Keeping Warm in Winter

Contributed by MORI
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Compatative survey of attitudes and behaviour among older people in the UK and Sweden

"Help the Aged in partnership with British Gas are currently campaigning to reduce winter deaths among old people in the UK. Rates of winter deaths among elderly people have been shown to be higher in the UK than in other European nations with similar climates. According to the Office for National Statistics, 31,600 older people in England and Wales died of preventable, cold-related illnesses last year. The year before, the comparable figure was around 21,500 deaths."

"Previous research has shown that excess winter deaths are caused by a combination of low incomes and poor housing conditions, as well as attitudes and behaviours with regard to keeping warm in winter."

In order to explore whether, and to what extent, attitudes and behaviours may explain excess winter deaths in the UK, British Gas and Help the Aged commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct comparative survey research among older people in the UK and Sweden.

The research points to the fact that older people in the UK are more worried about fuel bills compared to income, despite higher fuel prices in Sweden.

Other key differences between the UK and Sweden were:

More than a third of the UK's 9.6 million over 65's are dreading the cold this winter. (34 per cent compared to 20 per cent)
UK pensioners are four times more likely to avoid heating rooms like their bedroom, bathroom or living room. (20 per cent against five per cent)
A third of UK pensioners are worried about being able to afford their fuel bills this winter. (34 per cent against eight per cent)
Over half of UK pensioners wear extra layers of clothes at home to keep warm, compared to only a quarter in Sweden (53 per cent against 26 per cent)
Nearly twice as many people in the UK worry about getting out and about in winter. (37 per cent against 20 per cent)

For further information on the survey and on Help the Aged's campaign, please visit: www.helptheaged.org.uk/en-gb/Campaigns/News/news_winterd_071106.htm

Technical details

Telephone interviews were conducted among people aged 65 and over in the UK and Sweden using random digit dialling (RDD). 1,245 interviews were conducted in the UK and 1,000 were conducted in Sweden . The larger sample size in the UK was designed to allow for analysis at the Government Office Region level. All interviews were conducted between 18th September and 3rd October 2006.