

Encouraging Active Schools

2015 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AT SCHOOL SURVEY



Off-site school facilities for physical activity and sport in schools

The 2015 Opportunities for Physical Activity at School Survey explores the availability of facilities in the community environment which support physical activity and sport outside of the school. This topic will be explored by key demographic considerations, such as student population size, location, and type of school.

Off-site school facilities

The majority of Canadian schools (>80%) report having access to the following off-site facilities: playing fields, other green spaces or play areas, and skating rinks. Roughly three quarters of schools report having access to nearby areas with playground equipment, baseball diamonds, and walking/bicycling trails. Table 1 further summarizes the availability of off-site facilities.

Region

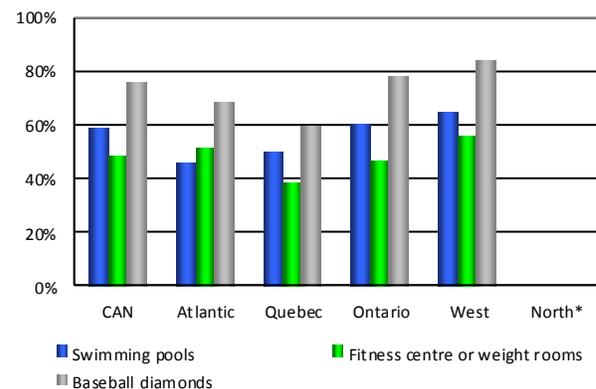
A few regional differences were noted with regards to the availability of off-site facilities.

Compared to the national average,

- relatively fewer schools in the Atlantic region report having access to off-site swimming pools, skating rinks, municipal sports and recreation facilities and community centres.
- schools in Quebec are less likely to report having access to nearby dance studios, swimming pools, fitness centres or weight rooms, baseball diamonds, and running tracks.
- a greater proportion of schools in Western Canada have access nearby fitness centres and baseball diamonds.

FIGURE 1

Regional differences in availability of off-site facilities



*Canadian total includes data from schools in the North. Sample size limits individual release of data.

Opportunities for Physical Activity at School Survey, 2015, CFLRI

TABLE 1

Availability of off-site facilities

Type of facility	% of schools indicating availability, <i>Off-site</i>
Other green space or play area	89%
Playing fields	84%
Skating rink	82%
Area with playground equipment	78%
Baseball diamond	75%
Walking and/or bicycling trails	74%
Municipal sports and recreation facility	66%
Paved area used for active games	65%
Community centre	64%
Gymnasium	57%
Swimming pool	57%
Tennis court	51%
Fitness centre or weight room	48%
Running track	41%
Dance studio	29%

Opportunities for Physical Activity at School Survey, 2015, CFLRI

School characteristics

According to schools, differences exist with regards to accessibility of nearby facilities by student population size and grade level. Specifically, schools with the smallest student populations are generally *least* likely to report being able to access off-site dance studios, gymnasiums, swimming pools, fitness centres or weight rooms, municipal sports and recreation facilities, playing fields, running tracks, tennis courts and walking/bicycling trails.

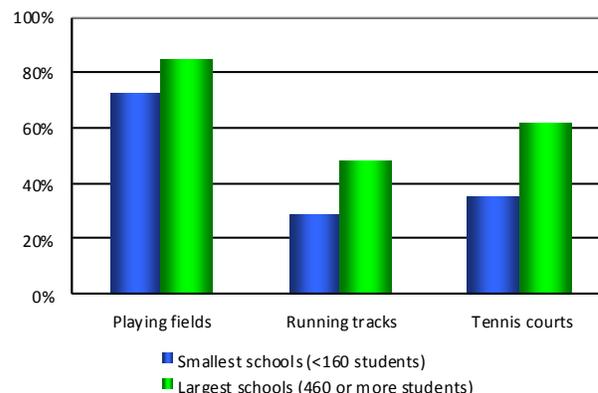
Fewer schools with the smallest student populations report having access to nearby baseball diamonds, paved areas used for active games, community centres and other green spaces compared to schools with mid- to large-student populations. Schools with the largest and smallest student populations are less likely than those with mid-size populations to report having access to areas with playground equipment. Differences in accessibility of off-site facilities are summarized in Table 2. There are generally no differences in the availability of off-site facilities by school type with the exception of public schools being *less* likely than schools from ‘other’ boards to have access to off-site swimming pools and fitness centres and weight rooms.

Community characteristics

Not surprising a number of differences exist with respect to accessibility of off-site facilities by community size. For the most part schools located in the smallest communities (<1,000 residents) are *least* likely to report being able to access nearby facilities and more specifically: swimming pools; fitness centres or weight rooms; municipal sports and recreation facilities; playing fields; other green spaces or play areas; running tracks; tennis courts; paved areas used for active games; and, walking/bicycling trails. Similarly, a lower proportion of schools from the smallest communities (<1,000 residents) report having access to gymnasiums, skating rinks and community centres compared to schools in certain larger communities. Conversely, schools in smaller communities (1,000-4,999 residents) are generally more likely than the average to indicate that off-site baseball diamonds are available for school use.

FIGURE 2

Differences in accessibility of off-site facilities by student population size



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Variations in accessibility are also noted depending on school location; namely, rural schools being *least* likely to report having access to dance studios, swimming pools, municipal sports and recreation facilities, playing fields, running tracks, tennis courts, and walking or bicycling trails. Fewer rural schools report having access to off-site community centres, other green spaces or play areas, and paved areas for active games compared to urban schools. Urban schools are more likely than rural schools to report having access to off-site fitness centres.

TABLE 2

Difference in availability of off-site facilities

Type of school	Differences in access to off-site facilities compared to the national average	
	Less likely to have access	More likely to have access
Elementary	Fitness centre or weight room	Other green spaces or play areas, area with playground equipment, paved area use for active games
Secondary (or combined with middle schools)	Area with playground, paved area used for active games	Fitness centre or weight room, tennis court, walking and bicycling trails
Comprehensive (K-12)	Municipal sports and recreation facility, community centre, playing fields, running track, tennis court, paved area used for active games, walking and bicycling trails	Fitness centre or weight room

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