uic barcelona

Report

Older Parents, Generations and Family Solidarity

A Multilevel Analysis of the Spanish Context

Authors: Rita Cavallotti, Francesco Marcaletti

Universitat Internacional de Catalunya
Santander IsFamily Chair

Contents

Index of tables and graphs

Sponsored by:

Santander Universidades

Academic cooperation:

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA del Sacro Cuore

Centro di Ateneo
Studi e Ricerche sulla Famiglia

Universitat Internacional de Catalunya
Immaculada, 22. 08017 Barcelona

ISBN: 978-84-697-7725-1
D.L.: B 18384-2018

Foreword

It is a great pleasure to introduce this report, which compiles an initial analysis of the results of the survey on 'Older Parents, Generations and Family Solidarity'. This is the first empirical study using in-house data carried out by the **Santander IsFamily Chair** (http://www.uic.es/es/iesf/investigacion/grupos-investigacion/catedra-isfamily-santander). The aim of the Chair is to present the family as a model of intergenerational solidarity which can adapt to change and support the individuals within it. Research carried out by the Chair approaches the family as an environment for intergenerational transfer of resources, and the main threads of the research revolve around three fundamental aspects affecting the family: the economy, health and care of people, and education. The research also helps to shape social policies which enable families to carry out these intergenerational processes. The Santander IsFamily Chair aims to create a body of knowledge and actions which exploit the intergenerational potential of the family as an agent of social change. Thus, the Chair contributes to the development and realisation of a society which has a place for all generations, and where everyone can take an active role and enjoy equal rights and opportunities, all throughout their lives. This report is primarily aimed at an academic audience, specifically the institutions which have put it together: the Institute for Advanced Family Studies (IESF) of the UIC Barcelona *(Universitat Internacional de Catalunya)*, and the *Centro di Ateneo di Studi e Ricerche sulla Famiglia* of the *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore* in Milan, which collaborated in the research. However, the report is also aimed at those conducting social studies on family in Spain and Europe. The work seeks to promote discussion in the UIC Barcelona and amongst the scientific community around the results — which are set out descriptively — and thus generate more research leading to scientific publications in diverse disciplines. We have therefore set out our research methodology in detail in a specific section of this report.

In the context of the Chair's work, the report is the starting point for joint research between the UIC Barcelona and the *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*. This

work will include two international scientific workshops (in Barcelona and Milan) — leading to a joint publication — involving top academic experts in the study of family within social sciences.

The report is split into different sections, starting with an introduction setting out the research aims and methodology, followed by a presentation and discussion of the data collected which is organised in themed paragraphs as per the issues addressed in the survey.

The conclusions pull together the results to reconstruct the profile of the interviewees, and introduce possible areas for further study and research based on the data gathered.

This first report has not tried to make recommendations, nor propose family policy or formulate hypotheses or conclusions which cannot be proven using the data we have gathered.

It is my express wish that this work constitute the starting point for a series of scientific publications which draw on different fields of knowledge and enrich the results of the survey, which was put together with the invaluable help of Giovanna Rossi and Donatella Bramanti and for whose support I am extremely grateful.

Montserrat Gas Aixendri
Institute for Advanced Family Studies (IESF)
Universitat Internacional de Catalunya

1. Introduction

In developed societies, structural inequalities between generations risk a crisis of intergenerational solidarity (Binstock, 2010). The ageing of the population is the backdrop for intergenerational conflict over the distribution of resources, at any level of society. The growing participation of women in the labour market (particularly those with young children), the time invested in education and training, and cuts to the welfare state also affect the 'intergenerational contract' (Jönsson, 2003).

Whilst intergenerational solidarity seems to be holding up on the local and family levels (Arber, Attias-Donfut 2000), other pressures increase the sense of distance between generations (Donati, 2015), such as digital technologies, the extensive use of ICT amongst young people, or the increasing among of work-related travel.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of our study titled *Older Parents, Generations and Family Solidarity. A Multilevel Analysis of the Spanish Context*, led by the IESF (Institute of Advanced Family Studies) of the UIC Barcelona and funded by the Santander IsFamily Chair, has been to analyse the dimensions of intergenerational solidarity in Spain. The research took inspiration from the project *"L'allungamento della vita. Una risorsa per la famiglia, un'opportunità per la società"* (E. Scabini, G. Rossi 2016), led by the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan (UCSC). The IESF-UIC Barcelona research project has reproduced the same type of study in Spain, albeit with a series of changes (see Table 1). However, as with the Italian project, we have taken a relational perspective (Donati 2013) in our study, and we have defined the target population as those individuals aged between 65 and 74 (in the Spanish case, only those with living children). This choice enabled us to use a tested methodology and instruments, and provided both research teams (in Italy and Spain) with the option of developing a comparative analysis of the main trends emerging in the two countries, despite the use of different sampling strategies in each (probability sampling in Italy, and quota sampling in Spain). The Spanish study has been enriched by elements specific to the national context, and by others enabling deeper study of intergenerational solidarity within the family, without detriment to the analytical focus lifted from the study already conducted in Italy.

Our first objective was to describe and interpret the dimensions of intergenerational solidarity in Spain: quantity and quality of relationships, resources exchanged, individual goals, rules and values within the family and those which extend to other

relevant social spheres (e.g. neighbour and friend networks). We included various specific variables in the survey in this regard. A second objective was to analyse the data gathered against the dimensions of intergenerational family cohesion — association, affection, overall agreement, shared resources, the strength of family rules, structural opportunities for interaction — analysed by Bengtson and Roberts (1991) as interrelated elements which lead to a construct explaining intergenerational family solidarity.

Within the second objective, we also sought to identify the same type of interrelations between elements which explain intergenerational family solidarity, or conversely to identify other subsets of interrelationships, using the Spanish data.

Studying intergenerational solidarity in Spain

This research was conducted in Spain, and studies in this area of research already exist for the Spanish context. Two of these are particularly worthy of mention.

The first is *Individualización y solidaridad familiar* (Individualisation and Family Solidarity) (Meil 2011), led by Gerardo Meil and published in the Social Research collection of the 'la Caixa' Foundation. The research analysed the strength of family values and looked at the flows of support and solidarity between different family generations. It also examined the extent to which the family contributed to the individual wellbeing of its members, and identified the main family conflicts. The main source of data for this study was the survey on *Redes Sociales y Solidaridad* (Social Networks and Solidarity) (2007), designed by Meil himself. It also drew upon various CIS (Centre for Sociological Research) surveys and others developed as part of European projects, such as Social Networks II from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP, 2001), the second (2004) and fourth (2008) rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS), the Gender and Generations Survey (GGS, 2004/2005), the survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE, 2004 and 2007) and the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS, 2007).

The second is the study on *Personas mayores y solidaridad intergeneracional en la familia (Older People and Intergenerational Solidarity in the Family)*, led by the Extraordinary Chair on Family Policy, a joint initiative between the NGO *Acción Familiar* and the Complutense University of Madrid (López López et al. 2015). This study measured three of the six dimensions of the construct identified by Bengtson and Roberts (1991) and produced a Summary Index of Intergenerational Solidarity. The analysis used official statistics only — the researchers used the Use of Time Survey (EET) and the Family Budgets Survey (EPF), both of which are published by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE).

However, the strengths of our survey *Older Parents, Generations and Family Solidarity. A Multilevel Analysis of the Spanish Context* are as follows:

— it is the only survey in Spain based on a national population sample (ad hoc sampling) which looks at intergenerational solidarity in the family;

— the survey is based on a sample which, not being probabilistic, reproduces and respects most of the characteristics of the target population as a whole;

— being a specific survey on intergenerational solidarity in the family, it has explored many specific aspects of this area using the most appropriate technical tools (question sets already used in other studies, new question sets, validated scales, etc.).

2. Methodology

The survey comprised 99 questions covering various themes (Table 1): family relationships and intergenerational relationships within the family, family and friends network, attitudes towards other generations, appreciation and sense of fairness, state of health and leisure habits, use of ICT, having a paid job, participation in voluntary work and in the socio-political sphere, social capital, values, perception of old age, income and financial situation.

We carried out quota sampling on the 65 to 74 age group resident in Spain (islands included). The only distortion with respect to the theoretical sample was that it was impossible to construct this using quotas which exactly reproduced the distribution of chosen age group including those with living children. This is because there are no immediately accessible data in official statistics about the number of parents within this age group who have living children.

We randomly chose local government areas in which to conduct the interviews, in alignment with the distribution of the 65 to 74 age group nationally across the Autonomous Communities (17) and local government areas (5 types). The sampling process was based on a total of 85 strata. We also randomly selected specific political constituencies within the local government areas chosen in each stratum and, from amongst these, specific streets in which to carry out the interviews. We applied a random process for choosing street numbers and which specific flats to call on in search of people who could potentially make up the sample (in accordance with the quota requirements) and be interviewed.

Interviews were conducted between November and December 2016 using the CAPI technique.

Our sampling strategy is therefore different than that chosen for the survey in Italy, which used a probabilistic methodology and where the names of interviewees were randomly selected from local government electoral lists, and from a distribution of 7 population types resident in the 21 regions of Italy (for a total of 126 strata).

Table 1. Comparison of the IESF-UIC Barcelona and UCSC surveys

	IESF-UIC Barcelona	UCSC
Scope	National (Spain)	National (Italy)
Sample	Residents in the 65 to 74 age group with living children	Residents in the 65 to 74 age group
Sampling	Quota	Probabilistic
Sample size	600	900
Sampling technique	CAPI face to face	Tradicional face to face
General theme	Intergenerational solidarity in the family	Active ageing
Specific themes investigated in the survey	Family relationships and intergenerational relationships within the family	Family relationships and intergenerational relationships within the family
	Family and friends networks	State of health
	Attitudes towards older generations	Leisure habits
	Sense of appreciation and fairness	Use of ICT
	State of health and leisure habits	Having a paid job
	Use of ICT	Participation in voluntary work and in the socio-political sphere
	Having a paid job	Perceptions of the economic crisis and of welfare
	Participation in voluntary work and in the socio-political sphere	Social capital
	Social capital	Family and friends networks
	Values	Attitudes towards older generations
	Perception of old age	Sense of appreciation and fairness
	Income and financial situation	Values
		Perception of old age
		Income and financial situation
Number of questions	99	109
Number of variables	374	509

3. Sample

Fieldwork (November to December 2016) resulted in 629 interviews in a quota sample of residents throughout Spain aged between 65 and 74 with living children. In 2016 (July 1) there were 4,373,480 residents in the country within the 65 to 74 age group. The sample which was later used in the analysis comprises 608 valid cases.

The majority of the subjects live in Andalusia and Catalonia, with the smallest proportion resident in Navarre and La Rioja. The sample distribution by Autonomous Community (Table 2) reflects the distribution of the population of the same age in Spain in 2016.

Table 2. Interviewees and population by autonomous communities (absolute frequencies and percentages)

AC (Autonomous Community)	Frequency	Percentage	Representative universe by AC (percentage)
Andalusia	101	16.6	18.1
Aragon	18	3.0	3.2
Asturias	18	3.0	3.0
Balearic Islands	14	2.3	2.3
Canaries	24	3.9	4.4
Cantabria	12	2.0	1.4
Castile and León	36	5.9	6.6
Castilla-La Mancha	24	3.9	4.3
Catalonia	95	15.6	17.4
Valencian Community	67	11.0	12.2
Extremadura	14	2.3	2.5
Galicia	43	7.1	7.8
Madrid	78	12.8	5.8
Murcia	16	2.6	2.8
Navarre	8	1.3	1.5
Basque Country	32	5.3	5.8
La Rioja	8	1.3	0.8
Total	608	100.0	100.0

Some 47.5% of those interviewed live in municipalities with fewer than 50 thousand residents (47.1% of the total population aged 65-74), with the remaining 52.5% in municipalities with more than 50 thousand residents (52.9% of the population). This population distribution is respected within the sample. 53.6% of those interviewed are aged between 65 and 69, whilst the remaining 46.4% are aged between 70 and 74 (54.7% and 45.3% of the total population in 2015, respectively). 46.7% of interviewees are males and 53.3% are women (47.0% and 53.0% of the total population in 2015, respectively). There are no significant differences in gender distribution between the two age groups.

The sample is a good representation of the age and gender distribution of the total population of the same age. However, we could not find official data enabling a comparison of other general characteristics used to describe the sample. This is the case, for example, with the number of children. Within the sample, 16.3% have one child, 43.4% have two children and 40.3% have three or more. 4.9% have a deceased child. Those with one or more deceased children comprise 6.1% of the sample. In 11.7% of cases, no child lives less than 50 km from their parents. Looking now at distance as well as the number of children, in 73.7% of cases involving one child, said child lives less than 50 km from their parents. The figures for cases involving two-children and three or more children are 63.3% and 57.1%, respectively. Taking into account that 71.4% of the sample were born in the same local government area where they currently reside (at the time of the interview) or in another local government area in the same autonomous community, we found that interviewees with one child have experienced the same level of geographical mobility throughout their lives as their children. Those with two or more children have experienced a lower level of geographical mobility than their children.

18.4% of the sample have no grandchildren, 16.0% have one, 21.2% have two and 44.4% have three or more. Interestingly, given the age group of the sample, in 35.3% of cases involving grandchildren the latter are already adults.

In terms of other family members, only 3.6% of interviewees have no siblings, 17.3% have one, 22.4% have two, 17.1% have three and 39.6% have four or more. This relative majority of people raised in large families provides more clarity as to the demographic transition under way in Spain: 56.7% of interviewees have three or more siblings, and 40.3% have three or more children (bear in mind that this percentage is lower in the actual population because we have excluded those without children from our sample).

To conclude the description of the interviewees' family structures, in 3.0% of cases their father in still alive, rising to 11.3% in the case of their mother. The percentages remain low and in the same proportion with regard to having living parents-in-

law (3.6% and 10.2% respectively). These figures are very low considering the age of the interviewees and, as we will explain further on, help to push the flow of intergenerational solidarity towards descendants or peers (the latter being horizontal family solidarity) rather than towards older generations.

In terms of descriptive census information, in 61.8% of cases the survey was answered by the primary earner of the household (rising to 89.1% for males), in 26.2% another person answered and in 12.0% the survey was answered by a person who contributes financially and roughly to the same extent as the other members of the household.

Regarding the level of education, 8.8% of those surveyed have no formal qualifications. The majority (57.9%) completed the first cycle of secondary education, 17.5% completed the second cycle and 15.9% completed a further education qualification. Whilst this seems low, it differs greatly from the level of education amongst the parents of those interviewed. In this latter group, 37.6% are illiterate or have no formal education, and the majority only completed the first grade of the second cycle (87.4% including those who have no formal education). The only significant difference between men and women is that 18.1% of men completed a further education qualification compared to 13.9% of women.

Only 2.5% stated that they are currently employed (3.2% of males). This figure concurs with the 2016 statistical data for Spain, which show that the employment rate amongst the 65 to 74 age group was 3.4%. The vast majority stated being retired or a pensioner (80.3%, rising to 96.1% amongst males), and 30.9% of women stated that they are a housewife[1].

In terms of the interviewees' current or last job, the generation studied in our survey have lived through the transition from a mostly agricultural and industrial economy to another which, whilst still reliant on industry, is more service-oriented. The proportion of labourers amongst those interviewed (43.7%) is at practically the same level as that of their parents' generation (43.0%), where the percentage working in agriculture (as day labourers, owners and businessmen) still exceeds a quarter of the total (28.3%) and senior, intermediate and entry-level administrative employees comprise a minority (9.4%). These proportions are almost the inverse amongst those interviewed: those working in agriculture comprise just 7.7% of the total, whilst those working at different levels in administrative jobs comprise 22.1%.

1 The response method for the question on the interviewees' current status may have been confusing, especially amongst the female sub-sample. The percentage of women interviewed who are retired is 75.7% (based on survey question H01 on the age at which they retired) and 66.4% (based on the response to question S06 on current status). Some female interviewees, despite being retired, preferred to indicate their current status as housewife.

Social class, income and financial situation

Based on the main earner in the household, 18.9% of those interviewed are upper or upper-middle class, 44.7% are middle class and 36.4% are lower-middle or working class (General Media Survey - EGM)[22]. Four in five interviewees therefore fall into the middle or working class, based on their stated income and financial situation.

91.9% of interviewees own their own home, 5.8% live in rented accommodation and 2.3% have other living arrangements. Home ownership is, without a doubt, a source of financial protection.

Retirement pensions are handed out in 79.9% of cases, whilst other forms of income (each interviewee has indicated an average of 1.1 sources of income) make up a minority share: survivor's pension (9.7%), income from employment (5.9%), rental income (3.1%). 6.6% of the sample state having no income.

On average, 1.53 individuals contribute to the household income. The average number of people living off this income, irrespective of whether or not they live in the household, is 2.13. This figure underscores the idea of the family as a place for redistributing wealth. 24.3% of interviewees did not know the average net monthly income of the household or did not want to answer the question (including personal income and that of all members of the household).

Amongst those who did answer, half of the sample have an average monthly household income of up to 1,200 euros (Figure 1). Only 3.0% declared having an income exceeding 3,000 euros.

The majority of those interviewed (59.4%) state having no financial difficulties or problems with regard to putting a little money aside every month. Just over a quarter of the sample (28.7%) state being just able to cover their outgoings, with 11.9% stating that they have difficulties or need support.

In summary:

— The sample is a good representation of the Spanish population belonging to the age group chosen for the study.

— This is a generation of large families, albeit not as numerous as families in the previous generation.

2 Social class is calculated based on the level of education and job of the person who brings the most income into the household, as well as the income provided by the father of the interviewee.

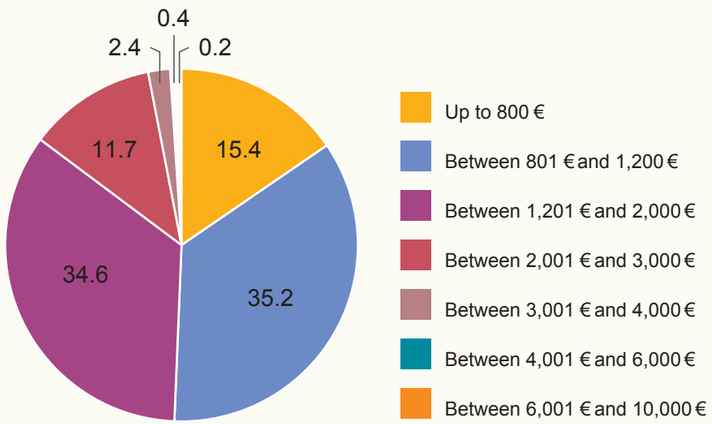
— More than four in five interviewees have grandchildren, these already being adults in more than a third of cases. Few interviewees still have living parents and parents-in-law.

— This generation is almost completely inactive in the job market (that is, they are mostly retired and housewives), with a residual proportion being employed or unemployed.

— The level of education amongst this generation is medium to low, in correlation with their social class.

— Almost all interviewees live in their own home, though four in five live off a pension along with family income which, for half of those interviewed, is less than 1,200 euros net per month on average.

Figure 1.
Average net monthly household income
(N. = 460, percentages)



4. Structure of family relationships

Now that we have analysed the general characteristics of the sample, we will now look at their marital status and household composition (cohabitees) and thus add the description of the different types of families living together (Table 4) in the same household to the description of the interviewees' marital status (Table 3).

Table 3. Marital status by gender (percentages)

Marital status	Male	Female	Total
Single, Widow/er	13.0	28.4	21.2
Married, Civil Partnership	78.5	61.7	69.6
Separated Divorced	8.5	9.9	9.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Approximately two thirds of the total are married or live with their partner (69.6%), just over one fifth (21.2%) are widowed or single, and the rest are separated or divorced (9.2%). Women are more commonly single or widowed (28.4% against 13.0% of men) and separated or divorced (9.9% against 8.5% of men).

The most striking aspect is that 18.9% of the sample live alone. Of those who do not live alone, 85.5% live at home with their spouse or civil partner, 31.8% live with their children, and 6.9% live with grandchildren or nieces/nephews.

Half of households therefore comprise partners without children (51.0%), followed by people living alone (18.9%) and partners with children/grandchildren (16.5%). The smallest homes comprise single-parent families (9.4%) and other household types (9.4%). The typical living arrangement of the survey cohort (69.9%) is therefore with a partner (without children) or alone (Table 4).

Furthermore, almost one third of households is multigenerational. Households comprising two generations comprise 25.0% of the total, three generations 4.8%, and the remaining 70.2% are households with just one generation. Families with multiple generations living under one roof are therefore not a thing of the past, and 29.8% (two- and three-generation households) is a somewhat astonishing figure.

Table 4. Types of cohabiting families (absolute frequencies and percentages)

Type of family	Frequency	Percentage
Partner with children	85	14.0
Partner without children	310	51.0
Partner with children and grandchildren	15	2.5
Single person	115	18.9
Single parent	57	9.4
Other	26	4.3
Total	608	100.0

In terms of care, 5.4% of those with a partner are their carer, either because their partner is dependent or because they have a chronic illness requiring care (full time care in half of cases). This figure rises to 27.3% amongst those who have parents or parents-in-law, which as we have seen represent just a small part of those interviewed: 3.0% have a living father and 11.3% a living mother (full time care is required in one in four cases). 1.8% of those with siblings are responsible for their care.

Lastly, 52.6% of those with grandchildren care for these. Care is part time in half of cases.

In conclusion, two thirds of the sample live alone (especially women) or with a partner, and are more prone to experiencing eroded family dynamics and loneliness. More than one quarter of the total have children still living at home (rising to almost one third if we exclude those who declared beforehand that they live alone). Taking these characteristics into consideration, multigenerational households represent less than one third of the total.

Care is delivered downwards towards grandchildren (also towards children in terms of help and support, as we will discuss further on). Few interviewees have parents still alive.

The general description of the sample and the study of family relationships has revealed that analysing the parent-child relationship is central to our research.

Relationship with children

Firstly, our survey asked the interviewees about the emotional state or feelings they experience towards their children: blame, longing, regret, gratitude, a sense of debt, resentment, children taking advantage of parents, sense of reciprocity

from child to parent, and pride in their children. The interviewees had four answer options: often, sometimes, rarely or never.

The lowest average scores were for negative feelings or those indicating a negative or ambivalent relationship (resentment, regret, blame). Positive feelings (pride in their children, reciprocity, gratitude, wishing to 'make it up to them') yielded the highest average scores (Table 5). Longing is experienced sometimes. Women experience positive feelings slightly more often than men, whereas men experience feelings of failure more than women ('I feel guilty', 'I feel regret').

The emotional states most commonly scored 'never' are 'I feel resentment' (particularly amongst those who live with children) and 'I feel guilty' (especially in the 70-74 age group). The positive emotional states most scored 'often' are 'I am proud of them' and 'I feel appreciated by my children' (particularly amongst the 65-69 age group in both cases).

The greatest difference in scores are between those who have children still living at home and those who do not. The sense of longing is less strong amongst the first group (average of 2.29 compared with 2.67 amongst those who do not have children living at home). Amongst the second group, the sense that 'My children take advantage of me' is less strong (average of 1.68 compared with 1.87 amongst those who have children living at home).

Table 5. – With regard to my children…
(Scale 1-4, where 1 = never and 4 = often, average scores)

	Sex		Age group		Lives with children		Total
	Male	Female	65-69	70-74	No	Yes	
I feel guilty	1.41	1.34	1.40	1.33	1.37	1.38	1.37
I feel longing	2.58	2.56	2.56	2.59	2.67	2.29	2.57
I feel regret	1.37	1.32	1.35	1.34	1.36	1.30	1.35
I feel gratitude	3.43	3.53	3.48	3.49	3.47	3.54	3.49
I feel like I have to make it up to them	2.17	2.17	2.25	2.07	2.19	2.12	2.17
I feel resentment towards them	1.19	1.19	1.17	1.21	1.21	1.13	1.19
They take advantage of me	1.71	1.74	1.72	1.73	1.68	1.87	1,73
I feel appreciated by my children	3.53	3.61	3.63	3.51	3.55	3.62	3.57
I am proud of them	3.79	3.85	3.86	3.79	3.84	3.78	3.83

The interviewees were then asked to think about their relationship with their children throughout their lives, as well as their current relationship with them, and to what extent they had received the following from, or given the following to, their children: affection, financial help, care and support during illness, and respect (Table 6).

Table 6. With regard to what I have received from my children…
(Scale 1-7, where 1 = I have received much more from my children than I have given, 4 = I have given and received in equal measure, and 7 = I have given much more to my children than I have received, average scores)

	Sex		Age group		Lives with children		Total
	Male	Female	65-69	70-74	No	Yes	
Affection	3.76	3.90	3.83	3.83	3.85	3.80	3.83
Financial help	5.17	5.03	5.16	5.02	5.14	4.97	5.10
Support during illness	4.27	4.09	4.22	4.12	4.23	4.01	4.17
Respect	3.76	3.83	3.87	3.72	3.81	3.76	3.80

The majority (69.1%) feel they have received just as much affection from their children as they have given. The figure drops to 28.1% for financial help, rising again to 56.1% for care and support during illness and rising still to 76.8% for respect. According to 60.2% of those interviewed, the target generation provides more financial help to the next generation, and 16.1% feel it receives more respect than it offers.

When expressed on a scale from 1 (“I have received much more from my children than I have given”) to 7 (“I have given much more to my children than I have received”), where 4 means “I have given and received in equal measure”, only ‘financial help’ falls at 5 on the scale (“I have given slightly more to my children than I have received”). This applies particularly to men, those aged between 65 and 69 and those who no longer live with their children. The other dimensions had average scores of 4, with ‘support during illness’ for female interviewees scoring closest to this ‘equal measure’ of giving and receiving.

Following the questions on how much they have given to/received from their children, we then read six statements to the interviewees about their performance in their role as parents, and whether they agreed or disagreed with these (Table 7).

Analysing the frequency distribution shows that 65.3% of those interviewed disagree with the statement “My children wish I had been a different parent” (35.0% disagree and 30.3% completely disagree), compared with 14.8% who agree and 7.4% who completely agree. This feeling of inadequacy is more pronounced amongst men, as evidenced by a slightly higher level of agreement to that expressed by women.

Table 7. Level of agreement with the statements
(Scale 1-7, where 1 = completely disagree and 7 = completely agree, average scores)

	Sex		Age group		Lives with children		Total
	Male	Female	65-69	70-74	No	Yes	
My children wish I had been a different parent	3.08	2.86	2.90	3.04	2.92	3.08	2.96
I have done everything possible to ensure the wellbeing of my children	6.47	6.54	6.50	6.51	6.50	6.54	6.51
My children are happy with what they have received from me as a parent	6.12	6.33	6.24	6.22	6.19	6.35	6.23
I have conducted myself appropriately with my children	6.39	6.49	6.44	6.44	6.42	6.51	6.44
My children have a good opinion of me	6.13	6.37	6.24	6.28	6.21	6.39	6.26
Taking stock to date, I have been a good parent to my children overall	6.25	6.40	6.34	6.32	6.30	6.41	6.33

97.2% of parents (34.2% agree and 63.0% completely agree) feel they have done everything possible to ensure the wellbeing of their children. 93.7% agree with the statement “My children are happy with what they have received from me as a parent” (46.5% agree and 47.2% completely agree). 97.6% feel that their children have a good opinion of them, and 95.8% believe that they have been a good parent to their children. Overall, women always express more positive feelings than men. Comparing the responses from interviewees in both age groups reveals no significant differences with one exception: more people in the older age group feel that their children wish their parents had been different.

On a scale from 1-7, where 1 = totally disagree and 7 = totally agree, it is interesting to note that the lowest average scores always came from men, and that the average scores are always higher in the group which still has children living at home. The exception is the statement “My children wish I had been a different parent”, for which men and those who still have children living at home yielded the same score, and the highest compared to the other categories.

With regard to their relationship with their children, the interviewees were asked about the support they feel they have given to their children in three areas: career, settling down and children (Table 8).

Table 8. How much support have you given your children so that they feel motivated to...?
(Scale 1-4, where 1 = none and 4 = a lot, average scores)

	Sex		Age group		Lives with children		Total
	Male	Female	65-69	70-74	No	Yes	
cultivate a profession	3.57	3.60	3.57	3.62	3.58	3.63	3.59
settle down	2.83	3.04	2.91	2.98	2.97	2.88	2.94
have children	2.60	2.79	2.64	2.78	2.73	2.62	2.70

65.1% of interviewees consider they have provided a lot of support to their children to cultivate a profession, 30.3% quite a lot, 3.1% little support and 1.5% none. 35.7% of interviewees consider they have provided a lot of support to settling down, 34.7% quite a lot, 17.9% little support and 11.7% none. 31.4% feel they have provided quite a lot of support to their children to have their own children, 28.6% a lot, 21.7% little support and 18.3% none. Most support is therefore given to making career decisions.

Breaking down the responses by sex reveals that mothers have provided more support than fathers in all dimensions, with greater differences noted with regard to support for settling down and having children. Distinguishing between the two age groups shows that older interviewees state having provided more support. Analysing the average scores (where 1 = none and 4 = a lot) shows this clearly. There is also a clear downward trend in scores from ‘cultivate a profession’ to ‘settle down’ and ‘have children’. The exception in this case is where the interviewees have children still living at home. Those in this situation state having supported their children to cultivate a profession, whereas those who do not have children living at home state — for understandable reasons — having provided more encouragement to their children to settle down and have children of their own.

Overall, when describing their relationship with their children, the interviewees state having given and received affection, respect and support in equal measure, with financial help being the only exception. Feelings of blame, remorse and resentment towards children are extremely low. Pride predominates, particularly amongst mothers, those aged 65 to 69 and those who have helped all their children to leave the family unit. As parents, the interviewees feel they have done everything possible to ensure their children’s wellbeing and that they have conducted themselves appropriately with them.

However, examining subsamples of interviewees does reveal differences. There is a considerable female/maternal positivity towards children which prevails over male/paternal positivity for all indicators, regardless of whether or not the interviewees live with their children. The feeling of having given and received in equal measure is slightly stronger amongst those who live with their children. Similarly, factors related to the role of parents emerge slightly more amongst this group.

Family and friends network

One section of the survey looked specifically at interviewees’ family and friends network, and consequently at how they experience reciprocity and solidarity in their relationships.

First, we asked about the number of family members, friends and neighbours with whom they maintain significant and genuine ties. Then we asked about the number of family members, friends and neighbours who they feel they can rely on in times of need. These questions were included in the survey to assess the scope of the interviewees’ relationships (Table 9). Said scope is positively correlated with the structural characteristics of the family unit. For example, living with their children implies having an above-average number of family members, friends and neighbours with whom they maintain ties and who they can rely on in times of need.

Table 9. Total number of family members, friends and neighbours with whom the interviewees maintain significant ties and who they feel they can rely on in times of need (percentages)

	Please indicate the number of family members, friends and neighbours with whom you maintain significant and genuine ties.			Please indicate the number of family members, friends and neighbours who you can rely on in times of need.		
	Family members	Friends	Neighbours	Family members	Friends	Neighbours
None	1.0	10.0	24.0	1.6	14.8	31.9
Between 1 and 4	19.7	42.1	51.6	36.5	55.4	54.6
Between 5 and 9	26.6	24.5	11.3	30.6	18.3	7.9
Between 10 and 19	30.1	16.3	9.9	19.9	8.7	4.3
20 or more	22.5	7.1	3.1	11.3	2.8	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In terms of the frequency distribution, 19.7% of those interviewed state having between 1 and 4 family members with whom they maintain significant and genuine ties, 26.6% have between 5 and 9, 30.1% have between 10 and 19, 22.5% have 20 or more and only 1.0% have none. The frequency distribution is therefore concentrated on between 5 and 9 and between 10 and 19 family members. Adding the percentages from these categories results in 56.7% of the total. The average number of family members stated is 12.8, with the median value equal to 10.

With regard to genuine friendships, 42.1% state having between 1 and 4, 24.5% between 5 and 9, 16.3% between 10 and 19, 7.1% have 20 or more and 10.0% in this case state having no friends. The frequency distribution with respect to friends is therefore concentrated in less numerous categories. That is, between 1 and 4, and between 5 and 9 friends, which together represent exactly two thirds of the total (66.6%). The average number of friends stated is 6.8, with the median value equal to 4.

For neighbourhood ties, 51.6% state having a significant relationship with between 1 and 4 neighbours, 11.3% between 5 and 9, 9.9% between 10 and 19, 3.1% with 20 or more and almost a quarter of the total (24.0%) with none. In this case, the frequencies are concentrated in even less numerous or nil categories. The sum of results for no neighbour ties and between 1 and 4 exceeds three quarters of the total (75.6%). The average number of neighbours stated is 4.2, with the median value equal to 2.

Similar results were recorded for the number of family members, friends and neighbours who the interviewees feel they can rely on in times of need, with even lower values obtained compared to those for the number of significant and genuine ties they state having. For family members, 36.5% can rely on between 1 and 4 in times of need, 30.6% between 5 and 9, 19.9% between 10 and 19, 11.3% on 20 or more and only 1.6% cannot rely on any family members. More than two thirds of the total (67.1%) is concentrated in the 1-4 and 5-9 categories. The average number stated is 8.4 family members and the median value is 6.

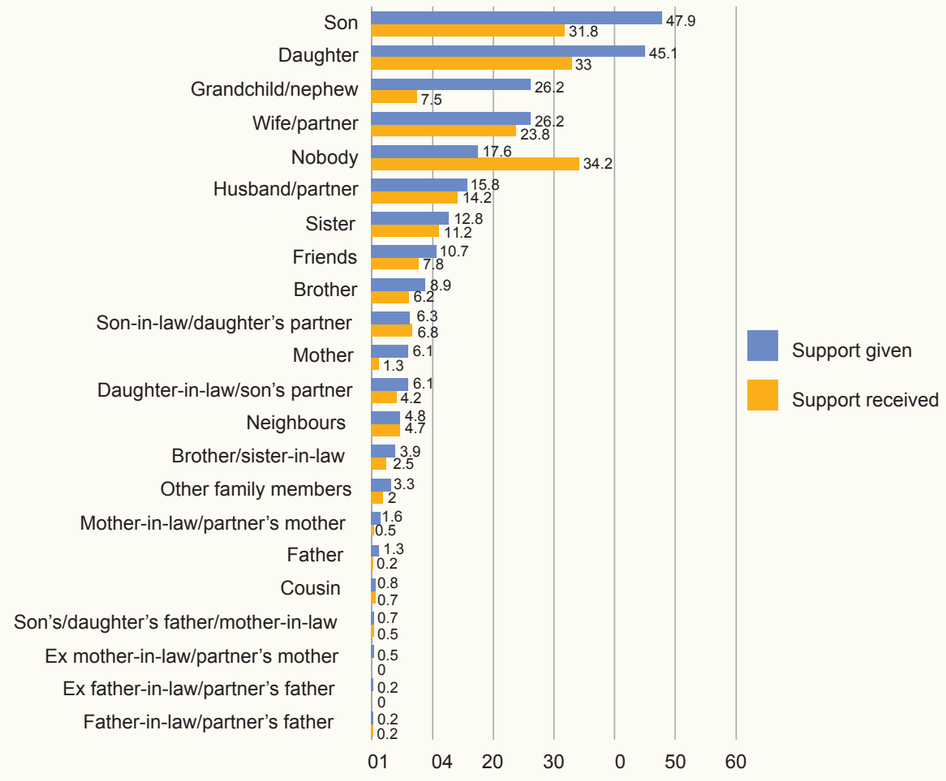
In terms of friends, 55.4% state being able to rely on between 1 and 4 friends, 18.3% between 5 and 9, 8.7% between 10 and 19, 2.8% on 20 or more and 14.8% cannot rely on any friends. In this case, the sum of the ‘none and 1-4 categories is 70.2%. The average number of friends stated is lower at 4.2, and the median value is 3.

Similarly, for neighbours, 54.6% state being able to rely on between 1 and 4 neighbours, 7.9% between 5 and 9, 4.3% between 10 and 19, 1.3% on 20 or more and 31.9% cannot rely on any. The sum of the ‘none’ and 1-4 categories is 86.5%. The average number of neighbours stated is 2.4, and the median value is 1.

These data show that the number of family members, friends and neighbours that the interviewees can rely on in times of need is always less than the number of these with whom they maintain significant and genuine ties. Furthermore, some structural characteristics of the family unit help to increase the scope of relationships more than other personal traits (such as gender, age or feeling old). For those with children still living at home, the average number of family members with whom they have significant ties rises to 14.5, friends to 8.4 and neighbours to 4.4. The same occurs for support in times of need: the average number of family members rises to 8.8, friends to 4.9 and neighbours to 2.7.

In terms of help given and received, it is striking that the interviewees feel they always give more help than they receive in all types of relationships (Figure 2). The only circumstances where this is not the case is for ‘nobody’ (in this case, the opposite happens), and for ‘son-in-law/unmarried partner of the daughter’ (where the interviewees state having received a little more support (6.8%) than that given (6.3%).

Figure 2.
Support given and received
(percentage of cases)



Of particular relevance is that more than a third of those interviewed (34.2%) stated not having received any type of help in the twelve months prior to the interview, and that half stated not having helped anyone during the last year (17.6%).

Examining the hierarchies of help given and help received (excluding the 'nobody' category) proves interesting. For help given, the order is as follows: son, daughter, grandchild, wife/female partner, husband/male partner. And for help received: daughter, son, wife/female partner, husband/male partner, sister. Children, followed by spouses, are therefore the main targets of support and the main providers of support, with slight gender-based differences. Help is mainly directed towards male children more than female children, whilst help received works the other way around: daughters provide more help than sons.

Support flows from parents to children and vice versa, and towards grandchildren, more so than towards spouses/partners. The difference between help given and received is greater in these vertical relationships, and tends to be minimised in horizontal relationships. We could speculate that in relationships where support has more of a normative basis, the trend is to provide more.

It is interesting to compare the perception of help given and received between the husband/male partner and wife/female partner. Women perceive having given and received more help from their partners to a greater extent than men. That is, women are more in touch with the dimension of mutual support between spouses/partners.

In light of the above, we can add that in terms of the direction of the help given (Table 10), 66.1% of interviewees provide support from parents to children (or grandchildren), 17.6% state that no help has been exchanged, in 7.9% of cases help has been given horizontally (between partners, siblings, cousins, brothers/sisters-in-law, etc.), in 6.7% of cases help has been given in both an ascending and descending direction, and in 1.6% of cases only ascending.

Table 10. Direction of help given (absolute frequencies and percentages)

Direction of help given	Frequency	Percentage
No help given	107	17.6
Descending	402	66.1
Horizontal	48	7.9
Ascending	10	1.6
Ascending and descending	41	6.7
Total	**608**	**100.0**

Overall, over the last 12 months almost three in four interviewees have provided help and support to their descendants (66.1% + 6.7%), whilst only one interviewee in twelve has provided some form of help to older generations (1.6% + 6.7%).

5. Attitudes towards generations

Another section of the survey studied attitudes towards generations. We used the variables devised by Karl Lüscher and his team in the "Gesellschaft und Familie" Institute of the University of Konstanz for studying "Family Structures and Intergenerational Relationships in the Konstanz Region" (Working Paper No. 34.4, 2000). This broad theoretical and empirical study looks not only at solidarity relationships but also at ambivalence between generations. The original survey has two parts: one for parents and one for children, facilitating data directly from both groups. Our study focuses solely on the older parents who comprise our target group. The four areas analysed based on Lüscher's survey are as follows:

— Which of these phrases best describes how the members of your family - whether they live with you or not - reach agreement?

— Sometimes the members of a family find themselves with opposing interests. Families can tackle these situations in very different ways. Let's examine some possibilities: Which best describes how your family manages these types of situations?

— In all families, situations may arise in which those affected don't know exactly how to behave. In these situations, the members of the family can do one of two things: act how they always do, or seek new ways of handling the situation. How do you and your family behave in these situations?

— In other situations, the members of a family must decide if they do everything possible to preserve family harmony or whether they allow conflicts to break out. In these situations, to what extent do you and your family try to preserve family harmony or allow conflicts to break out?

In terms of reaching agreement, 55.1% of those interviewed agree with the statement that "each family member looks out for the good of the family unit and does everything they can to avoid endangering good relationships", whilst only 3.8% state that "each family member does what they want, without worrying about the good of the family". The remaining cases are distributed between these two opposing positions. Similarly, when it comes to opposing interests, 52.1% agree with the statement "we seek a compromise which means everyone is happy", whilst 8.7% agree that "given that arguments make existing tensions worse, we prefer not to discuss these matters".

When faced with situations in which those affected don't know exactly how to behave, 30.8% agree with the statement that "we almost always try to resolve problems in the same way as before", whilst 4.4% agree that "we almost always try out new approaches".

In situations where the members of a family must make a decision, 61.2% state that "we almost always try to preserve family harmony", whilst only 1.0% state that "we almost always allow conflicts to arise".

Different generations are therefore open to dialogue with one another. Their solidarity manifests as a deep sense of internal cohesion, and relationships are strong in spite of past experience. Notwithstanding, it is interesting to note the attitude towards trying out new approaches.

We asked another two questions with two possible answers to choose from: the first looked at the attitude of parents towards children, and second at the attitude of children towards parents. The results of these two questions can be used jointly to construct an intergenerational solidarity index.

For the question on the responsibility of parents towards their children (Table 11), 63.8% of those interviewed responded that "parents are duty-bound to do the best by their children, although this comes at great sacrifice". Conversely, 21.7% responded that "parents have their own lives and should not be asked to make excessive sacrifices".

Table 11. Attitude towards generations (percentages)

	Sex		Age group		Lives with children		Total
	Male	**Female**	**65-69**	**70-74**	**No**	**Yes**	
Parents are duty-bound to do the best by their children, although this comes at great sacrifice	62.3	65.1	63.8	63.8	63.0	66.2	63.8
Parents have their own lives and should not be asked to make excessive sacrifices	23.2	20.4	23.6	19.5	23.1	17.8	21.7
None of the two statements	12.3	13.3	11.7	14.2	12.0	15.3	12.8
Don't know	2.1	1.2	0.9	2.5	2.0	0.6	1.6
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

For the question on the responsibility of children towards their parents (Table 12), 44.9% responded that “adult children have their own lives and should not be asked to make excessive sacrifices”. Conversely, 33.4% responded that “adult children are duty-bound to support their elderly parents, although this comes at great sacrifice”. Normative solidarity is therefore perceived as more binding for parents than for children.

Table 12. Attitude towards generations (percentages)

	Sex		Age group		Lives with children		Total
	Male	Female	65-69	70-74	No	Yes	
Adult children are duty-bound to support their elderly parents, although this comes at great sacrifice	32.7	34.0	34.0	32.6	30.8	40.8	33.4
Adult children have their own lives and should not be asked to make excessive sacrifices	44.4	45.4	45.7	44.0	47.9	36.3	44.9
None of the two statements	20.4	17.3	17.2	20.6	18.0	21.0	18.8
Don’t know	2.5	3.4	3.1	2.8	3.3	1.9	3.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Analysing the data by sex shows that women are more prone than men to supporting their children and to receiving support from them, without asking for excessive sacrifices.

Breaking down the data into the two age groups (65-69 and 70-74) shows that the two groups agree in equal measure (63.8% in both cases) to the initial statement: “parents are duty-bound to do the best by their children, although this comes at great sacrifice”. However, they differ with respect to the statement that “parents have their own lives and should not be asked to make excessive sacrifices” (23.6% and 19.5%, respectively). The youngest generation yielded slightly higher percentages for the statements on the responsibilities of children towards their parents. 34.0% of the youngest group of interviewees feels that “adult children are duty-bound to support their elderly parents, although this comes at great sacrifice”, compared to 32.6% in the oldest group. 45.7% of the youngest group feel that “adult children have their own lives and should not be asked to make excessive sacrifices”, compared to 44.0% of the oldest group who feel the same.

If we distinguish between interviewees who do not live with their children and those who do, the latter group yields the highest percentage for the statement on the responsibility of parents towards their children (66.2% and 63.0%, respectively).

The result for the statement on the responsibility of children to support their elderly parents is also the highest for those still living with their children (40.8%). The circle of normative solidarity is therefore stronger when parents and their children still live together.

6. Memory and gratitude

One section of the survey looked specifically at memory and gratitude, in the context of intergenerational relationships. The starting point once again was the perception of the older parents interviewed. Memory represents the field within which family history is transmitted to successive generations. Gratitude is about looking back at one's life, including at one's children and including eventual grandchildren.

First, we asked those interviewed if, in their opinion, their children know their family history (Table 13).

89.6% think that their children know their parents' history, 83.4% that of their grandparents, and 54.8% feel that their children know the history of their ancestors as far back as great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents. Children's knowledge of their ancestors, grandparents and parents declines as the distance between generations increases. That said, it is striking that all children — or at least one — in more than half of cases can recount details of their ancestors such as great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents, including their name, origins, profession, religion, language and relevant events.

Table 13. Memory: Do you think your children know their family history? Specifically... (Percentage of: My child - All my children)

	Frequency	Percentage
They know about their ancestors: great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents	333	54.8
They know their grandparents' history	507	83.4
They know your history (mother and father) from before you were married	545	89.6

We asked the interviewees to express their agreement/disagreement with a series of statements about their feelings of gratitude towards people (particularly children and grandchildren), events, situations etc. (Table 14). The highest agreement scores were attributed to gratitude towards 'children' (4.65 out of 5.00) and 'grandchildren' (4.61), followed by 'many things' (4.29), 'events' (4.23) and 'people' (4.08).

Table 14. Gratitude
(Scale 1-5, where 1 = completely disagree and 5 = completely agree, average values)

	Male	Female	Total
I have many things to be grateful for in my life	4.23	4.35	4.29
I feel gratitude towards a wide range of people	4.02	4.13	4.08
My children make me feel very grateful for my life	4.63	4.66	4.65
My grandchildren make me feel very grateful for my life (N. = 496)	4.51	4.69	4.61
When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for	2.74	2.54	2.63
If I had to make a list of everything I'm grateful for, it would be a very long list	3.81	3.98	3.90
As time goes on, I feel more able to appreciate the people, events and situations which form part of my life story	4.23	4.23	4.23
It will be a long time before I feel gratitude towards something or someone	2.33	2.25	2.29

Women in all cases yield greater average values than men, except for the statements "When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for" and "It will be a long time before I feel gratitude towards something or someone", for which the highest level of agreement is amongst the male subsample. The same occurs when comparing the average scores for the extent to which the interviewees feel old[3]. Those who do not feel old always express themselves more positively than those who do, except for the variables mentioned, which convey negative frames of mind.

Overall, the survey participants have expressed much gratitude for what life has given them, especially for having had children and, where relevant, grandchildren. Descendants have a good awareness of their family history and, in most cases, possess good knowledge of the lives of the generations which have come before them.

3 The definition of 'feeling old' for the purposes of this analysis is explained in section 8. We will include the variable here, and in the pages that follow, without a definition for the time being.

7. Health, free time, technology

One section of the survey specifically addresses the interviewees' state of health, use of free time and use of technology which, bearing in mind the age of the sample, makes for an interesting analysis. This section also addresses aspects which were looked at in great detail in the Italian study, mentioned in the introduction and the methodology.

State of health

Some 68.4% of interviewees do not suffer from any chronic disease, 16.3% have a disease with no serious limitations, 11.7% have a disease which does not limit them and 3.6% suffer from a disease with serious limitations (Table 15). A total of four in five interviewees (80.1%) do not suffer from any disease nor disease-related limitations. This figure rises to 82.8% amongst men and falls to 77.8% for women. Similarly, the rate of absence of diseases and limitations rises to the same figure of 82.8% amongst relatively older interviewees (70-74 years) and drops to 76.9% amongst the youngest (65-69 years).

Table 15. Chronic diseases and limitations (absolute frequencies and percentages)

	Frequency	Percentage
No chronic disease	416	68.4
Disease with no limitations	71	11.7
Disease with non-serious limitations	99	16.3
Disease with serious limitations	22	3.6
Total	608	100

Despite there being no identifiable causality between feeling old and being ill (that is, knowing which is the cause and which is the effect), there is nevertheless a correlation between the two. The percentage of those suffering from a disease with no serious limitations is double amongst interviewees who feel old with respect to those who do not (23.6% compared to 11.5%), whilst the percentage of those with diseases involving serious implications triples (6.2% compared to 1.9%).

The sample is in good health overall (more than two in three interviewees stated not having any chronic diseases). This may also be explained by the sampling strategy we used, whereby the chance door-to-door method could have been biased towards 'preselection' of available 'healthy' interviewees.

Although the older parents interviewed were in good health, none of them showed signs of being particularly active during their free time, as we will see further on.

Frame of mind - psychophysical wellbeing

We asked the interviewees about their frame of mind during recent weeks, since this is a fundamental aspect of overall psychophysical wellbeing (Table 16). We used a series of specific question on sleep, feeling useful, decision-making ability, stress, reaction to difficulties, state of unhappiness/depression and confidence in oneself.

The interviewees responded that they often feel able to make decisions (2.76 out of 3.00) and feel useful (2.74). They stated having problems sleeping 'sometimes' more than 'never' because of worries (1.76), and feel constantly stressed in the same measure (1.71). They may feel unable to overcome difficulties (1.61) and feel unhappy and depressed (1.56), and more rarely stated having lost confidence in themselves (1.37). The data reveal a generation which considers itself cognitively healthy and in a position to support others.

Table 16. How often have I…
(Scale 1-3, where 1 = never and 3 = often, average ratings)

	Sex		Age group		Lives with children		Total
	Male	Female	65-69	70-74	No	Yes	
Not been able to sleep because of worries?	1.66	1.85	1.76	1.77	1.76	1.77	1.76
Felt useful?	2.73	2.74	2.74	2.73	2.73	2.74	2.74
Felt able to make decisions?	2.80	2.73	2.79	2.73	2.77	2.75	2.76
Felt constantly stressed?	1.62	1.80	1.75	1.68	1.71	1.73	1.71
Felt unable to overcome day-to-day difficulties?	1.54	1.66	1.58	1.63	1.60	1.62	1.61
Felt unhappy and depressed?	1.46	1.65	1.54	1.59	1.57	1.54	1.56
Lost confidence in myself?	1.34	1.39	1.34	1.40	1.35	1.41	1.37

Female interviewees reported sleep problems, stress and feeling unhappy/depressed more than males. Comparing the two age groups in the sample does not reveal any significant differences. Nor does living with children cause any significant differences in the results. The data therefore confirm greater vulnerability amongst women to psychological distress — a risk that can also be exacerbated by living conditions. Sleep loss on account of worry and feeling unhappy is more prevalent amongst widows. This is also the case for women who are separated/divorced, and this group experiences a much higher level of stress. The sense of usefulness is much more evident amongst married women or those living with a partner.

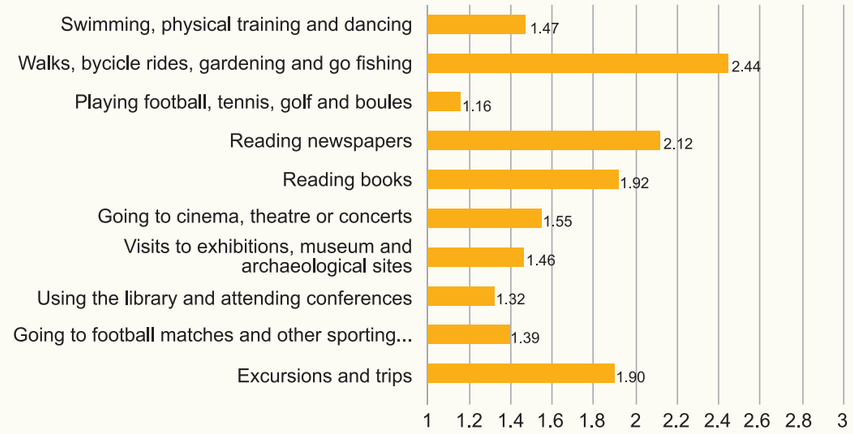
Use of free time

During their free time (Figure 3), the interviewees mainly go for walks or bicycle rides, garden, grow vegetables or go fishing (2.44 out of 3.00). These are followed by reading newspapers (2.12) and books (1.92), excursions and trips (1.90), going to the cinema, theatre or concerts (1.55), swimming, physical training and dancing (1.47), visits to exhibitions, museums and archaeological sites (1.46), going to football matches and other sporting competitions (1.39), using the library and attending conferences (1.32), and lastly, playing football, tennis, golf and boules (1.16).

There is no difference between the sexes in the average scores for free-time activities which are most suitable for couples (such as going to the cinema and theatre, visiting exhibitions, going on excursions and trips). The highest average scores amongst women are for physical training and dancing, and reading books. Amongst men, the highest scores are for walking, vegetable growing and fishing, playing outdoor sports, reading the newspaper or watching sporting competitions. All leisure activities are practised less as age increases.

The sample does not seem very active overall. For the first three types of free time activities i.e. those which imply a greater level of physical activity outdoors (swimming, physical training, dancing, walks, gardening, fishing, football and tennis, etc.), one interviewee in eight (12.5%) stated never doing any of these. This figure rises to 14.8% amongst women, 16.0% amongst those aged 70-74, 18.6% amongst those who feel old, and (somewhat surprisingly) 17.2% amongst those who live with their children, as though the mere presence of the latter has robbed them of free time for practising physical activities outdoors, and not the other way around.

Figure 3.
How often do you...?
(Scale 1-3, where 1 = none and 3 = often, average scores)



Ownership and use of ICT

The relationship our sample has with technology is a fundamental indicator of their level of openness to innovations, their willingness to learn and their ability to use the most modern and up-to-date information and communication technologies. Psychophysical wellbeing, pro-activeness and the use of ICT are often cited as fundamental aspects of a good active ageing strategy. However, the relationship between our sample and technology is concerning, and reveals the strength of the digital divide — something which can only be positively overcome via intergenerational exchanges, as we will see further on.

The interviewees either own or have the following electronic devices or services in their homes (multiple choice question): smartphone with Internet connection (81.8% of cases), Internet connection (modem and router) with contract (73.7%), laptop or desktop computer (68.1%), tablet (29.2%), pre-paid TV package (24.3%), e-readers (12.0%) and videogame consoles (7.9%). However, the level of use of these technologies is still low (multiple choice question): smartphone with Internet connection (50.7% of cases), Internet connection (modem and router) with contract (34.9%), laptop or desktop computer (28.8%), tablet (11.2%), pre-paid TV package (13.7%), e-readers (4.8%) and videogame consoles (0.3%). There is therefore a significant difference in the order of 30 percentage points between possession and use of smartphones, Internet connections and personal computers.

More than half of the sample never connect to the Internet (51.5%), but more than one in four connect almost every day (26.2%). 9.0% percent of the total sample are always online. Users of new technologies represent more than one third of the total sample.

Intergenerational mediation plays an important role in the relationship that adults have with technology. Whilst those interviewed have used different means of learning how to go online (multiple choice question), 49.5% of those who connect to the Internet have learned to do so with their children and 7.1% with their grandchildren. 35.6% taught themselves and 20.3% completed an IT course. The figures are lower for those who state having learned to use the Internet in pairs (e.g. with their partner, with friends, with relatives and peers).

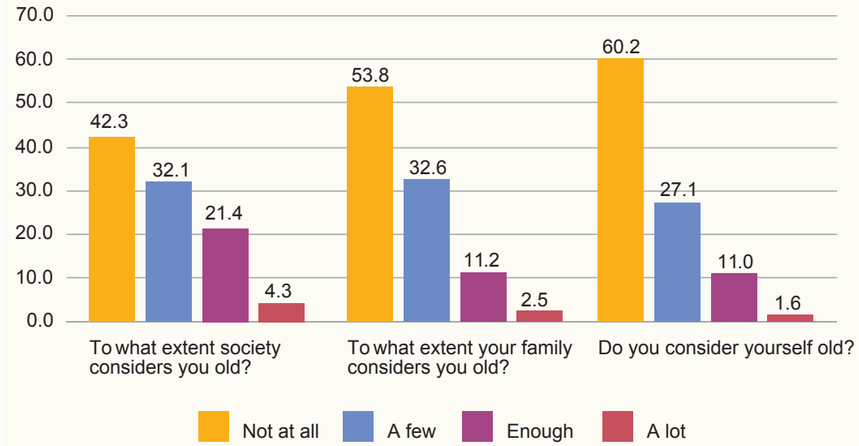
Those who use the Internet state that they are now more informed about current affairs than before (54.2% of cases) and that they use it to stay in touch with friends and family (53.2%). Fewer interviewees state that the Internet has helped them get back in touch with old friends (26.1%) or that it has facilitated new topics of conversation with their children and friends (25.4%).

In summary, we have observed how the sample of older parents in our study maintains a good state of health linked to a strong sense of purpose in their existing role in the family and in society. The female subsample shows somewhat more psychological unease. Despite the positive overall picture, those interviewed are relatively inactive. This is more prevalent amongst women, the oldest interviewees, those who feel old and those living with their children. The fact that more than half of the sample never goes online is representative of the difficult relationship the interviewees have with technology. Almost half of those who do go online have learned from their children, testament to the important role of intergenerational dynamics in learning and knowledge exchange in all directions.

8. Representation of old age

Various questions in the survey addressed how old age is represented. The first focussed on the different viewpoints in society, in the family and within oneself.

Figure 4.
Considering oneself old or feeling that others consider you
(percentages)

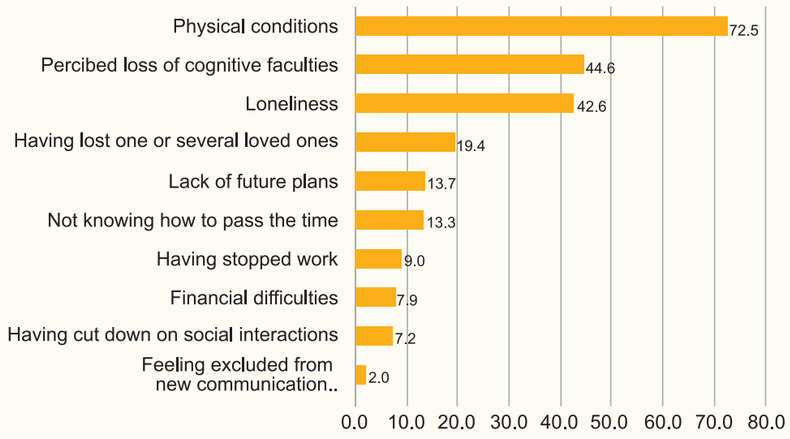


60.2% of the sample do not feel old in the slightest, 27.1% feel a little old, 11.0% feel quite old and 1.6% very old. When asked to what extent their families consider them old the percentages varied (53.8% not in the slightest, 32.6% a little, 11.2% quite old and 2.5% very old), likewise when asked to what extent society considers them old (42.3%, 32.1%, 21.4%, 4.3%). The interviewees generally feel younger than they believe their family and society perceive them to be.

We have used the last dimension, “Do you feel old in and of yourself?”, to distinguish the group who have declared that they do not feel old in the slightest (60.2% of the sample) from those who feel old to varying degrees (the remaining 39.8%). We will use this dichotomous variable — linked to feeling old to a greater or lesser extent — to more closely examine the results presented below.

When asked about aspects which contribute to a person feeling old (Figure 5), the interviewees indicated the following in descending order: physical conditions (72.9% of cases), perceived loss of cognitive faculties (44.6%), loneliness (42.6%), having lost one or several loved ones (19.4%), lack of future plans (13.7%), not knowing how to pass the time (13.3%), having stopped work (9.0%), financial difficulties (7.9%), having cut down on social interactions (7.2%), and feeling excluded from new communication technologies (2.0%).

Figure 5.
Aspects which most greatly contribute to a person feeling old
(percentage of cases)



Those who do not consider themselves old mostly highlight dimensions such as loneliness, lack of future plans and not knowing how to pass the time. Those who do consider themselves old have largely accepted these as aspects of old age. Hence, the percentage scores for these are lower.

However, amongst those who consider themselves old the dimensions most frequently mentioned are even more pronounced, from physical conditions to perceived loss of cognitive faculties and particularly having lost one or several loved ones. This does not come as a surprise, given that the literature on the subject sets out the onset of chronic diseases and the loss of a partner as two of the symbolic thresholds of old age.

When asked which aspects of life are most important in old age (Figure 6), the interviewees responded with the following in descending order: enjoying good health (80.1%), having good family relationships (52.6%), being independent

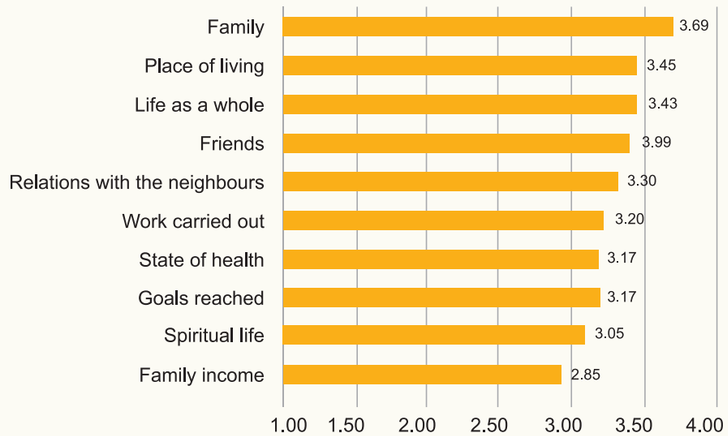
(46.7%), having a good relationship with one's partner (21.4%), having good friends (18.4%), having a sufficient amount of savings (11.0%), having many experiences, interests and hobbies (10.9%), enjoying oneself (9.2%), and lastly, having a religious faith (5.4%).

Amongst those who consider themselves to be old, the most significant aspects mentioned with respect to the total sample are being independent, having a good relationship with one's partner, having savings, having experiences, interests and hobbies, and having a religious faith. Conversely, this group yielded lower percentages with respect to the total for the following aspects: enjoying good health, having good family relationships and having good friends. Once again, the results imply that those who consider themselves to be old take for granted and accept certain fundamental aspects of the transition into old age (worsening health, deterioration of family relationships, loss of friends), which up to now have not been experienced to the same degree by those who do not feel old.

Figure 6.
Which of these aspects of life are most important in old age? (percentage of cases)

When asked about which aspects of life they are most satisfied with (Figure 7), the interviewees responded with the following in descending order: family (average score of 3.69 on a scale of 1 to 4), where they live (3.45), their life as a whole (3.43), their friends (3.39), their relationships with their neighbours (3.30), the work they have carried out (3.20), their state of health (3.17), goals reached (3.17), their spiritual life (3.05), and lastly, their family income (2.85).

Figure 7.
Satisfaction with the following aspects
(Scale 1-4, where 1 = not at all, 4 = a lot, average scores)



There is no significant difference between those who feel old and those who do not in terms of this variable. In effect, those who feel old did not yield higher scores than those who do not feel old for any of the aspects mentioned. This is particularly evident with regard to: life as a whole; state of health; friends; work carried out; and goals reached. Surprisingly, the results for these last two aspects seem to contradict the stereotype of old age whereby a person has a greater appreciation of how much they have done with their life and the goals they have reached.

The sample of older parents was also asked about which aspects of life they would like to develop in the future (Figure 8). The responses were: spend more time with family (53.5% of cases); followed in descending order by travel (53.3%); dedicate more time to myself (47.0%); dedicate more time to others (17.3%); develop cultural interests (16.8%); volunteer (7.6%); get involved in social affairs and politics (2.0%); and lastly, find a job (0.8%).

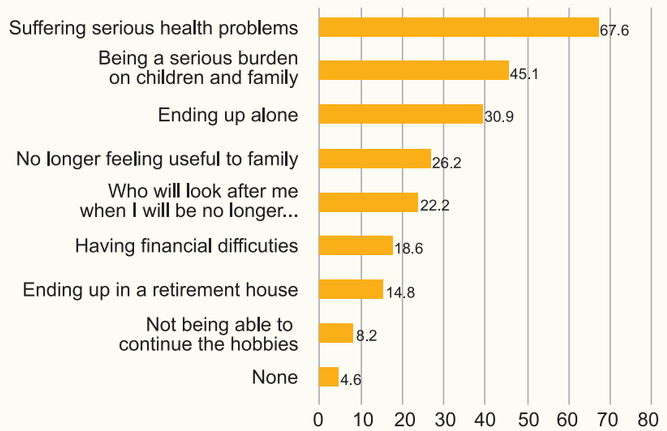
Figure 8.
Which interests would you like to develop in the future?
(percentage of cases)

Interestingly, those who consider themselves old indicate with greater frequency that they want to spend more time with family and dedicate more time to themselves and to others, with respect to the total. Other aspects are mentioned less often.

We also asked the interviewees about their worries for the future (Figure 9). The most frequent worry mentioned was about suffering from serious health problems (67.6% of cases), followed in decreasing order by being a serious burden on their children and family (45.1%), ending up alone (30.9%), no longer feeling useful to their families (26.2%), concerns about who will look after them when they are no longer independent (22.2%), having financial difficulties (18.6%), ending up in a retirement home (14.8%), and not being able to continue with their hobbies (8.2%).

The least frequent worries cited by those who feel old, with respect to the total, are not feeling useful to their family and not being able to continue with their hobbies. All other worries are more pronounced in this group, particularly those around being a serious burden on their children and family, and concerns about who will look after them if they are no longer independent. These two aspects are closely tied to the deterioration of a person's physical and mental faculties, and in this regard the interviewees do not wish to strengthen normative solidarity, as evidenced by the results in Table 12: just one third of interviewees think that children have a duty to support their elderly parents, despite the great sacrifices involved.

Figure 9.
What are your main worries about the future?
(percentage of cases)



In terms of the different aspects of old age which we analysed, various cross-cutting areas such as health, financial situation and family are worthy of a more detailed analysis.

For the first of these, the interviewees felt that a person's physical state makes the greatest contribution to feeling old, and that health is the most important aspect in old age. When it came to expressing their level of satisfaction, health came out as 'quite satisfactory', and the relationship between this variable and the extent to which a person feels old is particularly strong. In effect, the possibility of having serious health problems was the main worry about the future.

Moving on now to the interviewees' financial situation, monetary difficulties were not mentioned among the main aspects which contribute to a person feeling old. In addition, according to the interviewees, family income brings little satisfaction. Those who stated feeling old assessed these areas more pessimistically/negatively. In spite of this, the fact that half of the sample stated that they want to travel in the future somewhat contradicts their statements, and indicates that they have a certain amount of financial resources at their disposal. However, that one in five interviewees state worrying about having financial difficulties is also an important area for consideration.

With regard to the last area (family), one in five interviewees stated that having lost

one or various loved ones is one factor involved in making a person feel old. However, as mentioned previously, little more than one in two interviewees mentioned good family relationships amongst the most important aspects in old age (and just over one in five mentioned the importance of having a good relationship with their partner, which is quite odd considering that almost 70% of those interviewed live with a partner). Nevertheless, family is the aspect of life providing greatest satisfaction to the interviewees, and dedicating time and attention to family is the main future project for most of them. That said, many of the most frequent worries allude to family relationships, and particularly to the possible fragility/dysfunction of the solidarity provided by the family network:

— being a serious burden on my children;

— ending up alone;

— no longer feeling useful to my family; and

— ending up in a home.

9. Participation in socio-political activities and volunteering

After looking at the interviewees' psychophysical wellbeing, free-time activities, use of technology and perception of old age, the survey then specifically look at an aspect of active ageing strategies which European Commission documentation refers to as "Ageing well (…) and staying socially active and creative" (European Commission, 2007). This reflects one aspect of the initial concept of active ageing formulated by the World Health Organisation, which was expressed in terms of maintaining (maximising) the possibilities for (social) participation whilst ageing (WHO, 2002). Socio-political activities and volunteering are good examples of where people can get involved at the community level and also open the door to social capital.

The vast majority of interviewees (72.2%) are not members of any group or association. In descending order (multiple choice question), 8.2% are members of groups which run educational and cultural activities, 5.4% are in church groups, 4.1% are in groups and associations which provide social support, 3.3% are in groups linked to political parties and trade unions, 3.0% are in human rights groups, 2.6% are in sports or recreation groups, 2.0% are in local and neighbourhood committees, 1.6% are members of professional associations, and 1.2% are in groups which promote natural environment conservation.

Of those involved with a group or association, only a minority (42.0%) take part as a volunteer, either doing so irregularly (40.2%), for between 1 and 5 hours per week (32.0%) or for less than one hour (13.0%).

In ascending order, 16.6% of those interviewed have participated in meetings to discuss problems in their town or neighbourhood, 36.3% have made charitable donations in the last year, and 90.5% voted in the most recent elections.

Despite being in a good physical and cognitive state and seeing themselves as useful, the generation we studied is not very socially active (72.2% of those interviewed are not part of any group or association). This contrasts with the values they share (as we will see further on): respect towards others (3.81 out of 4), responsibility (3.77 out of 4), solidarity (3.63 out of 4), respect for the environment (3.33 out of 4) and culture (3.18 out of 4). All of these values usually imply involvement in prosocial activities.

The data also go some way to confirming that the sample has a characteristically low propensity to participate. The interviewees instead devote their time to their grandchildren (where relevant), and almost never full time: 82 of the 100 interviewees have grandchildren; of these, 75 provide part-time or limited support at certain times. In addition to their limited uptake of leisure activities (with the exception of walks, gardening and fishing), the sample displays a very low level of social participation, with little added value in terms of the specific support they provide: of the 100 interviewees, only 28 belong to a group or association; of these, only 12 give time to the group or association voluntarily; lastly, of these 12, only 2 volunteer for more than five hours each week.

We noted a more intense level of participation in terms of donations to charity and voting in elections. Research into active citizenship would attest to this as being typically linked to a low level of pro-activeness.

10. Social capital

Social capital is an important aspect to analysing the connection between intergenerational solidarity and possession of relational resources in family life (primary social capital) and in the widest relational sphere (secondary social capital).

Primary social capital has been measured via structured questions about trust, reciprocal support, collaboration and shared activities (where *family* refers to the interviewees and their children, even if they do not live together).

In terms of family trust (Table 17), the interviewees state that they trust their families (4.36 out of 5), that they feel they can rely on one another (4.39) and that they can freely express ideas and opinions (4.27). They also lend and share personal items (3.64). Comparing the average scores obtained from interviewees who do not live with their children and from those who live with some of their children, those in the latter group yielded higher values for all questions which are framed positively (that is, questions about reciprocal trust, trust in others, freedom of expression of ideas and opinions, and exchanging belongings). The average scores for negatively-framed questions were lower (questions about hiding important matters or feeling betrayed by others). There is therefore a direct relationship between living together and feeling trusting, which in turn is an element of primary social capital.

Table 17. Trust
(Scale 1-5, where 1 = not true and 5 = completely true, average scores)

	Average	Lives with children	
In terms of trust...		**No**	**Yes**
In our family, we trust each other	4.36	4.33	4.45
In our family, we feel that we can rely on one another	4.39	4.35	4.51
In our family, someone sometimes hides important matters from others	2.48	2.51	2.39
In our family, someone has felt betrayed	1.83	1.85	1.79
In our family, we can freely express our own ideas and opinions	**4.27**	**4.22**	**4.43**
In our family, we lend and exchange personal items (e.g. clothing, books, cars, etc.)	**3.64**	**3.59**	**3.78**

When it comes to reciprocal support (Table 18), the interviewees state that the members of their family can rely on one another for moral support (4.25 out of 5). This is followed in descending order by the following: if someone has problems they ask the others for help (4.10); anyone who provides help with a certain matter knows that the others will do the same for them (4.08); those who give advice also accept it (4.00); and lastly (with a somewhat lower score), the interviewees stated that the members of their family expect too much of one another (2.21). All of these average scores increase for interviewees who live with their children, with the exception of the question on having excessive expectations of family members. This question was couched in a negative sense, and the resulting score from this group is slightly lower. There is therefore a direct relationship between living together and volunteering reciprocal support, which in turn is another element of primary social capital.

Table 18. Receiving or volunteering help
(Scale 1-5, where 1 = not true, 5 = completely true, average scores)

	Average	Lives with children	
In terms of receiving or volunteering help...		**No**	**Yes**
In our family, anyone who provides help with a certain matter knows that the others will do the same for them	4.08	4.06	4.14
In our family, if someone has a problem they ask the others for help	4.10	4.08	4.17
In our family, we expect too much of one another	2.21	2.25	2.07
The members of our family can rely on one another for moral support	4.25	4.22	4.33
In our family, those who give advice also accept it	4.00	3.99	4.04

In terms of cooperation and division of labour (Table 19), the interviewees state that both parents share in educating their children (4.17 out of 5), followed in decreasing order by: when there is a problem, everyone works together to solve it (4.01); decisions are made jointly by everyone (3.98); everyone lends a hand with daily tasks (3.73); everyone helps (based on their ability) with domestic chores (3.69), and; when there is a problem, everyone is invited to make suggestions (3.62).

Table 19. Cooperating, doing things together
(Scale 1-5, where 1 = not true, 5 = completely true, average scores)

	Average	Lives with children	
In terms of cooperating / division of labour...		No	Yes
In our family, both parents share in educating the children	4.17	4.14	4.25
In our family, decisions are made jointly by everyone	3.98	3.96	4.05
In our family, when there is a problem, everyone works together to solve it	4.01	3.99	4.08
In our family, when there is a problem, everyone is invited to make suggestions	3.62	3.58	3.71
In our family, everyone helps (based on their ability) with domestic chores	3.69	3.69	3.70
In our family, everyone lends a hand with daily tasks	3.73	3.72	3.76

Breaking down the results based on interviewees who do not live with their children and those who do reveals higher levels of cooperation amongst the second group. In other words, there is a direct relationship between cooperation and living together, which in turn is the next element of primary social capital.

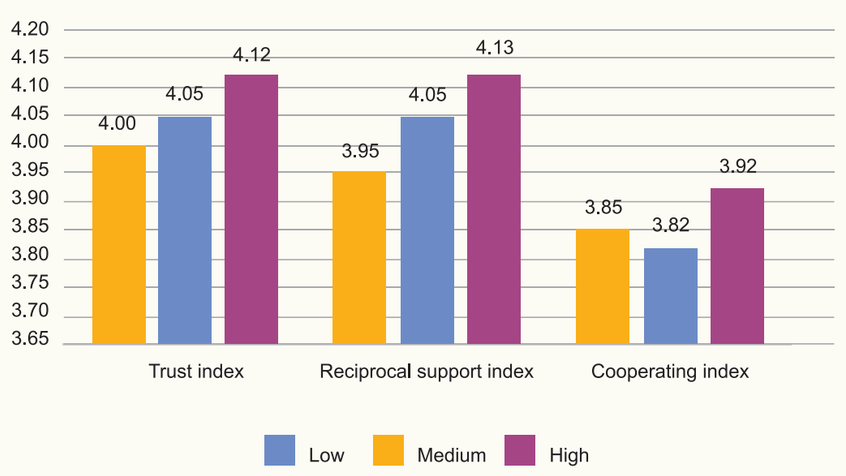
By way of example, and in order to verify what the average scores seem to show, the relationship between the elements of primary social capital and intergenerational solidarity — and functional solidarity specifically — can be explored by using indices. Four indices have been formulated for that purpose: three pertaining to the elements of primary social capital (based on the three sets of questions that we have just discussed); one pertaining to the intensity of the support given by the interviewees to their children. We recalculated two variables using reverse scoring (those with negative connotations, i.e. hiding important matters, and feeling betrayed) to formulate the trust index based on the set of questions comprising six items. This makes the score positive such that the higher the score, the higher the level of social capital represented by this element. We then calculated the average score of the six items, which in effect comprises the trust index. We performed the same procedure on the second set of questions. For these, only one of the five items had a negative connotation (expecting too much). After reversing the scoring, we then calculated the index pertaining to provision of help based on average of the five items. There were no variables with negative connotations in the third set of questions. The cooperation index was therefore calculated based on the average of the six items in the set.

We calculated the index pertaining to the intensity of help given to children based on the matrix for help given (discussed in section 4) throughout the family and friendship network, using for this purpose only those scores relating to help given to children. For those who stated having supported a son or daughter (or both),

the matrix specified the dimensions of said support within seven possible areas of intervention (from practical support to financial or moral support). For each of these seven areas, the interviewees were asked to state whether they have provided support ‘never’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ (over the last twelve months). We allocated a ‘weighting’ of 0 to ‘never’, 2 to ‘sometimes’, and 4 to ‘often’. We divided the sum of the scores by the number of instances of support (calculated based on the number of times the interviewees answered ‘sometimes’ and ‘often’), thus attaining the index pertaining to support given to children.

As the following example shows (Figure 10), there is a clear and positive relationship between primary social capital and functional intergenerational solidarity: the higher the level of intergenerational solidarity, the higher the social capital, and vice versa. We can also verify the opposite case. That is, whereas increasing primary social capital (broken down into all its elements) increases functional solidarity, likewise, reducing the former reduces the latter. These tendencies are even more pronounced in the subsample of those who live with their children.

Figure 10.
Dimensions of primary social capital (trust index, help given index, and cooperation index) for (low, medium, high) levels of support given to children (average scores)



With regard to secondary social capital, 61.5% of the sample are somewhat or totally in agreement with the statement that “Most people are deserving of trust”. Similarly, 84.5% somewhat or totally agree with the statement “Some say that by helping others, in the long run we end up helping ourselves”. 38.2% of those

interviewed state that they do not feel at all safe walking through the streets in the dark after a certain time. Almost two thirds of those interviewed have never taken part in any public events in their local area over the last six months, although the vast majority (89.0%) stated feeling quite or completely at home there. More than half (51.0%) have done favours for, or helped, a neighbour (often or sometimes).

In conclusion, as evidenced already by our analysis of other areas, the dimensions of primary social capital are influenced by living with one's children. Where this is the case, the various positive elements of social capital are more pronounced, and the negative aspects are kept more in check.

However, there are exceptions within the overall trends. The average scores for the indices pertaining to trust and to exchanging help are slightly greater with respect to the indices pertaining to cooperation. Analysing the data based on whether or not the interviewees live with their children and the intensity of the help given shows that all average scores increase when children are still living at home, irrespective of the level of support provided. Interestingly, however, regardless of whether children are still living at home, there is a divergent trend in the cooperation index. The score for the intermediate level of help was the lowest, suggesting that there is a greater level of cooperation when the level of support given to children is low or very high. In other words, a lack of support can generate cooperation, as can a heightened intensity in the support given from parents to children, triggering what appears to be a virtuous circle.

In terms of secondary social capital, it is particularly striking that more than one in three interviewees have little or no trust in most people. In effect, these interviewees focus their relationships within their own social sphere, something which chimes with the low levels of involvement in the social and political spheres described in previous sections. Such an attitude contrasts with the extent to which those interviewed have mentioned the theme of values. This is the topic of the next section of the paper.

11. Values

We asked the interviewees to assign a score (between 1 (not at all) and 4 (very) to a series of values (Figure 11, broken down by sex). The results, in order of most to least valued, are: family (3.85), respect for others (3.83), responsibility (3.76), loyalty (3.72), friendship (3.67), freedom (3.66), work (3.65), solidarity (3.65), connection (3.59), education (3.44), respect for the natural environment (3.37), local culture and language (3.12), money (3.02), religion (2.63), sex (2.39), politics (2.19) and power (2.16). There are differences between the sexes with regard to the last four values. Women value religion more highly (2.93), whilst men (albeit to a lesser extent) place greater value on sex (2.67), politics (2.29) and power (2.24).

A factor analysis was helpful for individuating synthetic components, which summarise how the values are grouped together by virtue of the interviewees' responses to the survey questions. Our analysis of the main components individuated four components, which together explain 48.5% of the total variance (Table 20). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.85, which is therefore acceptable given it is greater than the threshold value of 0.8.

We used a Varimax rotation to identify the main components (Table 21).

The first component detected — which alone explains 20.3% of the variance — aggregates eight values based on local culture and languages and respect for the environment. Added to these two elements are values pertaining to solidarity, friendships, loyalty, connection and freedom. Education is also an element of this component. We can therefore call this component 'identity and universal values'. Added to the factors which help construct a fundamental aspect of identity in its originating context — which include culture, language and region — are universal ideals such as those mentioned, pertaining to freedom and solidarity. This aggregation of values is the most significant. The second component explains just 11.6% of the variance and aggregates four values which pivot around family and work. Added to these are respect for others and responsibility. This component can therefore be called 'the cornerstones of life', given it spans family and work. It is interesting to note that this particular set of values is not the most important one (i.e. the one explaining the most variance) but the second most important.

Figure 11.
To what extent are the following values important
(Scale 1-4, where 1 = not at all, 4 = a lot, average scores)

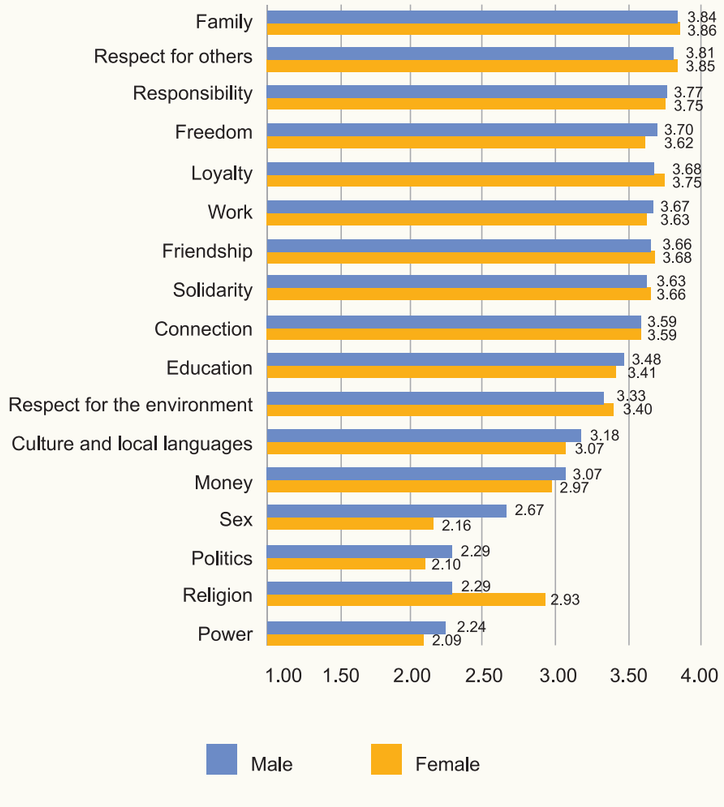


Table 20. Table of components
(percentage variance explained by each component)

Component	% variance	% accumulated
1	20.33	20.33
2	11.59	31.92
3	9.72	41.64
4	6.83	48.47

The third component explains 9.7% of the variance and bring together values linked with acquisition: politics, power and money. We can therefore label this component ‘means of control’. These values — as we have seen — are less significant, and are

related to one another by their goal. That is, to facilitate control over fundamental aspects of life: having the necessary resources available for living; and having the means for regulating human society.

Lastly, the fourth component explains 6.8% of the variance. It brings together the last two values, those being religion and sex, which are negatively correlated. We can label this component ‘contrasting ethics’, since it brings face to face two aspects of people’s private lives which are carried out in sharp contrast to one another. This is represented by the ‘-’ sign, which precedes the value in the matrix corresponding to the variable ‘sex’.

Table 21. Rotated component matrix

	1	2	3	4
Culture and local languages	0.708			
Respect for the environment	0.707			
Solidarity	0.685			
Friendship	0.607			
Education	0.581			
Loyalty	0.544			
Freedom	0.539			
Connection	0.461			
Respect for others		0.731		
Responsibility		0.696		
Work		0.473		
Family		0.405		
Power			0.750	
Money			0.573	
Politics			0.552	
Religion				0.824
Sex				-0.449

Extraction method: analysis of main components.
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation.
The rotation converged in 10 iterations.

Overall, the factor analysis is satisfactory in that not only does it meet the required significant thresholds for this type of analysis, but also because our study of the components has facilitated aggregations of values which can be interpreted and which show internal consistency.

Conclusions

Now that we have broadly described the results of the research, we shall summarise some of the main evidence to come out of the study and thus obtain a comprehensive and overall view of the scope of the data.

Firstly, we should emphasise that the sample studied was a good representation of the characteristics of the Spanish population comprising older parents aged between 65 and 74 years old. Furthermore, our decision to only interview people with living children has been crucial to exploring intergenerational relationships and family solidarity.

We discovered that our sample comprises middle and lower-middle class older parents. In other words, they have a low level of income (most are retired) and education. Throughout their lives, almost all those in the sample have worked as labourers or in white-collar jobs, and have experienced the transition from Fordism to rise of the tertiary sector of the economy.

Those interviewed are generally in a good state of health, with a minority declaring being limited by a chronic disease. In terms of overall wellbeing, the female subsample is the most vulnerable, particularly to psychological distress. This condition is more pronounced amongst widows and women who are separated/divorced.

Despite being in an overall good state of health, however, the sample studied is not particularly active, inquisitive or engaged. Their main free-time activities are walking, gardening and reading, with physical and cultural activities being carried out little or almost not at all on average. The interviewees are generally well equipped with new technologies though there is a divergence between ownership and knowing how to use them — their level of use of these is decidedly low (which may also be due to children having encouraged or assisted in the purchase). Only a quarter of the sample connect to the Internet almost every day. However, this particular group does hold an interesting key to intergenerational relationships, considering that half of those who use the Internet were taught to do so by their children. In terms of their relationship with the local community, the population studied is undoubtedly not very engaged in associational endeavours, and even less so in voluntary activities. Overall, the older parents we studied are not very pro-active. This also applies to participatory citizenship.

Whilst the interviewees have created large households (the largest grouping comprises those with three or more children), they mainly now live with their partner (without children living at home), or alone owing to having separated or been widowed. However, approximately one quarter of the parents we interviewed — a not insignificant amount — have children who still live at home.

To conclude the description of family structure, fewer than one interviewee in five have no grandchildren, and a small minority still have living parents and in-laws. Taking all these data into account shows that only a minority of families still comprise multiple generations: less than one third of the total number of households have two or three generations. Family solidarity therefore mostly flows horizontally (towards one's partner, siblings and other family contemporaries) or towards descendants (children and grandchildren). Care responsibilities arise mainly for grandchildren, and in few cases for the interviewees' parents, partner and siblings.

The age of the population studied undoubtedly provides the main explanation behind the data on family structures and the nature of family relationships. It is the mothers in the sample who have a positive view of their relationship with their children, in the context of having given and received in more or less equal measure (excluding financial support that the interviewees state having provided). For fathers and those with children still living at home, as age increases there is a slightly higher sense of regret about what they haven't done for their children and particularly for not having assisted them in their decision to settle down and have children.

When it comes to meaningful relationships — that is, the network of people with whom the interviewees maintain genuine and significant ties, and who they can rely on in times of need — family members are undoubtedly top of the list before friends and neighbours. However, the number of people on average with whom they maintain significant ties is distinctly greater than the number of people they can rely on in times of need, as evidenced by the analysis of the survey results. This discrepancy also arises when we analyse the dimensions of functional family solidarity, i.e. the flows of help given and help received. Given that, in this case, help is mostly exchanged vertically with children and grandchildren, rather than horizontally with one's partner, the perception of having given more help than that received is most prevalent in the former (vertical), with a greater balance observed in the latter (horizontal).

Functional solidarity has a strong direct relationship with the dimensions of primary social capital: the more established these dimensions are, the broader the scope of functional solidarity and vice versa. The relationship between solidarity and social capital is an interesting theme worthy of more in-depth exploration in future publications, drawing on this research.

In terms of the direction of intergenerational interactions, we observed that most of those interviewed expressed a preference for kindness in relationships within the family unit, and for seeking compromises which mean that everyone is happy and that family harmony is maintained. A greater sense of balance between drawing on previous experience and seeking or trying out new forms of conflict management only arose in relation to the way in which such solutions are sought.

Normative family solidarity is one aspect affecting the direction of intergenerational interactions. The data suggest that the interviewees have a stronger perception of their duty as parents — despite this involving great sacrifices — when they are of the view that their children are duty-bound to make sacrifices to support them in the event of illness. This view is reflected in the very fact of them feeling old, as we have already seen. One final aspect which stands out is that for both directions of the parent-child relationship, normative solidarity is stronger when there are children still living in the family home.

Overall, children seem to be actively engaged with their family history, and parents end up with a strong sense of gratitude which extends, where relevant, to their grandchildren.

Only a minority of interviewees consider themselves to be old, and this perception diminishes when asked how society views them. Of those who state that they are old, there is a greater proportion of those with chronic diseases or who have lost a family member. On the whole, this subsample seems to restore the image of an internalised old age. Those who are relatively younger and in a good state of health place more importance on — and in fact, are more concerned about — aspects of life linked to the stages which come before old age.

Lastly, in terms of the focus of the interviewees' lives, the values they hold in highest esteem are family and respect for others. However, looking at the fundamental core values shows that the sample can be best understood through the profound sense of identity expressed through culture, language and region, and universal ideals such as freedom, solidarity and friendship. From this perspective, family sits within a set of core values which are statistically less important than others in explaining the interviewees' value orientations, and is connected to other cornerstones of life, those being work, the value of responsibility and respect for others.

Bibliography

Arber, S., Attias-Donfut, C., eds. (2000), *The myth of generational conflict: the family and state in ageing societies*, Routledge, London.

Bengtson, V. L., Roberts, R.E.L. (1991), Intergenerational Solidarity in Aging Families an example of Formal Theory Construction, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 53(4), 856-870.

Binstock, R. H. (2010), From Compassionate Ageism to Intergenerational Conflict?, *The Gerontologist*, 50 (5), 574-585.

Comisión Europea (2007), *Envejecer mejor en la sociedad de la información - Una iniciativa i2010 - Plan de acción sobre tecnologías de la información y la comunicación y envejecimiento*, COM (2007) 332 final.

Donati, P. (2013), *Sociologia della relazione*, Bologna: Il Mulino.

Donati, P. (2015), Intergenerational Solidarity: Old and New Scenarios, Challenges and Prospects, in P. S. Dasgupta, V. Ramanathan and M. Sánchez Sorondo (eds.), *Sustainable Humanity, Sustainable Nature, Our Responsibility, Proceedings of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences/Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences Tenth Plenary Session (Vatican City, 2-6 May 2014*), Vatican City: The Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 569-613.

Jönsson, I. (2003), Policy Perspectives on Changing Intergenerational Relations, *Social Policy and Society*, 2 (3), 241-248.

López, M.T. (2015), *Personas mayores y solidaridad intergeneracional en la familia. El caso español*, Madrid: Colección Acción Familiar, Ediciones Cinca.

Lüscher, K et al. (2000), “Family Structures and Intergenerational Relationships in the Konstanz Region” (Documento de trabajo No. 34.4), Konstanz: Konstanz Universität.

Meil, G. (2011), “Individualización y solidaridad familiar”, Colección Estudios Sociales, n.32, Barcelona: Obra Social “La Caixa”.

Scabini E., Rossi G. (eds.) (2016), *L’allungamento della vita. Una risorsa per la famiglia, un’opportunità per la società*, Milano: Vita e Pensiero.

World Health Organisation (2002), *Active Ageing. A Policy Framework*, Geneva.

uic
barcelona