

## **Public perception of dog therapy – how we perceive the role of dogs in providing assistance**

### **Summary**

Dog therapy, a form of intervention involving the participation of a dog, is a relatively new means of supporting the rehabilitation process or treatment of people in need of assistance or care. Research on the use of animals in assisted intervention indicates positive effects, but attention is also drawn to the limitations on drawing clear conclusions from these studies, due to methodological deficiencies. Animal-assisted intervention (especially with dogs) is increasingly common, and the question arises as to public attitudes regarding this form of assistance. The aim of the study was to investigate how dog therapy is perceived by two social groups – young adults and the elderly. A total of 328 people took part in the study, including 132 students of the University of the Third Age (UTW) and 196 young adults, mainly students (Online group). The data was collected using a questionnaire of our own design. The UTW group completed a paper version of the survey, and the group of young adults, defined as the Online group, used an online form. The data indicate that both younger and older respondents have a positive attitude towards dog therapy. Awareness of the subject is increasing, with the younger generation having greater knowledge of dog therapy. While older people understand the sense of animal-assisted intervention and the need for it, they approach it more cautiously.

**KEY WORDS:** dog therapy, animal-assisted intervention, University of the Third Age, young adults