

## Social isolation and loneliness amongst older people: Circumstances, experiences and coping strategies

**Grenade, L**

Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

**Aims:** This presentation focuses on the circumstances and experiences of older people related to social isolation and loneliness, based on information obtained via in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted as part of a larger study investigating older people's social connections. Specific aims were to explore in depth the factors, resources and coping mechanisms that encourage or inhibit social isolation and/or loneliness, and views about the adequacy of current efforts to address the latter.

**Methods:** Informants (n = 35) were purposefully selected according to their respective levels of isolation and loneliness ('high' or 'low', as identified via an initial community survey). A semi-structured interview guide was used to explore a variety of issues related to the above aims. NUD\*IST NVivo software was used to manage the transcribed interview data. Interviews topics were used as a framework for the analysis, and comments coded accordingly.

**Results:** For many, living with another, maintaining regular interaction with significant others and the wider community, combined with minimal health or disability restrictions, were critical to maintaining a sense of 'connectedness'. Loss of loved ones, poor health, and 'personality' were frequently identified reasons for loneliness. Conversely, always having people around and/or things to do, and general disposition or outlook on life, were common reasons given for not feeling lonely. People's coping strategies often appeared influenced by their life experiences, personalities and upbringing. Although many were unable to give an informed opinion regarding the adequacy of current efforts to address isolation/loneliness, a common view was that loneliness was largely due to people's 'personality' or attitude, and hence that addressing it was mainly up to the individual.

**Conclusions:** Overall, the findings revealed a wide variety in people's situations, experiences and coping strategies, highlighting the need for a range of intervention options that can be tailored to address individual needs and circumstances.

## Nursing recruiters' attitudes toward older nurses: A quantitative cross-institutional investigation

**Gringart, E<sup>1</sup>, Helmes, E<sup>2</sup>, Janz, J<sup>3</sup>, Jones, B<sup>1</sup>, Monterosso, L<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Edith Cowan University, Perth, WA, <sup>2</sup>James Cook University, Townsville, QLD, <sup>3</sup>Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

**Aim:** To investigate nursing recruiters' attitudes toward mature aged nurses in Western Australia.

**Method:** One hundred and sixty three nursing recruiters', from various sectors, such as hospitals, aged care facilities and nursing agencies, completed questionnaires measuring stereotypes toward older nurses. There were 143 females and 19 males ranging in age from 25 to 67. The state-wide sample comprised 23.30% rural and regional and 76.7% from the Perth metropolitan area. More than 80% of respondents were educated at a tertiary level. There were three dependent variables: the sum of scale for age stereotypes; ratings of how relevant age was in making hiring decisions; and ratings of how likely respondents were to hire older nurses.

**Results:** Analyses showed clear evidence of negative stereotyping of older nurses compared to younger ones, as well as several positive stereotypes. Whilst previous research (Gringart, Helmes & Speelman, 2005; 2007) which employed samples of employers across industries, found that employers were less than likely to hire older workers, nursing recruiters indicated that they would be more than likely to hire older nurses. Nursing recruiters also stated that age was less relevant in making hiring decisions than did general employers. More positive overall attitudes, however, have been expressed by general employers compared to nursing recruiters.

**Conclusion:** These findings are important because they suggest that whilst availability and industry-specific pressures can enhance the employability of older workers it does not change ageist attitudes. This is relevant to policy formulation, attitude change interventions, and the well being of older workers.

### References:

- Gringart, E., Helmes, E., & Speelman, C. (2007). Harnessing cognitive dissonance to promote positive attitudes toward older workers in Australia. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*.
- Gringart, E., Helmes, E., & Speelman, C. P. (2005). Exploring attitudes toward older workers among Australian employers: An empirical study. *Journal of Ageing and Social Policy*, 17(3), 85-103.

## WA seniors' perceptions of safety from crime 2001-2007

**Hall, G**

Department for Communities, Office for Seniors Interests and Carers, Perth WA

**Aim:** Contrary to conventional wisdom, WA seniors are not selectively preyed upon by criminals, nor do they live in fear of crime or more fear than non-seniors. All statistics, whether official records or community surveys, have shown that seniors are less likely to be crime victims than non-seniors. The aim of this time-series was to monitor WA seniors' perceptions of safety from crime during the period from 2001 to 2007.