

## Every year spent in school or university improves life expectancy, study says

### Level 3: Advanced

#### 1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. Over the last few decades, life expectancy has generally increased across many parts of the world. Why do you think this is?
2. What factors do you believe have the most significant impact on life expectancy? Why?
3. In what ways do you think education can impact life expectancy?

#### 2 Key words

a. Match the words in the wordpool with their definitions.

absence	attendance	compelling	decline	deprived
earnings	empowered	inequalities	investment	longevity
magnitude	rates	regardless of	robust	systematic

1. following a method or plan \_\_\_\_\_
2. living for a long time \_\_\_\_\_
3. being present at a particular place or event \_\_\_\_\_
4. reduction \_\_\_\_\_
5. not being where you are expected to be \_\_\_\_\_
6. the number of times something happens over a certain period \_\_\_\_\_
7. amount of money someone receives in exchange for their work \_\_\_\_\_
8. strong, solid \_\_\_\_\_
9. an argument or statement so strong that makes you believe in it \_\_\_\_\_
10. putting resources, such as money or time, into something that can lead to benefits  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. unfair situations and differences in opportunities and treatment between individuals  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. the size, scale or extent of something
13. despite

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14. lacking essential resources necessary for a satisfactory standard of living  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. confident and in control of your own life and decisions \_\_\_\_\_

**b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences. You may need to change the form of the word.**

1. The project needs to be completed, \_\_\_\_\_ how much it costs.
2. The unemployment \_\_\_\_\_ has been increasing steadily over recent months.
3. Her \_\_\_\_\_ have increased significantly due to her hard work and dedication.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ need to be diversified to minimise risks and maximise potential gains.
5. Their assessment of the situation is \_\_\_\_\_, providing a comprehensive analysis.
6. Please remember that student \_\_\_\_\_ to lessons will be tracked.
7. Different types of \_\_\_\_\_ are evident throughout society, such as limited access to education.
8. Do you know the reason for his \_\_\_\_\_ from work today? Is he sick?
9. They presented \_\_\_\_\_ evidence that exercise can also improve our mental health.
10. There's been a sharp \_\_\_\_\_ in international students coming in September.

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#### ***Analysis also says not attending school is as deadly as smoking or heavy drinking***

**Richard Adams**

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- 1 Every year spent in school or university improves our life expectancy, while not attending school is as deadly as smoking or heavy drinking, according to the first systematic study directly linking education to gains in longevity.
- 2 Using evidence from industrialised countries such as the UK and US as well as developing countries such as China and Brazil, the review found that an adult's risk of mortality went down by 2% for every year in full-time education. Completing primary, secondary and tertiary education is the equivalent of a lifetime of eating a healthy diet, lowering the risk of death by 34% compared with those with no formal education, according to the peer-reviewed analysis in *The Lancet Public Health* journal. At the opposite extreme, not attending school at any point was as bad for adult health as consuming five or more alcoholic drinks every day or smoking 10 cigarettes each day for a decade.
- 3 The study adds impetus to efforts in England to ensure children stay at school, with experts saying the results underline connections between school attendance and health. It also implies that increases in the school-leaving age and rising numbers of young people staying on into further and higher education could add years to future levels of life expectancy.
- 4 While the benefits of education on life expectancy have long been recognised, the review by academics at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and the University of Washington in Seattle is the first to calculate the number of years of education and its connections to reducing mortality. Neil Davies, Professor of Medical Statistics at University College London and an expert on the links between education and health, who was not involved in the research, described it as "an impressive piece of work". But Davies cautioned that associations seen in the past may change, given the UK's recent expansion in higher education and other factors such as the decline in smoking so that rates are now similar among graduates and non-graduates.
- 5 Higher rates of school absences could also see children missing out on the future health benefits, Davies noted, saying, "It's worth noting that the increased rates of absence from school have major consequences beyond their effect on health. The relationship between time spent in education and earnings has been very well studied and is pretty robust. This is also likely to be worse for more disadvantaged students. Quite honestly, the links between education and mortality are the least of our worries about the increased rates of school absence – the labour market consequences are likely to be worse."
- 6 The researchers said the meta-analysis, backed by the Norwegian government's research fund and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was "compelling evidence" in support of increased investment in education as a way to reduce inequalities in global death rates. "Education is important in its own right, not just for its benefits to health, but now being able to quantify the magnitude of this benefit is a significant development," said Dr Terje Andreas Eikemo of NTNU, the study's co-author. The analysis also found the improvements in longevity to be similar in rich and poor countries, and regardless of sex, social class and demography.
- 7 David Finch, an assistant director of the Health Foundation who has studied life expectancy as part of its Healthy Lives team, said: "We have really big inequalities in the UK. The gap in life expectancy between the least and most deprived areas in England is 9.4 years for men and 7.7 years for women, and it isn't surprising that you see a significant difference when comparing by qualification level. So it's not surprising in that sense but it's really interesting to see it quantified."
- 8 Finch said a greater level of education improved life expectancy in different ways, including through 'soft', non-financial benefits. "It helps you to build better social connections. It makes you better at accessing and understanding information that can help you make better choices, essentially, whether it's financial or what you choose to do and participate in," Finch said. "It can help you feel empowered and valued. Those are slightly softer and really important things that can help people. A key channel is through which education leads to higher lifetime earnings and

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that itself in turn helps you to access lots of other things that are really important, like better quality of housing, a better diet.”

- 9 Finch said that whether a longer lifespan would continue to be enjoyed by those who spend longer in education depends on whether benefits remain in place. “Will that translate into better standards of living over their lifetimes, in the future? That’s where there is a question: can people access affordable housing? Are young people’s career earnings trajectories what they were for people 30 or 40 years ago, at the same age? The prospects aren’t as rosy,” Finch said.

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#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F) according to the article? Correct the false sentences, underlining the corresponding evidence in the text.

1. The study focused on both developed and developing countries in different regions.
2. The consequences of a lack of formal education are comparable to leading an unhealthy life.
3. This is the first study to acknowledge the relationship between education and life expectancy.
4. Davies stated other factors are at play and may alter results.
5. Davies asserts that school absences are directly linked with unemployment levels.
6. Researchers found that investment in education will not impact inequalities in the short term.
7. The study concluded that the impact of education varies considerably depending on region and other individual factors.
8. Finch believes the greatest contribution of this study is measuring the impact of education.
9. According to Finch, education impacts people's lives in both tangible and intangible ways.
10. Finch is confident the impact of education on longevity will not change over time.

#### 4 Key language

a. Complete the phrases from the article with the correct form of the words in brackets.

1. Not attending school is as \_\_\_\_\_ as smoking or heavy drinking. (DEAD)
2. Using evidence from \_\_\_\_\_ countries such as the UK and US as well as developing countries such as China and Brazil, the review found that an adult's risk of mortality went down by 2% for every year in full-time education. (INDUSTRY)
3. Completing primary, secondary and tertiary education is the equivalent of a lifetime of eating a healthy diet, \_\_\_\_\_ the risk of death by 34%. (LOW)
4. This is also likely to be worse for more \_\_\_\_\_ students. (ADVANTAGE)
5. 'Quite \_\_\_\_\_, the links between education and mortality are the least of our worries.' (HONEST)

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6. 'Education is important in its own right, not just for its benefits to health, but now being able to \_\_\_\_\_ the magnitude of this benefit is a significant development.'  
(QUANTITY)
7. Can people access \_\_\_\_\_ housing? (AFFORD)

### 5 Discussion

**a. Discuss these statements and questions.**

1. 'The links between education and mortality are the least of our worries about the increased rates of school absence – the labour market consequences are likely to be worse.'
2. Education 'helps you to build better social connections.'
3. Education 'makes you better at accessing and understanding information that can help you make better choices, essentially, whether it's financial or what you choose to do and participate in.'
4. 'Are young people's career earnings trajectories what they were for people 30 or 40 years ago, at the same age?'

### 6 In your own words

- a. In pairs or small groups, do some online research and gather information about the situation in your own country and prepare a presentation about what could be done to improve attendance and for people to spend more years in school or university.**