Older workers with unpredictable schedules: Implications for well-being and job retention

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Acknowledgements

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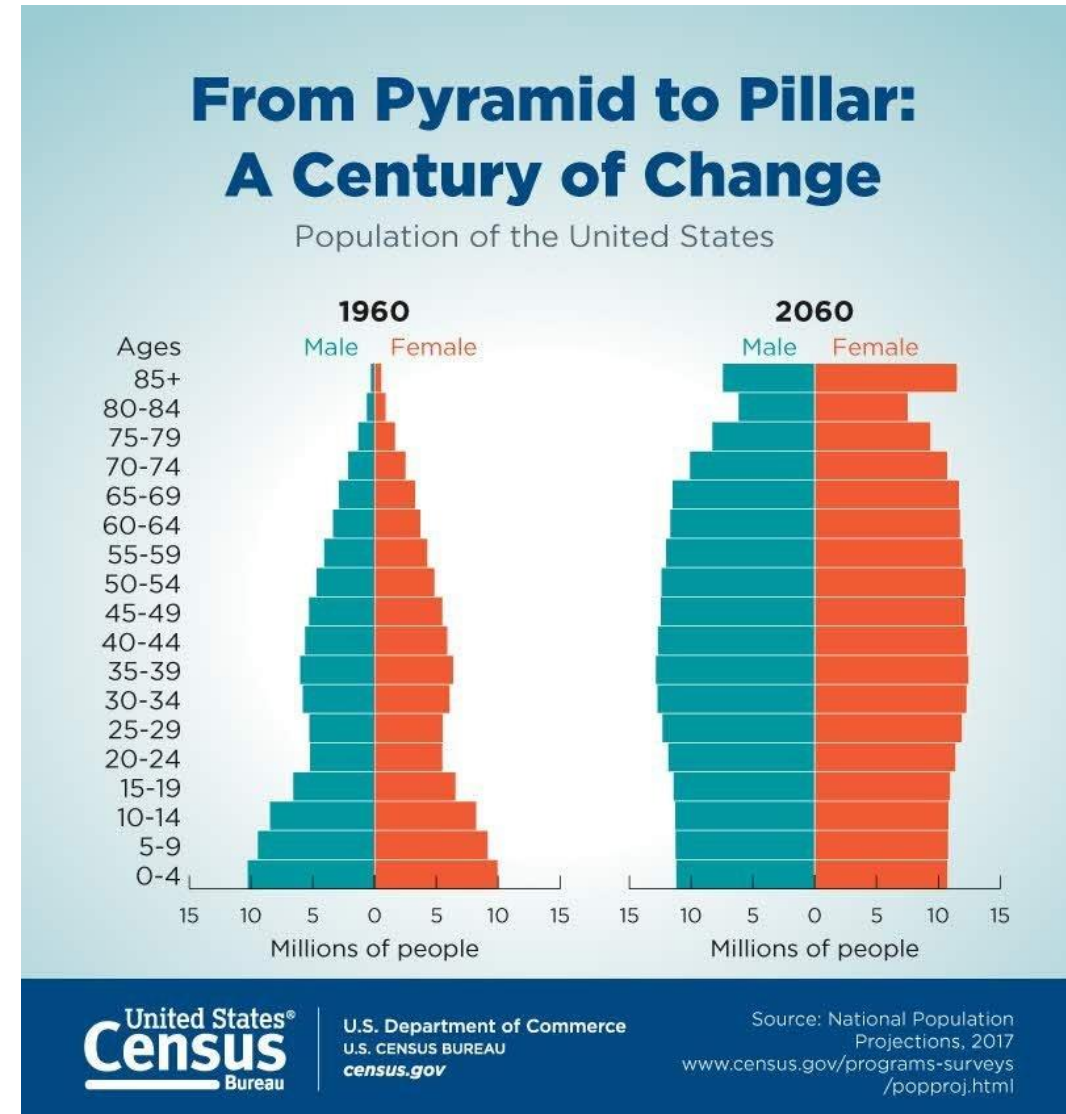San Francisco School of Nursing,
Social & Behavioral Sciences

The aging U.S. workforce

- Solvency of Social Security

- Solution? Working longer

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Disability = functioning + environmental context

Work schedules in the service sector

Schedule predictability is one highly modifiable work condition that may impact older workers' health and labor force attachment.

- 13% of workers employed in food preparation and service occupations and 25% of workers employed in sales and related retail occupations were ages 55 or older in 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021).

- 15% of workers ages 55 years or older (over 5 million people) are employed in the service sector (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021).

- Service workers' schedules are characterized by few days of advance notice, substantial changes week-to-week in shift timing, back-to-back closing and opening ("clopening") shifts, and having shifts changed, canceled, or added at the last minute (Schneider & Harknett, 2019).

- Such just-in-time scheduling tactics maximize employers' control over labor to enable lean staffing while offloading risks onto workers (Lambert, 2008; Rubery et al., 2005).

This paper aimed to:

(1) Document and describe scheduling conditions for older workers relative to younger workers

(2) Examine how unstable scheduling conditions are associated with well-being and indicators of job retention for older workers

Shift Project Data Collection

- Targeted Facebook and Instagram advertisements that link to Qualtrics survey

- Similar coverage to traditional landline sampling frames

- Unlike phone and address-based sampling, Facebook profiles are portable and durable means of contact

- Identity verification with low rates of false accounts and high accuracy in targeting

- Recruited uses employed at large retail and food service firms

- Five modules: respondents' job, economic security, demographics, health and well-being, parent/family information

- Address concerns about selection with poststratification weighting that adjust for differences between sample and population

https://shift.hks.harvard.edu; Schneider and Harknett (2019)

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Article

What's to Like? Facebook as a Tool for Survey Data Collection

Daniel Schneider[1] and Kristen Harknett[2]

More info on data collection methods ^^^

Data for this analysis

- Detailed information on working conditions and health from 121,555 service sector workers
  - About 20% (over 23,000) workers between ages 50-80

- Recruited from 2017 through 2020 using social media advertisements

- Data were imputed and weighted to handle missingness and non-representativeness and have undergone extensive validity checks

Work Schedule attributes by age groups

| Work schedule attributes	Total N = 121,408	18–29 48.7%	30–49 31.5%	50–80 20.0%	p Value
Unpredictable schedule items					
On-call	28.1%	31.3%	28.6%	19.5%	$p < .001$
Canceled shift	18.0%	20.0%	18.0%	12.9%	$p < .001$
Timing change	65.6%	73.7%	62.3%	51.2%	$p < .001$
Schedule notice					$p < .001$
0–2 days	18.6%	19.6%	19.3%	14.8%	
3–6 days	17.4%	18.1%	17.7%	15.1%	
1–2 weeks	27.9%	29.9%	26.2%	25.7%	
2–3 weeks	20.2%	20.0%	19.1%	22.4%	
3–4 weeks	10.1%	8.0%	10.8%	14.1%	
4+ weeks	5.9%	4.4%	6.8%	7.9%	
Clopening shift	44.7%	50.1%	43.5%	33.3%	$p < .001$
Unpredictable schedule scale					$p < .001$
0 (most predictable)	8.6%	5.2%	8.9%	16.7%	
1	21.2%	17.2%	22.4%	29.1%	
2	30.0%	30.3%	30.3%	28.8%	
3	24.8%	28.3%	24.0%	17.2%	
4	12.3%	15.0%	11.7%	6.5%	
5 (most unpredictable)	3.1%	4.0%	2.8%	1.6%	

Association of unpredictable schedules with well-being and indicators of job retention in older workers

Outcome	Mean (95% CI)	Unpredictable schedule scale coefficient (95% CI)	Unpredictable schedule scale coefficient, log odds (95% CI)	T (p)
Well-being outcomes				
Distress (0–20)	8.35 (8.30, 8.41)	0.64 (0.57, 0.71)		18.71 ($p < .001$)
Poor-quality sleep (1–4)	2.88 (2.87, 2.89)		0.18 (0.15, 0.21)	11.15 ($p < .001$)
Work–family conflict (1–4)	2.38 (2.37, 2.39)		0.32 (0.29, 0.34)	24.14 ($p < .001$)
Economic insecurity (0–10)	2.78 (2.76, 2.80)	0.28 (0.26, 0.31)		20.20 ($p < .001$)
Job retention outcomes				
Job dissatisfaction (1–4)	1.97 (1.96, 1.98)		0.35 (0.31, 0.38)	21.03 ($p < .001$)
Likelihood of looking for new job (1–3)	1.72 (1.71, 1.72)		0.33 (0.29, 0.37)	17.02 ($p < .001$)

Association of unpredictable schedules with well-being and indicators of job retention in older workers

(A) Well-being outcomes
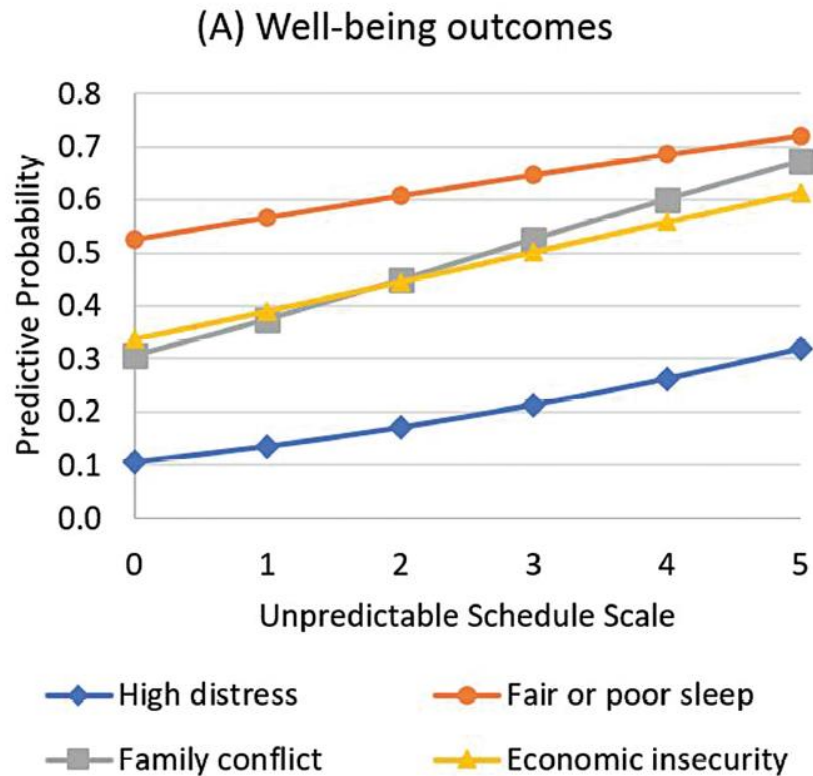
Association of unpredictable schedules with well-being and indicators of job retention in older workers
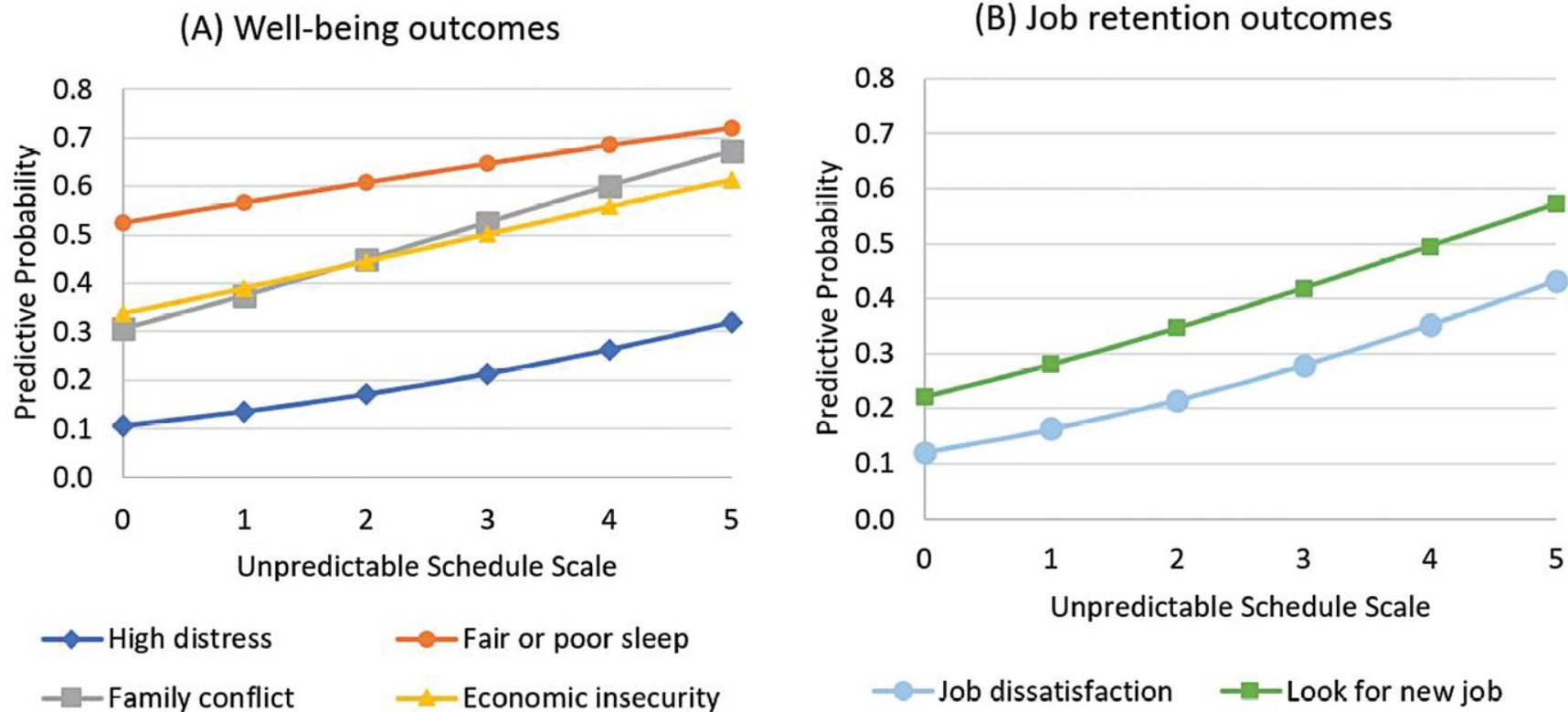
Average Marginal Effects of each scale item (ages 50+)

Items in model together	High distress	Fair or poor sleep	Family conflict	Economic insecurity	Job dissatisfaction	Likely to look for new job
Two weeks' notice	0.023**	0.024*	0.058***	0.019	0.041***	0.052***
On call	0.030**	0.021	0.026*	0.064***	0.023*	0.027*
Cancel shift	0.057***	0.039**	0.083***	0.098***	0.104***	0.115***
Clopening	0.043***	0.067***	0.116***	0.062***	0.064***	0.086***
Timing change	0.037***	0.045***	0.075***	0.038***	0.050***	0.059***

Conclusions and implications

- Scheduling conditions were more predictable for older compared to younger workers

  - However, >80% of workers ages 50+ experienced at least 1 type of schedule instability

- Among workers ages 50+, unpredictable schedules were associated with:

  - **Work-family conflict,** psychological distress, poor quality sleep, economic insecurity

  - Job dissatisfaction, intentions to look for a new job

- Policies aimed at improving scheduling conditions (especially canceled and clopening shifts) hold promise to benefit older service workers

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Research Article

Older Workers With Unpredictable Schedules: Implications for Well-Being and Job Retention

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Thank you! Questions?