

engaging in prostitution.

Sex linked to better memory, lower risk of dementia

A study has found that women who enjoy an active love life scored better in tests measuring their working memory.

The team of experts at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, recruited 78 young women aged 18 to 29. They quizzed them on their sex lives before taking them through memory tests. The tests involved looking at a group of 60 words and faces before later being asked to pick them out from a larger group of 90 words and faces. The idea was to measure their short-term recall, a measure of memory function.

The results, published in Archives of

Sexual Behaviour, revealed that women who enjoyed the most frequent sex registered the highest scores on the memory tests.

But the effect was much more noticeable when it came to remembering words rather than faces, researchers said.

This was probably because word recall is largely handled by the hippocampus, while other brain regions control facial memory. Scientists said this lends support to the theory that regular sex bolsters neurons in the hippocampal region. In a report on their findings, researchers said

Neurogenesis in the hippocampus is higher in those women with a higher frequency of intercourse.

Although the study only recruited women, previous research has hinted that men's brains benefit as much, if not more, from plentiful sex.

Animal studies have previously suggested that frequent sex stimulates a process called neurogenesis, the growth of new cells and tissue in the hippocampus — the part of the brain heavily involved in controlling memory.

Healthy love life also boosts levels of feel-good chemicals in the brain, called neurotransmitters.

Earlier this year, experts at Coventry University found that men and women in their 50s, 60s and 70s, who had an active love life, had a lower risk of dementia.

The study of nearly 7,000 older people showed women who had regular sex scored up to 14% higher marks in word challenges, while the most sexually-active men scored 23% more than their rivals.

With Britain's population ageing, scientists are desperately trying to find ways to preserve brain function in old age. Alzheimer's and other types of dementia recently emerged



as the UK's biggest killer, pushing heart disease into second place.

The 'epidemic' has triggered a boom in sales of trendy brain training computer games to those terrified of future illness.

However, a recent major review of 130 studies found little good evidence that exercises for the brain had long-term benefits.