



## ***Preventing crime against older Australians***

Like any Australians, older people are concerned about their safety. Australia's older population is growing rapidly, with one-quarter of the population projected to be over 65 years by the middle of the century. However, while it is a fact that older people are less at risk of criminal victimisation than other age groups, they tend to have a higher fear of crime than the general population.

Some groups of older people are more afraid of crime than others. Those most likely to be afraid are those who are more socially and physically vulnerable to the consequences of crime. This can include people who live in areas with high levels of crime and disorder; those who are on a lower income; and those who have been previously victimised or in contact with other victims. Older people who are most active and involved in their communities are the least likely to be anxious about crime.

Regardless of the risk, crime can impact greatly on some people's lives. Reducing crime and its causes for older people, as well as the fear of crime, supports the objective of safe, healthy and supportive communities. Crime prevention and fear-reduction strategies generally work best through a whole-of-government approach. They can include all levels of government, the private sector, non-government agencies, the police and community organisations.

Current policy challenges are to ensure that all older Australians not only live a safe and confident life as part of our communities, but that they also feel safe and secure within those communities. To ensure this, the main policy emphasis should be on:

- promoting a sense of security and safety to reduce older people's fear of crime;
- programs that increase the physical security and personal safety of vulnerable older people;
- programs that ensure the financial safety of vulnerable older people;
- identification and application of crime prevention techniques that encourage supportive social environments;
- effective utilisation of the social capital that is available within the older population and in the wider community;
- recognising and working with the diversity of the aged population; and
- measures to reduce media sensationalism of crime and its impact on older people.

### ***Further reading:***

James M & Graycar A 2003. *A safe and secure environment for older Australians*. Research and public policy series no 51. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/51/index.html>

Home Office 2002. Crime reduction web site <http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk>