



Press Release

Ipsos Global Advisor: Views on Aging

Ipsos global study finds high levels of concern about aging and paints a worried picture of later life.

Washington D.C., February 12, 2019 — Ipsos MORI's exclusive study, conducted in partnership with the Centre for Aging Better, a UK charity, funded by an endowment from The National Lottery Community Fund, shows the negativity felt by the online public¹ across 30 countries about aging, and how they are preparing for later life.

Sentiments in the U.S.

Overall, working age Americans (18-64) fall slightly above the global average in optimism about aging (40%) and are right in line with the average in what age is considered to be old (66 years). In the U.S., two-fifths of the population under the age of 50 (40%) consider someone old if they are between 60-69 years of age while only a fourth of the population of those between 50-64 (26%) believe the same. Older age groups are more likely to believe old age happens later; only 20% of those who are under 35 consider 70-79 to be old, while 43% of those who are 50-64 believe the same.

Working age Americans are rather optimistic when it comes to preparedness for aging. Three-quarters think it is possible to prepare for old age (75%), which is more than 10-points above the global total (64%). Furthermore, a significantly smaller portion than the rest of the world said they worry about getting old (48%, versus 52% globally).

The older working age Americans get, the more they prioritize spending time with loved ones and de-emphasize work. About a third of those under 35 (35%) say having more time to spend with friends/family is the best thing about growing old, but this number rises to 39% for those between 35-49 and 41% for those who are between 50-64. Similarly, the sentiment that giving up work is also something to look forward to increases in importance with age (15% of those who are under 35, 17% of those who are between 35-49, and 19% of those who are between 50-64 share this belief).

Similar to global statistics, working age Americans are the most worried about not having enough money to live on when thinking about getting old (14%). However, this is largely a fear that comes with age as almost twice as many of those who are over 35 (17%) than those who are under (9%) share this sentiment. Younger people are the most worried about losing their memory (15%), losing family or friends through death (12%), and being lonely (10%), while older people are most worried about not having enough money (17%), being unable to do things they once could (15%), and losing mobility (13%).

¹ Interviews carried out online with adults aged under 65. In countries with a low level of internet penetration, the sample will reflect a more urban, educated, and higher income profile than the general population

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The U.S. has one of the highest proportion of people who believe there is a lack of respect toward the elderly. A vast majority of Americans believe that people don't respect old people as much as they should (72%), which is much greater than the global average (60%).

Among 29 countries, the U.S. falls on the lower end of the spectrum when it comes to political clout of the elderly – only 22% agree that old people have too much political influence. However, younger people are far more likely than older people to believe this sentiment. More than one-third of those under 35 (36%) agree that old people have too much political influence, compared to a fifth of those between 35-49 (19%) and fewer than 1 in 10 of those aged 50-64 (9%).

Global Findings

Optimism about later life.

Globally, just one in three (33%) are looking forward to old age. Americans fall slightly above the global average at 40%. Other countries feel much more positive about old age, including three quarters (73%) in India and two thirds (67%) in Turkey.

While people around the world recognize that there are positives to getting old, including having more time to spend with friends and family (36%), more time for hobbies and leisure (32%), more time for holidays and travel (26%) and giving up work (26%) they also identify a number of downsides. Globally, three in ten worry about not having enough to live on (30%) with a quarter worrying about losing mobility (26%) and losing memory (24%).

Despite this, a majority of us expect to be fit and healthy in old age (57%). In the U.S., only 45% agree with this sentiment. There is also considerable variation between other surveyed countries. Nine in ten of those in Colombia, Argentina, China, Peru and Malaysia (89%, 88%, 88%, 86% and 85% respectively) agree with this sentiment. In comparison, those least likely to agree are those in South Korea (17%), France (20%) Japan (23%) and Belgium (24%).

Taken together though, this results in high levels of concern about later life. Globally, half (52%) of us worry about old age with people in Brazil and China (72% and 71% respectively) most likely to agree with this. Those in South Korea are least concerned; only one in six (16%) agree that they worry about old age.

When is old age, and what does it mean?

Globally, we think old age begins at 66. The biggest determinant of what someone thinks of as being old is their own age; the older people get, the more likely they are to define 'old' as being something that happens later in life. To illustrate, those who are 16-24 believe old age begins at 61. This rises to 72 for those aged between 55-64. Variation in countries is also significant; in Spain, you will only be considered old at age 74, whereas in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, old age comes decades earlier (55 and 56 respectively). When asked to select words to describe old age, the most commonly mentioned term is wise (35%). Next in line is frail (32%), followed by lonely (30%) and only a quarter saying respected (25%).

Three in five (60%) agree that people don't respect old people as much as they should. Agreement with this sentiment is highest in the LATAM countries (Brazil – 82%, Colombia – 79%, Argentina – 76%, Chile – 75%). At the other end of the spectrum, only a quarter (26%) of those in Saudi Arabia agree with this, and a third (32%) of those in Japan.

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Representation in the media

Opinion is polarized on how old people are depicted in the media. Only three in ten (31%) think that TV, film and advertising make old age seem exciting and full of potential while roughly the same proportion (29%) think that TV, film and advertising make old age seem depressing, with limited opportunities.

Americans are evenly split on this issue – roughly the same amount think that media makes old age seem depressing (26%) and exciting (28%).

Countries most positive about the representation of older people in the media include China (52%), Russia (44%) and India (43%).

In Turkey nearly half (48%) think that TV, film and advertising make old age seem depressing, with limited opportunities. Some LATAM countries are also negative on this issue – in Chile, Mexico, and Peru roughly two in five (39%, 39% and 38% respectively) and over a third (36%) in Colombia think this.

Political power

Globally, only three in ten (29%) agree that old people have too much influence, politically. On balance, people disagree with this sentiment (35%). However, there are some differences by age, with younger people more likely to think that old people do have too much influence politically. For instance, two in five (38%) of those aged 16-24 agree while only a quarter (27%) disagree.

People in Romania are most likely to agree that old people have too much influence (45%), followed by Malaysia (44%) and Japan (42%). Least likely to agree are those in Australia (17%), Russia (18%) and Belgium and Sweden (both 19%).

The potential for technology

Globally, we are techno-optimists; over half (55%) agree that technological developments will improve old age for a lot of people. Only one in seven (14%) disagree.

There are, however, significant differences in agreement by country. Four in five (80%) people in China agree that technological developments will improve old age for a lot of people. The next most positive countries are Brazil (66%), Turkey and Argentina (both 65%).

People in Japan are least convinced about the potential for technological developments to improve old age for a lot of people. Here, only two in five (41%) agree with this statement. People in Belgium and France are similarly cautious (44% agree in each country).

Preparing for later life

Around the world, two thirds (64%) think that it is possible for people to prepare for old age so that they are healthier and better able to cope.

People in some LATAM countries seem to have most faith in their ability to prepare for old age; in Mexico, Colombia and Brazil, four in five agree that people are able to prepare for old age (83%, 80% and 79% respectively). Four in five in China (79%) also agree with this.

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People in Russia (57%), the Czech Republic (51%) and South Korea (49%) feel least able to prepare for old age. Globally, people have a clear idea of what we should be doing to prepare for later life. The most commonly mentioned responses are staying healthy by exercising regularly and eating a healthy diet (60% and 59% respectively). Saving enough money for an adequate pension is mentioned by half (51%) and avoiding smoking, having a good circle of friends, and having a sport or hobby they practice regularly are cited by over two in five (45%, 44% and 44% respectively).

However, there is a gap between what we know we should do to prepare for old age, and what we are doing. When asked what people are doing in order to prepare for old age the most popular answer globally is avoiding smoking, mentioned by over two in five (45%). A similar proportion also mention eating a healthy diet and avoiding too much alcohol (43% and 40% respectively). Under three in ten (28%) mention saving enough money for an adequate pension.

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About the Study

These are findings of the Global Advisor survey conducted between 24 August and 7 September 2018. Interviews were conducted using the Ipsos Online Panel system, Global Advisor, among 20,788 online adults aged 16-64 in 28 countries (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and Turkey) and 18-64 in U.S. and Canada.

Approximately 1000+ individuals participated on a country by country basis via the Ipsos Online Panel, with the exception of Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Hungary, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden and Turkey, where each have a sample approximately 500+.

Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the general adult population according to the most recent country Census data, and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/-3.1 percentage points for a sample of 1,000 and an estimated margin of error of +/- 4.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20 per country of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in that country had been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

15 of the 30 countries surveyed online generate nationally representative samples in their countries (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and United States).

Brazil, Colombia, China, Chile, Czech Republic, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa and Turkey produce a national sample that is more urban & educated, and with higher incomes than their fellow citizens. We refer to these respondents as "Upper Deck Consumer Citizens". They are not nationally representative of their country.

Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of don't knows or not stated responses.

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About Ipsos

Ipsos is an independent market research company controlled and managed by research professionals. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has grown into a worldwide research group with a strong presence in all key markets. Ipsos ranks fourth in the global research industry.

With offices in 89 countries, Ipsos delivers insightful expertise across five research specializations: brand, advertising and media; customer loyalty; marketing; public affairs research; and survey management.

Ipsos researchers assess market potential and interpret market trends. They develop and build brands. They help clients build long-term relationships with their customers. They test advertising and study audience responses to various media and they measure public opinion around the globe.

Ipsos has been listed on the Paris Stock Exchange since 1999 and generated global revenues of €1,780.5 million in 2017.

GAME CHANGERS

« Game Changers » is the Ipsos signature.

At Ipsos we are passionately curious about people, markets, brands and society.
We make our changing world easier and faster to navigate and inspire clients to make smarter decisions.
We deliver with security, speed, simplicity and substance. We are Game Changers.

Ipsos is listed on Euronext Paris.
The company is part of the CAC Mid & Small index
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