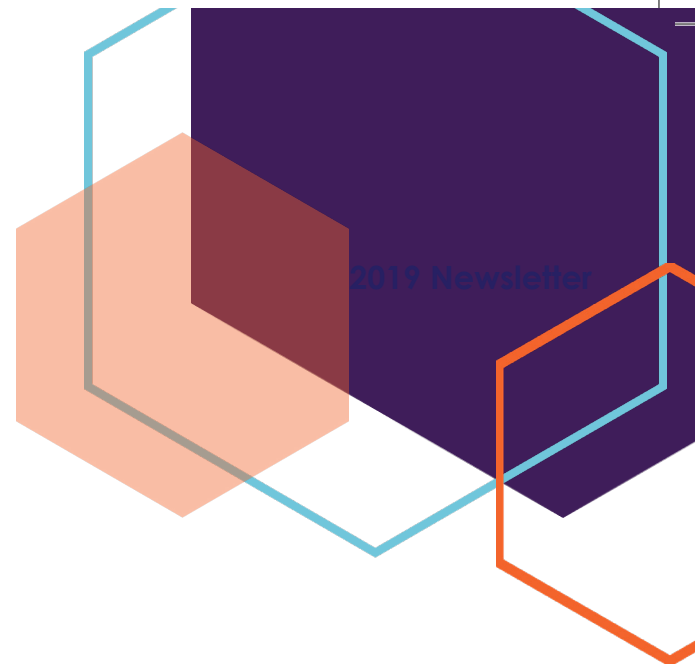




Australian National University



# PATH THROUGH LIFE

Co-hosted by  
Australian National University and UNSW

**Welcome to the annual newsletter of the PATH Through Life study. This year we are celebrating PATH's 20th birthday! This really gives a cause to say a huge thank you to all our participants who have contributed and continue to make PATH a truly unique and substantial study.**

The PATH study commenced in 1999 and was established to examine the development of cognitive mental disorders and cognitive decline, and the factors that influenced these outcomes. Since then we have added several items to address emerging research and policy issues in the ACT and nationally. For example, we've evaluated the mental health impact of the Canberra bushfires in 2003, the impact of work stress on mental health, risk factors for cognitive decline, and how obesity impacts the brain.

We are excited that interviews are underway for the Wave 5 of our 40s cohort, and the PATH Project team are based at UNSW Canberra for the Wave 5 40s and Wave 6 60s follow-ups. The funding for these follow-ups was awarded to Professor Anstey as part of the ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Aging Research. In 2019 the PATH study governance changed so that it is now jointly hosted by ANU and UNSW. We have a new Research Committee that includes Prof Kaarin Anstey, Prof Peter Butterworth, Dr Ruth Peters, Prof Nicolas Cherbuin, Dr Moyra Mortby, and Dr Liana Leach.

The PATH lead investigators are based at ANU and UNSW. We also have a Governance Committee that includes a representative of both UNSW and ANU Executive, Prof Butterworth and Prof Kaarin Anstey. Our new website can be found at [www.pathstudy.org.au](http://www.pathstudy.org.au).

We hope you enjoy our newsletter and wish you the best for the Festive Season and 2020.

## Celebrating 20 years of PATH

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## PATH 20+ cohort

Born 1975-79

Analysis of the 20s cohort data continues after many participants contributed to wave 5 data collection in 2017-2018. Our new website will be updated with the latest results and publications.

## PATH 40+ cohort

Born 1956-60

The online questionnaire and face to face interview are currently underway. Thank you to those participants who have already completed their interview or have booked an interview in the near future. For those who have elected for ORIMA research to handle their booking, please follow the link sent to your email to make an interview booking. There are many dates still available to schedule an interview this year.

## PATH 60+ cohort

Born 1937-41

We are looking forward to getting in touch again with our 60s cohort for interviews during 2020. For any further information, please get in touch with **Tanya** on **1300 917 295** or [info@pathstudy.org.au](mailto:info@pathstudy.org.au)

## PATH data in use

### Linked data use

PATH data linked with Medicare and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme yields many important findings about predictors of health service use. For example:

- Jenkins, L., et al (2016). A longitudinal analysis of general practitioner service use by patients with mild cognitive disorders in Australia. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000447123>.
- Pymont, C., et al (2015). Longitudinal cohort study describing persistent frequent attenders in Australian primary healthcare. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2015-008975>
- Butterworth, P., et al (2013). Socioeconomic differences in antidepressant use in the PATH through life study.



## 20 years of PATH...

The PATH project remains a valuable resource for researchers examining factors that influence the development of and recovery from mental disorders over the adult age span. Research continues to include its core aims:

### Aims

- to delineate the course of depression, anxiety, substance use and cognition across the adult life span;
- to identify environmental and genetic risk factors influencing individual differences in these mental health conditions;
- to investigate inter-relationships over time between these conditions.

### Policy use

PATH data continues to provide important information about health and wellbeing in the Canberra community. For example:

ACT Chief Health Officer's Report (2018) - [www.health.act.gov.au › files › ACT-Chief-Health-Officer-Report-2018](http://www.health.act.gov.au/files/ACT-Chief-Health-Officer-Report-2018)

ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate contract research:

- Social Inclusion: impact on health & wellbeing (2018).
- Resilience: factors that promote resilience (2018)

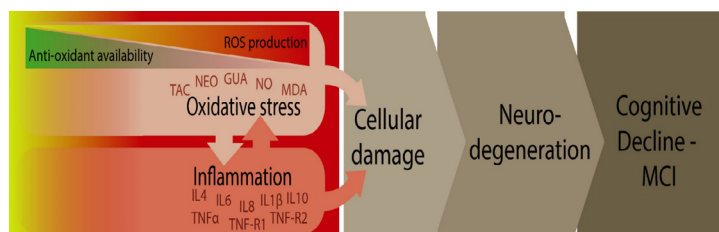
# PATH data in use

## Fatherhood

A number of recent Australian studies have been exploring the major challenges and enrichment that men experience when they become fathers – and PATH data has been contributing to this conversation. Data from the 20s cohort of PATH has shown that while some men experience depression and anxiety in the early parenting years, most men have good mental health across the transition to fatherhood. In fact, the highest mental health risks are for men who don't become fathers. PATH research shows that men who experience infertility are at a higher risk of depression, indicating that mental health support is important when men are experiencing infertility problems.

## Inflammation and Brain Health

While inflammation is an important protective mechanism to fight infections and resolve injuries, chronic inflammation can have a negative impact on our health. Data from the PATH MRI sub-study was used to investigate the link between inflammation and brain health. Lower levels of inflammation in the blood and higher levels of anti-oxidants were found to be associated with less shrinkage of the hippocampus – a brain region linked to memory function and emotions – and less decrease in cognitive function. Future studies will aim to identify the factors associated with different levels of inflammation.



## Healthy diet, healthy MIND

Using the CSIRO food frequency questionnaire as part of the PATH survey the Mediterranean-DASH diet Intervention for Neurological Delay (MIND) diet was evaluated against other diets.

Following a diet designed to increase brain health in the long term appears to reduce the odds of cognitive impairment and disorders including Alzheimer's and dementia. In adjusted logistic regression models, MIND diet (OR = 0.47, 95% CI 0.24, 0.91), was associated with reduced odds of 12-year cognitive impairment. The MIND diet is characterised by 15 dietary components with a focus on green leafy vegetables, whole grains, olive oil and small amounts of red meat.









## PATH contributions to research...

300 published articles in peer reviewed journals, 20 PhD theses submitted, and many more reports and presentations

# PhD Study

## SuperAgers: memory resilience

UNSW PhD candidate Janet Maccora presented her work on memory resilience in ageing at the Gerontological Society of America 2018 conference. "SuperAgers" are defined as older adults who perform as well as or better than much younger adults on tests of memory recall. Comparing PATH 20s and 60s data revealed 8.3% of women and 5.3% of men could be classified as SuperAgers. Interestingly, the lack of expected memory decline over time was evident for women but not men in the PATH sample.

<b>8.6%</b> of women were identified as SuperAgers These women:	<b>5.3%</b> of men were identified as SuperAgers These men:
 had more education	had more education 
 did more <b>investigative activities</b> (e.g. puzzles, chess etc)	did more <b>social activities</b> (e.g., being in groups or committees) 
 had moderate drinks per week	had less depression 

### We'd love to stay in touch...

Have you moved house?

Have you changed your phone number or email?

Do you have constructive feedback for us?

Contact: **1300 917 295**

Email: **info@pathstudy.org.au**



## Your PATH Interviewers

This year we have welcomed some new interviewers on board to begin face to face interviews of the 40s cohort. We also welcome back familiar faces: Liz, Cathy, Kay, Betty, Ian and Andrew. Liz and Cathy are currently getting in touch with our 60s cohort to begin interviews in 2020.

### PATH Survey Team



Tanya Price



Imogen Gad

### PATH THROUGH LIFE STUDY

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