



Wilfried
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for European Studies

Seniors in the 2014 European Parliament Elections:

Turnout, Voting Intentions and Representation

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Voting behaviour | Seniors | European Parliament | Elections



Policy Brief

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The European Union is facing core demographic challenges with the proportion of seniors projected to rise from just over 18% of the population today to 28% by 2050. This paper, by examining the behaviour of senior citizens in the 2014 European Parliament elections, finds that they are the most active voters and that they generally vote for centre-right parties that belong to the European People's Party. However, this paper further identifies that it is voting habit and party loyalty that are the main incentives for seniors to vote rather than ageing effects or any general stance towards politics. This paper also highlights the challenges facing established political groupings in attracting new generations of undecided swing voters as European society ages in the decades ahead.

Produced in collaboration with the European Seniors' Union





The European Parliament and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies assume no responsibility for facts or opinions expressed in this publication or their subsequent use. Sole responsibility lies with the author of this publication.

Abbreviations

CEECs	Central and Eastern European Countries
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
ESU	European Seniors Union
MEP	Member of the European Parliament



Preface

The promotion of active citizenship and age-friendly politics at all levels of government is the main objective of the European Seniors Union (ESU), an umbrella association of seniors' organizations mostly linked to member parties of the European People's Party (EPP). The realisation of these objectives, of course, needs not only a good relationship with politicians but also insight and knowledge about seniors themselves: their aspirations, their experiences and their motivation to participate in politics.

I am particularly pleased that in this publication on the 2014 European elections the authors have focused on seniors. Quite rightfully, in recent years political parties and social science research have focused mainly on young people: the new generations who are hard to persuade to commit and to participate in politics. Engagement of seniors, on the contrary, is often taken for granted, as if it can be assumed that they once were connected to a party and will remain so. Yet, recent shifts in election results in countries such as Belgium and Greece cannot be understood without taking into account the possibility that seniors have also changed their voting behaviour radically.

This study on voting behaviour, political opinion and participation of the senior population is therefore paramount. Seniors are an increasingly large population group, and their importance in elections will certainly not decrease. Moreover, this group is continually changing and is very diverse all over Europe. Men and women of these generations have lived through the enlargement, the contradictions and the problems since the emergence of modern Europe. Politicians should therefore ask themselves: 'who are these men and women that vote for us, and with and for whom we pursue policies?'

The paper provides ample data and explains a variety of important issues for organisations working in the interest of seniors, for political parties and for Members of the European Parliament. For the ESU these data offer a broader framework in which to situate the research the ESU has conducted among its own member organisations.¹ This publication is an incentive to continue deepening and broadening the ESU's actions.

I am particularly grateful that the Martens Centre included our request on the position of seniors in their research. I thank the young researchers Lawrence Cappelle and Gilles Pittoors. The conversations with them and Assistant Prof. Steven Van Hecke were very enriching as 'intergenerational' encounters. Finally, I thank the many enthusiastic seniors in our own ESU. Their commitment and active citizenship are the basis of both our political action and this publication. I hope that each in their own places and in their member states, men and women of all generations, will find inspiration in reading this publication.

*Prof. An Hermans
President ESU*

¹ L. Cappelle, *Seniors in Political Parties: Representation and Participation of Seniors' Organisations in the EPP Member Parties in the 2014 European Election Campaign*, ESU Working Paper (Brussels: European Seniors Union, 2015).



Introduction

The European Union as a whole has seen the share of the elderly population rise progressively. Over 18% of the population is currently aged 65 years or over, a figure that has risen by 2% over the last ten years and is expected to increase to 28% by 2050.² This trend holds across all of Europe. Confronted with demographic ageing, the question arises as to whether this changing structure of the population is also having an impact on politics and elections. Despite the increasing share of seniors in society, few if any studies have focused on seniors' voting behaviour.

This paper aims to examine the voting behaviour of European senior citizens in the 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections.³ It is structured along three main questions. The first part will deal with the question of whether and how the increasing share of seniors in the overall population affects voter turnout in elections, considering age, generational effects and political knowledge and opinion as the main explanations. The second part deals with the question of whether and how the increasing share of seniors in the overall population affects election results, considering political opinion and party loyalty as main explanations. The third and final part will assess the representation of seniors in the EP, considering the share of senior Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and the inclusion of representation of seniors' interests.

The paper finds that the seniors' share of the population is increasing and that they are also the most active voters.

The study is based on both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative part is based on a comparative research design with univariate analysis. The data used comprise pre- and post-election surveys and Eurobarometer data on general public opinion, with the post-election survey conducted by the European Parliament and the pre-election survey conducted by the EUvox project as an

online non-probability sample of the online and politically interested population of seniors. The qualitative study is based on twelve semi-structured interviews with MEPs and is completed with an analysis of official documents and academic literature.

The paper finds that the seniors' share in the population is increasing, and that they are also the most active voters. Additionally, they generally vote for centre-right parties that belong to the European People's Party (EPP) family. Their decision to participate in the elections, however, seems to have been driven more by generational effects—that is, party loyalty and voting habits—than by active campaign mobilisation. Regarding representation in the EP, seniors are strongly represented as a share of MEPs. Despite the fact that policy towards the senior population is spread across several committees, MEPs with a personal interest in seniors come together in the Intergroup on Active Ageing, Intergenerational Solidarity and Family Policies. As such, the study touches upon future challenges and new avenues for research in electoral studies, particularly with regard to the voting behaviour of the senior population.

² Eurostat, *Population Structure and Ageing*, (May 2014), accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing on 20 October 2014.

³ A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the ESU Presidium meeting in Leuven. We are grateful for the comments we received from the panel, as well as those of Sarah De Clercq and An Hermans.



Part I: Senior voter turnout

The first part of the paper covers the question of how senior voter turnout affects election results. It will focus on the turnout of senior voters in the 2014 EP elections, and consists of two sections: the facts on senior voter turnout and possible explanations for these.

1. Turnout in the 2014 EP elections: the facts

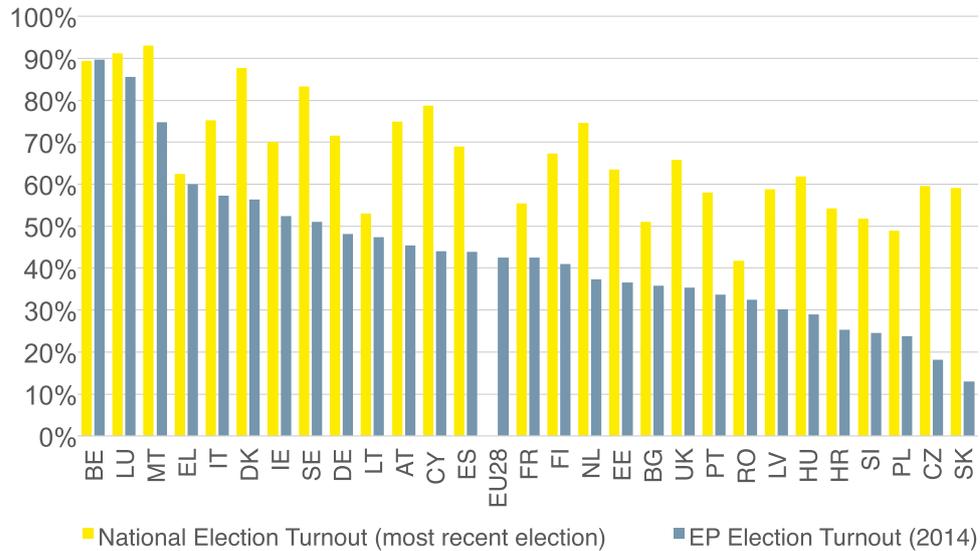
This section presents the data on the turnout of senior voters in the 2014 EP elections. It first compares seniors' turnout with the turnout of the overall population, and then offers a comparison between the 2009 and 2014 elections. The paper questions whether the large and increasing demographic share of seniors in the overall population also translates into stronger political representation. The data point out that, contrary to the overall trend, senior voter turnout is higher than turnout among the overall population and it has increased since 2009, suggesting an increasing impact of seniors on election results.

1.1. Comparison with the overall population

The turnout of the overall population for the 2014 EP elections is shown to be rather low, with less than half of the voting age population (42.54%) casting votes. Except for Belgium, where voter turnout is compulsory, in all European countries the turnout for European elections is lower than for national elections (Figure 1). Although in general European and national voter turnout develop in parallel—that is, when there is a high national turnout a high European turnout is expected and vice versa—the difference is particularly high in the Czech Republic (46% lower), Slovakia (41% lower) and the Netherlands (37% lower).



Figure 1 Turnout for the 2014 EP election and last national election



Sources: Data from IDEA, *Voter Turnout*; European Parliament *Post-election Survey 2014: European Elections 2014, Socio-Demographic Annex*, p.10.

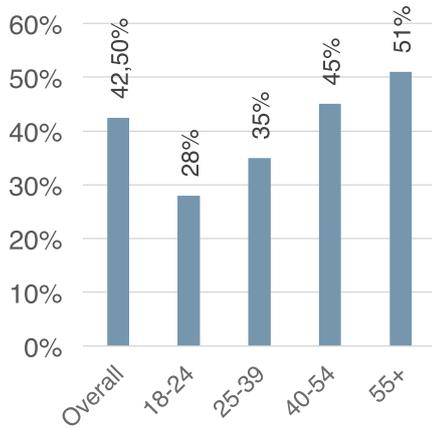
In the literature on voter turnout, it is generally assumed that turnout as a function of age is curvilinear, with a steep decline in turnout with age.⁴ It implies that age, alongside education, is the strongest individual-level factor accounting for turnout. Since the start of the studies on voter turnout in the 1930s, one of the most robust findings and irrefutable trends has been that turnout is low during early adult life, gradually increasing with age, but subject to decline with old age.

However, contrary to these general assumptions, data on recent European elections show that turnout is higher among senior voters aged 55 years and over, with a variance of almost 10% EU-wide (Figure 2). With the exception of Belgium, Italy and Sweden, age seems to play a significant and distinctly positive role in a person’s likelihood to vote in the EU elections (Figure 3).

4 Y. Bhatti, K. M. Hanssen and H. Wass, ‘The Relationship Between Age and Turnout: A Roller-Coaster Ride’, *Electoral Studies* 31 (2012), 588–93; S. Verba and N. H. Nie, *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

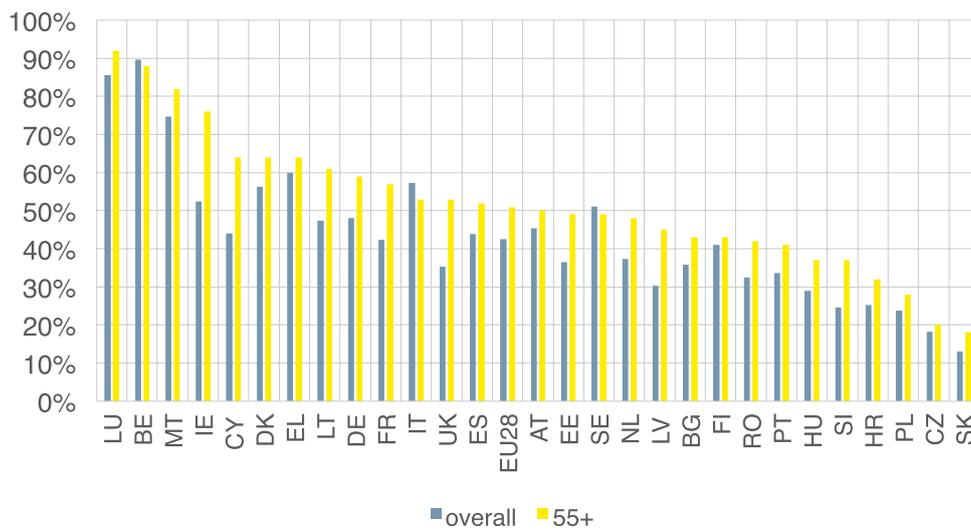


Figure 2 Turnout by age group, 2014 EP elections



Source: Data from the European Parliament, *Post-election Survey 2014: European Elections 2014, Socio-Demographic Annex*, p.9.

Figure 3 Turnout for the 2014 EP election by member state



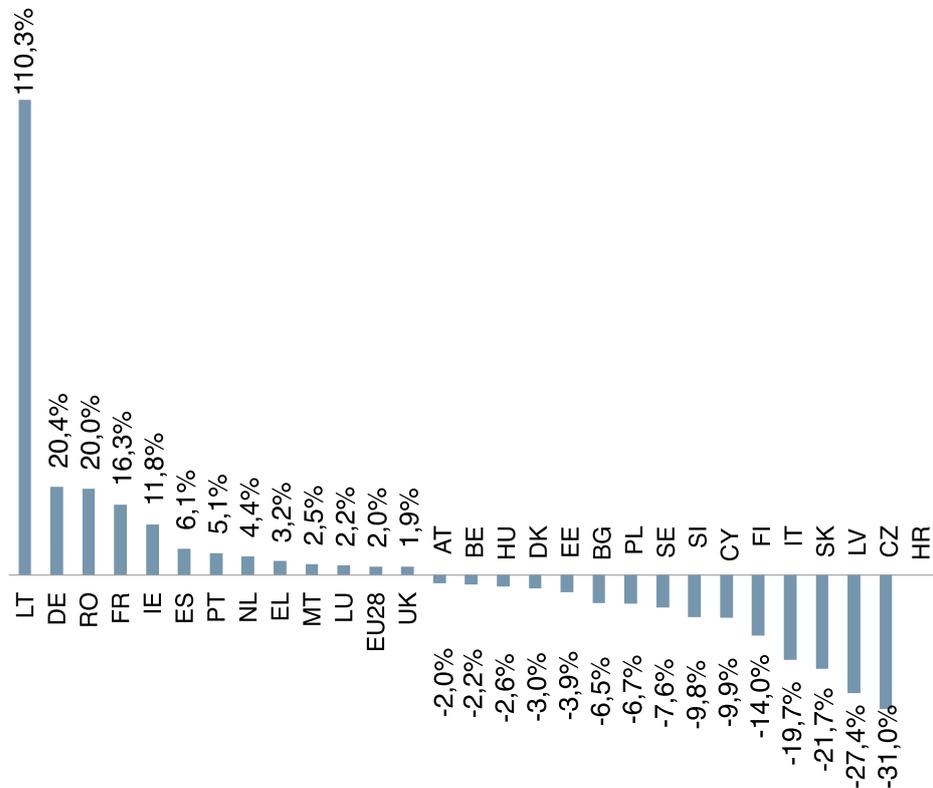
Source: Data from the European Parliament, *Post-election Survey 2014: European Elections 2014, Socio-Demographic Annex*, p.10.



1.2. Comparison between 2009 and 2014

The general trend in the EU has been a decline in electoral participation in both national and EP elections. Regarding the European elections, turnout has steadily declined since the first direct EP elections, from 61.99% in 1979 to 43% in 2009 and 42.54% in 2014.⁵ Although this decline has been caused by several different factors, the trend is also partly a by-product of the EU enlargement process, as voter turnout has generally been lower in those countries that joined the EU later on.⁶ The overall decline has also been steeper in these countries than in the original nine member states. The citizens of the EU are thus decreasingly interested in voting, and this trend is particularly visible in European elections.

Figure 4 Percentage change in senior voter turnout (2009 to 2014)



Sources: Data from the European Parliament, *Post-election Survey 2014: European Elections 2014, Socio-Demographic Annex*, p.10; European Parliament, *Post-electoral Survey 2009: First Results: Focus on the Vote by Age Group*, p.8.

⁵ European Parliament, *Post-Election Survey 2014: European Elections 2014, Socio-Demographic Annex*, European Parliament Public Opinion Monitoring Union (2014a), accessed at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2014/post/post_ee2014_sociodemographic_annex_en.pdf on 10 December 2014.

⁶ UK, House of Commons Library, *European Parliament Elections: Turnout Trends 1979–2009*, Standard Note SN06865 (3 April 2014).



However, while overall voter turnout has been decreasing over time, senior voter turnout witnessed a slight increase in 2014. Whereas overall turnout fell by about 0.5%, senior voter turnout for the EU27 (Croatia did not take part in the 2009 elections) increased by about 2%, from 50% in 2009 to 51% in 2014 (Figure 4). This means that the majority of people aged 55 years and over voted in the 2014 EP elections. Although in 15 EU countries the senior voter turnout has decreased, it has increased in most of the larger member states, resulting in the larger absolute numbers of senior voters. Given the large and increasing share of seniors in the EU, these findings are significant, as they indicate that votes are primarily lost among younger voters.

2. Explaining senior voter turnout

In this section we present possible explanations for the observation that contrary to overall trends, seniors are increasingly active voters in the EP elections. The paper highlights three categories of reasons for this trend: age-related explanations, generational explanations and EU-related explanations. The paper finds that higher turnout rates among seniors reflect a voting habit rather than active campaign mobilisation or attachment to the EU.

2.1. Age-related explanations

As has been mentioned above, it is generally assumed that turnout as a function of age is curvilinear, with a steep decline in turnout with age. Together with the individual education level, this curvilinear impact of age is the strongest individual-level factor accounting for turnout. These findings have been consistently supported by studies on turnout since the 1930s.⁷ The findings of this study, however, go against these general assumptions, as the data show that turnout seems to increase with age. Notably, a difference has to be made between age groups, as negative age-related effects particularly affect the very elderly. Increased turnout can be witnessed among the ‘early’ seniors aged 55–74 years, while the ‘late’ seniors aged 75+ are more subject to negative social and health issues.

2.1.1. Social effects related to age

It is generally accepted that being part of a social network encourages people to stay active in their communities and in society in general. Participating in social life and regularly talking with people about the news increases engagement and increases turnout.⁸ Moreover, social ties at the workplace and other forms of social engagement provide access to a large network over time, thus also increasing turnout. Taking this into account, being married or having been married seems to provide an extra positive effect,

⁷ See, for example, R. E. Wolfinger and S. Rosenstone, *Who Votes?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); L. W. Milbrath, *Political Participation* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965).

⁸ Y. Bhatti and K. M. Hanssen, ‘Retiring from Voting: Turnout Among Senior Voters’, *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 22/4 (2012), 479–500; L. W. Milbrath and M. L. Goel, *Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics?* (Lanham, MA: University Press of America, 1977).



which does not seem to disappear once the partner has passed away.⁹ While there is a definite ‘social network effect’, there does not seem to be a ‘widower effect’.

Thus, one of the main negative effects related to ageing is *social disengagement*. This is unfortunately something of a vicious circle. Due to their higher likelihood of living alone, the elderly gradually become less engaged in their social networks, which in turn decreases their involvement in society and by extension also their voting turnout. According to a recent study by Bhatti and Hansen,¹⁰ living alone decreases the likelihood of voting by 7% when compared to living with someone. These effects are particularly pertinent for elderly women, whose disengagement seems to start earlier. This is partly due to the higher likelihood for elderly women to stop working earlier and thereby rapidly lose any professional networks.

2.1.2. Health effects related to age

Negative health effects are among the biggest obstacles for the elderly with regard to voting.¹¹ Natural infirmities and disabilities have pervasive negative effects on electoral participation as, for example, obstacles to physically reaching the voting booth are quite common among the elderly. These *life-cycle effects* affect all people over a certain age—although not necessarily to the same degree—regardless of social network, generation or personal background. Necessarily, the difference between early seniors (aged 55–64) and late seniors (aged 65+) is paramount. While early seniors score very high on voter turnout, there is a sharp decline starting from the age of 75 years.¹² These studies show that, for example, in Denmark this decline ranges from 23% to 30%, and in Finland even from 65% to 80%. Ironically, the highest average turnout in the 2009 EP elections was among those aged 70 to 73, who encompassed approximately 47.6% of total voter turnout. From the age of 73 onwards, the turnout declines rapidly, which can to a significant extent be attributed to health issues.

2.2 Generational explanations

Generational explanations relate to those factors that characterise a specific generation. They are also known as cohort effects, referring to differences in the social characteristics between ‘cohorts’ or generational groups. Each generation has its own particular socially determined views on society and politics, which can have pervasive effects on their voting and turnout behaviour regardless of their age.¹³ For example, in the group aged 60 years

9 D. Denver, ‘Another Reason to Support Marriage? Turnout and the Decline of Marriage in Britain’, *British Journal of Political Science* 10/4 (2008), 666–80.

10 Bhatti and Hanssen, ‘Retiring from Voting’.

11 Ibid.; A. Goerres, ‘Why Are Older People More Likely to Vote? The Impact of Ageing on Electoral Turnout in Europe’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 9/1 (2007), 90–121; Milbrath, *Political Participation*.

12 Bhatti, Hanssen, and Wass, ‘The Relationship Between Age and Turnout’.

13 A. Blais et al., ‘Where Does Turnout Decline Come From?’ *European Journal of Political Research* 43 (2004), 221–36.

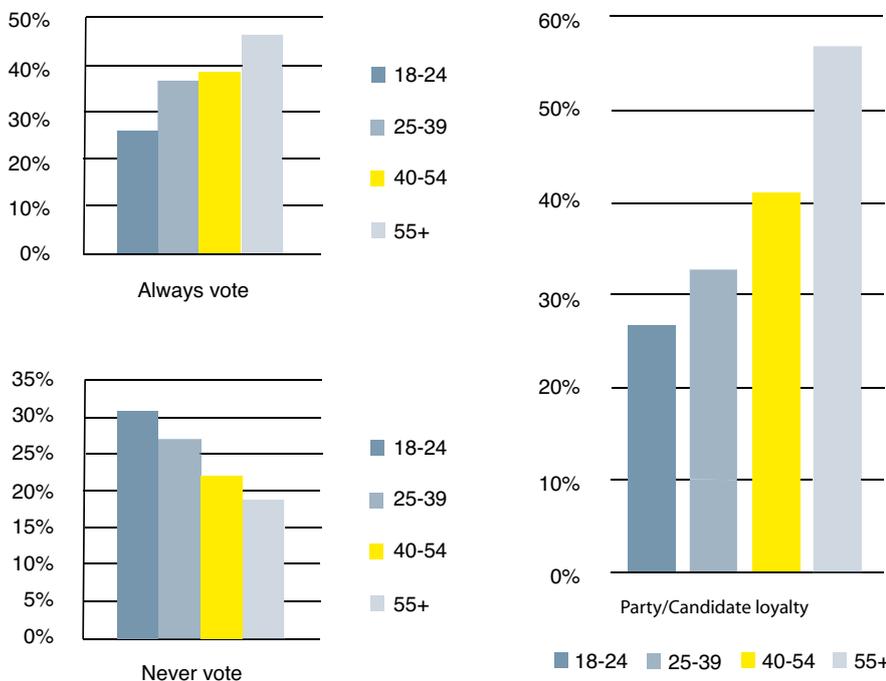


and over, the overall educational level of women is much lower than that of men. This could have a serious impact on their voting behaviour, as next to ageing, education is one of the strongest individual-level factors accounting for turnout.¹⁴ From this perspective, the paper thus suggests that the effects of age as a generational factor do not start only when reaching a certain age, but are present already throughout the ageing process from birth.

2.2.1. Habit and loyalty

One of the strongest generational effects explaining the higher and increasing turnout of senior voters is voting habit and party loyalty. Past voting experiences influence the future probability of voting.¹⁵ Forty-one per cent of the overall population feel that it is their duty as citizens to vote and thus always do so.¹⁶ However, there is a significant difference between generations. While this percentage is higher among the senior generation, reaching up to 46%, the number is drastically lower among the younger generation aged 18–24 years, where only 26% always vote. In contrast, only 19% of seniors say they never vote, considerably lower than the 24% among the overall population. Moreover, 57% of the senior generation indicate that they have ‘always voted for the political party or candidate they voted for in the recent European Parliament elections’, which is significantly higher when compared with the overall percentage of 45%.

Figure 5 Voting habit, abstention habit and party or candidate loyalty in the EP elections.



Source: Data from the European Parliament, *Post-election Survey 2014: European Elections 2014, Socio-Demographic Annex, pp. 31 & 47.*

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Goerres, 'Why Are Older People More Likely to Vote?'

¹⁶ European Parliament, *Post-election Survey 2014*. Accessed on 10 December 2014.



Seniors thus appear to have a significantly stronger habit and impulse to vote, as part of their perceived civic duty. Although one could hypothesise that adherence to past voting experiences and the social norm of voting positively increases by age,¹⁷ the senior generation seems to be much more sensitive to habits and civic duty than the younger generations. Moreover, regardless of ideological alliances, the senior generation also has a much stronger sense of party loyalty when compared to the irregular voting behaviour of the younger generation. While voting habit thus responds to the senior generation's ideas about being a 'proper citizen', party loyalty refers to their sense of being a 'proper partisan'.

These two aspects of voting behaviour are less present among the younger generations, and the drastic differences in mindset between generations indicate that voting behaviour surpasses individual ageing effects and can in fact largely be subscribed to generational differences. The current generation of seniors thus is composed of by far the most habitual and loyal voters by age group, and their generation is more bound to voting habits than the younger generation (Figure 5). This is the case in every European country. It is most apparent in Malta, Cyprus and Spain, where over 70% of seniors always vote. Remarkably lower levels of habitual voting can be seen in the UK, Denmark, Greece, Sweden, the Netherlands and Ireland, with less than 45%.

2.3. EU and politics-related explanations

As this paper focuses on seniors' participation in the European elections, it also looks at certain effects related to the (lack of) knowledge about the EU institutions and the (lack of) trust in politics in general. The paper finds that, although knowledge of the EU is notably higher among seniors when compared to younger people, their trust in politics and perception of the EU is much more negative.

2.3.1. Knowledge of the EU

Seniors' knowledge of and information about the EU and European elections—that is, the election date, the functioning (or even the very existence) of the EU, and so forth—is significantly above average: 60% of senior voters can be considered to be well informed versus 57% on average and only 50% among youth voters.¹⁸ This trend can be witnessed in all EU countries. Yet, with the exception of Luxembourg and Germany, knowledge about the EU is higher in the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) and newer member states than in the original member states, both on average and among seniors.

¹⁷ See, for example, Blais et al., 'Where Does Turnout Decline Come From?'; Goerres, 'Why Are Older People More Likely to Vote?'.
¹⁸ European Parliament, *Post-election Survey 2014*.



Moreover, seniors are more likely to have a media recall of news and information about the EP and European issues read in the press, seen on the Internet or television, or heard on the radio.¹⁹ This recall is particularly high in Sweden, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg, but notably lower in Denmark, the UK, Poland, the Czech Republic, Ireland and Italy.

2.3.2. Perception of the EU

While seniors reported high turnout rates, most senior abstainers took the decision not to vote weeks or months before the actual elections, which points to a deeply rooted distrust and dissatisfaction towards not only the EU but also politics in general.²⁰ Twenty-five per cent of senior abstainers claim to have an active aversion to politics, which is slightly higher than the 23% on average but sizeably more than the 15% among youth abstainers. Sixteen per cent of seniors are not interested in politics in general, while 15% believe voting doesn't change anything (compared to 14% overall and 10% among youth abstainers).

In addition to their above-average lack of trust in politics in general, and contrary to their knowledge of the EU, seniors' perception of the EU is also considerably more negative than average.²¹ Seniors have the lowest likelihood of viewing membership in the EU as a good development for their country. About half the senior population considers EU membership as a positive circumstance, compared to 57% among the younger population. The other half is either neutral or negative towards the EU. This negative perception of the EU and its institutions is particularly strong in the CEECs and Germany.²² Only in two countries, Luxemburg and Malta, does trust in the EP reach the full 50%. In all other countries seniors have an overall negative image of the EU.

Twenty five per cent of senior abstainers claim to have an active aversion to politics

3. Conclusions on senior voter turnout

The data on voter turnout in the European elections indicate that seniors are active voters. Not only is their turnout the highest compared to the overall population, but contrary to overall turnout their electoral participation rate has actually increased between 2009 and 2014. This runs contrary to and modifies the assumptions in the literature.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ In 2014 only 28% of people aged 55 and over expressed trust in the EU, contrary to 31% of the overall population and 42% among people aged 15 to 24 years. Similarly, the perception of the EU was least positive among this age group, with less than one-third (29%) having a positive image of the European Parliament (compared with 30% overall and 36% for people aged 15–24), fewer than half feeling that they understand the EU (52% overall, 54% among youth) and one in two being in favour of EU membership (51% overall, 57% among youth).

²² Eurobarometer, *Standard Eurobarometer 81: Public Opinion in the European Union*, European Commission DG Communication and TNS Opinion and Social (2014), accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81_publ_en.pdf on 22 October 2014.



This paper has looked at three factors explaining senior voter turnout. First, age-related effects seem to have an important impact, as social disengagement and bad health are detrimental to seniors' turnout. Most importantly, it seems that turnout increases among the early seniors, but sharply declines among the late seniors aged 75 years and over.

Second, generational effects such as voting habit and party loyalty seem to explain to a large extent the difference in voting behaviour between the senior and younger generations. While ageing effects explain more the *absence* of seniors in elections, the high and increasing senior voter turnout is best explained by the senior generation's sense of civic duty and partisanship.

Third, EU-related effects seem to point in the direction of a very negative attitude towards the EU and politics in general. Although this would suggest that seniors are less likely to vote, there doesn't seem to be a direct link between their (lack of) sympathy for the EU/politics and their voter turnout. Although seniors' image of the EU is generally rather negative, with a little over 50% seeing it as a bad thing, this has in no way prevented them from having the highest—and even increasing—turnout of the entire population. All of this indicates that senior voter turnout has more to do with being a good citizen (habit) and a good partisan (loyalty) than with individual ageing, political conviction or attachment to the EU.



Part II: Seniors' voting intentions

This second part of the paper covers the question of how seniors' voting preferences affect election results. It will focus on the voting intentions of senior voters in the 2014 EP elections, and consists of two sections: the facts on seniors' voting intentions and possible explanations for these.

1. Voting intentions in the 2014 EP elections: the facts

This section presents the data on voting *intentions* of seniors in the 2014 European Parliament elections. Following the first part of this paper, this section questions how the active voting behaviour of seniors translates into electoral impact. After explaining some hurdles in measuring the senior vote, this chapter will first compare seniors' voting intentions for the European Parliament elections, and then move on to explain these intentions based on European seniors' positions on a number of key issues. Generally, the data point out that senior voters are much more likely to vote for an EPP member party, with very few exceptions.

1.1. Measuring voting intentions

The data on which these findings are based are the result of an online survey conducted in the run-up to the 2014 EP elections. The data were collected by the Free University of Amsterdam and the University of Zürich through an online cross-age survey.²³ The survey covers 25 EU member states, with limited data available for Belgium, and none for Luxembourg and Malta. The data collected do not allow us to discuss the effective number of votes cast in the elections, as online samples have a particular tendency to be biased towards the younger, urban, highly educated, politically interested male population. Moreover, the effective electoral results per age group are politically sensitive information, usually collected and held by the political parties and therefore not readily available. This means that we are limited to discussing the *relative* inclination of the senior population to vote for the EPP member parties, as compared to the general population.

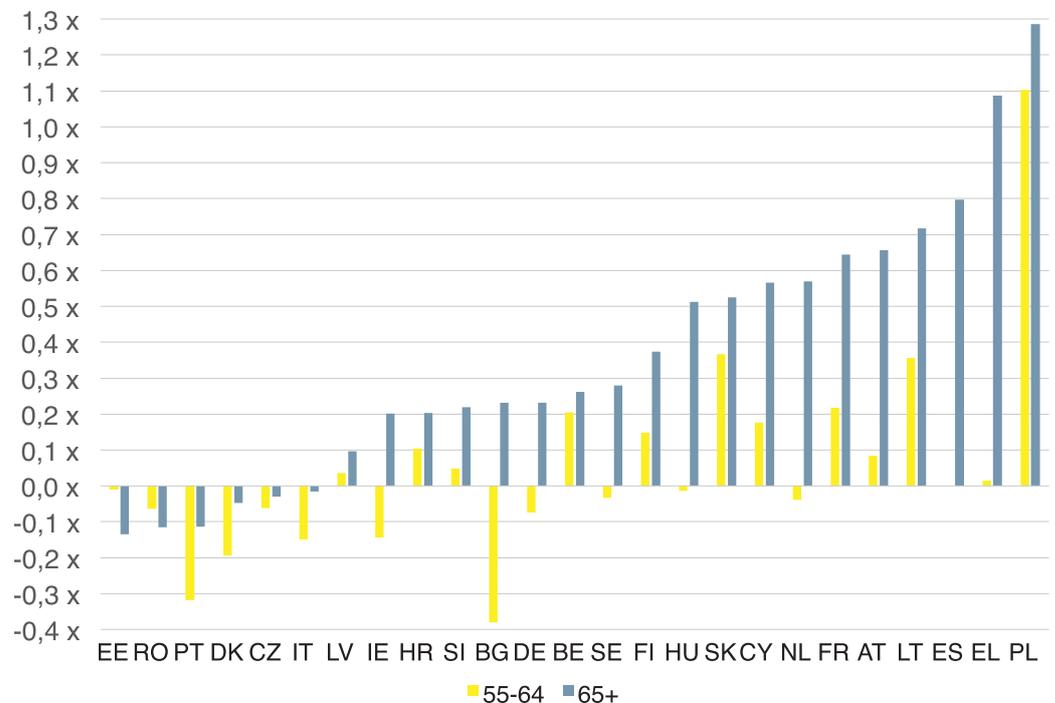
²³ EUvox, Amsterdam and Zürich: Kieskompas (VU University) / Preference Matcher (University of Zürich) (2014), accessed at <http://www.euvox2014.eu/> on 01 November 2014.



1.2. Comparison among countries and population

The data indicate that the likelihood of voting for a political party belonging to the EPP family increases with age. In the category 55 years of age and over, there is a higher than average likelihood of voting EPP in the vast majority of EU countries (Figure 6), with only a limited number of exceptions (considering that intentions could not be measured in Belgium, Luxembourg and Malta). In Portugal, Romania and Estonia the registered likelihood of voting EPP is clearly lower than average, while in Italy, Denmark and the Czech Republic the likelihood is only slightly lower or equal to that of the overall population. The share of EPP voters further increases with age and is particularly high among the population 65 years and over in all EU member states, and consequently higher even than among voters aged 55–64 years (with the exception of Romania and Estonia). In Ireland, Croatia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Germany, Belgium and Sweden, the 65+ age group is over 20% more likely to vote EPP. In Hungary, Slovakia, Cyprus, the Netherlands, France and Austria, this rises to over 50%, while in Greece and Poland the 65+ (and in Poland the entire 55+) age group are more than twice as likely as the rest of the population to vote EPP. It is thus quite clear that seniors, being the largest population group of Europe, have a strong impact on the election results for the EPP member parties, with an above-average share of EPP votes in most member states coming from seniors.

Figure 6 Comparative inclination to vote EPP in the EU elections (seniors v. general population)



Source: Data from EUVox 2014.

Seniors also reported the lowest share of undecided voters. This corresponds to earlier findings that senior voters already have a clear idea about which candidate or party they will vote for a considerable length of time before the actual elections.



2. Explaining voting intentions

This section tries to explain the voting behaviour of senior voters. The paper weighs two factors against each other: on the one hand, the political self-identification of seniors and the key issues they hold dear, and on the other hand, their party loyalty. The analysis points out that both factors play an important role. Seniors are generally more conservative and are hence more inclined to vote for the EPP parties on the centre–right of the political spectrum. However, for the senior generation, party loyalty continues to play a particularly large role.

2.1. Conservative self-identification and key issues

The data show that seniors are consistently more conservative than the overall population across the EU.²⁴ Even within the senior population, a trend can be distinguished that the age group 65+ is more conservative or right of centre than the group aged 55 to 64 years. This trend holds for all EU member states, with the exception of Poland and Italy, and to a lesser extent Hungary and Croatia, where older respondents were more likely to consider themselves politically ‘progressive’ or left of centre compared to the general population. Overall, a larger share of seniors in the CEECs consider themselves politically conservative compared to those in Western or Southern Europe.²⁵

This centre–right political self-identification is also confirmed in the key issues that seniors hold dear (Figure 7). Generally speaking, seniors across the European Union are politically, economically and socio-culturally right of centre. Economically, they tend to favour low government intervention in the economy and cuts in government spending. On the other hand, seniors are supportive of the redistributive role of the state and its role in providing social protection against lay-offs and through public health provisions. Politically, seniors are in favour of a common EU foreign policy and strong and joint action against aggressors such as Russia, as well as being more inclined to value considerations of security over personal freedoms and privacy. Socio-culturally, seniors are strongly in favour of the more conservative values and traditions. Same-sex marriage and the recreational use of cannabis are rejected by a clear majority of the 55+ population, while immigration and Islam are perceived as threatening to their values and traditions. A notable exception here is the right to abortion, which is supported by an overwhelming

²⁴ In the online survey, more than half (53%) of people aged 65 and over consider themselves to be politically conservative, placing themselves right of centre on the political spectrum. This compares to 47% of the 55–64 age group and just 41% of the voting-age population overall, indicating much lower shares among younger population groups (EUVOX, 2014).

²⁵ Of the countries reporting higher than average figures, eight come from the Central and Eastern European member states, with Croatia, Poland and Hungary being the exceptions. The five member states reporting the highest share of conservative self-placement among seniors (of both the 55–64 and 65+ age group) are all Central and Eastern European Countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Estonia), with over three-fourths of all seniors being politically conservative. The UK (63% of 65+, 54% of 55–64) and the Scandinavian countries (around 55% of 65+ but less than half of 55–64) complete the top, whereas conservative self-placement of seniors in the rest of the EU12 remains at or below the EU average, with Germany reporting figures of 53% (65+) and 51% (55–64), and all other countries remaining just below 50% (EUVOX, 2014).



majority of seniors across the EU. Finally, there is solid support for EU membership and its main attributes, notably the free movement of workers and the euro. Yet, seniors are also of the opinion that non-EU institutions such as the International Monetary Fund should not become involved in European public economics.

Nonetheless, significant differences by age in these positions have been observed. Among seniors, the younger generation aged 55–64 years consistently reports a more progressive position than does the 65+ generation. Government intervention in the economy, wealth redistribution (both horizontally between EU member states and vertically between citizens), social protection against lay-offs and public health provisions as well as more liberal values are consistently reported. Freedom of speech and freedom to protest are supported over security concerns by a majority of the 55- to 64-year-old generation. EU membership, the euro and freedom of movement are also supported slightly more among this generation.

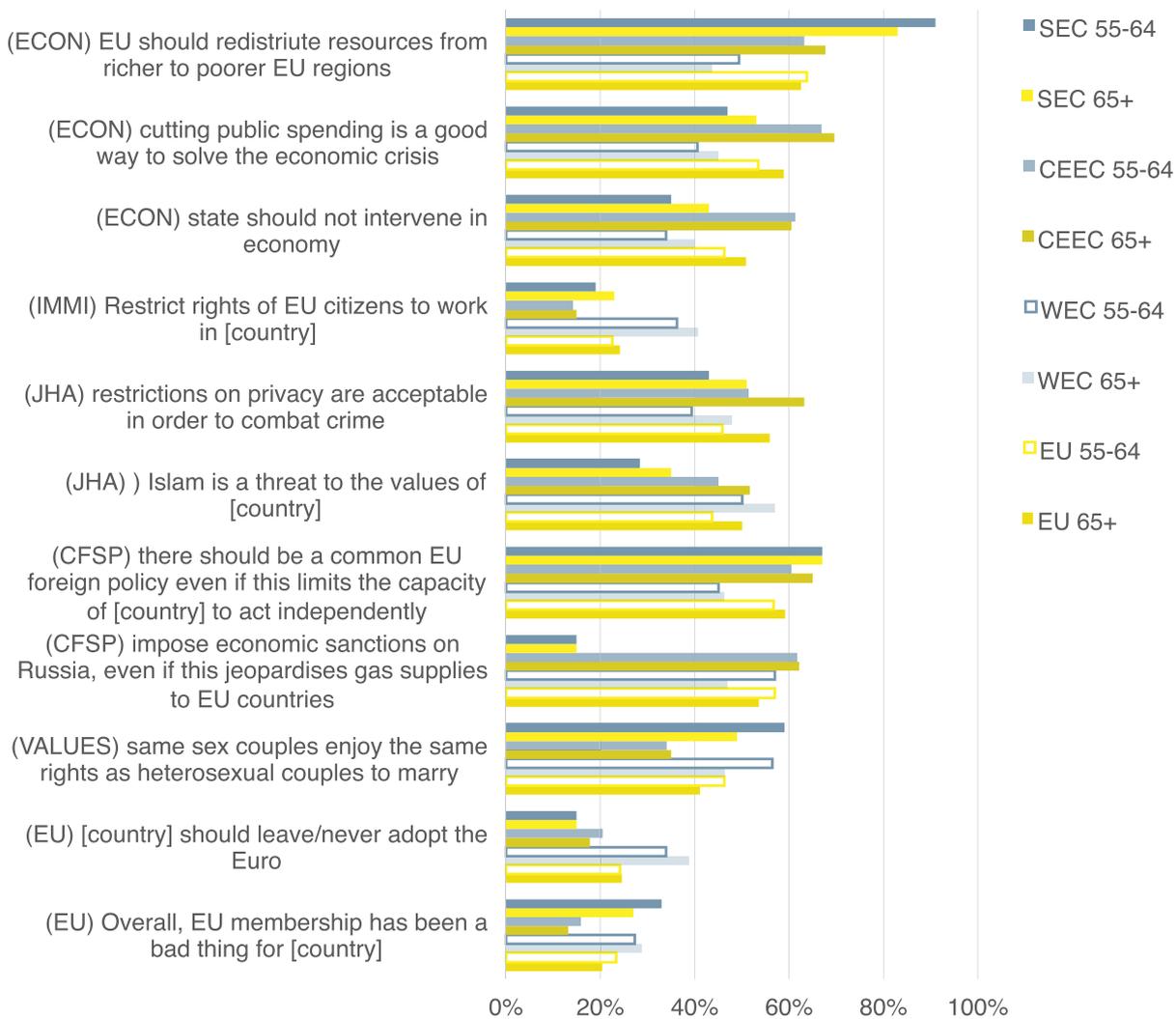
Figure 7 Percentage of senior respondents in favour of ...



Source: Data from EUVox 2014.



Figure 8 Percentage of senior respondents grouped by EU region in favour of ... (selected issues)



Source: Data from EUVox 2014.

Furthermore, we also observe significant differences by region in seniors' political positions (Figure 8). In Western European countries, seniors are economically more moderate than their peers in the rest of the EU and reject cuts in public spending as the way out of the crisis while favouring some state intervention in the economy. They are equally liberal on values. On the other hand, they are least supportive of the EU. Seniors from West European countries are most strongly against EU membership, the euro and the free movement of workers in the EU, while a majority reject wealth redistribution from richer to poorer EU regions. On immigration and multiculturalism as well, they hold strongly negative opinions.



Seniors from CEECs, on the other hand, seem to be the complete opposite. While being economically more conservative, they are in favour of wealth redistribution in the EU and the free movement of workers. They are most conservative on liberal values such as same-sex marriage and abortion, and favour security concerns over privacy. There is a huge gap when it comes to the desirability of sanctions against Russia, with seniors from the CEECs strongly in favour, regardless of the economic consequences for the EU. Seniors from the CEECs are, perhaps not surprisingly, most in favour of a common EU foreign policy. Overall, they are the most-pro EU group of all seniors in the EU.

Seniors from Southern European countries generally take a middle position between those of Eastern European and Western European seniors, though notably, they are most strongly in favour of wealth redistribution between the EU regions and can also be considered the most liberal among seniors in the EU, with a relatively liberal position on values and traditions such as immigration, multiculturalism and acceptance of same-sex marriage. A common EU foreign policy is also most strongly supported by seniors in the South European countries, even though they do not consider that the EU should act against Russia regardless of the economic consequences for the EU.

This analysis would indicate that citizens in the EU are currently more conservative with age.

While it is difficult to draw general conclusions on seniors Europe wide, this analysis would indicate that citizens in the EU are currently more conservative with age. This trend can be seen both in the more conservative self-identification of seniors vis-à-vis youth and the overall population, and also within the senior population itself, where a distinctly more conservative 65+ generation can be distinguished. Given that most EPP member parties are to be found in the centre to right-of-centre sector of the political spectrum and are in favour of the EU, the overall conservative self-identification of seniors seems to be an important factor in explaining the high likelihood of seniors to vote EPP.

2.2. Party loyalty

Whereas seniors are clearly more conservative than young voters, some factors discussed in the first chapter lead us to question political self-identification as the main indicator for seniors' voting behaviour. As explained in Part I, senior turnout and mobilisation is in large part the result of their voting habit and party loyalty. Moreover, despite the overall strong results of EPP member parties among senior voters, we noticed major differences in political self-identification among seniors, both between early and late seniors, and between different regions.



The success of the EPP member parties among senior voters across Europe can thus not be attributed solely to the ‘conservative connection’ of seniors. Whereas seniors consider themselves to be right of centre and conservative, and this is without doubt an important factor explaining the success and large share of votes cast in favour of the EPP family, the decision to turn out and cast their votes is strongly determined by party loyalty (Figure 5). The EPP family’s electoral result in the EP elections is thus at least partly the result of having a solid base of loyal, right-of-centre senior voters.

3. Conclusions on seniors’ voting intentions

This section of the paper has assessed how the large and increasing share of senior voters impacts the election results. The data show that seniors are relatively more inclined to vote for EPP member parties across the EU, indicating an increased likelihood to vote centre–conservative with age. As to the why of these developments, the paper has weighed political persuasion and party loyalty against each other. While the current generation of seniors is predominantly centre–right and conservative, this alone cannot fully explain the success of EPP member parties among seniors in the elections. Rather, party loyalty continues to play an important role in their voting behaviour, and in particular in the decision to turn out in the elections.

This result should be of particular importance to the EPP and its member parties, but is also relevant for other parties across Europe. Party loyalty is a particular characteristic of the senior generation that is not found among younger generations. The coming generations are much more undecided on their voting intentions and are much less affected by any sense of loyalty to a single party. This means that as the generations move up, not only EPP member parties but also other parties placed differently on the political spectrum are much less likely to be able to rely on a solid electoral base of loyal voters.



Part III: Representation of seniors in the EP

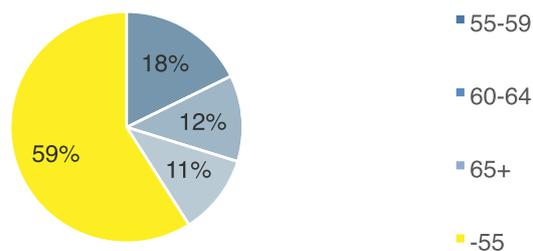
1. Seniors in the EP

This section of the paper will look at the spread of senior MEPs across time, political groups, committees and countries.

1.1. Senior MEPs

Not only is the EP working on policy that concerns the senior population, but of course, seniors are also active *in* the EP. At the start of the eighth legislature, 41% of MEPs could be considered seniors, that is, aged 55 years and over. Those aged 55–59 years make up 17.7%, those 60–64 12.1%, and those 65 and over 11.2% (Figure 9). Sixty-seven per cent of senior MEPs, the overwhelming majority, are men, while only 33% are women. The EP has also aged over the years; in 2009 only 38% of MEPs were aged 55 and over, which means that the number of senior MEPs increased by 3% over five years. Seventeen per cent of senior MEPs in the seventh legislature were aged 55–59 years, 14% were aged 60–64 and 7% were aged 65 and over.

Figure 9 MEPs per age group, eighth legislature



Source: Data from the authors' own statistics based on those of the European Parliament, *MEPs*.

Overall, those aged 55 years and over are overrepresented vis-à-vis the population share. Forty-one per cent of the MEPs are seniors, while only 30.9% of the EU population can be considered seniors. Conversely, however, the age group 65 and over is severely underrepresented, as only 9% of MEPs are aged 65+, while this age group represents 18.2% of the population. Particularly in Cyprus and Luxembourg this overrepresentation is extreme, as their share of people aged 55+ is only about 25%, while 66.7% of their MEPs are of that age group. A few countries show a slight underrepresentation. In Malta,



for example, the share of seniors in the overall population is 33.5%, while only 18% of their MEPs can be considered senior. Yet, the overall trend is one of senior overrepresentation (Table 1).

Table 1 Seniors in the EP compared to those in the overall population (%)^a

Country	55+ MEPs	55–59 MEPs	60–64 MEPs	65+ MEPs	55+ POP	55–59 POP	60–64 POP	65+ POP
CY	66.7	50	16.7	0.0	24.5	5.8	5.5	13.2
LU	66.7	16.7	50.0	0.0	25.1	6.1	5	14
PL	60.8	23.5	20.0	17.3	28.4	7.6	6.6	14.2
BE	52.4	33.4	4.7	14.3	29.9	6.5	5.8	17.6
EL	52.4	33.4	9.5	9.5	32.1	6.2	5.8	20.1
EE	50	16.7	0.0	33.3	30.9	6.7	6.2	18
DE	49	24	14.6	10.4	33.8	6.9	6.2	20.7
FR	48.6	14.8	14.9	18.9	30.3	6.4	6.3	17.6
FI	46.2	23.1	23.1	0.0	33	7	7.2	18.8
SK	46.2	23.1	7.7	15.4	26.5	7.2	6.2	13.1
LT	45.5	18.2	18.2	9.1	30.4	6.4	5.8	18.2
UK	45.2	16.4	16.5	12.3	28.6	5.8	5.6	17.2
SE	45	20	10.0	15.0	31.2	6	6.1	19.1
AT	44.4	16.6	27.8	0.0	30.1	6.4	5.6	18.1
EU28	39.7	18.4	12.3	9.0	30.9	6.6	6.1	18.2
LV	37.5	12.5	25.0	0.0	31.6	6.7	6.1	18.8
ES	37	12.9	5.6	18.5	29.1	6	5.4	17.7
HR	36.4	36.4	0.0	0.0	32	7.4	6.5	18.1
IT	31.5	15.1	10.9	5.5	33.7	6.4	6.1	21.2
RO	31.3	15.7	9.3	6.3	30	7.2	6.5	16.3
CZ	28.6	19.1	4.7	4.8	30.8	7	7	16.8
PT	28.6	14.3	9.5	4.8	32.1	6.5	6.2	19.4
IE	27.3	9.1	18.2	0.0	22.6	5.5	4.9	12.2
NL	26.9	7.7	11.5	7.7	29.7	6.6	6.3	16.8
SI	25	0.0	0.0	25.0	31	7.4	6.5	17.1
HU	23.8	4.8	9.5	9.5	31.7	7.8	6.7	17.2
DK	23.1	7.7	7.7	7.7	30.2	6.3	6.1	17.8
BG	18	12.0	0.0	6.0	33.5	7.1	7.2	19.2
MT	16.7	16.7	0.0	0.0	31.3	7	7.1	17.2

Sources: Data from the authors' own statistics based on those of the European Parliament, MEPs; Eurostat 2014.

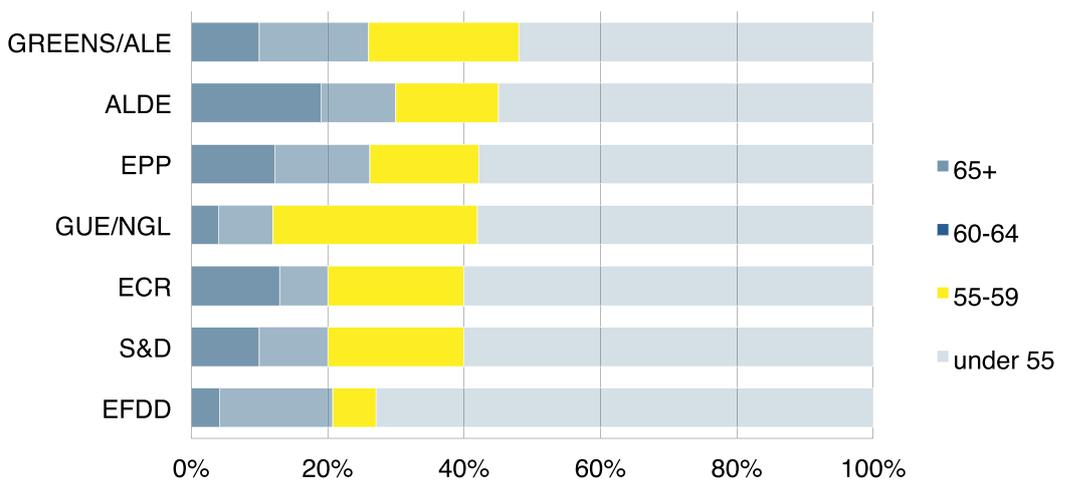
^aThis table shows the comparison between the share of seniors elected to the European Parliament and the share of seniors in the overall population, according to different seniors' age groups. The figures in the 'MEP' columns indicate the percentage of the total MEPs from the EU member states who belong to a particular age group. The figures in the 'POP' columns indicate the percentage of the population from the EU member states who belong to those age groups.



1.2. Age distribution by group

Contrary to what one might believe at first sight, the ‘oldest’ political group in the EP currently is the Greens/EFA. With 48%, they have the highest share of senior MEPs. At the other end are the extreme right and left groups, which are the youngest: 79.9% of Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group members and 88% of European United Left – Nordic Green Left members are younger than 60. When compared to their composition in 2009, some important changes can be noted. The Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group now have a considerably younger composition, whereas the Greens/European Free Alliance Group, the Socialists and Democrats, and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe now have a considerably older composition. This change can be explained by the fact that populist and Eurosceptic parties ‘won’ the elections and filled up their ranks and new seats with young members. In contrast, the traditional parties lost some seats, and here, usually the younger and less experienced MEPs have to pay the price.

Figure 10 Senior MEPs per political group (2014)



Source: Data from the authors’ own statistics based on those of the European Parliament, MEPs.

1.3. Age distribution by country

Although there is no clear geographical line to be drawn between EU countries, many Southern and Central and Eastern European countries (except for the Baltic countries) have a younger proportion of MEPs, while large member states generally have an older proportion of MEPs. Only six member states (Cyprus, Luxembourg, Poland, Belgium, Estonia and Greece) have more senior than younger MEPs (Table 2). Some major differences can be seen between 2009 and 2014. For instance, Poland saw its number



of senior MEPs doubled, from 30% to 60.8%, while Ireland saw its number more than halved, from 66.7% to 27.3%.²⁶

Table 2 Senior MEPs per country

Country	55+	55–59	60–64	65+	MEPs	Under 55
CY	66.7%	50.0%	16.7%	0.0%	6	33.3%
LU	66.7%	16.7%	50.0%	0.0%	6	33.3%
PL	60.8%	23.5%	20.0%	17.3%	51	39.2%
BE	52.4%	33.4%	4.7%	14.3%	21	47.6%
EL	52.4%	33.4%	9.5%	9.5%	21	47.6%
EE	50.0%	16.7%	0.0%	33.3%	6	50.0%
DE	49.0%	24.0%	14.6%	10.4%	96	51.0%
FR	48.6%	14.8%	14.9%	18.9%	74	51.4%
FI	46.2%	23.1%	23.1%	0.0%	13	53.8%
SK	46.2%	23.1%	7.7%	15.4%	13	53.8%
LT	45.5%	18.2%	18.2%	9.1%	11	54.5%
UK	45.2%	16.4%	16.5%	12.3%	73	54.8%
SE	45.0%	20.0%	10.0%	15.0%	20	55.0%
AT	44.4%	16.6%	27.8%	0.0%	18	56.6%
EU28	41%	17.7%	12.1%	11.2%		59%
LV	37.5%	12.5%	25.0%	0.0%	8	62.5%
ES	37.0%	12.9%	5.6%	18.5%	54	63.0%
HR	36.4%	36.4%	0.0%	0.0%	11	63.6%
IT	31.5%	15.1%	10.9%	5.5%	73	68.5%
RO	31.3%	15.7%	9.3%	6.3%	32	68.7%
PT	28.6%	14.3%	9.5%	4.8%	21	71.4%
CZ	28.6%	19.1%	4.7%	4.8%	21	71.4%
IE	27.3%	9.1%	18.2%	0.0%	11	72.7%
NL	26.9%	7.7%	11.5%	7.7%	26	73.1%
SI	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	8	75.0%
HU	23.8%	4.8%	9.5%	9.5%	21	76.2%
DK	23.1%	7.7%	7.7%	7.7%	13	76.9%
BG	18.0%	12.0%	0.0%	6.0%	17	82.0%
MT	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	6	83.3%

Sources: Data from the authors' own statistics based on those of the European Parliament, *MEPs*; Eurostat 2014.

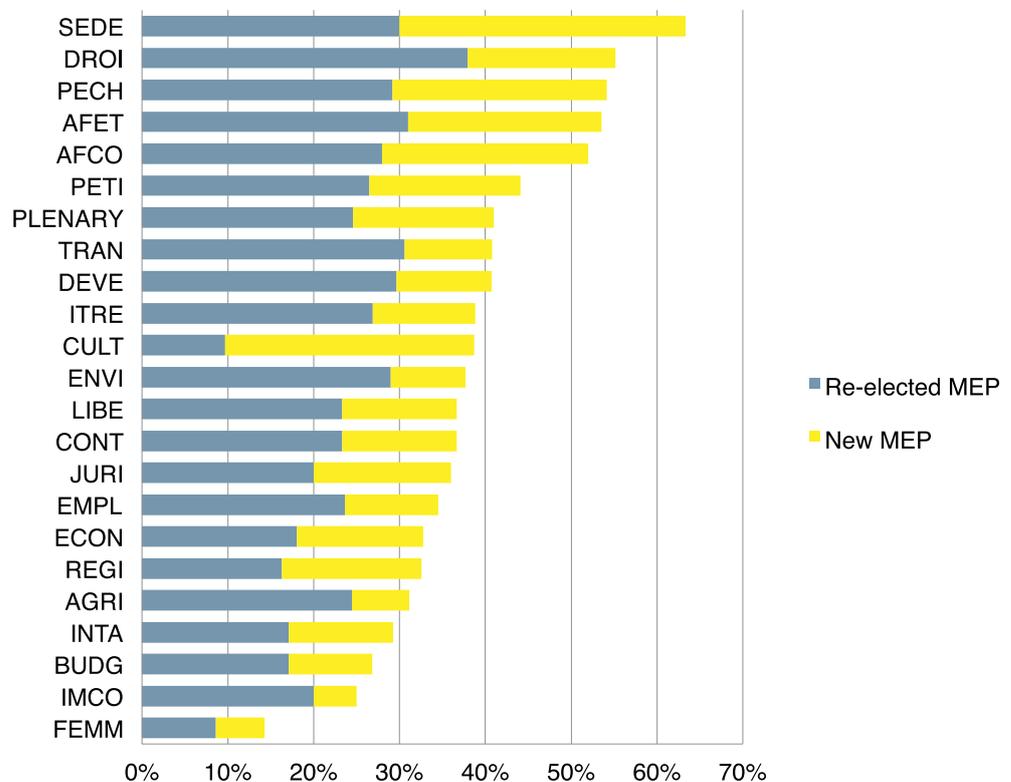
²⁶ The number of senior MEPs more than doubled in Finland, Malta and Poland and increased notably in the Austrian, Belgian, Greek, Estonian, Dutch and Romanian delegations. The number of senior MEPs elected in Ireland and Latvia was halved, while the composition of the Danish, German, Italian, Hungarian and Spanish delegations is considerably younger in the eighth legislature. In all other countries, the balance between younger and older MEPs remained more or less stable.



1.4. Age distribution by committee

Contrary to the age distribution by country, a very clear distinction between senior and younger MEPs can be drawn between committees. The Security and Defence (63%), Human Rights (55%), Foreign Affairs (54%), Fisheries (54%) and Constitutional Affairs (52%) committees each have a higher than average share of senior MEPs, reflecting their more prestigious and senior character. Conversely, committees with less history or prestige, like the recently formed Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee (14%), have fewer senior MEPs. The senior/prestigious committees also have a high number of re-elected MEPs—'senior' in a different sense. Similarly, new and less prestigious committees have a higher share of newly elected MEPs (Figure 11).

Figure 11 Share of seniors per committee



Source: Data from the authors' own statistics based on those of the European Parliament, MEPs.

Senior MEPs also play important roles as committee chairs and group chairs. Twelve out of 22 committee chairs are senior MEPs, which amounts to 55%. Slightly younger are group chairs: only four out of nine group chairs—the co-presidents of the Party of European Socialists, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, European United Left – Nordic Green Left and Greens—are seniors.



2. Representation of seniors' interests

2.1. Intergroup on Active Ageing, Intergenerational Solidarity and Family Policies

Of course, the actual age of an MEP does not necessarily correspond with an interest in senior citizens and their interests. The EP is formally divided into several committees to handle different policy areas, and issues related to senior citizens are mainly dealt with in the Employment and Social Affairs Committee and the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee. However, the MEPs interviewed for this study²⁷ are unanimous in indicating that policies concerned with ageing, such as labour market involvement, social inclusion and physical well-being, are horizontal issues, too broad to be dealt with in separate committees.

For that reason, MEPs consider the Intergroup on Active Ageing, Intergenerational Solidarity and Family Policies as the most important platform on which to discuss seniors' issues. Although the Intergroup has a very broad focus, it is vital in connecting MEPs from different committees on a personal level to converge over active ageing policies. Intergroups are forums where MEPs from different party groups, interested in particular political topics, as well as informal actors and cross-group coalitions meet. Although the participation of MEPs in an intergroup thus largely depends on their personal motivations and interests, intergroups are an effective tool for bringing together like-minded MEPs across political groups and committees.

Representatives from relevant interest groups often form a large part of an MEP's, and therefore also an intergroup's, network.

Moreover, representatives from relevant interest groups often form a large part of an MEP's, and therefore also an intergroup's, network. The greatest advantage is that an intergroup allows for an in-depth study of a topic, which is much more difficult to achieve in a committee or in the plenary. In a way, the intergroup system is the EP's version of a stakeholder consultation system. Particularly by frequently inviting AGE Europe Platform, a pan-European platform for representation of seniors' interests and a regular partner in the Commission's stakeholder consultations, the Intergroup on Active Ageing, Intergenerational Solidarity and Family Policies manages to coordinate interests beyond the EP. Overall, the Intergroup is thus a relevant network in the political governance of the EU.

²⁷ This chapter is based on 11 interviews with Members of the European Parliament, conducted between September and December 2014.



2.2. Friends of the ESU

Next to the Intergroup on Active Ageing, Intergenerational Solidarity and Family Policies, which is an EP-wide cross-group initiative, the EPP has also launched its own initiative to increase attention to active ageing policies. Together with the ESU, the EPP launched the Friends of the ESU group on 9 December 2014. The aim of this group is to create a platform for interest and exchange on age-related policies and to form a bridge between the EP, on the one hand, and senior citizens and their national associations, on the other hand.

During the first meeting on 9 December, it became apparent to MEPs that there was a lack of information concerning the political areas where age-related subjects are discussed, as well as concerning the dynamics of seniors associations' interests. There was a common concern between the EPP, the ESU and national seniors' associations about the important role of demographic change in future policies both at the EU and member state levels. The human rights-based approach was seen as the fundamental basis for actions and strategies responding to the challenges of ageing societies. For that reason, it was decided to further stress the importance of active ageing policies.

3. Conclusions on representation of seniors' interests

The EP is a senior institution, in terms of both its history and its composition. It has a widespread overrepresentation of senior MEPs vis-à-vis those comprising the younger generations. The youngest political groups seem to be those with electoral success, while those in electoral trouble have more seniors in their ranks. Geographically, no clear distinction can be made between countries, although large member states generally have more senior MEPs. Regarding the committees, the older and more prestigious committees often have a greater number of senior and re-elected MEPs compared to newer committees.

However, the general overrepresentation of senior MEPs has not led to an overrepresentation of seniors' interests in the EP. While age-related policies are formally dealt with in the Employment and Social Affairs Committee and the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee, an important role is played by the Intergroup on Active Ageing, Intergenerational Solidarity and Family Policies, which provides a venue for bringing together like-minded actors from within and outside the EP. Moreover, the EPP itself has also launched the Friends of the ESU initiative to similarly promote active ageing policies in collaboration with national seniors associations.



Conclusion

This paper has analysed the impact of the increasing share of seniors in the European population on EU politics and elections. It has done so by looking at their voting behaviour in the 2014 EP elections. More specifically, it looked at senior voter turnout, at seniors' voting intentions and at representation of seniors' interests in the EP.

Regarding the turnout of seniors in the EP elections, the data showed that seniors are the most active voters, and increasingly so. Compared to all age groups in the population, seniors are the largest group of voters. When compared to the 2009 EP elections, there was also an increase in senior voter turnout in 2014. In explaining this, the paper found that the active voting behaviour of seniors was less a consequence of an individual ageing effect, but rather of generational effects. The analysis showed that the effects of ageing along with seniors' general stance towards politics would actually be reasons for them *not* to vote, as health issues and a lack of trust in politics are counter-incentives. Consequentially, the paper concludes that the voting habit and party loyalty of the senior generation are their main incentives to vote. To the senior generation, casting one's vote is a sign of being a good citizen and a good partisan, things to which the younger generation is much less sensitive.

Regarding seniors' voting intentions in the EP elections, the data showed that seniors are generally and consistently more likely to vote for EPP member parties. Moreover, seniors also report the lowest share of undecided voters, and often have already decided on their votes a long time ahead of the elections. While the paper has shown that seniors are generally more centre-right

The data showed that seniors are generally and consistently more likely to vote for EPP member parties"

and conservative, it concludes that, while politically conservative self-identification is an important motive for seniors to vote for EPP member parties, party loyalty is an important factor determining their electoral participation. Both factors thus contribute to explaining the electoral success of the EPP family, which can rely on a large, increasing and solid basis of loyal senior voters.

Overall, the voting behaviour of seniors thus seems to be defined more by generational effects than by individual ageing effects. The current senior generation's sensitivity to being good citizens and good partisans seems to at least partly determine their turnout during elections, as well as the party they will most likely vote for. This statement, of course, holds not only for the EPP and its member parties but also for parties of other ideologies. The senior generation does seem to offer a solid base of loyal voters for EPP member parties as well as for socialist or liberal parties—albeit to a lesser extent due to seniors' centre-right conservative self-identification. This conclusion begs the question of what impact the fading out of this generation will have on political parties and elections. Many parties will probably lose their loyal base of senior voters and see them replaced by a new generation of undecided swing voters. Only future research can tell.



Regarding the representation of seniors' interests in the EP, the paper shows that it is spread across different entities. EU politics are first and foremost focused on economic and financial aspects of the internal market, on the labour market and growth. The creation of an age-friendly society is captured within the realm of 'soft' social and health issues. The overrepresentation of senior MEPs has not led to an overrepresentation of seniors' interests in the EP. Even in the EPP—with the largest number of senior voters—it seems difficult to create openness to the call of senior citizens for age-related policies and an inclusive approach to an age-friendly society. At the crossroads of civil society, interest groups, MEPs and the Commission, the Intergroup on Active Ageing, Intergenerational Solidarity and Family Policies has an important role to play. In the various political groups interest representatives and MEPs can build bridges to stimulate and strengthen an age-friendly approach in all policy areas, stressing that effective measures should be taken to ensure the full implementation of the rights of all citizens, including seniors.



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