



8

The Lived Environment Community, Housing, and Place

Chapter Overview

You will learn about the ways in which the housing and community environment influence aging processes. Person–environment/ecological theories of aging are critically examined against research literature. Some of the issues covered include falls, transportation, crime and victimization, technology, homelessness, housing alternatives, long-term care, and migration.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand the major theoretical and conceptual models used to explain the associations between individuals and their environments.
- Describe with whom, and where, older people live.
- Identify the principal environmental challenges that older people must overcome to remain independent and mobile in their community.

- Answer the questions: Why is “aging in place” the preferred housing choice in later life? And what are the various housing options available to older adults?
- List and elaborate upon the potential benefits and limitations of age-friendly community initiatives for older adults.
- Balance the benefits and limitations of various technologies aimed at increasing the independence and well-being of older adults with health limitations.

Key Facts

- In 2016, about 23.8 per cent of the population aged 65 and over (about 1.4 million people) lived alone (a rate of 29.8 per cent for women and 16.5 per cent for men), while 7.2 per cent of persons aged 65 and over (428,580) lived in health-care and-related facilities (institutional living)—nursing homes, chronic care, long-term-care hospitals, and residences for senior citizens (a rate of 9.2 per cent for women 65 and over, and 4.9 per cent for men).
- Also, in 2016, about one in five older Canadians lived in rural areas, with some rural villages and towns having 20 to 25 per cent of their residents aged 65 and over.
- In some studies, as many as 50 per cent of seniors express fear that they may be victimized, or they report changing their travel patterns, especially at night, to avoid being victimized.
- About one-third of accused individuals in violent crimes against seniors are family members.

Key Terms

activities of daily living (ADLs) Basic personal and necessary activities of daily living, such as getting in and out of bed or a chair, dressing, grooming, toileting, and eating. (p. 253)

environment The sum of the various personal, group, social, and physical components that influence behaviour and life chances throughout the life cycle. (p. 242)

gentrification The gradual resettlement and reconstruction of inner-city neighbourhoods by young to middle-aged affluent adults. As a result of this process, the elderly and other low-income groups are usually displaced. (p. 248)

instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) Activities of daily living that demonstrate competence and independence, such as preparing meals, shopping, banking and managing finances, cleaning and maintaining a home, driving a car. (p. 253)

migration Movement by an individual or group from one geographic region to another. (p. 247)

Study Questions

See below for answers.

1. Community has a number of meanings for older people. What is a community and how does it affect older people as they age?
2. What is the ecological model of adaptation and aging? What are the benefits and criticisms of such a model?

Additional Resources

Articles

- Golant, S.M. 2014. [Age-Friendly Communities: Are We Expecting Too Much?](#) *IRPP Insight 5*. Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy.
- Graham, A. 2016. [Improving with Age? How City Design Is Adapting to Older Populations](#), *The Guardian*.
- Lawler, K. 2015. [Age-Friendly Communities: Go Big or Go Home](#), *Public Policy & Aging Report*, 25(1), 30–33.
- Plouffe, L.A., Foucault, M.-L., Eve, D., Lawrence, R., et al. 2013. [Advancing Age-Friendly Communities in Canada](#), *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, 68–69.
- Torjman, S. 2018. [Policy Innovations for an Aging Society](#). Toronto: Maytree.
- Wahl, H.W., Iwarsson, S., & Oswald, F. 2012. Aging Well and the Environment: Toward an Integrative Model and Research Agenda for the Future, *Gerontologist*, 52(3), 306–316.
- World Health Organization. 2007. [Towards Age-Friendly Cities: A Global Guide](#).

Videos

- Percy, D. (Director). 2013. [Makeover](#). (7:09 minutes)
A funny, award-winning short film about dating in later life.
- Menec, V. 2015. [Age Supportive Environments and Healthy Aging](#), Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging Webinar. (61:08 minutes)
Dr. Verena Menec, Canada Research Chair in Healthy Aging, professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba, and Local Site Principal Investigator for the CLSA, talks about research that looks at what constitutes an age-friendly community from the perspective of older adults.
- Sinha, S. 2014. [Building age-friendly communities](#), TEDxStouffville. (14:20 minutes)
People are living longer than ever before. Are they living well? Dr. Samir Sinha is a geriatrician with some smart advice for developing age-friendly communities.

Websites

Aging 2.0, www.aging2.com

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), Livable Communities,
www.aarp.org/ppi/issues/livable-communities

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Seniors, www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/buying/seniors

Study Questions—Answers

1. “Community” has a number of meanings that we must be familiar with in order to create successful policies and programs for older people. On the simplest level, a community is a geographical space defined by political or natural geographical boundaries. A community may range in size from a few adjacent streets in a neighbourhood to a small city to a large metropolitan area. Some even refer to the world as a global community or a global village. A community can vary, as well, in location—rural, remote (as in Canada’s northern areas), urban, or suburban—with each location posing different challenges for aging individuals and for those responsible for public policies and social services. This sense of “community” arises through meaningful and persistent social relationships in which members engage in mutual trust and co-operation, known as social capital, and have shared interests, goals, values, and traditions. Thus, one can live physically in a community but not feel part of it if there is little or no meaningful social interaction with other people. One may also feel connected to, or a part of, several communities (e.g., a neighbourhood, an ethno-cultural group, an LGBTQ community, an age-based retirement community). An overlooked aspect of the residential experience are the ethno-cultural and immigrant dimensions of communities, given that these individuals often face limited access to community and housing services and have unique needs within unique contexts. (p. 242)
2. The ecological model of aging illustrates that the level of individual competence can vary from low to high, while the degree of environmental press can range from weak to strong. The outcome of the interaction between competence and environment influences adaptive behaviour and affect (emotional or mental state); the slope represents ideal behavioural adaptation and positive affect. (p. 250)