Do you move when your partner passes away? A longitudinal study of residential mobility after the death of a spouse **(extended abstract)**

Intro

The match between housing demand and supply of homes is a key point in how cities develop, and how citizens migrate, but little is known about the residential mobility and housing demands among people who recently have transitioned into widowhood. Peoples demand for housing correlates with many different aspects, including their age, income, employment, health status and family situation. About 64 percent of Danes between the ages of 30 and 80 years old live in a relationship in one form or another. Among this subpopulation about 1.5 percent, or just over 17,000 couples, each year experience a partner dying, although this number will be higher for couples on the right side of the age distribution and lower for couples on the left side. The death of a spouse, especially an unforeseen death, can be a big economic burden, that can force the widow to move to a less expensive home. Likewise, it could also be that the death of a spouse entails a shift in the housing needs for the surviving partner, as the residence no longer fulfil the demands of the widow and thus the death of a spouse can cause a new housing demand for the surviving partner.

Research in housing mobility and life cycles have shown that as people, and especially elderly people, move late in their housing career they are more likely to downsize. Furthermore, the importance of proximity to other relatives e.g. children and grandchildren is also likely to increase for widows after losing a partner. The purpose of this project is first to describe the relationship between the death of partner and a subsequent move. Second, the project investigates how the survivors' choice of residence differs from others both in placement and size of residence, including the distance to adult children and grandchildren.

Data

Our data used in the study consists of very detailed microdata that originates from two main sources, 'Statens Serum Institut' and 'Statistics Denmark'. By combining these data, we can identify which

families experience the death of a spouse, their geographically location of their residence at the time and the widow's subsequent residential choices. The administrative health data on hospital admissions, including cause of admission, from 1994-2012 gathered from 'Statens Serum Institut' can help us identify cause of death as it contains health information on all citizen, including prescribed medication, hospitalizations, deaths, etc. While the data from 'Statistic Denmark' give access to micro-data on all individuals living in Denmark from 1980 up to 2016, which include socioeconomic information, and allow us to identify family members and residential location for both themselves and their family. This allow us to monitor residential moving patterns after experiencing a partner's death and furthermore to identify the distance to adult children before and after experiencing a partner's death.

Methodology

As the aim of the study is to uncover how the death of a partner affects ones' subsequent residential mobility, or probability of moving, we want to utilize an empirical approach which can take all the relevant factors into consideration. Residential mobility literature has shown that one of the most important predictors for whether a household moves or not, is the time they have already lived in that residence. This means that the longer a household has lived in a residence, the lower the possibility is for them to move, or in other words, the duration stayed in the residence play is an important factor to account for. Furthermore, we expect that the time that have passed after a spouse has died plays an important role in the widow's probability to move. With these factors in mind, we choose to utilize a duration model approach in our analysis since this approach allow us to account for both the residential duration time and the duration time that has passed since the spouse's death together with other relevant factors. We can do this since our detailed administrative data not only allow us to identify whose partner died, and the time of their death, but also their residence at the time, including time lived in said residence and possible vacating for both the widows and all other

households. Given the detailed character of our data we know what exact year people first moved into their residence even though it happened before we start observing them, and we thus know for how long they have stayed in their current residence when we first observe them. This means that we don't encounter any problems regarding left-censored data, although we still have right censoring since many people continue to live in the same residence when we close our observation window. While left-censoring could pose a problem for our analysis, right-censoring is to be expected in an analysis on moving behaviour and doesn't pose any significant problems for the weight of our empirical results.

Results & conclusion

Our results show that widows' likelihood of moving is relatively high the first years following the death of a partner compared to their non-widow counterparts. The first years following the death of a partner widows' likelihood to move is approximately double as high as non-widows and they maintain a significantly higher likelihood to move up to 5 years after experiencing a partner's death before being equal to non-widows. Furthermore, we find that widows are more likely to downsize when moving to a new residence and that women are more likely to move to a municipality where they have adult children whereas men are more likely to move to a nursing home.

The project adds to the literature by exploring the mobility for all widows, through the utilization of a broader and more detailed dataset that uncovers the differences between widows and widowers as well as between sudden and more expected deaths. Additionally, the project contributes by showing how residential decisions by widows are impacted by the relationship between residential supply and demand in the local area by using detailed information about the housing stock within each municipally.