

Governance | Individual communication

IC - (20976) - HOUSING JAPANESE IN A SUPER-AGEING SOCIETY: HOW FAR HAVE WE PROGRESSED AND WHAT REMAIN TO BE DONE?

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Background and objectives

Japan started policy preparation to cope with its ageing in mid-1980s when alarming forecast told that a quarter of population would be 65 and over in 2030. Housing policy was no exception, and the author was involved in the development of dwelling design guidelines for an ageing society (not for aged persons) at a research institute. A proposal of design guidelines was drafted in 1991/92, with three essential requirements: elimination of unnecessary step differences; installation of hand/grab rails for securing stability; and widening of corridors/doors for temporary use of an indoor wheelchair.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

The application of guidelines started in the early 1990s, and the government introduced a policy to make the design recommendation to work – extra subsidies for housing mortgages in 1996 if the dwelling design was prepared for the ageing. Although the scheme was terminated in about ten years, major housing providers were persuaded to abide by the requirements since they were fairly easy to follow for new construction. Afterwards, similar policy measures were introduced intermittently to give incentives for new housing construction (but difficult to modify afterwards).

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

An optimistic forecast was that existing housing will be demolished and replaced at a speed of one million dwelling units per year. The reality was that roughly only half a million were demolished every year, the other half survived with poorer quality in many aspects, accommodating graying frail seniors.

As of 2022, people aged 65 and over is nearly 30% of total population, but housing survey conducted in 2018 suggests that about 42.4 %% of seniors live in dwellings complying at least one of three key requirements although only about 8.8 % of seniors live in dwellings that meet all three requirements.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Will Japan need another 25 years to eliminate the mismatch between the ageing/aged residents and design?

Palavras-chave : housing, ageing, design guidelines, policy