

# ANNUAL REVIEW

tilda

The Irish Longitudinal  
Study on Ageing

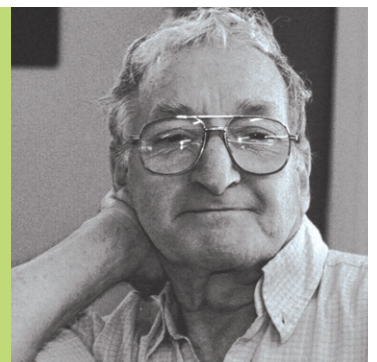
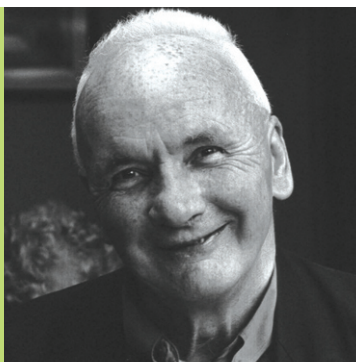


*Towards making Ireland the best  
place in the world to grow old*

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) is a major initiative led by Trinity College Dublin which will provide high quality research relating to older people and ageing in Ireland. It involves collecting baseline data and updates on a two yearly basis from a large cohort of people aged 50 and over. Detailed information will be assembled on all aspects of their lives, including the economic dimension (pensions, employment, income and assets, etc.), health aspects (physical, mental, service needs and usage, etc.) and social aspects (contact with friends and kin, formal and informal care, social participation etc.). TILDA is funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies and Irish Life.

www.tilda.ie

2008



## TILDA Aims

To develop an environment in which people can “age well”, we need to characterise the older Irish citizen and explore factors which determine successful ageing. This can only be done with the help of a nationally representative survey of the older population in Ireland that will act as the foundation on which appropriate health, medical, social and economic policies can be based. This study will provide a comprehensive and accurate picture of the characteristics, needs and contributions of older persons in Ireland. It will be of immense value for:

- policy-makers & public sector service planners;
- voluntary sector actors engaged in activities that seek to enhance the social integration of older citizens; and,
- many private sector companies in the research and development, pharmaceutical and services industries.

Furthermore the study will deliver quality cutting edge research consistent with the emerging national initiative towards a “knowledge society” built on innovations in science and technology.

The study is aimed at understanding the current status and changing needs of older people, in particular:

- Living standards, quality of life and pensions of people at older ages;
- Physical and mental health needs of older people;
- Social care needs and social networks of older people;
- Health and social needs of families and carers of older people;
- Biological and environmental components of “successful ageing”;
- Contributions that older people are making to society and the economy;
- How each of these key components can interact to ensure that Ireland meets the needs and choices of its citizens in a personalised and positive environment and with due dignity and respect; and,
- What direction policies related to older people should take.

## Project Description

A nationally representative sample of over 8,000 adults aged 50 and over, resident in Ireland, will be selected using a population sift. An initial multi-stage random sample of addresses will be chosen by means of the RANSAM sampling procedure developed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). Each address will have an equal probability of selection. The resulting sample will represent the appropriate urban/rural mix as well as income, education, gender and geographical groupings across the Republic of Ireland.

The selected addresses will then be visited by a fieldworker and all persons aged 50 or over (and their spouses of any age) will be canvassed to participate in the survey. Fieldwork will involve interviews in the respondents' home using computer-aided personal interviewing (CAPI) and a self-completion questionnaire, followed by either a visit by the respondent to a local TILDA Health Assessment Centre, where appropriate medical measurement facilities will be available, or a visit to the respondent's home by a qualified research nurse to take biomedical samples.

Participants selected for the main TILDA study will have a follow-up interview every two years and a health assessment every four years for at least a ten-year period.

## Pilot 1

### TILDA Health Assessment Centre

In the first TILDA pilot, respondents completed a face-to-face interview and self completion questionnaire in their home, and were then invited to attend a dedicated centre in Trinity College Dublin for a health assessment. The assessments were scheduled at a date and time which suited the respondent, and were carried out by highly trained nurses. Transport was provided to and from the centre for those who wished to avail of it and the assessments took an average of 2½ hours each. Of the 143 social interviews conducted in the pilot, 89 participants volunteered for the health assessment. Each of the participants received a copy of their test results and those that had given blood received the results within a few days of taking part. 100% of respondents who participated rated the assessment as good or better. Overall the experience was very positive and the friendliness, organisation and approachability of the Health Assessment Centre team was absolutely key to its success.



A participant of the Health Assessment during a test for Age Related Macular Degeneration.



One of the TILDA Health Assessment nurses, Sandra McGrath, testing the GAITrite mat which is used to measure a person's gait.



“Health in Ageing Conference” 29th & 30th May 2008.  
From left to right: Mr. Ciaran Long, Irish Life; Prof. Brendan Whelan, TILDA; Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney, TD; Prof. Rose Anne Kenny, TILDA; Mr. Gerry Loughrey, Irish Life; Prof. Davis Coakley, TCD.

## Events in 2008

### European Science Foundation Forward Look Workshop (November 2008)

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and TILDA organised a workshop called “Labour Market Implications of Demographic Ageing”. This event was organised in the context of the European Science Foundation Forward Look on Ageing, Health and Pensions in Europe.

### Health in Ageing Conference (May 2008)

The TILDA Health in Ageing - Achievements and Potential of Longitudinal Research was truly an international, multidisciplinary and diverse meeting. It was held in association with Trinity College Dublin, Science Foundation Ireland and the Centre of Excellence for Successful Ageing, St. James’s Hospital. The two day programme covered a wide variety of interdisciplinary topics including cardiovascular health, cognitive health and mental health as well as identifying future directions within the field of ageing research.

## Institutions Involved

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing is being carried out by Trinity College Dublin in collaboration with an inter-disciplinary panel of scientific researchers with expertise in various fields in ageing, from the following institutions:

- Dundalk Institute of Technology [www.dkit.ie](http://www.dkit.ie)
- Economic and Social Research Institute [www.esri.ie](http://www.esri.ie)
- National University of Ireland, Galway [www.nuigalway.ie](http://www.nuigalway.ie)
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland [www.rcsi.ie](http://www.rcsi.ie)
- Trinity College Dublin [www.tcd.ie](http://www.tcd.ie)
- University College Cork [www.ucc.ie](http://www.ucc.ie)
- University College Dublin [www.ucd.ie](http://www.ucd.ie)
- Waterford Institute of Technology [www.wit.ie](http://www.wit.ie)



TILDA Steering Committee. Back Row from left to right: Prof. Colm Harmon; Mr. Gerry Loughrey; Prof. Charles Normand; Dr. Virpi Timonen; Prof. Ivan Perry.  
Front row from left to right: Prof. Tom Fahey; Prof. Rose Anne Kenny; Prof. Brendan Whelan; Prof. Hannah McGee.

## Major Developments in 2008

Given the innovative nature of the study, and especially the health assessment element, it was deemed necessary to carry out two pilots, one local, and one national. Pilot 1 went into the field in July 2008. The key achievements of the pilot were as follows:

- Designed and implemented training for the field staff and nursing staff;
- Designed, programmed and administered the questionnaire in CAPI (computer-aided personal interviewing);
- Designed and administered the self-completion questionnaire;
- Determined feasibility and cost of the health assessments in one local centre;
- Set up a Health Assessment Centre under the auspices of Trinity College Dublin;
- Designed and administered the health assessments;
- Informed the public about the project;
- Designed and implemented standard operation procedures for collecting and using confidential data;
- Evaluated sampling and contact procedures (response rate, cost, effectiveness);
- Tested the questionnaire, and its implementation in CAPI (length of time for each module and overall, item non-response, routing etc.); and,
- Developed and checked procedures in relation to linking the data elements from multiple sources (CAPI questionnaire, self-completion questionnaire, health assessment).

## Comments from Participants of Pilot 1

- “I found it very interesting to be part of this pilot scheme and find it comforting to know that studies are being conducted to help us as we grow old.”
- “An interesting study as good health is so important in later years.”
- “Doing this survey has made me think more about the approaching years and how I can help myself to prepare more for the future.”
- “Thank you for a most interesting questionnaire on ageing in Ireland. I found it a delightful work and was happy to be called upon to contribute.”



## Plans for 2009

- Launch of "Dress Rehearsal" Pilot across Ireland.
- Launch of the second Health Assessment Centre in Cork.
- Launch of first wave of the study.

## The TILDA Team

In addition to the Principal Investigator and the Research Director, the core research team for TILDA consists of five researchers (which includes 4 post-doctoral), a project manager and two executive officers charged with administration. The researchers have advanced qualifications and training across a wide range of disciplines including epidemiology, geriatric medicine, demography, social policy, psychology and economics.

The TILDA team is supported by a number of Steering Groups. These groups constitute a major reservoir of expertise and experience since all the members are active researchers and come from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds.

## Funding Partners

*The*  
**A T L A N T I C**  
*Philanthropies*

"The Atlantic Philanthropies is very pleased to support TILDA and is confident that its findings will enrich the lives of older people in Ireland. TILDA will make a major contribution to evidence based policy and planning on ageing. The emerging data will inform attitudes and enable enhanced service provision. Its many innovative features are already attracting international interest."

*Mary Sutton, Programme Executive Ageing (ROI), the Atlantic Philanthropies.*



**Irish Life**

"At the time when the country is going through a difficult economic period, we are pleased that our support for TILDA will help Ireland position itself for the future. Data on ageing is particularly important in the Irish context in order to plan efficient allocation of resources."

*Gerry Loughrey, Head of Group Corporate Responsibility at Irish Life.*

**tilda**

The Irish Longitudinal  
Study on Ageing

To become involved or to get more information please contact

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