



WELL-BEING



Body mass index

Overall, 81% of youth report a healthy weight (including underweight), 15% are overweight and 4% are obese.

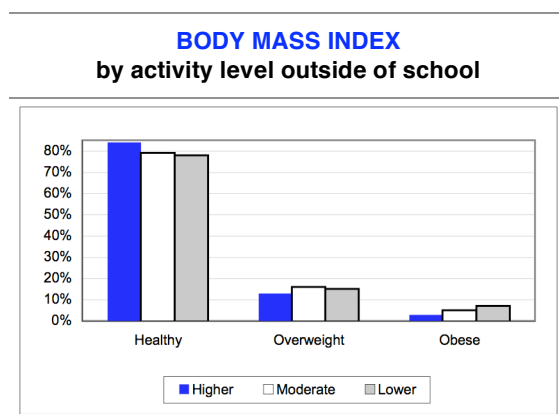
Activity level outside of school Of those youth who report higher levels of physical activity, 84% are at a healthy weight, compared with 78% of those who report lower levels of physical activity. Similarly, those who report the lowest levels of physical activity are more likely to be obese than those who report higher levels.

Sedentary behaviour Four fifths (79%) of youth who report spending more than six hours per week in sedentary activity have weights within the healthy range, while 86% of those who spend less than three hours a day have weights in this range.

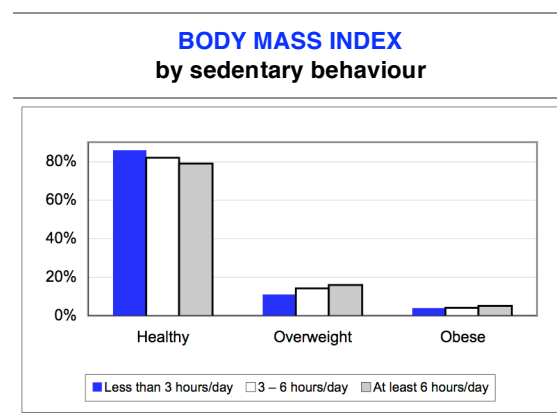
Class-time physical activity There is no difference in the amount of time spent in class time physical activity at school among different BMI groupings

Free-time physical activity at school Youth who spend one hour or less per week in free time physical activity at school are less likely to report their weight to be in the normal BMI range (80%) than those who spend 5 or more hours per week (83%).

Discussion Youth who report higher levels of physical activity outside of school hours and lower levels of sedentary activities are more likely to be a healthy weight than youth who report lower physical activity levels or greater amount of sedentary behaviour. The fact that there is no difference in class time levels of physical activities may reflect the requirement that all youth participate in class organised activities. Since more than half of overweight and obese youth feel that they were a bit too fat or much too fat (See topic entitled Body Image and BMI), perhaps their body image prevents them from participation. Conversely, youth who do not like to participate in physical activity, or who have not been encouraged to be physically active, may have become overweight. Either way, encouragement of overweight and obese youth to participate in physical activities would assist them to achieve a healthier weight.



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Body image and body mass index

Youth were asked if they thought their body was much too thin, a bit too thin, about the right size, a bit too fat, or much too fat. Overall, 15% stated that they were much too thin, 58% stated that they were about the right size, and 28% stated that they were a bit or much too fat. Most respondents with a healthy weight (62%) thought their bodies were about the right size, compared with 29% of overweight youth and 20% of obese youth.

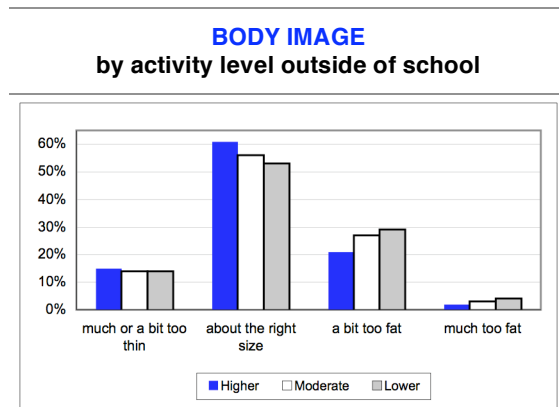
Activity level outside of school Youth who report higher levels of physical activity are more likely than other youth to have a positive body image. Among those youth who report higher levels of physical activity, 61% thought their bodies were about the right size, compared with 56% of moderately active youth and 53% of those who report lower levels of activity.

Sedentary behaviour Youth who spend less than three hours per day in sedentary pursuits are more likely to believe they are about the right size (62%) compared with those who spend at least six hours a day (56%).

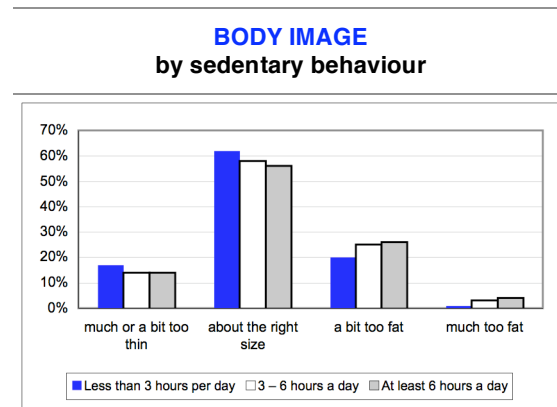
Class-time physical activity There is no difference in youth's body image with respect to the number of hours they report in physical activity at school in class time.

Free-time physical activity at school A greater proportion of youth who spend 5 or more hours per week in free time physical activity at school (61%) believe their bodies to be about the right size than those who spend only an hour or less per week (56%).

Discussion A higher reported level of physical activity is related to positive feelings about body image among overweight youth. This is supported by data analysis from this study and others.¹⁵ It is important to note that although there are certain limitations to using BMI, it is traditionally and widely used in epidemiological studies as measure of health risk among adults. The topic leads one to question the data which reveal that a high proportion of active youth who are classified as overweight felt that their bodies about the right size. It allows one to speculate that the self-report body mass index may inappropriately categorize youth with higher proportions of muscular strength to fatness. Objective measures would have to be taken to accurately substantiate this speculation. However it is interesting to note that perceptions of body size are related to participation in free time physical activity both within and outside of school but not class time indicating that choice in participation may be related to body image or visa versa.



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Perceived health status

Overall, 29% of youth believe their health to be excellent, 57% believe that it is good, and 14% believe that it is fair or poor.

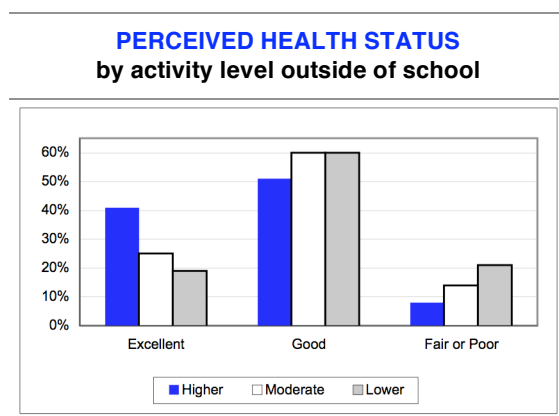
Activity level outside of school Two out of five youth who report high levels of physical activity are more likely to report that they are in excellent health, compared with one in five (19%) of those who report low levels of activity. Youth who report low levels of physical activity are far more likely to believe that they are in fair or poor health (21%) than those who report moderate (14%) or higher levels (8%) of activity.

Sedentary behaviour Youth who report less than three hours per day in sedentary behaviour are more likely to report that their health is excellent (40%) than are youth who report spending at least six hours per day (27%). Similarly those who spend greater amounts of time in daily sedentary behaviour are more likely to believe their health to be fair or poor (15%) than those who spend less than three hours a day (11%).

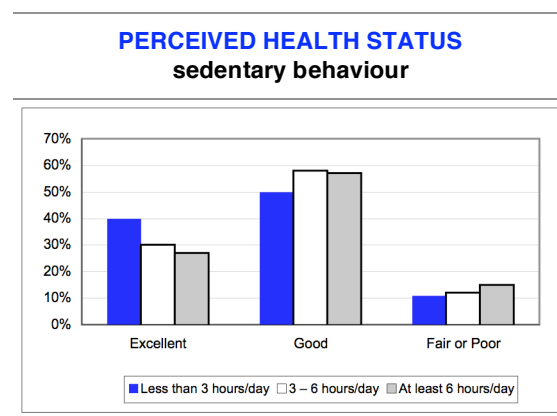
Class-time physical activity Slightly more than one third (35%) of youth receiving five or more hours of in-class physical activity per week report that they are in excellent health, compared with only 30% of youth receiving two to four hours, and 27% of youth receiving one hour or less.

Free-time physical activity at school Two-fifths (40%) of youth who participated in five hours or more per week in free time physical activity at school report that they are in excellent health, compared with 28% of those who received two to four hours per week and 26% of those who received one hour or less per week.

Discussion Higher reported levels of physical activity both outside of and within school hours and lower reported levels of sedentary activities are associated with beliefs of better health. Physical activity has been shown to benefit health and well being^{16,17} so these findings are not surprising. Kirkcaldy¹⁸ found physical exercise to be significantly related to scores for physical and psychological well-being.



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Alcohol consumption

Half of all (51%) youth between the ages of 11 and 15 report having consumed alcohol. One in ten youth drinks beer, wine, or liquor at least once a week. An additional 41% of youth report that they drink at least one of these beverages less frequently. When broken down, less than one in ten (7%) youth report that they drink beer at least once a week, while 64% report that they have never tried beer. Only 3% of youth report drinking wine every week and 64% say they never drink wine. A similar proportion (6%) of youth report drinking liquor at least once a week, while 66% say they never drink liquor.

Activity level outside of school Youth who report higher levels of physical activity are less likely to report that they never drink beer, wine, or liquor than their less active peers. Forty-four percent (44%) of youth who report higher levels of physical activity report that they never drink, beer, wine or liquor compared with 53% of youth who report the lowest levels of physical activity outside of school. Similar patterns can be seen for beer, wine, and liquor individually.

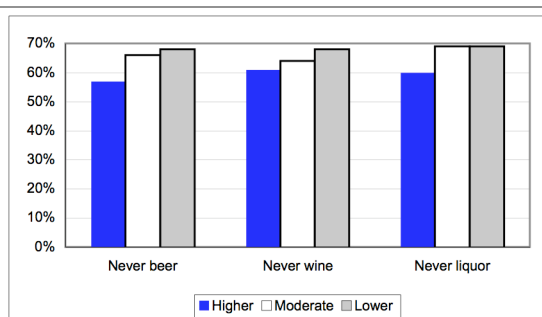
Sedentary behaviour There is no relationship between the amount of time spent in sedentary behaviour and the frequency of wine or beer consumption. However, 71% of youth who spend less than three hours a day in sedentary behaviour report that they never drink liquor while 64% of those who report spending at least 6 hours a day report the same. Reports of overall alcohol consumption follow a similar pattern.

Class-time physical activity Youth who participate in five hours or more of in-class physical activity per week are more likely to report having tried alcohol (42% had never drunk) than are youth who receive only one hour or less (52% have never drunk alcohol). Youth who report five hours or more of class-time physical activity are also less likely to report that they have never drunk beer, wine or liquor.

Free-time physical activity at school Youth who report at least five hours or more in free-time activity at school are more likely to have tried alcohol than others.

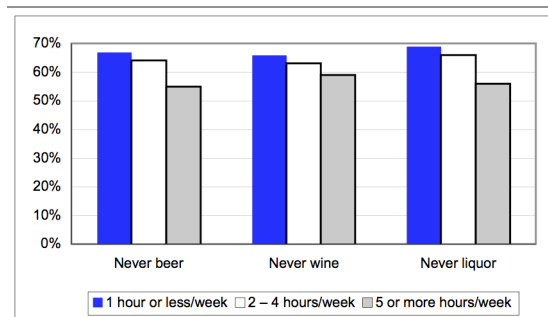
Discussion Youth who report the highest levels of physical activity in school are the most likely to have tried alcohol. Perhaps those with higher levels of physical activity at school are more likely to socialize or be influenced by peers. Indeed, as discussed in other topics (see Section entitled “Friends and Family”), youth who report higher levels of physical activity at school spend more time with friends.

**ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION
by activity level outside of school**



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**ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION
by class-time physical activity**



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Quality of life

Overall, when asked on a scale of one to ten how they would rate their quality of life, one fifth (21%) of youth rated it at six or less, slightly more than two-fifths (45%) rated it at a seven or an eight and one third (33%) rated it as a nine or a ten.

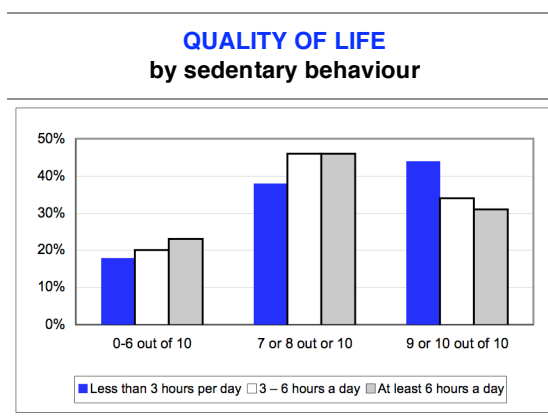
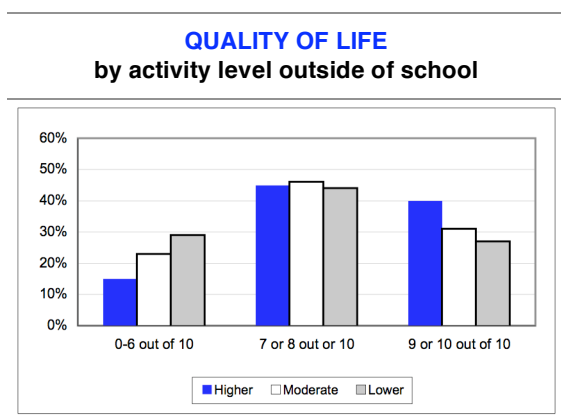
Activity level outside of school Among youth who report higher levels of physical activity, 40% rate their quality of life as a 9 or 10 out of ten while only 27% of those reporting low levels of physical activity provide the same rating of their life quality.

Sedentary behaviour Forty-four percent (44%) of youth who spend less than 3 hours a day in sedentary activities rate their quality of life as a 9 or 10 out of ten while only 31% of those who spend at least six hours a day do the same.

Class-time physical activity Almost four in ten youth (38%) who spend five or more hours per week in class time physical activity rate their quality of life as a 9 or 10 out of ten while closer to three in ten (32%) of those who spend an hour or less per week offer the same rating.

Free-time physical activity Among those youth who report at least five hours per week in free time physical activity at school, two-fifths (40%) rate their quality of life as a 9 or 10 out of ten, while 31% of those who report one hour or less per week provide the same rating.

Discussion High self-rated quality of life is more likely to be reported by those who spend greater amounts of time per week in physical activity outside of school hours and in free time physical activity at school, and who report lower amounts of time spent watching television, doing homework, or using a computer. The proportion of the youth population who perceive their lives to be good or excellent may be increased through encouraging physical activity. However, this relationship does not indicate whether those with a more positive outlook on life choose to be more active or whether those who are more active are generally more likely to rate their life quality higher.



Self confidence

Just over three-quarters (78%) of youth reported a positive degree of self-confidence (that they agree or strongly agree that they have confidence in themselves). Only 8% said they disagree to some extent, and 14% neither agree nor disagree that they have self-confidence.

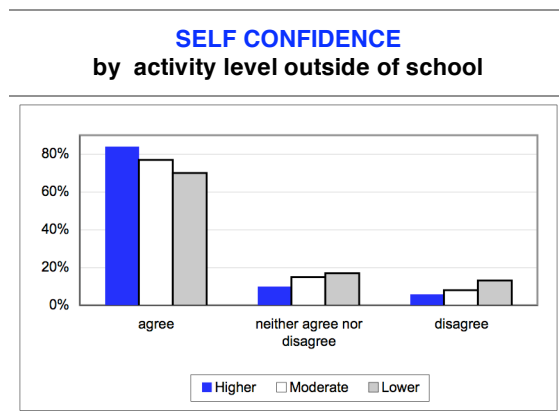
Activity level outside of school Among youth who report higher levels of physical activity, 84% say they feel self-confident, compared with 77% of those who are moderately active and 70% of those who report low levels of activity.

Sedentary behaviour Among youth who report less than three hours per day in sedentary activity, 84% have self-confidence, compared with 80% of those who report at least three but less than six hours per day, and 76% of those who report six hours or more of sedentary activity per day.

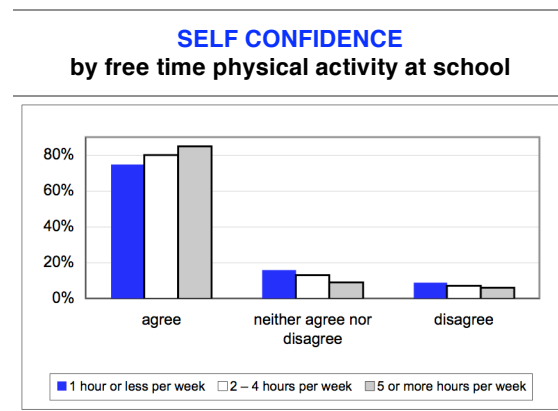
Class-time physical activity Slightly more than four fifths (83%) of youth who report five hours or more in class-time physical activity per week feel self-confident, compared with only 76% of those who report one hour or less.

Free-time physical activity at school Among youth who report five hours or more of their free-time in physical activity at school per week, 85% say they feel self-confident, compared with 80% of those who report between two and four hours per week, and 75% of those who report no more than one hour per week.

Discussion Self-confidence is strongly related to activity level. Youth who are more active both inside and outside of school are much more likely than those who are less active to feel self-confident. Youth who report less time in sedentary activities are also more likely to report self-confidence than youth who spend greater amounts of time being sedentary. Indeed, other research has indicated a positive relationship between physical activity and self esteem.^{19,15,20}



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Belief of teacher's opinion about school performance

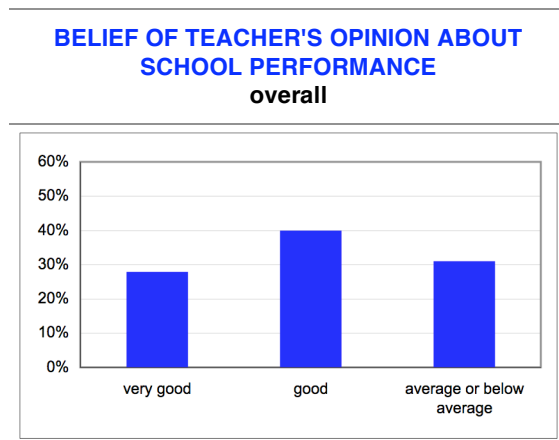
In general, most youth believe that their teacher is positive about their school performance. Almost three in ten (28%) believe that their teacher thinks their school performance is very good, compared to other classmates, while an additional four in ten (40%) believe that their teacher thinks their performance is good. Three in ten (31%) believe their teacher thinks their performance is average or below average.

Activity level outside of school Almost one third (32%) of youth who report higher levels of physical activity believe that their teacher thinks their performance is very good compared to other students, while only about one quarter (24%) of those who report lower levels of physical activity feel the same way.

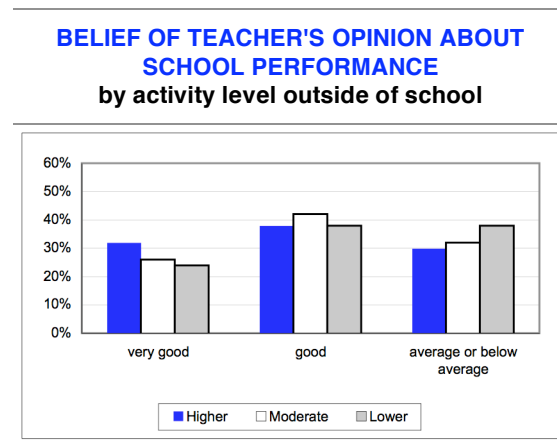
Sedentary behaviour There is no difference between the various amounts of time spent in sedentary activities and beliefs about school performance.

Physical activity at school There is no difference in the various reported levels of physical activity at school either within class time or during free time and beliefs about teacher's opinion of school performance.

Discussion Physically activity outside of school is related to more positive beliefs of one's teacher's opinion of school performance, indicating that this physically active time does not appear to detract from schoolwork, but may enhance performance.^{21,22,15} Perhaps the lack of difference among those reporting various levels of sedentary behaviour and school performance is related to the fact that homework is included in the sedentary behaviours reported. Further investigation could be done to examine whether there is a difference between those who report greater proportions of sedentary time in non-homework activities compared to those who spend a lot of sedentary time on homework.



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Well-being summary

Physical activity has been shown to benefit health and well being.^{16,23} Research has shown physical exercise to be significantly related to scores for physical and psychological well-being.¹⁸

Results from this research generally support previously documented findings pertaining to well-being, including:

- A higher reported level of physical activity is related to positive feelings about body image among overweight youth.
- Higher reported levels of physical activity both outside of and within school hours and lower reported levels of sedentary activities are associated with beliefs that one is in better health.
- Youth who are more active both inside and outside of school are much more likely than those who are less active to feel self-confident. Youth who report less time in sedentary activities are also more likely to report self-confidence than youth who spend greater amounts of time being sedentary.
- Physical activity outside of school is related to more positive beliefs of one's teacher's opinion of school performance, indicating that this physically active time does not appear to detract from schoolwork, but may enhance performance.
- Youth who report the highest levels of physical activity in school are the most likely to have tried alcohol.

Insufficient levels of physical activity have broad reaching effects. One research study²⁴ found a relationship between intent to participate in vigorous activity, perceived behavioural control and sense of competency in eighth graders. Studies have shown that higher levels of perceived self-efficacy were related to greater levels of physical activity and that interventions can increase perceptions of self-efficacy, particularly among girls.^{25,26} Promotion of activities that are enjoyable and in which youth (particularly girls) feel a sense of competency is likely to increase the likelihood that they will participate in physical activity. A wide variety of activities that appeal to youth of all skill and development levels that contribute to feelings of competency is important, including structured and unstructured as well as competitive and non-competitive physical activities.²⁷

A national Canadian survey found peer influences to be a stronger risk factor for adolescent substance use than parental drinking.²⁸ Subsequent topics in this report (see topics entitled "Time spent with friends after school" and "Evenings spent out with friends") demonstrate that youth who spend more time with friends outside of school hours also report higher levels of both physical activity and sedentary behaviours. Perhaps those with higher levels of physical activity at school are more likely to socialize or be influenced by peers. Statistics Canada²⁹ analysis has revealed that behaviour of friends plays one of the biggest roles in youth's alcohol and drug use. However, at least one other research study has indicated a strong association between participation in sports and the type of personality that tends to be resistant to drug and alcohol addiction.¹⁸