

NATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY UPDATE 2015



This year's update features important new findings based on the information you have provided to NCDS

- Your health at age 55
- Your caring responsibilities at age 55
- Scarring effects of childhood bullying



THE AGE 55 SURVEY



The most recent survey took place when you were 55, between September 2013 and May 2014. We were delighted that more than 9,100 of you took part, with around two thirds doing so online. Huge thanks to all of you who took part!

The information you gave us has now been converted into an anonymised format and has very recently been made available to researchers. We have had a first look at the data and have provided a snapshot below of what you told us about your health. But what we've reported here is just the beginning!

Over the coming years researchers will examine all of the information you provided in much greater depth to answer important questions about life for your generation. We will provide more information about research based on the Age 55 Survey in future mailings.

YOUR HEALTH AT 55

We asked you to describe your general health. Just under half (48%) of you reported that your health was 'excellent' or 'very good'. Just over 1 in 20 (6%) reported that your health was poor. The number reporting either 'excellent' or 'very good' health has fallen somewhat since you were last interviewed at age 50, while the number reporting 'fair' or 'poor' general health has risen a little.

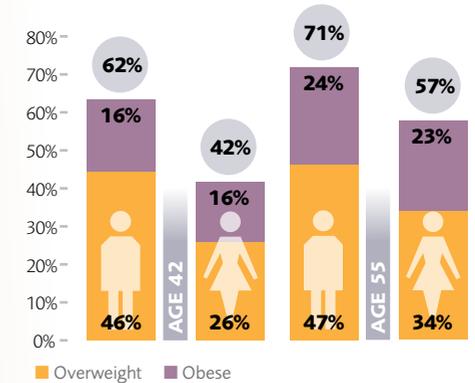
A third (33%) of you reported having a long-standing illness or condition, with women being slightly more likely than men to report that this was the case (35% compared with 31%). The most common health problems were backache, high blood pressure, and depression or other emotional problems. Around a quarter of

both men and women suffered from backache. High blood pressure was more common among men (25% compared with 20% of women), while depression was more common among women than men (19% compared with 12%).

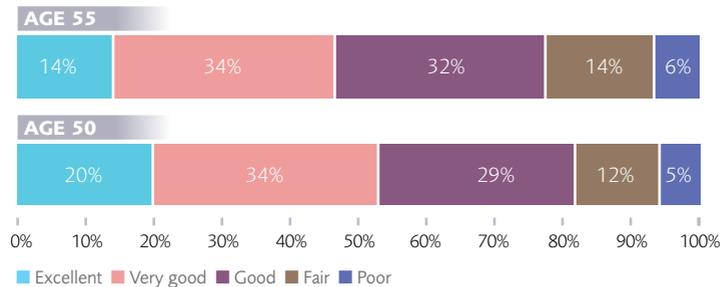
OBESITY AND OVERWEIGHT

Being overweight or obese is a growing health concern in today's society. Over seven in ten men (71%) and almost six in ten women (57%) were overweight or obese at age 55 according to standard Body Mass Index (BMI) measures. The number of people carrying excess weight has risen throughout adulthood. There have been significant increases in overweight and obesity for both men and women, but that the rise between 42 and 55 was particularly great among women.

Percentage overweight & obese at ages 42 and 55 (men and women)



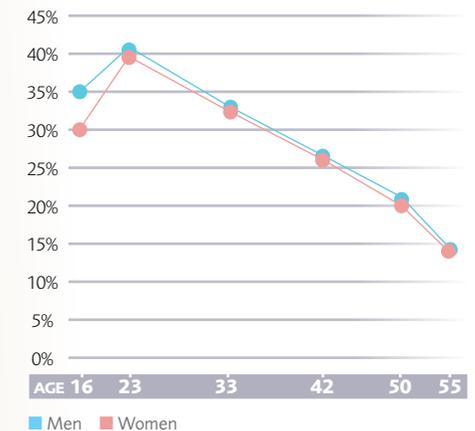
Self-rated health at ages 50 and 55



SMOKING

When you were 23, around two in five of you were regular smokers. But smoking has become less common over time – at age 55, only around one in seven (14%) reported being regular smokers.

Regular smoking from age 16 to 55



BRITAIN'S SANDWICH GENERATION: CARING ROLES AT 55



Lots of research using NCDS catches the attention of journalists and is covered in the press. You might not always realise that you were reading or hearing about NCDS, as journalists don't always mention the name of the study.

Research on the caring and family roles of your generation was covered by several news agencies, including the Telegraph, the Times, the Daily Mail and the BBC.

The research showed that several major social trends are having a significant impact on your caring responsibilities. For example, rising life expectancies mean that many of your parents are living longer (with

surviving parents typically in their 80s), and nearly half of you provide regular support for a parent or in-law. Among those of you supporting elderly relatives, the most common types of help are giving lifts (45% of carers), shopping (38%), decorating, gardening or house repairs (33%), dealing with personal affairs (29%) and cooking or providing meals (21%). Most of you help out for only a few hours each week, but 12 per cent of those providing regular care said they spent 10 or more hours a week looking after their parents or their partner's parents.

But, of course, many of you look after younger generations too. Many more grown up children are living at home with their parents these days. At age 55, almost half (45%) of you had at least one child living at home, the average age of children at home being 21. By this age, almost two in five of you (38%) were also grandparents. Among those of you with grandchildren, nearly three in five (57%) reported looking after them at least once a month. Among those who provide regular care, the average time spent looking after grandchildren was 8 hours a week.

In total, two thirds of you had some kind of caring responsibility at age 55, whether for elderly parents or in-laws, children under 18, or grandchildren.

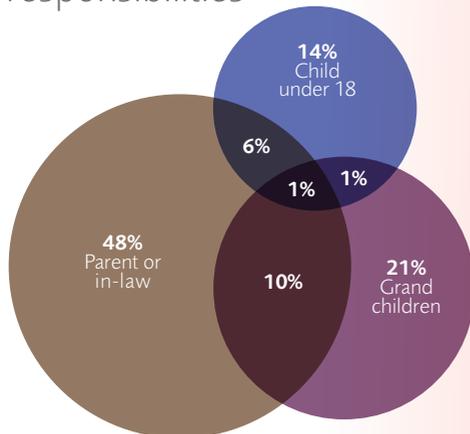
While both men and women spend time helping family members, it is typically women who take on a disproportionate share of the caring responsibilities. Just over one in five (21%) women spent more than 10 hours a week caring for others - not including time taken up by looking after children living at home - compared to 14 per cent of men.

Caring responsibilities can have a significant impact on people's lives. Those of you spending more than 10 hours caring for parents or grandchildren a week reported poorer health and poorer quality of life. Women carers were also less likely to report being in full-time work.

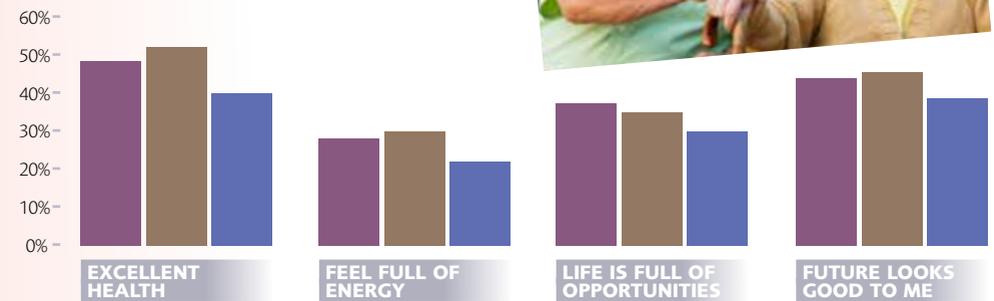
This research drew attention to important issues for policymakers to address, such as the need for flexible working arrangements, financial, and emotional support for people in their 50s who face significant caring demands.

Future research using NCDS will be able to look at how your generation is affected by the rise in state pension age (which will be at age 66 for both men and women), and how staying in work for longer affects both your caring roles and your health. It will also be important to understand how caring responsibilities change as people get older.

Overlapping caring responsibilities



Health and well-being by caring responsibilities



■ No caring ■ Less than 10 hours per week ■ More than 10 hours per week



SCARRING EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD BULLYING



MEET THE NCDS TEAM...

A study by researchers at King's College London found that those of you who were bullied as children were more likely to experience mental health problems in adulthood than those who were never bullied. The research was covered by the BBC, the Telegraph, the Independent and the Daily Mail. Just over a quarter of you had been bullied occasionally at ages 7 and 11, and 15 per cent were bullied frequently – similar to rates of bullying among children in the UK today. The researchers looked at a range of factors in adulthood, and found that the negative effects of bullying can be as damaging as other forms of childhood adversity, such as being put in care.

Victims of childhood bullying had higher rates of depression and psychological distress at ages 23 and 50 than those who were never bullied. Those of you who were bullied frequently while you were growing up had higher risks of anxiety and were

more likely to have thought about suicide by age 45, compared with those who were never bullied. The effects of childhood bullying on adult mental health remained even after taking into consideration related factors such as family social class, parenting and behavioural problems.

Those of you who had been bullied tended to have less education and fewer qualifications by age 50 than those who were never bullied. Men who had been bullied were at greater risk of being unemployed at age 50, and those who were in work were more likely to earn less than their peers.

By age 50, victims of childhood bullying were less likely to be living with a partner or have good social support from friends and family than those who had never been bullied. They were also more likely to report being less satisfied with their lives.

Professor Louise Arseneault, one of the study's authors, said: "We need to move away from any perception that bullying is just an inevitable part of growing up. Teachers, parents and policymakers should be aware that what happens in the school playground can have long-term repercussions for children. Programmes to stop bullying are extremely important, but we also need to focus our efforts on early intervention to prevent potential problems persisting into adolescence and adulthood."



Alissa Goodman (front) leads the team responsible for the study's content, design and analysis. Alissa is an economist whose main research interests relate to inequality, poverty, education policy, and the intergenerational transmission of health and wellbeing.

Matt Brown (top left) designs the questionnaires used in NCDS and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the study.

Maggie Hancock (middle right) transforms the information you provide into anonymised data files which are made available for research.

Robert Browne (top middle) is responsible for the secure database that holds your contact details. He works with **Denise Brown**.

Gearoid Garvey (top right) leads the team who ensure that the contact details we hold for you are kept up-to-date. In this team are **Mary Ukah** and **George Andrew** who will be your first point of contact if you phone, email or write to us.

Meghan Rainsberry (middle left) manages the communications team that promotes NCDS research and produces our newsletters and websites.



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KEEPING IN TOUCH

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

You can tell us by:

- Calling us free (from a UK landline) on 0500 600 616
- Emailing us at ncds@ioe.ac.uk
- Completing the contact form on the study website: www.ncds.info
- Or writing to us at National Child Development Study, FREEPOST KE7770, London WC1H 0BR