



## Introduction

In the presence of widespread demographic aging, the issue of the continuation of employment by the elderly after retirement is becoming more significant and relevant (Foster, Walker, 2021; Karpikova, Baeva, 2021), especially in connection with the retirement-age increase that currently affects almost all countries, as well as the difficult socio-economic situation, transformation and optimization of the healthcare and social protection systems.

Thus, according to UN estimates, the proportion of the elderly in European countries will rise to 23% by 2030, and by 2050 it will exceed 28% (Shchanina, 2021). This contributes to the implementation of a new policy in employment of the elderly and the revision of the previously defined old age and aging limits (Vidyasova et al., 2024). In particular, the idea of independent choice of activities by the elderly is becoming increasingly popular (Parfenova, Galkin, 2023). It means that the person chooses the most relevant activities for himself or herself. It is also important that usual retirement-related activities are increasingly being replaced by continuing employment, retraining, and integration into social life through continuing employment (Chistova, 2019).

These trends are characteristic of the whole world and particularly affect Russian society. The important aspects are both the institutional and global macro-contexts of such changes, as well as the specifics of choosing strategies for post-retirement work and adaptation to the workplace after retirement (Barkov et al., 2022; Ebbinghaus, 2021).

Russian society is characterized by the negative perception of retirement age related to the social status of working older people and the possibility of post-retirement work (Grigor'eva, Sizova, 2018; Galkin, 2021; Os'muk, Nezamaeva, 2021). Stereotypes are developed

based on the established cultural norms regarding the understanding of retirement age, while there is no science-based evidence that people's activities and lifestyle change after reaching retirement age (Evseeva, 2020).

These factors emphasize the need and importance of research on the choice of employment trajectories of the elderly and consideration of not only the macro-context, but also the individual characteristics of the choice of employment.

In the article, we put forward the hypothesis that the choice of the employment trajectory of working pensioners (to change jobs or continue to work at the same place) depends on the voluntary/involuntary nature of continuing employment. To confirm or reject this hypothesis, the aim is to examine the employment trajectories of working pensioners in a city of federal significance and in a large city of regional significance, and analyze the factors influencing the choice of different trajectories.

## Literature review

In numerous modern studies analyzing the employment of older adults, it is noted that one of the key factors of demand in the labor market is the level of education and the ability to quickly adapt to the needs of the economy and changing situation (Smirnova, 2007; Kartuzova, 2020). Also, in modern works related to employment and its strategies, there are tendencies to move from revising solely biomedical characteristics of age to considering age based on its nonlinearity and the diversity of people's life trajectories (Parfenova, Petukhova, 2024; Fasbender, Gerpott, 2021).

The concept of extended adulthood is actively developing, which focuses on understanding age as a construct and considering the extended period of middle age. The idea of delayed aging

is a continuation of the concept of extended adulthood: aging and age are constructs; therefore, it is important for older people to subjectively understand their age and its characteristics (Parfenova, 2023; Galkin, 2022). It is also examined how different trajectories and strategies are developed in old age, including employment strategies. At the same time, we should note that within the concept of delayed aging, professional employment is one of the key characteristics of extended adulthood (Vidyasova, Grigor'eva, 2023). Another important factor is understanding age as an achievement; therefore, older adults need to use age resources.

To date, there are more and more studies on the labor area, indicating that researchers are increasingly focusing on considering the individual employment trajectories of older people and their own decision-making regarding the need to continue employment or receive additional education, change jobs or retire (Vidyasova et al., 2024). It should also be noted that today, governments are increasingly refusing to set specific retirement age and moving towards considering retirement age as a fairly flexible and variable parameter (Van Vuuren, 2014). Often, the transition to a flexible government pension policy is evidence of the prevention of agism and social exclusion of older people, as well as the development of a differentiated approach to their employment and its continuation (Simonovits, 2021).

Studies show that there are several reasons why employers want to hire older people and retain jobs for them. On the one hand, it is the high qualification of older workers, which is especially important in the scientific and technological area, medicine and education (Timofeeva, Kashchuk, 2016; Kozlov, Teterina, 2019; Smirnykh, 2020). On the other hand,

older workers tend to have a strong work ethic and are well integrated into the team and the communication in it (Subbotina, Asatryan, 2022). The reasons are also the desire of the elderly themselves to continue working and their interest in improving financial well-being. The Russian context of employment of the elderly is characterized by the features of the pension system, low pensions, and retirement associated with job loss (Subbotina, Asatryan, 2022).

Modern Russian works on the employment of the elderly can be roughly divided into two areas. One of them considers mainly highly skilled employment and notes the demand for qualified older workers, mainly from large cities, in the labor markets (Scoppetta, 2008). In the other area, on the contrary, the forced employment of older adults is researched, and the specifics of their employment associated with the need to continue working due to the lack of financial resources are analyzed (Vyacheslavov, 2014). As a rule, the forced employment of the elderly is associated with criticism of the existing pension system, the need to financially support family members, as well as the transition to unskilled work. The authors emphasize: such trends are quite widespread in Russian cities (Kienko, 2023; Nioradze, 2022). So, the different nature of employment of working pensioners is significant, which, on the one hand, is related to current trends and the development of modern processes that determine the need for post-retirement work due to its economic efficiency, on the other hand, there are obstacles to continuing work for the elderly, primarily caused by negative stereotypes about working pensioners and their preferences in the choice of employment trajectories, their attitude to the retirement-

age increase, changes in market environment, the exacerbation of the personnel shortage and the benefits / disadvantages of shadow employment for older adults.

Modern studies show significant differences in the employment of people of retirement age between cities with populations of less than 1 million and metropolises. Despite the relative similarity of the infrastructure of regional centers and cities of federal significance, there are noticeable differences in the structure of job offers for older cohorts, as well as in the specifics of their professional activities (Kozina, Zangieva, 2018; Kul'kova et al., 2021).

The key factor determining the dissimilarities is the presence or absence of specialized programs aimed at supporting the employment of older adults. For example, in Moscow, as part of the "Moscow Longevity" program, projects are being implemented to train the elderly in entrepreneurial skills, while in Saint Petersburg the emphasis is on mastering new competencies, including information and communication technologies (ICT), which allows pensioners to change professions or adapt to modern labor market requirements (Grigor'eva, 2018). Unlike metropolises, such initiatives are less common in large regional cities, and available programs are more often focused on maintaining health and organizing leisure activities rather than on the fulfillment of older people's professional potential (Romashkina, Morozov, 2018). These differences substantiate a comparative analysis of the employment of working pensioners in cities with different populations, job availability, and different levels of social programs.

We focus primarily on these trends when considering the employment trajectories of working pensioners and analyze the choice and implementation of employment strategies by older people, which directly depend on the current processes in society and labor markets, the activities of institutions and organizations, the interaction of individuals with the social environment, as well as socially accepted traditions, standards and rules regarding working older people. When describing the employment trajectories of working pensioners, we focus on the following factors that determine the choice of strategy: volunteerism in the desire to continue employment, income level, education, professional area, number of years worked, health status of an older person, place of residence, existing stereotypes regarding the elderly. Based on the research of these factors, we identify two employment trajectories of the elderly.

### **Research methodology and empirical base**

An empirical research was conducted in 2024 in Saint Petersburg and Petrozavodsk. The selection of cities was based on statistical data reflecting the dynamics of employment among older people. According to information for 2024, there are about 53 million working pensioners in Russia<sup>1</sup>. Saint Petersburg ranks second in the country in this indicator: 362 thousand people are employed there, which is 25% of the total number of residents of retirement age<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, the opposite trend is observed in the Republic of Karelia: the number of working pensioners

<sup>1</sup> The number of pensioners has increased in Russia for the first time in six years (2025). RBC. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/20/02/2025/67b5a3189a7947eb8a77c673> (accessed: March 26, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> There are 43 thousand more elderly people in St Petersburg in a year (2025). Fontanka. Available at: <https://www.fontanka.ru/2025/03/25/75262535> (accessed: March 26, 2025).

is decreasing, reaching 46020 in 2022<sup>3</sup>. A similar trend is recorded in Petrozavodsk, where the proportion of the economically active older population is decreasing. Such statistical differences provide a significant basis for comparative analysis. In particular, Saint Petersburg is showing steady growth in the number of working pensioners, while in Petrozavodsk this figure is steadily decreasing. This contrast makes the comparison of the two cities methodologically substantiated for studying the factors affecting the post-retirement working life.

As part of the study, 50 semi-structured interviews were conducted with older citizens who continue their work. The age of the informants ranged from 65 to 72. The choice of the age range for the research is related to the fact that people who have recently retired demonstrate two main patterns of behavior: maintain their previous employment or stop working completely (Nikonova, 2009). Meanwhile, the analysis of long-term employment allows us to identify more complex patterns, including job search strategies, adaptation to new job conditions, and features of interaction with the work team. Studying people who work for some time after retirement makes it possible to systematize their ideas about further working life. Unlike people who have recently retired, who may experience an identity crisis, representatives of this group have already established stable employment practices, which allows them to analyze their motivation, preferences, and constraints associated with post-retirement work.

The sample included representatives of various professional areas and qualification levels who are officially engaged in post-retirement work. Although women predominate

among the respondents, gender balance was considered when selecting research participants. Most of the informants have higher education. The search for respondents was carried out on the basis of a purposive sample, and the interviewing process ended when theoretical saturation was reached, i.e. when new data began to repeat already recorded narratives.

Special attention in the research was paid to the analysis of motivational factors that determine the continuation of professional activity by older citizens. The key aspects influencing the choice of a strategy for maintaining employment or changing the professional area were also considered. During the interview, the respondents shared their professional experience, described the challenges of adapting to the workplace after retirement, and also discussed the obstacles they had to face. In addition, they gave a subjective assessment of the social policy aimed at supporting the employment of older citizens. Since the research was carried out within the qualitative paradigm, the identified employment trajectories should be considered as related to local employment environment.

## **Research results**

### ***The trajectory of continuing previous employment***

The most significant factors for this trajectory are a fairly good level of education, expertise and the volunteerism in the continuation of employment by the elderly. It was not uncommon for older people to be offered to continue working by employers because they are great assets with qualifications:

<sup>3</sup> The expert explained the reduction in the number of working pensioners in Karelia by the increase in mortality (2022). Stolicaonego. Available at: <https://stolicaonego.ru/news/sokraschenie-kolichestva-rabotajuschih-pensionerov-v-karelii-ekspert-objasnil-rostom-smertnosti> (accessed: March 26, 2025).

*“I’ve been working as an engineer for almost fifty years. When the digital environment began to actively develop, I managed to master it, and learned how to make technical drawings well. So, when it was time to retire, the heads immediately opposed this idea. They said themselves that I was needed here, and I decided to stay so as not to let the team down and not to cause any problems. As long as you can, you should work” (M., 70, military engineer, Saint Petersburg).*

The work experience in an organization is important, as well as communication with the team and awareness of one’s importance in it. Such features of employment of the elderly were most often found in Saint Petersburg, such employment is common in government agencies, design bureaus, and educational institutions (universities and vocational schools). Representatives of this trajectory accepted the increase in the retirement age and pension indexation. As a rule, they preferred official employment to the work “in the shadow” and noted that official employment was prestigious for them:

*“I honestly don’t know how others can work and receive something in envelopes. I think work is prestige actually. So, it is extremely difficult for me to imagine something informal connected with work. Employment should be official only, no other options” (F., 69, university lecturer, Saint Petersburg).*

Older people tried not to transit to lower-paid positions, but there were still such cases. They are mainly registered in Petrozavodsk and associated with the transition to the advisory post or to a lower place on the pay scale. Older people noted that in this case, it was essential to be able to continue working in a familiar place, with a familiar team, and maintain long-term cooperation experience:

*“I’ve just been removed from the position of chief accountant, and now I’m just an advisor, but with almost the same wages and all the guarantees. It was tough at the previous job, but now it’s OK. And it is important that I stayed in the team” (F., 68, advisor-accountant, Petrozavodsk).*

For representatives of this trajectory, it is important to always maintain health. Often, post-retirement work contributed to being in good health and maintaining the necessary activity. To sum up, this feature of the employment of older people was one of the most comfortable, as it allowed them to maintain the same level of activity, interact with the team and feel they are in demand. The most significant factors for this trajectory are the factor of volunteerism in the desire to continue employment, the factor of education, professional area, as well as fairly good health of an elderly person.

#### ***The trajectory of employment change***

This trajectory was characterized by two scenarios: a forced change of employment due to the need for money and financial support for relatives, and a voluntary change of employment to search for new activities, seasonal employment, or to monetize hobbies. The scenario of a forced job change was associated with involuntary continuation of employment, when older people had to look for low-paid work:

*“When my son changed jobs, he was underpaid, and sometimes not paid at all. Then I had to get a job as a security guard at the gardening – and be on duty at the entrance every three days for 24 hours. It is a pretty awful job, especially in autumn, when it’s cold. But there it is, I need to help my son” (F., 66, Saint Petersburg).*

Low income was also an important factor for the representatives of this scenario. As a

rule, such elderly people could not live just on their pension. In most cases, they had vocational education and were engaged in routine work before retirement. In some cases, routine work was replaced by digital technology, and then the employees had to change their activity:

*“I used to work as a manager, booking orders and answering customer questions at a small travel agency. But then, just before retirement, the position was cut and replaced by a chatbot. As a result, I had to get a job as a cleaner, because it is impossible to live just on the pension” (F., 67, cleaner, Petrozavodsk).*

Older adults who were forced to change jobs often reported a deterioration in their health. They tried to combine employment with additional activities (for example, with work in the backyard), which turned out to be difficult.

In the hobby monetization scenario, volunteerism was important, as well as sufficient income and good health, which allowed older people to do what they loved and earn money from it:

*“I started knitting three years ago. At first, just for myself, but then I got into it. I thought: Why not open my own business? As a result, I did it, and it began to bring a good income. It has improved my finances, and I enjoy doing what I love and getting paid for it” (F., 73, Petrozavodsk).*

This scenario is characterized by the acceptance of the increase in retirement age, as the additional income allowed pensioners not to worry about their financial security. The trajectory of employment change is less comfortable for the elderly, as they were forced to find work on their own, often faced with deteriorating health and moved

to low-paid positions. However, within this trajectory, the monetization of hobbies, which allows combining activity with earnings, was a favorable scenario. It should be noted that in the research, representatives of the trajectory of employment change were registered mainly in a large city of regional significance. This may indicate a lack of specialized post-retirement programs for the elderly and a low demand for older workers in such cities.

### Conclusion

To sum up, the hypothesis put forward in the research about the dependence of the trajectory of post-retirement work on the voluntary continuation of employment is confirmed by the analysis of interviews. The volunteerism in the continuation of employment directly determines the level of job satisfaction and affects the general well-being of an elderly employee. Also, additional factors such as income level, availability of qualified labor, education, and geographical location are essential in choosing the optimal employment trajectory. The first trajectory of continuing previous employment is associated with factors such as volunteerism, activism, and a high degree of integration with the team. It provides elderly people with comfortable conditions for maintaining their working status, opportunities for communication and professional interaction, as well as for maintaining the position of an expert in the team. For working pensioners who have higher education and a high level of qualifications, this trajectory turns out to be the most preferable, since it avoids the need to adapt to a new work environment and supports social activity of older people. In a city of federal significance where the data were collected, the employment structure of

the elderly is very diverse, and it includes opportunities for highly qualified work.

In Saint Petersburg, companies focused on retaining staff offer them retraining opportunities, flexible working hours, and additional incentives for them to continue working. This allows older employees to remain in demand and continue their work in a comfortable environment.

The second trajectory, change of jobs, is less effective for working pensioners, as it is usually associated with the need to maintain their financial situation and help family members. For older people who are in this category, a change of their position may be accompanied by a deterioration in working conditions, a decrease in income, and a high degree of professional uncertainty. However, there are also successful examples of adaptation, such as hobby monetization, seasonal employment, or transition to advisory positions. These options provide a more flexible schedule and allow continuing working without significant physical and emotional costs. It should be underlined that this opportunity requires developed social ties, access to educational programs, and government support aimed at employing senior citizens. In conditions where older people cannot rely on these resources, the change of jobs often leads to a deterioration in their socio-economic situation and quality of life. In regional centers such as Petrozavodsk, there is a decrease in the number of working pensioners, and the change of jobs is often accompanied by a transition to less qualified positions. This is due to both the limited number of vacancies and to the general

downward trends in employment among the older cohorts.

The conducted interview analysis confirms that the different nature of employment of the elderly, indicated in modern works, remains relevant. On the one hand, many older people are aware of their relevance and wish to continue working, on the other hand, forced employment associated with economic difficulties remains a serious issue. So, consideration of the factors affecting the labor activity of working pensioners requires further research and development of measures to improve employment conditions. The conducted research is a qualitative analysis of the employment characteristics of older people. The key aspect was the study of the motivation for continuing to work or changing a profession, as well as the factors influencing such decisions. An important result of the work is the conclusion that it is necessary to further investigate regional differences in the employment of pensioners, especially on cities with different populations and economic structures. The data obtained emphasize the importance of developing targeted support programs that consider the specifics of local labor markets.

Therefore, further research should focus on a more detailed study of the factors influencing the employment choice of older people, as well as on the development of strategies that contribute to improving working conditions. It is important to consider regional features and individual preferences of older workers, as well as to develop comprehensive programs that support both voluntary and involuntary employment of pensioners in the modern economy.

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