

DEPENDENCY AND CARE IN OLD AGE – PREFERENCES OF OLDER SLOVENIANS

Mojca Slana, Jože Ramovš & Ksenija Ramovš

Anton Trstenjak Institute of gerontology and intergenerational relations

INTRODUCTION

In comparison to other European countries, the rate of ageing of the Slovenian population is above-average. Due to the needs of constant care and everyday help 5% of Slovenians aged 65+ live in various care institutions. Additional 10% of the population who also need relatively high amount of care live at home. Research of elderly people in EU has shown that close family members take care of 2/3 of elderly people (European Commission, 1993 in Renner, 1997, p. 42). Despite the common belief that older people from Southern Europe prefer to be taken care of by their family and older people from Northern Europe prefer formal services (OECD, 1992 in Salvage, 1995, p. 24) that kind of generalization is incorrect. Numerous studies have shown that Europeans aren't keen on living in institutions and are actually relatively hostile to it (Jani-Le Bis, 1993 in Salvage, 1995, p. 24). Since Slovenia has been developing residences for the elderly but not other programs for home care until the year 2000, following data on preferred type of care and fears in old age from our research *The standpoints, needs and potentials of Slovenian population aged 50+* are important.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

- N = 1047, representative sample of Slovenians aged 50+
- ♂: 41.3%, ♀: 58.7%
- age groups:
50-59: 31.9%, 60-69: 30.9%, 70-79: 23.8%, 80+: 13.4%
- $M_{age} = 66.9$, $SD_{age} = 10.5$; $Min_{age} = 50.3$, $Max_{age} = 98.2$
- Employment:
employed 18.9%, retired 73.4%, unemployed 4.1%, other 3.7%

INSTRUMENT

- Complex questionnaire *The standpoints, needs and potentials of Slovenian population aged 50+* (IAT, 2010)
- Quantitative and qualitative questions
- Topics: physical health, health strengthening, taking drugs, public health, everyday chores and mobility, accommodation adjustment, interpersonal relations and long-term care, mental health and attitudes, intergenerational solidarity, local community and living, employment and retirement, family, demography

PROCEDURE

- Stratified random sampling
- Personal in-home survey → specially trained interviewer

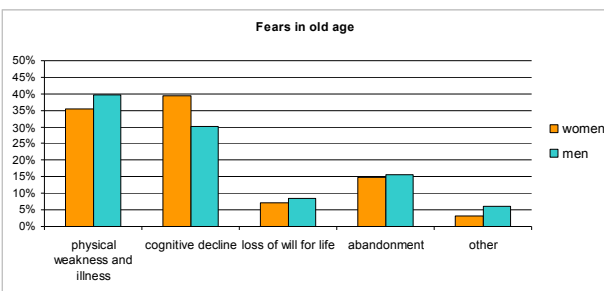


Figure 3. What is your greatest fear in old age?

CONCLUSIONS

- If unable to take care of themselves (not even with the help of their family) 38.2% would choose residence for the elderly and 39.6% home care. Remaining 22.2% prefer other possible options.
 - Significant differences between age groups and employment status (Figure 1, Figure 2)
- Having a possibility of choosing between being taken care of by their family or going to a residence for the elderly, almost 2/3 would decide for the first option. Most of them want to be taken care of at home by their partners or children.
- Older Slovenians are mostly afraid of physical illness and cognitive decline.
 - Significant differences between ♂ and ♀ (Figure 3)

RESULTS

- If unable to take care of themselves (not even with the help of their family), they would choose: residence for the elderly 38.2%, home care 39.6%, sheltered housing 12.3%, day care 3.5%, family care 0.6%, other options 5.7%
- Significant differences in preferred type of care:
 - age groups ($X^2(18)=56.9$, $p=0.000$)
 - employment status ($X^2(18)=36.2$, $p=0.007$)
- If forced to choose between residence for the elderly and taken care of by their family, 64.3% would prefer the latter
- Significant differences between ♂ and ♀ in fears in old age: $X^2(4)=12.5$, $p=0.014$

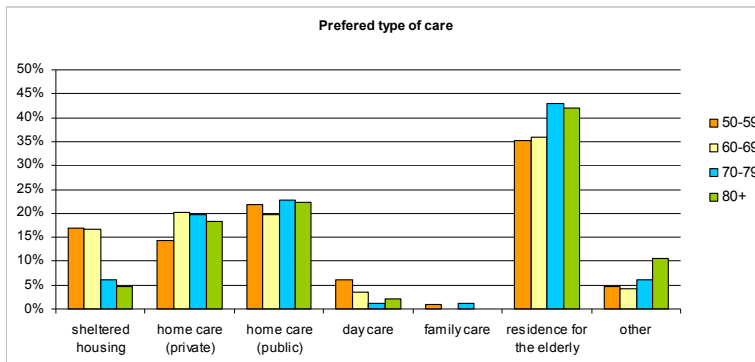


Figure 1. If unable to take care of yourself (not even with the help of your family), which type of care would you choose?

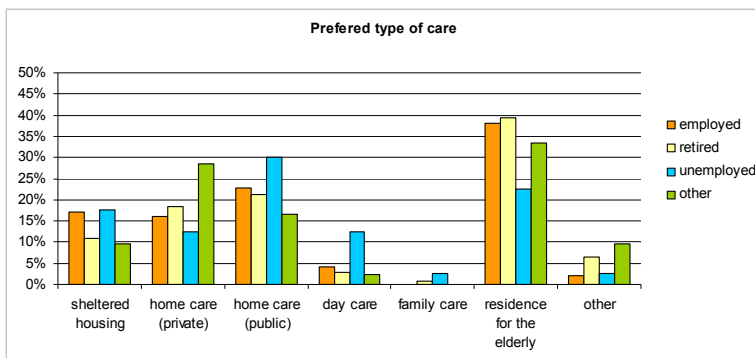


Figure 2. If unable to take care of yourself (not even with the help of your family), which type of care would you choose?

KEY REFERENCES

- Fine, M. & Glendinning, C. (2005). Dependence, independence or interdependence? Revisiting the concepts of »care« and »dependency«. *Ageing & Society*, 25(4), 601–621.
- Hvalič Touzery, Simona. (2007). *Supporting family carers of older people in Europe – The national background report for Slovenia*. Eurofamcare. Hamburg: Lit Verlag.
- Renner, T. (1997). Rastoča manjšina. *Družboslovne razprave*, XIII, 24–25, 40–48.
- Salvage, V. A. (1995). *Who will care? – future prospects for family care of older people in the European Union*. Dublin, Ireland: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

