

women's health australia

**Effect of mobility limitations and moving house on the social networks of older women**

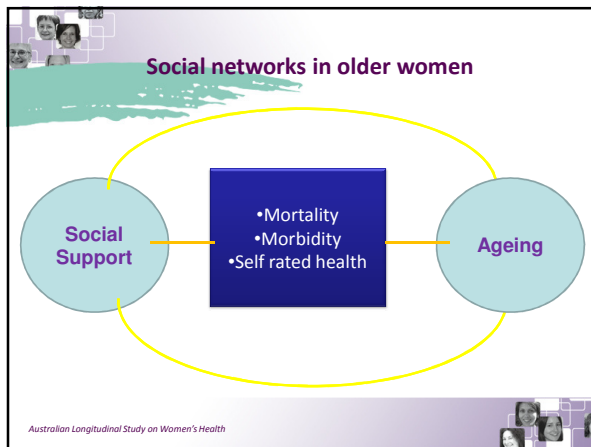
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**The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health**

- Longitudinal cohort study of the health and well-being of Australian women (1996 – 2015+)
- Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing
- Initial random sample of 40,000 women
- 1973-78 birth cohort
- 1946-51 birth cohort
- 1921-26 birth cohort
- Women re-surveyed every 3 years

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**The aim of this study**

- To explore factors associated with change in social networks amongst a cohort of older women

**Quantitative analysis**

- Longitudinal quantitative analysis of data from survey 2 (1999), survey 3 (2002) and survey 4 (2005) for the 1921-26 birth cohort.

5,863 women participated in all three surveys

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**Outcome variable**

**Social networks (Duke Social Support Index)**

- Close friends in the local area
- Time spent with another person
- Speaking on the telephone
- Meetings of organisations or groups

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**Explanatory variables:**

- Marital status
- Country of birth
- Death and health of significant others
- Recently moved house
- Sight or hearing problems
- Limitations in walking 100 metres
- Mental health (MHI-5 subscale of the SF-36)

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### Qualitative analysis

The final blank page of the questionnaires:

***“Have we missed anything? If you have anything else you would like to tell us, please write on the lines below.”***

173 women made comments relevant to the identified themes.

### Summary of quantitative results

- Social network size decreased over time
- Larger networks associated with:
  - better mental health,
  - being widowed or separated,
  - death or declining health of family or friend,
  - **no limitations in walking,**
  - being Australian born.

### Summary of quantitative results

- Smaller networks associated with:
  - being born in another country,
  - **sight problems,**
  - **moving house.**

### Limitations in walking

*“I am in a tiny independent living unit, I was accustomed to going out on public transport to classes, lunches etc, five times weekly. Now I can't even walk to the shops.”*

### Limitations in walking

*“Can't walk without a walking stick. Won't go out on public transport.”*

*“My physical and social activities are somewhat restricted due to an arthritic knee”*

### Sight problems

*“I am very limited in my activities on account of my eyesight. One eye is more or less blind and the other one is failing badly. As yet I can get about safely but although I can see people I can't tell who they are anymore.”*




## Sight problems

*"Deteriorating vision has loomed as a major disability for me. "*

*"Poor hearing and poor sight. These latter (hearing and sight) have made me very isolated."*



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## Moving House

*"Recently paid a deposit on a self-care retirement home for husband & myself. We really don't want to leave our home & wonderful neighbours but some of them are in a similar position & may also be moving."*



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## Moving House

*"I have just moved to a self-care unit in a retirement village, far from former friends and activities. So depression is high on the list, so is lack of friends; it is hard to start again at 82."*

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## Moving House

*"We find that hostel living has many challenges, brings you new friends and teaches you to be a little tolerant of other people's problems."*

*"Moving house into a smaller independent cottage in a retirement village was a major move. Some stress involved."*



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## Moving House

*"I moved house nearly two years ago. I'm nearer to some family members, which is good, but further from long time friends, which is not so good. Haven't made many new friends in my new "home"."*


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## Moving House

*"My mind thankfully works very well so I am not lonely, not many friends apart from internet, they have all died before me."*

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