



# Generation Games

Oddfellows Insight Report  
September 2015



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## About the Oddfellows

The Oddfellows is a friendly society open to everybody. It has Branches all over the UK where people are encouraged to meet and enjoy social activities together. Members organise days out, holidays, coffee mornings, informative and educational talks, and charity fundraising events.

In addition to social activities that help build friendships, the Oddfellows provides care support, helplines and a range of life-enriching financial benefits. The Society is a non-profit making mutual organisation, run by and for its members.

Though most of those active within the organisation are over 55, the Oddfellows also has a substantial number of Child Trust Fund members and is as interested in their welfare as it is in that of its older members.

The Oddfellows has a long and illustrious history. It was founded in 1810, offering a means for workers and their families not covered by traditional trade guilds to pay small regular sums to insure themselves should they fall on hard times.

During the industrial revolution, the Society continued to play a vital role in protecting workers from destitution – pioneering early forms of social security such as sick pay, unemployment benefit and life insurance.

By 1850 the Oddfellows had grown into the largest friendly society in Britain with its members playing a vital role in establishing the welfare state and National Health Service.

Though the establishment of the welfare state reduced the need for friendly societies to fulfil this important function, the Oddfellows still takes seriously its commitment to the wellbeing of its members and wider community.

The publication of this Oddfellows Insight Report coincides with Friendship Month, when the Society celebrates and encourages friendship.

For more information visit:  
[www.oddfellows.co.uk](http://www.oddfellows.co.uk)

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“Younger and older people want to spend time together and benefit hugely from each other’s company. We need to focus attention on how to build more opportunities for old and young to come together.”

Jane Nelson, Chief Executive Officer, the Oddfellows

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## Introduction

The idea that different generations live largely disconnected and different lives, separated by an unfathomable cultural, technological and linguistic ocean, is a false one.

This cultural “generation gap” has been acknowledged since the term was first coined in the US during the 1960s, and the dizzying pace of change in technology and the cultural landscape continues to have an impact on relationships between young and old.

But the results of this research show that the interaction between those aged under 25 and those aged over 55 are far richer and more mutually beneficial than conventional wisdom might have us believe.

Emerging from the statistics is an encouraging picture. In reality, the differences that exist between two groups that are separated by dissimilar upbringings and divergent life experiences act as a stimulus, not as a barrier, to interaction.

In other words, younger and older people want to spend time together and benefit hugely from each other’s company.

Central to intergenerational interaction are the skills and knowledge exchanged between the two groups. Over 55s pass social and universal life skills to their younger

counterparts, while a flow of information on how to use modern technology passes in the other direction.

But this isn’t just about sharing knowledge. It’s also about companionship and fulfilling needs.

It appears that the positive effects of companionship between the two demographics are in some cases sorely limited by the lack of time spent together. Indeed, a quarter of older people only rarely spend time with younger people. Many young adults, having left home, expressed a wish for more opportunities to spend time with older generations.

Like many organisations, the Oddfellows has an outstanding track record in building friendships among older people. What this research shows is that we – and society as a whole – need to focus attention on how to build more opportunities for old and young to come together.

We hope this research will help further that process. We also welcome opportunities to discuss how the Oddfellows, working in partnership with other groups, can encourage and share in projects to help meet this need and cultivate a happier, healthier and more cohesive society.



# Executive summary and key findings

The aim of this Oddfellows Insight Report is to examine and better understand the interaction between over 55s and under 25s (aged 13 to 25 in our sample). The research looked at how each group felt about spending time with the other, the level of importance attached to this time, any knowledge or skills exchanged and the degree of opportunity individuals from the two groups had to be together socially. The key findings are outlined below.

Overwhelmingly positive attitudes were found from both young and old to spending time together

96%

of over 55s find enjoyment in spending time with young people

97%

of under 25s find enjoyment in spending time with older people

Top reason:  
“They make me laugh”

Top reason:  
“Listening to their stories”

Skills exchange is an important element of satisfaction in different generations spending time together



76%

of over 55s have learnt a skill from a young person



87%

of under 25s have learnt a skill from an older person



Top skills taught:  
• Using a mobile phone  
• Computer/internet

Favourite life advice to young:  
“Work hard at your education”



Top skills taught:  
• Manners/life skills  
• Reading/writing

Favourite life advice to old:  
“Enjoy life to the full”

Subgroups of young and old have few opportunities to spend time together



1 in 4

over 55s rarely or never spends time with young people



1 in 5

under 25s has few opportunities to spend time with older people

29%

of over 55s would like more opportunities to spend time with young people

37%

of under 25s would like more opportunities to spend time with older people

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# 1

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## Benefits old and young people experience spending time together



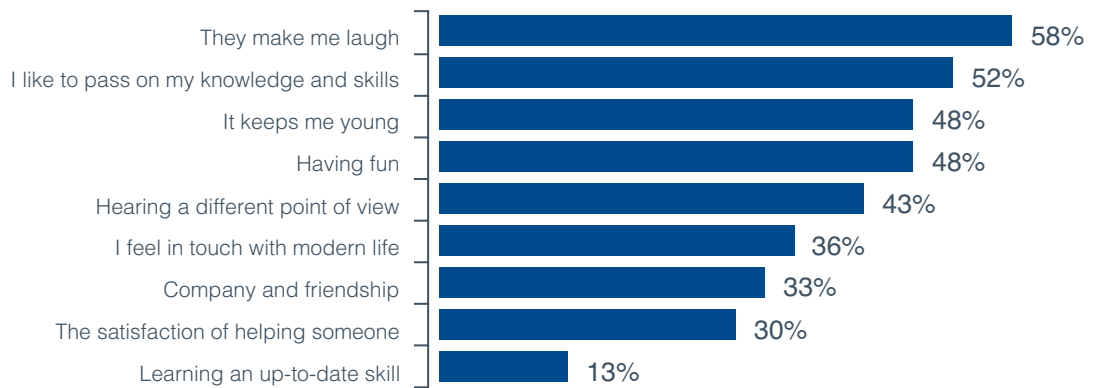
Helen Snell shares her love of photography with her grandmother, Eileen Lake.

## Overview

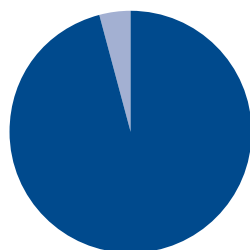
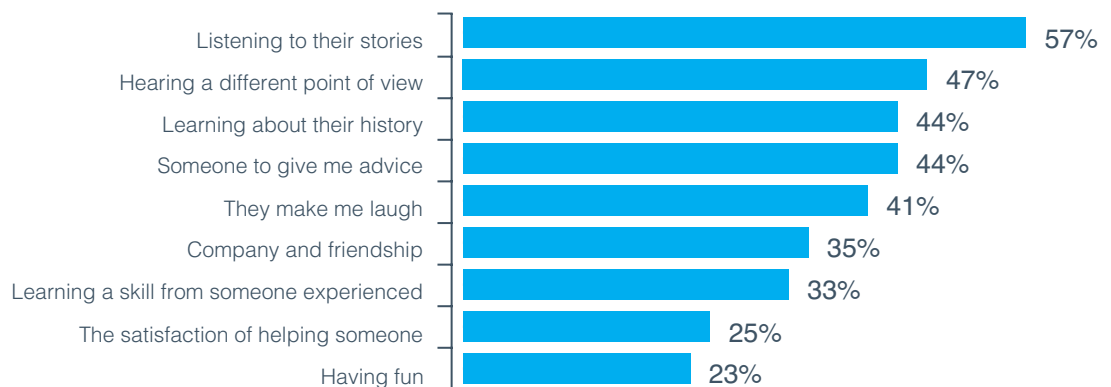
The research initially looked at how over 55s and under 25s felt about spending time together and what activities they shared. The findings were a strong challenge to the assumptions that the two groups shun each other and have little to gain from being together. It was seen that each enjoyed the company of the other and their companionship offered mutual benefits.

## What do you enjoy about spending time together?

### Over 55s

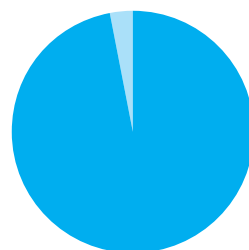


### Under 25s



**96%**

of over 55s find enjoyment in spending time with young people



**97%**

of under 25s find enjoyment in spending time with older people

Laughter (58%) and the chance to pass on knowledge and skills (52%) were the chief benefits cited by over 55s, who also said the company of the younger generation kept them young (48%) and was fun (48%).

Reflecting the more instructive side of companionship, under 25s most appreciated the stories (57%), the opinions

(47%) and the advice (44%) the older generation share with them.

Perhaps indicative of the relative stamina of the two groups, just 5% of under 25s found older people tiring, whereas 19% of over 55s found the company of younger people tiring. Only 9% of younger people were bored by over 55s.

## How do you feel when you have spent time together?



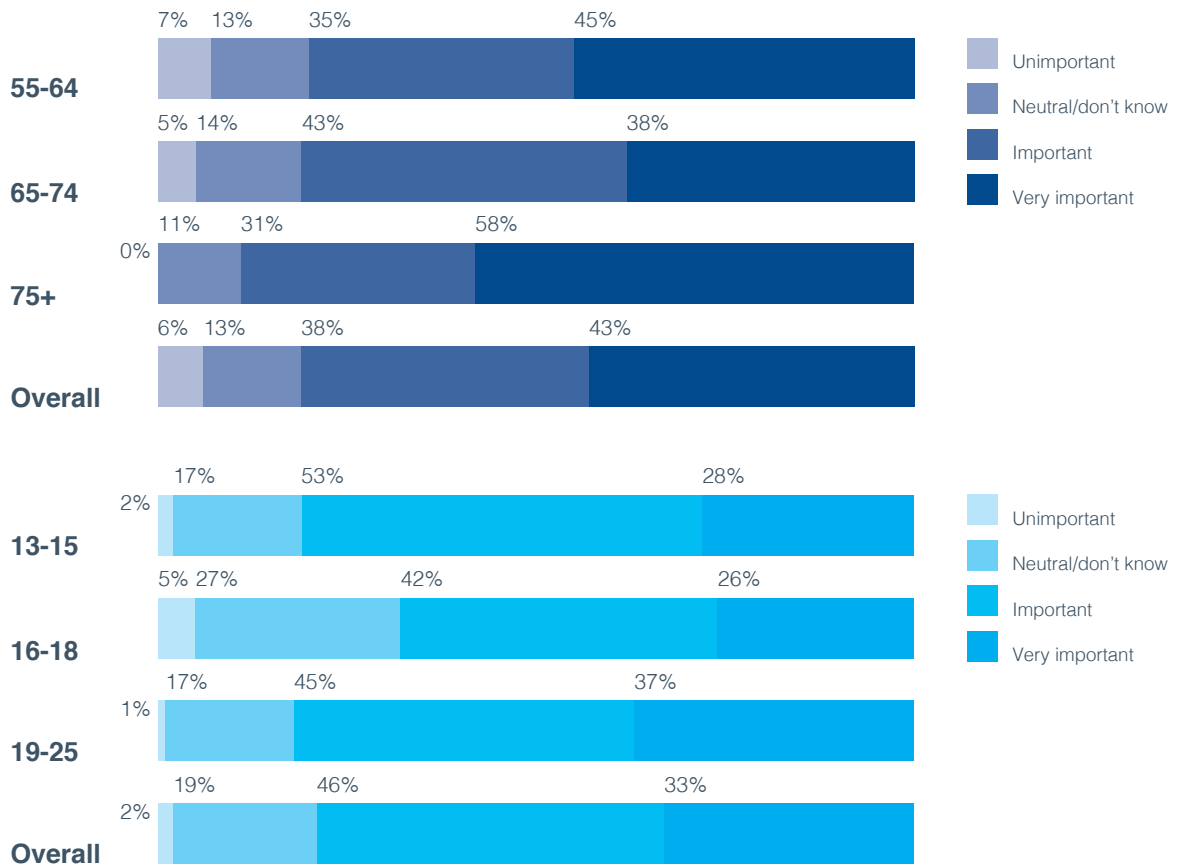


Over 75s valued the company of under 25s most highly yet spent the least time with them. 81% of over 55s and 79% of under 25s said they thought it was important to spend time with members of the other group.

Within the younger demographic there were interesting variations. Some 68% of those aged between 16 and 18 said

spending time with older people was important – a noticeably lower percentage than 19 to 25-year-olds. It could be that reduced contact with the older generation leaves an emotional gap in the lives of youngsters who have left home.

## How important is it to spend time with the older/younger generation?



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## 2

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### Opportunities to spend time together

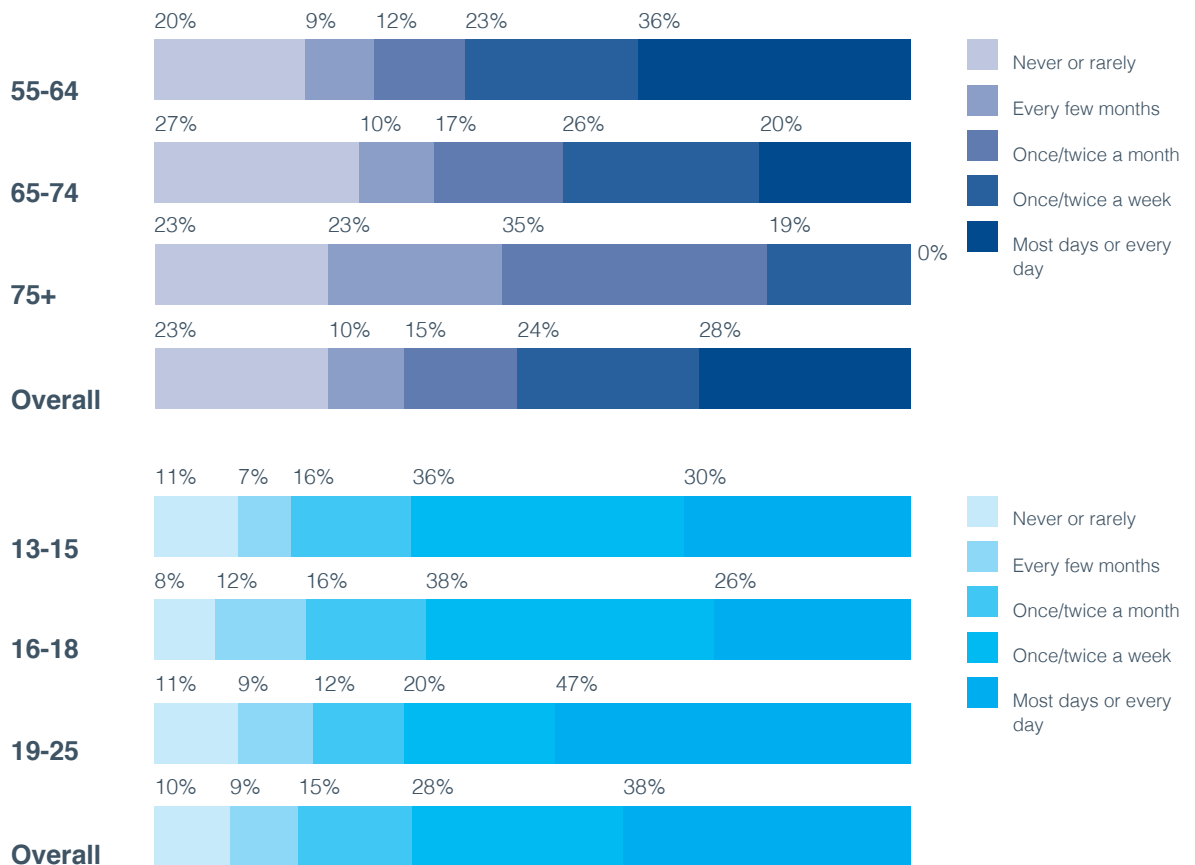


Ryan Huskisson and his grandfather Derek Green play for Spalding Indoor Bowls Club. Derek introduced Ryan to the sport when he was eight years old.

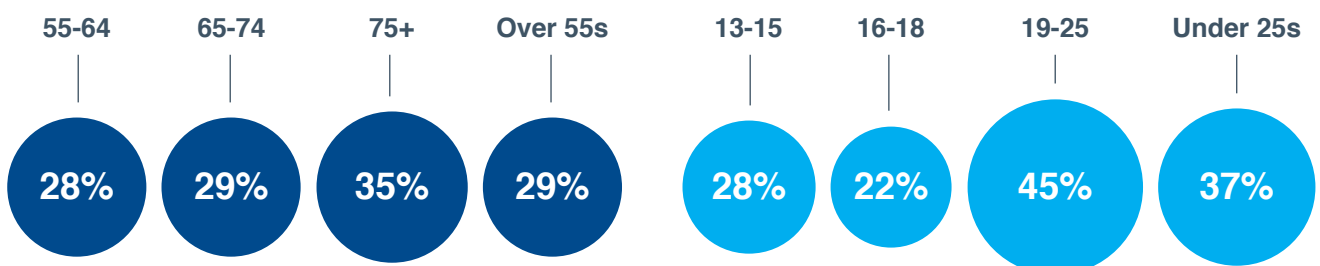
## Overview

The research clearly demonstrates the willingness on behalf of both parties to spend time together. It is also clear that for a significant minority there is an unfulfilled need to enjoy more time with a different age group.

### How often do you spend time with older/younger people?



### Would you like more opportunities? (Yes)



It is clear that many under 25s (37%) and over 55s (29%) want to spend more time with each other. This desire was found to be greatest among 19 to 25-year-olds, arguably because this group may have only recently left home.

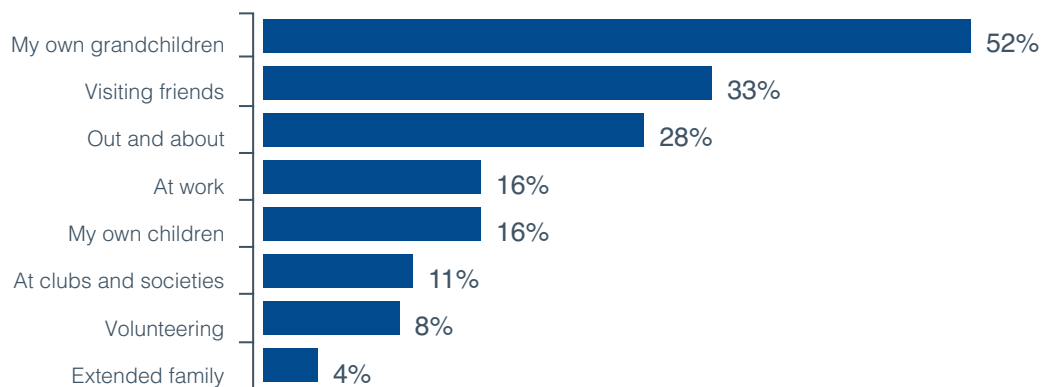
The data shows that as over 55s age they have fewer opportunities to spend time with under 25s. For approximately one in

three older people there is little chance to spend time with under 25s.

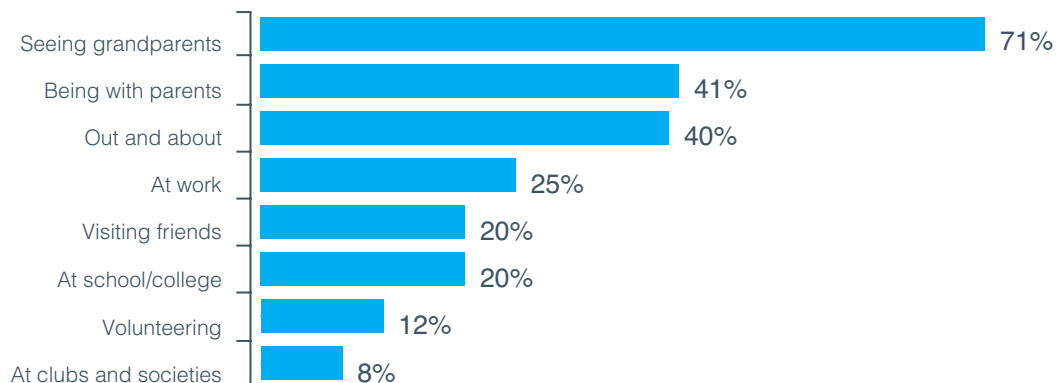
By way of illustration, 52% of over 55s cited interaction between grandparents and grandchildren as a chance to spend time with under 25s. This highlights the extent to which intergenerational contact might be limited to family environments.

## What opportunities do you have?

### Over 55s



### Under 25s



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# 3

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## Skills exchange between generations



Dawn Walters sharing her knowledge of the craft of book making with Rebecca Tivey, at Hot Bed Press, in Salford.

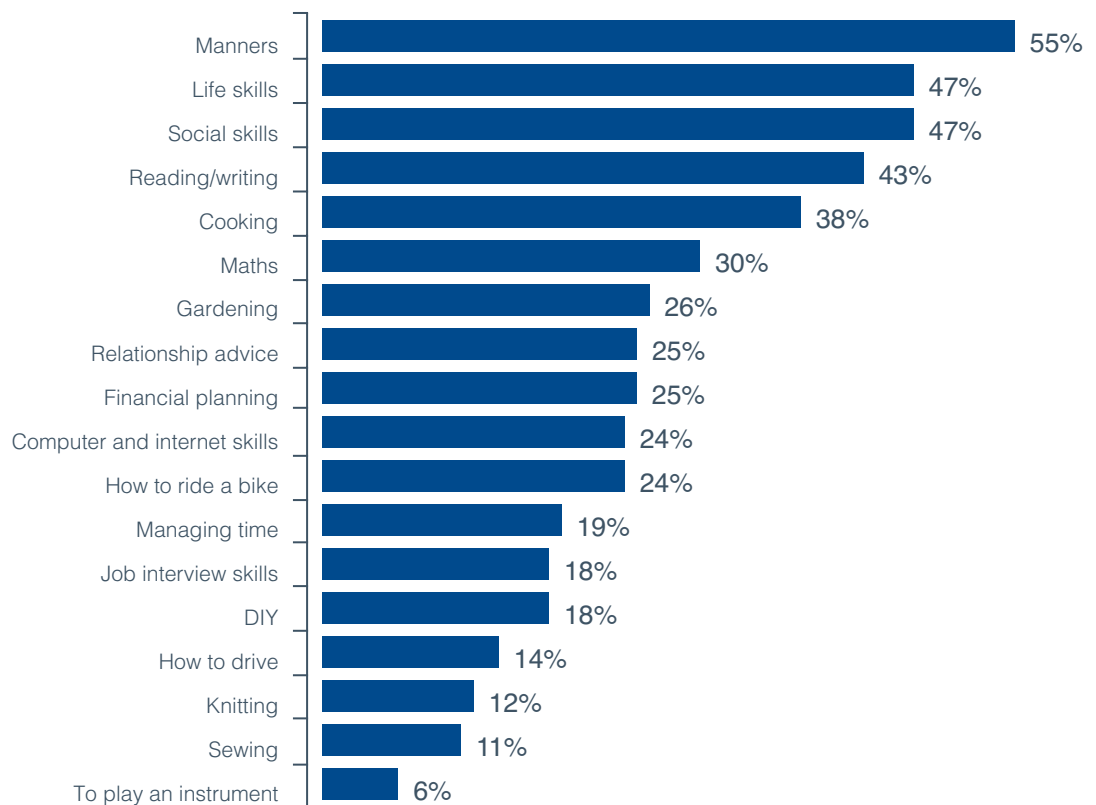


### Overview

A key outcome of over 55s and under 25s spending time together is the exchange of skills. There is clearly a two-way knowledge exchange at work. A large proportion of younger people help over 55s with modern technology and in coming to terms with the wider cultural changes taking place in society. In turn, over 55s pass on a mixture of softer interpersonal skills and practical know-how.

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### Skills older people have taught younger people

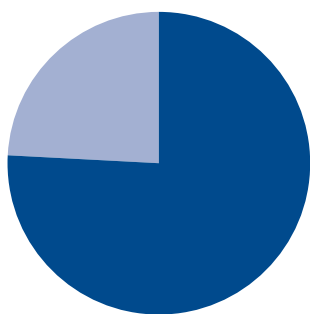
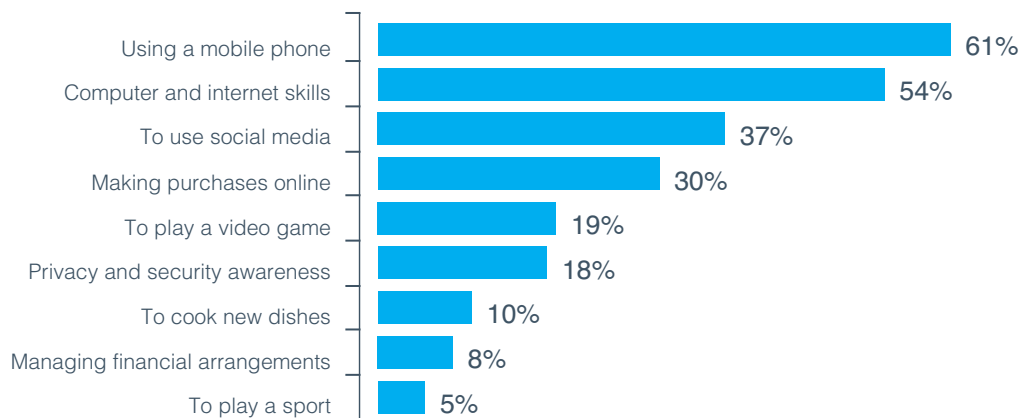


Softer skills were highest on the list of skills the older generation has passed on to under 25s. Manners (55%) and social skills (47%) comfortably ranked above practical skills such as cooking (38%), maths (30%) and gardening (26%).

Many members of the younger generation reported helping over 55s to use technology.

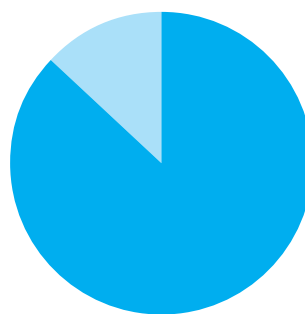
Some 61% helped with mobile phones, 54% with the internet and computer skills and 37% with social media. Knowledge transfer on this scale would have been impossible a quarter of a century ago. Conventional wisdom suggests advances in the use of IT, smartphones and social media platforms drive a social wedge between generations, but the opposite may be true.

## Skills younger people have taught older people



**76%**

of older people have learnt a skill from someone aged under 25



**87%**

of young people have learnt a skill from someone aged over 55

## Knowledge transfer

### Skills over 55s would like to teach

#### Most popular offers:

Manners  
Financial management  
Patience  
Cooking  
Social/communication skills  
Respect for others  
Reading  
Maths  
Tolerance  
Self-confidence  
Writing  
Driving  
Gardening  
Independence  
Kindness  
English grammar  
DIY  
Listening skills  
Careers advice/how to get a job  
Critical thinking

#### Other interesting offers:

Appreciation of nature  
Assertiveness  
Contentment  
First aid  
Fly-fishing  
Forgiveness  
Hula-hooping  
Ice-skating  
Mindfulness  
Mountaineering  
Negotiating  
Playing bridge  
Playing the vibraphone  
Political awareness  
Poetry  
Pottery  
Pride  
Responsibility for the planet  
Ten-pin bowling  
Toolmaking

### Skills over 55s would like to learn

#### Most popular requests:

Computer and internet skills  
How to use new technology  
Understanding young people's point of view  
Patience  
To have fun and enjoy life  
Keeping up to date with modern times  
Tolerance and understanding of others  
An appreciation of new music  
A sport  
How to use social media  
To be sociable  
To laugh  
Youthfulness  
Young people's language  
A new language  
To be energetic  
To be happy  
To play video and computer games  
To be optimistic  
Fashion and how to be stylish

#### Other interesting requests:

Breakdancing  
Cloud computing  
Curiosity  
How to dance like younger people  
Fearlessness  
How to be carefree again  
How to build a website  
Imagination  
Innocence  
Joyfulness  
Keeping healthy  
New recipes  
Lack of inhibition  
Open-mindedness  
Optimism  
Orienteering  
Salesmanship  
Snowboarding  
Twitter  
Visual Basic for Application programming

## Knowledge transfer

### Skills under 25s would like to teach

#### Most popular offers:

Computer and internet skills  
How to use new technology  
Social media and Facebook  
Video/computer games  
Socialising  
Avoiding scams  
Cooking new dishes  
Texting  
Online banking  
Skype  
Appreciation of new music  
A sport  
Internet shopping  
Dancing  
Financial management  
Football  
Keeping healthy  
A new language  
Patience  
Photography

#### Other interesting offers:

Acceptance  
Car maintenance  
Flexibility  
HTML programming  
Importance of diversity  
Instagram  
Mixology  
Open-mindedness  
Psychology  
Rally racing  
Rollerblading  
Slang words  
Strawberry picking  
Surfing  
To find unbiased media  
To make a loom band bracelet  
Twerking  
Volleyball  
What to do in an emergency  
Zumba

### Skills under 25s would like to learn

#### Most popular requests:

Cooking  
Financial management  
Life skills  
History  
Sewing  
DIY  
Driving  
Gardening  
Knitting  
History and life experience  
Life advice  
Relationship advice  
Patience  
Manners  
Careers advice  
Time management  
Social skills  
Family history  
How to face difficulties  
How to make do and mend

#### Other interesting requests:

Appreciation of '70s music  
Bell-ringing  
Calmness  
Carpentry  
Crochet  
Etiquette  
Formal dancing  
Frugality  
Hairdressing  
How to be grateful  
How to combat stress  
How to live so long  
How to make money  
Long-term commitment  
Professional skills  
Selflessness  
The art of conversation  
Vintage games (eg dominoes, chess)  
Where to get good tattoos  
Writing with ink

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# 4

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## Life advice to my older and younger self



Eileen Lake and granddaughter Helen Snell enjoy spending time baking and crafting together.



**Overview**

As part of the research, over 55s were asked what life advice they would give their younger selves. There was an extremely wide array of answers, drawn from decades of experience. A point made by a significant proportion of over 55s was to listen to the advice of older people. Somewhat surprisingly, the advice that under 25s foresaw offering their older selves included just the kind of wisdom more usually associated with the older generation.

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Holly Magrath regularly helps her grandparents, Bernard and Pauline, to use the internet and navigate their tablets.



If the over 55s could turn back time and speak to themselves in their youth, their words of wisdom would include ‘work hard at your education’ and ‘enjoy every minute’ – not necessarily mutually exclusive sentiments but probably not always easy bedfellows either.

Perhaps most tellingly, one of the top 10 pieces of advice was ‘listen to your elders’. This suggests that the over 55s either once valued the wisdom of the older generation or perhaps regret not having taken their advice when it was offered.

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## If you could travel back in time, what advice would you give your younger self?

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### Top 10 answers from over 55s

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1. Work hard at your education
2. Enjoy every moment
3. Listen to your elders
4. Be confident in yourself
5. Take opportunities
6. Use money wisely
7. Think carefully before making decisions
8. Live life your way
9. Worry less
10. Be patient

**“Be more glamorous and buy better underwear”**

**“Little kindnesses have a habit of coming back”**

**“You don’t need to be perfect”**

**“Get married”**

**“Don’t get married”**

**“Have more sex”**

**“Follow your dreams”**

**“Nothing is the end of the world even if it feels like it at the time”**

If the younger generation could travel forward in time, they would tell their older selves to remain young at heart, embrace new technology and remember that asking for help is not the same as being a burden. These and other responses appear to have

been informed by their interaction with the older generation. Notably, they would encourage their older selves to share their life stories with the younger generation.

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## If you could travel into the future, what advice would you give your older self?

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### Top 10 life answers from under 25s

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1. Enjoy life to the full
2. Listen
3. Take opportunities
4. Be happy
5. Embrace new technology
6. Worry less
7. Spend time with family and friends
8. Have more fun
9. Stay young at heart
10. Look after yourself and keep active

**“Call them, don’t wait for them to call you, they will forget”**

**“Find something every day that makes you happy or smile”**

**“You’re never too old to learn something new”**

**“Stay optimistic and curious about the world”**

**“Don’t sing in public!”**

**“You’re only as old as you feel, don’t let age limit your life experiences”**

**“Don’t be scared of change”**

**“Try to say YES more”**

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## Conclusion

Conventional wisdom suggests the divergent interests and life experiences of over 55s and under 25s form an unbreachable generational rift.

This report's findings show the opposite is true. Over 55s and under 25s enjoy spending time together and appreciate each other's company.

All the age groups questioned in our study recognised they have much to gain from such companionship. Moreover, all expressed a wish to spend more time together.

As this report shows, the mutual benefits derived from this social contact range from simple fun, laughter and conversation to the cross-pollination of skills, life experiences and cultures.

In fact, it is the differences in knowledge, cultural understanding and personal history that bring these seemingly disparate groups together.

Having different generations spend time in each other's company enables all parties to fuse their knowledge, pool their experience and develop their emotional intelligence. This has a constructive impact on individuals,

families, communities and, by extension, society as a whole.

Sadly, opportunities for intergenerational companionship are often limited. We found a high proportion of over 55s keen to spend more time with under 25s and vice versa.

While there are encouraging signs that ideas and skills are being transferred between generations, the limited time that these groups spend together restricts the reciprocal benefits for both.

It is vital that we fully recognise the many advantages of intergenerational interaction. It is vital, too, that we acknowledge the wishes of over 55s and under 25s alike to be in each other's company. In doing so, hopefully, we will take an important step towards a more cohesive, vibrant and understanding society.

What shines through this research is that we have already made great progress. The statistics reveal that we have entered into a golden age of harmony and warmth between older and younger people. Furthermore, if properly nurtured, the positive impact of this companionship will continue to chime for many generations to come.

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# Survey methodology

For the purposes of this report the Oddfellows commissioned a survey of the experiences and opinions of over a thousand people.

Selected from an online panel, the participants – 528 aged 55 and over and 501 aged from 13 to 25 – were asked a series of questions about time spent with people from a different generation.

The full breakdown of the number of respondents by age is as follows:


Age	Number of respondents
13-15	115
16-18	100
19-25	286
55-64	268
65-74	234
75+	26

All regions of the UK were proportionally represented in the sample.

Respondents were asked a number of questions with multiple-choice-style answers. These were optimised using small sample tests prior to the main survey, which was carried out in April 2015.

A number of “free text” questions were also included to allow respondents to record their experiences without restriction. Some answer standardisation was subsequently undertaken to highlight popular responses to these questions.





Established in 2010, Friendship Month is the Oddfellows' annual national campaign which aims to raise awareness of the importance of friendship to the nation.  
[www.friendshipmonth.com](http://www.friendshipmonth.com)

[www.oddfellows.co.uk](http://www.oddfellows.co.uk)



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