

What's the best age to retire?

Level

Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2–B1 and above)

Comment

This eLesson text explores a change in employment law in the UK: 65 is no longer the default retirement age and employees can now stay at work beyond 65 if they wish. This topic is a useful one for discussion and comparison with different countries.

How to use the lesson

- 1 If you can, put up some images on the classroom walls of people of different ages, happily doing different things: doing a sport, being surrounded by friends, getting married, working, winning an award, an older person doing something enjoyable like gardening, someone painting, a beautiful home, etc. Let students look at them and discuss in pairs which pictures they like and why, then ask them to prioritise the different things in exercise 1 individually.
- 2 Students work in pairs (or threes) to compare their priorities (exercise 2). As the activity draws to a close, ask students to consider how these priorities might be affected by a) gender and b) age. Take whole-class feedback on some of their ideas.
- 3 Focus on the point: *having a comfortable retirement*. Elicit what a 'comfortable retirement' might involve. Brainstorm ideas, eg going to bed when you want; having time / money to travel, etc. Elicit from students what the retirement age is in their country, for men and women (in the UK it is currently 65 for men and 60 for women but is set to rise for both to 65 (or more) by 2020). Then students complete the word class task exercise 3. This exercise pre-teaches some lexis related to the text. Check students understand the words; elicit collocations that go with pension: *live off / on, draw, be on + a pension*. Elicit *unemployment* too.
- 4 Students read the first paragraph to find out what news has made some older people happy (exercise 4).
- 5 Let students read the text and add in the questions which head each paragraph 2–7 (exercise 5). Let them compare their answers in pairs.
- 6 Exercise 6 is a primarily a comprehension task so do not worry if your students do not produce 100% accurate questions – it is the sense which is important. However, if they are a) accuracy-oriented or b) stronger, then encourage them to work on the accuracy of the questions too. Note that the task is graded, so the more difficult questions are towards the end. If necessary, you could put the questions at random on the board to help weaker students.
- 7 Exercise 7 is an oral fluency activity. Give students three minutes thinking time, to consider the different points and whether they agree or not. Explain that they should give longer answers, with details, reasons or examples. They then discuss the points in threes. Tell students that they will need to report back the main points of their discussion at the end, so they should allocate a note-taker and 'reporter' to feed back on their discussion.

Answer key

- 1 Students' own answers.
- 2 Students' own answers.
- 3

Noun (thing)	Noun (person)	Verb	Adjective
pension	pensioner	pension someone off (colloquial)	—
retirement	retiree (US)	retire	retired
employment	employer, employee	employ	employed
finance	financier	finance	financial
campaign	campaigner	campaign	—
economy, economics	economist	economise	economical

- 4 Students' own words.

The government has decided that from October 2011, employees will no longer be forced to stop working at 65.

- 5 a 6 b 7 c 2 d 5 e 4 f 3

- 6 Students' own words.

65: When do people retire in the UK at the moment? / What is the compulsory retirement age?

around 25,000 a year: How many people retire against their wishes in the UK?

they don't have enough money: Why do some people want to work after 65?

they are reliable and experienced: Why are older workers good to employ?

ageist: What do some people think of the present law / policy?

it will take jobs from younger people: Why do some people think this is a bad idea?

they liked talking to older staff: What did one company find out about their customers?

air traffic controllers and police: In what kind of jobs will employers be able to keep the compulsory retirement age?

two adults to one pensioner: What will the percentage of working adults to pensioners be in 2040?

- 7 Students' own answers.

Related websites

The following websites might be useful, for either yourself or your students.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-10796718> (includes video and useful graphs comparing European countries)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-10800638> (questions and answers)

http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/politics/domestic_politics/retirement+age+to+become+more+flexible/3726877

<http://www.euronews.net/2010/07/29/britain-to-scrap-retirement-age/>

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/summ2009-2010/674summ.pdf>