
Lay Summary

How we perceive our neighbourhood can influence our lives more than we know

Research Overview

The design and quality of our neighbourhoods can promote or hinder an active lifestyle. This is particularly true for older adults, who may often have physical limitations, making it difficult to stay active.

In this study, researchers explored if an individual's perception of their neighbourhood was related to their engagement in physical activity. The inter-relationships between perceptions of neighbourhood features, physical activity and sedentary time (sitting) were also assessed to determine whether perceptions of certain features (e.g., residential density) may impact physical activity and sedentary time by shaping perceptions of other environmental features (e.g., access to services).

Researchers found that older adults who perceived their neighbourhoods to be walkable with well-connected streets, aesthetically pleasing, and having good access to public sitting facilities were more likely to lead an active lifestyle.

However, researchers also discovered that whilst moderate-to-high levels of residential density promoted an active lifestyle, at extreme levels, the volume of physical activity decreased. This indicated that, whilst moderate-to-high levels of density may contribute to neighbourhood walkability, there is a limit where once hit, density starts hindering participation in physical activity.

Why is this important?

Many studies have examined the potential impact of older residents' neighbourhood perceptions on engagement in physical activity. This information is important because it can inform the planning and creation of healthy cities for ageing populations. However, most studies did not examine the inter-relationships between features of the neighbourhood environment. By exploring these inter-relationships, the study ensures that the potential impact of these features on an active lifestyle are not under- or overestimated.

Key Takeaway

This study highlights features of the neighbourhood environment that urban planners should aim to integrate into their designs, such as public sitting facilities, greenery and well-kept streets, to ensure that older adults can maintain an active lifestyle.

Title of Paper: How the perceived neighbourhood environment influences active living in older dwellers of an Asian ultra-dense metropolis

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