

# annual review 09

**tilda**

The Irish Longitudinal  
Study on Ageing

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

## 2009

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) is the most comprehensive study of its type ever conducted in Ireland. In 2009, interviewers began collecting baseline data on all aspects of the lives of people aged 50 and over resident in Ireland, including the economic dimension (pensions, employment, income and assets), health aspects (physical, mental, service needs and usage) and social aspects (contact with friends and kin, formal and informal care, and social participation). Data will be collected from a nationally representative sample of 8,000 plus residents in Ireland. Subsequent waves of data collection will occur every two years.



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[www.tilda.ie](http://www.tilda.ie)

# tilda aims

To develop an environment for ageing well we need to understand the older Irish resident and explore factors which determine successful ageing. TILDA will contribute towards this understanding. **The basic mission of TILDA is to bring about a significant improvement in the quality, quantity and prominence of information about ageing and older people in Ireland.** The study will deliver a comprehensive database of information about trends on ageing which will assist not only service provision and policy making but also deliver quality, cutting edge research. This research output will be consistent with the emerging national initiative towards a "knowledge society", built on innovations in science and technology.

## project description:

A representative sample of at least 8,000 Irish residents aged 50+ are selected using a population sift. If all eligible households participate, the study will represent the urban/rural mix in the country as well as income, education, gender and geographical groupings.

The study explores the current status and changing needs of older people with respect to:

- Living standards, quality of life and pensions
- Community based needs and social networks
- Health and social needs of families and carers
- Biological and environmental components of successful ageing
- Contributions that older people are making to the economy
- How each of these key components (health, wealth, happiness) interact.

The selected addresses are visited by a fieldworker and all persons aged 50+ (and their spouses of any age) are canvassed to participate in the survey. Fieldwork involves interviews using computer-aided personal interviewing (CAPI) and a Self-Completion Questionnaire. Afterwards, respondents either visit a TILDA Health Assessment Centre in Dublin or Cork



Our dedicated TILDA Steering Committee. From L to R: Dr. Brenda Gannon (NUIG), Dr. Maryann Valiulis (TCD), Sinead Quill (DoHC), Prof. Charles Normand (TCD), Mr. David Scott (QUB), Dr. Richard Layte (ESRI), Dr. Virpi Timonen (TCD), Prof. Brendan Whelan (TCD), Prof. Rose Anne Kenny (TCD), Anne Connolly (Ageing Well Network), and Prof. Mary McCarron (TCD).

where research-based biomedical measurement facilities are available, or are visited by a qualified research nurse in their home.

All information is treated in the strictest confidence and is anonymous. Study participants will have a follow-up interview every two years and health assessment every three to four years for a ten year period.

## comments from participants

"I think it's wonderful to have ongoing research into the ageing process, as it will enhance the quality of life for all older people."

"I found the whole experience worthwhile and helpful. The nurse was very encouraging and calm throughout and I enjoyed the whole interesting experience. It is a very beneficial study."

"This survey has given me a chance to reflect on my life. I have been fortunate to reach 71 years and enjoyed a very positive experience."

"Doing this survey has challenged me to look at my life with clearer vision and has kick started me into a more positive way to stay independent, and regain control of my time and my life."



# highlights of 2009

- TILDA joined the ageing forums for the general public by exhibiting at the Over 50's shows in Limerick and Dublin in September.
- TILDA ran a public relations event called "Pensions in Ireland: Prospects and Challenges" in May. Individual pension and retirement planning was discussed by a distinguished panel in an open forum, with questions from the general public. (see right)
- TILDA formalised its management structure and held inaugural meetings for its Oversight Board and Scientific Advisory Board.
- Dr. Richard Suzman of the National Institutes of Health in the USA visited in May to give a talk on "The Contribution of Longitudinal Studies on Ageing: An international perspective".



The panellists discussing their views on pensions. From L to R: Prof. Gerard Hughes, Visiting Professor in the School of Business, TCD, and in the Department of Economics, UCC; Dr. Shane Whelan, Department Head of Statistics and Actuarial Science, UCD, and Mr. David Harney, Chief Executive, Corporate Business, Irish Life.

## Presidential visit

Launching the public phase of TILDA at TCD, President McAleese said: "In these very chastening times for our country, the wisdom, experience, and resilience of our older generation, themselves veterans of several recessions, will have a critical contribution to make to the national journey of recovery." She also said about the 10-year initiative that "there are answers there just waiting for someone to ask."

TILDA Principal Investigator, Professor Rose Anne Kenny, said in response: "Ageing on the scale we will experience in the near future is an unprecedented phenomenon in Irish history. In stark contrast to the evident importance of ageing, there is an acute shortage of social, economic and health information on older persons in Ireland. TILDA is essential to underpin planning and to ensure a 'healthy and happy' life span for the people of Ireland."



From L to R: Dr. Richard Suzman of the National Institutes of Health, President Mary McAleese, Prof. Rose Anne Kenny, Provost Dr. John Hegarty and Prof. Charles Normand.

## major developments

In 2009, TILDA completed a national pilot of the data collection methods and fieldwork procedures. More importantly, TILDA launched its main wave of data collection. This involved:

- Registering TILDA with the Data Protection Commissioner to approve all procedures relating to protecting confidentiality and anonymity of all respondent data;
- The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) preparing a random sample of over 25,000 addresses in Ireland from which to determine eligibility;
- Recruiting and training over 100 interviewers to conduct fieldwork by asking eligible householders to participate in the study;
- Opening Health Assessment Centres in both Dublin and Cork to collect biomeasures from participating respondents;
- Recruiting and training over 12 nurses to conduct health assessments according to strict standard operating procedures in both centres and respondents' homes; and,
- Hiring a data manager and recruiting a statistician to provide more research capacity to prepare and analyse the data.

# plans for 2010

Complete first wave of the study's data collection.

Generate interest in collaborative research analysis and work.

Publish research documents about the study design and early findings.

## institutions involved

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing is being carried out by Trinity College Dublin along with scientific researchers 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 Ireland [www.rcsi.ie](http://www.rcsi.ie)
- University College Cork [www.ucc.ie](http://www.ucc.ie)
- Queen's University Belfast [www.qub.ac.uk](http://www.qub.ac.uk)
- Waterford Institute of Technology [www.wit.ie](http://www.wit.ie)

## funding partners



"TILDA will provide invaluable information to help plan for Ireland's older people now and into the future."

*Ms. Mary Harney TD, Minister for Health and Children.*



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."

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

The  
ATLANTIC  
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."

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

tilda  
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Study on Ageing

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