This study examines how home and neighbourhood characteristics, individual health, functioning and personal goals influence physical activity, life-space mobility and quality of life in old age. Life-space mobility refers to the size of the spatial area (bedroom, home, yard outside home, neighbourhood, town, distant locations) a person purposely moves through in daily life and the frequency of travel within a specific time and the need of assistance for that travel.

Older people spend most of their time at home or in its immediate surroundings, which form the primary venue for physical activity carried out as part of daily activities and their purposeful exercise participation. Life-space mobility reflects actual mobility performance, taking into account the balance between a person’s internal physiological capacity and goals and the external challenges older adults experience in daily life (environmental press).

Understanding why and how home and neighbourhood matter to physical activity and functioning in old age is insufficient, making it difficult to develop evidence-based policy and to optimise older people’s opportunities for active life and participation. To optimise older people’s opportunities for an autonomous and active life, and to reduce health disparities, requires a better understanding of the environmental features that hinder or support independent community mobility of older people.

LISPE is a prospective cohort study. The data consist of a baseline survey among 1,000 people aged 75 years and over living in Jyväskylä and include observation of the neighbourhood, face-to-face interviews on perceived environmental mobility barriers, social support, health, participation restriction, motives for physical activity and personal goals, tests on physical performance and sensory functions. A sub-group of 200 people will participate in a seven-day accelerometer recording while keeping a diary of places visited outside the home. Follow-up telephone interviews will be carried out among all baseline participants to collect information on changes in life-space mobility, disability and participation restriction one and two years after baseline. Data on mortality and hospital care will be followed up from registers.

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