

Experience and sense of home in oldest-old retirement home residents from Zagreb, Croatia

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Sense of home

Psychological factors

- Sense of acknowledgement
- Preservation one's habits and values
- Autonomy and control
- Coping

Social factors

- Interaction and relationship with staff
- Interaction with other residents
- Interaction family and friends
- Interaction with pets
- Activities



The built environment

- The private space
- The (quasi-) public space
- Personal belongings
- Technology
- Look and feel
- Outdoors and location



Rijnaard *et al.* (2016) The factors influencing the sense of home in nursing homes: a systematic review from the perspective of residents. *Journal of Aging Research*, ID 6143645.

Institutional care for older persons in Croatia

- 1) State homes
 - 2) County homes
 - 3) Non-state homes (owned by non-profit organizations, religious communities and other private legal entities)
- City of Zagreb – 35 retirement homes (11 county homes)
3251 users (20.31% of all users in Croatia)



HECUBA project



- Health, Cultural, and Biological Determinants of Longevity: Anthropological Perspective on Survival in Very Old Age (HECUBA), HRZZ IP-01-2018-2497 (2018 – 2022)
- Principal investigator: Dr. Tatjana Škarić-Jurić, research professor
- Institute for Anthropological Research, Zagreb
- Funded by: Croatian Science Foundation
- Project collaborators:



University of Zagreb
Faculty of
Economics & Business



University of Zagreb
Faculty of Croatian Studies



Field research (2007-2008)

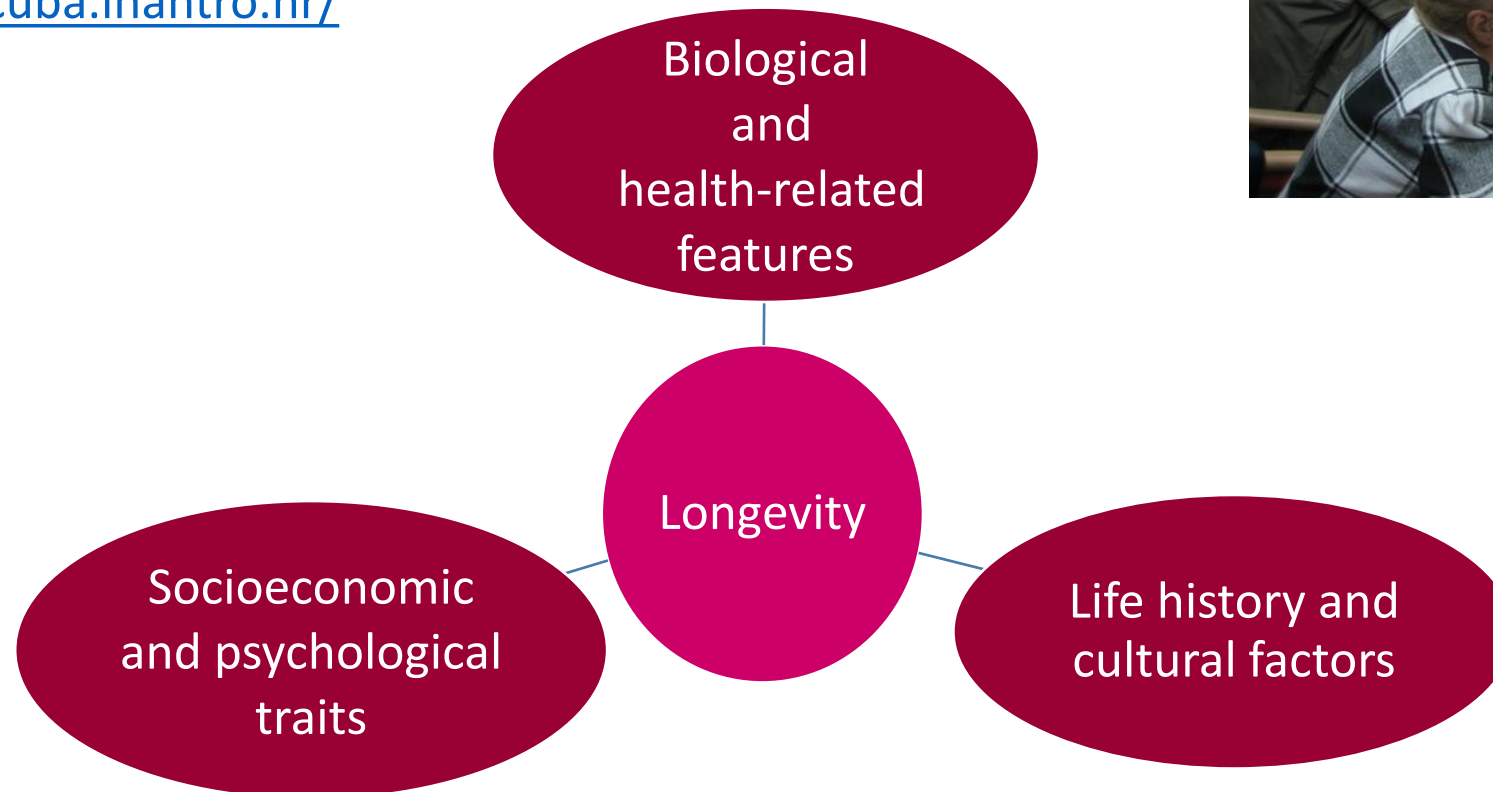
- 13 retirement homes in Zagreb (11 county homes for older persons and two private homes located in Zagreb County)
- face-to-face interviews, biometrical measurements, blood samples (hematological, biochemical and genetic analyses)
- 345 persons, 258 women (74.8%) and 87 men (25.2%), age range 79–101 years, mean age 88.33 ± 3.52 yrs.



HECUBA project (ten years follow-up)

- 1) respondents survival time
- 2) duration of preserved functional ability

<http://hecuba.inantro.hr/>



Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics

Sex, age, longevity	N / X _± SD	% / range
Men	87	25.2%
Duration of stay in the home for the older persons (yrs.)	6.3 _± 5.9	1 – 33
Year of birth	1919.7 _± 3.7	1906 – 1928
Age at interview	88.3 _± 3.5	79.2 – 100.9
Age at death	92.6 _± 4.3	84.8 – 106.7
Longevity (90.0+ yrs.)	232	67.2%
Extreme longevity (95.0+ yrs.)	93	27.0%

Region of birth



Socio-demographic characteristics

Marital status	N	%
Unmarried	22	6.4%
Married	30	8.8%
Divorced	20	5.8%
Widowed	270	78.9%



Number of children	N / X _± SD	% / range
None	83	24.2%
One to two	213	62.1%
Three to four	40	11.7%
Five or more	7	2.0%
Average number per person	1.5 _± 1.3	0 – 12



Socio-demographic characteristics

Number of grandchildren	N / X _± SD	% / range
None	101	29.8%
One to two	131	38.6%
Three to four	74	21.8%
Five or more	33	9.7%
Average number per person	2.0 _± 2.1	0 – 21

Number of great-grandchildren	N / X _± SD	% / range
None	210	62.1%
One to two	80	23.7%
Three to four	27	8.0%
Five or more	21	6.2%
Average number per person	1.1 _± 2.0	0 – 17



Life satisfaction

Satisfaction with overall previous life	N	%
Not satisfied	26	7.8%
Moderately satisfied	163	48.7%
Satisfied	146	43.6%

The most satisfying period of their life was in their (MC)	N	%
Childhood	113	33.8%
Ages 20 to 40	189	56.6%
Ages 40 to 65	124	37.1%
Ages 65 to 85	54	16.2%
Ages 85 till now	44	13.2%

Life satisfaction

Satisfaction with present life	N	%
Not satisfied	71	21.2%
Moderately satisfied	125	37.3%
Satisfied	139	41.5%





Social factors

The relation with inmates	N	%
Good	284	92.5%
Bad	6	2.0%
Not contacting	17	5.5%

The relation with children (if having any)	N	%
Good	238	90.2%
Bad	3	1.1%
Not contacting	23	8.7%

The relation with grandchildren (if having any)	N	%
Good	226	91.9%
Bad	6	2.4%
Not contacting	14	5.7%

The most important cause of their longevity is (multiple choices)	N	%
Family	137	41.6%
Friends	51	15.5%
Job	45	13.7%
Optimism, laugh	131	39.8%
Proper nutrition	99	30.1%
Continuous physical and mental activities	123	37.5%
Continuous work	90	27.4%
Genetics	132	40.1%
Other	95	28.8%

Activities and hobbies

In leisure time most frequently (MC)	N	%
Read books, newspapers, solve crossword puzzles	241	71.1%
Walk, exercise	229	67.6%
Talk with friends or neighbors	251	74.0%
Watch TV or listen to the radio	301	89.1%



Built environment – house rules



- A user cannot bring into a retirement home their **furniture, or other larger objects**.
- Bringing in of the **personal possessions** such as clothes, footwear, pictures, TV set, books and the like, is allowed.
- It is prohibited to keep and use **electrical devices** in the rooms.
- **Adaptations of the rooms** or **changing of the locks** on the entrance doors of the rooms in which they are accommodated are not allowed.
- It is not allowed to keep **pets** in the rooms or other spaces, or to feed the pigeons and other birds on the balconies and windows of a retirement home.

Homesick

- *"Others reap the benefits of my labour; my house is abandoned so the neighbours steal the fruit."* (H342, woman, 87)
- *"To sell my house was stressful..."* (H80, man, 95)



Nostalgic memories

- *"I used to live in a house with a big courtyard; a lot of friends used to come over, I would play and had nothing to worry about."* (H198, woman, 96)
- *"When I retired, I bought a meadow and had an estate in Gorski Kotar; I used to plant conifers... there were always children on the estate..."* (H313, woman, 92)





Negative emotions

- *"I feel like a canary in a cage..."* (H307, woman, 88)
- *"I have never a moment of peace in the home; my room-mate is a difficult person."* (H322, women, 92)
- *"I don't like it in the home... I have no friends, I don't get along with room-mates. All the room-mates were aggressive and mean, I want to go home..."* (H297 woman, 90)
- *"Go to a retirement home as late as possible and only if absolutely necessary."* (H101, woman, 94)

Leaving or losing a pet

- *"It was hard, leaving my bees and vineyard cottage."* (H11, man, 88)
- *"I had to leave my 12-year-old cat to my daughter. I miss her..."* (H13, woman, 86)
- *"They killed the dog when I was going to the home."* (H253, woman, 88)



- *"I have two pigeons, here in the home, on the balcony..."* (H67, woman, 86)
- *"I take care of the flowers, in my room and in the home as well."* (H145, woman, 86)





Life after lockdown

- Mare: *"...what can you do, you go on the computer for a bit, then some reading, then TV, then onto the chair, then from chair into the bed... Thank God, we're facing south! And the only place to get out to is the corridor. It was hard, it can drive you mad, to be like that for months on end. And then you sort of accept your fate."*
- Katica: *"This happiness is hard to describe, we were all mad already. I haven't been out since October. There is nothing like freedom, believe me. I don't even have to get out, I'll stay indoors, but I need to know that the door is open."*

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