

Mothers' groups linked to positive well-being

February 17 2016, by Cecily Strange



A Perth study led by researchers from The University of Western Australia has found that participation in a local mothers' group (facilitated or parent-led) is linked to mothers' who have a positive mental well-being.

The study, published in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, also found that connectedness to the community and having social support networks available was associated with participation in a local mothers' group.

Mothers surveyed who had two or more children or who had lived longer than three years in their local community also scored higher on the [social support networks](#) they had available and community connectedness.

Lead author of the study, Dr Cecily Strange from UWA's School of Population Health, said the research supported earlier findings which suggested that supportive networks developed through mothers' groups helped parents cope with the challenges of parenting [young children](#) and build community connectedness.

"Support networks in neighbourhoods had decreased in recent years," she said.

"There are several factors affecting this, such as mothers now returning to the workforce earlier, older women staying in the workforce longer and increasing migration and mobility in recent years that has fragmented families.

"Currently, 30 per cent of Western Australian residents are born overseas and as a result, families with young children can feel isolated in their neighbourhoods at a time when they need the support most."

Dr Strange said the 2014 Australian Bureau of Statistics General Social Survey revealed weekly face-to-face contact with family and friends living outside the home had reduced (76 per cent) compared to 2010 (79 per cent).

"It is becoming increasingly important to help parents with young children meet other families and develop social interaction in their communities." she said.

Study co-authors included UWA's Dr Colleen Fisher and Associate Professor Lisa Wood, and Dr Peter Howat from Curtin University, surveyed 313 Perth mothers of children aged up to five years old.

Dr Strange said the research suggested that government and non-government agencies working with families with young children needed

to plan and develop strategies to help [mothers](#) find supportive parenting groups in local communities.

More information: Cecily Strange et al. Mothers' group participation: associations with social capital, social support and mental well-being, *Journal of Advanced Nursing* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/jan.12809](https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.12809)

Provided by University of Western Australia

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