

Cumming School of Medicine
Department of Community Health Sciences

Aging-in-place with pets: *Is pet-ownership relevant to social participation and life satisfaction for older adults in Canada?*



**UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY**

Authors: Ann M. Toohey, Jennifer A. Hewson,
Cindy L. Adams, and Melanie J. Rock

CLSA Webinar Series

Presentation by Ann M. Toohey, PhD candidate
amtoohey@ucalgary.ca

06 December 2016

Today's presentation:

- i. Aging-in-place with pets
- ii. CLSA analysis of social participation & pets
- iii. Implications for promoting age-friendly cities



NATIONAL POST

HOME • FINANCIAL POST • NEWS • COMMENT • PERSONAL FINANCE • INVESTING • TECH • SPORTS • ARTS • LIFE • HEALTH • HO

NEWS CANADA POLITICS

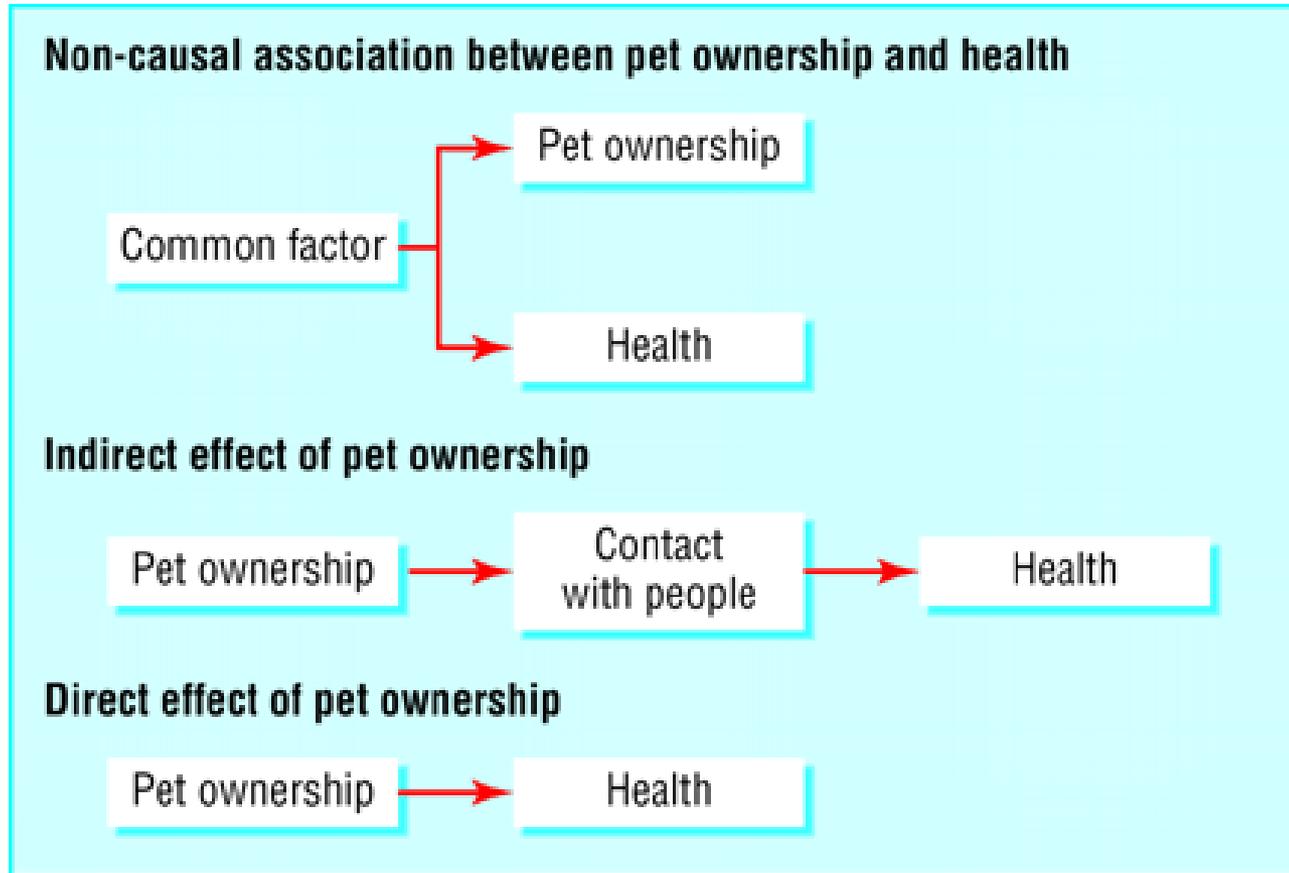
CANADA

TRENDING [Leonard Cohen](#) | [NHL](#) | [Akin](#) | [U.S. election](#) | [Hydro bills](#) | [Real estate](#) | [Lotto Max](#)

'I'm not getting rid of my kitty': Calgary senior chooses homelessness over giving up kitten

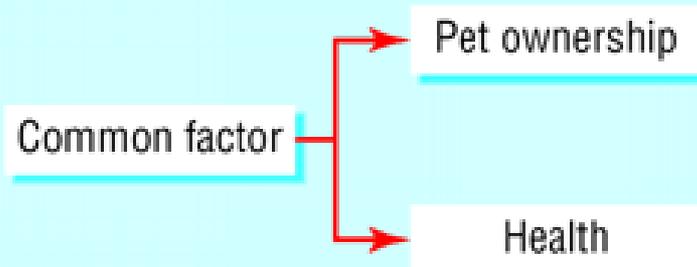
NP EMMA MCINTOSH, POSTMEDIA NEWS | August 5, 2015 11:36 AM ET
[More from Postmedia News](#)





Credit: McNicholas J, Gilbey A, Rennie A, Ahmedzai S, Dono J-A, Ormerod E. Pet ownership and human health: a brief review of evidence and issues. *BMJ*. 2005 Nov;331(7527):1252–4.

Non-causal association between pet ownership and health



Indirect effect of pet ownership



Direct effect of pet ownership



Credit: McNicholas J, Gilbey A, Rennie A, Ahmedzai S, Dono J-A, Ormerod E. Pet ownership and human health: a brief review of evidence and issues. *BMJ*. 2005 Nov;331(7527):1252–4.

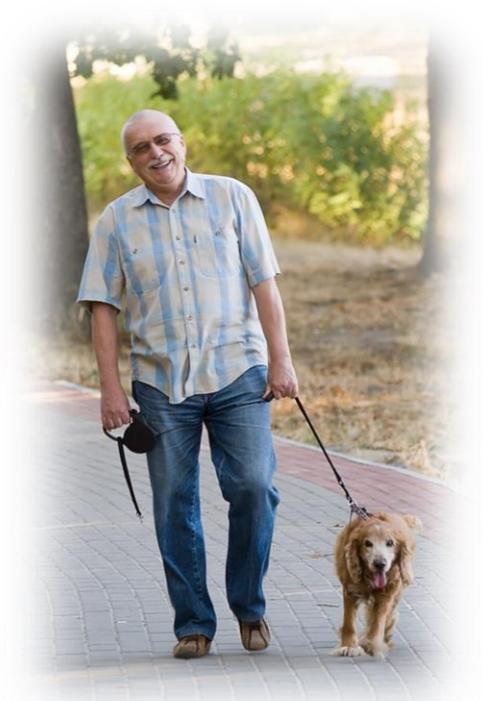
Over **1/3 of older Canadians** (≥ 65 yr) report living with a household pet that offers companionship

What does current research tell us about pets and aging-in-place?



Evidence suggests that for older adults, relationships with pets may:

- contribute to maintaining **physical function**;
- provide **companionship** and **purpose**; and
- facilitate **social interactions** and lead to a heightened **sense of community**



Yet, some contradictory, counter-intuitive findings exist:

Older adults with pets may be **lonelier**, or **less satisfied with life**, or show various other indications of **poorer mental health...**



© Shutterstock

...BUT may also be **buffered from the negative consequences** of loneliness and having lower levels of social support



© MorgueFile



ATTACHMENT to pets has been explored as a key to understanding efficacy of pets in relation to “healthy” or “successful” aging...



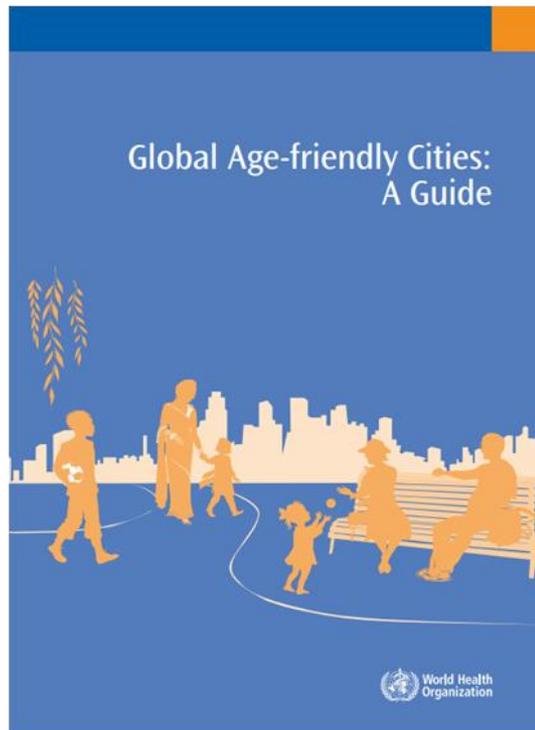
... in fact, some older adults **credit their pets** with contributing to their own successful aging

CRITIQUES of pets for older adults have included concern with “extreme” attachment, to the **detriment** of **participating in social life** and **neglecting self-care**

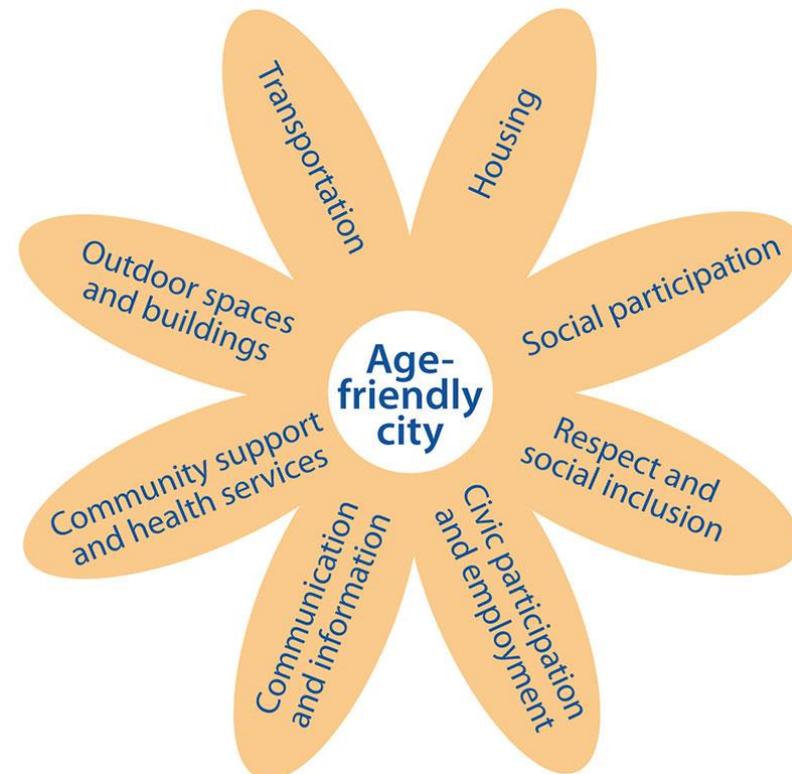


© All Creatures Great & Small Rescue

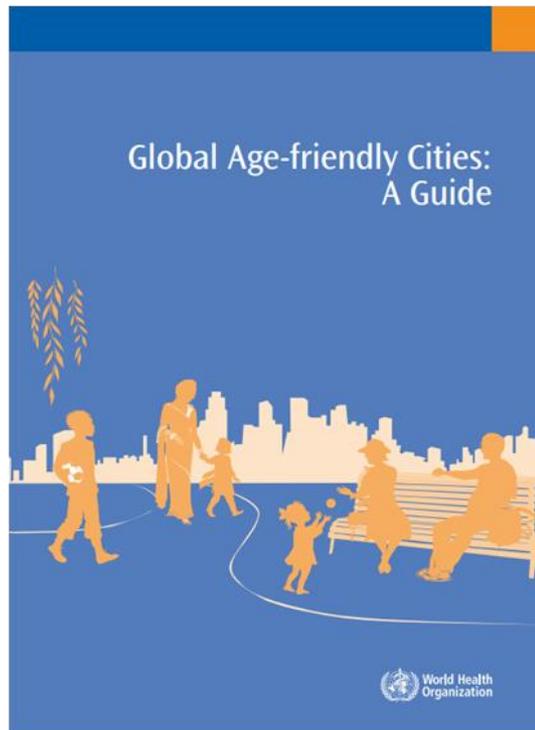
- Few studies seek to understand pets in relation to ways that we actively promote aging-in-place



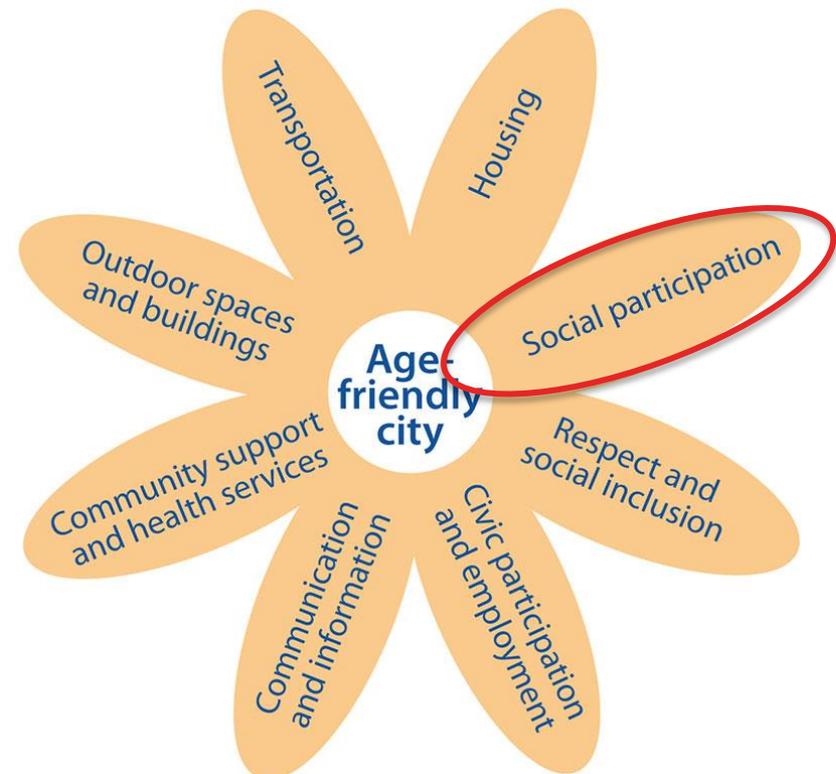
WHO Age-Friendly Themes



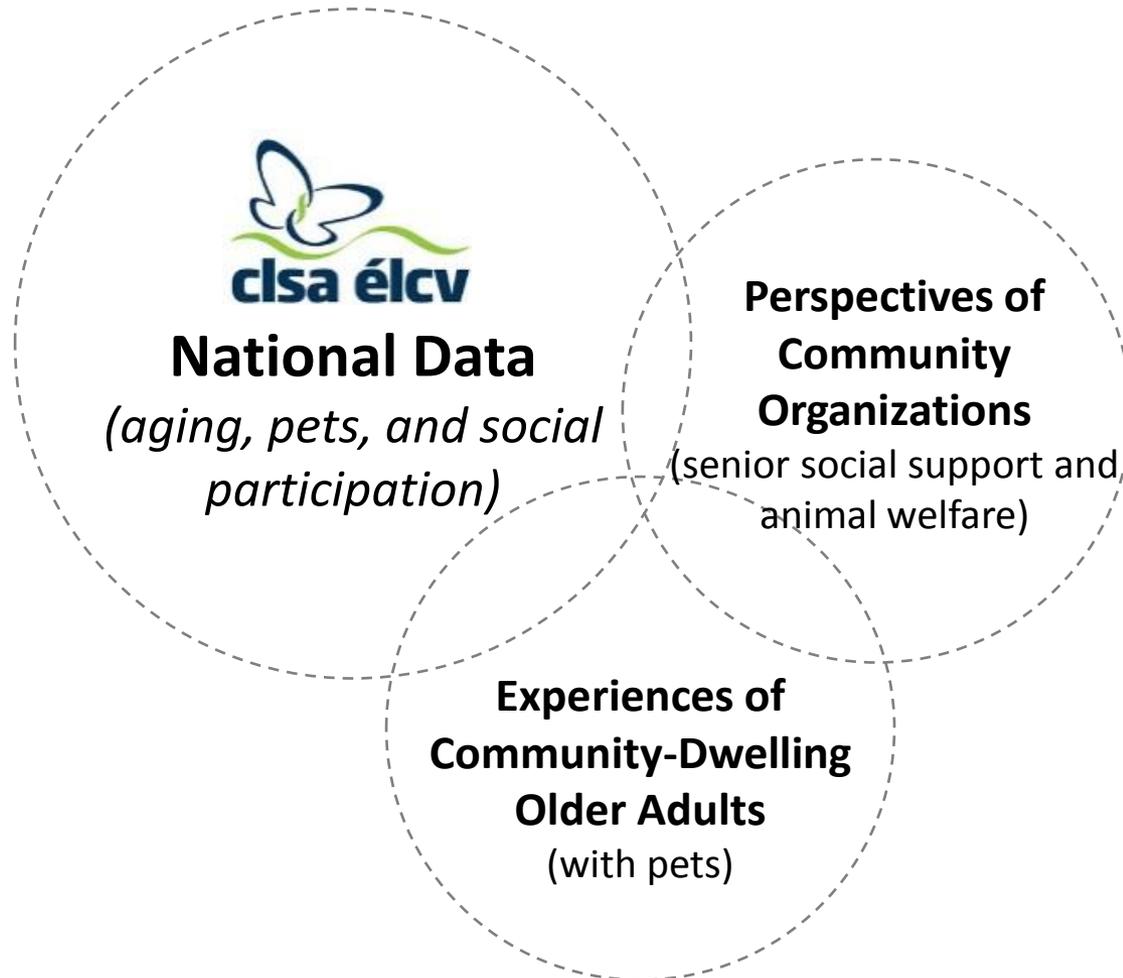
- Few studies seek to understand pets in relation to ways that we actively promote aging-in-place



WHO Age-Friendly Themes



*Exploring a contemporary phenomenon:
in depth and in context (Yin 2009)*



OBJECTIVE I: To describe the **baseline characteristics** of older Canadian pet-owners and non-owners (≥ 65 yr) participating in the CLSA (Tracking cohort)

OBJECTIVE II: To explore measures of **social participation** and **life satisfaction** for older Canadian adults, considering whether and how these differ for pet-owners vs. non-owners

- **CLSA Telephone Tracking cohort (Release 3.0)**
 - Community-dwelling adults residing in Canada
 - 65 yr or older at baseline (N=8,845)
 - Data collected Sept 2011 - May 2014
 - Representative sampling



© www.clsa-elcv.ca

Social Participation (SPA)

- (i)** Frequent participation in various types of social, recreational, and group activities over the past 12 months (as per Gilmour, 2012)
- (ii)** Wanted to participate in more social activities over the past 12 months
- (iii)** Barriers to social participation identified by participants and coded by CLSA personnel

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLS): level of agreement with the following statements:

- *In many ways my life is close to ideal;*
- *The conditions of my life are excellent;*
- *I am satisfied with my life;*
- *So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life;*
- *If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.*

- **Assessing pet ownership:**

Do you have a household pet that provides you with companionship?



- **OBJECTIVE I:** weighted proportions stratified by pet-ownership; F-tests

- **OBJECTIVE II:** logistic regression models comparing pet-owners and non-owners in terms of:
 - life satisfaction
 - levels of social participation (current vs. desired)
 - barriers to social participation
 - associations between social participation and life satisfaction

All models were controlled for socio-demographic variables and probability weighting

- Compared to non-owners, older pet-owners are **less** likely to:
 - *be older (≥ 75 yr)****
 - *belong to a visible minority****
 - *live alone****
 - *rent their homes****
 - *have completed post-secondary education**

n=7,474 respondents ≥ 65 yr, after removing observations with missing data

* $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$

- In terms of considering **vulnerability and diversity** within the aging population, pet-ownership was reported by:
 - *25% of respondents 75 yr and older****
 - *29% of respondents living alone****
 - *23% of respondents identifying as visible minority****
 - *46% of respondents who identified as LGBTQ*
 - *31% of lower income respondents (<\$20K/yr)*
 - *32% of respondents reporting poor to fair health*

n=7,474 after removing observations with missing data

*** $p < 0.001$

- Pet-owners as a whole tend to indicate lower levels of life satisfaction

OR = 0.72, 95% CI [0.64, 0.83]***

- As a whole, pet-owners were less likely to be **frequent participators** in one or more social, recreational, or group activities than non-owners

OR=0.68, 95% CI [0.57, 0.81]***

- Pet-owners and non-owners were equally likely to have **wanted to be more socially active** over past year

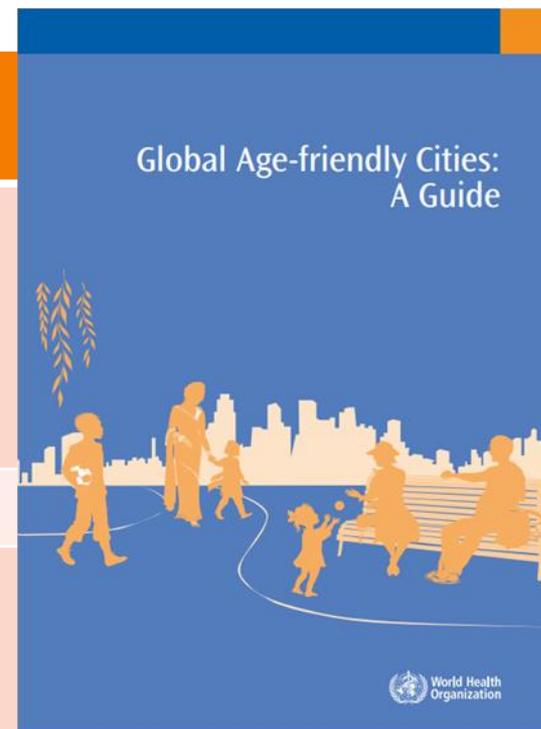
OR=1.06, 95% CI [0.95, 1.19]

- The **most socially-active** pet-owners (i.e., frequent participation in 5 or more social activities) had **higher life satisfaction** than similarly active non-owners

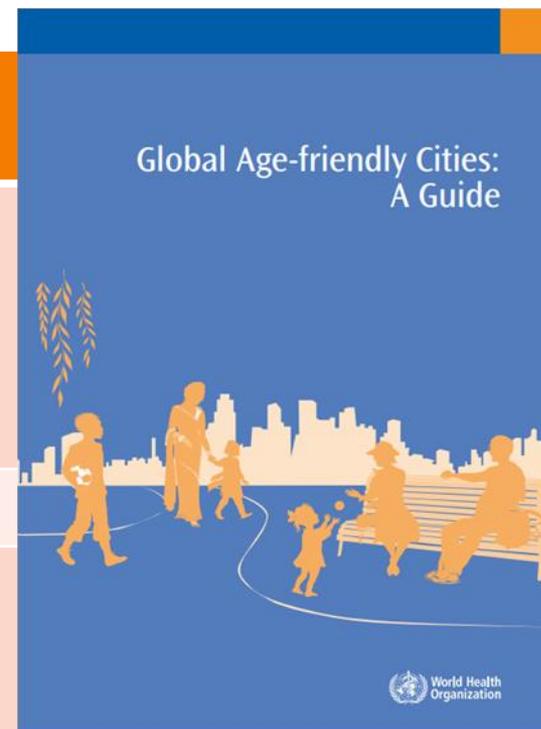
$$OR_{(\text{pet-owners})} = 2.97, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.99, 4.42]^{***}$$

$$OR_{(\text{non-owners})} = 2.38, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.74, 3.26]^{***}$$

WHO Age-Friendly Cities Framework	CLSA Barriers
Accessible opportunities	<i>Afraid, concerned for safety</i> <i>Location not accessible</i> <i>Location too far away</i> <i>Transportation</i> <i>Timing</i> <i>Did not want to go alone</i>
Affordable opportunities	<i>Cost</i>
Appropriate range of events and activities	<i>Activities not available nearby</i> <i>Health condition/limitation</i> <i>Timing</i> <i>Too busy</i> <i>Did not want to go alone</i>
Awareness of opportunities	<i>Language-related reasons</i>
Encouraging social participation	<i>Location too far away</i> <i>Activities not available nearby</i> <i>Health condition/limitation</i> <i>Did not want to go alone</i> <i>Personal or family responsibilities</i> <i>Language-related reasons</i>



WHO Age-Friendly Cities Framework	CLSA Barriers
Accessible opportunities	<i>Afraid, concerned for safety</i> <i>Location not accessible</i> <i>Location too far away</i> <i>Transportation</i> <i>Timing</i> <i>Did not want to go alone</i>
Affordable opportunities	<i>Cost</i>
Appropriate range of events and activities	<i>Activities not available nearby</i> <i>Health condition/limitation</i> <i>Timing</i> <i>Too busy</i> <i>Did not want to go alone</i>
Awareness of opportunities	<i>Language-related reasons</i>
Encouraging social participation	<i>Location too far away</i> <i>Activities not available nearby</i> <i>Health condition/limitation</i> <i>Did not want to go alone</i> <i>Personal or family responsibilities</i> <i>Language-related reasons</i>



Interests in pets may **transcend socio-cultural and socio-economic differences**, as well as promote opportunities for inter-generational interactions



© MorgueFile

Costs and responsibilities of pet-care may be prioritized over dedicating time or spending money on social activities



Offering more opportunities that align with interests in pets may also involve rethinking ways that public spaces might become more pet-friendly



© The Atlantic

Important to balance needs of all older adults – currently, pet-owners' interests tend to be missing from organized efforts to promote age-friendliness

Strengths:

Social-ecological approach

Conceptual link with age-friendly cities framework

Limitations:

Species distinctions

*Other indicators of social well-being
(e.g., Newall/ Menec cluster analysis presented in
previous CLSA Webinar)*

Cross-sectional design

Measures themselves...



- Dog-walking: promotes physical activity, but also sense of community for older adults...may not be captured by social participation as currently measured.

Health & Place 22 (2013) 75–81



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at SciVerse ScienceDirect

Health & Place

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/healthplace



Dog-walking and sense of community in neighborhoods: Implications for promoting regular physical activity in adults 50 years and older



A.M. Toohey^a, G.R. McCormack^{a,b,*}, P.K. Doyle-Baker^{b,c}, C.L. Adams^{a,b,d}, M.J. Rock^{a,b,d}

^a Faculty of Medicine, Department of Community Health Sciences, University of Calgary, 3rd Floor, TRW Building, 3280 Hospital Drive NW, Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 4Z6

^b Faculty of Medicine, Institute for Public Health, 3rd Floor, TRW Building, 3280 Hospital Drive NW, Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 4Z6

^c Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary, 2500 University Dr NW, Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 1N4

^d Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Calgary, 2nd Floor, TRW Building, 3280 Hospital Dr NW, Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 4Z6

- Growing recognition that we as researchers are “missing” something important when we fail to pay attention to roles pets play in people’s lives.

SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS

Sociology of Health & Illness Vol. 37 No. 1 2015 ISSN 0141-9889, pp. 67–80
doi: 10.1111/1467-9566.12176

On interviewing people with pets: reflections from qualitative research on people with long-term conditions

Sara Ryan and Sue Ziebland

“Pets were often presented as important family members, yet the **researchers’ responses** to the presence or talk about pets was often **markedly different** from their reactions to other household members.”



NATIONAL POST

HOME • FINANCIAL POST • NEWS • COMMENT • PERSONAL FINANCE • INVESTING • TECH • SPORTS • ARTS • LIFE • HEALTH • HO

NEWS CANADA POLITICS

CANADA

TRENDING Leonard Cohen | NHL | Akin | U.S. election | Hydro bills | Real estate | Lotto Max

'I'm not getting rid of my kitty': Calgary senior chooses homelessness over giving up kitten

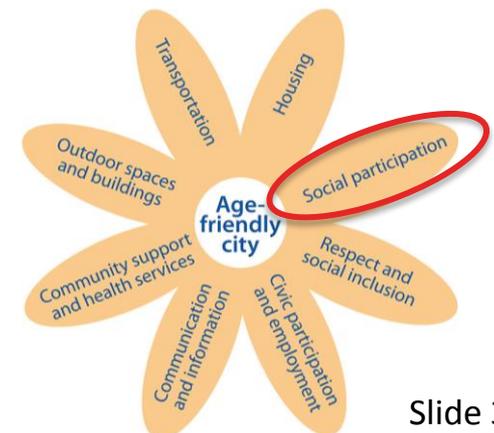
NP EMMA MCINTOSH, POSTMEDIA NEWS | August 5, 2015 11:36 AM ET
[More from Postmedia News](#)



- i. Many older adults have pets, including members of diverse and vulnerable sub-populations
- ii. Having a pet is associated with both lower life satisfaction and lower levels of social participation for older adults

YET ...

- iii. Having a pet may also help to offset some of the negative outcomes of being socially-isolated
- iv. Pet-owners with higher levels of social participation also have highest life satisfaction
- v. Efforts to promote social participation that also consider pet-owners' needs and interests may contribute to the age-friendly priority of enhancing social participation



- i. Drs Jennifer Hewson, Daniel Dutton, Cindy Adams, and Melanie Rock for substantive contributions and mentorship
- ii. Drs James Gillett, David Hogan, Parminder Raina, and Debbie Stoewen for conceptual input
- iii. The Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging
- iv. All of my case study research participants



© LIFE Magazine 1961, accessed via Pinterest

- Bennett, P. C., Trigg, J. L., Godber, T., & Brown, C. (2015). An Experience Sampling Approach to Investigating Associations between Pet Presence and Indicators of Psychological Wellbeing and Mood in Older Australians. *Anthrozoös*, 28(3), 403–420.
- Chur-Hansen, A., Winefield, H. R., & Beckwith, M. (2009). Companion Animals for Elderly Women: The Importance of Attachment. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 6(4), 281–293.
- Enmarker, I., Hellzén, O., Ekker, K., & Berg, A.-G. T. (2015). Depression in older cat and dog owners: the Nord-Trøndelag Health Study (HUNT)-3. *Aging & Mental Health*, 19(4), 347–352.
- Garrity, T. F., Stallones, L., Marx, M. B., & Johnson, T. P. (1989). Pet ownership and attachment as supportive factors in the health of the elderly. *Anthrozoos*, 3, 35–44.
- Gilmour, H. (2012, October). Social participation and the health and well-being of Canadian seniors. Statistics Canada.
- Graham, T. M., & Glover, T. D. (2014). On the fence: Dog parks in the (un) leashing of community and social capital. *Leisure Sciences*, 36(3), 217–234.
- Himsworth, C. G., & Rock, M. J. (2013). Pet ownership, other domestic relationships, and satisfaction with life among seniors: Results from a Canadian national survey. *Anthrozoos*, 26(2), 295–305.
- Krause-Parello, C. A. (2012). Pet ownership and older women: The relationships among loneliness, pet attachment support, human social support, and depressed mood. *Geriatric Nursing*, 33(3), 194–203.
- McNicholas, J., Gilbey, A., Rennie, A., Ahmedzai, S., Dono, J.-A., & Ormerod, E. (2005). Pet ownership and human health: a brief review of evidence and issues. *BMJ*, 331(7527), 1252–1254.
- McNicholas, J. (2014). The role of pets in the lives of older people: a review. *Working with Older People*, 18(3), 128–133.
- Morley, C., & Fook, J. (2005). The importance of pet loss and some implications for services. *Mortality*, 10(2), 127–143.
- Pachana, N. A., Ford, J. H., Andrew, B., & Dobson, A. J. (2005). Relations between companion animals and self-reported health in older women: cause, effect or artifact? *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 12(2), 103–110.

- Parslow, R. A., Jorm, A. F., Christensen, H., Rodgers, B., & Jacomb, P. (2005). Pet ownership and health in older adults: findings from a survey of 2,551 community-based Australians aged 60-64. *Gerontology, 51*(1), 40–47.
- Peacock, J., Chur-Hansen, A., & Winefield, H. (2012). Mental Health Implications of Human Attachment to Companion Animals. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 68*(3), 292–303. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20866>
- Pikhartova, J., Bowling, A., & Victor, C. (2014). Does owning a pet protect older people against loneliness? *BMC Geriatrics, 14*, 106.
- Poresky, R. H., & Daniels, A. M. (1998). Demographics of Pet Presence and Attachment. *Anthrozoos, 11*(4), 236–241.
- Putney, J. M. (2013). Relational ecology: A theoretical framework for understanding the human-animal bond. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 40*, 57.
- Raina, P. S., Waltner-Toews, D., Bonnett, B., Woodward, C., & Abernathy, T. (1999). Influence of companion animals on the physical and psychological health of older people: an analysis of a one-year longitudinal study. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, 47*(3), 323–329.
- Swift, A. U., & Tate, R. B. (2013). Themes from older men's lay definitions of successful aging as indicators of primary and secondary control beliefs over time: The Manitoba Follow-up Study. *Journal of Aging Studies, 27*(4), 410–418.
- Toohey, A. M., McCormack, G. R., Doyle-Baker, P. K., Adams, C. L., & Rock, M. J. (2013). Dog-walking and sense of community in neighborhoods: Implications for promoting regular physical activity in adults 50 years and older. *Health & Place, 22*, 75–81.
- Wells, Y., & Rodi, H. (2000). Effects of pet ownership on the health and well-being of older people. *Australasian Journal on Ageing, 19*(3), 143–148.
- Wood, L. J., Giles-Corti, B., & Bulsara, M. (2005). The pet connection: pets as a conduit for social capital? *Social Science & Medicine, 61*(6), 1159–1173.