

WORK AMONG SOVIETS OF RETIREMENT

AGE

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Since World War II, Soviet authorities have sought to maximize the labor force participation of all Soviet citizens. The tremendous losses of manpower in World War II are felt less severely over time, but declining fertility, especially in European Russia, has led to a discussion in the West as to how the Soviet Union can fulfill its future manpower needs (Anderson and Silver, 1985; Feshbach and Rapaway, 1973, 1976).

This need for manpower has contributed to the Soviet Union having the highest rate of female labor force participation of any country in the world (cf. Anderson, 1987). It has also motivated the Soviet government to encourage retirement-age people to work. As the educational levels of successive cohorts increase, the elderly increasingly become a source of skilled, educated manpower.

This paper investigates the factors that lead to work among those past normal retirement age in the Soviet Union, as well as factors that account for how well compensated an older person is for working. Retirement age marks a significant point in the life course, at which many people stop working for pay. However, retirement-age people who work for pay fall into two distinct subgroups. First, there are those who continue to work because they have fairly good jobs and they enjoy their work. Second, there are those who take jobs due to economic necessity. They tend not to like these jobs, and the jobs do not pay well. Those who continue past retirement age to work at a job they started before retirement age are paid as well as younger people with

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comparable characteristics. However, those who begin new jobs after retirement age are not paid well, even in comparison with other people of comparable education, job experience, and job type.

Soviet policy has been aimed at increasing the number of retirement-age workers of the first type. The evidence suggests that the more this happens, the happier retirement-age workers will be.

Importance of Work Among Those Past Retirement Age

By the conventional definition used in Soviet statistics, the working ages begin at sixteen. They end at age fifty-five for women and sixty for men. In order to qualify for a pension, normally men must have twenty-five years of public sector work experience and women twenty years. Increasingly, however, work for pay does not begin at age sixteen, due to the deferment of full-time work associated with completion of schooling; and work does not stop upon reaching legal retirement age, as more and more older people continue to work for pay.²

Soviet pension provisions have encouraged older persons to work for pay. Since 1956, the amount of Soviet pensions has increased substantially. Most people can work and receive a pension without

²The original rationale for a shorter period of required work to qualify for a pension for women than for men was that women were more "fragile" than men. More recently, the rationale has been that most women must take some time away from work for pay in order to bear and raise children (Anikееva, 1982).

Although 60 for men and 55 for women are the normal retirement ages, people who are engaged in especially arduous or dangerous jobs may be able to retire as early as age 50 for men, with commensurately fewer number of years of work necessary in order to qualify for a pension, and as early as age 45 for women (Zakarov, 1974).

reduction of the pension amount.³ Also, since 1974, people who continue to work past normal retirement age obtain a bonus upon retiring for additional years worked (Scherer, 1979)⁴. People who have not accumulated the required number of years of work experience for an old-age pension can meet these requirements by working enough additional years past normal retirement age. Some Soviet scholars have argued that little more can be done with economic incentives, but that to increase retirement-age work further, improvements are needed in working conditions and the availability of part-time work (Acharkan, 1977; Martirosian, 1976).

The focus of governmental efforts has been on encouraging people to continue in their same jobs after they reach retirement age. There has not been as much emphasis on drawing non-working retirees into paid work. Nor has much attention been given to rehabilitation and retraining of partially disabled workers so that they can qualify for full-time jobs (such as those that do not require heavy physical labor) instead of remaining on disability pensions (see Anderson, Silver, and Velkoff, 1987).

³There was a large increase in the amount of most pensions in 1956. An important change that does not directly affect the SIP respondents was the extension of pensions to cover collective farmers in 1964 (Zakarov, 1974).

Although most people can continue to work and receive a pension, in some jobs people cannot receive a pension while they continue to work. Among such jobs are those of economists, bookkeepers, and designers (Demidov, 1977b).

⁴There has been concern in the Soviet press that people may not generally be aware that they can continue to work and still receive a pension (Demidov, 1977a).

Retirement-Age People in the SIP General Survey

The SIP General Survey reflects the high proportion working among those of retirement age for the Soviet Union as a whole. Of the 144 men and 411 women interviewed in the SIP General Survey who were past normal retirement age⁵ at the end of the last normal period of life in the Soviet Union,⁶ 68% of the men and 53% of the women worked at least for a while after they had reached retirement age.⁷

At the end of the LNP, 81% of the men age 55-64 were working for pay, and 40% of the women age 55-64 were working for pay. In the United States in 1979, the comparable figures were 73% for men and 42% for women (Soldo, 1980). Thus, the SIP women had almost as high labor force participation rates as American women from their mid-fifties through

⁵The Soviet Interview Project (SIP) completed interviews with 2,793 emigrants from the Soviet Union who arrived in the United States between January 1, 1979 and April 30, 1982. The survey was administered by NORC. The field work took place in April-December 1983. The instrument was administered in Russian and lasted approximately three hours. The response rate was 79%. The results of the Soviet Interview Project are intended to be generalizable to a referent population of Soviets of European background who lived in medium-sized or large cities. For more discussion of the sample and data quality, see Anderson and Silver (1986a).

Respondents were between age 21 age and age 70 at the date of arrival in the United States. Thus, SIP respondents could have been no older than 70 years of age at the time they left the Soviet Union. Since labor force participation declines with age, Soviet citizens older than age 70 would be even less likely to work for pay than younger people of retirement-age.

⁶The last normal period of life in the Soviet Union (LNP) is defined as the five-year period of life in the Soviet Union before the respondent's life substantially changed due to the decision to emigrate. Usually the LNP ended the month before the respondent applied for an exit visa.

⁷A woman was classified as having worked after reaching retirement age if she was age 56 or older when she last worked. A man was classified as having worked after reaching retirement age if he was age 61 or older when he last worked.

their mid-sixties, even though these ages were after normal retirement age for Soviet women and not for American women. The SIP males had higher rates than American men, even though the ages overlapped the Soviet retirement age but not the American retirement age for men.

In order to assess the labor force potential of the older respondents in the SIP General Survey, it is useful to look at their characteristics. Columns 1 and 2 of Table 1 show their distribution by age at the end of the LNP, education, size of city of residence, marital status, and living arrangements.

The Soviet government especially needs additional labor in large cities. This is partially because the government has pursued a policy of trying to limit the growth of the largest cities, through allowing only small amounts of additional housing to be built (Chinn, 1977). Many older people are already living in the city, often sharing living space with married children. If they work, then the production in the city increases without the increased demand on social services that younger workers would generate (Moses, 1982; Zakarov, 1983). For example, post-retirement age workers make virtually no demand for educational services for their children.

Some Soviet scholars have been skeptical about how much older people can contribute to alleviating the manpower shortage if they have a low educational level (Khorev et al., 1973). However, the better-educated members of the post-retirement population of large cities could make a substantial contribution to the alleviation of this problem.

Retirement-age respondents in the SIP survey of both sexes tended to be fairly highly educated, like the SIP respondents as a whole. Also, like the SIP respondents as a whole, they tended to come from large

cities. Their high educational level and their concentration in large cities makes them a more desirable pool for paid work than older people in the Soviet Union generally. Hence, an examination of the work behavior of these people should indicate how well Soviet labor policy is working among an especially important target group of older people, and also could suggest changes in work behavior in the general Soviet elderly population in the future.

There are some important differences in the family statuses of the two sexes. Although 44% of the women were widowed, only 3% of the men were widowed. In fact, all but ten of the 144 men were married at the end of the LNP. Also, although 12% of the women lived in a household with a child age 6 or younger, only 6% of the men (9 men) lived in a household with a young child. The young children in these households were not the children of these older people. Usually they were their grandchildren.

Who Works After Retirement Age?

A Soviet survey of people who were 1-2 years younger than retirement age showed that 79.5% of men and 61.5% of women claimed they would like to work past retirement age. The main reason was that they liked their jobs. Of those who did not plan to continue working, the main reasons given were poor health or family obligations (Kogan, 1982).

In another Soviet study, among people who continued to work after retirement age (men age 60-63, women age 55-58), the main reasons were the difficulty of living only on a pension, the desire to supplement family income, and satisfaction with their job. Thirty percent of the

men and twenty percent of the women mentioned the attractiveness of being able to hold a job and receive a pension at the same time (Yvert-Jalu, 1985).

Shapiro (1980) has claimed that the factors that best explain whether people continue to work after reaching retirement age are (in order of priority) income level, education, and if the work was mental work. In his study, he found that among retirement-age people, one-third had changed employment in the last three years.

Another survey reports the reasons why retirement-age people did not work (Slobozhanin, 1977): 32% simply did not want to continue to work; of this 32%, 70% because of physical labor; 16% because of the absence of part-time work; 9% because of the absence of work at home; and 3% because of poor labor organization.

Columns 3 and 4 of Table 1 show the proportion of retirement-age people who worked for pay according to various characteristics. Post-retirement work increases with education for women, but it has no relation to education for men. There is no relation to city size for either sex. Women in households with small children and women whose husbands were alive at the end of the LNP were less likely to work after reaching retirement age.

Among the SIP respondents, 50% of those who became eligible for pensions could have continued to work for pay and have received their pension at the same time. Seventy-two percent of those who could have received their pension and continued to work did continue to work.*

*The questions about pensions were asked of a random one-third of the respondents. The small number of people who answered these questions allow statement such as those in this paragraph but do not allow complex analyses.

The Decline of Labor Force Participation with Age

Table 1 referred to whether people worked at all after reaching retirement age, but it did not address the extent to which retirement-age people of different ages work for pay. In light of the Soviet emphasis on post-retirement work, does reaching retirement age make any difference at all? Alternatively, is there a general linear decline in labor force participation with age, with a preset retirement age being unimportant?

Table 2 shows the percentage of people by sex and five-year age group from 41 through 70 who worked for pay at the end of the LNP. Retirement age does make a difference in labor force participation. Women's labor force participation dropped from 78% for those age 51-55 to 40% for those age 56-60; men's labor force participation dropped from 87% for those age 56-60 to 64% for those age 61-65.

The Soviet literature claims that a major reason why some people do not work past retirement age is poor health. The information in Table 2 shows that ill-health cannot be the only reason that retirement-age citizens do not work. If it were, the labor force participation rates of retirement-age women would be higher, since generally, women of a given age have better health than men of the same age;¹⁰ at every age, the women's labor force participation rates are lower than those of men.¹⁰

¹⁰In developed countries in general and in the Soviet Union in particular, older women have substantially lower mortality rates than men of the same age (cf. Anderson and Silver, 1986b).

¹⁰A random one-third of the SIP respondents were asked questions about pensions. None of the post-retirement-age men held disability pensions.

Choices Upon Reaching Retirement Age

For some purposes, the distinction between whether people worked or did not work after reaching normal retirement age is not very useful. The Soviet literature claims that the main reasons why people work after reaching normal retirement age are that they enjoy their work or that they need the money. I find that these two kinds of reasons pertain to distinctive subgroups of the retirement-age population.

Table 3 shows the distribution of retirement-age people by sex according to whether they: 1) never worked; 2) worked before retirement age but not after retirement age; 3) worked after retirement age at a job they began after reaching retirement age; or 4) continued after retirement age in a job they began before retirement age. About as many women did not work after retirement age as continued in their pre-retirement jobs; the bulk of men continued in their pre-retirement jobs. Almost all persons of both sexes worked before retirement age; no one who did not work before retirement age began to work after retirement age. In fact, all people of both sexes who worked at all after retirement age also worked immediately before they reached retirement age. Fairly few people of either sex began a new job after reaching retirement age.

Table 4 shows characteristics of three groups of retirement-age people and the comparable characteristics of people of the same sex age 41 or older.¹¹ The three categories of retirement-age people are very different. In general, those who continued in a pre-retirement job liked their work; they lived in reasonable economic circumstances.

¹¹Pre-retirement age people age 41 or older were chosen as a comparison group so that the findings would not be affected by education and the early career.

Those who began new jobs did not find jobs that they especially liked; rather they worked out of economic necessity. This interpretation is supported by the results in Table 4. Those who continued in their pre-retirement jobs were more satisfied with that job than any other group. That they were not just generally satisfied and agreeable people is indicated by their lesser distinctiveness in satisfaction with their overall standard of living. Also, the per capita income of their households if they were not included compares well with that of pre-retirement-age people.¹²

On the other hand, those who began a new job after retirement did not like the job, and they were not well-paid for such jobs. Also, their households had a very low per capita income and their economic situation would have been worse if they had not worked for pay.

Those who did not work after retirement age fall into a middle category in terms of economic status. For both men and women, a higher proportion of those who did not work after retirement age than other groups reported that they had poor health.¹³

Much of the Soviet literature about retirement-age workers, as well as press reports in the West, concentrates on those older people who have undesirable jobs. They would primarily be those people who began new jobs after reaching retirement age.

¹²The per capita income without the respondent could only be calculated for those respondents who lived in a household that contained at least two people.

¹³The question about health was asked only of a random one-third of the respondents.

Sonin (1978) claims that only one-third of all retirees succeed in returning to work. Often they are not able to obtain the kind of job that they want. He also claims that one-third of all employed pensioners work in low-level, undesirable jobs, such as a guard or watchman. Rabkina and Rimashevskaya (1978) claim that half of all pensioners live in families, and that their pension level is on average two-thirds of the per capita income of the remainder of the family.

In the United States, older people who seek new jobs typically have a longer period of job search than younger people. This is partly because employers are reluctant to hire older workers (United States, 1978). A similar phenomenon may occur in the Soviet Union. Enterprise managers may be reluctant to hire older workers if younger workers are available. Enterprise managers also may be reluctant to hire older people for part-time work, since the overhead costs, such as record-keeping, for part-time workers are nearly as high as for full-time workers.

Older people do not even have first priority for low level service jobs. Demidov (1977a) has argued that preference should be given to retirement-age people for jobs such as selling juice.

Table 5 shows the distribution by broad occupational categories of pre-retirement people, the last job of retired people who do not work for pay and of retirement-age workers according to when they began their job. Those who began their job after retirement age are more likely to have low level service or manual jobs.

Table 6 shows the average income in rubles per month for the same groups of people by occupational category shown in Table 4. Retirement-age workers in new jobs get paid substantially worse for a given occupational category than any other group.

Determinants of Earnings in Retirement Job

Very few SIP respondents engaged in part-time work. Only 12% of retirement-age workers worked less than 35 hours a week. This means that part-time work was not readily available, or that available part-time jobs were not attractive, even though there is substantial discussion in the Soviet literature about the desirability of part-time work for older people (Slobozhanin, 1977), and even though a substantial number of old people claim they would find part-time work attractive (Sonin, 1978).

Table 7 shows the determinants of income for people age 41 or older. The number of years of work experience, the income at first job, and whether the person had at least some higher education are taken into account. In addition, for retirement-age people, a dummy variable takes the value "1" if the person began the retirement-age job after reaching retirement age, and is "0" otherwise. There is also a dummy variable which takes the value "1" if the person is past retirement age and is "0" otherwise.

Table 8 shows that once income at first job, years of work experience, and whether a person has at least some higher education are taken into account, being past retirement age has a small negative, but statistically insignificant, effect on income.¹⁴ However, those who began their jobs after reaching retirement age have substantially lower incomes.

¹⁴The negative coefficient for years worked for men reflects the greater number of years since completion of education for men with low levels of education.

This analysis suggests that there is not substantial discrimination against older workers who continue in their job in terms of obtaining raises. Thus, older workers who continue in their jobs reap additional benefit sfor continuing to work. However, even when factors such as educational level and job experience are taken into account, older workers who begin new jobs suffer substantially in income.

Concluding Remarks

The Soviet government's policy of trying to induce older workers to remain in their jobs has been quite successful among the well-educated, big-city, SIP respondents. Those workers who do continue in their jobs tend to be quite satisfied with their jobs, and they are paid reasonably in comparison to younger workers.

It is not clear that labor force participation of older men can be increased much more without improvement in the general health of older men. Women's work at older ages also probably will not increase much until there are further increases in female labor force participation before retirement age.

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TABLE 1. Characteristics of Retirement-Age People and Proportion Working After Retirement Age in SIP General Survey

	Distribution of Retirement-Age People		Percentage Working Past Retirement Age	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<u>Education</u>				
Less than Complete Secondary	44	44	47	77
Complete Secondary	38	29	55	50
Some Higher or More	<u>18</u>	<u>27</u>	66	74
Total	100%	100%		
<u>City Size</u>				
Less than 500,000	20	22	43	63
500,000-999,999	8	12	67	82
1,000,000 or More	<u>72</u>	<u>66</u>	55	67
Total	100%	100%		
<u>Household Composition</u>				
No Children Less than 6 Years Old	88	94	55	67
One or More Children Less than 6 Years Old	<u>12</u>	<u>6</u>	41	78
Total	100%	100%		
<u>Marital Status</u>				
Married	50	93	46	69
Not Married	<u>50</u>	<u>7</u>	60	61
Total	100%	100%		

Note: All characteristics refer to the end of the LNP.

TABLE 2. Proportion Working for Pay by Age and Sex in the SIP General Survey

Age	Women	Men
41-45	85%	96%
46-50	85%	93%
51-55	78%	91%
56-60	40%	87%
61-65	27%	64%
66-70	20%	48%

Note: Work Status is at the end of the LNP.

TABLE 3. Distribution of Timing of Beginning of Work After Retirement Age

	Women	Men
Never Worked	4%	1%
Did Not Work After Retirement Age	42%	31%
Worked After Retirement Age, Began Job After Retirement Age	10%	7%
Worked After Retirement Age, Began Job Before Retirement Age	<u>44%</u>	<u>61%</u>
Total	100%	100%

TABLE 4. Characteristics of People by Retirement Activities

WOMEN				
	People Age 41-55	No Retirement Job	Continued Pre- Retirement Job	Began New Job
% Very Satisfied with Job	35%	25%	46%	7%
% Very Satisfied with Standard of Living	13%	12%	9%	5%
Income in Rubles per Month in Last Job	145	118	136	89
Per Capita Income Remainder of Household	242	275	269	154
% With Poor Health	15%	21%	16%	0%
MEN				
	People Age 41-60	No Retirement Job	Continued Pre- Retirement Job	Began New Job
% Very Satisfied with Job	30%	41%	41%	0%
% Very Satisfied with Standard of Living	11%	11%	15%	10%
Income in Rubles per Month in Last Job	206	187	196	131
Per Capita Income Remainder of Household	217	186	267	175
% With Poor Health	24%	47%	37%	27%

TABLE 5. Distribution of Occupations of Pre-Retirement Age People, and of Working Retirement-Age People, According to When They Began Their Job

WOMEN				
	People Age 41-55	People Age 56-70		
		No Retirement Job	Continued Pre- Retirement Job	Began New Job
Managers and Professionals	54	41	55	39
Engineering/Technical	15	8	10	3
Other Service	12	21	17	33
Workers and Agriculture	<u>19</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>26</u>
Total	100%	99%	101%	101%

MEN				
	People Age 41-60	People Age 61-70		
		No Retirement Job	Continued Pre- Retirement Job	Began New Job
Managers and Professionals	41	51	36	10
Engineering/Technical	20	11	16	20
Other Service	3	7	6	10
Workers and Agriculture	<u>36</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>60</u>
Total	100%	100%	99%	100%

TABLE 6. Income in Rubles per Month by Occupation for Pre-Retirement-Age People, and for Working Retirement-Age People, According to When They Began Their Job

WOMEN				
	People Age 41-55	People Age 56-70		
		No Retirement Job	Continued Pre- Retirement Job	Began New Job
Managers and Professionals	153	122	142	108
Engineering/Technical	170	158	177	110
Other Service	111	94	108	74
Workers and Agriculture	123	118	125	76

MEN				
	People Age 41-60	People Age 61-70		
		No Retirement Job	Continued Pre- Retirement Job	Began New Job
Managers and Professionals	218	208	212	70*
Engineering/Technical	210	134	241	170
Other Service	183	98	127	250*
Workers and Agriculture	193	183	176	108

*: One case only.

TABLE 7. Multiple Regression Results for Determinants of Income in Last Job, People Age 41 or Older

Variable	B	T	Significance of T
<u>WOMEN</u>			
Years Worked	.751011	3.155	.0017
Monthly Income in First Job	.173927	4.378	.0000
Dummy for Some Higher Education or More	52.193673	10.527	.0000
Dummy for Began New Job After Retirement	-54.640212	-4.364	.0000
Dummy for Past Retirement Age	-6.834133	-1.334	.1827
(Constant)	89.708973	12.390	.0000
Overall F = 37.58756			
Significance of Overall F = .0000			
N = 635			
<u>MEN</u>			
Years Worked	-.078724	-.160	.8730
Monthly Income in First Job	.128975	2.602	.0095
Dummy for Some Higher Education or More	46.760905	5.595	.0000
Dummy for Began New Job After Retirement	-50.745262	-1.638	.1020
Dummy for Past Retirement Age	-2.066269	-.183	.8545
(Constant)	172.455138	10.899	.0000
Overall F = 10.56782			
Significance of Overall F = .0000			
N = 506			