



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Update 2026

BCS70

1970 British
Cohort Study

NOW AND THEN



BCS70 started with 17,196 babies in the first survey who were born all around the UK. During childhood, 842 people were added, including those born overseas in your birthday week who later moved to Great Britain.

In total, 18,038 study members have been part of at least one survey.

We are still in touch with
12,500
of you!

It's amazing that we are still in touch with around 12,500 of you after all this time. At the last survey, 8,016 study members took part – 7,789 who are living in Great Britain as well as 227 living abroad.

We know that around 1,800 study members now live overseas. We can now invite study members overseas to take part in our surveys online. This gives us a valuable opportunity to learn about the experiences of emigrants compared

with those who have stayed in Britain. If this applies to you, please make sure we have your current contact details so we can invite you to our next survey.

Sadly, we know that just over 1,000 study members have passed away over the years.

We would like to thank every single one of you who have contributed to BCS70. The study wouldn't be possible without you.






DID YOU KNOW?

A new study called Generation New Era will track over 30,000 babies born in the UK this year. This will be the first nationwide study of its kind in 25 years, and it will be based at the UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies, like BCS70.

HOW HAS LIFE CHANGED ACROSS GENERATIONS?

You might know that BCS70 belongs to a family of longitudinal studies in the UK. Each study follows a different generation of people through life. Researchers often use BCS70 in combination with one or more of these other studies to see how our lives and society are changing over time. Here are some of the things we found when we looked at people's experiences of big life events in their early 30s.

Year born and age at survey	1946 (age 31)	1958 (age 33)	1970 (age 34)	1989-90 (age 32)
Were living with a partner or spouse 	80%	79%	74%	61%
Owned a home 	Not asked at this age	79%	75%	51%
Had become a parent 	69%	72%	66%	58%

YOU ASKED US...

Why is it important to keep taking part?

Studies like BCS70 track changes over time, which helps researchers understand how lives unfold in a way that short-term studies never can. Long-term studies like BCS70 aim to answer big questions like how lifestyle, environment, or genetics affect a generation over decades.

By staying involved, you are representing your generation and helping to ensure the study's findings remain accurate. Insights from the study often shape decisions that benefit society and may even help your own family or community.

Your participation really does have impact!

40 YEARS SINCE YOUTHSCAN

Cast your mind back to 1986... Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. Top Gun was the number one film of the year. The Communards topped the charts with their hit single Don't Leave Me This Way. And, across the country, thousands of young BCS70 study members were completing questionnaires for the Age 16 Survey, known as Youthscan.

WHAT WAS YOUTHSCAN?

Almost 12,000 of you took part in Youthscan. This survey looked at your life as a young person living in Britain. It collected information about topics like education, leisure activities, smoking, drinking, relationships, beliefs, and life goals.

In our podcast series, 50 Years of Life in Britain, one study member reminisced on the experience, saying, "They asked quite pertinent questions... the kind of questions that adults didn't generally ask teenagers. They were quite refreshing to answer because you always felt like 'Oh, okay, so my opinion matters, and someone

is sort of listening to how I feel about things.' They asked us about smoking, sex, drinking. All sorts of things that you wouldn't dream of talking about to anybody over the age of 16."



An eating day in the life of a teenager



Images taken from Youthscan

This survey was the very first time we asked you to keep a record of your eating habits. Since then, you've completed two more diet diaries – in your 40s and again in your 50s.

You filled in a survey over four days, recording everything you ate and drank. We're happy to report that 94% of you said you'd eaten vegetables in those four days.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM YOUTHSCAN?

Researchers have made many important discoveries using your Youthscan responses with information from other BCS70 surveys from across your lives. For example, Youthscan helped show how reading for pleasure improved performance in spelling, vocabulary, and maths. These findings have informed initiatives encouraging children to read more.

REACH FOR THE STARS

Youthscan even had the backing of celebrities Sir Lenny Henry and Glynis Barber, as you might remember from the publicity material we sent you. Two study members also got the chance to meet Princess Anne to celebrate BCS70 study members turning 16!



Smart kids who like a pint

IN THE NEWS

Newspapers had strikingly different interpretations of the Youthscan findings. News of the World claimed your generation were living in 'the age of lost innocence' where 'drugs run wild' and '7 in 10 hit the bottle'. In contrast, the Western Daily Press said your generation had been overtaken by 'a new mood of moral awareness' with 'less interest in casual sex' and 'more awareness of religion'. The Daily Record took a more balanced view, describing you as 'smart kids who like a pint.'

Catch up on the BCS70 50th anniversary podcast at bcs70.info/podcast

EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCES IN YOUR EARLY 50s

Your 50s are an important period for understanding your working lives. At this stage of life, most people are employed and have reached their peak earnings – but inequalities persist and some are still struggling financially. As you move closer to the State Pension age, many people are thinking about how they'll manage in retirement.

When we visited you in your early 50s, more than four in five of you were in work or looking for work. You worked 37 hours per week, on average. Among those of you who had permanently left the workforce, the majority were from the lowest income homes and poor health was the most common reason.

We looked at what you told us about your employment and finances in your early 50s. We then compared your circumstances with data collected from participants in another cohort study (born in 1958) at the same age to see how things have changed for your generation.

FULL- AND PART-TIME WORK

Among those of you in work in your early 50s, more than three quarters were working full-time. More women than men worked part-time at this age – three in 10 women compared to just one in 20 men.

BCS70 women were working around three hours more per week, on average, than women born in 1958.

The overall proportion of men and women in work was similar to the 1958 cohort at the same age. However, BCS70 women were working around three hours more per week, on average, than women in the 1958 cohort.

DOMESTIC DUTIES

Despite women of your generation working more hours than their baby boomer peers, those living with a partner said they were still doing most of the domestic chores at home.

Two thirds of the women of your generation said they did most of the laundry, and well over half said they did most of the cleaning, cooking, and shopping. Around one in five men said they did most of the cooking and shopping, and less than one in 10 said they did most of the cleaning or laundry. Men were more likely than women to feel that these chores were 'shared equally' in their homes.

There were some signs of progress towards a better gender balance for your generation – a fair few more women in the 1958 cohort felt they got stuck with all the laundry!

MONEY WORRIES


We asked you how you felt about your financial situation. Around a quarter of you said you were 'just getting by' or finding it difficult.

Many of you shared concerns about your future finances. Around two thirds said you worry about how much you will have to live on in retirement, with women tending to worry about this more than men. Worries about retirement were most common among those on the lowest incomes. However more than half of the most affluent study members shared similar concerns.




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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