

Seniors' housing preferences in medium-sized cities in Poland

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Article history:

Received: July 11, 2023

1st Revision: September 30,
2023

Accepted: November 09,
2023

DOI:

[10.14254/jsdtl.2023.8-2.26](https://doi.org/10.14254/jsdtl.2023.8-2.26)

Abstract: *Purpose:* The paper investigates senior citizens' housing preferences and needs in medium-sized Polish cities, aiming to inform sustainable housing development strategies that cater to an ageing population. *Methodology:* Utilizing a questionnaire survey, the study engages a representative group of seniors and pre-seniors within the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship to gather data on their housing conditions, preferences, and expectations. *Results:* Findings reveal a significant demand for housing adapted to seniors' needs, with preferences leaning towards dwellings without architectural barriers and including essential services. The research highlights the discrepancy between current living conditions and the ideal housing situation for seniors. *Theoretical Contribution:* This paper contributes to the discourse on sustainable urban development by emphasizing the importance of integrating senior citizens' housing preferences into planning and policy-making processes. *Practical Implications:* The study offers valuable insights for real estate developers, urban planners, and policymakers, suggesting the need for a diversified housing market that includes options tailored to the elderly, potentially influencing future housing policies and market offerings.

Keywords: senior housing, housing sustainability, ageing population, transport accessibility

1. Introduction

The article addresses the housing issue for seniors by identifying the housing preferences of pre-teenagers (50-59 years of age) and seniors (over 60 years of age). The undeniable background of the need to develop housing for seniors is the ageing of the Polish population. At the end of 2021, the number of people over 60 was 9.7 million. The share of seniors in the total Polish population then reached 25.7%. According to a forecast by the Central Statistical Office (CSO), the population aged 60 and over in Poland is expected to increase to 10.8 million in 2030 and to reach 13.7 million in 2050.

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Older people will account for approximately 40% of Poland's population (CSO, 2022). The demographic changes may be a significant challenge for the real estate market. The hitherto unnoticed senior citizen may become a new and vital housing market consumer. Currently, they are faced with the disadvantages of the housing substance. Therefore, the starting point for research in this area should be identifying problem areas in senior housing. To this end, research should be carried out into the housing conditions of seniors and their expectations as to the relevance of sustainable housing development for seniors.

2. Literature review

Meeting housing needs is considered one of the basic human needs (Kucharska-Stasiak, 2016; Dziworska, 2017). Housing is a particular good. It plays a significant role and is essential in everyone's life.

The literature provides several definitions of housing. G. Główska (2012) defines a dwelling as "an enclosed space that can meet housing needs, regardless of its architectural form". According to the Regulation of the Ministry of Infrastructure, a dwelling is defined as "a complex of living and auxiliary rooms, having a separate entrance, separated by permanent building partitions, fulfilling the necessary conditions for permanent residence of people and running an independent household" (Regulation of 12 April 2002). In turn, the CSO adopts the following definition of a dwelling: "a dwelling consisting of one or more rooms including ancillary rooms, built or rebuilt for residential purposes, structurally separated (by permanent walls) within a building, to which the dwelling has an independent entrance from a staircase, a general corridor, a common hallway or directly from a street, a yard or a garden" (CSO, 2014).

The definitions presented are complementary and correspond with each other, noting the primary function that housing should have - namely, to guarantee safety understood as shelter. For the elderly, given their relatively more frequent stay at home (up to 21-24 hours a day) than that of younger (economically active) people and the increased likelihood of mobility impairment, the characteristics of housing seem to have a significant role to play.

The satisfaction of housing needs determines living conditions (Gawron, 2011). Indeed, these needs belong to subjective needs - the pursuit of a particular living comfort or social status (Trojanek, M., Trojanek, R., 2012a, 2012b).

How older people live is diverse. It is not easy to clearly define the current housing conditions of senior citizens and their housing preferences as potential customers in the residential property market. However, attempts are being made to verify them, both locally and nationally.

Knowledge of the housing situation of the elderly in Poland is provided by annual surveys prepared by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy (2023). According to the data presented, households consisting exclusively of older adults live predominantly in multi-family buildings - 63.0% of the respondents. In contrast, 36.8 per cent of respondents lived in single-family houses simultaneously. The average area of an elderly person's dwelling was 71.2 m², with 28.5 m² less in urban areas than in rural areas (MRiPS, 2023).

The report also describes how households are equipped with access to essential technical infrastructure. In 2022, 99.8% of elderly people's dwellings had a water supply. Dwellings with a bathroom, flush toilet, and hot running water are used by about 99% of elderly households. Mains gas was supplied to 67.8% of elderly households, and 23.7% used cylinder gas. Central heating (from a combined heat and power plant, district or local boiler house) was used by 86.4% of older people's dwellings (MRiPS, 2023).

The report also outlines the declared housing conditions of seniors.

Seniors indicated that their flats have a balcony, terrace or garden (78.9%). In addition, the flat is well insulated. The disadvantage reported by seniors was architectural barriers at their place of residence, which was reported by almost 28% of respondents. This problem was more pronounced in the city than in the countryside. Other disadvantages included living in noisy or polluted surroundings - 8.6% of older people's households, living in an area with lousy infrastructure (2.9% of respondents), and the threat of crime, e.g. violence - 1.8% of respondents (MRiPS, 2023).

Separate analyses of seniors' housing situation have rarely been undertaken. The nationwide research on the housing situation comes partly from the 2021 National Census. Based on the 2011 National Census, the document *Housing. National Population and Housing Census 2011*. In 2012, the

CBOS foundation conducted research entitled 'Poles towards their old age'. An essential contribution to the assessment of the housing conditions of the elderly was the research carried out in 2012 as part of the PolSenior project entitled 'Medical, psychological, sociological and economic aspects of ageing in Poland' by the Polish Gerontological Society. The 'Report on the Situation of Older People in Poland' was produced in the same year by the Institute of Labour and Social Affairs in Warsaw. In 2016, a study, 'Socio-demographic Portrait of Seniors', was produced. A comprehensive assessment of the housing situation of the elderly was made at the end of 2017 by the 'Expert opinion on the study of the housing needs of seniors and the identification of significant problems and deficits in the area of senior housing'. The expert study was carried out by the National Institute for the Senior Economy, Lab 60+, PCG Poland and Amron. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Construction commissioned the study, and it was a crucial document in shaping and updating housing policy in Poland, considering the place of the elderly in it. In addition, regional and local studies were also conducted on the housing situation of seniors (Strączkowski, 2016; Bartoszek, Niezabitowska, Kucharczyk-Brus & Niezabitowski, 2012; Jancz, 2017; Szukalski, 2017; Kłobukowska, 2014; Strzelec, 2008; Błędowski, Szatur-Jaworska, Szweda-Lewandowska & Kubicki, 2012).

The development of housing for seniors in Poland may result from the diverse housing needs and the year-on-year increase in the number of people over 60. The concept of housing offered exclusively to the elderly originated in the United States. Its beginning dates back to the 1990s. It is, therefore, a new segment of the real estate market (Brecht, 2002). The primary objective of the housing solutions introduced for older people is to meet seniors' universal needs, including (Kirejczyk, Brzeski & Kozłowski, 2015) mobility accessibility, affordability, social integration, intergenerational solidarity, support and care. This housing should, therefore, meet housing needs in terms of the characteristics of the dwelling and the housing building, architectural facilities, and support from others for daily activities.

Systematising the existing types of senior housing, one can distinguish (Kirejczyk, Brzeski & Kozłowski, 2015):

- multi-generational single-family homes - "ageing in place" - by the family,
- adaptation of the current local housing to the housing needs of the elderly in terms of eliminating architectural barriers,
- self-contained 'senior' flats in new housing complexes,
- separate 'senior' buildings in larger complexes (owned, leased) with access to additional services,
- dedicated senior homes with different levels of support,
- urban/suburban settlements with a diverse range of senior housing (independent, serviced, care),
- senior villages with extensive 'senior' infrastructure, where a minimum age threshold determines residence,
- independent living with access to mobile support, home help, care and nursing,
- senior citizens' homes in various operator models for seniors,
- facilities for chronic dementia patients and palliative care units.

This housing works based on market options (owner-occupied or rental housing), social housing and institutional housing.

In the academic discourse, research is conducted on the best direction for housing development in terms of the type of housing and also the available options to improve the housing situation of seniors (Boerenfijn, Kazak, Schellen & J. van Hooff, 2017; Jancz, & Trojanek, 2020; Meluch, 2013; Pytel, 2014; Labus, 2015; Jancz & Rącka, 2017; Kulesza, 2001; Zrałek, 2012). Abroad, the issue of housing has also been addressed both in terms of analysing housing preferences and looking for appropriate solutions to facilitate living where one lives (Anarde, 2019; Ismail et al., 2020; Gu et al, 2020; Park et al. 2019; Ossokina et al., 2019; Lawler, 2001; Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008; Van Hoof et al., 2019; Vanleerberghe et al., 2017; Loughnan, Carroll & Tapper, 2015; Peek et al., 2016).

3. Research method

The research method selected aimed to identify the housing preferences of seniors and pre-senior citizens. To this end, a survey was conducted using a questionnaire and survey technique. The research was conducted stationary at senior citizens' clubs and third-age universities from January to April 2018.

The study authors assumed that housing conditions, needs, and preferences may vary according to the size of the settlement. Therefore, they decided to check how the situation in the abovementioned area develops in medium-sized towns.

The research area covered medium-sized cities in Wielkopolskie Voivodeship (due to financial limitations, the focus was on one region). According to the nomenclature of the Central Statistical Office (GUS) (2009), a medium-sized city is defined as a unit with a population of 20,000-100,000.

The research questionnaires came from the following towns: Swarzędz, Śrem, Luboń, Ostrów Wielkopolski, Gniezno. These are towns with different characteristics in terms of their location in the voivodeship and different numbers of inhabitants (from around 29,000 to around 70,000).

The questionnaire study was addressed to people aged 50 and over who lived in the area of the analysed voivodeship. By including people who currently represent the pre-teenage group (50-59) in the study, the aim was to find out whether the age of the people and, thus, certain attitudes or behaviours resulting from generational differences are reflected in the answers given to the question of housing - between pre-teenagers and seniors. Previous literature studies have shown that senior housing abroad has often already been offered to people over 50 despite the ever-shifting threshold of old age. On more than one occasion, this was explained by the decreasing migratory tendencies of older people.

Respondents were selected for the sample using a quota (purposeful, non-random selection). The research sample, assuming a 3% prediction error for the inhabitants of medium-sized towns in Wielkopolskie Voivodeship who are over 50 years of age, consisted of 216 questionnaires.

The research sample itself reflected the structure of the population of the entire Wielkopolska voivodship in terms of:

(a) gender (female/male),

(b) age (50-54, 55-60, 61-64, 65-69, 70-74, 75 and over),

(c) place of residence (urban/rural),

(d) the population of the locality (<5,000 inhabitants, 5-10,000 inhabitants, 10-20,000 inhabitants, 20-50,000 inhabitants, 50-100,000 inhabitants, >100,000 inhabitants).

Verification of the survey about the distributions of the research sample and the population (inhabitants of the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship over 50 years of age) performed using the X2 compatibility test allowed us to state that the structure of the sample in terms of gender, age, place of residence and number of people in the place of residence corresponded to the structure of the population.

The selection of respondents to the sample and the lack of differences in structures made it possible to make the research representative of the general population (inhabitants of Wielkopolskie Voivodeship over 50).

4. Results and discussion

The results of the questionnaire research provided knowledge in two areas: the current housing situation and housing preferences of people over 50 from middle-sized cities in Wielkopolskie Voivodeship. The current housing situation is often a motive for identifying deficiencies and needs in the current place of residence. Thus, housing preferences may be built based on current housing conditions. From the authors' point of view, it was, therefore, essential to determine the conditions and the preferences of the people surveyed.

The results of the self-study will be presented below. The respondents were first characterised.

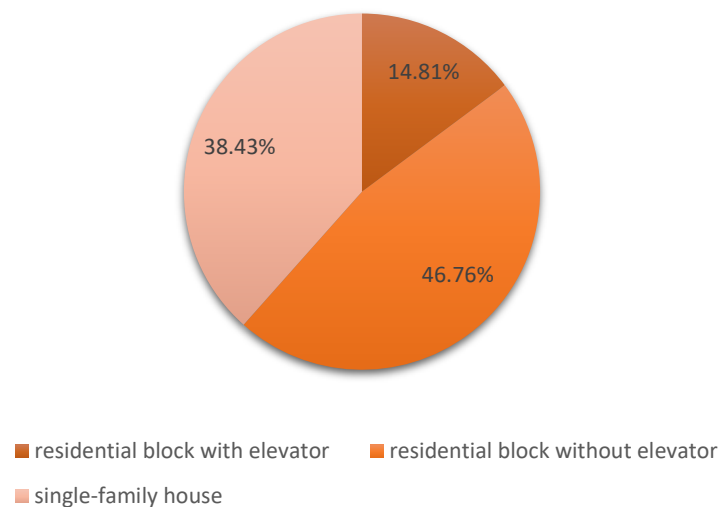
A total of 216 respondents participated in the survey, of whom 55.56% were women and 44.44% were men. The pre-senile age group (50-59) comprised 35.19% of respondents, while 64.81% were seniors over 60. The most significant proportion of seniors declared themselves to be aged 60-64 years - 19.91%; an equal proportion were those aged 65-69 years (17.59%) and 75 years and over (17.59%), with the remaining proportion attributed to respondents aged 70-74 years (9.72%). Respondents indicated that they had primary education (9.26% of respondents), basic vocational education (19.44%

of respondents), secondary education (41.20% of respondents) and higher education (30.09% of respondents). In analysing the professional status of the respondents, it should be indicated that half of them were retired. The others were employed - 24.07%, self-employed - 14.35%, pensioners - 8.33%, not working - 1.85% and indicated their status as farmers - 1.39%. Most respondents, as many as 46.30%, ran 2-person households, 21.30% indicated that they lived in a 1-person household, while 19.44% declared that they ran a 3-person household. The fewest respondents indicated that their household has four or more persons (12.96%). In the metric, respondents were also asked to indicate the amount of gross disposable income. Most respondents answered that they had PLN 1500-2500 monthly disposable income - almost 45% of respondents. Nearly 39% of respondents declared that their disposable monthly income does not exceed PLN 1500. The smallest number of people - only 16.20% of respondents answered that they have disposable income in the range of PLN 2500 and more. It should also be noted that 47.69% of the respondents lived in cities with a population of 20,000 and 50,000. The rest lived in cities with a population of between 50,000 and 100,000.

The first part of the questionnaire survey concerned identifying the respondents' current housing situation. The first question in this section asked respondents how long they lived in their current dwelling. Most respondents answered that they have lived in their current dwelling for 11-20 years - 38.43% of respondents. In contrast, 13.89% of respondents answered that they have lived in their current dwelling for less than five years, 21.76% of respondents answered that they have lived in their current dwelling for 6-10 years, and only 6.94 respondents answered that they have lived in their current dwelling for 21-50 years. Almost 1/5 of respondents indicated more than 50 years, many times since birth.

Another question asked about the type of development the respondents live in (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Type of housing occupied



Source: own elaboration

Figure 1 shows that the most significant % of respondents live in a block of flats without a lift - 38.43% of respondents. In medium-sized cities, housing with a lift is less common - only 14.81% of respondents live in multi-family housing with a lift. In addition, single-family or terraced housing is a popular place to live. Living in single-family or terraced houses was more common for people under 60. People aged 60-64 and 65-69 were most likely to live in a block of flats without a lift. Those declaring to live in a block of flats without a lift most often answered that their monthly disposable income was between PLN 1001-1500.

Table 1 describes the characteristics of the property respondents, including the number of rooms, the dwelling area, and the tenure.

Respondents indicated they mainly live in 2-4 room dwellings (76.86% of respondents). The majority are 2-room dwellings. The lowest number of respondents declared they lived in dwellings with

six or more rooms. It should also be noted that the surveyed sample of people most often answered that they live in relatively large dwellings of 61-100m² - 24.07% of respondents. Respondents rarely declared to live in dwellings up to 30m². Pre-senile respondents were likelier than seniors to indicate they lived in 61-100m dwellings. Seniors aged 60-69 were most likely to respond that they live in 2-room dwellings. The research shows that people with a 2-person household would most likely live in units measuring 41-50m². This is a noticeable share since as many as 1/5 of the respondents living in a 2-person household occupy a metric size of 61m² and more. Many respondents indicated owning a flat with a title deed - as much as 84.72% of all respondents. A tenancy right to housing does not especially characterise people over 75.

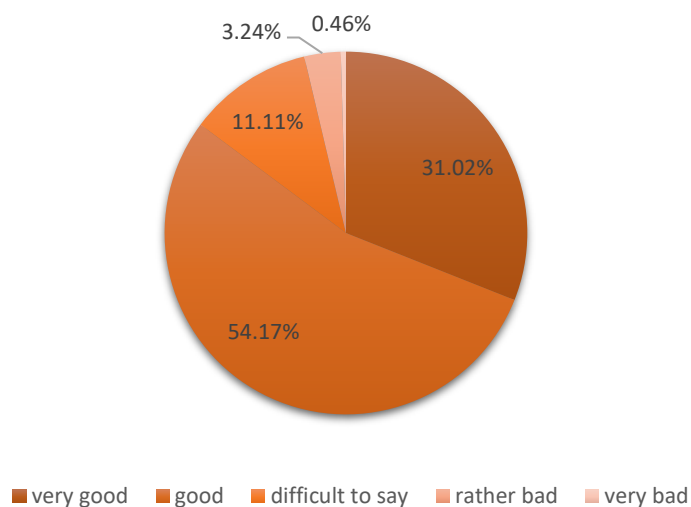
Table 1: Characteristics describing the type of housing unit occupied

Feature	Feature variant	Percentage of indications
Number of rooms	1 room	5.56%
	Two rooms	32.41%
	Three rooms	22.69%
	Four rooms	21.76%
	Five rooms	13.89%
	Six rooms and more	3.70%
Flat area	up to 30m ²	3.24%
	31-40m ²	10.65%
	41-50m ²	20.37%
	51-60m ²	18.98%
	61-100m ²	24.07%
	101 m2 and over	22.69%
Right to premises	lease	15.28%
	ownership	84.72%

Source: own elaboration

In the following question, respondents were asked to rate their housing conditions, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Housing assessment



Source: own elaboration

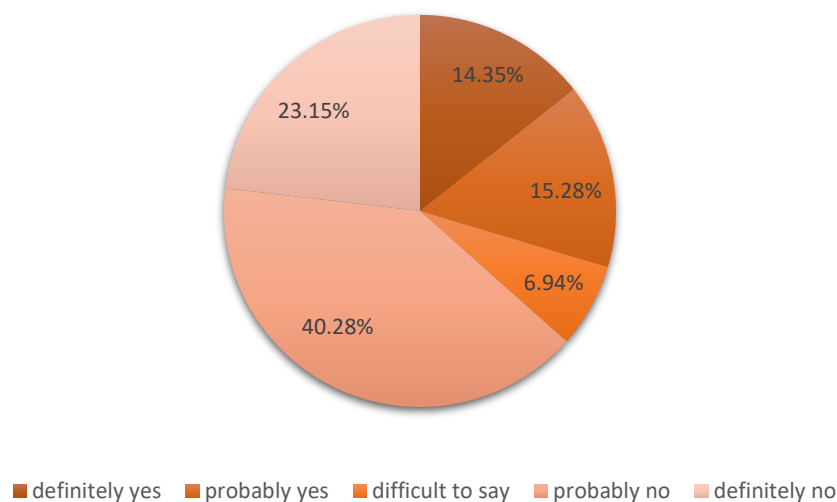
More than half of the respondents rate their housing conditions poorly; 31.02% consider them very good. Only 0.46% of respondents, i.e., one person, consider their housing conditions very bad. People aged 70 and over were more likely to rate their housing conditions as bad than those in their pre-teen years. The negative rating was often given to a multi-family housing structure without a lift.

In the following question, respondents were asked whether they thought their dwelling was suitable for an elderly person. Respondents could select one of five answers: definitely yes, rather yes, hard to say, instead no, definitely no. People's attitudes towards the question are somewhat undecided - respondents most often chose the answer that their dwelling is rather suitable for an elderly person to live in - 33.80% of respondents or, instead, not - 28.30% of respondents. A large proportion of respondents, 18.52%, could not answer the question and selected the answer "difficult to say".

In the following question, respondents were asked what kind of solutions, facilities or equipment necessary for elderly people to live comfortably are missing from their current residence. The question was open-ended. Analysing the respondents' answers, it should be pointed out that most indications were concerned with changes in architectural amenities. Respondents indicated that their apartment building lacks a lift or wheelchair ramps, and there are unnecessary stairs at the entrance to the staircase, which often makes it challenging to move around. In addition, there are no handrails at the entrances to the staircases of multi-family buildings. Another type of reported need was bathroom renovation. Respondents indicated the need to replace the bulky bathtub with a shower and to install additional grab bars in the bathroom. Respondents also pointed out unnecessary thresholds in their flats, often making it difficult to move around. Respondents living in detached and terraced housing indicated that it would be essential to change the heating, e.g. to gas, which would facilitate the process of reheating the property. In terms of technical infrastructure, respondents also frequently reported that there was a lack of sewerage at their homes.

Figure 3 shows whether respondents desired to change their dwelling and move to another one.

Figure 3: Willingness of respondents to change residence



Source: own elaboration

The vast majority of respondents - as many as 63.43% answered that they do not intend to change their place of residence in the future, with 40.28% of respondents unsure of this opinion. In addition, it should be noted that a large proportion of respondents - a total of 29.63% - are willing to change their residence. Respondents over 70 were most likely reluctant to change their residence, and respondents declared the highest monthly disposable income - above PLN 2,500.

The second part of the questionnaire survey revealed the housing preferences of people over 50 in medium-sized cities in Wielkopolskie Voivodeship.

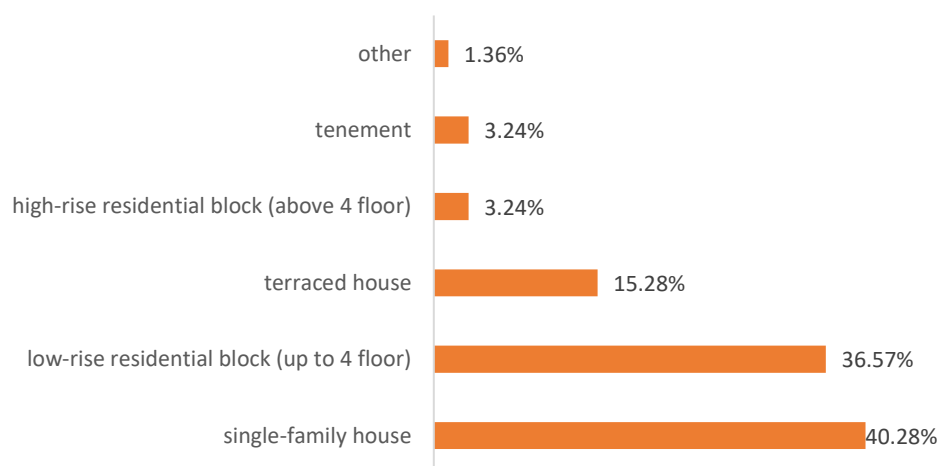
First, respondents were asked to indicate which factors and to what extent they would be most relevant to respondents in the event of a change of residence.

Among the factors one should distinguish: the conditions for purchasing a flat (price of the flat, convenient method of payment for the flat), communication (convenient access to the necessary places), type of building (design of the building, its size, construction technology), equipment of the building (lift, monitoring, parking), characteristics of the flat (area of the flat, having a balcony or terrace, functionality), neighbourhood (safety of the area, view from the window, proximity to green areas, neighbours), estate infrastructure (proximity to retail and service outlets), social factors (proximity to family, sentiment towards the area).

Respondents indicated the three most significant factors: the conditions for purchasing a home, the property's characteristics and communication. Respondents most often selected this as a significant variable for these factors. In turn, they cited the neighbourhood of residence and building amenities as an essential variable. Respondents would pay the slightest attention to the type of building and the social factor when choosing a property - for these two factors, respondents were least likely to indicate that this was a significant factor.

Respondents were then asked to indicate the parameters characterising their preferred residential property. Figure 4 shows the structure of respondents' choices regarding the type of development.

Figure 4: Preferred type of development



Source: own elaboration

Respondents often indicated that a single-family house and a low-rise block of flats up to 4 storeys was their preferred type of development. Respondents were least likely to relate that they would like to live in a townhouse or high block of flats. Among the 'other' responses, the desire to live in a flat block was mentioned, and preferences were given for various forms of housing, including the absence of architectural barriers, most frequently mentioned by those over 70.

Table 2 describes the characteristics of the preferred dwelling and its size in terms of the number of rooms and square footage, location and possible maintenance costs.

Table 2: Characteristics of the preferred dwelling

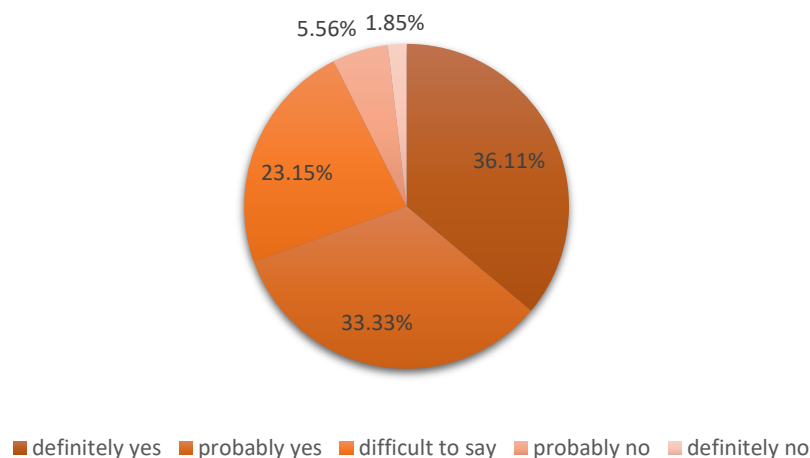
Feature	Feature variant	Percentage of indications
Number of rooms	1 room	3.24%
	Two rooms	35.19%
	Three rooms	32.87%
	Four and over	28,70%
Flat area	up to 30m ²	1.85%
	31-40m ²	12.96%
	41-50m ²	18.98%
	51-60m ²	23.61%
	61-100m ²	31.02%
	101m ² and above	11.57%
Location	city centre	28.70%
	outside the city centre	61.11%
	village	10.19%
Level of monthly maintenance costs	under £500	24.07%
	PLN 501-1000	43.06%
	PLN 1501-2000	18.06%
	PLN 2001 and above	14.81%

Source: own elaboration

Respondents' opinions about the preferred rooms in a new dwelling vary. Most people prefer 2-room flats - as many as 35.19% of respondents. However, a high share also applies to 2- and 3-room flats. Respondents do not prefer 1-room flats with a small size. As many as 31.02% of respondents would prefer to purchase a flat with a large area of 61-100m². Such an opinion most often concerned respondents of pre-senior age with a monthly disposable income of more than PLN 2,500. Moreover, such dwellings would be chosen more often by persons from cities with a population of 20-50,000 than those with a population of 51-100,000. Seniors aged 70 and over running one-person or two-person households were interested in smaller areas of 51-60m².

The survey questionnaire also included the need for senior housing, the desire to move to such a housing substance and what form it would take. The respondents were also asked about the additional services that should be provided in senior housing and how a purchased unit in senior housing should be financed.

Figure 5 presents respondents' answers to whether they think there is a need for new forms of housing for seniors.

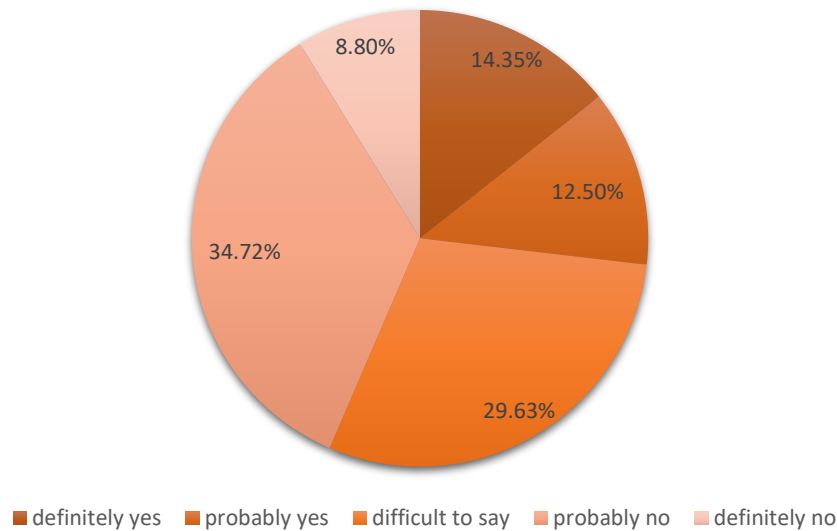
Figure 5: Need for new forms of housing for seniors according to respondents

Source: own elaboration

Most respondents—almost 70%—say there is a need to develop new forms of housing for seniors. Just over 23% have no opinion in this regard. A small proportion say that this type of housing should not be developed.

The next question examined whether respondents would be willing to move to housing exclusively for older people. Figure 6 shows the respondents' answers in this regard.

Figure 6: Respondents' interest in moving into senior housing



Source: own elaboration

Despite respondents indicating the need for housing development for seniors, they express an undecided attitude towards moving into this type of housing. Nearly 30% of respondents said they did not know whether they would move into this type of housing, and as many as 34.72% said they would rather not. Only 14.35% of respondents strongly indicated they would consider choosing such a residence. Those most interested in senior housing are 60-65, women, and those living in one-person households.

Table 3 presents respondents' answers on what form of housing they would choose if they decided to live in senior housing.

Table 3: Preferred form of housing for seniors according to respondents

Response option	Percentage of indications
existing dwelling converted to meet the needs of an older person (architectural improvements)	21.76%
new flat in a multi-family building from the developer with architectural improvements	15.74%
a terraced house or a single-family house adapted to the architectural needs of an elderly person	4.63%
a flat in a building containing exclusively flats for the elderly with architectural amenities and additional services	15.28%
a flat in a building containing only flats for the elderly with architectural facilities without additional services	28.24%
senior housing (flat) adapted to the needs of the elderly (architectural facilities)	12.50%
room sharing in a care home	0.93%
independent room in a nursing home	0.93%

Source: own elaboration

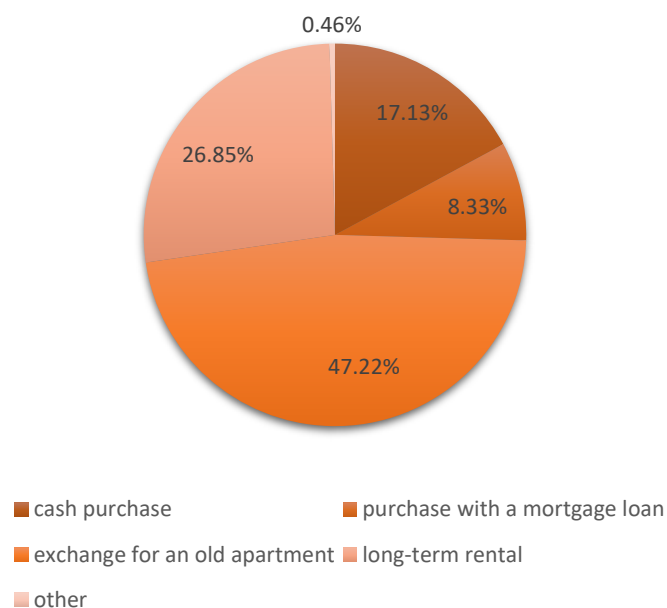
The form of housing for seniors that received the most interest from respondents was living in a building with only flats for the elderly with architectural facilities without additional services. 28.24%

of respondents would choose this form of housing, and just over one-fifth of the respondents preferred to remain in their existing flats, which would be converted to meet the needs of older adults. It should be noted that respondents repeatedly raise the issue of housing adaptation in terms of architectural facilities. Despite earlier declarations of respondents' desire to live in single-family houses for this question, respondents rarely answered that they would choose a terraced or single-family house that would be architecturally adapted for an older adult as a place to live. Respondents were not interested in living in a care home - regardless of whether they would have an unoccupied room or have to share it with another person. Respondents aged 75 and over were most likely to indicate that they would like to stay in their existing accommodation, which would be converted to suit their needs. In contrast, pre-senile respondents would most often live in a dwelling adapted for an older person with architectural facilities.

In the following question, respondents were asked what type of service they would be willing to pay extra for if they lived in senior housing. Respondents could choose from the following types of preferred services: food service (canteen or restaurant), medical and care services, cultural services (e.g. seniors' club, library), transport services (transportation of people), and rehabilitation services: hair and beauty services, 24-hour security, shopping delivery. Most people considered the possibility of accessing a doctor, nurse or assistant to be the most essential service, followed by the option to receive rehabilitation at home. Furthermore, these services were most frequently chosen by those aged 60-69 and by women. Respondents were least likely to be willing to pay for access to hair and beauty services.

Figure 7 shows respondents' preferred means of financing senior housing.

Figure 7: Method of financing senior housing



Source: own elaboration

Respondents indicated that, in their opinion, the best way to finance a flat for a senior citizen would be to swap the flat for an old one - almost half of the respondents think so. Respondents are also considering the option of a long-term lease - 26.85% of respondents. Many respondents have cash that they could use to purchase a senior property - 17.13% of respondents. These are mainly people over the age of 75. One person (0.46% of respondents) indicated that their children would finance a senior property.

5. Discussion of results

Housing preferences should be considered when shaping the country's and local authorities' housing policies. They should also influence the type of new housing stock provided and the attempt to repair the existing stock.

Surveys conducted in medium-sized cities show that respondents most often rate their housing conditions as good or very good, even though many of them live in multi-family buildings without lift access or with other architectural defects, e.g. an unadapted bathroom - no grab bars, a bathtub instead of a shower, no handrails at the entrance to the building or steps at the entrance to the staircase.

Almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of the respondents live in large units 61-100m², which is not met with dissatisfaction, e.g. due to the property maintenance costs incurred.

Most people own the dwelling they occupy.

Respondents would instead not change their place of residence. If they decide to move, they must pay attention to the housing price and payment method. The characteristics of the dwelling and communication would also be necessary.

Housing preferences about the type of development chosen may come as a surprise. Respondents often choose the form where they live, a detached house, and do not want to incur high property maintenance costs (PLN 501-1000 per month). The preferred location of respondents is an area outside the city centre.

Respondents express a positive attitude towards senior housing - they believe it should be developed. However, they are unsure whether they would like to live in such a scheme. They would prefer to stay in their current home, where they have often lived for 11 to 20 years, or even since birth, with the possibility of adapting the property to meet their needs. If respondents were to change their residence, it would be to move to a flat with housing exclusively for the elderly with architectural amenities and no additional services. However, if they decided to do so, the most essential services would be medical and care services and access to rehabilitation. In case of a change of residence, respondents would consider swapping the old dwelling for a new one, which would often be the only option for moving.

6. Conclusion and policy implications

The development of housing for seniors is an essential direction in the housing market due to the year-on-year growth of people over 60 in the general age structure of the population. However, this development requires well-considered solutions driven by senior citizens' reported housing needs. The main tasks for property market developers are to recognise seniors as consumers in the housing market and to make the housing stock accessible to this group of people. According to the reported housing preferences of people over 50 in medium-sized cities in the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship, the most crucial feature of housing construction should be housing design without architectural barriers. Such facilities are missing in the old housing stock - no lifts or unnecessary stairs without handrails at the entrances to buildings. Taking care of housing improvements should be included in the new long-term senior citizens' policy in the country. In addition, sustainable housing development in this area would serve the various social groups in the long term.

From a practical standpoint, this research underscores the urgent need for housing policies responsive to senior citizens' preferences and requirements. The study's findings advocate for the development of barrier-free housing with accessible medical services, which could significantly enhance the quality of life for older adults. These insights should inform urban planning and real estate development, prompting the creation of diverse, age-friendly living environments that support the independence and well-being of seniors.

Scientifically, the research contributes to the existing body of literature by providing empirical evidence on the housing preferences of seniors in medium-sized cities—a demographic often overlooked in urban studies. It challenges prevailing assumptions and highlights the necessity for a nuanced understanding of senior living conditions. The study's methodology and findings offer a replicable model for future research in similar contexts, potentially guiding a reevaluation of theoretical frameworks related to aging and habitation.

In conclusion, the implications of this study are twofold: practically, it calls for immediate action to address the housing needs of an aging population; scientifically, it enriches the discourse on sustainable urban development and gerontology, paving the way for further scholarly inquiry and policy innovation.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Citation information

Jancz, A., & Manasterska, T. (2023). Seniors' housing preferences in medium-sized cities in Poland. *Journal of Sustainable Development of Transport and Logistics*, 8(2), 333-347. doi:10.14254/jsdtl.2023.8-2.26

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Journal of Sustainable Development of Transport and Logistics (ISSN: 2520-2979) is published by Scientific Publishing House "CSR", Poland, EU and Scientific Publishing House "SciView", Poland, EU

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