

Research

What are older adults seeking? Factors encouraging or discouraging retirement village living

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Aims: (1) To identify factors that older adults find encouraging or discouraging about the prospect of relocation to a retirement village; and (2) to identify features or facilities often associated with retirement communities that are most appealing to prospective residents.

Method: Randomly selected community residents ($n = 517$), aged 55–94 years, from the Australian Capital Territory completed postal surveys to identify the characteristics associated with retirement villages that influence relocation decisions.

Results: The provision of outdoor living areas, support in maintaining independence, assisted living facilities and accessibility to medical facilities were identified as factors that would encourage relocation. Luxury services (e.g. heated swimming pools) were indicated as least likely to encourage relocation. Negative perceptions most influential in discouraging relocation reflected a fear of losing independence and privacy.

Conclusions: Through identifying the expectations of prospective residents, retirement village providers may better tailor facilities to the needs of their target demographic.

Key words: aged, housing decision, relocation.

Introduction

Although older Australians express a strong preference to remain in their own home [1], a growing proportion are relocating to retirement villages. Predominantly populated by persons older than 75 years (constituting 66.5% of residents), retirement villages represent a desirable housing choice for an increasing number of older Australians [2,3]. In 2008, an estimated 1756 retirement villages were operating

in Australia, accommodating up to 150 000 residents. Demand is anticipated to increase, with an additional 65 000 residences required over the next 15 years [4].

The decisions older adults make about their future housing needs involve a complex range of factors. To date, there has been a paucity of research investigating factors that encourage or discourage individuals from considering relocation to retirement villages. Investigating the characteristics that older adults regard as important is essential in examining the extent to which current service provision effectively meets consumer needs.

A combination of stressors and opportunities may contribute to decisions to move in later life. Relocation may be necessitated by declining health, or attractive features of a retirement village may encourage relocation [5]. Retirement village residents often cite improved quality of life, a community environment, supported independent living and security as some of the benefits associated with relocation [2,6]. Reports suggest that, post-location, up to 90% of people are satisfied with their decision to move [7]. However, negative perceptions that age-segregated communities cultivate dependence, and concerns about privacy, social isolation and affordability, can present major barriers to relocation [2,8,9].

Gardner [10] identified two distinct groups of individuals relocating to retirement villages: planners, who indicate future health concerns as their major motive; and reactors, who relocate because of current health problems. Younger retirees, often relatively healthy, financially comfortable and married, may be attracted to retirement communities that are proximal to amenities and offer opportunities for an enhanced lifestyle (e.g. through social activity and health and fitness facilities). In comparison, older retirees may be more likely to relocate in response to health decline, loneliness (resulting from loss of a spouse) or safety concerns [5,11].

Although these motives prompting relocation have been identified, little is known about the characteristics of retirement villages and relocation that encourage or discourage older adults from considering this housing option for the future. A report exploring the relocation intentions of Western Australian residents found that 39% of persons older than 50 years did not intend to remain in their current residence indefinitely [12,13]. Lifestyle change, retirement transitions and considerations of where to spend the remainder of one's life most commonly influenced intentions to

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move. Those residents not intending to move cited 'comfort' and 'financial viability' as reasons for staying.

Stimson and colleagues [7] identified services in Australian retirement villages that were perceived as desirable or undesirable by residents. Emergency call systems, reputable management/staff and community centres were viewed as most desirable. Facilities such as gyms, golf courses and tennis courts were not desired. While this report provided a comprehensive overview of the services important to residents, data collection was conducted in 2000–2001, and significant changes in the economic and social environment have occurred since this time. Moreover, a gap remains in the literature regarding the opinions of community-dwelling older adults yet to commit to such a move. Importantly, research concerned with the residential preferences of the ageing baby boomer cohort has had mixed results [14]. The higher education levels and greater employment opportunities of baby boomers compared to previous generations mean that housing options may be less constrained by financial concerns for this cohort. A greater appreciation of lifestyle factors offered by retirement communities may also result in an increasing attraction to this housing option among baby boomers [14–16].

The present study extends recent Australian findings [12,13] to investigate community-dwelling older adults' perceptions of retirement villages and factors encouraging and discouraging future relocation; and to identify the features of retirement villages that most appeal to prospective residents. By identifying the expectations and concerns of community-dwelling residents, providers may better tailor their services to population need and contribute to making the transition a positive experience for those who relocate either through preference or through necessity. Based on previous distinctions between younger and older retirees' motives for relocation [5,11], we predicted age differences in the features endorsed as important in influencing relocation decisions. Specifically, we expected young-old adults (aged 55–64 years) would be more encouraged by the presence of leisure facilities whereas older adults (aged 75+ years) would be more influenced by the provision of continuing health care services.

Method

Participants and procedure

Participants comprised 517 community residents recruited through the Australian Electoral Roll within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) as part of a study investigating transitions in later life. A random sample of 1973 adults, aged 55 years and over, were invited to participate in the study, of whom 561 participants were recruited (response rate 28.4%); however, 34 cases were removed from analysis as a result of non-response to the question concerning future relocation. An additional 10 participants were removed to avoid non-independence caused by co-resident spouses com-

pleting the survey. Comparisons between the current sample and Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 census data for ACT residents aged 55–94 years indicate the sample was representative of the population on age and sex demographic characteristics [17,18]. Ethics approval was obtained for the study from the Australian National University Committee for Ethics in Human Research (Protocol 2009/041). The survey was conducted via self-report questionnaires mailed to respondents.

Measures

Characteristics encouraging or discouraging future relocation and features of retirement villages that may influence decisions to move were assessed using scales developed for the present study. Scales were informed by focus group discussions conducted by National Seniors Australia involving an independent sample of ACT residents. Transcripts from the focus group discussions relating to plans for future living arrangements and thoughts concerning retirement village living were coded for common themes. The resulting scales required respondents to indicate on a five-point scale from 1 (not likely to influence my decision/not at all important) to 5 (very likely to influence my decision/very important) 'How much would the following things encourage (or discourage) you from wanting to move into a retirement village?'; and 'If you were considering moving into a retirement village, how important would the availability of the following features be in influencing your decision?'. Tables 1 and 2 reflect the list of scale items. To simplify analyses, all items were converted to dichotomous variables (0 = not likely to influence the decision/not at all important, only a little or somewhat likely; 1 = likely or very likely to influence the decision/important–very important). The scale was divided in this way to allow comparisons between those persons who held strong opinions (positive or negative) towards each characteristic and persons who were not strongly influenced by the item presented.

Sociodemographic characteristics and covariates

Sociodemographic information was obtained relating to age (categorised as 55–64, 65–74 and 75+ years), sex, marital status, retirement status, and financial status (whether participants had enough money to meet needs). A single item, 'Have you considered moving into a retirement village/complex in the future?' (0 = no, 1 = yes), provided the opportunity to compare the perceptions of those who had, versus had not, considered relocation. Respondents also completed questions assessing self-reported physical health (RAND-12 Physical Health component score [19]); and perceptions of the neighbourhood environment [20].

Statistical analysis

Logistic regression analyses were conducted to investigate differences in the likelihood of characteristics being endorsed as influencing relocation decisions by age group and considered relocation. All models were adjusted for demographic characteristics, physical health and

Table 1: Factors endorsed as encouraging or discouraging relocation, by age group and relocation consideration

	Age								Considered relocation			
	% endorsed			Logistic regression†					% endorsed		Logistic regression‡	
	55–64	65–74	75+	65–74		75+			No	Yes	OR	95% CI
				OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI					
<i>n</i>	289	164	64					339	178			
<i>Encouraging factors</i>												
Communal/supportive living environment	51.0	42.6	19.0	0.8	0.5–1.2	0.3*	0.1–0.6	39.5	54.5	1.9**	1.2–2.7	
Being around people own age	42.4	34.6	17.2	0.3**	0.5–1.2	0.8	0.2–0.7	32.7	45.2	1.6***	1.1–2.4	
Greater social life	31.7	25.8	13.8	0.7	0.4–1.1	0.3**	0.1–0.7	27.4	28.6	1.0	0.6–1.5	
Opportunities for keeping active	45.2	38.9	17.9	0.8	0.5–1.2	0.3*	0.1–0.6	36.7	46.6	1.5	1.0–2.2	
Less stress	58.1	49.1	30.4	0.7	0.5–1.1	0.4**	0.2–0.8	44.6	66.5	2.4*	1.6–3.6	
Inbuilt facilities	50.0	43.6	39.7	0.8	0.5–1.2	0.7	0.4–1.5	37.8	63.5	2.7*	1.8–4.0	
Convenient location to facilities	60.3	55.0	42.1	0.8	0.5–1.3	0.5***	0.3–1.0	48.9	70.8	2.5*	1.7–3.8	
Family doesn't have to look after you	72.9	63.2	63.2	0.6***	0.4–1.0	0.5***	0.3–1.0	63.9	78.0	1.9**	1.2–3.0	
Improved security	48.9	44.1	39.7	0.6***	0.4–1.0	0.5	0.3–1.1	40.9	56.6	1.6***	1.1–2.4	
Assistance in case of declining health	81.5	72.4	72.4	0.5**	0.3–0.8	0.4***	0.2–0.9	72.2	87.6	2.5*	1.5–4.2	
Assistance with household/gardening chores	59.5	52.1	50.0	0.6***	0.4–0.9	0.6	0.3–1.1	50.6	66.3	1.8**	1.2–2.6	
<i>Discouraging factors</i>												
Loss of independence	67.8	71.0	61.0	1.1	0.7–1.8	0.7	0.4–1.5	73.7	57.4	0.5	0.3–0.7	
Lack of privacy	67.8	65.6	60.3	0.9	0.6–1.5	0.8	0.4–1.5	71.3	56.7	0.6**	0.4–0.9	
Would not want to move away from friends and family	52.9	60.9	39.7	1.2	0.7–1.8	0.3*	0.2–0.6	59.4	43.4	0.5*	0.3–0.8	
Do not want to lose current neighbours	16.8	35.0	29.3	1.8***	1.0–3.1	0.8	0.4–1.8	27.8	16.9	0.5***	0.3–0.9	
Do not want to leave family home	45.2	60.1	56.1	1.5	1.0–2.5	1.5	0.8–3.0	58.7	37.1	0.4*	0.3–0.7	
Have to change doctor	16.5	31.3	45.8	1.6	0.9–2.7	2.5**	1.3–5.2	26.2	21.5	0.6	0.4–1.0	
Just for older people	37.2	37.9	36.8	1.0	0.6–1.6	0.8	0.4–1.7	43.5	26.0	0.4*	0.3–0.6	
Too expensive	49.3	59.5	42.1	1.4	0.9–2.2	0.9	0.5–1.7	52.7	50.0	0.8	0.6–1.2	
Limited space, garden	52.2	55.9	46.6	1.0	0.7–1.6	1.0	0.5–1.8	56.5	45.8	0.7	0.5–1.0	
Want to bequeath something	41.7	46.9	47.5	1.0	0.6–1.6	1.3	0.7–2.5	47.3	37.9	0.6	0.4–0.9	
Lack of respect for older people in some institutions	48.1	60.2	44.1	0.7	0.8–1.2	1.3	0.4–1.3	53.8	47.2	0.7	0.5–1.1	
Just don't want to/don't like idea	38.0	55.9	52.6	2.2*	1.4–3.6	2.4***	1.2–4.8	55.8	25.1	0.3	0.2–0.4	

* $P < 0.001$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.05$. All models are adjusted for marital status, retirement status, financial status, physical health and perceived neighbourhood cohesion. †Reference category is age 55–64 years. ‡Reference category is 'not considered relocation'. CI, confidence interval; OR, odds ratio.

Table 2: Features endorsed as likely to influence decisions, by age group and relocation consideration

	Age								Considered relocation			
	% endorsed			Logistic regression†					% endorsed		Logistic regression‡	
	55–64	65–74	75+	65–74		75+			No	Yes	OR	95% CI
				OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI					
<i>n</i>	289	164	64					339	178			
Heated swimming pool	42.4	39.8	28.1	0.8	0.5–1.2	0.6	0.3–1.1	38.7	42.4	1.2	0.8–1.8	
Gym facility	44.5	36.5	19.6	0.8	0.5–1.3	0.4**	0.2–0.9	40.9	36.2	0.9	0.6–1.4	
Lock-up garage	72.0	67.1	64.3	0.8	0.5–1.3	0.7	0.4–1.4	69.2	70.3	1.1	0.8–1.7	
Single-level units	74.1	79.5	83.9	0.9	0.5–1.5	1.1	0.5–2.5	73.9	82.5	1.5	0.9–2.4	
Garage door straight through to house	65.4	71.6	73.2	1.2	0.7–2.0	1.3	0.6–2.6	67.2	70.2	1.1	0.8–1.7	
Access to medical facilities	82.3	90.1	91.1	1.4	0.7–2.7	1.8	0.6–5.4	84.4	88.2	1.2	0.7–2.2	
Community dining room/lounge	37.1	42.9	33.9	0.8	0.5–1.3	0.5	0.3–1.1	35.6	44.1	1.3	0.9–1.9	
Close to shops	65.4	74.1	67.9	1.2	0.7–1.9	1.0	0.5–2.1	69.5	66.5	0.8	0.6–1.3	
Close to public transport	73.4	75.2	76.8	0.9	0.6–1.6	1.2	0.6–2.6	72.6	77.5	1.3	0.9–2.0	
Having some independence	94.9	95.7	98.2	0.9	0.3–2.7	1.1	0.2–6.3	94.9	96.6	1.8	0.7–4.7	
Being able to have visitors stay	86.0	84.0	69.6	0.9	0.5–1.8	0.5	0.2–1.1	83.8	83.1	1.0	0.6–1.7	
Pets allowed	50.2	32.7	29.1	0.5*	0.3–0.8	0.5**	0.3–1.0	45.6	36.2	0.7	0.5–1.0	
Space to get out and walk around	95.6	90.1	89.3	0.4**	0.2–1.0	0.4	0.1–1.4	93.7	92.1	0.8	0.4–1.8	
Assisted living component	86.0	88.9	91.1	0.7	0.4–1.4	0.9	0.3–2.6	85.5	91.0	1.6	0.8–2.9	

* $P < 0.01$, ** $P < 0.05$. All models are adjusted for marital status, retirement status, financial status, physical health and perceived neighbourhood cohesion. †Reference category is age 55–64 years. ‡Reference category is 'not considered relocation'. CI, confidence interval; OR, odds ratio.

perceived neighbourhood cohesion, which have been identified as significant predictors of considering relocation [21]. Analyses were undertaken using STATA Version 10.

Results

The sociodemographic characteristics of the sample have been published previously [21]. Participants ranged in age from 55 to 94 years (mean = 64.5, SD = 7.7), and were

predominantly married (74.7%); approximately half were women (51.1%) and fully retired (50.9%). Almost two-thirds of the participants sampled ($n = 339$) had not considered relocation to a retirement village in the future.

Factors encouraging relocation

'Assistance in the case of declining health', 'family doesn't have to look after you', 'convenient location to facilities' and 'assistance with household/gardening chores' were, across the sample, reported by the greatest proportion of respondents as being likely to influence a decision to relocate to a retirement village. Advantages offered by retirement village living relating to 'opportunities for keeping active', 'being around people your own age' and 'greater social life' were less strongly endorsed as likely to influence relocation decisions. Figure 1 displays the proportion of responses for each factor by response category. Analyses investigating group differences in the endorsement of each characteristic are presented in Table 1. Compared to the youngest cohort (55–64 years), older adults (65–74, 75+) were less likely to report 'family doesn't have to look after you' and 'assistance in the case of declining health' as encouraging relocation. In addition, persons aged 65–74 years were less likely to report 'being around people one's own age', 'improved security' and 'assistance with household/gardening chores'. Those aged 75+ years were less likely than the youngest cohort to report 'communal/supportive living environment', 'greater social life', 'opportunities for keeping active', 'less stress' or 'convenient location to facilities' as encouraging relocation.

Analyses showed that individuals who had considered relocation were significantly more likely to report almost all of the 'encouraging factors' (with the exception of 'greater social life' and 'opportunities for keeping active') as important in influencing their decision (Table 1).

Factors discouraging relocation

A perceived 'loss of independence' and 'lack of privacy' was, across all age groups, reported by the greatest proportion of respondents as likely to discourage relocation. 'Not wanting to lose neighbours' and perceptions that retirement villages are 'just for older people' were less frequently reported as influencing decisions. Figure 2 displays the proportion of responses for each factor by response category. Logistic regression analyses (Table 1) indicated significant age effects in factors discouraging relocation. Compared to persons aged 55–64 years, those aged 65–74 years were more likely to report 'not wanting to lose current neighbours', whereas those aged 75+ years were more likely to report 'having to change doctors', and less likely to report 'not wanting to move away from friends and family' as discouraging. In addition, both those aged 65–74 years and those aged 75+ years were more likely to report 'just don't want to/don't like the idea' than those aged 55–64 years.

Analyses indicated that persons who had considered relocation were less likely than those who had not considered it to report 'lack of privacy', 'not wanting to move away from family and friends', 'not wanting to lose current neighbours', 'not wanting to leave the family home' and the perception that 'retirement villages are just for older people' as discouraging (Table 2).

Features of the retirement village

Across all cohorts, more than 85% of people endorsed 'having some independence', 'space to get out and walk around', an 'assisted living component' and 'access to medical facilities' as important in influencing decisions to relocate. The provision of amenities such as 'community dining room/lounge', 'heated swimming pool' and 'gym

Figure 1: Ratings for the influence of factors encouraging relocation.

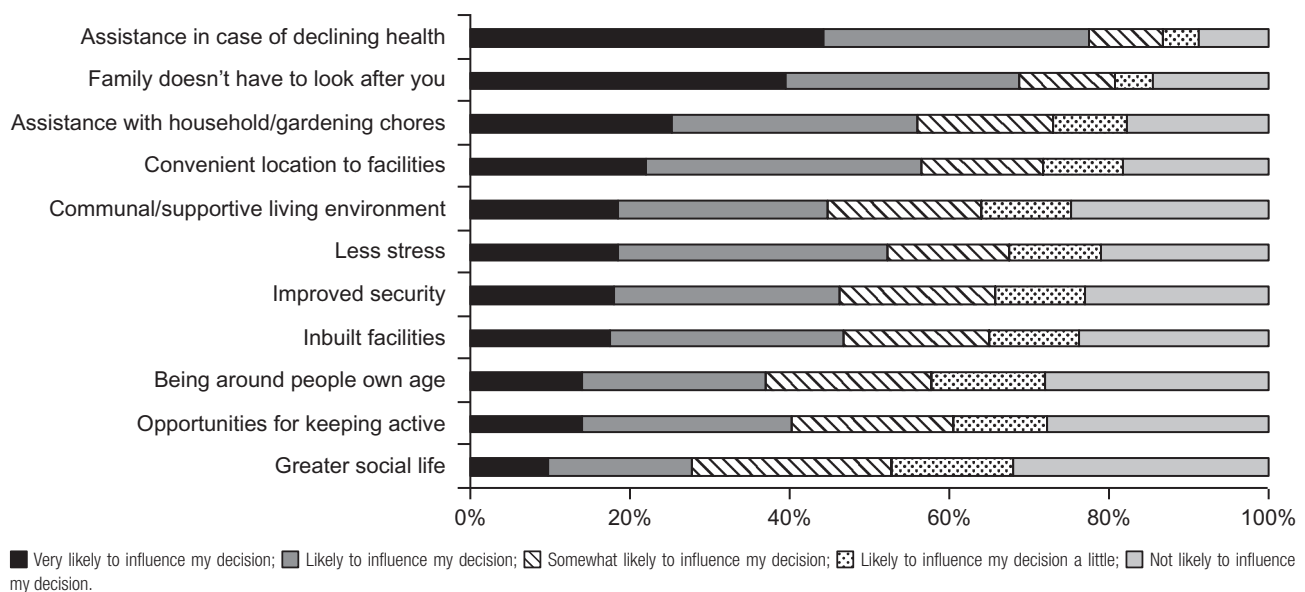


Figure 2: Ratings for the influence of factors discouraging relocation.

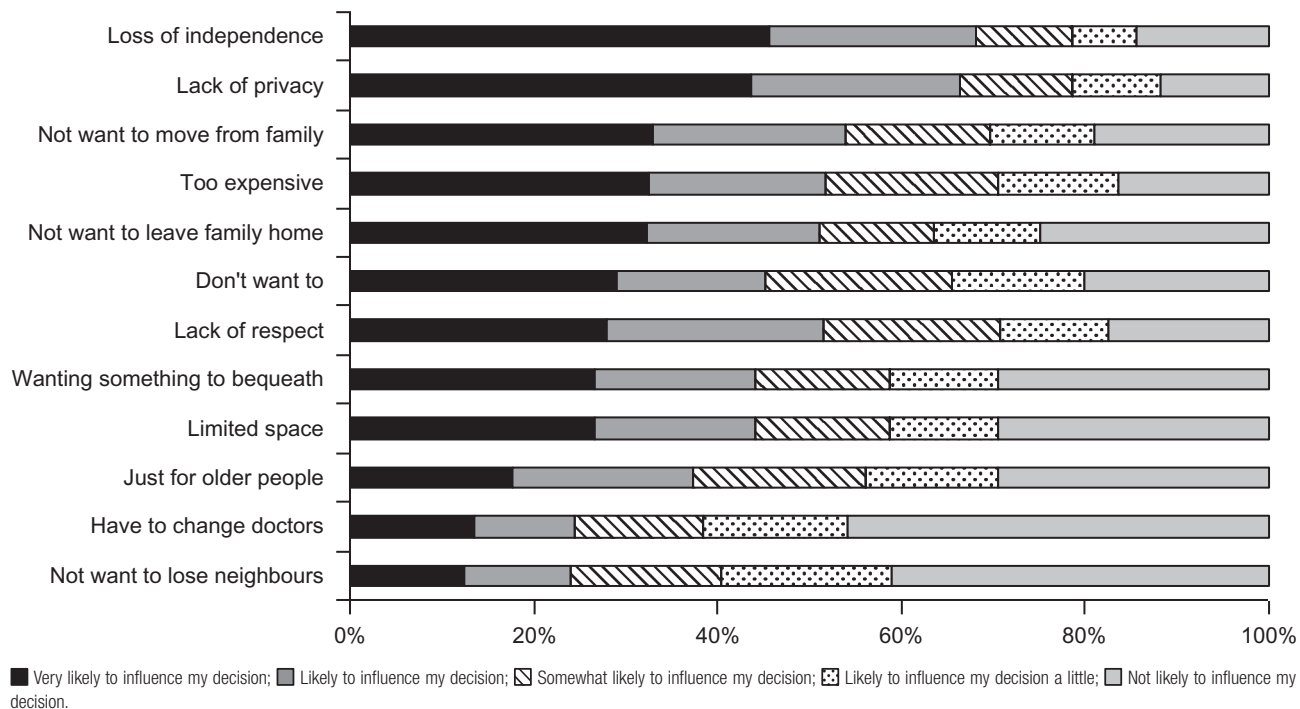
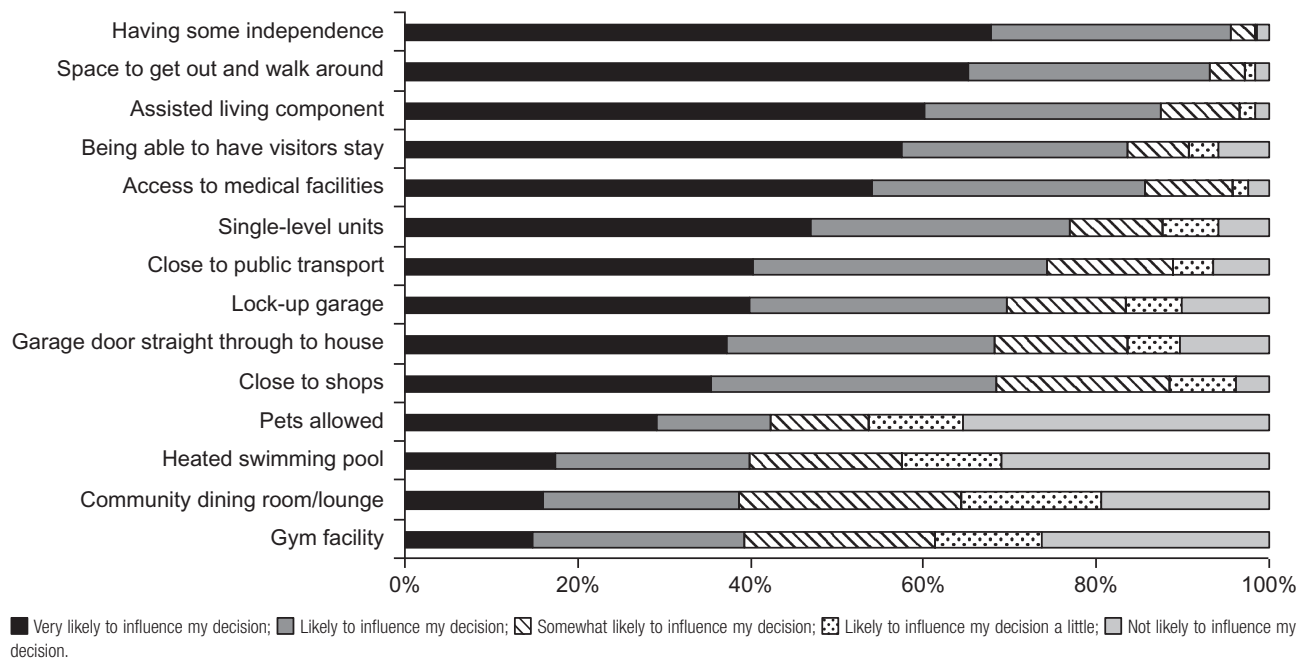


Figure 3: Ratings for the influence of services and facilities important in the decision to relocate.



facilities' were endorsed by a smaller proportion of respondents (approximately 40%). Figure 3 displays the ratings for the influence of services and facilities important in the decision to relocate by response category. Logistic regression analyses indicated significant age effects (Table 2). Compared to persons aged 55–64 years, older adults (65–74 or 75+ years) were less likely to report being 'allowed pets' as an

important consideration in relocation. In addition, those aged 55–64 years were also more likely than the older cohort to report 'space to get out and walk around' and 'gym facilities' as important.

Comparing those who had considered relocation to a retirement village in the future and those who had not, little

difference was found in the pattern of features endorsed as important. No significant effects were found for group membership in village features endorsed as important.

Other demographic indicators

While not the main focus of the study, a small number of other demographic differences were observed in the analyses. Analyses indicated that retired older adults were more likely to cite improved security (odds ratio (OR) = 1.6, $P = 0.04$; 95% confidence interval (CI) 1.02–2.5); and those reporting financial stability were more likely to report assistance in the case of declining health (OR = 2.8, $P = 0.02$; 95% CI 1.2–6.7) as encouraging relocation. Compared to partnered persons, those separated/divorced were more likely to cite not wanting to lose current neighbours (OR = 2.3, $P = 0.01$; 95% CI 1.2–4.2), the expense (OR = 1.9, $P = 0.02$; 95% CI 1.09–3.2) and the limited space (OR = 1.9, $P = 0.02$; 95% CI 1.08–3.2) as discouraging relocation. Those never married were less likely to report limited space and garden as discouraging relocation (OR = 0.3, $P = 0.04$; 95% CI 0.1–1.0).

Finally, the investigation of village features identified as important found retired persons were more likely to cite community dining/lounge (OR = 1.6, $P = 0.04$; 95% CI 1.02–2.5) and assisted living facilities (OR = 2.3, $P = 0.01$; 95% CI 1.2–4.5); and less likely to report gym facilities (OR = 0.6, $P = 0.03$; 95% CI 0.4–1.0) as influencing decisions to relocate. Compared to partnered persons, those never married were less likely to report being able to have visitors stay as influencing their decisions (OR = 0.2, $P = 0.003$; 95% CI 0.08–0.6).

Discussion

Factors perceived by older adults as most likely to encourage relocation to a retirement village included provision for continuing health care needs, home maintenance support and the convenient location of facilities. A fear of losing independence and concerns related to privacy were most frequently cited as likely to discourage a move. Age differences were identified in the characteristics influencing decisions, supporting the importance of identifying the target population when promoting the benefits of retirement village life. Unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of persons who had considered relocation for the future endorsed positive characteristics offered by retirement villages (e.g. communal living environment, reduced stress, improved security and continuing care) as encouraging relocation. In contrast, those who had not considered relocation were more likely to report discouraging factors such as loss of privacy, leaving family, friends and neighbours and the perception that retirement villages are just for older people. Despite this, no difference was found between these groups in the features of retirement villages endorsed as important in deciding to move.

Factors encouraging relocation

Provisions for continuing care so that family did not incur the burden of care were highly supported as encouraging

relocation, regardless of consideration given to the move. The endorsement of 'assistance in the case of declining health' was 2.5 times higher among those having considered the move, controlling for present health status, supporting concern for future functional decline as a primary motive for consideration of relocation in later life.

Interestingly, 'opportunities for keeping active', 'being around people your own age' and a 'greater social life' were considered less likely to play a role in the decision. While seemingly in contrast to socially based motives surrounding relocation decisions, feelings of social isolation and loneliness accompanying decisions may only be prompted by the loss of a spouse, or relocation of friends or family [22]. Moreover, it may be that a combination of primary (e.g. health care provision) and secondary (e.g. leisure facilities) factors contribute to influencing relocation decisions, whereby secondary concerns become relevant to decision-making only after primary concerns have been adequately addressed.

Factors discouraging relocation

Changing negative perceptions of retirement village life represents a possible target area for service providers aiming to attract prospective residents. Relocation to a retirement village can be branded with negative societal views, beginning with the suggestion that they are 'places where old people live'. This stigma affects both residents' self-concept and their relationships with others [8,9] and likely discourages some prospective residents from making the move. While in the present study this belief was held by less than 40% of respondents, other more highly endorsed perceptions such as relocation representing a loss of independence and lack of privacy (each endorsed by around two-thirds of participants) suggest these are areas warranting the attention of service providers. Concerns over lack of privacy may be particularly important given that previous studies have identified this as a potential downside of condensed housing villages [3,23]. Although not a major contributor to encouraging relocation in the present study, the social benefits potentially provided by retirement village living, as well as resident quality of life, may be impeded if an adequate balance is not achieved between desired levels of social engagement and privacy [3].

A reluctance to move away from family, friends and neighbours also characterised people who had not considered relocation. While social support was not previously found to be a significant predictor of considering relocation within this sample [21], those who have not considered relocation may feel more satisfied with, and be more embedded in, their neighbourhood social environment.

Age differences

Contrary to predictions, participants across age groups rated 'assistance in case of declining health' as important in encouraging relocation. Compared to the oldest adults (75+ years), those aged 55–64 years were more likely to recognise

the provision of a social/community environment, and 'opportunities for keeping active' as attractive features of retirement villages. Consistent with previous research on this sample [21], the younger cohort appeared more open to future relocation, as they were less likely to indicate 'just not wanting to move/not liking the idea' when considering factors discouraging relocation. This younger cohort was also less discouraged by the prospect of losing neighbours and having to change doctors, suggesting that they may be more confident in their capacity to adapt to challenges accompanying relocation than the older cohorts.

Public expectations: What are people seeking in a retirement village?

Consistent with primary motives for relocation (e.g. declining health) [5,10,24], the features of the retirement village deemed most important in relocation decisions reflected fundamental needs. Maintaining independence, access to medical facilities and assisted living facilities were endorsed by more than 85% of respondents across the sample. In addition, the provision of 'space to get out and walk around' endorsed by 93% of respondents as important is consistent with Boldy et al.'s [13] finding of 'adequate space' being sought by potential movers. While an inability to maintain a large garden and family home may prompt relocation [25], retaining a manageable space can promote a sense of independence and allow for continued engagement in valued leisure activities [26,27].

In contrast, luxury facilities (e.g. heated swimming pool, gym facilities) were endorsed by fewer than 40% of respondents as being important in influencing relocation decisions. With financial concerns and affordability representing a perceived barrier to relocation, this may be an important area for service providers to consider. Supporting residents in travel to public services (e.g. swimming pools, hairdressers, coffee shops) as an alternative to on-site facilities may also provide benefits to resident well-being by supporting continued integration in the wider community.

Limitations

The results of the present study should be interpreted in the context of several limitations. First, the sample was restricted to ACT residents, who in general have a greater degree of socioeconomic homogeneity than residents of other capital cities in Australia [28]. As employment, health and functionality and family status can influence housing choices, it is recognised that other community populations may hold differing expectations. Given these possible concerns regarding the generalisability of the findings, along with our relatively low response rate in the current study, additional studies are needed to provide a more complete picture of older adults' perceptions regarding residential relocation in the Australian context. Finally, as this was a cross-sectional study, it is not possible to determine the extent to which observed age differences reflect cohort or developmental differences in motivation and attitudes towards relocation.

Conclusions

As reported previously [21], those aged 55–64 years are more open to the idea of relocation to a retirement village than older cohorts. However, the opinions of community-dwelling older adults' regarding this housing option have largely not been documented. The present study provides an insight into the beliefs and residential preferences of our older community. Importantly, an identification of those factors central to the decisions made by the baby boomer cohort as they move into later life may help to ensure adequate provisions are made. In evaluating and promoting their services, aged care providers may also benefit from addressing those factors reported by this cohort as important determinants of their relocation decisions. Villages that provide outdoor living areas and support independent living in conjunction with assisted living facilities and access to medical services are likely to most appeal to prospective residents. While leisure facilities (e.g. gym, community spaces, heated swimming pools) may be more important to the younger cohort (aged 55–64 years), overall these features appeared less important in influencing relocation choices across our sample. Aged care providers need also be aware of negative perceptions surrounding the retirement village lifestyle (e.g. fear of losing independence and privacy), which may discourage or promote anxiety around relocation.

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Key Points

- Factors reported as most likely to encourage relocation to a retirement village included continuing health care needs, support with home maintenance and convenient location to facilities.
- Factors most likely to discourage relocation included a fear of losing independence and concerns regarding privacy.
- Features of retirement villages most important in influencing decisions are consistent with a desire to maintain independence (e.g. assisted living facilities), but also include the provision of outdoor living space.
- Luxury services (e.g. heated swimming pools, gym facilities) appear least important in influencing relocation decisions.

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