

# The long arm of social classes: a longitudinal study of the social structuring of leisure activities in old-old age

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**TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AT BASELINE**

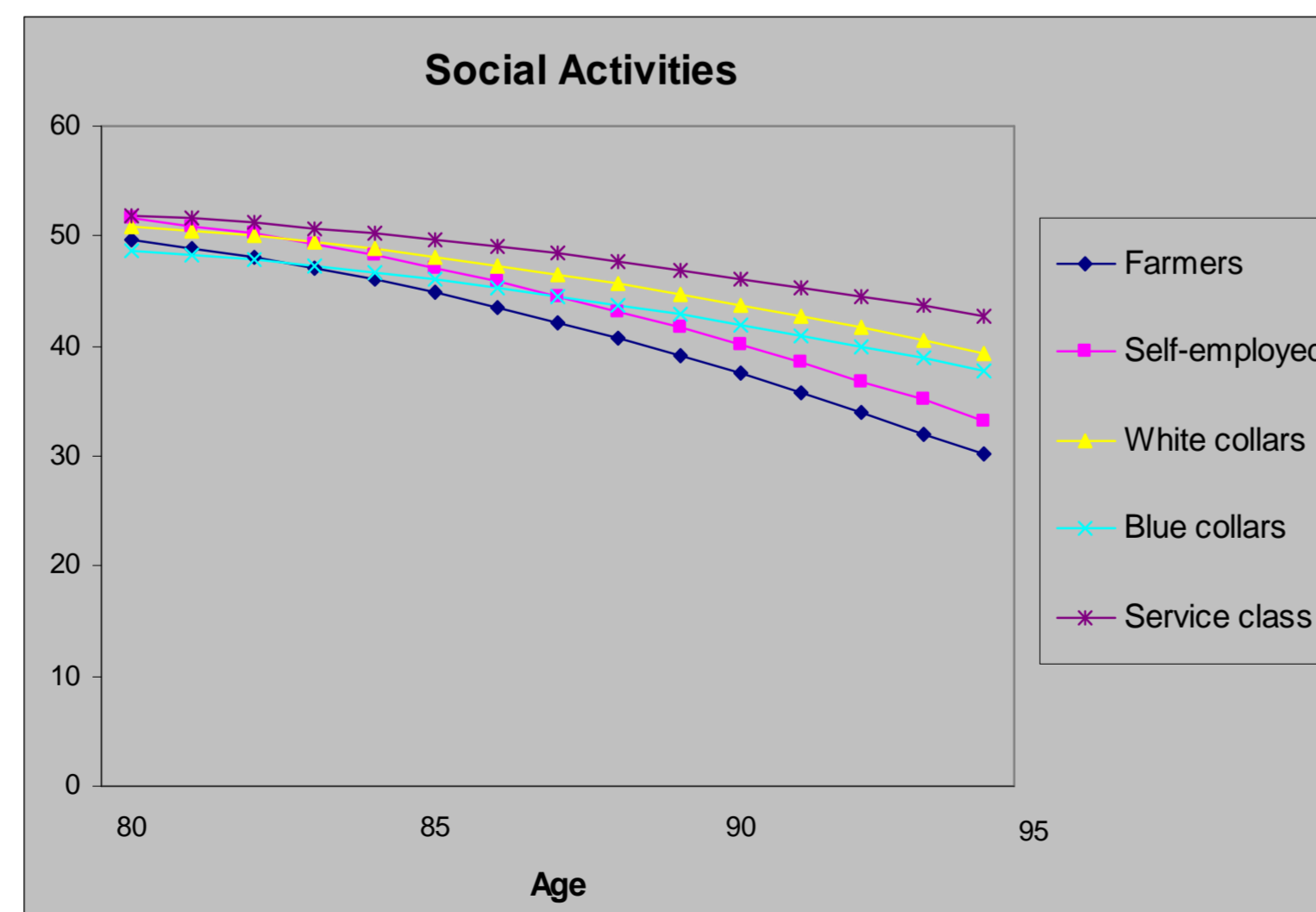
	Mean	SD	Range
Age (years)	84.22	2.68	[79.21-93.93]
Gender (women=1)	0.49	0.50	[0-1]
Region (metropolitan=1)	0.52	0.50	[0-1]
Robustness	0.44	0.50	[0-1]
Frailty (=reference group)	0.47	0.50	[0-1]
ADL-Dependence	0.09	0.29	[0-1]
Living with someone (yes=1)	0.51	0.50	[0-1]
To have a child (yes=1)	0.79	0.41	[0-1]
To have a sibling (yes=1)	0.66	0.47	[0-1]
To have an intimate friend (yes=1)	0.74	0.44	[0-1]
Farmers	0.09	0.29	[0-1]
Self-employed	0.18	0.38	[0-1]
White collars	0.18	0.38	[0-1]
Blue collars	0.23	0.42	[0-1]
Service class (=reference group)	0.32	0.47	[0-1]

**TABLE 2: TYPES OF ACTIVITIES BY SOCIAL CLASSES AND OTHER COVARIATES (multi-levels modelling)**

	Media	Leisure	Manual	External-Physical	Social	Religious
<i>Fixed effects</i>						
Intercept	52.59 ***	50.06 ***	51.30 ***	51.91 ***	52.03 ***	49.51 ***
Age	-0.13 **	-0.19	-0.53 ***	-0.07	-0.16 ***	-0.07
Farmers	-3.50 *	0.25	1.77	-3.64 *	-2.15	3.47 **
Self-employed	-3.58 **	1.67	-2.18	-0.72	-0.19	-0.47
White collars	-0.54	0.71	-2.27	0.13	-1.00	-0.33
Blue collars	-2.56 *	-0.13	1.49	-2.79 **	-3.20 **	1.53
Age*Farmers	0.02	-0.07	-0.07	-0.06	-0.09	-0.05
Age*Self-employed	0.10	-0.01	0.16	0.01	-0.08	-0.02
Age*White collars	-0.03	0.00	0.32	-0.15 *	-0.02	0.10
Age*Blue collars	-0.10	0.02	-0.12	-0.02	-0.03	0.08
Region (metropolitan)	-0.79	1.27	-2.82 **	-2.75 **	1.95 *	-7.77 ***
Gender (women)	1.07	1.84	0.14	-2.79 **	-1.45	3.88 ***
Age*Region	0.02	0.11	0.09	0.02	0.01	0.05
Age*Gender	-0.02	0.09	-0.12	0.04	0.02	0.08
Robustness	0.85 *	1.01 **	1.06 **	2.09 ***	1.82 ***	0.10
ADL-Dependence	-2.14 **	-1.55 *	-2.84 ***	-3.18 ***	-3.05 ***	0.23
Living with someone	0.95	0.50	1.31 *	-2.09 **	-1.31 *	-0.43
To have a child	0.54	1.65	2.23 **	0.46	1.00	0.10
To have a sibling	-1.21 *	0.16	0.02	0.37	-0.31	1.17 **
To have an intimate friend	0.82 *	0.54	0.16	0.61	1.45 **	-0.09

\*p.<0.05; \*\*p.<0.01; \*\*\*p.<0.001

**FIGURE 1: SOCIAL ACTIVITIES BY SOCIAL CLASSES ON AGE**



## QUESTIONS

- Are levels of activities in old-old age patterned by social classes?
- If yes, are these differences levelled with increasing age?

## DATA

The empirical data are issued from the Swiss Interdisciplinary Longitudinal Study on the Oldest Old (SWILSO-O) - an interdisciplinary study on aging in Switzerland. Two cohorts of octogenarians were assessed, the first one (N=340) for 9 waves from 1994 to 2004, and the second one (N=377) for 5 waves between 1999 and 2004. The starting samples of each cohort were stratified by sex and region (metropolitan vs semi-rural). The analyses were processed on the subsample of those living at home and directly interviewed (N=627 individuals; 2188 observations).

## INDICATORS AND ANALYSIS

➤ **Activities:** Participants were asked with which frequency they engaged in a total of 16 items. A factor analysis was computed to estimate composite activity scores: six mean indices of activities were constructed. To facilitate the interpretation of the results, we scaled the activity scores to the T metric (M=50; SD=10) at Wave 1 (for further details on operationalization, see Ghisletta, Bickel & Lövdén, 2006, *J. of G.*, 61B (5), P253-61).

➤ **Social classes:** Individuals were classified on the basis of their socio-professional status (or the one of their partner) in five categories: farmers, self-employed, white collars, blue collars and service class.

➤ **Other covariates:** Age (as centered on age 79); gender; region; health, distinguishing 3 statuses: robustness, frailty (=reference group), ADL-dependence; social networks: living with someone, to have a child, to have a sibling and to have an intimate friend.

➤ **Multi-level analyses** were computed for each type of activities. For 3 types of activities (religion, leisure, manual) the relationship with time was shown as linear, for the 3 other types as a curvilinear one (modelled as age<sup>1.5</sup>). For brevity, only the fixed effects are presented here (Table 2).

## CONCLUSIONS

- **For some types, social classes are associated with strong differences in level of activities:** the service class and white collar employees are more involved in outdoor activities and media-reading. The other types are socially homogeneous.
- **No levelling effect is observed**, even for the types of activities which are declining with age (see Fig. 1 for an illustration).
- **Women** have a lower level of external-physical activities, but a higher one in religion.
- In the **metropolitan area**, people are less active in 4 of the 6 types.
- Except for religion, **frailty** is associated with a lower level of practice.
- Results for the **personal network** indicators are mixed and thus in need of further inquiry; friendship appears more uniformly positively associated with levels of activities.