



# Changing the Canadian Landscape...one step at a time

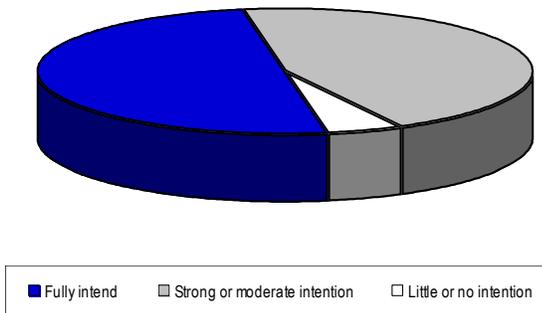
## Results of the Physical Activity Monitor 2007

### Intentions to be active and personal control over choice to be active

A number of research studies have shown strong associations between intention and perceived behavioural control in adults with leisure-time walking<sup>1</sup> and overall physical activity.<sup>2,3</sup> The 2007 Physical Activity Monitor explored Canadians' intentions to be physically active in the near future (six months following the survey). The majority of Canadians intend to be active, as illustrated in Figure 1. When specifically asked about their intentions to be active:

- \* 50% of Canadians fully intend to be active,
- \* 45% strongly or moderately intend to do so, and
- \* 5% have little or no intention.

**FIGURE 1: INTENTION TO BE ACTIVE overall**

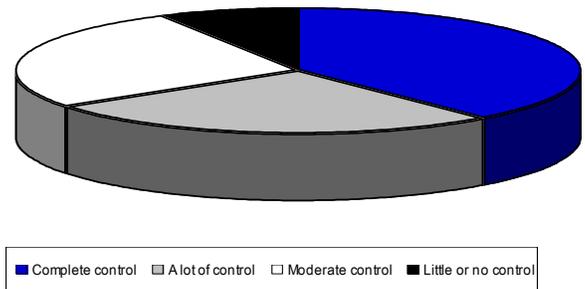


2007 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

The 2007 Physical Activity Monitor also examined the amount of personal control that Canadians feel they have over whether they are able to fit regular physical activity into their lifestyle, as illustrated by Figure 2. Overall, most Canadians feel they have considerable control:

- \* 39% of Canadians feel they have complete control,
- \* 27% feel they have a lot of control,
- \* 27% feel they have a moderate amount of control, and
- \* 8% feel they have little or no control.

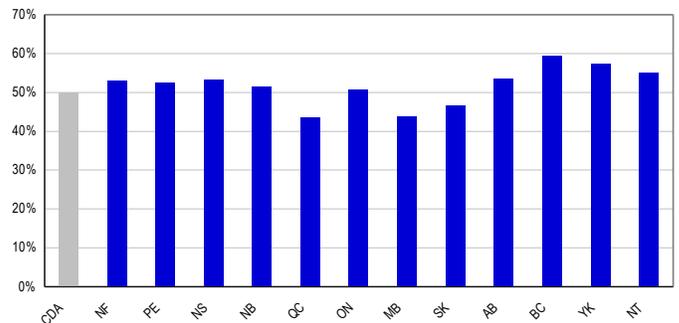
**FIGURE 2: PERSONAL CONTROL FITTING IN ACTIVITY overall**



2007 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

**Region** Quebec residents are less likely than the average Canadian to fully intend to be active, whereas those in British Columbia are more likely to report this. Residents of British Columbia and the Yukon are more likely to say that they have complete control over their ability to fit physical activity into their daily routines.

**FIGURE 3: FUTURE INTENTION by province or territory**



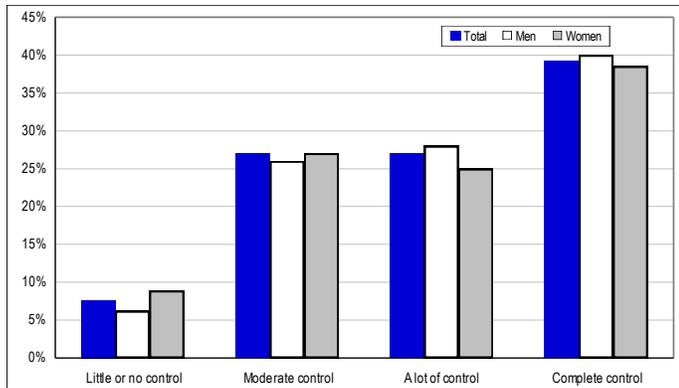
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**Age and sex** There are no significant differences between men and women in terms of their intentions to become active.



Women are, however, more likely than men to state that they have little or no personal control when it comes to fitting physical activity into their daily routines.

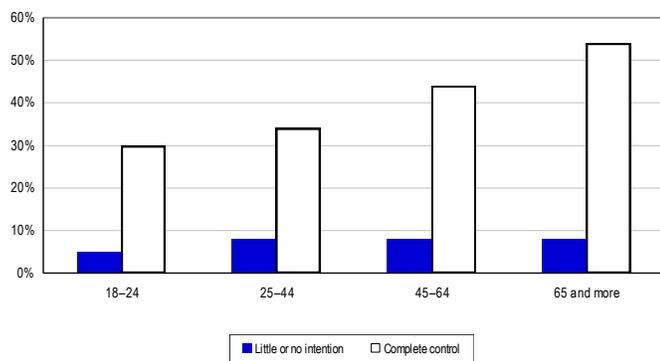
**FIGURE 4: PERCEIVED CONTROL by gender**



2007 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Older adults are more likely to say that they have little or no intention to be active in the six months subsequent to the survey. The extent to which Canadians feel they have complete control generally increases with successively older age groups, whereas the converse is true for those reporting moderate levels of control. Generally speaking, these relationships appear for both men and women.

**FIGURE 5: PERCEIVED CONTROL AND INTENTION by age**



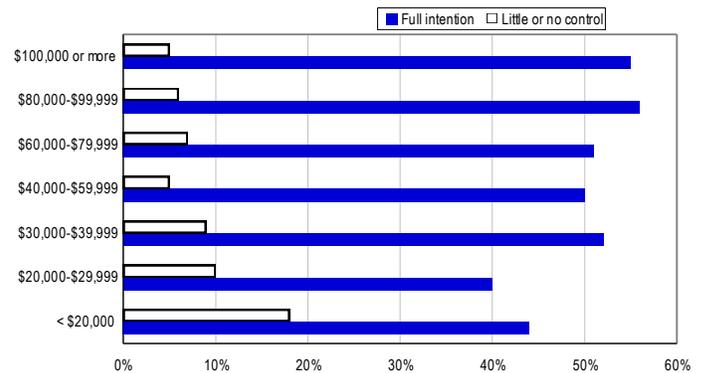
2007 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

**Socio-economic and demographic characteristics** Canadians with less than a secondary education are more likely than those with a university education to have little or no intention to be active in the ensuing six months and conversely, are less likely than those with a university education to fully intend to do so. In addition, those with less than a secondary education are generally the least likely to indicate that they have full control and are more

likely than those with post-secondary education to say that they have little or no control over fitting in regular physical activity.

Those with low household income (between \$20,000 and \$29,999) are less likely than those with higher incomes (\$80,000 or more) to fully intend to be active. Those with the lowest household income (<\$20,000) are generally the most likely to feel that they have little or not control over fitting regular physical activity into daily life.

**FIGURE 6: PERCEIVED CONTROL AND INTENTION by household income**



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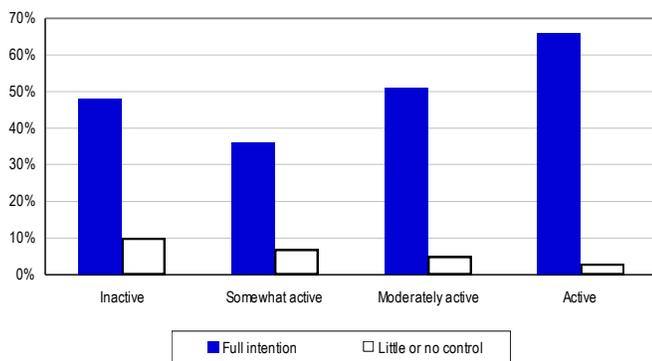
Unemployed Canadians are less likely than the national average, and more specifically less likely than those who work full time or who are retired to state that they fully intend to become active in the next six months. Retired Canadians are the most likely to state that they have complete control over fitting in regular physical activity compared to those in all other employment categories. Canadians who work on a full-time basis are more likely to state that they have complete control compared to students or those who are unemployed. Those who are unemployed for a given reason, including illness or sick leave, are generally the most likely to say that they have little or no control over fitting physical activity into their daily life.

Those who have never been married are more likely than those who are widowed, divorced, or separated to strongly or moderately intend to be active, while they are less likely than those who are married or previously married (widowed, divorced, or separated) to have little or no intention. Canadians who are widowed, divorced, or separated are less likely than those who are married, who in turn are less likely than those who have never been married, to state they have a moderate amount of control. The converse is true (i.e., those who are widowed, divorced or separated are more likely than those who are married,

who in turn are more likely than those who have never been married) for those reporting that they have complete control over fitting physical activity into their daily life. Perceptions of control and stated intentions to be active do not differ among Canadians by community size.

**Physical Activity** Active Canadians are more likely than those who are less active to fully intend to be more active. Inactive Canadians are more likely than those who are more active to say that they have little or no control over fitting regular physical activity into their daily lives.

**FIGURE 6: PERCEIVED CONTROL AND INTENTION by activity level**



2007 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

**Changes since 2002** There has been no change between 2002 and 2007 in the overall proportion of Canadians who fully intend to be active in the six months following interview. This finding is true regardless of region, income, education, marital status, or employment status. In 2007, however, women aged 65 years or older are more likely to indicate that they fully intend to be active compared to their counterparts in 2002.

In 2007, Canadians are slightly less likely to indicate that they have little or no control over their choice to be active compared to 2002. This finding is true for both men and women, university educated adults, married adults, and full-time workers. Seniors (aged 65 or older) are significantly more likely in 2007 than they were in 2002 to report that they exert complete control over their physical activity choices. This pattern was also found among Canadian retirees as compared to Canadians in other employment categories, likely due to the significant overlap in the description of these groups. There have been no changes since 2002 in perceived control over physical activity choices with respect to sex, region, income, education, marital status, or employment status.

**Summary and Recommendations** As found in 2002, most Canadians have strong intentions to be physically active in the six months following their interviews. In fact, only 5% have little or no intention to do so. Moreover, it appears that most Canadians have considerable control over their ability to fit physical activity into their daily lifestyle (39% have complete control and 53% have a lot of control). These are indeed positive findings, as they suggest a potential receptivity to strategies, information, and programming that encourage physical activity. Moreover, the finding that seniors are now more likely to cite full intention (women only) and complete control compared to five years ago is a promising one for potentially reducing the age-related gap in physical activity.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour describes attitudes, normative beliefs (See Bulletin in this series entitled “Beliefs about the benefits of physical activity”), and perceived behavioural control as determinants of intention, which can subsequently determine physical activity.<sup>4</sup> As such, understanding those who have perceptions of little personal control and suggesting ways of overcoming barriers and modifying their perceptions of control are important.

So, who reports that they have little or no intention to be active or control over fitting physical activity into daily life?

**Women** – Women, and especially mothers, have experienced significant increases in work time.<sup>5</sup> Canadians are experiencing greater difficulty in striking a work-life balance, and women are especially affected by role overload, work-to-family interference, and membership in the ‘sandwich generation’ which demands caring for children and older parents.<sup>6</sup> It is perhaps, therefore, not surprising that they are experiencing lower levels of personal control over the incorporation of physical activity into their daily lives compared to men. Indeed, other national data corroborates this; key barriers to sport participation reported by women are other competing demands, lack of time, lack of energy, and time away from the family. Focusing on options that can assist women in overcoming these types of obstacles is important (e.g., taking a walk at lunch or during a break, and finding opportunities to be active as a family or for mothers and children to participate in sport or physical activity simultaneously). In addition, tailoring interventions for women of various age groups is also important<sup>7</sup> (e.g., increased care-giving obligations among middle aged women).

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Lower socio-economic groups – Findings from this bulletin indicate that perceived control and intentions to be active are lower among those with lower education and those with low incomes. Among those in the lowest income group (<\$20,000 per year), cost is more likely to be considered a barrier than those with higher incomes. Policies that improve the accessibility of programming for low-income adults can be encouraged, including reducing or eliminating user fees, subsidies for fees, or alternative fee options for low income families (e.g., volunteering in lieu of fees, deferring or multiple payments). Further, promotion of free, low-cost, subsidized, or sponsored physical activity opportunities to all Canadians may encourage activity regardless of ability to pay, with the potential secondary benefit of fostering community belonging. A significant number of individuals with lower incomes are older adults for whom additional suggestions appear below.

Older adults – Although older adults are more likely to feel that they have a high degree of control over their choice to be active, they are less likely to intend to be active in the next six months. Evidence suggests that positive beliefs about the benefits of physical activity are predictive of initiation and maintenance of physical activity by older adults;<sup>8</sup> older adults are generally less likely to hold strong positive beliefs regarding the benefits of physical activity (see bulletin in this series entitled “Beliefs about the benefits of physical activity”). As well, though older adults encounter health professionals more frequently and are more likely to be strongly influenced by their physicians, recent research has shown that general practitioners are less likely to counsel older female patients on physical activity.<sup>1,9</sup> In addition, older adults (and especially older women) are more likely to see physical activity as a recreation pursuit rather than a health maintenance behaviour, and are more likely to view some of the results of physical activity (for example, sweating and laboured breathing) as being harmful or socially undesirable.<sup>10</sup> Promotions, programs and policies could enhance positive beliefs about physical activity among older adults, as well as redefine physical activity as behaviour which is not only recreational but also beneficial to physical, psychological, and social health. Governments, health authorities, family physicians and geriatricians need to develop policies which provide the time and resources required to counsel older adults on the benefits of physical activity and how to overcome their individual barriers.

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