



WHERL is a three-year research project investigating ageing, work and health across the lifecourse

WHERL is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Medical Research Council (MRC) through an Extended Working Lives Consortia Grant.

Introduction



WHERL will examine a crucial question for ageing societies: how inequalities across the lifecourse relate to paid work in later life in the UK.

This issue is of growing importance since the UK, like many other governments across the world, is rapidly extending the working lives of older adults through the postponement of the state pension age and other measures.

These policy reforms affect millions of people, yet their implications for health and wellbeing are unknown. Do these policies harm, benefit or have little effect on the population?

To answer this, we need to understand the lifelong drivers affecting the complex relationship between paid work in later life, health and wellbeing.

Our funding (worth £1.22m) will be invested in making a significant contribution to our understanding of the interactions between paid work and health, especially in later life.

The WHERL consortium's main aim is to investigate lifecourse influences on later life work trajectories and the implications for health and wellbeing of working up to and beyond the state pension age.

The project builds on an existing UK-Canadian collaboration examining lifecourse influences on later life work trajectories across several European countries and the USA.

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WHERL is led by the **Institute of Gerontology at King's College London** in partnership with:

- Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience at King's College London
- Epidemiology & Public Health at University College London
- Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto
- Pensions Policy Institute
- Age UK
- UK Department for Work and Pensions.

Research themes



Using a wide variety of complex large scale datasets, our interdisciplinary team will be tackling projects that cover three major areas:

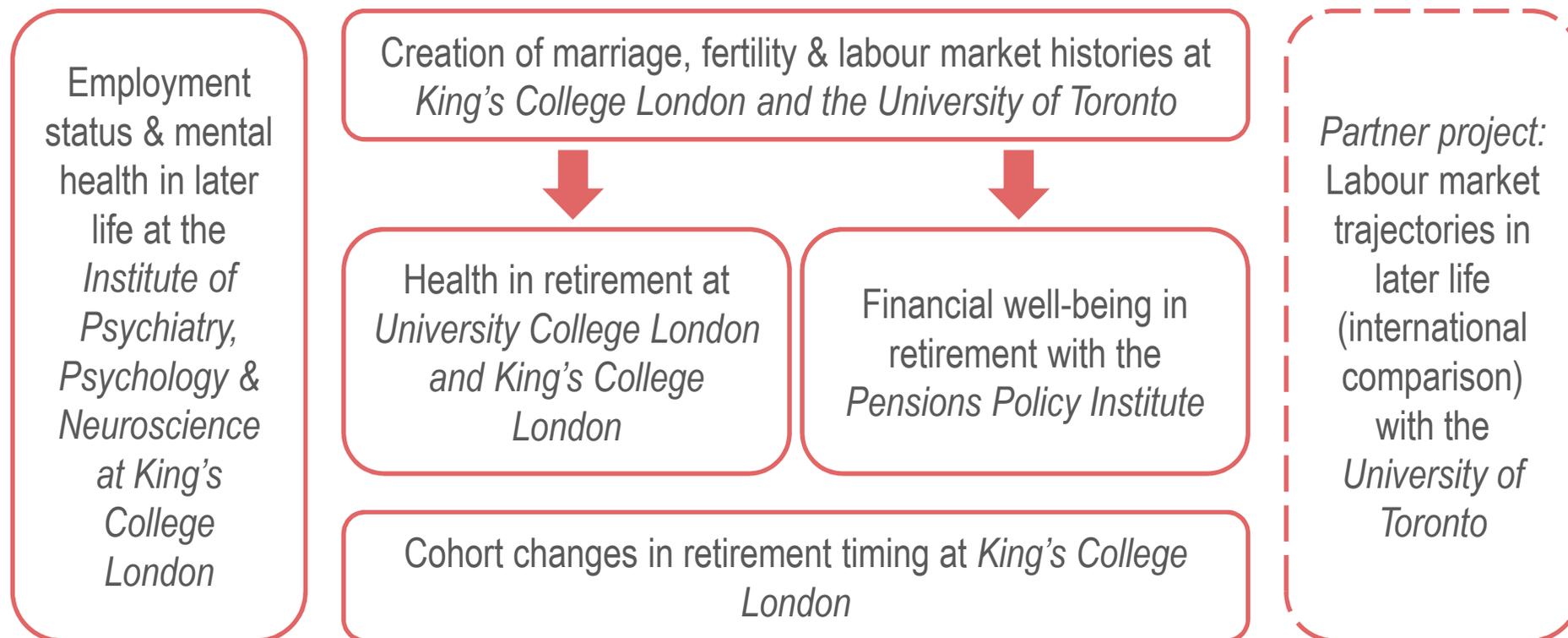
- i) a comprehensive assessment of lifecourse determinants and consequences for health and wellbeing of working up to and beyond the state pension age
- ii) an evaluation of whether (and how) these relationships have changed for different cohorts and over time
- iii) modelling of the financial consequences of working up to and beyond the state pension age for those with different lifecourse trajectories.

Research questions

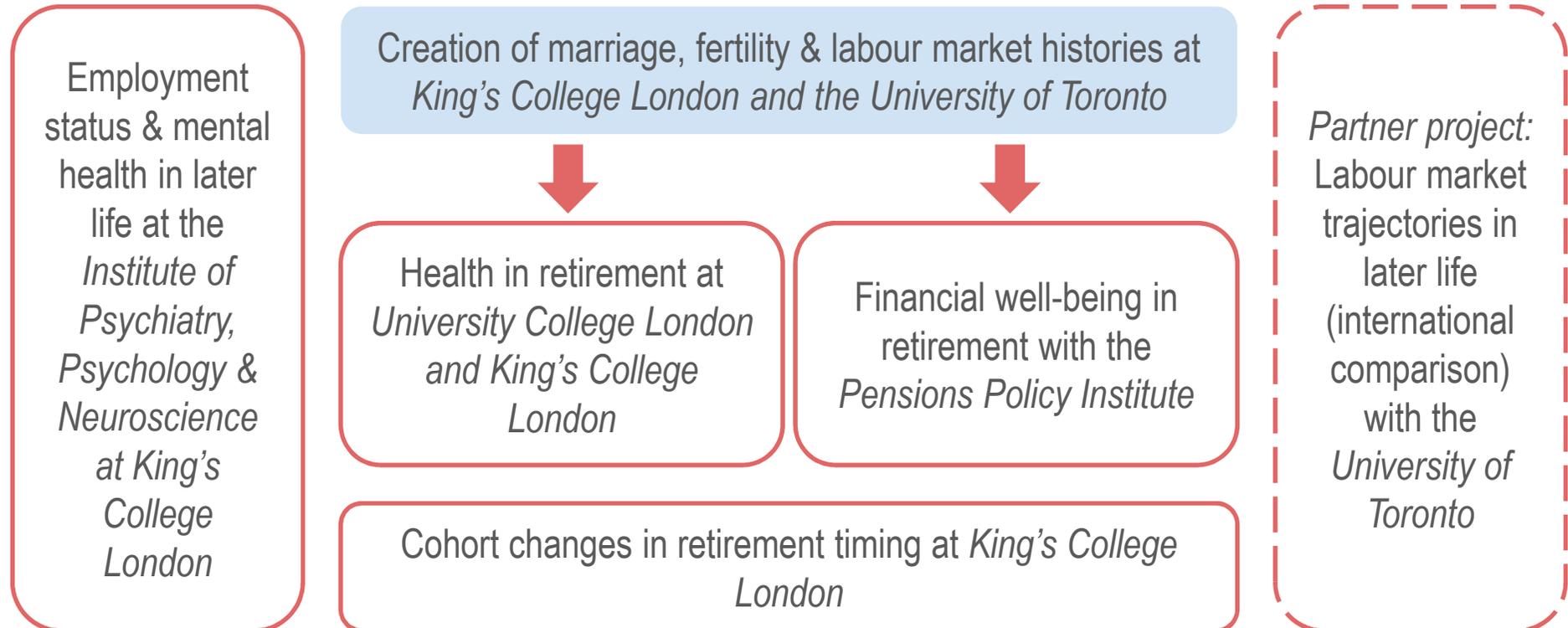


- How work and family histories influence who works for pay until or beyond SPA? How does this vary by gender and social class? How has working in later life changed across cohorts?
- How does working later in life relate to health in the UK? Does this relationship differ according to individuals' earlier work and family histories? Has this relationship changed across cohorts?
- In the UK, how does working later in life influence projections of income in retirement? Is the financial impact of late career work affected by individuals' earlier work and family histories? Has the impact of earlier work and family histories on retirement income changed across cohorts in the UK?

Project structure



Project structure



Creation of marriage, fertility and labour market histories



- Aim is to summarise and describe individuals' long-term biographies for use in subsequent work packages.
 - Using data from the British Household Panel Survey, the British Retirement Survey and the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing.
 - Annual state in each domain over adult working life (16–55 years):
 - **Labour Market Involvement:** Full-time and self-employment / Part-time / Not in paid work
 - **Marital Status:** Married / Not married
 - **Fertility (number of children <16 years):** 0 / 1 / 2 / 3+
 - First work package, due for completion in March 2015.
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Research team:

King's College London: Karen Glaser, Debora Price, Laurie Corna,
Loretta Platts, Rachel Stuchbury, Lawrence Sacco, Giorgio di Gessa.
University of Toronto: Peggy McDonough, Diana Worts.



Classifying individual histories



- For three different British datasets...
- ... generate year-by-year work, marital and fertility histories for participants born 1920–1945.
- Group each set of histories according to frequent and meaningful patterns with the help of “model” or “synthetic” sequences.
- Classify participants according to the work, marital and fertility synthetic histories they match most closely in each domain.
- The final result for one participant could be that their work, marital and fertility history was classified as: “full-time work”, being “married throughout” and having had “one child early”.

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Male work histories

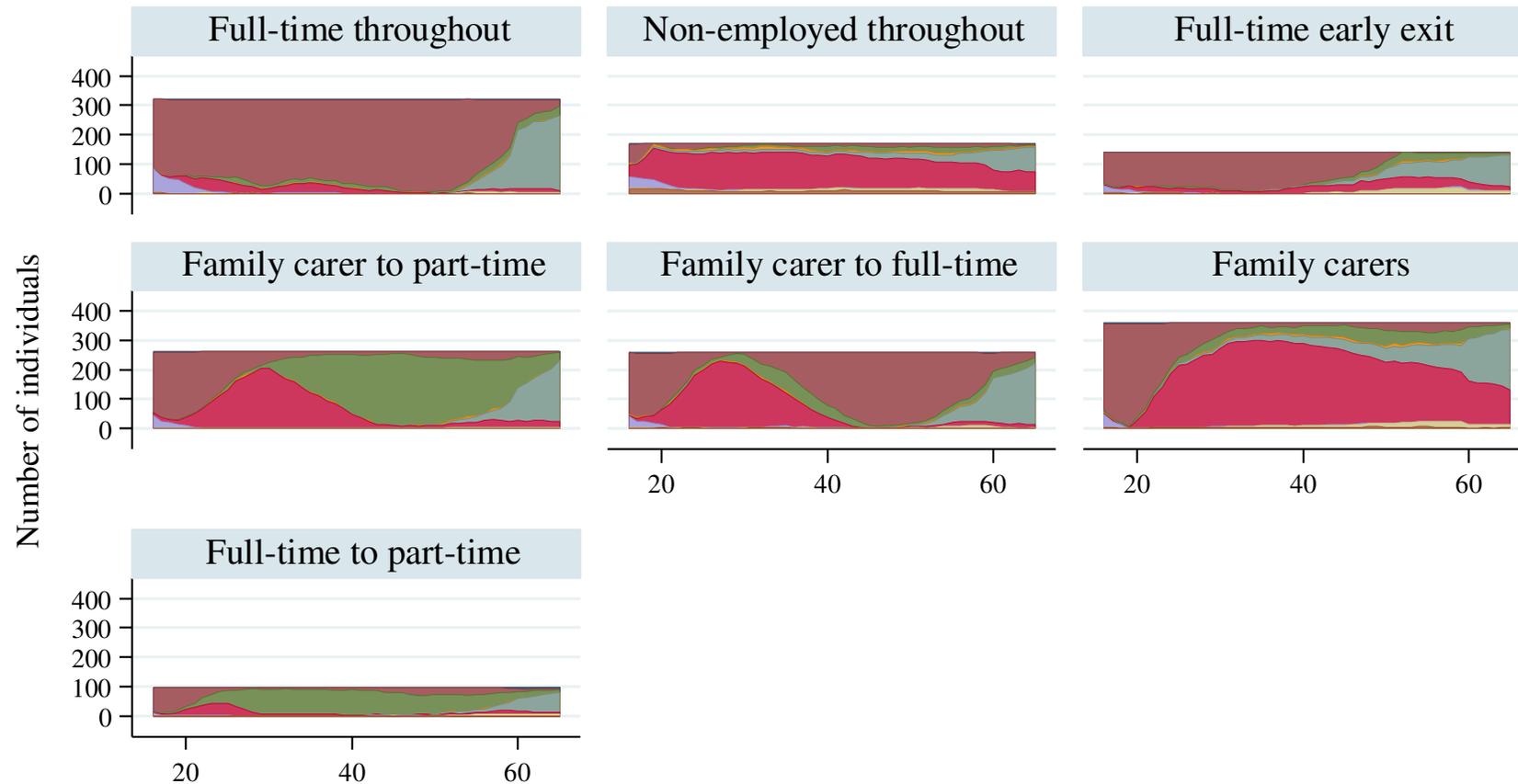


Age (range: 16–65 years)

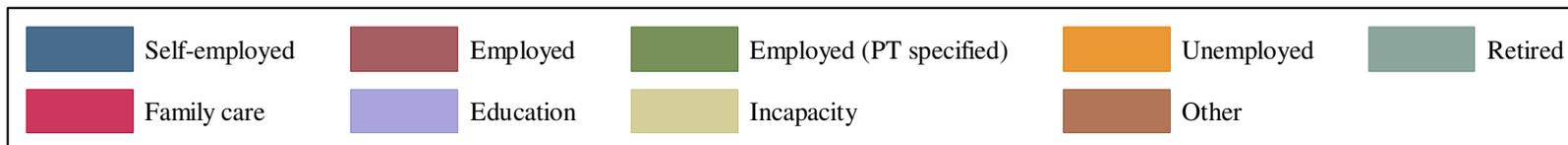


Graphs of labour market histories organized by their nearest synthetic type.

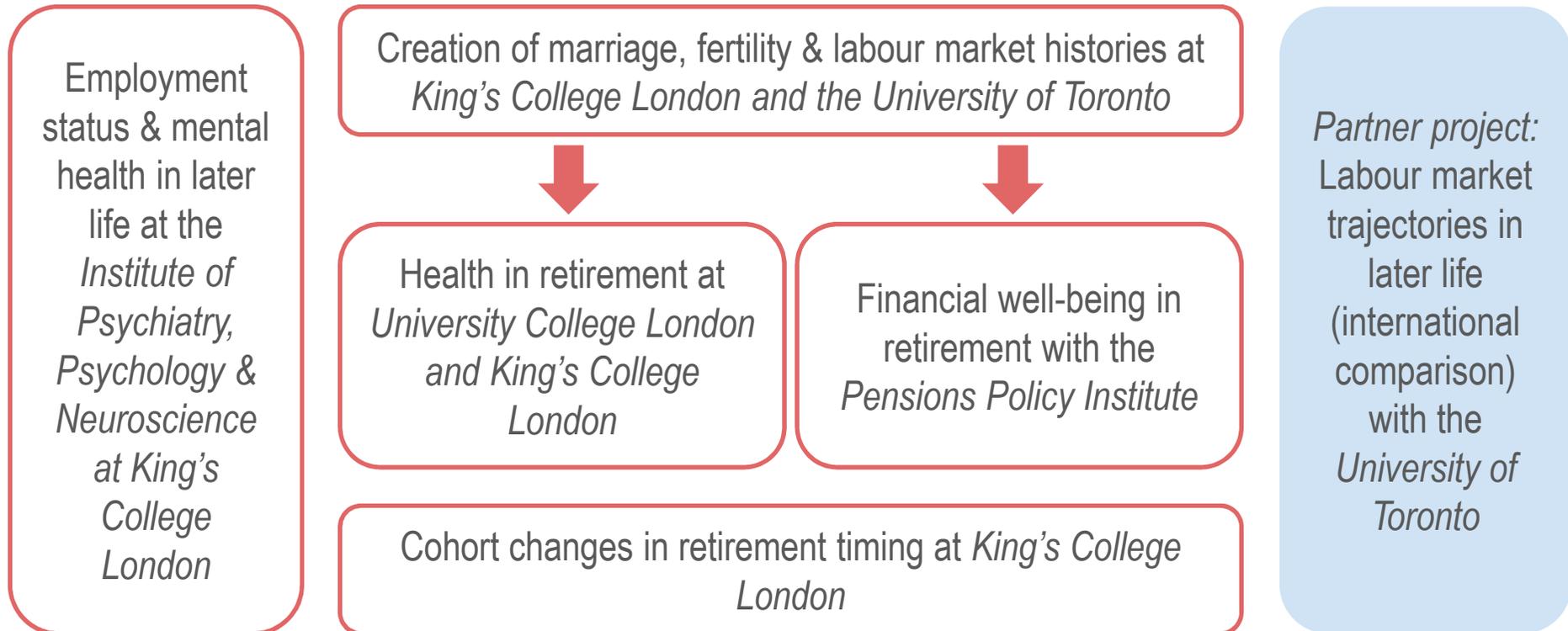
Female work histories



Age (range: 16–65 years)



Graphs of labour market histories organized by their nearest synthetic type.



Labour market experiences in
later life: Relationship to
health and earlier work and
family circumstances



- A comparative project examining older adults' labour market involvement from a gendered life course perspective.
 - Adults' labour market activities between the ages of 50 and 69 years are modelled as single sequences, using data from the USA, Italy, Sweden and Germany.
 - Key Questions:
 - How are labour market sequences in later life shaped by gender and earlier employment and family (marital/fertility) circumstances?
 - How are labour market sequences in later life related to health?
 - Led by the University of Toronto (Peggy McDonough & Diana Worts) with King's College London (Laurie Corna) and University College London (Amanda Sacker & Anne McMunn).
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"Work and Health in Later Life: Pathways and Social Patterning in Comparative Context" is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

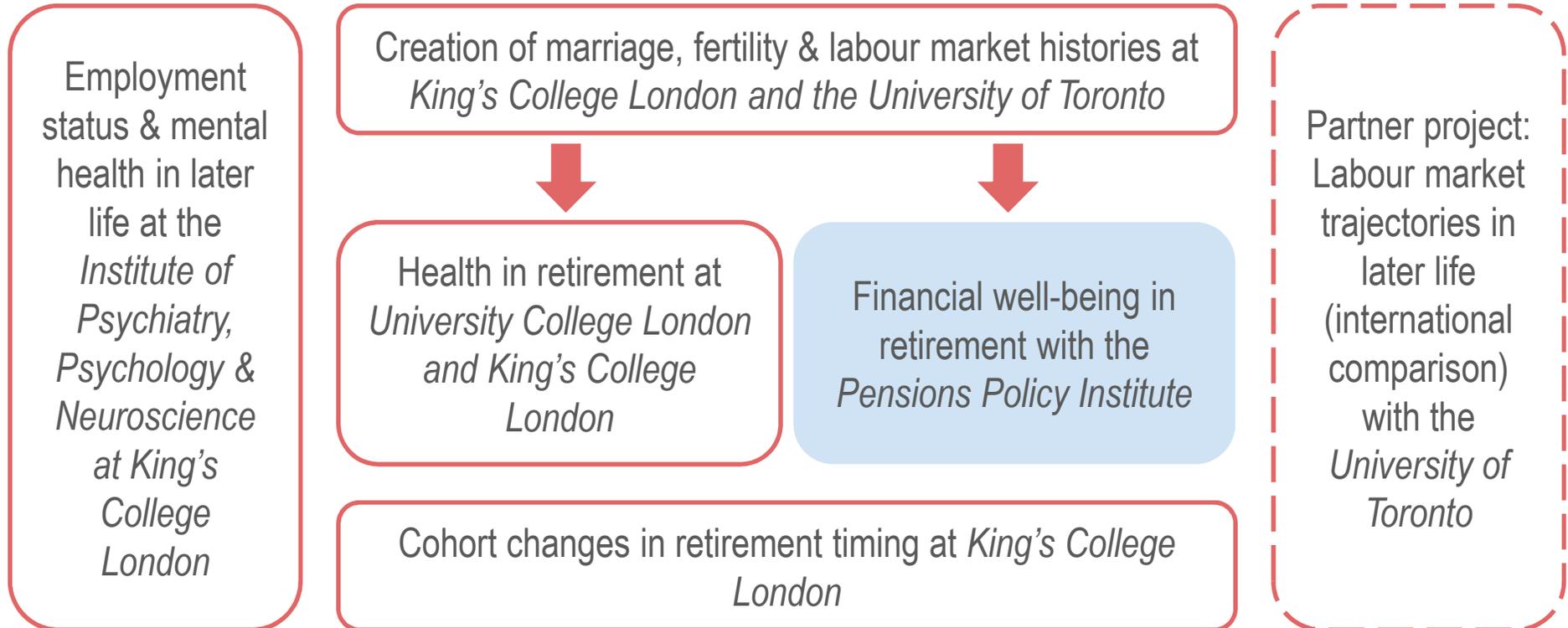
Early findings



- Highest labour market attachment between ages 50–69 was in Sweden, followed by the USA, then Germany, lowest in Italy.
- There were marked gender differences in employment biographies in Germany and Italy; they were visible to a lesser degree in Sweden and the USA.
- Attachment to the labour market during individuals' careers up to age 50 and family caregiving earlier in the life course are key to understanding gender differences, and matter more in Germany and Italy than in Sweden or the USA.
- We are working to compare these findings with British data from the WHERL project.

“Work and Health in Later Life: Pathways and Social Patterning in Comparative Context” is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.





Modelling financial circumstances in retirement



- A collaboration with the Pensions Policy Institute, an expert organisation undertaking rigorous research into retirement provision from an independent, long-term perspective.
- The Pensions Policy Institute has constructed a sophisticated individual model which models pension receipts for hypothetical individuals according to their employment histories.
 - But which individuals should be included?
 - Somebody with mean earnings & a full employment history (e.g., 30 years' full-time work to age 55)? Supplement this with other individuals with different employment histories?
 - Are such invented individuals representative of the population? (How long are typical career interruptions? What proportion of women return to work after having children?)
- WHERL will provide a set of hypothetical individuals based on real data from nationally representative datasets. This will mean that a more realistic set of individuals can be used, improving the accuracy of this sort of individual model.

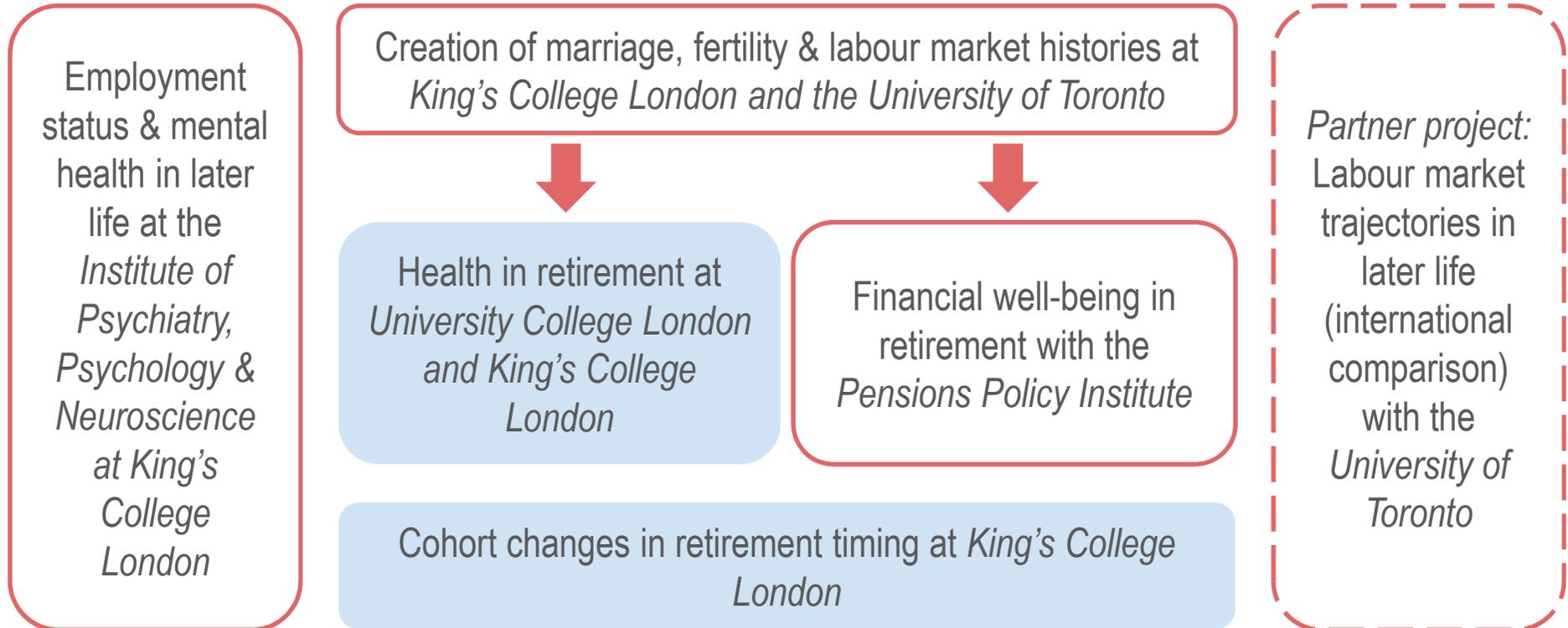
Research team:

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Pensions Policy Institute: Chris Curry, Mel Duffield, John Adams, Shamil Popat.



Later work packages



Dissemination activities 2015–2017



- Dissemination activities will take place from mid-2015 to early 2017.
 - A series of briefing notes will be created over the next 2½ years, accompanying research articles from the various work packages as they are accepted for publication.
 - A series of seminars is being planned, in collaboration with AgeUK and the Pensions Policy Institute.
 - Everything will be available through the website: www.wherl.ac.uk.
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Thank you



www.wherl.ac.uk