

AGEING  
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# Older People, Research and Useful Stuff

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## Research and Its Use

- **Research is diverse:**
  - Pure – how does the body, the brain, the world work
  - Applied – how do we understand a particular problem
  - Evaluative – did it work, what stopped it working
  - Transformational – how do we change and enable
- **Lots of people do it**
- **Lots of learnings go beyond the research itself**

# Some 'learnings beyond' the research

- Key programmes with older people (see [www.goodhomes.co.nz](http://www.goodhomes.co.nz) and [www.cresa.co.nz](http://www.cresa.co.nz) )
  - Older people and home maintenance and repairs
  - Resilience in natural adverse events
  - Downsizing
  - Retirement villages

## Older people are diverse and deal with:

- Big stuff, little stuff, shocks, and game-changers
- We often fail to distinguish between or confuse them, especially:
  - Big and little stuff
  - Shocks and game-changers
- Confusing issues can disable people:
  - Focus on the individual weakness rather than enabling through changes to their environment, home and neighbourhoods
  - Promote dependency rather than independence

## What my research experience suggests:

- We paradoxically treat older people as:
  - Knowing everything or knowing nothing
  - Just like every other age group or totally different
  - Highly resourced or under resourced
- We hear what older people say but:
  - Rarely listen to what they mean.
  - Are hesitant to observe and discuss.
- Consequently we can:
  - Over or under service
  - Provide services which do not fit
  - Disempower rather than enable

## Some examples:

- In-home support is typically light housework, gardening, dressing and meal preparation – But for many older people what is critical are:
  - Spring cleaning
  - Shopping
  - Changing lightbulbs
  - Assistance to get repairs and maintenance work done
- Heat pumps are often promoted as alternatives for older people:
  - Many find them difficult and expensive to use
- Although there are a multiplicity of options for older people, downsizing is often couched in terms of move out and:
  - Go to retirement village
  - Live with children
  - Go to a rest home

## Big decisions are often poorly informed:

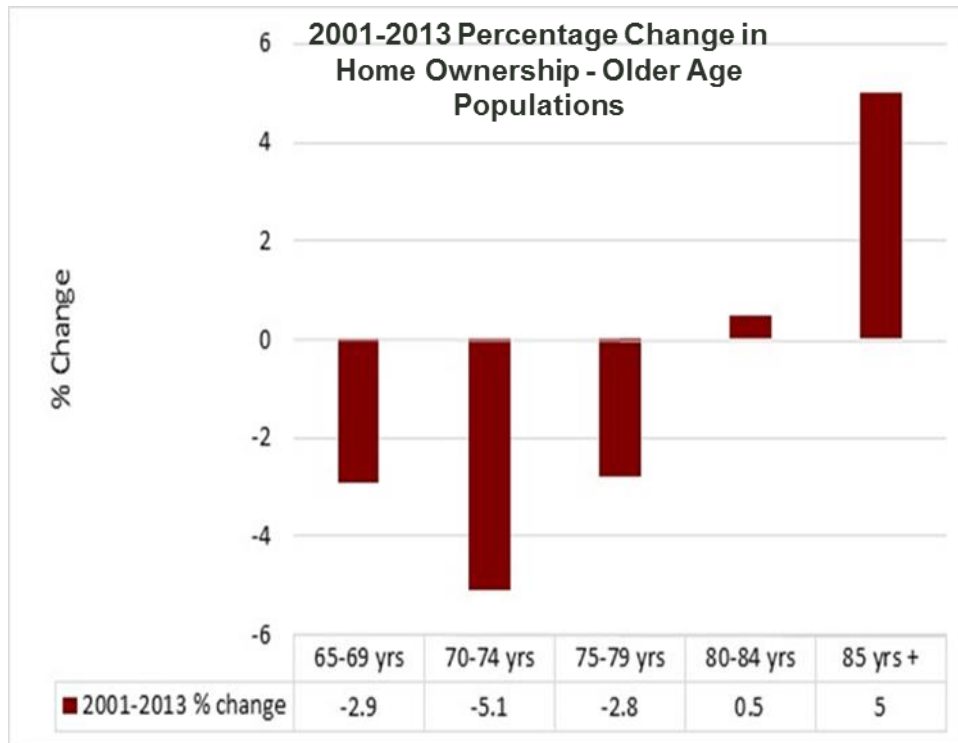
- Older people are diverse – many believe they are better informed than they are, many are poorly advised by family, friends and, often ‘professionals’, many make decisions out of fear.
- Information is often around what providers give them not what older people want to know.
- Some major misunderstandings, wrong assumptions, knowledge gaps evident among older people and their advisers are around:
  - Retirement villages
  - Retirement villages vs rest homes
  - Inevitability of movement to institutional or hospital care
  - Home maintenance costs and repair needs
  - Home comfort
  - Transport – low levels of understanding of around subsidized taxi provision
  - Rate liabilities and rates relief

## Some future changes:

- Older people of the future are not going to have the same experiences or conditions of today's older people.
  - More diversity
  - Increased virtual connectivity with family
  - Reduced direct availability of children to support older people
    - International movement and migration as well as domestic
    - Smaller parent to child ratio
    - Children will be less well-resourced than in the past
  - Impacts of the tenure revolution



## Diverse Older People – Different Trends



- **For 80+ yrs**
  - Ageing at home
  - Possibly a small retirement village effect.
  - Legacy of home ownership policy and affordable housing
- **For 65-79 yrs:**
  - Previously renting
  - Moving to rental
  - Out of private into non-private dwellings

# What Will Be Affected? Lots!

- High, mortgage-free homeownership among older people frames:
  - Retirement incomes policy and settings
  - Health policy particularly:
    - In-home care
    - Home modifications
  - Residential care settings and funding
- Current housing delivery assumes older people have housing wealth:
  - HNZ gives low priority to older people
  - Local government pensioner housing in decline and affordability issues
  - Community housing sector:
    - Does not target older people
    - Paralysed by policy and legislative confusion
  - Retirement village expansion