

The Age-inclusivity of New Haven and Connecticut:

A pilot of *Measuring the Age-friendliness of Cities: A Guide to Using Core Indicators* by the World Health Organization Centre for Health Development

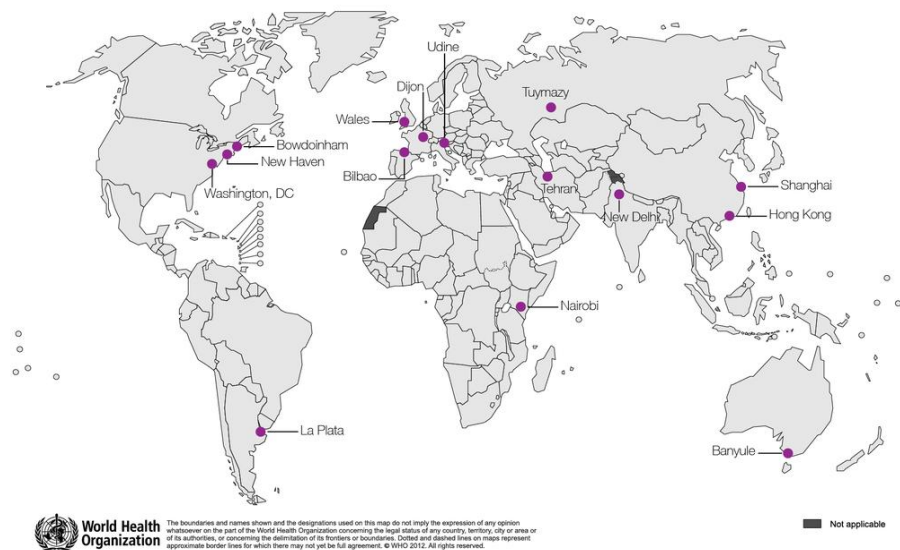
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with support from Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

About the Report

The Age-inclusivity of New Haven and Connecticut is a technical report that DataHaven has developed to support the work of the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO invited DataHaven to conduct this work based on its existing work to collect and evaluate local-level community information in collaboration with partners such as Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging.

Using a set of indicators that was designed by the WHO specifically to measure the age-inclusiveness of communities, this report evaluates the status of livability in New Haven and Connecticut. WHO indicators include characteristics of the physical environment (such as transportation), social engagement, quality of life, and access to health and basic needs. By focusing in detail on the Greater New Haven region as well as the City of New Haven, we believe that the report is fairly representative of other suburban and urban Connecticut communities.

WHO Indicator Guide for Age-Friendly Cities: Pilot Sites



The WHO will use this study's findings, along with those of similar studies led by 14 other international sites, to inform their global standards for characteristics of age-inclusive communities.

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organizations for their generous support and guidance and acknowledge Alyssa Norwood, Project Manager at the Commission, for her dedicated work on this project. The report incorporates comments from an event held in March 2015 at the New Haven Public Library. We thank the community members and organizations that attended for their participation and observations.

Report Findings

Consistent with worldwide trends, the population of Connecticut is aging: between 2013 and 2025, the share of Connecticut residents 60 years and over will grow by 44 percent. Nationally, 90 percent of older adults would prefer to "age in place" - to stay in their homes and communities as they grow older. The physical and social elements of Connecticut's cities and towns can help ensure that all residents will

remain happy and healthy as they age, and Connecticut promotes many initiatives, policies, and programs that make "aging in place" a viable option for its older residents. This study notes many positive aspects of living in Connecticut, such as information showing that 80 percent of older adults are satisfied with where they live, and that many are deeply engaged within their communities.

The findings also reveal areas in which more support could advance the well-being of residents across the lifespan. First, older residents generally find the physical environment to be accessible. However, the analysis suggests that for adults 60 years and over, using public transit, accessing businesses, and walking are easier for city residents and more challenging to residents of the suburbs: 57 percent of those in the city and 34 percent in the suburbs have safe streets and sidewalks in their neighborhood, there are businesses within walking distance of 67 percent of city compared to 46 percent of suburban dwellers, and bus stops are close by to almost 87 percent of city residents and 42 percent of suburban residents. The study also reports that despite high rates of voter registration among people 60 years and over, about half of this group may feel otherwise disengaged from their communities: only 46 percent of all older residents of Greater New Haven had volunteered in the past month, 37 percent often attended cultural events, and 50 percent believed community support for older people to be good. Low-income individuals (annual household income less than \$30,000) are even less likely to participate in community activities than other older people. Further, compared to other adults 60 years and over, low-income residents on average are in worse health, have less financial security, and are less likely to have access to food and other basic needs. Other factors impacting wellbeing and their implications for livability are discussed in the complete report.

Moving Forward

Several studies and actions will continue to develop the information in this report. In mid-2015, the DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey will interview 15,000 randomly-selected Connecticut residents on many of the topics discussed in this report, capturing information about livability in all cities and towns across the state. Using the results of the Community Wellbeing Survey and other data sources, DataHaven will release an updated version of its Community Index in 2016, which will cover the topic of age-inclusivity. Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging intends to use the 2015 Community Wellbeing Survey and other data to create a statewide indicators report on Connecticut's livability across the lifespan. The Commission and other local partners will continue to lead conversations, to support efforts, and otherwise to advance community livability and age-inclusivity throughout the state. The WHO has requested that DataHaven present its findings in June at an international convening on age-inclusive livability in Geneva, Switzerland.

The authors hope that this report will provide a baseline understanding of the issues related to aging, and that it will provoke discussions about Connecticut's strengths and obstacles to improving livability for residents of all ages. To learn more about this topic:

1. Go to www.ctdatahaven.org/know/images/8/85/WHO_aging_NewHaven_2015.pdf to access the full report.
2. Visit www.livablect.org, the website of Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging that provides information, inspiration and resources to community leaders and their partners in Connecticut.
3. Follow the progress of livability research in Connecticut, including the 2015 Statewide Community Wellbeing Survey and the 2016 Community Index, at www.ctdatahaven.org.
4. Learn about the World Health Organization's global efforts to improve age-inclusivity and explore how cities around the world have advanced this initiative at www.agefriendlyworld.org.