



## The power of a smile

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### Background

What is a smile, really?



No more than a few coordinated sprains of our facial muscles, our Zygomaticus major in action, which raises the edges of our mouth, suppresses negative thoughts, and renders our appearance cheerful. It does not require any special skills and is not limited by our age, location or time. In today's fast-paced world we forget to smile. We are entangled in our everyday problems and thus can see only the bad things around us and within ourselves. We rarely notice life's small or big wonders. Nonetheless, children sincerely smile to the world with shining eyes and pure heart. Then they grow up and change so there will be only very few occasions on which they are able to selflessly give cheerfulness to others albeit laughter is healthy, makes one happy and sugar-coats.



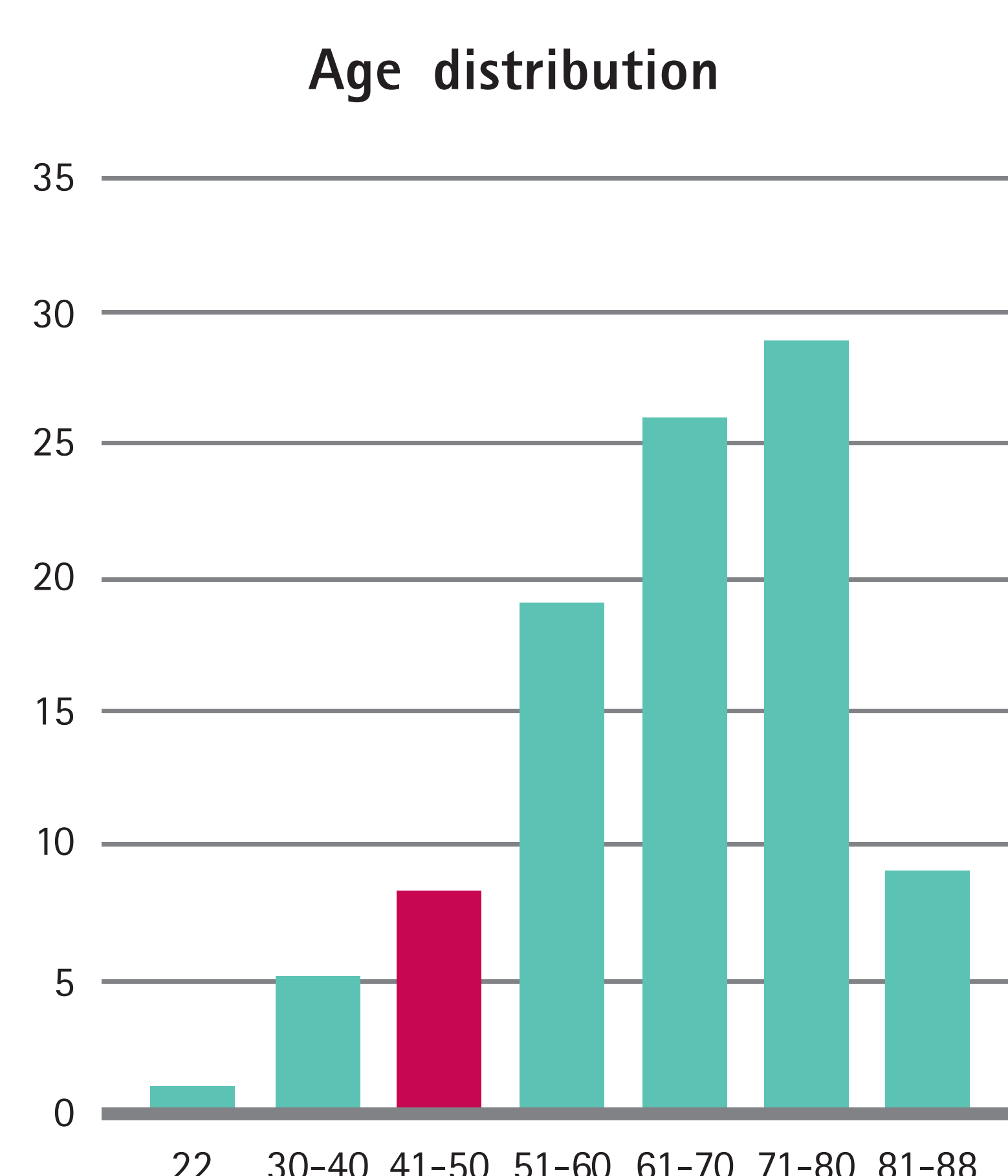
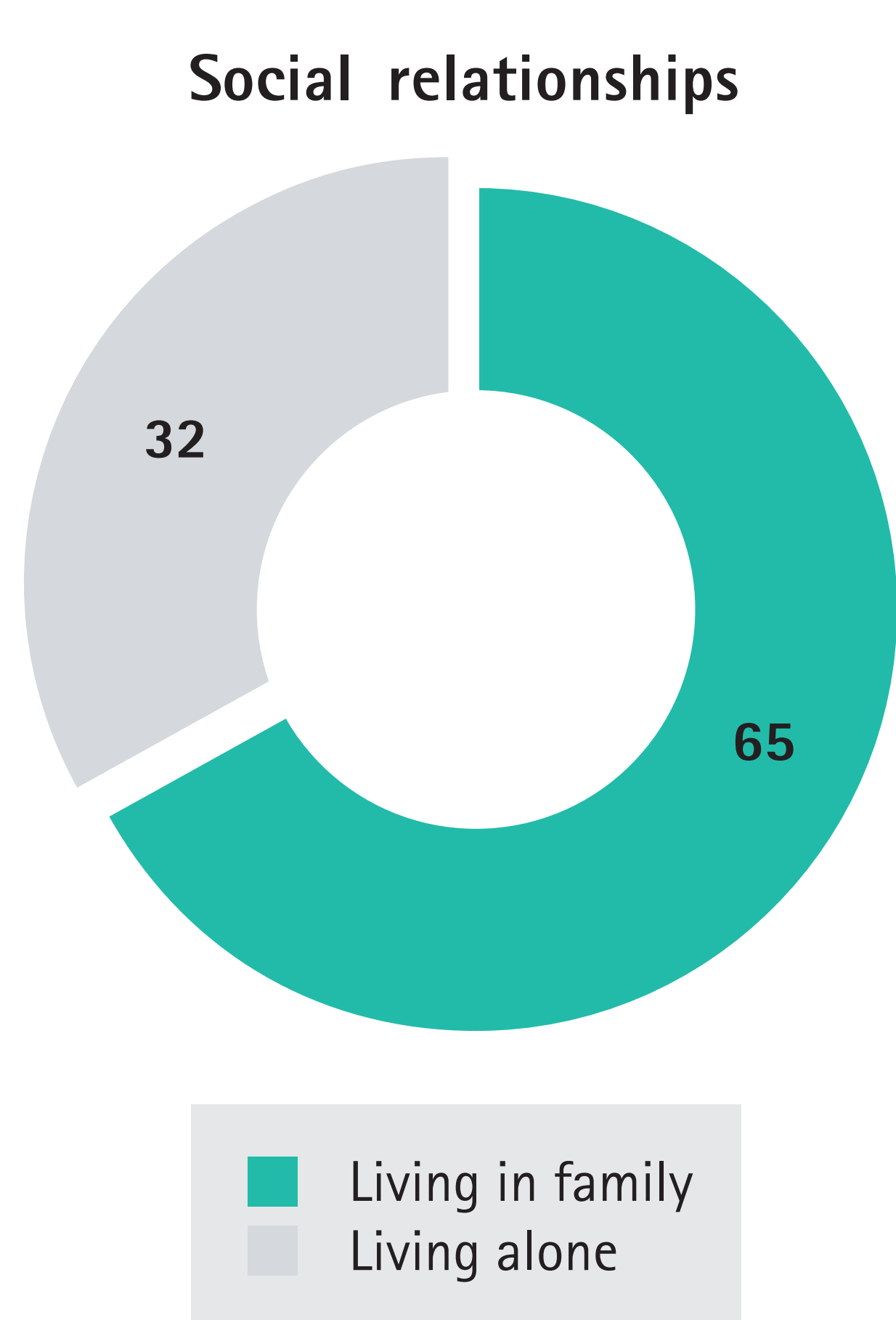
The study<sup>1</sup> involving 169 volunteers and presented in the Journal of Psychological Science by Tara Kraft and Sarah Pressman, researchers of the University of Kansas, examined the effects of different types of facial expressions on the physical conditions of the participants when solving problems under stress. During the experiment the researchers measured the volunteers' heart rate and stress level. Stress is the number one cause of myocardial infarction!

In the course of the experiment it was concluded that smile appeases stress and physically helps to overcome difficult, stressful situations. The evaluation revealed that smile really affects our physical conditions, even if it is not intentional, just a mere contraction of our facial muscles.

"A smile is a curve that straightens everything..."



### Does this work in haemodialysis? How painful may the puncture be when the staff smiles?



### Methods and results

Dialysis Centre no. 8 in Tatabánya, 98 haemodialysis patients, on the basis of 84 responses to the questionnaire: Female: 33, Male: 51. Lives in family: 61, single: 23 people. Fistula is possessed by 50, cannula by 34 people. Nervous prior to arriving for dialysis treatment: 8, anxious 14, calm: 62 people. The mood of the dialysis centre affects 41, not affected by it: 43. Smiling staff evokes better mood for 57 persons, 23 persons calm down, 3 people feel indifferent. "The puncture hurts less when the nurse smiles" stated 19 persons, it hurts the same, but they bear it better: 19 people; it does not matter to 12 patients. In the case of a cannula manipulation, a smiling nurse renders 27 patients calm, 7 people indifferent. 67 patients find that the time required for the treatment passes faster in the case of smiling nurses, for 17 persons its length feels the same. According to 72 people the nurses smile, whereas 12 people believe only few do so.

According to psychologists smile is "infectious", an innate ability which enables even a few weeks old baby to cheer his/her environment; it can also open the "taps" of the deepest love and arouse emotions even in the coldest-hearted humans. This is because smile is a gift. It is of such great value; still many people appear to take it for granted and most of the time we are "mean" with it as if it was not in inexhaustible supply.

Experts have long known that smile – regardless of the type – is good for the soul. Humour has a positive effect on everyone else, which has repercussions also on the smiling person. The muscular activity needed for laughter improves blood flow to the brain therefore it gets more oxygen as well as serotonin, the so-called: "happy hormone", which boosts the immune system.



*Smile is an exceptional gift! After all, it costs nothing and it is heart-warming. It lives for only a moment, but the memory remains. It delivers delight and nourishes goodwill. It is an excellent antidote against envy and malice. It gives encouragement to those who quail and pours strength into them. It cannot be purchased, borrowed, stolen; it does not represent earthly goods to anyone as long as one does not voluntarily donate it to someone else. If someone is too tired to smile at you, look at him cheerfully, because no one needs a smile more than someone who is no longer able to smile.*

### Conclusion

It may occur that people are no longer able to be more serene whether they see a face beautified by a smile. The stress level is too high; the pressure is continuously on them. Everyone has bad days. Nevertheless, we ought not to let sullenness overwhelm us. I myself go through times during which it is hard even for me to smile. Sometimes, however, no matter how difficult, I feel like I have to do it, because it may very well be that with a smile I empower someone. Subsequently, it no longer seems to be a big effort, because the majority of people like giving as making someone feel happier makes one feel good too. We may sometimes find ourselves in nadir. In this case, one should try to see the sunshine in the grim days, hear bird singing and notice the blue sky, the flowers, a smile which worth living for...

