

# Identifying Conflicts Experienced by Older Adults While Aging in Place

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## INTRODUCTION

Older adults are often faced with making decisions about aging-in-place (AIP) as their health changes. These decisions may create conflicts with others, causing stress and frustration. We sought to characterize the conflicts older adults experience.

## METHODS

As part of a larger study on decision making about AIP (R01AG058777), we are longitudinally following a cohort of adults over the age of 65. Participants complete surveys every 6 months and are asked to describe conflicts that have occurred regarding their living situation. Responses were coded using constant comparative analysis, examining type, content, and whether statements were interests, rights, or power-based.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics (By Time Point)

Variable	Baseline N=293
Age, M (SD)	73.5 (5.0)
Sex, %	
Male	27.3
Female	72.7
Race %	
Black	29.1
White	59.6
Other	11.3
Education, %	
HS or less	14.7
Some College	18.5
College Graduate	21.9
Graduate Degree	44.9
Income, %	
< \$10,000	4.6
\$10,000-\$24,999	13.9
\$25,000-49,999	24.9
>= \$50,000	56.6
Employment Status, %	
Working for Pay	28.3
Retired/Unemployed	71.7
Marital Status, %	
Married	47.3
Unmarried/Widowed	52.7

## Conflicts about AIP occur frequently among older adults (e.g., interpersonal, task, and value-based).

## Thematic analysis of conflict content categories:

<b>Location Change</b> 	<i>We have conflicts about when to get out of here and where to go... my wife wants to get out of this house sooner than later.</i>
<b>Home Maintenance</b> 	<i>My son insisted I put in a new lower tub and I didn't want to.</i>
<b>Different Ways of Task Completion</b> 	<i>It is about my children and the way we do things; I don't take my time, and I don't eat the same stuff.</i>
<b>Safety</b> 	<i>The crime rate is too high in Chicago. Neighbor kicked in the door and destroyed our property.</i>
<b>Health-related</b> 	<i>Having a homecare helper give me assistance.</i>
<b>Financial</b> 	<i>The rent is too high. I had to pay more money than my daughter and it was becoming too much.</i>

## RESULTS

We enrolled 293 subjects (Table 1), and 124 conflicts were reported over 18 months. Thematic analysis revealed three overarching types of conflicts:

1. Interpersonal (subcategories: spouse, intergeneration, other)
2. Task
3. Value-based

Content were coded into 6 themes:

**Location change** (e.g. my sister says I can be incapacitated and she said I should live in senior housing), **Home maintenance issues** (e.g., My son insisted I put in a new lower tub and I didn't want to), **Different ways of completing tasks** (e.g., it is about my children and the way we do things, I don't take my time, and I don't eat the same stuff), **Safety** (e.g., Neighbor's boyfriend kicked in the door and destroyed our property), **Financial** (e.g. I discovered that my spouse secretly met his attorney and changed his will so I would get nothing), and **Health-related** (e.g., the family next door is always having bonfires which messes with my asthma. we've argued). Most statements were interests or rights-based.

## CONCLUSION

Older adults experience a range of conflicts involving AIP decision-making. Most often older adults experience interpersonal conflicts with supporters about moving from their home or maintaining/adapting their home. Training in negotiation may help alleviate these conflicts between older adults and their care supporters.

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