



Ask an interviewer
Joanne Stanton,
Hoxley, Essex

Tell us about your career with NatCen...

October 2014 marks 10 years of service as a

NatCen interviewer. I've worked on a variety of projects but ELSA is one of my favourites.

Best thing about your job

When anyone asks me what I do for a living, I say I drive about talking to people. The vast majority of people I meet are lovely and I often leave an interview with a big smile on my face.

Most memorable interview

Part of the ELSA interview one year was actually a memory test. I interviewed a lady who had just read a mind training book. She not only recalled all ten words but also in the right order. To my astonishment she repeated the feat a few minutes later!

Why do you like working on the study?

Going back to people you have interviewed before is a big plus. You get to update their experiences and life stages – it's very rewarding.

What topics are participants most interested in?

We ask about a wide range of things but people are always fascinated by the fact that we can compare results across many different countries. They enjoy that their contribution can be measured globally. It's pretty mind blowing!

Did you know?

- Life expectancy in England in 1600 was just 35 years old.
- Sandra Bullock, Boris Johnson and Prince Edward - all turn 50 this year.
- By 2050 there will be more than two billion people aged 60 and over across the globe.

Stay in touch

Your contribution to the study is important and we really value your continued commitment to ELSA. Please let us know if you have recently changed your contact details or have any questions about the study.

You can call us for free from a landline on **0800 652 4574**. Write to us at ELSA 50+ Health & Life, 101-153 King Road, Brentwood, Essex, CM14 4LX. Or email us at **elsa@natcen.ac.uk**.

www.natcen.ac.uk/elsa50plus

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ELSA

50+ Health & Life

NatCen
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About ELSA - 50+ Health & Life

Turning 50 isn't quite like it was half a century ago. And neither is turning 60, 70, 80 or more. As life expectancy has sharply increased over the last half century, the lives of people over 50, and their families, have also seen a dramatic change. By taking part in ELSA you're helping to find out how things are changing.

ELSA is about all the things that make up your life. It's about your health, planning for retirement, money, relationships, quality of life and much, much more. We're exploring the relationships between all these different aspects of life. What's more, as ELSA is part of a wider programme of international research – we can see how people in England compare with others around the world.

What we've discovered

Never too late to get fit

Regular exercise in later life can dramatically boost the chance of healthy ageing, even for those who do not take up physical activities until their sixties.

Four years of sustained and frequent physical activity raised the likelihood of people ageing healthily sevenfold compared with those who were consistently inactive, our research found.

Staying physically fit not only lowers the risk of developing major diseases or disabilities, but also promotes good mental health, keeps the mind sharp and helps us maintain an active social life.

Stay happy

A good frame of mind in middle age can set you up for a healthy retirement.

Our research found that levels of happiness among over-50s had a significant bearing upon the onset of disability, slower walking speeds and the incidence of heart disease.

Data from ELSA panel members highlight the importance of psychological wellbeing in your 50s and suggests that efforts to improve enjoyment in life as well as to manage and prevent disease could have beneficial effects on life expectancy.

Blitz spirit

Members of the generation which lived through the Second World War are happier with their lives than people decades younger, despite the limitations of old age.

Our research showed that although, as people move into their 70s and 80s, quality of life is affected by the effects of failing health and losing loved ones, levels of contentment remain high. In fact, their levels of life satisfaction are much higher than people in their 50s at the height of their careers in good health.



How ELSA is making a difference



HM Revenue and Customs

Government departments and agencies use ELSA to produce ad hoc evidence specific to their own particular needs. HMRC, for example, compares ELSA findings with their own in-house wealth estimates on an on-going basis, and is also interested in information collected on receipt of gifts and inheritances.



Department of Work and Pensions

DWP has used ELSA data to develop a strategy for pensions as well as using it to inform how they communicate with the public about changes to pensions.



Parliament

ELSA is frequently used in response to parliamentary questions. The Department for Work and Pensions and the Pensions Commission have made extensive use of ELSA data to understand pension reform, pensioner poverty and early retirement.



Thank you

Penny Young, Chief Executive, NatCen Social Research

“Now that one in three people in England are over 50, ELSA is more important than ever. We're grateful to the

thousands of people like you who take time out to tell us about their lives.

The first I heard about ELSA, long before joining NatCen Social Research, was when my mother was first invited to take part back in 2006. She's still part of the panel and enjoys a visit by her interviewer every couple of years. She treats each interview as an opportunity to pause and reflect on life.

For well over a decade we've followed thousands of people to find out how their lives are changing in terms of health, wealth and quality of life. What we've uncovered has given society a better understanding of people aged 50 and over and is being used by policymakers across government – from the Department of Work and Pensions to the Department of Health. Because every person involved is spoken to face-to-face in their home, the study is widely respected by the media, politicians and academics.

“We couldn't do it without you – our valued ELSA panel members.”

Thanks once again for your continued support and enthusiasm for sharing your experiences.”

What ELSA participants say...

“ My interviewer was very courteous and direct and impressed both myself and my daughter who was with me at the time. ”

“ Brilliant. Wendy is professional but with that niceness about her, she makes it fun as well. ”

“ It was nice to catch up because I have not done an interview for years. ”

“ You find it an easy process, not too onerous, well-paced, and it doesn't take too much of my time. The interviewers are knowledgeable, sensitive and aware of what they are there to do. ”