
1970 BRITISH COHORT STUDY: 2016-18 SURVEY

A Step-by-Step Guide



BCS70

1970 British
Cohort Study

WELCOME TO THE 2016-18 SURVEY!

This booklet provides you with information about the survey and what it will involve. This time around, the survey is a little different, and has a particular focus on health. There are a number of different activities we would like you to take part in: an interview, a paper questionnaire, a few activities to understand how you think, some health measurements, an online questionnaire about eating and drinking, and physical activity monitoring.

WHO IS CARRYING OUT THE SURVEY?

The study is run by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS), a research centre in the Institute of Education, which is part of University College London. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. You will be visited by a registered nurse from NatCen Social Research, which is an independent research institute.

The nurse will conduct the interview and carry out the health measurements. The visit will take around 1 hour and 40 minutes, although it could be a little longer or shorter depending on your circumstances.

**THE SURVEY
WILL ALLOW
RESEARCHERS
TO STUDY
HEALTH IN MUCH
MORE DETAIL**

WHAT HAVE YOU HELPED US LEARN ABOUT HEALTH SO FAR?

During your childhood you might remember that lots of information was collected about your health. Medical examinations took place at ages 5, 10 and 16 and your parents also answered lots of questions about your health. Throughout adulthood we have continued to ask you about your health, and the information you have provided has been used extensively by health researchers. This has significantly improved our understanding of how circumstances and experiences during one stage of life can affect our health later on.

FOR EXAMPLE...

BEING YOUNG AND MENTALLY HEALTHY

Good mental health during childhood increases the chances of being a healthy weight in later life. BCS70 shows that there's a link between emotional problems and weight-gain between ages ten to 30, and that general behavioural problems at age five are related to an increased risk of being overweight at age 30.

HEALTHY IN BODY AND MIND

BCS70 shows that young people who often participated in a range of sports and activities were happier than those who engaged in less energetic activities like darts and snooker.

DRINKING WISELY

Having better mental ability as a child was related to drinking more alcohol as an adult. This was especially true for women.

PASSIVE SMOKING IN CHILDREN

The study shows there is a link between mothers smoking and respiratory problems in children. More 10 year olds had wheezy bronchitis if their mother smoked.

OLD HABITS DIE HARD

It appears we form habits at a young age. The study showed that those who watched a lot of TV when they were ten were the most likely to binge on television at age 42. Watching more TV at this age is linked with poor health outcomes such as obesity.

The information that will be collected during the 2016-18 Survey will allow researchers to study the causes of good health and poor health in adulthood in much more detail.

YOUR INTERVIEW AND QUESTIONNAIRE



THE INTERVIEW

The nurse interviewer will conduct an interview which will collect information about lots of different topics, including your family situation, your employment and income, and your health. It will take around 50 minutes and is conducted in your home. During the interview the nurse interviewer will also ask you to do a few tasks which will examine how you think.

As always, your participation is entirely voluntary and you can skip any question you do not wish to answer. For some questions, which might be more private, you will fill in the answers by yourself on the nurse interviewer's laptop.

PAPER QUESTIONNAIRE

We will post you a paper questionnaire which we would like you to complete in advance of the nurse interviewer's visit. The questionnaire will include questions about well-being, physical activity and leisure activities, and will take about 20 minutes to complete. The nurse interviewer will collect the questionnaire when they come to your house to conduct your interview.



**WE WANT TO
KNOW ABOUT
YOUR WELL-
BEING, HEALTH &
ACTIVITIES**

HEALTH MEASUREMENTS

If you agree, the nurse interviewer will also collect some physical health measurements after your interview. This is the first time that adults in BCS70 will have been asked for this type of information. We very much hope that you will agree to them, as they are a valuable part of the survey, and will help provide a fuller picture of health in people your age, both now and in the future. The nurse interviewer can give you a note of some of these measures to keep for your own records if you would like. The health measurements will take around 50 minutes to complete.

HEIGHT, WEIGHT, BODY FAT, WAIST & HIP MEASUREMENTS

All of these measurements are important in assessing health. Lately there has been much discussion about the relationship between weight, body fat and health. In addition, the waist and hip measurements are useful for assessing distribution of weight over the body. A stadiometer will be used to measure your height, a set of scales to measure your weight and body fat, and a tape measure to measure your waist and hip circumference.

BLOOD PRESSURE AND HEART RATE

High blood pressure (also known as hypertension) is one of the biggest risk factors for health conditions such as heart disease and stroke. Collecting data on blood pressure, especially alongside the other types of information collected in BCS70, is therefore extremely valuable in helping us to get a better understanding of health in the population. It is particularly useful to measure it in BCS70 as we can look at whether there are aspects of people's childhoods that are linked to having high blood pressure later in life.

Blood pressure is measured using an inflatable cuff that goes around the upper arm. The nurse interviewer can tell you your blood pressure, along with an indication of its meaning, if you would like. Whilst a diagnosis cannot be made on measurements taken on a single occasion, we can send your blood pressure results to your GP (if you give us permission to do so), as they are best placed to interpret the results in the light of your medical history.



**YOUR HEALTH
MEASUREMENTS
WILL HELP
PROVIDE A
FULLER PICTURE
OF PEOPLE
YOUR AGE**

GRIP STRENGTH

We would like to measure your upper body strength by seeing how strong a grip you have. Grip strength is an indicator of people's general health and it has also been shown to be linked to people's future health. Those who have stronger grip strength in their 40s and 50s are more likely to be physically healthier in their 60s. Some studies have shown that grip strength is linked to what people eat.

We would like to measure your grip strength on BCS70 to find out how it relates to other measurements of health. We can also compare it to data collected when you were younger to see whether early life factors can predict having a strong grip in adulthood.

In order to measure your grip strength we will ask you to grip and squeeze a handle on a small device for a few seconds.

BALANCE

Measuring your ability to balance involves asking you to perform a few simple movements. This measurement can be an indicator of overall health and some studies show there is a link between balance and future health. The nurse interviewer will explain exactly what we would like you to do when they visit.

**YOU CAN MAKE
A UNIQUE
CONTRIBUTION
TO HEALTH
RESEARCH**

BLOOD SAMPLE COLLECTION

The nurse interviewer will ask you if you are willing to provide us with a blood sample. This is an important part of the survey, as blood samples will tell us a lot about the health of your generation. We would also like to extract and analyse DNA from your blood sample, to help us to understand how our genes can affect our health and other aspects of our lives.

With your written permission, the nurse interviewer will take a blood sample from a vein in your arm. We will send you another leaflet, which will explain the process, and your nurse interviewer will be able to answer any further questions you may have during the interview.



WHAT WILL MY BLOOD BE TESTED FOR?

Part of the sample will be sent to a medical laboratory to be tested for the following:

■ Total and High Density Lipoprotein (HDL) Cholesterol. Cholesterol is a type of fat present in the blood, related to diet. Too much cholesterol in the blood increases the risk of heart disease. However, cholesterol is made up of two parts or types; HDL is the 'healthy' type, which helps to keep 'bad' cholesterol levels lower.

■ Glycated haemoglobin. This is an indicator of long term blood sugar levels and is associated with the risk of developing diabetes.

We would also like to store some of your blood sample for future analysis. This part of your sample will be sent to a specialist storage facility at the University of Bristol.

WHY DO YOU WANT A DNA SAMPLE?

We will ask for your written permission to extract, analyse and store DNA from your blood sample for research purposes. Research shows that an increasing number of illnesses have a genetic component. For example, research using DNA from the blood samples given by participants in the 1958 birth cohort study has led to important breakthroughs in our understanding of the role of genetics in common medical conditions such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and coronary heart disease. Combining information about your genes with all of the other information we have collected about your health and your lifestyle will help researchers to identify which genes are linked to certain conditions. This will help with understanding who is most at risk, which may in turn lead to improved diagnosis, treatment and disease prevention.

CAN YOU LET ME KNOW THE RESULTS?

If you would like, we can send you your total and HDL cholesterol, and glycated haemoglobin results. If you wish, we can also send these results to your GP. We will need your permission to do this. If we send you (or your GP) your results, we can let you (or your GP) know whether or not they are in the normal range.

It will not be possible to routinely feedback any results from genetic testing.

HOW WILL MY BLOOD SAMPLE AND DNA BE STORED?

The blood sample and DNA will be stored securely and anonymously. Your name and address will not be attached to the blood sample when it is sent to the lab, nor will it be stored with your samples. Researchers using your samples will not have access to your name and address.

WHAT WILL THE STORED SAMPLES BE USED FOR?

The samples will be used for research purposes only. They cannot be accessed by lawyers or insurance companies and will not be used for cloning. Any future analysis will be done at the specialist storage facility or at another laboratory, which may be outside the UK. This could include research by the commercial sector. We will not sell or make any profit from the samples you donate and they will only be used in research which meets ethical guidelines.

Researchers who want to use your blood sample or DNA will have to apply for permission to an independent committee which oversees access to the samples and resulting data. Permission to use the samples and resulting data is only given to bona fide researchers who can explain the potential impact of the research and its wider value for society.

The anonymised samples will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND AFTER I HAVE GIVEN A SAMPLE?

You can withdraw your consent for the use of your samples at any time, without giving any reasons, by writing to the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (see details at the end of this booklet). They will inform the laboratory and the stocks of your samples will be destroyed.



FINDING OUT WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK

We would like to collect information about your eating habits. The links between diet and health are well-established, and information about what we eat and drink is an important part of helping us to understand health and illness. This information will be collected using an online dietary questionnaire, on two days after the nurse interviewer has visited. The nurse interviewer will let you know during the interview on which two days we would like you to complete the questionnaire. Completing the questionnaire will take 10-20 minutes on each of the two days.

If you agree to take part in this, the nurse interviewer will give you a leaflet explaining the task further, including information on how to access and log in to the online questionnaire. You can also ask the nurse interviewer any questions you may have.



MEASURING YOUR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



We would also like to collect information about your level of physical activity. Research has shown that lifestyle factors such as the amount of time people spend being active, the time spent being inactive, and the types of activity they do have an important impact on their health. To collect this information we would like you to wear a device called an activity monitor. This is a small lightweight device which is worn on the front of the thigh. It uses a motion sensor to detect the amount and types of activity you have done.

We will send you another leaflet with more information about activity monitoring, and the nurse interviewer will be able to answer any questions you may have. If you agree to take part, the nurse interviewer will

help fit the device for you (or you can do this yourself if you prefer). The activity monitor is designed to be worn 24 hours a day without any discomfort. For this study we will be asking you to wear it for seven days. There is no need to remove it for showering, bathing, or swimming as it has a waterproof seal. It is also worn when you are sleeping.

As well as wearing the monitor, you will be given a simple diary for you to note down some information about your sleep each night that you wear the device. You will be given a pre-paid envelope to post back the monitor and diary when the seven days are complete.

MORE INFORMATION

PREPARING FOR THE VISIT

There are a few things we would like you to do to prepare for the nurse interviewer visit:

- For 30 minutes before the nurse interviewer arrives, please do not eat, smoke or drink alcohol and avoid vigorous exercise, as this could affect your blood pressure readings.

- Please wear light, non-restrictive clothing and avoid anything which is tight (e.g. lycra, tight jeans) or has a thick belt, otherwise your waist and hip measurements will not be accurate. If possible, please do not wear very long garments which may prevent the nurse interviewer from seeing your feet during some of the measurements.

- To take the height, weight and body fat measurements, you will need to remove your shoes and socks or tights, to be barefooted.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The 2016-18 Survey has been approved by an independent group of people called a Research Ethics Committee, to protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity.

INSURANCE COVER

If you agree to your blood pressure or blood sample results being sent to your GP, then she/he may use them in medical reports about you. For example, if you apply for a new life assurance policy, or for a new job. When people apply for new policies, insurance companies may ask if they can obtain a medical report from the GP.

An insurance company cannot ask your GP for a medical report about you without your permission.

Having given your permission, you then have the right to see the report before your GP sends it to the insurance company, and you can ask for the report to be amended if you consider it to be incorrect or misleading.

CONFIDENTIALITY & DATA SECURITY

The information you provide will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act, and used for research purposes only. This means that the data we collect from you is always kept separately from information which could identify you (such as your name and address). When reports based on the data are published, care is taken to ensure that no information which could identify an individual is included.

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION

We hope this booklet answers any questions you may have, but if you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact us using the details below.

For information about the 2016-18 Survey, you can contact NatCen on:

- Freephone 0800 526 397
- bsc70@natcen.ac.uk

Your allocated nurse interviewer will also be able to answer any further questions you might have when they contact you to make your appointment for the 2016-18 Survey.

For information about the 1970 British Cohort Study, you can:

- visit www.BCS70.info
- email CLS at bsc70@ucl.ac.uk
- call CLS Freephone on 0800 035 5761
- or write to CLS at FREEPOST RTCX-HBGC-CJSK, 1970 British Cohort Study, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL.



**THANK YOU AGAIN
FOR CONTINUING TO
CONTRIBUTE TO THIS
IMPORTANT STUDY**

We hope you find the experience
enjoyable and interesting
