

# Being positive linked to lower chance of dying, study says

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Credit: Bill Kuffrey/public domain

Being positive, marrying and getting a degree are each significantly associated with a lower chance of dying, a new study says

Christopher Jacobi, of the University of Oxford, studied survey responses and [medical records](#) of 28,662 people in the U.K. to find out whether their chance of dying was associated with their mental health.

Mr Jacobi told the British Sociological Association's Medical Sociology conference in Birmingham today [Thursday 8 September] that people with high positive mental health were less likely to die than average, though a longer follow-up period would be needed to see the [long-term effects](#).

Those in the top sixth group of scores for positive mental health experienced a relative risk of dying that was 18% lower in the four years after the survey, he found.

Mr Jacobi, of Nuffield College, said that the strength of this effect was similar to the effect of having a degree or being married.

In his research, he analysed people with similar physical health, income and other life characteristics to exclude the effects of these and isolate those of mental health, marriage and education.

Other factors, such as religious belief and income, did not have a statistically significant role.

Factors linked to a greater chance of dying were, as expected, being older and having physical health problems.

"The results indicate that better positive mental health seems to have a somewhat protective effect against mortality," Mr Jacobi told the conference.

"In research literature the most frequently stated ways in which positive mental health is likely to affect mortality are via direct physiological responses such as lowered blood pressure, capacity to cope with stress, less drinking and smoking, an active lifestyle, and better sleep quality.

"Likewise, people with high positive mental health might not be affected

as severely by potentially negative symptomatic and physiological effects of life events like divorce or unemployment."

The interviewees' [mental health](#) was evaluated by scoring them for how optimistic they were about the future, how useful and relaxed they were, how close they felt to other [people](#) and how decisive they felt.

Provided by British Sociological Association

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