



‘I really have thought this can’t go on’: Housing tenure and health of older Australians on the age pension

Alan Morris

University of Technology Sydney

There is increasing consensus that the affordability, adequacy and security of tenure of housing can influence health status. The importance of guaranteed or secure housing for ‘ontological security’ is well-established. In the case of older (65 plus) Australians, the minimal regulation of the private rental sector means that older private renters are generally in a very different position to older social housing tenants or homeowners. They have minimal security of occupancy and the cost of their accommodation often accounts for a substantial proportion of their budget. This study draws on 125 in-depth interviews with older homeowners, private renters and social housing tenants. It illustrates that the financial stress and minimal security of occupancy experienced by most older private renters potentially have serious health implications. Most felt that they had negligible control over their present and future housing circumstances. In contrast, the low cost of their accommodation and guaranteed security of tenure meant that older social housing tenants and homeowners could usually control their budgets and their present and future housing situation. The study shows how their housing situation generally laid the basis for a positive outlook.