



RESEARCH REPORT

2018

DESIGNING HOMES FOR AN AGEING POPULATION



“The purpose of this research is to assess the types and locations of housing demanded for an ageing population in Ireland. It discusses Ireland’s demographic profile, and builds on work by the Housing Agency on housing Ireland’s ageing population by discussing how good planning and design can ensure housing delivery and place-making meets the needs of a large (and growing) cohort of older people.”



Ireland's demographic profile: Census 2016

In Ireland as elsewhere, people are living longer. The Irish population aged over 65 has increased by 19.1% between the Censuses of 2011 and 2016. This is especially evident in the male population which rose by 53,523 (22%) to 296,837 compared with an increase of 48,651 (16.7%) to 340,730 for females. For the population aged over 85, the male population increased by 24.8% to 23,062 while the female population increased by 11.4% to 44,493, an additional 67,500 people over the age of 85 in a five year period.

Ireland is not out of line with other developed countries in this regard; better medical care and the changing nature of work away from manual labour to office-based employment means that more people will be living healthy lives for longer. Improved health and longevity will lead to significant advances in how long people choose to work into old age, and presents huge opportunities for new thinking about positive attitudes towards ageing.

As discussed below, this will place demands on Ireland's social welfare and pensions system, and – without reform of housing policy the need for nursing homes and acute hospital care will increase.

This increased cohort of people aged 65 and over is not uniformly spread across Ireland as the 2016 Census data shows: Fingal continues to have the youngest population followed by Kildare. It is not co-incidental that these are two urban areas which have seen rapid growth in office-based employment in recent years. Kerry and Mayo, two of Ireland's least densely populated rural counties, and ones reliant on agriculture, have the oldest population followed closely by Leitrim.

Thus, a high level view of the most recent census data reveals that rural areas of Ireland have a higher proportion of older people than urban areas. This, as this report will show, has an enormous bearing on the range and types of support which are essential to older people in order for them to remain in their own homes. Such as transport and community health care. It will not be economically possible to provide these services to a dispersed population and we need to increase the provision of suitable housing in existing communities.

Cover images

Cover, top left: Dunluce Apartments, Winner Best Housing, RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2017, DTA Architects

Cover, top right: Hazel Lane Mews Houses, Winner of Best Housing, RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2016, Dublin Design Studio

Cover, bottom left: Rochestown House, Phase 2, Winner Sustainable Project, RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2017, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Architects Department.

Cover bottom right: Clancy Quay, Winner Best Housing, RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2018, OMP Architects with Lindsay Conservation Architects Architects

Older population profile in Ireland

	2011	2016
65 - 69 YEARS	173,638	211,236
70 - 74 YEARS	131,190	162,272
75 - 79 YEARS	102,036	115,467
80 - 84 YEARS	70,113	81,037
85 YEARS AND OVER	58,416	67,555

Oldest and Youngest Counties in Ireland

		2011	
County	AGE	County	AGE
State	36.1	State	37.4
OLDEST			
Cork City	38.7	Kerry	40.2
Mayo	38.6	Mayo	40.2
Kerry	38.5	Leitrim	39.8
Leitrim	38.4	Roscommon	39.7
Roscommon	38.6	Sligo	39.2
YOUNGEST			
Laois	34.3	Laois	35.6
South Dublin	34.1	South Dublin	35.5
Meath	33.8	Meath	35.2
Kildare	33.5	Kildare	34.9
Fingal	32.9	Fingal	34.3

Older population profile in selected counties

STATES		2011	2016	INCREASE
	ALL AGES	4,510,409	4,676,648	166,239
	65 years and over	491,168	587,284	96,116
	70 years and over	323,907	384,990	61,083
	75 years and over	199,236	231,304	32,068
	80 years and over	104,697	123,676	18,979
	85 years and over	43,264	51,503	8,239

FINGAL		2011	2016	INCREASE
	ALL AGES	271,958	292,989	21,031
	65 years and over	18,153	24,824	6,671
	70 years and over	10,496	15,042	4,546
	75 years and over	5,797	8,032	2,235
	80 years and over	2,742	3,888	1,146
	85 years and over	1,078	1,458	380

KILDARE		2011	2016	INCREASE
	ALL AGES	208,522	220,923	12,401
	65 years and over	15,100	20,370	5,270
	70 years and over	8,914	12,201	3,287
	75 years and over	5,108	6,552	1,444
	80 years and over	2,599	3,230	631
	85 years and over	1,086	1,304	218

KERRY		2011	2016	INCREASE
	ALL AGES	140,975	141,596	621
	65 years and over	18,742	22,155	3,413
	70 years and over	12,338	14,409	2,071
	75 years and over	7,717	8,530	813
	80 years and over	4,151	4,572	421
	85 years and over	1,755	1,942	187



LEITRIM		2011	2016	INCREASE
	ALL AGES	31,556	31,721	165
	65 years and over	4,322	5,037	715
	70 years and over	2,957	3,348	391
	75 years and over	1,890	2,068	178
	80 years and over	1,031	1,161	130
	85 years and over	420	543	123

MAYO		2011	2016	INCREASE
	ALL AGES	128,492	127,767	(725)
	65 years and over	17,718	20,735	3,017
	70 years and over	11,998	13,553	1,555
	75 years and over	7,677	8,277	600
	80 years and over	4,245	4,576	331
	85 years and over	1,896	1,992	96

Research by the Housing Agency undertaken before the publication of Census 2016 data confirms the long-term trend that the number of older people in Ireland is growing, both in real terms and as a proportion of the overall population.

The number of people living in Ireland and aged over 65 grew by 100,000 between 2010 and 2015 and more people are now living longer into what could be termed “old-old age.” Based on the same research, the percentage of the Irish population aged over 65 is projected to double, from 12.4%

to 24.9%, by 2050. In addition, the number of people aged 80 and over in Ireland is projected to rise from 130,600 to 458,000 an increase of 250% bringing the percentage of the population aged over 80 from 2.7% to some 9.1%.¹

Not only will there be more elderly people in the next few years, those elderly people will account for a greater share of the population; this has a clear economic impact as the ratio of working age people to retired people will diminish.

¹ Housing for Older People: Thinking ahead (Housing Agency, Oct. 2016)

Old People as Dependents

Dependents are defined for statistical purposes as people outside the normal working age of 15-64. Dependency ratios are used to give a useful indication of the age structure of a population with young (0-14) and old (65+) shown as a percentage of the population of working age (i.e. 15-64).

The total dependency ratio (i.e. the total number of people not of working age per 100 people) increased from 49.3% in 2011 to 52.7 in 2016, a rise of 3.4 points. Thus, in 2011 there were 49.3 dependents per 100 people. In 2016, there were 52.4 dependents per 100 people living in Ireland.

$$\frac{(0-14 \text{ years old}) + (65+ \text{ years old})}{(15-64 \text{ years old})}$$

While the number of people aged 15-64 increased by 44,477 over the five years, the number of those aged 65 and over rose by 102,174 - more than twice that amount. The number of those aged 0 to 14 increased by just 26,962. The young dependency ratio (i.e. the number of children per 100 people) increased by 0.4 points while the old dependency ratio increased by 3.0 points.

Old dependency in 2016 stood at 20.4 older people per 100 people living in the State, compared to 17.4 in 2011. There were substantial differences at county level. In 2016, the top two counties with the highest old dependency ratios were Mayo (28.3) and Leitrim (27.4). The counties with the lowest old dependency ratios were Fingal (13.8) and Kildare (15). These four counties were both the top and bottom also in 2011.

It is important to bear in mind that dependency ratios are a rather crude measure as variations occur over time due to the number of young people in third level education and people over 65 continuing to work. As technology develops, it is likely that an ever-larger cohort of people aged 65+ will be physically fit enough to work well into "retirement." Nonetheless, dependency data is important as it points to the likely financial demand placed on the exchequer to fund care for the elderly.

Housing usage

According to the 2016 Census, almost 10% of the population live in homes with more persons than rooms.

The persons per room ratio has been used in previous census reports on housing to measure the level of crowding within households.

There were 95,013 permanent households with more persons than rooms according to Census 2016, a 28% rise on the equivalent number in 2011 (73,997). Close to 10% of the population resided within these households in 2016 at an average of 4.7 persons per household.

Couples (including married) with children accounted for 60% of homes with more persons than rooms, followed by one-parent mothers with children (8.2%).

Two-thirds of these households were rented, while 23% had an existing loan or mortgage. In terms of geographical location, 43% were within the Dublin Region.

At the opposite end of the spectrum there were 729,012 homes where there were at least two rooms for every person, representing over 40% of all households, with an average household size of 1.76.

Thus, it is clear from the most recent census that there are a large number of homes which are being used “sub-optimally” most frequently by “empty-nesters” i.e. those couples or widows who continue to reside in the family home after their children have moved into their own accommodation.

Rochestown House, Phase 2, Winner Best Sustainable Project, RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2017, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Architects Department.



Elderly and living alone

There were a total of 587,284 people aged 65 and over in private households in April 2016 and of these 156,799 (27%) lived alone. Among the 231,304 persons aged 75 and over, 81,672 (35.3%) lived alone while almost 45% of the 51,503 persons aged 85 and over also lived alone.

Urban areas, along with the Border and Western regions, had the highest proportions of elderly people living alone. Counties in the Eastern region, particularly those in the Dublin commuter belt generally had lower proportions of elderly living alone. Dublin city was an exception to this.

More elderly women live alone than men. Women accounted for 62.3% of all elderly people living alone. Among the older age group – aged 85 and over – women accounted for almost three in every four of those living alone.

Current Health Policy Position

Established by the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is responsible for the provision of health and social services, using public funds. The HSE replaced ten health boards, the Eastern Regional Health Authority and other agencies and comes under the remit of the Minister for Health. It has an annual budget of over €13 billion, and is the main body responsible for care of older people in the state. Other bodies such as the Health Information Quality Authority (HIQA) are also involved in monitoring care, and funds such as the National Treatment Purchase Fund in financing it.

It is the stated aim of the HSE, as confirmed within the Programme for Government, to facilitate older people staying in their home or community as long as possible. This effectively means stemming demand for nursing homes and to do this there are currently two models. The first is a community services-led model supported by a primary health team, while the second is the provision of home care. The HSE is currently exploring potential “Third Options”, for example where older people move in with a family, in a system similar to the fostering of children. As of 2014, the total budget for care of OP was circa €1,400m, of which €324m was spent on home care. Currently 4.1% over-65s are in nursing

homes and almost one-quarter of over-85s are in long-term care, according to HSE figures.

In the nursing home sector, roughly 80% of these are privately run nursing homes. However, despite the dominance of privately run nursing home beds, the system as a whole is underpinned by the Fair Deal scheme. The Fair Deal scheme came into effect in 2009 to provide financial support for people who need long-term nursing home care. Under this scheme, administered by the HSE, a person in need of care will make a contribution towards the cost of their care and the State will pay the balance. Any person of any age who needs nursing home care can apply to be a part of the scheme. Every applicant must undergo a financial assessment that examines personal income as well as assets in order to calculate the personal contribution and the shortfall the State will cover. It is this aspect of the scheme that is going to be affected by the changing nature of home-ownership in Ireland, as the current contribution also refers to the value of any assets they own (this is subject to certain minimum thresholds). Contributions by eligible residents under the Fair Deal scheme can be made during the period they reside in the care home or they can be deferred and be paid from their estate after death.

Programme for Partnership Government

The current government has committed itself to recognising the policy (and financial) implications of an older population. However, the Programme for Partnership Government is focused on incentivising private investment in nursing homes and supported living/assisted living, rather than examining new ways of designing purpose-built apartments and houses, either in developments designed for an elderly population, or within mainstream housing developments:

“Over the next 30 years the number of people aged over 65 will double. At the same time, the number of us living to be over 80 is set to quadruple. We need therefore, to be able to

cater for the needs of a more diverse ageing population who want to live independent and active lives in their communities....We will seek ways to incentivise private nursing home investment and new supported living/assisted living arrangements.”

A review of the The Fair Deal Scheme in 2016 showed that it currently supports c.24,000 people in nursing home care and this is set to increase to c.33,000 by the end of 2024. 79% of nursing homes are reliant on Fair Deal income, making the nursing home sector hugely dependent on taxation incentive schemes into the future



No. 55 Percy Place, Highly Commended in the RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2016, ODOS Architects

Future Trends

The research from the Housing Agency is clear that many older people want to age in place. The vast majority of older people surveyed (88%) are very happy with their current home. But when explored in more detail it was found that the link may be stronger to the community rather than the actual house. More than 50% of older people when surveyed said that staying in their local community was the key reason for staying in their current home, and 28% said staying in contact with their friends and neighbours was another key reason. At the same time, more than 20% said that the type of house they lived in negatively impacted 'a lot' on their ease of living. This would show an opportunity for more 'age appropriate' housing within existing communities, of living in the same area but in a different home.

For example, in the UK, 33% of people aged over 55 have considered moving to a smaller property, more suitable for their changing needs, but only 7% did move as the remainder could not find a suitable property². Therefore there is clearly a need for housing designed and constructed to suit the needs of older people especially what can be called the "young old" and "empty nesters" but that demand is not being met.

Related to this, homelessness is an issue for older people that often goes unrecognised, though the majority of homeless people are aged between 25 and 44: in August 2016, 88 adults aged 65+ (out of a total of 4,248) accessed local authority managed emergency accommodation, according to Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government Homelessness Report.

As the Housing Agency has noted:

"Housing for older people needs to be viewed in terms of a Spectrum of Care, as it is in other countries. It is also important to model the supply and demand influences on housing provision for an ageing population, including the role of state supports (and subsidies) and influences on housing costs. Ireland's older population will grow significantly over the next number of decades, but there is already a pressing need to develop new types of accommodation choices for the current population of over 65s. Demographic changes will also shape the structure of Irish households, which in turn will create a large population of OP, often living alone, in accommodation that is gradually becoming less appropriate for their needs. Added to demographic change

² JLL (UK) "Retirement Living Where is the Opportunity?" (November 2015)

is the impact of regional dynamics, especially the 'concentration' of OP in more rural areas (though also in specific urban locations such as inner Dublin, for example). Home ownership – especially ownership outright without a mortgage – is the dominant tenure type, and this tenure preference will also shape the housing choices available and the choices eventually made by an ageing population.”

Therefore it is important to recognise that not all people will reach retirement having paid off a mortgage; many people in Ireland will be renters during their working years and reach retirement without having bought their home outright. This cohort will need to fund the rent for their accommodation from their pension. Thus, houses for an elderly population should be available to rent as well as to buy.

A second issue that is important to note is the lack of home loans available to those beyond working years. It is the norm in the Irish mortgage market for home loans to be made available to purchasers up to the age of 65. This effectively prevents retired people (or those close to retirement) from borrowing to fund the purchase of their home. It is appropriate that greater effort is made to introduce affordable bridging finance for those older people who need access to financing to fund the bridge from one form of housing to another.



Access All Areas, Highly Commended in the RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2018, Duggan Architecture

Impact of an aging population on the exchequer

Standard and Poors expect that Ireland's total population will increase by 8% between 2015 and 2050 to some 5 million people, while the share of the working-age population will decline from 66% to 56%³. Under the government's current policies, they project that annual age-related spending will increase by 3.4% of GDP⁴. In the absence of further reforms or expenditure cuts in other areas, this growth in spending would weaken Ireland's fiscal position and reverse the current decline in net general government debt in 10 years' time. "Health care spending is under increasing upward pressure, yet the

Irish government faces significant challenges in modifying health care policy. Public health care expenditure has exceeded the budget by 0.1%-0.3% of GDP annually in the past few years, in contrast to a rapid consolidation of spending in other government departments. This is despite a high contribution from private health care insurance and the means-testing of free primary health care. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), only 68% of Ireland's health expenditure is publicly funded, against an average of 73% and a median of 76% among all OECD members, as of 2012."

³This is a relatively modest population growth forecast for 2050. Ibec has recently noted that on an all island basis, the population now stands at 6.6 million people. In the coming years, this population will continue to grow by 25%, one of the fastest rates in Europe. This will bring the total number of people living on the island of Ireland up to 8.25 million people by 2040 and 10 million by 2050. Given changes to technology and travel it is sensible to consider population and demographic trends on an all island basis. However, Census data used in this report is only available for the Republic of Ireland.

⁴Standard & Poor's "Global Ageing 2016: Ireland's Ageing Population Would Reverse Fiscal Gains In 10 Years Absent Reforms" (July 2016)



Hazel Lane Mews Houses, Winner of Best Housing, RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2016, Dublin Design Studio

Aging Population Data And Scenario Results: Ireland

	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Demographic and economic assumptions Population (mil.)	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.8	5.0
Working-age population (% of total)	65.7	63.4	63.3	63.1	61.9	59.3	56.7	55.7
Elderly population (aged over 65; % of total)	12.4	15	17.1	19.4	21.4	23.1	24.5	24.9
Old-age dependency ratio (%)	18.9	23.6	27	30.7	34.5	39	43.2	44.7
Economic growth (% change of GDP)	7.8	1.4	1.4	1.8	1.7	1.4	1.4	1.9
Age-related government expenditure (% of GDP)								
Pensions	7.5	8.0	8.7	9.1	9.6	10	10.2	9.1
Health care	6.1	6.3	6.6	6.9	7.2	7.3	7.3	7.3
Long-term care	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.3
Unemployment benefits	1.9	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Total	16.2	16.5	17.4	18.1	18.8	19.3	19.7	19.6

Features in home

The Housing Agency undertook a survey of older people, and asked them about features which were of importance their age cohort; they were asked whether their house had this feature, and whether it was needed now or might be needed in the future.

The research shows the mismatch between the current presence of features and what is needed. It provides a useful guide to those designing homes for older people, or when assessing the potential flexibility of existing homes, to what is needed by older people so that they can live in their accommodation longer.

	My home has this feature	This feature isn eeded in my home now	This feature might be needed in my home in the future	Not applicable
Toilet on the ground floor	85%	1%	8%	6%
Outside lights	85%	2%	3%	9%
Nonslip floor surfaces	73%	3%	10%	14%
Toilet and shower/ bathtub on the ground floor	68%	3%	16%	14%
Bedroom on the ground floor	58%	2%	21%	20%
Alarm system	56%	5%	16%	23%
Adequate storage for walking aids, wheelchair, etc.	37%	2%	25%	36%
Widened doorways	29%	3%	32%	35%
Bathroom aids, e.g. walk in shower, grab rails, toilet adaptations	23%	3%	37%	37%
Surveillance system	21%	5%	31%	44%
Ramps	10%	3%	39%	47%
Intercom	8%	5%	37%	50%
Chair lifts	5%	2%	35%	58%

Base: 554 adults aged 55+

Conclusion

Ireland's demographic profile is changing, and the number of elderly people as a proportion of the overall population is increasing. While improved healthcare and the changing nature of work means that more people will remain in good health into old age, an ever larger number of people will require housing which specifically meets their needs.

This should be available across tenure type, recognising that many people will reach old age while still renting their home. It must also recognise the fact

that many elderly people live alone and thus are dependent on neighbours and community for their day-to-day care.

Thus housing must be designed to fit the physical needs of the person living there, and it must be situated in a community where the most vulnerable have access to the supports they need. As noted earlier, Ireland's most elderly regions are also its most sparsely populated regions. Therefore not only must Ireland begin to design homes for an older population, it also needs to consider where those homes are situated.



Belgrave Mews, Highly Commended in the RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2018, TAKA Architects

Recommendations

1. THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO ACT ON THE FUTURE CHANGES TO IRELAND'S DEMOGRAPHICS

The Irish population has continued to grow, despite recent high levels of emigration driven by the recession. Whether Ireland's economy continues to grow or shrink during the next thirty years, demographic change will continue to take place. Ireland has a relatively young population by European standards, but it is aging. Government, the Oireachtas and others have all acknowledged Ireland's changing demographic profile and so it is vital that Government invests in new ways of thinking, planning and investing in housing for elderly people now.

Many housing reforms take time for new supply to become available. A strategic approach to developing appropriate housing for older people is important, but central government, the housing finance agency and local authorities should do more to identify appropriate available housing now for purchase by or lease to older people, as well as the identification of potential suitable housing development sites.

2. TARGETS NEED TO BE SET FOR THE DELIVERY OF SUITABLE HOUSES AND APARTMENTS IN EXISTING COMMUNITIES FOR 'DOWNSIZERS'

The "persons per room ratio" is a useful Census indicator to measure the level of crowding within households. 10% of the population live in houses where there is more than one person per room, of which some 60% are couples with children. On the other hand, in 40% of households, there are at least two rooms for every person. Therefore it can be said that in some younger households there is significant overcrowding, and in others, houses are not being completely occupied. Efforts should be made by government to promote the development of smaller homes for older people whose children no longer occupy the family home and who therefore wish to downsize and make available their larger home for those families needing more space.

The State should also seek a financial solution to enable and support those older people who wish to trade down from a larger home to a more appropriately sized home. One possibility

is to develop a ring-fenced fund to assist with difficulties in securing short-term bridging finance. The State should also review the taxation implications of downsizing and develop initiatives whereby proceeds of the sale of the larger house can be saved in a pension fund.

3. INCREASED DENSITIES CLOSE TO TRANSPORT AND EXISTING TOWNS AND VILLAGES NEED TO BE INCENTIVISED

Older people have specific infrastructural requirements, and reduced mobility and fear of isolation mean that services and community should be within easy reach. Government should promote increased densities and encourage new housing development within existing towns and cities, as well as investing in public transport between urban areas to allow older people easy access to the services they need.

4. COMMITTING TO DELIVERING AN AGREED PERCENTAGE OF NEW HOUSING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE.

As well as requiring specific infrastructural services, older people also have specific housing needs. In recent

years, the Government has recognised that the number of students in Ireland is increasing and has had a focused policy on promoting purpose-build student accommodation. Similar efforts should now be made to commit to delivering a sustained high level of housing supply which is specifically designed with older occupants in mind. The types of features required by older people has been well-researched by the Housing Agency.

5. USING EFFECTIVE URBAN DESIGN TO CREATE MORE AGE FRIENDLY BUILT ENVIRONMENTS.

Research by the Housing Agency has shown that older people wish to remain independent and in their own homes for as long as possible. It is therefore important that both their homes and environment allow them to achieve this. By constructing age-appropriate housing within existing towns and cities, a sense of neighbourhood and community can be delivered, reducing fear of isolation and loneliness. Government should promote effective urban design standards to ensure that older people can continue to live happily in their own homes within easy reach of the services and community they require.



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