



Let's Get Active!

Planning Effective Communication Strategies

2008 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MONITOR: FACTS & FIGURES



Beliefs about the benefits of physical activity

The 2008 Physical Activity Monitor asked Canadians about the strength of their beliefs regarding certain lifelong benefits of physical activity. The majority of Canadians strongly believe that there are benefits to physical activity, as illustrated in Figure 1. When specifically asked about particular benefits, the majority of Canadians very strongly agree that physical activity helps to:

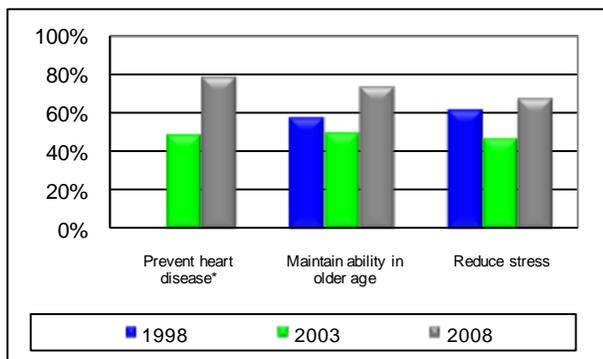
- prevent heart disease (78%);
- maintain ability with everyday tasks in older age (73%); and
- to reduce stress (67%).

When it comes to beliefs on whether they personally do enough physical activity to reap such benefits, much smaller proportions of Canadians very strongly agree that they do enough to:

- help prevent heart disease (24%);
- maintain physical ability in older age (30%); and
- reduce stress (24%).

FIGURE 1

Trends in strong beliefs in the benefits of physical activity, 1998 - 2008, overall

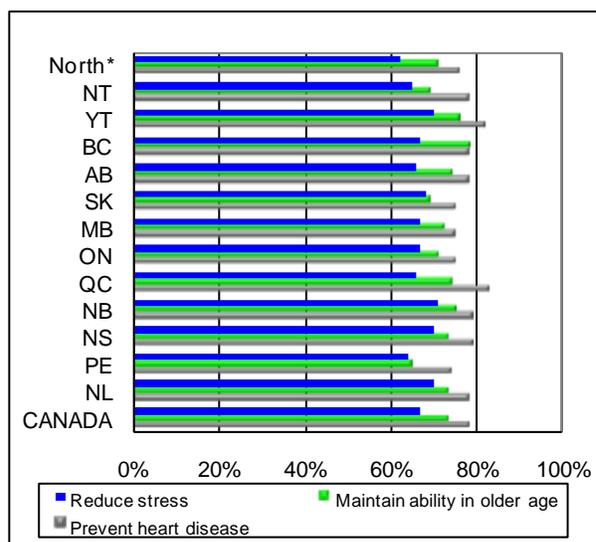


* Unavailable in 1998 due to slight changes to survey question

Physical Activity Monitor 1998, 2003, & 2008, CFLRI

FIGURE 2

Strong beliefs of benefits of physical activity, by region



* 'North' includes Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut

Physical Activity Monitor 2008, CFLRI

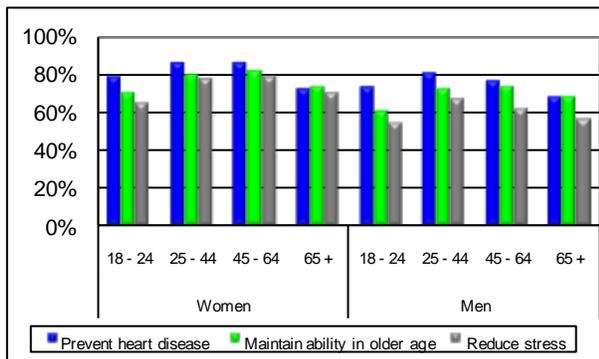
Region

Prince Edward Island residents are less likely than the average Canadian to believe that physical activity helps to maintain ability to do everyday tasks in older age.

Age and sex

Women are more likely than men to strongly agree that physical activity helps to prevent heart disease, maintain ability with everyday tasks in older age and reduce stress. Men and women are equally likely to strongly agree that they do enough physical activity to reap these benefits.

FIGURE 3
Strong beliefs in the benefits of physical activity, by sex and age group



Physical Activity Monitor 2008, CFLRI

Strong agreement with the beliefs that physical activity helps to prevent heart disease, maintain ability in older age, and reduce stress are related to age:

- Strong agreement with these benefits is generally higher among those aged 25 to 64 years than among those younger and older.
- Women aged 45 to 64 years are more likely to hold strong beliefs that physical activity prevents heart disease than men of the same age.
- Women aged 25 years or older are more likely to strongly believe that physical activity reduces stress than men in this age group.

Whether Canadians believe that they do enough physical activity to reap these benefits also varies with age.

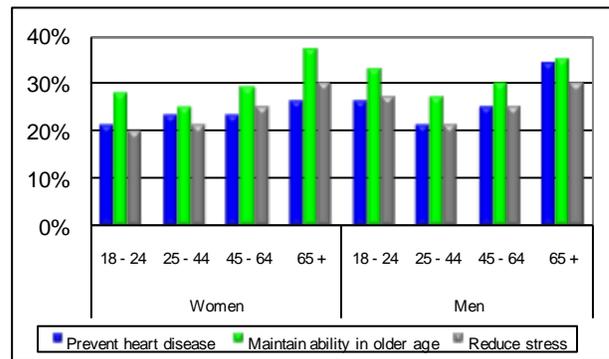
- Men aged 65 years or older are more likely than those aged 25 to 44 years to strongly believe that they do enough to prevent heart disease.
- Women aged 65 years or older are more likely than those aged 25 to 44 years to strongly believe they do enough to reduce stress, and are more likely than those aged 25 to 64 years to strongly believe that they do enough physical activity to maintain functional ability in older age.

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics

The following relationships appear with respect to the benefits of physical activity in reducing heart disease risk, reducing stress, and maintaining abilities into older age:

- Those with less than a high school education are generally least likely to strongly agree with these benefits.
- Those in the highest income households are more likely to strongly agree with these benefits than are those in lower income households.
- Students are less likely than the national average to strongly agree with these benefits of physical activity.

FIGURE 4
Strong beliefs of adequacy of current activity level to achieve benefits, by sex and age group



Physical Activity Monitor 2008, CFLRI

Retired Canadians are more likely than the average Canadian to strongly agree that they do enough physical activity to maintain ability in older age and to reduce stress. There are no differences in any of these factors by community size.

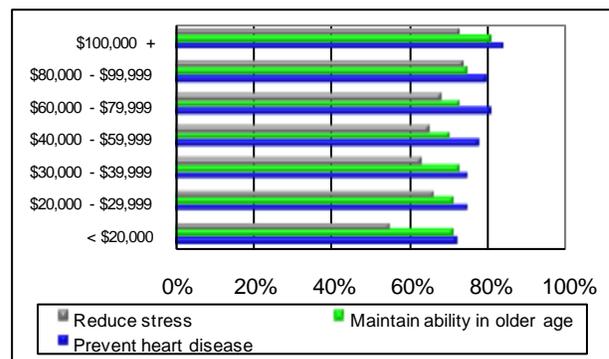
Physical activity and sport participation

With respect to physical activity levels –

- sedentary Canadians are generally the least likely to strongly believe that physical activity prevents heart disease and helps to maintain abilities in older age; and
- those who are active are two to three times more likely than those less active to strongly believe that they do enough physical activity to prevent heart disease, reduce stress, and maintain functional abilities in older age. Still, the majority of those who are active do not strongly agree that they do enough activity to achieve these benefits.

Sport participants and non-participants are equally likely to strongly agree with the benefits of physical activity. Sport

FIGURE 5
Strong beliefs of benefits of physical activity, by household income



Physical Activity Monitor 2008, CFLRI

participants, however, are more likely to believe that they do enough physical activity to prevent heart disease, reduce stress, and maintain abilities in older age than are non-sport participants.

Trends

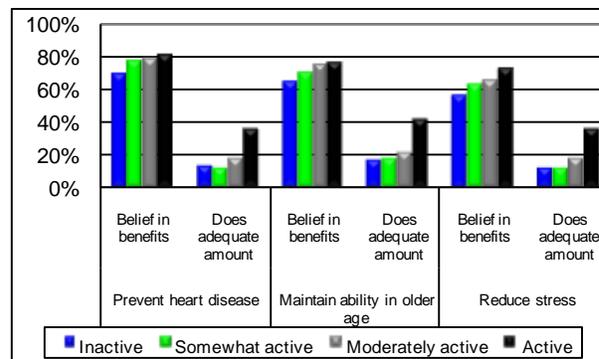
Beliefs about the personal adequacy of physical activity levels to achieve health benefits have not changed significantly since 1998, with the exception that a slightly higher proportion of Canadians in 2008 believe they do enough activity to reduce stress compared to 2003. Strong beliefs that physical activity helps to prevent heart disease, maintain abilities into older age, and reduce stress have become more common. Though the proportions of Canadians that held strong beliefs about the benefits of maintained abilities in older age and stress reduction diminished somewhat from 1998 to 2003, the proportions holding these strong beliefs in 2008 are much higher than either of the previous years.

Regarding heart disease prevention, responses in 1998 are not directly comparable to responses in 2003 and 2008. From 2003 to 2008, however, increases in strong positive beliefs appear similar to those noted for the other benefits of physical activity over time.

Most of the pattern noted below in 2008 were present in 1998 and 2003, with a few exceptions:

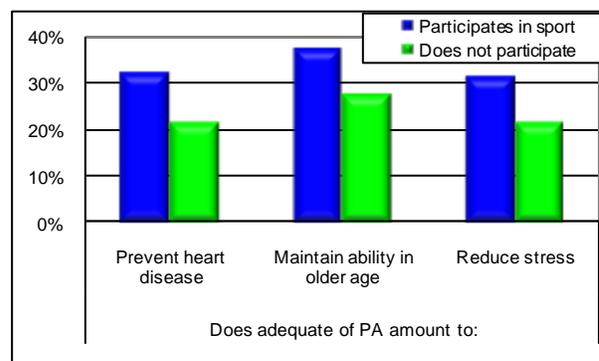
- Relationships between education and strong beliefs about the physical activity helping to maintain function in older age newly emerge in 2008; and
- In each survey period, there are age related relationships with adequacy of physical activity to contribute toward maintained functionality in older age but these relationships differ in each period.

FIGURE 6
 Strong beliefs in the benefits of physical activity and of adequacy of current activity level to achieve benefits, by activity level



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FIGURE 7
 Strong beliefs of adequacy of current activity level to achieve benefits of physical activity, by sport participation



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