

Every year spent in school or university can make you live longer, study says

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

- a. Read the title of the article. Make a list of possible reasons why education can help people live longer. Then discuss with a partner.

2 Key words

- a. Match the words in the word pool with their definitions. All the words appear in the article.

absence	attending	decline	earnings	empowered
investment	major	mortality	rates	regardless of

1. being present at a particular place or event
2. the state of being a person who is alive and will not live forever
3. reduction
4. the number of times something happens in a certain period
5. not being where you are expected to be
6. important, significant
7. amount of money someone receives in exchange for their work
8. putting resources, such as money or time, into something that can lead to benefits
9. despite
10. 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 words.

1. The project needs to be completed, _____ how much it costs.
2. The unemployment _____ has increased over the past months.
3. Her _____ have increased due to her hard work and dedication.
4. _____ need to be diversified to minimise risks.
5. She is _____ a conference on education next Monday.
6. Do you know the reason for his _____ from work today? Is he sick?

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

Level 2: Intermediate

Richard Adams

23 January, 2024

- 1 Every year spent in school or university improves your chances of living longer, while not attending school is as deadly as smoking or heavy drinking, according to a recent study directly linking education to a longer life.
- 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. 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 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 warned 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 rates are now similar among graduates and non-graduates.
- 4 Davies also noted 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 solid. This is also likely to be worse for less fortunate students. Quite honestly, the links between education and mortality are not as worrying as the consequences in the job market."
- 5 The researchers said there is strong evidence to support investment in education as a way to reduce differences in global death rates. "Education is important in its own right, not just for its benefits to health, but now being able to quantify how beneficial it is is a significant development," said Dr Terje Andreas Eikemo, the study's co-author. The analysis also found results are similar in rich and poor countries, and regardless of sex or social class.
- 6 David Finch, who has studied life expectancy, 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. It can help you feel empowered and valued. Those are really important things that can help people. A key fact is that education leads to higher lifetime earnings and that in turn helps you to access lots of other things that are really important, like better quality of housing or a better diet."
- 7 Finch said that those who spend longer in education will continue to enjoy a longer life only if benefits stay the same. Whether this translates into better standards of living over their lifetimes will depend on whether they can access cheap housing or earn as much as people did in the past at the same age. But prospects are not really promising.

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First published in *The Guardian*, 23/1/2024

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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. Not having a formal education can be compared to an unhealthy lifestyle.
3. This is the first study to focus on the relationship between education and life expectancy.
4. Davies explained there are other factors such as the decline in smoking that can affect the results.
5. According to Davies, school absences are directly linked with unemployment levels.
6. Investment in education will not help reduce inequalities in the short term.
7. The impact of education depends on the region and some individual factors.
8. Finch believes the greatest contribution of this study is measuring the impact of education.

4 Key language

a. Complete the sentences from the article using only one word in each gap.

1. Not attending school is _____ **deadly as** smoking or heavy drinking.
2. Using evidence from industrialised countries _____ **as** the UK and US **as** _____ **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.
3. David Finch, _____ has studied life expectancy, said a greater level of education improved life expectancy in different ways, including through "soft", non-financial benefits.

b. Look again at the words/phrases with which you completed the sentences and answer the questions.

1. Which one is used to introduce a comparison?
2. Which one is used to add extra information about a person?
3. Which one is used to introduce an example?

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements and questions.

1. 'Quite honestly, the links between education and mortality are not as worrying as the consequences in the job market.'
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.'

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.