

Kukhta M. The age limits and markers of old age as the characteristics of the social and age group of the elderly

Aging is inherent in all people but this process is individual and its specificity depends on a number of factors. The sociological approach to the understanding and allocation of aging should be systemic and based on a combination of data from various scientific areas – gerontobiology, gerontopsychology, demography, etc. For a long time, there were no significant differences between different types of old age, and in every society formed the notion of the prevailing age of the onset of old age, from which later they repelled in the adoption of age limits for the completion of the active phase of life. However, with the increase in the dynamics of social change and the overall increase in life expectancy, the situation has changed: the physiological capabilities of people for a long time remain close to the average age, and individualization, a mod for youth and activity predetermine the reluctance to identify with the age of reduced opportunities.

In the article, an attempt is made to find out the criteria for allocating the limits of old age in different approaches: medical-biological, psychological, demographic and finding a single complex criterion, suitable as a theoretical basis for the creation of sociological tools is relevant.

In the scientific discourse, aging is traditionally viewed from the standpoint of structural and functional methodology, where old age is predominantly evaluated as an objective, inevitable process of quantitative change in the biological component of human existence, and studies focus on the research of the social consequences of this change. With such a vision of aging, it is usually a matter of establishing a certain age limit, for the achievement of which a person from the standpoint of existing social norms refers to the “old.” As for the subjective experiences of aging subjects, as well as the qualitative characteristics of old age, they are either ignored, or their influence on social processes is considered insignificant, and the subject of consideration of them is psychology.

Today, there is no single idea of the time of the onset of old age. More often today, the threshold for the onset of old age is called the 60-year-old age but this figure remains rather conventional. Thus, social aging is associated with the age structure of society, while the social age is adapted to the average life expectancy of the country, on the one hand, and the median age – on the other. That determines the economic pressure on the working population.

Individual age limits also depend on the aging features of the population as a whole. Thus, the level of health care, social security, working conditions and rest, environmental safety of the living environment, etc., adjust the time of the onset of old age. That is, the traditional markers of old age are filled with new content, and the age limits become relatively variables. In this regard, one can assume that the emergence of new, unknown from the experience of the past, the conditions of aging and forms of social behaviour of the elderly can and should become the subject of research activity, based on new, generated by the science of XX – beginning of the XXI century conceptual approaches and methods, primarily on the methodology of interdisciplinarity.

Key words: age limits, aging, markers of old age, group of slopes, periodization of development.