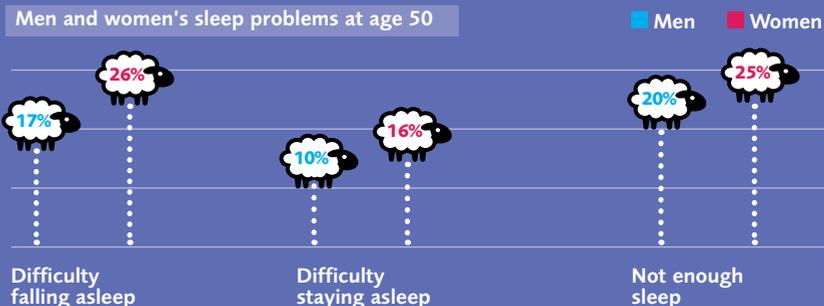


NATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY UPDATE 2013



SLEEP PROBLEMS AT AGE 50



NCDS IS IMPROVING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECT OUR SLEEP

Sleep deprivation is associated with high blood pressure and chronic disorders such as diabetes while too much sleep has also been shown to have adverse health outcomes. It is estimated that obstructive sleep apnoea alone costs the NHS over £430 million a year.

Growing interest in the impact of social influences (such as money worries) on sleep led researchers at the Centre for Longitudinal Studies to investigate the link between poor sleep at age 50 and a range of factors including gender, employment and housing, as well as financial circumstances.

WHAT WE ASKED YOU

In the age 50 survey in 2008, you completed a questionnaire that included four questions about the quality of your sleep over the previous four weeks. We asked you how many hours' sleep you had on average per night, how long it had usually taken you to fall asleep, how often you had woken up during the night and whether you had enough sleep to feel rested in the morning. Researchers compared this information with what you told us about other aspects of your lives.

MEN SLEEP BETTER THAN WOMEN

Significant differences were found between the sleep quality of men and women, with one in four women reporting they didn't get enough sleep, compared to one in five men. Twenty-six per cent of women found it difficult to get to sleep, compared to 17 per cent of men. Women were also more likely to wake up during the night and have trouble falling back to sleep.

Both men and women who were living with a partner reported sleeping better than those who were single.

ADEQUATE SLEEP IS LINKED TO BETTER OVERALL HEALTH

There was a very strong relationship between health and sleep, with more than a third of men and half of women who rated their health as 'poor' also reporting that their sleep was inadequate. Sleep problems were more common among smokers than non-smokers, and among those who didn't exercise regularly. One in two people with depression symptoms felt they rarely had enough sleep, compared to 17 per cent of men and 18 per cent of women without these symptoms.

Those of you who never drink were more likely to have troubled nights than heavy drinkers but moderate drinkers had least difficulty sleeping.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL TROUBLES ARE LINKED TO POORER SLEEP

The study also suggests that those in paid employment sleep better than those who are not. Just 8 per cent of men who were working had difficulty sleeping through the night, compared to 28 per cent of unemployed men. The association between sleep and employment was similar for women, with only 13 per cent of working women having trouble sleeping, compared to 29 per cent of those not working.

The results showed that 34 per cent of men and 46 per cent of women with financial difficulties had trouble falling asleep, compared to 13 per cent of men and 20 per cent of women who said they were 'living comfortably'.

HOME-OWNERS SLEEP BETTER THAN RENTERS

The type of housing you had at 50 was strongly associated with sleep quality. The highest rates of poor sleep were found among renters, rather than home-owners. Almost four in ten (37 per cent) women who rented felt they didn't get enough sleep, compared to 20 per cent of women with a mortgage and 21 per cent who owned their home outright. Similarly, 28 per cent of men renting reported inadequate sleep, in contrast to 20 per cent of those with a mortgage and 18 per cent of home-owners with no mortgage.

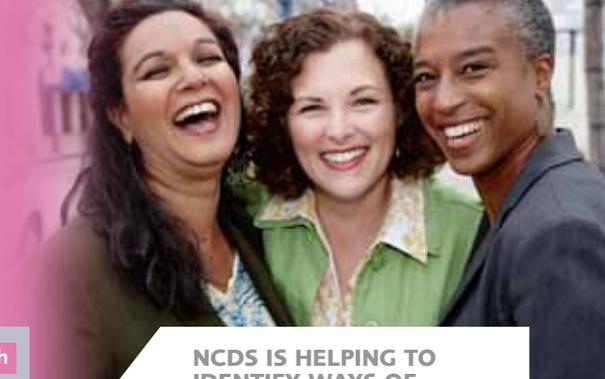
NCDS is one of the few large-scale social surveys to gather information on sleep patterns. Thanks to the unique information you have provided throughout your lives, NCDS is an invaluable source of information that will enable us to continue developing our understanding of sleep.

It is hoped that future research will examine the influence of family relationships and childrearing on troubled sleep, and look at the onset of sleep problems and their link to different life events.

'Prevalence and correlates of sleep problems at age 50: Initial results from the National Child Development Study' by Stella Chatzitheochari will be published by the CLS Working Paper series in February 2013.



MORE FRIENDS IMPROVES MENTAL WELLBEING



Having a wide circle of friends in middle age improves mental wellbeing for both men and women, according to a study based on information gathered by the NCDS.

Researchers at University College London found that the more friends you had the better your psychological wellbeing. Those with fewer than five close friends at age 45 generally had poorer wellbeing five years later than those with larger friendship networks, even when other potentially influential factors were taken into account. Levels of wellbeing were particularly poor among those with no close relatives or friends.

Researchers were surprised to find that women's wellbeing at age 50 was not, however, affected by the number of relatives they saw regularly. Men, on the other hand, were found to have significantly higher levels of wellbeing if they had contact with more than 10 relatives a month.

The study used information from NCDS to find out whether factors such as gender, education and employment have an effect on the size of an individual's social networks and levels of wellbeing.

WHAT WE ASKED YOU

When you were 45, we asked you how many friends and relatives outside of your household you saw once a month or more. Researchers then compared this information with what you told us about your psychological wellbeing at age 50, your employment status, the age you left full-time education and whether or not you were living with a partner.

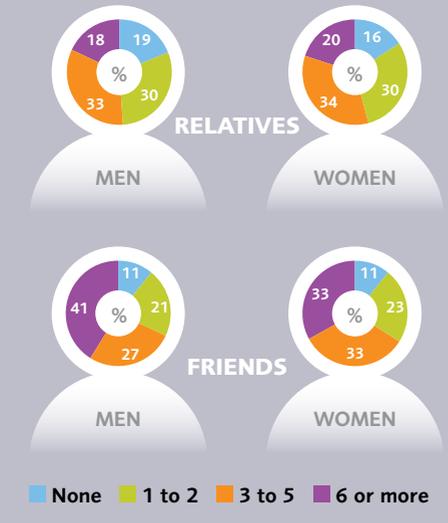
MOST OF YOU SEE YOUR FRIENDS MORE THAN YOUR FAMILY

Most of you (men and women) reported that you saw your friends more frequently than your family. Four in ten men and around one in three women said they had more than six friends whom they saw once a month or more. Eighteen per cent of men and 20 per cent of women saw more than six relatives every month.

Around one in seven of you said you had no contact with relatives outside your immediate households, and one in ten said they had no friends.



Number of people seen at least once a month



WOMEN WHO STAYED IN EDUCATION HAVE MORE CLOSE FRIENDS – BUT THE REVERSE IS TRUE FOR MEN

Education was the only factor found to affect the number of friends you saw regularly, but the results were very different for men and women. Staying in education beyond age 16 reduced the number of close friends men saw regularly. However, women were 38 per cent more likely to have larger friendship networks if they continued in full-time education past age 16, and 74 per cent more likely if they stayed on past age 20.

NCDS IS HELPING TO IDENTIFY WAYS OF IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE UK

This study confirms the link found in previous research between social relationships and wellbeing. It also reveals the importance of family networks to men in particular. The information you provided has enabled researchers to examine the factors that affect the size of social networks, and the findings could help to improve levels of wellbeing in society.

Women tend to suffer from poorer mental health than men. The link found between staying in education and having larger friendship networks therefore suggests that policies to support women into further education could help to improve their overall wellbeing and reduce the gender gap in mental health.

'Friends are equally important to men and women, but family matters more for men's wellbeing' by Noriko Cable, Mel Bartley, Tarani Chandola and Amanda Sacker was published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health in August 2012.

HOW YOUR LUNGS CAN BE AFFECTED BY A POOR START IN LIFE



**NCDS IS HELPING TO
SHOW HOW SOCIAL
INEQUALITIES IN
CHILDHOOD CAN AFFECT
ADULT HEALTH**

Financial hardship in childhood often leads to relatively poor respiratory health in middle age, research using the NCDS has shown.

Researchers at University College London and the University of Essex found a strong link between lung function in your mid-forties and your parents' financial circumstances when you were young children. Medical tests showed that those from the poorest backgrounds exhaled 6 per cent less air (0.2 litres), on average, than those brought up in better-off families.

HOW YOU HELPED US

When you were aged 44 to 46, many of you took part in a special biomedical survey that included a lung function test. A spirometer was used to measure the volume of air that you could blow out in one second. Those who could exhale more air were deemed to have healthier lungs.

Researchers then compared your lung function with four other factors. One was your family's housing conditions when you were a child, for example whether there was an indoor toilet, whether the property was rented and how many people shared your home.

The other factors considered were: your qualifications, your occupation, and whether you had smoked in adulthood. The research included information collected when you were born, and at ages 7, 11 and 42.

POOR HOUSING IN CHILDHOOD IS LINKED TO WEAKER ADULT LUNGS

The researchers found that poor housing conditions appear to provide the strongest link between childhood disadvantage and adult lung function. This may be explained by the increased risk of exposure to damp and to infections.

CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY CAN LEAD TO HEAVY SMOKING AS AN ADULT

Fifteen per cent of the relationship between childhood adversity and adult lung function had to do with people's smoking habits. The most socially disadvantaged in childhood were nearly twice as likely to be heavy smokers by age 42 as those who had experienced no hardship. In the lung function test, heavy smokers exhaled, on average, 12% less air (almost 0.4 litres) than those who had never smoked.



IN 1965 WHEN YOU WERE AGED 7:

4 in 10 lived in council rented property

7% lived in homes with no hot water

15% lived in homes with no indoor toilet

over 4 in 10 lived in 'overcrowded' homes (defined as more than one person per room)

IN 1969 WHEN YOU WERE AGED 11:

almost 1 in 5 shared your bed with someone else

This NCDS-based study by the Universities of London and Essex could have an important impact on public health by pinpointing some of the childhood factors that are linked to poor lung function in adult life. Its findings suggest that lung function could be improved by reducing children's exposure to unhealthy living conditions and weakening the links between early life experiences and smoking.

'Early life financial adversity and respiratory function in midlife: A prospective Birth Cohort Study' by Mel Bartley, Yvonne Kelly and Amanda Sacker was published in the American Journal of Epidemiology in December 2011.



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KEEPING IN TOUCH

If you change your address or phone number, please let us know so that we can contact you in the future.

You can tell us by:

- Calling us free (from a UK landline) on 0500 600 616
- Emailing us at ncds@ioe.ac.uk
- Completing the contact form on the study website: www.ncds.info
- Or writing to us at National Child Development Study, FREEPOST KE7770, London WC1H 0BR