

Family, relationships and identity

An overview

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An ageing world

Demographic aging brings with it a systematic transformation of all spheres of social life ... beneath even the daunting fiscal projections, lies a longer-term economic, social and cultural dynamic ... What will it be like to live in societies that are much older than any we have ever known or imagined?

Politicians urged to face up to the Demographic timebomb (Guardian 2006)

The Commission on Global Aging (1999)

Population ageing - Are we heading for a future of protest, destruction and the threat of financial meltdown? (BBC 2004)

- But what about compression of morbidity and improvements in living standards? How is the experience of ageing changing?
- And the opening of a 'third age' space, pre- and post-retirement, post-parenting and pre-dependency.
- And the ways in which the opening up of these possibilities are related to social and economic circumstances.

General comments

- Study design has lead NCDS to make an outstanding contribution to scientific understanding and policy development across many areas.
- In part, this is a result of the collection of high quality, multidisciplinary, longitudinal, life course, data that enables us to understand trajectories and causal processes.
- The nature of the data inevitably means that the focus is on individual processes, but we also should consider the varying contexts in which these processes occur (national, period and generation).
- Design decisions should consider:
 - Current age of cohort members;
 - Previous content;
 - Consistency of measures within the study, including going forward;
 - Likely periodicity of future contact;
 - Opportunities to draw comparisons with other studies – international and different cohorts.

Dominant themes

- Caring – sandwich generation.
- Grand-parenting.
- Intergenerational relationships.
- Partnerships.
- Social networks
- Social and cultural participation.
- Attitudes and personality.

Caring (and receipt of care)

- Sandwich generation, caring for parents, children, grandchildren, and also caring for other people;
 - Who care is provided to;
 - Care tasks carried out;
 - Hours of caring;
 - Quality of the caring experience (effort-reward);
 - Support for caring activities (formal and other informal carers).
- Disability and receipt of care (formal and informal);
- Work place adaptations
- Consistency with 2008 and 2013 measures.
- Consistency with other studies (most notably ELSA).

Grand-parenting

- Overlap with caring, but suggestions for more detail on the nature and quality of these relationships:
 - Where grandchildren live;
 - Amount of time spent with grandchildren;
 - Periodicity of grand-parenting;
 - Activities performed with grandchildren;
 - Motivations and perceived rewards.

- Consistency with ELSA.

Intergenerational transmission and relationships

- Cohort members' children's' outcomes – opportunity to take advantage of the extent of data on cohort members and their children's household circumstances, and data collected on children at the age 33 wave:
 - Education;
 - Economic activity and occupation;
 - Family income (financial hardship);
 - Marital status and grandchildren;
 - Economic transfers (e.g. help with housing costs);
- Possibility of collecting data directly from cohort members' children.
- Inter-generational fairness, perception of relative advantage compared with other generations, and support for other generations.
- Generativity.

Partnerships

- Spouse:
 - Employment and retirement (plans);
 - Economic circumstances;
 - Health.

- Sexual attitudes.
- Sexual behaviours.
- Sexual orientation.

- Include non-cohabiting relationships and dating?
- Collect detail on spouse/partner's children?

Social networks

- Parents, children, friends, other relatives, friends;
- Size of networks;
- Frequency and mode of contact;
- Quality of relationship;
- Level of positive and negative engagement/support;
- Loneliness and social isolation.

Social and cultural participation

- Volunteering;
- Community and civic engagement;
- Perceptions of neighbourhood characteristics and quality;
- Housing quality and satisfaction (and plans);
- Cultural participation (and cultural capital):
 - Reading and what kind of things are read (including digital);
 - (Possibility to include a large number of additional markers);
 - Relationship with cognition and learning; and with class.
- Digital inclusion, citizenship, use of digital technologies – what, where, when, why.

Attitudes and personality

- Personality and personal values – deep personal beliefs about what is most important in life;
- Political values;
- Environmentalism;
- Religion and religiosity;
- Political trust;
- Prejudice;
- Orientation to work;
- Planned retirement age, likelihood of working at age 65, 67, 70.
- What will life be like at 80 (70)? (Also experiences of ageing.)
- Also intergenerational fairness and generativity.

Sandwich generation and role demands

- Relationship between paid work, caring and volunteering
 - Importance of each of these roles for the individual, social networks and society;
 - Reasons for starting and stopping activities;
 - Quality of these roles (satisfaction, control-demand, effort-reward);
 - Impact on health and well being.

Some other suggestions

- Planning for long-term care (health, finances, housing, informal sources of care),
- Receipt of bequests.
- Past and current involvement in criminal activity.
- History of homelessness.
- Later life consequences of adoption.

- Administrative data linkages.
- Proxy interviews, more accurate estimates of prevalence of disability etc.