# STREAM – evidence from a work and retirement cohort

Background

To deal with the ageing of the population, it is essential that older persons continue working longer. Although an increasing number of studies address sustainable employability in an ageing society, there are several gaps in our knowledge which are primarily due to a lack of longitudinal studies in which a broad set of potential determinants are examined. The Study on Transitions in Employment, Ability and Motivation (STREAM) was designed to contribute to filling these gaps, and to provide better insight into the factors that influence transitions in employment and productivity among older workers.

Design

STREAM is a longitudinal study among persons aged 45-64 at the start of the measurement. More than 12,000 employees, 1,000 self-employed persons, and 2,000 unemployed persons participated in the first measurement. Between 2010 and 2013, participants annually filled in an online questionnaire and in 2015 the fifth measurement started. Alongside the online questionnaire, qualitative interview studies are being conducted with a sample of the participants. Questionnaire data can also be matched with register data from Statistics Netherlands. Below the research framework is shown.
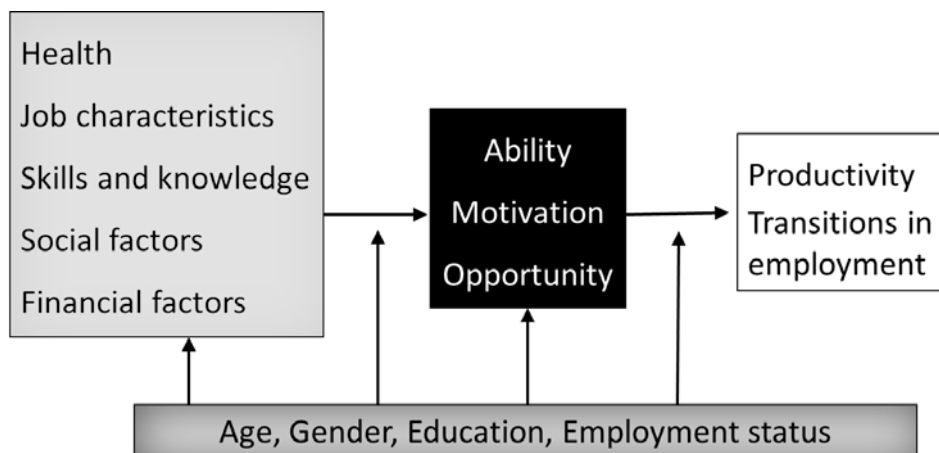
STREAM research framework

Results

Response percentages were high. In the second measurement 82% of the original participants participated, in the third measurement 80%, in the fourth measurement 74% and in the fifth measurement 66%. At this moment STREAM analyses already resulted in 14 papers in international peer-reviewed journals, 6 publications in Dutch and 6 reports for policymakers.

Discussion

The strength of longitudinal studies is their capacity to approximate causality due to the temporality of the observed association, i.e. the cause precedes the effect in time. Therefore, longitudinal

studies collect data which better enable us to disentangle cause and effect than cross sectional studies. However, we still should be careful in the interpretation of the results.