

# Well-being of the older population in Europe and the U.S

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## Abstract:

As longevity increases there is an increasing emphasis on understanding quality of life at older ages. Better understanding of how older people assess the quality of their lives is important in assessing the value of programs and policies, which support older populations. This study explores how variability in the national social and economic context in which older people live their lives affects reported evaluative and experiential well-being across 12 countries. The analysis uses nationally representative data sets for Europeans and Americans 70 years of age and older to examine how life satisfaction and depressive symptoms vary among the oldest old with national and individual circumstances. Using a multilevel analysis, after controlling for individual characteristics, the perception of the quality of public services is associated with higher levels of satisfaction, while lower poverty rates are linked to more life satisfaction. For depressive symptoms, GDP is negatively associated with depression, while poverty rate and pension replacement rate are linked to a higher likelihood of expressing depressive symptoms. Both life satisfaction and depression are associated with the generosity of national programmes. Policies and programmes that influence the lives of older people strongly relate to well-being; and both individual and national-level indicators are important in successful aging.

Keywords: well-being, life satisfaction, depressive symptoms, SHARE, HRS, Europe, the U.S., older population