

# A green living environment encourages middle-aged people to do physical activity

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Residential greenness encourages middle-aged people to do physical activity, according to a joint study by the University of Oulu and Oulu Deaconess Institute Department of Sports and Exercise Medicine, Finland. Living in a green environment especially increases light physical activity, particularly among men.

The study also sought to ascertain how much greenness there should be in the [living environment](#) to promote [physical activity](#). Based on the results, physical activity increases the more green there is in the environment. Therefore, the results encourage communities to preserve and increase the natural environment as well as the green areas in residential areas.

The study subjects consisted of a total of 5,433 of Northern Finnish people born in 1966 and who were 46 years of age at the time of the study. Most of them lived in North Ostrobothnia. Daily physical activity was measured by wrist-worn Polar Active accelerometers. The greenness of the living environment was measured using [geographic information systems](#) (GIS). Residential greenness determined by satellite-imaging was used as a key method.

The study focused on the association between greenness and light physical activity in particular, as recent studies and new physical activity recommendations show that light physical activity also has health and well-being effects. The natural environment is also known to promote health and well-being. Activities in nature reduce blood pressure, improve resistance to disease and invigorate the mind. Furthermore, most people can do it with no effort. Although the natural environment is often found near homes, its effects on our physical activity are hardly known.

Too little physical activity is a threat to the public health and national economy in Finland as well as elsewhere in the world. More information and new methods are needed to promote physical activity among the population. The information provided by this study can be used, for example, in residential area land-use planning.

**More information:** Soile Puhakka et al. Satellite Imaging-Based Residential Greenness and Accelerometry Measured Physical Activity at

Midlife—Population-Based Northern Finland Birth Cohort 1966 Study, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2020). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph17249202](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17249202)

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