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## BETWEEN OBLIGATIONS AND LEISURE: AN EXAMINATION OF NON-WORK ACTIVITIES AMONG THE GENERATION 55+ IN POLAND AND CZECHIA

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**ABSTRACT.** This article seeks to evaluate the non-work activities of the generation 55+ in Poland and the Czech Republic. The theoretical framework relies on Ronald Inglehart's theory of values, which is also applied in the research methodology. Following Inglehart's theory, the activities of the generation 55+ can be categorised into two groups. The first group aligns with materialist duty-related values, encompassing responsibilities such as caring for grandchildren, tending to elderly and disabled family members, and participating in religious observances. The second group aligns with postmaterialist values, emphasising personal development, self-expression, and quality of life. These activities encompass participation in classes offered by the University of the Third Age, volunteering, engaging in sports, and tourism. The research findings indicate a greater involvement of Poles in duty-related activities, particularly among women. This suggests a prevalence of materialist values in Poland. Conversely, Czechs, especially Czech women, exhibit more active involvement in leisure activities, pointing to the predominance of postmaterialist values. The conclusions present an integrated model of non-work activities for the generation 55+ that takes into account both materialist and post-materialist values.

**Keywords:** non-work activities, theory of value, generation 55+, Poland, the Czech Republic

### Introduction

In recent years, generation 55+ has burgeoned into a substantial demographic entity in society – a trend propelled by demographic shifts observed in high- and middle-income countries. Central and Eastern European nations, marked by dynamic development since the post-communist era and integration with the European Union, have not been immune to this

transformation. The region has experienced a diminishing birth rate and an improved life expectancy, resulting in a greater share of the 55+ age group within societal structures (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>, 2023). Consequently, there is an imperative to equip this cohort for an active old age, necessitating a focus on both extended professional engagement and non-work activities.

This article delves into the nuanced dynamics of the generation 55+ in Poland and the Czech Republic—countries that both used to be under the influence of real socialism. The formative years of this generation and the commencement of their professional journeys unfolded during this epoch. Over the course of their careers, they experienced the transition to a new socioeconomic framework, encountering both opportunities and challenges inherent in the evolving system (Swadźba & Swadźba, 2023).

As of 2021, the 55-64 age group comprised over 6.4 million individuals in Poland and the Czech Republic combined, with 5 million in Poland and just over one million in the Czech Republic. Notably, these two nations account for 10.9 % of the EU-27 population, with Poland contributing 8.5% and the Czech Republic – 2.4%. This places the generation 55+ share in the population structure below the EU average (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>, 2023). While this cohort remains active in the labour market, there is considerable variation in the level of activity between the two countries. Czechs exhibit a higher employment rate at 70 %, whereas Poles register a lower rate at 55 %, notably below the EU average. A distinctive characteristic of the Polish labour market is the limited work activity of the generation 55+, primarily attributed to a notable disparity in the employment rates of women. In Poland, the employment rate for women stands at 43 %, lagging behind by up to 20 percentage points compared to the Czech Republic (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>, 2023). This discrepancy underscores a key facet of the labour market dynamics within the analyzed countries.

This concise characterization of the generation 55+ delineates both commonalities and distinctions between the two analysed countries. In both Poland and the Czech Republic, the prevailing imperative is to activate this generation, enhancing its societal integration, and aligning with the paradigm of active ageing (Lamura & Principi, 2019; Boerio et al., 2023). The concept of active ageing, formulated by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2002, envisions activities that enable individuals to pursue what they value throughout their lives (WHO, 2002). Presently, the European Union (EU) is actively promoting the principles of active ageing, aiming to counteract population ageing by influencing individuals and preparing them for old age. This preparation encompasses professional work, health, education, social engagement, and ensuring an adequate standard of living (European Commission, 2021; Boerio et al., 2023). Work activity stands out as a crucial aspect, holding significant social importance by providing older individuals with a sense of purpose (Horáková Hirschlerová, 2019; Raab, 2020; Grmanova & Bartek, 2022; Swadźba, 2022).

Social utility extends beyond professional work to encompass various activities such as housework, caregiving for elderly and sick family members, community engagement, educational pursuits, and volunteering. However, compared to Western European countries, the generation 55+ in post-communist countries exhibits lower levels of activity, particularly in educational pursuits. In Western European countries such as Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Iceland, more than 20 % of the generation 55+ participate in lifelong education. In contrast, the rates in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Croatia and Greece are at a significantly lower level (Kawińska, 2018). This disparity underscores a research gap, as educational and other activities are more extensively studied in Western European countries than in post-communist nations (Esgin Gunter, 2014; Bialozyt & Pikula, 2019; Licen et al., 2019; Okulicz-Kozaryn & Morawski, 2021; Boerio et al., 2023).

Addressing this research gap, the authors aim to conduct a comparative study highlighting differences in the activities of Generation 55+ based on their value systems and cultural disparities (Eugester et al., 2017). While Polish and Czech societies share similarities, they also exhibit cultural diversity (Swadźba, 2013). Consequently, the research endeavours to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of duty-related activities among the generation 55+? Does gender play a role in participation, and are there national differences? Do these activities signify the prevalence of materialist values in the social consciousness of both nations?

2. What is the level of leisure activities for the generation 55+? Does gender influence participation, and are there national differences? Do these activities indicate the presence of post-materialist values in the social consciousness of both nations?

To address the research inquiries, this study outlines the theoretical framework, incorporating Ronald Inglehart's theory of value as a foundational element. The exposition includes an elucidation of the concepts underpinning active ageing, with a particular focus on non-work activation as one of its pivotal components. The research methodology commences with an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), facilitating the construction of indicators that delineate distinct factors categorizing non-work activities. Leveraging these indicators, the investigation delves into discernible disparities between the Polish and Czech populations. The intricate relationship between each variable employed and each respective country is explicated in the research results section. Subsequently, the Discussion and Conclusions sections draw upon Inglehart's theory of values, and considerations of active ageing within populations, and furnish explicit responses to the posed research questions.

### **1. Theoretical background (Inglehart's theory of values and the concept of non-work active ageing)**

In the theoretical underpinning of this study, Inglehart's theory assumes a pivotal role in the analysis of value systems (Inglehart, 1977) rooted in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It posits that human needs are hierarchical, with physiological and safety needs paramount. Two fundamental theses emerge from Inglehart's theory: (1) individuals have a predilection for items in relative scarcity, and (2) we find a non-immediate adjustment between the socioeconomic environment and value priorities because the basic values are reflecting conditions prevailing in the pre-adult phase of one's life (socialization thesis). Physiological and safety needs are in the first place and after addressing those basic needs individuals strive to implement other intangible needs. This means that the transition from materialist to post-materialist values, where economic concerns yield to self-expression and quality of life, accompanies economic prosperity. This dichotomy reveals substantial differences in the value systems between younger and older generations. Older individuals, shaped by conditions of scarcity, tend to favour materialist values, while the younger generation, nurtured amidst economic growth, gravitates towards post-materialist values. Empirical support for these propositions can be found in the research on changes in the system of values carried out in Europe since 1970 (Inglehart, 1990; Inglehart et al., 1998; European Value Study (EVS), 2022). Analogous research in post-communist contexts, including Poland and the Czech Republic has been carried out since 1989 (Rabušić & Chromková Manea, 2018; Marody, 2019).

Inglehart's concept, while theoretically robust, has not been without critique. An alternative perspective was proposed by Marek Ziółkowski who believes that Inglehart's thesis requires a reinterpretation (Ziółkowski, 2000). Inglehart describes the transition from materialism to post-materialism in a two-dimensional space of values: (1) the transition from materialism to post-materialism in which economic issues become in general less important,

and (2) a shift in cultural preferences towards 'libertarian' values. M. Ziółkowski has supplemented Inglehart's concept by distinguishing two orders of post-materialist values which makes it particularly relevant for analysing post-communist countries and introduces a nuanced understanding of post-materialist values related to leisure and activity management (Ziółkowski, 2000, 117-124).

Given the economic disparities between Poland and the Czech Republic, influencing the wealth of their citizens as well as the respective value systems (Swadźba, 2013; Rabusic & Chromková Manea). Hence, when examining the non-work engagement of Generation 55+ in Poland and the Czech Republic, we can connect and assess it in relation to the values inherent to this generation. Based on Inglehart's theory, the activities of generation 55+ can be bifurcated into two groups: materialist values centred around duties, and post-materialist values emphasizing personal development and quality of life. The ensuing analysis explores the multifaceted dimensions of these activities, ranging from caregiving responsibilities and religious observances to educational pursuits, sports, tourism, and volunteering.

### ***1.1 Duty-related non-work activities: Caregiving and religious observances***

A crucial role within the non-work activities of the generation 55+ is playing the role of grandparents, notably grandmothers. Grandmothers, recognized for their care, patience, and dedication, contribute significantly to childcare, often in an unpaid capacity (Zamarro, 2020; Kalbarczyk, 2021). This intergenerational support aids younger generations in pursuing their careers and work commitments. The caregiving aspect extends beyond grandchildren to encompass the responsibility of caring for elderly and sick family members, typically shouldered by women. In the traditional family model, women have a dilemma related to elderly care, pondering the balance between professional engagement and caregiving responsibilities (Bom et al., 2019).

Religious activity forms another facet of non-work activities, manifested through participation in religious observance or other forms of religiosity (Sadłoń, 2021; Swadźba, 2013).

### ***1.2 Leisure activities: Self-development, volunteering and active lifestyle***

The second group of non-work activities is oriented towards self-development and creativity (Tiittanen & Turjamaa, 2022). Participation in the University of the Third Age (U3A) is a pivotal indicator in this category, fostering lifelong education to help seniors adapt to societal, cultural, and economic changes. U3A, through its diverse offerings, plays an important role in changing perceptions of old age and enabling seniors to cultivate neglected talents from their working years (Bazalova, 2019; Licen et al., 2019; Gierszewski & Kluzowicz, 2021). Here it is crucial to start the learning process early during the life cycle, thereby mitigating the severity of 'encountering old age' (Esgin Gunder et al., 2014; Bialozyt & Pikula, 2019). U3A's impact extends beyond education to activate seniors in physical activities, sports, tourism, and social engagement. These activities can be performed individually or in groups. Doing sports appropriate for one's age contributes to the maintenance of health and physical well-being. As research shows, physically active individuals live longer in good shape (Kim et al., 2021; Sanchez-Santos et al., 2022). Other studies show that tourism influences the well-being of older people in a positive way (Kolasińska & Sporek, 2021; Ghența et al., 2022).

Volunteering emerges as a significant activity for the generation 55+, with its prevalence varying between Western European and post-communist countries (Horáková Hirschlerová, 2016; Tiittanen & Turjamaa, 2022; Palaz, 2021; Cameron et al., 2020). Volunteering enhances

social contacts and the mental well-being of older individuals. Adopting an active lifestyle post-retirement, individuals in the age group 55+ aim to demonstrate their sustained vigour and vitality (Omelan et al., 2016; Patterson & Balderas-Cejudo, 2022, Horáková & Šobánová, 2016).

Non-work activities demand time, making them primarily feasible for retired individuals within the generation 55+. As of October 1, 2017, the retirement age in Poland has been established at 65 for men and 60 for women. The decision to lower the retirement age positions Poland among European countries characterized by relatively brief periods of work activity, with a particular impact on women (<https://www.zus.pl/swiadczenia/emerytury/emerytura-dla-osob-urodzonych-po-31-grudnia-1948>, 2023). In the Czech Republic as of January 1, 2018, the minimum pension insurance period was raised and stands now at 35 years, accompanied by a gradual increase in the retirement age to 65 for both men and women (<https://www.oecd.org/els/public-pensions/PAG2019-country-profile-Czech-Republic.pdf>, 2023).

It's pertinent to note that the retirement age in Poland and the Czech Republic is roughly similar, and any analysis of non-work activities necessitates an understanding of personal and cultural factors, including the prevailing value system. The study focuses on the dual aspects of duty and free time within this context.

## 2. Methodological approach

The research sought to explore the life and work strategies of individuals aged 55–65 and was conducted in Ostrava (Czech Republic), Katowice and neighbouring cities in the conurbation (Poland), and Debrecen (Hungary) as part of the international project titled 'Social and Cultural Mechanisms of In- and Exclusion: A Comparative Perspective': Life and Work Strategies of the Generation 55 to 65: Their Position on the Labour Market, Obstacles and Wishes (Institutional Development Project, IRP, No. 201819). This initiative was organized and financially supported by the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava, in collaboration with the Institute of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Silesia, and the Department of Sociology and Social Policy, Faculty of Humanities, University of Debrecen. Notably, this article confines its analysis to data pertaining to Poland and the Czech Republic.

The research design envisaged the use of mixed methods approach, both: quantitative and qualitative. However, due to outbreak of COVID-19 pandemics duration of the project had been curtailed and qualitative research revoked.

The second, qualitative study was eventually carried out in the following project titled 'Economic awareness of the inhabitants of the V4 countries. A comparative study of two generations' was carried out in 2022 by the 'Visegrad' Research Team, which was established at the Institute of Sociology of the University of Silesia and funded by internal funds. Despite time brake between the quantitative and qualitative research the whole design of the initial project had been realized and both parts should be treated as one sequential explanation strategy (Creswell, 2014).

The quantitative survey aimed to evaluate the current status of the generation 55+ in the labour market, identifying barriers to work and discerning their work-related expectations. The analysis in this article, however, concentrates solely on responses related to non-work activities. The foundational question for this analysis queried participants about their daily non-work activities, seeking estimates on a 5-point scale (1 – I do not do it at all to 5 – I do it every day) for the frequency of engaging in nine activities. These activities encompassed caring for grandchildren, caring for family members, participating in religious observance (attending

church groups, services and other events of ones religious community), participating in University of the Third Age (U3A) and lifelong learning activities, volunteering, cultural activities (visiting theatres, cinemas, exhibitions etc.), do active sports, travel, and socializing with friends. The first three activities were linked to materialist duty-related values, while the subsequent ones were associated with post-materialist values, emphasising leisure activities, personal development, self-expression, and quality of life.

The research employed quota sampling to recruit participants in each of the examined cities, ensuring a balanced representation based on gender and education structure of the age group 55-65 years. The sampling process encompassed all city districts to maintain social diversity, with interviewers obligated to consider designated structural factors during respondent selection. This approach yielded a representative sample that reflected the diversity of the 55-65 generation in the examined cities.

Given the limitations associated with online surveys, such as poor response rates and representativeness, coupled with the higher digital divide in older age cohorts (Frimel, 2014), the data collection adopted structured face-to-face paper-and-pencil interviews. These interviews were conducted in 2019 by selected students, including doctoral students, under academic supervision. The survey achieved a total of 321 interviews, with 169 conducted in Poland and 152 in the Czech Republic. The gender distribution mirrored the population structure, with a slightly higher percentage of women due to their predominance in the demographic composition of this age group (in Poland 46.7 % of participants were men and 53.3 % women; in the Czech Republic 41.4 % were men and 58.6 % of the participants were women).

The empirical material collected underwent coding and statistical development using IBM SPSS Statistics software. The analysis included a cross-table examination of non-work activities by country, followed by explanatory factor analysis (EFA). To ensure the suitability for EFA, a sufficient number of participants for each observed variable (questionnaire item) was maintained, following the recommendation of at least 5-10 participants per variable. The EFA utilized principal component analysis and varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization, identifying two factors based on Cattell's criterion (scree plot). Both factors exhibited an eigenvalue greater than 1, and factorability was confirmed through the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2008). Subsequently, items were categorized into two groups according to the factors they loaded, enabling cross-country comparisons for each item.

Both, quantitative and qualitative methods had been employed in this study, with quantitative as leading and qualitative in supplementary function. The qualitative data had been gathered after analysis of qualitative data.

The qualitative research was conducted using the in-depth interview method. It concerned the professional and non-work activities of the 55+ generation. Due to the impediments of the pandemic, 12 in-depth interviews were conducted only in 2022 (6 each in Poland and the Czech Republic). The interviews were supplementary in character allowing to facilitate and root the qualitative data results.

In qualitative research, the purposive sampling method had been applied. The rationale of inclusion was covering the diversity of gender and occupational situation. The inclusion criteria was based on gender (women to men half by half) and occupational situation: non-retired employed, retired non-working and retired but still working. Compounding those two criteria gave six diverse cases. Altogether 12 in-depth interviews had been conducted (6 in each city).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Duty-related activities of the generation 55+

The analysis commences by examining the duty-related activities of the generation 55+. In addition to routine tasks like housekeeping and shopping, this generation contends with work and responsibilities, particularly concerning adult children and, often, grandchildren in need of care. Caring for ageing parents is also a significant responsibility, along with duty-related activities like religious observance, particularly prominent in Poland.

Table 1 and 2 shows the results of statistical correlation with gender above the analyzed activities (no. 1,2,3).

Table 1. Duty-Related Activities - statistical correlation with gender Polish respondents (chi-square significance and Cramer's V), N = 169

Type of activity	Chi-square			Cramer's V	
	Chi-square	df	Asymptotic significance	Cramer's V	Approximate significance
1.Caring for grandchildren	12,577	4	0,014	0,273	0,014
2.Caring for family members	17,429	4	0,002	0,321	0,002
3.Participation in church and parish activities	1,676	4	0,795	0,100	0,795

Source: own data and calculations

Table 2. Duty-Related Activities - statistical correlation with gender Czechs respondents (chi-square significance and Cramer's V), N = 152

Type of activity	Chi-square significance			Cramer's V	
	Chi-square	df	Asymptotic significance	Cramer's V	Approximate significance
1.Caring for grandchildren	2,921	4	0,571	0,139	0,571
2.Caring for family members	4,204	3	0,240	0,166	0,240
3.Participation in church and parish activities	3,838	3	0,280	0,159	0,280

Source: own data and calculations

The correlation results show that the statistical relationship between duty-related activities and gender occurs only in two activities: "Caring for grandchildren" and "Caring for family members" in the responses of Polish respondents. Polish women in particular are more involved in caring for family members, most often elderly parents, than men. Detailed analysis results show percentages.

The questionnaire addressed caring for grandchildren as one of these activities. The research indicates that over half of Polish respondents do not participate in this activity (A – a total of 58.8 %). Factors include the absence of grandchildren, no longer needing care, or the grandchildren living too far away so that caregiving is geographically impractical. Gender disparities among Poles reveal that women are more likely to care for their grandchildren than

men The difference in the response 'I do not do it at all' between Polish men and women is 21.7 % (men {M} – 68.4 %, women {W} – 46.7 %). Conversely, Czech respondents exhibit fewer instances of not providing care for their grandchildren (A – 32.9 %, M – 38.1 %, W – 29.2 %). In cases where respondents declared caring for grandchildren, Poles were more active, with a higher frequency of daily care and/or weekly care compared to Czechs ('I do it every day' (Poles: 15.0 %, Czechs: 10.7 %); 'I do it once or several times a week' (Poles: 39.7 %, Czechs: 24.5 %), and the Czechs less often 'I do it once or several times a month' (Poles: 24.6 %, Czechs: 59.8 %)).

In in-depth interviews, most of the surveyed women declared such care, but so did also men: *"When my children are away, I look after my grandchildren (they live with me). This is sporadic help, because my daughter-in-law has not returned to work yet and she mainly takes care of the children. Situations like this when I have to take care of my grandchildren happen several times a week. Sometimes I also go to kindergarten to walk my granddaughter to kindergarten"* (Ewa, PL, St, ZZ, E)<sup>1</sup>, *"I take care of my wife and grandchildren, go shopping and do household chores. I do this almost every day. The grandchildren sometimes come for dinner, we help with homework, it is systematic help - several times a week"* (Jerzy, PL, St, Ś, E). *"Caring for my grandson – one day a week – 8-10 hours. Garden – systematic work – 25-35 hours a week (depending on the season)"* (Petra, CZ, St, Ś, E). Caring for family members, such as spouses or parents, is another time-intensive activity. Women, especially Polish women, are more involved. The difference between Polish women and men in the answer 'I do not do it' is 24.5 % (W – 48.9 %, M – 73.4 %, average (A) – 60.4 %). Almost half of Polish women surveyed undertake this activity, with nearly 19 % doing it daily (M – 7.6 %, W – 18.9 %, A – 13.6 %). In contrast, there is no such gender difference among Czech respondents: M – 69.8 % of male respondents and 61.8 % of Czech women answered that they do not take care of a family member (chi-square significance of  $p = 0.240$ , Cramer's  $V$  of 0.166). On the other hand, approximately 19.1 % of Czech women and 15.9 % of Czech men care for family members daily.

In in-depth interviews, only women declared that they helped their elderly parents: *"My mother lives near me, so I help her from time to time, I go shopping, I go to the doctor"* (Petra, CZ, St, Ś, E); *"I handle various matters: doctors, medicines, taking people to clinics. I help take care of my sick mother, sometimes every other day, sometimes by phone, I am generally available by phone because unplanned situations happen. I always try to help when help is required of me. In fact, it has been a constant help for a long time."* (Maria, PL, Mł, Ś, Pr).

Participation in church and parish activities is considered mandatory for some of the generation 55+. This is notably more common among Polish respondents, with only 18.3 % stating not to participate at all. The research shows a slightly higher declaration among women (M – 17.7 %, W – 18.9 %). The majority of Poles go to church 'once or several times a week' (W – 37.8 %, M – 36.7 %, A – 37.3 %), and every day (W – 12.2 %, M – 11.4 %, A – 11.8 %). For Czechs, the percentage of inactivity is higher (80.9 %), with Czech women more religiously active than men ('I do not do it': M – 85.7 %, W – 77.5 %; 'once or several times a week': M – 3.2 %, W – 9.0 %; 'once or several times a month' M – 1.6 %, W – 5.6 %). These findings align with expectations, given the historical context of high religious observance among Poles in

<sup>1</sup> Explanations of abbreviations: Fictitious name given by the researchers (e.g. Edward, Barbara, Peter, Zdenka), PL - Polish respondent, CZ - Czech respondent, age group: Mł - younger, St - older; Education: P – primary, ZZ – basic vocational, Ś – secondary, W – higher; P – working respondent, E – retired respondent, P/E – retired and working respondent.

comparison to other European nations, contrasting with the traditionally lower participation of the Czech population.

### 3.2 Leisure activities of the generation 55+

In addition to fulfilling obligations, individuals possess varying amounts of free time. In this aspect, the generation 55+ is very diverse influenced by factors such as employment status and family responsibilities.

Leisure activities can be provided differently: active or passive, institutional, requiring external structures (no. 4,5,6), and personal, conducted independently (no. 7,8,9). *Table 3 and 4* show the statistical correlation with gender results below the analyzed activities.

Table 3. Leisure activities - statistical correlation with gender Polish respondents (chi-square significance and Cramer's V), N = 169

Type of activity	Chi-square			Cramer's V	
	Chi-square	df	Asymptotic significance	Cramer's V	Approximate significance
4. Taking part in Third Age University and Life Long Learning	1,862	4	0,761	0,105	0,761
5. Volunteering	6,588	4	0,159	0,197	0,159
6. Doing cultural activities (visiting theater, cinema, exhibitions, etc.)	3,876	4	0,423	0,151	0,423
7. Sport activities (walking, running, gymnastic, swimming etc.)	1,707	4	0,789	0,101	0,789
8. Traveling (make a trip in the area or going for a holiday trip)	1,273	3	0,736	0,087	0,736
9. Meeting friends and acquaintances	4,600	4	0,331	0,165	0,331

Source: own data and calculations

Table 4. Leisure activities - statistical correlation with gender Czechs respondents (chi-square significance and Cramer's V), N = 152

Type of activity	Chi-square			Cramer's V	
	Chi-square	df	Asymptotic significance	Cramer's V	Approximate significance
4. Taking part in Third Age University and Life Long Learning	13,630	4	0,009	0,299	0,009
5. Volunteering	7,785	4	0,100	0,226	0,100
6. Doing cultural activities (visiting theater, cinema, exhibitions, etc.)	2,256	3	0,521	0,122	0,521
7. Sport activities (walking, running, gymnastic, swimming etc.)	3,374	4	0,497	0,149	0,497
8. Traveling (make a trip in the area or going for a holiday trip)	3,486	4	0,483	0,151	0,483
9. Meeting friends and acquaintances	2,847	4	0,584	0,137	0,584

Source: own data and calculations

Statistical analysis reveals a significant dependence between gender and participation in U3A, Signifying that Czech women participate in U3A more often than men. The remaining activities are not statistically significant. Statistical analysis does not show significant differences in leisure activities requiring external structures (volunteering, doing cultural activities) and personal activities (sports, travel and meeting friends). However, the analysis of the percentage results shows some percentage differences in the answers of women and men of the 55+ generation in both countries.

### 3.2.1 Leisure activities requiring external structures

#### *University of the Third Age (U3A) and Lifelong Learning:*

In Poland, 88.2 % of the participants do not engage in U3A activities, with women participating slightly more than men („monthly or several times a month“ - M – 5.6 %, W – 7,6 %). Czech respondents show higher participation (70.4 % respond 'I do not do it'). Approximately 14 % of respondents actively participate in U3A activities several times a month. One of our respondents described her activity as follows: *"I go to U3A because there are exercises there and you can listen to lectures about health. Well, we have trips, so we will get to know each other better"* (Zdenka, CZ, Mł, Ś, E). Notably, Czech women demonstrate a significantly higher involvement in U3A classes compared to Czech men ('I do not do it': M – 81.0 %, W – 62.9 %, A – 70.4 %). It means that approximately one-third of Czech women actively engage in U3A pursuits, reflecting a commitment to self-development.

#### *Volunteering*

Certain individuals from generation 55+, unburdened by work obligations, may choose to devote their time to assisting organizations and institutions reliant on volunteers, especially those without immediate family responsibilities such as caring for grandchildren. The data

indicates that 87.6 % of Polish respondents refrain from volunteering. Gender-based differences in volunteerism are minimal, with women participating more frequently, either several times a week or month (4.4 %, 6.7 %), and men contributing a few times a month or year (3.8 %, 5.1 %). These percentages, however, are relatively modest. Among the Polish respondents in in-depth interviews, no one declared to be involved in volunteering. However, helping neighbours was often recalled: *"Sometimes I help my neighbors with minor issues: sometimes. shopping, delivering medicines, but this is sporadic help"* (Maria, PL, Mł, Ś, Pr). In contrast, a higher proportion of respondents engage in volunteer activities in the Czech Republic (20.4 %). Among Czech respondents, women exhibit greater involvement, volunteering several times a year (12.4 %) or week (6.7 %). Amid the Czech respondents, in in-depth interviews, two people declared their participation in volunteering: *"I help in organizing cultural and educational events - organization, cuisine"* (Petra, CZ, St, Ś, E), *"From time to time I help in a charity organization, I work on equipment, I repair, set up, and help with purchasing. Everything is free of charge"* (Dusan, CZ, St, ZZ, E).

#### *Cultural Activities*

In terms of cultural engagement, involving visits to theatres, cinemas, exhibitions, and similar activities, 32.0 % of Polish respondents reported no such involvement. The majority of respondents participate in cultural activities several times a year, with women being more active than men ('I do not do it': M – 35.4 %, W – 28.9 %). In the Czech Republic, generation 55+ is notably more active in visiting cinemas and theatres, with only 9.9 % declaring 'I do not do it.' Half of the Czech respondents engage in cultural activities several times a month (50.0 %), and women exhibit a higher inclination toward cultural pursuits. A mere 8 % of Czech women (M – 12.7 %) claim non-involvement in such activities, while the majority (53.9 %) attend theatres, cinemas, and other cultural institutions several times a month.

#### **3.2.2 Personal activities: Sports, travel and meeting friends**

The second category of personal activities pertains to self-development, with a primary focus on sports. Approximately 70 % of Polish respondents engage in this activity, with a higher participation rate among men compared to women ('I do not do it': M – 27. %, W – 33.3 %). One of the respondents describes his activity this way: *"Bicycle. Whenever I feel comfortable, I run. Whenever I have time and the weather is favorable, I do it every day, for about an hour. I ride a bike with my wife, I run alone"* (Edward, PL, Mł, W, Pr). Poles typically participate in sports several times a week. In contrast, a slightly higher percentage of Czechs declare non-participation in physical exercise (36.8 %). Men in the Czech Republic engage in physical activity more frequently than women (M – 31.7 %, W – 40.4 %). Among those who exercise, women are more consistent, doing so several times a week (M – 23.8 %, W – 29.2 %). The low activity in this domain is attributed not to a lack of infrastructure but rather to the Czech lifestyle.

Tourism or travel constitutes another personal activity, which can be undertaken independently or with the assistance of travel agencies. Less than half of Polish respondents partake in such activities (45.5 %), and nearly 40 % engage in travel once or several times a year. One of the interviewees described it: *"I travel around the country and sometimes abroad, I actively hike in the mountains with my family and friends. Sometimes even weekly during weekend, if weather permits."* (Wojciech, PL, St, Ś, Pr). Women exhibit higher travel frequency than men ('I do not do it': M – 58.2 %, W – 52.2 %). Notably, there is a substantial disparity in tourist activity between Poles and Czechs. Merely 11.2 % of Czechs assert non-participation in travel, and among the active participants, nearly two-thirds (67.1 %) travel once or several times

a year. One of our Czech respondents lists her activities as follows: "Winter - cross-country skiing, summer - hiking, cycling" (Zdenka, CZ, Mł, W, Pr). Czech men travel slightly more frequently than Czech women ('I do not do it':  $M - 9.5\%$ ,  $W - 12.4\%$ ), presenting a reversal of the situation observed in Poland.

The final personal activity examined is socializing with friends and acquaintances. In the Polish cohort, 15.2 % of men indicate non-participation in spending leisure time with friends, a significantly higher proportion than women (8.9 %). Both men and women typically engage in social interactions once or several times a month ( $M - 38.0\%$ ,  $W - 34.4\%$ ). Such activity was indicated in in-depth interviews: "I meet my friends once or several times a week. We drink coffee and talk. Sometimes we also visit our neighbors" (Marketa, CZ, Mł, ZZ, E/Pr). Czech individuals are more active in socializing with friends than their Polish counterparts, with only 1.3 % of Czechs reporting non-participation. Czech women are particularly active in daily contacts ( $M - 4.8\%$ ,  $W - 12.4\%$ ), while Czech men typically have social interactions once or several times a week ( $M - 58.7\%$ ,  $W - 52.8\%$ ). Almost one-third of Czechs meet their friends once or several times a month. The research underscores the divergent patterns in how individuals allocate their leisure time, with Czech men and women exhibiting greater activity in this domain compared to their Polish counterparts.

### 3.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of non-work activities in the generation 55+

Empirical validation of theoretical assumptions related to Inglehart's theory in the context of the activities of generation 55+ was carried out through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The conclusive results of the EFA are presented in Table 1, wherein the measured variables are arranged based on the factors they load. Following Cattell's criterion, two distinct factors have been identified. Collectively, these two factors account for a substantial 35.63 % of the variance in the observed results.

Factor one is loaded by variables describing activities such as participation in third-age university, travel, cultural activities, sports, meeting friends and acquaintances and volunteering. Interpreting the factors in terms of the theoretical assumptions made, it can be concluded that they relate to post-materialist values, placing a premium on personal development, self-expression and quality of life, and are thus defined as Leisure activities.

Table 5. Final EFA of non-work activities of the generation 55+

Factors and variables	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	% variance
<b>Leisure activities</b>		1.954	21.71%
Participation in U3A and LLL activities	0.656		
Travelling	0.615		
Cultural activities	0.596		
Sporting activities	0.590		
Meeting friends and acquaintances	0.515		
Volunteering	0.343		
<b>Duty-related activities</b>		1.253	13.92%
Religious observance	0.814		
Caring for grandchildren	-0.548		
Caring for family members	0.174		
Total variance explained			35.63%

N= 321; Abbreviations: U3A = University of Third Age, LLL = Lifelong Learning  
Source: own data

The second factor refers to materialistic, duty values, which can include: caring for grandchildren, caring for elderly and disabled family members and religious practices. It was therefore referred to as Duty activities.

The acquired results enable the assignment of standardized values to each tested individual concerning each factor. These indicators were generated using a regression method, considering the factor loadings of specific questions within each factor. The values may be either positive or negative: negative values imply that the frequency of engaging in a particular non-work activity (factor) is below the average, while positive values indicate a much higher frequency than the average.

Utilizing these indicators, a factor space was constructed, portraying the position of each examined participant. This visualization was based on the calculated indicator values for individual activities (refer to *Figure 1*).

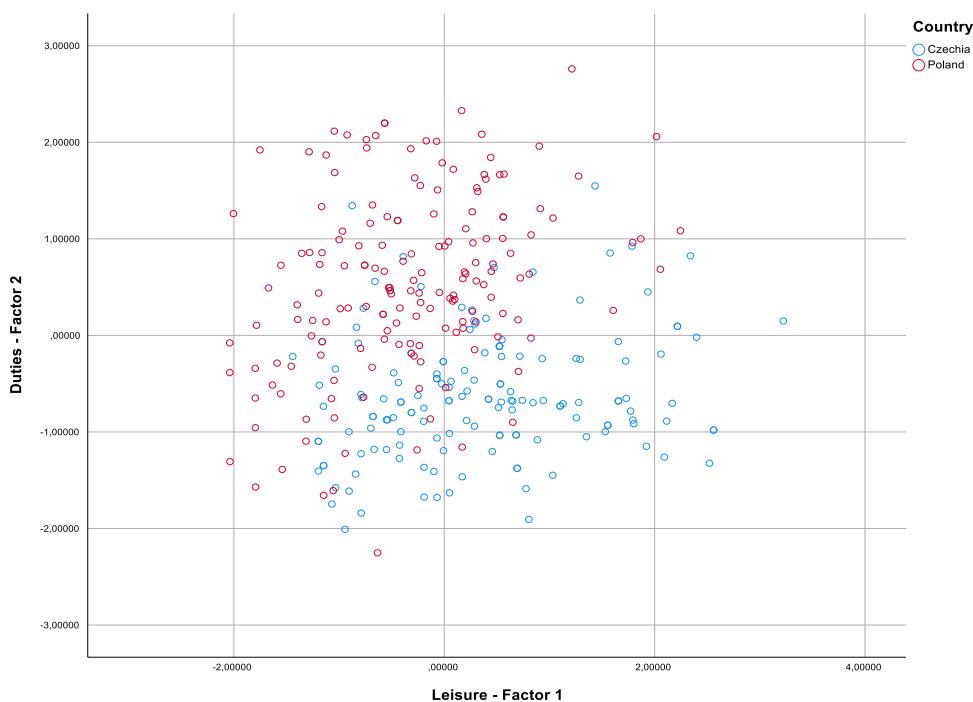


Figure 1. Location of respondents relative to factors 1 and 2 by country  
Source: own data

*Figure 1* elucidates the positioning of respondents concerning non-work activities (factors), categorized by country. The x-axis denotes leisure activities, while the y-axis represents duty-related activities. Marks for Czech respondents are denoted in blue and those for Poland in red. Despite some intermingling of mark clouds assigned to individuals from each country, a concentration is discernible at the centre of the chart. Notably, disparities in duty-related activities (factor 2) are pronounced, with most Czechs recording negative values, signifying less frequent engagement in such activities compared to the average. Conversely, among Poles, instances of duty-related activities with values above zero are more prevalent, indicating a higher frequency than among Czechs. Thus, it can be inferred that Poles engage in duty-related activities more frequently than their Czech counterparts. In the context of leisure activities, differences are less stark, yet positive values in this factor are more common among Czechs, whereas negative values are more frequent among Poles. While the mixing of mark clouds is more significant in this dimension, it is noteworthy that strongly negative values for

leisure activities are prevalent among Poles, while strongly positive values are characteristic of Czechs. Therefore, distinctions in this dimension are also apparent between respondents of the two countries.

A noteworthy observation is that Poles predominantly occupy the upper left quarter (positive values for duty-related activities and negative values for leisure activities), suggesting that duty-related activities often come at the expense of leisure activities. Conversely, the lower right quarter, encompassing instances of more frequent leisure activities with limited engagement in duty-related activities, is predominantly occupied by Czechs.

To substantiate the observed differences between Poles and Czechs in both categories of non-work activities, a Student's *t*-test was conducted for each indicator, determined by factor assessments of individual respondents, in two independent samples. The analysis reveals that respondents' nationality significantly impacts the frequency of leisure activities,  $t(299.2) = 6.521$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ; 95% CI (0.482; 0.899);  $d = 0.94$ . The average value of the leisure activities indicator for Czechs ( $M = 0.36$ ;  $SD = 1.01$ ) is statistically significantly higher than for Poles ( $M = -0.33$ ;  $SD = 0.87$ ). In the ANOVA analysis the difference in the values of averages appeared to be statistically significant  $F(1, 319) = 43,214$ ;  $p < 0,001$ . The effect (Cohen's  $d = 0.94$ ) indicates a strong relationship between the country and the frequency of engaging in leisure activities (Cohen, 1992).

Similarly, analyses were conducted using a Student's *t*-test for two independent samples of duty-related activities, revealing the influence of nationality on their undertaking,  $t(300.88) = -13.12$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ; 95% CI (-1,345; -0,994);  $d = 0,81$ . The average value of the duty-related activity indicator is statistically significantly lower for Czechs ( $M = -0.62$ ;  $SD = 0.65$ ) than for Poles ( $M = 0.55$ ;  $SD = 0.93$ ). The ANOVA analysis revealed statistically significant difference between groups  $F(1, 319) = 165,948$ ;  $p < 0,001$ . The effect (Cohen's  $d = 0.81$ ) indicates a strong relationship between the frequency of carrying out duty-related activities and the country. Both analyses incorporated variance inequality correction. The confirmation of differences between respondents' nationality and the aggregated values of indicators, determined by factor loadings, both graphically and statistically, enables detailed analyses of variations in relation to all component variables, facilitating a thorough quantitative exploration.

#### 4 Discussion and conclusions

The conducted analyses represent an empirical application of Inglehart's transformation concept from materialist to post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1977; Inglehart et al., 1998), critically modified by Ziółkowski (2000). Focused on the values related to leisure and activity management in generation 55+, this study theoretically divided them into materialist duty-related values and post-materialist values, emphasising personal development, self-expression, and quality of life. The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) validated the theoretical assumptions by isolating two factors, one related to leisure activities and the other to duty-related activities, from the nine analyzed items.

The statistical assignment of these components to factors aligns with the theoretical assumption that Poland and Czechia differ in economic development and wealth, influencing their value systems (Rabusic & Chromková Manea, 2018; Swadźba, 2013) and the frequency of undertaking duty and leisure activities. The scatter plot analysis reinforces these distinctions, particularly in the homogeneity of quadrants showing above-average engagement in duty-related activities and below-average engagement in leisure activities, predominantly by Poles. Statistical confirmation through Student's *t*-tests justifies the claim that the Czech generation 55+ is more inclined toward leisure activities, while Polish counterparts are more likely to

perform duty-related activities, substantiating the assumption of distinct value systems regarding non-work activities.

Summarily, the study highlights both similarities and differences in the non-work activities of the generation 55+ in Poland and the Czech Republic. The study underscores a variety of activities in the examined countries, as explored in existing literature (Zamarro, 2020; Esgin Gunder et al., 2014; Licen et al., 2019; Sanchez-Santos et al., 2022; Ghența et al., 2022). Comparative international investigations have highlighted the influence of cultural conditions and value systems on the selection of activities (Van Tienoven et al., 2020). Our examination of two proximate societies reveals both commonalities and distinctions in non-work activities, underscoring the pivotal role of the cultural factor. Through the exploration of two research questions, we illuminate parallels and divergences.

The initial research inquiry delved into duty-related activities, with a focus on the involvement of generation 55+ in caring for their grandchildren in both surveyed countries. This responsibility is predominantly shouldered by women, aligning with stereotypically accepted roles (Pratt et al., 2008; Zamarro, 2020). This childcare is commonly rendered without monetary compensation, mirroring analogous trends in various countries (Kalbarczyk, 2021; Di Gessa et al., 2022). However, a nuanced distinction emerges in the frequency of childcare provision. Polish women exhibit a more systematic dedication to assisting their adult children, while Czech women engage in this role more sporadically. Research indicates a more equitable distribution of grandchild care responsibilities across genders in the Czech Republic. This variance could be attributed to a heightened degree of individualism and the significance of post-materialist values in Czech society, as opposed to the greater traditionalism and emphasis on materialist values in Polish society (Rabusic & Chromková Manea, 2018; Swadźba, 2013; Swadźba, 2022).

The second duty-related endeavour, entailing the care of sick or disabled family members, manifests with subtle variations across the examined communities. Polish women exhibit a higher propensity for tending to family members, particularly the elderly or infirm, in comparison to Polish men, investing considerable time and effort in this responsibility. In contrast, Czech society portrays a more equitable distribution of this duty between genders. This disparity suggests a greater emphasis on materialist values in Polish society, where gender roles traditionally dictate responsibilities. Nevertheless, in both scrutinized communities, family care for sick and disabled members predominates over institutionalized care, especially concerning the elderly (Bom et al., 2019).

The culminating duty-related activity, involving religious observance and participation in church and other religious activities, undeniably falls within the purview of the Polish populace. Religious engagements, entwined with materialist values, are notably more prevalent in Poland than in Czechia, a distinction rooted in historical conditions and the enduring influence of traditional values within Polish society (Swadźba, 2013; Rabusic & Chromková Manea, 2018). Czech society, by contrast, predominantly espouses atheistic tendencies (Furstova et al., 2021). Remarkably, religious activity, a trait shared by both Polish and Czech women, distinguishes itself in this realm. In addressing the research question, it becomes evident that duty-related activities find more resonance among women, with Polish women displaying notable involvement. The disparity in the proclivity for duty-related activities between the two nations underscores a robust presence of post-materialist values in the social consciousness of Czechs, juxtaposed against the prevalence of materialist values in the psyche of the Polish population.

To address the second research question, an analysis of six activities was conducted. The initial activity, institutional engagement, revealed a greater involvement of Czech respondents. Czech women demonstrated heightened activity beyond their immediate

surroundings. In contrast, Poles are not so much involved in this kind of activities, possibly stemming from the comparatively family-centric focus of Poles, especially Polish women, who direct their assistance outside the family to a lesser extent, notably in volunteering. This discrepancy suggests that Polish women adhere more closely to traditional social roles, whereas Czech women exhibit a more contemporary orientation. This contrast is particularly notable in volunteering and U3A activities, prevalent in Western European countries (Licen et al., 2019; Cameron et al., 2020; Palaz, 2021).

Czech women further distinguish themselves by a greater propensity for self-investment in cultural and tourism activities. Their increased engagement in such pursuits aligns with lifestyle and values akin to Western European societies (Omelan et al., 2016; Patterson & Balderas-Cejudo, 2022; Ghența et al., 2022). The divergence extends to personal activities, where Czechs exhibit more involvement in travel, socializing with friends, and, to a certain extent, sports, compared to their Polish counterparts. Socializing with friends and acquaintances, rather than family, among both Czech men and women signifies an inclination towards post-materialist values. Notably, the divergence in duty and leisure activities is more pronounced among women, with Czech women leaning towards leisure activities and showing lesser involvement in duties compared to Polish women.

In examining the concept of activation in generation 55+, work activation is commonly perceived as paramount (WHO, 2002; Lamura & Principi, 2019; Raab, 2020; Rašticová et al., 2020; Swadźba, 2022). However, our analyses underscore the significant role of non-work activation, affirming previous research findings. Non-work activation has multifaceted functions in the generation 55+.

Duty-related activation, specifically in caring for the younger generation, holds both economic and social dimensions. While the economic aspect, facilitating the younger generation's ability to work and earn money, is frequently discussed in scientific circles, the social and psychological dimensions are equally crucial (Kalbarczyk, 2021; Di Gessa et al., 2022). The younger generation needs the help of their parents in caring for the grandchildren to have more time to work and earn money. On the other hand, caring for grandchildren allows older individuals to feel needed, fosters intergenerational contacts, and facilitates the transfer of accumulated knowledge to younger family members. Similarly, assuming responsibility for elderly or disabled family members alleviates burdens on state institutions and other family members, with these caregiving functions being predominantly fulfilled by women, as corroborated by prior studies (Bom et al., 2019).

Leisure activation among the 55+ generation serves several vital functions encompassing health, mental well-being, and social aspects. The promotion of activities that sustain and enhance physical, mental, and intellectual fitness is imperative (Omelan et al., 2016; Ghența et al., 2022). Our research underscores the role of age-appropriate sports, cultural engagement, and tourism in fulfilling these functions. These activities not only contribute to social connections but also position tourism as a pivotal element in the activation process, especially with increasing societal wealth (Gierszewski & Kluzowicz, 2021). The aspirations of the surveyed Czech and Polish generation 55+ align with those of Western societies (Gierszewski & Kluzowicz, 2021; Kolasińska & Sporek, 2021).

In conclusion, activation among generation 55+ significantly contributes to improved quality of life and holds promise for successful ageing. Acknowledging this challenge is paramount for policymakers, as the growing number of individuals in the 55+ demographic, coupled with generational replacement, necessitates infrastructure and services tailored to their evolving needs. Through purposeful activity, the older generation can enhance life satisfaction and overall quality, demanding adaptation of public economic and social structures to address the dynamic demographic landscape and support the activation of the generation 55+.

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