

# Life Course ‘Cognability’: Examining Neighborhoods, Health Behaviors, and Health Disparities

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While disparities in Alzheimer’s Disease and Alzheimer’s Disease Related Dementias (AD/ADRD) are well-documented, the underlying causal process explaining how and why these inequalities arise is less clear. Evidence suggests that potentially-modifiable individual factors, such as social isolation and physical inactivity, can significantly reduce one’s dementia risk. Much less attention, however, focuses on the upstream, contextual factors that structure people’s access to these risk factors and behaviors. The Neighborhoods and Health at All Ages Study addresses this gap by investigating neighborhood influences on cognitive health-promoting activities across the lifespan. Seated and mobile interviews conducted from August 2023 to March 2024 in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area captured perceptions of neighborhood amenities and hazards among 60 participants aged 18-75 (average age 42). 53% identified as female, 40% male, 7% non-binary; and 30% identified as Asian, 25% Hispanic, 20% Black/African American, 18% non-Hispanic White, and 7% American Indian/Alaska Native. Reflexive thematic analysis revealed age-specific patterns: young adults prioritized affordable amenities and online social infrastructure, mid-life individuals emphasized safe transportation and educational sites, while later life participants valued civic/social organizations and accessible outdoor recreation. This study uncovered nuanced perspectives on neighborhood engagement, including experiences of structural racism, classism, and ageism. Analysis captures nuanced perspectives and varied experiences of how individuals engage with their neighborhoods across the life course. Results highlight the importance of creating equitable neighborhoods with opportunities to support lifelong cognitive health. Findings deepen understanding of how adults of different ages leverage community sites to engage (or not) in cognitively-healthy lifestyle behaviors.

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