

Generations forgotten

Report of a survey commissioned by Bank of America on behalf of PRIME into attitudes towards older entrepreneurship across the UK

A PRIME Report
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Bank of America



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The PRIME Initiative was set up by Prince Charles to help people aged 50 and over to find financial independence and personal fulfilment through self-employment or setting up a business. PRIME is a registered charity number 261794-2 linked to Age Concern England. In Wales PRIME services are provided by The PRIME Trust (Cymru), registered charity number 05037535, trading as PRIME Cymru. Both charities are members of the Prince's Charities Group. The PRIME Initiative is working to provide a self-employment service to people who are aged over 50 across the UK.

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Contents

Executive summary	Page 4
The Survey: background and method	Page 5
Question 1	Page 7
Table 1 – Question 1	Page 8
Table 2 – Question 2	Page 10
Question 2	Page 11
Question 3a	Page 11
Table 3a – Question 3a	Page 12
Question 3b	Page 13
Table 3b – Question 3b	Page 14
Table 3c – Question 3c	Page 15
Question 3c	Page 16
Table 4a – Question 4a	Page 18
Question 4a	Page 19
Table 4b – Question 4b	Page 20
Question 4b	Page 21
Table 4c – Question 4c	Page 22
Question 4c	Page 23
Question 5	Page 25
Table 5 – Question 5	Page 26
Table 6 – Question 6	Page 28
Question 6	Page 29
Question 7	Page 31
Table 7 – Question 7	Page 32
Question 8	Page 33
Table 8 – Question 8	Page 34
Question 9	Page 35
Table 9 – Question 9	Page 36
Conclusion	Page 38
Bibliography	Page 39

Executive summary

This large survey demonstrates the difficulties the over 50s have in finding work as employees, principally because of ageist attitudes. And it highlights the key role self-employment therefore plays in making it possible to remain financially independent.

Data was collected from 1,000 respondents, half of them over 50 and half under (aged 16 to 50). The results show that something both significant and negative is happening to people in the labour market as they reach 50. The over 50s clearly perceive that ageist attitudes are still rife, and stifling their opportunities. This is just as unacceptable as gender or race discrimination.

The results also show that there is an interest in self-employment on a huge scale among older people. But government, regional development agencies, labour market agencies and local authorities have, in the main, failed to respond to the demand, and have tended to ignore the needs of the over 50s. There is a youth-centric attitude to enterprise which is inappropriate in an ageing society.

The survey reveals that there are far more people aged over 50 who are interested in enterprise than generally thought. One person in six in the 50-64 age cohort has considered it. Some 15 per cent of the over 50s polled had already started a business, with 4 per cent starting a business since turning 50.

Clearly self-employment is a particularly important option for the over 50s, since it appears they are being discriminated against in regular employment and jobs.

The Survey: background and method

This survey was commissioned from GfK to mark the launch of the partnership between Bank of America and PRIME in November 2008. The fieldwork was undertaken between 31st October and 2nd November 2008.

The survey was planned as a cross-sectional sample of the UK population from 16 onwards, seeking responses from 500 people aged between sixteen and fifty, and 500 people aged over 50, with about half those over 50 being in the age cohort fifty to sixty-four and half being over sixty-five.

In fact there were 1000 respondents with 250 from the fifty to sixty four age cohort, 222 from the over sixty-five cohort, and the remainder in the sixteen to 49 cohort.

The data has been collated by:

- (i) age in 10 year age bands from 16 to 64 and then over 65. Additionally a 50-64 age cohort was collated as there was deemed to be a difference between those aged 45-49 and those aged over 50:
- (ii) gender:
- (iii) four categories of class (AB, C1, C2 and DE):
- (iv) three categories of marital status (married, single and divorced or separated)
- (v) three categories of working status (full-time, part-time and workless)
- (vi) regions and UK nations

There were a number of questions addressed to the full age range or to those answering in a particular way (Questions 1 – 4) and a number of questions addressed only to those aged over 50 with some of the questions probing a particular answer.

The data in this report are drawn from the full data-set. The full data-set contains adjustments, or weightings, made to ensure samples were representative of the wider population. The full-data set also contains “Other” and “Don’t know” which is why the data reported here do not always add up. In collating the figures for this report, the weightings are not given. Anyone trying to re-work the data may find this a difficulty but, for bona fide researchers, PRIME is willing to consider making the full data-set available. However in providing the data PRIME has attempted to include enough information for the reader to assess the reliance that can be put on the findings.

No statistic of significance has been calculated for this report because it is attempting to give a broad overview. However in some of the categories the number of respondents was too small to put any reliance on the percentages. This is particularly true for the regional / national statistics. Here the data has been collapsed into three broad geographic bands:

North: Scotland, North-West, North, Yorkshire and the Humber

Midlands: East and West Midlands, Anglia, Wales and Northern Ireland

South: London, South-East and South-West

This collation of the statistics enables some broad comparison of the regional data. Data for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been incorporated for interest, but in the majority of cases the data-sets are too small to expect any reliability, and only the most tenuous conclusions can be drawn.

A series of tables have been drawn up in the same format for all questions in this report. The first table on a question looks at the differences in terms of the age of the respondents. The second tables look at differences in terms of gender and class. The third set examines marital and working status, while the final set looks at differences in terms of region and, more tentatively and with huge caveats on reliability due to the small numbers in the sample, nation.

In this report, under each question in the survey there is a section that draws out the relevant findings and a section that discusses the findings. This enables the reader to separate the facts from a discussion of the facts.

Question 1.

Survey question: *Generally speaking, what do you think the average age of a start-up entrepreneur is in the UK today? Would you say ...?*

1.1 The Findings

Fifty-three per cent of those questioned were of the opinion that the average age of a start-up entrepreneur in the UK was between the ages of 20 and 29. The percentage that thought that the average age was between 20 and 34 went up to 66 per cent (i.e. two people in every three held this view).

There was very little difference between the different age groups: they all held the same view with a remarkable consistency. The only difference was amongst the over 65 age cohort. Here there was a slightly more realistic view about the real average age of start-up entrepreneurs, although nearly 50 per cent still thought the average age was between 20 and 34.

There was little difference between genders in responding to this question, but a noticeable difference between classes. Those in classes D and E were less likely to opt for the average age of a start-up entrepreneur being 20 to 29 or 20 to 34 than those in classes A and B. However, although these data are not recorded in the tables in this report, the full data shows that in the responses from classes D and E, thirteen per cent were more likely to state that they did not know.

Amongst single, divorced, separated and workless people (amongst whom will be many aged over 65) there was a tendency to move away from the popular view that the average age of start-up entrepreneurs was somewhere between 20 and 34. However 20-34 was still by far the most popular choice.

1.2 Discussion of the findings

The clear finding here is that the majority of people, quite wrongly, believe that the average age of a start-up entrepreneur is between 20 and 29. In fact the peak age for starting a business is between 35 and 49 (Smallwood Report).

Why are so many people across all ages, regions, gender, class and working and marital status so completely and utterly wrong?

PRIME believes that we have, inadvertently, fostered a belief that young and enterprise are mutually dependent. It is common to hear people refer to “young enterprise” and most images of enterprise contain people who look youthful. There are very few images of older people in enterprise. National, regional and local authorities have also stressed the importance of young enterprise and the amount of money expended on youth enterprise, both through charities and from the public purse, far outweighs that put into olderpreneurship.

Table 1 Question 1

What is the average age of a start-up entrepreneur?

GfK Nov 08

Q 1

	Age of respondents							% All	Actual Nos
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	50-64	65+		
% selecting 20-29	48	59	56	59	54	57	42	53	567
% selecting 20-34	60	76	50	69	69	70	49	66	701
Total No Responding	113	145	182	178	160	250	222		1000

	Gender			Class			
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE
% selecting 20-29	54	51		61	52	56	45
% selecting 20-34	66	65		75	66	71	56
Total No Responding	487	513		208	314	215	283

	Marital Status				Working Status		
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep		Full-time	Part-time	Workless
% selecting 20-29	57	48	46		57	50	50
% selecting 20-34	70	62	58		69	70	62
Total No Responding	594	214	192		435	131	434

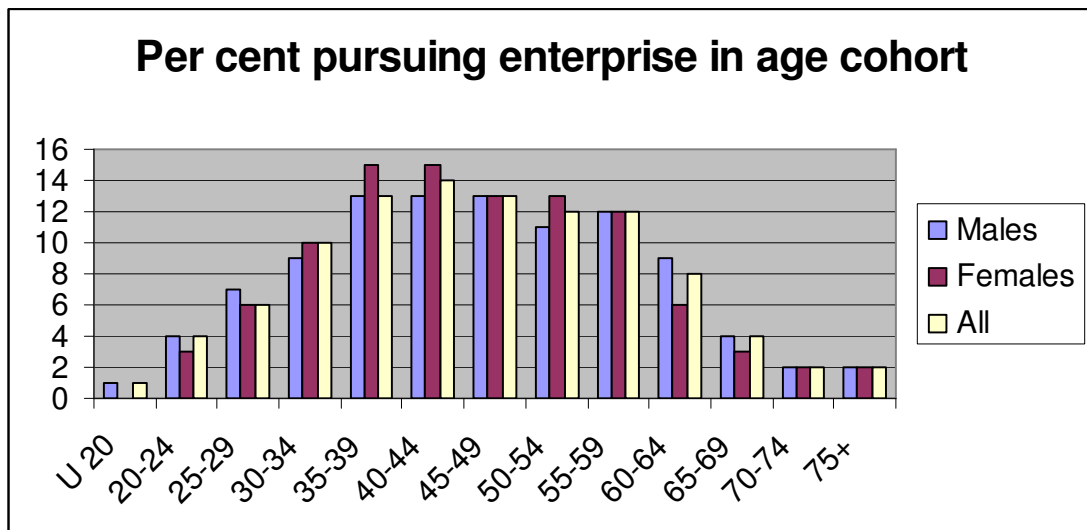
	Region & Country					
	North	Midlands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland
% selecting 20-29	60	46	46	58	44	42
% selecting 20-34	73	59	59	73	53	59
Total No Responding	319	271	410	86	46	27

The numbers for Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland are very small

Scotland has been included in North, and Wales & Northern Ireland in Midlands

For example Enterprise Week was originally established solely to focus on enterprise for the under 30s. It was only in 2008, as a result of the government strategy on enterprise, “Enterprise: unlocking all the UK’s talents” BERR March 2008, that an over 50s dimension was incorporated in Enterprise Week (or Global Enterprise Week as it became in 2008). Any calculation of the amount of money and effort that went into Global Enterprise Week between youth and over 50 would undoubtedly show that the major part was focussed on youth in 2008.

Underlying this is possibly a deeper malaise. It does appear that as a nation we still seem to accept that at 50 most things are over. For example we appear to accept passively that one person in three between the ages of 50 and state pension age should be workless. Those who recall the 70s are aware that a much lower rate of youth unemployment was considered unacceptable. There is clearly a social and cultural issue that needs to be addressed.



Data Source: Smallwood & Obiamiwe “Improving Employment Prospects for the over 50s” PRIME 2008 – www.primeinitiative.org.uk

Table 2 Question 2

Aged 30-34 more or less likely than those 55-59 to be entrepreneurial?

GfK Nov 08

Q 2

	Age of respondents							% All	Actual Nos
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	50-64	65+		
% selecting more likely	83	79	77	80	78	78	72	78	777
% selecting less likely	9	12	15	14	14	14	13	13	130
Total No Responding	113	145	182	178	160	250	222		1000

	Gender			Class			
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE
% selecting more likely	81	75		77	79	79	76
% selecting less likely	12	14		15	14	10	13
Total No Responding	487	513		208	314	215	263

	Marital Status				Working Status		
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep		Full-time	Part-time	Work-less
% selecting more likely	77	79	77		81	76	75
% selecting less likely	14	12	12		13	15	13
Total No Responding	594	214	192		435	131	434

	Region & Country					
	North	Midlands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland
% selecting more likely	81	74	78	80	66	88
% selecting less likely	11	16	13	11	26	6
Total No Responding	319	271	410	86	46	27

*The numbers for Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland are very small
Scotland has been included in North, and Anglia Wales & NI in Midlands*

Question 2

Survey question: *Do you think people aged 30 - 34 years are more likely or less likely than people aged 55 - 59 years to be entrepreneurial and inclined to start their own business?*

2.1 Survey findings

The data shows that across age, gender, class, marital and work status, and region of the UK, three-quarters of the population believe that someone aged between 30 and 34 is more likely to start a business than some-one aged over 55.

2.2 Discussion of the findings

Given the overwhelming findings from Question 1, this question, surprisingly, almost became redundant. It was included because such an extreme answer to Question 1 was not anticipated. However the findings are even more extreme than in Question 1 and demonstrate that the nation's perceptions are completely wrong-headed about age and enterprise. These findings merely add additional weight to the comments made in Section 1.2 above.

Question 3

Questions 3a

Survey question: *Please tell me whether you think there are likely to be more positives or more negatives to starting up a business later in life? By later in life I mean aged 50 or over. Would you say ...?*

3a.1 Findings in Survey

Of the three choices available:

- (i) there are more positives than negatives in starting a business at 50+
- (ii) there are more negatives than positives in starting a business at 50+
- (iii) the negatives and positives balance out in starting a business at 50+

Twenty-seven per cent say there are more positives than negatives, 48 per cent say there are more negatives than positives and 22 per cent say the positives and negatives balance out.

This is consistent across age, gender, class, marital and working status and region and nation. If any groups were to be singled out it would be those that are married that show slightly more pessimism about self-employment.

Table 3a

Question 3a

More positives or more negatives in starting a business at 50+

GfK Nov 08

Q 3 a

	Age of respondents							% All	Actual Nos
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	50-64	65+		
% selecting more positives	31	36	23	29	22	24	24	27	269
% selecting more negatives	50	42	52	46	51	48	48	48	482
% selecting equal + & -	19	19	23	23	24	24	22	22	220
Total No Responding	113	145	182	178	160	250	222		1000

	Gender			Class			
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE
% selecting more positives	27	27		27	29	25	26
% selecting more negatives	51	45		44	46	54	49
% selecting equal + & -	20	24		25	22	20	21
Total No Responding	487	513		208	314	215	263

	Marital Status				Working Status		
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep		Full-time	Part-time	Work-less
% selecting more positives	26	30	26		28	37	22
% selecting more negatives	52	40	46		50	36	50
% selecting equal + & -	19	27	25		20	25	24
Total No Responding	594	214	192		435	131	434

	Region & Country					
	North	Midlands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland
% selecting more positives	23	29	28	22	39	19
% selecting more negatives	51	47	47	50	40	70
% selecting equal + & -	24	21	22	25	15	11
Total No Responding	319	271	410	86	46	27

*The numbers for Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland are very small
Scotland has been included in North, and Anglia, Wales & NI in Midlands*

3a.2 Discussion of findings

While it does appear initially that people are generally more pessimistic about self-employment for the over 50s, there are perhaps some grounds for optimism in that a combination of those finding more positives and those finding a balance of positives and negatives are roughly equal in percentages to those finding more negatives.

This is an important point, given that there is a general degree of negativity in some quarters towards 50+ self-employment.

Question 3b

Survey question: *And which of the following, if any, do you think are positives of starting up a business later on in life?*

(Base : All adults aged 16+ saying more positives or equal combination of positives and negatives)

3b.1 Findings of the survey

This question probed those who saw more positives or an equal number of positives and negatives in starting your own business at 50+. While some 12 per cent said "Something else" and 2 per cent said "Don't know", more than three out of four saw:

- the professional experience gained by being older:
- the increase in personal and social skills that age usually brings: and
- the wider group of contacts that someone over 50 has accumulated:

as positive attributes for someone starting a business aged over 50, with three out of four people agreeing with even the least selected positive (over 50s have a wider group of contacts).

It is difficult to see major differences between age, class, gender, marital and working status or region and nation. Basically there is fairly strong agreement that these are the positive attributes that an older person brings to enterprise and the order in which these are selected is consistent. The positive attributes that someone aged over 50 brings to enterprise are always seen in this order:

- (i) more professional experience
- (ii) more personal and social skills
- (iii) a wider group of contacts

Table 3b Question 3b

What are positives in 50+ for starting a business

	Age of respondents							% All	Actual Nos
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	50-64	65+		
% selecting more professional experience	77	81	92	78	88	83	83	83	407
% selecting more personal & social skills	85	74	89	73	79	80	67	77	377
% selecting wider group of contacts	79	73	84	74	74	75	68	75	366
Total No Responding	113	145	182	178	160	250	222		488

	Gender			Class			
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE
% selecting more professional experience	83	83		87	88	82	75
% selecting more personal & social skills	80	75		81	81	76	70
% selecting wider group of contacts	73	77		79	79	71	68
Total No Responding	228	260		108	159	96	126

	Marital Status				Working Status		
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep		Full-time	Part-time	Work-less
% selecting more professional experience	82	86	84		81	75	86
% selecting more personal & social skills	78	78	75		79	81	73
% selecting wider group of contacts	76	77	70		75	74	76
Total No Responding	270	120	98		203	81	204

	Region & Country					
	North	Midlands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland
% selecting more professional experience	79	84	86	82	82	91
% selecting more personal & social skills	72	81	79	68	94	69
% selecting wider group of contacts	74	74	76	68	78	41
Total No Responding	151	132	205	43	24	8

*The numbers for Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland are very small
Scotland has been included in North, and Wales & NI in Midlands*

Table 3c Question 3c

50+ What are the negatives of starting a business later in life?

	Age of respondents							% All	Nos
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	50-64	65+		
% selecting learning new skills	66	61	67	66	61	62	59	61	443
% selecting less vigour & energy	82	66	65	60	72	69	66	66	475
% selecting others think past it	63	60	68	62	64	55	60	62	432
% selecting lack of tailored support	71	64	65	63	58	62	61	63	443
Total No Responding	78	91	138	122	115	179	156		700

	Gender			Class			
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE
% selecting learning new skills	68	59		62	67	64	60
% selecting less vigour & energy	73	63		67	67	73	64
% selecting others think past it	62	61		68	65	59	58
% selecting lack of tailored support	67	59		67	59	66	62
Total No Responding	344	356		143	215	158	184

	Marital Status				Working Status		
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep		Full-time	Part-time	Work-less
% selecting learning new skills	61	66	66		68	59	62
% selecting less vigour & energy	68	76	58		67	62	71
% selecting others think past it	61	65	58		66	58	59
% selecting lack of tailored support	63	65	62		67	55	61
Total No Responding	420	143	137		306	82	313

	Region & Country					
	North	Mid-lands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland
% selecting learning new skills	66	60	63	77	72	58
% selecting less vigour & energy	64	67	71	67	83	65
% selecting others think past it	56	63	65	58	65	64
% selecting lack of tailored support	62	62	65	60	59	51
Total No Responding	236	182	282	61	27	22

3b.2 Discussion of these findings

There is always a danger that a survey that gives a limited number of options will lead the respondents to those answers. Unfortunately a longer list creates an “ennui” in the respondents. However it would appear that there is a general unanimity in the findings.

Question 3c

Survey question: *And which of the following, if any, do you think are negatives of starting a business later on in life?*

(Base : All adults aged 16+ saying more negatives or equal combination of positives and negatives)

3c.1 Findings of the survey

This question was asked of the 700 people who saw more negatives than positives in starting a business later in life or who saw an equal combination of positives and negatives. There is, therefore, an overlap in the sample between 3b and 3c, namely those who saw the positives and negatives as balancing out. Those who saw more positives than negatives in starting a business later in life were therefore excluded from expressing their view. Respondents were allowed to select more than one option.

Learning new skills

About 61 per cent of all respondents saw the need to learn new skills as a negative. More of the 35 -54 age cohort, along with the 16-24 age cohort, saw this factor as a negative as opposed to other age cohorts. Higher percentages of men than women selected this. Those in full-time work and those who were single or separated / divorced were slightly more inclined to select this.

Less vigour and energy

Sixty-six per cent of the respondents selected less vigour and energy as a negative. Interestingly there was the greatest divergence amongst age groups with 82 per cent of the 16-24 age cohort selecting this as against 60 per cent in the 45-54 age cohort. Again males were more inclined to select this than females, as were single and workless people, and an interesting difference between the North and South, with the North less inclined to select this.

Others think you are past it

Overall 62 per cent of the sample selected this, with 55 per cent of the 50-64 age cohort selecting this option. There does **not** seem to be a gender split on this

option, although full-time workers were more inclined to select this as were those in social class AB. The same North – South split was apparent.

Lack of tailored support

Overall 63 per cent of the respondents selected this as a negative in starting a business in later life. Once again there was a wide variation between age cohorts with 71 per cent from the 16-24 age cohort selecting this as against 58 per cent of those aged 55-64. There were more men than women selecting this variable while class C1 (59 per cent) was least inclined to select it. Part-time workers (55 per cent) were less likely to select this than full-time workers (67 per cent).

3c.2 Discussion of the findings

Although the usual caveats about respondents being lead by the options has to be echoed, this is, nevertheless, a series of very depressing findings. With rare exceptions in particular categories, more than 6 out of 10 respondents perceived these negatives attributes to be relevant to finding it difficult to start a business in later life.

The findings suggest that a lot of people – particularly amongst those who are younger, believe that when you reach 50+, you are likely to find it difficult to learn new skills; you have less vigour and energy; and perceive that other people think you are “past it”. There is no evidence on which to build these beliefs, so they can only be viewed as *sorry cultural nostrums* holding back a growing number of people as our society ages. It is particularly sad to see they are carried and purveyed by people in the 50+ age cohort. This more than anything else is evidence of a broken society – a society where even those over 50 have negative concepts about their lives.

The belief that there is a lack of tailored support and that this is a negative factor holding back people aged 50+ from enterprise is in a different category. It suggests that people of all ages, gender and class are either unaware that Business Link and other enterprise support agencies deal with all ages, or specifically believe that they do not cater for the over 50s. As discussed earlier, given the emphasis put on youth in enterprise, this is hardly surprising. But it is a wake up call. It is vitally important that the over 50s are given business support because, for many, this is their only option of re-entering the labour market. It is also, of course, important because there will be even fewer businesses started by younger people as demographic ageing changes the profile of the population. It will be vital to the UK’s global competitiveness that there is a constant flow of new businesses creating a vibrant economy, and this will only happen if older people take up the challenge. Business Link has always maintained it is unnecessary to collect data on the over 50s using enterprise support. These data provide a strong rationale to revisit this decision

Table 4a Question 4a

Aged 50+ more or less likely than those 20-30 to be entrepreneurial?

GfK Nov 08

Q 4a

	Age of respondents								Nos
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	50-64	65+	% All	
% selecting more successful	41	37	31	31	34	34	42	36	363
% selecting less successful	47	47	48	46	41	41	39	46	463
Total No Responding	113	145	182	178	160	250	222		1000

	Gender			Class			
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE
% selecting more likely	37	35		38	42	31	33
% selecting less likely	48	41		38	38	52	51
Total No Responding	487	513		208	314	215	263

	Marital Status				Working Status		
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep		Full-time	Part-time	Work-less
% selecting more likely	34	39	42		37	36	35
% selecting less likely	47	42	37		47	40	42
Total No Responding	594	214	192		435	131	434

	Region & Country					
	North	Midlands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland
% selecting more likely	34	41	35	38	53	38
% selecting less likely	47	40	46	44	30	41
Total No Responding	319	271	410	86	46	27
<i>The numbers for Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland are very small</i>						
<i>Scotland has been included in North, and Wales & NI in Midlands</i>						

Question 4

Question 4a

Survey question: *Do you think older generations aged 50+ are likely to be more successful or less successful than younger generations, say aged 20-30 years, as entrepreneurs when it comes to starting their own business? Would you say ..?*

4a.1 Survey findings

While 36 per cent of the respondents thought the over 50s would be more likely to be successful entrepreneurs than the 46 per cent that selected “less successful”, there are some interesting age differentials. Younger people (16 -34) and the over 65s were more likely to select successful than other age groups although the younger age group was also more likely to select “less successful”

Men are more likely to select less successful than women but those in classes C2 and DE are far more likely to select unsuccessful than those in classes AB and C1. The married are far more likely to select “less successful” than the divorced or separated and those in the Midlands tend to select “less successful”.

4a.2 Discussion of the findings

Younger people are more likely to have an unequivocal view on whether over 50s will be more or less successful as entrepreneurs than those in their 20s. Eighty-eight per cent took a definitive line as opposed to 75 per cent of those aged 50 – 64. There does appear to be a slightly more marked assertiveness in the young which is mirrored in gender differences and, to a lesser degree, marital status.

However the class basis for making the assertion that older people are more likely to be less successful as entrepreneurs than younger people is of concern. Those in class C2 and DE are probably more likely to be workless at 50+ than those in classes AB and C1. This is because class and education are strongly correlated, and those with fewer educational qualifications tend to end up in work which is manual or blue-collar. Manual and blue-collar jobs are those which tend to disappear first, and are those which people over 50 find hardest to find. If people who are most likely to be workless at 50+ assume that the self-employed over 50s are less likely to be successful than younger entrepreneurs, they may well be rejecting one of the most realistic ways of escaping worklessness in older age.

More thought needs to be given to why those in classes C2 and DE are more likely to perceive olderpreneurs as less likely to be successful than younger people if olderpreneurship is going to be an attractive proposition.

Table 4b Question 4b

Why are 50+ likely to be more successful?

	Age of respondents							% All	Nos
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	50-64	65+		
% selecting more experience	82	88	97	95	90	91	93	91	330
% selecting more determination	54	55	70	55	69	65	79	66	238
% selecting more likely to start-up capital	65	64	83	84	83	83	87	79	286
Total No Responding	48	53	55	53	56	85	88		353

	Gender			Class			
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE
% selecting more experience	92	90		92	89	93	92
% selecting more determination	61	70		65	63	70	67
% selecting more likely to have start-up capital	79	79		82	75	72	86
Total No Responding	175	178		75	125	66	87

	Marital Status				Working Status		
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep		Full-time	Part-time	Work-less
% selecting more experience	91%	86%	95%		96%	77%	90%
% selecting more determination	65%	61%	73%		63%	58%	72%
% selecting more likely to have start-up capital	78%	77%	84%		76%	76%	83%
Total No Responding	197	83	73		157	45	151

	Region & Country					
	North	Mid-lands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland
% selecting more experience	91	94	89	91	100	92
% selecting more determination	62	62	71	52	52	63
% selecting more likely to have start-up capital	77	73	85	75	74	70
Total No Responding	110	108	135	32	23	11

On the other hand it is important not to gloss over the very positive finding that over one-third of the sample in every case see olderpreneurs as likely to be more successful than “youngerpreneurs”. Clearly there are some positives on which to build. The question for policy-makers is why we are not making more of this positive outlook.

Question 4b

Survey question: *And which of the following, if any, best describes why you think older generations aged 50+ are likely to be more successful at starting up their own business? Would you say ...?*

4b.1 The findings

The question was only asked of those who selected the answer to question 4a that they felt olderpreneurs were more likely to be successful than youngerpreneurs. Three alternatives were offered as to why they might be more successful:

- (i) older people have more experience
- (ii) older people are more determined
- (iii) older people are more likely to have start up capital

Those questioned could choose as many answers as they wished.

Ninety-one per cent selected “more experienced” whereas 79 per cent selected “likely to have start-up capital” against 66 per cent (two out of three) selecting “more determined”. This pattern of answers cuts across age, gender, class, marital and working status, and geography. The exception seems to be part-time workers, the only category where the selection of this variable fell below 82 per cent.

The over 65s are more likely to say that olderpreneurs are more determined than those in the younger age bands, and women see more determination than men. Those who are divorced or separated are more likely to select “determination” than their married or single peers. Part-timers and the 16-24 and 25-34 and 45 - 54 year olds are the only categories where the selection rate for determination falls to the 50-60 per cent band.

In terms of selecting “more likely to have start-up capital” the 16 – 34 year olds are around 64 or 65 per cent likely to select this variable, a far lower rate than any other category.

Table 4c Question 4c

Why are 50+ less successful at starting their own business?

	Age of respondents							% All	Nos
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	50-64	65+		
% selecting younger more energy drive & thirst to succeed	73%	81%	82%	82%	86%	85%	84%	81%	362
% selecting younger more innovative open new ideas	93%	85%	86%	79%	89%	86%	83%	85%	378
% selecting younger more willing to take gamble in pursuing opportunity	79%	84%	90%	90%	92%	90%	86%	87%	386
Total No Responding	51	70	84	80	66	102	90		441

	Gender			Class			
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE
% selecting younger more energy drive & thirst to succeed	84%	79%		81%	80%	83%	83%
% selecting younger more innovative open new ideas	88%	83%		89%	85%	85%	84%
% selecting younger more willing to take gamble in pursuing opportunity	85%	89%		83%	92%	81%	90%
Total No Responding	232	209		82	120	113	126

	Marital Status				Working Status		
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep		Full-time	Part-time	Work-less
% selecting younger more energy drive & thirst to succeed	83%	77%	84%		83%	81%	80%
% selecting younger more innovative open new ideas	85%	87%	84%		85%	86%	85%
% selecting younger more willing to take gamble in pursuing opportunity	88%	86%	86%		88%	85%	86%
Total No Responding	276	88	77		206	53	182

	Region & Country					
	North	Mid-lands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland
% selecting younger more energy drive & thirst to succeed	82%	79%	83%	88	96	74
% selecting younger more innovative open new ideas	85%	89%	84%	78	92	76
% selecting younger more willing to take gamble in pursuing opportunity	85%	86%	90%	86	91	93
Total No Responding	147	109	185	38	15	10

4b.2 Discussion of the findings

There appears to be an inconsistency in the very high level of agreement that experience is more likely to make the over 50s more successful, and the value society actually puts on retaining experience in the workforce. Currently some one in three of those with “experience” are actually workless, without a specific targeted programme funded from the public purse to help them start their own businesses. This suggests a dissonance between what people actually believe, and public policy. It is not hard to surmise that such a dissonance might eventually be reflected in the ballot box.

It is interesting to note that such a large proportion of the sample considered that those over 50 were more likely to have start-up capital. This may be the case, depending on what people consider sufficient start-up capital. PRIME has data from those who contacted PRIME for help in considering self-employment (Olderpreneurs for the Future: June 2007 – see www.primeinitiative.co.uk/research). One of the conclusions of the study was that there is a significant sub-group of PRIME clients, living on their own in rented accommodation with no private pension provision. This is far from the picture of a significant group of over 50s with disposable assets that can be invested in a business that seems to underlie the answers to this question.

Question 4c

Survey question: *And which of the following, if any, best describes why you think older generations aged 50+ are likely to be less successful at starting up their own business? Would you say ...?*

Base : All adults aged 16+ who think older generations are likely to be less successful at starting their own business.

4c.1 The findings

This question was asked of all those who thought the older generation would be less successful at starting their own businesses. The question posited three statements and the respondents could choose as many as they felt appropriate. They could also answer “Don’t know” or offer their own statement. The three statements were:

- (i) because the younger generation has more energy, drive and thirst to succeed:
- (ii) because the younger generation is more innovative and open to new ideas:
- (iii) because the younger generation is more willing to take a gamble in pursuing an opportunity

Eighty-one per cent selected statement (i), 85 per cent selected statement (ii) and 87 per cent selected statement (iii). Generally there was very little difference across age, gender, class, marital and working status and geography, except for the 16-24 age cohort. Here the responses were more likely to down-play drive and energy, be more likely to select innovation and openness to new ideas, and more inclined to down-play the willingness of the young to take a gamble.

4c.2 Discussion of the findings

Obviously the dangers of being influenced by the statements have to be minded, but there does appear to be a very strong level of agreement with the statements. The key question is whether there is any empirical evidence to suggest that the statements are true, or whether this reflects another *sorry cultural nostrum*. PRIME would challenge researchers and policy-makers to show that the empirical evidence does exist, and the responses are more than reflections of the prevailing youth-centric cultural attitude.

Question 5.

Survey question: *Please tell me whether or not you have ever considered becoming self employed or establishing your own business since you have turned 50 years of age? If were already self-employed or had your own business when you turned 50 please say so. Please also tell me if since turning 50 years of age you have since become self employed or set up your own business.*

Base : All adults aged 50+

5.1 The findings

This question was only asked of the over 50s and an age distinction was drawn between the 50-64 age cohort and those over 65 (i.e. State Pensions Age or SPA). The four options were:

- (i) I have considered setting up my own business
- (ii) I have not considered setting up my own business
- (iii) I have already set up my own business
- (iv) I have set up my own business since reaching 50

Overall 10 per cent had considered setting up a business but of those aged 50-64 the percentage who had considered was far higher (at 17 per cent or one person in 6) than the 3 per cent of those in the over 65 age cohort. About three-quarters (73 per cent) said they would not consider setting up their own business, but this figure is much lower for those aged 50-64 (64 per cent) than for those aged over 65 (83 per cent). Some 15 per cent of the over 50s had already started a business with 4 per cent starting a business since turning 50.

Looking at gender differences, 12 per cent of men and 9 per cent of women had considered starting a business, but 64 per cent of men and 81 per cent of women would not consider doing so. Nearly twice as many men as women had already started a business with three times more men than women starting since they turned 50.

The class analysis also reveals differences. Class C2 has 23 per cent who have started a business (with 6 per cent starting since turning 50). This compares to 18 per cent for class AB (5 per cent since 50), 15 per cent for class C1 (4 per cent since turning 50), and 11 per cent for class DE (with 2 per cent since turning 50).

While there does not seem to be much difference between those with different marital statuses in terms of starting a business after 50, those who are married seem more likely to have started a business. Single people on the other hand appear more likely to have considered starting a business. Those who are

Table 5 Question 5

50+ only -have you considered own business?

	Age of respondents							% All	Nos
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	50-64	65+		
% selecting considered setting up own business						17%	3%	10	46
% selecting no would not consider setting up own business						64%	83%	73	328
% selecting already set up own business						14%	9%	11	50
% selecting set up since 50						4%	3%	4	17
Total No Responding						250	222	.	472
	Gender			Class					
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE		
% selecting considered setting up own business	12%	9%		8%	15%	13%	6%		
% selecting no would not consider setting up own business	64%	81%		75%	70%	64%	79%		
% selecting already set up own business	15%	8%		13%	11%	17%	9%		
% selecting set up since 50	6%	2%		5%	4%	6%	2%		
Total No Responding	202	270		83	144	63	182		
	Marital Status				Working Status				
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep		Full-time	Part-time	Work-less		
% selecting considered setting up own business	11%	20%	6%		18%	11%	7%		
% selecting no would not consider setting up own business	69%	69%	82%		54%	72%	81%		
% selecting already set up own business	15%	1%	8%		21%	12%	7%		
% selecting set up since 50	4%	4%	3%		7%	5%	2%		
Total No Responding	261	54	157		102	52	318		
	Region & Country								
	North	Mid-lands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland			
% selecting considered setting up own business	7%	8%	14%	6	18	3			
% selecting no would not consider setting up own business	78%	75%	67%	75	74	74			
% selecting already set up own business	7%	11%	15%	10	8	17			

Divorced or separated appear less inclined to consider starting a business than their peers.

Of those who are in full-time employment 28 per cent started their own business (with 7 per cent starting the business after the age of 50) and a further 18 per cent having considered self-employment. This means nearly half (46 per cent) of those in full-time employment either started or have considered starting a business. Some 7 per cent of the workless have considered starting a business and 9 per cent have actually done so (and presumably the business ceased trading). Those in part-time work seem to stand half-way between those in full-time employment and those who are workless.

In terms of geography those living in the South are more likely to have started a business, though those in the North are three times more likely to started a business since turning 50 (although they are half as likely to have started a business before the age of 50). Those in the South are more likely to consider self-employment than those in the North or Midlands. It does appear that those in the Midlands are more likely to have started a business before the age of 50 than those in the North (though not as likely as those in the South). However they are less likely to start a business after 50 than those in the North (though in about the same numbers as those in the South).

5.2 Discussion of findings

These findings give considerable grounds for optimism as far as a supply of people ready to start a business are concerned. With one person in six in the 50-64 age cohort having considered business start-up there are questions to be asked about why this consideration does not result in a conversion – a business start-up. There are similar questions to be asked about why women who have considered a business start-up do not appear to be “converting” – starting a business – in the same numbers as men. There are also questions to be asked about why single people are less likely to have started a business before 50 than those who are married.

Consideration needs to be given to class and self-employment. What is it about class C2 that seems to correlate with business start-up?. Critically there is an issue of how to ensure more of those in Class DE consider and start a business as this class is more likely to be workless than other classes. This may explain why those who are workless are least likely to consider self-employment – they are likely to be drawn from Class DE. PRIME would suggest that this has a lot to do with perceived levels of support available.

Finally there are important geographic issues to consider. Unemployment is heavier in the North than the South (though the Credit Crunch may change this), and more over 50s start a business than in the South. PRIME has, of course, been far more active in the North than in the South

Table 6 Question 6

Aged 50+ more or less likely to self employment if help on funding & advice Q 6

	Age of respondents							% All	Nos
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	50-64	65+		
% selecting more inclined							22%	24%	23
% selecting no not inclined							76%	76%	76
Total No Responding							162	185	347

	Gender			Class			
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE
% selecting more inclined	21%	24%		29%	20%	20%	24%
% selecting no not inclined	78%	75%		71%	79%	78%	75%
Total No Responding	132	215		63	101	41	142

	Marital Status				Working Status		
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep		Full-time	Part-time	Work-less
% selecting more inclined	23%	27%	22%		24%	14%	24%
% selecting no not inclined	75%	73%	78%		74%	86%	74%
Total No Responding	180	38	129		57	35	255

	Region & Country					
	North	Midlands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland
% selecting more inclined	24%	24%	21%	25	36	34
% selecting no not inclined	76%	74%	77%	75	64	63
Total No Responding	118	101	128	36	20	11
<i>The numbers for Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland are very small Scotland has been included in North, and Anglia Wales & NI in Midlands</i>						

Question 6

Survey question: *Would you be more inclined to consider going self employed or setting up your own business if you knew there was help and support on hand to guide you through the stages of starting a business, for example, providing funding and advice.*

Base : All adults aged 50+ who would not consider becoming self-employed or set up their own business

6.1 The findings

Question 6 was only directed at those aged 50+ who would not consider becoming self-employed or starting their own businesses. It therefore seeks to probe some of the reasoning behind a decision not to consider self-employment. The question asks whether there would be more inclination towards a business start-up if there was help and support on hand to guide the respondent through the stages of starting a business.

Twenty-three per cent of the respondents said they would be more inclined to consider a business start-up if they knew there was help and support available. Women would be more inclined to consider self-employment where help and advice is available than men and the percentages of Class AB and DE more inclined to consider self-employment is 29 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. The findings for the categories under marital status are very similar.

6.2 Discussion of findings

The fact that there was a probe into the reasons behind a decision not to consider self-employment is, in itself, important. In most research the slightest antipathy towards self-employment by those aged 50+ is interpreted as a total rejection of enterprise. By probing this attitude, this survey was able to determine whether there was any logical reason, susceptible to a policy solution, behind the response.

Drawing data from Questions 5 and 6, the most startling finding is that just under 40 per cent of the 50-64 age cohort (i.e. 2 people out of every 5) would consider self-employment if they knew there was business support available.

The findings suggest that women are more inclined to look for help and guidance through business the start-up process and would be far more inclined to start a business knowing there is assistance available. Adding together the findings from Question 5 and Question 6 suggests there is little difference between the inclination of men and women aged 50+ to consider self-employment when it is known that help and support is available.

Similarly by adding those inclined to consider a business start-up in Question 5 and in Question 6, the class differences are considerably ironed out. Similarly the workless are far more inclined to consider self-employment when help and support is known to be available. When the geographic spread is considered, differences start to disappear.

There is a very clear policy message here. The numbers of people aged 50-64 are huge. For example nearly 3.5 million people are workless in this age cohort after a correction has been made for the different SPA for men and women. If help and support is known to be available, the survey suggests that 31 per cent of the workless might consider self-employment. This represents approximately 1 million people in the 50 – 64 age cohort who are currently workless. So there are three very clear messages which are very relevant to the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, and Jobcentre Plus, Regional Development Agencies and local authorities with Local Enterprise Growth Initiative Programmes (LEGI funding) or Working Neighbourhood Funds:

- (i) ensure that the over 50s who are workless do have help and support for business start-up available and make sure they are aware of this help and support:
- (ii) ensure there is full support for 50+ self-employment in the flexible New Deal and all other employment support programmes for the over 50s
- (iii) do not assume that the over 50s are uninterested in self-employment if they reject or ignore programmes which appear to be principally aimed at a much younger audience.

Question 7

Survey question: *Are you currently working or seeking work? IF YES What impact do you think the credit crunch will have, if any, on your employment prospects? Would you say ... ?*

Base : All adults aged 50+

7.1 The findings

Respondents were asked whether they were currently working or seeking work. Those that were had a choice about the impact of the “Credit Crunch”. They could say that it would have no or minimal impact: it would have some impact: or it would have a significant impact.

Forty-one per cent of the 50-64 age cohort reported that they were not currently working or seeking work, whereas 84 per cent of those over 65 were not currently working or seeking work. There is therefore a very important difference between those aged 65+ and those in the 50-64 age group. Unfortunately a breakdown by age cohort against gender, class, marital and work status and geography are not available at this point. These data will therefore be heavily distorted and can only be relevant when they are compared.

Of the 50 – 64 age cohort, 21% believed the “Credit Crunch” would have minimal or no impact on their chances of getting work or changing their job, whereas 24 per cent selected a response that said it would not have a real or much impact . However 28 per cent said it would have a real or significant impact on their chances of getting or changing a job.

Women appeared to consider that the Credit Crunch would have less impact on chances of finding a job or job change than men but a greater percentage were not currently working or looking for a job.

The class analysis gives some evidence that those in class AB were far more likely to be out of work and not seeking work than those in classes C1 and C2. However the data also shows that those in class DE were most likely to be not working or seeking work (71 per cent). Class DE were least likely to see the Credit Crunch having any impact but they were most likely to be workless and therefore less aware of its impact.

There was a similar pattern found in the marital status and working status analyses. The divorced and separated were more likely to be workless than the married and single and therefore saw the Credit Crunch as having least impact. The workless were least likely to foresee the Credit Crunch having an impact on chances of getting a job, whereas those in full-time work saw it as likely to have a significant impact.

Table 7 Question 7

50+ if currently seeking work does credit crunch have impact?

	Age of respondents								
						50-64	65+	% All	Nos
% selecting minimal impact on chances of getting / changing job						21%	4%	12	56
% has had no real impact on getting / changing job						24%	6%	15	69
% has significant impact on getting / changing job						28%	8%	16	82
% selecting not currently working or seeking work						41%	84%	62	278
Total No Responding						250	220		472
	Gender			Class					
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE		
% selecting minimal impact on chances of getting / changing job	14%	11%		14%	15%	10%	10%		
% has had no real impact on getting / changing job	17%	14%		13%	19%	21%	10%		
% has significant impact on getting / changing job	22%	15%		20%	22%	27%	10%		
% selecting not currently working or seeking work	58%	65%		66%	54%	52%	71%		
Total No Responding				83	144	63	182		
	Marital Status			Working Status					
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep	Full-time	Part-time	Work-less			
% selecting minimal impact on chances of getting / changing job	13%	18%	11%	29%	24%	4%			
% has had no real impact on getting / changing job	19%	16%	9%	27%	41%	6%			
% has significant impact on getting / changing job	23%	17%	11%	37%	24%	9%			
% selecting not currently working or seeking work	55%	59%	74%	20%	22%	86%			
Total No Responding	261	54	157	102	52	318			
	Region & Country								
	North	Mid-lands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland			
% selecting minimal impact on chances of getting / changing job	15%	7%	14%	22	8	5			
% has had no real impact on getting / changing job	14%	12%	19%	16	17	18			
% has significant impact on getting / changing job	16%	17%	21%	9	9	32			
% selecting not currently working or seeking work	59%	70%	58%	54	76	55			
Total No Responding	151	136	185	46	27	15			

Apart from the fact that more people in the Midlands (70 per cent) were workless than in the North or South (59 per cent and 58 per cent respectively) there is little geographic difference apart from a noticeably higher fear of the impact of the Credit Crunch on people in the South (21 per cent).

7.2 Discussion of findings

This report has cited worklessness as just under 1 in 3 amongst the 50-SPA age group and has suggested this will be higher when the anomaly of women reaching SPA earlier than men is corrected. The 41 per cent worklessness figure for the 50-64 corroborates this assumption.

The impact of the Credit Crunch depends on where a person is coming from. The workless are less able to make an assessment of its impact than those in full-time work who are far more concerned at its impact.

The timing of the survey probably affected these findings. The full impact of the Credit Crunch and the recession had not, at that stage, hit the majority of the population.

Question 8

Survey question: *Do you think your age puts you at a disadvantage to younger competition in the job market, or not?*

Base : All adults aged 50+

8.1 The findings

As with Question 7, it was not possible at the report writing stage to disaggregate by age across gender, class, marital status, working status and geography. However 58 per cent of those in the 50 – 64 age cohort saw age as a disadvantage against younger competition in the labour market, whereas 35 per cent felt it was no disadvantage. The results for the over 65s were slightly lower with 48 per cent seeing age as a disadvantage and 29 per cent seeing age as no disadvantage.

There is little difference in the gender, class or geographic analyses that stands out as exceptional, but the singles category stand-out as more pessimistic in the marital status analysis. Generally there is no exceptional finding in the working status analysis except that part-time workers are more inclined to see age as no disadvantage.

Table 8 Question 8

Aged 50+ is your age a disadvantage in current labour market?

GfK Nov 08

Q 8

	Age of respondents							% All	Nos
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	50-64	65+		
% selecting YES						58%	48%	53	237
% selecting NO						35%	29%	32	146
Total No Responding						250	222		472

	Gender			Class			
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE
% selecting YES	52%	53%		51%	56%	47%	52%
% selecting NO	36%	30%		36%	31%	43%	28%
Total No Responding	202	270		83	144	63	182

	Marital Status				Working Status		
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep		Full-time	Part-time	Workless
% selecting YES	50%	72%	51%		56%	46%	53%
% selecting NO	34%	19%	35%		39%	51%	26%
Total No Responding	261	54	157		102	52	318

	Region & Country					
	North	Midlands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland
% selecting YES	54%	50%	54%	47	46	56
% selecting NO	38%	26%	33%	44	20	31
Total No Responding	151	136	185	46	27	15
<i>The numbers for Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland are very small Scotland has been included in North, and Anglia, Wales & NI in Midlands</i>						

8.2 Discussion of findings

Clearly those in the labour market are more likely to perceive age as a disadvantage in the labour market. This contrasts with Question 4b where experience is seen as an advantage (albeit only by those who saw over 50s as likely to be more successful entrepreneurs than younger people).

The Age Discrimination Act has clearly failed to make older people feel secure in the labour market, whether they are or not, and clearly policy-makers need to take cognisance of this failure in the legislation.

Question 9

Survey question: *Which of the following, if any best describe what you think is the main reason/s you consider your self to be at a disadvantage to younger people in the job market now you are 50+ years of age?
Would you say ...?*

Base : All adults aged 50+ who think their age puts them at a disadvantage in the job market

9.1 The findings

This question was asked of all those who felt they were at a disadvantage in the labour market in respect of younger people. As with Question 7, it was not possible at the report writing stage to disaggregate by age across gender, class, marital status, working status and geography.

Respondents were given a choice as to why they were at a disadvantage from:

- (i) I am restricted by changes in my health
- (ii) I am restricted because my skills have not kept up with changes in the labour market
- (iii) I am restricted by feeling less qualified than younger people applying for the same role
- (iv) I am restricted by the attitudes of certain employers to age

Respondents could select more than one answer.

Overall 55 per cent selected health as an issue although 61 per cent of the over 65s chose this as opposed to 49 per cent of the 50 – 64 age cohort. Forty-three per cent selected skills as an issue and 45 per cent selected the fact that they felt less qualified than younger people. However 81 per cent cited the attitude of certain employers to age as the reason for being at a disadvantage.

Table 9 Question 9

50+ why at disadvantage in respect of younger in labour market?

	Age of respondents							% All	Nos
						50-64	65+		
% selecting restricted by health changes						49%	61%	55	129
% selecting skills not kept up with changes in lab mark						44%	40%	43	101
% selecting feeling less qualified than younger for some roles						45%	45%	45	107
% selecting attitudes of certain employers to age						82%	80%	81	192
Total No Responding						145	109		254
	Gender			Class					
	M	F		AB	C1	C2	DE		
	50%	59%		46%	57%	45%	61%		
	51%	35%		47%	43%	43%	39%		
	41%	49%		34%	45%	49%	51%		
	79%	82%		88%	81%	68%	81%		
Total No Responding	108	146		46	80	28	100		
	Marital Status			Working Status					
	Married	Single	Divorce / Sep	Full-time	Part-time	Workless			
	50%	63%	59%	37%	41%	65%			
	43%	52%	38%	45%	24%	45%			
	42%	50%	49%	41%	42%	48%			
	80%	88%	79%	79%	90%	80%			
Total No Responding	133	39	82	57	24	173			
	Region & Country								
	North	Mid-lands	South	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland			
	46%	55%	61%	33	60	50			
	39%	44%	45%	5	43	37			
	46%	46%	45%	29	41	48			
	87%	73%	82%	82	76	69			
Total No Responding	84	68	102	22	13	8			

With the exception of class C2 respondents (and this is from a very small sample of 28 people) and those from the Midlands (where there was a 73 per cent response), all categories, with a response rate of between 79 and 90 per cent, identified the attitude of certain employers to age as putting them at a disadvantage in the labour market.

9.2 Discussion of findings

The statement that the attitudes of certain employers to age put the over 50s at a disadvantage in respect of younger people in the labour market, however delicately phrased, suggests that there is an unacceptably high level of ageism amongst employers. This feeling of being discriminated against on grounds of age crosses all categories of over 50s analysed in this survey. Whatever qualifications can be put on the finding, this is quite unacceptable. If people feel ageism on this level, it is quite a deplorable state of affairs and an open call on policy-makers to confront what is an intolerable state of affairs in the labour market.

It is also of major concern that people aged 50+ feel they are at a disadvantage in the labour market for health reasons, out of date skills and lack of qualifications. Either these are perceptions that provide a pernicious veneer for ageist behaviour, or they suggest the need for urgent action. In an ageing society where there will be fewer and fewer young people in the labour market, it will be vitally important to retain older workers. If they are too unhealthy to work, lacking in skills, and under-qualified for the roles needed by industry, then this is an urgent wake-up call to employers and policy-makers to take action now.

Conclusion

This Survey and Report is a wake-up call. As a society we cannot afford to discard and ignore the over 50s, particularly those 1 in 3 of the 50 to SPA age cohort who are workless. This survey demonstrates the difficulties the over 50s have in finding financial independence as an employee, principally because of ageist attitudes, and highlights the key role of self-employment.

There are a number of messages that come from this survey and report:

- (i) there is a youth centric attitude to enterprise which is inappropriate in an ageing society
- (ii) ageism in the employment market needs to be tackled
- (iii) there are far more over 50s interested in enterprise than was previously thought
- (iv) over 50s are held back because they do not believe there is the enterprise support that they need.

PRIME has been working in the field of 50+ self-employment since the beginning of the 21st century and has been dismayed at the prejudice and neglect of the enterprise support needs of those over 50. The over 50s have received what can best be described as the crumbs from the table, justified by absurd statements such as those over 50 lack innovative skills, are risk averse, or inherently unhealthy, when the statistics show that one in every six new businesses is started by someone over 50.

The over 50s clearly perceive that ageist attitudes are rife in the labour market. This is as equally unacceptable as gender or race discrimination. The one thing that is surer than taxation is that we will all age, and yet this survey shows that even the over 50s hold negative attitudes about age.

The data presented here demonstrate that something which is both significant and negative is happening as people in the labour market reach 50. Clearly self-employment is a particularly important arena for the over 50s, when it appears they are being discriminated against in employment and jobs. In any other field of discrimination the first reaction would be to collect and collate data, and yet there is a reluctance to do this for the over 50s age cohort, particularly in the area of business support.

The data show that there is an interest in self-employment on a huge scale. It also emphasises the degree to which the government, regional development agencies, labour market agencies and local authorities have, in the main, failed to respond to the demand and have ignored the labour market needs of the over 50s.

Bibliography:

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An initiative founded by HRH The Prince of Wales to provide a self-employment service to people aged over 50 across the UK

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For more information

PRIME www.primeinitiative.org.uk
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