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Dear Dr. Veenhoven,

I enclose your excerpt, with a few corrections. The Sierra Leone survey was done in 1981. Non-response varies "from under 1% to 13% (5 years ahead) or 24% (women on jobs, mostly women who had never been employed. Most non-response was under 4%.

Another study, of the Nigerian elderly in 1984, included some of the same questions. The results of the satisfaction indicators have not been published as yet. Men and women over 60 years of age in Abeokuta, Ijebu Ode and Port Harcourt were questioned, with the following results (mean score, from 1 (bad) to 7 (good):

	Males			Females		
	Hbeokuta	Ijebu Ode	P.Harcourt	Abeokuta	Ijebu Ode	P.Harcourt
Children turned out	6.7	4.4	6.1	6.5	4.4	5.5
This city	6.8	4.0	4.9	6.7	3.8	3.7
Work you have done	6.7	3.5	4.8	6.6	2.3	4.5
Life as a whole	6.6	4.6	4.8	6.0	4.3	4.4
This house	6.6	4.0	4.7	6.3	3.8	4.8
Your marriage(s)	6.6	4.2	4.5	6.3	3.5	2.6
Your family life	6.5	4.1	4.7	6.2	3.9	3.5
Where were you 5 years ago?	6.1	NA	4.8	5.9	NA	4.7
Your health	6.0	4.5	4.0	6.0	4.0	3.4
Standard of living	5.9	3.5	4.2	5.4	2.3	4.8
Income: you and your household	5.2	3.0	3.8	6.0	1.9	4.3
Progress of Nigeria	5.1	3.1	1.9	5.6	1.5	2.6
Friends you have had	4.9	2.6	4.0	6.0	2.1	3.9
Position of elderly people in this town	5.0	2.4	2.2	5.4	2.2	2.6
N	131	117	29	60	75	24

Non-response was under 5% for whole life, city, house, work, health and standard of living, but was higher for Abeokuta than the other 2 cities, and for family & children (7%), Nigeria (F about 12%) income (Abeokuta 30%M 6Q%F) and elderly (10%). The Abeokuta sample was consistently more satisfied than the others. They were better educated, and had higher incomes and better educated children. Only part of the Port Harcourt sample was asked these questions.

I worked out combined codes for the 'Has your life been disappointing or rewarding, or something in between?' and 'Has it been enjoyable or miserable, or in between?'

Results are: Bad (%)	34	1	12	12	3	18	35%
Middle/mixed	28	37	73	62	27	41	26%
Enjoyable/good	66	86	23	25	58	55	22%
Don't know	3	3	1	3	1	0	11
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	533
N	131	117	105	60	75	45	100%

I enclose a paper written for a forthcoming issue of African Urban Studies, which will provide further information on this research, and let you know when the satisfaction data are written up.

Yours sincerely,


 Margaret Peil

OLD AGE IN TOWN: IMPLICATIONS FOR HOUSING AND SERVICES

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It has long been assumed that most African migrants eventually return home. During the colonial period, they were often away for only a short period before returning to farming (Caldwell 1969). Today, many migrants still envisage an eventual return to their place of origin because they view staying in town after retirement as a risky business. The expense of urban living is a major factor in the return migration decision, but ownership of urban housing makes a continued stay both more possible and more likely (Peil *et al.* 1988).

Long-term and permanent migration, together with the tendency of elderly widows to join their children in town, have resulted in an increasing number of old people in African cities. While the younger ones (under 65 or 70) tend to be independent and self-supporting, older men and women are less so, and the need for housing and services from children, relatives and/or the state increases. Governments are increasingly being urged to provide for the elderly, though their resources are already fully stretched (Brown 1984; Hampton 1985). Young adults today are much more likely to have living parents than was the case in the past, and these parents expect support; demands are likely to be particularly heavy at a time in their careers when the need for money for school fees for their own children is also heaviest (Caldwell 1976; Peil 1988). The lack of relatives at home who are willing and able to look after elderly women is partly responsible for their movement to the cities, where sons who are already in crowded housing must find room for them.

The Study

Our study was designed to answer questions about the position of the elderly in both cities and villages. Though this paper is concerned with urban life, village data are presented in some of the tables to show how the urban and rural elderly compare. What are the effects of the presence of an increasing number of elderly people on housing and health services? What conditions are the elderly living in and how are these conditions likely to change as the aged population increases and as economic problems multiply?

Surveys were carried out in 1984 and 1985 in three cities in southern Nigeria: Abeokuta, Ijebu Ode and Port Harcourt. These cities were chosen because they were large provincial centres within easy range for this low-budget project, but also because they provide an opportunity for comparison. The first two have a long tradition of sending out migrants who return in old age, whereas the third is a colonial creation with a largely immigrant population and fewer old people than the "traditional" cities. Of the 533 urban residents over 60 years of age who were interviewed, 353 were men and 180 were women. The rural samples included 315 men and 155 women living in 22 villages within 30 km. of the selected cities.

Port Harcourt, with a population of about 911,000 (Salau 1984) was the largest city studied. Founded in 1912 by the British as a major port and railway terminal for southeastern Nigeria, it is an ethnically heterogeneous industrial town and the capital of Rivers State. Its very rapid growth in recent years as a result of the oil boom and administrative expansion have produced a considerable shortage of housing (Ogionwo 1979), though most migrants expect to return home in old age. There are even fewer old people than might be expected because most of those who fled during the civil war (1967-70) did not return.

Abeokuta was founded in 1830 and Ijebu Ode is much older. Both are ethnically homogeneous Yoruba cities. Abeokuta is the capital of Ogun State, with a population of about half a million. It has very little industry, and many educated people migrate to Ibadan or Lagos for work (Peil 1981). Ijebu Ode is about half the size of Abeokuta; it is mainly a marketing and educational centre, with a reputation for producing astute businessmen and women (Aronson 1978).

Local knowledge was used in each case to obtain samples which were as large as possible in the time available, using several widespread clusters to enhance the representativeness of the samples. The first set of interviews in Port Harcourt, plus an Aba sample which we were unable to replace, were stolen by an armed robber, so the number of interviews there (150) is less than in the other two cities (191 and 192). The interviews took up to an hour and focused on life histories, support networks, housing conditions and health. Comparisons of these cities and of men with women provide considerable information on the living conditions of the elderly in southern Nigeria. While many of those interviewed did not know precisely how old they are, most could put themselves into one of our categories through the use of local or national events and a discussion of their life histories. Those who were least sure have been categorized as 65-74 unless they were very likely to be over 85. Not all saw themselves as "old", but they did perceive that their families and neighbors put them in that category.

Housing

As long as most migrants intend to return home eventually, it makes sense as well as being normative for Africans to build a house at home if they can afford to do so. However, with the rapid rise in urban land values and the profitability of urban housing and the longer stay of most migrants in towns, urban house ownership has become both a symbol of success and a key to an independent old age. Ownership of a house makes continued stay in town feasible, because one can live off the rents. Owners can also look after elderly relatives more easily than tenants. Thus, Caldwell (1969) found that most Ghanaian rural-urban migrants either owned a house in their village or hoped to own one eventually, but Barnes (1986) found that many successful migrants to Lagos choose to build there rather than at home. An important part of the decision is assessing where one wants to base one's family and spend one's old age.

Studies in several cities (Peil 1981) have found very few cases of urban landlords retiring to a village leaving their houses in the care of their children or a relative. This tends to be an either-or choice; very few people can afford to build in both places, and wealthy urban residents tend to build more houses in town rather than using their resources for a house at home, unless they choose not to invest in urban housing but to focus their investments on their home place. Table 1 shows that over half of the elderly men in the towns but only one in eight of the women were owners, and that ownership varied considerably with migration experience and between cities. Women often lived in houses owned by their husbands, family or sons. Indigenes who never left home and returnees are more likely than immigrants to live in their own houses; some of the latter may have houses at home to which they plan to return. Abeokuta returnees in particular tend to be living in family houses, but returnees have also acquired the resources for house-building through successful work away from home. In this case, "home" is a city rather than a village.

Table 1 Housing ownership, by migration status, location and sex (%)

	Nonmigrants		Returnees		Immigrants		Abeokuta		Ijebu Ode		PH		Rural	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Owner	59	17	69	17	48	10	66	8	43	9	53	24	83	44
Kin of owner	13	54	10	58	13	62	16	65	14	60	7	52	12	52
Tenant	28	29	21	25	39	28	18	27	43	31	40	24	5	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	83	42	70	24	195	106	128	59	115	68	105	45	315	156

The importance of comparisons rather than focusing on a single place or only on men is demonstrated in the inter-urban differences. Ownership is highest among men in Abeokuta and among women in Port Harcourt. These Port Harcourt women are largely indigenes; some have inherited family houses, while others have inherited from their husbands. There tend to be too many members of extended families living in Abeokuta and Ijebu Ode for women to inherit houses, but most do have access to a room in a family house. However, over a quarter of the elderly women in these cities are tenants, dependent on their own resources or on spouses or kin for rent. They may be living in the household of a non-owner son, or they may have their own room, with rent paid by a child who has no space in his/her- own household.

Many of the tenants were still working; the pressure to return home will increase as they grow older, and most will have a house or at least a room in a family house at home. The large number of male tenants in Ijebu Ode was unexpected; since 77% of the male tenants are immigrants and virtually all are under 75, they are probably still trading there without having the permanent commitment symbolized by house ownership. Ownership is lower in all three sample areas, for both men and women, in the cities than in the surrounding villages, but it is probably higher than it will be for later cohorts of elderly people. Rapidly rising land values and building costs make it increasingly difficult for ordinary people to acquire urban houses, which are mainly built rather than bought and sold. This will raise problems for those with nowhere else to spend their old age.

Ownership increases among men from half of those under 75 to 72% of those over that age, since many men return home in their 60s and early 70s. The proportion of women living in a house owned by a relative increases fairly regularly with age, from 53% for those under 66 to 81% of those over 85. Tenancy decreases with age for both men and women; only two women and no men over 85 were still paying rent. Thus, some men acquire a house in their old age (presumably by inheritance, since it is too late to accumulate the resources to build), whereas women are increasingly accommodated by their children.

Owners may rent out only one or two rooms, but often keep only one or two rooms for themselves so as to maximize income (Peil 1981, Schwerdtfeger 1982). Many elderly land lords/land ladies in Port Harcourt play an active role as compound heads. Resident landlords are often preferred to distant owners who have rents collected by an agency,

as is common in Lagos. Traditional family houses, with no tenants, are more likely in the Yoruba cities than in Port Harcourt.

In general, living conditions for these old people were typical of their neighbourhoods as far as crowding, facilities and condition of the houses were concerned; at least, they do not appear to be suffering undue disadvantage. About one in seven were living in conditions rated as poor by the interviewers (see Table 2). The proportion increased with age and was most notable among women in Abeokuta and men in Port Harcourt. In about 75% of the houses, two or more families were sharing facilities (kitchen, bath and toilet). Electricity and pipe-borne water were far more common than in the villages. A large majority of houses had the former. Port Harcourt houses were best off and Ijebu Ode houses were least often provided with water. Carrying water from a public standpipe is problematic for the elderly, but most have young people available to do it for them. Hells are often polluted because they are too close to the compound privies. Water tanks have become increasingly common in the cities in recent years; those who have them may sell water to neighbours.

Table 2 Housing conditions by age, location and sex (percentages)

	Under 65		65-74		75-84		85+		Abeokuta		Ijebu Ode		PH		Rural	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Poor condition	10	6	12	15	19	23	17	19	11	23	8	9	19	7	24	26
Electricity	93	92	91	99	90	95	83	94	89	97	89	92	96	96	42	35
Water																
Pipe	61	37	47	36	48	22	33	56	49	35	40	11	66	78	19	19
Well/tank	24	11	35	26	14	26	58	37	47	57	17	4	21	9	31	28
Single room	9	22	12	20	2	9	0	0	5	22	9	17	14	25	5	8
Lives alone	9	19	16	20	5	13	0	25	4	18	9	4	6	4	5	12
Median size household	5	3	5	4	5	5	7	5	6	5	5	4	3	5	5	4
N	128	54	169	87	42	23	12	16	131	60	117	75	105	45	315	156

Women are about twice as likely to be living in a single room and living alone as men. This is partly due to marriages which break down after menopause; only 29% of the women were living with a spouse, compared to 78% of the men. Most men have one or more wives (often considerably younger than themselves) and children in their households, who provide the domestic services which the elderly women provide for themselves. However, many of the old women living alone in Abeokuta live in family houses, so there are relatives nearby to help if they need it. Median household size appears to increase slightly with age—the oldest are most likely to be living in three generation households, but households of more than seven people are rare except in Abeokuta. They *mere* more common in the villages around Port Harcourt (where many young adults were waiting for jobs to open up in town), but less common in the Abeokuta villages than in the city. Large, extended family rural households may have succumbed to outmigration, but it is probably a fallacy to assume that they were common in all areas in the past. Where urban conditions are favourable (as in Abeokuta, Freetown and Banjul), they may be just as common in town as in the countryside. While households in a single room are less common in villages than in the cities, the proportion of the elderly living in a one and the average household size are roughly comparable.

Economic Provision

It has often been argued by modernisation theorists that the extended family is on the way out. As countries industrialize and urbanize, individualism and consumer-ism become more important, and nuclear-families must cope with their own needs. While industrialized countries have developed elaborate social welfare systems to care for the needy, children remain the most important source of help for the elderly in Nigeria as in most Third World countries. Family bonds remain very strong in Nigeria, in daily life as well as in times of need. Given the absence of a comprehensive national welfare policy, the elderly are still the responsibility of their families (Brown 1984). So far, only about 3% of the urban population can be classed as elderly, but numbers are growing as health care improves.

Nigerian government policy on and provision of social welfare and community development have a minimal effect on the elderly. The regulations on retirement, pensions and gratuity are salient to only about 5% of the population and do not effect the large majority who are self employed. For the few who do earn a pension, it is often very small and must be collected personally, requiring continued residence in the city of dispersal. Most elderly Nigerians therefore work as long as they are able; ill health is the major reason for leaving the labor force, though more urban than rural men are subject to compulsory retirement at 60. Women tend to stop work earlier- than men, and often leave voluntarily because their children are prepared to support them, but many carry on domestic tasks well into old age (Peil et. al. 1985).

Generally, economic activity continues at a high level into the 70s for most urban males. Some of the men in our sample were still supporting young children. Men who find farming or unskilled laboring too much for their failing strength may become watchmen or do some small-scale trading. Adeokun (1981) found that there was no acceptable role for an elderly man who is completely dependent on his children or others for support. However, many in our

samples avoided the impression of complete dependency through the roles of house owner, advice giver and dispute settler.

Bamisaïye *et al* comment that trade offers women a measure of economic and social participation in the community even though the financial rewards are often low. Elderly women can continue as petty traders from the house or concentrate on domestic tasks and looking after grandchildren. This is often very welcome to daughters or daughters-in-law, who find it both difficult and expensive to get reliable child-minders. Thus, a woman is seldom completely dependent, even though she suffers considerable disability.

Table 3 Monthly income, by age, location and sex (percentages)

Income (N)	Under 65		65-74		75-84		85+		Abeokuta		Ijebu Ode		PH		Rural	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
>50	12	52	20	54	39	91	50	70	9	42	49	70	13	57	20	20
51-200	36	31	43	38	39	9	0	20	35	42	32	27	46	29	57	71
201+	52	17	37	8	22	0	50	10	56	16	19	3	41	14	23	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N ^a	75	29	92	48	23	11	2	10	57	19	41	37	94	42	306	151

*Note the small base for some of the percentages.

Our respondents were asked, "About how much money do you have to spend in a month?" While quite a few of them were unable to answer- this question and the meaning of the results depends on the local cost of living and non-monetary sources of support, the comparisons available in Table 3 provide some impression of their economic condition. As expected, women have considerably less disposable income than men and income declines with age. The Abeokuta men are relatively well-off, as behaves a population which has often done well in wage and/or self employment and whose children are often in well-paid posts. Men living in Port Harcourt come next; they were slightly more likely to be still working than the Abeokuta interviewees. However, Ijebu Ode is clearly the least affluent; a large majority of its elderly were still in the labor force, but many are tenants and they tended to have less disposable income than the villagers. Further research is necessary to see whether it is the less successful Ijebu migrants who return home in old age, or- merely that immigrants who choose places like Ijebu Ode are less likely to be economically successful than those who migrate to larger cities.

Very few women over 75 have enough money to feed or house themselves; rural women appear to be better off than urban women in this. This may not matter insofar as they have children to provide for them, but childless women are often in a desperate situation. Almost all of the people who reported no income at all were childless women. Only 2% of the men, compared to 6% of the women, had no living children. These often have no living siblings either, and such women may be accused of witchcraft unless they have a personality which can overcome these afflictions. Should the government be able to provide some help for the elderly, these women would be a good place to start. Insofar as economic activities, and rents from tenants, are insufficient for the needs of daily life, the elderly are dependent on their children or relatives for support. The reports of those in our sample on the help they received from children, siblings and other kin show that considerable financial and physical support is given, though not always as much as is needed. Because fertility rates are high, most old people have children to look after them. Problems tend to be greatest when the children all live elsewhere, but this is somewhat more common in villages than in cities because of the variety of urban job opportunities.

Various strategies are available to cope with the needs of old age. Men may marry a young wife, though this requires access to financial resources. Widows may move to the city to live with their migrant sons. This often coincides with leaving the labor force and taking up the role of resident grandmother. Many urban women would find it hard to combine work and motherhood without such help. Other women move back to their natal homes if siblings still living there are willing to help them. Elderly people in need of medical attention often go to live with their urban children temporarily to obtain care. This constitutes a significant addition to the demand for medical care in cities. The cost and availability of medical care are an important political issue for large numbers of the elderly and their children (Ekpenyong *et al.* 1987).

Conclusion

While the position of elderly people in African cities is not as desperate as is sometimes made out, there will obviously be an increasing need for housing and for economic and social support for elderly people who choose to spend their old age in town. Some will have grown up in cities and others will have decided that conditions in town are sufficiently better than those in their home villages to make continued urban residence worthwhile. Others may simply have no place to go, because they lost land rights through long absence or government reorganization (as in Tanzania). Housing conditions are generally better in the cities, and there is a greater likelihood that some of one's children and grandchildren will be living nearby.

The norm of care for one's parents is still very strong in Nigeria. While there have been homes for the aged since the beginning of the century (Iliffe 1987, p.83), these have provided only a few places for those who lacked family

support. Large numbers of urban men own the houses they are living in and many of these get a regular, if small, income from renting rooms. Children give to their mothers if at all possible, and many provide accommodation, not only out of filial piety but also for the practical reason that elderly women continue contributing to the household in a way that elderly men seldom do.

Government regulations on property taxes, building regulations and petty trading from home tend to affect the elderly adversely. Women especially are less likely than younger people to be literate and experienced in dealing with government bureaucrats, and they often lack the resources needed for alternative strategies. Inflation and consumerism are taking their toll of support for parents, but less than might be expected. It is largely the childless who lack support, as it has been in the past. It is unlikely that pensions or other forms of social security will fill the gap for a long time to come, because the majority of the population are still in self employment and because any surplus which can be used for welfare remains small. However, government policies which encourage families to help their own (such as deductions from income tax for family support) could positively benefit the elderly. Expecting all old people to go back to the villages is unrealistic, and may also deprive many of help from urban-based children.

NOTE

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