



Neighbourhood Safety

Photo Credit: Adam. J. Tobin Law

Photo Credit: Total Senior Care

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Perceived Risk (safety): In the psychological sense, perceived risk is a personal perception of how much risk a certain activity or situation will have. It could be perceived that a certain situation is more risky than it actually is therefore being less safe.

Neighbourhood safety is a concern to people of all ages, races, and ethnicities. The safety of a neighbourhood is dependent on a number of factors such as: the perception of the neighbourhood, where it is located within a city, what kind of people live there, how well the neighbourhood is serviced, transportation services offered, lighting, housing types, and **percieved risk**. These factors often depict where someone will live, where and when children play, where and when people will go for walks, how often people will leave their dwelling, what activities people take part in, and whether people stay or leave their neighbourhood for activities.

Neighbourhood Perceptions

As mentioned above, there are a number of factors that influence the safety of a neighbourhood. Data found in a study done in St. Louis, Missouri found that:

Race, ethnicity, gender, social connectedness(2,5,10), self-reported health, and access to transportation (1, 6) play a role in how an individual perceives the safety of their neighborhood (Ruggeri, D., et al. 2011).

Neighbourhoods are often looked at in a “in front of our eyes” way. **Many safety concerns of a neighbourhood are perceived by the individual.** A study by Ruggeri et al. states that:



Photo Credit: Getty Images

Figure 1: Older adults assume that they are more likely to be victims of crime, this is often not the case.

Aging individuals in relatively low crime neighborhoods can still perceive themselves to be unsafe, and this perception affects how elderly residents think, behave, vote, spend money, and their overall health regardless of the actual level of victimization (Ruggeri, D., et al. 2011).

Whether a neighbourhood is perceived to be unsafe or actually is unsafe, there are numerous ways to improve the neighbourhood. Adequate lighting is important in any neighbourhood. Many studies outline the main problems faced in neighbourhoods. One such study was done by Balfour and Kaplan in Alameda County, California. Their study found that:

Neighborhood problems encountered most frequently in



Photo Credit: Jenny Cane

Figure 2: Difficulty accessing public transportation



Photo Credit: Assisted Living Facilities

Figure 3: Assisted Living

older adults...were traffic...crime...and excessive noise...while difficulty accessing public transportation(1,6)...inadequate lighting at night...and trash and litter...were reported less frequently (Balfour, L. J., & Kaplan, A. K. 2002).

In the article by Balfour and Kaplan they conclude that the issues mentioned above “influence functional health by interfering with safety, self-care tasks (e.g., food shopping), physical activity(5,8), and community participation(2)” (Balfour, L. J., & Kaplan, A. K. 2002).

Location

The location of where older adults live in a neighbourhood is an important indicator of safety. Dwellings on major roads are perceived to be safer than if they were located on side streets or in remote rural areas. **The main issue with location is the distance** to amenities, services, activities, and public transportation, and how they get to there. The automobile is the preferred method of transportation, and then depending on distance, public transportation or walking are preferred.

A study done by Fyhri et al. (2010) outlines the influence of perceived safety and security of walking. The researchers point out two types of risks for pedestrians. The first is the risk of being involved in an accident, and the second is the risk of being a victim of a criminal offence, violence or threats.

Safety in Dwelling

Living in a safe environment has many benefits for people of all ages, particularly for older adults. Yahaya et al. (2012) state that:

Older people who live in unsafe environment[s] are more prone to isolation, dissatisfied and increased mobility problems (Yahaya, N., et al. 2012).(10)

Whether living in a house or in an assisted living complex, the safety of the dwelling will contribute to the older adults quality of life and ability to age in place. When the safety of the older adult becomes compromised for reasons like not being able to care for or cook for

Safety concerns of pedestrians:

Fear of accidents

Fear of criminal offence, violence or threats



Figure 4: Safety concerns within home: Stairs



Figure 5: Safety concerns within home: Bathroom. This picture shows an outfitted bathroom.

ones self, the need to move from a non-assisted to assisted living arrangement could become mandatory.

Non-assisted living

There are numerous areas in a house(7) that are areas of concern in regards to safety. Rogers et al. (2008) state that a large proportion of falls older adults experience occur within the home. Because of this safety concern, a safety assessment of the house(7) should be completed. This assessment should look at lighting, flooring, stairs (figure 4), furniture, bathroom (figure 5), and the bedroom.

Assisted Living

Older adults move to assisted living residences for many reasons. Fonad et al. (2006) outline these reasons in a study they did in Stockholm, Sweden. The participants cited reasons for moving such as outliving a spouse, liking the environment more, and deteriorating health conditions. “The most common reason participants moved to the retirement home was that they **lost feelings of safety and security due to accidents** that occurred while living in their own homes” (Fonad et al. 2006, p. 49).

Seasonal Safety

Seasonal safety is a concern people of all ages. In cold weather climates such as Winnipeg, there is a concern over safety when the temperature drops and snow falls. In an article by Wagner et al. (2010), older adults in the Northern British Columbia town of Prince George were solicited in order to find out opinions and attitudes in regards to a variety of housing issues(7), walkability(8), and winter condition safety concerns. In their study, they found that a number of the respondents avoided going out(10) because of the amount of **ice on the walkways** in the area (Wagner et al. 2010). In the same study, a large proportion of the participants said that they:

felt that winter conditions were an impediment to safety, community participation(2, 5, 8) and community access to facilities/services(1, 4, 6) (Wagner et al. 2010, p. 411). (10)

It is also important to look at how heat can affect older adults. A good source

Safety concerns in house:
Lighting, flooring, stairs, furniture, bathroom, and bedroom.

for this is Lynne's article called "Feeling the Heat", which outlines safety concerns for older adults during times of **extreme heat and/or heat waves** (Lynne, P. 2011).

Neighbourhood Safety

As we grow older, safety becomes an increasing issue due to deteriorating mental and physical health. As outlined in this document, there are a number of factors that are associated with the overall safety of an older adult. These factors include: neighbourhood, location, physical safety and housing type, health, accidents, perceptions, seasonal safety, and the overall ability to take care of oneself.

Works Cited:

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If noted in text, please see:

1. Rural Transportation
2. Intergenerational Interaction
3. [Neighbourhood Safety](#)
4. Urban Design
5. Recreation
6. Personal Transportation
7. Housing
8. Walkability
9. Online Technical Assistance
10. Social Isolation