

For Continuing a Fulfilling Life of Older People 75+

Findings from *Five-year Longitudinal Study on a Daily Life of Older People*

Daily Life of Older People 75+ Living Alone or with a Spouse Only

July 2009

ILC-Japan

Five Year Longitudinal Study on a Daily Life of Older People

International Longevity Center-Japan (ILC-Japan) was founded in 1990 with the aim of promoting researches on aging issues from an interdisciplinary viewpoint, as well as developing education and advocacy. Since then we have been making efforts to realize aged society where all the generations support one another and live an active life in collaboration with the eleven ILC sister centers in the world.

Due to drastic advance of low-fertility and aging in Japan, the ratio of older people aged 65 or older is estimated to surpass 25% in 2015 and 35% in 2050. Under such a situation, it has become more and more important for older people to live independently as long as possible; above all for older people “living alone” or “living with a spouse only” significantly increasing recently in Japan to live a fulfilling life.

What is supporting life of older people aged 75 or older, which they have stored up to now and still continues at present? Our intention was to learn from older people aged 75 or older, retrace their profile and also pursue definite guidelines in aging society. Accordingly the 5-year longitudinal study was carried out about comprehensive daily life of older people aged 75 or older in the field of ‘activities,’ ‘health,’ ‘economy,’ ‘family,’ ‘housing,’ ‘community’ and ‘information.’

This report is summarized so that general public but for professionals could easily read. Please look into the website of ILC-Japan or study report for further information.

Research Implementation:

(This study is supported by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.)

Study population:

300 physically independent males and females aged 75-79 years old, living alone or living with a spouse only in the Tokyo metropolitan area

Period:

From 2004 through 2008

Research Committee:

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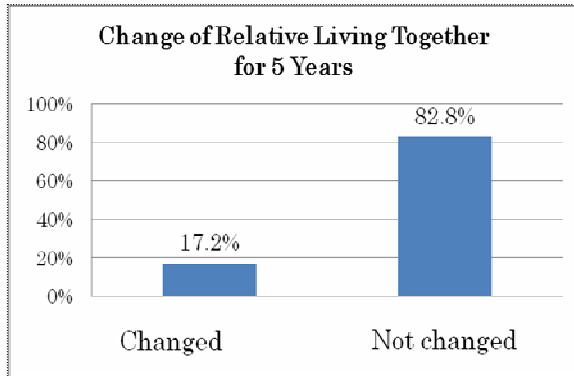
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What Is Life after 75 Like?

In this survey, 300 persons aged 75 or older cooperated annually with the interview about their daily life for 5 consecutive years (2004-2008). Lots of changes appeared in their life for the 5 years.

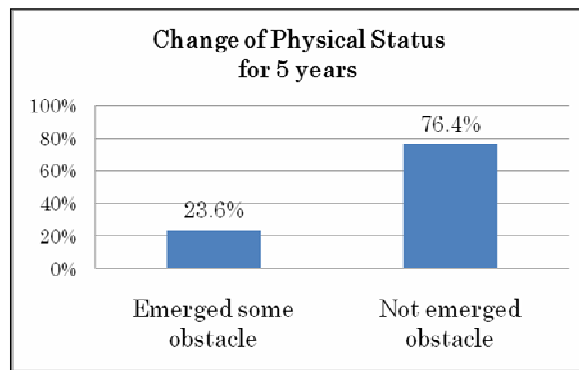
◆ There were changes in about 17% cohabitants.

(The rate of the persons who had some change: for instance, from 'living with a spouse only' at first to 'living alone' or 'living with a child.' Covered are those who cooperated the interview for the 5 consecutive years.)

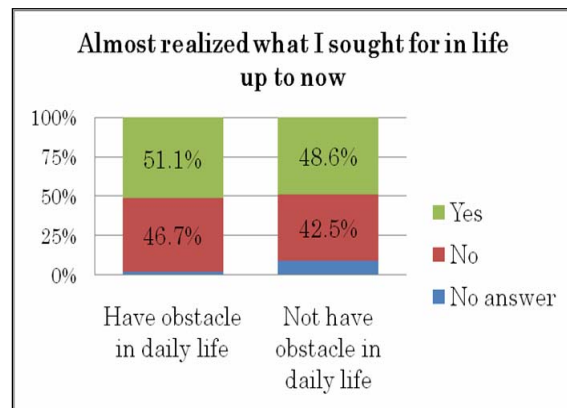
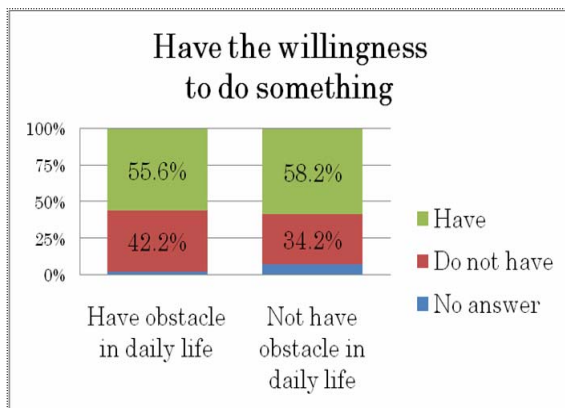


◆ Some obstacle emerged in about 24% persons' daily life.

(The total rate of 'Those who answered they had at least one problem in IADL or ADL,' and 'those who received certification of long-term care need' during the 5 years.)



◆ No significant change was found in "satisfaction in life" or "positive willingness" even after some obstacle emerged in daily life.



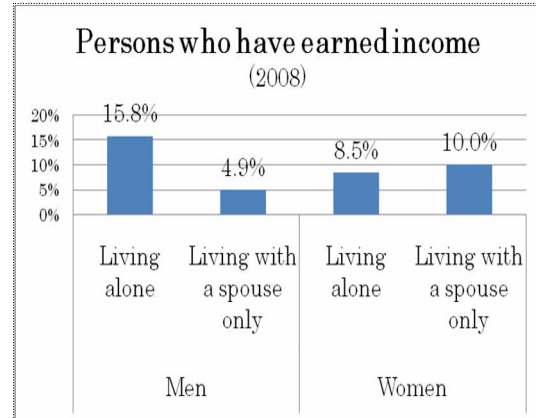
(“Do you think you have realized what you sought for in life up to now?” “Are you willing to do something in future, or wish to be of help for something?” 2008)

Features of Life in Accordance with Household Type

It is one of the aims of the survey to illustrate features in the four cases of 'Men living alone,' 'Women living alone,' 'Men living with a spouse only,' and 'women living with a spouse only.' Tendency in comparison with different type of households have taken shape as follows.

Men living alone

- Many persons are in work.
- Many persons have trouble in going out or going shopping.
- They go out quite frequently.
- A good many persons are isolated.
- They don't pay careful attention to healthy lifestyle or meals.
- They are not very sensitive about a trifle.
- They tend to have a fall quite often.



Distinctive features in comparison with other household type:

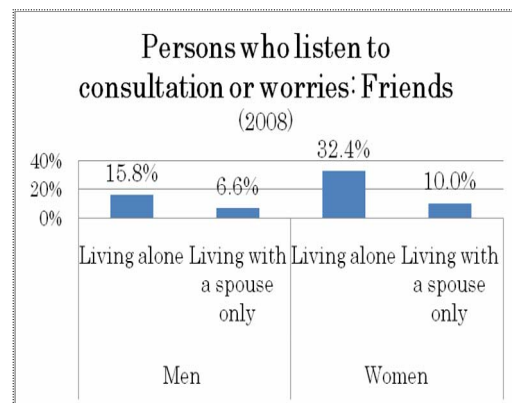
Quite a few persons answered as follows: 'Earn an income from labors,' 'Ride a bike more than 4 times a week,' 'Have no person who listens to my worries or troubles,' 'Take no breakfast,' 'Pay no attention to high intake of salt,' 'Have a fall frequently,' 'Have lost weight.'

Inter-annual changes over a 5 year period:

Decrease in 'IADL, going out and shopping,' increase in 'Going to educational or cultural facilities,' and decrease in 'sensitive about a trifle.'

Women living alone

- Annual income is low.
- Many decided to live alone on their own, and wish to continue live alone in future.
- They have many friends who listen to their worries or troubles.
- Quite a few began to feel some obstacle when they went out during the 5 years.
- Frequency of going to hospital was on the increase.



Distinctive features in comparison with other household type:

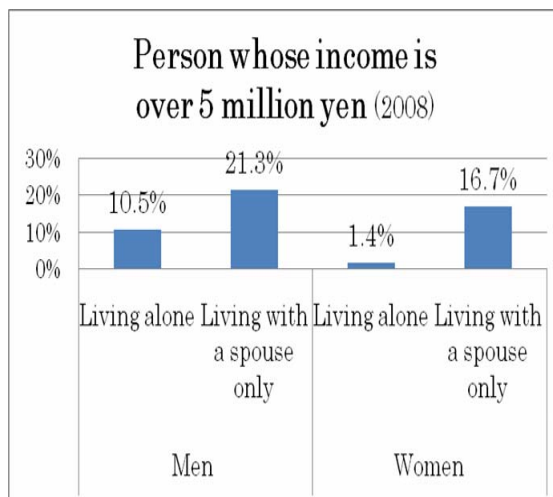
'Annual income is less than 1.2 million yen.' 'Decided to live alone on my own,' 'Wish to keep living alone.' 'Have many persons or friends who listen to their worries or troubles.'

Inter-annual changes over a 5 year period:

Increase in 'Received certification of long-term care need. Declining in 'IADL, going out by train or bus, daily outing,' and increase in 'Frequency of going to hospital in the past year.'

Men living with a spouse only

- Quite a few have an affluent life.
- The level of satisfaction with their spouse is high.
- They often tell worries or troubles to their spouse.
- Those who had some trouble in going out were on the increase for the 5 years.
- Level of satisfaction with life was declining.
- They tend to go to hospital more frequently than before.
- The number of people who received certification of long-term care need was on the increase.
- They are liable to count on a spouse.



Distinctive features in comparison with other household type:

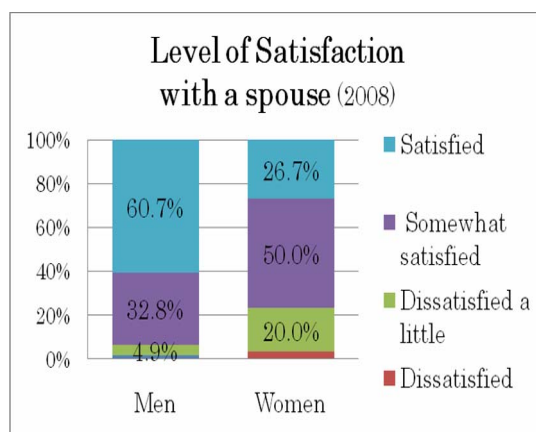
Quite a few persons: 'are satisfied with a spouse,' 'tell worries and troubles to their spouse,' and 'earn more than 5 million yen annually.'

Inter-annual changes over a 5 year period:

IADL of going out by train or bus or daily outing were on the decrease. 'Those who received certification of long-term care need,' 'frequency of hospitalization in the past year,' and 'those who are worried about little things recently,' were on the increase. The ratio of 'those who are satisfied with life' was on the decrease.

Women living with a spouse only

- The level of satisfaction with their spouse is low.
- Many have life of fulfillment.
- Many feel attached to where they live now.
- Many are worried about long-term care for their spouse in future.
- About 31% changed from "living with a husband" to 'living alone' during the 5 years.
- Many started to feel some trouble in outing during the 5 years.
- Those who received certification of long-term care need were on the increase.



Distinctive features in comparison with other household type:

A few women are 'satisfied with a husband.' Many think they 'could realize what they sought for in life.' Also, many of them 'feel attached to where they live now,' and 'are worried about long-term care for a husband.' About 31% changed from "living with a husband" to 'living alone' during the 5 years.

Inter-annual changes over a 5 year period:

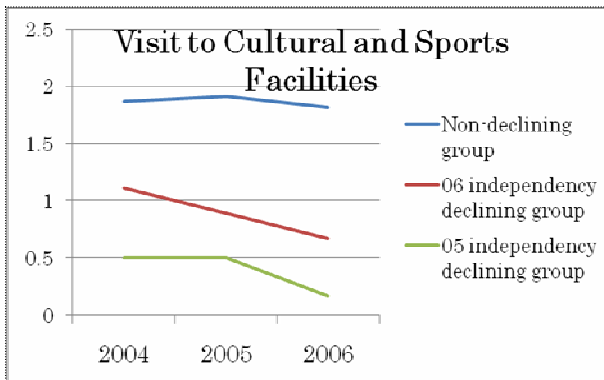
Those who 'received certification of long-term care need,' and 'pay attention to salt intake' were on the increase. Declining level of IADL was the lowest of the four household type.

Findings from Analysis

In the survey, interviews were conducted annually based on the questionnaire for the 5 years, and the results were analyzed. A part of the findings is introduced below.

Going out to enjoy culture, art and exercise is important.

- People who began to face obstacle in daily life such as outing by public transportation like train or bus, daily shopping, etc. visited less frequently 'events in the culture halls or theaters,' 'museums or libraries' and 'pool or sports facilities even one year before when they had had no obstacle.



A fall tends to be repetitive.

- People who had a fall in the past are liable to repeat it.
- Since injury caused by a fall needs comparatively long-term treatment for older people 75 or older, it greatly influences upon ADL. Measures not to prevent a fall again are essential.

People who experienced a fall in the past year have a risk of fall 3,37 times higher than that of the others.

(In a comparison between presence or absence of a fall in 2004 and 2005, odds ratio)

There are many active persons among those who had their house remodeled.

- Examining the breakdown of those who had "remodeling or repair" and those who did not, we found in the former group many active persons who had no obstacle in daily life and also took action for 'aging in place.'

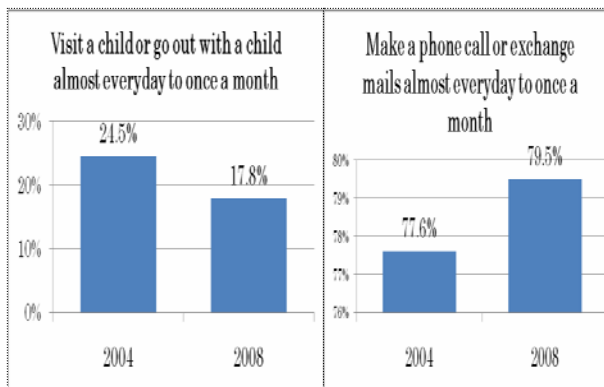
Ratio of people with no obstacle in daily life among those who had their house remodeled more than twice: 8/11 persons (72.7%)

Ratio of people with no obstacle in daily life among those who did not have their house remodeled: 50/114 persons (43.8%)

(An inquiry among householders from 2005 through 2008. 'Remodeling' here includes not 'remodeling especially for older people, like installing handrails or barrier-free floor, but general remodeling.)

Occasions to visit a child were on the decrease, while phone calls or exchanging mails was on the increase.

- 'Visiting a child or outing with a child' was on the decrease, while 'talking over the phone or exchanging mails' was on the increase.
- Phone call and e-mail, neither of which requires to move, has become a supplement or alternative.



Findings from Additional Interviews

Additional interviews for the details were conducted with the respondents who had cooperated with the survey. They told us valuable stories.

Those who maintain a fulfilled life even in need of care bear firm pose, pride, muscular habit with a casual support and a certain measure of economic base.

- The common points were: pride that they had built through life, to move as much as possible even with little help, and a certain stable economic base, especially assuring settled housing.

“I have not had a tendency to count on some one else throughout my life.”

“My son takes me shopping by car on holidays.”

“I walk to fish and grocery stores on my stick.”

“All the same, we would rather own a house.”

Activities in the community lead to new activities

- Work, amusement, volunteer activities, etc. in the local community tend to last long.
- By continuing activities, a network of activity fellows expands. The network enhances chances to start new activities.
- Some older persons over 75 have started new activities, encouraged by close acquaintances.

“I thought it might be important to rise to the bait of community people.”

“I have such good fellows. They tell me how to do.”

“I started a volunteer activity recently. (First it started in the next town,) so in here, too.”

Older people tend to change medical institutions frequently.

- All the respondents experienced some change of medical institutions.
- The causes are: it became hard for them to go to hospital far away. The attending physician transferred to another hospital. The physician who had consulted with long time grew older.
- They often look for a new hospital only after they have got to change hospital.

“I had consulted with my personal physician for long years, but he passed away.”

“My personal physician gained a growing reputation, and became a practitioner (in another city).”

“It’s hard for me to go to hospital now because I have to go up and down a steep hill.”

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