

# Housing Aspirations of the Elderly in Malaysia: A Comparison of Urban and Rural Areas

Ainoriza Mohd Aini , Nooraisyilah Murni and Wan Nor Azriyati Wan Abd Aziz  
*Department of Estate Management, Faculty of Built Environment, University of Malaya, 50603  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.*

\**ainoriza@um.edu.my*

Recent population censuses in many advanced industrial countries have highlighted the growing number of elderly in the rural areas. Additionally, industrialisation in the urban areas of developing countries has, to a certain degree caused significant changes of traditional family structure and has resulted in nuclear conjugal families. Likewise, the ageing phenomenon in Malaysia is inevitable due to the exponential increase in the elderly population. Furthermore, rapid urbanisation and out-migration of rural young generation, has had a significant impact on the population of Malaysia. This is reflected by the high proportion of elderly and high dependency in the rural areas. The issues and demographic pattern of the elderly are divergent and varies from the urban to the rural setting. This article looks at the housing implications of the ageing population in Malaysia in general, and in the rural and urban setting specifically. The study examines the housing aspirations of the elderly living in the urban and rural areas in Malaysia. Future housing plans and the kind of living arrangement the Malaysian elderly seek are explored based on the urban-rural locational aspect. In the effort to provide better quality housing for urban and rural elderly, a face-to-face survey interview was conducted on Malaysian aged 50 years and older living in the Kuala Lumpur (urban) and Kelantan (rural) areas. The findings indicate that most elderly in the urban and the rural areas prefer to age-in-place and stay in a familiar environment. The rural elderly has a stronger preference to ageing in place. A majority of the elderly also indicated a preference to live close to their children, which suggests strong family values amongst Malaysians. The study further revealed that the elderly are more likely to either renovate or improve, especially, the bedroom and bathroom areas to avoid accidents. The elderly in the rural area preferred landed housing in the form of either a single or double storey bungalow, whilst, the elderly in the urban area are more open and willing to move to other housing options, for example, strata housing, and other forms of landed housing, for example, terrace house and bungalow. It is recommended that a policy be introduced to promote ageing-in-place and takes into account the aspirations, preferences, behaviour and opinions of the elderly in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** *Elderly, Housing, Housing Needs, Housing Aspirations, Urban-Rural*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ageing is inevitable. The steady increase of the elderly will render Malaysia an aging nation status by 2030. The elderly population in Malaysia has increased significantly from 0.5 million in the 1970's to about 2.3million in 2010. It is forecasted that by 2030, the elderly population will increase to 15 percent of the total population in Malaysia (Hamid *et al.*, 2013; Sulaiman, 2011). The Malaysian society is rapidly transforming into an urban society and this has affected the Malaysian way of life (Hassan,

2009). Traditionally, Malaysians practice the norm where the elderly co-reside with their children. However, with increased urbanisation and modernisation, the social characteristics of Malaysians have also gradually change in tandem. These changes has expanded educational and job opportunities, resulted in smaller family size, intensified online connectivity activities and further promoted the migration of the younger populations to the urbanised areas (Duflo, 2012). Thus, the needs, expectations and aspirations of the elderly in the urban and rural areas may differ greatly due to

urbanisation phenomenon.

This circumstances has prompted the formulation of the key research question i.e. what are the housing aspirations and future housing plans of the elderly in urban and rural areas in Malaysia? This paper discusses the housing aspirations of the elderly, focusing on the spatial differences i.e. the urban and the rural areas in Malaysia. In addition, the study will highlight the housing options preferred by the elderly in the urban and rural areas, the future mobility plan of the elderly and reasons for the move, and the types of houses and location of future housing preferred by the elderly.

The first part of the paper will establish the related and relevant literature, the context of the study and highlight the current understanding with regards to the elderly and ageing phenomenon as well as the housing needs and the urban-rural locational aspects. The data collection and analysis methods will be explained in the second part, followed by the discussion of the findings and synthesis of the key points. The paper will end with the conclusion and implications of the study.

## **2. MALAYSIAN ELDERLY AND THE AGEING PHENOMENON**

The Department of Statistics Malaysia (2010) recorded that the elderly population in Malaysia is about 8 percent of the total population in Malaysia. In other words, there are 2.2 million elderly out of the 28.5 million Malaysians. Hence, 1 out of every 13 person in Malaysia is an elderly. This figure is projected to increase annually. Sulaiman (2011) and Hamid (2008) forecasted that by the year 2020 about 10 percent of the population in Malaysia will consist of persons aged 60 years and older.

The significant increase in the elderly population is not a new global phenomenon (Holdsworth et al., 2013). The United Nations (2013) estimated that in 2013, there are approximately 841 million elderly. This figure is projected to steeply increase to approximately 2 billion by 2050, and by then, the number of elderly may either equal or even surpass the number of children (0-14 years).

Although there are many research on the elderly and ageing, a firm and definite age used in defining 'elderly' is yet to be established (Lim, 2012; Tinker et al., 2013; Yusnani, 2006). Different researchers

use different definitions of the elderly. For example, the World Health Organization (2012) defined elderly as those aged 60 years and older. Malaysia has adopted the "60 years and over" age group as the cut-off point in deliberating on the elderly. This definition is in line with that of the United Nations World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna in 1982. This research however, focused on the elderly aged 50 years and older in order to ascertain the future housing aspirations and preferences of the elderly.

The experiences of the elderly are diverse. Thus, understanding the diversity requires a comprehensive analysis of the elderly in the various contexts. In Malaysia, the issues of elderly housing needs and aspirations are often either neglected or not given proper emphasis. Lim (2012) implied that the understanding of the key issues surrounding the needs and aspirations of elderly is crucial to reform the existing policy and framework for related elderly service provision. Since Malaysia is a multiracial country, the aged care service delivery is complex and requires an inclusive and comprehensive assessment in order to meet the needs and aspirations of the current and future elderly community (Lim, 2012).

## **3. HOUSING AND HOUSING ASPIRATION**

Human Rights Education Associates (2011) stated that housing fulfils physical, psychological, social and maybe even economic needs of a person. For instance, housing fulfils the physical needs of a person by providing security and shelter. Cristoforetti et al. (2011) posited that a house symbolises the passage from the external to the internal world and from the private to a more public space. Housing fulfils the psychological needs of a person by providing him a sense of personal space and privacy. Subsequently, Lewis et al. (2011) opined that bedrooms, as well as toilets in a house, provide its owner with a sense of personal space and privacy. A house is symbolised as a space where independence, freedom and security are expected (Kellett et al., 2003; Wiles et al., 2009). Housing is a basic need for humans, and generally, represents a positive meaning despite the fact that to-date the meaning of a house to an individual is ambiguous (Parsell, 2010). A house is also symbolised as a passage from the external world to internal world and from the private space to a more public space

(Carroll et al., 2009; Cristoforetti et al., 2011; Wiles et al., 2009).

In some ways, a house also gives a sense of security, protection and comfort especially to a vulnerable group of people like the elderly. Cristoforetti et al. (2011), asserted that a house is of significance to the elderly as it fulfilled the essential need for safety and shelter. Tinker et al. (2013) further stressed that it is important to understand what appropriate housing is to the elderly and what their housing needs and their aspirations are. Similarly, Shannon (2010) acknowledged that the elderly is a special population with unique housing needs and aspirations. Above all, understanding the housing needs, nature and aspirations of the elderly requires an insight into the cultural context in which housing is designed and produced.

Housing aspirations can be defined as a 'realisable target or goal', which will affect the housing behaviour as well as the housing choices for tenure, type of property and the location (Clegg et al., 2007). A study on Housing Choices and Aspirations of Older People in London revealed that, although the elderly might not feel very happy with their current house, most of them will opt to stay as they are attached to it (linked to family and neighbourhood attachment) and thus, aspire to age-in-place (Croucher, 2008). The cultural context, especially the social aspects of housing serves as a way of satisfying owner's social needs, and may create social pressures that stimulate people to purchase the aspired houses in future (Yuhui, 2012). Therefore, examination of the housing aspirations of the elderly in the urban-rural area of Malaysia may reveal the gaps in terms of variation in the current housing choices and future desired housing choices.

#### 4. ELDERLY HOUSING OPTIONS

Living independently, that is, either living alone or with one's spouse, is not a norm amongst elderly in the developing countries. It is nevertheless, a dominant living arrangement in developed countries. In Korea for example, where ageing is rapid than that of Japan, there is significant reduction in support for the elderly from the children (Park et al., 2008). Common housing and facility options available for the elderly population can be divided into 4 categories namely; family

home (ageing in place), elderly care, medical facility and retirement village.

The first category is the family home or ageing in place. "Ageing in place" is a term used by gerontologists to refer to the situation where an elderly remains and continues living within the community, and at the same time have some level of independence, as compared to living in residential care (Wiles et al., 2011). Most elderly people aspire to age-in-place for the remaining period of their lives as it gives them a sense of attachment, sense of security and familiarity, whilst at the same time giving them a strong sense of identity through independence and autonomy (Costa Font et al., 2009; Wiles et al., 2011).

The second category, "elderly care" or elderly care institutions are community housing built for the senior citizens who are less fortunate either financially, childless or even abandoned. These institutions usually house the elderly who experience certain health conditions and hence, require extra attention and assistance (Barry et al., 2010). In general, these nursing homes can be further divided into 2 main categories namely: Private or Voluntary nursing homes.

The third category can be classified as "medical facilities". An elderly suffering from severe health conditions such as Alzheimer and dementia is commonly treated in a medical facility. The ability to house and treat the elderly who have severe health conditions are amongst the main features that differentiate the medical facility from other types of facility options available for the elderly.

Finally, is the "Retirement Village". The basic idea behind a retirement village concept is having the elderly community living independently together with other fellow elderly in building equipped with health and other assistance needed by the elderly. It is noteworthy to highlight that Malaysia has a simplistic version of the retirement village called the *pondok* system. The *pondok* system is different from the typical retirement village as the *pondok* system emphasises on religious activities and programmes (Zainab et al., 2012).

## 5. ELDERLY AND THE URBAN-RURAL CONTEXTS

The experiences of the elderly are diverse and unique, thus understanding the diversity requires an examination of the elderly in the different context and setting (Keating, 2008). The location of elderly, in terms of rural and urban areas can be one of the contexts/settings. Currently, only a few researchers have linked gerontology with the environmental and geographical or spatial elements (Andrews et al., 2009; Cutchin, 2009; Golant, 2012; Keating, 2008; Wahl et al., 2010). Keating (2008) for instance, highlighted the significance of the space element, in the context/setting of the rural area.

O'Shea (2009) contended that it is particularly important to ensure that the elderly have proper access to social activities, services as well as facilities. In this context, Winterton (2012) asserted that the elderly who reside in rural areas face difficulties in terms of mobility, age-related change with health, poor infrastructure, and access to services and goods. It is reasonable to conclude that the elderly in rural areas face a certain degree of difficulties which may affect their level of satisfaction with their housing.

Rural areas are often portrayed as problem-free, idyllic housing environments characterised by strong social ties and a slower pace of life; however, the reality can be somewhat different (Heenan, 2010). Although the rural areas are often thought of as areas with poor transportation services, lack of housing facilities and elderly related health facilities, it is statistically proven that the number of elderly residing in the rural areas outnumbered those living in the urban areas (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012; United Nation, 2011). In addition, the high crime rates in the urban neighbourhoods may also contribute to feelings of insecurity amongst most elderly (Smith, 2009). Furthermore, stiff housing competition, abnormal noise pollution, bad traffic congestion, excessive maintenance costs as well as other difficulties, have driven the elderly to return and settle down in the rural areas.

Wenger et al. (2008) are of the opinion that growing old in rural areas has its own pros and cons, and neither is consistently better nor worse than the elderly in urban areas. Keating (2008), in

addressing the question of whether rural areas are good places to grow old, noted that the answer depends on various factors. The stage in the person's life cycle, the community in which they live in and where they built, foster and nurture their relationships with other people and places are amongst the important factors. Nevertheless, different scholars have different opinions with regards to the pros and cons of living in the urban or rural areas.

In the context of Malaysia, it is acknowledged that the country has achieved extraordinary economic growth since its independence in 1957 and is rapidly transforming into an urban society (Hassan, 2009). Similar to other developing countries, Malaysia has experienced and continue to experience urbanisation that has manifested itself in expanding city size and boundary countrywide. People migrated into cities to look for better living conditions, such as better access to health services, better educational opportunities as well as securing better jobs (Dufлот, 2012). As a result, the social characteristics of Malaysians gradually change in tandem with the urbanisation process, for example, delay in marriage, smaller family size, and better paying jobs..

The urban-rural distinction may provide further platform to understanding how modernity and globalisation can affect the elderly (Wahl et al., 2010). This basic distinction may also provide an insight into how the urban and rural areas affect the housing aspirations of the elderly (Keating, 2008). Therefore, this research will examine the housing aspirations of the elderly, in the rural and urban areas in Malaysia. Hence, the objective of this paper is to investigate the housing aspirations of the elderly living in the urban and rural areas in Malaysia.

## 6. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur represents the urban area and Kelantan represents the rural area. Kelantan was chosen as the rural study area, mainly because the state of Kelantan display the lowest urbanisation level in Malaysia (Malaysian Statistical Department, 2010), whilst the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur was chosen as the urban study area as it has reached the highest level of urbanisation,

which makes it ideal as an urban study area in Malaysia (Malaysian Statistical Department, 2010). Malaysian aged 50 and above were selected as respondents as propounded in other researches by several authors (see for example Tatsiramos,2006; MacLeod and Stockdale ,2013) mainly because the “50-59 years old” age group is claimed as the retirement transition life course stage. This age group is also closely associated with the age when the elderly would begin to plan and ponder upon their retirement, including their housing plans. Furthermore, this group would also have aged and will be categorised as elderly when Malaysia become an ageing nation.

The data for this study were collected using face-to-face semi-structured interview. Prior to the actual empirical work, a pilot survey of 100 respondents selected randomly was conducted in Kuala Lumpur. The main purpose of the pilot study was to ensure the validity of the questions. The actual face-to-face interviews were carried out between January and June 2014 at study locations in Kuala Lumpur and Kelantan. Stratified random sampling based on age, ethnicity and strata (rural and urban) were adopted to obtain the samples. The total sample size was 384 (192 urban and 192 rural) and was determined using the Minimum Adequate Sample Size Formula (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

The enumerators were also assigned based on ethnicity quotas to ensure that the study population will reflect the demographic characteristics of the area. Face-to-face semi-structured interview allows enumerators to explain and clarify the questions especially to respondents who have low literacy rates. This technique also proved to be more helpful for older respondents who are hearing impaired. In Kelantan, the local dialect is widely spoken, thus requiring the hiring of local enumerators. This approach is adopted to increase accuracy and consistency of data collected. The average time taken to complete the interview was about 40 minutes.

## 7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Fifty eight percent of respondents in the urban areas are male, Malays (61%) and married (80%). Approximately 27% of respondents are Chinese followed by 12% Indians. Whilst in the rural area, the respondents are mostly females (56%), also dominated by Malays (70%) and married (77%). Forty two percent of the urban respondents have lived in their current house between 11- 20 years, followed by >20 years with 34.4% (refer Table 1). More than half (62.0%) of the rural elderly had lived in their current house for more than 20 years. Only a very small percentage (.5%) of the rural elderly indicated that they have lived in their current house for less than 5 years.

Table 1: Duration in current house

<5 years	6.3	.5
5-10 years	17.2	6.8
11-20 years	42.2	30.7
>20 years	34.4	62.0

Table 2 further revealed that a large majority (67.7%) of the urban elderly respondents either own or co-own their current house and this phenomenon is also common among the rural elderly although the percentage is lower (59.9%). Table 2 also indicates that urban elderly have a greater tendency (12.5%) to rent, as compared to

their rural counterparts, only 1.0% of elderly in the rural area rent their house. This may be an indication that owner occupation is still a preferred form of ownership status. Although rental is common in the urban areas but to find that there are the elderly renting may either indicate affordability or the plan to return to the rural area upon retirement.

Table 2: Ownership status

	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
Own/Co-own	67.7	59.9
Renting	12.5	1.0
Others	19.8	39.1

The study also examine the satisfaction level of the urban and rural elderly, based on the aspect of safety and adequacy of their current house. For this purpose, 5-points Likert scale was used. When asked of their perception with regards to the

physical safety aspects of their current house, both the urban and rural elderly agree that their current house is safe. However, both the urban and rural elderly specifically indicate that the bathroom in their current house is unsafe. This is shown in the Figure 1 and Figure 2.

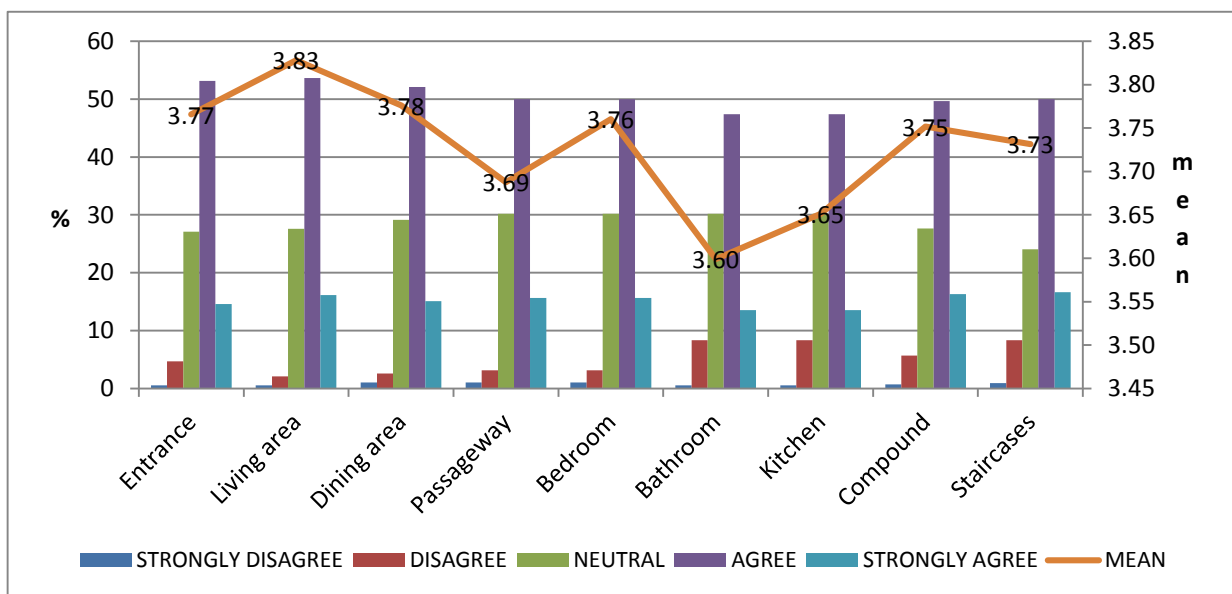


Figure 1: Urban Elderly perception towards Safety Aspect of current house

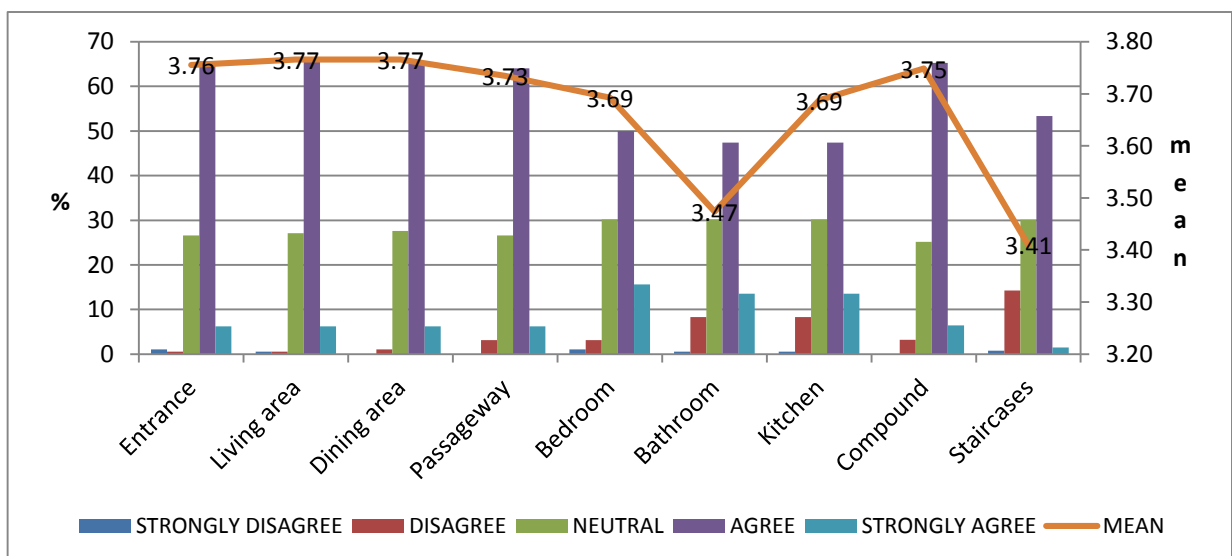


Figure 2: Rural Elderly perception towards Safety Aspect of current house

A majority of the urban and rural elderly agree that the size of their current house is adequate. However, the rural elderly indicated a slightly lower overall mean value with bedroom (3.44) and bathroom (3.42), suggesting lower

satisfaction with the size of the bedroom and toilet. The urban elderly, on the other hand, indicated a lower overall mean value with the bathroom (3.49) and kitchen (3.52) in their house, implying lower satisfaction with the size of the bathroom and kitchen (see Figure 3 and 4).

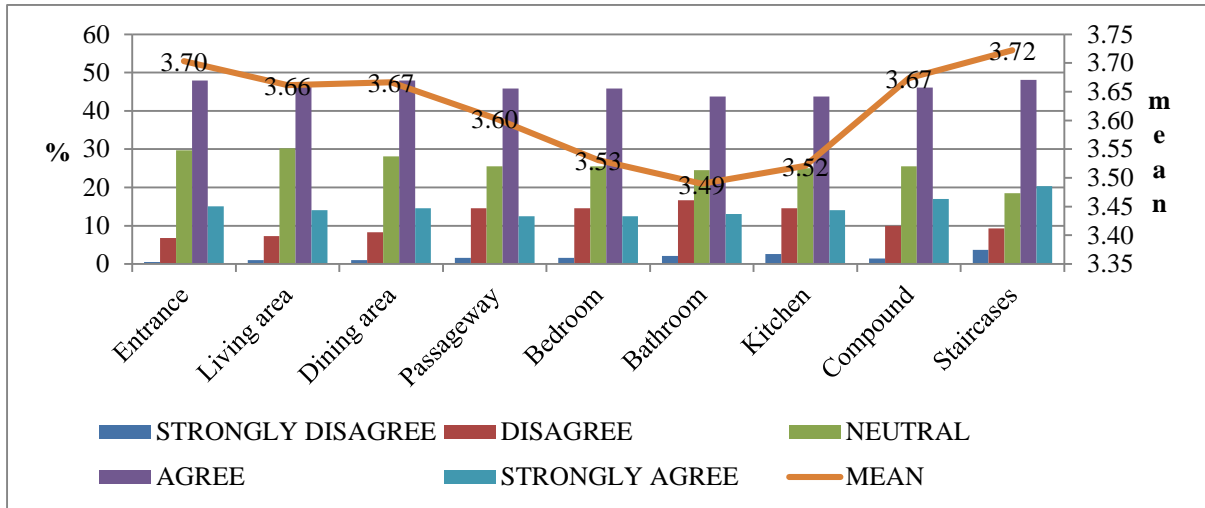


Figure 3: Urban Elderly perception towards size of current house

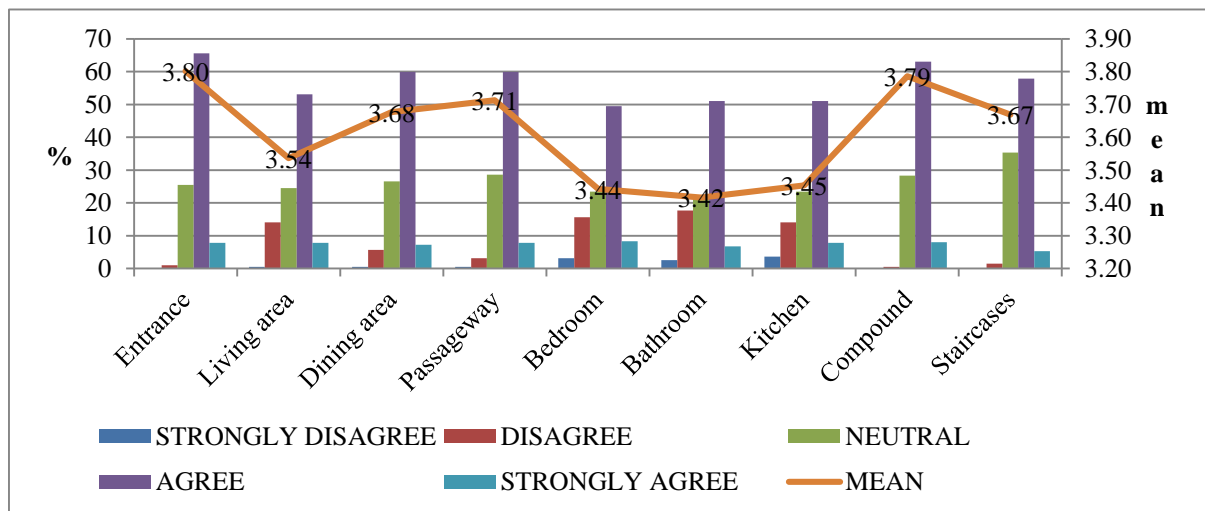


Figure 4: Rural Elderly perception towards size of current house

The elderly in the urban and rural area have expressed the desire to move out of their current homes, although the percentage is low, i.e. 15% and 3% respectively (see Figure 5 and 6). This could be an indication of dissatisfaction with current housing and wanting to acquire or buy new housing that will meet their needs or preference. The dissatisfaction with current home amongst the elderly is further illustrated in Figures 5 and 6 respectively, where 62% of the elderly in the urban area and 67% of the elderly in the rural area plan

to purchase new homes. A majority of the elderly from both the urban and rural areas (76% and 94% respectively) have no intention of moving out of their current houses. This finding parallels that of Dye et al. (2010) which concluded, elderly prefer to age-in-place or stay within an area which they are familiar with. Additionally, most elderly displayed high residential stability as they aged and are very attached to their current neighbourhood and current house (Oswald et al., 2011; Scharf et al., 2005).

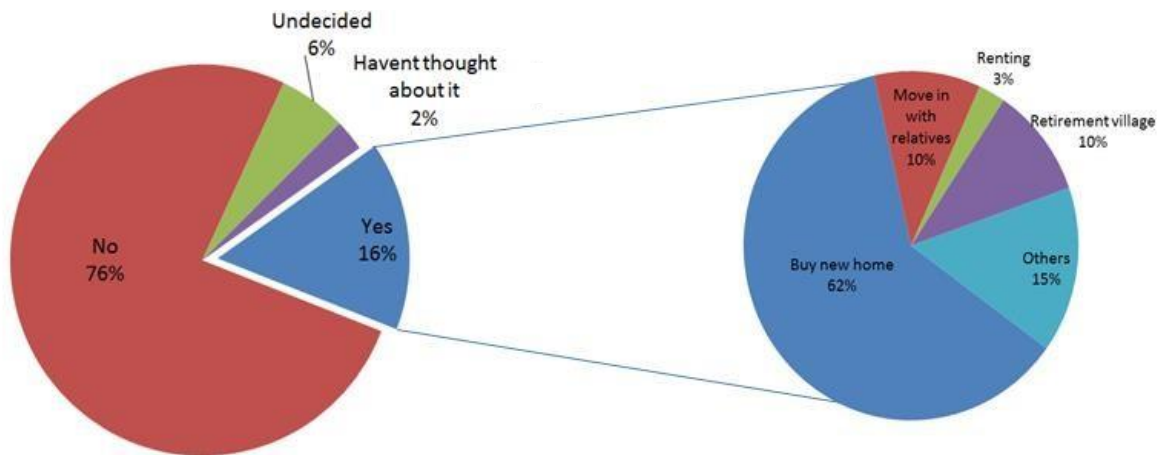


Figure 5: Urban elderly housing plan

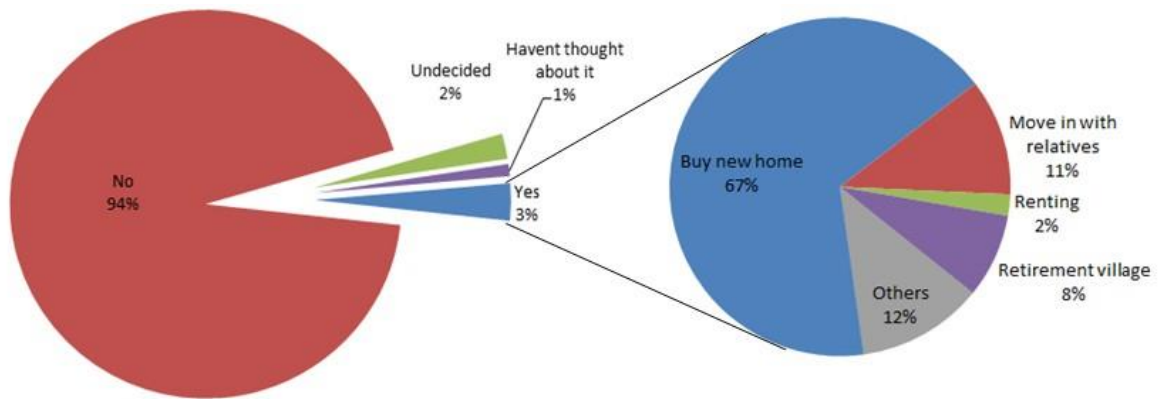


Figure 6: Rural elderly housing plan

The elderly in the rural area are more inclined to either bequeath their current house to their children (60%) or rent the house out (40%) as illustrated in Figure 7. This is contrary to the plan

of the elderly in the urban areas. The elderly in the urban areas are inclined to either sell the current house or bequeath the house to their children. The option of renting the house out is not favoured by the urban elderly.

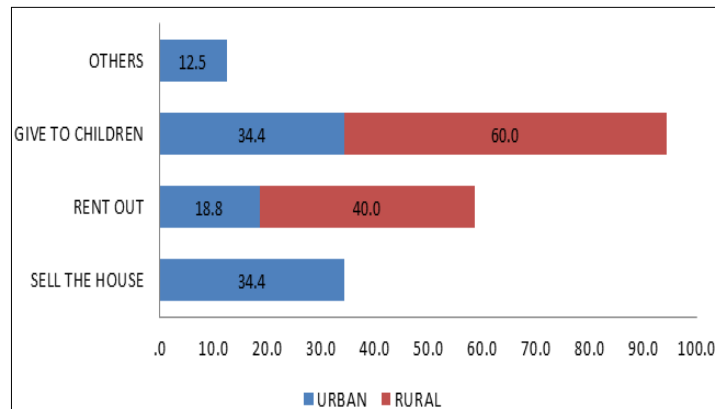


Figure 7: Plan for current house



The aspirations of the urban elderly with regards to the type of house they plan to purchase are more varied. The single storey terrace house is preferred, illustrating the concern with stairs climbing, followed by double storey house and the traditional house. There is also the aspiration amongst the urban elderly to own strata housing i.e. apartments and flats. The rural elderly, on the other hand,

preferred to purchase only the single storey detached i.e. free standing, and the double storey terraced type of houses. The high preference for single storey detached houses (86%) is typical of the rural areas and further suggest that the concern with stairs climbing is even more prevalent amongst the rural elderly. See Figure 8.

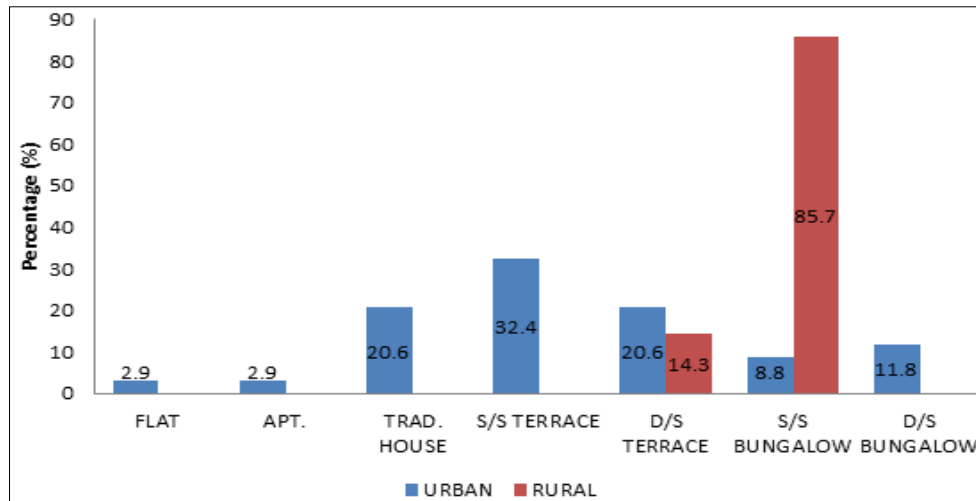


Figure 8: Type of house that respondents plans to buy

A majority (47%) of the elderly in the urban areas plan to purchase a house located in the same town they are currently living in. This finding is similar to the findings of the study by Banks et al. (2012). The study by Banks et al. (2012) revealed that the elderly who move, tend to move to houses which are located within the same region of their

previous houses. A majority (57%) of the rural elderly, on the other hand, are more willing to move to a different town so long as it is within the same state they currently live in. The urban elderly are more ready (34%) as compare to the rural elderly (14%) to move to other states. See Figure 9.

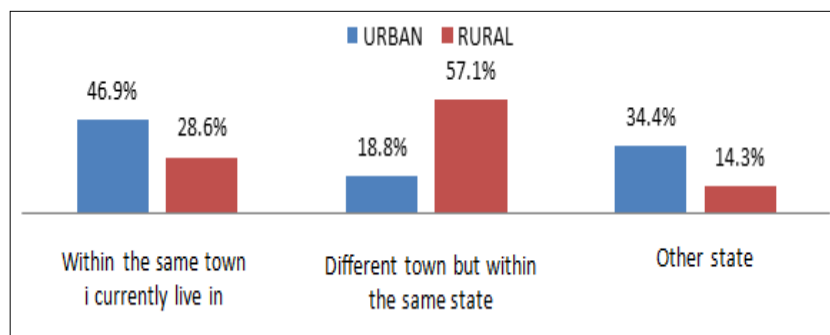


Figure 9: Location of house respondents plan to buy

A cross-tabulation analysis of the variables i.e. the consideration to move, plan for current house, type of house plan to move to upon moving out of current house and the location of the future house) with demographic data i.e. age, gender, ethnicity,

education level and income) was also undertaken. Table 3 is an example of the cross- tabulation of the variable “consideration to move out” with age. From the table, it can be ascertained that both the urban and rural elderly displayed similar pattern,

where the “old” elderly preferred not to move out of their current houses. However, the preference to age-in-place is significantly higher in rural area. Only the “young” elderly i.e. the 50-59 year old, in the rural area plan to move out of their current houses (6.1%) as compared to the “young” elderly in the urban area (15%).

Tables 3 also indicate that female elderly are more unwilling to move out of their current houses compared to their male counterparts (81% of urban female elderly and 96% of rural female elderly). Both gender in the rural area display a relatively

low percentage (4.7% male and 1.9% female) to the “consideration to move”, as compared to the elderly in urban area (17% male and 13.8% female). The Malay elderly in the urban areas are more open to other options in their living arrangements. A large majority (95%) of the rural Malays are unwilling to move out of their current houses as compared to the urban Malays, In addition, Table 3 also revealed that the single elderly (38%) living in the urban areas seem to be a bit more undecided in terms of wanting to move out in the future as compared to their rural counterparts.

Table 3: Demographics and the Consideration to Move in the Future Amongst Urban & Rural Elderly

AREA	Variable	Descriptions	CONSIDERATION TO MOVE IN THE FUTURE			
			Yes	No	Undecided	Have not thought about it
URBAN	AGE GROUP	50 - 59	8.8%	15.1%	4.2%	2.1%
		60 - 69	6.3%	25.0%	1.6%	0.5%
		70 years and above	0.5%	35.9%		
		Total	15.6%	76.0%	5.7%	2.6%
RURAL	AGE GROUP	50 - 59	3.1%	47.4%	0.5%	
		60 - 69		25.0%	1.0%	1.0%
		70 years and above		21.4%	0.5%	
		Total	3.1%	93.8%	2.1%	1.0%
URBAN	GENDER	Male	9.9%	33.9%	0.5%	1.6%
		Female	5.7%	42.2%	5.2%	1.0%
		Total	15.6%	76.0%	5.7%	2.6%
RURAL	GENDER	Male	2.1%	40.1%	1.6%	0.5%
		Female	1.0%	53.6%	0.5%	0.5%
		Total	3.1%	93.8%	2.1%	1.0%
URBAN	ETHNICITY	Malay	11.5%	44.3%	2.6%	2.6%
		Chinese	2.6%	21.9%	2.1%	
		Indian	1.6%	9.4%	0.5%	
		Others (Bumiputera)		0.5%	0.5%	
Total	15.6%	76.0%	5.7%	2.6%		
RURAL	ETHNICITY	Malay	3.1%	91.7%	1.0%	1.0%
		Chinese		2.1%	1.0%	
		Total	3.1%	93.8%	2.1%	1.0%
URBAN	MARITAL STATUS	Single/Never married		2.6%	1.6%	
		Married	14.1%	58.9%	4.2%	2.6%
		Divorce		1.0%		
		Widow	1.6%	13.0%		
		Others		0.5%		
Total	15.6%	76.0%	5.7%	2.6%		
RURAL	MARITAL STATUS	Single/Never married		2.6%		
		Married	3.1%	70.3%	2.1%	1.0%
		Divorce		2.1%		
		Widowed		18.8%		
URBAN	EDUCATION LEVEL	No Proper Education	0.5%	1.0%		
		Primary school	1.1%	10.9%		
		PMR/SRP/LCE		4.2%	1.6%	
		SPM/SPMV/MCE	4.2%	18.8%	1.6%	1.0%
		STPM/STAM/MATRIC.	1.0%	4.2%		0.5%
		Certificate	3.6%	4.2%		
		Higher Education	5.2%	32.3%	2.6%	1.0%
Total	15.6%	76.0%	5.7%	2.6%		
RURAL	EDUCATION LEVEL	No Proper Education		17.7%	0.5%	0.5%
		Primary school		29.7%	0.5%	0.5%
		PMR/SRP/LCE		15.1%	0.5%	
		SPM/SPMV/MCE	1.6%	9.9%		
		STPM/STAM/MATRIC.		1.0%		
		Certificate	1.0%	8.3%	0.5%	
		Higher Education	0.5%	12.0%		
Total	3.1%	93.8%	2.1%	1.0%		

It was further disclosed in Table 3 that the education level of the urban elderly did not have any significant impact on the readiness of an elderly respondent to move out. As mentioned earlier, the elderly living in the urban areas are more open to the option of having to move in the future. In contrary, the education level of the rural elderly have an impact upon their willingness to move in the future. The rural elderly with secondary school and higher educational qualification are more willing to move out of their current houses. It is interesting to note that the elderly who have similar education background but in different areas (urban-rural), displayed varying responses when it comes to planning to move out of their current houses in the future. This finding correlates with the study conducted by Costa-Font et al. (2009), which stated the preferences to age-in-place is significantly higher in the elderly who are less formally educated and less affluent.

In the past two decades, a notable growth of the elderly has been observed in almost all countries around the world. While previous studies have emphasised the housing needs of the elderly, only a few have looked into the differences between the housing aspirations and needs of the elderly in urban and rural areas. Thus, the objective of this study was to examine the housing aspirations of elderly people in urban and rural areas in Malaysia. Many researches showed that older people prefer to age-in-place and choose houses that are suitable for their current or future personal needs. The study by Dye et al.'s (2010) stated that elderly prefers to stay in an environment which is familiar to them. A related study on elderly that looked into the locational and migration of elderly people in Korea also showed that if the elderly living in urban area wanted to move upon their retirement, they often opt to move to a less dense area. There is a great majority of the elderly living in the urban area who actually prefer not to move and opt to age-in-place (Kim et al., 2014). An earlier study by Robinson et al. (2000) concluded that individual preferences for location in later life are very heterogeneous and varied depending on the individuals, where some people prefer to age in place, while others choose to move.

To a certain degree, this study suggests that existing and future houses should include facilities suitable and necessary for the elderly to live

comfortably. As individuals grow older, they prefer to age in place and fulfill their basic needs.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that both the urban and rural elderly strongly believed that their family will undertake filial responsibilities and take care of them in the old age. Therefore, the elderly should be given the choice to age-in- place. The urban elderly are more open to other housing options, especially when the family is not able to support them.. It is imperative that by 2030 when Malaysia achieved the status of an Ageing Nation , the necessary blueprint to promote and support aging-in-place are set and the housing aspiration of the elderly are met. Hence, appropriate planning should start from now as it takes considerable time and effort to develop the best policy so as to ensure that the housing needs and aspirations of the elderly are fulfilled. Accordingly, each housing policy should commence by identifying the exact housing needs of these elderly (for example, the urban and rural aspect). A study on the elderly housing needs and aspiration is particularly important as it can be used as the platform to explicitly formulate the much needed elderly housing policy and ways of caring for the elderly. It can be further construed that when it comes to the housing needs aspect, the Malaysian elderly in the urban and rural area do have certain similarities and differences. It is noteworthy for the policy makers and relevant agencies to have a closer look at the similarities and differences in order to create a housing environment that is conducive for the elderly in the future.

Although this study provides the analysis on the urban and rural aspect of elderly housing aspirations in Malaysia, the study may have limitations and is not generalisable to other international elderly housing markets. The Malaysian elderly might be different in terms of the environment, traditions, way of thinking and lifestyles than the elderly in other countries. Future research may look into this and compare the results of this study with those of other countries. Additionally, there are many aspects of elderly housing and housing needs that can be further explored. Future research, for example, can focus on certain demographics of the elderly or on elderly in high rise buildings in the urban setting.

## 9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by NAPREC, Ministry of Finance of Malaysia (NAPREC R&D 6/13) and the University of Malaya/Ministry of Higher Education (UM/MOHE) High Impact Research Grant (UM.C/625/1/HIR/MOHE/ASH/02)

## 10. REFERENCES

- Ahmad, W. I. W., & Ismail, Z. (2011). Population ageing and religious participation among rural elderly in Terengganu, Malaysia. *Journal of US-China Public Administration*, 8(9), 968-977.
- Andrews, G. J., Milligan, C., Phillips, D. R., & Skinner, M. W. (2009). Geographical Gerontology: Mapping a Disciplinary Intersection. *Geography Compass*. doi:10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00270.x
- Barry, U., & Conlon, C. (2010). Elderly care in Ireland-provisions and providers. University College Dublin. School of Social Justice
- Carroll, B., Morbey, H., Balogh, R., & Araoz, G. (2009). Flooded homes, broken bonds, the meaning of home, psychological processes and their impact on psychological health in a disaster. *Health & Place*. doi:10.1016/j.healthplace.2008.08.009
- Clegg, S., Coulter, A. and Edwards, G. (2007) *Housing Aspirations*. Edinburgh, Scottish Government Social Research
- Costa-Font, J., Elvira, D., & Mascarilla-Miró, O. (2009). Ageing in place'? Exploring elderly people's housing preferences in Spain. *Urban studies*, 46(2), 295-316
- Cristoforetti, A., Gennai, F., & Rodeschini, G. (2011). Home sweet home: The emotional construction of places. *Journal of Aging Studies*. doi:10.1016/j.jaging.2011.03.006
- Croucher, K. (2008). *Housing choices and aspirations of older people: Research from the New Horizons Programme*. Department for Communities and Local Government.
- Cutchin, M. (2009). Geographical Gerontology: New Contributions and Spaces for Development. *The Gerontologist*, 49(3), 440-444. doi:10.1093/geront/gnp095
- Department of Statistics Malaysia (2010). *Laporan taburan penduduk can ciri-ciri asas demografi 2010*. Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia
- Department of Statistics Malaysia (2012). *Malaysia Population Projection Report*. Putrajaya: Department of Statistics, Malaysia.
- Duflot, L. (2012). *Urbanisation Policy in Malaysia and its Impacts*. Graphite Publications. Retrieved from <http://graphitepublications.com/urbanisation-policy-in-malaysia-and-its-impacts/>
- Dye, C. J., Willoughby, D. F., & Battisto, D. G. (2010). Advice from rural elders: what it takes to age in place. *Educational Gerontology*, 37(1), 74-93.
- Elvira, D., & Mascarilla-Miro, O. (2009). 'Ageing in Place'? Exploring Elderly People's Housing Preferences in Spain. *Urban Studies*, 46(2), 295-316. doi:10.1177/0042098008099356
- Glenn, Israel. D. (2002). *Determining sample size*. University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences, EDIS.
- Golant, S. (2012). Out of Their Residential Comfort and Mastery Zones: Toward a More Relevant Environmental Gerontology. *Journal Of Housing For The Elderly*, 26(1-3), 26-43. doi:10.1080/02763893.2012.655654
- Hamid, T. A., & Tyng, C. S. (2013). Meeting the Needs of Older Malaysians: Expansion, Diversification and Multi-sector Collaboration. *Malaysian Journal of Economic Studies*, 50(2), 157.
- Hamid, T. A., & Yahaya, N. (2008). National policy for the elderly in Malaysia: achievements and challenges. *Ageing in Southeast and East Asia: Family, Social Protection, Policy Challenges*, 108.
- Hassan, H. (2009). Issues and challenges of sustainable urban development in Malaysia. *Sustainable Urban Development Issues in Malaysia*, 1-22.
- Heenan D (2010). *Rural ageing in Northern Ireland: Quality of life amongst older people*. Belfast: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.
- Holdsworth, C., Gould, W., Finney, N., Marshall, A., & Norman, P. (2013). *Population and society*. Los Angeles, CA.: Sage

- Publications.
- Human Rights Education Associates  
(2011) *The Right to Housing*. Retrieved from [http://www.hrea.org/index.php?base\\_id=149](http://www.hrea.org/index.php?base_id=149)
- Keating, N. C. (2008). Rural Ageing: A Good Place to Grow Old?: The Policy Press, 2008. *Can. J. Aging*, 28(04), 402. doi:10.1017/s0714980809990262
- Kellett, P., & Moore, J. (2003). Routes to home: homelessness and home-making in contrasting societies. *Habitat International*, 27(1), 123-141. doi:10.1016/s0197-3975(02)00039-5
- Kim, J., & Han, J. (2014). Myths of migration on retirement in Korea: Do the elderly move to less dense areas?. *Habitat International*, 41, 195-204. doi:10.1016/j.habitatint.2013.08.003
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*
- Lewis, R. (2011) Shutting the bathroom door. *Geographies of children, youth and families: An international*. Perspective (pp. 67-80). Routledge London.
- Lim, C. K. (2012). *The changing needs of older Malaysians: a Selangor case study*. (Doctoral dissertation, Adelaide: University of Adelaide).
- Malaysian Statistical Department (2010). *Laporan taburan penduduk can ciri-ciri asas demografi 2010*. Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia *Natural & Applied Sciences*, 6(3).
- O'Shea, E. (2009). *Rural ageing and public policy in Ireland: A living countryside? The politics of sustainable development in rural Ireland*, 269-285.
- Ong, F. S., Phillips, D. R., & Hamid, T. A. (2009). Ageing in Malaysia: Progress and prospects. *Ageing in East Asia: Challenges and policies for the twenty-first century*, 138-160.
- Oswald, F., Jopp, D., Rott, C., & Wahl, H. (2010). Is Aging in Place a Resource for or Risk to Life Satisfaction?. *The Gerontologist*, 51(2), 238-250. doi:10.1093/geront/gnq096
- Oswald, F., Jopp, D., Rott, C., & Wahl, H. W. (2011). Is aging in place a resource for or risk to life satisfaction?. *The Gerontologist*, 51(2), 238-250.
- Papers in Regional Science*, 74(4), 361-387. doi:10.1111/j.1435-5597.1995.tb00646.x
- Park, B. H., & Lee, H. O. (2008). A comparative study on housing welfare policies for the elderly between Korea and Japan—focused on the elderly who can live independently. *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 1(1), 90-103.
- Parsell, C. (2012). Home is where the house is: the meaning of home for people sleeping rough. *Housing Studies*, 27(2), 159-173. doi:10.1080/02673037.2012.632621
- Revision: Highlights and advance table. New York: United Nations
- Robison, J., & Moen, P. (2000). A Life-Course Perspective on Housing Expectations and Shifts in Late Midlife. *Research On Aging*, 22(5), 499-532. doi:10.1177/0164027500225003
- Scharf, T., Phillipson, C., & Smith, A. E. (2005). Social exclusion of older people in deprived urban communities of England. *European Journal of Ageing*, 2(2), 76-87.
- Stockdale, A., & MacLeod, M. (2013). Pre-retirement age migration to remote rural areas. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 32, 80-92.
- Sulaiman, N. (2011). *Opportunities for the transfer of United Kingdom best practices for the provision of public residential care facilities for the elderly to Malaysia* (Doctoral dissertation, Salford: University of Salford).
- Taira, E. D., & Carlson, J. (2014). *Ageing in place: designing, adapting, and enhancing the home environment*. Routledge.
- Tatsiramos, K. (2006). *Residential Mobility and Housing Adjustment of Older Households in Europe* (No. 2435). Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA).
- Tinker, A., Ginn, J., & Ribe, E. (2013). *Assisted Living Platform: The Long Term Care Revolution: a Study of Innovative Models to Support Older People with Disabilities in the Netherlands*. King's College London.
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). (2011). *A Practical Guide for Conducting: Housing Profiles - Supporting Evidence-based Housing Policy and Reform*. UN-HABITAT

- United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2013) *World population prospects. The 2012*
- VanderHart, P. G. (1998). The housing decisions of older households: A dynamic analysis. *Journal of Housing Economics*, 7(1), 21-48.
- Wahl, H. W., & Oswald, F. (2010). Environmental perspectives on ageing. *The SAGE Handbook of Social Gerontology*, 111-124. *Gerontology* (pp. 111–124). London: Sage
- Warnes, A., & Ford, R. (1995). Housing aspirations and migration in later life: developments during the 1980s.
- Weeks, L., & LeBlanc, K. (2010). Housing Concerns of Vulnerable Older Canadians. *Can. J. Aging*, 29(03), 333- 347. doi:10.1017/s0714980810000310
- Wenger, G. C., & Keating, N. C. (2008). *The evolution of networks of rural older adults*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Wiles, J. L., Allen, R. E., Palmer, A. J., Hayman, K. J., Keeling, S., & Kerse, N. (2009). Older people and their social spaces: A study of well-being and attachment to place in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Social Science & Medicine*, 68(4), 664-671.
- Wiles, J. L., Leibing, A., Guberman, N., Reeve, J., & Allen, R. E. (2011). The meaning of “ageing in place” to older people. *The gerontologist*, gnr098.
- Winterton, R., & Warburton, J. (2012). *Ageing in the bush: The role of rural places in maintaining identity for long term rural residents and retirement migrants in north-east Victoria, Australia*. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 28(4), 329-337.
- Wong, Y.-L. I., & Stanhope, V. (2009). Conceptualizing community: A comparison of neighborhood characteristics of supportive housing for persons with psychiatric and developmental disabilities. *Social Science & Medicine*, 68, 1376-1387.
- Wood, G. R., Colic-Peisker, V. R., & Berry, M. R. (2010). *Asset poverty and older Australians' transitions onto housing*. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Melbourne, Australia.
- World Health Organization. (2012). *Health statistics and health information systems. Definition of an older or elderly person*. WHO.
- Yearns, M. H. (2000). Universal design in housing. *Livable New York resource manual*. Retrieved from, <http://www.aging.ny.gov/livableny/ResourceManual/Design/IV1a.pdf>
- Young, L. (2006). Community and cluster centre residential services for adults with intellectual disability: Long- term results from an Australian-matched sample. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, (50), 419-431
- Yuhui, T. (2012). *A Study Of Housing Aspiration And Social Interactions Of China's Generation Y* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Yusnani, M. Y. (2006). Accommodating the Malaysian elderly: the cultural precursors. *Ageing International*, 31(3), 185-202. [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2003/who\\_dar\\_03.2.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2003/who_dar_03.2.pdf)
- Zainab, I., Wan Ibrahim, W. A., & Redzuan, M. R. (2012). Living Arrangement of Older Population in Rural Malaysia. *Advances in*