



The 13th European Nutrition Conference, FENS 2019, was held at the Dublin Convention Centre, 15–18 October 2019

## Food and health related characteristics of active home-living elderly in Norway

Øydis Ueland and Ida Synnøve Grini  
*Nofima, Tromsø, Norway*

### Abstract

**Background:** The large increase in the elderly population in the Western world is challenging traditional social and welfare structures. Health issues following a natural aging process increase the load on health and welfare services, making it imperative to reduce negative effects of aging and enabling elderly to stay active and live home longer. The aim of this study was to investigate food-related characteristics of active home-living elderly that can provide advice for strategic health promoting measures for this group.

**Material and methods:** A quantitative web-based survey measuring food and health related behaviour, was administered to a sample of elderly, 67 years and older, in Norway. 1005 elderly participated in the study, 50/50 male/female, age distribution 67–74 years (70%), 75–79 years (19%), and 80 + (11%). In addition, two focus groups and 12 in-depth interviews were conducted.

**Results:** Women showed higher general health interest than men and enjoyed food more ( $p < 0,001$ ). Almost everyone consumed at least three regular meals, following fixed routines. They reported dietary practices and knowledge that closely fit the dietary advice from the Health Authorities. 25% reported avoiding certain foods, and 65% took daily dietary supplements. Only 4% reported no physical activity at all. These respondents had higher BMI and age distribution than the rest of the sample. In general, reported health status of the sample was good, and they scored high (7,8) on a scale from 1–10 for how satisfied they were with life. With increasing age, the respondents expressed needs for more dietary advice and special foods as well as a decrease in appetite and fruit and vegetable consumption. The seniors indicated that eating with others was important for food enjoyment and appetite. The qualitative studies confirmed this, but that the advantage of social meals did not include eating with strangers.

**Discussion:** In order to provide knowledge that can promote and uphold a better life in the future for elderly consumers, active, home-living elderly in generally good health were recruited for this study. Characteristics of this group involved healthy daily meal routines, an active lifestyle and a social life. These activities improve appetite and feelings of well-being. Strategies enabling elderly to adapt and uphold these activities are necessary to avoid severe decline in food intake and activity as the aging process progresses.

### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.