

# **AGE AND ATTITUDES**

**Main Results  
from a  
Eurobarometer Survey**



**1993**

# CONTENTS

The surveys on which this report is based were conducted on behalf of Directorate General V (Employment, Social Affairs and Industrial Relations) of the Commission of the European Communities. They were carried out in the 12 Member States of the European Community by means of a questionnaire circulated in April/May 1992

DGV requested Professor Alan Walker, the Chair of the EC Commission Observatory on Ageing and Older People, to write the commentary on the surveys' findings. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
The Changing Nature of Old Age	3
The Demographic Revolution	4
The Surveys	4
About this Report	5
<b>2. THE OLDER EUROPEAN CITIZEN</b>	<b>6</b>
What's in a Name?	6
Respect for One's Elders?	7
Older and Better?	8
Passing the Time	8
Intimacy at a Distance	11
<b>3. OLD AND YOUNG</b>	<b>12</b>
On the Same Wavelength?	12
Birds of a Feather	13
My Brother's (and Sister's) Keeper?	15
<b>4. MONEY MATTERS</b>	<b>16</b>
Getting By	16
How Much is Enough?	18
Paying for Pensions	20
Pensions or Concessions?	21
Looking Forward to Retirement	22
<b>5. OLDER WORKERS</b>	<b>24</b>
Work or Retirement?	24
Making Way for the Young	25
Age Discrimination	25
<b>6. TAKING CARE</b>	<b>27</b>
Disability and Care	27
Are Families less Willing to Care?	29
Community Care	29
Clients or Consumers?	30
Paying for Care	30
<b>7. POLITICS AND POLICY</b>	<b>32</b>
Politics and the Media	32
The Policy Deficit	32
The European Year 1993	33
<b>8. CONCLUSION</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>36</b>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The citizens of the European Community are increasingly older citizens. By the year 2020 people aged 60 and over will comprise one in five of the EC's population and those aged 65 and over more than a quarter. Just 50 years ago those aged 65 and over would have made up just one in fourteen of the community's population. This silent revolution in Europe's age structure has been taking place largely unnoticed by the general public and, until relatively recently, by policy makers as well. It has major policy implications, which are analysed in detail in the 1993 report of the EC's Observatory on Ageing and Older People.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this report is to present the key findings of two unique European surveys on attitudes to ageing and older people sponsored by the EC. Last year two Eurobarometer surveys were conducted to gauge the attitudes of the general public in all twelve member states towards ageing and older people. In the first attitudes were sought from the general population aged 15 and over, while in the second a special study of the views of older people themselves was undertaken. These linked surveys represented the first pan-EC attempt to provide a comprehensive picture of attitudes towards ageing and older people. The results are summarised here and a full report on the surveys will follow later this year.

## **The Changing Nature of Old Age**

Alongside of the ageing of the population we are witnessing a profound transformation in the experience and meaning of old age in late twentieth century society. Retirement is no longer the straightforward entry-point to old age that it once was and, therefore, it is increasingly anachronistic as a definition of older people. More and more people throughout the Community are leaving the labour force in different ways: early retirement, partial retirement, redundancy, unemployment, disability and so on. At the same time, with increased longevity, older people are living longer and healthier old ages and, as a result, the threshold of frailty is being pushed back. These changes in age struc-

ture, health and patterns of employment are transforming the nature of old age. They are, thereby, posing sharp questions about both the traditional passive roles expected of older people and the extent to which policy makers and major economic and political institutions have adjusted to socio-demographic change. In essence the question at issue is what is the place of older citizens in European society in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries?

In the light of the changing meaning of old age and the increasingly active stance being taken by senior citizens themselves on local, national and European platforms, the terminology used to describe this group and the associated metaphors - old, elderly, retired - seem to be out of tune with their subjects. This is one reason why a distinction is now commonly made between the third age (50-74) and the fourth age (75 and over), in the manner of Shakespeare's seven ages, though even this more sensitive approach crudely applies age criteria that may not in practice reflect functional reality in many cases. The aim of emphasising stages rather than ages is thereby thwarted.<sup>2</sup> Well, as is revealed shortly, we directly confronted this issue of the appropriateness of nomenclature by asking older people themselves what they would prefer to be called.

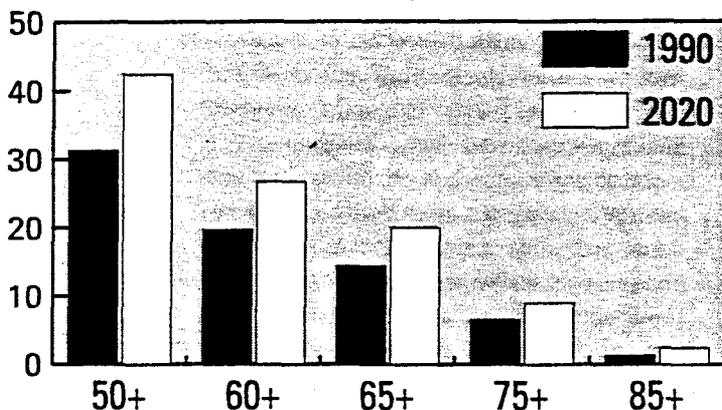
**Alongside of the ageing  
of the population we are  
witnessing a profound  
transformation in the  
experience and meaning  
of old age in late twentieth  
century society.**

### The Demographic Revolution

Before examining the results of the surveys it might be helpful to have a general picture of the parameters of the older population in the EC.

There are more than 60 million people aged 60 and over in the EC, representing just under one in five of the population. Nearly one-third of the Community's population and one-fifth of the labour force are over the age of 50. As the following graph shows by the year 2020 they will comprise more than one-quarter and two-fifths respectively of the EC's population.<sup>3</sup>

Older people in 1990 and 2020 as a Percent of the Total EC Population



The two main factors explaining this demographic revolution are declining fertility and mortality rates: fewer children and more older people. On average around 2.1 children per woman of child bearing age are required to replace the population. At present the only EC country to achieve this level is Ireland and it only just does so (2.17). The EC average is 1.59 and this has been declining since the mid 1960s from 2.63 in 1960, to 2.45 in 1970 and 1.87 in 1980.

At the other end of the age scale, life expectancy has been increasing since the beginning of the century when it was around 50 years at birth. It rose to 65 years in 1950 and by 1990 had reached nearly 75 years. In other words a child born in 1990 may expect to live almost 10 years longer than one born in 1950.<sup>4</sup>

There is a significant gender gap in life expectancy at birth, with women in the EC outliving men by an average of 6.6 years (79.3 years versus 72.7 years). This means that women considerably outnumber men in old age and especially in advanced old age. Though Greek women only have the advantage over their male counterparts by 5.3 years, while at the other extreme French women have stretched their lead to 8.2 years.

### The Surveys

The Eurobarometer reached adulthood in the Autumn of 1991. For the previous 18 years the Commission of the European Communities, through DGX The Directorate-General for Information, Communication and Culture, has organised a twice yearly survey covering each of the member states.<sup>5</sup> The twin surveys reported here represented the thirty-seventh in the series and were conducted between 20 April and 18 May 1992. The first was a 'standard' Eurobarometer survey of the population aged 15 years and over in each of the member states of the EC. The second was a special survey of the population aged 60 and over.

The standard Eurobarometer is a public opinion survey among a sample of 1,000 people representative of the entire population aged 15 and over in each of the twelve member states. A limited sample of 500 is taken in Luxembourg, while in Germany there is a sample of 1,000 for the former FDR and 1,000 for the former GDR, making a combined sample of 2,000. (The convention followed in this report is to present the totals for the two former halves of Germany together with the combined one.) An additional sample of 300 for Northern Ireland is added to that of Great Britain to constitute the UK. Thus the total sample is some 12,800 persons.

The special follow-up survey of older people consisted of samples of 400 people aged 60 years and over in each member state (200 in Luxembourg, 800 in Germany). Thus the total sample in this case was some 5,000 persons. Of this sample of older people one in four were

aged 60-64 and the same proportion aged 65-69; one-fifth were 70-74 years, 16 per cent 75-79 years and 14 per cent were 80 and over. Forty-one per cent were men and 59 per cent were women.

In setting the sights of these surveys it was decided that they should provide baseline information on attitudes towards older people and some of the topical policy issues surrounding them. In the case of the general population survey the main issues raised included standards of living and the adequacy of pension arrangements, willingness of the general public to fund pensions, the role of older people in the labour market, the need for and supply of care and the extent to which older people should determine their own service needs. The policy questions addressed in the special follow-up of older people included the age of retirement, living standards, pensions, loneliness and isolation, cash payments versus concessions, social support and political activity. In addition some questions were specifically directed to the theme of intergenerational solidarity to reflect the objective of the European Year of 1993. As large scale surveys of this sort are very expensive each question was at a premium.

Thus the information collected enables us for the first time both to present a picture of the attitudes of the general public in each member state towards ageing and older people and to construct a rough profile of the current conditions and thoughts of older European citizens. It is also possible to report on the present state of relations between the generations.

In addition to the core attitudinal data, each Eurobarometer survey provides three other sorts of information: demographic data, information on socio-psychological and socio-political attitudes and answers to 'trend' questions concerning European integration and perceptions of European institutions. In the detailed report some of these data are used to analyse and flesh out the answers to questions about ageing and older people.

Here we are concentrating on the bare bones.

## **About this Report**

This then is a summary report intended to make available to as wide an audience as possible the results of the two linked Eurobarometer surveys. The data are meant to inform policy makers and the general public in the twelve member states about our increasingly ageing societies and, hopefully, to provide a spur to further work on public attitudes to ageing and particularly the collection of the views of older people themselves.

There is always a danger that a report such as this might be seen as promoting the idea that age is the key variable in social analysis. This would be quite wrong, older people are as divided by class, gender, race and so on, as younger people; it is just that to summarise the data some of that diversity had to be forfeited.

# 2 THE OLDER EUROPEAN CITIZEN

This account starts with the views of the older Europeans themselves. The main purpose is to provide an outline sketch of the subjective experience of being an older person in the 1990s in each of the countries of the EC. This includes information on how older people feel they are treated by the rest of us and, in particular, by some of the main official, professional and commercial organisations they come into contact with on a regular basis; how they spend their time, what contact they have with their families and friends; and finally whether or not they experience feelings of loneliness. The important missing element, financial security, is discussed in chapter 4. But first we tackle the sometimes vexed issues of names.

## What's in a Name?

As noted in the introduction we decided to cut through much of the agonising that has taken place in academic circles about the appropriate nomenclature and ask older people the direct question what do *you* prefer to be called? The results are shown in table 1 below.

There is no consensus across the whole of the twelve, with the majority vote being split between 'senior citizens' and 'older people'. Four individual countries show a majority favouring 'older people' and three 'senior citizens'. What is abundantly clear though is that, with the exception of Denmark and the partial exception of the Netherlands, the term most com-

monly used by policy makers, the media and social gerontologists, i.e. 'elderly', is firmly rejected.

In some countries there seems to be a reaction against connotations of 'oldness'. This was the finding of the 1991 survey of attitudes to ageing in the UK and the low proportion of UK senior citizens voting for 'older people', 'pensioners' and 'elderly' confirms that survey's findings. However, only Denmark and to a lesser extent Ireland and the Netherlands share this reaction and if they are excluded, along with the UK, 'older people' is strongly favoured. In contrast Italians seem to embrace the concept of oldness wholeheartedly with two out of three people favouring 'older people' or 'the old'/'the aged'/'old aged people'.

The positive choice of 'senior citizens' is interesting and perhaps indicative of the changing character of old age in Europe. It carries connotations of individuals as civic actors with both rights and duties and, therefore, emphasises the integration of older people rather than their separate group status. It had been thought to be too closely associated with the USA to catch on here. But older people in Germany, Ireland and the UK backed it strongly, though as can be seen from the table, in Germany it was the people of the old Länder that swung the vote.

The sweeping rejection of the media inspired 'golden age' with its soporific image of a 'golden pond' and obvious suggestions of comfortable affluence is not surprising: after all our respondents are living the reality and they know that it rarely fits the cosy celluloid images. But, more than that, when coupled with the preference for 'senior citizens', this seems to signal some kind of positive statement

## 1. CHOOSING A NAME (OLDER PEOPLE ONLY)

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Elderly	6.6	7.7	49.5	4.0	3.4	3.8	3.5	15.1	12.3	2.4	3.3	23.9	7.4	13.3	4.3
Older People	27.4	18.1	3.9	24.8	33.3	42.1	35.0	34.2	9.0	30.9	62.8	10.8	52.4	55.1	4.3
Senior Citizens	30.9	31.5	18.5	21.5	47.1	35.1	44.7	14.7	41.9	21.1	15.7	13.0	21.7	14.5	45.2
Retired	15.0	32.6	24.5	26.5	12.2	17.1	13.1	17.6	14.4	9.1	18.2	5.5	13.3	7.8	14.7
The old/aged/ old aged people	10.6	0.0	0.0	21.1	1.0	0.3	0.9	4.7	4.5	36.5	0.0	18.7	0.0	0.3	0.8
60 plus	1.1	4.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	24.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
golden age / years / oldies	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
pensioners	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	5.8
Others	5.5	0.0	3.4	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.7	11.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	1.9	8.0	22.9
none / don't know	1.6	5.4	0.2	0.4	2.3	0.9	2.1	1.9	3.5	0.0	0.0	1.9	3.3	0.8	2.8

The exact question was: "Which of the following ways of describing people aged 60 and over is the one you prefer to be used?" (Respondents could add their own).

from this group that either they want to be regarded as people, who just happen to be older than some others, or as citizens like the rest of the community.

There is much food for thought here because labels carry symbolic meanings, they tell us, and particularly those they are applied to, a great deal about the social role and status of the labelled. If one can draw out a message from these results it is perhaps that those of us in the business of putting a name to this large and growing group of EC citizens have not listened closely enough hitherto to what they want us to call them.

### Respect for One's Elders?

Are older people treated with greater respect after they reach old age or is the opposite the case? The answer, for the EC as a whole, is roughly equal with some three out of ten saying more and slightly fewer saying less. This leaves a majority responding (spontaneously) that they have detected no significant difference in attitudes towards them. Interestingly there appears to be some association between age and the treatment older people feel they receive from others: 26 per cent of the 60-64 year olds say that they have received more respect but this rises to 35 per cent among those aged 75 and over. The variations between countries are shown below.

	Proportion of older people saying they get treated with more or less respect as they grow older	
	more respect %	less respect %
Belgium	19	33
Denmark	19	15
France	34	26
Germany	24	31
Greece	43	30
Ireland	44	21
Italy	33	26
Luxembourg	29	21
Netherlands	20	28
Portugal	34	13
Spain	33	28
UK	34	25

Agencies/Individuals	Proportion saying they have been treated as second class citizens by them (EC as a whole) %
Social Security/Pensions	18
Local Authorities	19
Banks/Financial Institutions	10
Doctors/Health Service	13
Post Office	10
Shop Keepers	13
Politicians	19
Transport Staff	13
Media	16
Solicitors/Lawyers	6
Their own Family	8

In order to pinpoint more precisely whether or not older people have experienced patronising, demeaning, derogatory or age discriminatory attitudes from particular agencies we asked them if they had ever been treated in this way by a wide range of different public and commercial agencies, professionals, the media and finally their own families.

The most striking fact to emerge from this series of questions (apart from the exposure of the legal profession as paragons of virtue in this respect) is the small proportion of older people who have ever felt they have been treated as second class citizens. This is encouraging news for our ageing societies.

On the down side, concentrating on the minority that have been patronised or demeaned in some way, it is public agencies and politicians that appear to be the worse culprits.

There are considerable variations between countries. For example families come off worst in Belgium (17 per cent saying that they have been treated as second class citizens by their own families) and the legal profession in Greece (13 per cent). The media is clearly worse than the average in Germany (19 per cent

and particularly in the old FDR, 20 per cent); transport staff in Portugal (21 per cent) and Greece (19 per cent); politicians in Germany (26 per cent), Italy (24 per cent) and Belgium (23 per cent); shopkeepers in Germany (21 per cent) and Greece (21 per cent) (the 'nation of shopkeepers', the UK, had a low score 9 per cent); post offices in Italy (18 per cent); Doctors in Greece (23 per cent) and Italy (19 per cent); Banks in Greece (19 per cent) and Belgium (16 per cent); local authorities in Germany (27 per cent), Greece and Italy (24 per cent) and Belgium (23 per cent); and social security offices in Belgium, Greece and Portugal (25 per cent).

Of course agencies and professionals named in this 'rogues gallery' could reasonably protest that these results may tell us as much about the older people themselves as about the way they have been treated. There is something in that, but it cannot explain the whole picture. There are enough inconsistent variations between countries - with one exception - to suggest that the explanation lies beyond a predilection to criticise in a particular culture.

The exception by the way is Denmark, which consistently attracts the lowest score across ten of the eleven agencies and individuals. (The only one it did not score lowest on was 'politicians', they appear to be at their least patronising in the UK.) Perhaps Danish senior citizens are less prone to criticise than those of other countries, but this still does not explain the other variations across countries. And yet perhaps older citizens are actually treated differently in Denmark than in other EC countries. Maybe the bus drivers of Athens and Lisbon do have something to learn from their

counterparts in Copenhagen? Likewise social security staff and families too. This issue certainly deserves further investigation and could possibly give rise to a sharing of experiences across the EC that has the potential to truly fulfil the meaning of Community.

### Older and Better?

How do older people respond to the ageing process? To gauge this we asked whether growing older has given them a new lease of life. The obvious intention behind the question was to dispense with the negative images of ageing and to put the positive case. The results, shown in table 2 below, were surprising.

As it happens the mean score of the four responses falls roughly in the middle, as if the older citizens of the EC were equivocal about the experience. Perhaps, like the rest of life, it is a matter of good and bad points in their eyes.

Looking at variations between countries the difference between Denmark and Greece in the proportions agreeing strongly with the statement is no doubt partly attributable to the superior objective conditions of older Danes from their Greek counterparts (as the latest report from the EC's Observatory shows<sup>7</sup>). But how we explain the even higher score for Spain is another matter and beyond this summary I am afraid.

In terms of differences based on age, for the sample as a whole, they are relatively small: 51 per cent agreed that growing older has given them a new lease of life compared with 41 per cent of those aged 75 and over. Not surprisingly older people with disabilities were less likely to respond positively to this proposition: 39 per cent compared with 49 per cent for the non-disabled.

## 2. OLD AGE HAS GIVEN ME A NEW LEASE OF LIFE (OLDER PEOPLE ONLY)

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Agree strongly	14.8	8.7	23.8	11.7	8.9	6.8	8.5	6.5	14.6	15.3	19.8	11.0	9.5	27.4	21.9
Agree slightly	30.0	26.9	38.1	32.4	27.1	17.0	25.1	12.7	29.3	38.4	26.2	13.8	25.7	32.9	32.2
Disagree slightly	31.0	43.0	20.4	32.2	37.1	40.9	37.8	30.3	29.0	28.1	29.9	36.1	25.1	19.9	27.9
Disagree strongly	19.6	16.2	12.2	19.1	22.7	30.8	24.3	41.1	22.6	12.5	11.7	32.3	34.8	14.7	15.5
DK	4.6	5.2	5.5	4.7	4.2	4.4	4.3	9.5	4.5	5.8	12.4	6.8	5.0	5.0	2.3

### Passing the Time

Many of the popular and literary images of old age are essentially passive images. For example, there's the

### 3. PASSING THE TIME (OLDER PEOPLE ONLY)

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
There is hardly enough time in the day. I'm very busy	33.9	23.3	35.8	31.7	32.5	35.8	33.1	13.9	30.8	47.4	24.0	23.4	14.3	22.5	40.7
I have a full day but not too much to do	33.1	44.3	53.0	36.7	38.0	36.3	37.7	24.1	38.9	19.9	49.4	55.6	39.3	26.9	30.8
I have plenty of free time	23.5	21.9	7.9	20.9	21.4	22.4	21.6	39.6	20.4	23.3	18.0	15.3	31.0	36.6	21.5
I have so little to do. I often have too much time on my hands	6.0	5.3	2.0	7.5	5.3	4.1	5.1	11.9	6.4	5.2	5.6	4.8	9.2	8.7	4.3
I have nothing to do	2.9	4.7	0.9	3.2	1.7	0.9	1.5	9.1	3.0	3.4	2.4	0.7	6.2	4.2	2.2
DK	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.0	1.1	0.5	1.0	1.4	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.2	0.0	1.2	0.0

sixth and seventh ages of Shakespeare's well known 'seven ages' of man and W B Yates :

*'When you are old and grey and full of sleep, and nodding by the fire...'*

Indeed US research on the image of older people portrayed in classical literature and poetry suggests that it is negative, focussing overly on the physical aspects of old age.<sup>8</sup> But on the evidence of our survey the reality is quite different. The picture to emerge from table 3 is very much one of older people as active citizens. On average two out of three are either very busy or leading full lives.

The most active are the Italians, followed by the British. The least active are the Greeks and Portuguese. Eschewing any idea of convenient cultural stereotypes it does appear that there is a void in the lives of a significant group of older people in both of these southern European countries. It is a sad fact that one in five in Greece and one in seven in Portugal say that they either have too much time on their hands or have nothing to do. The work of the EC's Observatory on Older People shows that policy makers are aware of this problem but there is clearly room for more actions to boost the social interaction of older people, along the lines of the KAPI (community centres) in Greece.<sup>9</sup>

Not surprisingly there were variations between the third and fourth ages in answer to this question. For example the proportion of those aged 60-64 leading busy lives is double that of the 75 and overs (45 per cent versus 22 per cent), while only 1 per cent of the former say they have nothing to do, it is 6 per cent of the latter. Those suffering from a long standing illness or disability are only slightly less active than their non-disabled counterparts.

When we look at the kinds of activities older people are engaged in this active picture is confirmed, even though the 'activity' undertaken by the largest number of them in the last week was watching television. Looking beyond that near universal pastime (at least nine out of ten people in all countries) there are routine daily tasks, such as shopping and housework that seven out of ten of those questioned said they did last week. The UK came top of the shopping league (85 per cent) and Spain bottom (54 per cent). Danes appear to do more housework (81 per cent) and Spaniards the least (54 per cent).

Two out of five older people are engaged in gardening or do-it-yourself (DIY) household maintenance. Denmark and the UK are the countries where older people are most frequently involved in these tasks (three out of five) and Spain is where they have the lowest

involvement (one in seven). Not surprisingly it was primarily in the youngest age group (60-64) that gardening or DIY were most often mentioned. Over half of older people went for a walk or took exercise in the previous week (three out of five in Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Spain and the UK), though less of those aged 75 and over (48 per cent) than the younger group (58 per cent).

Nearly one in three older people had been to church or taken part in a religious meeting in the previous seven days. This rises to 82 per cent in Ireland and slumps to 13 per cent in the former GDR, 15 per cent in Denmark and 23 per cent in France and the UK.

Older people are less often engaged in extra-familial social pastimes: on average one in seven had been to a club or centre for senior citizens. The fact that the proportion using such centres in Denmark is three times that in Greece and Portugal (24 per cent) compared with 8 per cent) is bound to owe something to the very different levels of provision of these facilities between the north and south of the Community.

The use of social amenities intended not only for older people, including social clubs and bars, was nearly as common as for the special facilities (13 per cent on average). More than one-fifth of older people in Portugal and the UK had visited such a place in the previous week and this rose to a high of three out of ten in Ireland. The participation rate for cinemas, theatres and concerts was universally low (4 per cent on average).

## **Older people are less often engaged in extra-familial social pastimes.**

A small proportion of older people are engaged in organised voluntary work - 8 per cent overall - but in Denmark, France, Ireland and the UK it rises to over 10 per cent and in Luxembourg and the Netherlands it reaches 17 per cent. However in response to a specific question concerning membership of voluntary organisations and charities (as opposed to active engagement) more than one in eight responded positively. This proportion reaches more than one in four in Denmark, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

On the evidence of the survey European senior citizens are, by and large, involved in current affairs, with nearly three out of four having read a newspaper or magazine recently. In some countries this figure exceeds nine out of ten (Denmark, Ireland and the former GDR) but in Greece, Portugal and Spain it is much lower - around two in five. This points to the twin issues of access and ability: it is not simply that some older people in these southern states do not have the resources to purchase newspapers and magazines but also that levels of illiteracy are still significant among the older age group.

Senior citizens in the EC cannot be described as 'book-worms' - only one in three had read a book in the previous week. In only two countries (the Netherlands and the UK) does this proportion exceed 50 per cent. Again Greece, Portugal and Spain returned the lowest figures (10-14 per cent).

This account started by pointing to the relatively high levels of activity revealed by the survey. When it comes to political activity, however, the story is quite different. Only just over one in a hundred older people had taken part in political or pressure group activities in the previous seven days. This rose to three in a hundred in Italy and Luxembourg and four in a hundred in the former GDR.

This does not mean that older Europeans are not interested in politics. We asked them about the issues that interest them (see chapter 3) and more than one in five said local politics and one in four national politics. More than two out of

#### 4. CONTACTS WITH FAMILY (OLDER PEOPLE ONLY)

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Every day	44.4	35.8	13.8	34.2	48.7	37.7	46.5	64.8	50.1	70.7	38.0	19.2	59.8	60.7	21.9
Two or more times a week	18.3	22.0	26.0	16.2	15.2	17.6	15.6	9.7	19.3	14.4	21.1	26.6	9.6	15.5	28.3
Once a week	15.5	23.5	25.4	25.1	13.0	17.4	13.8	5.8	14.1	7.8	19.4	25.4	8.7	7.4	19.0
Once a fortnight	6.1	4.7	16.9	5.8	9.9	6.4	9.2	4.2	2.5	1.2	9.5	10.8	3.8	3.8	6.8
Once a month	4.6	3.5	7.8	6.8	4.4	9.6	5.4	2.0	3.8	0.8	3.5	8.9	4.2	2.9	5.6
Less often	7.6	6.0	8.2	9.0	4.9	7.9	5.5	7.3	6.8	1.6	6.5	5.8	10.1	8.3	14.5
Never / No family or friends	3.4	4.4	1.8	3.0	4.0	3.6	3.9	6.3	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.2	3.8	1.4	4.0

five are interested in major social problems such as human rights, poverty and homelessness, while nearly half are interested in the environment. These findings suggest a fair degree of latent political and social commitment among older people and certainly disprove any suggestion that they might have disengaged from civic life.

#### Intimacy at a Distance

The trend for increasing numbers of older people to live alone may be observed in all Community countries - though it is more pronounced in the north than the south. Thus residential segregation has given rise to fears that older people are being abandoned by their families. Research evidence has shown that this is far from being the case and, in fact, older people maintain very close ties with their families and vice versa - a position that has been perfectly described as 'intimacy at a distance'.<sup>10</sup> Because this continues to be a topical issue and because information on some EC countries is hard to come by we decided to ask older people themselves about their family contacts. The results are shown in table 4 and they confirm the findings of country specific research showing frequent face-to-face contacts between older people and their families. On average nearly four out of five see a member of their family at least once a week.

A similar question was asked about friends and again the results show high levels of social contact: on average nearly three out of four see a friend at least once a week. There were wide

differences between countries however, with less than one in ten seeing a friend every day in Germany and the Netherlands compared with six out of ten in Portugal and Spain.

Despite these high levels of social contact feelings of loneliness are present in a significant minority of older people. Overall some one in eight said that they feel lonely often and a further one in three feel lonely occasionally. But there are wide variations between countries that might be noted by policy makers.

Proportion of Older People Who Often Feel Lonely		EC Country
%		
< 5		Denmark
5-9		Germany, the Netherlands, UK
10-14		Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Spain
15-19		Italy
20 or more		Portugal, Greece (36%)

# 3 OLD AND YOUNG

In this chapter we examine the survey results concerning the issue that lies at the heart of the European Year and, arguably, of the fabric of European society itself: intergenerational relations. Literature is scattered with references to this issue - Job and his sons, Oedipus, King Lear and his daughters - so we know that it is an age old one. But what is the current state of relations between the generations? What do older people think of younger people? Do older people favour age segregation? And, crucially in policy terms, will the population at large continue to pay for the pensions of older generations?

## On the Same Wavelength?

There is much conventional wisdom about the lack of respect for older people on the part of the young, so the older Europeans were asked whether or not they agree with the statement that 'young people are generally helpful towards older people'. The question was purposely positive to avoid the promotion of a popular negative stereotype. The results, shown below (table 5), indicate that on the whole older people are favourably inclined towards the young.

Older people in Denmark and Ireland stand out as being the most positive about youth, and Belgium and Italy as being the least positive. Those in their fourth age were more likely to agree strongly with the proposition that young people are helpful to older people than those in their third age.

In 1987 and 1990 Eurobarometer conducted surveys among younger people (15-24) and I thought it would be instructive to compare the generations in their answers to a specific

question.<sup>11</sup> The question chosen concerned a list of qualities that parents can try to encourage in their children, including independence, tolerance, loyalty and so on. Respondents were asked to choose three out of eleven items (or to reject them).

Here is a comparison of the results for different age groups:

Qualities for Parents to Encourage in Children	Age Groups	
	15-24 (1990)	60 and over (1992)
	%	%
A sense of responsibility	55	57
Good manners and politeness	48	45
Tolerance and respect	43	45
Ability to communicate	35	11
Independence	27	11
Loyalty	20	21
Conscientiousness at work	19	28
Thrift	13	31
Imagination	12	3
Obedience	11	17
Religious faith	6	16
Don't know/no reply	2	1

The similarity in the proportions of older and younger people selecting the first three qualities is extraordinary. Thereafter the consensus breaks down somewhat with the exception of loyalty. Two items - communication and independence - might be regarded as being youth orientated, but conscientiousness at work, thrift, obedience and religious faith seem to be more strongly favoured by older than younger people. Nonetheless the main impression is one of consensus on what were regarded as the most important qualities.

## 5. YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE HELPFUL TOWARDS OLDER PEOPLE (OLDER PEOPLE ONLY)

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Agree strongly	14.0	8.7	33.8	12.6	9.5	11.5	9.9	19.2	34.4	10.7	24.3	14.1	20.7	16.6	18.8
Agree slightly	44.2	44.0	41.5	49.8	45.0	46.0	45.2	36.2	47.5	31.4	40.2	35.9	46.4	41.0	54.0
Disagree slightly	27.2	30.6	9.8	26.4	31.9	33.0	32.1	22.2	10.7	36.8	20.6	28.4	25.8	25.7	15.7
Disagree strongly	11.4	14.4	10.4	8.4	10.6	6.2	9.7	19.1	5.6	17.7	6.1	15.3	7.2	13.8	7.7
DK	3.2	2.4	4.5	2.7	2.9	3.3	3.0	3.3	1.8	3.4	8.7	6.3	0.0	2.8	4.0

There were expected differences among older people according to their age (just as there were in 1990 among younger people). For example third agers were more

likely than fourth agers to emphasise a sense of responsibility, tolerance, communication and independence, while the reverse is true for good manners, thrift, obedience and religious faith. (Further analysis is almost certain to reveal gender differences as well.)

An attempt was also made in constructing the questionnaire for the survey of older people to provide a comparison with the 1990 study of young people's attitudes to the major issues of the day. This proved impossible and we had to settle for a differently worded question, but we are able to draw a very loose comparison between some of the causes espoused by younger and older people.

On average nearly half of older people professed an interest in the environment (69 per cent in Luxembourg - 30 per cent in Spain), in the 1990 survey 56 per cent of 15-24 year olds saw this as one of their 'greatest causes'. Just over two out of five older people are interested in major social problems such as human rights and poverty (54 per cent in Greece - 26 per cent in Belgium), while just under two out of five younger people said that poverty was one of their greatest causes and nearly half said human rights. The proportion of young people interested in Third World issues is double that of older people (29 per cent compared with 14 per cent). World peace was the dominant cause in the 1990 survey of young people (60 per cent) but among older people only slightly more than one in ten expressed an interest in it (36 per cent in Greece - 4 per cent in Spain). Finally the proportion of older people interested in religious life was more than four times that suggested for young people by the 1990 survey (32 per cent compared with 7 per cent).

### Birds of a Feather?

In order to assess the current state of relations between the generations it is essential to know how much contact there is between them. To this end the straightforward question was asked: 'how much contact do you have with young people, say younger than 25, including members of your family?'

The results shown below (table 6) reveal a high level of interaction between young and old. Not surprisingly the amount of contact declines with age: 46 per cent of those aged 60-64 report a lot of contact compared with 27 per cent of those aged 75 and over, while 6 per cent and 14 per cent say none at all.

The follow-up question was: 'would you like to have more contact with young people?' The results suggest ambivalence: 45 per cent wanting more and 25 per cent not (with 10 per cent don't know). However when these averages are broken down by country a clearer picture emerges. Thus more than three in five older people in Greece, Italy and Portugal said that they want more contact with young people, and similarly large proportions in Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK said they do not.

Some questions were designed to probe the issue of age segregation from the perspective

## The results shown reveal a high level of interaction between young and old.

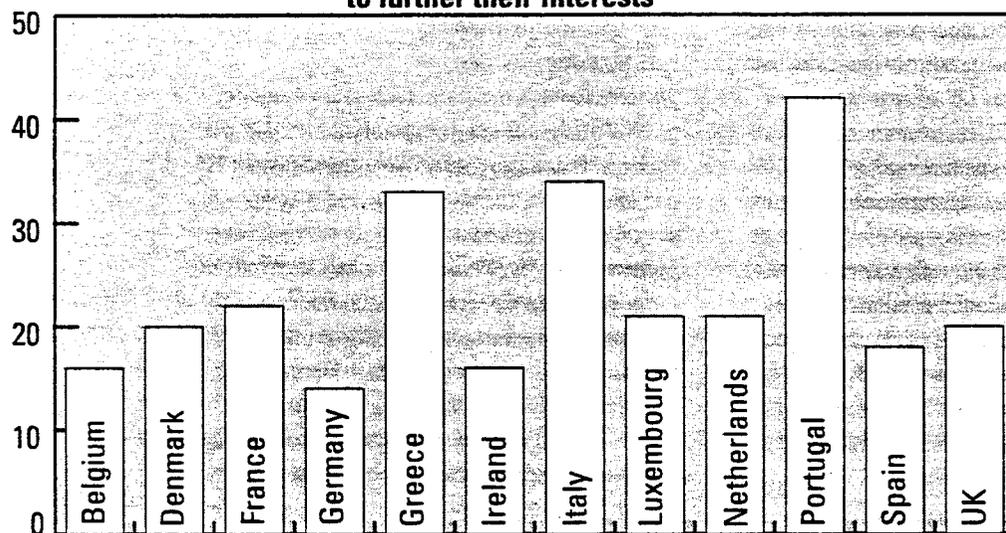
### 6. CONTACT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE (> 25) (OLDER PEOPLE ONLY)

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
A lot	36.4	40.3	45.5	33.8	35.3	41.0	36.5	27.8	46.4	37.7	39.5	37.2	32.5	26.4	42.2
A little	35.6	33.2	31.8	30.1	40.7	32.2	39.0	36.7	30.1	38.8	24.8	32.2	44.4	37.9	32.2
Hardly any	18.6	16.1	14.5	20.9	17.9	18.5	18.0	16.8	17.4	15.2	21.6	23.3	17.1	24.1	18.3
None at all	9.1	10.0	7.7	15.2	5.6	7.8	6.0	18.3	6.1	8.4	14.1	7.2	6.1	11.3	7.3
DK	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.6	1 0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.0

of older people. So we asked this group whether older people prefer to mix with people their own age. A majority agreed that they do: 24 per cent strongly and 35 per cent slightly and only 11 per cent disagree strongly. The strongest agreements were in Greece and Portugal (44 per cent) followed by Spain (36 per cent), Ireland and Luxembourg (31 per cent). The strongest disagreements were in Denmark (26 per cent), the UK (18 per cent) and the Netherlands (16 per cent).

Looking at this issue from a political perspective and bearing in mind the development of 'age interest' politics in the USA, we wondered whether older people would join a political party formed specifically to further their interests. The majority were opposed to the idea but the minority - 22 per cent on average across the EC - seems surprisingly large. The country by country breakdown is as follows:

**Proportion of older people who said they would join a political party formed to further their interests**



The results from this section of the survey of older people suggest, tentatively at this stage, that the interaction between young and old is relatively high and, as far as older people are concerned, it is high enough in most countries. However it seems that senior citizens think that their age group prefers to mix

with people of its own age. Furthermore there does appear to be a significant minority in a majority of member states that would support the development of age-related political parties.

This issue was also pursued in the survey of general public opinion in member states. Again the positive case was put: 'older people are admired and respected by young people' and the public were asked to agree or disagree. A majority disagreed 63 per cent (two-thirds slightly and one-third strongly). The main deviations from this opinion were in Ireland and Portugal where more than one-fifth agreed strongly with the proposition and more than half agreed either slightly or strongly.

So, as far as the general public is concerned in a majority of member states, young people do not admire and respect older people. The reasons cannot be probed here but it may be reasonably asked, why should they? Because older people are older? The young may expect

more than that. But let them speak for themselves: when we break down responses by age we find that the youngest age group (15-24) was slightly more inclined to the affirmative than those aged 55 and over: 38 per cent agreed that older people are admired and respected by young people as opposed to 31 per cent of those aged 55 and over.

A majority of European public opinion

also holds that older people are too set in their ways and ideas: 69 per cent (one-third agreeing strongly and two-thirds slightly). Again the highest levels of disagreement were found in Denmark and Ireland where 17 per cent and 13 per cent disagreed strongly compared with an average for the EC of 7 per cent.

The proposition that 'older people are not willing to listen to younger people's views' produced a split vote with the average for the EC as a whole falling almost exactly in the middle of the possible responses. The countries showing the strongest agreement were Portugal, Luxembourg and Spain and those disagreeing most strongly were Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands.

Finally in the general population survey we asked whether 'older people and younger people should mix together more often socially'. The response was unanimous, yes they should, with nine out of ten such respondents being split evenly between strong and slight agreement. The only countries to slightly oppose this trend were Belgium and the UK but it must be emphasised that even in those countries there were still large majorities in favour of intergenerational social mixing.

### **My Brother's (and Sister's) Keeper?**

Finally in this chapter we turn to the crucial macro-policy issue concerning relations between the generations: the funding of pensions. In all member states of the EC worries have been voiced recently about the policy implications of population ageing and these usually focus on one particular concern: the rising 'dependency-ratio' between older people and those of working age. The deficiencies of these crude demographic tools have been exposed elsewhere but, nonetheless, dependency ratios are of pressing concern to some policy makers and independent commentators. For example

some experts have pointed to the potential for conflict between workers and pensioners if the 'burden' of financing pensions is not lifted.<sup>13</sup>

It is essential, if an informed debate is to take place, for us to know what populations at large think about the payment of taxes to fund pensions. On their willingness to continue to do so hangs the social contract that underpins all pensions and social protection systems in the EC (and beyond). We tackled this question in the standard Eurobarometer (administered for the general public aged 15 and over) by asking to what extent people agreed or disagreed with the statement that those in employment have a duty to ensure, through the contributions on taxes they pay, that older people have a decent standard of living.

The results shown in table 7 below display a remarkably high level of consensus and suggest that the social contract is in good shape. If there is any slight cause for concern it lies in the fact that there was a tendency among those aged 15-24 and 25-34 not to be as strong in their agreement as older age groups. For example 28 per cent of 15-24 year olds agreed strongly with the social contract proposition compared with 40 per cent and 41 per cent of 55-64 year olds and those aged 65 and over respectively. However these groups were more likely than the older ones to agree slightly, so the overall consensus was maintained.

## **7. THOSE IN EMPLOYMENT HAVE A DUTY TO ENSURE, THROUGH CONTRIBUTIONS OR TAXES, THAT OLDER PEOPLE HAVE A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING**

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Agree strongly	37.0	32.5	60.1	25.9	28.5	37.6	30.4	39.4	40.7	38.4	34.2	42.4	41.2	45.7	45.9
Agree slightly	42.8	42.7	29.8	51.2	49.7	43.7	48.4	35.0	40.9	40.1	44.8	38.2	32.3	38.1	37.2
Disagree slightly	9.0	13.8	6.3	13.0	12.4	7.7	11.4	8.3	5.8	6.9	10.6	9.8	10.0	4.4	6.2
Disagree strongly	8.6	4.1	2.0	4.6	3.7	3.2	3.6	4.2	1.7	2.7	3.4	4.0	7.8	2.8	3.1
DK	7.6	6.9	1.8	5.3	5.8	7.8	6.2	13.1	10.9	11.1	7.0	5.6	8.7	9.1	7.5

For many years old age has been associated with poverty and low incomes. There are signs that this situation is changing in some Community countries.<sup>14</sup> But, whatever are the current trends, financial security is the bedrock of social integration in EC countries as well as elsewhere.

Therefore this issue figured centrally in both Eurobarometer surveys.

### Getting By

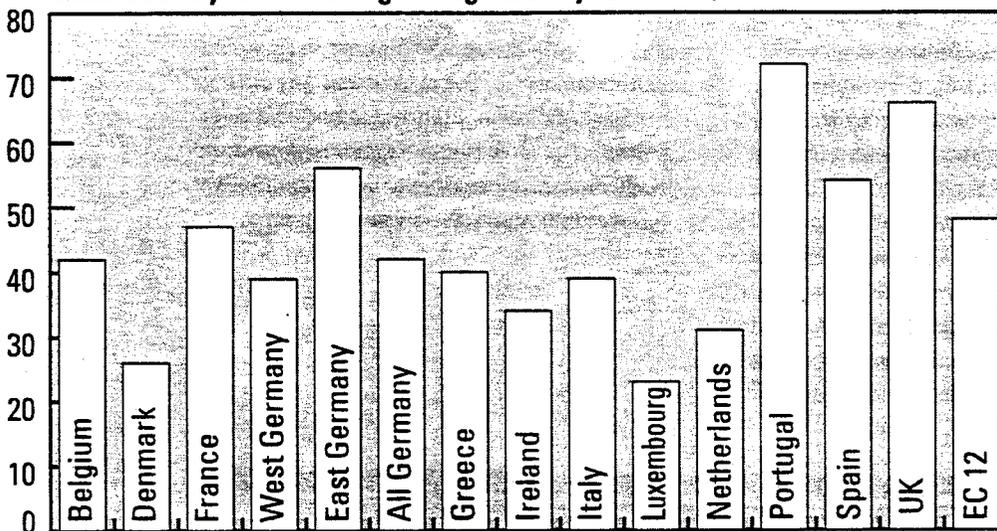
When the general public were asked an open-ended question about the main problems facing older people two issues were mentioned more than any others: financial difficulties and loneliness. Of the two, financial problems were most frequently mentioned, with an average of just under half of EC citizens saying that they regarded this as the main problem facing older people in their country. However there were wide variations between countries:

	AGE					
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Proportion saying the main problem facing older people is:						
Not having enough to live on/financial difficulties	46	52	52	46	45	44
Loneliness/isolation lack of friends	36	40	43	45	45	44

Turning to the special survey of older people themselves, we asked them to describe their current financial situation according to five different classifications. The results, shown

in table 8, describe the majority as getting by with care financially. These subjective opinions coincide with the objective evidence on income levels in the latest report from the EC's Observatory on Older People. In most countries only a minority of older people regard themselves as comfortable or very comfortable financially. The exceptions are Denmark, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

**Proportion saying that the main problem facing older people in their country is not having enough money to live on/financial difficulties**



It is interesting that when these responses are divided according to age there is a slight tendency for younger people to put financial problems first whereas older people are more likely than younger ones to say loneliness or isolation:

British research in social gerontology has long been aware of an apparent paradox whereby older people who, by objective criteria, are suffering poverty and deprivation may nonetheless express, subjectively, satisfaction with their living standards. Further

analysis of the survey results will allow us to test this paradox on a European scale. For the moment it is important to establish that, by a large majority, older people regard themselves as financially secure. Of course there were variations between member states - a high of 89 per cent in Denmark and a low of 40 per cent in Greece - and within one of them - 78 per cent in the former FDR compared with 57 per cent in the former GDR - but overall more than seven out of ten older Europeans said they were financially secure. So, regardless of the objective situation, there is no sign of widespread feelings of financial insecurity on the part of older people.

We then asked the majority and the minority in turn, what makes them feel financially secure or insecure. Dealing with the majority first, by far the most important factor overall was the public pension system (seven out of ten nominations). Looking beyond the EC average this held good for all individual countries except two: Greece where a slim majority said that their house or property was the main source of their financial security and the same factor came first in the UK but by a larger, but still small, majority. Older people in the UK ranked the state pension system lower than those in any other EC country and far lower than other northern EC states (48 per cent compared with 90 per cent in Germany and 75 per cent in France).

The role of the public sector in creating a sense of financial security among senior citizens was not rivalled in any country by employer's or private pensions, with the exception of the UK where it received nearly the same level of support.

Looking at the average for the EC as a whole private and occupational pensions ranked sixth in importance.

Ahead of them were housing/property: most important in Ireland, Greece and the UK and least in the Netherlands; next personal savings: highest score in Germany and lowest in Spain; then good health: most important in France and least in Portugal and Spain; and then family support: highest in Greece and lowest in the Netherlands and Denmark. In this last respect the differences between the north and south of the Community were striking: the proportion nominating family support as the basis of financial security in Greece was nearly eight times the proportion in the Netherlands, four times that in Germany and twice that in the UK.

The public sector was the main ingredient in financial security but it was the leading one, by far, in causing insecurity as well. Thus, some

**There is no sign of widespread feelings of financial insecurity.**

## 8. FINANCIAL SITUATION OF OLDER PEOPLE (OLDER PEOPLE ONLY)

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Very comfortable	3.5	2.4	18.3	1.8	1.3	0.3	1.1	0.8	4.3	6.1	8.9	5.2	0.7	2.5	5.5
Comfortable	32.6	31.3	57.5	34.5	21.8	5.5	18.6	16.5	36.0	44.0	58.1	46.8	22.8	31.5	39.0
I have to be careful, but I get by	51.4	56.2	22.1	52.7	68.9	82.8	71.6	32.0	45.5	39.5	24.5	41.3	45.8	38.3	47.7
I have trouble making ends meet	8.9	6.7	1.2	7.1	6.9	9.9	7.5	34.1	10.8	6.6	4.5	5.2	17.8	20.7	5.1
Things are very difficult	2.9	1.2	0.9	3.5	0.3	0.7	0.4	16.2	2.4	2.6	0.4	0.8	11.6	5.6	2.5
DK	0.8	2.2	0.0	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.4	0.9	1.2	3.6	0.8	1.4	1.4	0.1

## Viewed from the perspective of those on the receiving end, the EC's pension systems are not entirely successful.

seven out of ten of those older people in the EC who said they felt financially insecure blamed the low level of state benefits and pensions. The highest proportions (over 80 per cent) were in Greece and Luxembourg and the lowest were in Denmark and the UK (56-58 per cent). Next

in line was the level of savings being too small, then poor health followed by their private or occupational pensions being too small.

Older people were asked if they would have liked to have made additional pension contributions or savings when they were younger, only a minority would not (29 per cent). Not surprisingly answers to this question were related to those concerning financial security. Thus in Denmark a large majority said they did not, while in Portugal it was a tiny minority. But then if an individual wanted to make additional contributions, could they have afforded to? In all but two countries, Denmark and Belgium, the answer was no. Across the EC as a whole three-fifths of older people would have liked to have made additional contributions or savings but two-thirds of them said that they could not have afforded to do so. The biggest gaps between aspirations and ability to pay were predictably in Greece, Portugal and Spain but also less so in the former FDR.

### How Much is Enough?

The issue of poverty is a controversial one, particularly with regard to older people, partly because a large majority receive most of their income from public pension systems and, therefore, statistics showing a continuance of poverty are indirectly criticisms of public policy. Volumes have been written on this issue and the Observatory's 1993 report looks at it in detail. For the purposes of the Eurobarometer surveys we asked some straightforward, bench-mark, questions.

First, all of those in the general population survey that had retired were asked whether the pensions (public and private) they receive are adequate. The results are shown below in table 9 and, as can be seen the Community divides into three groups: those countries where a large majority of older people regard their pensions as adequate (Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands); those where opinion is split on adequacy versus inadequacy (Belgium, France, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the UK); and those where large majorities say pensions are inadequate (Greece and Portugal). This evidence is not concerned with objective measures but, viewed from the perspective of those on the receiving end, the EC's pension systems are not entirely successful. It is only in four member states that older people seem to be mainly satisfied with their pensions.

The results of a second question to pensioners in the main Eurobarometer survey seem to indicate a relatively high level of

### 9. ADEQUACY OF PENSIONS (OLDER PEOPLE ONLY)

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Completely adequate	12.7	10.9	23.4	5.2	24.1	8.9	20.6	4.5	13.6	8.4	29.5	28.6	1.2	22.2	9.3
Just about adequate	40.9	47.8	50.4	42.1	53.3	50.9	52.7	13.2	36.9	38.8	51.4	40.3	15.8	26.2	38.6
Somewhat inadequate	23.8	22.3	17.4	27.0	16.7	27.5	19.2	25.0	24.8	21.5	8.4	22.0	37.1	25.0	28.4
Very inadequate	21.3	16.7	8.7	22.4	5.9	10.6	7.0	55.7	20.3	30.8	10.8	6.0	44.9	26.7	22.6
DK	1.2	2.2	0.0	3.3	0.0	2.1	0.5	1.7	4.4	0.5	0.0	2.9	1.1	0.0	1.1

## 10. THE LEVEL OF MINIMUM RESOURCES THAT SHOULD BE PROVIDED BY THE STATE

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Just enough to make ends meet	3.8	4.2	6.4	4.7	1.8	1.2	1.7	1.4	4.9	3.2	14.5	8.8	1.2	8.6	2.4
Enough to get along fairly but no more	35.2	47.2	54.3	40.9	26.5	14.1	23.9	30.4	26.9	42.1	51.0	62.6	17.8	29.4	36.2
Something closer to the average wage for people still in work	57.2	44.3	38.1	52.1	64.9	81.7	68.4	65.2	62.6	51.9	31.5	26.0	77.7	59.0	56.9
DK	3.8	4.4	1.3	2.3	6.8	3.0	6.0	3.0	5.6	2.7	3.0	2.5	3.3	3.0	4.5

frustrated aspirations and perhaps even latent resentment over the level of pensions people had accrued when in employment. We asked them to take into account the contributions they had made during their working lives and then to say whether the pension they now receive allows them to lead the life they would like to lead.

Only just over one in eight were definitely positive in their response to this question and the most certain were in Denmark (34 per cent) and Luxembourg (39 per cent). Adding together those who said yes definitely and those who said probably there were what we might call satisfied majorities in Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Thus in Denmark, Luxembourg and the Netherlands there appears to be a high level of contentment, on the part of pensioners, with the level of the pensions they receive as both a source of income and a well-earned reward for a working life. The countries in which older people were most definite that their pensions do not produce the living standards they would like after a lifetime's contributions are in descending order: Greece (66 per cent), Portugal (56 per cent), Italy and Spain (42 per cent) and the UK (41 per cent).

In the main Eurobarometer survey we thought it important to try to assess the opinion of the general public about the appropriate level of income that should be provided by the state to older people. Here we are talking about the minimum level of guaranteed income. The results, in table 10 above, provide substantial

backing for the conclusion drawn from table 7 that there is solid support in the European Community for the public provision of a decent standard of living for older people. This is a conclusion with immense significance for policy makers.

As the table shows there is hardly any support for the 'Beveridge' subsistence option. Fairness proved the most attractive choice in Denmark and the Netherlands, which may have something to do with the fact that these two countries, alone in the EC, have public pension systems that are based on citizenship rather than contributions through employment. But it was the 'Bismarck option' of earnings equivalence that was favoured by majorities in most countries.

It is interesting to note that there is little variation in opinions concerning minimum state pensions by either age or sex. The average figures for age are shown below.

Level of minimum income to be provided by the state	AGE					
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Just enough to make ends meet	4	4	5	4	4	3
Enough to get along fairly but not more	41	34	32	35	33	35
Something closer to the average wage for people still in work	50	58	60	58	60	58
DK/NA	5	4	3	3	3	4

## Paying for Pensions

As we saw in chapter 3 there was very strong support for the maintenance of the intergenerational social contract whereby taxes and contributions levied on those in employment pay for the pensions of those in retirement. But the previous discussion of the adequacy or inadequacy of pensions immediately raises the question of how they should be financed. Since issues concerning the level of pensions and their financing are intertwined, though rarely considered together in surveys such as this, we put them together in one question.

The results shown in table 11 reveal a clear distinction between the general public's opinion on the pensions/taxation equation in those countries with pension levels in the top half of the EC league as compared to those in the bottom half. The former are more likely to have said that pension levels are about right or that they are too low but will have to stay at that level, while the latter are more likely to have said that they are too low and should be raised even if this means increasing contributions or taxes. The stark difference between the former FDR and GDR is significant in this respect. The minuscule proportions in every member state of people saying that pensions are too high are striking.

It is also noteworthy that there was hardly any variation between age groups in responses

to this question, with the exception that is of those aged 15-24 who were significantly less likely than older groups to say pensions are too low and should be raised regardless of the consequences for taxes and contributions.

Related to the question of pension financing is that of who should be responsible for pension provision: the state, employers or individual workers?

In most EC countries a majority of the public thinks that pensions should be provided mainly by the public authorities and financed from contributions on taxes. On average just under half (49 per cent) of the sample of the whole population of the EC was of this opinion. The countries that deviated from this majority position are Germany (though the former GDR was in favour and the former FDR against - 55 per cent compared with 33 per cent), the Netherlands and the UK (though only just, 48 per cent).

The preferred alternatives of those three member states were, in the case of Germany, pensions provided by employers and financed mainly from their own and their employee's contributions; and in those of the Netherlands and the UK opinions were split between their method and private contracts between individual workers and pension companies. Though it must be said that only in the Netherlands did the proportion favouring the

## 11. PENSIONS AND TAXATION

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Pensions are too low and should be raised even if this means raising taxes	43.0	36.3	30.1	27.0	20.3	48.6	26.2	66.3	29.0	53.8	28.1	16.8	73.7	66.8	56.6
Pensions are too low but cannot be raised because taxes should not be increased	28.7	34.1	36.3	42.9	42.8	27.8	39.6	14.1	33.6	20.5	16.8	25.0	17.2	14.4	20.7
Pensions are too high and should be reduced	8.6	1.7	0.2	1.8	1.1	0.0	0.8	0.3	0.6	0.6	2.3	0.2	0.9	0.4	0.3
Pensions are about right	17.4	19.5	29.7	22.1	26.8	15.9	24.5	5.2	18.1	8.4	40.0	41.6	2.4	7.6	14.9
DK/NA	10.3	8.4	3.6	7.2	9.0	7.7	8.8	14.0	18.7	16.7	12.9	16.5	5.8	10.8	7.5

## 12. HOW TO SUPPORT OLDER PEOPLE : MONEY OR CONCESSIONS ? (OLDER PEOPLE ONLY)

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Money to spend as older person wishes	49.1	44.6	81.9	51.0	51.0	57.3	52.3	61.4	48.6	29.9	66.6	60.0	40.1	34.6	62.9
Reduced prices / concessions for older people	34.9	35.5	10.7	34.0	31.5	27.6	30.7	15.9	34.5	50.2	8.3	20.2	33.6	47.5	29.6
Both of these	10.2	15.9	4.0	7.5	11.1	12.4	11.3	18.8	13.3	13.1	18.0	8.8	24.0	9.6	5.4
DK	5.7	4.1	3.4	7.5	6.4	2.8	5.7	3.9	3.7	6.8	7.1	10.9	2.2	8.2	2.1

private provision of pensions exceed 15 per cent and overall this approach was supported by only one in ten of respondents.

### Pensions or Concessions ?

The issue of whether or not senior citizens should pay reduced prices for certain staple items, such as electricity and transport, is also a contentious one. For many years several EC countries have provided goods and services free or at a reduced price for older people. The most common items are bus and rail passes and home helps. Research by the EC's Observatory suggests that Denmark has the most extensive provision of such subsidies. The EC bus and rail pass for senior citizens has been the subject of a long campaign by organisations working for older people and members of the European Parliament. On the other hand it may be argued that such concessions run the risk of conveying a sort of second-class status on older people.

To pick our way through this minefield we decided to ask the general public whether or not they support the idea of older people getting reduced prices for things like gas, electricity, telephone and transport. Across the whole of the EC the support was overwhelming, adding further to the already strong impression of a general sense of older people's deservingness in the eyes of the people of Europe. Nearly three out of four people aged 15 and over agreed, well over half of them strongly. The strongest expressions of agreement were in Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the UK and the strongest disagreement was found in Denmark,

Germany and the Netherlands. Some slight hint here that the countries with the best pension systems in the EC (in terms of the subjective satisfaction of pensioners) were the least likely to favour concessions.

What about older people themselves? How do they view the pensions/concessions dilemma? First of all, when we break down the general public's views by age we find that those aged 65 and over are more likely than younger age groups to favour reduced prices (51 per cent compared with 35 per cent of those aged 15-24 and 40 per cent aged 25-34).

Secondly, in the special survey of senior citizens we posed the question in the form of a choice between money in the form of a pension, on the one hand, and on the other, reduced prices and concessions. If an older person responded 'both of these' then that was recorded. The results shown above (table 12) indicate a strong preference for money to spend as older people themselves choose. Not really surprising, but important nonetheless, not least because this is the first opportunity that older people have had to express an opinion on the subject simultaneously in each member state.

**This is the first opportunity that older people have had to express an opinion on the subject.**

### **Looking Forward to Retirement**

Finally in this chapter we report the results of some questions designed to see what the general public thinks the future has in store for them as they grow older.

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement 'I am worried about how adequate my pension will be when I retire/is, now that I am retired'. Their responses revealed widespread concern in all EC countries. Three-fifths of the whole population agreed strongly or slightly and, as far as individual countries are concerned, it was France, Greece and Portugal that had the highest levels of agreement. Those that appeared to be least worried were in Denmark, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. So it seems that financial security in old age may have some connection with the degree of optimism with which those of working age view the future. Looking at the results according to age it was the middle aged (35-44) who were most worried about the adequacy of their future pensions.

There is also quite a high level of pessimism among the general public about how far the

**So it seems  
that financial security  
in old age may have  
some connection  
with the degree  
of optimism  
with which those  
of working age  
view the future.**

pensions contract will be honoured in the future. Thus when asked whether people will get less pension for their contributions in the future just over one half of the public said yes. There has been much debate in recent years in all EC countries (and many others too) beyond the EC about the cost implications of population ageing. In some countries this debate has been couched in extreme and alarmist terms such as the 'burden' of pensions and the 'threat' posed by pensioners to economic progress,<sup>15</sup> it is not surprising therefore if the general public echoes this pessimism to some extent.

In France more than three-quarters of the public thought that the pensions contract would be modified adversely, and in Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands it was three-fifths. Only in Greece and Portugal were there larger numbers saying that they did not expect older people to get less pensions for their contributions in the future. Also in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain between one-fifth and one-third responded that they did not know what would happen, which underlies the general sense of uncertainty about the future of pensions in some countries.

In a similar vein we wondered if, given the increasing numbers of older people, those in employment would have to retire later. A majority thought not (54 per cent). The countries most likely to say yes were Germany (mainly the former FDR) and the Netherlands. The pension reforms introduced in Germany at the start of 1992 are aimed, in part, at a phased increase in retirement age, so German public opinion may to some extent be reflecting what is happening in policy terms. No such change has taken place in the Netherlands, though there have been public discussions about the cost of pensions. In both France and Italy official proposals to alter the pensions contract have been made recently but these do not seem to have filtered through to public opinion.

Finally the issue of the ability of the welfare state to cope with increasing numbers of older people was put to the test of public opinion by asking whether or not the welfare state will

continue to grow and take care of older people better than now. Again quite a high level of pessimism and uncertainty was uncovered in some countries. Overall only just under one in three were confident enough in the future of the welfare state to say yes. One half replied negatively and the remaining one in five did not know. The largest concentrations of pessimism were in Denmark, France, the former FDR (nearly double the number in the former GDR) and the Netherlands. Perhaps the general public in those countries with some of the highest pension levels in the EC were saying that they do not think it will last, alternatively we could interpret their responses as meaning they do not think it is possible to improve on the present superior position.

The changing character of old age discussed in chapter 1 is partly reflected in the transition from fixed age retirement to more flexible forms of labour force exit. Unfortunately for many older workers this 'flexibility' has been down the age range only and early exit has often been largely beyond their control. Public policy measures have been used recently in several EC countries to encourage older workers to leave the labour market and make way for younger ones. Now, with the rising cost of pensions and, in some countries, predicted shortages of young labour market entrants, attention is being turned towards the potential for postponing retirement. Older workers themselves may be forgiven if they are a little sceptical about these ebbs and flows in public policy. Meanwhile in the labour market itself many of them have reported experiencing age discrimination in job recruitment, training and promotion. We addressed this complex set of issues concerning older workers in both surveys.

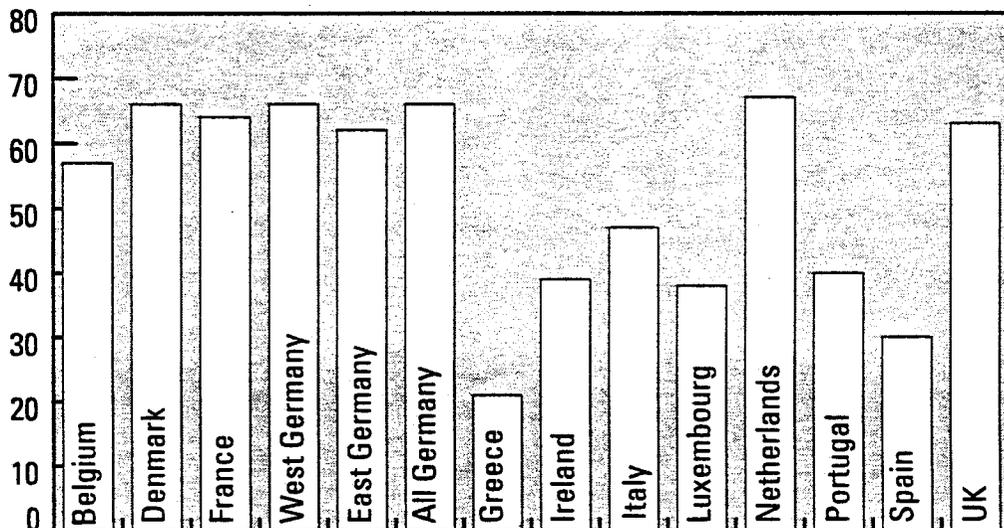
### Work or Retirement?

In the survey of people aged 60 and over some seven out of ten were retired and not working, only 6 per cent were still employed and the

same proportion were retired but still working. The remaining one-fifth either had never held a paid job or had not done so for many years.

The retired were asked if, at the time of their retirement, they would have preferred to stay in employment either full-time or part-time. The majority (58 per cent) across the EC as a whole said they did not want to continue working. Only in Greece, Italy and Portugal were there majorities in favour of continued employment. Nonetheless there was nearly two-fifths of the retired who said they would have liked to continue in work. Over half of them would have liked to continue working in a part-time capacity. In four countries - Greece, Ireland, Portugal and the UK - more than one in four of the retired said they would have liked to have continued working full-time. The question of flexibility in retirement was pursued in the general Eurobarometer survey. The majority opinion in the EC as a whole was that older people should be able to retire when they like, after having worked a minimum number of years (55 per cent) rather than at a fixed age (40 per cent). The countries in which public opinion favoured fixed age retirement are Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain. The percentages favouring flexible retirement are as follows:

**Proportion of the general public in favour of flexible retirement**



### 13. PEOPLE IN THEIR 50s SHOULD GIVE UP WORK TO MAKE WAY FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Agree strongly	9.9	13.4	9.8	8.6	7.5	5.5	7.0	17.9	8.2	12.4	14.0	9.4	20.3	9.9	9.0
Agree slightly	20.5	24.3	22.2	21.8	19.0	17.9	18.8	25.8	18.5	20.9	17.4	13.4	31.5	24.7	17.2
Disagree slightly	33.3	37.5	25.4	36.6	40.9	39.7	40.6	26.7	26.7	30.7	31.4	33.1	20.7	34.0	25.4
Disagree strongly	32.3	21.5	41.9	30.1	28.5	33.8	29.6	22.9	40.8	32.2	33.7	41.7	25.5	25.4	43.8
DK	4.0	3.3	0.8	2.9	4.1	3.1	3.9	6.7	5.8	3.8	3.5	2.3	2.1	5.9	4.6

Those who had never held a paid job were evenly split between fixed age and flexible retirement.

The general public were asked if retired people should be allowed to take paid employment or only to work on a voluntary basis. The majority either said that they should be allowed to take paid employment (43 per cent) or to do both (16 per cent), only three out of ten thought that older people should do only voluntary work. The countries with the largest majorities in favour of granting retired people access to employment were the UK (76 per cent), Denmark (63 per cent), Ireland and the Netherlands (50 per cent).

#### Making Way for the Young

One of the most difficult moral questions surrounding public policy in this field in recent years has been that concerning the respective rights to employment of older and younger people, particularly at a time of high youth unemployment. As noted above social policies, such as the Job Release Scheme in the UK and VUT in the Netherlands, have been used to encourage older workers to leave the labour force and make way for younger ones. Giving their personal reasons for taking early retirement individual older people will sometimes refer altruistically to the need to provide jobs for unemployed youngsters.

To gauge the views of the general public in each member state we presented them with the proposition 'people in their 50s should give up work to make way for younger people'. In looking at the results in table 13 it should be remembered that unemployment was rising in a majority of member states. This fact makes

the substantial opposition to the notion of one age group making way for another all the more remarkable. Even in those countries that have practised labour substitution there did not appear to be any enthusiasm for this sort of policy. Moreover there was hardly any difference in opinion on this question between younger people and older ones. For example 61 per cent of those aged 15-24 disagreed compared with 66 per cent of those aged 55 and over.

#### Age Discrimination

Objective evidence about discrimination on grounds of age is hard to come by, for obvious reasons, and a large scale public opinion survey such as Eurobarometer is not a sensitive enough vehicle on which to try to collect such information. But this important issue, in personal and policy terms, could not be ignored. The solution was to ask some specific questions concerning job recruitment, promotion, training and the status or position an older worker occupies in his or her organisation. By asking these questions of the general public we are avoiding the possible criticism that older workers themselves may be biased in their opinions and may use age discrimination as an excuse for poor performance.

**Objective evidence  
about discrimination  
on grounds of age  
is hard to come by.**

## 14. PROPORTION BELIEVING THAT OLDER WORKERS ARE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN EMPLOYMENT

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Recruitment:	78.7	82.5	80.1	81.8	76.3	82.2	77.6	76.9	74.7	77.1	82.4	83.2	66.1	74.8	82.4
Promotion	61.5	59.9	63.6	63.3	56.1	49.6	54.7	62.3	63.3	54.7	57.5	51.8	55.9	64.6	77.7
Training	67.1	68.5	64.2	68.6	63.7	62.5	63.4	64.4	69.3	63.3	66.7	65.0	64.3	64.8	77.3
Status	48.7	49.5	37.9	52.1	39.6	26.0	36.7	63.9	49.7	48.8	49.1	35.0	52.6	57.1	58.3

Table 14 shows that an extraordinarily high proportion of citizens in all EC countries believe that older workers are discriminated against with regard to job recruitment and furthermore, significant majorities also believe that such discrimination exists with regard to job promotion and training. Since such a wide cross-section of the twelve member states think that age discrimination in employment is widespread it is difficult to argue that it does not exist. The only item on which there was not, quite, a majority concerned the status or position an individual occupies in their organisation, a not altogether surprising finding given the existence of age-related promotion and career patterns.

Equally noteworthy is the fact that there are hardly any differences between age-groups in their strong belief that age discrimination exists with regard to employment.

The same uniform response by younger and older workers was found with regard to promotion, training and occupational status. Also there were no differences between men and women in their responses to these questions.

The final stage of this analysis of issues concerning older workers focusses on government action. There is a great deal of controversy surrounding the issue of anti-age discrimination

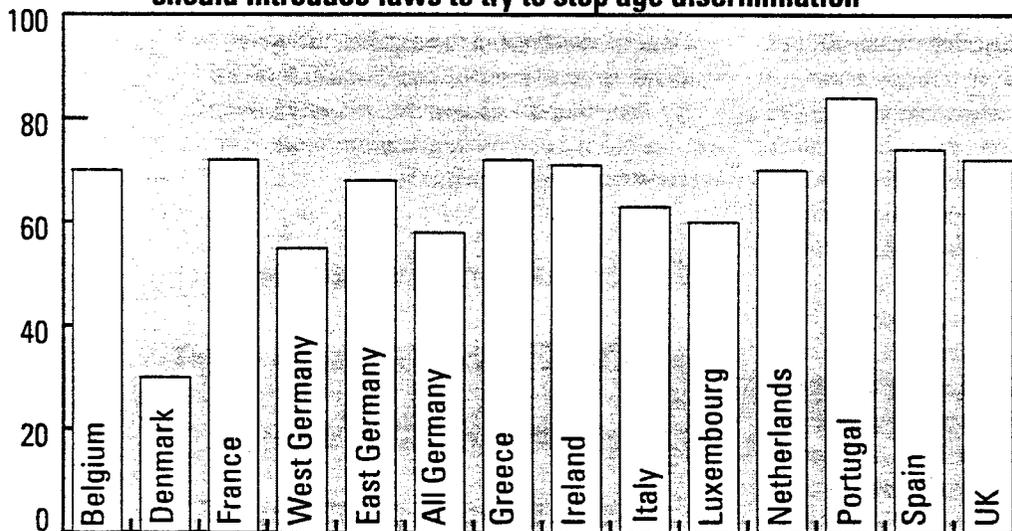
Proportion of the EC population who believe that older workers are discriminated against in job recruitment

AGE	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	74.5	82.3	82.3	81.0	81.5	72.2

legislation with some groups representing older workers arguing that it is essential to protect this group in the face of widespread discrimination and some policy makers responding that it would be unenforceable. What does the general public think? By a large majority of two to one they favour such government action (in fact less than one in five said that the state should not introduce anti-age discrimination

legislation, so if those who did not express an opinion are excluded the majority would be four to one).

Proportion of the general public who think their government should introduce laws to try to stop age discrimination



Increasing longevity is a sign of social and economic progress, including the successful intervention in death and disease by public health measures. However this means that there are more and more people who are likely to need some level of personal care or support. It is important not to get this out of proportion: the majority of older people, even in the fourth age, are able to look after themselves adequately or with only minimal assistance from others. Moreover if help is required it usually comes first from the family - in the majority of EC countries the state plays a relatively minor role in the care of older people either as direct providers or funders, but the demand for such care is rising. Thus an increase in the proportion of older people requiring care has important implications for both families (women in particular) and governments. Therefore, yet again, this was an issue that had to be addressed in the Eurobarometer surveys.

### Disability and Care

In order to establish a bench-mark for some questions about the receipt of care among older people it was necessary to know the incidence of functional incapacity. To do so we employed a standard question from British social surveys concerning the presence of a long-standing

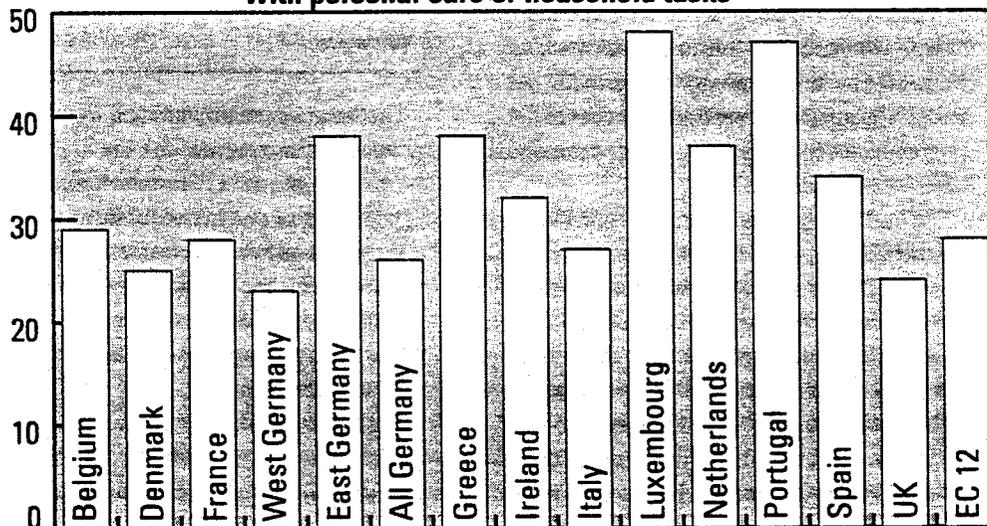
illness, disability or infirmity which limits an individual's activities. This has been shown to be an effective method to distinguish those suffering from significant disability.

Accordingly just under two-fifths (38 per cent) of the population aged 60 and over said they were suffering from functional incapacity. However the variations were quite wide between countries, from 53 per cent in Greece to 22 per cent in Belgium and this suggests some variation in the interpretation of the question that should be the subject of further investigation. Predictably there was an association between age and disability: 32 per cent of those aged 60-64 reported a limiting long-standing illness or disability compared with 47 per cent of those aged 80 and over. But, even in this oldest age group, the majority did not regard themselves as disabled to any major extent.

Next we asked about the care that older people were receiving (if any). Here the focus was on regular assistance with personal care and household tasks that people need help with because they find it difficult to do them by themselves. The results are as follows: *see graph below.*

Two points should be emphasised about the graph below. First, the relatively small proportions receiving care, apart that is from Luxem-

**Proportion of older people receiving regular help or assistance with personal care or household tasks**



bourg and Portugal. (Of course the figures exclude those living in institutions.) Second these figures cannot be read as a proxy for the need for care since it is likely that some people in need are not getting any help. Disability is a better indicator of the likely need for help and assistance. Again there were big differences between those in their third and fourth ages with regard to receipt of care: 18 per cent of the 60-64 year olds compared with 59 per cent of those aged 80 and over.

Who are the main supporters of older people in need of care? Looking at the EC as a whole, adult children were the most frequently mentioned carers (40 per cent), followed by spouses (32 per cent), private paid help (11 per cent), other relatives (14 per cent), the public social services (13 per cent), friends (6 per cent), neighbours (6 per cent) and voluntary organisations (3 per cent). Therefore, as demonstrated by previous research, family members are by far the main providers of care: two-thirds of the care being supplied to older people in the special Eurobarometer survey came from within their families.

Looking at children first, one half of them were living with the older person and the other half were supplying care from outside of the older person's household. In-house care is most common in Greece (39 per cent), Italy (34 per cent) and Spain (30 per cent) and least common in the Netherlands (2 per cent) and Denmark (4 per cent). Out-of-house care by adult children is most common in Germany (32 per cent), Belgium (27 per cent) and Greece (26 per cent) and least so in France (12 per cent) and Italy (13 per cent).

The role played by spouses differs considerably between EC countries. In Greece 47 per cent of those receiving care are helped by a spouse, in Portugal it is 44 per cent and Germany 40 per cent. At the other end of the scale only 8 per cent are assisted by a spouse in the Netherlands and 19 per cent in Denmark.

The role of paid private help also differs widely between the member states. Only three countries report more than one-fifth of

assistance being provided by private paid help: France (27 per cent), the Netherlands (33 per cent) and the UK (21 per cent). In comparison Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain record only 3-5 per cent of care coming from this source.

As for the public social services, not surprisingly they figure significantly in those countries with the most developed infra-structures of service provision. Thus Denmark has the most extensive system of home care provision in the EC and, in this survey, more than two-thirds of those receiving care were being assisted by the social services. Next in line came the Netherlands and the UK with just over one-quarter receiving such help; followed by Belgium and France with just under one-fifth. After that no other EC country makes it into double figures (Ireland was closest at 9 per cent).

Looking at these results from the perspective of age: the older the age group the less likely it is that care will be provided by a spouse and the greater the likelihood that it will be provided by the public social services. This, to some extent, 'substitution' relationship develops as follows:

	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+
Spouse	54%	44%	33%	25%	16%
Public services	8%	8%	10%	13%	20%

The roles of neighbours and the voluntary sector also increase with the age of the person in receipt of care but nowhere near as significantly as that of the public sector. Even so the public sector clearly does not fully compensate for the loss of spouse care. The role of private paid help remains more or less constant across the age range, as do those of children and other relatives.

Therefore these data suggest that there is something of a care gap left by the loss of spouses. Given the disproportionate share of care for older people borne by women it is

important to note that they are far less likely than men to receive assistance from a spouse : 18 per cent compared with 53 per cent of men.

### Are Families less Willing to Care ?

Despite data, such as those presented in the previous section, showing the crucial role of the family in the care of older people, the myth has been perpetuated that families are now less willing to care for their relatives than they were in past-times. This myth has been debunked countless times by both historical and contemporary research. However, as table 15 shows, as far as older people themselves are concerned, the family is less willing to care for older relatives. This finding is of the utmost importance, not only because it flies in the face of the evidence but also it points to a worrying belief among older people themselves. True, a more specialised survey might have distinguished between 'families in general' and the older person's own family, but there was not space for us to do that.

As can be seen from the table the strongest views concerning the declining willingness of the family to care were expressed in France, Luxembourg, Italy and Spain. On the other hand the strongest disagreements were in Denmark, Ireland and the UK. There was very little variation on the basis of either age or sex.

### Community Care

It is not mere coincidence that, as the cost of residential care has risen, policy makers have become more and more interested in keeping older people in their own homes - or, in its most

basic definition, community care. There are other good reasons for such a policy, none more so than the expressed preference of older people themselves to remain in their own homes. We put the issue to the general public in this way: 'some say that older people needing personal care should go into residential/nursing homes, while others say that the social services should help them to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. Which comes closest to your opinion ?

The vast majority of the general public (four out of five and nine out of ten of those that expressed an opinion) thought that older people should be helped to remain in their own homes. The only countries wherein more than one-fifth chose the residential option were Denmark and Portugal (27 per cent). This indicates that there is strong support for community care among the general populations of member states. Furthermore this consensus extends across virtually the whole of the age range and is shared by both sexes.

The only partial exception is among those aged 15-24 where a slightly higher proportion (18 per cent) than other age groups support the use of residential care but this declines among the 25-34 group to 12 percent where it remains more or less through to the 65 and over age group.

There is not space to do more than note in passing that some one in ten of the samples of the general public aged 15 and over in EC countries were providing care to someone within their own household as a result of a long term illness, disability or old age. In addition one in seven were providing out-of-house care.

## 15. FAMILIES ARE LESS WILLING TO CARE FOR OLDER RELATIVES THAN THEY USED TO BE (OLDER PEOPLE ONLY)

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Agree strongly	33.4	32.4	32.7	41.4	24.3	22.8	24.0	36.0	25.6	39.4	39.2	34.4	42.9	45.2	26.4
Agree slightly	34.0	37.2	26.6	32.7	39.0	30.2	37.2	35.5	26.6	34.6	24.1	27.8	36.2	34.8	31.8
Disagree slightly	18.2	17.7	19.4	13.7	23.8	28.7	24.8	15.1	19.0	17.1	17.4	19.1	12.6	10.5	18.9
Disagree strongly	10.4	9.2	16.4	9.5	8.9	15.4	10.2	7.8	22.5	5.1	11.9	12.5	4.9	5.5	18.3
DK	4.1	3.6	4.8	2.6	4.0	2.9	3.7	5.4	6.3	3.8	7.5	6.2	3.5	4.1	5.3

## 16. THE BEST PERSON TO DECIDE ON SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
A relative or close friend	27.8	24.0	24.8	25.7	21.3	15.1	20.0	37.8	41.5	30.9	25.7	18.7	38.6	38.4	29.6
The older person	33.7	43.0	48.1	34.9	47.2	38.8	45.4	35.0	22.3	18.2	33.0	32.7	22.6	36.1	29.8
The service provider	5.5	8.1	9.0	3.7	3.9	2.8	3.7	8.7	5.8	7.5	5.6	11.7	14.1	3.8	4.3
Another professional (eg. doctor)	30.2	22.3	17.0	34.7	25.2	41.3	28.5	16.9	26.8	42.2	30.1	33.4	24.0	16.6	30.6
DK	2.8	2.7	1.0	0.9	2.5	2.0	2.3	1.6	3.6	1.2	5.7	3.5	0.6	5.1	5.7

### Clients or Consumers ?

One of the most contentious current issues surrounding the long term care of older people is whose voice should prevail in determining the provision of care? Of course for most younger adults this sort of question does not arise, they are used to deciding for themselves what is in their own best interests. But in the care of older people a practice has developed whereby they become, in effect, the clients of professionals or quasi professionals and these groups may decide which sort of care is appropriate for them, sometimes in discussion with informal carers. This may have the effect of disenfranchising older people from making crucial decisions about their own lives (one of the Latin roots of 'client', a term that is much used in the social services, translates into: 'to hear, to obey'). This is a gross simplification, not least because often professionals make strenuous

efforts to consult and do what is best for older people and they have the task of assessing priorities for resource allocation as well as ensuring that care is provided, and it would be wrong to mis-read this as impugning the honourable motives of social services professionals. However the matter of the rights of older people to self-determination is one that cannot easily be side-stepped.

We raised it in the general Eurobarometer survey in terms of the person in the best position to decide on the most appropriate services for older people needing long term care. The results in table 16 above show older people themselves gaining the highest vote overall, but only just, with professionals (which should be read as meaning doctors) and relatives/friends close behind. In all countries except Italy the combined percentages for the older person and their relatives or friends came to more than half of the total.

**The matter of the rights  
of older people  
to self-determination  
is one that cannot  
easily be side-stepped.**

### Paying for Care

The final part of this chapter focusses on how the long term care of increasing numbers of frail and older people should be financed. At the present time in EC countries this is either provided by the state, free or at subsidised rates, or privately, paid for by the individuals concerned or by the state. Germany has recently introduced a public insurance scheme for long term care and the issue has been debated in several other countries. We put to the general public a series of possible methods

of financing long term care and asked them to choose which they think is the best way.

The results shown below (table 17) reveal a surprisingly widespread opposition to the use of the private sector in this field. More than seven out of ten favoured either a compulsory public insurance scheme or a public service financed through taxation and, if the 'don't knows' are excluded this rises to just under eight out of ten. The citizens of Europe have spoken with clear voices on this issue: either the public sector should organise the financing of long term care or it should both finance and provide it. There was hardly any deviation from the picture shown in table 17 on the basis of age or sex, though the group aged 55-64 was slightly more likely than others to favour compulsory public insurance.

#### 17. THE BEST WAY OF PROVIDING FOR LONG TERM CARE

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Compulsory public insurance	36.6	45.7	17.9	41.3	49.4	44.0	48.3	32.2	19.3	34.9	50.1	40.1	31.3	38.2	17.7
Compulsory private insurance	6.2	10.4	6.6	7.9	7.7	2.4	6.6	4.0	5.7	7.2	7.3	9.9	6.4	2.6	3.8
Optional public insurance	7.6	8.2	4.9	7.1	9.8	12.9	10.4	8.4	4.9	5.1	8.4	7.9	7.1	5.7	8.0
Optional private insurance	4.1	8.2	5.1	2.6	5.8	3.6	5.4	3.6	4.0	3.0	3.0	5.2	5.0	2.2	5.0
Public provision of care financed through taxes	33.9	17.7	60.3	32.1	18.8	27.3	20.6	31.1	44.0	34.7	18.1	27.2	48.0	29.6	56.7
DK	11.6	9.9	5.2	9.0	8.5	9.8	8.7	20.6	22.0	15.2	13.2	9.7	2.0	21.7	9.0

In this penultimate chapter some of the loose ends of the previous discussion are pulled together. Here we look at the extent of the participation of older people in public life, as seen through the eyes of the general public, and the extent to which there is a perceived need for further government and EC action.

### Politics and the Media

It was established in chapter 2 that senior citizens are, by and large, involved in current affairs but, while there is evidence of a considerable interest in politics, levels of engagement in political or pressure group activities are very low. In the parallel study of the general populations of member states respondents were asked about the involvement of older people in politics and the media.

With regard to political life there was a slight majority of the general public saying that older people are not playing a full enough part (46 per cent as opposed to 43 per cent). This opinion was expressed by most people in Belgium (65 per cent), Spain (60 per cent) and the Netherlands (56 per cent) and was denied by most in Greece (75 per cent), France and the Netherlands (54 per cent) and Italy (50 per cent). Of course the paradox underlying this question is that many of those who are prominent political figures may be older people yet, at the same time, the mass of senior citizens are often far less active in politics than their younger counterparts.

Taking this issue a stage further we asked the general public if older people should stand up more actively for their own rights. The results, shown in table 18 below, indicate that this is another matter on which the people of

Europe see eye to eye. There was virtually no deviation from this unanimity across the different age groups, though there was a tendency for the proportions agreeing strongly to rise with age up to 55-64 age group, after which there was a slight decline.

When it comes to the issue of television and radio the general public, by a large majority, are of the opinion that older people are not represented fully enough: 53 per cent compared to 33 per cent who think they are. In Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy and Spain some three out of five of the general public think that older people do not figure enough in television and radio.

### The Policy Deficit

In order to gain an impression of the degree to which the people of the EC regard existing provision for older people in their own countries as adequate or not and to see how far they think there is room for further action - in effect the relative 'deservingness' of older people - we asked if the government is doing all it should for this group, does too much or not enough.

The results confirm the high favour in which older people are held in Europe. More than three-quarters of all EC respondents thought that their government does not do enough for older people and in only four countries - Denmark, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands - did the majority fall below seven out of ten. Antithetically those same four countries were the ones where the largest proportions were likely to say that the government is doing all it should (from 23 per cent in Denmark to 36 per cent in the Netherlands). There were significant differences in responses

### 18. OLDER PEOPLE SHOULD STAND UP MORE ACTIVELY FOR THEIR RIGHTS

	EC12	Belgium	Denmark	France	West Germany	East Germany	All Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK
Agree strongly	35.5	36.1	36.6	24.0	29.3	35.7	30.7	52.2	40.9	36.8	27.9	40.5	58.7	38.8	41.6
Agree slightly	47.1	44.9	42.2	48.4	54.0	48.6	52.8	37.9	46.8	48.9	38.9	36.8	33.2	48.3	42.9
Disagree slightly	9.6	11.6	13.7	18.0	8.8	7.4	8.5	3.1	5.5	7.0	17.6	12.8	4.0	6.5	8.6
Disagree strongly	2.3	3.1	5.4	3.8	1.7	1.4	1.7	0.8	1.3	2.4	5.0	2.6	1.6	1.4	1.9
DK	5.4	4.3	2.0	5.8	6.1	6.9	6.3	5.9	5.5	4.9	10.6	7.2	2.5	4.9	4.9

between the former FDR and GDR. For example 82 per cent of former East Germans thought that their government does not do enough, compared with 68 per cent of former West Germans.

There was hardly any difference between age groups in their opinions on the adequacy of current government action:

Proportion saying that the public authorities in their country do not do enough for older people						
AGE	15-24	24-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	72.3	77.3	79.0	72.7	76.4	74.4

In similar vein respondents were asked whether the European Community is doing enough with regard to older people. Predictably the level of uncertainty increased markedly compared with the question about national governments. Thus the average of one in three who replied 'don't know' carries its own powerful message with regard to the so-called 'democratic deficit'. This uncertainty peaked in Denmark (at 43 per cent), followed by the Netherlands and Spain (35 per cent) and declined to 18 per cent in Portugal.

The other important finding to emerge from this question is that an average of just under three out of five of those sampled said that the EC should do more for older people. (If the don't knows were excluded nearly nine out of ten held this opinion.) The country by country percentages are shown opposite:

There were slight tendencies both for younger people to say that the Community should do more and for older people to be more uncertain.

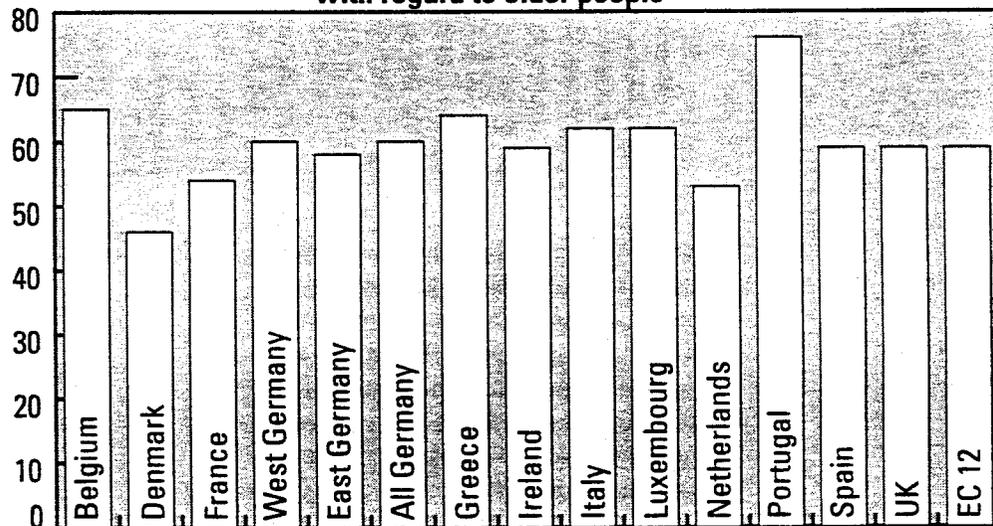
### The European Year 1993

Finally older people in the special Eurobarometer survey were asked about the European Year of Older People and Solidarity Between the Generations and, specifically, what information they would like to be better informed about. The results exposed a widespread interest in 1993 and in being better informed about benefits and services available in both their own and other EC countries.

First of all only 14 per cent said that they did not want to be better informed about the European Year and related issues. Then, over half (54 per cent) of the older people sampled wanted to be better informed about the benefits, services and facilities available to older people in their own country. The proportions wanting this information were at their highest in Portugal (70 per cent) and the former GDR (72 per cent) and at their lowest in Luxembourg (38 per cent) and the Netherlands (36 per cent).

One quarter of older people wanted information about benefits, services and facilities available in other EC countries. This interest peaked in Portugal (38 per cent) and the UK (34 per cent) and slumped in the Netherlands (9 per cent). These data suggest a remarkably high proportion of older people with an interest in

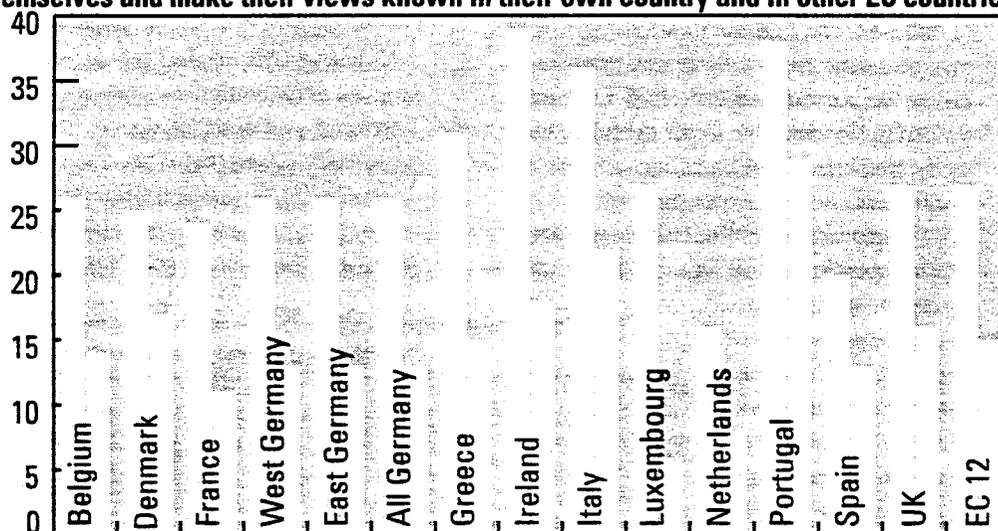
**Proportion saying that the European Community should do more with regard to older people**



provision in other EC countries. This impression was confirmed by the fact that just over one in five expressed a desire to be better informed about what the European Commission is doing to encourage solidarity between the generations. Interest in this was at its highest in Portugal (32 per cent), Italy (29 per cent) and France (27 per cent), and lowest in Spain (14 per cent).

Responses to this question also confirmed the latent interest of older people in political activity. Thus more than a quarter wanted to be better informed about how older people organise themselves and make their views known in their own country, and some 15 per cent wanted similar information about other EC countries. The results for each country are as follows:

**Proportion wanting to be better informed about how older people organise themselves and make their views known in their own country and in other EC countries**



There were some 15 per cent of older people who wanted to be informed about how they could actually take part in the activities and events organised as part of the European Year. This may seem like a small proportion but if their interest was translated into actual participation it would mean something of the order of 9 million older people across the Community being actively involved in the European year.

# 8 CONCLUSION

It would be premature to draw definite conclusions from what is a preliminary report on a vast data set, but to a large extent the people of Europe have drawn their own conclusions. They say loud and clear, for example, that older people maintain a special place as a deserving cause for action by national governments and the Community as a whole, and moreover they want more of both forms of action. It would be mistaken to see this as a display of pity for older people. The findings reveal a far richer tapestry than that flimsy cloth. For instance there is proof of very powerful intergenerational solidarity between young and old - workers and pensioners - which provides much hope for the future. True this is partly a matter of self-interest, since younger people these days can expect to be older people some day, but nonetheless important for that. Then there is a widespread awareness of age discrimination in all member states and the feeling that something should be done about this injustice. Finally there is a strong belief that older people themselves should stand up for their own rights more actively.

Turning to senior citizens themselves, they too have spoken. There are signs of resentment with regard to the low level of pensions in some countries and of segregative impulses, but also proof of embeddedness in their families and favourable attitudes towards youth. There are disturbing indications of financial insecurity among a minority but, overall, a sense of mild satisfaction with the lives they lead, without much complaint or overt political action.

Just under one-quarter of older people were very satisfied with their lives, more than half fairly satisfied and only one in five not satisfied. The variations between countries cannot be painted over and the challenge the Community faces is to minimise those that derive mainly from differences in socio-economic conditions. These differences may be summarised in the following statistical spiral: 68 per cent of older people in Denmark are very satisfied with the lives they lead, 43 per cent in the Netherlands, 25 per cent in

Spain, 6 per cent in Greece and 3 per cent in Portugal. Conversely only 3 per cent of Danish elders are not satisfied with their lives compared with 41 per cent of the Portuguese and 59 per cent of Greek elders.

How long the relative political acquiescence of older people will last in the face of such divergence is a matter for speculation but there were indications in the surveys of a latent interest in political activity, a clear impression of active engagement in current affairs and a strong feeling among the general public that older people should stand up more actively for their rights.

There are causes for celebration in these findings - particularly the continuing strength of intergenerational solidarity - and there are many causes for reflection as well.

## REFERENCES

1. A. Walker, J. Alber and A-M Guillemard. *Older People in Europe - The Policy Dimensions*, Brussels, EC Commission, 1993.
2. E. Midwinter, *The British Gas Report on Attitudes to Ageing 1991*. London, British Gas, 1991.
3. Full details are contained in Walker, *et al*, *op cit*.
4. G. Dooghe, *The Ageing of the Population in Europe*. Brussels, CBGS. 1991.
5. K. Reif and R. Inglehart (eds) *Eurobarometer, The Dynamics of European Public Opinion*, London, Macmillan, 1991.
6. Midwinter, *op cit*, p.12.
7. Walker, Alber and Guillemard, *op cit*.
8. M. Sohngen and R. Smith, 'Images of Old Age in Poetry', *The Gerontologist*, vol. 18(2), 1978, pp.181-186.
9. Walker, Alber and Guillemard, *op cit*.
10. L. Rosenmayer and E. Kockeis, 'Propositions for a Sociological Theory of Ageing and the Family' *International Social Service Journal*, vol.15, No.3, pp.410-26.
11. EC Commission, *Young Europeans in 1990*, Brussels.
12. A. Walker, 'The Economic "Burden" of Ageing and the Prospect of Intergenerational Conflict', *Ageing and Society*, vol.10, 1990, pp.377-396.
13. P. Johnson, C. Conrad and D. Thomson (eds) *Workers Versus Pensioners*, Manchester University Press, 1989.
14. See Walker, Alber and Guillemard, *op cit*.
15. See Walker, *op cit*.

## LIST OF TABLES

- TABLE 1 CHOOSING A NAME  
TABLE 2 OLD AGE HAS GIVEN ME A NEW LEASE OF LIFE  
TABLE 3 PASSING THE TIME  
TABLE 4 CONTACTS WITH FAMILY  
TABLE 5 YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE HELPFUL TOWARDS OLDER PEOPLE  
TABLE 6 CONTACT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE (> 25)  
TABLE 7 THOSE IN EMPLOYMENT HAVE A DUTY TO ENSURE THROUGH CONTRIBUTIONS OR TAXES, THAT OLDER PEOPLE HAVE A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING  
TABLE 8 FINANCIAL SITUATION OF OLDER PEOPLE  
TABLE 9 ADEQUACY OF PENSIONS  
TABLE 10 THE LEVEL OF MINIMUM RESOURCES THAT SHOULD BE PROVIDED BY THE STATE  
TABLE 11 PENSIONS AND TAXATION  
TABLE 12 HOW TO SUPPORT OLDER PEOPLE: MONEY OR CONCESSIONS?  
TABLE 13 PEOPLE IN THEIR 50s SHOULD GIVE UP WORK TO MAKE WAY FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE  
TABLE 14 PROPORTION BELIEVING THAT OLDER WORKERS ARE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN EMPLOYMENT  
TABLE 15 FAMILIES ARE LESS WILLING TO CARE FOR OLDER RELATIVES THAN THEY USED TO BE  
TABLE 16 THE BEST PERSON TO DECIDE ON SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE  
TABLE 17 THE BEST WAY OF PROVIDING FOR LONG TERM CARE  
TABLE 18 OLDER PEOPLE SHOULD STAND UP MORE ACTIVELY FOR THEIR RIGHTS

PRODUCTION Tournesol CONSEILS  
TEL. 32/2/640 85 96 - FAX. 32/2/646 72 22