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## Work History and Later-Life Labor Force Participation: Evidence from a Large Telecommunications Firm

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Gangaram Singh and Anil Verma

## Abstract

This study examines the relationship between later-life labor force participation and work history. Survey data on 1,805 Bell Canada early retirees show that 40% returned to work, of whom 17% took full-time employment, 51% took parttime employment, and 32% became self-employed. Return to work was positively related to work attachment and tenure in the last job, and negatively related to having been in a non-managerial occupation and lacking upward career mobility. Those with high attachment to work (as measured by responses to several survey questions) were more likely to return to full-time employment than to retire. Clerical workers were less likely than managers to choose parttime employment over retirement. Both lateral (versus upward) mobility in the last job and high work attachment were negatively related to the choice of selfemployment over retirement.

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\*The authors are grateful to the Institute for Human Development, Lifecourse and Aging, University of Toronto, for access to data collected in a survey financed by Human Resources Development Canada under the "Issues of an Aging Work Force Project." Helpful comments for this paper were received from Morley Gunderson, Victor Marshall, Douglas Hyatt, and Peter Doeringer.

# WORK HISTORY AND LATER-LIFE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION: EVIDENCE FROM A LARGE TELECOMMUNICATIONS FIRM

GANGARAM SINGH and ANIL VERMA\*

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**I**n this study we analyze a combination of administrative and survey data on 1,805 early retirees of Bell Canada, Canada's largest telecommunications firm. These data have some important advantages that enable us to shed new light on later-life labor force participation. First, because they are from multiple sources, they reduce the likelihood of common method variance. Sec-

ond, the early retirement campaign at Bell Canada typifies such programs in the labor market as a whole (CARNET 1995). Third, our data contain work history variables (career mobility, occupation, job satisfaction, work attachment, and tenure) that have not previously been examined.

## Research and Theory

A large body of research has focused on later-life labor force participation. Health and the financial ability to retire at the time

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Confidentiality agreements prevent full disclosure of the data used in this study. Once appropriate steps are taken to mask the identity of the sampled individuals, however, the data can be made available in a form that will allow other researchers to check the methods used. Contact the first author at College of Business Administration, San Diego State University, 5500 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA 92182.

of the transition have received much attention. Observers have reported that individuals in tribal societies work until poor health prevents them from doing so (Ewers 1967; Guemple 1980). A similar though less perfect relationship is found in industrialized societies: as one grows older, his or her physical ability is reduced and the probability of retirement increases (Wentworth 1945; Steckler 1955; Sammartino 1987).<sup>1</sup> Hence, we can expect a negative relationship between the decision to return to work and poor health.

Following World War II, a few years after Social Security became a reality, economists began examining the effects of financial ability on later-life labor force participation (Singh 1998). Central to the income-leisure choice model is the assertion that the participation decision is determined by an individual's reservation wage—the wage at which he or she is indifferent between retiring and continuing to participate in the labor force. Any condition that increases an individual's reservation wage will positively affect the likelihood of deciding to retire. Pension benefits, for example, increase an individual's wealth, increase his or her reservation wage, and encourage the decision to retire.<sup>2</sup> Thus we may expect a negative relationship between the return-to-work decision and wealth.

Almost all of these studies used a data source that contained only pension cover-

age information (Hardy and Hazelrigg 1999). There is reason to believe, however, that other financial factors influence the retirement decision. For example, in Canada, employees have access to three types of private pension benefits—full and immediate, reduced, and deferred. Reduced and deferred pension benefits generally provide less wealth than full and immediate pension benefits, and thus are associated with a lower reservation wage and a higher probability of returning to work. Access to public pension benefits from the Canada/Quebec Pension Plan (C/QPP) and Old Age Security (OAS) systems, in contrast, is likely to increase one's wealth, thereby raising the reservation wage and discouraging return to work. Also likely to increase wealth, raise the reservation wage, and discourage return to work are investments, which provide annuities, and ownership of a mortgage-free home. Indebtedness, generally a sign of less wealth, is associated with a lower reservation wage and a higher likelihood of returning to work.

Although poor health and financial ability have been the primary focus of most research examining determinants of later-life labor force participation, several other factors have received modest attention. Political economists, for example, have cited the state of the labor market as a determinant of the work-to-retirement transition. Periods of high unemployment may motivate an older worker to withdraw from the labor force. This outcome is supported by the discouraged worker hypothesis, which states that a worker who cannot find suitable employment will be apt to withdraw from the labor force (Peracchi and Welch 1994; McDonald and Wanner 1984; Clark and Barker 1981). Hence, we anticipate a negative relationship between periods of high unemployment and the return-to-work decision.

Others have considered the influence of gender and age. Bernasek (2001) argued that employment discrimination is more likely to affect older women than older men, and women are more likely than men to be in monotonous clerical jobs that have little intrinsic job satisfaction—two reasons

<sup>1</sup>The investigation of the impact of health on retirement has faced a series of methodological challenges. One particularly strong criticism has been that self-reported health status, on which many studies have relied, may be unreliable because it can be influenced by the social acceptance of poor health as a reason for retirement. A highly influential study, however, showed a high positive correlation between self-reported and more objective measures of health and concluded that there is no need to treat them as separate measures (Butler, Burkhauser, Mitchell, and Pincas 1978).

<sup>2</sup>See Boskin (1977); Boskin and Hurd (1978); Burkhauser and Turner (1978); Fields and Mitchell (1984); Bazzoli (1985); Burtless and Moffitt (1985); Schiller and Weiss (1979); Mitchell and Fields (1984); Mitchell and Luzadis (1988); and Pesando, Hyatt, and Gunderson (1992).

for expecting fewer women than men to return to work after retirement. Possibly accentuating this gender difference, Bernasek speculated, is women's increasing engagement in long careers, which results in greater wealth accumulation than formerly. One countervailing consideration is that a longer career, by accustoming a woman to work, may make the retirement choice more difficult. Overall, however, our impression is that women would be less likely than men to return to work after early retirement. Past research supports that expectation (George, Fillenbaum, and Palmore 1984). Based on both theory and evidence, therefore, we anticipate that women are less likely than men to return to work.

Age is obviously an important determinant of later-life labor force participation, especially in terms of early retirement. In many instances, early retirement incentives to facilitate restructuring and downsizing are made available to those as young as 45 years old (Davidson, Worrell, and Fox 1996). These individuals are still young enough to build a second career, and, compared to workers who are closer to the usual retirement age, they are more likely to be in good health, less likely to have reached their potential income peak, and less likely to have satisfied their psychological need to work. Empirical findings show an inverse relationship between age and the return-to-work decision (Herz 1995; Hayward, Hardy, and Liu 1994; Hardy 1991; Myers 1991). Hence, we expect those who return to work to be younger, on average, than those who do not.

The relationship between later-life labor force participation and education and training can be assessed from two perspectives.<sup>3</sup> First, because general education takes time to accumulate, workers with more educa-

tion are more likely to remain in the labor market as long as possible to recover their investments (Becker 1964). Employers, in addition, are likely to value their skills more than they do the skills of less educated workers. Second, more educated workers are likely to invest in post-retirement training for several reasons: compared to other workers, they are more likely to have had extensive exposure to educational institutions, a family history of respect for education, and a positive experience with education (Picot and Wannell 1987); they may see retraining as a way to protect their substantial investments in education; and the knowledge and experience their education has given them make them better prepared than less educated workers for retraining (Mazerolle and Singh 1999). Workers who accumulate post-retirement training are interested in recovering their investments, and employers are interested in hiring them (Hill 1995). Therefore, workers with more education and post-retirement training can be expected to be more likely to return to work.

Marital status is another important variable influencing later-life labor force participation decisions. A prevalent view is that the retirement decision for married workers is more complex than that for unmarried workers (Szinovacz and DeViney 2000). First, they must pool their resources to determine if retirement is financially viable (Henkens 1999; Smith and Moen 1998; Szinovacz and Ekerdt 1995). Second, they must consider expected changes in the marital relationship after retirement (Beehr 1986; Henkens 1999; Honig 1998; Talaga and Beehr 1995). Third, they must take the spouse's health into consideration (Honig 1996; Talaga and Beehr 1995). No

<sup>3</sup>Investments in human capital are beneficial to the worker and the employer (Becker 1964; Angrist and Krueger 1991). As a result of education and training, workers gain skills that are valued by employers. Individuals invest in education and training to reap the benefits of higher wages (Gunderson and

Riddell 1993). Employers, in turn, pay higher wages for such skills because they are associated with higher productivity (Becker 1964). Investments in education and training are similar to other investments in that they should result in returns for workers and employers that exceed the expenses incurred (Angrist and Krueger 1991).

consensus has emerged as to the net effect of marital status on the retirement decision. Hence, we state no *a priori* expectation, but we explore the relationship.

Work history, in contrast to the variables described above, has received little or no attention as a factor in later-life labor force participation. It is surely reasonable to suppose, however, that a long career will play an important role in the work-to-retirement transition. Career mobility, for instance, is commonly construed as an upward trajectory through which individuals' needs and organization goals are reconciled (Schein 1978). The organizational restructuring, downsizing, and reduction of middle management positions that began in the 1980s, however, resulted in "flatter" structures with fewer upward opportunities and more "blocked career paths" (Foot and Venne 1990; Peters and Waterman 1982; Hammer and Champy 1993). Workers whose career paths were blocked at their career employer might be more likely than other workers to try to continue those paths at a different employer, since a blocked career path may be correlated not only with inadequate financial ability to retire, but also with an unfinished career progress agenda (Taylor and Shore 1995). Hence, we expect that someone who experienced a blocked career path is more likely to return to work than is someone who experienced an upward career path.

Occupational background can affect later-life labor force participation. Verma and Chaykowski (1997) outlined the occupational background of the workers at Bell Canada. In addition to managers, four occupations are common—technicians, operators, sales persons, and clerical workers. Operators and clerical employees are predominantly women, while technicians and sales persons are primarily men. Technicians and operators belonged to the Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union, and sales and clerical workers belonged to the in-house Canadian Telephone Employees Association. Past research has shown that the retirement decision is delayed among those whose jobs involve high

substantive complexity and require social skills (Hayward, Friedman, and Chen 1998). Promotions to managerial ranks require both technical (high substantive complexity) and managerial (social skills) competencies (Verma and Singh 1996). Therefore, we expect that managers are more likely to return to work than are non-managerial workers.

Among the non-managerial groups, we expect to find that technicians and operators return to work at a rate lower than that of clerical workers and sales persons. Technicians and operators began their careers when lifetime employment was the norm. They built their careers around skills that were specific to the employer (Verma and Chaykowski 1997) and that generally cannot be transferred to another employer. Clerical and sales skills, on the other hand, can be transferred to another employer with greater ease (Verma and Singh 1996).

Also almost certainly relevant to the work-to-retirement decision are workers' feelings and attitudes about their work. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment, in particular, can affect individuals' decision whether or not to withdraw from the labor force. Workers who enjoyed high intrinsic job satisfaction (satisfaction unconnected with the job's material rewards) are less likely than other workers to view retirement as desirable (Hanisch 1995). Extrinsic job satisfaction (satisfaction with such material rewards of the job as wages and benefits) could be associated with the pecuniary value of a job. Intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, as such, could both have a positive impact on the return-to-work decision.

Work commitment, too, can affect the work-to-retirement transition. Hanisch (1995) argued that low work commitment increases the desirability of retirement. Sonnenfeld (1988), in *The Hero's Farewell*, argued that many workers create a self-identity that is closely tied to work. Retirement, for such workers, represents a loss of self-identity (Schein 1978; Levinson 1986; Feldman 1988). Richardson and Kilty (1991), relatedly, found that older workers were very dissatisfied with retirement be-

cause it resulted in “rolelessness.” Other studies have found a positive relationship between the return-to-work decision and work attachment (Monette 1996; Parnes and Sommers 1994; Fontana and Frey 1990). Hence, we expect a positive relationship between work attachment and return to work.

The number of years a worker spends at an organization may be important, but the net effect of tenure on the return-to-work decision is unclear. On the one hand, longer tenure reflects competence, attachment to work, and stamina (good health), all of which can positively affect the return-to-work decision. On the other hand, longer tenure can be associated with better financial ability (Kilty and Behling 1985), which could increase one’s reservation wage. Moreover, longer tenure with a single employer could make employment with other employers more difficult, especially if career employment skills are not transferable. Given these mixed implications, we make no prediction as to how tenure affects later-life labor force participation.

### Methods

#### Data Sources

The data for this study were obtained from Bell Canada, Canada’s largest telecommunications firm, founded in 1880 by Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone. Bell Canada is part of Bell Canada Enterprises (BCE), a company whose shares are traded at exchanges in North America, Japan, and Europe. In many ways, Bell has been regarded as a model employer (Verma and Chaykowski 1997). It has a long history of relatively peaceful relations with its two unions. Among the most notable clauses in the collective agreements was one granting immunity from layoffs. In the early 1980s, under pressure to restructure, Bell turned to early retirement incentives to achieve headcount reduction. Between 1985 and 1995, it offered four different early retirement incentive packages: the Early Retirement Incentive Plans (ERIP) in 1990, the

Voluntary Termination Incentive Plan (VTIP) in 1992, the Termination Incentive Package (TIP) in 1994, and the Voluntary Separation Program (VSP) in 1995. The plans were not available to all employees. Generally, they were targeted at departments or occupational groups in which a surplus existed, and those who accepted them were disproportionately older workers, since the accessibility criteria usually included age and years of service.

Our objective was to determine the post-retirement behavior of these early retirees. The population consisted of 6,848 individuals. We gathered data from three sources. First, for our sampling frame, we accessed employment records at Bell Canada. In early 1995, Bell agreed to participate in a larger study, “Issues of an Aging Work Force Project,” sponsored by Human Resource Development Canada (CARNET 1995). Bell provided the following information: names and addresses of those who participated in the early retirement programs, pension types (full and immediate, reduced, and deferred), age, years employed at Bell, age at departure, marital status, occupation, and gender.

Responses to a mail survey provided a second source of information. The survey obtained information on the return-to-work decision, intensity and category of work, health limitations, income source (C/QPP, OAS, and investment), home and debt ownership, education, post-retirement training, career mobility, job satisfaction, and work attachment. Of the 6,848 individuals in the population, 3,614 were sent questionnaires in July 1995. This questionnaire sample consisted of all 45–50-year-old workers in the population together with a random 50% selection of those over 50 years old. The reason for selecting all individuals in the 45–50 age group was to ensure an adequate number of respondents from the younger cohort.<sup>4</sup> Of the 3,614 subjects in

<sup>4</sup>All descriptive statistics are for the weighted data, which are corrected for the initial stratification by age.

the survey sample, 38 failed to reply due to poor health, death, or relocation; of the remainder, 2,147 (60%) returned questionnaires that were completed or partially completed.

The population and our questionnaire sample were compared with respect to age, tenure, departure age, marital status, and occupation (CARNET 1995). Statistical tests (t and Z) show statistically significant differences, but the magnitudes are small. Compared to the population, individuals in the questionnaire sample were, on average, 0.48 years younger; had .62 year greater tenure (32.05 years, versus 31.43); were about four months younger when they left Bell (56.35 years, versus 56.82); had a 2.3% higher incidence of widows (the greatest single marital status difference); and contained 7.1% more managers. Men comprised 63.2% of the sample, compared to 57.5% of the population.

The third source of information was Statistics Canada, which provided unemployment rates for the years in which the early retirees left Bell Canada (finish date from the employment records). Since the questionnaire respondents were well distributed across Ontario, we used Statistics Canada's unemployment rates for that province.

The data contained complete information on return-to-work and all of the relevant independent variables for 1,805 (84%) of the respondents.<sup>5</sup> Employment records are generally more accurate than survey data. An in-depth survey of work history variables such as career mobility, job satisfaction, and work attachment is feasible only through self-reports. Pension type is consistently measured. Inter-organizational differences, such as pension structure, are controlled. While the Bell data offer a unique window for examining the relationship between the return-to-work

decision, intensity and category of employment obtained, and work history, they also have disadvantages. As in all case studies, the generalizability of the results is limited.

### Variables and Measures

This study contains two dependent variables. The first captures the return-to-work decision. The respondents were asked, "Have you ever worked for pay since leaving Bell?" Those who answered yes were asked, "Were you working for someone else or were you self-employed?", "Was this job full-time or part-time work?", and "Was this a full-year job or part of a year?" Along with the return-to-work question, these questions were used to create a second dependent variable: a nominal category variable defining the intensity and category of employment obtained (retire, return to full-time employment, become employed part-time, and become self-employed).

We asked two questions in the survey to gather valid information on respondents' health. Our yes-no question designed to capture poor health was, "Are you limited in the kind or amount of activity you can do because of a long-term condition or health problem, that is, one that is expected to last six months or more?" We interpret an affirmative answer as indicating poor health. One problem with this question is that it was asked in 1995 and did not relate to the time of the work-to-retirement transition. However, the majority (92%) of the respondents, in response to our second health-related question, reported that since leaving Bell their health was "about the same."

Information on private pension benefits was taken from employment records. Bell did not release the dollar amounts, but did provide information that allowed us to distinguish three categories of pension benefits: full and immediate (reference category), reduced, and deferred. The remaining financial information was taken from the survey. Three yes-no questions asked respondents whether they were receiving income from C/QPP, OAS, or investments. Respondents were also asked to

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<sup>5</sup>Where possible, missing values were imputed by mean substitution. For the 342 cases with missing values on the dependent variables and some independent variables such as occupation, it was impossible to impute a value. As such, they were dropped from the analysis.

report whether they owned their homes mortgage-free. The final wealth variable captures whether the respondents owed a debt over \$5,000. Our assumption is that these wealth measures are exogenously determined. Of course, this is not necessarily the case. For example, an individual anticipating a longer period of retirement may be more likely to build up his or her investments to finance that outcome.

For each observation, we used the Ontario unemployment rate for the year in which the individual left his or her career job at Bell Canada. This is appropriate because those who returned to work had done so within two years. Based on the historical pattern shown by the Statistics Canada data, we treat the years 1985–89 as low-unemployment and the years 1990–95 as high-unemployment.

All of the demographic variables were taken from the survey (which matched the information found in the administrative record). The age of the respondent at the time he or she left Bell was measured in years. Gender (female = 1), post-retirement training (training = 1), and marital status (married = 1) were all measured as dummy variables. To check on post-retirement training, the survey asked the yes-no question, "Have you ever taken further education and training of any kind since leaving Bell?" All of the respondents who indicated "yes" were then asked whether the education and training they undertook was primarily (a) to pursue an interest or for pleasure, or (b) to increase their chances of getting a job. That follow-up question is relevant because one employment option is self-employment, and it is quite possible that someone who undertakes training and education for pleasure or to pursue an "interest" will use that enhanced human capital to become self-employed. Educational attainment is captured with a nominal category variable containing three groups: below high school education (reference category), between high school and university education, and university education.

The work history variables were taken from both administrative data and the sur-

vey. The respondents experienced a number of career paths at Bell Canada, which can be grouped into four categories. The question was, "In general, thinking about all the years you were working at Bell, would you describe your total job history as...", with six response categories offered: two or more jobs moving up the organization, two or more jobs moving both up and across the organization, two or more jobs moving across the organization, two or more jobs moving down and across the organization, two or more jobs moving down the organization, and few, if any, job moves within the organization. The six groups were collapsed into four categories: upward mobility (two or more jobs, moving up—the reference category); upward and lateral mobility (two or more jobs, moving up and across); lateral mobility (two or more jobs, moving across); and lateral and downward mobility (two or more jobs, moving across and down; two or more jobs, moving down; and few moves). We assume that those in the last two categories (lateral, and lateral and downward) experienced some form of blocked career mobility.

Occupational data were taken from both administrative records and the survey. Administrative records indicated if the individual was managerial or non-managerial staff. Survey data for the most recent job the individual occupied before leaving Bell were used to categorize the respondents as technicians and operators, clerical workers and sales persons, or "others." The nominal occupational category contained four groups: managers (reference category), technicians and operators, clerical workers and sales persons, and others.

The three psychological variables are multi-dimensionally measured. In the survey, the respondents reported on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) their reactions on the following statements: (1) there was a lot of freedom to decide how I do my work, (2) I did the same thing over and over, (3) the pay was good, (4) my chances of promotion for career development were good, (5) I liked my job, (6) I enjoyed the people I worked with, (7) the work I did was one of the most satisfying

parts of my life, (8) some of my main interests and pleasures in life were connected with my work, (9) to me, my work was just a way of making money, and (10) the benefits were good. A factor analysis, using principal components and varimax rotation, indicated that items (1), (2), (5), (6), (7), (8), and (9) loaded onto one factor, and items (3), (4), and (10) onto another. The first factor is interpreted as intrinsic job satisfaction and the second factor as extrinsic job satisfaction. The Cronbach-Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) for intrinsic satisfaction was .75 and that for extrinsic satisfaction was .46. For the work attachment variable, the respondents reported on a scale from 1 (never) to 4 (often) their views on how often they: missed the feeling of doing a good job, felt that they wanted to go back to work, worried about not having a job, and missed being with other people at work. The  $\alpha$  for the work attachment variables is .79. None of the  $\alpha$ 's was above the .80 level. Hence, we created indices for the three variables by adding the individual items. The results were almost identical if scales were used for intrinsic job satisfaction and work attachment.

We used employment records from Bell Canada to calculate the number of years a respondent spent at the organization.

### Data Analysis

Our analysis involved several steps. We first examined the descriptive statistics for the full sample. We then divided the sample into post-retirement labor market status (retirement, full-time employment, part-time employment, and self-employment) and reported the descriptive statistics for the groups.

We then examined the return-to-work decision with a series of regression equations. The first equation (the Base Model) includes the traditional determinants of labor force participation. In six separate equations (Models 1–6), we enter each of the work history variables into the Base Model. The final model accounts for the traditional determinants of later-life labor force participation and all of the work his-

tory variables. Since the dependent variable is defined as a dummy outcome, conventional OLS regression procedures may yield inaccurate results. In this regard, a binary-coded dependent variable can yield predicted values outside the theoretical range of 0 to 1. To constrain the predicted values to the 0–1 interval, we use logistic regression (Aldrich and Nelson 1984).

Our final analysis examined the intensity and category of employment obtained. Since the dependent variable is defined to include more than two choices, multinomial logistic regression is used to simultaneously control for all the independent variables (Green 1990).

### Results

Of the 1,805 respondents, 723 (40%) returned to work after leaving Bell Canada. Descriptive statistics for the sample are shown in Table 1. Nineteen percent reported a health limitation. The majority of the respondents had a reduced pension (72%). Fifty percent received income from C/QPP, 22% from OAS, and 68% from investments. Seventy-three percent of the entire sample owned a mortgage-free home and 20% owed a debt over \$5,000. The majority of the respondents left Bell after 1990 during a period of high unemployment. Thirty-six percent of the respondents were female, and the average age at the time of leaving was 55. The majority (64%) of the respondents attained below a high school education. Fifteen percent pursued post-retirement training, and 82% were married.

With respect to work history, only 15% of the sample experienced upward career mobility, and the majority (52%) had been union members at Bell. Job satisfaction was generally high, with average levels of 21 points (out of 28 points) and 9 points (out of 12 points) for intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, respectively. The average level of work attachment was 10 (out of 16 points). Average tenure was 32 years.

Our data contained information on the intensity of work and the category of employment obtained for 690 of the 723 early

Table 1. Proportions, Means, and Standard Deviations of Variables.

Variable	Full Sample	Retired	Return to Work		
			Full-Time	Part-Time	Self-Employment
Health Limitation (Yes = 1)	19%	21%	19%	18%	15%
[Full and Immediate Pension]	18%	22%	12%	11%	8%
Reduced Pension	72%	70%	71%	75%	76%
Deferred Pension	10%	7%	17%	13%	16%
Canada Pension Plan (Yes = 1)	50%	56%	32%	46%	37%
Old Age Security (Yes = 1)	22%	26%	15%	19%	15%
Investments (Yes = 1)	68%	69%	69%	61%	70%
Mortgage-Free Home (Yes = 1)	73%	76%	64%	68%	72%
Debt over \$5000 (Yes = 1)	20%	14%	32%	28%	26%
Left after 1990 (Yes = 1)	54%	61%	40%	46%	43%
Gender (Female = 1)	36%	45%	14%	30%	10%
Age at Leaving (Years)	55.71 (4.18)	56.53 (4.08)	54.42 (4.16)	54.77 (3.96)	53.96 (3.94)
[Below High School Education]	64%	69%	49%	63%	47%
Between H.S. and University	28%	26%	36%	32%	34%
University	8%	6%	15%	5%	19%
Post-Bell Training (Yes = 1)	15%	9%	25%	23%	26%
Marital Status (Married = 1)	82%	79%	92%	86%	91%
[Upward Mobility]	15%	15%	9%	17%	14%
Upward and Lateral Mobility	49%	42%	64%	56%	69%
Lateral Mobility	20%	21%	20%	19%	13%
Lateral and Downward Mobility	16%	22%	6%	9%	4%
[Management]	48%	36%	74%	59%	79%
Clerks and Sales	17%	23%	6%	14%	3%
Technicians and Operators	26%	33%	12%	17%	13%
Other	8%	9%	8%	9%	5%
Intrinsic Job Satisfaction (Index)	21.16 (3.96)	21.11 (3.92)	20.94 (3.97)	21.15 (3.81)	21.69 (4.37)
Extrinsic Job Satisfaction (Index)	8.90 (1.56)	8.99 (1.57)	8.67 (1.50)	8.86 (1.51)	8.71 (1.58)
Work Attachment (Index)	10.40 (8.78)	8.50 (5.90)	18.42 (13.33)	11.47 (9.70)	13.04 (11.39)
Tenure (Years)	32.12 (6.21)	31.74 (6.80)	32.93 (5.26)	32.60 (5.26)	32.78 (4.90)
Number of Observations	1,805	1,082	118	349	223

Note: Square brackets indicate reference category for subsequent statistical analysis.

retirees who returned to work. Of those 690, 17% returned to full-time employment, 51% took part-time employment, and 32% became self-employed. The descriptive data generally show that return to work was encouraged by good health, inadequate financial ability, low unemployment, being male, being younger, having above a high school education, acquiring post-

retirement training, and being married. In terms of work history, the decision to return to work is more likely among those who had greater tenure, were managers, experienced upward career mobility, reported lower levels of intrinsic job satisfaction, reported higher levels of extrinsic satisfaction, and reported higher levels of work attachment.

### The Base Model

The base model in Table 2 accounts for all of the determinants of later-life labor force participation except work history. The respondents who were entitled to a deferred pension were more likely to return to work than those who were entitled to a full and immediate pension. Older workers who owed a debt were more likely to return to work than those who did not owe a debt. Ownership of a mortgage-free home was negatively related to the return-to-work decision. From these results, it is clear that wealth affected the labor force behavior of these older workers, with more wealth reducing the probability of returning to work. As expected, the rate of return to work was lower in 1990–95, which was characterized by high levels of unemployment, than in 1985–89. Age and female gender were negatively related to return to work; education and post-retirement training activities were positively related.

In summary, the results of our Base Model, which incorporates variables to capture the known determinants of return to work, are highly consistent with the findings of past research on later-life labor force participation. We therefore proceed with confidence to an examination of the relationship between work history and post-early retirement employment.

### Return to Work and Work History

In Table 2, Models 1–6 introduced each of the work history variables to the base model. The inclusion of the career mobility variable was very important (Model 1). Respondents who had experienced lateral and downward career mobility patterns were less likely to return to work than were those who experienced upward career mobility. Model 2 indicates that technicians and operators were less likely than managers to return to work. The introduction of the occupation variable reduced the impact of higher educational levels on work after early retirement. Neither intrinsic nor extrinsic job satisfaction affected the return-to-work decision at a statistically significant level (Models 3 and 4). Model 5 shows that

higher levels of work attachment were positively related to work after early retirement. Tenure positively affected return to work (Model 6). Work history, therefore, is an important factor affecting later-life labor force participation.

Model 7 simultaneously accounts for all of the determinants of work after early retirement, including work history. One could argue that there exists a robust relationship between the return-to-work decision and work history. Older workers who experienced the most severe form of blocked career path (lateral and downward mobility) were less likely to return to work than those who experienced upward career mobility. This is contrary to the hypothesis that workers who experienced blocked career paths would be likely to seek fulfillment of their frustrated ambitions by re-entering the labor market. Technicians and operators were less likely to return to work than were former managers. This supports our *a priori* expectation that substantive complexity, poorer social skills, and fewer transferable skills would discourage return to work.

Work attachment was positively related to return to work, reflecting the centrality of work in the lives of those with high scores on that variable. Tenure also positively affected return to work, lending support to the hypothesis that this variable reflects stamina (good health), an affinity for work, or both. It should be noted, in addition, that the simultaneous inclusion of the work history variables influenced the relationships between the return-to-work decision and some of the other determinants. For example, with a control for occupation, educational level does not affect return to work. All told, the Model 7 evidence suggests that work history explains 20% of the variation in the return-to-work decision.

### Intensity and Category of Employment Obtained

Table 3 shows the multinomial logit estimates for full-time employment, part-time employment, and self-employment. The omitted choice category is retirement.

Table 2. Logit Estimates of the Return to Work Decision.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Base Model</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>
Health Limitation (Yes = 1)	-.25	-.22	-.20	-.25	-.25	-.26	-.25	-.21
[Full and Immediate Pension]								
Reduced Pension	.10	.12	.15	.11	.11	.07	.14	.14
Deferred Pension	.88***	1.00***	.93***	.89***	.88***	.79***	1.11***	1.10***
Canada Pension Plan (Yes = 1)	-.27	-.25	-.20	-.27	-.27	-.13	-.30	-.09
Old Age Security (Yes = 1)	.05	.07	.04	.05	.06	.01	.08	.05
Investments (Yes = 1)	-.13	-.19	-.12	-.13	-.12	-.07	-.14	-.12
Mortgage-Free Home (Yes = 1)	-.48***	-.48***	-.42***	-.48***	-.48***	-.38***	-.50***	-.35***
Debt over \$5000 (Yes = 1)	.68**	.66***	.69***	.68***	.68***	.59***	.67***	.57***
Left after 1990 (Yes = 1)	-.87***	-.82***	-.63***	-.87***	-.87***	-.92***	-.85***	-.69***
Gender (Female = 1)	-1.20***	-1.12***	-1.27***	-1.20***	-1.19***	-1.17***	-1.08***	-1.03***
Age at Leaving (Years)	-.09***	-.08***	-.07***	-.09***	-.09***	-.09***	-.09***	-.06***
[Below High School Education]								
Between H.S. and University	.29**	.27**	.17	.2***	.28**	.26**	.32***	.19
University	.53***	.44**	.19	.53***	.51***	.43**	.60***	.17
Post-Bell Training (Yes = 1)	1.07***	1.00***	1.04***	1.07***	1.07***	1.00***	1.06***	.92***
Marital Status (Married = 1)	.10	.10	.09	.10	.10	.13	.13	.14
[Upward Mobility]								
Upward and Lateral Mobility		.13						.12
Lateral Mobility		-.14						-.001
Lateral and Downward Mobility		-.92***						-.68***
[Management]								
Clerks and Sales			-.26					-.21
Technicians and Operators			-.86***					-.60***
Other			-.41					-.30
Intrinsic Job Satisfaction (Index)				.01				-.01
Extrinsic Job Satisfaction (Index)					-.03			-.01
Work Attachment (Index)						.05***		.05***
Tenure (Years)							.03**	.02**
Constant	5.51***	4.68***	4.42***	5.41***	5.77***	4.70***	4.55***	2.72***
Chi Square	372.6***	397.0***	402.7***	372.7***	373.2***	422.5***	375.3***	462.7***
Pseudo R Square	.20	.22	.22	.20	.21	.23	.21	.25
N	1,805	1,805	1,805	1,805	1,805	1,805	1,805	1,805

\*\*Statistically significant at the .05 level; \*\*\*at the .01 level.

Therefore, the coefficients are interpreted with reference to the retirement option.

Looking first at the non-work-history determinants, full-time employment is positively related to a deferred pension (relative to a full and immediate pension), a debt over \$5,000, higher levels of education, and post-retirement training, and negatively related to periods of high unemployment, female gender, and age at leaving. Part-time employment is less likely among women than among men, and more likely among those with university degrees than among those without. Self-employment, finally, is negatively related to age at departure from Bell.

With respect to work history, full-time employment is clearly more likely among respondents who enjoyed upward career mobility than among those who experienced lateral and downward mobility; among former managers than among those who were in non-managerial occupations; and among those with a greater level of work attachment. Part-time employment is less likely among clerks and sales persons than among managers. Self-employment is negatively linked to lateral mobility (relative to upward mobility) and work attachment. Thus, both the return-to-work decision and the intensity or category of employment obtained are influenced by work history.

Focusing more specifically on intensity or category of employment obtained, full-time employment was positively associated with entitlement to a deferred pension, the presence of a debt over \$5,000, higher levels of education and post-retirement training, and attachment to work. Part-time employment was more likely among those who had a university education.

### Discussion

Our results show that 40% of the respondents in our sample obtained bridge employment. Of those, 17% worked full-time, 51% worked part-time, and 32% became self-employed. At a general level, the high rate of return to work suggests that policies based on the assumption that retirement

means a permanent and complete withdrawal from the labor force are outdated. For example, the period of bridge employment raises questions about the appropriateness of a national policy to promote youth employment by supporting early retirement. Both retirees and youths may compete for part-time employment opportunity.

The results also bolster the argument that the main life course events of school, work, marriage, and retirement do not exist independent of one another (Marshall 1995). Our results provide strong support for the relationship between later-life labor force participation and work history. *A priori* expectations of the impact of occupation, work attachment, and tenure are supported. Intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction did seem to affect the return-to-work decision. Contrary to our expectation, blocked career paths negatively affected the return-to-work decision. Perhaps previous experience of some upward mobility gave workers reason to hope for more of the same—or at least new opportunities—in a new job, whereas the chronic discouragement of those who suffered the most severe forms of blocked career paths caused them to withdraw from the labor force. Another plausible possibility we cannot investigate here is that workers who experienced upward mobility were viewed as more “desirable” than other workers both by Bell and by other employers, making them more re-employable after their early retirement.

### Implications for Employers

Our results have important implications for organizational practice. Work after early retirement, for example, is significantly related to post-retirement training. Retraining initiatives are very important as organizations restructure and workers are redistributed among employers. But retraining can be a challenging task for older workers. Empirical evidence shows that older workers are reluctant to undergo retraining for many reasons, including difficulty adjusting to educational institutions and pedagogy that are geared for younger

Table 3. Multinomial Logit Estimates for Types of Employment Obtained.

Variable	Full-Time/ Retirement	Part-Time/ Retirement	Self-Employ./ Retirement
Health Limitation (Yes = 1)	-.32	-.12	-.29
[Full and Immediate Pension]			
Reduced Pension	0.58	0.42	.99
Deferred Pension	1.69***	.77	.77
Canada Pension Plan (Yes = 1)	-.06	-.09	.65
Old Age Security (Yes = 1)	.45	.35	.73
Investments (Yes = 1)	-.19	.05	-.19
Mortgage-Free Home (Yes = 1)	-.31	.05	.17
Debt over \$5000 (Yes = 1)	.44**	-.17	.20
Left after 1990 (Yes = 1)	-.61***	-.02	.45
Gender (Female = 1)	-1.81***	-1.01***	-.27
Age at Leaving (Years)	-.10***	-.04	-.09**
[Below High School Education]			
Between H.S. and University	.37**	.26	.05
University	.77***	1.29***	.43

Continued

Table 3. Continued

Variable	Full-Time/ Retirement	Part-Time/ Retirement	Self-Employ./ Retirement
Post-Bell Training (Yes = 1)	1.01***	.08	.18
Marital Status (Married = 1)	.17	-.01	-.24
[Upward Mobility]			
Upward and Lateral Mobility	.08	.12	-.60
Lateral Mobility	-.30	-.11	-1.10**
Lateral and Downward Mobility	-1.08***	-.34	-1.04
[Management]			
Clerks and Sales	-.93**	-.87**	-.54
Technicians and Operators	-.65***	-.11	.30
Other	-.77**	-.61	-.39
Intrinsic Job Satisfaction (Index)	.01	.03	.06
Extrinsic Job Satisfaction (Index)	-.01	-.002	-.07
Work Attachment (Index)	.05***	.01	-.04***
Tenure (Years)	.01	-.01	-.03
Constant	3.19	.93	6.09**
Chi Square	3,097.4***		
N	1,772		

\*\*Statistically significant at the .05 level; \*\*\*at the .01 level.

students (CARNET 1995). It is a well-established fact that training programs for older workers must be designed to meet the unique needs of an “older learner” (Mazerolle and Singh 1999).

Many employers, viewing older workers as less productive than younger workers, more prone to absenteeism, apt to remain in the labor force for only a short time, and unwilling to retrain as unsuitable for the primary labor market, dismiss them as unsuitable for the primary labor market (see CARNET 1995 for an extensive literature review). Even granting those stereotypical beliefs some validity, our results suggest a degree of motivation in older workers that may more than compensate for such drawbacks. In particular, we found that tenure

(indicative of commitment) and attachment to work were both positively correlated with the probability of return to work; hence, later-life labor force returnees are likely to have relatively high attachment to work, which can translate into efficiency and effectiveness. This finding is supported by past research (Hanisch 1995; Sonnenfeld 1988; Schein 1978; Levinson 1986; Feldman 1994; Monette 1996; Parnes and Sommers 1994; Fontana and Frey 1990).

Employers who are led by such considerations to view early retirees as committed and motivated workers may need to redesign many of their established human resource management practices in order to attract and retain these workers. One such practice is deferred compensation, which

is designed to increase the cost of job loss and reduce shirking and the firm's monitoring cost by backloading the earnings profile, paying workers at a rate below their productivity during the first years of their employment, then at a rate above their productivity level in their latter years of employment. The crucial question for employers is whether to treat retirees who return to the labor market as new entrants, and therefore restart the deferred compensation practice. The drastic decline in wages from pre-retirement employment to post-retirement employment that has been found by some studies (Rhum 1990) may strongly deter many committed and motivated older workers from rejoining the labor force.

### Implications for Unions

Over the past two decades, many unions' membership has declined steeply as firms with traditionally high rates of unionization have downsized. Some observers see this decline as a natural and inevitable consequence of post-industrial growth, in which employment shifts from large, usually unionized employers to smaller, usually nonunion employers. An important component of downsizing at large firms is natural attrition, whereby older workers who retire are not replaced. Bell Canada, like many other firms, has taken steps over the years to accelerate that relatively painless downsizing strategy. If our sample of former Bell workers is representative of retirees from other large firms, however, it cannot be assumed that all retirees simply drop out of the labor market or out of the union picture. About 40% of our sample returned to some form of employment (with higher proportions among the younger age groups), and of that number, roughly two-thirds returned to work for wages. We have no data showing whether these workers—the great majority of whom, managerial and non-managerial alike, had been union members at Bell—once again joined unions when they returned to the labor market, but we see no reason why they could not have done so.

We know of few unions that have targeted membership campaigns at this group of ex-Bell employees returning to work. That is surprising, since these workers' career employment experience has familiarized them with the benefits of unionization. Probably they would be more disposed than other workers to become members even if the transition to new employment entailed no sacrifices; and since most of them do, in fact, have to accept sizable reductions in wages, benefits, and perquisites when they take a new full-time or (especially) part-time job, probably they are acutely aware of their need to acquire voice and some protection of their rights and interests.

To fully enlist the participation of this group of workers returning to work after a career job, however, unions may need to shift their traditional emphases and develop new services. The traditional union emphasis on wages may not be optimally effective with this group, given their additional sources of income. Instead, this group's single most important concern may be the portability of benefits from one employer to another. Toward satisfying this need, large unions can negotiate terms that will extend benefits to early leavers. Many unions have negotiated some extension of benefits, typically for workers who are close to retirement. However, for younger leavers the benefits extension usually lasts only for a limited time. For such workers, unions can develop union-run benefit plans to which both workers and employers can contribute. As such workers change employers, their benefits coverage can continue without interruption.

Finally, early retirees who have a positive view of the union can be recruited to spread the union message to other workers in their new workplaces. The effort need not be limited to an organizing drive alone. These committed workers can also, for example, sign up new members for union-run benefit plans. Many other activities, such as labor-sponsored savings funds and political campaigns for pro-labor candidates in general elections, can also attract new volunteers through the efforts of such early retir-

ees. In summary, older workers in ever-increasing numbers are returning to work. As their numbers in the labor force grow, unions will find it useful to reach out to them in a variety of ways.

### Age and Return to Work

One important issue that this study examines only sketchily is the importance of age as an impediment to return to work after early retirement. The survey did not ask respondents how they viewed the appropriateness of work in later life, or whether they believed that in their quest for re-employment they had encountered age discrimination by employers. Our results do not show whether employers are hiring older workers because age is an un-

important issue to them or because (for example) they are unable to find younger qualified workers. Similarly, we cannot tell whether those older workers who are accepting part-time employment and self-employment are doing so because they are unable to find full-time employment or because they would prefer to reduce their hours to fit their new station in life. All of these questions warrant further research.

What we can say is that many older workers are clearly returning to work and that they are largely successful in finding some type of employment. As the numbers of these workers rise in the labor market, all the actors in the industrial relations system will need to develop new policies or adjust older ones to the needs of these workers.

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