

Men in Northern Ireland: Report 10 June 2014

Paula Devine, ARK

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www.ark.ac.uk

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www.ark.ac.uk/ageing

This factsheet was produced to inform 2014 Men's Health Week:

www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2014.html

Older men: health and wellbeing

Key facts

- The proportion of men reporting 'good' or 'very good' general health decreased with age: 91% for 16-24 year olds, and 46% for men aged 75 years or over.
- Incidence rates for some diseases are highest among older men, such as prostate, bladder and bowel cancer.
- Since screening for Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm among men aged 65 began in 2012, 16,500 men have taken part.
- Older men were most likely among all age groups of men to think that they lead a healthy life.
- 14% of men aged 65 or over provide unpaid care.
- 90% of men aged 75 or over expressed satisfaction with their lives.

Introduction

The population of Northern Ireland is becoming increasingly older, which is partly due to a fall in the number of births, as well as people living longer. This factsheet outlines key statistics relating to the health and wellbeing of older men. In general, these figures will relate to men aged 65 years or older. However, different age groups may be used for specific topics. For demographic information on older men (for example, life expectancy), see Report 9 in this series.

General health

The 2012/13 Health Survey Northern Ireland interviewed 4,294 adults across Northern Ireland, and provides a useful source of information on health and wellbeing. The proportion of men saying that their general health was 'good' or 'very good' decreased by age. For example, 91% of men aged 16-24 years said this, compared with 60% of those aged 65-74 and 46% of those aged 75 years or older. One in eight men aged 65-74 years (13%) said their general health was 'bad' or 'very bad', as did 15% of men aged 75 years or more. Around two thirds of men aged 65 or over thought that their health was the same as a year ago, one in ten thought it was better, but one quarter felt it was worse.

The survey data indicated that men and women aged 65 years or over were equally likely to report a longstanding illness (that is, something that has troubled them over a period of time or is likely to affect them over a period of time): around six out of ten (59%) of those aged 65-74 years, and around seven out of ten (68%) of those aged 75 years or over. At least four out of ten men reporting a longstanding illness felt that it reduced their ability to carry out day to day activities 'a lot' (40% for men aged 65-74 years, and 47% for men aged 75 or over), whilst 30% for each age group said that affected them 'a little'.

Lifestyle

The Health Survey also provides useful information on lifestyle. In 2012/13, most men (85%) thought that they lead a 'very' (16%) or 'fairly' (69%) healthy life, and this was highest among older men. For example, only 6% of men aged 75 years or over said that they lived an unhealthy life, compared with 18% of the youngest age group (16-24 years). Overall, nearly nine out of ten men thought that they could have 'a great deal' (53%) or 'quite a lot' (36%) of influence on their own health by the way they choose to live their life. However, even though older men were most likely to say that they lived a healthy life, they were least likely to say that their lifestyle could influence their health 'a great deal': 34% of men aged 75 years or more said this compared with 63% of men aged 25-34 years.

Nearly three out of five men (57%) have smoked at some point in their lives, and this figure rises with age. Thus, 62% of men aged 65-74 years and 68% of men aged 75 years or over have smoked now or in the past. However, rates of smoking *now* are lowest among older men: 15% for those aged 65-74 years and 11% for those aged 75 years or over, compared with 32% for men aged 25-34 years.

Four out five men taking part in the 2012/13 survey stated that they drank alcohol, 7% used to drink alcohol, whilst 11% had never done this. The highest proportion of men that drink alcohol was among those aged 25-34 (91%). This declined with age, to 73% for those aged 65-74 years, and 65% of those aged 75 and over. Over one in five (22%) men in this oldest age group said that they had never drunk alcohol.

Diet and weight

In the Health Survey 2011/12, one in five men (26%) said that they ate 5 or more portions of fruit or vegetables per day. In general, there was little variation across the age groups. For example, the figure for men aged 65-74 years was 30%, and 28% for those aged 75 years or over. The exception was for men aged 16-24, for whom, the figure was 18%.

BMI scores calculated using data from the same survey suggest that around four in ten (42%) men were overweight, and a further 25% were obese. Among men aged 65-74 years, 46% of were overweight, and 28% were obese. This means that three quarters (74%) of men in that age group have BMI scores that are higher than recommended, and the figures for men aged 75 years or over were similar. In contrast, 24% of men aged 16-24 were overweight or obese.

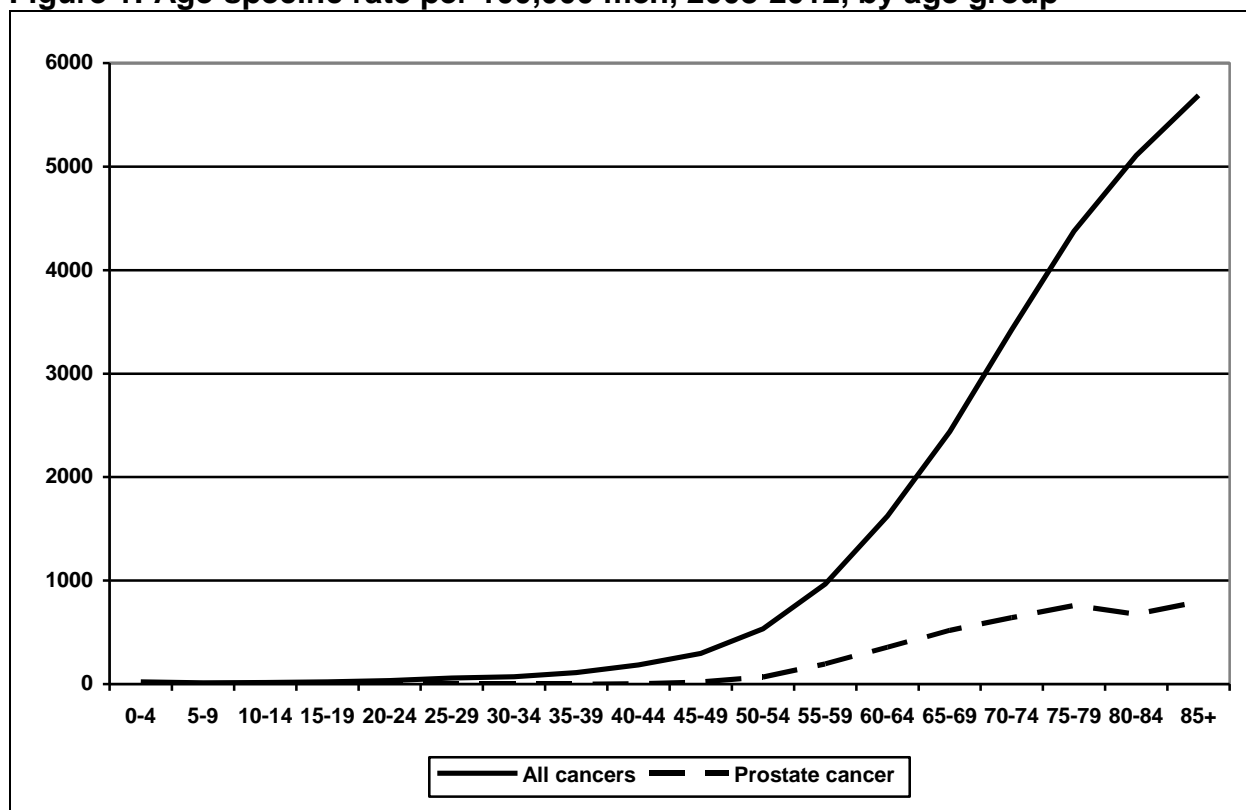
Contact with doctor

Analysis of data from the 2010/11 Health Survey showed that females were generally more likely to have spoken to a doctor (excluding hospital visits) in the previous 14 days than males: 19% and 14% respectively. However, for the 75 and over age group, there was little difference between males (25.3%) and females (25.2%).

Age-related diseases

The incidence rate of some diseases is strongly related to age. Statistics from the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry show that for all cancers, the age-specific incidence rate per 100,000 men in Northern Ireland (2008-2012) is 33.3 for men aged 20-24 years, 184.5 for men aged 40-44 years, 1,624.2 for men aged 60-64 years and 5,108.9 for men aged 80-84 years – see Figure 1. One specific cancer which has a strong association with older men is prostate cancer. On average, between 2008 and 2012, less than 2% of diagnoses of prostate cancer were made among men aged less than 50 years, whilst 85% of diagnoses were among men aged 60 years or over. Bladder cancer and bowel cancer are also strongly associated with older age.

Figure 1: Age-specific rate per 100,000 men, 2008-2012, by age group



Another issue related to older men is Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA), which is a widening of the main artery in the body as it passes through the abdomen. The walls of the artery weaken, causing it to balloon out, and perhaps rupture if not treated. The main risk factors for AAA are age and being male: 95% of ruptured AAAs occur in men aged 65 years and over, and deaths from this account for 2% of all deaths in men of this age group. It is estimated that 1 in 40 men aged 65 in Northern Ireland have an AAA, although there may be no symptoms. The Northern Ireland Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening Programme began in June 2012 and offers AAA screening to all men in their 65th year. Since the programme began, 16,500 men have been scanned, representing an uptake rate of over 80%. In the first year, 94 AAAs were found, which represents a prevalence rate of 1.4%. In nine out of ten of these cases, the AAA is small or medium sized, and is placed under surveillance. A further ten cases involved larger AAAs, and these men were referred for specialist advice and treatment.

Mental health

The Health Survey Northern Ireland 2011/12 included the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ), which is designed to detect the possibility of psychiatric distress in the general population. A score is calculated from the responses to 12 questions, and a score of 4 or more suggests a possible psychiatric disorder. One in eight men aged 65-74 years (13%) fell into this category, as did 17% of those aged 75 years or more. In general women were more likely to show signs of a possible mental health problem, although the reverse is true among people aged 75 or older: 14% for women and 17% for men. For both men and women, the 45-54 age category had the highest proportion with possible psychiatric distress.

Unpaid care

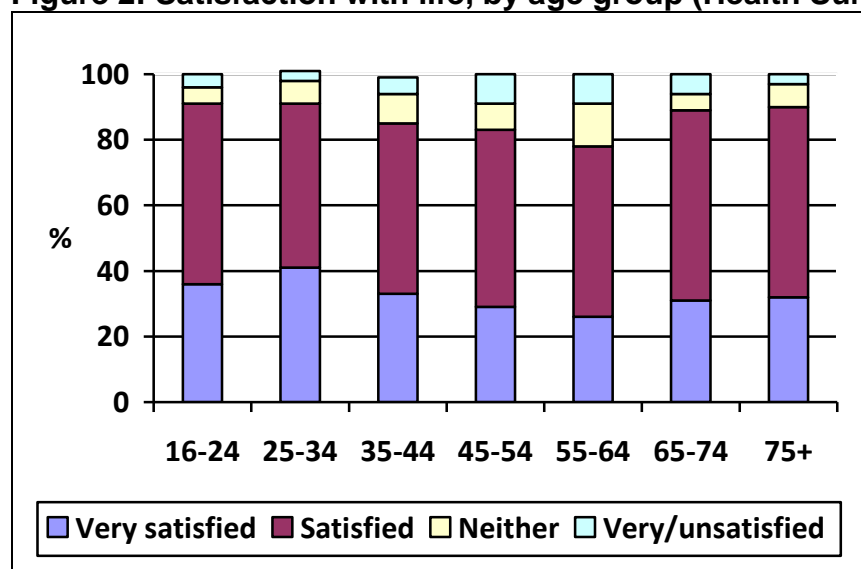
Within the 2011 Census of Population, a question was asked on the provision of unpaid care, that is, any unpaid help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental ill-health, or due to old age. Approximately one in eight men

(14%) reported that they provided some type of unpaid care, including 14.% of those aged 70 to 74 years and 8% of those aged 90 years or more. Around four out of ten male carers aged 65 years or over (38%) provided less than 20 hours of unpaid care per week, whilst nearly one half (47%) of them did so for 50 hours per week or more. Whilst the proportion of the oldest men who provided care is lower than among other age groups, their intensity of providing such care was higher: six out of ten of these oldest carers were providing care for at least 50 hours per week.

Life satisfaction

Within the Health Survey 2012/13, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their life, and the majority of men across all ages were generally satisfied. However, Figure 2 shows some patterns according to age. In particular, men aged 55-64 years were least likely to express satisfaction with their lives: 78% said they were very satisfied or satisfied, compared with 90% of those aged 75 years or over.

Figure 2: Satisfaction with life, by age group (Health Survey 2012/3)



References

NISRA (2013) Estimates of the population aged 85 and over, Northern Ireland 2012 (& revised 2001-2011) – Statistical Report

www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/population/OldestOld/85_Report0112.pdf

OFMDFM (2013) Profile of Older People in Northern Ireland - 2013 update www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/a-profile-of-older-people-2013-update.pdf

Useful sources of information

www.nisra.gov.uk/Census.html The 2011 Census of Population in Northern Ireland took place on Sunday 27 March 2011. The Census website contains information, publications and statistical reports.

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-public-health.htm The Health Survey Northern Ireland asks questions on a range of health topics. The survey runs on a continuous basis with separate modules for different policy areas included in different years.

www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/nicr/ The Northern Ireland Cancer Registry is the official producer of cancer incidence and survival statistics. Online resources include statistics and a cancer e-atlas.