

Social and political attitudes of the elderly in the Netherlands

by Paul Dekker and Peter Ester

Social research on the elderly has been primarily focussed on social indicators like the use of social services, housing needs, health, social isolation, disposable income, and social security. Research on older people's beliefs and attitudes about society and politics is rare, however. Several social developments such as the rapidly increasing proportion of older people within the total population, the expression of political claims by elderly movements, emancipation trends among older people, their improved economic outlook and educational levels, underlines the growing social significance of the elderly. As such it is interesting to study older people's social and political attitudes, which is the main aim of this paper.

An analysis of Dutch survey data using a wide range of social and political attitudes and by comparing three age groups: the elderly (people between 65 and 74 years old) and two other age groups (people between 55 and 64 years old, and between 25 and 54 years old) shows besides many attitudinal similarities some clear differences. These differences generally reflect public notions about older people's attitudes and do not reveal that the elderly are moving into a direction which drastically differs from the rest of the population. Subsequent cohort analyses do not support explanations of observed differences primarily in terms of generation effects or specific trends among oldest cohorts. No evidence could be found for current popular hypotheses about possibly diverging norms, beliefs, values, and attitudes among the elderly of the future.

Youth-unemployment in the Thirties

by Willibrord de Graaf

In the ongoing economic crisis references are frequently made to the unemployment of the Thirties. But there appears to be very little systematic insight in numbers, the different age- and social groups affected, the regional distribution of unemployment and some causes of unemployment. This article is written with the aim of offering – as much as possible – an overview of the existing materials, with an emphasis on youth-unemployment.

Because of the limitations of the official statistics, other sources have to be included. Although it is difficult to draw hard conclusions, several points can be indicated: unemployment among young people and women was relatively low (also in comparison with the actual situation), and unemployment could especially be found in the lower social classes. The rapidly declining unemployment among young people at the end of the Thirties might point at the use of young labourers because they were cheap and flexible.

The great unknown: an evaluation of the computer as data collection instrument in survey research

by Anton J. Nederhof

Although data collection by means of computers is on the increase in the social and behavioral sciences, systematic knowledge is lacking about how use of a computer in data gathering affects the process of data collection and both the validity and reliability of the data. The sources of bias reviewed include: computer-anxiety, response sets, social desirability bias, differences in duration of data collection, differences in accuracy, and experimenter effects. Although it should be taken into account that many of the studies show methodological problems, data collected by means of a computer did not show very large differences with data collected through other modalities.