

# Sexuality in older age



Foto: Rankin/Relate

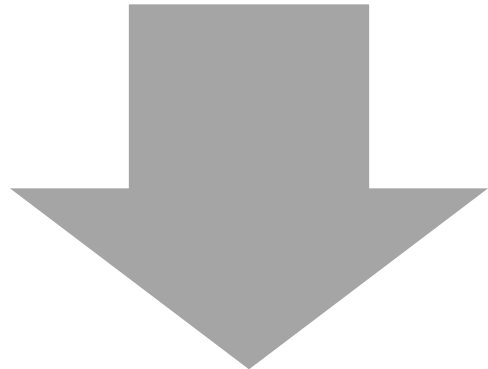


Foto: Rankin/Relate; <https://magazin.aktualne.cz>

# Sexuality in older age



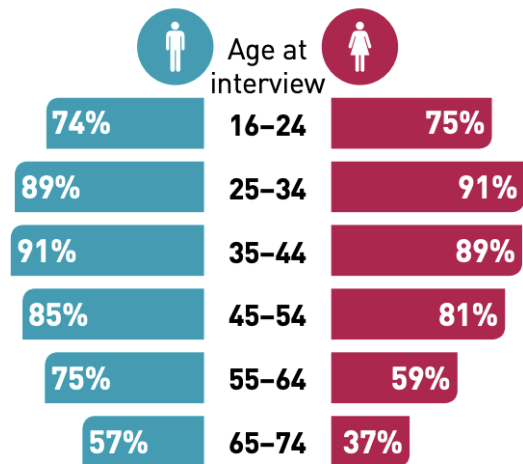
Increase?



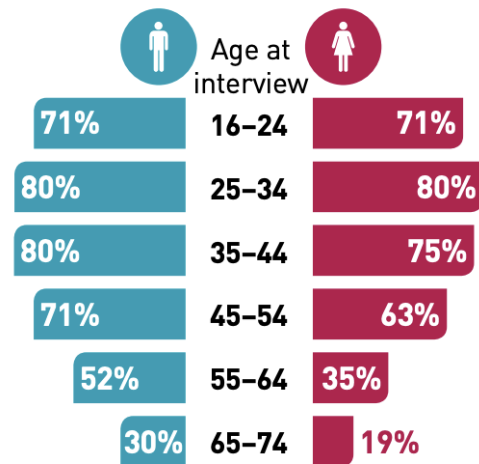
Decrease

# Different types of sex with people of the opposite-sex, past year (Natsal-3)

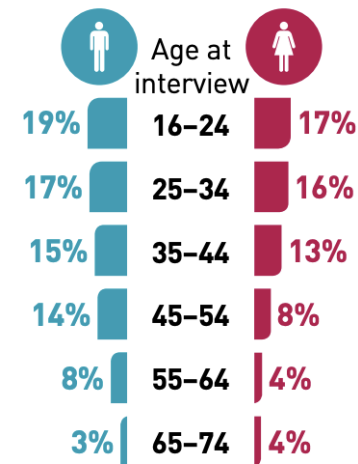
## Vaginal sex



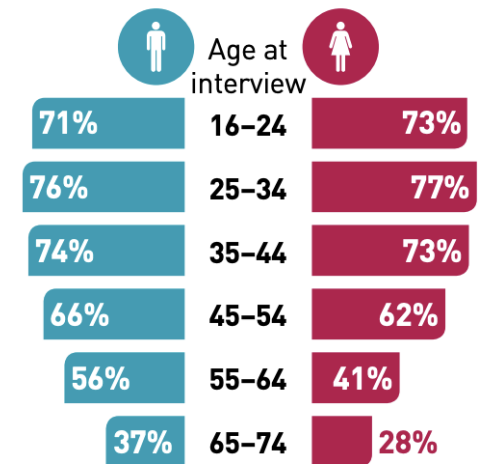
## Given/received oral sex



## Anal sex



## Other genital contact



Sample: 15,162 UK men and women aged 16-74

# Natsal-3 MEN

	16-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65-74 years	All age groups	p value
<b>Sexual practices with female partners</b>								
Number of occasions of sexual intercourse in past 4 weeks†								
Mean (SD)	5.1 (7.2)	5.4 (6.5)	4.1 (4.3)	4.1 (6.1)	3.2 (4.5)	2.3 (3.6)	4.3 (5.7)	..
Median (IQR)	3 (0-7)	4 (1-8)	3 (1-6)	3 (1-6)	2 (0-4)	1 (0-3)	3 (1-6)	..
Vaginal sex in past 4 weeks	52.7% (50.0-55.3%)	74.6% (72.1-76.9%)	75.1% (71.8-78.3%)	69.3% (65.7-72.7%)	55.2% (51.3-59.1%)	37.2% (33.1-41.5%)	62.9% (61.5-64.4%)	<0.0001
Given or received oral sex in past year	70.9% (68.4-73.3%)	80.0% (77.6-82.2%)	80.2% (77.0-83.0%)	71.0% (67.2-74.5%)	52.4% (48.4-56.4%)	30.4% (26.5-34.6%)	67.1% (65.7-68.5%)	<0.0001
Anal sex in past year	18.5% (16.4-20.7%)	17.6% (15.6-19.8%)	15.1% (12.6-18.0%)	13.8% (11.1-17.0%)	7.6% (5.7-10.0%)	2.9% (1.7-4.9%)	13.4% (12.4-14.4%)	<0.0001
Genital contact without intercourse in past year	71.3% (68.6-73.8%)	75.8% (73.1-78.3%)	73.1% (69.6-76.3%)	66.0% (62.0-69.8%)	56.2% (52.3-60.1%)	36.8% (32.7-41.1%)	65.4% (63.9-66.8%)	<0.0001
<b>Masturbation</b>								
Masturbated in past 4 weeks	82.6% (80.5-84.5%)	78.1% (75.6-80.3%)	72.9% (69.1-76.3%)	64.6% (60.6-68.4%)	53.1% (49.0-57.1%)	33.1% (29.2-37.3%)	66.4% (64.9-67.8%)	<0.0001
<b>Sexual practices with male partners</b>								
Any sexual experience or contact with another man	7.0% (5.7-8.5%)	7.8% (6.4-9.4%)	7.4% (5.5-9.8%)	9.2% (7.3-11.6%)	10.0% (8.0-12.4%)	6.1% (4.4-8.4%)	8.0% (7.2-8.9%)	0.0754

# Natsal-3 WOMEN

	16-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65-74 years	All age groups	p value
<b>Sexual practices with male partners</b>								
Number of occasions of sexual intercourse in past 4 weeks†								
Mean (SD)	5.8 (6.6)	4.9 (5.1)	4 (4.6)	3.5 (4.2)	2.5 (3.4)	1.4 (2.3)	4.0 (4.9)	..
Median (IQR)	4 (1-8)	4 (1-7)	3 (1-5)	2 (1-5)	2 (0-4)	1 (0-2)	3 (1-6)	..
Vaginal sex in past 4 weeks	59.6% (57.2-61.9%)	75.7% (73.8-77.5%)	72.3% (69.4-74.9%)	64.4% (61.2-67.3%)	41.4% (38.1-44.7%)	21.3% (18.2-24.8%)	58.4% (57.2-59.7%)	<0.0001
Given or received oral sex in past year	70.3% (68.0-72.5%)	79.7% (77.8-81.4%)	75.4% (72.7-77.9%)	62.7% (59.5-65.7%)	35.3% (32.0-38.7%)	19.0% (16.1-22.2%)	59.9% (58.7-61.2%)	<0.0001
Anal sex in past year	17.0% (15.3-18.9%)	15.9% (14.4-17.5%)	12.7% (10.8-14.9%)	7.7% (6.1-9.5%)	3.6% (2.5-5.1%)	3.6% (2.4-5.3%)	10.5% (9.8-11.2%)	<0.0001
Genital contact without intercourse in past year	72.6% (70.4-74.8%)	77.1% (75.1-79.0%)	73.4% (70.6-76.0%)	62.4% (59.3-65.4%)	41.0% (37.6-44.4%)	28.1% (24.7-31.7%)	61.4% (60.2-62.6%)	<0.0001
<b>Masturbation</b>								
Masturbated in past 4 weeks	37.1% (34.7-39.5%)	43.7% (41.4-46.0%)	39.8% (36.8-42.8%)	37.6% (34.4-40.9%)	19.2% (16.7-22.0%)	10.3% (8.2-12.8%)	32.9% (31.7-34.1%)	<0.0001
<b>Sexual practices with female partners</b>								
Any sexual experience or contact with another woman	18.9% (17.1-20.9%)	18.1% (16.4-20.0%)	11.5% (9.8-13.6%)	8.8% (7.3-10.6%)	6.6% (5.1-8.4%)	2.6% (1.7-4.1%)	11.5% (10.7-12.3%)	<0.0001

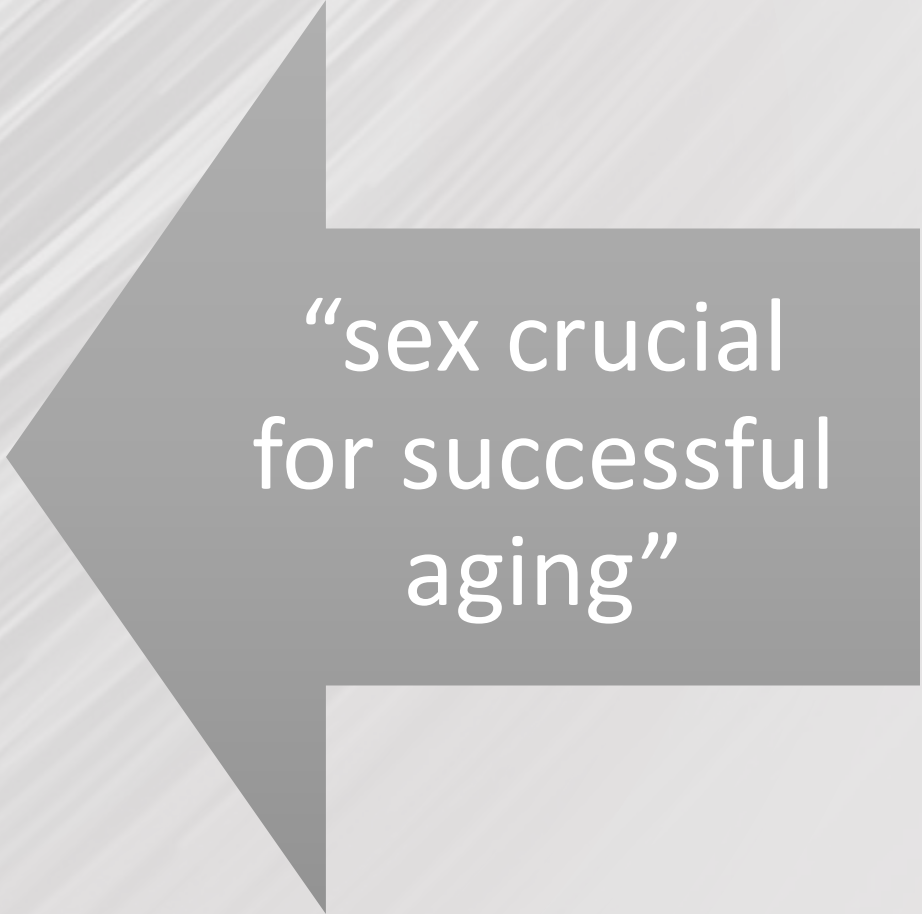


# Sexuality in older age

- Two contrasting views



“asexual old  
age”



“sex crucial  
for successful  
aging”

# Impact on sex?

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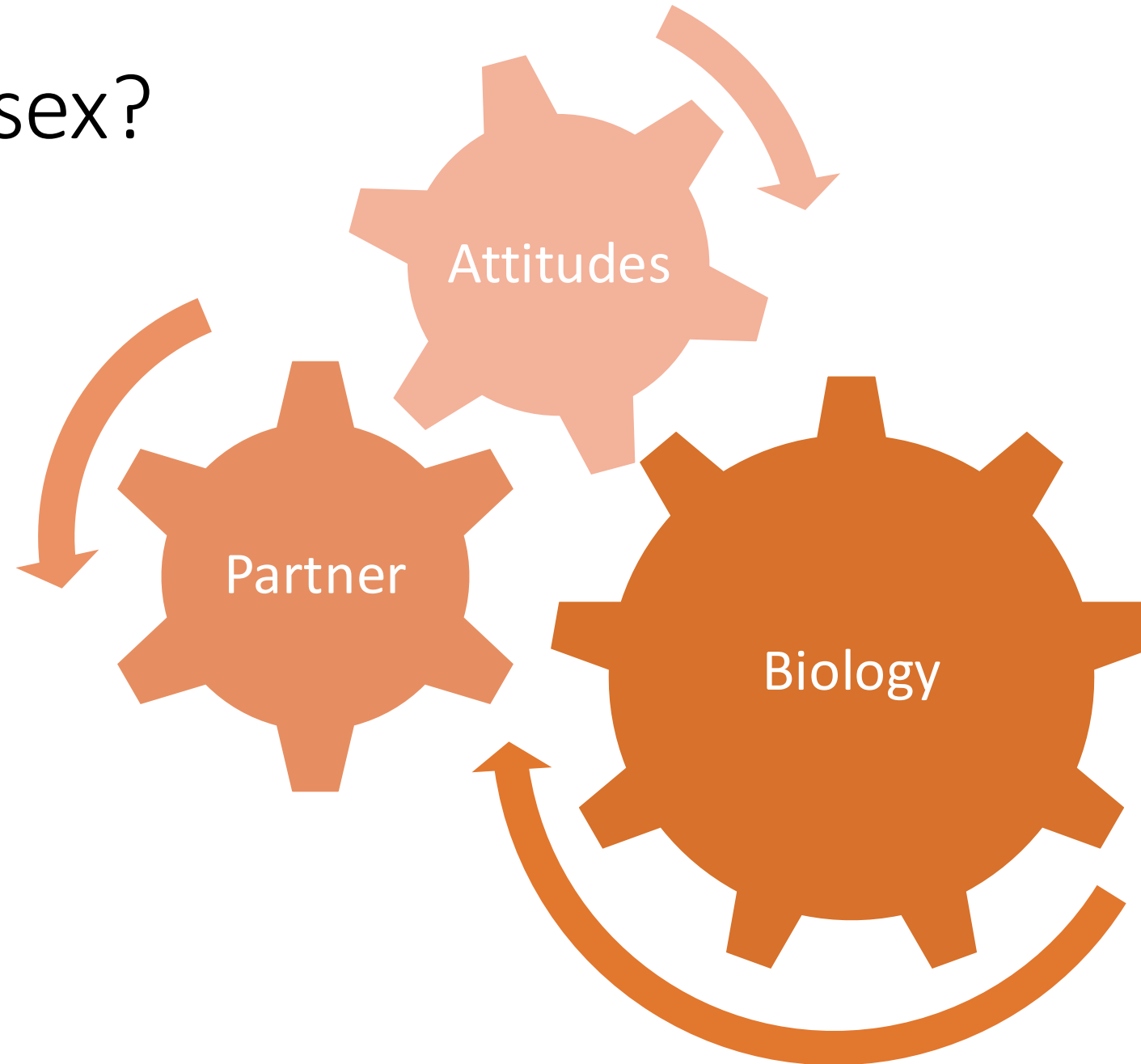
What do you think may affect (negatively or positively) sexual functioning among older people?

Menti.com

**2935 9179**



# Impact on sex?



\* Complex

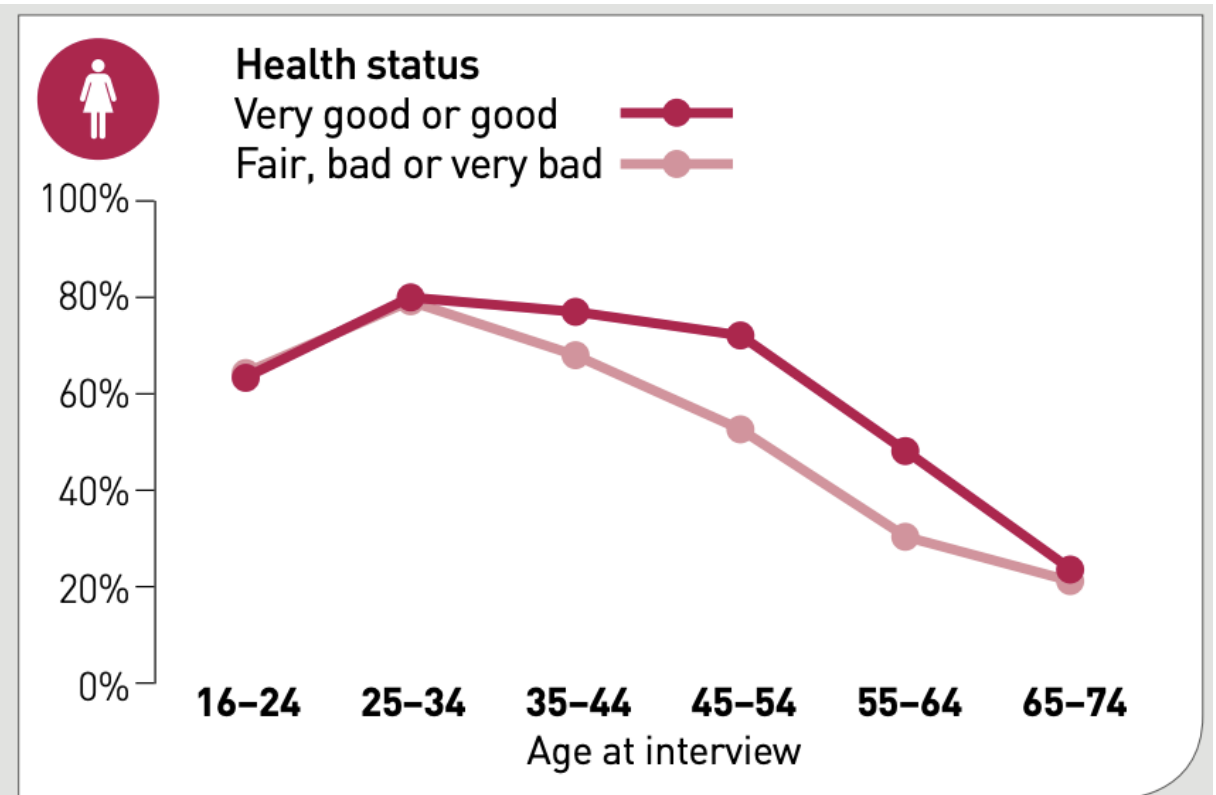
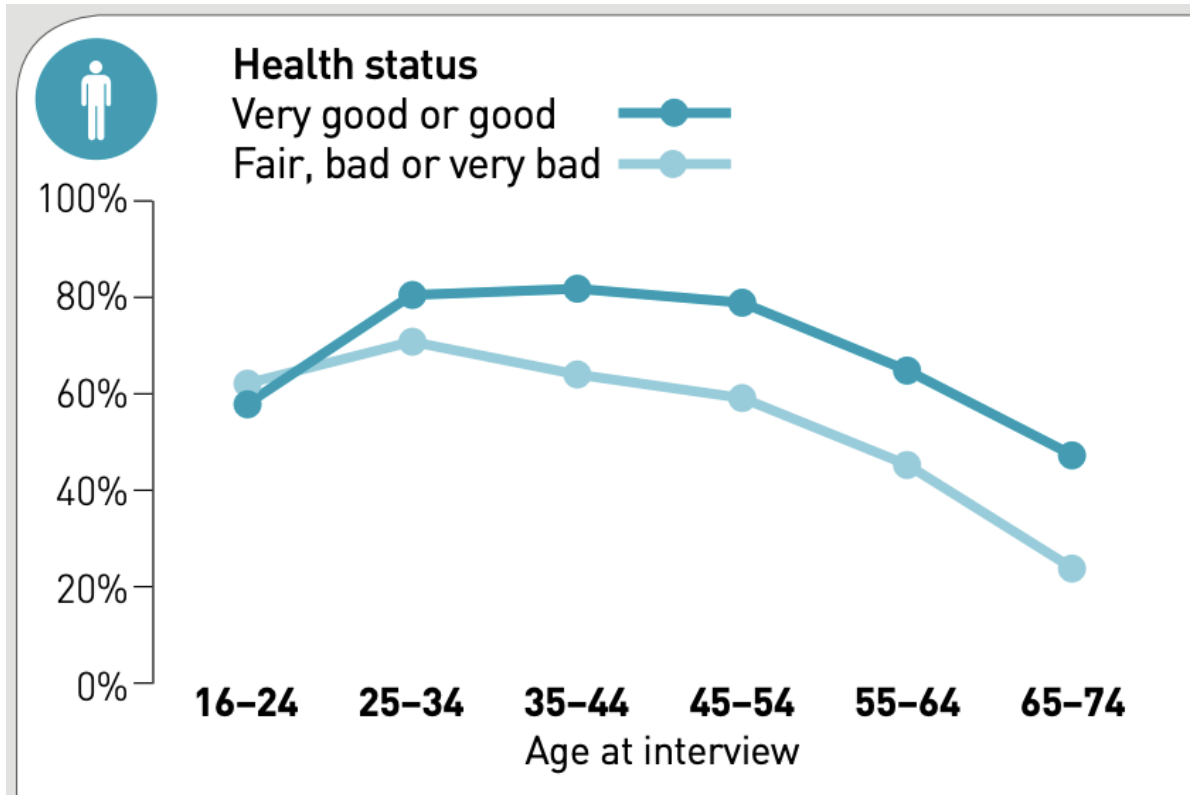
\*\* Intertwined



# Impact on sex: Natural biological changes

- Age-related decrease in physical fitness
- Illnesses (particularly chronic)

Natsal-3: Percentage reporting recent sexual activity (in past 4 weeks)



# Impact on sex: Natural biological changes

- Age-related decrease in physical fitness
- Illnesses (particularly chronic)
- Medication (pharmacotherapy)

# Impact on sex: Health / illness / medication

Context & subjective health status, not only physical health per se

*„Z mého pohledu tam byl velký strach z nemoci jeho [manžela]. Jednou jsem ho navštívil v nemocnici a viděl všechny ty hadičky a všechno, řekl jsem si, byl bych rád, kdyby přežil a zůstal naživu.“ (vdaná, 65 let)*

*„Kvůli hypertenzi užívám tyto léky: Cynt 0,4, Amicloton, Anopyrin, Lusopress, Irbesartan Actavis 300 mg, Nebivolol Sandoz 5 mg. Asi mám problémy s erekcí. Jelikož mám partnerku, nechci na ní šetřit. Je možné provést nějaké změny v léčbě hypertenze nebo přidat nějaké léky, které by zlepšily moji erekci? (muž, 62 let)*

*“...physically not good, my health is failing, I keep on living on pills.  
As I said, willingness also fails. [...] Lack of will, lack of energy.” (M, 70)*

*“I have a pacemaker, I have atherosclerosis, this, that, a whole bunch of diseases. So what? Should I sit down and cry? No. I want to enjoy life and experience lots of cool things for as long as I can.” (W, 68)*

# Impact on sex: Natural biological changes

- Age-related decrease in physical fitness
- Illnesses (particularly chronic)
- Medication (pharmacotherapy)
- Menopause and andropause: affect sexual functioning
  - Menopause: rapid & intense changes, ovaries stop producing estrogen and progesterone; mood swings, depression, sweating, hot flashes, anatomical changes, lubrication issues etc.
  - Andropause (testosterone deficiency syndrome, PADAM (*partial androgen deficiency in the aging male*)): gradual, slow changes
- **Careful! Diversity:**

*“Menopause? What menopause? I had to ask my friends what it was. Myself, I haven't even notice, only that I stopped menstruating.”*

# Impact on sex: Natural biological changes

■ **TABLE 6.4 Typical Age-Related Changes in the Sexual Response Cycles of Older Men and Women**

Phase	Typical Changes in Women	Typical Changes in Men
<b>Excitement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Vaginal lubrication is somewhat delayed and occurs with less volume.</li> <li>■ Vaginal mucosa thins, and length and width of vagina decrease.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Longer time required to obtain an erection.</li> <li>■ Erection may be less firm.</li> </ul>
<b>Plateau</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Orgasmic platform less pronounced.</li> <li>■ Less elevation of uterus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Less overall muscle tension.</li> <li>■ Less elevation of testes.</li> <li>■ This phase is often elongated in time.</li> </ul>
<b>Orgasm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fewer orgasmic contractions.</li> <li>■ Occasionally uterine contractions may be painful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of muscular contractions decrease, and force of ejaculation is lessened.</li> <li>■ Sensations of ejaculatory inevitability may be absent.</li> </ul>
<b>Resolution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Typically occurs more rapidly as vaginal expansion, orgasmic platform, and clitoral retraction disappears soon after orgasm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Occurs more quickly with rapid loss of erection.</li> <li>■ Refractory period between orgasm and the next excitement phase gradually lengthens.</li> </ul>

# Impact on sex: Sexual dysfunctions

Specific problems with sexual functioning (physiological) + distress

The ICD-11 diagnosis guidelines categorize sexual dysfunction into four main groups:

- Hypoactive sexual desire and arousal dysfunctions
- Orgasmic dysfunction
- Ejaculatory dysfunction
- Sexual pain-penetration disorder

DSM 5 includes female sexual arousal/interest disorder, female orgasmic disorder, genitopelvic pain/penetration disorder, male hypoactive sexual desire disorder, erectile disorder, premature (early) ejaculation, and delayed ejaculation.

16–24 years 25–34 years 35–44 years 45–54 years 55–64 years 65–74 years All age groups [p value\\*](#)

**Women**

Lacked interest in having sex	24.8%	31.9%	37.0%	37.9%	38.8%	34.2%	<0.0001
Lacked enjoyment in sex	11.3%	13.2%	11.0%	12.7%	14.2%	8.0%	0.0737
Felt anxious during sex	8.2%	8.2%	4.2%	3.6%	2.7%	2.0%	<0.0001
Felt physical pain as a result of sex	9.5%	8.0%	5.3%	6.4%	10.4%	5.3%	0.0006
Felt no excitement or arousal during sex	8.6%	8.0%	7.1%	8.9%	9.5%	6.9%	0.4626
Difficulty in reaching climax	21.0%	17.2%	14.3%	14.7%	16.3%	13.7%	0.0029
Reached climax more quickly than you would like	3.8%	2.5%	1.7%	2.6%	1.6%	1.1%	0.0136
Uncomfortably dry vagina	9.4%	9.7%	7.5%	14.1%	26.9%	20.0%	<0.0001



	16–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45–54 years	55–64 years	65–74 years	All age groups	<a href="#">p value*</a>
<b>Men</b>								
Lacked interest in having sex	11.5%	14.5%	17.2%	15.3%	16.0%	13.6%		0.0961
Lacked enjoyment in sex	5.4%	6.7%	5.0%	3.3%	4.6%	1.8%		0.0071
Felt anxious during sex	5.7%	6.3%	5.8%	4.4%	5.5%	3.8%		0.4269
Felt physical pain as a result of sex	1.8%	1.7%	1.8%	2.0%	1.9%	1.0%		0.9243
Felt no excitement or arousal during sex	3.3%	4.3%	3.3%	2.2%	2.6%	2.7%		0.2245
Difficulty in reaching climax	9.2%	9.8%	8.3%	7.9%	10.6%	10.4%		0.5100
Reached climax more quickly than you would like	16.5%	19.1%	15.8%	13.6%	10.0%	10.8%		0.0002
Trouble getting or keeping an erection	7.6%	7.9%	7.9%	13.4%	23.5%	30.0%		<0.0001

# Impact on sex: Societal and personal attitudes

- Societal stereotypes (normative barriers)
  - Media
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Healthcare providers
  - Presence or absence of models of sexual life in later life
- Restrictive stereotypes in older research, new research more permissive (Syme & Cohn, 2017)

*! We are social beings !*

# Impact on sex: Societal and

Dirty old man

Old, sexual (barriers)

! We are social beings !

Old, interest

is not normal for an old person show sexual interest

- Presence or absence of mo
- Restrictive stere (Syme & Cohn,

It is ok for an older man to have a young wife, but an older woman with a younger man? No way!

It's sad. They should age with dignity and not behave like youngsters

It's disgusting

Couguars

# Impact on sex: Societal and personal attitudes

- Individual, personal attitudes toward sex

*„Sex was important in my life, is important and will continue to be important. Why should I give it up just because I went through menopause?“*

*“I would like to, perhaps, but what would my friends say [...] how would the children react? No, that's not really an option.”*

*“I feel great about myself, as I've never have. Sex hasn't been a part of my life for many years. Why would I change that now?“*

# Impact on sex: Societal and personal attitudes

- Individual, personal attitudes toward sex
- Also:
  - The role of sex (why do I engage in sexual activity?)
  - Component of pleasure?
  - The meaning of sex (does sex=sexual intercourse or is there more to it?)
  - And other issues...

# Impact on sex: (Not) having a partner

- Being partnered/ Lack of partner/ loss of a partner
  - Strongly associated with sexual activity in most research.

# Impact on sex: (Not) having a partner

Archives of Sexual Behavior

**Table 4** Sexual activity during the past 12 months in men, by sociodemographic factors separately for each country

	Norway <i>n</i> = 642		Denmark <i>n</i> = 489		Belgium <i>n</i> = 289		Portugal <i>n</i> = 208	
	AOR	95% CI	AOR	95% CI	AOR	95% CI	AOR	95% CI
<i>Age-group</i>								
60–64 years	96.4***	1.00	93.5**	1.00	89.1 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00	88.2 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00
65–69 years	88.8	0.44 0.16–1.21	89.9	0.79 0.29–2.15	83.0	0.31 0.13–0.76	84.2	0.81 0.32–2.47
70–75 years	85.5	0.29 0.10–0.84	85.0	0.48 0.18–1.26	81.3	0.22 0.09–0.57	74.1	0.59 0.22–1.59
<i>Level of education</i>								
Primary	79.4**	1.00	85.1*	1.00	80.0 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00	72.1*	1.00
Secondary	89.8	2.19 0.93–5.14	87.3	1.13 0.57–2.24	81.5	1.21 0.45–3.28	86.0	1.94 0.81–4.64
Tertiary	93.1	2.94 1.26–6.83	94.3	2.81 1.21–6.53	87.9	1.95 0.69–5.48	92.7	3.91 1.04–14.78
<i>Place of residence</i>								
Rural	90.2 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00	87.6 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00	82.1 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00	77.3 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00
Medium urban	89.3	0.69 0.35–1.35	89.2	1.17 0.62–2.23	85.2	1.18 0.61–2.28	82.3	1.16 0.43–3.13
Urban	94.9	1.48 0.47–4.60	92.9	1.23 0.42–3.61	85.1	1.26 0.52–3.05	88.4	1.66 0.54–5.08
<i>Relationship status</i>								
No partner	70.4***	1.00	76.3***	1.00	67.8***	1.00	92.9 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00
Partner	95.0	8.39 4.53–15.53	91.3	3.61 1.78–7.35	88.0	4.15 2.29–7.51	82.1	0.44 0.04–5.24



# Impact on sex: (Not) having a partner

Archives of Sexual Behavior

**Table 5** Sexual activity during the past 12 months in women, by sociodemographic factors separately for each country

	Norway <i>n</i> = 556		Denmark <i>n</i> = 443		Belgium <i>n</i> = 582		Portugal <i>n</i> = 212	
	AOR	95% CI	AOR	95% CI	AOR	95% CI	AOR	95% CI
<i>Age group</i>								
60–64 years	80.0***	1.00	87.7**	1.00	68.8**	1.00	81.3***	1.00
65–69 years	78.9	0.69 0.77–2.59	76.6	0.43 0.19–0.96	55.1	0.56 0.32–1.00	85.3	2.88 0.94–8.77
70–75 years	61.8	0.68 0.36–1.32	72.6	0.40 0.18–0.87	57.4	0.74 0.41–1.35	46.2	0.29 0.11–0.75
<i>Level of education</i>								
Primary	59.6**	1.00	73.8*	1.00	47.1**	1.00	62.2*	1.00
Secondary	71.4	1.21 0.55–2.65	75.0	1.04 0.57–1.90	58.4	1.69 0.85–3.36	76.8	2.22 0.94–5.24
Tertiary	78.8	2.60 1.16–5.85	84.8	1.80 0.92–3.52	70.9	3.62 1.71–7.67	82.9	5.90 1.53–22.74
<i>Place of residence</i>								
Rural	75.5 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00	80.0 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00	59.7 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00	61.4 <sup>ns</sup>	1.00
Medium urban	73.3	0.83 0.49–1.41	76.5	0.94 0.55–1.62	62.5	1.08 0.65–1.80	73.9	0.85 0.31–2.29
Urban	75.0	0.91 0.44–1.89	80.6	1.13 0.50–2.54	58.4	1.21 0.64–2.30	77.4	2.22 0.80–6.15
<i>Relationship status</i>								
No partner	37.1***	1.00	49.3***	1.00	42.4***	1.00	45.6***	1.00
Partner	89.6	15.61 9.78–24.90	83.3	5.52 3.04–10.01	79.9	5.25 3.33–8.26	81.6	7.39 3.06–17.88

# Impact on sex: (Not) having a partner

- Lack of partner/ loss of a partner
  - However, psychological interpretation also important

*„I dont have any sex problems. My only problem is that I don't have a partner.” (M, 62)*

*“When I think of intimacy, it's always with him [husband].  
I don't feel attracted to anyone. I wouldn't let any other man touch me.  
Absolutely not, out of the question! [...]  
I simply still love my husband, even though he is not here anymore.”*

- Re-partnering?
  - Gender gap
  - Social acceptance?

And this is just a tip of an  
iceberg...

Thank you for listening 😊