



# Kids CAN PLAY!

Encouraging children to be active at home, at school, and in their communities

## Sedentary pursuits after school

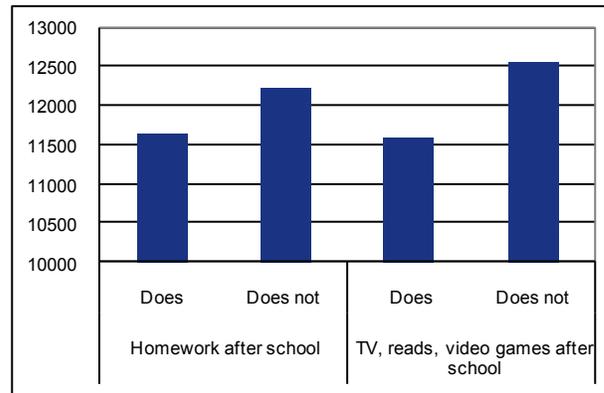
Recent data from the Canadian Health Measures Survey indicate that children and youth spend on average 8.6 hours (62%) of their waking hours in sedentary pursuits.<sup>1</sup> A commonly reported sedentary behaviour in children is TV viewing, and numerous studies reviewed found that children's screen time far exceeds the 2 hour per day limit recommended in newly released Canadian sedentary guidelines.<sup>1,2,3</sup> These guidelines also recommend that children limit the time spent in other sedentary behaviours (including motorized transport, extended sitting and time spent indoors as well). The reasons for these guidelines are clear, the increasing evidence links sedentary behaviours with various physiological effects.<sup>2</sup> In children, extended TV viewing has been shown to increase the risk of being overweight or obese, though more research is needed to examine the potential effect of other sedentary behaviours on childhood obesity.<sup>2,3</sup>

Since 2005, Canada's Physical Activity Levels Among Youth (CANPLAY) study have asked parents about their children's participation in several sedentary activities between the time school ends and dinner. In year five of the CANPLAY study, parents report that nearly seven in ten children and youth (69%) do homework between the end of the school day and dinnertime, and three-quarters of children and youth watch TV, read, or play video or computer games during this time. Children reported to watch TV, read, or play video and computer games after school take about 1,000 fewer steps each day than children who do

not engage in these activities. There is no significant difference in daily steps based on whether children and youth do homework after school. These findings are generally consistent with previous years.

FIGURE 1

Steps taken by sedentary pursuits, 2009/10



CANPLAY 2009/10, CFLRI

### Region

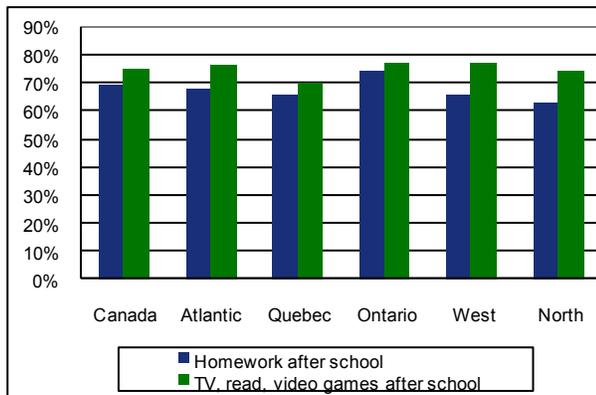
Compared to the national average,

- a greater proportion of children and youth living in Ontario reportedly do homework after school, whereas relatively fewer in the North indicate this; and
- a smaller proportion of children and youth residing in Quebec reportedly watch TV, read, or play video/computer games after school.



FIGURE 2

Percentage participating in sedentary pursuits by region, 2009/10



CANPLAY 2009/10, CFLRI

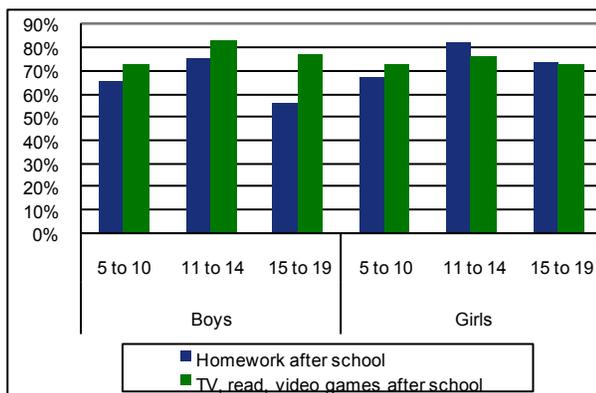
### Socio-demographic and other characteristics

According to parents, more girls than boys to do homework between the time that school ends and dinner. Upon closer examination, however, this is only true among girls and boys aged 11 to 19. Among both boys and girls, a greater proportion of 11 to 14 year-olds reportedly do homework during this time period compared to younger children and older youth. Regardless of whether they do homework after school, younger children generally take more steps per day than older children and youth.

According to parents, boys and girls are similarly likely to watch TV, read, or play video/computer games

FIGURE 3

Percentage participating in sedentary pursuits by age and gender of child, 2009/10



CANPLAY 2009/10, CFLRI

between the time school ends and dinner. Like for homework, a greater proportion of 11 to 14 year-olds engage in these sedentary activities than those older and younger. Among 11 to 14 year-olds only, relatively more boys than girls watch TV, read, or play games during this time period. Regardless of whether they watch TV, read, play video games or do homework after school, boys take more steps per day than girls. Among girls (but not boys), however, those who do not watch TV, read or play video games after school take more steps than those who do.

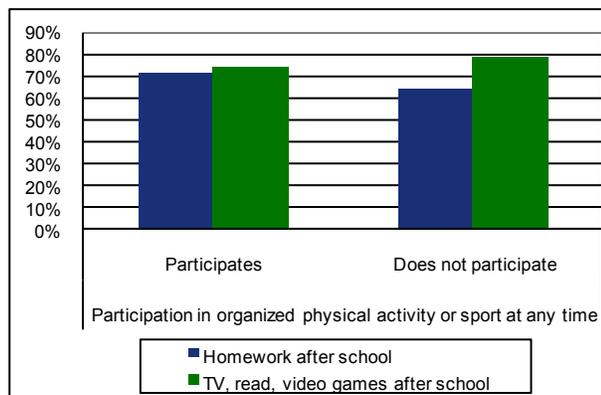
A child's participation in these types of sedentary activities generally do not differ by parental education level, physical activity level, or household income.

A greater proportion of children who participate in organized sport or physical activity reportedly do homework after school compared to those who do not participate in these types of organized activities. Step counts vary with respect to participation in organized sport and physical activity and participation in sedentary activities, as follows:

- Among children and youth who do not participate in organized sport or physical activity, those who watch TV, read, or play video games after school take fewer steps than those who do not do these after-school activities. This difference does not appear among those who do participate in organized sport or physical activity.
- Among children and youth who do homework, or watch TV, read, or play video games after school, those who participate in organized sport and physical activity take more steps than those who do not. This step count difference does not appear among those who neither do homework nor watch TV, read, or play video games after school.

FIGURE 4

Percentage participating in sedentary pursuits by participation in organized physical activities and sport, 2009/10



CANPLAY 2009/10, CFLRI

## References

1. Colley et al. (2011). Physical activity of Canadian children and youth: Accelerometer results from the 2007 to 2009 Canadian Health Measures Survey. *Statistics Canada*. Vol. 22(1).
2. Tremblay et al. (2010). Physiological and health implications of a sedentary lifestyle. *Appl. Physiol. Nutr. Metab.* Vol. 35:725-740.
3. Tremblay et al. (2011). Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children and Youth. *Appl. Physiol. Nutr. Metab.* 36:1-6.

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