



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Update 2025

BCS70

1970 British
Cohort Study

WHAT'S NEXT FOR BCS70?

Learning from the Life in Your Early 50s Survey

The information we collected in the Life in Your Early 50s Survey is now available for researchers around the world to analyse. We're really looking forward to seeing what more we can learn from your generation's experiences and sharing these findings with you.

Over the years, BCS70 has produced an enormous amount of evidence on a variety of crucial issues, making a real difference to the world we live in. In this update, you can learn about some of the most recent discoveries based on information you shared with us in earlier BCS70 surveys.

We truly appreciate your ongoing involvement in this important study. Thank you once again for your invaluable contribution.

60 SECONDS WITH...

How have you used BCS70?

Using the information you've provided over your lifetime has been amazing! Recently I've used the data collected during the Covid-19 pandemic to explore how your mental health throughout life affected your experiences.

What do you hope to learn from BCS70 in their 50s?

I'm very excited about the latest information. The early 50s is a time of life which is very under-researched, but it is a vital period for understanding things like cognitive ageing. I'm hoping to look at this using the memory and word-based exercises you completed, along with similar tasks from previous surveys. My goal is to understand how your earlier life experiences and behaviours, such as exercise and smoking, influence cognitive function in your early 50s.



A STARRING ROLE FOR BCS70

We were thrilled to see BCS70 featured in an episode of the BBC series Call the Midwife earlier this year. Over 7 million viewers witnessed the moment it all began in April 1970. Regular character, Dr Turner, is quite right when he tells the midwives, "This is going to be teaching us things for 80 years..."

You can find the episode on BBC iPlayer – Series 14 Episode 1.

Research findings from BCS70 often make national and international headlines. In the last year, BCS70 has appeared in The Times, the Daily Mail and many other publications.



YOU ASKED US...

"When is the next survey planned and what will it focus on?"

We're already planning the next survey which we expect to take place online in 2026. Participants in another cohort study, who were born in 1958, will complete the same survey as you. This will mean researchers can compare the experiences of two generations.

The survey will focus on important issues, including ageing, working lives, pensions, social care, and health.

DO OUR MOTHERS INFLUENCE WHEN WE HAVE KIDS?

A recent study shows how our mums' experiences can influence the age we become parents and the size of our families.

Researchers compared information you gave us about the number of children you have, and how old you were when you had your first, with the same information collected from your mums.

They found you were more likely to have children if your mother had become a parent before she was 25, and that this was especially true of women. Coming from a larger family, with two or more siblings, also increased the likelihood of having your own children, but only for women.

For both men and women, the number of brothers and sisters you had was important for the timing of parenthood; those with three or more siblings were likely to start their own family at a younger age, before 25.



These patterns were the same regardless of your social background, highlighting the influence of your mothers' experiences on your own lives.

Exploring other factors at play, the researchers found that men and women from East England and the Midlands were more likely to have a third child. Having a third child was also more common among men who were in their second marriage or live-in relationship.

HEALTHY EATING IN MIDLIFE

Your early adulthood can influence what's on your plate years down the road!

We've asked you to tell us about your diet more than once over the years. In a recent study, a team of researchers used the food diaries you completed for the Age 46 Survey to investigate factors that affected the quality of your diet in midlife.

The researchers analysed information you shared in these diaries to see how your diet compared to the Mediterranean diet, which is linked to a reduced risk of dementia and cardiovascular diseases. It focuses on unprocessed whole foods including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats like olive oil, and moderate amounts of fish and dairy.

The researchers found that your education and your work in early adulthood, between ages 16 and 24, played a key role in your diet quality in midlife. For example, those of you who stayed on in education past age 18 tended to have the best diet at age 46.

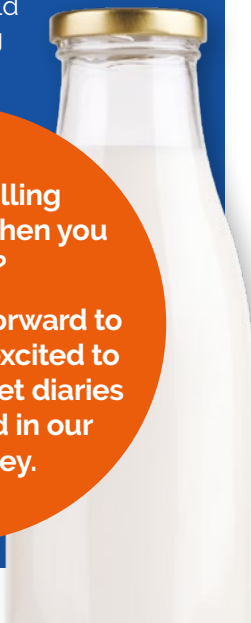


Factors such as your household income when you were a child, your parents' social status, and where you lived as an adult didn't affect your diet quality to the same degree.

Eating a healthy diet is important for our overall health and is something we have some control over. Understanding that our food choices in midlife can be influenced by our circumstances as young adults should be helpful for tackling health inequalities.

Do you remember filling in a diet diary when you were 16?

Time flies! Fast forward to now, and we're excited to learn from the diet diaries you completed in our latest survey.



MORE DISCOVERIES

DENTAL HEALTH

Moving up the social ladder can boost our dental health.

Using information you've shared throughout your working lives and information about what your parents did for a living, researchers organised people into different groups: those who had moved up the social ladder compared to their parents, those who had moved down, and those who stayed on the same rung as their parents. They then compared how people in the groups rated their dental health, on a scale from 'excellent' to 'poor,' in the Age 46 Survey.

The researchers found that those who had started off in a high social class, and remained there, tended to report better dental health than those in all other groups. Those who had moved down the social ladder, and those who had stayed in a lower social class, were significantly more likely to rate their dental health poorly. Additionally, women and those living in rural areas had a more positive perception of their dental health.

This research suggests that addressing social inequalities could help improve dental health in adults.

HEALTHY WEIGHT

For many people, maintaining a healthy weight is one of the best things we can do to protect our health. But according to findings from BCS70, the benefits of a keeping BMI in a normal range may be more far-reaching.

At age 42, those who had been heavier as teenagers performed worse on the vocabulary test and had lower educational qualifications, on average. This was true even when accounting for other influential factors, such as your family's financial and social circumstances when you were growing up.

However, your weight in adolescence was not linked to how you felt at age 42 – there was no significant difference in how often people said they felt confident, close to other people or interested in trying new things.



SOCIAL ISOLATION

Researchers used information from BCS70, and four other similar studies, to understand whether we are leading more isolated lives today and when in life we may be most at risk.

Social isolation is measured by our interactions with others – for example, whether we live alone and how much contact we have with friends, family, and colleagues. It's different from loneliness, but it can still have a negative impact on health and wellbeing.

The researchers compared information collected in BCS70 and studies following generations of people both older and younger than you, born between 1946 and 2002. They found that living alone

had become more common among young adults. In your mid-20s, 9% of your generation were living alone while 17% of those born in 1989-90 lived alone at a similar age.

Researchers looked at whether people were in work or studying as both can create opportunities for social interaction. Over generations, it had become less common for women to be neither working or in education during early adulthood. This indicates a growing trend in delays to starting a family. Men had a higher probability of living alone in early-to-midlife and women were more likely to live alone in later life, probably due to outliving their partners.



FIND OUT MORE

Head to our website to find out more about these stories and other research.

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


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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.

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