

Today's 75-year-olds are cognitively fitter and happier than the 75-year-olds of 20 years ago

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Older adults today show higher levels of cognitive functioning and well-being than older adults of the same age 20 years ago. This has been found in a collaborative study among several research institutions in Berlin, including the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, the Max Planck Institute for Human Development (MPIB), and the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP). The result will be published in the scientific journal *Psychology and Aging*.

For all of those who are worrying about getting old, here is some good news: Old age is getting younger. On average, today's 75-year-olds are cognitively much fitter than the 75-year-olds of 20 years ago. At the same time, the current generation of 75-year-olds also reports [higher levels](#) of well-being and greater life satisfaction. "The gains in [cognitive functioning](#) and well-being that we have measured here in Berlin are considerable and of great significance for life quality in old age," comments Ulman Lindenberger, Director of the Center for Lifespan Psychology at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development. The researchers relate the gains to sociocultural factors such as education. In their opinion, the increase in well-being is also due to better physical fitness and higher levels of independence in old age.

"However, we expect that these positive historical trends are attenuated at the end of life," adds Denis Gerstorf, Professor for Developmental

Psychology at the Department of Psychology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. During the final stage of life, the increase in good years of life is likely to give way to a rapid and marked drop in both cognition and well-being. Current studies by Gerstorf and colleagues examining old people's last years of life support this view.

More information: "Secular changes in late-life cognition and well-being: Towards a long bright future with a short brisk ending?"

[www.diw.de/documents/publikati ... 97.de/diw_sp0738.pdf](http://www.diw.de/documents/publikati...97.de/diw_sp0738.pdf)

Provided by Max Planck Society

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