



FRIENDS AND FAMILY



Close friends of the same sex

Overall, 88% of boys report having three or more same sex friends, as do 91% of girls.

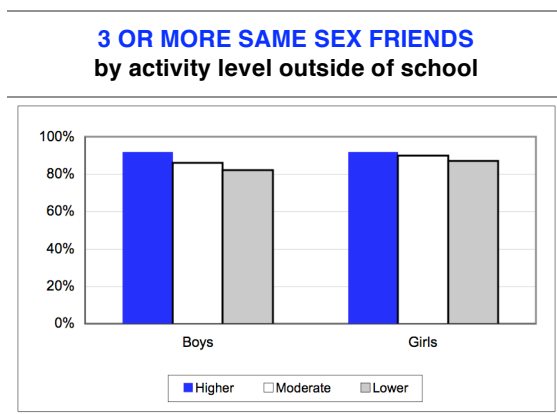
Activity level outside of school Youth who report higher levels of physical activity outside of school hours are more likely to report having greater numbers of close friends. Boys who report higher levels of physical activity are more likely to report having three or more close male friends (92%) than those boys who report low levels of activity (82%). For girls, 92% of those who report higher levels of physical activity report having three or more close female friends, while 87% of those who report lower levels do the same.

Sedentary behaviour For both boys and girls, the number of hours spent in sedentary activity is not related to the number of close same-sex friends that they report.

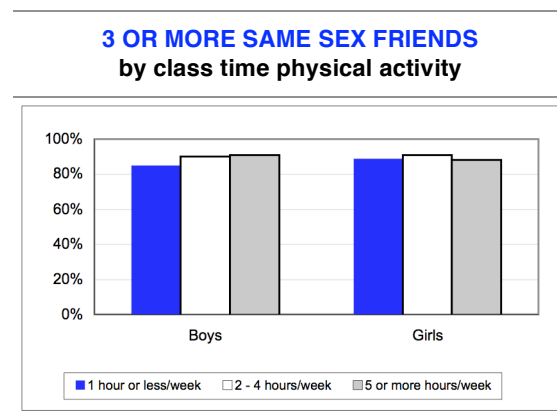
Class-time physical activity For boys who report spending five or more hours in physical activity in class time per week, 91% report having three or more close friends of the same sex, while 85% of those who spend one hour or less in class time physical activity per week report having three or more close male friends. For girls, the proportion of those with close female friends does not differ by amount of class time physical activity.

Free-time physical activity at school Among boys who spend five hours or more per week in free-time activity at school, 90% report having three or more close friends, while 85% of those who spend an hour or less report the same. For girls, the number of hours spent in free-time physical activity at school makes no difference in the likelihood of having three or more same-sex friends.

Discussion Physical activity appears to have a positive influence on youth's social lives. Youth who lead active lives tend to have more friends of the same sex. A Nova Scotia study reported finding that youth related physical activity with social benefits like making friends and gaining a feeling of acceptance.³⁰



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Close friends of the opposite sex

Sixty-three percent (63%) of boys and of girls report having three or more close friends of the opposite sex.

Activity level outside of school Similarly to trends seen in the number of same sex friends, more active youth report greater numbers of opposite sex friends. Girls who report higher levels of physical activity are more likely to report having three or more close friends of the opposite sex (71%) than are girls with lower levels of physical activity (57%). Boys who report higher levels of physical activity are also more likely to report having three or more close female friends (70%) than are boys who report lower levels of activity (55%).

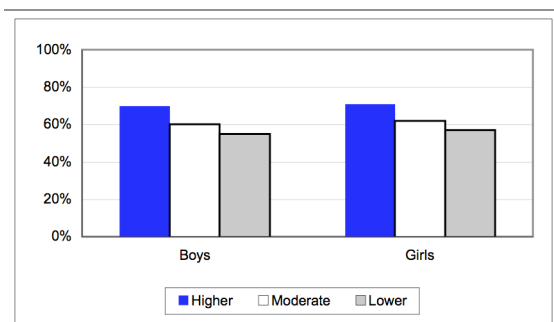
Sedentary behaviour For both boys and girls, the number of hours spent in sedentary activity has no relationship with the number of opposite-sex close friends that they report.

Class-time physical activity Of youth who report spending five or more hours in physical activity in class time per week 72% of boys and 68% of girls report having three or more close friends of the opposite sex while 59% of boys and 61% of girls who spent one hour or less in class time physical activity per week reported the same.

Free-time physical activity at school Among youth, 72% of boys and 74% of girls who spent 5 hours or more per week in free-time activity at school report having three or more close friends of the opposite sex while 57% of boys and 59% of girls who spend an hour or less report the same.

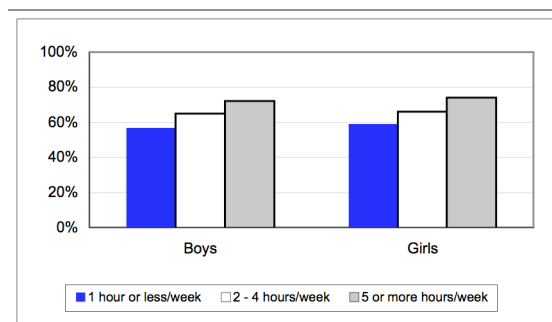
Discussion As with close friends of the same sex, more active youth tend to have more friends of the opposite sex. The difference in the proportions of youth who have opposite-sex friends between those who are most and least physically active is greater than the difference between those reporting number of same-sex friends. It is possible that either physical activity engenders a closer companionship with members of the opposite sex, or that those who are more outgoing generally tend to be more physically active.

**3 OR MORE OPPOSITE SEX FRIENDS
by activity level outside of school**



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**3 OR MORE OPPOSITE SEX FRIENDS
by free time physical activity at school**



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Days per week out with friends right after school

In general, most youth (56%) report that they spend time with friends right after school on at least three days per week, while one third (32%) report spending one or two days. Only 13% report that they do not spend any time with friends immediately after school during the week.

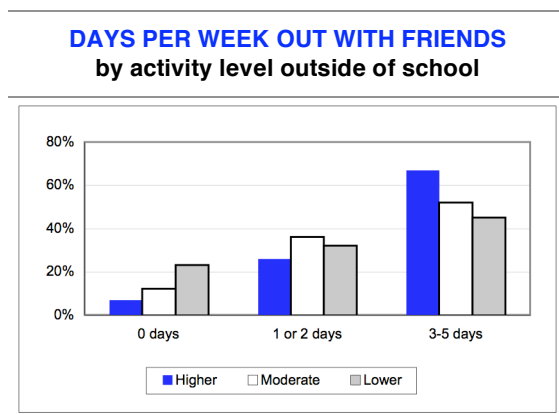
Activity level outside of school Of those youth who report higher levels of physical activity, 67% say that they spend time with friends immediately after school on three to five days per week, compared with only 45% of those who report low levels of activity.

Sedentary behaviour Youth's level of sedentary activity is not related to the number of days on which they report spending time with their friends immediately after school.

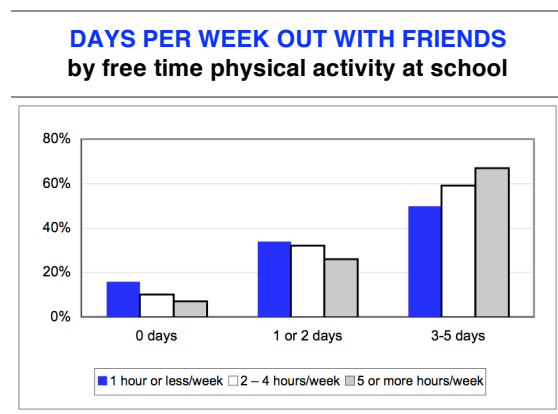
Class-time physical activity Among youth who report one hour or less of class time physical activity, 52% report that they spend time with their friends after school on 3 or more days per week, compared with 63% of youth who receive 5 hours or more of class time physical activity per week.

Free-time physical activity at school Sixty seven percent (67%) of youth who spend five or more hours of physical activity in their free time at school also report spending three or more days a week with friends immediately after school, while only 50% of those who spend less than an hour a week in free-time physical activity at school report spending as much time with their friends after school.

Discussion The likelihood that a youth will report time with friends immediately after school is strongly related to their level of activity both within the school environment and outside. Other Canadian research indicates similar trends for other types of activities done by children and youth directly after school. Active children are also more likely than inactive children to play outdoors, participate in organized physical activities, and to participate in unorganized physical activities.⁵ These types of activities can facilitate time spent socially with friends and acquaintances.



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Evenings spent out with friends

Overall, youth aged 11 to 15 are quite social: 73% report spending at least two evenings per week with their friends.

Activity level outside of school Over four out of five youth (82%) who report higher levels of physical activity report spending at least two evenings per week with friends, compared with about three out of five youth (59%) who report lower levels of activity. Less than one in ten (8%) of those who report higher levels of activity do not spend any evenings out with friends, compared with one quarter (25%) of those who report lower levels of physical activity.

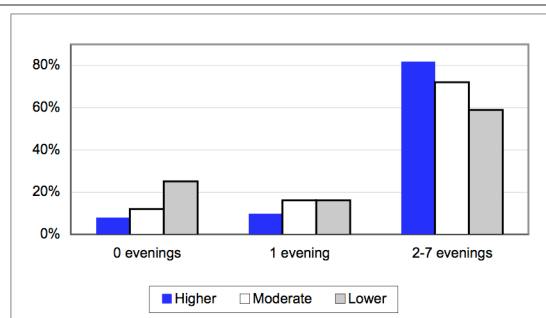
Sedentary behaviour The amount of time youth spend in sedentary activity is not related to the number of evenings they report spending time with their friends

Class-time physical activity Sixty-nine percent (69%) of youth who report one hour or less of class time physical activity per week spend at least two evenings out with friends while 79% of those who spend at least five hours per week do the same.

Free-time physical activity at school Youth who report spending five or more hours of free-time physical activity at school are more likely to report being out at least two evenings per week with friends (82%), than are youth who report spending an hour or less per week (68%).

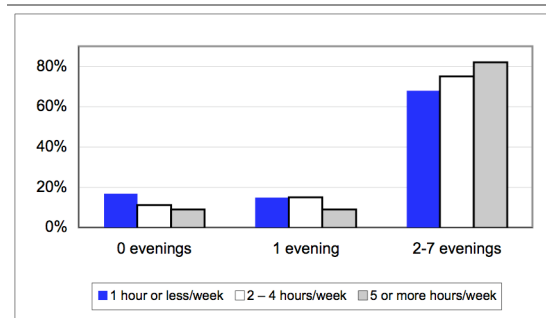
Discussion Youth who report higher levels of physical activity both within and outside of school hours are likely to report more evenings out with their friends than youth who report low levels of activity. In addition those who report greater levels of sedentary behaviour also report more time out in the evenings with friends. It would appear that both sedentary and physical pursuits are linked to spending evenings with friends.

**EVENINGS OUT WITH FRIENDS
by activity level outside of school**



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**EVENINGS OUT WITH FRIENDS
by free time physical activity at school**



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Communicating with friends

When youth were asked how often they talk with friends on the phone, or send text or e-mail messages, 74% said they do so three or more days per week, 16% do so one or two days a week, while 10% said they do so rarely or never.

Activity level outside of school Youth who report higher levels of physical activity are more likely to communicate with their friends by phone or computer at least 3 days per week (78%) than are youth who report lower levels of activity (69%).

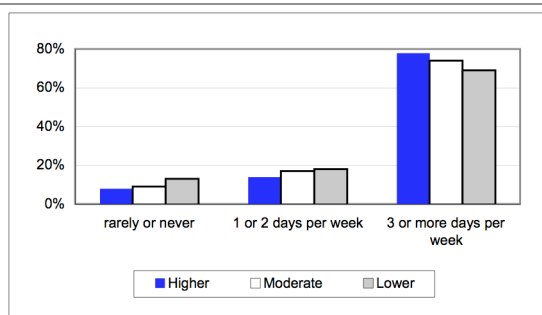
Sedentary behaviour Youth who report at least 6 hours per day in sedentary activity are more likely to report contact with their friends by telephone or e-mail at least three days per week (78%). This compares with only 57% of youth who report spending less than three hours per day of sedentary activity.

Class-time physical activity Seventy-seven percent (77%) of youth who spend five or more hours per week in class time physical activity report communicating with friends three or more days per week, compared with 72% of those who spend one hour or less in classroom time.

Free-time physical activity at school Youth who spend greater amounts of time in free time physical activity at school are more likely to report spending 3 or more days per week communicating with friends than those who spend one hour or less in this type of activity.

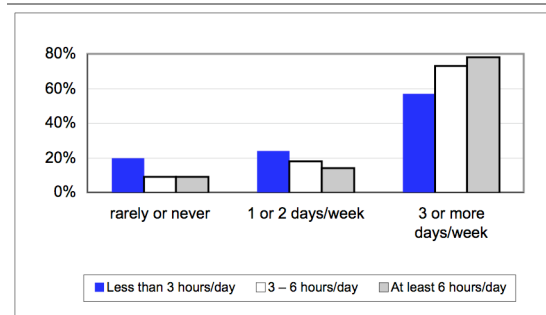
Discussion Youth's activity level outside of school is associated to some degree with the level of phone or computer communication they have with their friends after school. Youth's level of sedentary behaviour is strongly related to the level of phone or computer communication they undertake with their friends outside of school. This is not surprising, since telephone and computer time are sedentary activities and computer use is one of the components of the sedentary activities variable.

**COMMUNICATING WITH FRIENDS
by activity level outside of school**



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**COMMUNICATING WITH FRIENDS
by sedentary activity level**



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Parental understanding and importance of parental opinion

Most youth feel understood by their parents. When asked if they agree with the statement “My parents understand me,” 79% of youth say that they agree or strongly agree. A small proportion (13%) say that they neither agree nor disagree, while roughly one tenth (9%) say that they disagree to some extent. In addition, most youth (73%) agree to some extent that their parents’ opinions are important. Only 9% of youth don’t agree that what their parents think is important, while almost one fifth (18%) neither agree nor disagree.

Activity level outside of school Of those youth who report higher levels of physical activity, 81% feel that their parents understand them to some degree, compared with 74% of those who report lower levels of physical activity. Youth who report the lowest levels of activity are less likely to agree that what parents think is important (68%) than are or those who report the highest levels of physical activity (76%).

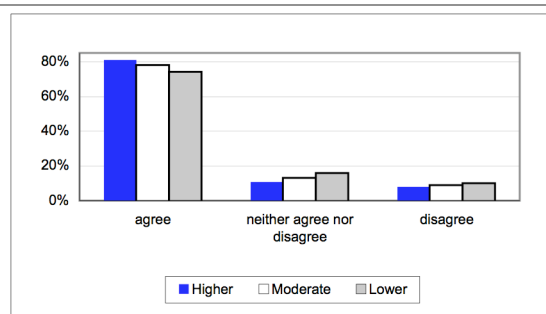
Sedentary behaviour Neither factor varies by reported sedentary activity time.

Class-time physical activity Youth who pass greater amounts of time in class physical activity are more likely to report that they feel their parent’s opinions are important than those who spend fewer hours. The likelihood that youth feel understood by their parents is not related to the amount of time reported in physical activity during class time.

Free-time physical activity at school Among youth who report no more than one hour per week in free-time physical activity at school, 77% feel that their parents understand them, compared with 82% of those who report five hours or more per week in free time physical activity at school. Similarly, 76% of those who spend five or more hours a week in free time physical activity at school agree that what their parents think is important compared with 71% of those who spend one hour or less.

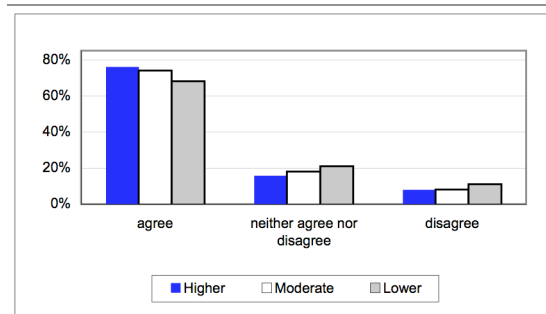
Discussion For youth, feeling understood by parents is associated with a higher level of activity outside of school and in free-time physical activity at school. Besides providing a supportive environment for their children, parents can also play an important role in modelling of appropriate physically active behaviours. They can also help their children establish physical activity goals or reinforce positive physical activity with rewards or praise.

PARENTAL UNDERSTANDING
by physical activity outside of school



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IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL OPINION
by physical activity



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Parental expectations

When asked if parents expect too much of them in *general terms*, almost one quarter (23%) of youth said they agreed to some extent (agree or strongly agree), while half (50%) of all youth disagree to some extent. A considerable proportion (27%) of youth neither agrees nor disagrees. Similarly, regarding parents expectations *at school*, roughly one quarter (26%) of youth say they agree or strongly agree that their parents expect too much. Half (47%) of all youth disagree to some extent, and more than a quarter (27%) neither agree nor disagree that their parents expect too much of them from school.

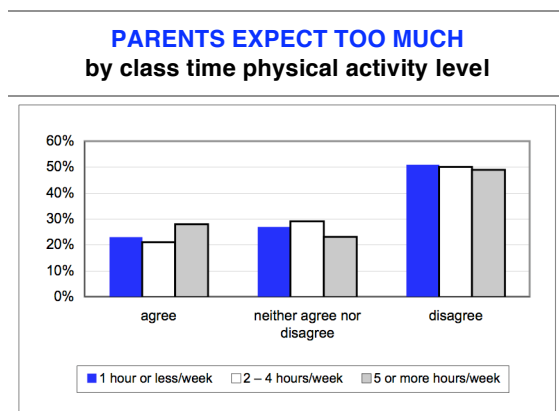
Activity level outside of school All youth are equally likely to agree that their parents expect too much from them *generally* and *at school*, regardless of their activity level.

Sedentary behaviour Of youth who report at least six hours per day in sedentary behaviour, 44% do not feel that their parents expect too much from them *at school*, compared with 56% of those who report less than three hours per day in sedentary behaviour. There is no difference among those with varying levels of sedentary behaviour and their feeling about parental expectations generally.

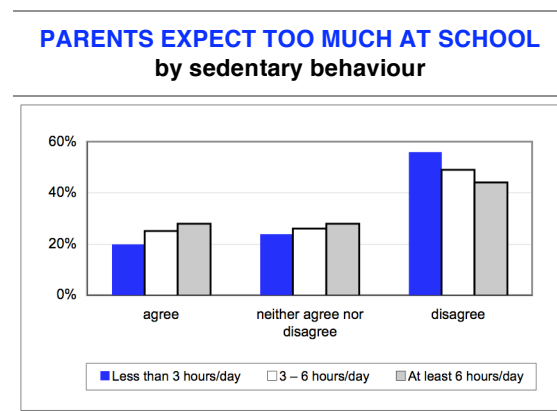
Physical activity at school Among those youth report five hours or more in class time physical activity per week, 28% agree that their parents expect too much of them *in general* and 30% agree that their parents expect too much of them at school, compared with 23% (general) and 25% (school) of those who spent one hour or fewer hours in class time physical activity.

Free-time physical activity at school There is no difference among the proportions of youth doing physical activity in their free time at school and parental expectations around school performance or in general.

Discussion Youth who report more time in sedentary behaviour are more likely to agree that their parents expect too much of them at school. Whether this means that parental expectations lead to more homework or that youth who spend time in other sedentary pursuits such as computer game playing or watching television feel pressure from their parents to do well at school is unknown. Parental encouragement is correlated with higher levels of physical activity in children. There also appears to be a strong relationship between youth physical activity and parental support in the form of verbal support and other types of support (financing, transportation, etc).³¹



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Friends and family summary

Analysis of 1994 data found that youth who were more active were more likely to make friends more easily, spend greater amounts of time with friends, were more likely to be able to talk to an opposite sex friend and were less likely to feel like an outsider than those who were less active. Lower amounts of television watching were also associated with greater ease of making friends, and youth who watched greater amounts of television or videos were more likely to spend more than two evenings a week out with friends. In 1994 the amount of video watching and computer game playing was linked to feelings about parental pressure and expectations about school performance. Those who participated to a greater extent in either of these activities felt greater parental pressure to do well in school.

The provision of a supportive social network is important for physical activity. Research has shown that parental encouragement is correlated with higher levels of physical activity in children. Parents can also play an important role in modelling of appropriate physically active behaviours or providing verbal and materialistic support.³¹ Parental involvement can also be integrated into school physical activity by volunteering at recess, lunch or for other school events. Parents can also be encouraged to attend their child's extracurricular physical activities (e.g., after school basketball games). Policy-makers, service providers and schools can be encouraged to promote the social aspects of physical activity and as a means of overcoming a potential barrier. This section found that:

- Youth who lead active lives tend to have more friends of the same sex.
- More highly active youth tend to have more friends of the opposite sex.
- The likelihood that a youth will report time with friends immediately after school is strongly related to their level of activity both within the school environment and outside.
- Youth who report higher levels of physical activity both within and outside of school hours are likely to report more evenings out with their friends than youth who report low levels of activity.
- Youth's activity level outside of school is associated to some degree with the level of phone or computer communication they have with their friends after school. Youth's level of sedentary behaviour is strongly related to the level of phone or computer communication they undertake with their friends outside of school.
- For youth, feeling understood by parents is associated with a higher level of activity outside of school and in free-time physical activity at school.
- Youth who report more time in sedentary behaviour are more likely to agree that their parents expect too much of them at school.