

# Social connectedness, mental health and wellbeing of ageing carers

Timothy Broady

*Senior Research and Development Officer, Carers NSW*

Australian Association of Gerontology Conference

4<sup>th</sup> November, 2015

# Carers

Any individual who provides care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug and/or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail.

2.7 millions carers in Australia

- 12% of the population

*Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2012*

Replacement costs: **\$60.3 billion**

*Deloitte Access Economics, 2015*

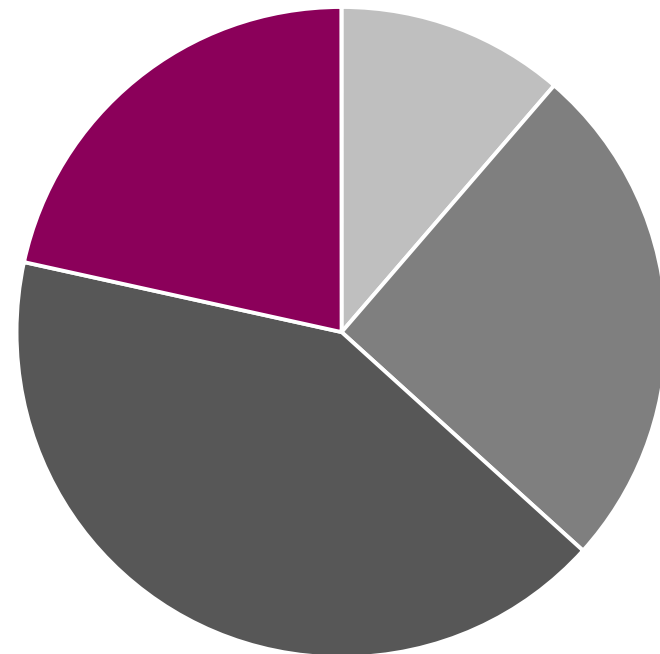
# Ageing carers

More than 1 in 5 carers are aged 65+ (22%)

Nearly 1 in 5 Australians aged 65+ are carers (19%)

*Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2012*

Carers' age (years)



■ <25 ■ 25-44 ■ 45-64 ■ 65+

# Carer Survey

## Carers NSW Carer Survey

- Informs organisational direction, support and systemic advocacy for all carers across NSW
- Main sections:
  - Carer demographics
  - Care recipient
  - Employment
  - Service access and **social support**
  - Health and wellbeing

# Demographics

Variable	Category	%
Gender	Female	76%
	Male	24%
Aboriginal		1%
CALD		19%
Education	High school	46%
	TAFE	34%
	University	20%
Household income (per week)	<\$800	59%
	\$800-\$1999	39%
	\$2000+	2%
Carer disability/illness		38%

# Demographics

Variable	Category	%
Caring for more than 1 person		15%
Caring for:	Spouse/partner	54%
	Son/daughter	36%
Hours per week	0-20	22%
	21-40	19%
	41-70	17%
	70+	42%
Years caring	0-5	23%
	6-15	34%
	16+	43%

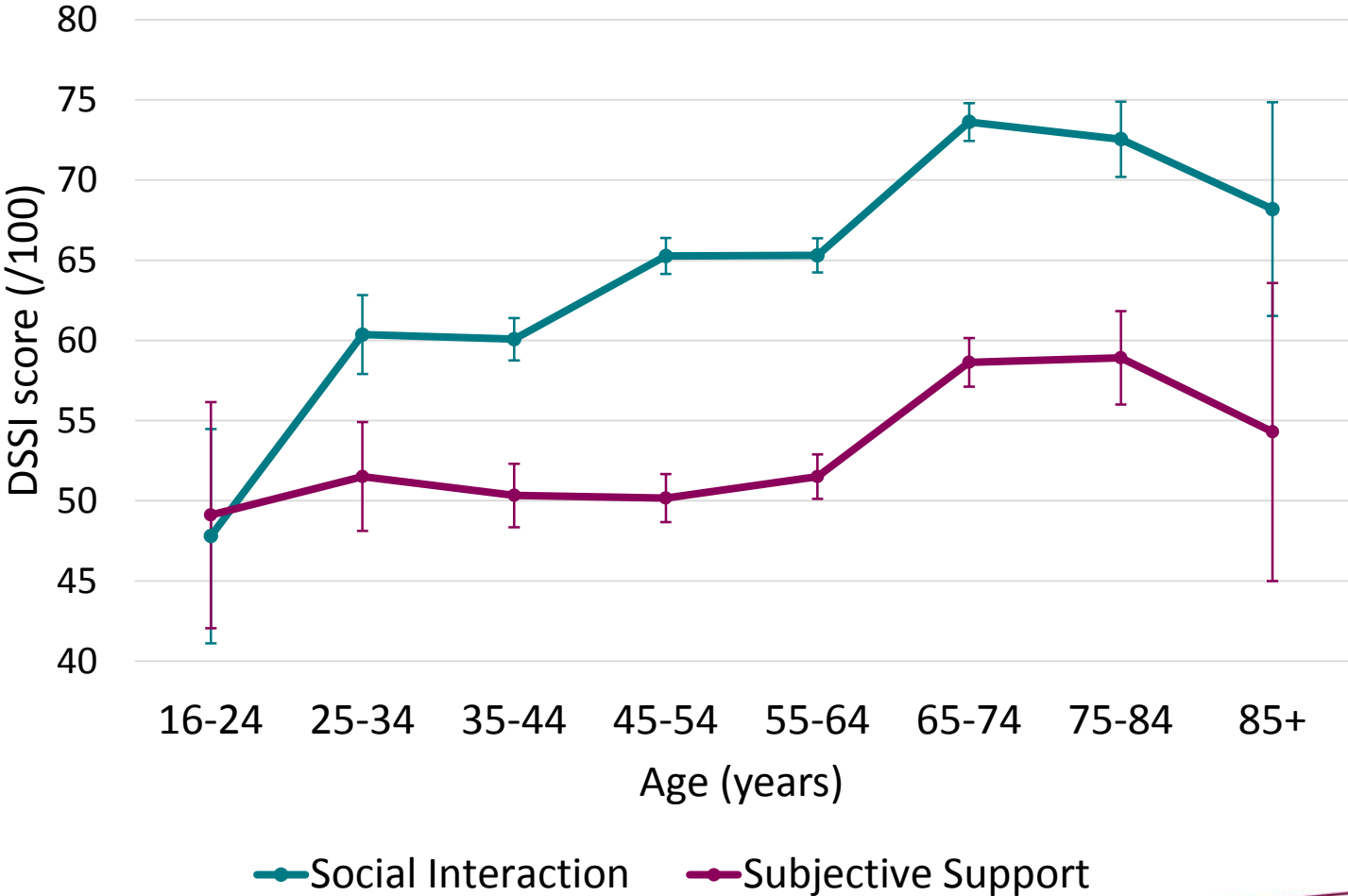
# Social Support

Measured using the Duke Social Support Index (DSSI)

Subscales:

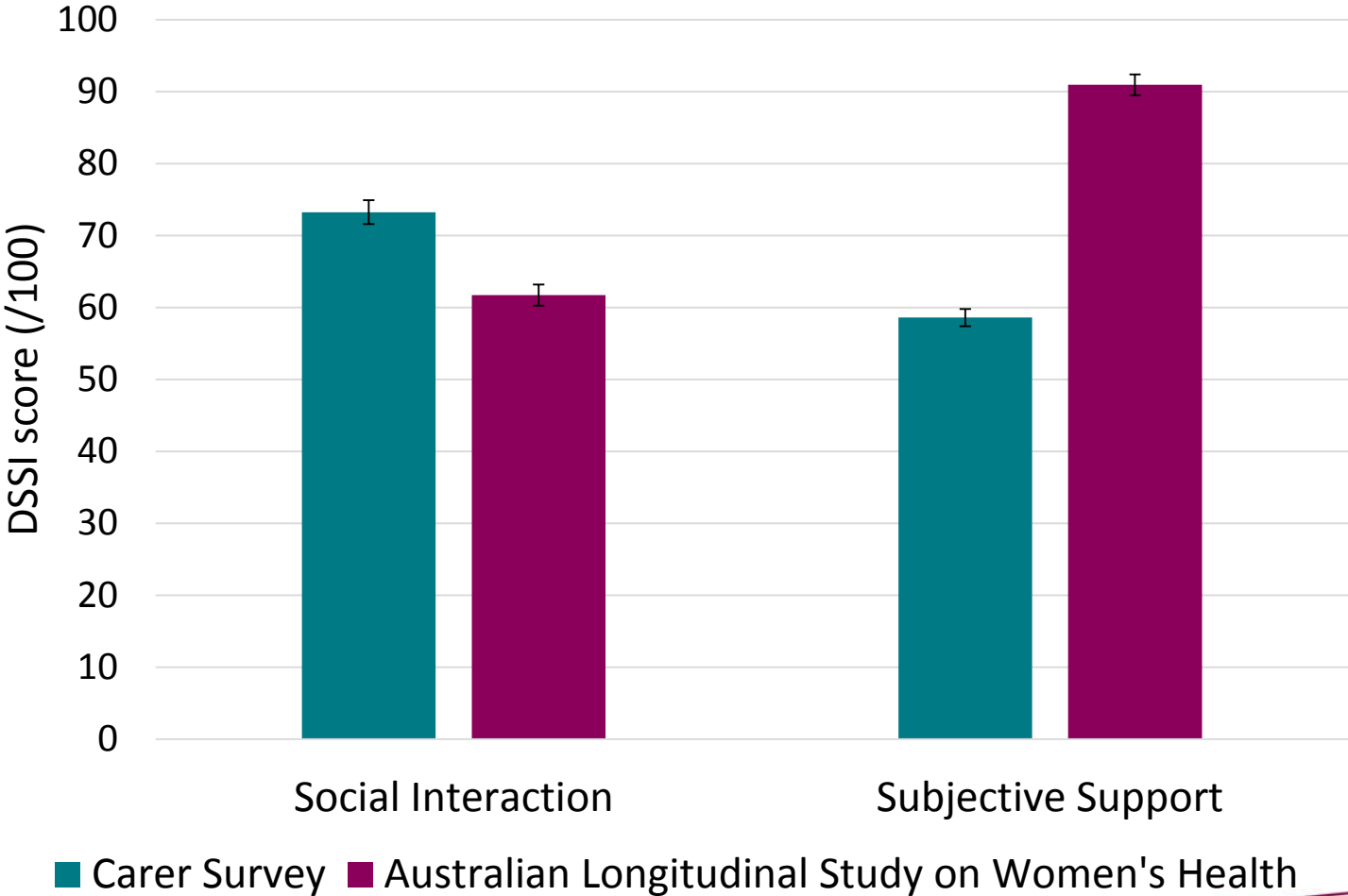
- **Social interaction**
  - How many people you feel close to
  - How often you spend time with people who don't live with you
- **Subjective support** (satisfaction)
  - Do family/friends understand you?
  - Can you talk to family/friends about your deepest problems?

# Social Support

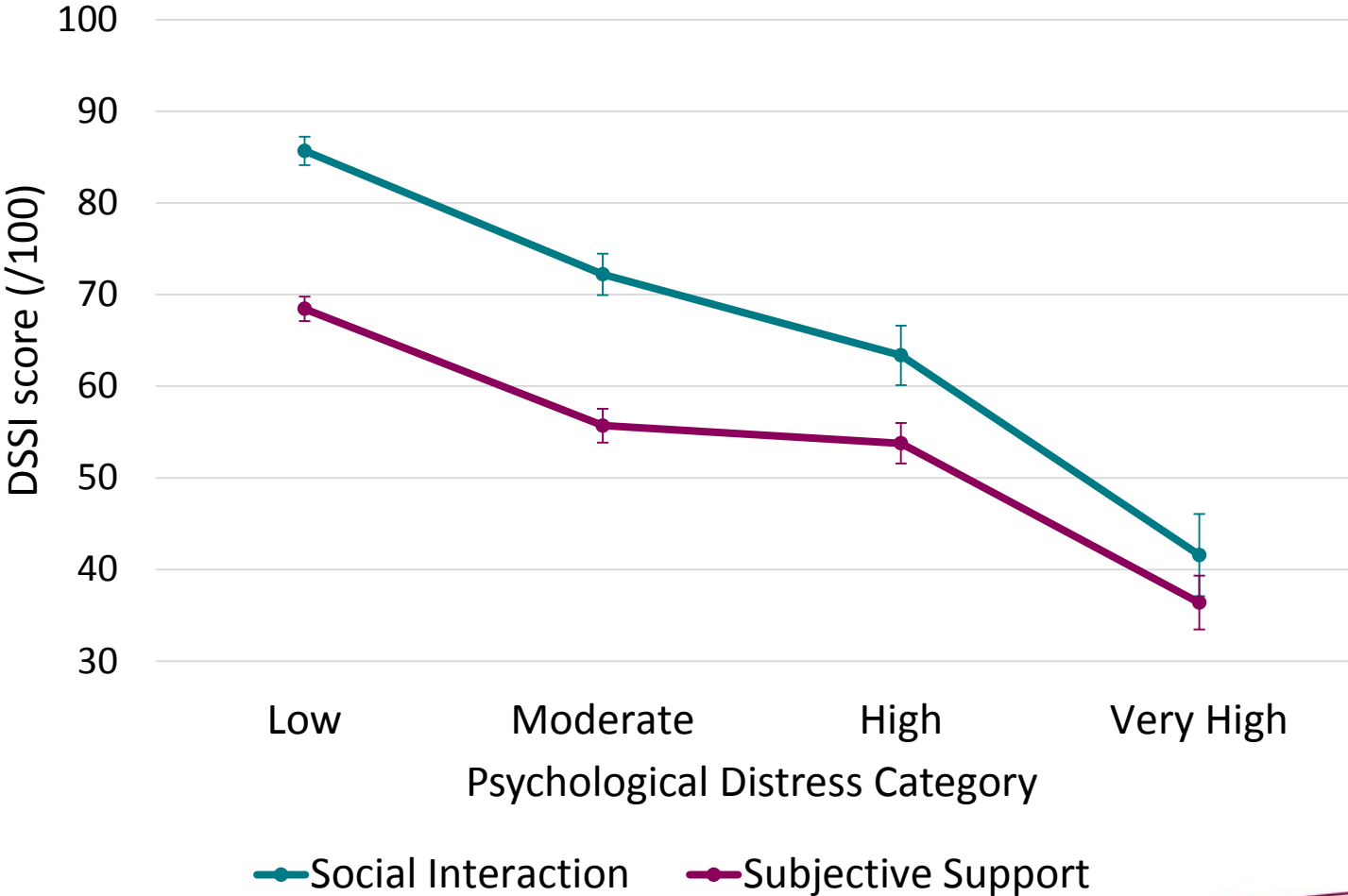




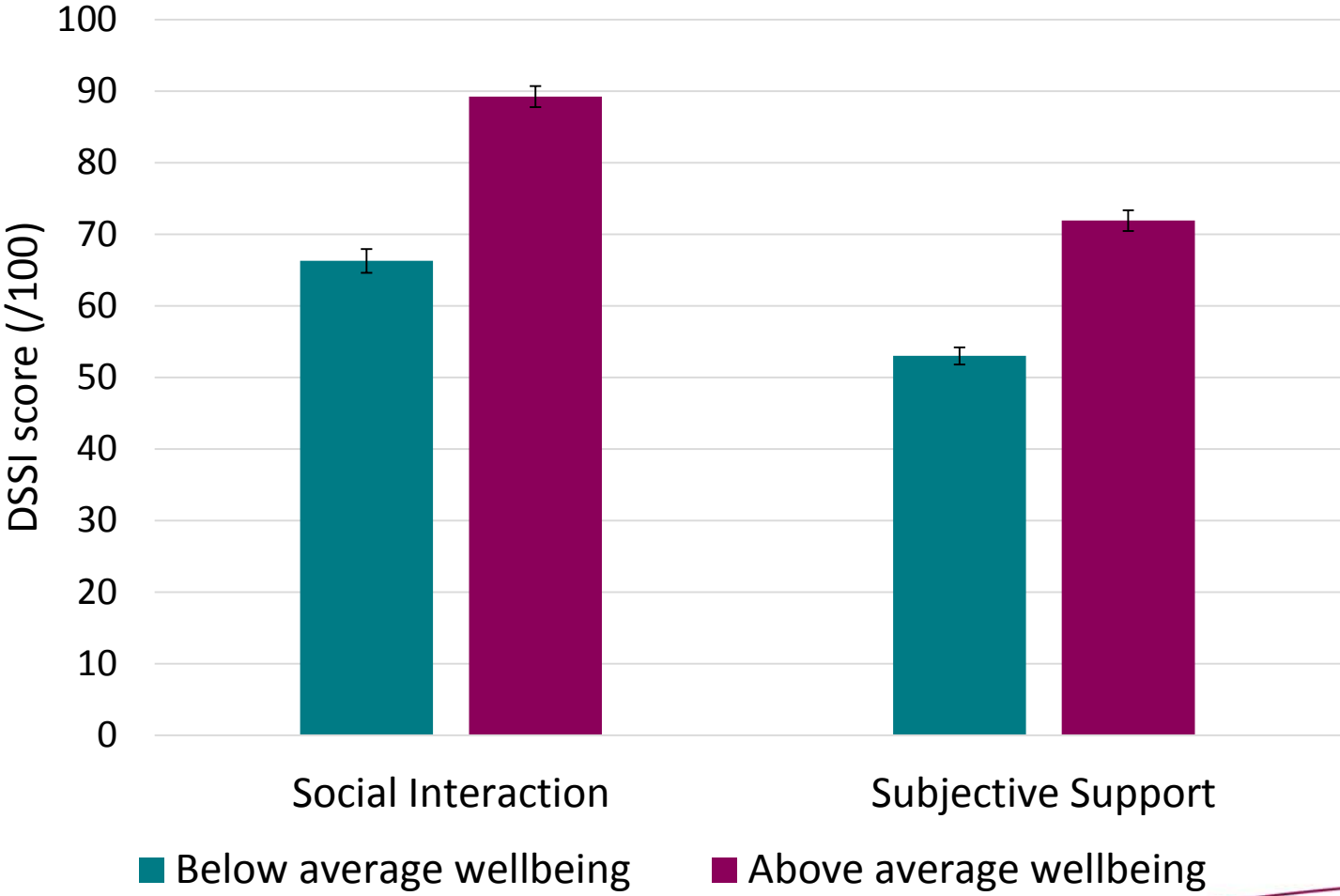
# Social Support



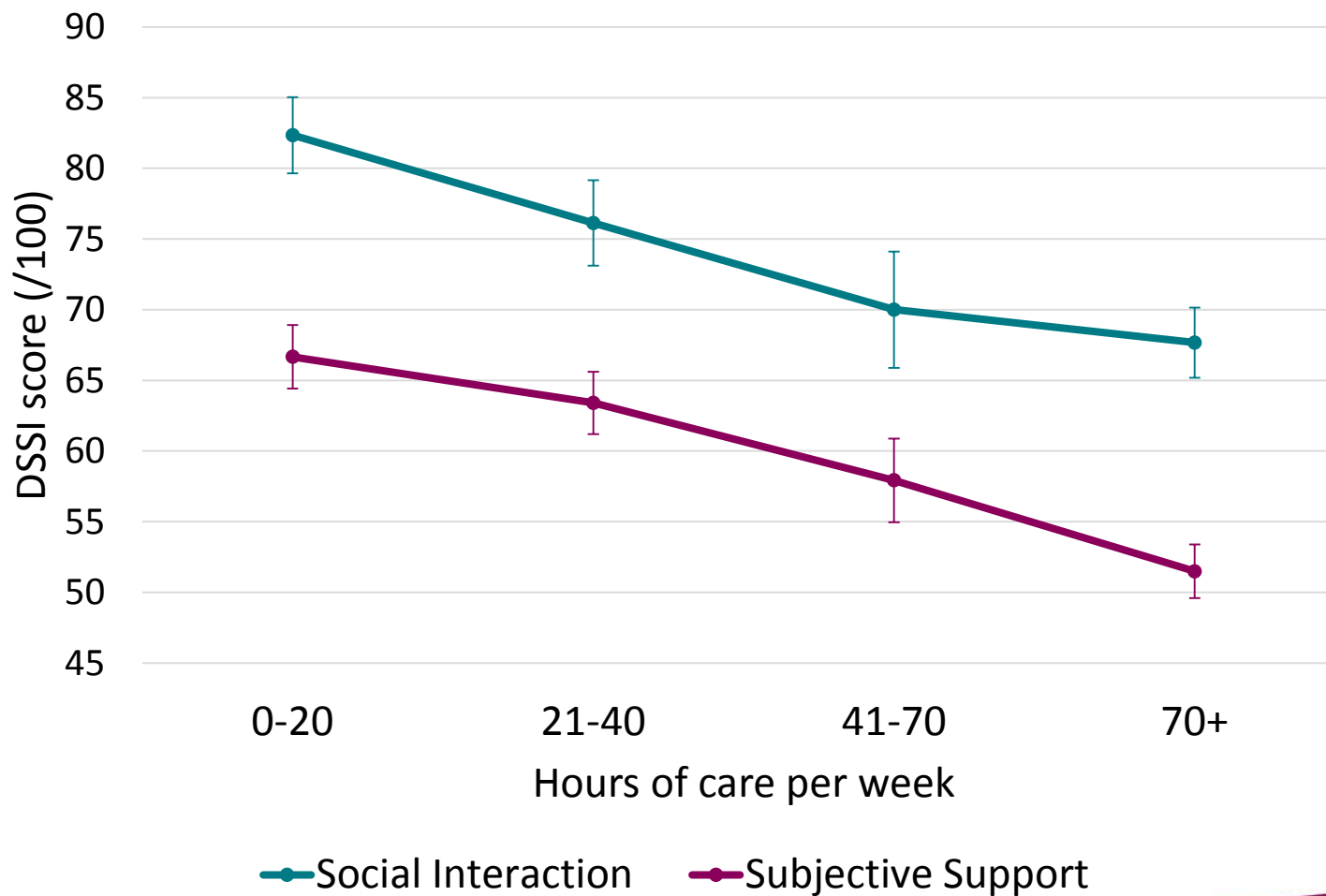
# Social Support



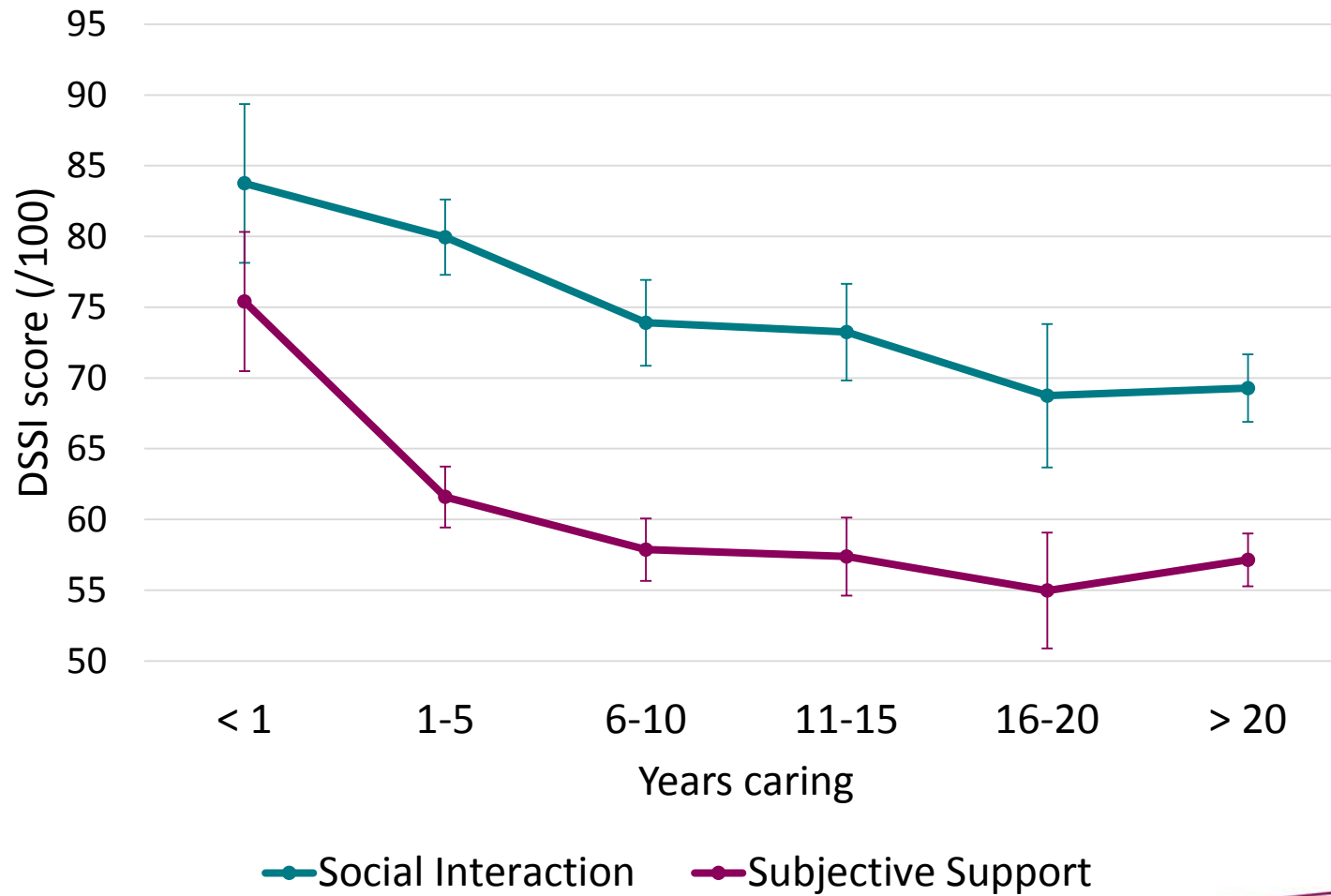
# Social Support



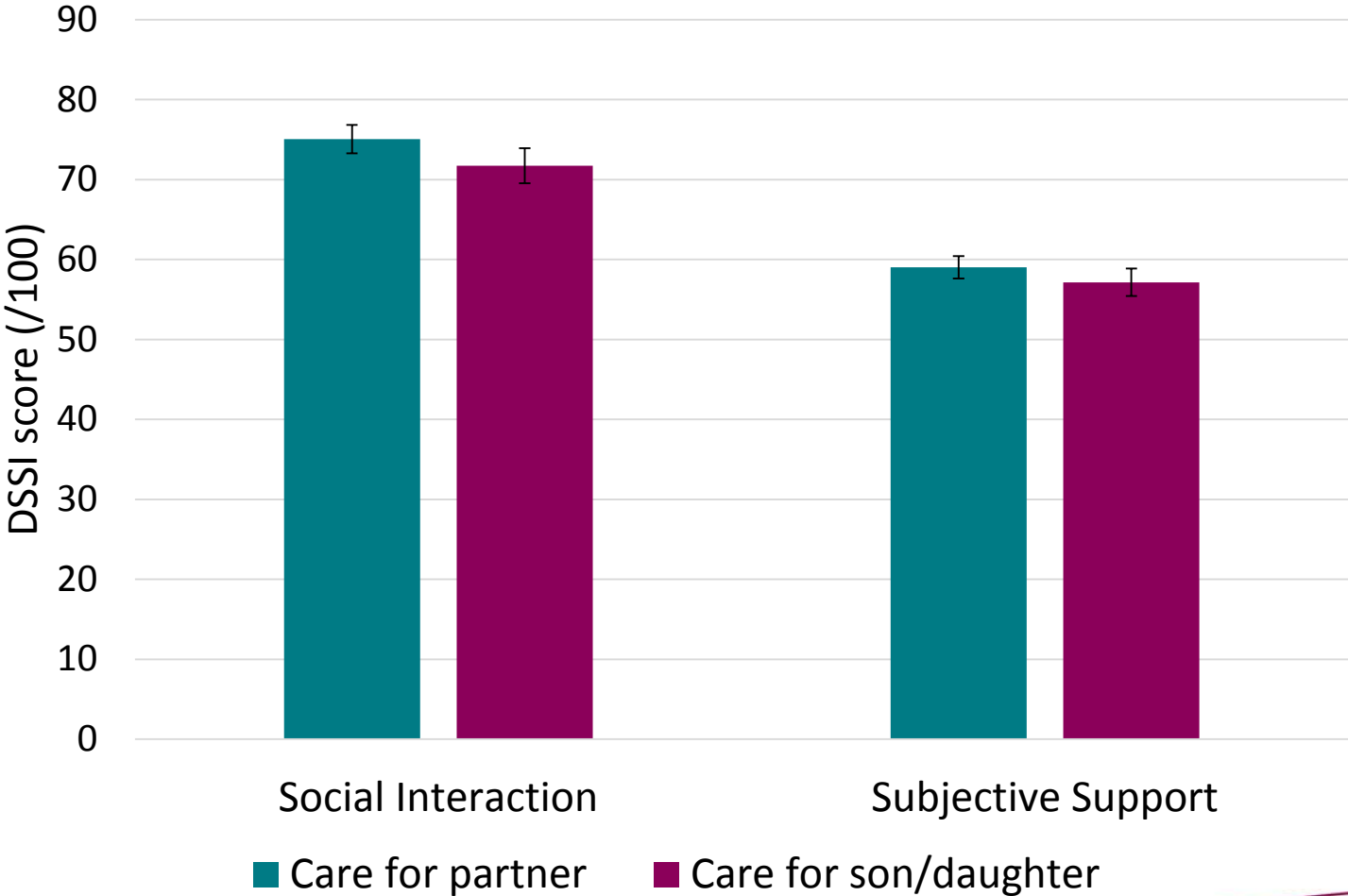
# Social Support



# Social Support



# Social Support



# Social Support

No difference between:

- Rural and metropolitan
- CALD and non-CALD
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

# Implications

Older carers more socially connected than younger carers

**BUT** *much less socially connected than wider community*

Social connectedness:

- *Increases* with age **BUT** *decreases* with years caring
- Life course perspective
  - Challenges of caring
  - Resilience, learnt strategies
- Impact of care recipient condition (e.g., dementia vs. disability)

Loss of “retirement”

- c.f. caring for son/daughter vs. caring for partner



# Contact details

Tim Broady

Senior Research and Development Officer  
Carers NSW

P: 02 9280 4744

E: [timb@carersnsw.org.au](mailto:timb@carersnsw.org.au)

## Follow Carers NSW



[twitter.com/carersnsw](https://twitter.com/carersnsw)



[facebook.com/carersnewsouthwales](https://facebook.com/carersnewsouthwales)