The determinants and consequences of falling at older ages in England

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Why the focus on falls?

- Falls are common: 1 in 3 people aged 65+ experiences at least one fall each year in the UK.
- Older people who have suffered a fall experience an increased risk of recurrence and of being hospitalised.
- Falls can be prevented.
Age adjusted prevalence of falls in ELSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No fall</th>
<th>Fall, not severe</th>
<th>Fall severe</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Men**
| Wave 4 | 74.1    | 20.1             | 5.9        |
| Wave 8 | 73.4    | 18.9             | 7.6        |
| **Women**
| Wave 4 | 69.5    | 20.3             | 10.2       |
| Wave 8 | 68.5    | 20.1             | 11.4       |
Health professional follow-up for severe falls

No

Balance and/or strength test

Additional tests

Balance + Additional tests

% 100

Wave 4 Wave 8 Wave 4 Wave 8

Men

Women

74.7 81.4 76.9 78.1

11.5 6.2 15.2 13.2

6.5 2.6 2.9 3.1

7.2 6.2 4.9 5.6
Determinants of falls
Socio-economic and social risk factors associated with the risk of severe falls

**Increasing age**

![Graph showing increasing age risk]

**Loneliness**

- Not living with a partner
- Women

Photo by Changwoo Ryu
Socio-economic and social risk factors *NOT* associated with the risk of severe falls.
Health behaviour risk factors

High risk of experiencing a severe fall

Not associated with the risk of severe falls

Sedentary Behaviour

Smoking

Alcohol

BODY MASS INDEX

Normal 18.5-24.9
Overweight 25-29.9
Obese 30-39.9
Morbidly Obese > 40
Health factors associated with increased risk of severe falls

- Depression
- Stroke
- CHD
- Arthritis
- Slow walking speed
- Limitations with ADLs & IADLs
- Incontinence
Consequences of falling
Walking speed
Difficulties with ADLs

The graph shows the number of ADL difficulties over different waves. The x-axis represents the wave number, ranging from 4 to 8, while the y-axis represents the number of ADL difficulties, ranging from 0.2 to 0.8. There are two lines: one representing no severe fall (dashed line) and the other representing severe fall (solid line). The data points indicate an increasing trend in difficulties with wave number.
Physical activity

The graph shows the trend of physical activity score over different waves. The score decreases over time, with two lines indicating different outcomes: one for 'No severe fall' and another for 'Severe fall'. The 'No severe fall' line is represented by a dashed blue line, while the 'Severe fall' line is shown by a solid red line.
Cognitive functioning

![Graph showing memory score over waves for participants with no severe fall and severe fall.](image-url)
Wellbeing, Social capital & labour market exit

- Poor well-being and higher loneliness scores in people who experienced a severe fall.

- Similar trajectories over time in the group of people that had a severe fall and those who did not.

- We did not find strong evidence for labour market exit in people experiencing a severe fall.
Summary

- 8% of men and 10% of women in Wave 8 reported experiencing a severe fall

- Of these only 19% of men and 22% of women reported receiving medical follow-up to ascertain the cause of their fall

- Women have a higher risk of falls than men
Summary

• Consequences of a severe fall included reduced levels of cognitive function, physical function, walking speed and physical activity.

• Risk factors for severe falls included not living with a partner, loneliness, depressive symptoms, ADLs, urinary incontinence, slow walking speed, low levels of physical activity and multiple morbidity.
Conclusions

- NICE guidelines of multifactorial falls risk assessment are not being implemented widely

- Falls prevention programmes should be designed to take into account gender, chronic conditions, incontinence, depression and loneliness

- Improving cognitive function, walking speed, physical activity levels and physical functioning of people who experienced a severe fall should be a priority