



The Poor Perception of Younger People in the UK

A Research Report from the Intergenerational Foundation

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17 August 2011

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Contents

	Page:
Executive Summary	3
Respect	4
Friendly	5
Competent	6
High Moral Standards	7
Admiration	8
Pity	9
Contempt	10
Envy	11
Economic Contribution	12
Overall Rating	13
Conclusion	14
Background	15
Appendix	17

Executive Summary

- The Intergenerational Foundation (IF) was established in February 2011 to promote fairness between generations. Our work involves conducting research and educating decision makers, opinion formers, the media and the public of the rights of younger and future generations to be treated more fairly by policy makers and society as a whole.
- IF wanted to benchmark intergenerational attitudes in the UK compared with other countries.
- The research analysed the latest European Social Survey (ess.nsd.uib.no), which undertakes a biennial survey of social attitudes across 29 countries (including the former Communist bloc countries) with just under 57,000 respondents.
- A range of questions was asked which IF believes have serious intergenerational implications:
 1. British people in their 20s achieved **the lowest scores** of any country in relation to being viewed with **respect**.
 2. British people in their 20s came **near-bottom** for being **friendly, competent, viewed with admiration** and having **high moral standards**.
 3. In terms of **contempt**, British people in their 20s came **first** and in terms of **pity**, British people in their 20s **came third**.
 4. When asked to rate overall how positively or negatively people felt towards those in their 20s, respondents from the UK gave its younger people **the lowest score of any country, coming 29th out of 29 countries**.
 5. However the **economic contribution** of British young people in their 20s was recognised with the UK coming **13th** out of the 29 countries surveyed.
 6. The contrast between the low esteem that British people in their 20s are held in the UK compared to those aged over 70 years was also striking. **The scores for those aged over 70 were in line with the average** across all the countries surveyed.

(The scores are summarised in the Background section of this document).

- There seems to be a current imbalance in intergenerational relations in the UK, with British younger people perceived in a much worse light than their continental counterparts.
- IF believes a national debate is required on the obligations different generations owe each other.
- At a time when so called 'baby boomers' are striking and campaigning for pension rights, welfare, health and social care needs, younger generations are having to deal with high unemployment, increasing part-time work, high rents, unaffordable housing, increased tuition fees as well as a societal perception that they are not valued.
- The Intergenerational Foundation believes we owe young British people in their 20s a greater degree of respect and gratitude and a fairer future as they are society's future taxpayers and pension, health and social-care providers after all.

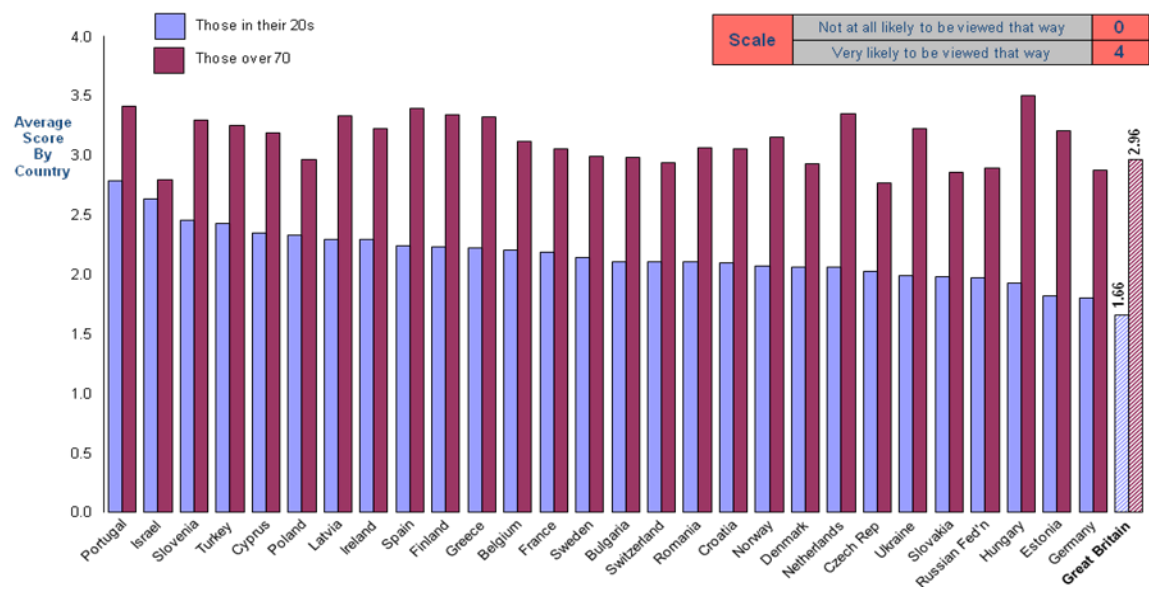
Respect

In terms of being viewed with respect, those in their 20s in the UK come 29th out of the 29 countries. Their score of 1.66 is well below the average score of 2.06 for those in their 20s across all the countries.

Average Scores By Country For The Statement

“Most People View People In Their 20s/Over 70 With Respect”

(BASE – All Respondents (20s N=54,739/70s N=55,280))



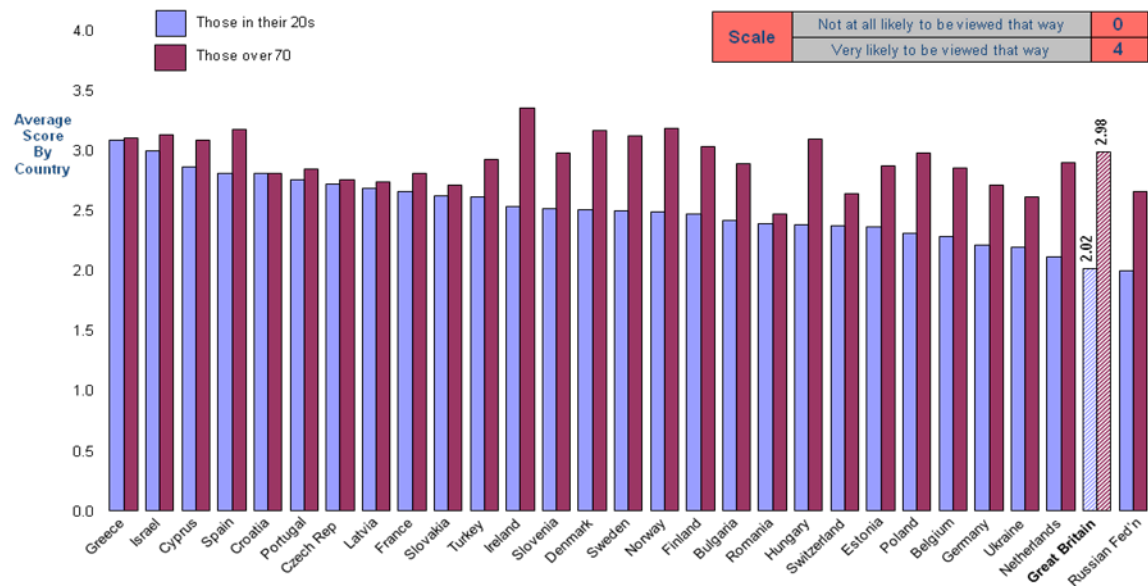
Friendly

As regards being friendly, people in the UK rate those in their 20s second lowest of the 29 countries with a score of 2.02 compared to the average across all the countries for those in their 20s of 2.34. By contrast, people in the UK rated those aged over 70 above average for being friendly.

Average Scores By Country For The Statement

“Most People View People In Their 20s/Over 70 As Friendly”

(BASE – All Respondents (20s N=54,812/70s N=55,119))



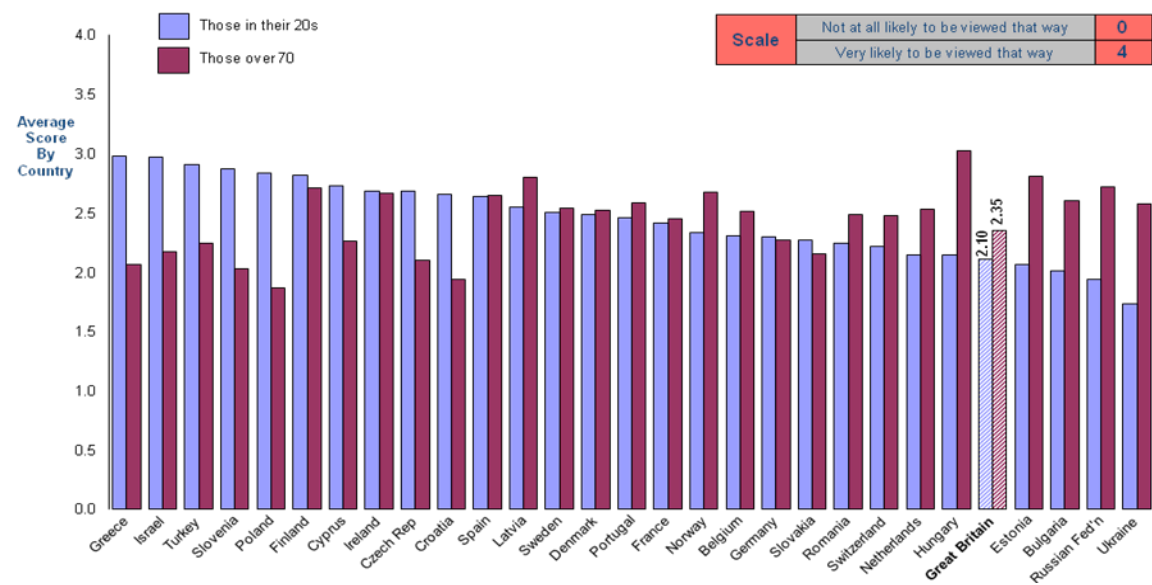
Competent

When it comes to how people are viewed in terms of being competent, those in the UK again rated those in their 20s well below average. Across Europe those in their 20s averaged 2.31 while those in the UK scored 2.10. This score ranked them **25th out of the 29** countries.

Average Scores By Country For The Statement

“Most People View People In Their 20s/Over 70 As Competent”

(BASE – All Respondents (20s N=54,794/70s N=54,915))



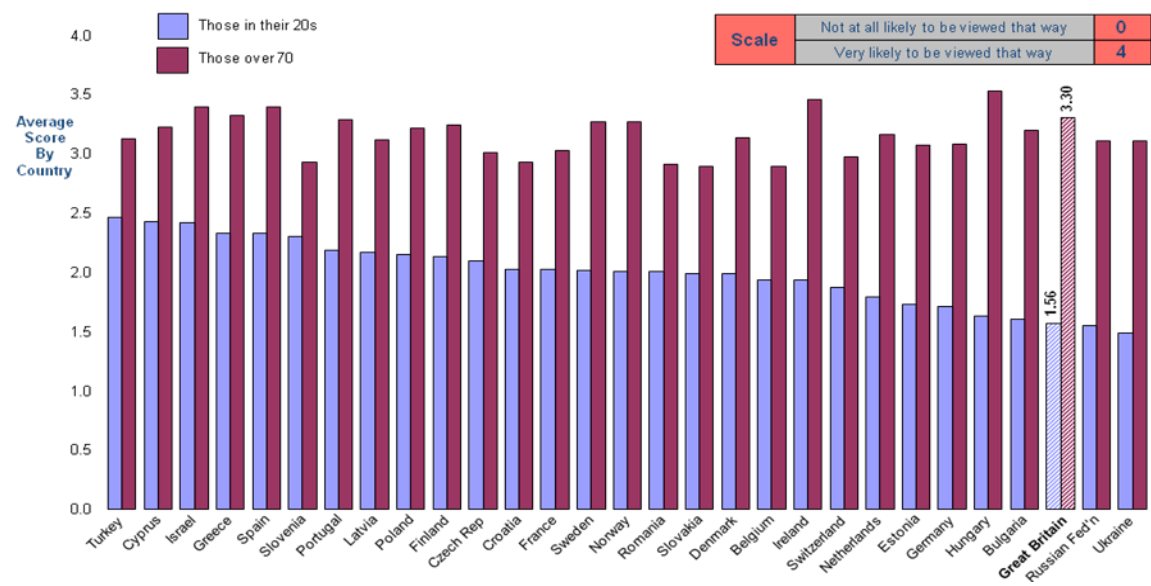
High Moral Standards

Overall those in their 20s tended to be ranked far lower in terms of having high moral standards than those aged over 70. The UK average score for those in their 20s of 1.56 compared with a European average of 1.87 and left them ranked **27th out of the 29** countries.

Average Scores By Country For The Statement

“Most People View People In Their 20s/Over 70 As Having High Moral Standards”

(BASE – All Respondents (20s N=54,501/70s N=55,004))



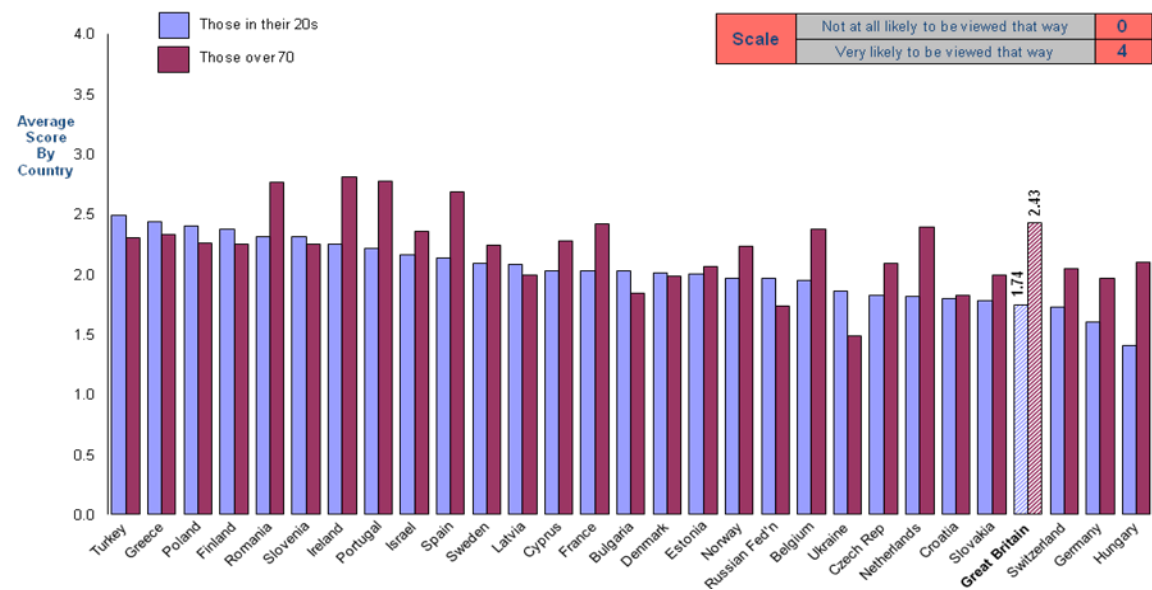
Admiration

In terms of being viewed with admiration, those in their 20s in the UK score 1.74 compared to the average across the survey of 1.99. This places them **26th out of the 29 countries**. For those in their 70s in the UK, their score of 2.43 is above the survey average of 2.14.

Average Scores By Country For The Statement

“Most People View People In Their 20s/Over 70 With Admiration”

(BASE – All Respondents (20s N=54,118/70s N=54,457))



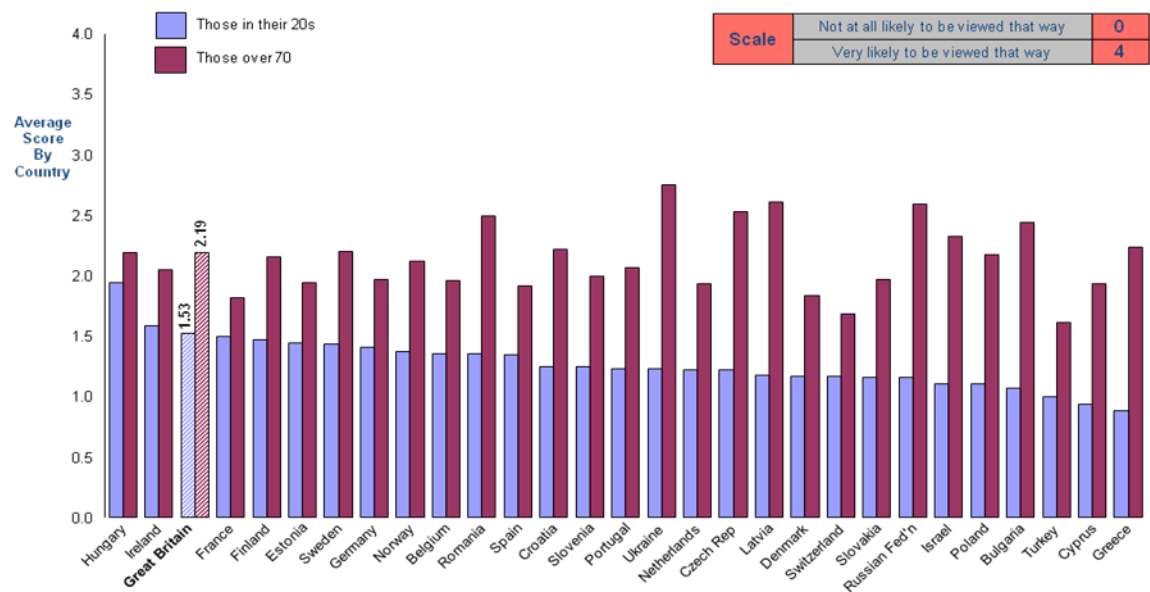
Pity

Of the 29 countries those in their 20s in the UK have **the third highest score** in terms of being viewed with pity. Their score of 1.53 compares with the average for those in their 20s across the 29 countries of 1.28.

Average Scores By Country For The Statement

“Most People View People In Their 20s/Over 70 With Pity”

(BASE – All Respondents (20s N=54,164/70s N=54,781))



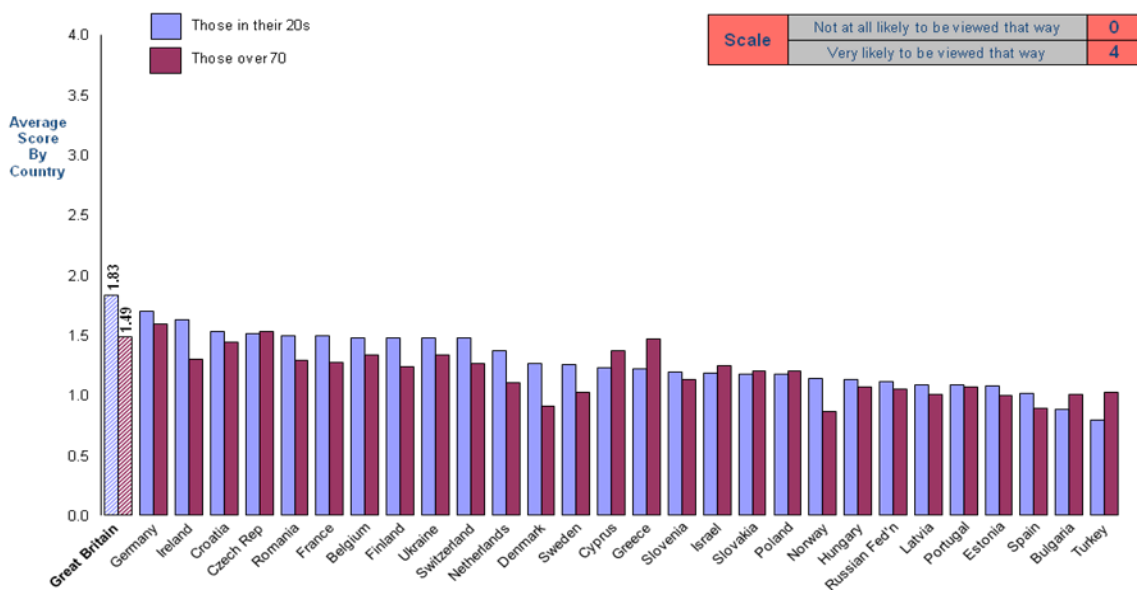
Contempt

Those in their 20s in the UK have the **highest score** for being viewed with contempt across the 29 countries. Compared to the survey average score of 1.32 amongst those in their 20s, those in this age group in the UK scored 1.83.

Average Scores By Country For The Statement

“Most People View People In Their 20s/Over 70 With Contempt”

(BASE – All Respondents (20s N=53,765/70s N=54,149))



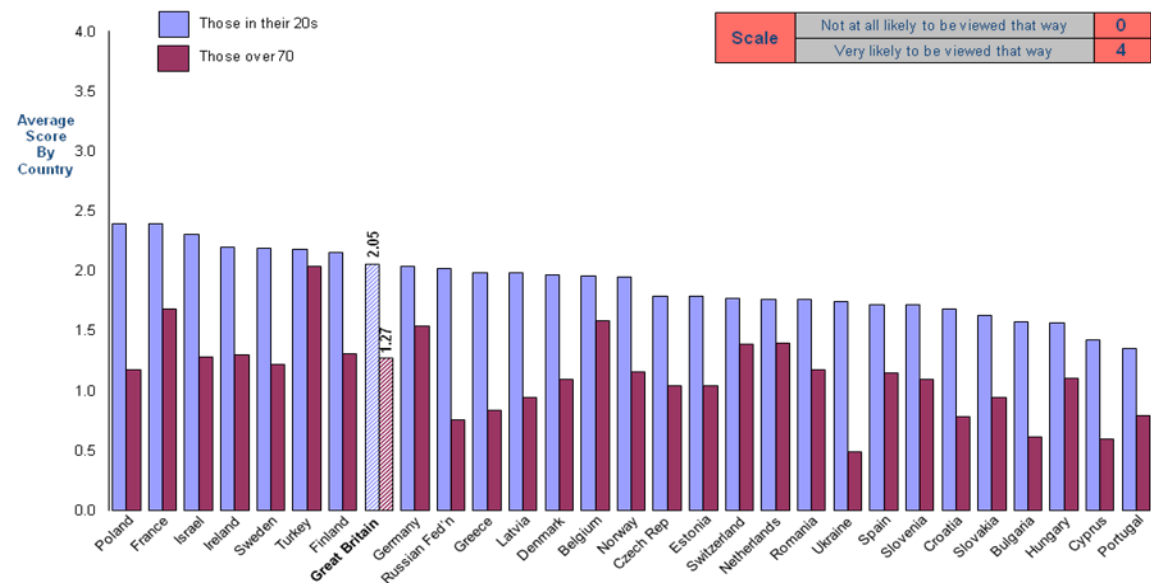
Envy

Those in their 20s in the UK scored more highly in relation to being viewed with envy. Their score of 2.05 was above the European average for those in their 20s of 2.01. In this area of envy, younger people do score more highly than those aged over 70.

Average Scores By Country For The Statement

“Most People View People In Their 20s/Over 70 With Envy”

(BASE – All Respondents (20s N=53,997/70s N=54,476))



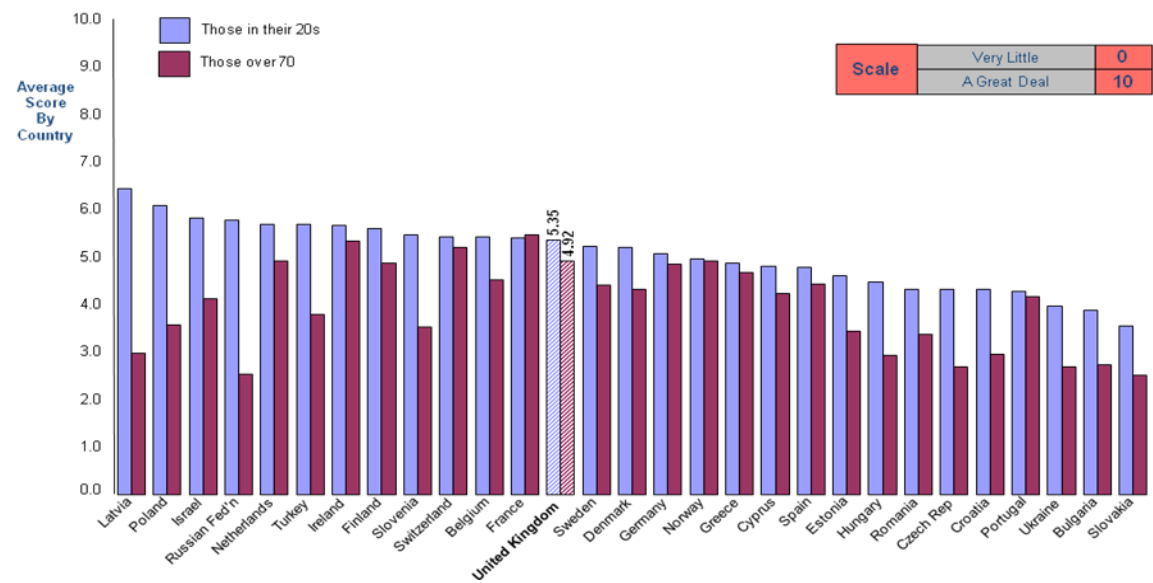
Economic Contribution

The economic contribution that younger people make to the UK is somewhat better recognised. Compared to an average score in terms of economic contribution across the 29 countries of 5.25, those in their 20s in the UK score 5.35 and are **ranked 13th**.

Average Scores By Country To The Question

“Do You Think People In Their 20s/Over 70 Contribute Very Little Or A Great Deal Economically?”

(BASE – All Respondents (20s N=54,788/70s N=54,765))



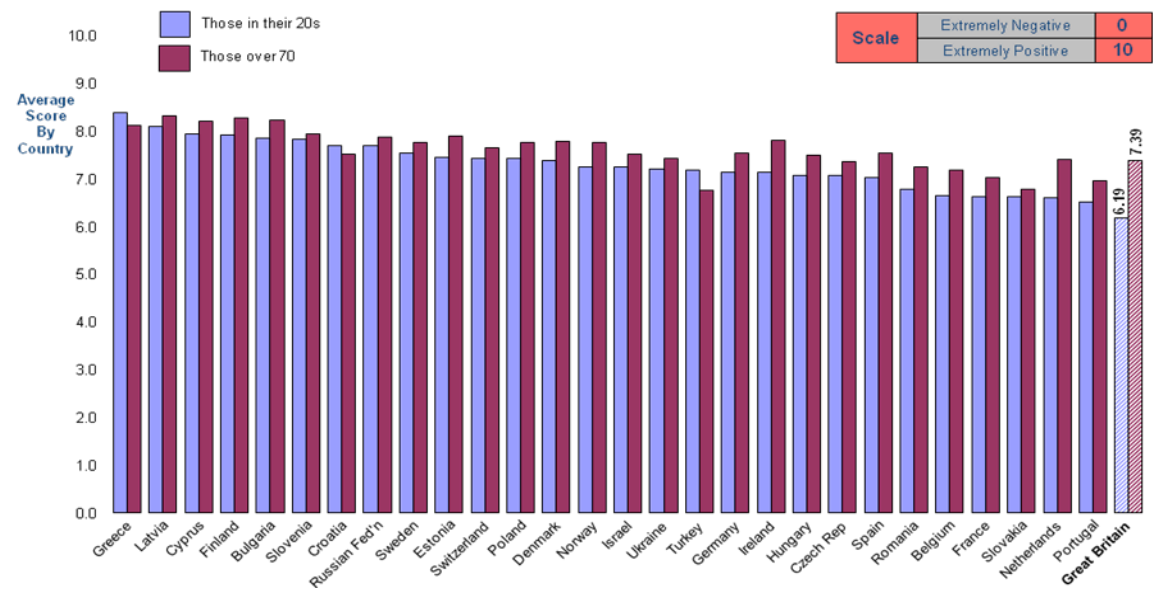
Overall Rating

In this question, those surveyed were asked how positive or negative they felt towards people in their 20s or aged over 70. The score of 6.19 for those in their 20s in the UK placed them **29th out of the 29 countries** surveyed and well below the average for those in their 20s of 7.15.

Average Scores By Country To The Question

“Overall How Negative Or Positive Do You Feel Towards People In Their 20s/Over 70?”

(BASE – All Respondents (20s N=55,856/70s N=55,804))



Conclusion

This research serves to show that British people in their 20s are viewed far more poorly and, we believe, unfairly, than their continental counterparts.

Whilst British people in their 20s scored consistently poorly, British older people in their 70s achieved scores in line with the survey average.

IF believes that this shows that there appears to be an imbalance in how different generations perceive each other in the UK.

The results seem to dispel the long-held view that society needs to concentrate our efforts on improving levels of respect given to older generations. Perhaps the pendulum has swung too far and now society needs to put greater resources into programmes aimed at appreciating younger generations more.

British people in their 20s are society's future tax payers, pension and social and healthcare providers so it is within society's interests to treat them with the respect they deserve, especially during a time of austerity.

Background

- This study allowed us to compare attitudes across many countries in Europe and to make comparisons between attitudes in the UK and other European countries.
- Our study looked at three different blocks of questions from the part of the survey that studied age related issues.
 - How those in their 20s and those aged over 70 are viewed in terms of being “friendly”, “competent”, “respected” and having “high moral standards”.
 - How likely most people are to view those in their 20s and those aged over 70 with “admiration”, “envy”, “pity”, “contempt” and their “economic contribution”.
 - Overall how positive or negative people feel towards those in their 20s or aged over 70.

*A higher score for these “negative” elements equates to a lower score for the other “positive” elements

Those in their 20s	How likely is it that most people in [country X] view those in their 20s as.....				How likely is it that most people in [country X] view those in their 20s with.....			
	Having high moral standards	Being Friendly	Being Competent	Bring Respected	Admiration	Envy	Pity*	Contempt*
ESS Survey Average	1.67	2.34	2.31	2.06	1.99	2.01	1.28	1.32
UK Average	1.56	2.02	2.10	1.66	1.74	2.05	1.53	1.83
UK ranking (out of 29 countries)	27	28	25	29	26	8	3	1

“Overall how negative or positive do you feel towards people in their 20s/people over 70?”

(nb scale here is 0 to 10 where 10 is extremely positive and 0 extremely negative)

	Those in their 20s	Those aged over 70
ESS Survey Average	7.15	7.48
UK Average	6.19	7.39
UK ranking (out of 29 countries)	29	22

Average scores for the “positive” attitudes/statements*

	Those in their 20s	Those aged over 70
ESS Survey Average	2.11	2.72
UK Average	1.82	2.80
UK - % over/under ESS Survey	-14%	+3%

*high moral standards, friendly, competent, respected, viewed with admiration

*ESS Round 4: European Social Survey Round 4 Data (2008). Data file edition 4.0 Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

Appendix

Research Methodology

- The European Social Survey (ess.nsd.uib.no) is a biennial survey of social attitudes that is undertaken across 29 countries in Europe (including the former Communist bloc countries) and some countries in the Middle-East. The first round was undertaken in 2002/2003 and the most recent, Round 4, had an average of almost 2,000 persons per country and a total sample size of 56,752.
- The subject of Ageism was a rotating module that was being investigated for the first time on the 2008 ESS survey. Accordingly no comparison is possible with data about this subject from previous rounds.
- For the comparisons that were made between the different countries participating in ESS round 4, the data from ESS round 4 was analysed in SPSS in relation to variables that addressed age related status and stereotypes.
- The analysis was undertaken with the design weights turned on and where appropriate, the population weights turned on.

The Intergenerational Foundation

- The Intergenerational Foundation (IF) is newly established to promote the rights of younger and future generations in British policy-making. IF is a charitable organisation and non-party-political. We believe in fairness between generations and are concerned that the interests of younger and future generations are at risk of being ignored by current policy makers.
- IF is currently researching the reasons why we believe there is an im-balance in British society in five key areas:
 - pensions and taxation
 - healthcare
 - housing
 - education
 - the environment

For further information on the work of the Intergenerational Foundation (IF) please contact Liz Emerson
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