

Green Elderly – Active Ageing and Sustainability: The Italian Case

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Abstract

Population ageing represents one of the major demographic and public health challenges of contemporary societies. Scientific evidence demonstrates that regular physical activity contributes significantly to the prevention of chronic diseases, the maintenance of functional capacity, and the improvement of quality of life among older adults. Review studies indicate a reduction in overall mortality between 20% and 30% among physically active individuals, in line with findings from the World Health Organization.

Despite this evidence, a significant gap persists between recommendations and practice: in Italy, over 23% of the population is aged over 65, while approximately 35–40% of older adults are physically inactive. Physical inactivity is recognised as a major risk factor for overall mortality, whereas regular physical activity improves cardiovascular health, psychological well-being, and social inclusion.

The study analyses the main statistical trends relating to physical activity in the Italian elderly population, developing an interpretative framework that integrates health, physical behaviour, and sustainable development.

The contribution is based on secondary institutional data and a targeted review of scientific literature, highlighting the need to move beyond exclusively health-based approaches and to consider environmental, social, and infrastructural determinants of active behaviour.

Promoting physical activity through green spaces, age-friendly environments, and community-based programmes represents a key strategy for improving well-being, reducing healthcare costs, and fostering more inclusive and sustainable communities.

Keywords: Active Aging; Physical Activity; Sustainable Health; Elderly Population; Physical Inactivity; Public Health; Italy