

SUPPORTING SEXUAL EXPRESSION & WELLBEING IN LATER LIFE

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Today

- Project overview
- Understandings of sex
- Safer sex practices
- Talking to health care providers
- Improving & supporting sexual lives

Project team

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Sex, Age & Me team members:

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Aims and objectives

- Explore the sexual behaviours, relationships and dating patterns of older Australians;
- Explore the knowledge of older Australians in relation to STIs and STI prevention;
- Explore sexual health help-seeking behaviour of older Australians.

Methods

- ⦿ Eligible participants
 - Australians aged 60+
- ⦿ Mixed Methods
 - Survey
 - Interview
- ⦿ Recruitment strategy
 - Media
 - Facebook
 - Relevant organisations

SEX AGE & ME

PARTICIPANTS WANTED!

**A National Survey on Sex and Relationships
Among Older Australians**

Are you aged 60 and older and currently living in Australia?

You're invited to take part in a survey from La Trobe University on sex and relationships in later life. To find out more or to complete the survey go to:

www.sexagesurvey.org.au

If you would prefer to complete a paper version of the survey, please contact:

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Interviews

- ⦿ One-on-one, semi-structured
- ⦿ Recruited through the survey
- ⦿ Understandings & experiences of sex, safer sex, information & help-seeking

Characteristic	Male participants	Female participants
	n=30	n=23
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	27	20
Gay/Lesbian	1	1
Bisexual	2	2
Current relationship status		
Married	13	5
In a relationship	7	6
Single	5	8
In an open relationship/multiple partners	4	2
Widow	1	2

Sexual rights

- ◉ Declaration of sexual rights (World Association for Sexual Health, 2014):
 - 1) The right to equality and non-discrimination;
 - 3) The right to autonomy and bodily integrity;
 - 7) The right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual health; with the possibility of pleasurable, satisfying, and safe sexual experiences'
 - 9) The right to information; & 10) the right to education & the right to comprehensive sexuality education.

Understandings of sex

- Hierarchical

A man gets an erection of his penis and he inserts it into a female's vagina (Finn, 60 heterosexual, widow)

Well as a sex act it's physical intercourse, which probably includes you know oral and genital sex, but I wouldn't count kissing, you know, cuddling if you like, as sex acts. (Norman, 69, heterosexual, married)

Understandings of sex

- Fluid

It's wide ranging, and I suppose in society when people talk about sex it's sexual intercourse, but I think it's...a lot more than that. (Herman, 65, heterosexual, married)

Everything that is beyond society's generally accepted physical contact (Shane, 72, heterosexual, married)

Intimacy & bonding

Just a part of a relationship in the sense that...it is about trust and it's about sharing something very intimate with each other, and being able to share one's feelings, thoughts, fears, anxieties, being able to talk about doing things, exploring really. (Leroy, 73, heterosexual, in a relationship)

For when you get to my stage orgasm is almost an infrequent occurrence, occasion, but the intimacy is still very rewarding. (Zane, 80s, bisexual, married)

Safer sex – understandings & practices

- Condoms
- Discussing sexual history
- STI tests
- Sexual practices
- Monogamy
- No safer sex
- Self-care
- Trust & relationship context essential

Barriers

- ⦿ Embarrassment
- ⦿ Erectile dysfunction
- ⦿ Lack of skills, experience & safer-sex culture
- ⦿ Stigma
- ⦿ Reduced pleasure

Facilitators

- ① Concern for personal health
- ① New relationships & trust
- ① Education about STIs

Talking to healthcare providers

- Most did not talk to HCPs about sex
- Comfortable talking about sex
- Embarrassed talking about sex
- Stigmatising or negative responses

Improving & supporting sexual lives

- ◉ Sexualities education
- ◉ Training & education for HCPs
- ◉ Shifting cultural norms
- ◉ Media representations
- ◉ Aged-care facilities

Concluding comments – achieving sexual & social justice in later life

- Conditions for sexual rights not fully actualised
- Recognition of diversity
- Shifting understandings of ‘sex’
- Inclusion in sexual health policy & practice
- Tackling age and gender-based discrimination

Publication details

- Fileborn, B., Lyons, A., Heywood, W., Hinchliff, S., Malta, S., Dow, B., Brown, G., Barrett, C., Minichiello, V. (2017). Talking to Healthcare providers about sex in later life: findings from a qualitative study with older Australian men and women. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*. E-pub ahead of print.
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