

Time spent watching television does not replace physical activity for Finnish men – unlike for Finnish women

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A large proportion of highly active men watch more television than their low-active peers do. In contrast, highly active women watch less television than low-active women do.

Previous studies have found prolonged television time to be more harmful to health than other domains of sedentariness. A recent longitudinal study with a ten-year follow-up examined how the television viewing time of Finnish adults was associated with their [physical activity level](#) during leisure-time.

The results showed that maintaining a high level of leisure-time physical activity was accompanied by less television viewing time for women. High television time (3 hours or more per day) especially was more prevalent among low-active women than it was among highly active women.

Surprisingly, highly active men tended to watch more television (approximately two hours per day) than did their low-active peers, who tended to watch television one hour or less a day. Highly [active men](#) seemed to have time for physical activity as well as television viewing.

The researchers thought about the reasons behind the differences between genders.

"One reason might be the different motivations men and women have for participating in [physical activities](#)," says Senior Researcher Xiaolin Yang from the LIKES Research Centre for Physical Activity and Health: "According to a previous study, men have more intrinsic orientation, meaning mastery and competition, whereas women have more extrinsic orientation, for example appearance and physical condition. Additionally, women are usually more health-conscious than men are. Thus, the health consciousness of physically active women may have an additive effect on their decision-making regarding television viewing as well."

Irinja Lounassalo, a Ph.D. student at the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences at the University of Jyväskylä, adds another point of view to the previous one: "The differences between genders may also be related to the use of leisure-time. According to time use studies, Finnish women spend nearly an hour more on household work on an average day than Finnish men do. Thus, those [women](#) devoting more time to physical activity might take the time for it from [television](#) time—not, for example, from housework."

More information: Xiaolin Yang et al. Associations Between Trajectories of Leisure-Time Physical Activity and Television Viewing Time Across Adulthood: The Cardiovascular Risk in Young Finns Study, *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* (2019). [DOI: 10.1123/jpah.2018-0650](#)

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