

# Subjective poverty massively affects older people's health

February 21 2014, by Claudia Roth

---

Being objectively low income leads to poor health and a shorter life. This much we already knew. But poverty can also be a matter of subjectively feeling poor. WZB economist Maja Adena and her colleague Michal Myck (DIW Berlin and the Center for Economic Analysis, CenEA, Szczecin) have substantiated how the subjective assessment of being poor affects the health of the 50+ age group. A study of Germany and 11 other European countries shows that older people who assess themselves as poor get sick more often (38 per cent) and suffer more from health setbacks (48 per cent) than those who do not. The probability of dying earlier is also much higher – around 40 per cent for men in this age group.

The researchers differentiated between three types of poverty: income poverty, wealth poverty and subjective poverty. In addition to feeling [poor](#), wealth poverty also causes one's [health](#) to deteriorate. Someone over 50 who possesses little wealth gets sick significantly more often and recovers from an illness more slowly than someone who is better off. Income, on the contrary, doesn't make any difference regarding the health of subjects in this age group.

The study reveals that poverty manifests itself in different ways. The researchers found little overlap between the various forms of poverty: only eight per cent of the respondents were poor according to all three definitions (income, wealth and self-assessment). The authors therefore recommend against relying on relative income alone to measure poverty. Broader definitions of poverty are needed to accurately describe old age

[poverty](#) and its consequences.

The researchers used a representative survey of the 50+ population in Europe, the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE). They analyzed data from a repeat survey (panel), conducted between 2006 and 2012. Health was linked to four factors: the subjective self-assessed health status, symptoms of [poor health](#), limitations in performing activities of daily living, and mortality.

**More information:** "Poverty and Transitions in Health" is available online: [bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/2013/ii13-307.pdf](http://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/2013/ii13-307.pdf)

Provided by Berlin Social Science Center

Citation: Subjective poverty massively affects older people's health (2014, February 21)  
retrieved 4 May 2024 from  
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-02-subjective-poverty-massively-affects-older.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--