

Location for physical activity

Where do Canadians participate in physical activities? The 1995 Physical Activity Monitor, conducted by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, investigated the various locations used by Canadian adults and children to engage in physical activity.

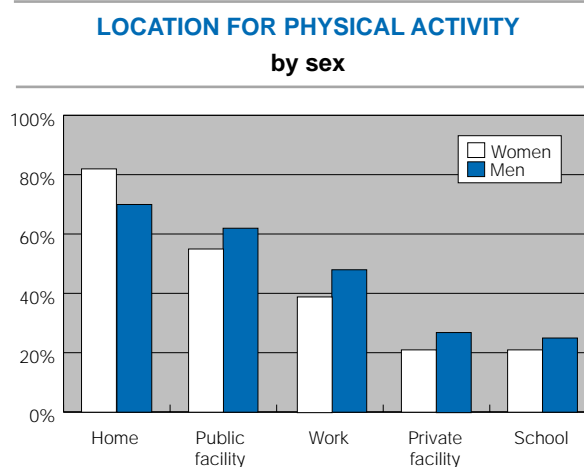
Adults

It turns out that for both men and women, home is the most frequently cited place, followed by public facilities, work, private facilities, and schools (Figure 1). Three-quarters of people citing home as a place for activities also report using other locations. Only two in ten report home exclusively, one in ten cite facilities only, and the majority uses a combination of locations.

Women in every age group are more likely than men to participate in activities at home. Home is also the top-ranked location for men, but they are more likely than women to do activities at work and in public and private facilities (Figure 1). These differences are most pronounced among young adults aged 18–24 and adults aged 25–44. In the 45–64 age group, men are also more likely to participate at work, but men and women are equally likely to go to public or private facilities.

Home is the most frequently cited location for activity irrespective of education level, income level, employment status, and size of community. The more affluent are more likely to report home as a location for physical

Figure 1



1995 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

activity. Those with higher household incomes or education levels are less likely to engage in physical activities at work. On the other hand, they tend to use public and private facilities more.

About half of employed (either full-time or part-time) Canadians report that they do activities at work. School is mentioned as a location for physical activity by over half of students over 18 and one-third of part-time employees. Only one in ten full-time workers use schools as a location to be active. Homemakers and retired adults are the least likely to use public facilities. Retirees are also the least likely to use private facilities, in contrast to students, who are the most likely.

Individuals in communities with fewer than 1,000 residents are less likely to use public

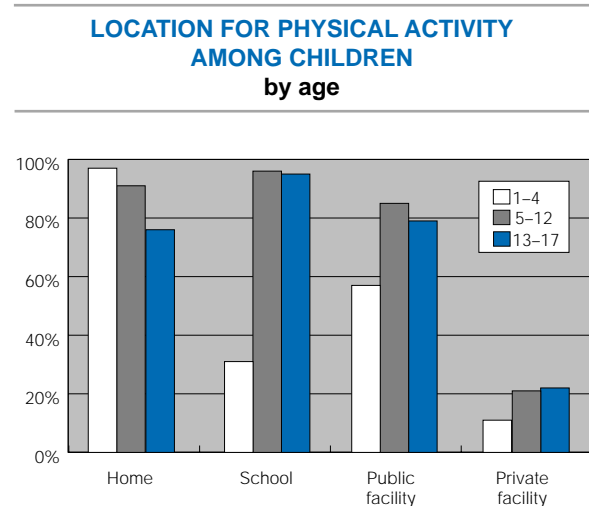


and private facilities than are individuals living in larger centres.

Children and youth

Most boys and girls are active at home, at school, and in public facilities (Figure 2). Only about one in five report using a private facility. Among children using both public and private facilities, almost two-thirds use public facilities most often.

Figure 2



1995 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Home is the location most often cited by parents for preschoolers' activities. This is followed by public facilities, which are used by over half of preschool girls and boys.

Almost all school-aged children (5–17) are reportedly doing activities at school. There are age-related differences, however, in the relative use of different locations for physical activity. Home is cited as a location for physical activity for the vast majority (91%) of children aged 5–12. This decreases substantially to 76% among 13–17 year-olds. On the other hand, teenagers are more likely than younger children to make use of public facilities. In fact, the use of public facilities surpasses home as the second location for physical activity among teenagers, primarily as a

result of the decreased numbers of teenage girls doing physical activities at home.

In general, there is no relationship between the location of the child's participation in activity and the education level of the parent. There is one exception: the children of more educated parents are more likely to use public facilities.

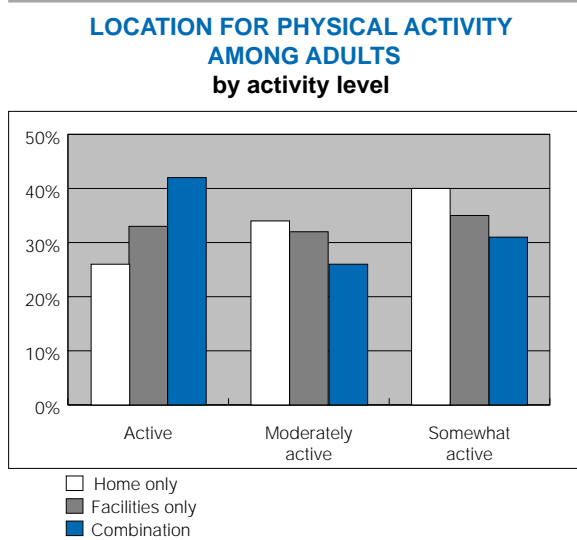
Family composition

If they have children under 18 living at home, couples and parents who are widowed, divorced, or separated are much more likely to use public facilities to do physical activity. In fact, two-thirds of all parents report using public facilities. Among adults without children at home, those who never married are the most likely to use public facilities. Parents who are single are more likely than other single adults to exercise at home.

Activity level

Active adults are more likely than less active ones to do physical activities in every location except at work. Men and women who use a combination of locations are the most likely to be active (Figure 3). This applies to every age group. Men and women who are active in facil-

Figure 3



1995 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

ities only are less likely to be active, and those who are active at home only are the least likely to be active.

Children aged 5 to 17 who do activities at home reportedly spend twice as much time engaged in physical activity as those who are not active at home. In addition, teenagers who use facilities spend more time on physical activity. Specifically, teenagers using public facilities are reported to spend 4.5 more hours a week engaged in physical activity, and those using private facilities spend 4 more hours. The location in which children do their activities is generally not related to the activity level of their parents. However, the children of active parents are more likely to use private facilities.

The home-only crowd

Women are more likely than men to report home as the only location for activity. The proportion of adults active only at home increases with age. Older adults are 1.6 times more likely to do activities only at home, compared with people in the 45-to-64 age group. Adults in this pre-retirement group are in turn 1.6 times as likely as younger adults aged 25–44 to do activities only at home. In absolute numbers, however, there are fewer seniors than adults aged 25 to 64 who report being active at home only, by virtue of the large number of Canadians in the latter group.

Doing activities only at home is more of a tendency among less-educated Canadians. Likewise, those with incomes under \$40,000 are more likely than those with higher incomes to report being active at home only.

The most frequently reported activities among the home-only group are walking, gardening, home exercise, dancing socially, bicycling, and swimming. Compared with the general population, people in the home-only group are more likely to report home exercise but less likely to report dancing socially, bicycling, and swimming.

Private vs. public facilities

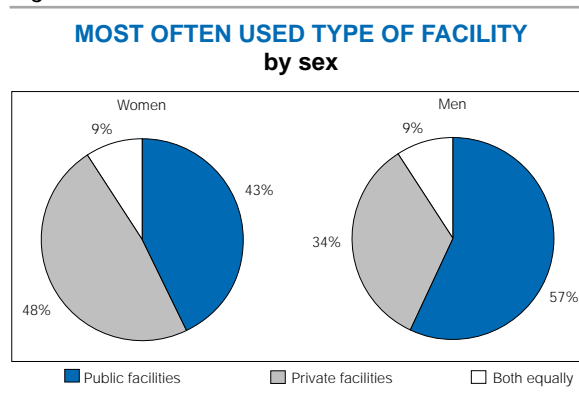
Six in ten adults report using public facilities as one venue for their activities, and almost one in four report using private facilities. Three-quarters of those using private facilities also use public facilities.

About equal numbers of men and women use public facilities. Of those using public facilities, over five in ten are 25 to 44, two in ten are 18 to 24, another two in ten are 45 to 64, and fewer than one in ten are over 65. One-quarter have annual household incomes under \$30,000, with the remainder split equally between those having household incomes of \$60,000 or more annually and those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$60,000. Half of Canadians using public facilities are classified as active.

Given the overlap in facility use, the profile of individuals using private facilities is roughly the same. Users of private facilities appear to be slightly more active, however.

Adults who use both public and private facilities were asked which type of facility they used most often. Overall, five in ten use public facilities more frequently, while four in ten resort to private facilities more often. About one in ten report equal use of public and private facilities. Among those using both public and private facilities, women tend to use private facilities more often whereas men tend to use public facilities more (Figure 4).

Figure 4



1995 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Reaching out

The fact that home is a common location for activity among adults and that those doing activities only at home are less active poses challenges for recreational and health promotion professionals. The traditional approach of promoting a specific program offered at a certain time in a given facility may need to be broadened to include a leisure-education approach.

Such an approach could highlight the benefits of physical activity, provide tips on how to go about being regularly active, and advertise resources available in the community. In particular,

- develop services that reach out to the potentially large numbers of adults, especially women, who are active in their homes. Determine what types of programs and services would increase their participation and keep them motivated to participate regularly;
- build on the activities chosen by the home-only exercisers: provide pleasant trails for walking and bicycling, offer professional counselling for home exercise, organize gardening contests, etc.;
- organize neighbourhood events and clinics to allow home exercisers to try new activities or learn skills and safety tips to feel confident in doing a variety of activities. Enlist local businesses to contribute equipment prizes or other donations to attract participants;
- take advantage of local schools that can function as a hub for community events while the school is not in session;
- promote non-facility-based physical activities in small communities, where fewer facilities exist, focusing instead on outdoor recreation.

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Funded in part by Health Canada

Published in December 1996

Location of physical activity—adult

1995 Physical Activity Monitor

	Home	Work	School	Public facility	Private facility
TOTAL, ADULTS (18+)	76%	44%	23%	58%	24%
<i>women</i>	82	39	21	55	21
<i>men</i>	70	48	25	62	27
18–24	76	50	58	79	32
<i>women</i>	89	43	51	73	25
<i>men</i>	63	57	65	85	39
25–44	77	46	14	65	26
<i>women</i>	83	41	–	61	23
<i>men</i>	71	49	–	70	29
45–64	75	39	–	43	19
<i>women</i>	79	33	–	42	20
<i>men</i>	71	44	–	45	18
65+	77	–	–	33	13
<i>women</i>	80	–	–	33	–
<i>men</i>	73	–	–	33	–
EDUCATION LEVEL					
<i>Less than secondary</i>	70	49	–	33	15
<i>Secondary</i>	78	50	23	57	23
<i>College</i>	80	44	–	66	20
<i>University</i>	77	35	26	70	34
HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
< \$20,000	72	46	34	48	19
\$20,000–29,999	74	50	–	52	23
\$30,000–39,999	76	47	–	51	17
\$40,000–59,999	76	45	–	63	23
\$60,000–79,999	74	42	–	72	26
\$80,000–99,999	87	35	–	81	34
≥ \$100,000	84	30	–	68	47
EMPLOYMENT STATUS					
<i>Full-time worker</i>	75	45	12	64	27
<i>Part-time worker</i>	77	48	36	63	24
<i>Unemployed</i>	68	–	–	63	–
<i>Homemaker</i>	87	–	–	41	20
<i>Student</i>	82	–	55	69	34
<i>Retired</i>	74	–	–	34	13
COMMUNITY SIZE					
< 1,000	86	61	–	38	20
1,000–9,999	73	46	–	56	20
10,000–74,999	76	44	–	63	21
75,000–299,999	79	36	34	62	24
≥ 300,000	75	43	28	65	31

(cont'd)

	Home	Work	School	Public facility	Private facility
FAMILY COMPOSITION					
<i>Living with a partner</i>	77	43	10	55	22
<i>with children at home</i>	81	47	–	68	24
<i>without children at home</i>	75	40	–	43	20
<i>Widowed, divorced, separated</i>	78	38	–	47	15
<i>with children at home</i>	90	42	–	65	–
<i>without children at home</i>	74	37	–	42	13
<i>Never married</i>	73	47	48	72	32
<i>with children at home</i>	87	–	–	62	–
<i>without children at home</i>	72	47	46	73	34
ENERGY EXPENDITURE					
<i>Active (≥3 KKD¹)</i>	82	44	31	72	34
<i>Moderately active (1.5–2.9 KKD)</i>	78	42	–	57	23
<i>Somewhat active (0.5–1.4 KKD)</i>	73	45	–	50	15
<i>Sedentary (<0.5 KKD)</i>	62	42	–	31	–
ACTIVITY PATTERN					
≥ <i>Every other day</i>	81	44	25	63	28
≥ <i>Twice a week</i>	72	38	–	49	18
< <i>Twice a week</i>	65	46	–	50	14

¹ Kilocalories/kilogram of body weight/day; an energy expenditure of 3 KKD is equivalent to walking one hour every day.

– Data unavailable because of insufficient sample size.

Location of physical activity—children

1995 Physical Activity Monitor

	Home	Work	School	Public facility	Private facility
TOTAL, CHILDREN (1–17)	88%	–	83%	76%	19%
<i>girls</i>	88	–	85	75	18
<i>boys</i>	88	–	80	76	19
1–4	97	–	31	57	–
<i>girls</i>	97	–	–	61	–
<i>boys</i>	98	–	–	52	–
5–12	91	–	96	85	21
<i>girls</i>	93	–	98	81	21
<i>boys</i>	88	–	94	89	–
13–17	76	–	95	79	22
<i>girls</i>	67	–	97	81	–
<i>boys</i>	82	–	93	77	–
PARENT'S EDUCATION					
<i>Less than secondary</i>	80	–	83	57	–
<i>Secondary</i>	91	–	82	73	–
<i>College</i>	91	–	86	83	26
<i>University</i>	88	–	82	84	24
PARENTS' EMPLOYMENT					
<i>Both parents full-time</i>	86	–	87	81	20
<i>One full-time, one part-time</i>	90	–	83	78	–
<i>One full-time</i>	89	–	83	79	–
COMMUNITY SIZE					
< 1,000	95	–	83	58	–
1,000–9,999	84	–	83	73	–
10,000–74,999	91	–	84	84	–
75,000–299,999	86	–	84	75	–
≥ 300,000	92	–	85	82	29
PARENT'S ENERGY EXPENDITURE					
<i>Active (≥3 KKD¹)</i>	87	–	79	78	24
<i>Moderately active (1.5–2.9 KKD)</i>	90	–	86	78	21
<i>Sedentary (<1.5 KKD)</i>	89	–	84	74	–
PARENT'S ACTIVITY PATTERN					
≥ <i>Every other day</i>	89	–	86	80	21
≥ <i>Twice a week</i>	86	–	74	67	–
< <i>Twice a week</i>	89	–	80	73	–

1 Kilocalories/kilogram of body weight/day; an energy expenditure of 3 KKD is equivalent to walking one hour every day.

– Data unavailable because of insufficient sample size.