

# LIVING STANDARDS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

## OVERVIEW

In 2009, we were funded by the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment to develop a measure of living standards for older people. Since then, we have achieved our objectives and also supported the developing research capability of many graduate students and research assistants. A brief overview of the entire project is contained in this flyer. Summaries of the journal articles, conference proceedings papers, and reports written from this grant to date are contained on the USB.

## LS-CAPE MEASURE

The main outcome of this research was a measure of living standards that assessed the extent to which older people were able to access six domains important to them: Enjoyment, Health, Social relationships, Contribution, Security, and Autonomy. The full 24 item measure can be found in the paper attached. From this, a 6 item short form was also developed. This includes one item selected from each domain, and is shown below. This measure assesses the whole range of living standards from material constraint to economic freedom.

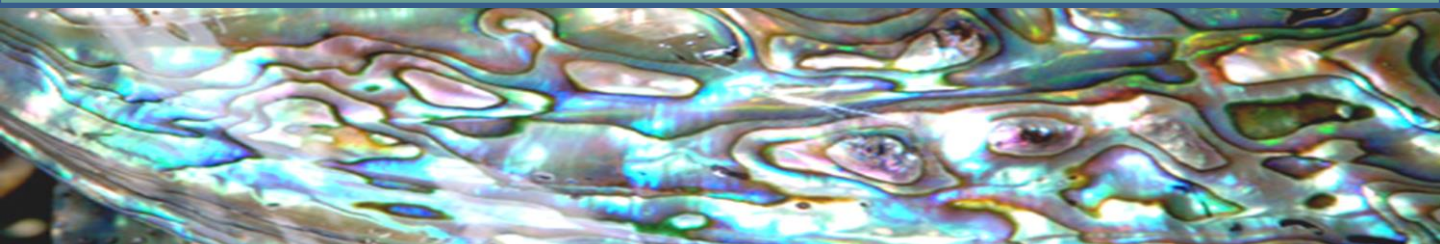
Breheny, M., Stephens, C., Alpass, F., Stevenson, B., Carter, K. & Yeung, P. (in press). Development and validation of a measure of living standards for older people. *Social Indicators Research*. DOI 10.1007/s11205-012-0188-4.

### The Living Standards Capability Short Form (LS-CAPE 6)

Please indicate how true these statements are for you:

	Not true for me at all					Definitely true for me				
I can afford to go to a medical specialist if I need to	1	2	3	4	5					
I am able to visit people whenever I wish	1	2	3	4	5					
I am able to give to others as much as I want	1	2	3	4	5					
I am able to do all the things I love	1	2	3	4	5					
I expect a future without money problems	1	2	3	4	5					
My choices are limited by money	1	2	3	4	5					

Mary Breheny, Christine Stephens, Fiona Alpass, Brendan Stevenson,  
Juliana Mansvelt, Kristie Carter  
Massey University and University of Otago



## ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

In addition to the development of the measure, our project had many other findings. Analysis of the interviews with 143 people aged 65-93 years have provided additional insight into the lives of older people.

### RESOURCES ENABLE MANY CAPABILITIES

The interviews show that although access to material goods are important, there are complex relationships between material goods and the capabilities that they enable for older people.

Stephens, C., Breheny, M. & Mansvelt, J. (2013). Healthy ageing from the perspective of older people: A capabilities approach to resilience. Manuscript submitted for publication.

### SECURITY

Thematic analysis of the interviews showed that one of the main things that economic resources provide is a sense of security. Older people with many resources have many more possibilities for managing the inevitable uncertainty of later life. Although many older people in difficult circumstances were proud of their ability to mend and make do, these strategies were difficult to maintain in the context of reducing health and increasing frailty.

*“You don’t know how long you’re going to live and you don’t know what your needs are going to be.”*

Mansvelt, J., Breheny, M., & Stephens, C. (in press). Pursuing Security: Economic living standards and capabilities of older New Zealanders. *Ageing & Society*.

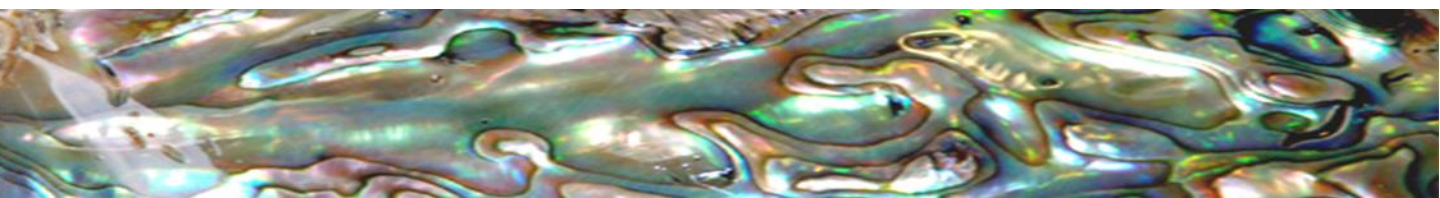
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X13000342>

### CONTRIBUTION

*“I used to get quite bitter about it because I was doing so much voluntary work and you never so much as got a petrol voucher.”*

Another important area of older people’s lives is contribution to others. We found that reciprocity is an important part of contribution to others. Older people recognise that they benefit from giving to others but also wish for their contributions to voluntary work, and the wider community to be acknowledged and supported.

Breheny, M., Stephens, C., & Mansvelt, J. (2013). Better to give than to receive: the importance of contributing to the community in later life. Manuscript submitted for publication.



## BUILDING RESEARCH CAPABILITY

**ELIZABETH BUTCHER** is a Te Rau Puawai Scholar who completed her Masters thesis using interviews with Maori elders from the East Cape to investigate the importance of place in understanding living standards for older Māori. Elizabeth presented her results at the NZ Psychological Society conference and the Indigenous Psychologies: Our Past, Present, and Future conference. Her conference proceedings paper can be found on the USB.



Masters student **KAREN HURLEY** analysed the ways that eligibility for New Zealand Superannuation is discussed in the media. A key finding from Karen's analysis is that much of the discussion supporting continued provision of universal superannuation is not about universality, but is discussed in terms of ensuring older people are lifted out of poverty and receive a return on what they have contributed. A summary of her research can be found on the USB.

**RACHEL ROSE** is a Masters student investigating access to health services in the Wakatipu Basin. Rachel explored the factors that influence the ability of older people to age in place in small isolated communities. This project identified barriers to ageing in place and suggested solutions to ensure that older people can continue to live in the communities they choose as they age. This thesis can be accessed here: <http://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/4756>.



**BARBARA HORRELL'S** PhD research investigates the ways that caring for an elderly relative both limits and enhances people's lives. This project has identified the importance of emotional aspects of caring on the ability to maintain care for older relatives. This will make a significant contribution to understanding the lives of carers and their place in the wider community during these times of demographic change.



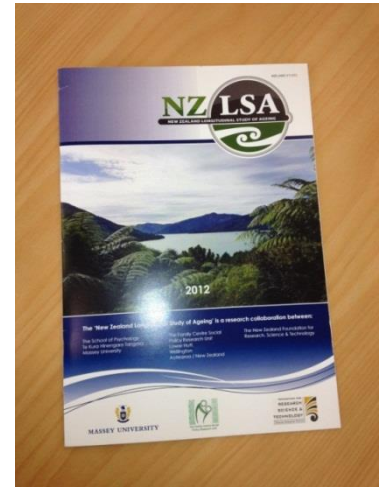
## RESEARCH TEAM

The research team included Mary Breheny, Christine Stephens, Fiona Alpass, Brendan Stevenson, and Juliana Mansvelt from Massey University and Kristie Carter from the University of Otago. Vicki Beagley was a Research Assistant on the project, and Polly Yeung and Annette Henricksen from Massey University provided additional data analysis.



The Health and Ageing Research Team (HART) were awarded the 2012 Massey University Research Team Medal.

More information on this study and other research on ageing in New Zealand can be found on the Health and Ageing Research Team website [hart.massey.ac.nz/](http://hart.massey.ac.nz/). We are happy to come and discuss the knowledge we have gained through this project with your organisation and any possibilities for collaborative research on ageing.



HART was recognised by the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) as a Centre of Excellence in research in social gerontology, and is a member of the IAGG's Global Ageing Research Network. This network exchanges information on ageing; supports contacts between professionals, specialists, academics, and health authorities; and builds collaborative research programmes.

### Further Information:

Dr Mary Breheny  
School of Health and Social Services  
Massey University  
Private Bag 11 222  
Palmerston North  
Email: [M.R.Breheny@massey.ac.nz](mailto:M.R.Breheny@massey.ac.nz)

