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**Challenges and changes: how can technology promote sexual health and wellbeing in later life. *Taking a different perspective...***

**NatCen**  
Social Research that works for society

 **ageUK**  
for later life

**ELSA** English Longitudinal  
Study of Ageing

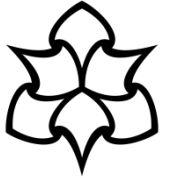
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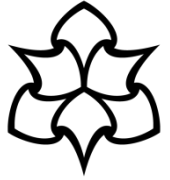
## Sexuality and Health

- U.K. population is ageing
- Older adults are healthier
- Representative data on later life sexuality?
- How are sexual activities and satisfaction linked to health and wellbeing more generally?
- Healthy and successful ageing...
- ***What has sex got to do with it?***
- ***How can technology help?***



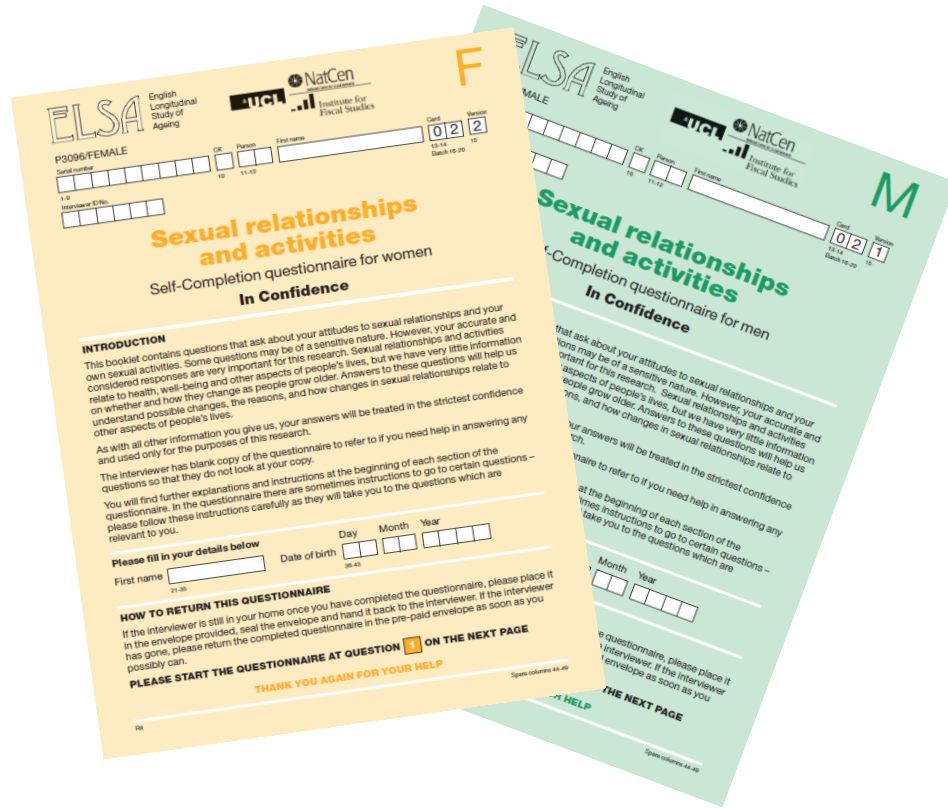
## Why is this research important?

- Sexual activity and intimacy are integral features of being human
- Humans are unique in having sex not simply for reproduction
- Positive coupled relationships provide tangible health benefits...
- Sex, love and intimacy are key factors
- *How can we understand and improve human health and wellbeing if we ignore sex?*

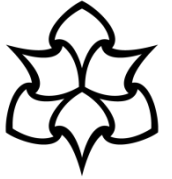


# Our research evidence...

## ELSA Sexual Function Questionnaire



- Included in the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (waves 6 and 8)
- Main survey has rich data on health, cognition, economics, wellbeing, biomarkers, life history etc.
- SFQ - sexual attitudes, activities, problems, satisfaction, relationships
- 7000+ responders (56% female)

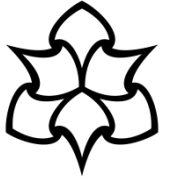


## What do people say?

“Doctors and health care professionals do not seem to give any help re: sexual health problems: in my case, erectile dysfunction” (*Man aged 70-80*)

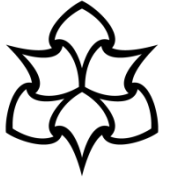
“Have sought help through GP and privately. Very little help available – often feel that you shouldn’t be concerned at your age!” (*Woman aged 70-80*)

“The NHS seems reluctant to help with sexual problems in someone of our age. Penetrative sex is incredibly painful and I have been advised it’s due to age” (*Woman aged 70-80*)



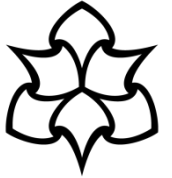
## Research Challenges

- Ongoing, representative data needed
- Evidence base → inform policy and practice
- Older people remain reluctant to seek help for sexual problems
- <20% of over 50s sought help or advice for concerns about their sex life (ELSA, 2016)
- Prevalence of STIs increasing in the over 50s
- *How can digital technologies help?*



## Digital technologies for sexual health

- Older people increasingly using digital tech
- Online resources around sexual health need to inform, guide and signpost users
- Online resources can provide a wealth of information... *but need to be evidence based*
- Wide range of health apps (100,000+ available for smartphones)
- Social media sites used by healthcare providers  
→ service information and patient interaction



## Implications for sexual health in later-life

- Potential to overcome barriers to seeking help due to embarrassment, taboos and ageism
- Could be a resource for sharing experiences among peer group/support networks
- If evidence-based, could lead to improved self-monitoring/-management of sexual problems
- If initial consultation(s) mediated via a digital route → could lessen initial hurdles and triage subsequent interventions more effectively





## More Information...

ILC-UK report:

*How long will I love you? Sex and intimacy in later life*

[http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/index.php/publications/publication\\_details/  
how\\_long\\_will\\_i\\_love\\_you\\_sex\\_and\\_intimacy\\_in\\_later\\_life](http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/index.php/publications/publication_details/how_long_will_i_love_you_sex_and_intimacy_in_later_life)

Film (MMU/UoM): *Sex and intimacy in later life*

<http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/story/6325/>

Chief Medical Officer annual report 2015: the 'baby boomer' generation (Chapter 8 – *Sexual health*)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cmo-annual-report-2015-health-of-the-baby-boomer-generation>