

7.

AGEING

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MAJOR FINDINGS

- The ageing of the society, i.e., the growing rate of the older generations is one of the decisive social phenomena of the past few decades. The rate of the age group 65+ will grow at a still greater pace in the decades to come, though with minor fluctuations. By 2050 nearly 30 per cent of the Hungarian population will be 65 or more.
- Demographic ageing is a consequence of low fertility and the increase of life expectancy. These two factors are the causes also of the fact that in the past few decades the ageing index was the most dynamically growing one, indicating the ratio of the older generations in comparison to that of children. In 2009 the number of elderly people over 65 was 110 per hundred persons belonging to the age group 1-14.
- Life expectancy at birth in the case of Hungarian men and women lags behind the European average. The prospects of men are especially unfavourable. In 2008 male life expectancy at birth was 69.8 years. The position of women is much more favourable, their life expectancy having been 77.8 years in the same year.
- Life expectancy is highly differentiated not only by sex but also by social strata.

A person's occupation and level of education similarly strongly determine his/her life expectancy. Those with higher education and intellectual occupations can expect to live much longer than people with lower education and doing manual work. Differences by social strata are much more marked in the case of men than in the case of women.

- One third of the population over 65 lives alone, and 43 per cent of the age group live with their spouses or partners, just the two of them. It is not common today for more generations to live under the same roof. Those who do so live together under the pressure of circumstances rather than by their own free choice.
- The loosening of intergenerational ties is reflected also by the fact that the number of those supporting their children, parents or other relatives living in separate households with money or by other means is fast decreasing, i.e. the rate of those taking part in the transfer between households is decreasing.
- It is well known that the state of health of the Hungarian population is bad, especially as regards the older generations. In 2004 55 per cent of the age group 65-78 reported having health problems that put a check on their everyday activities.
- The image of the older generations within the society is controversial. In certain respects younger generations can be called more tolerant with the elderly than they used to be, while in others the social recognition of the latter is slackening. Young people feel that the elderly wish to interfere with their lives to a smaller extent (which is probably the subjective reflection of the actual processes), at the same time the job experience of the elderly has been devaluated.

THE AGEING OF THE SOCIETY

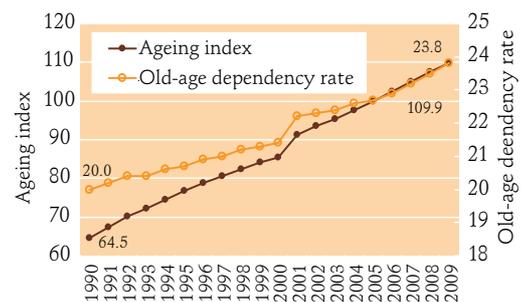
As a result of low fertility and increased longevity the age structure of the European societies underwent a considerable change in the past decades. The rate of the older generations within the society has been increasing. The phenomenon is so conspicuous that due to the increase in the duration of human life and the subsequent rise of the retirement age 65 years are considered the lower margin of old age in several respects instead of 60.¹ The results of the survey conducted in the early 2000s² also testify that no matter which age group is interviewed, the members of the Hungarian society tend to consider 65 years as the lower limit of old age.

The ageing of the society is a well-documented phenomenon both in Hungary and in the rest of Europe. In 1990 the population 65+ constituted 13.2 per cent of the society. By 2009 the rate has grown to 16.4 per cent. By 2050 population projection predicts 29.4 per cent and by 2060 31.9 per cent for Hungary, which rate is similar to the aggregated figures for the European Union. In 2008 the rate of the population over 65 was 17.1 in the 27 EU-countries, which is expected to rise to 28.8 per cent by 2050 and to 30 per cent by 2060.

The indicators of the ageing process are the old-age dependency ratio and the age-

ing index. The former expresses the rate of the age group 65+ as compared to the age group 15-64, while the latter determines the percentage of the old generation as compared to the number of the age group 0-14. Both indices showed a strongly rising tendency in the past decades. In 1990 the old-age dependency ratio was 20 per cent, while in 2009 23.8 per cent. The ageing index grows even more dynamically (from 64.5 to 109.9 per cent), which is due to the extremely low fertility, consequently the considerably lower rate of children within the population (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Ageing index and old-age dependency rate, 1990–2009



Source: Demográfiai évkönyv

Due to the different mortality of men and women the rate of the latter is invariably higher in all age groups over 65. The difference in the number of the two sexes is ever greater with every higher age group (Fig. 2).

As it has been mentioned before, the ageing of a society is in connection with low fertility and increased longevity. This latter phenomenon is naturally positive but it has to be added, however, that life expectancy in Hungary lags much behind the European average, especially as regards men. In 2006 male life expectancy was 75.8 years in the 27 EU member states, whereas in Hungary

¹ This is the cause of the fact that the present chapter similarly determines the lower margin of old age once as 60 years, once as 65. The majority of international studies uses the latter age limit, while Hungarian publications and researches use both.

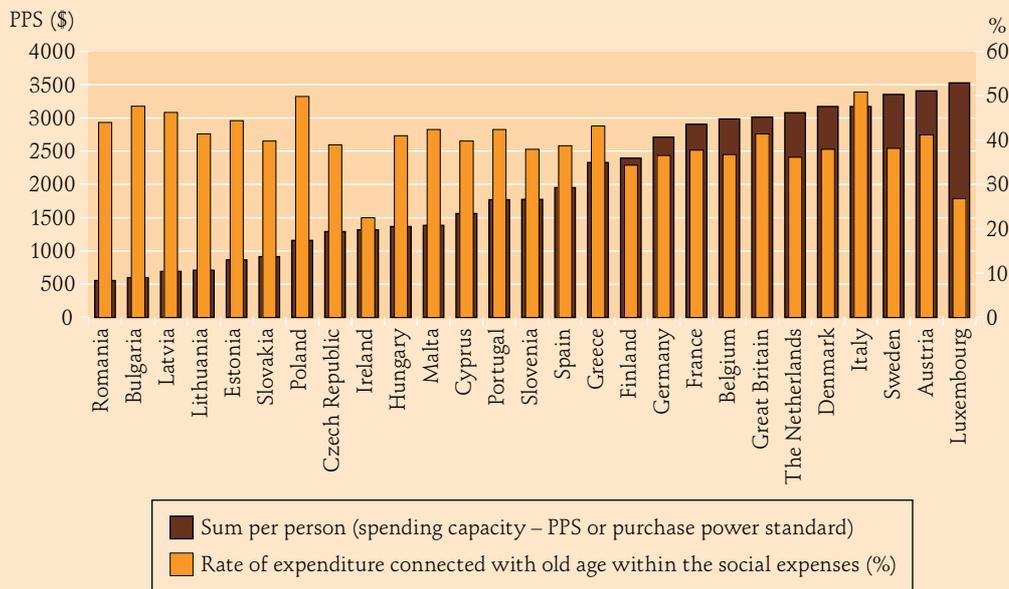
² First wave of the demographic survey 'Turning Points of the Life Course' carried out by Demographic Research Institute in 2001: 'From what age is someone considered old?'

SOCIAL EXPENSES IN CONNECTION WITH OLD AGE

The ageing of a society is often mentioned in sociopolitical discussions with respect to the financial burdens of old age. It is of vital importance also as regards the sustainability of the pension system. In the countries of Europe the largest group of social expenses is the one connected with old age. In 2006 it amounted to 40 per cent of the total expenditure in the

27 EU member states on average. This rate was the highest in Italy and Poland, and the lowest in Ireland and Luxembourg. The relevant Hungarian rate corresponds to the European average. The differences are even more marked in absolute figures. The amount invested in one citizen in connection with ageing is the highest in Luxembourg and Austria, and the smallest in Romania and Bulgaria. Hungarian investments amount to approximately half of the EU average.

Social expenditure in connection with old age, 2006

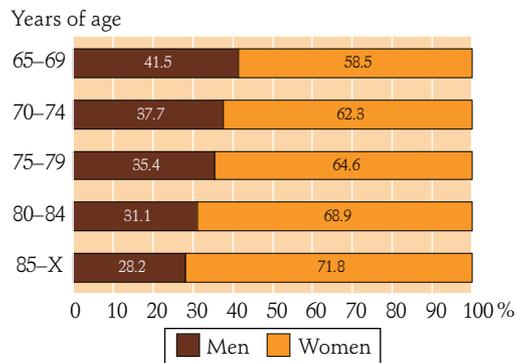


Source: EUROSTAT, ESSPROSS data. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/living_conditions_and_social_protection/data/main_tables. Downloaded on September 7, 2009.

it was only 69.2 years. This means that Hungarian men can expect to live 6 years less than the EU average. In the case of women the difference is smaller. The average of the 27 EU states is 82.0 years, while in Hungary it is 77.8. The male population of Hungary precedes only the three Baltic states in this respect. The life expectancy of men in Bulgaria and Romania is similar to

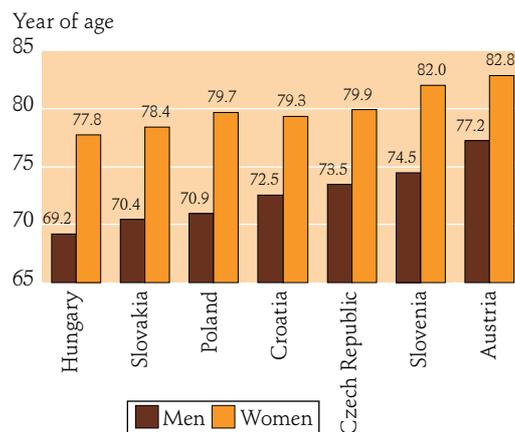
the Hungarian figure. Women in the countries with the lowest figures for men can similarly expect the shortest life among the women of the EU. The Hungarian figures are unfavourable not only as compared to all EU states but also as compared to the neighbouring countries or the countries of the post-socialist transition (*Fig. 3*). (See also Chapter 5 of the present volume.)

Fig. 2. The rate of men and women in the population 65+, 2008



Source: KSH vital statistics, January-December, 2008.
<http://www.ksh.hu>

Fig. 3. Life expectancy at birth in some European countries, 2006

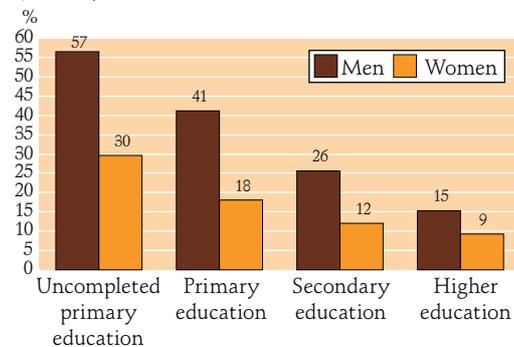


Source: EUROSTAT. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/data/main_tables

Life expectancy is differentiated also by social status, as reflected for example by the differences in the probability of death between the ages of 30 and 65 by the level of education. This indicator is especially important from our present point of view as it expresses the rate of those not living long enough to reach even the lowest limit of old age. Differences are considerable also among women, but among men they are

downright dramatic. Based on the data on mortality in the five years between 2000 and 2004, 57 per cent of 30-year-old men not having finished primary school cannot expect to turn 65. The same rate is 41 per cent for those with primary education, 26 per cent for those with secondary education, and 15 per cent for those with higher education (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Probability of death between the ages of 30 and 65 by level of education, 2000-2004 (%)

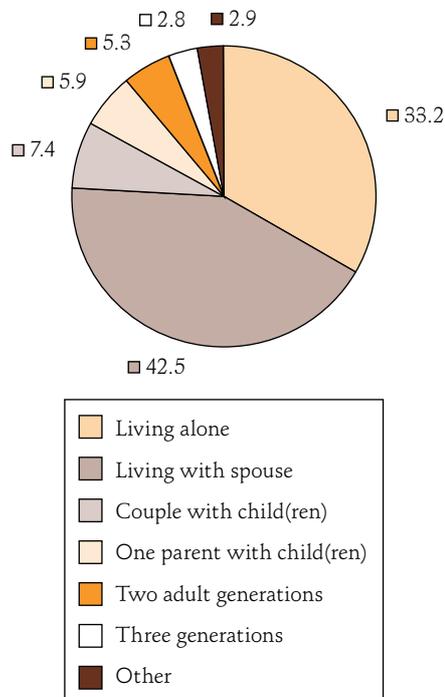


Source: Hablicsek L. and Kovács K. (2007)

FAMILY AND OTHER RELATIONS OF THE ELDERLY

Old age is a part of the life course that is characterized by special household structures. Children have already left the parental home and have started their own families. In certain age groups even the grandchildren have begun to start families of their own. As a result, the population aged 65+ typically lives in one-person households or the elderly couples live together by themselves. In 2004 one third of the age group in question lived alone and over 40 per cent lived with their spouses. Another characteristic feature of the household structure is that there are hardly any households (a mere 3 per cent) with three generations (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5. Distribution of the population aged 65-78 by type of household, 2004 (%)



Source: Demographic Research Institute, Turning points of the life course, demographic survey, 2004. (Author's calculations.)

It has to be noted that three-generation households and ones with two adult generations are most commonly involuntary forms of coexistence. Research has proved that the lack of financial means and the dissolution of marriages, i.e., families plays a decisive role in keeping younger generations in the same household with the older

ones or in the return of the young to the home of their parents.

The situation of the elderly is determined not only by the persons they live with but also by their relationship with their children and grandchildren living separately. Only 10 per cent of the age group 65+ remained childless. The rate of those with one child is 28 per cent, that of those with two children is 42 per cent, and that of those with three or more children is 20 per cent. Taking only this fact into account, the potential family network would be much wider than what would follow from the structure of households. Eighty-three per cent of the age group 65+ have grandchildren, too, whose supervision is a popular activity among them. (Source: *Turning points of the life course, demographic survey, 2004.*)

The existing family network does, however, not mean automatically that the elderly generations can realize their family relations. The links between the generations became looser in the past decades. An indicator of this fact is that the transfer of goods among the households has decreased. The results of the Time Use Survey reveal that in 1986 only 18 per cent of the households where the head of the family was 60 to 69 years old did neither receive nor give financial or non-financial support. By 2000 this rate had grown to 30 per cent. A setback could be observed also in those house-

Table 1. The rate of households the members of which do not participate in the transfer between households, 1986 and 2000 (%)

Age group	Budapest		County seats		Other towns		Villages		Total	
	1986	2000	1986	2000	1986	2000	1986	2000	1986	2000
60-69	27.5	47.2	20.7	32.3	13.2	26.1	16.0	22.9	18.4	30.2
70-x	33.3	46.8	33.6	31.4	24.7	28.0	19.2	22.3	25.2	30.8

Source: Bocz J. and Harcsa I. (2001

Table 2. Loneliness among elderly people living alone by the number of their children, 2004 (%)

Do you often feel lonely?	Number of children born to the person				Total
	0	1	2	3 or more	
Not at all	26.0	29.0	24.6	22.5	25.7
Rarely	21.8	17.3	19.1	24.4	20.0
Often	21.8	24.5	26.9	29.0	25.7
Always	28.8	28.8	29.0	24.2	28.0
Does not know	1.6	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Demographic Research Institute, Turning Points of the Life Course, demographic survey, 2004.
(Author's calculations.)

Remark: The number of children is not identical with the number of living children. Also foster children can play the role of children by blood in the life of the older generations. Interpreting the data above, it has to be taken into account.

holds where the head of the family was 70+, though to a smaller degree. In 1986 one quarter of them was left out of the co-operation between households, whereas by 2000 this rate had risen to one third. The change was considerable especially among Budapest residents (Table 1).

The loosening of the ties with children living outside the household probably plays a role in that childless elderly people do not feel much more lonely than those having child or children (Table 2).

STATE OF HEALTH OF THE ELDERLY

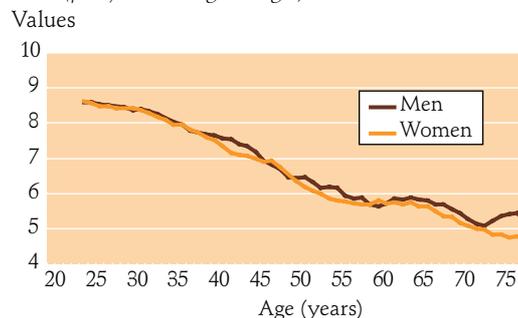
There are several indicators to measure the state of health. The persons involved may assess their own state of health or establish whether they have illnesses that are impediments in the way of their everyday activities.

One of the indicators used in this chapter is the assessment of one's own health on a scale 0 to 10. The question is how far the interviewed persons are satisfied with their state of health.

It can be considered natural that health deteriorates with age and elderly people

have a worse opinion of their own health than younger ones. It is, however, not at all natural that an unfavourable rating appears already among the 30 to 40 years old (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6. The evaluation of own health status on scale 1–10, 2004 (five-year moving averages)



Source: DRI Turning points of the Life Course, demographic survey, 2004 (Author's calculation)

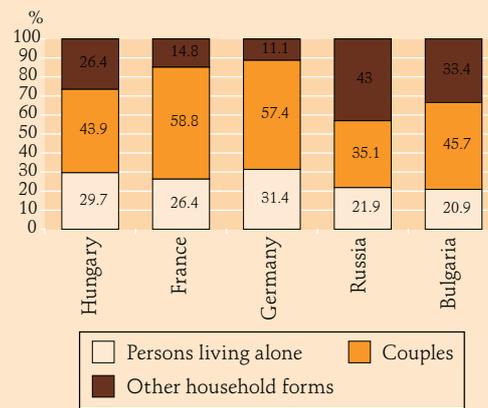
With regard to the other indicator of health it could be established that in 2004 55 per cent of the age group 65-78 had illnesses that hindered them in their everyday activities. Severe hindrances could be found in 18 per cent of the age group, moderate ones in 21 per cent, and fluctuating ones in 16 per cent. Comparing men and women we find that the latter have more health problems detrimental to their everyday activities. Fifty-seven per cent of women and 51 per

HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE OF OLD PEOPLE IN SOME EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The major characteristic feature of the household structure of the elderly generations in Hungary is that the proportion of those living alone is high, while that of those living with their children or relatives is low. This is not the case in all other European countries. For example, in Germany and France nearly 60 per cent of the age group 60-78 live with their partners. The Bulgarian level is low just like those of Hungary, but the Russian one is still lower. A mere 35 per cent of Russian persons in the age group 65-78 live with their partners in a household, just the two of them. However, the rate of those living with their children in multigenerational families is 43 per cent. Research in this field shows that this form of household is not a voluntarily chosen or preferred way of life and a result

of solidarity between the generations but is mostly forced on the families by unfavourable conditions.

Household structure of the age group 60-78 around 2000

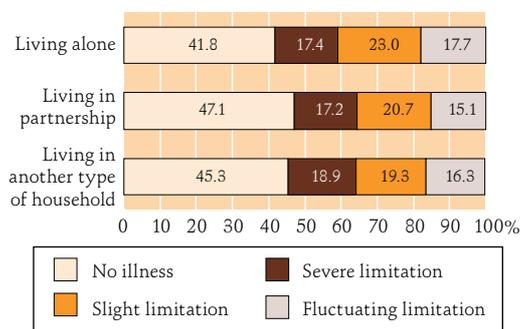


Source: Gender and Generation Survey, 1st waves around 2000. Author's calculations.

cent of men complained of such problems. One of the causes can be that due to the higher mortality of men their age group 65+ is a selected section of the male population as a considerable part of men with a higher risk of morbidity (those on a low

level of education and doing manual work) do not even live as long as that. It can be similarly connected with the problem of life expectancy that among women in the age group 65+ the rate of very old persons with serious health problems is higher, too. The third factor is that women realize and accept their illnesses more easily than men. Finally, more women live alone than men, which enhances the risk of an illness. Loneliness is a burden detrimental to health as compared to the state of those living in partnership or in a bigger family (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7. Presence of an illness delimiting everyday activities in the age group 65-78, 2004



Source: Demographic Research Institute, Turning points of the life course, demographic survey, 2004. (Author's calculations.)

THE IMAGE OF OLD PEOPLE IN THE SOCIETY

Demographic ageing presents a complex challenge for every society. The most important one is the change in the rate of the ac-

tive and the inactive part of the population, the growing financial burden of pensions, and the increasing duties of health care and the social welfare system. To handle these problems properly not only financial means and expert capacities are needed but also a positive approach to old age on the part of the whole population. Old people should be seen as fully qualified members of the society. This aim is emphatically present in the strategies of social policy for managing the problems of old age both in the EU and in Hungary.

Relevant research reveals, however, a controversial picture in this respect. Comparing the early 1980s and the early 2000s it turns out that the society had become more tolerant vis-à-vis the elderly from certain respects but in other fields their social recognition had slackened.

An example for the former is that in the early 2000s a much smaller portion of the population agreed with the statement “old people are suspicious and see everybody as an enemy” than 20 years earlier. Less people support also the statement “old people are dissatisfied with everything and grumble all the time”. The widening gap

between the generations and the diversification of life styles is indicated by the fact that whereas in 2001 less than half of the adult population agreed with the statement “old people like to interfere with the life of the young”, in 1980 this rate had been 70 per cent. The statement “it is the duty of adult children to assist their old parents” similarly got smaller support. In 1982 93 per cent agreed with it but in 2001 only 73 per cent.

Everyone knows how elderly generations are handled in the labour market. During the period in question the number of those agreeing with the statement “workplaces do not appreciate those who are at the brink of becoming too old to work” doubled. The working experience of the older generations has lost its value, as indicated by the decreasing number of those thinking that “the work of the old is more valuable than that of the young due to the formers’ great deal of experience”. The rate of those in the adult population who did not agree with this statement was 28 per cent in 1982, while 45 per cent in 2001, which is again more marked opinion (*Table 3*).

Table 3. *Opinions about old people (%)*

	Year	Agrees	Does not agree	Uncertain	Does not know	Total
Old people are suspicious and see everybody as an enemy	1982	26	51	21	2	100
	2001	19	68	12	1	100
Old people are dissatisfied with everything and grumble all the time	1982	30	47	21	2	100
	2001	22	61	16	1	100
Old people like to interfere with the life of the young	1982	70	13	14	3	100
	2001	52	31	16	1	100
It is the duty of adult children to assist their old parents	1982	93	2	4	1	100
	2001	73	16	11	0	100
The work of the old is more valuable than that of the young due to the formers’ great deal of experience	1982	42	28	28	2	100
	2001	38	45	16	1	100

Source: Dobossy I., S. Molnár E., and Virág E. (2003)

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