

HOUSING NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE IN POLAND AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE WARSAW, POZNAŃ AND SZCZECIŃ URBAN AREAS¹

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Abstract

Due to an ageing population, local governments are facing new challenges in the field of addressing the housing needs of older people. Seniors are not a homogeneous group; three basic categories may be distinguished in terms of independence level and the resulting needs. The first category would include independent people, the second one - the elderly with limited independence, and in this case it is necessary to adapt their dwellings to the needs of people with partial disabilities, e.g. dedicated housing. The last category is comprised of people with considerable dependence for whom there is a need to create special dwellings such as sheltered housing or assisted living housing. The aim of this paper is to diagnose the housing preferences of the elderly and to explore the solutions of the selected municipalities in the field of addressing the housing needs of seniors. The issue is analyzed based on desk research and information collected within field research in the Warsaw, Poznań and Szczecin urban areas.

Key words: *housing needs, the elderly, seniors, housing policy, ageing in place.*

JEL Classification: *A13, J11, J14, J26, H00, Z18.*

Citation: *Iwański R., Rataj Z., Cieśla A., 2019, Housing Needs of Older People in Poland as Exemplified by the Warsaw, Poznań and Szczecin Urban Areas, Real Estate Management and Valuation, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 126-137.*

DOI: *10.2478/remav-2019-0020*

1. Introduction

Population ageing in Poland is a challenge in many areas, including but not limited to: healthcare, social care, social security or housing policy. The forecasted growth in the number of older people,

¹ Some information used in the process of drafting this paper was obtained while conducting a research project "Social Housing and Its Role in Satisfying Housing Needs of Indigent Households in Poland" funded by the National Science Centre (2014/13/N/HS4/02100).

along with a consistently low total fertility rate, will result in the growth of the share of the elderly in the total population. Apart from the necessity to provide for care services, one of the most serious issues will be to address housing needs, taking into account the level of older people's fitness.

In recent years, the importance of housing in the life of the elderly has been increasingly often emphasised and the concept of ageing in place, i.e. ageing where the person has lived so far, has been promoted. The idea to deinstitutionalize long-term care for dependent older people shifts the responsibility of creating the housing and assisting infrastructure to municipalities, which are responsible for addressing the housing needs of sensitive groups (GLASBY and ROBINSON 2019). Creating a housing infrastructure that is well adapted to the needs of seniors will make self-care possible for at least some of them, and in the case of people with a low level of independence, to provide secure and appropriate care at their homes.

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition of an older person

At present, there are three definitions of older people applied in Poland. The first one is governed by the Elderly Act of 11 September 2015 (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1705) which defines an older person as a person who is 60. Institutions dealing with statistical data analysis (Polish Central Statistical Office, Eurostat) use the limit of 65 years of age. Due to different retirement ages for women (60) and men (65) in Poland, there is also the post-working age category which is defined differently for the respective sexes. In this paper, 60 years of age, according to the law applicable in Poland, is going to be to the age limit for defining an older person.

Let us note that international definitions of an older person differ slightly from the Polish standards. The United Nations has agreed that 65+ years may usually be denoted as an old age (9), this being the first attempt at an international definition of old age. However, for its study of old age in Africa, the World Health Organization (WHO) set 55 as the beginning of old age. At the same time, the WHO recognized that the developing world often defines old age, not by years, but by new roles, loss of previous roles, or inability to make active contributions to society.(10)

2.2. Demographic status in Poland

Population ageing is characteristic of developed and developing countries. The total fertility rate (TFR) in Poland in the mid-2010s amounted to merely 1.32, which placed the country near the end of the ranking in the European Union. A lower TFR was noted in only three countries: Portugal, Cyprus and Greece. In 2016, the population in Poland amounted to more than 38.4 million people, and according to the forecasts, will drop to 33.9 million in 2050. In 2016, men 65+ and women 60+ constituted 21.2% of the population. In regional terms, the youngest province in Poland is the Province of Podkarpacie, where seniors constituted 18.7% of the population. The oldest one, on the other hand, is the Province of Łódź, with a 22.5% share of the elderly in the population. According to demographic forecasts, 2050 will see as high as a 36.5% share of the elderly in the population. The highest share of seniors is estimated to be in the Province of Opole (40.2%), whereas the lowest one in the Province of Pomerania (33.7%). In Poland, mean life expectancy at birth for women is approximately 81.5 years, and over 73 years for men. The demographic forecasts assume that this figure will grow to 88 years for women and 81 for men in 2050. Due to the persistent differences in the life expectancy of women and men, the process of the feminization of old age will progress, particularly in the 85+ category (RATAJ, IWAŃSKI, BUGAJSKA 2018). The mean life expectancy is also determined by the place of residence: in rural areas, life expectancy forecasts are shorter by several months, or even years. This results, among others, from the type of work performed, availability of healthcare services, including specialists, but also the quality of housing and the facilities for the elderly they are furnished with.

2.3. Housing needs of older people

Needs in general terms may be divided into biological and social ones (LISOWSKI 1996, p. 17). Due to the fact that not all needs may be satisfied at the same level, they are divided into ones that must be satisfied (as they secure the very existence of a human) and ones that do not have to be, may not be, or even should not be satisfied (LISOWSKI 1996, p. 14). Such a categorization is a background for ladders or hierarchies that indicate basic and further needs. Among the theories using such a distinction, the

most popular is the theory of Maslow, who included food and shelter at the bottom level, and higher personal and abstract needs at the top. Another theory, based on Maslow's concept but slightly more expanded, is proposed by Gawron. The concept is focused around housing aspects and develops a hierarchy of needs satisfied "in house", based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The author distinguishes between basic and advanced needs due to the changes occurring in the contemporary societies. According to the author, the basic needs include sleep, meal preparation, storage of personal belongings, rest and healing from illnesses, upbringing of children and studying. He completes those with the needs that have arisen from civilisation advancement: pursuing the out-of-work passions of the family members, participating in social life and working from home (GAWRON 2012, p. 37).

Population ageing is a unique process in historical terms. An urgent need is visible to undertake measures preventing the growth of social inequality in terms of access to medical and care services (WIM VAN DEN HEUVEL 2015) due to the inability to satisfy them to the full extent. Demographic forecasts encourage considerations about the housing needs of the elderly, especially those aged 60 and over, and the ways to address them within the state housing policy. Let us note that the elderly are not a homogeneous group. The needs of seniors in the field of housing vary, as a consequence of their financial, social, psychological, or biological status, and in particular their level of independence (NETTLETON et al. 2018).

Seniors who, despite their advanced age, demonstrate a high level of self-reliance need only to have their home and building adapted to improve comfort and security. In many cases, it suffices to adapt washing facilities to reduce the risk of falling (e.g. while stepping out of the bathtub) or remove the main architectural barriers from the building. Seniors who require assistance in everyday living due to their low level of independence may use three forms of aid: assisted living housing, sheltered housing or nursing homes. In Poland, as in other countries of Western Europe, (HOUBEN 2001) it is underlined within the deinstitutionalisation concept that creating appropriate conditions, including the housing conditions, (GIADA MEDA 2014) will allow seniors to remain where they have lived so far as long as possible.

2.4. Ageing in place

Ageing in place is an idea evolving in Western Europe according to which the elderly may maintain independence and self-reliance (HILLCOAT-NALLETAMBY et al. 2010) by adapting their dwellings to the specific needs of older people (SCHARLACH 2017). The fact that such solutions are reasonable is corroborated by research on seniors' preferences, which shows that they want to live in their familiar environment as long as possible (VANLEERBERGHE et al. 2017; GONYEA, BURNES 2013).

Originally, the idea of ageing in place involved specifically the ageing in one's own housing environment and neighbourhood to allow for the sense of stabilization and security, which translates into a higher quality of life (BOWLING et al. 2003). Currently, it has been expanded to the definition applied by the World Health Organisation (WHO 2004) which reads as follows: "Meeting the desire and ability of people, through the provision of appropriate services and assistance, to remain living relatively independently in the community in his or her current home or an appropriate level of housing. Aging in place is designed to prevent or delay more traumatic moves to a dependent facility, such as a nursing home."

3. Data and Methods

This paper is principally aimed at diagnosing the housing preferences of older people and exploring the solutions applied by the selected municipalities in the field of addressing the elderly's housing needs. The diagnosis is based on survey research which constituted a case study for three selected urban areas: Warsaw, Szczecin and Poznań. Apart from their own research, the authors also conducted desk research. The analysis of the housing preferences of older people allowed the housing needs of the elderly to be investigated. The solutions applied in the municipalities under examination are evaluated as referred to the results of the survey.

The hypothesis formulated in this paper is that the elderly want to stay at their own homes as long as possible, but the condition for this is that their dwellings be adapted to the changing age-related needs. To verify the hypothesis, the authors carried out quantitative research with the use of their own questionnaire and a desk research. The paper also uses statistical data from domestic institutions demonstrating the process of population ageing as predicted up to 2050. The research was carried out in three stages.

3.1. Research Stages

Stage I involved the collection of statistical data allowing for the determination of demographic trends in Poland.

Stage II involved the collection of literature on the subject of social housing and the idea of ageing in place, and the carrying out of the survey research. This stage was aimed at diagnosing the housing preferences of the elderly and analyzing the housing solutions in the context of an ageing society, in particular with reference to the idea of ageing in place.

With reference to the formulated hypothesis, stage III was the answer to the question whether the current condition of housing may constitute an instrument to address the housing needs of the elderly according to the idea of ageing in place. Within stage III, Polish solutions in the field of housing policy were analyzed, including emphasis placed on the needs of older people in Poland.

4. Empirical results

To verify the formulated hypothesis according to which the elderly want to remain in their homes as long as possible, the quantitative method was applied, with the use of the survey technique. The data was collected with the use of a questionnaire consisting of 11 questions asked in two groups. The first group of questions concerned the present status of the respondents, the other one concerned their own evaluation of their home. The information collected in the survey was completed with the data from the Polish Central Statistical Office.

The main group of respondents were the students of Universities of Third Age in the selected urban areas. In Warsaw, the respondents also included the visitors to the Model Senior's Flat. The questionnaire was completed by a total of 265 people, of which 104 people were the dwellers of Warsaw, 74 of Szczecin, and 87 of Poznań. All the respondents were aged 60 or more.

Table 1

Age of respondents						
Age	Warsaw		Szczecin		Poznań	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
60 – 65	22	21.1	10	13.5	39	44.8
66 – 70	31	29.8	34	45.9	23	26.4
71 – 75	29	27.7	19	25.7	17	19.5
76 – 80	9	8.8	6	8.1	6	6.9
81 – 85	10	9.8	1	1.4	0	0.0
86 – 90	2	1.9	3	4.1	2	2.3
91 – 95	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
No data	0	0	1	1.4	0	0
	N=104	N=100%	N=74	100%	N=87	N=100%

Source: own data.

The largest group (33%) within the total number of respondents comprised persons aged between 66-70. More than every fourth respondent was at the first stage or at the verge of old age, i.e. at the age of 60-65. A similar share of the seniors who completed the questionnaire were 70-75 years old, 8% of the respondents were 75-80 years old, and 7% were 81 or more.

In Warsaw, the largest group was at the age of 65-70 year-olds (nearly 30%); also large were the groups of people aged 60-65 (21.1%) and 70-75 years (27.7%). In total, people aged 60-75 constituted 81.8% of the respondents in Warsaw. Similarly in Szczecin, the group of people aged 65-70 was the largest (45.9%), followed by those aged 70-75 (25.7%). In Poznań, the largest group of the respondents was at the age of up to 65 (44.8%).

The majority of the respondents in Warsaw and Szczecin were women (69.2% and 83.8% respectively), while men prevailed in Poznań, though to only a small extent (50.6%).

The largest group of respondents in Warsaw and Szczecin are those living alone (43.3% and 50% respectively), while in Poznań it is only 24.1%. The majority of the respondents in Poznań live in two-person households, which, in the case of Warsaw, constitute 33.7% of the total and in the case of

Szczecin - 37.8%. Not many respondents declared living in three-or-more-person households. This demonstrates a low care potential within families, which is particularly visible in Poznań. This is especially important seeing as how family carers, according to estimates, provide care in 80% of households of the older people who require assistance in everyday living. Demographic forecasts clearly show that the share of one-person households maintained by the elderly, especially those aged 85 and more, will be growing in the years to come.

Table 2

Number of people living in the household

No. of people in the household	Warsaw		Szczecin		Poznań	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	45	43.3	37	50.0	21	24.1
2	35	33.7	28	37.8	53	60.9
3	14	13.5	5	6.8	0	0
4	5	4.8	3	4.1	7	8
5	4	3.8	1	1.4	0	0
6	1	1.0	0	0.0	6	6.9
No data	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0
Total	N=104	N=100%	N=74	N=100%	N=87	N=100%

Source: own data.

Table 3

Legal title to use the dwelling

Category	Warsaw		Szczecin		Poznań	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I am the owner of this dwelling	55	52.9	45	60.8	82	94.2
I am a member of a housing cooperative and I hold the cooperative member's right of ownership or tenancy to the dwelling	32	30.8	23	31.1	2	2.3
I rent the dwelling from the municipality	10	9.6	1	1.4	0	0
I rent the dwelling from a social housing association	0	0	1	1.4	0	0
I rent the dwelling from a private owner	0	0	0	0	0	0
I live in a dwelling provided for use by my family	7	6.7	3	4.1	3	3.5
No data	0	0.0	1	1.4	0	0
Total	N=104	N=100%	N=74	N=100%	N=87	N=100%

Source: own data.

There are notable differences with regard to the legal title to the dwelling in the selected urban areas. In Poznań, the great majority of the respondents are the owners of the occupied dwellings (94.2%). In Warsaw and Szczecin, owners also constitute the majority, though not as prevalent as in Poznań (52.9% and 60.8% respectively). In these two cities, 1/3 of the respondents are members of cooperatives and hold cooperative member's right of ownership or tenancy to the dwelling. A few respondents from all urban areas under examination live in dwellings provided for use by their families.

When analyzing the housing policy and the housing needs of the elderly, it is indispensable to examine the housing stock existing in the areas under investigation. The condition and age of the stock has an influence on the quality of life defined by P. de Hardwood, as well as R. Gillingham and W. S. Reece as the feeling of well-being by an individual, the individual's satisfaction or dissatisfaction. R. Gillingham and W. S. Reece define this term as the individual's level of satisfaction

derived from the consumption of goods and services, pastimes and use of other material and social conditions of the environment in which the individual exists.

According to the 2011 National Census in Poland, the age structure of dwellings in examined urban areas was as follows:

Table 4

Number of occupied dwellings by building construction period

	Total number of dwellings as of 2011	Prior to 1945	%	1945-1988	%	1989-2011	%
Warsaw	717 956	80 131	11	445 896	62	191 929	27
Poznań	217 891	42 825	20	127 166	58	47 900	22
Szczecin	155 679	46 455	30	71 243	46	37 981	24

Source: own calculation based on data from www.stat.gov.pl.

The smallest share of dwellings constructed before 1945 is present in Warsaw. This is caused by the enormous damage of the urban tissue caused during World War II. In Szczecin, the percentage share of such dwellings is three times larger, whereas in Poznań it is twice as large. The intense development of construction in the socialist era is particularly well observable in Warsaw (62% of the total stock) and Poznań (58% of the total stock). In Szczecin, the share of dwellings constructed in this period is the least considerable. The most intense housing construction activity after 1989 was noted in Warsaw (27%), and Szczecin saw more dwellings constructed in this period than Poznań (in percentage terms).

In our survey, we asked the respondents about the construction time of the dwelling occupied by them. Considerable differences are noted as compared to the Census data.

Table 5

Years in which the dwellings occupied by the seniors were constructed

	Prior to 1945		1945-1988		1989-	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
Warsaw	4	3.8	82	78.8	17	16.4
Poznań	2	2.3	52	59.8	33	37.9
Szczecin	9	12.2	38	51.4	25	33.8

Source: own data.

Out of 103 seniors residing in Warsaw, 82, i.e. just under 80%, live in buildings erected between 1945 and 1989. Let us note that this was the period of a large-scale migration of young people to Warsaw, where they settled in newly-built blocks of flats. Today, the high percentage of seniors occupying dwellings constructed during the communist time suggests that these are dwellings which they moved into when they were young and have been living there ever since. Only 4 people, i.e. less than 4%, live in buildings dating back to before 1945, and 16.4% of the respondents live in newly-built ones. This proves that a certain group of older people is ready to change their place of residence. This may be inspired by the willingness to improve one's living conditions. In the case of Szczecin, the large share of people living in dwellings constructed before 1945 is notable. As shown by the data from the National Census in Szczecin, there are many more such dwellings in Szczecin than in Warsaw or Poznań (in percentage terms). The share of people occupying buildings erected in the communist times is much lower than in Warsaw, which is due to the much smaller stock of such dwellings. Much higher than in Warsaw (16.4%), on the other hand, is the share of elderly people occupying dwellings created after 1989, comprising 33.8% for Szczecin.

In Poznań, the majority of the respondents (60%) live in housing from the communist times. As in the case of Szczecin, 38% occupy dwellings constructed after 1989. Such a high share results from the fact that more than 50% of the respondents from Poznań live in newly-built single-family homes, which proves that not only young people are interested in moving into this type of housing. However,

as noted before, the respondents from Poznań are usually people aged 60-65. It may thus be assumed that people around 50, who are at the height of their financial abilities, are prone to investing and moving to single-family homes, usually with a large surface area. Even if such dwelling type may hold some advantages, it becomes an increasing nuisance as health troubles intensify with growing age. This results from certain security-related limitations (e.g. longer time necessary for ambulance arrival or the necessity to use stairs) and high maintenance costs, which become an increasing problem when income is reduced.

The period in which the residential buildings were constructed may be of importance due to the residential dwelling construction standards applicable at the relevant time. First, let us examine the dwellings constructed before 1945. The distinctive features of tenement houses are high rooms and a generally large cubic capacity of the premises, which affects maintenance expenditures, such as heating costs. In lower standard dwellings from that period (annexes) the problem is the lack of bathrooms in flats, and it is not always possible to build ones due to technical limitations. Furthermore, some of the older buildings, due to the lack of appropriate refurbishments, are in bad technical condition. The dwellings from the period after the war to 1989 were constructed mainly in the technology of prefabricated large panels. This group of dwellings includes 4- or 5-storey residential buildings with no lifts, which is an impediment for older people. In the case of dwellings constructed in the more recent nearly 30 years, a notable problem is that the residential buildings are sometimes located in places with no easy access to public services such as healthcare clinics or shops. The problem is particularly noticeable in suburban areas where new residential estates are increasingly often located.

Undoubtedly, an appropriate surface area of a dwelling is a condition necessary to provide for a good quality of life. German recommendations define the optimum residential area for a single-person household as 45 sq. m. (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit, 2004)

Table 6

Surface area of dwellings of the elderly

Dwelling surface area	Warsaw		Szczecin		Poznań	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
up to 40 sq. m	30	28.8	12	16.5	5	5.7
40 – 60 sq. m	45	43.3	28	38.3	40	45.9
60 – 80 sq. m	18	17.3	24	32.9	21	24.1
80 – 100 sq. m	3	2.9	2	2.8	11	12.5
above 100 sq. m	8	7.9	7	9.7	9	10.3
no data	1	1	2	1.4		
	N=104	N=100	N=74	N=100	N=87	N=100%

Source: own data.

Nearly 1/3 of the respondents from Warsaw live in dwellings with an area of under 40 sq. m. In Szczecin, dwellings with such a surface area are occupied by 1/6 of the respondents, while in Poznań, it makes for only 5.7%. Dwellings with such a low surface area may be a challenge, particularly when an older person has to deal with disability and move in a wheelchair. In such dwellings, there are often too narrow passages and small bathrooms making it impossible for a disabled person to use. The optimum size of a dwelling for a household of 1-2 people falls between 40 to 60 sq. m. This also happens to be the surface area most frequently indicated by the respondents. In the case of Warsaw, 43.3% of the respondents occupy such dwellings, in Szczecin - 38.3% and in Poznań 45.9%. Almost 1/3 of the respondents from Szczecin live in dwellings with an area between 60 – 80 sq. m, which is close to twice as many as in Warsaw (17.3%) and 10% more than in Poznań. The largest dwellings, i.e. those over 80 sq. m, are occupied by nearly 1/4 of the respondents from Poznań, which is almost twice as many as in Szczecin (13%) and in Warsaw (11%). A dwelling that is too large as compared to the needs may be a considerable burden for an elderly person due to higher maintenance costs. This problem is clearly notable in Western countries, where many seniors live in such flats. Germany is seeing the growing popularity of a housing cooperative model dedicated to the elderly called "Wohnen gegen Hilfe", which means "living in exchange for assistance". The model assumes that a young person, e.g.

a student, moves in with an older person that has a large flat and may live there for free or for a small fee in exchange for assistance in everyday activities (DROSTE 2015).

The collected information on the surface area of the dwellings occupied by the seniors in the selected urban areas finds confirmation in the 2011 Census data.

Table 7

Number and share of dwellings with a specific surface area in the analyzed urban areas National Census 2011

	Total number of dwellings	up to 40 sq. m		40 – 60 sq. m		60 – 80 sq. m		80 sq. m and more	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Warsaw	735 993	198 099	26.9	302 362	41.1	175 569	23.8	91 259	12.4
Poznań	224 793	45 050	20.0	87 921	39.1	60 265	26.8	41 855	18.6
Szczecin	160 543	31 187	19.4	65 969	41.1	42 567	26.5	27 499	17.1

Source: own calculation based on data from www.stat.gov.pl.

The data shows that, in Warsaw, in percentage terms, there are more dwellings below 40 sq. m than in Poznań and Szczecin, and fewer dwellings of more than 80 sq. m. This might be related to the different age structure of the housing stock, where flats dating back prior to 1945 constitute only a small part. Large dwellings often occur in older housing stock, which is corroborated by the data from Szczecin and Poznań. This means that the Warsaw local government should apply other measures to provide for decent living conditions for the elderly than the local governments in Szczecin and Poznań. In Warsaw, focus should be placed on supporting older people, with special emphasis on those who are disabled, living in too cramped dwellings not adapted to their needs, while the priority in Szczecin and Poznań should be a solution to the problem of older people living in too large of dwellings.

The questions in the second part of the survey concerned the respondents' evaluation of their own dwellings. The great majority of the respondents are rather satisfied or definitely satisfied with their dwelling. Nearly 90% of the respondents living in Warsaw and 98% of those living in Poznań indicated such answers. In Szczecin, the share was slightly lower and fell to 83.8%. More than 10% of the respondents from Szczecin and Warsaw were rather unsatisfied. One person from Warsaw and two from Szczecin were definitely not satisfied with the flat occupied. The reasons provided were: too much noise, a sense of anonymity in the neighbourhood and too small of a surface area of the premises.

Table 8

Are you satisfied with your flat?

Categories	Warsaw		Szczecin		Poznań	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Definitely not	1	1.0	2	2.7	0	0
Rather not	11	10.6	8	10.8	2	2.3
Rather yes	56	53.8	35	47.3	39	44.8
Definitely yes	35	33.7	27	36.5	46	52.9
No data	1	1.0	2	2.7	0	0
Total	N=104	104	N=74	N=100	N=87	N=100%

Source: own data.

In all cities under analysis, quiet and a balcony, which allows them to go outside without having to leave their flat, are items that the respondents appreciate the most (Table 9.). Equally important is also an attractive view from the window, which suggests older people like observing what is happening outside. In the case of Poznań, the indications of a balcony and an attractive view were the lowest but,

as had been mentioned earlier, half of the respondents from this city live in single-family homes. Important for the respondents were also dwelling conditions that allowed for moving around in a wheelchair, and for the bathroom to be equipped with a barrier-free shower base and grab bars. Modern high-tech solutions, such as telemedicine, spill and smoke sensors or air-conditioning did not find many fans. This might suggest that older people treat modern technologies aimed at improving the security and quality of the lives of seniors with reserve in their own dwellings and lack knowledge about them.

Table 9

Decisive elements to finding a dwelling good according to seniors

	Warsaw	Szczecin	Poznań	Total
Ability to move around the dwelling in a wheelchair	21	14	6	35
Balcony	74	55	36	129
Attractive view of the street or square	55	36	20	91
Air-conditioning	9	2	2	11
Quiet	72	49	62	121
Spill and smoke sensors	8	5	2	13
Ability to contact medical staff and remote consultation (telemedicine)	18	7	8	25
Comfortable bathroom with grab bars and barrier-free shower with a seat	35	16	15	51

Source: own data.

The respondents were asked to answer the question of whether they would like to change their place of residence if it involved improving their living conditions. Nearly 70% of the respondents from Poznań marked "definitely not", and for Warsaw and Szczecin, this answer was selected by approximately half of the respondents. A quarter of the respondents from Szczecin could change their place of living but only provided it were in the same estate / in the same neighborhood. In Warsaw, this share was 16.3%, while in Poznań - 8%. 8% of the respondents in each respective urban area were ready to move but only within the same city. Open to changes, regardless of the new place of residence, were as many as 15.4% of the respondents from Warsaw, just under 10% of those from Szczecin, and almost 13% from Poznań. Few individuals were definitely ready to change their place of residence.

Table 10

Would you be willing to change your place of residence if it involved improved living conditions?

Categories	Warsaw		Szczecin		Poznań	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Definitely not	57	54.8	35	47.3	60	69.0
Yes, but only in the same estate / in the same neighborhood	17	16.3	19	25.7	7	8.0
Yes, but only within the same city	8	7.7	6	8.1	7	8.0
Rather yes	16	15.4	7	9.5	11	12.6
Definitely yes, regardless of the distance between the new and old places of residence	2	1.9	4	5.4	0	0
No data	4	3.8	3	4.1	2	2.3
Total	N=104	104	N=74	N=100	N=87	N=100%

Source: own data.

As it turns out, seniors are ready to change their place of residence if it involves improving their living conditions. The readiness to change their place of residence among the examined seniors may result from the fact that the housing stock is not well-adapted to their needs. The majority of the

examined seniors, however, prefer to stay at their own home or neighborhood, which may be a sign that they feel well in their local community.

5. Exploration of senior housing solutions in the selected urban areas

So far in Poland, several projects have been undertaken which were address to the elderly and took into consideration the age-related housing needs and the idea of ageing in place allowing for independent existence in the current home without a caretaker's assistance.

In 2016 in Warsaw, the first Model Senior's Flat in Poland was created, which presents products and interior design solutions enabling the elderly to remain self-reliant for as long as possible despite the ailments that develop along with age, according to the ageing in place concept. It is a completely grass-roots, private project authored by architects dr inż. arch. Agnieszka Cieśla and dr inż. arch. Jan Cieśla. The undertaking was possible owing to the participation and involvement of producers offering solutions dedicated to the elderly. It is aimed at catalyzing changes in the Polish housing market, which are necessary due to it lacking adaptations to the needs of the ageing society. The visitors to the Model Senior's Flat are older people who would like to know how dwellings adapted to their needs may be furnished and what solutions are available to enjoy independence for longer. It is also visited by developers interested in constructing such dwellings, as well as interior designers, for whom the elderly are becoming an increasingly growing group of customers. (www.mimowiek.pl/10.02.2018)

In 2015, in Szczecin, 23 assisted living dwellings were created. The investment was carried out by the Municipality of Szczecin and Szczecin Social Housing Association. They are intended for people aged 65+ who hold no legal title to residential premises, a single-family home, or a building plot. In the recent years six sheltered dwellings have also been created in Szczecin. Each of these premises is occupied by approximately 5-6 seniors who are provided with a full-time assistance of community care assistants.

The Poznań Social Housing Association has created a scheme "Flat for a Senior, within which the Senior House was created in 2009 and the Community Pensioner House in 2012. The Senior House is a set of two four-storey buildings. It contains studio flats and one-bedroom flats which, according to the rules of the Social Housing Association, are intended for rent. The investment is located near shops, a church, allotment gardens, healthcare centers and a pharmacy. Importantly, the estate is well connected with the city center, with bus and tram stops close by, so seniors also have good access to cultural centers. What is more, one of the buildings hosts the seat of the Third Age Association "Świerczewski Krąg" aimed at the physical and mental activation of older people.

The Community Pensioner House contains 68 independent studio flats and one- and two-bedroom flats. 50 dwellings are adapted to the needs of the disabled, and, in the majority of the flats, solutions that remove doorsteps and differences in floor levels are introduced. The ground floor of the building hosts a doctor's practice and a medical treatment room, and there is an underground car park for residents. The halls are wide and allow for free communication among the residents. Furthermore, there are three lifts in the building, one of which may carry people in a lying position.

Another project worthy of noting is the pilot project "Mini-Grants for Seniors" within which the Council of Municipal Housing Stock accepted applications until March 2018. It was aimed at improving the living conditions for the tenants of residential premises and social housing from the housing stock of the City of Poznań by making small renovations (up to 10 thousand zlotys) of municipal dwellings occupied by seniors from Poznań. Currently, the results of the scheme remain unknown, but if it proves successful, it would complement the housing policy addressed to the elderly, allowing at least for adapting the occupied dwellings to the limitations resulting from architectural barriers.

6. Discussion and conclusions

The housing situation of the elderly in Poland varies depending on the available housing stock in the particular cities. The respondents are open to changes in the place of residence, which shows a potential with regard to long-term internal migration within this age group. Seniors are usually satisfied with their dwellings; they especially value quiet, independence and the ability to move freely within their dwellings and in the neighborhood.

Let us note that the age structure of the elderly in Poland will be changing in the nearest future. The number of people at an advanced age, i.e. 85 and more, will grow, which is related to the ageing of the birth cohorts of the demographic high following World War II. Due to the steady tendencies with regard to long-term external migration of people of working age, the care potential of families will significantly drop. An increasing part of the elderly, if they become dependent, will be forced to use the assistance of professionals: community care assistants, community nurses or private assistants offering their services in the free market. It is very important to undertake steps allowing the elderly to remain in their households as long as possible or in dwellings prepared specifically for them.

The projects discussed herein are special on the national scale and should be copied, particularly in towns with peripheral locations; these age very fast as young people move out to large cities. By developing the housing policy in an appropriate manner, we may provide the elderly with a better quality of life, despite the decreasing care potential. The deinstitutionalisation of long-term care of the elderly has another advantage: cost cuts. The risk of severe injuries resulting in long and costly treatment may be mitigated by adapting the existing dwellings to the needs of older people or by constructing appropriate new dwellings. Many Western countries arrange schemes for financing renovations of housing in which the elderly live, and, in the case of newly-built residential buildings, it is mandatory to construct a specific number of flats adapted to their needs (Kremer-Preiß & Mehnert, 2014). Taking into account the pace of population ageing in our country, which takes no precedence in the history, we must implement, on a wide scale, solutions supporting the longest possible independence of the elderly.

6. References

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