

The article studies the associations between fertility preferences and old age. Data for the study comes from the IPPAS database and covers the DIALOG countries in Europe. Along the progression of population ageing and increasing life span — currently 3.5-4 generations are living at the same time, instead of 1.5-2 generations before the onset of demographic transition — societies are finding themselves in a situation which calls for building the new bridges between generations. The analysis is set to identify population groups representing stronger as well as weaker ties across generations.

The article applies multivariate analysis on three indices of generational solidarity, constructed upon the IPPAS database: image of the elderly, family care and informal care. Two sets of models were estimated. The first set produced non-adjusted estimates for parity. The second set of models produced the estimates for parity adjusted for the effects of other covariates including sex, age, education, marital/partnership status, religiosity. Country-specific analysis as well as the analysis of countries combined together are presented. All three indices support the hypothesis that weaker ties are represented among childless and one-child oriented people while stronger ties can be found among those oriented to three children. In addition to general conclusion, there are also several differences between European countries, particularly because of fertility levels and preferences as well as ageing process vary from country to country.

European societies are facing the task of building bridges between generations and stages of life. At the individual level, life-course thinking should assume a greater role, while the role of the strategies oriented towards short-term goals and values should diminish. At the national level, reforms bringing various activities in societies corresponding to the new age distribution are envisaged.