

ELDERLY IMMIGRANTS IN SWITZERLAND: EXPLORING THEIR SOCIAL AND HEALTH SITUATION

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Rezumat: Acest articol se concentrează asupra situației socio-economice și stării de sănătate a imigranților în vârstă din Elveția. Plecând de la cercetările empirice din cadrul anchetei „Îngrijirea minoritarilor vîrstnici din Elveția” realizate prin Programul Cadru 5 al Uniunii Europene, între 2003 și 2004, cercetare prezentată este bazată pe un chestionar aplicat unui eșantion de 290 de spanioli, italieni și ex-iugoslavi, de 55 de ani și peste, care locuiesc în orașele Geneva și Basel. Obiectivul este acela de a înțelege mai bine condițiile de viață ale imigranților în vârstă, în special situația veniturilor, locuința și îngrijirea sănătății. Aceste informații ne ajută să înțelegem mai bine ce resurse și ce provocări există, ce nevoi specifice și, prin urmare, care sînt cererile potențiale pentru serviciile sociale, medicale, de geriatrie. Articolul este o contribuție în cadrul altor studii sistematice cu privire la aceste aspecte.

Cuvinte-cheie : imigranți, persoane în vîrstă, profil socio-demografic, starea de sănătate, servicii sociale și medicale

Abstract: This paper explores: the socio-economic and health situation of older immigrants in Switzerland. It is based in a study entitled "Minority Elderly Care in Switzerland" (MEC) that was conducted in the context of the 5th Framework Program of the European Union between 2003 and 2004. The study was grounded on a questionnaire survey of a quota sample of 290 Spaniards, Italians and former Yugoslavs aged 55 and over in Basel and Geneva. The aim was to inquire about the life conditions of elderly immigrants. In particular we have explored their income, their housing and their health situation. Important information about their resources as well as about their difficulties are collected, and allow us to detect their specific needs and potential demands to social and health services. It is a contribution to more systematic empirical studies about these issues.

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Résumé: Cet article s'intéresse à la situation socio-économique et sanitaire des personnes âgées immigrées en Suisse. Il est basé sur une recherche empirique intitulée "Minority Elderly Care in Switzerland" (MEC) qui a été conduite dans le contexte du 5^{ème} Programme Cadre de l'Union européenne entre 2003 et 2004. La recherche présentée ici a été basée sur une enquête par questionnaire adressée à un échantillon par quota composé de 290 Espagnols, Italiens et Ex-Yougoslaves âgés de 55 ans et plus et résidant dans les agglomérations de Genève et Bâle. L'objectif est de mieux connaître les conditions de vie des personnes âgées immigrées, notamment sur le plan du revenu, du logement et de leur état de santé. Ces informations permettent de mieux saisir quelles sont leurs ressources et leurs difficultés, et de déceler ainsi leurs besoins spécifiques et leurs demandes potentielles aux services sociaux, gériatriques et de santé. Il s'agit donc d'une contribution à la nécessité de disposer d'études empiriques systématiques sur ces questions.

Mots-clés: immigrants, personnes âgées, profil socio-démographique, état de santé, des services sociaux et de santé

Introduction

This paper explores: the socio-economic and health situation of older immigrants in Switzerland. It is based in a study entitled "Minority Elderly Care in Switzerland" (MEC) that was conducted in the context of the 5th Framework Program of the European Union between 2003 and 2004. The study was grounded on a questionnaire survey of a quota sample of 290 Spaniards, Italians and former Yugoslavs aged 55 and over in Basel and Geneva (Bolzman et al., 2004). The aim was to inquire about the life conditions of elderly immigrants. In particular we have explored their income, their housing and their health situation. Important information about their resources as well as about their difficulties are collected, and allow us to detect their specific needs and potential demands to social and health services. Many research studies in Switzerland and in other European countries show that elderly immigrants are over represented among those experiencing difficult socio-economic situations and health problems (Bolzman, Fibbi, Vial, 1999; Bolzman, Fibbi, Guillon, 2001; Patel, 2003). We will examine to what extent this is always the case in Switzerland. In fact, there is still a lack of systematic empirical studies about these issues.

Beside a general overview regarding the situation of elderly immigrants in these areas of concern, we shall proceed to some comparisons in order to understand which are the main factors affecting social and health situation of elderly immigrants. Usually different factors are explored, like "ethnicity", region of settlement, age, gender, legal status, reasons for migration, length of residence

and cultural variables (level of education, knowledge of local language), in order to analyse the situation of elderly immigrants. Even though, our purpose is to measure the impact of different factors, we are aware that it is a difficult task, because many of these factors are related to the particular history of each ethnic group we have studied. "Ethnicity" is thus related to many other variables, like the length of residence, the reasons for emigration, the legal status and so on. Therefore differences between "ethnic" groups will be the core of this paper, because they are the more systematic ones. It is thus crucial to present an accurate description of the three minorities groups that have been selected: Italians, Spanish and former Yugoslavians⁴.

The sample selection

First of all, it is important to underline that these three groups represent the three main groups of elderly immigrants from the "South" in Switzerland. As can be observed, what is specific to the Swiss situation is the fact that most of elderly immigrants come from European countries. The first two represent the classical immigrant recruited as immigrant workers after the Second World War. Former Yugoslavians represent a more mixed group arrived later to Switzerland and composed by immigrant workers and by refugees (Bolzman, Poncioni-Derigo, Vial, 2003).

Moreover, a look at the distribution of the whole foreign resident population in Switzerland shows that today, the main foreign national groups residing in Switzerland are Italians and former Yugoslavians. In particular, the Yugoslavian group increased drastically during the last twenty years, while the proportions of foreigners from other European countries increased at a more slow pace. This important increase of the first is mainly related to family reunification and to the high number of asylum seekers that requested for protection during the war in Yugoslavia.

The main reasons to choose these three national groups are historical, demographic, cultural, and linked to the forms of their community organisation. The Italian community is the largest and most ancient immigrant group in Switzerland, with the highest number and proportion of elderly. Italians first immigration started at the end of the nineteenth century ; a new important wave of "guest workers" developed after World War II. Some Italian immigration is still going on today but at a slower pace. Italians are present in all regions of the country ; they are rather well organised at the community level and have minority providers offering some social and care services.

⁴ It would be more precise to talk about nationals from new States that were part of the Republic of Yugoslavia. .In order to simplify the text we refer to them as "former Yugoslavians".

Table 1. Relevant data on the three chosen minorities

	Size of minority*	Aged 55 or more*	Moment of arrival	Urban-rural	Region	Community organisation
Italians	319'641 4% TRP ¹	84'347 26%TI ²	Mainly 1950s and 1960s	Mainly urban	all Switzerland	Strong
Spaniards	83'405 1% TRP	13'357 16%TS	Mainly 1960s and 1970s	Mainly urban	> in Swiss-French region	Middle
Ex-Yugoslavia	190'731 2.5% TRP	8'886 5%TY	Mainly 1970s and later	Urban and Rural	> in Swiss-German region	Weak

¹Total resident population ²Total Italians. *31.12.2000

Spaniards represent also an ancient and important immigration of "guest workers" and a high proportion of elderly, actually the second one after Italians. Spanish immigration really started in the sixties and continued during the early seventies. It was mainly an immigration of guests workers, but also of people politically persecuted by the Franco regime. Nowadays, the Spanish new immigration is, like the Italian one, rather small. Spaniards are mainly present in French speaking Switzerland and - this is a huge difference between them and Italians - have very few community services of their own.

Former Yugoslavians are the second most important foreign minority in Switzerland, growing fast these last years. The Yugoslavian immigration started in the seventies. It was at the beginning a guest workers' immigration too. Because of the war in Yugoslavia, many former guest workers decided to stay in Switzerland and to proceed to family reunification. Moreover, a new group of asylum seekers arrived during the eighties and nineties. Many of them stayed in Switzerland with various precarious statuses. Thus, the number of former Yugoslavians living in Switzerland increased very fast during the last twenty years ; in the future, they will probably become the most important ethnic minority in Switzerland. Today, they represent already the third most important minority of elderly immigrants. Many of them were already relatively old when they arrived to Switzerland, where they met specific problems; moreover, they are nowadays one of the most stigmatised and discriminated foreigners' group in Switzerland. A majority of them - Albanians coming from Kosovo and Bosnians - are Moslem, which brings about specific difficulties with mainstream services. They have no minority services of their own at disposal, but some NGO's have created specific services for them. Most of the former Yugoslavians live in the German speaking part of Switzerland.

Switzerland is a federal country with 26 highly autonomous cantons and three main linguistic regions. Most of foreign residents are concentrated in the urban cantons. Residential segregation within cities is higher in German speaking

than in French speaking Switzerland (Schuler, 2001). Therefore, it seemed important to us to choose one canton, mainly urban, in each linguistic region. We have selected the canton of Geneva, located in the French speaking part of Switzerland ; and the canton of Basle-City, located in its German Speaking part.

We have thus collected data about these three groups of immigrants in these two regions. In Geneva, Italians and Spaniards are well represented, but also to some extent, former Yugoslavians. In Basle, Italians, Spaniards and former Yugoslavians are well represented. Since each canton has its own health and social care system, it is important to choose two cantons in regard to we have already a certain knowledge of the system. Moreover, the chosen cantons have built up in each region one of the most elaborated system of elderly care in Switzerland. They are also the most open to migrants. In this way, we hope to picture the "best practices" in Switzerland with respect to elderly immigrants. If it happens that in the two cantons the gap between the minority elderly needs and demands and mainstream services is still considerable, one can easily predict the long way to go for other cantons to offer adequate support to foreign minorities' elderly.

Socio-demographic profile

Before introducing the results, it is important to present the demographic characteristics of the three selected minorities to complete the overview of the main characteristics differentiating the chosen minorities. It can be observed that former Yugoslavians present some important differences when compared to the socio-demographic profile of Italians and Spaniards. As we will see along this paper, some of these differences play a major role in the explanation of the specific social and health situation of former Yugoslavians compared to Italians and Spaniards.

Among the residents of those three ethnic groups in Switzerland, former Yugoslavians are indeed the youngest: more than 80% of them are aged under 65. At the opposite, Italians are the oldest: most of them (72%) are aged 65 or more, and Spaniards are in between (47% among them are aged 65 or more). This age distribution reflects the length of settlement of these three national groups in Switzerland. Italians came the first during the 1950 and 1960, Spaniards came some years later, mainly during the 1960's and 1970's, while former Yugoslavians arrived more recently.

The rate of masculinity is much more important among former Yugoslavians (68%) than among Italians and Spaniards. In those two last groups women are largely the majority (62%).

Marital situations vary greatly according to ethnic group. Among the former Yugoslavians, the dominant pattern is to be married (81%). If the majority of Italians are also married (60%), widows are over represented among them (25% to 14% or less). This situation is related to a larger proportion of older women among the Italians. It is among the Spaniards that we observe the greatest variety

of marital statuses: if the married persons are the majority (52%), the number of divorced is the most important (18%), widows are also well represented (14%) and is the only ethnic group with a substantial minority of unmarried persons (15%).

There is a clear difference between former Yugoslavians on one hand, and Italians and Spaniards on the other one with respect to the number of children. Most of the latter have 1 or 2 children (73% and 64% respectively), while the majority of former Yugoslavians (60%) have at least 3 children. Spaniards are the most numerous without children, which is related to an important proportion of single women among them.

Former Yugoslavians differ also clearly from the two other national groups on living arrangements: 84% of them live with someone, while it is the case of 60% of Italians and of Spaniards. The main reason is marital status: former Yugoslavians are more often married than the members of the two other national groups: 80% among the first live with their spouse, which is the situation of 60% of the Italians and 53% of the Spaniards.

Moreover, since former Yugoslavians are younger and have more children, the number of persons living in the same household is larger than in the two other national groups: 57% of them live at least with one child, while only 10% of Italians and 24% of Spaniards are in that case.

Finally, former Yugoslavians are the only national group living with at least one grandchild (9%) or other relatives (9%), which is true for only 1% of Italians or Spaniards. This means that, among the last two national groups, the children settle in a new accommodation when they get married, while some former Yugoslavian's married children still live with their parents.

Legal situation differs greatly between Italians and Spaniards on the one hand, and former Yugoslavians on the other. The great majority of the firsts (99%) holds either a permanent resident permit or the Swiss nationality. Even if three quarters of former Yugoslavians are also in possession of a permanent resident permit, almost a quarter of them have a more precarious legal status, namely a temporary status related to asylum procedures.

Three quarters among the Italians and Spaniards came into Switzerland for economic reasons, while it is the case of half of the former Yugoslavians. The difference is related to the fact that many former Yugoslavians (30%), especially Bosnians and Albanians from Kosovo, came to Switzerland escaping from violence in their home country. Thus, on the one hand there is a population that can be described as classical immigrant workers and their families (Italians and Spaniards); on the other, we observe a more mixed population, composed by immigrant workers but also people searching for protection against violence (former Yugoslavians).

As we noticed before, the presence of Italians and Spaniards in Switzerland is much more ancient than that of former Yugoslavians. While Italians have been

living in Switzerland since 43 years on the average and Spanish since 38 years, former Yugoslavians are present since 23 years on the average and many came as asylum seekers in the last 15 years.

Former Yugoslavians are less numerous to speak local language (French or German) than Italians and Spaniards (63% vs 84%). This is related to a higher proportion of former Yugoslavians more recently settled in Switzerland, and at a more advanced age. This is particularly the case for the Geneva region where are living most of Yugoslavians that came to Switzerland as asylum seekers. Spaniards are more polyglot than Italians. Actually, they are more numerous to speak Italian than the Italians to speak Spanish. As we observed in former surveys (Bolzman, Fibbi, Vial, 1998), Italian is the *lingua franca* for Latin immigrants in Switzerland, especially in the Swiss German part of the country.

Life conditions and health situation

In this section we give some basic information about the socio-economic situation and the health condition of elderly immigrants. We explore three main indicators : income, housing and health situation. But before presenting these indicators, let's have some general information about the level of education and the work situation of the interviewees.

The majority of the surveyed (52%) have a low level of education (no more than primary school), little more than 20% has continued to secondary post compulsory school and less than 10% has achieved university studies. As the majority of this generation of immigrants, two thirds of the interviewees are or have been blue collar workers, little more than 20% are or have been white collar workers and the others, mainly housewives.

Looking at the distributions by gender and national group, we observe that three quarter of the Italians, men as well as women, are retired; this is not surprising since their group is, on the average, older than the two other ones. As a result, the proportion still at work among them is lower than in the two other groups. Nevertheless, even among Spaniards and former Yugoslavians, the percentage of people still at work is only a third. The reasons behind this situation are different. Among former Yugoslavians, a quarter of the men are disabled or perceive a social allowance and a third of the women are housewives. In the Spanish group, half of the men are still at work and another half is retired, while 60% of the women are retired.

It appears that a third of our retired interviewees was forced to leave work because of health problems, and 8% because of lasting unemployment. However, we observe on that question important inter-ethnic differences: two third of the former Yugoslavians were forced to leave their work because of health problems, which happened to 29% of the Spaniards and 21% of the Italians. In all groups, men are more concerned by those problems than women.

Income groups

The economic situation, and especially income, is an important indicator of the social situation of older immigrants. We have asked them which was their current net monthly income level (together with their spouse or partner).

We recoded the income groups in four categories, a distribution which corresponds to the Swiss income distribution: those who earn at most 1'000 Euro net a month (10%), those who earn between 1'001 and 2'000 Euro a month (33%), those with 2001 to 3'000 Euro (30%) and those who earn more than 3'000 Euro (26%)⁵.

Table 2. Household monthly net income by ethnic group (%)

	Italians	Former Yugoslavians	Spaniards	Total
1'000 euros or less	02	22	08	10
1'001-2'000 euros	39	19	42	33
2'001-3'000 euros	38	24	26	30
More than 3'000 euros	21	35	24	26
N	85	74	72	231

V=.24; P=.00

Former Yugoslavians are situated at the extremes of monthly income levels: they are over represented among those that earn at most 1'000 euros, but they are also over represented among those that earn more than 3'000 euros by month. These differences with respect to the other two ethnic groups may be explained by two factors : former Yugoslavians are more often depending upon welfare or disability insurance, but also they are younger and more numerous to be still on the labour market compared to the important proportion of Italians and Spaniards already retired. Thus Yugoslavians' income distribution is more spread, whereas the other two groups are concentrated in the central income categories (between 1'001 and 3'000 euros).

In our preceding research, the proportion of people whose personal monthly income is lower than 1'000 Swiss francs (about 670E.) - which is much under the level of poverty – appeared to be 8.4% (Bolzman, Fibbi, Vial, 1999), that is two and half more than within the resident population of the same age. We observe here that 10% of the interviewees earn (per household) 1'500 Swiss francs (about 1'000E.) or less; and the proportion of Yugoslavians in that situation is dramatically high (22%).

⁵ As expected, the number of interviewees declining to answer to this question is quite high (20%).

The income situation is particularly dramatic among former Yugoslavians living in Geneva: 37.5% among them earn at most 1'000E by month compared to 3% among them in Basle. This is due to the fact that former Yugoslavians living in Geneva cumulate a certain number of difficulties when compared to those living in Basle. A more important proportion among them arrived to Switzerland escaping from violence in their home country and have still precarious legal status (asylum seekers, temporary permits). Moreover, a more important proportion among them have been living in Switzerland for less than fifteen years and were more advanced in age (more than 40 years old) when they immigrated. Hence they are also less fluently in the local language than former Yugoslavians in Basle.

Income situation is also strongly related to the situation of the interviewees with respect to labour market. Those who work have a better economic situation than those who are temporarily or definitively out of the labour market. Those who have the lowest income are the ones that depend upon welfare benefits. And former Yugoslavians, even if the youngest, are the most numerous to receive social welfare, a disable pension or family assistance.

Surprisingly (since we asked for the household's income), it appears that income differs greatly by gender, at least among Italians and Spaniards. In these two groups, most women have no spouse (widowed, divorced or never married): this is the case of 52% of the Italian women and 62% of the Spanish ones (38% of the Former Yugoslavians women). These women are often in a difficult financial situation, as showed hereafter.

Table 3. Monthly net income of unmarried interviewees according to gender (%)

	Men	Women	Total
At most 2'000 E.	55	78	72
More than 2'000 E.	45	22	28
N	20	67	87

V= .30; P= .05

Another question give a more subjective indicator of possible economic difficulties faced by our respondents. It appears that 42% among the interviewees acknowledge some difficulties in paying their bills at the end of the month.

The difficulty in paying bills does not vary between ethnic groups, but is clearly related to monthly income. Among those who earn at most 1'000 €, 70% have difficulties to pay the bills, which is the case of half among those who earn between 1'000 and 3'000 € and only 20% of those who earn more than 3'000 € (P=.00).

Those who get earnings from work have less problems than those who are unemployed (31% against 46%, P=.01. At the opposite, those who depend on

welfare benefits have more difficulties to pay their bills than the others (60% against 36%, $P=.00$).

Those who are fluently in the local language have less difficulties to pay bills than those who do not speak the local language (39% vs 58%; $P=.01$).

To sum up, we notice that income situation is strongly related to the interviewees' situation with respect to labour market. Those who work have a better economic situation than those who are temporarily or definitively out of the labour market. Those who have the lowest income are the ones that depend upon welfare benefits. They are without surprise those who have the most difficulties in paying their bills.

Housing

The great majority of the interviewees are living in apartments (90%), which is the situation of most of the population living in urban areas in Switzerland, and especially among blue collar workers. People living in houses are a small minority. In Switzerland, the majority of the population do not own their house or their flat. Thus, not surprisingly this is the case of the great majority of our sample. Among the renters, the overwhelming majority is living in a privately rented flat (83%) and a small minority is renting to the commune or to an association.

Compared to the elderly Swiss living in Geneva (see Lalive d'Épinay and al., 2000) elderly immigrants have the same standards with respect to warm running water, central heating, toilets inside the flat, bathroom or shower. They have also a similar situation with respect to electro domestic facilities: refrigerator, washing machine and more often microwave oven. The situation is also quite similar with respect to Telephone and TV.

Density of occupation per room is generally considered as a pertinent criteria in order to know if the size of the accommodation is adapted to the number of occupants. It indicates how many persons live per room in the apartment or house (kitchen and bathroom excluded). A density of 1 person per room – each occupant has one room at his disposal – is considered as appropriate. People are considered to be cramped for room if density is over 1, which means that there are less rooms than occupants.

Table 4. Density of occupation per room according to ethnic group

	Italians	Former Yugoslavians	Spaniards	Total
.5 or less ⁽¹⁾	48	9	49	36
.6 to 1 ⁽²⁾	51	50	48	50
More than 1 ⁽³⁾	1	41	3	14
N	97	90	98	285

⁽¹⁾ at least 2 rooms per person; ⁽²⁾ at least 1 room and less than 2 rooms per person; ⁽³⁾ less than 1 room per person.

It appears that the Former Yugoslavians are once more at a disadvantage according to this criteria, with 40% of them living in a house/flat with a density of occupation higher than 1. This is not surprising since they are on the average younger than the members of the two other groups, living more often with spouse (80% to 60% at most) and with (many) children (57% to less than 25%). Actually, 39% of Former Yugoslavians live with 2 to 4 children and 9% of them with grandchildren.

In our previous research on Italian and Spaniard immigrants (aged 55-64) residing in Switzerland, we found that 11% of them lived in an accommodation with a density of occupation per room higher than 1 (Bolzman, Fibbi, Vial, 1998). This appeared to be a better situation than that of the foreign residents in general (20% in that situation) but a worst condition than that of the Swiss (only 4% in that situation)⁶. As we can observe, former Yugoslavians are clearly disadvantaged on this issue.

A list of 10 problems possibly met at home was presented to the surveyed. Only a minority indicates some problems. The main problem indicated is that the flat is too small and Yugoslavians, with bigger families, are more concerned than the other ethnic groups by this problem (22% vs 6%, $P=.00$). Yugoslavians are also less satisfied than the others with respect to stairs, to toilet or to kitchen not adequately equipped, and they have less often a lift at their disposal. Spaniards are more often complaining about high doorsteps.

We asked to the interviewees how satisfied they were with their current accommodation's conditions. We recoded the answers in three categories: those who are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, those who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and those who are satisfied or very satisfied. Almost three quarters among the surveyed are satisfied with their housing; 10% only are dissatisfied.

Table 5. Satisfaction with accommodation's conditions according to ethnic group (%)

	Italians	Former Yugoslavians	Spaniards	Total
Dissatisfied/very	02	26	04	10
Neither...nor	08	27	18	18
Satisfied/very	90	46	78	72
N	96	84	95	275

$V=.31$; $P=.00$.

It is not surprising that Yugoslavians are the most dissatisfied with their housing conditions since they were the most numerous to indicate some problems

⁶ Swiss federal census, 1990.

about their flat. Only half of them are satisfied with their accommodation's conditions, while this is the case of 90% of the Italians and almost 80% of the Spaniards.

Health

In this section, we examine three indicators of health: self-assessed health, functional health, and mental health. Most of our indicators show important health problems among older immigrants, especially among former Yugoslavians.

Self-assessment of state of health is a subjective but reliable indicator of both physical and mental health; it is moreover a standard procedure in social research.

With respect to self evaluated health, we observe that a high proportion of interviewees (26%) consider to be in a poor or very poor health condition. Various canton-level studies published in the eighties show that, in Switzerland, 7 to 11 per cent of persons over 65 consider their health as poor (Rapport CFV, 1995). A more recent study from 1994, shows that 5 to 7 per cent of people aged from 65 to 79, consider their health poor and that is the case of 13 to 15 per cent of people aged from 80 to 94 (Lalive d'Epinay and al., 2000, 125). Our population, though much younger is in much more difficult situation concerning self evaluated health.

Table 6. Self-assessed health according to ethnic group (%)

	Italians	Former Yugoslavians	Spaniards	Total
Poor/very poor	21	37	22	26
Average	33	40	36	36
Good/very good	46	23	43	37
N	99	89	101	289

V=.16; P=.00

The proportion of Italians and Spanish in poor assessed health (21%), is similar to the scores of our precedent research (19%, see Bolzman, Fibbi, Vial, 1999), which is very high compared to the Swiss population of the same age. But the situation of former Yugoslavians is even worse: more than a third among them is in bad health condition. Besides the problems of hard work conditions, this is related to the presence of older asylum seekers and refugees who experienced situations of war and violence in their home country and who are still living under precarious legal conditions in Switzerland.

Differences between men and women are not statistically significant. The proportion of persons in poor health increases logically with age (37% of 75 years and more versus 26% in the whole sample).

As in our preceding research, we notice that people in bad health are more numerous in the Basle region than in the Geneva one (33% to 19%, $P=.00$). Probably, this is due to the fact that Basle is a more industrialised region with more risks of professional accidents. Italians and Spaniards are more concerned by these regional differences than Yugoslavians. This is due to the fact to a higher proportion of political migrants among the Yugoslavians live in the Geneva area.

Limits to activities

Another indicator turns on limits in daily activities because of health problems. We distinguish people that are not limited at all from those who experiment little or a lot of limits. The main difficulties in everyday activities are: climbing several flights of stairs, moderate activities such as moving a table or pushing a vacuum cleaner and, to a lesser extent, shopping for groceries.

We built up an additive scale of limits in accomplishing daily activities. We have distinguished three categories: those who do not meet any limit, those who meet from one to four limits (moderate limitation), those who meet five limits or more (strong limitation). One fifth of the sample have a lot of limits in their daily activities because of health problems, and 28% meet some difficulties in these activities for the same reasons.

Table 7. Number of limits in daily activities according to ethnic group

	Italians	Former Yugoslavians	Spaniards	Total
None	66	22	64	52
1 to 4	25	36	24	28
5 or more	09	42	12	20
N	99	89	98	286

$V=.30$; $P=.00$

Former Yugoslavians are really in a difficult situation with respect to daily activities. Almost 80% among them meet some limitations related to health problems, which is the case of a third of Italians and Spaniards. This can be considered as quite dramatic because Yugoslavians are younger than the members of the two other ethnic groups. We must remember that Yugoslavians have the highest rate of registered disabled persons. Other indicators of our survey show that Yugoslavians are also the most affected in their daily activities by physical or emotional problems, or by pain interfering with regular activities.

Physical and mental problems

Interviewees have been asked, in relation to their limitations in daily activities mentioned above, if these problems were related to mental problems, to physical problems or both. We observe that a third of the sample is affected by emotional problems, alone or combined with physical problems.

Table 8. Reasons for problems with daily activities according to ethnic group (%)

	Italians	Former Yugoslavians	Spaniards	Total
No problem	68	40	47	52
Physical only	13	16	26	18
Emotional only	13	12	15	13
Both	06	32	12	16
N	95	89	100	284

V=.24; P=.00

Italians are the less concerned with physical or emotional problems, Spanish are mainly concerned with physical problems while Yugoslavians are touched by both.

Immigrants aged 65 are more affected by physical problems than those younger (23% versus 14%), while the last ones are more concerned with both physical and emotional problems (22% versus 9%, $P=.015$). There are no differences between men and women. Elderly immigrants living in Geneva suffer less from problems limiting activities than immigrants living in Basle (62% without problems versus 43%); the latter are suffering more often from both types of problems than the first (24% versus 8%, $P=.001$).

Among the causes mentioned as producing emotional problems the most frequently mentioned are: concern about health (19% of the sample), family issues (13%), income (11%) and disability (11%). Housing (3%), unemployment (2%) and discrimination (0.3%) are less frequently mentioned.

Well being

Three questions were asked in order to explore if elderly immigrants feel rather depressed or, at the opposite, have a positive mental attitude: “have you felt calm and peaceful during the last month?”; “did you have a lot of energy?”; “have you felt downhearted and low?”. Interviewees had five possibilities to answer, from “non of the time” to “all of the time”.

We built up a synthetic indicator from the mean scores on the three questions: those who are in “negative well-being” situation (mean= 1 to 2.67), those who are in a “middle well-being” situation (mean= 3 to 3.67) and those who

are in a “positive well-being” situation (mean=4 to 5). Each category represents a third of the sample.

Table 9. Well-being according to ethnic group (%)

	Italians	Former Yugoslavians	Spaniards	Total
Negative	23	49	28	33
Middle	34	32	35	34
Positive	42	19	38	33
N	99	90	101	290

$V=.18$; $P=.00$

Half of the Yugoslavians have negative scores in the well being dimension, which is the case of a quarter of Italians and Spanish. A high proportion of Yugoslavians have also a low rate of self-esteem (60%) compared to only a quarter of the Spanish and 14% of the Italians ($V=.30$; $P=.00$).

There are no significant differences with regard to gender, age categories or region of residence.

The situation of the elderly immigrants may be described as the result of what has been called the “exhausted migrant effect” (Bollini and Siem, 1995) : most of these persons (with the exception of Yugoslavian refugees) arrived in Switzerland in a very good health condition - those in better “shape” left the country of origin, and the newcomers endured severe health controls at the Swiss border -, but are today exhausted after twenty to forty years of hard work and sometimes difficult legal situations. A recent study developed in Geneva shows that life expectancy is shorter among the half-skilled or unskilled blue collar workers, that is, mainly among immigrant workers (Guberan and Usel, 2000).

Most of the indicators relative to the health conditions of the former Yugoslavians are particularly alarming: a high proportion of persons in bad health according to self-assessed indicators, a high level of disabled registered persons, of functional limitations and of mental health problems. Only with respect to different forms of illness the situation of Yugoslavians is better than that of Italians and Spanish. And one should not forget, that already these two immigrants populations are in bad health compared to the Swiss population of the same age.

Concluding remarks

The socio-economic situation of elderly foreigners is strongly related to their past life conditions. Thus, it is not surprising that they are over-represented among the poor and among people in bad health. On the other hand, they benefit from family support and from their participation in ethnic informal networks. However, neither their children nor the members of their informal network are able

today to assume systematic care of them in case of disability, illness or others problems related to age.

Even if the mainstream providers are organised to cover most of elders needs, services they deliver are not always easily accessible to elderly immigrants. This situation is due to many factors : lack of adequate information about the services which is adapted to people speaking other languages and with few formal education ; lack of an integration policy towards that generation of immigrants ; bad relations with Swiss officialdom because of severe immigration policy ; not enough attention paid by the mainstream institutions to elderly immigrants ; lack of attention and training to intercultural approaches in health and social work.

In our survey elderly immigrants also mentioned some difficulties in dealing with health and social care (HSC) services, related to general social problems - cost of services, lack of personal, lack of responsibility of care assigned to a single person, bureaucratic procedures - other difficulties are directly related to the lack of sensitivity of mainstream providers to the intercultural dimension: thus it is not surprising that problems like obstacles to obtain clear information in general and about users' rights more specifically, lack of knowledge of the needs of foreign elders by the professionals, difficulties of communication with the staff, availability of an interpreter, misunderstanding of foreign elders' cultural values are central in the critics that are developed by minority elderly with respect to HSC services.

The problems elderly migrants have in the use of HSC services reflect a lack of integration policy; this lack has important long term consequences. According to another survey, 83% of the Italian respondents think that the Swiss State did nothing to make their integration easier, and that, if their present situation is not too bad, this is due to their own merit (Colonies, 2001).

If these general remarks concern all minority elderly in Switzerland, the case of Yugoslavians is particularly dramatic. Those that came escaping from violence in Bosnia and Kosovo and that are living for many years with precarious legal status are particularly affected. Though younger than other elderly immigrants, their life and health conditions are more precarious. At the same time, their access to a wide variety of health services, as asylum seekers or provisory admitted, is more restricted. Their case reflects the need for legal, social and health policies adapted to the problems faced by older refugees.

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