
Ageism and Socioeconomic Status as Joint Barriers to Physical Activity in Older Adults: A Scoping Review

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Résumé

Introduction: Health benefits of physical activity (PA) are well-established within later life. However, older adults in France remain insufficiently active. Reviews indicate that both ageism and socioeconomic status (SES) hinder older adults' engagement in PA (Harris et al., 2024; Jin & Harvey, 2021). Understanding their combined effects is essential to guide interventions and public policy for sustained engagement in PA. Ageism and SES represent distinct determinants of health behaviors, occurring respectively at different levels with various facets. They may contribute to the marginalization of a population often under-represented in research. Therefore, existing evidence on this topic is likely to be diverse in nature and scarce. In such contexts, scoping reviews are valuable tools for analyzing the size, variety, and nature of the literature (Tricco et al., 2018). This review aims to synthesize the evidence on ageism as a predictor of PA among older adults, with a focus on variations across SES or within populations of lower SES. The objectives are to detail definitions, tools, relationships between SES and ageism in the prediction of PA, mechanisms of action, interventions, gaps and additional factors.

Method: The procedure followed the PRISMA extension for Scoping Reviews (Tricco et al., 2018). A literature search was performed in April 2025 and yielded to 8,076 studies from 7 databases (PubMed, PsycINFO, SportDiscus, PBSC, SocINDEX, Web of Science and BASE). Preregistration was done on OSF (<https://osf.io/g4uv8>; Bovier-lapierre et al., 2025). Inclusion criteria were organized following the PICOS framework. **Population** refers to an identifiable age range of 50 to at least more than 65; **Exposure** was least one of the low-SES facets (i.e., education level, household income, occupational prestige, area-level deprivation, wealth/poverty and subjective-SES) defining the population, the area or taken as an independent variable; **Context** implicates ageism as a predictor; **Outcome**, only understood as an dependent variable, was PA defined in a holistic approach including sedentary behaviors, active aging intentions and other volitional, motivational and behavioral variables explicitly linked to PA; **Study characteristics** only includes empirical studies. Quality assessment used the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (Hong et al., 2018).

Results: Screening is currently in progress. The preliminary results indicate that self-directed ageism and age-related beliefs affect PA and sedentary behaviors among low-SES older adults. Institutional level anti-ageist initiatives to promote PA may have a cumulative effect with socioeconomic conditions. Pilot research showed gendered ageism.

*Intervenant

Discussion: To the best of our knowledge this is the first Scoping Review that explore the role of ageism in PA among socioeconomically disadvantaged older adults. It offers a critical analysis of a well none effect with a particular interest on the under-researched population of low-SES older adults. We extend and update previous reviews by focusing on individuals aged 50+ and expanding the search query to more comprehensive definitions.

Conclusions / Perspectives: This review may demonstrate a multiple-standards of social judgements and decision for aged people with low-SES. It encourages to consider intersectionality et specific vulnerability to ageism at different forms, levels and dimensions among socioeconomically deprived populations.

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