



First OPENspace survey:

Questionnaire on outdoor activity, environmental support and quality of life

A cross-sectional study using a self-administered questionnaire was conducted to examine the associations between the quality of outdoor environments, especially neighbourhood parks and open spaces, outdoor activities and the quality of life of older people.

Data collection procedure

Three different data collection methods were employed to reflect the environmental and socio-cultural diversity of older people's use of outdoor spaces, eliciting a total of 335 valid responses. The methods were:

1. **Mail Survey.** The sample for postal questionnaire was selected randomly from 20 local authorities in the UK. These local authorities were chosen from Britain's 11 government regions based on population distribution, geographic location, urban/rural areas and types of industry (17 from England, 2 from Scotland and 1 from Wales). A questionnaire was mailed to 2218 people in the sample. About half of the non-responders were contacted by telephone to be reminded of the survey. The total number of responses after the follow-ups was 211 (10% response rate).
2. **Older people in sheltered care.** People living in sheltered accommodation were approached in order to obtain data from this stratum of the population, through local housing associations and city councils in the same 20 locations. Thirteen organisations agreed to distribute the questionnaire in their housing schemes, and 102 responses were obtained.
3. **Minority ethnic group participants.** In order to ensure that we obtained some responses from minority ethnic older people, who might not be likely to respond to a mailed questionnaire, we followed advice from the Scottish Ethnic Minority Research Unit on the best way to engage with such older people. Two translated sessions were held, facilitated by minority ethnic support organisations, and gathered 22 valid responses (15 Asian older people in London and 7 Chinese older people in Edinburgh).

Measures & Instruments

Outdoor activity was defined as "being outdoors." It encompasses both non-vigorous and vigorous activities.

Environmental support was measured in two ways:

1. **Perceived quality of neighbourhood outdoor space.** A 30-item scale was developed, based on the focus group interviews, instruments developed by Saelens et al. (2003) and Humpel et al. (2004), and relevant design guidelines (e.g., Civic Trust, 2004; DTLR, 2002). Of 30 items in this scale, three items are relevant to outdoor spaces around one's house, the majority of items are concerned with a local open space such as a park and routes to reach such a space, and four items ask about the larger neighbourhood area. The scale focuses on natural or green environments because of the distinctive benefits (restorative and social) they may possess for older people.



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2. **Personal projects carried out in neighbourhood outdoor space.** The original version of the personal projects analysis questionnaire developed by Little (1983), which can be complex and over lengthy for older people, was simplified for this study. The participants were asked to list outdoor activities they do regularly, have decided to undertake, or are thinking about doing (free description). Participants were then asked to evaluate each activity in terms of the extent to which the environment makes it difficult or easy to carry out, and its personal importance. The environmental support for a participant was calculated as a weighted mean of support (difficulty/easiness) for the listed activities using the importance as a weight (Wallenius, 1999).

Quality of life was evaluated through a 5-item scale to measure people's satisfaction with life, developed by Diener & colleagues (1985). The reliability of the scale was 0.87.

Functional capability was measured by asking participants to indicate the ease with which they could perform six instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) (Jette et al., 1986). The IADLs employed were concerned with mobility such as walking a certain distance, climbing stairs and using public transportation. The number of outdoor activities (personal projects) listed by participants was also included in the analysis.

Health was measured as the number of days (in the last 30 days) poor health prevented the person from doing daily activities.

Socio-demographic measures included: gender; age; ethnicity; amount of time living in current neighbourhood; living arrangements; education; access to a car; and occupation/former occupation of main 'breadwinner' in the household.

References

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