

# ***Rural and Urban Solo Living in Scotland***

**Solo living seminar, 26 October 2009**

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# ***Introductory comments***

- Detailed study – draws together quantitative & qualitative information on a wide range of issues
- Reveals the complexity of patterns of living alone in rural & urban areas
- Highlights the challenges of understanding solo living and the divergent accounts given by respondents
- Identify key themes & contributions (that I hope will be addressed in discussion & papers this afternoon)

# *Defining solo living itself*

Common use of a residential definition (one person household) within a time frame (that varies)

- Survey: provides point in time info
- Qualitative studies: add a time frame (duration)
- How long is long enough to be included? (e.g. 3 /6 months over the past 3/5 years?)
- How alone do they need to be? (e.g. children away, economic migrants temporarily away from 'home')
- Excludes those who would prefer to be living alone: 'hidden solos' (numbers may have increased)

# *Living with others (LwO)?*

Caution: Relationship to those in category 'Living with others' likely to vary (not a simple dichotomy)

- Report highlights that younger men more likely to enter LA from shared accommodation
- Routes out of LA have a co-residential partnership as desirable (but not LwO as in kin/friends)
- LwO may entail different options across the life course
- Routes out of LA in later life/ for those who are ill may include institutional care (as well as kin/friends)
- Link to considerations of independent living

# *Disentangling solo living*

What – if anything – is shared by people who are living alone? Do they have anything in common?

- Can we separate out solo living from wider demographic and relationship changes?
- Life course spine is important & age is key to understanding differences, including gender differences
- What influence – if any – does LA & the aspiration to LA (even for a temporary period) have on relationships & social change more broadly?

# *Unconventional or not?*

Younger solo's appear fairly conventional...

- Preference is a co-residential partnership (in longer term)
- Having children an option if partnered
- View relationships is something that just happens (reluctant to seek a partner – stigma)
- Social support is familial/ kin based (above friends)

# ***Contrasting images***

- Advantaged solos
  - Professional, educated, affluent, largely urban, property owners
  - Optimistic about the future, enjoying opportunities (*women?*)
- Disadvantaged solos
  - Un/underemployed, poor education, ill health, poverty, live in more deprived areas, in social housing
  - Pessimistic about the future, facing challenges (*younger men?*)

*NB - Disadvantage accumulates over the life course*

# *Inequalities*

- Widening gap between rich & poor

## Report situates LA

- In context of changes in how personal life is lived and experienced (families, intimacy, etc)
- In wider context of inequalities (employment, housing, health, social integration, etc)
- *A policy review of tax & benefit system? (focus on impact of policy & any policy changes on those living alone)*

*Report a key reference*