

Title

Are local places in Britain becoming more age segregated (and what does internal migration have to do with it)?

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Abstract

This paper engages directly with the notion that all-age communities are vital for intergenerational connection and for tackling the causes of intergenerational unfairness (House of Lords 2019); and the idea that the development of ‘age friendly environments’ supports the wellbeing and participation of older people (WHO, 2017). It addresses the dearth of recent empirical evidence on these topics by answering the questions: *What is the extent of intergenerational residential mixing at a local level in Britain? How is this changing over time? How is residential mobility shaping age mixing/age segregation?* The paper uses 2021/2022 Census data (Aggregate level tables and interaction/flow data) for small areas of England and Wales/Scotland, compared with 2011 and 2001, to calculate residential age segregation and mixing; and age-specific migration rates between neighbourhoods. Associates of neighbourhood type (e.g. age polarising, youth in-migration, age mixed) will then be modelled. Persistence of trends of neighbourhood residential age segregation is expected, and particularly for areas of economic decline and tight housing markets. Our contention is that the divergence in the internal migration (residential mobility) patterns of older and younger populations is driven not by a desire to live separately but by different opportunity structures (affordability) that stratify the population spatially along lines of age. This raises policy implications about housing provision if we are to achieve age sustainable neighbourhoods.

Extended Abstract

Background and Research Questions

This paper engages directly with the notion that all-age communities are vital for intergenerational connection and for tackling the causes of intergenerational unfairness (House of Lords 2019); and the idea that the development of ‘age friendly environments’ support the wellbeing and participation of older people (WHO, 2017). Although recent literature has stressed the positive outcomes of communities of mixed ages, there remains limited quantitative scholarship in the UK (and, indeed, elsewhere) on residential age mixing (see Sabater et al., 2017), despite some increased attention in recent years (e.g. Sabater and Catney 2019). Similarly, recent community-oriented studies of place have paid greater attention to age, though with a particular focus on ageing (and ageing in place) rather than intergenerational connections (e.g. Buffel et al, 2020; Lewis and Buffel 2020). Studies have highlighted increases in neighbourhood age segregation in Britain, life course

variations in age mixing and the need to consider the dynamics of places where people grow older (Lewis and Buffel, 2020).

This paper adopts a 'spatially assertive perspective' (Soja 2010), recognising that patterns and processes of changing populations are embedded in place. It examines the extent of intergenerational residential mixing and how this is changing over time providing new knowledge on the patterns and processes of intergenerational mixing. This evidence will be relevant to policies promoting intergenerational fairness, community cohesion, 'levelling up' and ['Local Living'](#).

This paper is part of a larger programme of work within the Connecting Generations Programme of the Centre for Population Change and develops work previously undertaken by CPC. This paper will address the following questions:

1. What is the extent of intergenerational residential mixing at a local level in Britain?
2. How is this changing over time?
3. How is residential mobility shaping age mixing/age segregation?

Data and methods

The paper uses England and Wales 2021/Scotland 2022 Census data at aggregate small area (LSOA/MSOA/data zone) level to provide a comprehensive, national coverage description of residential age mixing. Analysis will be compared to Census 2011 and 2001 to identify trends in age (and intersectional) residential mixing. Analyses of in- and out- (internal) migration of neighbourhoods by age will provide detailed documentation of population shifts enabling identification of places vulnerable to age polarisation. Census 2021 origin-destination (flow) data for small areas will be used, representing early analysis of this unique data source (*Note: exact timing of release of 2021 Census interaction data is not known. If the interaction data are not available in time to enable analysis for the conference, research question 3 will be addressed – albeit in a less satisfactory way – by analysing age selectivity of migration by place using the 'usual residence one year ago' census question in standard table/Custom Table Builder outputs. These analyses will not be possible for Scotland as these data are not expected until 2025*).

Segregation, for neighbourhoods within districts, will be calculated using measures of segregation (e.g. P^* , D) and diversity (RDI). This will address deficiencies in extant work which has tended to use relatively crude two-group measures of segregation. Research question 3 will require calculation of age-specific migration rates (between neighbourhoods) on the basis of which a categorisation of neighbourhoods can be devised. Associates of neighbourhood type (e.g. age polarising, youth in-migration, age mixed) will then be modelled.

Findings & Contributions

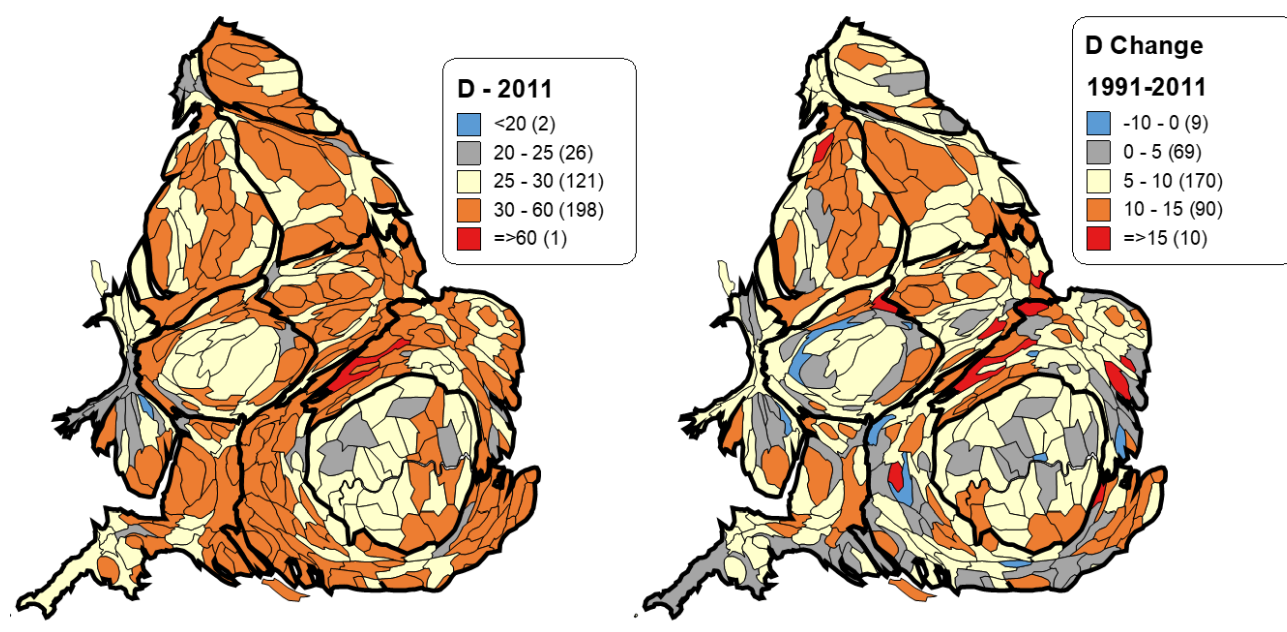
Recent contributions to the field draw attention to the differential opportunities in later life – as at other points in the life course – for residential mobility (Oliver et al 2018). Some have suggested that it is at the point of retirement that older populations become spatially isolated (Botterman 2020) and that urban resource allocation should take into account changing age dynamics (Leyso 2023).

Some, as yet limited, debate is addressing the politics of the drivers and consequences of age segregation including concerns about social isolation and the need for policy response (Lau 2023). Oliver et al (2018: 449) caution that age segregation should be viewed as part of broader processes of socio-spatial inequalities: "segregation is far from a "natural" separating out of individuals by age, but choice markets reflect, reproduce or exacerbate existing socio-economic and ethnic inequalities.". Hochstenbach (2018) points to differentials

in the contributions of younger and older residents to urban upgrading (gentrification); and these concerns can be situated in the growing interest in kinship migration that has (re)emerged prominently in recent years in internal migration literature (e.g. Mulder 2018, Thomas and Dommermuth 2020).

In this context, this paper will answer the question ‘Are local places in Britain becoming more age segregated?’ and – based on past trends (see Figure 1) will expect to find in the affirmative. Out expectation, however, is that age segregation will be particularly marked in areas of economic decline and tight housing markets. Moreover, in answering the question ‘Is age segregation increasing because younger and older people are moving away from one another?’ we anticipate to find this to be the case. Our contention is that the divergence in the internal migration (residential mobility) patterns of older and younger populations is driven not by a desire to live separately but by different opportunity structures (affordability) that stratifies the population spatially along lines of age.

Figure 1: Increase in Residential Segregation (evenness) of older adults (65+) vs. younger adults (25-40) across neighbourhoods



Neighbourhoods within Local Authority Districts in England and Wales, 1991-2011. From: Sabater, Graham and Finney (2017)

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