

Intergenerational solidarity

Summary

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This survey was requested by the Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and coordinated by Directorate General Communication.

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission. The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

Flash EB Series #269

Intergenerational solidarity

Conducted by
The Gallup Organisation, Hungary
upon the request of Directorate General
Employment, Social Affairs and Equal
Opportunities



Survey co-ordinated by
Directorate General Communication

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THE GALLUP ORGANISATION

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Introduction

Nearly every country in the EU is faced with the prospect of a population that is getting progressively older: birth rates are declining while life expectancy is rising. This demographic evolution will be accompanied by profound social changes: in terms of social protection, housing and employment, for example. However, the EU population's gradual ageing process is also having a strong impact on conventional relationships between generations.

The political debate has often focused on the negative challenges of ageing, such as the need for increased expenditure on pensions, health care and social protection systems. Such systems are dependent on the concept of (intergenerational) solidarity, an integral part of the European economic and social system, and – therefore – a crucial factor in this debate. According to the European Commission, solidarity and the creation of links between younger and older generations should not be seen in strict financial terms. The Commission recommends placing equal importance on the promotion of mutual cooperation and interchanges between the generations, as well as better understanding and new forms of co-existence¹.

The Flash Eurobarometer *Intergenerational solidarity* (Flash N° 269) was conducted in order to examine EU citizens' opinions about:

- existing relations between the younger and older generations
- costs of an ageing population – particularly in terms of pensions and elderly care
- the need for pension and social security reforms
- ways in which older people contribute to society – financially and in a broader way
- existing possibilities for autonomous living for elderly EU citizens
- the provision of elderly care and support by social services
- the role of public authorities in promoting intergenerational solidarity

The Flash Eurobarometer *Intergenerational solidarity* (Flash N° 269) fieldwork was conducted between 20 and 24 March 2009. Over 27,000 randomly-selected citizens aged 15 years and over were interviewed in the 27 EU Member States. Interviews were predominantly carried out via fixed-line telephone, reaching ca. 1,000 EU citizens in each country. Parts of interviews in Austria, Finland, Italy, Portugal and Spain were conducted over mobile telephones. Due to the relatively low fixed-line telephone coverage in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, 300 individuals were sampled and interviewed on a face-to-face basis.

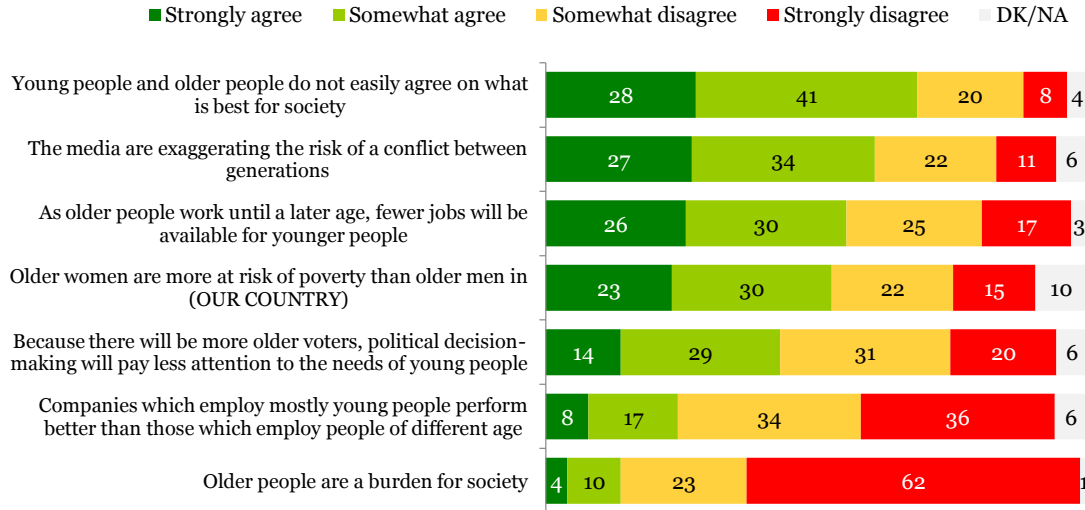
To correct for sampling disparities, a post-stratification weighting of the results was implemented, based on key socio-demographic variables.

¹ See: <http://www.age-platform.org/EN/IMG/Solidarity-uk4.pdf>

1. Relations between the different generations

EU citizens were most likely to agree that young people and older people do not easily agree on what is best for society (28% *strongly* agreed and 41% *somewhat* agreed), and least likely to agree that older people are a burden on society (4% *strongly* agreed and 10% *somewhat* agreed). More than 6 in 10 EU citizens *strongly* disagreed that older people are a burden on society.

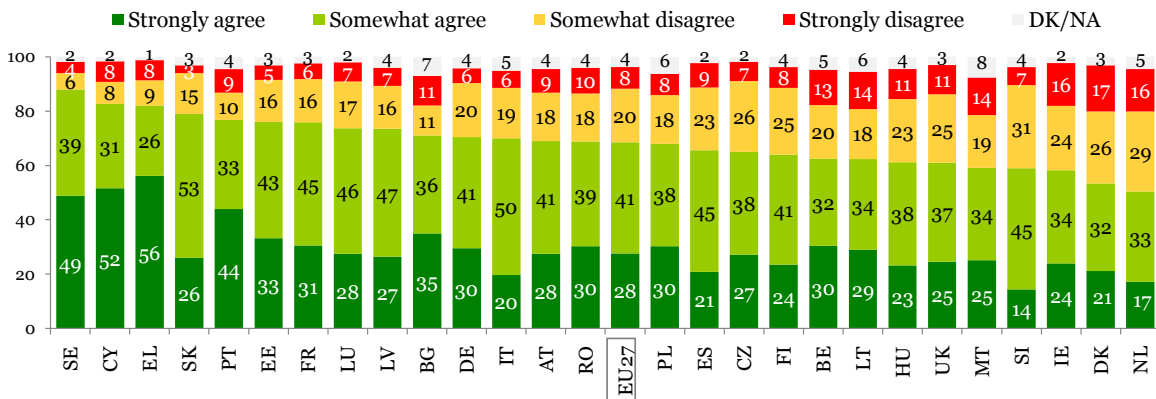
Perceptions regarding the relations between younger and older people



Q1. I am going to read out a number of statements about relations between younger and older people. For each one, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.
Base: all respondents, % EU27

In all EU Member States, at least half of respondents thought that the **young people and older people do not easily agree on what is best for society**; the total level of agreement (i.e. the sum of *strongly* and *somewhat* agree responses) ranged from 50% in the Netherlands to 88% in Sweden. At least two-thirds of interviewees in each Member State, however, *somewhat* or *strongly* disagreed that **older people are a burden on society**.

Young people and older people do not easily agree on what is best for society



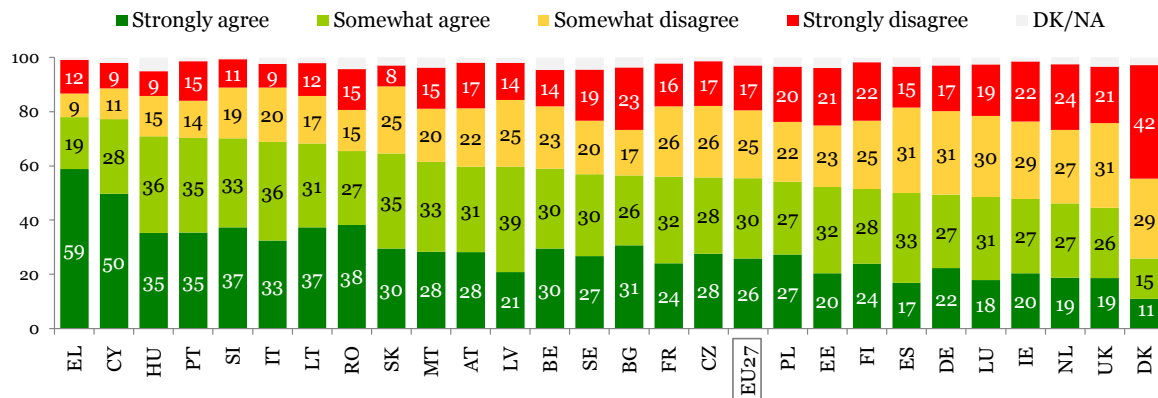
Q1. I am going to read out a number of statements about relations between younger and older people. For each one, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.
Base: all respondents, % by country

The youngest respondents (under 25) were the most likely to think that young people and older people do not easily agree on what is best for society (75% *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed compared to 66%-69% in the other age groups). The oldest respondents (over 64) were twice as likely as the youngest ones to *somewhat* or *strongly* agree that older people are a burden on society (25% vs. 12%).

A majority of EU citizens agreed that **as older people work until a later age, fewer jobs will be available for younger people** (26% *strongly* agreed and 30% *somewhat* agreed). Seven in 10 EU citizens disagreed that **companies that mostly employ young people perform better than those that employ people from different age groups** (36% *strongly* disagreed and 34% *somewhat* disagreed).

Cypriot and Greek respondents appeared to be the most likely to agree with the two previous statements, while Danish, Dutch and British interviewees were the least likely to agree. For example, while 78% of Greeks and Cypriots *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed that fewer jobs will be available for younger people if older people extend their working lives, only 26% of Danes and 45%-46% of British and Dutch respondents agreed with this outlook.

As older people work until a later age, fewer jobs will be available for younger people



Q1. I am going to read out a number of statements about relations between younger and older people. For each one, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.
Base: all respondents, % by country

Roughly half of EU citizens disagreed that, **because there will be a higher number of older voters, decision-makers will pay less attention to young people's needs** (20% *strongly* disagreed and 31% *somewhat* disagreed). Younger respondents were less likely to *somewhat* or *strongly* disagree (45% of 15-24 year-olds vs. 53% of those over 64).

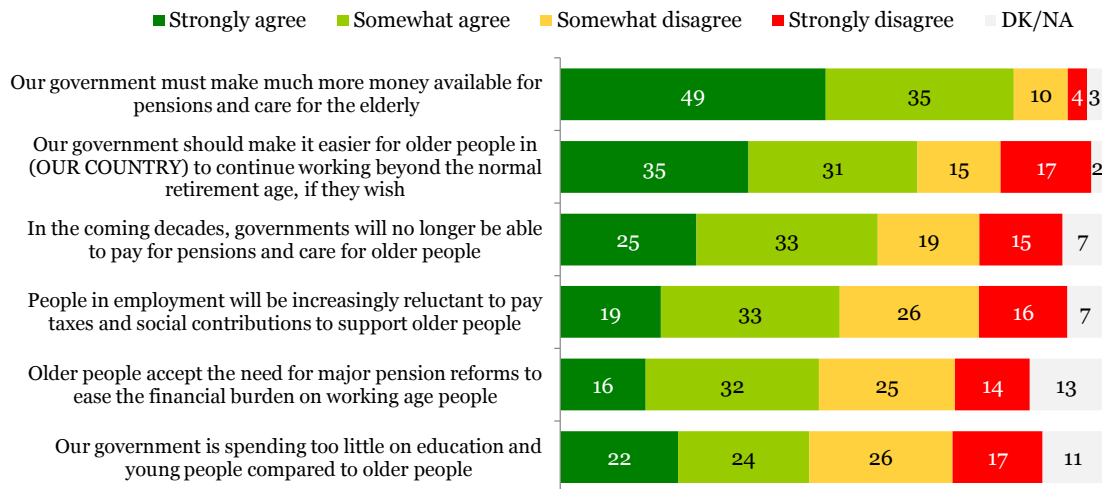
Slightly more than 6 in 10 EU citizens also thought that **the media exaggerates the risk of a conflict between generations**: 27% *strongly* agreed and 34% *somewhat* agreed with this proposition.

Finally, in total, slightly more than half of EU citizens agreed that, **in their country, older women are at a greater risk of falling into poverty than older men**; slightly less than a quarter (23%) *strongly* agreed that this is the case in their country.

2. Affordability of pensions and elderly care; the need for pension reforms

When presented with various statements about the costs of an aging population, EU citizens were the most likely to *somewhat* or *strongly* agree that their national governments must make more money available for pensions and care for the elderly – only 14% disagreed with the statement. Moreover, half of EU citizens *strongly* agreed that this need exists.

Perceptions regarding the affordability of pensions and elderly care



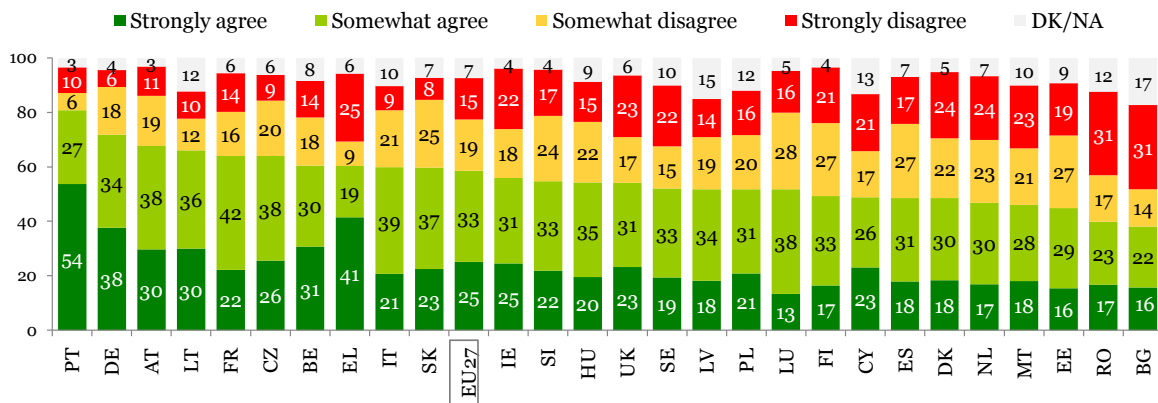
Q2. Now I would read out a few statements related to pensions. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree .
Base: all respondents, % EU27

Costs of an ageing population – in terms of pensions and elderly care

EU citizens were in agreement that **their national governments must make more money available for pensions and care for the elderly**: in 18 Member states, at least 8 in 10 respondents *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed, and not more than one-sixth disagreed, with this proposition. In the five countries at the bottom of the distribution – Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary and Denmark – just 7 in 10 interviewees or less agreed with the statement.

The statement – **in coming decades, governments will no longer be able to pay for pensions and care for older people** – received a total level of agreement ranging from approximately 4 in 10 interviewees in Bulgaria and Romania to twice as many in Portugal (81%).

In the coming decades, governments will no longer be able to pay for pensions and care for older people



Q2. Now I would read out a few statements related to pensions. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree .
Base: all respondents, % by country

A slim majority (55%-56%) of the over 54 year-olds and 50% of 40-54 year-olds *strongly* agreed that more government funds are needed for pensions and care for the elderly, compared to 41% of 15-24 year-olds and 43% of 25-39 year-olds. Respondents aged between 25 and 54 were the most concerned about the affordability of pensions: slightly more than 6 in 10 of these respondents agreed with this statement, compared to only a slim majority of respondents in the other age groups (53%-55%).

EU citizens were divided in their opinions as to whether **their national government's expenditure on young people and on education is too little, in comparison with the amount spent on older people**: 46% *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed and 43% in total disagreed with this proposition

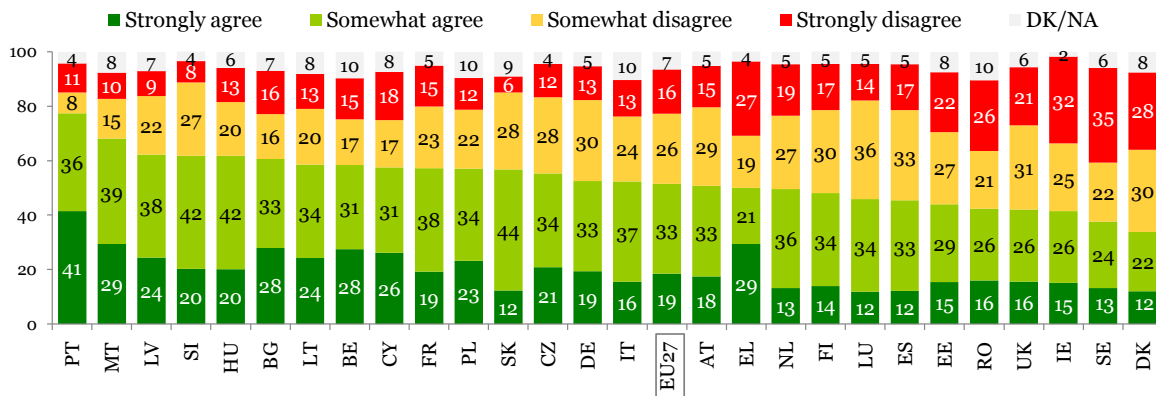
The need for pension and social security reforms

EU citizens were almost as likely to agree that **people in employment will be increasingly reluctant to pay taxes and social contributions to support older people**, as they were to agree that **older people accept the need for major pension reforms to ease the financial burden on working-age people** (52% *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed with the former statement and 48% with the latter).

Portuguese respondents most frequently agreed that people in employment will be increasingly reluctant to pay taxes and social contributions to support older people (in total, 77% agreed). In the Scandinavian countries, on the other hand, less than 4 in 10 respondents *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed.

Although respondents in Sweden and Denmark were the least likely to think that people in employment will be increasingly reluctant to pay taxes and social contributions to support older people, they were among the most likely to disagree that older people accept that major pension reforms are needed to ease the burden on working-age people: 43% and 46%, respectively, of respondents in these countries *somewhat* or *strongly* disagreed with the above proposition.

People in employment will be increasingly reluctant to pay taxes and social contributions to support older people



Q2. Now I would read out a few statements related to pensions. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.
Base: all respondents, % by country

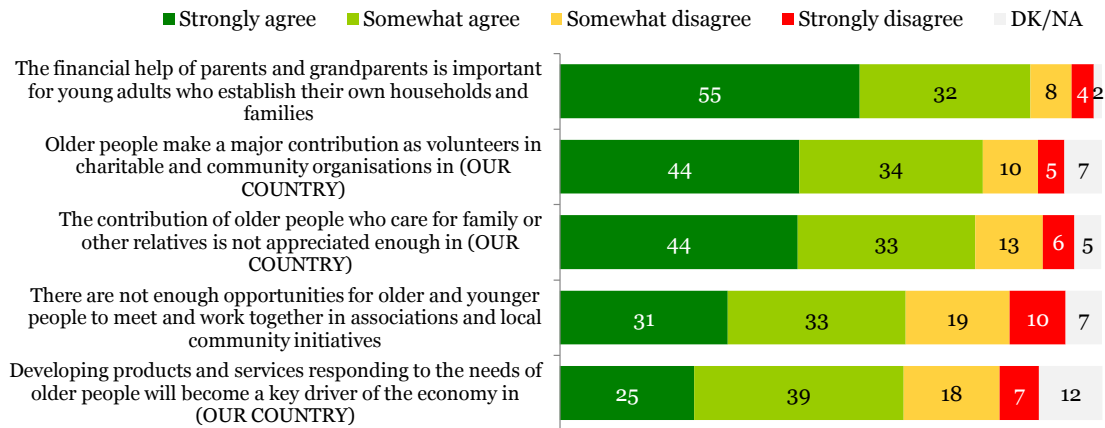
Almost 6 in 10 of the 15-24 year-olds *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed that people in employment will be increasingly reluctant to pay taxes and social contributions to support older people, compared to approximately half of the older respondents. Furthermore, while only slightly more than 10% of 15-39 year-olds *strongly* agreed that older people accept that major pension reforms are needed to ease the burden on working-age people, approximately a fifth of the over 54 year-olds expressed strong agreement.

In total, more than 8 in 10 British, Finnish, Dutch, Danish and Irish respondents *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed that **their government should make it easier for older people to continue working beyond their normal retirement age (if they so desire)**. In Greece, Italy and Slovakia, interviewees were the least likely to *somewhat* or *strongly* agree with this statement (44%, 46% and 49%, respectively).

3. Contributions of older people to society

A large majority of EU citizens agreed that older people make a major contribution to society via voluntary work in charitable and community organisations in their country (44% *strongly* agreed and 34% *somewhat* agreed). Slightly more than three-quarters of interviewees thought that the contribution of older people who care for family members or relatives is not sufficiently appreciated in their country (44% *strongly* agreed and 33% *somewhat* agreed).

Perceptions regarding older people’s contribution to society



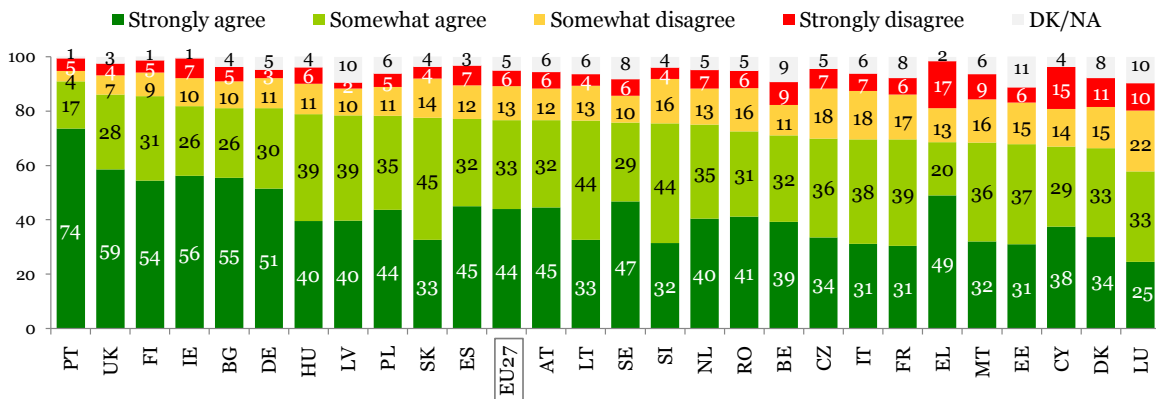
Q3. Older people are not just receiving from society, they can also give something back. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree .
Base: all respondents, % EU27

Ways in which older people contribute to society – both financially and in a broader way

More than 8 in 10 respondents in almost all Member States *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed that **financial help from parents and grandparents is important when young adults are establishing their own households and families**. The total level of agreement, however, was considerably lower in Denmark (59%), the Netherlands (65%), the Czech Republic (71%) and Sweden (76%).

A majority of respondents in all Member States also thought that the **contribution of older people who care for family members or relatives is not sufficiently appreciated in their country** (the total level of agreement ranged from 58% in Luxembourg to 91% in Portugal).

The contribution of older people who care for family or other relatives is not appreciated enough in [our country]



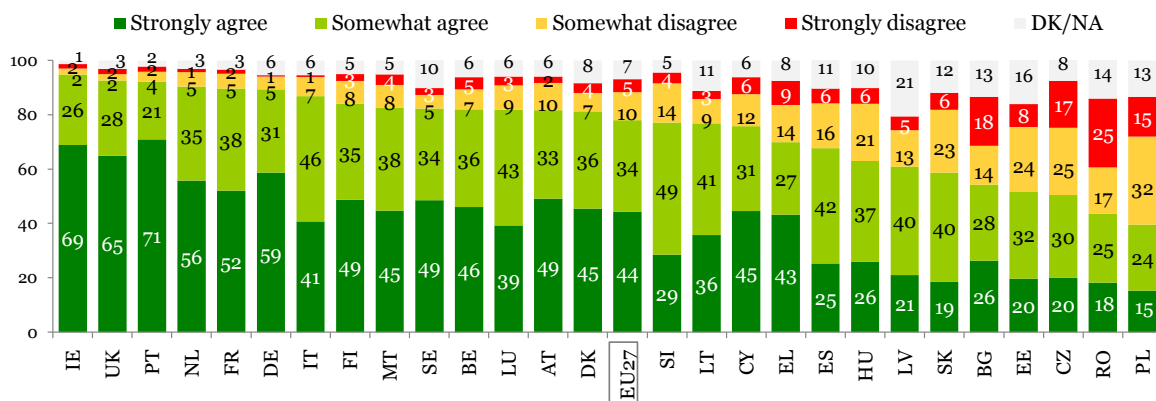
Q3. Older people are not just receiving from society, they can also give something back. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree .
Base: all respondents, % by country

Respondents between 40 and 64 years-of-age were the most apt to *somewhat* or *strongly* agree that the contribution of older people who have a responsibility of care for family members or relatives is not sufficiently appreciated in their country, while 15-24 year-olds were the least likely to do so (80% vs. 71%-72%).

Voluntary work and opportunities for older and younger people to meet

A large majority (78%) of EU citizens *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed that **older people make a major contribution to society via voluntary work in charitable and community organisations in their country**. The eight Member States where respondents were the least likely to agree with this statement all belonged to the group of countries that joined the EU in 2004 or later; the eight countries where respondents most frequently agreed were all pre-2004 enlargement countries.

Older people make a major contribution as volunteers in charitable and community organisations in [our country]



Q3. Older people are not just receiving from society, they can also give something back. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.

Base: all respondents, % by country

When EU citizens were asked whether **there are (not) enough opportunities for older and younger people to meet, and work together, via associations and local community initiatives**, the majority view in 21 Member States was that there are insufficient opportunities. In Portugal, the UK, Ireland and Greece, at least three-quarters of respondents *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed with the statement that there are not enough opportunities.

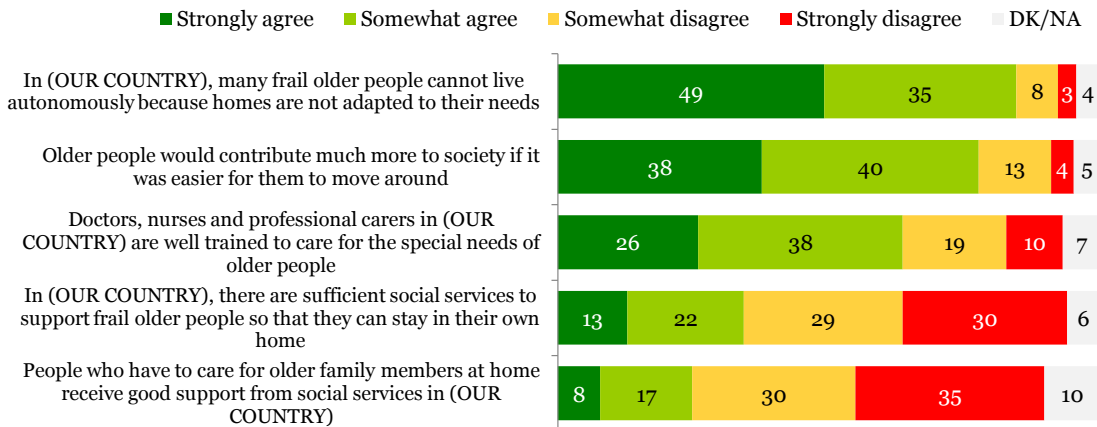
Only 7 in 10 of the 15-24 year-olds *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed that older people make a major contribution to society via voluntary work in charitable and community organisations in their country, compared to 80% of the over 54 year-olds. The oldest respondents (over 64) were also the least likely to think that there are not enough opportunities for older and younger people to meet, and work together, via associations and local community initiatives (60% *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed). By comparison, roughly two-thirds of 15-39 year-olds, in total, agreed that there are insufficient opportunities.

Finally, in total, almost two-thirds of EU citizens agreed – and a quarter *strongly* agreed – that **developing products and services responding to the needs of older people will become a key driver of their national economy**.

4. Autonomous living for the elderly, elderly care and support by social services

Only slightly more than a third of EU citizens in total agreed – and 59% disagreed – that there are sufficient social services to support frail older people so that they can stay living in their own home. Two-thirds of interviewees also *somewhat* or *strongly* disagreed that people with a responsibility of care for older family members at home receive good support from social services.

Perceptions regarding elderly care



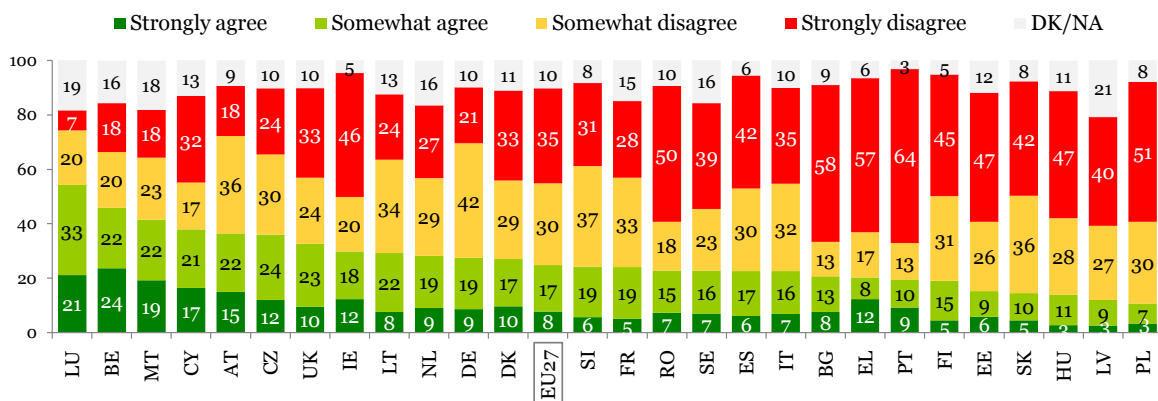
Q4. Let me read a few statement about problems related to elderly care. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree .
Base: all respondents, % EU27

The provision of elderly care and support by social services

Roughly 6 in 10 of EU citizens *somewhat* or *strongly* disagreed that there are **sufficient social services to support frail older people so that they can stay living in their own home** (30% *strongly* disagreed and 29% *somewhat* disagreed). Almost two-thirds of interviewees also disagreed that **people with a responsibility of care for older family members at home receive good support from social services** (35% *strongly* disagreed and 30% *somewhat* disagreed).

Respondents in Portugal, Bulgaria and Greece were not only among the most dissatisfied with support from social services for elderly people living on their own, they were also the most dissatisfied with social services support for individuals who have a responsibility of care for older family members at home. Respondents in Luxembourg, on the other hand, were the most likely to agree that there are sufficient social services.

People who have to care for older family members at home receive good support from social services in [our country]



Q4. Let me read a few statement about problems related to elderly care. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree .
Base: all respondents, % by country

Both the youngest (under 25) and the oldest respondents (over 64) were more likely than respondents in the other age categories to *somewhat* or *strongly* agree that there are sufficient social services to support the elderly (38%-39% vs. 30%-34%) and those who have a responsibility of care for older family members at home (28%-30% vs. 23%-24%).

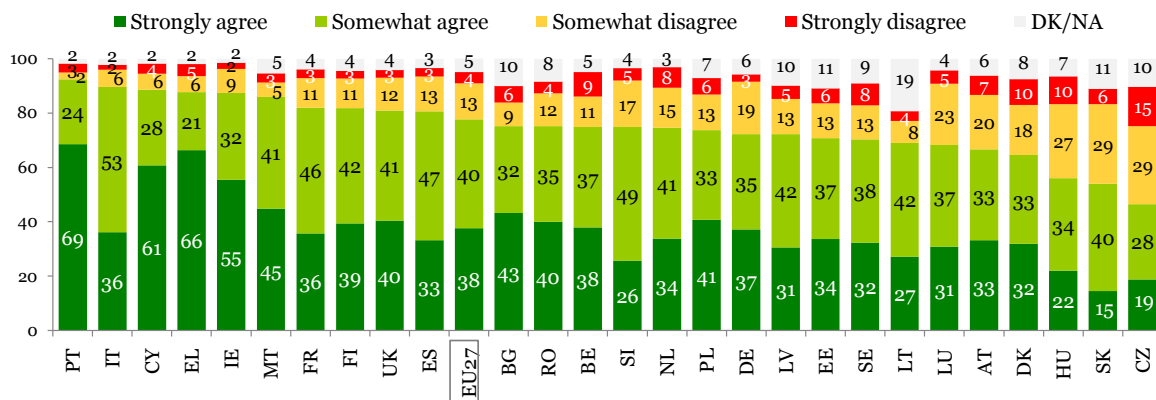
Almost two-thirds of EU citizens thought that **doctors, nurses and professional carers in their country are sufficiently well trained to care for the special needs of the elderly**. The total level of agreement ranged from slightly less than half of respondents in Greece, Lithuania and Estonia (46%-47%) to more than 8 in 10 (82%) of respondents in Austria.

Existing possibilities for autonomous living for elderly EU citizens

At least 7 in 10 respondents across all Member States *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed that **many frail older people cannot live autonomously because their homes are not adapted to meet their needs**: the total level of agreement ranged from 70% in Luxembourg to 95% in Portugal.

A large variation in country results was, nevertheless, observed for the statement that **older people would contribute much more to society if they could move around more easily**: less than half Czech respondents *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed with this statement, compared to approximately 9 in 10 Portuguese, Italians and Cypriots.

Older people would contribute much more to society if it was easier for them to move around



Q4. Let me read a few statement about problems related to elderly care. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.

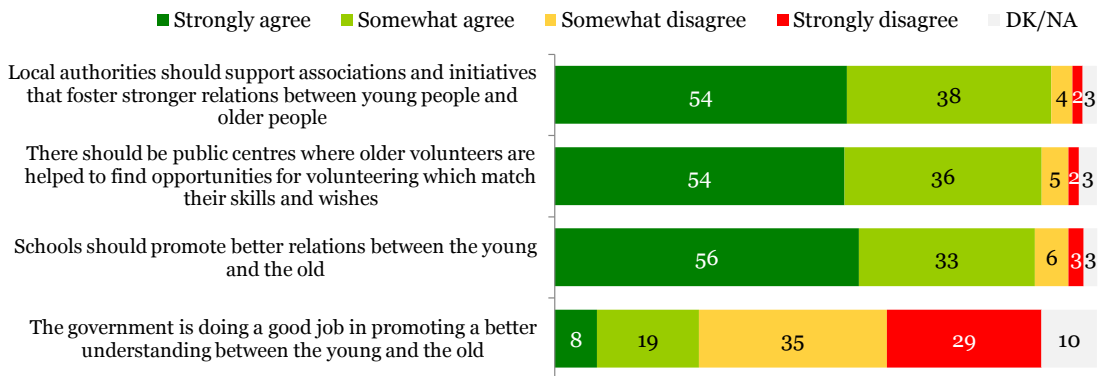
Base: all respondents, % by country

Only approximately a third of the 15-39 year-olds *strongly* agreed that older people would contribute much more to society if they could move around more easily, compared to 37% of 40-54 year-olds and 42% of respondents over 54.

5. The role of public authorities in promoting intergenerational solidarity

More than 6 in 10 EU citizens disagreed that their government does a good job in promoting better understanding between young and old (35% *somewhat* disagreed and 29% *strongly* disagreed). EU citizens were, nevertheless, in agreement about the role of public authorities in promoting better relations between young and old.

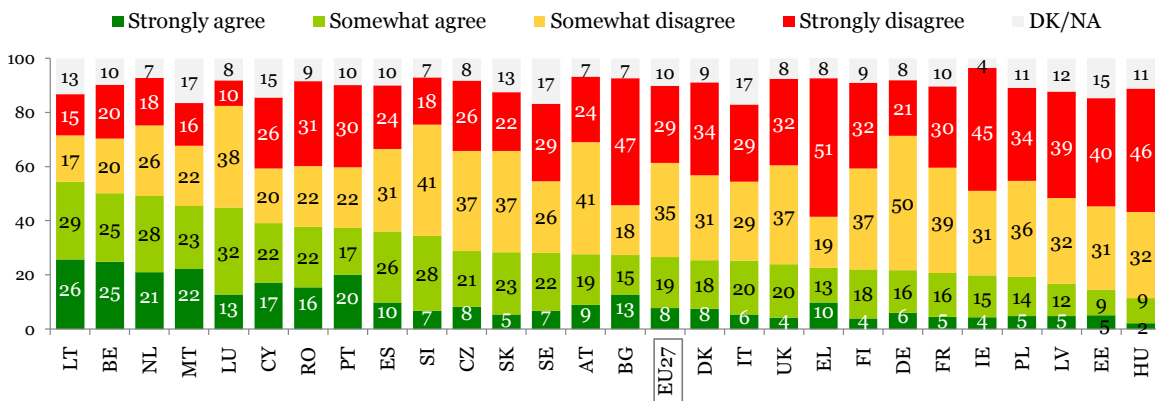
Perceptions regarding the role of public authorities



Q5. Finally I would like to ask about the role of public authorities. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.
Base: all respondents, % EU27

Lithuania and Belgium were the only two countries where at least half of interviewees *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed that **their government does a good job in promoting better understanding between young and old** (54% and 50%, respectively). In a majority of EU Member States, more than 6 in 10 respondents disagreed that the government does a good job in this area.

The government is doing a good job in promoting a better understanding between the young and the old



Q5. Finally I would like to ask about the role of public authorities. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.
Base: all respondents, % by country

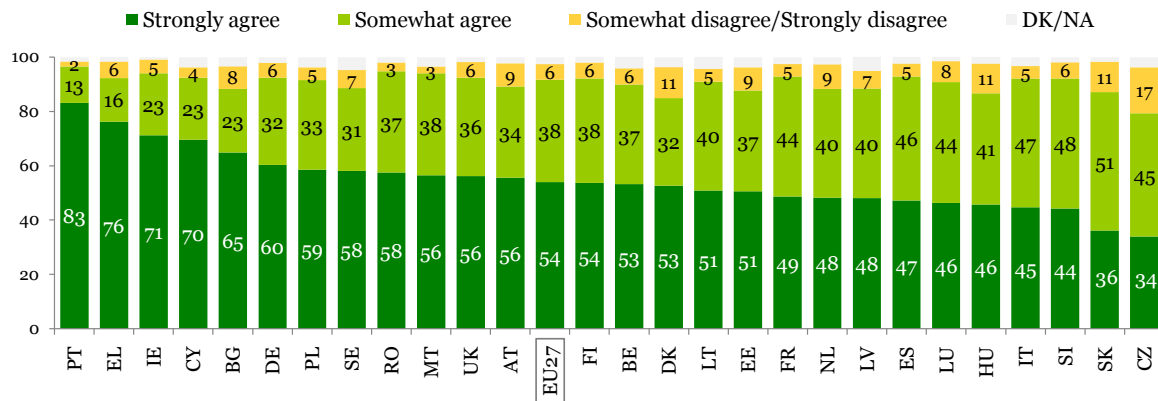
Respondents over 64 were the most likely to *somewhat* or *strongly* agree that the government does a good job (32%), with almost as many of the 15-24 year-olds agreeing (29%). The total level of agreement, however, was lower for respondents between 25 and 64 (between 23% and 27%).

EU citizens were, nevertheless, in agreement about the role of public authorities in promoting better relations between young and old; roughly 9 in 10 interviewees in total agreed – and a majority even *strongly* agreed – that:

- **local authorities should support** associations and initiatives that foster **stronger relations** between young and older people,
- **schools should promote better relations** between the young and the old, and
- **public centres for volunteers** should exist where older people are helped to find opportunities to volunteer for tasks that match their skills and wishes.

For example, in all EU Member States (except for the Czech Republic), at least 85% of respondents *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed that local authorities should support associations and initiatives that foster stronger relations between young and older people. A slightly lower proportion of Czechs – but, nevertheless, 79% – agreed that this is a responsibility of local authorities. Furthermore, while three-quarters of respondents in Portugal (83%) and Greece (76%) expressed strong agreement; those in the Czech Republic and Slovakia were less than half as likely to do so (34% and 36%, respectively).

Local authorities should support associations and initiatives that foster stronger relations between young people and older people



Q5. Finally I would like to ask about the role of public authorities. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.
Base: all respondents, % by country

Older respondents (over 39) were more likely than respondents under 40 to *strongly* agree with the above statements regarding local authorities, schools and public centres for volunteers. For example, while roughly 6 in 10 respondents over 39 (between 58% and 60%) *strongly* agreed that local authorities should support associations and initiatives that foster stronger relations between young and older people, only 44% of 15-24 year-olds and 49% of 25-39 year-olds *strongly* agreed that this is the case.