

Individual temperament underlies differences in physical activity, study finds

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Among women, the tendency to experience more negative emotions was associated with lower levels of physical activity, particularly during leisure time. Women who experienced more negative emotions, such as

frustration and sadness, at age 42 were less physically active at age 61.

"This finding is consistent with our previous studies," says postdoctoral researcher Tiia Kekäläinen from the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences and Gerontology Research Center. "It might be that women who experience more [negative emotions](#) may derive less enjoyment from moderate-to-vigorous [physical activity](#) or experience more exercise barriers."

The study also found that the behavioral activity of 8-year-old girls, manifested, for example, as playing eagerly with other children, predicted more [sedentary behavior](#) at age 61 before taking into account the current occupational status. The researchers believe that this could be explained by the associations between behavioral activity, educational background and occupational status.

"Girls who were socially more active in childhood are more likely to pursue [higher education](#) and end up in professions, like expert roles, which involve a lot of sitting," says doctoral researcher Johanna Ahola from the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences and Gerontology Research Center. "This sedentary behavior at work is captured in accelerometer measurements."

The research is published in the journal [BMC Public Health](#).

The study is part of the Jyväskylä Longitudinal Study of Personality and Social Development, where the same participants have been followed since 1968. In this study, physical activity and sedentary behavior were measured with wearable accelerometers that capture [everyday activities](#), such as brisk walking to the bus, more accurately than questionnaires. The research enhances understanding of how various factors, such as individual temperament, explain the differences in the levels of physical activity and sedentary behavior between individuals.

Doctoral researcher Johanna Ahola feels that, in the future, it would be important to pay attention to how, despite negative emotions, each individual could find a type of sport they enjoy.

More information: Johanna Ahola et al, Child socioemotional behavior and adult temperament as predictors of physical activity and sedentary behavior in late adulthood, *BMC Public Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.1186/s12889-023-16110-y](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-16110-y)

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