



NEXT STEPS

LEARNING FROM YOUR GENERATION



SHAPING
THE
FUTURE



YOUR
ANSWERS,
OUR
FINDINGS

UPDATE 2025

NEW FINDINGS AT AGE 32



NEXTSTEPSSTUDY.ORG.UK

DOES PARENTHOOD AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH?

Having children is a major life change. Most parents would probably agree there can be both highs and lows. But when we caught up with you for our latest survey, we discovered that those who had started a family tended to have higher life satisfaction and better mental health.

WHAT WE ASKED YOU

We asked you a series of questions in the Age 32 Survey, carefully designed to identify symptoms of anxiety, depression and other emotional difficulties. These included questions like, 'Have you lost sleep over worry?' and 'Have you been constantly under strain?'. You also told us how satisfied you felt with your life, on a scale from zero to ten.

WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS?

Just over half of your generation (54%) had children. The average age to have become a parent was 28.

On the whole, those of you who were parents reported better mental health and life satisfaction. But there were some differences among parents. For example, parents who were not living with a partner had lower life satisfaction and poorer mental health than those raising kids with a partner. Those in couples where neither partner was employed reported higher psychological distress and lower life satisfaction than those in couples where both partners were in work.

DOES FAMILY SIZE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Among females, those with multiple children were at a slightly higher risk of reduced life satisfaction and mental health problems compared to those with just one child. But this wasn't the case for males, whose life satisfaction and mental health didn't seem to vary according to the size of their family.



HOW ABOUT THOSE WITHOUT CHILDREN?

Study members without children tended to rate their life satisfaction more highly if they were currently trying for a family. Life satisfaction was lowest for males who said they didn't want children and for females who were not sure if they wanted to become a parent.

WHY ARE THESE FINDINGS IMPORTANT?

Parental mental health problems can have a big impact on the lives of parents and on their children. While, overall, those of you with children were at lower risk of poor mental health compared to those without children, some factors, such as not having a cohabiting partner, did increase this risk. Identifying these patterns is crucial, as it enables mental health services to tailor their support more effectively.

In future surveys we hope you'll continue to share information about different aspects of your life so that we will be able to learn more about what impacts your generation's mental health.

**BOTH THE
THE TIMES
AND THE BBC
REPORTED THESE
FINDINGS!**

DELAYING PARENTHOOD

In the last survey, we also asked about your plans to start a family or to have more children if you were already a parent. Of those who were not parents, half said they were keen to have kids in the future. However, among those hoping to become parents or to expand their family, only one in four told us they were currently trying for a child.

Not feeling ready was the most common reason for people delaying their family plans but affordability was also a big factor.

We shared more from this research in our email update earlier this year. If you missed this, scan the QR code or visit nextstepsstudy.org.uk/delaying-parenthood to catch up.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEALTH AND WORK



Our health and working lives can be very closely intertwined. People with long-term health problems can sometimes feel the job market is closed to them. Researchers have used your answers to the Age 32 Survey, and information you shared in earlier surveys, to explore this important relationship between health and work.

PAST HEALTH EXPERIENCES AND EMPLOYMENT

Periods of poor general health were much more common among people who were unemployed at 32 but looking for work, as well as people who were not looking for work. For example, around 4 in 10 males, and 3 in 10 females, who were out of work and not looking for a job had said their general health was poor at some point in the past (during childhood, adolescence or early adulthood). In contrast, only around 1 in 10 males, and 1 in 8 females, in paid work had previously rated their general health as poor.

WHY THESE FINDINGS MATTER

Boosting the number of people in paid work is a key focus of current government policy, so understanding the factors that can prevent people from being part of the workforce is crucial. These new findings from Next Steps suggest that early access to healthcare and support could help reduce the impact that health problems can have on people's working lives.

HOW MENTAL HEALTH IS RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT

Overall, females were more likely than males to have experienced mental health problems at some point. Mental health problems were also more common among those not working at 32 compared to those in paid work. This was the case for both males and females, but the difference was starkest among males. Around half of males who were not in work had experienced mental ill health versus around a quarter of those in work at age 32.

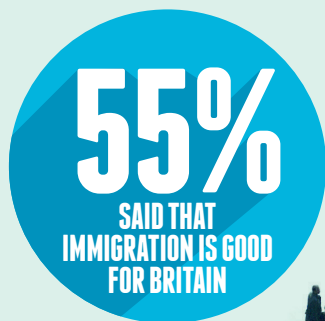
**HALF OF
OUT-OF-WORK
MALES
HAD EXPERIENCED
MENTAL ILL HEALTH**

WHAT DOES YOUR GENERATION THINK ABOUT IMMIGRATION?



In our surveys we're keen to find out how everything is going in your own lives, but we also ask some questions to get your thoughts on society more broadly. This is so we can learn how your generation feels about different topical issues. Understanding the values and attitudes of the population, what matters to people, is critical for UK policymakers.

In the last survey, we asked you some questions about immigration.



YOUR GENERATION VIEWS IMMIGRATION POSITIVELY

The majority of you agreed that immigration is positive for the British economy. Around a quarter had a neutral opinion while just less than a fifth felt immigration had a negative impact.

Just over two thirds of your generation said that the number of immigrants to Britain should either increase or remain the same, with 1 in 8 of you believing it should increase significantly.

Those of you in education or in work tended to view immigration more positively than those who were unemployed. University graduates were also more likely to see immigration as a good thing compared to non-graduates.

DO POLITICAL VIEWS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Your generation's views on immigration were linked to your voting choices.

Those of you who voted for the UK to remain in the EU in 2016 held more positive views on immigration than those who voted to leave. Those who voted for Labour, the Lib Dems or the Green Party in the 2019 General election were more likely to hold more favourable attitudes towards immigration, compared to those who voted for the Conservatives.

KNOW YOUR MONEY



Being financially savvy and knowing your way around concepts like budgeting, saving and investing can help you make sound financial choices and protect your money – all things which can promote positive wellbeing. But compared to similarly advanced economies, Britain currently has one of the lowest levels of financial literacy.

Money Saving Expert, Martin Lewis, led a campaign to get financial education taught in schools, and it has been part of the secondary school national curriculum since September 2014.

WHAT DID WE ASK YOU TO DO?

We asked you three questions in the Age 32 Survey to gauge how well your generation understands terms like inflation, interest and compound interest.

HOW DID YOU GET ON?

Of those who answered all three questions, almost 4 in 10 of you got all three questions right. On average, males had higher scores than females and those with a degree did better than those without.

HOW WILL RESEARCHERS USE THIS INFORMATION?

Researchers will be able to look in-depth at how levels of financial literacy can vary among your generation, and how this might impact on your lives, including your financial stability and mental health. The information could also be a useful benchmark for policymakers when assessing whether teaching financial education in schools is making a difference.

HOW MANY QUESTIONS DID PEOPLE GET RIGHT?

6%
0 QUESTIONS
CORRECT

17%
1 QUESTION
CORRECT

37%
2 QUESTIONS
CORRECT

39%
3 QUESTIONS
CORRECT

TESTING YOUR MEMORY



We asked you to do a memory exercise as part of the Age 32 Survey. This was the first time we had given you a task like this. Working memory is a major component of our cognitive ability and it is vital for reasoning, planning and decision-making. We use these skills every day, for example when we need to follow directions, solve problems, and even when we're having normal conversations.

WHAT DID WE ASK YOU TO DO?

We showed you sequences of numbers one at a time and asked you to memorise these and then recall them in reverse order. The first sequence had just two numbers to remember. The sequences increased in length, one digit at a time. If you were able to accurately recall a sequence backwards, we'd show you the next one. The longest sequence we showed you – for those who made it to the end – was 11 digits long.

HOW DID YOU GET ON?

On average, you were able to memorise a sequence of five numbers and recall it backwards. Male and female study members scored about the same on this task.

Under 4% were able to correctly remember the 9, 10, and 11-digit sequences.

A really impressive 77 (1.5%) people completed the whole task – making it all the way to the 11-digit sequence and getting it right!

HOW WILL RESEARCHERS USE THIS INFORMATION?

Completing tasks like this helps researchers understand how cognitive abilities like memory and attention change over time, and how they may be influenced by factors such as our environment, lifestyle, or health.



FIND OUT MORE

You can learn more about other Next Steps discoveries by visiting our website:

nextstepsstudy.org.uk



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