

Not so happy old age?

November 13 2015



Credit: Peter Griffin/public domain

The notion that older people are happier than younger people is being challenged following a recent study led by a University of Bradford lecturer.

In fact it suggests that people get more depressed from [age](#) 65 onwards.

The study, led by psychology lecturer Dr Helena Chui and recently published in the international journal *Psychology and Aging*, builds on a

15-year project observing over 2,000 older Australians living in the Adelaide area.

Previous studies have shown an increase in depressive symptoms with age but only until the age of 85. This is the first study to examine the issue beyond that age.

Both [men](#) and women taking part in the study reported increasingly more depressive symptoms as they aged, with women initially starting with more depressive symptoms than men. However, men showed a faster rate of increase in symptoms so that the difference in the genders was reversed at around the age of 80.

Key factors in these increases include levels of physical impairment, the onset of medical conditions, particularly chronic ones, and the approach of death. Half of those in the study suffered with arthritis and both men and women with the chronic condition reported more depressive symptoms than those without.

Dr Chui said: "These findings are very significant and have implications for how we deal with old age. It's the first study to tell us [depressive symptoms](#) continue to increase throughout old age. We are in a period of unprecedented success in terms of [people](#) living longer than ever and in greater numbers and we should be celebrating this but it seems that we are finding it hard to cope.

"It seems that we need to look carefully at the provision of adequate services to match these needs, particularly in the area of mental health support and pain management. Social policies and ageing-friendly support structures, such as the provision of public transport and access to [health care services](#) are needed to target the 'oldest-old' adults as a whole."

More information: [www.brad.ac.uk/mediacentre/med...
leasedocs/Chui-2015](http://www.brad.ac.uk/mediacentre/media-centre/Releasedocs/Chui-2015---Trajectories-of-Depressive-Symptoms-(2).pdf)—Trajectories-of-Depressive-Symptoms-(2).pdf

Provided by University of Bradford

Citation: Not so happy old age? (2015, November 13) retrieved 19 April 2024 from
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