

# 62 percent of men and 37 percent of women over the age of 65 are sexually active: Spanish study

4 April 2012



There are gender differences among those older than 65, with less sexual activity in women compared to men. Credit: Jose Javier

A study based on the National Health and Sexuality Survey, involving nearly 2000 people, describes the sexual practices of senior citizens in Spain. The most common are kisses, caresses and vaginal penetration. The main causes of sexual inactivity are physical illness and widowerhood.

A new study published in one of the world's biggest sexuality journals the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* analyses the factors that influence sexual activity amongst elderly people in Spain.

"This research lets us know the reality of a [social phenomenon](#) which is not tackled enough in Spain: sexuality and the elderly", Domingo Palacios, a researcher at the Rey Juan Carlos University in Madrid and main author of this study, explained to SINC.

The results, based on the National Health and Sexuality Survey, in which 1,939 heterosexual elderly people participated in 2009, show that

62.3% of men and 37.4% of women are sexually active. The most common practices are kisses, caressing and vaginal penetration. On the other hand, the least practised are masturbation and oral sex.

Furthermore, there are other factors that limit sexual activity in both sexes: being older than 75, not having a partner, having a low level of education, a poor perception of their own health and sexuality, suffering from two or more [chronic illnesses](#) and taking two or more types of medication.

"This can be applied to preventing illnesses and promoting health and healthy [sexual practices](#)", Palacios states. He highlights widowerhood and [physical illness](#) amongst reasons why the older Spanish population do not have sexual intercourse.

The authors note [gender differences](#) among those older than 65, with less sexual activity in women compared to men. They also note age differences, with better results for those aged between 65 and 74 than those older than 75.

## The results support previous studies

This is not the first time that sexual health amongst the elderly has been measured. In 2006, a study published during the XXVI Spanish Family and Community Medicine Society (SEMFYC) Conference showed that 60% of people over the age of 65 said they had sex on average four times a month.

In that project, which was carried out with over 100 people by family doctors in Catalonia, the majority said that although their [sexual intercourse](#) had changed as a result of age, they were not "less satisfying".

Furthermore, new data backs up a survey carried out in the USA and published in 'New England Journal of Medicine' in 2008, in which 73% of Americans between 57 and 64 years of age had sex. The number dropped to 53% for those aged between 65 and 75, and dropped to 26% for those aged 85.

**More information:** Domingo Palacios-Ceña; Pilar Carrasco-Garrido; Valentín Hernández-Barrera; Cristina Alonso-Blanco; César Fernández-de-las-Peñas; Rodrigo Jiménez-García. "Sexual Behaviors among Older Adults in Spain: Results from a Population-Based National Sexual Health Survey". *J Sex Med*; 9:121-129, Jan 2012.

Provided by FECYT - Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology

APA citation: 62 percent of men and 37 percent of women over the age of 65 are sexually active: Spanish study (2012, April 4) retrieved 23 October 2019 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-04-percent-men-women-age-sexually.html>

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