

## Elsbeth Graham, Francesca Fiori and Zhiqiang Feng, "Growing Up and Growing Old in Scotland: housing transitions and changing living arrangements for young and older adults, 1991-2011" [SLS Project 2013\_011]

### Research Summary

The recent economic downturn has had a disproportionate impact on first time home buyers in the UK, contributing to an extended transition from youth to adulthood. As young adults face difficulties getting onto the property ladder, so older adults are seen by some to be under-occupying larger family housing.

Scotland has a more rapidly ageing population, a different housing stock and a distinctive policy environment compared with the rest of the UK but is less frequently the focus of academic research. The research investigated changes in the dimensions and determinants of housing transitions and living arrangements for young and older adults in Scotland between 1991 and 2011. We found decreases in residential mobility for both age groups, increased social inequalities in access to homeownership among young adults but only a small increase in the proportion of older movers downsizing their housing. The findings highlight intergenerational interdependencies in housing consumption and are relevant to policy-makers seeking to understand recent changes in Scotland's housing market.

### Underpinning Research

The research used secondary data from the Scottish Longitudinal Study (SLS) in statistical models examining transitions out of the parental home and into homeownership for young adults aged 16 to 29 at the start of each decade, and residential moves and consequent house size adjustments for older adults aged 55 to 69 at the start of each decade. Separate analyses were conducted for two decades (1991-2001 and 2001-2011) to identify elements of stability and change in the

### Key findings

There have been recent declines in residential mobility among both young and older adults in Scotland. More young adults lived with their parents and fewer older adults moved house during the 2000s compared with the 1990s. Although higher education remained an advantage, parental background became a more important influence on the likelihood of becoming a homeowner during the 2000s. Among older adults, changes in household size due to widowhood, divorce or children leaving home were the main triggers for moving to a smaller house.

With young adults staying in the parental home for longer and the increasing residential immobility of older adults whose children are living with them, changing intergenerational interdependencies could have important implications for Scotland's housing market.

The findings have been disseminated to both academic and non-academic audiences. A workshop was held in June 2015, with invited participants including representatives from NRS, ONS and the Scottish Government.

factors influencing housing transitions and housing adjustments.

Compared to the 1990s, results for young adults in the 2000s showed:

- a moderate increase in the proportion who stayed in the parental home but strong gender differences, with women twice as likely as men to leave.
- those from a professional/managerial family background whose parents were homeowners became the group most likely to become homeowners.

- post-secondary educational qualifications remained an advantage for accessing homeownership, whereas being employed in a higher status job became less of an advantage.
- a greater sensitivity to prices in local housing markets, with prospective buyers in middle-range markets least likely to fulfil their aspirations.

Compared to the 1990s, results for older adults in the 2000s showed:

- a decrease in residential mobility, with women becoming less likely than men to move house.
- for the minority who did move house, around half moved to smaller housing but the proportion moving to larger housing increased.
- life events (widowhood, divorce and children leaving home), rather than retirement, were the most important triggers for downsizing.
- those living in small towns and villages were least likely to move house, but older movers do not appear to respond to house prices in local housing markets.

Our findings indicate increasing social inequalities in access to homeownership. The greater propensity of young adults to stay in the parental home for longer, combined with the decline in residential mobility among older adults whose children are living with them, have important implications for Scotland's housing market. Changing intergenerational inter-dependencies suggest a further decline in the number of older people who downsize and release family housing onto the market in the current decade.

### Impact

The findings are relevant for policy-makers and others interested in young people's access to housing and house size adjustments at older ages, especially in relation to social equity, social mobility and intergenerational justice agendas. Scottish Government, Local Authorities in Scotland, the National Records of Scotland and the Office for National Statistics have all shown

## Further Information

[SLS project 2013\\_011](#): "Growing Up and Growing Old in Scotland: housing transitions and changing living arrangements for young and older adults, 1991-2011" Elspeth Graham, Francesca Fiori and Zhiqiang Feng, Centre for Population Change, University of St Andrews

Main results published as:  
[CPC Briefing Paper 26, ESRC Centre for Population Change, UK](#)

[CPC Briefing Paper 30, ESRC Centre for Population Change, UK](#)

Other key publication:  
Graham, E & Sabater, A (2015) Population change and housing across the life course: demographic perspectives, methodological challenges and emerging issues. [CPC Working Paper 64, ESRC Centre for Population Change, UK](#)

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interest in our findings. Representatives participated in an extended discussion of UK population change and housing across the life course during a 2-day workshop held at the University of St Andrews in June 2015.

A published working paper provides a critical overview of previous academic research on the links between population change and housing, and two briefing papers outline our key findings. These publications are available on the ESRC Centre for Population Change website. ([www.cpc.ac.uk](http://www.cpc.ac.uk))