

Love gets stronger with age: Canadian researchers

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Older couples are more in love than most and continue to have satisfying sex lives, despite some physiological hurdles, according to Canadian researchers.

Persons older than 65 obtained the highest scores of 119 and 120 points on the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale, which measures couples' happiness, compared to the Canadian average of 114.

"It's a significant difference," said Gilles Trudel, a [psychology](#) professor at the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM).

The scale takes into account [sexual satisfaction](#), but also how well couples communicate, function together in general, and their cohesion. Researchers questioned 508 couples all from Quebec and all already pensioners, most aged over 65.

The fact that divorced couples were not included in the study could account for its optimistic results, as this left only results from happy older couples, Trudel admits.

Alternately, he theorized that couples after they retire have much more time to spend together and do things couples do, "like a second honeymoon."

In some cases, retirement can have the reverse effect: with more time on their hands, marital problems that remained latent during many years

focused on career or child-rearing suddenly surface.

This is accompanied by anxiety or depression twice as often in the elderly as with younger persons.

Finally, researchers noted a recent, albeit still marginal, phenomenon: old people almost never divorced in the past, but nowadays five-six percent of gray-haired couples split up, at age 70 or older, some of them because their partner fell in love at first sight with another.

And retirees' sex lives are no longer taboo.

"There's a myth" surrounding the sex lives of the elderly. But that stems for some from "imagining, for example, their grand-parents making love, provoking uneasiness" among young people, Trudel suggests.

When we get older, "[sexuality](#) transforms, men can face erectile dysfunction, for women it's lube issues, but they can still have pleasure ... with the help of medications or without," he said, recalling comments by study participants.

These interviews were conducted with absolute discretion, which increased their reliability: subjects were asked questions and responded by selecting a button on a computer that recorded their answers anonymously.

Through their research, UQAM's psychologists also offered elderly [couples](#) in group sessions some relationship tips such as communicating more, never cutting off your spouse, and sharing feelings.

Most important was to never believe that you know already what a person is going to say and so conclude that listening to them is not important.

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