

# Older adult learning engagement in the modern city context of the Greater Glasgow Area

## Abstract

The present research by the new Urban Big Data Centre employs novel techniques to examine older adult learners' journeys (educationally and physically), in order to gain a 'three-dimensional' picture of engagement in forms of learning in the modern urban context of Glasgow.

Findings reveal participation for older adults (60+) is lower than expected for all forms of learning (even self-led and family) when compared with national averages and younger counterparts.

However, there is a subset of socially and technologically engaged older-adult 'learner-citizens' participating in educational, physical, cultural, civic and online activities, including online political discussions and boycotts.

These were more likely to be working, carers and had better health and their GPS trails show more city centre activity.

The full dataset will be available (via application) in 2016 for you to explore demographically diverse learner engagement in the urban context of Glasgow.

## Background

-Despite marked efforts by UK government to promote inclusion, inequalities in learning participation persist .

-Widening participation (WP) initiatives, emerged from adult learning sector, but now heavily focus resources on raising aspirations in schools.

-Adult learners are decreasing in numbers according to UK administrative data (e.g. UCAS).

-The 'Learning Cities' agenda (e.g. UNESCO 2013) acknowledges an aging population, living in increasingly urban environments.

-Lifelong & 'lifewide' learning is a key feature of such places, promoting learning beyond formal courses and across the lifespan.

-There are economic & social benefits of promoting all forms of learning as central to smart, green, sustainable, 'future' cities.

The present project uses advances in technology, and big/ open datasets to obtain a more holistic picture of learning engagement in modern urban city environments, particularly for marginalised groups such as older adult learners.

## Methods

Urban Big Data Centre (UBDC) @ Uni. of Glasgow, funded by the ESRC to 'open' access to existing data, and develop new methods (analyses & visualisations) for researchers, policy-makers, & citizens tackle, urban challenges. See details at [www.ubdc.ac.uk](http://www.ubdc.ac.uk)

The integrated Multimedia City Data Project (iMCD)  
Strand 1: 'Understanding Greater Glasgow' Survey  
Strand 2: Sensors- GPS & Lifelogging Cameras  
Strand 3: Glasgow Memory Server



Survey: ongoing 1500 household survey, with a sample of adults aged 16 and over (n= 1037), and specifically adults aged 60 and over (n= 377)  
Sensors: Potentially n=600 GPS, with 75% also wearing camera  
Social Media: 12 Months Data Capture

## Assessing Learning Engagement

Survey operationalised UNESCO Learning City key features.

Attitudes, literacy/ knowledge & Behaviours in:

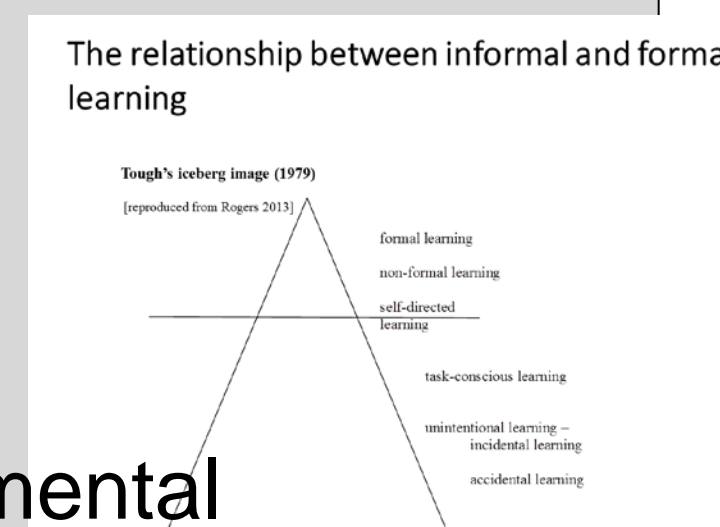
**Education/ skills**  
**Sustainability**  
**Transport**  
**Cultural/ civic activities**  
**ICT/ technology**

*Education Variables :*

Formal Learning  
Informal Learning  
Non-formal Learning  
Family Learning

+Modes, Hours, Reason for studies

+Literacies- English, Languages, Maths & Financial, Health, Environmental



## Survey Results

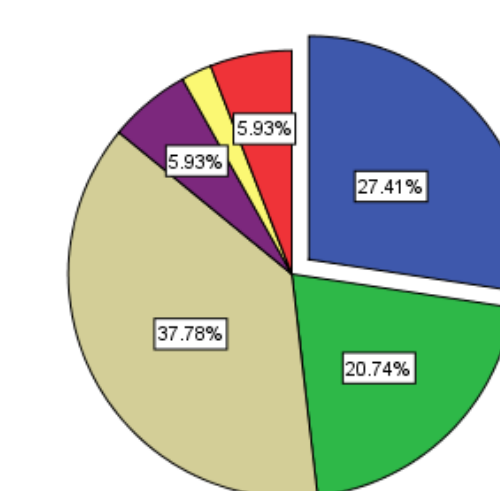
Sample included n= 1,037 adult interviews from 710 households.  
Mean age 50.73 years (SD=18.72, from 16 to 93).  
1.4 adults responded per household,  
45.2% male respondents & 54.8% female.

-Older adults (60+) participate least, in all forms of learning (p<0.001)  
There were no sex or nationality, nor income effects on participation

-Older adults left school younger and more likely to have started a job directly (66.2% of compared to 27.6%); p<0.001).

-Of those 60+: 12.2% were presently engaged in a learning activity.  
-23.9% of these formal & 17.4% % in non-formal activities

Figure 2: Total sample motivation for engaging in informal (self-directed) learning?



And 71.7% in informal, self-led learning.

Mainly via:

48.1% Reading websites or watching videos online videos  
5.7% Practicing with others  
4.4% Reading books  
1.7% Learned from a friend or relative

Figure 3: Differences in older adult motivations for types of learning

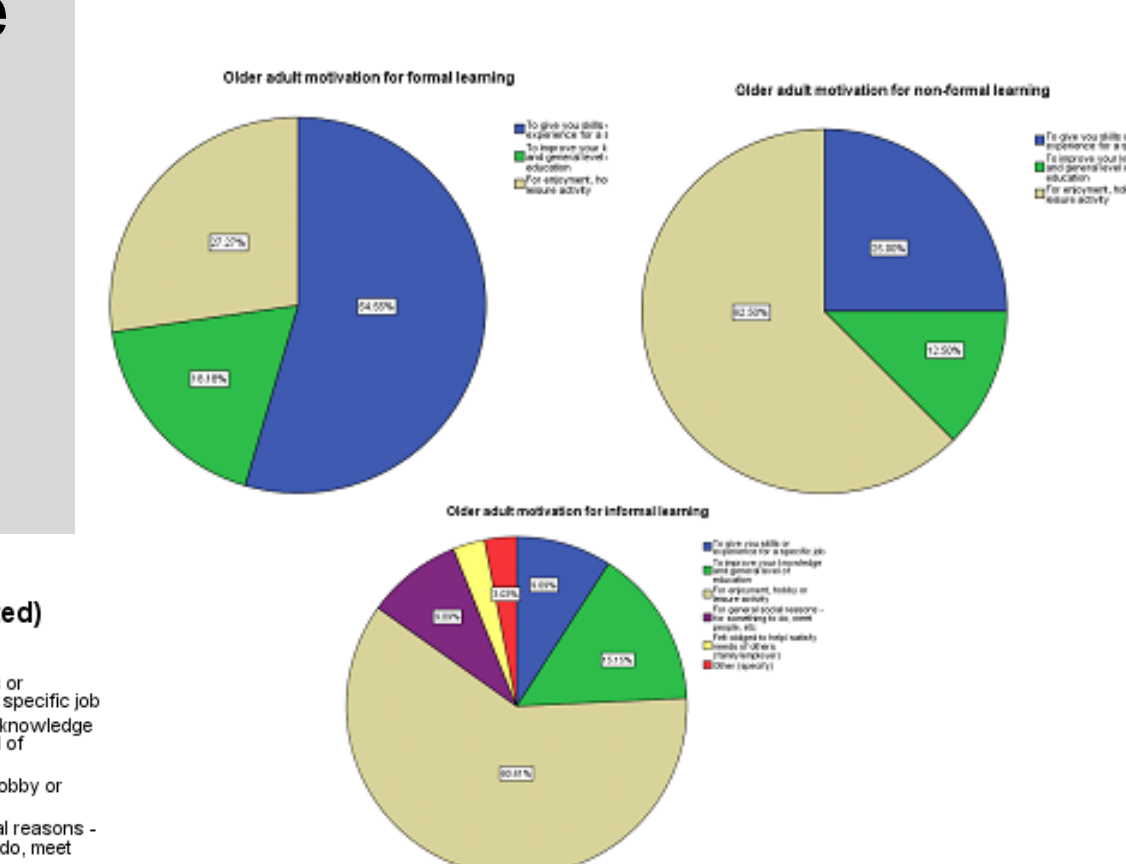
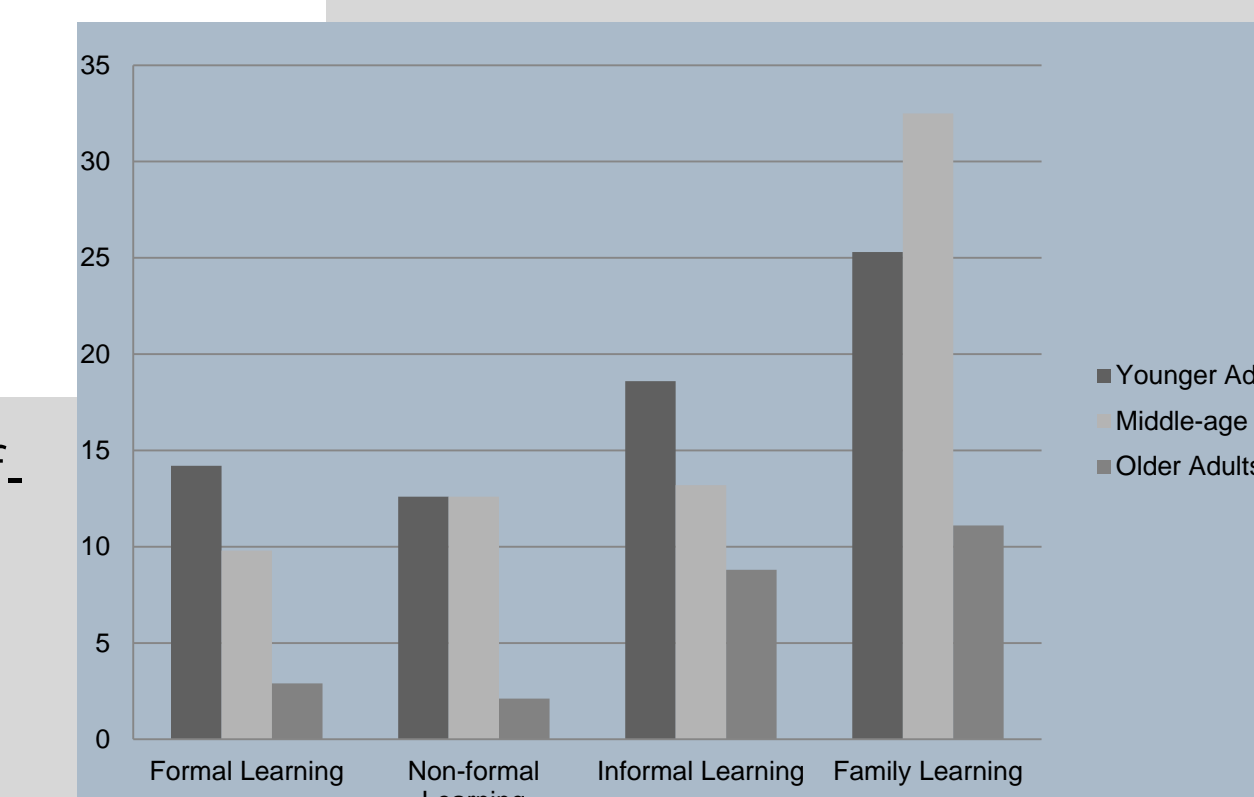


Figure 3: Engagement by Age



## GPS Results

Figure 4: GPS Map detailing movements of learning engaged and matched non-engaged older adults across Scotland

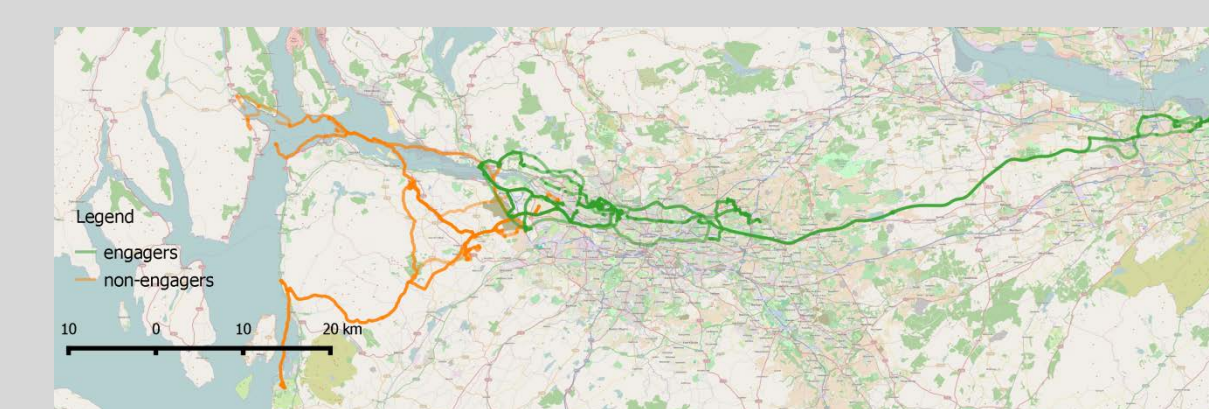
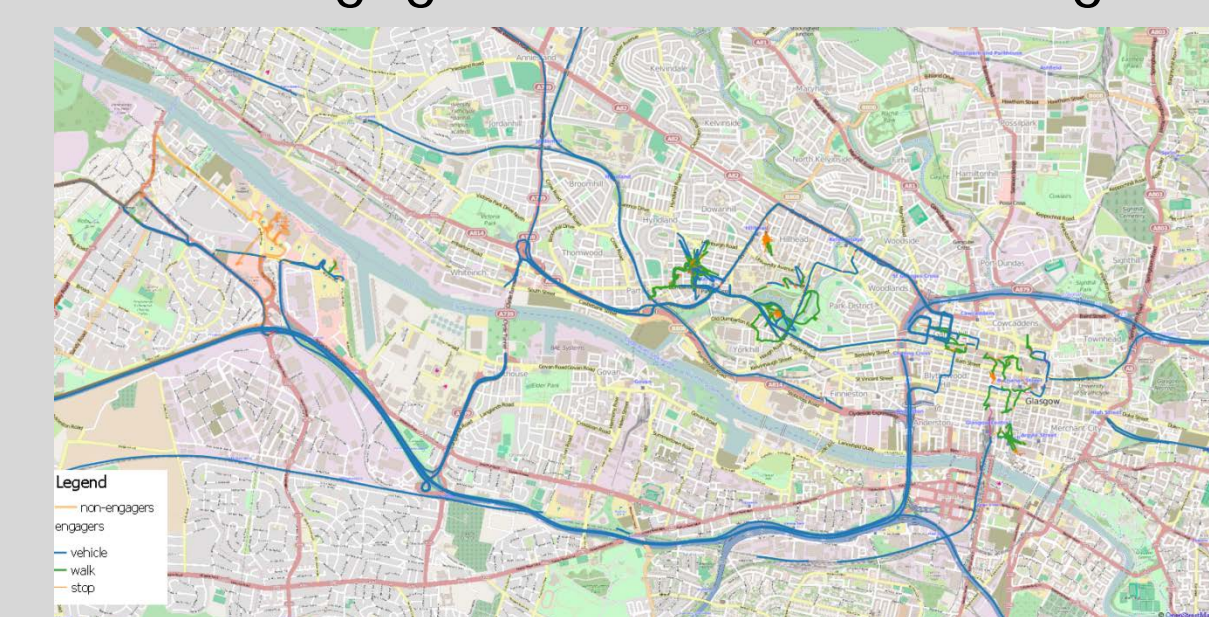


Figure 5: GPS Map detailing movements of learning engaged and matched non-engaged older adults in Glasgow



## What are people learning independently in Glasgow?

### Self-led 'Informal' Learning Activities Reported:

**Languages-** Spanish, Irish, Sign Language, Urdu, Swedish, Hebrew, German, Slovakian

**Cooking-** Food Hygiene, Aga oven, healthy eating

**Instruments-** Guitar, ukulele, fiddle

**ICT-** Web management, adobe, programming, databases, security 'Architect'

**Work-related skills** (not IT), Communication, discrimination, management, leadership

**Sports/ Physiology-** Karate, coaching, swimming, curling

**Practical Skills-** sewing, driving, First Aid, photography,

**Other:** Art (sculpture), Astronomy, Massage, Horse-Riding, History, Floristry, Psychology (Autism), Matchstick making, genealogy, Girl Guiding.

## Conclusions & Future Research

### iMCD Data Launch Feb. 2016

Planned Projects:

**'Educational Disadvantage and Place'** - Osborne, Kintrea & Lido:

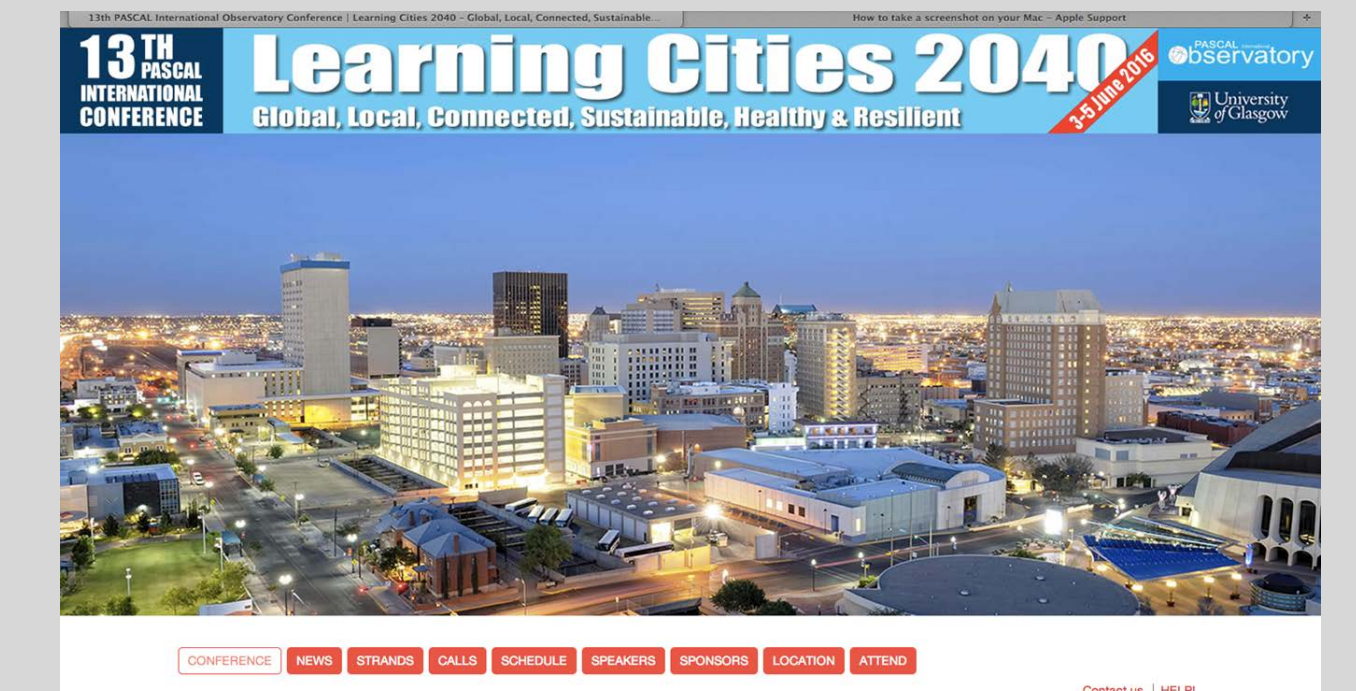
-Who is learning, what are they learning & where are they learning?

-Linking to School records, mapping access and attainment 'flows'

**Urban Indicators Project-** Thakuriah & colleagues wider context surrounding Glasgow.

**CR&DALL & UBDC Half-Day Conference-** Wellbeing and learning for a better life

Register now for the next PASCAL Learning Cities conference  
Glasgow June 3-5 2016: [Connected, Sustainable, Healthy & Resilient](http://www.pascallearningcities.org)



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References available upon e-mail request