

## **What's new in Wave 8?**

The next wave of ELSA will run from May 2016 to May 2017. One of our interviewers will be in touch soon.

### **We would like to ask about grand-parenting**

Researchers are interested to understand more about how grandparents provide care for their grandchildren. For example what does it involve; overnight stays, meals, help with homework or simply keeping an eye on them. This will help answer questions about the effect of rising retirement ages and the impact of grandparents staying in work for longer.

### **There is also a section on mentoring**

When you were young, did someone from outside your family give you help and advice about work or relationships? We are interested in whether these positive experiences when people are young can shape the ways people behave when they are older.

## **Tell us your ELSA story**

We would really like to hear from ELSA participants. We are keen to find out more about your lives and your experience of taking part in the study. We would like to feature some of you in future communications about the study, with a short interview and maybe a photo if you are happy with this.

To express an interest in telling your story, please email us at [elsa@natcen.ac.uk](mailto:elsa@natcen.ac.uk) or write to us at:

**ELSA study  
Kings House  
101-135 Kings Road  
Brentwood  
Essex  
CM14 4LX**

We're keen to hear from participants of all ages, from all backgrounds, to illustrate the range of experiences that ELSA covers.



## **Moving house or updating your contact details?**

### **Please let us know.**

You are a valuable and irreplaceable member of ELSA. We are very grateful for your continued support for the study.

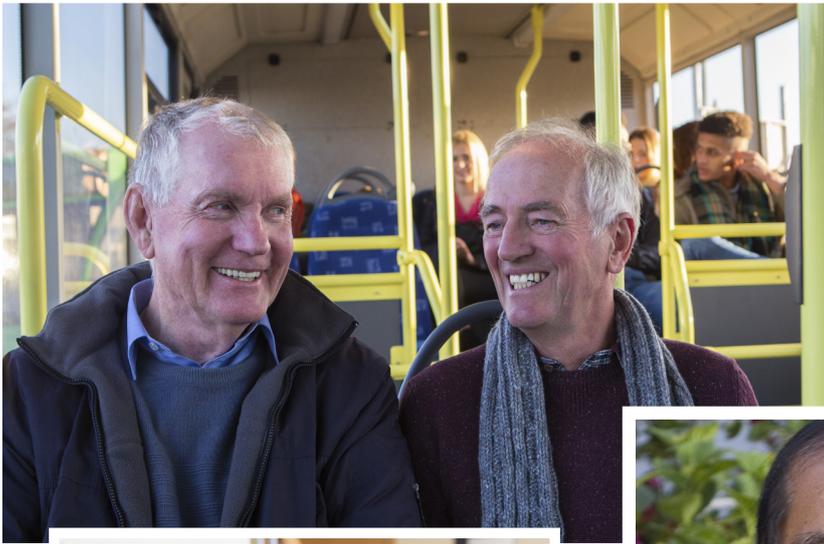
If you have changed your contact details recently, or have any questions, please let us know by filling in this quick form at [www.natcen.ac.uk/elsa-update](http://www.natcen.ac.uk/elsa-update), email us at [elsa@natcen.ac.uk](mailto:elsa@natcen.ac.uk) or call free on **0800 652 4574**.

# ELSA

## 50+ Health & Life

**NatCen**  
Social Research

[www.natcen.ac.uk/elsa50plus](http://www.natcen.ac.uk/elsa50plus)



### **About ELSA - 50+ Health & Life**

I would like to welcome you to this latest update from ELSA, the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing. The last wave of the study was a great success, with nearly 10,000 people taking part. We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who participated – and we do hope as many as possible will be able to take part again in future.

The information you give us helps us build a detailed picture of growing older in England. This evidence is used by policy makers in government, by charities and voluntary organisations, and by researchers, not only in this country, but throughout the world. The particular strength of ELSA is that we collect information from the same people over the years. This helps us understand how the experience of ageing changes over time. This makes ELSA very special.

#### **Professor Andrew Steptoe**

Principal Investigator, ELSA

Head of UCL Research Department of Epidemiology and Public Health

British Heart Foundation Professor of Psychology

## ELSA around the world

ELSA is part of an international network of studies tracking the experiences of people aged 50 and over around the world. Similar studies are taking place in America, Ireland, China, Korea, Mexico, Japan, Brazil, India and Costa Rica, and twenty other European countries.

There are regular meetings between the teams running the studies to discuss current findings and future developments. One challenge is designing questions or new elements that are useful for each country but that can also be compared internationally.

A comparison of the health of 55-64 year olds in England and the US found big differences. People in the US more likely to have experienced diabetes (12% in the US, 6% in England), high blood pressure (42% compared to 34%), heart disease (15% and 10%) and stroke (3% and 2%).

But when it comes to memory, Americans were ahead. A study found that people in the US aged 65 and over tended to have better memories than those in England. This might be because people in the US are more likely to take medication for high blood pressure than in England, which may reduce the development of memory problems.



### Percentage of population (aged 70-79) who have experienced...

	in the US	in the UK
Diabetes	12%	6%
High blood pressure	42%	34%
Heart disease	15%	10%
Stroke	3%	2%

## Intimacy in later life

Wave 6 of ELSA included a paper questionnaire on sexual experiences. This information was analysed by Dr David Lee, Research Fellow at the University of Manchester.

As might be expected, the data showed that people tend to become less sexually active as they get older – but there is still plenty going on. Among those aged 70 to 79, 59% of men and 34% of women reported that they were still sexually active. This fell to 31% of men and 14% of women, among those aged 80 and over. Dr Lee also found that people who rate their own health as ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ are more likely to think about sex frequently than people who rate their health as ‘fair’ or ‘poor’.

The findings caused quite a stir in the media and the results were covered by all the major national newspapers, including the Times, the Telegraph and the Mail.

Listen to David Lee talk about his findings at <https://wellcomecollection.org/media/8753>



## Benefits of an active social life

Retiring from work is a major life event, and often a positive one (no more early mornings!), but it can also pose significant challenges to our wellbeing. Data from ELSA have revealed that being sociable is important for ensuring a high quality of life after retirement.

During your Wave 6 interview, we asked you whether you were a member of any groups, like political parties, religious groups or social clubs. The results showed that most people do tend to get more sociable as they enter retirement.



## What participants say about ELSA

He was very professional, very friendly.... just a very sociable kind of guy. He put me at ease.

I find it an easy process, not too onerous, well-paced and doesn't take too much time.

It was first-class, like meeting an old friend. I've had the same interviewer for 5 or 6 visits now.

Which is good news. Further analysis showed that the more social groups a person is involved in, the healthier they are. Retirees who were members of more social groups had better physical health and also reported feeling more positive about life. Losing contact with social groups, on the other hand, can have a negative impact on wellbeing. To put it in numbers, breaking contact with a single social group accounted for a 10% drop in quality of life six years later.