

Would you describe yourself as old?

December 19 2008

(PhysOrg.com) -- How old is "old"? Researchers at the University of St Andrews are investigating people's perceptions of when an individual should be called old.

The new research at the School of Psychology aims to explore Scotland's population, identifying a range of factors which can improve people's experience of the ageing process.

In the first in a series of studies, a questionnaire was distributed to over sixty participants, asking for their opinions on the ageing process. Questions included "What do you think are the best/worst things about growing older?" and, "Would you describe yourself as old?".

Researcher Joanne Persson explained, "As Scotland's population grows older it becomes ever more important to understand the factors which can influence successful ageing.

"For the first time in the UK in 2001 the annual census showed that there were more people over sixty (21%) than under sixteen (20%). Never in the nation's history have so many people lived into the later stages of their lives and remained so healthy and productive."

Preliminary analysis on the results showed some interesting differences between the two age groups. When asked "When does an individual become old?", younger adults' responses were almost 20 years younger at 54.5 years than the 74 years given by the older participants.

Joanne continued, "This finding is in line with previous research. More unexpected however was the finding that young participants were significantly more likely to have experienced age discrimination than the older individuals. It is yet to be determined whether this pattern is true of the UK as a whole, or is a uniquely Scottish phenomenon."

Psychological research in this area has previously shown that both young adults (those aged 18-25) and older adults (aged 60+) can often be victims of discrimination and prejudice in Western society, particularly in the USA.

These and similar issues are currently being investigated with a larger questionnaire, which was distributed to over 2000 people throughout Fife last month.

The researchers behind this questionnaire are planning to run a series of experimental studies to complement this data, and are looking for adults aged 60-75 to participate in this work.

Provided by University of St Andrews

Citation: Would you describe yourself as old? (2008, December 19) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-12-would-you-describe-yourself-as.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.