

Brain capital: A new investment approach for late-life well-being

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Within many societies and cultures around the world, older adults are too

often undervalued and underappreciated, according to a new article in the journal *Innovation in Aging*. This exacerbates many key challenges that older adults may face. It also undermines the many positive aspects of late life that are of value at both an individual and societal level.

In the article "Investing in Late-Life Brain Capital," a global team of experts proposes a new approach to elevate health and well-being by optimizing late-life brain capital.

"We define brain capital as neuroscience-inspired technologies that integrate and optimize outcomes for [mental health](#), [brain health](#), education, diversity, and [positive psychology](#)—including resilience, wisdom, and creativity," said Harris Eyre, MD, Ph.D., co-lead of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development's Neuroscience Inspired Policy Initiative. "Brain capital has the potential to introduce a paradigm shift to our understanding and agency in brain health."

Eyre is the paper's senior author, as well as co-founder of the PRODEO Institute and a senior fellow for brain capital with the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.

"This paper highlights and seeks to increase and tailor investments into late-life brain capital, which prioritizes brain skills and brain health in a brain economy (aka a [knowledge economy](#))," noted Walter D. Dawson, DPhil, senior fellow at the Global Brain Health Institute and first author on the paper. "It will unlock and capitalize on the value of aging for individuals, organizations, and societies. Older adults have accrued tremendous wisdom over their lives, wisdom which can help us solve modern challenges."

Dawson and Eyre now co-instruct a Global Brain Health Institute summer course on brain capital, where they teach fellows from around

the world about the latest developments in this new field.

"Millions of [older adults](#) experience elder mistreatment each year at great social and [economic costs](#)," noted Brad Cannell, Ph.D., associate professor of epidemiology at the University of Texas Health Science Center School of Public Health. "The preservation of social connection and cognitive function representing [sic] two of the most promising targets for primary prevention of elder mistreatment today—both of which are key constructs of the brain capital model."

The paper argues that environmental, social, and governance (ESG) approaches have driven positive business and societal value. Businesses use metrics to measure their ESG performance in order for them to be transparent with consumers and stakeholders. This information can help companies make better decisions about their business practices. The coauthors believe ESG measures are incomplete. Incorporating [brain capital](#) into ESG frameworks would provide a more comprehensive, robust approach to create long-term positive productivity and well-being impacts for the economy, the environment, and all stakeholders.

More information: Walter D Dawson et al, Investing in Late-Life Brain Capital, *Innovation in Aging* (2022). [DOI: 10.1093/geroni/igac016](https://doi.org/10.1093/geroni/igac016)

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