

# MAJOR TRENDS IN THE EDUCATION FOR THE THIRD AGE PERSONS IN ST PETERSBURG

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**Abstract:** *The aim of article is to describe the situation with the third-age education in St Petersburg, to show the main tendencies and trends in such education. The results of investigation about the training needs of the third age people from St Petersburg are presented. The investigation was made in St Petersburg in March 2015 in the frame of the exhibition "Third age generation that is organized ". The results of the investigation were used for organizing educational process in the Third Age Institute in St Petersburg State University of Industrial Technologies and Design.*

**Keywords:** *third age education, gerontology, training needs assessment for the third age persons*

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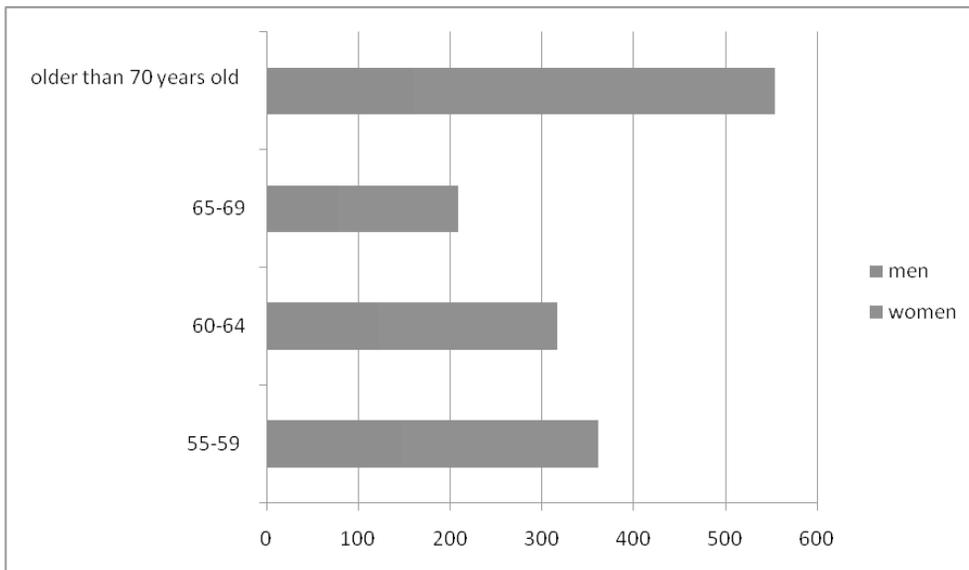
## INTRODUCTION

Due to increasing duration of life and the number of elderly citizens in society, science and social practice has significantly increased interest to gerontological issues. Retirement is one of the most crisis periods in life of elderly people, resulting in significant changes in the conditions and way of life. For many elderly people this process is long and painful, accompanied by experiences, passivity, inability to find new possibilities and contacts. In this regard, the need to preserve the active life of elder people through their education is one of the important themes of modern scientific research in the field of gerontology, andragogy and social learning for adults[1]. The aim of article is to describe the situation with the third-age education in St Petersburg, to show the main tendencies and trends in such education.

## INVESTIGATION OF DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION IN ST PETERSBURG

St Petersburg is the third largest city in Europe (after Moscow and London) and the first populous city in Europe, which is not the capital of the state. About 40 % of residents have

high education. In St Petersburg, as well as in most European cities, number of older people is increasing. It is connected with demographics, and with the improvement of medical care of the older generation. In St Petersburg on January 1, 2013 lived 1441.2 thousand people aged over 55 years, which is 28,66 % of the population. The division of this group by age and sex are presented on Figure 1.[2]



**Fig.1.** The structure of population in the age older than working age by sex and age on the 01.01. 2013

Data presented in Figure 1 show that the maximum number of people in the group older than 70 years. And there are more women in all age groups than men. So if the amount of women in the age group 55-59 years 1.5 times more than men, in the group older than 70 years, this figure is more than 2.5 times. According to the demographic forecast until 2031, the population of retirement age will grow (Figure 2). The dependency ratio (showing how many persons in the age more than working age will be in 1000 persons of working age) to 2031 will be 453[ 3] .

### **IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR TRENDS IN THE EDUCATION FOR THE THIRD AGE PERSONS IN ST PETERSBURG**

All the work for the third age people organized by Complex centers for social service is concentrated in Social-Leisure Departments in each District. Education for the third age people is organized by providing different courses. Most popular are: Computer Literacy, Handicraft, Dances, Singing, Foreign languages. The Government of St Petersburg pays special attention to the training of senior citizens computer literacy. Courses, schools, clubs on computer literacy for older people are organized in 37 Social-Leisure departments of Com-

plex centers for social service. Libraries began to organize educational programs for third – age persons about 10 years ago. Computer courses, schools were organized in 76 public libraries in St Petersburg in 2014.

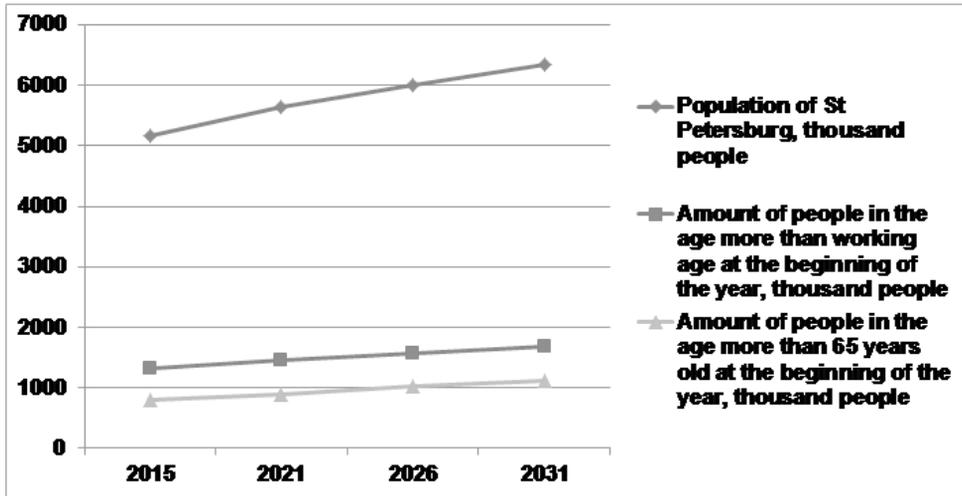


Fig.2. Forecast of population of St. Petersburg, thousand persons

Education for the people of the third age is also organized in different universities & schools: School for the third age people of Nevsky District, School of the third age in Central District, Online-the University of the Third Age created on the basis of the St Petersburg national research University of information technologies, mechanics and optics (NRU ITMO).

### TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR THE THIRD AGE PERSONS IN ST PETERSBURG

The training needs assessment was done in the frame of the international conference and exhibition "Third-age generation" that was held in St Petersburg on the 18-21. 03.2015. A questionnaire was created about the demands for education of the third age people. In the questionnaire nine questions were included. 146 questionnaires were received from people of the third age who visited the exhibition. The structure of the respondents is showed at Figure 3.

It can be seen that the most active ages, who are interested in active social life are 56-60 years old, 61-65 years old and 66-70 years old. Women are more active in any age.

Analyzing the data about the amount of retired people who is still working can be concluded that most of women and men in St Petersburg are working till 65 years old: men 5 years after official opportunity to retire and women 10 years after official opportunity to retire. After the age of 65 the share of the persons who are working is decreasing in all age groups.

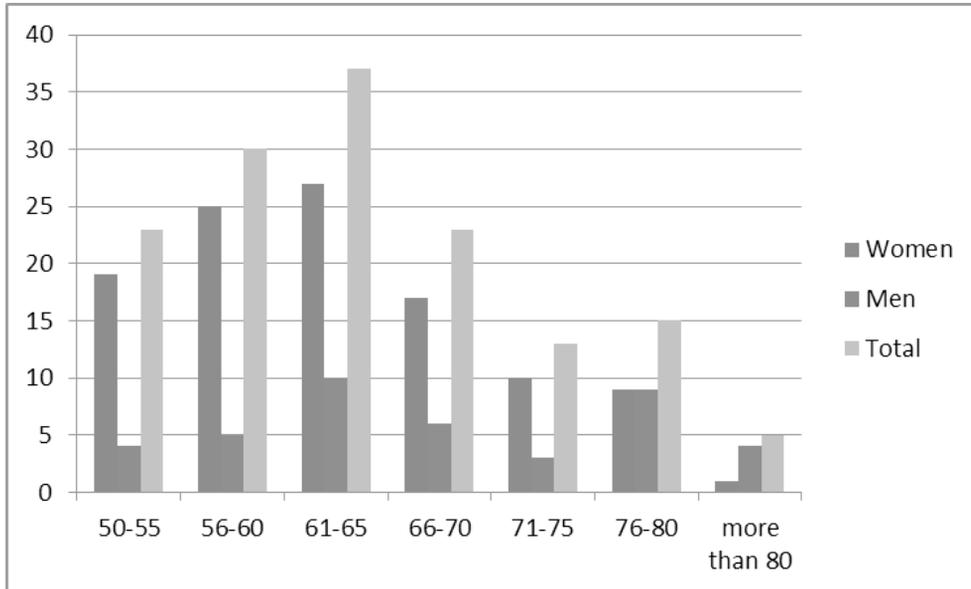


Fig. 3. The structure of the respondents, persons

In the questionnaire there was a question about the training programs that the Institute of the Third Age of St Petersburg State University of Industrial Technologies and Design is planning to organize. The results are shown at the Figure 4.

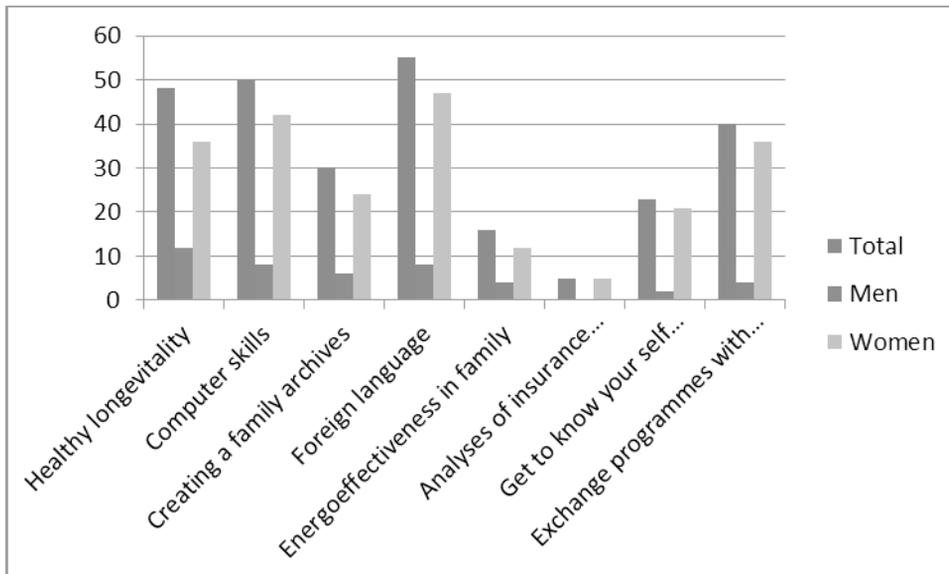
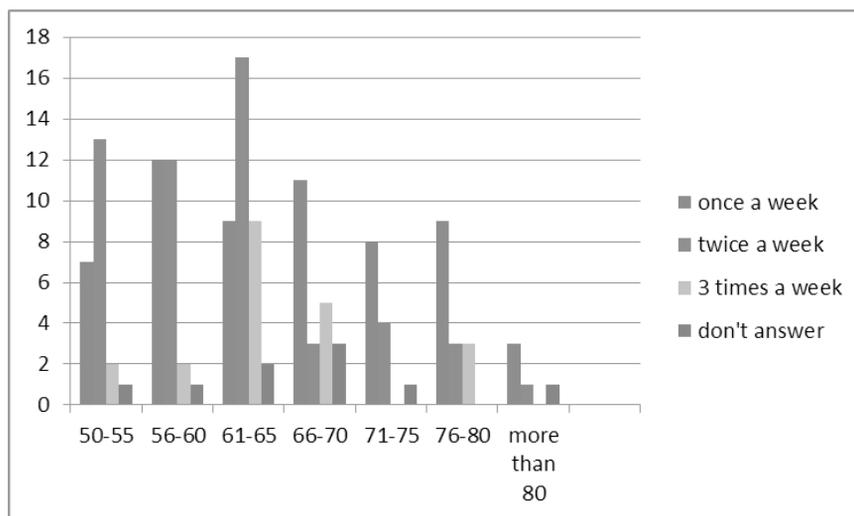


Fig.4. Respondents preferences, persons

Respondents of the survey mostly like such courses as

1. Foreign language. Women are more interested in this program than men.
2. Computer skills. Men and women are interested in this program.
3. Exchange programs with Third age universities from foreign countries. Mostly women are interested in this program.
4. Healthy longevity. Men and women are interested in this program.

Analyzing how often the third age persons would like to study, showed at Figure 5, can be concluded that most of them are interested in studying once or twice in a week.



**Fig.5.** How often people of the third age are ready to study in e week, persons

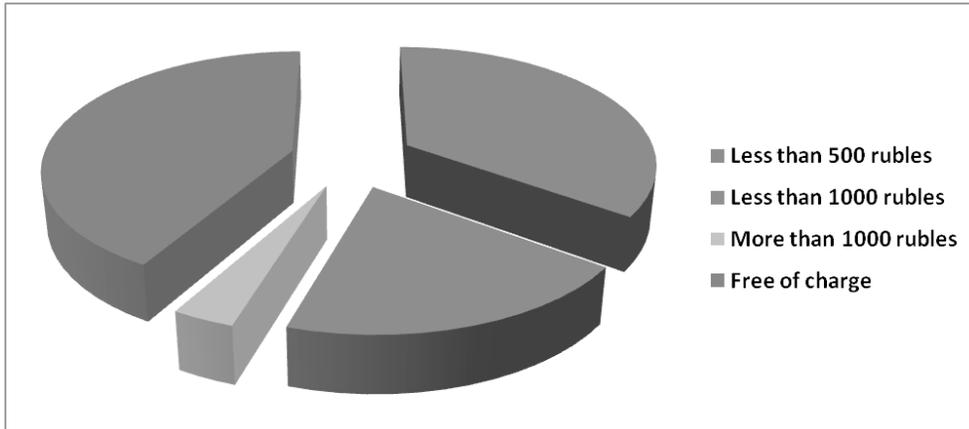
One of the main questions connected with organization of Third Age Institute is the question about financing these activities. Obviously it can't be financed only by third age people but it was interesting to understand to which extent they are ready to pay. The results of investigation are showed at Figure 6.

Most of men of the third age are ready to study free of charge, but in the ages 50-55 and 61-65 most of them are ready to pay not more than 1000 rubles for the course. Most of women of the third age are ready to study free of charge, but in the ages 50-55 and 56-60 most of them are ready to pay not more than 500 rub. for the course.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The contribution of the elderly in the scientific-technical, social, cultural and educational creative potential of St Petersburg can hardly be overestimated. The solution to the problem of sustainable development of St Petersburg requires knowledge of the laws of interaction of generations in a transforming society. Programs aimed at the connection of

generations are actively developing and implementing in St Petersburg in recent years. They, of course, require scientific analysis and further development.



**Fig.6** The desire to pay for the education of the third age people, persons

In the frame of sustainable development of St Petersburg it should be taken into account not only the features of adaptation of different generations in the conditions of developing city and society, but also multi-dimensional, multivariate relationships existing between generations. It is especially important because city need to use of personal and professional experience of third-age persons in St Petersburg.

Analyzing the behavior of older people in St Petersburg it can be concluded that a big group of third-age people have a need to continue to learn, to gain new knowledge. They are actively participating in different courses and universities for the third-age persons. The programs for such people are made in connection with such important factors as: education of adult learners, professional status of the person in the present and the past, gender differences, reflexive capacity to adequately assess the possibility of their participation in specific social and socio-educational programs. The providers of the development and implementation of such programs in St Petersburg are state organizations, public organizations, including veteran organizations, universities of the third age, folk high schools, clubs and libraries.

The survey, which was conducted in March 2015 in St Petersburg showed great desire and need of people of the third age in education. 80 % of respondents expressed a willingness and desire to increase their level of awareness and literacy through education in the "University of the third age". Moreover, women are more focused on training – 86 % willing than men (57 %). However, only 58 % of respondents willing to pay for the education, among which 51 person (60 %) would like to pay not more than 500 rubles, 29 (20 %) persons – not more than 1000 rubles and only 5 persons – more than 1000 rubles. 37 % of the respondents are interested in studying foreign languages, 34 % in studying computer, 33 % in ensuring healthy longevity and 27 % in exchange programs with Universities of the third age in foreign countries. Conducted investigation helps to understand the preferences of the third age persons, to suggest the courses in which they are interested and to organize the education in a way that it will be more convenient for the third age people.

Education for the third age people in St Petersburg can develop only under conditions of adequate perception of aging and images of older persons. Among the main tendencies in active ageing in St Petersburg can be mentioned: a reduction in discrimination of persons working in old people, expanding their opportunities for education, retraining, and new incentives for formal and non-formal education, more intensive use of the potential of informal learning in recent years. In the frame of this the third-age education is developing nowadays in St Petersburg.

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