

## Confidentiality

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All information you give will be treated in strictest confidence and used for statistical research purposes only. Your name and address will not be stored with the data you provide. No survey results based on small geographical areas that might therefore risk being identified with you or your household, will be made available to councils, the press or members of the public.

## Who is paying for the study?

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Half of the funding for the first five years of the study has been provided by the National Institute for Aging from the United States. They are also funding a parallel study in the US and we will learn a lot from comparing results across the two countries.

The other half of the funding for the study has come from a number of UK government departments, coordinated by the Office for National Statistics. Contributing departments include the Department of Health, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Culture Media and Sport and the Cabinet Office Women's Unit.

## Who is running the study?

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The study is a collaboration between three of Europe's leading research groups in the fields of health, economics and social statistics:

**International Centre for Health and Society at University College, London**

**Institute for Fiscal Studies**

**National Centre for Social Research**

Also involved in the study are academic researchers from Cambridge University, Oxford University and the University of Nottingham.

## Who can I contact about the study?

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We hope that you have found this leaflet interesting and that it shows the importance of the survey and of your contribution to it. If you have any more questions please do not hesitate to contact us at the address below:

Sandra Laver  
National Centre for Social Research  
Northampton Square  
London EC1  
Tel 01277 200 600

You can find out more about the study, or contact us, via the web site:  
<http://www.ifs.org.uk/elsa/index.shtml>

# Health, Retirement and Lifestyles

## What is the study about?

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The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing will look at the health, economic position and quality of life for people aged 50 and over. The survey will cover a broad set of topics relevant to a full understanding of the ageing process.

## Why is the study important?

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The population aged over 50 is the most rapidly growing group in the UK, as it is in most other developed countries. On average, people are living longer and retiring earlier. Households with members over aged 50 already account for around one half of the countries consumption and three quarters of the countries wealth. And these fractions will increase over the next twenty years as the population ages.

But from a scientific point of view, we do not know nearly enough about the health and economic resources of these households are linked, and this means we do not know enough about the implications of population ageing in the UK. Until now there has not been good enough data to study the issues and therefore inform government policy on health, pensions or retirement for example.

Those currently over 50 are the first generation in the UK to experience extended retirements and active healthy ageing. By forming the basis of this study they will provide the answers needed to inform government policy both now and for future generations.

Key questions that this study will be designed to answer are:

- What is the relationship between health and wealth?
- What determines the nature and timing of retirement?
- How important are household and family structures to health, wealth and quality of life?
- How adequate are financial provisions for retirement, and how can policy help?
- How should the government design the use and quality of health services?
- What is the nature and structure of social networks, support and participation?

## Who is taking part and why have I been asked?

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Around 13,000 adults from all over England have been chosen for the study. Members of the study and their spouses will be interviewed every two years in order to build up a detailed picture of how circumstances change in later life.

We specially select people from lists such as the Post Office's list of addresses. To ensure accurate results, we have to rely only on the people chosen for the study. Nobody else can take their place.

Most people who are chosen agree to be interviewed, and enjoy the experience. No special knowledge is needed to take part.

## What questions will I be asked?

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The key feature of this study is that it will recognise the many dimensions of life over 50 in the UK. Rather than just studying health or finances the study will look at the two together along with all other factors contributing to quality of life. Questions will be asked about health, work, family and social networks, income and benefit receipts, quality of life, cognitive functioning, daily activities, housing, retirement and pensions.

*Everybody has a contribution to make by answering the questions. Your answers are important, even if you feel that none of this applies to you, as they will help to build up the overall national picture.*

## How will the results be used?

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The Department of Health and Department for Work and Pensions will use the results to help plan the spending of their budget (more than £150 billion per year) both now and for future generations. Other government departments will also be using the results to design policies targeted towards older people. Academic researchers will use the data to help understand important questions in health, economics and ageing. Their results will then be used to advise policy makers on how best to design policies for health and pensions and to compare us to similar studies in other countries.