



Positive and negative life events and well-being across age groups

Lj. Kaliterna Lipovčan, A. Brajša-Žganec, Z. Prizmić Larsen,
R. Franc and I. Sučić





Croatian Longitudinal Study on Well-Being

- ❑ Research project funded by Croatian Science Foundation
- ❑ Two major goals:
 - a) to determine stability of well-being through time and whether patterns of change are different among different people
 - b) to determine if well-being, other than being an indicator of good life, can also be considered as predictor for positive life outcomes
- ❑ On-line longitudinal research, four-waves panel survey
- ❑ Subjects: 18 + internet users in Croatia
- ❑ Collects the data on socio-demographic variables, personality traits, different components of well-being, affect regulation strategies and life events

Well-being, life events & age

- ↘ *Life events across adulthood*: Older age is associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing negative events. However, older adults show ability to maintain emotional well-being despite experiencing relatively more losses than gains.
- ↘ *On average, emotional well-being is maintained and even improves across adulthood* : It is explained by **socioemotional selectivity theory** (Carstensen, 2006): having a limited future time perspective, with advanced age, people tend to maximize positive affect and/or minimize negative affect.

Aims of the presentation

- ↘ The study is examining age differences in the frequency of positive and negative events, and its associations with well-being:
- 1) to explore the frequency of positive and negative life events reported over the last year among young, middle-aged and older adults
 - 2) to analyze the associations between frequency of positive/good and negative/bad life events with life satisfaction as a measure of cognitive component of well-being and with positive and negative affect as measures of affective component of well-being across three age groups

Method

Participants

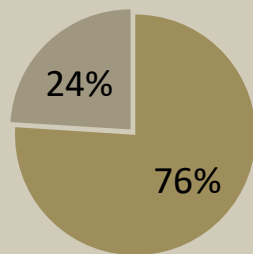
- Adult internet users in Croatia

N= 5019

Age:

M=35.3 SD=11.99 range 18-85 years

Gender:



■ Female ■ Male

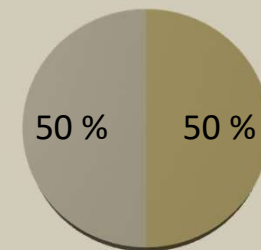
Education:

	%
Elementary	0.6
High school	42.7
Bachelor's degree	47.3
Doctoral degree	9.4

Income in Euro:

	%
< 268	18.0
269-672	50.7
673-1613	27.1
> 1614	4.2

Marital status:



■ Married/relationship. ■ Others

- Age groups:

	Young N=2115	Middle-aged N=2517	Older N=387
Age: Mean (SD)	24.4 (3.44)	40.5 (6.69)	61.0 (5.34)
Range	18-30 years	31-54 years	55-85 years

Measures

- **Life satisfaction (LS):**

“Taken all together, how satisfied are you with your life?”

0 (Not at all) - 10 (Completely satisfied)

- **Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE-P; SPANE-N):**

“How often did you experience these feelings over the past month?”

0 (Never) - 7 (Always)

6 positive feelings: positive, good, pleasant, happy, joyful, contented

6 negative feelings: negative, bad, unpleasant, sad, afraid, angry

- **Positive and Negative life events** (GoodLE; BadLE):

- 69 life events covering repertoires from family, work, health, leisure activities and legal areas of one's life (adapted Leist et al. 2010)

“Check list if the event occurred during the past year: Yes No”

If it occurred than ratings:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| a) How positive was the event? | 0 (Not at all) | 10 (Completely) |
| b) How negative was the event? | 0 (Not at all) | 10 (Completely) |

GoodLE (8 items): falling in love, romantic relationship, friendship, club membership, vacation, touristic travel, volunteering, new activity

BadLE (7 items): financial loss, injury, illness of close person, cheating, lost documents, hospitalization or treatment, calamity

Frequency and percentage of these events were used for analyses. The events were selected to be comparable across age groups.

Method

Procedure

- an on-line survey consisted of a comprehensive battery of questionnaires - 30 min

www.sreca.hr

(Happiness = Sreća)



Results

↘ Positive and Negative Life Events in the sample

	Positive Life Events (GoodLE)	Negative Life Events (BadLE)
Frequency (range)	4671 (1-8)	2167 (1-6)
M (SD) %	3.5 43.1 (21.72)	1.5 21.1 (10.99)
Ratings of positivity; M (SD)	8.6 (1.56)	1.1 (2.21)
Ratings of negativity; M (SD)	0.9 (1.60)	7.9 (2.67)

$r=.01$ *n.s.* % GoodLE > % BadLE $t=41.18$ $p<.01$

Results

↘ Descriptive (M,SD) for three age groups and F statistics

	Young M (SD)	Middle-aged M (SD)	Older M (SD)	ANOVA
Sum of GoodLE	4.0 (1.77)	3.1 (1.60)	2.7 (1.33)	F=223.84 ** Y>M>O
% GoodLE	50.2 (22.11)	38.2 (20.01)	33.2 (16.59)	
Sum of BadLE	1.5 (0.75)	1.5 (0.79)	1.5 (0.79)	F=0.10 n.s.
% BadLE	20.9 (10.67)	21.2 (11.22)	21.2 (11.2)	
LS	7.1 (1.94)	6.9 (2.06)	7.0 (2.07)	F=7.49 ** Y>M
SPANE-P	30.7 (6.69)	30.1 (6.73)	30.6 (6.78)	F=4.44 * Y>M
SPANE-N	20.7 (6.57)	19.9 (6.69)	17.9 (6.57)	F=32.56 ** Y>M>O

GoodLE= positive life events; BadLE= negative life events; LS= life satisfaction
 SPANE-P = positive feelings; SPANE-N= negative feelings; * p<.05; ** p<.01

↘ Hierarchical regression analyses: Predicting **Life satisfaction** (final model)

	Young (β)	Middle (β)	Older (β)
Gender	-.03	-.03	-.05
Marital status	-.06	-.22**	-.15
Income	.11**	.13**	.23**
Education	.04	.13**	.12
Sum of GoodLE	.17**	.17**	.15
Sum of BadLE	-.19**	-.17**	-.05
Multiple R	.30**	.40**	.37**

Gender: 1=female 2= male; Marital status: 1=married/relationship 2= other
 GoodLE= positive life events; BadLE= negative life events; ** p<.01

↘ Hierarchical regression analyses: Predicting Positive and Negative feelings (final model)

SPANE-Positive feelings

	Young (β)	Middle (β)	Older (β)
Gender	-.04	-.05	-.04
Marital status	-.10**	-.18**	-.17*
Income	.07*	.11**	.14
Education	-.01	.03	.01
Sum GoodLE	.18**	.23**	.21**
Sum BadLE	-.18**	-.16**	-.20**
Multiple R	.28**	.35**	.39**

SPANE-Negative feelings

	Young (β)	Middle (β)	Older (β)
Gender	-.12**	-.09**	-.05
Marital status	.06	.11**	.05
Income	-.07*	-.10**	-.14
Education	.02	.01	.04
Sum GoodLE	-.07*	-.10**	-.09
Sum BadLE	.17**	.18**	.23**
Multiple R	.24**	.28**	.30**

Gender: 1=female 2= male; Marital status: 1=married/relationship 2= other
 PosLE= positive life events; NegLE= negative life events;
 SPANE-P = positive feelings; SPANE-N = negative feelings; * p<.05; ** p<.01

Conclusions- main findings

- On average good events happened more often than bad events from the lists of 15 events (43% good and 21% bad events)
- Across the age groups young adults reported experiencing more good events over the last year than middle-aged and older adults
- No differences across the age groups in the frequency of bad events

Conclusions- main findings

- Frequency of life events did not have an impact on cognitive component of well-being for older adults as in other two age groups, however it had an impact on affective (hedonic) component of well-being which was similar across the age groups.
- Socioemotional selectivity theory might explain the finding. As adults age, they perceive remaining lifetime shorter so person shifts from orientation of growth (or finding meaning in a life) to maintenance of their emotional goals in maximizing positive and minimalizing negative emotional experiences.

**Old age isn't so bad; when
you consider alternatives.**

Maurice Chevalier