

# Research on the Future Housing Aspirations of Older People

A summary report by the Housing Executive  
on behalf of the Department for Social Development

MARCH 2013



**Housing**  
Executive

# Report on Future Housing Aspirations of Older People

## Background

This summary report presents findings from research carried out by the Housing Executive in June and July 2012 into the future housing aspirations of older people.

The research was carried out on behalf of the Department for Social Development (DSD) and examines the views of those respondents aged between 50 and 70 years old in relation to the suitability of their current housing circumstances and their housing aspirations as they grow older. This specific age group was chosen on the basis that they would be moving into older age (i.e. those aged 50-60 years) or would be requiring housing with a higher degree of support (i.e. those aged 60-70 years).

## Impetus for the research

This research was commissioned by the Housing Executive and the Department for Social Development following a research report by Professor Chris Paris into the 'Future Housing and Support Needs of Older People in Northern Ireland'. The report recommended that further research into housing aspirations of older people be carried out to enable better strategic planning for Northern Ireland's aging population.

## Research Objectives

The objectives of the survey were to examine:

- suitability of current accommodation;
- plans for accommodation in the future;
- potential barriers to remaining in current accommodation;
- measures that might assist remaining in current accommodation
- types of suitable accommodation for older people; and
- demand for information on what accommodation is available for older people.

## Methodology

In May 2012, the Housing Executive's Research Unit appointed an independent market research company, Perceptive Insight, to undertake fieldwork for the 2012 Public Attitudes Survey (PAS). Questions pertaining to the housing aspirations of older people were included as a module of the wider PAS.

An advisory group, comprising senior staff from the Housing Executive's Research Unit and the Housing Branch of DSD agreed the content and design of the housing aspirations module. The agreed survey methodology was face-to-face interviews, using computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) software, with HRPs (or partners) who were aged between 50 and 70 years old.

The sample frame was drawn from the Pointer address database, the definitive address database for Northern Ireland.

## Participation in the Survey

Perceptive Insight contacted all households in the sample by letter before fieldwork began. This letter introduced the sample households to the survey, explaining the background as well as the aims and objectives. Participation was voluntary and experienced social researchers carried out interviews face-

to-face with respondents. Respondents were assured that information given would not be used in a way in which they could be identified.

### **Quality Assurance**

As standard practice, Perceptive Insight carried out back checks on 10 per cent of the total completed interviews. Research Unit quality assured and validated all data received.

### **Response Rate**

Out of the 1,000 respondents to the 2012 Public Attitudes Survey, 382 had a head of household, or partner, aged between 50 and 70 years old. The questions in the housing aspirations module were only asked of these 382 eligible households.

## Key findings

### Profile of all respondents

- 1.0 The majority (40%) of respondents to the housing aspirations module were aged between 55 and 64; one-third (33%) were aged 65-70 and 27 per cent were aged between 50 and 55 years.
- 1.1 There were more (52%) female respondents than male (48%).
- 1.2 Almost three-fifths (58%) of respondents were married; equal proportions (13%) were single or divorced and a similar proportion (12%) were widowed. Smaller proportions were separated (3%) or in a civil partnership (1%).
- 1.3 Almost two-fifths (38%) of respondents were working; 36 per cent were retired; 11 per cent were sick or disabled; 8 per cent were not working and 6 per cent were looking after the family/home.
- 1.4 Almost all (99%) of respondents were of a white ethnic background. Almost three-fifths (58%) said their nationality was British, 27 per cent Irish and 14 per cent Northern Irish.
- 1.5 Almost one-quarter (24%) of respondents had a gross household income between £10k and £20k; 18 per cent had less than £10k; 17 per cent had £30k+ and 12 per cent had between £20k and £30k. A high proportion (28%) of respondents to this survey refused to provide details of their annual income.

### Tenure

- 2.0 Almost three-quarters (71%) of respondents were owner-occupiers and less than one-fifth (18%) were Housing Executive tenants. Fewer respondents were renting privately (7%) or renting from a Housing Association (Table 1).

### Current accommodation

- 2.1 Almost two-thirds (63%) said they thought their current accommodation will continue to meet their needs as they get older, compared to 21 per cent who said it would not and 16 per cent who had not thought about their long term accommodation needs (Table 2).

### Current accommodation by tenure

- 2.2 Analysis by tenure shows the highest proportions (71%) of respondents who thought their current accommodation would continue to meet their needs in the longer term rented from a Housing Association, though numbers were quite low. In comparison, 64 per cent of owner-occupiers thought their current accommodation would continue to meet their needs, as did 60 per cent of Housing Executive tenants and 54 per cent of private renters.

A higher proportion of Housing Executive tenants (27%) than any other tenure group said their current accommodation would not meet their needs as they grow older. Proportionately more private renters (25%) than the other tenure groups had not thought about their housing needs in the longer term (Table 3).

### Reasons for not thinking about moving

- 2.3 More than half (56%) of respondents who said they had not thought of their long term accommodation needs could not give a reason why. They simply had not thought about it. More than one-quarter (26%) said it was because they were still in good health and 13 per cent considered themselves still too young to think about their accommodation needs in the longer term (Table 4).

### Plans to move<sup>1</sup>

- 2.4 Of the 21 per cent of respondents (see 2.1) who said their current accommodation would not meet their needs as they aged, 46 per cent had definite plans to move to another home and 54 per cent (43 respondents) had not made any plans. The most common accommodation type cited by more than half (51%) of those planning to move was 'bungalow/ground floor accommodation'. More than half of this sub-group (52%) said they planned to live in the owner-occupied sector, compared to 40 per cent who wanted social housing (Tables 5-7).
- 2.5 Among the respondents who said their current accommodation would not meet their needs as they aged and had definite plans to move, more than half (51%) were female and 49 per cent were male. There was more than twice the proportion of women (67%) than men (33%) in this sub-group<sup>2</sup> who did not have definite plans to move. For a more thorough analysis of socio-economic characteristics of this sub-group, see appendix table 5.

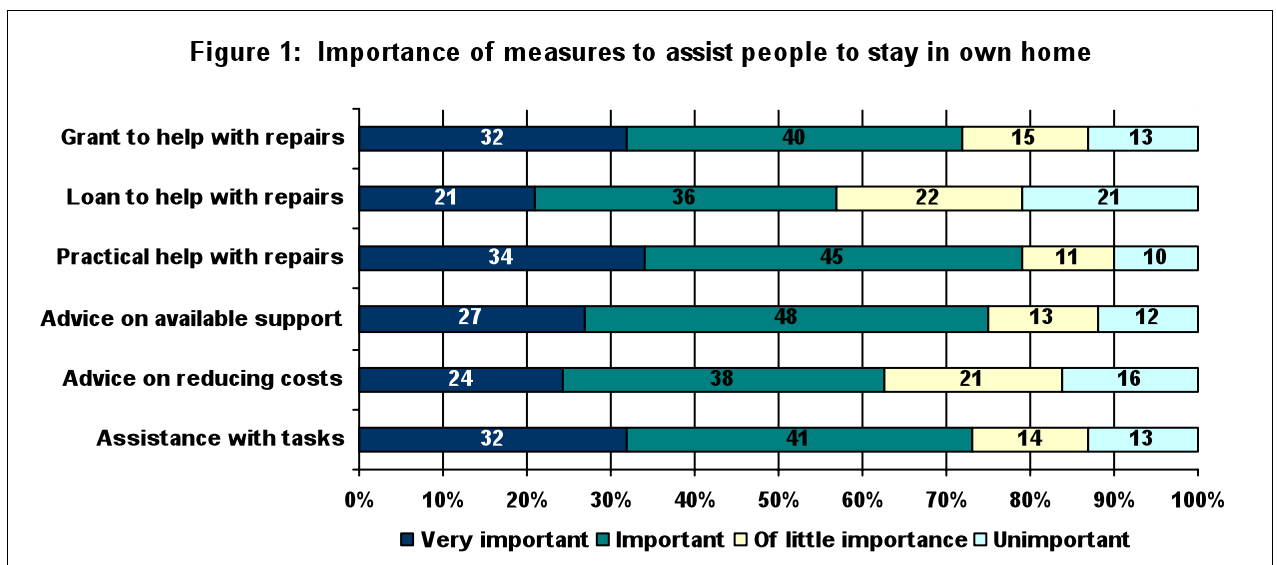
### Potential barriers to remaining in current home

- 2.6 Respondents were asked to think about the future and their current home and what they saw as potential barriers to remaining in their current home as they get older. Almost half (47%) of all respondents said they could see no barriers and 29 per cent cited 'declining mobility'. A full analysis of reasons is in Table 8.

### Importance of measures that might assist people to stay in their own home

- 2.7 Figure 1 sets out how much importance respondents attach to the following measures to assist people to stay in their homes as they grow older. For ease of reporting, the textual analysis will combine levels of importance. A full breakdown is also in Table 9.

The highest proportion of respondents (79%) rated practical help with repairs as important. Three-quarters (75%) rated advice/information on available support as important, as did similar proportions of respondents who rated the importance of assistance with day-to-day household tasks (73%) and a grant to help with repairs/welfare adaptations (72%). Respondents attached least importance to advice/information on reducing running costs (62%) and a loan to help with repairs/welfare adaptations (57%).



<sup>1</sup> This sub-group refers to 80 respondents in total. The textual analysis quotes percentages for ease of reporting. Numbers are in the appendix tables.

<sup>2</sup> For clarity, the sub-group in question consists of those 43 respondents who did not think their current accommodation would continue to meet their needs as they grow older and had no plans to move.

**Financial Assistance**

2.8 Almost two-fifths (39%) of all respondents thought, if financial assistance was available to help repair/adapt respondents’ homes to meet their needs as they get older, that it should be delivered by the Housing Executive. More than one-third (34%) thought the Department for Social Development (including the Social Security Agency) should deliver this assistance and 10 per cent thought it should be delivered by district/city councils (Table 10).

**Suitable Future Accommodation**

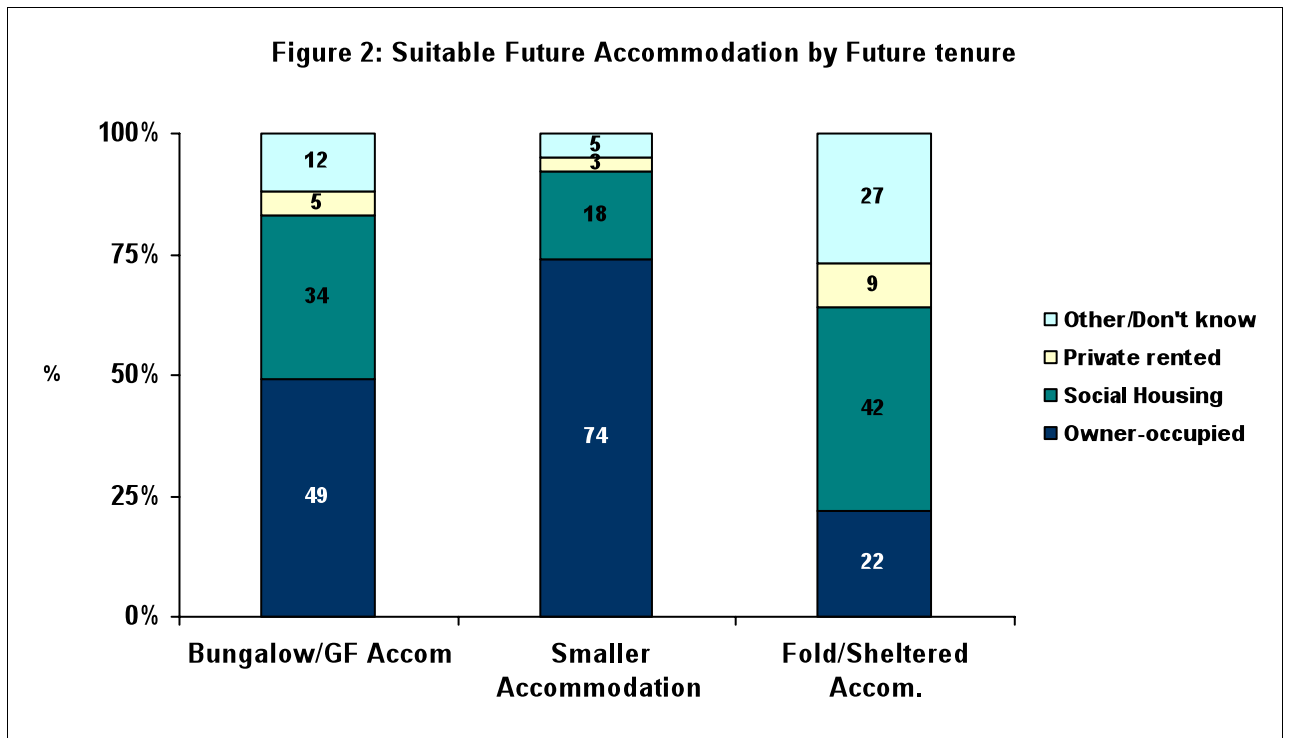
2.9 Respondents were asked to think about the future and consider if their current accommodation no longer met their needs, which type of accommodation would be most suitable. One-third (33%) of all respondents said ground floor/bungalow type accommodation and 16 per cent said down-sizing to smaller accommodation would best suit their needs (Table 11).

**Future tenure type**

2.10 Almost half (47%) said their preferred future tenure would be in the owner-occupied sector and more than one-quarter (27%) preferred social housing. Lesser proportions opted for other tenure types (Table 12).

**Suitable Future Accommodation by Future Tenure**

2.11 Almost half (49%) of those who said they would prefer to live in bungalow/ground floor accommodation if their current accommodation could no longer meet their needs would do so in the owner-occupied sector, compared to one-third (34%) who would look for social housing. Of those who said they would prefer smaller accommodation, almost three-quarters (74%) would do so in the owner-occupied sector; 18 per cent would look for social housing. Of those who said they would prefer Fold/Sheltered Accommodation, more than two-fifths (42%) would look for social housing, compared to 22 per cent of who would do so in the owner-occupied sector. Few respondents said they planned to live in the private rented sector should their current accommodation no longer meet their needs (Figure 2; Table 13).



**Distance respondents willing to move from current home to access suitable accommodation**

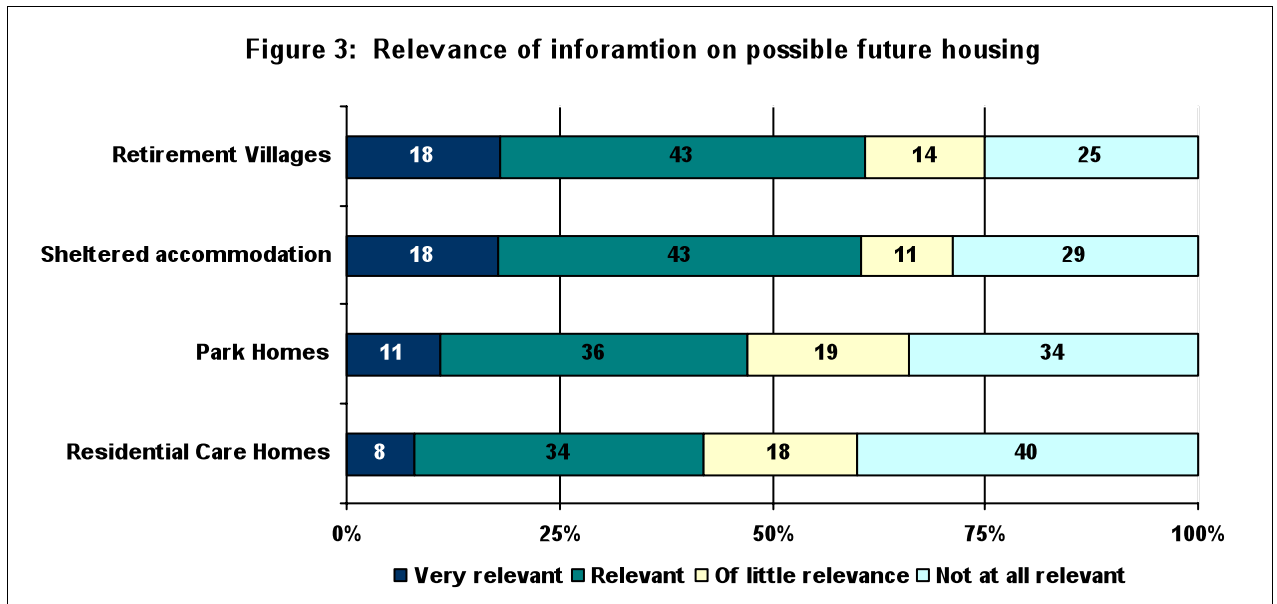
2.12 Almost one-third (32%) said they would be willing to travel up to one mile from their current accommodation to access suitable alternative accommodation. A similar proportion (29%) would be willing to move 1 to 3 miles away and 23 per cent would be prepared to move more than 5 miles away (Table 14).

**Reasons for not wanting to move more than one mile from current home**

2.13 Of the respondents who said they would not be willing to move more than one mile away, more than two-thirds (67%) said it was because they 'have always lived in this area'. More than one-third (35%) said they 'need to be near family/friends' and a similar proportion (34%) said they 'like living in this area'. A full breakdown of reasons is in Table 15.

**Information on Future Housing Options**

2.14 More than one-quarter (26%) of respondents said they would like information on possible future housing options. All respondents were asked to rate the relevance of information on possible future housing options. Responses are set out in Figure 3 and Table 16.



**Relevance of information on possible future housing**

2.15 Respondents rated information on sheltered accommodation and retirement villages as most relevant to them (equally 61%). Lesser proportions said information on Park Homes (47%) and Residential Care Homes (42%) would be relevant to them (Table 17).

**Provider and preferred format of future housing information**

2.16 Almost half (48%) of respondents said this information should be provided by the Housing Executive; 26 per cent said DSD; 13 per cent said district councils and a similar proportion (12%) said Age NI should provide this information. Most respondents would like this information by leaflet or other written format (61%) (Tables 18 and 19).

## Tabular Analysis

**Table1: Do you own or rent your home?**

	Number	Percent
Own it outright	204	53
Buying it with the help of a mortgage	67	18
Renting from the Housing Executive	68	18
Renting privately	28	7
Co-ownership - (pay part rent and part mortgage)	1	0
Renting from a Housing Association	14	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2: Do you think your current accommodation will continue to meet your needs in the longer term, as you get older?**

	Number	Percent
Yes	241	63
No	80	21
Haven't thought about it / Don't know	62	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 382 (all respondents aged between 50 and 70)

**Table3: Do you think your current accommodation will continue to meet your needs in the longer term, as you get older? (By Tenure)**

	Yes	No	Haven't thought about it	Total
Owner-occupiers	174 64%	53 20%	44 16%	271 100%
Housing Executive Tenants	41 60%	18 27%	9 13%	68 100%
Private renters	15 54%	6 21%	7 25%	28 100%
Housing Association	10 71%	2 14%	2 14%	14 100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>240 63%</b>	<b>79 21%</b>	<b>62 16%</b>	<b>381 100%</b>



**Table 4: Can you tell us why you have not yet thought about where you would like to live as you get older?**

	Number	Percent
I just haven't thought about it	35	56
I'm still in good health	16	26
I'm still too young	8	13
I don't have enough information	2	3
Other - not specified	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 62 (respondents who have not thought about their future housing)

**Table 5: Do you have definite plans to move to another home as you get older?**

	Number	Percent
Yes	37	46
No	43	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 80 (respondents who do not think their current accommodation will continue to meet their needs)

**Table 5: Do you have definite plans to move to another home as you get older? (profile of 43 respondents who said no)**

	Number	Percent
<b>Age</b>		
50-54	15	35
55-64	16	38
65-70	11	26
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	14	32
Female	29	68
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	28	65
Single	6	14
Divorced/Separated	6	14
Widowed	3	8
<b>Employment status</b>		
Working	16	37
Not working	5	12
Retired	13	31
Permanently sick/disabled	5	12
Other including looking after family home	4	9

Base: 80 (respondents who do not think their current accommodation will continue to meet their needs)

**Table 6: Which type of accommodation do you plan to live in?**

	Number	Percent
Bungalow/ ground floor accommodation	19	51
Smaller accommodation	10	27
Other (including Fold or other supported Housing)	8	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 37 (respondents who have planned to move to alternative accommodation)

**Table 7: Which of the following tenure types do you plan to live in?**

	Number	Percent
Owned-occupied property	19	52
Housing Executive or H. Association property	15	40
Don't know	3	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 37 (respondents who have planned to move to alternative accommodation)

**Table 8: Thinking about the future and thinking about your home, what do you see as the main barriers to remaining in your current home as you get older?**

Barriers	Number	Percentage
None- no barriers	178	47
Declining health or mobility	109	29
Home is too big for my needs	61	16
Home would need adaptations	53	14
Unable to afford running costs (e.g. heating, electricity or water charges)	48	13
Living on my own	37	10
Access to transport	19	5
Access to services (doctors, hospital care)	15	4
Accessibility (e.g. steep drive/ steps)	10	3
Stairs	3	1
Garden too big	3	1
Other – not specified	3	1
Upkeep of house/ difficult to heat/ insulation	2	1

Base: 382 (all respondents aged between 50 and 70)

**Table 9: Thinking about the future, please rate the importance of the following measures that might assist you to stay in your own home as you grow older.**

	Very Important		Important		Of little importance		Unimportant	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Assistance with day-to-day household tasks	122	32	157	41	54	14	49	13
Advice/information on reducing running costs of the home	92	24	146	38	82	21	62	16
Advice/information on accessing available support	103	27	184	48	49	13	46	12
Practical help with repairs	130	34	171	45	42	11	39	10
A loan to help with repairs/welfare adaptations	80	21	137	36	85	22	80	21
A grant to help with repairs/welfare adaptations	122	32	153	40	57	15	50	13

Base: 382 (all respondents aged between 50 and 70)

**Table 10: If financial assistance was available to help repair/adapt your home to meet your changing needs, whom do you think should be responsible for delivering this assistance?**

	Number	Percent
NI Housing Executive	149	39
Department for Social Development including Social Security Agency	128	34
District or City Council	38	10
Age NI	34	9
Don't know	20	5
Other (including landlords, tenants, taxpayer)	13	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 382 (all respondents aged between 50 and 70)

**Table 11: If, in the future, you felt unable to remain in your current accommodation, which type of accommodation do you think would best suit your needs?**

	Number	Percent
Ground floor accommodation/ bungalow	128	33
Smaller accommodation	62	16
Don't need to move/ happy with accommodation	59	15
Don't know/ haven't thought about it	47	12
Retirement village	12	3
Nursing home	5	1
Residential home	3	1
Other including apartment	22	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 382 (all respondents aged between 50 and 70)

**Table 12: Which of the following tenure types would you plan to live in?**

	Number	Percent
Owned-occupied property	181	47
Housing Executive or H, Association property	105	27
Don't know/Refusal	60	16
Private rented sector	25	7
Other	11	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 382 (all respondents aged between 50 and 70)

**Table 13: Preferred suitable accommodation by future tenure**

	Owned-occupied property	Housing Executive or Housing Association property	Private rented sector	Other	Don't know	Total
Ground floor accommodation/ bungalow	63 49%	44 34%	6 5%	2 2%	13 10%	128 100%
Smaller accommodation	45 74%	11 18%	2 3%	1 2%	2 3%	61 100%
Don't need to move/ happy with current accommodation	28 47%	15 25%	5 8%	3 5%	9 15%	60 100%
Don't know/ haven't thought about it	20 43%	6 13%	1 2%	0 .0%	20 43%	47 100%
Fold/ sheltered accommodation	10 22.2%	19 42%	4 9%	3 7%	9 20%	45 100%
Retirement village	1 9%	5 46%	3 27%	1 9%	1 9%	11 100%
Nursing home	0 .0%	1 20%	1 20%	1 20%	2 40%	5 100%
Residential home	0 .0%	2 67%	1 33%	0 .0%	0 .0%	3 100%
Other including apartment	14 64%	3 14%	1 5%	0 .0%	4 18%	22 100%
<b>Total</b>	181 47%	106 28%	24 6%	11 3%	60 16%	382 100%

Base: 382 (all respondents)

**Table 14: If you did have to change your current living arrangements to suit your needs as you grow older, how far would you be willing to move from your current home to access this accommodation?**

	Number	Percent
Up to 1 mile	120	32
1 to 3 miles	109	29
More than 3 miles but less than 5 miles	66	17
More than 5 miles but less than 10 miles	34	9
10 miles or more	52	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 382 (all respondents aged between 50 and 70)

**Table 15: What prevents you from thinking about moving to a new area<sup>3</sup>?**

	Number	Percent
I've always lived in this area	81	67
Need to be near family / friends	42	35
Want to live near other people like me	6	5
Don't want to leave my own home	29	24
I like living in this area	41	34
Other, including handiness, family ties to the area.	8	7

Base: 120 (respondents who would not move more than one mile away from current location)

**Table 16: Would you like more information on possible future housing options?**

	Number	Percent
Yes	100	26
No	282	74
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 382 (all respondents aged between 50 and 70)

**Table 17: Please rate the relevance to you of the following information about possible future housing options.**

Information about...	Very Relevant		Relevant		Of little relevance		Not at all relevant	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sheltered accommodation	18	18	42	43	11	11	28	29
Park Homes	11	11	36	36	18	19	34	34
Retirement villages	18	18	43	43	14	14	25	25
Residential care homes	8	8	34	34	18	18	40	40

Base: 382 (all respondents aged between 50 and 70)

<sup>3</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer.

**Table 18: How would you like to receive this information?**

	Number	Percent
Leaflet or other written format	61	61
By telephone	5	5
Face to face advice	21	21
From the internet	9	10
Other not specified	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 382 (all respondents aged between 50 and 70)

**Table 19: Whom do you think should provide this information?**

	Number	Percent
District / City Council	13	13
NI Housing Executive	48	48
Department for Social Development (including Social Security Agency)	26	26
Age NI or charitable organisations	11	12
Other organisation - not specified	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 100 (respondents who would like to receive information on future housing options)

## Questionnaire

### Section 11: Housing Aspirations of the over 50s

(This is an omnibus module for those identified in the 50-70 age group)

Q1. Do you think your current accommodation will continue to meet your needs in the longer term, as you get older?

*Please circle one response only*

Yes	1	Route to Q5
No	2	Route to Q3
Haven't thought about it/Don't know	3	Route to Q2

Q2. Can you tell us why you have not yet thought about where you would like to live as you get older?

*Please circle all that apply*

I'm too young	1	Route to Q5
I'm still in good health	2	
I don't have enough information	3	
I just haven't thought about it	4	
Other, please specify	5	

Q3. Do you have definite plans to move to another home as you get older?

*Please circle one response only*

Yes	1	Route to Q4
No	2	Route to Q5

Q4a Which type of accommodation do you plan to live in? eg move to smaller house, ground floor accommodation, sheltered housing, residential care, retirement village etc

*Probe for detail and record verbatim*

Q4b. Which of the following tenure types do you plan to live in?

*Please circle one response only*

Owner-occupied property	1
Housing Executive or Housing Association property	2
Private rented sector	3
Other	4
Refusal	5
Don't know	6

Q5. Thinking about the future and thinking about your home, what do you see as the main barriers to remaining in your current home as you get older?

*Please circle all that apply*

Home is too big for my needs	1	Continue to Q6
Unable to afford running costs (e.g. heating, electricity or water charges)	2	
Declining health/mobility	3	
Access to services (Doctors or Hospital care)	4	
Access to transport	5	
Home would need adaptations	6	
Living on my own	7	
Other, please specify	8	
None/no barriers	9	

Q6. Thinking about the future, please rate the importance of the following measures that might assist you to stay in your own home as you grow older.

**Please circle one response for each measure**

	Very Important	Important	Of little importance	Unimportant
Assistance with day-to-day household tasks	1	2	3	4
Advice/information on reducing running costs of the home	1	2	3	4
Advice/information on accessing available support	1	2	3	4
Practical help with repairs	1	2	3	4
A loan to help with repairs/welfare adaptations	1	2	3	4
A grant to help with repairs/welfare adaptations	1	2	3	4

Q7. If financial assistance was available to help repair/adapt your home to meet your changing needs, whom do you think should be responsible for delivering this assistance?

**Please circle one response only**

District/City Council	1	<b>Continue to Q8</b>
NI Housing Executive	2	
Department for Social Development including the Social Security Agency	3	
Age NI	4	
Other organisation, please specify	5	

Q8a. If, in the future, you felt unable to remain in your current accommodation, which type of accommodation do you think would best suit your needs? eg move to smaller house, ground floor accommodation, sheltered housing, residential care, retirement village etc

**Probe for detail and record verbatim**

Q8b. Which of the following tenure types would you plan to live in?

**Please circle one response only**

Owner-occupied property	1
Housing Executive or Housing Association property	2
Private rented sector	3
Other	4
Refusal	5
Don't know	6

Q9. If you felt you did have to change your current living arrangements to suit your needs as you grow older, how far would you be willing to move from your current home to access this accommodation?

Up to 1 mile	1
1 to 3 miles	2
More than 3 miles but less than 5 miles	3
More than 5 but less than 10 miles	4
10 miles or more	5

**If 'up to one mile' (Q9=1) continue to Q10, else route to Q11**

Q10. What prevents you from thinking about moving to a new area?

**Please circle all that apply**

I've always lived in this area	1	<b>Continue to Q11</b>
Need to be near family/friends	2	
Want to live near other people like me	3	
Don't want to leave my own home	4	
I like living in this area	5	
Other, please specify	6	



Q11. Would you like more information on possible future housing options?

**Please circle one response only**

Yes	1	<b>Continue to Q12</b>
No	2	

Q12. Please rate the relevance to you of the following information about possible future housing options.

**Please circle one response for each option**

	Very Relevant	Relevant	Of little relevance	Not at all relevant
Information about Sheltered accommodation	1	2	3	4
Information about Park Homes	1	2	3	4
Information about retirement villages	1	2	3	4
Information about residential care homes	1	2	3	4

Q13. How would you like to receive this information?

**Please circle one response only**

Leaflet or other written format	1	<b>Continue to Q14</b>
By telephone	2	
Face-to-face advice	3	
From the Internet	4	
Other, please specify	5	

Q14. Whom do you think should provide this information?

**Please circle one response only**

District/City Council	1	<b>End of interview</b>
NI Housing Executive	2	
Department for Social Development (including Social Security Agency)	3	
Age NI or charitable organisations	4	
Other organisation, please specify	5	

Thank respondent for their assistance and end interview.