



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Update 2024

BCS70

1970 British
Cohort Study

IT'S A WRAP!

Thank you for all your help with the Life in Your Early 50s Survey!

The latest BCS70 survey is now complete! Over the last two and a half years, our interviewers have caught up with more than 8,000 of you. This includes 369 study members who hadn't taken part since the Age 42 Survey.

We're incredibly grateful to all of you for your contributions.

We were all set to launch this survey in summer 2020. But the pandemic meant a change of plan. We eventually got underway in late 2021, initially asking you to take part by video – a first for BCS70. Then in spring 2022, we could finally visit you at home again.

And here we are now at the end of this amazing journey!

To everyone who took part by video for the first time or let us into your home during these unpredictable years, thank you for your patience and your dedication to the study.


We're looking at all the information you've shared with us, to see what we've learned about your lives. Watch this space for our findings!


HOW DID WE DO?


We'd love to hear your thoughts about being a study member. Whether you have taken part recently or not, please take 5 minutes to complete our online feedback survey and help us improve the experience for everyone:

bcs70survey.co.uk


Life in Your Early 50s Survey in numbers:

 **8,000+**
took part

 **3,500+**
did their interview by video

 Almost **5,000**
completed an online diet questionnaire

Since 2016, when we last visited you, BCS70 data has been used in...

 **580+**
published research papers

 **300+**
different institutions and organisations

 **44**
countries

YOU ASKED US...

"Why do you ask so many questions about finances?"

For decades, BCS70 has been a crucial source of evidence on how finances are connected to health, wellbeing, family life, caring and much more. Many of your generation will now be thinking ahead to retirement, so understanding these connections is increasingly important.

Research has shown that income alone only scratches the surface of people's financial wellbeing. Pensions, savings, debts, benefits, assets, inheritance, and partner's circumstances together shape your paths in retirement.

We treat information on your financial circumstances as we do all your data, with the utmost respect, privacy, and care. But if there are ever any questions that you're not comfortable answering, you don't have to. The choice is always yours.

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES OF ONLY CHILDREN

Some people believe that children who don't have siblings outpace their peers when it comes to cognitive development. The reason, supposedly, is that only children don't have to share their parents' attention and the family's resources with brothers and sisters. But is this really the case?

Researchers looked at BCS70, alongside cohorts born in 1946, 1958 and 2000-02. They found that, across all generations, only children had no advantage over those from two-child families in cognitive assessments at age 10 or 11, but did do better than kids growing up with two or more siblings.

But even this so-called 'advantage' was less common for only children born at the turn of the century. Researchers believe this is because single-child families are changing.

Across all generations, parents' relationships and families' socioeconomic circumstances

had a greater effect on children's cognitive development than whether they had siblings. What's changing is that only-child families have become more likely to face hardship over time.

Among your generation, only children tended to come from better-off homes. Today, only children are a more mixed group, and many have faced difficult experiences like family breakdown.

This research was covered by The Conversation news site and translated into five languages. It's already reached millions of people around the world, from France, to Singapore, to Brazil!

FAST FOOD AND OBESITY

Findings from BCS70 have shown that living near lots of fast food outlets could increase your chances of being an unhealthy weight.

We add publicly available information about your local area to the information you share with us through our regular surveys. Researchers can use this to investigate the impacts of the neighbourhoods we live in.

For example, we recently added information from the UK Ordnance Survey about the different places you can buy food in your local area - from supermarkets to bakeries, fishmongers and restaurants. A team of researchers used this to work out what proportion of these were 'fast food' outlets. They then analysed this information alongside the data we collected about BMI (a measure that uses height and weight to work out if someone's weight is healthy) at age 46 and during the pandemic.

The researchers found that people living in areas with more fast food outlets were at greater risk of becoming obese. This was true even after taking account of

other factors which might influence people's food choices, such as their income.

While the researchers could not say for certain that increased access to fast food leads people to eat more fast food, this could be one explanation.

Poorer areas tend to have more takeaways, and people living in these areas are already at greater risk of poor health. This new research suggests that promotion of healthier food choices, particularly targeting these areas, could help combat these health inequalities.



LATEST RESEARCH IN BRIEF



NOT VOTING LINKED TO CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

In a study thought to be the first of its kind, researchers have found a link between childhood behavioural problems and not voting in general elections. When you were growing up, we asked your parents questions about your behaviour, such as whether you played truant or got into fights. Over the years, you've told us whether you've voted in general elections. Researchers have found that people who had behavioural difficulties in childhood were less likely to participate in elections compared to people with no significant problems. With a general election around the corner, this research highlights the importance of helping everyone to have their voices heard.

LASTING IMPACT OF SCHOOL DAYS

Children who feel interested and involved at school are more likely to consider themselves good communicators, team players and problem solvers at work, years later, BCS70 has found. Researchers looked at how being engaged at school can benefit people in the long term. They discovered this was one of the keys not only to gaining academic qualifications but also to other positive outcomes, including developing important workplace skills and earning more money.



DID THE PANDEMIC TRIGGER A SECOND 'MIDLIFE CRISIS'?

Over-50s experienced their highest-ever levels of mental ill health during the COVID-19 pandemic, even surpassing the well-known peak in people's 40s, according to findings from BCS70 and a study of people born in 1958. Those with long term mental health problems tended to be the most likely to experience financial hardship during the pandemic.



ARE TALLER PEOPLE MORE CLEVER?

Taller people often do better in cognitive tests, leading scientists to believe the same genes determine both height and brain function. But when comparing BCS70 to other generations, researchers found something surprising: the connection between height and cognition is getting weaker. This wouldn't happen if these traits were purely genetic. Instead, it seems changes in society and the environment might also be having an effect. Cognition is an important measure of health, so understanding what influences it is crucial, particularly if there are things we can change.

LONG SHADOW OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Visual impairment in childhood has been linked to greater risk of adversity in adult life. And now researchers have found that some of these inequalities have got worse, not better, in spite of the introduction of policies designed to reduce them. Researchers compared the experiences of people with and without childhood visual impairment in BCS70 as well as in two other similar studies of people born in 1946 and 1958. They found that many of the adverse impacts associated with childhood visual impairment had actually increased for people of your generation compared to previous generations. These included the likelihood of being unemployed, having worse physical health and experiencing anxiety or depression.

FIND OUT MORE

Find out more about these stories and other research on our website!

[bcs70.info](https://www.bcs70.info)



KEEP IN TOUCH

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

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LATEST DISCOVERIES

Check out the study website to keep up with the latest scientific discoveries you've made possible.

bc70.info