TITLE: THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF SELF-REPORTED DISABILITY OF THE ELDERLY IN POLAND

AUTHOR: Anita Abramowska - Kmon

Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research Fellow,
European Doctoral School of Demography,
Unit of Demography, Institute of Statistics and Demography,
Warsaw School of Economics, Al. Niepodleglosci 162, Warsaw, Poland,
phone/fax: +48 22 564 86 43,
e-mail: aabram@sgh.waw.pl, abramowska@demogr.mpg.de

Background and purpose of the research:

Population ageing has been recently one of the most important demographic phenomena. According to the last population forecast in Poland, the number of people aged 60+ will increase by 64% in the period 2002 – 2030, whereas the share of the elderly will rise from about 17% to 30%. Since the health status deteriorates with age the growth in the number of older people will contribute to an increase in the number of the disabled and the dependent. However, many studies have shown that the health status does not only depend on biological factors (age, sex), but also on social and demographic factors (place of residence, living arrangements, marital status or level of education). For instance, although life expectancy for women is higher than for men, females experience more health problems than males. Furthermore, the health status of single persons is worse than that of the married. Finally, health indicators for people with a higher education level are better than for the less educated.

The objective of this study is twofold: (1) to describe the health status of the elderly in Poland by age, sex, place of residence, living arrangements, marital status and the level of education (by assuming that the health status can be considered in terms of the disability category) and (2) to study determinants of the health status by use of the logistic regression.

Data and methods:

Firstly, based on micro data from the Population Census 2002 the prevalence rates of disability were computed by sex, age, place of residence (urban, rural), household composition (three types of household are considered: one-person households, multi-person households, and institutions), marital status, living arrangements (considered in terms of a household position: child, single, couple (married) without children, couple (married) with children, head of one-parent family, non-family member), and the education level.

Secondly, the data from the Population Census 2002 were used to estimate parameters of the logistic regression for disability level (1 – complete or severe limitation of activity, 0 – without limitation) separately for males and females.

Main results:

The results for Poland are generally in line with those found for other countries. As it could be expected, women more often felt complete limitation of activity than men did. Disability rates increased with age and were higher for both sexes in rural than in urban areas. Significant differences in disability were observed by the household type, the marital status and the household position. Persons in institutions were more often disabled than those living in private households (one- or multi-person ones). Never married were more likely to feel complete limitation in activity than the married or widowed. Women on the position of non-family member were more likely to be completely disabled than married without children or those living alone. Moreover, lone mothers were also more often disabled than married with children. Finally, people with the university degree had the lowest disability rates, contrary to those who did not complete any education.

Estimated parameters of the logistic regression provide conclusions that are in line with the above mentioned results.