

A new assessment method for active ageing

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Researchers at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland have developed a new indicator for assessing active aging. The indicator is called the University of Jyväskylä Active aging Scale (UJACAS). Active aging refers to having initiative and doing things the aging person considers important. The indicator consists of a series of questions, which can be presented either in an interview or as a questionnaire. A score describing active aging is calculated based on the responses.

"The tool helps us produce new knowledge about how older people strive to promote their [wellbeing](#) through their own actions, as per their goals, abilities and opportunities. The wellbeing of older people has often been studied as if it was solely a product of external conditions. Our new indicator opens up a new approach to aging research, because it takes into account persons' own actions in promoting their wellbeing," says professor Taina Rantanen, the principal investigator of the study.

The year-long process of developing the indicator was conducted as the first phase of AGNES, a larger study on active aging, funded by the European Research Council. In total 235 persons, aged 60–94 years, took part in the study.

"In all phases of the development work, we asked the respondents to give us feedback. We wanted to get their opinion if the indicator measured essential items. We found it important that before trying to promote the wellbeing of [older people](#) we know their opinion," says Rantanen.

"Active aging differs between individuals and takes diverse forms. It is

based on personal goals and the view of the world. For example, some are interested in exercising in the nature while some like to keep their home nice and tidy, or some want to promote communal matters and are active in organizations while some others are interested in DIY. Physical exercise is an important aspect of active aging, but not the only one. According to the present understanding, all activity is beneficial for mood and wellbeing," Professor Rantanen explains.

The idea of the indicator is that people who differ in activity get different scores. Based on item analyses, the indicator fulfills this requirement well. It gives valid results and measures the underlying construct of active aging in different aspects of life.

The results suggest that, in general, higher activity is more beneficial than lower activity.

"In the next phase, we want to study the factors associated with [activity](#) and the consequences of active aging to different indicators of wellbeing in old age. We also want to take the functional capacity, environmental and social support and individual differences into account," Rantanen concludes.

More information: Taina Rantanen et al. Developing an Assessment Method of Active Aging: University of Jyväskylä Active Aging Scale, *Journal of Aging and Health* (2018). [DOI: 10.1177/0898264317750449](https://doi.org/10.1177/0898264317750449)

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