

# ncds

National Child  
Development Study



# Making a difference

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UPDATE 2025

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# What's next for NCDS?

LEARNING FROM THE LIFE IN YOUR EARLY 60s SURVEY



**We've been busy behind the scenes working on the information you shared with us in the Life in Your Early 60s Survey.**

We'll soon be ready to share this with researchers around the world, paving the way for more findings on issues that matter.

In the meantime, we've taken a first look at your responses. You can find a snapshot of what you told us on the NCDS website. We'll be taking a deeper dive into the data soon, so please keep an eye on our website or head to our new Facebook page for updates.

Thank you again for taking part!

## 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 be an online survey in 2026. Participants in another cohort study, who were born in 1970, will complete the same survey. 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.

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# Retirement before State Pension Age

**Researchers have used the Age 55 and Covid-19 surveys to explore what retirement is like for your generation. They found that while 80% of you were working at age 55, this had dropped to just 55% by age 62.**

**Men and women stop working for different reasons**

Both men and women were more likely to stop working between 55 and 62 if they owned their home or didn't have children.

Retiring due to long-term ill health was more common among men.

And while men with a workplace pension were more likely to have retired by age 62 than those without, this made only a small difference for women.



**The increase in the SPA for women in this cohort by six years will have removed some of the financial resources available to them.**

**Dr Vanessa Moulton**  
(Lead researcher)

Researchers noted the impact of the rise in the State Pension Age (SPA) for women from 60 to 66. They found women who had retired in their early 60s were more likely to be living with a partner than those who were still working.

**Leaving the workforce during Covid-19**

The researchers found that the number of study members working dropped only slightly in the first year of the pandemic, suggesting that Covid-19 did not cause a sudden exodus from the workforce for your generation.

The information you shared in the Life in Your Early 60s Survey will provide further insights into your retirement plans and experiences.

# Discoveries from your age 11 essays

Researchers are learning fascinating things from the essays you wrote when you were 11 years old.

More than 50 years ago we asked you to write an essay imagining what your lives would be like when you were 25. Decades later, these essays were made available to researchers across the world, helping them to uncover how your circumstances affected your childhood aspirations, and how that would impact you as you entered young adulthood and beyond.

Who could have predicted how your essays would help researchers half a century later? Here you can learn about some of their discoveries.



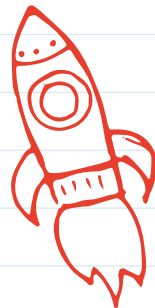
## Family background affects life goals

How you imagined your future when you were 11 differed depending on your family background.

Children from wealthier backgrounds, and those whose fathers and maternal grandfathers had jobs associated with higher socioeconomic status, were more likely to believe that they would attend university. They also expressed more interest in occupations such as teaching, medicine, and the military.

Children from less well-off families were more likely to write about earning money in their future rather than educational aspirations. They also tended to include details about home and family responsibilities.

Regardless of family background, those of you who wrote more about educational aspirations were more likely to go on to have careers with higher status and



income as adults than those who wrote about making money.

The authors of this research recommend that schools and policymakers focus on supporting students' ambitions, providing clear information about career options and making university more affordable for all.

**FUN FACT**  
A surprising number of you wrote about watching or playing football, perhaps because you were writing just three years after England won the World Cup in 1966!



— From an essay with high psychological wellbeing score

## Lower depression risk for positive children

Children who expressed positive thoughts and optimism in their essays were less likely to experience depression in their early 20s.

Researchers rated your psychological wellbeing based on the positivity and negativity expressed in your essays. They compared these wellbeing scores with information you provided at age 23 about your mental health.

Those of you who wrote more positively in your essays had a significantly lower risk of depression at 23 – with the link being particularly strong for girls.

This research highlights the importance of identifying risk factors for depression as early as possible, so that support can be provided before serious problems arise.

"I'm working at the docks and unloading the ships it a very heavy job and it very difficult. Loading the pasles, into the wright places.."

— From an essay with low psychological wellbeing score

THE BEATLES

"...I am now married and very happy and I, am going to have children. I lead a good home life, and my husbuned and I are very happy."



# How life experiences can impact health



**Throughout your lives, NCDS has gathered evidence about your health and lifestyle behaviours. Scientists have been able to use this information to uncover how earlier life experiences can shape physical health later.**

## Mental health and exercise

How happy you were as a young adult can affect how often you exercise later in life, according to findings from NCDS and another study of people born in 1970.

Researchers looked at people's exercise habits in their 30s to 50s and compared this to information about their mental health in their 20s.

They found that people who reported symptoms of psychological distress in early adulthood were less likely to exercise regularly later in life.

Overall, your group reported exercising more in your 30s than those born in 1970, but the difference between the generations balanced in later years.

These findings suggest that improving early detection and treatment of psychological distress may help people to live healthier lives.

## Childhood mental health and adult physical health

NCDS has helped us understand the link between early childhood mental health and high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity later in life.

When you were 11, we asked your teachers about your social and emotional behaviour, aggression, and hyperactivity. The researchers compared this information with evidence you gave us in midlife about your physical health.

They found that poor midlife health occurred more often among those who experienced emotional and behavioural challenges during childhood. Children with these difficulties were more likely to experience high blood pressure and diabetes later in life. Those with emotional problems also had a higher chance of developing obesity.

The researchers recommend that children with a difficult start in life should be regarded as at risk for high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity. They suggest that investing in mental health services for children, especially in poorer communities, can have long-term benefits for physical health.



## Giving up smoking harder the earlier you start

The age at which people start smoking can affect when they give up.

New research has uncovered that those who began smoking by the age of 16, and had a challenging childhood, found it harder to quit than those who started smoking at a later age, and had a happier upbringing.

Researchers compared information from those of you who reported being smokers or former smokers by the age of 23 with data on smoking habits collected during surveys completed between ages 23 and 55.

Those who started smoking by 16 were five times more likely to take longer to quit – and more likely to relapse – than those who started between 16 and 23. Almost a fifth of those who started smoking by 16 had faced childhood challenges such as physical neglect.

The researchers advise that smoking prevention should be targeted at adolescents – especially those who have had a harder upbringing.

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

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

# Keep in touch

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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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## LATEST DISCOVERIES

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

[ncds.info](http://ncds.info)

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