

Warnings about old age in Uruguay

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In Uruguay the old population is the least poor, numbers say. However, problems are recognized. One out of three older adults have difficulties in their health coverage, social security, housing or income. These are some of the conclusions of the "Panorama of old age in Uruguay," research that was presented yesterday at the Catholic University. The research was supported by the Catholic University, the Institute for Research on Integration, Poverty and Social Exclusion and the Population Fund of the United Nations. The two coordinators of the research are sociologists Federico Rodríguez and Cecilia Rossel.

One of the main problems is that Uruguay is an increasingly aged country. "In Uruguay there is an increasingly aging population. It's not a trend exclusive to Uruguay, it also an international problem, primarily in developed countries, and we will increasingly have a generation more numerous of older adults, because people live more and more. And this raises questions, problems and challenges we must think about because it is a process that progresses ever faster, we're going to face sooner or later, with more or less seriousness." Rossel said.

The study takes as criterion for the elderly the age 65. According to the report, in the last 35 years over-65 went from 8.9% of the total population to 13% (432,981 people).

The study analyzed four variables in the lives of older adults: the coverage of health, social insurance, housing and income. Rossel explained the results. "One out of three older adults have at least some welfare dimension that is not covered adequately. Or do not have adequate health care coverage, are on the first income quintile, have no access to social security, no home ownership or live in occupied houses. Faced with the hard data that a very low proportion of older people is poor, in reality there are other dimensions that can not be described by the simple indicator of income, below or above the poverty line, to which must be pay attention. There are obviously basic needs that are not met in at least some level." she said.

The study analyzed the processes that accompanies aging. They are not experienced equally in men and women. Women have more problems, particularly in access to social security. "More and more women survive more than men in terms of health and age. Women have more problems than men in order to access the social security system. The income earned by women in retirement and pension system is three times lower than that of men. Basically because they have not participated in the labor market as men have, they have not had the opportunity, possibility, and in some cases the need to do so." said Rodriguez.

According to investigators, the entry of women into the labor market would

change that situation. But in this new context, new challenges appear. "Historically the care system was designed from a family role. Today, when the woman leaves to work and is most active in the market, is less likely to provide that service to their past generation. Mom now works, then who cares for the grandmother. Those are issues we need to start thinking as a country, how they can provide that service at some of the three spheres: state, family or market. Very few have access to paid services, families have problems and the state does not provide a service for it." described Rodriguez.

Sociologist Rossel posed the gravest concern: what will happen with the next generations of old people. "This is the generation we have today. And the achievements that the country has to leave the population above the poverty line and provide proper welfare conditions probably require more effort for future generations. Why? Because, as we know, future generations have serious deficits accumulated over a lifetime. When children of 10 years ago or now reach old age, their group will have accumulated a deficit we are seeing now in this generation. The phenomenon of such second and third generations born and lived in poverty. Phenomena that will reach the stage of aging."