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building activities set out by health officials, according to a new study released Thursday.

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By Tanaz Meghjani, Bloomberg News (TNS).

Americans aren't exercising enough.

Less than a third of U.S. adults meet suggested benchmarks for aerobic and muscle-building activities set out by health officials, according to a new study released Thursday.

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People living in rural areas were even less likely to get enough exercise: Only 16% of people outside cities met benchmarks for aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities, compared with 28% in large metropolitan cities areas.

Regional differences emerged as well. People living in the South were less physically active than those in other regions, while people in the West were most active.

Major improvements at the local, state and national level are needed to promote healthy exercise, the authors said, such as sprucing up physical spaces in cities and rural areas to make them more inviting to activity, and encouraging philanthropic investments in research.

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