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Join the club for longer **life**  
  
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PENSIONERS who take up social hobbies such as gardening groups and book clubs live longer, happier lives, a study has said.

The health benefits of mixing while enjoying mutual interests are similar to doing regular exercise.

The findings, published online by the journal BMJ Open, show that the more groups a person is involved in the fewer the risks to their health.

Researchers found that after retirement long-term health deteriorates rapidly.

However, when they tracked 424 pensioners over six years they found that those who were members of **social groups** lived longer.

The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing started in 2002/3 and recorded findings from participants aged over 50.

Quality Those who recorded a good quality of **life** prior to retirement were more likely to record a higher quality of **life** after.

But the research also found that those who were members of **social groups** - like book clubs or church choirs - were also more likely to record a higher quality of **life** after giving up work.

Study author Dr Niklas Steffens, of Queensland University, Australia, said the effects of physical activity on health were comparable to maintaining group memberships and developing new ones.

In 2014 a study by University College London found that older people with the greatest sense of purpose in **life** survived longer.

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