DEMOCRATIC PROSPECTS IN POLAND — DIAGNOSIS BASED ON SELECTED INDICATORS DETERMINING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF POLES

Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, the situation of Poles aged 65 and over is difficult and affected by numerous factors. Social, political, economic and civilisational transformations have resulted in the fact that pensions in Poland are at a relatively low level in comparison to the western countries of the European Union. People who are 65 years of age and more require special attention, appreciation and conditions for activation, followed by relevant social and economic policies.

In accordance with the Eurostat and OECD standards, people aged 65 and more are considered to be the elderly. This assumption has been also adopted in the following paper.

1 Habil. Dr. Marek Stefański – prof. at WSB University in Gdańsk, Police Colonel. In 1984–1986, he studied in Italy and in 1986–1992, he worked and studied in Germany. In 1992, he defended his doctoral dissertation at the then Pedagogical University in Bydgoszcz. In 2013, he obtained a postdoctoral degree at the National Defence University in Warsaw. Author of many publications on social pedagogy and security sciences.

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2 In accordance with the Eurostat and OECD standards, people aged 65 and over are considered to be the elderly.

3 Eurostat (European Statistical Office) is a Directorate-General of the European Commission located in the Kirchberg quarter of Luxembourg City, Luxembourg. Its main responsibilities are to provide statistical information to the statistical institutions of the European Union (EU) and promote the harmonisation of statistical methods across all its member states and candidates for EU accession. OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) aims to provide support to its member countries so that they can achieve the highest level of economic growth and standards of living for their citizens.
According to the analysis provided by PolSenior⁴, which covers the issue of safety of the elderly, senior citizens face various forms of domestic violence. 5.9% of them have already experienced such behaviour. Women become victims of violence more often, amounting to nearly 7%, whereas 5% of victims are men⁵. The most frequent forms of violence include mental abuse, humiliation, verbal abuse, being shouted at or ignored. Police reports indicate physical and economic violence related to pensions or property, where psychological extortion is used through various threats to force elderly people to will the property to the extortionists with the help of a notary. There are cases of physical, economic and verbal violence, in which the contact with doctors, priests or family members is obstructed. Passive violence in the form of negligence is frequently observed. The analysis indicates that women most often face violence in their domestic environment, from people they know. Men usually fall victim to this type of abuse in their external environment: on the streets, at offices, shops or means of public transport. Relatively younger senior citizens and seniors who live in large cities experience violence most often⁶. This problem can be observed to a greater extent than indicated by the statistics research, since not all the cases involve domestic violence against the elderly and, therefore, they are not reported anywhere. Feeling threatened, some senior citizens are afraid of their closest family members and hide their actual family situation. The multi-layered character of the demographic problem and the above-mentioned cases have determined the choice of the topic for this paper.

Methodology

The methodology requires determining procedures which will define compatible methods, techniques and research tools in a way that is adequate to the reality. In the chapter, the research focuses on the social conditions of the elderly associated with fulfilling their needs. The aim is to determine the situation of people who are over 65 years of age in terms of shaping the quality of their social life. The main problem is the question: How can the quality of lives of people aged 65 and more be defined in comparison to the entire society? The specific questions are:
— What is the material situation of people who are 65 years old and more in comparison to the entire society?

⁴ senior.gov.pl/source/raport_osoby%20starsze.pdf accessed on 11 March 2019
⁵ file:///C:/Users/maste/AppData/Local/Temp/Zalozenia%20Dugo
⁶ file:///C:/Users/maste/AppData/Local/Temp/Zalozenia%20Dugo
— What is the health self-assessment of people aged 65 and over in comparison to people aged 16 and more?
— What is the level of readership of people aged 65 and over in comparison to people aged 16 and more?
— What is the frequency of computer use reported by people who are 65 years old and over in comparison to people aged 16 and more?
— How often do people aged 65 and more go to the cinema, theatre, concerts and visit museums and art exhibitions in comparison to people who are 16 years old and more?
— How do people aged 65 and over assess their life satisfaction in comparison to people aged 16 and more?

The main research hypothesis is that the quality of life of the elderly in Poland is lower in comparison to the entire society. In the specific hypotheses, it is assumed that:
— economic situation of people over 65 years of age is worse than that of the entire society;
— health self-assessment of people aged 65 and more is significantly worse than that of the entire society;
— the level of readership of people aged 65 and more in comparison to the entire society is comparable;
— the frequency of computer use reported by people who are 65 years old and more is significantly lower than that of people aged 16 and over;
— people aged 65 and more go to the cinema, theatre, concerts and visit museums and art exhibitions less often than people aged 16 and over;
— people who are 65 years old and more assess their life satisfaction as much lower than people aged 16 and over.

The methods have been properly adjusted to solve the research problem and included statistical analysis of documents, specialist literature, comparison, induction, deduction, synthesis, heuristic methods and reasoning. The research procedure conducted using properly selected methods guarantees that the research problem has been solved in a scientific manner.

Basic definitions of safety

The notion of safety can be determined as a state and a process of functioning, surviving and developing under conditions which allow one to achieve self-actualisation and live without fear. Apart from physiological needs, safety plays the most important role in human life. On the one hand, prospects for social and economic development are dynamic, risky and sometimes unpredictable. On the other, safety is characterised by optimism and faith in the future. This provides opportunities for the socialisation and development of an individual through interactions with
other people. Safety entails a belief that one will be able to enjoy the material goods obtained and feel happiness without any major difficulties. Undoubtedly, safety is a universal value which may be applied to all people.

Social safety is one of the basic national values, including life quality in its global, regional, national, local and personal aspects. It also includes, among others, the problem of inequality in the availability of various state resources to social groups. Social safety also pertains to issues related to demography, health, culture, education, crime, social interaction, migration, immigration, unemployment, violation of human rights, social conflicts and threats of social exclusion.

Social safety can be defined as:
— fulfilment of basic and social needs without feeling threatened and scared;
— sustainable social development of various social groups;
— the sense of safety during social interactions at various levels;
— social homeostasis, which provides individuals with opportunities for personal development;
— well-being and possibilities to perform social roles, satisfy needs and aspirations, as well as achieve close and more distant objectives.

State administration entities, self-government units and non-government organisations cannot be underestimated in terms of their role in shaping social safety, along with economic, political and social conditions of the state. Significant elements of social safety potential include the shape of the social and demographic structure, current inequalities and social conflicts, as well as activities of the civil society. The social awareness of problems referring to national safety is also important.

The key element of social safety is the national identity, which has been shaped since the beginning of the state and lasts for centuries. The national identity consists of historical tradition, language, literature, culture, religion, national customs and awareness, art and national symbols, such as the national emblem, national colours and the national anthem.

An increased number of people at risk of social exclusion, including individuals over 65 years of age, results in the fact that expectations towards the state in terms of social, psychological and legal aid have been growing as well. Social safety constitutes one of the fundamental values and civil rights. Eliminating or limiting the sense of insecurity and threats related to life situations by the state is an important action applied to maintain social order. State policy includes duties towards citizens who have found themselves in a difficult and exceptional situation, which guarantee support and minimum benefits to such persons.

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The sense of safety is the starting point for well-being, implementing life-related, family-related and professional plans. This is a situation when the development of aspirations, needs, social roles, satisfaction and personal qualities is guaranteed. Understood as a state in which there are no threats, the sense of safety means freedom from danger and fear or an attack. This is a process characterised by variability in time and space.

Quality of life is an interdisciplinary notion referring to people of all ages. It is applied in social politics, psychology, sociology, pedagogy, medicine, economics, and other fields. It consists in an evaluation of the fulfillment of tangible and intangible needs, meeting standards, achieving the highest human values in areas such as psychology, pedagogy, spirituality, recreation, sports, biology, sociology, politics, culture, ways of spending free time, social interactions, economy, human capital, ecology, as well as fields related to individuals, families and communities.

Statistical data determining the social status of the elderly in Poland

The social position of elderly people aged 65 and more is undoubtedly worse than the position of the entire society. Growing numbers of seniors, as well as decreasing numbers of births and people in the working age (15–65) result in a bad situation in terms of demographic and economic aspects, considering both short-term and long-term prospects. The insufficient care and unfavourable condition of the elderly are underlain by their poor material status and an inefficient system of social and psychological safety. In comparison to numerous countries of the European Union, pensioners in Poland find themselves in a much worse social and economic situation. Therefore, the government authorities should pay more attention to economic development, which indirectly contributes to the improvement of elderly people’s living standards. Individuals who are about to become pensioners often fear low pensions. That is why the government has been encouraging citizens to prolong their employment period beyond the retirement age.

People over 65 years old use health care services more often than people over 16. The organisational structure and availability of specialist health care leave a lot to be desired. Especially the elderly over 65 years of age who live alone require more interest not only from the government authorities, self-government units and non-government organisations but also from religious organisations, which are not sufficiently involved in their support.

The data obtained during the multi-aspect household survey presented below provide an insight into the actual situation of elderly people over 65 years of age. The project was entitled “The Social Coherence Survey” and

12 file:///C:/Users/maste/AppData/Local/Temp/jakosc_zycia_osob_starszych_w_polsce.pdfz 22.11.2019.
was implemented by Statistics Poland in the first half of 2015, on a representative sample of almost 14,000 Polish inhabitants aged 16 and more\textsuperscript{13}.

Table 1

The economic situation of people aged 65 and over in comparison to people aged 16 and more (in %).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poverty</th>
<th>People aged 65 and more</th>
<th>Total – people aged 16 and more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income poverty*</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty based on living conditions**</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty based on budget imbalance***</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good economic situation</td>
<td>People aged 65 and more</td>
<td>Total – people aged 16 and more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator of high income****</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator of good living conditions*****</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator of a good budgetary situation******</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The percentage of people living in households where the monthly equivalised income left at the disposal of the household members (within 12 months before the survey) was lower than the amount considered as the poverty threshold. The poverty threshold was established at the level of 60% of the median of the equivalised income, that is income comparable among households of various demographic composition.

** The percentage of people living in households where at least 10 symptoms of poor living conditions have been observed out of 30 symptoms indicating the housing quality, the level of durable consumer goods in the household, deprivation of various types of (tangible and intangible) consumer needs.

*** The percentage of people living in households defined as poor based on the lack of budgetary balance, where at least 4 out of 7 symptoms have been observed, including opinions of household members on their material status and facts indicating budgetary difficulties of the household (such as overdue payments).

**** The percentage of people living in households having the highest income (where the monthly equivalent income was higher than 5/3 (approximately 167%) of the median of the equivalised income, \textit{i.e.} approximately 2.8 times higher than the amount considered as the relative poverty threshold).

***** The percentage of people living in households where no symptoms (out of 30) of poor living conditions have been observed.

****** The percentage of people living in households of the highest budgetary freedom, \textit{i.e.} households where the possibilities to manage income have been assessed in a positive way.


Chart 1

Poverty affecting people aged 65 and more in comparison to people aged 16 and more (in %).

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).

Chart 2

Good material status of people aged 65 and more in comparison to people aged 16 and more (in %).

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).

The analysis of the data presented in Table 1 indicates that 29% of elderly people and 34% of the entire society live in poverty. This is an unfavourable situation for both social groups. However, it is confirmed that senior citizens over 65 years of age require some special attention in terms of their economic situation.

A relatively good economic situation is reported by 54% of elderly people and by 60% of the entire society.
The organisation of activities intended to prompt elderly people to participate in social life is insufficient. The government administration, together with self-government and non-government entities should undoubtedly take more responsibility for the quality of life of senior citizens aged 65 and over.

Unquestionably, health self-assessment largely affects life quality. It is possible to observe a considerable difference in the health self-assessment reported by elderly people over 65 and people over 16 years old. In the course of the research, the respondents were asked the following question: “How do you assess your health condition in general?”

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health self-assessment</th>
<th>People aged 65 and more</th>
<th>Total — people aged 16 and more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither good nor bad</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very bad</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).*

### Chart 3

*Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).*
The analysis of the data presented in Table 2 indicates that 20% of people aged 65 and more assess their health condition as very good and good. 58% of individuals who are 16 and over 16 years of age describe their health as satisfactory. The difference is too big, given that people over 65 are usually more exposed to various afflictions than people over 16. Therefore, the government authorities should pay more attention to the implementation of programmes facilitating access to health care services, preventive health care services, medications sold at high discounts, rehabilitation and social amenities.

30% of the respondents over 65 assess their health condition as bad and very bad. Persons over 16 years old who assess their health in the same way form a group of only 11%. This indicates that elderly people require more interest and more empathy from the government administration.

Knowledge of foreign languages is an extremely important element of the quality of social life, especially in the era of globalisation. Seniors aged 65 and over did not have opportunities to learn foreign languages like the current generation of people aged 16 and over does.

Table 3
Knowledge of foreign languages of people aged 65 and more compared to people aged 16 and more (in %).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of foreign languages</th>
<th>People aged 65 and more</th>
<th>Persons aged 16 and more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).

Chart 4
Knowledge of foreign languages of people aged 65 and more compared to people aged 16 and more (in %)

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).
25% of the respondents aged 65 and more declare that they can communicate in at least one foreign language\(^{14}\); the same is stated by 46% of the respondents who are 16 and over years old. Therefore, learning foreign languages could potentially be one of the activities offered to senior citizens. Considering that a very high number of Poles live abroad, universities of the third age could also provide an opportunity to join foreign language courses, on the condition that such courses are granted considerable external funding.

Reading is another important aspect contributing to life satisfaction. Undoubtedly, constant contact with books ensures lasting aesthetic and emotional experiences. A living word enriches knowledge, develops intelligence, as well as is a source of entertainment and fun.

Readership is very important for intellectual development and staying up to date with current events and social relations. It allows people over 65 years old to participate actively in social life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readership</th>
<th>People aged 65 and more</th>
<th>People aged 16 and more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading newspapers at least once a week(^*)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading monthly or weekly magazines regularly(^{**})</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading books(^{***})</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* People who declare that they read daily newspapers at least once a week in paper or online formats.
** People who declare that they regularly read monthly or weekly magazines in paper or online formats.
*** People who declare that within 3 months before the survey they read one book in a paper or online format (except for handbooks).

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).

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\(^{14}\) Communicative knowledge of a foreign language means using basic phrases and the grammar structures to define familiar objects and situations.
Another issue under study was the problem of digital exclusion. Unfortunately, a large proportion of the elderly aged 65 and over remain within the circle of such exclusion (Tables 5 and 6, Charts 6 and 7). This certainly results from the fact that the acquisition of completely new skills is quite difficult for a senior. Nevertheless, it is worth encouraging the elderly to take up such activities. As a consequence of introducing elderly individuals into the online world, they become more independent and confident in their own abilities. The Internet provides a chance to feel a sense of belonging to a group, companionship, and to build and strengthen social bonds. It allows one to overcome loneliness.
Table 5.
The frequency of computer use reported by people aged 65 and more and by people aged 16 and more (in %).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The frequency of computer</th>
<th>People aged 65 and more</th>
<th>People aged 16 and more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day or almost every day</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least once a week</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once a week</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once a month</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to say</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).

Chart 6
The frequency of computer use reported by people aged 65 and more and by people aged 16 and more (in %).

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).
Table 4 presents the data on readership. 64% of the respondents who are 65 or over declare that they read daily newspapers at least once a week in paper or online formats. 66% of the surveyed individuals aged 16 or more declare the same. 40% of the respondents who are 65 years old or more state that within 3 months before the survey they read one book in a paper or online format. The same is claimed by 46% of the studied persons aged 16 and more.

**Table 6**

The frequency of computer and Internet use reported by people aged 65 and more and people aged 16 and more (in %).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>People aged 65 and more</th>
<th>People aged 16 and more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the Internet to find required information*</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using social media**</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using online banking services***</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using online public administration services****</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the Internet to buy and sell goods and services*****</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* People who declare that they use the Internet to find information they require (related to health, timetables, goods and services).
** People who declare that they use social media, such as Facebook, Google+, Nasza klasa, Goldenline or others.
*** People who declare that they use online banking services.
**** People who declare that they use online public administration services.
***** People who declare that they use the Internet to buy and to sell goods and services.

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).
The frequency of computer and Internet use reported by people aged 65 and more and people aged 16 and more (in %).

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).

The analysis of data presented in Table 5 indicates that 75% of people who are 65 years old and more do not use computers. This is a worrying situation, which can result in social alienation and a threat of exclusion from ongoing social computerisation processes. Furthermore, the lack of activation of elderly people fosters their withdrawal from social interactions. Undoubtedly, such a situation makes functioning in social life more difficult for individuals aged 65 and more (e.g. with regard to using electronic card payment systems, etc.).

Preventive activities should include more intensive actions undertaken by the government authorities (Ministry of Family and Social Policy), self-government units (municipal or local social welfare centres), non-government entities, universities of the third age, and senior clubs. Elderly people should participate to a greater extent in the process of shaping safety in local communities, as well as in preventive actions undertaken to warn and inform senior citizens about situations in which they may become victims. Following the rules of safe behaviour by elderly people should become a priority of the social policy adopted by the country. It should be noted that only 13% of persons aged 65 and more use computers every day or almost every day. This is a bad situation, which indicates that this group does not actively participate in social interactions in cyberspace.

28% of people who are 16 years old and more do not use computers, which is also unfavourable, considering the fact that schoolchildren use
the Internet during their regular classes. Social groups that do not use computers should be diagnosed and some corrective actions should be undertaken. 53% of people aged 16 and over use the Internet every day or almost every day. The research indicates that an increasing number of persons use computers very often. The frequency of computer use imposes the structure of the computerised society on citizens. Online studies, e-learning and the prevalence of computerisation necessitate the use of online resources.

The analysis of Table 6 indicates that only 16% of people aged 65 and more declare that they use the Internet to find the required information (about health, timetables, goods and services) whereas 60% of individuals aged 16 and more state the same. This big statistical difference constitutes an additional argument to intensify opportunities to offer courses in Internet use to senior citizens over 65. Other statistical data confirm such a necessity – only 9% of people aged 65 and more claim that they use social media\(^{15}\). With regard to individuals aged 16 and more, this number amounts to 43%. Only 7% of senior citizens aged 65 and more state that they use online banking services, whereas the same thing is declared by 46% of people who are 16 years old and more. 6% of people aged 65 and over and 31% of people aged 16 and over claim that they use online administrative services. Using the Internet to buy and sell goods and services is practised by 6% of individuals aged 65 and more and by 47% of people who are 16 years old and more. The above-mentioned data leave no doubt that senior citizens aged 65 and over should be equipped with the knowledge and practical skills allowing them to use possibilities and resources offered by the Internet.

The next presented data concern active participation in culture, and more precisely – attending the cinema, theatre, and concerts (Tables 7 and 8, Charts 8 and 9). These are extremely important activities that affect the quality of and satisfaction with life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of people going to the cinema (in %).</th>
<th>People aged 65 and more</th>
<th>People aged 16 and more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once every 2 or 3 months or more often</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than every 2 or 3 months</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never or almost never</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).

\(^{15}\) file:///C:/Users/maste/AppData/Local/Temp/jakosc_zycia_osob_starszych_w_polsce.pdf accessed on 22 December 2019.
**Chart 8**

Number of people going to the cinema (in %).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>People aged 65 and more</th>
<th>People aged 16 and more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once every 2 or 3 months or more often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than every 2 or 3 months</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never or almost never</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).

**Table 8**

Number of people going to the theatre and concerts (in %).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>People aged 65 and more</th>
<th>People aged 16 and more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once every 2 or 3 months or more often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than every 2 or 3 months</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never or almost never</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).
The analysis of Tables 7 and 8 indicates that 82% of people who are 65 and over never or almost never go to the cinema, theatre or concerts. Such an attitude can be related to financial problems, which directly affect the quality of life of senior citizens. Frequently, elderly people have to face a choice between purchasing indispensable medications and going to the cinema or theatre. Individuals aged 65 and more should obtain help in the field of using goods of culture in the form of tickets sold at a high discount.

49% of people who are 16 years old and over never or almost never go to the cinema, while 69% of them never or almost never go to the theatre or concerts. Cultural values and experiencing art are important elements of human development. Therefore, the state, including primarily educational institutions, should pay more attention and enable citizens to use goods of culture to a larger extent. Such activities directly contribute to aesthetic and spiritual development and the quality of human life.

The following data refer to the frequency of visits to museums and art exhibitions by people aged 65 and over, as well as those aged 16 and more.
Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>People aged 65 and more</th>
<th>People aged 16 and more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once every 2 or 3 months or more often</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than every 2 or 3 months</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never or almost never</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Chart 10

Number of people visiting museums and art galleries (in %).

Data related to the number of persons visiting museums and art exhibitions presented in Table 9 indicate that 81% of people who are 65 years old and more never or almost never visit any museums or art exhibitions, while 72% of people aged 16 or more claim the same. 16% of the respondents aged 65 or over state that they visit the above-mentioned institutions less than every 2 or 3 months. With regard to individuals who are 16 years old or more, this number amounts to 24%. Perhaps museums should try to involve senior citizens over 65 more into learning about history and modern times. In turn, it is possible that the experience, knowledge and stories that can be told by senior citizens over 65 can be of educational value for future generations.
Being active is extremely important to senior citizens to improve the quality of their lives, especially considering the ways they spend their free time.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>People aged 65 and more</th>
<th>People aged 16 and more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family situation</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations with other people</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial situation</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material standing</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of free time</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways of spending free time</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of residence</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General life satisfaction</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).

Chart 11

Source: Statistics Poland, “Jakość życia osób starszych w Polsce na podstawie wyników badania spójności społecznej 2015” (“Quality of life of elderly people in Poland based on 2015 social coherence survey”).
Life satisfaction directly affects the quality of life and allows people to enjoy functioning in social environments. The analysis of the data presented in Table 10 indicates that 85% of the respondents aged 65 and more appreciate having a lot of free time, whereas the same is claimed by 62% of surveyed individuals who are 16 years old or more. This can be easily explained, considering professional activities usually undertaken by respondents over 16. 80% of the studied persons aged 65 and more declare that their life satisfaction is related to their place of residence, whereas for people aged 16 and more it is 76%. 79% of the respondents who are 65 years old and more appreciate relations with other people, while the same is claimed by 84% of individuals aged 16 and more. 73% of the respondents aged 65 and over declare that they are generally satisfied with their life and 78% of the surveyed people aged 16 and more state the same. 69% of persons aged 65 and more are satisfied with their family situation. The same is declared by 77% of the respondents who are 16 and over. Life satisfaction in its various aspects is highly significant to the way in which the quality of life is shaped. Elderly people over 65 should be provided with more social and cultural care so that they can be able to satisfy their needs.

Conclusions

Demographic problems in Poland are highly significant, considering the fact that the number of deaths has been higher than the number of births, the number of senior citizens who have reached their retirement age has increased and elderly people over 65 have become generally impoverished. The fact that the life quality of senior citizens over 65 years of age has been worsening results from obstructed access to specialist health care, the lack of computer skills to use the cyberspace, the absence of sufficient funds to purchase medications, difficulties in using goods of culture and, in some cases, the lack of money to buy wholesome food every day. Taking into account their low pensions, the elderly have found themselves in a difficult economic situation. This social group requires more interest from the state authorities and self-government entities. Senior citizens should be provided with aid in all aspects of social life, e.g. by implementing aid programmes, providing individual social assistance, supporting in using goods of culture and granting more opportunities to undertake various activities. Furthermore, it is necessary to pay more attention to scientific research on the quality of life of people aged 65 and more, which should be permanently continued. The diagnosis, analysis and forecast related to the elderly open new possibilities to the government authorities who can undertake various actions, such as adopting preventive schemes and developing new aid programmes. Considering the above-mentioned research on the
quality of life of senior citizens in Poland\textsuperscript{16}, the necessity to continue such studies to ensure a secure future for the elderly has been implied. The aforementioned analysis clearly indicates that the social group of senior citizens aged 65 and more is undoubtedly more impoverished than the entire population over 16 years old. Their economic situation, health self-assessment, level of readership and computer use, frequency of going to cinemas, theatres and concerts, visiting museums and art galleries, as well as general life satisfaction are worse than those of the remaining part of the society. This situation must be addressed properly and relevant actions must be undertaken to improve the quality of life of these individuals. Aid funds, privileges in purchasing indispensable medications, tickets for cultural events, computer skills training, activation of the elderly in everyday life, educational programmes and individual help are examples of actions that may be undertaken by government authorities, self-government entities and non-government organisations. Moreover, actions taken by religious organisations to improve the life quality of senior citizens over 65 are insufficient. Therefore, all hypotheses presented in the paper have been positively verified.

\section*{References}

\subsection*{Publications}

\subsection*{Other sources}
\textit{Electronic source}: www.gus.gov.pl

\textit{Electronic source}: www.gus.gov.pl


\textsuperscript{16} www.senior.gov.pl/source/raport_osoby\%20starsze.pdf
Keywords: demography, safety, elderly people, life quality

Summary: Demographic problems, including ageing of the Polish population, appear to be the challenge of the 21st century. This issue does not concern Poland exclusively, but rather involves the whole European Union. That is why it is necessary to undertake research in order to provide diagnoses, analyse the results and develop prospects needed to solve this matter. Shaping the safety of the elderly is a duty of authorities, local government entities and non-governmental organisations.