Join a club in retirement to live longer

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What would make you [happy in retirement](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/elder/10130017/Reaching-retirement-makes-people-feel-they-are-30-again-health-figures-show.html) – the money, or the freedom?

According to new research, neither of those things are the key to a[longer life in retirement](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/goodlife/11651115/Dont-expect-to-retire-until-youre-100.html). Instead, it’s the membership of [social groups](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/uk/london/8993248/Last-orders-for-the-Working-Mens-Club.html)that will do it. These, such as book clubs or church groups have an impact on health and wellbeing similar to that of regular exercise, according to research published in the journal BMJ Open.

This found that the more groups an individual belongs to in the first few years of retirement, the lower the risk of death.

To produce substantive results, researchers tracked the health of 424 people for six years after retirement, and compared them with the same number of people, matched for age, sex and health status, still in work.

The results shows that those individuals whose quality of life was good before retirement scored more highly on quality of life after retirement. The member of social groups was found to be a significant factor: every group membership lost after retirement was associated with a 10 per cent drop in quality of life score six years later, the research found.

Physical activity levels were also proven to have an impact on the length of life in retirement. The research found that if a person exercised vigorously once a week before retirement and kept this up, their chance of dying over the next six years was three per cent. This rises to six per cent if this was reduced to less than once a week, and 11 per cent if they stopped altogether.

A spokesperson for the report commented: "Accordingly, we can see that the effects of physical activity on health were comparable to those associated with maintaining old group memberships and developing new ones.

"They suggest that as much as practitioners may help retirees adjust by providing support with financial planning, they may also help by providing social planning.

"In this regard, practical interventions should focus on helping retirees to maintain their sense of purpose and belonging by assisting them to connect to groups and communities that are meaningful to them.”