report 76

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SOLIDARITY BETWEEN PARENTS AND THEIR ADULT CHILDREN IN EUROPE

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KNAW Press | Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences

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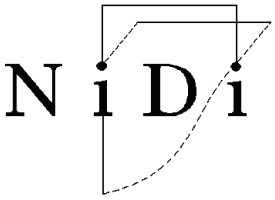

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Executive summary

European families have changed considerably in recent decades, in both structural and cultural terms, due to major demographic, socioeconomic and cultural developments (e.g. ageing of Europe's populations, postponement of union formation and parenthood, decline in the birth rate, increases in union dissolution, women's emancipation, development of welfare systems, individualisation and secularisation). Families today consist of more generations, but each successive generation consists of fewer people. The composition of the families has become more complex in the sense that an increasing number of people are faced with divorce, re-partnering and step ties. The expansion of welfare state provisions has decreased the practical and economic need for family support, while women's higher labour force participation has decreased the practical ability to take care of dependents. Parent-child relations are now characterised by a more individualistic and affective orientation and a greater emphasis on individual needs and personal happiness than they were in the past.

There is a lively debate going on among scientists and policy makers about the implications of these changes for family solidarity and solidarity between parents and children in particular. Some believe in 'lost' solidarity while others believe that solidarity has not so much weakened, but has changed in character. In order to contribute to this debate, we examined the current strength, nature and direction of the solidarity between parents and their adult children, its variation among European countries and its determinants. Data were used from the second public release of the first wave of the *Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe* (SHARE) which took place in 2004 among 27,500 non-institutionalized individuals aged 50 years and over in eleven European countries.

Unlike previous studies, multiple aspects of solidarity were examined, both separately and simultaneously, in a large number of European countries. Four domains of intergenerational solidarity were examined: 'structural solidarity', measured by geographical proximity, 'associational solidarity', measured by the frequency of contact, 'normative solidarity', measured by the perceived family care obligations, and 'functional solidarity', measured by mutual exchange of financial support and help in kind. No less than eleven countries were included: Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France, Austria,

Switzerland, Italy, Spain, and Greece, allowing us to consider in detail the impact of different welfare state regimes (private versus public oriented) and different family cultures (family oriented versus individualist) on parent-child solidarity. Attention was also paid to the impact of factors at the individual level. As lives of the recipients and donors are connected, the possible impact of both parent and child characteristics were examined.

Our findings do not indicate at all that the structural and cultural changes in European families have resulted in a decline in actual intergenerational solidarity: although coresidence is not very common in our day, especially not in northern and central Europe, parent-child ties appear to be quite strong. The majority of Europeans aged 50 and over live in close proximity and have frequent contact with at least one of the children. Moreover, strong sense of family duty still exists and a substantial amount of support is being exchanged between parents and their non-coresident children.

Parent-child ties, however, are not strong in all European families. Large differences by gender, religiosity, marital history and socioeconomic status emerge. Mothers have more intensive contact and exchange more help in kind with their children, although fathers are more inclined to assist their children financially. Being religious and having a large family are positively associated with geographical proximity and contact frequency. The more often parents practise their religion or the more children parents have, the more likely they are to live near one of their children and to have frequent contact with at least one of them. In addition, parents who practise their religion more regularly have stronger feelings of family care obligations. Parental divorce and a better position of parents and children on the socioeconomic scale, on the other hand, lead to a weakening of parent-child ties in many respects. For instance, divorced single parents and the more highly educated and wealthier parents are living at a greater distance from their children and having less frequent contact and weaker feelings of family care obligations than their counterparts. Moreover, divorced mothers and fathers and parents with higher incomes are less likely to receive help in kind from their children than widows/widowers and those with lower incomes, respectively. However, higher educated and financially well-off parents are more likely to give their children money. Finally, contrary to common belief, employed children show solidarity with their parents as much as those without a paid job.

The nature of parent-child solidarity also differs between European countries. Geographical proximity, contact frequency and feelings of family care obligations exhibit the general north-south divide. Older parents in southern Europe are more likely to coreside with a child or to live close to their children, to have frequent contact with at least one of their non-coresident children, and to have a strong sense of family duty than their counterparts in the north. This does not mean, however, that older adults and their children in these countries actually help each other more than in the rest of Europe. The percentages of older adults who receive help in kind from their children and who support their children, including financial assistance and childminding, are even higher in most of the other European countries, albeit less frequent than in southern Europe. This suggests that formal care facilities relieve the burden faced by informal carers rather than fully replacing informal care.

Acknowledgement

This report has been prepared within the project 'European Landscape of Variations in Intergenerational Solidarity' (ref. no. VS/2006/0684), funded by a grant (SI2.450329) from the Unit on Social and Demography Analysis of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission.

Data were used from release 2 of SHARE 2004. The SHARE data collection had been primarily funded by the European Commission through the 5th framework programme (project QLK6-CT-2001-00360 in the thematic programme Quality of Life). Additional funding came from the US National Institute on Ageing (U01 AG09740-13S2, P01 AG005842, P01 AG08291, P30 AG12815, Y1-AG-4533-0108291, P30 AG12815, Y1-AG-4553-01 and OGHA 04-064). Data collection in Austria (through the Austrian Science Foundation, FWF), Belgium (through the Belgian Science Policy Office) and Switzerland (through BBW/OFES/UFES) was nationally funded. Further support by the European Commission through the 6th framework program (projects SHARE-I3, RII-CT-2006-062193, and COMPARE, CIT5-CT-2005-028857) is gratefully acknowledged. For methodological details see Börsch-Supan and Jürges (2005).

1. Introduction

Background

In the second part of the last century, major demographic and socioeconomic transformations have been taking place in Europe. The most notable demographic change is the ageing of Europe's populations, as a result of the transition from relatively high to low fertility and increased life expectancy. Other important demographic changes are: postponement of leaving the parental home (especially in southern Europe), delayed partnership/marriage and parenthood, increases in childlessness (projected in parts of Europe) and increases in union dissolution (e.g. Aassve *et al*., 2002; Allan *et al*., 2001; Billari *et al*., 2001; Hakim, 2000; Kiernan, 2004; Kuijsten, 1999; Liefbroer, 2005). On the socioeconomic front, the most notable changes are: the expansion of education, the development, expansion and adaptation of welfare systems (including social protection, pension and early retirement schemes, provision of state care support), and the massive influx of women into the paid labour force. Along these transformations, Europe faced broader societal changes, like the processes of individualisation and secularisation, increasing geographic mobility, women's emancipation, and changing care preferences (Lesthaeghe & Surkyn, 1988; Van de Kaa, 1987).

These transformations have resulted in irreversible changes in household size and composition (Fokkema & Liefbroer, 2007; Hall, 1986; Keilman, 1987, 2005; Kuijsten, 1995). There is a trend throughout much of Europe towards smaller households. One-person younger households are on the rise: besides increases in union dissolution, an increasing number of young adults establish premarital residences independent of their parents as the final step in their transition to adulthood. The proportion of one-person households among the elderly has increased as well, due to a combination of rising prosperity, increased life expectancy, growing popularity to live independently as long as possible, and increased state-provided elderly care and support. The decrease in the number of children per family and smaller age gaps between each child have led to a narrowing of the time frame during which one is responsible for dependent children, although the expansion of education and postponement of leaving the parental home postpone the 'empty nest stage'. Furthermore, because of the changing roles of women and men in society, a trend is noticeable regarding the organisation of tasks within the household. While for a long time it was common that the husband was the only or main breadwinner

and the wife was responsible for child care and housework, the division of tasks is currently less clear.

Also the family is in transition. European families are becoming more diverse in generational structure and forms. The increase in longevity and the drop in birth rates have reshaped families from pyramids to 'beanpoles', referring to a family structure in which the shape is long and thin, with relatively many vertical (across-generation) ties and relatively few horizontal (within-generation) ties (Bengtson, 2001; Bengtson *et al*., 1990; Farkas & Hogan, 1995; Harper, 2005; Hogan *et al*., 1993; Seltzer *et al*., 2005). Altered patterns of mortality and fertility have also created 'top-heaviness' in families and 'longer years of shared lives' between generations (Hagestad & Herlofson, 2007). In addition, the growing popularity of unmarried cohabitation and increases in divorce and remarriage have resulted in more complex 'blended' families (Allan *et al*., 2001; Furstenberg *et al*., 1983; Riley, 1983; Riley & Riley, 1993).

The demographic and socioeconomic transformations noted above undoubtedly have also changed the family's relations and functions. There is a lively debate, however, whether it has resulted in 'lost' or 'changed' intergenerational solidarity. Those who believe in the 'decline of the family' are particularly concerned about the role that divorce and remarriage play in fracturing and weakening intergenerational ties (e.g. Popenoe, 1988, 1993; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). They further emphasize the negative consequences of the welfare state expansion for the foundation of intergenerational solidarity. Basic functions of the family (e.g. guarantee of old age security, including the provision of housing, and serving the needs of dependent family members) have been transferred to other social institutions, lowering the obligation of families to care (the so-called 'moral hazard' of the welfare state; Wolfe, 1989) and therefore, the likelihood that families will withdraw, be substituted or even 'crowded out' in their supportive role (Künemund & Rein, 1999; Lingsom, 1997). In addition, the increased female participation in the workforce and higher geographic mobility have lowered the practical ability, and maybe also the willingness of women, to support the older generation (Weymann, 1998).

Those who believe in 'changed' rather than 'lost' intergenerational solidarity, on the other hand, suggest a move from 'isolated nuclear families' to 'modified extended families'. They point to potential positive consequences of the increase in the duration of shared lives across generations. The extension of life has enhanced the availability of a 'latent network' of aging parents who can be

activated to nurture and support family members in need (Silverstein *et al*., 1998). In this respect, one often refers to the increasing role of grandparents in supporting or socializing grandchildren, especially when their children are parents of preschool-age children, relieving them from their career and parenting roles ('double burden'), or after a divorce (Johnson & Barer, 1987; Minkler & Rowe, 1993). The 'beanpole' family structure also implies an increase in the relative importance of parent-child ties. The fewer children parents have, the more they can emotionally, socially, practically and financially invest in each individual child. Furthermore, they suggest that generous welfare state services complement rather than substitute or crowd out family care: because of public services, family members are better able to combine support with other commitments and preferences, resulting in a higher total coverage of need (Attias-Donfut *et al*., 2005a; Chappell & Blandford, 1991; Daatland & Herlofson, 2001). Some even argue that mature welfare systems contribute to a process of 'crowding in', i.e., welfare state expansion increases rather than undermines family support and solidarity (Attias-Donfut & Wolff, 2000; Kohli, 1999; Kohli *et al*., 2000; Künemund & Rein, 1999).

Previous studies more often support the latter side of the transformation in family debate (e.g. Attias-Donfut & Wolff, 2000; Chappell & Blandford, 1991; Daatland, 1992; Daatland & Herlofson, 2003a, 2003b; Hank, 2007; Tomassini *et al*., 2004b). Intergenerational solidarity seems to be alive and well in Europe; in general, no indication is found for weakening family relations and the majority of European families still show strong commitments to maintaining their function in providing support. Their manifestations, however, seem to have changed: while economic and instrumental tasks have increasingly been transferred from the family to other institutions, the socio-emotional roles and functions have modified and gained in importance (Dykstra, 2004). The decreasing need for exchanging of economic and instrumental support has resulted in a shift from less obligatory to more chosen family ties. Formal services, however, did not erode informal support; little empirical evidence has been found for the 'crowding out' hypothesis (Daatland & Lowenstein, 2005; Künemund & Rein, 1999; Motel-Klingebiel *et al*., 2005).

Despite these earlier research findings, however, our knowledge of the current stage of intergenerational solidarity in Europe is limited. In part, this is because of the scope and working method of the previous studies. Firstly, many studies have been focussed on either 'families with young children' or 'older parents in need', giving only insight into the kin support obtained during a 'crisis' (e.g.

Daatland & Lowenstein, 2005). It is likely that the incidence of intergenerational support at any particular time is much lower than the life-time prevalence of support. Moreover, variations between the individuals will be limited in case of examining quite homogeneous groups. Secondly, due to the main research subjects, there has been a significant bias towards examining specific domains of intergenerational solidarity – functional exchange (support systems) – with the risk of underestimating the strength and reciprocity of intergenerational relations and of exaggerating the extent to which the family is in decline. In case of studying more domains of intergenerational solidarity, the domains have largely been examined in isolation of one another (e.g. Attias-Donfut *et al*., 2005b; Lawton *et al*., 1994a; Lin & Rogerson, 1995; Roberts *et al*., 1991; Tomassini *et al*., 2004a, 2004b), neglecting 'variegated' types and generalising about a 'modal' type of intergenerational solidarity. Moreover, the extent to which different types of support are involved in reciprocal exchanges (e.g. providing financial support in return for practical help, giving an elderly parent a place to live in exchange for the receipt of childcare) remains in the shadow. Those few studies that did examine domains of intergenerational solidarity simultaneously, use either U.S. data (e.g. Hogan *et al*., 1993; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997) or were carried out on national level (e.g. Van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006). Thirdly, in order to explain variations in intergenerational solidarity between individuals, attention has often focused on the sociodemographic characteristics of one of the giving-receiving sides (e.g. Attias-Donfut *et al*., 2005b). This neglects the fact that the lives of the recipients and donors are connected (linked lives; Elder, 1994; Hagestad, 2003). Finally, most research on intergenerational solidarity has been carried out in single countries, regions within countries, or only a few European countries (e.g. Dewit *et al*., 1988; Grundy *et al*., 1999; Grundy & Shelton, 2001; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Lawton *et al*., 1994b) and therefore, has not been able to consider in detail the impact of different degrees of welfare state involvement.

Aim of the study

Given this background, the overarching aim of the study is to provide a more differentiated picture of the strength, nature and direction of intergenerational solidarity, its variation among European countries and its determinants. The focus will be on the relations between parents and their adult children, the critical nexus in intergenerational webs. Four domains of solidarity will be examined, following Bengtson and Roberts (1991) model: structural, associational, normative and functional. The opportunity *structure* of the parent-child relationship, the necessary condition for exchange behaviour, will be

measured by geographical proximity (i.e., whether or not parents living nearby or sharing their home with their children). The *associational* domain will be measured by the frequency of contact (e.g., the proportion of parents having more than weekly contact with at least one adult child). The *normative* domain will be measured by the perceived family care obligations (i.e., the responsibility of the family to care for frail and needy elderly and the duty of parents and grandparents to care for their children and grandchildren). In order to capture more widely the presence of *functional* assistance between generations, our measures of functional solidarity will be inclusive with respect to help in kind (practical household help, personal care, help with paperwork, and looking after grandchildren) and exchanging financial support. Moreover, the functional solidarity will be measured as a bidirectional flow of assistance since adult children tend to rely on parents for help as much as (if not more than) they provide help to them. The dataset we used does not cover information on the other two domains of solidarity from the model of Bengtson and Roberts: 'affectional solidarity', referring to the positive sentiments family members have for one another and the degree of reciprocity of these sentiments, and 'consensual solidarity', encompassing the degree of agreement on values, attitudes and beliefs among family members (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991; Hammarström, 2005).

Data

We will use data from the first wave of the *Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe* (SHARE; see http://www.share-project.org/ for more information) – Release 2. This survey took place in 2004 among 27,500 non-institutionalized individuals aged 50 years and over in eleven European countries: Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, and Greece. Computer-assisted personal interviews were conducted. Self-completion questionnaires supplemented these interviews.

SHARE is unique in several respects. First, the dataset contains information on various aspects of solidarity. Second, SHARE covers a large number of European countries, allowing us to examine between-country differences and similarities. Moreover, it includes countries ranging from those in Scandinavia to those in the Mediterranean region, representing the northern, central and southern part of Europe, different welfare state regimes (private versus public oriented; Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1997, 1999) and different family cultures (family oriented versus individualist). Third, SHARE covers a broad set of

sociodemographic characteristics (see next section) of both parents and their adult children, allowing us to examine the extent to which intergenerational solidarity differs from person to person. Finally, the degree of comparability of the SHARE outcomes across countries is high due to the use of the same questionnaire.

Although probability samples were drawn in all participating countries, the survey did not have a uniform sampling design, varying from a simple random selection of households (in the Danish case, for example, from the country's central population register) to rather complicated multistage designs (as, for example, in Greece, where the telephone directory was used as a sampling frame). The weighted average household response rate ranges from 39 percent in Switzerland to 81 percent in France (a thorough description of methodological issues is contained in Börsch-Supan & Jürges, 2005; Börsch-Supan *et al*., 2005). Also the sample sizes vary among the countries. Belgium has the largest sample size (3,600 persons aged 50 years and over), Switzerland the smallest (960 persons aged 50 years and over). Because of its low response rate and limited sample size, some caution is recommended with regard to the Swiss findings.

Some of the dependent variables were derived from answers given by the so-called 'family respondent', who was randomly selected from all eligible respondents in a household. From these, we selected those respondents aged 50 and over who had at least one living child. The original pooled multinational sample of those family respondents was 17,000 cases. When parents have a child living in, they may have less need for contact and support from non-coresident children, if any. Hence, the analyses on contact, support and typology of late-life families were further restricted to those who have only non-coresident children, reducing the original pooled multinational sample to 11,900 cases. It is worthy to note the final sample size for each descriptive and regression analysis contains less respondents due to missing values on any of the variables.

Analytical strategy

The merit of this study is the examination of different aspects in no less than four domains of solidarity between parents and their adult children. Moreover, contrary to previous studies we will not only rank people within and across countries along separate solidarity measures; we will also contrast different solidarity measures simultaneously, resulting in different types of late-life

families. In other words, we will examine the diversity in the principal types of relationships between parents and their adult children based on their position in different areas of intergenerational solidarity. In this way, we gain a better understanding of the current complexity and contradictions of parent-child relationships.

Examination of the four domains of solidarity and the different types of late-life families consists of a descriptive and an explanatory part. In the descriptive part, an initial impression of the differences between the countries is given. Moreover, attention is paid to some particular interesting differences at the individual level. In the explanatory part, our focus is on the extent to which differences in solidarity domains and typologies persist in the context of family structure and each generation's constraints, opportunities for support, needs and resources and whether, after controlling for these sociodemographic characteristics, between-country differences still remain. In order to do so, different regression analyses are carried out. Regression analysis estimates the independent effect of each variable on the dependent variable, when the impact of other variables is controlled for. Moreover, different types of models are estimated. In the first model, only sociodemographic characteristics of the parents and their children are included as independent variables. This model allows us to asses the influence of these personal characteristics on people's solidarity across Europe. Next, if relevant, other solidarity measures are added, allowing us to gain insight into the interdependence among different areas of solidarity. In the final model, country dummies are included. This model will reveal whether there is a level of consensus among population groups across Europe or whether practices of intergenerational solidarity are so deeply rooted in the culture of a country (reflecting, among other things, the degree of welfare state involvement, the level of public services and social policy traditions) that their distinctiveness persists after controlling for possible variations in population composition. Note that the descriptive results presented in this report are based on weighted data, while unweighted data served as the input for the regression analyses. In addition, to facilitate a comparison of the degree to which the various personal characteristics relate to solidarity, the regression coefficients have been standardised.

As noted above, the sociodemographic variables included in the regression analyses cover both parent characteristics and child characteristics. The former include, among other things, the respondent's age, gender, partner status, health status, socioeconomic status and religiosity. The available information on the

adult children covers age, gender, partner status, educational attainment and employment status (for details about the measurement of these and other independent variables, see the Appendix). Particular reference, however, is on the effects of changing family structures and gender roles in general, and the consequences of divorce and children's employment in particular. Are mothers more likely than fathers to have close ties with their adult children, and particularly with their daughters? Are parents especially supportive as their adult children are in their family-building phases? Do children with a paid job assist their parents less because of other demands on their time? Do divorced parents support their adult children less than those in intact marriages? And do parents provide more help after child's divorce?

Policy relevance

Insight into contemporary intergenerational solidarity in families is not only important for the well-being of individuals but is also highly relevant for policy makers. Patterns of intergenerational solidarity are shaped by different, inter-related domains of social policies and services, like employment, child and elder care, health care, housing, and redistribution of wealth. Therefore, the study enhances the monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of these social policies.

The European Employment Strategy (EES) aims to encourage labour force participation, in particular among older workers and women. Measures proposed in the EES for finding a balance between work and family life for women, include incentives to enter, re-enter and stay in the labour market, the level of participation (fulltime or part-time employment) and the provision of care facilities for children and other dependents. The EES is not only essential to increase labour force participation, but also to support families and foster social cohesion: higher labour force participation puts additional demands on individuals and families. Most NRPs (National Reform Programme; until 2005 National Action Plan (NAP)) also give particular attention to reconciling work and family life, including care for dependents. In several Member States, the government has undertaken actions or plans to create conditions for carers in order to be able to combine caring with employment, such as improvements to the main carer benefits (United Kingdom) and care leave (the Netherlands).

Different European countries have adopted a wide variety of policies affecting the residence patterns of people, including subsidised housing costs, direct provision of housing units to the poor, favourable tax treatment of mortgages, housing allowances, controls on rental costs, and the provision of dwellings

especially for the elderly. It is very likely that these housing policies, along with old-age income assistance, have contributed to the decline in the proportion of older people living in intergenerational households on the one hand and the increase of elderly living alone on the other hand.

With regard to the redistribution of wealth, it is of great interest to policy makers to what extent, and under what conditions, the family serves a redistributive function in the total flow of intergenerational financial transfers (Kohli, 2004). If, for example, part of the public transfers from the employed to older persons is channelled back to younger individuals through family transfers, such transfers strengthen intergenerational ties, thus enhancing social embeddedness. Consequently, they have a stronger welfare effect than if they were paid directly from the state. But also immaterial intergenerational transfers in the form of time and attention can have strong material implications (Hagestad & Herlofson, 2007). Grandparents who provide childcare enable young parents to hold paid jobs; taking care of frail parents keeps women out of the workplace and leaves them with reduced or no pension. From the viewpoint of social inequality, it is essential to have insight into the extent to which the well-being of family members depends on the unpaid labour of women and of grandparents.

Besides enhancing the monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of social policies, the proposed study will also raise a number of important social policy issues and dilemmas. Will encouraging older people to work for longer mean they have less time to support children and grandchildren? Should lone mothers of young children be encouraged to go out to work or supported to stay at home? As populations are ageing, and given that equal opportunities for women are an undisputed and widespread social policy goal, what is the optimum and sustainable balance of the two? Should formal services be further expanded to relieve carers with the risk that they reach a point where they begin to substitute for family responsibility? Should services be targeted towards very old people living alone or towards family carers of older people?

Organisation of the report

This report is organised into seven chapters. After this introductory chapter, Chapters 2 to 5 present subsequently the results of the differences in structural, associational, normative and functional solidarity between parents and their adult children within and across the European countries. In Chapter 6, a presentation is given of the incidence of different types of late-life families in Europe and the extent to which these types differ from country to country and

from person to person. The final chapter summarizes our findings in such a way that the main policy and societal implications are assessed. In the final chapter we also discuss the limitations of the study and provide suggestions for future research.

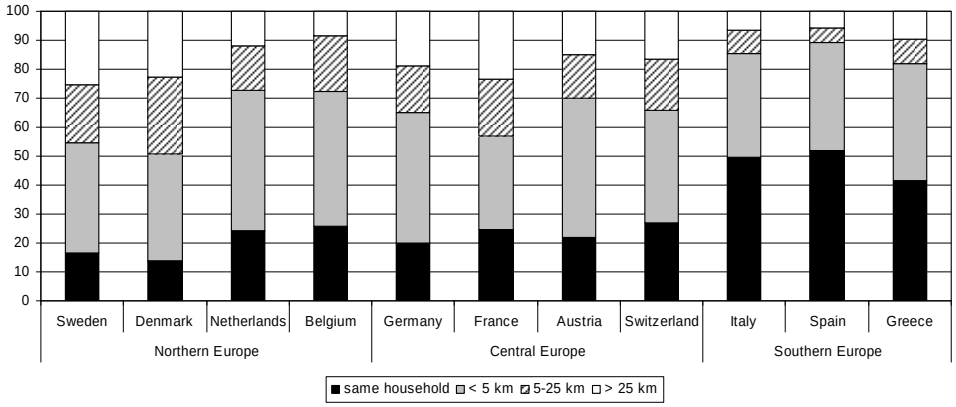
2. Geographical proximity

Introduction

The relevance of examining geographical proximity between parents and their adult children is twofold: it is an important indicator of intergenerational relationships and one of the main preconditions for other dimensions of solidarity. Living nearby facilitates contact and support exchange. This applies in particular to face-to-face contact and practical help (De Jong Gierveld & Fokkema, 1998; Hank, 2007; Joseph & Hallman, 1998; Lawton *et al*., 1994a; Litwak & Kulis, 1987; Tomassini *et al*., 2003).

In this chapter we will address the variation in geographical proximity between parents and their adult children across European countries and individuals. SHARE respondents were asked about the geographical distance of all children (up to 17). The answer categories were: (1) in the same household, (2) in the same building, (3) less than 1 kilometre away, (4) between 1 and 5 kilometres away, (5) between 5 and 25 kilometres away, (6) between 25 and 100 kilometres away, (7) between 100 and 500 kilometres away, (8) more than 500 kilometres away, and (9) more than 500 kilometres away in another country. As coresidence can be seen as a form of solidarity, we will first present between-country differences for all older parents, including those with coresident children (*figure 2.1*). Next, we will focus on those who only have non-coresident children. Besides differences between countries, descriptive statistics will be given of the association between several parent characteristics and two indicators of geographical proximity: the average number of children living within five kilometres and the percentage of parents with at least one child within five kilometres (*table 2.2* and *table 2.1*). In addition, we will present the results of the logistic regression analysis on geographical proximity, where having at least one adult child within five kilometres (1 = yes; 0 = no) will be the dependent variable (*table 2.3*). These regression results allow us to evaluate the extent to which the between-country differences and the associations with the personal characteristics remain significant after controlling for the influence of the other determinants in the model.

Figure 2.1. Geographical proximity between parents aged 50 and older and their nearest living child (weighted %)



Source: SHARE – release 2.

Multi-generation household: a southern European phenomenon

The most striking finding presented in figure 2.1 is that southern European older adults were far more likely to form part of a multi-generation household than their peers in central and northern Europe. No fewer than 40 percent (Greece) and 50 percent (Spain and Italy) of the Mediterranean older adults lived with one of their children. In central and northern Europe, these percentages were much lower, ranging between 27 percent (Switzerland) and 14 percent (Denmark).

The high percentages of people aged 50-plus in southern Europe who live in a multi-generation household is hardly surprising. Earlier studies have shown that young people continue living in the parental home longer in southern Europe, where children still tend to leave the parental home upon marriage (Billari *et al*., 2001, 2002; Corijn & Klijzing, 2001; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1993). As a result, we see that in these Mediterranean welfare states, the tendency to delay marriage in recent decades has meant that leaving the parental home has also been delayed. At the same time, it is still quite common for married children in southern European countries to live with their parents and for parents to live in with one of their children when they need care in old age (De Jong Gierveld, 2001; De Jong Gierveld *et al*., 2002; Tomassini *et al*., 2004a, 2004b). This may be explained by the fact that there is a shortage of affordable housing for starters, job insecurity among young adults, limited financial government support for young families and few public intramural care facilities for older adults.

Table 2.1. Geographical proximity between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children by selected parent characteristics (weighted cases)

	average number of children within five kilometres			% at least one child within five kilometres		
	sons	daughters	total	sons	daughters	total
Gender						
male	0.4	0.4	0.9	33.5	33.5	55.0
female	0.5	0.5	1.0	36.6	39.4	61.1
Age group						
50-59	0.3	0.3	0.7	28.5	26.3	45.8
60-69	0.4	0.5	0.9	35.0	38.8	59.8
70+	0.5	0.5	1.1	38.8	40.9	63.9
Partner status						
married	0.4	0.4	0.9	34.9	35.7	57.5
single after widowhood	0.5	0.6	1.1	39.9	44.2	66.9
single after divorce	0.3	0.3	0.6	24.8	22.8	40.0
Health status						
no health problems	0.4	0.4	0.9	33.9	35.1	56.6
health problems	0.5	0.5	1.1	38.3	40.9	62.9
Educational attainment						
low	0.6	0.6	1.1	41.8	42.8	66.6
middle	0.4	0.4	0.8	30.6	34.2	54.4
high	0.3	0.3	0.5	23.5	23.3	41.3
Income						
0 – 25%	0.6	0.6	1.2	43.3	42.3	66.1
26 – 50%	0.4	0.5	0.9	35.0	38.4	59.9
51 – 75%	0.4	0.4	0.8	30.5	35.0	55.3
>75%	0.4	0.4	0.7	29.9	30.0	50.3
Religiosity						
prays daily	0.6	0.6	1.1	41.9	44.9	67.1
prays weekly	0.6	0.6	1.1	41.1	42.2	67.0
prays less than weekly	0.4	0.5	0.9	33.0	36.6	57.4
never prays	0.4	0.4	0.8	33.1	35.2	57.3
Number of children						
1 child	0.2	0.2	0.4	20.4	24.0	44.4
2 children	0.4	0.4	0.8	34.5	36.6	58.4
3 children	0.6	0.6	1.2	45.6	44.8	68.6
≥ 4 children	0.9	0.8	1.7	51.4	51.4	71.6

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Table 2.2. Geographical proximity between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children (weighted cases)

	average number of children within five kilometres			% at least one child within five kilometres		
	sons	daughters	total	sons	daughters	total
Northern Europe						
Sweden	0.3	0.3	0.6	28.0	26.9	45.7
Denmark	0.3	0.3	0.6	26.7	24.0	42.8
Netherlands	0.5	0.6	1.1	39.7	42.5	63.8
Belgium	0.5	0.5	1.0	36.8	39.6	62.9
Central Europe						
Germany	0.4	0.4	0.8	34.1	33.4	56.6
France	0.3	0.3	0.6	23.3	25.8	42.8
Austria	0.5	0.5	0.9	36.5	39.3	61.6
Switzerland	0.4	0.4	0.7	30.7	30.1	53.0
Southern Europe						
Italy	0.5	0.6	1.2	41.2	48.2	70.7
Spain	0.8	0.7	1.5	52.7	53.3	77.8
Greece	0.6	0.6	1.1	43.5	45.4	69.0

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Table 2.3. Results of logistic regression on geographical proximity between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children (likelihood of at least one child within five kilometres)

	Model: 1 (baseline)	2 (model 1 + country)
Characteristics parents		
Gender (1 = female)	1.02	1.05
Age (*ref* = 50-59)		
60-69	1.24**	1.18*
70+	1.31**	1.29**
Single (1 = yes)	0.93	0.99
Single after divorce (1 = yes)	0.71**	0.78*
Health problems (1 = yes)	1.10	1.10
Educational attainment (*ref* = low)		
middle	0.77**	0.81**
high	0.59**	0.63**
Income (*ref* = 0 – 25%)		
26 – 50%	0.80**	0.89
51 – 75%	0.72**	0.84
>75%	0.65**	0.77**
Religiosity (*ref* = prays daily)		
prays weekly	1.05	1.04
prays less than weekly	0.87	0.99
never prays	0.76**	0.92
Number of children (*ref* = 1 child)		
2 children	1.82**	1.89**
3 children	2.52**	2.74**
≥ 4 children	3.05**	3.32**
Characteristics adult children		
≥ 1 daughters (1 = yes)	1.08	1.08
≥ 1 children with partner (1 = yes)	1.10	1.12
≥ 1 children divorced (1 = yes)	0.92	0.99
≥ 1 children with paid job (1 = yes)	1.19	1.21
≥ 1 children with high education (1 = yes)	0.61**	0.62**
Countries (*ref* = Italy)		
Sweden		0.36**
Denmark		0.38**
Netherlands		0.77
Belgium		0.59**
Germany		0.66**
France		0.36**
Austria		0.80
Switzerland		0.48**
Spain		1.08
Greece		0.79

** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.01$.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

At least one non-coresident child close by

A clear majority of Europeans aged 50-plus who only have non-coresident children were found to have at least one child that lives close by. In most cases the distance to the closest non-coresident child did not exceed 25 kilometres; this appears to be the case in particular in the three southern European countries and in the Netherlands and Belgium (≥ 84%). In these countries the average number of children living within a five-kilometre radius from their parents was one or more (table 2.1). The highest percentages of parents whose closest non-coresident child lives at least 25 kilometres away were found in Sweden, Denmark and France (30, 26 and 31% respectively). In these countries the average number of children within a five-kilometre radius was 0.6.

No major gender differences

Geographical proximity did not differ between fathers and mothers. On average, both sexes had approximately the same number of children living within a distance of five kilometres (table 2.1). Nor were any significant differences found between fathers and mothers in the likelihood that at least one of their children lived close by (table 2.3). The children's sex did not have any effect on geographical proximity either. The average number of sons and the percentage of older adults with at least one son within a radius of five kilometres scarcely differed from the figures found among daughters (table 2.1). This is confirmed by the logistic regression in table 2.3, which shows that European elderly with one or more daughters have neither a greater nor a lesser likelihood of having at least one child living within five kilometres than older adults who only had sons.

Parental divorce leads to greater distance

Parental divorce was found to literally drive parents and their children apart. Compared with married couples, parents who were divorced and single had a significantly lower likelihood of having one of their children living close by. No more than four out of ten single, divorced parents had at least one child living within a radius of five kilometres, compared with almost six out of ten among married parents. The percentage of parents with at least one child close by was even higher among widowed parents (67%). However, this difference between married parents and single widowed parents was not significant after controlling for other personal characteristics.

Divorce among adult children does not appear to have a substantial effect on geographical distance. The likelihood of having at least one child living within a distance of five kilometres was the same for parents who had one or more divorced children and for parents whose children had never been divorced.

Shorter distances to children in the event of health problems

The health status of older adults was found to be related to the distance from their children. On average, parents with health problems had more children living within five kilometres from their home than parents without health problems. This may be explained by the fact that the need to live close to one another, and possibly also the willingness to do so, is greater if parents need assistance. Having said that, the difference between older adults with and without health problems was not significant after controlling for other personal characteristics.

Status creates distance

There appears to be a clear relationship between the socioeconomic status of European older adults and the geographical distance to their children. The higher the level of education and income, the smaller the average number of children and the percentage of older adults with at least one child living within a distance of five kilometres. Among both the lesser educated parents and parents with the lowest incomes, two thirds had at least one child living close by; this was no more than 40 percent and 50 percent respectively among the better educated and parents with the highest incomes. This relationship was still observed after controlling for other personal characteristics.

Table 2.3 also shows that the children's level of education is significant. European older adults who had one or more children with a high level of education were found to have a significantly lower likelihood of having at least one child living close by. This could be explained by a variety factors. As specialist jobs are more widely dispersed than non-specialist jobs and jobs for the higher educated are only available in selected areas, more highly educated children are more likely to take on a job far from their parents' home (Börsch-Supan, 1990; Büchel & van Ham, 2003; Greenwell & Bengtson, 1997; Mulder, 1993; Mulder & Kalmijn, 2006; Simpson, 1992; Van Ham, 2001). There is also a greater need and willingness among the better educated to move far away from home in order to pursue a particular study. Another explanation could be that more highly educated children attach less importance to having very frequent

contact with their parents. Somewhat longer distances tend not to be a major obstacle to occasional contact between parents and their children.

Other significant personal characteristics

The parents' age and family size are other personal characteristics that were considered. Geographical proximity between European older adults and their children was found to increase with age. As expected, there was also a positive relationship with family size. The likelihood of at least one child living within a radius of five kilometres was twice as great in families with two children and three times as great in families with three or more children. Lastly, on average, strongly religious older adults had more children who live close by than less religious older adults. This effect was no longer significant, however, after controlling for differences between countries.

Between-country differences

The differences between countries mentioned remain even after controlling for the above personal characteristics. The likelihood of at least one child living close to the parents was greatest among older adults in Spain and Italy, followed closely by Greece and Austria. Older adults in Sweden, Denmark and France, on the other hand, were least likely to have a child living close by.

3. Contacts

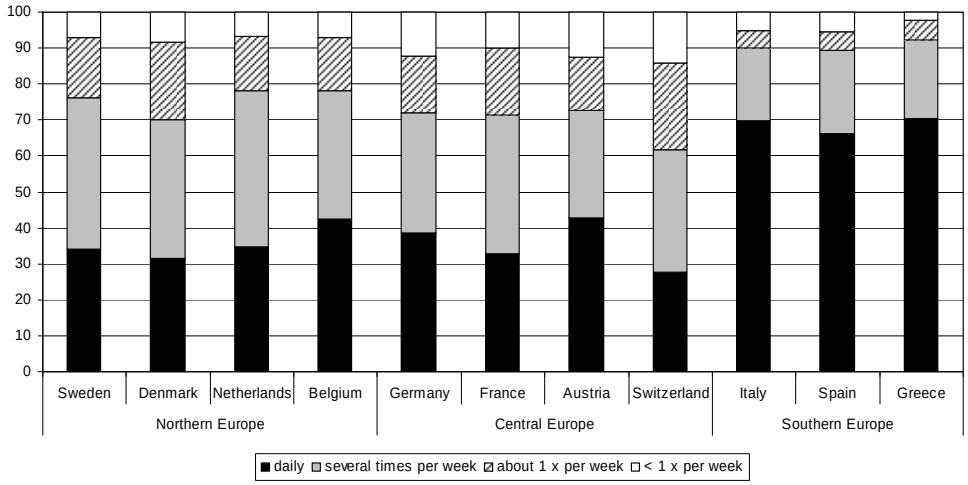
Introduction

Contact frequency between parents and their adult children is the central issue of this chapter. Like geographical proximity, regular contact is needed to exchange support. The more contact there is, the easier it is to give and receive support and to identify whether support is needed. Contact frequency is sometimes seen as a form of support in itself as it meets a social need. It is also an indirect indicator of a range of types of support that are difficult to measure (Kalmijn & Dykstra, 2006). It is worth noting that frequent contact may also be associated with negative interactions. There is a growing awareness, however, that high levels of both contact and conflict (ambivalence) do not automatically imply that the parent-child relationship is of low quality (Van Gaalen, 2007).

In the SHARE questionnaire, respondents were asked about the frequency of contact with at most four children: 'During the past 12 months, how often did you (or your husband/wife/partner) have contact with [child name], either personally, by phone or mail?'. The answer categories were: (1) daily, (2) several times a week, (3) about once a week, (4) about every two weeks, (5) about once a month, (6) less than once a month, and (7) never. Assuming that parents have daily contact with coresident children, the contact question is asked for non-coresident children.

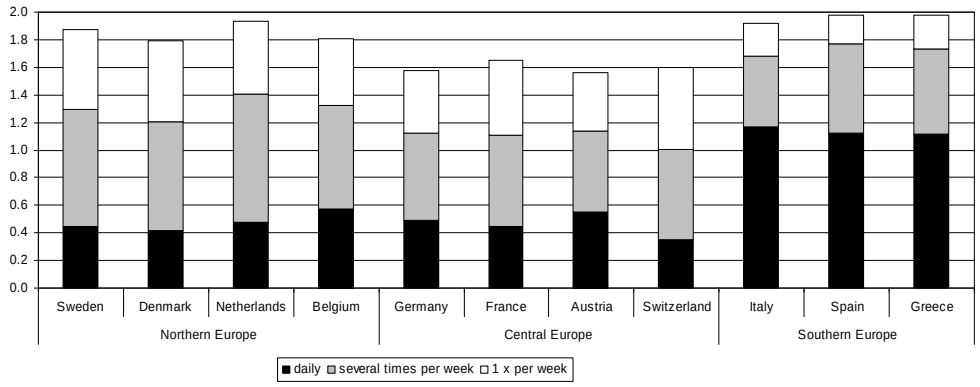
First, country differences will be presented with regard to contact frequency on its own and in relation to conflict (*figure 3.1*, *figure 3.2* and *figure 3.3*) and the average number of children with whom parents were in contact once a week, several times a week or daily (figure 3.2). Our focus will then shift to the bivariate relationship between parent-child contact on the one hand and several personal characteristics on the other hand, with special attention to the parents' and children's gender, family size, and parental divorce (*table 3.1*, *table 3.2*, *table 3.3* and *table 3.4*). For these descriptive analyses, different indicators of contact frequency at the level of the parent were considered, including frequency of contact with the most contacted child, the percentage of parents having daily contact or more than weekly contact, the percentage of parents having no contact with the children, the total number of contacts across all children, the variation in contact frequency between children and the mean annual number of

Figure 3.1. Contacts between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children (weighted %)



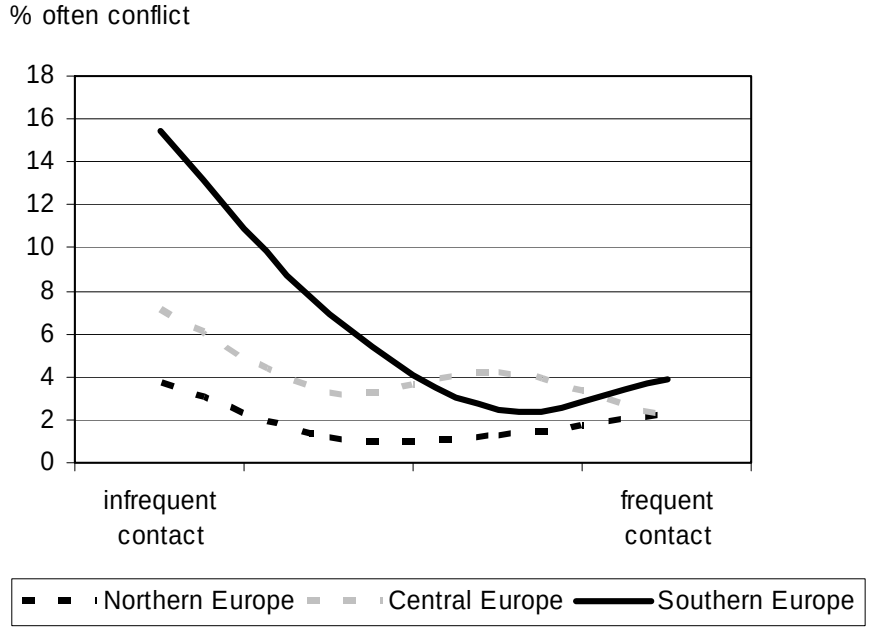
Source: SHARE – release 2.

Figure 3.2. Contacts between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children: mean number of children by contact frequency (weighted cases)



Source: SHARE – release 2.

Figure 3.3. Contact frequency between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children by conflict (weighted cases)



Source: SHARE – release 2.

contacts per child. With regard to the latter indicator, we recoded the original answer categories to numerical scores as follows: daily contact (200), several times a week (100), about once a week (50), about every two weeks (20), about once a month (10), less than once a month (5) and never (0).[1] Finally, to examine the net effect of the personal characteristics and the countries, OLS and logistic regression analyses were carried out with the annual number of contacts and the likelihood of having more than weekly contact with at least one child, respectively, as the dependent variable (*table 3.5* and *table 3.6*). Both descriptive and explanatory analyses were restricted to these older adults with only non-coresident children.

[1] We experimented extensively with alternative recoding schemes but they hardly affected the outcomes of our analysis. Moreover, because of the skewness of the variable, we experimented with a transformation to more normal scores. This logarithmic transformation, however, did not substantially change the outcomes either. Hence, we decided to use the untransformed numerical scores as these scores have an intuitively attractive interpretation: the means refer to the average number of contacts per year in a specific social category.

Table 3.1. Contacts between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children (weighted cases)

	mean annual number of contacts				% with at least one child more than weekly contact			
	father-son	father-daughter	mother-son	mother-daughter	father-son	father-daughter	mother-son	mother-daughter
Northern Europe								
Sweden	81	93	86	105	58.9	66.2	59.1	73.1
Denmark	79	92	80	98	52.3	61.1	55.1	68.6
Netherlands	79	98	84	106	56.0	69.8	62.6	74.7
Belgium	86	107	95	112	57.4	72.3	67.2	77.2
Central Europe								
Germany	81	90	91	107	54.1	57.7	58.2	73.6
France	77	91	83	96	52.8	60.4	55.4	68.5
Austria	79	99	98	109	49.9	65.7	61.9	69.9
Switzerland	67	72	82	95	40.5	44.9	55.0	65.7
Southern Europe								
Italy	131	141	134	150	77.8	85.0	79.6	88.5
Spain	126	129	124	152	78.9	80.5	80.3	88.0
Greece	141	149	135	151	86.2	91.6	83.0	89.5

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Table 3.2. Contacts between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children by family size (number of children of the parents) (weighted cases)

	mean annual number of contacts per child	total number of contacts across all children	intra-family variation in contact*	% with at least one child daily contact	% with at least one child more than weekly contact
1 child (no brothers/sisters)	118	118		38.8	69.5
2 children (one brother/sister)	108	217	0.6	45.1	79.0
3 children (two brothers/sisters)	101	302	1.0	52.0	82.1
≥ 4 children (three or more brothers/sisters)	91	363	1.3	51.2	82.2

* intra-family variation in contact = (number of contacts with the child with whom parent has the most frequent contact -/- number of contacts with the child with whom parent has the least frequent contact)/mean number of contacts across all children.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Table 3.3. Contacts between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children by partner status (weighted cases)

	mean annual number of contacts per child			% with at least one child more than weekly contact			% no contact with the children		
	sons	daughters	total	sons	daughters	total	sons	daughters	total
Fathers									
married	96	110	105	63.1	70.4	76.4	1.3	1.4	0.6
single after widowhood	94	109	103	58.8	71.9	76.8	1.1	2.6	1.0
single after divorce	63	55	61	41.3	34.5	45.9	12.0	14.4	11.7
Mothers									
married	104	119	114	68.8	77.6	83.1	0.5	1.0	0.2
single after widowhood	105	123	116	67.3	79.4	83.4	0.5	1.5	0.4
single after divorce	72	98	86	41.4	64.1	60.9	5.1	0.6	2.2

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Table 3.4. Contacts between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children by selected parent characteristics (weighted cases)

	mean annual number of contacts per child	average number of children with more than weekly contact	% with at least one child more than weekly contact
Age group			
50-59	98	1.1	71.4
60-69	109	1.4	79.0
70+	110	1.4	79.6
Health status			
no health problems	107	1.3	77.0
health problems	108	1.4	78.8
Educational attainment			
low	116	1.5	82.4
middle	100	1.2	74.5
high	91	1.1	68.6
Income			
0 – 25%	113	1.4	79.6
26 – 50%	106	1.3	76.6
51 – 75%	105	1.3	78.1
>75%	103	1.3	75.4
Religiosity			
prays daily	122	1.5	85.6
prays weekly	115	1.5	80.7
prays less than weekly	110	1.4	79.0
never prays	97	1.1	70.3
Geographical distance			
no child within 5 km	80	0.9	60.4
≥ 1 children within 5 km	126	1.6	89.7

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Table 3.5. Results of multivariate regression on annual number of contacts between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children

Model:	1 (baseline)	2 (model 1 + geographical distance)	3 (model 2 + country)
Characteristics parents			
Gender (1 = female)	0.03*	0.03*	0.03**
Age (*ref* = 50-59)			
60-69	0.00	-0.01	-0.03
70+	-0.04*	-0.06**	-0.08**
Single (1 = yes)	-0.05**	-0.05**	-0.02
Single after divorce (1 = yes)	-0.11**	-0.10**	-0.09**
Single after divorce*male (1 = yes)	-0.05**	-0.04*	-0.05**
Health problems (1 = yes)	0.00	-0.01	0.00
Educational attainment (*ref* = low)			
middle	-0.08**	-0.06**	0.01
high	-0.09**	-0.06**	-0.01
Income (*ref* = 0 – 25%)			
26 – 50%	-0.08**	-0.06**	-0.02
51 – 75%	-0.08**	-0.06**	-0.00
>75%	-0.11**	-0.08**	-0.01
Religiosity (*ref* = prays daily)			
prays weekly	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01
prays less than weekly	-0.06**	-0.05**	-0.02
never prays	-0.10**	-0.08**	-0.04*
Number of children (*ref* = 1 child)			
2 children	-0.09**	-0.13**	-0.14**
3 children	-0.16**	-0.21**	-0.20**
≥ 4 children	-0.20**	-0.26**	-0.25**
Characteristics adult children			
≥ 1 daughters (1 = yes)	0.10**	0.09**	0.09**
≥ 1 children with partner (1 = yes)	-0.02	-0.03*	-0.03*
≥ 1 children divorced (1 = yes)	-0.05**	-0.05**	-0.02
≥ 1 children with paid job (1 = yes)	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01
≥ 1 children with high education (1 = yes)	-0.05**	-0.01	-0.02
Geographical distance			
≥ 1 children within 5 km (1 = yes)		0.32**	0.31**
Countries (*ref* = Italy)			
Sweden			-0.19**
Denmark			-0.16**
Netherlands			-0.21**
Belgium			-0.20**
Germany			-0.23**

Table 3.5. (end)

France			-0.16**
Austria			-0.19**
Switzerland			-0.17**
Spain			-0.02
Greece			0.01
Adjusted R^2	9.8	19.2	25.3

** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.01$.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Frequent and good contact

The southern European countries stand out in terms of the number of contacts between parents and children: parents aged 50 and over in Italy, Greece and Spain were in more frequent contact with their children than older adults in the other European countries. More than two thirds of the 50-plus in southern European countries who did not have coresident children were found to have daily contact with at least one child (figure 3.1). In central and northern Europe this percentage fluctuated between 28 (Switzerland) and 43 (Belgium and Austria), yet in these countries, too, contact between older adults and their children was intensive. In each of the countries studied, more than 85 percent of parents age 50-plus had weekly contact with at least one of their children. No more than a small minority of the elderly Europeans saw or spoke to their children less than once a month (2%) or had even lost touch completely (1%).

In terms of contact frequency with all children taken together, the southern European countries again stand out favourably (figure 3.2). The average number of children with whom Italian, Spanish and Greek older adults were in daily contact was more than 1. In the other countries studied, this figure did not exceed 0.6. Between-country differences were smaller if children with whom parents were in contact once a week or more are included.

Table 3.6. Results of logistic regression on contacts between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children (likelihood of more than weekly contact with at least one child)

Model:	1 (baseline)	2 (model 1 + geographical distance)	3 (model 2 + country)
Characteristics parents			
Gender (1 = female)	1.27**	1.30**	1.31**
Age (*ref* = 50-59)			
60-69	0.96	0.90	0.90
70+	0.75**	0.67**	0.66**
Single (1 = yes)	0.85	0.86	0.93
Single after divorce (1 = yes)	0.46**	0.47**	0.48**
Single after divorce*male (1 = yes)	0.66	0.69	0.62*
Health problems (1 = yes)	0.96	0.93	0.94
Educational attainment (*ref* = low)			
middle	0.74**	0.80**	1.03
high	0.65**	0.74**	0.93
Income (*ref* = 0 – 25%)			
26 – 50%	0.76*	0.80	0.90
51 – 75%	0.85	0.93	1.08
>75%	0.77*	0.86	1.04
Religiosity (*ref* = prays daily)			
prays weekly	0.80	0.77*	0.82
prays less than weekly	0.73*	0.73*	0.80
never prays	0.64**	0.68**	0.72**
Number of children (*ref* = 1 child)			
2 children	1.56**	1.31**	1.27*
3 children	1.67**	1.26*	1.26
≥ 4 children	1.57**	1.09	1.08
Characteristics adult children			
≥ 1 daughters (1 = yes)	1.69**	1.73**	1.76**
≥ 1 children with partner (1 = yes)	0.97	0.95	0.97
≥ 1 children divorced (1 = yes)	0.85	0.86	0.97
≥ 1 children with paid job (1 = yes)	1.11	1.06	1.09
≥ 1 children with high education (1 = yes)	0.84*	0.98	0.97
Geographical distance			
≥ 1 children within 5 km (1 = yes)		4.14**	4.17**
Countries (*ref* = Italy)			
Sweden			0.54**
Denmark			0.34**
Netherlands			0.37**

Table 3.6. (end)

Belgium	0.38**
Germany	0.28**
France	0.34**
Austria	0.28**
Switzerland	0.18**
Spain	0.76
Greece	1.30

** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.01$.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Does frequent contact always mean good contact? In order to answer this question, the average contact frequency between parents and their children was related to the percentage of older adults who had frequent conflicts with one of their children. Figure 3.3 clearly shows that there was a positive relationship between the number of contacts and the perceived quality of the parent-child relationship: contact was infrequent where parents and children had frequent conflicts, in particular in southern Europe. Note, however, that this is a highly select group: only very few southern European older adults were found to have little contact with their children (see figure 3.1), and among those who did, this was presumably because they had had an argument.

Note also that the percentage of European older adults who were in frequent conflict with one of their children was not very high, irrespective of contact frequency. In Italy, for example, just under seven percent of parents aged 50-plus said they often had conflicts with one of their children. In France, Austria, Switzerland and Spain this was about five percent, and Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands trailed behind with less than two percent.

Most contact between mothers and daughters, least contact between fathers and sons

As shown in table 3.1, big gender differences were found in the frequency of contact. In all countries studied, both fathers and mothers had more frequent contact with their daughters than with their sons. The main difference between parent-daughter and parent-son relationships was that older adults tended to have daily or more than weekly contact with their daughters and monthly contact with their sons.

Table 3.1 also shows that the number of contacts between mothers and daughters exceeded the number of contacts between fathers and daughters. This was found in all countries and here, too, the difference is attributed to the fact that mothers and daughters tended to have daily or more than weekly contact whereas fathers and daughters tended to have monthly contact. Another finding shown in table 3.1 is that, with the exception of Spain and Greece, mothers and sons had more frequent contact than fathers and sons: mothers, more so than fathers, tended to be in contact with their sons at least weekly.

More contact in large families, but less contact per child

Table 3.2 shows that the number of contacts per child decreases linearly as the number of children per family increases. This makes sense given that parents need to divide their time between their children, which makes it more difficult for parents in large families than for parents in small families to have time for everyone.

Table 3.2 also shows that the variation in contact frequency between children is greater in families with three or more children than in families with two children. Apparently, it is more difficult for parents in large families to spend just as much time on each child. Whereas the time per child decreased as family size increased, the total amount of time spent on all children was found to increase. The total number of contacts in families with four or more children, for example, was three times as great as in families with only one child. We also see that the percentage of parents who had daily contact with at least one of their children, or who were in contact with them several times a week, was higher in large families than in small families. In families with three or more children more than half the parents were in daily contact with at least one child; in families with one child, this was 39 percent. If we include children with whom the parents had contact several times a week, the percentage is 82 (three or more children) and 70 (one child) respectively. In other words, children in large families had less contact with their parents, but parents in big families had more contact with their children.

Parental divorce has major negative social consequences

As shown in table 3.3, the consequences of parental divorce on intergenerational contacts are substantial. This applies not only to fathers but also to mothers, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent. Married mothers were found to have an average of 114 contacts with their non-coresident children a year, compared with an average of 86 contacts among single, divorced mothers. More than 80

percent of married mothers had daily or more than weekly contact with one of their children and virtually no-one had lost touch completely. Conversely, about 60 percent of the divorced mothers were found to see or speak to one of their children more than once a week, and two percent had had no contact whatsoever with their children in the past year. Surprisingly, contact between children and their married fathers was almost as frequent as contact with married mothers: 105 compared with 114 contacts per year. This could be explained by the fact that married fathers benefit from the contacts their wives have with the children (De Graaf & Fokkema, 2007; Kalmijn, 2007). The difference between married and divorced fathers was considerable, however. Whereas almost all married fathers had been in contact with their children in the past year, and more than three quarters had even been in daily or more than weekly contact, no fewer than 12 percent of the single, divorced fathers had had no contact whatsoever with their children in the past year and a mere 46 percent had more than weekly contact with their children. On average, single, divorced fathers were in contact with their children 61 times a year and married fathers 105 times a year. If we break the figures down further, we see that divorce had a particularly negative effect on contacts between fathers and daughters.

Higher status leads to less contact

Both educational attainment and income were found to have an effect on intergenerational contact (table 3.4). The higher the parent's level of education and the higher the household income, the lower the total number of annual contacts. Better educated parents also had the smallest number of children with whom they had more than weekly contact. Furthermore, better educated parents and those with higher incomes were found to be least likely to have at least one child with whom they had daily contact or contact several times per week. Among parents with low levels of education and income, about 80 percent had more than weekly contact with at least one child; among higher educated and financially well-off parents, this was less than 70 and 75 percent, respectively. These socioeconomic effects remained strong after controlling for other parent and child characteristics (table 3.5 and table 3.6, Model 1). Table 3.5 and table 3.6 also show that the child's level of education played a significant role as well. The annual number of contacts and the likelihood of having more than weekly contact with at least one child were lower in families where one or more of the children were highly educated.

Other differentials by parent and child characteristics

Table 3.4 shows that the frequency of contact with children varies by parental age. The older the parent, the higher the mean number of annual contacts, the higher the number of children with whom they have daily contact or contact several times a week, and the greater the likelihood of having more than weekly contact with at least one child. After controlling for other parent and child characteristics, however, significant differences were only found between parents aged 50-59 years and those who were 70 or older, and the relationship was the reverse: the older age group had less frequent contact and was less likely to have more than weekly contact with at least one child.

Looking at table 3.3, widowhood seems to have neither a positive nor a negative effect on contact with children. Fathers and mothers who are 'single' because they lost their spouse were found to see or speak to their children just as often as parents in intact marriages. In addition, the likelihood of having more than weekly contact with one of the children and of having broken off contact with their children was similar among married parents and those who were widowed. After controlling for other parent and child characteristics, however, widowhood appeared to have some negative effects on intergenerational contact. The total number of annual contacts was significantly lower among parents who were widowed than among those in intact marriages. Apparently, the increased need for companionship and support is outweighed by the difficulties widowers face in maintaining frequent contact with all their children.

Contact levels did not differ between parents without health problems and those with health problems. Health problems appear to have conflicting effects. Whereas parents need more support from their children when they experience health problems (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998), such problems reduce mobility and vitality, which in turn reduces the frequency of contact.

Substantial differences were found in intergenerational contact by religiosity. Whereas parents who pray daily were found to have the highest number of contacts with their children, parents who never pray had the smallest number of contacts: 122 against 97. In addition, the less often parents pray, the smaller the number of children with whom they had daily or more than weekly contact and the less likely they were to have more than weekly contact with at least one child. Parents who pray every day were found to have more than weekly contact with 1.5 children, on average, and more than 85 percent had more than weekly contact with at least one child. Among parents who never pray, these figures

were 1.1 and 70 percent respectively. These differences remained significant after controlling for other parent and child characteristics.

Finally, in addition to the above-mentioned effects of the child's gender and level of education, parent-child contact seems to be influenced slightly by the partner status of the children. Whereas a child's partner status had no impact on the likelihood of parents seeing or speaking to at least one of their children more than weekly, the annual number of contacts parents have with their children was found to be lower if one or more of the children were divorced. An explanation could be that children who are divorced have less time and energy for their parents given the demands of and problems in their own lives.

How contact relates to distance

There was a clear relationship between the frequency of contact between parents and children and the geographical distance between them. The total number of contacts was significantly higher when one or more children live within a radius of five kilometres from their parental home (table 3.5, Model 2). We also found that the likelihood that these parents have daily or more than weekly contact with at least one of their children is four times higher (table 3.6, Model 2). The positive relationship between intergenerational contact and geographical proximity is hardly surprising as living close by makes it easier for people to remain in frequent contact, in particular in the case of face-to-face contact.

As mentioned, parents with a high socioeconomic status tend to live further away from their children. Model 2 in table 3.5 and table 3.6 shows that geographical distance only partly explains why these parents have less frequent contact with their children than those with a lower socioeconomic status. After controlling for the number of children living within five kilometres from their parents, the differences in contact based on level of education and income were smaller, but still significant. The only exception is that the effect of income on the likelihood that parents have more than weekly contact with at least one of their children was no longer significant. The same applies to parental divorce and religion. The fact that single divorced parents and non-religious parents were found to be in less frequent contact with their children can be attributed only in part to the fact that they live further away from their children; even after controlling for geographical proximity, these parents had less contact with their children and a smaller likelihood of more than weekly contact with at least one of their children. These differences could possibly be explained by the less traditional values and perhaps not as strong a sense of having to stay in touch

with one's family among the better educated, divorcees and non-religious parents. We shall address the question whether this is, in fact, the case in the next chapter.

The fact that parents had less frequent contact with their children when one or more of their children had attained a high level of education was clearly related to the smaller likelihood that at least one of their children lives close by. After controlling for geographical proximity, the differences in contact frequency between parents with and without highly educated children disappeared almost entirely. This is true both for the difference in the average number of contacts per year and for the likelihood of more than weekly contact with at least one of their children.

Lastly, controlling for geographical proximity scarcely affected the differences found in contact frequency by other personal characteristics of parents and children. The only exception is that parents with four or more children no longer had a greater likelihood of more than weekly contact with at least one of the children than parents with only one child. Differences in number of contacts by family size, however, did become greater after controlling for geographical distance.

Between-country differences

The differences found between southern Europe and the other European countries remain after controlling for the parent and child characteristics. Parents in Italy, Spain and Greece had significantly more frequent contact with their children and a greater likelihood of more than weekly contact with at least one of their children. Interestingly, differences in contact by the parents' socioeconomic status virtually disappeared after controlling for between-country differences. In other words, the fact that southern European parents had more frequent contact with their children may be explained in part by their lower average socioeconomic status.

4. Family care obligations

Introduction

This chapter focuses on care obligations towards family members. The relevance of examining this normative aspect of solidarity is the interdependence between feelings of obligation and actual support exchange. Earlier research has shown that a sense of duty towards one's family can have a predictive value for the informal care actually exchanged. Elderly American parents, for example, who felt strongly that family should help one another, gave their children more practical and financial help than parents who felt less strongly about this (Lee *et al*., 1994). Other studies have shown that the more strongly elderly parents and/or their adult children subscribed to the view that children and parents should support one another, the more practical support they received (Broese van Groenou, 2005; Klein Ikkink *et al*., 1999; Stein *et al*., 1998). Conversely, actual support exchange has also been found to influence feelings of obligation. According to Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, situations in which behaviour conflicts with personal values (cognitive dissonance) are considered undesirable. In order to reduce dissonance, giving or receiving support is retrospectively attributed to a strong sense of duty, and the absence of support exchange could lead to the adjustment of personal values.

In the self-completion questionnaire used in SHARE, a number of items on two types of care obligations were posed: an obligation to care for the elderly and an obligation to care for children and grandchildren. With regard to the first type of obligation, respondents were asked who should bear the responsibility for three aspects of care for the elderly: (1) help with household chores for older persons who are in need such as help with cleaning and washing; (2) personal care for older persons who are in need such as nursing or help with bathing or dressing; and (3) financial support for older persons who are in need. Respondents could choose any of the following answer categories: totally the government, mainly the government, totally the family, mainly the family, both equally. The degree to which they felt a duty to care for children and grandchildren, the second type of obligation, was determined using four statements: (1) grandparents' duty is to be there for grandchildren in cases of difficulty (such as divorce of parents or illness), (2) parents' duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being, (3) grandparents' duty is to help grandchildren's parents in looking after young grandchildren, and (4) grandparents' duty is to contribute towards the economic security of grandchildren and their families.

For each of these statements, the respondents had to indicate the extent to which they agreed, ranging from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree. Given the different recipients to which the items of both types of obligations refer – frail and needy elderly versus children and grandchildren – and given the age of the respondents, 50 years and over, the first type of obligation says more about their own care preferences (formal versus informal care) and the degree to which they are prepared to receive support from their own families, while the second type of obligation is indicative of the degree to which they are prepared to support their children and grandchildren. Note also that the items within both types of obligations differ in terms of the type of support (general versus specific, help in kind versus financial assistance) and the context (unconditional versus conditional).

We will first address the variation in the strength of obligations across European societies. To gain an insight into the extent to which feelings of obligation are conditional on the type of recipient (i.e., whether older adults are the receiving or the giving party), the type of support and the context, between-country differences in each of the statements of both types of obligations were examined. The results of these descriptive analyses are presented in *table 4.1* and *table 4.2*. Next, to gain an impression of the relationship between family care obligations and personal characteristics and to examine whether between-country differences exist over and above composition effects, OLS regression analysis was performed. For the sake of simplicity, two scales were constructed. The first scale was formed with the aid of the three statements about the responsibility of the family to care for older adults (family obligation). The second scale was constructed on the basis of the four statements about the duty of parents and grandparents towards their children and grandchildren (parental obligation). Both scales go from 0 (very weak feelings of obligation) to 10 (very strong feelings of obligation) and have good psychometric characteristics. *Table 4.3* presents the results of the OLS regression analysis on the two scales[2]. The analyses were carried out for those individuals aged 50 and over with one or more coresident or non-coresident children.

[2] As mentioned, both the statements about the duty to care and the question about religiosity were included in the self-completion questionnaire. As the question about religiosity was not asked in France, older adults in France have not been considered here.

Table 4.1. Opinions about the responsibility of government and family for care for older adults (weighted %)

	household help for older adults in need of assistance		personal care for older adults in need of assistance		financial support for older adults in need of assistance	
	totally/mainly the family	totally/mainly government	totally/mainly the family	totally/mainly government	totally/mainly the family	totally/mainly government
Northern Europe						
Sweden	13.8	56.0	10.0	66.6	10.3	69.7
Denmark	4.1	77.7	2.5	88.8	3.7	83.1
Netherlands	13.6	45.8	5.5	61.9	5.9	69.1
Belgium	25.9	35.3	18.7	42.5	13.1	54.7
Central Europe						
Germany	43.6	12.0	28.7	16.0	14.8	36.5
France	13.3	48.0	8.7	53.7	8.4	50.6
Austria	38.2	17.6	22.3	24.4	11.8	39.9
Switzerland	42.3	18.0	23.1	22.9	12.9	47.7
Southern Europe						
Italy	36.5	16.7	29.5	20.6	17.5	37.8
Spain	36.6	20.8	31.4	23.2	22.2	34.9
Greece	54.2	13.2	66.0	8.7	9.0	59.2

Note. The row percentages for each care item do not add up to 100 because the category ‘both equally’ has not been presented.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Table 4.2. Opinions about the duty of parents/grandparents to care for their children/grandchildren (weighted %)

It is the duty of parents/grandparents..	to be there for their grandchildren in cases of difficulty		to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being		to help the parents of their grandchildren in looking after young grandchildren		to contribute towards the economic security of grandchildren and their families	
	agree/ strongly agree	disagree/ strongly disagree	agree/ strongly agree	disagree/ strongly disagree	agree/ strongly agree	disagree/ strongly disagree	agree/ strongly agree	disagree/ strongly disagree
Northern Europe								
Sweden	78.4	7.7	88.4	4.2	51.9	26.1	41.9	28.6
Denmark	76.0	10.2	70.2	13.6	37.5	34.3	17.0	50.8
Netherlands	74.0	10.7	64.9	14.9	28.5	42.0	25.1	43.2
Belgium	81.2	7.9	66.3	19.0	60.3	19.2	45.5	28.9
Central Europe								
Germany	83.5	3.2	58.3	21.2	74.8	7.4	39.8	27.9
France	89.3	2.9	72.0	10.7	69.4	9.7	49.4	17.5
Austria	73.1	10.7	76.2	12.8	56.2	21.1	35.4	35.8
Switzerland	70.9	12.2	69.4	17.2	49.5	25.1	32.9	38.8
Southern Europe								
Italy	89.6	3.3	88.6	3.4	77.8	7.1	63.7	13.4
Spain	87.1	2.6	89.8	2.8	69.1	10.9	58.0	14.4
Greece	90.0	2.7	91.6	3.3	80.1	4.0	59.3	17.6

Note. The row percentages for each opinion do not add up to 100 because the category ‘neither agree nor disagree’ has not been presented.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Table 4.3. Results of multivariate regression on obligation scales among parents aged 50 and older

	Family obligation		Parental obligation	
	Model: 1 (baseline)	2 (model 1 + country)	1 (baseline)	2 (model 1 + country)
Characteristics parents				
Gender (1 = female)	-0.04**	-0.02	-0.05**	-0.05**
Age (*ref* = 50-59)				
60-69	0.05*	0.01	0.09**	0.07**
70+	0.06**	0.04	0.12**	0.10**
Single (1 = yes)	-0.01	-0.00	-0.06**	-0.04*
Single after divorce (1 = yes)	-0.06**	-0.02	-0.05**	-0.03*
Health problems (1 = yes)	-0.04**	-0.04**	0.02	0.02
Educational attainment (*ref* = low)				
middle	-0.01	-0.01	-0.09**	-0.03*
high	-0.03*	-0.02	-0.09**	-0.04*
Income (*ref* = 0 – 25%)				
26 – 50%	-0.08**	-0.03	-0.03	0.01
51 – 75%	-0.08**	-0.00	-0.05**	-0.00
>75%	-0.11**	-0.01	-0.09**	-0.01
Religiosity (*ref* = prays daily)				
prays weekly	0.02	-0.00	-0.05**	-0.04*
prays less than weekly	-0.06**	-0.02	-0.08**	-0.05**
never prays	-0.19**	-0.08**	-0.15**	-0.09**
Number of children (*ref* = 1 child)				
2 children	-0.01	0.02	-0.02	-0.04
3 children	-0.02	0.01	-0.06**	-0.06**
≥ 4 children	-0.02	0.02	-0.06**	-0.06**
≥ 1 grandchildren (1 = yes)	-0.03	-0.01	0.14**	0.15**
≥ 1 parents alive (1 = yes)	-0.01	-0.01	-0.04*	-0.05**
Characteristics adult children				
≥ 1 daughters (1 = yes)	-0.01	-0.00	0.00	0.00
≥ 1 children with partner (1 = yes)	-0.06**	-0.02	-0.03	0.01
≥ 1 children divorced (1 = yes)	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	0.00
≥ 1 children with paid job (1 = yes)	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.02
≥ 1 children with high education (1 = yes)	-0.00	0.02	-0.00	-0.01
Countries (*ref* = Italy)				
Sweden		-0.23**		-0.11**
Denmark		-0.30**		-0.20**
Netherlands		-0.22**		-0.30**
Belgium		-0.10**		-0.20**
Germany		0.05**		-0.13**

Table 4.3. (end)

Austria		-0.02		-0.20**
Switzerland		0.00		-0.11**
Spain		-0.01		-0.04*
Greece		0.07**		0.02
Adjusted R^2	6.2	20.2	10.5	18.9

** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.01$.
Source: SHARE – release 2.

Strong preference for government support in northern Europe

In northern Europe a collective duty of care is required by law. Informal care is encouraged, but not legally required (Pommer *et al*., 2007). It therefore comes as no surprise that in Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium no fewer than 35 to 78 percent of people aged 50 and over were of the opinion that household help for older adults in need of care should be provided primarily by government; no more than 4 to 26 percent felt this is the family's responsibility (table 4.1). With respect to financial support and personal care for older adults in need of care, as many as 43 to 89 percent of the 50-plus in northern Europe felt that it is the government's duty to provide such care, and 3 to 19 percent felt this is the responsibility of the children and other relatives.

In the central European countries the government is legally required to provide care for people in need of intensive care, and the informal network is responsible for those who need less care. In southern Europe responsibility for caring for older adults lies primarily with their families. In Greece, for example, the families of older adults in need of care are legally required to look after them. In Italy and Spain the family is charged with the duty of care, and the government is responsible only in situations where the family is unable to comply with this duty. In southern Europe people are therefore more inclined to hold the family responsible for the provision of care, and turn to the government only when it comes to supporting financially disadvantaged older adults. This is true in particular in Greece, where 54 and 66 percent of the 50-plus respectively felt they should be able to count on their families for household help or personal care; 13 and 9 percent were of the opinion that this is the government's responsibility.

Strong sense of duty to care

We found that European older adults feel a much stronger sense of duty when it comes to caring for their children and grandchildren than vice versa. As shown in table 4.2, a large majority of people aged 50 and over felt that grandparents need to be there for their grandchildren if they have problems. A clear majority also felt that it is the parents' duty to do their best for their children, even at the expense of their own well-being.

No less than three quarters of southern Europeans aged 50-plus were of the opinion that grandparents should help their children care for the grandchildren. In the other countries, between 29 and 75 percent of the older adults agreed. These lower percentages are hardly surprising given that the statement appeals to a concrete duty of care, but not to the need for support. In Denmark about the same percentage older adults (34%) and in the Netherlands an even higher percentage older adults (42%) were of an opposite opinion. They did not feel that it is the duty of grandparents to help their children in this way.

Older adults clearly showed less solidarity with their children and grandchildren when it comes to financial support. Whereas in the Mediterranean countries, 61 percent of those aged 50 and over felt that grandparents should contribute to the economic security of their grandchildren and their families, this was a mere 33 percent in the northern European countries. In Austria and Switzerland the number of people who agreed and disagreed was more or less equal. In Denmark and the Netherlands no fewer than 51 and 43 percent of the older adults respectively were of the opinion that grandparents have no obligation to contribute to the economic security of grandchildren and their families; 17 and 25 percent felt that they do.

Women feel weaker family care obligations

Women were found to have a weaker sense of duty with respect to older adults than men (table 4.3). They also felt less of an obligation towards children and grandchildren than men. This is surprising as caring duties are usually the domain of women rather than that of men (Cloïn & Boelens, 2004). Apparently, the actual provision of care by women is not very strongly or uniquely conditioned by feelings of obligation. We will deal with this in more detail in the next chapter.

Parental divorce weakens sense of family duty

As shown in earlier studies (Coleman *et al*., 1997; Rossi & Rossi, 1990) we found that parental divorce leads to a weaker sense of duty with respect to care. European older adults who have remained single after divorce were less inclined than married older adults to feel a sense of obligation towards the elderly and towards their children and grandchildren in terms of care-giving. This can be attributed to a number of factors: broken off or damaged relationships within the family, less time and money to help members of family, and a preoccupation with one's own problems, making people blind for the problems of others. Having one or more divorced children, on the other hand, does not appear to have any effect on a sense of family duty.

Status weakens sense of obligation

A sense of duty with respect to family care was strongly related to the level of education and financial status. This is true for both directions of intergenerational care. The highest income groups and people with the highest level of education were found to have the weakest sense of duty towards older adults and towards children and grandchildren. The effect of education confirms the perception that the better educated have less of a sense of obligation to care as they attach less importance to being acknowledged and to social control and more importance to autonomy (Kohn, 1969). It has been repeatedly shown that the better educated have a more individualistic lifestyle than the lesser educated (Felling *et al*., 2000). The fact that older adults in higher income groups have a weaker sense of duty to care could be related to the fact that people who are financially better off are better able to afford private care.

Religion strengthens sense of duty to care

A sense of family duty is closely related to religiosity. People who practise their religion more regularly were found to have a stronger sense of obligation towards both older adults and children and grandchildren. This was to be expected: values prescribing that children and parents should support each other are embedded in religious ideologies (Reher, 1998).

Need for care does not lead to a stronger sense of duty to care

One would assume that widowed parents and parents with health problems expect their families to provide more care than married parents and healthy older adults as the former need more support and their stronger sense of duty could well reflect how they would like to be treated themselves (Lee *et al*., 1994). Our results do not support this assumption, however. Widowed and married parents

had the same sense of duty towards frail or needy elderly. And older adults with health problems were even found to have a significantly weaker sense of duty to care than those without health problems. A possible explanation could be that older adults with health problems want to protect their children from having to provide care (Gans & Silverstein, 2006). Altruistic motives also seem to explain why older adults have a weaker sense of duty towards frail or needy elderly if one or more of their children have a partner. Our findings also show that widowed parents have a weaker sense of obligation towards their children and grandchildren than married parents. This could possibly be explained by the fact that people who are widowed adjust their sense of obligation to what they perceive as their less favourable practical circumstances and are therefore inclined to downgrade this sense of duty.

Burden of care leads to a weaker sense of duty to care

A person's sense of duty towards older adults does not appear to be significantly related to whether or not their own parents are still alive nor to the number of children and grandchildren. The presence of older or younger generations did, however, affect the sense of duty felt by older adults towards their children and grandchildren. Older adults with three or more children had a weaker sense of duty than those with one child. These feelings were also found to be less strong when one or both parents were still alive. An explanation could be that older adults in both situations felt they had fewer opportunities to actually provide care (conflicting responsibilities) and therefore felt less responsible for the well-being of their children and grandchildren. Conversely, older adults who had one or more grandchildren of their own had a stronger sense of duty towards children and grandchildren. Despite the fact that the statements about a sense of duty were formulated in such a way that they were also relevant to people without grandchildren, it is highly probable that a sense of obligation towards grandchildren is stronger among people who themselves are grandparents.

Between-country differences

Large differences in the sense of duty to care remain between the countries studied after controlling for the parent and child characteristics. The strongest sense of duty towards both older adults and children and grandchildren was found in southern Europe. Older adults in northern Europe had the weakest sense of obligation. Note that almost all significant differences in the sense of obligation towards older adults by personal characteristics disappear if country dummies are included. The only exceptions to this are the negative effect of health and, to an extent, the positive effect of religiosity. However, with the

exception of the negative effect of income, the differences found in the sense of obligation towards children and grandchildren by personal characteristics remain.

5. Support exchange

Introduction

Support exchange is the last dimension of solidarity considered in this study. The literature pays particular attention to two issues. The first is the impact of the expansion of welfare state provisions, such as social security, pension, childcare arrangements and extramural and intramural eldercare services, on support exchange among family members. There is broad consensus that the expansion of the welfare state, together with social and cultural changes, have relieved the family of the primary and life-long responsibility of caring for its members in economic and practical terms (so-called de-familisation; Lister, 1994). There is less consensus, however, whether family support is being substituted by welfare state provisions or whether they are complementary, although empirical studies more often confirm the latter (Arber & Attias-Donfut, 2000; Chappell & Blandford, 1991; Daatland & Herlofson, 2001; Knijn *et al*., 2005; Rainwater *et al*., 1986). The second issue addressed in the literature concerns the main reasons why people provide support: do family members help each other because of 'prescribed altruism' and gendered norms and values (Finch, 1989; Land & Rose, 1985), or is reciprocity (norms and practices of giving and taking) the driving factor? And if reciprocity is what drives people to provide support, do family members reciprocate each other's support immediately or is some recompense expected in the long run (Gouldner, 1960; Komter *et al*., 2000)?

SHARE respondents were asked whether they had given support to, and whether they and their partner, if any, had received support from people outside their own household in the past 12 months, and if so, what kind of support this had been (personal care, practical household help and/or help with paperwork), to/by whom (answering categories of specific persons, including non-coresident children) and how often (almost daily, almost every week, almost every month or less often). They were also asked whether they or their partner had given or received 250 euros or more to/from people inside or outside their own household in the past 12 months, and if so, to/from whom (answer categories of specific persons, including children), why (list of specific reasons) and how much. Finally, respondents with one or more grandchildren were asked whether and if so, how often (almost daily, almost every week, almost every month or less often), they looked after them. So, the dataset allows us to examine different aspects of support exchanges, namely different types of support, their reciprocity

(i.e., the extent to which giving is paired with receiving), their frequency (in the case of help in kind) and the reasons for exchanging support (in the case of financial support).

Like the other dimensions of solidarity, we will first present the main between-country variations with regard to these different aspects of support, starting with help in kind, followed by financial support and ending with childminding (*figure 5.1, figure 5.2, figure 5.3* and *figure 5.4* and *table 5.1*). As the question about help in kind only referred to people outside the household, the analyses on help in kind and financial support were restricted to respondents who only had non-coresident children; the analysis on childminding was restricted to people who had at least one grandchild under the age of 13. Next, bivariate associations will be presented between support exchange on the one hand and personal characteristics on the other, followed by the results of a logistic regression analysis (*table 5.2, table 5.3, table 5.4* and *table 5.5).* The logistic regression was performed to examine the net effect of personal characteristics and whether or not country differences remain after controlling for compositional differentials. In order to reduce complexity, the answers relating to the different types of help in kind (personal care, practical household help, help with paperwork, and, in the case of giving support, looking after grandchildren) and their frequency were combined and dichotomised into 'regular (at least once a month) help in kind received and given respectively' and 'no help in kind received and given respectively, or given only occasionally (less than once a month)'. As receiving financial support from one's children appears to be highly exceptional, logistic analysis on financial support exchange was restricted to whether (1 = yes, 0 = no) parents had given money to any of their (non-coresident) children.

5.1. Help in kind

Upwards

Figure 5.1 shows that European older adults received more help in kind than they gave their children. The figure also shows that children mainly helped their parents with household and paperwork – 16 percent of the children provided household support, 11 percent helped their parents with administrative duties – and that forms of support were given on a regular basis rather than occasionally.

Figure 5.1. Support exchange between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children (weighted %)

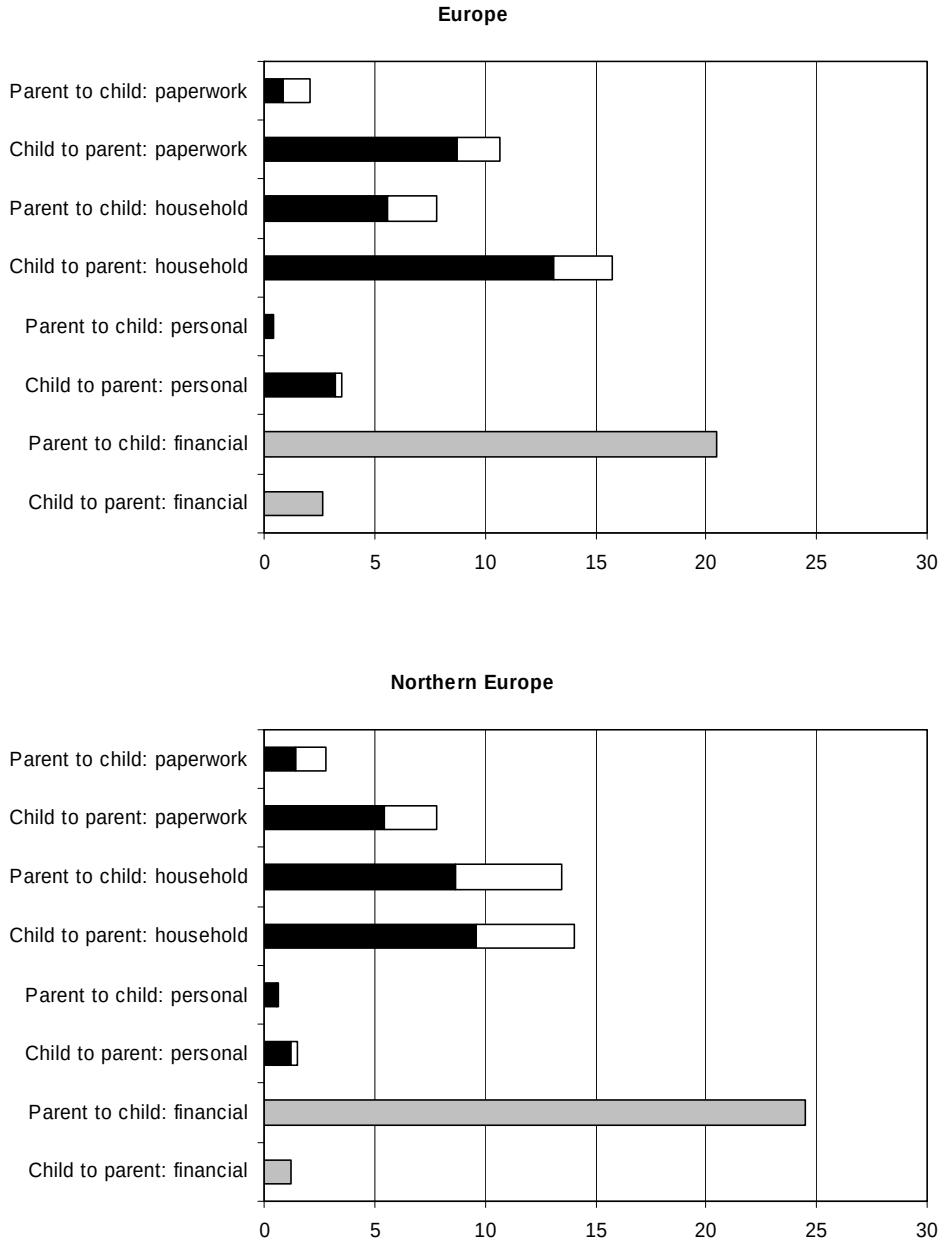
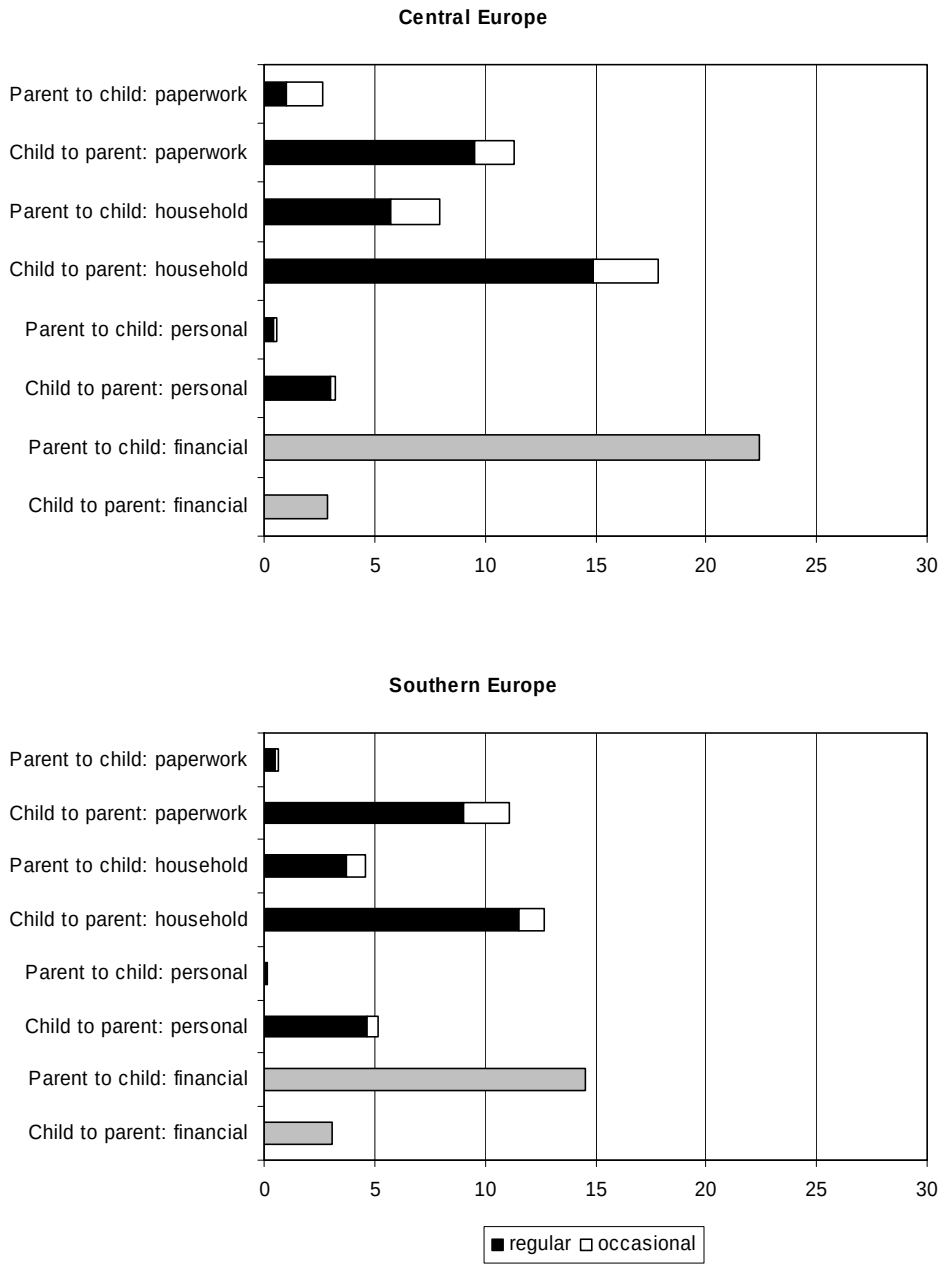


Figure 5.1. (end)



Source: SHARE – release 2.

Figure 5.2. Help in kind exchange in the past 12 months between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children by parents' age (weighted %)

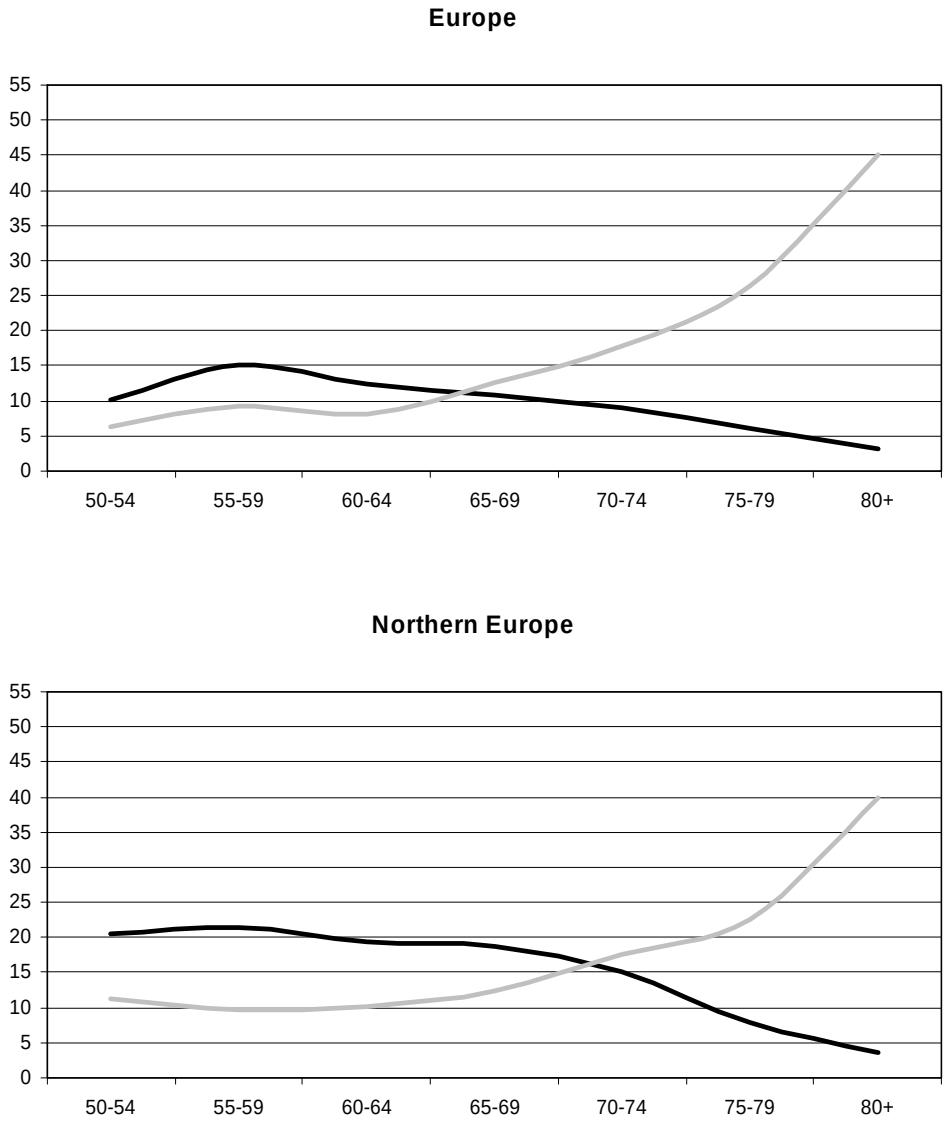
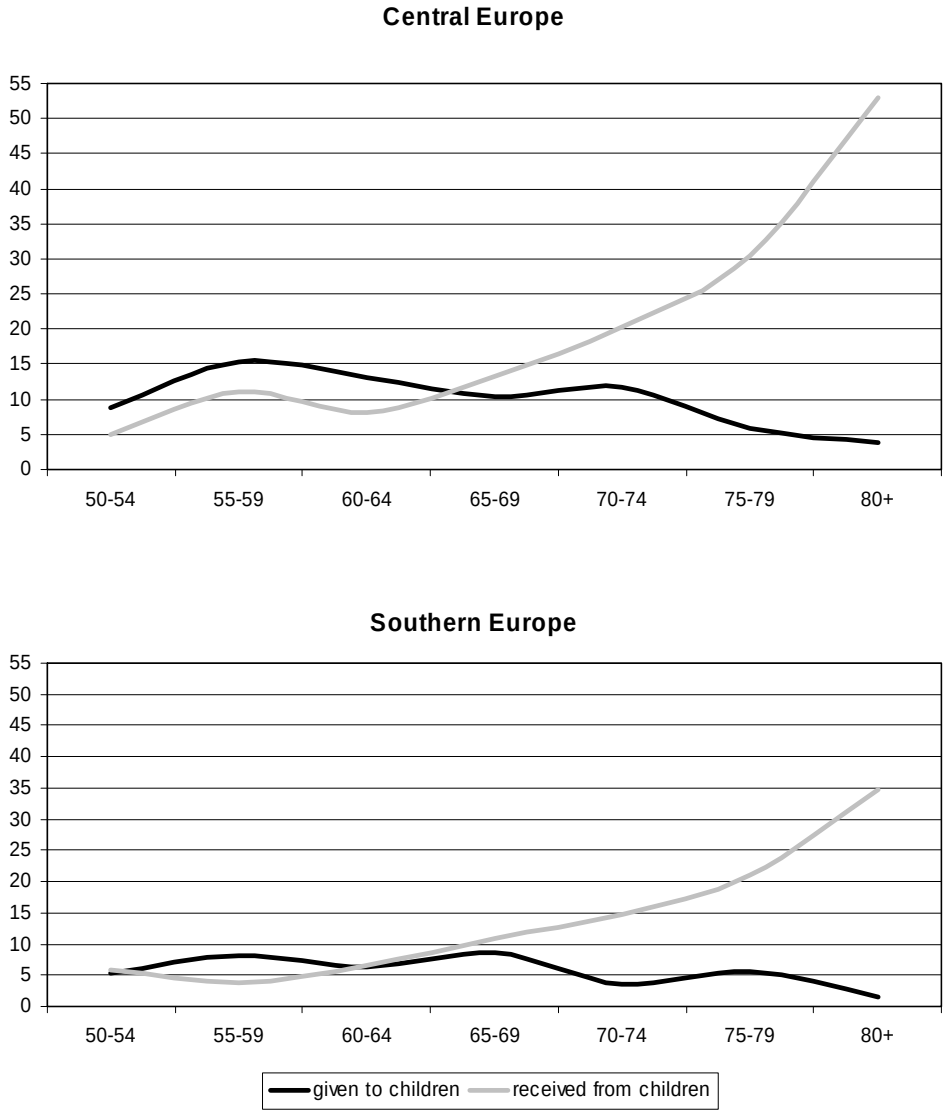


Figure 5.2. (end)



Source: SHARE – release 2.

Figure 5.3. Financial support exchange in the past 12 months between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children by parents' age (weighted %)

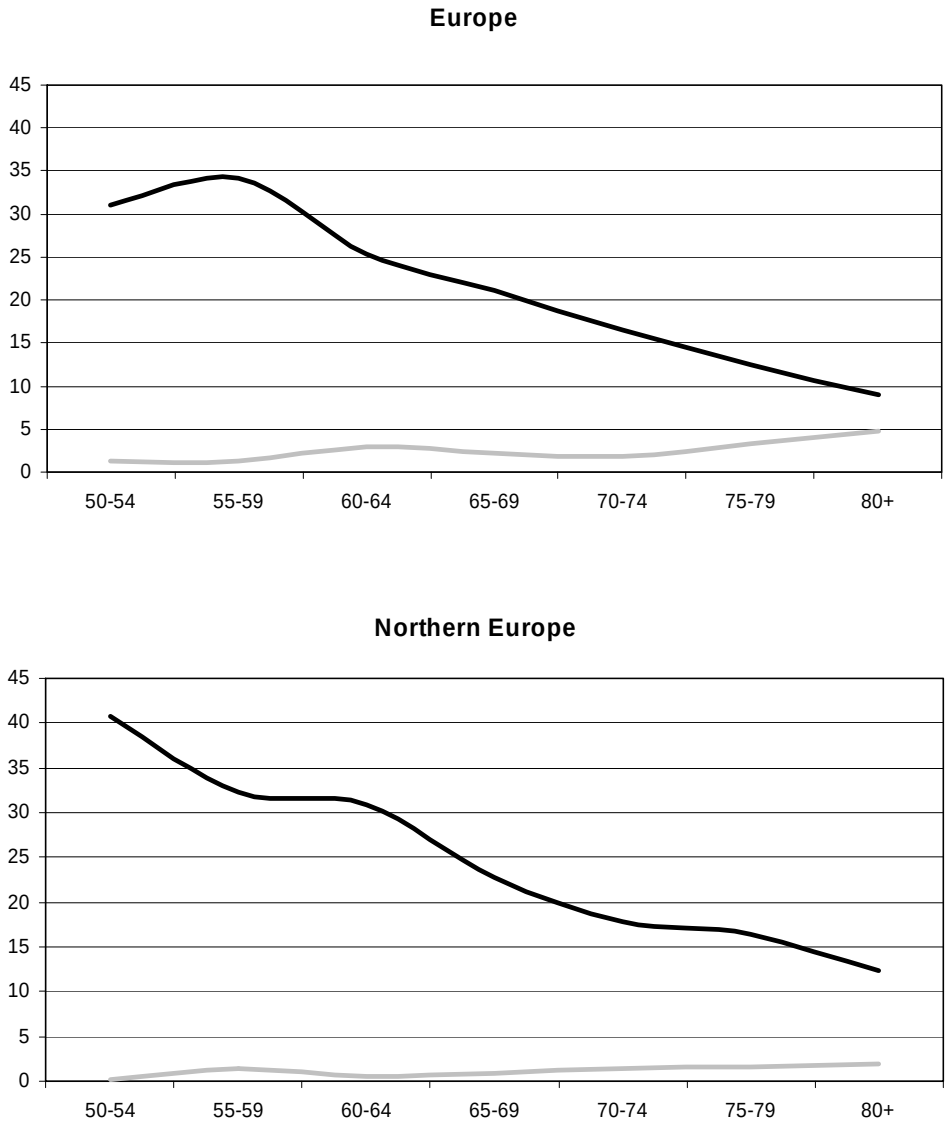
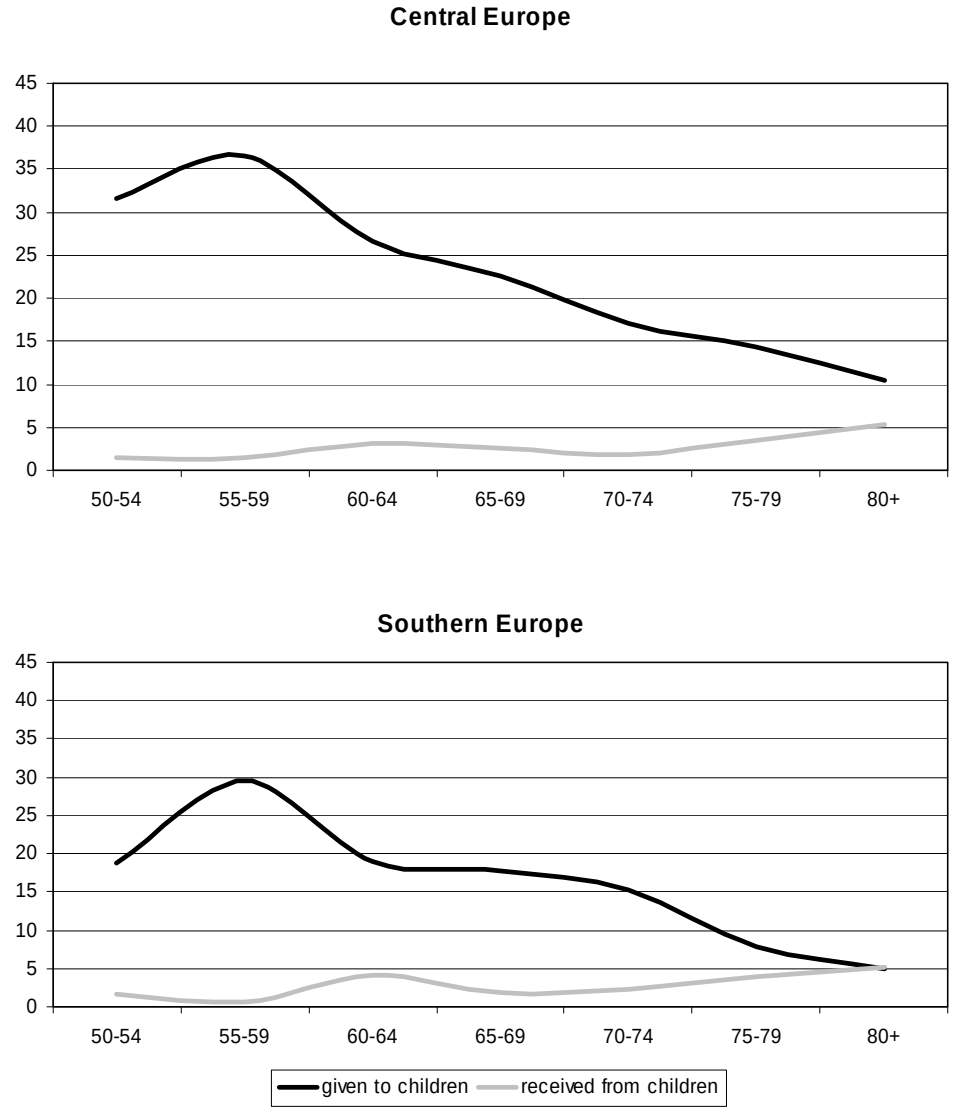
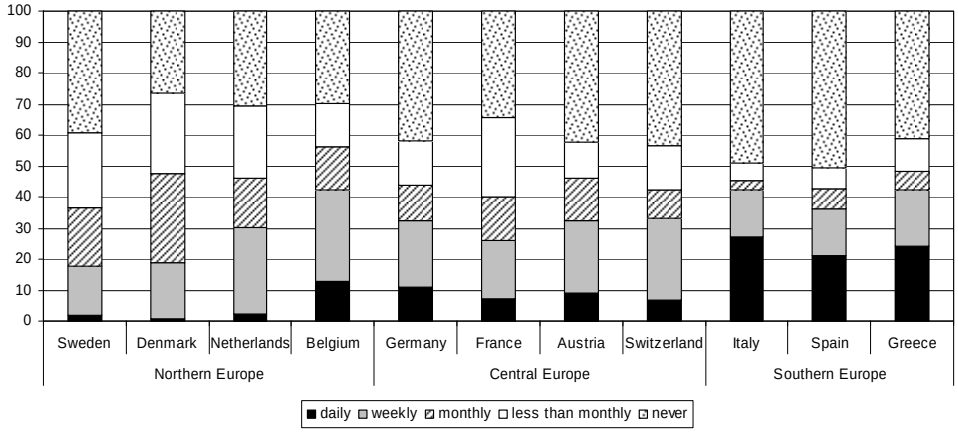


Figure 5.3. (end)



Source: SHARE – release 2.

Figure 5.4. Frequency of care by grandparents aged 50 and older with young grandchildren (< 13 years old) for the grandchild who they care for most frequently (weighted %)



Source: SHARE – release 2.

Support given by parents to their children tended to be immaterial, consisting mainly of assistance with household responsibilities – 8 percent of the parents helped with household duties – but this form of assistance was provided on an occasional basis in more than a quarter of the cases (less than once a month).

Less but more regular in southern Europe

The exchange of help in kind, with the exception of children helping their parents with personal care, was found to be more common in northern and central Europe than in southern Europe. This is surprising as the welfare state is less developed in the countries of southern Europe (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Pommer *et al*., 2007) and as the geographical distance between older adults and their children was shortest in Italy, Spain and Greece (see Chapter 2) and the frequency of contact was highest in these countries (Chapter 3); geographical proximity and frequent contact are necessary preconditions for support (De Jong Gierveld & Fokkema, 1998; Hank, 2007; Joseph & Hallman, 1998; Lawton *et al*., 1994a; Litwak & Kulis, 1987; Tomassini *et al*., 2003). Having said that, support given in central Europe and, even more so, in northern Europe was usually given on an occasional basis whereas support in southern Europe was given regularly.

Table 5.1. Reasons why parents aged 50 and older give financial support to their children (weighted %)

	basic needs	to buy furniture/ home	to buy something expensive (excl. home)	family celebration	assistance after divorce	assistance in the event of death/illness	assistance in the event of unemployment	further education	to meet legislative requirements	no specific reason	other reasons
Northern Europe											
Sweden	28.4	9.5	15.2	7.1	1.5	0.9	3.8	5.8	0.4	27.4	15.2
Denmark	21.1	13.5	13.7	12.3	2.0	0.3	0.4	8.7	0.0	34.4	9.4
Netherlands	23.8	17.8	10.4	8.7	2.4	1.0	2.9	12.8	1.8	23.8	12.8
Belgium	14.1	31.2	12.8	7.3	3.5	2.4	0.8	2.1	1.5	25.8	9.4
Central Europe											
Germany	23.6	15.9	16.4	22.2	0.4	0.0	5.6	9.2	1.7	15.0	4.6
France	28.5	20.2	13.4	5.2	1.4	1.4	3.2	8.7	1.2	32.5	0.7
Austria	17.3	17.2	20.0	22.8	0.3	0.3	0.8	7.0	0.8	18.5	9.3
Switzerland	14.8	9.6	11.6	11.6	0.9	2.1	8.3	17.2	0.9	32.8	3.3
Southern Europe											
Italy	22.9	12.7	6.8	12.8	0.0	1.1	1.0	4.3	0.0	33.1	11.6
Spain	25.3	24.0	8.4	13.0	3.2	0.0	1.5	0.0	6.8	8.4	15.1
Greece	35.7	3.9	17.3	12.1	1.5	1.6	4.8	7.6	0.0	22.9	3.0
EU-average	24.3	16.3	13.6	14.4	1.0	0.7	3.6	7.9	1.4	23.4	6.8

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Table 5.2. Support exchange between parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children (weighted %)

	% at least once per month help in kind *received* from children	% financial support *given* to children	% at least once per month help in kind *given* to children
Gender			
male	9.6	26.2	26.0
female	18.7	16.4	28.1
Age group			
50-59	4.8	32.9	30.3
60-69	6.8	23.1	37.1
70+	25.6	12.5	18.7
Partner status			
married	8.1	24.7	33.1
single after widowhood	29.9	12.6	19.6
single after divorce	8.6	21.4	19.1
Health status			
no health problems	8.4	23.4	31.0
health problems	29.4	14.2	18.9
Educational attainment			
low	18.9	12.2	27.0
middle	12.0	25.0	27.7
high	8.2	38.1	26.9
Income			
0 – 25%	20.5	12.0	24.3
26 – 50%	16.2	15.8	26.5
51 – 75%	10.9	27.4	32.1
>75%	10.0	30.3	26.5
Gift			
never received a gift of 5,000 euros or more by parents/parents-in-law		16.7	
ever received a gift of 5,000 euros or more by parents/parents-in-law		35.0	
Religiosity			
prays daily	17.3	16.1	27.2
prays weekly	13.8	21.5	30.7
prays less than weekly	12.6	23.3	28.2

Table 5.2. (continued)

never prays	9.3	26.5	26.7
Number of children			
1 child	12.6	20.7	20.2
2 children	13.1	22.8	29.9
3 children	17.3	18.8	32.7
≥ 4 children	21.3	15.4	24.2
Gender of children			
no daughters	10.7	23.0	23.8
≥ 1 daughters	16.2	19.7	28.2
Partner status of children			
no children with partner	7.8	32.3	10.0
≥ 1 children with partner	15.9	19.0	29.5
no children divorced	14.4	20.7	27.4
≥ 1 children divorced	19.2	19.6	26.1
Employment status of children			
no children with a paid job	18.6	25.8	15.3
≥ 1 children with paid job	14.5	20.0	28.9
Educational attainment of children			
no children with high education	16.3	17.7	26.9
≥ 1 children with high education	13.3	24.6	28.5
Professional help			
no professional help	12.5		
receiving professional help	35.3		
Help in kind			
no help in kind *given* to children	15.7	19.2	
help in kind *given* to children	12.9	24.3	
no help in kind *received* from children			
help in kind *received* from children		21.6	27.9
Financial help			
no financial help *given* to children	16.1		25.8
financial help *given* to children	10.4		32.1

Table 5.2. (end)

Geographical distance			
no children within 5 km	8.2	24.2	17.9
≥ 1 children within 5 km	19.7	17.8	33.8
Contact frequency			
more than weekly contact with no child	6.4	20.9	10.0
more than weekly contact with at least one child	17.4	20.4	32.1
Family/parental duty			
household help and personal care for older adults: duty of government	15.1		
household help and personal care for older adults: duty of the family	14.4		
financial support to grandchildren: not duty of grandparents		20.3	
financial support to grandchildren: duty of grandparents		22.6	
help in kind to children/grandchildren: not duty of grandparents			17.8
help in kind to children/grandchildren: duty of grandparents			27.8

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Elderly parents 'net receivers'

As shown in figure 5.2, at an advanced age, European older adults are 'net receivers' of help in kind. With increasing age, European older adults gradually give less and exponentially receive more help in kind. The curves for giving and receiving support cross at the age of 60 (southern Europe), 65 (central Europe) and 70 (northern Europe).

5.2. Financial support

Downwards

Contrary to help in kind, financial support tended to be given by the older generations to the younger generations rather than vice versa: European older adults gave more financial support than they received from their children (figure 5.1). In the past twelve months, 20 percent of older adults aged 50-plus had

Table 5.3. Results of logistic regression on help in kind received from non-coresident children by parents aged 50 and older (likelihood of at least once per month)

Model:	1 (baseline)	2 (model 1 + geographical distance + contact frequency + family duty	3 (model 2 + country)
Characteristics parents			
Gender (1 = female)	1.42**	1.38**	1.32**
Age (*ref* = 50-59)			
60-69	1.16	1.11	1.05
70+	2.50**	2.35**	2.22**
Single (1 = yes)	2.15**	2.21**	2.11**
Single after divorce (1 = yes)	0.67*	0.76	0.80
Health problems (1 = yes)	2.90**	2.91**	2.86**
Educational attainment (*ref* = low)			
middle	0.95	1.01	0.71**
high	0.83	0.93	0.76
Income (*ref* = 0 – 25%)			
26 – 50%	0.73**	0.76*	0.83
51 – 75%	0.69**	0.71*	0.79
>75%	0.63**	0.66**	0.77
Religiosity (*ref* = prays daily)			
prays weekly	0.93	0.96	0.87
prays less than weekly	0.99	1.04	0.98
never prays	0.98	1.07	1.05
Number of children (*ref* = 1 child)			
2 children	1.23	1.08	1.10
3 children	1.16	0.99	1.07
≥ 4 children	1.52*	1.23	1.38
Characteristics adult children			
≥ 1 daughters (1 = yes)	1.36*	1.32*	1.37*
≥ 1 children with partner (1 = yes)	1.02	1.04	1.07
≥ 1 children divorced (1 = yes)	1.12	1.16	1.08
≥ 1 children with paid job (1 = yes)	0.80	0.81	0.82
≥ 1 children with high education (1 = yes)	0.92	1.01	0.88
Other types of help			
Professional help *received* (1 = yes)	1.86**	1.95**	2.48**
Help in kind *given* to children (1 = yes)	1.35**	1.15	1.20
Financial help *given* to children (1 = yes)	1.10	1.07	1.04

Table 5.3. (end)

Geographical distance		
≥ 1 children within 5 km (1 = yes)	1.76**	1.79**
Contact frequency		
More than weekly contact with at least one child (1 = yes)	2.12**	2.25**
Family duty		
Household help and personal care for older adults: duty of the family (1 = yes)	1.03	0.86
Countries (*ref* = Italy)		
Sweden		1.45
Denmark		2.40**
Netherlands		0.77
Belgium		1.18
Germany		4.15**
France		1.42
Austria		2.70**
Switzerland		1.57
Spain		1.03
Greece		2.64**

** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.01$.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

given 250 euros or more to their children. No more than three percent said their children had supported them. The percentage aged 50-plus offering financial support to their children was highest in the wealthiest countries of northern European (25%) and lowest in the least wealthy countries of southern Europe (15%).

Older adults 'net givers'

The older Europeans aged 50 and over are, the less financial support they give their children (figure 5.3). After the age of 75, older parents are more likely to receive financial support from their children, however meagre. The curves for giving and receiving support in southern Europe cross each other after the older adults have reached the age of 80. In northern and central Europe the curves do not cross each other: in these countries, parents remain 'net givers' in terms of financial support.

Table 5.4 Results of logistic regression on financial support given to non-coresident children by parents aged 50 and older (likelihood of at least once during the last year)

	Model: 1 (baseline)	2 (model 1 + geographical distance + contact frequency + parental duty	3 (model 2 + country)
Characteristics parents			
Gender (1 = female)	0.82*	0.83*	0.83*
Age (*ref* = 50-59)			
60-69	0.70**	0.69**	0.69**
70+	0.47**	0.46**	0.46**
Single (1 = yes)	0.92	0.90	0.88
Single after divorce (1 = yes)	1.07	1.22	1.13
Health problems (1 = yes)	0.91	0.91	0.92
Educational attainment (*ref* = low)			
middle	1.53**	1.56**	1.49**
high	1.87**	1.90**	1.87**
Income (*ref* = 0 – 25%)			
26 – 50%	1.32*	1.30*	1.27*
51 – 75%	1.90**	1.84**	1.76**
>75%	2.11**	2.09**	2.04**
Religiosity (*ref* = prays daily)			
prays weekly	1.05	1.05	1.03
prays less than weekly	0.98	1.00	0.97
never prays	0.95	1.06	1.04
Number of children (*ref* = 1 child)			
2 children	1.16	1.17	1.15
3 children	1.08	1.10	1.08
≥ 4 children	1.03	1.08	1.07
Characteristics adult children			
≥ 1 daughters (1 = yes)	1.02	1.00	1.00
≥ 1 children with partner (1 = yes)	0.64**	0.63**	0.63**
≥ 1 children divorced (1 = yes)	1.23*	1.26*	1.25*
≥ 1 children with paid job (1 = yes)	0.72**	0.72**	0.72**
≥ 1 children with high education (1 = yes)	1.28**	1.29**	1.26**
Other types of help			
Help in kind *received* from children (1 = yes)	1.09	1.07	1.03
Help in kind *given* to children (1 = yes)	1.24**	1.20*	1.21*
Ever *received* a gift of 5,000 euros or more by parents/parents-in-law (1 = yes)	1.78**	1.76**	1.74**
Geographical distance			
≥ 1 children within 5 km (1 = yes)		0.87	0.90

Table 5.4. (end)

Contact frequency		
More than weekly contact with at least one child (1 = yes)	1.28**	1.25*
Parental duty		
Financial help to grandchildren: duty of grandparents (1 = yes)	1.43**	1.40**
Countries (*ref* = Italy)		
Sweden		1.42*
Denmark		1.04
Netherlands		0.97
Belgium		0.98
Germany		1.05
France		0.94
Austria		1.23
Switzerland		0.80
Spain		0.41**
Greece		1.40

** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.01$.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Reasons

As shown in table 5.1, European older adults mainly gave their children money to buy basic needs (24%) or for no specific reason (23%). Other important things parents gave money for are to buy or furnish a home (16%) or other expensive purchases (14%) and family celebrations (e.g. weddings and birth of a grandchild, excluding divorce and death/illness, 14%). Whereas financing basic needs was the main reason why Greek older adults in particular took out their purses, Belgian parents tended to support their children financially to buy or furnish a home. Money given to children by Dutch and Swiss older adults was often used to finance further education (13 and 17% respectively).

5.3. Looking after grandchildren

More often, but less formal in northern Europe

A majority (59%) of European grandparents who have at least one grandchild under the age of 13 looked after their grandchildren regularly or occasionally. No fewer than 22 percent of the grandparent childcarers helped out one of their children daily, 33 percent weekly and 19 percent monthly; just over a quarter (26%) looked after their grandchildren less often.

Table 5.5. Results of logistic regression on help in kind given to non-coresident children by parents aged 50 and older (likelihood of at least once per month)

Model:	1 (baseline)	2 (model 1 + geographical distance + contact frequency + parental duty	3 (model 2 + country)
Characteristics parents			
Gender (1 = female)	1.25**	1.22**	1.24**
Age (*ref* = 50-59)			
60-69	1.25**	1.22*	1.27**
70+	0.48**	0.46**	0.47**
Single (1 = yes)	0.62**	0.64**	0.62**
Single after divorce (1 = yes)	0.92	1.10	1.10
Health problems (1 = yes)	0.69**	0.69**	0.68**
Educational attainment (*ref* = low)			
middle	0.96	1.04	1.00
high	1.03	1.20*	1.08
Income (*ref* = 0 – 25%)			
26 – 50%	1.10	1.18	1.14
51 – 75%	1.01	1.09	1.06
>75%	0.90	0.99	0.94
Religiosity (*ref* = prays daily)			
prays weekly	0.89	0.91	0.90
prays less than weekly	0.95	1.00	0.98
never prays	0.83*	0.90	0.89
Number of children (*ref* = 1 child)			
2 children	1.30**	1.15	1.16
3 children	1.40**	1.17	1.17
≥ 4 children	1.22	1.02	1.00
Characteristics adult children			
≥ 1 daughters (1 = yes)	1.26**	1.18*	1.18*
≥ 1 children with partner (1 = yes)	3.27**	3.39**	3.24**
≥ 1 children divorced (1 = yes)	1.11	1.15	1.11
≥ 1 children with paid job (1 = yes)	1.57**	1.52**	1.44**
≥ 1 children with high education (1 = yes)	0.85*	0.93	1.08
Other types of help			
Help in kind *received* from children (1 = yes)	1.21	1.03	1.06
Financial help *given* to children (1 = yes)	1.25**	1.24**	1.25**
Geographical distance			
≥ 1 children within 5 km (1 = yes)		1.88**	1.91**

Table 5.5. (end)

Contact frequency		
More than weekly contact with at least one child (1 = yes)	2.70**	2.75**
Parental duty		
Help in kind to children/grandchildren: duty of grandparents (1 = yes)	1.36*	1.49*
Countries (*ref* = Italy)		
Sweden		1.02
Denmark		1.43*
Netherlands		1.23
Belgium		1.95**
Germany		1.01
France		1.05
Austria		1.05
Switzerland		0.96
Spain		0.96
Greece		0.97

** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.01$.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Grandparents in the northern European countries and in France were found to look after their grandchildren more often than grandparents in other parts of Europe (figure 5.4). This is surprising given the relatively greater availability and good quality of formal childcare facilities in these countries (Neyer, 2006), and the weak sense of duty in Denmark and the Netherlands to help out with the care of grandchildren (see Chapter 4). The frequency with which grandparents look after their grandchildren, however, was substantially lower in northern Europe and France than in southern Europe. More than 70 percent of the Swedish and Danish grandparent nannies and around 60 percent of Dutch and French grandparent nannies cared for their grandchildren about once a month or less, which seems to suggest that they are willing to help out, but not on a regular basis. The grandparents act as a kind of backup: granny helps out when the grandchild is ill and cannot go to the nursery, or when the parents have to work late. The situation in southern Europe was different. Here, one in three grandparent nannies looked after their grandchildren every week. In Greece and Spain more than 40 percent and in Italy 50 percent even helped out on a daily basis. This may be explained in part by the lack of good, affordable childcare.

5.4. Support given to and received from parents

Clear age and gender differences

As shown in figures 5.2 and 5.3, the parents' age is clearly associated with support exchanges with their children. Parents aged 70 and over were most likely to receive help in kind from their children and were least likely to give help in kind and financial help to their children. Comparing parents aged 50-59 and 60-69, different findings were observed for support given. Whereas most financial support was given to children by parents who are younger than 60 years, help in kind was given primarily by those who are between 60 and 69.

The effects of gender were also clear and in line with traditional gender roles. Mothers gave more help in kind to their children and in return received more help in kind from their children than fathers did. In addition, parents tended to give and receive help in kind if they had one or more daughters. Fathers, by contrast, were more likely to help their children financially.

Necessity increases support

The degree to which European older parents receive help in kind from their children is highly dependent on the need for support. Single parents and those with health problems received more help in kind than their counterparts. The greater likelihood of receiving help in kind by single parents, however, applied almost exclusively to the widowed; we found a strong negative effect of being divorced, suggesting that divorce works against the principle of need (Kalmijn, 2006). In return, parents who lived alone and parents in poor health gave less help in kind to their children than their counterparts. Partner status and health were not found to play a key role in supporting one's children financially. After controlling for the other parent and child characteristics, there were no significant differences in giving financial support to children between single parents and parents who lived with a partner and between parents with and without health problems. The incidence of divorce among one's children, however, did influence the likelihood of parents giving money to their children. When the other parent and child characteristics are taken into account, parents who had one or more divorced children were more likely to provide financial support.

Matthew effect

Socioeconomic status appears to be a major factor in supporting one's children financially. The higher the parents' level of education and income, the more likely they were to give money to their children. The likelihood of providing

financial support also increased if the parents had ever received a gift from their own parents. This positive effect of parents' socioeconomic status comes as no surprise and is consistent with the principle of resources: parents with a higher socioeconomic status have more financial resources, which make them better able to give this kind of support. Financial need among children, probably with the exception of divorced children, did not appear to increase the likelihood of financial transfers. On the contrary, parents were more likely to provide financial help if they had one or more highly educated children. This finding suggests that parents are more inclined to support children financially if they expect something in return some day.

Different effects of socioeconomic status are found when turning to the intergenerational exchange of help in kind. Whereas parents in the higher income categories received less help in kind from their children than the lower income groups, after controlling for the other parent and child characteristics, the parents' and children's level of education was found to have no effect. Conversely, parents were more likely to provide help in kind if their children did not have a high level of education, while there was neither a positive nor a negative effect of parents' socioeconomic position. The negative effect of parent's income and children's level of education, respectively, is probably related to the fact that people who are well-off are better able to afford private care.

Other personal differentials

Parents with four or more children were more likely to receive help in kind from their children than parents with one child. At the same time, parents were more likely to give help in kind to their children if they had more than one child, with one exception: parents with four or more children were not significantly more supportive than one-child parents. The number of children had no significant effect on giving financial support.

Whereas financial help was given primarily to children if one or more of them had no partner or no paid job, help in kind tended to be given if one or more of them did have a partner or a paid job. This finding appears to reflect the different needs along the children's life course: while children without a partner or paid job are more likely to lack financial resources, children with a partner or a paid job lack time for household and caring tasks. Neither the children's partner status nor their employment status was found to affect the help in kind they give their parents. When the other parent and child characteristics are taken into

account, the likelihood of receiving help in kind among parents with only single or unemployed children was as high as among parents who had one or more children with a partner or a paid job. This is surprising as one might expect that children who have more time available, for instance because they have no partner or are unemployed, are better positioned to support their parents.

Religiosity does not appear to have a great impact on the intergenerational exchange of support, after controlling for the other parent and child characteristics. The only exception is the significantly lower likelihood of giving help in kind to their children by parents who never pray compared with parents who pray daily.

Crowding in

Parents who received professional help were almost twice as likely to receive help in kind from their children. This finding confirms the 'crowding in' (complementary) hypothesis – the encouragement of family help through the provision of formal care services – rather than the 'crowding out' (substitution) hypothesis – people are less inclined to provide care to family members if formal services are available. In addition, some evidence of reciprocity was found: parents who provided help in kind to their children were more likely to receive this kind of support from their children. The reverse also holds, but this relationship was not significant. The exchange of financial assistance for help in kind was not found. Finally, parents who gave money to their children were also more likely to give help in kind and vice versa.

Main preconditions: geographical proximity and contact frequency

As expected, geographical proximity was found to be a strong precondition for mutual help in kind. The likelihood that help in kind is exchanged between parents and children was much higher if at least one of the children lived within a 5-kilometre radius. Geographical proximity did not appear to strongly affect financial transfers from parents to children. Another important precondition for intergenerational support exchange is contact frequency. More support was exchanged when there was more than weekly contact with at least one of the children. This holds for receiving and giving help in kind and, although to a lesser extent, for giving financial assistance by parents to children. Finally, a positive relationship was found between giving help in kind as well as financial help by parents to their children and the extent to which parents feel they are obliged to do so. On the other hand no correlation was found between the likelihood that parents receive help in kind and the extent to which they think

that caring for frail and needy elderly is primarily the responsibility of the family.

Controlling for these dimensions of solidarity has implications for the effect of some personal characteristics. With regard to receiving help in kind from their children, the effects of parental divorce, family size, and giving financial help to their children became non-significant. With respect to giving help in kind to their children, the effects of religiosity, family size and children's level of education became non-significant.

Between-country differences

Some national differences still existed after controlling for parent and child characteristics. The ranking of the countries did not, however, follow a clear north-south pattern. By running a series of equations, with each country subsequently serving as the omitted reference group, the likelihood of receiving help in kind from children had the following sequence: (1) German older parents had the highest likelihood, followed by (2) Austrian, Greek and Danish, (3) Swiss, Swedish and French, and (4) Belgian, Spanish, Italian and Dutch older parents. The ranking of the countries with regard to financial support given by parents to children, was: Swedish, Greek and Austrian parents had the highest likelihood and Spanish parents came in last. With regard to help in kind given to children, a significantly higher likelihood was found for Belgian older parents, followed by Danes.

6. Typology of late-life families

Introduction

Previous chapters subsequently focused on geographical proximity, frequency of contact, family care obligations and support exchange, representing the structural, association, normative and functional solidarity in the Bengtson and Roberts (1991) model, between parents and their adult children. The focus was on describing and explaining the current variations in each specific domain of intergenerational solidarity within and across European countries. In this chapter, we will contrast the four solidarity domains simultaneously, in an aim to find different late-life family types. In other words, we will examine the diversity in adult children-parent relationships on the basis of different domains of intergenerational solidarity. In this way, we gain a better understanding of the current complexities in the relationships ageing parents have with their adult children. To our knowledge, this is the first time that multiple domains are considered simultaneously in more than one country. The challenging research question is whether different types of late-life families can be empirically distinguished, and if so, what their incidence is, and whether their distribution varies across and within European societies.

Latent Class Analysis (LCA) was applied to construct the typology of late-life families. In LCA one assumes probabilistic rather than deterministic relationships between the latent construct (the concept of interest, in this case solidarity between parents and their adult children) and manifest indicators (the measures actually used) (Hagenaars & Halman, 1989; Yamaguchi, 2000). A basic assumption of LCA is conditional dependence, which means that associations between manifest indicators exist only insofar they measure the same latent construct. LCA has the advantage that the classes of the latent construct are discrete and need not be ordered along a continuum (Clogg, 1995).

The input for LCA is a cross-classification table of the scores for each variable in the analysis. In order to have a manageable number of cells in the data matrix[3], it is common to use dichotomous variables (cf. Hogan *et al*., 1993; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997; Van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006). The dichotomous variables (0 = no, 1 = yes) we constructed with regard to geographical proximity and the frequency of contact were whether the parent had at least one child

[3] An analysis on the basis of eight dichotomous measures, for example, results in 2^8 or 256 cells.

living within a 5-kilometre radius and whether the parent had more than weekly contact with one or more children, respectively. The variable with regard to family care obligation was based on the three items assessing the extent to which governments and families are responsible for eldercare together with the four items assessing the duty to care for one's children and grandchildren (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2 in Chapter 4)[4]. Cronbach's $\alpha = .61$, indicating reasonable internal consistency. Those with sum scores in the bottom 20 percent (and thus strongly refuting family responsibility) were assigned a score of 1 (= weak feelings of family care obligation), the others received a score of 0 (= strong feelings of family care obligation). With regard to support exchange, we constructed the following three dichotomous variables (0 = no, 1 = yes): (a) downward help in kind: whether the parent had provided household help, personal care or help with paperwork to one or more adult children or had looked after the grandchildren at least monthly in the past year, (b) upward help in kind: whether one or more of the adult children had provided household help, personal care or help with paperwork at least monthly to the parent, and (c) downward financial transfers: whether the parent had provided financial support to any of the children in the past twelve months.

We started by computing a latent class model with only a single latent class (no relation between manifest indicators) and added one class after the other, checking for model fit and significance. We used the program Latent GOLD 4.0, developed by Vermunt and Magidson (2005). In addition, we determined the robustness of the latent class model for the various countries included in SHARE by estimating separate latent class models for the three geographic regions: northern Europe (Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Belgium), central Europe (Germany, France, Austria, and Switzerland), and southern Europe (Italy, Spain, and Greece). Next, after identifying the number of late-life family types, we examined the distribution of these types across Europe.

In the final stage of the analyses, we examined the extent to which these late-life family typologies differ across parent and child characteristics and whether, after controlling for these sociodemographic characteristics, country differences still remain. In order to do so, we applied multinomial logit regression analysis (Liao, 1994), which is an extension of the binary logit model. The multinomial logit model (MNLM) is appropriate because the categories of the dependent

[4] Both the statements about the duty to care for the elderly and the statements about the duty to care for children and grandchildren were included in the self-completion questionnaire. 3,900 respondents did not fill in this questionnaire. In order to keep the group of respondents sufficiently large, missing data of those respondents were substituted by mean values.

variable (i.e., types of late-life families) are discrete, nominal and unordered. With n categories, the MNLM is roughly equivalent to performing 2 * (n - 1) binary logistic regressions. In the MNLM all the logits are estimated simultaneously, which enforces the logical associations among the parameters and makes a more efficient use of the data (Long, 1997). To interpret the MNLM results, we estimated marginal effects (Liao, 1994). The marginal effect gives the change in probability by one unit change in an explanatory variable when all other variables are held constant at sample mean values. For example, the marginal effect for a dummy variable is the difference between being in Category 1 and being in Category 0. Per variable the marginal effects sum up to zero.

Four types of late-life families

Table 6.1 provides details on the optimal number of types in the LCA, which turned out to be four. The right-hand column shows successive decreases in the size of the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) as the number of types progresses from 1 to 4, and an increase if a fifth type is distinguished. *Table 6.2* provides information on the distinguished types of parent-child relationships. When separate latent class models for respondents in northern Europe, central Europe, and southern Europe were estimated, the same general family typology emerged, indicating that it is highly robust across the distinguished geographic regions.[5]

As can be seen in the top row of Table 6.2, 35 percent of families are of the first type, 25 percent are of the second, 7 percent of the third, and 33 percent are of the fourth type. These percentages are the cumulative probabilities of all families

Table 6.1. Model fit for the optimal number of classes in the Latent Class Analysis

Number	Df [a]	L^{2b}	*p*-value	BIC[c]
1	57	2319.9	0.00	69735.4
2	50	390.6	0.00	67871.5
3	43	106.4	0.00	67652.5
4	36	38.5	0.36	67649.8
5	29	27.9	0.52	67704.5

[a] Df = Degrees of freedom.
[b] L^2 = Likelihood ratio statistic.
[c] IC = Bayesian Information Criterion.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

[5] The numbers of respondents per country were too small to warrant separate analyses by country.

belonging to the respective types. The coefficients in the columns of types 1 to 4 indicate the probability that a family is characterized by specific dimensions of solidarity, under the condition that the family is of that type. For example, there is a 75 percent probability that at least one child lives with a radius of five kilometres in Type 1 families, and a 29 percent probability that parents provide financial support to their children.

A high probability of having a child living within five kilometres is characteristic of Types 1 and 2, but not of Types 3 and 4. The likelihood of more than weekly contact broadly distinguishes the first three family types from the last one: it is high for Types 1, 2 and 3, and low for Type 4. A high probability of strongly endorsing family care obligations is characteristic of Types 1 and 2, but not of 3 and 4. With its high probability that help in kind is provided by parents to their children, Type 1 distinguishes itself from Types 2, 3 and 4. We assign the label 'descending familialism' to Type 1 families. 'Familialism' in the label emphasizes the strong endorsement of family care obligations. The likelihood that adult children provide help in kind to their parents is higher for Type 2 than for any other type, and for that reason we assign the label 'ascending familiasm' to Type 2 families. The high probability that parents have weak family care obligations and provide financial support to their children makes Type 3 stand out from the others, and we assign them the label 'supportive at distance'. Type 4 families are characterized by low probabilities of having a child living nearby, more than weekly contact with at least one child, and support exchange, although their feelings of family care obligation are neither weak nor strong. We assign the label 'autonomous' to these families.

In sum, the four late-life family types, which are robust across northern, central and southern European regions, are:

(1) Descending familiasm
living nearby, frequent contact, strong family care obligations, and primarily help in kind from parents to adult children
(2) Ascending familiasm
living nearby, frequent contact, strong family care obligations, and primarily help in kind from children to ageing parents
(3) Supportive at distance
not living nearby, frequent contact, weak family care obligations and primarily financial transfers from parents to adult children
(4) Autonomous
not living nearby, little contact, moderate family care obligations, and few support exchanges

Table 6.2. Latent Class Analysis of solidarity among parents aged 50 and older and their non-coresident children (probabilities)

	Type 1 Descending familiasm	Type 2 Ascending familiasm	Type 3 Supportive at distance	Type 4 Autonomous
	35%	25%	7%	33%
Domains of solidarity				
Structural				
At least one child within 5 km	0.75 **	0.86 **	0.21**	0.23 **
Associational				
At least one child more than weekly contact	0.96 **	0.96 **	0.73**	0.46 **
Normative				
Weak feelings of family obligation	0.08 **	0.10 **	0.26**	0.15 **
Functional				
At least once per month help in kind given to children by parents	0.66 **	0.15 *	0.18**	0.10 **
At least once per month help in kind given to parents by children	0.09 **	0.30 **	0.02	0.05 **
Financial support given to children by parents	0.29 **	0.09 **	0.91**	0.15 **

**$p < 0.001$, *$p < 0.01$.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

Apart from a high probability of having a child nearby, being in contact more than once a week with at least one of the children, and having strong family care obligations, the 'descending and ascending familiasm' types are characterised by high probabilities of exchanging help in kind from parents to children and from children to parents, respectively. It is interesting that neither late-life family type has the characteristics of a high probability of help in kind both upward and downward. Apparently, a tit for tit pattern of support exchange is not characteristic of relationships between parents and their adult children. The exchange of support among parents and adult children more closely resembles a pattern of reciprocity in the long run than short-term reciprocity. Furthermore, comparing the characteristics of the 'descending and ascending familiasm' types on the one hand and those of the 'supportive at distance' type on the other hand, geographical proximity and strong family care obligations seem to be important conditions for the exchange of help in kind, but not for the exchange of financial support.

Table 6.3 shows the distribution of these four late-life family types by country. Each family type is present in each country, but the distributions vary. The 'descending familiasm' type is strongly represented in Belgium, and not strongly represented in Denmark, France, Austria, Switzerland, and Spain. In Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Greece the representation of the 'descending familiasm' type is close to the European average. The 'ascending familiasm' type is least strongly represented in Sweden and Denmark, and most strongly represented in Italy, Spain, and Greece. In Austria, the representation of the 'ascending familiasm' type is also on the high side. The representation of the 'descending familiasm' type in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France, and Switzerland approximates the European average. The proportion of families in the 'supportive at distance' type is highest in Sweden and Denmark, followed by the Netherlands. The proportion of this late-life family type is lowest in Italy and Spain, and also relatively low in Belgium. Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, Greece have proportions that resemble the European average.

The proportions in a particular country of 'descending and ascending familiasm' types should not be viewed as communicating vessels. Rather, the two types appear to go together. Countries with a high proportion of the 'descending familiasm' type also tend to be those with a high proportion of the 'ascending familiasm' type. The pattern appears to be one of a high or a low likelihood of intensive intergenerational transfers, regardless of the direction of the transfers. This intensive-transfer pattern finds its mirror in the 'autonomous' type. In France and Switzerland, for example, the proportion of 'descending and

Table 6.3. Distribution of late-life family types by country (weighted %)

	Type 1 Descending familiasm	Type 2 Ascending familiasm	Type 3 Supportive at distance	Type 4 Autonomous
EU-average	35	25	7	33
Sweden	34	19	12	35
Denmark	29	21	12	37
Netherlands	36	28	9	28
Belgium	42	25	5	29
Germany	32	26	7	36
France	25	23	7	45
Austria	28	32	8	33
Switzerland	27	25	6	42
Italy	37	38	3	22
Spain	30	44	1	24
Greece	34	42	6	19

Source: SHARE – release 2.

ascending familiasm' types is on the low side (48% and 52%, respectively), but the proportion of the 'autonomous' type is higher than elsewhere in Europe (45% in France and 42% in Switzerland). Conversely, the proportion of 'descending and ascending familiasm' types is high in Italy (73%), Spain (74%) and Greece (76%), and to a lesser extent in Belgium (67%), but the proportion of the 'autonomous' type is low in these countries (22% in Italy, 24% in Spain, 19% in Greece, and 29% in Belgium). The proportion of the 'autonomous' type in Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Austria is close to the European average. Interestingly, the proportion of the 'autonomous' type is not the highest in the countries which are generally viewed as the most de-familialised (Reher, 1998): Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Differentials by parent and child characteristics

The top part of *table 6.4* shows the associations between family type and sociodemographic characteristics of parents and their offspring. To assess whether the distribution of late-life family types varies by parental gender, one should not only consider the gender main effect, but also the interaction effect of divorce and gender. These predictors taken together show that mothers are more likely to be in the 'descending familiasm' type of late-life families than fathers, a finding that is consistent with the notion of mothers as kinkeepers (Rosenthal, 1985), and this is particularly so for widowed mothers and for those in intact

Table 6.4. Predictors of the four types of late-life families: Marginal effects of multinomial logistic regression

	Type 1 Descending familiasm	Type 2 Ascending familiasm	Type 3 Supportive at distance	Type 4 Autonomous
Characteristics parents				
Gender (1 = female)	0.03**	-0.00	-0.01	-0.03*
Age (*ref* = 50 – 59)				
60 – 69	0.03	0.01	-0.03**	-0.02
70+	-0.17**	0.18**	-0.05**	0.04
Single (1 = yes)	-0.08**	0.08	-0.00	0.01
Single after divorce (1 = yes)	-0.03	-0.06*	-0.01	0.10**
Single after divorce*male	-0.08**	-0.05	0.01	0.12**
Health problems (1 = yes)	-0.07**	0.09**	-0.01	-0.01
Educational attainment (*ref* = low)				
middle	0.00	-0.05**	0.03**	0.02
high	0.01	-0.12**	0.06**	0.05*
Income (*ref* = 0 – 25%)				
26 – 50%	0.02	-0.04*	0.01	0.02
51 – 75%	0.03	-0.06**	0.04*	-0.00
>75%	-0.04	-0.04*	0.04**	0.01
Religiosity (*ref* = prays daily)				
prays weekly	-0.03	0.01	0.02	-0.00
prays less than weekly	-0.02	0.01	-0.01	0.02
never prays	-0.04*	0.01	-0.00	0.03
Number of children (*ref* = 1 child)				
2 children	0.07**	0.06**	-0.01	-0.13**
3 children	0.09**	0.08**	-0.02*	-0.16**
≥ 4 children	0.06**	0.13**	-0.02*	-0.16**
Characteristics adult children				
≥ 1 daughters (1 = yes)	0.05**	0.01	0.00	-0.07**
≥ 1 children with partner (1 = yes)	0.14**	-0.06	-0.03**	-0.04
≥ 1 children divorced (1 = yes)	0.01	-0.01	0.00	-0.01
≥ 1 children with paid job (1 = yes)	0.06*	-0.02	-0.03**	-0.02
≥ 1 children with high education (1=yes)	-0.01	-0.07**	0.02*	0.07**
Countries (*ref* = Italy)				
Sweden	-0.06**	-0.13**	0.06**	0.13**
Denmark	-0.08**	-0.10**	0.05**	0.14**

Table 6.4. (end)

Netherlands	-0.04**	-0.05**	0.03**	0.06**
Belgium	0.04**	-0.12**	0.01	0.07**
Germany	-0.07**	-0.04**	0.00	0.11**
France	-0.11**	-0.11**	0.01	0.21**
Austria	-0.08**	-0.01	0.02**	0.07**
Switzerland	-0.13**	-0.08**	0.00	0.21**
Spain	-0.03**	0.02**	-0.03**	0.04**
Greece	0.03**	-0.01	0.03**	-0.05**

**$p < 0.001$, *$p < 0.01$.

Source: SHARE – release 2.

marriages. They also show that mothers, particularly if they are widowed or in intact marriages, are less likely to be in 'autonomous' late-life families than fathers.

Table 6.4 shows furthermore that the parents aged 70-plus are less likely to be in 'descending familiasm' families and more likely to be in 'ascending familiasm' families than the 50 – 59 year-olds. The aged 60 and over are less likely to be in 'supportive at distance' families than the youngest age group.

To assess differences by partner status, the effects of singlehood, divorce, and the interaction of divorce and gender should be considered together. The findings show that parents living without a partner are less likely to be involved in 'descending familiasm' families, and more strongly so (a) if they are divorced than if they are widowed, and (b) for fathers than for mothers. The opposite holds for the likelihood of being part of 'autonomous' late-life families: it is greater for older adults living without a partner than for those living with a partner, and greatest for divorced fathers. The likelihood of being part of 'ascending familiasm' families differs between the divorced and the widowed: the divorced are less likely, but the widowed are more likely than are those living with a partner to be part of a family involving 'ascending familiasm'.

Older parents experiencing health problems are less likely to be in 'descending familiasm' families but more likely to be in 'ascending familiasm' families than are older parents in good health. Parental health status is not associated with the likelihood of being in either 'supportive at distance' or 'autonomous' families.

The likelihood of being part of a 'descending familiasm' family does not vary by the educational status of the parent. Families involving 'ascending familiasm' are less likely, but families involving 'supportive at distance' are more likely among the middle and high educated than among those with low levels of educational attainment. The high educated are more likely to be in families with 'autonomous' parent-child relationships than the low educated. The pattern of findings for parental income is quite similar to that for parental education, with one exception. Parental income is not associated with the likelihood of being part of an 'autonomous' family.

The findings show virtually no differences by parental religiosity. The only significant coefficient is for the families of parents who report never to pray: their families are least likely to involve 'descending familiasm'.

Differences by family size involve a contrast between one-child families, and families with two or more children. The likelihood of being part of 'descending and ascending familiasm' families is greater, but the likelihood of being part of 'supportive at distance' families or 'autonomous' families is smaller for parents with two or more children compared to parents of a single child.

The middle part of table 6.4 shows the associations between family type and sociodemographic characteristics of adult children. Parents of daughters have a greater likelihood of being part of 'descending familiasm' families, and a smaller likelihood of being part of 'autonomous' families. The gender composition of the children's network is not associated with the likelihood of being in 'ascending familiasm' families or 'supportive at distance' families. Parents with children-in-law have a greater likelihood of being part of 'descending familiasm' families, and a smaller likelihood of being part of 'supportive at distance' families. The pattern of findings for parents of children with paid jobs is similar. Having partnered children and having employed children shows no association with the likelihood of being part of 'ascending familiasm' or 'autonomous' families. Divorce in the younger generation makes no difference regarding the distribution of family types. Parents of high educated children are less likely to be part of 'ascending familiasm' families, but more likely to be part of 'supportive at distance' families. They also have a greater likelihood of being part of 'autonomous' families.

Taken together, the above findings suggest that parent-child relations change in response to changes in the lives of those involved, reflecting different needs and resources. A first shift is noticeable from 'supportive at distance' to 'descending familiasm' when children move from young adulthood (being on school, living

as a single) to middle-aged, entering their family-building phase (living with a partner, having children and a paid job). The next shift is from 'descending familiasm' (parents being the providers of help in kind) to 'ascending familiasm' (parents being the recipients of help in kind) when parents reach the last phase of their life, characterized by increasing health problems and widowhood. This comes as no surprise and is consistent with the principle of need. Finally, the sociodemographic profile of the 'autonomous' families reveals that especially parental divorce and a high socioeconomic status increase the likelihood of individualism in late-life families.

Between-country differences

The bottom part of table 6.4 includes controls for country differences. As the table shows, significant differences in the distribution of late-life family types between European countries exist, over and above differences in the sociodemographic characteristics of parents and their children. So, there are cross-national differences in the distribution of late-life family types which cannot be attributed to sample differences. Interestingly, the pattern of findings resembles that in table 6.3, which presented bivariate associations only. Apparently, to understand country differences in the distribution of family types, we need to look at other factors than composition effects.

7. Conclusion and discussion

7.1. Introduction

Families in Europe have changed considerably in recent decades, in both structural and cultural terms. The most important changes in family structure are the verticalisation and horizontal narrowing of families (Bengtson, 2001; Bengtson *et al*., 1990; Farkas & Hogan, 1995; Harper, 2005; Hogan *et al*., 1993; Seltzer *et al*., 2005): as life expectancy is rising, families today span a larger number of generations, but due to the declining family size, each successive generation consists of fewer people. We also see that family and marital ties have become weaker. Marriage has lost ground to other living arrangements, divorce is on the rise and, due to growing geographic mobility, family members are living further apart from each other (Allan *et al*., 2001; Kiernan, 2004). At the same time, caring duties have come under increasing pressure as a result of the emancipation of women, in particular their increased enrolment in education and labour force participation (Blossfeld, 1995; Blossfeld & Huinink, 1991; Hakim, 2000). In cultural terms there has been a shift from instrumental orientation towards the family to a more individualistic and affective orientation and a greater emphasis on individual needs and personal happiness (Hareven, 1995).

According to some, these changes are a threat to family solidarity (Popenoe, 1993; Wolfe, 1989). They say that the degree to which parents and children are prepared to support and care for each other is decreasing. In this respect, the welfare state has not been of any help. The need for children to care for their parents has declined as formal care for the elderly has been extended (Lingsom, 1997; Künemund & Rein, 1999). Benefits such as state and other pensions and social security have made parents and children less dependent on each other in economic terms.

Others believe that family solidarity has not so much weakened, but has changed in character. Smaller families and the disappearance of distance-creating parental authority have paved the way for more intensive and more personal contact between parents and their children. They say that formal care facilities for older adults and caring for one's family are complementary: as part of the caring responsibilities are taken off their shoulders, informal carers are relieved

somewhat of this heavy burden and are able to keep up these duties for a longer period of time (Attias-Donfut *et al*., 2005a; Chappell & Blandford, 1991; Daatland & Herlofson, 2001). Parents, in their turn, are able to offer their children and grandchildren financial support in difficult times thanks to improved pension arrangements.

In 2004 a large-scale survey was held among people aged 50 and over in eleven European countries: the *Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe* (SHARE). The data from the second public release version of this survey were used to gain a deeper insight into the state of intergenerational solidarity in Europe in our day and age. The focus of our study was on the relations between parents and their adult children, the critical nexus in intergenerational webs. Issues addressed were how many older adults lived with one of their children and the frequency of contact with non-coresident children, the extent to which elderly Europeans are still prepared to receive care from their families and give assistance to their children and grandchildren, the actual amount of support exchanged, and whether family solidarity is stronger in southern European countries where the welfare state is less developed than elsewhere in Europe and where the family still occupies a central position in society. The most important findings of this study are described here, followed by some limitations and suggestions for future research.

7.2. Summary of findings

Intergenerational solidarity alive and well

Although based on cross-sectional data, our findings do not indicate at all that the structural and cultural changes in European families have resulted in a decline in actual intergenerational solidarity: parent-child ties among Europeans appear to be quite strong. This confirms the most common conclusion of previous studies (e.g. Attias-Donfut & Wolff, 2000; Chappell & Blandford, 1991; Daatland, 1992; Daatland & Herlofson, 2003a, 2003b; Hank, 2007; Tomassini *et al*., 2004b). Our findings, however, are based on a large sample of no less than eleven European countries and different dimensions of solidarity, which we studied both separately and simultaneously.

The majority (51-89%) of European parents aged 50 and over had at least one child with whom they coresided or who lived in close proximity (5 kilometres or less). We found that seeing or speaking to each other regularly is still the norm: 62-92 percent of the parents maintained more than weekly contact with at least

one of their non-coresident children. At the other end of the contact spectrum, no more than one percent had lost touch completely. As geographical proximity and frequent contact are a prerequisite for support exchange, these percentages are encouraging with a view to the almost inevitable need for support when people grow older. We also found that a sense of duty with respect to family care still exists albeit conditional on both the type of family member involved and the kind of support to be provided. Whereas the majority of European parents aged 50 and over felt that parents and grandparents have a duty to provide their children and grandchildren with help in kind, they felt less of an obligation for the family to provide care for the elderly and even more so to financially support ascending and descending kin. A final finding was that a substantial amount of support is being exchanged between parents and their non-coresident children. Parents receive and give help in kind, although receiving increases and giving decreases with age. About 8-22 percent of parents received household help, personal care or help with paperwork from one of their adult children at least once a month. Parents were less likely to give this kind of help to their children, but a substantial proportion helped their children with childminding: 37-56 percent looked after their grandchildren at least once a month. Exchange of financial support was predominantly downwards, from parents to children. Whereas about 9-30 percent of the parents gave 250 euros or more to any of their adult children per year, only 1-12 percent of the parents received financial help from their children. Considering the different solidarity domains simultaneously, the majority of European late-life families are characterized by (1) having a child nearby, (2) being in frequent contact with at least one of the children, (3) having strong family care obligations, and (4) regular exchange of help in kind either from parents to children ('descending familialism', 35%) or from children to parents ('ascending familialism', 25%).

Differentials at the individual level

The general statement that intergenerational solidarity is alive and well does not mean that parent-child ties are strong in all European late-life families. Large sociodemographic differentials emerge. Many of these differentials confirm previous research findings and common assumptions in the broader socio-political arena but disprove others.

While we found no clear *gender* differences with regard to geographical proximity between parents and their non-coresident children, mothers exhibited higher levels of contact with their children than fathers did. Moreover, daughters had more frequent contact with their parents than sons. As a result, contact

between mothers and daughters was most frequent, father-son contact least frequent. Gender also appears to be a strong predictor of both the incidence and kind of support exchange. Mothers were not only the main recipients but also the main providers of help in kind and the likelihood of receiving help in kind was greater if the parent had one or more daughters. Fathers, on the other hand, were more inclined to assist their children financially. Contrary to what is commonly believed and contrary to a number of previous American studies (e.g. Gans & Silverstein, 2006; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Stein *et al*., 1998), however, mothers were not found to express a stronger sense of duty towards frail and needy elderly, children and grandchildren than fathers. In fact, the reverse appeared to be the case. So, although women had more frequent contact and exchanged more help in kind with their children, they did not have a stronger sense of family care obligation than fathers. Several explanations are possible. It might be that mothers help their children without experiencing it as an obligation. Alternatively, women might give more realistic answers than men. Women might give less socially desirable, and therefore more valid answers because they are all too familiar with the practice of caring (Leira *et al*., 2005; Millar & Warman, 1996; Rosenthal, 1985). Men, on the other hand, tend to subscribe to the importance of caring for parents and children in a theoretical sense. They are less inclined than women to accept the consequence, namely that they are the ones who should provide this care.

Another common belief is that *parental divorce* leads to a weakening of ties between parents and children (e.g. Popenoe, 1988; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Previous studies (e.g. Barrett & Lynch, 1999; Coleman *et al*., 1997; Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990; De Graaf & Fokkema, 2007; Dykstra, 1998; Grundy & Shelton, 2001; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Lye *et al*., 1995) and our own findings largely confirm this belief. Parental divorce had a negative effect on geographical proximity. Divorced single parents were less likely to live close to one of their children compared with their married and widowed counterparts and they had less intensive contact with their children. Divorced fathers in particular had relatively few contacts with their children, but being divorced also significantly reduced mothers' contact with their children. Furthermore, divorced single parents had weaker feelings of family care obligation than married parents. In addition, divorced single parents were less likely to give their children help in kind than parents in intact marriages. Lacking a partner, however, is a more likely explanation for this latter finding than being divorced; divorced single parents were not less supportive than their widowed counterparts. Finally, although single parents received more help in kind from

their children, suggesting that having a partner is an important resource when help is needed, this was the case in particular for those who were 'single' because of the death of the partner; being divorced had a strong negative effect on receiving help in kind from their children, suggesting that divorce works against the principle of need (Kalmijn, 2006).

Contrary to parental divorce, *divorce among adult children* appeared to have a less pronounced negative effect on parent-child ties, a finding that is consistent with earlier work (Dykstra, 1998). The only effect we found is a lower number of yearly contacts among parents who had one or more divorced children compared with parents with children without a history of disruption. Financial support given by parents to children was even higher when one or more children were divorced.

In accordance with earlier studies (e.g. Hank, 2007; Kalmijn & Dykstra, 2006; Liefbroer & Mulder, 2006; Mulder & Kalmijn, 2006; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Ward, 2001), we found that both the parents' and the children's *socioeconomic status* had an effect on the different dimensions of intergenerational solidarity and the effect was substantial. First, the higher the parents' level of education and income, the less likely it was for one of their children to live at a distance closer than five kilometres. This likelihood was also lower when one or more of their children were highly educated. Second, parents who were better educated or had a higher income as well as parents with one or more highly educated children had less frequent contact with their children; the negative effect of children's level of education on contact frequency was attributed primarily to the fact that they lived further away from the parental home. Third, the more highly educated and wealthier parents had weaker feelings of family care obligation. Fourth, socioeconomic status had a negative effect on the intergenerational exchange of help in kind: parents with higher incomes were less likely to receive help in kind from their children, and parents with highly educated children were less likely to support them. Again, the latter finding was largely ascribed to the fact that highly educated children lived at a greater distance from their parental home. The negative effect of parents' income on receiving help in kind is probably related to the fact that people who are well-off can afford to buy private care. Living at a greater distance from their children, having less frequent contact and having weaker feelings of obligation towards them did not, however, prevent parents with a higher socioeconomic status from giving their children financial support. On the contrary, better educated parents, parents with

a high income and those with one or more highly educated children were more likely to give their children money.

Being *religious* was found to be positively connected with geographical proximity, frequent contact and a stronger sense of family duty. Religiosity, however, rarely has an impact on intergenerational support exchange. There were no great differences in the likelihood of giving or receiving support between parents who practiced their religion regularly and non-religious parents.

Not surprisingly, parents with *health problems* were more likely to be the recipients and less likely to be the providers of non-financial support than their healthy counterparts. Parents' health status was not found to influence their likelihood to provide financial help to any of their children. Nor were any differences observed between parents in good and poor health in terms of geographical proximity and contact frequency with their children and a sense of parental and grandparental duty to care for children and grandchildren. Parents with health problems did express less strong feelings of family responsibility to care for frail and needy elderly. It would appear that they want to relieve the burden of care for their children out of altruistic motives (Gans & Silverstein, 2006).

Family size had a clear effect on geographical proximity and contact frequency: the more children parents had, the more likely they were to live near one of their children and to have frequent contact with at least one of them. This is not surprising: people with more children had a greater likelihood of living close to at least one child and a greater pool of children whom they could meet regularly. This finding is consistent with previous studies (e.g. Kalmijn & Dykstra, 2006; Tomassini *et al*., 2004b; Uhlenberg & Cooney, 1990) and suggests that having a large family serves as a kind of old-age insurance. However, a significant difference in help in kind received was observed only between one-child parents and those with four or more children; parents who had two or three children were not more likely to receive help in kind than those with only one child.

It is generally believed that the increased *labour force participation* of women has eroded intergenerational solidarity. People with a paid job have less leisure time than those without a paid job. This would suggest that it is more difficult for them to stay in touch with and to support their parents. Our findings do not strongly support this assumption, however. No differences were found between parents who only had children without a paid job and other parents in terms of

the frequency of contact with one of the children and the likelihood of receiving help in kind. Nor was the children's employment status related to geographical proximity to their parents and a sense of obligation towards children and grandchildren. Whereas employment status *was* found to have an impact on whether or not parents gave support, it did not point in a single direction. While the provision of financial help was more common if the children had no paid job, providing help in kind was more common if one or more children did have a paid job.

Between-country differences

Even after controlling for parent and child characteristics, substantial differences in intergenerational solidarity remain. These between-country differences tend to follow the general division into an individualistic north and a familistic south, as reported in the literature (e.g. Banfield, 1958; Höllinger & Haller, 1990; Reher, 1998), but this was not the case for all solidarity dimensions studied.

Our findings confirm previous studies (e.g. Farkas & Hogan, 1995; Grundy, 1996; Hank, 2007; Höllinger & Haller, 1990; Kohli *et al*., 2005; Murphy, 1996; Pampel, 1983; Reher, 1998; Tomassini *et al*., 2004a, 2004b) that older parents in Italy, Spain and Greece are much more likely than their central and northern European counterparts to coreside with a child or to live close to their children and to have frequent contact with at least one of their non-coresident children. We also found that feelings of family care obligation exhibit a clear north-south divide, in line with prior research (e.g. Glaser *et al*., 1998; Walker, 1993): older parents in southern Europe had stronger feelings of family care obligation than their counterparts in the north. With regard to support exchange, however, no clear north-south pattern emerged. The fact that southern European older adults had a stronger sense of duty towards frail and needy elderly and towards children and grandchildren, does not mean that older adults and their children in these countries actually helped each other more than in the rest of Europe. On the contrary, the percentage of older adults who received help in kind from children and the percentage of older adults who supported their children, including financial assistance and childminding, were lower in Spain and, to a lesser extent, in Italy than in most of the other European countries. Relatively high rates of help in kind received from children and financial support given to children were only found in Greece. Where southern European parents and children did help each other, however, it was often on a regular basis. The opposite was found for central Europe and even more so for northern Europe. The percentage of older parents who gave money to their children was

significantly higher in Sweden and Belgium than in the other European countries. In addition, relatively high rates of help in kind exchange were found in some of the central and northern European countries, albeit less frequent than in southern Europe. This suggests that formal care facilities relieve the burden faced by informal carers rather than fully replacing informal care.

The four distinct late-life family types, derived from the different domains of intergenerational solidarity, are present in each country, but their distributions vary. The proportion of late-life families in the 'descending familialism' type – living nearby, frequent contact, strong family care obligations, and primarily help in kind from parents to adult children – was highest in Belgium and lowest in Denmark, France, Austria, Switzerland, and Spain. The 'ascending familialism' type – living nearby, frequent contact, strong family care obligations, and primarily help in kind from children to ageing parents – was most strongly represented in the southern European countries Italy, Spain, and Greece and least strongly in Sweden and Denmark. The highest proportion of families in the 'supportive at distance' type – not living nearby, frequent contact, weak family care obligations, and primarily financial transfers from parents to adult children – was found in Sweden and Denmark, followed by the Netherlands, while the lowest proportion of this late-life family type was found in Italy and Spain and, to a lesser extent, in Belgium. Finally, the representation of the 'autonomous' type – not living nearby, little contact, moderate family care obligations and few support exchanges – was highest in France and Switzerland and lowest in the southern European countries.

The above findings suggest that intergenerational solidarity is alive and well across Europe but its nature differs between countries and is commensurate with the availability of public and other resources. The high prevalence of coresidence in southern Europe and extensive mutual support in Greece, for instance, are more likely to be a social protection mechanism rather than a reflection of strong family ties and a high level of satisfaction with family relations (Zunzunegui *et al*., 2001). If poverty is successfully tackled in these countries, this type of intergenerational solidarity may diminish (Lyberaki & Tinios, 2005). In northern Europe, where a wider range of public services, benefits and other resources are available, the more arduous and constraining care duties are replaced by less intensive, and probably more voluntary help in kind and larger financial transfers given the more individualistic lifestyles.

7.3. Limitations and suggestions for further research

This study has provided a more differentiated picture of the strength, nature and direction of solidarity between older adults and their children, its variation among European countries and its determinants. We did so by systematically investigating different dimensions of solidarity, both separately and simultaneously, by including eleven European countries, and by examining the effect of both parent and child characteristics. However, some limitations of our study need to be addressed.

SHARE was conducted from the perspective of the parents. In other words, the dataset did not allow us to view parent-child solidarity from both sides. This is unfortunate as it is highly likely that the children's perspective would yield other outcomes (Mandemakers & Dykstra, forthcoming; Shapiro, 2004). Previous studies have shown, for instance, that the provision of support to parents differs depending on whether one asks the parent or the child (Aquilino, 1999; Klein Ikkink *et al.*, 1999). A recent Dutch study has shown, for example, that older adults are less prepared to receive informal care than their children are to provide care of this kind (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2007). The Generation and Gender Surveys (GGS), which are currently being conducted within the framework of the Generations and Gender Program (GGP) under the auspices of the Population Activities Unit of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva (Vikat *et al.*, 2007), will enable researchers in the near future to examine intergenerational solidarity from a 'bottom up' and a 'top down' perspective.

The analyses of geographical proximity, contact frequency and support exchange were almost exclusively restricted to older parents and a specific child (i.e., the closest living child, the most contacted child, the child that provides most support, and the child receiving most support). Consequently, our findings provide insight into intergenerational solidarity at the level of the family, or more precisely, of the parent. In addition, in order to gain an insight into the effect of family composition, family size (number of children) and children's gender, partner status, employment status and level of education were considered. It would have been more elegant to study the solidarity of parents with each child. Examination of all children would provide a more complete picture of the interdependence among the children (the effect of their position within the sibling network) and could also improve our understanding of intra-family bargaining processes underlying children's solidarity towards their

parents (Konrad *et al*., 2002; Van Gaalen *et al*., 2008). In this context, important research questions are: Is the solidarity of a child towards its parent less strong if he/she has a sibling who is geographically closer to the parent or who receives more support than the child him/herself? Do parents invest more socially, practically and financially in first-born children than they do in later-born children, and vice versa?

Solidarity between parents and their adult children was central to this study. Moreover, due to data limitations, the impact of partner status was restricted to the effect of being single after divorce or widowhood; possible differences between first-married parents and those in second- or higher order marriages could not be studied. As a result, this study only provides insight into the solidarity of married and single older parents towards the generations below them. Given the increase in life expectancy, it is likely that late middle-aged and young-old generations, particularly women, will in the future face commitments to their children or young grandchildren while, at the same time, their parents or parents-in-law are in need of help (Agree *et al*., 2003; Brody, 1981; Grundy & Henretta, 2006; Soldo, 1996). It would be interesting to examine the degree of solidarity among this so-called pivot generation towards both younger and older family generations in the future. Do members of this generation seek to provide help in equal measure to younger and older generations or do they give priority to the needs of the young over the old (or vice versa)? As the prevalence of new family forms is increasing, we strongly recommend that future European comparative research also pay more attention to solidarity among these new family forms, such as childless couples and so-called binuclear families, where divorce is followed by remarriage. In this context, challenging research questions are: Does remarriage fully repair distorted parent-child relationships, in particular with divorced fathers? Are children less likely to help their stepfathers or stepmothers than their biological fathers or mothers? Do repartnered parents invest less in stepchildren than in their biological offspring? How do people without vertical downward ties (the childless) manage their needs? Are childless people at risk of becoming socially isolated and of lacking necessary support given that children tend to be the most supportive members in a person's network, or do other family members (such as siblings and cousins) assume the caring role?

Another limitation of our study is that we used rather crude indicators of associational and functional solidarity. The associational dimension of intergenerational solidarity was measured in terms of the frequency of contact

between parents and at most four non-coresident children. SHARE did not distinguish between different modes of contact, such as face-to-face contact and contact by phone and by mail. Moreover, it did not provide additional data about the content and perceived quality of parent-child contacts; information was available only on the frequency of conflicts between parents and their children. The functional dimension of intergenerational solidarity was restricted to the frequency of care assistance (household help, personal care, help with paperwork), looking after grandchildren, and exchanging monetary support; SHARE did not cover emotional support, nor was information available on the level of satisfaction and the evaluation of support exchange.

Our findings did not indicate that European families are 'in decline'. Although coresidence is not very common in our day, especially not in northern and central Europe, older adults today live in close proximity to one of their children, they have frequent contact with at least one of their children, feel obliged to care for their children and grandchildren, and exchange substantial amounts of support. On the basis of our cross-sectional data, however, no conclusions can be drawn about whether solidarity between parents and their adult children is becoming weaker. Longitudinal data provided by further waves of SHARE will allow us to properly test this assertion.

Our findings reveal that substantial country variations in intergenerational solidarity exist, even after controlling for possible country differences in parent and child characteristics. It is likely that these between-country differences are attributable to different sociocultural circumstances and specific national contexts. For a substantive interpretation of these between-country differences, however, future research will need to incorporate relevant country-level (macro) indicators into multilevel models.

A final limitation of our study is the lack of data on eastern European countries; SHARE covers only the countries of northern, central and southern Europe. This is regrettable as eastern European countries have witnessed more rapid and more dramatic demographic changes and are undergoing different socioeconomic and political developments and have different welfare systems from those in the rest of Europe (Fokkema & Esveldt, 2006). A comparison of intergenerational solidarity between the 'old' and 'new' members of the European Union is highly desirable. The above-mentioned GGS-data, covering several eastern European countries, will make comparison possible in the near future.

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Appendix Measurement of the independent variables

	Related question in SHARE	Categories
Characteristics parents		
Gender	Observation by interviewer	Respondent is female (0 = no, 1 = yes)
Age	In which month and year were you born?	Age groups '50-59' (*ref*), '60-69' and '70+' *Note*. Age (in years) = 2004 (interview year SHARE) -/- year of birth
Partner status	Are you…? • living with a spouse • living with a partner • living as a single What is your marital status? • married and living together with spouse • registered partnership • married, living separated from spouse • never married • divorced • widowed	Respondent is either married[a] (= 0) or single (= 1) Respondent is either single after widowhood (= 0) or single after divorced (= 1)[b] Respondent is divorced and male (0 = no, 1 = yes)[c] *Note*. Married = not living with either a spouse or a partner, regardless of his/her marital status Single, widowed = living as a single and his/her marital status is 'widowed' Single, divorced = living as a single and his/her marital status is 'divorced'
Health status	Would you say your health is ...? • excellent • very good • good • fair • poor	Respondent has health problems (0 = no, 1 = yes) *Note*. Health problems = rating his/her health as poor; severely limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do; or one or more limitations with ADL or IADL

	Related question in SHARE	Categories
continue Health status	For the past six months at least, to what extent have you been limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do? • severely limited • limited, but not severely • not limited Please tell me if you have any difficulty with [the following six activities of daily living (ADL) and seven instrumental activities of daily living (IADL)] because of a physical, mental, emotional or memory problem. Exclude any difficulties you expect to last less than three months • dressing, including putting on shoes and socks • walking across a room • bathing or showering • eating, such as cutting up your food • getting in and out of bed • using the toilet, including getting up or down • using a map to figure out how to get around in a strange place • preparing a hot meal • shopping for groceries • making telephone calls • taking medications • doing work around the house or garden • managing money, such as paying bills and keeping track of expenses	
Educational attainment	What is the highest school leaving certificate or school degree that you have obtained? Country specific answer categories, converted to 'none' and ISCED-coding 1 to 6	Educational groups 'low' (*ref*), 'middle' and 'high' *Note*. Low = no certificate or school degree obtained or ISCED-code 1 or 2 Middle = ISCED-code 3 or 4 High = ISCED-code 5 or 6

	Related question in SHARE	Categories
Income	Generated by several income questions	Income groups in four quartiles: '0 – 25%' (*ref*), '26 – 50%', '51 – 75%' and '>75%'
Religiosity	Thinking about the present, about how often do you pray?[d] • more than once a day • once daily or almost daily • a couple of times a week • once a week • less than once a week • never	Religiosity groups 'prays daily' (*ref*), 'prays weekly', prays less than weekly' and 'never prays' *Note*. Prays daily = more than once a day or once daily or almost daily Prays weekly = a couple of times a week or once a week
Number of children	How many children do you have that are still alive? Please count all natural children, fostered, adopted and stepchildren (including those of your husband/wife/partner)	'1 child' (*ref*), '2 children', '3 children', and '4 or more children'
Grandchildren	How many grandchildren do you (and your husband/wife/partner), have altogether?	Respondent has one or more grandchildren (0 = no, 1 = yes)
Parents	Is your natural mother/father still alive?	Respondents' mother and/or father is still alive (0 = no, 1 = yes)

	Related question in SHARE	Categories
Characteristics of adult children		
Gender	Is [child name] male or female? (up to 17 children)	Respondent has one or more daughters (0 = no, 1 = yes)
Partner status	What is the marital status of [child name]? (up to 4 children) • married and living together with spouse • registered partnership • married, living separated from spouse • never married • divorced • widowed Does [child name] have a partner who lives with him/her? • yes • no	Respondent has one or more children who live with a partner (0 = no, 1 = yes) Respondent has one or more divorced children (0 = no, 1 = yes) *Note*. Living with a partner = marital status is 'married and living together with spouse'; marital status is 'registered partnership'; or other marital status but having a partner who lives with him/her
Employment status	What is [child name]'s employment status? (up to 4 children) • full-time employed • part-time employed • self-employed or working for own family business • unemployed • in vocational training /retraining/education • parental leave • in retirement or early retirement • permanent sick or disabled • looking after home or family • other	Respondent has one or more children with a paid job (0 = no, 1 = yes) *Note*. Paid job = full- or part-time employed, self-employed or working for own family business
Educational attainment	What is the highest school leaving certificate or school degree [child name] has obtained? (up to 4 children) Country specific answer categories, converted to 'none' and ISCED-coding 1 to 6	Respondent has one or more children with high education (0 = no, 1 = yes) *Note*. High = ISCED-code 5 or 6

	Related question in SHARE	Categories
Other types of help		
Professional help	During the last twelve months, did you receive in your own home any of these kinds of care? • professional or paid nursing or personal care • professional or paid home help, for domestic tasks that you could not perform yourself due to health problems • meals-on-wheels • none of these	Respondent has *received* professional help during the last twelve months (0 = no, 1 = yes) *Note*. Professional help = either 'professional or paid nursing or personal care' or 'professional or paid home help'
Help in kind received	Has any family member from outside the household, any friend or neighbour given you (or your husband/wife/partner) any kind of help? If so, which family member from outside the household, friend or neighbour has helped you (or your husband/wife/partner) in the last twelve months? (up to 3 persons, including children) Which types of help has this person provided in the last twelve months? • personal care, e.g. dressing, bathing or showering, eating, getting in or out of bed, using the toilet • practical household help, e.g. with home repairs, gardening, transportation, shopping, household chores • help with paperwork, such as filling out forms, settling financial or legal matters	Respondent has *received* help in kind during the last twelve months from any of his/her non-coresident children at least once a month (0 = no, 1 = yes)

	Related question in SHARE	Categories
continue		
Help in kind received	In the last twelve months, how often altogether have you (or your husband/wife/partner) received such help from this person? Was it… • almost daily • almost every week • almost every month • less often	
Help in kind given	In the last twelve months, have you personally given any kind of help to a family member from outside the household, a friend or neighbour? If so, which family member from outside the household, friend or neighbour have you helped in the last twelve months? (up to 3 persons, including children) Which types of help have you given to this person in the last twelve months? • personal care, e.g. dressing, bathing or showering, eating, getting in or out of bed, using the toilet • practical household help, e.g. with home repairs, gardening, transportation, shopping, household chores • help with paperwork, such as filling out forms, settling financial or legal matters	Respondent has *given* help in kind during the last twelve months to any of his/her non-coresident children or looked after any of his/her grandchildren at least once a month (0 = no, 1 = yes)

	Related question in SHARE	Categories
continue		
Help in kind given	In the last twelve months, how often altogether have you given such help to this person? Was it… • almost daily • almost every week • almost every month • less often During the last twelve months, have you regularly or occasionally looked after your grandchild/grandchildren without the presence of the parents? If so, on average, how often did you look after the child/children of [child name] in the last twelve months? Was it… • almost daily • almost every week • almost every month • less often	
Financial help	Please think of the last twelve months. Not counting any shared housing or shared food, have you (or your husband/wife/partner) received any financial or material gift or support from anyone inside or outside this household amounting to 250 euro or more? If so, to whom did you (or your husband/wife/partner) provide such financial assistance or gift in the last twelve months? (up to 3 persons, including children)	Respondent has *given* financial support during the last twelve months to any of his/her non-coresident children (0 = no, 1 = yes)

	Related question in SHARE	Categories
Gift	Please think of the last twelve months. Not counting any shared housing or shared food, have you (or your husband/wife/partner) received any financial or material gift or support from anyone inside or outside this household amounting to 250 euro or more? If so, who has given you (or your husband/wife/partner) a gift or assistance in the past twelve months? (up to 3 persons that have given or helped the most, including parents and parents-in-law) About how much did this person give you (or your husband/wife/partner) altogether in the last twelve months? Not counting any large gift we have already talked about, have you (or your husband/wife/partner) ever received a gift or inherited money, goods, or property worth more than 5000 euro? If so, from whom did you (or your husband/wife/partner) receive this gift or inheritance? (up to 5 persons, including parents and parents-in-law)	Respondent has *received* financial support amounting 5000 euros or more during the last twelve months from his/her parents or parents-in-law or has ever received a gift of 5000 euros or more by his/her parents or parents-in-law (0 = no, 1 = yes)
Geographical distance	Where does [child name] live? (up to 17 children) • in the same household • in the same building • less than 1 kilometre away • between 1 and 5 kilometres away • between 5 and 25 kilometres away • between 25 and 100 kilometres away • between 100 and 500 kilometres away • more than 500 kilometres away • more than 500 kilometres away in another country	Respondent has one or more children within 5 kilometres (0 = no, 1 = yes)

	Related question in SHARE	Categories
Contract frequency	During the past 12 months, how often did you (or your husband/wife/partner) have contact with [child name], either personally, by phone or mail? (up to 4 children) • daily • several times a week • about once a week • about every two weeks • about once a month • less than once a month • never	Respondent has more than weekly contact with one or more of his/her children (0 = no, 1 = yes)
Family duty	In your opinion, who – the family or the government – should bear the responsibility for…[e] help with household chores for older persons who are in need such as help with cleaning, washing? personal care for older persons who are in need such as nursing or help with bathing or dressing? • totally family • mainly family • both equally • mainly government • totally government	Respondent has the opinion that the family is mainly or totally responsible for household help and/or personal care (0 = no, 1 = yes)
Parental duty	The following statements are related to the duties people may have in their family. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.[e] Grandparents' duty is to contribute towards the economic security of grandchildren and their families	Respondent strongly agrees or agrees that grandparents have the duty to financially support grandchildren (0 = no, 1 = yes)

	Related question in SHARE	Categories
	Parents' duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being Grandparents' duty is to be there for grandchildren in cases of difficulty (such as divorce of parents or illness) Grandparents' duty is to help grandchildren's parents in looking after young grandchildren	Respondent strongly agrees or agrees that parents and grandparents have the duty to give help in kind to children and grandchildren (0 = no, 1 = yes)

[a] For those respondents who were married, it was not possible to assess whether they were previously divorced or widowed. Hence, the married group includes persons who were remarried.

[b] This additional dummy variable allows us to assess whether on top of an effect of being single on solidarity, the divorced are different from the widowed.

[c] In those regression models including the interaction between divorce and gender, the main effect of gender applies to married and widowed parents.

[d] The question about religiosity was included in the self-completion questionnaire and not asked in France.

[e] Both the statements about the duty to care for the elderly and the statements about the duty to care for children and grandchildren were included in the self-completion questionnaire.

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At present, our knowledge of the current state of solidarity between parents and their adult children in Europe is limited. Insight into contemporary intergenerational solidarity is not only important for the well-being of individuals but is also of great interest to policy makers. Patterns of intergenerational solidarity are not only affected by social policies and services but also reveal a number of important social policy issues and dilemmas. Will encouraging labour force participation among women and older workers mean they have less time to care for their dependents? Should formal care services be further expanded to relieve the burden faced by family members with the risk that they start to replace informal care?

This report aims to contribute to this insight by providing a more differentiated picture of the strength, nature and direction of solidarity between parents and their adult children, its variation among European countries and its determinants. Our findings indicate that parent-child ties are quite strong. The majority of Europeans aged 50 and over live in close proximity and are in frequent contact with at least one of the children. Moreover, strong family care obligations still exist and a substantial amount of support is being exchanged between parents and their non-co resident children.

Interesting differences, however, emerge between individuals and countries. While fathers are more inclined to assist their children financially, mothers have more frequent contact and exchange more help in kind with their children. Being religious and having a large family have a positive impact on several dimensions of intergenerational solidarity. Parental divorce and a better socioeconomic position of parents and children, on the other hand, lead to a weakening of parent-child ties in many respects. Contrary to common belief, employed children show solidarity with their parents as much as those without a paid job. Differences in the nature of intergenerational solidarity between the European countries tend to follow the general division into an individualistic north and a familistic south.