

# Urbanization, ageing and migration: some evidence from African settlements in Cape Town

A. Sagner\*

Institute of Ethnology and African Studies, Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich, Germany

## Abstract

*This paper is based on secondary analysis of data obtained from the 1995 Western Cape Community Housing Trust study on the demographic and socio-economic dynamics of the African population in the Metropolitan Cape Town area (WCCHT, 1995). The sample consisted of 807 households, of which 113 sheltered at least one person aged 60 years and over (elderly households). Statistical information on household composition, housing and infrastructure, standard of living items, household economy, migration and mobility, community integration and perceived quality of life are drawn together for elderly and young households. A comparison of their profiles shows that elderly households in the metropolitan area tend to be larger, more prone to the exigencies of unemployment, and more likely to be sheltered in formal houses and the established townships of Langa, Guguletu and Nyanga than young households. This geographical distribution coincides with better housing infrastructure and more consumer durables. Nevertheless, in terms of income elderly households tend to be significantly poorer than their younger counterparts. The WCCHT data indicate that social pensioners in urban areas – as with their rural counterparts – act as magnets for economically weaker persons and that pensions are thus important redistributive mechanisms which enable the survival of structurally vulnerable families in urban settings. Contrary to common belief, older citizens have participated in the recent mobility upsurge, albeit on a somewhat smaller scale. This holds good for intra-urban as well as for rural-urban/urban-rural movements. It appears that elderly urban households are often part of an integrated urban/rural nexus. Considering the policy relevance of this finding and the paucity of knowledge about later-life migration, further quantitative and qualitative studies are called for.*

In Africa, as in other parts of the so-called Third World, both the absolute number and the relative number of elderly people living in urban areas are increasing rapidly (US Bureau of the Census, 1993: 40-41). South Africa, the most industrialized state in sub-Saharan Africa, is no exception to this trend (Gist, 1994: 265). Not surprisingly, the problems of the urban elderly have attracted a great deal of research in South Africa in recent years (e.g. Barnes & Yach, 1991; Ferreira & Rip, 1991; Ferreira, Møller, Prinsloo & Gillis, 1992; Glanz, 1991; Hildebrandt, 1993; Møller, 1993; O'Brien & Gillis, 1994;

Parry, 1995). However, there is still a general lack of hard statistical evidence relating to the living circumstances of elderly households (and older people) and to their socio-economic and geographical dynamics in specific urban settings. This applies particularly in the case of research in the Cape Peninsula, one of the fastest growing urban areas in South Africa. Such information is particularly needed to address lags in the provision of services and to inform broader intervention strategies on behalf of the elderly.

Although informed by another objective, the 1995 Western Cape Community Housing Trust (WCCHT) study on household dynamics and mobility of Africans in Cape Town is a useful source for gerontological research, providing extensive data with which to establish profiles of elderly African households in Metropolitan Cape Town. So far, these data have only been partly analysed (WCCHT, 1995). But in accordance with the policy vision of the Trust, the data are freely available to interested parties for further analyses. The WCCHT study involved two interrelated research objectives. First, it was designed to provide much needed statistical information about the demographic and socio-economic dynamics of the African population in the metropolitan area. Second, it aimed to provide policy makers, community organizations and other interested parties involved in the provision of social housing with data to formulate and/or revise their housing and urban development policy strategies. A major part of this multidimensional study was devoted to the migration experience of the households' members, especially senior males and females. It thus covered an area which has been neglected in gerontological research. Therefore, it was intended that a secondary analysis of the WCCHT data would not only provide hard statistical information on the living circumstances of elderly households but would also provide some clues to the nature of the urban-rural linkages in elderly households as well as to the past and recent migration patterns of older members.

## Method

The WCCHT housing study used a cluster sample design covering Metropolitan Cape Town to enumerate 800 African households in formal, informal, site-and-service African settlements.<sup>1</sup> Following an often used definition in social survey research (e.g. SALDRU, 1994a: 10-11), the household was defined as being composed of people who lived in the same dwelling for at least 15 days of the past 12 months and who

\* Address correspondence to

Dr Andreas Sagner, 703 Lancaster, Marlborough Park, Bath Road, Claremont 7700, South Africa. E-mail: asagner@compuserve.com

shared food from a common source (cooked and ate together) and contributed to or benefitted from a common resource pool (WCCHT, 1995: 5). Thus, individuals temporarily away because of work, study or other reasons (e.g. visits) were included, as were persons who had been usual household members within the 12 months preceding the survey but who were no longer living in the household. The realised sample consisted of 807 households with a total of 3 223 individuals, including 14 visitors. Weighted, the sample represented 209 158 households and 892 945 persons (WCCHT, 1995: 10). Although the unit of analysis was the household, information on individual members was also collected. Besides basic statistical information on each member's sex, age, etc., every person was asked to provide information about his/her current and recent residential mobility. Finally, each member aged ten years and above was asked about his/her income-earning activities.

**Household profiles**

As shown in Table 1, elderly households accounted for 14% of the unweighted households, 113 out of 807, and for 17% of the weighted households, 134 out of 807, respectively (see section A). The table reports the main household characteristics of elderly and young households (residual category) in respect of composition, housing and infrastructure, standard of living items, household economy, migration and mobility, community integration and perceived quality of life. To make it comparable with relevant results of the 1993 Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development (SALDRU, 1994a), the analytical framework developed by Møller and Devey (1995) has been broadly followed.

**Table 1**  
Profile of elderly and young households

	Household		
	Elderly	Young	Total
<b>A. Sample characteristics</b>			
- Unweighted n	113	694	807
- Unweighted sample proportion (%)	14	86	100
- Weighted n	134	673	807
- Weighted sample proportion (%)	17	83	100
- Households in sample area	34.833	174.325	209.158
<b>B. Geographic distribution (%)</b>			
- Langa/Guguletu/Nyanga	77	53	57
- Khayelitsha	22	40	37
- Geographically peripheral areas	1	7	6
<b>C. Household composition</b>			
Household size (mean)	5.9	3.9	4.3
Co-resident generations (%)			
- One	7	22	20
- Two	44	68	64
- Three	48	10	16
- Four	1	0	>1
Households with (%):			
- Resident males	92	87	88
- Resident females	98	92	93
- Persons under 20 years	70	76	75
- Persons over 60 years	100	0	17
- Old-age pensioners	68	0	11
- Resident males (mean)	2.4	1.7	1.9
- Resident females (mean)	3.5	2.2	2.4
- Persons under 20 years (mean)	2.2	1.7	1.8
- Persons over 60 years (mean)	1.2	0	0.2
Household head characteristics (%)			
- Male	53	60	59
- Female	47	40	41
- Age in years (median)	67	39	41
- Standard 2 and lower (%)	32	12	15
- Standard 10 and higher (%)	4	11	10

	Household		
	Elderly	Young	Total
<b>D. Housing and infrastructure</b>			
Home owner (%)	48	69	66
Rooms occupied by household (mean)	4.0	3.0	3.2
Persons per room (mean)	1.6	1.6	1.6
Persons per room (median)	1.5	1.3	1.3
House type (%)			
- Formal house	78	44	49
- Freestanding shack	18	44	40
- Hostel	5	8	7
- Backyard shack	0	4	4
Water source (%)			
- Tap in house	71	49	53
- Tap at communal site	10	22	20
- Yard tap (shared)	10	13	13
- Yard tap (sole use)	9	13	12
- Water carrier	>1	3	3
Toilet (%)			
- Flush toilet	93	76	79
- Communal toilet	2	10	8
- Bucket toilet	3	9	8
- Pit latrine (without ventilation)	2	3	3
- Bush	>1	3	3
- Chemical toilet	0	>1	>1
Connected to electricity (%)	81	58	62
Electricity main energy source for ... (%)			
- Cooking	69	46	50
- Lighting	85	59	64
- Heating water	76	50	54
- Heating home	60	38	42
Paraffin main energy source for ... (%)			
- Cooking	29	49	45
- Lighting	13	35	31
- Heating water	22	46	42
- Heating home	33	54	50
<b>E. Standard of living items</b>			
Households with (%):			
- Car	13	9	9
- Bicycle	3	3	3
- Radio	66	69	69
- Stereo	19	13	14
- Television set	82	58	62
- Electric stove	55	35	38
- Gas stove	9	16	15
- Primus stove	22	23	23
- Refrigerator	55	39	42
- Geyser	10	12	11
- Electric kettle	54	37	40
- Telephone	27	13	16
<b>F. Household economy</b>			
Household with (%)			
Persons in prime working age (20-59 years)			
- Males	88	100	98
- Females	57	74	71
- Females	81	89	88
Income-earning persons in prime working age			
- Males	59	91	85
- Females	31	58	54
- Females	43	57	55
Unemployed rate <sup>a</sup> (persons in prime working age/all households taken together (subsample level)) (%)			
- Males	65	43	47
- Females	60	33	37
- Females	67	50	53
Households contributing to other households (%)			
Households contributing to other households (%)	25	49	45
Households receiving money/goods from other households (%)			
Households receiving money/goods from other households (%)	16	9	10
Household with (means):			
Persons in prime working age			
- Males	2.5	2.2	2.3
- Females	0.9	1.0	0.9
- Females	1.6	1.3	1.3
Income-earning persons in prime working age			
- Males	0.9	1.3	1.2
- Females	0.4	0.6	0.6
- Females	0.5	0.6	0.6

	Household		
	Elderly	Young	Total
Monthly income <sup>b</sup> (mean Rand (median Rand))			
- Total income	1513 ( 800)	1504 (1100)	1506 (1100)
- Total per capita income	320 ( 177)	494 ( 300)	465 ( 287)
- Income-earning activities <sup>c</sup>	1170 ( 700)	1449 (1100)	1402 (1100)
- Other income <sup>d</sup>	342 ( 390)	56 ( 0)	103 ( 0)
- Remittances flowing in (receivers only)	184 ( 200)	247 ( 200)	233 ( 200)
Income level <sup>e</sup> (%)			
- Above household subsistence level	36	58	55
- Below household subsistence level	64	42	45
Modified dependency ration <sup>f</sup> (mean)			
- Household level (households with income-earning persons only)	3.6	2.1	2.3
- Subsample level	4.7	2.0	2.4
<b>G. Property elsewhere (%)</b>			
- Land	8	6	7
- Rural homestead	5	5	5
- Livestock	>1	2	2
- Urban house	0	2	1
<b>H. Life-time migration and mobility (senior males and females only)<sup>g</sup></b>			
Total number of prior residences (%)			
- One/two	14	27	25
- Three	30	30	30
- Four	20	21	21
- Five or more	36	21	24
Total number of prior Metropolitan Cape Town residences (%)			
- None	9	11	11
- One	30	33	33
- Two	22	29	28
- Three	19	15	15
- Four or more	20	12	13
Residence prior to arrival in Metropolitan Cape Town (%)			
- Born in Cape Town	12	22	20
- Eastern Cape	66	60	61
- Gauteng	6	4	5
- Western Cape	8	6	7
- Other	8	7	7
Arrival in Cape Town (in-migrants only) (median year)			
- Senior males	1959	1985	1984
- Senior females	1961	1986	1985
Household heads joining today's household			
- Age (median)	49	32	34
- Year (median)	1977	1990	1990
Number of lifetime residences (mean)			
- All prior residences	3.8	3.3	3.4
- Prior metropolitan residences	2.1	1.8	1.9
<b>I. Community integration</b>			
Membership of organizations (%)			
- Burial society	85	70	72
- Church	67	49	52
- Civic/community	60	36	40
- Political	14	18	17
- Educational/school	9	18	17
- Masigodusane	5	6	6
- Income-earning club	5	6	6
- Social/cultural	4	6	5
- Women	4	5	5
- Trade union	6	3	4
- Sports club	2	5	4
- Youth club	1	3	3
- Old age	1	3	3
- Health	7	1	2
- Health	2	2	2
Membership of organizations (mean)			
- Households with members only	2.2	2.2	2.2
- All households	1.9	1.6	1.6
Most important source of help in regard to: (%) <sup>h</sup>			
Finding current place/dwelling			
- Myself/this household only	58	45	48
- Relatives	15	29	27

	Household		
	Elderly	Young	Total
- Friends/neighbours	7	16	14
- Co-workers/employer	4	5	5
- Formal institution	16	5	7
Feeling settled			
- Myself/this household only	42	34	35
- Relatives	25	30	29
- Friends or neighbours	29	35	34
- Co-workers or employers	3	2	2
- Formal institution	2	1	1
Helping with social problems			
- This household only	38	24	26
- Relatives	40	47	46
- Friends or neighbours	21	27	26
- Co-workers or employers	2	3	3
- Formal institution	1	2	2
Helping with money problem			
- This household only	32	23	24
- Relatives	44	41	42
- Friends or neighbours	15	24	22
- Co-workers or employers	8	11	11
- Formal institution	6	5	6
Place considered home			
- Cape Town	79	62	65
- Eastern Cape	18	34	31
- Other place	3	4	4
<b>J. Perceived quality of life</b>			
Household satisfaction with present dwelling (%)			
- (Very) dissatisfied	49	51	51
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18	16	16
- (Very) satisfied	33	33	33
Household satisfaction with community (%)			
- (Very) dissatisfied	16	20	19
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17	15	15
- (Very) satisfied	68	65	65
Recommended government intervention to improve living conditions <sup>i</sup> (%)			
- Housing	72	74	73
- Income or jobs	56	66	64
- Education and training	37	40	40
- Facilities	13	22	20
- Amenities	12	16	15
- Health centres	7	7	7

a Defined as persons who pursued no income-earning activity during the past 12 months (see c below).

b Household income was calculated on the basis of two variables computed by the authors of the WCCHT study and partly based on the individual income of the household's members. If the answers to the precoded household income question had been used instead, the monthly income would have been lower. This appears to indicate that the above figures should be considered as maximum values.

c The item read: "Does X do anything now, or has he/she done something during the past 12 months (year), for pay, profit or family gain? This may involve something done at home or in the neighbourhood, as well as further away, and may involve anything done for a very short period of time, as well as things done over a long period of time or regularly."

d The item read: "In addition to the income-earning activities already described, are there any other ways that the household obtains income?" This included sources such as old-age pension, private pension, civil-servant pension, government disability pension, government poor relief, workmen's compensation, interest/dividend, unemployment insurance fund, NGO programme, rent from property or house, lodgers.

e The "Household Subsistence Level" (HSL) refers to subsistence expenditures only and is based on the cost of food, clothing and other basic household expenditures (fuel, light, washing, etc.) for each individual, as well as fixed amounts for rent and transport (Potgieter, 1995). The HSL is to be distinguished from the so-called Primary Household Subsistence Level (PHSL) which does not include expenditures for transport and rent. In accordance with the WCCHT study (WCCHT, 1995: 43) the above data have been calculated using the low-middle income stan-

dards. In this analysis the relevant March 1995 figures have been used (see Potgieter, 1995: 52, Table 27).

- f Residents under 15 years and over 64 years as well as all economically non-active persons (15-64 years) divided by the number of residents aged 15-64 years who pursued an income-earning activity.
- g "Senior" refers to the household head and, if appropriate, his or her partner; it does not imply that either was the eldest member of their gender in the household (WCCHT, 1995: 6).
- h The items read: "(i) to find this place/dwelling, if anyone; (ii) to feel settled when you first began living here, if anyone; (iii) if you need help with a major personal or social problem, from whom do you most ask help, if anyone; (iv) if you have a money problem, from whom do you ask help, if anyone?" In each case two responses could be given. Due to multiple responses columns add up to over 100%.
- i The item read: "What in your opinion could government do to most help this household improve its living conditions? In other words, what do you need most?" Three responses were expected. Some respondents pleaded for the same government intervention twice or even three times; such reiterations have been excluded in the above table. Due to multiple responses columns add up to over 100%.

### *Geographical location and household composition*

**Profile of elderly African households.** Section B in Table 1 shows that elderly households, 77%, were mainly located in the older African townships of Langa, Guguletu and Nyanga. In contrast, Khayelitsha, established in 1984 and now the largest African settlement in the Western Cape Province, was home to only 22% of elderly households (see section B). Almost half were three- and four-generational households (49%) and a further 44% were two-generational households (see section C). In separate analyses (the data are not included in the table), it was found that 11% were so-called skip-generation households, consisting of grandparents and grandchildren only. The mean (average) household size was 5.9 persons. Over 59% (3.5 out of 5.9 persons) of all household members were female. Only 68% of elderly households had an old-age pensioner in the home.<sup>2</sup> Fifty-three per cent of the households were headed by a male. Half of the household heads were 67 years and older.

**Comparison of elderly and young households.** Almost twice as many young households were located in Khayelitsha. Young households were significantly smaller in size than elderly households – on average, by two persons. These households were predominantly two-generational. Indeed, a considerable portion were one-generation households. Partly reflecting the feminization of old age, there were more females in elderly households than in young households. In contrast, young households showed a higher proportion of persons aged under 20. The characteristics of household heads varied both by sex and by educational attainment, as heads in young households tended to be male and to be better educated.

### *Housing and infrastructure*

**Profile of elderly African households.** More than three-quarters of elderly households lived in formal houses (see section D). The relatively small number of households who lived in shacks was related to the preponderance of elderly households in the established African settlements. Approximately half of the households regarded themselves as owning the dwelling. The mean number of rooms occupied in a dwelling was 4, while the overall mean number of persons per room was 1.6 with a median of 1.5. Regarding infrastructure four-fifths of the households were connected to electricity which constituted the main energy source for lighting, heating and cooking. The vast majority had a flush toilet (93%) and an indoor tap (71%). Finally, section E gives some details

about household conveniences. Nearly all households had at least one piece of electronic entertainment equipment (radio, television, stereo) and over half owned a refrigerator. Approximately a quarter had a telephone.

**Comparison of elderly and young households.** A significantly higher proportion of young households lived in shacks, either freestanding or in a backyard. As there was a noteworthy drop in access to electricity beyond formal houses, paraffin was the most important energy source for cooking and heating in young households. Besides this, the latter households had to rely disproportionately on water sources other than indoor taps and quite often on sanitation systems other than flush toilets. However, while dwellings of young households tended to be smaller, crowding appeared to be greater in elderly households, reflecting the larger size of these households. Finally, elderly households were on average better equipped with a wide range of major household consumer assets, including motor vehicles and electric kitchen appliances (see section E).

### *Household economy*

**Profile of elderly African households.** While nearly all households (88%) had at least one adult in prime working age (a person aged 20-59 years), only 59% contained at least one adult between 20 and 59 years who actually pursued some type of income-earning activity (see section F). Viewed from another perspective and taking *all* elderly households together, 65% of all the adult working-age population were not economically active – 60% of the males and 67% of the females. Considering only those households with at least one income-earning person, the modified dependency ratio (see Table 1 (f)) was 3.6 dependents on one economically-active person. Turning to the subsample level (all households taken together), 4.7 dependent persons had to be sustained by every active person. The proportion of those households who contributed to others (25%) exceeded the proportion who received money and/or goods from other households (16%). Amongst the latter, the mean monthly remittance amount was R184. The overall mean household income amounted to R1 513 and the mean per capita income, R320. Nevertheless, half of all elderly households had an income of less than R800 a month. Noteworthy is the fact that almost a quarter of the total mean income (R342 out of R1 513) was derived from other sources, i.e. from non-income generating activities, mainly the old-age pension. Only 36% of elderly households were living above the Household Subsistence Level (HSL).

**Comparison of elderly and young households.** Young households had a significantly higher proportion of income-earning persons in prime working age and thus, a markedly smaller unemployment rate (in the above sense). They were twice as likely to contribute to other households. Fewer young households than elderly households received remittances, but when they did, the amount of the remittances tended to be higher. While the overall mean monthly household income in young and elderly households was almost identical, the median income of young households was significantly higher. Reflecting the larger size of households with persons aged 60 and above, the mean per capita income in young households exceeded theirs by 50%. Consequently, a smaller proportion reported that they lived below the household subsistence level. Income in young households was almost totally derived from various income-earning activities, as alternative sources generated a negligible sum at most.

pensions graphically. The figure depicts both the percentage of economically-active persons and the mean monthly income of the members of pensioners' households, according to their age.<sup>4</sup> It is evident that these households would not be viable without the pension money.

In short, even in urban settings such as in Metropolitan Cape Town, old-age pensions are important redistributive mechanisms which enable the survival of large extended families living in poverty and haunted by structural unemployment (cf. Ardington & Lund, 1995; Lund, 1993; McKendrick & Shingwenyana, 1995). While the absorption of (unemployed) kin depresses per capita household income and undermines the elderly's exclusive use of their pensions, pension sharing is so deeply rooted in the moral economy of kinship and in the culture-specific notion of old age itself that is not prone to change, at least not in the short term.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Urban-rural ties and life-time migration of older people*

Following the 1986 lifting of the infamous influx control legislation and the 1988 rescinding of the Group Areas Act, tens of thousands of Africans have moved from rural areas to Cape Town which is traditionally regarded by Xhosa-speaking people of the Eastern Cape as part of their "natural" hinterland. According to WCCHT data, older people have participated in this recent rural-urban migration, albeit on a relatively small scale. In fact, considering the in-migrations between 1989 and 1994, only about 2% of the migrants from the Eastern Cape appear to have been older than 60 years at the time of their leaving their place of origin. Bearing in mind their much higher proportion in their specific rural regions of origin – e.g. in 1991, 8% of Transkei's population was 60 years or older (SALDRU, 1994b: 50) – this finding tends to indicate that the rural elderly might have been unfavourably affected by the recent urbanization surge (e.g. left behind with their grandchildren). On the other hand from an urban angle their participation rate of 2% might appear to be negligible. But, in view of the large scale of the movements, this rate amounts absolutely to several thousand older in-migrants. As these people generally do not intend to move back to a rural area, this old-age migration pattern has serious implications for service provision. Though there is still little known about the dynamics of this later-life relocation, especially about the specific contribution of the elderly persons' social networks, from the WCCHT data – and from qualitative research – it appears that regional differences in the availability and quality of health services, a lack of access to the pension system and the poor quality of the physical infrastructure in rural areas all play a dominant role in the decisions for out-migration.

Despite this large-scale rural-urban migration, recent movement patterns have been dominated by intra-urban mobility. This is particularly true for older citizens. The WCCHT data indicate that over 20% of all the elderly have moved within the greater Cape Town area in recent years (i.e. between 1989 and 1994). The major determinants appear to have been access to safe and better housing, besides familial and health reasons.

Elderly Africans in Cape Town have intense interaction with their areas of origin, through a variety of means, especially through "visits" back and forth. According to the data, they do not keep the door open should it be necessary to return to the village at a later date. The vast majority of older African citizens have not only spent the bulk of their working life in the Cape Peninsula, they also regard Cape Town as their permanent and final "home". And, as shown above, only a small proportion of elderly people claim possessions in the rural areas. Thus, despite the problems which they face in town,

cases of return migration in old age appear to be rare; when asked, only 16% of the respondents aged 60 years and over favoured a place in the Eastern Cape as their retirement residence.<sup>7</sup>

Qualitative research shows the complexity of the underlying causes of these urban-rural visits which appear to be motivated, at least partly, by the search for security, both in a material sense as well as a future-oriented strategy to secure care by kinfolk in case of deteriorating health. This preliminary finding is supportive of recent research done by Spiegel and others (e.g. Spiegel, Watson & Wilkinson, 1996) that points to the integrated nature of the urban/rural nexus in South Africa as well as to the geographically "stretched" and fluid character of African households, and that interprets the mobility of their members as poverty-related survival strategies. Noteworthy is the fact that the participation rate of elderly (households) people in this intermittent urban-rural migration appears to be significantly higher than that of their younger counterparts.<sup>8</sup> This finding raises many questions concerning the sociodynamics of elderly households and the linkages between elderly urban households and rural homesteads. Are the urban elderly (households) more attached to rural areas because their poverty puts resource-sharing at a particular high premium? Or, on the contrary, does the pension money provide them with the means to migrate more often to and fro? Does this difference between young and elderly people/households reflect different generational outlooks on the moral quality of kinship? It is obvious that further research is needed before we can hope to answer these and similar questions.

*Data on elderly patterns*

#### **Conclusion**

The paper has highlighted some of the structural differences between older and younger African urban households using data from the 1995 Western Cape Community Housing Trust survey of the demographic and socio-economic dynamics of the African population in Metropolitan Cape Town. The analysis showed that the often reported poverty of elderly African households (e.g. Møller & Devey, 1995) is not simply the consequence of their predominantly rural character. In fact, compared to their younger urban counterparts, elderly households in Metropolitan Cape Town are significantly economically disadvantaged. The WCCHT data suggest that this is due (at least partly) to the attraction of old-age pensions to poverty-stricken kinfolk, especially children and unemployed adults. Thus, as long as the high levels of unemployment have not abated and other forms of social security have not been developed, urban old-age pensions appear to be imperative for the survival of quite a large number of urban poor. Contrary to modernization theory credo, elderly people have participated in the recent mobility upsurge, albeit on a significantly smaller scale than younger age cohorts. Nevertheless, rural-urban in-migration in later life has serious consequences for service providers, all the more considering that return migration in old age appears to be rare nowadays. Both later-life relocation and the intense participation of elderly households/older people in short-term urban-rural mobility calls for future research. Particularly, the sociodynamics of elderly households and the linkages between elderly urban households and rural homesteads should be attended to. Generally, the analysis of the interdependence between urban and rural households should be given priority in future (gerontological) research. Besides, it is apparent that any discussion of late-life migration – such as rural-urban/urban-rural movement patterns generally – must be considered within a wider framework of political and economic constraints and oppor-

### Life-time migration and mobility

**Profile of elderly African households.** Section H gives some details regarding life-time migration and recent mobility. It indicates that the majority of senior males and females (66%) moved directly from the Eastern Cape to Cape Town, mainly from former Transkei and Ciskei. Thus, taking into account only changes of residence, their life-time mobility appeared to have been mainly a form of intra-urban mobility. Out of 3.8 overall mean life-time residence changes, 2.1 took place in Metropolitan Cape Town alone. Half of the senior males and females arrived in Cape Town before 1959 (males) and 1961 (females). Their rootedness in Metropolitan Cape Town is evidenced by the fact that the overwhelming majority (79%) regarded Cape Town as their home (see section I). Further, the majority of the household heads moved to their present residence before 1977, i.e. 20 years ago. Section G shows that only a tiny fraction owned property elsewhere, mainly land in the Eastern Cape.

**Comparison of elderly and young households.** As might be expected, the heads of younger households and their spouses arrived significantly later in Metropolitan Cape Town and in their present residence. On the other hand the percentage born in Cape Town was markedly higher. However, the majority had migrated from the Eastern Cape.

### Community integration

**Profile of elderly African households.** Over four-fifths of elderly households belonged to one or more organizations, with a mean of 2.2 organizations (calculated only for those who belonged to at least one organization) (see section I). The principal types of organizations were burial societies (67%) and churches (60%), followed by civic and political organizations. All other organizations had membership rates of less than 10%. Surprisingly, only 7% of elderly households mentioned membership of an organization for seniors. The most important sources of help were co-residents and kinfolk outside the home. Other persons, especially friends and neighbours, played an extremely important role in the social support network of about a quarter of the elderly households.

**Comparison of elderly and young households.** Young households were significantly less likely to be members of an organization than their elderly counterparts. However, the mean number of memberships proved to be the same. Elderly households were more self-reliant than households with no person aged 60 and over. While the latter were more likely to turn to non-kin, i.e. friends and neighbours, non-resident relatives were in both cases the most important sources of help with social and money problems.

### Perceived quality of life

**Profile of elderly African households.** Regarding development priorities, the top priority was housing, followed by higher effective income or jobs (better paying jobs, lower taxes, or lower cost of living) and the provision of education and training facilities (see section J). Although important to some elderly households, other development problems – including the installation of amenities (water, electricity, etc.) and the establishment of health centres – played a somewhat secondary part. While approximately half of households were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their housing situation, over two-thirds were (very) satisfied with their community.

**Comparison of elderly and young households.** The overall ranking of called-for government interventions was the same. However, young households were more articulate in their demands for government interventions,

especially regarding their need for more jobs and improved wages. Considering reported satisfaction with their respective housing situation, the pattern was almost identical. On the other hand young households tended to be more dissatisfied with their community than their elderly counterparts.

## Discussion and further analysis

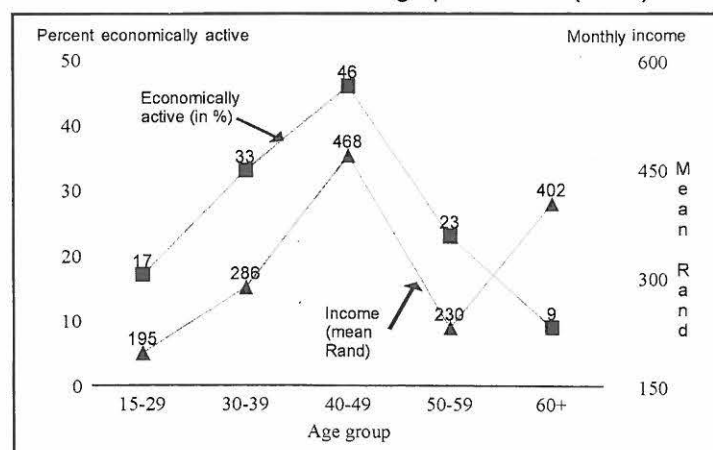
### Economic characteristics of elderly households

Elderly households were substantially more likely to live in poverty, defined as living below the household subsistence level, than young households.<sup>3</sup> This was particularly true for old-age pensioners' households, whose median household and per capita income amounted to R765 and R162, respectively. Somewhat surprisingly, this income disadvantage of elderly households appeared to be associated with a higher standard of living (see sections D and E in Table 1). However, allowing for their different housing situation, this edge on young households disappeared. Thus, the distribution of consumer durables was similar within young and elderly shack-dwelling households, and young and elderly households in formal houses. However, elderly households sheltered in shacks still appeared to be somewhat better off in relation to housing infrastructure (water sources, access to electricity, etc.) than their younger counterparts. Probably, life-course factors (especially the length of stay in Cape Town) might best explain this divergence between household income and living standards.

Considering only old-age pensioners' households, a very important characteristic of their social and economic structure is the economic dependency of their members on the pensioners: the overall majority of their adults (72%) in prime working age pursue no income-earning activity, whether casual or regular, and thus do not contribute to the overall household income. In about half the households with old-age pensioners, the latter appear to be the *sole* source of income. As implied by the extremely high dependency ratio – on average, taking all pensioners' households together, every economically-active person had to sustain 6.1 people – large numbers of unemployed kinfolk, especially the elderly's children and their offspring, appeared to cluster around old-age pensioners who thus formed the core of many urban multigeneration households (see also Møller & Sotshongaye, 1996). Figure 1 shows the intimate relationship between unemployment levels and the economic importance of old-age

**Figure 1**

Rates of economic activity and monthly mean income of members of households of old-age pensioners (1995)



Source: WCCHT data files (author's analysis).

tunities. It is evident that the integral nature of the urban/rural nexus – of which the elderly are a part – calls for flexibility in planning approaches, e.g. in developing local care facilities. However, before we can draw definite policy-relevant conclusions, further research into this field has to be awaited.

### Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank the Western Cape Community Housing Trust and Professor Robert Mazur, one of the two authors of the study, for making the data files available to him and allowing him to reanalyse them. Of course, the responsibility for the accuracy of the calculations of the data and for the presented interpretations rests solely with the author. As this secondary analysis was done as part of a more extensive research project, funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)), the author wishes to express his thanks for its generous support.

### Notes

- Specifically, the area included extended from the area north of Milnerton to Kraaifontein, to Khayelitsha, and included the southern peninsular areas of Simon's Town and Hout Bay. Thus, besides the people in site-and-service areas and informal settlements throughout Metropolitan Cape Town, the sampled populations were those in formal housing areas in Langa, Guguletu, Nyanga, Khayelitsha, Crossroads, Philippi, etc. Budgetary reasons did not allow the inclusion of Africans living in more racially integrated suburbs, as well as those living in informal settlements near Somerset West/Strand (WCCHT, 1995: 8).
- Separate analysis showed that 72% of all age-qualified men (65 years and older) and women (60 years and older) received a social pension.
- The mean income figures tend to conceal the income disadvantage of the elderly households, as is shown in their vastly different median income. Allowing for the main type of housing, i.e. formal houses, shacks and hostels, elderly households were significantly poorer than their younger counterparts, even on average. Thus, according to further analysis the mean monthly income for elderly households sheltered in formal houses, shacks and hostels amounted to R1 688, R939 and R778, respectively. The comparative figures for young households were R1 947, R1 171 and R1 079.
- It is emphasized that *all* persons of the relevant age groups have been included in calculating the individual monthly mean income, i.e. both the economically-active persons and the unemployed age group members.
- Put simply, kinship is not a biological factor given fact, at least not primarily, but a moral system that provides the ideological means to transform everyday relationships into less transient ties, or conversely, to "deprioritize" genealogical relationships. Seen in this context, the exclusive use of the pension money for one's own benefit would not only be seen as morally outrageous but would almost be tantamount to the termination of kinship itself. This kinship-derived moral imperative of pension-sharing is interwoven with a definition of old age that appears to stress the moral qualities of growing up and growing old. The author hopes to go into that highly fascinating subject in more detail in a future article.
- The author is currently involved in anthropological fieldwork in Khayelitsha. In the course of this, focussed life history interviews with elderly people are to be conducted, taped and later transcribed.
- Bivariate correlation analysis, using Pearson correlation coefficient, indicates that the wish of people aged 50 years and over to leave Cape Town and to go back to the Eastern Cape for retirement was significantly associated with possession of rural property ( $p < 0.001$ ), living in a shack ( $p < 0.001$ ) and age ( $p < 0.001$ ). However, the last factor correlated negatively with a preferred Eastern Cape retirement residence. Constructed regression models, based on these and other variables, while statistically significant at the 0.001 level, only explained a small part of the variance. Again, this underlines the need for further focussed research into this field.

- Defined by the frequency that people had been away continuously from their dwelling for a week or longer during the 12 months preceding the survey.

### References

- Ardington, E. & Lund, F. 1995. Pensions and development: the social security system as a complementary track to programmes of reconstruction and development. *Development Southern Africa*, 12(4): 557-577.
- Barnes, J.M. & Yach, D. 1991. *A survey of health aspects of black elderly living in a settled and a newly developed township in the Cape Town metropolitan area*. Cape Town: Centre for Epidemiological Research in Southern Africa, Medical Research Council. (Technical Report No. 11, Urbanisation and Health National Programme.)
- Ferreira, M. & Rip, S. 1991. *Social change in an area of Johannesburg: the case of elderly white residents*. Pretoria: HSRP Publishers.
- Ferreira, M., Møller, V., Prinsloo, F.R. & Gillis, L.S. 1992. *Multidimensional survey of elderly South Africans, 1990-91: key findings*. Cape Town: HSRP/UCT Centre for Gerontology.
- Gist, Y.J. 1994. Aging trends – Southern Africa. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*, 9(2): 255-276.
- Glanz, L. 1991. *Crime and victimization of the elderly in the Cape Peninsula*. Cape Town: HSRP/UCT Centre for Gerontology.
- Hildebrandt, E.M. 1993. *Self-care strategies for the aged in a black township*. Cape Town: HSRP/UCT Centre for Gerontology.
- Lund, F. 1993: State social benefits in South Africa. *International Social Security Review*, 46 (1): 5-25.
- McKendrick, B.W. & Shingwenyana, B.Z. 1995. Are old age pensions for urban Africans family allowances? Implications for the Reconstruction and Development Programme. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 31(3): 228-235.
- Møller, V. 1993. *Intergenerational family relations and wellbeing in three-generation urban black households*. Cape Town: HSRP/UCT Centre for Gerontology.
- Møller, V. & Devey, R. 1995. Black South African families with older members: opportunities and constraints. *Southern African Journal of Gerontology*, 4(2): 3-10.
- Møller, V & Sotshongaye, A. 1996. "My family eat this money too": pension sharing and self-respect among Zulu grandmothers. *Southern African Journal of Gerontology*, 5(2): 9-19.
- O'Brien, A. & Gillis, L.S. 1994. *The perceived needs of elderly residents of Khayelitsha*. Cape Town: HSRP/UCT Centre for Gerontology.
- Parry, C.D.H. 1995. Quantitative measurement of mental health in urban areas: opportunities and constraints, In: Harpham, T. & Blue, I. (Eds) *Urbanization and mental health in developing countries*. Aldershot, UK: Avebury, pp. 193-224.
- Potgieter, J.F. 1995: *The household subsistence level in the major urban centres of the Republic of South Africa and Namibia*. Port Elizabeth: University of Port Elizabeth, Institute for Planning Research. (Fact Paper No. 99.)
- SALDRU. 1994a. *South Africans rich and poor: baseline household statistics*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- SALDRU. 1994b. *Poverty profile of the Transkei region*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Spiegel, A., Watson, V. & Wilkinson, P. 1996. Domestic diversity and fluidity in some African households in greater Cape Town. *Social Dynamics*, 22(1): 7-30.
- US Bureau of the Census. 1993. *An Aging World II*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. (International Population Reports, P 95/92-3.)
- WCCHT. 1995. *Household dynamics and mobility of Africans in Cape Town: appropriate housing responses*. Cape Town: Western Cape Community Housing Trust. (Authors: Mazur, R.E & Qangule, V.N.)