

Differences with age



Gunnar Björing

Boksidan

Differences with age

Gunnar Björing

"Middle-aged people between 40 - to 50-year-old begin to notice changes that they do not want to see and many are trying to escape. It could be wrinkles, grey hair, baldness, and that the maximum sports performance deteriorates or that virility is not like before."

From **Attitudes towards older people in employment** by **Per Erik Solem** in (Aronsson A and Kilbom Å, 1996).

Translated from Swedish to English, by Google translator and Gunnar Björing.

Copyright: Boksidan 2014
Box 558
146 33 Tullinge

Differences with age, ISBN: 978-91-88109-11-8

Visit www.boksidan.com and learn more!

With time, we change in different ways. This is partly due to the aging process and partly because the world is changing. This chapter describes an attempt to, as far as possible, isolate and examine what changes can be attributed to the former. The material is based primarily on well known knowledge of physical aging and secondarily on information from Swedish studies with repeated interviews with the same people.

Unfortunately most studies with repeated interviews, that I have seen, presents very sparse data on the relatively subtle differences that may be due to aging. Therefore the information here is in third place based on data from other studies. As this was not enough to illuminate the areas in which I think we change, the information is also based on structured interviews with ten persons (6 men and 4 women). On average, they were in the middle of the middle age, i.e. 45 years (median: 47 years, min-max: 38-49 years) and they had varying levels of education, occupation, income, family and living conditions. The questions to the participants are reported beside each line up of answers.

The procedure has both advantages and disadvantages regarding the veracity of the responses and the how relevant the answers are for people in general, probably mainly:

(+ Advantage, disadvantage -):

- The sample is small and not representative for the general population.
- + Since it was interviews and I held the pen, I could to a greater extent assure that the respondents thought through their answers compared to if they had written down their answers themselves. In addition, I was able to, to a greater extent, assure that I understood their responses compared to if I had only been obliged to interpret what they had written.
- It may happen that some questions were misunderstood and that the respondents thus responded to anything other than what was intended. From that respect open interviews would have been better because they are not stopped at a short answer.
- All people think probably a little different from day to day, so the responses captured only partially true changes over time.
- The participants compared rather the image they have today of what they thought when they were teenagers with what they think now, than compared the actual thoughts from then and now.
- Questions about quantifying something probably give very different answers depending on the language and the terms of reference of the respondents. For example, perhaps the real difference is less for a person who said that the difference are huge, compared to someone who said that it is only a slight difference.
- There is some risk that others have made observations about the age effects that the participants made their own even if it does not applies to them.
- +/- The answers are based partly on the open-ended questions, which have the advantage that the participants to a lesser extent are given the answers through the questions and they have more space to take up various aspects in the response, compared with fixed answer alternatives. The downside is that some of them may not be thinking about taking up some viewpoints that they actually shared.

The most obvious effects of aging are physical. Which I and contemporaries with me (between 40-50 years) have notices in the form of drier skin¹, less hair² on some spots and more in others, changed hair colour³, and impaired vision⁴. Many of those who are doing much harder physical activities than people in my vicinity, may also find that their body becomes weaker and less resistant to physical load⁵ after early adulthood. From the age of 40, we also get about 1mm shorter for every year that passes (Spiriduso W et al., 2005). In addition, deteriorating apparently shows in our fitness⁶, hearing⁷, the ability to get children⁸ and our reaction time⁹, although I have not noticed any of it. At even higher age awaits worse physical deterioration.

1. The production in the skin's oil glands decreases and the skin therefore loses some of its shine, gets drier and less smooth after adolescence and onwards (Lindehag A.-G, 1989), see also figure 1-16, which depicts two siblings from childhood.
2. Men often have less hair on their crown, which is "compensated" with stronger hair growth on other parts of the head, such as bushy eyebrows, see figure 7-16.
3. The hair colour change over the years, blonde child may, for example, over time, become dark-haired and later get hints of white or silvery hairs, see figure 7-16.
4. With increasing age (Lindehag A.-G, 1989) the pupil are gradually reduces and less light reaches the eye's internal parts, so a 70-year-old receives two-thirds less light than a 20 year old. In addition, the lens becomes stiffer in our 40s, which means that we get more and more difficult to see clearly on short distances.
5. From the age of 30 the amount of bone mass and muscle power is reduces with around one percent per year (Spiriduso W et al., 2005).
6. Aerobic power decreases with about one percent per year from 20 years of age (Lindehag AG, 1989).
7. Hearing cells begin to atrophy already in our 20s and 50 years later, about half of them has disappeared (Lindehag AG, 1989).
8. About at 35 years of age women's ability to have children begins to fall (Lindehag AG, 1989).
9. The reaction time increases by about 0.5 ms/year from 20-years of age (Spiriduso W et al., 2005).

Picture 1-6, Christina born 1943.



About 7 years

21

31

41



46

67 years

Picture 7-16, Carl-Gustav born 1946.



About 4 years



17



23



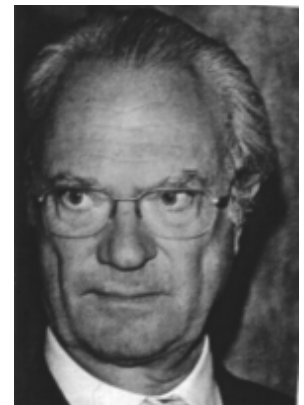
28



38



48



63 years

The production of sex hormones is also reduced with age. At about 25 (Leander G, 2004) mens testosterone production is at its peak and then it has declined by around 30% by the age of 40. Thereafter, the production is relatively constant further upwards in age. Testosterone builds muscles, hold down the fat mass, increases sex drive and men's ability to get and maintain an erection. In addition, testosterone's effects on the brain we still only have vague notions about. A reasonable guess, in my opinion, is that it increases aggressiveness and decreases empathy. Which I think is supported by the testimonies from men who have doped themselves with anabolic steroids. I think we can also recognize ourselves in the image of an older man who the psychotherapist Margaret Nordeman describes in her book **"Love at old age"** (Nordeman M, 1992): *"a man can undergo an amazing transformation from being a stringy and metering father to a playful, caressing grandfather."*

In addition, researchers (Hallsten L, 1996) has revealed that from 20-year and upward men's care for others increase, while women show the same concern over the whole adult period. Men also appear to become less performance-driven from early adulthood to middle age (Helson R and A Stewart, 1994), however, women do not.

Furthermore "female" hormones (oestrogen) decreases with age, especially in the menopause (Leander G, 2004). It is reasonable to believe that it also has psychological effects, such as perhaps, that the properties considered being characteristic for women is, to some extent, reduced. In conclusion (Helson R, Soto CJ and Cate RA 2006) men become more "feminine" and women more "masculine" from the late middle age.

A common, though not given, effect of age appears to be increasing weight. Since most people I have known for a long time has more stomach today than they had ten or twenty years ago. But I have met few really old people who are obese. So in my experience this weight gain does not continue until we die. It could be because our bodies become less able to absorb nutrients and/or that we will have decreased appetite. These observations are supported by results from SCB's interview studies (chart 1), which shows that we gain weight from the time we are young adults until we reach our sixties, and then we reduce weight again. These results are also supported in part by research (Spiriduso W et al., 2005) which shows that Americans are gaining weight until they are 45-50 years (women) and 40 years (men). Then 55-year-old men start losing weight, while women do the same when they are in their 70s.

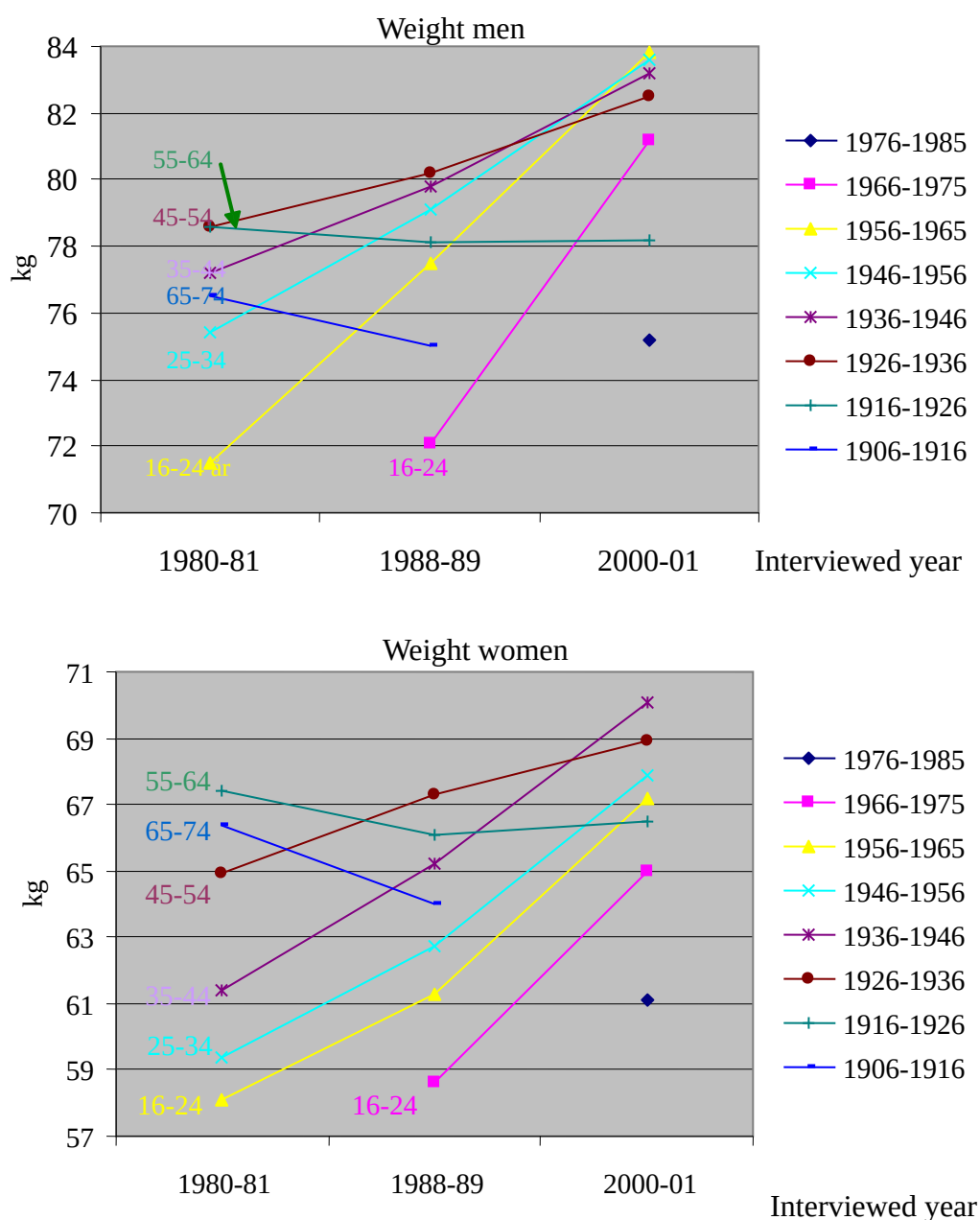


Chart 1. Average weight according SCB¹⁰ for a large number of people, who have been interviewed about this and other issues several times over the years.

¹⁰. Retrieved from a table on SCB's website, the data come from their surveys of living conditions (ULF) through annual interviews with about 10 000 people. A large portion of these persons have been involved from the time these studies began in 1975. The data presented in SCB's table is not presented by year of birth, but by age therefore the cohorts to some extent are overlapping, and the values do not match completely with the survey results.

For obvious reasons, it is a larger and larger percentage of us who are ill during long periods. Since many will never fully recover and there are constantly new cases added. When we are around 20 years old is about 20% and then the rate just increase (chart 2).

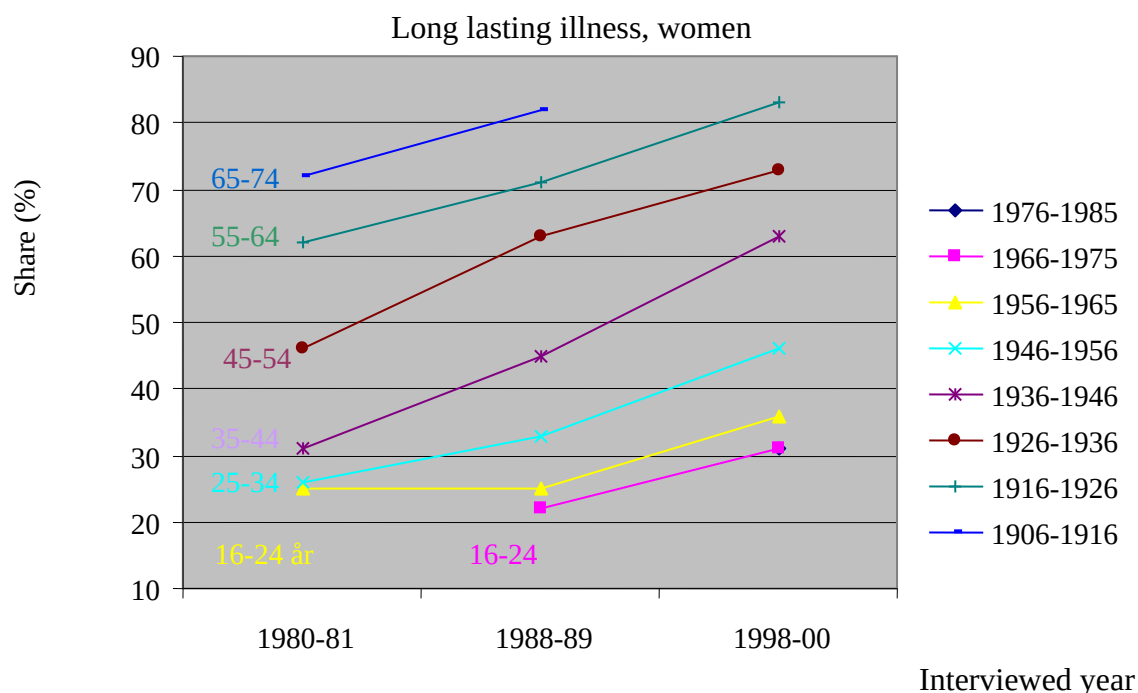
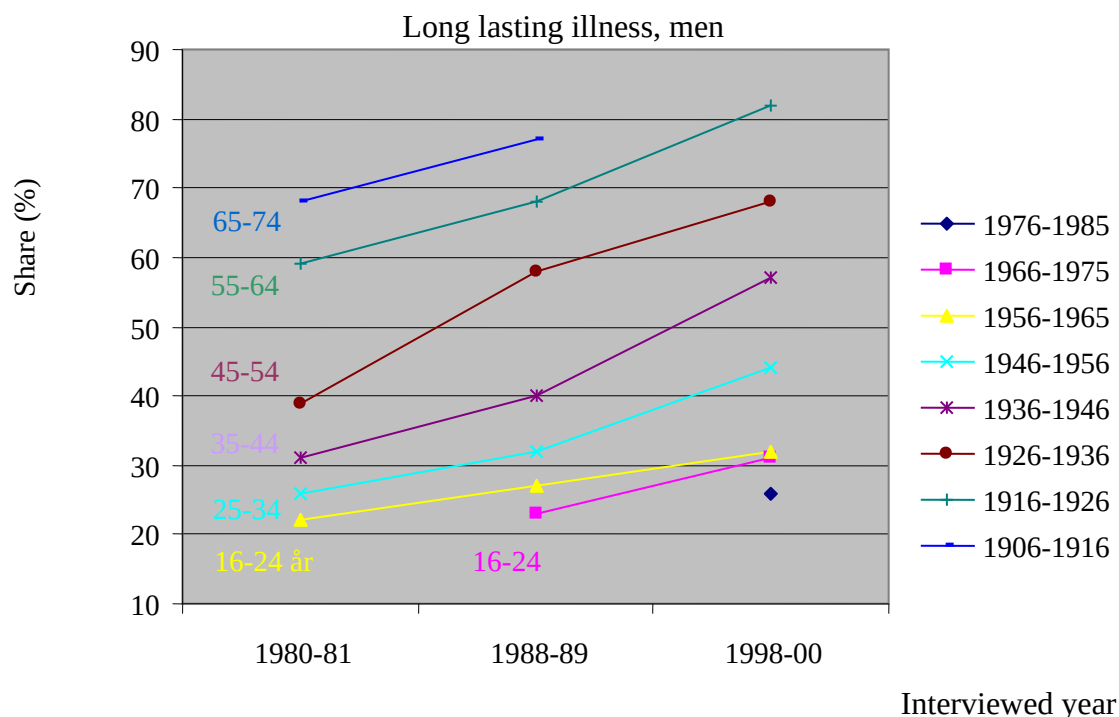


Chart 2. The proportion (SCB, 2002)¹¹ of each generation who, in recurrent surveys, answered yes to the question if they have "any long-term illness, problems following an accident, a disability or weakness or if they regularly use medicine for something."

¹¹. The data presented in SCB's table is not presented by year of birth, but by age therefore the cohorts to some extent are overlapping, and the values do not match completely with the survey results.

More and more people also gets problems with the musculoskeletal system, such as pain in the joints (see chart 3).

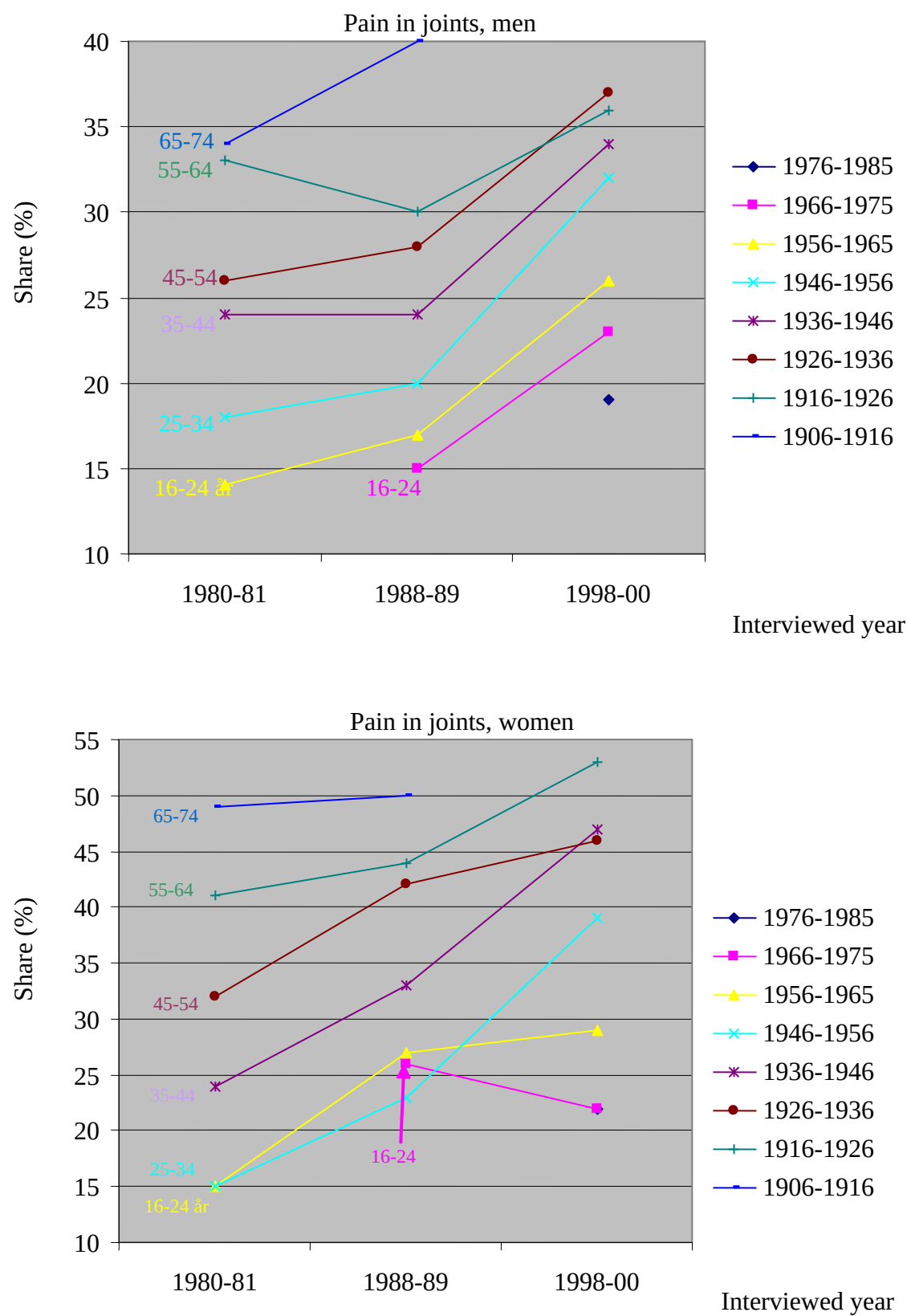


Chart 3. The proportion (SCB, 2002, Figure 3.6) that answered "yes" to questions about pain in the joints¹¹.

With increasing age, however, fewer and fewer people are smoking (see chart 4). Though it is probably mainly an effect of that smoking in general has declined. But to some extent it seems to also be an effect of age because, at almost every subsequent time point (see the chart below), there were a higher proportion of smokers in the younger generations than in the older ones.

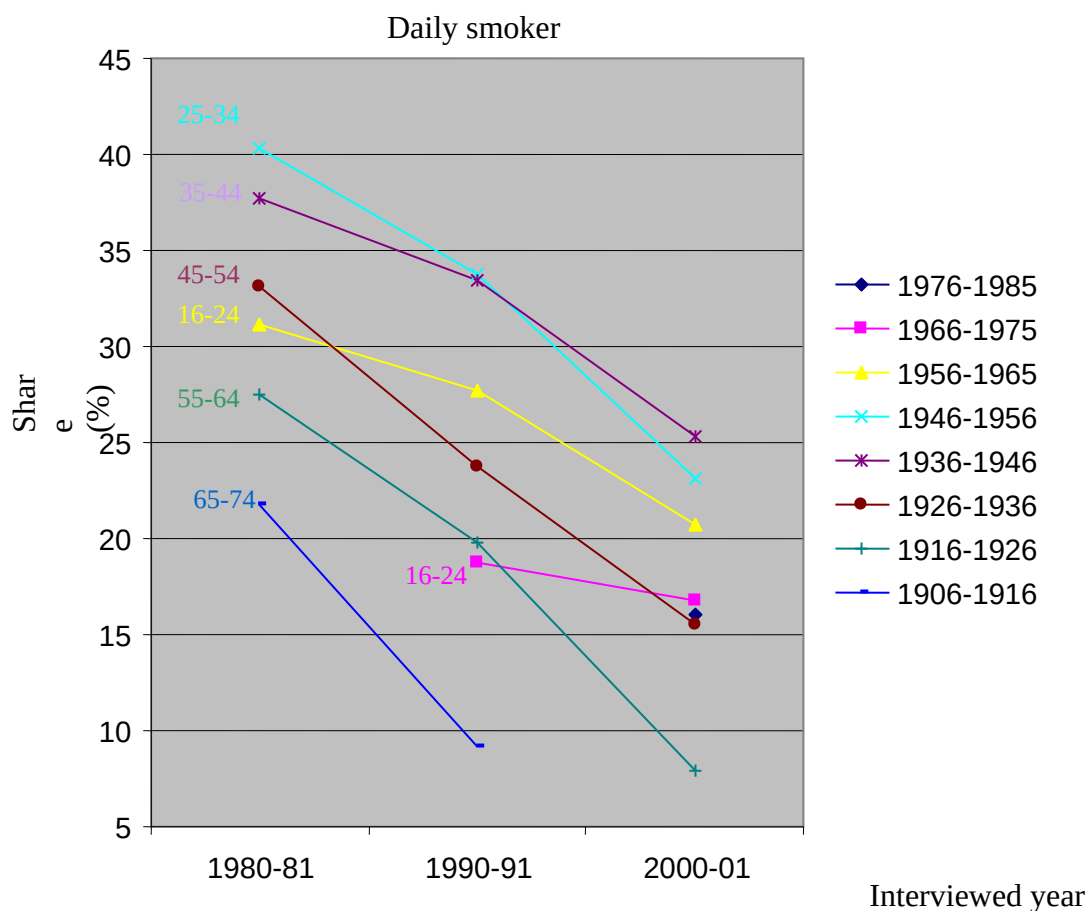


Chart 4. The proportion of each generation who are smokers, according to SCB¹².

¹². Retrieved from a table on SCB's website.

The income, however, increases with age (chart 5). At least until one gets a long-term illness or retire.

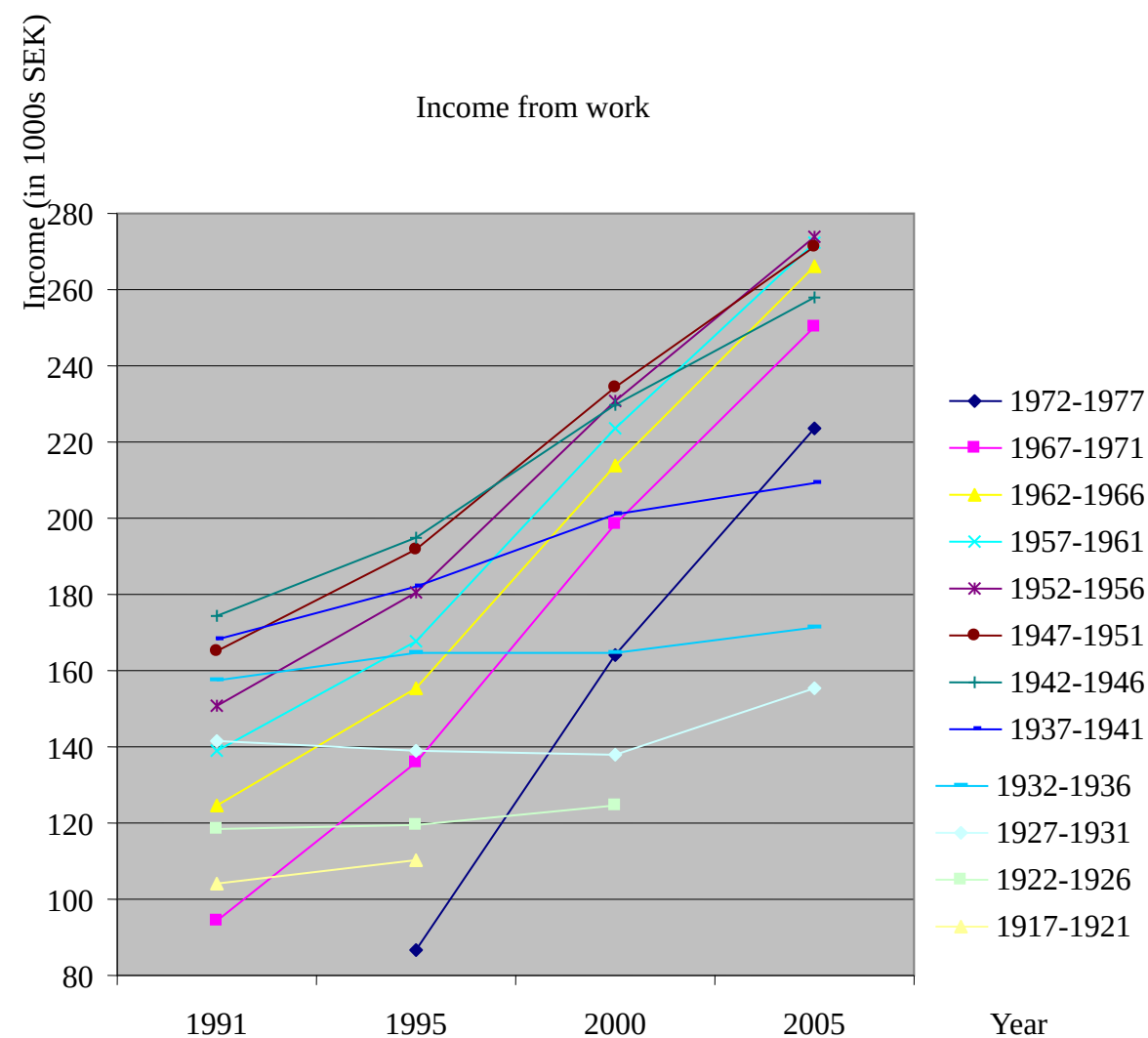


Chart 5. The development, according to SCB¹², of the total income (income from wage jobs + business incomes + social benefits + pensions) from 1991 to 2005.

Unfortunately, it may not be an effect of aging. The increase in earned income is probably rather due to the worlds and especially Swedens economy improved during the presented period (see chart 6).

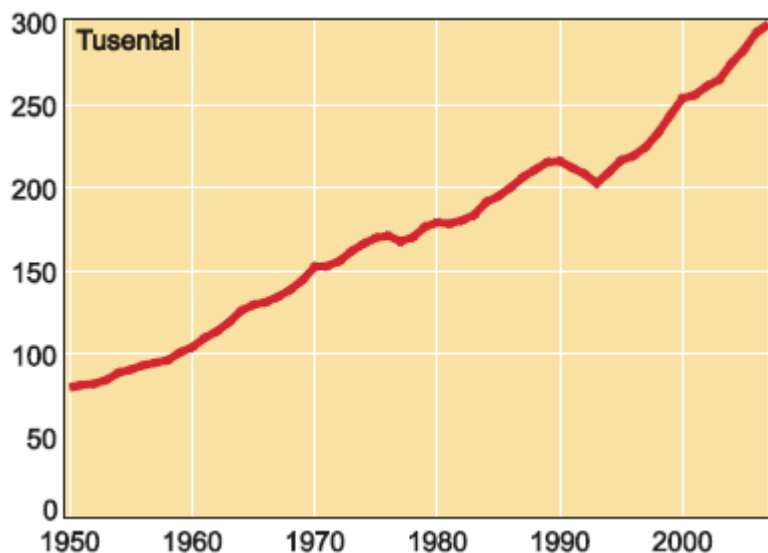


Chart 6. The total value of everything produced in a year, averaged over all the inhabitants (GDP per capita) in 1 000's SEK, here with 2000 as the base year (SCB, 2010).

Even if everything else were equal, most people would improve their economy every year because of that their accumulated wealth grew larger. For many, this wealth consists not of what we in the ordinary sense regards as capital. Instead, it consists of the things we believe we need in our lives. Over time, more and more of what has ever been on the wish list is added to everyone's little "fortune".

Results from SCB's ongoing interviews with more or less the same people (SCB, 1997, summary table: tangible assets) shows that we purchase the most common capital goods (cars, boats and TVs) already in our late teens, others (caravans and washing machines) we buy when we had children. The rest of the stuff that was included in the study (freezers, videos, and dishwashers) increased very much in existence for all age groups during the studied period. Thus, the results suggest that many have a relatively large part of the material "wealth" fairly early in adulthood. Which should reasonably result in that we can then use more money to create a gold edge on our existence and/or to save some money.

To study whether this is the case we have agreed on a measure called deprivations index. It weighs the size of the home, savings, vacations, the prevalence of dishwasher, freezer, TV, car caravan, boat, an equity holding of at least 13 000 SEK and the occurrence of payment problems (chart 7). With this index, the picture is somewhat different. Some generations (born in 1954-61 and 1962-69) became "richer" during the studied period, while the older ones got "poorer". It does not mean that they felt poorer. Maybe they moved to smaller homes or got rid of the car to prepare for old age, though it may not be as likely for the oldest participants was only 64 years old. But it was a severe economic crisis in Sweden just before the third measurement occasion and that had the effect that many Swedes got poorer without it had anything to do with age.

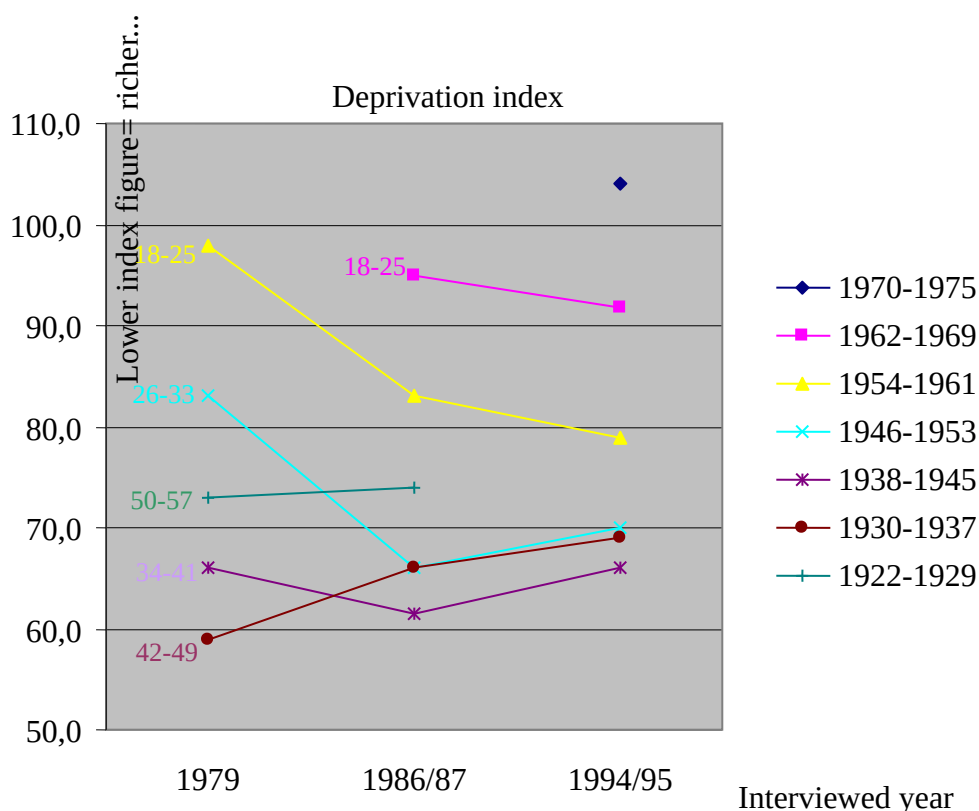


Chart 7. An index that weighs

together various indicators for the personal economy. The data used comes from ULF surveys (SCB, 1997, Figure 10.5).

Money in the bank and the amount of capital is, after all, only a subset of what makes life worth living. There are many other factors that many probably values higher, such as the ability to travel and drinking alcohol. SCB's ongoing interview studies (SCB, 1997, summary table: leisure) shows that several of these factors like visits to restaurants, sports events and cinemas and decreases with age. The same applies to own musicianship and sporting. The only one of the studied leisure activities that seems to increase with age (up to 70 years of age), judging from the presented results, is the proportion who have walked in the forest more than 20 times in a year. Not even the number of vacations abroad increases with age (chart 8), at least not after we turn 65.

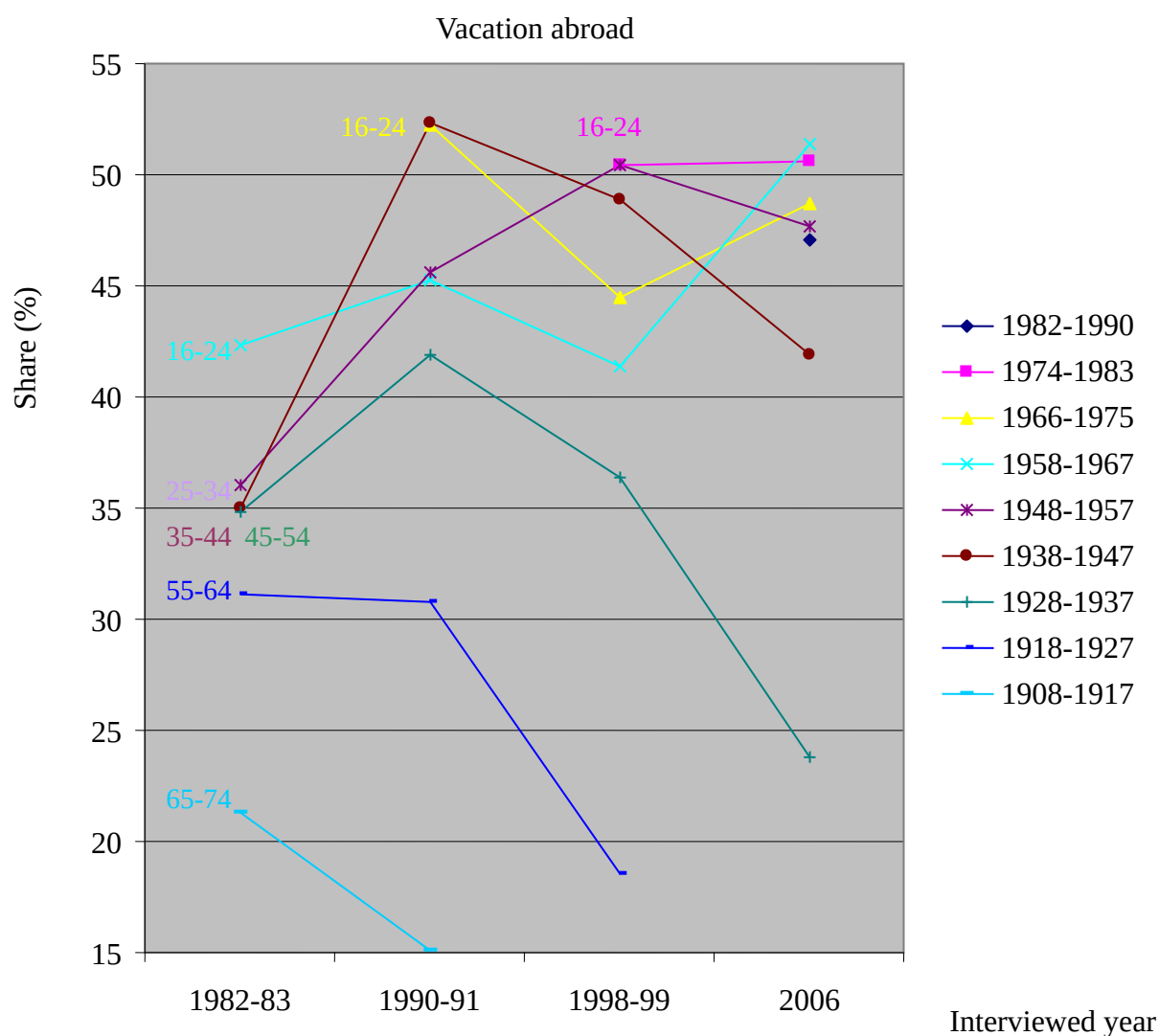


Chart 8. The proportion of a generation that has been on holiday abroad, some time during the past 12 months according to SCB¹⁰.

I think that I quite often have heard older people say that they do not feel old. Instead, they claim that they feel like when they were in their 20s. A reasonable explanation for this, I think, is that they as well as I, since childhood have a well-rooted picture of how old people are and they do not recognize themselves in that picture. Since they still have about the same preferences as when they were young, which at that time, were strictly associated with youth. And they do not realize that these former teen idols, like Mick Jagger, by the youth of today probably are seen as old men with a completely old fashioned style. The music that the youth of today like, they do not understand at all.

Regarding musical taste the reasoning was confirmed by half of those participating in this study, since they responded that they today have the same taste in music as when they were teenagers (table 1), but the second half felt that they have a broader taste nowadays (3 persons), or followed the trends (2 persons). Overall, it doesn't give much support for the theory that we generally retain the taste in music we embraced in our youth. One reason why so many has changed their musical taste over time could be that our taste in adolescence is formed by our closest friends, but then gets a more unique character from the different roads we travel on through life. This reasoning is supported (Labouvie-Vief G et al, 1995, Kruger R f, Johnson W, Kling K, 2006) by that the personality becomes more and more complex and unique from childhood and onwards.

There were fewer who thought that their interest in music has increased (2 persons) compared to ditto for clothes (4 persons). This can be an effect of that the times changed. For, as I remember, clothing and fashion was far less important in the 70 - and early 80's, when the majority of the participants were teenagers. Music, I think, however, was about as important as today. The difference would then not be an effect of age.

Though it may also be that the participants are increasingly able afford "fancy" clothes today than before. Or that they have less time and/or calmness to listen to music today, but they however believe that it is worth taking the extra time to choose clothes with greater care. If this latter reasoning is closer to the truth, the difference may be an effect of age.

Table 1. What did you like when you were 18-years and what do you like today? (→ =same, ↘ =decrease, ↗ =increase):

Participant no:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Music	wider	→	→	→	wider	Have followed the develop.	more modern	wider	→	→
Intrest in music	↘	↘	↘	→	→	→	↘	↗	↗	→
Clothes	fashion	→	→	→	maturer	fashion	→	brands	more bohemc	fashion
Intrest in clothes	↘	→	→	→	↘	↗	↗	shape	→	priceworthy

There were more participants who have gone more to the left, than those who have gone to the right, of the political spectrum (table 2). One explanation for this, except that the sample may have been skewed, could be that we seem to go from arguing based on our own needs in the early years, through arguments based on the groups needs, to more principle based arguments in older days¹³. Other (McCrae & Costa PT, RT, 2006) have also shown that we become more unselfish and humble with age. This suggests that the effect may to some extent be generalized. Something that speaks in the opposite direction is that high earners probably to a greater extent than people with low-income votes on the right wing, and it's probably more that goes from having a low income to high income than vice versa.

It was just one of the participants who said she has become more interested in politics over the years. It is contrary to data from Statistics Sweden (chart 9) which suggests that younger adults become more politically interested with age.

Table 2. What did you like when you were 18-years and what do you like today, regarding?

Participant no:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Politics	more left	→	wider	→	→	→	more right	→	more left	more left
The intrest for politics	→	→	→	→	→	↘	→	↗	→	→

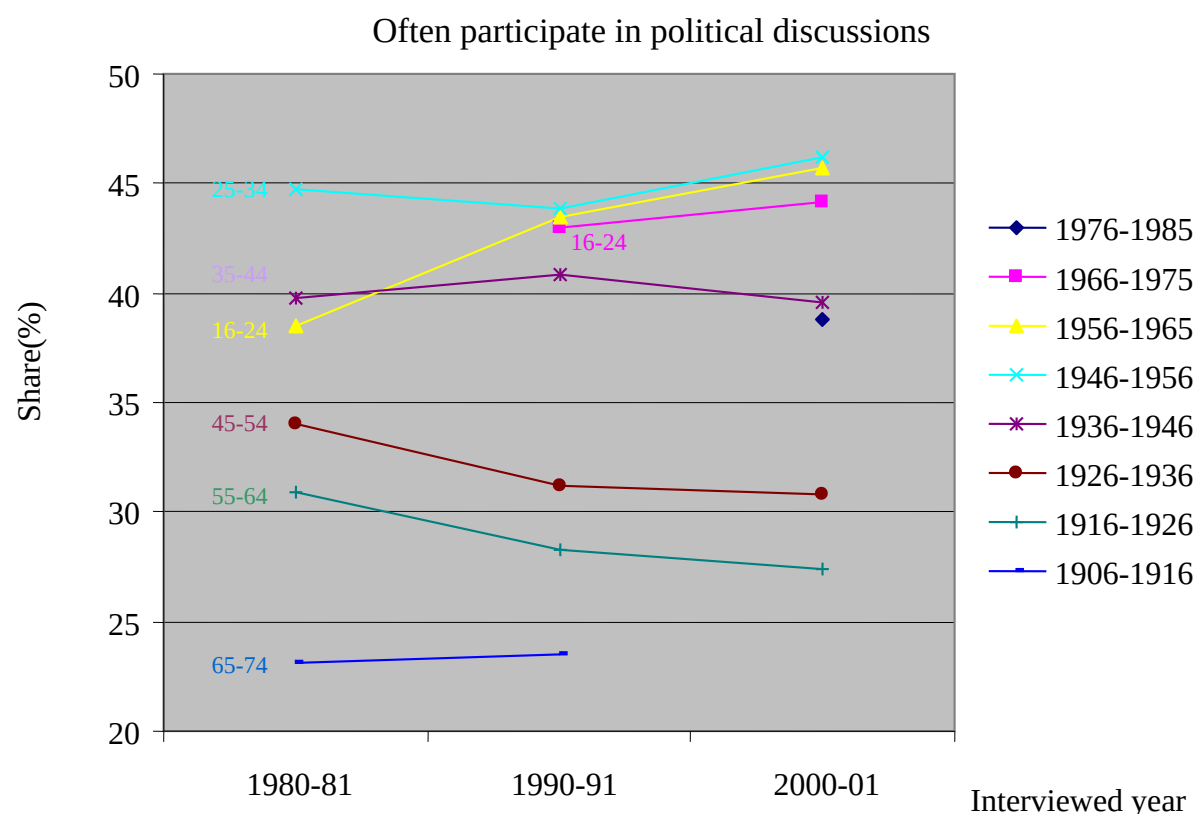


Chart 9. The proportion of each generation that often is involved in political discussions, according to SCB¹⁰.

¹³. A scientist (Kohlberg L, 1981) examined people's arguments to resolve hypothetical dilemmas such as: "Is it right to steal medicine from a pharmacist to give to your severely ill wife, if you do not have money to pay for the medicine?" He found that the arguments followed a line of development from *egocentric* arguments (referring to peoples own, individual interests), to *group-oriented* (referring to family, community or authorities) and finally to self-selected, *non-partisan* arguments (referring to universal principles).

For myself, I can say that my willingness to follow simple rules decreases. If it is universal, it could be due to that we as children are to follow very simple rules:

Do not cross the street if the traffic light shows a red man.

Since young kids are not capable of handling complex and conditional instructions:

Make an assessment of the traffic situation and pass the pedestrian crossing in the first place when there are no cars around, whether it is green for pedestrians or not. Secondly, you pass when all the cars are so far away that they can not possibly get to the crosswalk before you have passed and consider the prevailing road conditions when assuming the time it takes for you to cross the roadways. Third, you pass when it is green for pedestrians and all vehicles are standing still.

During adolescence and early adult life, we gradually replace these simple rules with other more complex ones. And we become less stubborn in our thinking from the 10s - to 60-year-olds (Labouvie-Vief G et al, 1995). Some simple rules, we test and reject even as small kids. While we rejected others relatively more complicated, but still simplified rules, later. Still others we may be breaking during adolescence and then re-follow them. For example, it is more likely to, any time in that period, shoplift something in a store, than later in life. It was also confirmed by the majority (7 of 10) of the participants, since they at least once between 10-20 years of age shoplifted something in a shop¹⁴, and only two of them have shoplifted anything after adolescence. Although only 4 of 10 has become more law abiding with age (table 3). Which might suggest that a reduced amount of violations of clear and simple rules, such as the prohibition of stealing, is offset by more offences to more complicated ones, such as traffic rules.

Table 3. What is your view on the current situation and back in time on:

Participant no:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Law abidingness	↗	↗	→	→	↘	↗	↗	→	↘	→

¹⁴. The answers to the question: *Did it sometime between you were 10-20 years happened that you shoplifted something from a store, and how old were you the last time you shoplifted?*

It is also a fact that the older we get, the more of what it is happening we have been through before. Which means that we can rely more on old experience instead of simple rules. This results in fewer and fewer mistakes in our daily lives. But probably less training and experience in meeting new situations and thus presumably a decreased ability and desire to do so. I seem to have noticed that there is a huge gap between older people, in this regard. Some seem to completely lack the ability to adequately respond to new situations, while others gladly take on any problem or any situation in a very rational way. I think I also have noticed that people from the former group have lived a life with far fewer challenges than the latter. If so, generally speaking, this is not an effect of age, instead it is an effect of the lack of training in how to respond to new situations.

It is often said, as you know, that the more we know about something, the less we become overconfident. Whoever, for example, only knows one way to cure a sick person might suggest this way for all ailments. While a doctor has a whole variety of cures to choose from, and it forces him or her to do in-depth studies to determine the cause of the problem. Presumably the same applies to all aspects of life. Over time, we have for example, tried more and more food and we have more and more difficulty to select a single favourite dish. With greater knowledge of the human way to act in different situations, we have reasonably more difficulty to condemn the actions of others. I think, for example, that children more clearly repel awkward children than adults do with ditto adults. There are also researchers (McCrae & Costa PT, RT, 2006) who suggest that openness increases from infancy to the late 20s and then decrease again. This seemingly increased openness may be an effect of us over the years becomes more "polite" to each other. But it is obvious that children are more likely to embrace new people, such as new friends, compared to adults. In addition, they are forced to constantly confront new situations (there's always a first time for everything). So really, maybe children are less conservative than adults, at least from a certain perspective. One guess is that kids/teens in any case faster embrace technology they think is cool and people who fit into the group, but they might to a greater extent than older repel things that are not considered cool or right. It is in line with the majority of the responses in this study, since they felt that they had an unchanged view on different/new things but a greater openness to odd people (6 of 10, table 4).

Table 4. What is your view of the current situation and back in time at:

Participant no:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Odd persons/ viewpoints	→	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗	→	↗	↘	↗
Openness for different/new thing	→	↘	→	→	→	↗	→	→	↘	→





















I myself had in my 20s large ambitions and wove great dreams for the future. At thirty, I realized that it would not be so. Somewhat later I accepted that. Most of those interviewed (6 out of 10, table 5) shared my view in that they felt they had less desire to make a career. Which in and of itself, both for me and the majority of the interviewees, could be an afterthought because none of us have made any traditional career. Given that it means that over time get hierarchically higher and higher management positions in an organization.

For some people, however, is "making a career" equated with making more money. It's called having an instrumental attitude to work. In one study (Ohlsson B, 2009) with deep interviews of 16 workers with such a view of what the career entails, it was concluded that the willingness declined after the participants started a family. Half of those who feel a decreased desire to pursue a career had a family and it is possible that the decreased desire to some extent is explained by this fact.

For many people, there is no possibility to become the boss, or make more money since the profession or the organization on the workplace is such that they can not become managers, regardless of how appropriate they are and how willing they are to accept the assignment. The wage increases are also generally limited to a few percent per year. Then it is reasonably healthiest to let the desire to make a career die.

There are fortunately other ways to achieve success or make a "career". One of them is to become very good at something, for example, work or a hobby. In order to capture such "career aspirations" to some extent I asked the participants about possible differences in their general ambition level over time. But even these responses suggest that the desire to make a career has declined since half of the respondents (table 5) answered that the level of ambition has been reduced and only one person said that it has risen. This result is not representative of people in general, because research (Helson R, Soto CJ and Cate RA 2006) have shown that in general, we are the most ambitious in the middle of the middle age, because we then have the most roles at work, in society and in the private life. And they summarized research on how middle-aged people describe themselves and are described by others, with that they then peaks in skills, productivity and social responsibility.

Table 5. They interviewed opinion at the moment, and back in time about career and their level of ambition.

Participant no:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
To do a career										
Your level of ambition										

An important characteristic for success, regardless of what you consider to be success, is to withstand doing even the boring elements included in most tasks. My experience is that I, with age, have become better at that. From the time I was little and voluntarily just devoted myself to what I thought was fun, that is, played. Through adolescence, when I as well as others forced myself to clean the room or doing homework, et cetera. Until now, when I often grab the boring tasks with decent energy to get rid of them. There is also research (McCrae & Costa PT, RT, 2006) showing that virtues such as duty and obligation of self-discipline increases with age.

But the majority (8 of 10, table 6) of the participants argued that, in contrary to the reasoning above, that they had the same or less energy to do boring things today compared to earlier in life.

A possible explanation is that the contrast ratio, in addition to that the sample might be skewed, could be that the participants in this study with boring stuff related to anything but dull moment in professional practice or anything else that they want to develop in. Finally, it may an additional evidence for that the desire to make a career actually decreases with age.

Table 6. The interviewee's energy to do boring things.

Participant no:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your energy to do boring things	↗	↘	↗	→	↘	↘	↘	→	→	↘

Another way to achieve success or make "career" is to break new ground in a field. That's what many of history's most successful people are remembered for, regardless of whether they, in addition to the pioneering efforts, made a traditional career or not. In an attempt to make some estimate of the participants' ability to innovate have decreased with time, they were asked about creativity. Happily, there were only two of them who believed that their creativity had decreased with time. The remaining eight felt that it was either constant (6 of 10, table 7) or had increased, but that does not mean that is the case. It could be that they actually become less innovative, but do not want to accept it or do not understand the concept of creativity, but rather misinterpret it as "creative work".

Table 7. The participant's creativity.

Participant no:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your creativity	→	↘	↘	→	↗	↗	→	→	→	→

In order to determine whether the ability to innovate in general decreases or increases with age, I studied the ages at which a number of prominent people made their most famous contributions. This by systematically going through the first 399 pages of a volume of the Swedish National Encyclopedia¹⁵ while noting the ages when the described scientists and inventors made their greatest achievements (chart 10). This review showed that they performed their first major achievement on average in their 40s (mean 41 years, median 39 years). Many of them have since made more great achievements at higher ages. The results thus indicate that creativity in any case does not decrease until the middle age.

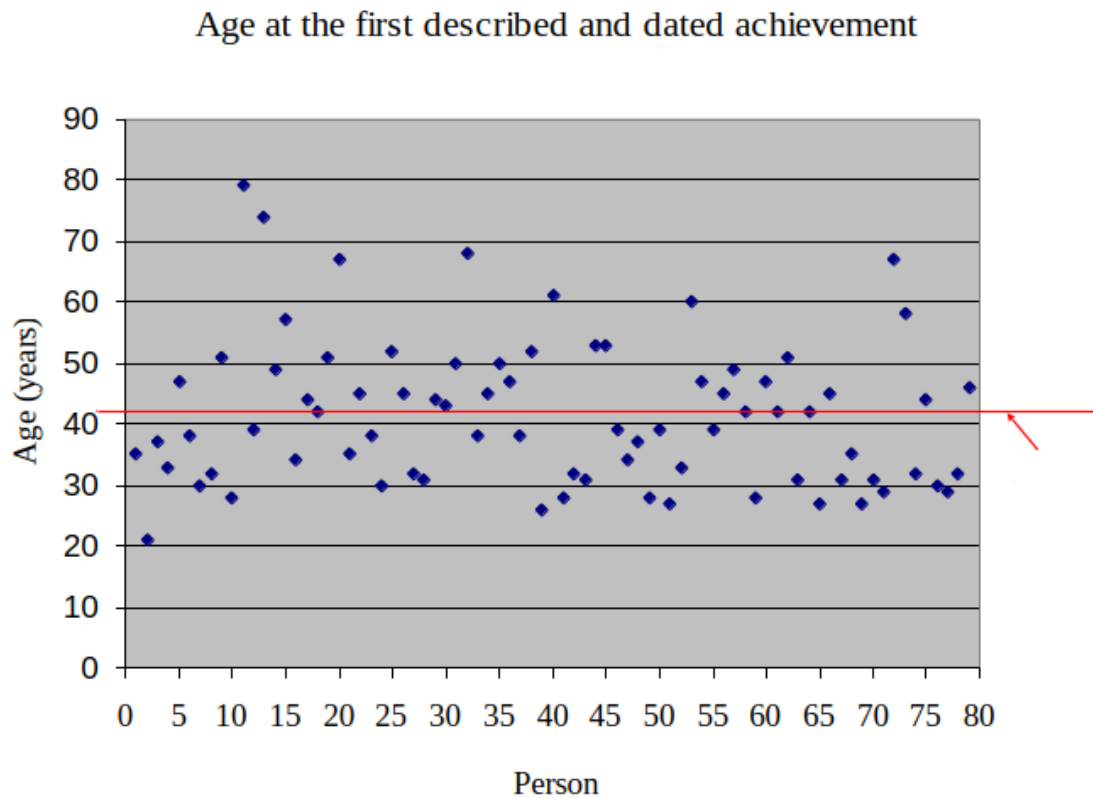


Chart 10. The year that the 80 first presented scientists and inventors described in the Swedish National Encyclopaedia made their first dated great achievement.

¹⁵. The volume referred to is the first. Therein are, on the first 399 pages, 80 scientists and/or inventor that are presented in such a way that achievement and highlights are also dated. The reason that no other prominent persons were included in the study is that for example, regarding artists and politicians it is often in the nature of things that they do not get attention until after a period of successful work. A shortcoming of this study is, however, that in many cases the achievements described in the Encyclopaedia are summaries of earlier research. The effect of that is in this context that the most successful period shifted upward in age. Age is shifted further upwards since the magnificent ideas that form the basis for the exploits always comes before the actual achievements, as the achievement usually is dated to the year in which they in finished form were presented publicly. An opposite effect in this study is that some of the involved scientists lived long ago, in a time when people generally lived much shorter time than today. Which may result in that persons who would have been able to do more achievements if they had lived long enough, died before it was time.

Sadly, I have noticed that with age, there are fewer and fewer things that amuse me. The nature of what amuses me has also changed. When I was little, I as well as other children, was a lot more amused by things that involve any degree of physical activity, such as rocking or playing ball. Later these activities stopped to amuse me. However, some new pleasures were introduced, such as drinking alcohol, travel and to have sex. But most of these newer pleasures came into my life in adolescence. And beyond that period, few new pleasures have been added. I have also made the most of what still amuses me so thoroughly, that I feel like I need bigger and bigger doses or better "quality" to really be amused. Several of the participants were on the same track, i.e. they added to the answers to the questions in table 8 that with age they have higher demands on the TV shows, movies or books that they consume. There were also more people who felt that they were less amused by what amuses (4 of 10) compared with those who believed the opposite (2 of 10). Though in contrary to my theory it was a large number who believed that there were more things that amuse them today than in the past (3 of 10) compared to the opposite (0 of 10). Note that those who thought they are less amused by the causeless or action claimed that other pleasure have come along, that compensates for the loss. The answers concerning certain specific entertainments, support, however, to some extent the theory, since it was more that are less amused than more by: films (5 of 10 are less amused, compared to 1 of 10 who are more entertained) and TV (4 vs. 3). The exceptions were the pleasure of literature (3 less than 4, which are more entertained) and food (2 versus 7). The former, I have no explanation for, but the latter could have several reasons such as: that we as adults do not take the food for granted as when we did when we were children; we ourselves to a greater extent can choose what we want to eat; or that food -passion is a contemporary phenomenon.

Table 8. They interviewer's opinion at the present and in the past about:

Participant no:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	More intrests	A little more intrests						Caruselles et cetera	Slightly more intrests	Action
Is it other things that amuse you compared to when you were 18?	↗	↗	→	→	→	→	→	↘	↗	↘
Are you as emused of the amusements?	→	↘	↘	→	↗	↘	↗	↘	→	→
Has your joy of film changed?	→	↘	↘	Different	→	Bad movies	↗	↘	↘	→
Has your joy of literature changed?	↗	↗	↘	→	→	Bad literature	↘	→	↗	↗
Has your joy of TV changed?	↘	↗	↘	→	Facts	Bad TV	→	→	↘	↗
	Nowadays only news				↗	↘				
Has your joy of food changed?	↗	↗	↘	→	↗	↗	↗	↗	↘	↗
	More gourmé					Partly due to more products	Maybe a time phenomena	Wider		

Children are afraid of a lot of things that they later in life are not the least bit afraid of, like ghosts under the bed. However, they are perhaps not at all afraid of things we want them to be afraid of. For example, we want them to be afraid of getting hit by a car or getting beat up by someone in their age. The latter is unfortunately quite common among teenagers (SCB, 1997, diagram 18.7 and overview table: victims of violent and property crimes), but with increasing age, the risk is reduced, but the fear of the same increases. I think it also applies to risky stuff such as climbing on things or driving a motorcycle. It is also confirmed by the fact that half of the participants (table 9) explicitly said that they were more afraid of doing things that can cause physical harm. Adventurousness is also considered (McCrae & Costa PT, RT, 2006) to decrease from the 20s and up.

Personally, I have noticed that I find it far more unpleasant to see violent movies now, compared to when I was in my teens. I believe this is due to an improved ability to imagine the possible negative consequences of being beaten or hurt in any other way. Which in turn has the effect that I am more afraid of this. But there were more persons who thought it was less uncomfortable to see violence on film (5 persons), compared to more (4 persons). Nor regarding real violence a clear trend in line with my idea was noticed.

Table 9. The participants' fears.

Participant no.:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Is there something that you have got more scared of, from adolescens until today?	Risky things ↗	→	→	Illness ↗	→	Risky things ↗	Risky things ↗	Risky things ↗	Using a lift ↗	Risky things ↗
Is there something that you have got less scared from adolescens until today?	Make a fool of myself ↘	→	→	Don't know	Illness ↘	Social things ↘	Social things ↘	Misstakes at work ↘	Talk to an audience ↘	→
Do you think it is more or less uncomfortable to see violence on film nowadays compared to when you were a teenager?	↘	↘	→	↗	↘	↗	↘	↗	↘	↗
How about real violence then in for instance the news?	↗	→	→	↗	↘	→	↘	→	↘	↗

One positive thing about getting older is that I am less worried about what others think about what I do or say. It can depend on several things, like:











1. With age, my personality has become firmer and firmer. I.e. I adapt it less and less for the people I meet. Which in turn means that I, to a lesser extent, need to ask myself if I have adapted appropriately.
2. With age, I have more experience of what works and it makes me not have to worry as much about what I say or intend to say.
3. Most people that I meet are people who have known me for long, and already have a solid picture of me, regardless of I would do or say something in their eyes, stupid or evil in the next moment.
4. As a child, I was much more exposed to criticism/guidance from, for example, my parents, compared to today, when I rarely get criticized whether it is justified or not. This "constant" present danger reasonably made me more insecure.
5. Finally, it is now quite rarely that I meet new people whose early impressions of me can be very important for me in the future in relation to how it was in younger days.

Most of the participants (8 of 10) also shared my opinion, that it means less today what others thinks¹⁶ about them. And half (5 of 10, table 9) indicated that they with age has become less afraid of making a fools of themselves from a social perspective.

The amount anxiousness probably changes through life. When we were young, we should have had the most reason to worry about things because the future was more uncertain. And we should have been more worried about dying, because we had more life to lose. Researchers (Costa J, et al., 1987) has also noted that the emotional fluctuations decreases with age (from 45 years and above), which could mean that the anxiousness decreases.

But it could on the other hand be that the turmoil in general, paradoxically increases with age, just as the fear for violent crimes. The results of the present study suggest that, since there were more who felt that the overall turmoil has increased (5 of 10, table 10) compared to those who found that it has decreased (3 of 10). Moreover mental disorders, such as depression, get more common with age (Hagnell O et al., 1994)¹⁷.

Table 10. The participants' anxiousness.

Participant no.:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Do you think your total anxiousness has decreased or increased with age?										

¹⁶. The questions were: *How much does it matter what others think about what you say, what you wear, or where you work, today, and how has it changed?*

¹⁷. Researchers concluded after letting experienced psychiatrists interview 1 369 people in the city Lundby in 1957 and 1972 about their mental health. These results does not contradict that emotional volatility generally decreases because there are few who suffer from severe mental disorders such as depression.

The older I get, the greater my past will be. Additionally, it feels like I can slide a lot more in the past. If I, for example, sees someone who I knew twenty years ago, it feels like the days when we knew each other partly comes back for a while. Which of course was impossible when I was about twenty years old. Likewise, the choices that I made for, say, ten years ago, have a much greater impact on my life today compared with the effect choices I made when I was three years had on me when I was thirteen. Moreover, the situation on the whole, is more the same every year. I.e. housing, clothing, work, friends, interests, and thinking changes less and less. Each additional year also gives a smaller and smaller contribution to the total time I had lived. Finally, the number of new impressions per time units gets fewer and fewer. All this ought reasonably to have the effect that it feels like time goes faster and faster. An experience shared by almost all the interviewees (9 of 10) that thought¹⁸ that time passes more quickly with age. And six of them described the difference in terms such as "large" or "huge".

Another effect could be that it is getting harder and harder to find a specific event, among many other similar events in the memory mazes. That could in turn give the impression of memory degeneration. It is also shown (Hallsten L, 1996) that the elderly are worse than younger people in quickly and accurately retrieve information from their memory, and also that the short-term memory is impaired (Zacks R and L Hasher, 2006).

However, more participants felt that they remember as much as before (5 of 10, the question was: *Do you feel that you remember as much of what is happening now as before?*), Compared with those who claimed to remember less (4 persons). It may be due to that a possible degeneration of the memory is first noticed at older ages, or perhaps that the participants have not noticed that they remember less. One response from a participant supports the latter "theory", since she claimed to remember as much *"even though I find that I actually forget things I think I remember."*

¹⁸. The answers to these questions: *Do you think it feels like time goes faster or slower with age? And how big is the difference in that case?*

I also think that my nightly dreams have changed through life. The biggest difference I noticed is that the dreams I feel are nightmares gradually become rarer. An observation that three of the interviewees mentioned when answering the question: *Has your nightly dreams changed through life and if so, how?* Four others said they had not noticed any difference but one thought that he dreams more nightmares, one did not know and the last one claimed to dream less but with much the same content as before. Thus there is no real support for that the number of nightmares decreases with age.

The social patterns probably also changes through life. A small child is susceptible to interact with other people and they can quickly replace a mate, while as we get older it gets much more difficult to do so. As some friends and acquaintances for various reasons disappear from one's proximity with time, the effect should be that the number of persons included in ones frequent socializing outside of work decreases with time. Furthermore, the need and type of socializing changes with each change in ones private situation. A single may need more interaction during leisure time, for example to counteract the feeling of loneliness. While someone who has a partner and children may yearn for moments of solitude. Then over time, since more and more people will have children and/or a permanent partner, it is reasonable to believe that socializing outside of family and work, on average decreases.

The above speculation is supported by results from SCB's interview studies (SCB, 1997, summary table: social relations) which shows that the proportion of time spent with friends and/or colleagues every week decreases sharply with age.

It is also supported by almost half of the respondents (4 of 10), since they on the question: *How has your social life varied with time?* Replied something like: *"the same friends as before but I spend less time with them."*

Most children play with selected persons among them they casually meet, like neighbours and classmates. This means that more or less all of their mates know each other and socialize in various configurations over time. While later in life we live and operate in different geographic locations and/or workplaces, and thus meet new people who are more or less completely isolated from the rest of our acquaintances. In addition, perhaps, children's entertainment such as games, have more to gain on that there are more participants than adult ones. This should, collectively, have the effect that our social life becomes more geographically and socially wide spread with time.

This reasoning is supported by the fact that many of those interviewed (5 of 10), on the question above said things like: *"In the past I spent time in a gang where everyone knew everyone. Today I spend time in different configurations that do not know each other."*

The relationship to and perception of ones parents ought to change through life. For many children, the parents are everything. But as both children and parents get older, the situation changes so that the child's need for the parent decreases. And successively the parents should more and more treat the child as an adult. They boast them less and post more adult requirements. In early adulthood, when children have the right to leave their parents, they may distance themselves extra to build a life of their own. Then they maybe later in life, approaches the parents again. Finally, the parents may become weak and helpless, which might leads to the reverse dependencies.

Five of the interviewees expressed opinions¹⁹ showing that they are mentally closer to their parents nowadays, compared to when they were teens. But only two of them had during the same period increased their socializing with the parents. Which is in line with results from Statistics Sweden (SCB, 1997, diagram 17.2) showing that between 16-64 the number of contacts with the parents is fewer and fewer with age.

¹⁹. *Have your opinion about and your interaction with your parents varied over time from when you left home?*

The sexual activity is probably most depending on practical conditions such as if you have or do not have a sexual partner. But if the conditions in such respects would be constant, perhaps the sexual activity would go down because of, say: the amount of sex hormones drops; one's confidence is improved; the sexual act feels more and more monotonous; we feel less attractive or find our partner less attractive. This reasoning is supported by researchers (Öberg P, 2005)²⁰ which demonstrated that after 30, the importance of sexuality in life is radically reduced and we believe that we were the most physically attractive around 32-years of age.

Fortunately the majority of the participants disagreed on that, since four of them felt that their sexual activity is constant, and two said that the activity was the same in cases where they had a sexual partner.

I think the ability to fall in love decreases with age from teens and up, partly for social reasons and partly for physical ones. The latter is due to that the amount of sex hormones decrease and the former primarily to the issue, as such, becomes less hot as more and more of one's friends are involved in stable relationships. But it was only four of the respondents who claimed that the ability to fall in love had declined with age. This suggests that my theory is wrong.

Our age preferences in terms of the opposite sex probably also changes with time. In the way that we with increasing age are attracted more by, for example, forty year olds when we are in that age ourselves compared to when we were twenty years younger. The fact that most people actually choose partners with equal age suggests that this is the case, although there are exceptions.

²⁰. Among the participants in the study who were up to 30 years old, about 70% of the women and 80% of the men thought that sexuality is an important part of their lives. Among the older participants the importance of sex decreased quite linearly down to that about 15% of the women and 35% of the men at the age of 85 years thought that sex is an important part of their lives. But it need not be an effect of age because it may also be an effect of that the participants have permanent partners that they might have got tired of having sex with. Alternatively, it is over time fewer and fewer people who have someone to have sex with. Results from another study of older people in the Gothenburg area (H70 project, Nordeman M, 1992) indicate the later. Since only a quarter of the single 70-year-old men and a few percent of ditto women who participated in the study still had intercourse. While more than half of the married men and over a third of ditto women had sex.

Young children often wake up early even on days off, while older children sleep longer. After adolescence the ability to be able to sleep late in the day, appears to decrease. And many seniors that I knew, gets up very early in the mornings even though they could lie in bed half the day if they so wished. However, there were only two of the respondents who thought²¹ they go up earlier and go to bed earlier now than before. Two further claimed that they nowadays have difficulty to sleep after long party nights. But as much as four persons felt that they had the same rhythm now as before.

I have also heard from a larger proportion of all children I have asked about the seasons, that they prefer winter, compared with adults which I have asked the same thing. It is quite easy to understand because children do not see the dark sides of winter in the forms of:

1. That the car is cold and hard to get started. In addition, it may have to be shovelled from snow and ice.
2. It is dark, both on the way to and from work.
3. Heating costs for the dwelling will be higher.
4. The risk of slipping and getting hurt increases.
5. We are more tired, but still stay up late for various reasons.

Children, however, utilize more of the good sides of the winter as they are playing with the snow in different ways. But the interviewees did not share my opinion²², when the majority of them (6 of 10) valued the seasons in the same order as before. The interviewees on average rated the summer the highest, followed by spring and autumn tied for second place. Of the four who have changed their preferences, three have downgraded summers and as many have upgraded spring and/or fall. But it was only two of them who nowadays ranked winters worse. It is possible that the responses have been different if I asked about what they liked as a kid, but then maybe the oblivion would have been larger. In summary, the answers gave no support for my theory.

The participants experienced, on average, that what has changed the most over the years is their economy (table 11). Which is reasonable to believe and also something that I can confirm since I know the participants. Fortunately, for all of them it has changed to the better. Regarding other issues the ratings were, however, more wide spread. The men felt to a greater degree that their face has changed (median ranking for men: 8, women: 5), while women to a higher degree thought that their values have changed (men: 3, women: 8). I have no explanation for that, other than that it may be an effect of selection. The men rated changes in their empathy higher than women, which could be a support for the previously described theory that men with lower testosterone levels are "softer". That I can also personally confirm for several of them, and some also mentioned it themselves. The last major difference between the sexes is that women rated the changes in their skin except the face higher than the men. It could be explained by that their skin actually has degenerated more. If it is the case, it could be because they have been given birth. But it could also be due to that they care more for their skin and thus are more liable to notice that it has become drier and/or more wrinkled.

In addition, the majority of the more tangible phenomena's (face, muscles and joints, economy) on average were ranked higher than the less tangible factors (level of ambition, what pleases me, my values, my empathy, my taste in clothing, my taste in music). Suggesting that the participants believe that ageing is more a physical than a spiritual issue.

²¹. *Have your daily life rhythm changed from the time you turned 18 and if so, how?*

²². *How do you rate the four seasons and how do you think your ranking looked when you were a teenager?*

Finally the changes in clotting taste were ranked higher than the changes in musical taste. And that gets some support in that there were more who felt that their taste in music was unchanged (5 of 10, table 1) compared to those who thought the same about their taste for clothes (4 of 10).

Table 11. What has changed the most (10) and so on, down to the least (1).

	All participants				Women	Men
	Average	Median	Min	Max	Median	Median
Face	7	7	4	10	5	8
Muscles and joints	7	6	3	10	6	7
The skin except in the face	5	5	1	10	6	4
The level of ambition	5	5	1	10	5	5
What cheers you up	5	4	2	8	4	5
Your values	5	5	1	10	8	3
Your economy	8	9	4	10	9	9
Your empathy	5	6	1	9	3	7
Your clothing taste	5	6	1	10	6	6
Your music taste	4	3	1	7	3	3

I saw a TV show about age, where the discussion participants (mostly older people) were asked what their best age so far has been. All answered "now", although at least their physical form and prospects regarding this reasonably must have been better. In addition, I think many talks with far more joy of childhood and adolescence than the present. At least one study (Oberg P, 2005) also shows that most people who passed the 25-year-olds perceive themselves to be younger, would prefer to be younger and believe that others see them as younger. It is also supported by the fact that it sold a lot of products, such as skin creams and laser treatments against hair loss, whose purpose is to hide our aging.

The participating, however, did not think²³ that childhood was their best time. But it was a couple of persons that their best age were when they were about 18 years old. The majority (6 of 10) chose instead, surprisingly enough, a period after the age of 30. Two of them motivated with that the children's were young then, while four justified it in terms of that they knew more and/or feel safer. It is in line with that the majority of the respondents care less about what others think about them. And that, in turn, is probably a very important factor for the overall well-being, probably, for most people, more important than the physical degeneration that had hitherto been noted. And probably even more important than other possible negative effects of aging, such as decreased pleasure from that which pleases. Furthermore, it is possible that the everyday mistakes gets fewer with increasing experience, resulting in that those who suffer from making mistakes suffer at fewer occasions. Finally, the amount of future to worry about decreases with increasing age. The result also has some support in Öberg's study, which indicate that from about 50-years and older we, relatively constant, think we were at our best in the 45's. And the three participants in this study, who considered their best time to be now, were all between 45-48 years old.

²³. Answer to the question: *Your idea of the age that has so far been the best and why?*

References

- Aronsson A och Kilbom Å (red.) (1996) Arbete efter 45. Historiska, psykologiska och fysiologiska perspektiv på äldre i arbetslivet, Arbetslivsinstitutet, Solna.
- Costa jr P T, mfl. (1987). Longitudinal analysis of psychological well-being in a national sample: Stability of mean levels. *Journal of Gerontology*, 42, 50–55.
- Hagnell O, Öjesjö L, Otterbeck L & Rorsman B (1994): Prevalence of mental disorders, personality traits and mental complaints in the Lundby Study. *Scand J Soc Med Suppl* 50: 1–75.
- Hallsten L (1996) Arbete och psykologiska åldersförändringar Aronsson A och Kilbom Å (red.) Arbete efter 45 Historiska, psykologiska och fysiologiska perspektiv på äldre i arbetslivet, Arbetslivsinstitutet, Solna.
- Helson R och Stewart A (1994). Personality change in adulthood. I: T. F. Heatherton & J. L. Weinberger (red.), Can personality change? 201–225. *Am. Psychol. Ass*, Washington DC.
- Helson R, Soto C J och Cate R A (2006) From young adulthood through the middle ages. Mrozek mfl (red.) *Handbook of personality development*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, New Jersey.
- Kohlberg L (1981) *Essays on moral development*. Harper & Row, San Francisco.
- Kruger R f, Johnson W och Kling K (2006) *Behaviour Genetics and Personality Development*. Mrozek mfl (red.) *Handbook of personality development*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, New Jersey.
- Labouvie-Vief G m fl, (1995). Representations of self across the life span. *Psychology and Aging*, 10, 404–415.
- Leander G (2004) *Könets kemi Om könsskillnader, hormoner och allt som förenar oss*, Valentin förlag, Västerljung.
- Lindehag A-G (1989) *Hälsoproblem hos äldre*, Esselte Studium.
- McCrae R T och Costa P T (2006) Kruger R f, Johnson W, Kling K (2006) Cross-cultural perspectives on Adult personality trait development. Mrozek mfl (red.) *Handbook of personality development*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, New Jersey.
- Nordeman M (1992) *Kärlek på äldre dar*, LT förlag, Stockholm.
- Ohlsson B (2009), *Arbetet i människors liv*, Göteborg 13-14 maj 2009. Tema 4 – Arbetet i olika faser i människors liv, Göteborgs universitet.
- SCB (1997) *Välfärd och ojämlikhet i 20-årsperspektiv 1975-1995*, SCB, Stockholm.
- SCB (2002) *Ohälsa och sjukvård 1980-2000, Levnadsförhållanden, rapport 95*, SCB, Stockholm.
- Spiriduso W, Francis K och MacRae P (red.) (2005) *Physical Dimensions of Aging*, Human Kinetics, Champaign, USA.
- Zacks R och Hasher L (2006) *Aging and long-Term Memory: Deficits Are not Inevitable*. Bialystok E och Craik I (red.) *Lifespan Cognition Mechanisms of Change*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Öberg P (2005) *Den åldrande kroppen – samhälleliga bilder och de äldres egna erfarenheter*. Jeppsson Grassman E och Hydén L-C (red.) *Kropp, livslopp och åldrande. Några samhällsvetenskapliga perspektiv*, Studentlitteratur, Lund.