

**Summary**  
**of the use of the Hungarian survey**  
**„Turning Points of Life”, The Hungarian Gender and Generations Survey**

The Demographic Research Institute of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office has designed the panel survey parallel to the elaboration of the Generations and Gender Programme and the G&G Survey.

The purpose of the survey was to understand changes in demographic behaviour in Hungary and in Europe.

The content and the structure of the questionnaire enables researchers and analysts to evaluate the characteristics and the interrelationships of various elements of changes in demographic behaviour, such as

- major events in life histories (like marriages, partnerships, births, divorces and separations, widowhood, ageing etc.)
- structural relations (such as housing circumstances, material well-being, education, economic activity) and
- values, attitudes and aspirations (traditional /modern value orientations, motives of decisions, family ideals, satisfaction etc.).

Our aim is to reveal causal relationships which, besides their scientific interest and merit, can enhance the social policy use of the survey.

The first wave of the survey was carried out at the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002. The questionnaire contained about 150 questions. The field work was by face-to-face personal interviews. The respondents represented the male and female population aged 18-75. We collected 16300 successful interviews. The second wave is planned for 2004. Consecutive waves beyond 2004 are also planned at three year intervals.

The primary results of the first wave already allow to draw many useful conclusions.

The questionnaire is appropriate to follow how structural changes in family formation: like marriage vs. unmarried cohabitation or decline in reproduction can be traced in individual life histories, in decision situations, value orientations, which family policy measures are welcome and what extent of family assistance is considered as necessary by the population.

Poverty and deprivation measures that can be obtained from the survey show whether and to what extent disadvantaged situations are due to socio-demographic circumstances, like more children in the family, or households without active members, declining health, disability, old age, living in small rural settlements, belonging to the gypsy population etc. Social-demographic disadvantages lead to loss of confidence, and increase the feeling of loneliness or helplessness which, if such circumstances are of longer duration, can diminish the effectiveness of social action.

The survey lays great emphasis on intergenerational relations and on old age and pensioner status. Beside analysing the various types of living arrangements, including multigenerational arrangements, the questions relating to intergenerational transfers reveal the forms of support between families and households.

The survey also deals with the preparation for old age or pensioner status among the population aged around 50, or older but economically active. Another aspect of the generation issue covered by the survey is the situation, lifestyle, health, well being, worries, satisfaction of the population aged 60-75. The questions related to common beliefs and opinions about older people show whether prejudice and intolerance against older people can be discerned in the public opinion that can decrease the effectiveness of policy actions targeted to the old population.

People who no longer can care for themselves alone, need extensive family and public support. The survey also provides data on what kind of support people think they would prefer if or when they face situations of loss of autonomy.

The first summaries of these topics were published in a working paper in 2002.

It seems obvious that the follow-up of life situations, of decisions and of subjective assessments of situations is necessary

- for social policy in general, and for the elaboration of a suitably flexible family policy,
- to decrease disadvantages and situations of exclusion that can be attributed to demographic factors,
- to narrow intergenerational gaps,
- to manage increasingly emerging situations and problems related to old age.

The best tool to discern and follow causal relationships between individual situations, subjective indicators and demographic behaviour is a series of longitudinal surveys.

As the topics covered by the survey and proposed in the G&G Survey are of relevance to all of the ECE region, and sooner or later will need concerted European or international responses, international comparative studies carried out along the same lines are very much needed.

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