

Election won't be won by just kissing babies

Inside:

How will the baby boomers vote?

Two page special report into the views of the generation who could decide the outcome of the next election

Blow to older people's workplace rights as Government wins appeal

Why we urgently need a Commission for Equality and Human Rights

As the next General Election looms and the major political parties make promises on pensions and care costs it's increasingly clear that the grey vote holds the key to success at the ballot box. Yet new research shows that when it comes to older voters nothing can be taken for granted – except that they're more likely than the rest of the electorate to visit their polling station

Isn't it time politicians stopped just kissing babies?, the new Age Concern England manifesto for the forthcoming General Election, warns politicians that they ignore older voters at their peril – a vocal and determined baby boomer generation has now reached its half century and beyond, and its opinions could well hold sway at the next election.

New research commissioned to support the manifesto identifies six distinct types of baby boomer voters. All have very decided views on issues including health, education, crime, pensions and care for the elderly.

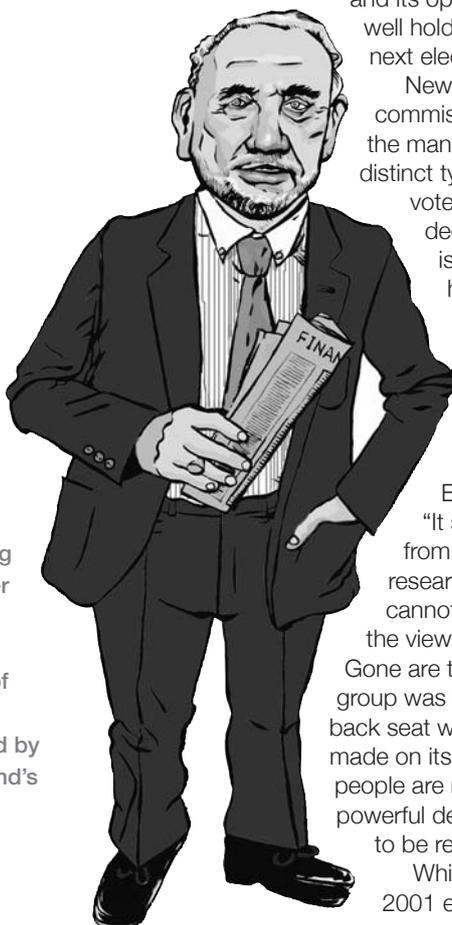
Gordon Lishman, Director-General of Age Concern England, said:

"It should be very clear from our manifesto and research that politicians cannot afford to disregard the views of older people.

Gone are the days when this group was happy to take a back seat while decisions were made on its behalf – older people are now a hugely powerful democratic force to be reckoned with."

While turn out for the 2001 election fell to

59 per cent, the lowest for almost a century, votes cast by the over-50s held up. An estimated 11 million members of the baby boomer generation, born after World War Two, are approaching later life. There are already more people over 60 than under-16.



He's sixty-something and used to the finer things in life – the "Healthy Wealthy" is one of six types of the baby boomer generation identified by Age Concern England's research into older voters – see pages two and three for more details

Age Concern England's manifesto

Income

- Increase the Basic State Pension to £105 a week to cover basic living costs
- Keep the State Pension Age at 65
- Introduce a new deal for carers
- Persuade employers to do more to provide occupational pension schemes
- Provide better information and advice

Equality

- Establish a Commission for Equality and Human Rights
- End discrimination in health and social care
- Introduce a public duty to promote age equality
- End mandatory retirement ages

Treatment

- More emphasis on prevention
- Higher personal expenses allowance for people in care
- Rights of the most vulnerable to be protected
- Improved services for older people with mental health problems
- More choice in care, housing and support treatment

How will the baby boomers vote?

When it comes to winning the next election it's a key group for all politicians: Reportage gives an insight into the views of the baby boom generation

Almost 1,700 people aged 45-69 from all over Britain were interviewed for Age Concern England's new research **Looking Beyond the Grey**. The research carried out by ad agency TBWA identified six types of baby boomer and discovered the top five issues likely to decide the way they vote on polling day. Many appear to be undecided as to which party they will support.

Goodtime Grafters

Most likely to identify with the Labour party (34%), they enjoy a good time without worrying about the future. Grafters are on low incomes but don't qualify for benefits, so they work long hours. They spend more money than they've got, relying on credit cards.

Grafters' main concerns are those closest to home: crime tops the list, and they fear that they, their parents and children may become victims. They believe the NHS is thriving, and know from first hand the benefits of investing in the health service.

Grafters believe that the care system benefits those who have never worked for anything.

Most will be reliant on the basic state pension and don't see how they can afford to retire.

They think that schools are sub-standard and blame the state and other parents for a younger generation lacking discipline and respect.

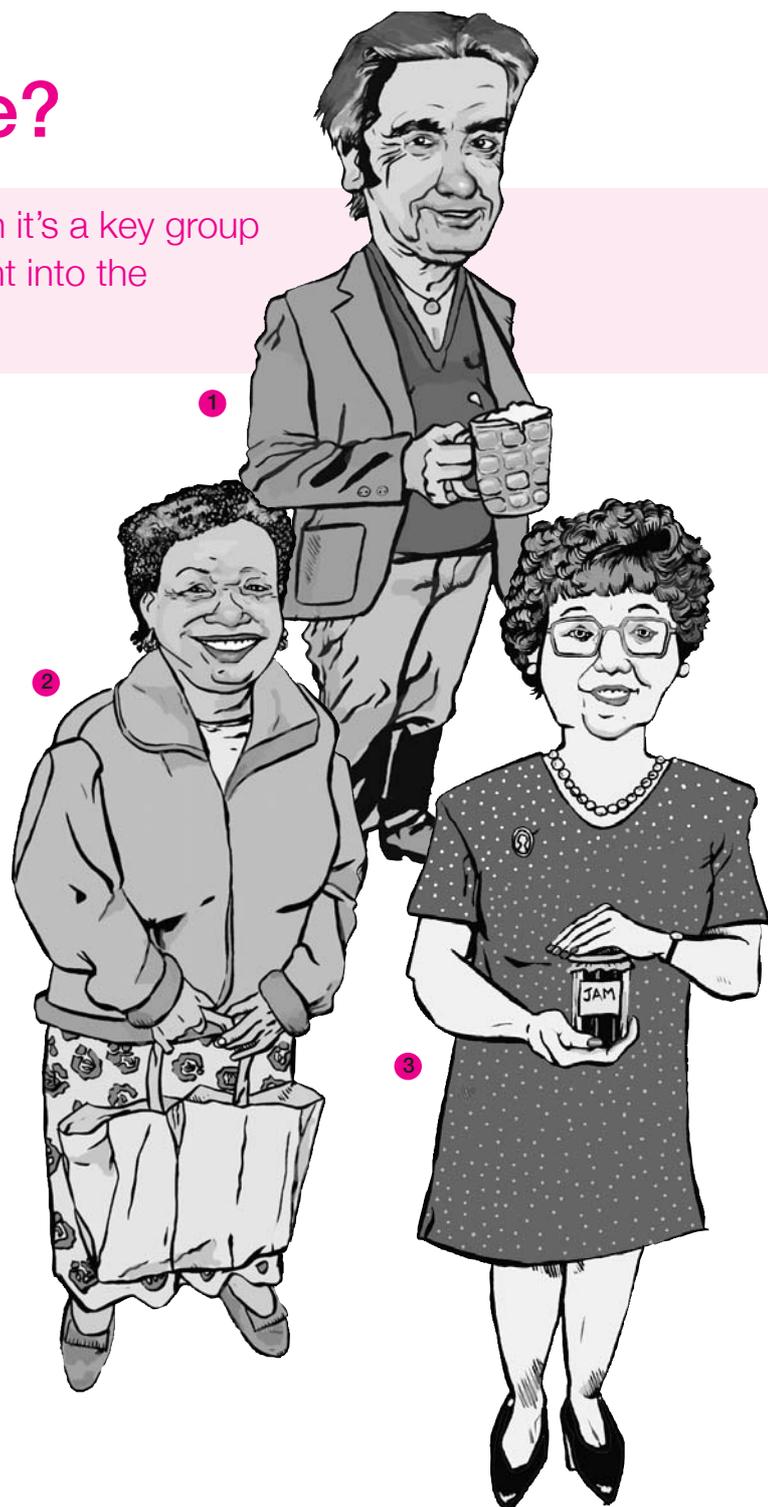
Home Comforts

Most likely to identify with Labour (41%): cautious, thrifty and unadventurous when it comes to new technology and new experiences, these people struggle by on small incomes. Their top five issues are: health – they believe that older people are treated worst by the NHS and worry about paying for the dentist; care – and losing their home to pay for it; crime – where badly behaved children and light sentences are seen as the main problems; pensions – they think the current system's a mess and people should be encouraged and given incentives to save; and the environment– which they say should be protected.

Measured Traditionalists

The Conservative party is the one this reserved and careful group is most likely to identify with (30%). Money is important; whether measured traditionalists have it or not they're pre-occupied by the financial pages and don't make big purchases without reassurance from the experts. Some live on diminished private pensions and the state while others feel that they are better off than they've ever been.

A key issue for this group is health – they worry about the state of the NHS, believing that any good experiences they've



- 1. Goodtime Grafters:** despite being in their 40s and 50s these eternal “yoofs” enjoy nights in the pub and holidays in Ibiza
- 2. Home Comforts:** are in their 60s and love to garden, watch soaps and play bingo but worry about the state of the planet
- 3. Measured Traditionalists:** aged 60-something, this group isn't all jam and Jerusalem. They have environmental concerns and buy Fair Trade
- 4. Worn-out Worriers:** in their 40s, 50s and 60s enjoy TV, play the lottery religiously and look forward to a retirement looking after their grandchildren
- 5. Life Lovers:** in their 40s, have no intention of growing old gracefully and pride themselves on having better social lives than their kids



had must be unique to them. MRSA, waiting lists and paying for dental care are high up on their list of concerns.

When it comes to crime they want to see more severe sentencing and more bobbies on the beat. They feel that pensions are a bit of a lottery, and resent the fact that they are taxed.

They can't see why they should have to sell up to pay for care when others who haven't bothered to plan will get the same deal.

This group is concerned about the health of the planet, supporting environmental initiatives as voters as well as consumers.

Worn-Out Worriers

With little money and less time this group likes to watch TV to relax and looks forward to a retirement taking care of their grandchildren. Most likely to identify with Labour (42%), they say their standard of living has improved over the past few years.

Worriers are very fearful of crime levels in their own area, they would not go out alone and keep the doors bolted at all times. They think the Government does



its best to provide care, but are concerned that families themselves no longer provide support in the way they used to.

Worriers think there are not enough nurses in the NHS and that standards may have dropped.

They believe the state pension is out of step with the cost of living and are fearful of existing without the support of benefits.

They say the education system is too soft on unruly children, who are causing problems in the classroom.

Healthy Wealthies

High achievers, most likely to identify with the Conservatives (32%), they've kept their nest eggs warm and made financially astute preparations for retirement. They've come a long way from their parents and have the money to achieve their dreams like no other generation before them. They give to charity and take an interest in current affairs.

Their major concern is the general well-being of the health service: waiting times; cleanliness and MRSA; poor management; and red tape are top of their list.

While they're less likely to be victims they do worry about crime.

They don't see why older people should be forced to pay for care and believe there is a worrying discrepancy between the quality of private and local authority-funded care.

When it comes to pensions, wealthies are more concerned about future generations than themselves. They believe that private enterprise has a part to play in pension provision.

They know from personal experience that higher education costs are rocketing and wonder if they should be encouraging their children to take vocational courses or apprenticeships

Life Lovers

With plenty of time to enjoy leisure as well as work, life lovers, who are most likely to identify with Labour (26%), find the world an invigorating place. They enjoy the great outdoors, the arts and seeing friends. To them, money is for spending and most have got enough to enjoy themselves and give to others.

When it comes to election issues health is top of the list – they claim to be proud of the NHS, although half have opted for private health cover. Older people get a poor deal and waiting lists should be cut, they say.

The fear of crime, fuelled by the media, is prevalent among their parents' generation, though they personally don't feel threatened.

Education is too exam and league table focussed and too stressful for children. Discrimination is an important issue for this group, who abhor it wherever it occurs in society.

Life lovers are cynical about pensions and not convinced they're worth having, preferring to put their money into property.

Respond

As a generation baby boomers are politically astute, and may be attracted by policies and parties most likely to meet their aspirations. Failure to respond to their concerns may mean punishment at the ballot box for would-be Governments.

Rutherford ruling blow as Government wins employment tribunal appeal

Moves to improve older people's employment rights received a setback last month when the Government won its appeal against a decision that entitled two workers aged over 65 to unfair dismissal and redundancy payments.

Had the Government lost its appeal against the case of clothing industry workers John Rutherford, 72, and Samuel Bentley, 76, the first steps on the way to real workplace rights for people over 65 would have been taken, allowing them the same access to employment protection as that afforded to younger employees. As the law currently stands older workers are not protected

from unfair dismissal or eligible for statutory redundancy payments.

Gordon Lishman, Director General of Age Concern England, said:

"This judgement is a kick in the teeth for older people in work. Half a million people are currently working beyond 65 and should have exactly the same workplace rights and protection as everyone else."

Rectify

Describing the current situation as "disgraceful", Mr Lishman added: "The future of older people's rights and choices now hangs in the balance. The Government does, however, have a chance to rectify its actions. If it is bold it will deliver equality for people of all ages by scrapping mandatory retirement ages and offering full employment protection to all workers."

News In Brief

Five principles welcomed

The Making Decisions Alliance, representing people with conditions including schizophrenia and dementia, has welcomed the five principles set out in the Mental Capacity Bill designed to protect thousands of people who are not always able to make decisions themselves. The principles cover the presumption of a person's capacity, maximising his or her decision-making capacity, allowing someone the freedom to make unwise decisions, ensuring that any decision taken on a person's behalf is in his or her best interests, and that the decision made is the least restrictive on a person's rights and freedoms. The Bill will receive its Second Reading in the Commons on 11th October. For more information go to www.makingdecisions.org.uk

No generation gap

A new report from End Child Poverty and Age Concern England says the needs of children and pensioners living in poverty should not be seen in conflict or competing for limited resources.

Family Misfortunes: the links between child and pensioner poverty, launched on 19th September, argues that poor children are tomorrow's poor pensioners. Poor children are more likely to leave school at a young age with few qualifications, more likely to experience unemployment as a young adult, more likely to earn lower wages and less likely to face old age with personal savings and an adequate pension. While the Government has pledged to end child poverty within a generation there is no parallel pledge for pensioners. The charities are calling on all parties to end poverty across all generations in a generation.

New role for Johnson

Former postman Alan Johnson MP is the new face at the Cabinet table, replacing Andrew Smith MP as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. Mr Johnson was born in 1950 and educated at Sloane Grammar School, Chelsea. He joined the Union of Communication Workers in 1968, and served as its General Secretary from 1992 until 1997, when he became the MP for Hull West and Hessle.

A member of the Trade and Industry Select Committee until he was made Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury in December 1997, he became PPS to the Paymaster General a year later. He moves to the Department for Work and Pensions from a ministerial post at the Department for Education and Skills.



Why we need a single equality body urgently

In May the Government announced its intention to set up a Commission for Equality and Human Rights. Now a packed Parliamentary timetable and opposition from some interest groups could threaten its creation. Katie Ghose, Age Concern England's Campaigns and Parliamentary Unit Manager, explains why a single equality body must not slip from the agenda



Ageism permeates our society. Older people are discriminated against in the NHS and other public services, by the financial sector and in the workplace – where reaching retirement age strips employees of employment rights and can force them out of jobs they enjoy. In our wider society older people are often treated with less respect and their views given less consideration than those of younger people.

If, rather than being older, these people were discriminated against because they were members of a minority ethnic community, or women, or disabled, they would at least have an equality commission to turn to – and some legislation to cite in making their case.

When it comes to discrimination, older people have recourse neither to the law, nor a body to represent them. The Government recognises that this has to change, and earlier this year set up a task force to look at the creation of a Commission for Equality and Human

Rights, a new single equality body

that will take on the work of the existing equality commissions on race, sex and disabilities, as well as representing the new areas of religion and belief, sexual orientation and age.

In May the Government published a White Paper **Fairness for All: A New Commission for Equality and Human Rights**, setting out a blueprint for the new body. However, there is currently no legal obligation on the Government to introduce the body, or guarantee of parliamentary time to ensure that it is established quickly – and there is a very real possibility that it may fall by the wayside before the next General Election.

Legislation from the European Parliament means that by 2006 laws will be in place to tackle ageism in employment and training, but this is not enough. We need a body which can deal with a wide range of issues affecting older people, from helping a couple to fight for their right to stay together when one has to move to a residential home, to tackling age discrimination in the IT industry. We need this body and we need it soon.

Other Viewpoints

“ Having a single champion and a 'one-stop-shop' for equality and human rights issues makes sense for individuals, employers and service providers. It will help make sure that all our equality laws, including new laws on age, belief and sexual orientation, are equally well understood, promoted and enforced. In the longer term we need consistent laws that make it easier for individuals and organisations to understand their rights and responsibilities and for the Commission to be truly effective. ”

Equal Opportunities Commission

“ UK anti-discrimination law is currently made up of a patchwork of statutes providing different standards of protection. This creates a hierarchy of equalities and fails to tackle multiple discrimination. Plans to introduce a single equality body will go some way towards tackling the problems of multiple discrimination, by providing a single body to advise someone who for instance might suffer discrimination for being gay, being African and being HIV positive. However the efficacy of the Commission will be significantly impaired by the inconsistency and complexity of the law. What is needed is a Single Equality Act, which would enable the commission, once it is in place, to bring clarity to the legal bureaucracy that currently surrounds discrimination law. ”

National AIDS Trust



Photo Credit: Paul Mattsson / reportdigital.co.uk

Still waiting: older women need protection from discrimination

Your Say

We'd like to know what you think of the new-look Reportage. Please send any comments to Age Concern England's Parliamentary Assistant, Hannah Pearce, at pearceh@ace.org.uk



Sunderland MPs' pledge to break age barrier

Sunderland MPs Fraser Kemp (left), Chris Mullin (right), Bill Etherington (seated) and Joyce Quin (not pictured) accepted the Director of Age Concern Sunderland, Alan Patchett's invitation to fight age discrimination by signing up to the Break the Age Barrier Business Pledge

Sunderland MPs joined Sunderland City Council and the Sunderland Echo in calling for all employers to give older people a fair chance in the employment stakes, and value their experience and skills. Mr Patchett said: "The support of all our local MPs is a significant development in this campaign and sends out a strong signal to employers in the city that older people should be valued and can make a very positive contribution to any business."

Age Concern continues to campaign against age discrimination and is currently calling on the Government to abolish mandatory retirement ages, allowing people to leave work when they want to, not when they are forced to.

The charity is supported by the general public in its campaign. A survey by ICM this summer found that nine out of ten people agree that older workers should be able to choose when they retire. Almost three-quarters (72%) of people, regardless of age, social class or gender think that fixed retirement old ages are old fashioned, unnecessary and belong to the past.

The poll also found that 86% of those questioned disagreed that employers should have the right to get rid of anyone over 65 solely on the grounds of age and 68% disagreed that older workers should retire to make way for younger workers.

The Government is at a crossroads in deciding how far to adopt the European Union's age equality laws, which will be implemented in the UK in 2006. It could respond positively to our ageing society and give people choice about when they retire. Alternatively it could bow to pressure from industry, ignore public opinion and perform a cowardly U-turn that would continue to force people at an arbitrary age.

www.epolitix.com/forum/age-concern • www.ageconcern.org.uk

AGE
Concern

Reportage

Editor: Francesca Nelson. **Layout by:** simdesign@maksa66.wanadoo.co.uk **Published by:** Age Concern's Public Affairs Department. **Further Information:** please contact Hannah Pearce: 020 8765 7274 pearceh@ace.org.uk or Helen Simpson: 020 8765 7509; simpsoh@ace.org.uk. Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER Tel: 020 8765 7200 Fax: 020 8765 7211. **Printed by:** The Marstan Press Limited, Princes Street, Bexleyheath, Kent DA7 4BJ Tel: 020 8301 5900. **Design:** www.thiswayup.co.uk
Registered Charity Number: 261794