

Municipal Opportunities for Physical Activity

2009 SURVEY OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES: FACTS & FIGURES



Municipal perspectives on physical activity in small communities

The 2009 *Survey of Physical Activity in Canadian Communities* was abbreviated for small municipalities (those with fewer than 1,000 residents) to reflect the distinct nature of these rural communities. The results of the Survey (and comparisons with previous Surveys in 2000 and 2004, where available) are described below for small municipalities under the following headings:

- Partnerships and use of guidelines
- Targeted programs and schedules
- Infrastructure promoting physical activity and active transportation
- Municipal barriers and needs

Partnerships and use of guidelines

In 2009, the following proportions of small municipalities reported working with the organizations and institutions listed below to encourage people to be more active:

- Schools, 34%
- Local not-for-profits, 18%
- Health settings, 9%
- Workplaces, 5%
- Other organizations (e.g., clubs for seniors, recreation centres), 19%

Compared to 2000, small municipalities are now somewhat more likely to report working with local not-for-profit organizations and schools. There have been no significant changes in the proportion reporting having shared-use agreements with local school boards.

Nearly 80% of small municipalities do not use physical activity guidelines in their physical activity programming. Of those that do, information from Canada's Physical Activity Guide (CPAG) is used by 17%.

Compared to 2000, substantially fewer small municipalities use physical activity guidelines in programming.

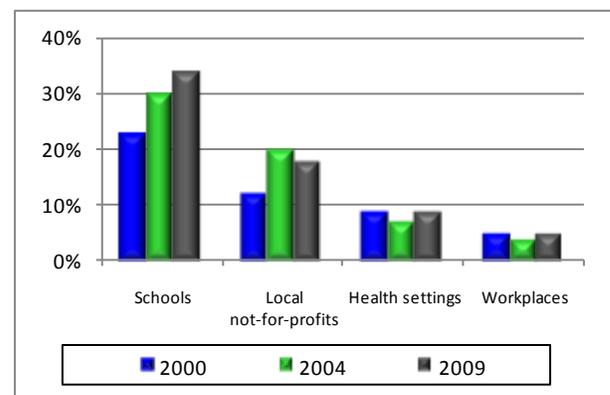
Community size

Small municipalities are less likely than those with 1,000 or more residents to work with schools, local not-for-profit organizations, health settings, and workplaces to encourage physical activity. Generally, municipalities with 500 to 999 residents are more likely than those with fewer than 500 residents to work with schools, health settings, and local not-for-profit organizations to encourage people to be more active.

About one-third (33%) of small municipalities indicate that they have agreements with one or more local school boards regarding shared use of school or municipal facilities; this is substantially lower than among

FIGURE 1

Organizations and institutions collaborated with by small municipalities to encourage physical activity, trends



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municipalities with 1,000 residents or more. Municipalities with 500 to 999 residents are substantially more likely to have shared-use agreements with local school boards.

Small municipalities are less likely than those with 1,000 or more residents to use physical activity guidelines in programming, and are less likely to use CPAG if they do. The smallest municipalities (< 500 residents) are less likely than those with 500 – 999 residents to use CPAG.

Region

Compared to the national average, small Atlantic municipalities are slightly less likely to report working with schools to encourage people to be active, and similarly, are less likely to report agreements to share facilities with school boards. Quebec municipalities are slightly more likely than average to work with local not-for-profit organizations, and are more likely to report having shared-use agreements with local school boards.

Compared to the national average, small municipalities in Ontario are less likely to report that they use any guidelines in their programming, whereas those in the Atlantic are more likely to report this. No regional differences appear among municipalities using CPAG.

Targeted programs and schedules

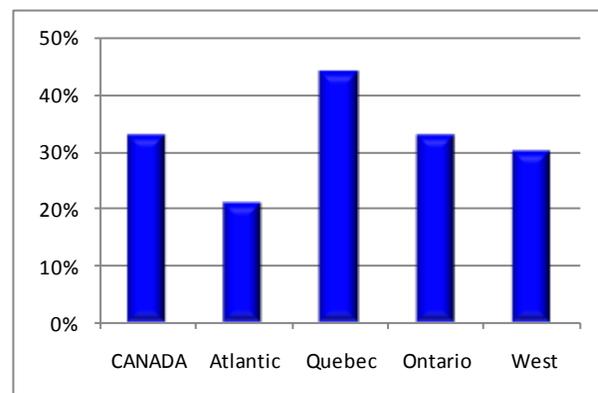
The prevalence of offering programming or schedules that target particular population groups in small municipalities are:

- Children, 58%;
- Adults, 50%;
- Older adults, 43%;
- Families, 41%;
- Women, 30%;
- Beginners, 18%;
- Lower income individuals, 16%;
- Overweight individuals, 15%;
- Children and youth at-risk, 15%;
- Individuals with disabilities, 11%;
- Pregnant women, 10%;
- Aboriginal Canadians, 8%; and
- New Canadians, 6%.

There has been little change from 2004 in the proportions of small municipalities offering targeted programs and schedules. Compared to 2000, however, there have been:

FIGURE 2

Formal shared-used agreements between local school boards and small municipalities, by region*



*North excluded due to small numbers - see Methodology bulletin for more detail

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- moderate increases in the proportions of small municipalities reporting programs and schedules targeting adults, families, older adults, and women; and
- slight increases in the proportions reporting programs and schedules for children and individuals with lower income.

Among small municipalities that offer targeted programs and schedules to each population group, few administer these programs alone. For each targeted group, about 50% or more of small municipalities have programs and schedules that are administered by a group other than the municipality; further, about 20% to 40% have targeted programs and schedules offered by both the municipality and an outside group.

Where sufficient numbers of municipalities allow comparison, there appears to have been a decline over time in the proportions of municipalities reporting that targeted programs and schedules are administered by the municipality alone or by another group alone, and a corresponding increase in the proportions reporting that such programs and schedules are offered by both the municipality and another group.

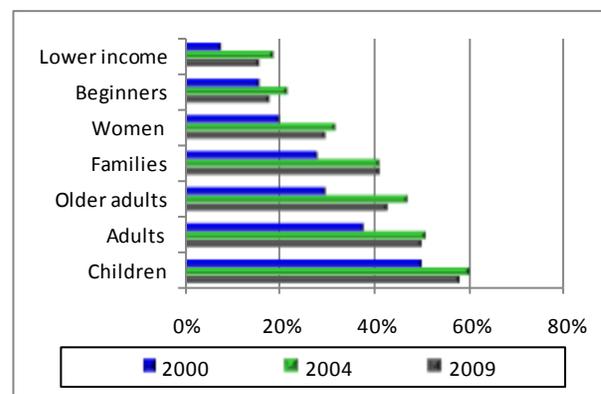
Community size

For each population group, small municipalities are less likely to report a targeted program or schedule than municipalities with 1,000 or more residents. For nearly all population groups (except new Canadians and Aboriginal Canadians), municipalities with 500 to 999

residents are more likely to offer targeted programs and schedules than those with fewer than 500 residents. The greatest differences appear in among the programs and schedules targeting children, adults, families, older adults, and women.

For most population groups (all except Aboriginal Canadians, pregnant women, beginners, and children and youth at-risk), targeted programs and schedules are more likely to be administered by an outside group in municipalities with fewer than 500 residents than in those with 500 to 999 residents. Regardless of size, few municipalities report that they are the sole administrators of such targeted programs and schedules. This differs from municipalities with 1,000 or more residents. In these larger communities, targeted programs and schedules are generally more likely to be offered by both the municipality and an outside group and generally less likely to have such programs administered by an outside group alone.

FIGURE 3
Targeted programs and schedules in small municipalities, trends



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TABLE I

Regional* differences (compared to national average) in targeted programs and schedules among small municipalities

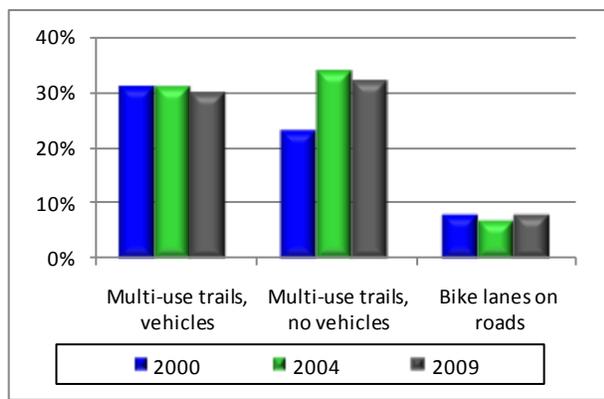
Region	Offering programs and schedules		Administration of programs	
	More likely to offer	Less likely to offer	More likely	Less likely
Atlantic		-Adults -Families -Older adults		-Programs targeting older adults are less likely to be run by an outside group
Quebec		-Adults -Families -Women -Lower income individuals -Beginners	-Municipality is more likely to offer programs targeting children -Outside groups are more likely to offer programs targeting adults and older adults.	-Programs targeting children, adults, and older adults are less likely to be offered by both the municipality and another group.
Ontario				
West	-Adults -Families -Older adults -Women -Overweight individuals -Beginners -Children and youth at-risk		-Programs targeting children, families, overweight individuals, Aboriginal Canadians, and children and youth at-risk are more likely to be offered by an outside group.	

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FIGURE 4

Infrastructure promoting physical activity and active transportation in small municipalities, trends



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Region

Some slight variations in the proportions of municipalities offering programs and schedules targeting particular population groups and the administration of these programs appear across regions (see Table 1).

Infrastructure promoting active transportation and physical activity

Municipalities were asked about their physical activity and transportation-related infrastructure that would allow residents to be active, and where relevant, whether these are maintained in winter. Among small municipalities,

- 32% report that they have multi-use trails where no motorized vehicles are permitted (29% of these maintain them for winter use);
- 30% indicate that they have multi-use trails that permit motorized traffic in addition to walkers, cyclists, etc. (54% of these maintain them in winter);
- 20% report that they have traffic calming services or sidewalks on high pedestrian routes (51% of these municipalities maintain them in winter);
- 8% have designated bicycle lanes on roadways; and
- 3% institute road closures on designated days to promote cycling.

The proportions of small municipalities reporting bicycle lanes on roads, multi-use trails permitting vehicles and multi-use trails that do not permit motorized traffic have not changed significantly since 2004, though slightly

more small municipalities report multi-use trails that do not permit vehicles compared to 2000. In general, winter maintenance of multi-use trails is reported by fewer municipalities in 2009 than in 2000.

Community size

Overall, small municipalities are less likely than those with 1,000 or more residents to report each of the above-described amenities. Municipalities of 500 to 999 residents are more likely than those with fewer than 500 residents to report traffic calming or sidewalks, multi-use trails with no vehicular traffic, and multi-use trails that permit motorized vehicles. They are also more likely to report maintaining their multi-use trails of both types in winter.

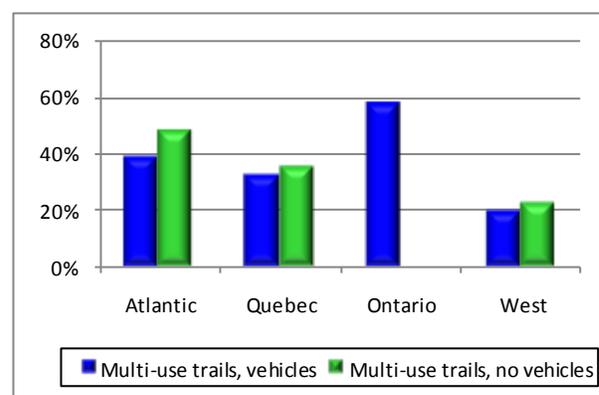
Region

Regional differences appear, as follows:

- Municipalities in Atlantic are more likely to report that they have multi-use trails (both those permitting and prohibiting motorized vehicles), but are less likely to report that they have traffic calming or sidewalks on high pedestrian routes.
- Municipalities in Quebec are more likely to report having designated bicycle lanes on roadways.
- Ontario municipalities are substantially more likely to report having multi-use trails that permit motorized vehicles
- Municipalities in the West are less likely to report having both types of multi-use trails.

FIGURE 5

Multi-use trails in small municipalities, by region*



* North not included due to small numbers - see Methodology bulletin for more detail
Insufficient sample in Ontario for 'Multi-use trails, no vehicles'

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Municipal physical activity barriers and needs

Small municipalities were also asked about barriers that exist in their communities, and what the most pressing infrastructure needs are to facilitate higher physical activity among their citizens.

Frequently reported barriers included:

- sport and recreation facilities needing repair or maintenance, 68%;
- lack of funds to cover the costs of repair and maintenance of trails and parks, 64%;
- sidewalks and bike lanes needing of repair or maintenance, 30%;
- the amount of lighting discouraging people from walking or cycling at night, 19%; and
- the amount of crime on the streets discouraging people from walking or cycling, 5%.

Generally, the proportions of small municipalities agreeing to each barrier are stable over time, except:

- the proportion of small municipalities agreeing that their sport and recreation facilities require repair and maintenance has increased by about 7% since 2000; and
- the proportion indicating that insufficient lighting discourages activity at night has dropped by the 7% over the same time period.

To address these and other barriers, municipalities report that the following improvements to infrastructure

are needed to help increase physical activity among citizens, as follows:

- more walking, bicycling, and multi-purpose trails, 50%;
- more outdoor sport and recreation facilities, 49%;
- more indoor sport and recreation facilities, 42%;
- repair of outdoor facilities, 39%;
- repair of indoor facilities, 36%;
- improved networking trails, paths, and sidewalks, 29%; and
- improved linkage of bicycle pathways and lanes with roadways and transportation, 14%.

Compared to 2004, small municipalities are slightly more likely to report need of repair of indoor sport and recreation facilities.

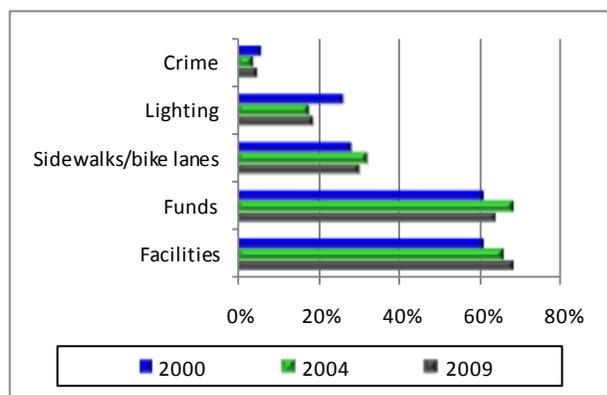
Community size

Small municipalities are less likely than municipalities with 1,000 or more residents to report sidewalks and bike lanes requiring maintenance and insufficient lighting as barriers to physical activity. Communities of 500 to 999 people are more likely than smaller communities (<500 residents) to agree that:

- it is hard to find the funds required to repair and maintain trails and parks;
- sport and recreation facilities are in need of repair or maintenance; and
- sidewalks and bike lanes are in need of repair or maintenance.

FIGURE 6

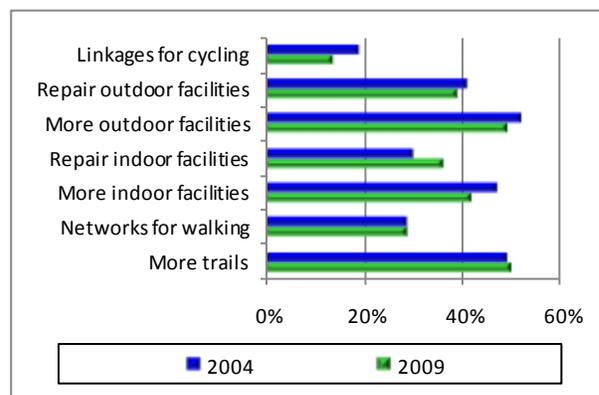
Municipal barriers to physical activity in small municipalities, trends



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FIGURE 7

Pressing infrastructure needs among small municipalities, trends



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Small municipalities are generally less likely to report each requirement than are larger municipalities (1,000+ residents), except that they are similarly likely to report the need for more outdoor facilities and repair of indoor and outdoor facilities. Further, communities of 500 to 999 residents are generally more likely than their smaller counterparts to report each of the most pressing infrastructure needs. The only exception is repair of indoor sport and recreation facilities: small municipalities of all sizes are similarly likely to report this need.

Region

Table 2 presents the region differences in barriers to physical activity and the most important infrastructure requirements to increase physical activity among residents of small municipalities.

TABLE 2

Regional* differences (compared to national average) in municipal barriers and most pressing needs among small municipalities

Region	Barriers		Most pressing needs	
	More likely to agree	Less likely to agree	More likely to report	Less likely to report
Atlantic	-Difficult to find funds for maintenance of facilities	-Sidewalks & bike lanes need maintenance	-More indoor facilities -More outdoor facilities -Repair outdoor facilities -More trails -Improved networking of walk spaces -Improved linkages of bicycle path & lanes	-Repair indoor facilities
Quebec	-Sport & recreation facilities need maintenance -Insufficient lighting deters activity at night -Sidewalks & bike lanes need maintenance		-More outdoor facilities	-Repair of indoor facilities
Ontario	-Difficult to find funds for maintenance of facilities			
West		-Insufficient lighting deters activity at night	-Indoor facilities need repair	-More indoor facilities -More outdoor facilities -More trails -Improved networking of walk spaces

*North not included due to small numbers - see Methodology bulletin for more detail

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