

In-patient admissions, 1848-59: Sex and age analysis

Introduction

This paper examines the sex and age of in-patients admitted to Dorset County Hospital from 1848 to 1859. These are the earliest complete years for which admission records exist.

Data source

The data for this analysis comes from two volumes of in-patient admissions for Dorset County Hospital held at the Dorset History Centre. It should be noted that the registers record the number of *admissions*, not the number of *patients*. These volumes provide 3,648 valid entries:

- Volume 1 (reference NG/HH/DO(C)/5/2/1) records 3,536 admissions during the period January 1848 to August 1859. Of these, 3,523 entries are included in this analysis – 13 have been excluded because:
 - 3 were crossed out being apparently duplicate entries
 - 8 were crossed out for unknown reasons
 - 2 entries consisted of the surname only with no other data
- Volume 2 (reference NG/HH/DO(C)/5/2/2) records 125 admissions during the period August 1859 to December 1859. No entries have been excluded.

Sex

The patients' sex is not given in the registers, and has had to be assigned for the purpose of this analysis. The assignment of sex has been based on the forenames (where given in full) and occupations (e.g. "plough boy", "sempstress", etc.). Individuals with the forenames in initial form only have been assigned sex based solely on their occupation. Those with the forename initials "M. A." are assumed to have been christened "Mary Ann(e)" and have been assigned as female.

Of the 3,648 valid entries, 2,130 are for males and 1,515 are for females. There are 3 entries where it has not been possible to determine the sex.

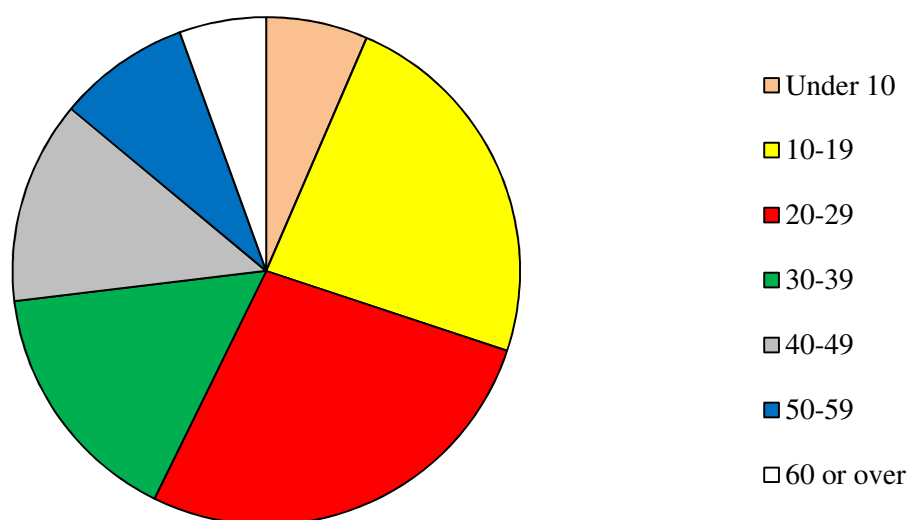
Sex >	Male	Female	Unknown	Total
Number	2,130	1,515	3	3,648
Percentage	58.4	41.5	0.1	100.0

Age

The admission registers give the age of the patients in the vast majority of cases. There were 4 cases where the age was not given in the register, but it has been determined from other sources (3 from burial registers and 1 from an article in the *British Medical Journal*).

Age >	Under 10	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 & over	Unknown	Total
Number	225	820	943	550	449	293	192	176	3,648
Percentage	6.2	22.5	25.8	15.1	12.3	8.0	5.3	4.8	100.0

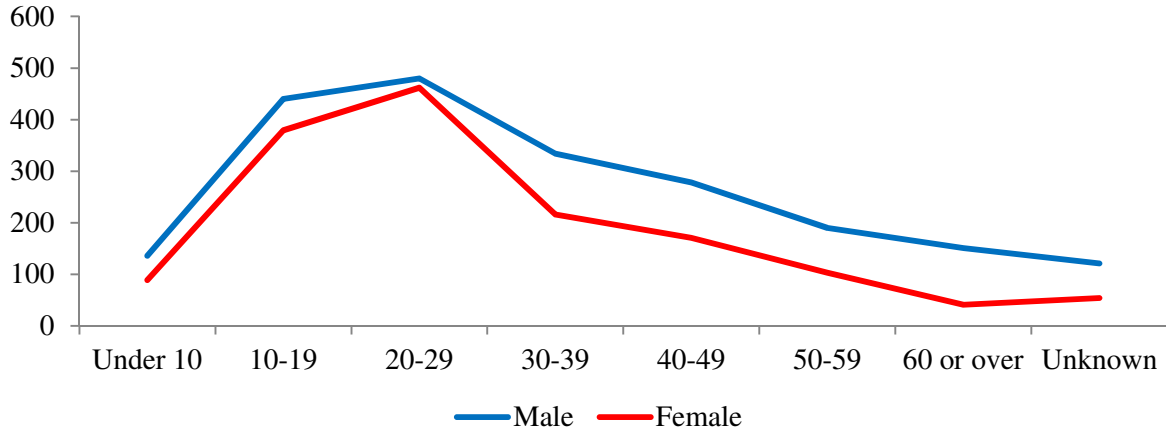
The two largest age groups were 10-19 and 20-29. The two smallest groups were the very young and the old.



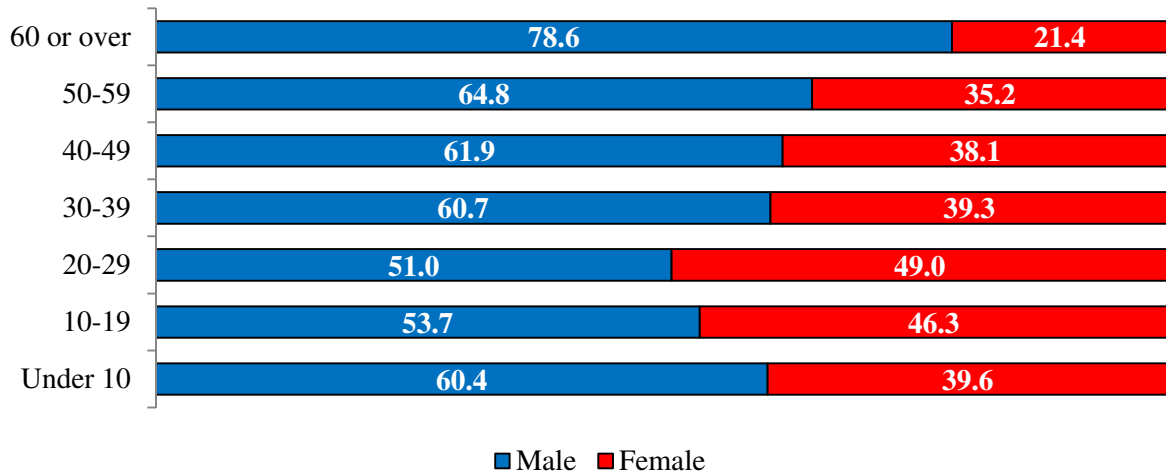
Age and sex

The distribution of the age groups across each of the two sexes was very similar. There was only one admission where neither the age nor the sex of the patient could be determined.

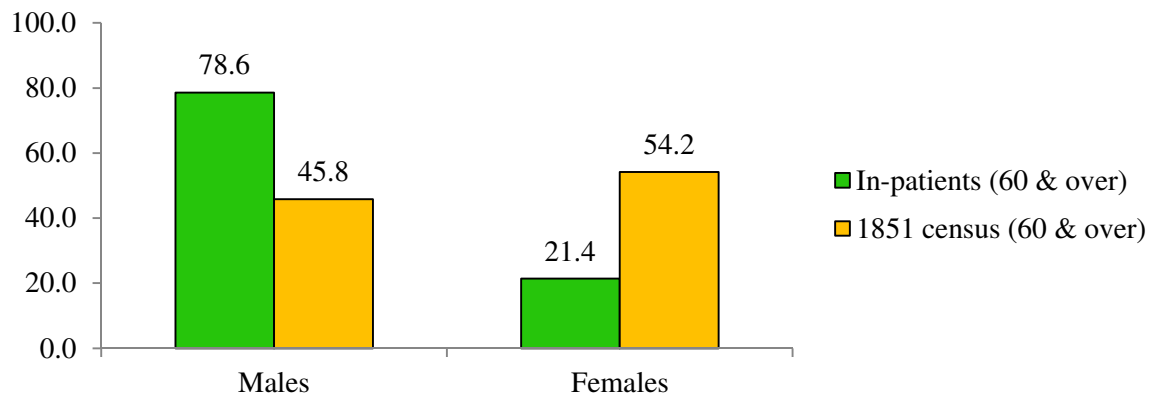
Sex > Age v	Male		Female		Unknown	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Under 10	136	6.4	89	5.9	0	0.0
10-19	440	20.7	379	25.0	1	33.3
20-29	480	22.5	462	30.5	1	33.3
30-39	334	15.7	216	14.3	0	0.0
40-49	278	13.1	171	11.3	0	0.0
50-59	190	8.9	103	6.8	0	0.0
60 & over	151	7.1	41	2.7	0	0.0
Unknown	121	5.7	54	3.6	1	33.3
Total	2,130	100.0	1,515	100.0	3	100.0



The sex profile for each age group shows there was near parity between the sexes among those aged 20-29 years, and to a slightly lesser extent in the 10-19 age group. The greatest disparity was among those aged 60 and over, where there was a heavy bias in favour of males.



Just one-fifth (21%) of in-patients aged 60 or over were female despite constituting over half (54%) of this age group in the 1851 census.



There is evidence that less selective institutions – such as workhouse infirmaries – also received proportionately fewer women over sixty, suggesting that older women may have had less need to turn to public institutions for help¹. Their usefulness in child-minding, their earning opportunities in cottage industries even into extreme old age, and the fact that they found it easier than men to secure poor relief away from the workhouse, may have meant they were more likely to be taken in by relatives – as an asset – and thus they were cared for by family when ill².

Deaths

Around 4% of patients died – a slightly higher percentage of males than females.

Sex >	Male	Female	Unknown	Total
Total patients	2,130	1,515	3	3,648
Number who died	95	49	0	144
Death rate	4.5	3.2	0.0	3.9

¹ Claudia Edwards, “Age-based rationing of medical care in nineteenth-century England”, *Continuity & Change*, 1999, 14(2): 227-265.

² Nigel Goose, “Poverty, old age and gender in nineteenth century England: the case of Hertfordshire”, *Continuity & Change*, 2005, 20(3): 351-384.