

Neighbourhood Environments and Later Life Flourishing: A Systematic Scoping Review

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INTRODUCTION

The global population is ageing rapidly. Enabling older people to live comfortably in their neighbourhoods for longer, known as **ageing-in-place**, has become a policy priority to reduce pressures on health and social care systems².

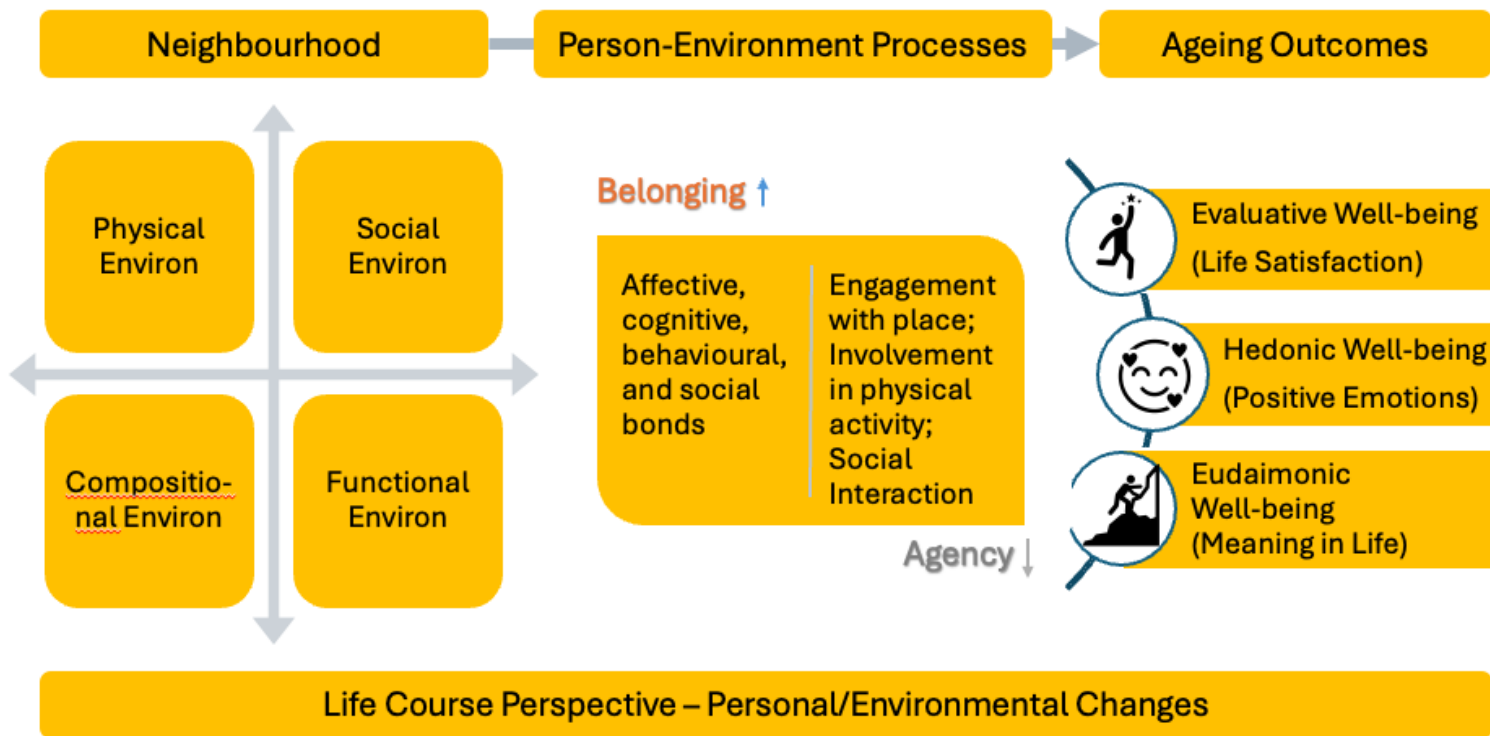
However, research on place and health remains predominantly deficit-focused, emphasising illness and decline (e.g. frailty, depression, and anxiety).

There remains a limited integrated understanding of how neighbourhoods can not only reduce risks but actively foster *satisfying, joyful, and meaningful* later life.

OBJECTIVES

We adopt a life-course framework and a positive psychology perspective.

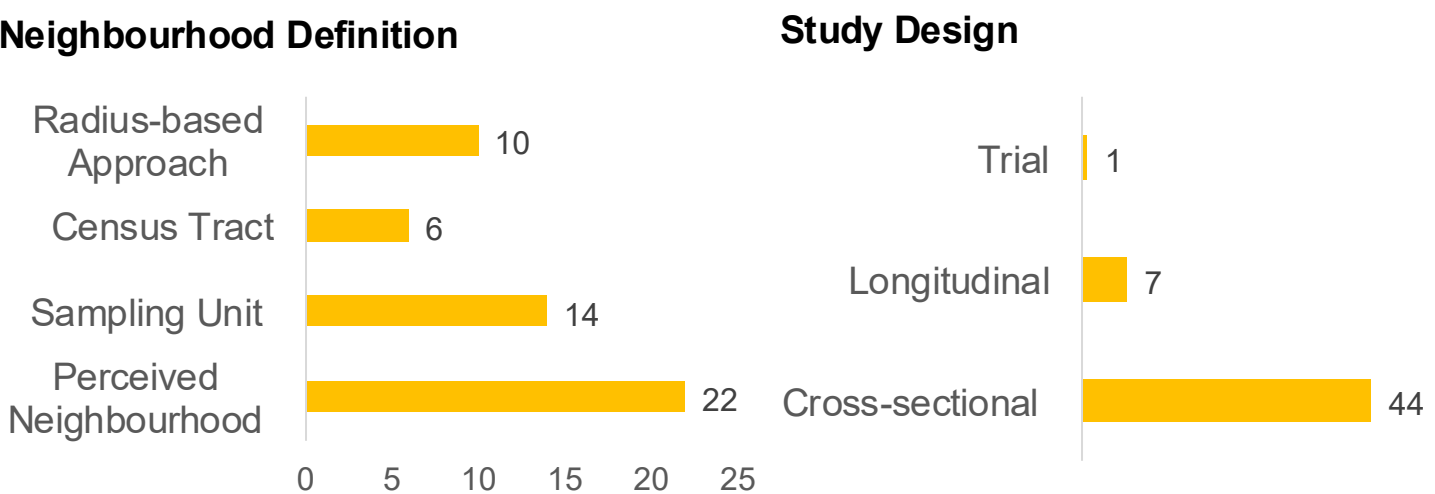
We synthesise evidence on how neighbourhood environments support flourishing in later life, which encompasses happiness, life satisfaction and meaning in life



METHODOLOGY

Searches were conducted across nine databases. Peer-reviewed, English-written studies examining associations between neighbourhood characteristics and flourishing among adults aged 45 and over were included. Content analysis was used to synthesise findings, guided by an adapted version of Wahl, Iwarsson and Oswald’s person-environment framework of ageing well. Results were stratified by neighbourhood physical, social, functional, and compositional characteristics.

RESULTS – Part A



From 3,375 records, 52 studies met the inclusion criteria. The evidence base overall is limited due to data constraints and research design.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❖ Shifts attention from avoiding disease to understanding positive well-being (*flourishing*) in ageing.
- ❖ Shows that physical and social environments consistently support older adults’ flourishing.
- ❖ Identifies agency and belonging as key resilience pathways linking neighbourhoods to flourishing outcomes.
- ❖ Highlights the need for further research on causal pathways and life-course mechanisms.

RESULTS – Part B

| Physical environment | | | |
|---|------------|---------|------------|
| | Evaluative | Hedonic | Eudaimonic |
| Aesthetic appeal (+) | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Neighbourhood physical disorder (-) | 2 | | |
| Blue spaces (+) | 1 | | 1 |
| Green spaces (+) | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Blue and green spaces (null) | | 1 | 1 |
| Air quality (null) | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Walking facilities (+) | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Social environment | | | |
| Neighbourhood cohesion (+) | 10 | 8 | 6 |
| Perceived safety (+) (null) | 2 | | |
| Ageism (-) | 1 | | |
| Functional environment | | | |
| Accessibility to local amenities (+) | 11 | 4 | 3 |
| Land use diversity/access (+/-) | 1 | | |
| Transportation (+/-/null) | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Compositional environment | | | |
| Income level (null) | 1 | 3 | |
| Income level (+) | | | 1 |
| Income inequity (null) | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Education (+) | 1 | | 1 |
| Education (null) | | 1 | |
| Residential density (+) | 1 | | |
| Residential density (null) | 1 | 1 | |
| Residential density (-) | 1 | | |
| Institutional presence (null) | 1 | | |
| Institutional presence (+) | | | 1 |
| <div><div></div><div>0246810</div></div> <div>Number of studies</div> | | | |

CONCLUSION

Neighbourhoods play a crucial role in supporting older adults’ flourishing, but evidence on causal pathways and life-course dynamics remains limited. The proposed integrative framework enhances conceptual clarity and provides a foundation for longitudinal research to guide place-based interventions for positive ageing.