

# Elderly Housing

Rocco Cheung

## The Concept of Elderly Housing Changed

As medical care advances, the average life expectancy has been increased. Table below shows that by 2001, life expectancy had increased to 78.2 for men and 84.1 for women and it is projected that by 2031, the average life expectancy will reach 82.3 for men and 87.8 for women in Hong Kong. According to the 2001 Census, there is a total of 1,000,849 elderly people aged 60 or above. This is about 14.9% of the overall population. The increasing longevity also causes the phenomenon of population aging unprecedented.

**Expectation of Life at Birth for Hong Kong and Selected Economies, 2001-2031**

Economy	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031
<b>Male</b>							
Hong Kong	78.2	79.1	80.0	80.7	81.4	81.8	82.3
Japan	77.5	77.9	78.2	78.4	78.7	78.8	79.0
U.S.A.	74.4	75.0	75.6	76.2	76.9	77.6	78.3
U.K.	75.8	-	77.4	-	78.6	78.9	-
<b>Female</b>							
Hong Kong	84.1	84.9	85.7	86.4	86.9	87.4	87.8
Japan	84.2	84.7	85.1	85.4	85.7	85.9	86.0
U.S.A.	80.1	80.8	81.4	82.2	82.9	83.6	84.2
U.K.	80.6	-	81.5	-	82.8	83.2	-

Sources: Hong Kong. Census and Statistics Dept. Hong Kong population projections, 2002-2031

It is generally assumed that old people, being more traditional people like to live with their children. This is the traditional Chinese culture of 'raising a son



as a security measures for old age'. However, in maintaining young generation living with elderly parents without giving proper support, for example, securing an accommodation of adequate quality and size and respecting the elderly people's right to autonomy, we are creating stigmatization and discriminating against 'unconventional families'.

Old people change with society. The search for independent living and autonomy is no longer only cherished by the young. Chow and Chi's (1990) research has found that while many elderly people continue to live with young family members, there is a growing preference among the elderly to lead an independent life in Hong Kong. Even when their health is deteriorating, a substantial proportion of elderly do not want to depend on their close relatives. (Chan and Lee, 1999)

In a study by Chow and Chi, the limitation of the study is that the respondents were members of social and multi-service centers only. And that the study also adds to our understanding in that about four to six percent of the elderly would probably prefer to live alone should they be offered a choice to do so. Furthermore, it is observed that other than meeting the accommodation need of the elderly, measures should also be taken to ensure that the elderly are happy with their present situation and would not look for a change. Finally, it must be recognized that the elderly are now more receptive to living in institutions and they may not regard living with their families as the best choice. (Chow, Nelson and Chi, Iris (1990) A study of the living arrangement of the elderly in Hong Kong. Hong Kong journal of gerontology. Vol 4, no.1, pp. 11-18.)