



## Dear High School & Beyond Participant,

A few years ago, you were part of one of America's largest and most important scientific efforts to answer questions like:

- What leads some older people to be healthy while others have many health problems?
- What causes some older people to have difficulty thinking and remembering things while others have less difficulty?
- What leads some older people to be happy and prosperous while others struggle?

You completed a survey so we could understand your experiences, health, and memory. You were also invited to provide blood and saliva so we could better understand the biology of how early life experiences, education, stress, and other factors shape our health.

Out of about 22,500 members who joined High School & Beyond in the early eighties, about 14,000 generously participated between 2020 and 2022. Participants shared extraordinary information that will lead to scientific advances to prevent diseases like Alzheimer's and other dementias. This newsletter is a small token of our appreciation. In it, we share insights about the experiences of people in High School & Beyond. (And as always, your personal privacy and confidentiality are our top priority.)

If you participated a few years ago, THANK YOU. If you were not able to participate, thank you anyway. We look forward to another round of High School & Beyond in a few years!

**John Robert Warren, Eric Grodsky, Chandra Muller, Jennifer Manly, and Adam Brickman**  
Principal Investigators, High School & Beyond

# High School & Beyond at Midlife



Almost everybody's ability to remember things slips as they get older. For many people this gradual decline can start as early as their 40s or 50s. So, if you find yourself having trouble remembering things these days, know that you are not alone!

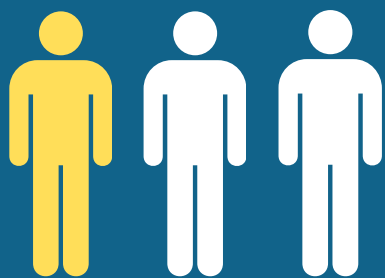
When people's ability to think and remember things declines below a certain point, they may be diagnosed as having "cognitive impairment" or even with a form of dementia such as Alzheimer's Disease. Even though almost everyone's ability to remember things declines as they get older, some people don't experience that decline until much later in life. That means they delay or completely avoid getting to the point of cognitive impairment or dementia. What experiences and factors in life impact how long people delay the onset of memory loss?

Many people with dementia or other cognitive impairments have excess levels of certain proteins in their brain (called "amyloid- $\beta$ " and "tau"). However, many people who have excess levels of these proteins grow old never experiencing cognitive impairment or dementia; for some reason, their brains continue to function normally (for their age). What experiences and factors in life impact whether having biological risk factors for cognitive impairments actually turns into dementia?

Before High School & Beyond—that is, before you made High School & Beyond happen—scientists could not easily research the answers to questions like these. That's because they needed information about experiences and factors all across people's lives, not just at older ages. And they needed that information for a large group of people that represents all kinds of Americans. High School & Beyond to the rescue! In the next several years, the data you provided will be used to find answers to questions like the ones above. In this way you are helping to delay memory loss and prevent dementia. ■

## 1 in 3 participants

said in 2021 their memory is getting worse as they get older



**10%**  
had trouble remembering appointments and dates



**15%**  
had daily problems with thinking and memory

## What to do if you notice a change in your memory

**Get checked out.** Changes in cognitive health are normal as we age, but sometimes it can be a sign of something more serious. If you are consistently struggling, talk to a doctor about your concerns.

**Call up a friend.** Believe it or not, loneliness can be a contributing factor to cognitive decline—and something as simple as a conversation with someone you love can help.

# “Tell me about your most recent job.”

Asking about your career is one of the most important parts of the High School & Beyond study, and it's one that we've asked at every one of our six follow-ups. Your answers have helped make sense of changes in the labor market, the different choices made by people your age, and the effects of our jobs on our health. You have shared your answers with us over four decades—that's a lot of data! Here is an overview of what the High School & Beyond crew has been up to since leaving school.

When you were interviewed back in the 1980s, the majority of participants (82%) viewed job success and steady work as important in their lives, but only 1 in 3 reported wanting to make a lot of money. Your values changed over time as you matured; 12 years after leaving school, you cared about starting a family 15% more than you did as high school students.

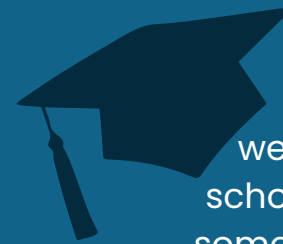
A wide variety of industries are represented among HS&B participants. The most commonly represented are schools, hospitals, and other healthcare, which show that our participants care about

giving back and helping others—which is exactly what you're doing by participating in this study!

One of the most special characteristics of the HS&B cohort is how many participants went back to school later in life. Because we have checked in with you throughout your lives, we are able to understand the circumstances that prevented some people from attending college directly after high school— *and* the reasons you returned later on. ■

## Top Occupations Represented in HS&B

- General and Operations Managers
- Registered Nurses
- Customer Service Representatives
- Accountants and Auditors
- Financial Managers
- Bookkeepers
- Office and Administrative Support
- Education, Training, and Library
- Elementary School Teachers
- Administrative Services



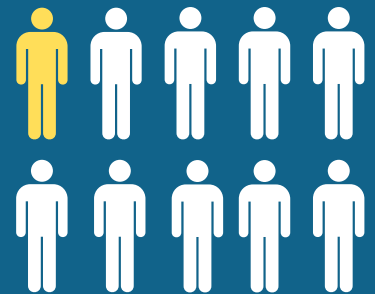
**65%**  
went back to school to learn something new



**7%**  
served in the military

**1 in 10 participants**

Had retired by 2021



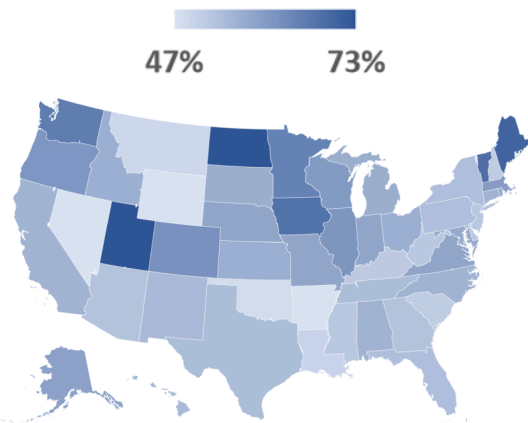


## Moving or changing your contact information? Let us know!

You are a valuable and irreplaceable member of HS&B. We are very grateful for your continued support for the study. If you have changed your contact details recently, or have any questions, please let us know by emailing us at [HS&B@norc.org](mailto:HS&B@norc.org) or calling toll free at **1-877-346-7151**.

## Make sure you're represented!

### 2021-22 Response Rates by State



HS&B cares about the experiences of Americans from across the country. Of people originally selected in 1980 to participate, most continued to participate in the 2021-2022 survey. Be sure to respond to the next HS&B survey so that people like you and those around you are represented!

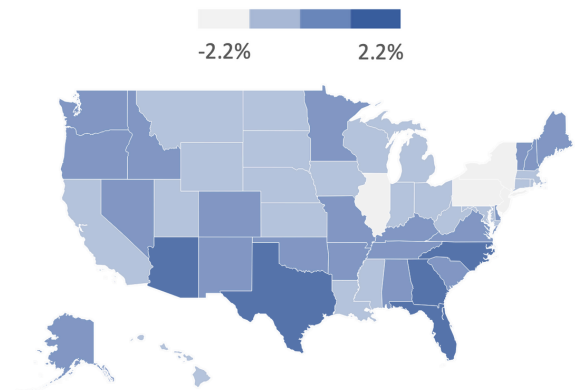
"I am glad that I am still a part of this adventure that started in 1980. I hope to continue participating as long as you let me."

-Participant, 2021 follow up

"I believe that the HS&B program... has made me take stock of my education and the direction I've gone."  
-Participant, 2021 follow up

## Participants on the Move

### Changes in Residence 1980-2022



Curious to know how many of your classmates have stuck around since 1982? High School & Beyond participants come from all across America. Most participants have remained within a couple of hours from the schools they graduated from, but some areas have seen more change than others. Across your lives, many of you have moved from colder climates to warmer states like Florida and Texas.