



How Europeans see themselves ageing

September 2026

OpinionWay study for Clariane





How Europeans see themselves ageing

Europe's population is ageing. By 2050, nearly one in three people in the European Union will be aged 65 or over, compared with one in five today.¹ How do Europeans view ageing, and how do they envisage this stage of life for themselves? Against this backdrop, OpinionWay surveyed more than 12,000 people in six EU countries on behalf of Clariane.²

Key finding: the majority of Europeans (73%) say they want to **live as long as possible**, but 88% of them say this is on the condition that they can grow old **healthily**.

Only 32% of Europeans believe that society is ready to tackle the demographic challenge of an ageing population. Meanwhile, 40% consider talking about old age to be a taboo subject. This means that ageing is seen as a social, health and political challenge, and 84% of Europeans believe that enabling the entire population to **age well should be a national priority**.

A slight majority (56%) of Europeans say they feel relaxed about their old age, with Spaniards proving to be the most optimistic (two in three), whilst in France and Belgium the proportion is less than 50%. **Barely half (49%) of Europeans believe they will grow old healthily**. In each of the six countries, physical or cognitive health is the main cause for concern (88%), followed by ageing's impact on lifestyle (66%) and the prospect of loneliness (57%).

When thinking about their later years, **70% of Europeans say they can rely on their family**, ranging from 65% in Germany to 79% in Spain. Families are expected to fulfil a far greater role than friends or neighbours (20%), public services (20%) and voluntary organisations (8%). 18% of those surveyed believe they will have to rely solely on themselves.

However, as the study reveals, the **vast majority** of Europeans have already **put in place measures ahead of their old age**: three quarters of those surveyed have a healthy lifestyle, 61% have savings in place and 54% have arranged for medical monitoring to prevent the onset of certain illnesses.

The study consists of two parts: the European results (pages 3 to 11) and data specific to France (pages 12 to 15).

1- *Demographic transformation in the EU: understanding change and adapting to its consequences*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2026, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/9943353>

2- A survey of 12,078 people in six EU countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain.



Living as long as possible...



73%
of Europeans want
to live as long as
possible

...on one condition: staying healthy



For **88%**
of Europeans, living a long
life only makes sense if they
remain healthy

A life stage that requires preparation



For **87%** of Europeans, ageing is
a stage that needs **to be planned**
for in order to stay healthy



61%
Six in ten Europeans aged
over 35 are saving to fund their
old age and the associated costs

A feeling of being undervalued

69%
of Europeans believe
that older people are
undervalued

Concerned Europeans

Only **56%**
of Europeans are
relaxed about their
own ageing

A national priority



For **84%**
of Europeans,
enabling the
entire population
to “**age well**”
should be a
national priority

A rewarding life stage



78%
a period for
taking some
time for
yourself

69%
a period for
discovering
new things and
travelling

68%
a rewarding
life stage

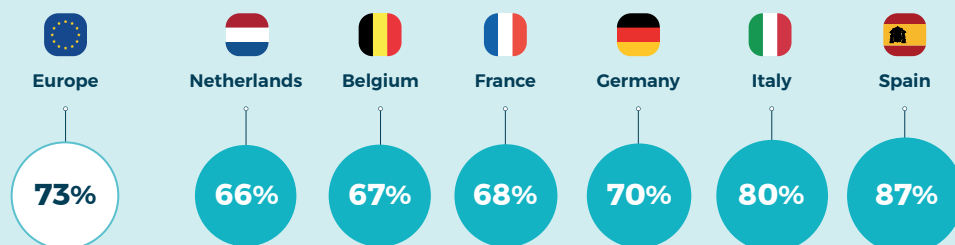


Three quarters of Europeans would like to live for as long as possible

But this wish is closely linked to one condition: being in good health.

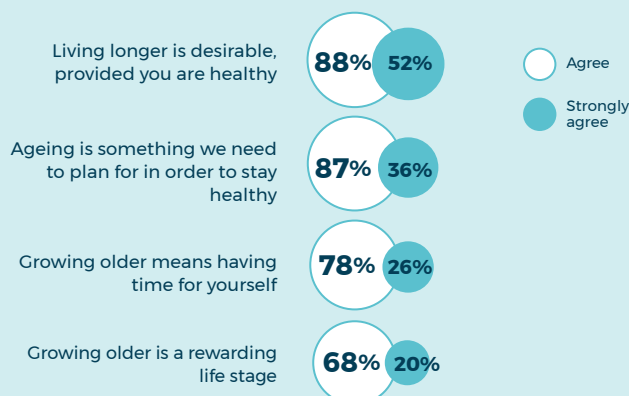
The desire to live as long as possible appears to be stronger in southern Europe, with 87% of respondents in Spain and 80% in Italy expressing this wish, compared with 68% in France, 67% in Belgium and 66% in the Netherlands.

Do you want to live as long as possible? (percentage of 'yes' answers)



Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about ageing?

Europe

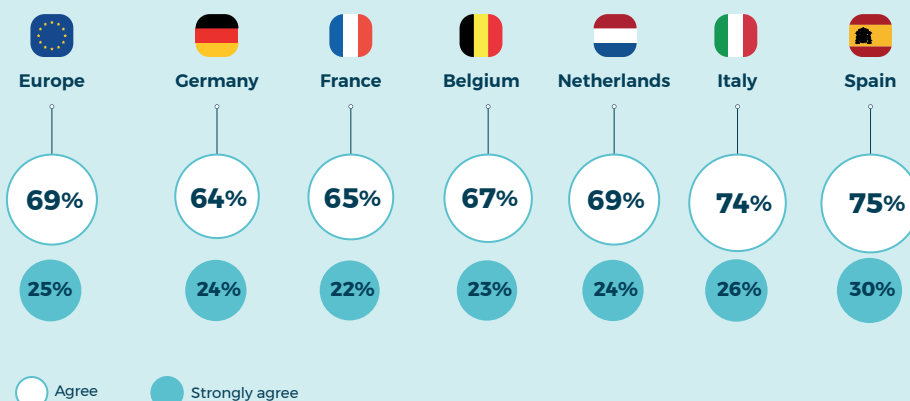


73% of Europeans want to live as long as possible

This desire for a long life forms part of a generally positive view of ageing: for the majority of Europeans, growing older can mark the start of a period of rediscovered time, new discoveries and personal fulfilment. 78% view it as a good time to focus on themselves, and 68% see it as a rewarding life stage.

Nearly seven in ten Europeans believe that older people are undervalued in society. This feeling is particularly pronounced in Spain and Italy, two countries where the desire to live a long life is nevertheless among the strongest.

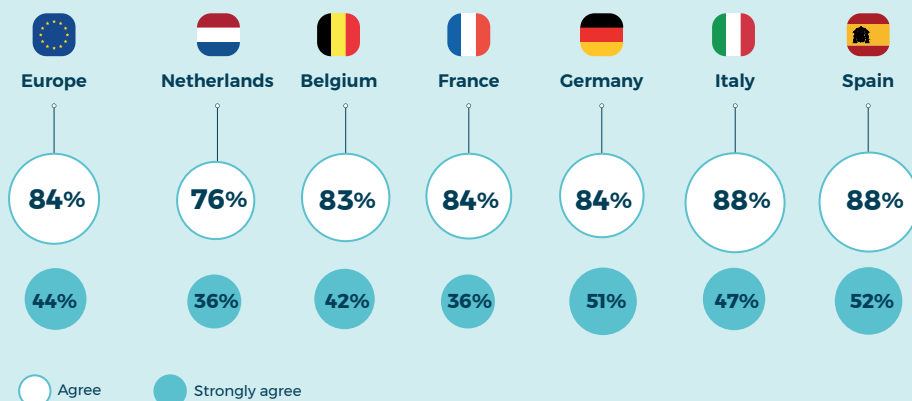
Do you think older people are undervalued within society?





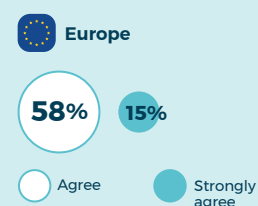
Ageing well: a key concern for the public

Do you agree or disagree with the statement: 'Enabling the whole population to age well should be a national priority'?



For 84% of Europeans, enabling people to age well should be a national priority

Support for older people is better today than it was 20 years ago



Europe is ill-prepared



Do you think society is ready to cope with its ageing population?



Old age - a taboo?



Discussions about old age are a taboo subject.



Moving healthcare systems forwards

To what extent do you trust the healthcare system to address each of the following issues relating to ageing?



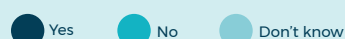
Effectively preventing age-related diseases



Providing high-quality care for older people



Ensuring fair access to care for older people



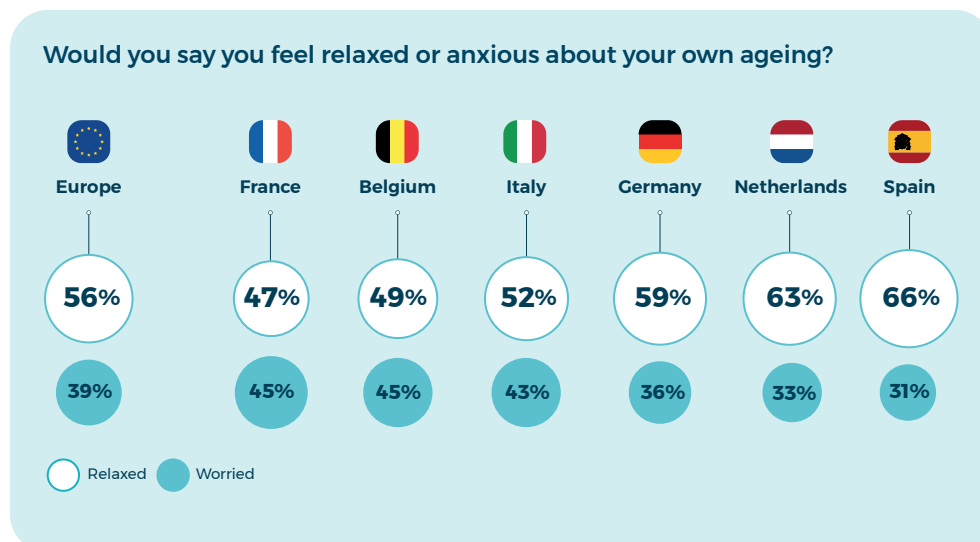
The majority of Europeans (58%) recognise that support for older people is better today than it was twenty years ago. Nevertheless, only one in three Europeans (32%) believe that society is prepared to cope with an ageing population.

There is widespread, but fragile, confidence in healthcare systems' ability to address the various challenges posed by an ageing population. 55% of Europeans trust their healthcare system to effectively prevent age-related diseases, 52% trust it to provide high-quality care for older people, and 52% trust it to ensure fair access to care.



Health, lifestyle... how Europeans envisage their later years

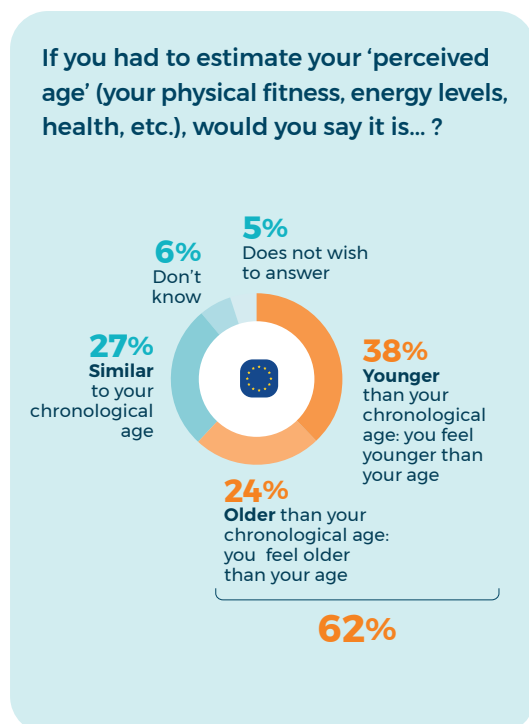
A small majority of Europeans say they feel relaxed in terms of their old age. But barely half (49%) believe they will grow old in good health.



56% of Europeans feel relaxed about their own ageing

Here again, there are marked differences between countries: 66% of Spaniards say they feel relaxed about it, compared with 47% of French people and 49% of Belgians. This contrasting picture raises a key question: what

worries Europeans is not just growing older, but its possible consequences for their health, independence, lifestyle and relationships with loved ones (see next page).



Chronological age and perceived age

Chronological age does not always correspond to perceived age. 62% say they feel a different age to their chronological age. Of these, 38% perceive themselves as younger, 24% as older, whilst 27% say they feel around the same age as their chronological age. The sense of youth is particularly pronounced in Spain, where 46% of respondents feel younger than their actual age.

Conversely, the Netherlands has the highest proportion of people who feel older, at 28%.

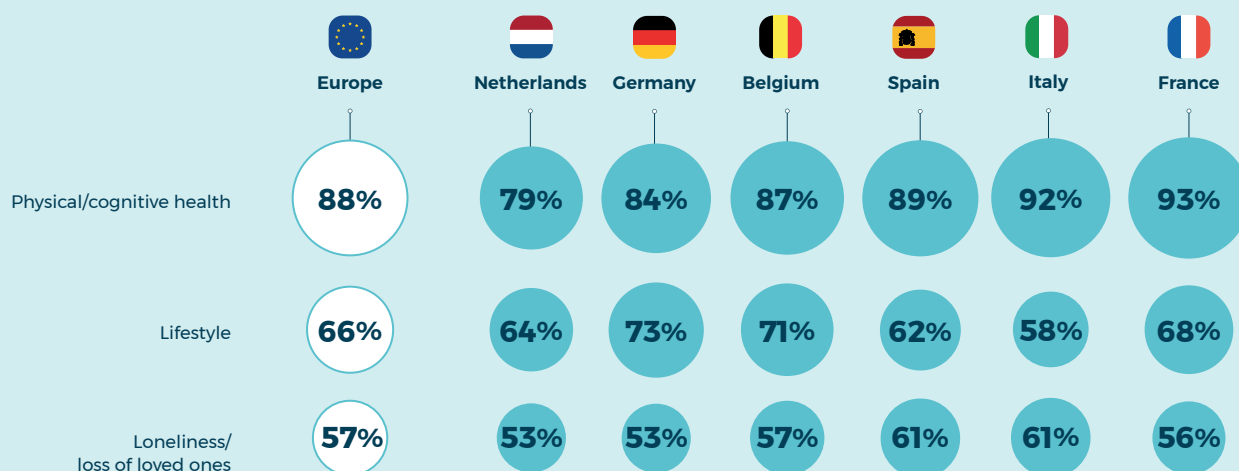
62% of Europeans don't feel their actual age



What worries you most about getting older?

This question was asked only of those who said they were concerned about their own ageing.

Multiple answers possible Total exceeds 100%



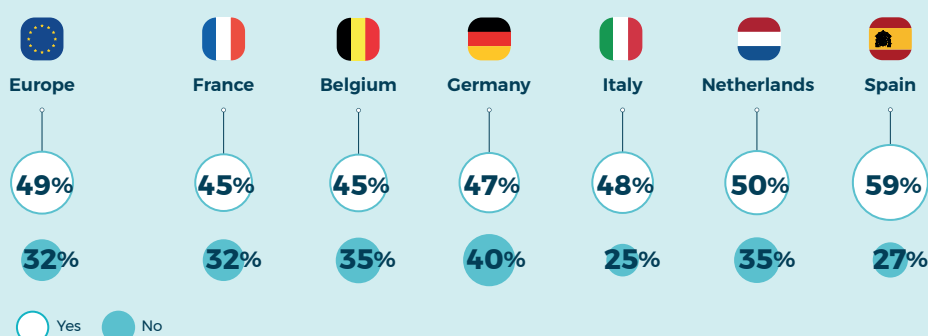
When Europeans express concern about their own ageing, their fears relate primarily to **physical or cognitive health**. **88%** cite at least one concern of this kind, whether it be the onset of illness (61%), loss of independence (60%) or memory loss and cognitive impairment (54%).

Their concerns also relate to the ability to **continue their lifestyle**. Among those who are concerned, **66% fear at least one consequence for their daily lives¹**: no longer being able to continue doing what they enjoy (40%), seeing their income fall or no longer being able to support themselves (35%), or having to

leave their homes (26%). Ageing can be a cause for concern when it threatens people's freedom to live according to their habits and choices and in familiar surroundings.

The third category of concerns relates to **social bonds**. **57%** of Europeans mention loneliness, the loss of relationships with others, or the weakening of those relationships. The loss of loved ones is cited by 42% of them, whilst 34% fear loneliness or the loss of social connections. Thinking about old age therefore also means worrying about the end of a certain kind of social life and facing loneliness.

Personally, do you think you will grow old in good health?



49% of Europeans believe they will grow old in good health

This is all the more striking given that only just half of Europeans believe they will grow old healthily: 49% at the European level, with marked differences between Spain (59%) and France or Belgium (45%). This discrepancy highlights one of the key tensions in the study: Europeans aspire to live long lives, but still doubt whether they will be able to grow old in the conditions they consider essential.

¹ See the detailed results on pages 128 to 141 of the study, which is available in full on the [clariane.com](https://www.clariane.com) website, under the 'Health and Longevity' section.

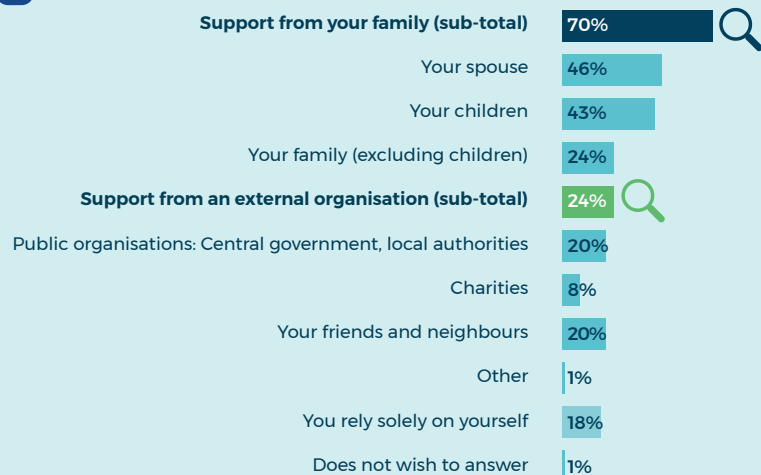


The ambivalent situation regarding relatives: Europeans are counting on them, but are also worried about them

When you reach old age, do you think you will be able to rely on any of the following to help you, excluding specialist organisations?

Multiple answers possible – Total greater than 100%

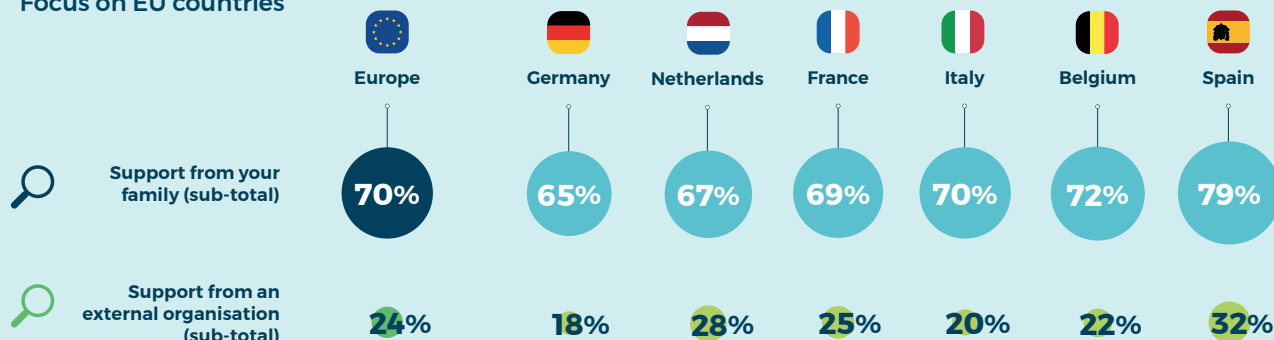
Europe



When asked about old age, 70% of Europeans surveyed said they could rely on their family – 46% on their spouse, 43% on their children, and 24% on their extended family. This level of support far exceeds that provided by friends or neighbours (20%), public bodies (20%) and voluntary organisations (8%). Conversely, 18% feel they have no one to turn to or believe they can only rely on themselves.

The importance and status accorded to the family vary from country to country: it is particularly high in Spain (79%) and lower in Germany (65%).

Focus on EU countries



Are you worried that you might become too much of a burden on your loved ones when you're older?

Europe



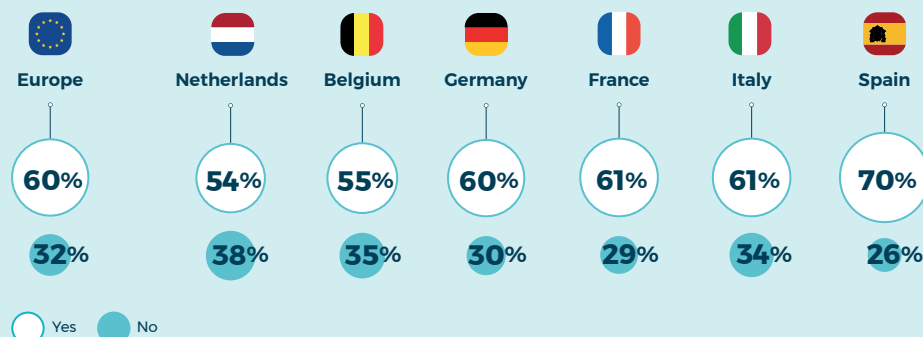
But this anticipated support from loved ones has its downside. 66% of Europeans are worried that they will be too much of a burden on them when they are older.

The family thus emerges not only as the primary source of support when facing old age, but also as a source of moral and emotional anxiety: the anxiety of having to rely on those whom they wish to protect. This ambivalence highlights the importance placed on planning ahead: preparing for old age also means seeking to maintain one's independence and to minimise the potential burden on loved ones.



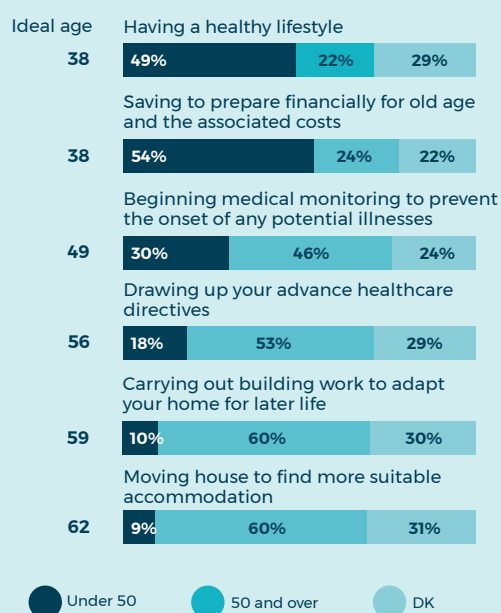
Delaying, correcting, anticipating: a preventative approach to old age

In your opinion, is it possible to delay the health effects of ageing?



60% of Europeans believe the effects of ageing can be delayed

For each of the following activities, at what age do you think it is important to start or introduce them?



Six out of ten Europeans believe it is possible to delay the health effects of ageing, with the Netherlands and Belgium showing the most cautious views (54% and 55% respectively), whilst Spain is more convinced (70%). In the eyes of Europeans, taking a number of steps well before old age sets in is a way of preventing the effects of ageing and delaying their onset.

This process starts early. According to Europeans, people should start adopting a healthy lifestyle and saving money to prepare financially for old age from the age of 38 on average. At around the age of 49, regular medical check-ups are introduced to help prevent the onset of any potential illnesses. Later on, between the ages of 56 and 62, it becomes necessary to take steps relating to advance healthcare directives, adapting one's home or choosing more suitable accommodation.

Ageing thus emerges as a matter of progressive prevention: it does not begin in old age, but long before, in the way people make preparations in terms of their health, independence, living environment and the practical conditions for ageing well.

Healthiness: the WHO's definition

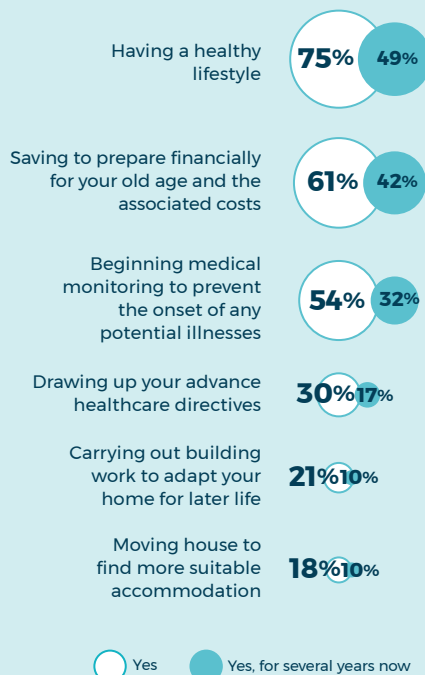
Healthiness is not simply a matter of not being ill. For this study, we have adopted the definition of health given by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the preamble to its Constitution: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Health is thus considered in its entirety. It is linked to the concept of well-being.



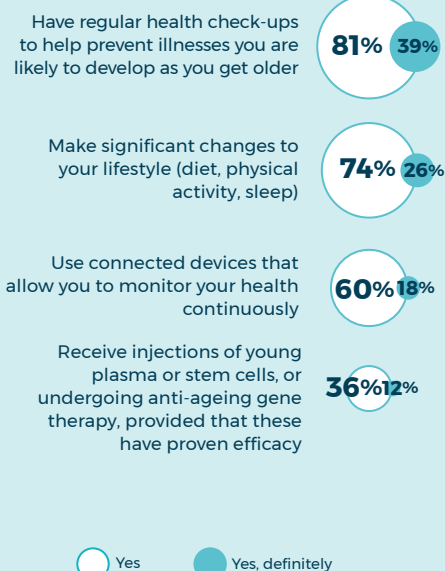
Planning for old age: many Europeans have already taken steps

Have you yourself ever implemented any of the following?

Question asked of people aged 35 or over.



Would you be willing to ... ?



Three quarters of people aged 35 or over have already adopted a healthy lifestyle ahead of their later years

In fact, Europeans aged 35 and over already appear to be taking steps to prepare for their later years. 75% say they have adopted a healthy lifestyle, 61% are saving for old age and 54% have arranged regular medical check-ups. This last indicator varies considerably from country to country: it stands at 65% in Belgium and 64% in Spain, but only 50% in France.

Europeans also say they are prepared to go further when the proposed solutions involve practical and manageable preventative measures. 81% would be willing to undergo preventative health checks, 74% would be willing to make significant changes to

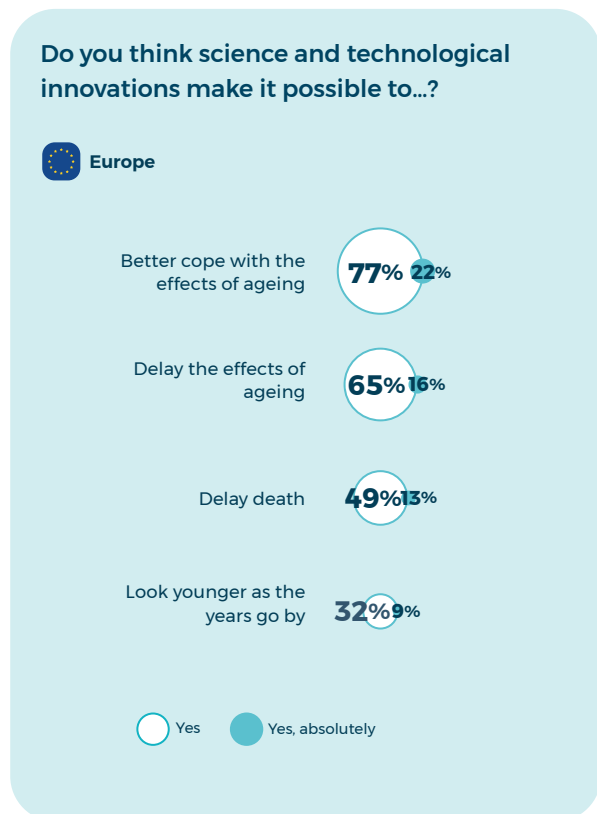
their lifestyle – diet, physical activity, sleep – and 60% would be willing to use connected devices to monitor their health continuously.

On the other hand, uptake falls sharply when solutions appear to be more invasive. Only 36% of Europeans say they would be willing to undergo treatments such as young plasma injections, stem cell therapy or anti-ageing gene therapy. The line of acceptability is therefore clear: Europeans are largely in favour of preventative measures when these help to maintain or improve health, but remain much more cautious when it comes to interventions perceived as more radical.



High expectations, but focused on quality of life and health

Key challenges in science and innovation



Europeans expect science and technological innovations to help them, first and foremost, age more comfortably. 77% believe that they can help people cope better with the effects of ageing, and 65% believe that they can help delay some of these effects. This expectation is an extension of their approach to preventative care: it is not so much a question of denying the ageing process as of maintaining good health, independence and quality of life for as long as possible.

More radical promises attract less clear-cut support. 49% of Europeans believe that science and innovation could help delay death, whilst only 32% believe they could help people become younger as they get older.

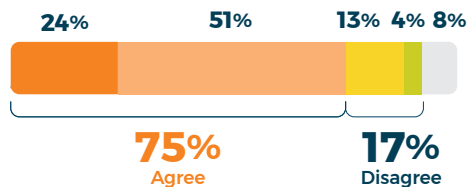
Geroscience for healthy ageing



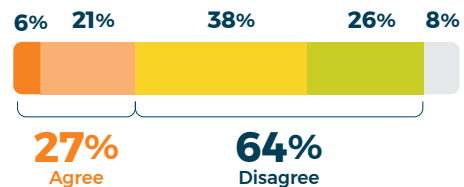
Against this backdrop, geroscience remains relatively unknown: 35% of Europeans have heard of it, with awareness being lower in France (28%) and higher in Spain (45%). However, once the principle behind geroscience has been explained, it gives rise to specific expectations: improving the quality of life for older people (54%), enabling them to stay healthy for longer (52%), preventing age-related illnesses (46%) and extending healthy life expectancy (42%).

Its benefits are also recognised at a collective level. 63% of Europeans believe that geroscience could help reduce public spending related to ageing, and 60% believe it could reduce age-related inequalities by enabling everyone to age well, regardless of their income.

Do you think that the issue of old age and an ageing population should be a key theme of the next presidential campaign, in 2027?



Do you think politicians in France are genuinely working to support older people?



 Strongly agree
  Somewhat agree
  Somewhat disagree
  Strongly disagree
  Does not wish to answer

Living as long as possible...



68% of French people would like to live as long as possible

...on one condition: staying healthy



For **90%** of French people, living a long life only makes sense if they **remain healthy**

A life stage that requires preparation



62% of French people aged over 35 are saving to fund their old age and the associated costs



For **89%** of French people, ageing is a stage that needs to be **planned for** in order to stay healthy

A feeling of being undervalued

65% of French people believe that older people are undervalued

Concerned French people

47% are relaxed about their own ageing

A national priority



For **84%** of French people, enabling the entire population to "**age well**" should be a **national priority**

A rewarding life stage



82% a period for taking some time for yourself

73% a period for discovering new things and travelling

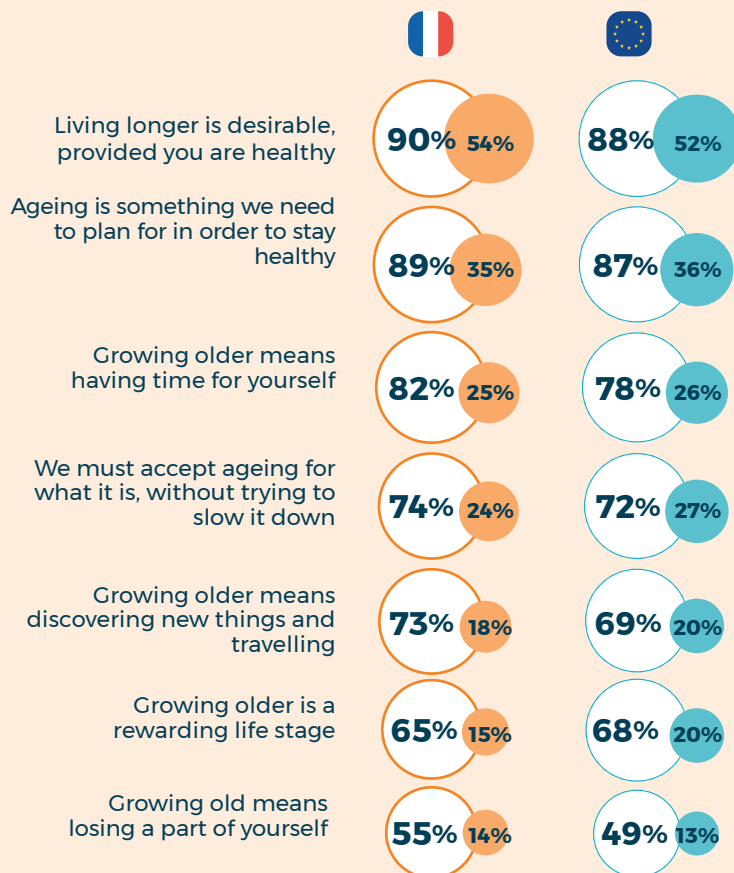
65% a rewarding life stage

FOCUS ON FRANCE

French attitudes to ageing

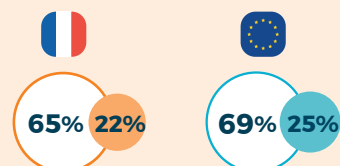
Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about ageing?

 Agree  Strongly agree

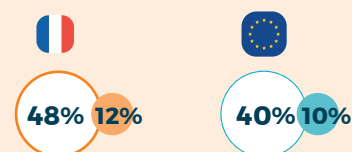


Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Are older people undervalued within society?



Are discussions about old age a taboo subject?

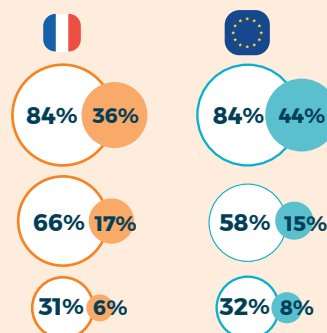


Is society ready to cope with its ageing population? Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Enabling the whole population to "age well" should be a national priority

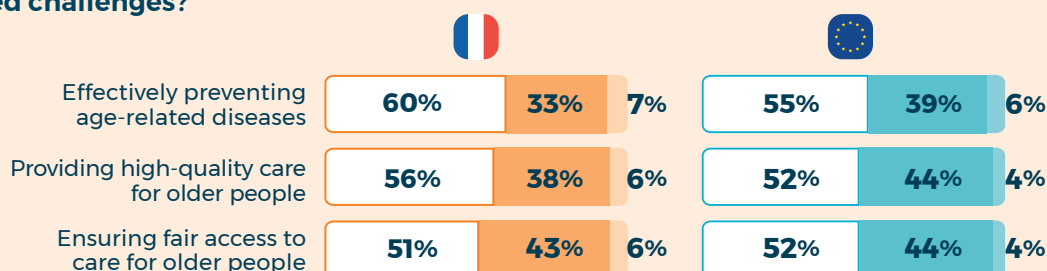
Support for older people is better today than it was 20 years ago

Society is ready to cope with its ageing population

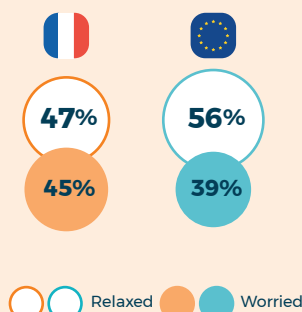


To what extent do you trust the healthcare system to address each of the following ageing-related challenges?

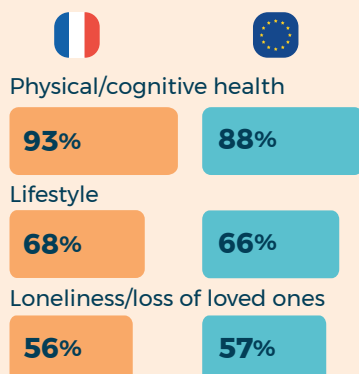
 Yes  No  Don't know/N/A



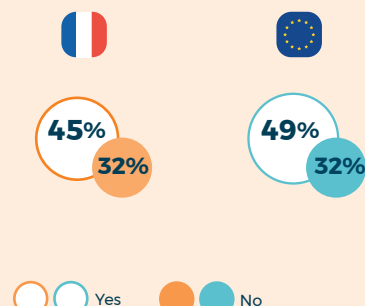
Would you say you feel relaxed or anxious about your own ageing?



What worries you most about getting older?¹

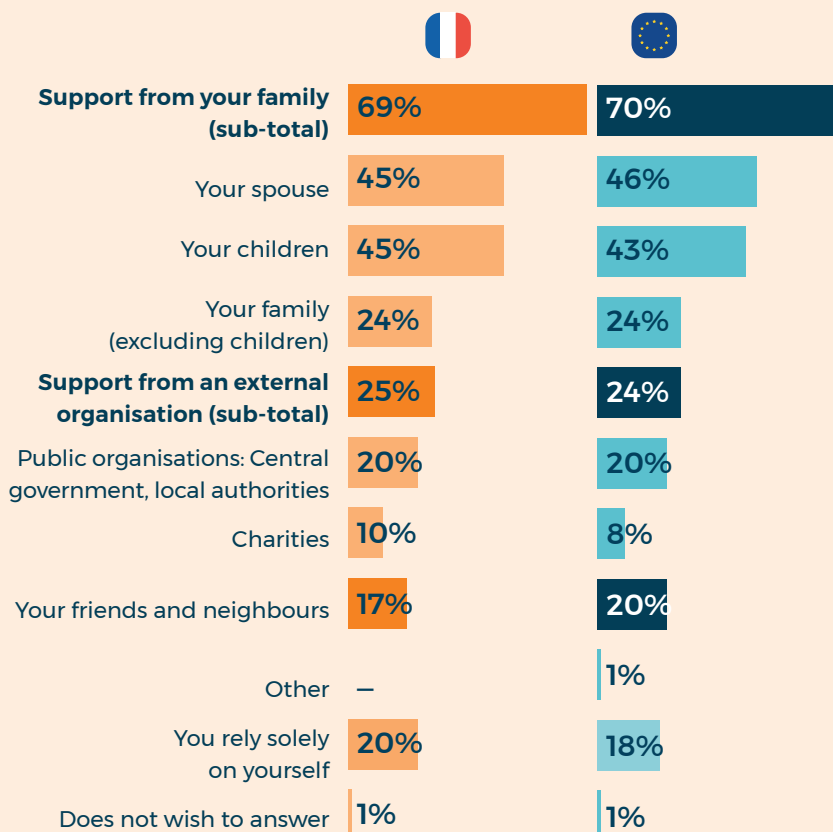


Personally, do you think you will grow old in good health?

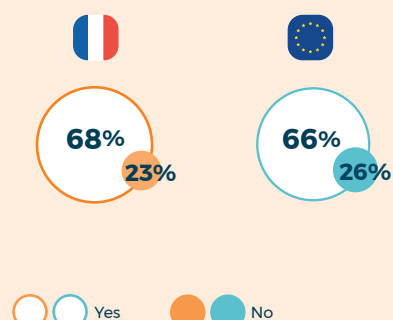


When you reach old age, do you think you will be able to rely on any of the following to help you, excluding specialist organisations?

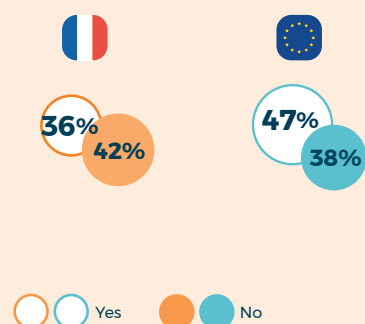
Multiple answers possible – Total greater than 100%



Are you worried that you might become too much of a burden on your loved ones when you're older?



Do you think your children or loved ones will be responsible for some of your care when you are older?

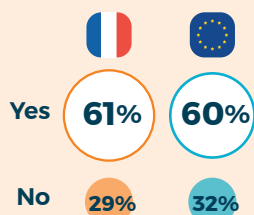


¹ This question was asked only of those who said they were concerned about their own ageing. Multiple answers possible Total exceeds 100%

FOCUS ON FRANCE

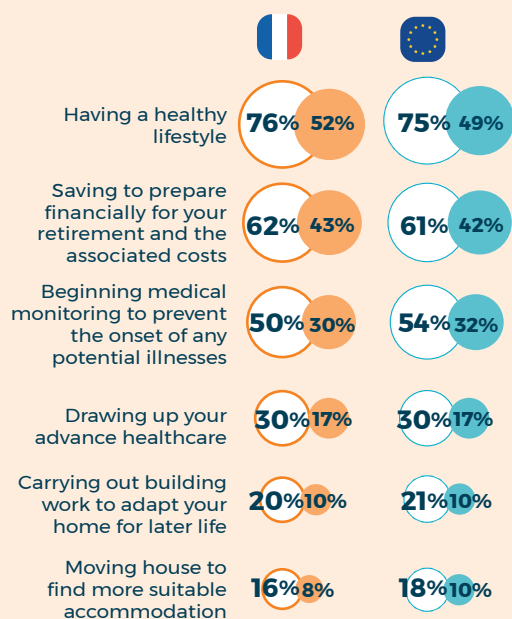
French attitudes to ageing

Do you think it is possible to delay the health effects of ageing?



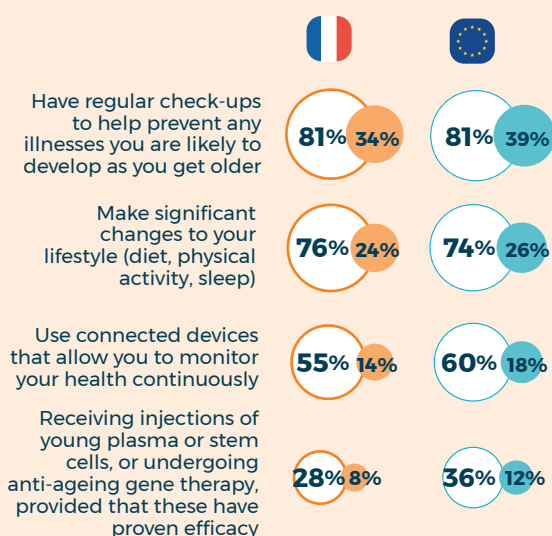
Have you yourself ever started or implemented any of the following?

Question asked of people aged 35 or over.



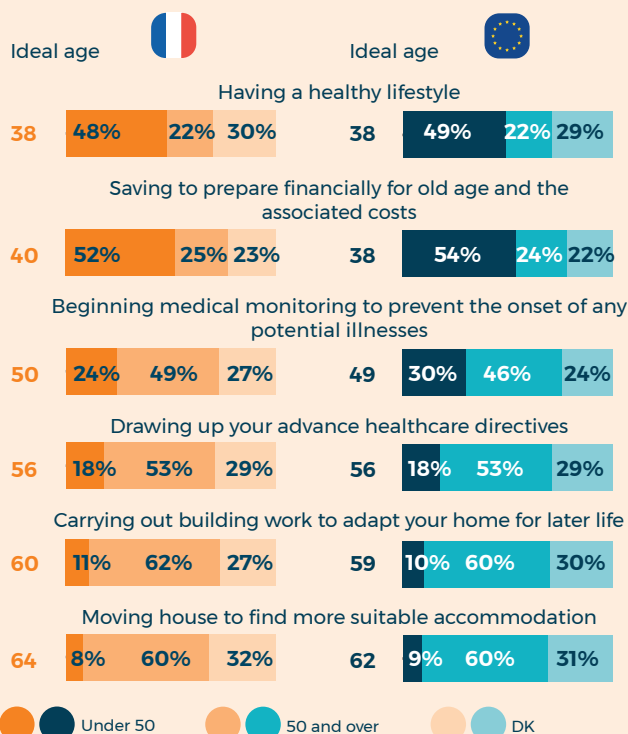
Yes Yes, for several years now

Would you be willing to ... ?



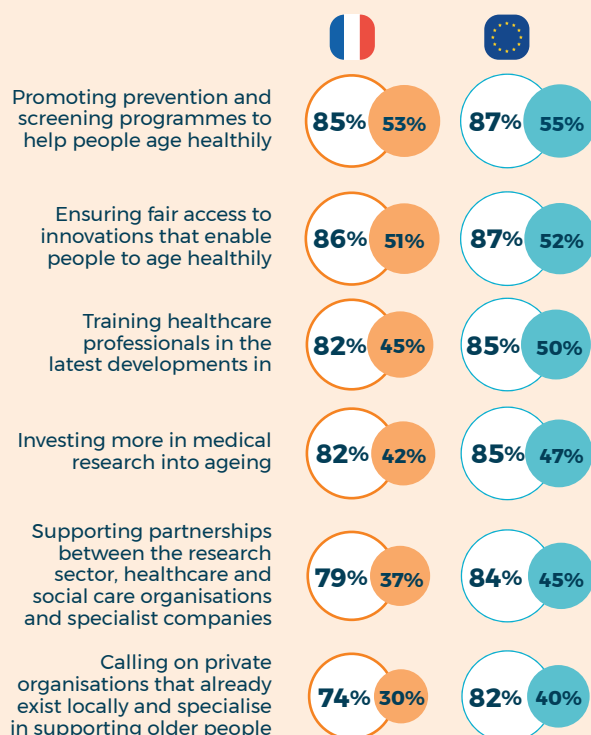
Yes Yes, definitely

For each of the following activities, at what age do you think it is important to start or introduce them?



Under 50 50 and over DK

Do you consider each of the following measures relating to the ageing population to be essential, or important but not essential?



Essential Essential/important



The study was conducted on a sample of 12,078 people, representative of the population aged 18 and over:

 **France: 2,021 people**

 **Italy: 2,000 people**

 **Belgium: 2,023 people**

 **Germany: 2,015 people**

 **Spain: 2,014 people**

 **The Netherlands: 2,005 people**

The sample was selected using the quota method with regard to sex, age, socio-professional category, region of residence and income.

Interviews were conducted using a self-administered online questionnaire via a CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) system.

They took place from 21 April to 7 May 2026.

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