



Special Article

Housing and Ireland's Older Population

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Abstract

It is sometimes argued that residential immobility on the part of older people results in the sub-optimal allocation of the housing stock. If older people remain in larger houses which were purchased with a view to housing families with growing children, then such houses are not available for the next generation of younger families. Similarly, if older people remain close to places of work after retirement, they may contribute to the limiting of supply in urban centres. In this paper, we explore this issue in two ways. First, we look at the types of houses being occupied by older people in different household structures – living alone, as couples or with children/grandchildren. This provides a sense of whether there are, in fact, many older people living in houses that are large relative to their needs. Second, we explore whether there is much evidence of older people 'trading down' to smaller houses or 'trading out' of urban areas to more rural areas. On the first issue, the picture is mixed. We find that many older people living alone already live in smaller houses. For example, 40.6 per cent of older people living alone live in houses with four rooms or less – the corresponding figure for people living with children/grandchildren is 15.8 per cent. However, when we look at couples, we find that 30.9 per cent live in houses with seven rooms or more. We find no evidence of trading down or trading out among the small proportion of older people who moved between 2010 and 2012. The findings suggest that there is scope for generating more mobility in housing but any policy initiatives should be sensitive to concerns related to social isolation and negative health consequences if older people leave familiar communities.

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1. Introduction

Ireland is currently facing a shortage of residential accommodation as evidenced, for example, by rising rents and low levels of new completions relative to estimates of demand. In this context, it has been argued that a lack of housing mobility among Ireland's older population contributes to the overall difficulties (see for example Lyons, 2016). There are at least two dimensions to this argument. First, older people can find themselves living in houses which are large relative to their needs once children have grown up and left the family home – so-called 'empty nesters'. If they downsized, they would free up supply of larger family homes. Second, it could also be the case that retired people stay living in urban centres which were once close to places of work even though they no longer need such proximity. In this case, if they moved out of urban areas they would free up accommodation better suited to those still in work.

While these arguments are often made it is not clear, for example, whether there are lots of empty nesters or whether trading down is infrequent. If it is the case that significant numbers of older people actually live in smaller homes or that significant numbers already move at later stages of their lives, then there will be limited scope for increasing movement in the housing market through any actions aimed at incentivising more mobility for older people.

The lack of information on these questions is not just an Irish phenomenon. Banks et al. (2010) note that 'even the basic question of whether housing is downsized as people age is not well answered in the literature' (Banks et al., 2010, p.347). They point to contradictory findings on downsizing. Venti and Wise (2001) find that the elderly do not generally reduce housing equity as they age in the United States, but Sheiner and Weil (1992) did find widespread switches out of home ownership. In their own work, Banks et al. (2010) suggest that some of the confusion may arise from the different lengths of time over which possible transitions are viewed. For example, they show that over a two-year period, only 11 per cent of older home owners in the US move but the proportion increases to more than 30 per cent in a ten-year period. Banks et al. (2010) also show that rates of movement are lower in the UK compared to the US.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an initial exploration of housing tenure and movement among Ireland's older population using a rich data source – The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA). We provide more details on the data below but for now we will note that TILDA contains data on a large-scale representative sample of Ireland's older people. TILDA is also a panel study whereby the same people are interviewed at different points in time. This allows

us to look at the nature of housing among the older population and also their propensity to move.

The paper is structured as follows. In the remainder of this section, we provide more detail on the data. In Section 2, we look at housing characteristics among the older population with an emphasis on exploring whether there is evidence of older people living in larger dwellings. In Section 3, we look at moves among older people. Here we are particularly interested in whether there is evidence of people downsizing or moving from urban to rural areas. In this section of the paper, we also assess econometrically the characteristics associated with whether or not older people move accommodation. We conclude in Section 4.

TILDA is a nationally representative study of the population of Ireland aged 50 and above who were living in the community when first surveyed.¹ The first wave of data was collected between October 2009 and July 2011. In total, 6,279 households participated in this survey,² with information on a total of 8,504 individuals collected. Of this, 8,175 individuals were aged 50 and over, while the remaining 326 people interviewed were the younger spouses/partners of the other survey participants.

In the report, we begin by examining the household structure among the over 50s in Ireland using the first wave of the TILDA data (2009-2011). For this examination, the household³ is used as the unit of analysis. In particular, the results are based on the responses to the House Ownership module that were provided by the person who was designated as the 'financial respondent' when the interview was conducted.⁴ Thus, the analysis is based on 5,959 observations,⁵ with all results weighted to ensure that the findings are representative of the full population of people aged 50 and above in Ireland at the time the first wave of data were collected.

¹ Individuals living in long-term care institutions were not included in the sampling frame for the Wave 1 TILDA data capture. However, individuals living in such institutions are captured in subsequent waves of the TILDA data (as people who lived in houses, apartments, etc., when the Wave 1 data was captured have moved into long-term care institutions when subsequent waves of the data are captured).

² The number of selected eligible households was 10,128; thus, the response rate was 62 per cent.

³ As opposed to the individual.

⁴ In capturing the TILDA data, when two persons were married together in a household, or were living together as if married, one individual was designated as the financial respondent in order to reduce respondent burden in capturing the data, and also to ensure more accurate responses for those TILDA modules that the financial respondent had to provide information for. In addition to the 'House Ownership' module, the financial respondent also answered the 'Other Assets' module.

⁵ 76 households which contained two financial respondents were excluded from the analysis as the housing data provided by each respondent were not consistent.

In the second part of the report, we examine the characteristics of those individuals who moved accommodation between TILDA Waves 1 and 2. The second wave of the TILDA data was collected between February 2012 and March 2013. In particular, we present the Wave 1 characteristics of those individuals who moved accommodation between 2009-2011 and 2012-2013.

2. Household Structure among the Over 50s

In Table 2.1, we begin our exploration of the housing characteristics of the over 50s and show the distribution of household composition for the full sample and by age. As noted above, our tables in this section are based on households, as opposed to individuals, and the age of the household is determined by the financial respondent in that household. The data presented relate to responses to the survey in its first wave, conducted between 2009 and 2011.

Across the full sample, households are divided in three, almost equal, categories; living alone, living with a spouse only and living with children⁶ or grandchildren. However, the distribution is quite different across the age categories and reflects expected situations over the life-span. While just under 20 per cent of households aged 50 to 59 are made up of people living alone, the corresponding figure for the over 80s is 63 per cent. Similarly, the proportion of people living only with a spouse peaks in the age group 60 to 69, while the proportion living with children and grandchildren declines between the 50s and the late 70s.

TABLE 2.1 Household Structure of Individuals Aged 50 and Above in Ireland: 2009-2011

	All	50-59	60-69	70-79	80 Plus
Living alone	31.1	19.7	26.4	43.8	63.0
Living with spouse only	32.4	23.0	44.2	39.2	19.4
Living with child/grandchildren	33.7	53.2	27.0	15.1	16.5
Living with other relative	2.4	3.3	2.0	1.9	1.0
Living with unrelated people	0.5	0.8	0.4	-	0.2
Total:	100	100	100	100	100
Population: ¹	875,632	341,829	262,273	184,569	86,962

Source: TILDA Wave 1 Data.

Note: ¹ The population figures (based on the 2010 QNHS) were derived by applying the CAPI (computer aided personal interview) weight that is in the TILDA data to the sample used in the analysis.

⁶ Including step and adopted children.

In Table 2.2, we look more closely at the distribution of household composition and provide breakdowns by age and gender. We identified in Table 2.1 that almost two-thirds of those aged over 80 were living alone (63 per cent) – from Table 2.2 we can see that over 70 per cent of these households are female. Apart from the age group 50 to 59, Table 2.2 shows how the living alone households are more likely to be female.

TABLE 2.2 Gender Profile of Individuals Aged 50 and Above in Different Household Structures: 2009-2011

	Living alone	Living with spouse only	Living with children / grandchildren	Living with others ¹
Gender Profile of People:				
<i>All:</i>				
Male	42.7	54.7	46.9	53.8
Female	57.4	45.3	53.1	46.2
<i>Aged 50-59:</i>				
Male	59.8	46.6	48.2	55.6
Female	40.2	53.4	51.8	44.4
<i>Aged 60-69:</i>				
Male	44.5	56.5	51.6	54.5
Female	55.6	43.5	48.4	45.5
<i>Aged 70-79:</i>				
Male	35.9	58.1	36.5	56.4
Female	64.2	41.9	63.5	43.6
<i>Aged 80 and Above:</i>				
Male	29.3	66.0	26.6	13.7
Female	70.7	34.0	73.4	86.3

Source: TILDA Wave 1 Data.

Note: ¹ Relative or non-relative.

In Table 2.3 we look at the family structures of the differing household compositions. One point that emerges from Table 2.3 is that almost 40 per cent of people who are living alone have no living children (38.2 per cent). This is noteworthy because it suggests that many of those living alone are not ‘empty nesters’ – it seems that they never had children and this may be reflected in their house sizes. Among couples, 12.3 per cent have no children meaning that almost 90 per cent do have children and so are ‘empty nesters’, in the sense of having had children who have now left the family home.

TABLE 2.3 Family Information for Individuals aged 50 and Above by Household Structure: 2009-2011

	Living alone	Living with spouse only	Living with children / grandchildren	Living with others ¹
Number of (Living) Children:				
0	38.2	12.3	-	43.0
1	7.7	6.7	7.0	6.4
2	12.8	22.2	23.1	14.6
3	14.1	24.5	24.8	12.3
4	10.9	17.3	19.7	12.8
5	6.6	8.2	11.8	4.3
6 and Above	9.8	8.8	13.7	6.7
Proximity of Children of People:²				
Co-resident children	-	-	99.4	25.2
At least one child in the county	48.8	68.2	0.6	21.7
Child lives in another county	8.1	13.6	0.1	5.5
Child lives in another country	4.9	5.9	-	4.7
No children	38.2	12.3	-	43.0

Source: TILDA Wave 1 Data.

Note: ¹ Relative or non-relative.

² This question is asked of all children aged 16 and above, so the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Table 2.4 tries to provide a sense of housing size by household composition, with a view to exploring one of our key questions; if there is evidence of many older people living in houses which are large relative to their needs? We will focus first on the living alone group. From the top panel of the table, we can see that the living alone households are more heavily concentrated in dwellings that are likely to be smaller – for example 6.7 per cent of those living alone are in apartments/flats/bedsits compared to just 0.5 per cent of people living with children and/or grandchildren. Similarly, 21.8 per cent of the living alone households are in terraced houses, compared to 17.5 per cent of people living with children and/or grandchildren. Having said that, we can also see that almost half of those living alone reside in detached houses so the picture is somewhat mixed. If we look at couples, we see that 60.2 per cent live in detached houses and so they are more likely to live in such houses compared to people living with children and/or grandchildren.⁷

⁷ In Appendix 1, we provide the information in the top panel of Table 2.4 by area; Dublin, other urban and rural.

If we consider this issue from the perspective of number of rooms,⁸ we again can see that living alone households tend to live in smaller dwellings. Of the living alone group, 40.6 per cent live in households with four rooms or less – for people living with children and/or grandchildren, the corresponding figure is 15.8 per cent. Looking at larger houses, we can see that 36.4 per cent of people living with children and/or grandchildren live in houses with seven or more rooms. The corresponding figures for the living alone and couples are 13.9 per cent and 30.9 per cent respectively. Hence, while these data show that, compared to larger households, there are smaller proportions of those living alone and couples living in larger houses; they also show that a reasonable proportion of couples in particular reside in large houses.

TABLE 2.4 Housing Information for Individuals aged 50 and Above by Household Structure: 2009-2011

	Living alone	Living with spouse only	Living with children / grandchildren	Living with other relatives	Living with non-relatives
Type of Residence:					
Detached house	47.9	60.2	56.5	65.5	45.4
Semi-detached house	23.2	23.6	25.3	16.9	21.8
Terraced house	21.8	14.8	17.5	16.6	23.6
Apartment/flat/bedsit	6.7	1.2	0.5	1.0	9.3
Other	0.5	0.2	0.1	-	-
Number of Rooms:					
1	1.6	-	-	-	-
2	6.7	0.7	0.3	0.8	-
3	13.9	7.1	4.5	4.6	6.8
4	18.4	11.8	11.0	19.0	6.8
5	26.5	25.0	24.1	20.9	24.7
6	19.0	24.0	23.4	23.6	27.5
7	8.7	16.4	15.8	16.2	13.1
8 and above	5.2	14.5	20.6	14.9	21.0
Non-response	0.1	0.5	0.3	-	-

Source: TILDA Wave 1 Data.

⁸ A room is defined as a space of a housing unit of at least 4 square metres (e.g., normal bedrooms, dining rooms, living rooms and habitable cellars and attics) with a height over 2 metres and accessible from inside the unit. Kitchens are not counted unless the cooking facilities are in a room used for other purposes. Thus, a kitchen-cum-dining room is one room in the count of rooms. The following do not count as rooms: bathrooms, toilets, corridors, utility rooms and lobbies. Verandas, lounges and conservatories only count as rooms if they are used all year round. A room used solely for business use is excluded, but is included if it is shared between private and business use. If the dwelling is shared by more than one household all rooms are counted for the owner/tenant except those exclusively used by the other households.

Summarising so far, our task has been to see if there is evidence of older people occupying ‘excess housing’ in the sense of there being a lot of older households living in houses that exceed their current needs. Focusing on the living alone group first, the data appear to show that many in this group are already living in smaller dwellings – 40.6 per cent live in houses with four rooms or fewer. However, almost 14 per cent live in houses with seven or more rooms so the evidence is mixed. For couples, over 30 per cent live in houses with seven or more rooms. While this is lower than the corresponding figure for people living with children and/or grandchildren, it is still sizeable.

In the remaining tables in this section, we go on to consider some additional issues which are not central to the current research questions, but are nonetheless of interest. In Table 2.5 we look at ownership type. One striking point from this table is the higher proportion of renters in the living alone category. While 15.9 per cent of living alone households are renters, only 4.7 per cent of couples are renting. As with the earlier tables, this points to distinctive characteristics among some of the living alone group.

TABLE 2.5 Ownership Type for Individuals aged 50 and above by Household Structure: 2009-2011

	Living alone	Living with spouse only	Living with children / grandchildren	Living with other relatives	Living with non-relatives
Ownership Type:					
Owned by the respondent or his/her spouse	78.3	94.3	87.5	67.6	58.2
Owned by another household member ¹	3.1	0.6	2.8	26.5	4.4
Rented	15.9	4.7	9.3	6.0	37.5
Occupied rent free ²	2.5	0.5	0.3	-	-
Don't know	0.0	0.1	-	-	-
Non-response	0.2	-	0.1	-	-

Source: TILDA Wave 1 Data.

Note: ¹ Not the respondent's spouse/partner.

² Not owned by a household member.

In Table 2.6, we draw on a question that was contained in the TILDA survey which sought to establish if people were in receipt of rental income from their primary residence. As can be seen from Table 2.6, this is rarely observed. The one exception is households in which people are living with non-relatives, where almost 5 per cent are in receipt of rental income.

TABLE 2.6 Rental Income for Individuals aged 50 and above by Household Structure: 2009-2011

Received Rent for Property in Last Year:	Living alone	Living with spouse only	Living with children / grandchildren	Living with other relatives	Living with non-relatives
Yes	0.5	0.5	0.2	-	4.6
No	77.8	93.7	87.3	67.6	53.5
Not Applicable	21.7	5.8	12.5	32.4	41.8

Source: TILDA Wave 1 Data.

3. Movers among the Over 50s

In this section, the particular richness of the TILDA data emerges because we are able to draw on the fact that participants were interviewed in 2009/2011 and then re-interviewed in 2012. This means that we are able to identify who moved between the two waves of the survey. We can then go on to look at the extent to which people moved and the characteristics of movers. We are particularly interested in seeing if there is evidence of trading down (to smaller dwellings) or trading out (from urban to rural). As indicated in Section 1, the analysis in this part of the paper is based on individuals (as opposed to households).

Before presenting the tables, we should mention that we can identify which people moved between private dwellings and who moved into nursing homes and other institutions.⁹ As only a tiny proportion moved into nursing homes (0.4 per cent), the sample size is small and we are unable to say much about this group which would be statistically reliable.

Turning now to Table 3.1, we can see that in total 3.1 per cent of TILDA respondents moved between Waves 1 and 2; 2.7 per cent between private dwellings and, as just mentioned, 0.4 per cent into institutional settings.¹⁰ As the period in question was one of great uncertainty in the Irish housing market, moving in general was at a lower rate than would generally be the case. This means that it is difficult to say if the rate of movement observed in the TILDA data is low due to the period effect or due to rates of movement always being low for older people in Ireland. Nevertheless, we can at least look within the data and look at the rates of movement across different age groups within TILDA. This is done in Table 3.2. Looking across ‘all movers’ (private and institutional) and private movers only, we see that rates of movement are highest for the youngest (50-59) and the oldest (80+).

⁹ Individuals who moved abroad, who died or who dropped out of the survey are not captured in the TILDA data.

¹⁰ Banks et al. (2010) report 11 per cent of older home owners in the US moving in a two-year period and almost 40 per cent of renters. Hence, the figure here of 3.1 per cent is tiny.

TABLE 3.1 Percentage of Individuals Who Moved Between 2009-2011 and 2012-2013

Moved	
No	96.9
Yes- Private Household (HH)	2.7
Yes - Nursing Home/Other Institution	0.4
Population:¹	1,015,705

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

Note: ¹ The population figure was derived by applying the CAPI weight that is in the TILDA data to the sample used in the analysis (see Note under Table 2.1). Those missing age information were excluded from the analysis.

TABLE 3.2 Movers by Age Category

	All Movers	Private Movers
Age:		
50-59	3.4	3.3
60-69	2.1	1.9
70-79	3.1	2.0
80 and Above	5.7	3.9

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

In Tables 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5, we provide information on the baseline characteristics of movers and non-movers with a view to getting a sense of what distinguishes movers. Some points emerge. First, and reflecting Table 3.2, movers are more likely to be older – while 7.5 per cent of non-movers are over 80, this rises to 14.1 per cent for movers. As can be seen from the difference in the proportions of all movers and private movers among the 80+s, some of the people in question are moving into institutional settings.

Separated/divorced people and widows are more likely to move, as are people who were born outside of Ireland. In Table 3.4, we can see that those living alone are more likely to move compared with others. In Table 3.5, we can see that people with no children are more likely to move whereas people with co-resident children are less likely to move.

TABLE 3.3 Demographic Profile of Non-Movers and Movers - I

	Non-Movers	All Movers	Private HH Movers ¹
Gender:			
Male	48.0	51.5	52.7
Female	52.0	48.5	47.3
Age:			
50-59	41.5	45.8	52.1
60-69	31.9	20.9	22.4
70-79	19.2	19.3	14.3
80 and Above	7.5	14.1	11.2
Marital Status:			
Married	69.6	48.0	50.9
Never Married	9.5	10.2	8.5
Separated/Divorced	6.4	18.7	21.4
Widowed	14.5	23.1	19.3
Irish Born:			
Yes	91.8	83.0	81.7
No	8.2	17.0	18.3
Health:			
Excellent	15.0	15.9	18.1
Very Good	28.9	22.2	20.5
Good	32.6	32.0	33.2
Fair	18.5	23.1	21.7
Poor	5.0	6.8	6.5
Population:	984,293	31,412	26,935

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

Note: ¹ Private HH Movers are a sub-set of the 'All Movers' category.

TABLE 3.4 Demographic Profile of Non-Movers and Movers - II

	Non-Movers	All Movers	Private HH Movers
Education:			
Primary or Less	35.7	41.4	36.0
Junior Certificate	25.7	23.7	25.7
Leaving Certificate	18.8	17.5	20.5
Certificate/Diploma	10.1	6.4	6.4
Degree or Higher	9.6	11.0	11.5
Employment Status:			
Employed	37.2	26.8	29.3
Retired	34.3	38.7	34.8
Other	28.5	34.6	35.9
Household Composition:			
Lives Alone	21.5	40.5	37.2
Lives with Spouse	38.7	27.0	28.1
Lives with Child	36.0	26.7	28.8
Other	3.8	5.8	5.9
Population:	984,293	31,412	26,935

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

TABLE 3.5 Family Information of Non-Movers and Movers

	Non-Movers	All Movers	Private HH Movers
Living Children:			
0	14.7	20.4	18.8
1	6.7	9.1	8.4
2	20.4	14.1	14.2
3	21.7	19.8	21.2
4	17.2	17.1	16.5
5	9.0	7.6	8.8
6 and Above	10.3	11.9	12.2
Proximity of Children			
No Children	14.7	20.4	18.8
Co-Resident	37.0	26.7	28.8
One Child lives in County	37.5	36.6	36.3
Child lives in other County	7.6	8.5	8.5
Child lives in other Country	3.2	7.8	7.6
Population:	984,293	31,412	26,935

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

When we econometrically examined the characteristics associated with mobility among older people (Table 3.6), the results confirmed many of the previous descriptives. Specifically, we found that those aged 50-59 and aged 80 and above were more likely to move accommodation between 2009/2011 and 2012 compared to those aged 60-69.

TABLE 3.6 Determinants of Housing Mobility Among Older People (Marginal Effects)

	All Movers	Private Movers
Gender (Ref: Females)		
Male	0.006	0.006
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Age (Ref: Aged 60-69)		
50-59	0.018***	0.016***
	(0.006)	(0.006)
70-79	0.006	-0.002
	(0.006)	(0.005)
80 and Above	0.023**	0.012
	(0.012)	(0.010)
Marital Status (Ref: Single)		
Married	0.005	0.008
	(0.007)	(0.007)
Separated/Divorced	0.067***	0.076***
	(0.024)	(0.027)
Widowed	0.032**	0.034**
	(0.017)	(0.018)
Educational Attainment (Ref: Primary or Less)		
Junior Certificate	-0.004	0.000
	(0.005)	(0.004)
Leaving Certificate	-0.005	0.000
	(0.005)	(0.005)
Cert/Diploma	-0.013**	-0.010**
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Degree	0.002	0.005
	(0.007)	(0.007)
Post-Graduate Degree	-0.005	-0.005
	(0.007)	(0.007)

Contd.

TABLE 3.6 *Contd.*

	All Movers	Private Movers
Economic Status (Ref: Employed)		
Retired	0.012** (0.006)	0.012** (0.006)
Unemployed	0.019** (0.012)	0.020** (0.011)
Sick/Disabled	0.022** (0.014)	0.026** (0.014)
Home Duties	0.005 (0.008)	0.003 (0.007)
Education/Training	0.123*** (0.059)	0.117*** (0.056)
Other	0.049**	0.041**
Health Status (Ref: Excellent)		
Very Good	-0.011* (0.005)	-0.012** (0.004)
Good	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.006 (0.005)
Fair	-0.004 (0.006)	-0.007 (0.005)
Poor	-0.005 (0.008)	-0.007 (0.006)
Birth Location (Ref: Non-Irish)		
Irish	-0.024*** (0.009)	-0.022*** (0.008)
Proximity of Children (Ref: No Children)		
Co-Resident	-0.018*** (0.006)	-0.016*** (0.006)
One Child Lives in County	-0.013** (0.006)	-0.010* (0.006)
Child Lives in Other County	-0.009 (0.006)	-0.008 (0.005)
Child Lives in Other Country	0.002 (0.010)	-0.001 (0.008)
Observations	6,981	6,953
Pseudo R2	0.070	0.076

Source: Authors' analysis.

Note: Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

When we focused specifically on private moves, only those aged 50-59 were more likely to make private accommodation moves. The results also indicated that older people who were either separated/divorced or widowed were more likely to move relative to single people.

Regarding the impact of a person's economic status on mobility, those who were retired, unemployed, sick/disabled or pursuing an education/training course were more likely to move accommodation between 2009/2011 and 2012 compared to those in employment. A person's self-perceived health status was found to have no impact on their decision to move accommodation.¹¹ People born in Ireland were found to be less likely to move accommodation between 2009/2011 and 2012, as were older people who were co-residing with their children or had at least one child living in the same county.

Our next task is to explore the issues of trading down and trading out and we begin this in Table 3.7a. At this point we are excluding people who moved into institutional settings and we are only looking at moves between private dwellings. This means that our sample is now the 2.7 per cent in Table 3.1; with this small sample size, we will need to see large differences across the groups in order for any differences to be statistically significant. As will be seen, we typically do not see such large differences.

To the extent that trading down is occurring, we should see the distribution of house types being skewed towards smaller dwellings in the post-move column. Looking at Table 3.7a, we do not generally see this. There are a larger proportion of the movers in apartments/flats and bedsits post-move, but the proportion in terraced houses falls and the proportion in semi-detached houses rises. Broadly, these patterns are present whether people are aged under 70 (Table 3.7b) or over 70 (Table 3.7c).¹²

¹¹ We also examined whether the deterioration in an older person's health status between 2009/2011 and 2012 had an impact on their likelihood of moving. The results from this analysis, which are available from the authors on request, indicated that this health measure also had no impact on an older person's decision to move accommodation.

¹² For sample size reasons, it is not feasible to examine more disaggregated age groups.

TABLE 3.7A House Type of All Private Movers Pre- and Post-Moving

	Pre-Move	Post-Move
House Type:		
Detached	32.6	31.5
Semi-Detached	17.0	20.8
Terraced House	20.8	16.0
Apartment/Flat/Bedsit	8.4	13.6
Unknown/Other	21.2	18.2
Population:	26,935	26,935

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

TABLE 3.7B House Type of Private Movers Aged Less than 70 Pre- and Post-Moving

	Pre-Move	Post-Move
House Type:		
Detached	29.3	27.1
Semi-Detached	18.1	22.8
Terraced House	17.6	13.3
Apartment/Flat/Bedsit	9.7	14.4
Unknown/Other	25.2	22.5
Population:	20,080	20,080

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

Note: Individuals defined as aged 70 and above on the basis of their age in Wave 1 of the TILDA data

TABLE 3.7C House Type of Private Movers Aged 70 and Above Pre- and Post-Moving

	Pre-Move	Post-Move
House Type:		
Detached	42.3	44.3
Semi-Detached	13.5	15.0
Terraced House	30.1	23.9
Apartment/Flat/Bedsit	4.6	11.2
Unknown/Other	9.5	5.6
	6,855	6,855

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

Note: Individuals defined as aged 70 and above on the basis of their age in Wave 1 of the TILDA data

The issue of size of house pre- and post-move is also considered in Table 3.8 where we look at the number of rooms in the dwellings. Focusing on dwellings with four rooms or less, 26.5 per cent of people live in such houses before their move and this rises to 34.2 per cent post-move. While this might provide some

evidence of trading down, the difference pre- and post-move is eliminated if we look at dwellings with five rooms or less, so any evidence of trading down is weak.

TABLE 3.8 Number of Rooms in House of Private Movers Pre- and Post-Moving

Number of Rooms:	Pre-Move	Post-Move
1	1.8	-
2	3.4	7.9
3	9.2	13.0
4	12.1	13.3
5	24.2	16.4
6	13.4	16.2
7	8.5	9.6
8	4.2	2.3
9	1.9	1.6
10	0.6	0.7
11	0.7	
12	-	0.5
Unknown	19.9	18.8
	26,935	26,935

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

In Table 3.9, we consider the trading out question by looking at the distribution of dwelling by urban and rural locations pre- and post-move. As can be seen, there is very little difference in the location distributions and certainly no evidence of people moving out of Dublin or other urban areas into rural areas.

TABLE 3.9 Geographic Location of Private Movers Pre- and Post-Moving

	Pre-Move	Post-Move
Location:		
Dublin city or county	23.9	26.5
Another town or city	36.0	37.6
A rural area	39.5	35.9
Unknown	0.6	-
	26,935	26,935

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

Before leaving this exploration of movers, we can look at a number of further questions. In Table 3.10 we look at household composition pre- and post-move to see if there is any evidence of people living alone moving in with children or other

relatives. As can be seen, there is very little change in the distribution of household composition and so little evidence of the living alone moving in with others. This is also seen in Table 3.11 where we focus on movers who were living alone in 2009/2011. Almost 90 per cent were still living alone post-move.

TABLE 3.10 Household Composition of Private Movers Pre- and Post-Moving

	Pre-Move	Post-Move
Household Composition:		
Living alone	37.2	35.7
Living with spouse only	28.1	27.6
Child/step/adopted/grandchildren	28.8	30.8
Living with other relative	3.2	3.2
Living with unrelated people	2.7	2.7
	26,935	26,935

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

TABLE 3.11 Household Composition of People Living Alone in 2010 After Moving (Private Movers Only)

	Post-Move
Household Composition:	
Living alone	88.2
Living with spouse only	9.4
Child/step/adopted/grandchildren	2.4
	10,014

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

Another issue that we will consider relates to financial transfers. One theme that emerged from early analyses of the TILDA data was the significant numbers and amounts of financial transfers which older people made to their children – both large one-off gifts and ongoing smaller gifts. It is possible that the sale of a house leads to the release of equity whereby movers are better positioned to make gifts and hence more likely to do so. This could include situations where a move would happen regardless of any gift, but where a gift results from the move or a situation in which the move is motivated in the first place by the desire to make a transfer. In Table 3.12, it can be seen that no evidence emerges for gift-giving related to moves.

TABLE 3.12 Financial Transfer Information for Non-Movers and Movers

	Non-Movers	All Movers	Private HH Movers
1. Gave Property, Large sum of Money or Large Gift to Child			
Yes	24.1	15.6	16.8
No	75.9	84.4	83.2
Total:	100	100	100
Population:	594,855	19,249	16,907
2. Gave other Financial Transfer to Child			
Yes	49.2	47.0	51.4
No	50.8	53.0	48.6
Total:	100	100	100
Population:	594,718	19,483	17,140

Source: TILDA Waves 1 and 2 Data.

Notes: This question is asked only of family, and family/financial respondents.

The two population totals differ due to missing information for some individuals for each of the financial transfer type questions.

4. Conclusion

The goals of this paper were twofold. First, we wanted to assess whether there was evidence of significant under-utilisation of housing among Ireland's older people in the sense of older people living alone in large houses. Second, we wanted to see if there was evidence of trading down or trading out among Ireland's older people.

One-third of the over 50s live alone and almost two-thirds of the over 80s. Many of these people live in smaller dwellings and so the evidence on under-utilisation is weak if we focus on those living alone. Specifically, 40.6 per cent of older people living alone live in houses with four rooms or less: the corresponding figure for people living with children/grandchildren is 15.8 per cent. However, when we broaden the analysis to include couples, the evidence on under-utilisation strengthens somewhat. For example, just over 30 per cent of older couples live in houses with seven rooms or more. This is smaller than the corresponding proportion of families in the sample who live in houses with seven or more rooms (36.4 per cent), but still represents a sizeable number.

One implication of the results is that arguments around the potential to generate greater movement in the housing market through incentivising older people to move might have less impact than is generally understood, based on the findings

with respect to those living alone. However, the results for couples suggest that there is scope for impact. The low rate of trading down and trading out also suggest that there might be scope for freeing up supply of larger houses and in urban areas. Given the period over which we observed moves (2009/2011 to 2012), it is likely that the rate of movement which we observed was lower than that which would apply in more normal economic circumstances. For this reason, there will be value in returning to this type of analysis as future waves of TILDA come on stream.

As a final point, it should be noted that any economic benefit which might accrue from the mobility of older people should be set against possible costs in terms of social connectedness and health. A growing literature in health sciences is creating an increased awareness of the importance of social connectedness in later life and the dangers of social isolation (for example, Cornwell and Waite, 2009). If mobility of older people meant movement out of familiar communities, this could be damaging and any policies in this area should be cognisant of this issue.

Appendix 1

TABLE A.1: Household Type of Individuals Aged 50 and Above Living in Dublin by Household Structure

	Overall	Living Alone	Living with Spouse	Living with children/ grandchildren	Living with others ¹
Type of Residence:					
Detached House	13.7	10.1	16.8	13.4	20.1
Semi-Detached House	46.0	39.5	47.9	50.5	34.5
Terraced House	33.8	34.5	31.7	34.4	41.5
Apartment/Flat/Bedsit	6.5	15.9	3.4	1.8	3.9
Other	0.0	-	0.1	-	-

Source: TILDA Wave 1 Data.
 Note: ¹ Relative or non-relative.

TABLE A.2: Household Type of Individuals Aged 50 and Above Living in Urban Location by Household Structure

	Overall	Living Alone	Living with Spouse	Living with children/ grandchildren	Living with others ¹
Type of Residence:					
Detached House	35.1	25.8	42.7	37.4	38.7
Semi-Detached House	33.4	30.1	34.7	36.1	28.1
Terraced House	27.9	35.6	21.0	26.1	27.5
Apartment/Flat/Bedsit	3.4	7.8	1.5	0.4	5.8
Other	0.3	0.8	-	-	-

Source: TILDA Wave 1 Data.
 Note: ¹ Relative or non-relative.

TABLE A.3: Household Type of Individuals Aged 50 and Above Living in Rural Location by Household Structure

	Overall	Living Alone	Living with Spouse	Living with children/ grandchildren	Living with others ¹
Type of Residence:					
Detached House	87.1	80.9	89.6	89.8	90.3
Semi-Detached House	7.6	10.8	6.5	6.1	6.2
Terraced House	4.5	6.2	3.6	3.9	3.6
Apartment/Flat/Bedsit	0.5	1.6	0.4	0.2	-
Other	0.4	0.6	-	-	-

Source: TILDA Wave 1 Data.
 Note: ¹ Relative or non-relative.

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