

**CHILD OF THE  
NEW CENTURY** 

# **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

**UPDATE 2026**



# A HUGE THANK YOU!

Thank you for all your help with the Age 23 Survey!

The latest Child of the New Century survey is now complete and over 9,700 of you participated, which is amazing. We also checked in with your parents and carers as we know that many continue to play a really important role in your lives.

We're incredibly grateful to all of you for your contributions.

The Age 23 Survey focused on life in your early 20s. Many of you will have experienced big changes since our last major catch-up at age 17 - from leaving education and getting your first full-time job to moving out and moving in with a partner.

By combining what you told us at age 23 with the information you've shared throughout your lives, we can build a unique picture of your

generation. This helps us understand more about the lives of young adults today.

Earlier this year, we made the Age 23 Survey information available to researchers worldwide. We'll share some of their findings with you in future updates. In the meantime, you can explore some of our early insights on the next pages.

## AGE 23 SURVEY IN NUMBERS:

 **9,700+**  
took part

 **7,600+**  
responded online

## OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS, CNC HAS BEEN USED IN...

 **790+**  
different institutions and organisations

 **50+**  
countries, covering every continent except Antarctica

 **950+**  
published research papers



## Meet the new director

We're pleased to announce Professor Morag Henderson is the new director of Child of the New Century. Morag is a professor of sociology and she has used CNC data in her own research about inequalities in education. CNC's previous director, Professor Emla Fitzsimons, has stepped down after 11 years to become Director of the UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies. We wish Emla the very best of luck in her new role.



## A new study is born

Generation New Era is a new scientific study that will continue the tradition of tracking people's lives over time.

This study will follow the lives of more than 30,000 babies born in 2026, during their early years, and potentially beyond. It is the first new UK-wide study of its kind since Child of the New Century. It will also be based at the UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies, the organisation that runs CNC and other studies like it.

## In the media

You may see findings from CNC in the news under its scientific name, the Millennium Cohort Study. This is the name used by researchers, policymakers and journalists when talking about the study publicly. In the last 12 months, we spotted more than 100 headlines featuring CNC research. Here's a small selection:

**PUPILS IN CROWDED AND DAMP HOMES MISS MORE SCHOOL, STUDY FINDS**

*Tes magazine*

**GEN Z AREN'T HAVING KIDS. GIVE THEM A BREAK**

*The Times*

**EARLY AIR POLLUTION EXPOSURE AFFECTS HEALTH IN ADOLESCENCE, STUDY FINDS**

*The Guardian*

**CULTIVATING KINDNESS IN KIDS MAY PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING**

*United News of India*



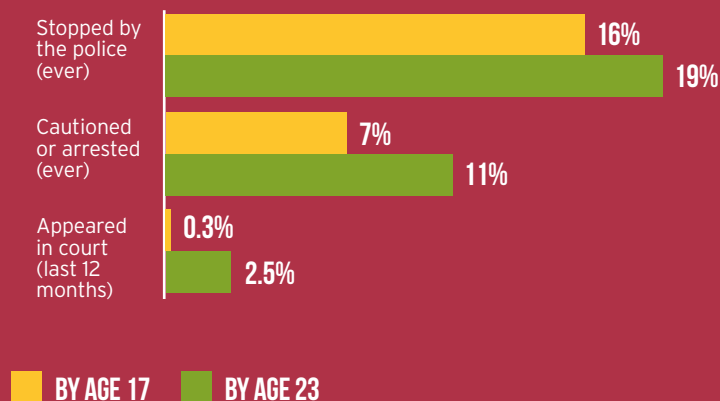
# UNDERSTANDING CRIME AND SUBSTANCE USE

Crime and substance use can have long-term consequences for relationships, health, and employment. Our researchers have taken a first look at your answers to the Age 23 Survey, to understand your generation's experiences with these issues.

## Your experiences with crime

We asked you some questions about crime in the Age 23 Survey, including whether you had ever been stopped by the police, cautioned or arrested. The researchers compared your answers with information you provided at age 17, to see how much more likely your generation were to have experiences with crime by your early 20s.

While the majority of you had never had any brushes with the law, almost one in five reported being stopped by the police at some point in life, and one in ten said you had been cautioned or arrested before. The researchers found that weapon carrying had become less common among your generation in your early 20s than it had been when you were teenagers. At age 23, 1% reported carrying a weapon during the previous 12 month period, compared to almost 3% at age 17.



## Differences between males and females

Male study members were more likely than female study members to report having been cautioned or arrested by age 23 (16% of males vs 6% of females). They were also more likely to have been physically assaulted over the last 12 months (14% of males vs 8% of females).

Female study members were more likely than male study members to have experienced unwanted sexual approaches, sexual assault and violence or emotional abuse from a partner in the last 12 months. For example, 25% of females reported experiencing unwanted sexual approaches compared to 8% of males.

## Substance use and addictive behaviours

We also asked about your drinking, smoking, vaping, and drug use at age 23, as we did at age 17.

Nearly one in five of you said you never drink. On the other hand, almost seven in 10 of you reported binge drinking in the last year, defined as having six or more drinks in one session. Rates of frequent binge drinking had tripled since the Age 17 Survey. Almost three in 10 reported binge drinking once a month or more at age 23, compared to one in 10 at age 17.

At age 23, nearly half of you said you had tried cannabis compared to one in three at age 17. Experience with harder drugs had tripled, with one in 10 reporting that they'd tried this by age 17, compared to three in 10 by age 23.

Males were more likely than females to report higher rates of frequent binge drinking, regular smoking, frequent use of cannabis and frequent use of harder drugs. For example, 16% of males reported frequently using cannabis compared to 9% of females.

Frequent binge drinking was more common among those of you who'd been to university, while smoking, vaping and gambling were more common among those who hadn't.

If reading the findings in this booklet leaves you worrying about anything that's happening in your life, you'll find details of some organisations that can help on our website:

[childnc.net/helplines](http://childnc.net/helplines)



# IS STAYING AT HOME THE NEW NORM?

Leaving home has often been seen as one of the key milestones on the journey to adulthood. But times are changing and new evidence from Child of the New Century shows that your generation is taking longer to leave the family home than before.

## Living arrangements in your early 20s

When we last caught up with you, for the Age 23 Survey, more than two thirds of you (68%) were living with your parents. This was by far the most common living arrangement for your generation. In comparison, around one in five of you (21%) were renting your own place and a very small minority of you (5%) had bought your own home.

We asked those of you living with your parents about the main reasons why. Unsurprisingly, for most, it came down to money. Around one in five (17%) were actively saving for a deposit on a place, while almost a quarter of you (23%) said you simply couldn't afford to move out. But money wasn't the only factor. For some of you, living at home was a positive choice – one in eight (12%) told us you didn't want to live apart from your family.

## Millennials vs gen Z

Our researchers compared your experiences to those of a cohort of millennials, born in 1989-1990, who are part of a similar study. The difference was striking: at age 23, your generation, gen Z, were almost three times as likely to be living with your parents as the older millennial cohort had been at age 25 (68% compared to 23%).

Compared to millennials, your generation were almost

**3X**  
AS LIKELY TO BE LIVING WITH YOUR PARENTS IN YOUR 20S

**1 IN 8**

told us you didn't want to leave home yet



## Looking ahead

Although many of you were not yet living independently in your early 20s, your answers gave a sense of how you see the future. When asked about having children, more than six in 10 said you would definitely like to become parents (or have more children), and a further three in 10 said you might. Only a small minority (8%) said that having children was not part of your plans.

In future surveys, we will be able to see how things have changed in your lives and continue building a picture of your generation's journey through your 20s and beyond.



FINDINGS FROM THE AGE 23 SURVEY HAVE BEEN WIDELY REPORTED IN THE PRESS, INCLUDING IN:

THE SUN


RADIO 5 LIVE

THE INDEPENDENT

# KEEP IN TOUCH




If you change your address, phone number or email address, please let us know so that we can contact you in the future.

 0800 092 1250  
(free from a UK landline)

 [childnc@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:childnc@ucl.ac.uk)


 [childnc.net](http://childnc.net)

 Child of the New Century  
Centre for Longitudinal Studies  
UCL Social Research Institute  
20 Bedford Way  
London WC1H 0AL

Please get in touch if you would like this content in a different format, such as large print or high contrast.

**Look out for more findings from the Age 23 Survey on the study website and socials:**

 [childnc.net](http://childnc.net)

 [@childofthenewcentury](https://www.instagram.com/childofthenewcentury)

 [@childofthenewcentury](https://www.facebook.com/childofthenewcentury)

