

Does Age Affect Attitudes on Hope?

Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from Health & Hope, a study conducted by members of the Hope Research Advisory Committee, Hope Foundation of Alberta.



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Persons of different ages often have different life experiences which may shape their views. For example, young persons have been known to view themselves as invincible to danger. Older persons, with long life experience, recognize that they are vulnerable in many situations. But they also realize they've weathered storms before.

This research describes the views of hope and levels of hope of different ages. The following question was asked:

- How do people of different ages view hope?

Persons were also asked to indicate which of seven different views of hope was the one best description of hope for them. These seven views were:

- having a positive outlook,
- having a deep inner faith,
- having goals or plans,
- finding meaning in life,
- having a good future,
- being open to possibilities,
- and being connected to others.

There were notable differences in terms of how people of different age-groups viewed hope:

- Young adults (ages 18-24) selected *having goals or plans* as their best description of hope more often than any other age group (23.4%).
- In older age groups, fewer people described their hope in this way. For example, only about 5% of people 65 years of age or older selected this response. In contrast, in general, people 65 years old and older were more likely to describe their hope as **having a deep inner faith** (24.8%) than people between the ages of 18 and 24 (7.2%).

Summary

These findings highlight some important differences in our view of hope for persons of different ages. Although people in this survey were generally quite hopeful regardless of their age, their definition of hope differed by age group. Young adults' views were more goal-oriented than were older adults. As people age and become members of older age groups, their view of hope may shift toward a deeper faith orientation. Another possible explanation for these findings is that older people are more likely to have been raised within a faith tradition than younger people. With a steady decline in church attendance over the past 30 years and a lessening of the role of religion and faith within families and communities, young adults of today are less likely to have been influenced by a religious or faith tradition than older people, thus possibly accounting for some of the differences.