

Designing liveable neighbourhoods to support healthy ageing

Physical functioning and the neighbourhood environment

The world's population aged 60 years and above is predicted to double by 2050, and a key concern is maintaining physical functioning as people age. Physical functioning relates to individuals' underlying capability to undertake a broad range of daily activities which can impact their quality of life and ability to live independently. Understanding how the neighbourhood environment relates to physical functioning is crucial for promoting healthy ageing and maintaining independence.

What did we do?

This systematic review examined the relationship between neighbourhood built and social environment features with physical functioning among mid to older-aged adults.

- We reviewed 25 articles including 8 longitudinal and 17 cross-sectional studies from 8 countries.
- Neighbourhood built and social environmental features included aesthetics, crime safety, greenness and parks, land use mix and destinations, neighbourhood disadvantage, pedestrian/street infrastructure, public transport, residential density, street connectivity, social environment, traffic safety, walkability, and composite variables.
- Physical functioning was measured subjectively and objectively using 12 different methods.

What did we find?

- Strong positive relationships existed between physical functioning and neighbourhood features including land use mix and destinations, walkability, crime safety, greenness and parks, social environment, and neighbourhood disadvantage.
- Weaker positive relationships existed between physical functioning and residential density and aesthetics.
- Relationships were stronger when environmental features were measured objectively from a participants' home at shorter distances (<500m).
- Approximately half of the studies came from Asian countries.
- Only 7 studies considered the length of time people lived in their neighbourhoods.
- Only 8 studies separated outcomes by gender.
- Only 6 studies included middle-aged adults of 45-60 years old in the sample.

What do these findings mean?

Mid- to older adults living in areas with higher walkability, lower crime, better access to parks and greenness, more social amenities, and living in more advantaged neighbourhoods have better physical functioning.

Increasing the 'liveability' of neighbourhoods may promote better physical functioning and support healthy ageing.

To learn more read the full paper [here](#).

Citation:

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