CREW

Care, Retirement & Wellbeing of Older People Across Different Welfare Regimes

DURATION	BUDGET
15/12/2016 - 31/03/2020	**249.806 €**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Context
Against the background of population ageing, understanding how to improve the well-being of the older population has become one of the most important societal challenges. It is not simply a matter of living longer but also better. Many terms encapsulate this notion of "ageing well" such as successful, active and healthy ageing, which all acknowledge the need to look beyond physical health to consider other aspects of ageing. Much ageing research is often approached from a strict medical perspective, ignoring the broader social context, family and social networks, and relevant institutions.

General objectives
CREW aims to fill key four policy-relevant gaps in the existing research: (1) examining how social policy provisions are patterned from an intergenerational perspective; (2) measuring the effects of welfare regimes on caregiving and retirement decisions and how they differ by gender; (3) assessing the effects of caregiving, work and retirement on health and wellbeing at old ages and (4) investigating the role of policies in shaping successful ageing for men and women and those from different socio-economic groups.
The project is structured according to four main areas of research:
1. Definitions, measures and determinants of well-being at older ages
2. The joys and burden of caring (grandparenting, care of frail family members and caregivers' wellbeing)
3. Retirement, health, caregiving, and wellbeing: who, when, how?
4. Ageing without (close) kin and consequences on wellbeing

Methodology
In order to examine the complexities of ageing, wellbeing, and the welfare context, we will use national and cross-national data sets, all available to the scientific community free of charge:
The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE: biennially since 2004; 20 countries), Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS; 19 countries), Time Use Surveys (Belgium 2013-14; Canada 2015; Italy 2014-15; the Netherlands 2011-12, Spain 2009-10), Canadian General Social Surveys (1990; 1995; 2006; 2011; 2017), European Social Survey (biennially since 2004; 36 countries). In addition to these individual-level data for Europe and Canada, we will draw on macro level data from different sources.
We will use methods specific for longitudinal data, critical for examining the process of aging. In addition, we will use techniques to deal with inferential problems about causality. Demographic techniques and microsimulation will be used to examine how the population of older adults without kin may change in the future.

Potential impact of the research on science, society and/or on decision-making
The outputs of the project will inform policy makers in four specific areas:
1) Identifying key determinants of health and well-being in later life: This project will provide policy makers with an overview of the key determinants of well-being in later life, including economic conditions (and in particular, income provided by the pensions system), availability and contact with kin, and social participation.
2) The Consequences of Caring: The project will provide analyses that demonstrate links between caregiving roles and later life well-being as well as the various moderator factors that can help identify meaningful policy interventions.
3) Work, Care and Well-being: One of the key transitions in later life is the transition from work to retirement. This transition has large implications for well-being in later life. The analysis within the project will seek to build on this research and provide an overview of the institutional, structural and cultural factors that shape health and well-being through this transition.
4) Ageing Alone: Our project will try to better inform policy makers about trends in this area by applying sophisticated techniques to estimate future populations who will being 'ageing alone'. The project will provide a clear assessment of the relationship between 'ageing alone' and health and well-being.

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Key findings

1) Older people wellbeing is a complex multidimensional phenomenon that needs to be studied using rich longitudinal data and appropriate methods, taking a life course perspective that analyses ageing as a process and a comparative approach recognizing the role of welfare regimes.

2) Caregiving has both positive and negative aspects. The impact of caregiving on caregivers' health is gendered and highly heterogeneous as it depends on intensity and type of caregiving, whether or not it is combined with other activities and on the country context. Men and women continue to unequally share responsibilities for paid and unpaid work at later ages

3) Pension systems are the single most important system of intergenerational transfer in current modern nations. Unfortunately, they are rarely balanced and viable in the long run.

4) The kin availability is rapidly changing: in the near future, a higher proportion of individuals is going to age without kin (children, grandchildren, etc.).

5) Health outcomes turn out to be highly heterogeneous, depending on individual socio-economic and job-related characteristics. Health impairment and inequalities in later life depend on the individual life course. All the disadvantages suffered in the past, in all life domains matter, but it is their cumulative effects that turns out to be particularly harmful.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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LINKS

https://crewmoreyearsbetterlives.wordpress.com/

A synthesis of our research findings has been published in a freely available N-IUSSP e-book

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