

3rd World Conference on
Ageing and Gerontology
July 09-10, 2026 | Frankfurt, Germany



Agata Żółtaszek

University of Lodz, Faculty of Economics and Sociology, Łódź, Poland

Spatial Gaps in Access to Specialized Healthcare for the Aging Population: A County-Level Analysis in Poland

As populations age globally, ensuring equitable access to specialized medical services becomes a critical challenge for public health systems. This study identifies and classifies patterns of accessibility to specialist clinics at the county level (LAU2) in Poland, with a specific focus on the elderly population (65+) and the access gap for chronic-care-related specialties between 2021 and 2024. Using unpublished data from the Statistics Poland (GUS) survey 1.29.07, the research evaluates 22 medical specialties essential for geriatric and long-term care. An arbitrary taxonomy method was employed to categorize 380 counties based on the intensity of use (visits per 1,000 residents) and the breadth of the local medical offer. The results reveal profound spatial inequalities, identifying numerous "healthcare deserts" where the aging population faces significant barriers to accessing vital specialties such as geriatrics, neurology, and cardiology. Even in highly urbanized areas, the availability of specialized care for seniors is often fragmented, failing to meet the demands of rapid demographic shifts. The findings suggest that the current hybrid model of healthcare delivery in Poland fosters regional polarization, leaving peripheral regions with insufficient resources. This study argues for a transition toward integrated spatial planning and the development of regional geriatric excellence centers. Such centers should be strategically located based on potential spatial accessibility models, accounting for travel time and distance for senior citizens. Understanding these local gaps is indispensable for implementing egalitarian health policies that effectively address the complex needs of an aging society.

Keywords: aging population, geriatric care, spatial accessibility, health disparities, Poland, specialist outpatient care

Biography

Agata Żółtaszek is a researcher specializing in health economics, socioeconomic, and labour market studies. Her methodological expertise includes statistical, econometric, and spatial analysis to evaluate healthcare system efficiency. Her current research emphasizes the impact of regional disparities on the health outcomes of the elderly in Central Europe, with a focus on identifying local access gaps in specialized care. By integrating spatial methods with economic drivers, she seeks to develop evidence-based recommendations for more equitable health policies in aging societies.