Parents do actually live longer say top scientists

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[Charles White for Metro.co.uk](http://metro.co.uk/author/charles-white-for-metro-co-uk/)Monday 13 Mar 2017 11:30 pm

Smug couples can rejoice because parenthood actually makes you live longer, research has suggested.

Having children does not seem so selfless anymore because it apparently gives you a longer life expectancy.

The benefits last longer than previously understood – affecting you beyond the age of 80.

Experts from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, tracked the lifespan from the age of 60 of all men and women born between 1911 and 1925 living in Sweden.

They found that men and women who had at least one child experienced lower death risks than childless men and women.

At 60 years of age, the difference in life expectancy between those with children and those without was almost two years for men and 1.5 years for women.

Aged 60, men with children could expect to live for another 20.2 years, whereas men without children could expect a further 18.4 years – an almost two-year difference.

Meanwhile, women aged 60 with children could expect to live a further 24.6 years, whereas those without could expect another 23.1 years – a difference of 1.5 years.

At the age of 80, men with children could expect to live a further 7.7 years, while those without could live seven years.

For women aged 80 with children, they could expect a further 9.5 years, while those without could live a further 8.9 years.

Both married and non-married couples benefited from having children, though unmarried people – and particularly men- seemed to enjoy a stronger benefit, the research also showed.

This may suggest that unmarried people rely on their children more for support, whereas married couples are supported by their partner.

But the team, writing online in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, found that having a girl made no difference to a parent’s lifespan compared to having a boy.

Previous studies have suggested that girls are more likely to help their ailing parents than their brothers.

The new study suggests that boys may be just as likely to offer support as girls, including in helping parents navigate the social care system.

In contrast, people who do not have children struggle more for the kind of social support offered by having offspring.

Other influences for a longer life could include the fact that parents live healthier lives than those who are childless, the researchers said.

Biological factors involved in having children may also play a role.

The team concluded: ‘Having children is associated with increased longevity, particularly in an absolute sense in old age.

‘That the association increased with parents’ age and was somewhat stronger for the non-married may suggest that social support is a possible explanation.’