

# **Job Loss and Lower Healthcare Utilization due to COVID-19 among Older Adults across 27 European Countries**

*Gabriela Kšiňanová, Albert Kšiňan*

**Background.** Older adults are at greater risk for becoming severely ill from COVID-19; however, the impact of the pandemic on their economic activity and non-COVID-19 related healthcare utilization is not well understood. The aim of this study was to examine the prevalence and predictors of COVID-19 related unemployment and healthcare utilization in a sample of older adults across 27 European countries.

**Methods.** We used data from the Study of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) COVID-19 Survey, collected between June and August 2020. Participants (n=52,061) reported whether they lost a job, forgone medical treatment, and whether their appointment was postponed due to COVID-19. Three-level models were estimated for each outcome to test the effects of individual, household, and country-level characteristics.

**Results.** The mean prevalence of reported job loss, forgone, and postponed medical care were 19%, 12%, and 26%, respectively. Job loss was associated with female sex, lower education and household income, and older age in women. For example, the odds ratio of job loss, comparing primary vs. tertiary (college) education, was 1.89 (95% CI 1.59-2.26). Forgone and postponed medical care was associated with older age in men, female sex, and higher education. At the country level, postponed medical care was associated with more stringent governmental anti-COVID measures.

**Conclusion.** Job loss and lower healthcare utilization for non-COVID-19 related reasons were common among older adults and were associated with several sociodemographic characteristics. Job loss appeared to disproportionately affect already economically vulnerable individuals, raising concerns about the exacerbation of social inequalities.