

# Health and Employment After Fifty (the HEAF study)



## Dear participant

In January 2016, the HEAF study entered its fourth year! We have listened to your comments and have added in some new questions as suggested and we now enclose this year's questionnaire. Thank you for helping to make the HEAF study such a success. Without you, it would not be possible for this type of research to take place.

**Please note:** we need your permission to keep contacting you, so please complete the pale orange consent form included and return it along with your questionnaire.

## What is the HEAF study?

The HEAF study is a research investigation of a group of people aged over 50 years who live in the UK.

As in many countries, people in Britain are living for longer, and an increasing number of older people are staying in work past the traditional retirement age of 65. The aim of the HEAF study is to find out whether working to older ages is good or bad for health and in what ways, and also how often health affects people's ability to work in different types of job at older ages. We will use our findings to lobby government departments, like the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Department of Health, and to inform employers about what can and cannot be expected from older workers.

In 2013, 24 general practices across England agreed to take part in the HEAF study. More than 8000 people filled in the first questionnaire, which included questions on various topics, including health, work, finances, leisure and social activities.

Since then, over 80% of participants have completed two further annual questionnaires.

## Progress so far...

Our first results have now been published! You can read more about the HEAF research study online at:  
<http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/s12889-015-2396-8.pdf>

### In summary:

- More women (54%) than men (46%) are taking part in the study
- 1 in 3 of those taking part are not in paid work (mostly retired)
- Of those not in paid work, 1 in 3 left work for a health reason, often to do with their joints and muscles
- Important factors affecting job loss include poor mental health, chronic pain, and frailty
- Body weight is closely linked with joint and muscle pain, especially leg pain, and the two together increase the risk of job loss
- 1 in 5 people feel their job is insecure
- 1 in 7 people often lose sleep worrying about work, and 1 in 10 find it difficult to cope financially
- 1 in 4 people are in heavy manual employment, while many people in their 50s and 60s are still working regular night-time shifts

## Plans for the future

We still have lots of work to do!

We have a wealth of information from all the questionnaires that you have completed. Over the next year we plan to focus on a number of subjects including:

- How sleep and health may be affected by retirement
- How job satisfaction and working conditions affect people's decisions about working or retiring
- Money worries and working to older ages

Our initial findings have been discussed at scientific meetings in Europe and Canada. We are hoping to be able to compare our findings with those from similar studies in the Netherlands and Denmark so we can see how different countries deal with working to older ages. This study is also attracting interest from policy makers in government and the NHS.

You can get further information about all our research at:

[www.mrc.soton.ac.uk/cmhw](http://www.mrc.soton.ac.uk/cmhw)

## Moving house? Please let us know!

If you are changing address, please get in touch and let us know your new contact details:-

**telephone: 023 80777624**

**email: [chl@mrc.soton.ac.uk](mailto:chl@mrc.soton.ac.uk)**

We hope you will be able to continue to help us. We really do value your support for the HEAF study because it is only with your help that we are able to carry out this important work.

**Thank you!**