



Kids CAN PLAY!

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

Physical Activity Levels of Canadian Children and Youth

The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's CANPLAY study (Canadian Physical activity Levels Among Youth study) has measured physical activity levels of children and youth using pedometers to measure daily steps. The majority of the analyses in this bulletin highlights the combined data collected in year five and six of the study (2009-2011), unless otherwise stated. Combining year 5 and 6 of data collection, the CANPLAY study shows that Canadian children, aged 5 to 19, take approximately 11,600 daily steps on average.

Province and Territory

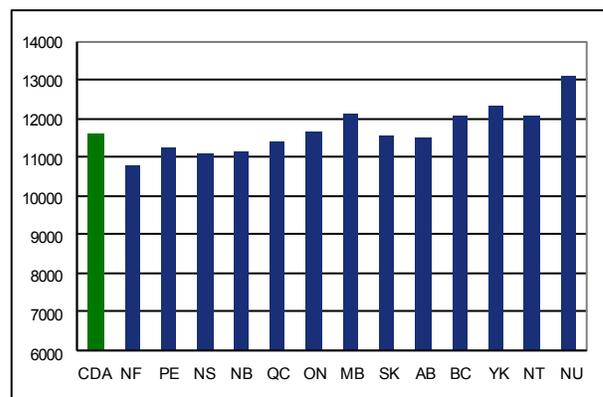
Compared to the national average, there are generally very few provincial and territorial differences; children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador generally take fewer steps, whereas those in Nunavut take a greater number of daily steps on average. It is important to note, however, that the study in Nunavut follows a different methodology than the main study (see Methodology Bulletin #1 in this series).

Child characteristics

Boys take more daily steps on average than girls do. Younger children take more steps per day than older teens; specifically, steps significantly decrease with each increasing age group. These gender differences appear at every age group and the age-related decrease in steps appears for both boys and girls.

FIGURE 1

Average daily steps of children and youth by province and territory, 2009-2011



CANPLAY 2010/11, CFLRI

Children who participate in organized physical activities and sport take on average 1,600 more daily steps than children who do not participate in these types of activities.

Parent and household characteristics

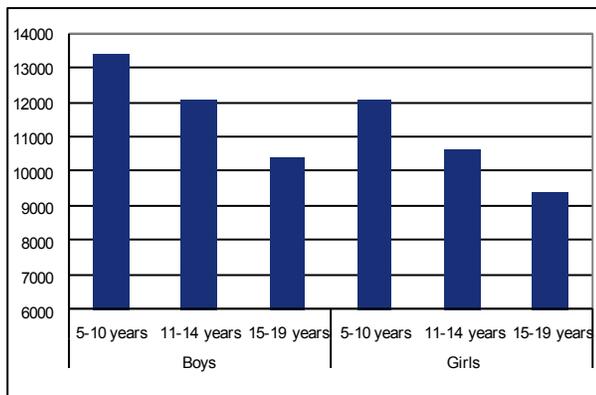
There are very few significant differences between a child's average daily steps and the household income or the education level of parents. Children whose parents have a university education take slightly more steps than those with a college education. Children from the highest income household (\geq \$100,000 per year) take more daily steps on average than those from households with incomes between \$40,000 and \$59,999. Children whose parents consider themselves *substantially less*



active than their peers take fewer steps on average than those who parents consider themselves *slightly more* active than their peers.

FIGURE 2

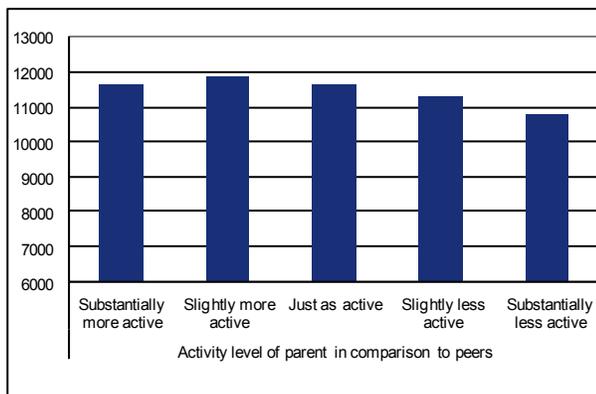
Average daily steps of children and youth by age and sex of child, 2009-2011



CANPLAY 2010/11, CFLRI

FIGURE 3

Average daily steps of children and youth by parent's activity level, 2009-2011



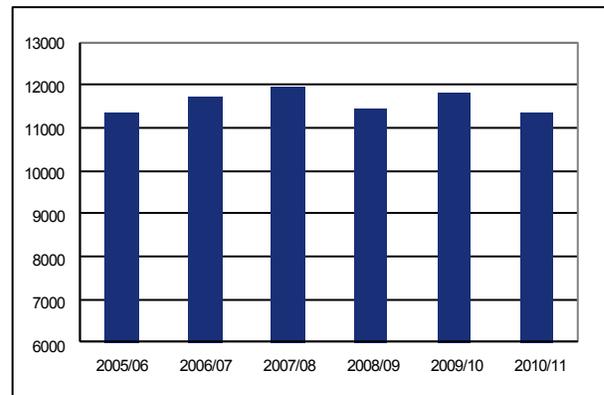
CANPLAY 2010/11, CFLRI

Trends in activity level over time

In 2010/2011 (year 6 of data collection), children and youth aged 5 to 19 take roughly an average of 11,350 steps. The following differences were noted: the average number of steps is slightly lower in 2010/11 (year 6) compared to year 2, 3 and 5 of the CANPLAY study, (see figure 4). The following analyses looks at trends over time examining each survey year independently.

FIGURE 4

Average daily steps of children and youth over time, 2005-2011



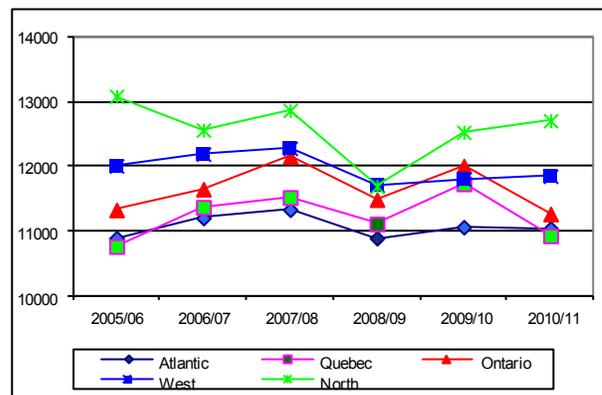
CANPLAY 2010/11, CFLRI

Region

Generally speaking, there has not been a significant change in daily steps over the past six years among children and youth living in the Atlantic, West, and the North. However, in Ontario, children and youth have lower steps in year 1 and the current year (year 6) of the study compared to both year 3 and year 5. In Quebec, the only difference over time is the higher number of steps taken in year 3 compared to year 1.

FIGURE 5

Average daily steps of children and youth by region, 2005-2011



CANPLAY 2010/11, CFLRI

Child characteristics

In all years of the CANPLAY study, boys take more steps than girls. The age-related decrease in steps also appears for all study years. The age- and sex-relationships persist over time.

Parent and household characteristics

Although an association between a child's average daily steps and parent's education level existed in earlier years of the CANPLAY study (year 1 to year 4), this relationship was not significant in year 5 and year 6 of data collection. In earlier survey years, children and youth who lived in the highest income households took more steps than those from the lower income households, however, the relationship is not as clear in year 6. In year 6, children from the highest level households took more steps than those from households with incomes between \$40,000 to \$59,999, which was a similar pattern to that found in Year 3.

The association between a child's average daily steps and parental perceived activity level appeared in year 1 and year 2 of CANPLAY, and a similar pattern also exists in Year 6.

CANADIAN FITNESS & LIFESTYLE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

201-185 Somerset Street West • Ottawa, ON K2P 0J2 • (613) 233-5528 • info@cfri.ca

<http://www.cfri.ca/>



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