

# Longer marriages make for stronger couples ... literally

By Sarah Knapton SCIENCE EDITOR

GROWING old together in a happy marriage makes couples stronger ... quite literally, a study has shown.

Men and women over 60 were found to be more physically capable than their unmarried, widowed or cohabiting peers, according to UCL.

On average, British men who were in their first marriage had a 0.73kg stronger grip than men who were widowed or never married.

In England, married men walked 3.1 inches (8cm) per second faster than widowers and 4.3 inches (11cm) faster than singletons, a sign of good health. Married women also walked up to 3.1 inches quicker than singles.

Dr Natasha Wood, the lead author of the study, said: "We know from previous research that married people live longer and report better physical and mental health, but there is limited evi-

dence on the association between marriage and physical capability.

"Much of the advantage that married people have is because they are, on average, wealthier than those who are not married and greater wealth has been linked with better physical capability."

The study, published in *PLOS ONE* journal, measured the grip strength and walking speed of more than 20,000 over-60s from England and the United States.

The majority of differences between married and unmarried people disappeared once the researchers had accounted for wealth, suggesting that combining finances had a protective impact on health.

Dr Wood added: "Given that more people are entering old-age unmarried, these results could mean that in the future more people can expect to experience difficulties with everyday activities at older ages."

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