

# Patterns of intergenerational co-residence. Evidence from former socialist countries

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## Abstract

High intergenerational co-residence in Eastern Europe has been noticed by researchers and its levels are usually connected with a historical pattern of family formation with high incidence of extended/multigenerational households on the one hand, and the housing situation (availability and affordability) on the other hand. A closer look at the household and family contexts in the region shows, in terms of traditional household formation patterns, that a neolocal-nuclear household formation system was characteristic for Romania, and complex/multigenerational households had small proportions in other countries in the region, too (e.g. Bulgaria). The post-socialist housing crisis, brought by the privatization of the housing stock, the sharply decreasing rhythm of construction of new dwellings and drastic decrease in the purchasing power of population, may have been forcing young people to co-reside with their parents even after forming their own family. This argument holds especially for countries where the transition to the market economy was slow and difficult, such as Romania and Bulgaria. We use the Generations and Gender Survey data to investigate patterns of co-residence in several eastern European countries, from the perspective of the adult children who live with their parents. As previous studies showed, characteristics of both adult children and elderly parents matter. We investigate the effect of the opportunity and needs structure of the children (employment status, income, education) and of the parents (income, health status, home ownership) in determining co-residence. Our hypothesis is that the (adult) child's needs, especially in terms of inability to acquire individual housing, are the main trigger of co-residence.

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Co-residence is depicted in the literature as a **form of intergenerational solidarity**. It appears as an intense type of intergenerational support (Brandt, Haberkern and Szydlik 2009), a form of functional intergenerational support (providing a living space) (Isengard and Szydlik 2012), and even as the main form of intergenerational support in Southern Europe (Albertini, Kohli and Vogel 2007, Jappens and Van Bavel 2012). Co-residence as a form of intergenerational solidarity appears mainly in societies where the state takes less responsibility for its citizens (Isengard and Szydlik 2012, referring to the Southern European countries). Heylen et al. (2012) consider geographic proximity (in West) and co-residence (in East, referring to Bulgaria) as a latent form of solidarity that becomes a fundamental mediator for actual support in times of need.

Higher co-residence in the Southern European countries is usually linked with the strong family ties, as opposed to weak family ties in the North-West (Reher 1998). Hank (2007) refers to the national cultural characteristics, in terms of a nation's orientation toward private or public values, arguing that primary group ties are closer in the more private oriented societies from the South and East of Europe, hence a high incidence of co-residence, while social networks with more secondary relations (friends and neighbours) are more spread in the North and West, hence lower co-residence in these parts.

In general co-residence is addressed with a focus on Southern Europe, emphasizing the much higher incidence in comparison with Northern or Western countries. High intergenerational co-residence in Eastern Europe has been noticed, but usually it is not

investigated further. When authors try to offer an explanation though, they refer to two elements: a historical pattern of family formation with high incidence of extended/multigenerational households (De Jong Gierveld, De Valk and Blommesteijn 2002, De Jong Gierveld, Dykstra and Schenk 2012), on the one hand, and the housing situation (availability and affordability) on the other hand (De Jong Gierveld, De Valk and Blommesteijn 2002, Robila 2004, De Jong Gierveld, Dykstra and Schenk 2012).

In his closer look at the household and family contexts in the Balkans, Kaser (1996) shows, in terms of traditional household formation patterns, that a "neolocal-nuclear household formation system"<sup>1</sup> was characteristic for Romania. In Kaser's description, Bulgaria, for instance, was characterized by a "patrivirilocal-lifecycle complexity"<sup>2</sup>. Both Kaser (1996) and De Vos and Sandefur (2002, quoting Todorova 1996) draw attention that the neolocal-nuclear household pattern was common in Bulgaria, too, while complex/multigenerational households had small proportions.

Economic difficulties and uncertainties may increase co-residence not only in Eastern Europe. Isengard and Szydlik (2012) investigate how individual characteristics, family structures and cultural contexts influence the degree of intergenerational co-residence in 11 countries (from North, Western and Southern Europe). Their general conclusions are that co-residence is an important form of family solidarity in societies where the state takes less responsibility for its citizens; it is not the preferred living arrangement, but the economic pressure and uncertainties have great influence. Characteristics of both elderly parents and adult children matter (Kalmijn and Saraceno 2006, Isengard and Szydlik 2012). Adult child's employment status and level of education, as indicators for child's opportunity and needs structure, show that economic necessity from behalf of the child increases co-residence (De Jong Gierveld, De Valk and Blommesteijn 2002, Isengard and Szydlik 2012). Parents' home ownership and large size encourages co-residence, while parental health problems increase co-residence only when the parent doesn't have a partner (Isengard and Szydlik 2012). Smits, Van Gaalen and Mulder (2010) found that children's support needs are more important than those of the parents in determining co-residence.

Different life course transitions increase or decrease the likelihood of co-residence. Adult children who have a partner (and children) are less likely to live with their parents than adult children that are single (Kalmijn and Saraceno 2006, Isengard and Szydlik 2012); divorced or widowed children are more likely to co-reside than partnered ones (Smits, Van Gaalen and Mulder 2010); single parents are more likely to live with their mothers (Heylen et al. 2012 for Bulgaria), and widowhood on behalf of the elderly increases co-residence (Kalmijn and Saraceno 2006).

Our **aim** for this study is to have a detailed insight into co-residence issue in Eastern Europe, to investigate which characteristics of adult children and parents favor intergenerational co-residence. If we do not rely so much on the historical pattern of multigenerational households explanation in Eastern Europe, and keeping in mind other results that show that co-residence is not the preferred living arrangement - not even in Eastern Europe - but rather an adaptive strategy imposed by economic difficulties, we want to investigate what is the role of adult children's needs in determining co-residence and what is the role of parents' needs in the same process.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of marriage the boys received their equal shares of land, and left the parents' house in order to established separate residences. The youngest (or the oldest) remained with his parents (Kaser 1996: 381).

<sup>2</sup> When the boys married, their wives came to live with them and their parents; the separation and the transmission of property into equal parts took place upon the death of the father or upon the marriage of all boys (Kaser 1996: 381).

## Data and method

We use for our investigation the Generations and Gender Survey data. We study the adult children's perspective on intergenerational co-residence, so we select from the original sample only persons that have at least one parent alive.

The dependent variable is whether the adult children co-reside with the parent(s). First we distinguish only between person who co-reside with their parent(s) and those who do not, using binary logistic regression models. Then we distinguish between two types of co-residence: the child has never left parental home and the child has ever left parental home (and later came back or he/she took the parent(s) into their home - with GGS data we are not able to make this distinction). In this case, we study the effect of adult children's and parents' characteristics on co-residence with parents by means of multinomial logistic regression.

## Results

We run the analysis for Romania and Bulgaria for the moment, but we plan to add other former socialist countries.

Table 1 presents the working sample sizes and several characteristics of the sample for the two countries.

	<b>ROMANIA</b>	<b>BULGARIA</b>
Sample	6679	9129
% co-residing with 1 parent	11,3	13,5
% co-residing with 2 parents	12,9	23,4
% co-residing with partner/spouse's parent(s)	4,2	5,9
% never left parental home	19,7	21,9
% ever left parental home	4,5	13,6

As expected, being in a partnership status other than marriage increases the odds of co-residence (Table 2), the highest in case of not being married, but also for divorced or widowed. Education has different effects in the two countries: higher education lowers the odds of co-residence in Romania, while the opposite holds for Bulgaria. Compared with employed persons, those not working and those retired have higher odds of co-residence. The more small children a person has, the lower the chances to be in co-residence. The higher the ages, the lower the chances for co-residence, too. Men have higher odds of co-residing with their parents, and the higher the income the higher the odds of co-residence.

Regarding parents' characteristics, persons with only one parent alive show higher odds of living together with them than persons with both parents alive. Parents' disabilities increase the odds for co-residence. In Bulgaria, only mother's disabilities matter. And the more rooms in the house, the higher the chances of co-residence.

Table 2. Results of logistic regression models, odds ratios for co-residence

Covariates		Romania		Bulgaria	
Marital status	Married (ref)	1		1	
	Never married	19,26	***	11,89	***
	Divorced	9,3	***	6,53	***
	Widow	4,15	***	2,01	***
Education	Low (ref)	1		1	
	Medium	0,9		1,61	***
	High	0,41	***	1,54	***
Employment status	Not working	1,24	**	1,52	***
	Retired	1,17		1,93	***
	Employed (ref)	1		1	
Co-resident children aged 0-7	No children aged 0-7 (ref)	1		1	
	One child aged 0-7	0,55	***	0,48	***
	Two or more	0,29	***	0,31	***
Age group	Below 30 (ref)	1		1	
	30-49 years	0,3	***	0,42	***
	40-49 years	0,11	***	0,23	***
	50 plus	0,11	***	0,23	***
Gender	Man	2,6	***	2,23	***
	Woman (ref)	1		1	
Income		1,3	***	1,2	***
Alive	Only mother alive	2,59	***	1,74	***
	Only father alive	1,73	***	1,21	
	Both alive	1		1	
Disabilities	Both have disabilities	1,55	**	1,15	
	Mother has disabilities	1,89	***	1,43	***
	Father has disabilities	2,15	***	1,01	
	None have disabilities	1		1	
Number of rooms		2,12	***	1,79	***
Place of residence	Urban	0,56	**	0,92	
	Rural	1		1	
Pseudo R square		0,547		0,507	

Source: GGS databases, author's calculations.

Note: \*\*\* significant at 1% level; \*\* significant at 5% level; \* significant at 10% level

These effects point to the need of further investigation, distinguishing between situations of co-residence. Adult children may live with their parents as they never left parental home, or they may have returned later in their life into their parents' home or they may took their elderly parents to live with them. We do this distinction and results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of multinomial logistic regression models, odds ratios for co-residence (with non-co-residence as the reference category for the dependent variable)

Covariates		Never left parental home				Ever left parental home			
		Romania		Bulgaria		Romania		Bulgaria	
Education	Low	3,36***		1,15		1,02		0,34***	
	Medium	2,75***		1,40***		1,25		0,83*	
	High (ref)	1		1		1		1	
Employment status	Not working	1,29**		1,55***		1,09		1,44***	
	Retired	0,93		1,46		1,66*		2,12***	
	Employed (ref)	1		1		1		1	
Disabilities	Both have disabilities	1,35		1,31		2,53***		1,10	
	Mother has disabilities	1,77***		1,50**		2,21***		1,26	
	Father has disabilities	1,90***		0,93		3,25***		1,12	
	None have disabilities (ref)	1		1		1		1	

Source: GGS databases, author's calculations.

Note: Controlled for gender, age group, marital status, number of children aged 0-7, income, number of rooms, place of residence

Note: \*\*\* significant at 1% level; \*\* significant at 5% level; \* significant at 10% level

Regarding persons who never left parental home, we see that adult's children's needs play an important role: the lower the education, the higher the odds of co-residence, and not working also increase co-residence. Parents' needs are important as well, but in Bulgaria only mother's disabilities matter.

Regarding persons who ever left parental home, we find different results for Romania and Bulgaria. In Romania, being retired and parents' disabilities matter; it looks like adult children took their ill parent(s) to live with them at one point in their life. In Bulgaria, higher education, not working or being retired increase co-residence, while parents' disabilities show no effect.

## Conclusions

We found that family structure, both children's and parents', is important in the process of co-residence: low co-residence for married adult children's and when there are (small) children present and low co-residence when both parents are alive. The needs, both adult children's and parents', are important determinants of co-residence. When they never left parental home,

low education and inactivity increase co-residence, as well as parents' disabilities, which means that both parties' needs are important. When they ever left, in Romania the parents' needs are important (disabilities), as well as adult children's time availability to take care of the parent(s) (being retired). In Bulgaria, parents' needs do not matter (disabilities).

Co-residence is a complex phenomenon that needs further investigation, as well as comparisons among more countries.

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