

EQUAL ACCESS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEN AND WOMEN TO THE MUNICIPAL CLUBS FOR PENSIONERS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN SOFIA

Team

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Description of the problem

There are nine municipal clubs for pensioners and people with disabilities in Sofia, used by members of the respective associations to the clubs or with individual permits for attendance. The main goal of the clubs' activities is to provide opportunities for social contacts. The activities are organized by the associations to the respective clubs and basically include board games like chess, backgammon, cards, as well as lectures, excursions, concerts and trips. However, in practice, the men and women who actually attend the activities are less than the members of the associations to the clubs. Moreover, there is a clear gender division in the choice of activities which separates men and women into large groups with different interests.

Object of the survey

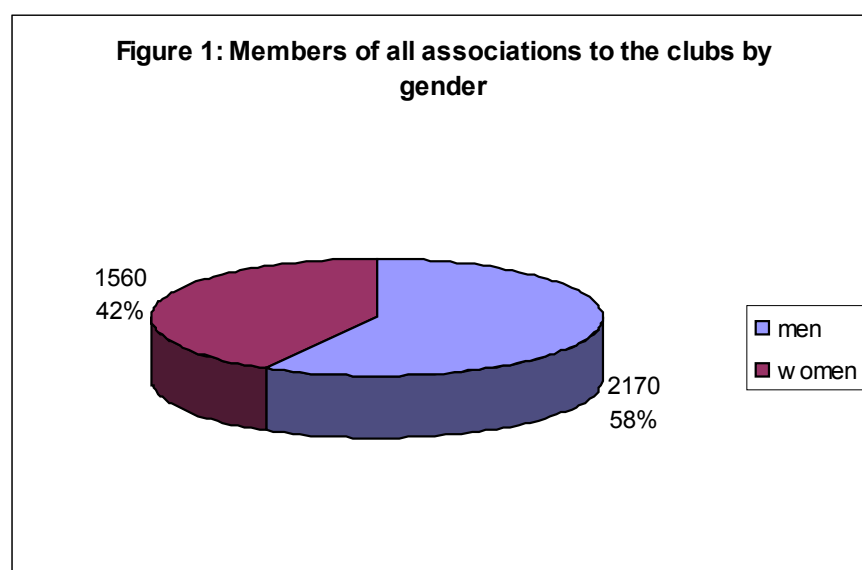
The survey explores the associations using the municipal clubs for pensioners and people with disabilities in Sofia from gender perspective regarding membership, schedule for attendance and attendance.

Objectives of the survey

The objective of the survey is to find out if men and women have equal access and equal opportunities to use the municipal clubs for pensioners and people with disabilities, based in Sofia and to participate in their preferred activities.

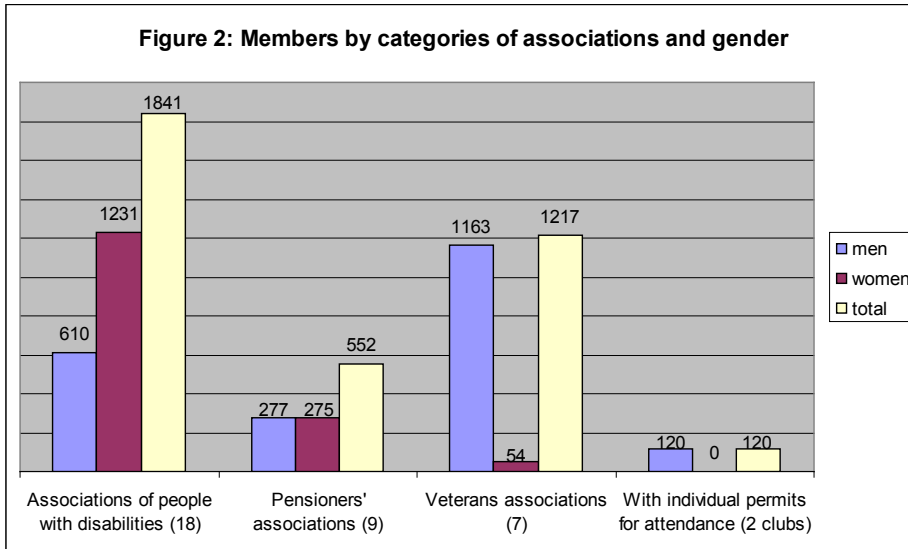
Data (R1, R2)

The data for R1 (representation) show that the associations in which pensioners and people with disabilities are organized are 34 in total and include 2170 men, which represent 58% of all members, and 1560 women or 42% (Figure 1).

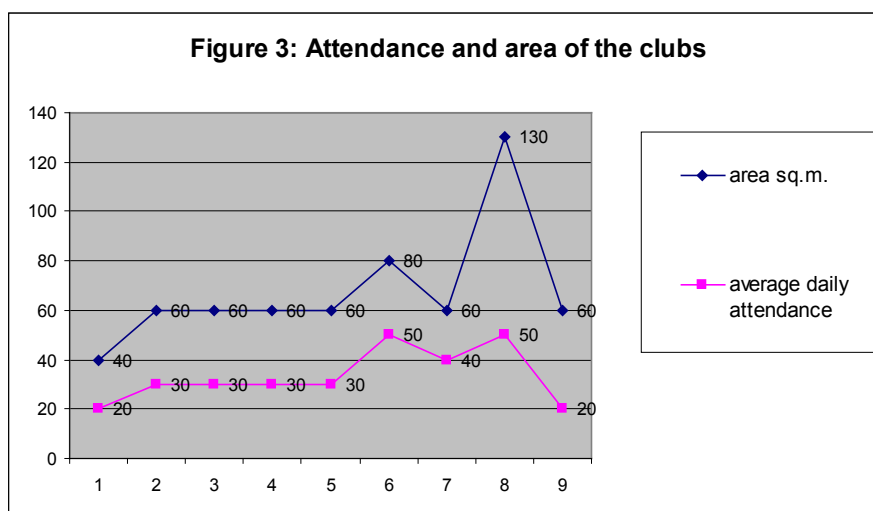


For the purpose of the survey, the pensioners' associations were additionally divided and thus were compared 4 specific categories of associations: of people with disabilities, of pensioners, of war veterans, and people with individual permits for attendance (Figure 2).

The women members of the associations of people with disabilities are twice as men – 67%. In the pensioners' associations the representation of men and women is equal. In the war veterans' associations the women are 4%, while the holders of individual permits are only men. The proportion of the members of the associations by gender varies in the respective clubs – in three of the clubs significantly prevail women, in three – men, and in three – their number is approximately equal.



The focus for R2 (resources) fell on the schedule for attendance, which is determined by the chairmen of the associations and the technical assistant to the respective club, as well as on the actual attendance of the clubs based on the observations of the assistants. In some cases the actual attendance corresponds to the number of the members. In others, although there are more women members of the associations, they have restricted opportunities for using the club for their activities. In third cases, with almost equal number of men and women associations' members, most of the visitors are from one gender only (Figure 3).



Analysis and conclusions (R3)

There are more men than women among the members of the associations to the municipal clubs in Sofia. It is due to the fact, that the war veterans' associations represent half of the members of all associations. Therefore, although at retirement age women are more than men, they are not well represented in the pensioners' associations – almost 17% for all categories. This makes them a neglected target group, who does not use the public resources (the municipal clubs for pensioners and people with disabilities) equally with men. It is necessary to identify all the reasons for this situation and propose measures to attract more women to participate in these associations, considering that most of them live alone, not surrounded by children or relatives. There is an opposite trend with regard to the associations of people with disabilities. Here, the future work should be focused on men in order to identify their problems and take measures, specifically targeting them.

Action Plan

- **The clubs should start gathering statistics by gender related to the attendance of the clubs which should be used for the preparation of the schedule, in order to ensure equal access and equal opportunities for men and women.**
- **The Social Activities Directorate should conduct a survey by gender among the target groups on the territory of Sofia Municipality about: preferred activities, needs of such clubs, and the reasons for not participating in the associations and/or not attending the municipal clubs. Based on the results, a gender sensitive municipal strategy for senior citizens should be developed, with financially supported measures.**
- **The activities in the municipal clubs should be expanded by attracting additional funds through projects of the Social Activities Directorate for external financing and partnerships between the associations and NGOs.**
- **The activities in the municipal clubs should be promoted in the communities in order to attract and actively engage more people from the target groups.**