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# A YEAR IN REVIEW

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Update 2017

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**BCS70**

1970 British  
Cohort Study

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# UPDATE ON THE 2016-17 SURVEY

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Visits for the 2016-17 Survey began last July. Thank you to over 2,300 study members who have already taken part – your contribution is invaluable. The survey continues throughout the rest of this year and will finish early next year.

To those of you who have yet to hear from us, we will be in touch over the coming months. If you've recently moved house, please let us know so we can get in touch with you! Our contact details are on the back of this booklet. Your continued support and involvement is vital to the success of the study and is greatly appreciated.

## HOW LIFE IN THE UK IS CHANGING

BCS70 is one of five cohort studies following generations of Britons born in 1946, 1958, 1970, 1989 and 2000. Together they make up the complete picture of how life in the UK is changing.

**1946**  
**BRITISH BIRTH  
COHORT STUDY**



**1958**  
**BRITISH BIRTH  
COHORT STUDY**

## **YOUR UNIQUE PLACE IN HISTORY**

People today live longer, but do they live happier and healthier lives? Were the Baby Boomers really the last 'lucky generation'? Do children today have chances in life that their parents didn't?

The answers to these important social questions lie in Britain's unique tradition of cohort studies, of which you are a critical part. Since the end of the Second World War, Britain has followed special groups of people throughout their lives. Each group represents a generation, from the Baby Boomers, to Generation X, to the Millennials. Together, these remarkable studies give insight into how life in the UK is changing – and how it is staying the same.

Your participation has been invaluable in helping shed light on

some of the biggest issues facing society, including how childhood circumstances can influence adult life, and how inequalities persist for generations.

The findings from the studies also speak directly to our personal lives, for example, by helping to show the wider benefits of reading for pleasure in childhood, the origins of religious belief, and the impact of being physically active in middle age.

And now, with the 2016-17 Survey of BCS70, we are collecting biological and social data side by side – just like the studies of generations before you. This valuable information will help us understand how our biology and our social circumstances are linked, and how this has changed for different generations.

**1970**  
**BRITISH**  
**COHORT**  
**STUDY**



**NEXT STEPS**  
**(BORN 1989-90)**



**MILLENNIUM**  
**COHORT STUDY**  
**(BORN 2000-01)**



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# THE BENEFITS OF BEING A WORKING DAD

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Findings from BCS70 have shown that fathers who work full-time earn more than men without children. In contrast, working mums tend to make less than other women in the workplace.



## WHAT WE ASKED YOU

When you were 33 and 42, you told us about your family life, and whether or not you had children. We also asked you questions about your employment and income.

## GENDER DIVIDE

Fathers working full-time earned a fifth more, on average, than men who didn't have children.

Those fathers with two or more children fared even better financially, earning 9 per cent more than those with just one child.

However, full-time working mothers made 7 per cent less, on average, than their workmates without children.

When the researchers looked more closely at women's earnings, they found that mums who had given birth to their first child before the age of 33 were worst off, earning 15 per cent less than women who didn't have children. But women who had children later actually made 12 per cent more than those who weren't parents.

The differences in wages remained even after taking into account other factors that can affect pay, such as education, type of job, and where you lived.

## PENALTY VS PREMIUM

The researchers from the Institute for Public Policy Research explained that the wage penalty for younger mothers might be a result of women needing to take time off work early in their careers in order to balance employment with family responsibilities.

"Women are much more likely than men to move into part-time work or stop working altogether when they have children," the researchers said.

They also suggested that some employers may judge parenthood differently for men and women. While the reasons for the fatherhood wage premium were not clear, the researchers suspected that unlike for women, parenthood was seen as a positive for men in the workplace.

## BCS70 IN THE NEWS

The BCS70 research on the benefits of being a working dad was reported extensively in the UK media. Stories appeared in The Guardian, The Independent, The Sun and The Metro. The findings were also featured on BBC News, Sky News and ITV.



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# MENTAL HEALTH IN MIDDLE AGE

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**BCS70 is helping to improve our understanding of mental health in mid-life by looking at how it is connected to circumstances we experience growing up.**

Researchers from the UCL Institute of Education looked at whether there was a link between your childhood and teenage years, and your mental health when you reached your forties.



## WHAT WE ASKED YOU

When you were a baby, your mothers told us whether they smoked while pregnant, and if they breastfed you. At 10 years old, your parents let us know if they were still together or if they had split up.

When you were 16, we asked you a series of questions to find out whether you had any emotional or behaviour problems. Then at age 42, you let us know if you experienced psychological distress, such as feeling anxious, depressed or irritable.

Another study of people born in 1958 asked similar questions of its study members at roughly the same ages. By comparing your experiences to the 1958 cohort, we can begin to figure out how mental health has changed across generations.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS ON THE RISE FOR YOUR GENERATION

Your generation reported poorer mental health at age 42 than those born in 1958, and the increase in psychological distress was more prominent among men.

At age 42, 16 per cent of men reported poor mental health compared to 10 per cent of those born 12 years earlier. For women, 20 per cent of you reported psychological problems, compared to 16 per cent born in 1958.

## DOES EARLY LIFE MATTER?

The early life circumstances you and your parents told us about revealed that your generation experienced quite different childhoods to those born 12 years earlier.

It was more common for people your age to have divorced parents than for people born in 1958. More of your mothers smoked while pregnant, and fewer of you were breastfed. Your generation was also more likely to have had behavioural and emotional problems at age 16.

While more of you experienced these negative circumstances during childhood, they only played a small part in explaining why some of you had poorer mental health in middle age.

## BCS70 IN THE NEWS

The BCS70 research on mental health in middle age appeared in The Times, Daily Mail and The Independent.



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# KEEP IN TOUCH

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If you change your address, phone number or email address, please let us know so that we can contact you in the future.

## You can contact us by:

- ☎ 0500 600 616  
(free from a UK landline)
- ✉ [bc570@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:bc570@ucl.ac.uk)
- 🌐 [www.bcs70.info](http://www.bcs70.info)  
(check out our new website!)
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