

## DATA INSIGHTS

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# Youth Movements, Social Mobility and Health Inequalities – Update

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## OVERVIEW

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The formal schools-based education system is a major state intervention aimed at producing a fair distribution of socioeconomic position in later life. However, there is growing evidence that other skills gained outwith formal education may be as important.

Our study looked at youth movement attendance and long-term effects on social mobility and self-reported general health in mid-life.

## WHAT WE DID

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The data we used were from the Aberdeen Children of the 1950s (ACONF) study. ACONF followed a cohort of individuals born in Aberdeen between 1950 and 1956. These individuals were surveyed in 1962 whilst at school and early-life data were obtained from birth certificates and school and hospital records. A random sample of them were asked about family circumstances, attitudes and behaviour in 1964 and they were traced for a follow-up questionnaire in the early 2000s. There were 1333 participants in our cohort.

We used these data to model the participants' self-reported health around age 50 and looked at whether this was different for those who attended youth movements (such as the Guides and Scouts) compared to their peers who did not. To do this, we also took into account differences in socioeconomic situation in childhood, a child's health, well-being and development, and parental support and engagement in their child's development.

## WHAT WE FOUND

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We found that children who participated in these organisations – which aim to support young people in their personal development – had 53% higher odds of reporting excellent health around age 50 compared to their peers.

We looked at why this might be and found that around a quarter (27%) of this may be explained by children who attended these groups having greater social mobility and consequently improved chances of better health in mid-life.



## WHY IT MATTERS

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Our findings add to previous research in this area, which found a positive relationship between Scout and Guide participation and adult mental health. Because many of the organizations that deliver these youth programmes are charities supported by volunteers, they may represent a very cost-effective method of delivering population health.

## WHAT NEXT?

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Future work has begun to explore the previously reported link between youth movement attendance and adult mental health using the ACONF data linked to individual prescription records for mental ill-health.

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