W.H.O Age Friendly Cities – Indicators

Overview

- The focus of this guide is on developing a core set of indicators for a summative assessment of the age-friendliness of a city.

- This is technical guidance offered by WHO as a service to local and municipal governments and community groups who are seeking direction on this issue and who may be interested in improving the global comparability of their indicators.

- An age-friendly city is an inclusive and accessible community environment that optimizes opportunities for health, participation and security for all people.

- An age friendly city is a community-wide, rather than individually-based , effort which takes a broader perspective of older persons' wellbeing.

- The key principles which are reflected in the core indicators are equity, accessibility and inclusiveness.

- Older residents require a number of supportive living conditions to respond to the physical, mental and social changes they experience as a result of biological ageing.

- An environment better adapted to the needs of the growing proportion of older adults, enabling them to remain highly functional, socially engaged and emotionally content is essential.

- In response to population ageing and the rise of noncommunicable diseases, health services are increasingly being reoriented to enhance health promotion, prevention of disease, disability and frailty, management of co-morbidities and provision of long term care, while reducing unnecessary institutionalization.

- The tenet states that an age friendly city encompasses a wide range of physical and social environmental factors that cut across the sectors of government and society.

ACCESSIBILITY OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Walkability

- Defined as : Proportion of streets in the neighbourhood that have pedestrian paths which meet locally accepted standards.

- Neighbourhood walkability refers to the extent that a neighbourhood design supports walking. Walkability is characterized by a range of features including:
    - mixed land use,
    - accessibility of destinations,
    - safety,
    - and the availability, quality and connectivity of pedestrian facilities.

  Several methods are currently available for assessing neighbourhood walkability using both quantitative and qualitative data. The suggested definition focuses on one key aspect of walkability – i.e. availability of accessible pedestrian paths. Locally accepted standards (path wide enough, no step to road, obstacle free, etc.) should be applied.

- Suggested data sources: - Field survey of city streets - Administrative data on city planning, roads and infrastructure.

Accessibility of spaces and buildings

- Defined as : Proportion of new and existing public spaces and buildings that are fully accessible by wheelchair.

- The suggested indicator (i.e. accessibility by wheelchair) can be supplemented with additional indicators for a more comprehensive assessment of compliance with universal design (or inclusive design) standards.
    - Universally designed buildings and spaces enable access for everyone, including children, older people and people with functional limitations.
    - The buildings and spaces are easily understood regardless of experience or knowledge, minimize hazards and accidental or unintended actions, and can be used efficiently and comfortably with a minimum of physical effort. Several guidelines on universal design are currently available.

- Suggested data sources: - Field survey of new and existing public spaces and buildings - Administrative data on city planning, building safety/permits, and parks.

Accessibility of Public transport

- Defined as : Proportion of public transport vehicles with designated places for older people or people who have disabilities.

- Physical accessibility of public transport vehicles refers to the ability of people with disabilities and older people to safely ride in a public transport vehicle in order to reach their destination. Several guidelines on accessible public transport are currently available with locally accepted standards applied.

- Suggested data sources: - Administrative data from local transport authority.

Accessibility of Bus stops etc

- Defined as : Proportion of housing within walking distance (500 m) to a public transportation stop.

- Accessibility of bus stops in this context refers to the distance from the homes of older people to public transportation stops. If door to-door services of public transportation are available, the proportion of housing within the coverage area of door-to-door services could be an alternative indicator. Additional indicators would be needed to take into consideration the safety and quality of the route to the transportation stop, the accessibility of transportation stops from important destinations (e.g. community centres, healthcare service, grocery stores, banks, etc.), the extent to which people's activities are actually limited due to lack of access to public transport, and other aspects.

- Suggested data sources: - Administrative data from local transport authority or city planning department.

Affordability of Housing

- Defined as : Proportion of older people who live in a household that spends less than 30 per cent of their equalized disposable income on housing.

- Housing costs include renting costs, mortgage payment, and repair and maintenance costs.
    - The threshold of 30 per cent of disposable household income is based on existing practice. Locally accepted thresholds for defining affordability can be applied.

- Suggested data sources: - Household census - Administrative data from department of economic affairs or housing - Public expenditure report.

INCLUSIVNESS OF THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

A Positive Social Attitude towards Older People

- Defined as : Number of reported cases of maltreatment of older persons (as a proportion of the total number of older people).

  (*A lower number can be indicative of a society in which the dignity and respect of older persons are protected.)

- Maltreatment of older persons is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person. This type of violence constitutes a violation of human rights and includes physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial and material abuse; abandonment; neglect; and serious loss of dignity and respect.

  - Maltreatment of older people is an important public health problem. However, older people are often afraid to report cases of maltreatment to family, friends, or to the authorities. It may also be considered taboo to report such cases. Therefore, caution is required in interpreting low numbers of reported cases of maltreatment of older people, as it may in fact reflect undesirable conditions.
  - Ageism is discrimination or unfair treatment based on a person's age, specifically discrimination against older people; absence of ageism is another indicator of a society's inclusiveness and respect for older people.
  - Media portrayal of older adults, or the attitudes of employers and service providers toward older people, can also be important measures of social attitude, though their measurement remains a challenge. Measures of social capital, such as social cohesion, may also be an indicator of the inclusiveness of a community, which can be assessed through self- report surveys.

- Suggested data sources: - Data collected by local law enforcement authorities, health/social service providers, or community groups addressing (elder) abuse prevention.

Volunteer Activity of Older People

- Defined as : Proportion of older people in local volunteer registries.

- While volunteer activity is generally considered to be a positive indication of older people's social participation and contribution, it is not a desirable situation if they would rather be engaging in paid work but that option is not available to them because of their age. Therefore, an additional indicator worth considering is the level of satisfaction with, or desirability of, the volunteer activity from the older person's perspective. The types of volunteer activity, setting (e.g. schools, neighbourhood) and frequency of participation to be measured can be determined locally, as appropriate.

- Suggested data sources: - Administrative data from local government - Reports from local organizations with volunteer registries.

Older Peoples participation in Local Decision Making

- Defined as : Proportion of eligible older voters who actually voted in the most recent local election or legislative initiative.

- Indicators of older people's participation in local decision-making can include, for example, the representation of older people (either direct or indirect) in the local government council and other local decision making bodies and fora e.g. council meetings.

- Suggested data sources: -Administrative data from local government.

Older People in paid jobs

- Defined as : Proportion of older people who are currently unemployed.

  (*A lower unemployment rate is indicative of greater availability of paid employment opportunities for older people.)

- Measures of unemployment take into account whether the individual considers him/herself to be in the labour market (i.e. looking for paid work but not currently employed). This is a sensitive indicator of employment opportunities as it captures lack of positions instead of successful employment.

    - While engagement in paid labour is generally considered to be a positive indication of older people's access to employment, social participation, inclusion and contribution, it is not a desirable situation if they would rather be retired but that option is not available to them because of their lack of economic security. Therefore, an additional indicator worth considering is the level of satisfaction with, or desirability of, the opportunities for paid work from the older person's perspective. The frequency of engagement in paid employment can be determined locally, as necessary.

- Suggested data sources: - Labour statistics.

Older Peoples Socio Cultural Activity

- Defined as : Proportion of older adults among all reported visitors to local cultural facilities and events.

- Participation in socio-cultural activities is a positive indication of older people's social participation and inclusion, and generally includes leisurely participation in formal or informal religious, cultural or other social activities with friends, relatives or neighbours.

    - The focus is on face-to face encounters, although online encounters and activities may become increasingly important with successive generations of older adults. The specific types of activities to be included in this indicator and the frequency of participation can be determined locally, as necessary

- Suggested data sources: - Administrative data from city department of cultural affairs - Demographic data of visitors reported by cultural facilities and events

Availability of information

- Defined as : Availability of local sources providing information about health concerns and service referrals, including by phone.

- Information is essential for older persons and their caregivers to be able to take informed decisions and actions about their health and social life, as well as seek needed services. The information should be provided in a way that is inclusive of people of different age groups and functional abilities, who may vary in their preferred mode of communication

- Suggested data sources: - Administrative data from city health department

Availability of Health Services for Older People

- Defined as : Proportion of older persons who have personal care or assistance needs that are receiving formal (public or private) home- or community-based services.

- Home- and community-based social and health services cover a wide range of services. They are essential for older people with health conditions or functional limitations which inhibit their ability to live autonomously and maintain quality of life.

  - The core indicator focuses on the availability of formal services; in contexts where informal (family) care plays a major role, the indicator should be adapted to account for this.
  - The need for services can be determined based on self-report, diagnosed health conditions and/ or functional limitations. More detailed indicators would be necessary to determine the unmet need for specific types of services in the community (e.g. home health, personal care)

- Suggested data sources: - Administrative data from city government on health and social services - Official reports from local home- and community-based health and social service providers

Economic security

- Defined as : Proportion of older people living in a household with a disposable income above the risk-of-poverty threshold.

- Economic security is an individual's economic situation that allows the individual to maintain their standard of living and meet their basic needs now and in the near future without public or private assistance.

  - The European Union sets the risk-of-poverty threshold at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income (after social transfers).
  - The equivalised income is calculated by dividing the total household income by its size determined after applying the following weights: 1.0 to the first adult, 0.5 to each other household members aged 14 or over, and 0.3 to each household member aged less than 14 years old (see References below).

- Suggested data sources: - Labour statistics – Administrative data from economic affairs depa

Older Peoples quality of Life

- Defined as : Healthy life expectancy at birth

- The indicator of healthy life expectancy at birth focuses on the average number of years that a person can expect to live in "full health" by taking into account years lived in less than full health due to disease and/or injury.

  - Healthy life expectancy at an older age (e.g. 60) can be a more sensitive measure of years lived in full health in the later years of life.
  - Quality of Life is not simply the absence of disease or injury. An enabling and supportive environment can allow someone with disease or injury to still enjoy a good quality of life.
  - A subjective measure of Quality of Life can be very important, which would indicate "an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value system in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectation, standards and concerns" (WHO, 1997 p.1). Other possible measures of Quality of Life include Subjective Well-being

- Suggested data sources: - Administrative data and reports from city health department

SUPPLEMENTARY INDICATORS

Older Peoples Accessibility of parking

- Defined as : Proportion of priority parking spaces at new and existing public facilities that are designated for older people or people with disabilities.

- In societies where private car use is the main means of transportation, accessibility of priority parking can be important for older people's mobility.

  - Priority parking refers to accessible parking spaces designed for people meeting certain criteria, such as having a disability. Several guidelines on priority parking are currently available ; locally accepted priority parking standards (e.g. width of parking space, signs etc.) should be applied. The suggested definition captures only the availability of priority car parking spaces; additional indicators would be required for a more comprehensive assessment of the accessibility of priority parking.

- Suggested data sources: - Administrative data on city planning, building safety/permits and parks.

Accessibility of Housing

- Defined as : Proportion of new and existing houses that have wheelchair-accessible entrances (i.e. sufficient width, ramp).

- The suggested indicator can be supplemented with additional indicators for a more comprehensive assessment of compliance with universal design standards.

    - Universally designed housing enables access for everyone, including children, older people and people with functional limitations.
    - The features of universally designed housing are adapted, and adaptable, in order to respond to the individual needs and circumstances of people as they age.
    Several guidelines on universal housing design are currently available (see References); locally relevant, appropriate and acceptable standards should be applied.

- Suggested data sources: - Administrative data from department of housing.

Older Peoples participation in physical activity

- Defined as : Proportion of older people who are a member of a self-organized or institutionalized leisure-time physical activity group.

- The focus of this indicator is on leisure-time group physical activity, including play, sports and planned exercise.

    - The aim is to capture the positive aspects of both physical activity and social participation.
    - Other forms of physical activity, such as commute/transport, occupational activity and household chores, are more likely to be done out of need rather than desire, and not as likely to involve social participation.
    - The specific types of activities and groups or facilities to be included in this indicator can be determined locally, as appropriate.
    - More specific measures of physical activity are possible, with specifications of the type, duration, frequency and intensity of exercise. However, assessing optimal levels of physical activity for older persons on a population basis can be complicated, as many older adults may not be able to do the recommended amounts of physical activity due to health conditions or functional limitations. Indicators for such kinds of assessments would need to capture the extent to which older adults are as physically active as their abilities and conditions allow.

- Suggested data sources: - Demographic data of members reported by local clubs, associations or facilities for group sports and other physical activities.

Older Peoples participation in lifelong learning

- Defined as : Proportion of older people who were enrolled in education or training, either formal or non-formal, in the past year.

- Formal, non-formal and informal education are three different types of education.

    - Formal education refers to education and training courses, including workplace training, offered by universities, colleges, schools and other organizations with accreditation.

    - Non-formal education refers to organized and structured education within or outside of education institutes. The difference with formal education activities is that non-formal education does not lead to a qualification. Examples are courses audited, not for credit, at a college or university, library courses or religious learning activities.

    - Informal education activities refer to learning situations at home, at work or during leisure activities, and are neither organized nor structured.

    - The specific types of education activities and time period to be included in this indicator can be determined locally, as appropriate. If local residents have good access to life-long learning opportunities in neighbouring communities, surveys of older residents may provide a fuller picture of their learning activities than information obtained only from local institutions.

- Suggested data sources: - Administrative data from city department of education - Enrolment data of private and public education and training institutes.

Internet Access

- Defined as : Proportion of older people living in a household with internet access at home.

- The use of the Internet as a means of obtaining information and communicating with other users whether for social interaction, to receive services and care (e.g. e-/m-Health), or to perform work and other daily tasks (e.g. shopping) from home, has grown dramatically over the years.

    - While there still may be substantial variability in the degree of reliance on the Internet as an essential information and communication technology among older adults, thus creating a digital divide between generations/ age cohorts or geographic areas, it is already an important tool for older adults in many developed countries, and is expected to increasingly become important for successive generations of older adults in other contexts.

- Suggested data sources: - Demographic data of internet users reported by public and/or private internet providers.

Public Safety

- Defined as : Reported rate of crimes (per year) committed against older people.

- Public safety in the community is important both for directly and indirectly promoting the health and wellbeing of residents. Safety from crime, violence and other hazardous events in the community can protect the physical health and mental wellbeing of residents.

  - Feelings of safety and trust can also enhance social cohesion. Perceived safety can further promote people's wellbeing and inclusion in society by reducing their anxiety about leaving home to engage in physical exercise and social activities.
  - Many kinds of physical and social environment interventions are possible to enhance community safety, particularly for older adults, such as installing way-finding systems and safety features at crosswalks, and raising awareness about common crimes against older persons

- Suggested data sources: - Crime statistics - police

Preparedness for emergency

- Defined as : Proportion of employees of local government agencies, community organizations, and service providers who participated in an emergency response training or drill in the past year which addressed the needs of older residents.

- Older adults have special needs in an emergency. It is common for them to have chronic health conditions and functional limitations which increase their vulnerability and need for support in an emergency.

  - It is critical that individuals, service providers, and communities actively engage in emergency planning and training, taking into account the special needs of older adults and people with disabilities.
  - Each person has a responsibility to prepare for a potential emergency, including older adults and their family caregivers.
  - Service providers must be trained in emergency response procedures to ensure continuity of service, the safety of their own staff, and that of the older adults under their care.
  - Local government agencies and community organizations must coordinate and be prepared to support the health and safety needs of older adults, engage them in the planning and training/exercising, and prepare plans, information systems, supplies and facilities to meet the needs of older adults in their community, not only in the immediate response phase but also in the mid- to long-term recovery phase, as necessary. This should be an integral part of the broader community emergency preparedness and response protocol.

- Suggested data sources: - Reports by local authorities who conduct regular emergency response trainings or drills (e.g. local emergency management office, local fire department) - Survey of relevant local government agencies, community organizations and service providers.