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How is the Czech Prison Population Aging?

Introduction

In terms of demographics, the European population, including that of the Czech Republic, is aging, so the reason data on age and aging is so important (Chart 1) is clear. The problems experienced by individuals and society in association with the aging population are reflected in the lives of each and every one of us. They particularly affect social, economic and health aspects, which we need to prepare for in advance.

Projected population trends in the Czech Republic anticipate a slight reduction in the total population by 2050. The number of children under the age of 15 will fall by more than one quarter, while the number of senior citizens over the age of 65 will double and account for about 30 % of the population.¹ This view is based on the demographic forecast by the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO), which predicts the population will age significantly in 2050 and the number of people in the age category of 85 or over will increase fastest.²

The need to respond to the natural aging of strong birth years, together with higher life expectancy, is reflected in not only the work of the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which prepared a National Action Plan to Promote Positive Aging for 2013-2017 (Government Resolution of the Czech Republic No. 108 of 13 February 2013),³ but also in the vision of the Czech Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice is preparing for the problem of the aging prison population through the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, in a new strategic document titled Prison Concept to 2025 (Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 79 of 3 February 2016) as one of its specific objectives.⁴

¹ ČEVELA, Rostislav, ČELEDOVÁ, Libuše, KALVACH, Zdeněk, HOLČÍK, Jan, & KUBŮ, Pavel. *Sociální gerontologie Východiska ke zdravotní politice a podpoře zdraví ve stáří (Social Gerontology: Basis for Health Policy and Promoting Health in Old Age)*. Prague: Grada Publishing, a.s., 2014. ISBN 978-80-247-4544-2.

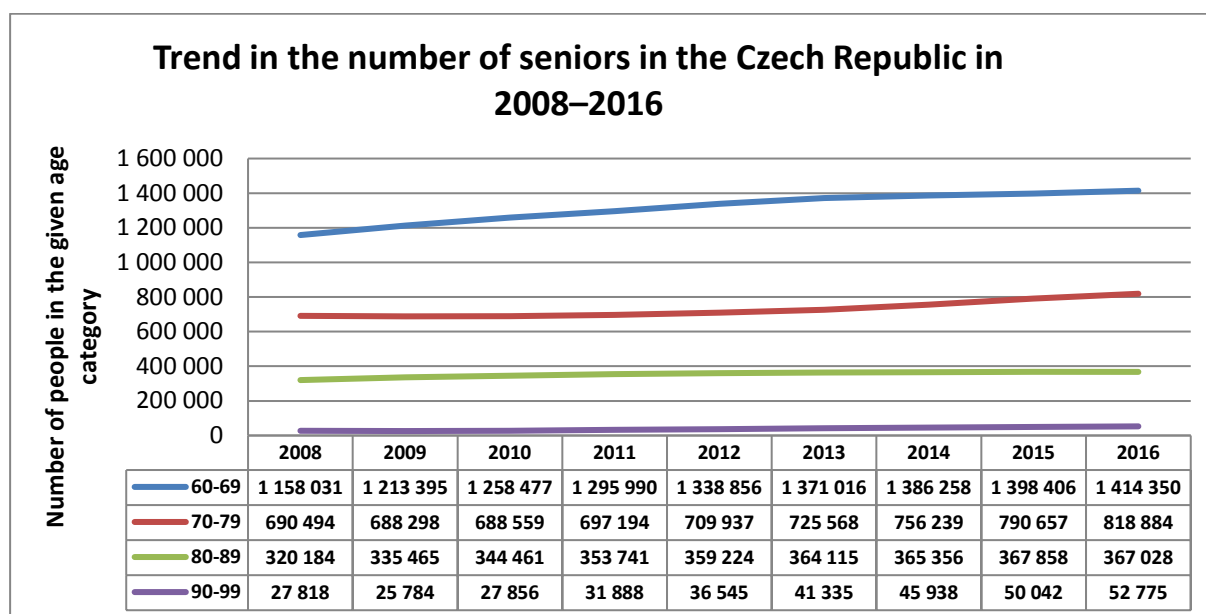
² *Populační prognóza ČR do r. 2050 – N (Population Prognosis for the Czech Republic to 2050 – N)* (30 June 2004). Downloaded from the Czech Statistical Office website: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/populacni-prognoza-cr-do-r2050-n-g9kah2fe2x>.

³ The resolution is based on UN documents and recommendations, in particular the International Plan of Action on Aging adopted in 2002 in Madrid and the UN Principles for Older Persons, a document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (Resolution 46/91) on 16 December 1991.

⁴ *Koncepce vězeňství (Prison Concept)* (22 June 2017). Downloaded from the General Directorate of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic website: <http://vscr.cz/koncepce-vezenstvi/>.

Chart 1

Trend in the number of seniors in selected age categories in the Czech Republic in 2008-2016



Compiled by the author according to CZSO statistics¹

The aging of the prison population according to Czech Prison Service statistics

The gradual aging of the population in the Czech Republic has also been reflected in the age structure of prosecuted, charged and subsequently convicted persons. According to Válková and Hulmáková, there has been an increase in the number of unconditional prison sentences imposed on seniors over the age of 60 per 100,000 inhabitants in recent years (the index was 99 in 2000, increasing to 147 in 2012).² Although seniors usually receive short-term prison sentences of up to one year, the number of convicted seniors in Czech prisons is gradually increasing, see Chart 2. However, when interpreting the data in this chart, the amnesty declared by the President of the Czech Republic, Václav Klaus, to mark the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the independent Czech Republic must be taken into account. Therefore, 2013 is not typical, as the number of inmates fell by about 30 % as a result of the amnesty.³

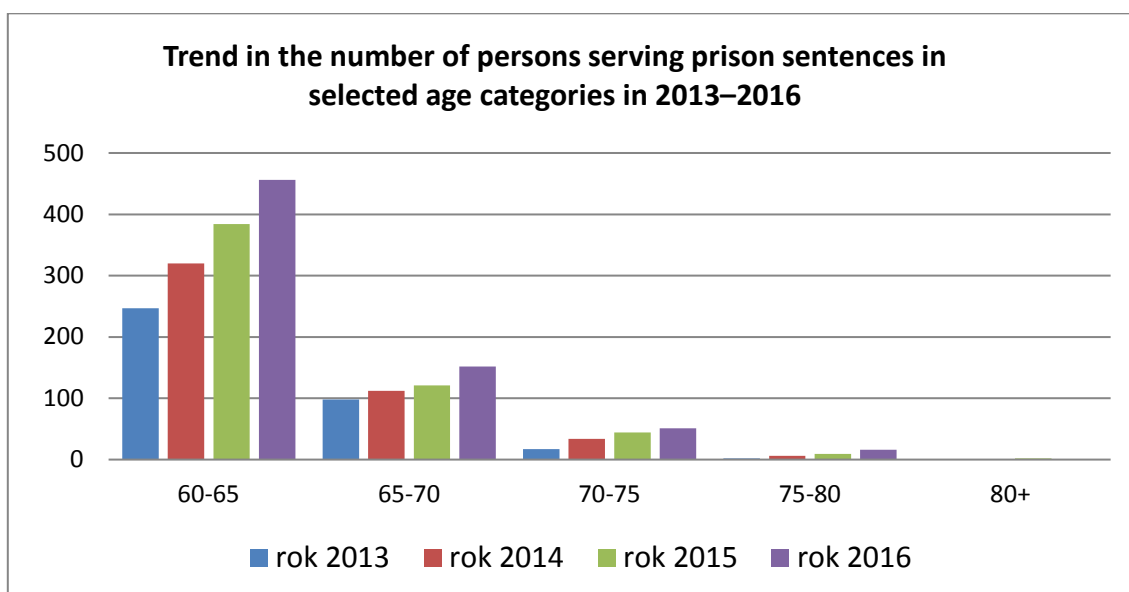
¹ *Věkové složení obyvatelstva – 2016* (Age Structure of the Population - 2016). (28 April 2017). Downloaded from the Czech Statistical Office website: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/vekove-slozeni-obyvatelstva-2016>.

² VÁLKOVÁ, Helena & HULMÁKOVÁ, Jana. Kriminalita stárnoucí populace a sankční politika uplatňovaná vůči seniorům v České republice (Criminality of the Aging Population and Sanction Policy Relating to Seniors in the Czech Republic). In: *Fórum sociální práce* (Social Work Forum), 2/2013, p. 29-44.

³ BIEDERMANOVÁ, Eva. Je výkon trestu odnětí svobody v nestátních objektech v českých podmínkách reálný? (Is Imprisonment in Non-Government Facilities Realistic under Czech Conditions?) In: *Trestněprávní revue* (Criminal Law Review). 5/2014, p. 121-124.

Chart 2

Trend in the number of persons serving prison sentences in selected age categories in 2013–2016



Source: Statistical Yearbooks of the Czech Prison Service for the relevant years, as of 31 December of the given year.

Yet, it is important to note the specifics of the age of persons serving prison sentences indicated in the **Statistical Yearbooks of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic** (hereinafter Yearbooks), which are the basic source of information and statistics on inmates in the Czech Republic. Unfortunately, tracking older age groups in the Yearbooks was unsystematic over the longer term as this figure was not given at all in some years, and there were also various changes:

- 1) In 1980 - 1993, the age of older convicted persons serving prison sentences was given in five year intervals (up to the age of 65), the last age category being over 65. Yet the number of persons over the age of 60 did not exceed 0.76 % (1980).¹
- 2) In 1994–2012, the age of older convicted persons was monitored in ten year intervals (50–60, 60–70 and over 70).
- 3) From 2013, Yearbooks returned to the finer division of five year intervals for the age of convicted persons again (ending at the age of 80+).

The diversity of data presented in the Yearbooks stems from demographic changes in the population, as statistics on the age of seniors responded to increasing retirement age and life expectancy over the years.

Therefore, if we want to document the aging of the prison population over a longer time period (Table 1), we need to unify the data from Yearbooks into the age categories 60-70 and 70+. Based on the data in Table 1, it can be stated that **both the absolute number of older persons in prison gradually increased over more than one**

¹ Data on percentages was drawn from the thesis, *Seniors Serving Prison Sentences*, viz TREGLER, Jiří. *Senioři ve výkonu trestu odnětí svobody* (Seniors Serving Prison Sentences). Brno, Czech Republic, 2007.

decade (from 220 persons in 2006 to 676 persons in 2016),¹ as did their percentage representation.

Table 1

Number of persons over the age of 60 in prison in 2006-2016

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
60-70	208	280	238	297	345	398	395	345	432	505	608
70 +	12	16	15	17	19	27	31	19	40	55	68
Total	220	296	253	314	364	425	426	364	472	560	676
Total (in %)	1.36	1.78	1.4	1.62	1.87	2.07	2.08	2.54	2.87	2.97	3.3
Total people in prison	16 179	16 647	18 100	19 374	19 449	20 541	20 429	14 301	16 433	18 850	20 501

Source: Statistical Yearbooks of the Czech Prison Service for the relevant years, as of 31 December of the given year.

Suicide by seniors in prisons and the general population

Unfortunately, there is often an accumulation of illnesses and disorders in older age. This is associated with the attempted or successful suicide of seniors as one of the accompanying pathological phenomena of old age. Information classifying suicide in the general population by age is provided by the CZSO, which complements statistics on suicides collected by the Czech Police - compare Marešová.² In the publication, Deaths Listed by Cause of Death, Gender and Age in the Czech Republic, Regions and Districts - 2005 to 2014 on the CZSO website,³ suicides are broken down by gender, age and manner of execution. It is apparent that there has been a **slight increase in the number of suicides by seniors** in the general population in the Czech Republic over the last decade, see Chart 3. However, this data must be interpreted taking into account the increase in the number of persons in these age groups.

Suicides also occur in remand and in prison. Experience and data from the Prison Service of the Czech Republic shows that the period of highest risk for both accused and convicted persons is the first 48 hours after arriving in prison; in contrast, the end of a sentence is not decisive for committing suicide. Attempts to commit suicide most often occur on Fridays, in the afternoon to evening, when the majority of employees

¹ As part of remand proceedings, 1,907 accused were placed in remand prisons as of 31 December 2016, of which 49 were over the age of 60, i.e. 2.57 %. As of the same date, 7 persons over the age of 60 were sentenced to life imprisonment (about 9 % of all persons with life sentences).

² MAREŠOVÁ, Alena et al. *Analýza trendů kriminality v roce 2014* (Analysis of Criminality Trends in 2014). Prague: ICSP, 2015. ISBN 978-80-7338-150-9.

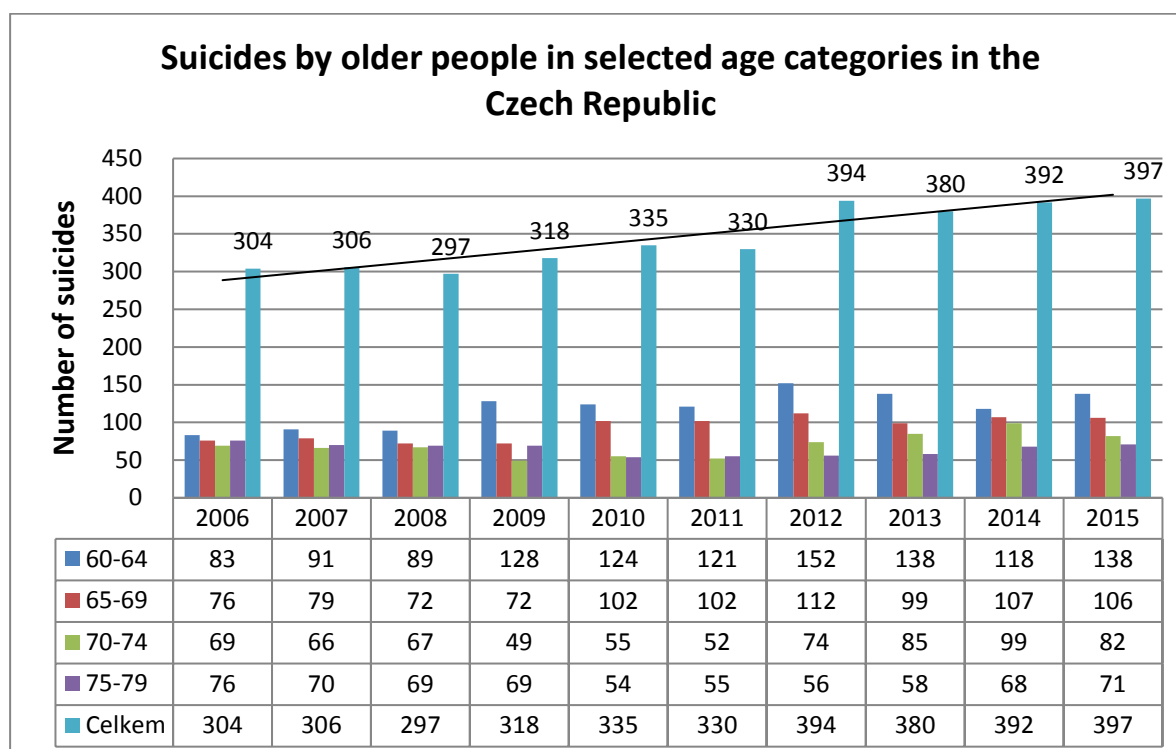
³ *Zemřelí podle seznamu příčin smrti, pohlaví a věku v ČR, krajích a okresech - 2005 - 2014* (Deaths Listed by Cause of Death, Gender and Age in the Czech Republic, Regions and Districts - 2005 to 2014) (16 November 2015). Downloaded from the Czech Statistical Office website: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/ceska-republika-podle-pohlavi-a-veku-2005-2014>.

are ending their work day, and on weekends or during changes in shifts. Suicides are attempted in remand more often than in prison.¹

Data on the number of suicides in prisons is monitored separately for accused and convicted persons in the Statistical Yearbooks of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic in the section on extraordinary events. Their age is not indicated in the Yearbooks due to the low number of cases. A closer analysis of suicides and attempted suicides in prison should be evident from information provided to the Government Council for Human Rights on the issue of prisons each year, as required by Government Resolution of the Czech Republic No. 80 of 3 February 2016. The age of persons showing signs of suicidal behaviour in 2015 – from the age of 17 to 59 (average age 34.8) - can be determined from material submitted by the General Directorate of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, viz. Analysis of Suicides in Prison in 2015. Persons who committed suicide were older - aged between 22 and 50 (average age 36.1). The **highest risk** group indicated in the submitted material was **inmates between the ages of 41-45, i.e. not persons of senior age.**

Chart 3

Suicides by older people in selected age categories in the Czech Republic



Compiled by the author according to CZSO statistics.²

¹ Council Meeting of 6 June 2016. (6 June 2016). Downloaded from the Government of the Czech Republic website: https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rlp/cinnost-rady/zasedani-rady/Zapis-Rady-6--6--16_2.doc.

² Zemřeli podle seznamu příčin smrti, pohlaví a věku v ČR, krajích a okresech - 2005 - 2014 (Deaths Listed by Cause of Death, Gender and Age in the Czech Republic, Regions and Districts - 2005 to 2014) (16 November 2015). Downloaded from the Czech Statistical Office website: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/ceska-republika-podle-pohlavi-a-veku-2005-2014>.

Persons permanently incapable of work in Czech prisons according to researchers

With the increasing number of seniors¹ in prisons, there is an increasing interest in this category of inmates by the Prison Service of the Czech Republic. Prison Service staff, particularly those who come into daily contact with aging people, are aware of their limits when working with these inmates. The treatment programme for seniors must take into account the specifics of their declining psychological and physical condition.

Persons over the age of 65 serving prison sentences in Czech prisons are usually classified as **persons permanently incapable of work** (PPIW) and are not obliged to do so. PPIW also includes inmates who are recipients of 3rd degree disability pensions or whose state of health does not allow permanent employment (Section 69 (1) of Act No. 169/1999 Coll., on imprisonment and amendments to certain related acts). However, seniors may request to be assigned work. The reason is the financial benefits of employment, social contact, the inmate's improved social status, and doing something meaningful for a large part of the day.

There were 24 departments in Czech prisons in 2016 specialising in imprisonment for persons permanently incapable of work in 15 prisons.² One of the largest PPIW departments for convicted women is located at Světlá nad Sázavou Prison and at Pardubice Prison for men.³

Standardized or specialized programs designed for convicted seniors included in PPIW are currently not implemented. But for example, in Heřmanice and Stráž pod Ralskem Prison, they work with convicted with mental defects and dementia in a specialized department for convicts with mental retardation.

Despite the fact that the number of persons in prison over the age of 60 is increasing (approx. 3.3% at the end of 2016), this area has not been fully mapped. The exception is graduate and postgraduate theses, which allows us to refer to an older thesis titled *Seniors Serving Prison Sentences, from 2007*.⁴ In his research, the author confirmed that the number of seniors (over 65) in the prison population was rising and points out their increasing number in the future.

A study describing a group of persons permanently incapable of work, including persons of retirement age, was conducted **at Pardubice Prison** in 2015. A total of 112 inmates were assigned to the PPIW department as of 10 August 2015,⁵

¹ A senior is considered a person over the age of 60, unless specified otherwise in the following text.

² *Annual Report 2016*. (11 March 2017). Downloaded from the General Directorate of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic website: <http://vscr.cz/informacni-servis/uredni-deska/>.

³ Concrete activities and procedures for dealing with PPIW are not specified in the internal regulations of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, nor are there any specialised courses for working with them.

⁴ TREGLER, Jiří. *Senioři ve výkonu trestu odnětí svobody* (Seniors Serving Prison Sentences). Brno, Czech Republic, 2007.

⁵ The number of convicted persons in specialised departments also records health assistants, in this case four people.

of whom 30 were over the age of 65 (Section 69 (1) (a) of Act No. 169/1999 Coll., on Imprisonment).

The study described 106 PPIW inmates, with almost **40 % over the age of 60** (42 people) included in the sample. Most of the 106 men studied had vocational training without final exam, were of Czech nationality, and were divorced or single. Among the most frequent offences for which offenders were serving prison sentences was theft (30 persons), murder (28 persons), fraud (21), breaking and entering (20) and robbery (19). Most often, they were first-time offenders (35 %) or in prison for the second (18 %) and third time (12 %).

Twenty PPIW respondents from the Pardubice Prison in the age group 30-78 completed the submitted questionnaire and commented on the **treatment programmes offered in prison**. They were found to be passive in using the treatment programmes provided, and as many as 80% did not participate in any therapeutic activities and 50% were bored during their free time. However, this was predominantly younger respondents (30 to 53 years of age), and only applied to seniors in three cases (66, 72 and 78), though surprisingly none of them indicated their health as poor.¹

Experience with seniors in prison - Poland

There is also increasing interest in seniors serving prison sentences in neighbouring Polish prisons, as confirmed by Grzesiak.² He argues that when working with senior inmates and after their release from prison, activities should be **largely based on social assistance and social work**. Based on an analysis of his research results, Grzesiak recommends taking into account the following ten principles³ in penitentiary work with regard to the state of health of convicted seniors (who he considers as persons over the age of 65):

- 1) Penitentiary work with seniors in prison must be supportive, caring, remedial, rehabilitative, and if necessary therapeutic.
- 2) Architectural and organisational solutions to prisons should be executed with a view to helping senior inmates function day-to-day in prisons.
- 3) There is a need to introduce alternative sanctions for seniors to serving prison sentences (electronic monitoring).
- 4) Support the creation of suitable conditions for activities with senior inmates (more time to work with them, more professional staff in prisons, less administration, etc.).

¹ RASZKOVÁ, Tereza & HOFERKOVÁ, Stanislava. *Edukace a reedukace trvale pracovně nezařaditelných v českých věznicích* (Education and Re-Education of Persons Permanently Incapable of Work in Czech Prisons). Hradec Králové: Gaudeamus, 2015. ISBN 978-80-7435-378-9.

² GRZESIAK, Sławomir. Pokročilý věk v polských trestních institucích - současnost a perspektivy (Advanced Age in Polish Penal Institutions - Present and Perspectives). In: VÁLKOVÁ, Helena; ČERNÍKOVÁ, Vratislava; FIRSTOVÁ, Jana et al. *Aktuální otázky vězeňství*. (Current Issues in the Prison System) (p. 79-86). Prague: Police Academy of the Czech Republic in Prague, 2014. ISBN 978-80-7251-426-7.

³ GRZESIAK, Sławomir. *Praca penitencjarna z wieźniami seniorami*. Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT - Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 2013. ISBN 978-83-7432-902-6.

- 5) Provide seniors with penitentiary, remedial, therapeutic and medical activities appropriate to their age, needs and health condition in prison.
- 6) Allow seniors sufficient time to adapt to prison life and isolation from the outside world.
- 7) Place seniors in cells with suitable fellow prisoners - preferably of similar age.
- 8) Provide professional training for prison staff.
- 9) Collaborate with non-government organisations and healthcare facilities outside prison - preparing to help senior inmates after their release.
- 10) Thoroughly prepare senior inmates for life after their release from prison.

Grzesiak confirmed that **when working with senior inmates, the specifics of this group must be taken into account, with an emphasis on therapeutic, medical and re-adaptation activities**, which should be key elements in the model supporting penitentiary care for seniors in prison, with an emphasis on the development of geriatric rehabilitation.¹

Conclusion

It is astonishing that inmates of senior age in the Czech prison population have hitherto, with few exceptions, escaped attention by researchers. One reason may be their seemingly low percentage. In 2016, 3.3% of the total number of 20,501 inmates serving prison sentences were over the age of 60. However, this group cannot be ignored. Their number will increase in the future and they will require special treatment and the provision of specific services (health, therapeutic, social, etc.). In order to prepare for this situation, as anticipated by the Prison Concept to 2025, seniors and their problems in prison will need to be thoroughly analysed. This task therefore presents a challenge for future researchers working in the field of penology, as well as Czech Prison Service staff working with aging inmates in prison.

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¹ JŮZL, Miloslav, et al. Stáří v penitenciární izolaci jako výzva pro vězeňský personal (Age in Penitentiary Isolation as a Challenge for Prison Staff). *Epistemologická východiska penitenciární vědy* (Epistemological Basis of Penitentiary Science) (p. 165-173). Brno: Institut mezioborových studií, s.r.o. (Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies), 2015. ISBN 978-80-88010-06-7.

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RESUMÉ

Článek upozorňuje prostřednictvím dostupných statistických údajů na zvyšující se počet stárnoucích osob ve výkonu trestu odnětí svobody v českých věznicích. Poukazuje krátce na specifika této skupiny osob vyplývající mimo jiné z provedeného výzkumu trvale pracovní nezařaditelných osob ve Věznici Pardubice a na zkušenosti při práci s ní v sousedním Polsku.

Autorka avizuje nedostatečný zájem o stárnoucí osoby ve věznicích ze strany výzkumníků, způsobený pravděpodobně nízkým absolutním počtem těchto osob ve výkonu trestu a s tím související nedostatek dat, který by umožnil analyzovat stávající situaci a přijmout potřebná opatření do budoucnosti.

Klíčová slova: Koncepce vězeňství do roku 2025, sebevraždy seniorů, česká vězeňská populace seniorského věku, trvale pracovní nezařaditelné osoby.

S U M M A R Y

The article uses available statistical data to highlight the increasing number of aging persons serving sentences in Czech prisons. It briefly points out the specifics of this group, arising, inter alia, from a study of persons permanently incapable of work at the Pardubice Prison and from experience working with them in neighbouring Poland.

The author notes the lack of interest in aging prison inmates by researchers, probably due to the low absolute number of these persons in prison and the associated lack of data enabling an analysis of the current situation and adoption of necessary measures in the future.

Keywords: Prison Concept to 2025, suicide by seniors, inmates of senior age in the Czech prison population, persons permanently incapable of work.