

Exploring the place attachments of older migrants in Aotearoa: A life course history approach

Research Question

We examined how older migrants developed a sense of place and home in Aotearoa over time and considered what factors shaped this process.

Background

Place attachment is developed as people form a sense of belonging (place identity) and are able to live and work comfortably in a new environment (place dependence). Place attachment is important to migrants' wellbeing and ability to age healthily in host countries.

A life course approach is necessary to consider how migrants' place attachment develops as they age.

What We Did

We examined the narratives of ten older migrants (65 years or older) who migrated to Aotearoa before the age of 50.

What We Found

The needs and wants of their spouses, parents, and children, such as better employment and education, were important to some participants' decision to migrate.

Some participants showed strong place identities yet weak place dependence in relation to their home countries.



After migration, their place attachment to Aotearoa grew when they observed living situations improving and basic needs met.

For some participants, place identities grew through place dependence. Place identities also changed as they faced barriers, such as feeling excluded because of their accent, and facilitators, such as social support from community.

What This Means

Narratives of place attachment were organized according to migration-related life stages, pre-migration, post-migration and changing life situations.

Participants showed strong place dependence to Aotearoa. Place identities changed over time and differed across participants and life stages.

Place identities varied based on migrants' social connections, community participation, family relationships and experiences of discrimination.

Why It Matters

By understanding how place attachment changes for older migrants, we can offer practical policy recommendations for ways to support migrants' adaptation.