



## **SECTION D: BARRIERS TO WALKING AND BICYCLING**



## *Introduction*

Barriers are considered to be factors that are perceived as a “hindrance to the desired behaviour change” by a certain population.<sup>25</sup> From a social marketing perspective, the goal of promoting a socially desirable behaviour involves minimizing the barriers and accentuating the benefits associated with that behaviour.<sup>26</sup> In this report, municipalities reported on potential barriers related to infrastructure and to the physical environment, namely street crime, poorly lit sidewalks and streets, lack of a linked network of trails and paths, repair and maintenance of local sport and recreation facilities, repair and maintenance of sidewalks and bicycle lanes, and lack of funds to cover the costs of repair or maintenance of trails and parks on activity behaviours of their residents.

These potential barriers are examined by region and community size, as well as compared with data collected in 2000. In this report, small towns and cities are categorized as having between 1,000–9,999 residents, mid-sized towns and cities include 10,000–99,999 residents, and larger towns and cities have over 100,000 residents.

## Barriers in the physical environment

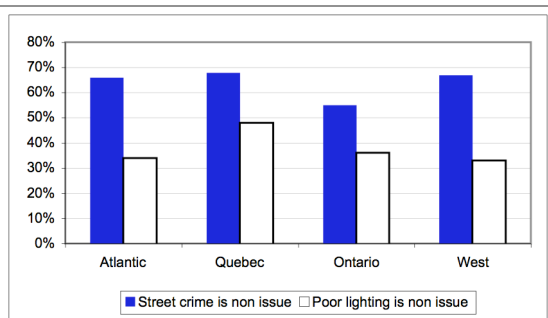
**Towns and cities (1,000+ residents)** This topic examines the extent to which municipalities perceive street crime and poorly lit sidewalks and streets as barriers to their residents walking and bicycling in the community, especially during evening hours. Two-thirds of municipalities indicate that street crime is generally not an issue (no or very little agreement) and relatively few strongly agree that it is an issue (to a large or great extent). Slightly more than one in ten (14%) municipalities view poorly lit sidewalks and streets in their municipality as a factor discouraging residents' activity at night, while 38% of municipalities do not view it as a barrier. Large communities are substantially more likely than other municipalities to agree somewhat that crime is an issue and the larger the community the more likely it is to somewhat agree that poor lighting poses a barrier to the activity levels of their residents.

**Region** Compared to municipalities overall, municipalities in Ontario are less likely to say street crime is not an issue. Municipalities in the West are slightly less likely, whereas those in Quebec are slightly more likely to state that poor lighting on sidewalks and streets *prevents* residents from bicycling or walking at night.

**Smaller communities (< 1,000)** Roughly seven in ten of the smallest communities surveyed (<1,000) do not view street crime as a barrier to walking or bicycling on municipal streets and roads. Fewer (45%) regard lighting as a barrier. Indeed, only 12% strongly agree that it limits participation.

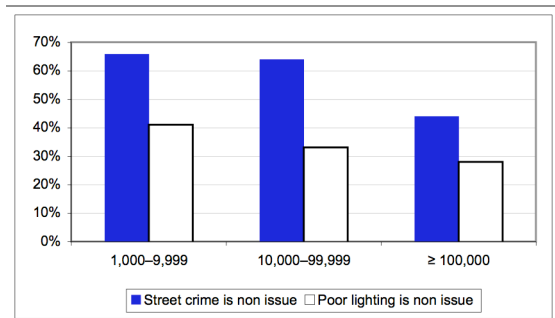
**Trends** The proportion of municipalities in 2004 rating street crime and poor lighting on streets in their community as a potential barrier to their residents' walking and bicycling is consistent with data collected 5 years prior.<sup>5</sup> There were no differences between 2000 and 2004 in the percentage of municipalities viewing poor lighting on city streets or street crime as a barrier.

**BARRIERS IN THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT  
by region**



2004 Survey of Canadian Municipalities, CFLRI

**BARRIERS IN THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT  
by community size**



2004 Survey of Canadian Municipalities, CFLRI

## Lack of networking of trails and paths

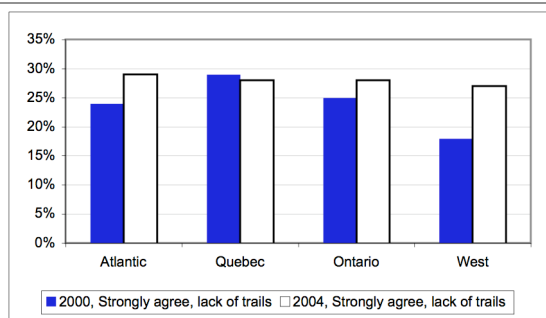
**Towns and cities (1,000+ residents)** Roughly three in ten (28%) municipalities report that the lack of linked trails and paths to form a network is a barrier (agree to a large or great extent) to residents' physical activity, while two in ten do not see this as an issue. Many of the remainder (19%) specify that this is not applicable to their municipality. The larger the municipality, the more likely it is to report this as a factor limiting activity, whereas the smaller the municipality, the more likely it is to state that the lack of a well-connected network is not applicable in their case.

**Region** There are no regional differences in the proportions reporting that lack of a network linking trails and paths is a potential barrier.

**Smaller communities (< 1,000)** At least half of very small municipalities (<1,000) specify that the issues surrounding trail networks are not applicable to their area. One in ten of these very small municipalities agree to a large or great extent that the lack of networked trails and paths is a barrier.

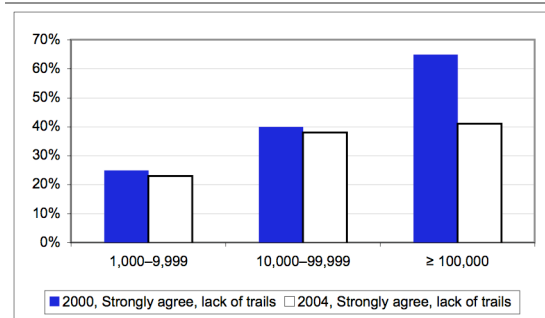
**Trends** Generally speaking, there is no difference in the overall percentage of municipalities between the years of 2000 to 2004 that view the lack of a network of paths and trails as a barrier to physical activity in their community.<sup>5</sup> However, the proportion of municipalities in Atlantic and Western Canada viewing it as such has increased so that they are now just as likely as Quebec and Ontario to report this. Furthermore, over this period, roughly the same high proportions (~20%) state that this question is not applicable to their community. In 2000, there was a linear increase with increasing size of the municipality in the proportion reporting lack of linked trails and paths as a potential barrier in their communities; however, by 2004 the magnitude of the gap has decreased.

**NETWORKING OF TRAILS AND PATHS**  
trends by region, 2000–2004



2000 and 2004 Survey of Canadian Municipalities, CFLRI

**NETWORKING OF TRAILS AND PATHS**  
trends by community size, 2000–2004



2000 and 2004 Survey of Canadian Municipalities, CFLRI

## Repair and maintenance of municipal infrastructure

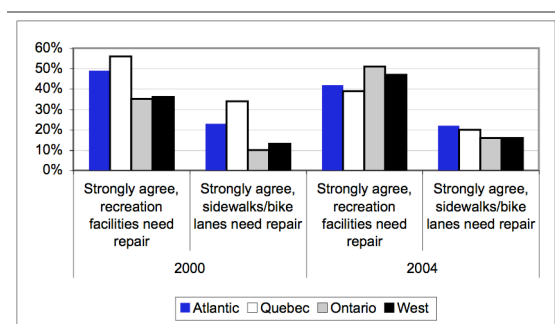
**Towns and cities (1,000+ residents)** Overall, 45% of municipalities strongly agree (to a large or great extent) that their local sport and recreation facilities are in need of repair or maintenance. One in five Canadian municipalities (18%) strongly agree that their sidewalks and bike lanes are in need of repair or maintenance. An additional one in five municipalities indicates that this is not applicable to their municipality. Although larger municipalities are slightly more likely than mid-sized municipalities to strongly agree that their sport and recreation facilities are in need of repair or maintenance, there are no differences with respect to the percentage who report that sidewalks and bike lanes require repair or maintenance by the population size of municipalities.

**Region** Ontario municipalities are slightly more likely, whereas those in Quebec are slightly less likely, than municipalities overall to strongly agree that their local sport and recreation facilities are in need of some repair or maintenance.

**Smaller communities (< 1,000)** Most very small municipalities (<1,000) say that the issue of repairing or maintaining sidewalks and bicycle lanes is not applicable to their community. In fact, communities with less than 500 residents are more likely to state this than those with a population of 500–999. Roughly one-half of municipalities with less than 1,000 residents strongly agree that their sport/recreation facilities are in need of repair or maintenance and approximately one-quarter of municipalities strongly agree that the sidewalks and bicycle lanes are in need of repair or maintenance.

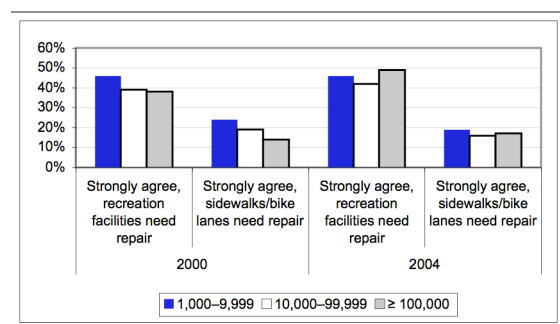
**Trends** Although there is virtually no difference in the last 5 years in the proportions of municipalities who strongly agree that their local sport and recreation facilities or that their sidewalks and bicycle lanes are in need of repair or maintenance, there are differences in the percentages by the size of municipality over the 5 year span.<sup>5</sup> Where in 2000 small municipalities were slightly more likely to strongly agree that the sport and recreation facilities require upkeep compared to mid- or larger sized municipalities, in 2004 larger municipalities are more likely than mid-sized municipalities to strongly agree. In 2000, small municipalities were also slightly more likely than their larger counterparts to strongly agree that sidewalks and bicycle lanes in their communities required repair or maintenance; however, in 2004 these differences no longer appear.

**REPAIR TO INFRASTRUCTURE**  
trends by region, 2000–2004



2000 and 2004 Survey of Canadian Municipalities, CFLRI

**REPAIR TO INFRASTRUCTURE**  
trends by community size, 2000–2004



2000 and 2004 Survey of Canadian Municipalities, CFLRI

## Funding for repair and maintenance of trails and parks

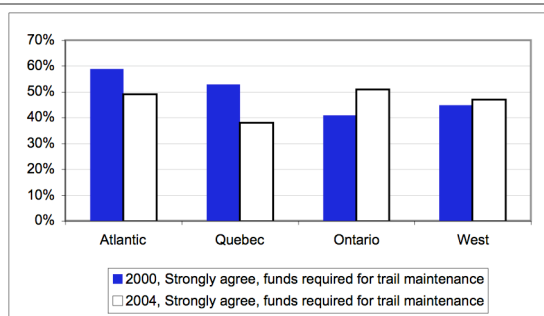
**Towns and cities (1,000+ residents)** Almost half of municipalities strongly agree (to a large or great extent) that it is difficult to find sufficient funds to cover the costs associated with the repair or maintenance of trails and parks. Fewer than one in ten do not view it as at least somewhat of an issue. The smaller the municipality, the more likely it is to view funding for repair or maintenance of trails and parks as problematic.

**Region** Municipalities located in Ontario are slightly more likely to report that funds are difficult to find compared to municipalities in general. However, Quebec municipalities are slightly less likely to report this.

**Smaller communities (< 1,000)** The majority of very small municipalities (<1,000) strongly agree that it is difficult to find sufficient funds to cover the costs associated with the repair or maintenance of trails and parks. However, roughly one-quarter state that this is not applicable in their circumstance.

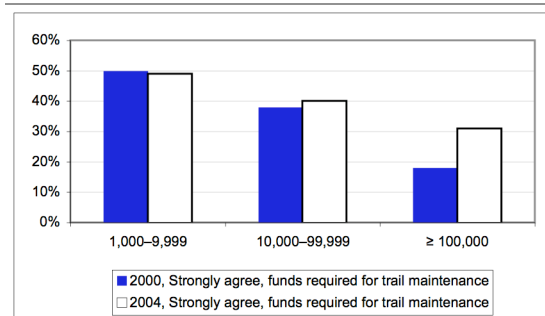
**Trends** Virtually no differences appear during the 5-year span from 2000 to 2004 in the proportion of municipalities reporting difficulty in finding sufficient funds to cover the costs for repair or maintenance of trails and parks.<sup>5</sup> However, fewer Quebec municipalities and more Ontario municipalities report this as an issue in 2004 than did in 2000. The gap evident 5 years ago, wherein small communities were more likely to strongly agree that funding for trail and park repair or maintenance was needed, was perpetuated in 2004.

**FUNDING FOR REPAIR OR MAINTENANCE**  
trends by region, 2000–2004



2000 and 2004 Survey of Canadian Municipalities, CFLRI

**FUNDING FOR REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE**  
trends by community size, 2000–2004



2000 and 2004 Survey of Canadian Municipalities, CFLRI

## *Summary of section*

The majority of municipalities indicate that local sport and recreation facilities are in need of repair or maintenance and that it is difficult to find sufficient funds to cover the costs associated with the repair or maintenance of trails and parks. Although large municipalities are more likely to report that sport and recreation facilities are in need of repair, small municipalities are more likely to report that finding funds to repair or maintain trails and parks is an issue. Roughly two in ten municipalities indicate that needed repairs of sidewalks and bicycle lanes is a barrier, and three in ten that the lack of a well-linked network of paths and trails is a barrier to physical activity in their community – the latter of which is more of an issue among small municipalities than larger ones. Generally speaking, very few municipalities rate street crime or poorly lit sidewalks and streets in their municipality as barriers to the activity of their residents.

## *Discussion, Implications and Recommendations*

A detailed analysis of earlier national data reveals that citizens of larger communities report access to a greater variety of facilities and that the available facilities are generally appropriate in type for participation in the most popular activities.<sup>5</sup> However, the high proportion of municipalities, especially larger ones, reporting that the repair and maintenance of facilities prevent people from being active is an issue and raises questions as to whether the current condition of the facilities can meet the current demand of residents and whether an increase in demand of such facilities could be accommodated. However, from a population perspective, research indicates that although relatively few Canadians report that disrepair of sport and recreation facilities prevents them from being more active,<sup>7</sup> it is more of an issue for older adults, residents of smaller communities, and individuals with lower income and levels of education. These are also the groups within the population who are generally less active. To assist municipalities in repairing and retrofitting facilities to meet citizens' needs, some provinces provide grants specifically earmarked for the repair and maintenance of physical activity, sport and recreation facilities. Other provinces could consider the role that physical activity facilities could play to create and sustain an active population as one element of their provincial strategy to increase population levels of physical activity.

The fact that very few municipalities rate street crime as a potential barrier to their citizens' physical activity behaviours is consistent with a survey of the general population, as less than one in five adults even moderately agree that crime inhibits their ability to walk at night.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that older adults and adults with low levels of education and income are more likely to strongly agree that crime is an issue.

Taking these results together, it is important that policy-makers and municipalities understand how to create a physical environment that is supportive of physical activity especially for older adults and by individuals with low income. For example, municipalities could provide programs that involve little cost to the participant, ensure proper lighting in areas where a higher proportion of residents report low income, and promote walking and bicycling as a means of utilitarian travel (i.e., for work, for shopping, for errands). Studies have shown that residents of areas characterized by lower

socioeconomic status were more likely to report walking, and it was suggested that this may be due to the greater density within these neighbourhoods; however, among these residents participation in more vigorous activities was lower, perhaps due to the cost and low visibility of activities in facilities.<sup>27, 28</sup> It is suggested by Giles-Corti and Donovan that increased access to low-cost facilities and increased availability of open spaces and a more walkable environment may help increase the “visibility” of physical activities in low socioeconomic areas and affect the social norms of that area.<sup>28</sup> Creating walkable environments can include improving neighbourhood aesthetics and reducing perceived barriers (reduce crime, reduce graffiti, improve traffic safety, improve lighting, improve maintenance of sidewalks, etc.).

Smaller communities are less likely to report local facilities, places, and programs specifically designed for physical activity and sport. For these communities, shared use of places that are not specifically designed for physical activity may provide an alternative for meeting the physical activity needs of this population. As such, innovative programming may need to be incorporated to adapt to these types of facilities (e.g., church basements). Moreover, promoting activities that do not require specific facilities may be a practical option among smaller municipalities. This includes providing information to residents on how to build physical activity into daily life such as at-home activities, taking the stairs rather than the escalator, and parking further away from work.