



Joint Programming Initiative
Demographic Change in Central and Eastern Europe

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**Norms of filial obligations, actual support to aging parents,
and the role of family-life experience.**

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FamiliesAndSocieties



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- The aim of this study is to examine filial obligations, support given to aging parents by middle-generations adults, and links between them in countries from Eastern and Central Europe.
- We concentrate on the relationship among children and nonresident parents, because we believe that

“... the relationship between adult children and parents who no longer live in the same household provide the acid test for the excellence and extent of intergenerational solidarity within the family” (Szydlik 2008, p.110).

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- Even if there are several comparative studies on support behaviour, they rather address Western European countries (Albertini, Kohli & Vogel 2007), or contrast with other developed countries like USA (Cooney & Dykstra 2011).
- Most studies are about single countries, usually more developed ones (Silverstein, Gans & Yang 2006 on California; Dykstra & Fokema 2012 on The Netherlands).
- Studies addressing family solidarity in Central and Eastern Europe concentrate rather on family norms (Daatland & Herlofson 2011) than on support behaviour or the link between them.
- Comparative studies proved that filial norms are supported in Europe, but with a different intensity between countries (Daatland and Herlofson, 2003; Lowenstein and Daatland, 2006).
 - In Southern and Central European countries care is perceived as a responsibility of the family, whereas in Northern European countries weaker obligation to care are prevalent (Haber Kern and Szydlik, 2010).

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Filial norms and country context:

1. *Family-culture hyp.* Filial norms are stronger towards the East and South of the continent, with Norway and Georgia as extreme cases (Daatland si Herlofson 2011).
2. *Familialism-by-default hyp.* Where there are few publically provided alternatives to family care and financial support, filial obligations will be stronger: the belief that it is important to give support to family members in need is in correspondence with more limited public support available (Saraceno 2010). Eastern Europeans will express stronger filial responsibilities than Western Europeans.

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Filial support and country context:

1. *Family-steps-in hyp*: When publicly funded services are not available, adult children will be more supportive of aging parents (Cooney & Dykstra 2011). Eastern Europeans adult-children will be more supportive toward their aging parents than Western Europeans.
2. *Complementarity hyp*. Public welfare system does not necessary interfere with family solidarity and may promote it (Attias-Donfut & Wolf 2000). When public support is generous, family members are more able to redistribute resources to assist those in need (Kohli et al. 2000), and more willingly perform support tasks they feel capable of doing well (Lowenstein and Daatland 2006). Western European adult children will be more supportive than Western Europeans.

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Connection between filial obligations and support behavior

1. *Family-steps-in hyp.* The connection between obligations and support behavior is stronger where the public support is reduced, since it is more critical to act upon beliefs about filial responsibilities because of more severe consequences that may occur if one fails to follow through on obligation norms. The link between obligations and support behavior is stronger in Eastern Europe.
2. *No choice hyp.* The connection is weaker where the public support is less available, since that no matter what the circumstances are, the limited public support system gives adult-children no choice but to assist parents in need. The link between obligations and support behavior is weaker in Eastern Europe.

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Connection between family experience in childhood and support behavior

1. *Weakening ties hyp.* Non-normative family-life experience in childhood (i.e. parental divorce, separation, transnational families) has consequences in the long-term, and weakens support behavior to ageing parents (Shapiro, 2012; Schienk and Ykstra, 2012; Moor and Kompter, 2012; Kalmijn, 2013).
2. *Gender roles hyp.* In case of negative family-experience in childhood, aging mothers benefit more of actual support from their children than fathers (Lowenstein and Daatland, 2006).

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Sample

- We use the data from the Generations and Gender Surveys, wave 1, conducted in 2004-2010 (depending on the country)
 - 7 Central and Eastern European countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Georgia, and Russia
 - 2 Western European countries: France and Norway
- From the total respondents we have selected only those who still have a living nonresident parent (51 463 cases).

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1) Popular support for **filial obligations** served as the dependent variables. We constructed an index, where we recoded (0 total disagreement, 4 total agreement) the following questions:

- Children should take responsibility for care parents if parents in need.
- Children should adjust working lives to the needs of their parents.
- Children should provide financial help if parents financial difficulty.
- Children should live with parents when no longer look after themselves.

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2) For measuring the **actual support given to parents** (yes/no), we consider three types of help offered in the last 12 months:

- **Instrumental help**: personal care given regularly toward day-to-day activities like eating, getting up from the bed, clothing, washing, or using the toilet.
- **Financial help**: giving money, assets, or goods of substantive value to parents
- **Emotional support**: listening to the personal experience and feelings of the parent

Control variables

Beside the more general aim to test the link between filial norms and actual support to parents, our special thought was to stress the role of *family experience* on intergenerational support given to non-resident aging mothers and fathers.

- **Family-life experience in childhood:** if R experienced or not parental divorce in childhood; if R grew up with both, only one or none of biological parents.
- R's **family and household composition** : coresident partner, coresident children, number of siblings
- **parental needs** : parental widowhood (recent or no); parental health problem or disabilities
- **child's practical possibilities:** having health problems; being employed; time distance to parents' residence
- **personal characteristics:** age, gender, level of education, religiosity
- **actual support received** from mother /father

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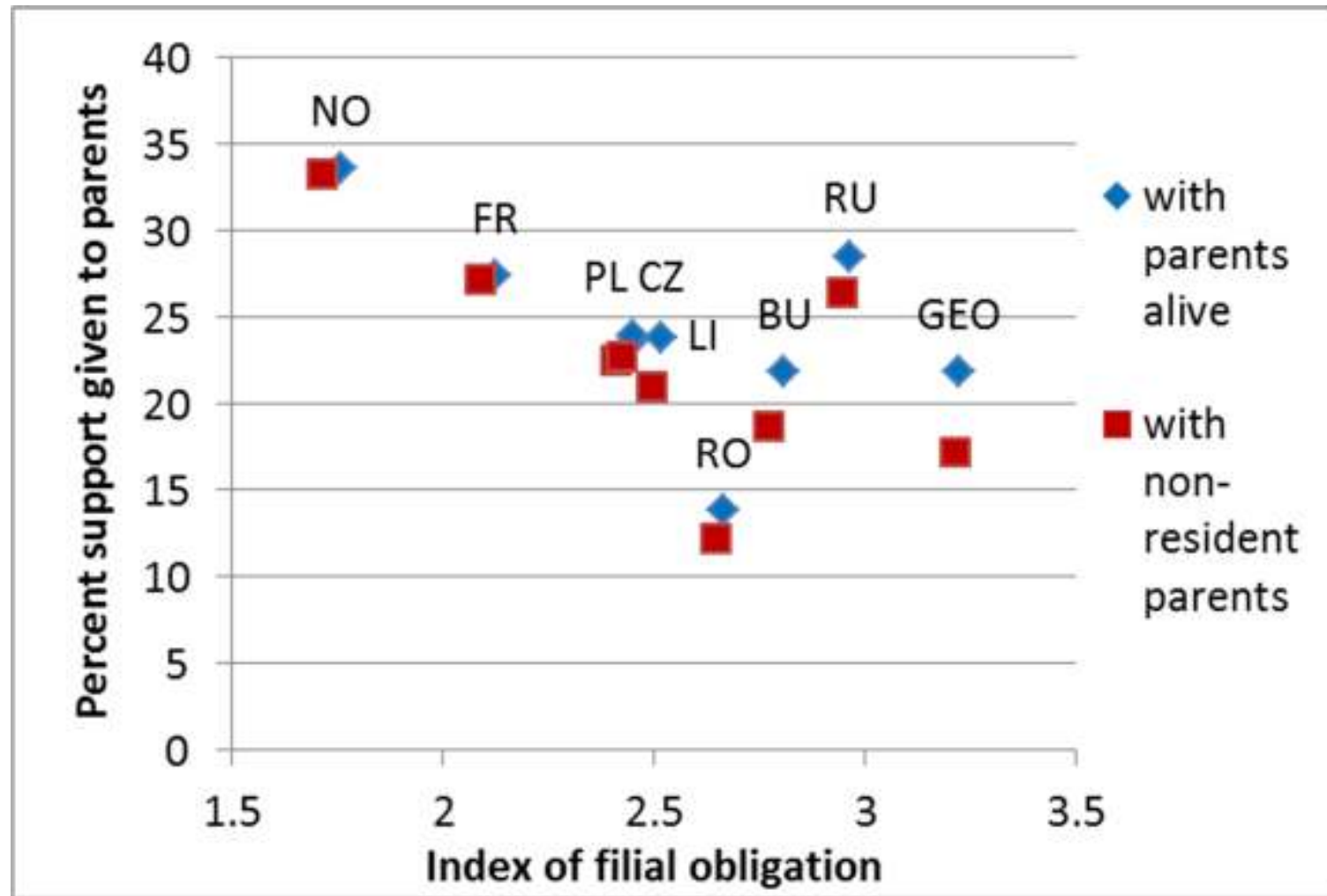
Connection between family experience and support behavior

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- **Descriptive statistics** for assessing comparatively the differences and similarities between countries, regarding mean score of filial obligation and likelihood of support given.
- **Logistic regression models** of actual support to parents, by types of support (instrumental, financial, and emotional), separately for mothers and fathers, for each country (60 models = 3 types x 2 genders x 10 countries).

Filial norms and country context

Mean score of filial obligation and proportion of actual support to aging parents, by type of residence



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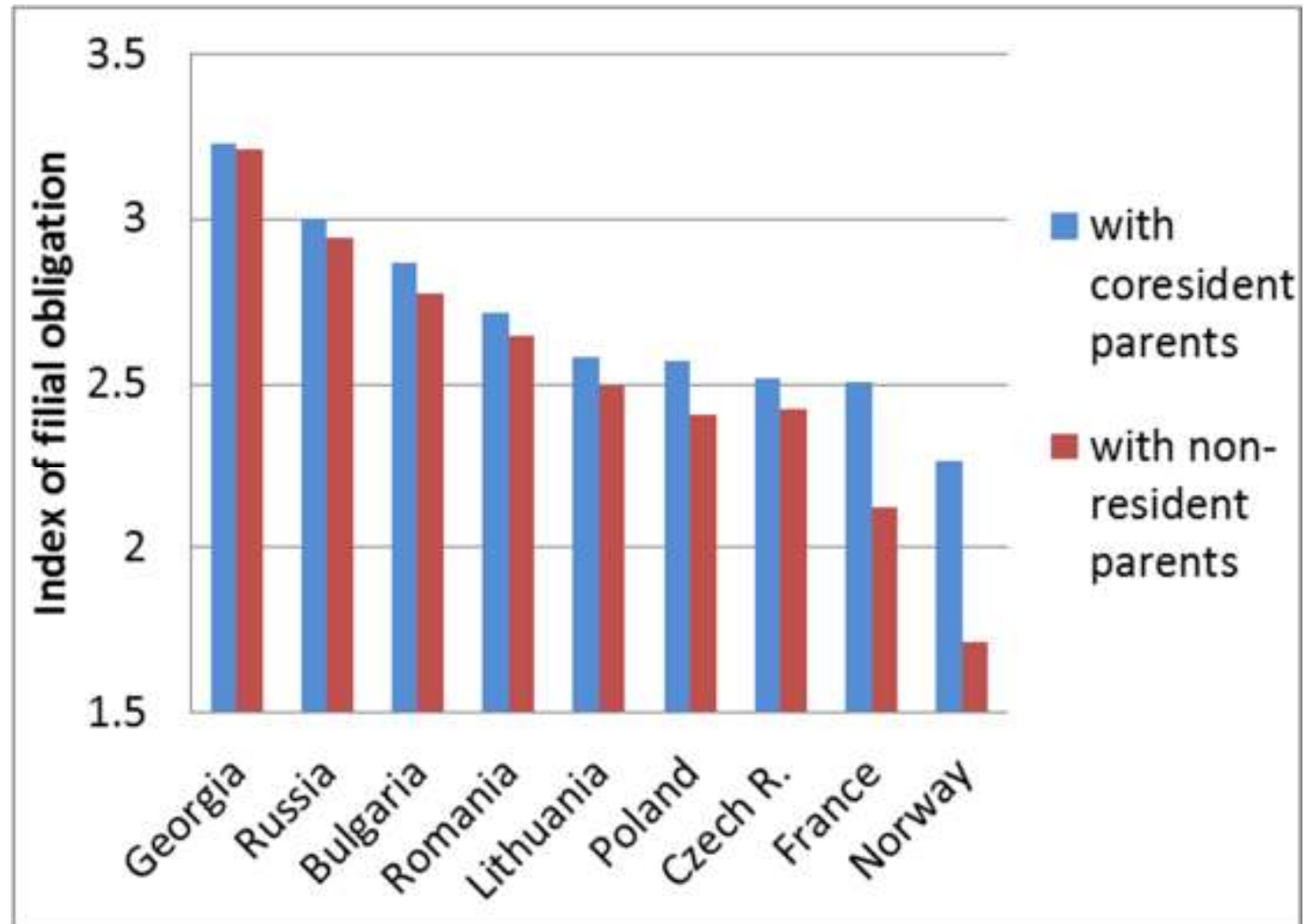
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Filial norms and country context

Mean scores of filial obligation, in decreasing order by country



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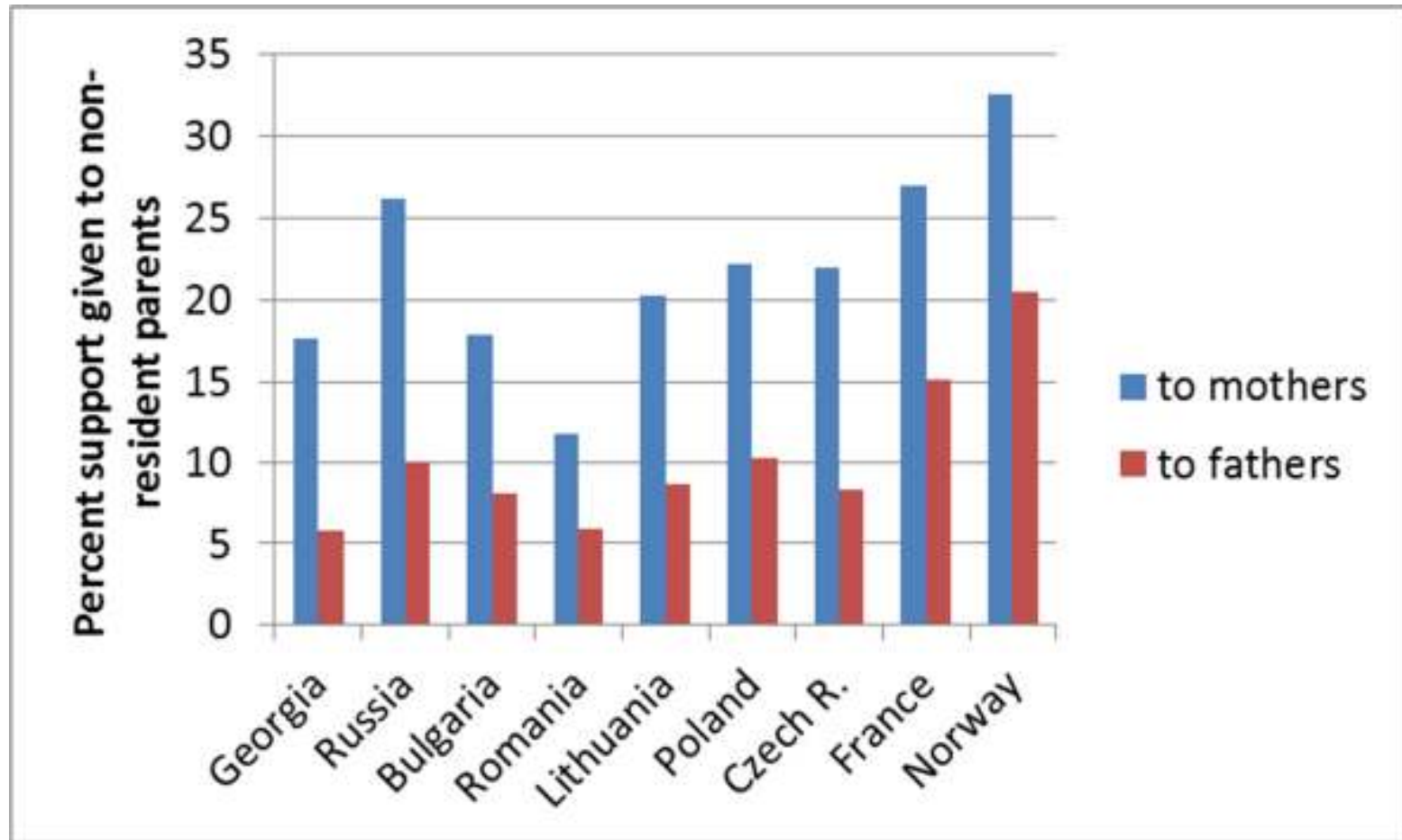
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Actual support given to nonresident parents, by gender of receivers



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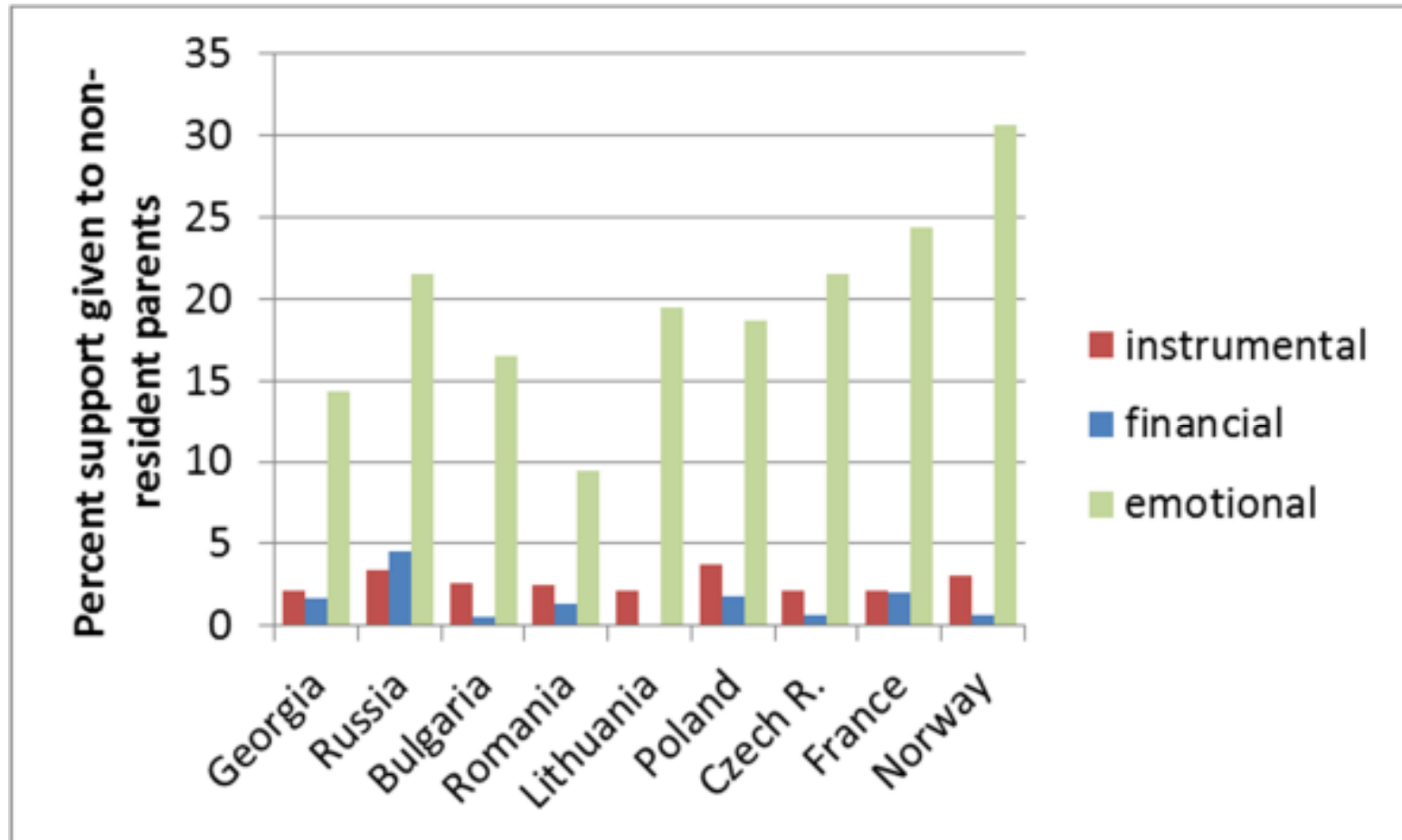
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Actual support given to nonresident parents, by type of support



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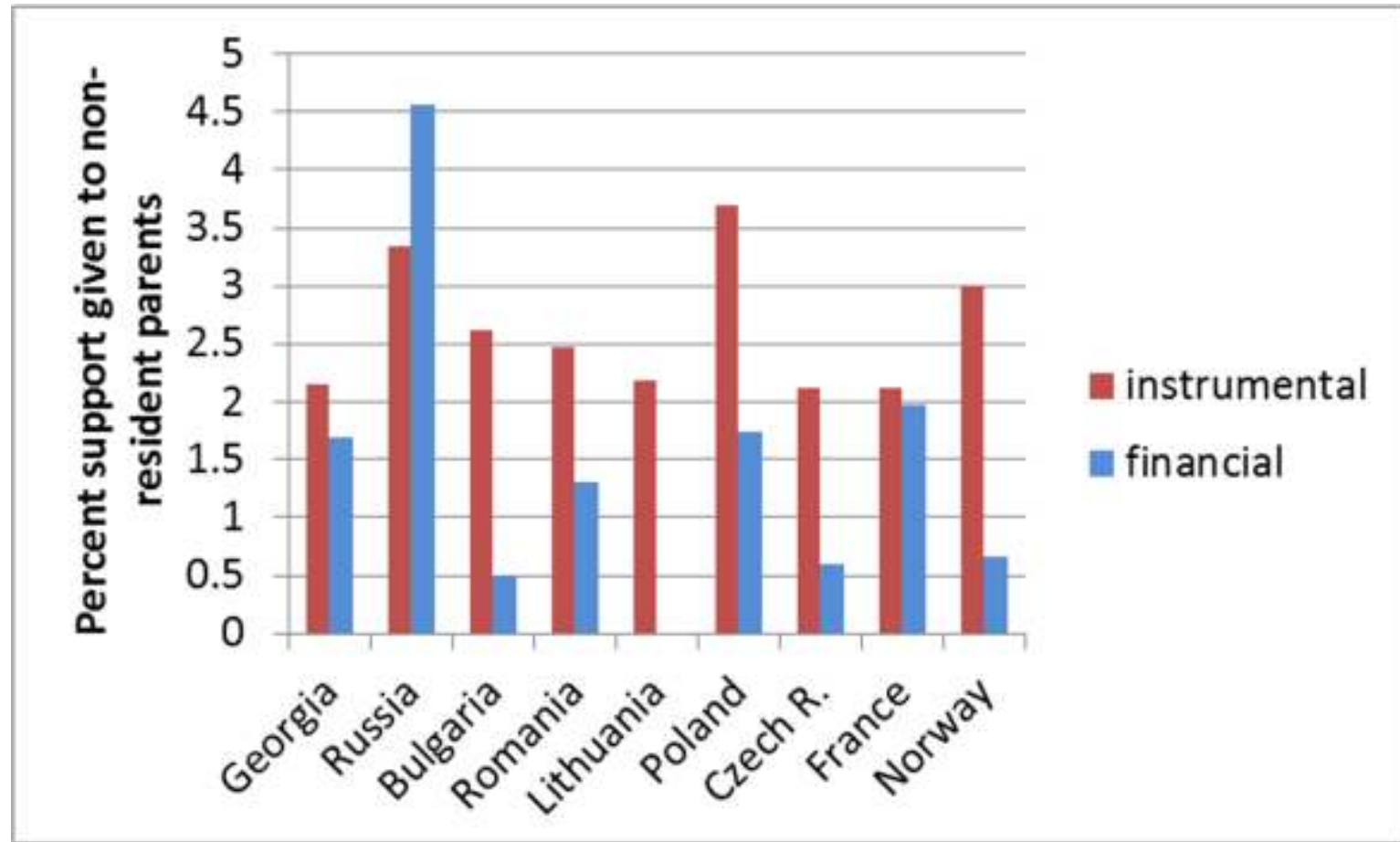
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Instrumental support and financial help given to nonresident parents



Connection between filial norms and support behavior. Eastern Europe (pooled data for 7 countries).

Odd ratios predicting support to parents in Eastern Europe.

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	Support to mothers			Support to fathers		
	Instrumental	Financial	Emotional	Instrumental	Financial	Emotional
Index of filial obligation (0-4)	1.42 ***	1.15	0.98	1.33 **	1.42 **	1.04
Support from the parent (ref = no)	1.59 ***	2.82 ***	24.24 ***	1.56 ***	2.93 ***	27.34 ***
Mother's / father's need						
Recently wid. parent (ref = not widowed)	1.75 ***	1.32 ***	1.13 ***	2.33 ***	1.51 *	1.16
Parent wid. 3+yrs ago (ref = not widowed)	1.65 ***	1.65 ***	1.20 ***	2.55 ***	1.01	2.07 ***
Parent with health problems (ref = no)	11.70 ***	1.44 ***	1.12 **	17.60 ***	1.52 *	1.30 ***

Notes: 1. The models also control for respondents characteristics (age, level of education, religiosity), practical possibilities (health problems, employment, time distance to parent's residence), parental family during childhood, current family and household composition, and country. 2. Significance levels: * p ≤ 0.10, **p ≤ 0.05, ***p ≤ 0.001

Connection between filial norms and support behavior. Eastern Europe (pooled data for 7 countries).

Odd ratios predicting support to parents in Eastern Europe.

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Filial norms have a positive effect (*family-steps-in hyp*) on:

- instrumental support to mothers / fathers
- financial support to fathers

Filial norms have no effect (*no-choice hyp?* or *reciprocity hyp?*) on:

- emotional support to mothers / fathers

Filial obligation converted into actual support when parent's need increases

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Connection between filial norms and support behavior. Separate models for each country.

Odd ratios predicting support to parents by index of filial obligation.

	Geo	Ru	Bu	Ro	Li	Po	Cz	Fr	No
Support to mothers									
Instrumental support	1.07	1.10	1.48 *	1.52 **	1.08	1.70 ***	1.67 **	1.09	1.00
Financial support	1.85 **	1.12	1.03	1.74 **	-	1.03	0.67	1.60 ***	2.11 ***
Emotional support	0.98	1.05	0.90	1.06	0.86	0.99	0.97	0.97	1.04
Support to fathers									
Instrumental support	1.45	1.19	0.89	1.13	1.00	1.86 ***	2.43 ***	0.98	1.06
Financial support	3.31 **	1.35	1.59	1.69	-	1.29	1.12	0.85	1.84 **
Emotional support	0.75	1.18	0.98	0.85	0.93	1.04	1.40 **	1.02	1.02

Notes: 1. The models also control for support received from parents, respondents characteristics (age, level of education, religiosity), parental needs, practical possibilities, parental family during childhood, current family and household composition. 2. Significance levels: * p ≤ 0.10, ** p ≤ 0.05, *** p ≤ 0.001

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Odd ratios predicting support to parents by index of filial obligation.

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Support to mothers									
Instrumental support	1.07	1.10	1.48 *	1.52 **	1.08	1.70 ***	1.67 **	1.09	1.00
Financial support	1.85 **	1.12	1.03	1.74 **	-	1.03	0.67	1.60 ***	2.11 ***
Emotional support	0.98	1.05	0.90	1.06	0.86	0.99	0.97	0.97	1.04
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Instrumental support	1.45	1.19	0.89	1.13	1.00	1.86 ***	2.43 ***	0.98	1.06
Financial support	3.31 **	1.35	1.59	1.69	-	1.29	1.12	0.85	1.84 **
Emotional support	0.75	1.18	0.98	0.85	0.93	1.04	1.40 **	1.02	1.02

Notes: 1. The models also control for support received from parents, respondents characteristics (age, level of education, religiosity), parental needs, practical possibilities, parental family during childhood, current family and household composition. 2. Significance levels : * p ≤ 0.10, ** p ≤ 0.05, *** p ≤ 0.001

- The link between filial obligations and instrumental helping behavior is stronger in EE (there are exceptions).
- The link between filial obligations and financial helping behavior is stronger in WE (exception Geo, Ro-mothers).
- No link between filial obligation and emotional support in EE nor in WE. (exception Cz-fathers).

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Odd ratios predicting support to parents in Eastern Europe

	Support to mothers			Support to fathers		
	Instrumental	Financial	Emotional	Instrumental	Financial	Emotional
Parental family during childhood						
Parents divorced during childhood (ref = no)	0.75	1.22	1.07	0.92	0.59	1.22
Living with 0 or 1 parent in childhood (ref = 2)	1.04	0.96	1.16 **	0.38 **	0.72	0.72 *
Current family and household composition						
Coresident partner (ref = no)	0.93	0.82 *	1.09 *	0.91	0.71 *	1.37 ***
Coresident children (ref = no)	0.84 *	0.75 ***	0.79 ***	0.87	0.79	0.69 ***
Siblings 2+ (ref = 0 or 1)	0.78 ***	0.93	0.87 ***	0.80	0.87	0.86 **

Notes: 1. The models also control for respondents characteristics (age, level of education, religiosity), practical possibilities (health problems, employment, time distance to parent's residence), index of filial obligation, support received from the parent, parent's need, and country. 2. Significance levels: * p ≤ 0.10, ** p ≤ 0.05, *** p ≤ 0.001

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Coresident partner (ref = no)	0.93	0.82 *	1.09 *	0.91	0.71 *	1.37 ***
Coresident children (ref = no)	0.84 *	0.75 ***	0.79 ***	0.87	0.79	0.69 ***
Siblings 2+ (ref = 0 or 1)	0.78 ***	0.93	0.87 ***	0.80	0.87	0.86 **

Notes: 1. The models also control for respondents characteristics (age, level of education, religiosity), practical possibilities (health problems, employment, time distance to parent's residence), index of filial obligation, support received from the parent, parent's need, and country. 2. Significance levels: * p ≤ 0.10, ** p ≤ 0.05, *** p ≤ 0.001

- Parental divorce in childhood has no long-term effect on support behavior to aging parents in EE.
- But, living mainly with none or one biological parent until age 15, increases the odds of emotional support given latter on to mothers and decreases the odds of any kind of support given to fathers.
- Other potential support receivers in the household and other possible support givers diminish the odds of supporting behavior (except the positive influence of coresident partner on emotional support to fathers).

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Odd ratios predicting support to mothers, by family-life experience during childhood.

	Geo	Ru	Bu	Ro	Li	Po	Cz	Fr	No
Support to mothers if parents divorced during R's childhood, relative to no parental divorce.									
Instrumental support	0.79	1.03	0.73	0.83	1.22	0.42	-	0.56	1.15
Financial support	2.18	1.43	0.74	1.78	-	1.02	-	2.97 ***	2.30 **
Emotional support	0.87	1.12	1.09	1.29	1.15	1.26	-	1.78 ***	1.44 ***
Support to mothers if R lived with only one or none of biological parent until age 15, relative to R lived with both parents.									
Instrumental support	3.50 ***	0.75	0.75	0.39	0.65	1.57 *	1.18	1.61	0.95
Financial support	1.36	0.64	0.65	0.35	-	1.87 **	0.95	0.65	0.53
Emotional support	1.37	0.97	0.93	0.91	0.96	1.26	1.48 ***	0.76	0.92

Notes: 1. The models also control for index of filial obligation, support received from parents, respondents characteristics (age, level of education, religiosity), parental needs, practical possibilities, current family and household composition. 2. There are often too small variations in the case of support to fathers. 3. Significance levels: * p ≤ 0.10, ** p ≤ 0.05, *** p ≤ 0.001

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Emotional support	1.37	0.97	0.93	0.91	0.96	1.26	1.48 ***	0.76	0.92

Notes: 1. The models also control for index of filial obligation, support received from parents, respondents characteristics (age, level of education, religiosity), parental needs, practical possibilities, current family and household composition. 2. There are often too small variations in the case of support to fathers. 3. Significance levels: * $p \leq 0.10$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

- There is a link between family experience and support behavior both in EE and in WE, but
- In EE is more important if Rs lived with both biological parents during childhood, and in WE is more important if Rs did not experience parental divorce before their age 15.

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Filial obligation is stronger in EE than in WE:

- The belief that it is important to give support to family members in need is in correspondence with more limited public support available. *Familialism-by-default hyp* confirmed.
- Filial norms are stronger towards the East and South of the continent. *Family-culture hyp* confirmed.

Support behavior is not more effective in EE than in WE:

- Adult children are not more supportive of aging parent, where the publicly funded services are not available. *Family-steps-in hyp* not confirmed (exception Ru).
- When public support is generous, family members are more able to redistribute resources to assist emotionally those in need. *Complementarity hyp* is partially confirmed, but only for emotional support.

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Connection between filial obligation and instrumental care is stronger in EE than in WE:

- When publicly funded care is not widely available it is more critical to act upon beliefs about filial responsibilities and offer instrumental help to aging parents in need. *Family-step-in hyp* is partially confirmed, only for instrumental help (exceptions: Geo, Ru, Li mothers, and more EE countries' fathers).

Connection between filial obligation and financial help to mothers is weaker in EE than in WE:

- Where financial services are not available adult-children have no choice but to assist parents in need. *No choice hyp* is partially confirmed, only for financial help to mothers, but not to fathers (exceptions: Ro, Geo fathers).

No connection between filial obligation and emotional support, nor in EE or WE:

- Rather reciprocity in receiving and giving emotional support works (exception: Cz fathers).

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Parental divorce and/or missing biological parent in childhood have a gendered effect on support behavior to aging parents

- Non-standard family experiences in childhood strengthen emotional support to mothers and weaken any kind of support to fathers, both in EE and in WE. *Weakening ties hyp* is confirmed for fathers, but for mothers the *strengthening ties hyp* is rather confirmed (partially). *Gender roles hyp* confirmed.

Thank you for your attention !