

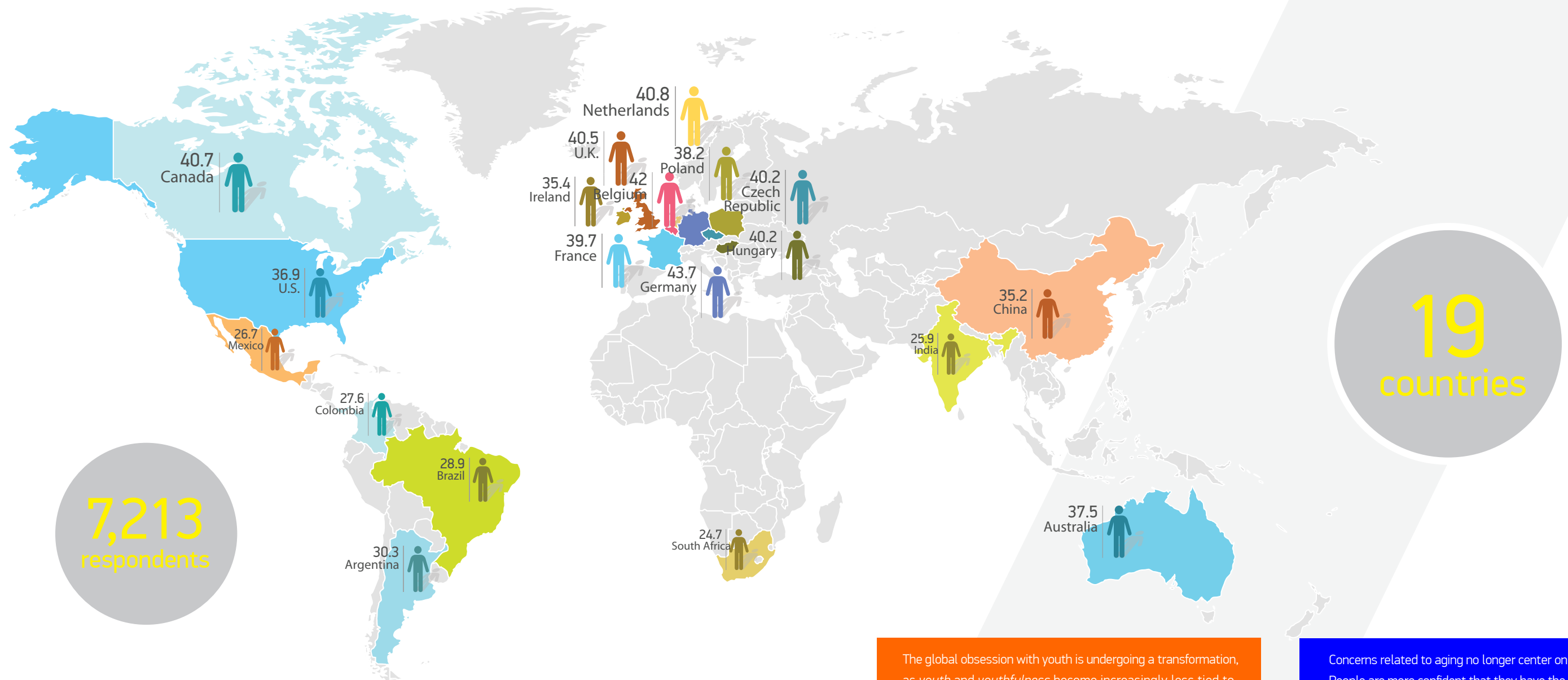
EURO RSCG WORLDWIDE

Prosumer Report

Vol. 14, 2012



**Aging: Moving
Beyond Youth Culture**



Euro RSCG Worldwide surveyed 7,213 adults in 19 countries: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Our objective was to better understand changing values related to aging, identify unmet consumer needs, and uncover areas of opportunity.

The median age in the markets surveyed ranged from just below 25 years in South Africa to a high of 44 years in Germany. The respondent base is made up of 84 percent mainstream consumers and 16 percent leading-edge Prosumers; we pay particular attention to the latter group because what they are thinking and doing today is a good indication of what the mainstream will be thinking and doing in the near future.

84%
Mainstream

16%
Prosumers

The global obsession with youth is undergoing a transformation, as *youth* and *youthfulness* become increasingly less tied to one's chronological age. Rather than shying away from growing old, more people are embracing their later years and the unique satisfactions they'll bring.

Concerns related to aging no longer center on physical beauty. People are more confident that they have the tools they need to keep wrinkles, paunches, and other signs of aging at bay (provided they put in the requisite effort). What worries them now is *loss of autonomy*. The potential for physical and cognitive deterioration is of widespread concern, as are worries over long-term financial security. For these reasons primarily, people are now wary of pushing the limits of longevity.

Key Insights

Consumption gaps are shrinking as people in older age segments continue to enjoy and employ new technologies, products, and entertainment options. The traditional notion of older people withdrawing from consumer markets no longer applies.

How one ages—and even the manner in which one dies—is increasingly perceived as controllable rather than predetermined. This means people are feeling more pressure and responsibility for a satisfactory outcome.



Introduction: From Disaster and Disease to Decay

“There have been three great ages of death: the age of disaster, the age of disease, and the age of decay.”
—Steve Jones, Professor of Genetics,
University College London

For all the widespread fear about pandemics, the reality is that improvements in sanitation and healthcare over the last century have prevented communicable disease from being a major cause of illness and death. That means the global population has been growing ever larger—and older. As of October 2011, the world’s population bounded past the 7 billion mark, only a dozen years after it reached 6 billion. Some of this growth can be attributed to babies being born, but more of it is a result of people clinging to life longer, with significant repercussions for individuals and for society as a whole.

This latest study from Euro RSCG Worldwide explores attitudes toward aging, incorporating both personal experiences and expectations (are people scared of dying?) and geopolitical implications (are the global balances of power and influence shifting?). What we discovered through our global survey is that the demographic shifts we’re undergoing will have significant consequences for virtually every consumer-facing industry.

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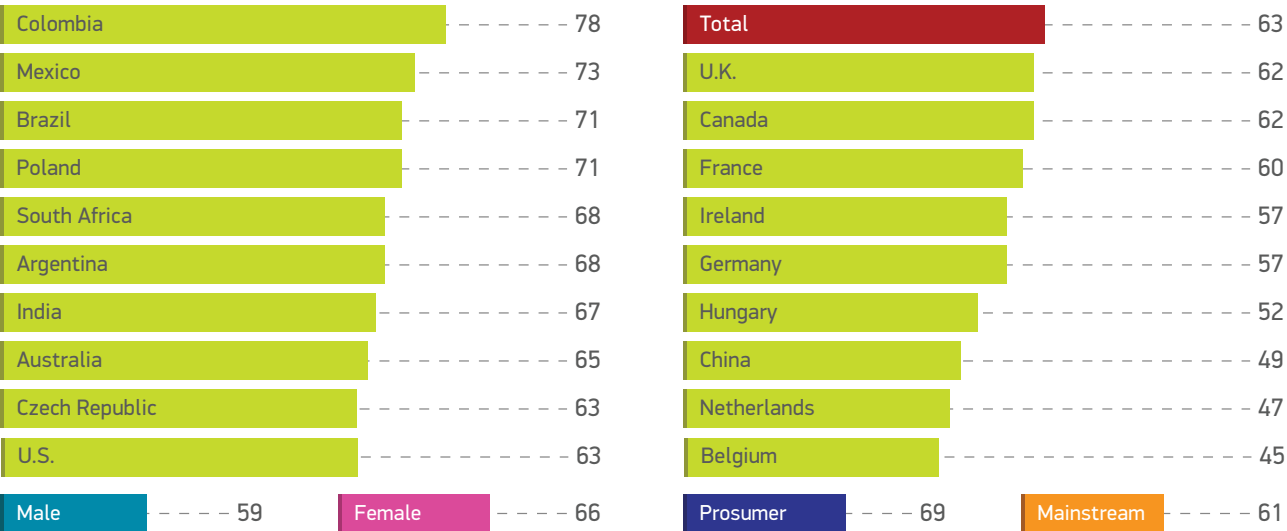
A Tempering of Our Youth Obsession

“Why is the society obsessed with youth? Is it a media-created thing? My grandma says in her times only older people were taken seriously and highly respected. So what happened? Why is everyone so ageist nowadays? I find it stupid big time.”
—Giselle, posting on Yahoo! India

Society’s obsession with youth has been well chronicled. We hear again and again of actresses “aging out” of Hollywood, and we watch as people go to increasing extremes to deceive others, and perhaps themselves, about their age. It’s not a modern phenomenon: As far back as 1,500 BCE, it is said, people were ingesting the gonads of tigers in a bid to rejuvenate themselves. And the search for the elixir of youth has spanned millennia. What we’re beginning to see signs of now, however, is irritation with the extent to which the young are glorified at the expense of the aged. Youthfulness is still very much an aspiration, but it is no longer deemed the preserve of those below a certain age.

Looking at the results of our global survey, just about three-quarters of respondents expressed the belief that society has grown much too youth obsessed—an opinion shared not just by the older set but also by 6 in 10 millennials (for the purposes of this survey, defined as those aged 18–34). Not surprisingly, given the added pressure on them, women were more likely than men (66 percent vs. 59 percent, respectively) to agree that our youth obsession has gotten out of hand.

Society has become much too youth obsessed



Showing % agreeing strongly/somewhat

While people typically are still anxious to optimize their looks, there is a growing sense that the youth imperative has become too arduous, too exacting to be feasible for those of us not surrounded by a coterie of makeup artists, personal trainers, and photographers skilled in the magic of Photoshop. As Neil Howe, author of *Millennials Rising*, explains it, “Even young isn’t enough anymore. [We’ve] got to be ‘perfect’ young.” And that quest has become too heavy a burden for some—and an absolute turn-off for others.

Signs of a backlash are everywhere, from Dove’s “Real Beauty” campaign (launched in 2004) to the public’s embrace of older celebrities such as Meryl Streep, Carole Bouquet, Jane Seymour, and Isabelle Huppert, who have maintained their natural beauty rather than inject their foreheads with chemicals or go under the knife. It’s not that people don’t still want to look their best—they do. But now “one’s best” is no longer defined so much as hiding one’s true age as accentuating one’s natural beauty and vigor. Being fit and strong and radiant is the goal, not looking like a fossilized Barbie doll.

There was an interesting schism on the question of whether respondents had had or would consider having cosmetic surgery to look younger. Whereas 1 in 4 millennials said they would, only around 1 in 6 of those aged 35–54 and 1 in 10 respondents aged 55+ agreed. It may be that the millennials are leaving their options open, while older respondents have already thought about and chosen not to pursue cosmetic enhancements.

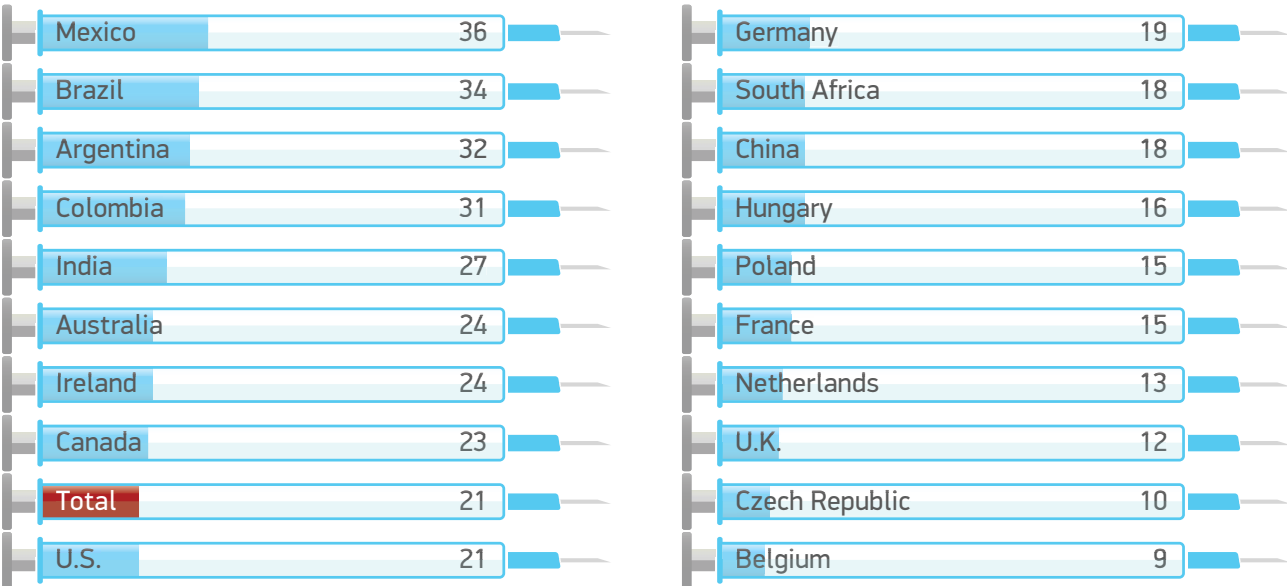
Attitudes toward cosmetic surgery: now more a generational than a gender divide.

There’s also the possibility, however, that today’s youth will be more apt to consider cosmetic procedures as they age because theirs is a generation used to digital fixes and quick solutions to life’s problems. And, given that 38 percent of U.S. millennials already sport a tattoo (Pew Research Center), this may well turn out to be a generation that is less hesitant to permanently modify their bodies, whether as an adornment or as aging control. In the U.S., 76,000 teens underwent some type of cosmetic procedure in 2011, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, including nose jobs, breast augmentations, and a newly popular procedure: chin implants.

Millennials are also less likely than the other age cohorts to believe that cosmetic surgery has gotten out of hand: 63 percent agreed, compared with 68 percent of the middle cohort and 76 percent of those aged 55+.

And what about the gender divide on the issue of cosmetic surgery? Surely, women are still more apt than men to consider having some “work” done. On the contrary: Looking at our global sample, 19 percent of women and 22 percent of men have had or would consider undergoing surgical enhancements to look younger. A majority of the global sample (52 percent) believe on-the-job age discrimination is one reason some people are desperate to banish wrinkles and gray hair.

I have had or would consider having cosmetic surgery to look younger



Showing % agreeing strongly/somewhat



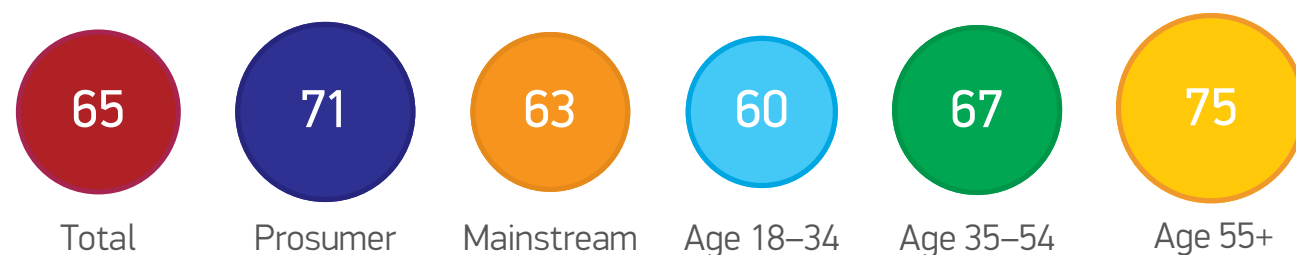
No Shame in Growing Old

"The big ideal is no longer aggressive anti-aging but smart aging based on the intention to embrace aging and all that comes with it. People want to tune their bodies with sports, fitness, and food and their minds with sleep, love, books, socializing, etc., in order to age well." —Euro RSCG Germany

Walk into any pharmacy, and you could easily surmise that the physical effects of aging are a life-threatening (or, at the very least, disfiguring) disease that has to be fought off at any cost. Shelf upon shelf of anti-wrinkle serums, hair colorants, teeth whiteners, and other youth restorers strongly suggest that the natural aging process is taboo—a condition to be avoided through any and every means available. And for some people that's true. We've all read about, or know personally, people who fret over every gray hair, every sagging body part, every reminder of the passing months and years. And yet when we asked respondents to choose whether they are more intent on aging gracefully or fighting it every step of the way, more than three-quarters (77 percent) chose the former.

Why the disconnect? One might argue that, as the world ages, we are growing more used to the notion of old age. Yet, if that were the case, we should see a greater disparity in responses from the "old" and "young" countries in our sample. The right answer may lie in a related statement included in the survey: "I intend to embrace aging and all that comes with it." Around two-thirds of the global sample—and 75 percent of respondents aged 55+—agreed with the statement, suggesting a strong appreciation for the good things that come with growing old. In an era marked by a frenetic pace and a paucity of spare time, it's little wonder that people would be looking forward to the relative calm of the retirement years. It may also be that people are reacting against the extremes to which some are going to stay "young" longer, opting instead to enjoy their later years with acceptance and grace rather than fight a battle the costs of which are too high.

I intend to embrace aging and all that comes with it



Showing % agreeing strongly/somewhat

Prosumers lead the way in terms of desiring to remain as youthful as possible while also embracing the aging process. Nearly 3 in 10 (29 percent) intend to "fight aging every step of the way, doing anything and everything to stay youthful longer"; this compares with 22 percent of mainstream consumers. At the same time, 71 percent of Prosumers intend to "embrace aging and all that comes with it," compared with 63 percent of the mainstream.

How can Prosumers hope to have it both ways? These are women and men who are more knowledgeable and proactive than most. They are used to controlling their environments and stacking the odds in their favor, whether by thoroughly researching a vacation destination prior to travel or by combining deals in such a way as to optimize their cost savings. When it comes to aging, it appears, Prosumers expect to assert the same level of control, but they are also cognizant of the physical, psychological, and financial trade-offs that typically accompany a blind obsession with youth. So they are likely to research and, if feasible, use products that have proven anti-aging benefits and also to keep up with the latest news and developments related to maintaining one's youthful appearance, outlook, and activities longer. But they will not do so at the expense of enjoying the fruits of aging. The Prosumer impulse is to optimize one's situation with whatever tools and information are most efficacious but to keep a running tally of the pros and cons. Their approach to aging will be no different.

Which comes closer to your point of view?



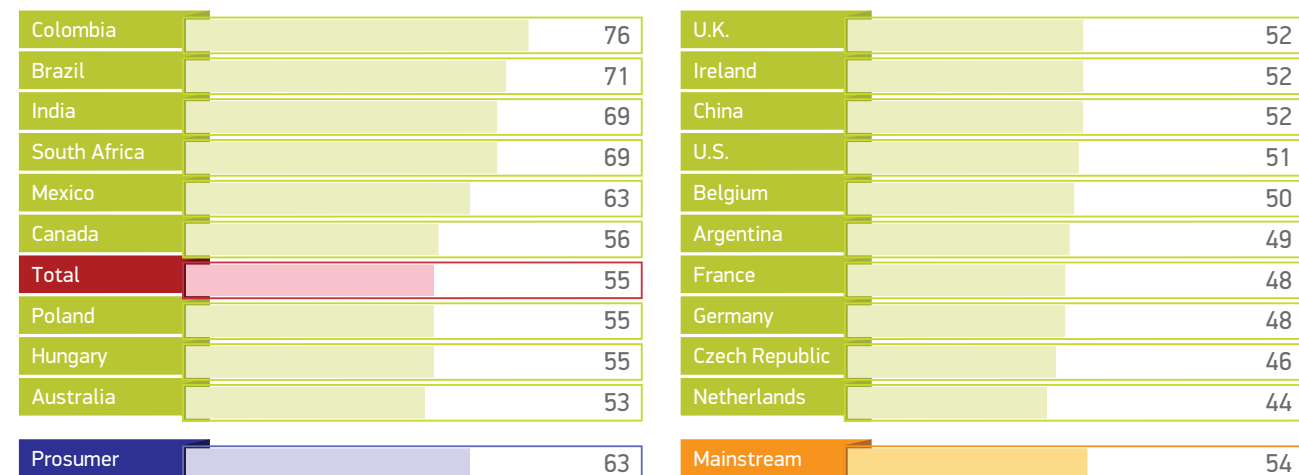
I intend to fight aging every step of the way; I'll do anything and everything to stay youthful longer (%)

I intend to age gracefully; there is no shame in growing old (%)

Keeping Old Age at Bay

"Physical and mental fitness are key factors of success in our performance-driven society and, therefore, are objects of personal ambition and effort as people seek to shape their fitness, health, and good looks." —Euro RSCG Chicago

I look younger than most people my age



Showing % agreeing strongly/somewhat

We all like to think we're above average—smarter than average, funnier than average, better drivers than average—and our assessment of how we're coping with aging is no different. Nearly 6 in 10 respondents in the global sample (59 percent) say they feel younger than their age, and 55 percent believe they look younger than most of their peers. The two groups most inclined to agree with these statements are Prosumers and respondents aged 55+. Nearly two-thirds of Prosumers say they look younger than most of their contemporaries, compared with just 54 percent of their mainstream counterparts. No wonder Prosumers intend to age gracefully—they think they already have a head start!

Also worth noting, of all 19 markets studied, only the United States had minority agreement (47 percent) with the statement, "I feel younger than my age." This compares with agreement levels

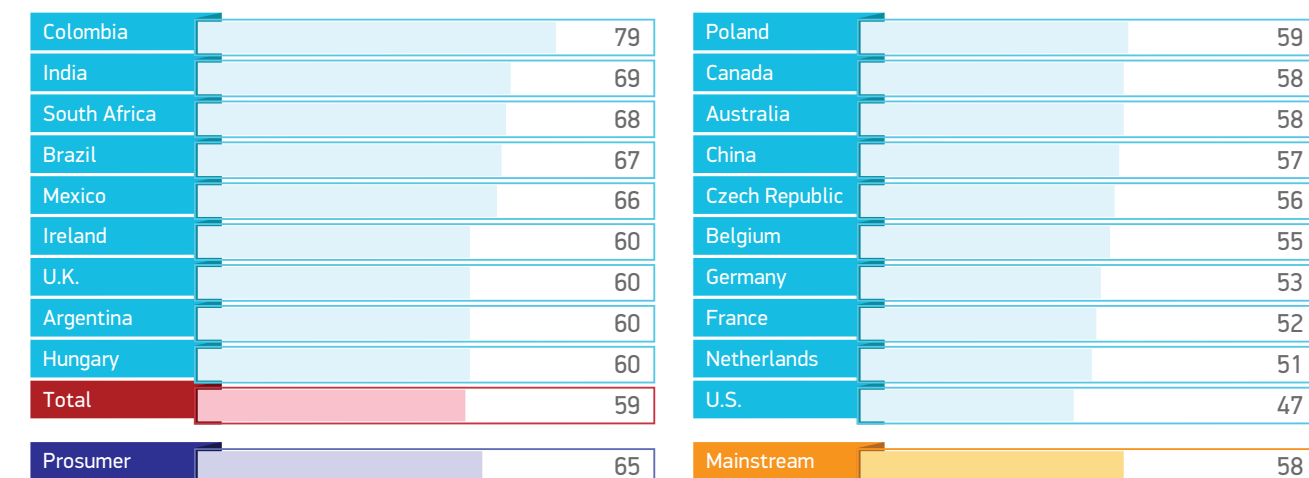
of 69 percent in India and 79 percent in Colombia. The least likely to believe they look younger than most of their peers: the Dutch, Czechs, French, Germans, and Argentines—each with agreement levels below 50 percent.

One of the ways in which people retain their youthful attitudes is by continuing to engage in youthful pursuits. In Euro RSCG's 2006 study, the Future of Generations, we saw a big gap in levels of agreement with the statement, "I still feel connected to youth; there's no big difference in the things I like." In the U.S., 73 percent of Prosumers agreed, compared with 59 percent of the mainstream. One aspect of today's digital lifestyle that bears further investigation is the extent to which shared technologies and digital entertainment options will diminish the cultural gap between young and old. With multiple generations enjoying everything from

Angry Birds and Facebook to Instagram, the barriers between youth, middle age, and old age may well grow less distinct. And that, in turn, will make year of birth a less important delineator for marketers in numerous categories.

Certainly, digital technologies offer unprecedented access to the aged. Thinking about the "elderly" used to evoke images of a blanket-clad figure in a rocking chair in front of the hearth. Today, a more common scenario is probably a computer logged on to Facebook or Amazon. In the U.K., a 2012 survey by BaseKit.com found that people aged 55 and older are the biggest demographic of online shoppers, with 86 percent regularly purchasing from online stores. In fact, more than a third of this age group do the majority of their shopping online.

I feel younger than my age



Showing % agreeing strongly/somewhat

And older people have certainly embraced social media: According to Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, the fastest growing demographic of social media users in the U.S. is people aged 74 and up. It's worth remembering, too, that today's elderly represent the last generations that will be asked to enter the world of digital communications, online shopping, and social media in their later years. For ensuing generations of elderly, digital living will simply be the norm.



What Worries Us About Aging

“Older generations understand their younger family members might not spend much time with them due to work pressures, so they seek time and join activities with their friends, especially physical activities to keep their bodies and minds alert.” —Euro RSCG Shanghai

“In our new world, people are obsessed with the idea of lifelong autonomy and mobility—and it is changing their relationship with aging. It’s no longer enough to age beautifully and gracefully; now we must age in such a way that we retain our ability to do things, to contribute and be productive, and to remain a vital part of what’s happening around us.” —Marianne Hurstel, Vice President, Euro RSCG’s BETC and Global Chief Strategy Officer, Euro RSCG Worldwide

Money is also a big issue for respondents. More than 6 in 10 are at least moderately worried about running out of money before they die, and 59 percent fear they won’t be able to afford adequate medical care. This latter worry is most pronounced in Latin America, especially in Brazil, where 57 percent admit to being very or extremely worried about it (not shown in chart).

Recent and ongoing global and national economic crises have only served to exacerbate people’s concerns about how well they’ll be able to support themselves financially when they’re older. Studies show that large segments of the population are not putting away enough money to support them through their retirements, especially now that so many people are living for three decades or even longer after they leave the workforce.

In general, there’s a sense that older people are being left to fend for themselves, without the traditional forms of support (e.g., village, extended family, government/ community programs) that used to sustain them. Now that living into one’s 80s or even 90s is increasingly common, these fears are becoming more pervasive. Nearly three-quarters of global respondents (71 percent) and 84 percent of those aged 55+ believe “the government needs to do more to protect and provide for the elderly.”

Looking at the list of fears related to aging, the biggest differences emerge not between the age groups but between the sexes. Simply put, women are more apt than men to worry about what lies ahead. On every single one of the 20 areas of concern, women outscored men, by a margin ranging from a single percentage point (having to live in a nursing home, being bored) to a gap of 11 points (diminished mental capacity).

It’s also interesting to note that people are more fearful of aging than of actually dying. As we continue to push the limits of life expectancy, we add to the tally of things that can go wrong. Looking at the list of 20 concerns related to aging, “dying/the way I die” came in way down at number 14. In a separate question, only 39 percent of respondents said they worry about death and dying. It seems to be a fear that ebbs with age, garnering agreement from 42 percent of millennials but only 30 percent of those aged 55+. It may well be that our relative lack of control over the means and timing of our deaths releases us of responsibility—and, therefore, from some of the pressure.

We’re all aware of the perceived benefits of aging—experience, expertise, and wisdom, among them—but few welcome the other changes typically associated with one’s advancing years, including a gradual physical and all-too-often cognitive decline. Hence, the near-universal longing to uncover the secret of eternal life and youth. In far-off times, our hopes rested in magic: the Fountain of Youth, the philosopher’s stone, Shangri-La. Now our hopes are pinned to science and modern medicine.

We asked people to rate their levels of anxiety with regard to 20 aspects of growing old, ranging from the physiological to the financial. Looking at top-three-box responses (moderately + very + extremely worried), we see that the greatest areas of concern center on loss of autonomy and function. This is particularly worrisome to Prosumers, who are accustomed to being in control: 70 percent of Prosumers worry about diminished physical capacity, and 68 percent worry about diminished mental capacity (vs. 65 percent and 63 percent, respectively, for the mainstream).

According to the World Health Organization,

25–30%

of people aged 85 or older have some degree of cognitive decline.

Within each country (not shown in chart), concerns about aging are likely to be influenced by several factors. In places where youth and vigor are particularly prized, getting older is a more daunting prospect. The Latin American countries are a case in point, although only Colombians stood out in the sample as significantly more concerned about the prospect of aging. In societies in which the elderly are traditionally honored and respected, the disadvantages of aging

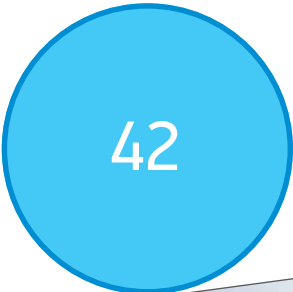
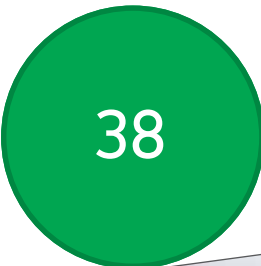
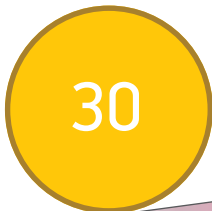
“Brazil places significant value on a youthful spirit and aesthetic. Not being able to participate in and live a youthful lifestyle is a prominent concern, compounded by poor public retirement benefits, poor infrastructure for the elderly, expensive medication and health insurance, and few elder-oriented leisure and entertainment opportunities.”
—Euro RSCG Brazil

are compensated by the status of age. That cultural difference is certainly reflected in responses from India: On every single one of the 20 measures related to aging concerns, our Indian respondents returned lower scores. They simply are not as worried about aging as are people in other markets. In China, in contrast, we can see the effects of a modernizing culture. Whereas the Chinese sample was less apt than average to worry about such things as diminished capacity and illness, they were more likely to express concern over such things as lost social status, not being supported by their children, and “being forgotten.” The provision of facilities for older people in each country is another crucial factor. The Netherlands is one of the most socially inclusive countries in the survey and is one of the few where pension funding is sustainable over the long term. The greater sense of security the elderly feel in that country can be seen in the survey scores. For instance, only 17 percent of the Dutch are very or extremely worried about loss of independence, which is just less than half the top-two-box scores for the global sample. And only 1 in 10 Dutch is very or extremely worried about losing social stature while aging, compared with 2 in 10 in the global sample.

I worry about death and dying

- Age 55+
- Age 35–54
- Age 18–34

Showing % agreeing strongly/somewhat



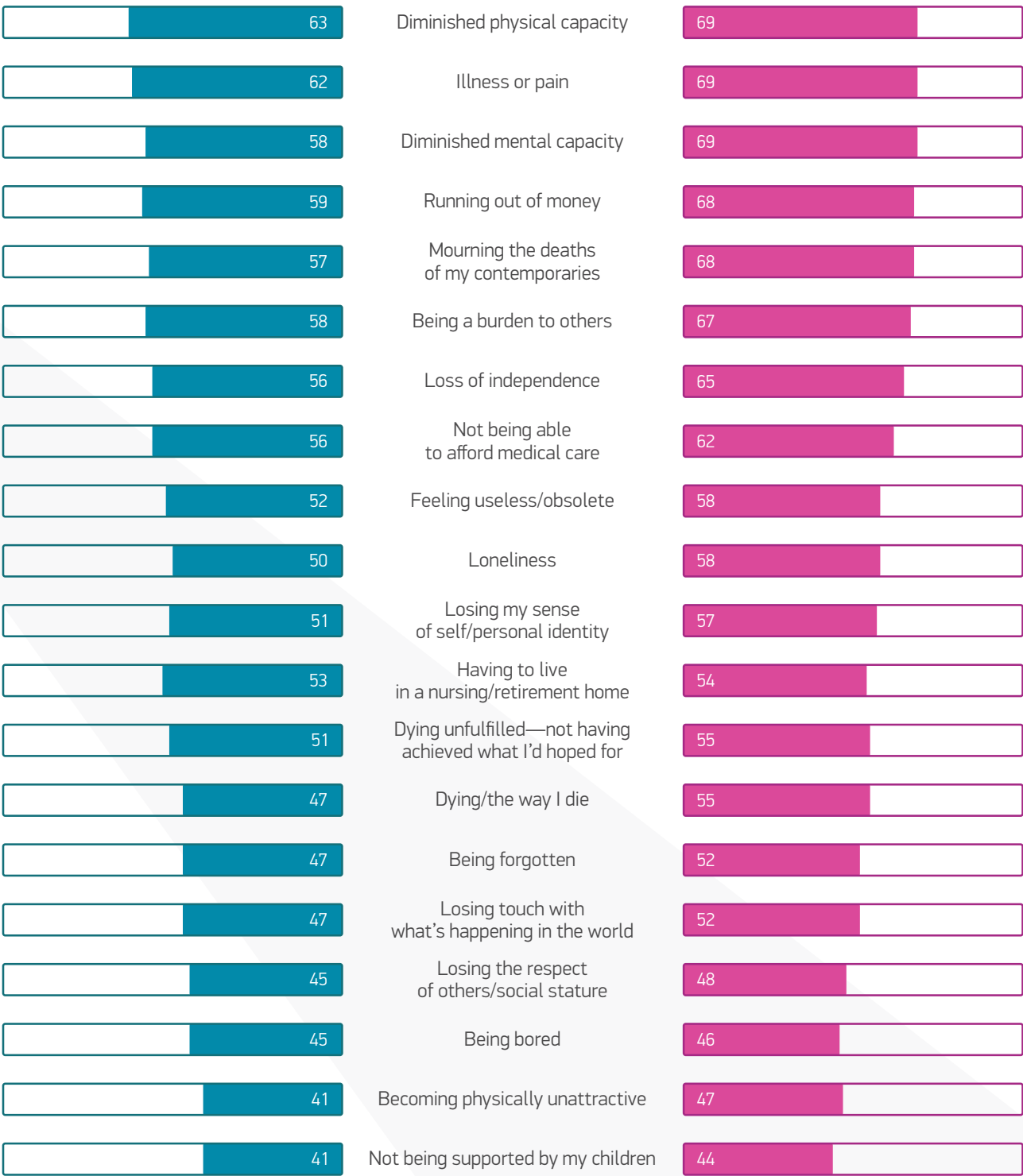
50%

of millennials worry about being bored when they're older

58%

of millennials worry about dying unfulfilled

Which aspects of aging worry you?



Showing % that are moderately/very/extremely worried



Have You Hit Your Peak?

"Nowhere in the world is growing old an attractive prospect. And even less so if you are in South Africa. Our state provides poorly for the elderly, leaving the burden to family and/or the individual to carry."
—Euro RSCG South Africa

In the year 1800, not a single country had a life expectancy over age 40. By 1900, a Caucasian male born in the United States could expect to live to age 47, a man born in Hungary would be expected to make it to 37, while an Australian could expect to see age 48. Today, a little more than a century beyond that, "youth" isn't even considered to end until age 48, the point at which middle age sets in, according to our respondents' estimations.

As the lifetime scale has been elongated, virtually everything about how we perceive youth and aging has shifted dramatically. With average life expectancy around the world now at 67—ranging from just over 39 years in Mozambique to nearly 83 years in Japan (U.N. figures)—our notions of what constitutes *young* and *old* have had to evolve. People now have children and run marathons (and companies) at ages at which they would have been long gone in previous centuries.

Modern lifestyles are further skewing how we think about age. Wherever prosperity has grown, young people stay in school longer, start careers later, marry later, and have children later. In consequence, everything gets pushed back—including our notions of what constitutes old age. In this survey, respondents pegged old age as starting at 71. That's the good news. The bad news is it's assumed we'll have hit our peaks decades before we've reached old age. Looking at the global sample, respondents believe both men and women hit their sexual, physical, and creative peaks by their mid-30s. Even the perceived age of peak wisdom is quite young: judged to be 44 years for women and 49 years for men. That leaves an awful lot of years in which to witness one's gradual decline.

46

is too old for a woman to raise a newborn

48

is too old for a man to raise a newborn

48

Start of middle age

71

Start of old age

- Physical (in terms of strength/fitness)
- Creative
- Physical (in terms of attractiveness)
- Mental
- Sexual
- Wisdom

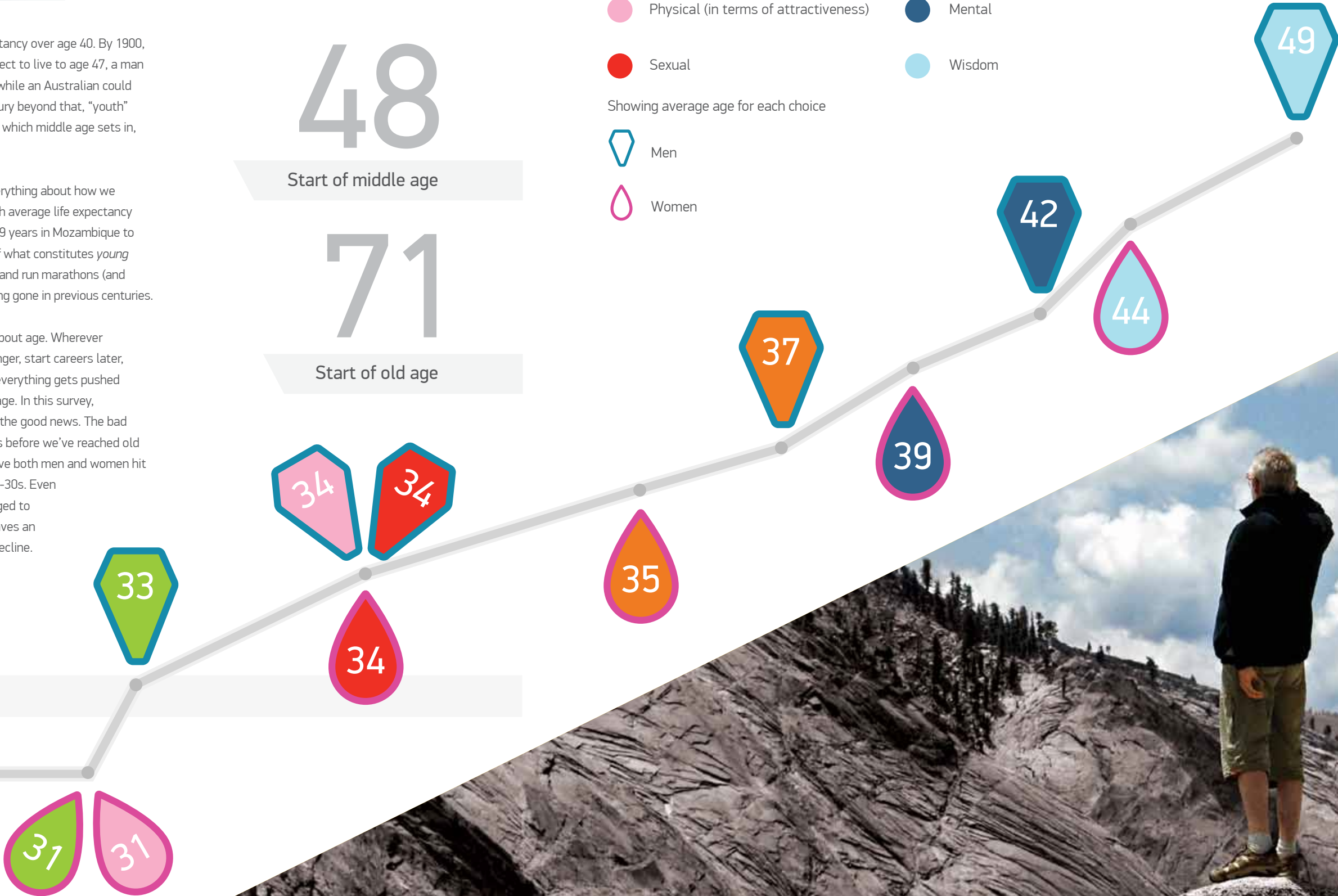
Showing average age for each choice



Men



Women



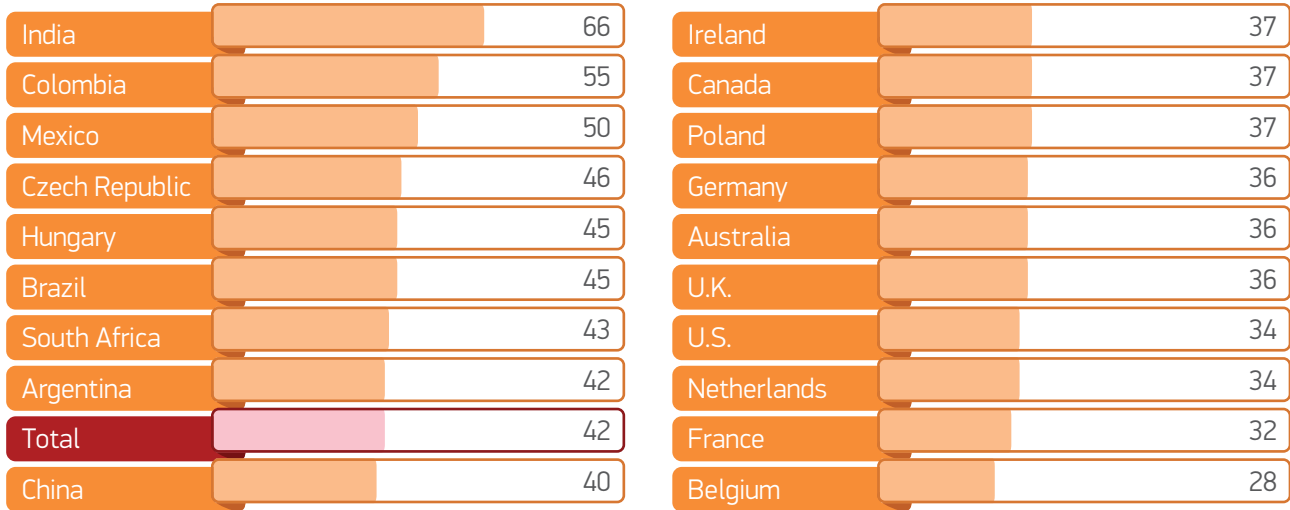
Rejecting a Century at Any Price

If you could take a pill that would guarantee you'd live to 100, would you? What if there were no guarantees about your cognitive or physical state at that age? If you opted to swallow the pill, you'd be in a small minority. Of our global respondents, only 28 percent said they'd take it, while 72 percent demurred. China is the only country in which the question yielded a close result, with a slight majority of 51 percent opting for the centenarian pill and 49 percent leaving it in the bottle.

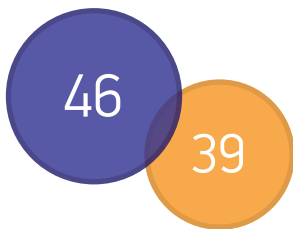
For all our assumptions that eternal life is the be-all and end-all of human aspirations, our study has uncovered a conflicting truth: *People don't just worry about dying too young, but also about living too old.* Forty-two percent of the sample would rather not live into their late 90s or early 100s; they'd rather die younger, when they're less frail and have more independence. There's also widespread concern about the more general possibility of humans finding new ways to extend lifespans. More than 4 in 10 global respondents worry that new technologies and medical advances will extend people's lives to the detriment of society and the planet.

These worries may be well founded: Since 1950, the estimated number of people living beyond 100 has doubled every decade in the most developed countries. More and more, medical science is enabling people to "cheat death," extending their lives further without necessarily paying sufficient heed to the quality of those later years and perhaps also not taking into full account the costs—both financial and in terms of the resultant burden on family, the community, and the healthcare system. The idea of immortality may be a mainstay of mythology, but it loses its appeal when eternal youth and good health aren't part of it. It's easy to understand, then, why nearly half the global sample (54 percent of Prosumers and 48 percent of the mainstream) believe physician-assisted suicide should be legal, and why 4 in 10 say they would consider that option if their physical health deteriorated sufficiently.

I don't want to live into my late 90s or early 100s; I'd rather die younger, when I'm less frail and have more independence

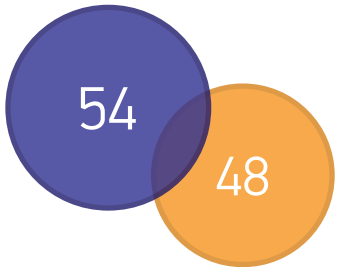


Showing % agreeing strongly/somewhat



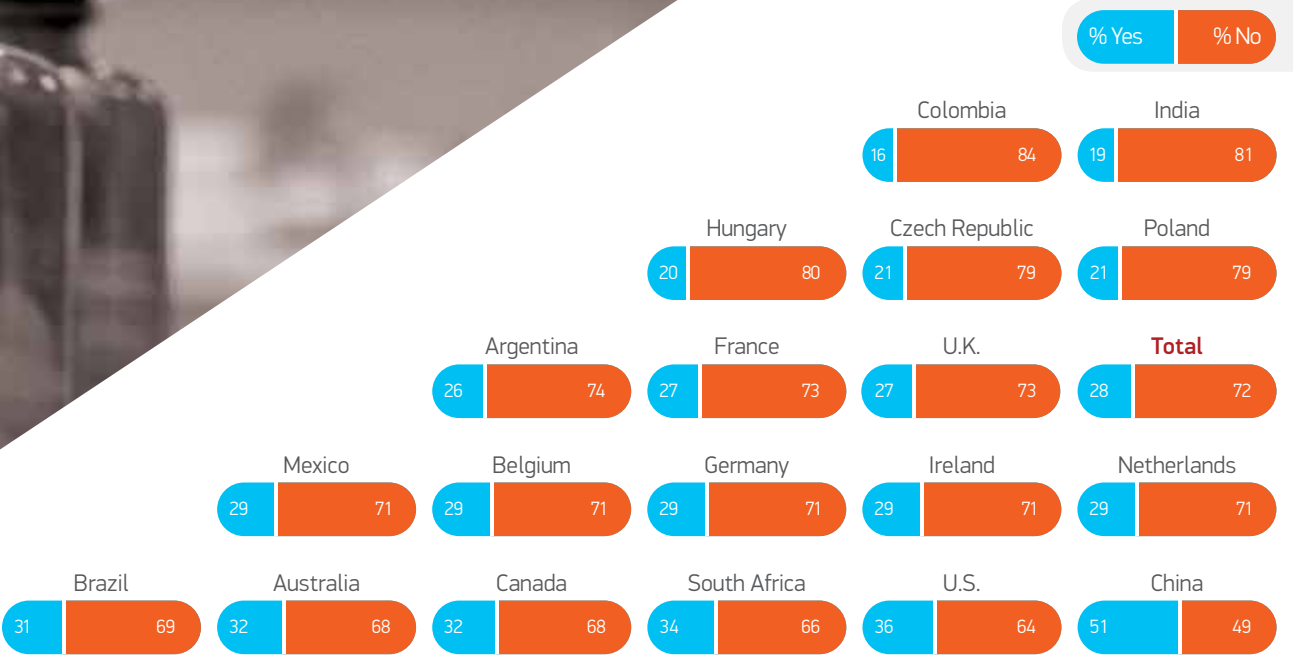
If my physical health deteriorated enough, I would consider physician-assisted suicide

Prosumer Mainstream



I believe physician-assisted suicide should be legal

Would you take a pill to live to 100?



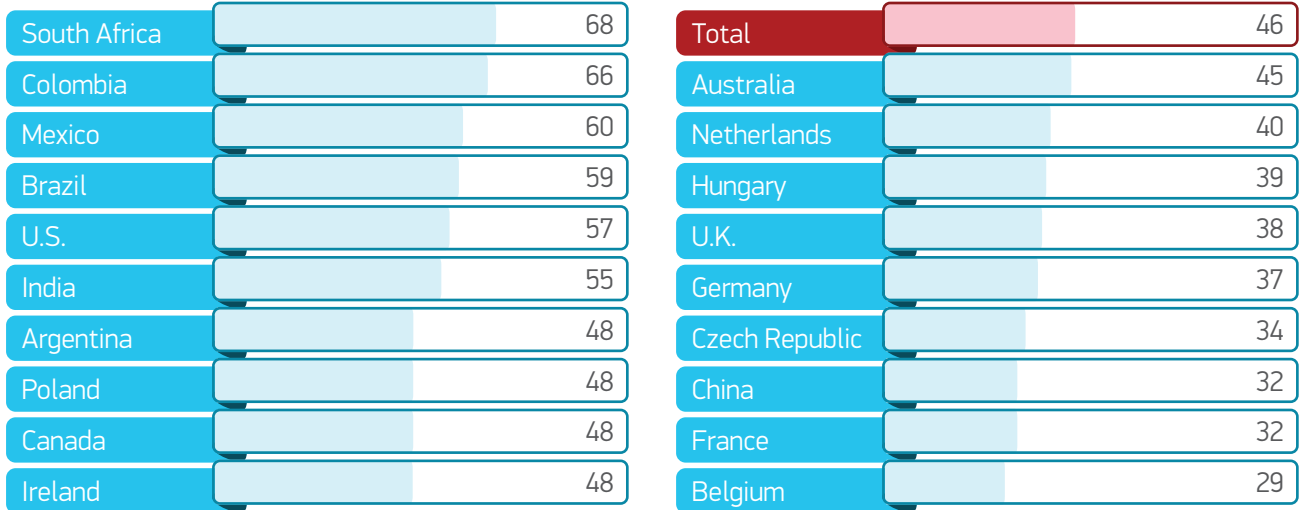
On this score, governments are sorely out of touch with the governed: Currently, active euthanasia (intentionally ending a life in order to relieve pain and suffering) is legal only in the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg), and assisted suicide is permitted only in Switzerland and three western U.S. states (Montana, Oregon, Washington). Earlier this year, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe directly rejected euthanasia,

declaring, "Euthanasia, in the sense of the intentional killing by act or omission of a dependent human being for his or her alleged benefit, must always be prohibited." So governments, by and large, are actively supporting the prolongation of life at any cost (though without being willing to help bear the financial costs, in many cases), even as more citizens have come to the conclusion that death is preferable to extreme—or perhaps simply prolonged—

suffering. This is likely to be fertile ground for social media activism in coming years.

For a sizable minority of respondents, fear of death may be tempered by a belief in the afterlife. Forty-six percent believe there is life after death, ranging from a low of 29 percent in Belgium (interesting, given that country's support of euthanasia) to more than 6 in 10 respondents in South Africa, Colombia, and Mexico.

I believe there is a life after death



Showing % agreeing strongly/somewhat



Are We Heading Toward a New World Order?

"In the Netherlands, there is worry about the 'aging of the population' concerning our pensions and the shrinking size of the workforce. Outsourcing labor-intensive work feeds the discussion on the innovative power of our industries: Can you have successful R&D without doing the real (production) work yourself?" —Euro RSCG Amsterdam

Looking at countries around the globe, the median age—the point at which half the population is younger and half is older—ranges from a low of 15 years in Uganda to a high of 40 years or more in Japan and a number of European countries. As populations in much of the developed world continue to grow older, what will be the consequences?

We put that question to respondents, asking them to forecast how countries with older populations will change and how the balance of power likely will shift between the “old” and “new” worlds. A majority of the global sample are convinced that countries with older populations will become more conservative—both socially and politically. And more than 4 in 10 believe these nations will become less innovative and less tolerant in coming years. Perhaps even more worrisome for the more aged countries is the perception of their waning power and influence. There is a widespread belief that countries with youthful populations—including Africa and parts of Asia and Latin America—will see their economic, political, and cultural influence grow, while current powerhouses will see their influence wane. On every measure, Prosumers and men were likelier than others to perceive these shifts ahead.

Digging into the responses by country (not shown in chart), we find nationalist optimism on both sides. India is particularly convinced that the relative youth of emerging markets will turn them into a globally dominant force. For instance, 79 percent of Indians think

countries with younger populations will see their economic power grow—more than 20 points higher than the global response. Meanwhile, older powers, including the U.S. and U.K., aren’t quite ready to give up the ghost. While they accept that the rising economic and political might of younger parts of the world is inevitable, they are less apt to think they’ll cede much cultural ground. Only 28 percent of British respondents and 33 percent of Americans believe countries with older populations will have less of an impact on global culture. (This compares with 55 percent of Indians and 45 percent of Chinese.) This may be explained, in part, by the fact that only around a third of respondents in the U.S. and U.K. think countries become less creative and innovative as their populations age. In the digital economy, ideas are currency—and whichever parts of the world produce the most powerful ideas will come out on top, regardless of the national median age.

While on this topic, it’s worth looking back at the findings regarding when people hit their creative peak. There’s a clear geographic divide based on population age: On that question, just 57 percent of Americans and 59 percent of British respondents said men hit their creative peak prior to age 40; this compares with nearly three-quarters of respondents in China (74 percent) who said the same. This is in keeping with signs we’ve been seeing of late in the most developed markets that the *wunderkinder* of yesteryear may have lost some of their bloom. When we

think of the creative masterminds of our time, such people as Steve Jobs (in his mid-50s at the time of his death) and Jonathan Ives (age 45) come to mind. If creative genius has an expiration date, it’s being largely ignored. And, where business is concerned, experience counts for a lot. Consider the case of Facebook: No one dismisses founder Mark Zuckerberg’s accomplishments, but the social media site didn’t become profitable until he, at age 23, brought in Sheryl Sandberg, then age 38, as chief operating officer. At this stage of his career, Zuckerberg is not taken quite as seriously as an older person in his position might be.

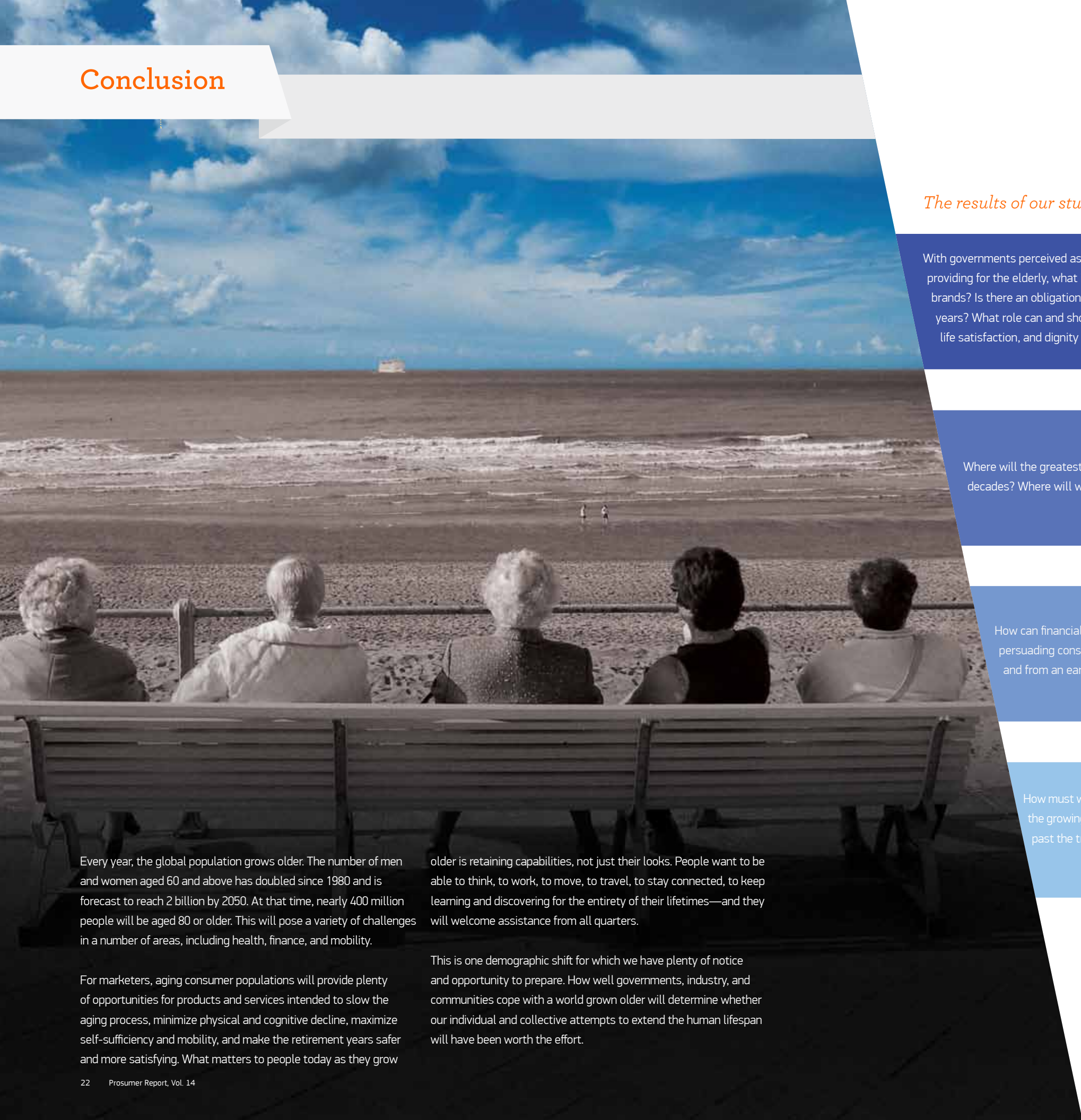
It would be a mistake for self-satisfied baby boomers and Gen Xers to dismiss the potency of youth, however. What young people have on their side is their sheer numbers and fluency in digital communications, which, in combination, spell tremendous potential for political power—a reality far from lost on politicians ranging from President Obama in the U.S. and President Hollande in France to the Islamic and progressive candidates vying to determine the future of Egypt.

As populations in much of the developed world continue to grow older, what will be the consequences?



Showing % agreeing strongly/somewhat

Conclusion



Every year, the global population grows older. The number of men and women aged 60 and above has doubled since 1980 and is forecast to reach 2 billion by 2050. At that time, nearly 400 million people will be aged 80 or older. This will pose a variety of challenges in a number of areas, including health, finance, and mobility.

For marketers, aging consumer populations will provide plenty of opportunities for products and services intended to slow the aging process, minimize physical and cognitive decline, maximize self-sufficiency and mobility, and make the retirement years safer and more satisfying. What matters to people today as they grow

older is retaining capabilities, not just their looks. People want to be able to think, to work, to move, to travel, to stay connected, to keep learning and discovering for the entirety of their lifetimes—and they will welcome assistance from all quarters.

This is one demographic shift for which we have plenty of notice and opportunity to prepare. How well governments, industry, and communities cope with a world grown older will determine whether our individual and collective attempts to extend the human lifespan will have been worth the effort.

The results of our study give us lots to think about:

With governments perceived as falling short in terms of protecting and providing for the elderly, what is the optimal role for corporations and brands? Is there an obligation to help people prepare for their later years? What role can and should brands play in promoting the care, life satisfaction, and dignity of the aged and infirm?

What are the implications of aging populations on communications? To what extent will digital technologies provide a pathway to the oldest consumer cohorts?

Where will the greatest cultural influences come from in future decades? Where will we find new epicenters of innovation?

How will attitudes toward aging evolve as people in their 80s, 90s, and beyond become a larger presence? What stereotypes and assumptions will fall by the wayside?

How can financial services companies do a better job of persuading consumers about the need to save more—and from an earlier age?

What new product and service categories will be required to meet the needs of the aged?

How must workplaces evolve in order to accommodate the growing number of people who must earn money past the traditional retirement age?

What needs to be done to make physical spaces—from homes, stores, and workplaces to public parks and museums—more age-friendly?



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