Children born during the great depression aged rapidly later in life. Here’s how trauma can affect you before you’re even born

The worst recession in US history shaped how well people would age — before they were even born. Researchers have found that the cells of people who were conceived during the Great Depression, which lasted from 1929 to 1939 and, at its height, saw about 25% of the US workforce unemployed, show signs of accelerated ageing.

The study authors measured these changes in the cells’ epigenome — the collection of chemical markers attached to DNA that determines when, where and by how much genes are expressed in each cell. And they think the pattern of markers that they uncovered could be linked to higher rates of both chronic illness and death.

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