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Planning for our Future Selves: The Mobility Needs of an Ageing Population

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The Baby Boomer Generation

“Providing for the ongoing safe mobility of ageing baby boomers will require active planning and a rethinking of strategies, policies and provision of services in order to support their continued health and wellbeing into and beyond retirement ...”



OECD 2001

- Today almost 10% of people in the world are over 60 years old;
- By 2050 the figure will be higher than 20%.



The Old Age Dependency Ratio

- As the number of older people rises, the birth rate is falling;
- So there will be fewer working age people to sustain an ageing population without mobility.
- This will lead to:
 - A shortfall in taxation income to pay for essential services;
 - An increased demand for services such as healthcare.



What do we know about today's older people?

- Many older people remain fit and active into old age;
- They often have high disposable incomes;
- They continue to travel regularly both locally and longer distance.



But.....

There is a strong link between age and disability

2/3 of disabled people are elderly. Over half of those over 75 have a disability

Many have stiff joints, reduced sight and hearing

And

Dementia and related neurological conditions affect 10% of people aged 65+

Around 50% of people over 80 have some form of cognitive impairment ranging from mild to severe dementia

Understanding needs

What about the next generation?

The next generation of older people will expect to keep travelling;

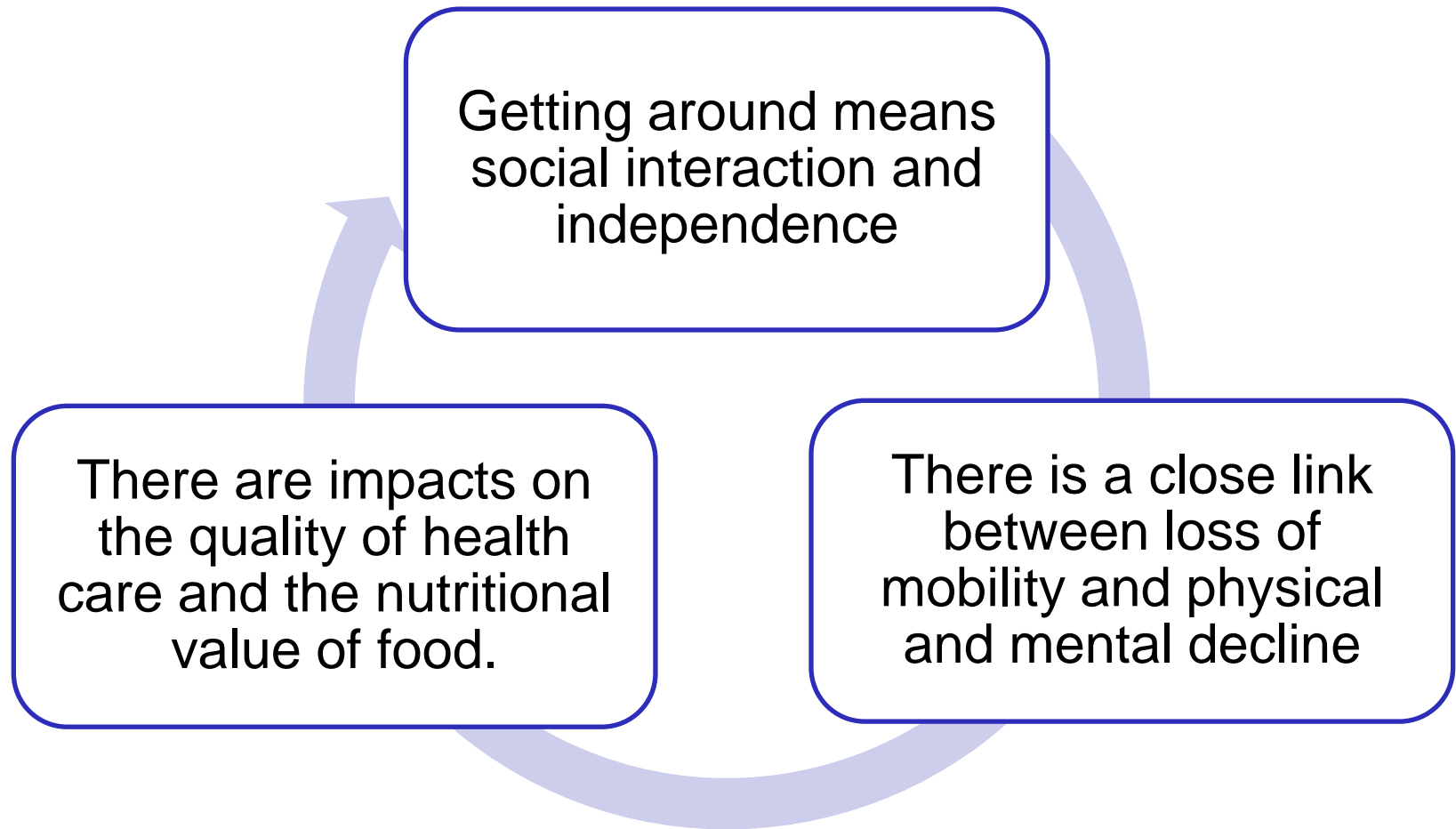


They are unlikely to accept limitations as a consequence of ageing;



They will demand accessible and affordable travel as a right.

Why is mobility important?



Can I get there?

- Many older people don't use public transport because they can't get to it;
- Even if public transport is within walking distance there are often no useable pavements or safe crossing points;
- Gradient, pavement surface and weather condition all affect walking ability.



[www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan Burden](http://www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan_Burden)

Slips and Trips

- Older people walk more (30-40% of travelling time is spent on walking);
- Older pedestrians are at greater risk than any other age group;
- This risk is not reflected in road accident statistics;
- But the cost to society is high.



“Pedestrian Friendly”?

- “Pedestrian friendly” initiatives can mean:
 - Long walking distances from car parks or public transport stops;
 - Lack of resting places;
 - Frightening mix of vehicles and pedestrians.



“You can’t miss it”

- **Pedestrianised areas can mean:**
 - Loss of familiar landmarks
 - Poor or confusing signing
 - Lack of information on distances to toilets, bus stops etc.



Seeing the world through older eyes

- **Macular degeneration**



- **Cataracts**



The price of lost confidence

Many older people lose confidence to go out alone

They are frightened of falling or being knocked down by a cyclist or car driver

The costs to society and to the individual are very high



Finding solutions

- Accessibility is often a low priority for national and local Governments;
- It is seen as an optional extra, not as a fundamental necessity that benefits everyone;
- We need to re-position the economic and fiscal basis of accessibility by :
 - Looking at accessibility as a benefit rather than a cost;
 - Including access to transport as an official measure of economic progress.

We still lack consistent and meaningful indicators of accessibility;

Too often progress is measured by numbers of adapted buses or bus stops, not by the number of people able to travel.

The power of tourism

Ageing populations mean that accessible tourism is a fast growing market;

Tour companies – for example in the USA – demand accessible venues and transport;

In Europe, numbers of disabled and older air travellers are increasing at twice the rate of passengers overall.



There is a need to link funding to a non-negotiable requirement for accessibility;

There must also be a link with defined accessibility standards;

And with monitoring and enforcement.



- Funding conditions are often imposed at national level (as in the USA);
- The EU has introduced a link between accessibility and the availability of funds for transport and infrastructure projects;
- They have produced a “toolkit” with examples of how to integrate accessibility into mainstream planning.

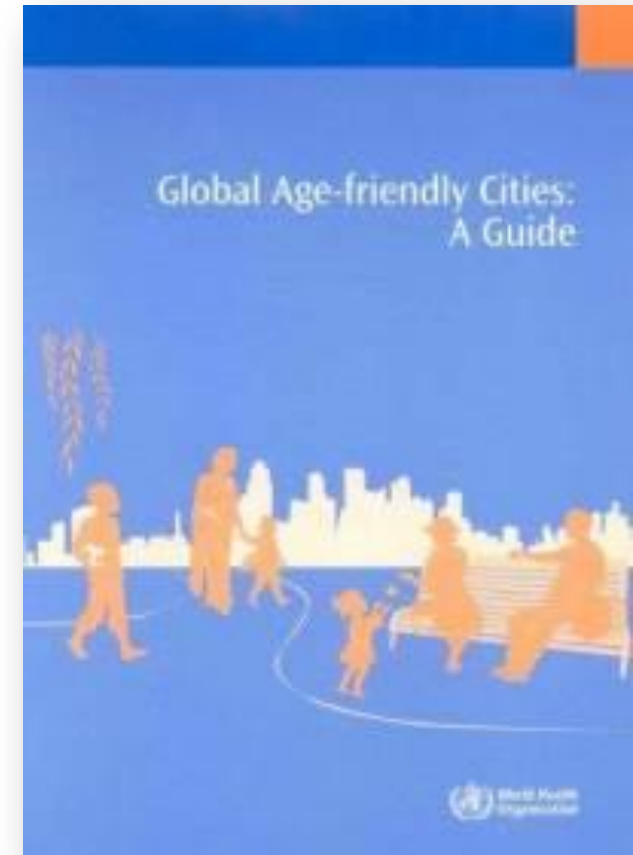


- Many older people living in cities say they are lonely;
- This is often linked to loss of mobility;
- It is important to create environments in which older people feel confident and safe to go out.



Photograph: Martin Argles

- Many countries are now looking at ways to enable older and disabled people to continue to live in their own communities ;
- The World Health Organisation concept of “Age Friendly Cities” sets out useful goals.



Universal Design

Universal Design means making things easier for everyone rather than creating something special for a minority;

For example the ticket machines in the Barcelona Metro were designed by blind people;

This means that they are intuitive to use and everyone finds them easier!



- Planning and design of our cities must include the needs of older people;
- They are a large and growing part of all our populations;
- Personal mobility is a key part of independent living;
- Safety is not just being safe. It is also feeling safe;
- It is not enough to assume we have met their needs, we must listen to them and engage them fully in determining priorities and monitoring implementation!
- One day it will be us, not them!



Thank you!

Thank you!

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