

# Literature highlights

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## Later-life divorce

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**Divorce and personal wellbeing of older Australians. (2007).** de Vaus, D., Gray, M., Qu, L., & Stanton, D. In *Australian Social Policy Conference 2007*. Sydney, NSW: Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales. Online only. <http://www.sprc1.sprc.unsw.edu.au/ASPC2007/abstract.asp?PaperID=200>

This paper examines the impact of divorce on individual wellbeing among older people. Using data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, the authors compare the social connectedness, perceived social support, life satisfaction, and general health of men and women aged 55–74 years old, who are divorced and single, divorced and remarried, and married and never divorced. A previous paper by these authors found negative financial consequences of divorce among older people. Similarly, the results of this study indicated a negative impact of divorce on personal wellbeing in older age groups.

**Later life divorces. (2007).** Weston, R. *Threshold*, 91, 12–13.

Australian statistics show a trend towards divorces later in life; in 1985, 15% of divorcing husbands were aged 50 or older, but in 2005, 28% were in this age group. There is also an increasing trend towards divorces involving couples who had been married for 25 years or more. This article summarises the five-yearly statistics from 1985 to 2005 and discusses social and demographic reasons for the trends.

**Later-life divorce and parent-adult child contact and proximity: A longitudinal analysis. (2003).** Shapiro, A. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24(2), 264–285.

This study explores how parental divorce that occurs after children have reached adulthood affects parent–adult child contact and proximity. Data are from the 1987–88 and 1992–94 waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (USA) and include 1,463 respondents. The findings suggest that divorce affects parent–child contact and proximity differently for mothers and fathers. Compared with stably married fathers, fathers who divorced were more likely to experience a decline in co-residence and weekly contact with at least one adult child. However, divorced mothers were more likely than stably married mothers to report an increase in weekly contact with an adult child. At the same time, the data intimate that divorce may slightly increase mothers' likelihood of little or no contact with an adult child.

**The marital mid-life crisis. (2002).** Brelsford, A. *Threshold*, 72, 14–15.

This article is part of a series in which a number of contributors examine some of the challenges facing couples in the later years of marriage. It is published as an aid to educators working with couples in long-term relationships. The author discusses the topic of marital midlife crisis. Compared to those issues surrounding the newly married or cohabiting couple, far less has been written about issues relevant to marriages that have lasted a number of years. However, given what is known about the incidence of later-life divorce and separation, the author argues that issues faced by couples who have been married for a considerable time are worthy of more attention.

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## Retirement

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**Aspects of retirement for older women. (2006).** Warren, D. Canberra, ACT: Office for Women. Online only. [http://www.ofw.facsia.gov.au/downloads/pdfs/Aspect\\_of\\_Retirement%20\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.ofw.facsia.gov.au/downloads/pdfs/Aspect_of_Retirement%20_report_final.pdf)

This report compares key characteristics of retirement for men and women, including reasons for retiring, transitions to retirement, life satisfaction, the effect of the presence of a spouse or partner, and financial security. The study is based on a literature review and the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey; the population considered were men and women aged 45 and over. The report presents new findings about differences in life in retirement for single and partnered women, as well as confirming existing findings; for example, the importance of education and health as factors influencing retirement.

**Australian baby boomers' expectations and plans for their old age. (2006).** Quine, S., & Carter, S. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 25(1), 3–8

The ageing of Australia's baby boomers will significantly change Australian society. However, it is unclear what is known about the expectations and plans of this cohort for their retirement and old age. This paper provides a first step by reviewing the Australian literature, focusing on areas of health, housing, work and income, and responsibility. The review identified that, despite agreement about the significance of baby boomers' ageing, empirical work directly addressing the research topics was rare. In particular, there was little coverage of baby boomers' ascription of responsibility for their welfare in older age. If policies are to be effective, empirical research obtaining information directly

from baby boomers is required to fill the gaps identified through this review. (Journal abstract, edited)

**For better, for worse, but not for lunch. (2002). Alvey, E. *Threshold*, 72, 9.**

This article is part of a series in which a number of contributors examine some of the challenges facing couples in the second half of marriage. It is published as an aid to educators working with couples in long-term relationships. The author discusses a program she designed for couples preparing for retirement. The rationale for this was based on the gap between the many opportunities for retirees to obtain advice on financial planning, housing and leisure ideas, but a lack of information on aspects of the relationship.

***I married him for better or for worse but not for lunch: Retirement and marriage. (2003, February). de Vaus, D., & Wells, Y. Paper presented at the 8th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne. Melbourne, Vic: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Online only. <http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/afrc8/devaus1.pdf>***

Retirement is a major transition that has considerable potential to affect the marital relationships of those who retire. Retirement can have an impact on a person's roles and identity, the amount of time a couple spends together, and the roles and responsibilities of each partner following retirement. This paper reports findings from a four-wave panel study of men and women retirees. These retirees were tracked from just before they retired until three years after retirement. Information was collected on a range of aspects of the marital relationship, from both the retiree and their spouse. The paper describes the extent and ways in which marital relationships change following retirement, and identifies factors related to the different marital outcomes following retirement. (Author abstract, edited)

**Retirement expectations: Gender differences and partner effects in an Australian employer-funded sample. (2006). Onyx, J., & Baker, E. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 25(2), 80–83.**

The concept of retirement has been undergoing change, and opportunities for a variety of retirement lifestyle options are increasing. Retirement plans for one cohort are examined in this context. Responses to a questionnaire of 200 public sector employees attending a retirement seminar were analysed by gender. Findings suggest that both men and women viewed retirement as a positive experience, focusing on opportunities for further personal development. This approach was more evident among women. However, both men and women would prefer to maintain a form of reduced employment after retiring. There were no gender differences in reasons for retiring at that time, but those with partners were more likely to retire because of family responsibilities. Implications for theories of ageing and public policy are discussed. A more flexible approach to retirement policy is urged. Retirement may provide more opportunities for personal growth than decline. (Journal abstract, edited)

**Understanding baby boomers' expectations and plans for their retirement: Findings from a qualitative study.**

**(2006). Quine, S., Bernard, D., & Kendig, H. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 25(3), 145–150.**

This study explored the range of expectations and plans for retirement of Australian baby boomers. Participants were recruited to 12 focus groups in New South Wales in 2004, grouped by socioeconomic status, gender and geographical location. Topics raised included work, retirement, and financial and other planning. Transcriptions of the sessions were analysed manually to identify the range of views on each topic and any variation by the selected study variables. Although some baby boomers had planned for their retirement, many had not. Socioeconomic status was the most important variable associated with planning. The findings increase understandings of how baby boomers from different backgrounds are thinking and planning for their retirement. Baby boomers from low socioeconomic backgrounds consider that responsibility for retirement funding should rest either solely, or partially, with the government as they have not had time to accumulate sufficient superannuation. (Journal abstract, edited)

**Working towards retirement: Promoting positive mental health among men in pre-retirement years. (2002). Speirs, T., & Wilson, M. In L. Morrow, I. Verins, & E. Willis (Eds.), *Mental health and work: Issues and perspectives* (pp. 110–125). Bedford Park, SA: Auseinet.**

For many men, work and the ability to work have strong associations with masculinity, status and self-esteem. The authors examine mental health promotion options for men between 50 and 65 before they retire. They believe that men do not plan productively for retirement because they are constrained by restrictive interpretations of masculine identity. The authors suggest that a proactive social and health policy is integral to bridging the gap between expectation and experience. They call for all levels of the community, including government, unions, and large and small businesses, to become involved in realistic retirement planning.

***The retirement expectations of middle-aged individuals. (2006). Cobb-Clark, D. A., & Stillman, S. Canberra, ACT: Centre for Economic Policy Research, Australian National University. Online only. <http://cepr.anu.edu.au/pdf/DP540.pdf>***

Using data from the first three waves of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, this paper examines the retirement plans of middle-aged workers. Although about two-thirds of men and more than half of women appear to be making standard retirement plans, more than 20% of others have delayed their retirement plans and about 10% do not know when or whether they will retire. Those workers who do not know when they expect to retire are those who face uncertainty and have concerns about their retirement income. Men's retirement plans are altered in response to labour market shocks, while women's are more likely to be altered in response to changes in their own or their partners' health.