

## At what age are you officially old and boring? A few recent surveys reckon it's your mid-thirties.

- By Mark Johanson

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What's the perfect age? For some it's the carefree teenage years or time at university. But 35 may in fact be the pivotal turning point, both personally and professionally.

Not only is 35 the age when we're perceived to no longer be "young", according to a [study](#) from the University of Kent, but also when men reach "[peak loneliness](#)" and women hit "[peak boring](#)." And if that wasn't bad enough, 35 is also the age at which we start hating our jobs, according to a [survey](#) of more than 2,000 UK employees by human resources company Robert Half.

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- Whipman

Research suggests it's during your mid-thirties that family pressure and increased financial responsibility conflate causing problems both at work and home.

### **Under pressure**

Job security also becomes more of an issue. In the first quarter of 2017, UK workers aged 35-49 were twice as likely to be made redundant as those aged 25-34, according to [data](#) from the Office for National Statistics.

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Moreover, this group were less content at work than their younger peers, the Robert Half UK [survey](#) found. It revealed that one in six British workers over the age of 35 were unhappy in their job – more than double the figure for those under 35.

"It's quite a combination to have a new family and more financial commitments... all while maturing into a career where you've started to go into leadership roles with more responsibility," says Ashley Whipman, director at Robert Half UK.



Macro groupings use 18-34 and 35-54, making 35 one of the most common dividers between those considered younger and older (Credit: Getty Images)

Workers in their mid-30s struggle with the nagging question: Have I made it?

Whipman says younger workers often benefit from lower expectations from their managers and higher aspirations, while workers in their mid-30s struggle with the nagging question: Have I made it?

Of course, 35 is also the age when we're no longer in the same age bracket as 20-somethings and instead lumped in with the older generations, which could make it more of an arbitrary marker than studies claim it to be.



Rebel Wilson, recently at the centre of defamation lawsuit over claims that she lied to a journalist about her age – which is 37 – to appear younger (Credit: Getty Images)

Julia Clark, a pollster with global market research company Ipsos, says, it's fair "to consider that some of the 'under 35' and 'over 35' differences you find are due to the fact that that's where we draw the line."

However Clark adds it's a standard practice among the market research community to use age categories that cut across decades, rather than coincide with them, to accurately group people by life stage. A 20-year-old and a 29-year-old are often at

very different life stages, so the first common demographic grouping runs from 18 to 24 (then 25-34). Macro groupings use 18-34 and 35-54, making 35 one of the most common dividers between those who are young and developing a career and those who are older and more established.

Women who want to have children still face anxiety over their fertility post-35 although [recent research](#) suggests fertility doesn't drop as sharply as once imagined. In the US, an increasing number of women are now postponing their first pregnancy well into their 30s to continue education and forge careers. The latest [statistics](#) from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest that, for the first time in recorded history, women in their early 30s are now having more children than those in their 20s.

There are also financial reasons for delaying children – a [2011 study](#) published in the Journal of Population Economics found that every year a woman postpones having children leads to a 9% increase in career earnings.

### Deferred decisions

Dilip Jeste, director of the Center for Healthy Aging at University of California San Diego, says there's a common misconception that our 20s and 30s will be the best years of our lives, and that things only go downhill later on. In reality, these formative years are riddled with the stress and anxiety of making major life decisions.

A longer life-span in the developed world, coupled with the [overabundance of choices](#) in a globalised economy, only makes this process of settling into a career, family and geographic location longer and harder than it was a generation ago.

A lot of these stresses that once happened earlier in life are now happening in the 30s – Dilip Jeste

“Previously people made definitive lifelong decisions in their early 20s, but today's millennials are continuing to defer decisions,” says Jeste. “They're getting married later in life, they're having children later in life, and a lot of these stresses that once happened earlier in life are now happening in the 30s.”



Spice Girl turned fashion designer Victoria Beckham has seemingly managed the impossible: Maintaining celebrity status beyond youth (Credit: Getty Images)

The good news? “The rest of your life is going to be happier,” says Jeste.

Of course, ageing isn’t a glamorous affair but your mental health may improve as the decades pass “we know ourselves better, we make informed decisions and we tend to be less selfish,” Jeste says. “That’s the wisdom that comes with experience, which only comes from ageing.”

