

Nordic Gerontological Federation

GeroNord

News on research, developmental work and education within the
ageing area in the Nordic Countries

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Words from the President

Dear colleagues,

Longevity is on the rise, and with it comes a growing need to better understand ageing and the everyday lives of older adults. The demographic shift, with ageing societies, offers great promise, but also brings new challenges. How can we ensure that older people live well—with good health, security, and a sense of meaning?

Meeting these challenges requires more than policy ambition, it calls for solid research and education, grounded in empirical evidence. Such evidence is derived from survey data and qualitative interviews, which are crucial for capturing the lived experiences of older adults: their health, social connections and daily realities.

This knowledge enables researchers to identify trends and inequalities, while also providing decision-makers with the tools needed to plan for the future wisely. To achieve this, it is vital that decision-makers and societies continue to prioritise and value opportunities to conduct this kind of research.

In a recent article, organisers and key participants of the NKG 2024 Congress emphasise the urgent need to adapt to ageing societies. Their message is clear: societies must be inclusive, sustainable, and innovative. For researchers, this is a call to deepen understanding and to frame ageing not only as a challenge but also as an opportunity.

You will find more about the article below and much more in this newsletter.

Best regards,



Carin Lennartsson

President of the Nordic Gerontological Federation



We invite you to the 28th Nordic Congress of Gerontology in Jyväskylä, Finland, June 16-18, 2027

On behalf of the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences and Gerontology Research Center at the University of Jyväskylä, Societas Gerontologica Fennica, the Finnish Geriatricians Society, the Finnish Society for Growth and Ageing Research, and the Nordic Gerontological Federation we invite you to join the 28th Nordic Congress of Gerontology (NKG) to share your thoughts and latest research findings on ageing.

The theme of the conference is **"Ageing in the Current Light"**. We welcome multidisciplinary contributions reflecting the pillars of the NGF's scientific orientations: behavioural and social sciences; biological, health and medical sciences; humanities; social research, policy, and practice. There will also be an enjoyable social programme.

The congress will take place at [the University of Jyväskylä, located in the heart of the city](#). Our beautiful and sustainable campus is a key element of the University's appeal. It offers a unique blend of cultural heritage and natural beauty, reflecting over a century of Finnish architectural history. The campus is internationally renowned for its numerous buildings designed by Alvar Aalto.

We look forward to welcoming you to Jyväskylä in 2027!

[Read more](#)

From the Organising Committee:

Mikaela von Bonsdorff | Congress President

Katja Kokko | Secretary General

Johanna Eronen | Congress Coordinator

Linda Enroth | The Finnish Society for Growth and Ageing Research

Jouko Laurila | Finnish Geriatricians

Esa Jämsen | Societas Gerontologica Fennica



Key insights of the 27NKG in Stockholm published in paper

A perspective paper from the 27th Nordic Congress of Gerontology, hosted by ARC at Karolinska Institutet in June 2024 in collaboration with several Nordic gerontological and geriatric organisations, is now available online in the Journal of Global Ageing.

Titled Ageing in a transforming world: Insights for future research and policy from [the 27th Nordic Congress of Gerontology](#), the paper highlights key insights from the congress and outlines future directions for ageing research in both the Nordic and global contexts.

[Read more](#)

OsloMet Joins DIGI4AGE: Shaping the Future of Ageing in a Digital World

The Faculty of Social Sciences (SAM) at OsloMet and Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) are proud to announce their partnership in DIGI4AGE, a newly launched doctoral network funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) under HORIZON Europe.

DIGI4AGE is an interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and international research and training program designed to foster excellence in evidence-based leadership for digitalizing societies. Over the course of the program, 14 doctoral researchers will be trained to become future leaders with deep expertise in both digital transformation and ageing societies. These researchers will be equipped to drive innovation across academia, the public and private sectors, and civil society—developing solutions that benefit older individuals, European communities, and businesses alike.

The program explores how digital technologies can:

1. Support health in old age while respecting personal identity and self-image.
2. Adapt to older individuals' habits and preferences in workplaces and consumer markets.
3. Complement social innovation to promote equality and inclusion in ageing societies.

Professor Kathrin Komp from LUT University in Finland coordinates the DIGI4AGE network. From OsloMet/NOVA, Rune Halvorsen, Mi Ah Schøyen, and Marja Aartsen are actively involved. Other academic partners include:

- Open University (Netherlands)
- Lietuvos Socialinių Mokslų Centras (Lithuania)
- Technical University Dortmund (Germany)
- Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (Spain)
- Karl Landsteiner Privatuniversität (Austria)

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (Folkehelseinstituttet) is also participating as an associated partner. PhD recruitment is expected to begin after the summer.

[Read more](#)

A sociocultural perspective on the emergence of seven meeting places

New research maps the population composition, loneliness landscape and social activity landscape in the local areas of seven future meeting places in Denmark.

Cities have developed in a way that creates a shortage of natural meeting places in everyday life – especially for the citizens who are least mobile. The project “Places We Meet” initiated by the philanthropic association Realdania, support the development of seven inclusive and age-friendly meeting places, which are located in extension of the places where older people go on a daily basis.

This initiative is based on a fundamental ambition to help reduce loneliness and improve the quality of life among older people by developing new activity and community-building functions and places in the city.

[Read more](#)

Three of the future meeting places are studied in an ongoing PhD project by Pernille Bülow Pedersen. The project is a collaboration between the EGV Foundation (Social inclusion of Older Adults) and the Department of Public Health, University of Copenhagen, and funded by the EGV Foundation and Realdania. [‘Where shall we meet?’ – A longitudinal case study of age inclusion in new public meeting places as a way to reduce loneliness among older people.](#)

OPEN FOR REGISTRATION

The course “Ageing and Social Change III: Social participation and well-being”

The relation of social participation and well-being with its connection to social dynamics and structures is at the centre of this course, intertwining theoretical concepts with empirical studies.

Students will investigate how active engagement in social activities relates to ageing, life courses and social change, and how it relates to various dimensions of social structures across different stages of life.

This last course from the Ageing and Social Change PhD course series starts in November 2025. The course is given online, with a two-day on-campus workshop in Norrköping. The language of the course is English.

[Please go here to apply for the course](#)

For more information, please get in touch with Ceciel Heijkants from the Division of Ageing and Social Change, Linköping University at ceciel.heijkants@liu.se

Recent PhD dissertations



The trajectories of mobility among community-dwelling older people through the COVID-19 pandemic

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Background and objectives: The COVID-19 pandemic created a unique natural experiment to examine how sudden reductions in environmental support influence older adults' mobility. Mobility is a multidimensional construct essential for maintaining independence and participation in later life. This doctoral dissertation explored how different dimensions of mobility among older adults in Finland changed from the pre-pandemic period (2017–2018) to the onset of the pandemic (early summer 2020), and approximately two years later (2021–2022). The focus was on three key dimensions: autonomy in outdoor mobility, life-space mobility, and physical activity.

In addition to describing changes over time, the study aimed to identify personal, sociodemographic, psychosocial, and environmental factors that contributed to these changes. Another objective was to examine the longitudinal and reciprocal associations between different mobility dimensions: physical capacity (assessed via walking performance), actual mobility (measured by accelerometer-based physical activity), and perceived autonomy in outdoor mobility.

Methods: The study utilized data from the Active Ageing – Resilience and External Support as Modifiers of the Disablement Outcome (AGNES) study, which collected data at three time points: baseline (2017–2018, n=1021), onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020, n=809), and

second follow-up (2021–2022, n=663). Participants were community-dwelling older adults initially aged 75, 80 and 85 years living in Jyväskylä. Data were collected via self-reporting, laboratory and performance-based assessments, and accelerometer-based physical activity monitoring.

Results: At the onset of the pandemic in 2020, there were notable decreases in life-space mobility and perceived autonomy in outdoor mobility. Conversely, an increase in self-reported physical activity was observed. Approximately two years after the onset of the pandemic, life-space mobility and perceived autonomy in outdoor mobility had partially recovered, although not to baseline levels, while self-reported physical activity had declined below baseline levels. Being a driver with good lower extremity performance helped mitigate the decline in life-space mobility. Higher levels and increases in self-reported physical activity were also observed, particularly among those with better lower extremity performance and higher muscle strength prior to the pandemic. Women generally had lower levels of mobility over the study period and experienced greater decreases in life-space mobility and perceived autonomy in outdoor mobility at the onset of the pandemic.

Perceived walking ability and female sex were the most consistently negatively associated with life-space mobility throughout the study period. However, the factors associated with autonomy in outdoor mobility varied more, with the negative role of female sex increasing and the role of older age and poorer self-rated health status decreasing at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Psychosocial factors, on the other hand, showed the most consistent association with autonomy in outdoor mobility across different time points.

The analysis of the longitudinal and reciprocal associations between different mobility dimensions showed that walking performance is crucial for older adults' physical activity and perceived autonomy in outdoor mobility. Additionally, physical activity that exceeds an individual's usual walking intensity can help maintain better walking performance. In contrast, absolute physical activity, defined by uniform thresholds for everyone, did not show association with later walking performance.

Conclusion: This doctoral dissertation reveals diverging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the different dimensions of mobility of older adults. It also emphasises the need to support those with poor physical function and other limited resources, such as older women. Gender differences may be explained by women's weaker physical function, less driving, and more cautious attitudes towards the pandemic. In addition, the findings suggest that focusing on physical activity intensity above the preferred walking speed may improve walking performance and thus perceived autonomy in outdoor mobility.

[The dissertation can be read in the JYX publication archive](#)



Context-related physical activity and sedentary behaviour before and after retirement: GPS and accelerometer-based study

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In addition to individual and social factors, many environmental factors can modify physical activity. However, few studies have focused on older age groups. The aims of this dissertation were to examine the contexts in which physical activity and sedentary behaviour takes place before and after statutory retirement, and how natural vegetation, i.e., greenness, relates to physical activity. The study also examined changes in physical activity and sedentary behaviour during retirement, in relation to physical activity linked to pre-retirement work and commuting. The data was derived from the Finnish Retirement and Aging study (n=102–137) and from the Enhancing Physical Activity and Healthy Aging among Recent Retirees trial (n=45–53), and was collected using a device with GPS and accelerometer sensors.

On workdays, more time was spent, and more physical activity and sedentary time accumulated, in non-home locations than at home. Conversely, on days off, more sedentary time and physical activity accumulated at home. Greater exposure to green space during active travel (i.e., trips made in physically active ways) was associated with higher total and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) during active travel. However, these associations were observed on days off and on retirement days, but not on workdays. Greater residential greenness was positively associated with the level of retirees' physical activity. In addition, MVPA at home or during active travel increased to a greater extent during the physical activity intervention among retirees with the greatest exposure to residential greenness. Pre-retirement work-related and commuting physical activity predicted changes in physical activity and sedentary behaviour during retirement transition.

To conclude, this study shows that physical activity and sedentary behaviour are associated with different contexts. The results also highlight the need to distinguish between workdays and non-workdays when analysing the contexts of physical activity and sedentary behaviour among working-age populations. The study observed a positive association between greenness and physical activity, both overall and during active travel. Thus, accessible, good quality green spaces in residential areas and around pedestrian and bicycle lanes may promote physical activity among late middle-aged people.

[Read more](#)



Care and financial support in ageing families: The changing shape of inequality

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Background

Sweden is well known for its strong welfare model, which for a long time has provided older adults and their families with a secure safety net. Through pensions, publicly funded health and social care, and social insurance, the system has aimed to reduce the burden on families and create equal conditions, regardless of individual resources or access to relatives. In international comparison, this has been largely successful.

In countries with less generous welfare systems, a greater responsibility often rests on families. There, more intensive care is provided, usually by a smaller number of children. In the Nordic countries, it is more common that several children share lighter tasks, while municipalities have taken responsibility for more basic care needs, a model preferred by both older people and their families. During the past decades, however, demographic and social changes have affected both the needs that welfare systems are expected to meet and their actual capacity to do so. With an ageing population, growing inequalities in living conditions, and old-age care that has both been retrenched and largely privatised, the question remains: how do families adapt to these changes?

The family's growing role

The thesis primarily examines how so-called intergenerational support, that is help exchanged across generations within the family, has changed over time. It focuses on two directions: care from adult children to parents, and financial support from older parents to children and grandchildren. It also examines changes in the receipt of care—from formal, informal, and privately purchased care—over the past 30 years. The analysis is based on data from SWEOLD, a unique, nationally representative study of the living conditions of older people in Sweden.

A clear pattern is that public old-age care has declined while care provided by older people's partners has increased. Between 1992 and 2021, the proportion receiving formal care (home help) among those who needed assistance with daily activities, such as grocery shopping or cleaning, fell from nearly 60 to 30 percent. The proportion relying solely on care from partners or children, without any supplementary help from formal care, also increased. This means that overall, partners carry more responsibility for care today than previously, often themselves in older age and with reduced functional ability, raising the risk of negative impacts on their own health and quality of life.

Even among the most vulnerable groups—older women, who more often than men live alone,

people with disabilities, and those with low education—public old-age care has declined. At the same time, privately purchased care has become more common. In 2021, it was just as common to buy help with everyday tasks as to receive home help. Women and people with higher education were more likely to purchase private services, suggesting that economic resources have become decisive for what type of support one receives. This reinforces inequalities between those who can afford to buy care and those who cannot.

Who helps—and with what?

Adult children are often an important resource, particularly when an older parent lives alone. The most common contributions are practical help such as transport, buying clothes, or managing finances, but the distribution is uneven. Daughters in working-class occupations most often provide help, and they are also the ones most involved in the most demanding care tasks: cleaning, cooking, or helping with bathing—in other words, tasks that require time and presence. This is a heavy responsibility, often carried by those who themselves have the least margins in terms of time, money, and energy.

Financial support across three generations

Intergenerational support is not only about informal care for older parents, results show that older parents also play an increasingly important role as providers of financial support to both children and, above all, grandchildren. The fact that this support often extends across three generations shows how the family's role as a financial anchor has grown. However, the ability to contribute varies. It is primarily those with stronger financial resources who can afford to provide support to their younger family members.

Men have historically given larger amounts, with their level of giving remaining stable over time. Women, however, now contribute more, particularly through larger transfers. This shift reflects women's improved economic position relative to earlier cohorts, but also changing priorities. Yet, despite greater labour force participation, older women still have fewer resources than men, making their increased giving especially noteworthy.

Family support on unequal terms

The thesis shows how families are taking on greater responsibility as public support declines, but they do so on unequal terms. Who gives and receives support is increasingly shaped by socioeconomic conditions rather than by actual needs. At the same time, many older people continue to support children and grandchildren financially, in patterns that clearly reflect both gender and class.

Solidarity within the family cannot be taken for granted. It is shaped by opportunities, limitations, and by social structures often considered self-evident. When responsibility shifts from the public sector to families, without being recognised or compensated, there is a risk of embedding inequalities where equality was once the goal.

Failing to take these changes seriously carries costs, not only for individuals left with increased

responsibilities or unmet needs, but also for trust, for the belief in the future, and for the strength of the social contract upon which our welfare system rests. The development of the patterns identified in this thesis needs to be carefully monitored, otherwise decisive changes may occur silently.

[Read the thesis](#)

[Read more about Isabelle von Saenger and her work](#)

Changes in physical activity in relation to retirement transition – concurrent changes in Body Mass Index, physical functioning and self-rated health

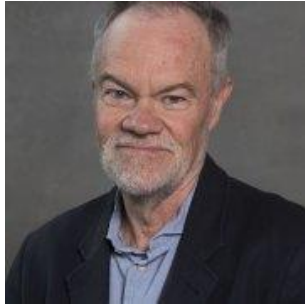
Roosa Lintuaho, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Turku.

This thesis aimed to examine changes in physical activity and body mass index (BMI) during working years and changes in physical activity concurrently with changes in BMI, physical functioning, and self-rated health during retirement transition. It examined two cohorts of public sector workers, from the Finnish Public Sector study (n=66,852) and the Finnish Retirement and Aging study (n=3,550). The data were collected using a repeated survey. Group-based multi-trajectory analysis was the main statistical method used.

During a 16-year follow-up in this working-age population, physical activity decreased and BMI increased, regardless of age or sex. The differences in the four identified groups were mainly related to their initial level of physical activity and BMI.

During the retirement transition, physical activity temporarily increased, independently of the pre-retirement activity level. BMI remained stable. BMI and physical activity were inversely connected: low activity was associated with a high BMI. During the retirement transition, lower physical activity was associated with a lower level of physical functioning and poorer self-rated health. Physical functioning and self-rated health improved along with physical activity during the transition, but the change was only temporary. Female sex, manual occupation and living alone were associated with lower physical activity, higher BMI, poorer physical functioning, and suboptimal self-rated health during the transition to retirement.

In conclusion, physical activity, physical functioning, and self-rated health temporarily increased during the retirement transition, but BMI remained stable. The changes in physical activity, physical functioning and self-rated health were interconnected. The results suggest that retirement is timepoint-sensitive to changes in lifestyle habits and that physical activity should be promoted among those about to retire, especially among those at risk of low physical activity after retirement. [Read more](#)



Social Policy, Inequality and Health – Symposium in Honour of Professor Johan Fritzell

On August 26, ARC hosted a symposium that brought together leading scholars to celebrate the remarkable contributions of Professor Johan Fritzell to research on social policy, inequalities, and health over the course of his career.

After a historical overview of the existence of health inequalities since the beginning of human history by Professor Eero Lahelma, the first session, Social Policy and Inequalities, featured distinguished presentations by Professors Joakim Palme, Marta Szebehely, Olli Kangas, Tine Rostgaard, Espen Dahl, and Jon Kvist. They highlighted Johan's role in advancing comparative welfare state research and deepening our understanding of how policy shapes social and health inequalities across societies.

The second session, Life Course, Inequalities and Health, included contributions from Professors Mikael Rostila, Marja Aartsen, Marijke Veenstra, and Marja Jylhä. Their reflections underlined Johan's pivotal influence on life course research, particularly on how life transitions and inequalities accumulate and affect health in later life.

Beyond his scientific achievements, speakers repeatedly emphasized Johan's personal qualities—his generosity, intellectual curiosity, and quiet leadership—which have left a lasting imprint on the research environments he has helped build. The event concluded with Johan's own reflections, followed by closing remarks from colleagues at Karolinska Institutet, affirming a shared sense that his journey is far from complete and that many look forward to continuing it alongside him.

The symposium was sponsored by Forte and the Strategic research area in epidemiology (SFO-epi) at Karolinska Institutet.

Seven projects receive funding to study sustainable health and social care for older adults in the Nordic and Baltic region

The projects have been chosen among a total of 74 applications by the deadline in February 2025.

The funded projects address issues related to older people's substance abuse problems, formal and informal care systems, healthy ageing in Nordic Indigenous populations, prevention of osteoporotic fractures, and how qualitative living environments can contribute to home-based health and care services. The projects were announced in June 2025.

In August, it was announced that two more projects had received funding, as the Novo Nordisk Foundation had agreed to contribute.

[Read more about the initial five projects who received funding](#)

[Read more about the additional two projects](#)

Calendar 2025

- **24-26 September, Reykjavik, Iceland,** [EuGMS 21st New landscapes in geriatric medicine](#), European Geriatric Medicine Society
- **23 October, Nyborg, Denmark,** [Er fællesskaber en løsning for alle ældre?](#) Fonden Ensomme Gamles Værn (EGV Foundation - Social inclusion of Older Adults)
- **28 October, Oslo, Norway,** [Sammen for et aldersvennlig Norge 2025](#), Rådet for et aldersvennlig Norge og Senteret for et aldersvennlig Norge
- **16-17 September, Oslo, Norway,** [Aldring og helse dagene. Tjenester i tiden?](#) Aldring og helse. Nasjonalt senter
- **22-24 October, Norrköping, Sweden,** [Aging and Social: Fifteenth Interdisciplinary Conference: Aging, Intergenerational Solidarity and the Polycrisis](#), Linköping University
- **25-26 November 2025, Copenhagen, Denmark,** [Ageing is Living: Building Age-friendly Communities in the Nordic-Baltic Region](#), Nordic Welfare Centre, WHO Regional Office Europe and the Centre for an Age-friendly Norway

2026

- **5-9 July, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, [23rd IAGG world congress of gerontology and geriatrics](#).** Ageing well in a globalized world.

2027

- **16-18 June, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, [28th Nordic Congress of Gerontology](#)**

**Would you like to announce an upcoming event in the GeroNord calendar?
Please send an email to contact@ngf-geronord.se**

The Executive committee and NGF representatives

Executive committee

President: Carin Lennartsson, Aging Research Center, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden

1. Vice president: Mikaela von Bonsdorff, Societas Gerontologica Fennica, Finland

2. Vice president: Jette Thuesen, Danish Gerontological Society, Denmark

Secretary General of the 27NKG: Amaia Calderón Larrañaga, Aging Research Center, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden

Representatives from the member organizations

Denmark

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Danish Society for Geriatrics (Dansk Selskab for Geriatri): Pia Nimann Kannegaard

Finland

Societas Gerontologica Fennica: Anu Siren

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Finnish Society for Growth and Ageing Research (Kasvun ja vanhenemisen tutkijat ry - Föreningen för forskning i uppväxt och åldrande): Katja Kokko

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Sweden

Swedish Gerontological Society (Sveriges Gerontologiska Sällskap): Carin Lennartsson

Swedish Geriatrics Society (Svensk Geriatrisk Förening): Peter Nordström

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