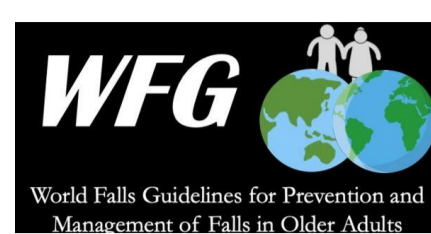


Is concerns about falling a risk factor for future falls? A systematic review of prospective studies



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Background

- Concerns (or, ‘fear’) about falling are common among older people [1].
- They have been reported to be associated with various negative outcomes, including activity restriction, depression, decreased quality-of-life, social isolation, and falls.
- The recent World Falls Guidelines therefore recommended that clinicians assess and manage concerns about falling [2].
- Whilst prior conceptualisations have proposed an association between concerns about falling and future falls [3, 4], the evidence base for such purported association is uncertain.
- We conducted a systematic review to explore the association between concerns about falling and future prospective falls.

Aim

- 1) To investigate if concerns about falling predict future falls in older adults (aged 60 years and above)
- 2) To assess if this relationship is independent of other risk factors for falls

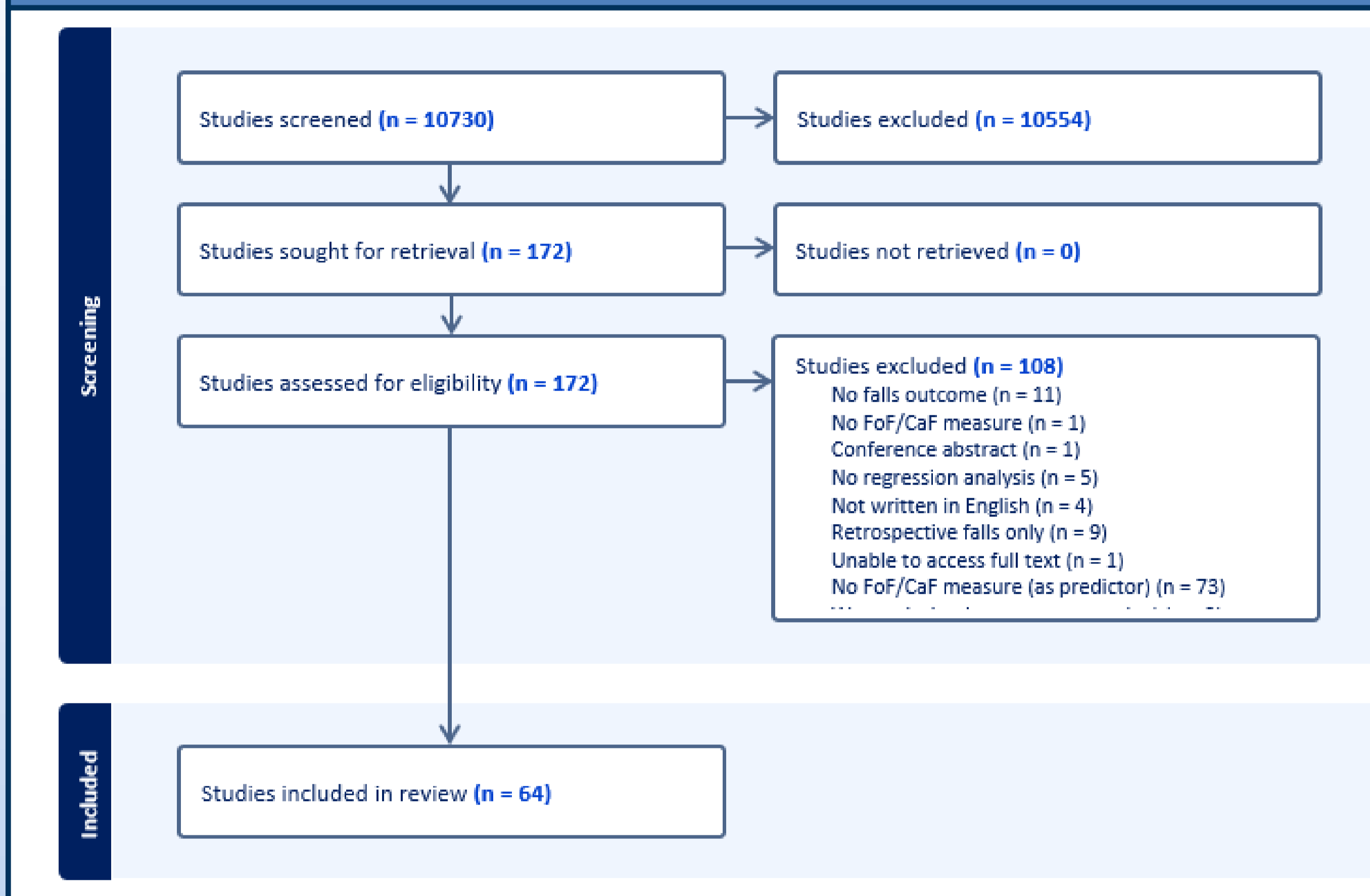
Study Characteristics

- Following the removal of duplicates, we screened the abstract and titles of 10,554 articles; and the full text of 172 articles.
- We included and extracted data from 64 articles, which consisted of data from **87,826 participants**.
- Concerns about falling were most commonly assessed via the FES-I (7- or 16-item version; **N = 19**) or a single-item question (e.g., “Do you experience worries about falling?”; **N = 18**).
- Included studies were from 20 separate countries, most commonly: USA (*N* = 14), Australia (*N* = 10), Netherlands (*N* = 7) and Japan (*N* = 5).

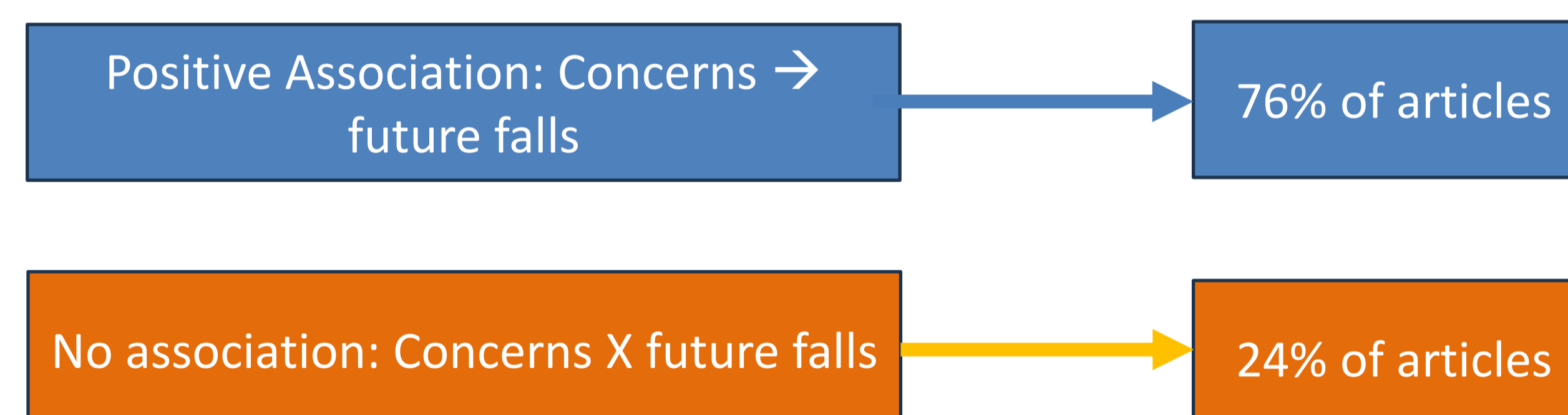
Methods

- We searched 4 databases for articles that included concerns about falling as a baseline predictor for future falls over a 6-month period or longer; focusing on **community-dwelling older adults** (aged 60 years and above).
- We excluded articles that focused on specific populations (e.g., people living with Parkinson’s Disease or people recovering from a Stroke).

PRISMA Flow Diagram



Results



- The significant positive association remained after controlling for potential confounding variables, e.g., age, low muscle strength etc. (*N*=16 articles)
- Four articles identified that high concerns only increased risk for certain older people (e.g., those with *good* balance)

Conclusions

- These findings support previous conceptualisations and identify concerns about falling as an independent risk factor for future falls.
- As part of the World Falls Guidelines, we recommend that clinicians working with older people regularly screen for concerns about falling, using the short 7-item FES-I [2].
- Further analysis is currently ongoing to conduct meta-analyses based on specific outcomes (e.g., recurrent vs. single falls) and assessment tools (e.g., FES-I vs. ABC vs. single-item measures).

References

- [1] Scheffer et al. (2008). Fear of falling: measurement strategy, prevalence, risk factors and consequences among older persons. *Age and ageing*.
- [2] Ellmers et al. (2023). Why should clinical practitioners ask about their patients' concerns about falling?. *Age and Ageing*.
- [3] Hadjistavropoulos et al. (2011). Reconceptualizing the role of fear of falling and balance confidence in fall risk. *Journal of Aging and Health*.
- [4] Ellmers et al. (2023). The perceived control model of falling: developing a unified framework to understand and assess maladaptive fear of falling. *Age and ageing*.