

Topic coverage in the Millennium Cohort Study

Guide to support the MCS Age 27 Sweep consultation

Introduction

This document supports the consultation on the content of the [Age 27 Sweep of the Millennium Cohort Study \(MCS\)](#). It is intended to help structure discussions about what should be included in the survey.

MCS follows the lives of around 19,000 people born in the UK in 2000–02 and is one of the world's leading multidisciplinary longitudinal studies. The Age 27 Sweep will continue to capture key aspects of cohort members' transitions through early adulthood. As well as the core survey with cohort members, the sweep is expected to include a partner survey for those in cohabiting relationships. In addition, a study app will be placed to collect short, low-burden questionnaires between major sweeps and to support ongoing engagement with cohort members.

To guide contributions, we are structuring the consultation around four broad themes:

1. Families, relationships and housing
2. Labour market experiences, economic circumstances and education & training
3. Physical health, mental health and cognitive function
4. Identity, participation, values and aspirations

How to use this document

There are five sections in this document: one for each of the themes listed above, and a fifth section about the resident partner questionnaire. The tables in each section show

whether subtopics were included in the MCS Age 17 Sweep, the MCS Age 23 Sweep, and the Age 25 Sweep of Next Steps, a cohort study of people born in 1989–90 when they were a similar age. These tables provide a high-level summary of potential content to help ensure that key longitudinal measures are maintained, and to highlight where cross-cohort comparisons with Next Steps could be possible.

We have aimed to include most topics that appeared in at least one of these previous surveys and were asked directly of cohort members. We have also included some topics which have not been covered in previous sweeps but are likely to be considered for age 27. **The list is not exhaustive, and we welcome suggestions for additional topics both within the themes and outside them.**

The final column in the tables indicates the current priority assigned to each topic for possible inclusion at Age 27. Topics marked green are currently considered high priority, amber indicates medium priority, and red indicates lower priority. **These assessments are provisional and intended only to guide discussion. They do not represent final decisions, and we welcome comments and suggestions on the relative priority of topics.**

The core survey will take 60 minutes to complete online and 75 minutes in person.

1. Families, relationships and housing

This theme covers living arrangements and household composition, romantic partnerships and relationship histories, family dynamics, parenting and children, caring responsibilities, and housing circumstances including neighbourhood and local area.

1.1 Household and family composition

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Household composition	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Presence of resident and non-resident children	Limited	Yes	Yes	High

1.2 Partnerships

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Marital status and date of marriage	No	Yes	Yes	High
Current cohabiting relationship	No	Yes	Yes	High
Current non-cohabiting relationship	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Sex of partner	No	Yes	Yes	High
Cohabiting relationship history	No	No	Yes	High
Relationship satisfaction	No	Yes	Yes	High
Relationship length	No	Yes	Yes	High
Domestic violence	No	Yes	No	Medium

1.3 Family and children

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Cohort member's relationship with parents	Yes	Yes	No	Medium
Parental supervision of cohort member	Yes	No	No	Low
Reason for living with parents	No	Yes	Yes	Medium
Caring responsibilities	Yes	Yes	No	Medium
Fertility plans	Limited	Yes	No	Medium
Pregnancy histories for male and female cohort members	Yes	Yes	Yes* ¹	High

¹ In the Next Steps Age 25 Sweep this was only asked of female cohort members.

1.4 Resident children

This section covers questions asked of cohort members about their resident children, including topics such as children’s early development, health, care arrangements and aspects of parenting. Some of these questions are age-specific, so the suitability of individual items will depend on the ages of cohort members’ children.

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Birth details	No	Yes	No	High
Pregnancy behaviours (e.g. smoking during pregnancy)	No	Yes	No	High
Infant feeding	No	Yes	No	High
Developmental milestones	No	Yes	No	High
Parenting activities	No	Yes	No	High
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) <i>Emotional and behavioural screening for children aged 2–17</i>	No	Yes	No	High
Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) <i>Developmental screening tool for children age 0–6</i>	No	Yes	No	High
Relationship with child	No	Yes	No	High
Emotional regulation	No	Yes	No	High
Childcare	No	Limited ²	Yes	High
Views on parenting	No	Yes	No	High

² Corrected. Previous version read ‘Yes’.

1.5 Non-resident children

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Contact frequency	No	Yes	Yes	High
Nature of visits	No	Yes	No	High
Financial support	No	Yes	No	High

1.6 Housing

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Type of residence / accommodation	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Number of rooms	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Tenure and home ownership	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Home purchase details	No	Yes	No	Medium
Housing expenses	No	Yes	Yes	Medium
Quality of housing	No	Yes	No	Medium
Periods living away from parents	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Periods of homelessness	Yes	Yes	No	Medium
Neighbourhood and local area	No	No	No	High

2. Labour market experiences, economic circumstances, and education and training

This theme covers employment and labour market experiences, job quality and working conditions, unemployment, income and benefits, financial security and debts, future career plans and expectations, and education, training, qualifications and skills.

2.1 Labour market experiences

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Current economic activity	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Start date of activity	No	Yes	Yes	High
Occupation details	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Usual weekly hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Overtime	No	Yes	Yes	High
Shift work	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Autonomy over hours	No	Yes	No	Medium
Second job	No	Yes	Yes	Medium
Contract type (including zero hours)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
Job satisfaction	No	No	No	High
Unemployment / job seeking	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Partner economic activity	No	Yes	Yes	Medium
Partner work hours	No	Yes	Yes	Medium
Partner study hours	No	Yes	Yes	Medium
Economic activity history	No	Partial	Yes	Medium

2.2 Economic circumstances

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Earnings	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Partner earnings	No	Yes	Yes	High
Benefit receipt (cohort member and partner)	Limited	Yes	Yes	High
Other income sources	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Total household income	From parents	Yes	Yes	High
Educational debt	No	Yes	Yes	High
Non-educational debt	No	No	Yes	High
Self-reported financial situation	No	Yes	Yes	High
Savings and investments	No	No	No	Medium
Pensions	No	No	Yes	Medium

2.3 Education and training

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Current study	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Academic and vocational qualifications obtained	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Uncompleted courses	No	Yes	No	Medium
Details of schools attended	Yes	Yes	No	Low
School moves	Yes	No	No	Low

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Higher education attitudes / costs/ expectations	Yes	No	No	Medium
Career advice sources	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Apprenticeships	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Job training	No	No	No	Medium

3. Physical health, mental health and cognitive function

This theme covers physical health and long-term conditions, mental health, wellbeing and socioemotional functioning, reproductive and sexual health, health behaviours such as sleep, diet, exercise, smoking, vaping, alcohol and drug use, psychological measures, and cognitive assessments such as memory, attention and decision-making.

3.1 Physical health

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
General health	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Limiting longstanding illness	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Accidents	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Long COVID	No	Yes	No	Medium

3.2 Health behaviours

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Sedentary activities (e.g. watching TV or working at a screen)	Yes	Yes	No	Medium
Sleep	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Exercise	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Diet	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Smoking	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Vaping	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Alcohol	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Drug taking	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Sexual activity	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Contraception	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
Height and weight	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Perception of weight	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Body fat	Yes	No	No	Low

3.3 Mental health and wellbeing

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Kessler-6 <i>Screening for anxiety and mood disorders</i>	Yes	Yes	No	High
Rosenberg self-esteem scale <i>For measuring self-esteem</i>	Yes	No	No	Medium
Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale <i>For measuring mental wellness</i>	Yes	Yes	No	High
Diagnoses / treatment	Yes	Yes	No	High
Loneliness	No	Yes	No	High
Eating disorders	Yes	Yes	No	High
Self-harm	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Suicide attempts	Yes	Yes	No	High
Social provisions (access to friends and sources of support)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
Generalised Anxiety Disorder 2-item (GAD-2) <i>Screening for generalised anxiety disorder</i>	No	Yes	No	High
General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) <i>Screening for current, short-term, non-psychotic, general mental health, psychological distress</i>	No	No	Yes	Low
Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2) <i>Screening for depression</i>	No	Yes	No	High
Positive childhood experiences (PCEs)	No	Yes	No	Medium

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)	No	No	No	Medium
Body dysmorphia	No	Yes	No	Medium
Life satisfaction	No	Yes	Yes	High
Strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) <i>Emotional and behavioural screening for children aged 2–17</i>	Yes	No	No	Low

3.4 Personality and non-cognitive skills

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Self-control	Yes	No	No	Medium
Locus of control	No	No	Yes	Medium
OCEAN Big 5 personality test <i>Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism</i>	Yes	No	No	Medium
Risk preference ³	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Patience	No	Yes	No	Medium
Trust	No	No	Yes	Medium
GRIT scale <i>Growth, Resilience Instinct and Tenacity</i>	No	Yes	No	Medium

³ This row has been corrected. Previous version read 'No' for MCS Age 17, 'Yes' for MCS Age 23, and 'No' for Next Steps Age 25.

3.5 Cognitive assessments

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Backward Digit Span <i>Measure of working memory</i>	No	Yes	No	Medium
Stroop Colour and Word Test <i>Measure of cognitive control and response inhibition</i>	No	Yes	No	Medium
Vocabulary	No ⁴	No	No	Medium
Numeracy	Yes	No	No	Medium
Financial literacy	No	Yes	No	Medium

⁴ Corrected. Previous version read 'Yes'.

4. Identity, attitudes, participation and aspirations

This theme covers identity, gender and sexuality, religion, ethnicity and language, social and political attitudes and values, civic and community participation, volunteering and activism, social and cultural activities, digital life and use of technology, experiences of crime and victimisation, and aspirations and expectations for the future.

4.1 Identity

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Gender identity	Yes	Yes	No	High
Sexual identity	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
Religious identity	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Ethnicity	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Languages spoken	Yes	No	No	Medium
Welsh language use	Yes	Yes	No	Medium
Adult identity	No	No	Yes	Medium

4.2 Risky behaviours

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Social media use	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
Victimhood	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
Gambling	Yes	Yes	No	Medium
Offending	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
Police interaction	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
Courts interaction	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium

4.3 Activities

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Reading	Yes	Yes	No	Medium
Social and cultural activities	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Volunteering	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Religious activities	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Political activities	Yes	No	Yes	Medium
Time with family and friends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
Commute time	Yes	No	No	Medium
Transport used	Yes	No	No	Medium

4.4 Attitudes and values

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 inclusion
Attitudes to democracy and politics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
Attitudes to family and gender roles	Yes	No	No	Medium
Attitudes to wealth distribution (e.g. the government should redistribute wealth)	No	Yes	No	Medium
Attitudes to economic activity (e.g. any job is better than none)	Yes	No	No	Medium
Attitudes to environmental issues	Yes	Yes	No	Medium
Attitudes to race and religion	Yes	No	No	Medium
Belief in meritocracy (e.g. Britain is a place where hard work is rewarded)	No	No	Yes	Medium

4.5 Future aspirations

Topic	MCS Age 17	MCS Age 23	Next Steps Age 25	MCS Age 27 priority
Expected achievements at 30	Yes	Yes	No	Medium
Expected career at 30	Yes	Yes	No	Medium

5. Partner survey

The MCS Age 23 Sweep included the first survey for resident partners. They were asked a subset of questions asked of the cohort member. The topics included were as follows.

5.1 Families, relationships and housing

Topic	MCS Age 27 priority
Whether parents still alive, relationship with parents, parents' economic activities	Medium

5.2 Labour market experiences, economic circumstances, education and training

Topic	MCS Age 27 priority
Education: type of educational establishments attended, highest educational level attained and details of higher education	Medium
Employment: economic activity plus full details of any current job and income	Medium

5.3 Physical and mental health, cognitive function

Topic	MCS Age 27 priority
General health and limiting longstanding illness	Medium
Mental health (Kessler and life satisfaction)	Medium
Health behaviours (drinking, drug taking, exercise)	Medium

5.4 Identity, participation, values and aspirations

Topic	MCS Age 27 priority
Ethnicity	Medium