

Longer male life in the Mediterranean - Older men's roles, habits and leisure activities in Malta

Ágnes Bene¹, Brigitta Váradi², Andrea Izsó², Gabriella Mihály-Gajdos

¹University of Debrecen, Hungary, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2275-7090>

²Malta POSITIVE, Malta

Keywords: Malta, older man's longevity, garage culture

Most aging societies are characterized by gender differences, i.e., a predominance of women among those aged 65 and over, and especially among the oldest elderly. This trend can also be observed in Malta. While in Hungary the gender balance breaks down among the over-50s (with slightly more men in earlier age groups), in Malta this phenomenon is observed at the earliest among the over-75s.

The aim of the research is to explore the characteristics of longer life among Maltese men.

Method: The research method was interviews. In the first stage, we interviewed elderly Maltese men (n=7) and foreign adults who had been living in Malta for more than a year (n=11).

Results: The research revealed several components of the activity of elderly Maltese men. The respondents reported on the diverse roles played by older men in their local communities. In addition to traditional grandparental roles, such as looking after their grandchildren, they also volunteer in local sports clubs and community events, with activities appropriate to their age and abilities. A characteristic feature of their voluntary activities is that they almost always carry them out in groups. Older men are also active in advocacy, as members of local, national, and international organizations.

Groups of older men in Malta can often be seen not only in coffee shops and bars, but also in front of their homes, talking, laughing, or crying, hugging each other. They do not refrain from expressing their emotions in public.

In Maltese communities, it can also be observed that elderly men spend long periods of time in groups in their open garages. The large garage is a common meeting place for elderly men. This garage culture may be one of the components of the long active life of Maltese men.

In the next phase of the research, we are planning to involve additional study participants. We also intend to provide a detailed description of the garage culture phenomenon observed among Maltese men.

Research ethics permission: EPKEB-2025-137

References

- Bene, Á. Móré, M. (ed.) (2022). *Pozitív idősödés 1*. DUPress
- European Commission (2011). *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*. Commission Staff Working Paper, Brussels. SEC
- European Commission (2015). *The 2015 Ageing Report, Economic and budgetary projections for the 28 EU Member States (2013-2060)* European Economy 3/2015.
- European Commission (2000). *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*. Commission Staff Working Paper, Brussels. SEC (2000).
- Logan, J. R., Ward, R., & Spitze, G. (1992). As old as you feel: Age identity in middle and later life. *Social Forces*, 71(2), pp. 451-467.
- Montepare, J. M., & Lachman, M. E. (1989). " You're only as old as you feel": Self-perceptions of age, fears of aging, and life satisfaction from adolescence to old age. *Psychology and aging*, 4(1), pp. 73-78.
- Pinker, S. (2014). *The village effect: Why face-to-face contact matters*. Atlantic Books Ltd.
- Marvin, F. (2019). *Measuring and Modelling Demographic Trends in Malta: Implications for Ageing Policy* *International Journal on Ageing in Developing Countries*, 2019, 4 (2): 78-90
- Kushkestani, M., Moghadassi, M., & Sidossis, L. (2024). Mediterranean lifestyle: More than a diet, A way of living (and thriving). *Endocrine, Metabolic & Immune Disorders-Drug Targets*, 24(15), 1785-1793.