

Urban Environment and Elderly Self-Sufficiency



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Research Questions

Does the likelihood that a senior moves into institutionalized elderly housing, and the age at which they make the move, differ across urban, suburban, and rural environments?

Does this relationship persist after adjusting for influential factors such as health, co-residence with other family members, income, sex, and marital status?

Background

Seniors desire independence in their lives, which includes being able to participate fully, both physically and socially, in their home communities. Literature on aging and urban development suggests that seniors retain independence longer when their environment adequately provides for their needs, the most important of which is mobility. Residents of sprawling suburban neighborhoods often find their physical and social needs out of reach, prompting them to relocate into specialized homes for the elderly. In contrast, urban environments may provide physical amenities and rural environments may provide social amenities that allow seniors to retain their independence more so than in suburban places.

Data and Methods

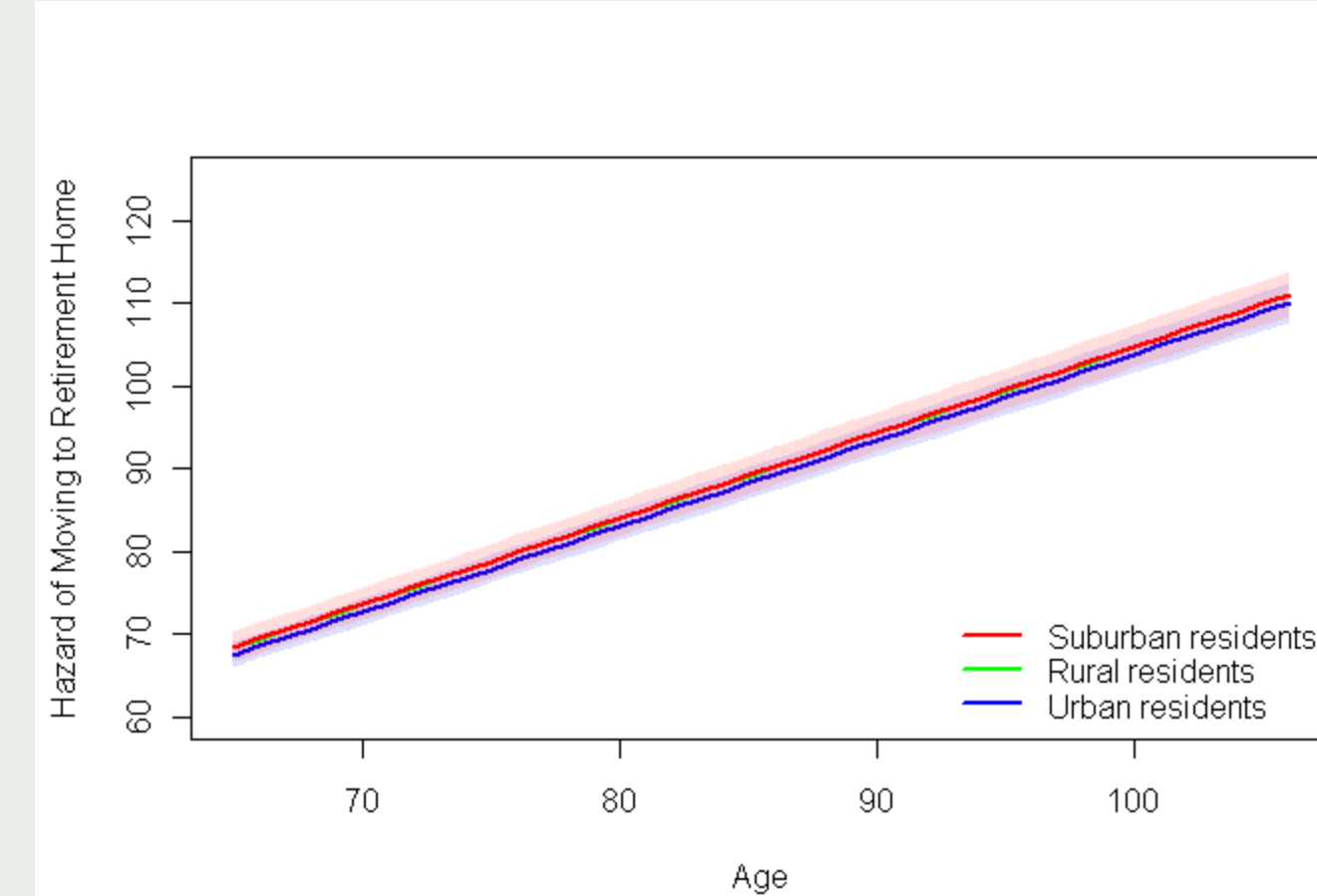
Data: Panel Study of Income Dynamics (1990-2007)
Unit of Analysis: Individuals Age 65+
Method: Event History Analysis, Complimentary Log-Log Model with Robust Standard Errors

Number of Persons (age 65+) and Person-Intervals in PSID Sample, 1990-2007

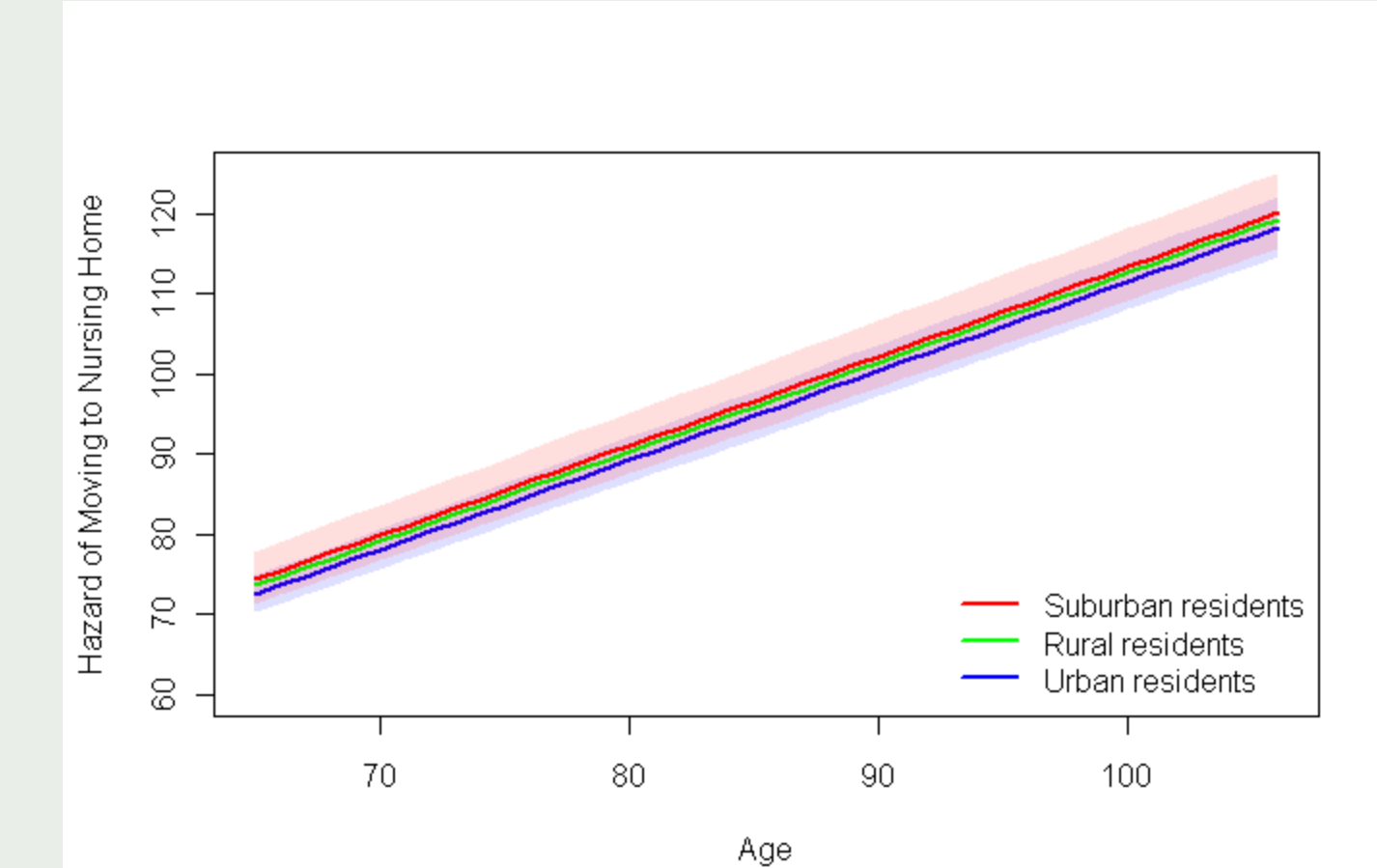
	Males	Females	Total
Persons	1,211	1,593	2,804
Person-Intervals	4,040	5,518	9,558

Hazard of Institutionalization Across Environments

Hazard of Moving to a Retirement Home*



Hazard of Moving to a Nursing Home*



*95% Confidence Intervals are shown for suburban and urban residents. The results are controlling for all other variables in the models.

Descriptive Statistics of Person-Intervals by Residential Transition

	Moved to Retirement Home	Moved to Nursing Home	Continued to Live in Independent Home	
Mean Duration	9.66	15.29	7.38	***
Mean Age	76.44	82.89	73.66	***
% Female	64.52	74.29	57.46	**
Mean Years of Education	11.70	10.94	11.51	
Median Total Family Income (\$) in Previous Interval	23,999	13,675	29,166	
% Married	37.42	4.29	59.39	***
% Widowed	50.97	80.00	29.44	***
% Divorced, Separated, or Never Married	11.62	15.71	11.17	
Median Number in Family Unit in Previous Interval	2	1	2	***
% in Poor Health	1.29	5.71	1.62	*
% Living in Urban Counties in Previous Interval	70.32	57.14	69.27	
% Living in Suburban Counties in Previous Interval	25.81	38.57	26.89	
% Living in Rural Counties in Previous Interval	3.87	4.29	3.84	
N	155	70	9,333	

Difference is significant at *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05

Conclusions

- Suburban county residents are more likely to move to a nursing home, and at a younger age, than urban residents.
- This result persists when controlling for other important covariates, including health, co-residence with other family members, income, sex, and marital status.

Future Research

- Test whether the relationship between urban environment and elderly housing transitions exists at smaller geographic units, for instance, census tracts. This is possible with access to the geo-coded PSID data files.
- Uncover the physical and social characteristics of the neighborhood environment that differ across urban, suburban, and rural places that lead to varying housing outcomes for seniors.