

# New research shows naming things quickly and accurately more difficult from our fifties

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(Medical Xpress)—A study of adults from the ages of 25 to 70-plus revealed that our ability to spontaneously and accurately name common objects starts to decline when we hit our 50s and accelerates throughout our 60s and 70s.

Researchers Clémence Verhaegen and Martine Poncelet from the Department of Psychology at the University of Liège, Belgium, tested the naming skills of a group of adults over 3 to 3½-year intervals.

The tests, conducted in French, included naming pictures of objects, deciding if numbers were odd or even and making connections between similar words. The researchers measured both how accurately the study subjects carried out the tasks and how quickly they completed them.

The results, reported in the *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society* published by Cambridge Journals on behalf of the International Neuropsychological Society, show that participants in their 50s, while able to name objects as accurately as people in their 20s and 30s, showed a decline in how fast they could come up with the names compared with younger people. [Adults](#) in their 60s and 70s were both slower to find the correct words and also more likely to give objects the wrong name.

Martine Poncelet said: "We found that a subtle decline in naming ability starts to happen in our 50s when it takes us longer to name objects, although we can still name them accurately. This weakening of

connections throughout the [language system](#) then starts to gather pace in our 60s and 70s when we begin to be poorer at both giving objects the right name and doing it quickly."

Clémence Verhaegen added: "We don't yet know why this happens - it may indicate changes in our [language abilities](#) only or it may be caused by physical factors that have nothing to do with language. More studies are needed to reveal what is really going on."

**More information:** [journals.cambridge.org/jinsnaming](https://journals.cambridge.org/jinsnaming)

Provided by Cambridge University Press

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