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HELPING OVER-50s Survey among students SPAIN



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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 for senior students 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 period comprised the months of April and May of 2015. The survey was conducted online with the Lime Survey tool and after a previous information campaign that promoted the objectives of this project.

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.

STUDY

Our attention focuses on those older adults enrolled in our educational programme – Permanent University of the University of Alicante. 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 (Place of Living, Age; Gender; Level of education; and Activities); and a second one related to the educational programme (how did they get in contact with the UPUA, opinion about the educational activities, motivations for the educational activities, interests, plans for the future regarding their education and finally preferences (schedule, duration and location)).



Seniors to which the EduSenNet surveys for UPUA students are addressed

The surveys are addressed to any resident of the Alicante province above 50 years of age who aspires socio-cultural improvement and without being required any previous qualifications.

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

Gender

The total number of surveys completed in Spain amounted to 357.

50.98% of them being from women and the remaining 49.02% from men.

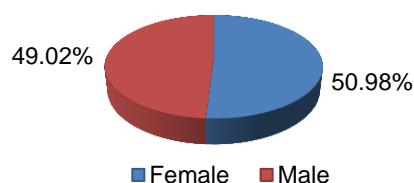


Figure 1: Participants according to gender (in percentage)

Age

As regards age distribution, 21.85% are 50-to-60-year-olds; 56.58% have between 61 and 70 years of age; 19.89% are between 71 and 80 years old; and only 1.68% is 81 or older.

It is worth highlighting the significant proportion of over-70s involved in the survey (21.57% of respondents) which already suggests a considerable level of interest in our study object.

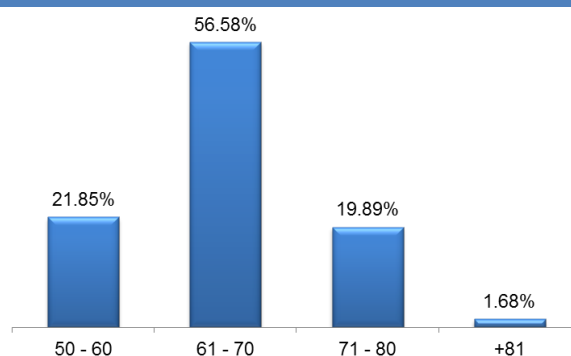


Figure 2: Participants according to age groups (in percentage)

Educational level

As for level of education, those who have finished a university degree stands out in first place (accounting for 57.42% of the sample), followed by individuals with a secondary school level (30.81%). A group representing up to 8.96% 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. Only 2.80% of the respondents have finished the primary school.

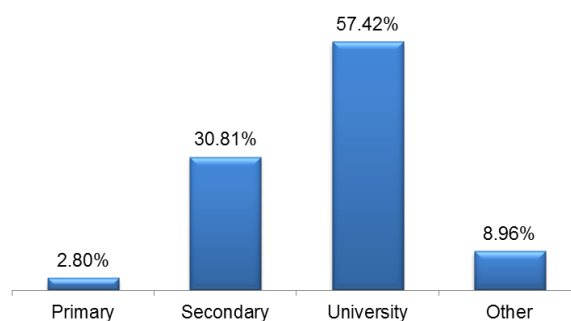


Figure 3: Respondents' educational level (in percentage)

Area of residence

With regard to the area of residence, 82.91% of respondents have their homes in relatively large cities or towns of more than 100,000 inhabitants, whereas 17.09% live in smaller towns or villages/rural areas (with population figures ranging between 10,001 and 100,000 inhabitants).

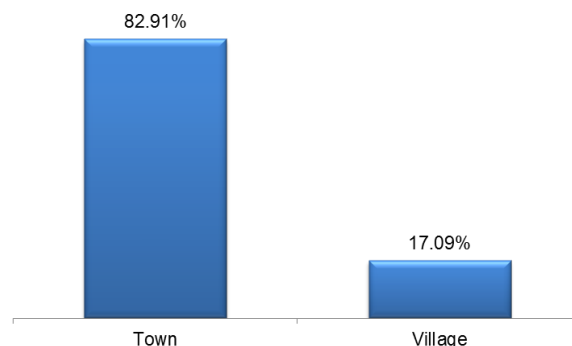


Figure 4: Respondents' area of residence (in percentage)

Activities

With regard to the activities, most of the respondents devote their free time to hobbies 35.57%, household activities 32.49% and other activities 28.85%. A reduced group is still working. It is worth highlighting the time devoted to altruistic activities such as volunteering 11.48% or care of family and grandchildren.

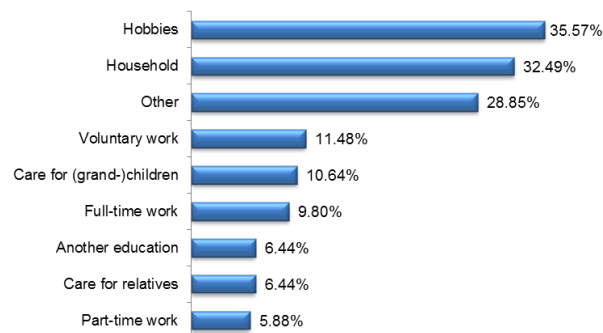


Figure 5: Activities

LEARNING

Which of the following statements fits best your digital activities?

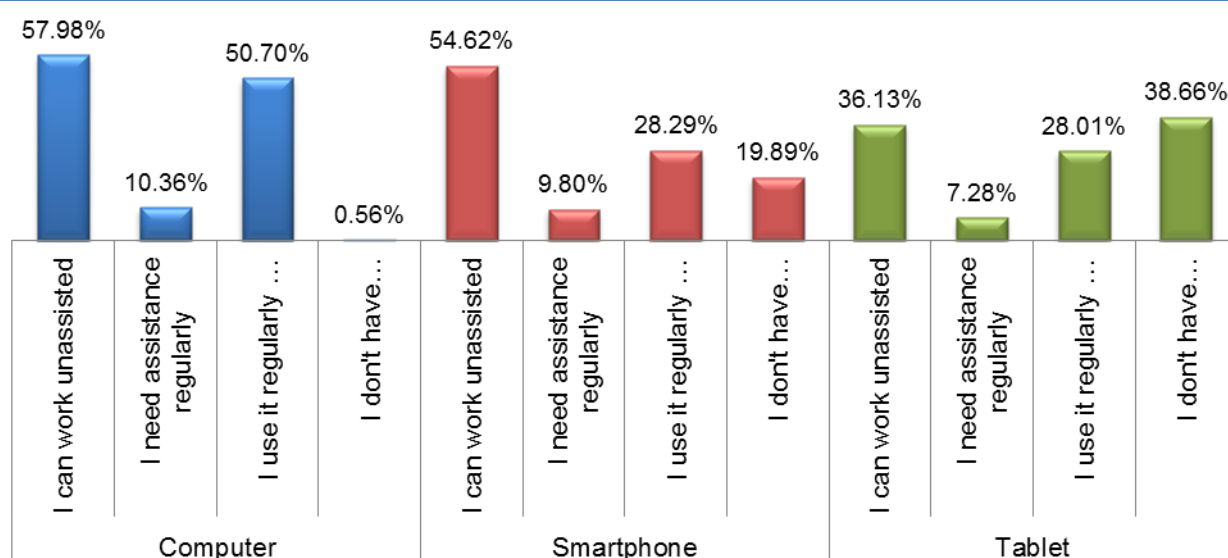


Figure 6: Statements that fit best with digital activities

According to the obtained results, practically all of the respondents have a computer. A high percentage also have a smartphone, whereas tablet is the technological resource that 61.34% of the interviewees have.

In order to carry out the digital activities, the main tool used by the interviewees is the computer (50.70%), followed by the smartphone and the tablet at the same level.

A reduced percentage of the interviewees, lower than 11%, need help to carry out the activities with digital resources, whereas more than 54% are able to use a computer and smartphone without help.

How did you get in contact with the Permanent University?

The students' first contact with the UPUA was through friends and relatives (78.71%) who have conveyed the benefits of learning at the institution. Internet also has an important role as the first contact source with the UPUA, accounting for more than 12.04% of the answers.

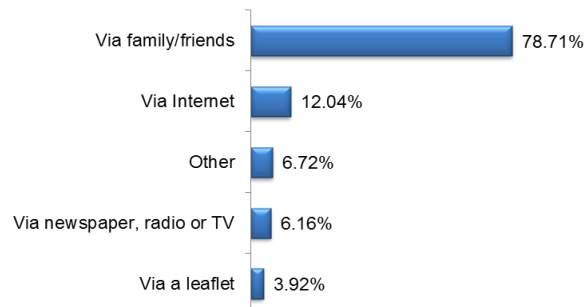


Figure 7: Means of contact with the UPUA

What are in your opinion the main motivations for educational activities?

As for the main motivations to undertake educational activities, the one that stands out the most is "self-development", accounting for 71.99% of the answers. Secondly, it is worth mentioning "productive ways to spend time" (37.82%), followed by "information on several topics" (31.37%) and "the acquisition of practical skills" (30.81%). Equally important, a group of students has been involved in the training activities to meet new people with similar interests (22.41%).



Figure 8: Main motivations for educational activities

When did you attend your first educational activities at the Permanent University? (courses, trips, seminars, discussions, workshops)

As for the beginning of the activity in the UPUA, most of the respondents started to take part between two and five years ago. It is worth highlighting that there are people still interested in the academic activities of the institution even though they undertook training activities more than ten or fifteen years ago.

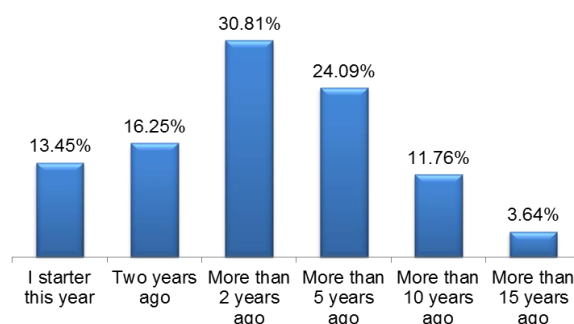


Figure 9: First educational activities at the Permanent University (courses, seminars, workshops)

Give your reaction to the following statement: "The attended educational activities have been up to my expectations"

More than 80% of the respondents think that the training activities of the UPUA they have attended live up to their expectations. Only 1.12% does not agree.

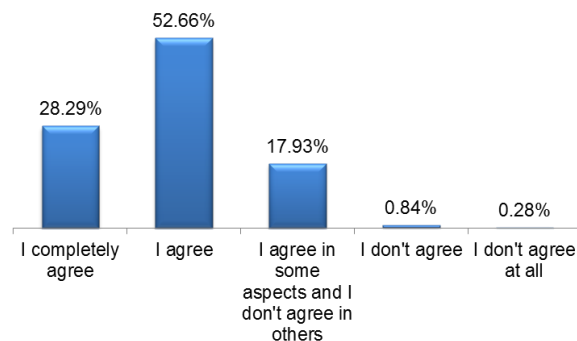


Figure 10: The attended educational activities have been up to the students' expectations

If you didn't attend educational activities at UPUA, can you state why?

The main reasons why the students have not attended the training activities sometime are personal circumstances, unsuitable schedule, time constraints as well as other reasons not mentioned.

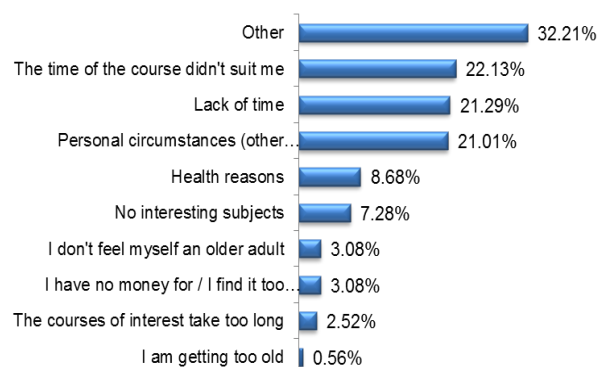


Figure 11: Main reasons why the students have not attended the training activities at UPUA

Are you planning to attend educational activities at the Permanent University during the following year?

It is worthy of note the very high percentage of respondents (89.64%) that want to keep being enrolled next year in the training activities of the UPUA. Only 2.24% will not continue to be enrolled in the UPUA and 8.12% still do not know.

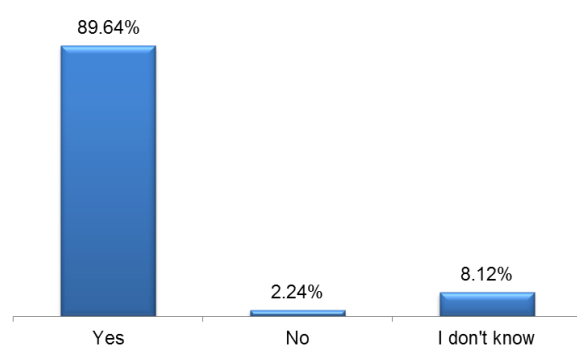


Figure 12: Interest in being enrolled next year in the training activities of the UPUA

Which of the following subjects interests you the most?

As for the subjects of interest, Humanities stands out with 73.39% of the respondents, followed by Computer Science, Image and Sound with 43.68%.

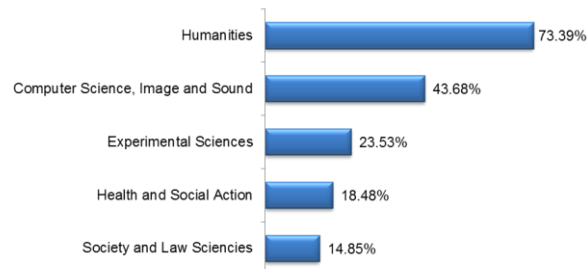


Figure 13: Subjects of interest

Which period do you prefer to attend a course?

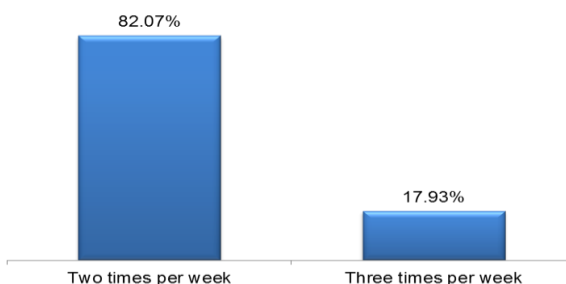
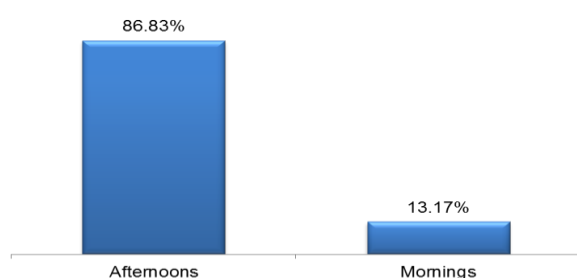


Figure 14: Period of preference

Are you interested in attending courses in the evening or during the weekend?

Practically all the interviewees (93.84%) prefer attending classes during the week and only 3.92% would be interested in some kind of training at the weekends.

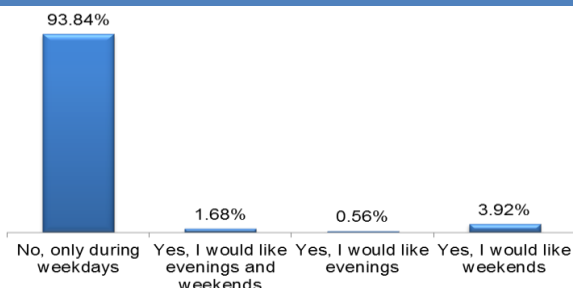


Figure 15: Interest in attending courses in the evening or during the weekend

What is your preferred length for a course/session?

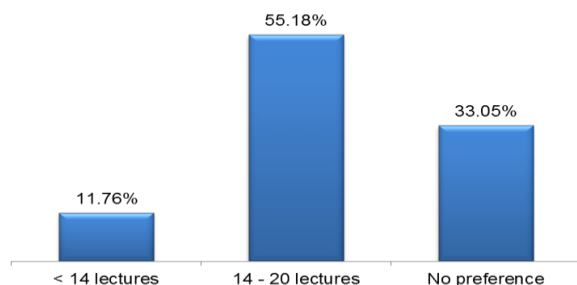


Figure 16: Preference for course length

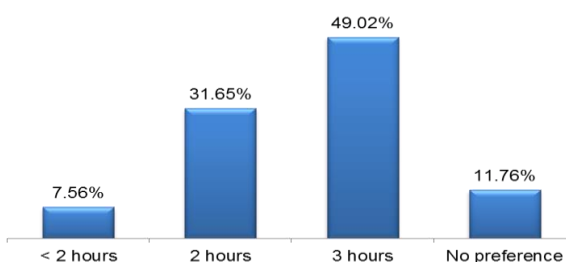


Figure 17: Preference for session length

Which course location do you prefer?

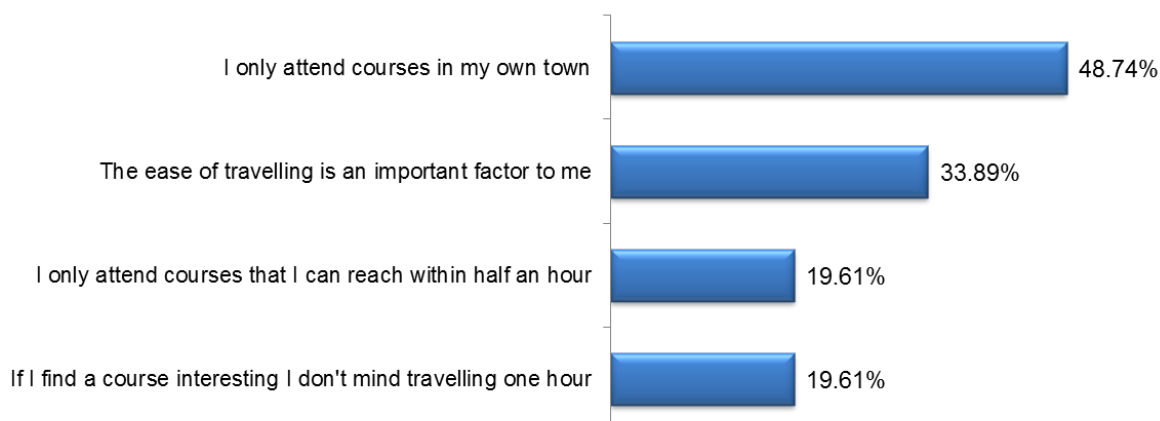


Figure 18: Preference for course location

In which sequence of importance would you place the following options for the choice of a course? (from 1 as most important to 10 as less important)

With regard to the ranking of importance when choosing subjects, the subject itself takes the first place, which shows that the topic is the main motive when choosing subjects. Secondly, the teaching staff takes almost 30%, as well as if known people are also taking the subject. This last fact shows that the UPUA activities are an integration and social cohesion mechanism.

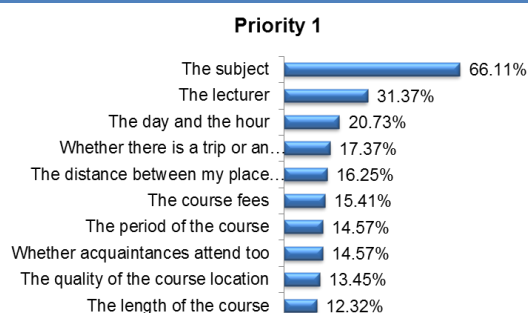


Figure 19: Ranking of importance when choosing a course

How many courses have you attend since your first enrollment at UPUA?

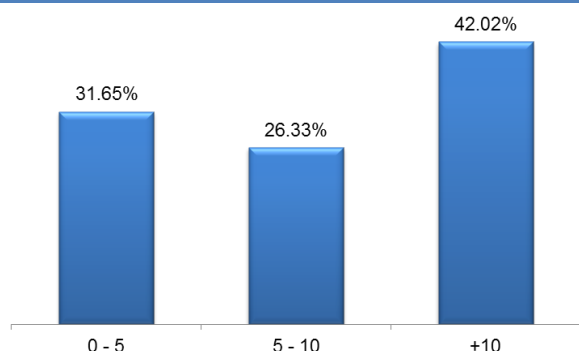


Figure 20: Courses attended since the first enrollment

How many course do you attend per year at UPUA?

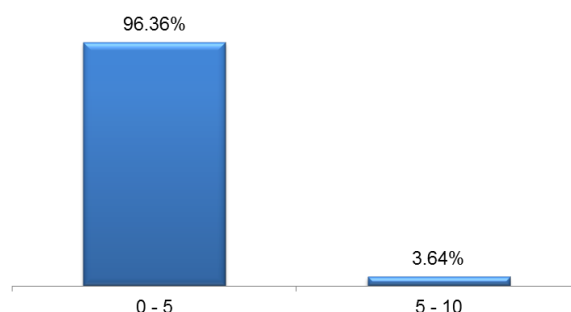


Figure 21: Courses attended per year at UPUA

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT: NEW TRENDS

Once the survey and the quantitative analysis have finished, and based on analysing the evolution of the Senior Diploma programme during its 17 years of existence, we can suggest by way of conclusion that certain changes and new trends are emerging within the profile of students and their needs and demands.

The percentage of participation of men and women is increasingly put on a level each year. A decrease has thus been experienced in the gender difference between participants in the UPUA programme – which was mostly female in its early years.

There is a growing presence of the age group comprised between 50 and 60 years and that of over-80s, even though the majority group continues to be the one formed by 61-to-70-year-olds.

A significant change has taken place in the profile of students, who have a better and better educational level. Up to 75% of the students who access the programme have completed three-year or five-year university degrees.

A remarkable transformation has also been operated in the selection of contents/subjects that students want to develop. Humanities, which had traditionally been by far the most often followed area of knowledge among older adult students, has reduced its number of enrolled students during the last few years in favour of subjects belonging to the areas of Health and Social Action, Experimental Sciences, Social and Legal Sciences, and ICTs.

Students demand subjects which combine theoretical contents with others of a practical nature that can be easily applied to everyday life.

The number of older adult students interested in blended and online training is increasing.

More and more older adult students are willing to become involved in research as well as in exchanges between study programmes and centres for seniors, both nationally and internationally.

There is a growing interest in the development of intergenerational training activities.

A considerable number of senior students participate to an increasingly great extent in collaborative learning schemes, peer-to-peer training and voluntary service initiatives, within the framework of the UPUA Senior Diploma Programme.