

How Do We Feel at Different Ages? The Perspective of Subjective Well-being and Health in Lithuania and Poland

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INTRODUCTION & AIM

Understanding how people assess their subjective well-being (SWB) and health throughout their lives is important for evaluating their overall wellbeing and shaping social and health policy. Although SWB has been widely studied in Western Europe, research in Central and Eastern Europe remains less consistent and relatively limited.

Existing studies often focus on individual countries, groups of countries, or specific population groups, there is a lack of comparative analyses examining how SWB and subjective health (SH) differ across age groups in neighboring countries, such as Lithuania and Poland.

The aim of the research is to analyse age-related differences in SWB and SH in Lithuania and Poland and to compare patterns between these two neighbouring countries using European Social Survey (ESS) data.

METHOD

The research data are based on using **European Social Survey ESS data from round 11**. Using data sources like the ESS, allows for comparable measures across countries and over time.

SWB representing questions:

1. All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? (0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied).
2. Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are? (0 means extremely unhappy and 10 means extremely happy).
3. Subjective health (1 means very good, 2 - good, 3 - fair, 4 - bad, 5 - very bad).

Sample of Lithuania was N=1365, in Poland N=1442.

Used methods: descriptive statistics and comparison method.

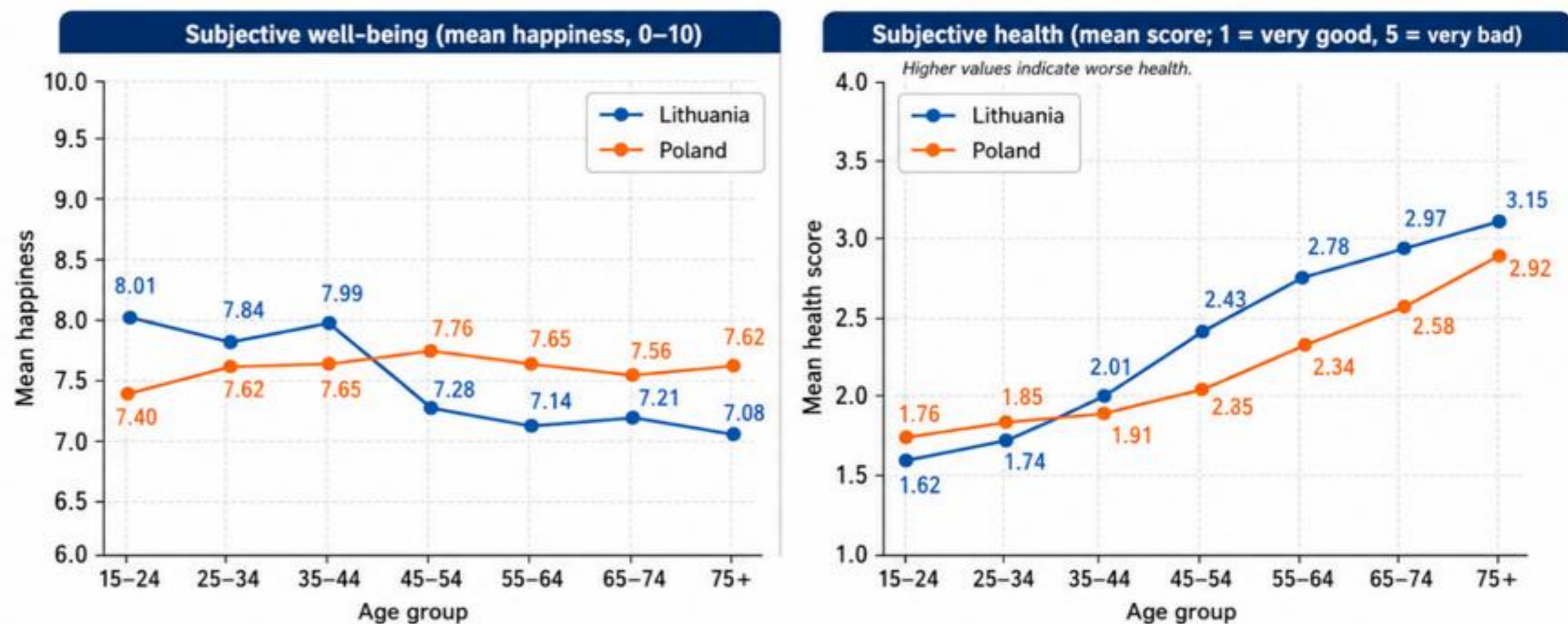
RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Research results revealed some specific insights about the analysed topic:

- In Lithuania, SWB varies more strongly by age than in Poland. The youngest and early middle-aged groups in Lithuania report the highest levels of happiness: the mean happiness score is 8.01 among those aged 15–24 and 7.99 among those aged 35–44. However, after age 45, happiness declines noticeably, reaching 7.08 in the 75+ age group.

How do we feel at different ages?

Age patterns of subjective well-being and health in Lithuania and Poland (ESS Round 11)



- In Poland, happiness remains more stable across age groups. In Poland, mean happiness scores vary only slightly, ranging from 7.40 to 7.76. From age 45 onward, Polish respondents report higher happiness levels than Lithuanian respondents, suggesting a weaker decline in subjective well-being in later life.

Satisfaction with life data were similar tendency as happiness.

- Subjective health worsens with age in both countries, but the decline is sharper in Lithuania. Since higher values on the health scale indicate worse self-rated health, the results show a clear age-related deterioration in both countries. In Lithuania, the mean health score increases from 1.62 in the youngest group to 3.15 in the 75+ group. In Poland, it increases from 1.76 to 2.92. This indicates that older Lithuanians evaluate their health less positively than older Poles.

CONCLUSION

- The results reveal clear differences in both SWB and SH, also, when comparing age groups and countries.
- Younger respondents tend to report higher happiness and better health, while older age groups experience declining SH.
- Lithuania shows a stronger decline in happiness with age compared to Poland, where happiness remains comparatively stable across the life course.
- These results suggest that ageing affects SH more strongly than subjective happiness, especially in Lithuania.

FUTURE WORK / REFERENCES

Future research could focus on the analysis of longitudinal data to compare changes in SWB and health across different age groups in Lithuania and Poland, and to identify the social, economic, and health factors that most strongly influence these changes.