Designing neighbourhoods to support early childhood development

Neighbourhood 'double disadvantage' and child development in inner city and growth areas

Growth area suburbs on the urban fringe may lack essential services and infrastructure, raising concerns about how healthy these settings are for young children. Child development and wellbeing might look different for a child growing up in the inner city vs. outer and growth areas. Understanding the influence of urbanicity and neighbourhood disadvantage is important for promoting children's lifelong health, development, and wellbeing.

What did we do?

We analysed data from 47,000 children living in Melbourne, Australia to investigate relationships between child development, urbanicity, and 'neighbourhood double disadvantage'.

- Urbanicity: inner city, middle ring, outer ring, and growth area.

- Developmentally vulnerable on one or more of the five Australian Early Development Census domains (https://www.aedc.gov.au).

- Neighbourhood disadvantage from most to least disadvantaged.

- Neighbourhood double disadvantage: Urbanicity and neighbourhood disadvantage combined (e.g. high disadvantage, growth area).

What did we find?

- Child development was not statistically different in Melbourne's inner city, middle ring, outer ring or growth area suburbs.

- Children living in the most disadvantaged areas had higher odds of developmental vulnerability regardless of urbanicity.

- The 'poorest' child development outcomes were associated with living in the most disadvantaged inner-city area.

What do these findings mean?

- ◦ Neighbourhood disadvantage was associated with early childhood development, urbanicity was not.

- ◦ Continued investment in policy interventions and place-based initiatives in disadvantaged areas across the metropolitan area.

Where can I find out more?

Read the full paper here.

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