



## What Makes the Neighborhood Healthier for People Aging with Physical Disabilities?

More and more Americans are growing older with a physical disability, whether it was present at birth or developed during childhood or adulthood. People with disabilities acquired earlier in life are more likely to experience **negative health, social, and economic outcomes** compared to people with no disabilities, or people who became disabled later in life as a result of the aging process.

### The Neighborhood Matters

People with disabilities are more likely to lead lifestyles that puts them at **increased risk for cardiometabolic disease**. Of course, it's much easier to lead a healthy lifestyle when your home and your neighborhood are made for healthy living. For instance, studies have found that people without disabilities who live in neighborhoods with **parks and grocery stores** tend to have a **lower body mass index** and be more physically active.

Analyzing differences in the way neighborhoods are built is important. Unfortunately, not a lot of researchers have looked at whether neighborhoods are **built to help people aging with physical disabilities**.

### A Healthier Future for All

Researchers included data from **over 15,000 people with disabilities**. They found that living in neighborhoods with **more broadband Internet connections, a lot of public transportation stops, and places for recreation** (e.g., parks) was associated with **reduced risk of developing a cardiometabolic disease** over 3 years.

These findings are important because they also reveal what does *not seem to help* this population. For instance, while **grocery stores** in a neighborhood are important for the health of people *without* disabilities, it didn't seem to affect people aging with physical disabilities. Findings like these are very important, because they can help state and local governments set the right priorities for **a healthier future for all**.

# 40%

of people who were part of this study were diagnosed with a cardiometabolic disease

### A Definition of Cardiometabolic Diseases (CDs)

CDs are a group of common and often preventable diseases that affect the heart, the circulation of blood and metabolic health.

The most common CDs are heart attacks, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, and nonalcoholic steatohepatitis.





## Call To Action

- Neighborhood planning is an essential component of promoting the health of people with disabilities.
- Since broadband Internet was associated with lower risk of cardiometabolic disease, it may be important to invest in infrastructure.

## SNAPSHOT INTO THE RESEARCH

Location Matters: The Role of the Neighborhood Environment for Incident Cardiometabolic Disease in Adults Aging With Physical Disability *American Journal of Health Promotion*. (2024). DOI: 10.1177/08901171241228017 PMID: 38236090 PMCID: PMC11076158. Anam M. Khan, et al.



### Goal of the Study

To understand which features in a neighborhood are important to decreasing the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases.

### Findings

The study sample included people with **cerebral palsy** and **spina bifida** (58.2%), people with **paralysis** (20%) and **multiple sclerosis** (19.2%). 60% of the sample were **females**. The vast majority of the sample (75%) were **50 years of age or younger**.

The development of cardiovascular diseases were common in people aging with a physical disability.

- Having **fewer broadband Internet connections** in the neighborhood was an independent (not connected to any other factor) risk factor for cardiometabolic disease.
- Residence in neighborhoods with more public transit stops was associated with an **11% lower risk** of cardiometabolic disease.
- A greater concentration of recreational organizations and parks offered protection against cardiometabolic diseases. The effects were more pronounced for those residing in neighborhoods with the **greatest concentration of parks**.

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