



Special issue: aging, aging process and health; active citizenship and sustainable development

Especial temático: envelhecimento, processo de envelhecer e saúde; cidadania ativa e desenvolvimento sustentável

Especial temático: Envejecimiento, proceso de envejecimiento y salud; ciudadanía activa y desarrollo sostenible

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Aging is a universal, natural, and irreversible phenomenon that has persisted throughout human history, interpreted in diverse ways across different eras. In contemporary society, the dual aging process, characterized by increased life expectancy and declining birth rates, has rendered the experience of growing older a complex challenge for older adults, their families, public policies, and health and social care systems across the globe.

The physiological changes inherent to aging, when compounded by the increased prevalence of chronic diseases, diminished functional capacity, and cognitive decline, tend to elevate levels of dependency and the demand for healthcare services. This dynamic not only places considerable strain on the sustainability of health systems, but also imposes a significant burden on families, particularly those facing heightened socioeconomic vulnerability.

Aging is not merely the accumulation of years; it is a multifaceted experience that can be lived with quality, autonomy, independence, and dignity, provided that adequate conditions of health, social inclusion, and civic engagement are ensured. To realize this ideal, it is essential that older individuals retain the right to fully exercise active citizenship, which entails not only being heard but also participating meaningfully in the political, social, and cultural decisions that directly affect their lives and the communities to which they belong.¹

It is worth noting that the United Nations' 2030 Agenda established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)² across various domains, reinforcing the vision of inclusive, equitable, and environmentally responsible societies. Considering this landmark framework for human and societal development, aging must be recognized as an integral component of sustainability policies. The creation of accessible cities, with adequate mobility, communal spaces, integrated healthcare systems, and intergenerational support programs, among other features, constitutes progress not only for older adults but for society as a whole.^{1,2}

Recognizing that one of the foremost contemporary challenges is to transform the aging process and the full exercise of citizenship into opportunities for growth and development, rather than sources of concern, this special issue brings together a collection of articles authored by students, professors, and researchers from across Brazil. Their findings contribute to dismantling prejudice, stereotypes, and dependency, thereby reinforcing the academic contribution to healthy aging and the strengthening of active citizenship. More engaged older citizens foster more democratic and sustainable societies, while sustainable development, in turn, ensures dignified conditions for all generations. Investing in this virtuous cycle is an investment in a more just, humane, and balanced future.

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Submitted on 10/14/2025.

Accepted on 10/14/2025.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/2177-9465-EAN-2025-E002en>