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Sources of heterogeneity in elderly living arrangements—The space, timing and numerical dimensions

Jeromey Temple (jeromey.temple@anu.edu.au)
The Australian National University

Abstract

A key finding from social gerontology is that individual ageing is an extremely heterogeneous process. Older persons differ substantially with respect to their economic, social and health resources. Indeed, recent research indicates that resources in old age are heavily influenced by the living arrangements. The individual resources held by older persons necessarily influence the unmet demand for health, welfare and social services that must be met by federal, state and local governments in Australia.

The recognition that population ageing, along with individual ageing as a heterogeneous process, is important in planning for population ageing in Australia. The space, timing, numerical and structural dimensions of population ageing are all important sources of heterogeneity at the macro level.

The purpose of this paper is to adopt a new method for projecting households (McDonald and Kippen, 2003) using full count census data to examine the timing, spatial, numerical and structural dimensions of elderly living arrangements in Australia. Results indicate that over the next 15 years, the living arrangements of older persons vary substantially across time and space. These projections provide some important data for policy makers, with which to plan for population ageing.

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