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Socioeconomic differences in associations between living in a 20-min neighbourhood and diet, physical activity and self-rated health : cross-sectional findings from ProjectPLAN

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1 **TITLE**

2 Socioeconomic differences in associations between living in a 20-minute neighbourhood and  
3 diet, physical activity and self-rated health: cross-sectional findings from ProjectPLAN

4

5 **ABSTRACT**

6 The 20-minute neighbourhood (20MN) concept aims to enable residents to meet daily needs  
7 using resources within a 20-minute trip from home noting that there is no single definition of  
8 what services and amenities are required for daily needs nor what modes of transport  
9 constitute a 20 minute trip. Whether 20MNs promote better health and whether associations  
10 differ by socio-economic status (SES) is unknown. Using cross-sectional data from adults  
11 randomly sampled in 2018-19 from Melbourne or Adelaide, Australia, we examined whether  
12 associations between neighbourhood type (20MN/non-20MN) and diet, physical activity or  
13 self-rated health vary according to individual- or area-level SES. We found no consistent  
14 patterns of interactions. The results do not consistently support the often assumed belief that  
15 20MNs support more healthful behaviour and that these relationships vary by SES.

16

17 **KEYWORDS**

18 Built environment, 20-minute neighbourhood, physical activity, eating behaviours

19

20 **ABBREVIATIONS**

21 ProjectPLAN: Places and Locations for Activity and Nutrition study; 20MN: 20-minute  
22 neighbourhood; SES: socioeconomic status; IRSAD: Index of Relative Socio-economic  
23 Advantage and Disadvantage; BMI: body mass index; CI: Confidence Interval; IQR:  
24 interquartile range.

25

## 26 INTRODUCTION

27 Diet and physical activity behaviours are key contributors to health and wellbeing (Afshin et  
28 al., 2019, Murray et al., 2020, Lee et al., 2012). However, even within high-income countries  
29 such as Australia, many people fail to achieve recommended daily levels of fruit and  
30 vegetable consumption or physical activity (Leme et al., 2021, Guthold et al., 2018,  
31 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). Individual-level factors such as age, sex  
32 and education are known to be associated with dietary and physical activity behaviours  
33 (Marques et al., 2015, Alkerwi et al., 2015, Thorpe et al., 2019, Li et al., 2020). Recognising  
34 that individual-choices are influenced by environmental exposures, health-promoting built  
35 environments have been a key focus of recent population-level policy responses (Pineo et al.,  
36 2018). This includes improving access to facilities that encourage healthful behaviours, such  
37 as parks (Sallis et al., 2016) and outlets selling (fresh) healthful food (Trapp et al., 2015,  
38 Moore et al., 2008).

39 A number of systematic reviews have reported links between the built environment and diet  
40 and physical activity behaviours, although the underlying evidence is uneven rather than  
41 wholly consistent (Ige-Elegbede et al., 2020, Rahmanian et al., 2014, Smith et al., 2017).  
42 Findings have also been inconsistent when examining self-rated health, although there is less  
43 research on built environment effects on self-rated health (Spring, 2018, McCormack et al.,  
44 2019). In the US, long-term exposure to environments with low levels of service provision  
45 (low access to supermarkets, recreational facilities, health services, residential care facilities,  
46 senior services) or potentially health damaging environments (high access to liquor stores,  
47 pawn shops and fast-food outlets) was associated with a higher risk of poor self-rated health  
48 (Spring, 2018). However, in Canada, research found little evidence of a relationship between  
49 access to community resources and self-rated health (McCormack et al., 2019).

50 The importance of creating local built environments that support health and well-being,  
51 whilst ensuring that underlying socioeconomic disparities do not increase, was a key part of  
52 the Victorian Government initiative named ‘Plan Melbourne’ (State of Victoria Department  
53 of Environment, 2017, State of Victoria Department of Transport, 2014, State of Victoria  
54 Department of Environment, 2019). The 20-minute neighbourhood (20MN) concept was  
55 posited as a key feature of Plan Melbourne, with its aim to provide residents the ability to  
56 meet most of their everyday needs within a 20-minute trip from home. Over subsequent,  
57 multiple iterations of this document, the definition of how a 20-minute trip ostensibly  
58 supports health continued to evolve (c.f. (Thornton et al., 2022)). The 2015 version (State of  
59 Victoria Department of Environment, 2015) stated the 20-minute trip was limited to  
60 “primarily within a 20-minute walk” with an estimated distance of 1 to 1.5km. In the more  
61 recent 2019 update (State of Victoria Department of Environment, 2019), it is stated “within a  
62 20-minute walk from home with access to safe cycling and local transport options” and “this  
63 20-minute journey represents an 800m walk from home to a destination, and back again”.  
64 These statements highlight that, for Melbourne, whether intentionally or unintentionally,  
65 walking retains a core place as the chief envisioned mode of transport and that a 20-minute  
66 journey is conceived as reflecting a small service area. Other walkable community planning  
67 concepts have been proposed in less populated urban areas in Australia, such as Adelaide.  
68 Although not explicitly aiming for 20MNs, Adelaide does recognise the need for  
69 infrastructure that supports walkable and connected communities (Government of South  
70 Australia Department of Planning and Local Government, 2010).

71 Importantly, the Plan Melbourne policies and the ongoing narrative related to 20MNs in other  
72 locations have implicitly tied the 20MN to better health, largely without supporting evidence.  
73 How the field finds itself in such a position reflects the commingling of science, politics, and  
74 management in the governance of urban development, confounding the process with tangled

75 motives, expectations and, ultimately, consequences (or lack thereof, of health benefits at the  
76 least). Without a clear definition of the 20MN, it is impossible to assess the proposed health  
77 benefits of the 20MN, and it is wrong to propagate unsubstantiated health benefits supportive  
78 of the 20MN concept without defensible scientific data.

79 The project from which the current analysis derives, was constructed to evaluate some of the  
80 potential health benefits of the 20MN. Doing so was made possible through an explicit  
81 operationalisation of the 20MN in the Places and Locations for Activity and Nutrition study  
82 (ProjectPLAN) (Thornton et al., 2022), with residents in 20MNs and non-20MNs then being  
83 surveyed about their health and behaviour. Findings from this project have shown some  
84 benefits to residing in a 20MN, such as more walking for transport (Contardo et al., 2022)  
85 and a lower body mass index (Yang et al., 2022) despite a low consistency of findings  
86 between Adelaide and Melbourne. Results have also suggested that 20MNs could encourage  
87 a greater frequency of out-of-home meal consumption which may potentially be detrimental  
88 to health (Oostenbach et al., 2022) as well as no benefit in terms of recreational walking  
89 despite more walking for transport (Contardo et al., 2022).

90 Stepping back from the 20MN *per se*, there is evidence indicating that for local residential  
91 areas, the availability of local area resources varies according to socio-economic status (SES)  
92 (Daniel et al., 2009, Lamb et al., 2010, Marquet and Miralles-Guasch, 2015), and that  
93 relationships between local resources and health-related behaviour vary according to SES.  
94 For example, Rummo et al. (2015) found a stronger association between greater access to  
95 convenience stores and lower dietary quality among those with lower individual-level income  
96 (Rummo et al., 2015). Among adolescents in Spain, Molina-García et al. found that  
97 associations between neighbourhood walkability and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity  
98 differed by neighbourhood SES, with the highest activity occurring in more walkable  
99 neighbourhoods with higher SES (Molina-García et al., 2017). In Japan, associations between

100 street density and proximity to commercial destinations and walking for exercise among  
101 adults aged 20-64 years were only observed in high SES areas (Koohsari et al., 2017). In  
102 Australia, Turrell et al. found higher levels of walking for transport in more disadvantaged  
103 than advantaged neighbourhoods. In their mediation analysis, they found that this relationship  
104 was explained to some extent by the disadvantaged neighbourhoods studied having built  
105 environment infrastructure more conducive to walking, in addition to residents having lower  
106 car access (Turrell et al., 2013). These findings suggest but do not specifically indicate that  
107 the effect of residing in a 20MN on health and behaviour has the potential to differ according  
108 to individual- or area-level SES.

109 Although ensuring access to health-promoting facilities is one way of supporting healthful  
110 behaviour, less research has explored whether environmental-risk factors and environmental-  
111 level health promotion efforts benefit all population segments equally. To address this gap,  
112 the aims of this study were to examine whether the effect of living in a 20MN on dietary  
113 behaviour, physical activity and self-rated health differed according to individual- or area-  
114 level SES.

115

## 116 **METHODS**

117 ProjectPLAN examined the influence of living in a 20MN on diet and physical activity  
118 behaviours in two Australian cities: Melbourne, Victoria and Adelaide, South Australia.

### 119 *Neighbourhood characteristics*

120 For this study, 20MNs were defined according to five domains with access to various  
121 individual attributes required to meet the requirements for each domain (healthful food  
122 [supermarkets and fruit and vegetable stores], recreational resources [gyms], community  
123 resources [primary schools, general practitioners, pharmacies, libraries, post offices, cafés,],

124 public open space, and public transport access [bus, tram, train]). This aligns with the broad  
125 but largely unspecified 20MN concept presented by Plan Melbourne at the conceptual phase  
126 of this study (State of Victoria Department of Environment, 2017). Full details of the 20MN  
127 definition used in this study are provided elsewhere (Thornton et al., 2022). In brief,  
128 geospatial data for the 20-minute neighbourhood attributes were sourced from a combination  
129 of government and commercial sources. A 1.5-kilometre distance pedestrian network service  
130 area (to reflect the Plan Melbourne emphasis on walking) was created around each of the  
131 geocoded healthful food outlets, recreational resources and community resources, while  
132 accessibility to public open space and public transport were guided by Australian planning  
133 guidelines recommendations (i.e., access to any public space within a short walk and access  
134 to a minimum amount of greenspace within a larger area around homes). Different criteria  
135 were set to meet the requirements of each domain. For example, for the healthful food  
136 domain, a resident needed to have access to at least one large supermarket or at least one  
137 smaller supermarket and a greengrocer. Thus, for this domain, three separate individual  
138 attributes were mapped and assessed yet the domain criteria could be met through access to a  
139 single attribute (i.e., a large supermarket). For community resources, access was required to  
140 all six individual attributes. The final selection of 20MNs were defined as areas that  
141 intersected all five domain layers (i.e., healthy food, recreational resources, community  
142 resources, public open space and public transport). Non-20MNs were defined as areas with  
143 five or fewer of the 11 individual attributes (e.g., library, supermarket, and bus stop only) in  
144 Melbourne, otherwise four or fewer individual attributes in Adelaide. This definition of the  
145 non-20MN differed slightly between cities due to differences in public transport  
146 infrastructure (Thornton et al., 2022). Non-20MNs were defined and sampled to provide a  
147 distinct referent for comparing to 20MNs, in the form of an extreme groups contrast. Under

148 this approach, areas with moderate levels of service provision were not sampled and  
149 analysed.

150 Area-SES (low versus high) was defined using the Australian Bureau of Statistics Index of  
151 Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) deciles. Deciles 1-3 of the  
152 IRSAD at Statistical Areas Level 1 (small census based geographical areas) were classified as  
153 low SES if they were also located within Statistical Areas Level 2 (larger census based  
154 geographical areas) of deciles 1-3. This approach was adopted to ensure low SES areas  
155 considered were small areas with low socioeconomic conditions within a larger community  
156 that also had low socioeconomic conditions. The process was repeated for Statistical Areas  
157 Level 1 and Statistical Areas Level 2 within deciles 8, 9 and 10 to represent areas with high  
158 socioeconomic conditions. The rationale behind only considering deciles 1-3 (low SES) and  
159 deciles 8-10 (high) was to ensure clear separation between areas defined as low or high SES.  
160 This enables an assessment of participants from distinctly different SES contexts.

161 Neighbourhood type (20MN/non-20MN) and area-SES (low/high) were used in both the  
162 sampling for ProjectPLAN and as covariates of interest in the study.

### 163 *Recruitment*

164 Stratified recruitment was conducted within 20MNs and non-20MNs in both low and high  
165 SES areas from each city in 2018-2019. Household address points, sourced from routinely  
166 available government data sources (Department of Environment, 2021, Government of South  
167 Australia, 2021), for all study strata (Melbourne/Adelaide; 20MN/non-20MN; low/high SES)  
168 were randomly selected, with residents at selected addresses mailed non-personalised  
169 invitations to participate in ProjectPLAN. More letters were mailed to address points within  
170 low SES areas due to lower anticipated response rates in these areas. To reduce participant  
171 burden, half of the randomly selected households were sent an invitation to complete the



172 online food survey and the other half sent a link to complete the physical activity behaviour  
173 survey (thus households received either the food or physical activity survey). Food survey  
174 respondents were required to be the main household food purchaser while the resident aged  
175  $\geq 18$  years with the most recent birthday was invited to participate in the physical activity  
176 survey. Self-rated health was solicited for both the food and physical activity surveys as were  
177 data reflecting demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. In total, 782 participants  
178 (3.7% response rate) from Melbourne and 830 participants (4.2% response rate) from  
179 Adelaide completed either the food or PA survey.

180 Ethics approval was obtained from the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee  
181 (HEAG-H 168\_2017).

## 182 **Variables**

### 183 *Dietary behaviour outcomes*

184 The three dietary behaviour outcomes were: i) serves of fruit consumed per day (<1 serve/ 1  
185 serve/  $\geq 2$  serves), ii) serves of vegetables consumed per day (<2 serves/ 2 serves/  $\geq 3$  serves),  
186 iii) hot takeaway food consumption frequency (never or less than once per month/ more than  
187 once per month but less than weekly/ at least once per week).

### 188 *Physical activity outcomes*

189 The three physical activity outcomes were: i) total transport walking time (minutes), ii) total  
190 recreational walking time (minutes), and iii) number of other (non-walking) exercise  
191 activities in the past week. Participants reporting no recreational or transport walking were  
192 accorded zero minutes for walking outcomes.

193 For the third physical activity outcome of “other” (non-walking) physical activities, these  
194 included recreational- or transport-related jogging/running, recreational- or transport-related

195 cycling, use of exercise/gym equipment, swimming, fitness class/ personal training, yoga/  
196 pilates, and organised or social sport. An “Other” option was provided to account for any  
197 activities not included in this list. The count of other activities (rather than time spent doing  
198 such activities) was calculated for analysis as this variable aimed to capture the variety of  
199 activities in which participants engaged.

#### 200 *Self-rated health outcome*

201 Both food and physical activity survey participants responded to the question “in general,  
202 how would you rate your health?”, with responses on a 5-point scale ranging from poor to  
203 excellent. Response options were coded to three categories, given small cell counts (poor or  
204 fair/good/very good or excellent).

205 All outcome measures were adapted from past studies such as VicLANES (King et al., 2015)  
206 and READI (Thornton et al., 2015) which have both examined neighbourhoods and health in  
207 the Australian context.

#### 208 *Exposure*

209 Neighbourhood type (20MN/non-20MN).

#### 210 *Moderators*

211 Two SES measures were considered: i) area-SES (low/high) and ii) individual-SES measured  
212 by highest educational qualification obtained (up to year 12/certificate or diploma/university).

#### 213 *Other covariates*

214 Potential confounders of apparent relationships between residing in a 20MN or not and each  
215 outcome were identified using causal diagrams (see Appendix Figure 1 a-c). Age (years) and  
216 gender (male/female) were considered prognostic of the outcomes. Children in the household  
217 (no children/ at least one child aged  $\leq 4$  years /only child(ren) aged  $>4$  years), relationship

218 status (in a relationship and living with partner, versus not living with partner/single) and  
219 neighbourhood self-selection were all identified as potential confounders.

220 Neighbourhood self-selection included preference to live within a 20-minute walk of: i) a  
221 supermarket (fruit and vegetable intake outcomes only), ii) everyday (non-work) needs (all  
222 diet outcomes; transport walking; number of physical activities), iii) parks, beaches or open  
223 space (recreational walking; number of exercise activities), or iv) recreational facilities, such  
224 as gyms (number of activities). These variables were created by combining responses to two  
225 survey questions. The first asked about outcomes specific to where a respondent currently  
226 lives (e.g., “Within a 20-minute walk, I can reach a grocery store or supermarket”; “Overall,  
227 within a 20-minute walk I can meet most of my everyday (non-work) needs”, etc.) with  
228 response options of ‘yes’ or ‘no’. The second question asked which attributes present within a  
229 20-minute walk (i.e., those for which the response to the first question was ‘yes’) were core  
230 reasons underpinning why the respondent chose to move to or live at their current address  
231 (e.g., “Within a 20-minute walk, I can reach a grocery store or supermarket”; “Overall, within  
232 a 20-minute walk I can meet most of my everyday (non-work) needs”, etc.) with response  
233 options ‘yes’ or ‘no’. For each of the four self-selection items, responses to these two  
234 questions for each attribute were dichotomised as ‘not within a 20-minute walk, or within a  
235 20-minute walk and not an important reason for living here’, or ‘within a 20-minute walk and  
236 an important reason for living here’. Each item was considered separately.

### 237 *Statistical analysis*

238 Analyses were conducted separately for Melbourne and Adelaide as it was considered *a*  
239 *priori* that the estimated effect of living in a 20MN on outcomes could differ between the two  
240 cities due to differences in population density, the density of services and amenities and  
241 public transport infrastructure. Ordinal regression was used to assess whether the effect of

242 residing in a 20MN differed by either SES measure for each of the diet outcomes and self-  
243 rated health. Two-part models were fitted to each of the walking duration outcomes given the  
244 scope of zero-inflation of observations from participants reporting no walking. Poisson  
245 regression was used for analysis of the number of activities undertaken. Interactions between  
246 neighbourhood type (20MN) and SES (either area-SES or individual-SES) were included in  
247 each model. Models adjusted for measured prognostic and confounding variables.

248 A complete case analysis was conducted in primary analysis. Sample characteristics were  
249 compared for the complete case and omitted participants. With a few exceptions, these were  
250 comparable (see Appendix Table 1).

#### 251 *Sensitivity analyses*

252 Models were fitted with and without adjustment for neighbourhood self-selection to assess its  
253 impact on results. Providing estimates from both models assists understanding how estimated  
254 effects differed, dependent on adjustment (Lamb et al., 2020). Additional diet and physical  
255 activity outcome models were fitted, accounting for body mass index (BMI) and self-rated  
256 health as potential confounders. These were omitted from the primary analyses reported here  
257 as they were interpreted to be mediators. To assess sensitivity to missing data assumptions,  
258 multiple imputation using chained equations was used to impute missing data. Imputation  
259 models included all variables included in the adjusted models, with 20 imputed data sets  
260 generated. Adjusted analyses were conducted using the imputed datasets with the findings  
261 pooled using Rubin's rules and compared to the complete case analyses.

262

## 263 **RESULTS**

264 Complete case sample sizes were 289 (81% of the full sample) and 353 (86%) for Melbourne  
265 and Adelaide food samples, and 337 (84%) and 335 (83%) for Melbourne and Adelaide  
266 physical activity samples, respectively. Participant characteristics are shown in Table 1.

### 267 *Diet outcomes*

268 Half of dietary behaviour sample participants consumed  $\geq 2$  serves of fruit per day  
269 (Melbourne: 52%, Adelaide: 48%) whilst over 40% consumed  $\geq 3$  serves of vegetables per  
270 day (Melbourne: 46%, Adelaide: 42%). About a third consumed hot takeaway at least once  
271 per week (Melbourne: 36%, Adelaide: 31%) (Table 1).

272 Results from models testing moderation by area-SES (Figure 1) did not indicate an  
273 interaction between area-SES and neighbourhood type on diet. The patterns of findings were  
274 similar for low and high SES areas in both 20MNs and non-20MNs. An anomalous exception  
275 was fruit consumption in Melbourne, where in 20MNs the point estimate for the predicted  
276 probability of consuming  $\geq 2$  serves of fruit per day was higher (although, the confidence  
277 intervals (CIs) overlapped) for participants in low (0.60, 95% CI: 0.46-0.74) compared to  
278 high SES areas (0.49, 95% CI: 0.37-0.60). In contrast, the opposite pattern (albeit also with  
279 overlapping CIs) was observed in non-20MNs (low: 0.48, 95% CI: 0.37-0.58; high: 0.54,  
280 95% CI: 0.43-0.65). However, CIs for interaction terms were wide and included the null  
281 (Appendix Table 2). This finding was not observed in Adelaide (Figure 1).

282 Similarly, there was no strong support for interactions between individual-SES and  
283 neighbourhood type (Figure 2). As with area-SES, the only exception was fruit consumption  
284 among Melbourne participants. Within 20MNs, the predicted probability of consuming  $\geq 2$   
285 serves of fruit per day was highest for those with a trade/certificate in 20MNs (0.75, 95% CI:  
286 0.54-0.97). However, it was highest among those with university education in non-20MNs

287 (0.53, 95% CI: 0.42-0.64). Although CIs did not contain the null for some interaction terms  
288 (i.e., fruit intake in Melbourne), the estimated CIs were wide (Appendix Table 2).

289 The predicted probabilities for each outcome within each SES category appeared comparable  
290 for 20MN and non-20MNs in both Melbourne and Adelaide (Figures 1 and 2). Therefore, in  
291 general it appears that residents of 20MNs did not have better dietary behaviours than those  
292 residing in non-20MNs.

### 293 *Physical activity outcomes*

294 Overall, median transport walking and other non-walking exercise activities were higher for  
295 Melbourne (transport walking: 60 mins/week, interquartile range (IQR): 0-85; activities: 3,  
296 IQR: 2-4) compared to Adelaide (transport walking: 0 mins/week, IQR: 0-80; activities: 2,  
297 IQR: 1-3) (Table 1). In contrast, median recreational walking was higher in Adelaide (120  
298 mins/week, IQR: 60-200) compared to Melbourne (90 mins/week, IQR: 60-180).

299 Full modelling results are presented in Appendix Table 3, with estimated marginal means  
300 from adjusted models shown in Figures 3 and 4. Considering the patterns presented in Figure  
301 3, amongst the physical activity outcomes there is no apparent interaction effect between  
302 neighbourhood type and area-SES. Generally, the models show higher estimated marginal  
303 means for participants in high SES areas in both 20MN and non-20MN in each city, although  
304 with some exceptions. For example, in Adelaide, both the marginal mean minutes of  
305 recreational walking and the number of recreation physical activities per week were  
306 comparable for participants in low and high SES areas in non-20MNs (low SES: 133 [95%  
307 CI: 109-157] mins recreational walking, 2.3 [95% CI: 2.0-2.6] activities; high SES: 132 [95%  
308 CI: 108-156] mins, 2.4 [95% CI: 2.0-2.7] activities). This was not so, however, for 20MNs  
309 where recreational walking and the number of activities were greater for high SES areas (low

310 SES: 114 [95% CI: 81-147] mins, 2.1 [95% CI: 1.8-2.5] activities; high SES: 162 [95% CI:  
311 133-191] mins, 3.0 [95% CI: 2.7-3.4] activities).

312 Comparing the overall patterns of results for 20MNs and non-20MNs within each city, there  
313 was no apparent interaction effect between neighbourhood type and individual-SES on  
314 transport walking or number of activities (Figure 4). There was some suggestion that patterns  
315 for recreational walking differed for 20MN compared to non-20MNs in Melbourne, with  
316 mean minutes decreasing with increasing education in 20MNs but roughly the opposite  
317 pattern observed in non-20MNs. However, the CI for the lowest qualification category among  
318 those with a 20MN was wide (Figure 4). Further, this pattern was not observed in Adelaide.

319 Although there were no consistent interaction effects, mean transport walking appeared to be  
320 higher in 20MNs relative to non-20MNs for Melbourne but not for Adelaide (Figures 3 and  
321 4). There were no other clear differences between 20MNs and non-20MNs.

### 322 *Self-rated health*

323 The percentages reporting poor/fair health was comparable for both Melbourne samples  
324 (19%) and lower than those observed for Adelaide (food: 25%; physical activity: 27%)  
325 (Table 1).

326 There did not appear to be an interaction between neighbourhood type and area-SES on self-  
327 rated health (Figure 5). There was some suggestion of an interaction between neighbourhood  
328 type and individual-SES. However, this was not consistent across the four samples (Figure 6).

329 For example, in the Melbourne food and the Adelaide physical activity samples, the  
330 estimated predicted probability of very good/excellent health decreased with higher  
331 educational qualifications in 20MNs, whereas the opposite pattern was observed in non-  
332 20MNs. This is shown in the modelling results (Appendix Table 4), where interaction  
333 parameters in the Melbourne food and Adelaide physical activity samples do not contain the

334 null. In contrast, the same was not apparent for the Melbourne physical activity or the  
335 Adelaide food samples. There did not appear to be a difference in self-rated health by  
336 neighbourhood type. However, the estimated odds of better self-rated health was consistently  
337 greater for high compared to low SES areas, although such effects were less pronounced for  
338 the Adelaide physical activity sample (Appendix Table 4).

### 339 *Sensitivity analyses*

340 Findings were very similar either with (see Adjustment 2 in Appendix Tables 2-4) or without  
341 (Adjustment 1) adjustment for neighbourhood self-selection. In addition, further adjustment  
342 for self-rated health and BMI (Adjustment 3 [diet and physical activity models only]) had  
343 little impact. Comparisons of missing data approaches are shown in Appendix Tables 5-7.  
344 Although the estimated effects differed for some models (e.g., the estimated coefficient for  
345 the interaction between 20MN and area-SES was -0.24 from multiple imputation, compared  
346 to 0.03 from complete case in the analysis of fruit intake for Adelaide), the study conclusions  
347 were not impacted by the approach taken to deal with missing data.

348

## 349 **DISCUSSION**

350 Findings from ProjectPLAN provided little evidence to indicate that the effect of living in a  
351 20MN on dietary behaviours, physical activity or self-rated health differed by area-level or  
352 individual-SES. The implication is that residing in a 20MN does not help reduce social  
353 inequalities in health behaviours and outcomes. ProjectPLAN was the first study to examine  
354 the 20MN built environment exposure (noting this measure was tailored to the cities under  
355 investigation and was limited to considering access within a 20-minute walk only (to align  
356 with the wording in the Melbourne based planning documents) and it is not possible to  
357 directly compare the findings from this analysis to other studies. Where built environment



358 and SES interactions have been considered, these have typically examined single aspects of  
359 the built environment, such as availability of food outlets or walkability (Mackenbach et al.,  
360 2019, Pearce et al., 2008, McInerney et al., 2016, Vogel et al., 2017, Peng and Kaza, 2020, da  
361 Silva et al., 2017, Zang et al., 2022, Molina-García et al., 2019, Molina-García and Queralt,  
362 2017, Molina-García et al., 2017, De Meester et al., 2012, Koohsari et al., 2017, Steinmetz-  
363 Wood and Kestens, 2015, Cummins et al., 2005), whereas our 20MN measure is multi-  
364 dimensional.

365 In the food environment literature, few studies have found statistically significant interaction  
366 effects on dietary behaviour between SES and objectively measured access or proximity to  
367 the food resources (Mackenbach et al., 2019, Pearce et al., 2008, McInerney et al., 2016,  
368 Vogel et al., 2017, Peng and Kaza, 2020). However, as built environmental effects on  
369 behaviour outcomes are typically of small magnitude and detecting interactions with small  
370 effects requires large sample sizes, it may be that studies lack power to detect these effects.

371 Of course, previous studies have generally considered just one aspect of the local built  
372 environment (i.e., the food environment) and have primarily focussed on outlets deemed  
373 unhealthful (e.g., fast food stores). Our 20MN exposure, on the other hand, featuring a  
374 healthful food layer consisting of access to at least one large supermarket or at least one  
375 smaller supermarket and greengrocer, was not designed to capture unhealthful food  
376 environments. It is possible that 20MNs, both in our study and more broadly where 20MNs  
377 are considered, encompass both healthful (e.g., greengrocers), and unhealthful food options  
378 (e.g., fast food outlets) as found in earlier studies from Melbourne (Thornton and Kavanagh,  
379 2012). This means 20MNs may not have a wholly positive influence on dietary behaviour.

380 Interactions between SES and a variety of built environment attributes related to walkability  
381 including street lighting (da Silva et al., 2017), number of overpasses (Zang et al., 2022),  
382 public open space (da Silva et al., 2017), availability of physical activity facilities (da Silva et

383 al., 2017) or other commercial destinations (Koohsari et al., 2017, Steinmetz-Wood and  
384 Kestens, 2015) have been considered in the physical activity literature. Street connectivity (da  
385 Silva et al., 2017, Zang et al., 2022, Steinmetz-Wood and Kestens, 2015) or walkability  
386 (Molina-García et al., 2019, Molina-García and Queralt, 2017, Molina-García et al., 2017, De  
387 Meester et al., 2012) have most frequently been considered, and with mixed findings. Some  
388 studies found little to indicate an interaction between these characteristics and SES on active  
389 transport, leisure time physical activity (Molina-García et al., 2019), or active commuting to  
390 school (Molina-García and Queralt, 2017). Others found weaker associations between these  
391 characteristics and active transportation among residents of low SES areas (Steinmetz-Wood  
392 and Kestens, 2015), as well as negative associations with walking (Zang et al., 2022) and  
393 positive associations with moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (De Meester et al., 2012) in  
394 low SES areas. Findings from ProjectPLAN provided little indication of interactions between  
395 20MN and SES on walking for recreation, transport or the number of physical activities  
396 undertaken. As with the dietary behaviour literature, prior studies of interactions between the  
397 built environment and SES on physical activity have tended to examine individual  
398 environmental attributes, such as street connectivity. In contrast, our 20MN measure  
399 considers local access to services and resources (food outlets, recreational resources,  
400 community resources), public open space and public transport. Research considering links  
401 between commuting physical activity and multiple attributes of the built environment, albeit  
402 considering each attribute individually (e.g., street lighting, paved streets, sidewalks, street  
403 connectivity, public open space, distance to gyms/health clubs), has found little evidence of  
404 an interaction with SES (da Silva et al., 2017). Therefore, our findings in ProjectPLAN are  
405 largely consistent with research to date.

406 Relative to dietary and physical activity behaviours, fewer studies still have examined built  
407 environment and self-rated health relationships. Those that considered the built environment

408 examined community resources (McCormack et al., 2019, Spring, 2018), walkability (Colley  
409 et al., 2019), highways and grassland (Nguyen et al., 2019), and housing (Badland et al.,  
410 2017). Few studies have considered interactions between the built environment and SES on  
411 self-rated health (Schüle and Bolte, 2015). One study from the UK found larger estimated  
412 effects between access to health services and self-rated health among those that were not  
413 working compared to those who were. However, they did not find that the relationship  
414 between other built environment attributes, such as access to public recreational resources  
415 (i.e., swimming pools, libraries), and self-rated health differed by this measure of SES  
416 (Cummins et al., 2005). Findings from ProjectPLAN were mixed but overall provided little  
417 evidence of a consistent or compelling interaction effect. Given the paucity of research in this  
418 area, further studies are needed to assess built environment and SES interactive effects on  
419 self-rated health.

420 Findings from this study not only provide little indication of SES interaction effects but also  
421 little to suggest any obvious benefit from residing in a 20MN for any of the health outcomes  
422 considered, apart from transport walking in Melbourne, discussed elsewhere (Contardo et al.,  
423 2022). Therefore, if replicated and found generalisable, any health benefit conveyed by living  
424 in a 20MN may be specific to active transportation, a finding supporting efforts to improve  
425 transportation outlet availability and access.

426 For Melbourne, the working definition of the 20MN is problematic given it ties to the idea  
427 that a service or amenity must be nearby to be accessible. We note this to highlight that it is  
428 not our preference to limit the definition to a time-based accessibility measure that aligns  
429 with walking, but one that was necessary to align our 20MN definition to the policy narrative.  
430 In Melbourne, the 20MN policy now states a “20-minute journey represents an 800m walk  
431 from home to a destination, and back again” (State of Victoria Department of Environment,  
432 2019). Achieving this is unfeasible in cities without a high population density. Further,

433 deemphasising other modes of transport in favour of walking limits the ability to travel  
434 further in a short time and makes other areas beyond the immediate neighbourhood less  
435 accessible. Thus, these restrictions go against the premise that a 20MN should make  
436 accessing everyday needs easier. In Melbourne, this could be best achieved by allowing  
437 people to travel further using non-car-based forms of transport (e.g., cycling, or public  
438 transport), making the already well-provisioned services and amenities more accessible to  
439 both high and low SES residents.

440 Currently, the proximity-centred focus on access and limitations placed on travel mode (i.e.,  
441 walking) runs counter to improving accessibility and reducing urban inequalities. This current  
442 policy narrative makes it difficult to fully appreciate and assess the benefits of 20MNs, and  
443 claims about benefits should be downplayed prior to improvements in defining the 20MN  
444 (which should be accompanied by an operationalised measure as without this it is not  
445 possible to assess where they exist and the benefits of living in one).

446 Limitations apply to this study. First, this study was not *a priori* powered to detect interaction  
447 effects and thus interpretation was based on examining patterns in the combined effects of  
448 neighbourhood type and SES. While there were some indications of interactions, differences  
449 were modest and stand to be accounted for as Type 1 errors related to the number of  
450 estimates considered. Furthermore, although it would be of interest to examine the combined  
451 interactive effects of both individual and area-SES and neighbourhood type on health and  
452 behaviour, our modest sample sizes prevented these more complex analyses. Second, as this  
453 was a cross-sectional study, it was not possible to determine temporal ordering. It is possible  
454 that those who are more physically active, or who have preference for certain foods, choose  
455 to live in areas with greater access to these services. Therefore, residing in a 20MN may not  
456 be responsible for more healthful behaviours. While attempts were made to account for  
457 neighbourhood self-selection, reverse causality remains a possibility. Third, it is often

458 assumed that the relationship between area-SES and health or behaviour may be due to the  
459 quantity and quality of services available, as well as perceptions of safety (Schultz et al.,  
460 2018, Evans and Kantrowitz, 2002).

461 While a strength of ProjectPLAN was the stratified sampling of low and high SES areas with  
462 and without a 20MN to aid in separating the effect of built and physical environment  
463 attributes from area-SES, there was no assessment of the *quality* of the attributes the  
464 participants could access in this study. Quality has been shown to be an important  
465 determinant of health and behaviour (Sawyer et al., 2017, Francis et al., 2012). Therefore,  
466 future studies of the 20MN should aim to examine both availability and quality. Fourth, no  
467 information was obtained about how much time participants spent at or near their home  
468 address, relevant to determining extent of exposure to the local environment. To understand  
469 how the home environment influences health and behaviour, it is important to consider  
470 people's activity spaces more broadly to address potential biases introduced by ignoring  
471 locations in which activities are undertaken (Perchoux et al., 2015).

472 In summary, findings from ProjectPLAN do not support the belief that health or health-  
473 related behaviours associated with living in a 20MN on differ according to SES. However,  
474 we did not find much indication of a difference in these behaviours between 20MN and non-  
475 20MN, beyond benefits for transport walking which was equally beneficial for low *and* high  
476 SES areas.

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## TABLES

**Table 1.** Descriptive characteristics of ProjectPLAN food and physical activity samples in Melbourne and Adelaide

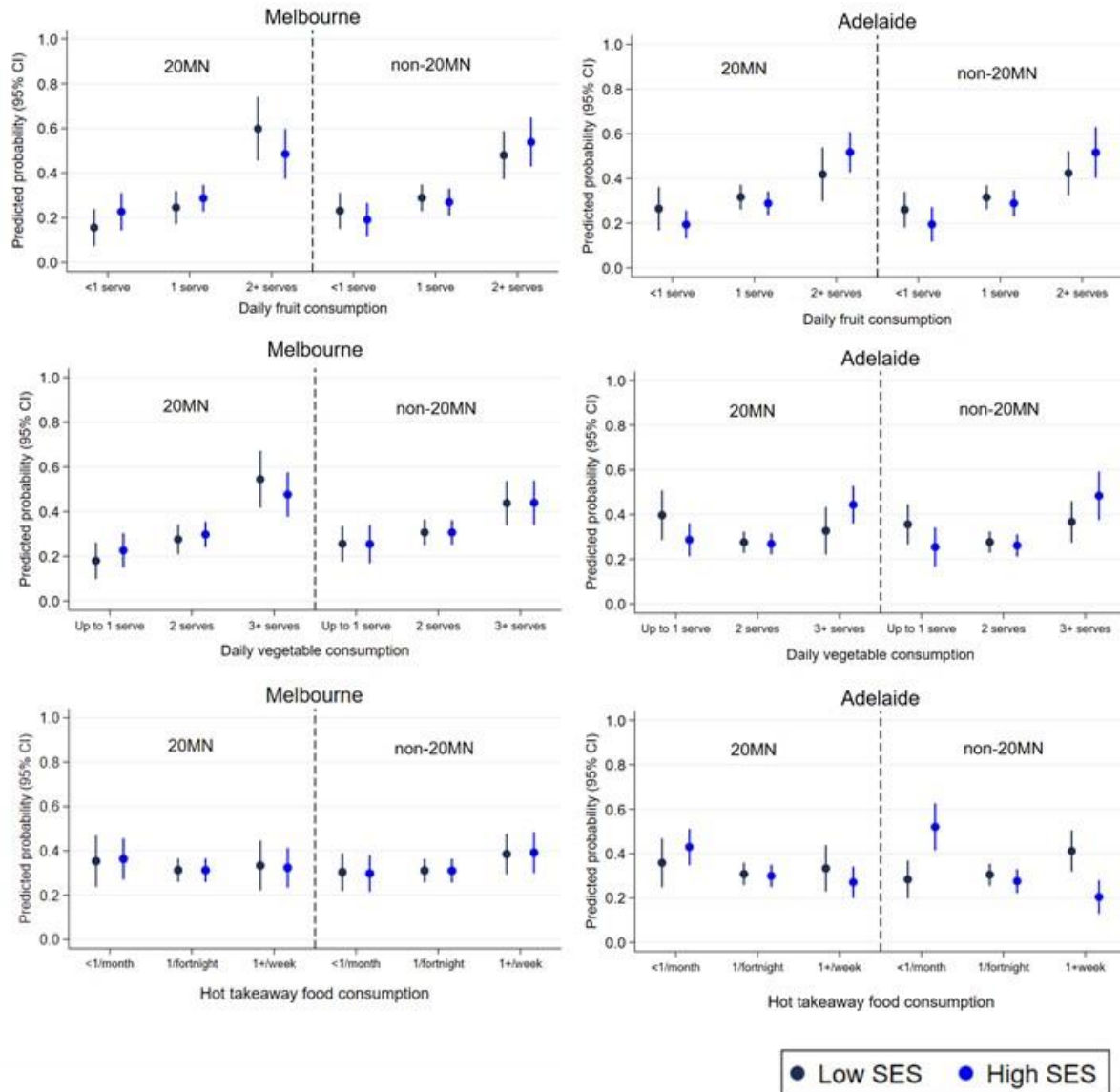
	<b>Melbourne Food N = 289</b>	<b>Adelaide Food N = 353</b>	<b>Melbourne PA N = 337</b>	<b>Adelaide PA N = 335</b>
<b>Outcomes</b>				
Serves of fruit per day				
<1 serve	60 (20.8%)	79 (22.4%)	n.c.	n.c.
1 serve	80 (27.7%)	105 (29.7%)	n.c.	n.c.
≥2 serves	149 (51.6%)	169 (47.9%)	n.c.	n.c.
Serves of vegetables per day				
<2 serves	68 (23.5%)	112 (31.7%)	n.c.	n.c.
2 serves	87 (30.1%)	94 (26.6%)	n.c.	n.c.
≥3 serves	134 (46.4%)	147 (41.6%)	n.c.	n.c.
Frequency of hot takeaway food consumption				
Never/less than once per month	94 (32.6%)	142 (40.2%)	n.c.	n.c.
Once every two weeks	90 (31.3%)	102 (28.9%)	n.c.	n.c.
At least once per week	104 (36.1%)	109 (30.9%)	n.c.	n.c.
Walking for transport (mins/week), median (IQR)	n.c.	n.c.	60 (0, 85)	0 (0, 80)
Walking for exercise/recreation (mins/week), median (Q1, Q3)	n.c.	n.c.	90 (60, 180)	120 (60, 200)
Number of exercise activities in past week, median (Q1, Q3)	n.c.	n.c.	3 (2, 4)	2 (1, 3)
Self-rated health				
Poor/Fair	56 (19.4%)	88 (24.9%)	65 (19.3%)	89 (26.6%)
Good	112 (38.8%)	133 (37.7%)	133 (39.5%)	123 (36.7%)
Very Good/Excellent	121 (41.9%)	132 (37.4%)	139 (41.2%)	123 (36.7%)
<b>Exposure</b>				
20-minute neighbourhood	127 (43.9%)	191 (54.1%)	123 (36.5%)	170 (50.7%)
<b>Moderators</b>				
Area-SES				
Low SES	127 (43.9%)	145 (41.1%)	142 (42.1%)	139 (41.5%)
High SES	162 (56.1%)	208 (58.9%)	195 (57.9%)	196 (58.5%)
Highest qualification				
Up to Year 12	45 (15.6%)	78 (22.1%)	64 (19.0%)	68 (20.3%)
Trade/Certificate	65 (22.5%)	113 (32.0%)	70 (20.8%)	106 (31.6%)
University	179 (61.9%)	162 (45.9%)	203 (60.2%)	161 (48.1%)
<b>Other covariates</b>				
Age (years), mean (SD)	51.7 (15.9)	56.4 (15.7)	48.8 (16.6)	57.4 (15.8)
Gender				
Male	116 (40.1%)	138 (39.1%)	146 (43.3%)	146 (43.6%)
Female	173 (59.9%)	215 (60.9%)	191 (56.7%)	189 (56.4%)
Children in household				
No children	194 (67.1%)	277 (78.5%)	226 (67.1%)	257 (76.7%)
Child(ren) under 4 yrs	52 (18.0%)	37 (10.5%)	58 (17.2%)	37 (11.0%)

<i>Only child(ren) over 4 yrs</i>	43 (14.9%)	39 (11.0%)	53 (15.7%)	41 (12.2%)
<b>Relationship status</b>				
<i>Single/Not living with partner</i>	99 (34.3%)	130 (36.8%)	126 (37.4%)	124 (37.0%)
<i>Living with partner</i>	190 (65.7%)	223 (63.2%)	211 (62.6%)	211 (63.0%)
<b>Supermarket reason for moving/living here</b>				
<i>Not within 20min/not important</i>	120 (41.5%)	149 (42.2%)		
<i>Important</i>	169 (58.5%)	204 (57.8%)	n.c.	n.c.
<b>Everyday needs within 20 minutes reason for moving/living here</b>				
<i>Not within 20min/not important</i>	130 (45.0%)	165 (46.7%)	182 (54.0%)	167 (49.9%)
<i>Important</i>	159 (55.0%)	188 (53.3%)	155 (46.0%)	168 (50.1%)
<b>Park, open space or beach reason for moving/living here</b>				
<i>Not within 20min/not important</i>			131 (38.9%)	124 (37.0%)
<i>Important</i>	n.c.	n.c.	206 (61.1%)	211 (63.0%)
<b>Recreational facilities (e.g., gyms) reason for moving/living here</b>				
<i>Not within 20min/not important</i>			220 (65.3%)	247 (73.7%)
<i>Important</i>	n.c.	n.c.	117 (34.7%)	88 (26.3%)
<b>Body mass index (kg/m<sup>2</sup>), mean (SD)</b>	25.3 (4.3)	26.8 (5.0)	25.7 (4.5)	26.8 (5.0)

ProjectPLAN: Places and Locations for Activity and Nutrition study; PA: physical activity; SES: socioeconomic status; n.c. = not collected (indicates covariates that were not measured in the sample).

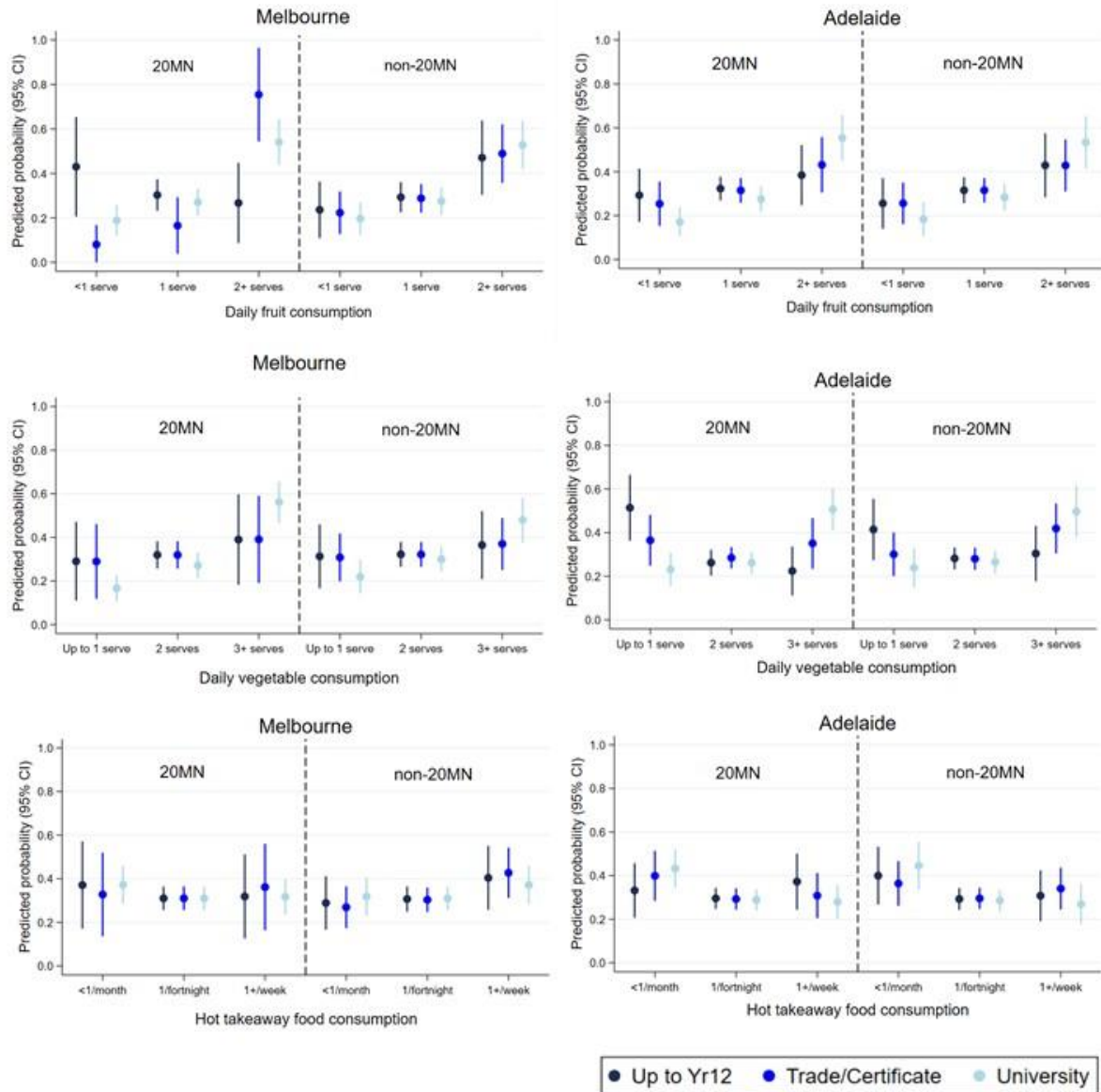
## FIGURES

**Figure 1.** Predicted probability with 95% confidence intervals of each diet outcome by neighbourhood type and area-SES for each city from adjusted ordinal regression models.



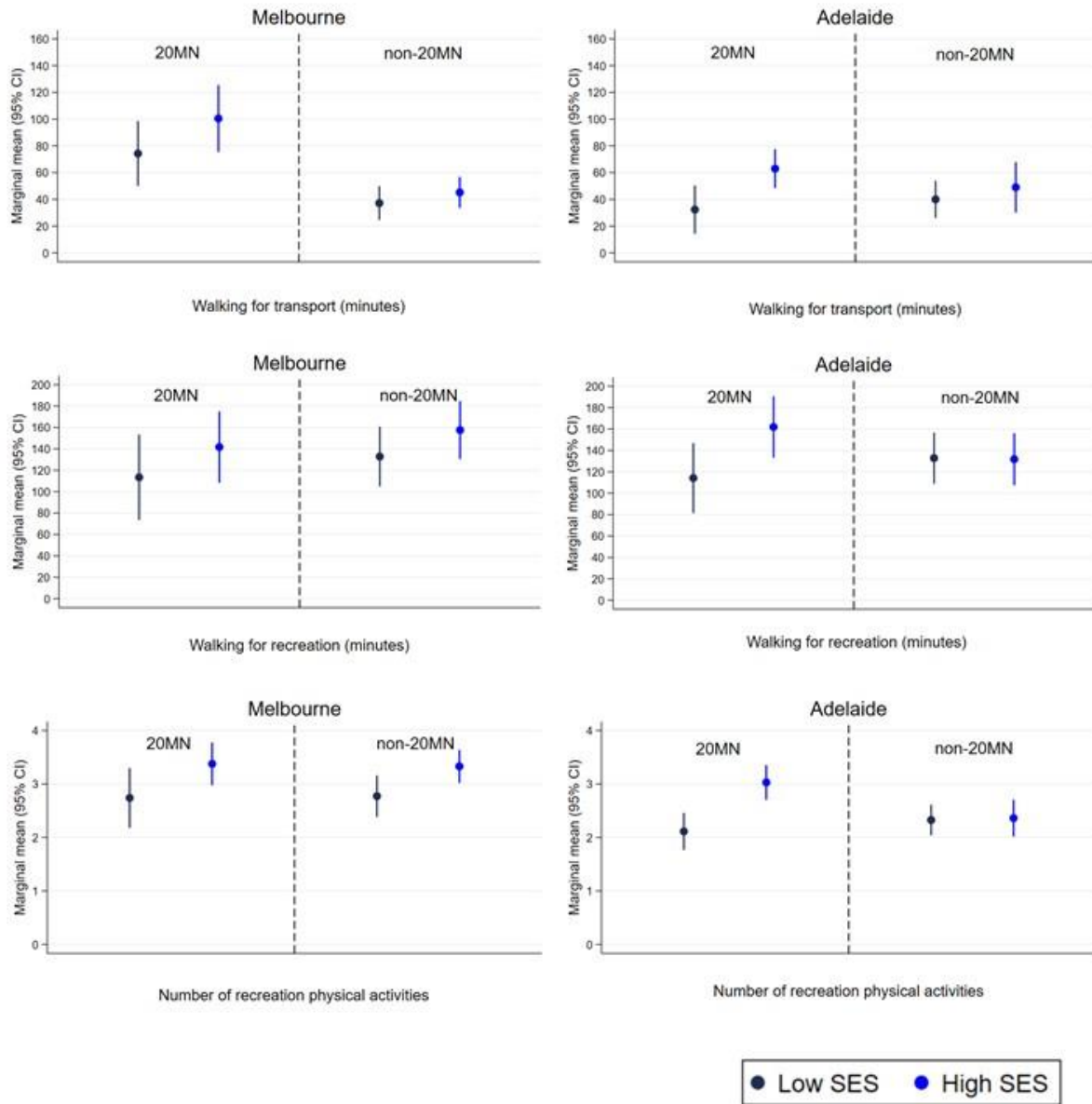
\*Hot takeaway food consumption: <1/month is Never or <1/month.

**Figure 2.** Predicted probability with 95% confidence intervals of each diet outcome by neighbourhood type and highest qualification for each city from adjusted ordinal regression models.

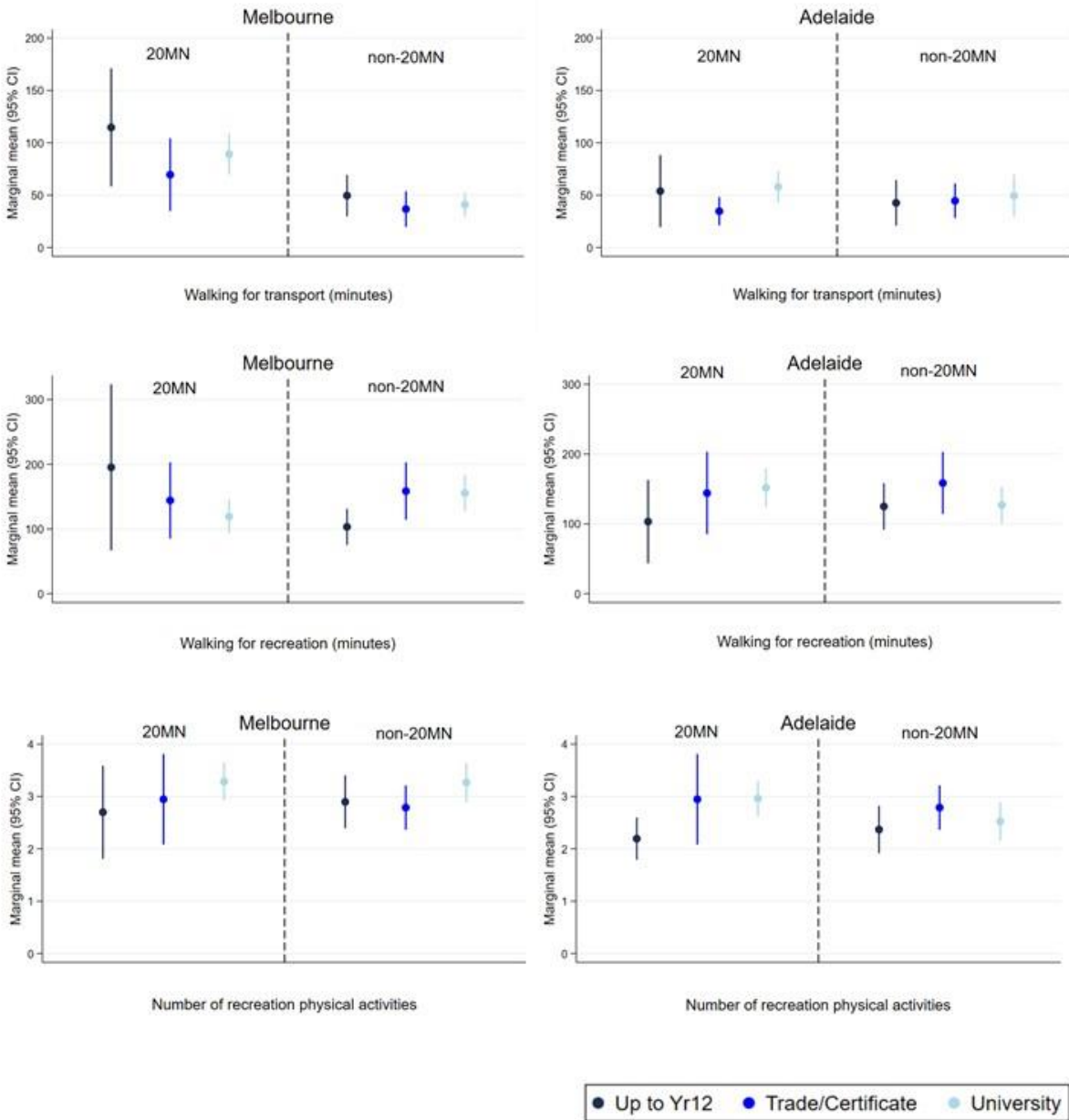


\*Hot takeaway food consumption: <1/month is Never or <1/month.

**Figure 3.** Marginal mean with 95% confidence intervals of each physical activity outcome by neighbourhood type and area-SES for each city from adjusted two-part and Poisson regression models.

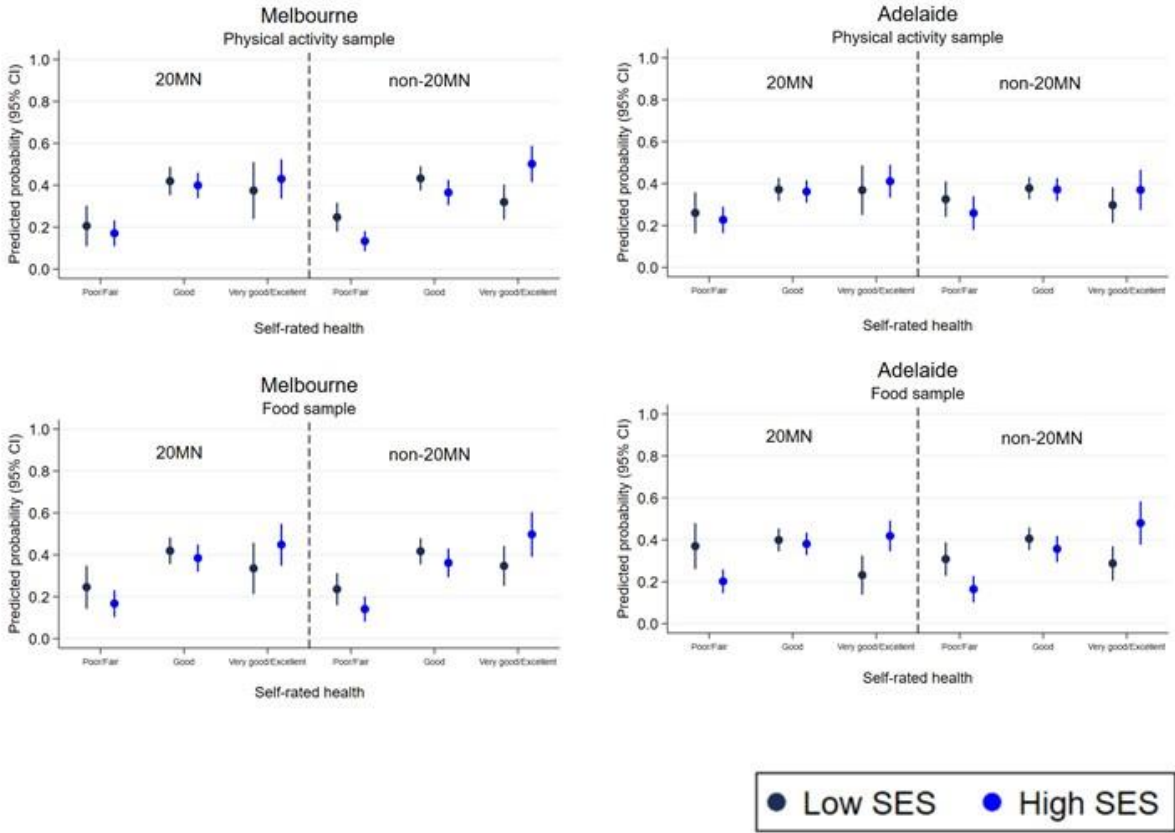


**Figure 4.** Marginal mean with 95% confidence intervals of each physical activity outcome by neighbourhood type and highest qualification for each city from adjusted two-part and Poisson regression models.





**Figure 5.** Predicted probability with 95% confidence intervals of self-rated health by neighbourhood type and area-SES for each city and sample from adjusted ordinal regression models.



**Figure 6.** Predicted probability with 95% confidence intervals of self-rated health by neighbourhood type and highest qualification for each city and sample from adjusted ordinal regression models.

