

ncds

National Child
Development Study



Making a difference

UPDATE 2024

Almost there!

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THE LIFE IN YOUR EARLY 60s SURVEY



In January 2020, interviews began for the most ambitious NCDS survey we had ever planned. Within a few short weeks, it became clear just how different it would be.

The pandemic turned our plans on their head. A whole new world for social research emerged, and we all needed to adapt.

But here we are, four years later, and the end of this extraordinary survey is finally in sight. We're grateful to the 8,000+ study members who have taken part once again, including 790 who returned to NCDS after more than 10 years away. We look forward to seeing the final few over the coming weeks.

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.

“I love that I am part of something that can help others in the future.”

— NCDS study member

HOW'D 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:

ncdssurvey.co.uk


Of the 8,000+ who took part at age 61+, around...


 **2,300**
took part by video

 **6,300**
took part in a health visit

 **5,000**
gave a blood sample

Since we last visited you at age 55, NCDS has been used in...

 **2,942**
different research projects

 **1,627**
scientific papers

 **51**
different countries

YOU ASKED US...

“Why do you ask so many questions about finances?”

For decades, NCDS has been a critical source of evidence on how finances are connected to health, wellbeing, family life, caring and much more. Understanding these connections is especially important as your generation approaches retirement.

Research has shown that income alone only scratches the surface of people's financial wellbeing, particularly in the lead up to retirement. 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.

Latest research from NCDS

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 NCDS, alongside cohorts born in 1946, 1970 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 11, but did do better than kids growing up in households with three 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.

“Only children had no advantage over those from two-child families.”

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!



Pandemic may have triggered second 'midlife crisis' in mental health for over-50s

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 NCDS and a study of people born in 1970. Those with long-term mental health problems tended to be the most likely to experience financial hardship during the pandemic.

The connection between exercise and neighbourhood

Regular physical activity is important for our overall health. Using information linked to the study about your neighbourhoods, researchers have found that people living in industrial or inner-city areas, or those dominated by social housing, struggled to develop long-term exercise habits, compared to their peers living in suburbs, rural areas or at the seaside.



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 NCDS 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.

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

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

How NCDS helped reform women's financial rights

Throughout your working lives, NCDS has been one of a small number of longitudinal studies shaping our understanding of the gender pay gap.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Professor Heather Joshi, a former director of NCDS, and her colleagues examined women's earnings using NCDS and other longitudinal studies. They found that the single biggest driver of the gender wage gap, and women's low pension accumulation, was time spent out of work caring for children and other family members.

Decent part-time work

Many women tried to pair caring with part-time work, but found these jobs were often low-paid and low-skilled. And women with few qualifications were even more disadvantaged than their higher-skilled peers. For example, childrearing could halve a woman's lifetime earnings, but

this was rarely the case for the well-educated.

The impact of divorce

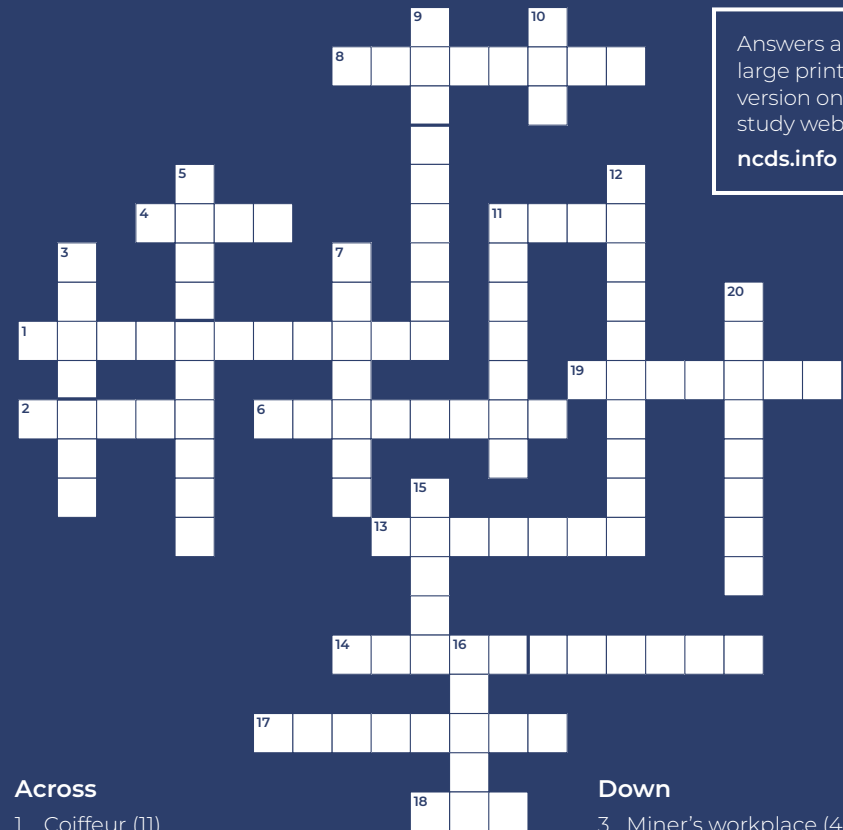
Professor Joshi and her colleagues found women paid an enormous financial penalty if they divorced. Again, this was much worse for those with less education and more children. Divorce could as much as halve a woman's old age income.

Time for a change

By the late 1990s, Professor Joshi and her colleagues had become influential voices on the need for change. They advised government on how to eliminate aspects of the pension system that disproportionately disadvantaged women. Their efforts paid off – new legislation eventually brought in pension sharing on divorce, and better recognition of time spent caring within the state pension system.

THE AGE 11 CROSSWORD

When you were 11, we asked you to write a short essay imagining your life at age 25. Complete the crossword to discover some of the most common words you used.



Answers and large print version on the study website: [ncds.info](https://www.ncds.info)

Across

- 1 Coiffeur (11)
- 2 Popular European holiday destination for Brits (5)
- 4 Employment (4)
- 6 Offspring (8)
- 8 Favourite bat-and-ball childhood game (8)
- 11 Man landed here when you were 11 (4)
- 13 Escape for city dwellers (7)
- 14 Equestrianism (5,6)
- 17 England were still world champions when you were 11 (8)
- 18 Ocean (3)
- 19 Buddies (7)

Down

- 3 Miner's workplace (4,3)
- 5 Daily chore (4,6)
- 7 Angling (7)
- 9 Public transport job (3,6)
- 10 National drink of England (3)
- 11 Common relationship status for your generation (7)
- 12 Higher education (10)
- 15 Prize fighter (5)
- 16 The final frontier (5)
- 20 Popular house type during your childhood (8)


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.

ncds.info