

UPDATE 2004

First findings released

“ELSA data will be a crucial input to our understanding of pensions provision and retirement behaviour in Britain” Adair Turner CBE
Chairman, Pensions Commission

“Surveys that follow the same people over time are an invaluable national statistical resource and ELSA adds a new dimension to the UK evidence base” Len Cook
The National Statistician, Office for National Statistics

“I am delighted to see the launch of ELSA, which fills an important gap in our knowledge of how older people live their lives” Baroness Sally Greengross
Former Director General of Age Concern England,
Chair of ELSA Advisory Panel

“These data will be crucial to help us meet the health care needs of the older population” Lord Warner
Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Department of Health

Growing older in England today

Ask anyone about growing older in our society and they would have a view. By asking so many of you from all backgrounds about all kinds of topics we have been able to build up a picture of what life is really like for those aged 50 years and over in England today.

As the findings show, many of you reported having good to excellent health and did not have a long-term illness that limited your ability to do things. However, an important number of you experienced a variety of health problems.

The majority of you reported that your health was either excellent, very good or good, even amongst the oldest age group.

Percentages who reported their health as excellent, very good, good, fair or poor

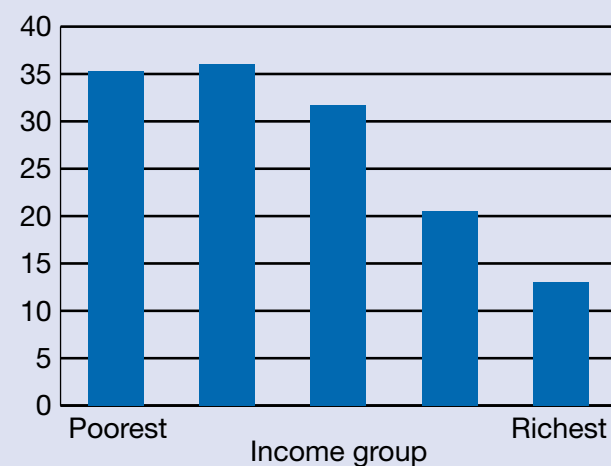


Physical health declines with age. Twenty-four percent of people aged between 50 and 55 years said that they had an illness that limited what they could do, compared with 53% of you aged over 80 years.

Mental health does not decline with age. People with the poorest mental health are likely to be in either the youngest or the oldest age groups.

But age is not the only factor. Those with low incomes, the poorest jobs or with the least education had the worst health.

Percentage in each income group who say they have poor health



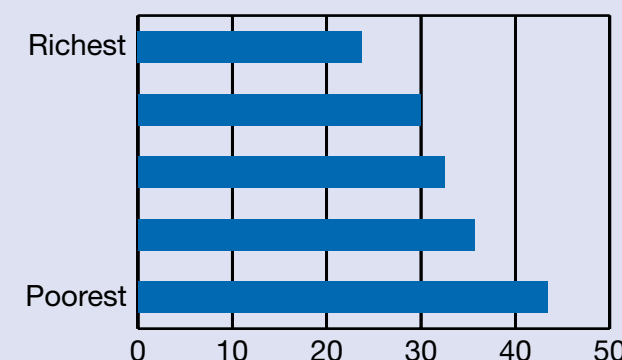
More and more often people are leaving work before state retirement age. For those of you who are below state pension age, only six out of every ten are in paid work.

Only 3 in 10 men who are working in their fifties are 100 per cent certain that they will still be working after age 60.

Those aged 65 and over have a monthly income which is two thirds of those aged under 65.

On average you thought that there was a three in ten chance that your future resources would not be enough to meet your needs. But these chances are lower for those with more wealth.

Chances that future resources will not be sufficient for future needs for each income group



- Half of you go to the cinema, opera or museums at least once a year. Almost all of you eat out of the house at least sometimes.
- Just over one in ten of you did some voluntary work last month and around nine per cent of you spent some of your time caring for someone last month.
- Nearly half of you have a computer in your household, and one third have access to the Internet.

What's next?

Exciting developments for the next round of the study, between April 2004 and early 2005, include:

- New questions about the quality of health care people receive.
- More on experiences of growing older and expectations and motivations.
- A visit by a qualified nurse and more physical tests like the walking speed test in the first interview.

More findings can be seen on the ELSA web site: <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/elsa>

