

# AGING AS ONE OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN TERMS OF STATISTICAL EVALUATION

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## Abstract

The topic "Aging as one of the causes of poverty and social exclusion" is highly actual from a demographic point of view. In this paper we will focus on one of the most vulnerable parts of society, which currently doesn't receive attention it deserves. Our goal is not just highlight the seriousness of the problems of an aging generation, but also the attitudes of society towards these group of citizens. Problems of the aging generation involve a number of conflicts, interesting ideas and attitudes. Higher age is often associated with lack of opportunities for social contact, unmet needs of acknowledgment, following a gradual recognition of the overall social exclusion. Also, the financial security of older people is often insufficient and when the closest relatives for various reasons refuse to help, there is great likelihood for the person that his living standards will drop to or below the line of poverty. Today, the number of elderly people is growing and it is important that even in this stage of life a person would have a possibility to live meaningful full life. In this paper we are using quantitative methods to prove this sensitive topic.

**Keywords:** Family. The society. Aging generation. Care. Statistical methods.

**JEL Code:** J16, J17

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## Introduction

Quality of human life is a part of fundamental indicators. Long life does not mean high quality of life. We can easily recognize decrease of quality in the lives of elderly people. It is characterized by heavy atmosphere, addiction and loss of autonomy. When it comes to the quality of life, people aren't losing the meaning of life or opportunities to express their personality. Their social interactions are rich, while physical abilities may be impaired. (Bayer, 1998, p. 94)

## 1 Theoretical basis

Few of the most important factors affecting quality of life for elderly people are:

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Health - poor health and subjective difficulties connected with forgetfulness significantly reduce the feeling of well-being.

Loneliness and isolation - lack of interpersonal relationships, including relationships within the family, can rapidly disrupt life quality of geronta (elderly people).

Economic conditions - unsuitable housing and low financial income decrease the living conditions of elderly people and reduce satisfaction and quality of life. (Kociová et al., 2003, pp. 41-42)

Every situation in human life somehow affects the aging process. The main factors include the social situation in which one lives, where we include mainly self-sufficiency, and contact with others. Currently, no one of us doubts the importance of family in life, and for this aging generation especially a well-functioning family plays priority function. We cannot neglect the importance of spiritual development that helps these people to cope with the many negative issues in their lives. The economic situation is important as well, which for the older generation is a significant problem. Increased costs for medical care, diet meals, reduced income - all have a negative impact on an elderly person. Exact lack of financial resources causes poverty, thereby reducing the quality of life in the part of the population, it leads them into social isolation and often can later lead to suicidal expressions.

At the moment there isn't a society without the layer of poverty. A lot of people who are older, whom are retired, only increase this number. Poverty in Slovakia is associated with the transformation process and the liberalization of prices, which have a significant impact on social inequalities in society, which hit the most vulnerable layers of population.

"Poverty is not a marginal phenomenon in society, but affects estimated by many experts, about one third of the population of our planet. In its radical form poverty means homelessness, lack of things, vulnerability, poverty and helplessness. In this context we talk mostly about absolute poverty, when people lack minimum living standards in food, clothing and housing. Absolute poverty affects, according to Meyensa 630 million citizens in the world. " (Ondrejko, 2000, p. 31)

"Under poverty we generally understand social phenomenon characterized by a lack of vital resources of an individual or group. In this case, it is considered a social problem or a socio-pathological phenomenon. Sometimes, instead of the ambiguous concept of absolute poverty the term misery is being used. Compared with term misery, poverty is considered a

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less drastic situation in which an individual or social group can be situated in. The concept of misery is usually used in connection with hunger, physical or mental suffering or damage and social dependence. The lines of misery and poverty can not be established, and both terms are often being confused. "(Tokárová, 2002, p. 349)

Demographic revolution has affected whole world. Number of people older than 60 years, which is currently more than 600 million in the world, will double by the year 2025 and will virtually reach two billion by 2050. World Health Organization defines healthy aging as a process of seizing the opportunities for optimization of physical, social and mental well-being throughout whole life, so that the expectancy of healthy life can be prolonged and achieved. In such a rapidly aging world it is necessary to promote the active participation of elderly in social events, to use their human potential, experience and knowledge. This philosophy is aswell supported by the public defender of rights. ([Http://www.vop.gov.sk/files/File/VOPSept07.pdf](http://www.vop.gov.sk/files/File/VOPSept07.pdf))

A priority task of the young generation is also solidarity and empathy. For the mutual relationship between generations, kind of age discrimination against older people is well known as the term ageism. Poverty brings the number of problems for elderly people, which they can hardly handle without the help of the young generation.

"Social exclusion is a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and they are prevented from fully participating in society because of their poverty, lack of basic skills (competence) and lifelong learning opportunities or as a cause of discrimination. This holds them back, isolating them from employment, income and education opportunities as well as social and community networks and activities. They have very limited access to determining authority and thus often feel powerless and unable to manage and to control decisions that affect their daily lives. "(Tvrdoň, Kasanová, 2004, p. 16)

Social exclusion means social isolation, affecting different social groups including the elderly. Countries of the European Community are dealing with social exclusion since 1988 and this resulted in the adoption of program aimed towards the fight against poverty.

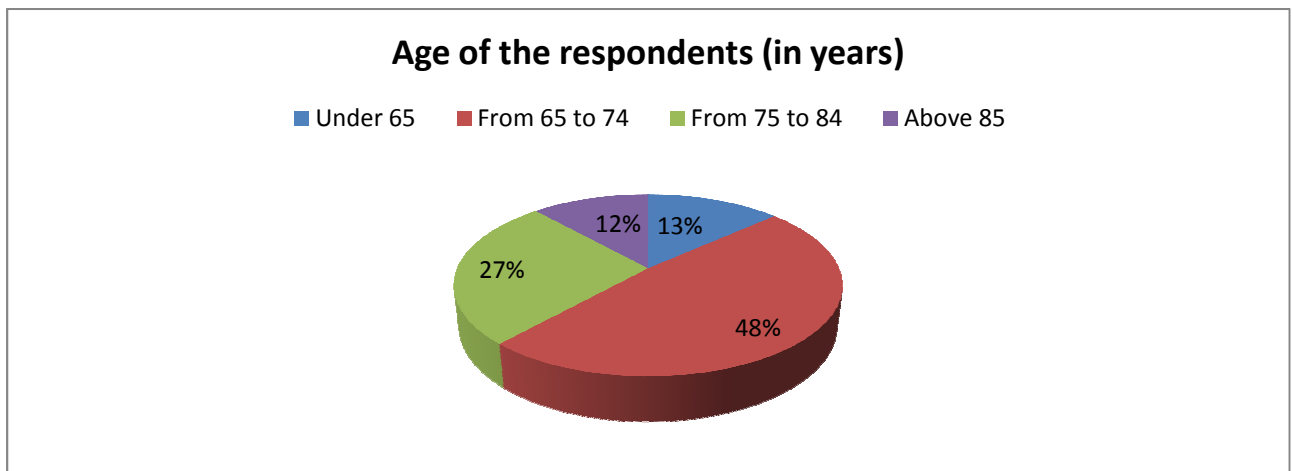
"In 1999, the term social exclusion has made it into the preamble of the European Social Charter, which says that" in a spirit of solidarity is necessary to combat social exclusion ". The third anti-poverty program of the European Community is using the concept

of social exclusion as a practical alternative for the old concept of poverty. "(Maresš, 1999, p. 165)

## 2 Results from our survey 2010

In 2010 a survey was realized, which was focused on the issue of quality life for seniors. Today no one doubts the importance of quality of life for individuals but also for society as a whole. There were 60 interviewed respondents, whose average age was 73.8 years. Of the total number of respondents, 60% were women and 40% of men. The largest age representation were respondents with age from 64 to 74 years, which was 48% of interviewed people.

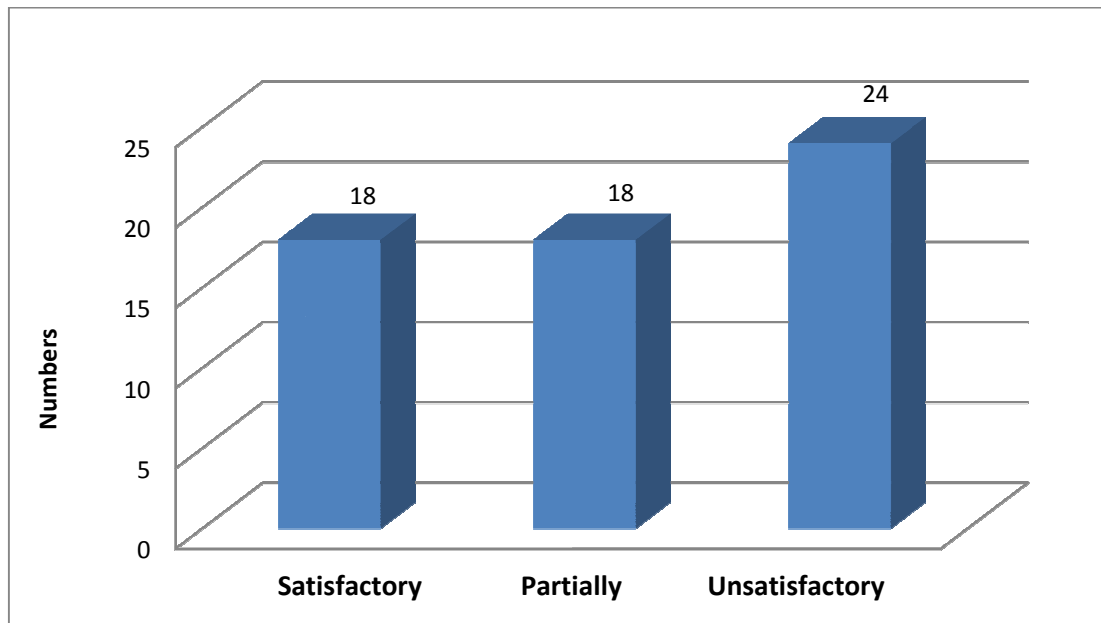
**Fig. 1: Age of the respondents (in years)**



Source: own processing

Interesting results were received in the analysis of environmental issues, where 40% of respondents answered negatively.

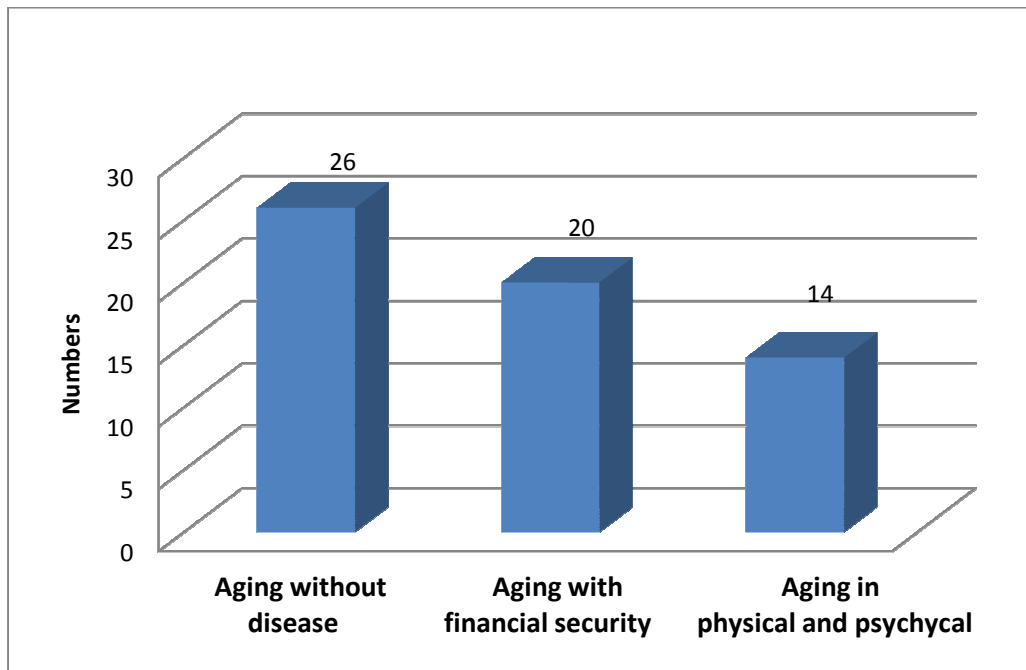
Fig. 2: How are you affected by the enviroment in which you live in?



Source: own processing

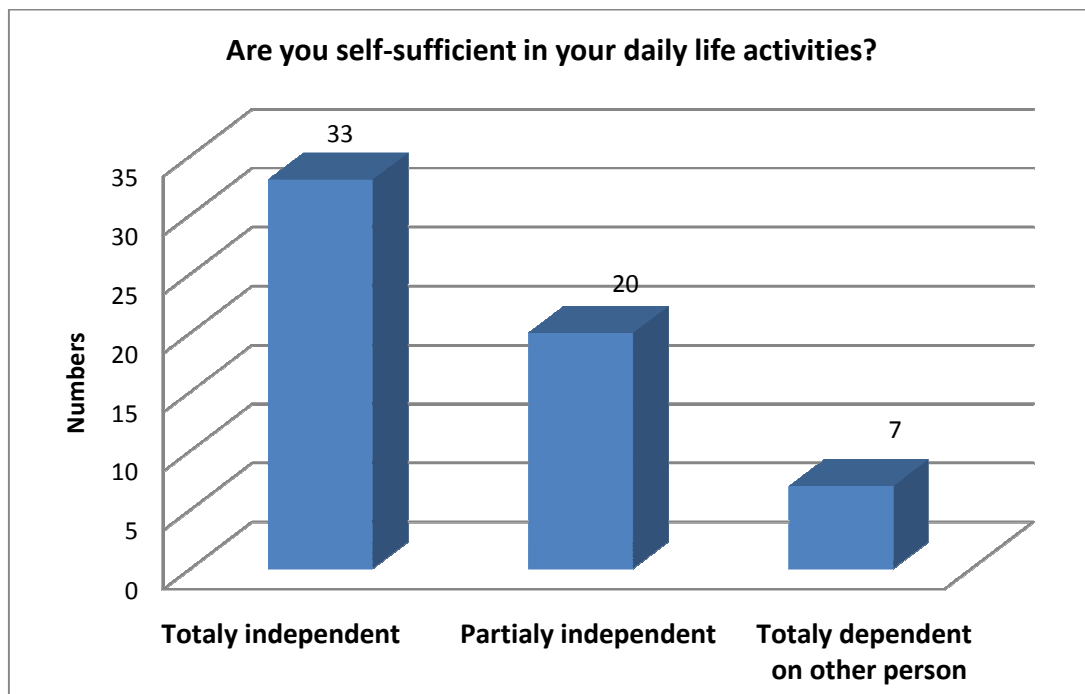
The priority value, that is significantly pointed out by the aging generation is important role of good health, which is demonstrated by the following results. 43.3% of respondents would wish to age with the absence of any disease. With this issue closely related to the problem of self-sufficiency and social contacts, which resulted in answers to the question "Do you visit social events at least once a week?" The answers are in the following charts

**Fig. 3: What do you understand under the term "healthy aging"?**



Source: own processing

**Fig. 4: Are you self-sufficient in your daily life activities?**

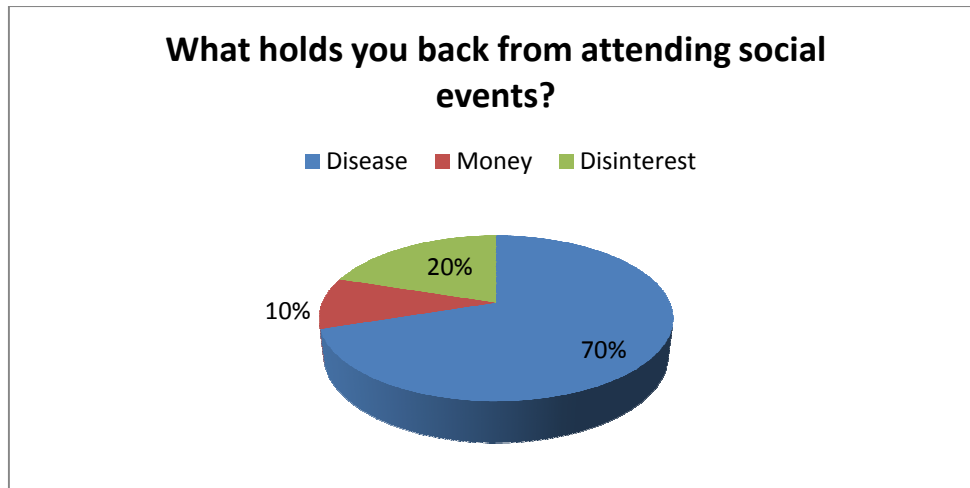


Source: own processing

The answer for question how often do older people attend on social activities was also interesting. Responses were as follows: Always when there is the possibility 15% of

respondents. Often 28.3% of respondents. Sometimes 46.6% of respondents. Rarely 10.10% of respondents. Most people answered sometimes with 46.6% of respondents and we wonder what are the reasons preventing the older generation from attending social events.

**Fig. 5: What do you hold back from attending social events?**



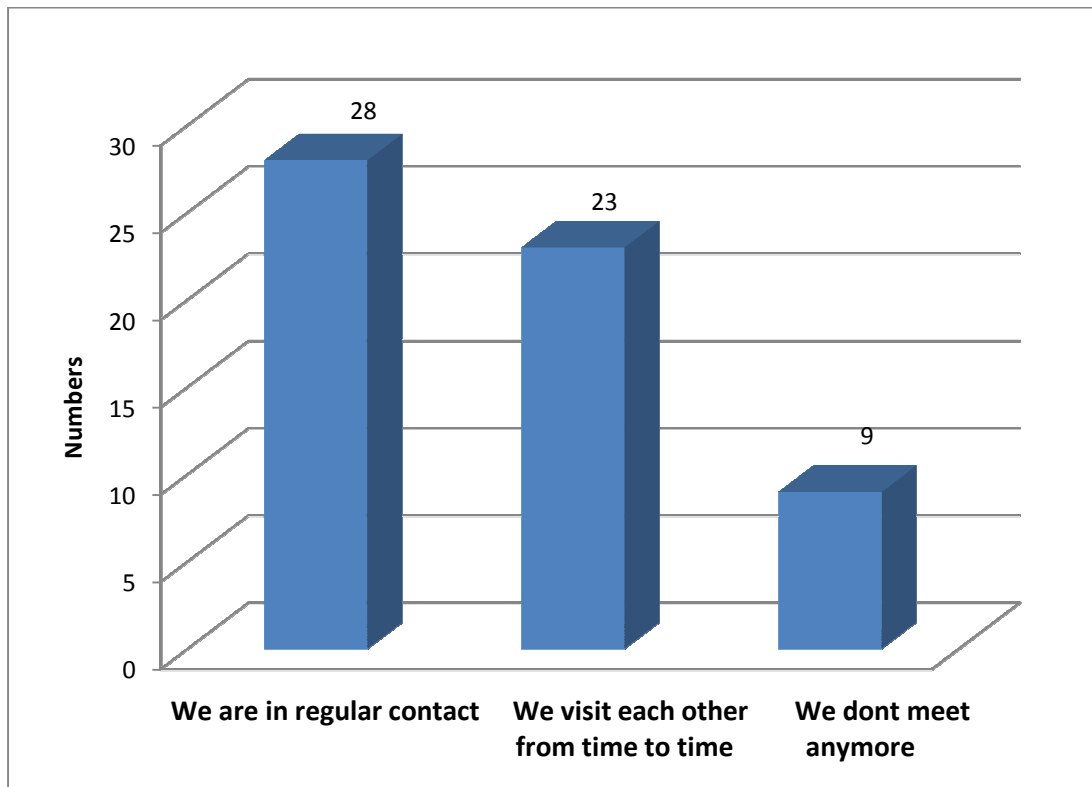
Source: own processing

Up to 70% of respondents stated because of the disease.

The family is the source of happiness and satisfaction, but also great suffering, if there are disturbed family relations. We all know that the most effective physical, psychical, social, moral and emotional support throughout the life we are receiving from family. However, there are many individuals who are experiencing suffering within the family, distress, pain and misery.

Older person has the same rights as any other member of society, he has the right for self-realization, respecting the principles of solidarity and human dignity.

**Fig. 6: Do you maintain family and friendly relationships?**



Source: own processing

## Conclusion

This contribution deals with the quality of life of an aging generation, which is not only the task of family but also society as a whole. The level of security and quality of life for those disadvantaged in society is also one of the criteria for evaluation the maturity of the State.

Elderly people should be given increased attention, requiring individual attention from the social worker, because an aging man is going through major life events like retirement, loss of partner, existential conflicts, social insecurity, loneliness, dependence, associated with feelings of fear, anxiety or restlessness. We must not forget that the aging man is a human being, personality with valuable life experiences and wisdom.

Taking care of these people requires a change of good personal attitudes, thinking of whole society. I would like to highlight the importance of family in life, that will not be replaced even by the best institution. Positive attitude towards life, formed especially by the family environment, in interaction with the closest family members.



Experts dealing with issues of aging are pointing out the importance of prevention and enlightenment in order to mobilize the elderly into active and meaningful spending of their free time. Involvement in community and cultural events will support the efforts of an aging man to remain full members of society, without a label of social exclusion.

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