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BRIEF REPORT

Spousal Preferences for Joint Retirement: Evidence From a Multiactor Survey Among Older Dual-Earner Couples

Maria Eismann
Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute and University of Amsterdam

Kène Henkens
Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute and University Medical Center Groningen

Matthijs Kalmijn
University of Amsterdam and Netherlands Interdiciplinary Demographic Institute

The general assumption in past research on coupled retirement is that men and women prefer joint retirement. The current study tests this assumption and hypothesizes that preferences to retire jointly are associated with (a) the work and relationship attachment of both members of the couple, and (b) the respective spouse's preferences. The results show that the majority of dual-earner couples have no preference for joint retirement. Male and female spouses with either weak work attachment or strong relationship attachment are more likely to prefer to retire jointly. Moreover, spouses strongly influence each other's preferences.

Keywords: synchronization, decision-making, interdependence, two-stage least squares, instrumental variable

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The general assumption in previous research on coupled retirement is that men and women prefer joint retirement (Blau, 1998; Gustman & Steinmeier, 2000; Johnson, 2004), meaning that the two spouses exit the labor force at approximately the same time. However, preferences for joint retirement "typically go unmeasured" (O'Rand & Farkas, 2002). Thus, the assumption that spouses generally prefer to retire jointly has rarely been tested directly, and studies of the determinants of these preferences are virtually nonexistent. Theoretically, clear preferences contribute to setting goals, which is an important stage in retirement planning (Noone, Stephens, & Alpass, 2010). Moreover, retirement is often conceptualized as a decision-making process in which older workers gradually disengage from work via preferences, intentions, actual retirement, and ultimately, postretirement adaptation (Beehr, 1986; Feldman & Beehr, 2011; Solem et al., 2016). To gain more insight into preferences as an early stage in this process and to investigate whether spouses share their retirement goals, we investigate the following three questions: (a) When approaching retirement age, to what extent do dual-earner couples wish to synchronize their labor-market exits and retire at the same time? (b) Which factors influence whether male and female spouses wish to follow individual or joint paths during their retirement? and (c) To what extent do spouses influence each other's preferences for joint retirement?

Next to studying preferences for joint retirement directly, we seek to contribute to the existing literature on joint retirement in two additional ways. First, we take a multispheral approach to preferences for joint retirement (Settersten, 2003), meaning that determinants are expected to arise from different life spheres (cf. microsystems; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Specifically, this study focuses on the work and relationship attachment of both spouses. Second, we take a multiactor perspective on joint retirement. Data are collected from each member of 2,114 dual-earner couples, with the aim of determining the extent to which one spouse's preferences to retire jointly influence the preferences of the other. We account for the interdependencies between spouses' preferences using a two-stage least square (2SLS) approach.

Maria Eismann, Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI-KNAW) and Department of Sociology, University of Amsterdam; Kène Henkens, Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI-KNAW) and Department of Health Sciences, University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG-RUG); Matthijs Kalmijn, Department of Sociology, University of Amsterdam, and Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI-KNAW).

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Maria Eismann, Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI-KNAW), P.O. Box 11650, NL-2502 AR, The Hague, the Netherlands. E-mail: eismann@nidi.nl

Background and Hypotheses

Determinants of Preferences for Joint Retirement

For our main hypotheses, we lean on the assumption that retirement takes place in a multispheral context (Settersten, 2003). Given that joint retirement primarily impacts the work and relationship domain, we argue that work and relationship attachment are predominant determinants of preferences for joint retirement. However, we also consider sociodemographic variables that have been shown to affect joint retirement behavior in previous studies (i.e., age, spousal age gap, income, wealth, children, health, and care tasks) as well as satisfaction with social contacts and leisure activities.

Work Attachment

Joint retirement requires coordinating dual-earners' individual retirement preferences and opportunities. Older workers who are strongly attached to their work are less prone to adapt their own retirement plans to facilitate joint retirement with a spouse. One indicator of work attachment that might play a role in the retirement decision is occupational status, a concept that encompasses the link between education and income (Ganzeboom, Degraaf, Treiman, & Deleeuw, 1992). High occupational status indicates attachment to the work role, because people in high-status occupations are more often intrinsically motivated in their job (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2013). Another indicator of work attachment is the number of weekly working hours (Damman, Henkens, & Kalmijn, 2015). This factor might be especially relevant in the Dutch context, where part-time work among women is quite common (OECD, 2002; Statistics Netherlands, 2016). Controlling for these structural indicators, older workers were deemed to differ in their degree of connectedness to their work. Job satisfaction is a relevant affective indicator of work attachment and can differ substantially within a group of people in the same occupation (Barnes-Farrell, 2003; Von Hippel, Kalokerinos, & Henry, 2013). Another affective indicator of work attachment is the degree to which older workers expect to miss the work role after retirement; we call this "retirement anxiety" (see also Van Solinge & Henkens, 2008). Retirement anxiety is related to work attachment, because older workers who expect to miss the appreciation of colleagues, the feeling of productivity, and the social prestige connected to work are likely to value their work role highly (see Table 1 for all items).

Given the above, we hypothesize that stronger work attachment—as evidenced by (a) higher occupational status, (b) more weekly work hours, (c) higher job satisfaction, and (d) stronger retirement anxiety—is associated with weaker preferences for joint retirement (Hypothesis 1).

Relationship Attachment

Joint retirement offers the possibility of increased joint leisure for dual-earner couples, which makes it attractive for older workers who are strongly attached to their relationship (Gustman & Steinmeier, 2000; Johnson, 2004). Moreover, older workers for whom the relationship with their spouse is a central aspect of their lives are more prone to adapt their own retirement plans to facilitate joint retirement. One indicator of relationship attachment that might play a role in the retirement decision is relationship status. Married couples have a more homogeneous lifestyle (Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001) and are more invested in their relationship (Poortman & Mills, 2012) than cohabiting couples, which might result in a stronger preference for joint retirement. Another indicator of relationship attachment is the duration of the relationship, because duration is positively related to commitment and investment (Behringer, Perrucci, & Hogan, 2005; Macher, 2013). Being married as opposed to cohabiting, and relationship duration, are characteristics that are shared by the two members of a couple. However, the degree of attachment can differ between spouses. Individual perceptions of relationship quality and marital conflict might, therefore, be considered important additional indicators of relationship attachment that should be addressed in studies on joint retirement (Warren, 2015).

Given the above, we hypothesize that stronger relationship attachment—as evidenced by (a) being married as opposed to cohabiting, (b) longer relationship duration, (c) higher relationship quality, and (d) lower marital conflict—is associated with stronger preferences for joint retirement (Hypothesis 2).

Interdependence Between Spouses

According to a life-course perspective, individuals are interdependent and the life courses of spouses are particularly tightly linked (Elder & Johnson, 2003). This notion of linked lives is also present in family studies (Kalmijn, 2005; Lee, Zarit, Rovine, Birditt, & Fingerman, 2016) and developmental studies (Elder, 1998; Settersten, 2015). We expect that besides being affected in similar ways by their shared context (De Preter, Van Looy, & Mortelmans, 2015), spouses also influence each other more directly by exchanging information and actively persuading each other of their point of view (Henkens, 1999). Literature suggests that older workers discuss retirement primarily with their spouse, rather than with their coworkers or supervisors (Henkens & Van Solinge, 2003). In the course of these discussions, spousal attitudes and preferences are likely to align (Davis & Rusbult, 2001). Couples can, thus, become more similar in their attitudes over time (Kalmijn, 2005) and adapt their own preferences instead of simply adapting their behavior to each other's preferences (Becker & Lois, 2010). Given the above, we hypothesize that each spouse is more likely to prefer joint retirement if the other spouse prefers to retire jointly, even when controlling for the shared context (Hypothesis 3).

Factors Moderating Interdependence

Older workers with strong retirement anxiety see their work role as a central aspect of their life. Even though spouses may align their attitudes in discussions, they are less likely to adapt their opinion on issues that are of central importance to them than on issues that they find less important (Davis & Rusbult, 2001). Therefore, we hypothesize that older workers with strong retirement anxiety will be less influenced by their spouses' preferences for joint retirement than older workers with weak retirement anxiety (Hypothesis 4).

Table 1
Means, SDs, Coding and Psychometric Properties, and Wording of Survey Questions of All Independent and Control Variables (N = 2,114)

Independent and control variables	Men		Women		Coding and psychometric properties	Wording of survey question[a]
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Work attachment						
Occupational status	.15	.98	.04	.83	Coded according to the 2008 international socioeconomic index of occupational status (ISEI; Ganzeboom et al., 1992; Ganzeboom & Treiman, 1996), standardized, and combined in a single measure of occupational status (De Vries & Ganzeboom, 2008) based on the full sample (Henkens et al., 2017)	Questions: What is your job or profession?; In which category could your job or profession be grouped? (10 answer categories: 1 = *higher intellectual or free profession*, 2 = *higher executive profession*, 3 = *intermediate intellectual or free profession*, 4 = *intermediate executive or commercial profession*, 5 = *other nonmanual work*, 6 = *skilled and executive manual work*, 7 = *semi-skilled manual work*, 8 = *unskilled and experienced manual work*, 9 = *agricultural profession*, 10 = *I don't know*)
Work hours per week	35.51	6.76	24.68	7.73	Continuous variable ranging from 12 to 50. Censored at 50, because in the Netherlands, the average working week rarely exceeds 40 hr	Question: How many hours a week do you work on average (excluding overtime employment)?
Job satisfaction	5.30	1.07	5.39	1.02	1-item scale ranging from 1 = *low job satisfaction* to 7 = *high satisfaction*	Question: How satisfied are you with your work (7 answer categories: 1 = *extremely satisfied* to 7 = *extremely dissatisfied*)
Retirement anxiety	−.00	.83	.00	.84	6-item scale ranging from −2 = *weak retirement anxiety* to 3 = *strong retirement anxiety*, $\alpha_M = .91$, $\alpha_W = .92$	Question (adapted from earlier research [e.g., Henkens, 1999; Van Solinge & Henkens, 2008]): To what extent do you expect to miss the following aspects when you stop working? (a) Meaning something in society, (b) Appreciation by others, (c) A clear daily schedule, (d) Feeling productive, (e) Societal prestige, (f) Meaning something to others (5 answer categories: 1 = *very much* to 5 = *not at all*)
Relationship attachment						
Cohabiting[b]	.07	.26	.07	.26	Dummy variable: 1 = *cohabiting*, 0 = *married*	Question: Do you have a partner? (4 answer categories: 1 = *yes, I am married*, 2 = *yes, I cohabit with a partner*, 3 = *yes, I do have a partner, but we do not live together*, 4 = *no, I am single*)
Relationship duration[c]	34.04	8.87	34.02	8.87	Continuous variable ranging from 0 to 46 years. Censored at so that the younger partner was minimally 20 years old when the union was formed. In the Dutch context, people born between 1948 and 1965 rarely entered into cohabiting relationships before this age (Liefbroer & Dykstra, 2000, p. 90)	Question: Since what year have you and your wife/husband/partner been a couple?
Relationship quality	.00	.93	.00	.93	3-item scale ranging from −6 = *low relationship quality* to 1 = *high relationship quality*, $\alpha_M = .92$, $\alpha_W = .93$	Items (selected from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study [e.g. see Rijken & Thomson, 2011]): The relationship with my wife/husband/partner makes me happy; My wife/husband/partner and I have a good relationship; The relationship with my wife/husband/partner is very stable (5 answer categories: 1 = *completely agree* to 5 = *completely disagree*)

(*table continues*)

Table 1 (*continued*)

Independent and control variables	Men		Women		Coding and psychometric properties	Wording of survey question[a]
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Marital conflict	1.86	.79	1.91	.80	1-item scale ranging from 1 = *low marital conflict* to 5 = *high marital conflict*	Item: My wife/husband/partner and I do not have much conflict (5 answer categories: 1 = *completely agree* to 5 = *completely disagree*)
Controls						
Age	61.84	2.03	59.82	2.79	Continuous variable ranging from 50 to 67 years	Question: In what year were you born?
Age gap (absolute)	2.78	2.38	2.78	2.38	Continuous variable ranging from 0 to 15 years	
Income (in 1.000€)	2.63	.79	1.85	.71	Categorical variable with 8 categories consisting of the mid-point of each answer category	Question: What is your total *net* monthly income from paid work? (8 answer categories: 1 = *less than 1.000 euros*; 2 = *1.000–1.500 euros*; 3 = *1.500–2.000 euros*; 4 = *2.000–2.500 euros*; 5 = *2.500–3.000 euros*; 6 = *3.000–3.500 euros*; 7 = *3.500–4.000 euros*; 8 = *more than 4.000 euros*)
Wealth[b]						
<50.000 €	.41	.49	.41	.49	Categorical variable with 3 categories. Here, percentages belonging to each category are reported	Question: How large do you estimate your total wealth (own house, savings, stocks, etc. minus debts/mortgage) to be? (7 answer categories: 1 = *less than 5.000 euros*; 2 = *between 5 and 25 thousand euros*; 3 = *between 25 and 50 thousand euros*; 4 = *between 50 and 100 thousand euros*; 5 = *between 100 and 250 thousand euros*; 6 = *between 250 and 500 thousand euros*; 7 = *more than 500 thousand euros*)
50.000–100.000 €	.32	.46	.32	.47		
>100.000 €	.28	.45	.28	.45		
Children[b]	.93	.26	.93	.26	Dummy variable: 1 = *children*, 0 = *no children*	Question: Do you have children? (2 answer categories: 1 = *no*, 2 = *yes*)
Health	3.30	.87	3.36	.86	1-item scale ranging from 1 = *poor health* to 5 = *excellent health*	Question: How would you characterize your health in general? (5 answer categories: 1 = *excellent* to 5 = *very poor*)
Care tasks	.50	.50	.63	.48	Dummy variable: 1 = *any care task*, 0 = *no care tasks*	Question: How many hours do you spend *per week on average* on the following activities? (a) Looking after (grand)children, (b) Unpaid help to persons who are ill or in need of help
Social contacts	5.51	.81	5.59	.86	1-item scale ranging from 1 = *low satisfaction with social contacts* to 7 = *high satisfaction with social contacts*	Question: How satisfied are you with your social contacts? (7 answer categories: 1 = *extremely satisfied* to 7 = *extremely dissatisfied*)
Leisure activities	5.53	.90	5.42	.96	1-item scale ranging from 1 = *low satisfaction with leisure activities* to 7 = *high satisfaction with leisure activities*	Question: How satisfied are you with your leisure activities? (7 answer categories: 1 = *extremely satisfied* to 7 = *extremely dissatisfied*)
Proximity to retirement					Categorical variable with 8 categories	Question: At what age do you expect to *completely* stop being engaged in paid work?
Within current year	.10	.30	.06	.23		
1 year	.12	.33	.09	.29		
2 years	.12	.33	.09	.29		
3 years	.13	.34	.12	.33		
4 years	.13	.34	.12	.33		
5 years	.12	.32	.11	.31		
6 years	.09	.29	.09	.29		
7 or more years	.18	.39	.31	.46		
Gender primary respondent	.37	.48	.37	.48	Dummy variable: 1 = female, 0 = male	Are you a man or a woman? (2 answer categories: 1 = man, 2 = woman)

[a] All question and answer categories are translated from Dutch. [b] Variable measured among primary respondents. [c] Variable measured among secondary respondents.

Older workers with a high relationship quality see their relationships as a central aspect of their life and are likely to be influenced by their spouse on matters related to other spheres of life (Roest, Dubas, Gerris, & Engels, 2006). According to Heider's balance theory, older workers who are strongly attached to their spouse adapt to their spouses' preferences even if the spouse does not actively try to convince them (Crandall, Silvia, N′Gbala, Tsang, & Dawson, 2007; Heider, 1958). Therefore, we hypothesize that older workers with high relationship quality are influenced more by their spouses' preferences for joint retirement than older workers with low relationship quality (Hypothesis 5).

Gendered Process

As "gendered life scripts and options produce distinctive life course patterns for men and for women" (Moen, Kim, & Hofmeister, 2001), which can lead to differences in retirement behavior (Radl, 2013), it can also be argued that men and women differ in their preferences for joint retirement. In heterosexual couples, the woman is usually the younger spouse (Ho & Raymo, 2009; Szinovacz, 2002). The older spouse (the man) will face mandatory retirement once he reaches public pension age, leaving the burden of adapting individual retirement plans to the younger spouse (the woman). This might make women less likely to prefer joint retirement with their male spouse, because they would have to sacrifice potential working years to facilitate joint retirement. In line with this argument, we hypothesize that men prefer joint retirement more strongly than women (Hypothesis 6).

We also expect the strength of spousal influence to depend on gender. Women generally earn less than men. This means that the woman's retirement may only have a small effect on the financial health of the household. Therefore, once the male spouse's retirement is settled, the woman may not be able to fall back on financial arguments for continuing to work if her male spouse wishes her to join him in retirement. This weakens her bargaining position (Blood & Wolfe, 1960), even when controlling for the age of both spouses. Thus, we hypothesize that the effect of the male spouse's preference for joint retirement on the female spouse's preference is stronger than the effect of the female spouse's preference on the male spouse's preference (Hypothesis 7).

Method

Sample

This study used data from the first wave of the Pension Panel Survey carried out by the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) in 2015. The data were collected among a stratified sample of 60- to 65-year-old participants in three large pension funds in the Netherlands (representing workers in government, education, care, health, and construction), covering 45% of the Dutch workforce. A mail questionnaire was sent to 15,480 older workers (primary respondents) and, where applicable, their spouse (secondary respondents). In total, 6,793 primary respondents returned the questionnaire (response rate 44%). Selective nonresponse with respect to gender, age, sector of employment, and size of employing organization was relatively limited (Henkens, Van Solinge, Damman, & Dingemans, 2017). Secondary respondents returned the questionnaire in 84% of the 5,279 applicable cases. Of the 4,409 couples, we exclusively included dual-earner couples in the analytic sample in which both spouses were gainfully employed for at least 12 hr per week (N = 2,234). The sample was also limited to couples in which the secondary respondent was between 50 and 67 years old (N = 2,167) and to heterosexual couples (N = 2,114). We dealt with missing data using single stochastic regression imputation (Enders, 2010, pp. 46–49).

Measures

Preferences for joint retirement were measured based on the question "How important is it for you to stop working at approximately the same time as your wife/husband/partner?" Respondents answered this question on a 5-point Likert-scale (coded −2 = *very unimportant*, −1 = *unimportant*, 0 = *neutral*, 1 = *important*, 2 = *very important*). Table 1 presents the means and *SD*s of the imputed data for all independent and control variables, along with coding details and wording of the survey questions. For the retirement anxiety and the relationship quality scale, Table 1 also presents Cronbach's α.

Design

In a first model, we estimated an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model to study the relationship between preferences for joint retirement and older workers' work and relationship attachment. In a second model, we applied the 2SLS extension of OLS (see also Van Solinge & Henkens, 2005), because single-equation estimation techniques produce biased estimates when modeling interdependence (Godwin, 1985). In the 2SLS procedure, the two direct effects of spouses' preferences on each other represent mutual influence. If both coefficients are positive and significant, the influence is likely to be bidirectional. In a third model (also 2SLS), we studied whether retirement anxiety and relationship quality interact with the effect of one spouse's preference for joint retirement on the other spouse's preference.

Results

Preferences for Joint Retirement

Of the male spouses, 46% stated that retiring jointly was (very) important to them. Another 20% said that joint retirement was (very) unimportant. Of the female spouses, 45% stated that retiring jointly was (very) important to them. Another 25% said that joint retirement was (very) unimportant. At the couple level, 31% of the couples agreed that joint retirement was (very) important and 39% of the couples agreed that joint retirement was not (very) important. The remaining 30% of the couples disagreed on the importance of joint retirement.

Determinants of Preferences for Joint Retirement

The results of the OLS regression analyses of men's and women's preferences for joint retirement are presented in Model 1 (see Table 2). Higher occupational status was associated with weaker preferences to retire jointly for both men and women. Weekly

work hours did not significantly affect men's preferences, but unexpectedly were associated with stronger preferences for women. When considering the affective variation within these structural measures, higher job satisfaction was associated with weaker preferences to retire jointly for both men and women. Retirement anxiety did not significantly affect men's preferences, but was associated with weaker preferences for women. Overall, these findings lend support to Hypothesis 1, in which we expected stronger work attachment to be associated with weaker preferences for joint retirement.

Cohabitation versus marriage did not significantly affect men's or women's preferences for joint retirement. Longer relationship duration was associated with a stronger preference to retire jointly for both men and women. Turning to the affective variation within these structural measures, higher perceived relationship quality was associated with a stronger preference to retire jointly for both men and women. Marital conflict did not significantly affect men's preferences, but was associated with weaker preferences for women.[1] Overall, these findings lend support to Hypothesis 2, in which we expected stronger relationship attachment to be associated with stronger preferences for joint retirement.

Of the sociodemographic control variables that have been shown to affect joint retirement behavior in previous studies, poor perceived health and a larger absolute age gap were associated with weakened preferences for joint retirement for men and women. Men in the highest, rather than the lowest, wealth category and those with children had weaker preferences. Somewhat surprisingly, older women showed weaker preferences for joint retirement.

Spousal Influence

The results of the 2SLS regression analyses of spousal influence on preferences for joint retirement are presented in Model 2 (see Table 2). For men as well as women, the results provide strong support for Hypothesis 3, in which we expected that each spouse is more likely to prefer joint retirement if the other spouse prefers to retire jointly, even when correcting for mutual causation by other factors.

Moderation of spousal influence by retirement anxiety and relationship quality is tested in the 2SLS regression analyses (see Table S1 in supplemental material). For men (retirement anxiety: $b = -.01$, $p = .888$; relationship quality: $b = .05$, $p = .265$) and women (retirement anxiety: $b = -.05$, $p = .450$; relationship quality: $b = .01$, $p = .903$) both interaction terms were nonsignificant, lending no support to either Hypothesis 4 or 5. Hence, spouses affect each other's preferences independently of their own retirement anxiety and perceived relationship quality.

Gendered Process

Providing support for Hypothesis 6, we found that men ($M = .43$, $SD = 1.04$) preferred joint retirement more strongly than women ($M = .34$, $SD = 1.10$), $t(2113) = 3.58$, $p < .001$), but the difference was modest. Hypothesis 7, in which we expected the effect of the man's preference for joint retirement on the female spouse's preference to be stronger than the effect of the woman's preference on the male spouse's preference, was not supported, $z = -1.62$, $p = .105$. When examining the magnitude of the effects, it even appears that female spouses generally have more influence.

Discussion

The current study allows three conclusions. First, it is suggested that preferences for joint retirement were not as strong as implied by earlier studies (Johnson, 2004; Szinovacz, 2002). There was also considerable heterogeneity, with slightly less than half of the couples preferring joint retirement and slightly more than half not preferring joint retirement. Second, work and relationship attachment affected preferences for joint retirement. Specifically, the stronger older workers' work attachment, the weaker their preferences to retire jointly. In contrast, the stronger their relationship attachment, the stronger their preferences to retire jointly. Third, both men and women preferred joint retirement more strongly if their spouse preferred it as well. The strength of spousal influence did not differ according to retirement anxiety, relationship quality, or gender.

The strong mutual influence of dual-earners' preferences for joint retirement suggests a developmental process in which attitudes toward joint retirement become more synchronous over time. Thus, the quality of couples' collaborative cognition may gradually improve (Strough & Margrett, 2002). This like-mindedness will facilitate spouses' collaboration when planning their joint retirement (Peter-Wight & Martin, 2011; Rauers, Riediger, Schmiedek, & Lindenberger, 2011). However, even couples who agree on the unimportance of joint retirement might benefit from this consensus compared with couples who do not agree, because spouses who support each other's retirement plans have been shown to be better prepared (Van Dalen, Henkens, & Hershey, 2010). Naturally, the cross-sectional design of our study does not allow for definite claims about the effect of preferences for joint retirement on the decision-making process. Future research, using dynamic data, may determine how stable preferences for joint retirement are, whether any alignment of preferences leads to stronger or weaker preferences over time, and how preferences for joint retirement affect the paths dual-earners take in their retirement decision-making process.

The present study is not without its limitations. First, our dependent variable relies on a single-item measure, which may have impaired its reliability. Second, preferences for joint retirement might have been confounded by restrictions on retirement for both spouses. Couples who expected one spouse to retire soon but knew that the other spouse could not retire might have adjusted their preferences accordingly. Thus, this study might have underestimated the prevalence of preferences for joint retirement. Third, the current study is based on a national context characterized by a mandatory retirement age that is gradually increasing from 65 to 67, high enrollment in occupational pension plans, high pension replacement rates, and relatively low income inequality. This might limit the generalizability of our findings to other countries.

[1] It is possible that affective variables of work and relationship involvement (i.e., job satisfaction, retirement anxiety, relationship quality, and marital conflict) have their strongest impact when financial concerns are not an issue. Therefore, we tested the moderation of each of the affective variables by income. None of the interaction terms reached statistical significance, $ps \geq .131$. Note, however, that our sample is drawn from a country with low income inequality.

Table 2
Model 1 (OLS) and Model 2 (2SLS) of Preferences for Joint Retirement (N = 2,114)

	Model 1				Model 2			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
Independent and control variables	Coef.	*p*	Coef.	*p*	Coef.	*p*	Coef.	*p*
Individual determinants								
Man's work attachment								
Occupational status (M)	−.07**	(.009)			−.08**	(.001)		
Weekly work hours (M)	−.00	(.851)			−.01	(.091)		
Job satisfaction (M)	−.05*	(.021)			−.04	(.051)		
Retirement anxiety (M)	−.02	(.403)			.02	(.340)		
Woman's work attachment								
Occupational status (W)			−.10**	(.002)			−.07*	(.042)
Weekly work hours (W)			.01*	(.021)			.01	(.187)
Job satisfaction (W)			−.15***	(.000)			−.12***	(.000)
Retirement anxiety (W)			−.10***	(.000)			−.08**	(.004)
Man's relationship attachment								
Relationship quality (M)	.16***	(.000)			.10***	(.000)		
Marital conflict (M)	−.00	(.901)			−.00	(.989)		
Woman's relationship attachment								
Relationship quality (W)			.14***	(.000)			.11***	(.000)
Marital conflict (W)			−.13***	(.000)			−.12***	(.000)
Man's controls								
Age (M)	−.02	(.103)			−.03**	(.010)		
Income (M)	.00	(.458)			.00	(.146)		
Health (M)	−.08**	(.007)			−.02	(.379)		
Care tasks (M)	.04	(.360)			.04	(.363)		
Social contacts (M)	−.00	(.930)			−.00	(.943)		
Leisure activities (M)	.02	(.435)			.02	(.384)		
Woman's controls								
Age (W)			−.07***	(.000)			−.05***	(.000)
Income (W)			−.00	(.187)			−.00	(.362)
Health (W)			−.07*	(.012)			−.06*	(.015)
Care tasks (W)			−.01	(.804)			−.03	(.449)
Social contacts (W)			−.01	(.798)			−.00	(.884)
Leisure activities (W)			.02	(.584)			.01	(.709)
Shared context								
Shared relationship attachment								
Cohabiting (Ref = married)	−.10	(.281)	.00	(.968)	−.11	(.217)	.05	(.606)
Relationship duration	.01*	(.035)	.01*	(.042)	.00	(.193)	.00	(.160)
Shared controls								
Age gap (absolute)	−.04***	(.000)	−.11***	(.000)	−.00	(.697)	−.09***	(.000)
Wealth (Ref = <50.000 €)								
50.000–100.000 €	−.06	(.229)	−.04	(.471)	−.06	(.242)	−.01	(.901)
>100.000 €	−.18**	(.002)	−.09	(.126)	−.13*	(.014)	−.03	(.638)
Children (Ref = no children)	−.20*	(.022)	−.09	(.303)	−.13	(.105)	−.02	(.791)
Interdependence								
Female spouse's preference					.55***	(.000)		
Male spouse's preference							.33**	(.006)
R^2	.076		.129		.275		.293	

Note. OLS = ordinary least squares; 2SLS = two-stage least square. Controlled for individual proximity to retirement and gender of the primary respondent.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The current study clearly shows that the early stage of couples' retirement decision-making process is more complex than previously presumed: men's and women's work and relationship attachment and their spouses' preferences interact in creating preferences to retire jointly or not. Our study provides evidence of diversity among dual-earners approaching retirement. Couples who prefer retirement to be a synchronized household transition might follow different paths in preparation for it, and might adopt different lifestyles after it, compared with couples for whom the two spouses' retirement transitions are much more individualized. Mandatory retirement in combination with recent policy reforms aimed at longer working lives may reduce older workers' individual flexibility in the timing of their retirement transition. For couples who aim for synchronization, this greatly limits the opportunity to realize their preferences, specifically when spouses are of different age.

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