

Hello, Viva families! We hope you've enjoyed a wonderful summer.

As the season winds down, we're excited to share the latest news, research highlights, and opportunities from the Project Viva community.

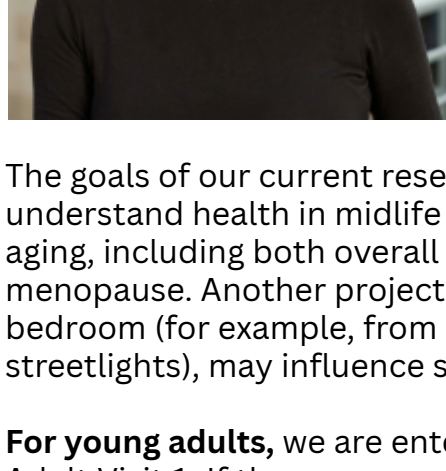
This issue features a **Q&A with Principal Investigator Dr. Emily Oken, updates on current and upcoming study visits, and a look at the health topics you told us you want to learn more about.** We're also highlighting **new research** showing how the neighborhoods where women live may shape cardiovascular health for years to come.

Thank you for being a valued member of the Project Viva community!



A Q&A With Our Principal Investigator

Dr. Emily Oken, MD, MPH



What's coming up in Project Viva for moms and young adults?

We are thrilled that we have recently received some new funding to study topics of importance for both Viva moms and Viva young adults.

For moms, we have received new funding to continue follow-up through a new visit, the Women's Health Visit 2. This visit will be fully remote.

The goals of our current research projects focused on moms are to better understand health in midlife and beyond. Our newest project examines predictors of aging, including both overall aging and reproductive aging, such as the timing of menopause. Another project investigates how exposure to light at night, both in the bedroom (for example, from electronic devices) and outdoors (for example, from streetlights), may influence sleep, menopausal symptoms, and brain function.

For young adults, we are entering the final year of data collection for the Young Adult Visit 1. If there are any young adults who haven't yet found the time to participate in either a remote or in-person visit, please reach out to us soon, as the window is closing! In addition to the main research grant that supports new data collection at this visit, and via the annual questionnaires, we have received several new research grants focused on analyzing our existing data on Viva young adults, from birth through the present day. One of these grants is focused on understanding environmental factors that influence kidney function.

What topics are you currently most excited about in Viva?

I am excited to be working on a project that is looking at characterizing "positive health." When most people think about health, they think about not being sick. In fact, much of our work in Viva has focused on disease outcomes like obesity, high blood pressure, or asthma. But health is much more than that. Positive health is about thriving, not just surviving. We are using all of the questionnaire responses and measures we have collected from Viva young adults to better understand how different components of health are inter-related, including mental health, optimism, and physical functioning.

How do you decide what new questions to study?

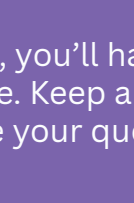
There are many different ways that we develop our research questions. Some questions come from the many students and trainees who join us to work on research projects as part of their education. Others emerge from the big public health topics of the day, such as our current work related to maternal diet and chemical exposures in pregnancy and autism risk in kids. Finally, we take inspiration from the questions that participants pose to us during their visits or on questionnaire open responses. Examples of the latter include studies related to media use and mental health in teens and young adults, or stress and menopause symptoms in moms.

What makes Project Viva unique compared to other studies?

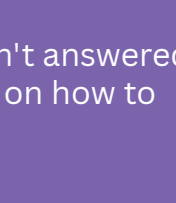
Project Viva continues to be one of the only studies in the US, and indeed across the world, that has such rich information on health from pregnancy through young adulthood (for kids) and midlife (for moms) collected in real time – i.e. not remembered years after the fact. The long-term nature of the study and number of different types of data we have collected are both tremendous strengths. Another distinguishing feature of Viva is how accurate and detailed we are with the data collected – we continue to have a truly terrific staff of research assistants and data analysts who make sure that every data point is accurate.

What's your favorite part about working on this study?

Honestly, I enjoy all of the parts – from thinking of research ideas, to writing grants to get funding, to writing papers. I no longer do the data analysis myself – we have such amazing statisticians and analysts who do a way better job than I could ever do. But probably the most fun is watching students and trainees learn and develop research skills and progress in their own careers. The best is when they come back to work with us and mentor their own students on Project Viva analyses. It makes me feel like a proud research grandma! (Note: I am not yet a real grandma. This is the closest I've gotten so far!)



Still Have Questions? We've Got You Covered!



Soon, you'll have the opportunity to submit any questions that weren't answered above. Keep an eye out for an upcoming communication with details on how to share your questions with us.

Current Participation Opportunities

Every survey and study visit helps us better understand health over time. See below for the latest opportunities to participate in Project Viva.

YOUNG ADULTS: PARTICIPATE & EARN INCENTIVES

Two opportunities are open now. We invite you to complete both!



The Young Adult Visit #1



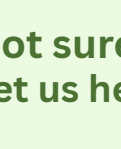
In person at our office



Home visit



Remote/self-guided



Questionnaire-only

(Takes about 20-30 minutes)

Open until early 2027



The 2026 Annual Survey



Takes about 5 minutes



Complete online any time

Open until the end of 2026

Not sure what you've completed and what's still pending? Let us help. Contact us today (project_viva@hphci.harvard.edu).

MOMS: STAY TUNED



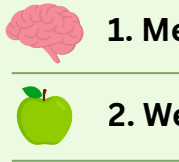
- We are still preparing to launch the **Women's Health Visit #2** later this year.
- This will be a **fully remote visit**.
- This visit aims to help us understand how light at night and everyday stress may affect menopause, sleep, mood, and cognition over time.

We look forward to working with you.

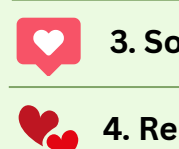
Exploring the Topics That Matter Most to You

Your feedback helps shape the future of our research! We took a look at responses from the **2025 Annual Survey** to learn which topics participants are most interested in exploring.

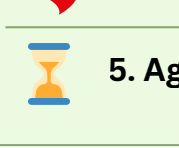
Here's what topped the list:



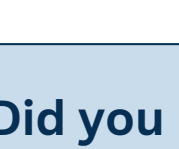
YOUNG ADULTS



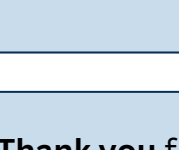
1. Mental Health & Stress



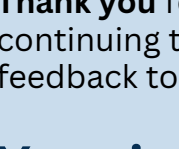
2. Weight & Eating Habits



3. Social Media



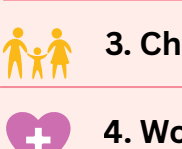
4. Relationships



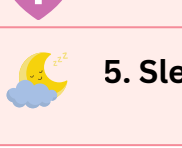
5. Aging



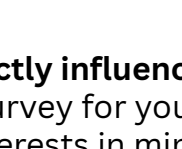
MOMS



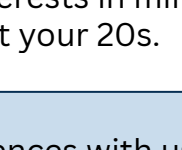
1. Menopause



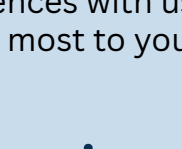
2. Mental Health & Stress



3. Children & Family



4. Women's Health



5. Sleep

Did you know?

Your feedback directly influences the questions we ask. The 2026 Annual Survey for young adults was designed with participant interests in mind and explores how life changes throughout your 20s.

Thank you for sharing your ideas and experiences with us. We look forward to continuing to incorporate topics that matter most to you and using your feedback to guide future research!

Your input helps shape the science.

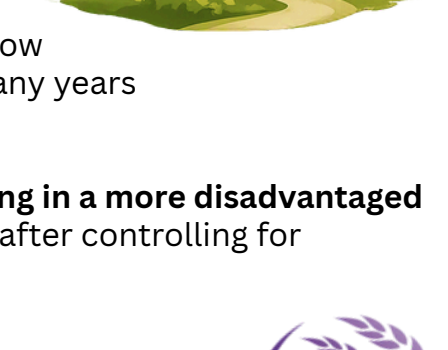


Featured Finding

New **Project Viva** study shows where women live can shape heart health for decades

Why was this study needed?

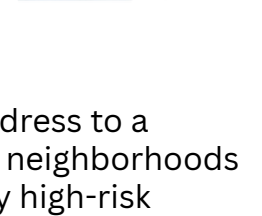
Heart disease is a **leading cause of death for women**. A woman's heart health can get worse in midlife, especially around menopause. Past studies showed that neighborhood factors can shape heart health, but we know less about how these factors affect heart health over many years as women go through menopause.



Project Viva researchers sought to evaluate whether **living in a more disadvantaged neighborhood was linked with lower heart health**, even after controlling for socioeconomic factors like income and education.

Who was involved?

1,200 women in Project Viva, who have been followed for **more than 20 years** from pregnancy into midlife.



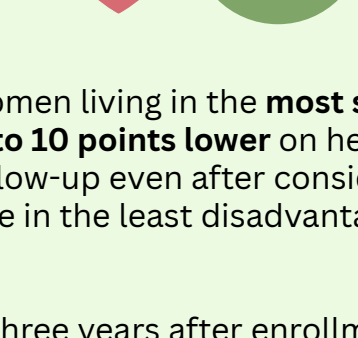
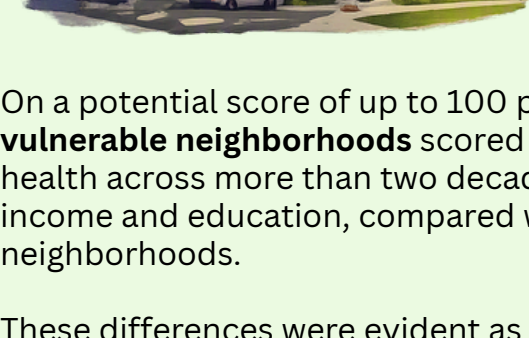
How was the study done?

Researchers mapped out where participants lived, matching each address to a specific neighborhood based on census data. They then linked these neighborhoods to the **Social Vulnerability Index**, which is a tool that helps to identify high-risk neighborhoods with poor access to social and economic resources. Researchers also measured heart health using a cardiovascular health score based on the American Heart Association's **Life's Essential 8**. This score includes known risk factors for cardiovascular disease, including blood pressure, weight, blood sugar, cholesterol, smoking, physical activity, sleep, and diet.

Key findings/takeaways:

HIGHER VULNERABILITY

POORER HEART HEALTH



- On a potential score of up to 100 points, women living in the **most socially vulnerable neighborhoods** scored about **6 to 10 points lower** on heart health across more than two decades of follow-up even after considering income and education, compared with those in the least disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- These differences were evident as early as three years after enrollment and **persisted into midlife**. Women also experienced faster declines in heart health before menopause, a key period for rising cardiovascular risk.
- Socioeconomic factors also shaped outcomes. Women with lower income, less education, or who identified as Non-Hispanic Black had lower heart health scores throughout the study.

Implications:

- The years **before and around menopause** may be an important time to support women's heart health, especially for those living in **under-resourced neighborhoods**.
- The findings highlight opportunities to improve neighborhood conditions – such as access to healthy food, safe places to be active, and quality health care – so women can protect their heart health over time.

Read more about this study in Newsweek: <https://bit.ly/4xi8CFS>

Thank you for reading!



PROJECT Viva

A STUDY OF HEALTH FOR THE NEXT GENERATION