

<http://dx.doi.org/10.16926/gea.2025.02.01.07>

dr Olena BURUNOVA

Uniwersytet Jana Długosza w Częstochowie

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0502-0644>

e-mail: o.burunova@ujd.edu.pl

Financial comfort and perceived structure of household expenditure among older people

Summary

The aim of this article is to examine how the subjectively assessed financial comfort of a household is related to the perceived burden of selected categories of expenditure among older people. The analysis is based on survey data collected among people of retirement age. Groups of households with different levels of financial comfort were distinguished and compared in terms of their declarations as to which categories of spending – food, medicines and health care, services and loan repayments – constitute the greatest burden on their household budget. The results show that the level of financial comfort clearly differentiates the subjective burden of food expenditure, with the group of people declaring that “there is only enough money for more important purchases” standing out in particular. The relationship between the level of financial comfort and the perception of burdens is especially pronounced in the case of spending on medicines and health care – the differences between successive levels of the scale are particularly visible here. Expenditure on services primarily distinguishes households with the highest level of financial comfort, which suggests that these are rather additional than basic expenditures. Loan repayments, in turn – apart from a single difference between the extreme groups – do not constitute an important factor differentiating the financial comfort of the households surveyed.

Keywords: financial comfort, older people, household budget, perceived expenditure burden, expenditure on medicines and health care, expenditure on food, services for the elderly, debt repayment.

Introduction

Population ageing in developed countries – including Poland – has for many years been identified as one of the key challenges for pension systems, health care and, more broadly, social protection. The 2024 *Ageing Report* shows that the growing share of people aged 65+ across the European Union will translate into a lasting increase in expenditure on pensions, health care and longterm care, as well as a shift in the structure of public spending. The OECD report *Pensions at a Glance 2023* in turn highlights increasing disparities in the level of pension benefits and in the standard of living of older people, both between countries and within individual pension systems¹.

Data from Statistics Poland (GUS) indicate that in Poland the majority of households with older persons assess their material situation as at least average. However, in 2023 a noticeable proportion of households with people aged 60+ – especially those composed exclusively of older persons – described their material situation as “bad” or “rather bad”, which points to a real risk of economic exclusion. Complementary expert studies on the material situation of seniors underline the strong internal differentiation of this group: alongside households that are relatively economically stable there are households with very low incomes, burdened with high treatment costs or indebtedness².

In this context, research on the financial condition and financial wellbeing of older people is gaining in importance – understood not only as the level of income, but also as the subjective sense of security and financial comfort, the structure of expenditure and the burden of debt.

This situation is further shaped by the legal framework in force in Poland in the field of social security and health care. Of particular importance are: the Act of 17 December 1998 on pensions and disability pensions from the Social Insurance Fund³, which sets out the rules for acquiring entitlement to pension benefits and their indexation; the Act of 12 March 2004 on social assistance⁴, which regulates the system of benefits addressed to individuals and families with the lowest incomes; the Act of 27 August 2004 on health care benefits financed from public funds, which defines the scope and rules of access to health services⁵; and the Act of 11 September 2015 on older persons, which, among

¹ OECD, *Pensions at a Glance 2023: OECD and G20 indicators*. OECD Publishing 2023.

² G. Uścińska, *Sytuacja materialna seniorów w Polsce*. Ekspertyza w ramach projektu „Świat na miarę seniora – sytuacja osób starszych w Polsce”. Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych Wyszyńskiego 2023.

³ Ustawa z dnia 17 grudnia 1998 r. o emeryturach i rentach z Funduszu Ubezpieczeń Społecznych, t.j. Dz. U. z 2024 r., nr 1631 z późn. zm.

⁴ Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2004 r. o pomocy społecznej, t.j. Dz. U. z 2025 r., poz. 1214 z późn. zm.

⁵ Ustawa z dnia 27 sierpnia 2004 r. o świadczeniach opieki zdrowotnej finansowanych ze środków publicznych, t.j. Dz. U. z 2025 r., poz. 1461 z późn. zm.

other things, introduces the obligation of systematic monitoring of the situation of people aged 60+ and of taking their needs into account in public policies⁶.

These legal regulations are complemented by the governmental document *Social Policy for Older People 2030. Security – Participation – Solidarity*, adopted by a resolution of the Council of Ministers, which identifies as key objectives of state action, among others, strengthening the income security of older people, improving access to health and care services, reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion in this group, and explicitly drawing attention to the economic situation and housing conditions of older persons⁷.

It is precisely within this demographic, economic and legal context that older people's households operate, and their subjective financial comfort and expenditure structure are the focus of the present analysis.

In the literature, the direct relationship between a simple, onedimensional assessment of financial comfort – such as the Leiden Household Lifestyle Scale (LS_GD) used in this study – and responses to questions concerning key aspects of the economic situation of households is still relatively rarely examined. Existing studies usually concentrate on: (1) objective indicators of income or expenditure poverty⁸, (2) complex scales of financial wellbeing, or⁹ (3) detailed analyses of individual expenditure categories¹⁰.

⁶ Ustawa z dnia 11 września 2015 r. o osobach starszych, Dz. U. z 2015 r., poz. 1705 z późn. zm.

⁷ Uchwała nr 161 Rady Ministrów z dnia 26 października 2018 r. w sprawie przyjęcia dokumentu Polityka społeczna wobec osób starszych 2030. Bezpieczeństwo – uczestnictwo – solidarność, M.P. z 2018 r., poz. 1169.

⁸ J. Czapieński, T. Panek (red.), *Warunki jakości życia Polaków. Raport, Diagnoza Społeczna*, Rada Monitoringu Społecznego, Warszawa 2011; T. Panek (red.), *Statystyka społeczna. Procesy społeczne, źródła danych i metody analizy*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 2020; GUS, *Sytuacja osób starszych w Polsce w 2023 r.*, Warszawa 2024.

⁹ Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, *Financial wellbeing: The goal of financial education*. CFPB 2015; Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, CFPB financial wellbeing scale: Technical report. CFPB 2017; E. Kempson, A. Finney, C. Poppe, *Financial well-being a conceptual model and preliminary analysis*, "Consumption Research Norway", 3–2017; E.C. Brüggen, J. Hogreve, M. Holmlund, S. Kabadayi, M. Löfgren, *Financial wellbeing: A conceptualization and research agenda*, "Journal of Business Research" 79, 2017, s. 228–237; E. Sobolewska-Poniedziałek, *Dobrostan finansowy osób w dojrzałym i starszym wieku w wybranych krajach Unii Europejskiej*, „Ekonomia” 2017, nr 23 (4), s. 95–109.

¹⁰ J. Arsenijevic, M. Pavlova, B. Rechel, W. Groot, *Catastrophic health care expenditure among older people with chronic diseases in 15 European Countries*, PLoS ONE 11 (7), 2016; M. Piekut, *Gospodarstwa domowe z wysokim udziałem wydatków na zdrowie – charakterystyka i wzorzec konsumpcji*, „Wiadomości Statystyczne. The Polish Statistician” 2023, 68 (8), s. 15–33; L. Karpinska, S. Śmiech, *Conceptualising housing costs: The hidden face of energy poverty in Poland*, "Energy Policy" 2020, vol. 147; C. Rozynek, M. Lanzendorf, *How does low income affect older people's travel practices? Findings of a qualitative case study on the links between financial poverty, mobility and social participation*, "Travel Behaviour and Society" 30, 2023, s. 312–324; A. Hiilamo, *Household nonmortgage debt and depression in older adults: Evidence from 22 European Countries*, "Social Indicators Research" 173 (2), 2024, s. 551–574.

The research gap therefore lies in the lack of studies that simultaneously capture subjective financial comfort measured by a simple selfassessment scale (LS_GD) and the extent to which respondents feel that a given category constitutes the largest expenditure item in the household budget.

The aim of this article is to examine the relationship between the subjective financial comfort of the household, measured with the Leiden LS_GD scale, and the degree to which particular expenditure categories (food, medicines and health care, services, loan repayment) are perceived as the largest burden in the household budget, which makes it possible to better grasp the practical consequences of older people's subjective "financial health".

1. Financial condition, financial well-being, and the structure of household expenditures among older people: a literature review

1.1. Financial health and well-being of older people

There are several similar terms in the literature describing the economic situation of households: financial condition, material situation, financial well-being, and financial health. In more recent Anglo-Saxon approaches, financial well-being is defined as the ability to maintain a desirable standard of living now and in the future, along with an associated sense of security and freedom in making financial decisions. Brügggen et al. (2017) propose to frame financial well-being as a perceptual state that reflects the possibility of achieving current and expected living standards and financial "freedom", while taking into account the consequences of financial behavior, contextual factors, and individual characteristics¹¹.

The U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) defines financial well-being as a state in which an individual (a) is in control of their day-to-day finances, (b) is prepared for unexpected expenses, (c) is meeting their financial goals, and (d) feels free to choose to enjoy life¹². On this basis, a 10-item financial well-being scale was developed, which is widely used in international research and is described in detail in a technical report by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau¹³.

In OECD documents and in national financial education strategies – including the OECD/INFE recommendations on financial education strategies – financial

¹¹ E.C. Brügggen, J. Hogleve, M. Holmlund, S. Kabadayi, M. Löfgren, *Financial Well-being: Concept and Research Agenda*, Journal of Business Research 9, 2017, pp. 228–237.

¹² Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, *Financial Well-Being: The Purpose of Financial Education*. CFPB 2015.

¹³ Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, *CFPB Financial Well-Being Scale: Technical Report*. CFPB 2017.

well-being and financial health are indicated as the overriding objective of financial education and public policies in the area of consumer protection¹⁴. Achieving financial well-being here is associated both with having adequate resources and financial skills and with the ability to cope with shocks (e.g. increased inflation, loss of income).

In Poland, the number of studies directly referring to the financial well-being of the elderly is increasing. Sobolewska-Poniedziałek (2017) analyses the financial well-being of mature and older people in selected EU countries, pointing out that the percentage of people signalling income restrictions and concerns about maintaining their standard of living in retirement increases with age¹⁵. This approach is developed by Jajko-Siwiek (2024), who, based on data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) for pensioners aged 65–79 in Poland, Spain and Denmark, shows that the ability to “make ends meet” is primarily a function of disposable income and financial resources, with rising food costs being particularly important in Poland¹⁶.

On the other hand, Zalegi’s (2017) research on the financial situation of people aged 65+ in Poland confirms that, despite relatively stable pension income, a significant proportion of seniors negatively assess their financial situation, and household budgets are dominated by a high share of housing and health expenditures, with limited opportunities to accumulate savings¹⁷. The problem of the accumulation of low incomes, the lack of a savings buffer and consumer debt as factors reducing the financial well-being of the elderly is also highlighted by Świecka (2016), who points to the growing importance of credits and loans taken out to finance current consumption¹⁸. Uścińska (2023) and the report of the Central Statistical Office *The Situation of the Elderly in Poland in 2023* also emphasise that the economic dimension of the well-being of seniors is closely linked to housing conditions, the structure of expenditure and the subjective assessment of the financial situation of pensioners’ households¹⁹.

¹⁴ OECD/INFE, *National Financial Education Strategies: OECD/INFE Policy Handbook*. OECD Publishing 2015.

¹⁵ E. Sobolewska-Poniedziałek, *Financial well-being of people of mature and older age in selected countries of the European Union*, „*Ekonomia*” 2017, no. 23 (4), pp. 95–109.

¹⁶ A. Jajko-Siwiek, *Discovering financial well-being: insights of pensioners from the Third Age group in Poland, Spain and Denmark*. “*Economics and Business Review*” 10 (3), 2024, pp. 7–33.

¹⁷ T. Zalega, *The financial situation of people aged 65+ in the light of the results of own research*. “*Innovative Management in Economy and Business*” 2017, 1 (24), 87–104.

¹⁸ B. Świecka, *Assessment of the financial situation, wealth and debt of the elderly*. “*Problems of Management*” 2016, No. 14 (59), pp. 118–134.

¹⁹ G. Uścińska, *The material situation of seniors in Poland. Expert opinion as part of the task “A world tailored to seniors – the situation of the elderly in Poland”*, Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, Warsaw 2023; Central Statistical Office, *The situation of the elderly in Poland in 2023*, Warsaw 2024.

Most studies emphasise the need to combine the objective dimension (income, assets, debt) with the subjective dimension (sense of security, financial stress, control over finances). The same nominal income may be assessed extremely differently by different households – as “sufficient” or “barely enough for basic needs”.

1.2. Subjective measures of financial situation and the Leiden method

In addition to classic, objective indicators of the material situation, more and more emphasis is placed on subjective measures of well-being and poverty, based on self-assessment of the “sufficiency” of income, lifestyle, or perceived financial comfort. Among subjective methods, an important place is occupied by the Leiden Poverty Line (LPL), initiated by van Praag’s team²⁰. In surveys of this type, respondents are asked to rate their household income on a scale from “very bad” to “very good”, and then, based on these assessments, the subjective welfare function and the subjective poverty line are determined.

Kot (2002) discusses in detail the Leyden method of measuring the welfare function and the methodological dilemmas associated with it, pointing out that this method – despite its mathematical “setting” – is based on arbitrary assumptions (including the choice of the utility threshold that is supposed to define the poverty line)²¹. The Statistical Office in Poznań (2015) uses a related approach to estimating the subjective poverty line and analysing perceived poverty in Poland, showing that the declarations “income is insufficient” and “income is sufficient” make it possible to set a subjective poverty threshold that differs from statutory or relative thresholds²².

Subjective measures of the financial situation of households are commonly used in research on the economic situation of people aged 65+ in European countries, especially in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. In datadriven analyses based on SHARE and the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EUSILC), one of the most commonly used indicators is the assessment of the

²⁰ B.M.S. van Praag, A.J.M. Hagenaars, J. van Weeren, (1982). *Poverty in Europe*. “Review of Income and Wealth” 28 (3), 1982, pp. 345–359; S.M. Kot, *Methodological dilemmas of measuring welfare and poverty*. “Problems of Social Policy” 2002, No. 4, pp. 97–115; Statistical Office in Poznań, *Poverty and Social Exclusion: From Concept to Measurement*, Poznań 2015.

²¹ S.M. Kot, *Methodological dilemmas of measuring welfare and poverty*. “Problems of Social Policy” 2002, No. 4, pp. 97–115.

²² Statistical Office in Poznań, *Poverty and Social Exclusion: From Concept to Measurement*, Statistical Office in Poznań, Poznań 2015.

household's "ability to make ends meet", usually on a multilevel scale from "very easily" to "with great difficulty"²³.

In analyses of the new EU Member States, Stropnik and Kump (2008) use, in addition to the classic income poverty threshold, questions about the difficulty of making ends meet and about "the lowest monthly income needed to make ends meet", which make it possible to determine the subjective poverty line for older people²⁴. Zaidi (2011, 2012) uses a similar approach, constructing indicators of deprivation and the so-called capability deprivation for people aged 65+. These indicators are based on responses related to the ability to cover unexpected expenses, the occurrence of payment arrears, and the declared ease of meeting basic needs²⁵.

Figari, Matsaganis and Sutherland (2011) combine indicators of income poverty, material deprivation, and the subjective assessment of the financial situation, showing that minimum pensions and social benefits translate differently into the perceived financial well-being of older people in Central and Eastern European countries²⁶.

More recent works go even further, treating subjective assessments as a separate, multidimensional aspect of economic difficulties. Palomäki, Riekhoff and Kuitto (2025) construct a synthetic "economic hardship" indicator based on EU-SILC data for people aged 65+ living below the income poverty threshold, drawing, inter alia, on the ability to make ends meet, the ability to finance an emergency expense, the presence of arrears in payments, and the lack of funds for basic consumption needs²⁷. The authors show that it is in Central and Eastern European countries that older people most often experience the accumulation of several such subjectively felt problems at the same time, despite the formal application

²³ S.L. Greer, J. Lynch, A. Reeves, M. Falkenbach, J. Gingrich, J. Cylus, C. Bambra, *Ageing and Health: A Policy for Better Policies*, "European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies" 2021, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; A. Zaidi, *Exclusion from material resources among older people in EU countries: new evidence on poverty and deprivation of skills* (Policy Brief No 2/2011), European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Vienna 2011.

²⁴ N. Stropnik, N. Kump, *Income and Poverty among the Elderly in the New Member States: A Comparative Analysis*, [in:], *Poor Older People in the New EU Member States* (ENEPRI Research Report No. 60), red. J.C. Vrooman, CEPS/ENEPRI, Brussels 2008, pp. 3–43.

²⁵ A. Zaidi, *Material Exclusion among Older People in EU Countries: New Evidence on Poverty and Disability Deprivation* (Policy Brief No. 2/2011), European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Vienna 2011; A. Zaidi, *Material Resource Exclusion: Poverty and Deprivation among Older People in Europe*, [in:] *From exclusion to inclusion in old age: a global challenge*, red. T. Scharf, N.C. Keating, Bristol 2012, pp. 71–88.

²⁶ F. Figari, M. Matsaganis, H. Sutherland, *The financial well-being of older people in Europe and the redistributive effects of minimum pension schemes* (EUROMOD Working Paper No EM7/11), Colchester 2011, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex.

²⁷ L.-M. Palomäki, A.-J. Riekhoff, K. Kuitto, *What it means to be poor: Dimensions of economic hardship among older people living in poverty across Europe*, "Ageing & Society" 45 (5), 2025, pp. 947–968.

of the same income poverty threshold throughout the EU²⁸. The results of Serrano-Alarcón and co-authors (2017) and the FREE Policy Brief (2013) report further indicate that difficulties in making ends meet in old age are a strong predictor of poorer health and higher mortality in Eastern European countries²⁹.

The literature also includes cross-national comparisons involving Poland. Oczkowska, Kulati and Myck (2023) use declared difficulties in meeting basic needs, along with indicators of material and social deprivation, to compare the economic well-being of people aged 50+ (including those aged 65+) in Poland and Germany, showing a much more frequent occurrence of “great difficulties” in making ends meet among Polish seniors³⁰. Data from the Central Statistical Office (GUS) and studies on the situation of the elderly in Poland, based on assessments such as “good/average/bad material situation of the household”, fit into this trend of subjective measurement, while at the same time making it possible to distinguish households with people aged 60/65+ as a separate category. Taken together, these studies show that subjective measures of the financial situation – based on self-assessment of financial difficulties, income adequacy, and the ability to cope with unexpected expenses – constitute a widely used tool for assessing the economic condition of households aged 65+ in Europe, especially in Eastern European countries.

1.3. Structure of expenditure of older people: food, health, services

The structure of household expenditure has long been treated as an indirect indicator of the level of wealth. The theoretical justification for such an approach is provided by Engel’s classical laws, which describe the relationship between the amount of income and the share of individual categories of expenditure in the household budget³¹. According to Engel’s first law, as income increases, the share of food expenditure in overall consumer expenditure gradually

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ SerranoAlarcón, M., J. Perelman, *Ageing in Unequal Circumstances: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Gender Patterns and Socio-Economic Functional Limitations among Older Adults in Southern Europe*, International Journal for Equity in Health 2017, 16, Article 175; M. Adena, M. Myck, *Poverty and health of the elderly – how much does income matter?*, “FREE Policy Brief Series”, September 2013, Forum for Research on Eastern Europe and Emerging Economies (FREE Network), <https://freepolicybriefs.org/2013/09/30/old-age-poverty-and-health-how-much-does-income-matter/>.

³⁰ M. Oczkowska, E. Kulati, M. Myck, Income and well-being in old age—systemic and regional factors in comparison between Germany and Polish, “Innovations in Aging” 7 (S1), 2023, p. 71.

³¹ Cf. T. Zalega, *Consumption. Determinants, Theories and Models*, Polish Economic Publishing House, Warsaw 2012, pp. 95–102; Cz. Bywalec, *Consumption in the Theory and Practice of Management*, PWN Scientific Publishing House, Warsaw 2007, pp. 101–110.

decreases³². The second law indicates that the share of expenses related to the maintenance of housing (including, among others, rent, fuel and lighting) shows relatively low sensitivity to changes in income, remaining at a similar level or growing moderately³³. On the other hand, Engel's third law emphasises that with the improvement of the income situation, the share of expenditure on other needs and luxury goods increases. The reference to Engel's laws therefore justifies the use of the structure of expenditure as an approximate measure of the level of welfare of households³⁴.

Data from the Central Statistical Office (GUS) household budget survey confirm that pensioner households devote a relatively larger share of their expenditure to food, housing and energy carriers than households relying on wage labour³⁵.

Analyses of the household budgets of older people show that the "core" of their consumption consists of three groups of expenditure: food, housing/energy and health, and that their combined share significantly exceeds the corresponding share in younger households³⁶.

The literature emphasizes that a high share of food in total expenditure, together with rising housing maintenance costs, is typical of households with limited financial resources. An important item in the budgets of the elderly is health expenditure: medicines, private consultations, rehabilitation or long-term care. Studies on catastrophic health spending show that in many European countries, households – in particular those with older people and chronically ill people – incur health expenditures that exceed a certain income share threshold and lead to a reduction in other consumption categories, including basic ones³⁷. In the context of population ageing, this implies a real risk of a decline in the financial well-being of some seniors, even where there is formal access to public services.

Energy poverty among the elderly is also receiving increasing attention. Comparative studies across European countries show that difficulties in

³² See T. Zalega, *Consumption. Determinants, Theories and Models*, op. cit., pp. 95–97; H. Dudek, *The impact of income situation on the structure of household expenditures*, „Zeszyty Naukowe SGGW – Ekonomika i Organizacja Gospodarki Żywnościowej” 2012, no. 98, pp. 235–244.

³³ Cf. Cz. Bywalec, *Consumption in the Theory and Practice of Management*, op. cit., pp. 105–110; T. Zalega, *Consumption. Determinants, Theories and Models*, op. cit., pp. 99–102.

³⁴ Cf. Cz. Bywalec, *Consumption in the Theory and Practice of Management*, op. cit., pp. 105–110; T. Zalega, *Consumption. Determinants, Theories and Models*, op. cit., pp. 99–102.

³⁵ Central Statistical Office, *The situation of households in 2023 in the light of the results of the household budget survey*, Warsaw 2024.

³⁶ GUS, *The situation of households in 2023 in the light of the results of the household budget survey*, Warsaw 2024a; G. Uścińska, *The material situation of seniors in Poland*. Expert opinion as part of the project “A world tailored to seniors – the situation of the elderly in Poland”. Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, 2023.

³⁷ J. Arsenijevic, M. Pavlova, B. Rechel, W. Groot, Catastrophic expenditure on health care among older people with chronic diseases in 15 European countries, *PLoS ONE* 11(7), 2016.

adequately heating the home and paying energy bills are strongly associated with poorer health and lower mental well-being³⁸.

More detailed analyses – e.g. of older people's households in Greece – indicate that the risk of energy poverty in this group increases with deteriorating health and income constraints, while at the same time being mitigated by stable pension benefits³⁹.

Another important group of items in seniors' budgets is made up of broadly defined services, including in particular housing and energy (rent, heating, utilities), transport, and personal and care services. Rising energy and heating costs are the reason why energy poverty and energy exclusion are being recognised more often than before, which particularly affects older people living in buildings with poorer thermal insulation and low incomes⁴⁰. On the other hand, research on mobility and transport exclusion shows that limited financial resources can lead to a reduction in the use of collective and individual transport, and thus to a reduction in the social participation of older people⁴¹. In conclusion, the literature points to strong, albeit complex, links between:

- subjective assessment of the financial situation (income sufficiency, sense of security, financial stress),
- income structure (type and stability of sources, pension benefits, additional income),
- the structure of expenditure (share of food, health costs, housing and transport services, and credit burdens) in households of older people⁴².

³⁸ H. Thomson, C. Snell, S. Bouzarovski, *Health, Well-being and Energy Poverty in Europe: A Comparative Study of 32 European Countries*. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 14 (6), 2017, p. 584; M. Zawada, M. Szajt, J. Kowalik, R. Kucęba, *Spatial Differentiation of Energy Poverty in Eu Countries*. In *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 2018, Vol. 164, No. 1, p. 012002. IOP Publishing.

³⁹ E. Sardianou, *Understanding energy poverty among older people: Conclusions from a survey of households in Greece*. "Energie" 17 (1), 2024, 94.

⁴⁰ H. Thomson, C. Snell, S. Bouzarovski, *Health, Well-being and Energy Poverty in Europe: A Comparative Study of 32 European Countries*. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 14 (6), 2017, p. 584; E. Sardianou, *Understanding energy poverty among older people: findings from a survey of households in Greece*. "Energie" 17 (1), 2024, p. 94.

⁴¹ C. Rozynek, M. Lanzendorf, *How does low income affect the travel practices of the elderly? Results of a qualitative case study on the links between financial poverty, mobility and social participation*, "Travel Behaviour and Society" 30, 2023, pp. 312–324.

⁴² J. Arsenijevic, M. Pavlova, B. Rechel, W. Groot, *Catastrophic healthcare expenditures among older people with chronic diseases in 15 European countries*, PLoS ONE 11(7), 2016; GUS, (2024a). *The situation of households in 2023 in the light of the results of the household budget survey*, Warsaw 2024; A. Hiilamo, *Debt matters? Mental wellbeing of older people with household debts in England*. "SSM – Population Health" 12, 2020; A. Hiilamo, *Non-mortgage household debt and depression in older adults: evidence from 22 European countries*, "Social Indicators Research" 173 (2), 2024, pp. 551–574; H. Thomson, C. Snell, S. Bouzarovski, *Health, Well-being and Energy Poverty in Europe: A Comparative Study of 32 European Countries*. "International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health" 14 (6), 2017, p. 584.

Empirical research consistently shows that a high share of expenditure on basic goods (food, housing, services) and health is typical for households with limited financial resources, and a high debt service burden is associated with a decrease in mental and material well-being⁴³. At the same time, the growing literature on financial well-being highlights the importance of simple, subjective measures of financial comfort as indicators of a household's "financial health"⁴⁴.

2. Research methods

The study was conducted using the diagnostic survey method and an original questionnaire. The PAPI (Paper and Pencil Interview) technique was used. The PAPI method is based on a traditional paper questionnaire filled in by the respondent, either independently or with the support of an interviewer. The sample comprised N = 244 older people – students of Universities of the Third Age. The questionnaire included a block of questions concerning the subjective assessment of the financial situation, including, inter alia: improvement in the financial situation compared with the previous year, indication of the largest type of expenditure in the household budget (food; medicines and health care; services; loan repayments), and assessment of the increase in the cost of living during the year. The key variable was the assessment of household lifestyle and financial comfort (LS_GD) on a five-point scale, ranging from the response "money is not enough even for basic needs" to "I enjoy life and I do not pay attention to money because I do not have to worry about finances".

Many studies on the financial situation of households use simple subjective assessment scales, including the widely used Leyden scale. This approach is also followed in the present study, which uses the Leyden LS_GD scale – a synthetic indicator of lifestyle and financial comfort, based on the answer to the question: "How do you assess the lifestyle of your own household?" (1 – "not enough for basic needs" ... 5 – "I do not have to worry about finances").

⁴³ B. Świecka, *Excessive Indebtedness and Insolvency of Households in Poland in the Light of Primary and Secondary Research*. "Scientific Works of the Wrocław University of Economics" 2009, No. 54, pp. 110–124; A. Hiilamo, *Debt Matters? Mental wellbeing of older people with household debts in England*. "SSM – Population Health" 12, 2020.

⁴⁴ E.C. Brüggen, J. Hogreve, M. Holmlund, S. Kabadayi, M. Löfgren, *Financial Well-being: Concept and Research Agenda*, Journal of Business Research 9, 2017, pp. 228–237; Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, *Financial Well-Being: The Purpose of Financial Education*. CFPB 2015; E. Sobolewska-Poniedziałek, *Financial well-being of people of mature and older age in selected countries of the European Union*, „Ekonomia” 2017, no. 23(4), pp. 95–109.

The statistical analysis examined the relationship between the financial comfort assessment (LS_GD) and the above-mentioned subjective assessments, which made it possible to capture the practical consequences of the subjective “financial health” of older people.

In line with the adopted objective of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

- 1. How does the level of household financial comfort (LS_GD) differentiate the subjectively perceived budgetary burden of food expenditure among older people?
- 2. Is the level of financial comfort (LS_GD) related to the intensity of perceived expenditure on medicines and health care in the households of older people, and, if so, to what extent?
- 3. Does the intensity of expenditure on services (e.g., hairdressing, care, cleaning) differ significantly between groups with different levels of financial comfort (LS_GD)?
- 4. Is the declared budgetary burden of loan repayment a significant factor differentiating the financial comfort (LS_GD) of households of older people?

To compare the level of financial comfort, the nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test was applied. Each analysis compared the distribution of LS_GD ratings between two independent groups of respondents distinguished on the basis of the intensity with which a given category of expenditure was indicated.

3. Research results

The first step was to examine the values of the Mann–Whitney test for the declared intensity of food expenditure and the level of financial comfort (LS_GD) in Table 1.

Table 1. Mann–Whitney U test values for declared intensity of food expenditure by level of financial comfort (LS_GD)

Physical comfort LS_GD	Measure	
	With	p
There is not enough money even for basic needs/ I only have enough money for more important purchases (level 1–2)	-2,649	0,008
There is not enough money even for basic needs / I live very frugally to save for more important purchases (level 1–3)	0,252	0,801
There is not enough money even for basic needs / I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (level 1–4)	-0,557	0,577

Physical comfort LS_GD	Measure	
	With	p
There is not enough money even for basic needs/ I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances (level 1–5)	-0,392	0,695
I only have enough money for more important purchases/ I live very frugally to save for more important purchases (level 2–3)	3,312	0,001
I only have enough money for more important purchases/ I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (level 2–4)	2,649	0,008
I only have enough money for more important purchases/ I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money, because I don't have to worry about finances 2–5	1,968	0,049
I live very frugally to save for more important purchases/ I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (level 3–4)	-2,585	0,010
I live very frugally to save for more important purchases/ I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances (level 3–5)	-1,306	0,192
I live frugally and I have enough money for everything/ / I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances (level 4–5)	0,245	0,807

Values marked in red indicate significance levels $p < 0.05$, indicating statistically significant differences between the groups compared.

Source: own study.

The Mann–Whitney test showed that the perceived budgetary burden of food expenditure differs significantly between certain levels of financial comfort (LS_GD). Against this background, the group of people declaring that “there is enough money only for more important purchases” (level 2) stands out – their assessments of the share of expenditure on food clearly differ from those at both lower and higher levels of financial comfort. Significant differences in the perception of food spending can also be observed between people who “live very frugally to save for more important purchases” (level 3) and those who “live frugally and have enough money for everything” (level 4). The lack of significant differences between the two highest comfort categories (levels 4 and 5) suggests that, among those in the relatively best financial situation, the subjective budgetary burden of food expenditure is very similar. Table 2 presents the values of the U statistic and the corresponding significance levels (p) for comparisons of the intensity of expenditure on medicines and health care between groups of respondents differing in their level of financial comfort (LS_GD).

Table 2. Mann–Whitney U test values for declared expenditure on medicines and health care by level of financial comfort (LS_GD)

Physical comfort LS_GD	Measure	
	With	p
There is not enough money even for basic needs/ I only have enough money for more important purchases (level 1–2)	-2,694	0,007
There is not enough money even for basic needs / I live very frugally to save for more important purchases (level 1–3)	2,206	0,027
There is not enough money even for basic needs / I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (level 1–4)	2,961	0,003
There is not enough money even for basic needs/ I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances (level 1–5)	1,466	0,143
I only have enough money for more important purchases/ I live very frugally to save for more important purchases (level 2–3)	2,020	0,043
I only have enough money for more important purchases/ I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (level 2–4)	2,694	0,007
I only have enough money for more important purchases/ I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances (level 2–5)	1,018	0,308
I live very frugally to save for more important purchases/ I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (level 3–4)	4,856	0,000
I live very frugally to save for more important purchases/ I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances (level 3–5)	1,034	0,301
I live frugally and I have enough money for everything/ / I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances (level 4–5)	-2,955	0,003

Values marked in red indicate significance levels $p < 0.05$, indicating statistically significant differences between the groups compared.

Source: own study.

The Mann–Whitney test indicated that the perceived budgetary burden of spending on medicines and health care clearly differs between individual levels of financial comfort (LS_GD). The strongest differences compared with other groups are observed among those declaring that they “live very frugally to save for more important purchases” (level 3) and those who “live frugally and have enough money for everything” (level 4) – between these two categories of financial comfort, a particularly strong, statistically significant difference in the assessments of the intensity of health expenditure was observed. Significant differences also appear when comparing the group with the lowest level of comfort (“money is not enough even for basic needs”, level 1) with both people

who “live very frugally to save” (level 3) and people who declare that “there is enough money for everything” (level 4). By contrast, the absence of significant differences between levels 1 and 5 and 2 and 5 suggests that, among those who are extremely dissatisfied and extremely satisfied with their financial situation, assessments of the budgetary burden of expenditure on medicines and health care are more diverse and do not form a simple, linear system. Table 3 presents the values of the U statistic and the corresponding pvalues for comparisons of the intensity of expenditure on services (e.g. hairdressing, care, cleaning) between groups of respondents differing in their level of financial comfort (LS_GD).

Table 3. Mann–Whitney U test values for declared expenditure on services by level of financial comfort (LS_GD)

Physical comfort LS_GD	Measure	
	With	p
There is not enough money even for basic needs/ I only have enough money for more important purchases (level 1–2)	-0,625	0,532
There is not enough money even for basic needs / I live very frugally to save for more im- portant purchases (level 1–3)	-1,013	0,311
There is not enough money even for basic needs / I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (level 1–4)	-0,871	0,383
There is not enough money even for basic needs/ I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money becau- se I don't have to worry about finances (level 1–5)	-2,119	0,034
I only have enough money for more important purchases/ I live very frugally to save for more important purchases (level 2–3)	0,146	0,884
I only have enough money for more important purchases/ I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (Level 2–4)	0,625	0,532
I only have enough money for more important purcha- ses/ I enjoy life and I don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances level (level 2–5)	-1,492	0,136
I live very frugally to save for more important purchases/ I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (level 3–4)	1,597	0,110
I live very frugally to save for more important purcha- ses/ I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money becau- se I don't have to worry about finances (level 3–5)	-2,469	0,014
I live frugally and I have enough money for everything/ / I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money becau- se I don't have to worry about finances (level 4–5)	-3,646	0,000

Values marked in red indicate significance levels $p < 0.05$, indicating statistically significant differences between the groups compared.

Source: own study.

The results of the Mann–Whitney test indicate that differences in the perceived budgetary burden of expenditure on services (e.g. hairdressing, care, cleaning) appear primarily among people with higher financial comfort. Significantly lower expenditure on services is declared by people who “live frugally and have enough money for everything” compared with those who “enjoy life and do not have to worry about finances”. Statistically significant differences also appear when comparing the “I live very frugally to save for more important purchases” group with those with the highest comfort (level 5), while between the lower levels of LS_GD (1–3) and level 4 there are usually no significant discrepancies in the assessment of the share of services in the budget.

Table 4 presents the values of the Mann–Whitney test for the declared intensity of expenditure on loan repayment and the level of financial comfort (LS_GD).

Table 4. Mann–Whitney U test values for declared intensity of loan repayment expenditure by level of financial comfort (LS_GD)

Physical comfort LS_GD	Measure	
	With	p
There is not enough money even for basic needs/ I only have enough money for more important purchases (level 1–2)	-1,238	0,216
There is not enough money even for basic needs / I live very frugally to save for more important purchases (level 1–3)	-0,155	0,876
There is not enough money even for basic needs / I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (level 1–4)	0,912	0,362
There is not enough money even for basic needs/ I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances (level 1–5)	-0,103	0,918
I only have enough money for more important purchases/ I live very frugally to save for more important purchases (level 2–3)	-0,205	0,838
I only have enough money for more important purchases/ I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (Level 2–4)	1,238	0,216
I only have enough money for more important purchases/ I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances (level 2–5)	-0,216	0,829
I live very frugally to save for more important purchases/ I live frugally and I have enough money for everything (level 3–4)	2,250	0,024
I live very frugally to save for more important purchases/ I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances (level 3–5)	-0,328	0,743
I live frugally and I have enough money for everything/ / I enjoy life and don't pay attention to money because I don't have to worry about finances (level 4–5)	-1,665	0,096

Values marked in red indicate significance levels $p < 0.05$, indicating statistically significant differences between the groups compared.

Source: own study.

The results of the Mann–Whitney test indicate that the declared burden on the budget with loan repayment differs only slightly between the levels of financial comfort of LS_GD. A statistically significant difference appears only between people who “live very frugally to save for more important purchases” (level 3) and those who “live frugally and have enough money for everything” (level 4) – in the first group, the intensity of spending on loan repayment is on average higher. The lack of significant differences in the other comparisons suggests that in the analysed sample, loan repayment is not a category of expenditure that clearly differentiates the financial comfort of the elderly, apart from the aforementioned “threshold” between a very frugal and relatively financially stable life.

3. Conclusion

On the basis of the analyses conducted, it can be concluded that the relationship between the financial comfort of the surveyed households (LS_GD) and the subjectively perceived burden of selected categories of expenditure is clear, though heterogeneous.

Firstly, in the case of expenditure on food, statistically significant differences appear mainly between people declaring that “there is enough money only for more important purchases” and other LS_GD levels. This means that for this group – with moderately low financial comfort – food is a particularly severe budgetary burden, differentiating their situation more strongly than that of both the most extremely poor and those with higher financial comfort.

The results obtained in the study, according to which food is a particularly severe burden on the budget in the group with moderately low financial comfort (LS_GD), correspond well with research on the structure of household expenditure among older people. Piekut (2020) shows that in single-person senior households in Poland, a high share of expenditure on food remains a typical distinguishing feature of a strained financial situation, limiting room for other forms of consumption⁴⁵. Similarly, the analyses of Loibl and co-authors (2022) indicate that among older people in European countries, financial difficulties and economic stress strongly translate into food insecurity and problems in meeting basic nutritional needs⁴⁶. The results of this study therefore confirm that even with moderately low – rather than extremely poor – financial comfort, food can be perceived as a category that lowers the assessment of the household’s economic situation.

⁴⁵ M. Piekut, *Standards of living in single-person households of the elderly*, “Sustainable Development” 12 (3), 2020, 992.

⁴⁶ C. Loibl, W. Bruine de Bruin, B. Summers, S. McNair, P. Verhallen, *What financial stressors are associated with food insecurity among older people in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands? Exploratory Study*, *Food Security* 14 (2), 2022, pp. 533–556.

Secondly, expenditure on medicines and health care shows a clear relationship with the assessment of financial comfort. There is a significant difference between successive LS_GD levels, especially between people who “live very frugally to save for more important purchases” and those who declare that they “live frugally and have enough money for everything”. This suggests that even a relatively small improvement in the financial situation can be felt as a significant reduction in the pressure of health spending, which is particularly important in the case of older people.

The results on medicine and health-care expenditure are part of the broader literature on the financial consequences of chronic disease and ageing. Arsenijevic et al. (2016) showed that in European countries, older people relatively often incur so-called catastrophic health expenditure, especially when they have limited income⁴⁷. WHO/Europe reports also show that out-of-pocket payments for treatment and long-term care can lead to foregoing other categories of consumption or falling into outright income poverty⁴⁸. Against this background, the variation in the intensity of health expenditure observed in the study between people “living very frugally to save for more important purchases” and those who “live frugally and have enough money for everything” can be interpreted as empirical confirmation of the thesis that even a relatively small improvement in the financial situation translates into a noticeable reduction in the pressure of health costs. This is particularly relevant in the light of research showing a strong link between financial stress and poorer health and well-being in old age⁴⁹.

Thirdly, with respect to expenditure on services, significant differences appear primarily at the highest level of financial comfort. People who “enjoy life and don’t have to worry about finances” assess the budgetary burden of expenditure on services differently from groups with lower financial comfort, which can be interpreted as greater freedom in shaping the consumption of additional services only after achieving a relatively good financial situation.

The literature on expenditure on services indicates that such spending is of an “additional” rather than a basic nature in the budgets of older people. Piekut (2020) points out that in senior households, spending on food, housing and energy is given priority, while the consumption of services and goods of a recreational nature increases only with improvement in the income situation⁵⁰. Similar

⁴⁷ J. Arsenijevic, M. Pavlova, B. Rechel, W. Groot, *Catastrophic health care expenditures among older people with chronic diseases in 15 European countries*, “PLOS ONE” 11 (7), 2016.

⁴⁸ WHO Regional Office for Europe, *can people afford to pay for healthcare? New evidence for financial protection in Europe*, Copenhagen 2019.

⁴⁹ R. Huang, C. Tang, *The Impact of Financial Stress on Self-Esteem, Health, and Quality of Life of Older Adults in Five Developing Countries*, “BMC Geriatrics” 20, 2020, 288.

⁵⁰ M. Piekut, *Standards of living in single-person households of the elderly*, “Sustainable Development” 12 (3), 2020, 992.

conclusions are drawn from research on poverty in access to basic services in the European Union, which shows that low-income households – including pensioners – reduce the use of some services (transport, some personal services), focusing on maintaining essential expenditure⁵¹. The fact that significant differences in the budgetary burden of services appeared primarily among people with the highest financial comfort can therefore be read as confirmation that only after securing food and health expenditure is there scope for more flexible shaping of the consumption of additional services.

Fourthly, loan repayment in the analysed group of older people plays a significantly smaller role as a differentiating factor in financial comfort than food or health expenditure. A significant difference appears only between people who “live very frugally to save for more important purchases” and those who “live frugally and have enough money for everything”, which suggests that debt can be an additional burden when resources are limited, but is not the dominant category in the perception of most of the surveyed households.

The relatively weaker importance of loan repayment as a differentiator of financial comfort (LS_GD) in the analysed sample is an interesting result against the backdrop of international research. Numerous analyses, including those by Hiilamo and Mudraziji, show that debt in old age – especially consumer and unsecured debt – is associated with poorer mental health, higher levels of financial stress and reduced well-being⁵². In turn, the CFPB report on the financial well-being of older Americans indicates that the presence of debt correlates with a lower sense of financial security⁵³. The fact that in the present study significant differences in the burden of loan repayment appear only between the categories “I live very frugally to save for more important purchases” and “I live frugally and I have enough money for everything” may result from the specific characteristics of the group studied – educationally active students of universities of the third age – among whom debt is not as widespread or as extreme as in some of the populations described in the literature.

Taken together, the results fit well with the strand of research on multidimensional poverty and “economic difficulties” in old age. The work of Zaidi (2011, 2012) and Palomäki et al. (2025) highlights that for people aged 65+, the ability to meet basic needs – to pay for current expenses, to cope with unexpected costs, to avoid arrears – and only then to consume more “flexible”

⁵¹ Milieu Consulting, *Study on poverty in basic services in the EU and its implications for environmental policy*, European Environment Agency, Brussels 2024.

⁵² H. Hiilamo, *Household Debt and Depression among Older People in Europe*, “Journal of Aging & Social Policy” 33 (2), 2021, pp. 189–208; S. Mudrazija, *Debt and Financial Well-Being of the Elderly*, “Public Policy & Aging Report” 30 (4), 2020, pp. 131–135.

⁵³ Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, *Financial Well-Being of Older Americans*, Washington, DC 2018.

categories of expenditure is crucial. In this context, the strong relationship observed in the study between financial comfort (LS_GD) and the perceived burden of expenditure on food, medicines and health care, alongside the secondary role of services and loan repayment, confirms the thesis that it is the ability to secure basic life and health needs in old age that determines subjective “financial health”.

The results obtained allow us to answer the research questions unambiguously: (1) the level of financial comfort (LS_GD) clearly differentiates the perceived burden of food expenditure, with a particularly prominent group of respondents declaring that “there is enough money only for more important purchases”; (2) there is a clear relationship between LS_GD and expenditure on medicines and health care, with marked differences observed between successive levels of the scale; (3) expenditure on services differs significantly primarily among those with the highest financial comfort, which indicates the more “additional” nature of this category; and (4) loan repayment, apart from the difference between the group “I live very frugally to save for more important purchases” and the group “I live frugally and I have enough money for everything”, is not a significant factor differentiating the financial comfort of the surveyed households.

This confirms the thesis that, in old age, it is crucial to be able to provide for basic life and health needs without excessive budgetary strain, and only then to consume additional services.

Bibliography

- Adena M., Myck M., *Poverty and health of the elderly – how much does income matter?*, “FREE Policy Brief Series”, September 2013, Forum for Research on Eastern Europe and Emerging Economies (FREE Network), <https://freepolicybriefs.org/2013/09/30/old-age-poverty-and-health-how-much-does-income-matter/> [accessed: 12.06.2025].
- Arsenijevic J., Pavlova M., Rechel B., W. Groot, *Catastrophic healthcare expenditure among older adults with chronic diseases in 15 European countries*, PLoS ONE 11 (7), 2016; e0157765. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0157765> [accessed: 11.05.2025].
- Brüggen E.C., Hogreve J., Holmlund M., Kabadayi S. and Löfgren M., *Financial Well-being: A Research Concept and Agenda*, Journal of Business Research 79, 2017, pp. 228–237; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.03.013> [accessed: 2.07.2025].
- Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, *Financial Well-Being: The Purpose of Financial Education*. CFPB 2015.

- Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, *CFPB Financial Well-Being Scale: Technical Report*. CFPB 2017.
- Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, *Financial Well-Being of Older Americans*, Washington, DC 2018.
- Bywalec Cz., *Consumption in the Theory and Practice of Management*, PWN Scientific Publishing House, Warsaw 2007.
- Deaton A., *An Analysis of Household Research*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2000, pp. 251–255.
- Dudek H., *The impact of income situation on the structure of household expenditures*, „Zeszyty Naukowe SGGW – Ekonomika i Organizacja Gospodarki Żywnościowej” 2012, no. 98.
- Social Diagnosis 2011. *Conditions for the quality of life of Poles. Report*, edited by J. Czapiński, T. Panek, Social Monitoring Council, Warsaw 2011.
- European Commission, *Ageing Report 2024: Economic and Budgetary Projections for EU Member States (2022–2070)* (European Economy Institutional Paper 279). Publications Office of the European Union 2024; <https://doi.org/10.2765/022983> [accessed: 12.04.2025].
- Central Statistical Office, *Situation of households in 2023 in the light of the results of the Household Budget Survey*, Warsaw 2024a.
- Central Statistical Office, *Situation of older people in Poland in 2023*, Warsaw 2024b.
- Central Statistical Office, *Situation of the elderly in Poland in 2023*, Warsaw 2024.
- Greer, S.L., Lynch, J., Reeves, A., Falkenbach, M., Gingrich, J., Cylus, J., & Bamba, C., *Ageing and health: a policy for better policies*, “European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies” 2021, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108973236> [accessed: 18.04.2025].
- Figari F., Matsaganis M., Sutherland H., *The financial well-being of older people in Europe and the redistributive effects of minimum pension schemes* (EU-ROMOD Working Paper No EM7/11), Colchester 2011, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex.
- Hiilamo A., *Debt Cases? Mental wellbeing of older people with household debts in England*. “SSM – Population Health” 12, 2020; 100658. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2020.100658> [accessed: 12.06.2025].
- Hiilamo A., *Household Debt and Depression in the Elderly: Evidence from 22 European Countries*, Social Indicators Research 173 (2), 2024, pp. 551–574; <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-024-03314-x> [accessed: 18.06.2025].
- Hiilamo H., *Household Debt and Depression among Older People in Europe*, Journal of Aging & Social Policy 33 (2), 2021.
- Huang R., Tang C., *The Impact of Financial Stress on the Self-Reported Health and Quality of Life of Older Adults in Five Developing Countries*, “BMC Geriatrics” 20, 2020, 288.

- Jajko-Siwiek A., *Discovering Financial Well-Being: Insights of Third Age Pensioners in Poland, Spain and Denmark*. "Economics and Business Review" 10(3), 2024, pp. 7–33; <https://doi.org/10.18559/ebr.2024.3.981> [accessed: 9.06.2025].
- Karpińska L., Śmiech S., Conceptualization of housing costs: the hidden face of energy poverty in Poland, „Polityka Energetyczna” 2020, vol. 147; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2020.111819> [accessed: 12.07.2025].
- Kempson E., Finney A., Poppe C. *Financial well-being as a conceptual model and preliminary analysis*, Consumption Research Norway, 3–2017; DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.18737.68961; [accessed: 12.08.2025].
- Kot S.M., *Methodological dilemmas of measuring welfare and poverty*. "Problems of Social Policy" 2002, No. 4, pp. 97–115.
- Loibl C., W.B., W., Summers B., McNair S., Verhallen P., *What financial stressors are associated with food insecurity among older people in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands? Exploratory Study*, Food Security 14 (2), 2022, pp. 533–556.
- Milieu Consulting, *Study on poverty in basic services in the EU and its implications for environmental policy*, European Environment Agency, Brussels 2024.
- Mudrazija S., *Debt and Financial Well-Being of the Elderly*, "Public Policy & Aging Report" 30 (4), 2020.
- OECD, *Pensions at a Glance 2023: OECD and G20 indicators*. OECD Publishing 2023; <https://doi.org/10.1787/4757bf20-en> [accessed: 15.06.2025].
- OECD/INFE, *National Financial Education Strategies: OECD/INFE Policy Handbook*. OECD Publishing 2015.
- Oczkowska M., Kulati E., Myck M., *Income and well-being in old age—systemic and regional factors in comparison between Germany and Polish*, "Innovations in Aging" 7 (S1), 2023, p. 71.
- Palomäki L.-M., Riekhoff A.-J., Kuitto K., *What it means to be poor: Dimensions of economic hardship among older people living in poverty across Europe*, "Ageing and Society" 45 (5), 2025, pp. 947–968, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X2300096X>. [accessed: 13.04.2025].
- Piekut M., *Standards of living in single-person households of the elderly*, "Sustainable Development" 12 (3), 2020, 992.
- Piekut M., *Households with a high share of health expenditure – characteristics and consumption patterns*. "Statistical News. The Polish Statistician" 2023, 68 (8), pp. 15–33. <https://doi.org/10.59139/ws.2023.08.2>. [accessed: 5.05.2025].
- Rozynek, C. and Lanzendorf M., *How does low income affect the travel practices of the elderly? Results of a qualitative case study on the links between financial poverty, mobility and social participation*, "Travel Behaviour and Society" 30, 2023, pp. 312–324; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tbs.2022.10.003> [accessed: 7.06.2025].
- Sardianou E., *Understanding energy poverty among older people: Findings from the survey of households in Greece*. "Energie" 17 (1), 2024, 94; <https://doi.org/10.3390/en17010094> [accessed: 25.06.2025].

- Seale J.L., Regmi A., *Modelling patterns of international consumption*, "Review of Income and Wealth" 2006, vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 603–624.
- SerranoAlarcón M., Perelman J., *Ageing in Unequal Circumstances: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Gender Patterns and Socioeconomic Functional Limitations among Older Adults in Southern Europe*, "International Journal for Equity in Health" 2017, 16, Article 175.
- Sobolewska-Poniedziałek E., *Financial well-being of people in mature and older age in selected countries of the European Union*, „Ekonomia” 2017, no. 23 (4), pp. 95–109; <https://doi.org/10.19195/2084-4093.23.4.8> [accessed: 12.06.2025].
- Social statistics. Social processes, data sources and methods of analysis*, ed. T. Panek, Polish Scientific Publishing House, Warsaw 2020.
- Stropnik N., Kump N., *Income and poverty among older people in the new Member States: a comparative analysis*, [in:], *Poor older people in the new EU Member States* (ENEPRI Research Report No. 60), red J.C. Vrooman, CEPS/ENEPRI, Brussels 2008, pp. 3–43.
- Świecka B., *Excessive indebtedness and insolvency of households in Poland in the light of primary and secondary research*. "Scientific Works of the Wrocław University of Economics" 2009, No. 54, pp. 110–124.
- Świecka B., *Assessment of the financial situation, wealth and debt of the elderly*. "Problems of Management" 2016, No. 14(59), pp. 118–134; <https://doi.org/10.7172/1644-9584.59.8> [accessed: 12.06.2025].
- Thomson H., Snell C., & Bouzarovski S., *Health, Well-being and Energy Poverty in Europe: A Comparative Study of 32 European Countries*. "International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health" 14 (6), 2017, 584; <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14060584>.
- Uścińska G., *The material situation of seniors in Poland. Expert opinion as part of the task "A world tailored to seniors – the situation of the elderly in Poland"*, Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, Warsaw 2023.
- Statistical Office in Poznań, *Poverty and Social Exclusion: From Concept to Measurement*, Statistical Office in Poznań, Poznań 2015.
- van Praag, B.M.S., Hagenaars, A.J.M., and van Weeren, J., *Poverty in Europe*. "Review of Income and Wealth" 28 (3), 1982, 345–359. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4991.1982.tb00621.x>. [accessed: 28.06.2025].
- WHO Regional Office for Europe, *can people afford to pay for healthcare? New evidence for financial protection in Europe*, Copenhagen 2019.
- Zaidi A., *Exclusion from material resources: Poverty and deprivation among older people in Europe*, [in:] *From exclusion to inclusion in old age: a global challenge*, eds. T. Scharf, N.C. Keating, Bristol 2012, pp. 71–88, <https://doi.org/10.46692/9781447307419.006>. [accessed: 22.06.2025].
- Zalega T., *Consumption. Determinants, Theories and Models*, Polish Economic Publishing House, Warsaw 2012.

Zalega T., *The financial situation of people aged 65+ in the light of the results of own research*. "Innovative Management in Economy and Business" 2017, 1 (24), 87–104; https://doi.org/10.25312/2391-5129.24/2017_87-105 [accessed: 21.06.2025].

Zawada M., Szajt M., Kowalik J., Kucęba R., *Spatial Differentiation of Energy Poverty in Eu Countries*. In *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 2018, Vol. 164, No. 1, p. 012002. IOP Publishing. doi:10.1088/1755-1315/164/1/012002 [accessed: 28.06.2025].

Legislation

Act of 17 December 1998 on pensions and disability benefits from the Social Insurance Fund (Journal of Laws of 2024, item 1631, as amended).

Act of 12 March 2004 on Social Assistance (Journal of Laws of 2025, item 1214, as amended).

Act of 27 August 2004 on health care services financed from public funds (Journal of Laws of 2025, item 1461 as amended).

Act of 11 September 2015 on the elderly (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1705 as amended).

Council of Ministers, Resolution No. 161 of 26 October 2018 on the adoption of the document *Social Policy towards the Elderly 2030. Security – Participation – Solidarity*, Warsaw 2018.

Komfort finansowy a postrzeganie wydatków w budżecie domowym osób starszych

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest zbadanie, w jaki sposób subiektywnie oceniany komfort finansowy gospodarstwa domowego wiąże się z tym, jak osoby starsze postrzegają obciążenia wybranymi kategoriami wydatków. Analiza opiera się na danych z badania ankietowego przeprowadzonego wśród osób w wieku emerytalnym. Wyodrębniono grupy gospodarstw o różnym poziomie komfortu finansowego i porównano je pod względem deklaracji, które kategorie wydatków – żywność, leki i opieka zdrowotna, usługi oraz spłata kredytów – stanowią największe obciążenie budżetu domowego. Wyniki pokazują, że poziom komfortu finansowego wyraźnie różnicuje subiektywne obciążenie wydatkami na żywność; szczególnie wyróżnia się tu grupa osób deklarujących, że „pieniędzy wystarczy tylko na ważniejsze zakupy”. Zależność między komfortem finansowym a postrzeganiem obciążeń jest najbardziej wyraźna w przypadku wydatków na leki i opiekę zdrowotną – różnice między kolejnymi poziomami skali są tu wyjątkowo wyraźne. Wydatki na usługi istotnie odróżniają przede wszystkim gospodarstwa o najwyższym komforcie finansowym, co sugeruje, że mają one raczej charakter wydatków dodatkowych niż podstawowych. Spłata kredytów – poza pojedynczą różnicą między skrajnymi grupami – nie stanowi natomiast istotnego czynnika różnicującego komfort finansowy badanych gospodarstw domowych.

Słowa kluczowe: komfort finansowy, osoby starsze, budżet domowy, subiektywne obciążenie wydatkami, wydatki na leki i opiekę zdrowotną, wydatki na żywność, usługi dla osób starszych, spłata kredytów.