



YOUNG
WORKERS
NETWORK

**SIPTU Young Workers'
Network**
Submission to the
Commission on Pensions

March 2021

It's all our futures





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Introduction

The voice of young people is largely absent from the debate surrounding pensions and the state pension age. This is not too surprising given the enormous financial challenges young people face. Crippling rents, childcare costs and low paid precarious employment have left large swathes of young workers pinned to their collar or on pandemic payments and supports.

Income security in retirement may seem like low priority for many young workers in the midst of a global pandemic. However, the decisions that are made today will have profound long-term consequences for young people and their future standard of living. That is why the Young Workers' Network conducted a survey in March 2021 that informs and underpins this submission to the Pensions Commission. The online survey was taken by over 1,300 people under the age of 35 and was distributed by trade unions and youth organisations.

The results, both quantitative and qualitative, give a clear insight into young workers' thoughts on the pension system and living in retirement. The results also reveal the struggles faced by young workers today. One respondent succinctly captured the consequence of Ireland's high cost of living; "I know I should be paying into a pension plan at my age (25) but it's not a reality for me with all my other costs of living, mostly rent."

Another stated "people of my generation are already being stalled from getting mortgages by exorbitant costs of housing both by the mortgages themselves and current rents. To have our retirement also eroded would see our society and family unit completely crumble."

The reality faced by low paid workers is starkly expressed by another respondent saying "I have no pension scheme in work. I don't earn enough to set up my own. Struggle to make ends meet as it is".

The debate surrounding the State pension age cannot be seen in isolation. It must consider the lived reality of young workers today. For most young workers, this reality is high rents, high house prices, high childcare cost and for many, low wages. It should surprise no one that 92% are saying a firm no to any increases in the eligibility age for the State pension.

The young workers of today are paying for the mistakes of the past with their futures. It's time to say stop.

Darragh O'Connor
Head of Strategic Organising and Campaigns



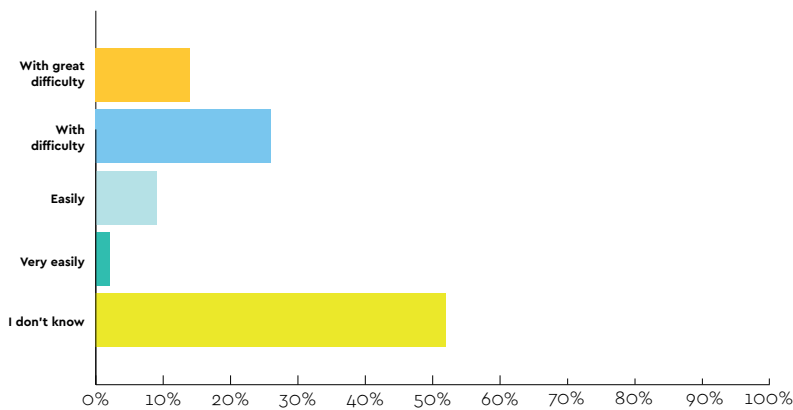
The Young Workers' Network bring together young activists to build society that works and is supported by a number of unions.

Survey Results

The results show that young workers are deeply concerned about their standard of living in retirement. A majority of respondents, 80% when 'don't knows' are excluded, believe that they will have difficulty or great difficulty in making ends meet when they retire.

I will be able to make ends meet when I retire

Answered: 1,314

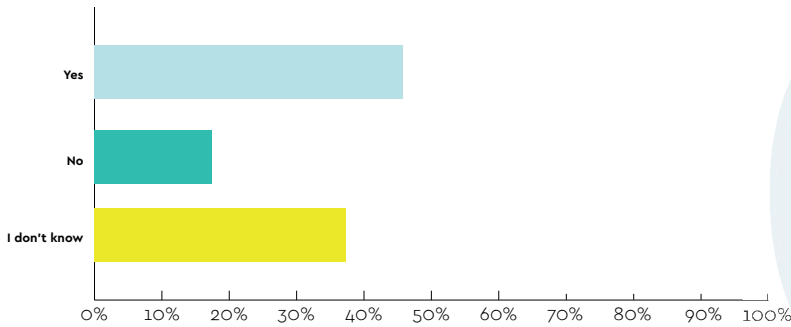


“Will I have my mortgage paid off? (If we can even afford to get one in the current circumstances); day to day living; any form of illness that may occur.”

For those who pay into an occupational or personal pension, a large number (68.4% when 'don't knows' are excluded) believe that the State pension will be their primary source of income in retirement.

I expect the State Pension to be my primary source of income when I retire

Answered: 1,317

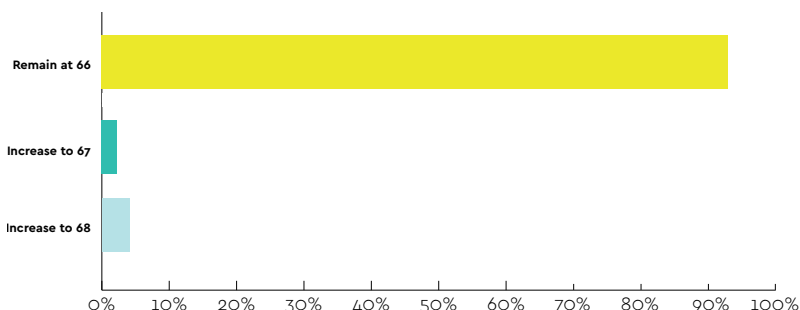


“I already see how worried my parents are about their own retirement. They're in the private sector and want to keep working because they don't know if they'll be able to afford to retire. It makes me really worry for my own future. I think if there's no action taken on this to secure retirement rights for people, the health and wellbeing of my generation will really be in jeopardy!”

In relation to the state pension age, (92.2%) of respondents want it to remain at 66, compared to (2.8%) who favor an increase to 67 or (5.0%) who favor an increase to 68.

The state pension age should...

Answered: 1,269



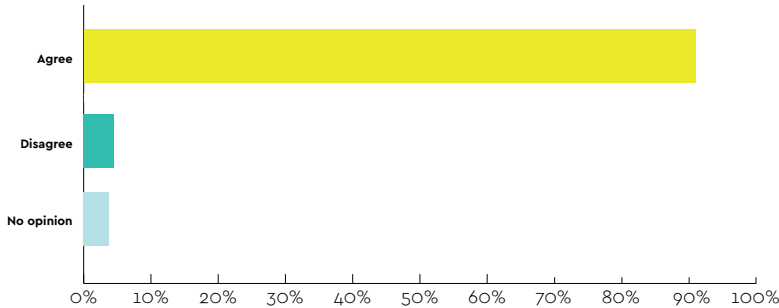
“I have worked full time since I was 16 because that was the world built over the last two decades, I'll work hard until the day I retire. Why is it ok to eat into the only free time in my entire life?”

“We already spent most of our lives not being able to pursue our interests, to keep pushing retirement age out because the wealthy are living longer is a cruel joke”

However, at (91.0%), there was an overwhelming support for the option to work past 66 if a worker wanted to. There was also very strong support (85.6%) for low retirement ages for professions that are physically demanding and arduous.

Workers should be given the option to work past 66 if they want to

Answered: 1,316



However, many also identified an increased retirement age as a barrier for career progression for younger workers.

“ People should be able to continue working if they wish but this should not be a requirement. They will have given decades of service; they deserve to have the right to retire. For more demanding roles, there should be an option to retire earlier too - it is just common sense!” ”

“ Retirement age should not rise drastically as young workers will find it hard to find jobs if older workers stay in the labour market ” ”



Conclusion

The attitude of young workers in relation to the state pension age is unambiguous - no further increases. However, the survey also reveals a desire for greater flexibility with a majority in favour of the option of working past 66.

The results and comments also reveal that the current high cost of living, rent and childcare in particular, are barriers to making financial provisions in retirement for young workers.

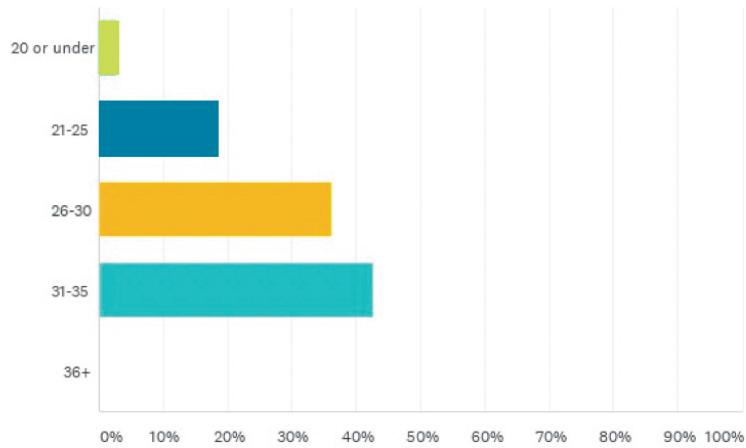
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Appendix: Graphs and Charts

Q1: Age

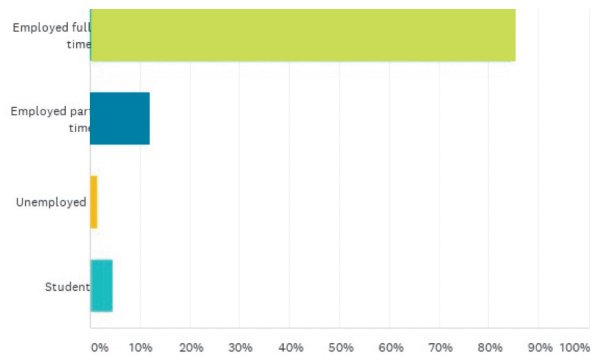
Answered: 1,317 • Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
20 or under	2.73%	36
21-25	18.22%	240
26-30	36.29%	478
31-35	42.75%	563
36+	0.00%	0
TOTAL		1,317

Q2: Work status

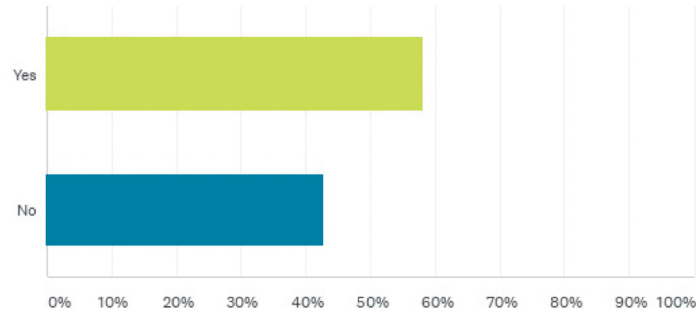
Answered: 1,315 • Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Employed full time	84.87%	1,116
Employed part time	12.02%	158
Unemployed	1.44%	19
Student	4.56%	60
Total Respondents: 1,315		

Q3: I am currently paying into an occupational or personal pension

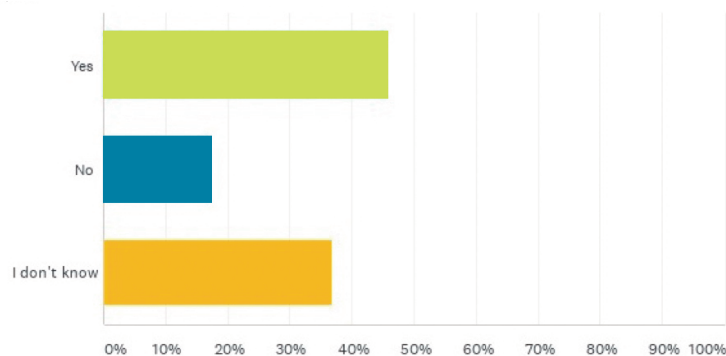
Answered: 1,313 • Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	57.58%	756
No	42.42%	557
TOTAL		1,313

Q4: I expect the State Pension to be my primary source of income when I retire

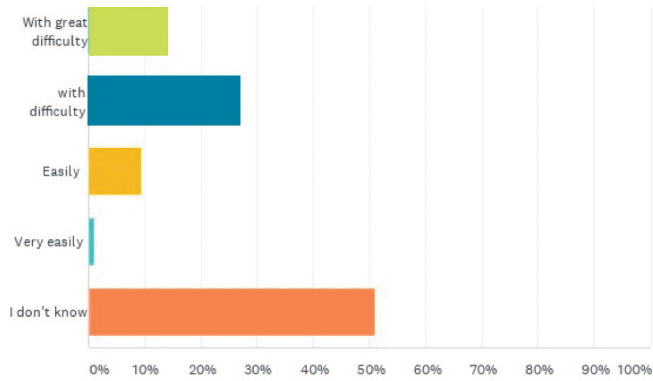
Answered: 1,317 • Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	45.63%	601
No	17.46%	230
I don't know	36.90%	486
TOTAL		1,317

Q5: I will be able to make ends meet when I retire

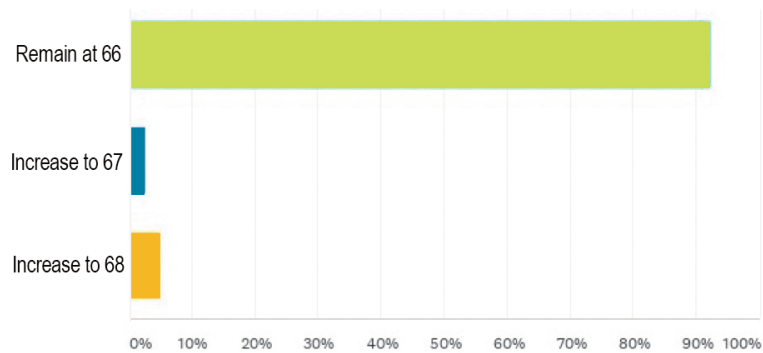
Answered: 1,314 • Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
With great difficulty	13.77% 181
with difficulty	26.94% 354
Easily	9.44% 124
Very easily	0.99% 13
I don't know	51.14% 672
Total Respondents: 1,314	

Q6: The state pension age should ...

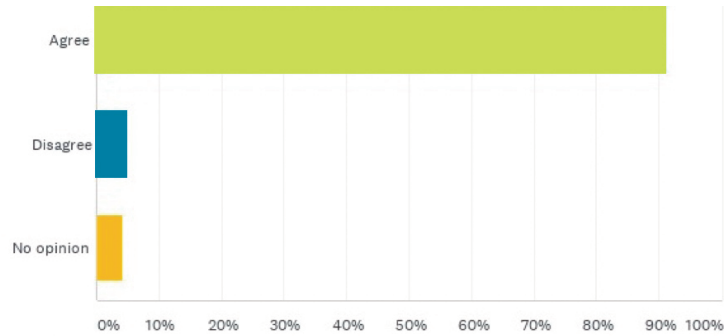
Answered: 1,269 • Skipped: 48



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Remain at 66	92.28% 1,171
Increase to 67	2.76% 35
Increase to 68	4.96% 63
TOTAL	1,269

Q7: Workers should be given the option to work past 66 if they want to

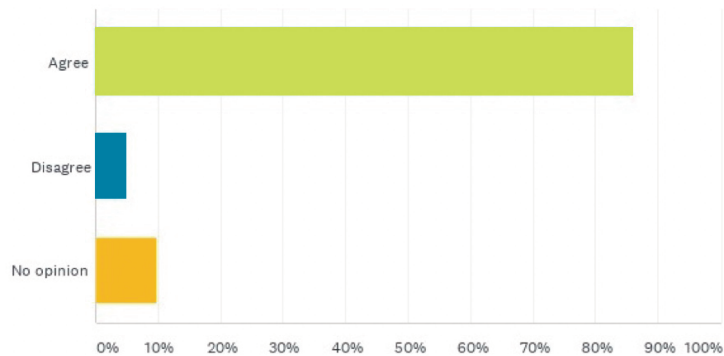
Answered: 1,316 • Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agree	90.96%	1,197
Disagree	4.86%	64
No opinion	4.18%	55
TOTAL		1,316

Q8: There should be lower retirement ages for professions that are physically demanding and arduous

Answered: 1,315 • Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agree	85.55%	1,125
Disagree	4.71%	62
No opinion	9.73%	128
TOTAL		1,315

