

How Swedes feel about health, culture and recycling of clothes

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Our values change as we age. This is the main conclusion of the 2011 SOM survey, from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, where Swedes were asked to rate the importance of different values. Young people want their lives to be exciting, whereas the older prioritise national security. Cultural life does not promote physical health, but does affect a person's perceived well-being. Three Swedes in five throw away clothes that are in usable condition.

'Our most interesting finding is that people born in the 1960s and 1970s seem to be adopting the values of their parents' generation,' says Henrik Oscarsson from the SOM Institute.

For example, the share of those born in the 1970s who think that 'self-realisation' is very important has been reduced in half in the last 10 years, from 57 to 27 percent. 'A comfortable life' and 'a life full of pleasure' are perceived as more important in younger generations, while older [generations](#) prioritise 'national security' and 'global peace'. A full 85 percent of those born in 1939 or earlier think of [national security](#) as 'very important'; the figure for the youngest age group is 47 percent.

The SOM Institute, University of Gothenburg, also looked at the connection between engagement in/exposure to cultural activities and health. The results suggest a rather weak link. The researchers asked the [respondents](#) about their level of engagement in cultural activities, such as writing poetry or singing in a choir, and exposure to culture, such as going to the cinema, theatre or a museum. When they looked for links

with physical and perceived health, they did find some connection between self-perceived health and exposure to culture.

'Going to the cinema makes you feel a little better, and this effect should of course not be underestimated', says Professor Sören Holmberg.

Yet he points out that the main finding remains.

'Former minister of culture Bengt Göransson once said that "culture doesn't make people healthy", and it turns out that he was more right than wrong.'

Overall, three [Swedes](#) in five (62 percent) occasionally throw away clothes that are in usable condition. Looking only at people with a strong interest in environmental issues, the figure is almost the same. Eva Gustafsson, docent (reader) in Business Administration, points out some minor differences between men and women.

'Women are better at handling old clothes in an environmentally sound manner. A larger share of women than men never throw away clothes.' The survey also shows that 87 percent of people donate [clothes](#) to charity 'sometimes'.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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