



Impacts of urban greenspace on mental health

Michaela Roberts¹, Alistair McVittie², Katherine N Irvine¹
¹The James Hutton Institute, Craigiebuckler, Aberdeen
²Scotland's Rural College, Kings Buildings, Edinburgh
 Email: Michaela.roberts@hutton.ac.uk



Introduction

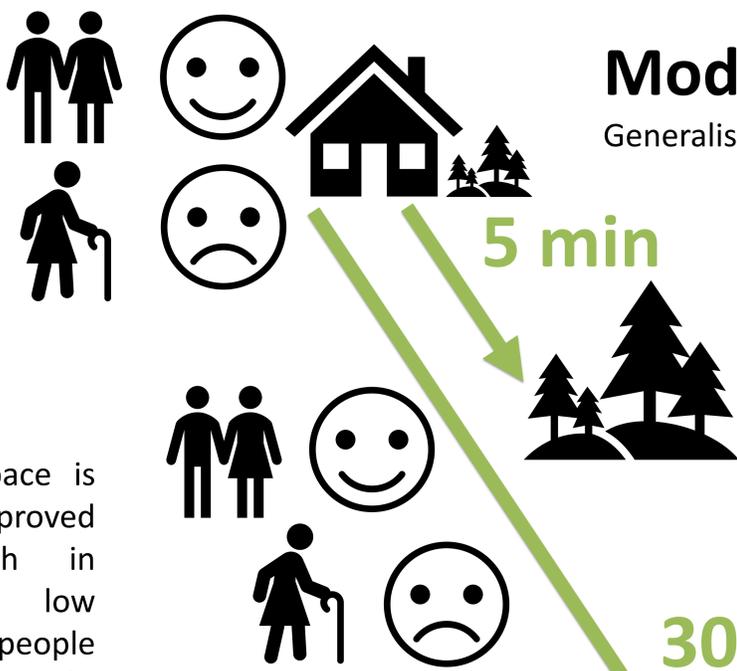
Urban greenspace has been associated with improved mental health outcomes, although these are not always consistent across populations. Individual characteristics of people and greenspace can impact the relationship between urban greenspace and mental health. We model the relationship between area of urban greenspace, as a proxy for access, within the neighbourhood, within 5 minutes walk and within 30 minutes walk.



Study site

Scotland's urban areas with populations over 10,000.

Data was aggregated to the neighbourhood (census datazone) level.



Model

Generalised Least Squares – including spatial autocorrelation argument.

Greenspace measure: Area of greenspace within the neighbourhood, within 5 minute walk (300m) of the neighbourhood and within 30 minutes walk (2km) of the neighbourhood.

Mental health measure: Proportion of individuals within the neighbourhood with a prescription for drugs to treat depression, anxiety or psychosis, as a proxy for prevalence of poor mental health.

Results

Urban greenspace is related to improved mental health in areas with low proportions of people over 65. In areas with higher proportions of people over 65 high greenspace within the neighbourhood or 5 minutes walk was related to worse mental health.

Model Covariates including impacts on greenspace access and mental health.

		
Over 65		
Dependent children		
British Minority Ethnic groups		
No religion		
Female		
Married		
Drive time to GP		
Deprivation		

Discussion

We find positive impacts of nearby urban greenspace only in mental health of populations with low proportions of people over 65. Urban greenspace is associated with many services which help improve mental health, however greenspace can also be a site of disservices, with poor lighting, uneven paths and large groups of people. Older individuals also use greenspace less often, so receive fewer benefits. This may result in reduced mental health outcomes in areas with high numbers of people over 65. When we consider greenspace with 30 minutes walk no negative impacts are identified, possibly due to a larger number of types of greenspace being present, and the option to avoid negative greenspaces which are more distant.

Policy implications

Current recommendations in the UK suggest all individuals should have greenspace within 5 minutes walk. Our results indicate that this may not have a positive outcome for all populations. Understanding the relationship of populations to urban greenspace is therefore important to target future policy to ensure health benefits are achieved.

