

Title: Residential Proximity to Urban Centres, Local-Area Walkability and Change in Waist Circumference among Australian Adults

Authors: Takemi Sugiyama^{1,2,3}, Theo Niyonsenga², Natasha J Howard², Neil T Coffee², Catherine Paquet^{2,4}, Anne W Taylor,⁵ Mark Daniel^{2,6,7}

¹ Institute for Health and Ageing, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

² Spatial Epidemiology and Evaluation Research Group, University of South Australia, Adelaide, SA, Australia

³ Centre for Design Innovation, Faculty of Health Arts & Design, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

⁴ Research Centre of the Douglas Mental Health University Institute, Verdun, Québec, Canada

⁵ Population Research and Outcome Studies, The University of Adelaide, SA, Australia

⁶ Department of Medicine, The University of Melbourne, St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

⁷ South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute, Adelaide, SA, Australia

Corresponding Author

Takemi Sugiyama, PhD

Institute for Health and Ageing

Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, VIC 3000, Australia

Phone: +61 3 9230 8262, Email: takemi.sugiyama@acu.edu.au

Word Count: 250 words (abstract), 3582 words (main text), 1 figure, 4 tables

Conflict of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

Citation: Sugiyama, T., Niyonsenga, T., Howard, N.J., Coffee, N.T., Paquet, C., Taylor, A.W., & Daniel, M. (2016). Residential proximity to urban centres, local walkability and change in waist circumference among Australian adults. *Preventive Medicine*, 93, 39–45.

ABSTRACT

Consistent associations have been observed between macro-level urban sprawl and overweight/obesity, but whether residential proximity to urban centres predicts adiposity change over time has not been established. Further, studies of local-area walkability and overweight/obesity have generated mixed results. This study examined 4-year change in adults' waist circumference in relation to proximity to city centre, proximity to closest suburban centre, and local-area walkability. Data were from adult participants (n=2080) of a cohort study on chronic conditions and health risk factors in Adelaide, Australia. Baseline data were collected in 2000-03 with a follow-up in 2005-06. Multilevel regression models examined in 2015 the independent and joint associations of the three environmental measures with change in waist circumference, accounting for socio-demographic covariates. On average, waist circumference rose by 1.8 cm over approximately 4 years. Greater distance to city centre was associated with a greater increase in waist circumference. Participants living in distal areas (20 km or further from city centre) had a greater increase in waist circumference (mean increase: 2.4 cm) compared to those in proximal areas (9 km or less, mean increase: 1.2 cm). Counterintuitively, living in the vicinity of a suburban centre was associated with a greater increase in adiposity. Local-area walkability was not significantly associated with the outcome. Residential proximity to city centre appears to be protective against excessive increases in waist circumference. Controlled development and targeted interventions in the urban fringe may be needed to tackle obesity. Additional research needs to assess behaviours that mediate relationships between sprawl and obesity.

Keywords: environment; sprawl; urban planning; central adiposity; longitudinal study

1 **INTRODUCTION**

2 The relationship between local-area attributes and residents' obesity is the focus of an emerging body of
3 research (Kirk et al., 2010; Sallis et al., 2012). A recent review on obesogenic environments found
4 mixed associations, however, between environmental measures and obesity (Mackenbach et al., 2014).
5 Walkability has been examined frequently, on the basis of its link with physical activity (Freeman et al.,
6 2013; Van Dyck et al., 2010; Villanueva et al., 2014). However, among 19 studies that examined
7 walkability in the review, fewer than half (8 studies) reported associations with measures related to
8 obesity, and the rest reported either statistically non-significant associations or significant associations
9 only for subgroups (Mackenbach et al., 2014). The most consistent relationships were found for urban
10 sprawl (expansion of low-density residential areas at the urban fringe), with seven of nine studies
11 reporting associations between sprawl and overweight/obesity, and the remaining two reported non-
12 significant relationships (Mackenbach et al., 2014). More recent cross-sectional studies also attest to a
13 relationship between urban sprawl and higher levels of obesity (Berrigan et al., 2014; Ewing et al.,
14 2014). In addition, longitudinal studies indicate that moving to a new residential location with greater
15 levels of sprawl is associated with subsequent weight gain (Arcaya et al., 2014; Plantinga and Bernell,
16 2007).

17
18 Sprawl is often operationalised as 'county sprawl index' (Arcaya et al., 2014; Berrigan et al., 2014;
19 Ewing et al., 2014), a county-level measure calculated for US studies from population density and block
20 size (Ewing and Hamidi, 2014). However, counties are a spatially large administrative unit with a
21 median size of 1600 km² (United States Census Bureau, 2010). It would be quite possible that
22 overweight and obese individuals are not evenly distributed within such a large spatial unit. It is thus
23 arguably just as important to examine how sprawl measured within a metropolitan region relates to
24 changes in weight status over time. Distance to city centre can be a reasonable measure in examining
25 the relationship of sprawl and adiposity given that such development is often characterised as taking
26 place at the periphery a city (Resnik, 2010), and car commuting, in particular long commutes, is known
27 to be associated with greater levels of adiposity (Hoehner et al., 2012; McCormack and Virk, 2014;
28 Sugiyama et al., 2016). It might be hypothesised that locations distal to city centre where residents are

29 more likely to rely on cars for commuting might be conducive to weight gain. We are not aware,
30 however, of any research that has examined the relationship between distance to city centre and
31 adiposity changes over time. A similar urban-scale measure, distance to a suburban centre (shopping
32 area with a transportation hub), which represents a local-scale access to various destinations, might also
33 relate to changes in adiposity over time. Although this is not a measure directly corresponding to
34 sprawl, living near such a centre (even if not close to a city) may promote active living, which could
35 support maintaining healthful body weight.

36
37 This prospective observational study evaluated in a population-based cohort in Adelaide, Australia, how
38 proximity to city centre, proximity to suburban centre, and local walkability were associated with
39 change in waist circumference. We examined the independent and joint associations between these
40 environmental measures and change in waist circumference to evaluate the unique and potential
41 synergetic effects of proximity measures and walkability. In light of previous mixed findings regarding
42 the associations between walkability and overweight/obesity, we also assessed whether the relationship
43 between walkability and increasing waist girth was modified by individual demographic variables, area-
44 level socioeconomic characteristics, and proximity measures.

45

46 **METHODS**

47 **Data Source and Study Setting**

48 This study was part of the Place and Metabolic Syndrome (PAMS) project, a study that assessed the
49 relationships between local-area social and built environmental factors and cardio-metabolic health
50 (Baldock et al., 2012; Coffee et al., 2013). The PAMS project links spatial data derived from a
51 geographic information system (GIS) with biomedical data from the North West Adelaide Health Study
52 (NWAHS), a population-based cohort that examined chronic diseases and health risk factors. Detailed
53 descriptions of the NWAHS have been reported elsewhere (Grant et al., 2009). Participants were adults
54 over 18 years randomly selected from the north-western metropolitan region of Adelaide, the capital
55 city of South Australia (population: 1.15 million in 2006) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). The
56 study sample was representative of the target population, except for an overrepresentation of those with

57 middle-level education and middle-level income (Taylor et al., 2006). The study area comprises both
58 older, more traditional residential areas to the west of the city centre and newer, more car-oriented
59 residential areas to the north of the city centre (Figure 1). This area was chosen because it reflects the
60 demographic profile of the State's population by covering a diverse spectrum of socioeconomic status
61 and ethnic background.

62

63 (FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE)

64

65 **Study Participants**

66 Baseline data were collected from 4056 adults in 2000–03 (wave 1), with two additional waves of data
67 collection in 2005–06 (wave 2, N=3205) and 2008–10 (wave 3, N=2996). Data for the present study
68 were drawn from 3182 adults who took part in both the baseline (wave 1) and the first follow-up data
69 collection (wave 2) with measured waist circumference at both time points. Participants who lived
70 outside the Adelaide urban areas at baseline (n=72), and those who changed addresses between baseline
71 and first follow-up (n=591) were excluded. Non-urban areas (population density \leq 200 persons/hectare)
72 were excluded on the basis that walkability was designed for use in urban areas. Participants who had
73 difficulty walking at least 100 metres at baseline (n=486) and/or follow-up (n=450), and those who
74 received a home visit (instead of visiting a clinic) for the follow-up data collection (n=41) were also
75 excluded because neighbourhood environments are unlikely to have impact on obesity for those with
76 reduced physical mobility. Participants who were 85+ years at follow-up (n=54) were also excluded due
77 to a high possibility of mobility difficulty in this age group (Rantakokko et al., 2013; Stessman et al.,
78 2009). For those with limited mobility, their activities may be confined to a space near residence and
79 locations of urban centres may not have major impact on their adiposity. The final sample size was
80 2080. Data from wave 3 were not used due to a higher attrition rate and a larger number of participants
81 who moved residence: the sample size had we extended our analysis to include wave 3 would have been
82 1229 rather than 2080, applying the same criteria. Written informed consent was provided by all
83 participants at each wave of data collection. The PAMS Project was approved by the Human Ethics
84 Committees of the University of South Australia, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and the South

85 Australian Department for Health and Ageing.

86

87 **Measures**

88 The outcome variable was change in clinically-measured waist circumference (Δ waist
89 circumference=follow-up measure – baseline measure). Waist circumference was assessed by clinical
90 staff, trained by a clinical coordinator of the project. Three measures were recorded, and the mean was
91 provided. Waist circumference rather than weight was used as the outcome as waist circumference is a
92 stronger marker of cardio-metabolic risk than general obesity measured by body mass index (Janssen et
93 al., 2004). The median time period between baseline and follow-up was 3 years 11 months (25th–75th
94 percentile: 2 years 4 months – 4 years 2 months).

95

96 Proximity measures included distance to Adelaide city centre (Adelaide General Post Office) and
97 distance to the closest suburban centre. The seven ‘suburban centres’, defined as a shopping area with a
98 transportation hub, included Arndale, Elizabeth, Gawler, Marion, Port Adelaide, Salisbury, and Tea
99 Tree Plaza (Figure 1). For each participant, the road network distance to Adelaide city centre and each
100 suburban centre centroid was calculated using ArcGIS Network Analyst (ESRI, Redlands, CA).

101 Walkability was comprised of dwelling density, intersection density, land use mix, and net retail area
102 ratio (Coffee et al., 2013). Each of the four walkability components was ranked from 1 (lowest) to 10
103 (highest). The walkability score was calculated at baseline for each participant as the sum of the four
104 decile scores for a one-kilometre road network buffer of their residential location. This measure has
105 been shown in previous research to correspond to walking behaviour. For instance, another study in
106 Adelaide has shown walkability to be associated with walking for transport (Owen et al, 2007).

107 Distance measures and walkability were standardised to facilitate comparison of results. Standardised
108 distance measures were reversed so that larger positive values denote proximity. These measures were
109 also categorised into quartiles to better illustrate the magnitude of waist circumference change at
110 different levels of proximity and walkability. Table 1 summarises the operationalisation of these
111 exposure measures.

112

(TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

113
114
115 Individual-level covariates at baseline included age, gender, education (high school or less; vocational
116 education; Bachelor’s degree or more), marital status (couple, single), having children in the household
117 or not, annual household income (AUD 20,000 or less; AUD 20,001–50,000; AUD 50,001 or more),
118 alcohol consumption, smoking status, and glycaemic risk. Alcohol consumption was coded ‘at risk’ or
119 ‘not at risk’ according to the 2001 National Alcohol Guidelines (National Health and Medical Research
120 Council, 2009). Self-reported smoking status was coded into ‘smoker’ or ‘non-smoker’ (including ex-
121 smokers). Glycaemic risk was defined as fasting plasma glucose ≥ 5.6 mmol/L and/or physician-
122 diagnosis of diabetes according to the American Diabetes Association criteria (American Diabetes
123 Association, 2015). As work status changes during the study period could influence commuting and
124 other potentially relevant behaviours, analyses accounted for change in work status: working (full or
125 part time); having ceased working; having commenced working; or not working. As the follow-up
126 interval varied widely, the number of days between baseline and follow-up measurements was also
127 accounted for in analyses. Area-level socio-economic covariates were defined at the State Suburb level,
128 and included the proportion of households having low income and the Index of Relative Socioeconomic
129 Disadvantage (IRSD), a composite area-level measure of deprivation (Australian Bureau of Statistics,
130 2008).

131

132 **Statistical Analysis**

133 Characteristics of study participants and summary statistics of outcome variables were computed
134 (means and standard deviations for numeric variables; proportions for categorical variables). Given the
135 clustered nature of the data with participants nested within suburbs, analyses were conducted using
136 multi-level linear regression models. There were 138 suburbs in the study area, and the median number
137 of participants in these suburbs was 12 (25th–75th percentile: 4–19). To control for clustered errors, we
138 included a random intercept in the model, and used the compound symmetry as the model specification
139 for the within-cluster error correlation. Our recent study has shown that the suburb was associated with
140 the greatest level of clustering among different spatial units (Paquet et al., 2016). We also used robust

141 standard errors to address the problem of heteroscedasticity in errors. Analyses relied on the full
142 information maximum likelihood approach for missing data handling, which assumes that data are
143 missing at random.

144
145 The independent and joint associations of proximity and/or walkability (expressed as continuous
146 measures) with Δ waist circumference were examined in the following models. First, each
147 environmental measure was examined individually in Model 1. In Model 2, proximity to city centre and
148 walkability were examined simultaneously. In Model 3, proximity to closest suburban centre and
149 walkability were similarly examined simultaneously. In Model 4, the two proximity measures were
150 examined simultaneously to check whether the main effect of proximal locations to city centre, for
151 instance, was explained by their relative location to suburban centres. Quartiles of proximity and
152 walkability measures were then employed as predictors to provide covariate-adjusted mean waist
153 circumference change at each level of proximity and walkability quartiles.

154
155 As the literature regarding the association between walkability and obesity shows mixed findings, it is
156 possible that walkability is associated with obesity only for certain subgroups or areas. Thus, further
157 analyses evaluated whether the relationship between walkability (expressed continuously) and Δ waist
158 circumference was modified by the individual-level demographic measures (age and gender), area-level
159 socioeconomic status (IRSD), and environmental factors (proximity measures). Stratified analyses were
160 conducted when interaction terms were statistically significant.

161
162 All models including interaction analyses were adjusted for participant-level and suburb-level
163 covariates discussed above. Analyses were conducted in 2015 using STATA version 12 (StataCorp,
164 College Station, TX). Statistical significance was set at $\alpha=5\%$ except for interaction effects for
165 which α was set at 10% on the basis that interaction analyses tend to have less power (Twisk,
166 2006).

167

168 **RESULTS**

169 Table 2 shows the characteristics of the study sample. On average, waist circumference rose by 1.8 cm
170 across the median follow-up interval of approximately 4 years. The mean increase in waist
171 circumference was 1.6 (SD: 5.8) cm for men and 2.0 (SD: 6.3) cm for women (difference not
172 statistically significant: $p=0.07$). Distance to city centre ranged from 2.3 to 45.6 km. Distance to the
173 closest suburban centre ranged from 0.2 to 11.7 km. The correlation between the two distance measures
174 was $r= -0.57$ ($p<0.001$). Correlations between distance to city centre and walkability, and distance to
175 closest suburban centre and walkability were $r= -0.47$ and $r=0.17$ (both $p<0.001$), respectively.

176

177 (TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE)

178

179 The results of regression analyses are given in Table 3. Living near the city centre was significantly
180 associated with lesser Δ waist circumference, accounting for covariates (Model 1) and walkability
181 (Model 2). Living near a suburban centre was associated with greater Δ waist circumference,
182 accounting for covariates (Model 1) and walkability (Model 3). Statistically significant associations
183 between Δ waist circumference and proximity to city centre and proximity to suburban centre were
184 nullified when both predictors were included in the same model (Model 4). Walkability was not
185 associated with Δ waist circumference in any models (Models 1-3).

186

187 (TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE)

188

189 Table 4 shows the adjusted mean Δ waist circumference (and 95%CI) according to the quartile groups
190 of the proximity and walkability measures. Relative to participants living farthest from the city centre
191 (QG1), those closest to the city centre (QG4) had lesser Δ waist circumference ($p=0.01$). With regard to
192 proximity to suburban centre, participants in the most proximal and second proximal categories (QG4
193 and QG3) had a significantly greater Δ waist circumference ($p=0.01$, $p=0.03$, respectively) than did
194 those in the farthest quartile (QG1). Each 10 km increment in the distance from city and suburban
195 centre was associated with 0.42 cm (95%CI: 0.06, 0.78) greater and 1.08 cm (95%CI: 0.12, 2.04) lesser
196 increases in waist circumference, respectively. No statistically significant differences were observed

197 between the categories of walkability.

198

199

(TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE)

200

201 For tests of interactions, gender interacted with walkability in effects on Δ waist circumference
202 ($p=0.09$). Stratified analyses suggested a stronger inverse association between walkability and Δ waist
203 circumference for men ($\beta= -0.35$, 95%CI: [-0.76, 0.05], $p=0.09$) compared to women ($\beta= -0.02$, 95%CI:
204 [-0.38, 0.41], $p=0.93$). These associations were not, however, statistically significant. Interactions with
205 walkability were not statistically significant for age ($p=0.36$), IRSD ($p=0.22$), proximity to city centre
206 ($p=0.47$), and proximity to closest suburban centre ($p=0.98$).

207

208 **DISCUSSION**

209 The study found that adults living further from the city centre experienced a greater increase in waist
210 circumference than those living in vicinity to the city centre, over nearly four years. As shown in Table
211 4, participants in more distal areas (20 km or farther from the city centre) had a greater increase in waist
212 circumference compared to those in areas more proximal to city centres (9 km or less). Adelaide is a
213 highly car-oriented city. The 2011 Australian Census confirms that among seven capital cities, Adelaide
214 had the highest mode share for car commuting (82%), the third lowest mode share for public transport
215 use (10%), and the second lowest mode share for walking (3%) (Mees and Groenhart, 2012). Research
216 has documented that daily car use for commuting is known to be related to weight increase (Sugiyama
217 et al., 2013), and longer distance from home to work is detrimentally associated with markers of cardio-
218 metabolic risk (Hoehner et al., 2012). Car commuting amongst study participants may have been
219 prevalent and longer in duration in more distal study areas, and this may have contributed to a larger
220 increase in central adiposity.

221

222 Contrary to expectations, this study found that living in proximity to a suburban centre was associated
223 with greater increases in waist circumference. Although each suburban centre has a transportation hub
224 (railway or bus transit), these transportation resources may not be enough to promote active travel.

225 Census data indicate that public transport use for commuting is less common in Adelaide (10%) versus
226 other capital cities including Sydney (23%) and Melbourne (16%) (Mees and Groenhart, 2012). As
227 some suburban centres included in this study are located along a major arterial road with a ‘big box’
228 shopping centre and large car parking area, residents living nearby may be encouraged to use cars more
229 often than to walk or cycle. Shopping centres are also likely to have more fast food options, which can
230 impact on residents’ eating behaviours.

231
232 Associations between proximity to city centre and Δ waist circumference were nullified when proximity
233 to closest suburban centre was simultaneously modelled. As the two proximity measures were inversely
234 correlated ($r = -0.57$), residing away from the city centre automatically confers proximity to a suburban
235 centre. Thus, the results can be interpreted to mean that living near the city centre may have a positive
236 impact partly as such locations are farther from suburban centres. Yet, other contextual factors not
237 measured in this study (e.g., access to highways, public transport) could also shape residents’ daily
238 behaviours such as commuting and shopping, and these, in turn, influence adiposity change.

239
240 In this study, local-area walkability was not associated with Δ waist circumference. This finding aligns
241 with results of the review article indicating that more than half of the published studies have not
242 observed statistically significant associations between walkability and obesity (Mackenbach et al.,
243 2014). Walkability measures are expressed for a local area (one-kilometre network buffer in this study).
244 It is possible that a local area of this size might not be large enough to capture a range of behaviours
245 that could influence waist circumference. Although local walkability is known to be associated with
246 walking and physical activity (Freeman et al., 2013; Van Dyck et al., 2010; Villanueva et al., 2014),
247 other behaviours that occur outside local areas (e.g., commuting or shopping) can be relevant to
248 adiposity changes. Environmental measures expressed for areas larger than local neighbourhoods may
249 be needed to capture multiple adiposity-relevant behaviours. Further studies examining behavioural
250 mechanisms through which distance to city centre is associated with residents’ obesity are warranted.

251
252 This study found that the regression coefficient for the association between proximity to city centre and

253 Δ waist circumference remained almost the same after further adjustment for walkability. These results
254 suggest that living close to city centre is likely to be protective against excessive increases in central
255 adiposity irrespective of local walkability. Walkability, however, is a ranked measure calculated within
256 a specific area. It assigns a decile score, even when the actual variability in walkability components is
257 small. It is possible that the study area was relatively homogeneous in terms of local environments, and
258 that this may be a reason for not observing statistically significant associations for walkability. This
259 notion is supported by an international study on residential environments and physical activity that
260 included Adelaide as a study site in 12 geographically-diverse countries (geographic information was
261 collected from different suburbs within Adelaide) (Adams et al., 2014). According to this study,
262 suburbs in Adelaide appear to be more homogeneous in residential density and intersection density than
263 other study sites in different countries (Adams et al., 2014). Further research on the impact of
264 walkability on adiposity is needed in different geographical contexts, where more variance in
265 walkability components is expected.

266

267 **Strengths and Limitations**

268 Strengths of the study include its longitudinal study design, clinically-measured waist circumference,
269 and the use of new measures of sprawl (proximity to urban centres) that differ from the previously-used
270 macro-scale sprawl index. Although further research with refined measures of sprawl would be needed,
271 this study shows that this crude, approximate measure can be used to explain a within-city gradient of
272 waist circumference change over time. This study has a number of limitations. The results may be
273 subject to particular spatial distribution and characteristics of city/suburban centres in Adelaide.
274 Therefore, the findings may not be applicable to other localities. In particular, other major cities in
275 Australia (e.g., Sydney, Melbourne) have larger suburban centres that are well integrated in public
276 transport network. Proximity to such suburban centres may have different impact on residents'
277 adiposity change. The analysis did not account for additional environmental factors that could be
278 relevant to adiposity, e.g., access to public transport stops, major motor ways, recreational facilities, and
279 food environments. Particularly, food environments (e.g., access to fast food outlets) warrant further
280 investigation, as they might explain the association of proximity to suburban centres with the increase

281 in waist circumference. Additional research is needed to assess behaviours such as physical activity,
282 prolonged sitting and diet that might mediate relationships between sprawl and obesity. In addition,
283 waist circumference is just one measure of cardiovascular risk. Further examination of other risk factors
284 or clinical outcomes would help consolidate the findings of this study.

285

286 **CONCLUSIONS**

287 This longitudinal study indicates that residing in sprawled areas is, through yet unknown behavioural
288 mechanisms, associated with a greater degree of residents' adiposity increase over time. It suggests that
289 low-density residential development away from a city centre may have long-term adverse health
290 impacts for residents. Further collaborative research between the health, planning, and transport sectors
291 on the adverse health impacts of urban sprawl is warranted. Such collaboration has the potential to yield
292 a stronger evidence base to advocate for growth management policies and targeted interventions to help
293 tackle obesity.

294 **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

295 The Spatial Epidemiology and Evaluation Research Group at the University of South Australia in
296 collaboration with the South Australian Department of Health and Ageing conducted this research
297 under National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grants #631917 and #570150.
298 Catherine Paquet was funded by a NHMRC Post-doctoral Training Research Fellowship (#570139).
299 This manuscript has been reviewed for scientific content and consistency of data interpretation by Chief
300 Investigators of the North West Adelaide Health Study (NWAHS). We are grateful for the interest and
301 commitment of cohort participants. We appreciate the contributions of research support staff involved
302 in recruitment and clinical follow up.

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FIGURE

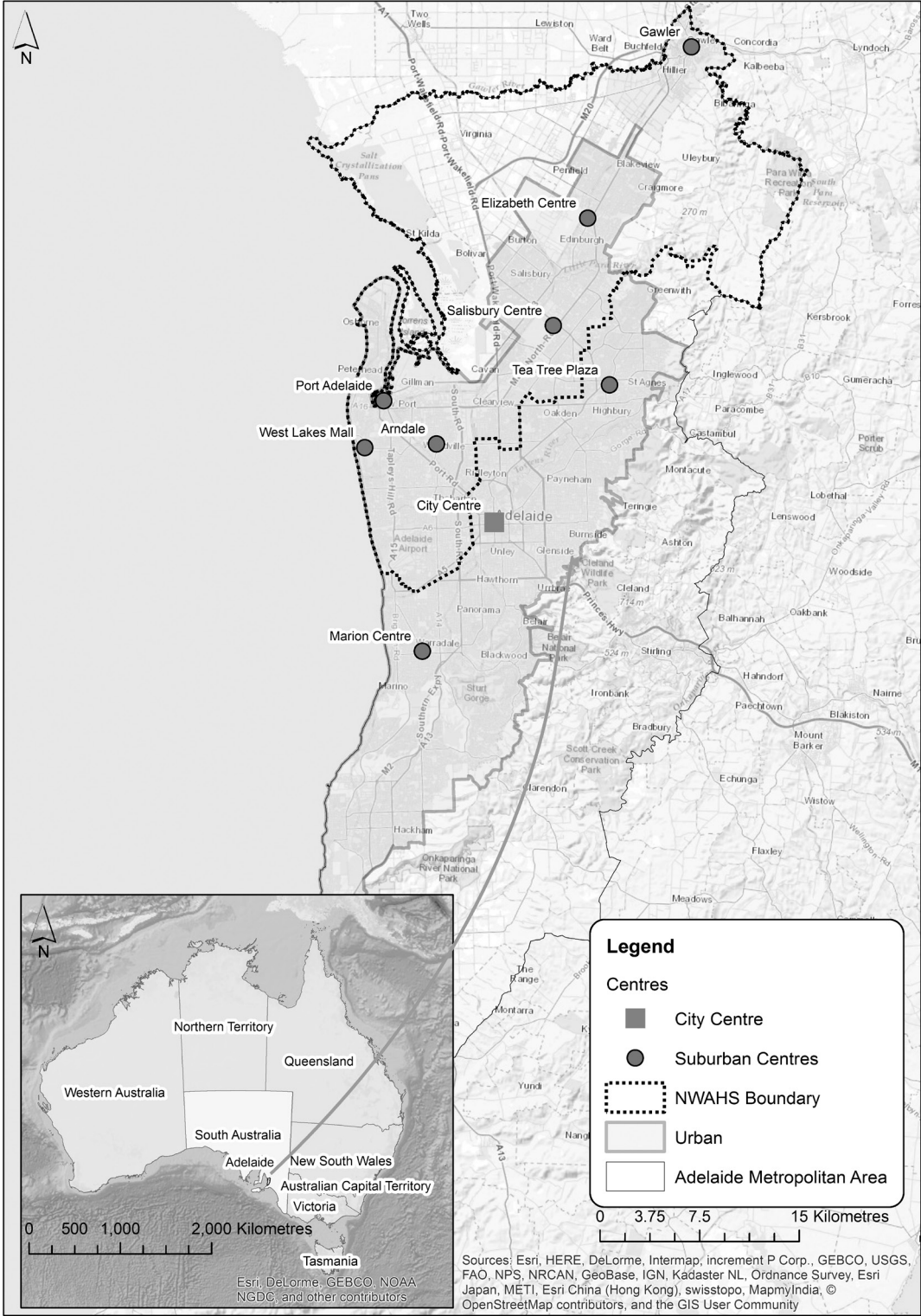


Figure 1. Study area: The north-western metropolitan region of Adelaide, Australia, 2000–03
 Footnote: Elizabeth, Gawler, and Port Adelaide are accessible by bus and train. The other suburban centres have a bus interchange.

TABLES

Table 1. Operationalisation of exposure measures

	Continuous measure	Categorical measure
Proximity		
To city centre	Network distance to city centre (standardised and multiplied by -1)	Quartile of the proximity measure (QG1: distal, QG4: proximal)
To suburban centre	Network distance to the closest suburban centre (standardised and multiplied by -1)	Quartile of the proximity measure (QG1: distal, QG4: proximal)
Walkability	Sum of 4 walkability component scores (standardised)	Quartile of the walkability measure (QG1: least walkable, QG4: most walkable)

Table 2. Sample characteristics (N=2080), Adelaide, Australia, 2000–03

Variable	Mean (SD) or %
Age	50.6 (14.2)
Gender, women (%)	51.0
Education (%)	
high school or less	47.4
vocational education	37.7
Bachelor's degree or more	13.4
missing	1.4
Work status change (%)	
working (full or part time)	51.2
ceased working	6.3
commenced working	5.4
not working	35.5
missing	1.6
Marital status (%)	
couple	67.4
single	32.0
missing	0.6
Having children in the household, yes (%)	31.0
Annual household income in AUD (%)	
20 000 or less	24.4
20 001–50 000	37.7
50 001 or more	33.8
missing	4.1
Drinking, risky drinker (%)	25.1
Smoking, current smoker (%)	16.1
Glycaemic disease, diagnosed (%)	6.7
Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage	962 (89)
Proportion of low income housing (%)	35.5
Distance to city centre (km)	15.6 (8.9)
Distance to suburban centre (km)	5.7 (2.7)
Walkability index (range: 3–38)	21.3 (7.1)
Waist circumference at baseline (cm)	91.7 (13.6)
Waist circumference at follow-up (cm)	93.5 (13.9)
Waist circumference change (cm)	+1.8 (6.0)

Table 3. Associations between Δ waist circumference, proximity to city/suburban centre and walkability, Adelaide, Australia, from 2000–03 to 2005–06

	Standardised linear regression coefficients (95%CI)			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Proximity ^a				
To city centre	-0.38 (-0.70, -0.05)*	-0.36 (-0.69, -0.03)*	–	-0.23 (-0.61, 0.14)
To suburban centre	0.38 (0.09, 0.67)*	–	0.36 (0.06, 0.66)*	0.26 (-0.08, 0.61)
Walkability ^b	-0.17 (-0.44, 0.10)	-0.03 (-0.31, 0.25)	-0.12 (-0.39, 0.15)	–

^a negative coefficients indicate less increase in waist circumference for closer proximity, ^b negative coefficients indicate less increase in waist circumference for higher walkability

* $p < 0.05$

Model 1: All environmental variables examined individually (3 separate models)

Model 2: Proximity to city centre and walkability examined simultaneously

Model 3: Proximity to suburban centre and walkability examined simultaneously

Model 4: Proximity to city centre and suburban centre examined simultaneously

Analyses modelled the change in waist circumference (follow-up – baseline) as outcome. All models were adjusted for age, gender, education, work status change, marital status, having child in the household or not, drinking, smoking, glycaemic risk, IRSD, the proportion of low income housing, and the number of days between baseline and follow-up, and accounted for spatial clustering. The final sample size analysed was 2063 due to missing values in covariates.

Table 4. Adjusted mean Δ waist circumference according to the quartile groups (QG) of proximity to city/suburban centre and walkability, Adelaide, Australia, from 2000–03 to 2005–06

	Adjusted mean Δ waist circumference (95%CI)			
	QG1 (ref)	QG2	QG3	QG4
Proximity				
To city centre	2.4 (1.8, 3.1)	1.7 (1.1, 2.2) [†]	1.7 (1.1, 2.3)	1.2 (0.7, 1.8)*
To suburban centre	1.2 (0.6, 1.8)	1.6 (1.1, 2.1)	2.1 (1.5, 2.7)*	2.2 (1.7, 2.7)*
Walkability				
	1.8 (1.3, 2.3)	2.1 (1.4, 2.7)	1.7 (1.2, 2.1)	1.6 (1.0, 2.1)

[†] $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$ (difference from the reference category, QG1)

All models were adjusted for age, gender, education, work status change, marital status, having child in the household or not, drinking, smoking, glycaemic risk, IRSD, the proportion of low income housing, and the number of days between baseline and follow-up, and corrected for clustering. The final sample size analysed was 2063 due to missing values in covariates.

Distance to city centre: QG1 (19.7–45.6 km); QG2 (13.7–19.7 km); QG3 (9.0–13.7 km); QG4 (2.3–9.0 km). Distance to suburban centre: QG1 (7.9–11.7 km); QG2 (5.4–7.9 km); QG3 (3.5–5.4 km); QG4 (0.2–3.5 km).