

Let's Get Active!

Planning Effective Communication Strategies

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT MONITORING PROGRAM



Physical activity levels of Canadians

Physical inactivity is a significant public health issue, as low levels of physical activity are associated with increased risk of non-communicable diseases (e.g., heart disease, diabetes, certain cancers), chronic disease risk factors (e.g. obesity and hypertension), anxiety and depression, and premature mortality.^{1,2} The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor of global mortality, estimating 3.2 million deaths globally attributable to inactivity.³ In addition to the impact on the lives of the individual, there are societal costs. For example, the economic impact of physical inactivity in Canada in terms of chronic disease, obesity and health care costs is estimated at CAD \$6.8 billion per annum.⁴

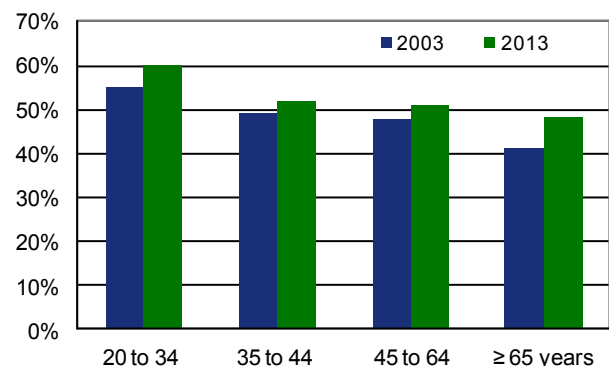
Currently, the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) is one data source for tracking physical activity levels of Canadians adults. Within this Canadian study, leisure time physical activity have been examined as a risk factor for health surveillance, as part of policies and programs related

Measuring physical activity - In the CCHS, the physical activity indicator measures the single domain of leisure time physical activity (LTPA). This self-report measure assesses recall of physical activity participation during the past 3 months. Activity level is calculated by multiplying the occasions by the average time reported for each activity participated in by the MET (metabolic equivalent which indicates the amount of energy expended on the activity relative to a resting state) value for each of these activities. As the question is based on 3 month recall, in order to calculate the yearly total, this product is multiplied by 4. This calculation is repeated for each physical activity reported. The energy expenditure value is summed across each activity and divided by 365 to yield the average energy expenditure from LTPA per day. For the purposes of this bulletin, active is considered achieving 1.5 or greater MET per day.

to health more generally. The proportion of Canadians (20 years and older) who are considered active has increased slightly from 49% in 2003 to 53% in 2013.⁵ Based on 2013 data, more men (55%) than women (51%) are active.⁵ This pattern has persisted since 2003.⁵

In 2013, activity levels decreased with increasing age (60% of 20 to 34 year olds, 52% of 35 to 44 year olds, 51% of 45 to 64 year olds, and 48% of those 65 years and older are at least moderately active).⁶ This age-related decline appears for both men and women.⁶ To some extent, this relationship has consistently appeared since 2003.⁶

FIGURE 1
Physical activity levels by age



Canadian Community Health Survey,⁵ 2003, 2013

Provinces and territories

Differences in activity levels exist by region. Compared to the national average in 2013, a lower proportion of adults were considered at least moderately active in Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Quebec, whereas a higher proportion in British Columbia and the Yukon were active.⁵ Table 1 describes significant differences when compared to the national average, gender- and age-related differences, and significant differences over time.^{5,6}

TABLE 1

Physical activity levels for province and territories, overall, by age and sex, and over time^{5,6}

Province or Territory	Overall gender differences (2013)	Overall age differences (2013)	Overall changes over time (2003-2013)
Newfoundland and Labrador	No significant differences	No significant differences	No significant change since 2003
Prince Edward Island	No significant differences	No significant differences	Not significant change since 2003
Nova Scotia	No significant differences	65 yr olds least likely to be active	Higher in 2013 than 2003 to 2008
New Brunswick	No significant differences	General decrease with increasing age	Higher in 2013 than 2007
Quebec	No significant differences	General decrease with increasing age	Higher in 2013 than 2003 to 2008
Ontario	Men more active than women	General decrease with increasing age	Higher in 2013 than 2003, 2007 to 2010
Manitoba	Men more active than women	65 yr olds least likely to be active	Higher in 2013 than 2003 and 2005
Saskatchewan	No significant differences	General decrease with increasing age	Higher in 2013 than 2005 to 2008
Alberta	No significant differences	No significant differences	Higher in 2013 than 2008
British Columbia	No significant differences	General decrease with increasing age	Higher in 2013 than 2003 to 2008, 2010, 2011
Yukon	No significant differences	No significant differences	Higher in 2013 than 2005 to 2009
Northwest Territories	No significant differences	General decrease with increasing age	Higher in 2013 than 2008 and 2009
Nunavut	No significant differences	No significant differences	No significant change since 2003

References

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6. Statistics Canada. Table 105-0501 - Health indicator profile, annual estimates, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces, territories, health regions (2013 boundaries) and peer groups, occasional, CANSIM (database). Accessed: September 30, 2014, <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/pick-choisir?lang=eng&p2=33&id=1050501>



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