

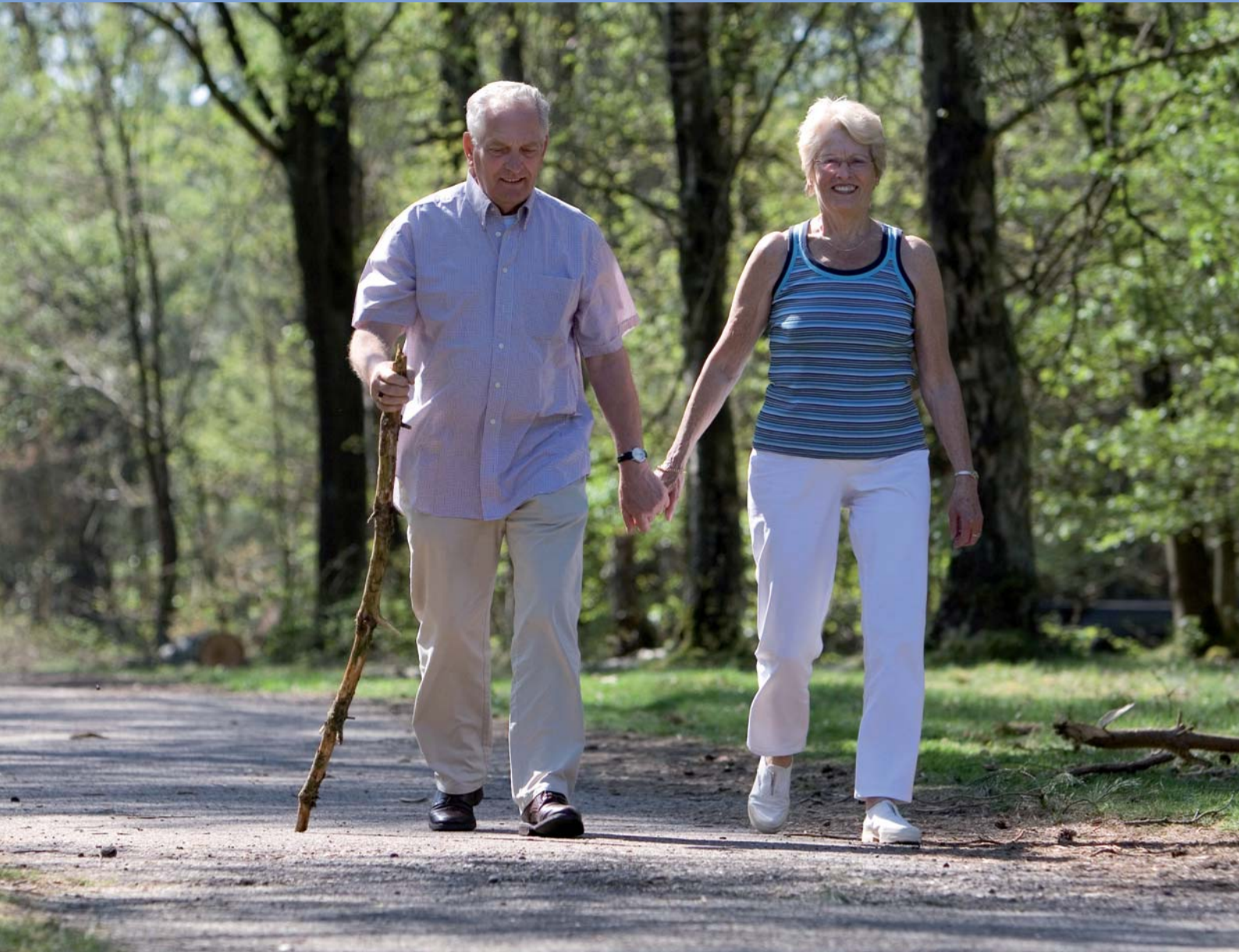
2010-2011

ELSA UPDATE

 NatCen
National Centre for Social Research

 UCL

 Institute for
Fiscal Studies



Welcome to the latest update from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA). We bring you news and a preview of the fascinating findings emerging from ELSA, which follows the health and lifestyles of people aged 50-plus and their partners.

The last wave of ELSA which ended in July 2009 was a great success. We would like to say a big thank you to all of you who took part. Approximately 11,000 people in the study were interviewed and many also had a visit from an ELSA nurse. We hope as many of you as possible will be able to continue to participate in the future. We are currently exploring some of the interesting findings from this latest wave and a report will be published around July 2010.

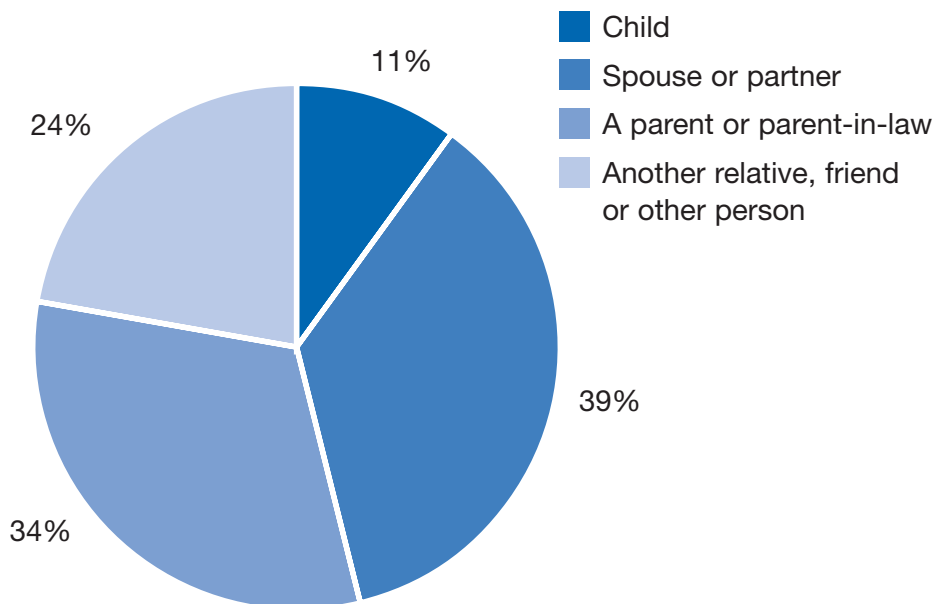
New findings from the study

In this newsletter we describe some of the highlights from the findings from ELSA's previous waves. These findings are from research carried out by researchers at the National Centre for Social Research, University College London and the Institute for Fiscal Studies.



Caring

As the UK population ages, older people are more likely to provide care for family members and friends. Findings from the second wave of ELSA (2004) have shown that 10% of people aged 50 and over were carers. Those who provided care were most likely to care for a spouse or partner (39%), whilst a third cared for their parents or parent-in-law (34%). A quarter reported caring for another relative or a friend (24%) and 11% of participants cared for children.



Volunteering is good for life satisfaction

Using ELSA data, researchers found that people who do voluntary work or some form of paid work, after retirement, reported a better quality of life. They also said they had more life satisfaction and were less likely to be depressed. However, the nature of the paid or voluntary work was an important factor as it was only those who felt their work was adequately rewarding reported this finding. Approximately 10-15% of ELSA members reported that they participate in paid or voluntary work after the state retirement age, with women more likely than men to be doing voluntary work.

Extending working lives

Researchers have found that employment at older ages has increased in recent years. Younger ELSA participants have higher employment rates at each age than their predecessors. Not only are they more likely to be in work in their 50s and early 60s, they're also more likely to expect to continue to work at older ages.

One policy change that would be expected to encourage more people to work beyond the age of 60 is the increase in the female State Pension Age from 60 to 65. Amongst those who will be affected, we found that not many people knew about this change. Those who were working in 2006 had a better knowledge of this change than those who were not working.

ELSA is a model study!

Researchers from the University College London ELSA team recently participated in an international meeting held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, organised by the Brazilian government.

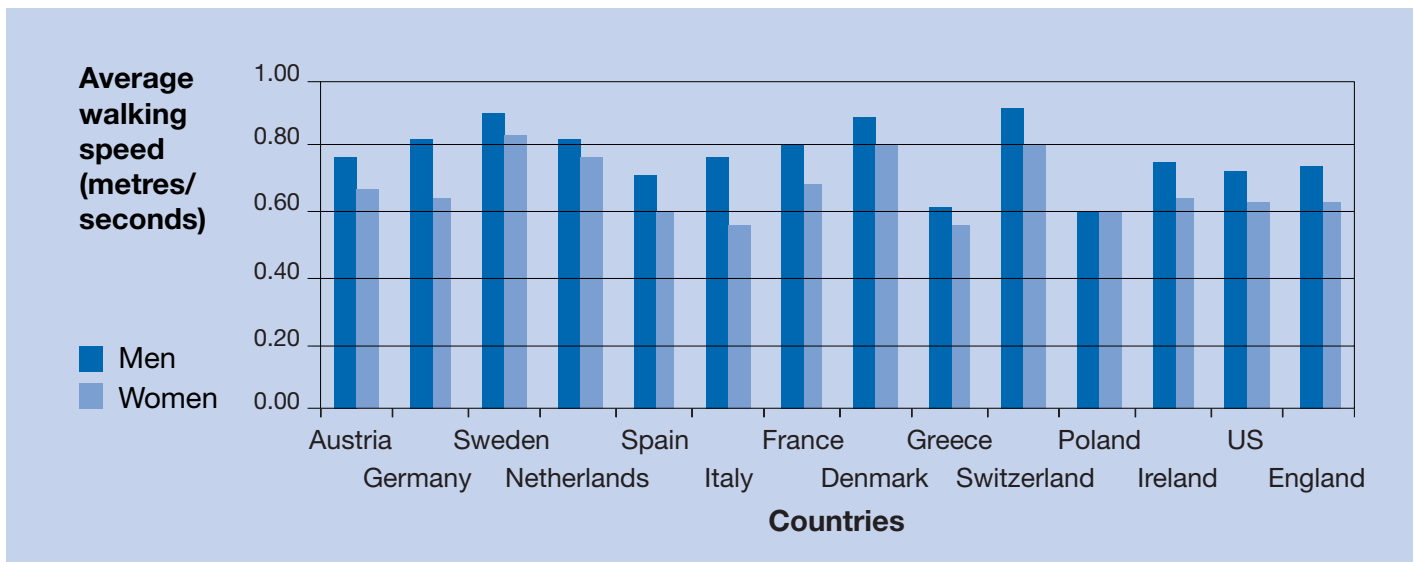


This initiative is an exciting and significant collaboration between ELSA researchers in the UK and researchers in South America. It highlights the international importance of ELSA within the global network of longitudinal ageing studies. ELSA is also compared to similar studies throughout the world, including Europe, China and the United States.

The aim of the meeting was to explore the possibility of starting a longitudinal ageing study in Brazil. ELSA was chosen by the Brazilian researchers as their preferred role model because of its high quality and innovative methods. The ELSA UK team will assist and advise the Brazilians in setting up their study.



Walking speed compared across countries



As an example of the international work that has been going on, information from ELSA was compared with information from other studies in the United States and from Europe.

Researchers compared the walking speed of respondents aged 75 and over from these different countries. Walking speed is useful as it can be an indicator of the risk of falling and declining mobility. Researchers found that:

- On average, men walk faster than women.
- In Italy, men and women have the biggest difference in their average walking speed.
- Only in Poland do men and women have the same average walking speed.
- Men in Switzerland have the fastest average walking speed (0.92 metres per second) and women in Sweden have the fastest average walking speed (0.84 metres per second).

Did you know?

- Since ELSA began, over 800 different research projects have used the data to look at a huge range of topics.
- ELSA continues to contribute to shaping national and international policy.
- The data you provide has been enormously well used and useful to government, researchers and voluntary organisations.
- ELSA has been funded for another five years by the UK Government funding departments and the United States National Institute on Aging. This is great news.

ELSA's fifth wave

Our interviewers will be visiting you again sometime between spring 2010 and summer 2011. We would like to include as many participants as we possibly can. This fifth wave will include an interview, but there will not be a nurse visit. An interviewer will be in touch with you soon to make an appointment. If you have any queries about what it means to be a participant, what is done with your data, or any other matter, please call our freephone number, 0800 652 4574.

What would you like to see in the next issue of the newsletter?

We hope you have enjoyed reading this issue of the newsletter and have found the articles interesting to read. If you have any ideas about what you would like us to include in the next issue of the newsletter, please contact us. We are very interested in hearing what you would like to know about and we will try to include your ideas whenever possible.

Meet the team



Ali Muriel is a Senior Research Economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies. He is part of the ELSA team that designs and analyses the questions which ask about your income and assets. His main research interest is the impact of people's health on their income (and vice versa!).



Andrew Steptoe is a Professor of Psychology and Deputy Head of the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London. He is responsible for the coordination of the funding for ELSA and for the study team at UCL. He uses data from ELSA to look at how behaviours like physical exercise and biological measures are related to health and well-being as we get older.



Nicholas Steel is a senior lecturer in primary care at the University of East Anglia and NHS public health consultant. He leads the development of questions about quality of health care. He uses ELSA data to see what sort of health care different respondents have received.



Elise Yarrow has taken over from Chris Shaw as the head of the team that looks after ELSA at the National Centre for Social Research offices at Brentwood. She answers the ELSA helpline, responds to queries from ELSA participants and looks after our interviewers and nurses.

Once again, thank you for taking part in ELSA. Please keep in touch!

We are very grateful for your continued participation in ELSA and we hope that you continue to welcome our interviewers when they visit. You are a valuable and irreplaceable member in the study and we would not want to lose you. Please let us know if you have recently changed your contact details or have any questions about the study. You can either call us on Freephone 0800 652 4574, or alternatively, you can write to us at ELSA study, King's House, 101-153 Kings Road, Brentwood, Essex, CM14 4LX or email us at elsa@natcen.ac.uk.