

# Senior citizens increasingly satisfied with their sex lives

17 March 2015



Senior citizens have experienced a considerable improvement in their sex lives since the 1970s. A doctoral thesis by Nils Beckman at Sahlgrenska Academy has found that six out of every ten women and seven out of every ten men over 70 are highly satisfied with their sex lives.

Based on data from the large H70 and women's population studies, researchers at the University of Gothenburg Center for Aging and Health (AgeCap) have examined the sexual attitudes of senior

citizens and identified the factors that determine whether or not they remain sexually active.

## Childhood experiences

Childhood experiences have a major impact on the sexuality of senior citizens. The studies, which offered a unique opportunity to monitor women from middle age to 70 years old, showed that a history of [childhood poverty](#), parental squabbling or divorce, and [corporal punishment](#) may reduce [sexual desire](#) and activity even in [middle age](#).

## Gender roles make a difference

Gender roles make a difference as well. Sexual activity is largely fueled by male appetite: women are less likely to be active if their partners do not experience much desire and more likely if their partners do.

"In other words, our studies suggest that women's desire is not decisive for how active they are," Dr. Beckman says. "One reason may be the [gender roles](#) that these generations grew up with, which dictate that men always take the initiative."

Sexual activity among 70-year-olds has increased from 12% to 34% for women and from 47% to 66% for men since the 1970s.

## Improved quality of the sex life

The quality of the sex lives of [senior citizens](#) has improved as well. A total of 62% of women and 71% of men report being highly satisfied with their sex lives, as opposed to 41% of women and 58% of men in the 1970s.

"A general sense of wellbeing, comfortable circumstances, good physical condition and vibrant mental health all contribute to sexual satisfaction," Dr. Beckman says. "Previous sexual experiences and the quality of the relationship also play a role."

"The studies found that even people in their late 90s have sexual feelings. While unlikely to be active at that age, they talk about their sexual thoughts and dreams, often regretting that they no longer have the chance to share intimacy with another person."

### **Natural for doctors to ask about sex**

Dr. Beckman's thesis concluded that half of 97-year-olds have a positive attitude to sex. A total of 88% of men and 82% of women find it perfectly natural for doctors to ask about their sexuality at checkups.

"Caregivers must be broadminded and open to the fact that love, desire and sexuality do not dissipate as people grow older," Dr. Beckman says. "Doctors and nurses should never hesitate to ask patients whether they are experiencing sexual problems, no matter how old they might be."

**More information:** Link to thesis:  
[gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/37524](https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/37524)

Provided by University of Gothenburg

APA citation: Senior citizens increasingly satisfied with their sex lives (2015, March 17) retrieved 17 October 2019 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-03-senior-citizens-increasingly-sex.html>

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