

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE ELDERLY

The National Council for the Elderly was established in January 1990 in succession to the National Council for the Aged which began in June, 1981. The terms of reference of the Council are:

To advise the Minister for Health on all aspects of ageing and the welfare of the elderly, either on its own initiative or at the request of the Minister, and in particular on

- *measures to promote the health of the elderly,*
- *the implementation of the recommendations of the Report, The Years Ahead — A Policy for the Elderly,*
- *methods of ensuring co-ordination between public bodies at national and local level in the planning and provision of services for the elderly,*
- *ways of encouraging greater partnership between statutory and voluntary bodies in providing services for the elderly,*
- *meeting the needs of the most vulnerable elderly,*
- *ways of encouraging positive attitudes to life after 65 years and the process of ageing,*
- *ways of encouraging greater participation by elderly people in the life of the community,*
- *models of good practice in the care of the elderly, and*
- *action, based on research, required to plan and develop services for the elderly*

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ATTITUDES OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO AGEING AND THE ELDERLY

A report on a study of attitudes to ageing and the elderly among final year students in Waterford and Dun Laoghaire Community Colleges and trainees in Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop.

by

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NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE ELDERLY
REPORT NO. 16

First published in 1987. Reprinted in 1992 by the National Council for the Elderly, Corrigan House, Fenian Street, Dublin, Ireland

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Price: £2

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PREFACE

1993 is *European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations*. It aims to highlight the positive contribution which older people make to society. Equally, it aims to increase understanding and practical cooperation between generations, particularly between the young and the old.

The European Year provides us with the opportunity to reappraise our attitudes to ageing and older people. How influenced are we by the negative stereotypes so often projected by the media? We know that we are as different from each other as chalk and cheese. Yet we continue to lump all old people together in our minds, often equating them with "the sick and dying". Some old people are vulnerable, lonely and ill and need our special attention and care. But all older people need our respect, to be seen and treated as individuals and to be allowed to participate as equals in all that our society has to offer.

Likewise older people themselves must reappraise their attitudes to the young. Are they putting up barriers between the generations? Better by far are efforts to pool the generosity, energy, experience and wisdom of the different generations in the interests of a more civilised society.

The National Council for the Elderly is pleased to republish its 1987 Report *Attitudes of Young People to Ageing and the Elderly* as a special contribution to the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in 1993. It hopes that in so doing it will provide renewed stimulus to the efforts already begun nationally by agencies such as *Age and Opportunity* to change what negative attitudes we have to being old in our society.

Teachers and students may like to undertake similar studies to this one in their schools by using the questionnaire used by the Dun Laoghaire and Waterford schools in 1987. Such exercises would be valuable contributions to the 1993 European Year programme and the national effort to change our attitudes to older people in 1993 and beyond.

Lady Valerie Goulding
President
National Council for the Elderly

FOREWORD TO FIRST EDITION

Throughout the research of the National Council for the Aged,* various common themes emerge. One of these is the need for attitudinal change.

In studies of elderly residents in rural and suburban neighbourhoods, those interviewed have revealed their attitudes towards themselves and their perceptions of the attitudes of the community towards them. This study represents, however, the first attempt by the Council to identify the views of ageing and the elderly held by any other particular age group.

Why did we choose young people of school-leaving age as the category to be studied? It was because of the realisation that the community in which they will spend their adult lives will contain an increasingly large proportion of people over sixty-five years of age. Their attitudes to the older generation and to the process of ageing itself will be an important factor in the shaping of national policies. For this reason, we are anxious to promote the design of an educational programme which will help young people to come to terms with the ageing process and develop positive attitudes towards the role that elderly people are capable of playing in the community. The study was carried out as a means towards this end and was visualised as part of the process of education of some young people in their appreciation of age and the process of ageing rather than as an end in itself.

Financial constraints limited the scope of the study. The sample contains, nevertheless, students from urban, suburban and rural backgrounds. The inclusion of a greater number of schools, while admittedly desirable, would be unlikely to have altered to any great degree the conclusions in this report. If this initial attempt to discover the images of ageing and the elderly held by young Irish people should lead to further research in this area, that would be a welcome development.

Finally, we wish to emphasise that the principal aim of this study is to encourage young people, along with their teachers and guardians, to evaluate the role of the elderly and help create the kind of society in which elderly people would not merely have their physical needs met but would be given a deeper sense of belonging and wider opportunities to contribute to the welfare of their local communities.

Many people contributed in different ways to this study, which was completed in May, 1986. The National Council for the Aged* would like to thank first and foremost the administration, staff and students/trainees of Dun Laoghaire Community College, Dun Laoghaire Com-

munity Training Workshop and St. Paul's Community College, Waterford, for their goodwill and for their co-operation in undertaking the study in their establishments.

The administration, staff and Leaving Certificate students of the Christian Brothers" Secondary School, Dun Laoghaire, and of the Dominican Convent Secondary School, Dun Laoghaire were also most helpful at the design and pretesting stages of the study. Without all the assistance from the young people involved in the preparation and completion of the questionnaires the study would not have been possible.

Our thanks also go to Professor Conor Ward of the Department of Social Science, University College, Dublin and Mrs. Teresa Brannick of the Department of Industrial Relations, University College, Dublin, for their assistance in processing the data compiled.

The Council takes this opportunity to thank the members of its Education Committee, particularly its Chairman, Mr. Michael White, and the author of the report, Very Rev. Brian Power P.P. for their work in undertaking and completing this study.

The Council also wishes to acknowledge the assistance of its Secretary, Mr. Bob Carroll, its Research Officer, Mr. Michael Browne, and Ms. Jennifer Leech, a former member of staff, who contributed to the production and publication of the report.

L.J. Tuomey,
Chairman.

March 1987

*The Council is now called the National Council for the Elderly.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Since it came into existence in June 1981 as an advisory body to the Minister for Health, the National Council for the Aged has conducted and commissioned a good deal of research into the needs of certain categories of elderly people, such as the incapacitated and the institutionalised. The research also brought into clearer focus the more positive aspects of ageing and the many valuable qualities of people who have passed the normal retirement age of sixty-five.

For some time, the Council has been conscious of the need for a community education programme which would make Irish people of all ages more aware not merely of the social disadvantages of some categories of elderly people but of the strengths and skills of elderly people in general. Shortage of funds has made it impossible, at this stage, to initiate large scale research which would form the basis of such an education programme. It was felt, however, that a beginning could be made by some of the Council members themselves. Consequently, a committee was set up under the chairmanship of Mr. Michael White to consider what might be done in this regard.

Believing that any community education programme should embrace the young and should be based on whatever reliable information could be acquired, the committee decided to try and ascertain by means of a sample survey the images of ageing and the elderly which young people might be expected to entertain at the end of second level education. This decision was made on the basis of several assumptions.

These assumptions were as follows:

- A. By the time young people complete their second level education, many of the images and concepts they have formed are likely to be retained for the rest of their lives, especially in the case of those who will never proceed to third level education.
- B. Many of these young people will shortly incur the responsibility or challenge of dealing with elderly people.
- C. Young people completing their second level education would be easily accessible, with the help of school administrations, for the purposes of conducting a study.
- D. The results of such a study could be used in the promotion of an educational programme in Irish schools.

- E. If conducted on a small scale by members of the Council, a study of this kind should prove inexpensive and could be completed in a relatively short time.
- F. The process of conducting such a study should in itself prove educational and provide a model for manageable research of a similar kind in schools other than those selected for the study.

Method and Purposes of the Study

It was decided that a study to ascertain the images of ageing and the elderly among students in final year classes would be conducted in two non-denominational Community Colleges, one in Waterford and one in Dun Laoghaire. by administering a precoded questionnaire in classes due to complete their final year courses in June 1986. The reasons for this selection were as follows:

- A. Two Council members. Mr. Michael White in Waterford and Fr. Brian Power in Dun Laoghaire. were available to supervise the study and liaise with teachers willing to give assistance in these Community Colleges.
- B. The selection of Leaving Certificate classes in St. Paul's Community College. Waterford. would embrace a small percentage of students (estimated at 20%-30%) living in rural areas.
- C. The selection of Leaving Certificate classes in Dun Laoghaire Community College which contained students who had received their entire second level education in that school, along with pre-employment classes which contained the remainder who had received their entire second level education there, would afford a basis for comparison between the response of students in a Dublin suburb and the response of students in a provincial city.
- D. Dun Laoghaire Community College provided student contact with elderly people by means of a programme of assistance in its library service supplied by the local Retirement Association. The existence of this programme in one College would give added interest to comparison of the response there with the response in a College which did not have any corresponding programme.

Because young people who abandoned second level education at an early age were not so far included in the sample, it was decided that a questionnaire would be administered also in the Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop, an AnCO and VEC programme set up specifically, under the control of a voluntary local management committee, to provide training for young people in this category. Most of

the trainees in the Workshop had at one time been students either in Dun Laoghaire Community College or in another Community College situated in Dun Laoghaire Borough. In order to be admitted to the programme, trainees had to be at least fifteen years of age and to have been at least six months out of school.

Construction of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire to be used in the study was constructed in the following way.

- A. A draft questionnaire was prepared by the researcher and amended in consultation with the research committee.
- B. The researcher spent two class sessions with students in a Leaving Certificate class in the Christian Brothers' Secondary School, Dun Laoghaire, during which he discussed the purpose of the proposed study and the draft questionnaire. As a result of this consultation, some new questions were added, others were eliminated, and the intelligibility of the questionnaire to the age group for which it was designed was considerably improved.
- C. Pre-tests of the questionnaire were conducted by the researcher in another Leaving Certificate class in the Christian Brothers' Secondary School, Dun Laoghaire, and in a Leaving Certificate class in Dominican Convent Secondary School, Dun Laoghaire. Further minor alterations were then made in the questionnaire, which it had been proved could be administered without pressure during a class session lasting forty to forty-five minutes.

CHAPTER 1

THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

1.1 The Sample

In the Community Colleges in Waterford and Dun Laoghaire, not all the students whose names were on the registers at the beginning of the academic year had continued to attend classes throughout the second and third terms. When the questionnaire was administered in the early weeks of the final term, that is between 8th and 25th April 1986, the numbers normally attending the classes selected for the study were 78 in St. Paul's Community College, Waterford, and 68 in Dun Laoghaire Community College. In both schools a small number of students were absent when the questionnaire was administered—five in Waterford and five in Dun Laoghaire, of whom four were foreign students. The number of trainees in Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop was 30, all of whom filled in the questionnaire.

The total sample with which we will be concerned consisted, then, of 73 students in St. Paul's Community College, Waterford; 63 students in Dun Laoghaire Community College; and 30 trainees in Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop. In St. Paul's Community College, Waterford, the questionnaire was administered by teachers who had been briefed by Mr. Michael White. In Dun Laoghaire Community College, it was administered either by Fr. Brian Power or by a teacher briefed by him. In Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop, it was administered by the researcher, Fr. Brian Power.

Table 1.1 shows the numbers and percentages of respondents in each of the three educational centres.

Table 1 1 *DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE IN EDUCATION CENTRES*

	Number	Percentage %
Waterford College	73	44
Dun Laoghaire College	63	38
Dun Laoghaire Workshop	30	18
Total	166	100

To make them easier to follow, percentages only will be used in further tables. It should be borne in mind, however, that small percentages indicating a particular response in one of the three centres studied will represent very small numbers. Decimals will not be used in the tables, but percentages will be given to the nearest round figures.

Table 1.2 shows the distribution of the sexes in the educational centres studied.

Table 1 2 *SEX DISTRIBUTION IN EDUCATIONAL CENTRES*

	Waterford %	D L College %	D L Workshop %	Total Sample %
Boys	61	67	48	61
Girls	39	33	52	39

Of all the respondents, 61% were boys, 39% girls. In Waterford College, likewise, 61% were boys, 39% girls. In Dun Laoghaire College, there were twice as many boys as girls—67% as against 33%. Girls were better represented in Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop, where they slightly outnumbered the boys, 52% of the respondents being girls, 48% boys.

Table 1.3 gives the age distribution of the respondents in the three educational institutions.

Table 13 *AGE DISTRIBUTION IN EDUCATIONAL CENTRES*

	Aged 16 or under %	Aged 17 %	Aged 18 %	Aged 19 or over %
Waterford	44	52	3	1
Dun L. College	57	29	11	3
Dun L Workshop	52	38	7	3
Total Sample	50	41	7	2

In the total sample, half of the respondents were aged sixteen or younger (in effect, sixteen or fifteen years, but the exact percentage who were aged fifteen was not ascertained). Forty-one per cent were aged seventeen and 9% over eighteen. Higher percentages of the respondents in Dun Laoghaire than in Waterford were in the youngest bracket. As can be estimated from Table 1.3, 91% of all the respondents were under eighteen years of age.

In the total sample, the age distribution of the boys and girls was almost identical.

As a general rule, further comparison of the responses given to questions in the educational centres or among boys and girls will be made only where there was a notable difference between them. Differences in response between the two Community Colleges were rarely significant. Differences in response between boys and girls were more frequently significant.

1.2 Ages of Parents

Most of the respondents had relatively young parents. Ninety-one per cent gave their mothers' ages as under fifty-five (29% as under forty) and 87% gave their fathers' ages as under fifty-five (13% as under forty). In the remainder of cases, three students said that their mothers were deceased and five that their fathers were deceased, a small number did not attempt to guess their parents' ages, while one student's mother was stated to be over sixty-five and three students' fathers were stated to be over sixty-five.

1.3 Elderly Grandparents

Seventy-two per cent of all the respondents had at least one grandparent or great-grandparent living who was over sixty-five years of age, but only 39% had more than one such relative. Seventy-seven per cent of the Waterford and 71% of the Dun Laoghaire Community College students had at least one grandparent or great-grandparent living aged over sixty-five, as against 59% of the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees.

Only 4% of the total sample said that there was anyone aged sixty-five or over, other than a parent, living in their homes. It can be concluded, therefore, that where the young people had elderly relatives they were almost always living elsewhere.

CHAPTER 2

ATTITUDES TO AGEING

2.1 Length of Life Aspirations

The young people were asked to indicate the approximate age to which they would like to live. The largest category in the response (46%) showed no apparent misgivings about growing old, saying they would like to live to be eighty years or more. The second highest category (28%) said they didn't know how long they would like to live. Eleven per cent indicated seventy-five years approximately, 11% sixty-five years approximately, and 4% fifty-five years or less.

Some difference occurred here between the Waterford College and the Dun Laoghaire College students. Fifty-two per cent in Waterford, as against 37% in Dun Laoghaire College, said they would like to live to be eighty years or more. The difference is explained mainly by the smaller percentage of Waterford students (17% as against 39% in Dun Laoghaire College) who didn't know how long they would like to live. The fact remains that Waterford students were more likely than Dun Laoghaire College students to display a positive inclination to go on living to a good old age. Although a substantial percentage (31%) of the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees didn't know how long they would like to live, quite a high percentage (48%) of them opted for eighty years or more.

2.2. Age at which Value to Community may be Thought to Cease

Question No. 7 may be thought to be something of a trick question. It ran as follows: At what age do you think people cease, as a general rule, to be of any value to their community?

As a result of prior consultation with Christian Brothers' students about the construction of the questionnaire, however, respondents were free to tick either an approximate age or one of the categories 'Can't put any age on it' or 'Never'. Respondents whose replies fell into either of these categories could be said to have evinced, at very least, reluctance to regard old age as equivalent to uselessness or helplessness—although in the mind of the researcher 'Never' would be rated as the ideal response to the question.

Table 2.1 displays the total response to Question No. 7 and the breakdown of replies among girls and boys.

Table 2 1 AGE AT WHICH VALUE TO COMMUNITY CEASES

	Total Sample %	Girls %	Boys %
Never	36	34	37
Can't put any age on it	25	36	19
60 Years or less	7	3	9
65 years approx	8	2	9
70 years approx	8	6	6
75 years approx	5	2	8
80 years or more	4	3	4
No idea/don't know	11	14	8

The main difference between the sexes was that girls were less likely than boys to put an age on the cessation of human value to the community, and somewhat less likely to specify a lower age category. Twenty-eight per cent of the total sample were prepared to specify a definite age at which people might cease to be of any value to their community. Thirty-six per cent of the boys did so as against 16% of the girls. This was one clear instance where geographical location or type of educational centre made practically no difference to the response, but where sex did make a difference.

2.3 Fear or Anxiety about Growing Old

Question No. 17 was: Do you have any fear or anxiety about growing old? Respondents who answered 'yes' were then asked to indicate one or more of several reasons suggested by the students who helped with the construction of the questionnaire.

In the total sample, 56% said that they did have some fear or anxiety about growing old, while the remainder (44%) answered 'no'. In Waterford Community College, 59% said 'yes', while in Dun Laoghaire Community College a similar percentage (57%) said 'yes' as against a somewhat lower percentage (48%) in Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop. Once again the difference in response between the sexes was more striking. In the total sample, 67% of the girls expressed fear or anxiety about growing old as against 49% of the boys. The fact, then, that girls had emerged as less likely to equate old age with a decline in human value did not mean that they were less likely than boys to be worried about growing old. The situation, it would seem, was quite the reverse.

In replying to the second part of this question, the respondents who had answered "yes" to the first part gave the following reasons for their fear or anxiety.

As people grow older they are left alone/lose those close to them/suffer from loneliness: 33% of the total sample.

I see some old people growing weak or helpless: 31% of the total sample.

It's getting nearer to death: 15% of the total sample.

It's going into the unknown: 5% of the total sample.

Any other reason: 6% of the total sample.

Girls were more likely than boys to express concern about loneliness, loss or abandonment. This type of reason was given by three-quarters of the girls who expressed fear or anxiety about growing old, but by less than half of the boys who expressed such fear or anxiety.

The second most commonly indicated reason was concern about growing weak or helpless. This reason was indicated by over half of both girls and boys, in almost identical proportions, who expressed fear or anxiety about growing old.

It is noteworthy that a higher percentage (56%) of all the respondents entertained fear or anxiety about growing old than expressed a desire to live beyond eighty years of age (46%). Were the 44% of all the respondents who expressed no fear or anxiety about growing old much the same young people as the 46% who wished to live to be eighty years or more? Not necessarily. Only half of the respondents who indicated that they would like to live beyond eighty years of age turned out to be free of fear or anxiety about growing old. The desire to live to a ripe old age was not inconsistent with some foreboding about what it would be like to be old.

2.4 Opinions about Compulsory Retirement Age

Question No. 12 was as follows: Do you think that there should be a minimum age at which people have to retire from fulltime paid employment of every kind?

The response to this question might arguably relate as much to the attitude of the young people to the elderly as to their attitude to ageing. If so, it can be stated that the majority showed no inclination to clamour

for compulsory retirement of their elders in employment. Sixty per cent felt that the age for retirement should depend on the nature of **the** job and 15% that there should be no particular age at which people should have to retire. Sixteen per cent specified sixty-five as the appropriate age, while 6% were in favour of compulsory retirement at an age under sixty. Two per cent indicated seventy years and 1% seventy-five years or more.

Table 2.2 compares the response in the three educational institutions.

Table 2 2 *PROPOSED RETIREMENT AGE*

	No age %	Depends on job %	Under 60 %	65 %	70 %	75 + %
Waterford	8	67	9	16	-	-
Dun L. College	8	64	5	18	5	-
Dun L. Workshop	45	35	-	14	3	3

A striking divergence in response occurred between the trainees in Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop and the students in the Community Colleges. The trainees displayed the most liberal, if not necessarily the most practical, approach to setting any conditions for a retirement age. Forty-five per cent of them proposed without reservation that there should be no particular compulsory retirement age in employment and none of them opted for an abnormally early retirement age. This may have had something to do with their preference for a work situation over school attendance, but it would be possible to speculate endlessly as to the most likely reasons. As the table illustrates, there was little difference in response between the two Community Colleges, any more than there was any difference between girls and boys in the total sample.

CHAPTER 3

ATTITUDES TO THE ELDERLY

3.1 Membership of Caring Groups

It was not expected that many of the young people, for the most part aged between fifteen and nineteen, would belong to any group concerned with the welfare of elderly people. The tiny percentage (2%) who did so was even lower than might have been anticipated.

3.2 Elderly Friends

In the construction of the questionnaire, it was assumed that some close bonds might be expected to exist between the respondents and elderly grandparents or relatives. The kind of relationship that young people might have developed with some elderly people other than close relatives might be expected to present a more accurate reflection of their attitude to the elderly in general. Question No. 10 asked if there was anyone aged sixty-five or over, other than a relative, whom the respondent would regard as a friend. Table 3.1 shows the response in the total sample and compares the response of boys and girls.

Table 3 1 *NUMBER OF ELDERLY FRIENDS*

	None %	One %	Two %	Three or more %
Boys	69	14	6	11
Girls	58	25	6	11
Total Sample	65	18	6	11

As can be seen, almost two-thirds (65%) of the total sample could not think of any elderly person not related to them whom they would regard as a friend. A slightly higher percentage of the girls (42%) than of the boys (35%) could claim to have at least one elderly friend who was not a relative.

3.3 Social Contact with Elderly People

The response to a question designed to discover how much social contact the young people had with elderly people, outside their home or school situations, yielded a similar result. Question 11, rather a lengthy one, ran as follows: Is there anyone aged sixty-five or over, other than a relative, teacher or school helper, with whom you have a chat, of your own free will, at least once a week e.g. stopping on the street, going out to visit, or meeting together in a club, group or social environment?

Table 3.2 shows the response which was quite similar to that in Table 3.1, although with some slight difference in the response of the girls.

Table 3.2 *REGULAR SOCIAL CONTACT WITH ELDERLY*

	None %	One %	Two %	Three or more %
Boys	65	19	4	12
Girls	67	16	2	15
Total Sample	66	18	3	13

Two-thirds (66%) of all the respondents did not have any regular social contact with even one elderly person who was not related to them or placed in contact with them in their school situation. It may be remarked that a slightly higher percentage of girls had no regular social contact with elderly people than lacked friends among the elderly. There is nothing that is necessarily contradictory in this, however. It is possible to maintain a friendship with someone whom one rarely sees.

An exceptionally high correlation between the response to the questions about friendship and social contact revealed that the vast majority of respondents who had regular social contact with elderly people also claimed friendship with some elderly people. Lack of regular contact with elderly people was a good indicator that respondents would be unable to claim that they had a friendship with even one elderly person.

Whether the respondents lived in Waterford or Dun Laoghaire made practically no difference to the nature of the response to the questions about friendship and social contact. The only slight deviation from the norm was that a fairly sizeable percentage (21%) of the trainees in Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop, compared with 11% of the Waterford and 13% of the Dun Laoghaire Community College students, said that they were friendly with at least three elderly people.

Would increased contact with elderly people make the young any less worried about growing old themselves one day? In this study, while there was no strong association between social contact and this kind of anxiety, a larger percentage (59%) of the respondents who had no regular contact with elderly people not related to them expressed fear or anxiety about growing old; the corresponding percentage (51%) among those who had some such regular contact was not a great deal lower. No correlation was found between social contact with the elderly and how well or badly respondents thought they were treated. Opinions about this did not appear to be affected by the amount of contact the young people had with the elderly.

3.4 General Relationship with Elderly People

The majority of the respondents saw themselves as having a good relationship with elderly people in general. Friendly (62%), respectful (51%), interested (22%) and sympathetic (18%) were the words most frequently indicated to describe the nature of this relationship. On the negative side, the word most often indicated was 'distant', but only 13% indicated it, while 8% said the relationship was 'non-existent' and 7% 'uneasy'.

The only notable variation in the response in the three educational centres occurred in the use of the word 'friendly'. This is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3 3 *FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ELDERLY IN GENERAL*

	Friendly %	Not Indicated %
Waterford College	57	43
Dun Laoghaire Coilege	60	40
Dun Laoghaire Workshop	82	18

A significantly higher percentage (82%) of the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees than of the Community College students (57% in Waterford and 60% in Dun Laoghaire) described their general relationship with people over sixty-five years as 'friendly'.

It is worth noting that in the total sample girls were more likely than boys to say that their general relationship with elderly people was 'friendly' (72% of the girls as against 57% of the boys).

It may be of interest, too, to compare the 62% of all the respondents who said their general relationship with elderly people was friendly with the 35% who claimed to have friends in the over-sixty-five age bracket. Not that there is anything necessarily contradictory about this contrast. It is quite possible to have a friendly disposition towards a particular group of people without actually having any close friends within it.

3.5 Special Responsibility for Welfare of Elderly

Friendliness of disposition did not result in a majority of the respondents being ready to accept without reservation that they, as young people, had any special responsibility for the welfare of elderly people. The question which was asked was: Do you consider that you, as a young person, have any special responsibility for the **welfare** of elderly people?

Forty per cent of the total sample did give an unqualified 'yes' to this question. A further 13% answered—quite reasonably perhaps in the minds of many elderly people themselves—that they would accept such a responsibility only in the case of elderly people who needed to be cared for. Seven per cent indicated "Yes, but only if they are related to me", and 10% indicated "Yes, but only if they are related to me *and* have to be cared for". Twenty-two per cent said they were not sure and 9% gave an unqualified 'no' as their answer to the question.

The only other statistic worth noting is that a higher percentage of girls (48%) than boys (35%) accepted without reservation that they, as young people, had a special responsibility for the welfare of elderly people. Twelve per cent of the boys, moreover, indicated an unqualified 'no' as against 5% of the girls.

3.6 Treatment of the Elderly in Ireland

The respondents were asked to say how well or badly they thought elderly people in Ireland were treated. Since this was a very global sort of question, it can only be expected to convey a very general impression of the way the young people might assess community support or national services for the elderly generations.

As there was very little variation in the replies of the boys as against the girls, Table 3.4 presents the response in the total sample and the breakdown for the three educational institutions.

Table 3.4 HOW ELDERLY PEOPLE ARE SEEN TO BE TREATED IN IRELAND

	Very Well %	Fairly Well %	Rather Badly %	Very Badly %
Waterford	8	63	26	3
Dun L. College	3	62	30	5
Dun L. Workshop	7	43	25	25
Total Sample	6	59	28	7

The main volume of response in the total sample fell in the 'fairly well' category (59%). To put the response in clearer perspective, it may be noted that 65% of all the respondents thought that elderly people in Ireland were treated at least fairly well, whereas 35% thought that they were treated at least fairly badly.

Once again there was a difference in response between the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees and the students of both Community

Colleges. Whereas 71% of the Waterford and 65% of the Dun Laoghaire College students considered elderly people were well treated, the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees were split evenly in their response, 50% thinking the elderly were well treated and 50% thinking they were badly treated. The percentage of Dun Laoghaire trainees, moreover, who thought elderly people were treated very badly was 25%, a substantial percentage when compared with the 3% and 5% of the Waterford and Dun Laoghaire students who indicated this particular response.

Whether these differences reflected different experiences of the actual treatment of elderly people in the families or neighbourhoods of the respondents must remain open to speculation. Whatever about such speculation, analysis revealed that, in the total sample, the views of respondents as to how well or badly the elderly were treated had no apparent influence on whether or not they believed they had any special responsibility for the welfare of the elderly .

3.7 What the Young People thought of most Elderly People.

In the light of the fact that 62% of the total sample regarded their general relationship with people aged over sixty-five as friendly, the response to Question No. 19 may come as rather a surprise. This question provided a series of adjectives which might describe most elderly people, and respondents were left free to indicate any number of them as they wished.

Since there was no significant difference in response between the three educational centres. Table 3.5 gives the total response and compares the replies made by boys and girls. As negative images tended to predominate, they are listed above the positive.

Table 3.5 *IMAGES OF MOST ELDERLY PEOPLE HELD BY RESPONDENTS*

	Boys %	Girls %	Total %
<i>Negative</i>			
Cranky	53	49	51
Difficult to please	54	41	48
Demanding	34	32	32
Rigidly conservative	33	16	26
Boring	21	3	14
Forbidding	9	—	5

Table 35 *continued*

<i>Positive</i>			
Interesting	32	30	31
Cheerful	31	27	29
Helpful	23	21	22
Easy to get on with	23	18	21
Encouraging	17	14	16
Flexible/adaptable	8	8	8
<i>None of Above</i>	1	5	3

As can be seen from Table 3.5, differences in response between the sexes were noteworthy only in a few instances. A higher percentage of boys (54%) than girls (41%) described most elderly people as difficult to please. Twice as many boys (33%) as girls (16%) regarded them as rigidly conservative. A much higher percentage of boys (21%) than girls (only 3%) saw elderly people as boring. None of the girls as against 9% of the boys thought they were forbidding.

Only half of the respondents (51%) indicated the most commonly used negative adjective, 'cranky', to describe their image of most elderly people. Nonetheless, this stands in striking contrast to the fact that less than a third (31%) indicated the most commonly used positive adjective, 'interesting', to describe most elderly people. In general, the respondents were more likely to opt for negative than positive terms to give their impressions of the majority of elderly people.

Many of the respondents, of course, selected both positive and negative terms. A more favourable side to the response was found when the numbers who indicated at least one positive or at least one negative term were enumerated. Although three-quarters (75%) of the sample indicated at least one negative term, a large percentage (60%) indicated at least one positive term. The majority, therefore, made an effort to achieve some balance in their judgements.

The best summary of the total response, however, would seem to be that contained in Table 3.6, which distinguishes those who indicated a greater number of positive terms and those who indicated a greater number of negative terms.

Table 3.6 *PREDOMINANT IMAGES OF MOST ELDERLY HELD BY RESPONDENTS*

	Positive Mainly %	Evenly Balanced %	Negative Mainly %	Others %
Total Sample	31	13	52	4

Of the total sample, 52% held mainly negative and 31% mainly positive images of elderly people, while 13% selected an equal number of positive and negative terms. The remaining 4% included those who indicated 'none of these' in the list of terms provided and those who indicated that they could not give a satisfactory answer to the question.

CHAPTER 4

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ATTITUDES OF THE ELDERLY TO THE YOUNG

4.1 What the Young People Believed most Elderly People Thought of them

Preliminary discussion about the framework of the questionnaire with the students in a final year class in Christian Brothers' Secondary School, Dun Laoghaire, induced the researcher to include the following question: What do you think is the general opinion that most elderly people have of the young? Place a tick in more than one box if you wish.

In the event, the impression that a majority of the respondents entertained about the opinions most elderly people have of the young stood in marked contrast to the positive image most of them entertained about their own general relationship with the elderly. They tended to believe that most elderly people took a pretty dim view of the young.

Two-thirds (66%) of the sample thought most elderly people didn't understand them. This was easily the highest proportion to indicate any particular category of response. After that, 48% believed most elderly people were afraid of them; 46% that they looked on them as vandals; 42% that the elderly regarded most young people as disrespectful or rude; and 33% that most elderly people regarded them as young brats. Whether the young people believed that there was any solid reason for these attitudes which they assumed to be held by the elderly cannot be ascertained from this study.

On the more positive end of the scale, the response was much lower. Only a fifth (20%) indicated that most elderly people worried about **their** welfare and much the same proportion (19%) that most elderly people enjoyed their company. Other positive assumptions were indicated by smaller percentages.

Whether this response had anything to do with poor self-image is doubtful in view of the positive light in which the young people tended to see their own general relationship with the elderly. What it seemed to express was a feeling among many that, in spite of their benevolent disposition towards a generation which included a sizeable proportion of **people who were cranky and difficult to please, they** were not rewarded **with much recognition of their goodwill.**

Some noteworthy differences occurred between the sexes in relation to assumptions about how most elderly people viewed the young. Table 5.1, which lists the assumptions in order of magnitude of response, shows how boys tended to have a somewhat darker image than girls of the way they were regarded by the elderly. In the table, positive views are in italics.

Table 4.1 *OPINIONS YOUNG PEOPLE THINK ELDERLY PEOPLE HAVE ABOUT THEM*

	Total %	Boys %	Girls %
They don't understand us	66	70	59
They are afraid of us	48	52	42
They look on us as vandals	46	54	33
Think us disrespectful/rude	42	50	28
See us as young brats	33	37	27
<i>Worry about our welfare</i>	20	21	18
<i>They enjoy being with us</i>	19	13	30
They are jealous of us	15	20	6
<i>They are interested in us</i>	11	14	6
<i>Think us generous / helpful</i>	7	6	9
None of Above	4	-	-

Consistently higher percentages of boys than girls held negative assumptions about the opinions most elderly people had of the young. In some instances, the difference was quite large. Likewise, when we look at the minority of respondents who indicated positive assumptions, the one really significant difference was that in the total sample only 13% of the boys, as opposed to 30% of the girls, said that most elderly people enjoyed their company.

Notable differences in response among the three educational centres occurred in three instances only. Firstly, a much smaller percentage (28%) of the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees than of the students in the two Community Colleges (53% in each College) thought that most elderly people were afraid of them. Secondly, while 48% of the Dun

Laoghaire Workshop trainees believed the elderly didn't understand them, even higher percentages of the Community College students believed this—74% in Waterford and 65% in Dun Laoghaire College. Thirdly, in the Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop over a third of the trainees (35%) thought that the elderly liked being with them—as against only 15% of the Waterford and 18% of the Dun Laoghaire College students. There were some signs, then, that the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees were a little less likely to have mainly negative assumptions as to how they were regarded by most elderly people.

In assessing how predominant negative or positive images may have been among the respondents, it has to be borne in mind that a greater number of negative than positive categories were used in the construction of this question. Question No. 18. Furthermore, at least one category of response. "They are afraid of us", which was classified as negative in Table 4.1 could be understood in a neutral sense. Comments made by a few respondents suggested that they saw it as quite understandable that elderly people should feel afraid of the young.

The fact remains, however, that the phrase, "They are afraid of us", tended to be used mainly by respondents whose replies to Question No. 18 were otherwise either totally negative or, even without this phrase, predominantly negative. In attempting to assess the over-all amount of positive as against negative response to this question, the following decisions were made. A respondents image of elderly people's attitudes to the young was judged to be positive or negative according as the majority of other categories indicated in the questionnaire, apart from "they are afraid of us", were positive or negative. If, without taking this phrase into account, a respondent's replies were evenly balanced, the response to Question No. 19 or, where it was relevant, to Question No. 20, was taken into account in order to tip the scales towards one or other of the over-all categories. 'Positive predominantly', 'Evenly balanced', or 'Negative predominantly'. The latter kind of decision had rarely to be made, however.

Table 4.2 shows the results of this assessment.

Table 4.2 *PREDOMINANT IMAGES OF HOW THE ELDERLY VIEWED THE YOUNG*

	Positive predominantly %	Evenly balanced %	Negative predominantly %	Others %
Total Sample	17	7	72	4

Even if we allow for the existence of bias in the question—a bias which reflected the bias in the suggestions made by the young people who helped to phrase Question No. 18 but later was reduced in the categories used—there can be no doubt but that a clear majority of the respondents believed most elderly people had a very poor opinion of the young. Seventy-two per cent appeared to hold a predominantly negative image, and only 17% a predominantly positive image, of the way young people were regarded by the elderly.

CHAPTER 5

COMMENTS BY THE YOUNG PEOPLE

5.1 An Open Question

The final question, Question No. 20, invited the young people to **make** any general comments they would like to make. Fifty-eight respondents (35% of the sample) did so. They included thirty-two students in **St. Paul's College, Waterford**, which meant that 44% of the Waterford respondents answered this question, a higher percentage than did so in either of the Dun Laoghaire educational centres. Eighteen students in Dun Laoghaire College answered this question, which amounts to 29% of the respondents in that category. Twenty per cent (six respondents) of the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees made some comment. The comments made varied in length from single sentences to short essays. The majority were serious in tone, but a few were (hopefully) probably intended to be facetious.

In the total sample 36% of the boys and 34% of the girls made some comment.

5.2 Explanatory and Critical Comments about Specific Questions

About half (53%) of the respondents who replied to this open question attempted to explain their reactions to certain questions, principally Question No. 19, which was about the images entertained of elderly people, and occasionally Question No. 18, which was about the way the young people thought they were regarded by the elderly. Some of these comments, even when in a few instances they were critical of aspects of the categories in these questions, were perceptive and balanced. A few are quoted here, in whole or in part, because they illuminate the difficulties their authors encountered in replying to their own satisfaction.

"I think that some of the questions can be answered in two ways, but they are interesting."

"Different people have different personalities."

"It (the answer) depends on the old person and the young person in any given situation."

"They (the elderly) are just the same as young or middle-aged people. The answers differ in different cases."

"I think that most old people love company but are afraid of the young people of today."

"If we put down that old people are cranky, you would say we have no heart towards old people. But cranky might describe a senile person at different times, but they may also be cheerful in their good days."

"Old people would be more fearful if they are attacked or their house was broken into. They would have doubts about the young people because of this. The questionnaire is okay and the questions are all right except for Question 19. Now . . . there are different types of people, old and young . . ."

5.2 Other Comments

"There is a lot to learn on both sides and I think old and young people should be in contact more."

The remainder of the comments included a variety of suggestions and negative, positive and unexpected expressions of attitude. An occasional remark was made about the value or lack of value of the study.

"I think old people are treated badly. Some do not have the money to keep themselves well fed and have enough firewood. They get so little pension to manage on and they usually get no attention from the government."

"It must be remembered that we will all eventually be old and will inevitably wish to be treated with respect."

"I think old people should be clubbed to death like baby seals . . . They are only a burden on society and live off other people and anyway they can't have sex any more and make babies!"

"I think a limited form of euthanasia should be introduced to deal with senile or diseased old people."

"Thank you very much for caring about old people and making this questionnaire."

"You have to win the elderly over to your side before they fully understand and respect your ideas and actions. Most do because they were young once too."

"I would like to know what this sheet is for. Is it just going to be another statistic or is something going to be done with it? Probably not!"

"I think old people in Ireland today are treated too carelessly and, while this popular vision of the young and the old not being able to communicate is wrong and misguided, old people are all too easily

forgotten by society. People often tend to dismiss the old as useless and all washed up when many of them are a lot more enthusiastic and energetic . . . than the young."

"Surveys like this will help to bring the subject under the public light."

"Thank you very much for caring about old people because without them our lives would be boring and our heritage distant."

"To grow old is the most horrific stage in life."

If there were an award for the most unexpected suggestion, it should go to the Waterford boy who made the following comment:

"I don't mind being around old people. And as I have a C.B. radio I get the opportunity to talk to them. Some old people are lonely, so this would be a great pastime for them."

We'll leave the last word, however, to the Waterford girl who said the following:

"With more contact between young and old the community would become a much more caring one."

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 A Summary of the Findings

The Sample

The sample consisted of Leaving Certificate students in St. Paul's Community College, Waterford (44%). Leaving Certificate and Pre-employment students in Dun Laoghaire Community College (38%) and trainees in Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop (18%). Sixty-one per cent of the sample were boys and 39% were girls.

Fifty per cent of the respondents were aged sixteen or younger, 41% were seventeen, and 9% were eighteen or over. The parents of the great majority of the respondents were under fifty-five years of age.

Seventy-two per cent of the sample had at least one grandparent or great-grandparent living who was over sixty-five years of age. In Dun Laoghaire Community Training Workshop, however, the corresponding percentage was 59%, a good deal lower than in the Waterford (77%) and Dun Laoghaire (71%) Community Colleges.

Only 4% of the respondents had anyone, other than a parent, aged sixty-five or over living in their own homes.

Attitudes to Ageing

Fifty-seven per cent of the respondents said they would like to live to be seventy-five or older. Included in this percentage were 46% who said they would like to live to be over eighty. A larger percentage (52%) of the Waterford College students than of the Dun Laoghaire College students (37%) said they would like to live to be eighty years or more. In the Dun Laoghaire Workshop, 48% opted for this response.

Thirty-six per cent of the boys in the sample, as against 16% of the girls, specified a definite age at which people might cease to be of any value to their community.

Sixty-seven per cent of the girls, as against 49% of the boys, felt some fear or anxiety about growing old.

Sixty per cent of the respondents considered that the age for retirement in employment should depend on the nature of the job. Forty-five per cent of the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees, but only 8% in either Community College, were opposed to the idea of any compulsory retirement age in employment of any kind.

Attitudes to the elderly

Only 2% of the sample belonged to any group concerned with the welfare of the elderly.

Sixty-five per cent of the respondents said there was no one aged sixty-five or over, who was not related to them, whom they would regard as a friend. Sixty-six per cent had no regular social contact with anyone aged sixty-five or over who was not related to them. The respondents who lacked social contact with the elderly were, for the most part, those who were unable to specify any elderly person whom they would regard as a friend.

In spite of the foregoing, the majority of the respondents (62%) felt they had a friendly relationship with elderly people in general. Only a small minority described their relationship with the elderly in general as in any way negative. Eighty-two per cent of the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees, compared with 57% of the Waterford and 60% of the Dun Laoghaire Community College students, described their relationship with the elderly in general as friendly. A larger percentage of the girls (72%) than of the boys (57%) believed their general relationship with elderly people was friendly.

Forty per cent of the sample considered that they, as young people, had a special responsibility for the welfare of the elderly, and a further 13% were prepared to accept some such responsibility in the case of elderly people who needed care. The remainder restricted acceptance of this type of responsibility to elderly people related to themselves (17%), were not sure (22%), or gave an unqualified 'no' to the question. A somewhat larger percentage of the girls (48%) than of the boys (35%) accepted without reservation of any kind that they had a special responsibility for the welfare of the elderly, while 5% of the girls and 12% of the boys completely rejected such a proposition.

Sixty-five per cent of the respondents thought that elderly people in Ireland were treated at least fairly well, and 35% thought they were treated at least rather badly. A relatively large percentage of the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees (50%), compared with the Waterford (29%) and Dun Laoghaire (35%) College students, thought that the elderly were treated at least rather badly, and 25% of them, compared with 3% and 5% in the Community Colleges, thought that they were treated very badly.

Larger percentages of the respondents entertained negative images of most elderly people than entertained positive images. The terms most often selected to describe the elderly were 'cranky' (51%) and 'difficult to please' (48%). Of the total sample, 75% indicated at least one negative term but 60% did use at least one positive term to describe most elderly people. Nevertheless, the response of 52% was predominantly negative as against 31% predominantly positive, with 13% being evenly balanced.

Assumptions about Attitudes of the Elderly to the Young

The majority of the respondents held negative images of how they were regarded by most elderly people. The most frequently indicated category of response, selected by 66% of the sample, consisted of the belief that most elderly people didn't understand the young. More of the College students (74% in Waterford and 65% in Dun Laoghaire) thought this than did the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees (48%). Summarising the over-all response. 72% of the young people may be said to have had a predominantly negative image, and 17% a predominantly positive image, of the way young people are regarded by the elderly, while 7% were evenly balanced in their replies.

6.2 Conclusions

Some conclusions may be drawn, at least tentatively, from this study.

- (a) Although a slight majority of the young people said they would like to live to reach seventy-five years at least, approximately the same proportion experienced some fear or anxiety about growing old. A greater proportion of girls than boys were affected by fear or anxiety. Opportunities to voice and discuss this kind of emotional reaction to the prospect of ageing could be provided in the classroom or by bringing students into contact with a group or association of active elderly people.
- (b) Outside of their family circle or some structured situation, two-thirds of the young people had no regular social contact with any elderly person. Apparently as a consequence, almost all of the same young people knew no elderly person not related to them whom they would regard as a friend. In spite of this, a majority of the young people felt that their relationship with elderly people in general was a friendly one. There would appear to exist among them much good will of a general nature towards elderly people. Expressions of cordiality were especially evident among the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees. It seems desirable that ways be found of building on this good will by opening up greater avenues of communication which might result in more intimate relationships between young and old.
- (c) Not much more than half of the young people would accept that they should have any special responsibility for the welfare of the elderly unless, perhaps, they were related to them. Furthermore, almost two-thirds were satisfied that elderly people in Ireland were treated at least fairly well. It may be of some social significance that half of the Dun Laoghaire Workshop trainees dissented from this majority view. If improvements in services for the elderly are to be achieved, the coming generation who will shortly have some influence in this direction should be given as much factual information as possible about the needs of different sections of the elderly population.

- (d) Predominantly negative images of elderly people prevailed among more than half of the young people. A large majority, moreover, held predominantly negative images of how most elderly people regarded the young. These negative images will not easily be dissipated without the provision of more avenues of communication between young and old.
- (e) While the programme of library assistance provided by elderly people in Dun Laoghaire Community College is imaginative and deserves encouragement and expansion to other schools, little evidence emerged of more positive images of elderly people prevailing among the Dun Laoghaire College than among the Waterford College students. Obviously, it would be too facile to conclude therefore that the library service programme has not improved communication between the generations. It seems, on the contrary, to present an excellent opportunity for the introduction of more dialogue and understanding, and it is to be hoped that members of the Dun Laoghaire Active Retirement Association will be able to avail of the findings of this study in order to broaden the scope of their present contact with the students. Second-level schools and retirement associations in general are urged to take note that what may be needed most in any education programme about ageing and the elderly is opportunity for dialogue between old and young.
- (f) Many indicators for further research will arise from the findings of this study. Perhaps one of the most obvious would involve a study of the real attitudes of elderly people towards the younger generation. It is unlikely that they would turn out to be as perjorative as the young people imagine! Whatever about that, implicit in the response to some of the questions in this study seemed to be a widespread desire among the young people for greater appreciation and recognition from elderly people.
- (g) As was explained in the introductory chapter of this report, the research committee believed that the process of studying the attitudes to the elderly among young people of school-leaving age should be as important as any findings which might emerge. The construction of the questionnaire, the pre-test, and the eventual administration of the questionnaire to the classes selected for study elicited a good deal of interest and discussion among the students involved at various stages. Small-scale studies of this kind which could be conducted during class sessions in second-level schools or training centres should prompt many young people, perhaps for the first time, to think seriously about the implications of advancing in years and maturity and to ponder the needs of elderly people, both healthy and disabled, in their own communities.

- (h) Only a tiny percentage of the young people belonged to any group concerned with the welfare of any section of the elderly population. Is there a current lack of appropriate groups or associations to which young people might belong and relate, offering the benefit of youthful enthusiasm and ideas and developing their own potential for care, co-operation and communication?

APPENDIX I

OTHER RELEVANT RESEARCH

Research specifically designed to identify the attitudes of young people to ageing and the elderly does not appear to have been conducted previously in Ireland. In the United States, many studies have been done about the kinds of relationships which exist among the age generations.

A recent review of these studies by Walter H. Crockett and Allan N. Press¹ draws the general conclusion that in American society negative attitudes far exceed positive attitudes towards the elderly. Americans tend to believe that age brings an inevitable decline in such things as health, intelligence and sexuality, and that with advancing years people become dependent on others, grow rigid and inflexible in their opinions, suffer from depression and the fear of death, and become grouchy, passive and childish. They concede, on the other hand, that the elderly do acquire a few positive qualities, such as wisdom, experience and kindness.

The more recent studies in the U.S.A.. some concentrating on young people's attitudes and using indirect measures, have largely confirmed the impressions already listed from earlier studies. However, they also found that when induced to make judgements about specific individuals, respondents did not, as might have been expected, form more negative impressions of specific elderly people than of specific young people. Old people whose energy and attractiveness contradicted the stereotyped images of the elderly held by the respondents tended to be rated more positively than young people with similar characteristics.

In America, according to other studies cited by Crockett and Press, a wide variety of social patterns keeps the generations apart and minimises the likelihood of friendships developing across the age groups. When social contact actually occurs, however, such friendships are not uncommon.

1. Crockett, W.H. and Press, A.M.. "Relationships among Generations" in Berglorn, F.G., Schafer, D.E., and Associates, *The Dynamics of Aging*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado. 1981.

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. NAME OF SCHOOL:

Please answer the following questions by placing a tick in the appropriate box as follows:

2. Are you

MALE

FEMALE

3. What age were you on your last birthday?

16 or under

17 or under

18 or under

19 or over

4. If your mother is alive, in which of the following age groups do you believe her to be?

Not applicable—deceased

40 years or younger

40–55 years

55–65 years

65 years or older

No idea/can't say

5. If your father is alive, in which age group do you believe him to be?

Not applicable—deceased

40 years or younger

40–55 years

55–65 years

65 years or older

No idea can't say

6. Would you like to live to be

55 years or less

65 years approx.

75 years approx.

80 years or more

Don't know

7. At what age do you think people cease, as a general rule, to be of any value to their community?

Can't put any age on it

60 years or less

65 years approx.

70 years approx.

75 years approx.

80 years or more

Never

No idea don't know

8. Have you any grandparent(s), or great-grandparent(s), living who is/are *over 65 years of age?*

None

One

Two

Three

Four

9. Is there any person aged 65 or over, other than one of your parents, living with you in your home?

None

One

Two

Three or more

10. Is there anyone aged 65 or over, *other than a relative*, whom you would regard as a friend?

None

One

Two

Three or more

11. Is there anyone aged over 65, other than a relative, teacher or school helper, with whom you have a chat, of your own free will, at least once a week e.g. stopping on the street, going out to visit, or meeting together in a club, group or social environment?

None

One

Two

Three or more

12. Do you think that there should be a minimum age at which people have to retire from fulltime paid employment of every kind?

No particular age 65 years

It depends on the job 70 years

Any age under 60 75 years or more

13. Are you a member of any group concerned with the welfare of elderly people?

Yes

No

If you answer is 'yes' please name or briefly describe the group

14. Which of the following words would best describe your general relationship with people aged 65 or over? Place a tick in more than one box if you wish.

distant sympathetic

wary friendly

- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| uneasy | <input type="checkbox"/> | co-operative | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| respectful | <input type="checkbox"/> | interested | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| non-existent | <input type="checkbox"/> | none of these | <input type="checkbox"/> |

15. Do you consider that you, as a young person, have any special responsibility for the welfare of elderly people?

Yes

Yes, but only if they have to be cared for

Yes, but only if they are related to me

Yes, but only if they are related to me *and* have to be cared for

No

Not sure

16. Do you think that elderly people in Ireland are treated

Very well

Fairly well

Rather badly

Very badly

17. Do you have any fear or anxiety about growing old?

Yes

No

If your answer is Yes, is this because (Place a tick in more than one box if you wish.)

It's going into the unknown

Because I see some old people growing weak or helpless

Because it's getting nearer to death

Because as people grow older they are left alone lose those who were close to them suffer from loneliness

Any other reason

18. What do you think is the general opinion that most elderly people have of the young? (Place a tick in more than one box if you wish.)

They regard us as young brats

They enjoy being with us

They look on us as vandals

They think most of us are generous/helpful/caring

They are jealous of us

They worry about our welfare

They think most of us are disrespectful/rude

They are afraid of us

They are interested in us

They don't understand us

None of these

19. Do you consider that *most* elderly people are (Place a tick in more than one box if you wish)

demanding cheerful

helpful difficult to please

forbidding easy to get on with

encouraging rigidly conservative

boring flexible/adaptable

interesting none of these

cranky

20. Please make any general comment(s) you would like to make.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE ELDERLY REPORTS:

1. *Day Hospital Care*, April 1982.
2. *Retirement: A General Review*, December 1982.
3. *First Annual Report*, December 1982.
4. *Community Services for the Elderly*, September 1983.
5. *Retirement Age: Fixed or Flexible* (Seminar Proceedings), October 1983.
6. *The World of the Elderly: The Rural Experience*, May 1984.
7. *Incomes of the Elderly in Ireland: And an Analysis of the State's Contribution*, May 1984.
8. *Report on its Three Year Term of Office*, June 1984.
9. *Home from Home? Report on Boarding Out Schemes for Older People in Ireland*, November 1985.
10. *Housing of the Elderly in Ireland*, December 1985.
11. *Institutional Care of the Elderly in Ireland*, December 1985.
12. *This is Our World: Perspectives of Some Elderly People on Life in Suburban Dublin*, September 1986.
13. *Nursing Homes in the Republic of Ireland: A Study of the Private and Voluntary Sector*, September 1986.
14. *"It's Our Home": The Quality of Life in Private and Voluntary Nursing Homes in Ireland*, September 1986.
15. *The Elderly in the Community: Transport and Access to Services in Rural Areas*, September 1986.
16. *Attitudes of Young People to Ageing and the Elderly*, Second Edition 1992.
17. *Choices in Community Care: Day Centres for the Elderly in the Eastern Health Board*, September 1987.
18. *Caring for the Elderly. Part I. A Study of Carers at Home and in the Community*, June 1988.
19. *Caring for the Elderly. Part II. The Caring Process: A Study of Carers in the Home*, November 1988.
20. *Sheltered Housing in Ireland: Its Role and Contribution in the Care of the Elderly*, May 1989.
21. *Report on its Second Term of Office*, May 1989.
22. *The Role and Future Development of Nursing Homes in Ireland*, September 1991.
- 23 (a) *Co-ordinating Services for the Elderly at the Local Level: Swimming Against the Tide. A Report on Two Pilot Projects*, September 1992.
- 23 (b) *Co-ordinating Services for the Elderly at the Local Level: Swimming Against the Tide, Summary of an Evaluation Report on Two Pilot Projects*, September 1992.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE ELDERLY FACT SHEETS:

Fact Sheet 1 — Caring for the Elderly at Home.

Fact Sheet 2 — Carers: You Matter Too!

Fact Sheet 3 — Ageing in Ireland: Some Basic Facts.

The front cover shows the 'Tao' symbol for long life. This symbol is signed by the eighty-five year-old artist Yen Chih.

Also on the front cover is the symbol for European Year of Older People and Solidarity Between Generations – 1993.



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