

Contact: upua.internacional@ua.es

HELPING OVER-50s SPAIN



Author:

Concepción Bru Ronda

Work team:

Víctor Manuel Pina Medina
María Amparo Alesón Carbonell
Nuria Ruiz Armero
Antonio López Blanes
Víctor Sarrión Cano



Erasmus+



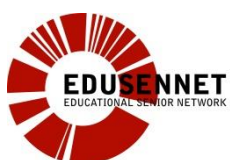
Educational Senior Network – Helping Over-50s - SPAIN by EduSenNet is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	4
STUDY	5
BASIC SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA - INTERVIEWEES' PROFILE	7
LEARNING	9
CONCLUSION.....	24

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Participants according to gender (in percentage)	7
Figure 2: Participants according to age groups (in percentage)	7
Figure 3: Respondents' educational level	8
Figure 4: Respondents' area of residence.	8
Figure 5: Respondents' domestic situation.....	9
Figure 6: Do you have a physical handicap or health problem that makes it difficult for you to join learning events?	9
Figure 7: Do you think learning in later life is important and are you interested in taking part in learning activities?	10
Figure 8: How do you find out about learning possibilities? / Where can you find out about learning possibilities?	13
Figure 9: Do you know any Universities of the Third Age?	14
Figure 10: Which of the following do you think are good reasons to take part in learning activities?16	
Figure 11: Would more information and a wider range of learning activities persuade you to take part?	16
Figure 12: If the answer is NO, what would prevent you from taking part?	18
Figure 13: Which type of education would you prefer?.....	19
Figure 14: Is the social aspect of learning important for you (learning inside a group and in direct contact with the lecturer)?	19
Figure 15: Would you want to use some new media for learning either at home or in a group?	21



INTRODUCTION

The EU-funded project Educational Senior Network (EduSenNet) seeks to identify the specific needs of learners older than 50 as well as the conditions under which they learn. This project examines the extent of possible innovation, how it could be undertaken, and who its addressees should be. Identifying a learning environment can help us schedule innovation not only in urban locations but also in specific communities from rural areas.

Researchers from 6 different European countries will be working together to find the best possible ways of helping older people fulfil their learning needs through the later years of their working lives and during retirement. The project will focus on how later life can be enriched through learning activities of all kinds.

Objectives, needs and outcomes are catered for in various ways:

- a) summarising experiences;
- b) encouraging older adults to take part in learning activities; and
- c) developing an interest to learn through participation in activities designed to promote and extend both knowledge and skills.

It will be necessary to examine the objectives and motivation, together with the barriers to learning faced by the older adults who take part in programmes as well as by those who do not. The introduction of new programmes and the upgrading of old ones will involve older people in activities better suited to their needs.

The EduSenNet project is designed to gather and share information, to make a wider and improved use of all these rich experiences, building upon them, analysing and assessing their value and impact on seniors, disseminating research evidence and, of course, creating a network to do all this.

During this first stage, we have been working with a survey questionnaire designed to provide and obtain the basic information that will make it possible to plan the most suitable measures and proposals to ensure that many other people can benefit from these training programmes and actions oriented to seniors, regardless of their background, their socio-cultural status or their level of autonomy and mobility.

The aforesaid questionnaire asks interviewees about their needs, fears, formative experiences and opinions regarding the different types of training and how to become involved in them. This survey carried out by each one of the network partners allowed us to achieve interesting outcomes as well as to prepare the national report that we are now presenting from the Permanent University of the University of Alicante.



The survey was opened on 11th May and closed on 16th September of this year. In total, it was completed by 103 people; 65% administered the survey on paper and 35% did it online.

STUDY

Our attention focuses on those older adults who have an interest in learning but need some guidance or assistance to join educational programmes. The attached questionnaire is designed to supply essential information so that we can devise appropriate measures.

The survey is divided into the following areas of analysis: two separate sections, the first one referring to socio-demographic aspects as tools used to define our interviewees' profiles (Age; Gender; Level of education; and Domestic Situation); and a second one related to training (the importance that respondents give to mature life, how they have got to know it, what experiences they are familiar with, which ones they see as the most appropriate and why, the social relevance of training as well as the format preferred by interviewees, and finally, some measures or suggestions which, in the respondents' opinion, are necessary for them to be able to become more deeply involved.

Seniors to which the EduSenNet surveys are addressed

The targeted older adult respondent population was found amongst different groups belonging to the context of seniors. A distinction can be drawn between: a) seniors' associations which carry out leisure and free-time activities (usually in Pensioners' Centres and Homes and regional houses or centres); b) Municipal Community Social Centres; c) Preventive Care Centres for seniors: CEAMS and CIMS; d) Third-Age Homes and Day Care Centres; and e) Residents' and Housewives' Associations.

- a) The so-called Pensioners' Homes are municipal public service establishments without a residential nature created to provide social relationships and, in general, to ensure the personal development of their members and users.
- b) Municipal Community Social Centres are open and environment-interactive facilities, a common space of both the formal and informal sector which helps socialise and revitalise the community. They make it possible to develop projects and activities that promote coexistence as well as Community Social Mediation Services meant to improve coexistence between residents and to boost communication between individuals and groups of different ages. They also have an intergenerational nature, even though older unemployed or retired people are the ones frequenting them more often.
- c) Preventive Care Centres for seniors: CEAMS and CIMS offer specialised services and focus on keeping seniors in a physical and emotional condition that allows them to manage by

themselves and to stay in their family and social milieu, ultimately seeking to postpone their admission to homes and hospitals. They are configured as units for prevention, health maintenance, rehabilitation, training, information, and for the development of activities focused on culture, leisure, coexistence and social promotion, oriented to favour healthy lifestyles while simultaneously revitalising group and interpersonal relationships. The aim sought is to prevent loneliness and rootlessness by becoming a support resource not only for seniors but also for their relatives –thus helping older people to remain within a familiar environment as long as possible. A number of requirements must be fulfilled to become a user of preventive care centres, namely: being 60 years old; and not suffering from any infectious-contagious disease or psychopathy which could alter normal life in the centre.

- d) Third-Age Homes and Day Care centres. They offer permanent housing and overall attention to seniors who, due to their health- or family-related, social or economic problems, as well as because of limitations regarding their personal autonomy, cannot be looked after at their own homes.
- e) Residents' Associations are the ones legally organised as an institution for their participation in public life and the achievement of shared goals by residents or people who live in the same community (the so-called «neighbourhood movement»). The community's territory defines the area within which each one of the residents' associations operates: it can be a neighbourhood, a city, a small town, a village, a residential area or any other type of urban arrangement. These organisations stem from the movements and dynamism of their members who feel encouraged to gather for reasons of good neighbourhood –they must not be confused with homeowners' associations, though. Residents' associations –as well as Housewives' Associations, which have a stronger protest and social component focused on defending women's rights and interests– stand out as an essential element in Spain when it comes to processes aimed at social achievements; and seniors are usually represented and organised to a large extent inside them.

Ours is an extensive social group of senior citizens distributed across different geographical areas in the Alicante province who have contributed with enriching views and valuable outcomes to the EduSenNet study.

All the answers and conclusions supplied by these groups of interviewees and collected in this report attempt to offer a general overview of the situation.

BASIC SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA - INTERVIEWEES' PROFILE

The total number of surveys completed in Spain amounted to 103 –61.17% of them being from women and the remaining 38.33% from men.

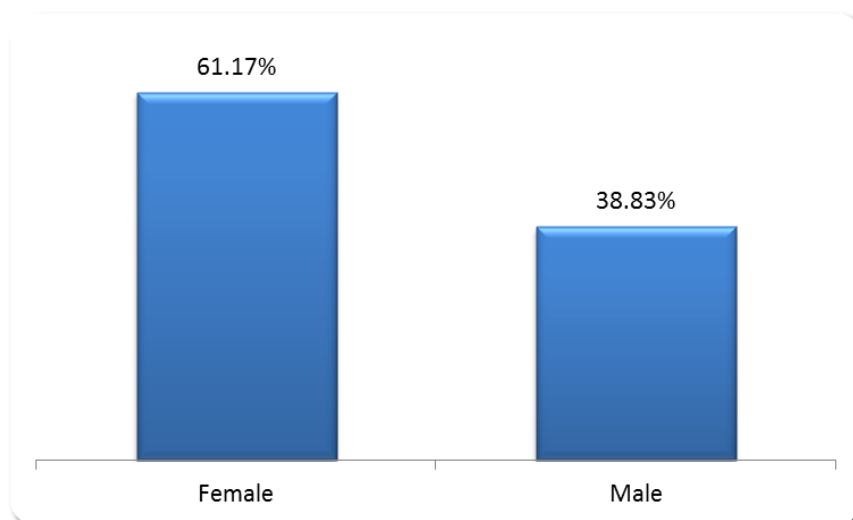


Figure 1: Participants according to gender (in percentage)

As regards age distribution, 15.53% are 50-to-60-year-olds; 39.81% have between 61 and 70 years of age; 28.16% are between 71 and 80 years old; and 16.50% are 81 or older.

It is worth highlighting the significant proportion of over-70s involved in the survey (44.66% of respondents) which already suggests a considerable level of interest in our study object.

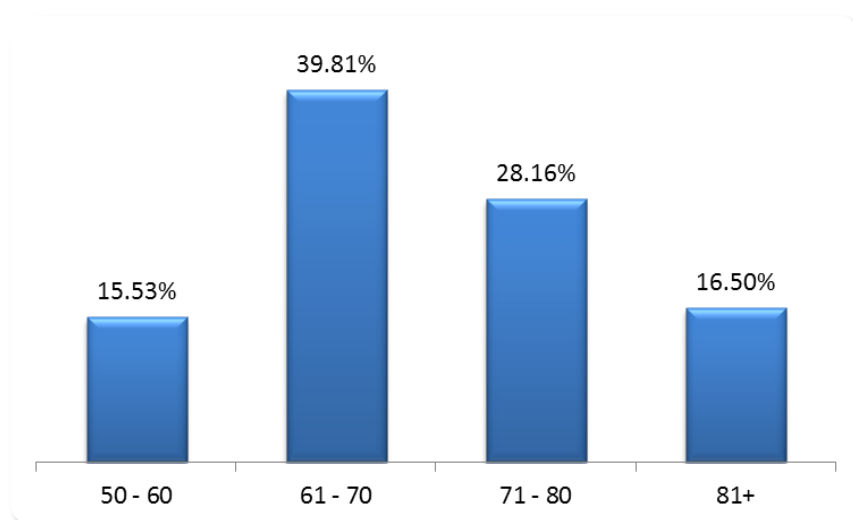


Figure 2: Participants according to age groups (in percentage)

As for level of education, the primary school group stands out in first place (accounting for 34.95% of the sample), followed by individuals with a secondary school level (27.18%) and those who have finished a university degree (23.30%). A group representing up to 14.56% of

respondents claim to have completed a different level –an answer which tends to be related to professional studies or medium-level vocational training certifications of a technical nature.

These results are in keeping with the general educational level trends identified in Spanish official demographic data.

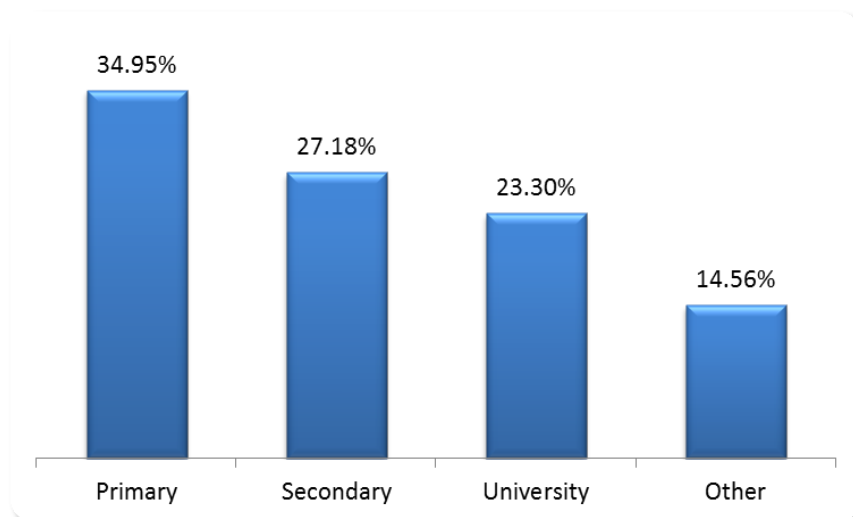


Figure 3: Respondents' educational level

With regard to the area of residence, 55.34% of non-retired respondents have their homes in relatively large cities or towns of more than 100,000 inhabitants, whereas 44.66% live in smaller towns or villages/rural areas (with population figures ranging between 10,001 and 100,000 inhabitants).

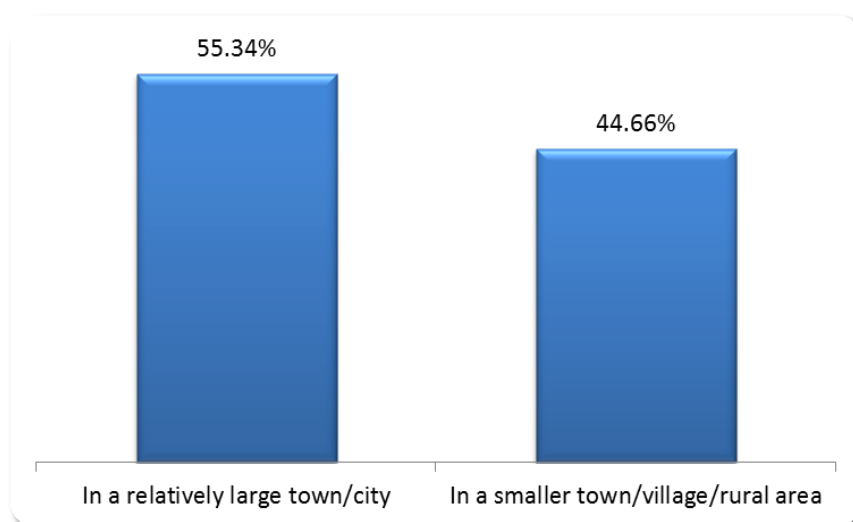


Figure 4: Respondents' area of residence.

As far as the household situation is concerned, a high percentage of retired people (55.34%) live with their relatives in a flat/apartment or a house; 25% live in a residential home; and 19.42% live alone. This reflects the cultural and traditional values of our country which supports a family-based structure of society.

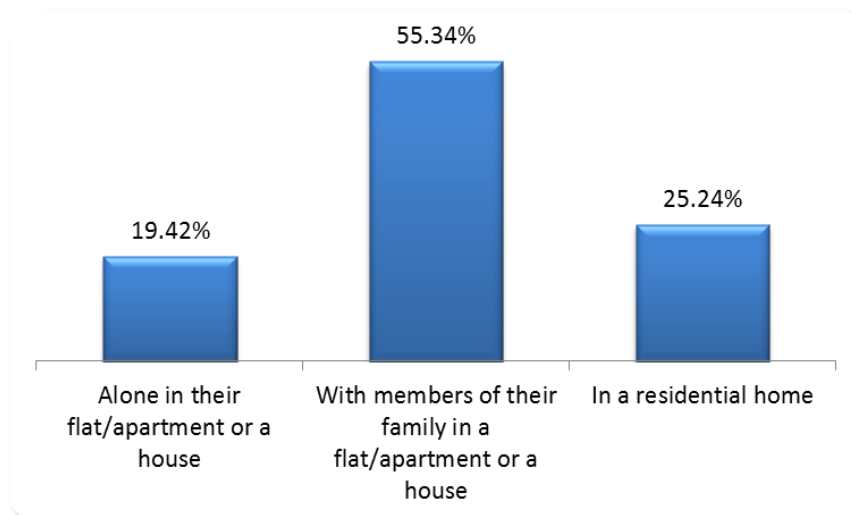


Figure 5: Respondents' domestic situation

LEARNING

Do you have a physical handicap or health problem that makes it difficult for you to join learning events?

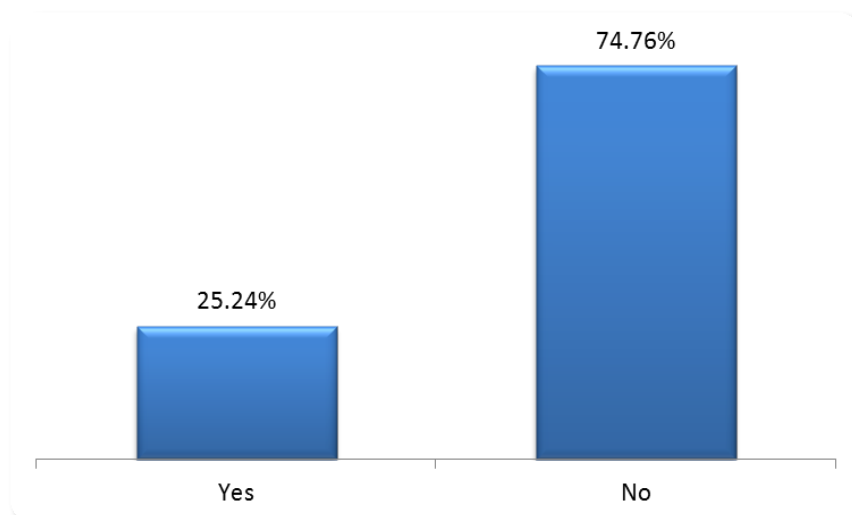


Figure 6: Do you have a physical handicap or health problem that makes it difficult for you to join learning events?

In accordance with the answers obtained, 74.76% of respondents claim not to have any difficulties to follow a training activity, whereas 25.24% of the sample does mention that they have health problems. This proportion shows a nearly absolute correlation with the group of

individuals who answer that they live in elderly people's homes, and it is likewise situated within the same range of people above 71 years of age. Nevertheless, we will see below that this answer does not correlate with a 'loss of interest' to participate in training activities and the 'belief' that participation in training activities is important for them –as can be seen in the results corresponding to the next question.

Do you think learning in later life is important and are you interested in taking part in learning activities?

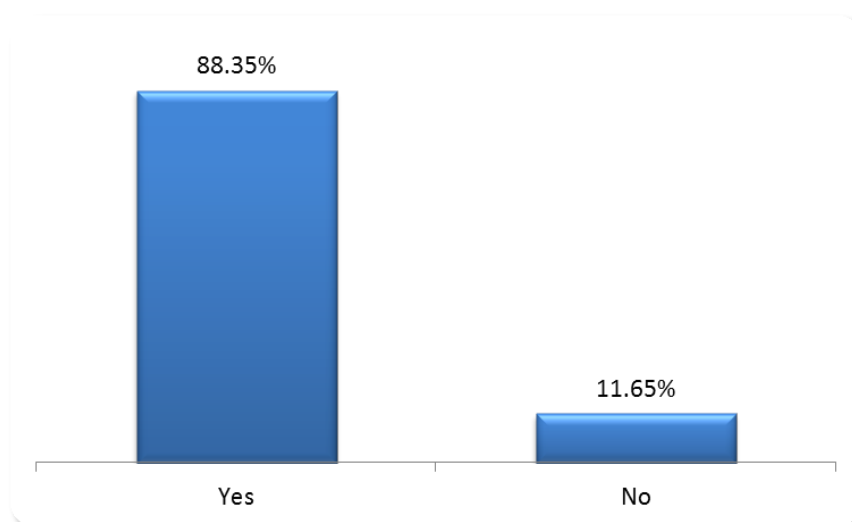


Figure 7: Do you think learning in later life is important and are you interested in taking part in learning activities?

Thus, only 11.65% of interviewees say that, in their view, learning at an adult age is NOT important, and they additionally would NOT be interested in taking part in active training –as opposed to the remaining 88.35%, who state that training activities ARE ACTUALLY important for them and, therefore, that they ARE INDEED interested in participating in such activities.

Please, explain the reason/s why you say YES/NO?

YES: A large number of reasons are argued by those who chose this option. That's why we will try to shortlist them to the most common ones together with those which deserve to be highlighted for their relevance:

- Most answers stress the **interest to learn new things, because they believe that it is very good and important to keep acquiring knowledge and to know more and more**. Along these same lines, emphasis is placed on the fact that this allows them "to access things so far unknown to them, such as new technologies"; they also point out that "we never learn everything, we know nothing about many interesting topics, and it all can help us enrich ourselves both culturally and as individuals"; after all, "people should see training as something permanent which gives them culture and educates them from a social point of view."

- **Age and its relationship with the fast changes that take place; this is an important aspect to justify participation in training** for another group: "The older we grow the more we still need to learn"; "No age limit exists for learning"; "I consider that, from maturity, with the accumulated experience, the serenity, the balance, and the free time, this becomes an exceptional moment to learn and, of course, if you stay in good health, there is no reason why the desire to discover new horizons should be restricted at our age"; "it can always help us overcome difficulties and even more so when you become older, since everything changes so quickly and we need to be part of this world"; "we can never stop learning new things, and lots of issues exist that you cannot study in depth while you are young and you are training for your job"; "with age and the passing of time, things are inevitably forgotten or they change to a large extent, which makes it necessary to become familiar with them and learn them once again."
- **The usefulness of training for physical and emotional training** is one of the reasons adduced by a large part of interviewees to say YES: "To exercise memory"; "It is very important to maintain the intellect in good condition"; "It is extremely important to feel and remain active because if the mind is active, so is the person"; "training keeps individuals active, in all their physical, mental, intellectual and social capabilities"; "Because it represents the best way to stay active, encouraged to live and to meet that need for knowledge which is never completely satisfied"; "The interest to learn more not only enriches us spiritually but also keeps the mind active and supplies vital energy" "I really want to stay active and to mix with other people who have the same aspirations as me" "I would like to slow down my physical, cognitive and social deterioration."
- The aims of **"distraction, entertainment, desire to socialise and participate"** are other reasons which justify a set of YES answers: "Because I am very curious and I like to explore new things and meet new people with whom I can share my leisure time"; "I like listening to debates and lectures, to music and to attend such events with other individuals who share a cultural interest in a variety of formative or cultural events with me"; "I consider it important because it encourages me to be in touch with other people of my age and, although you sometimes find it difficult to move or you do not feel like doing it, in the end it is rewarding because you always read something new and you feel better when you form part of a group of individuals with whom you share common entertainment tastes and interests."
- **Covering personal aspirations of personal achievement and development by means of an education that they did not receive while they were children or youngsters** also appears as a factor underlying YES answers: "The aspect of human beings' personal satisfaction and overall development"; "I am thankful for the opportunity to continue training myself because I was previously unable to do so on a

regular basis"; "I would like to learn because I cannot read/write correctly"; "I like to improve myself and keep training myself, completing my cultural development as well"; "It is a way of enjoying life after work, especially if you have not had any chances to do so before."

- **As a necessary step in the preparation for retirement:** "Yes, for when I retire. It is important to stay awake and to delve deeper into knowledge"; "In order to remain trained and prepared for the future, to be active and to have positive thoughts and attitudes before ageing and the final stage of our life outside the work context".
- Another group insists on **the need to continue training themselves in their profession as part of a process to update the knowledge and to improve the self-esteem of active seniors:** "Yes, she would like to continue learning things about their profession –nurse– because she has made a lot of progress in this field and it is very important for her to stay up to date"; "Because of labour promotion, together with personal development and self-esteem"; "Training is necessary throughout life, even if a person already has a job"; "To my mind, labour options will be better with a higher training level"; "In order to extend my training and gain access to new disciplines which allow me to broaden my knowledge and simultaneously to occupy a time that I –being already retired– have now available".
- **Training to feel useful and help others** is another of the justifications to answer YES amongst groups of seniors who develop voluntary service actions: "In my view, it is always important to keep both mind and body occupied and active, and even more so when the aim is to help other people"; "For me, continuously improving your training both for yourself and in order to help others is absolutely necessary; and, besides, it helps you achieve something important: feeling useful".

NO: below can be found the main reasons mentioned by those who chose this option:

- No, because I am a 96-year-old woman and I have health problems and I cannot move on my own to take part in these activities;
- Because I have worked a lot, and for my advanced age;
- Due to age limitations, I am very old and besides, I am not prepared because I have not previously attended school;
- No, I am not interested;
- No, because I already know what I need to know;
- No, I have no need to work and I am busy all day at home with the housework and my husband;
- No, I am too busy at home and I am too old to start studying again;
- It does not bring me any benefits at my age.

Therefore, summing up, we have: bad health, dependence, age, lack of basic preparation, fear of being unable to fulfil the basic requirements for this training ('self-imposed limits'), considering training as an unnecessary type of 'work' at a certain age, lack of interest, and the role of gender and socio-cultural self-exclusion which, for this reason, are argued by some of the female respondents, who point out that they 'cannot' carry out these activities because they have to take care of domestic chores and of their husbands. These are generally the issues that discourage that 11.65% of respondents from becoming involved in training.

How do you find out about learning possibilities? / Where can you find out about learning possibilities?

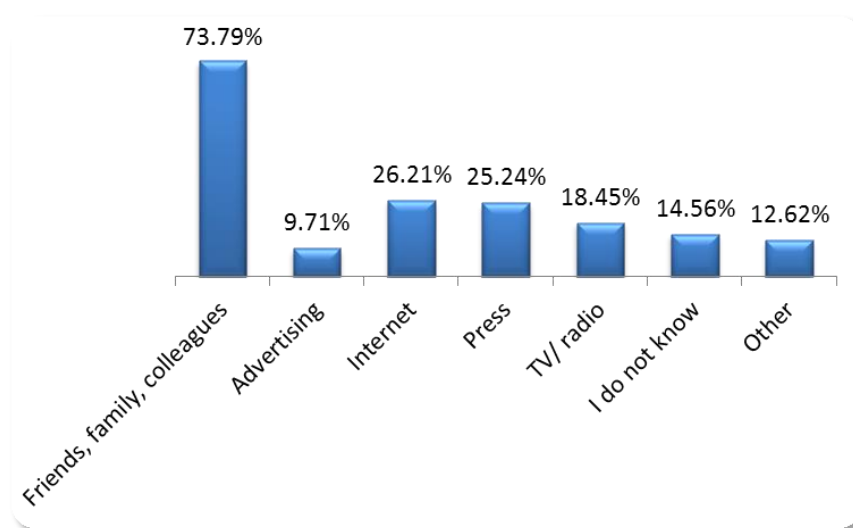


Figure 8: How do you find out about learning possibilities? / Where can you find out about learning possibilities?

Most interviewees (up to 73.79%) have discovered the various formative possibilities and have obtained information about them directly from their relatives, friends and colleagues, although we cannot neglect the increasingly important role played by social communication networks such as the Internet (26.21%) which becomes especially visible in the group of 50-to-71-year-olds. Both the press and mass media like radio and TV have a considerable importance and above all, it is worth highlighting a couple of relevant facts: 14.56% of interviewees claim that information does not reach them and/or they do not know how to find it; and up to 12.62% of them refer to other such varied informative media as: associations, seniors' homes, CEAMS, seniors' centres, Town Hall social action services –and some of them mention channels such as Whatsapp and Facebook.

Do you know any Universities of the Third Age?

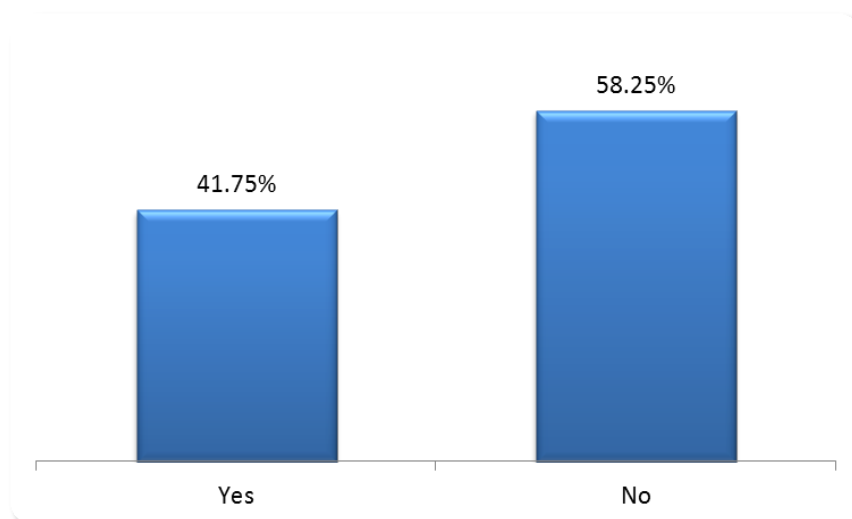


Figure 9: Do you know any Universities of the Third Age?

In contrast with the great interest in training shown by the group analysed, it deserves to be stressed that a high percentage of respondents (58.25%) do not know any Universities of the Third Age.

Which other learning activities for over-50s in your region are you familiar with?

93.20 % of interviewees answered this question, these being their most significant answers:

- Those which develop collective initiatives (such as Housewives' Associations)
- Those promoted by Seniors' Centres or Pensioners' Associations located in the neighbourhood where I live
- The ones which are carried out by the Home that I go to as a Day Care Centre user
- At the Seniors' Home where I live
- Those developed by Adult Training and Education Centres
- Those performed by CEAMS
- The ones that the Red Cross Centre promotes
- Courses and cultural activities of all kinds organised by the Town Hall
- Those developed by the National Distance Education University and the Permanent University
- The ones which are organised by private Reading, Poetry and Painting Clubs
- And up to 18% of respondents claim that they know NO activities addressed to over-50s.

Which of these learning activities would be suitable for you?

90.8 of our interviewees answer that they find many of the activities offered from the bodies, centres and institutions mentioned above suitable, and they do so in a highly proportional

way amongst very different activities. By contrast, up to 9.2% answer that none of those formative activities are suited to them.

In this respect, some of the older respondents highlight that: "the ones which are appealing and entertaining and help me have a good time are appropriate." "They claim to like everything and stress that they are open to anything, as long as they can keep themselves busy and amused at their age"; "I am interested, although I do not like them to be very complicated or to require a lot of movement."

Other answers not explicitly related to age appear repeatedly: "I have no special preference for a topic in particular, entertaining general culture activities which are to my liking or which prove useful to me"; "everything that is good for my health and quality of life during this period"; "any activity which allows me to discover new topics or provides me with information thanks to which I can be with other people and stay up to date"; "those which are attractive and encourage me to participate in a comfortable way"; "I like movement, information and discovery workshops."

With regard to themes and in accordance with the patterns repeatedly found in another of the questions, we find out that the formative activities considered appropriate are the ones linked to these great blocks by order of importance in the answers:

Those of a cultural nature related to Humanities (Writing, Literature, Poetry, Art, Painting and Drawing, History, Music, Singing, Theatre, and Cinema). Thus, many of the interviewees say that they would be interested in debates and gatherings basically oriented to sharing experiences and wisdom, but there are also many of them who want to learn to read and write correctly because they could not do that in the past or others who do not think they read and write well enough.

They are followed in terms of interest by activities associated with learning languages and new technologies, as well as those related to health sciences with a special focus on mind and body (Physical Activity, Tai Chi, Nutrition, Healthy habits, Psychology for daily life, Emotional Intelligence and Memory Workshops...)

An outstanding group see as being suited to them those activities developed in workshops related to handicrafts, knitting and sewing, cookery, cosmetics and beauty cares, dancing and games which, in their opinion, are more fun and also more useful in terms of exercising skills.

Which of the following do you think are good reasons to take part in learning activities?

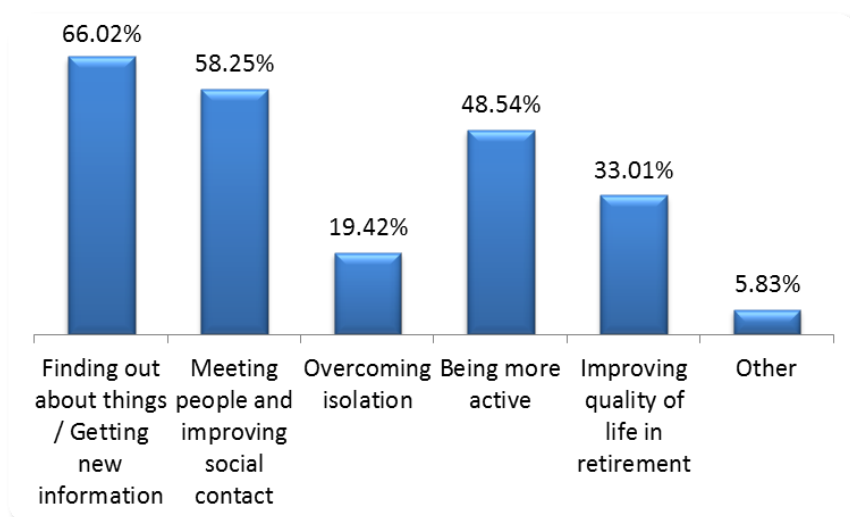


Figure 10: Which of the following do you think are good reasons to take part in learning activities?

Amongst the good reasons to take part in formative activities by order of selection stand out: 1st) Finding out about things / Getting new information (66.02%); 2nd) Meeting people and improving social contact (58.25%); 3rd) Being more active (48.54%); d) Improving quality of life in retirement (33.01%); 4th) Overcoming isolation (19.42%); and 5th) Other reasons account for 5.83%, amongst them three answers where it is said that none of them is a good reason to participate in training activities.

Would more information and a wider range of learning activities persuade you to take part?

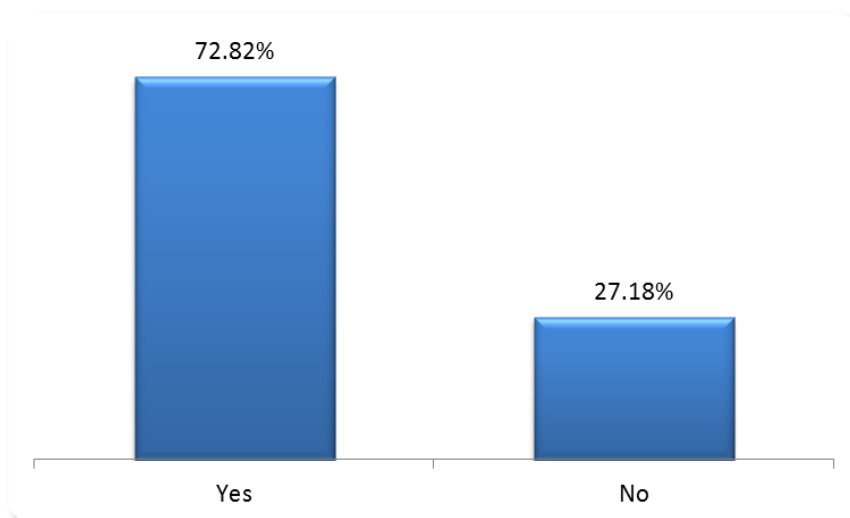


Figure 11: Would more information and a wider range of learning activities persuade you to take part?

In relation to whether the possibility of obtaining more information and the availability of a larger number of formative activities would encourage them to participate, 75 respondents (72.82%) said YES while the remaining 28 (27.18 %) answered NO.

If the answer is YES, which subjects would interest you?

The topics that interviewees would find interesting largely coincide in terms of priorities with those listed in the previous question:

- a) Cultural nature related to Humanities (Writing, Literature, Poetry, Art, Painting and Drawing, History, Music, Singing, Theatre, and Cinema). Thus, many of the interviewees say that they would be interested in debates and gatherings basically oriented to sharing experiences and wisdom, but there are also many of them who want to learn to read and write correctly because they could not do that in the past or others who do not think they read and write well enough.
- b) They are followed in terms of interest by activities associated with learning languages and new technologies, as well as those related to health sciences with a special focus on mind and body (Physical Activity, Tai Chi, Nutrition, Healthy habits, Psychology for daily life, Emotional Intelligence and Memory Workshops...)
- c) An outstanding group see as being suited to them those activities developed in workshops related to handicrafts, knitting and sewing, cookery, cosmetics and beauty cares, dancing and games which, in their opinion, are more fun and also more useful in terms of exercising skills.
- d) To which are added other new answers referring to current social issues (sociology, economy, social rights, tourism and leisure management) together with other fields related to ecological farming and the environment, as well as trekking and open-air guided routes to enjoy nature and meditation workshops.

If the answer is NO, what would prevent you from taking part?

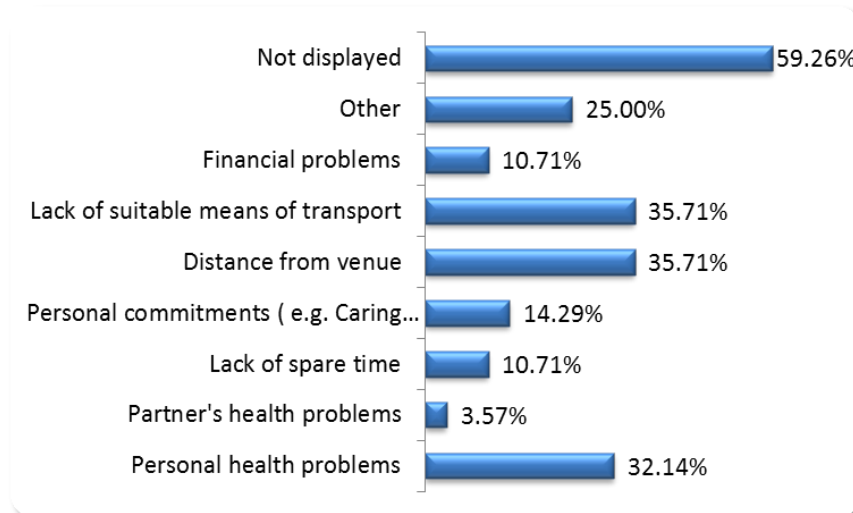


Figure 12: If the answer is NO, what would prevent you from taking part?

The reasons or impediments adduced by those respondents who pointed out that they would not participate in any of the formative activities (regardless of whether they know them or not) would be: in the top 2, a) Distance from venue (35.71%) and b) Lack of suitable means of transport (35.71%); next, we find: c) Personal health problems (32.14%); and in fourth place: d) Personal commitments (e.g. looking after relatives –14.29%); and e) lack of spare time (10.71%). This is in keeping with another group of interviewees who refer to: f) Partner's health problems (3.57%); and, finally, a small group mention g) Financial problems (10.71%).

A far from negligible number of respondents (25.00%) mention OTHER varied reasons (Because of my age; I cannot read or write; I do not feel like doing that sort of activity; lack of motivation or personal interest in the topics offered; difficulty to move; perhaps if I had a more flexible timetable which allowed me to attend activities elsewhere...).

It is finally worthy of mention that the answer "Not enough quality teachers" obtained 0.00% of answers.

Which type of education would you prefer?

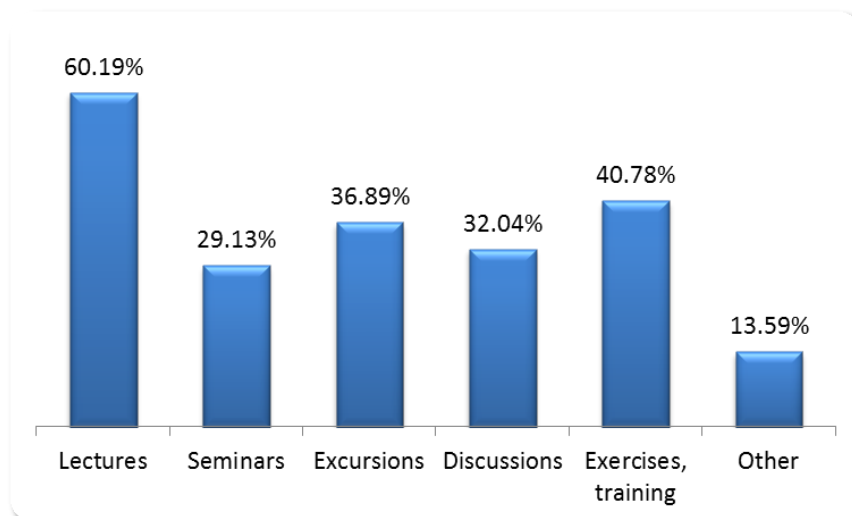


Figure 13: Which type of education would you prefer?

As for the type of education that they would prefer, it becomes repeatedly clear throughout the survey that their favourite activities are, in first place, Lectures, with 60.19% of answers, followed by Exercises and training, which account for 40.78%, in second place. After them can be found: 3rd) Excursions (36.89%); 4th) Debates (32.04%); and 5th) Seminars (29.13%).

As for the section named as OTHER, 13.59% say that they would enjoy: 'workshops' and "something active which goes beyond mere listening... which catches my attention and motivates me."

Is the social aspect of learning important for you (learning inside a group and in direct contact with the lecturer)?

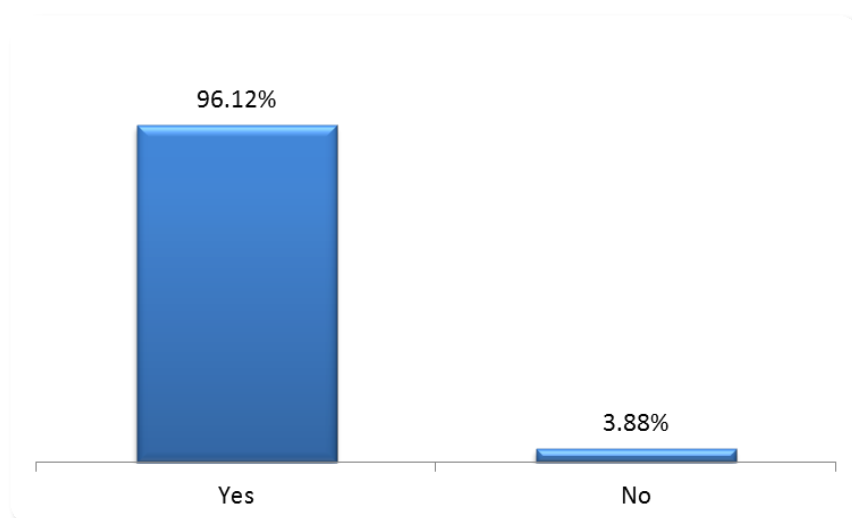


Figure 14: Is the social aspect of learning important for you (learning inside a group and in direct contact with the lecturer)?

Nearly all respondents recognised the social importance of training (96.12% of answers), while only 3.88% said that they did not care about this aspect.

This question reveals the essential role played by socialisation and interpersonal relationships as a factor sought by many people when they decide to become involved in these formative actions at their age.

The reason why the answer is YES/NO

YES: Most of the interviewees who answer YES say things like the following: "Because you learn more when you mix with people and can share and discuss experiences"; "you socialise with other individuals and share experiences with partners/colleagues, thus avoiding loneliness or social isolation"; "because you can share and ask the teacher, and that is more enriching, more interesting"; "I dislike solitude and if I start online activities, I become discouraged soon, you can do things online for a few months, but not all the time"; "Knowledge is better assimilated with a teacher who catches your attention and makes you learn in a more entertaining way"; "you can ask and establish an ongoing feedback through which you immediately obtain answers and solutions to your questions, and that is more stimulating and more fun too"; "Being in a group is more enriching because you hear opinions that sometimes do not coincide with yours, debate is generated and it all becomes more amusing and enriching"; "It is really important to see the expressions of the people around me with whom I am talking"; "Because there is a commitment to attendance and personal relationships, you strive harder to concentrate and the possibility arises to solve the doubts which may arise directly during the class"; "attending classes physically with a teacher at a certain age forces you to leave home, to get dressed up and look good and to socialise, apart from making a certain mental effort to follow the activities that you undertake to carry out"; "teachers' explanations are highly important and if those teachers are good and catch your attention, they help you stay 'hooked' on such activities and stimulate you."

NO: Very few respondents chose this option and those who did claimed to "be shy and not too inclined to explore new places or to meet groups of strangers"; "they are not interested in the social aspect of training"; "they do not have enough time to attend classes."

Would you want to use some new media for learning either at home or in a group?

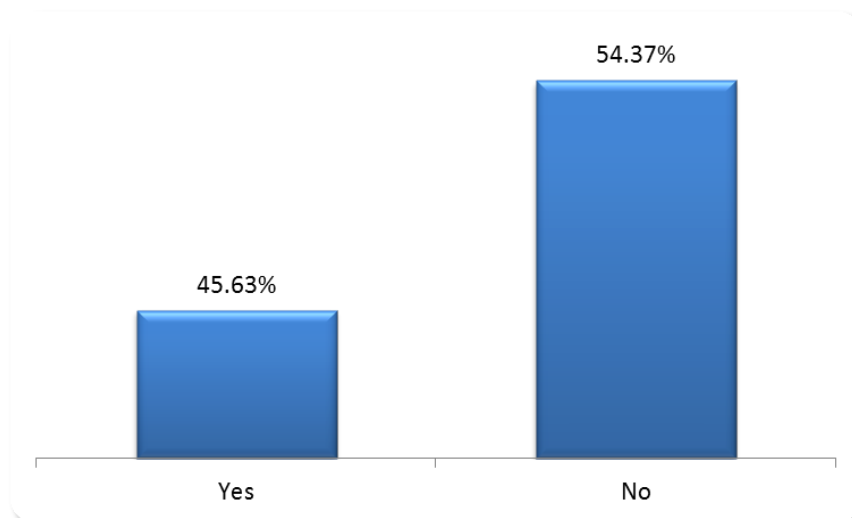


Figure 15: Would you want to use some new media for learning either at home or in a group?

It is interesting to check how socialisation and in-class training appear as the option chosen by a majority of respondents in the previous question. This time, when asked whether they would like to use new media to learn, either from home or in a group, utilizing online systems or computer devices on an individual or collective basis, up to 45.63% of them would be willing to do so.

The reason why the answer is YES/NO

YES: In this respect, those who said YES explain their answer as follows: "they would like to learn and manage new tools and innovative learning formats"; "because it allows them to do it with a flexible timetable suited to their needs"; "because it is more convenient, versatile and easy"; "Because it is more accessible for my time schedules and mobility problems" "due to the need to adapt to new technologies and thus to avoid becoming excluded"; "it enables me to have access to exhibitions, music, cinema and a huge number of art and literature resources, as well as news without leaving home; and at a low cost or completely free of charge"; "it gives me the chance to dedicate more time to studying and I save time in journeys"; "having a broader knowledge of learning modalities and methods is always positive, and more opportunities for learning appear in this way, consequently increasing the offer"; "it is a way to learn freely and autonomously."

A number of answers always include some reference to the fact that they need help from other people to follow activities from the Internet or multimedia resources because they cannot manage on their own, even though they believe that learning to use this new training modalities can prove useful to them.

NO: most respondents (54.37%) point out that "these forms of studying are not appealing to them because they do not master the tools which are typical of the Internet and/or the new technologies"; "these tools seem complicated to them, they generally have not learned to utilise them (some even admit that they cannot use a computer and still find mobiles too complex); "at certain ages, you have plenty of spare time, you can belong to several groups by leaving home, and you can dedicate the rest of your free time to doing things other than watch TV or sit in front of the computer"; "I enjoy direct contact with other people and, since my current physical condition still allows me to go out, I prefer taking specialised formative activities in specialised centres and with teachers or instructors who guide me and make it easier for me to meet other people"; "I have too many duties and I do not like to waste my time in front of a machine."

A group of answers stress that "they are very old and do not have the right age for this; they do not feel at ease or do not think they have the skills required" or "they do not have enough time" to spend learning these new training systems" and "they find it hard to use a computer."

What sort of measures come to your mind that would make it easier for you to take part in learning?

These are some of the possible measures which could help interviewees become involved in training by order of importance (according to the number of answers):

1. Bringing formative activities closer to quarters, centres, homes or municipalities where respondents find themselves
2. Promoting means of transport (public or private services) to facilitate access and mobility for participants. In this sense, the disabilities of some seniors and their reduced mobility constitute a handicap to join training actions if the latter are not carried out near their places of residence.
3. Information campaigns should be launched about the offers and conditions of formative activities, explaining by means of practical examples the extent to which they can be useful, applicable or good for seniors, so that such activities can be better known and consequently generate the necessary enthusiasm amongst their addressees.
4. Extending and adapting the training activity offer, since it is still limited and unsuitable in many small towns and villages. This offer must additionally be conceived for small groups –15 people at the most who can be given a personal treatment. Only formative actions for large groups are developed in many locations and that is pedagogically unsound; to which must be added that the activity is often suspended if groups of more than 10 individuals cannot be formed (for economic unviability reasons).

5. Teachers-instructors must be aware of the type of audience they are addressing, and they must use the pedagogy, methodology and empathy required to deal with these seniors and to train them properly.
6. People who lack economic resources must be offered access to this training either free of charge or at low prices, since some respondents explain in their answers that they cannot have access to this training for economic reasons –which excludes them from taking advantage of these opportunities.
7. The opinions of seniors in neighbourhoods, small towns and residences should definitely be collected so that we can see what they really need or what they want to do as training activities and thus adapt both the offer and the actions to their specific needs.
8. Taking advantage of the large number of volunteers (teachers) and already retired experts who can offer their time and knowledge to boost specific formative actions in various sectors at a municipal level and also in those places where the general actions of U3As or other educational centres are not available to seniors.
9. Promoting and encouraging both online and physical debate teams, discussion groups and training forums –both by the same volunteers and/or also from the institutions– about various topics and concerns, as well as outdoor activities and practical workshops about issues which can be of interest to seniors.
10. A need exists to establish close collaboration schemes between social agents, public-private institutions and communities of citizens and older users in order to adapt the offer, to extend it and to provide it with the necessary formative services suited to the diverse realities that characterise the life of today's seniors.

CONCLUSION

The survey was administered in neighbourhoods located on the outskirts of Alicante Town (with 55.34% of interviewees) and small municipalities and rural areas (the remaining 44.66%). In any case, these are areas where we have worked with the survey in: a) seniors' associations which carry out leisure and free-time activities (usually in Pensioners' Centres and Homes and regional houses or centres); b) Municipal Community Social Centres; c) Preventive Care Centres for seniors: CEAMS and CIMS; d) Third-Age Homes and Day Care Centres; and e) Residents' and Housewives' Associations.

The predominant gender is female (61.17% of those who answered) and the prevailing age group is the one going from 61 to 70 years of age (39.81%), followed by another significant group –71-to-80-year-olds– that accounts for 28.16% of interviewees. It is additionally worth highlighting that the 81+ group (with 16.50%) slightly exceeds that of 50-to-60-year-olds (15.53%) –the involvement shown by this group of individuals of a more advanced age in our survey being highly significant.

These are older adult citizens who up to a percentage of 55.34% live in their own house or apartment/flat with their family; and the proportion of those who live in a pensioners'/old age home (25.24%) is above that of those living alone (only 19.42%); finally, up to 25.24% claim to have health problems which prevent them from following or being able to carry out formative activities.

The majority of this interviewed population has either Primary studies (34.95%) or Secondary ones (27.18%), and up to 88.35% recognise that training for learning in later life is important and show an interest in taking part in learning activities.

73.79% of our respondents say that the knowledge about possible formative activities reaches them through friends, relatives and colleagues –it is also worthy of mention that according to 26.21%, this information comes to them from the Internet.

It is equally worth highlighting that 58.25% of our respondents do not know what Universities of the Third Age are, as opposed to remaining 41.75%, who do.

For the majority of them, the main reason to participate in training activities is “Finding out about things and Getting new information” (66.02%), even though “Meeting People and improving social contact” is also a strong reason (58.25%), together with “Being more active” (48.54%) and “Improving quality of life in retirement” (33.01%). Likewise, an outstanding proportion of 19.42% mention ‘Overcoming isolation’ as their main reason.

According to 72.82% of interviewees, the possibility of receiving more information and a higher availability of formative activities would be a way to boost their level of participation and this is actually one of the measures that they suggest in their answers to the last item on the survey questionnaire.

By contrast, another 27.18% would not take part in such activities all the same, for reasons mainly associated with personal and health problems (32.14%), due to lack of suitable means of transport (35.71%) or distance from venues (35.71%). These factors linked to dependence, reduced (or lack of) mobility or difficulty to get to the place where the formative action develops, along with lack of spare time (10.71%) and Personal Commitments –e.g. taking care of relatives– (14.29%) explain why that high percentage of individuals do not (or would not) participate.

The social aspect of training (learning inside a group and in direct contact with the teacher) appears as essential for 96.12% of interviewees, with a prevailing role being played by aspects such as relationships with people, sharing experiences, being able to ask and interact and enjoying the pedagogy and knowledge of a good teacher, in addition to finding a good reason to leave home for many seniors who thus force themselves to take care of themselves (dressing up and looking good), going out, walking and spending time with other activity partners.

However, it is worth stressing that up to 45.63% of our respondents would be willing to use new technologies and the Internet –either on their own or in groups– to follow a training programme. This percentage includes a majority of people who, despite claiming not to be familiar with them or not to master them, would like to learn if someone helps them. Similarly, a small group highlights the advantages of this option in terms of convenience because you can learn from home and with flexible timetables, and they also point out that a huge number of possibilities for zero-cost learning are available on the Internet.

With regard to questions about the subjects or topics that respondents would like to focus on or develop, they cover a very wide spectrum, as specified in the answers to question xxx. They can be summarised in groups of subjects for: 1) Most answers stress the interest to learn new things, because they believe that it is very good and important to keep acquiring knowledge and to know more and more; 2) Age and its relationship with the fast changes that take place; this is an important aspect to justify participation in training; 3) The usefulness of training for physical and emotional training; 4) The aims of “distraction, entertainment, desire to socialise and participate”; 5) Covering personal aspirations of personal achievement and development by means of an education that they did not receive while they were children or youngsters; 6) As a necessary step in the preparation for retirement; 7) the need to continue

training themselves in their profession as part of a process to update the knowledge and to improve the self-esteem of active seniors; 8) Training to feel useful and help others.

Interviewees suggest launching personalised dissemination campaigns (lectures) which show them the goodness of these training actions and their practical side (with specific examples or cases); they ask for proximity and convenience so that they can take part in them (in their centres, near them, with flexible timetables); and with teachers, instructors or volunteers who are capable of satisfying the formative needs of seniors (pedagogy, patience, empathy) sometimes limited by physical and emotional issues or others related to culture or studies.

It finally deserves to be mentioned that our group of interviewees includes highly diverse realities when it comes to personal autonomy, cultural level, place of residence and various services available to them, and economic situation, as well as the motivation which encourages them to participate. This is consequently a very heterogeneous group that would require different responses and action plans suited to their demands and necessities.