Sexual Function problems in UK – Prevalence Data from Natsal-3

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Natsal-3 is a collaboration between:

[Logos of collaborating organizations]

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[Logos of funding organizations]

With additional funding from:
Outline of presentation

- Measuring sexual function in national surveys
- The Natsal surveys: history and methodology
- Changes in sexual behavior in UK over 2 decades
- Prevalence data
  - Sexual function
  - Sexual function problems
  - Help seeking
## Natsal methodology:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Natsal-1</th>
<th>Natsal-2</th>
<th>Natsal-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age range</strong></td>
<td>16-59</td>
<td>16-44</td>
<td>16-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample size</strong></td>
<td>18,876</td>
<td>12,110</td>
<td>15,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Over-sampling</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>London BME</td>
<td>Ages 16-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data collection method</strong></td>
<td>Paper (PAPI)</td>
<td>Computer (CAPI/CASI)</td>
<td>Computer (CAPI/CASI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biological sampling</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Urine</td>
<td>Urine &amp; saliva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall response</strong></td>
<td>67.4%</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>among 16-44</em></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Change over time in behaviour: Men

- 10+ partners, lifetime: No change
- 2+ partners, past yr: No change
- Paid for sex, past 5 yrs: No change
- New partners from outside UK, past 5 years: No change
- New partner(s), past yr: No change
- 'Unsafe sex', past yr: No change
- Same-sex:
  - experience, ever: No change
  - sex, ever: No change
  - sex partners, past 5 yrs: No change

Colors represent:
- 1990
- 2000
- 2010

%
Change over time in behaviour: Women

- 10+ partners, lifetime
- 2+ partners, past yr
- Paid for sex, past 5 yrs
- New partners from outside UK, past 5 years
- New partner(s), past yr
- 'Unsafe sex', past yr
- Same-sex:
  - experience, ever
  - sex, ever
  - sex partners, past 5 yrs

Change over time:
- Women
- Same-sex: experience, ever
- 10+ partners, lifetime
- Paid for sex, past 5 yrs
- New partner(s), past yr
- 'Unsafe sex', past yr
- New partners from outside UK, past 5 years

Categories:
- 1990
- 2000
- 2010

Graph showing changes in behaviors over time.
Change over time in frequency of sex

Among sexually active men & women (reported sex in the past year)
1. Recent changes in behaviour have been considerably more marked among women than men.

2. Sexual repertoire has broadened; increase in oral and anal sex, and among women, in prevalence of same sex sex.

3. We have sex less often than before

4. Greater acceptance of more diverse sexual lifestyles, but greater disapproval of non-exclusivity
50 shades of greyer

The Sun 26th Nov. 2013

Less sex please, we’re too busy on the web

The Times 26th Nov. 2013
Sexual function
WHAT?

“a clinically significant disturbance in a person’s ability to respond sexually or to experience sexual pleasure.”

American Psychiatric Association DSM V (2013)

“the extent to which an individual is able to participate in and enjoy a sexual relationship”

Development work for Natsal-3
HOW?

Natsal-2
- Limited questions on sexual function problems

Literature review
- Sexual problems measured separately from other aspects of function
- No measure for population surveys

Development work
- What does having a functional sex life mean to YOU?

Conceptual Model

Natsal-SF
8 COMMON PROBLEMS WITH SEXUAL RESPONSE

- Lacked interest in having sex
- Lacked enjoyment in sex
- Felt anxious during sex
- Felt physical pain as a result of sex
- Felt no excitement or arousal during sex
- Did not reach a climax or took a long time to reach a climax
- Reached a climax more quickly than you would like
- Had trouble getting or keeping an erection (men)
- Had an uncomfortably dry vagina (women)

RELATIONSHIP FUNCTION

- My partner and I share about the same level of interest in having sex
- My partner and I share the same sexual likes and dislikes
- My partner has experienced sexual difficulties in the last year
- I feel emotionally close to my partner when we have sex together

APPRAISAL OF SEX LIFE

- I feel satisfied with my sex life
- I feel distressed or worried about my sex life
- I have avoided sex because of sexual difficulties
- Have you sought help or advice regarding your sex life?
Distribution of sexual function scores for men and women.
Low sexual function by age group (SF score below the lowest quintile cut off): women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Low SF (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
% with low sexual function (SF score below the lowest quintile cut off): men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>% with Low SF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Low sexual function, socio-demographics and health

- **Low sexual function associated with:**
  - Increasing age
  - Depression (OR 3.7 for men and 4.1 for women)
  - Poor health (OR 2.6 and 2.4)
  - Unemployment (OR 1.6 and 1.2)

- **Low sexual function NOT associated with:**
  - Area deprivation
## Low sexual function and relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship status at interview</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living together</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a non-cohabiting relationship</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previously in a relationship but not now</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married/lived with someone</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always find it easy to talk about sex with partners</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Else</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happy with relationship</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Else</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p*<0.0001 in all cases
# Sexual function and sexual behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual competence at first intercourse</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not competent</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 or more sexual acts, past 4 weeks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genital contact without intercourse, past 4 weeks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P < 0.0001 for all associations
## Sexual function and sexual health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Same sex partners, past 5 years</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1·00</td>
<td>1·00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2·28</td>
<td>1·60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of sexual partners, lifetime</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1·00</td>
<td>1·00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1·64</td>
<td>1·34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>1·19</td>
<td>1·39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>1·35</td>
<td>1·60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>1·35</td>
<td>2·12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experienced non-volitional sex, ever</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1·00</td>
<td>1·00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1·98</td>
<td>2·18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STI diagnosis, past 5 years</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1·00</td>
<td>1·00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1·50</td>
<td>1·83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0·001 for men except number of sexual partners (p=0·0971), experienced non-volitional sex (p=0·0158), and STI diagnosis (p=0·0206)*
Problems lasting 3 months or more in the last year
Sexually active individuals

- **Men**
  - Lacked interest in having sex: 14.9%
  - Reached climax too quickly: 14.9%
  - Difficulty getting/keeping an erection: 12.9%

- **Women**
  - Lacked interest in having sex: 34.2%
  - Difficultly in reaching climax: 16.3%
  - Uncomfortably dry vagina: 13.0%
  - Lacked enjoyment in sex: 12.1%
Problems by age: Women

- Lacked interest
- Difficulty climaxing
- Physical pain
- Anxious
- Vaginal Dryness
- No arousal
- Climax too quickly
Prevalence of problem by age: Men

- Climax too quickly
- Lacked Interest
- Difficulty climax
- Erection difficulties
- Felt anxious
- No arousal
- Physical Pain

Graph showing the prevalence of various sexual dysfunctions by age group.
Prevalence of severe problems: Men

- Lacked Interest in sex
- Difficulty getting erection
- Difficulty reaching climax
- Climax too quickly

Problem for 3 months or more
Problem meets DSM-5 morbidity criteria
Prevalence of severe problems: Women

- Lacked interest/arousal
- Difficulty reaching climax
- Painful sex

- Problem for three months or more
- Problems meeting DSM-5 morbidity criteria
## Overlap of severe problems: men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lacked interest</th>
<th>Erection difficulty</th>
<th>Difficulty reaching climax</th>
<th>Climax too soon</th>
<th>ANY in table (in parentheses)</th>
<th>DMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lacked interest</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.4% (5.2-26.8)</td>
<td>15.5% (6.3-33.3)</td>
<td>17.4% (7.4-35.7)</td>
<td>35.9% (20.6-54.7)</td>
<td>37,46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Erection difficulty</strong></td>
<td>5.4% (2.3-11.9)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.8% (5.4-20.3)</td>
<td>3.0% (1.0-8.5)</td>
<td>16.5% (9.9-26.2)</td>
<td>82,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulty reaching climax</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22,30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Climax too soon</strong></td>
<td>7.9% (3.3–17.4)</td>
<td>3.2% (1.1–8.9)</td>
<td>1.5% (0.2–10.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.0% (5.6–20.6)</td>
<td>82,103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Numbers too small to permit analysis
## Overlap of severe problems: women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lacked interest/arousal</th>
<th>Difficulty reaching climax</th>
<th>Pain</th>
<th>ANY of these</th>
<th>Dmntr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lacked interest/arousal</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>57.8% (40.1–73.6)</td>
<td>33.4% (18.6–52.4)</td>
<td>71.6% (54.4–84.2)</td>
<td>42, 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulty reaching climax</strong></td>
<td>18.1% (11.5–27.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14.1% (8.6–22.2)</td>
<td>26.1% (18.2–35.9)</td>
<td>145, 109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pain</strong></td>
<td>10.7% (5.8–18.7)</td>
<td>14.3% (8.7–22.7)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18.8% (12.2–27.8)</td>
<td>119, 107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Proportion of those with severe problems seeking help

- Lacked interest in having sex (men: unw 37; w 46)
- Trouble getting or keeping an erection (men: unw 82; w 108)
- Difficulty reaching climax (men: unw 22; w 30)
- Reached climax more quickly than you would like (men: unw 82; w 103)
- Experienced one or more of these problems (men: unw 194, w 253)
- Lacked interest and arousal (women: unw 42; w 34)
- Difficulty reaching climax (women: unw 145; w 109)
- Felt physical pain as a result of sex (women: unw 119; w 107)
- Experienced one or more of these problems (women: unw 259; w 210)
Sexual function in relationship context

MEN

- No shared interest level in sex
- Not same sexual likes and dislikes
- Partner has had sexual difficulties
- No emotional closeness during sex
- No shared interest level in sex
- Not same sexual likes and dislikes
- Partner has had sexual difficulties
- No emotional closeness during sex

WOMEN

- No shared interest level in sex
- Not same sexual likes and dislikes
- Partner has had sexual difficulties
- No emotional closeness during sex

Age categories:
- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
Distress and dissatisfaction

Had sex in past year | No sex in past year
---|---
Dissatisfied with sex life | 15% | 32%
Distressed or worried about sex life | 10% | 15%
Avoided sex because of sexual difficulties | 11% | 21%

Had sex in past year | No sex in past year
---|---
Dissatisfied with sex life | 12% | 22%
Distressed or worried about sex life | 11% | 10%
Avoided sex because of sexual difficulties | 13% | 17%
Natsal articles on sexual function


