

functioning among ageing female employees ten years before and after transition to old-age or disability retirement.

Methods:

We used Helsinki Health Study cohort data. The baseline (2000-02) included 7168 women, aged 40-60, employed by the City of Helsinki, Finland (response 67%). Follow-ups took place in 2007, 2012 and 2017 (response 78-83%). The outcome was RAND-36 Physical Functioning subscale, range 0-100, with higher scores indicating better functioning. Social classes were upper and lower class, and covariates age, work conditions and health behaviours. Mixed-effect growth curve models were used to predict functioning scores and 95% confidence intervals (CI) 10 years before and after mandatory old-age or disability retirement.

Results:

Old-age and disability retirees lacked class inequalities in functioning 10 years prior retirement. Towards retirement transition, functioning declined and inequalities emerged. Among old-age retirees, the predicted score was 86.1 (CI 85.2-86.9) for upper class and 82.2 (81.5-83.0) for lower class. Among disability retirees, the score was 70.3 (67.8-72.9) for upper class and 62.2 (60.4-63.9) for lower class. Among old-age retirees, functioning declined and inequalities slightly widened. Among disability retirees, the decline plateaued and inequalities narrowed. Physical work and BMI somewhat attenuated the inequalities.

Conclusions:

Among female employees, functioning declined and class inequalities emerged towards retirement transition. Widening inequalities were seen among old-age retirees, but not among disability retirees. Preventing the decline of functioning and related inequalities would help safeguard a healthy and successful ageing among female retirees.

Key messages:

- As functioning shows a constant decline before and after old-age retirement, there is a need for slowing down the pace of the decline.
- Class inequalities in functioning tend to widen among old-age retirees; egalitarian measures are needed to turn the development to narrowing inequalities.

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Class inequalities in physical functioning trajectories before and after retirement

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Background:

Longer work careers are discussed, but inequalities in health trajectories among employees facing retirement remain poorly understood. We examined social class trajectories in physical