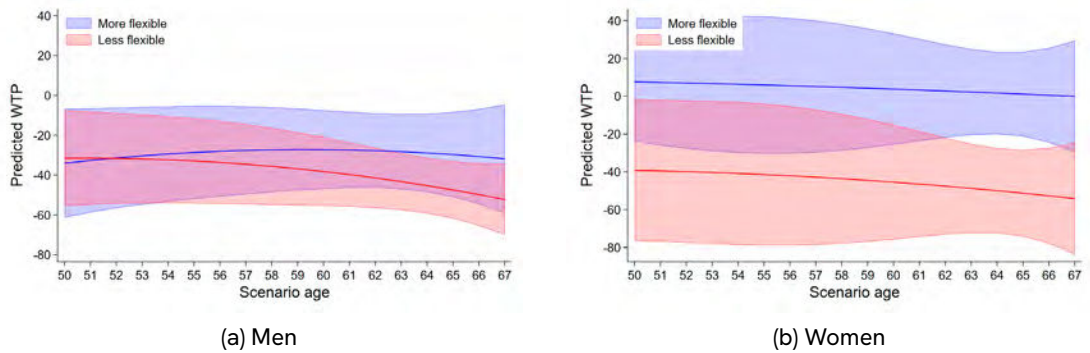
Note: The figure shows the distribution of reservation wages relative to the reference job wage for women with a previous job by job attribute. For each attribute, the two bars compare less demanding (e.g., part-time, more flexible, less physical, less stress) and more demanding (e.g., full-time, less flexible, more physical, more stress) conditions. Definitions of the reservation wage categories and confidence intervals are the same as for Figure 5.

Figure B.9: Predicted WTP by Working Hours: Retirees with a Previous Job



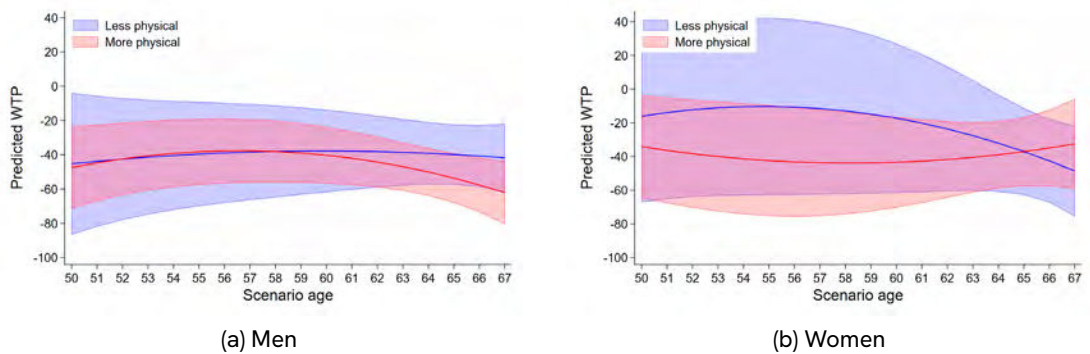
Note: Predicted willingness to pay for changes in working hours, derived from the Tobit specification discussed in the text. Predictions cover ages 50–67 and are shown separately for men and women for both part-time and full-time job conditions in the subsample of retirees with a previous job.

Figure B.10: Predicted WTP by Job Flexibility: Retirees with a Previous Job



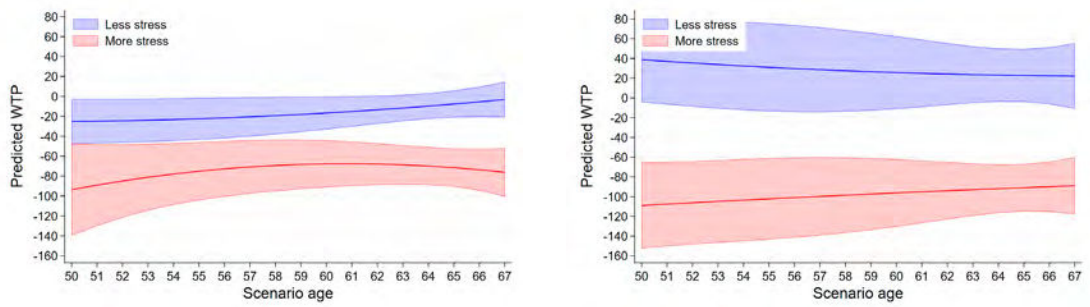
Note: Predicted willingness to pay for changes in job flexibility, derived from the Tobit specification discussed in the text. Predictions cover ages 50–67 and are shown separately for men and women for both more flexible and less flexible job conditions in the subsample of retirees with a previous job.

Figure B.11: Predicted WTP by Physical Demands: Retirees with a Previous Job



Note: Predicted willingness to pay for changes in physical demands, derived from the Tobit specification discussed in the text. Predictions cover ages 50–67 and are shown separately for men and women for both less physical and more physical job conditions in the subsample of retirees with a previous job.

Figure B.12: Predicted WTP by Job Stress: Retirees with a Previous Job



(a) Men

(b) Women

Note: Predicted willingness to pay for changes in job stress, derived from the Tobit specification discussed in the text. Predictions cover ages 50–67 and are shown separately for men and women for both less stressful and more stressful job conditions in the subsample of retirees with a previous job.



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