Albert Sabater, Elspeth Graham and Nissa Finney
Department of Geography and Sustainable Development
University of St Andrews
E: albert.sabater@st-andrews.ac.uk

MAIN FINDINGS

- The level of residential segregation between older and younger age groups in England and Wales has increased since 2001.
- The observed increase in geographical separation between older and younger age groups in the smallest census areas means that local neighbourhoods are becoming less mixed in terms of age composition.

BACKGROUND

- The relationship between age (or social generations) and residential geographies remains an under-researched field of empirical enquiry, despite growing concerns that demographic and institutional changes have led to the social and spatial separation of extra-familial generations (Hagestedt and Uhlenberg, 2006).
- Recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of creating intergenerational spaces where people of different ages can meet and interact (Vanderbeck and Worth, 2015).
- Social cohesion may be threatened if different age groups in a population live separate lives in different neighbourhoods (Andrews and Phillips, 2005).
- Limited contact and personal knowledge across age groups risks creating a dichotomy between “us” and “them”, which is often associated with increased competition for limited public resources to support the interests, agendas, services, and institutions that best meet a group’s age-specific needs (Binstock, 2010).
- Arguments favouring age segregation on the grounds of efficient service provision may make economic sense but they are seriously challenged by potentially adverse consequences for social cohesion (Hagestedt and Uhlenberg, 2006).

AIM

- To investigate whether, and to what degree, residential age segregation has changed in Britain since the beginning of the millennium.

DATA AND METHODS

- Small area population data from the 2001 and 2011 Census rounds in England and Wales are used in conjunction with two detailed geographical classifications (the Output Area Urban/Rural classification of the Office for National Statistics, and the 13-group classification of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).
- The Index of Dissimilarity (ID) is employed to document patterns of residential segregation by age across the smallest areas (Output Areas) for which census statistics are released. There are at least 100 persons and 40 households in each Output Area in England and Wales.
- To address our main research question – how residentially segregated are the old versus the young? – patterns of residence (segregation as measured by ID) are examined for older groups (aged 50+ and 65+) compared to younger groups (aged 16-40 and 25-40).

RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION BY AGE ACROSS OUTPUT AREAS IN ENGLAND AND WALES 2001-2011

- While the term ‘segregation’ in Britain and elsewhere is almost entirely associated in academic and policy circles with racial and ethnic segregation rather than segregation by age, it is clear that the emergence of socio-age segregation deserves more attention (Graham and Sabater, 2015).
- Ageing is a feature of many contemporary societies, and our findings suggest that intergenerational social distance may increase in different locales or communities as the age structure of the population changes.
- The age differentiation of space is often taken for granted by policymakers, who may overlook the negative societal implications of changing age composition in neighbourhoods and, particularly, of increases in socio-age segregation.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Increasing residential segregation over time is mostly due to greater unevenness between groups in post-retirement ages (60-84 years) and groups in the younger age range (25-40 years).
- Geographical separation between older and younger groups is growing predominantly in urban settings, with the largest increases in residential segregation in principal cities, as well as in small and large cities.
- Although the policy focus on ‘ageing in place’ is seen as a benign adaptation to demographic change that is expected to gradually increase age segregation, residential immobility among young adults has similar consequences for age segregation, albeit the latter is seen as a dysfunctional adaptation to housing market failures.
- An increase in residential immobility can have an immediate negative effect on the pace and places of age mixing, including the commitment to care for the next generation (Binstock, 2010).
- The World Health Organisation initiative on ‘global age-friendly cities’ demonstrates the relevance of the spatialities of ageing to international urban policy making (WHO, 2007).

RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION OF OLDER GROUPS (50+ and 65+) VS. YOUNGER GROUPS (16-40) ACROSS OUTPUT AREAS FOR EACH LOCAL AUTHORITY DISTRICT IN ENGLAND AND WALES 2001-2011

- The Spatialities of Ageing in Britain: Is Residential Age Segregation Increasing?

REFERENCE
