

Argentina

ILC Argentina

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In 2010 Argentina's population aged 60 years and over numbered 5.7 million and represented 14.3 per cent of the total population. Ninety per cent of older persons in the country reside in an urban area. A gradual decrease in the number of extended family households and a trend away from multi-generational co-residence are being noted. The shift is concomitant with a growing tendency towards individualism, reflected in an increasing number of single person households largely occupied by an older person.

In the same year, the percentage of households headed by a person aged 60+ stood at 29 per cent (21% in the case of the 65+ age group). Seventeen point three per cent of the 60+ population lived alone. In single generation older households, 37.1 per cent are occupied by a single person, while in 62.8 per cent of the households, older persons co-reside.

Meanwhile, 7.1 per cent of Argentina's total population is disabled, and the percentage of people with a disability increases with age. Twenty-eight point three per cent of people aged 65+ years (and 37% of persons aged 75+) are incapacitated. Life expectancy without incapacity is estimated at 15.5 years for males and 17.2 years for females.

A main objective, or *leit motif* of late 19th Century/early 20th Century immigrants was to "own a house" and to have a better quality of life.

Types of housing and their suitability

Approximately 75 per cent of older Argentines live in a house, while 18 per cent live in an apartment and 7 per cent live in another form of housing. Eighty per cent own their dwelling. Only 2.3 per cent of persons aged 60+ live in a residential care facility.

For the greater part, the housing in which older people reside is obsolete and poorly maintained. Numerous physical features and the size of the dwellings frequently do not suit older residents' needs.

It is salutary, nonetheless, that the majority of older people own their dwelling and continue to live in familiar surroundings – thus, they age in place. However, the physical environment in which their dwelling is located and where they lead their day-to-day life is often wanting and inadequate for their needs. There is often a lack of public spaces, services and accessible public transport. Where such facilities and services are available, their accessibility may be problematic due to architectural, built environment, transportation and communication barriers.

Policy on housing and the provision of specialist housing

Argentina has no policy on housing for older people. Private and government residential care homes are available (but accommodate only 2.3 per cent of older people). Only a few of the facilities (4%) are ethnic and/or faith based – largely a vestige of the high rate of immigration more than a century ago. Many of these homes are not well maintained and not easily accessible.

Currently, a number of middle and upper-middle income people in Argentina express an interest in relocating to a sheltered or more secure housing scheme. A range of such housing models, which provide security and assistance, are being developed.

The development of new specialist long-term care facilities is also under way. Several focus on psychophysical rehabilitation while others are designed for people with Alzheimer's disease. These developments are however not meeting the growing demand for such shelter and care that accompanies population ageing.

Government policy on housing for older people is urgently needed, to kickstart initiatives to meet the growing demand for specialist public housing.

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