

Living in the countryside

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How do changed living conditions in rural regions affect people's health and lifestyles? This is the question that Thomas Elkeles and colleagues from the Neubrandenburg University of Applied Sciences investigate, using rural communities in north-eastern Germany as their study populations. In the current issue of *Deutsches Ärzteblatt International*, the authors present the results of their Landesgesundheitsstudie (LGS, Rural Health Study) (Dtsch Arztebl Int 2012; 109(16): 285-92).

The particular characteristic of this study lies in the fact that the 2008 survey ties in with earlier surveys. As early as in 1973 and 1994, complete data collections were conducted among the adult population in 14 selected rural municipalities in northern Germany (the region of the former German Democratic Republic), with regard to their [health](#) and lifestyles. The residents of the same localities were surveyed again in 2008.

The evaluation of the data showed improvements over time, especially relating to lifestyles, as well as deteriorations, for example in terms of satisfaction with life. Whereas the latter may be an expression of increasing marginalization and subsequent sociostructural disconnection of the rural east German region, the authors interpret the improvements as the result of modernization. According to the study, improvements regarding the proportion of those participating in sports activities and health promoting dietary habits are primarily the result of changes in the lifestyles of women. In men, the proportion of those who assess their health status as good or very good has dropped in the LGS, whereas in women it has risen.

More information: www.aerzteblatt.de/pdf.asp?id=125017

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