

Understanding European Expats over 50 in Greater Manchester

Ambition for Ageing “Ageing Equally?” Research Project

by **Europia**

Simpler summary report

This is an easier to read summary of the “Ageing Equally?” research report by Europia.

It contains some background to the research, the main findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The Equalities Board team have written it to help people understand the research more easily, and to make it easier to use the findings to make places better for older people.



Glossary

Ambition for Ageing (AfA) = a Greater Manchester programme that aims to make communities more age-friendly and improve older people's quality of life

Brexit = the process of the UK leaving the European Union, the international organisation of European countries

Closed questions = questions that ask a person to give a one word answer, or choose answers from a list

Communities of identity or experience = a group of people who share a common identity or experience (e.g. Bangladeshi people, LGBT people, or people living with dementia)

Community languages = languages used by a minority community

Data = information

Expatriate = someone who moves to a different country from the one they were born in but retains their original national identity

GMCVO = Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisations, the organisation responsible for managing the Ambition for Ageing programme

Identity = your sense of your self

Integration = when someone becomes a part of their community

Interpreting = translating or explaining words and ideas from another language

Mainstream = catering for the majority, not specialised

Marginalised = being on the margins of society, excluded or ignored

Minority = a group of people who are different in some way from the majority of the population

Open questions = questions that ask a person to reflect and give their thoughts

Participant = someone who takes part in a project

Respondent = someone who answers research questions or a survey

Stigma = unfair negative beliefs about something to do with a person's appearance or identity that they cannot change

1. Introduction and background

Europaia

Europaia is a registered charity that supports European expats in Greater Manchester, and works on ways to help them become integrated in local communities.

Context

Older people who move to the UK from Europe face many challenges. Sometimes they move to provide care for their grandchildren. Sometimes they move to start a new life. Many people come here not able to speak much English, or have low education or a low income. Brexit has also created uncertainty for older Europeans living in the UK. In 2018 and 2019 Europaia did some research with older Polish people in Greater Manchester. But there has been no research about older people from other European countries. Europaia decided to focus this research project on older people from Lithuania, Portugal and Romania.

Aims of the research

The researchers wanted to find out more about older European expats'

lives and experiences. They looked at four main areas:

- The challenges that older European people face when ageing in Greater Manchester.
- What local services older people know about and use.
- What would help older expats age better in their local communities.
- How is Brexit affecting their well-being and identity.

Summary of findings

The researchers found people think good health, work, family, financial stability, and social connections are most important for wellbeing. Their main challenges are English language skills, accessing healthcare, and finding “decent work”. The services they use most are GPs, post offices, shops and supermarkets. They would like more information about local services and more services targeted at their community. The researchers found it difficult to get some marginalised communities to trust them, and to translate some words and ideas.

2. Method: How Europaia did their research

Europaia created a questionnaire and translated it into Lithuanian, Portuguese and Romanian. Research assistants asked 24 people the questions and interpreted the answers into English. Nine interviews took place in people's homes, nine at a community event, and six in public places such as libraries. Researchers recorded answers on Google forms then analysed them.

Sixteen respondents were from Lithuania, with four each from Romania and Portugal. They came from across Greater Manchester and the average length they had lived in their community was six years. Sixteen were women and eight were men. The oldest was 79, three were in their sixties, and the other sixteen were all in their fifties. The ages of the respondents meant that the research focused on "younger older" expats. Thirteen were married or living with a partner, six lived alone and the others lived with children or other family. Twenty-one out of 24 respondents were still working.

3. Findings: What Europaia found out

a) Challenges living in Greater Manchester

The main challenges for respondents were English language, accessing healthcare and finding "decent work". Some of them thought that it was harder for them to learn English than for younger expats, and that younger people were healthier or more active. Others thought there were no differences. Thirteen respondents were negative about Brexit, but 11 thought there would be no impact. Only three said it had affected decisions about their lives. This might be because there was still a lot of uncertainty about Brexit at the time.

b) Using local services

The neighbourhood services that people most often mentioned using were the GP, post office and local shops or supermarkets. Seven of the respondents never travelled outside their local area to access services. The people who did say they visited shops, banks, hospitals and health services. Most people thought there were no barriers to using local services. The most common barrier for the other respondents was the English language.

c) Ageing better in Greater Manchester

The European expats in the survey thought that good health, work, financial stability, family and social connections were important for wellbeing.

The survey asked both open and closed questions about what would help them age better in Greater Manchester. When people were asked open questions, they mentioned lifestyle factors 13 times (including more free time, socialising, activities), financial factors 13 times and health 12 times, but mentioned using English only three times. However, when respondents were given a list, using English came on top, chosen by 16 people, followed by better finances and health.

The researchers felt that some concepts such as “community” and “mental health” were difficult to translate in some of the languages.

Europaia’s recommendations

The researchers recognised they only had a small sample, and made recommendations about both action and future research.

Action recommendations:

- Provide more English classes that are targeted at particular European communities, and promote lifelong learning.
- Provide more information about local services, with better signposting in community languages.
- Provide more activities that encourage socialising for older European expats, and led by community members.

Research recommendations:

- Build in time to gain the trust of communities, especially those from ex-communist communities who may distrust authority more.
- Carry out further research into the experiences of retired European expats, and people from a wide range of European countries to find out about the importance of national identity. There could be follow up interviews about Brexit now it is confirmed.

Take more care when translating some words and ideas, particularly the ones that may have stigma attached. Researchers should consider using both open and closed questions to get over differences of understanding.

4. What can we learn from this research about what makes a good place to grow older for people in minority communities?

- Learning English is very important to older people from non-English speaking countries. For some people, a belief that it is harder to learn when you are older can be a barrier.
- Older people in minority communities often have the same concerns as mainstream community members.
- Many older people of working age, especially men, are focused on work and creating financial security.
- Service providers need to understand that everyone mostly uses the same local services. Then they will be more able to help people to integrate into their local communities.

About the “Ageing Equally?” Research Programme

Depending on their backgrounds, culture and life circumstances, different people need different things to feel socially connected and supported in their daily lives. Ambition for Ageing funded the ‘Ageing Equally?’ research programme to find out more about this by asking: “What makes a good place to grow older for people who belong to minority communities?”

More information

This is a simpler summary of the full report, which contains a lot more information about the background of the research, and details of Europa’s findings. You can read and download this summary, the full report, and all the ‘Ageing Equally?’ project reports and summaries from the Ambition for Ageing website here: <https://www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/ageing-equally>

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